MUSEUM
of SONOMA COUNTY

Museum of Sonoma County Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's Iconic *Running Fence*



SANTA ROSA, CA – The **Museum of Sonoma County** proudly announces its upcoming, landmark exhibition, ***Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Running Fence at 50 Years*.** From **June 27th through November 8th, 2026** we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the monumental temporary art installation that stretched 24.5 miles through 59 properties in Sonoma and Marin Counties to the Pacific Ocean. Originally completed in September 1976, *Running Fence* remains a world-famous milestone in contemporary art and a defining moment in North Bay history.

"The *Running Fence* was like a ribbon of light in the landscape" explained Christo in 1977. "I don't think any museum exhibition has touched so profoundly hundreds of thousands of people who visited Running Fence, in a way that half a million people in Sonoma and Marin Counties were engaged with the making of the work of art for three and a half years," also detailed the artist.

“The Fence stands out as one of the good things. No harm done. No animals got tied up in the ropes. Nobody died.”, says Santa Rosa Press Democrat Reporter Gaye LeBaron. “It's a happy story and they don’t come along everyday.”

“We are thrilled to share this remarkable story of perseverance and beauty with a new generation,” says Karen Wise, Executive Director of the Museum of Sonoma County.

Monumental and Collaborative

The *Running Fence* exhibition invites visitors to rediscover the four-year undertaking required to bring the 18-foot-high white fabric fence to life--a massive and almost miraculous community-galvanizing event. Christo and Jeanne-Claude overcame so many obstacles that the success of the project was often in doubt. “Christo and Jeanne-Claude's audacious definition of what art could be and who could help create it was key to the Fence,” says Jennifer Bethke, Museum of Sonoma County’s Curator of Art. “They considered the entire process part of their art–the public hearings, the government permits, and the thousands of people who participated (either willingly or not!). I love this about their projects.”



Local Ranchers

59 different property owners granted permission for the Fence to cross their land. Many of those ranchers were initially skeptical of the endeavor, but eventually became some of the project's most ardent supporters. "With the *Running Fence* I would never be able to do that project if the ranchers were not backing emotionally and actively the project, at least at the public hearings. I would never win the public hearings if the ranchers were not coming to fight for the project," recalled Christo in 1977.

Workers and Students

After two years of public hearings, and beginning in April 1976, the initial technical installation began with a local workforce. Ultimately there were about 400 paid workers and students who rose before dawn every day to stretch 240,000 square yards of heavy, woven fabric across the landscape using 2,050 steel poles.



Government Agencies

Running Fence required 18 public hearings and the first-ever environmental impact report for a work of art. Significantly, the State Coastal Commission said 'no' to the Fence running into the ocean after the local counties said 'yes'. When the Coastal Commission refused him a final permit to run his Fence into the sea, in defiance of the commission, Christo and Jeanne-Claude continued with the plan, at various points even hiding in bushes, out of sight of coastal authorities.

Cultural Impact

The legacy of the *Running Fence* is its profound impact on Sonoma County, shifting it from a traditional agricultural community into a recognized hub for art.

Exhibition Highlights

Through immersive design and powerful visuals, the Museum—which holds a large and important collection of Christo and Jeanne-Claude artworks, and materials related to *Running Fence*—will showcase:

- Original artworks from Christo on loan from the Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation.
- Items from the Museum of Sonoma County's permanent collection, including original *Running Fence* construction materials.



Exhibition Details

Dates: June 27 – November 8, 2026

Key Events: Member Preview Day 6/26; Public Opening 6/27; Reunion and Anniversary celebration 9/12; Maysles Films *Running Fence* Documentary screening 9/26 at Schulz Museum. Check the Museum website for full list of programs.

Drawings, collages and photos of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's Running Fence, can be downloaded on this press space.

About Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Christo and Jeanne-Claude were born on the same day: June 13, 1935; he in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, and she in Casablanca, Morocco. Jeanne-Claude passed away in 2009, and Christo died in 2020, both in New York City, where they had moved in 1964. Christo and Jeanne-Claude realized monumental projects around the world, including *Wrapped Coast, One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, 1968–69*; *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–USA, 1984–91*; *Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, 1971–95*; *The Gates, Central Park, New York City, 1979–2005*; *The Floating Piers, Lake Iseo, Italy, 2014–16*; *The London Mastaba, Serpentine Lake, Hyde Park, 2016–18*; and *L'Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped, Paris, 1961–2021*.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude worked together since their first outdoor temporary work of art: *Stacked Oil Barrels and Dockside Packages, Cologne Harbor, Germany, 1961*. Before he escaped to the West, Christo studied painting, sculpture, architecture, and decorative arts at the National Academy of Art in Sofia for four years. All early works, such as *Wrapped Cans*, *Wrapped Oil Barrels*, *Packages*, *Wrapped Objects*, and *Store Fronts*, as well as all preparatory drawings, collages, and scale models are works by Christo only. All public projects and indoor installations, both realized and unrealized, are collaborative works by Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

About the Museum of Sonoma County

Located in Downtown Santa Rosa, the Museum of Sonoma County presents exhibitions of modern and contemporary art and local and regional history. It is open year-round with changing exhibitions, public programs, tours for school groups, and special events. The Museum of Sonoma County preserves and manages a regional art and history collection of over 18,000 objects, making it the region's largest collecting museum.

The Museum of Sonoma County engages and inspires our diverse community with art and history exhibitions, collections, and public programs that are inclusive, educational, and relevant.

Press contacts

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