

(I)

NC 0019990 7



T691
M0055852NC

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

CHRISTO & ACTION AND PARTICIPATION

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO :

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

FACULTY OF FINE ART

DEPARTMENT OF SCULPTURE

BY

DECLAN HAYDEN

MARCH 1990

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS	..... P . (4)
INTRODUCTION	..... P . (5)
CHAPTER	
I Artistic Influences	..... P . (6)
II Art by all, Art for all	..... P . (12)
III Christo, Business Man	..... P . (17)
IV Impermanence / Permanence	..... P . (21)
V Gallery / Media	..... P . (24)
VI Aesthetic Qualities	..... P . (27)
CONCLUSION	..... P . (37)
BIBLIOGRAPHY	..... P . (40)

ILLUSTRATIONS

No.

- (1) Packed Bottles and Cans, 1953
- (2) Package, 1961
- (3) Wrapped Motorcycle, 1962 p. 9
- (4) Red Store front, 1964 p. 10
- (5) Henry Moore, Crowd looking at tied up object
1942.
- (6) Package, 1962 p. 11
- (7) The work force, with Hanging Curtain
- (8) Pont - Neuf, p. 15
- (9) Surrounded Islands p. 16
- (10) Wrapped Coast, Little Bay Austrailia 1975 p. 23
- (11) Valley Curtain, 1970 p. 31
- (12) Surrounded Islands, 1980 p. 32
- (13) Running Fence, 1979 p. 33
- (14) Wrapped Walk Way, 1977 p. 34
- (15) Wrapped Girl, 1962 p. 35
- (16) Wrapped Monument, 1970 p. 36

INTRODUCTION

In this essay I am going to attempt to discuss Christo from the point of view of his original approach to art making, to try and understand how he arrived at this method and the problems which he has to deal with as a result.

The interesting thing about Christos art, is that it is public, to the extent that it reaches its fullest potential in public interaction and through public participation, their presences alone sets him apart from other land artists, not only does his work confront the spectators but it calls on their involvement from the earliest planning right through the construction and destruction of the pieces.

Spectacular effects are to be achieved by architectural devices which celebrate the new technological power of man over nature. I feel that by making use of these new tools Christos work reflects the distinction between mundane life and potent art.

I choose to investigate Christos working methods above any of the other so-called earth/environmental artists as I feel he has been very successful in making the general public aware of land art and modern art in general.

ARTISTICINFLUENCES

Christo seems to have a good understanding of people, politics and systems. He is fond of saying that he prefers capitalism over socialism because it can be dealt with rationally and on its own terms. (Capitalism is about straight cash transactions rather than emotive causes or ideals.) He has secured more environmental permits from tough politicians/landlords and capital from art collectors than any other artist in history.

The constructivists believed that in order to do away with academism, even arts old fashioned tools would have to be gotten rid of, also they insisted on the use of "real" space and "real" materials, proclaiming that "we want our settings to be on an iron pipe or something constructed by the new man" (1). However this utopian vision was never realised by its origionators. It could be suggested that Christos projects might qualify as a realised part of the consturctivists unfulfilled dream.

As artistic and political revolutions intersected at the beginning of the century, the constructivists artists had to come to terms with factors from various aesthetic realms. They conceived of modernism as a socio - cultural allowance to radicalize arts function as well as its form. Socialism encouraged the overthrow of the old fashioned notions in art, tolerated change, fostered experiment and promoted a populist point of view. Mechanization and the introduction into art of industrial materials and machine methods, reduced its preciousness and enhanced its potential of serving the needs of tomorrows classless society. The theatricalization of art, finally guaranteed its communicative hold on vast and often illerate audiences.

Comparing Christo to the constructivists I find that his art too, condenses the prevailing social realities and is equally concerned with the aesthetic.

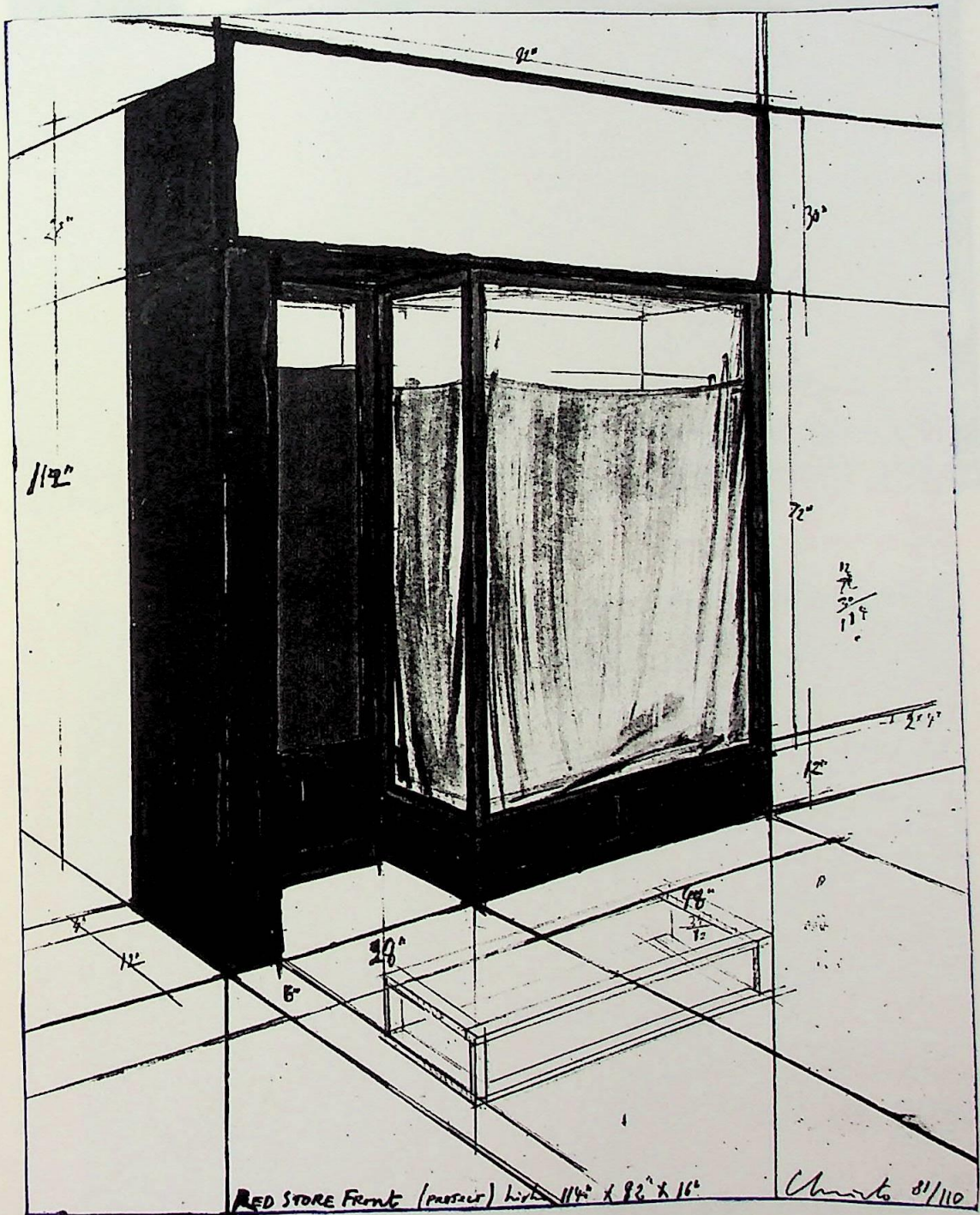
Just as in Russia a truly modern artist was one who left art behind, to whom mass production constituted arts ideal end, so Christo appears to dodge aesthetics in order to turn instead to the human, ecological and technical aspects of his art. Modern, to him, is a property of life today, the ways in which we think and operate and not a property of form, for none of his projects lay claim to formal innovation. Socialism may have been his initial philosophy and dialectic thinking may have remained his hallmark. However in moving to America he adopted pragmatic thinking. Pragmatism it could be suggested seems to do for his work what socialism did for the constructivists. It put preconceptions to the test and reconnected people with art and art with people. Christo is no longer able to operate without access to industry and thus proved the constructivists predictions right. While he has not led us to a classless society, his work certainly eludes ownership and offers equal enjoyment to all. Theatricalization is as important a strategy for Christo as it was for artists and activists in Revolutionary Russia. Christo does not have to move to the stage, he satisfies his political and architectural ambitions by setting his own stage.

