



Christo and Jeanne Claude: The Mastaba, Project for Abu Dhabi

Matthias Koddenberg

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History in the making: Christo and Jeanne-Claude's project for Abu Dhabi

The Mastaba, Project for Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates will not only be Christo and Jeanne-Claude's greatest achievement and only permanent large-scale work, but also the biggest sculpture in the world and one of the most significant creations in history.

Conceived in 1977, *The Mastaba* takes its name from an ancient word describing a trapezoidal structure with a flat top, two vertical walls and two outward sloping sides. Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Mastaba* will be made from 410,000 multi-colored barrels to form a mosaic of bright sparkling colors that echoes Islamic architecture. The sculpture will be 150 meters (492 feet) high, 225 meters (738 feet) deep at the 60 degree slanted walls and 300 meters (984 feet) wide at the vertical walls.

The individual colors and the positioning of the 55-gallon steel barrels were chosen by **Christo and Jeanne-Claude** in 1979, the year in which the artists first visited Abu Dhabi. They have since returned many times, creating a longstanding friendship with the Emirate and its people. In 2012, the ideal location for *The Mastaba* was identified approximately 160 kilometers south of Abu Dhabi in the stunning desert of Al Gharbia, surrounded by some of the most spectacular dunes in the world.

This book, designed by Christo himself, tells the story of the project from 1977 until today and is illustrated throughout with the photography of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's exclusive photographer, **Wolfgang Volz**. The evolution of *The Mastaba* is also captured through images of Christo's earliest drawings from the 1970s to his most recent work, and through the publication of maps, technical data, and engineering drawings. Many of these images and documents are published here for the first time.

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