I. Essay

Environmental artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have expanded the existing dialogue about art. Their two most recent unrealized projects, the subject of this exhibition, reveal several compelling new directions in their work. These new directions include a greater embrace of postmodernism and more involved aesthetic explorations of the possibilities of cloth.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude—Two Works in Progress: Over the River, Project for the Arkansas River, State of Colorado, and The Gates, Project for Central Park, New York City, allows viewers to explore why Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s unusual art enlarges artistic definitions through what they refer to as “gentle disturbances.” The exhibition consists of 12 preparatory drawings and collages for Over the River; eight drawings and collages for The Gates; 14 black-and-white photos by Wolfgang Volz of the Arkansas River, six black-and-white photographs of Central Park, maps of Colorado, Frenchoit and Chaffee counties, Manhattan, and Central Park; and text panels on each of the projects. In their work, Christo and Jeanne-Claude transform the environment and prompt viewers to experience their revolutionary new images of the landscape.

Christo Javacheff was born in Bulgaria on June 13, 1935, of an industrial family, precisely the same day and year his future wife, Jeanne-Claude de Guillebon, was born in Casablanca of a French military family. After studying art at the Sofia Academy of Art, Christo dropped his surname and left the communist system of Eastern Europe for the excitement and energy of socialist and capitalist Western Europe. After spending a few months in Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Switzerland, Christo settled in Paris in 1958, where he remained until 1964. There Christo met Jeanne-Claude, the daughter of a French general; they had a son, Cyril, in 1960.

In 1958, Christo began his transformations by wrapping, draping, and stacking small objects, such as bottles and magazines, eventually moving on to much larger ones, such as Bockside Packages (1961). This early work consisted of stacks of barrels casually draped with fabric. He simultaneously encountered the Nouveaux Réalistes artists, including Yves Klein and Arman, who had gathered under the auspices of the French critic Pierre Restany. These artists appropriated commonplace, everyday objects in reaction to the introspective abstraction dominating painting in the 1950s. Christo never fully participated in the group, although he contributed to its activities for a very brief period in the early 1960s.
Christo, Jeanne-Claude, and Cyril immigrated to New York City in 1964. That year Christo executed the Storefront series, empty showcases resembling storefronts, in which he blinded the window with fabric. In 1968, Christo and Jeanne-Claude proposed the first of their large-scale works of art, 5,600 Cubic Meter Air Package for the Documenta art fair in Kassel, Germany. This project introduced the public participation aspect of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s work, which the artists maintain even in their current projects. Such projects require the involvement of large numbers of workers to bring the works to completion. 5,600 Cubic Meter Air Package was one of the first to introduce the public declaration that the artwork was completely financed by the artists, an important announcement by the Christos that they create art outside of a communist society. In this undertaking, an enormous balloon was filled with air blown constantly to keep the package erect, as part of the festival.

Following Air Package, Christo and Jeanne-Claude were among 12 environmental artists invited for a group show as part of the Kunsthalle Bern’s 50th anniversary. They wrapped the entire museum, thus making the building and its interior a work of art. In 1968, Christo and Jeanne-Claude created a monumental sculpture, 1,240 Oil Drums Mustababa, at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. In 1969, they packaged the interior floors and the exterior of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago to heighten the viewer’s experience and interaction with the built environment. They then turned their attention to Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, One Million Square Feet (1969), in which they draped a portion of Australian coastline in an erosion control woven fabric, securing it with cord.

The succeeding large-scale work was the orange Valley Curtain, Grand Hogback, Rifle, Colorado (1970-72)—an enormous curtain drape unfurled into a gap 1,250 feet wide. The work was accidentally destroyed upon its initial unveiling in 1971, but a second attempt in 1972 to drape the valley succeeded. It lasted 28 hours before being ripped by high winds. During these years, Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrapped several cultural sites, such as two Milanese monuments to Vittorio Emanuele and to Leonardo da Vinci in 1970 and, in 1974, a 2,000-year-old wall in Rome near the Via Veneto. A lesser-known project of the 1970s was Ocean Front, Newport, Rhode Island (1974), in which the artists floated fabric over a small inlet for the relatively short period of eight days. This timing accounts for the project’s limited reputation, along with its less dramatic appearance when compared to Valley Curtain.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s other major project of the 1970s was Running Fence: Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, begun in 1972 and completed in 1976. This fence, more than 18 feet high and 24 miles long (five meters high and 39.5 kilometers long), ran through Northern California hills and finally dipped down into the Pacific Ocean. Running Fence received extensive media coverage and brought Christo and Jeanne-Claude and their transformations to a much wider audience. Following the success of Running Fence, they completed Wrapped Walkways, Loose Park, Kansas City, Missouri in 1977-78. This work consisted of a bright gold fabric stretched over 4.5 kilometers of walkways in a public park. Visitors could walk on the fabric and follow a yellow brick road around the park.

