Trouble
with
Classicists
In the first semester we made a big effort to make together a catalogue of what we all considered ‘the commons’. The catalogue is vast and monumental, but will somehow quickly lose relevance if we cannot translate it in a set of ‘real’ projects, in this world, in the reality as found. Therefore, this coming semester FORM will apply the acquired knowledge on the Even Covered Field in Italy, here the metropolitan area around Florence, Pistoia and Prato.

So, it’s Italy again, as we still consider it as the perfect test bed for understanding the possibility to produce an updated version of the Commons, able to survive the unfavourable economic and social conditions of anything public. Classicism (or the trouble with it…) will provide a special lens to look for ancestors and to search for solutions, in the conviction that it might provide us with a toolbox for designing projects which stand the passing of time, and are for that reason ‘sustainable’. (Rossi’s phantom is still around). At the same time, focusing on Florence and Tuscany gives yet another, deeper meaning to our endeavour. It is like going back to the very first moment in which the Classic was re-appropriated and re-invented in an attempt to produce the then new architecture for the civic space.

The catalogue developed during the first semester will provide us with a solid yet complex base for understanding the vast spectrum of solutions which are available in the field of the Commons, in the belief that architecture invites for reinterpretations (or misinterpretations) of its entire body of work. On the side, a decisive amount of local samples from the early Renaissance will be studied, visited and appropriated, hopefully extracting the Classicist lymph out of them. We will focus solely on schools (as usually accepting the irruption of few black sheep…), as they seem to remain an essential component of any shared infrastructure, while being lately involved in a set of transformations aimed at making them as multifunctional as possible to the life of the community. An interesting problem arises: how to re-use Brunelleschi’s dome or Alberti’s palace if you have to design a school?

As the conurbation around Milan was the catalyst of the first semester projects, this time the multifaceted field laying between Florence, Pistoia and Prato will provide us with a set of difficult locations. Context, an almost invisible ingredient in the projects for Milan in the first semester, will acquire a central role in this time. The relationship between context and projects is ambiguous, however: we will do a serious attempt to create context through the projects and will simultaneously read the different contexts with the projects themselves. To paraphrase McLuhan, here the project is the message. In order to be able to, it will need to be thoroughly developed, down to its technological choices, it’s obsessions, it’s smallest detail.
Elementary School
Aldo Rossi

Fagnano Olona, IT
1972-76
Secondary School
Aldo Rossi

Broni, IT
1979-1981
Santa Maria delle Carceri
*Giuliano da Sangallo*

Prato, IT
1486-1506
Pazzi Chapel
Filippo Brunelleschi

Florence, IT
1429-1443
San Marco Convent & Church
Michelozzo di Bartolomeo Michelozzi

Florence, IT
1437-43
Palazzo Rucellai
Leon Battista Alberti

Florence, IT
1446-1451
Villa Medici
Giuliano da Sangallo

Poggio a Caiano, IT
1480-1485
Studio Trip

*Florence - Prato - Pistoia*

Giotto di Bondone, *Ascension of St-John, Peruzzi Chapel*, c.1472
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