

This week we are looking at two different directions in art.

- 1. An ongoing questioning of art and its institutions continued.** The importance of things like the environment, power, ownership and, cultural and sexual identity, in determining what an artwork can mean continues. **Public art** developed as a result of these interests. The book discusses the work of Gordon Matta-Clark and Christo. We look more carefully at Christo.
- 2. We also look at some painters** who were working with ideas of postmodernism and applying them to representation.



A connoisseur of marginal, neglected spaces, Matta-Clark came to art only after studying architecture at Cornell University in the 1960s. Throughout his career he used this training, perversely, to ruin buildings, not construct them.

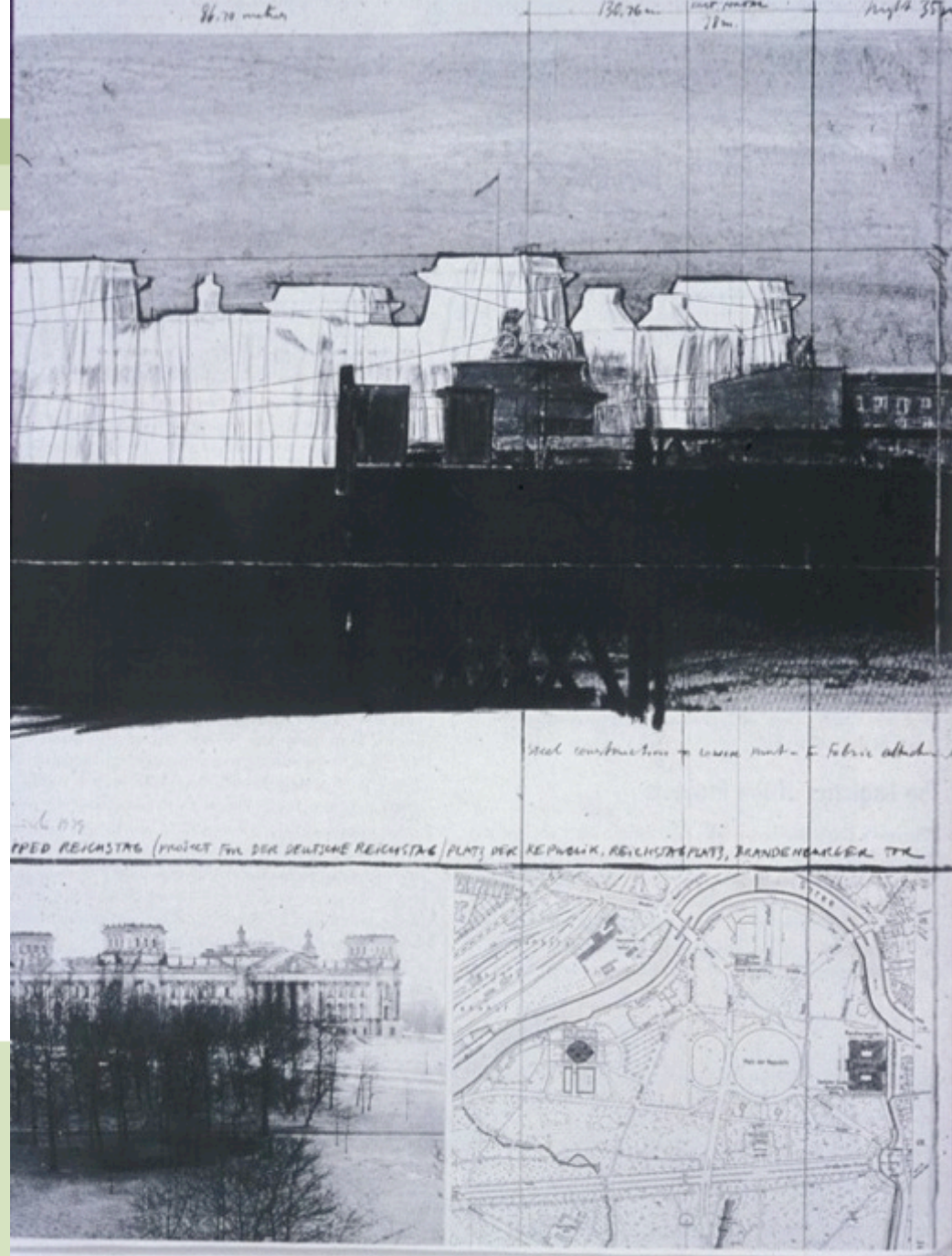
Christo and Jean-Claude

Create public work that is visually impressive and often controversial as a result of its scale.

