ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

SPECIAL FEATURE 2026

“The award-winning projects demonstrate just how contemporary and versatile brick architecture can be. They are recognised for the design and structural use of the material, for a sensitive yet confident approach to existing buildings and contexts, and for their consideration of social aspects. What is equally important is the interplay of these qualities: brick is not used merely as a defining material, but as part of a holistic architectural approach. The winners represent an architecture that brings material, place, history and social responsibility into harmony in a remarkable way.”

Jury Statement

ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

WINNERS

AWARD
Grand Prix

CATEGORY
Public Buildings, Recreation and Sport

PROJECT
Het Steen (Antwerpen, BE)

CONSTRUCTION TIME
2018 – 2021

ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
noAarchitecten



© Kim Zwarts





AN ECHO OF THE CENTURIES
“The Het Steen project continues the expression of the castle as a landmark of the city of Antwerp towards the river. The architects skilfully extend the distinctive historic castle rather than creating a rupture or reverting to the past – the existing fabric and the extension become a natural whole. The sensitive handling of the colour variations in the brickwork makes the patina of the different layers of time visible: the act of building on itself becomes a design quality. The characteristic features of a castle – masonry, bay windows, niches, battlements and towers – are expressed in raw, contemporary materials. History and the present are brought together both in the programme and in the architecture.”

Jury Statement

Monuments are a form of primal structure in the city. They determine our collective memory both physically and mentally. Changes to monuments are sensitive. The fact that people are emotionally affected by how their city changes is relevant. As architects, we are always interested in continuing to work on and with what is available. We prefer continuity to contrast. We believe less in ‚return‘ or ‚break‘, but build on what is there. The discussion about the original

is always complex, confusing and therefore highly interesting. The eventful construction history of Het Steen forms at the basis of the design. After centuries of being part of the city walls, the collection of buildings acquired a freestanding character around 1890 after the straightening of the Scheldt.

In order to restore the strong character of the freestanding castle, invented in the 19th century, we replaced the extension from the 1950s, which did not register in this story. It offers the opportunity to strengthen the different aspects – history, passage, landmark. We are making one building in which different layers of time are reconciled. The typical characteristics of a castle – stone walls with cut-outs, bay windows, niches, rising and falling eaves and towers – form the elements of a contemporary extension.

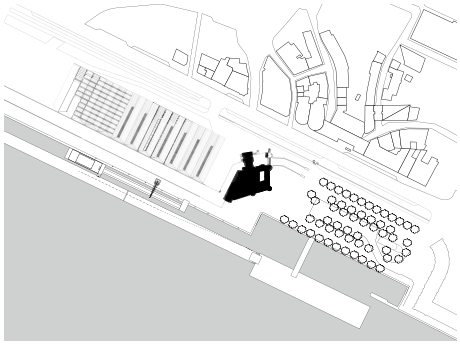


We considered the use of brick is central to the architectural dialogue with the existing structure, with façade tones derived from the natural stone palette of the historic castle wall. The gradient—from darker base to lighter upper layers, echoing centuries of material variation and patina—was developed with artist Pieter Vermeersch through careful brick selection and full-scale testing. Brickwork is combined with architectural concrete for key elements such as window frames and eaves, while integrated volumes house contemporary technical installations. At quay level, the more closed façade also responds to flood protection requirements as part of the Sigma Plan.

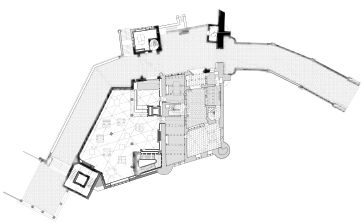


© Stijn Bollaert

We considered the use of brick to be central to the architectural dialogue with the existing building. The colours of the façades are derived from the palette of natural stone found in the historic castle walls. The colour gradient – from a darker base to lighter upper layers, echoing the diversity of materials and patina that developed over centuries – was developed together with artist Pieter Vermeersch through the careful selection of bricks and full-scale 1:1 tests. The brick masonry is combined with architectural concrete for key elements such as window frames and eaves, while integrated building volumes accommodate contemporary technical services. At quay level, the more enclosed façade also responds to the flood-protection requirements of the Sigma Plan.



The interiors are characterised by sober materials: brick walls, natural stone or wood floors. Generous staircases connect the whole. Traditional elements such as fireplaces and bay windows create a delicate and



intimate atmosphere, which also allows for easy integration of contemporary technical installations. The windows frame the imposing views and the window sills invite you to sit and watch.



