

## Press Release

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Frankfurt am Main, 13 September 2023

**Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main Region will be *World Design Capital 2026*.**

In a video conference on September 12, 2023, the World Design Organization (WDO)®, headquartered in Montreal, Canada, announced that Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main region will receive the globally prestigious title of *World Design Capital® 2026*.

With the theme *Design for Democracy: Atmospheres for a better life*, Frankfurt RheinMain was among the two finalists selected by the WDO's international committee representing all continents and managed to prevail over Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The title will be ceremoniously awarded to Frankfurt RheinMain at WDO's annual *World Design Assembly™* in Tokyo, Japan from October 27-29, 2023. In the first quarter of 2024, the *World Design Capital Signing Ceremony* will take place, at which the Host City Agreement will be officially signed. This is the starting point for *World Design Capital 2026*.

In the video conference, WDO's Managing Director, Bertrand Derome, thanked the application committee for the convincing and comprehensive application and congratulated Frankfurt RheinMain on winning the title of *World Design Capital 2026*. The bid committee particularly praised the application's theme, developed by Prof. Matthias Wagner K, which will have a great impact not only regionally, but above all worldwide. The committee was also impressed by the successful and impressive preparatory work that had taken place over the course of the application in the form of numerous events, many contributors and a tour of the entire Rhine-Main region. The committee was also particularly impressed by the cooperation between culture, design, business and society, which conveyed a great sense of community in the Frankfurt RheinMain region. As part of the evaluation process, members of the WDC Organizing Committee comprised of Bertrand Derome and Eunjoo Maing attended a two-day site visit of the Frankfurt RhineMain region in July 2023 to meet with numerous local stakeholders.

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The title of *World Design Capital*® (*WDC*) is awarded every two years by the *WDO* and is an internationally recognized program initiated from the design industry as a tribute to cities and regions for their effective use of design to promote cultural, economic, social and environmental development. During a year-long program of events, the designated city or region presents itself as a center for design, creativity and innovation. It becomes part of an international network. In the past, the international award has gone to cities such as Helsinki, Cape Town, Lille Métropole, Seoul and Mexico City, among others. These cities have become prominent design centers that still benefit from their designation as World Design Capital.

For more than two years, the team of the project company headed by Prof. Matthias Wagner K, Director of the Museum Angewandte Kunst, has been working on the application on behalf of the City of Frankfurt am Main and the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain and has been making considerable progress. The period was used to start a joint movement with various cooperation partners and participatory formats as well as actors, initiatives and supporters: "I am very pleased that Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main Region will bear the title World Design Capital 2026. We did not apply for the title in order to adorn ourselves with it, but what was important throughout the entire period was that the application should be a movement that stands for a democratic culture of freedom. And we succeeded in doing that. Our tour of the Rhine-Main region, numerous discussions and conferences have already shown how great the need is in Frankfurt RhineMain to talk about the issues that affect our future. This is already resulting in a widespread regional network, a new community on which the movement can build and which counters a wait-and-see "carry on like this" with a constructive "do things differently together" that goes far beyond the art and design scene. The project catalog that emerged from the application is an impressive fund from which to draw now. With the title, we are building on this foundation that has already been created and thank all the initiators, the designers, all those involved, the cities and communities and the sponsorship," says Prof. Matthias Wagner K, director of the Museum Angewandte Kunst and head of the application.

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"I congratulate the citizens of Frankfurt and the RheinMain region for the title *World Design Capital 2026*, which is a merit of collaborative efforts. The title offers a great opportunity for the field of action culture, which was an extensive part of the application. Together with Design for Democracy, we want to focus on the existing cultural venues in the Frankfurt RhineMain region and those that need to be redesigned, which seize the opportunity to promote the common good via the inherent cultural assets they convey with their own productions and events, and to spread their charisma to the world. We are all looking forward to being the host city and region for a large number of visitors," says Dr. Ina Hartwig, Head of the Department of Culture and Science in Frankfurt am Main.