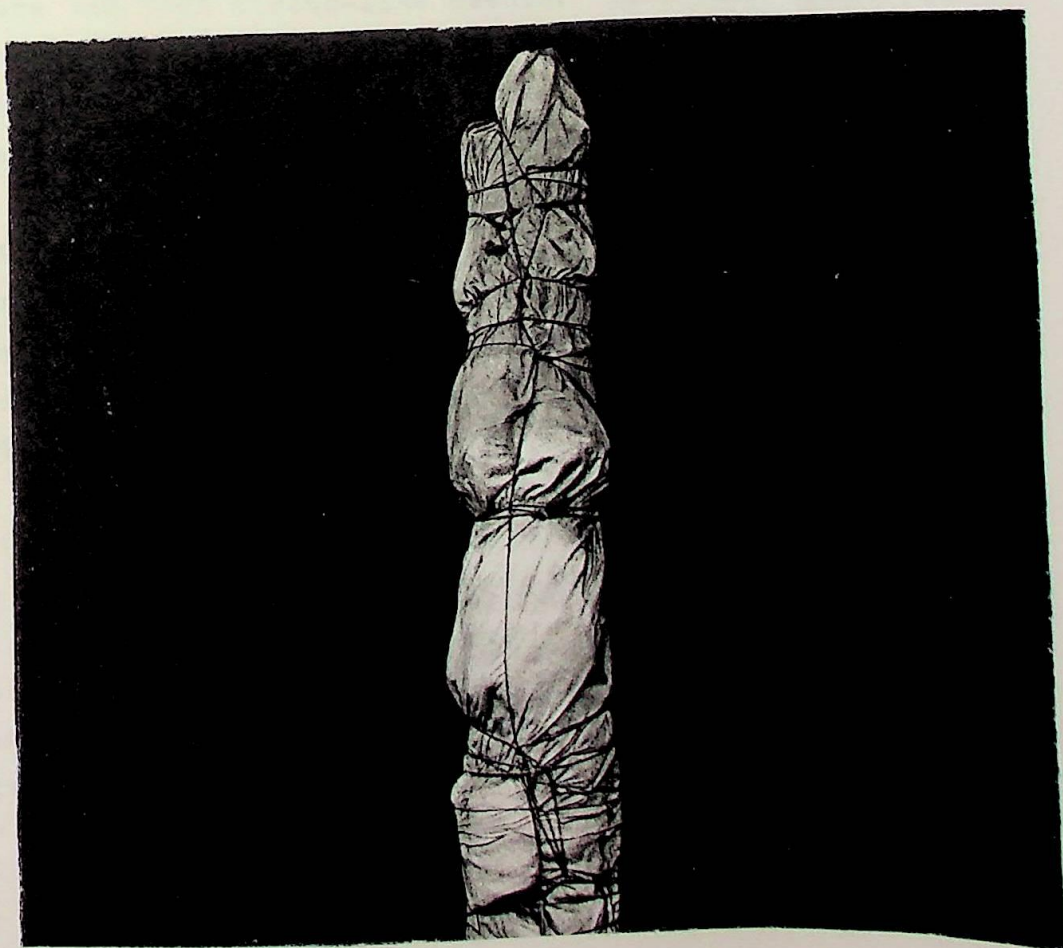
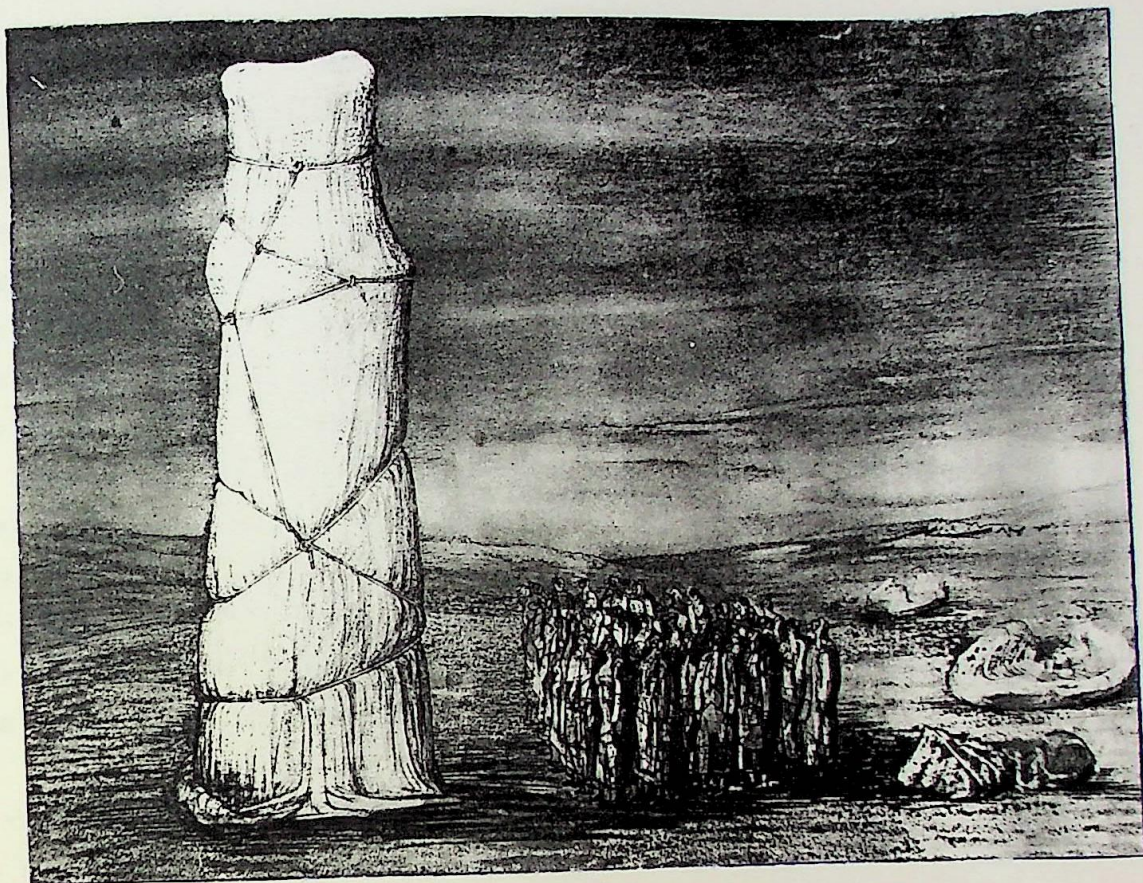
When one sees Christos wrappings one can not help but make the connection with Man Rays "enigma of isidore Ducasse", 1920, a Sewing Machine wrapped in cloth and rope. The dada connection is repeated again when one sees Duchamps fresh window 1920 in comparison to Christos early store fronts. We must however draw the line between Christo and the Dadas/surrealists when we come across his large scale projects. They exceed all normal dimensions of art, next to these large scale works the Dadas/surrealists while they share certain impulses offer little comparison.

It is true to say that many of Christo's earlier works keep within the format established by the Nouveau réaliste group, but for his large scale works in which Christo is now involved the relationship is no longer relevant. His impulse towards a realization on a gigantic scale which lay itself open to a wide variety of influences and uncontrollable forces was directly opposed to developments within the Nouveau réalistes. Christo is part of the modernist "tradition" and approach that places a premium on originality and which uses the challenge of the past as a constant and valid tactic. "New" art is derived from a rebuff of the old, yet that rebuff has grown in its vehemence." "The contentious and activist attitude of so much modernist art (and of its American progeny) rests on the notion that proves its value provocatively, by its onsetting effect on a complacent or unawakened public" (2) . Given this strong desire to agitate and arouse the imagination, the modernists work sometimes assaults. In the daring attempt to overturn the great, and the mediocre art of the past, the artists personality often looms as large as his achievements as in the case of J. Pollock. Christo has made significant contributions within this tradition.

