

Wien bleibt Fort Europe bleibt Wien

When a profession is socially in retreat, when other trades are invading its field of competence, there always remains the Napoleonic option – attack as the best defence. So when architecture is in peril of being gobbled up by mass production, anonymisation and spiritual impoverishment, and when this cultural medium par excellence seems to be losing its historic status as the mother of all arts, there is still always the possibility of designating *everything* as architecture. Frustration with architecture's marginalised position evaporates like snow in summer. This is exactly the trick Hans Hollein pulled off in his manifesto *Alles ist Architektur* (1966) in which he neatly inverted the customary roles. It was not a case of society winning ground at the expense of autonomous architecture but architecture expanding its territory by proclamation:

'Everything is architecture. Architects should leave off thinking of everything in terms of buildings. Architecture is a medium for communication. Man creates artificial situations. That is architecture. He expands himself and his body. He communicates himself. Chased from paradise by an irate God he wants to create his own paradise.' ★

In other words if architecture no longer carries any weight as an art form you simply declare it almighty.

★ Quoted in Lootsma, Bart, 'Hans Hollein', in Brand J. (ed.), *Architecture and Imagination*, Zwolle 1989, p. 205.

Architecture is no longer a term for specific (built) objects but for anything that functions as a medium – and thus for every possible facet of reality. Curtailment of the *task* of architecture is countered by an inflation of the *concept* of architecture.

of life, and Hollein as a contribution to the survival of his craft – and thereby, indirectly, also to the quality of life. That element of directness or indirectness is critical to the appreciation of both their work.

Homo Quasi-universalis as Chameleon

Since his manifesto, Hans Hollein has made the best possible use of the space he has created for himself. He has built up a career in which practically anything has been possible. For 35 years, he has been moving through the fields of culture as an all-round talent – architect, artist, exhibition designer, writer of articles and manifestos, organiser, jewellery designer. While his fame as a stylist has now reached international proportions, the changefulness of his apparel rivals that of the chameleon.

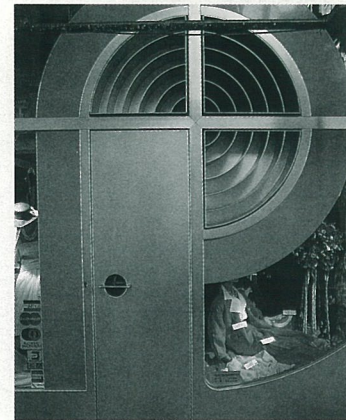
Still, Hollein's work is nowhere near as inconspicuous as the average chameleon. His oeuvre includes few offices, houses or utility buildings, such assignments being restrained as they are by standard typologies and cost analyses. When what you want is architecture which bears an outward resemblance to any other architecture, Hollein is not the right person to ask. He is *la différence* in person and so is his work. Hollein's architecture is a pattern book of original and unique forms, a kaleidoscope of idiosyncrasies and variations. The assignments Hollein accepts always call for exactly what he is best at – distinctiveness of form. At the same time, in a moral respect, he adapts



Rettl Candle Shop, Vienna, 1965



Jewellery Store Schullin I, Vienna, 1974



CM Boutique, Vienna, 1967

As it happened there were other ways in which people were working hard for an aesthetic revival in the same period. Not that everything was art (or architecture), but that everyone was an artist – an important difference. Joseph Beuys democratised art, as opposed to attributing the elitist status of art to everything else. His aim was to restore self-respect not to art but to humanity – and to do that by means of art. So it was not a little ironic that at the opening of Hollein's *magnum opus*, the Städtisches Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach (1983), the first thing the visitor saw in the central hall at the start of an aesthetic route were Beuys' *Blocks of Fat*. Both Hollein and Beuys wished to preserve an aesthetic domain: Beuys explicitly in the interests of the quality

chameleon-like to the vicissitudes of a prodigal society. He operates in a situation which calls for standing out without dominating, for exception without charisma. In other words, what matters is being noticed without really being noticed. Hollein is the ideal designer for this milieu. His work radiates glamour without moralising. The message is that everything is in flux but nothing really changes.

Architecture for the Honest Burgher

That Hollein's breakthrough as an architect came through designing shop interiors is no mere coincidence. Architecture is the most explosive art and it has to stand up to

Hollein covers a region of visualised thoughts which starts from Vienna, and after many journeys, departures and verifications, goes back to Vienna, '... the big head-brain-city left over from an empire which is now, on a national level, wisely recalled more in irony than an impotent regret. The city itself and its inhabitants seem relatively immune from the frenzy of "progress", from the will to economic and consumer expansion, almost as though they had already been through it and, in a state of decelerated metabolism, looked on as others burnt themselves out in the lucid folly governing the mythology of the great metropolis'.

Gianni Piretti / F. Raggi

As for me, I want first to have precise ideas about architecture, then I can start to consider the specific project.

Hans Hollein

You dig a hole.
Pile up some rocks.
Put up a pole.
Architecture comes into being.