They have never accepted commission or payment for any work, but rather raise the money themselves through the sale of drawings.

The art relies on the subtle political insight, empowered by visual beauty of the projects, to engage the public in masse in a critical debate on values.

Christo realized that those with wealth and power could control a democracy by shaping what people saw on television and read in the newspaper. He wanted to do something about this. He asked---
How can art compete?
What can art do?



Drawing for *Wrapped Reichstag*.



Before Christo and Jeanne-Claude brought the act of wrapping to much larger proportions when they applied it to the environment, Christo created many sculptures by wrapping everyday objects with fabric or polyethylene. He understood that when an ordinary object is obscured, it becomes something else. Maybe just an unrecognizable object, now an art object, or maybe it's a ghost of its self. ***Maybe the wrapping makes us look at it more carefully.***

CHRISTO, *Wrapped Telephone*, 1962

5 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 9 1/2" (14 x 27 x 24 cm) , Polyethylene, rope, telephone and telephone cord

Wrapped Motorcycle, 1962,

38 1/4 x 67 x 19 5/8" (97 x 170 x 50 cm), Polyethylene, rope and motorcycle



Christo was the first artist to communicate his aesthetic ideas successfully on a scale that enabled him to compete with big corporations in shaping the public's perception of events.

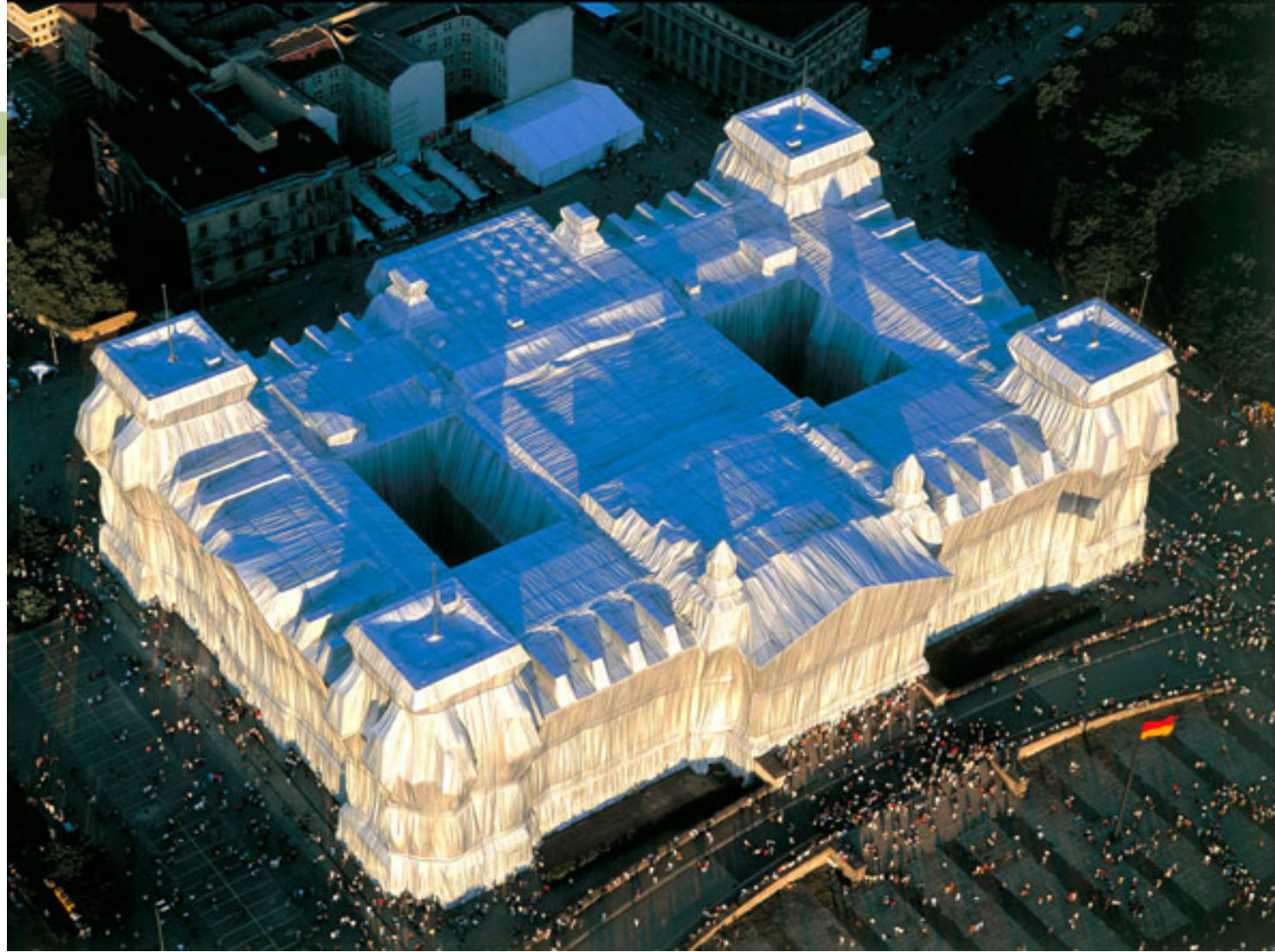


Wrapped Reichstag, 25 years 1971-1995

Christo and Jeanne-Claude worked to convince the elected Members of Parliament, going from office to office, writing explanatory letters to each of the 662 delegates and innumerable telephone calls and negotiations. On 25 February 1995 after a 70 minute debate at the Parliament and a Roll Call vote, the Bundestag allowed the project to go ahead.

Large-Scale public projects, such as this one, were designed to be wrapped for a designated amount of time.

They were impermanent, temporary but extremely impactful.



Just under 100,000 m of fireproof polypropylene fabric, covered by an aluminum layer, and 15 km of rope were needed. The wrapping began on 17 June 1995 and was finished on 24 June. The spectacle was seen by five million visitors before the unveiling began on 7 July.



While having many people see the work outside a museum or art gallery was important to Christo, equally important was how many people worked on the piece to complete it. Not only did they have to get permission from people in government, it took people (not artists) to sew, construct, tie off, and install, the piece.

“We were very eager to design the route of the *Fence* to cross fourteen roads, so people could see it where it crossed a road. We wanted the entire length of the *Fence* to run in relation to man-made structures—a house, a farm, a barn, a farmer’s fence.”

