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OVER THE RIVER

Chapter 3. The Artists' Vision: OTR Purpose and Need

**3. The Artists' Vision:
OTR Purpose and Need**

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Chapter 3. The Artists' Vision: OTR Purpose and Need

3.1 The Artists' Vision for OTR

OTR began as all Christo and Jeanne-Claude's projects do, with the artists' initial core vision, which was examined and developed on paper in preparatory drawings and collages by Christo and tackled by both artists. As with previous works, integral to the OTR vision has been the creation of a temporary work of art for the free enjoyment of the viewing public. It is the artists' vision for OTR, as described below, that constitutes the NEPA purpose and need and guides the EIS process.

The core vision for OTR involves the temporary horizontal suspension of luminous fabric in a summertime river environment that offers a range of lighting conditions and a variety of landscapes so as to create contrasting lines, forms, colors, and textures. With the natural beauty of the river as part of the temporary work of art, the artists envisioned that the translucent fabric panels would emphasize the configuration of the river as it meanders, winds, and bends.

Through decades of deliberation and evaluation, the artists developed more specific setting qualities necessary to realize their vision of the OTR temporary work of art. These qualities include vertical and horizontal terrain undulations, interesting geological conditions in both texture and color variations, diversity in slope aspects and river orientations, and a range of rafting conditions. In addition, the artists determined that OTR requires:

- High banks that accommodate the suspension of steel cables and allow sufficient clearance above the water
- A road running parallel to the river for viewing
- Good visibility between the road and the river (that is, little vegetation to impede viewing)
- The opportunity for viewing from the river (for example, from a raft)
- An aesthetically attractive site
- Alternating white water and tranquil areas
- Close proximity to large towns, workers, materials, and visitors
- Access to the riverbank, and construction feasibility.

In August 1992, 1993, and 1994, Christo, Jeanne-Claude, and their team traveled approximately 14,000 miles throughout the western United States and evaluated 89 rivers in search of the necessary setting. Ultimately, the stretch of the Arkansas River between Canon City and Salida was selected as the site for OTR because of its unique combination of the essential qualities listed above. Within this portion of the Arkansas River, there are distinct areas that embody unique configurations of lighting and landscape conditions to provide contrasts in line, form, color, and texture with the luminous fabric panels. In addition, it is one of the most rafted rivers in the United States and viewing OTR from a raft is a particularly desirable feature for the artists because it offers a unique perspective. Also advantageous, railroad tracks run parallel to the river and can be used to facilitate OTR installation and removal.

The artists' design of OTR consists of eight areas of fabric panels. Each area was selected and designed to include a number of interruptions for aesthetic reasons, technical feasibility, and environmental and human considerations. The overall length and location of panels and areas, and the intentional interruptions between the eight areas, and between sections within the areas, have been carefully selected by Christo and Jeanne-Claude to integrate the criteria critical to their artistic vision with respect to sunlight angle and intensity, river morphology, and riverbank characteristics. Together, each element, detail, shape, color, and contrast form the whole work of art. None of these areas, or sections within areas,

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may be removed without damaging the integrity, intent, and harmony of the temporary work of art as a whole.

3.1.1 The Artists' Vision for the Eight OTR Fabric Panel Areas

The following text describes the artistic vision for each of the eight fabric panel areas. These areas are listed sequentially in Table 3-1 (viewing west to east) and Table 3-2 (viewing east to west). As these tables indicate, OTR will appear dramatically different depending on whether it is approached from the western entrance (via Salida, heading east) or the eastern entrance (via Canon City, heading west), and depending on the time of day and lighting conditions in which the fabric panel areas are viewed.

Map 3-1 shows the locations of each of these areas.

