

**NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale Receives Monumental Gift of  
Christo and Jeanne-Claude Surrounded Islands Documentation Exhibition**

**Premiere Exhibition of New Acquisition: February 23, 2025**



Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Surrounded Islands*, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980-83. Photo: Wolfgang Volz. Copyright: 2024 Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation. Collection NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale: Gift of the Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation. Contact [dguidi@nova.edu](mailto:dguidi@nova.edu) for reproduction.

**FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.** – September 25, 2024 – NSU ART MUSEUM FORT LAUDERDALE is thrilled to announce that it is now “Home to Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s *Surrounded Islands*.” The museum will premiere its first exhibition of this transformative gift from the Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation in February 2025, which includes over 43 preparatory drawings and collages created by Christo, as well as photographs and photo murals, engineering surveys, environmental studies, permits, correspondence, original components such as sections of the pink fabric, scale models and other archival documents that trace the history of this project.

“The Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation is delighted to designate the NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, part of Nova Southeastern University, as the permanent home for the *Surrounded Islands* documentation exhibition,” said Karin J. Barkhorn, President of Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation. “The museum’s dedication to exploring topics that deeply connect with the South Florida community and its commitment to fostering meaningful discussions through scholarly research align with the ethos of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s art. We are particularly excited that the museum will permanently display

key sections of this historic exhibition, ensuring that the legacy of Surrounded Islands continues to inspire awe for generations to come.”

Following the passing of the artist duo, Christo V. Javacheff (b. 1935, Gabrovo, Bulgaria; d. 2020 New York, NY) and Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon (b.1935, Casablanca, Morocco; d. 2009, New York, NY), NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale was chosen as guardian of the archive for the definitive landmark installation, *Surrounded Islands: Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980-83*.

*Surrounded Islands* put Miami on “The Map” in May 1983, not just the art map. Likewise, with this monumental gift NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale will be known world-wide as “The Home of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s *Surrounded Islands*.” This gift places NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale in a league with the Smithsonian American Art Museum which acquired *Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972-76, The Documentation Exhibition* in 2008, as well as the Centre Pompidou in Paris which owns the documentation exhibition of *The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, 1975-85* and the Reichstag Building, Berlin, which houses the *Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1995 Documentation Exhibition* on permanent display.

“A gift of the magnitude of the *Surrounded Islands* documentary exhibition to NSU Art Museum is incredibly significant. It marks much more than a gift; it’s an investment in the culture of our community and the future of the Museum,” said Bonnie Clearwater, Director & Chief Curator of NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale. “*Surrounded Islands* has undoubtedly left an indelible impact on South Florida and the art world by redefining the interaction between art, environment and public space. This contribution further solidifies Fort Lauderdale’s unique cultural offerings and provides an opportunity for visitors to experience the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude for years to come.”

“This gift, allowing us to bring the *Surrounded Islands* Documentation Exhibition to NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, will grant NSU students, faculty, and staff, as well as the public a unique opportunity to be part of the creative process that led to this innovative and culturally significant work,” said Dr. George L. Hanbury II, President and CEO of Nova Southeastern University. “Exhibits like this one attract more people of all ages to come in and experience the power of imagination, creativity, and dedication that comes through engaging with works like these. That’s how the NSU Art Museum not only helps to foster a lifelong passion for the arts, but also allows us all to come away with a bit of that artistic passion in ourselves, to enrich whatever else we may choose to do in our own lives.”

“A gift of this caliber brings Fort Lauderdale’s cultural landscape to the next level, further positioning the city as a premier arts destination,” said Dean J. Trantalis, Fort Lauderdale Mayor. “As ‘Home of *Surrounded Islands*’ our very own NSU Art Museum in Downtown Fort Lauderdale, will be a draw for art enthusiasts, visitors and our local community to experience our city’s vibrant cultural offerings.”

