

Florian Nagler is the recipient of the 2026 Heinrich Tessenow Medal

Award ceremony and accompanying exhibition “ESSENTIAL” as part of the 2026 Hamburg Architecture Summer

This year, the Heinrich Tessenow Society, in cooperation with HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU), is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Heinrich Tessenow. As part of this, the Society will present the 2026 Heinrich Tessenow Medal to the German architect Florian Nagler at the University on 20 May from 4 pm. Following the award ceremony, the accompanying exhibition “ESSENTIAL” will open

The exhibition “ESSENTIAL” showcases works by Florian Nagler Architects as well as selected architectural projects from Prof. Dott. Arch. Paolo Fusi’s design course at HafenCity University, which were developed in dialogue with built works by students of Heinrich Tessenow. The exhibition also features contributions from former recipients of the Heinrich Tessenow Medal who are still actively practising.

Building on the continuity of Heinrich Tessenow’s teaching, which is essentially characterised by the duality of reform and continuity, the exhibition addresses the question of what can be considered essential in residential architecture today, given limited resources, social changes and ecological challenges. The exhibition is conceived as a space for joint reflection between theory and practice: The contributions, developed as part of a Master’s project, were created in dialogue with examples from Heinrich Tessenow’s students and form the starting point for a reflection on what is essential in housing construction.

On 21 May, HafenCity University will also host a conference and a presentation of a book by Prof. Dr. Arch. Francesco Collotti, dedicated to the work of Heinrich Tessenow.

Architect Florian Nagler is to receive the 2026 Tessenow Medal

Florian Nagler, born in Munich in 1967, has been one of the most important protagonists in the contemporary architecture debate for several years. In his work, he addresses central themes and tasks of contemporary and future architecture. His projects and completed buildings reflect the consistent application of skills and methods that he simultaneously theorises, conceives and develops in his research and teaching activities.

Florian Nagler is a member of the BDA Association of German Architects, the Berlin Academy of Arts and the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts. He is also a member of the board of the Bavarian Association for the Preservation of Local Heritage.

He has received numerous honours and awards for his architectural work and his contributions to teaching and theoretical research. Among other things, he received the German Timber Construction Award in 2015, the German Sustainability Award in 2016, the German Architecture Award in 2017, the German Building Owner Award in 2018 and the Semper Prize of the Saxon Academy of Arts in 2022.

Florian Nagler began studying art history and Bavarian history in Munich in 1987. In 1989, he completed a two-year vocational training programme as a carpenter. He then studied architecture at the University of Kaiserslautern, graduating with a degree in 1994.

Similar to Heinrich Tessenow, his training as a carpenter, in addition to his studies in architecture, enabled him to cultivate his expertise and passion for wood as a natural material at a very early stage and, above all, to deepen his spatial, constructive and technical knowledge in the use of one of his preferred building materials.

After completing his studies, he founded the architectural firm Florian Nagler Architekten in Munich in 1999, which he runs together with his wife Barbara Nagler.

In addition to his professional practice, Florian Nagler is also active in teaching and academic research. After guest and visiting professorships at the University of Wuppertal, the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen and the University of Applied Sciences in Stuttgart, he has been a full professor of design and construction at the Technical University of Munich since 2010.

Florian Nagler's "Einfach Bauen" – Architecture at the Intersection of Research, Construction and Aesthetics

The symbiosis and synergy effects between teaching and research on the one hand and his design and construction activities on the other enable him to develop outstanding solutions for contemporary and future-oriented, sustainable construction at both the architectural-aesthetic and technical-constructive levels.

For years, he has been relentlessly pursuing the goal of developing architectural solutions that reduce structural and building services complexity in favour of a refined aesthetic that arises from the natural properties of the building materials, under the guiding principle of 'simple construction'. The scientific research he conducts with his team in an academic context is combined with a creative and intellectual approach to the process of form-finding and construction.

Early buildings, such as the visitor centre at the Dachau concentration camp, which was the result of a competition, are characterised by three central qualities that shape his further work: the indispensable connection to the location, the reduction in design with the aim of achieving maximum sophisticated aesthetics, and the well-thought-out, skilful solution to all construction aspects.

A respectful approach to the location allows him to work with the contextual conditions so that the built works always appear natural in urban, suburban and rural contexts.

His design themes and corresponding variations appear to be inspired by his musical talent and knowledge. This additional virtue enables him to enrich his precise compositions with deliberate variations that accompany the main themes of his spatial designs.

His constructive knowledge is not only used as technical expertise to simplify implementation processes or for purely economic reasons, but also as a clear ethical stance on the use of environmental resources. The consistent implementation of this attitude synthesises the recovery of traditional craftsmanship with innovative research.