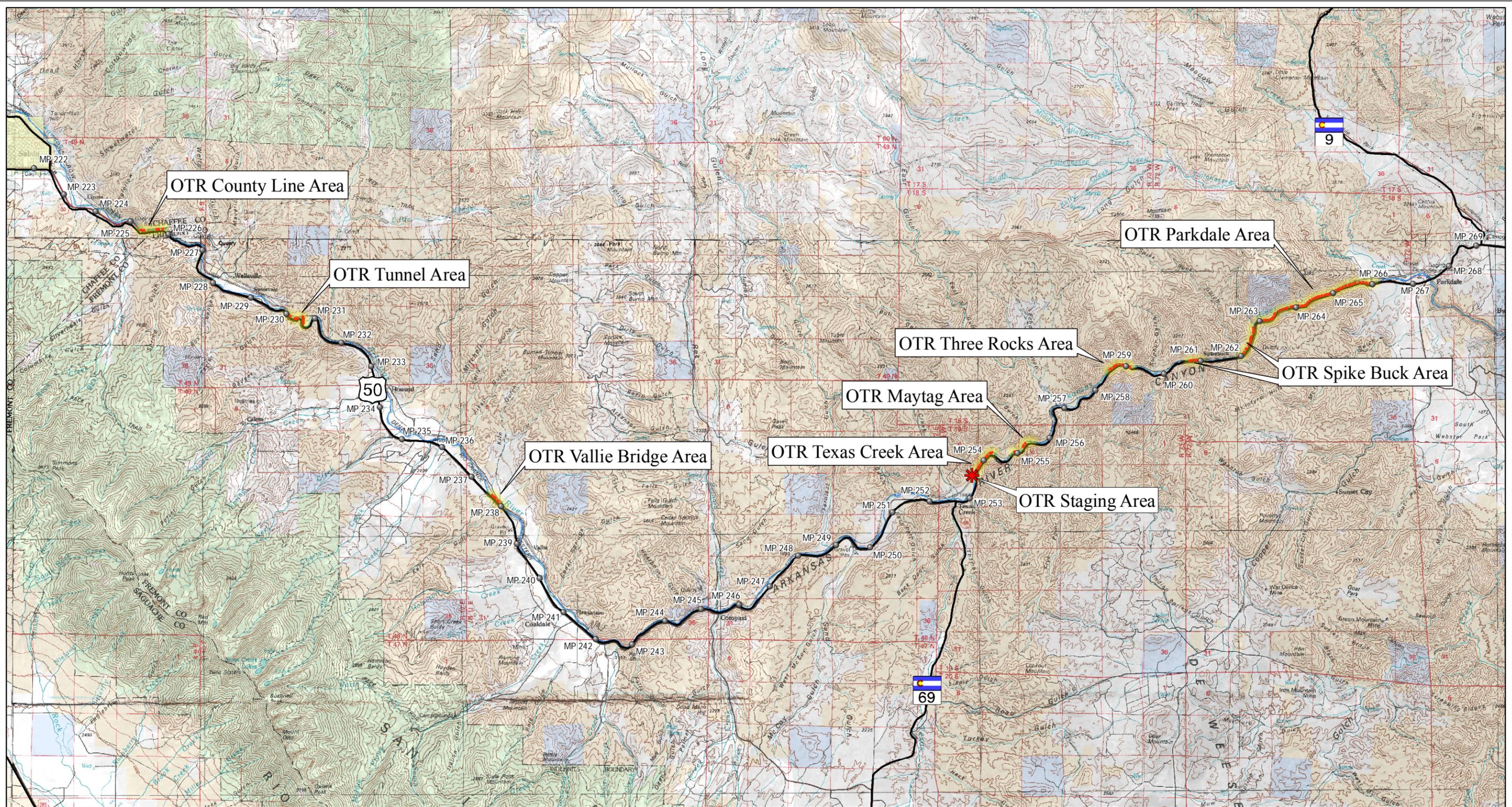
**Table 3-1. Sequence of Areas
Viewing from West to East
(Western Entrance)**

**Table 3-2. Sequence of Areas
Viewing from East to West
(Eastern Entrance)**

Fabric Panel Area	Length		Fabric Panel Area	Length
Areas receiving morning, afternoon, and sunset light			Areas receiving morning to midday light	
County Line	0.3 miles		Parkdale	2.5 miles
Tunnel	0.5 miles		Spike Buck	0.9 miles
Vallie Bridge	0.3 miles		Three Rocks	0.5 miles
Areas receiving morning to midday light			Maytag	0.3 miles
Texas Creek	0.7 miles		Texas Creek	0.7 miles
Maytag	0.3 miles		Areas receiving morning, afternoon, and sunset light	
Three Rocks	0.5 miles		Vallie Bridge	0.3 miles
Spike Buck	0.9 miles		Tunnel	0.5 miles
Parkdale	2.5 miles		County Line	0.3 miles

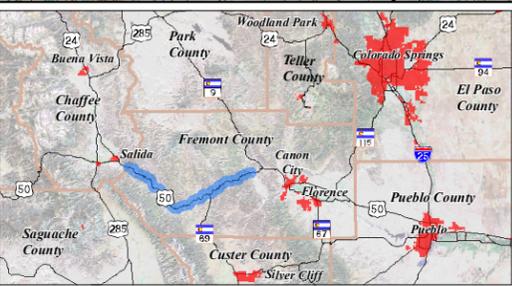
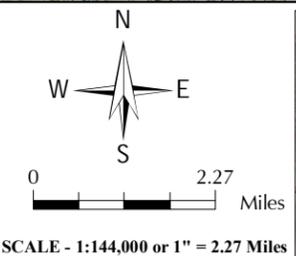
In addition, as described next, each of the eight distinct areas provides unique elements that together create a wide contrast in line, form, color, and texture with the fabric panels. The areas are described in order of their location from west to east.

