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Manifesta 16 Ruhr: Dates and key approaches announced - International Biennial Association

4-5 minuten



Former Church of St Suitbert, Gelsenkirchen © Photo: Dirk Rose / Manifesta 16 Ruhr

Manifesta 16 Ruhr

June 12– October 4, 2026

Title TBA

First Creative Mediator: Josep Bohigas

[Manifesta](#)

The 16th edition of **Manifest – European Nomadic Biennial**, will take place in **Germany’s Ruhr Area** from **21 June to 4 October 2026**. Spanning over 100 days, the biennial will unfold across multiple cities in the region, featuring artistic, urban, and social interventions that respond to the Ruhr’s post-industrial landscape and evolving civic identity.

Building on the momentum of **Manifesta 15**, which took place in **Barcelona** and its surrounding metropolitan area in 2024 with over 291,000 visits, the Manifesta 16 team has developed a clear curatorial and urban framework during an intensive pre-biennial research phase. This approach reflects Manifesta’s core mission: to investigate how **art and culture can inspire civic engagement and catalyze social change through inclusive and participatory practices**.

A key feature of **Manifesta 16 Ruhr** will be its engagement with **former church buildings**, many of which are being closed, deconsecrated, and sold off across Germany. Nearly **half of the country’s 40,000 churches** are projected to face redundancy in the coming decade. In this context, the biennial proposes to **reimagine these spaces as sites of artistic exchange and community life**.

“One of the urgent questions we’re addressing in this 16th edition of Manifesta—relevant not only for Germany but globally—is how art, culture and architecture can offer new perspectives on former church buildings, which are closing their doors at a rapid rate. How can these spaces, once sacred, now serve as vital sites for community life and social cohesion? ‘This is not a church’ was our starting point—but the real question is: what can it become?” — **Hedwig Fijen, Director, Manifesta 16 Ruhr**

This question resonates deeply within the **Ruhr's architectural and social history**. Once a key industrial center for coal and steel, the region experienced widespread destruction during the Second World War. The post-war period saw an ambitious phase of reconstruction, with new architectural and civic models emerging across the urban fabric. Manifesta 16 will build upon this legacy, using the **region's churches as symbolic and functional sites for contemporary inquiry**.

To guide this vision, **Catalan architect and urbanist Josep Bohigas** has been appointed **First Creative Mediator** of Manifesta 16. Renowned for his work on Barcelona's "superblocks"—a progressive model of urban planning that prioritizes **community, sustainability, and liveability**—Bohigas brings a deeply civic approach to Manifesta's upcoming edition. He is developing an Urban Vision that will be presented later this year. This vision will guide the biennial's artistic and urban interventions and propose ways in which neighbourhoods can become more dynamic and focussed on social cohesion. Bohigas's leadership reflects Manifesta's **long-term ambition to map European cities and regions** through experimental curatorial methods. His previous collaborations with former Barcelona mayor **Ada Colau** focused on enhancing **urban connectivity and social resilience**, themes that remain central to the Ruhr edition.

Central to the run up phase to the biennial is a series of **Manifesta 16 Citizen Consultations**, beginning across the Ruhr Area in **May 2025**. Designed as a bottom-up process, these gatherings will engage residents in shaping the themes and structures of the biennial. The outcomes of the

consultations will be published in **September 2025**, directly feeding into the participatory mediation process.

In parallel, Manifesta 16 will launch an **Open Call** in summer 2025, inviting regional **social and cultural actors** to contribute proposals for the transformation of their own neighbourhoods. Selected projects will be featured in the biennial's programme, further anchoring the event within the local context.

In addition to these initiatives, the biennial will announce its **Second Creative Mediator(s)**, **artistic framework**, and **participating cities** later this summer.

For more information, visit www.manifesta.org.

MANIFESTA 16 Ruhr