

Hollein Calling. Architectural Dialogues

21.09.2023–12.02.2024 | Exhibition hall 2

Opening: Wed 20.09.2023, 19:00

Press conference: Wed 20.09.2023, 11:00

There is more Hollein in contemporary architecture than you would think, and there is still much that is new to discover in the work of Hans Hollein, one of the most widely known of Austrian architects. Proof of both these statements is now available in the form of the Hollein Calling exhibition at the Architekturzentrum Wien and the accompanying publication.

Hans Hollein – Austria’s only Pritzker Prize winner and, before that, a self-proclaimed 1960s avant-gardist – was an assiduous curator of his own work during his lifetime. Now, nearly a decade after his death, an exhibition at the Az W engages with the Hollein phenomenon from a contemporary perspective. Hollein Calling: Architectural Dialogues presents a wealth of previously unpublished archive material that casts light on a hitherto “unseen” Hollein and launches a re-evaluation of his work in dialogue with a younger generation of architects.

In the exhibition, fifteen groundbreaking works by Atelier Hollein are juxtaposed with projects by fifteen European practices who are shaping the architectural discourse today. Visitors are drawn into a multifaceted experience that offers new and often surprising insights into seemingly familiar works, from Hollein’s small-scale projects, such as the Retti candle shop or Schullin jewelry store, to selected exhibition installations, school buildings, and museums. The Hollein exhibits – sketches, models, prototypes, and documents – are drawn from the extensive holdings of the Archive Hans Hollein, Az W and MAK, Vienna, a rich addition to the Architekturzentrum Wien’s unique architecture collection which the Az W has been cataloging and preserving for several years. Large display tables are used to create fields of association, grouping exhibits according to shared themes, methods, and interests. Complementing the tables, overhead projections provide a taste of Atelier Hollein’s extensive image archive. In dialogue with this, quotations from interviews and large-format illustrations convey the positions of the contemporary architectural practices and their views on Hollein’s work. Many of this younger generation see Hollein’s expansion of the concept of architecture as his greatest achievement, understanding their own work in similar terms, as part of an emerging critical cultural production. While they do not form a homogenous group, all are united by the idea that we need to be talking more about architecture.

Uncovering Hollein

Hollein’s work is defined by his consistent pursuit of the central themes of “design” and the “architectural idea,” with a focus on the image, as a bearer of meaning. Throughout, Hollein is concerned with architecture as a particular way of thinking with its own kind of logic. While his projects address broader social and cultural issues, their real subject is architecture – and also, more specifically, how architecture can assert itself in relation to other media and forms of expression at a time of rapid social change. Finally, Hollein’s

works are also interesting in terms of self-presentation and the curating of a media persona. These themes – equally relevant to today's discourse on architecture – are addressed in the exhibition in the form of interpretative notes on Exhibiting, Photography, Furniture, Materiality, City, Model, References, Art, Teaching, Teamwork, Gestalt, and Publishing.

Fifteen Key Works by Hans Hollein in the Exhibition

Fifteen projects by Atelier Hollein form the basic framework for the exhibition. Among Hollein's key works, they shaped not only the discourse in their own time but also the dialogues with the contemporary practices. Arranged chronologically, beginning with the Retti candle shop (1964) and ending with Vulcania (1994–2002), the selected works encompass a broad range of typologies and different scales and uses. All of them are realized buildings or exhibitions.

Projects by Hans Hollein:

Retti Candle Shop (1964–1965)
Richard Feigen Gallery (1967–1969)
Austriennale (1968)
Siemens Foundation (1969–1972)
Media Lines (1971–1972)
Schullin I Jewelry Store (1972–1974)
Abteiberg Municipal Museum (1972–1982)
MAN transFORMS (1974–1976)
Austrian Travel Agency (1976–1979)
Glassware and Ceramic Museum Tehran (1977–1978)
Köhlergasse Elementary School (1979–1990)
Schullin II Jewelry Store (1981–1982)
Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art (1982–1991)
Haas Haus (1985–1990)
Vulcania (1994–2002)

