

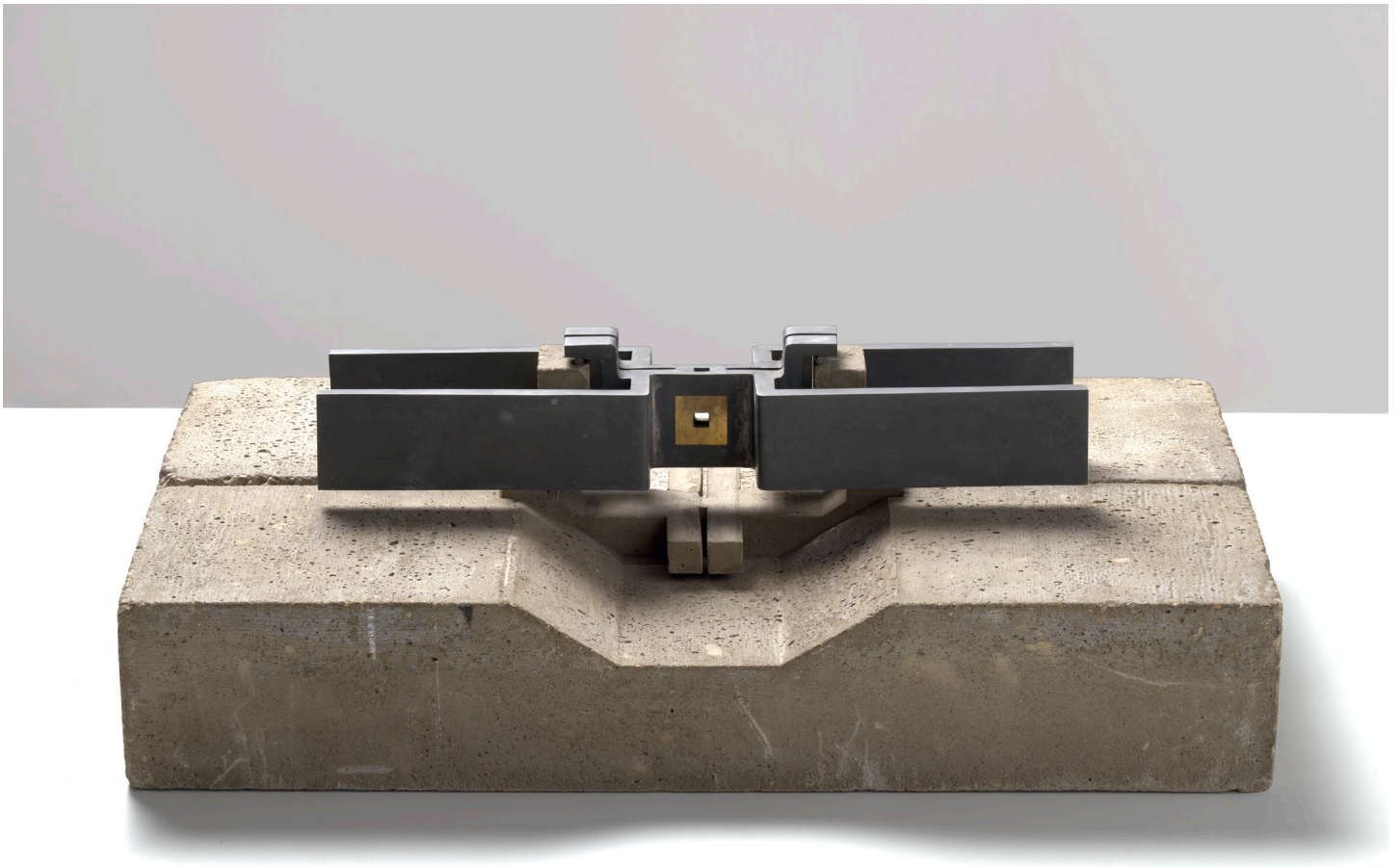
Press release

Hans Hollein

Works from the 1960s

25 July—27 September 2025

Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



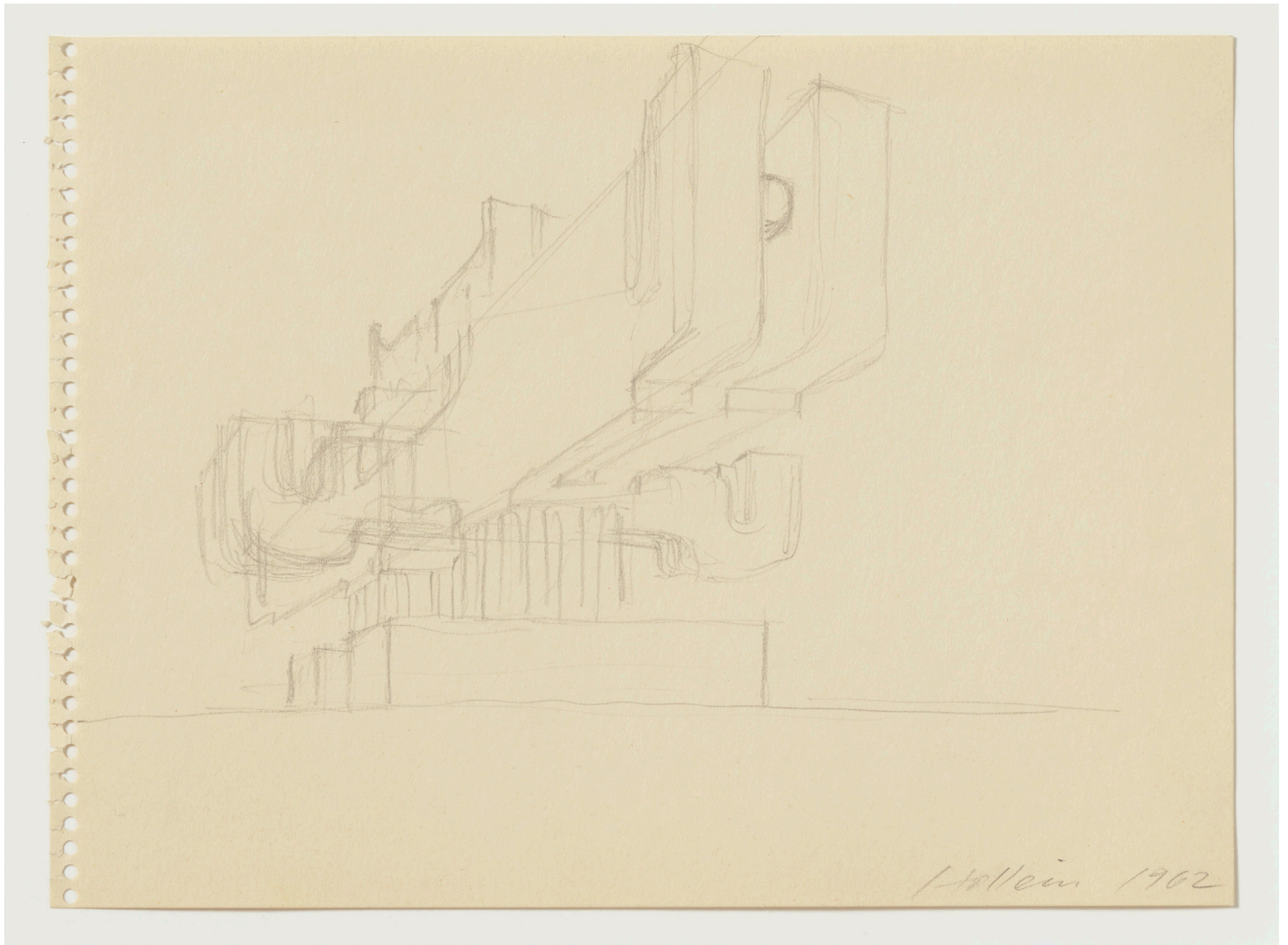
Hans Hollein, *Hanging urban structure with traffic junction*, 1962/1963.
Metal and concrete. 23.5 × 74.5 × 49.5 cm (9.25 × 29.33 × 19.49 in).

I have always considered architecture as an art.

— Hans Hollein (1934–2014)

This exhibition offers an exceptional insight into Austrian architect, artist, designer, theorist and Pritzker Prize winner Hans Hollein's eminently artistic practice. Declaring that 'everything is architecture', Hollein pioneered an expansion of the very concept of architecture. His artistic and architectural

oeuvre were inextricably linked, cross-fertilising each other. This exhibition, curated by art historian Dorothea Apovnik, presents a selection of visionary architectural drawings, conceptual works and a sculptural model that reimagine spaces, structures, cities, as well as their communicative and perceptual possibilities, and testify to Hollein's position at the forefront of the international avant-garde.