The Steen is now a tourist reception and visitor centre. In the old part, the long and layered history and character of the city by the river is explained. In the extension, a departure hall for the cruises, also a multifunctional hall, are located below; at the main entrance, the reception area is continued on the 1st floor; the roof is a public roof terrace, accessible from inside and from the tower with public access to the Noorderterras. The building is conceived for the long term. Just as its use has often changed over time, the history of Steen will not end with it.

noAarchitecten

ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

AWARD
Winner Gold

CATEGORY
Office and Commercial Buildings

PROJECT
Hotel Leo (Zurich, CH)

CONSTRUCTION TIME
2018 – 2023

ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
Boltshauser Architekten



© Kuster Frey





SUSTAINABLY REACHING NEW HEIGHTS
"In 1924, the British architect and urban planner Arthur Trystan Edwards formulated principles of good and bad manners in architecture: buildings should be designed with consideration for their surroundings, their users and society, and should make a positive contribution to the built environment rather than drawing attention to themselves for their own sake. One hundred years later, Hotel Leo fulfils all the principles of good manners in architecture, as if the book had served as the blueprint for its design. The building integrates respectfully into its setting. The materials and colours of the façades of the neighbouring villa serve as a reference for the new building. The careful placement of the new volume creates a small public square that can accommodate a variety of uses. The use of natural colours and untreated materials meets the requirements of a durable building and ensures the architecture's lasting beauty."

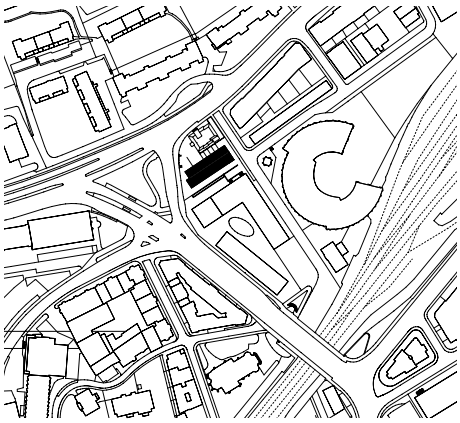
Jury Statement

The seven-storey new building creates a new high point at the edge of St. Gallen's city centre. The slender volume is positioned as far as possible from the historic villa, creating an outdoor space with a public character between the two buildings. The design of the brick façade responds to the surrounding built context. Along the long northern elevation, the vertical articulation establishes a relationship with the corner quoins of the Villa Wiesental opposite and emphasises the use

of the ground floor, which is connected to the square by several doors. This connection is reinforced by climbing plants growing on the façade and by the preservation of the old, mature lime tree. The upper section of the façade, where views across the city open up above the ridge height of the villa, is articulated horizontally by contrast.

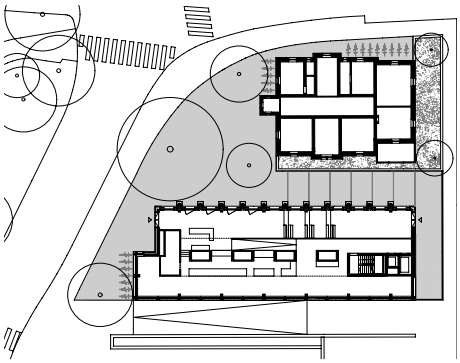


The bricks have a greenish hue, referencing the colour of the Bollinger sandstone used in the stonework of the villa. The material concept of the building aims to bring the natural colours and surface textures of untreated materials into dialogue with one another. This creates a compelling combination of raw, unfired earth, fired brick, steel, timber and finely finished bedding layers.

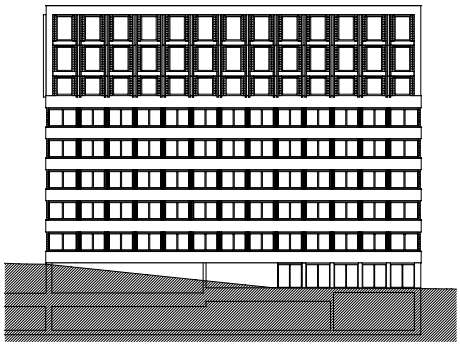


The ground floor of the hotel contains a bar with an integrated reception area and an open-plan restaurant. The lower plinth level accommodates seminar rooms and a co-working area. The upper floors contain a total of 102 hotel rooms, while the attic level houses a small wellness area with access to an outdoor terrace.

