

28

The
American
Club

For the 28th incarnation of Architecture Without Content we would like to deepen the research in 'Club Life', that we started unconsciously a few semesters ago. At first we investigated the possibility of a 'classical' American architecture. For this the great office of Charles Follen McKim, William Rutherford Mead and Stanford White was both reference and ancestor, as a kind of proto-American corporate classicist office. McKim, Mead and White's early 20th century architecture fueled our interest not only in an American kind of Classicism, but also in the particular civic life often represented in the buildings they developed. Club life, or an encapsulated, limited version of urban exchange seemed to be at the base of an architecture trying to emulate a European ideal (of city life) that perhaps never existed. This semester we would like to tackle the origins and the spatial mechanics of this urban world constructed entirely out of elite bubbles.

There are good reasons for that. Perhaps the architecture championed by McKim, Mead and White in the late 1890s and early 1910s was only possible if its ideals were shared by commissioners, clients and institutions alike that were ready not only to build such buildings but also to enact the life projected by them.

So it is almost impossible to disconnect McKim, Mead and White's architecture from Columbia university, the Century club, JP Morgan etc. The architecture, the urban positioning and the life that developed within these frameworks were all based on a particular cultural, social and economic consensus: club life.

Today, a type seemingly in decline for decades has resurrected. Long in the making, and indirectly the consequence of years of obsession with body culture, *the club* is quickly gaining ground as a new centre for shared urban experience.

The contemporary urbanite seems to have found her/his safe haven in the spaces of clubs where only her or his

kinds are invited. Is it the ultimate consequence of the chat rooms of the contemporary media? Is it the spatial translation of our current identity politics? What is certain is that places where only some selected people are granted access, became the new building blocks of our city, our society. This could be read in a very negative way, and we believe we should be critical about this phenomenon. At the same time, in this studio we would like to use this current dynamic to develop a project for urban interiors. We believe it is possible to use this renewed interest in the 'selected shared space' to create a proto-urban project. This project should use 'the accumulation of the many particular identities' as a building stone for an urban environment that is made for everybody, though perhaps not simultaneously. Seclusion as a new form of inclusion. Club life then becomes a small experiment in, or a fragment of, urban life. Club Architecture could

be a small experiment in urban architecture.

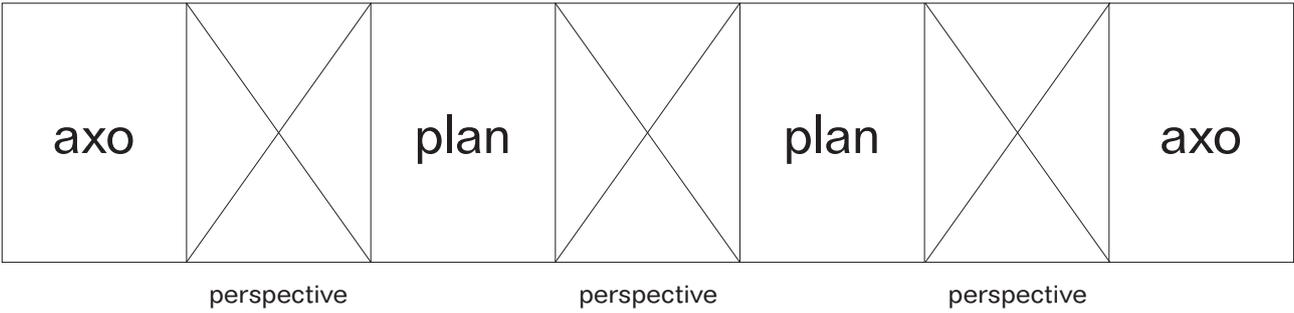
As Bramante built the *tempietto* and *Santa Maria della Pace* cloister as models for other grander urban architectures (of *St. Peter* and the *Belvedere*), so Adolf Loos built the American bar as an experiment of an architecture for the city of Vienna. He projected an idea of an American architecture in the core of the old central European city, only to seek for a proper urban translation later, in his housing buildings for example. The bar however, was the exploitable manifesto. The project in this semester should not be different. On the site where Hans Hollein built (mostly the interior) of the Feigen Gallery in upper east Manhattan, we want the students to develop a kernel of another urban architecture, a model of interiors, the future of architecture in Manhattan: The American Club.

Timing

- 1 17—22 January
Introduction
Kersten Geers Andrea Zanderigo
- 2 9—12 February
Type – interior – ancestors
Andrea Zanderigo
- 3 22 February
Midterm – full set sketch & ancestors
Kersten Geers Andrea Zanderigo
- 4 7—11 March
Trip Vienna
Kersten Geers Andrea Zanderigo
- 5 22—23 March
Reworking the Club type
Kersten Geers
- 6 5—6 April
Plan – axo – perspective
Andrea Zanderigo
- 7 19—20 April
The model as an argument
Kersten Geers
- 8 2 May
Final Review
Kersten Geers Andrea Zanderigo

Presentation

A1



+ model

Both for ancestors as project.

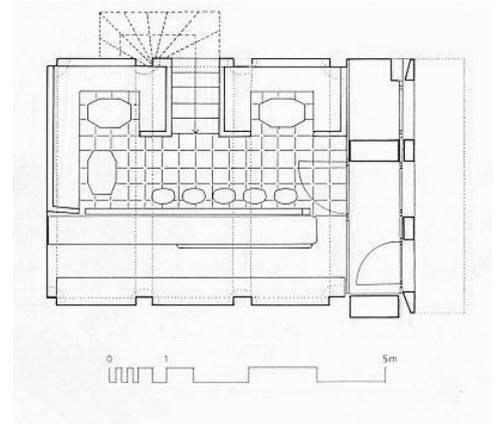
Ancestors



Hans Hollein, 1969, Feigen Gallery, New York, USA



Adolf Loos, 1903, American Bar, Vienna, Austria



McKim, Mead and White, 1919, Racquet Club, New York, USA



2018

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