"Our common goal was to hit the big time: *Frankfurt RheinMain. World Design Capital 2026*. We have achieved this goal, and in a few days the work will really begin. Until then, I am above all proud of our city and the entire Rhine-Main Region and grateful for the great team that has already achieved so much in such a short time. The city and region have impressed with their economic and urban quality, but also as a dynamic and resilient location with outstanding future potential. Networking with each other is tremendously important and would have remained as a lasting value even if the final outcome had not been in our favour. Now the title is an additional powerful impulse for the international perception and development of our creative location. It gives Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main region a wide range of opportunities to give projects room for discussion, development and realization, and thus perhaps also add a new facet to the high good of democracy," says Stephanie Wüst, head of the department of economics, law and city marketing in Frankfurt am Main.

"The successful application of Frankfurt and the RhineMain region as World Design Capital 2026 is a shining example of the power of cultural cooperation at all levels. I am proud that we can now host this important event together with our partners and bring the cultural identity of Frankfurt and the entire region closer to the world. At the same time, this designation will further enhance the attractiveness of our metropolitan region and promote the idea of networking within the region as well as with other cities and nations. Together, we are shaping the future through culture, and

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the world will look to Frankfurt RheinMain as a source of creative inspiration," says Karin Wolff, Managing Director of Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, delighted with the successful application of Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main region as World Design Capital 2026.

Frankfurt RheinMain applied with the theme *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*. The goal of this proposed 2026 program is to create a sustainable, participative international center of design, design disciplines and design methods for people from all over the world here in the Rhine-Main region. A hub for all existing design initiatives, grassroots initiatives, universities with a design focus, NGOs, representatives from society, business, politics, law, technology, science and culture, as well as citizens on the basis of illustrative historical design upheavals, existing and new projected projects. And last but not least, design should give Frankfurt and the region a common identity. Under the common denominator Design for Democracy, targeted work can now be done on the implementation of projects in cooperation with all cities and municipalities in the region. The title *World Design Capital 2026* will ensure international attention.

In the spirit of *Design for Democracy. Atmospheres for a better life*, the application defined twelve fields of action that are most pressing in shaping social interaction. They determine and structure the basic work as a platform provider for the development of the program for World Design Capital 2026: Working, Building, Education, Energy, Health, Industry, Consumption, Culture, Mobility, Public Space, Sports and Living. More than 100 projects were submitted from across the Frankfurt RheinMain region for the fields of action, and they now represent impressive value for the city and its surrounding region. These include as major projects: Designkioske Frankfurt RheinMain, A Step Ahead - Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, New Campus University of Design (HfG), Offenbach am Main, House of Democracy, Frankfurt am Main, Life Science Hub - biomindz, Mainz, Ropeway High\*Line, Offenbach-Frankfurt, Station Mitte, Offenbach am Main, Cultural Campus, Wiesbaden. In addition, more than 60 projects from the entire region found their way into the application.

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The planning for 2026 will be presented at a press conference in the fall 2023.

The sponsors of the application *Frankfurt RheinMain. World Design Capital 2026* are the City of Frankfurt under the leadership of the Department of Culture and Science and the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain - including the cities of Wiesbaden, Darmstadt, Offenbach and Hanau and additionally the City of Mainz as well as the districts of Offenbach, Hochtaunus, Main-Taunus, Rheingau-Taunus and municipalities in the region - as well as the State of Hesse, represented by the Prime Minister Boris Rhein. The State of Hesse and the City of Frankfurt am Main are the largest financial sponsors and supporters of this undertaking.

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Full application at:  
[designfordemocracy.com](https://designfordemocracy.com)  
Username: Application-WDC-2026  
Password: FrankfurtRheinMain

Project company:  
Design FRM gGmbH  
at the Museum Angewandte Kunst  
Schaumainkai 17, 60594 Frankfurt am Main, Germany  
Managing partners:  
Prof. Roland Lambrette, Prof. Matthias Wagner K

Director/CEO: Prof. Matthias Wagner K  
Project Management: Olaf E. Ginter, Daniela Kupetz (until 11/2022)  
Project curator: Anna Scheuermann  
Project advisor: Prof. Roland Lambrette  
Project Assistance: Helena Kiefer

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