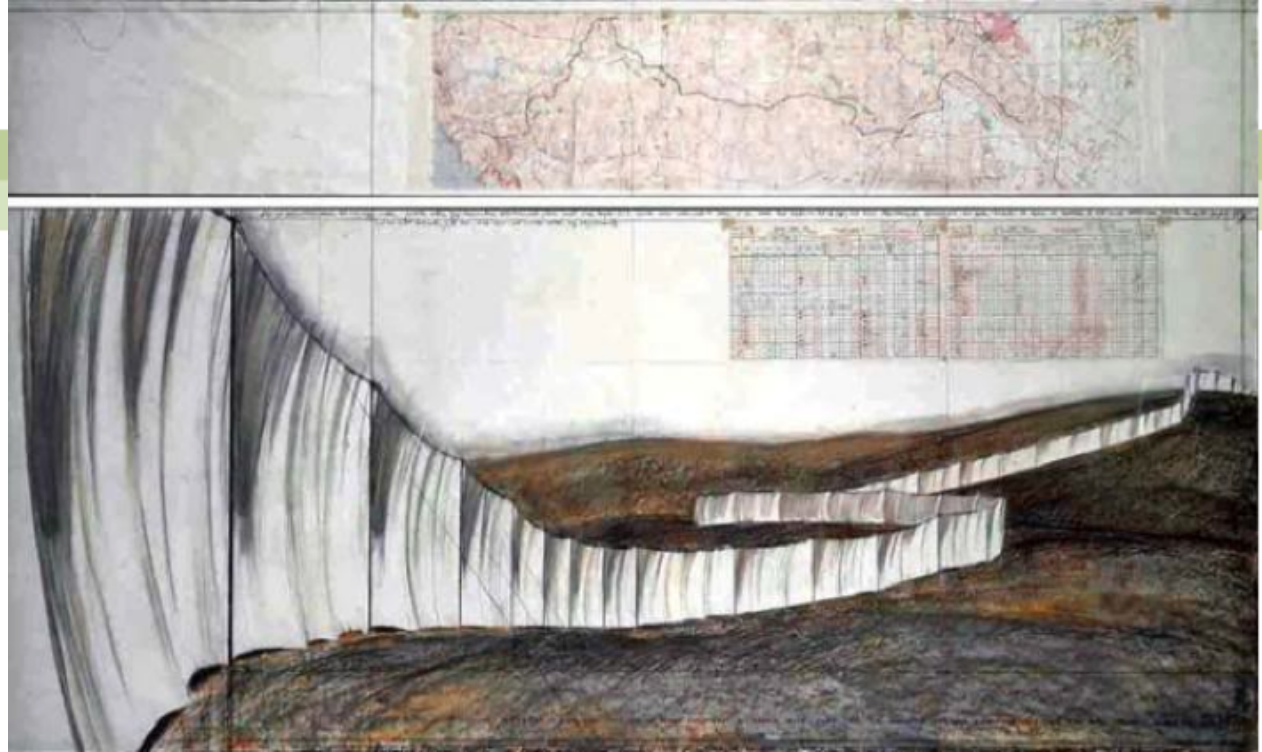
Christo



Running Fence, 5 years 1972-1976

Running Fence was a 24.5 mile fabric fence constructed and installed in Sonoma and Marin Counties, CA. It was supported by steel posts and steel cables, running through the landscape and leading into the sea.

Approximately 200,000 m² of nylon fabric, 2050 steel posts and 90 miles of steel cable were needed.



Christo: “In 1972, we started with the idea of doing a project that involved the life of the people related to the ocean from the urban, rural, to the countryside in California. And this is why the *Running Fence* is 24.5 miles: Because the *Fence* crosses from the rural area near the coast to the suburban area at Petaluma and finally crosses the highway, Route 101. In California the highway is very important, and the closest highway ran 24.5 miles from the coast. If the highway had been ten miles from the coast, the *Fence* would have been only ten miles. The project translates crossing fourteen county roads and small roads until crossing the important Route 101 running north and south from San Diego to the Oregon border. And of course, using the land of the 59 ranchers and public space—all of this exactly reflects how the people in California use the land from rural, suburban, to the urban space.”

Above: *Installation photo and one of the drawings sold to fund it.*



For the project, 59 families of ranchers needed to be convinced and the permission of the authorities had to be obtained, so Christo and Jeanne-Claude hired nine lawyers. The fence went up hills, through valleys, across roads and mostly went through uninhabited land.



The idea was to tell a story of the history of California and land use---to create a massive work of art that would make people think about art and politics, and it was also very beautiful.

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



On 3 January 2005, work began on the installation of the couple's most protracted project, *The Gates*, in Central Park in New York City.

The whole title is "*The Gates, Central Park, New York, 1979-2005*"



Installed, Central Park, Dates...

The cost of the project was \$21 million US dollars which was raised entirely by Christo and Jeanne-Claude selling studies, drawings, collages, works from the 1950s and 1960s.



