

Presentation for Christo and Jeanne Claude



Slide 1

A fun idea: You may want to wrap an object or package before the presentation. You can wrap it in plain fabric, white paper or colored wrapping paper. Make a big show of it and put it in a conspicuous place when you walk into the room on the day of the presentation. Do not mention it or refer to it. Do the students seem curious? How long before someone asks about it? Is the fact that they do not know what is inside intriguing? Does it make the object more interesting?

As most of you know, in Art in the Classroom we look at art and discuss works of art. What is *art* to you?

Let the children give their ideas. Some definitions you might suggest:

Expression of what is beautiful

Use of skill and creative imagination

Art is something out of the ordinary, always incorporating new ideas and techniques. If it wasn't, wouldn't it be boring?



Slide 2

Show Mona Lisa, Monet's Bridge at Argenteuil and "Yellow Store Front" by Christo

Which of these is art? Let the children voice their ideas.
What if I told you that they are all art?

Today we are going on a trip around the world to look at a pair of artists that do very creative work on a very large scale. They transform the ordinary into something that makes people stop and look at things in a different way.



Slide 3

Show “Wrapped bottles and cans” and “wrapped object”

Can anyone tell me what these objects are?

Is this how you normally see them?

What is your initial reaction to it?

What could be in the package on the right?

Does it make you think and wonder?

Why would an artist want to express themselves by wrapping or covering something? What comment would they be making?

When we look at art, some of the tools we use to talk about it are the Elements of Art:

Color, light, line, shape, texture and space (composition).

Who can tell me about the colors the artist used in this work and why you think that he chose them? (dark, muddy browns and greens contrasted with bright colors)



Slide 4

“Wrapped Trees”

Can you tell what these are? What season do you think it is? The trees are still recognizable but they make us look at them in a different way.

The artist's name is Christo. He is married to a woman named Jeanne-Claude who became his partner in life and in art. All the works that we are going to look at from here on are created by both of them, Christo and Jeanne-Claude.



Slides 5 and 6

Valley Curtain, Grand Hogback, Rifle, Colorado, 1970-72

About 30 years ago Christo and Jeanne-Claude installed this fabric curtain across a valley in Colorado. Let the children look at the images of "Valley Curtain"

What colors do you see?

Why do you think that they chose orange for the material? (notice how it stands out from the landscape and the blue of the sky)

What kinds of lines do you see? Do you think that these lines compliment or contrast with the landscape on which it is installed?

Can you see the road in this valley? Imagine if you were driving down this highway and looked up and saw this curtain. What do you think your reaction would be?

How do you think that the texture of the fabric differs from the texture of the rocky landscape?

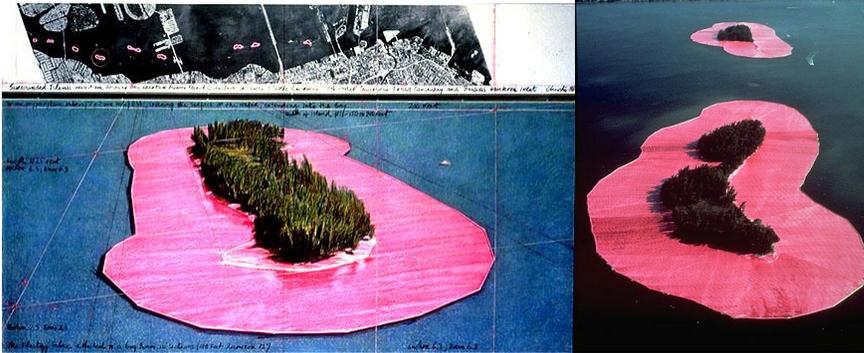
We usually go to museums to see works of art. We want to preserve them. If you went to Colorado to see this curtain, you would be out of luck. Christo and Jeanne-Claude only leave these works up for short periods of time. Unexpected high winds caused them to take this one down after only one day! Only one day; after years of planning. It takes Christo and Jeanne-Claude years and costs them millions of dollars to plan and carry out a work like this. How would you feel if you worked so long and hard on something, just to have it taken apart after a day? Christo and Jeanne-Claude may think that because their work is so temporary, it makes it all the more special. Do you agree with that?



Slides 7 and 8

Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972-76

A few years later they installed this fabric fence. From beginning to end it ran 24 ½ miles – that is almost as long as the NYC marathon! It has been called a “ribbon of light”. Why do you think that someone would use those words to describe this work? (color, contrast with rocks, long lines) Notice how it appears to disappear into the ocean.



Slides 9 and 10

Christo's sketch

photo

Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980-83

Using pink, floating fabric they encircled 11 islands in Biscayne Bay, Florida. Let the children look at the images.

How is this work different from the Valley Curtain and Running Fence? Let the children make their observations. (color, fabric surrounds the islands, not a straight line, floating on water)

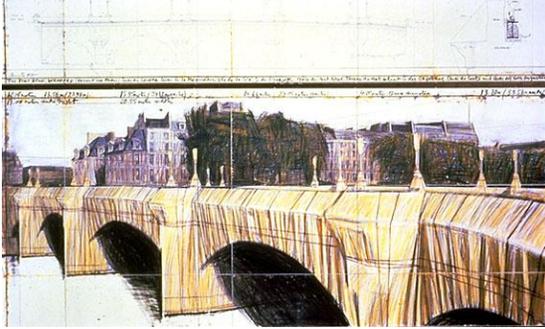
Has anyone ever been to Florida?