The interesting thing about Christo is the way in which he seems to diminish the gap between the utopian and the realistic. He always succeeds in creating the conditions to carry out his "risky" plans each time he seems to succeed with even more bizarre schemes. He remains essentially a realist even if his plans at times border on the utopian.







ART BY ALL / ART FOR ALL

Today's art is not merely shown, it puts on a show and encourages audience participation. The performance of artists as showpeople to the new art world, has caused some people to conclude that painting and sculpture have lost their bearings and are about to vanish into show business. The fact is, however, that art as action and performance by artists embody the principle of continuity that links together the vanguard art movements of the past fifty years. The impulse to turn from art object to art event, has its roots in the dada and surrealist movements, and as previously stated Christo acknowledges his debt to the influences of past art movements.

Community involvement plays a critical part in Christo's thinking as an artist. It may be said that Christo's work has filled the gap between art and life. His works are part traditional sculpture and part circus-like events. In a time where the mingling of art and life is taken for granted. His organisation of the community in the making of temporal art work requires the public's involvement.

All artistic activity requires some kind of creative tradition in which to operate and this considerably restricts non-professional artistic activity in our society but Christo manages to bridge this gap between artist and non-artist by involving the community in his works. The government bodies and the local people etc. have the ultimate power in the making of Christo's works. In a sense they are the art makers as without them his projects would not physically exist. What I mean is that first of all Christo has to obtain permission from the people to use their land/buildings as containers for his artworks and secondly he requires their physical input in the actual construction of the art work.

Therefore it could be said that they (the people) are the true art makers as without them Christos large works would not exist beyond his sketchbook.

It is evident in the photos he selects that he wants to present glimpses of the artistic function of mass workers. "The work is not only the physical object, the work is right now and here, everybody is part of it " (1).

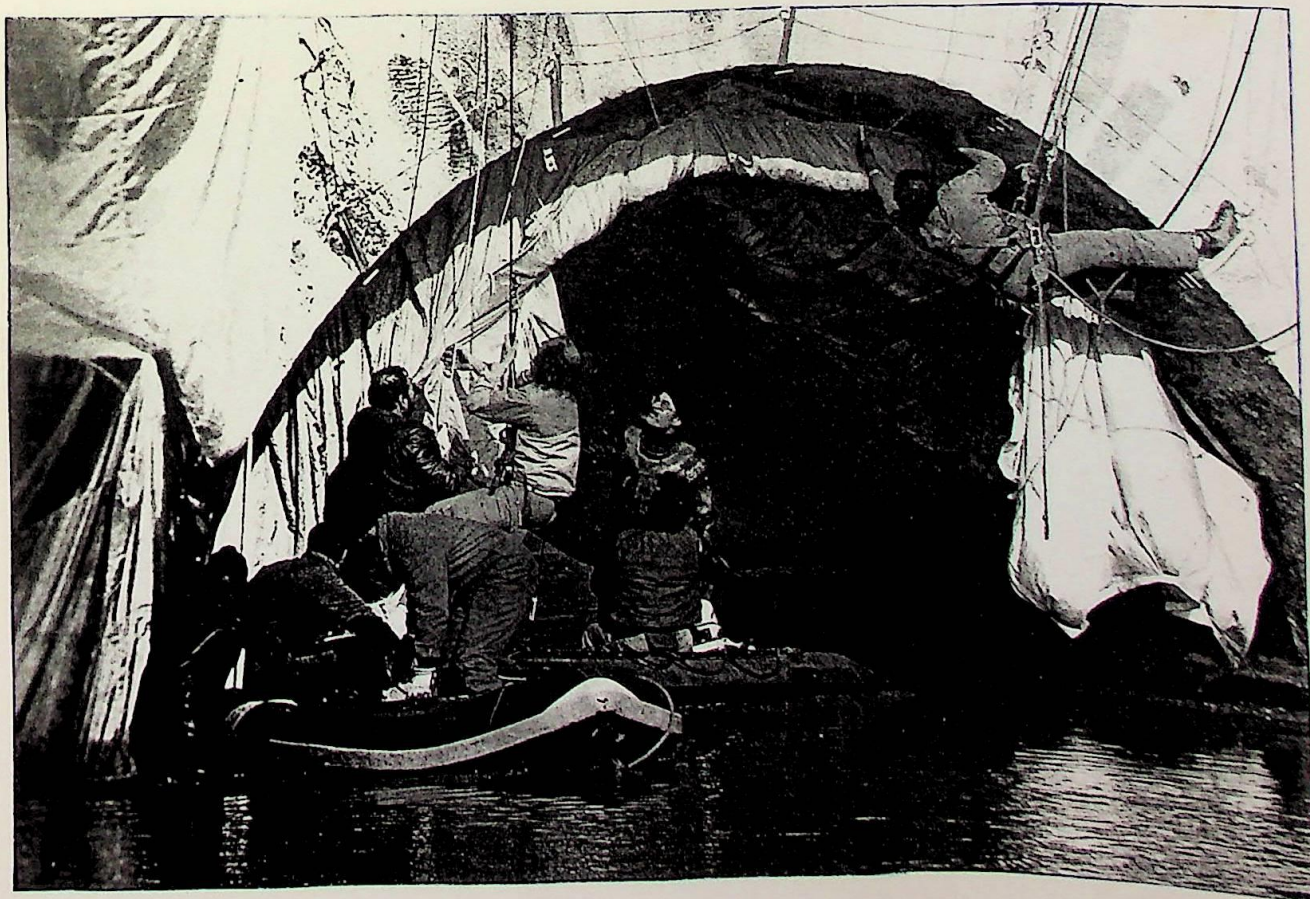
A project without the public and, therefore without opposition seems to hold no interest for Christo. The public the fact of their presence sets Christo apart from other land artists. For example works realized by Richard Long, Robert Morris, Robert Smithson or Walter de Maria tended largely to be removed from the general public, when they go monumental we find them executed in remote sites, they tend to avoid any confrontation with society.

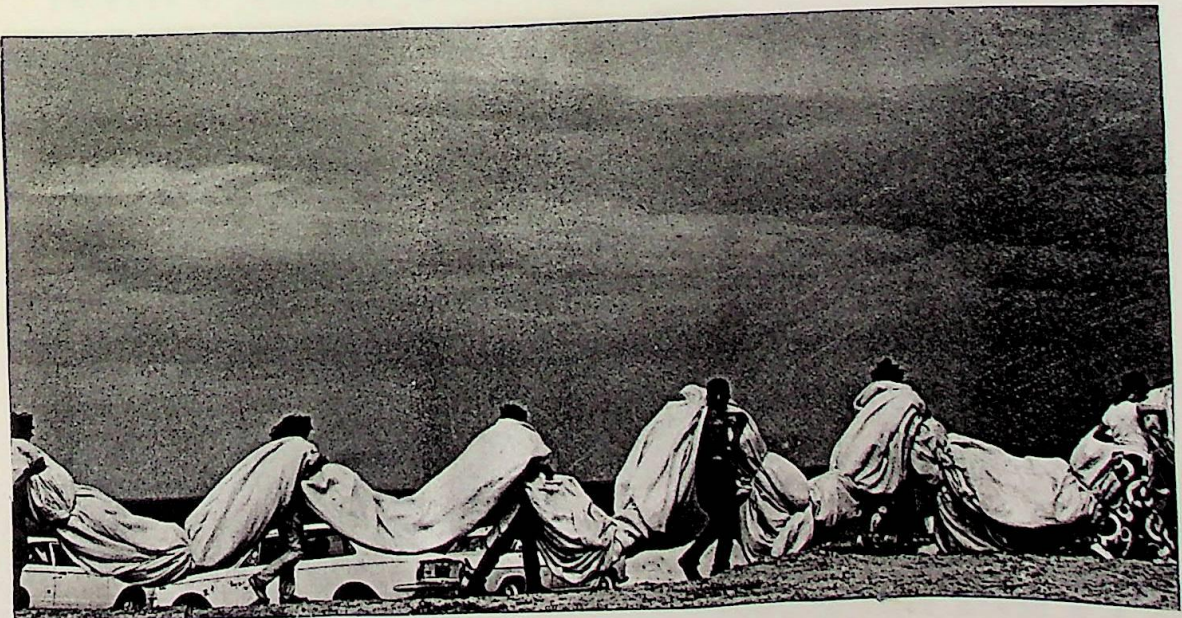
Christos environments are human environments and not deserted far removed places. He makes the physical environment part of what you might call a social and human environment by implicating a lot of people in his projects. The way these people are drawn into his projects is part of the work itself. Christo seems to regard all these aspects as important elements of the work, obviously his projects could not exist without the co-operation of the workers and the availability of the sites, however, Christo is indisputably the artist while the people and places make it all possible.