Hans Hollein

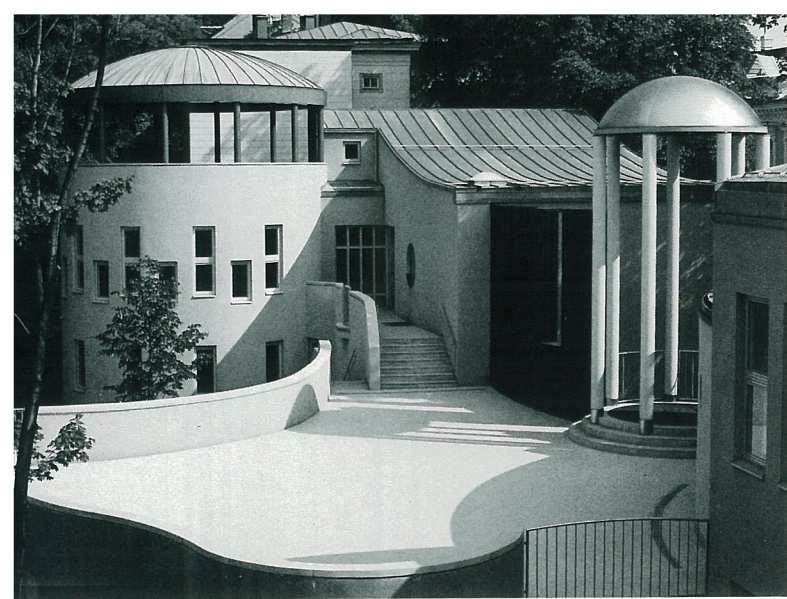
Architecture is in exile now on the moon or at the north pole while people are building

houses houses houses houses houses houses houses houses

Hans Hollein

Through thousands of years, artificial transformation and determination of mans world, as well as sheltering from weather and climate was done by means of building. The building was the essential manifestation and expression of man.

The development of science and technology, as well as the changing society and her needs and demands confront us with entirely different realities. Other and new media of environment determination emerge. There is a change as to the importance of 'meaning' and 'effect'. Architecture affects. The way how I take possession of an object, how I use it, becomes important. A building can become entirely an information - its message could may be rather experienced through the



Preliminary School, Vienna, 1979

the assaults of climate. Even in an age of Post-Modernism the exterior is necessarily less susceptible to the whims of fashion than the interior, which can change as often as the owner wishes. If we examine the Retti candle shop (1965) and the Schullin jewellery shop (1974), it is clear that an architect of bourgeois distinction like Hollein feels perfectly at home with such briefs. He is more interested in creating an intimate atmosphere to suit the wishes of his client than in giving permanent expression to a public issue. Hollein's work is private even in his public buildings. He upholds the style of a historical process, the rise of the bourgeoisie, which has elevated the private domain into a principle of life and placed it on the agenda of an age. The middle-class, the historical category that brought the individual to the centre stage of culture, is also the inventor of the public domain as an arena in which individuals can act. At the same time it is the destroyer of that arena; for paradoxically the rise of the individual was associated with the technical, economic and political marginalisation of the subject, the *conditio sine qua non* of the individual. The definition of the individual entailed its own negation, and hence also the negation of public debate as a means of settling issues between individuals. Sort that one out!

Hollein's work is admittedly public or semi-public, but it is above all a region for hyper-individual bourgeois fantasies. Whether we consider the shops as backgrounds for ritualised private transactions or the museums with their emphasis on contemplative wandering through the rooms, Hollein offers freedom of movement to the most subjective feelings of the visitor. By this he reveals the hidden agenda of his own conception of culture.

Even though the public domain is in crisis as a cultural category, the meanings carried by the façade will remain vulnerable to the forces that dominate public space for as long as the street remains part of that public space. These forces leave little room for introspection, and personal perceptions are subordinate, not least owing to the advancing role of architecture as a publicity medium. Introspection and personal experience are nonetheless essential to bourgeois culture. Hollein's projects supply the places where, against the odds, these bourgeois desiderata are satisfied.

With a little goodwill, the shop projects can be put down to historical coincidence. Following the forced contraction of Austria after the First World War, Vienna was by no means a centre of growth. For several decades little in the way of new architecture was commissioned. The work of Hollein's early period still shows unmistakable signs of these straitened circumstances. With his museum in Mönchengladbach, however, and to an even greater degree with his plan for the future Guggenheim Museum in Salzburg, Hollein has made his evident preference for the *Raumplan* into a veritable *Leitmotif*. Hollein does not wish to circumscribe, but to hollow out. His guiding principle in this is not so much a Cartesian coordinate system as pure fantasy. Hollein's work appeals to the imagination, not to some functionalist principle. That makes it rather difficult to evaluate his work objectively – you simply have to *experience* this architecture. Unless you talk about it at a meta-level: there is a specific intention behind Hollein's unique design style and we shall now attempt to probe it more deeply.

The Museum taken up into the Underworld

Subterranean building is gaining ground... In an age of internationalisation and rising mobility, with an unstoppable flood of consumer goods, the roads are becoming congested, the railways overloaded and more and more people are harassed by pollution and delays. That is why much research is taking place into transferring traffic to extensive underground networks.