Terrabloc earth blocks were used in the public spaces around the entrance area and on the hotel-room floors. The open-pored blocks regulate humidity and thereby contribute to a pleasant indoor climate. They are made from excavated material sourced from the area around the production site, resulting in significant savings in embodied energy compared with conventional materials. The interior fit-out of the rooms is reduced to the essentials: the rough surfaces of the earth blocks and the exposed concrete ceilings are complemented by glass blocks, dark parquet flooring and simple built-in furniture.



Sustainability is considered comprehensively: it begins with the densification of the site through a new building and extends to the creation of a new public outdoor space for the neighbourhood, the use of breathable and low-CO_2 materials such as unfired earth blocks, and the connection of both buildings to a district heating network. Crucially, however, the building must be accepted by both its setting and its users, remain in use for several decades and, if necessary, be capable of flexible adaptation.



Boltshauser Architekten

ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

AWARD
Winner Gold

CATEGORY
Residential Building/Apartment Complex

PROJECT
Veemgebouw (Eindhoven, NL)

CONSTRUCTION TIME
2015 – 2022

ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
Caruso St John Architects



© Filip Dujardin





CROWNING THE EXISTING
"The VEEM building in Eindhoven is an exemplary transformation of a modernist warehouse from the 1940s into residential use. Rather than overriding the challenging spatial conditions of its former use, the project develops a clear strategy from them: the existing structure is retained with minimal intervention and extended by three new residential storeys. The new rooftop addition responds to the existing building with precision, both structurally and architecturally. The undulating brick façades pick up on the materiality of the original building while interpreting it in their own distinctive way, giving the building a new and identity-defining expression. Particularly convincing is the combination of high architectural quality and social responsibility: 38 generous studios and maisonettes are provided at affordable rents, while the landscaped roof courtyard and private terraces create high-quality outdoor spaces despite the dense inner-city setting."

Jury Statement

The VEEM building forms a striking landmark at the edge of Strijp-S, a regenerating urban district in Eindhoven developed on the former Philips factory compound. Built in the 1940s as a warehouse at the end of Philips' production line, the ten-storey Modern structure was used to store finished consumer goods before distribution.

Following Philips' departure from the site in 1996, the land was acquired by a public-private partnership with a mandate to deliver mixed-use urban development, prioritising housing. Not-for-profit housing provider Trudo took ownership of the VEEM building and, recognising the challenges posed by its deep floorplates, dense column grid, and low 2.8 m ceiling heights, held an ideas competition in 2007. Caruso St John won with a proposal that avoided forcing the unsuitable interior into residential use, instead adding three new floors of housing on top, arranged around a sheltered rooftop courtyard.



The retained body of the building was retrofitted with minimal intervention. The ground floor was opened up to house a food hall, while the nine floors above serve as car parking for the wider development — a pragmatic response to Dutch planning requirements — with the upper floors accommodating apartments and offices. Ninety-five per cent of the original steel-framed windows were retained, requiring only replacement glazing.



The new rooftop addition comprises 38 studios and maisonettes arranged around a landscaped courtyard, entered from a lift lobby in the original core. Units are let at affordable mid-market rents. The dwellings are generously proportioned, with individual front doors opening onto the courtyard and deep, walled terraces offering protected outdoor space with punched openings framing views across the city. Structurally, the addition uses insulated cavity brick walls with calcium silicate inner skins, and timber upper floors to reduce loading on the existing structure.