It would be naive to conclude that Christos aim is similar to that concept of "participation" and public involvement in artistic decisions that was so exhausted in the 1960's. Works which brought this circus element to art can be retraced to Pollock's action painting, however, such works did not succeed the confines of artistic action. In my opinion this previous concept of participation was confined to an art establishment and not offered in an accessible way to the larger public. "In Christos case the communal event begins

in the mind of one visionary artist " (1). There is no denying that projects as outlandish as any of his major pieces, could only be guided by a singularly determined mind.

Art conceived by committee rarely amounts to anything. Christo utilizes the political process yet maintains an artistic freedom outside it. In his case, the focus on political, social, technical, legal and ecological concerns is so intense that for a time, at least during the long preparatory phase and subsequent construction, aesthetic criteria may appear to recede. Foreplanning is necessary in order to achieve his aims, however, at this early planning stage the aesthetic criteria are also taken into account and it is the juggling of these two vital aspects of his work that make possible the end result. I will primarily discuss in more detail this business element to Christos work because I believe that this is as important as the aesthetic qualities which I will later go on to discuss.





CHRISTO THE BUSINESS MAN

Pushing large pieces of environmentally based works such as Christos through to final approval involves the organisation of a sophisticated public - relations campaign to win the needed backing from press and from neighbourhood interest groups. The environmental artist is no longer a simple economic entity producing discrete works which can be neatly sold, with custody transferred to the buyer. The artist is becoming more like a developer, conceiving of a project, hustling for financing, securing the site, supervising the construction and arranging public access when the project is completed. It could be suggested that like business men artist are becoming deal makers.

In Cristos case his projects are financed out of a highly profitable sale of related drawings. The huge financial expences of his projects are usually responsible for grabbing media attention. His projects could be accused of wasting money without justification. Social and economic considerations are the recurrent essential factors in his works. Christo is always pointing out that he does not receive a penny of public money for his projects however the rectification never seriously asserts itself.

An organizational rather than an individual approach has made possible many of the past decades more significant artistic interactions with the natural/public environment. Christos projects such as Running Fence involve most of these elements and more. Hundreds of drawings must be sold to finance his projects, which involve lengthy negotiations with governmental agencies, landowners, banks and community groups. His works involve so much pre-planning that they have to be approached in much the same way as a highway authority would approach building a road for example. In the primary stages of his large works he must spend a long time structuring, financing, preparing environmental impact reports and testifying before zoning boards etc.

His works generate intense controversy and involve legal and political institutions, from their earliest planning stages through to their construction, maintenance and dismantling. There is no doubt however that the public hearings, legal contracts etc. are all part of Christo's intentions. He insists that a "work of art is not merely the physical object finally attained, but the whole process, the surveys, the engineering, the leasing, the fabricating, the assembling, the hearings and the rest of it" (1).

Christo has said of his projects "The work has its own reality" (2), yet the fact remains that they are designed by him, overseen by him, and paid for by him. They are free - enterprise ventures with a substantial quotient of populist sentiment. He has shown it is possible to overcome governmental and corporate interventions. He has the gift of wriggling through bureaucratic obstacles converting them into supports with his sweet talk.

The interesting thing about Christo's work is the human side of it, the fact that he has to wheel and deal for finances to create his large works. This wheeling and dealing with sponsors, governments, environmentalists, local people etc. makes it necessary to strike up compromises, this usually leaves Christo with the permission to make his works provided he stays within the tightly defined agreements he has struck up with the various groups.

Christo is a professional salesman when it comes to gaining public acceptance to his projects. As I have already mentioned he seems to have the ability to transform opposition into enthusiasm. One element I dislike about his approach when dealing with the local people is the way in which he points out how much they have to gain by allowing him to go ahead with his plans, increase in tourism, job creation etc., however it must be remembered that these are all short term gains and not of any real importance to them, however, the go

ahead from his already devoted collectors, art dealers and critics would never be enough in its self to carry off such projects. The public at large are after all the ones who make the final discisions therefore I suppose it is important that he uses what every tactics necessary to win their approval. Afterall the realisation of the work is for him the most important thing.

People who oppose his work are part of the "Art" actors in the drama. Each new work sees the same conflicts repeated this is inevitable as his large works usually affect an entire range of social life. This conflict, takes him to the mass media with a scale of publicity that art does not other wise receive. The actual value of his projects as pieces of art become secondary at this stage his works raise many questions.

Many of his contemporaries see him as being a capitilist entrepreneur, simply in the business of making art to boost his ego and enlarge his bank account, for example Mary Fuller, sculptor wrote to the Sonoma county planning commission 1975 stating the following "I oppose the construction of the curtain for the following reasons first, it is a money making proposition, a deal not art..., a public relations show job is not the same as art " .. she goes on to say how this type of project is a waste of money, time and energy, that it will cause a load of unwanted tourism and besides the above she felt it was old hat, been done before.

"At the risk of being called an unthinking philistine, I must say that from the air, I suspect the project would resemble a gargantuan roll of toilet paper unfurled across the pleasant dairy lands - Joel, W Hedgpeth".

Objections to his works are usually based on the grounds of the possible environmental damage his constructions may cause. His work is often considered to be destructive to the natural environment in an aesthetic context. After all his works are not exactly peaceful co-existent artifactual appendages to their sites, living in aesthetic symbiosis with nature.

I personally would not object to his works from an environmentalist stand point as I feel from reviewing his past grande temporary projects that they had very little if any at all effect on their surroundings, however, my objections to such works would be more on an association level, by this I mean years from now I can imagine people pointing to the islands of biscayne bay, Miami, Little bay Australia, or the pont Neuf Paris for instance and saying thats the island, coast, bridge that Christo wrapped. I suppose this is enevitable when one works on such a large scale. I fear that not only has he wrapped these places but he may have unconsciously smothered past associations, I presume that the smothering of past identities was not his aim.

By becoming an artist in the public eye Christo has/is always been attacked as a result. As allready mentioned a lot of people believe that he is simply in the business of going public with his work in order to feed his ever growing ego. It has even been suggested that his large works are a direct reflection of his huge ego. I believe there may be some truth in such statments, however, I don't believe that personal glory is his chief inspiration.

THE IMPERMANENCE / PERMANENCE OF CHRISTO'S WORK

The transience of the physical construction is a factor in the transformation of Christos works into something like public performances, which get attention both prior to their physical realization and after their physical destruction. His works seem to extend temporal boundaries, whereby the social context of its realization takes on aesthetic import.

