Three point perspective analysis

The buildings as seen through the eyes of the patron to the architectural edifice.
In both of these buildings the organization is the commissioning body behind the architecture. As discussed in the earlier introduction to the OAU and AU, the opinion of the organizations of themselves is that they are legitimate bodies with clear mandates for which they exist. As such in the analysis, we will focus on these two aspects: the use of architecture as an exercise in legitimization and the use of architecture as way of communicating clarity of vision.

• In Africa Hall the building uses four main strategies to highlight itself and communicate power. These are the use of symmetry, raising the building on a plinth, composing of volumes to create a strong building profile and using a variety of techniques to make the building appear larger and more prominent than it is. All of these together create a strong simple architectural entity, this links onto the idea of a simple building embodying a clarity of vision.

The strong axial view, which is created by the above strategies, portrays the buildings full power. By using the landscape plinth, which comprises of naturalizing elements, such as the central stepped fountain, and the stepped plant beds against the strong profile of the building; the building appears as a powerfully harmonious composition. This gives visitors and users of the building an impression of the ‘naturalness’ or legitimacy of the organization and the clarity of its vision, which has produced a clear and balanced building.

• In the AU headquarters sited within a business and light industrial area, the use of high perimeter walling creates a clear separation from the hustle and bustle of its context. This not only provides the compound its security but gives a strong impression of importance the building and organization it hosts. By arrangement of the buildings around a civic square and use of symmetry and strong axial views the buildings are given a prominence as the backdrops of civic events such as important AU conferences, and an intimate setting on the larger site when it is empty.

The clarity of form and materiality as well as the entrance sequence that culminates in the civic square give the building a clarity readable in its architecture. As such we see both buildings articulating the intention of its patron using different yet similar means, dependent on the surrounding context.
As such we see the buildings embodying the top-down vision of the organizations of themselves

The buildings as seen through the eyes of a visitor

This looks at the opinion of the media of the OAU as a "collaborative club of perpetual self preservation" and it’s view of the AU of cynicism, doubting that it can do any better than the OAU in solving Africa’s problems.

As previously discussed in the analysis of the OAU Conference Center in Abuja, accessing the building especially during conferences would be near impossible, however assuming the visitor had the necessary permission to do so, he/she would have one of two options to access the building.

The first would be to be dropped off on street level where he/she would report to the security guard on duty at the base of the plinth stairway and upon being granted access, ascend the stairway to the entrance of the conference hall. The second point of screening would be at the front door, which upon gaining access to will be in the foyer of the conference hall. The conference hall would be off limits. The building does not house first floor public galleries/press galleries and from photographic evidence, we see that members of the press would stand in the corner of the conference hall as no permanent seating for them had been provided.

The second option for entering the complex is by vehicle, in which the visitor would park in the designated area, which is a separate vehicular route as to the processional route used by dignitaries. The visitor would then have to proceed on foot and walk around the office building to the front of the conference hall. If the visitor wished to visit one of the office suites, he/she would use the separate office block entrance and report to reception.
From this and the previous discussion, we conclude the following:

- The building uses perimeter security checkpoints as well secondary checkpoints at the entrance to both the conference hall and office block as filtering devices to police who is allow to access the building and who is not.
- There are separate vehicular entrance sequences for dignitaries and visitors. Although the same entrance point is used, preference is given to the dignitary.

We thus see that from the perspective of the visitor accessing the building, the architecture reinforces the top-down perception of the OAU.

By the use of strong perimeter, walling the visitor is aware of the exclusivity of the complex he is entering into. This is confirmed by the presence of armed security guards who check clearances and visitor details before allowing the visitor to proceed. Visitors park in a separate designated parking lot at the rear of the building. Visitors then circulate on foot around the building and enter into the civic square. The second point of access control is at the entrance door to the building and the third at reception. There is a separate processional entrance to the conference hall accessible only to dignitaries.
Here we see:
- The clear definition of boundaries in the form of high perimeter walling and articulated entrance portals
- The use of separate entrance sequences for visitors, dignitaries and workers.

As such we see that from the perspective of the visitor accessing the building the architecture reinforces the top-down perception of the AU from the perspective of the media.

The building also uses a strong profile, which sees the lower conference hall against the backdrop of the higher office block. This creates a strong axial view with a well-defined sense of foreground, middle ground and background, creating a strong image of power.

Here we see from the perspective of an ordinary person walking pass the building, that the architecture portrays a strong sense of power which embodies civil societies view on the organization.

The buildings as seen through the eyes of an ordinary person passing by in the street
In the earlier conclusion, the opinions of ordinary people of the OAU and AU were discussed. These opinions were predominantly negative, revealing the elitist nature of the OAU and AU. This analysis looks at the buildings from the perspective of an ordinary person passing by in the street, in order to assess whether the architecture reinforces or refutes these opinions of the organizations.

Africa Hall
As previously discussed, the building uses a landscaped plinth to raise the building above street level. This comprises of a stepped fountain located on the axis of symmetry, as well as stepped plant beds that flank the two processional stairways.
AU headquarters

The AU headquarters achieves this through different means. As previously discussed, the complex makes use of high perimeter walls and at its entrance a prominent guardhouse and boomed vehicular entrance and exit points.

The building makes use of strong vertical elements including a tall tower element and a high red pyramid roof over the main spaces of the office wing. The building is designed to be best viewed from the civic square that exists beyond the secured booms. However, the use of strong perimeter security and tall vertical elements of the building creates an impression of a powerful institution that exists beyond the boundary wall.

Hence, we see the architectural strategies employed reveal the top-down nature of the AU as seen through the eyes of an ordinary person walking pass in the street.

Conclusion: Comparison between Africa Hall, seat of the old OAU and the AU headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

From an urban perspective, Addis Ababa was not a designed capital but grew out of a history of settlement traceable to 1886. The city is 100% urbanized and from aerial photography it is hard to distinguish the center from the periphery, as residential areas are mixed into the urban fabric. However, certain portions of the city seem to be given greater prominence, and these are found around historic nodal points. Africa Hall is located within one of these precincts, while the AU headquarters is found in the southeast of the city in an area known for business and light industrial functions.
At the scale of the building, each of the buildings used different strategies to portray power. At Africa Hall, the building was raised above the street on a plinth, used symmetry and a strong building profile, as well as entrance sequences as methods of creating strong axial views to portray power through its architecture.

At the AU headquarters, the building used symmetry, strong vertical elements as well as a civic square to portray power internally. From the external view, the complex used strong perimeter walling and vertical elements to portray a sense of importance of the institution it housed.

These buildings were also looked at from the perspectives of the architectural patron, visitor to the building and an ordinary person passing the building from the street. All three viewpoints revealed a relation between the elitist perception of the organization and the architecture.

As such we see a correlation between the opinions of the OAU and AU as elitist institutes and the architecture, which portrays this.