

# [***If You Care About Politics and the Environment, Don't Underestimate Art | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BGX-R7P1-DY68-154F-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** If we are to make the world a better place in 2024 and beyond, the arts remain an important piece of America's puzzle.

**Body**

In 2024, political engagement is at an all-time high. For better or worse, presidential election years bring a swell of interest in key issues that impact millions of Americans.

Early signs indicate a resurgence in social activism, especially among young people. Nearly 60 percent of Americans aged 18 to 34—a traditionally low-turnout voting bloc—are now [*extremely likely to vote in November*](https://circle.tufts.edu/2024-election-youth-poll). And they are especially engaged in issues like inflation, gun violence, and climate change.

Even beyond the youth and voting itself, Americans are increasingly passionate about the world around them. Take climate change, which is more a topic of conversation now than ever before. Since 2010, U.S. concerns about climate change have [*risen like sea levels*](https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/americans-are-warming-climate-change-cant-agree-rcna135131), and not just in so-called blue states. Even in Republican strongholds like Texas and North Carolina, most adults now accept that climate change is happening and that it must be addressed. In my home state of Florida, which is now deep red in many areas, the [*rise of the ocean*](https://www.vox.com/climate/23872640/coastal-climate-ocean-rising-miami-florida-building) is a concern shared by [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

In today's political climate, we can celebrate greater awareness about generational problems like climate change. After all, only through awareness can we hope to achieve any sort of progress.

But, on the public education front, there is still more work to be done. Not only does climate change skepticism [*continue to linger*](https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2023/08/09/why-some-americans-do-not-see-urgency-on-climate-change/), but millions of Americans do not feel as connected to the environment as needed. When [*nearly half of the country fails to participate in outdoor recreation*](https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2020/01/study-says-barely-half-americans-get-outside-recreation), it's clear that we are far too often disconnected from nature. Forces like technology and social media tend to keep us locked into a virtual world that is removed from the one outside.

So how do we solve this problem? How can we make sure that people remain in-tune with the outside world?

Here's one underrated influence: art. We simply cannot underestimate the transformative power of architecture, urban design, and similar fields. It is incumbent on today's artists, architects, and urban designers to create worlds where people are inspired and motivated to think deeply about fundamental issues—from climate change to immigration, affordable housing, and more.

Art is perhaps our most unique form of expression, and it doesn't need to be "in your face." Since it is far removed from the cable news cycle or daily squabbles on Capitol Hill, people are naturally more open to having their hearts and minds changed through artistic expression.

Therein lies a privilege and a responsibility for professionals in my field that we should not take lightly. Through our projects, our mission is to be eye-opening in more ways than one, and not only aesthetically. There is more to art than aesthetic beauty, while that is important.

Again, take climate change. [*According to recent research in the life sciences*](https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-023-00856-9), artistic representations of data can help bridge the U.S. political divide related to environmental action. Visual art can rejuvenate the portrayal of climate change to engage emotions and expand non-experts' capacity to perceive its relevance.

I see that firsthand. After a decade of work, my studio recently completed an environmental public art commission in Tamarac, Fla., right on the town's border with the Everglades. The project, titled *Sunset Hammock*, [*raises awareness*](https://tamaractalk.com/new-art-installation-at-tamaracs-sunset-point-43728) about the critical role of the Everglades within the ecological balance of South Florida. It incorporates the adjacent wetland into Tamarac's Sunset Point Park, featuring an educational children's art program that makes young people feel more connected to the Everglades—not only the beauty of the wetlands, but also potential threats to the ecosystem. And we are already receiving rave reviews.

Interestingly enough, *Sunset Hammock* is located close to an [*Amazon*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/amazon?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) fulfillment center, situating it right at the intersection of the environment and private industry. There is no better illustration of our world—and its potential pitfalls—than the point where commerce and the climate come together. Americans of all ages, and not just young people, need such visual reminders of the human impact on the environment.

There are other ways that art can open our eyes. At the Boca Raton Museum of Art, for instance, the *Mending Wall*[*reimagines*](https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/a-wall-that-mends_o) the very purpose of a wall, which is often cited in ***politics*** as a mechanism of exclusion and division. A wall that mends, on the other hand, reminds people that such "obstacles" can actually contribute to unity and inclusion, bringing us closer together.

As artists, we cannot forget the duty to use our talents for the greater good. Just like people in my profession encourage non-artists to take interest in the likes of architecture and urban design, we must hold up our end of the bargain. We return the favor by completing unique projects with the potential to change hearts and minds.

If we are to make the world a better place in 2024 and beyond, the arts remain an important piece of America's puzzle. Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, art can unite us all in the search for social impact.

*Margi Glavovic Nothard serves as founder and design director at* [*Glavovic Studio*](https://www.glavovicstudio.com/) *in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. and Los Angeles, Calif. The studio's Instagram profile can be accessed* [*here*](https://www.instagram.com/glavovicstudio/)*.*

*The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2358270/sunset-hammock-city-tamarac-florida.jpg)

**Graphic**

Sunset Hammock (City of Tamarac, Florida)

Photo Courtesy of Robin Hill Photography

Sunset Hammock in Tamarac, Fla., is pictured.

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