

Public Art's Impact on Health, Wellbeing and Community

Community art is one of the less discussed genres in the art world, however the importance of community-based art as a beneficial practice needs to be more widely acknowledged. The presence of and opportunity to create art leads to more prosperous and healthier outcomes for both the individuals and their communities. Public art can increase community members' sense of identity and belonging. This helps reduce a feeling of isolation that can lead to negative mental health and emotional health outcomes.

The therapeutic impact of art has shown significant results in decreasing anxiety, lowering levels of pain, in some cases, of faster healing for patients in hospitals that incorporate art. The content of the art is important, which is why some hospitals prioritize investing in uplifting and representational art, but interactive art in hospitals have also shown an increase in motivating patients, both mentally and physically.

These days, public art can encompass any of these things — murals, performance, sculptures — and can be either permanent or ephemeral. There are planned parks like the High Line in New York or temporary public art *Running Fence* (1976) or *The Gates* (2005), both public installations by Christo and Jeanne-Claude which were left up for less than a year. Bringing attention to an area or neighborhood through public art installations increases traffic and revenue and can be used as a strategy for increasing the wealth in a community.

Project Row House is one of the best examples of community art revitalizing a neighborhood. Artist Rick Lowe began the restoration of twenty-two abandoned shotgun houses in one of Houston's poorest neighborhoods, dedicating them to rotating installations of art, photography, and literary projects relevant to African American culture. He then created a community development corporation dedicated to including additional houses to become transitional homes for young mothers, as well as building new affordable homes in the same architectural character as the row houses. The result of Project Row House was a total transformation of a poverty-stricken area into a safe and sustainable community, which is why the project often gets hailed as a success story for the wide impact of community driven art projects.

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https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/PublicArtNetwork_GreenPaper.pdf

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