

PROJECT 1

Christo and Jeanne-Claude

1969

Wrapped Coast

28 October – 14 December 1969

Little Bay, Sydney

Drawings and Collages

22 October – 8 November 1969

Central Street Gallery, Sydney

Wool Works

1 – 30 November 1969

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

BIOGRAPHY

Husband-and-wife team Christo and Jeanne-Claude are widely known for their public art projects. From 1961, they proposed ambitious alterations of public places. The duo created temporary large-scale environmental works (in both urban and rural settings), often wrapping buildings and landscapes in fabric. In doing so, the artists faced resistance from governments and the public alike. However their ability to build a constituency of supporters allowed them to maintain artistic freedom. Following the death of Jeanne-Claude in 2009, Christo has continued to make work under the name of both artists.

FACTS

- In 1969, *Wrapped Coast* was the largest single artwork that had ever been made.
- The work measured 2.5 kilometres in length, between 46 and 244 metres wide, and 26 metres high at the northern cliffs.
- It took 4 weeks for 15 professional mountain climbers, 100 workers and 11 volunteers to install.
- The team secured 90,000 square metres (1 million square feet) of erosion-control fabric with 56.3 kilometres of polypropylene rope, 1.5 centimetre in diameter, via 25,000 fasteners, threaded studs and clips.
- The total cost was estimated at \$120,000, but through partnerships and collaborations was realised for much less.
- The project met great resistance from many locals. People feared environmental damage to the site and potential rubbish blowing across Sydney from the install. Fires were started in protest.
- On 15 October 1969 gale-force winds destroyed almost 50% of the pre-laid fabric, requiring additional funds and massive repairs.
- Christo's former *Wrapped Hay* works were refashioned for Melbourne with *Wool Works*, where 75 wool bales were stacked inside the gallery and two truckloads of wool barrels arranged and wrapped outside in the gallery's Murdoch Court.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Wrapped Coast – One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968–69 was the first major environmental project created by the iconic artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, more than a decade before they became famous for large-scale environmental projects at sites around the world. *Wrapped Coast* was the largest single artwork that had ever been made. Larger than Mount Rushmore, the expanse was so vast that no one vantage point allowed a complete view; instead, visitors walked for an hour to cross its surface. Two-and-a-half kilometres of coast and cliffs up to 26 metres high were shrouded in fabric and rope, appearing like a moonscape, alpine snowfield or Arctic terrain, transformed by sweeping winds into rivulets and billowing sails.

In 1967, Christo had already made his first drawings for a wrapped coastline, initially planned for California as a 'packed coast'. The following year, Christo and Jeanne-Claude welcomed the young Australian collector John Kaldor to their home in New York. Kaldor invited them to Australia as part of the Alcorso-Sekers Travelling Scholarship and it became the first visit to Australia for international artists to make new work and the first in the series of Kaldor Public Art Projects.

Kaldor secured a site 14.5 kilometres south-east of the city centre at Little Bay and a team of more than 100 workers and 11 volunteers spent four weeks climbing, wrapping, sewing and securing the work in an atmosphere of camaraderie that defined the mood and memory of the experience.

Somewhere between a monument and an event, *Wrapped Coast* was an extraordinary project that changed perceptions and had an enormous impact on art in Australia.

An exhibition, Drawings and Collages, was held at Central Street Gallery in Sydney, showing photographs by Harry Shunk of *Wrapped Coast* in progress, Christo's preparatory drawings, wrapped roses, and 70 bales of hay stacked and packaged in black plastic. The concept for *Wrapped Hay* was also refashioned for Melbourne as the centre of Australia's wool industry in a large new project for the National Gallery of Victoria. During November 1969, *Wool Works* saw 75 wool bales stacked inside the gallery and two truckloads of wool bales arranged and wrapped outside in the gallery's Murdoch Court.

Fifty years on, Christo and Jeanne-Claude are now famous for their environmental projects. They have travelled the globe, erecting offices and setting up project teams and new communities as they unfurl fabrics to create 'temporary monuments'. Since *Wrapped Coast*, some of their best-known works have been *Valley Curtain*, Grand Hogback, Rifle, Colorado, 1970–72; *Running Fence*, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972–76; *Surrounded Islands*, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980–83; *The Pont Neuf Wrapped*, Paris, 1975–85; *The Umbrellas*, Japan–USA, 1984–91; *Wrapped Reichstag*, Berlin, 1971–95; *The Gates*, Central Park, New York City, 1979–2005; *The Floating Piers*, Lake Iseo, Italy, 2014–2016; *The London Mastaba*, Serpentine Lake, Hyde Park, 2016 – 2018 and *L'Arc de Triomphe*, Wrapped, Project for Paris, 1962 – 2020.

Kaldor Public Art
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Jeanne Claude,
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Photo: Harry Shunk



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Image courtesy of
Kaldor Public Art
Projects