County Line Area (0.3 miles of fabric over 0.6 miles of the river) —Western Entrance. The County Line Area is located approximately 3 miles east of the City of Salida, centered on the Fremont and Chaffee County line. This area was chosen because of its long, meandering succession of curves with opposite inclinations of the banks. In the morning hours, the contrast of backlighting the fabric panel will create an exceptional alternation of light and shadow due to the varying and uneven height of the banks. In the afternoon, the entire length of this area will be bathed in a honey-hued light showing the folds of the fabric that will melt in the sunset light.



LEGEND

-  OTR Fabric Panel Area
-  State and Federal Highways
-  US-50 Mile Posts
-  Bureau of Land Management Lands
-  Forest Service Lands
-  State Land Board Lands



Jurisdiction information provided by the Bureau of Land Management. Road information provided by the Colorado Department of Transportation. 7.5' quadrangle information provided by USGS. Section information provided by Golder and Associates.

Map produced February 2007 by J.F. Sato & Associates

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Map 3-1. OTR Areas

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Tunnel Area (0.5 miles of fabric over 0.6 miles of the river). The Tunnel Area is located approximately 4.5 miles east of the County Line Area, and is east of Wellsville and Swissvale. Viewed driving on US 50 from Salida, the fabric panels will shimmer in the distance away from the road. Then, the most spectacular curvature of the river (and of the fabric panels, which follow the river's course) occurs with its 90-degree curve. The fabric panels then will return to a horizontal position and will seem to disappear into the vegetation between the road and the river. The exceptional contrasting height of the northern and southern banks will create a dramatic inclination of the tilted fabric panels. This orientation along the river will situate the fabric panels to constantly accept the changing light throughout the day. In the afternoon, the warm red color of the rocks will complement the golden hue of the sunset light, which will mirror itself on the silvery fabric.

Vallie Bridge Area (0.3 miles of fabric over 0.4 miles of the river). The Vallie Bridge Area is located approximately 7 miles east of the Tunnel Area and 4 miles east of Howard. This stretch with the mountains far from the river creates a visually open and invitational vista. The north bank steep rock formation, with vegetation at its top, will project shadows onto the fabric. The shadows start to disappear after 0.5 miles and the inclined fabric panels change to a horizontal position for 0.1 miles. In the afternoon, rafters will be able to view the blue sky, the cloud formations, and the mountains through the translucent fabric.

Texas Creek Area (0.7 miles of fabric over 0.8 miles of the river). The Texas Creek Area is located approximately 15.5 miles east of the Vallie Bridge Area, and is east of Texas Creek. From morning to midday, because of the southwest to northeast orientation, the fabric will emit a shiny platinum color light for a length of 0.5 miles. The fold of the fabric panels, following the contours of the river and the incline of the banks, will create a continuous bright stream of ripples.

Maytag Area (0.3 miles of fabric over 0.4 miles of the river). The Maytag Area is located approximately 0.7 miles east of the Texas Creek Area. This area was chosen because of the rich contrasting white water movement of the river and the morning light that would create a pink silvery hue on the fabric panels in this area. When the light passes through the panels, the straight-line shadows of the fabric's seams will interact with the waters as well as with the quiet water areas.

Three Rocks Area (0.5 miles of fabric over 0.6 miles of the river). The Three Rocks Area is located approximately 3 miles east of Maytag, 1.5 miles west of Spike Buck, and 3.8 miles west of Parkdale. In the morning, the narrow fabric panels will receive sunlight. The rafting experience underneath the fabric will be exceptional in the early morning light. The rafters will see the blue sky, the cloud formations, and the mountains through the translucent fabric. From midafternoon to sundown this area will be in shadow.