The advantages of such a transfer are clear. Ideally, if the bulk of transportation were to take place underground and the many environmentally damaging and anti-aesthetic activities of industry were to be hidden from view, it should be possible to create a park-like landscape, a reserve for nature and culture, at ground level. That would be a further step in the process of modernisation. Not only would it mean the colonisation of a new region (after the earth's surface, the water and the air) in accordance with the capitalist law of expansion, but the separation of Modernity and Post-Modernity would become a physical reality. Modernisation can thunder on at full tilt underground, while on the surface we go on professing the end of history. With impeccable prospects and healthy lungs, the leisured public would make its way towards the museum and the sculpture garden, which would be waiting to absorb them in droves.

Meanwhile, the new Hollein museum in Salzburg opts for an inversion of this strategy. This projected European branch of the Guggenheim Corporation is to be tunnelled into the rock of the city. Whereas Hollein's ancestors were miners and thus specialised in digging up nature's heritage, Hollein aims to bury our cultural heritage. Just as with the shops, where he was able to set the greater part of the scenario himself without being inhibited by the possible insensitivity of the neighbours, he can have things entirely his own way when underground. This is façadeless, contextless architecture. The designer can focus all his energy on intensifying the inward-directed experience, as a preparation for the individual meeting with Art. The site is freely manipulable in all three dimensions. Thus Hollein has extracted the maximum possible freedom of action. He is not prepared to wait for the removal of the tare of society from the inhabited world. Culture will just have to live underground for the while.

means of information (Press, T.V., etcetera). As a matter of fact, it is of almost no importance if e.g. the Acropolis or the pyramids exist in physical reality, as most people are aware of them through other media anyway, and not through an experience of ones own. Yes, indeed their importance - the role they play - is based on this effect of information. Thus buildings might be simulated only.

Hans Hollein

Limited and traditional definitions of architecture and her means have lost their validity. Today, the environment as a whole is the goal of our activities - and all the media of its determination. T.V. or artificial climate, transportation or clothing, telecommunica-

tion or shelter. The extension of the human sphere - and the means of its determination - go far beyond a built statement. Today, everything becomes architecture.

'Architecture' is just one of many means, is just a possibility. Man creates artificial conditions. This is Architecture.

Physically and psychically man repeats, transforms, expands his physical and psychological sphere. He determines 'environment' in its widest sense. According to his needs and wishes he uses the means necessary to satisfy this needs and to fulfil his dreams. He expands his body and his mind. He communicates. Architecture is a medium of communication.

Hans Hollein

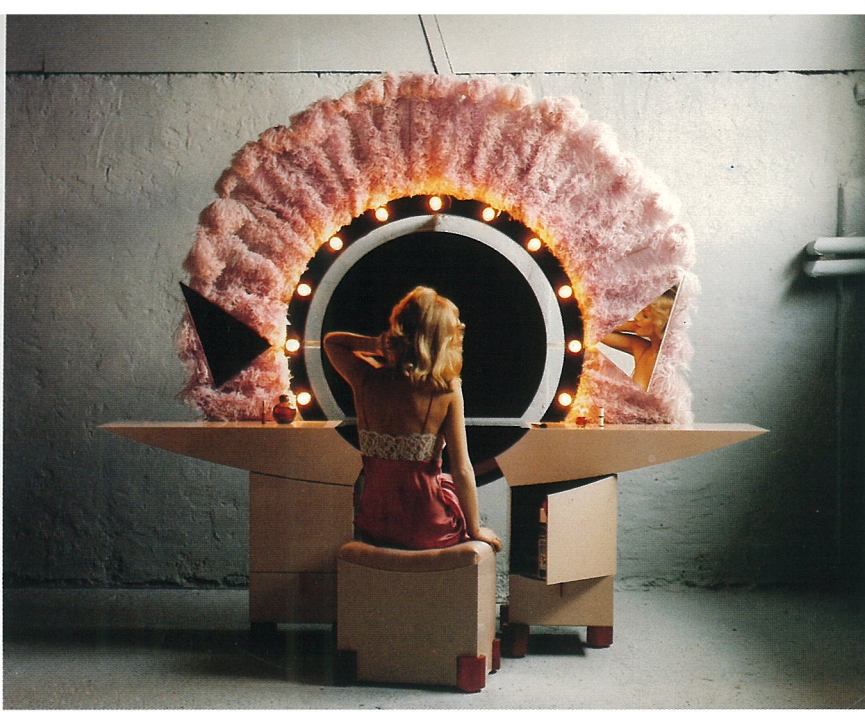
Architecture is spiritual order realised by building. Architecture - an idea built into infinite space, manifesting man's spiritual strength and power, material form and expression of his destiny, his life. From its origin to this day, essence and meaning of architecture have not changed. Building is one of man's basic needs. Its first manifestations were not roofs put up for shelter but the erection of sacred structures, the marking of focal points of human activities - the beginning of the town. All building is ritual. Architecture - expression of man himself - flesh and spirit at the same time. Architecture is elemental, sensual, primitive, brutal, terrible, mighty, dominating. However, it is also manifestation of the most

subtle emotions, sensitive recording of the slightest excitations, materialisation of the spiritual.

