

Christo's land art drawings on show in St Moritz

Beautiful mementoes of ephemeral creations – that fund projects

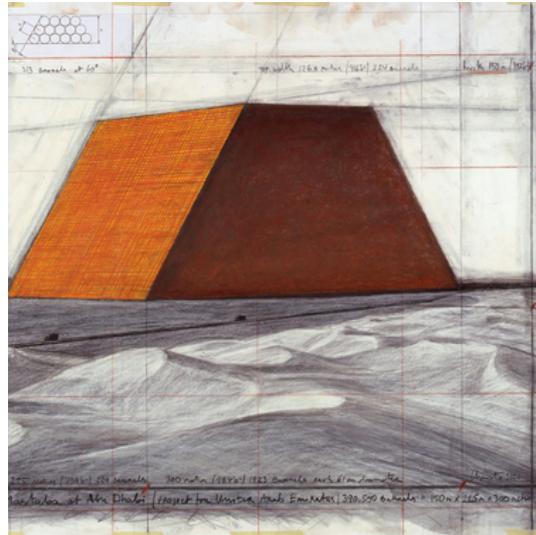


Image: Courtesy of Galerie Gmurzynska © CHRISTO

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The artist Christo, now aged 80, is nothing if not committed. This singular visionary, renowned and beloved throughout the art world – and beyond – for his enigmatic land art installations, wraps landscapes in a range of materials, rendering them utterly changed for a brief moment in time. His works are surreal, poetic and a lot of fun. They have arguably the best effect that artworks can, in that they fundamentally change how you see something. In this case, that something is the environment around us.

Galerie Gmurzynska is holding an exhibition of 14 mixed-media works on paper (\$230,000- \$1.2m) depicting Christo's land art, at its space in St Moritz, opening on February 14. This exhibition marks his solo continuation as a practising artist, following the death in 2009 of his wife Jeanne-Claude, who was his partner in art, as well as in life, for five decades.

One piece in this show is part of a project first conceived by Christo and Jeanne-Claude in 1977 – one Christo is still working to bring to fruition. It is the 2006 drawing in pencil, charcoal, wax crayon, pastel, technical data and tape, entitled *The Mastaba of Abu Dhabi (Project for United Arab Emirates)* (second picture), which is selling for \$230,000. It may be his ultimate piece, in that it remains unrealised. Once Christo gets an idea into his head, he doesn't give it up.

Another highlight is the mixed-media drawing of *The Floating Piers* (\$900,000, first picture), a sketch for a new installation that will appear on Lake Iseo, Italy, for just over two weeks this coming June and July. A set of floating pathways that intersect the lake means it will look one way from afar, but feel very different up close – because visitors will be able to walk across the water. *Over The River* (2010, third picture), depicts his covering of the Arkansas River, where fabric panels will be suspended high above the river – and the sale price of \$520,000, like that of most works here, will be put towards realising future works.

Christo's installations are a logistical feat to realise, yet when in place they appear serene and simple. They draw out the form of their host sites by erasing surface detail and familiar connotation, replacing them with a blanket of colour. Despite being so vast and having a solid

feel, the land works are ephemeral, which gives them a tremendous romance. “For collectors it’s about becoming part of the project and like buying a memento of a performance,” explains Gmurzynska CEO and co-founder Mathias Rastorfer. Christo’s drawings offer something permanent while supporting future projects.

15 February-30 March. Via Serlas 22, 7500 St Moritz, Switzerland (www.gmurzynska.com).