

The Museum of Modern Art

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ARCHITECTURAL FANTASIES: DRAWINGS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

Drawings and photomontages of architectural fantasies by three young Austrians will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from July 27 through September 23.

Sculptor Walter Pichler and architects Hans Hollein and Raimund Abraham are similarly fascinated by the complexity and scale of machines in relation to architecture. Hollein enlarges a familiar object such as a spark plug and transforms it into an architectural monument looming on the horizon or embeds an aircraft carrier on farmland like a medieval fortified town. Pichler's elegant drawings abstract parts of heavy machinery to make monumental designs recalling the projects of the 18th century French architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux. Abraham, using missile sites and other giant engineering installations seldom thought of as architecture, is concerned with scale based on "the new perception media, on all the senses, on dreams."

The fantasies envisaged by the three men include floating and underground cities, urban renewal in New York, a theodolite and a railroad car as monuments.

"Their speculations about the future of architecture begin with a sense of the inadequacy of inherited forms -- even 'modern' forms -- and they are fascinated by the complexity and scale of machines," says Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, who selected the show. "In this respect they echo an enthusiasm of several pioneer architects of the modern movement, but with an important difference. While Sant'Elia and Le Corbusier sought to incorporate machine-age details into conventional architecture, Hollein and Abraham propose architecture made out of the machines themselves. They are fascinated by violent transformations and by what might be called architectural content. Thus most of

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Hans Hollein's ideas involve the enlargement of a familiar object, like a spark plug or a theodolite, so that it becomes an architectural monument looming on the horizon. He is equally interested in the possibility of inserting a machine or a ship into a specific architectural context, as with his pictures of an aircraft carrier embedded in the landscape, like a medieval fortified town.

"All these pictures somehow suggest that they are illustrations to a continuing dream, and a most disconcerting one at that....The absence of human beings from most of the pictures, together with what seems to be functional detail, implies a highly organized world in which a planned environment pursues some purpose of its own. But these pictures should be thought of as visual poems, and as is often the case there seems to be a connection between poetry and prophecy. Recent announcements that New York City may purchase the Queen Mary for use as a school, rather than put up a conventional building, suggest that where these dreams break into real life the outcome could be quite cheerful."

Hans Hollein was born in Vienna in 1934 and did graduate work at the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of California. In 1966 he was the recipient of the Reynolds Memorial Award for Magazine Retti. He and Abraham now spend much of their time teaching and working in the United States. Walter Pichler, born in 1936, now lives in Vienna.

All the drawings in the exhibition were acquired for the Architecture and Design Collection of The Museum of Modern Art through the Philip Johnson Fund.

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Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York 10019. 245-3200.

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ARCHITECTURAL FANTASIES: DRAWINGS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

July 27 - September 23, 1967

Wall Label

The drawings and photomontages shown in this gallery are by Walter Pichler, a sculptor; and Hans Hollein and Raimund Abraham, both architects. All three were born in Austria. Hollein and Abraham now spend much of their time teaching and working in the United States; Walter Pichler works in Vienna. The similarity in their ideas has led them to exhibit and publish their work jointly.

Their speculations about the future of architecture begin with a sense of the inadequacy of inherited forms - even "modern" forms - and they are fascinated by the complexity and scale of machines. In this respect they echo an enthusiasm of several pioneer architects of the modern movement, but with an important difference. While Sant'Elia and Le Corbusier sought to incorporate machine-age details into conventional architecture, Hollein and Abraham propose architecture made out of the machines themselves. They are fascinated by violent transformations and by what might be called architectural content. Thus most of Hans Hollein's ideas involve the enlargement of a familiar object, like a spark plug or a theodolite, so that it becomes an architectural monument looming on the horizon. He is equally interested in the possibility of inserting a machine or a ship into a specific architectural context, as with his pictures of an aircraft carrier embedded in the landscape like a medieval fortified town.

Walter Pichler's elegant drawings abstract parts of heavy machinery to make monumental designs recalling the projects of the 18th century French architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux.

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Raimund Abraham's more varied projects are also concerned with the characteristic forms of machinery - especially such things as missile sites and other giant engineering installations seldom thought of as "architecture." In Abraham's words: "Architectural scale can no longer be based on the physical measurement of the human body, but has to be based on the new perception media, on all the senses, on dreams."

All these pictures somehow suggest that they are illustrations to a continuing dream, and a most disconcerting one at that. It is perhaps a dream of the past as much as of the future: anti-aircraft fortifications built by the Nazis during World War II remain to this day an indestructible and probably permanent part of the Vienna scene. Their terrifying scale (as in the photograph at the left) imposes a surrealist threat to an otherwise placid street.

The absence of human beings from most of the pictures, together with what seems to be functional detail, implies a highly organized world in which a planned environment pursues some purpose of its own. But these pictures should be thought of as visual poems, and as is often the case there seems to be a connection between poetry and prophecy. Recent announcements that New York City may purchase the Queen Mary for use as a school, rather than put up a conventional building, suggest that where these dreams break into real life the outcome could be quite cheerful.

Arthur Drexler

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