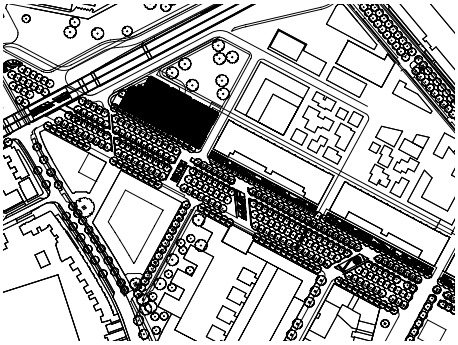


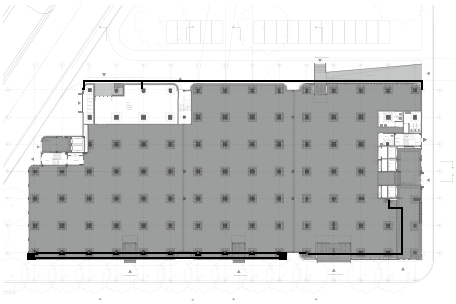
Caruso St John drew on detailed research into the building's original material palette to inform the retrofit's colour scheme, reintroducing turquoise, dusty pink, grey, and a vivid egg-yolk yellow on metalwork — colours reprised on the new rooftop crown to unify old and new. The undulating brick elevations of the addition elaborate on the building's Modern character through varied bonding patterns, creating a bold and distinctive roofline. A new illuminated steel mast reinstates the building's role as a beacon on the city skyline.

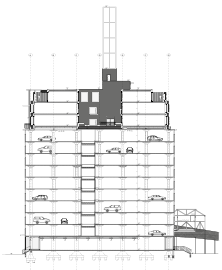
Operationally, the scheme performs well, with roof-mounted heat pumps providing heating and hot water, to be supplemented by photovoltaics targeting energy-neutral performance annually.

Executive architect V/Architecten delivered the scheme with notable fidelity to a design conceived more than a decade earlier.

Caruso St John Architects







ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

AWARD
Winner Gold

CATEGORY
Detached House/Semi-Detached House

PROJECT
Umbau Siedlerhaus Battin (Brüssow, DE)

CONSTRUCTION TIME
2021 – 2025

ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
Klöpfel Zeimer Architekten



© Schnepp Renou

REORDERING FROM THE CENTRE

"The single-family house provides an ideal framework for architectural research. In the field of housing, architects can work innovatively – with innovation clearly distinguished from mere novelty. Henry David Thoreau described the cellar and the chimney – both built of brick – as the enduring elements of a dwelling, in contrast to its more changeable or provisional components. This project succeeds in updating that concept and, beyond the purely conceptual level, creates an architecture that can be experienced sensorially and is rooted in geometry, materiality and fundamental family rituals. The project stands out as an exemplary design of great architectural interest – both in terms of its construction and structural use of brick and in its reinterpretation of domestic archetypes. It draws on deeply rooted archetypes while at the same time developing them further in both constructive and typological terms."



Jury Statement



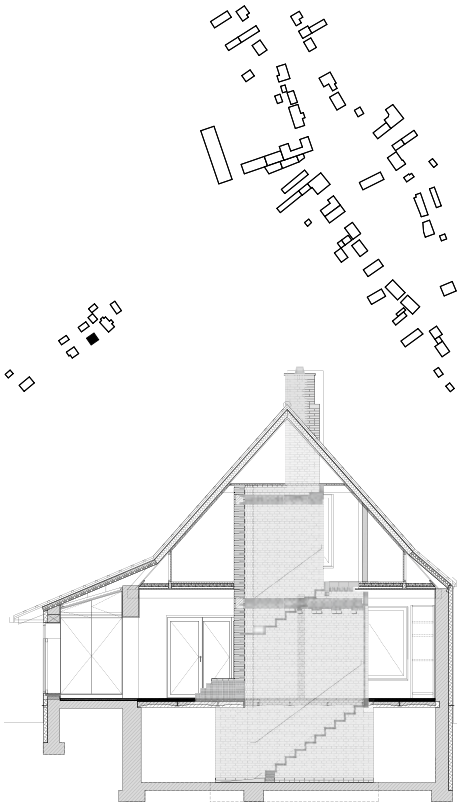
The architectural context of the project is a historic settler's house from the 1950s on the outskirts of Battin, a village in the north-east of the Uckermark region. The conversion reinterprets the house without fundamentally altering its external appearance. The architectural intervention therefore focuses primarily on a precise and timeless insertion in exposed brickwork, which reorganises the surrounding interior spaces and, as a kind of "house within a house",

enters into a symbiotic relationship with the existing building fabric. This insertion resembles a walk-in brick sculpture. From the centre of the building, it provides access to the two upper floors as well as the basement, while also incorporating the fireplace. Its materiality and construction are robust, differentiated and adaptable. The form of the insertion follows the directions of movement and visual relationships of the surrounding living spaces.



The choice of long-format brick and its laying in an adapted cross bond are derived from the rise of the timber stair treads, which are precisely integrated into the exposed masonry. The bricks were deliberately left uncut, causing the brick courses to form comb-like edges at all non-orthogonal corners. This sculptural quality is further enhanced by individual bricks rotated out of the bond.

