The extensive research in the oeuvre of the Sangallos we did the previous semester proved out to be a valuable exercise in architectural knowledge. A somewhat ludicrous idea to abolish the historical reference in favour of an intrinsically historical project, paradoxically resulted in remarkably contemporary design strategies. Relieved from the pressure of current trends, the Sangallos provided us with an excuse to challenge authorship, negotiate norms and develop a possible design theory. According to Aldo Rossi, this is the most important moment of every architecture: to develop a set of principles that define a practice. What a better way to test this knowledge than going back to Rome, the second semester, albeit five hundred years later?

For the 29th incarnation of Architecture Without Content we would like to investigate the idea of a club – a place which simultaneously references the elitism of gentlemen clubs as well as the commonality of early twentieth century worker’s clubs. This spectrum has already been our fascination in previous studios. Considering the shift between a detached interior and its public appearance, we were perhaps looking for traces of a genuinely urban architecture, embodied in the very idea of a club. Although seemingly long forgotten in the age of social media and virtual encounters, it has persisted precisely because of its locale.

We now want to tackle this particular notion through a specific European model of a club, typically associated with groups run by either business interest, or those aspired by greater deeds of humanistic ideologies. Mythical names like the Club of Paris or the Club of London, resonate as monickers of social, political and financial engagement of the global elite. Both are notorious groups of public lenders and private creditors. The Club of Budapest or the Club of Rome are concerned for the future of humanity. What they all have in common is that they carry names referring to the city of their origin or initial meeting point. In reality thought, this place is mostly irrelevant, as their organisations often inhabit other cities, adding a notion of glamour that perhaps never existed. The Club of Rome, for instance, is actually based in Winterthur, Switzerland.

Despite the apparent naivety of the latter group, to imagine a club as a global think-tank striving for a collective agenda (that can hopefully save us all) is perhaps not entirely science fiction, given the recent global unfolding of events. Can a club, incarnation of the elitist bubble, a place of celebrated individuality, influence and perhaps design a place of extreme collectivity? Is the club the new agora ‘on invitation only’? Is such a semi-detached place able to bridge the gap between its interior and its desire of global, and thus urban significance?
We have always been interested in the ambiguous relationship between architecture and its content. It therefore seems almost evident to embrace the challenges put by such an organisation. Perhaps, we implicitly feel that in times of increased virtual presence, it might be argued that exactly the opposite dynamic, i.e. translating the virtuality of political and social engagement in the factual world of built form, is the real challenge. We do not know exactly what we are looking for – what matters is to take the posed question seriously, to explore its limits. Is it possible to develop an urban architecture of *The Club of Rome*?

The site for this experiment, next to Palazzo Montecitorio, is perhaps one of the most contested voids in Rome. It is where Gianugo Polesello envisaged the white marble triangular monolith as his competition project for new offices for Chamber of Deputies. The mute, imposing form of the building seemingly denies its interior while also ignoring the complicated surroundings. As radical as it seems, it is also a direct descendent of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger’s project for a palace for Pope Leo X at piazza Navona.

The ‘old centre’ of Rome has always been an urban battlefield. As building in ‘media res’ has always been considered a direct engagement with history. Recent rules of conservation have somehow diluted this dynamic, in total ignorance of the saying that ‘the city is built out of many buildings’. Is there a better place to re-engage the challenge of building content without content? Rome can’t wait.

**Methodology:** In difference to the previous semester, when the studio work was primarily a collective endeavor, this semester students will work on their projects individually.

**Lectures:** A series of lecturers will provide the students with the theoretical backbone to tackle the theme of *Trouble With Classicists*.

**Field Trip:** Rome, March 24th - 27th

**Language:** The official atelier language is English.