

Annexe 2 Manifesta 16 Ruhr Venues

25th of September, 2025
St. Josef Kirche, Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Duisburg

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Duisburg

Kulturkirche Liebfrauen

The Catholic Liebfrauenkirche (1958–1971 by Dr. Toni Hermanns), located in Duisburg's lively city centre, is one of the most important post-war modernist churches in the Rhine and Ruhr areas. It stands as a testament to civic commitment toward the reorientation of secular churches. With its striking two-storey, cubic structure, the Liebfrauenkirche presents a refined fusion of art and architecture.

The interior is defined by a folding wall construction made of glass-fibre-reinforced Plexiglas. The church's furnishings include preserved elements from its war-destroyed predecessor, as well as exhibits from the Vatican pavilion at the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels—including the altar with canopy and cross, and mural paintings surrounding mosaics. While Kulturkirche Liebfrauen still contains rooms used for religious services, the Upper Church has been transformed into an art and cultural centre, with the primary aim of promoting dialogue between religions and cultures.



Kulturkirche Liebfrauen, Duisburg © Daniel Sadrowski

Essen

St. Gertrud

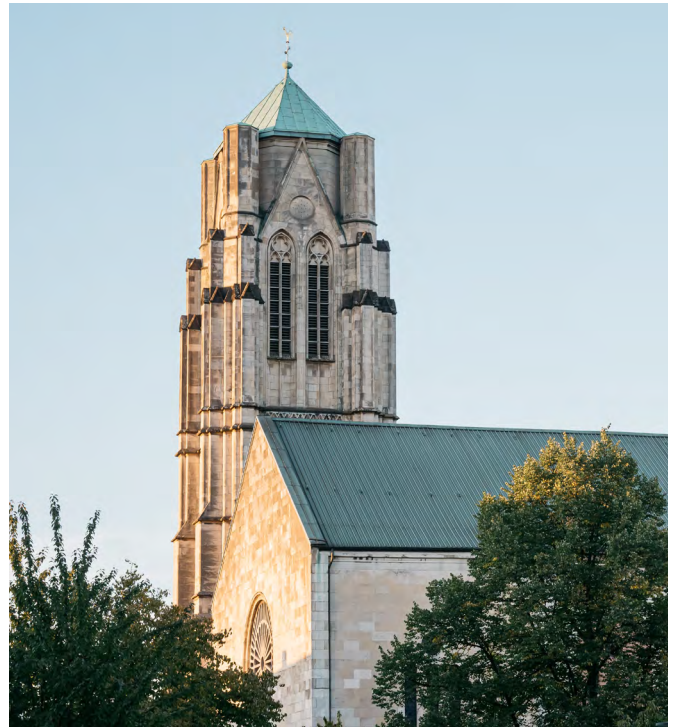
Located near Essen's commercial streets, the historic St. Gertrud Church (built in 1877 and reconstructed in 1955 by Emil Jung) stands in stark contrast to the surrounding bustle. St. Gertrud's original neo-Romanesque brick architecture from the late 19th century suffered severe damage during the Second World War. The church was rebuilt in a simplified style, and this "broken" architecture lends the building its distinctive appearance.

The church's transformative character is also reflected in recent developments regarding its function: After the final religious service was held in June 2025, the church is currently transforming into a centre for art, culture and education. The state-recognised private University of Fine Arts Essen (HBK) consolidated its locations within the church complex which now houses HBK's offices and seminar rooms.

Kunstraum Heilig Geist

Just steps away from the bustling Zollverein complex, one of the most visited heritage sites in Germany, the Heilig-Geist Art Space offers a cultural experience in an extraordinary setting. Housed in the former Heilig-Geist Church (1955–57), a striking architectural landmark by Pritzker Prize laureate Gottfried Böhm, this venue blends historical depth with contemporary vision.

Since being placed under historic preservation in early 2019, the church and its surrounding parish buildings have been reimagined as vibrant centres for cultural innovation. Today, Kunstraum Heilig Geist, owned by German gallerist Johann König, is a destination for those seeking inspiration at the intersection of heritage and contemporary creativity.



