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**PLUS**

GERMAN ARCHITECTURE  
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CULTURE, TRAVEL & MORE

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The 'Oskar Residence'.

# Devoted to urban living

**Regarding both form and content, the reference framework of Stefan Forster Architekten is the ever-evolving urban landscape of the European city.**

TEXT: CORNELIA BRELOWSKI | PHOTOS: LISA FARKAS

Founded in Darmstadt in 1989, the office has been situated in the city of Frankfurt am Main, Germany's financial capital, since 1995. With a thriving team counting more than 50 co-workers "with a burning passion for architecture", the office has long established its focus on urban residential construction for major cities.

Architect Stefan Forster states: "Architecture can only be sustainable by providing a contribution to the surroundings. Here, residential housing acts as the key element and concerns all social layers." Beginning with the analysis of a site and

its history, Stefan Forster Architekten seek user-friendly solutions, while constantly revaluing the boundaries between individual, house community and urban society. Flexible layouts, view-protected outdoor spaces and the creation of spacious vestibules mark the unique quality of Stefan Forster Architekten as well as the usage of robust materials and state-of-the-art construction and house technology. Promoting communication between inhabitants while ensuring enough private space, the team believes in creating "individual yet connected housing within the urban context".

Stefan Forster Architekten consistently pursue their goal of further evolving the cityscape through an interplay between research and applied theory. For the 'Oskar Residence', situated by the banks of the river Main, a variety of quality criteria was met by the office, resulting in winning both first price and a contract. The new residential complex connects with Germany's urban building traditions of the '20s, bowing to the permanent further development of residential housing typology. A mix of private investors and developers, housing companies and cooperatives form the financing clientele. The spectrum therefore ranges from high-end apartments to subsidised rental flats.

The Stefan Forster plan won the competition for the 'Oskar Residence' due to its

high-quality design of the site's corner situation, set between Oskar-von-Miller-Straße and Flößerbrücke. The jury especially honored the high-value, structured façade solution as well as the overall layout concept of two connected building sections. Fitting aesthetically into the context of the borough, the design shows an eight-storey residential block along the road with space for 30 condominiums connected to a ten-storey boarding house towards the crossing point. The latter, a prominent 'tower' building is 32 metres in height and houses 60 apartments. It marks the corner situation and as such stresses the important bridgehead. All condominiums and apartments are provided with individual loggias and both building sections feature a brick shell, in two different shades respectively. The darker shade of the boarding house façade was chosen as a counterpoint to the neighbouring residential building to the south. "The dark brick shell of the tower provides it with a prominent role," says Stefan Forster, "Together with the revitalising building of the





The new city block bordering Adickesallee.



The new city block bordering Adickesallee.

former employment agency vis-à-vis, it marks the entrance to the east section like a gate and complements the broad layout of the Saatchi&Saatchi building as well as the twin towers of the European Central Bank in an almost baroque urban development triad.”

Another recently completed Stefan Forster project, a new student housing complex in Frankfurt’s Nordend area has already garnered much attention. Set on a plot of the combined size of three soccer fields in close vicinity to the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, a students’ home with 332 apartments was created complete with communal rooms, shop and an underground car park. The design of the U-shaped building is oriented on the surrounding structures. Forming a new city block bordering Adickesallee, the side sections are suitable for future annexes while the varying height of the corners, the highest being the east corner with nine floors, “react” visually to the surrounding urban

scape. The street facing, red-brick façade reminds of large-scale industrial buildings rather than traditional apartment houses. A broad central avant-corps underlines the construction symmetry while the back shows an alternating array of balconies as a playful contrast to the imposing front.

The Frankfurt Eulengasse residential buildings look like a merger between modernist and traditional German construction, showing a combination of white façades and pointed roofs. Again, loggias provide for privacy, a recurring theme with Stefan Forster Architekten. Feeling at home with guaranteed privacy is a key aspect for the architect who left his own provincial home at an early age and studied architecture in ‘80s Berlin where he quickly connected to the charm of classic urban block construction with its roots in the Wilhelminian ‘Gründerzeit’, as well as its modernist Bauhaus-related typology. The latter was underlined by a visit to Tel Aviv’s White City and in consequence,

both modernist bright façades as well as a generous application of high-value brick stone have found their way into Stefan Forster designs.

The latest example of this dynamic yet grounded mix in style is the complex in Frankfurt’s Windeckstraße. In the prospering Frankfurt neighborhood around the European Central Bank tower, Stefan Forster architekten have recently realised a new residential building. The up-and-coming former working class area is situated close to the harbour and the Martin Elsaesser market hall from 1928. Set into this thriving borough, the new L-shaped building consists of 48 living units with a narrow line of front gardens. The balconies, strong reminders of Bauhaus aesthetics, add a streamlined yet organic outlook to the bright brick façade which features friendly wooden window profiles. The slightly recessing entrance area is both protected and enhanced by the dynamic design of the balconies. Despite its modernist appearance,

the building effortlessly harmonises with the surrounding 'Gründerzeit' architecture. Here, Stefan Forster Architekten again implement the aforementioned, bridging combination of aesthetics that marks their architectural language.

Apart from constant award-winning recognition in Germany, Stefan Forster Architekten have won numerous awards on a national and international level, such as the Best Architects award, the European Urban Development Prize as well as the Sir Robert Matthew prize for residential building by the International Union of Architects (UIA).

For 2017, Stefan Forster Architekten, at present counting 50 co-workers, will further expand. As the architect states: "Housing shortage is still a key challenge in prospering major cities and a central point of the debate around growth and affordable residential space. As a leading office of residential construction specialists in Germany, our work is more in demand than ever."

[www.sfa.de](http://www.sfa.de)



Complex in Frankfurt's Windeckstraße.



Eulengasse residential buildings.

