



Artists to speak at annual July 4 ceremony

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, environmental artists most widely known for their 2005 work of art, *The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979-2005*, will be the featured speakers Tuesday, July 4, at Monticello's 44th annual Independence Day Celebration and Naturalization Ceremony.

The husband-and-wife team were born on the same day in 1935 – Christo in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, to an industrialist Bulgarian family and Jeanne-Claude in Casablanca, Morocco, to a French military family. Christo studied at the Fine Arts Academy in Sofia from 1953 to 1956, and at the Vienna Fine

Arts Academy in 1957. Jeanne-Claude received a bachelor's degree in Latin and philosophy from the University of Tunis in 1952. The two met in Paris in 1958, and in 1964 they immigrated with their 4-year-old son, Cyril, to New York City, where they have resided ever since. They are both naturalized U.S. citizens.

By working specifically with fabric, Christo and Jeanne-Claude create a wide variety of works of art, including packages, drawings, collages, scale models, lithographs, outdoor projects, and large-scale temporary indoor installations. One of the goals of their short-term work is to emphasize the non-permanence of certain aspects of life, such as childhood, nature, and life itself. An example of this type of installation is their temporary use of



Courtesy Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Jeanne-Claude and Christo.

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rural and urban sites. Christo and Jeanne-Claude accept no sponsors and pay all expenses with their own money.

The list of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's significant projects includes *Valley Curtain, Rifle, Colorado, 1970-72; Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972-76; Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980-83; The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, 1975-85; The Umbrellas, Japan-U.S.A., 1984-91; Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971-95; and The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979-2005*. Their current project, begun in 1992, is titled *Over the River, Project for the Arkansas River, Colorado*.

The July 4 event at Monticello, which will begin at 10 a.m., is free and open to the public.

Since 1963, nearly 3,000 individuals have been sworn in as American citizens at the Monticello ceremony, which is presided over by the U.S. District Court, Western District of Virginia.

The roster of Independence Day speakers at Monticello includes President Gerald Ford (1976), astronomer Carl Sagan (1992), author and historian David McCullough (1994), Gen. Colin L. Powell (1997), and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (2000). Last year's featured speaker was I.M. Pei, the internationally renowned architect.

This July 4 will mark the 230th anniversary of American independence. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, died at Monticello on the 50th anniversary, July 4, 1826.

— KIM CURTIS

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COMMENTS? newsletter@monticello.org