

*Public art is a reflection of how we see the world—the artist’s response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are.*

- Association for Public Art

Art has been part of human culture for thousands of years. As artist and Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama puts it, art brings joy and color to our lives and communities. Today, many cities consider public art an important component of urban redevelopment, but what is public art?

Public art is art that is located outside of museums and galleries. According to the Association for Public Art, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit, to be considered public art a piece must be visible in public spaces, concerned with the community it is placed in, related to public interest, and publicly funded.

Public art can revive urban spaces and change the relationship between citizens and the place they live. The incorporation of art into the public sphere can engage new audiences and has the potential to create a sense of civic pride and ownership.

Around the world, in places as diverse as Tirana, Albania and Reno, Nevada, art has revolutionized the way inhabitants perceive their cities. Public art has been increasingly included in urban designs and is credited with positively impacting many contemporary urban issues. These issues include the need to contribute to local identity, reduce vandalism, boost tourism, create employment, enhance real estate values, and attract external investment.

*(this text is paired with static images of Rama's public art gestures in Tirana)*

Edi Rama was an artist before he was a politician. He now constantly integrates art into the way he interacts with politics. One of his most famous public art interventions was during his time as a mayor of Tirana, Albania. Just with colors, Rama was able to revive the capital of his country.

In the early 2000s, Rama transformed the gray landscape of Tirana by adding vibrant colors and geometric patterns to the buildings' facades. This act not only changed the aesthetics of the city but also, most importantly, the quality of life of its citizens. People stopped littering, they felt safer, crime rates fell, and hope, light and pride were re-integrated into the community.

Rama believes that art can change the way people interact with a city; it affects the inhabitants feeling of belonging. Once seen as an undesirable city to live in, thanks to the power of public art, Tirana has become a more desirable place in which to live.