St. Gertrud Kirche, Essen © Daniel Sadrowski



Kunstraum Heilig Geist, Essen © Claudia Dreyse

Markuskirche

Located in the residential district of Essen-Frohnhausen, the Markuskirche (1961–63 by Wolfgang Müller-Zantop and Heinz Kahlenborn) is a striking example of early 20th century sacred architecture. Reflecting the key principles of Reformed church design from that era, it features clear, purposeful forms, minimal ornamentation, and a spatial atmosphere reduced to its essential elements. With its tall tower, bright facade and functional hall layout, Markuskirche is a place of focus and simplicity, now reimagined as a potential resonance chamber for contemporary art and dialogue.

Surrounded by flat-roofed buildings from the same period—such as the adjacent nursery school and community centre, both built in a similar architectural style, Markuskirche also stands as a compelling example of interconnected community architecture.



Markuskirche, Essen © Daniel Sadrowski

Gelsenkirchen

Thomaskirche

Though modest in scale, Thomaskirche (1965 by Fred Janowski and Albrecht Wittig) stands out with its remarkable crystalline form, a bold expression of modernity in the mid-1960s that continues to make a remarkable impact on its urban surroundings today. Situated in Gelsenkirchen-Erle, a district shaped by suburban development, the church was conceived as a purpose-built replacement for the previous “shop church” located beneath a parish apartment; its compact size reflecting the needs of the growing community at the time. Architecturally, the building is defined by its contrasting forms: the eastern end curves upward in a bow-like shape, while the western



Thomaskirche, Gelsenkirchen © Manifesta 16 Ruhr

facade is sharply cut off to accommodate the main entrance. Inside, Thomaskirche embodies a conscious departure from traditional liturgical hierarchies. Instead, it presents a unified artistic and architectural vision designed to foster community engagement.

With its innovative spatial concept and bold modernist language, Thomaskirche ranks among the most significant examples of Protestant church architecture in North Rhine-Westphalia during the 1960s.

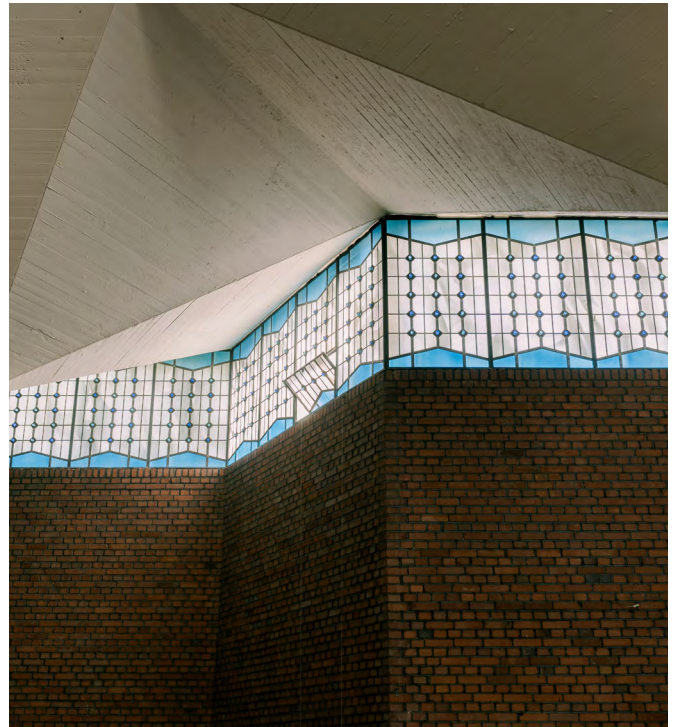
St. Bonifatius

Among the church buildings in Gelsenkirchen, St. Bonifatius (1963 by Ernst von Rudloff) stands out as a compelling example of how former houses of worship can be creatively repurposed. Originally a post-war church from the 1960s, the building was reimaged in the context of Urbane Künste Ruhr. This artistic organisation transformed the former church into a vibrant meeting place, fostering close collaboration between artists, local residents and a wider community of stakeholders.

Continuing this evolution, Manifesta 16 Ruhr will further transform St. Bonifatius into an exhibition venue, inviting visitors to engage in creative experiences and cultural exchange.

St. Anna

The St. Anna Church in Gelsenkirchen-Schalke-Nord is an impressive example of how a sacred space can be transformed into a lively centre for community and inclusion. Originally consecrated in 1908, the first church was destroyed during World War II and rebuilt in 1970 by the architect Dr. Paul Günther. The modern building captivates with its harmonious integration of architecture and functionality. A special highlight is the glass artwork by Johannes Beeck from 1972, which gives the interior a distinctive atmosphere. Since



St. Bonifatius, Gelsenkirchen © Anton Vichrov



St. Anna, Gelsenkirchen © Claudia Dreysee

its closure in 2007, the church has found a new purpose: the Sozialwerk St. Georg has taken over the premises and transformed it into an inclusive meeting centre.