The clients' living requirements could not be accommodated within the compartmentalised and enclosed spatial structure of the existing building and therefore called for a fundamental reorganisation of the interior. An open sequence of interconnected living spaces now develops around the walk-in brick sculpture. Its atmosphere is shaped by the interplay of exposed masonry, historic and newly added timber structures, and existing walls finished with clay plaster. Where necessary, existing façade openings were enlarged to open up views towards the expansive surrounding landscape.



Sustainability in this project is achieved through a reduction in materials and through the simplicity and permanence of the architectural interventions. Executed with simple materials and a high degree of craftsmanship, the conversion creates distinctive yet flexible living.

Klöpfel Zeimer Architekten

ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

AWARD
Best in Germany

CATEGORY
Residential Building/Apartment Complex

PROJECT
Ein Monolith als Lückenschluss (Berlin, DE)

CONSTRUCTION TIME
2018 – 2022

ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
DMSW Architektur Stadt Landschaft



© Jan Bitter


© Maria Simons

THINKING THE CITY THROUGH
"The co-housing project closes a gap between buildings that are each strongly shaped by the era in which they were built. Despite the challenging site and the need for a fire wall, the project succeeds in defining a clear plot boundary while considering the urban block as a whole. With its restrained, monolithic brick façade, the building gains a material character that strikes the right note for the place. The strength of the project therefore lies in its urban design: it develops the existing space further and makes it its own."

Jury Statement


© Jan Bitter

The building was constructed on a site in Berlin-Neukölln that had been considered unbuildable because outdated planning law designated it as road space. In close coordination with the urban planning authorities, an exemption was granted. Urban planning requirements, a public sewer running beneath the street-facing part of the site, and fire safety regulations resulted in the building's distinctive volume, which now defines a forecourt, closes the perimeter block and reorganises the previously fragmented urban space.

The project translates complex constraints into a striking architectural figure. The light-coloured clinker façade of the monolithic building extends into the window reveals, turning the façade itself into usable space. Dual-aspect apartments with flexible floor plans and generous

loggias, together with a variety of shared outdoor spaces, combine functional quality with spatial generosity. The result is a distinctive, durable architecture with a high level of architectural and cultural ambition.

The forecourt forms an entrance area with bicycle parking. The fully unsealed garden courtyard takes up the atmosphere of the neighbouring listed courtyard with areas of moss and shade-loving native planting, while also promoting biodiversity. The roof garden is divided into different use zones, and the site-adapted planting requires no artificial irrigation. Retention boxes and infiltration trenches allow rainwater to be stored and fully infiltrated on site.

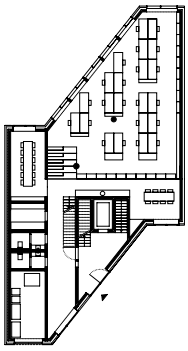
In close collaboration between all specialist planners, a resource-efficient low-tech concept was implemented that is robust, economical and climate-friendly. With final energy demand of just 24 kWh/m²a, primary energy demand of 27 kWh/m²a and CO_2 emissions of 11 kg/m²a, the building meets KfW 40 standards. Ninety per cent of the heat supply is provided by heat pumps powered by renewable electricity, supplemented by renewable district heating. Heat recovery, passive solar shading and night-time cooling ensure a comfortable indoor climate without active cooling.

The project is based on close cooperation between the building group, the architectural practice, specialist planners, public authorities and contractors. Urban planning, technical and economic challenges were resolved through joint coordination processes. Individual contracting, transparent cost models and participatory decision-making structures made it possible to create affordable, high-quality residential and working space. The scalable model represents a community-based planning culture. Building as a group can reduce housing costs by up to 30 per cent compared with comparable properties on the conventional market. Despite high land costs, affordable residential and office space was created. On a 586-square-metre site, 1,380 square metres of usable floor area were realised. Thanks to efficient planning and collaboration, construction costs amounted to €2,465 per square metre, while total project costs came to €5,240 per square metre of usable floor area. Operating costs also remain moderate as a result of the chosen energy supply system.