During the 1980s, Christo and Jeanne-Claude realized two large-scale projects, and in the 1990s they completed three more. In 1983, they completed the Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, in which they girdled 11 landfill islands between Miami and Miami Beach by floating fabric around each. In 1985, they completed The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, a project in progress since 1975, shrouding the oldest bridge in champagne-colored fabric with brick-brown ropes. During October 1991, they finished The Umbrellas, Japan/U.S.A., which had been in process since 1984. This bi-national work marked a departure from their previous transformational activities. Christo and Jeanne-Claude had workers place enormous umbrellas, blue in Japan and yellow in California, simultaneously over the landscape. In 1995, the artists brought to fruition Wrapped Reichstag, which had been in progress since 1971. And more recently, in 1998, they completed Wrapped Trees in Riehen, near Basel, Switzerland. Despite such an international and wide-ranging body of work, several misconceptions about Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s art persist.

One misunderstanding about these artists’ work is that the art is not solely of Christo’s authorship. In describing each of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s works, I have referred to the artists as a team because in February 1994, Christo changed the name of the artist on each of his projects retroactively and for the future to Christo and Jeanne-Claude. In recognition of
The Gates Project for Central Park, New York City. 11,000 - 15,000 gates. Height 15' or less. Overall scale unknown.
OVER THE RIVER (PROJECT FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER, STATE OF COLORADO) PARKDALE SONG, $50,000

Over the River, 1997. Drains in one part 20' x 90' and 20' x 60'.
his wife's fundamental and central role in the creative process, as well as being chief administrator, quality control manager, and negotiator on all the projects. Very few female environmental artists who have worked alongside their husbands in this way have received appropriate recognition. The situation of these women underscores the difficulty of recognizing spousal contribution to public creativity. It also reveals the astuteness of these two artists in what has been recognized as one of the great partnerships of contemporary art.

Additionally, one of the great flash points of any discussion about the artists' works is the status of the objects and large-scale projects as wrappings. Designating their work using an easily understandable and readily accessible label, the media have declared that these artists are engaged in wrapping. Christo's work was deemed "Under Wraps" in a 1979 note in *Neue Zeit*, and the artist was labeled "the Wrapper" in a 1970 *Daily Telegraph* article. These publications have wide readerships and circulation, leaving an indelible mark on the international art-viewing and popular sensibilities.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude vehemently deny that they are merely "wrappers" and remind any interested party to take note of such a distinction.

Perhaps one reason for the artists' denial of such a categorization is that wrapping only partially describes the nature of their transformations: they have also sheltered, encased, encircled, shrouded, and obstructed. Jeanne-Claude explains that the 1983 *Surrounded Islands* project in Miami does not have any wrapped elements. "You wouldn't say England is wrapped in water!" she exclaimed. "Because sculpted objects, even the altered landscape, have such an intense physical presence, an interesting relationship exists between the artists' transformational works using cloth and such compulsive actions as wrapping, encasing, surrounding, and entrapping. These features have only been explored in a limited manner.

These spatial enclosures have embedded cultural and inborn associations within childhood experience. French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard has attested to the primal qualities of human nature: "...well-being takes us back to the primitiveness of refuge." Humans like to withdraw into confined spaces and derive pleasure from this retreat. Bachelard has noted that nests, cocoons, shells, and houses are fundamental, essential containers for living creatures, embodying simplicity and primitive delight, and offering maximum refuge. However, these same spaces can also evoke sensations of claustrophobia and danger, as Bachelard cites "ambush-houses, trap-shells, and fishnets," which offer bait and threaten peril. The dual nature of enclosed space is analogous to the enchantment and irritation experienced in encountering Christo and Jeanne-Claude's art. It is either a protected, private, and welcoming refuge or a dangerous and restraining prison, depending upon the mood of the viewer.