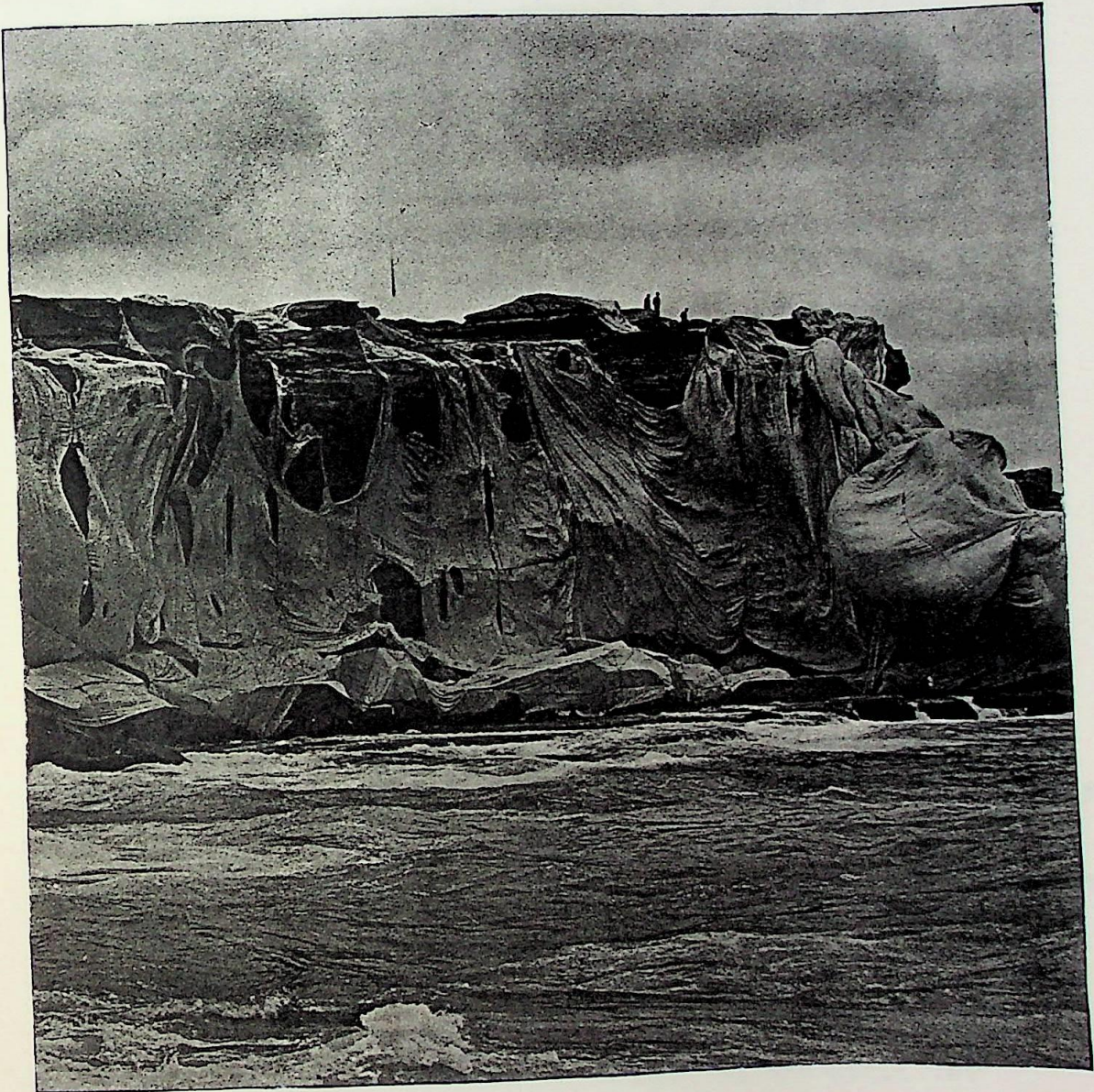
His large works are temporary in nature, not meant to remain in place more than a week or two, afterwards, their existence is reduced to their extensive documentation (which is intentional and well planned). In part, legal and economic constraints determine their duration, since the necessary permits to construct the projects have been contingent upon a fixed short lifespan. In addition the materials themselves partially influence the time period, for the fabric components would deteriorate if exposed to the elements for very long. It must be remembered however that Christo himself chooses to design projects that inherently raise the issue of how long they can physically or legally survive.

The contracts Christo has to sign always commit him to prompt demolition. "A project is only complete when it has disappeared completely " . (1) He works rhythmically in three stages, preparation, realization and memory. What remains is a scene of action strewn with evidence, a place to which memory clings (as stated in previous chapter). Perhaps nobody has linked creation and destruction as closely as Christo. His works do not exist merely as concepts; plan, realisation and remembered image all belong together.

The impermanence of the art object arose as the artists' weapon against art, as an intellectual prop, for once set in motion a work can survive apart from its physical body. The art object tends to dissolve into its reproductions and to fixed opinions regarding its meaning. Exhibited for limited periods, frequently to illustrate a concept, the original work retires leaving the image in the catalogue/book/film by which it is "placed" and comprehended. Perishable materials will not prevent artists from achieving immortality in the future. "Today artists are renowned in places where not a single piece of their work has ever been on display. Why should they not be equally famous in areas of time never reached by their actual products" ? (2). Today impermanence has become a stylistic device, eagerly appreciated in terms of aesthetic precedents.

Christo's works have aroused a bewildered and sceptical, but eventually enthusiastic public. His major works survive today only in memory and documentation. Christo works with two elements, the monumental and the transient. His books and films are full of accounts of vanished works. He seems to like to create the gigantic and unrepeatable to stir our imagination. He leaves behind him, not monuments tied to one place, but reports and records of fleeting boldness. The destruction of the original work becomes a necessary part so that all the photographs/books/films/drawings etc., which document its making can share in the aura of the lost and unrecoverable.

"Whether works are permanent or impermanent in an actual physical sense, they can still be objects to be possessed" (3). In Christo's case the secondary art form is more important than the primary one. His films/photos etc. as he says himself are the "real" art objects, and in my opinion they possess the ability through reproduction to outlive by far any other form of sculpture i.e. bronze/stone structures.



GALLERY/MEDIA

Before the industrial revolution artists and writers were well integrated into the social structures in which they worked. Working in galleries etc. and in no sense defining themselves as out casts or opponents to the social order. Today it would seem fair to say that there are new forms of patronage and employment for artists which integrate themselves into the capitalist system. Christo seems to have become a dab hand at manipulating these new systems. "All of us have the ability of expanding our visions beyond the mundane. It takes some one like Christo to prove it possible. " (1)

The 19th century artist could commune with nature on traditional size canvass with traditional materials, but the contemporary environment is so multifaceted and the individuals relationship to the social natural landscape is so complex, that traditional economic units of art production seem inadequate as modes of art expression. Contemporary environmental artists have choosen to confront the modern environment head on and in Christos case on a large/same scale. In doing so artists such as Christo have outgrown the confines of the traditional gallery system and have pointed to the importance of developing an alternative form of art distribution.

In relation to works by Christo it could be said that the role of the gallery has been replaced by the media. Even the most advanced and successfull galleries are still far removed from the sophisticated marketing/advertising abilities of the media.

Christo puts his art right out in society and it instantly engenders a great stir around it. Such excitement naturally captures the attention of the media. As already mentioned, some people would call this exploiting the media for personal glory however it is just as true to say that the media are attracted to such works because they contain a true element of universality within them.

His works grow to such a scale that they become news as well as art.

At the moment art is still a medium for a relatively small mass, though one which is capable of expanding indefinitely. To maintain the size of the mass and if possible to enlarge it, artists such as Christo have developed their own kind of public relations within medial circles through the use of films, interviews and public discussions. Neither by museum or by art criticism can large contemporary art works which interact with society be kept separate from the media. Not only does this type of art keep approaching the media by way of place and promotion but the media for their part take on the features of art.

The films and photographs which depict the construction of Christos larger works give us an insight into a new form of art appreciation. Aesthetics go hand in hand with the excitement and admiration aroused through the intense advertisement he receives through press coverage which follows the progression of his work. All of this makes his projects comprehensible and popular. Since he began to work on a large scale, Christo has succeeded like no one else both in retaining an individuality and even eccentricity to which avant - garde are accustomed us yet at the same time becoming a household name capable of generating intense controversy among non-artistic people.

Christo makes use of the media in much the same way as a gallery artist makes use of the galleries. In a sense the media are responsible for packaging his ideas/works and distributing them to the general public. The virtues of the media package are economy and reliability in production unlike art galleries which tend to be slow in communicating and in different degrees to different people. In short it could be suggested that the production and consumption of art in a gallery system occurs under the handicap of a confined space

capable only of communicating to a minute portion of the population on the other hand the media which is more widely distributed and viewed is capable of reaching a far broader audience and thus helping to bridge the age old gap between art and life.

Some people may be alarmed at "the possibility that a total victory of the media in the art world will lead to the monopoly of a single type of imagination, one in which creation is dominated by the craftsman's idea of what the public wants " (2) . Yet pleasing a public is becoming less restrictive as society is divided into a larger variety of taste groups. Artists can now choose to work for the one in which he feels most comfortable.

