

IN THE LIBRARY

Process and Participation in the Work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Selections from the Shunk-Kender
Photography Collection

February 6 – April 14, 2017 **National Gallery of Art**





TOP Harry Shunk (left) and János Kender at a dinner for artist Lucio Fontana at La Coupole in Montparnasse, Paris, 1961. Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20), Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. **BOTTOM** Christo and Jeanne-Claude on-site during construction of *Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado, 1970 - 72, 1972*, gelatin silver print, Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. © Christo. Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. All Rights Reserved.

SHUNK-KENDER PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION

From 1958 to 1973, Harry Shunk (German, 1924 – 2006) and János Kender (Hungarian, 1938 – 2009) — known collectively as Shunk-Kender, a partnership based initially in Paris and later in New York City — photographed the major European and American artists, studios, performances, and exhibitions of the time.

Between 2008 and 2012, the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation acquired the Harry Shunk Archive, which included the photograph and negative collection of Shunk-Kender as well as Harry Shunk's individual work. After organizing, digitizing, and cataloging the archive, the foundation donated the material in 2014 to a consortium of five institutions: the Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Tate (London), Museum of Modern Art (New York), and National Gallery of Art (Washington).

The portion of the Shunk-Kender Photography Collection received by the department of image collections in the National Gallery of Art Library encompasses 2,460 photographs with related digital images, and documents exclusively the work of Christo (b. 1935) and Jeanne-Claude (1935 – 2009), with whom the photographers worked closely throughout their partnership.

Photographs depict the artists, project staff, visitors, works of art, and location views during the 1960s to early 1970s. Some images are credited to Harry Shunk alone, but the majority of the works in the collection are credited to Shunk-Kender. The collection includes materials relating to a range of projects, and is particularly rich in documentation of *Wrapped Coast* and *Valley Curtain*.

This presentation focuses on these two large-scale projects and features photographs created by Shunk-Kender at the artists' behest, depicting both the myriad details of preparation, construction, and final installation of the works, and the many people who worked on them and were fundamental to their success. As these monumental projects were installed for a limited time, the artists considered the photographs an integral part of the record, and the images represented the projects in subsequent gallery exhibitions and publications.

The exhibition begins in the vitrine with a selection of Shunk-Kender's early documentary photographs for Christo, spanning the early 1960s in Paris to the beginning of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's wrapping of public buildings in the United States.

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are gelatin silver prints, Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. © Christo. Photographs: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. All Rights Reserved.

EARLY WORKS, PARIS

1963–1964

Harry Shunk and János Kender began working as a photographic team in 1958. They became highly sought-after in the artistic circles of Paris, particularly among artists associated with *nouveau réalisme*, the movement founded by art critic Pierre Restany in 1960. As Shunk-Kender, they photographed the work, events, and exhibitions of Yves Klein, Arman, Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, Raymond Hains, and others. For Christo, who joined the group in 1963, Shunk-Kender photographed early *Packages* and *Wrapped Objects*, with the images then used in Christo's gallery exhibition announcements and catalogs.

- 1,2** Christo works on *Wrapped Statue*, Place du Trocadéro, Paris, February 6, 1964. The artist wraps *Le Printemps* by Paul Niclausse (French, 1879–1958), one of eight gilded bronze statues on the esplanade of the Palais de Chaillot.
- 3** Christo, *Package on a Luggage Rack* (1962), 4 avenue Raymond Poincaré, 1963. Jeanne-Claude's mother, Précilda de Guillebon, had an apartment in the building with a basement room that the artist utilized for storage.
- 4** Christo with *Packages* and *Wrapped Objects*, outside of 4 avenue Raymond Poincaré, Paris, 1963. Among the pieces displayed along the wall are (from left to right) *Wrapped Perambulator*, 1962 (also known as *Packed Stroller*); *Package on a Baby Carriage*, 1962; *Package*, 1959; and two versions of *Package on a Luggage Rack*, 1962.
- 5** *Il siete invitato al vernissage di Christo: giugno 18 martedì*, Milan, 1963. Galleria Apollinaire announcement for Christo exhibition with several Shunk-Kender photographs.



Christo works on *Wrapped Statue*, Place du Trocadéro, Paris, February 6, 1964, gelatin silver print, Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. © Christo. Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. All Rights Reserved. (cat. 1)

WRAPPED MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART / WRAPPED FLOOR AND STAIRWAY

1968 – 1969

In 1964, Christo and Jeanne-Claude moved to the United States and settled in New York City; in 1967, Harry Shunk and János Kender went to Canada and then also relocated to New York. They began photographing for the artists again, now extensively documenting the large-scale projects Christo and Jeanne-Claude were creating, including two works for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, which were the artists' first wrapping of a public building in the United States. The museum's director, Jan van der Marck, coordinated the project and later became the project director for *Valley Curtain*. For *Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1968 – 69*, the artists, museum staff, and local art school students spent two days covering the building exterior in ten thousand square feet of water- and fire-resistant brown canvas tarpaulin and four thousand feet of Manila rope, leaving the roof and exits of the museum uncovered. For *Wrapped Floor and Stairway, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1968 – 69*, Christo and Jeanne-Claude draped the interior lower gallery, which had been cleared and painted white, with 2,800 square feet of off-white cotton dropcloth secured with ropes.