Spike Buck Area (0.9 miles of fabric over 2.1 miles of the river). The fabric panels will again become wider in the open mountain slopes of the Spike Buck Area and will create an impression of a river of fabric as a succession of waves shining in the sun. This area, pink at sunrise and shiny platinum at midday, will be in the shadow of the mountains in the afternoon, contrasting with the County Line and Tunnel areas.

Parkdale Area (2.5 miles of fabric over 3.1 miles of the river) – Eastern Entrance. The Parkdale Area is located approximately 16 miles west of Canon City and west of the intersection of SH 9 and US 50. This long succession of panels is rich in contrast and variety of curves and contours and heights of banks. Sometimes the fabric panels will be horizontal, sometimes dramatically tilted. If one is coming to OTR from the east, from Canon City, the first fabric panels appear in the distance, just before Brown's Bridge. Viewers will encounter the temporary work of art in a panoramic vista. The wide panels near the bridge start narrowing as one gets closer and closer to the river of fabric with the spectacular pink early morning light.

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3.1.2 The Artists' Vision for the OTR Experience

Although the fabric panel locations are the artistic foundation for OTR, other aspects are equally important. These include the temporary nature of the work of art; the summertime viewing period; the unique perspective that viewing by raft will provide; and the community dialogue that is generated.

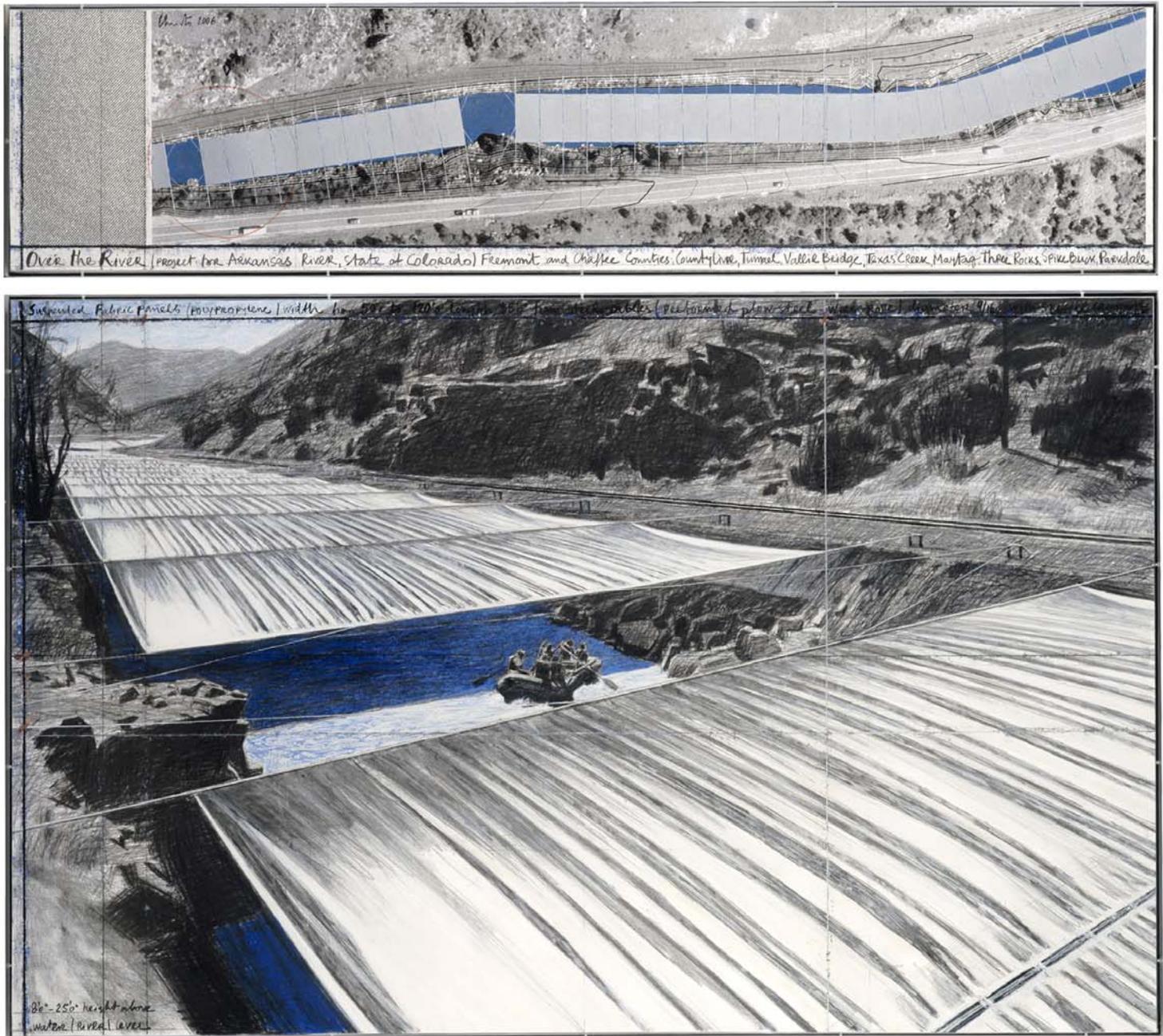
The permitting processes and surrounding discussions are important parts of the OTR work of art. The lengthy and complex permitting process, requiring extensive environmental studies and including often controversial public reaction, is considered by the artists as an integral component of the work of art. "Controversy enriches their art. Controversy is part of the package" (National Geographic 2006). These discussions convey the notion that art is a tool of communication, not something separate.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude believe that people should have the opportunity to experience art outside the confined walls of museums. They borrow public space and temporarily intervene in the daily rhythm of the local population, in order to create a gentle disturbance intended to refocus the routine view of usual surroundings. A key concept for the realization of OTR is the opportunity for the public to gain new perspectives on aspects of the Arkansas River corridor.

