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Chapter 2. The Artists

2. The Artists

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Chapter 2. The Artists: Background and Agency References

2.1 Introduction to the Artists

Throughout four decades of collaboration, the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have created highly celebrated public works of art across the globe. They are a unique, dynamic, and creative team who together have changed the concept of “public art” by creating works that are truly transitory by design.

Christo Javacheff was born on June 13, 1935, in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, of an industrialist family, and Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon was born on the same day and year in Casablanca, Morocco, of a French military family. Christo studied at the Fine Arts Academy in Sofia from 1953 to 1956, and escaped from Prague to the West in early 1957. Jeanne-Claude was educated in France and Switzerland, earning degrees in philosophy and Latin from the University of Tunis. In 1964, they emigrated with their son, Cyril, to New York City, where they have since resided.

Both artists are now known by their first names: Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

Works of art created by Christo and Jeanne-Claude include elements of painting, sculpture, architecture, engineering, and urban planning, sometimes on a very large scale, but always of a temporal nature. The artists’ goal is to create works of art that bring joy and beauty for the world to see without charging any viewing fees.

2.2 History of Other Works of Art by Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Christo and Jeanne-Claude have successfully realized more than 30 works of art worldwide. Figure 2-1, Selected Works of Art by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, describes a sampling of their works of art. Appendix C.1, Supplemental Information on the Artists, contains a complete listing of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s completed works, prizes, awards, and honorary degrees, and of books, catalogs, and films about the artists.

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The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979 - 2005



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Photo: Wolfgang Volz

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor of New York City, announced, that a 43-page contract had been signed permitting New York artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude to realize their temporary work of art. The 7,503 gates, 16 feet tall varied in width from 5 feet 6 inches to 18 feet according to the 25 different widths of walkways, on 23 miles of walkways in Central Park. Free-hanging saffron colored fabric panels, suspended from the horizontal top part of the gates, came down to approximately 7 feet above the ground. The gates were spaced at 12 foot intervals, except where low branches extended above the walkways. The Gates seemed like a golden river appearing and disappearing through the bare branches of the trees and highlighting the shape of the meandering footpaths. After 26 years of effort, this work of art remained for 16 days, then the gates were removed and the materials industrially recycled.

Wrapped Trees, Fondation Beyeler, Reichen, Switzerland, 1997 - 1998



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Photo: Wolfgang Volz

178 trees were wrapped with 592,034 square feet of woven polyester fabric and 14.4 miles of rope. The trees are located in the park around the Fondation Beyeler in Reichen, Switzerland and in the adjacent meadow as well as along the creek of Berower Park. The park includes a great diversity of trees: Chestnut, Oak, Ash, Plum, Cherry, Linden, Ginkgo, Beech, Birch, Sycamore, Maple, Catalpa, Hazelnut and Golden Weeping Willow. The Wrapped Trees are the outcome of 32 years of effort. The branches of the Wrapped Trees pushing the translucent fabric outward create dynamic volumes of light and shadow, moving in the wind with new forms and surfaces shaped by the ropes on the fabric.

Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971 - 1995



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Photo: Wolfgang Volz

In Bonn, at a plenary session, presided by Prof. Dr. Rita Süßmuth, the German Bundestag (parliament) debated for 70 minutes and voted on the work of art: 292 in favor, 223 against and 9 abstentions. It was the first time in history that the existence of a work of art was voted on by a Parliament. The Reichstag was built in 1894, burned in 1933, almost destroyed in 1945, was restored in the sixties, and always has stood as a symbol of Democracy. The wrapping of the Reichstag was completed by a work force of 90 professional climbers and 120 installation workers. 1,076,000 square feet of thick woven polypropylene fabric with an aluminum surface and 51,181 feet of blue polypropylene rope, created a sumptuous flow of vertical folds highlighting the features and proportions of the imposing structure, revealing the essence of the Reichstag.