The finished works were exhibited as *Christo: Wrap In Wrap Out*, and were on view to the public January 18 through March 2, 1969.

6 Postcard box with *Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art* and *Wrapped Floor and Stairway* photographs by Shunk-Kender. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection. Christo's autograph inscription to Herbert and Dorothy Vogel on inside lid.

7 Christo and a worker drape fabric on the museum's exterior walls for *Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art*.

8 Christo, on ladder, ties ropes across the fabric.

9 Overall view.

10 Christo drapes the museum's interior for *Wrapped Floor and Stairway*.

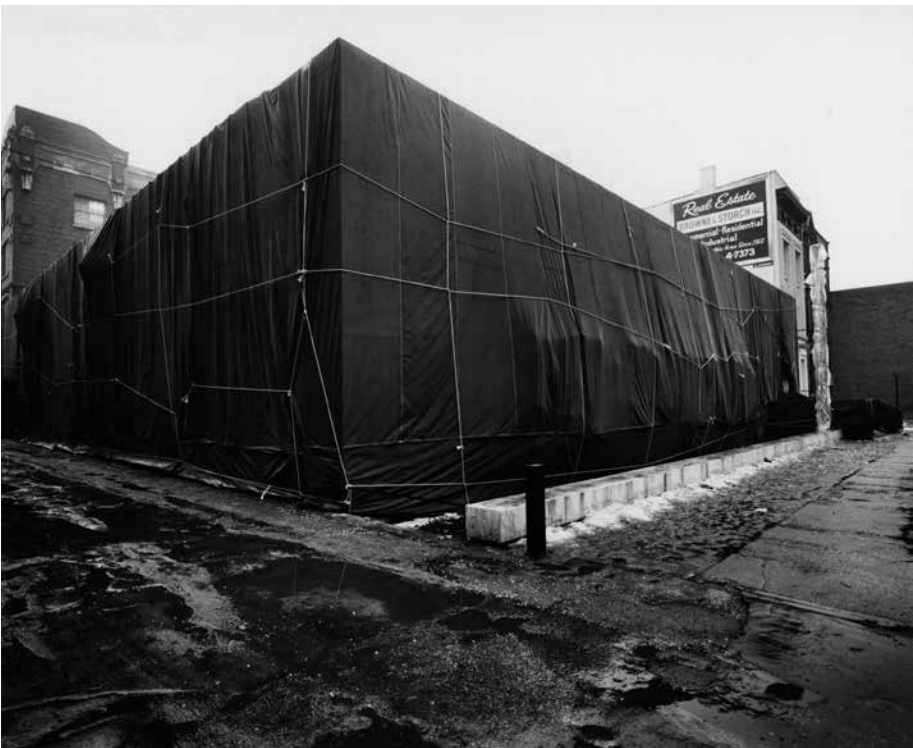
11 Christo covers the floors with fabric.

12 Jeanne-Claude and Christo at the reception for *Christo: Wrap In Wrap Out*.

13 Guests view *Wrapped Floor and Stairway*; Jeanne-Claude at far left.



Christo covers the floors with fabric for *Wrapped Floor and Stairway*, *Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago*, 1968 - 69, 1969, gelatin silver print, Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. © Christo. Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. All Rights Reserved. (cat. 11)



Overall view of *Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago*, 1968 - 69, 1969, gelatin silver print, Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. © Christo. Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. All Rights Reserved. (cat. 9)

WRAPPED COAST

1968 – 1969

Shunk-Kender documented all phases of *Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968 – 69*, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's monumental work of art created for the coast and cliffs of Little Bay near Sydney, Australia.

The artists, working with project coordinator John Kaldor (*Wrapped Coast* was the first in a series by Kaldor Public Art Projects) and Major Ninian Melville (retired Army Corps of Engineers), assembled and directed a team of fifteen professional rock climbers and 110 local art and architecture student workers, as well as Australian artists and teachers. Over a period of four weeks, they wrapped about one and a half miles of coast and cliffs up to eighty-five feet high with one million square feet of light beige erosion-control fabric and thirty-five miles of rope. The project suffered a temporary setback when, three-quarters of the way through, a storm severely damaged sections of fabric on the wrapped coastline, requiring them to be redraped. The artists and their team completed *Wrapped Coast* on October 28, 1969, and the work remained on view for ten weeks.