St. Anna has turned from an architectural landmark to a vibrant place of encounter and solidarity—a prime example of the successful repurposing of a church building into a social hub.

St. Josef

Among the venues of Manifesta 16, St. Josef (1894–1896 by Lambert von Fisenne, 1912 sacristy construction by Josef Franke) holds a unique position: unlike the selected modernist buildings, it features neo-Gothic and Classicist elements. Closed since 2023, the church's parish house has served as Manifesta 16's headquarters since summer 2025. The church hall itself is planned to host pre-biennial events as well as key highlights of the biennial's main programme.



St. Josef, Gelsenkirchen © Anton Vichrov

Bochum

Gethsemane-Kirche

Bochum's Gethsemane Church (1947–1950 by Otto Bartning) is a remarkable example of a Protestant Notkirche (emergency church). Emergency churches served as temporary places of worship set up quickly to provide spiritual support and a gathering space during times of crisis or transition. Especially after World War II, parts of large damaged church buildings were often separated by temporary walls and ceilings and used as emergency churches until the complete restoration of the entire building was possible. The parish received a prefabricated church kit from the Relief Organization of the Protestant Churches

in Germany, which provided the essential structural elements made of wood and iron. The community members themselves built the structure, filling the walls with cleaned bricks salvaged from the rubble of the former community centre.

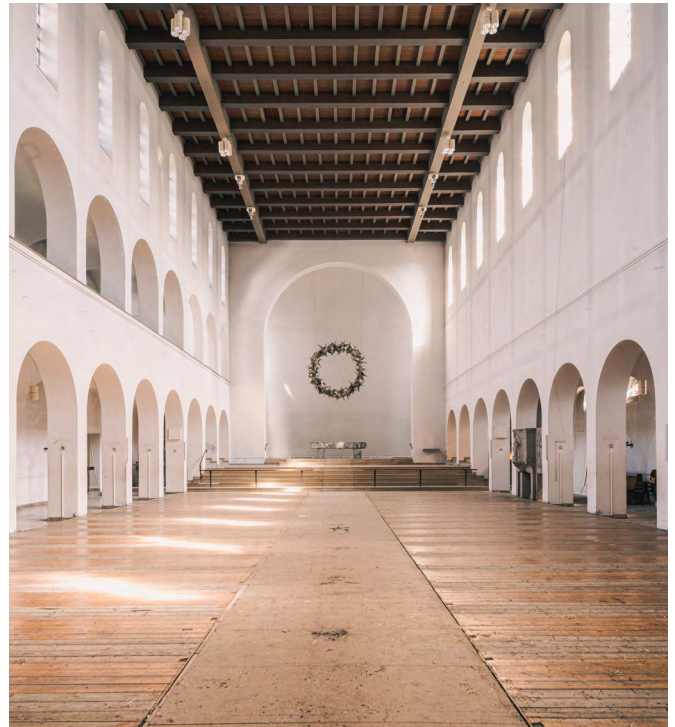
Kunstkirche Christ-König

The Christ-König Kirche (1932 by Franz Schneider) in Bochum is a reconstruction of a church originally built for a Franciscan monastery. Its simple design embodies the Franciscan ideal of poverty. After its closure in 1998, the church was repurposed as an exhibition venue during the European Capital of Culture celebrations in 2010.

As part of the Diocese of Essen's restructuring, the church's role as an art space is now intended to inspire the parish's future transformation. Current plans envision converting the building into a puppet production house.

St. Ludgerus

Nestled in the heart of Bochum, St. Ludgerus Church (1966 by Hans Joachim Lohmeyer) stands as a testament to postwar resilience and architectural innovation. Through its striking triangular shape, its clean lines and bold geometric proportions, St. Ludgerus captures the essence of modernist design while honouring its sacred purpose.



Kunstkirche Christ-König, Bochum © Anton Vichrov



St. Ludgerus, Bochum © Anton Vichrov

St. Anna

This church building (1929 by Wilhelm Peter) is located right in the middle of Bochum's Goldhamme district west of the city centre, which has been traditionally associated with the steel industry and its workers.



St. Anna, Bochum © Claudia Dreysee