

Hans Hollein

27.11.2011 – 09.04.2012

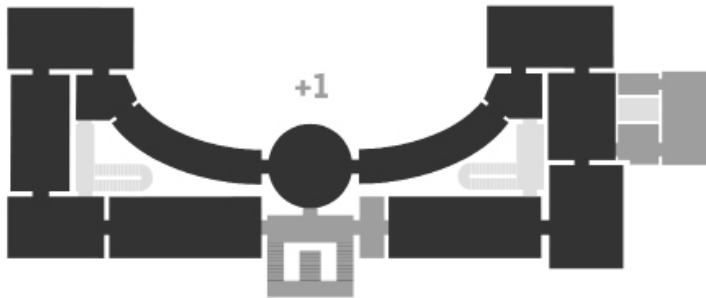
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This text is published on the occasion of the exhibition

Hans Hollein

Neue Galerie Graz
Joanneum Quarter
Universalmuseum Joanneum
November 27, 2011 until
April 09, 2012

Hans Hollein is a universal artist. As an architect, designer, sculptor, object artist, exhibition designer and architectural theorist, he is amongst the most outstanding of his time. His 1967 program “Everything is architecture“ has until the present day remained the foundation of his work which one encounters around the world, and which articulates his cross-border thoughts on design, form and functionality. The international recognition he has constantly earned over decades was crowned by the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1985. Hans Hollein has been the only Austrian architect to receive the award up to now.



Hans Hollein

An ABC

Architecture

“Everything is architecture“, Hans Hollein announced in the 1968 edition of the “Bau“ journal (→ Z) of which he was co-founder. Having established the basis for his work, that motto became manifest in his various different works and projects time and again. Triggered by his distaste for the triviality of post-war functional architecture, Hans Hollein’s understanding of architecture first caused quite a stir in the 1963 “Architecture“ exhibition in the legendary Monsignore Otto Mauer’s Galerie Nächst St. Stephan. In this highly acclaimed, but controversial exhibition, Hollein, together with Walter Pichler, presented radical alternatives to the unimaginative, almost naive building types of the Viennese 1950s. “*We must liberate architecture from building*“, he declared in one of the manifestos which accompanied the urban designs (→ Utopia), demonstrating clearly the program’s intentions.

Biennale

The Venice Biennale was of great importance to Hans Hollein, at the same time underlining his universality as an artist. In the Austrian pavilions of 1972, Hans Hollein displayed unusual objects (→ Q) whose surfaces were made of ordinary square white tiles, evoking a clinical effect. These objects were staged in different situations outside as well, on a raft or as a sacred place (→ Cult). From 1978 to 1990, Hollein was Austrian commissioner for the Biennale of Visual Arts, and for a further decade he was in charge of the Venice Architecture Biennale, of which he became Director General in 1996.

Chicago

Chicago was an incredibly booming town around the time of the 1893 World Exhibition. The first skyscrapers were built there. Sullivan and others experimented with new construction methods which, with the help of other technical innovations (e.g. elevators), made buildings grow higher and higher. Ever since Hans Hollein studied for a year in this city, he has been interested in skyscrapers, not only as a possibility for developing building density, but also for demonstrating manifestation architecture. By means of his sketches, designs, models, collages, projects and realisations, he approaches the topic from many different perspectives. Looking at the city itself, one notices that the vertical buildings are interesting in the way they redefine the urban silhouette and determine the cityscape in future perspectives, too (→ Utopia). In 1958, Hollein designed skyscrapers for Chicago which resembled sculptures (→), sometimes varying on the upward-striving masculine “sky scraper“ theme in a decidedly phallic manner.

Design

Hans Hollein not only designed buildings, but also stage settings, door handles, furniture, spectacles (e.g. for the Austriennale 1968), lamps, jewellery, watches, and even festivals and exhibitions (→ Interior rooms). The most spectacular object was a Bösendorfer grand piano which he designed in 1990 in solid brass and opulent gold leaf. Besides being curator of the great opening exhibition “*MAN trans-FORMS*“, which took place in New York’s Cooper-Hewitt Museum in 1976, Hans Hollein also designed and furnished the exhibition with his own works, creating a holistic work of art in order to demonstrate his idea of design. It was not about presenting good or bad products, or about distinguishing superior from inferior design, but intended to show how people transform, alienate or deform things. And he was also able to demonstrate that design itself is an indispensable part of cultural history, e.g. numerous different hammers were exhibited to show that, although their outward appearance could differ according to their function, they were still used to perform the same basic task.

