The
International
High-Rise
Award

Internationaler
Hochhaus
Preis

Background Information
International High-Rise Award 2026/27

Frankfurt/Main, November 3, 2026

Winner
ZIN, Brussels/ Belgium

Architects
51N4E Brussels, Belgium / l'AUC Paris, France / Jaspers-Eyers Architects
Brussels, Belgium

Client
Befimmo, Brussels, Belgium

International High-Rise Award 2026/27 Statuette

Exhibition
Best High-Rises 2026/27 – The International High-Rise Award

International High-Rise Award 2026/27 Partners

DAM Deutsches Architekturmuseum

Deka

Stadt Frankfurt am Main

The International High-Rise Award

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Winner



Foto: © Kirsten Bucher

ZIN, Brussels
Winner of The International High-Rise Award 2026/27

Architects: 51N4E Brussels, Belgium / l'AUC Paris, France / Jaspers-Eyers Architects Brussels, Belgium
Client: Befimmo, Brussels
Function: Mixed-use development combining offices, residential units, a hotel, retail, sports facilities, and public green spaces
Hight: 129 m
Completion: September 2024
Location: Brussels

The ZIN project is an example of how to handle preexisting building fabric in contemporary high-rise construction. The new building does not simply replace the existing complex, but instead transforms the former World Trade Center towers WTC I and II into a forward-looking, mixed-use urban structure.
The project marks the starting point of a comprehensive renewal of the North Quarter, which has suffered for decades from monofunctional buildings and a lack of urban vitality.
Befimmo, which owns the towers, started by inviting internationally active architectural offices to participate in a competition. It soon became apparent that a conventional approach—demolition and new construction—was no longer viable. Befimmo then collaborated with the *bouwmeester maître architecte* (chief architect of Brussels) to organize a second, more open-ended, conceptual competition. Meanwhile, the towers were made accessible for interim use by a number of different institutions and initiatives.
The concept developed by the architectural offices 51N4E and l'AUC prevailed in the second competition. They were joined by Jaspers-Eyers as a third partner for the project's continuing development and implementation.

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Rather than fully demolishing the existing high-rises, the team decided to retain the two circulation cores and the five sublevels, which would be integrated into the new building. A slab, interleaved between the two cores, now links the two high-rises to form a larger unified building. The inserted structure does not have its own circulation core and has been given double-height stories. While this does not result in significantly more floor space, it does generate far more volume, and hence greater possibilities. The layouts, which extend across every second level, are not tailor-made, but flexible. The levels that are not connected to this inserted structure are independent of these areas and can be used as needed. This alternating arrangement is referred to by the project team as the “zebra” concept. In the eastern tower today, office and hotel spaces alternate, and, in the western tower, residential units alternate with office spaces. This form of mixed use results in a building that is lively not just during office hours, but remains an active part of the city’s life around the clock.
This means that ZIN stands not just for architectural renewal, but also for a paradigm shift in high-rise construction: rather than demolition and new construction, the focus is now on transformation, resource conservation, and mixed use.

Architects

51N4E Brussels, Belgium / l’AUC Paris, France / Jaspers-Eyers Architects Brussels, Belgium

51N4E is a self-steering collective that wants to empower people to be both autonomous and connected. It does so by organizing the supportive processes needed for a collaborative design culture. This collaboration platform combines the internal studios with a growing network of external partners. As such, it mirrors today’s complex reality and produces an ecosystem of knowledge
51N4E is rooted in Europe, where comfort slows down change. In light of what 51N4E views as a democratic and ecological deficit, transformation happens here in a space that is already occupied by multiple and often parallel realities. In this context, they use design to help overcome opposition and create integrated value and new experiences.

Founded in 1996, **l’AUC** has developed a practice at the intersection of architecture and urbanism, working across France, Europe and internationally.
l’AUC’s approach connects different scales of intervention, from the metropolitan territory to the architectural detail, bringing architectural and urban questions into continuous dialogue. Its methods of analysis and design draw together different disciplines, perspectives and forms of knowledge to engage with the complexity of each situation. Rather than applying

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predefined solutions, l'AUC develops approaches grounded in the specific conditions and potential of each context.
l'AUC brings together an international and multidisciplinary team around thirty architects and urban planners, working for public and private clients, including local authorities, development agencies and property developers. Depending on the project, the practice draws on an extensive network of collaborators involved in the making and transformation of cities and territories.
l'AUC designs, coordinates, and implements complex, long-term urban development projects as well as architectural projects across a wide range of programs and scales. l'AUC also contributes to architectural and urban culture through exhibitions, publications and curatorial projects.

Jaspers-Eyers Architects is a Belgian architectural firm with offices in Brussels, Leuven and Hasselt. They are mainly active in Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Eastern Europe and China.
Their bureau offers an extensive range of services, going from architectural design, programming, urban architecture and master planning to graphic and interior design. Their aim is to design for the daily life of people. Since sustainability is an obligation they hold as a society and as an architectural firm, ecology is a theme throughout all their projects.

Real Estate Developer

Befimmo, Brussels/ Belgium

Befimmo is the largest private office landlord in Belgium and Luxembourg. As an investor, operator and developer, it creates and manages high-quality work and livin environments in the region's main city centres. Its mixed-use portfolio, valued at €2.9 billion, comprises 33 office and mixed-use buildings and 11 coworking spaces, totalling 843,000 m². With its in-house partners Silversquare (coworking), Sparks (meeting venues) and NABS (interior design), Befimmo delivers tailor-made workspaces for a sustainable future.