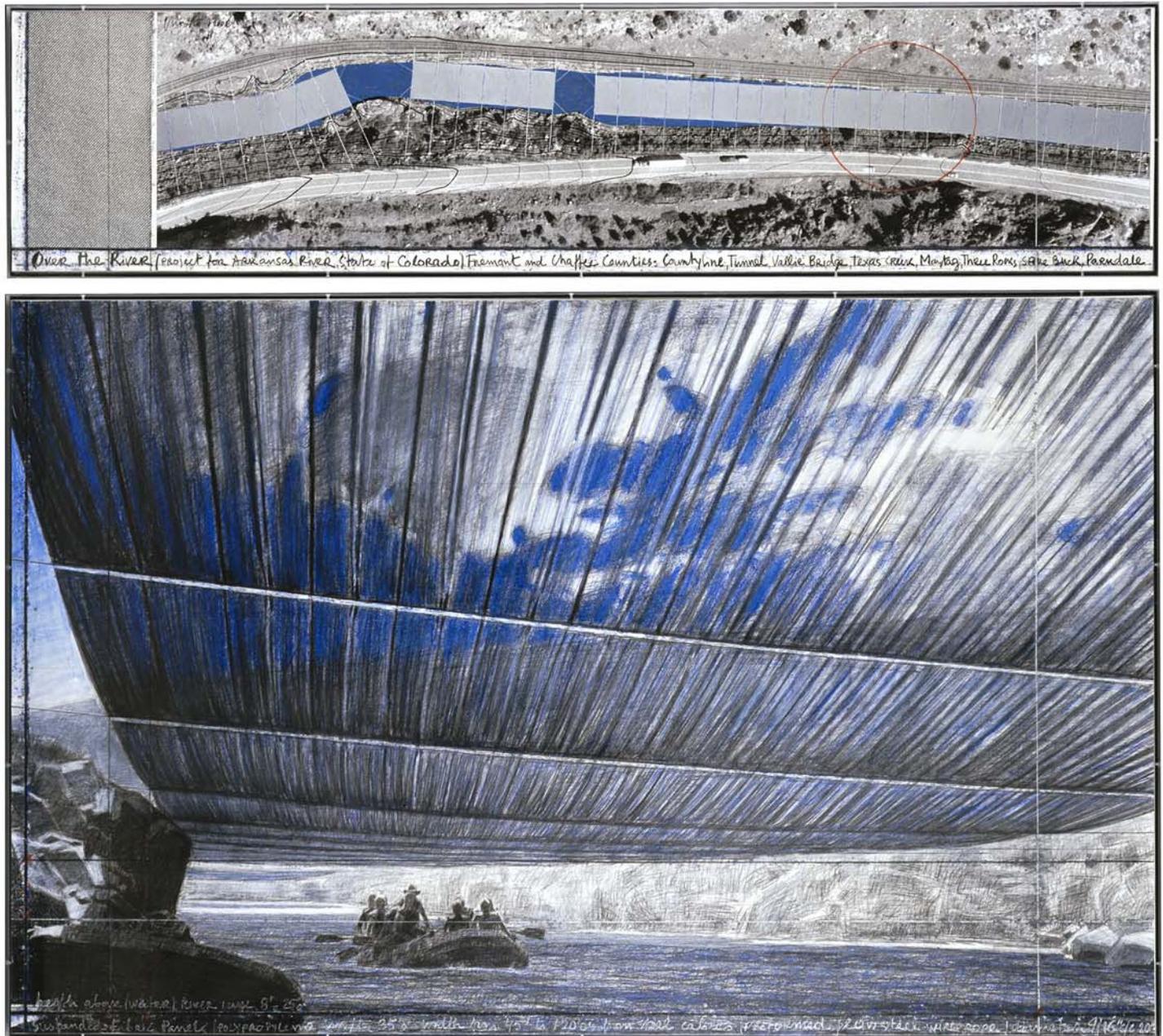
The artists' goal is to create works of art that bring joy and beauty for the world to see without charging any viewing fees. Christo and Jeanne-Claude continue to choose public spaces. Inherent in their approach to art is a deep respect for the ultimate meaning of public space as something freely shared. Christo has said, "We borrow space and create gentle disturbances.... We inherit everything that is inherent in the space to become part of the work of art. All our projects are like fabulous expeditions. The story of each project is unique. Our projects have no precedent." (National Geographic 2006).

