

TRANSFORMERS

Examine the couple's conceptual plans for "Over The River"—a \$40 million project in which fabric panels will be suspended over the Arkansas River—at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., through Jan. 25. Nearly 2,000 miles away, witness the project as it unfolds along the 40-mile stretch of river in Colorado through 2012, the earliest estimated completion date.

Art of the Possible: Christo and Jeanne-Claude

CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE'S genius lies in more than simple technical ability. Their sense of abandon and unrelenting audacity have created some of modern art's most outrageous and over-the-top works—Louis B. Mayer in scope and unabashedly brilliant esoterica in concept.

And what's not to love about their sense of style? He is the scion of Bulgarian industrialists. She is the daughter of a French military family. His horn-rimmed glasses and her shock of orange hair have made them icons in New York City, where they've lived in the same building since 1964.

Then there's the art itself. The 6.5 million square feet of fabric—larger than 80 soccer fields—draped over the ocean to surround islands of Miami's Biscayne

Bay in the early 1980s. Of course, there was their famous gift to New York City in 2005, the 7,503 free-flowing nylon fabric panels flooding Central Park, in a now-iconic project known as "The Gates."

As you can imagine, beyond being intellectually challenging, all this work can be physically draining—especially the hours spent trying to persuade local communities to approve their work. "There are always thousands of people who want to help us," Christo says, "and thousands of people who want to stop us. But this is not always bad. All of this helps enhance expectations of what the art will be."

Jeanne-Claude adds: "And when the work is finished, it is difficult to find the people who were against it when it all began." —BY DENNIS MCCAFFERTY



THAT'S A WRAP
For 50 years, artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have transformed bridges, buildings and landscapes into reflective, billowing artworks.