- 14 View of Little Bay, cliffs, and coast, located nine miles southeast of Sydney. The land used for the project was leased from Prince Henry Hospital, adjacent to the project site.
- 15 Model of *Wrapped Coast*.
- 16 Factory worker manufactures the project fabric, a synthetic woven fiber made for agricultural uses by Sarlon Industries Pty. Ltd., Australia.
- 17 Team carries lengths of fabric to the work site.
- 18 Christo (second from left) and team of workers spread fabric at site.
- 19 Jeanne-Claude (left) and team of workers spread fabric at site.
- 20 Worker sews together pieces of fabric.
- 21 Project team unfurls fabric over cliff edge.
- 22 Christo (third from left) and team fix rope over fabric to cliff; at right, a worker uses a ramset gun to fasten rope to rocks.
- 23 One of the project's professional rock climbers at top of cliff.



Team on cliffs and shore wrap rock outcrop for *Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia, 1968 – 69, 1969*, gelatin silver print, Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. © Christo. Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. All Rights Reserved. (cat. 29)

- 24 Rock climber works on fabric on cliff face.
- 25 View of in-process project.
- 26 Project coordinator John Kaldor attempts to hold down fabric during the storm.
- 27 Overall view of storm damage.
- 28 Team unfurls more fabric over cliff edge.
- 29, 30 Team on cliffs and shore wrap rock outcrop.
- 31 View of the completed project.

VALLEY CURTAIN

1970 - 1972

Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado, 1970 - 72 was designed for the Grand Hogback ridge near Rifle, Colorado. A swath of 200,200 square feet of orange nylon polyamide fabric was suspended across Rifle Gap at a width of 1,250 feet, and a height from 365 feet at each end to 182 feet at the center. As with *Wrapped Coast*, Shunk-Kender were from the start an integral part of the project team, which included engineers, site supervisors, thirty-five construction workers, and sixty-four temporary staff (college students and itinerant art workers). Over a period of two years, they photographed the initial preparation and meetings associated with planning the project; the construction with a first curtain, which was destroyed by winds on October 9, 1971, just before it could be completed; and the fabrication and construction of a second, final curtain, which was successfully unfurled on August 10, 1972. The completed project existed for only twenty-eight hours before a gale required that it be dismantled.

- 32** View of Rifle Gap, in the Grand Hogback ridge, Rifle, Colorado. The land used for the project was leased from two private owners and the US government.
- 33** View of the completed project.
- 34** Christo, standing with drawing of *Valley Curtain*, at the press conference announcing the project, State Capitol, Denver, February 18, 1971.
- 35** Worker dyes the fabric for the project in a factory in Putnam, Connecticut.
- 36** Factory workers sew the curtain at Rubber Fabricators, Richwood, West Virginia; Christo stands at far right.
- 37** Construction workers excavate for one of the curtain's anchors on the slopes of the gap.
- 38** Workers prepare to raise an eleven-ton steel plate to the main anchor on the west-side slope.
- 39** View across the valley from one of the slope anchors, with the four main project cables installed.
- 40** Project team attaches the curtain fabric to the steel pickup cable.
- 41** Christo (at left) and workers secure the fabric and its cable with knotted ropes designed to pull away and allow the fabric to unfurl once the wrapped cable was raised.
- 42** Curtain package left partially elevated when the crew finished for the day, October 9, 1971. That evening, a gust of wind caused some of the knotted ropes on the curtain to come loose, unfurling fabric onto the ground.



Unfurling of curtain for *Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado, 1970 - 72*, August 10, 1972, gelatin silver print, Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in memory of Harry Shunk and János Kender. © Christo. Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. All Rights Reserved. ([cat. 50](#))

- 43** View of the prematurely opened curtain.
- 44** Workers with the lowered cable and damaged fabric.
- 45** Crew at the project site unload a new curtain, redesigned to have an inner and outer cocoon to secure the fabric until it could be raised into place.
- 46** Jeanne-Claude and worker help to lift the curtain in its cocoon.
- 47** Ironworker Donald Jenkins stands on the curtain with other workers assisting in the cable car and on the slope, releasing the outer cocoon of the curtain package.
- 48, 49, 50** The project team unfurls and secures the curtain fabric.
- 51** View of the completed project.
- 52** Christo and Jeanne-Claude with *Valley Curtain*.

Harry Shunk and János Kender ended their partnership in 1973; *Valley Curtain* was their last collaborative project. Shunk continued briefly to work with Christo and Jeanne-Claude and to document the work of other artists. He retained Shunk-Kender's negatives and photographs until his death in 2006.

Checklist of the exhibition *In the Library: Process and Participation in the Work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude*, February 6 – April 14, 2017. © 2017 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington. Written by Meg L. Melvin.

For more information on the department of image collections in the National Gallery of Art, please visit nga.gov/resources/dlidesc.htm.

Harry Shunk and Shunk-Kender Archive: rlfphotoarchives.org and getty.edu/research/special_collections/notable/shunk_kender.html. Christo and Jeanne-Claude: christojeanneclaude.net.

FRONT COVER Christo and Jeanne-Claude with the finished project *Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado*, 1970–72, August 10, 1972. **BACK COVER** Staff portrait in front of unfurled curtain for *Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado*, 1970–72, August 10, 1972.

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