Joseph Chinard met Juliette Récamier on his first visit to Paris in 1795. The relationship proved very fruitful for Chinard, who completed numerous portrait medallions and busts of her in marble, plaster, and terracotta. It is likely that the Récamiers had other works by Chinard in their collection, and they even invited Chinard in 1805 to live in their fashionable Parisian home. He completed the earliest portrait of Juliette when she was only 17; she did not receive the last, a marble in the Museum of Art in the Rhode Island School of Design, until after Chinard’s death in 1813. The portraits vary in material, size, composition, hairstyle, and dress. The marble bust in Rhode Island, for example, lacks arms and bosom. These were removed later at Madame Récamier’s request after 1828. The Récamiers received the bust in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, in 1801; it is signed “Chinard de Lyon” on the back of the socle. A marble version with arms is in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Minnesota, United States).

Many consider the bust of Madame Récamier to be an unparalleled example of turn-of-the-century portraiture. Germain Bapst noted in a 1911 exhibition of Chinard’s works in Paris that “grâce à ces travaux, l’œuvre de Chinard est aujourd’hui connu” (Thanks to this piece, Chinard’s work is known today). Although the sculptor completed numerous portraits of fashionable women, this one stood apart during his time and even today remains his best-known work. He carved Juliette with a masterful exactness; what immediately distinguishes this work is her exquisite beauty and the graceful manner in which Chinard captures her attitude and nature. In Chinard’s hands Juliette became an emblem of her time as well as an eternal beauty. Her dress is in the then fashionable Neoclassical taste, and her head is bound in a Greek turban. A translucent shawl is coquettishly pulled around her partially exposed torso and drapes over the socle. The seemingly haphazard placement of drapery is in fact quite calculated. With this fashionable accessory Chinard innovatively unified the portrait and its support by blurring the line between bust and pedestal. He employed this technique in many of his female portrait busts, including the terracotta of his wife, Madame Chinard. Innovative as it may appear, some of Chinard’s contemporaries employed a similar approach, such as Canova’s Venus Italica (1804–12; Galleria Palatina, Florence) which also dates to the turn of the century; it is uncertain which work preceded the other.

Chinard’s success with the bust of Madame Récamier earned him celebrity and possibly brought his works to the attention of a larger social and political circle, including Napoléon and his family.

Maria L. Santangelo

Further Reading

Madame Récamier (exh. cat.), Lyon: Musée Historique, 1977

CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE

Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s combined efforts in environmental art have yielded some of the most awe-inspiring images in recent art. Until February 1994 their artworks were known solely as the product of Christo’s inspiration and efforts. At that time, to acknowledge her role as a participant in the creative process, Christo declared that all past and present projects ascribed to him since 1961 should be known as the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Their large-scale projects require the enormous coordination of the work of many people.

Christo Vladimirov Javacheff was born in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, the son of working class parents, and received his first art training in Bulgaria. He studied at the Fine Arts Academy of Sofia from 1953 until 1956. While there he was required to participate in work-study. Christo’s assignment proved fortuitous in helping him develop an aesthetic and artistic system based on large-scale, collaborative projects; the academy as-
signed him and his classmates to "pretify" the Bulgarian landscape, teaching farmers how to stack and place farm implements, products, and equipment in view so that passengers on the luxurious Orient Express would observe the tidy, organized Communist landscape.

Interrupting his Bulgarian art training, Christo went to Prague for six months. It was there that he first chanced upon Russian Constructivism and its colossal imaginative constructions, which would prove important in his later work with Jeanne-Claude. Disenchanted with Communism, Christo fled to Vienna in 1957 and studied for a short time at their Academy of Fine Arts. In 1958 he went to Paris, where he met Jeanne-Claude when he was hired to paint her mother's portrait.

Although their relationship might have caused a scandal since she was the daughter of a French general, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's union instead proved fortuitous; her capabilities as a mediator and manager proved enormously helpful for the kind of art Christo wanted to realize.

In 1958 Christo began converting commonplace items such as bottles or magazine by wrapping, stacking, or draping them. By 1961 he and Jeanne-Claude were collaborating on making larger versions of these modest alterations. They found a group of artists in Paris similarly disenchanted with abstraction who had organized under the name Nouveaux Réalistes. This group included artists Yves Klein and Arman, as well as the critic Pierre Restany, and was somewhat loosely organized although the group did produce a manifesto. Christo participated in some of their activities, but he remained on the periphery, never signing their manifesto or fully acknowledging involvement, even though he probably most represented the group's stated aesthetic. Like Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns in the United States, this group foreshadowed Pop Art with its interest in the everyday object. Christo's work of this period largely involved disruptions to small-scale objects, such as Wrapped Chair of 1961. Also in 1961 he created a manipulated photograph to which drawing and collage have been applied, Project for a Wrapped Public Building, which portrays a strange, draped presence in the otherwise ordered urban environment. Christo and Jeanne-Claude soon started working on a larger scale in Stacked Oil Barrels and Dockside Packages, both in Cologne Harbor, and then by blocking the narrow Rue Visconti in Paris with oil barrels on 27 June 1962, a creation wittily titled Iron Curtain—Wall of Oil Barrels, 1961–1962.