One problem of overemphasizing the idea of wrapping as a device in the work of these artists is that it shifts attention away from the brashness and strength of their works in expanding the dialogue of art history by breaking boundaries. Certainly one of the defining mechanisms of the avant-garde has been the transgression of norms, thus heightening sensibilities and challenging the status quo. The most comparison is in the work of the surrealists in their paintings and objects of the 1930s and 1940s. The use of the enclosed, shrouded, enveloped, or encased figures and object permeate surrealist imagery. This imagery has enormous reverberations in the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, recurring with regularity and persistence.

The commonality of the surrealists' sources lies in the fascination with the perverse: the co-mingling of sex and death. This interest stems from their obsession with the writings of the 18th century French writer Marquis de Sade, which the surrealists repeatedly cited. The relevant influences here are the images of covering in the "Egyptomania" of the 1920s and 1930s, so prevalent in the geometric ornament of art deco and so common in Hollywood films of the period. Egyptomania was spurred on in 1928 when Howard Carter unearthed the tomb of Tutankhamen. The image of the mummified or enthroned object or figure from this source thus became omnipresent in the surrealist works of Rene Magritte and Max Ernst after this date. The wrapped image of Egyptian ritual and art became the mark of the unknown, the provocative, and the transgressive in its hope for sustaining immortality. As noted by critic Lawrence Alloway, the images and actions of Christo and Jeanne-Claude have similar effects, although different sources, to those of the surrealists.

There are many other visual precedents for the kind of cloaking, shrouding, and enveloping seen in Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work. Multiple images of blindfolded women, men in mythology, and the images of liberty and the cupids of profane
love are examples. Thousands of examples of fabric in relation to the body exist throughout the entire history of art. The folds, treatments, pleats of fabric are so particular to different cultures throughout history that art objects can actually be dated by art historians, who look at the contours of fabric in artworks. Several examples of covering the body also convey and extend this interest. The popular medieval through enlightenment image of the écorché, or flayed skin, a kind of "unwrapping" of the body, is an example of the reversal of this image. During the 19th century, the sculpted veiled woman became an opportunity to reveal artistic virtuosity, simultaneously revealing and concealing the underlying female form. Following the surrealists in the 1920s, only a single drawing by Henry Moore, Crowd Looking at a Tied-Up Object (1942), shows the anticipation and desire of gazing at an unattainable, hidden object. Additionally, there is an enchanting series of photographs taken by multiple photographers showing Alberto Giacometti in his studio with several wrapped sculptures in various states of completion. But in general, this kind of imagery is characteristic of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work.

Turning now from source material to the unique prospect of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's art, it is necessary to understand their process. Incorporating some of the suspense associated with veiling, furling, surrounding, draping, enveloping, and encasing, two distinct stages of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work have evolved. The first is the planning.
Over the River Project on the Araroma River, State of Colorado, Fremont and Uinta Co. 1895-96.
formative, financing, and anticipatory stage, during which tension escalates as a large-scale project comes closer to fruition. This level seems focused on the transgressive nature of the proposition, with the public asking such basic questions as “Who are these artists, and why do they want to create this image in the form of this project?” “What will happen when it exists?” “Where do these artists get their ideas?” “How will this image exist?” and “Why does the image need to exist?” In a 1988 interview, Christo described the two different phases of their work in discussing the 1985 project The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris.

I see my projects as having two major periods or steps. One I like to think of as the “software period” and the other as the “hardware period.” The software period is when the project is in my drawings, propositions, scale models, legal applications, and technical data. That software period is more invisible because there are only projections of how the bridge will look. This is different from an architect or a bridge builder, for example, who can refer to previous skyscrapers or previous bridges, and they can make their work look about the same. But because we had never wrapped a bridge, each proposition is unique, even for us... The realized work of art, The Pont Neuf Wrapped, is the accumulation of the anticipation and the expectation of a variety of forces. formal, visual, symbolic, political, social, and historical. This is why we arrive at the hardware period—the second part—the physical making of the work is probably the most enjoyable and rewarding because it is the crowning of many years of expectation. The hardware period is very much like a mirror, showing what we have worked at. The final object is really the ending of that dynamic idea about the work.

With Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s realized large-scale projects, the resulting quality is that of beauty, rather than the transgressive nature of the proposition in its unrealized and formative state. In 1977, Werner Spies made the compelling point that Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s large-scale projects are heroic and monumental in their antithesis. only once they are disassembled is a project finished, because the work usually only lasts two to three weeks. But perhaps no one has described this notion of breaking boundaries so poetically as Dominique Laporte, when he wrote in 1986 that veiling has the potential to distort desire by the prolongation of revelation. According to Laporte, “by virtue of its mere presence, any veil invites its removal, for the function of all taboos lies in their potential transgression.” It is the active role of art making in Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s œuvre that sustains their images in the mind of the viewer. Once a viewer experiences a realized large-scale project, the effect is joyous and glamorous.

One of the interesting aspects of studying the art of Christo and Jeanne-Claude is the deficiency of sound scholarly reasoning in the categorization of their work or its defiance of historical categorization. While Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s large-scale projects fit easily into the definition of environmental art, critics have seemed disinterested in supporting such a status. Instead, they have chosen to call the artists unique forces outside the stylistic mainstream of modern and contemporary art, as did Jan van der Marck in 1981. Caroline N. Boulhès most aptly titled this inadequacy “the consistent application of critical misjudgment.” Boulhès finds the writings on Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s art wanting because of the difficulties in assessing their unique vision. Additionally, she rebukes critics who have failed to follow even basic scholarly norms in their work on the artists, such as avoiding the use of footnotes. Boulhès’s contention is that among art historians and critics, regardless of how esteemed and capable they may be, none is able to deal with the various and seemingly contradictory elements of his work. Had the authors not held fast to their prior doctrinal allegiances, they might have gone beyond the parameters of their own discourse and allowed for the incorporation of new elements, thus giving their estimation of Christo’s work the possibility of an unencumbered and free analysis.

Boulhès’s estimation of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s art, however, is that it has lacked “the violence and aggressive attacks” of earlier modern movements. But their work has embodied their aim to create public art. thereby reaching the broadest audience possible with a vision that expands the definition of what art is: they remove art from its conventional institutions and consumption and involve themselves in the compelling cultural and social issues of the day.

Boulhès ultimately decries Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s art as empty, devoid of the ideological protestations necessary to promote a utopian vision that could have positive social ramifications. But she misses the point of what Christo and
Jeanne-Claude do create and establish in their projects. She is unrealistically looking for an art so ambitious that it can heal society in a single gesture because it is ideologically emancipated from the tyranny of class and the constraints of established society.

What Christo and Jeanne-Claude have accomplished and continue to foster is an art produced free from the ideology of the ruling class yet created within that system as a way of diminishing one of the greatest burdens of this century-nationalism. Having been raised in a communist society, Christo wanted freedom from the dominance of the state and the right as an individual to produce in his own way. Percolating at all times for him and Jeanne-Claude are new images and what Christo describes as "the urge to make art." Christo said in an interview in 1982 that he wants to eliminate the alienation caused by contemporary culture by changing reality in some small way and bringing society together in a single unique experience. He and Jeanne-Claude work toward these ends while realizing visually compelling and aesthetically meaningful works of art. In this age of consumer capitalism, artists have experienced the economic and social realities of struggle, elitism, and exclusivity in a consumer-driven art market with a limited, educated, art-viewing population. The result of these forces in the art world has been oppressive and stifling to artists and their audiences.

The impact of this era on art, artists, and their market recalls the sentiments of the French political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, who in Democracy in America (1855-40) celebrated individualism because it represented possibility and freedom or a maximization of potential. He also wrote, however, about the negative outcome of individualism in its extreme form as limiting the individual's ability to relate to the community. He predicted three phases in American society: isolation, alienation, and competitiveness. The individual, de Tocqueville felt, would no longer seek participation in a community that the individual felt was hostile. In order for this individualism to exist today, within the framework of what de Tocqueville proposed, it must have a moral foundation that requires responsible action and involvement. Such a situation would re-establish communal interest and resolve malaise.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude's art presents a possibility for avoiding the restrictions of the art world, as reiterated by Christo's statement to writer Doug Adams that 'freedom is most important to me and my work.' Writer Ben Yama uses the term alienation in a positive sense in discussing Christo and Jeanne-Claude's art. He views their work as characterized by Verstimmungsefekt, the "alienation effect," forcing viewers to note the overlooked in their lives. Yama claims that Christo and Jeanne-Claude accomplish this through the playfulness of their works, the anti-utility of the projects, and finally in the collective, festive element whose purpose is the pleasure of others.