Does this color remind you of anything related to Florida? Pink flamingos, coral, color used in some homes and buildings.

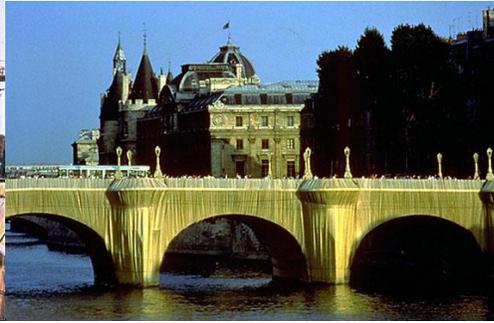
Do you think that the artists tried to make this work relate to the area in which it was installed, Florida?

If they had used orange like they did in the valley curtain, do you think that it would fit as well into this Florida bay?

Christo and Jeanne-Claude call themselves "Environmental Artists". They think about where this work is going and the landscape around it. They care about the places they work in. They removed 40 tons of garbage from these islands when they were working on this project. They like to leave their sites in good condition when they are done with their work. These islands looked like this for 2 weeks, then the artwork was taken away.



Christo's Sketch



Photo

Slides 11 and 12

Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, 1975-1985

The Pont Neuf is a famous bridge in France, in fact, it is the oldest bridge in Paris! Let the children look at the images.

Golden sandstone fabric was draped over the bridge and white rope accentuated its shape. Does this work remind anyone of a sculpture? (picture a Greek statue where folds of fabric drape over the figure and it is given shape by rope).

Point out that one image is a sketch that Christo makes before the project. He makes many of these preparatory sketches. They have to do a lot of work and planning before they get permission to build these works of art. Do you think that a government is quick to give permission to artists who want to transform a national landmark? It would disrupt traffic, possibly damage the roadway, the old stone and much more. It takes years!

The next works we are going to look at were installed at the same time, on exactly the same day; one set in Japan and one set in California.

Show the children the images of the umbrellas.

The Umbrellas, Japan--U.S.A., 1984-91



Slides 13, 14 and 15

Japan site



Slides 16, 17 and 18

US site

For this project, they used 3,100 umbrellas. Each umbrella was as tall as Burr Elementary School and was about as long and as wide as this classroom! Each one weighed 450 pounds. On October 9, 1991, these umbrellas were all opened in both countries at the same time.

Japan and the United States are 2 different cultures separated by the Pacific Ocean. The umbrellas in Japan were all blue, the ones in California were all yellow. Do you think it would have as much of an impact if all the umbrellas were different colors?

Look at the landscape for each one, do you think that the colors were picked for a reason?

Japanese valley: there is a river that runs through it. It rains all summer and the landscape is green.

California valley: dry season lasts the whole summer. The grass is burnt by the sun.

Did anyone notice that one set of umbrellas are more closely placed than the other? (the umbrellas at the Japanese site are closer together). The artists wanted to show the differences in the use of land in the two valleys. The whole country of Japan is the size of California. Japanese people do not have the land and space that is enjoyed in Southern California. To show that, the artists put the umbrellas in Japan closer together.



Slides 19, 20 and 21

Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971-95

Show the children the images of the Wrapped Reichstag. This building was the center of government for West Germany.

Does this work remind you of any of the others we have seen today?
How? (maybe Pont Neuf)

All the images we are seeing today are taking something from everyday life and transforming it; forcing us to look at it in a different way.

It took Christo and Jeanne-Claude over 20 years to get permission to complete this work. Five million visitors came to see the Reichstag during the 2 weeks that it was transformed.



Slide 22

Close up of fabric used to cover the Reichstag.
Can you see the richness of the silvery fabric? It is shaped by blue ropes.
What texture words would you use to describe this fabric?



Slide 23

**The Gates, Project for Central Park, New York City,
began 1979, in progress – February, 2005**

The next project that Christo and Jeanne Claude are working on is in Central Park in New York City! Panels of saffron colored nylon fabric will be suspended from 11,000 steel gates. The gates will be installed along 26 miles of Central Park's paths. They will be 15 feet high.

As the workers install the gates, they will keep the fabric cocooned. On February 7, 2005 they all will be opened. They will remain there for about 16 days.

What does the landscape in Central Park look like in the winter? Barren, brown grass, leaves off the trees.

How do you think the orange color will stand out against the winter backdrop?



Slide 24

This is a picture of Jeanne-Claude and Christo.

At the end of the presentation, ask the children if their ideas about art have changed after learning more about today's artists. Do they like the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude? Encourage them to look for news on "The Gates".

Time Filler: If you extra time at the end of the presentation you can use "texture bag" that is in the Visual aids box. It is a short guessing that will get the children using words that focus on texture.