3.2 Illustrations of OTR

The following several pages illustrate the artists' vision for OTR. Two preparatory drawings for OTR by Christo are included in Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2, followed by five photos of an OTR test conducted near Grand Junction, Colorado (Figure 3-3 through Figure 3-7). The final two figures (Figure 3-8 and Figure 3-9) show two preparatory collages for OTR by Christo.



CHRISTO - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO
Drawing 2006. In two parts: 38 x 165 cm. and 160,6 x 165 cm. (15 x 65" and 42 x 65") Pencil, charcoal, pastel, wax crayon, enamel paint, aerial photograph with topographic elevation and fabric sample. Photo: Wolfgang Volz.



CHRISTO - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO
Drawing 2006. In two parts: 38 x 165 cm. and 106,6 x 165 cm. (15 x 65" and 42 x 65") Pencil, charcoal, pastel, wax crayon, enamel paint, aerial photograph with topographic elevations and fabric sample. Photo: Wolfgang Volz.



CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO

The last of 4 life-size tests was conducted in June-August 1999. Outside of Grand Junction, Colorado. A total of 17 fabric panels were tested between 1997 and 1999. Photo: Wolfgang Volz.



CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO
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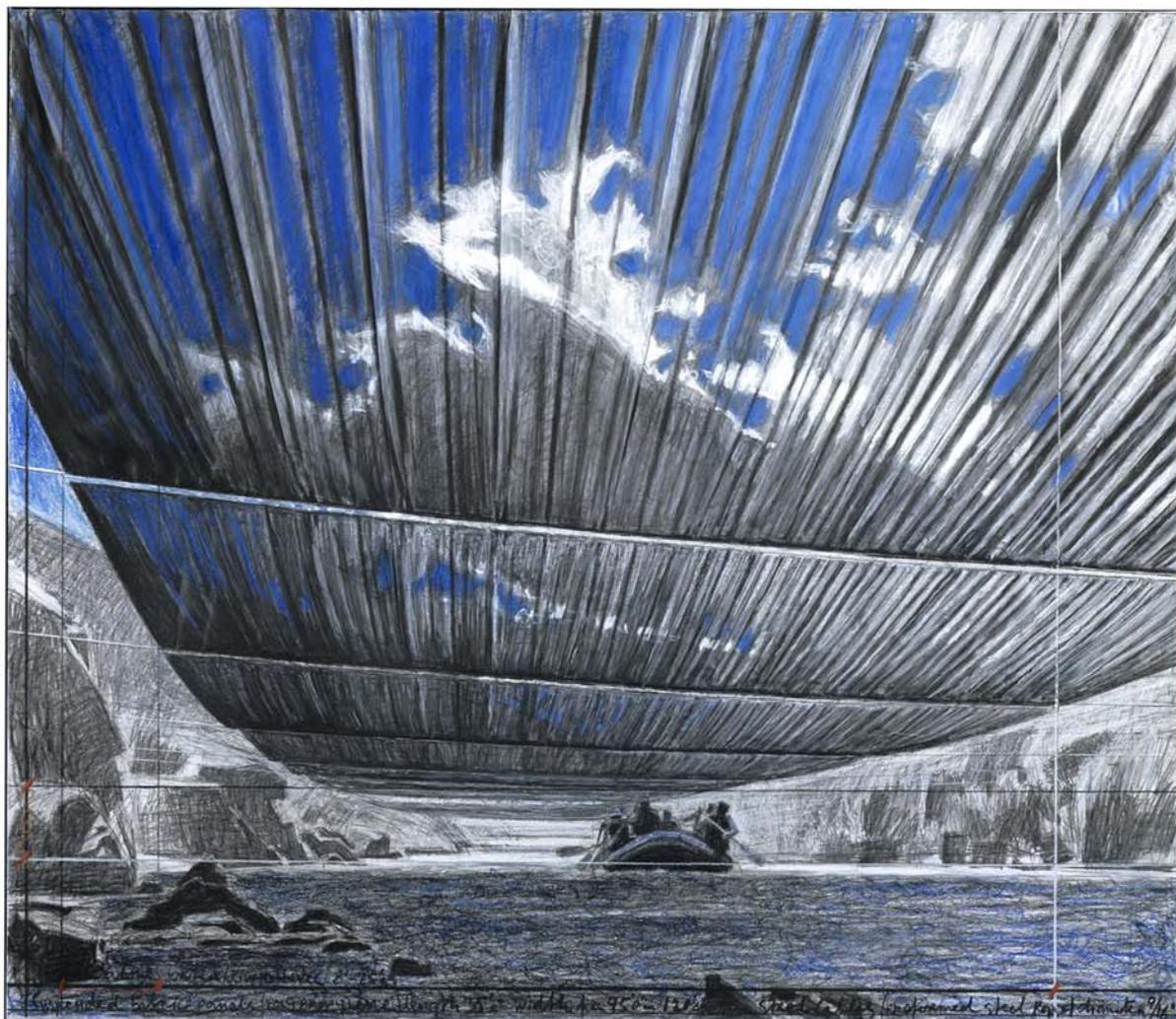
CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO

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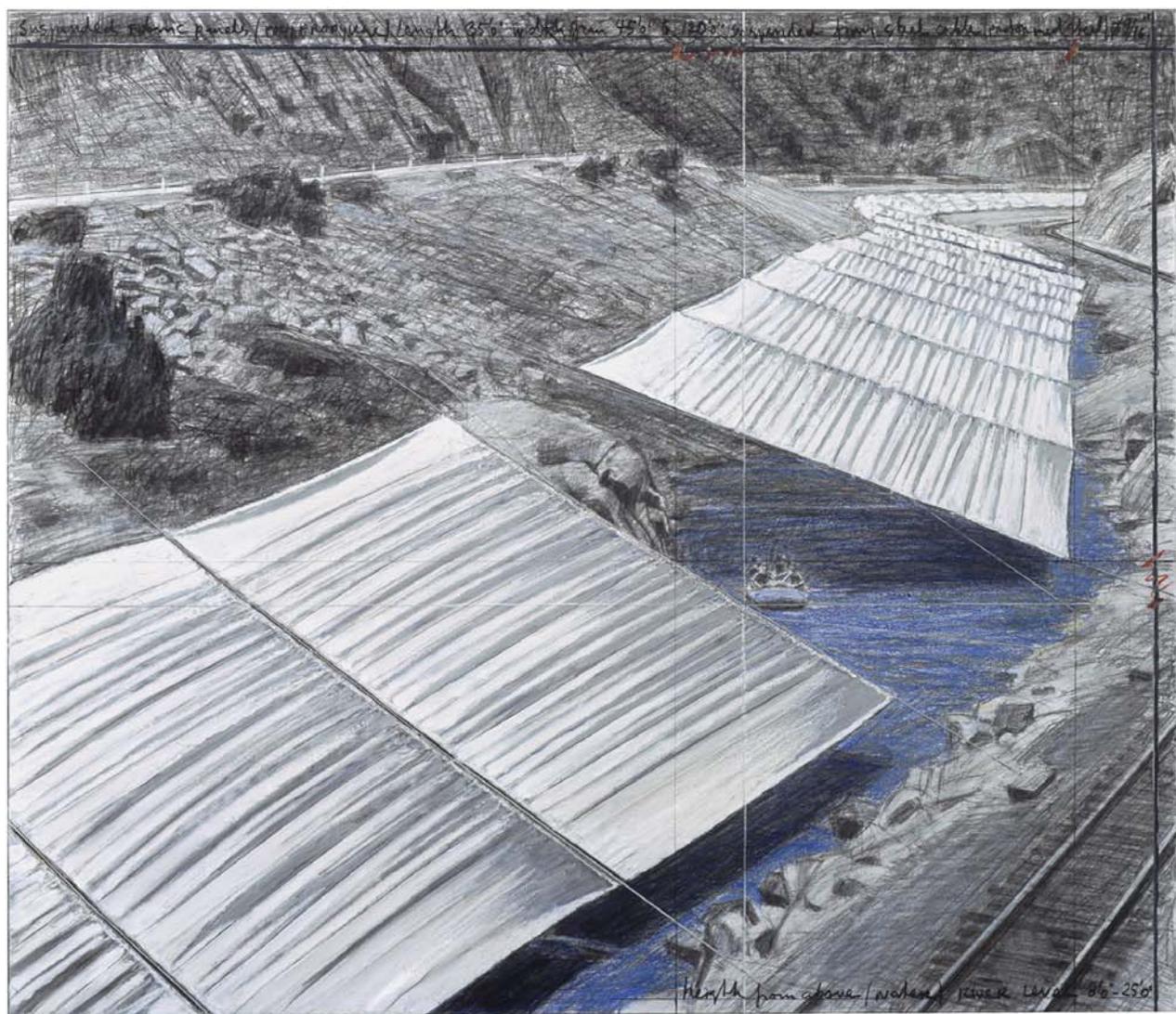
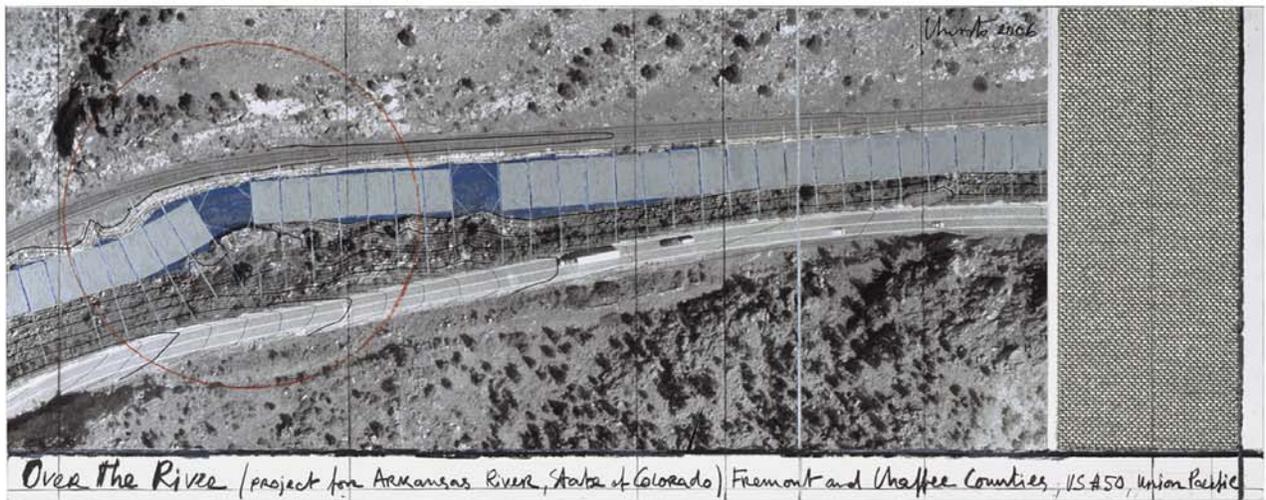
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CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO
The last of 4 life-size tests was conducted in June-August 1999. Outside of Grand Junction, Colorado. A total of 17 fabric panels were tested between 1997 and 1999. Photo: Wolfgang Volz.



CHRISTO - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO
Drawing 2006. In two parts: 30,5 x 77,5 cm. and 66,7 x 77,5 cm. (12 x 30 1/2" and 26 1/4 x 30 1/2") Pencil, fabric, pastel, wax crayon, charcoal, enamel paint, twine, aerial photograph with topographic elevations and fabric sample. Photo: Wolfgang Volz.



CHRISTO - OVER THE RIVER, PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO
 Collage 2006. In two parts: 30,5 x 77,5 cm. and 66,7 x 77,5 cm. (12 x 30 1/2" and 26 1/4 x 30 1/2") Pencil, fabric, pastel, wax crayon, charcoal, enamel paint, aerial photograph with topographic elevations and fabric sample. Photo: Wolfgang Volz.