Engineering design

Design is one of the core tasks of an architect. Many a milestone in the history of architecture has remained a blueprint. Hans Hollein, who draws a lot and often designs spontaneously, can quote a few examples from his own experience. The Salzburg Guggenheim Museum, for instance, which had already attracted a great deal of international attention, would have not only been technically and financially viable, but would also have solved local parking problems. In the end, political intervention prevented its realisation. The design featured a spectacular underground building with an access area via the Getreidegasse and an exit area via the Mönchsberg (→ Horizontal). The Berlin Kulturforum, too, was never built according to his plans; instead the Austrian Embassy was erected on the same spot some twenty years later.

Flattop

In the 1960s, when Hollein joined the Viennese Avantgarde, to which Arnulf Rainer, Markus Prachensky and Friedensreich Hundertwasser also belonged, he developed his own ideas for furnishing spaceships and inflatable offices. At the time, he also turned his architectural designs into collages, in which urban landscape and utopian city were central themes. Whilst everyday objects became monumental buildings, as flattops, they were also able to house whole cities by means of their perfect survival architecture. Utopian urban designs of this kind remind us of the oversized everyday objects created by Claes Oldenburg, who, in the 1960s, became successful with pop art in the USA. Richard Buckminster Fuller, whom Hollein met in the USA, was also interested in fantastic vehicles, moving machines and floating architecture.

Grave

On the occasion of the 1970 "Tod/Death" exhibition at the Gladbach Museum, Hans Hollein installed an archaeological burial ground in the basement, where visitors were able to interactively participate. They were able to uncover grave goods such as a Coca-Cola bottle (reconstructed), a hard hat or a golf club. Joseph Beuys, who was at the time convinced that everyone was something of an artist, participated in the excavation work too. Hans Hollein also buried a racing car in the park surrounding Eggenberg Palace, Graz on the occasion of the Styrian Festival "steirischer herbst" in 1970. This "grave of a racing driver" was dedicated to Graz-born racing driver Jochen Rindt who had shortly before lost his life in a racing accident. That work was part of the last exhibition by Hans Hollein in Graz.

Horizontal

Digging - Piling up - Forming, are the keywords Hans Hollein formulated as basic tendencies during his first American years. Tectonic piling up towards the sky (→ Verticality) interested him just as much as a-tectonic digging, hollowing and spreading out into the depths, as two completely different forms of spatial development. A vital part of his underground buildings were his museums in which treasures are safeguarded. Although museums require little daylight in areas where sensitive objects are housed, they should always have well-controlled and permanent light sources (→ Light). He sees the origins of his affinity to underground building in his family of several generations of miners. He is interested in the archaic qualities of underground building, which are essential for cult places (→Museum).

Interior rooms

Hans Hollein often designed interiors for business premises which appeared as monolithic total works of art out of his own hand. When it came to museum buildings (→ Museum) or manifestation architecture like the Haas Haus in Vienna, he focused on the relations between indoors, outdoors and surrounding areas. Exhibition design is a further great chapter in this architect's career. Due to the way it was presented, his design exhibition "MAN transFORMS" in New York had already been a great success. Others were "Türken vor Wien / The Turks before Vienna", "Tod / Death" (→ Grave), or "Traum und Wirklichkeit / Dream and Reality" (→ Jugendstil). It was always important to him to directly include the public and sensitively track down the elements of exhibitions.

Jugendstil

The name Jugendstil is often used when referring to the unique Viennese Secession. Hans Hollein was already interested in the period around 1900 when Schiele's drawings were still affordable and Adolf Loos was hardly known. He acquired various papers such as "Trotzdem / Nevertheless" in the 1950s for the original price from 1934, and in 1970 still, he recommended that those works not only be read, but that Loos' and Hoffmann's buildings (→ Q) should also be visited. What attracted him to that particular period was the discussion about architecture as a form of art between functionality and aesthetic impact. In 1984, Hans Hollein presented his significant exhibition "Traum und Wirklichkeit / Dream and Reality 1870 - 1939" at the Viennese Künstlerhaus. With the help of numerous reconstructions, the exhibition offered a visual journey through time which appealed to all senses, thus enabling this art period to attain great popularity, which it still enjoys today.

K = Cult

Hans Hollein perceived the origins of architecture within the cultic and sacred, as a mark, a symbol, and sign. To him, architecture is the elementary, visual expression of human intellect. It is both a medium of communication and a way to maintain body heat. Hollein's buildings, therefore, frequently include elements of strong archaic monumentality, which are prevalent in his designs. "The Golden Calf", on a base in front of the Neutorgasse Museum building, is an 18-meter long gold-plated railway car with horns on it. As a reference to the famous biblical idol, the installation literally reminds us of the "dance around the Golden Calf", which stands for the worship of wealth and power.

