To Dwell Upwards
Tectonic Paradigm for the
High-Rise Tropical Singapore

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation contends that rapid urbanization within Singapore has given rise to a new architectural landscape detached experientially and spiritually from the people. The embrace of technology and capitalism, and their obvious capacity to induce production for maximum returns has led to the homogenization of the built environment as a consequence of industrialized construction, in lieu of the more demanding investment required for the constructional aspect of architecture as craft.

Kenneth Frampton maintains that the act of building is first an act of construction; a tectonic and not a scenographic activity. Building is thus ontological, a presence or a 'thing' as opposed to a sign. The 'essence' of architecture is then the poetic manifestation of the structure implied in the Greek poiesis: an act of making and revealing that is tectonic. Within the tectonic cause championed by Frampton is located the post-modern disillusionment with the absence of phenomenological meaning in the built constructs of our modern era.

Furthermore, the implications of a high-rise, high density urban living condition characteristic of Singapore presupposes technological dependency. The nihilistic and reductive tendencies of technology should be countered by culturally informed technological imperatives embodied within the tectonic discourse, which attempts to transcend instrumentality as an end itself.

This dissertation proposes to trace the trajectory and concerns of the tectonic agenda and how/if the phenomenological case for the tropical high-rise can be advanced under the tectonic framework of enlightened construction. It will also investigate the potency of the tactile appropriation of reality afforded by tectonics upon the manifestation of a phenomenological reconciliation of the dislocated being with his lifeworld.

It is recognized that the field of phenomenology is wide and tectonics is just one of many ways of experientially engaging the existential being.

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