© Dawin Meckel

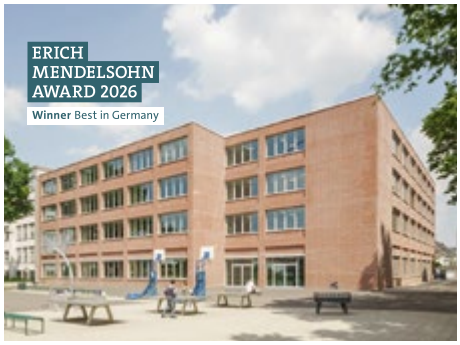




DMSW Architektur Stadt Landschaft

ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE



© Sebastian Schels





AWARD
Best in Germany

CATEGORY
Public Buildings, Recreation and Sport

PROJECT
Erweiterung Kaiserin-Augusta-Schule (Cologne, DE)

CONSTRUCTION TIME
2020 – 2023

ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
ZILA

THE POWER OF THE JOINT
"The extension of the Kaiserin-Augusta-Schule is compelling in the way it naturally brings together urban design, the existing building fabric and new architecture. Particularly convincing is its precise handling of brick: the hand-crafted water-struck brick is used not merely as façade cladding, but plays a defining role in the architectural expression. Different joint patterns, bonds and details respond to the heterogeneous context and lend the clearly structured façade a subtle degree of differentiation. The material is also consistently carried through into the interior. The result is an architecture developed from constructive logic, careful material selection and spatial quality. At the same time, the project demonstrates how sensitively a historically and socially charged site can be handled: the new routes through the site and the urban reorganisation give the neighbourhood a clear structure without obscuring the history of the place."

Jury Statement

The heterogeneous structure of Cologne's city centre, shaped by the juxtaposition of buildings from different periods, scales and materials, defines our image of the city on the Rhine. The Kaiserin-Augusta-Schule in the Georgsviertel district is likewise an expression of this diversity. The school building from the 1950s was extended as early as the 1960s with a formally independent building. In order to implement the school's current educational concept, a further extension became necessary.

ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

As part of the design for the school extension, the Georgsviertel was also to be given greater urban coherence. The site acquired an additional dimension with the collapse of the Cologne City Archive on Severinstraße on 3 March 2009. In this event, which had a profound impact on the city, important historical collections were lost and two people were killed. Our urban design approach aimed to complete and densify the fragmented perimeter blocks. The perimeter block was understood as a robust principle that creates clearly defined public spaces and allows for a mixture of different uses. At the site of the collapse, a new route through the neighbourhood marks the location of the event without leaving behind an open void.



The school extension forms part of this process of densification. A new south wing moves up to the perimeter of the block, encloses a sheltered schoolyard and at the same time creates a clearly defined edge along the new pedestrian route, which provides access to the school auditorium and the future sports hall. From the outset, it was clear to us that the building should be constructed in red brick. Brick is a façade material frequently encountered in Cologne, including on the existing Kaiserin-Augusta-Schule building on Georgsplatz. A Westphalian water-struck brick in standard format was selected, traditionally produced on a so-called Petersen press, whose hand-crafted and individual form, colour and surface quality convinced us. The homogeneous brick envelope reinforces the ordered window grid and gives the building a calm and cohesive appearance.



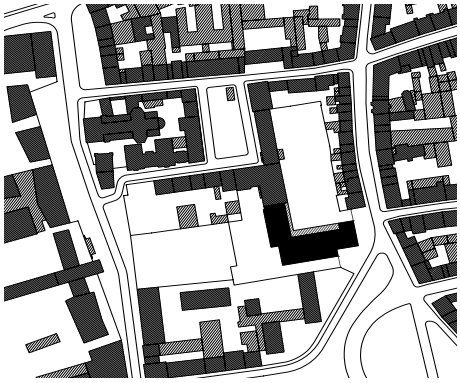
At the same time, this order is subtly broken up through differentiated detailing. Varying joint patterns take their cues from both clinker-brick and tiled façades in the surrounding neighbourhood and anchor the building within its heterogeneous context. Simple stretcher bonds, as an emblematic expression of the stacking of bricks, mark the areas of solid masonry, while vertically laid stretcher surfaces in a stacked-joint pattern indicate the use of clinker slips over the large-format lintels made of precast reinforced concrete. The light-coloured mortar joints lend the solid brick façade a surprising lightness, which varies according to the incidence of light and gives the building an almost textile-like appearance. The result is a façade that mediates between homogeneity and differentiation while reflecting the layered character of the site.