Hans Hollein

The shape of a building does not develop out of the material condition of its purpose. A building shall not show its use. It is not an expression of structure and construction, it is not enclosure or refuge. A building is itself. Architecture is without purpose. What we build will find its usefulness. Form does not follow function. Form does not originate by itself. It is the great decision of man to make a building into a cube, a pyramid or a sphere. Form in architecture is form determined and built by the individual.

Hans Hollein



'Vanity', dressing table and mirror, M.I.D., 1982



Neues Haas Haus, commercial building, Vienna, 1992

The Hollein Museum

The space in a Hollein-designed museum is a curious additive chain of separate rooms, achieved with the aid of visual apertures and a labyrinthine *promenade architecturale*. The many residual spaces this technique produces are places where formal oppositions are given expression. The main route is always a rising or descending path through the interior of the building, with bands of light streaming in from unexpected angles and enhancing the dramatic quality. The visitor can often see into adjacent rooms without necessarily being able to enter them directly. There is never any sense of a closed box.

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The Hollein museum, composed as a small, polymorphic city, brings the observer into a state of slight disarray. But at the same time something happens that has become impossible outside the museum: the observer experiences the confusing sequence of differentiated rooms under the influence of an integrating, harmonising aesthetic regime. This regime makes the variations tangible not as interruptions but as a continuity. Instead of drawing attention to inconsistencies, the optical disorientation induces sensations of perfection and aesthetic allure that whet the appetite to see more. It is the artistically designed space that tends to impress, not the art on display. Hollein wants to gratify and seduce. He tries to manoeuvre the visitor along ostensibly uncoerced routes through the museum, but meanwhile his museum pits itself against the exhibited work, enveloping it as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The architect manipulates all the dimensions of perception. Whatever direction you walk or look in, the movement and the gaze are always captured. All chance has been banned from experiencing the space, and is allowed only in the circulation pattern. Locomotion is free, in short, but not the aesthetic framing of reality.

There is always a conceptual layer in Hollein's work. He invariably enters into a dialogue with his assignment, and the dialogue achieves expression in an iconographic

form. In the Retti candle shop, there are visual allusions to the candle. The Austrian Travel Agency (1978) hints at journeys to far off places. In the museum, sure enough, there are reminders of the work of art. But there is never any subjective gesture which leads to a reading relating to the 'other', to an understanding of this work as a critical statement.

Musealisation of the World View

With art prices soaring and accordingly scrupulous conservation of collections, there is a tendency to shut out the yellowing light of day. The principle of hanging on to what you have implies the all-out exclusion of every ravage of time due to climatic inconsistency, daylight or the corrosive breath of visitors. The new Guggenheim Museum has no more than two skylights, and these are meant to make the interior of the rock visible (with the support of artificial lighting) and to reassure the claustrophobic visitor.

But art is conserved not only in the technical sense but also morally. It may seem paradoxical, but time is increasingly shut out of the contemporary museum. The fascination with the concrete products of the past amounts to a reduction of historicity to consumerism and entertainment. Hollein's work can be seen as a model of this kind of musealisation. Despite his museums' lack of chronology or nineteenth-century style monumentality, and their undeniable compliance with the social democratic demand for lowered thresholds, they remain temples of bourgeois culture. The reason is that the programme of the museum is not significantly altered. With Hollein, the programme still underwrites the exaltation of individual genius, without the least attempt to illuminate the consequences of such genius in a broader context. Thus the museum becomes a place where genius is neutralised, exalted to death. It makes no waves; on the contrary, it aims to calm them. Each work of art is an absolutely unique entity whose effect derives entirely from itself and which imparts itself principally through

The shape of buildings will change. The technical achievements of our century will be put to use: in construction technology, for example, the sphere and, in particular, the cantilever as well as the heritage of the nineteenth century, the high-rise building. Since we can build tall, widely cantilevering buildings we can build at last also leaning structures. Our buildings thrust upwards into the sky at an angle, expressing a new dynamic, thereby allowing far-reaching flexibility in floor plans instead of a monotonous addition of elements horizontally or vertically. We are also digging into the earth. Whatever does not have to be on the surface can disappear there, conserving valuable free space for man.

Hans Hollein

It is not enough for a modern building to be something and do something. It must also say something.

Lewis Mumford

There are instruments for defining an environment. Simulation of a condition is often perfectly capable of replacing a condition.

Hans Hollein

To my mind, Hans Hollein is the best interior designer anywhere and I don't mean this in any snide way and certainly not related to the British/American school of decorators. His facility with electrics, pop, *Sturm und Drang*, *Sezession*, humour, surrealism, graphics, kitsch, death, history, furniture, archaeology etcetera, is enviable. He is quite simply like a twentieth-century Robert Adam and it is a

symptom of our release from the purity of Modern Architecture that we can now think of the interior as a separate entirely important entity not necessarily related to an exterior.

James Stirling

I think that to design a chair is a great temptation for every architect; it is the ideal vehicle for transmitting symbolically your own ideas on fundamental issues in architecture. The specific characteristic of the chair as an object is that it can serve almost as a model for architecture. An object that has its own dimensions and at the same time refers to something on a completely different scale. (...) When you get a job to design a chair (...) this reveals maybe my more practical side.