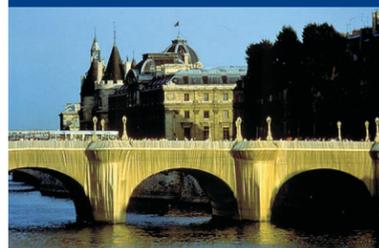
The Umbrellas, Japan-USA, 1984 - 1991



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Photo: Wolfgang Volz

This Japan-USA temporary work of art reflected the similarities and differences in the ways of life and the use of the land in two inland valleys, one 12 miles long in Japan, and the other 18 miles long in the USA. All 3,100 umbrellas were assembled in California: the yellow ones remained and 1,340 blue umbrellas were shipped to Japan. The Umbrellas, free standing dynamic modules, reflected the availability of the land in each valley, creating an invitational inner space, as houses without walls, or temporary settlements and related to the ephemeral character of the work of art. The Umbrellas were seen, approached, and enjoyed by the public, either by car from a distance and closer as they bordered the roads, or by walking under The Umbrellas in their luminous shadows.

Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, 1975 - 1985



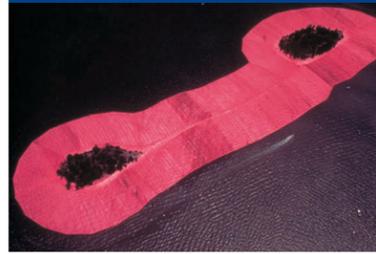
COPYRIGHT 1985 Christo
Photo: Wolfgang Volz

A group of 300 professional workers deployed 454,178 square feet of woven polyamide fabric, silky in appearance and golden sandstone in color, covering the Pont Neuf which has joined the left and right banks and the Ile de la Cité, the heart of Paris for over two thousand years. Ropes held down the fabric to the bridge's surface and maintained the principal shapes, accentuating relief while emphasizing proportions and details. The fabric was restrained by 42,900 feet of rope and secured by 11.8 tons of steel chains encircling the base of each tower, 3.3 feet underwater. 600 monitors, in crews of 40, were working around the clock maintaining the project and giving information.

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Figure 2-1. Selected Works of Art by Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980 - 1983



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Photo: Wolfgang Volz

Eleven of the islands situated in Biscayne Bay near Miami were surrounded with 6.5 million square feet of pink woven polypropylene fabric covering the surface of the water, floating and extending out 200 feet from each island into the Bay. The Surrounded Islands spreading over 7 miles was seen, approached and enjoyed by the public, from the causeways, the land, the water and the air. Some forty tons of debris was cleaned from these islands by project staff prior to the installation. Earth anchors were driven into the land, near the foot of the trees, to secure the inland edge of the fabric, covering the surface of the beach and disappearing under the vegetation. Surrounded Islands was tended day and night by 120 monitors in inflatable boats. Surrounded Islands was a work of art which underlined the various elements and ways in which the people of Miami live, between land and water.

Wrapped Walkways, Jacob Loose Park, Kansas City, Missouri, 1977 - 1978



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Photo: Wolfgang Volz

Wrapped Walk Ways, in Jacob Loose Memorial Park, Kansas City, Missouri, consisted of the installation of 135,000 square feet of saffron-colored nylon fabric covering 2.7 miles of formal garden walkways and jogging paths. The cloth was secured in place by 34,500 steel spikes (7" x 5/16") driven into the soil through brass grommets along the sides of the fabric, and 40,000 staples into wooden edges on the stairways. After 52,000 feet of seams and hems had been sewn in a West Virginia factory, professional seamstresses, using portable sewing machines and aided by many assistants, completed the sewing in the park. Eighty-four people were employed to install the fabric. Among others, there were 13 construction workers and four professional seamstresses. At the close of the art viewing, the material was removed and given to the Kansas City Parks Department for recycling, and the Park was restored to its original condition.

Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972 - 1976



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Photo: Wolfgang Volz

Running Fence, eighteen feet high, twenty-four and half miles long, extending East-West near Freeway 101, north of San Francisco, on the private properties of fifty-nine ranchers, following rolling hills and dropping down to the Pacific Ocean at Bodega Bay. The art project consisted of: forty-two months of collaborative efforts, the ranchers' participation, eighteen public hearings, three sessions at the Superior Courts of California, the drafting of a four-hundred and fifty page Environmental Impact Report and the temporary use of hills, the sky and the Ocean. Running Fence crossed fourteen roads and the town of Valley Ford, leaving passage for cars, cattle and wildlife, and was designed to be viewed by following forty miles of public roads, in Sonoma and Marin Counties.