Dialogues with Fifteen European Architectural Practices

The selection of partners for the dialogues was guided by the assumption that there were points of contact between the architectural practices and Hollein's work. Sometimes this common ground is quite obvious, in other cases there is only an indirect connection. What all of them share, however, is a willingness to engage with Hollein's work with an open mind, free of ideological barriers. The participating offices in many respects represent contradictory positions on Hollein's work. What they nevertheless have in common is their building practice, which is closely linked to an active participation in the local and international discourses. The architectural discourse as a whole is becoming more diverse and inclusive: debates in architecture schools are dominated by questions of social justice, a critique of technology, and pessimism in the face of the climate crisis. A scarcity of resources, coupled with a critique of extremes, is leading to an architectural turn towards the regional, the authentic, and the specific, but also to a desire to rediscover the universal and the classical, which includes a rediscovery of the more recent past.

The essential idea of the exhibition is to identify and make visible lines of association.

Rather than being forced into an art-historical corset, Hollein's oeuvre is set into conversation with tendencies in current practice. Out of this emerges a fundamental insight: the Hollein phenomenon continues to both inspire and provoke.

Hans Hollein in conversation with: Almannai Fischer Architekt:innen, München / baukuh, Mailand / Bovenbouw Architectuur, Antwerpen / Claudia Cavallar, Wien / Aslı Çiçek, Brüssel / Conen Sigl Architekt:innen, Zürich / doorzon interieur architecten, Gent / Expanded Design, Wien / Martin Feiersinger, Wien / David Kohn Architects, London / Kühn Malvezzi, Berlin / Lütjens Padmanabhan Architekt:innen, Zürich / Manthey Kula, Oslo / Monadnock, Rotterdam / OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen, Brüssel

The Archive Hans Hollein, Az W and MAK, Vienna, in the Az W Collection provided the starting point for the exhibition

The Architekturzentrum Wien, founded in 1993 by the City of Vienna and the Republic of Austria, is the only museum in Austria dedicated to architecture. The extensive collection of the Architekturzentrum Wien Collection provides a wealth of material for the discourse around architecture – and beyond. Its holdings, encompassing more than one hundred archives as well as unique photographic and extensive project collections, offer a diverse range of objects and documents that illuminate not only the history of art and culture but also socio-economic and technological history. Here, Hans Hollein's archive occupies a special position already on account of the sheer abundance of material: over 460 projects, hundreds of models, tens of thousands of photos and slides, as well as rolls of plans, correspondence, and, of course, sketches. With the acquisition of the archive in 2016, the Republic of Austria was able to save the internationally sought-after bequest for the nation. The agreement of a permanent loan from the MAK to the Az W marked the beginning of an interinstitutional collaboration that is unique in Austria. Since then, the Az W collection team has been working intensively to preserve and catalog the archive as well as collaborate with international researchers.

The Background

The exhibition and the book emerged from an interview project, Dialogues on Hans Hollein, begun by Lorenzo De Chiffre, Benni Eder, and Theresa Krenn in 2019, and developed into an exhibition and publication in close collaboration with the Architekturzentrum Wien since 2021.

Curators/Exhibition design: Lorenzo De Chiffre, Benni Eder, Theresa Krenn

Graphic design: Studio Polimekanos

Projekt coordination: Katrin Stingl

Archive Hans Hollein, Az W and MAK, Vienna: Claudia Lingenhöl

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The Book

The exhibition is accompanied and augmented by an extensive publication. The first part of the book contains the interviews with the contemporary architects, who relate Hollein's work to their own practice. The second part presents the selection of projects by Atelier Hollein, largely illustrated with previously unpublished archival material. Additional contributions by Monika Platzer and Mark Lee – on the Archive Hans Hollein, Az W and MAK, and the North American context, respectively – suggest starting points for further inquiry.

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Press contact: Ines Purtauf, +43-1-522 31 15-25, purtauf@azw.at

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