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Artist Wants Trump to Ditch ‘Racist’ Wall for Orange Fence by Christo

Luis Camnitzer wasn't expecting his petition to be so successful.

Brian Boucher (<https://news.artnet.com/about/brian-boucher-244>), January 9, 2017



Artist Christo looks at his artwork *The Gates*, Central Park, New York, 1979-2005. Photo Spencer Platt/Getty Images.

Dozens of signatories are piling on to artist [Luis Camnitzer](http://www.artnet.com/artists/luis-camnitzer/)'s [new petition](https://www.change.org/p/donald-trump-commission-christo-with-an-orange-running-fence-that-separates-the-u-s-from-mexico?source_location=minibar) asking President-elect Donald Trump to commission famed installation artist Christo to build an orange fence separating Mexico and the US.

The petition reads:

Dear President-Elect Donald Trump: Please commission U.S. artist Christo's [sic] with the creation of a new a version of his Running Fence to separate the U.S. from Mexico. His first project in Sonoma was completed in 1976 with great success. Though only 24.5 miles long then, in full length today it would transform a racist project into a public art event, and help improve the image of the U.S. with a cultural veneer.

"I wasn't expecting it to be so successful," the artist said in a phone interview Monday afternoon, adding that he had published it just a few hours before. He pointed out that an earlier petition, [calling for Pope Francis to canonize the Disney character Scrooge McDuck](https://www.change.org/p/pope-francis-help-canonize-scrooge-mcduck), had received just eight supporters.

Organized with Jeanne-Claude, then Christo's wife and artistic partner, [Running Fence](http://christojeanneclaude.net/projects/running-fence) (1972–

76) took the form of white fabric stretched along steel poles through rural areas of Sonoma and Marin Counties, near San Francisco, California.

Camnitzer's proposal to bring Christo into the equation doesn't result from any particular admiration of the public artist. "I'm not a fan of any public art," he said. "I think it's invasive. I would rather make the decision to go to a gallery or a museum rather than have stuff in my way that I have to look at."

A border wall, meant to stop illegal immigration from Mexico, was a central rallying point in the Republican candidate's presidential bid. While he initially promised that Mexico would pay for the wall, that promise has fallen by the wayside as House Republican officials have indicated that US taxpayers would foot the bill, [CNN has reported \(http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/05/politics/border-wall-house-republicans-donald-trump-taxpayers/\)](http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/05/politics/border-wall-house-republicans-donald-trump-taxpayers/). One of the people signing the petition, Claes Boman, of Gothenberg, Sweden, points out exactly this changeability as he comments, "I love Christo. Trump is a bozo, but may change his mind, he's good at that at least."

Reversibility, it turns out, was part of Camnitzer's thinking as well. Asked whether, say, a more durable public artwork, like a [Richard Serra \(http://www.artnet.com/artists/richard-serra/\)](http://www.artnet.com/artists/richard-serra/) sculpture, would have been a better choice for the border wall, he scoffed.

"I'm against monuments to oneself, and I put Serra among that camp," he said. "Serra is more permanent, so I'm not interested in having him do it, but rather having it be reversible, in the great tradition followed in art conservation. I think all these things should be as ephemeral as possible, including politics."

Christo did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



katykhazei • 6 months ago

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Orange has become something of a trademark color for Christo, having featured in both his *Floating Piers* (<https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/christo-floating-piers-italy-523877>) project, recently realized in Italy, and *The Gates* (<http://christojeanneclaude.net/projects/the-gates>), erected in New York's Central Park in 2005. It's also the distinctive hue of the president-elect's skin, which has led to comparisons of his person to a jack-o-lantern, a traffic cone, and the defoliant Agent Orange.

"I like Christo and I like orange," comments Kurt Stockman, in Ghent, Belgium, catching on to the petition's color theme.

Camnitzer, who was raised in Uruguay and has lived in New York since 1964, often uses language in his work in a manner that recalls several of his Conceptualist peers; and, having been raised in Uruguay, his work often echoes the anti-colonialist, politically infused art of that region. He had his first New York survey at El Museo del Barrio in 2011; writing in the *New York Times* (<http://prod-images.exhibite.com/www.alexandergray.com/50c7f4ec.pdf>), Holland Cotter called the show “terse, almost to the vanishing point in places,” saying that its frequent printed language is linked to “spare-to-barely-there visual matter.” He shows at New York gallery [Alexander Gray Associates](http://www.alexandergray.com/) (<http://www.alexandergray.com/>).

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