Nagler and his team apply their approach and working methods coherently to a wide range of planning and implementation tasks. These include buildings for a variety of uses, such as 'Wohnen am Dantebad 1 und 2' in Munich, the studio and workshop of artist Peter Lang, the institutes of the University of Berlin, the Karpfsee farmstead and the cowshed in Thanried, Dietramszell. The conversion and extension projects are also remarkable, such as the conversion and extension of the Tannerhof in Bayrischzell and the reconstruction of St. Martha's Church in Nuremberg. This shows how the exploration of the future-oriented development of architectural traditions is implemented not only on a theoretical level, but also in practice through the continued construction and reuse of material building resources.

In the field of residential construction, the three houses built in Bad Aibling stand out, among others, and they are also part of a university research project. Due to the scientific necessity of using comparable parameters, the three houses can also be interpreted as variations on an architectural theme through the use of three different materials, corresponding construction systems and technical details. The type and form of the houses exist here as essential 'a priori' elements and can be translated into different construction solutions.

Nagler's work makes a significant contribution to the paradigm shift in disciplinary discourse. In times of debate about building type E, he proves that simplicity must not correspond to a purely quantitative

dimension, as this would mean a banalisation of the architectural narrative. Rather, it means focusing on the aesthetic, compositional and constructive essence of architecture and architectural tasks.

The 2026 Tessenow Medal in recognition of the laureate's body of work, research and ethos

Florian Nagler and his team are awarded the Heinrich Tessenow Medal 2026 for a body of work characterised by extraordinary intellectual commitment, courage to be radical and a consistent approach to the complex and diverse topics of the discipline. In his work, he consistently embodies the humanistic synthesis between the scientific search for creative thinking in architecture and interior design and the logical rules of construction.

His research, which straddles tradition and innovation, proves, as did the teachings of Heinrich Tessenow and his best students, that the essence of architecture does not lie in consumer-oriented, loud gestures. Rather, it is to be found in sophisticated, patient and poetic research that simultaneously pursues a constant search for deeper understanding and future-oriented further development of constructive and design skills.

In this way, Florian Nagler's work becomes a deeper expression of an ethical and intellectual attitude that transcends disciplinary boundaries and is also significant for cultural thinking in contemporary society as a whole.

About the Heinrich Tessenow Medal

The Heinrich Tessenow Medal is awarded in memory of the great architect, master builder and university lecturer to European personalities who have made outstanding contributions to architectural, craft and industrial design and to education in residential and building culture, or whose work corresponds to the diverse life's work of Heinrich Tessenow.

Previous winners include Kay Fisker, Hans Döllgast, Wilhelm Wagenfeld, Sverre Fehn, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Peter Zumthor, Giorgio Grassi, David Chipperfield, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Gilles Perraudin, Peter Märkli, Miroslav Sik, Sergison Bates, Richard Sennett, Roger Diener, Alberto Campo Baeza, Winfried Brenne, Lacaton Vassal, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Quintus Miller & Paula Maranta, Shelley McNamara & Yvonne Farrell, Stephanie Macdonald & Tom Emerson, Maruša Zorec, Bernard Quirot.

The award is presented by the Heinrich Tessenow Society.

Images

You can find images of the award winner Florian Nagler and his work, as well as the event programme (in German), available for download via the cloud link below:

<https://cloud.hcu-hamburg.de/nextcloud/s/n7JcKbmMPQd896i>

- Research buildings in Bad Aibling — Sebastian Schels, PK Odessa
- Conversion of Hofgut Karpfsee - Sebastian Schels, PK Odessa
- Reconstruction of St. Martha, Nuremberg - Sebastian Schels, PK Odessa
- Entrance building, Glentleiten Open-Air Museum - Sebastian Schels, PK Odessa
- Visitor centre in Dachau (image title SM595-060) — Stefan Müller-Naumann
- Portrait of Florian Nagler — Johanna Nagler

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HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU)

HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU) was founded in 2006 as a university for architecture and metropolitan development. As a technical university, its research and teaching focus on key future topics in construction and urban development. Its teaching and research in architecture, engineering, planning, humanities and social sciences address the lives and work of people in urban areas, particularly in metropolitan regions. There is a special focus on the cross-cutting issues of digitalisation, social justice and climate change.

Its 45 professors and around 2,500 students come together at the Henning-Voscherau-Platz campus in the eponymous HafenCity. As Europe's largest inner-city urban development project, the HafenCity offers the special appeal of an urban laboratory on the doorstep.

The Hamburg Architecture Summer 2026

From May to July 2026, the HAMBURG ARCHITECTURE SUMMER will celebrate a FESTIVAL OF BUILT CULTURE at numerous venues across the city, featuring over 250 events centred on architecture, built culture, urban history, landscape planning and potential forms of coexistence.

The HAMBURG ARCHITECTURE SUMMER sees itself as a citizens' initiative for building culture. It has been held every three to four years since 1994, and will take place for the 11th time in 2026. Exhibitions, films, performances, workshops, guided tours and lectures in various artistic and participatory formats offer visitors an extraordinary variety.