

GALERIE MARIAN GOODMAN

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EDI RAMA

8 June – 26 July 2024

Public Opening: Saturday 8 June, 6-8 pm

Galerie Marian Goodman, 66 rue du Temple

“Politics is the battle of everyday life. And art is like a prayer.” – Edi Rama

Marian Goodman Gallery is pleased to present a new solo exhibition by Edi Rama, artist and current Prime Minister of Albania. This first major monographic exhibition in Paris, where Rama lived in the 1990s, offers a panorama of his artistic practice through drawings on paper, printed wallpaper, ceramic sculptures and a hand-embroidered folding screen. The ensemble, the result of an unprecedented creative process, underscores the artist's close relationship with color. Color has been essential to Rama, both in his political career and in his artistic practice, for its ability to convey elements of the psyche but also for its potential to change our perceptions and invigorate dialogue between individuals.

For Rama, drawing stems from a “need to find a balance between the inner gaze and outer gaze.” In the spirit of automatic drawings which focus on the unconscious mind, and to improve his concentration and listening skills, Rama draws during meetings and telephone calls in his ministerial office. “The only thing I know is that they are part of my working time. It is about working and it is like something inside me that is trying to escape the working frame.” Once completed, the drawings, which have become emblematic of his oeuvre, consist of complex compositions, made of bright colors partially covering A4 printed notes or daily appointment schedules.

The presence of hundreds of colored markers on his official desk dates back to the time when, as the Mayor of Tirana, he launched the ambitious project of repainting the city's facades of social housing in vivid colors. This initiative, documented by his long-time friend Anri Sala in his video *Dammi i colori* (2003), was intended not only to beautify the city, but also to revitalize the community; by using color as a means for social impact, Rama wanted to create a sense of belonging and communication with the inhabitants. “I do not think there is another city in Europe, be it the richest, where people discuss so passionately and collectively about colors. The hottest discussion in the coffee bars, in homes, in the streets was what the colors were doing to us,” explains Edi Rama in the 2003 video.

When Rama started drawing in his ministerial office, he also decided to display his colorful works as well as incorporating them as motifs for a wallpaper on site. The immersive installation that comprises Rama's office has been transposed to the first space of the exhibition, with a newly-designed wallpaper. Large polychromatic ceramic sculptures, which seem to embody the three-dimensional translation of his works on paper, are presented on custom-made pedestals. Conceived as *ronde-bosse*, that play with color, texture and shape, they invite the viewer to examine them from multiple angles. Extravagant and atypical at the same time, each resemble an architecture of whimsy and ingenuity.

For the first time, Rama also includes in its exhibition a folding screen on which his multicolored drawings are hand-embroidered, combined with a composition inspired by X-rays of the famous cycle *The Battle of San Romano* painted by Florentine Renaissance artist Paolo Uccello in the early 1440s.

The second space of the exhibition is imbued with the atmosphere of the studio where he models, paints and fires his ceramic pieces. Unlike his drawings, Rama's ceramics are made in his spare time in a studio outside the *Kryeministria*. Since his very first set of works, exhibited in 2016 in our New York gallery, the artist has deepened

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his knowledge and technique of ceramics, as evidenced by new small wall sculptures in glazed ceramic, pieces combining ceramic and bronze, and those composed from multiple fragments.

Born in 1964, Edi Rama lives and works in Tirana. A former professor of painting at the Tirana Academy of Fine Arts and a former player on the national basketball team, he is also the author of several books. He has served as Prime Minister of Albania since 2013. Alongside his political career, which began in 1998, Rama regularly exhibits his work, which has been the subject of several solo shows, most recently *Improvisations*, Zappeion, Athens, Greece (2023) and *Edi Rama: Work*, which travelled from Kunsthalle Rostock, Germany (2018) to the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno (2019). Rama took part in *Viva Arte Viva*, the 57th Venice International Art Biennale in 2017. He has also exhibited his work at numerous institutions, including the New Museum in New York (2016), the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2011), the MNAM - Centre Pompidou in Paris (2010) and the Haus der Kunst in Munich (2004).

Please join us for the opening reception on Saturday 8 June, from 6 to 8 pm, at 66 rue de Temple in Paris.

Press Contact: Raphaële Coutant raphaele@mariangoodman.com or + 33 (0)1 48 04 70 52