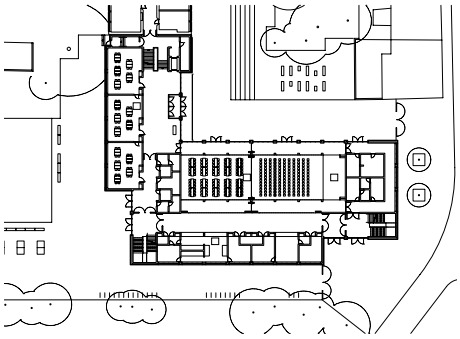


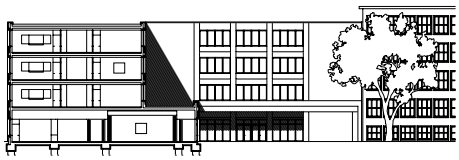
Despite the clear overall structure, a deliberate degree of differentiation was also important to us in the interior. The C-shaped floor plan

creates varied spatial sequences and distinctive places through alternating moments of expansion and compression. Scale, materials and colour scheme are tailored to the needs of the pupils. Split clinker tiles laid on the ground floor in the same format establish a connection with the water-struck brick of the façade. Their continuous stacked-joint grid refers to the octametric dimensional system that serves as the organising principle for the entire building.

ZILA

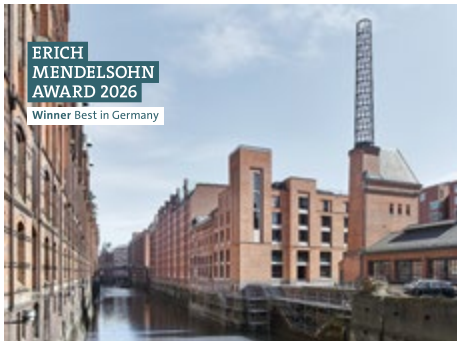






ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE



© Jochen Stüber

AWARD
Best in Germany

CATEGORY
Office and Commercial Buildings

PROJECT
Maschinenzentralstation (Hamburg, DE)

CONSTRUCTION TIME
2022–2026

ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
BIWERMAU Architekten BDA



A MISSING PIECE COMPLETES THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE
"Severely damaged during the Second World War, the former central power station in Hamburg's Speicherstadt regains its original volume with the reconstruction of the destroyed head building. It is a demanding architectural task in a remarkable setting: old and new come together with great naturalness to form a unified whole. The clear geometry of the new volume strengthens the existing building and restores the historic ensemble's presence within the urban fabric. At the same time, the layers of history remain legible without diminishing the architecture of the present."

Jury Statement



The former Maschinenzentralstation was built in 1880 as part of the first construction phase of Hamburg's Speicherstadt and has formed part of the Speicherstadt UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2015. Together with the neighbouring boiler house, it supplied energy to the warehouse buildings and their lifting and conveying systems.

Following a fire in 1891, the building was reconstructed at a reduced height and with a partially altered appearance. During the Second World War, the complex was severely damaged again by an aerial bomb, after which only the western section of the building was restored.

Erich Mendelsohn Award for Brick Architecture
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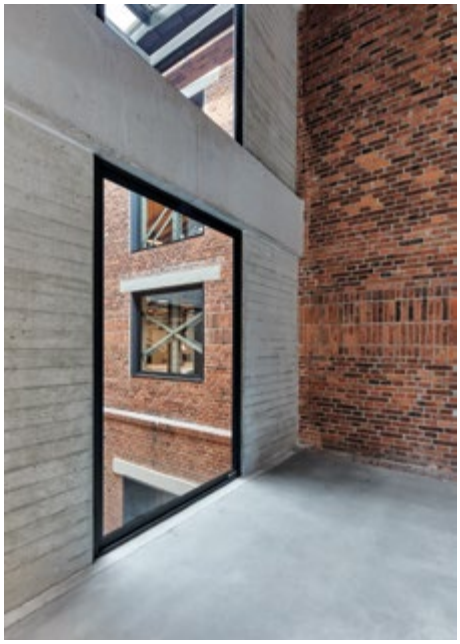
ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

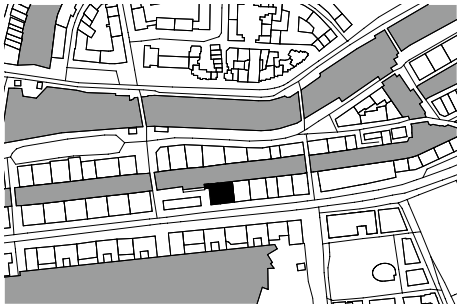
The head building destroyed during the war has now been reconstructed on its historic foundations in its original size and volume and, together with the previously unused existing building of the former Maschinenzentralstation, has been given a new use. All historic building elements were carefully refurbished in accordance with heritage conservation requirements, ensuring their long-term preservation. The historic part of the building was also upgraded in terms of energy performance. Sustainable and recyclable materials were used throughout the refurbishment.