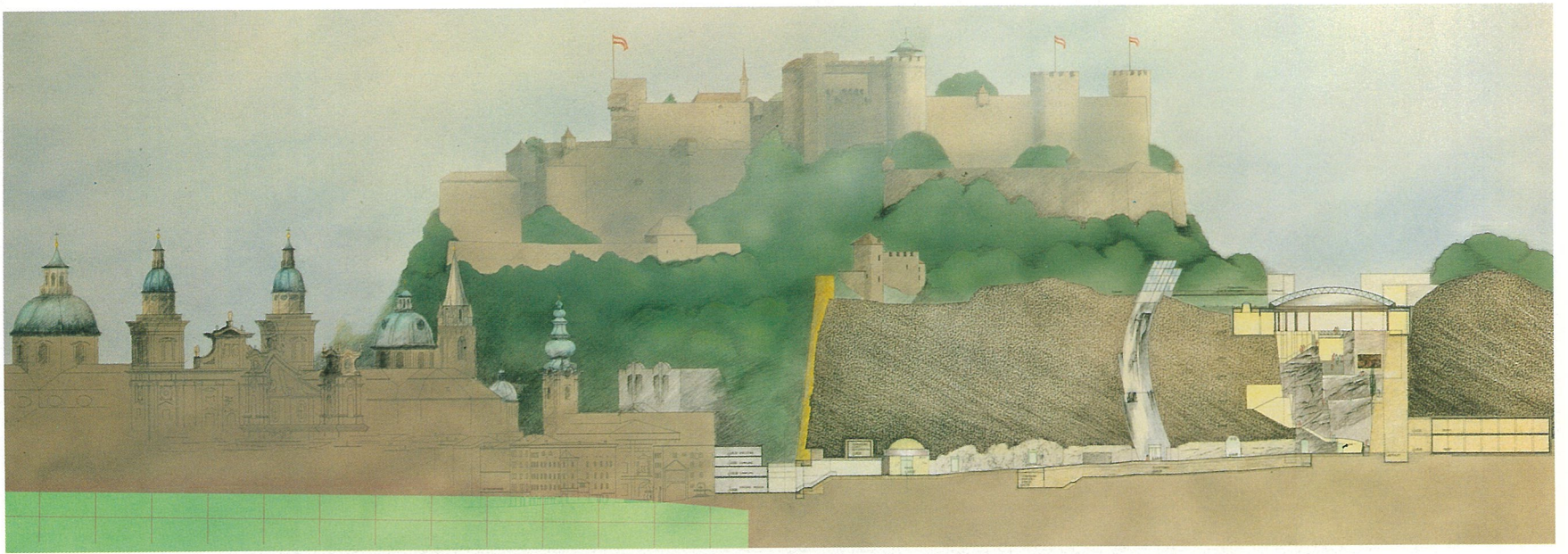
(...) I realise that the chair must be comfortable, easy to produce, made of materials that are technologically correct, and so on. For me personally there is always this ambivalence.

Hans Hollein

Designing furniture is basically a way of putting into practice your own architectural ideas, your own philosophy.

Hans Hollein

Nowadays, when advanced science and sophisticated technology put all possible means at our disposal, for the first time in the history of humanity we are able to build what we want in the way we want it; we create an



AFTER A SUCCESSFUL COLONIZATION



THE MOTHER SHIP LANDS

The Guggenheim Museum Salzburg, competition entry, 1980

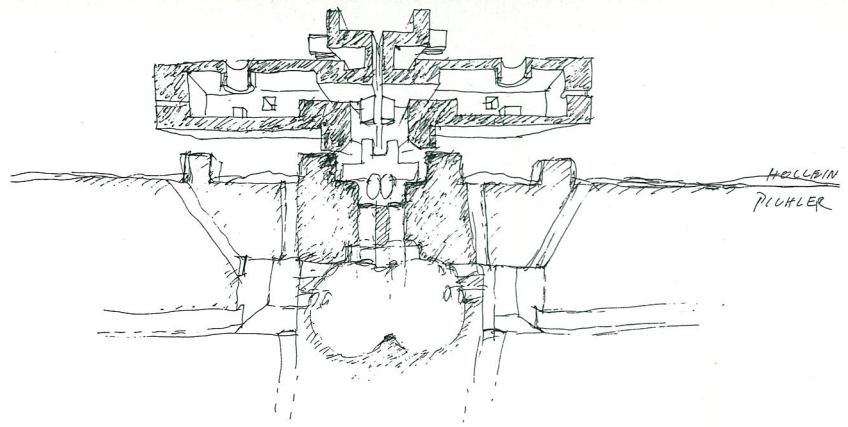


absolute form. And although all art has become conceptual in a certain sense since the advent of Concept Art, the ideology of the original remains entirely unimpaired.

The museum is no platform for a critical debate that generates social alternatives, but an oasis of quiet in which art can present itself to the enjoying citizen. The art and art historical objects distract attention from social tendencies, and reaction to current historical processes is postponed. (In Hollein's museums, moreover, every response to a work of art is absurd *a priori*, for the art is merely an embellishment of the architecture.) The museumification of culture is thus the end point of the bourgeois dream. The historical self-legitimation is complete and the middle-class is no longer a social/historical category but the finale of a civilisation.