Hans Hollein, *Communication Interchange*, 1962.
Pencil on paper. 18 × 24 cm (7.09 × 9.45 in)

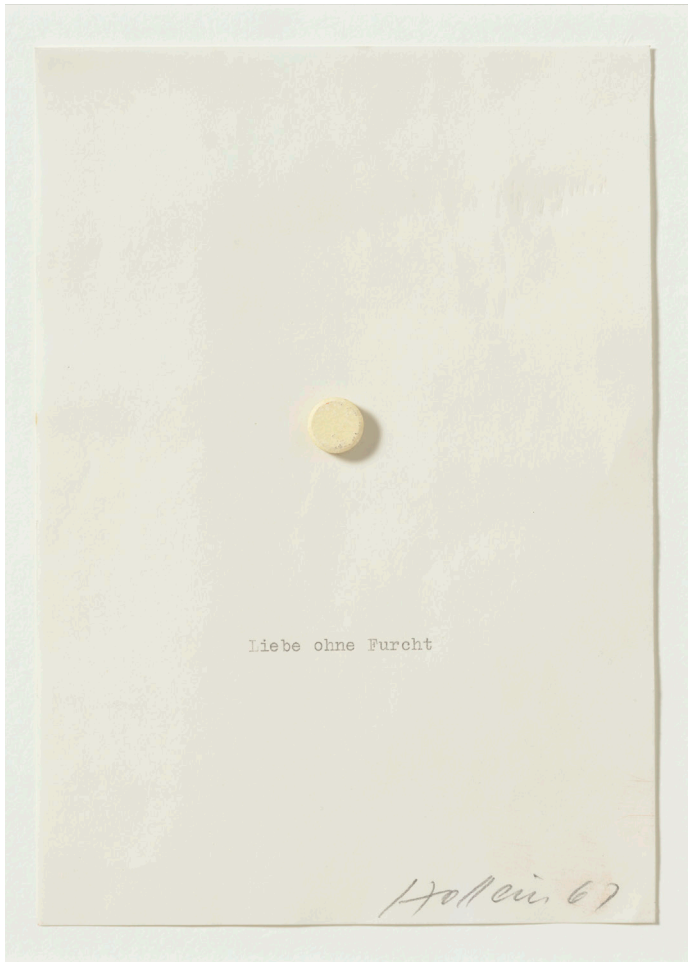
The exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Salzburg spans the 1960s, providing an intimate look into the pivotal early career of ‘the only architect whose works are kept in the art collections of both the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the only artist to have won the Pritzker’ (Prof Liane Lefaivre, architectural historian and curator, 2001).

The 1960s were a pivotal decade in Hans Hollein’s budding career. Studying architecture between Austria and the United States throughout the 1950s, Hollein returned to Vienna in the early 1960s, whereupon he became a key figure of the avant-garde. Hollein notably collaborated with artist Walter Pichler on a group of revolutionary architectural designs presented at the trailblazing Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna in 1963. Opposing Modernist functionalism, Hollein proclaimed the purposelessness of architecture, advocating for a ‘pure, absolute architecture’ in his accompanying

manifesto. ‘Not form follows function. Not function follows form. But form as function, form evokes function. Form is an integral part of the spiritual content, the purpose of a building’ (Hans Hollein, *Zurück zur Architektur*, 1962). This exhibition at Galerie nächst St. Stephan proved critical, resulting in the acquisition of Hollein’s drawings and models by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. As Prof Eva Branscome writes, Hollein’s ‘artistic output was already highly collectible before he was known as an architect’ and, by the end of the decade, his works had entered major public and private collections.

The concept of architecture as a spiritual order, the relationship between man, space and nature, the derivation of building from the cultic as well as the fascination for technology, vastness and space travel became Hollein’s themes, his programme and his vision.