Light

Light is a vital part of architectural design. Rooms are supplied with natural light through light openings such as windows and cupolas, etc., which are employed according to the required quality. Visitors are often glad to catch a glimpse of natural daylight every now and then in a museum; however, exhibits may frequently need more protection, especially when they are never exposed to light. That is why exhibitions always need a special lighting design in order to establish a basis for easy viewing. Light determines the colours and makes the same demands on the planner's skills as the material used. Hans Hollein's museum buildings are often underground which means that the architect has to take full responsibility for planning the lighting.

Museum

To Hans Hollein, a museum is a room for art, a space which accommodates treasures that are best stored underground. With his museum in Mönchengladbach, which was followed up by a number of other museums throughout the world, Hollein made history. With his *Vulcania* project in French Auvergne, where the entrance of the local volcano museum (1994-2002) is shaped like a monumental crater made from igneous rock, Hans Hollein succeeded in showing to what extent architecture can act as a symbol of his innermost self. He not only succeeded in exploiting the potential of the building site in his unrealised design for the Salzburg Guggenheim Museum, but also in Frankfurt, where his Museum für Moderne Kunst (1982-1991) is shaped like a slice of cake and fits ideally into the surrounding area. The new entrance area of the Albertina in Vienna (2003) demonstrates his inclination towards archaic monumentality.

Nobel Prize

The Pritzker Architecture Prize is regarded as a kind of Nobel Prize for architects. Hans Hollein received this award for his museum in Mönchengladbach in 1985. His first building in 1966 (→ Retti) had already been honoured with the Reynolds Memorial Award. Many other prizes followed. He was also keen to pass on his comprehensive artistic and architectural knowledge as a teacher at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (1967-1976) and at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna (Industrial Design from 1976 to 1986; master class for architecture from 1979 to 2002). Besides that, he was a guest professor in the USA at the universities of Los Angeles, New Haven and Columbus.

Olympia

With the erection of the Crystal Palace in the mid-19th century, the iron tube had become a structural element, and around 1900, pipes were used as a technical means of transport for many goods (such as gas, water and heating). Some 70 years later the iron tube became an independent architectural motif, whether it was whole highrises or buildings that took on that shape, or that it dominated certain parts of the façade. Hans Hollein, too, was fascinated by the tubular shape, and with his multi-functional signpost for the Olympic Village in Munich 1972, he proved that architecture was truly “everything” (→ Architecture). He developed a system of pipes as an ideal form of communication that could work as a guidance, communication and infrastructural system.

Postmodernism

Hans Hollein is generally regarded as a pioneer of postmodern architecture. Ever since the opening of the Städtisches Museum Abteiberg he has been acclaimed as one of its most prominent representatives. The fact that Hollein objects to such a classification probably has to do with the vague meaning of postmodernism. Hans Hollein relates to modernism, which is why he does not see himself as “postmodern”. If postmodernism is accepted as being an era which is again concerned with historical architecture, quoting it in elaborate materiality, and which dismisses bland functionalism, then his buildings of the 1970s and 1980s are simply part of it.

Q = Square

The square is a basic geometrical shape. It can serve as a basis for many proportionally well-balanced developments. Due to the fact that Josef Hoffmann, an architect in Vienna around 1900, used the square as a model for his designs, he was nicknamed “Quadrat-Hoffmann”. Because Hollein had a keen interest in him, he dedicated an edition of BAU (→ Z) to Hoffmann and his counterpart Adolf Loos. Moreover, Hans Hollein’s role as a participant and commissioner at the Venice Biennale (→ Biennale) resulted in various points of reference via the Austrian pavilion to its architect Josef Hoffmann. Both artists share a love of detail, which, in Hoffmann’s case, culminated in the creation of a total work of art during his collaboration with the Wiener Werkstätte. For Hans Hollein, too, the comprehensive design of living worlds (→ Design) has great significance.

Retti

Just as Otto Wagner's office portal of the newspaper „Die Zeit“ was a sensation in 1902, Retti was a milestone in the history of architecture in 1965. For his first assignment for Retti's candle business in Vienna, Hans Hollein designed shop premises covering an area of only 14 square metres. It is clear-cut and plane, composed above all of aluminium, glass and mirrors. A radically new façade and the terrific utilisation and presentation of the available space earned him early international recognition (→ Nobel Prize). After that, Hans Hollein realised other shops for Christa Metek (1967) and the jeweller Herbert Schullin (1974 and 1982), amongst others.

Sculpture

Where does sculpture end and architecture begin? As far as Hans Hollein is concerned, there is no sharp line between architecture and sculpture. His early models, therefore, have become a subject of discussion, especially in connection with sculptural architecture. In his drawings, a design sometimes turn into both; they are forms which develop within space and are a question of volume, body, space, distance and place. As a synthesis of interior and exterior, both are perfectly experienced in movement. This plastic stacking-up of rooms characterises Rudolf Schindler's work as well, who, as a “space architect“, defined space as an essential element of architecture. During his time in the USA, Hans Hollein was intensely engaged with Schindler and his work (→ Wien/Vienna), for which he even established his own archive.