By 1964 the artists were searching for new opportunities and decided to move to New York City. There they began expanding their range of images and forms by shielding and draping plate-glass windows in a series of works titled Store Fronts, which negate the subject's utility and rationale. This open-endedness was characteristically antimainstream, at a time when the New York art world was centered on the clarity of Pop art and the initial sparks of Minimalism were becoming evident.

By the late 1960s Christo and Jeanne-Claude were creating large-scale projects on a regular basis, first in Eindhoven in the Netherlands and Minneapolis, Minnesota, and then in larger metropolitan areas. In 1968 they realized several large projects in Kassel, Bern, and Spoleto, but it was the wrapping of a coast in Australia that catapulted them to a new level of size and scale in their work. The project Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, One Million Square Feet, Sydney, Australia, 1968–69, which consisted of 1.6 kilometers of coastline, 93,000 square meters of fabric, and 58 meters of rope, involved hundreds of people in the negotiations, realization, and completion of the project. The artists altered the normal look and function of the landscape with unexpected elements. Their gentle intrusions into the landscape helped establish environmental art as a movement, as many artists, uninterested in the overemphasis on the commodity and objectness of art, were seeking an environmental approach to art making. These large-scale projects required the viewer to actively participate, the artists facilitating an experience for a short period of time with temporary installations.

The projects of the 1970s further extended Christo and Jeanne-Claude's reputation and sphere of influence in the art world and beyond. Valley Curtain, Grand Hogback, Rifle, Colorado, 1970–72 consisted of a bright orange nylon curtain, 381 to 417 meters wide and 56 to 111 meters high, stretched across a valley. The work existed for only 28 hours before wind ripped the curtain in two, forcing the artists to remove
it. While the work was installed, a photographer documented the immense scale.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude began Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, in 1972, finally realizing it in 1976. The fence extended through the rolling hills of this area, ending in the ocean. Complete permissions to extend the piece into the ocean had not been provided; thus, after the installation of the majority of the 5.5-meter-high and 39-kilometers-long fence, the artists and a few others continued the fence into the waters as though it were emerging or waning. The Maysles brothers filmed this work, as well as Valley Curtain and most subsequent projects.

In 1983 the artists encircled 11 landfill islands between Miami and Miami Beach in Florida by floating fabric around each, resulting in Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980–83. The bold pink color reflected much of the splendid flora and fauna of the region and could be seen from all viewpoints. Equally visually compelling was the dramatic The Pont Neuf, Wrapped, begun in 1975 and realized in 1985. In this work the artists shrouded the oldest bridge in Paris in champagne-colored fabric. The spectacular work simmered in the day and glowed at night, reflecting the water below, as well as being reflected in the water. In 1991 they completed The Umbrellas, Japan–USA, in process since 1984. This binational work marked a departure from Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s previous artworks: workers installed enormous umbrellas, blue in Japan and yellow in California, simultaneously over the landscape. The next project, Wrapped Reichstag, had been in process even longer due to the building’s often-contested role in Germany’s past; the project, begun in 1971, was finally brought to fruition in 1995. The 1.2 million small swatches for distribution to visitors became one of the most collected items of the project. Despite all of these realized projects, many of the artists’ works remain in the unrealized state while permissions are sought.

The artists acquire the financing for their art, which they provide themselves, through the sale of preparatory drawings, collages, and early works done by Christo. They have their own corporation for financing and managing the financial aspects of each project.

The physicality of the objects, their transitory existence, and the ensuing public dialogue have made the works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude important examples of environmental and Installation art. Their work has often resulted in brief utopian periods of active social engagement through the dialogue each work prompts and fosters. Their work has become synonymous with the drama and grandeur of artists dealing with the rural and urban landscape.

See also Arman (Fernandez); Contemporary Sculptors; Installation; Klein, Yves; Performance Art

Christo

Biography


Jeanne-Claude

Biography

Born in Casablanca, Morocco, 13 June 1935. Given name Jeanne-Claude de Guillebon; daughter of a French general; met Bulgarian immigrant Christo in 1958; married him in 1960 (one son, Cyril); Christo assigned her credit as collaborator on all past and present projects solely ascribed to him since 1961. Lives and works in New York City.

