

## “Everything will be completely shaken up”

No more tops made of tulle, no more ties. Nina Hollein is leaving the city with her husband, and with that so too her label.

By Dorothea Friedrich

End of show. Nina Hollein is leaving Frankfurt with her husband Max, past director of the Schirn, Liebieghaus and the Städel. The fashion designer is giving up her shop in the Schweizer Straße in Sachsenhausen, which only just recently became all the rage. The storerooms are empty. This weekend the last clients are stopping by before the store closes, to nab some of the remaining few eccentric pieces that made their debut in 2009 in checked linen cloth from Austria. From now on the designs will be available only online.

Nina Hollein's label was and is a one-woman show, which she led with energy and, at least outwardly, exceptional ease. Actually the Viennese designer replicated exactly that which made her celebrated already in 1981 while she was in high school. Two years ago she posted a Facebook photo that was taken of her debut at a 1983 fashion show. The picture doesn't show a sweetly smiling young girl, but a cheeky, triumphant teenager posing provocatively in front of her entire school in an all black bathing suit, with laced patent leather shoes and shiny disco pants borrowed from her aunt. Ribbons tied the entire thing together. A perfect launch into

the worlds of architecture and fashion. Nina Hollein would become successful in both.

All the ribbons on her designs later gave her clients endless possibilities— and some questions, too. So, a simple piece of clothing could be at the same time a jacket or a pair of pants. Or a single dress could be worn in nine different ways. Long, short, narrow and wide were only four of them. Hollein likes to tinker and plays with everything, be it avant-garde or demure, gold or green, checked or striped, be it a circle skirt or a coat, be it chaste or funny, and all of these effects next to or layered atop each other. Her message is always in fact: wear what you like.

The see-through tops out of tulle were always all the rage. Eroticism through transparency? For Hollein, not so interesting, but it certainly engaged the clients. How should one wear such things? As if they didn't know! The photos of stars like Lady Gaga and Rihanna on the red carpet show it all too clearly. Everything perfectly fully utilized, according to Hollein. And yet somehow irresistible. In 2014 Raf Simons layered atop white t-shirts his transparent dresses, then in 2015 he put a half-naked 14-year old model on the stage without taking the precaution of the layered t-shirts. Nudity was a political battle cry for the Ukrainian Femen Group (a radical feminist activist group founded in 2008 that advocated women's rights), while during the French Revolution the "Marveilleuses" (fabulous divas) in Paris did away with hooped skirts and corsets and proudly wore see-through shirt dresses ("Chemisenkleider") instead. Provocative nudity had already long since existed, and this, totally irrespective of Hollein's new home in San Francisco, in which nudity is a subject of endless controversy: in 2012 the city's Board of Supervisors reigned it in just a bit by

placing a ban on public nakedness. But at the most popular parades and festivals many still wear nothing more than jogging shoes and sandals.

In her shop Nina Hollein took one of her shirts off the hanger and stretched the fabric. “Actually like a sieve”, she said. Decades ago, one could only dream of such a haptic pleasure made of spandex and polyester. Then, the painter Christian Schad portrayed himself in a greenish transparent shirt and at the same time distanced himself from the naked woman beside him. He spared his later wife when he painted her in 1942: Bettina Mittelstadt’s half-nude portrait is glazed in such a way that the that the pretty breasts are lost in fog and glimmer under a shirt that is hardly distinguishable today from one of Hollein's tulle tops.

Before she moved to Frankfurt with her husband in 2001, in the late 1990s Nina Hollein worked in New York as an architect. During her stint in New York, she several times visited San Francisco, where she’ll now live. She found its residents very open-minded. “If there’s something exotic, they’ll embrace it immediately.” So, beginning in July, it’ll be hippy culture in contrast to Frankfurter sobriety. The rustic flair of her Upper Austrian “Mühlviertler” linen with which she began her career as a fashion designer is finally in the past. “Everything will be more or less turned on its head,” Hollein says. And we all can trust that her new home in San Francisco will enrich her imagination and evolving designs.