Tourism

The Austrian travel agency, Österreichisches Verkehrsbüro, is Austria's oldest travel business. From 1976 to 1978, Hans Hollein designed an interior for the agency's premises (now known as Ruefa) which would appeal to the customers' imagination and awaken their desire to travel to distant destinations like the South Seas by employing elements such as palm trees, for instance. The dream of far-away places is suggested by means of spatial installations which surpass the conventional interior by far. Apart from taking the symbolic content of the room into consideration, which had always been his hallmark for exhibition design, Hans Hollein was also interested in mobility. Long before teleworking had been invented, he thus developed a mobile inflatable office which would be operable in different places. The office itself resembles an isolated capsule or cell that is independent of time and space (→ Young), like a lonely island where people can concentrate fully on their work.

Utopia

In connection with his spatial installations which also suggested analogous virtual spaces, such as the room with walls you can walk through, in the 1960s, Hollein designed utopian cities that are reminiscent of buildings from science-fiction films; they are spherical or resemble enormously enlarged everyday objects. He allocated various different physiological and psychological conditions like loneliness, isolation, exposure, weightlessness or communication to their interior. If Utopia is understood as a place that only exists as an idea or a vision in one's imagination, then this would certainly apply to the architecture pill. His 1967 “Non-physical Environment Control Kit“ contained pills that were able to induce the desired environmental situations. He also developed a spray which was designed to change surrounding areas. When are places not utopian, but real?

Vertical

Building upwards has interested architects for more than a hundred years. Discussions revolving around the advantages (views, air, density and prestige) and disadvantages (shade, density, dominance) of it have hardly changed in the process. The highrise is something that fascinated Hans Hollein from the start of his career (→ Chicago), and it became a major driving force of urbanism in his collages of the 1950s and 1960s as well as his actual building projects. Sometimes supposedly utopian designs are only realised decades later. The Monte LAA-PORR towers, for example, are based on one of his early ideas on cantilever architecture. The project largely consists of two 90-metre towers above which a horizontal 30-metre structure “floats”, thus introducing a second level into the cityscape. His latest highrise project is currently being realised in the business district of the Southern Chinese metropolis Shenzhen, into which he has placed an office tower, whose monolithic form will establish a new highrise typology.

Wien / Vienna

Hans Hollein was born on 30 March 1934 in Vienna. He commenced his studies under Clemens Holzmeister before he set off to the USA, where he continued his studies in Chicago (→ Chicago) and Berkeley. He completed his studies in 1960 with the master thesis “space in space in space”. Then he returned to Vienna, from where he began to build, teach and work throughout the world. Hans Hollein also associates Vienna with the history of the famous turn of the century period around 1900, when revolutionary innovations emerged, especially in the field of architecture (→ Jugendstil, Q). He erected important buildings in his home town, such as shops (→ Retti), schools and highrises. The Haas-Haus opposite St. Stephen’s Cathedral is certainly one of his most famous works. When the present house was built between 1985 and 1990, it was the subject of much public controversy. Today it is the landmark of modern Vienna.

Xenophile

Hans Hollein is xenophile, thus very open towards the foreign and unknown, and curious to find out how global building works. His work took him to the USA (where he was interested in the architecture of the Pueblos from early on), China, Peru and throughout Europe. However, the Austrian public did not always treat him kindly, on the contrary, his progressive projects were often rejected and his buildings were treated like alien objects (→ Wien/ Vienna). Meanwhile, alongside others, his Haas Haus has become one of the Viennese people’s favourite buildings.

Young

In 1965, Hans Hollein was invited to the Pariser Biennale for the young (under 35). The restrictive conditions of participation demanded work on residential housing. Since Hollein had no buildings to present and there was only one square metre exhibition area available, he decided to install a Viennese telephone booth which he intended to furnish as a minimum housing unit. This booth refers back to his ideas on the extension of architecture through other media, such as telecommunication, which was not yet mobile at that point. Because he was neither able to obtain an old yellow and black Viennese telephone booth, nor did he succeed in getting enough money for a new construction, his project failed in the end. Happily though, his idea was well-received in the media (purely virtually).

Z | Journal Bau

From 1965 to 1970, Hans Hollein designed and edited the visionary architectural journal "Bau. Schrift für Architektur und Städtebau" along with Sokratis Dimitriou, Günther Feuerstein, Gustav Peichl and Walter Pichler. The journal soon became a mouthpiece for new trends in architecture, which was then gaining much more social significance again. Architecture as a social reality was also the subject of an edition in 1968 in which Hollein's renowned essay on "Everything is Architecture" was published (-> Architecture).

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