

Framing History: Colin Rowe and the evasion of industry

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In his 1956 essay 'Chicago Frame', Colin Rowe made a distinction between the allure of the structural frame for its 'empirical convenience' in America and its 'ideal significance' in Europe. Curiously, a similar *empirical-ideal* binary can be seen in the essay itself. Rowe framed his essay in the 'Chicago frame', so that his analyses operate at a level removed from the soot of modern industry, and yet they – like the frame in architecture contemporary to Rowe – are almost inconceivable in its absence. By tracing Rowe's historiography of architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and H.H. Richardson, this essay argues an analogous relationship between moments of resistance to modern industry in architecture and Rowe's evasion of industry in his writing. At stake is an alternative and possibly more fruitful way to read one of the most influential figures in latter twentieth century architectural education.

Biography:

Braden Engel is Undergraduate History + Theory Coordinator in the School of Architecture at Academy of Art University, San Francisco, and a PhD Candidate at Leeds Beckett University, where his research traces the pedagogies of architectural history from Europe to the United States in the middle of the 20th century.