

Press Release May 2026

SCHELLING ARCHITECTURE PRIZE AND ARCHITECTURE THEORY PRIZE 2026

Today, more than ever, the majority of the existing built environment serves as a crucial starting point for any sustainable architecture. For the Board of Trustees, the thematic focus of the 2026 Schelling Architecture and Theory Prize—“Building on the Built”—is an architecture that conserves resources, carries history forward, and simultaneously creates new spatial, sensory, and social qualities. The existing conditions are carefully analyzed, interpreted within their context, and transformed into new relationships through targeted interventions.

With this in mind, three international teams have been nominated; each will briefly present their work to the public and the selection committee at the official award ceremony.

The award ceremony will be held on

November 18, 2026 at 6 pm
Filmtheater Schauburg Karlsruhe, Marienstr. 16

Please save this date today.

Excerpts from the jury's reasons:

Abruptarhitectura, Bucharest

Their architecture does not begin with the grand gesture, but with attentiveness: to what is already there, to the measure of available means, to the stories of a place, and to the people who should be able to understand a house and recognize themselves within it. Abruptarhitectura shows that contemporary architecture does not need to be spectacular in order to be relevant. It can be gentle and precise, familiar and new, rooted and open. An architecture that does not dominate, but takes care – and becomes strong precisely because of that.

AgwA, Brussels

The main activity of the Belgian office AgwA can be understood as “making spatial structures available” The term “disposition” refers to the notion of spatial arrangement and the actions that can be taken to influence a situation. Working on the renovation and transformation of existing buildings into striking spatial structures, the practise demonstrates the importance of rethinking existing structures for society and culture.

Søren Pihlmann, Copenhagen

Søren Pihlmann is nominated for the Schelling Architecture Award 2026 for his rigorous and forward-thinking approach to architecture as transformation. His work demonstrates how existing structures can become the foundation for new spatial, material, and cultural value. By advancing reuse as both an ecological imperative and an architectural language, Pihlmann redefines the potential of building with what already exists.

David Gissen, american architecture theorist, will be awarded the **Architecture Theory Prize 2026**.

In his book *The Architecture of Disability* (2022), David Gissen approaches architecture, city and landscape from the perspective of a vulnerable body, implicitly revealing how a growing flood of material and digital boundaries structures everyday life. Gissen writes about vulnerability not from a distance, but from lived experience - an experience that shapes his research as much as it shapes his language.

The Schelling Architecture Foundation was founded in Karlsruhe in 1992 by Trude Schelling-Karrer and Heinrich Klotz. An independent electoral board of trustees, which is continuously renewed, decides on the nominations and the awarding of prizes every two years. Board of Trustees 2026: Angelika Fitz, Kaye Geipel, Kathrin Golda-Pongratz, Jette Hopp, Georg Vrachliotis, Tobias Wallisser, Ludwig Wappner.