International High-Rise Award 2026/27 Statuette

Thomas Demand is a renowned international artist and was brought on board by DekaBank to design the award statuette. Since 2004, the symbol of the International High-Rise Award has been recreated every two years and bestowed on the respective winner. The statuette symbolically illustrates that a building consists first and foremost of thoughts and ideas, which take shape during the design phase as concepts, plans, data, and presentations, and later as contracts, defect lists, agreements, and so on—a tower of documents representing the building's genesis from the initial ideas through to its completion.

For the tenth award, the artist designed a new version of the statuette. The work reflects further development and refinement in the technologies used. The statuette, based on a high-resolution scan of a model, consists of striking wafer-thin layers of titanium is produced using electron beam melting (EBM), a technology that enables the material to be built up in layers. The process, which is otherwise mainly used to manufacture medical implants and in the aerospace and automotive industries, is currently considered the most innovative method of rapid manufacturing.

Exhibition

Best High-Rises 2026/27 – The International High-Rise Award
November 5, 2026 – April 4, 2027

Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM)
Schaumainkai 43, 60596 Frankfurt/Main, Germany

Opening hours: Tue, Thu – Sun 11.00 – 18.00 / Wed 11.00 – 20.00 / Mon closed
Guided tours: On Saturdays and Sundays at 14.00

This year, 30 projects from 12 countries were nominated for The International High-Rise Award. This year's selection confirms the trend toward an increasing number of mixed-use high-rises, which have been a recurring feature among the finalists since 2014. Features that were once considered unique – such as extensive greenery or the construction of high-rise clusters – have long since become standard. Due to the shortage of suitable building sites and growing environmental awareness, the existing building stock is increasingly becoming a focus in high-rise construction. While China – followed by the United States and Australia – continues to account for the majority of high-rise construction, South America – particularly Argentina and Brazil – as well as Singapore are currently emerging as exciting hotspots for high-rise architecture

Best High-Rises 2026/27 presents 30 of the most exciting recently completed high-rise projects that combine sustainability, external form and internal spatial qualities, and social aspects into exemplary designs that point the way to the future. The exhibition presents all nominated buildings. The award-winning ZIN in Brussels by 51N4E, l'AUC, and Jaspers-Eyers Architects; the finalists AGE360 in Curitiba by Architects Office and Triptyque; Tencent Tower in Guangzhou by Atelier Jean Nouvel; 88 Walker in Sydney by Fitzpatrick + Partners, and One Pearl Bank in Singapore by Serie Architects and Multiply Architects are documented in the exhibition through models, large-format photos, drawings, texts, and films.

The International High-Rise Award

Internationaler Hochhaus Preis

Four additional high-rise projects are featured outside of the competition: FOUR Frankfurt (headquarters of DekaBank) and three buildings by BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group (partner Brian Yang is a member of this year's jury).

Exhibition catalogue
Best High-Rises 2026/27
The International High-Rise Award / Internationaler Hochhaus Preis



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International High-Rise Award 2026/27 Partners

City of Frankfurt/Main
Frankfurt is the dynamic financial and cultural center with Germany's most impressive skyline. Thanks to its outstanding infrastructure, Frankfurt at the center of the FrankfurtRhineMain region is not only very easy to reach, but also very well networked. With some 60,000 companies, 650,000 jobs, 248 square kilometers of space, and just over 780,000 inhabitants from 180 different nations, Frankfurt is a vibrant and diverse metropolis where everything is close at hand. Renowned sights, such as the Imperial Cathedral and the Paulskirche, the cradle of German democracy, are both located not far from the high-rises, as are Frankfurt's riverside museums. These museums form the core of Frankfurt's museum world, an impressive synthesis of attractive cultural highlights and exciting urban planning. The city's opera and theater companies are also outstanding ambassadors for Frankfurt as a city of culture, captivating audiences both locally and internationally with their artistic work. The city of Frankfurt skillfully bridges the gap between the traces of the past and contemporary architecture—and thus between tradition and modernity—and stands for remarkable continuity at the highest level.

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Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM), Frankfurt/Main
The Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM) was opened in 1984 as the first architecture museum in Germany and is considered one of the most renowned addresses in Europe for historical and contemporary architecture. The focus is on changing exhibitions on national and international architecture and urban development themes of the 20th/21st century, presented in an iconic building of postmodernism with the house-in-house by architect Oswald Mathias Ungers. As a discussion centre for current issues, it organizes conferences and workshops, issues numerous publications and is represented in national and international award juries. The permanent exhibition ‘On building’, redesigned and opened in 2026, uses numerous model panoramas and exhibits from DAM exhibitions to illustrate the history of architectural development as well as the architectural discourse over the years. The educational program offers children, students and adults access to architectural topics in a playful and practical way.

DekaBank Deutsche Girozentrale
The Deka Group, consisting of DekaBank and its subsidiaries, is the securities service provider of the German savings banks and part of the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe. With assets under management totaling 485 billion euros (as of June 30, 2026) and more than 6.2 million client accounts, it is one of the largest securities service providers and real estate asset managers in Germany. Deka Group offers investment solutions and services for private and institutional investors and tailors its offerings to the needs of its owners, the savings banks.
For Deka, awarding the International High-Rise Award has been an important part of its social commitment since the award was jointly established almost 23 years ago. As part of the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe, Deka has a long tradition of sponsorship. Its focus areas include architecture, education and science, music, sports, social projects and contemporary art. With its commitment to the International High-Rise Award, DekaBank wants to promote future-oriented, sustainable and economical architecture.

More information from:
www.international-highrise-award.com

Press photos can be downloaded from:
www.international-highrise-award.com/en/press
www.dam-online.de/presse

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