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Christo Vladimirov Javacheff: 'We Will Walk on Water'



Christo Vladimirov Javacheff at the opening of 'Christo & Jeanne-Claude: Works in Progress'

'Everything I do starts with a mountain of impossibilities. The biggest thing is to break down those obstacles and tackle them one by one' artist and environmentalist [Christo Vladimirov Javacheff](#) explained to a small and eager group at the opening of [Christo & Jeanne-Claude: Works in Progress](#) at Galerie Gmurzynska St. Moritz. 'Then' he continued, 'you need to assemble a team. The biggest thing is to put people together, to get a good team. That's the hardest process of all'.

Christo and his late wife Jeanne-Claude's career has been one dedicated to process, and the sketches in this exhibition prove it. The preparation drawings for *Floating Piers* (2016), a structure on Lake Iseo in Italy which will allow people to walk on water over three weekends from 18 June to 5 July 2016, were the most exciting. As well as offering a snapshot into the highly-anticipated project, they're also a testament to Christo and Jeanne-Claude's belief in the creativity of exploration, experimentation and planning, proof that the knotty, complex and emotionally draining process of 'getting there' has been the primary concern over the duo's 50 year career, far more so than the 'result'.



Installation view, Christo & Jeanne-Claude: *Works in Progress*

These works are anti-attention seeking. There are no evasive abstract statements or illusive meanings. In the sketches for *Floating Piers*, Christo clearly tells us what he's doing, why he's doing it and how it might work. 'For some projects we have an idea and we try to find a site, like the umbrellas for *The Umbrellas*. Sometimes it's the other way around. That's what it was like with *Floating Piers*, and it began with all the drawings, the ones you see here where we're working out how everything can fit into the landscape'.

The purpose of it all is to test nature as much as it is to work with it. Can we really walk on water? If no, then why not? Will these massive rubber balloons transport materials across Lake Iseo (they used this method to carry 20 tonnes of material across the lake to build *Floating Piers*)? Let's see. The objective is to work with the land, find out what the limitations are and plan out ways to create huge, epic statements in these landscapes.



Installation view, Christo & Jeanne-Claude: Works in Progress

‘Jeanne-Claude and I worked on 22 projects in total, and working so much outside we’ve always faced adversity in getting the projects together and getting them through various legislations there are over open spaces.’ *The Gates* in New York was a classic example of this struggle, and it’s only after their friend [Michael Bloomberg](#) became mayor of New York City, that it went through: ‘Luckily Mr Bloomberg was a good friend, and he’s an artistic guy’ Christo said. They faced similar adversity with *Floating Piers* and it was thanks to the president of Lake Iseo Giuseppe Faccanoni that they got permission, ‘If Giuseppe wasn’t interested in art, it wouldn’t have happened’. *Floating Piers* has already been tested on a private estate on the German Danish border that belongs to one of Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s friends. ‘It’s not like an architect who knows how to build a skyscraper’ the artist explained, ‘this is something that has never been done. We can’t plan this project on a scale model in the studio, it needs to be made up life size.’

Christo & Jeanne-Claude: Works in Progress is also a testament to a career built on collaboration. ‘In the context of the Galerie Gmurzynska 50-year tradition of revisiting the great living artists of our time, it is a pleasure to present Christo, who, together with his wife Jeanne-Claude, has truly left his mark on the 20th century.’ said Mathias Rastaforer, the gallery director. *Floating Piers* is even more important for it being the last project Christo and Jeanne-Claude worked on together, and throughout his conversation Christo’s sentences are filled with references to ‘she’ and ‘us’. ‘It’s our project, not just mine’ he said, ‘we’re working on this together’.

For more information on *Floating Piers* visit [Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s website](#).

Christo & Jeanne-Claude: Works in Progress runs until March 2016 at [Galerie Gmurzynska St Mortiz](#)