Hollein's self-enclosed aesthetic system, with its subterranean compensation for a major cultural loss, is a masterly allusion to a culture that is becoming more and more isolated from any critical social programme. This culture merely puts on a show of social involvement; the mechanisms of repression, discipline and exclusion can continue unimpeded. The task of the museum's accumulation of ostensibly correctly illuminated and untouchable objects is to give a suggestion of substantial accessibility. But the closeness of the selective reality inside the museum simultaneously implies the inaccessibility of the total reality outside. Hence it is clear that we have become complete outsiders. That is also why we are forever being 'initiated', as it were – into the 'bad news' on television and into the 'good news' in the museum. This situation was once known as repressive tolerance, but now it no longer even has a name. Whether the museum is a tourist temple, a supermarket, an institution of further education or an archive, it is now more than ever also the bourgeois trophy cupboard. Ideas are not exchanged but merely showcased. There is a taboo on discussion. What remains is the adulation of the lone genius in search of personal immortality.

Hollein's work is a perfect actualisation of this cultural programme. In the first instance it rises above its *raison d'être* and becomes autonomous aesthetics. But on a closer look, it is clearly the autonomy which is exactly to the taste of the bourgeois *reservatio mentalis*. As a result of its perfect execution, the restricted programme of a museum of



Hans Hollein and Walter Pichler, Valley City, 1963

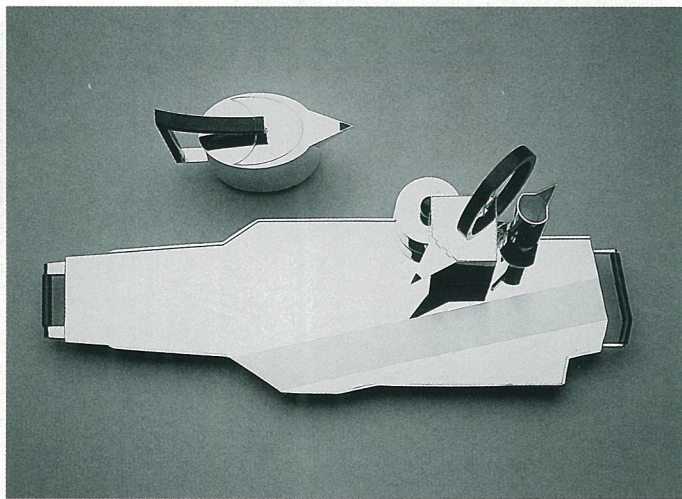
fine art becomes redefined at a universal level. ★ A visit to one of Hollein's museums is not merely a day out but a confirmation of the museumification that affects us all.

Vienna as a Bastion of Fort Europe

For centuries, Vienna was to many people the last halt before the wilderness. It was a bastion of Europe as an idea, the continent where Graeco-Christian civilisation has triumphed. Three times the Turks had stood at the gates, and three times they were repelled. Vienna was seen as the deliverer of European culture from the threat of (supposed) barbarism. As late as 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, Von Metternich aimed to underline the gravity of his responsibility with the words 'Asia begins at my back door'.

Less than a century later, the very same Vienna had become the 'laboratory of world dissolution', as Karl Kraus put it. It was the theatre of a comprehensive failure of every attempt to unite modernity with tradition. Practically all known preoccupations and literary topoi of twentieth-century Western bourgeois culture found their origins and most intense synopsis here: Freud, Wittgenstein, Von Hoffmannsthal, Herzl, Lüger, Kokoschka, Otto Wagner and so on. After Vienna's role as protector of Europe was played out, it suddenly proved to articulate the foundering of the idea of Europe.

After yet another hundred years or so, this idea of Europe or whatever is left of it is suffering from out-and-out museumification. In the process, the museum is no longer associated with the heroic, it is no longer the tangible result of a European triumph. Now it is the reserve of the status quo, which in the absence of a historical project continues to reproduce itself. Europe has thus become a perpetuated version of Vienna's heyday. Better, Europe is now the end of Vienna! How ironic it is that now that the 'Turks' stand once again before the gates of Vienna and before all those other gates of Fort Europe, the museum is becoming the new metaphor for a society that shuts itself off, a society that no longer offers the Other a place in its museum (there is such a plentiful supply of 'others', after all), but leaves them to perish outside as 'illegal immigrants' or 'economic refugees'. *Wien bleibt Wien*, now that all Europe can recognise itself in Vienna. How apt that a Viennese architect should offer us the most suitable images for this situation!



'Aircraftcarrier', tea and coffee set for Alessi, 1980

architecture which is not defined by technique, but which makes use of it - a pure and absolute architecture.

Hans Hollein

Even if architecture is a pure creation of the spirit, it's nevertheless material. Architecture consists not only of ideas but also of forms; it is not only a vacuum but also a fullness.

Hans Hollein

Architecture is not necessarily either a shelter or a monument. But one of its principal distinctions consists in the fact that a building is constructed or produced by whatever means are appropriate... A cave is not archi-

teature, neither is a tree, whereas every sheet of steel erected in the desert is architecture. Architecture is a creation of space, created by men and for men.

