

suns.works

Johannes Gachnang **New Historical Architectures**

March 21 – April 27, 2024
Opening: Thursday March 21, 6pm

Inauguration of suns.works' new location:
Haus Max Ernst Haefeli, Küsnacht

The drawings and etchings of Johannes Gachnang (1939–2005) depict fantastic architectures. Gachnang, who was best known as a publisher and former director of the Kunsthalle Bern, produced them in the late 1960s and early 1970s without the knowledge of the general public.

In work cycles such as “Die neue historische Architektur” (The New Historical Architecture), Gachnang combines parts of historical buildings that surrounded him in his various workplaces in Paris, Berlin, Rome, or Istanbul with more playful or even ironic elements. Oscillating between the ornamental and the abstract, the etchings evoke architectural fragments, grand schemes, elevations, or floor plans that continually fold out and into one another. Abstract geometric forms meet an opulence of detail to a fractal, sometimes hallucinatory degree.

For this in-situ exhibition, Gachnang's spatial imaginings are set in relation to the historic building of suns.works' new location nestled on Küsnacht's hillside, a modernist villa designed by Max Ernst Haefeli in the 1930s. In collaboration with ETH Zurich's Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta), a special display of plans and drawings of the house accompanies the exhibition. A simultaneous presentation takes place at the “Periscope” of the gta Institute on the Hönggerberg campus of ETH Zurich.

About Johannes Gachnang

Johannes Gachnang (1939–2005) was a Swiss artist, curator, and publisher. After training as a structural draftsman, Gachnang worked in Zurich and Paris. In Berlin, he was influenced by Hans Scharoun before publishing his first cycle of detailed etchings of fantastic architectures in 1966. From 1974 to 1982, Gachnang was the director of the Kunsthalle Bern and left his mark on the Swiss art scene with his program. In 1984, he founded the publishing house Gachnang & Springer, which specialized in artists' books and art historical publications. His works have been shown at the Biennale de Paris and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, among others. The retrospectives in Paris and Frankfurt honored his extensive work as a publisher and artist.

Special thanks

Enrica & Johannes Groeller, hotz stöckli architekten, Gabriel Müller / Kunstbroker, Fredi Fischli & Niels Olsen (gta exhibitions), gta Archives, Giulio & Ulrike Bernet

Visiting hours: Thursday – Saturday
To visit the exhibition please book an appointment

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Vitrine Display in Collaboration with gta, ETH Zurich

The Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at ETH Zurich (gta) was founded in 1967. Today, the associated gta Archives is one of the most important architectural archives in the world, housing the professional estate of Max Ernst Haefeli (1901–1976) and the archive of the Zurich architectural partnership Haefeli Moser Steiger (HMS), among other protagonists of Swiss modernism. Even before joining forces with his fellow students Rudolf Steiger and Werner M. Moser in 1936, Haefeli designed the Koellreuter House in 1931/32 and the neighboring Baumann-Heberlein House in Küsnacht in 1933/34, both of which were reviewed in several magazines in Switzerland and abroad. The iconic photographs of the two houses were taken by Hans Finsler, one of the most important architectural photographers of the 20th century and founder of the photography class at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Zurich in 1929.

Vitrine 1

Facade (south side), publication plan (reproduction),
gta Archives / ETH Zurich, Haefeli Moser Steiger

Exterior and interior photos of Wohnhaus Dr. Baumann
Photographer: Hans Finsler, gta Archives / ETH Zurich, Haefeli Moser Steiger

L'architecture d'aujourd'hui No. 1 (January 1936)
gta Archives / ETH Zurich

Axonometry of living room and study 1:50 and views and sections of cupboards 1:20 (reproduction)
gta Archives / ETH Zurich, Haefeli Moser Steiger

Detailed section of windows and blind boxes, publication plan (reproduction)
gta Archives / ETH Zurich, Haefeli Moser Steiger

Vitrine 2

Johannes Gachnang, Les Pavillons des délices, 1969, Etching (142/150), signed, 48.5 cm x 60.5 cm
CHF 1'200

Invitation to the opening of the gta Institute, 23 June 1967
gta Archives / ETH Zurich

Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture. Speeches and lecture at the opening, 23 June 1967,
Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel and Stuttgart 1968
gta Archives / ETH Zurich

Poster group exhibition with Johannes Gachnang at the Stummer & Hubschmied Gallery, 1975
gta Archives / ETH Zurich, Manuel Pauli

Die neue historische Architektur des Johannes Gachnang (The new historical architecture of Johannes Gachnang), in memory of Johann Bernhard Fischers von Erlachen, edited by Johannes Gachnang, with the collaboration of Hartmut Beck and Arthur Hubschmid, Zurich 1966 (title page)

Stedelijk Museum Catalogue 497, Johannes Gachnang, Wim Crouwel Design, 1971