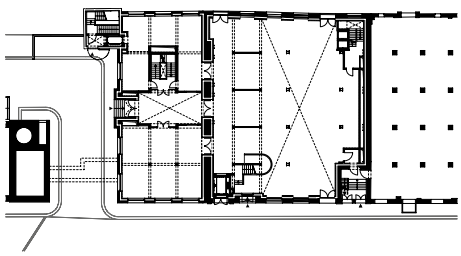
The design of the new head building is conceived as a careful yet contemporary addition to the existing structure. The aim is to once again create a unified building from old and new, one that makes the different historical layers legible while at the same time restoring an experience of the site's distinctive urban condition and its historic character.

BIWERMAU Architekten









Erich Mendelsohn Award for Brick Architecture
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ERICH MENDELSOHN AWARD 2026

FOR BRICK ARCHITECTURE

AWARD
Winner Gold

CATEGORY
Newcomer

PROJECT
Kühlturm (Leipzig, DE)

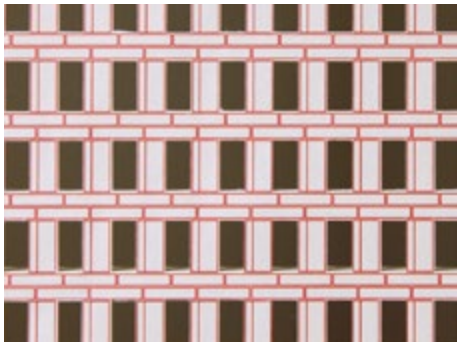
AUTHOR
Deborah Süß (HTWK Leipzig)

STATUS
Draft



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A NEW TYPOLOGY FOR HEAT RESILIENCE

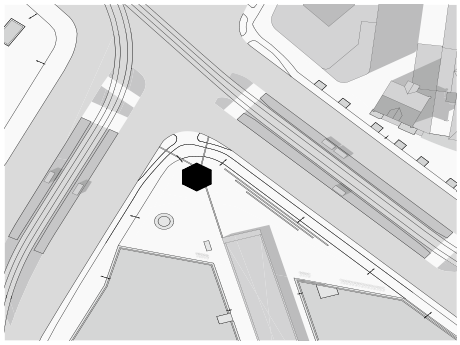
"We awarded the 'Cooling Tower' project Gold because, through the use of brick, it creates a new function that is becoming increasingly important for our cities: a public place for cooling that also serves as a place to spend time and as a bus station – and is therefore accessible to everyone. We were particularly impressed by the way this combination of material and function gives rise to an independent new architectural language. It is an architecture that brings ecological and social requirements together and is therefore especially relevant to the times we live in."

Jury Statement

Inspired by Bernd and Hilla Becher's formal studies of isolated industrial structures such as cooling towers, water towers and gas holders, the design adapts the sculptural quality and materiality of Per Kirkeby's Verkehrsturm. What can be observed is a recurring formal language of masses set in relation to one another. Spheres, cylinders and tower-like elements sit above a base that is at times solid and at times articulated by columns.

The use of red steel frames with brick infill within a structure of steel columns makes it possible to dissolve the base of the cooling tower, which is now formed by movable shading elements. In still air, the heat stored in the thermal mass of the brick is released and,

due to the chimney effect, causes cool air to be drawn in.



In addition, traditional Iranian badgir architecture is made publicly accessible. Cool winds from the prevailing directions of south-south-west and east are channelled into the tower by rotated bricks acting as wind catchers, thereby displacing the warm air in the base zone. In this way, it is not merely private living spaces that are cooled, but a publicly accessible space.

The cooling tower is a landmark, a meeting place, and a place to linger and wait. It offers the generally older local residents around Bayerischer Platz, as well as pedestrians and public transport users, a cool place in the midst of one of Leipzig's largest urban heat islands.

Deborah Süß