— Dorothea Apovnik, curator



Hans Hollein, *Liebe ohne Furcht*, Architektur, 1967.
Pill on paper, typewriter font. 21 × 15 cm (8.27 × 5.91 in)

At the heart of this exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac lies *Hanging urban structure with traffic junction* (1962/63), a sculptural model that was first exhibited in Hollein's historic show at Galerie nächst St. Stephan. A futuristic metal city rendered in a vocabulary of intersecting rectilinear forms seems to hover above a concrete plinth, its cantilevered wings jutting out overpoweringly. The work crystallises Hollein's conception of cities as 'manifestations of architectural will,' writes curator Dorothea Apovnik. 'They are intended to bundle and direct urban energy. The intersection is defined as the essence of the urban.' Hollein sketched various versions of urban structures that he called *Communication Interchange*, which are also on display. In his own words, 'Today's city is less a wall and tower than a machine of communication, a manifestation of the conquest and mastery of space and the connection of all humanity.' Hollein was also fascinated by increasingly large and complex machines, aircraft carriers and space travel, which he integrated in transformed form into his architectural visions.

Also on view are Hollein's *Non-physical Environment – Architektur aus der Pille* works from 1967, which encapsulate the pioneeringly conceptual nature of his practice. Asserting that 'architects have to stop thinking in terms of building', he strove to dematerialise the very notion of architecture in order to enhance its perceptual possibilities. In the *Non-physical Environmental Control Kit* (1967) to which several of the works on view belong, Hollein harnessed the power of psychoactive drugs to foster artificial spatialities through 'different pills which create various desired environmental situations'. As Hollein stated, 'I invented the "architecture pill". At that time, pharmaceuticals were developed which overcome claustrophobia or agoraphobia, which allowed rooms to appear less threatening by enlarging or reducing them perceptually. I imagined that one might even be able to produce images of architecture with pills, and I exhibited pills that I named, for example, "Hagia Sophia", "Sydney Opera" or "Stonehenge".'

In one of the works on display, 'Liebe ohne Furcht' (Love without fear) is typewritten beneath an ochre pill affixed to the paper support, while in another, a list of masterpieces including Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) and Wortuba's *Weibliche Kathedrale* (1946) is inscribed beside a dotted line of red pills, suggesting that the drugs might kindle an affective or aesthetic experience. Combining a compelling minimalist aesthetic with Duchampian wit and a Pop sensibility, Hollein's prescient conceptual artworks redefined architecture as fundamentally experiential.

Hollein expanded the concept of architecture in every direction. For him, there was no separation between architecture, art and society. Architecture should no longer just create buildings and cities, but design the human environment in a comprehensive sense. To the same extent that space travel, television and the beginning of computer networking changed the experience of space and time, architecture was also to become the medium of a new understanding of the world – one orientated towards the body's senses.

Hollein perceived drawing not only as an architectural tool but also as an artefact in itself. In numerous



Hans Hollein, *Calligraphy (building)*, 1960's.
Indian ink on paper. 20 × 25 cm (7.87 × 9.84 in)

works on show, the line between art and architecture dissolves almost entirely. In one drawing, Hollein's thick, inky brushwork oscillates between calligraphic art, abstract mark-making and an impression of the building the work's title refers to, while in another, he overlays the outline of a city with expressionistic, gestural sweeps of ink.

In 1969, Hans Hollein worked on plans to establish a Sigmund Freud Museum at Berggasse 19 in Vienna. The founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) emigrated to London in 1938 to escape the National Socialists. He managed to take his furniture, which included his famous couch, with him. As Lydia Marinelli and Georg Traska write, the expulsion of the family had left Berggasse 'a materially gutted place whose emptiness formed a stark contrast to its symbolic charge'. With reference to this, Hollein had made the proposal of simply placing a couch and an armchair in the empty practice. Thaddaeus Ropac will display a collage of the Freud furniture in the empty room (1969) as well as a golden sculpture of the couch and armchair from 1984, which was created on the occasion of Hollein's renowned 1985: *Dream and Reality (Traum und Wirklichkeit)* exhibition at the Vienna Künstlerhaus.

Kriemhild's Revenge (1972/86) comprises a linen shroud in the shape of a cross, fitted with square tombak plates. The work originates from Hollein's exploration of the subject of death for a 1970 exhibition at the Museum Mönchengladbach, where

he first presented three shrouds. His exploration of the topic evolved into a striking installation for the 1972 Ruhr Triennale in Essen, presented at the Folkwang Museum. Referencing the *Nibelungenlied*, a thirteenth century Germanic epic poem, it features a cross-shaped linen shroud, fitted with square plates, with one plate missing over the heart to reveal a small bloodstain – evoking the fatal vulnerability of the hero Siegfried. A linden leaf supposedly fell on this spot while Siegfried was bathing in dragon's blood, leaving that area unprotected – his only weakness, which ultimately led to his death at the hands of Hagen. In 1986, Hollein revisited the theme, creating five material variations of *Kriemhild's Revenge*, of which this tombak version has been shown at major institutions worldwide, including the Centre Pompidou earlier this year.