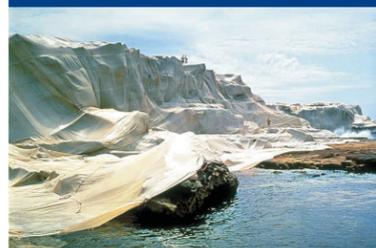
Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado, 1970 - 1972



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Photo: Harry Shunk

In Rifle, Colorado, between Grand Junction and Glenwood Spring in the Grand Hogback Mountain Range, a group of 35 construction workers and 64 temporary helpers, art schools, college students, and itinerant art workers tied down the last of 27 ropes that secured the 142,000 square feet of woven nylon fabric orange Curtain to its moorings at Rifle Gap, 7 miles north of Rifle, on Highway 325. By suspending the Valley Curtain, at a width of 1,250 feet and a height curving from 365 feet at each end to 182 feet at the center, the Curtain remained clear of the slopes and the valley bottom. The Valley Curtain, project took 28 months to complete. 28 hours after completion of the project, a gale estimated in excess of 60 mph made it necessary to start the removal.

Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968 - 1969



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Photo: Harry Shunk

The cliff-lined shore area that was wrapped is located in Little Bay, property of Prince Henry Hospital, approximately 9 miles southeast of the center of Sydney. The work of art was approximately 1.5 miles long, 150 to 800 feet wide, 85 feet high at the northern cliffs, and was at sea level at the southern sandy beach. One million square feet of erosion control fabric (synthetic woven fiber usually manufactured for agricultural purposes), were used for the wrapping. 35 miles of polypropylene rope, 1.5 inches in diameter tied the fabric to the rocks. 17,000 manpower hours, over a period of four weeks, were expended by 15 professional mountain climbers, 110 laborers, architecture and art students, as well as artists and teachers to install the work of art. The coast remained wrapped for a period of 7 weeks, then all materials were removed and the site returned to its original condition.

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2.3 Worldwide Government and Agency Involvement for the Works of Art by Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Christo and Jeanne-Claude's works of arts have each been subject to different permitting processes. Table 2-1 displays the agencies involved in the successful permitting processes completed for a select sampling of their projects.

Table 2-1. Agencies Involved for Christo and Jeanne-Claude's Works of Art

Work of Art	Agencies Involved	
The Gates	The City of New York New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Central Park Conservancy New York City Police Department	New York City Fire Department New York City Building Department New York City Department of Transportation Central Park Medical Unit 8 Manhattan Community Boards
Surrounded Islands	The Governor of Florida and the Cabinet Dade County Commission Florida Department of Environmental Regulation City of Miami Commission City of Miami Beach	City of North Miami Village of Miami Shores US Army Corps of Engineers Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management
The Umbrellas	Tokyo Ministry of Construction Building Center Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fire Department Police Department Ibaraki Prefecture The Governor's Office Planning Department Public Works Department Hitachiota-Shi The Mayor's Office Planning Division Tokyo Electric Power, Hitachiota office Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, Hitachiota office Fire Department Police Department Hitachi-Shi The Mayor's Office Planning Division Hitachi Huto Co., Ltd. Hitachi Port Fire Department Police Department Satomi-Mura The Mayor's Office Planning Division Omiya-Machi River Fuji Fishermen's Union US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management US Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration US House of Representatives	US Customs State of California The Governor's Office Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 6 and 7 Department of Parks and Recreation California Highway Patrol Board of Equalization California Legislature, Assembly and Senate Assembly Standing Committee on Revenue and Taxation Assembly Standing Committee on Ways and Means Senate Standing Committee on Revenue and Taxation Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations Joint Committee on the Arts California Arts Council Los Angeles County Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chief Administrative Officer Department of Public Works Department of Regional Planning Fire Department Sheriff Department Kern County Kern County Board of Supervisors Department of Planning and Development Services Public Works (Roads) Fire Department Sheriff Department

