

ARC2014: Design Studio 4 – Comprehensive Building Project
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Title: Construction of Site – A Choreography of Stereotomy and Tectonics

*‘Semper was to divide built form into two separate material procedures: into the **TECTONICS** of the frame, in which members of varying lengths are conjoined to encompass a spatial field; and the **STEREOTOMICS** of compressive mass that, while it may embody space, is constructed through the piling up of identical units (the term **STEREOTOMICS** deriving from the Greek term for solid **STEREOS**, and cutting, **TOMIA**). In the first case, the most common material throughout history has been wood or its textual equivalents such as bamboo, wattle and basketwork. In the second case, one of the most common materials has been brick, or the compressive equivalent of brick such as rock, stone or rammed earth and later, reinforced concrete.’*

Kenneth Frampton, ‘Rappel A L’Ordre’ in Labour, Work and Architecture: Collected Essays, 2002

In the quotation by Frampton, the oppositional framework of Tectonic and Stereotomic are used to frame the discussion about how architects build on a site. The essay ‘Rappel A L’Ordre’, first published in 1990 and ‘Toward a Critical Regionalism’ of 1983 are key texts in Frampton’s critique of the abstraction and obscurity of late modern discourse in architecture, the homogeneity of international style modernism and the scenography of post-modern architecture. Through Semper, Heidegger and others, Frampton constructs a discourse of origins that directly aligns the qualities and characteristics of making with those of place. Through these works, *tectonics* emerges as a critical/ operational tool of resistance. In order to carry meaning, architecture must be engaged both culturally and geographically in site.

We are currently working as architects within a strong paradigm shift in building technique and culture. Recognizing the limitations of the building techniques of the past, we are in practice moving towards the use of sustainable building systems and towards the provision of spaces of inclusion. We must come to terms with the imperatives of this retooled culture of construction and inclusion. To do so, we will engage in the oppositional framework proposed by Frampton and expand on the definitions of both site(stereotomy) and tectonics and rework to the current situation.

