

Assessing Public vs. Professionals' Aesthetic Preferences of Public Art Initiatives in Informal Areas: *The Case of the Ring Road in Cairo, Egypt*

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Abstract. Informal areas exist worldwide, in which they are considered a global challenge, affecting cities image, as they are characterized by high populations, dense buildings, and poor infrastructure, among other aspects that turn them into low-quality-living, unsafe, ugly pockets in cities. The research argues that public art, as a powerful tool, can (re)image, represent, and revitalize informal areas and improve the quality of life for their residents. The research investigates public perception of art in Cairo's informal areas from different perspectives and how diverse groups perceive and value public art as a tool for enhancing informal areas that aims to inform urban planning, design, and public art initiatives. Through a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods relying on the results of an achieved design competition, including interviews with competition jurors, user surveys, and competition jurors ratings, this study explores how different approaches influence the design and implementation of public art. The analysis of the collected data sheds light on the factors shaping public perception and the potential impact of public art on urban transformation. These include cultural resonance, aesthetic appeal, visibility, feasibility, and environmental integration.

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