A tendency in recent years has been to make art to the most advanced industrial techniques following the methods of the media, art today is often an efficiently conceived, factory produced, self explanatory aesthetic package. Whether art is made as a package or is an item to be packaged, it takes on the character of the package in its mode of transmission to the public, that is through the communication systems of the press, including the art press, galleries and other distribution and educational mechanisms. I can see a promising future for media museums. The prospect of the vanishing of the arts into the media is, on the face value, not too alarming. Christo has generally speaking been getting on quite well with the media, making full use of its explosion over the past two decades. One strain of current avant - garde art aims at breaking down the last barriers between art and life and transforming painting and sculpture into cultural events.

AESTHETICS QUALITIES

An important part of Christos work seems to be the fact that they have no real reasons to exist other than they can be quite beautiful to look at. The aesthetic status of Christos work and his conception of the extended project as a work of art may be theoretically controversial, but in fact the actual controversies surrounding these projects have been confined largely to the environmental implications of the constructions, viewed as intrusions on the natural settings.

In conception and design his works are monumental in scale. We are continually reminded visually as well as by documentation, of the extensive dimensions and costs of the materials and labor, as well as the engineering complexities and sometimes the real danger in actual construction. The scale of his projects are essential to their heightened visual appeal and to the complex social context of their realization. His large scale works are extremely forceful appendages to. If not intrusions upon their settings as stated in the previous paragraph.

"To identify such a structure as art would seem to say that art is any thing you can get away with " (1). It has become apparent that formal criteria are no longer adequate when dealing with Christos work, for example his wrapping of buildings is a familiar sight in cities when cleaning takes place, so one may question whether there is any difference between a building wrapped by maintenance workers and one wrapped by Christo? I suppose the difference becomes an aesthetic one, when the viewer is informed that what they are seeing is a piece of art. In the case of his wrappings they seem to disguise the objects to a certain extent. Hiding their details yet in a sense highlighting their beauty in that they draw the viewers attention to the simplistic beauty of the wrapped forms without the distraction of details one usually has to deal with when looking at a building. For example. His wrappings are inherently mysterious and bring to

mind images of containment, concealment, imprisonment etc. It has been suggested that the idea of wrapping is itself a means of preserving, enshrouding, and protecting objects in the same way as the Egyptians preserved bodies through wrapping in cloth - by wrapping everyday objects whether flowers books or buildings Christo takes them out of the world of everyday usage and elevates them into the world of art.

The primary element of Christos work is fabric which always involves colour whether it be a soft calm white in running fence or a dynamic screaming pink as in surrounded islands, it seems to play an important part in his work whether he uses it as a reflector of sunlight or as a powerful contrast to its surroundings. Fabric possesses a light flowing quality and when draped over even the most rugged structure has the ability to transform it into something soft and beautiful. Christo has perfected the manipulation of fabric to a fine art, it could be said that he is a master at dressing structures, from his earlier works such as wrapped girl to his most recent wrappings of buildings he approaches the objects in much the same way as a dress designer would approach the human figure, pulling and stretching the fabric in different directions in order to achieve the most visually dazzling effect.

I don't think beauty is something that Christo sets out to create but rather something which accrues at the completion of a project. Christo seems more interested in the beauty of the process of human and technical potential than in achieving visual beauty. In the closing scene of his film which documented Running Fence, Christo turns to his wife and expresses in a somewhat surprised tone how beautiful the piece looked.

Christos larger works could be said to assert themselves over/ against their chosen sites, by their size, their engineering complexity and their synthetic components. Those who believe

he has succeeded aesthetically, however could argue that he has selected natural sites in which nature is up to the challenge, in the case of Running Fence for instance it could be said that the natural surroundings were so grandiose that it was important for his piece to meet it on somewhat the same scale if they were to survive within the setting and not be over powered by it, however on the other hand it is probably not intentional on Christos behalf to make work which co-exist with nature. Fortunately nature can remain physically undiminished by such challenges. In Christos case a dialectics of nature and art is achieved through a combination of opposing forces, artifactual and natural, but at the same time both forces retain their identity as separately identifiable components of the completed work.

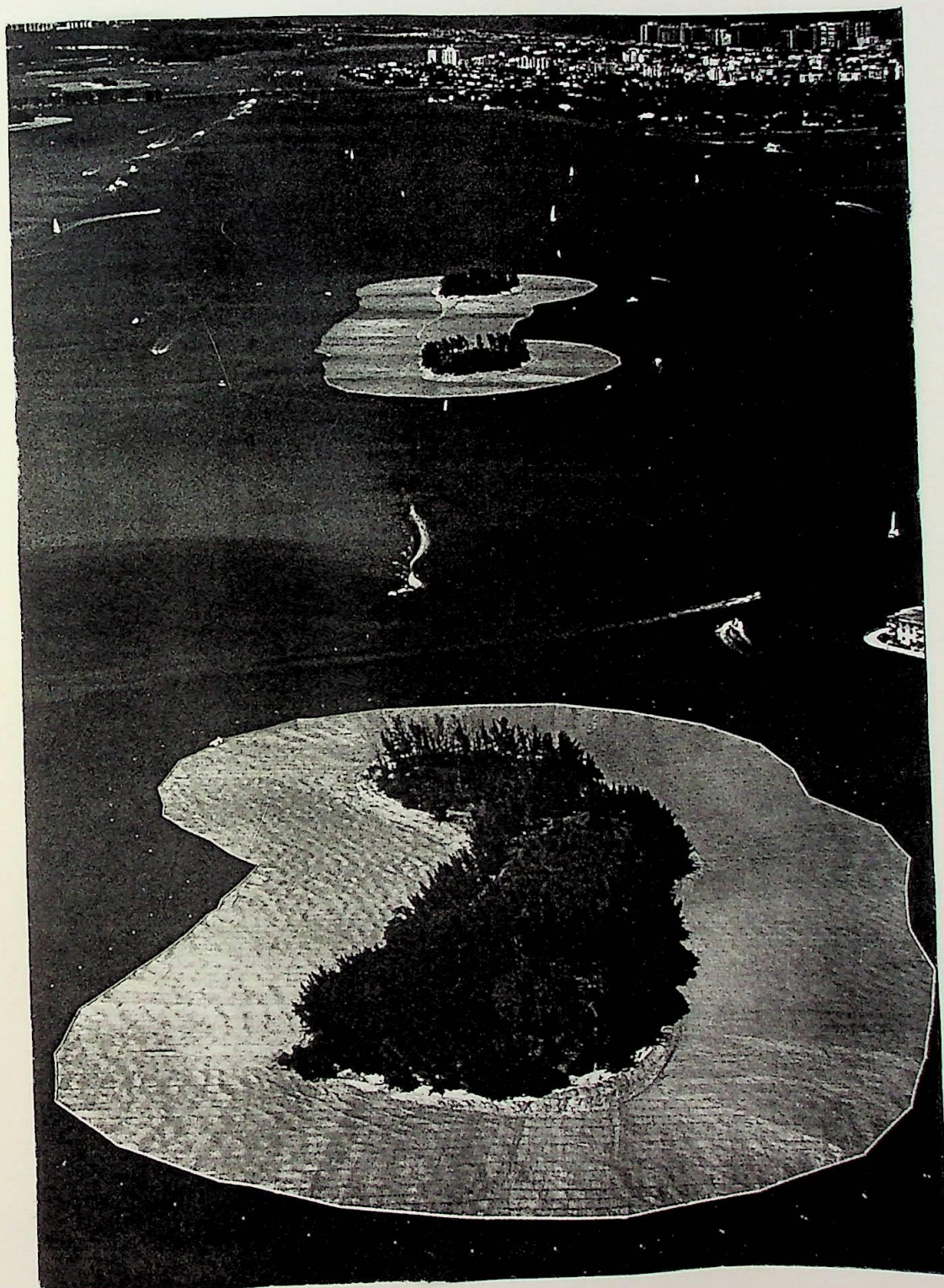
It is obvious when one looks at works such as Running Fence, Valley Curtain, and Little Bay Australia that Christo tends to select relatively undisturbed sites not already popular as scenic focal points for his naturally based projects, however the chosen sites are always accessible to public view, given his desire to include an interested public in the realization of his projects. An important aspect of his works seem to be that they allow the chosen sites to dictate the construction of the piece, his works even though artificial tend to look quiet peaceful in their environments. I think this is because of the type of materials he uses.

