

ARISTOS News

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ARISTOS EDITORS DUB CHRISTO'S CENTRAL PARK 'GATES' "BOGUS ART"

New York City / February 11, 2005 – The opinion of art critics and Mayor Bloomberg notwithstanding, Christo Javacheff's *The Gates: Project for Central Park, New York City* is "bogus art," say Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi, editors of *Aristos*, an online review of the arts. *The Gates*—consisting of saffron-colored fabric panels hanging from 7,500 frames, or "gates," along 23 miles of park walkways—will be unfurled at daybreak on February 12, remaining installed for 16 days. Many New Yorkers and visitors resent the prospect of such an intrusion into Central Park, while others look forward to the spectacle. Quite a few also wonder, "Is it art?"

"From the time prehistoric man first painted on the walls of caves, until the end of the nineteenth century," Torres and Kamhi observe, "artists re-created the real world in images that reflected their view of life, their deepest values. With the invention of abstract art in the early twentieth century, however, many purported artists dispensed entirely with the representation of reality. Thereafter, any combination of form, color, and texture was considered art—though it failed to convey any meaning to the ordinary viewer."

By the mid twentieth century, Torres and Kamhi further note, a reaction set in: "Postmodernists concocted new forms such as 'installation art' (which utilizes arrangements of real objects) and 'performance art' (in which the would-be artist himself is the medium). From then on, virtually *anything* could be considered art—if the artworld said it was."

Christo, as he prefers to be called, is the beneficiary of this radical view—which, Torres and Kamhi say, "turned the nature of art on its head." As they point out, *The Gates* is both "installation" and "performance," consisting not just of a display of colored cloth, but also of the public-relations and marketing campaign conducted by Christo's wife and partner, Jeanne-Claude. Billed as a co-creator of the work, she, too, is considered an "artist."

But is *The Gates* art? Christo calls his work "totally irrational, irresponsible, useless." Torres and Kamhi could not agree more. "However," they add, "genuine art has always made sense, and has filled a profound psychological or spiritual human need. That is why *The Gates* is not art, but *bogus art*."

ABOUT THE EDITORS – Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi are independent scholars and critics. In addition to editing *Aristos*, an online review of the arts at www.aristos.org, they are co-authors of *What Art Is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand* (Open Court, 2000)—which *Choice* magazine has judged to be "a well-documented debunking of twentieth-century art and art theory," and cultural historian Jacques Barzun has called "a splendid piece of work."