Hans Hollein

Architecture dominates spaces, it soars upwards, it penetrates the earth, it stands out against landscapes, it spreads in all directions, it dominates space with its mass and void, it dominates space through space itself.

Hans Hollein

The first furrow with the plough. A field. Space comes into being. The trees fall. The woods are opened up. Space comes into being. Man-made space.

Hans Hollein

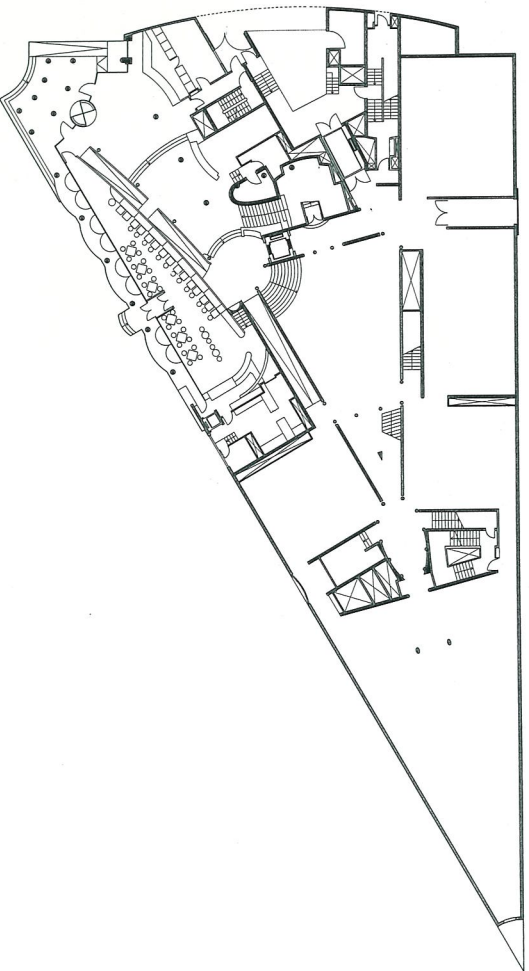
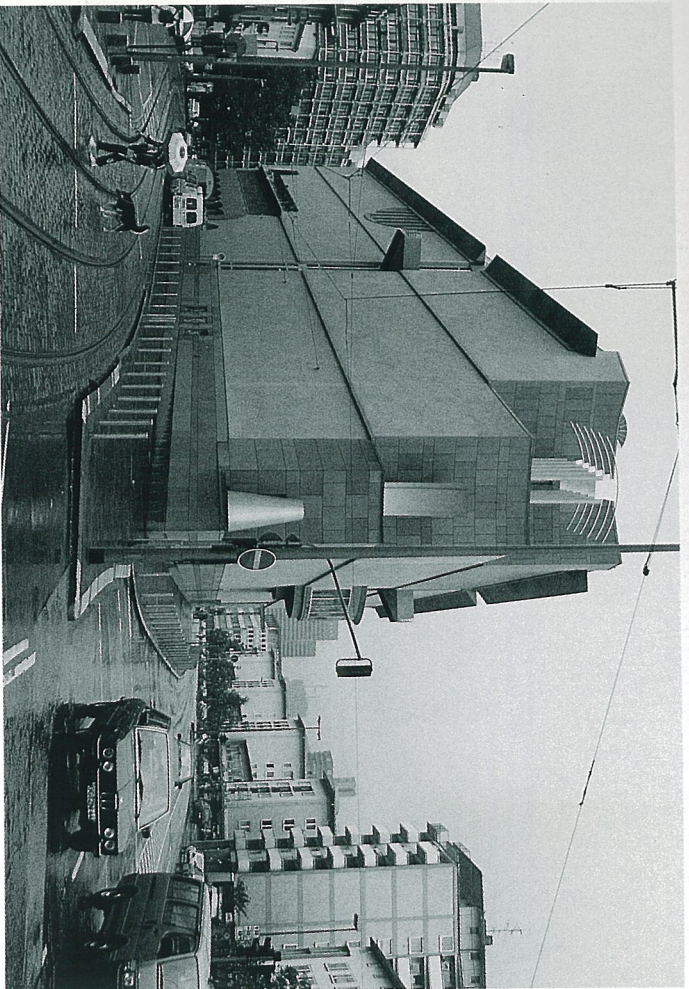
Cities - crucial points of life: we want space without confines, created by man. We want the total city, which dominates the landscape.