Selected Works

1961 Stacked Oil Barrels; oil barrels; realized at Cologne Harbor, Germany
1961 Wrapped Chair; chair, fabric, rope; private collection of Jeanne-Claude and Christo, New York City, United States
1969 Wrapped Coast—One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia; 1.6 kilometers of coastline, fabric, and rope; Sydney, Australia
1970–72 Valley Curtain, Grand Hogback, Rifle, Colorado, 1970–72; orange nylon curtain stretched across a valley; Rifle, Colorado, United States
1972–76 Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972–76; 39 kilometers long fabric fence; Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, United States
CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE

1975–85 The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, 1975–85; a bridge, rope, and fabric; Paris, France
1980–83 Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980–83; 11 landfill islands and fabric between Miami and Miami Beach; Florida, United States
1984–91 The Umbrellas, Japan–USA; 3,100 umbrellas (1,340 blue in Japan and 1,760 gold in California); Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan, and area south of Bakersfield, California, United States
1971–95 Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971–95; rope, fabric; Reichstag, Berlin, Germany

Further Reading
Christo and Jeanne-Claude Projects: Selected from the Lilja Collection, with photographs by Wolfgang Volz, London: Azzurra Editions, 1995
Vaizey, Marina, Christo, New York: Rizzoli, 1990

CHRYSELEPHANTINE SCULPTURE
Composite images of gold (chrysoi) and ivory (elephas) were fashioned in Mesopotamia and the Aegean at least as early as the 2nd millennium BCE, a thousand years before the Classical Greeks coined the compound adjective chryselephantinos. Bronze Age statues were small in scale, apparently no larger than life-size. Technical innovations allowed for larger images in the 1st millennium BCE, but chryselephantine images of all periods also served as components of functional ensembles, such as luxury furniture, weaponry, and toilet articles.

Although freestanding statues could be fashioned from single tusk or even tusk sections, many were nonetheless assembled from individually carved ivory components that were attached to one another or to wooden cores by mortises, tenons, dowels, and pins. Creamy, white ivory was reserved for exposed flesh—often just hands, face, and feet; clothing and hair were rendered in gold or polychromy over wood. Thus carvers did not employ precious imported ivory where it would not be seen, nor did they waste any of the tusk.

The composite technique and the precious materials of ancient chryselephantine statues made them vulnerable to looters as well as to the ravages of time. What has survived tends to be poorly preserved, but despite its fragmentary condition, it is of the highest quality, far outstripping more complete works in other media. Ivory’s dense structure, finer than any wood, allows it to hold detail better than marble, bronze, or terracotta; gold is the most attractive and versatile of metals. The cost of these materials, as well as their aesthetic appeal, ensured that they would be entrusted to the most accomplished craftsman, and surviving components indicate the character of what has been lost. Indeed, the most remarkable statues in any medium from the Aegean Bronze Age are composite chryselephantine statues from Crete, which exhibit exquisitely carved subcutaneous anatomical details, such as networks of veins and tendons. The Youth from Palaikastro, excavated 1987–90, was fashioned from at least 20 components. Gold clothing, a steatite coiffure, rock crystal eyes, and inlaid wooden nipples enhanced its hippopotamus ivory body. (Polychromy was an integral element of ivory sculpture, as of all ancient statuary.) The famous Leapers from Knossos, recovered by Arthur Evans in 1920, inspired a series of “Minoan” forgeries in the early 20th century, most depicting goddesses, some of which are still exhibited in North American museums.

Greek and Latin authors recorded over 200 gold- and ivory statues, and the remains of others have been recovered archaeologically (e.g., at Delphi in central Greece). Most renowned were the temple statues of Pheidias, fashioned in the 5th century BCE. Adapting age-old techniques of furniture makers, carpenters, shipwrights, and bronze casters, the Athenian sculptor contrived to construct composite statues on a monumental scale by unscoring elephant tusks into large, thin sheets of ivory that could then be chemically softened and molded to a desired shape. These veneers were attached to wooden armatures along with gold, glass, and other materials. In this way, Pheidias surpassed any limitation imposed by the size of tusks. The celebrated Athena in Parthenon on the Acropolis, decked with over a ton of gold, stood over 12 meters tall. Equally large was the Zeus at Olympia, which came to be considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Whether small or large, the cost and splendor of chryselephantine statues ensured that they served as status symbols as well as tokens of piety; although often dedicated to the gods, they nonetheless asserted the power, or pretensions, of men, whether individual donors or competing city-states. In the wake of Pheidias, who is also recorded as having produced gold- and ivory statues for the citizens of Elis, Megara, and Pellene, competitive emulation spurred other Greek states to commission monumental chryselephantine