

IMPROVISATIONS

Edi Rama

21-31 March 2023

Zappeion Megaron

The exhibition *Improvisations*, which opens on March 21 at the Zappeion Megaron, presents mixed media works and sculptures by the visual artist Mr. **Edi Rama**, currently Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania.

The exhibition, organised by the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs and curated by Ms. **Katerina Koskina**, art historian and museologist, is spatially defined and activated by a construction-installation covered with a wallpaper, printed on which are a large number of Edi Rama's paintings. The wallpaper also bears on its surface original works, painted on office documents, as well as ceramics. A similar wallpaper can be found in the Prime Minister's Office in Tirana.

The title of the exhibition reflects the artist's unique way of working. On A4-sized papers that have already been used in his office, such as calendars, notes or political documents, Edi Rama improvises with the pantons, pastels, felt-tip pens and watercolours on his desk, while acting as a high official during various meetings and phone conversations. As he has noted himself, this automatic artistic writing helps him focus on such conversations fulfilling his political duties.

The common elements of the works are the bold colours, the sense of flow and movement, the biomorphic shapes that seem to emerge one from the other, and the tracing of the artistic gesture.

E. Rama's work is connected to his perception of art and its social role, as integrated into life and public space. This perception was applied when, after his two-year tenure as Minister of Culture of his country, he served as Mayor of Tirana, a position he held for a long time, having been elected three times. As he pointed out in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, "art is a social infrastructure".

As noted by the curator of the exhibition, Katerina Koskina: "The decision to paint the facades of the rundown buildings of the city with bold colours and geometric or organic shapes invigorated the urban landscape, contributed to the rapid improvement of the city's image and sustainability, boosted a sense of community and, most importantly, positively influenced the mood of citizens and gained their trust." The project was documented by the acclaimed artist Anri Sala, a friend and

former student of the artist, in his video *Dammi i Colori* (2003), through which it gained further international exposure.

With the book *Refleksione* (1991), which he co-authored with his friend and fellow artist Ardian Klosi, the dramatic regime change in Albania, Rama defines what would become the future framework of his politically tormented artist's soul.

Rama supports both in theory and in action the choices and practices he has adopted for art, that is an extroverted collaboration between art and politics. In 2013, he transformed the ground floor of the building that houses the Prime Minister's Office into an open-to-the-public "Dialogue Centre", where various activities take place, such as exhibitions, workshops and conferences. His office, after all, constitutes an unusual, "non-systemic" space, which retains elements of an artist's studio.

As the curator states, "The exhibition *Improvisations*, which is the first extensive presentation of E. Rama's work in Greece, is doubly interesting as it illuminates not only the activity of an artist with experience in the educational field (also due to his tenure as a professor at the Tirana Academy of Arts for several years), but also the personality of a politician, for whom art is not only an expression of freedom, but also a tool for social and political cohesion."

Title: **Improvisations, Edi Rama**

Duration: 21 – 31 March 2023

Curator: Katerina Koskina

Production: EuroMare kai Synergon

Venue: Zappeion Megaron

Opening hours: weekdays 15.00 – 20.00, Saturday and Sunday 10.00 – 20.00

Free admission

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Short Biographical Note-Selection of Exhibitions

Edi Rama was born in Tirana in 1964. His father was a sculptor. He studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in the Albanian capital. Living in a country cut off from the international developments of contemporary art, he joined the Albanian National Basketball Team to be able to travel to international tournaments and see art. With the collapse of communism, he became a free traveller as he puts it, until he settled in Paris. With the death of his father, he returned to Albania and became involved in

politics first as Minister of Culture. He is married to Ms. Linda Rama and they have three children, Greg, Rea and Zaho.

In 2010, he participated in the exhibition *Les promesses du passé* at Centre G. Pompidou. In 2016, he exhibited at the Marian Goodman Gallery in New York In 2017 he participated at the central exhibition *Viva Arte Viva* of the 57th Venice Biennale. In 2018 he exhibited at Kunsthalle in Rostock, Germany.

His works have been presented at the Art Basel and Artissima.

In addition to the book *Refleksione* (1991) which he co-wrote with his friend and artist Ardia Klosi, his written work includes *Kurban* (The Sacrifice), 2011, his autobiography in which he refers to his experiences as an artist and politician during the unrest of the 1990s in Albania.