Hans Hollein

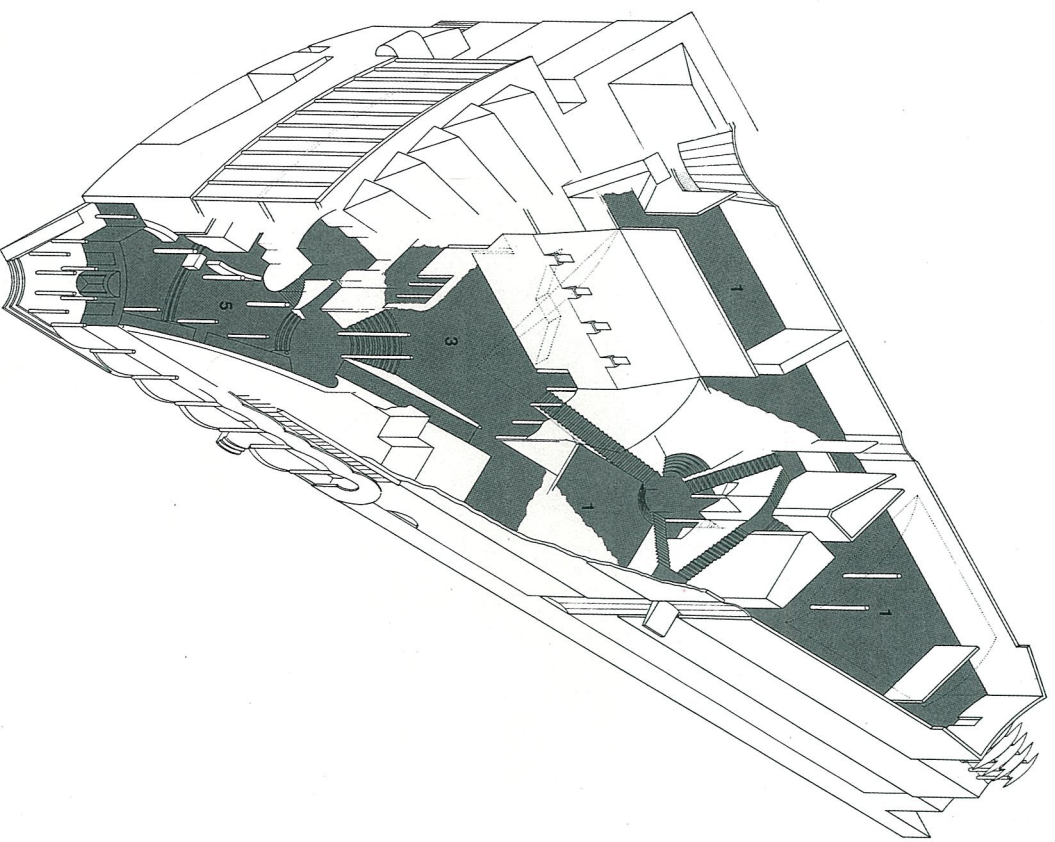
It's wrong to compare a phase of an artist's theoretical development (while, in the pursuit of his own identity, he expresses rigorously and through axioms the characteristics

of his poetics) with projects and realisations produced twenty years later, that is, when his maturity and possibility of operating in real scale, or rather in accordance with it, allow him a less tense way of expressing himself and a more serene analysis of his intentions and language. There is a continuity in Hollein's work, which may be expressed in a different way at different moments: at first it is highly critical, and later on it turns into a conversation conducted with himself or even expressed in didactic terms.

Gianni Peltena



The draft is the result of two premises: firstly, considerations in terms of municipal planning, urbanity and urban character as well as the conditions of the building site and its specific layout; secondly, the programme, its functional consequences and the necessities of presentation of fine art objects to a public of different educational background. The eastern end of the insular area is an important landmark in the approach to the historic core of the city characterised by a marked triangular shape. The apex of the triangle is conceived as a succinct solitaire, although integrated into the building proper. Visibility from long distances and noticeability of the design media are significant prerequisites. In order that the building communicates optimally with the historical town centre it was consistent to strive to place the main entrance at that point. This superimposition of an asymmetrical, diagonally oriented area of access on a symmetrical structure puts the building into complex interrelationships. In the interior, it seemed important to continue access by penetrating into and climbing up to various levels of event. A significant feature was to elevate the main action area of the entrance hall from a direct relationship to the street outside and also from the secondary functions like reception desk and cloakroom. The entrance hall proper is therefore about 1.5 metres above the entrance level, whereby the feeling of participating in an event is



intensified and disturbances from the secondary functions are minimised. From the central hall, the various departments and storeys of the museum are disclosed directly, in terms of both visual surveyability and physical accessibility. In addition to the doorkeeper's cabin, administration and library areas are also accessible both from the entrance hall and directly from outside. From these rooms there is visual contact with the museum rooms themselves. The café is, on the one hand, close to the entrance and the museum area, on the other, it is an independent element which should animate the street in front, the fabric of which is reshaped by the new museum. The collections are accessed from the large entrance hall. We avoided doing this only via lifts or high (psychologically inhibiting) vertical staircase shafts but endeavoured to achieve it by an experiential diagonal penetration of the building. Many roundwalks are possible; the desired outlooks are frequently broken down into zones serving communication. The roof areas have been planned so that the intentionally shaped roof structure – the result of necessary superstructures for air conditioning and light access – has an aesthetic effect and builds upon a clear moulding line on the main building mass. The silhouette has been articulated because of its significance in the cityscape. *Hans Hollein*

Location Domstraße 10, Frankfurt am Main, Germany Assistants R. Burgard, F. Madl, S. Eio and others Client City of Frankfurt am Main Design 1963-85 Completion 1987-91

Hans Hollein Architekt **Museum of Modern Art**



Jeff Koons, Made in Heaven, installation, 1991

