

"Christo & Jeanne-Claude: The Tom Golden Collection" opens at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW

FORT MYERS, FLA.- Florida Southwestern State College is presenting "Christo & Jeanne-Claude: The Tom Golden Collection" - a traveling retrospective exhibition on view at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery and running through April 17th. The Tom Golden Collection surveys the extraordinary career of artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude through collages, prints, photographs, drawings and objects. Drawn from the permanent collection of the Sonoma County Museum—the most extensive private collection in the United States—the exhibition spans 37 years of the Christos' career.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude were famous for their large-scale environmental projects that temporarily altered urban and rural landscapes in Europe, the United States, Australia and Japan. Each of the artists' projects, from the earliest to the most recent, existed only briefly, but were anticipated with suspense for months and even years while being planned. Their works defied easy categorization: always public, they were otherwise a unique mix of earth, installation, and conceptual art. While the temporary nature of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work may suggest an anti-materialist bent, the artists were nonetheless determined to concretely realize their monumental concepts through political and physical action, if for only a short time. More closely related to architecture in their monumentality and realization than to traditional art forms, the Christos' projects involved an incredible number of steps—logistical, political, social, and economic. The important role that process plays in the Christos' work was unique to these artists.

Equally important to understanding Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work are the original drawings, collages, and prints that were integral to the creation of their large projects. Unlike many other artists, Christo and Jeanne-Claude never sought grants, sponsorships, and commissions, instead treating these small-scale works as capital by using the income derived from their sale to pay for the large-scale installations. While Jeanne-Claude died in 2009 and Christo passed away last year, their work remains a widely recognized touchstone of contemporary art. The Sonoma County Museum's collection contains work made between 1962 and 2000, powerfully illustrating the art of Christo and Jeanne-Claude over that period of time.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude first visited the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery and the Florida Southwestern State College campus in 2003. They presented a lecture on their collaborations to an appreciative standing-room-only audience of students, faculty and community, and exhibited documentation of their many projects at that time. They generously donated hand-signed posters that were then sold to benefit programming, and always maintained connections with their many friends here in Florida.

This exhibition was organized by the Sonoma County Museum and is toured by Landau Traveling Exhibitions. Additional loans, including a large-scale remnant of "Running Fence" (1976), were provided by the Kent State University Art Galleries, and the exhibition was generously sponsored locally by Elliot & Holden Green.