Despite the ephemeral nature of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s projects, they considered each of these events as permanent artworks in the minds of viewers, since “an experience can never be taken away.” The artists piqued the curiosity of the broader community as well as the international art world with the extensive effort it took to realize their works. Documents, including correspondence, permits and environmental studies are preserved as part of the documentation exhibitions curated by the artists themselves.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude are historically recognized for their environmental artworks that questioned the very nature of art. Born on the same day, the pair met in Paris in 1958. They quickly established a lifelong creative and romantic partnership, making their first collaborative artwork together in 1961. Titled *Stacked Oil Barrels and Dockside Packages*, consisting of several stacks of large rolls of industrial paper covered with tarpaulins and secured with ropes, and a large number of oil drums horizontally stacked on the quay of Cologne Harbor. In making this simple shift within a mundane landscape, the artists both masked and revealed aspects of the environment that people typically become inured to and look past. Through these elementary acts, Christo and Jeanne-Claude gave the public the ability to see the shapes and scales that comprise their everyday views through new eyes.

*Surrounded Islands* was realized in May 1983, with 6.5 million square feet of floating woven polypropylene fabric to create striking pink margins around 11 islands along the length of Biscayne Bay. The installation remained in place for two weeks, though its realization took over three years and cost more than \$3 million. The project was paid entirely by the artists through the sale of original works by Christo such as those included in this donation. The idea for the work originally started in 1980, when the artists were invited to create an artwork for the 1982 New World Festival of the Arts. Over the next three years they made proposals and obtained permits from agencies including: the Governor of Florida and the Cabinet; the Dade County Commission; the Department of Environmental Regulation; the City of Miami Commission; the City of North Miami; the Village of Miami Shores; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the Dade County Department of Environmental Resources management, and they gained the cooperation of the many environmental activists and residents, working to ensure the protection of the marine wildlife that inhabited the islands' shores.

"The *Surrounded Islands* project – certainly one of the most visually stunning projects that Christo and Jeanne-Claude ever did, continues to grow in the imaginations of art lovers worldwide. In addition, it also completely transformed Miami Beach into the glittering art scene that it is today. It seemed only natural that the documentary exhibition which the artists curated as the permanent archive of this project should go to NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, an easy drive just north of the site where Christo and Jeanne-Claude installed the *Surrounded Islands* for those two extraordinary weeks in May of 1983. Recognized for its ambitious programs that focus on its unique collections, NSU Art Museum is a fitting home for this landmark project," said Jonathan Fineberg, author of the career survey book: *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: On the Way to the Gates*, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition (which will be published in February 2025) and board member of The Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation

While *Surrounded Islands* was installed for only two weeks, it left an indelible imprint on the history of South Florida. By donating the entire *Surrounded Islands* documentation exhibition to NSU Art Museum, the museum, the university, and Greater Fort Lauderdale will be elevated to a new level of worldwide significance, becoming a place of pilgrimage for the innumerable individuals who have been, and have yet to be, profoundly moved by this artwork. All materials used in *Surrounded Islands* were industrially recycled, aside from the documentation materials retained for the collection.

"Fort Lauderdale's dedication to arts and culture is a cornerstone of our community's identity. NSU Art Museum receiving the gift of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Surrounded Islands* as a part of its permanent collection will reinforce that dedication and elevate our city's standing as a cultural art hub," said Michelle Howland Sussman, Chair, Board of Governors, NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale.

Situated midway between Miami and Palm Beach, NSU Art Museum is located in the heart of Downtown Fort Lauderdale. The Museum is a premier destination for exhibitions and programs encompassing all

facets of civilization’s visual history and is widely known for its significant collection of Latin American art, contemporary art, as well as works by American artist William Glackens and the European CoBra group. For more information, please visit <https://nsuartmuseum.org>.

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### **About NSU Art Museum**

Founded in 1958, NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale is a premier destination for exhibitions and programs encompassing many facets of civilization’s visual history. Located midway between Miami and Palm Beach in downtown Fort Lauderdale’s arts and entertainment district, the Museum’s 83,000 square-foot building, which opened in 1986, was designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes and contains over 25,000 square feet of exhibition space, the 256 -seat Horvitz auditorium, a museum store and café. In 2008, the Museum became part of Nova Southeastern University (NSU), one of the largest private research universities in the United States. NSU Art Museum is known for its significant collection of Latin American art, contemporary art, as well as the largest holdings of works by American artist William Glackens, and the largest collection in a U.S. museum of the European CoBra group of artists. Two scholarly research centers complement the collections: The Dr. Stanley and Pearl Goodman Latin American Art Study Center and the William J. Glackens Study Center.

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