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Work of Art	Agencies Involved	
Wrapped Reichstag	The German Parliament (Bundestag) The Local Administration in Berlin The City District Department Tiergarten Building Department of the City of Berlin Building permit from the Fire Department of the City of Berlin Police Department of the City of Berlin Fire Department of the City of Berlin	Senate of the City of Berlin "Landesamt für Arbeitsschutz und technische Sicherheit" (department for the protection and security of the workers) "Landesamt für Denkmalschutz" (department for the protection of historical monuments) "Naturschutzbund" (society for the conservation of nature)
Running Fence	Governor Jerry Brown Sonoma County Planning Commission Marin County Planning Commission California Highway Patrol California Highway Department	Sonoma County Sheriff Department Marin County Sheriff Department Northern California Coastal Commission US Army Corps of Engineers
Wrapped Coast	City Government of Sydney State Government of New South Wales Federal Government of Australia	Army Corps of Engineers Prince Henry Hospital
Wrapped Ocean Front, Newport	State of Rhode Island City of Newport Rhode Island State Highway Authority	Monumental Arts Organization US Army Corps of Engineers
Kassel Air Package	City of Kassel Kassel Parks Department	Kassel Museum Dokumenta IV Art Organization
Spoleto Wrapped Tower and Fountain	City of Spoleto Municipality of Spoleto	Mayor of Spoleto Department of Historical Monuments of Italy
Wrapped Kunsthalle Berne	City of Bern Kunsthalle Trustees	Bern Fire Department
Wrapped Walkways	Mayor of Kansas City City Commissioner of Parks Trustees of Jacob Loose Park	Kansas City Police Department Kansas City Fire Department Kansas City Traffic Department
Pont Neuf Wrapped	President of France French Minister of Culture Mayor of Paris Mayor of the 4 th District of Paris French Department of Historical Monuments Paris Police Department 4 th District Police Department	Paris Traffic Department French River Department Seine River Department Marne River Department Paris Fire Department, Paris Sanitation Department
Wrapped Trees	City of Riehen Riehen Parks Department Sanitation	Fire Department Police Department
Valley Curtain	State of Colorado Colorado Highway Department Governor John Love	Mayor of City of Rifle Rifle Sheriff Department
Milan Wrapped Monuments	Mayor of Milan City Administration Milan Police Department Milan Fire Department	Historical Monuments of Italy Milan Historical Monuments Ministry of Culture
Wrapped Wall Rome	Ministry of Culture Historical Monuments of Italy Department of Archaeology Mayor of Rome	Rome Fire Department Rome Police Department City of Rome Traffic Department

2.4 United States References

As seen in Table 2-1, throughout their careers the artists have worked with many agencies. Numerous personnel at these agencies have experienced working directly with Christo and Jeanne-Claude, their project director Jonita Davenport, and their engineer Vince Davenport. Many of these personnel have written letters expressing their satisfaction of working with the artists and describing their credibility and demonstrated responsibility. Table 2-2 lists personnel from the United States who have written letters of reference for Christo and Jeanne-Claude. These letters are included in Appendix C2.

Table 2-2. Agency References for Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Name	Title	Agency
Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg	Mayor	City of New York
Raymond W. Kelly	Police Commissioner	City of New York
Adrian Benepe		City of New York Parks and Recreation
Douglas Blonsky	President and Central Park Administrator	Central Park Conservancy
D. Pankey	Commander, Fort Tejon Area	State of California, Department of California Highway Patrol
Dennis A. Doberneck	District Superintendent	State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation
D.O. Helmick	Commissioner	State of California, Department of California Highway Patrol
R.C. Caldwell	Captain	State of California, Department of California Highway Patrol
Lynn C. Woolsey	Congresswoman	California House of Representatives

The following are some excerpts from some of the letters:

- “You have my assurance that the experience of the California Highway Patrol with Christo’s group has shown that projects such as these can be successfully achieved with minimal interruption of services and operations.” (D.O. Helmick, Commissioner, State of California, Department of California Highway Patrol)
- “All the details and the requirements set by my Department and local officials were met and attained to everyone’s satisfaction.” (R.C. Caldwell, Captain, State of California, Department of California Highway Patrol)
- “While there were concerns, from environmental impact to public safety, the artists worked very closely with my office and relevant City agencies to thoroughly address all of them. They are very serious about their art and the public responsibility it carries, and their Chief Engineer and Director of Construction, Vince Davenport, as well as their Project Director Jonita Davenport, are two of the most responsible and professional people we have ever worked with.” (Mayor of the City of New York, Michael R. Bloomberg)
- “Throughout the project, he consistently maintained a positive attitude toward whatever public safety officials presented as reasonable for the safety and security of the people visiting the display.” (D. Pankey, Commander, Fort Tejon Area, State of California, Department of California Highway Patrol)
- “They fulfilled to the letter all of their obligations both contractual and informal, and kept all of their promises. They were flexible in solving problems, and deferred always to City authorities on matters of public safety.” (Adrian Benepe, City of New York Parks and Recreation)