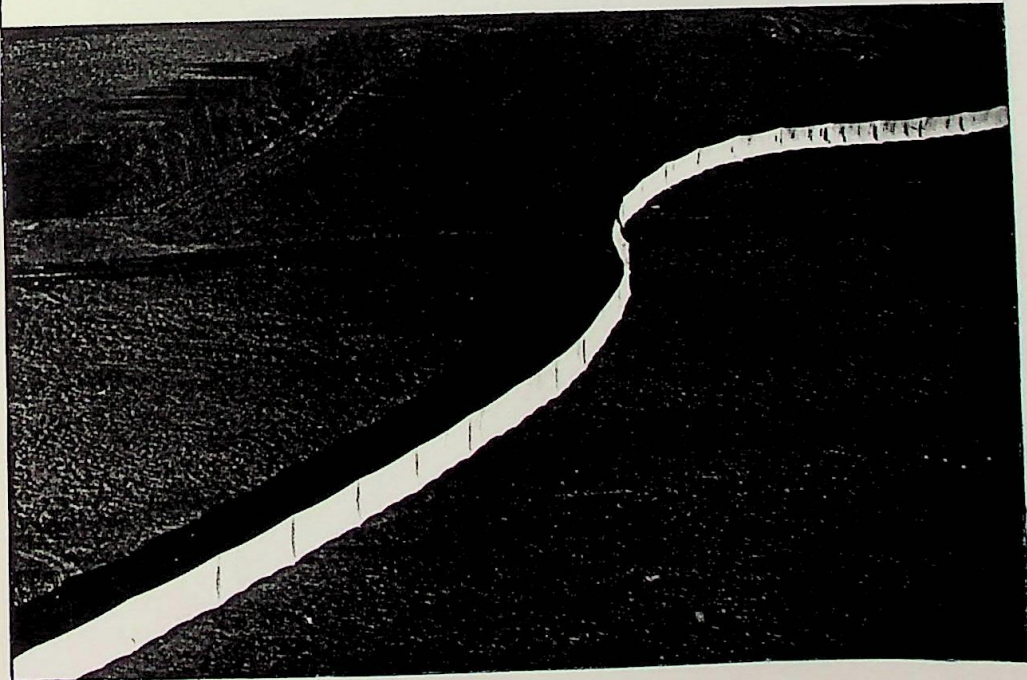
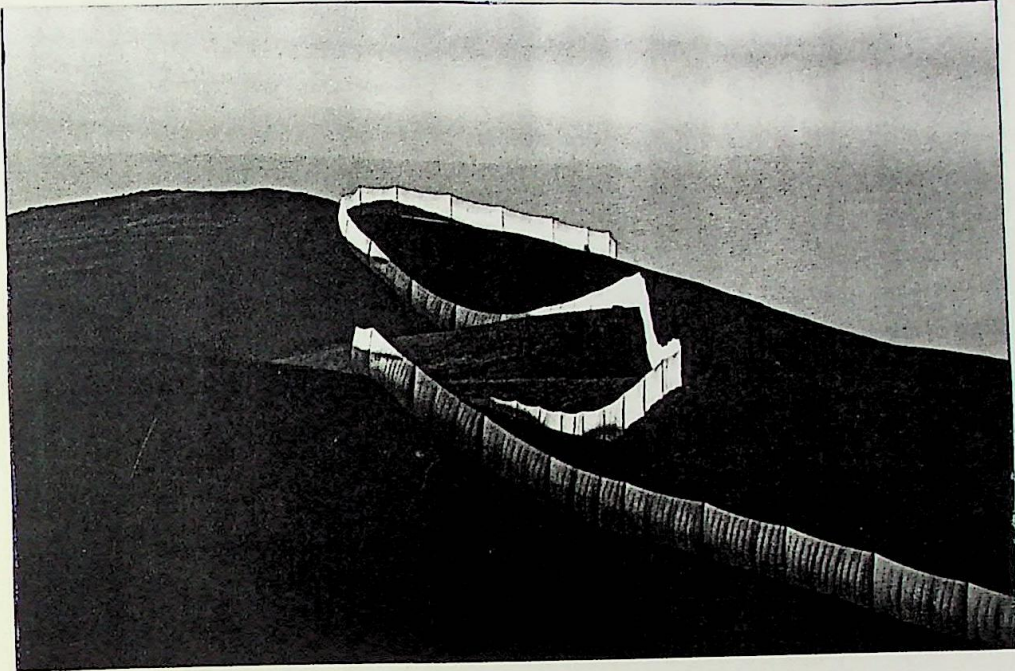
Running Fence for example by meandering up and down the countryside actually draws ones attention to the beauty of the meandering landscape, which may have gone unnoticed if it were not for this white line which catches your attention and draws your eyes across it. Likewise in his piece Hanging Curtain it could be said that this gigantic piece of coloured fabric stretched across a valley causes one to notice the sheer strength and beauty of this natural source, which may have otherwise gone unnoticed - I suppose it could be suggested that such work highlights the already existing beauty of the sites.

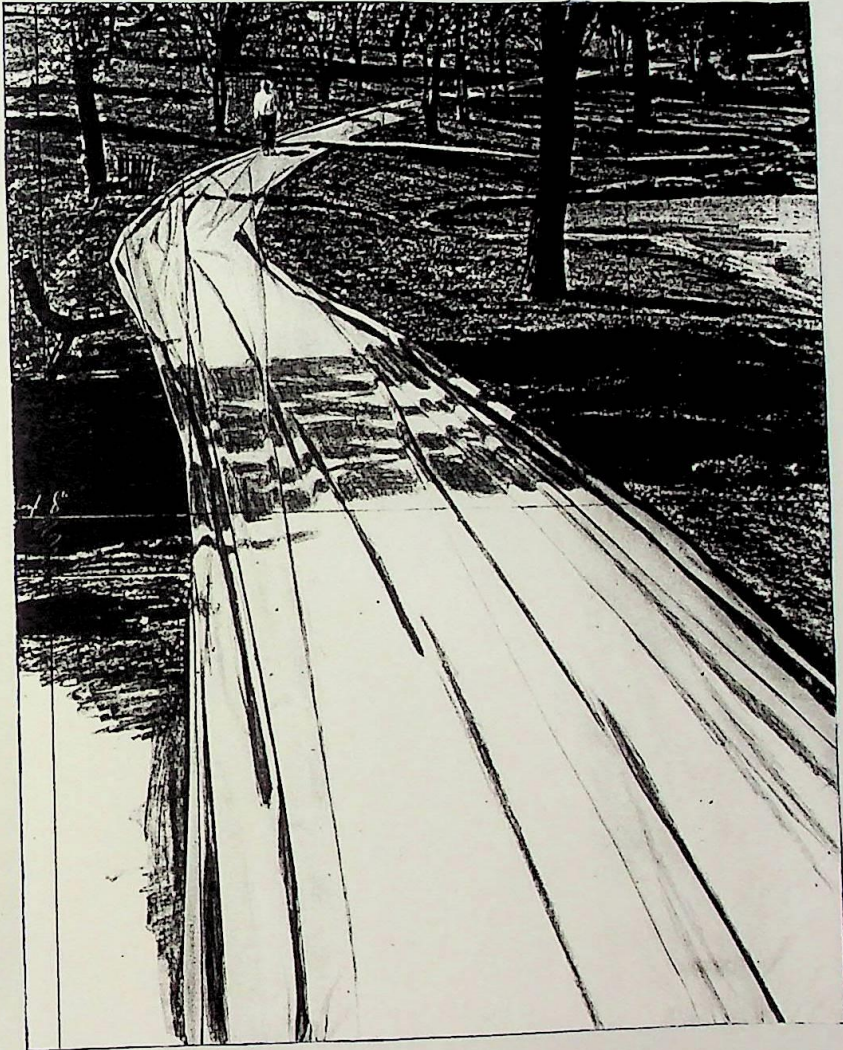
Pure nature is hard to find, and the aesthetic appreciation of nature is not limited to nature in its pristine form. Nature and artifacts commonly appear together. Artistic constructions are intentionally placed in natural settings, in a variety of ways, then the appreciation of nature often involves the artifactual, as I have already mentioned in Christos case. Aesthetic qualities seem to go hand in hand with the excitement and admiration over the technique/organisation involved in his projects. The old search for the authoritative aesthetic definition of a successful work of art is transferred to the world of technology.

