



Bauen mit Backstein

Press information

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Fritz-Höger-Award for Brick Architecture renamed

Renowned Architecture prize proceeds with new name

BERLIN. At its annual general meeting, the Initiative Bauen mit Backstein (The Brick Building Initiative) decided to conduct future iterations of its award for outstanding architecture under a new name. The decision was made based on a new study commissioned to the Hamburg historian Prof. Thomas Großbölting on Fritz Höger's Nazi past. The study will be published shortly.

"Our prize stands for a progressive understanding of architecture and for the creative potential of the building material in international architecture", Ernst Buchow says, chairman of the initiative. Since its foundation in 2008, the competition has steadily become more international and diverse. With more than 600 projects submitted and great international resonance, the award now occupies an established place in the world of architecture.

The great importance of the architect Fritz Höger and his buildings for modern architecture is undisputed, Buchow emphasizes. But it is now also clear that a contemporary evaluation of Fritz Höger's past has to be more critical. In contrast to 15 to 20 years ago, today's research does not focus solely on the direct perpetration of crime, but also on causes and activities that paved the way for the Nazi regime. Letters and writings by Höger, that have now been evaluated, bear witness to nationalistic-folkish, racist and anti-Semitic views, whose implications and consequences needed to be examined more closely.

For this purpose, The Brick Building Initiative supported by the Bund Deutscher Architektinnen und Architekten BDA (Association of German Architects), asked the Hamburg historian Prof. Thomas Großbölting, an expert in this kind of contemporary historical research, to conduct a thorough study on Fritz Höger's Nazi ties. The analysis, which had not been carried out in this depth before, concludes: "Höger is highly nationalistic-folkish and racist, but mostly in a regional-northern German mindset. [...] He already shared many ideologems with National Socialism in his early political socialization. He accentuated them between 1933 and 1945 out of opportunism and clung to several of these ideas even after 1945." Höger was clearly a National Socialist, "without, however, being involved with the regime in an important position."



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Academic reviewers usually refrain from recommending direct courses of action. Thomas Großbölting comments on his own study are accordingly cautious. "If you wanted to choose a name for a major architecture prize today, Höger would probably not be in first place. His political convictions are not at all compatible with the free democratic basic order."

The Brick Building Initiative, however, sees the expert opinion as a clear basis for the decision to give the architecture prize a new name that gives lasting expression to the international and progressive character of the competition.

The Brick Building Initiative plans to announce the new name in September and to suspend the existing name until that time. "The step, which we have weighed carefully, was not an easy one for us", Ernst Buchow says. His brickworks itself had produced the bricks for Höger's Chilehaus. "An architecture award must take these findings into account and renew itself with a signal for the future in order to live up to its standards."

Further Information:

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Additional Information on the Fritz Höger Award 2020 for Brick Architecture is accessible at www.fritz-hoeger-preis.com/en

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