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- “Virtually no visible, lasting landscape impacts resulted from this project.” (Dennis A. Doberneck, District Superintendent, State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation)
- “Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay tribute to Christo and Jeanne-Claude and to thank them for realizing the “Running Fence,” vision in Marin and Sonoma Counties and for the wonderful lasting impression they have left us.” (Lynn C. Woolsey, California House of Representatives)
- “...I am more than ready to attest to the success of The Gates and your absolute fulfillment to all commitments, pledges, promises that you made before, during, and after the historic Gates project in Central Park...” (Raymond W. Kelly, Police Commissioner, City of New York)

2.5 Colorado References for Christo and Jeanne-Claude (for Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado)

Christo and Jeanne-Claude realized the Valley Curtain temporary work of art on August 10, 1972, near the City of Rifle, between Grand Junction and Glenwood Springs, in the Grand Hogback Mountain Range. (See Figure 2-1, Selected Works of Art by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, for a photo of the project). The Valley Curtain project took 28 months to complete. Twenty-seven ropes secured the 142,000 square feet of woven nylon orange curtain to its moorings at Rifle Gap, 7 miles north of Rifle, on Highway 325.

On August 11, 1972, 28 hours after completion of the work of art, a gale estimated in excess of 60 mph made it necessary to start the removal. The artists completely removed all materials from the site, with the exception of a material remembrance requested by one of the property owners.

A park has been created and dedicated by the citizens of Rifle to Christo and Jeanne-Claude, in appreciation of their temporary work of art. (See Appendix C.3 for photos of the park and of the commemorative plaque located in the park.) As stated by the former Mayor of Rifle, “On August 18, 1972, we had a picnic at Heinze Park in Rifle to present a plaque to Christo and Jeanne-Claude by the citizens of Rifle for their dedicated efforts in conceiving and achieving the Valley Curtain. It is a pure and beautiful tribute to the imagination of man.” (Letter included in Appendix C.3.)

In the same letter, the former Mayor of Rifle stated, “I am writing about the rumor that the people of the “Valley Curtain” had trashed our area. NOT TRUE. NOT TRUE. Anyone who is saying that, was not from our area or not old enough or mature enough to understand otherwise.... The vegetation has all grown back and you cannot tell it was a work site.... I can truly say that we could not have been able to pay for all the good publicity we received....”

The private property owners for Valley Curtain also wrote a letter of reference for Christo and Jeanne-Claude (see Appendix C.3 for letter) after they heard rumors that the artists did not clean up the site. The private property owners stated, “[We are] writing to you to clear up a misconception... [we] requested that Christo and Jeanne-Claude leave the concrete foundations... We all enjoyed the Valley Curtain so much that we wanted a ‘concrete’ memento of this beautiful project.”

2.6 Environmental Involvement of Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Christo and Jeanne-Claude support environmental causes. They assisted in the development of an environmental organization, Nurture New York's Nature (NNYN), by donating a license agreement in 2003, which has generated significant funds. NNYN is a not-for-profit foundation dedicated to creating public awareness of the importance of nurturing New York's nature for the health and well-being of the City's inhabitants. The artists' gift gave NNYN an exclusive, worldwide royalty-free license to use the intellectual property rights from *The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979–2005*, to raise money to support NNYN's mission. The artists also donated signed art prints to NNYN to raise proceeds to support

its programs. All proceeds from the license are used to support NNYN. The artists receive absolutely no revenue from the license agreement or the sale of art prints.

Some of the sites of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's temporary works of art have had environmental improvements stem from their temporary works of art. For the *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, Sydney Australia, 1969*, the site previously was an illegal garbage dump. The site now contains no garbage and actually hosts a golf course. In Miami, their temporary work of art, *Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980–1983*, stimulated regional environmental awareness and development of an environmental council for South Florida.

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