

Christo's Back With the Unimaginable

Bryan Solomon (June 08, 2016)



Can humans walk on water? For 16 days we can. World famous artist, Christo, is back with his newest project called "The Floating Piers." From June 18th to July 3rd Christo will fill Italy's Lake Iseo with wide yellow-orange shimmering floating pathways that will allow visitors to travel across the lake.

The now completed large-scale artwork connects Italy's Lake Iseo with a 4.5-kilometer floating pier made out of shimmering yellow-orange fabric. Christo's installation covers the entire dock system and allows visitors to walk across the "floating piers" from Sulzano to Monte Isola, as well as to the island of San Paolo. Walking on the "floating piers" will allow visitors to feel the movement of the waves beneath them and visitors are urged to do so barefoot.

Access to the installation is free and open 24 hours a day, weather permitting. The "floating piers" will be covered with 70,000 meters of yellow-orange fabric and supported by a modular



system of floating pontoons formed by 200,000 high-density polyethylene cubes.

Christo's artwork will have a significant economic impact on the area, with projections that the installation will bring in 49 million euros in revenue, which is about three million euros a day. Hotel reservations are already up by 80% and about 250,000 tourists are expected.

Christo, 80, is known for his colossal and engaging artworks that were collaborations with his late wife and partner Jeanne-Claude. Their most recent artwork came to New York City's Central Park, called "The Gates," which was a project that was fully realized over the course of 30 years and was finally finished in 2005. The project cost \$21 million and required the help of 750 employees to install more than 7,500 gates of saffron-colored fabric. Unfortunately, "The Gates" was the last project Christo and Jeanne-Claude worked on together before Jeanne-Claude's death in 2009 from complications of a brain aneurysm at the age of 74.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude's special relationship is something out of a movie. Both were born on June 13, 1935. They met when Christo was commissioned by Jeanne-Claude's mother, Précilda de Guillebon, wife of famous French General Jacques de Guillebon, to paint a portrait. While engaged to Philippe Planchon, Jeanne-Claude became pregnant by Christo.

Immediately after her honeymoon, Jeanne-Claude left Planchon for Christo. Jeanne-Claude's parents were extremely displeased with the relationship especially because Christo was considered a refugee in France after fleeing his native Bulgaria for Western Europe.

The couple's art career began shortly after Jeanne-Claude left her husband. Jeanne-Claude became an artist out of her love for Christo, saying that if he'd been a dentist, she'd become a dentist too. The couple first earned notoriety in Paris in 1962 when they completed their first large-scale project, "Rideau de Fer" (Iron Curtain). As a statement against the Berlin Wall and without consent of authorities, the couple blocked off Rue Visconti with oil barrels.

Although their first major project sent a political message, Christo and Jeanne-Claude have since denied that their other artworks have any deeper meanings other than its aesthetic impact. They have said the purpose of their art is to create art for joy and beauty and to create different ways of seeing familiar landscapes.

The couple have created other enormous and enchanting artworks around the world, including wrapping the coast of Australia's Little Bay in 95,600 square meters of fabric and surrounding eleven islands in Miami's Biscayne Bay with over 600 square meters of pink floating fabric. Christo and Jeanne-Claude flew in different planes to their work sites because if one plane crashed, the other could continue their work.

All of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's works are temporary, as Christo's newest piece will only last for a little more than two weeks. In response to his critics about the temporary nature of his artworks, Christo explained, "I am an artist, and I have to have courage ... Do you know that I don't have any artworks that exist? They all go away when they're finished. Only the preparatory drawings, and collages are left, giving my works an almost legendary character. I think it takes much greater courage to create things to be gone than to create things that will remain." Although one half of the famous duo is gone, Christo's newest project shows that their combined creative spirit survives.

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