In a sense, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's art reinforces the concept of ascertaining "the real," or the authentic, as noted by art historian Rosalind Krauss when she remarked about Running Fence that it "might be said to be an impermanent, photographic, and political instance of marking a site..." Christo and Jeanne-Claude's art stimulates questions about the idea of societal relations through their megastructures.

In historical terms, Christo and Jeanne-Claude form a commanding kind of postmodern alliance. Their work shows the persistence of modernism, in the predominant participation of the artists in sustaining their intentionality, and its transcendency. There are three main ways in which modernism and postmodernism differ: in the role of the artist, the status of the viewer, and the province of the work of art itself. In modernism, the artist is a hero, the viewer gains all the interpretation from the artist's intention, and the work is a discrete and hermetic object. In postmodernism, the artist is a facilitator, the viewer is entitled to any interpretation, and the artwork is an open-ended, readable text. Christo clearly saw himself as a postmodern artist when he remarked: "The viewer can decide what the work is about." Jeanne-Claude explains, "We make the works for ourselves and our collaborators, what others think is up to them."

While the centralized control of the large-scale projects remains with the artists, the interpretation is left to the viewer, whom the artists promote by refusing to accept or reject interpretations of their work, caring only for accuracy about specific information related to each project. Their willingness to embrace ambiguity enriches the projects, as does their desire for their work to be polysemous, a quality that unfortunately can confound the spectator who hopes for an easy answer. Additionally, the artists interweave process and product, another aspect of the open-endedness so often a part of the postmodern work of art. As Jeanne-Claude says, "You can't separate the pregnancy from the child." Finally, the indeterminacy of place engendered by the large-scale projects once
the built environment or landscape has been transformed from its usual function also is a postmodern mechanism. Critic Peter Blank remarked that "a process of reevaluation[sic] continues long after the project is supposedly completed," and this fosters a permanent dialogue of reconsideration about the place and human interaction with it. These artists create art, which is equivocal to their viewers.

The content of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work lies in the temporariness of the projects. As mentioned earlier, the artists view their works as gentle disturbances, brief interferences in a certain place, space, and time. Writing about Surrounded Islands, Jonathan Fineberg notes multiple references to veiling and ephemerality. He describes Christo's comparison of his large-scale projects with the many workers descending on a site to the activity of Tibetan nomads who appear and disappear at a settlement in a short span of time. Fineberg explains how the fabric surrounding Surrounded Islands resembles the eroticism of the drapery on the Hellenistic Greek sculpture of the Nike of Samothrace (Musée du Louvre), whose veil exposes her body in a fashion more provocative than if her body were unclothed. And Fineberg mentions how in Dante's Divine Comedy, Adam appears wrapped in a blanket without a body, still in existence because he is defined by the wrapping. In describing The Umbrellas, Christo remarked on the centrality of the temporary in their artworks:

They deal with creating new responses and readjustment to a chosen space or object. Their dynamic situation can be created only if the project is not permanent. This is an important aspect of my aesthetics. With The Umbrellas, temporariness is more important than in my other works of art not only because the objects I will use have a strong
nomadic character, but also because it is a two-site project. The short three-week duration of the project insures that one’s impression of each of the sites remains strong. I love the way that the project is continuously linked to this memory experience. My art also incorporates the twentieth-century phenomenon of ephemeral experience. Life has so much drama and fluidity. The world is dynamic; nothing is constant. I also think it is poetic that the work will inspire regret, when the three weeks are over, the work will no longer be there.”

Confirmation of Christo’s desire for the infinite remembrance is evident in comments such as: “One cannot drive through the hills of Sonoma and Marin Counties north of San Francisco if one has seen Christo’s Running Fence, or even the documentation of it, without vividly recalling it in the mind’s eye.” The idea of the ephemeral is reinforced by the constant use of cloth in Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s work, a malleable form of opacity and transparency, solidity and fluidity.