The works on view in the exhibition, situated at a decisive period in Hollein's early career that established him at the forefront of the avant-garde, highlight the multifaceted nature of his practice. 'He shifts nimbly from one identity to another,' writes Prof. Lefavre. 'There is nothing arbitrary about this multiplicity.' Across a diverse body of works, the exhibition reveals the extraordinary breadth of Hollein's artistic practice, as well as his underpinning radical architectural vision.

Most recently, Hollein's works were shown in a comprehensive retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, Paris.



Hans Hollein, *City structure*, 1960.
Indian ink on paper. 30 × 40 cm (11.81 × 15.75 in)



About the artist

Hans Hollein (b. 1934, Vienna, d. 2014, Vienna) was an Austrian architect, designer, artist, theoretician and teacher. He graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in 1956, where he studied in Prof Clemens Holzmeister's masterclass, before attending the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago in 1958–59, and completing his Master of Architecture at the College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley in 1960. During his formative time in the United States, Hollein encountered the work of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Buckminster Fuller, as well as Friedrich Kiesler, Rudolph M. Schindler and Richard Neutra. He also travelled extensively across the American Southwest, where he was deeply inspired by indigenous Pueblo architecture. Returning to Vienna, Hollein founded his own architectural office in 1964. His first realised project, the prominent Retti candle shop (1965), immediately garnered international critical acclaim, earning him the distinguished R. S. Reynolds Memorial Award. In the latter half of the 1960s, Hollein was editor of the Austrian avant-garde architecture magazine *BAU*, while also contributing to other national and international architectural journals. Teaching was an integral part of Hollein's career: in the 1960s he was a guest professor at Washington University in St. Louis, as well as the Yale School of Architecture,

New Haven, the University of California, Los Angeles, and Ohio State University, Columbus. He was also a professor at the Academy of Arts in Düsseldorf from 1967 to 1976, before taking up teaching positions at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, where he notably headed the Department of Architecture between 1995 and 1999.

Hollein's lauded architectural oeuvre encompasses the Retti candle shop, Vienna (1964–65); Richard Feigen Gallery, New York (1967–69); Carl Friedrich von Siemens Foundation, Munich (1969–72); Media Lines – Olympic Village Munich (1971–72); Abteiberg Municipal Museum, Mönchengladbach, Germany (1972–82); Austrian Travel Agency, Vienna (1976–79); Glassware and Ceramic Museum Tehran, Iran (1977–78); Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art (1982–91); Haas Haus, Vienna (1985–90); Vulcania – European Park of Volcanism, Saint-Ours-Les-Roches, France (1994–2002), among many others. He also won a competition with his design for a subterranean branch of the Guggenheim Museum in Salzburg, which never materialised, and placed second for the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. Hollein received numerous awards during his lifetime, including the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1985.

Hollein's famous statement 'everything is architecture' also came to encompass his work as a designer of furniture, lamps, tableware, jewellery, as well as his sculptures, installations and opulent exhibition presentations, such as *Dream and Reality*. Vienna 1870–1930 (1985) at the Künstlerhaus, Vienna. His inaugural exhibition *MANtransFORMS* at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York (1974–76), became a historical milestone in the transformation of the museum from a place of a collection display into a total environment. In 1972, he represented Austria at the Venice Biennale with the installation *Work and Behavior, Life and Death, Everyday Situations*.

Hollein's works have been exhibited widely, including at the Museum of Modern Art, New York

(1967); Centre Pompidou, Paris (1987); Museum of the 20th Century, Vienna (1987); Nationalgalerie, Berlin (1988); Yurakucho Art Forum, Tokyo (1989); Neue Galerie Graz (2012); Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (2014); and MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna (2014). Hollein was the Director of the Sixth Architecture Biennale in Venice in 1996 and Austria's commissioner for the Venice Art Biennale from 1978 to 1990, as well as for the Venice Biennale of Architecture from 1991 to 2000.

Hollein's drawings, sculptures, collages, models and design objects are held in major collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Getty Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna.

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