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Art for the People - Public Art Around the World

By MutualArt

Urban life can be hectic and exhausting, with many of us commuting from point A to point B without taking a moment to appreciate our surroundings. Public art provides a visual respite from the hustle and bustle of daily life, infusing a bit of cultural nourishment while going on with our daily routines of commuting to work, running errands or even exploring a new city. Public art is a democratic entity, open to everyone, not just art seekers going to visit museums and galleries. It adds breadth to each city's cultural landscape, engaging the community with art and with one another. We've rounded up ten public art projects from around the world that are well worth a visit and accessible to all.

Antoni Gaudi, Park Güell, Barcelona, Spain



Antoni Gaudi, Park Guell, Courtesy Park Guell

The gorgeous sprawling grounds of Park Güell combine a lush, garden city with the iconic nature-influenced designs of Gaudi himself. Completed in 1914, the park includes a complex self-irrigating system that sustains the tree and plant life on site, meshed with the fantastical mosaic and design work of the Catalan master. Two colorful gingerbread-like guard houses welcome visitors into the Gaudi wonderland, where they are met with the famous mosaic serpent that is perched before a set of columns that emulate the park's trees. Atop the columns is a veranda offering superior views of Barcelona, where visitors can sit along Gaudi's twisting mosaic bench that weaves its way along the perimeter.

Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois, USA



The 24.5 acre Millennium Park joins the city with the Michigan Lake shore, bringing a collection of world-class art, architecture and green design to the area. Perhaps the most recognizable feature of Chicago's Millennium Park is Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate*, lovingly known by locals and tourists alike as "The Bean," and the artist's first public work in the US. The highly polished steel sculpture reflects and distorts the Chicago skyline, which has made it one of the most photographed places in the city. The adjacent towering video sculpture, *Crown Fountain*, designed by Jaume Plensa, is an interactive piece for the entire family. The 50 foot video towers show faces of all races and ages, which appear to "spit" water onto visitors below, who are welcome to splish and splash in the fountain. The park also hosts exhibitions, concerts within a Frank Gehry designed pavilion, ice skating and built on top of a rail yard and parking garage it is considered one of the world's largest roof gardens.



Anish Kapoor, *Cloud Gate*; Jaume Plensa, *Crown Fountain*, Courtesy Lori Zimmer

Artlantic, Atlantic City, New Jersey, USA

The East Coast gambling capital is not just known for its slot machines anymore. The ambitious new Artlantic public art project, curated by Lance Fung of Fung Collaboratives, has transformed disused parking lots in between casinos into a lush public sculpture park, including works by Kiki Smith, Peter Hutchinson, Robert Barry, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov and local artists Jedediah Morfit and Robert Lach. The park, which is nearly complete and, is joined by an interactive John Roloff mural on the boardwalk, and will soon include a waterfront sculpture park in Atlantic City's Marina District.



Robert Barry, *Untitled*, Courtesy Lori Zimmer

Robert Indiana, Love Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Robert Indiana's *LOVE* is one of the most iconic pop art images, having first been adopted as the Museum of Modern Art's Christmas card in 1964. In 1976, the city of Philadelphia adopted a Cor-ten sculpture version of the design for the city's Bicentennial celebration. The city loved the piece so much that it became a permanent installation in 1978, redefining JFK Plaza as "Love Park." The sculpture overlooks the historic City Hall building with its late 19th century appointments, and is a block from Claes Oldenberg's giant sculpture, *Clothespin*.

Rachel Whiteread, Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial, Vienna, Austria



Rachel Whiteread, *Nameless Library*, Courtesy Jewish Museum Vienna

Set in a plaza in Judenplatz in the first district of Vienna, Rachel Whiteread's stoic sculpture is familiarly known as the *Nameless Library*. Commissioned to replace Alfred Hrdlicka's memorial, which caused public offense, Whiteread's proposal was unanimously chosen by an international jury. Using her signature "room cast" style, the artist has portrayed a library with its shelves turned inside out. The spines of each volume are facing in, revealing only book pages, rather than titles. Double doors are cast, but without handles or door knobs. The powerful piece relates the books to Judaism, but also represents the lost and unreadable knowledge caused by the mass genocide, and loss of the European Jews during the Holocaust.

Richard Serra, *Fulcrum*, London, United Kingdom

Like Richard Serra's other Cor-ten sculptures, *Fulcrum* is made up of five giant pieces of steel that are simply leaning against one another, with no bolts or welding holding them together. Arranged to create an enclosure that is open to the sky, the massive 55 foot tall sculpture was installed outside of the Liverpool Street tube station in 1987. *Fulcrum* is one of Serra's few public pieces around the world, and differs as it is a vertical experience, as opposed to his usual horizontal pieces.

Jean-Paul Riopelle, *La Joute*, Montreal, Canada



Jean-Paul Riopelle, *La Joute*. Courtesy Montrealais

La Joute, which was created in 1969, is a lively kinetic sculpture that produces a 32 minute sequence involving fire, water and movement. The complex mechanism begins its “show” spewing water into dome-like shapes that are joined by mist emanating from the grates surrounding the fountain. The mist conjoins into a cloud around 18 minutes later, and the fountain jets dissipate to a dribble. Natural gas is then pumped in and lit into flames which dance on the water for seven minutes before being put out by the fountain itself. The incredible show repeats itself every hour from 7 to 11 pm, from mid-May to mid-October.

Christopher Janney, *Reach*, New York, New York, USA

Beneath New York’s busy Herald Square shopping area, Christopher Janney’s sound installation, *Reach*, invites commuters to play while waiting for the N and R trains. Suspended above the platform, the green tube is activated



Christopher Janney, *Reach*. Courtesy Lori Zimmer

when a hand is waved over one of the sensors, which activates a sound and an adjacent light. Nature and jungle sounds emanate, contrasting with the urban hustle of the subway and engaging riders with each other and their surroundings. The piece was installed in 1996, and continues to surprise and delight straphangers today.

Hew Locke, *Selene*, London, United Kingdom

Commissioned by the Nadler Soho Hotel, Hew Locke’s *Selene* is a new permanent sculpture on Carlilse Street, in London’s Soho neighborhood. The ornate sculpture depicts the goddess of moon and magic, representing Sleep. Inspired by Art Nouveau and Victorian fairy paintings, Locke gave *Selene* a modern twist, infusing the visual influence of the local drag queens that frequent the Soho streets, David Bowie references (with the inclusion of dragon fruit flowers) and *Selene*’s presence as the depiction of a black woman, which is rare in the public sculpture of London.



Hew Locke, *Selene*. Courtesy The Nadler Soho Hotel

Westersingel Sculpture Route, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Set along the picturesque Westersingel Canal, the open air installation from Rotterdam’s International Sculpture Collection features works by masters such as Rodin, Joel Shapiro and Umberto Mastroianni. The most controversial piece along the route was placed in 2008, Paul McCarthy’s scandalous *Santa Claus*. Made for the city in 2001, the giant sculpture depicts Santa holding a sex toy, rather than the usual miniature Christmas tree. The towering bronze was purchased for under \$240,000, a deal for the well-known