Like a nomadic tribe that moves in for a short period and then continues on, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, most of the time, must depend upon cloth to help convey their images. The ease of handling and manipulating cloth makes it well suited to the temporary built environment, an alternate descriptor for the large-scale projects. Cloth is a central part of set designs, carnivals, and circuses—words that also could be used to describe features of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s projects. The use of cloth allows the artists to create fluid lines in space, imparting the evocative and temporal. By relying on such a functional object, the artists recall a long history of associations with clothing, festivities, and ceremonies.

Art historian Daniel Thomas’s essay “Australia, Bulgaria, Christo” ends by quoting from Gisela Richter’s discussion of ancient Greek textiles in her Handbook of Greek Art: she explains that cloth becomes expressive of the person it covers in its folds whether the body is at rest or in motion.” The fabric helps emphasize the atmospheric conditions. Christo remarked, “We make very stimulating things. Unlike steel, or stone, or wood, the fabric catches the physicality of the wind, the sun. [The projects] are refreshing, and then they are quickly gone.” He also has noted how fabric helps eliminate the details that distract from the overall view. He referred to French 19th century sculptor Auguste Rodin’s two sculptures of the novelist Honoré Balzac, one a nude and the other clothed. The unclothed version is a bulging fool, whereas the clothed version is imposing and grand, befitting the great man of letters. It is the cloth that helps focus the viewer’s attention on the grandiose size of the large-scale projects, rather than on the details.

This temporary quality sharply contrasts with the obsessive technical level of detail in the planning and documentation of the large-scale works. Because many of the works take years to complete, hundreds of different kinds of materials are produced in order to realize a project. There are the preparatory drawings, scale models, and collages produced by Christo, as well as the bureaucratic forms required to obtain all the necessary permits. This includes everything from enormous environmental impact studies, overseen by both Christo and Jeanne-Claude, usually reserved for monumental architectural structures rather than temporary artworks, to the correspondence and photographs compiled in the huge volumes the artists have created after each project is completed. The artists are careful, though, to keep this documentation in the background and vehemently explain that no drawings are made after a work is realized, since it has left the domain of artistic ideal and entered into the status of real experience and subsequent memory.

One of the two not-yet-realized projects in the current exhibition is Over the River, Project for the Arkansas River, State of Colorado, which will consist of suspended fabric high above the water of the river to accentuate the contour of the river. This project began in 1992, while the artists were finalizing negotiations for Wrapped Reichstag. When the German Parliament took a break each August, the artists would interrupt their work to travel to the western United States in search of a river meeting their specifications. The river needed high banks to permit suspension of steel cables and permit multiple functions, such as rafting and fishing. Close proximity to a road and a major international airport were also important. In addition, the project would have to be viewable from below as well as along the riverbanks and nearby highways. The artists and their collaborators traveled more than 14,000 miles (22,530 kilometers) in August 1992, 1993, and 1994. They inspected 89 different rivers in seven states. The finalists for the project were the Payette and Salmon Rivers in Idaho, the Wind River in Wyoming, the Rio Grande in New Mexico, and the Cache la
Poudre and Arkansas rivers in Colorado. The Arkansas River was selected in 1996.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude chose 40 miles (64.5 kilometers) between the towns of Salida and Pocahontas on the Arkansas River to function as the project site. The artists want to ensure that the site is left as undisturbed as possible, and they go to great, even excessive lengths to avoid disturbing the land and wildlife. The project will consist of a succession of fabric panels, 8 to 25 feet above the riverbed, with interruptions for aesthetic reasons, rocks, bridges, and trees. The width of the fabric will vary with the width of the river, 4 to 6 miles (6.5 to 9.5 kilometers), and will be installed for two weeks. The artists want the fabric to appear opaque from above and translucent from below. This will create contrasting appearances, permit rain and sun to permeate the fabric, and act as a shelter from below and a waving screen from above. The date for completion is 2003, at the earliest, depending on whether all the permits can be secured.