A total of 7,503 gates made of saffron color fabric were placed on paths in Central Park. They were 16 ft. high and had a combined length of 22 miles.

Open to the public from 12 February until 27 February 2005.



Here are some pictures I took of some of my students from Nashville. We came up the weekend of the opening, February 12th.



Installation was still going on up near 110th Street.

We have already discussed Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as having roots in Minimalism and Land Art.

It also fits into this category-- Public Art.

Lin designed this memorial as a graduate student at Yale. She went on to design buildings and to make art about nature and our relationship to the nature.



MAYA YING LIN, *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, Washington, D.C., 1981–1983. Black granite, each wing 246' long.



Lin has created several other memorials like:
The Civil Rights Memorial, Montgomery, Alabama, and *Women's Table* at Yale University.
But she also makes sculptural pieces that reference the land or water.

She also created this piece, *Wavefield*, at Storm King Art Center, right here in NY.

Marine references make sense in a part of the world carved and smoothed by glaciers, and terrestrial themes have been central to Ms. Lin's art. "My affinity has always been toward sculpting the earth," she wrote in her autobiographical book "Boundaries" (2000). "This impulse has shaped my entire body of work."



MAYA YING LIN, "Storm King Wavefield" Maya Lin's new work at the Storm King Art Center, occupies a former gravel pit.

Reasons for artists creating work in public places

The ideas for the works we looked at this week were growing out of the social and cultural context we have been discussing the entire semester:

- Growth of consumer culture
- Awareness that art too, is simply another commodity
- Public demonstrations—for Civil Rights, Women's Rights and against the Vietnam War
- Interest in the environment
- Democratize art by bringing it into the real world rather than the 'elite' situation of museums or art galleries
- Bring attention to social, political, environmental issues on a large scale

There are more. Can you think of them?