No matter how complex and impure in the process Christos works may seem the end product has such formal strength and integrity, I would imagine that some aesthetic plotting was part of the process.

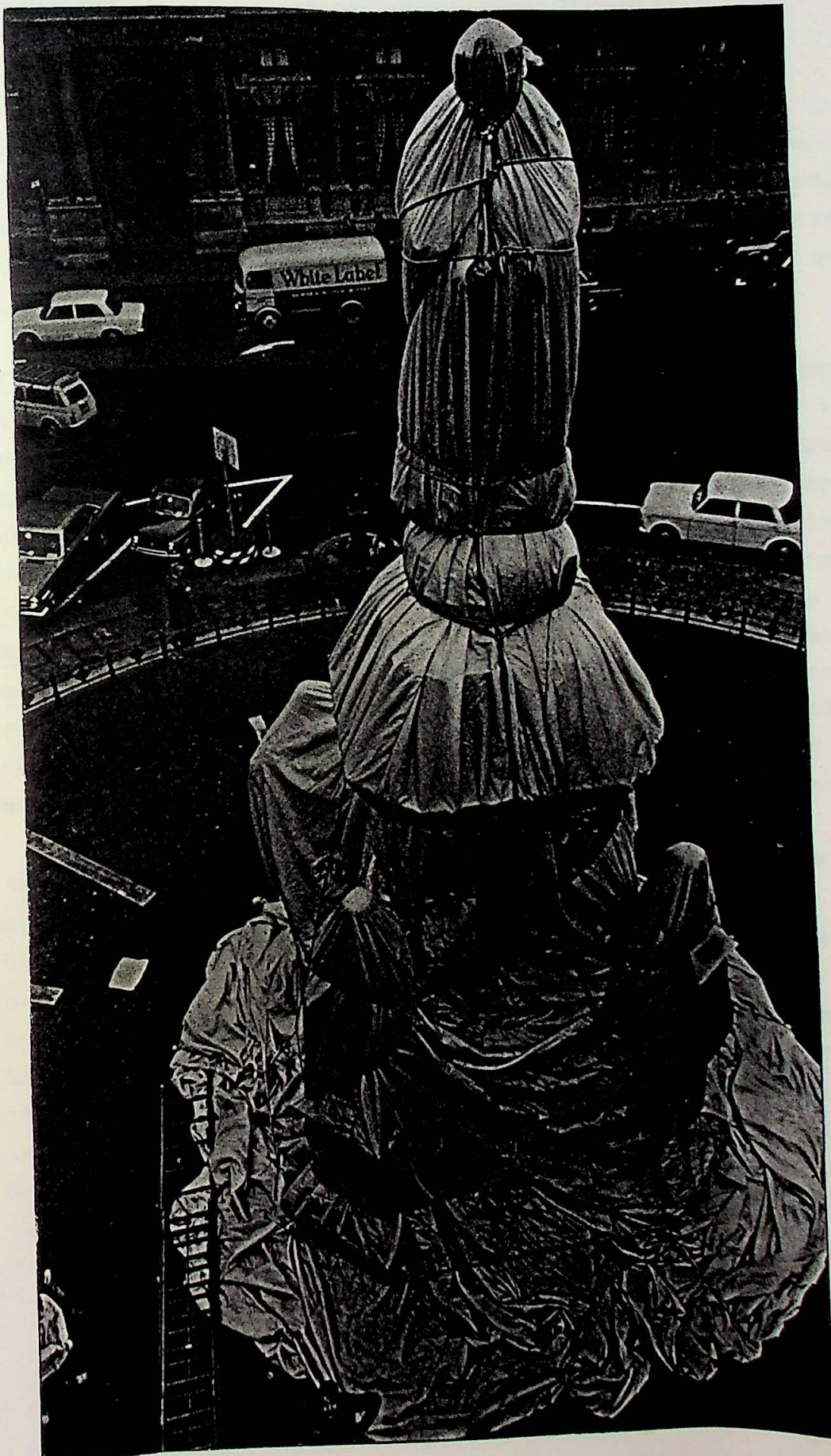












CONCLUSION

"It's impressive , but is it art?" (1). This is the main re-occurring questions in relation to Christo's work. I purposely decided not to touch upon this type of criticism in this essay as I don't believe it's really that important, after all what is art? Is there really any difference between a farmer, a miner and an artist? Apart from the fact that one is a farmer, one is a miner and one is an artist.

I believe that art should have the ability to uplift, to change, that one should start looking with as few pre-conceptions as possible and the experience of looking alone should profoundly effect one. I feel Christo's works, because of their sheer size and complexity certainly have the ability to effect the viewer, whether the effect is positive or negative depends on one's personal tastes. I feel his works, especially in the case of Running Fence, Valley Curtain and Surrounded Islands possess a poetic almost romantic quality. In relation to these large works, I feel that they highlight the beauty of the natural settings. Likewise, in relation to his wrappings it could also be suggested that they are revealing rather than concealing.

As much as Christo would like to believe he is outside the system of commodification of art objects, I believe he is slightly hypocritical in perception of his stance. On the one hand Christo seems to be trying to subvert the artistic establishment, like so many other environmental artists, by making his art objects effemeral, however as Christo says himself, it is his photos/drawings that become the actual art objects and therefore become objects to be possessed, in a sense I don't believe that Christo is really any different from the average artist working within the confines of the traditional gallery system.

I admire Christo for the Unique quality he appears to possess, that is being his own man in the face of such extreme opposition, for finding his own space within the capitalist social structure. As I have already mentioned Christo has been criticized/accused of being an artist in the business of making deals and not art. I myself don't believe that he is only a dealmaker, it's obvious that his primary interest is in making art and this business element is an essential component in order for such outlandish projects to be realized.

In my opinion, the most interesting element about Christo is that he involves a non-artistic public in the realisation of his plans, this coupled with his original approach to making art sets him above the average contemporary environmental artist.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

- (1) Theatre in Dada and Surrealism. J.H. Matthews P.132
(2) "Event" Arts and Art Events. Stephen Foster P.74

CHAPTER II

- (1) Christo editions 64→82. Schellmann/Kluger P.4
(2) Christo. Dominique Lopoarte P.67

CHAPTER III

- (1) ibid. P.46
(2) The translation of Nature in Art. Amanda Commaraswamy P.15

CHAPTER IV

- (1) "Christo": The Running Fence. Spies/Volz P.5
(2) ibid. P.15
(3) Art Works and Packages. Harold Rosenberg P.63

CHAPTER V

- (1) Art in the Land. Alan SonFist P.196
(2) "Event" Arts and Art Events. Stephen Foster P.63

CHAPTER VI

- (1) The Story of Modern Art. Norbert Lynton P.312

CHAPTER VII

- (1) Radio Interview. Viewing Works in the Hugh Lane gallery P.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Commarraswamy, Amanda K. The translation of Nature in Art
second edition constable and Co
Ltd, London 1956.
- Christo Collections on loan from the
Rathschild bank A.G. Zurich 1981.
- Christo Wrapped Coast - one million sq. ft.
1969 Contemporary Art Lithographers,
U.S.A. 1969.
- Foster, Stephen C. "Event" Arts and Art Events
U.M.I. research press, London 1983.
- Goldberg, Roselee Performance (Live Art 1909 to
present) Harry N. Abrams 1979.
- Lynton, Norbert The Story of Modern Art
W.S. Cowell Ltd, Ipswich 1980.
- Laporate, Dominique G. Christo pantheon books inc,
New York 1986.
- Mathews, J. H. Theatre in Dada and Surrealism
Syracuse uni. press 1974.
- Popper, Frank. Art - Action and Participation
Bas printers, Ltd, Wallop, Hampshire
1975.
- Rosenberg, Harold Art Works and Packages
Thames and Hudson 1969.

Rowan, Juda Gallery.

Christo surrounded Islands
1981.

Schellmann, Jorg.

Christo prints and objects
Munich 1983.

Schellmann / Kluser.

Christo editions 64 to 32
Weber offset, Munich 1983.

Spies / Voiz

Christo Surrounded Islands
Harry N. Abrams Inc. publishers
New York 1986.

Sonfist, Alan.

Art in the land
E. P. Dutton Inc. New York
1983.