Once realized, the project will resemble a golden walkway or a river streaming through Central Park. Central Park contrasts sharply with the overall grid pattern of Manhattan because of its sinuous linear walkway pattern, which is the project will help augment and highlight. The project will remain in place for two weeks in the autumn. The gates are each 20 feet tall (6 meters). Lampposts will create a new structural identity for the space of the park. The rippling effect of the fabric will be continuous, since the gates will be close enough together to allow the fabric to touch. The look will resemble clothes on a clothesline or a ceremonial entrance. The earliest this work could be completed is 2003.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude have become expert at manipulating the social and political machinations necessary to bring their large-scale projects to completion. They work on multiple projects simultaneously until one project seems to be closer to realization and they leave the other projects to wait until a better day is foreseen. The artists have several failed projects they have abandoned, but the momentum of Over the River, Project for the Arkansas River, State of Colorado, and The Gates, Project for Central Park, New York City, seems steady. It is hoped that one of them will be realized soon, so the next chapter in the consideration of their works can be written. The nature of their vision has augmented and challenged the dominant discourse in surprising ways and will probably continue to require new forms of speech. This exhibition will interest the viewer by providing insight into the processes and systems necessary to realize such enormous projects. Further, the exhibition will help orient the viewer to understand the nature of the place and its specifics and how the artwork will augment and enhance the selected space. Finally, this exhibition helps bring these unrealized works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude to an even larger audience, as it is one of the first exhibitions on these projects in the southeast.
II. Notes

1. I must express my gratitude to Christo and Jeanne-Claude for allowing me to interview them. Jeanne-Claude in a telephone interview in May of 1987, both artists in New York in May of 1992 and June of 1999. Further, I must acknowledge the assistance of Maya Hoptman for her editorial advice as I wrote this essay. I must also note my indebtedness to Professor Leonard Folgarait of Vanderbilt University. The ideas about the ideological bases of Christo's art set forth in his winter 1988 untitled lecture on Christo have significantly influenced me.


3. Brian Wallis in his recent "survey" on environmental art notes, "After the first generation of predominantly male earthworks artists (when women such as Nancy Holt and Jeanne-Claude, though working alongside their artist husbands, received little recognition)..." Land and Environmental Art, Jeffrey Kastner, survey by Brian Wallis. (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), 34.


5. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, interview 1999 (see note 2); and idem, lecture presented at Alliance Francaise, Florence Gold Hall, New York, June 17, 1999.

6. Ibid.


8. Ibid., 98.


14. Albert Elsen noted in 1990 that Christo has changed "work of art" from a noun to a verb in the course of realizing his large-scale projects over the last 20 years, Albert Elsen, "The Freedom to Be Christo," in John Kaldor Art Project. Christo (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, exh. cat., 1990), unnumbered.


18. Ibid., 253.

19. Ibid., 257.

20. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, interview, 1999 (see note 2). Christo responded to my question, "What advice do you have for a young artist trying to succeed today?" by remarking that "You must have the urge to make art." I apply his response here in an expanded context.


28. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, interview, 1999 (see note 2).


37. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, lecture, 1999 (see note 6).


39. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, lecture, 1999 (see note 6).
III. Checklist of Works in the Exhibition

1. Over the River, 1997 (2)
   Drawing in two parts
   15" x 96" and 42" x 96"

2. Over the River, 1998 (2)
   Collage in two parts
   12" x 30.5" and 26.25" x 30.5"

3. Over the River, 1997 (2)
   Collage
   8.5" x 11"

4. Over the River, 1998 (2)
   Collage
   8.5" x 11"

5. Over the River, 1996 (2)
   Collage in two parts
   12" x 30.5" and 26.25" x 3.5"

6. Over the River, 1996 (2)
   Collage
   8.5" x 11"

7. Map of State of Colorado
   20" x 19"

8. Map of Fremont and Chaffee Counties
   20" x 19"

9. The Arkansas River (14)
   Black-and-white photograph
   8" x 10"

10. Over the River
    Text
    8.5" x 11"

11. Biography of Christo and Jeanne-Claude
    8.5" x 11"

    Drawing in two parts
    15" x 65" and 42" x 65"

    Collage in two parts
    12" x 30.5" and 26.25" x 30.5"

    Collage in two parts
    12" x 30.5" and 26.25" x 30.5"

    Collage
    14" x 22"

    Drawing
    11" x 14"

    Collage
    11" x 14"

18. Map of Manhattan
    36" x 13"

19. Map of Central Park
    8" x 10.875" x 30.875"

20. Central Park (6)
    Black-and-white photograph
    8" x 10"

21. The Gates text
    8.5" x 11"
IV. Selected Readings


Christo. Christo: Collection on Loan from the Kothschild Bank AG. Zürich. La Jolla. La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 1981.


