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GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE ACQUIRES COMPLETE ARCHIVES OF ARTIST CLAES OLDENBURG AND ARTIST AND CURATOR COOSJE VAN BRUGGEN

The extensive archives are particularly rich in materials from Oldenburg's breakthrough decade of the 1960s and comprehensively covers Oldenburg's and van Bruggen's prolific careers



Coosje van Bruggen and Claes Oldenburg with *Spoonbridge and Cherry, Model* (1987), in their New York studio, 1987.
Photo credit: © Jan Staller, Copyright 1987 Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen

Los Angeles – The Getty Research Institute (GRI) announced today the acquisition of the vast and richly varied archives of the acclaimed artist Claes Oldenburg (Swedish/American, b.1929), and his collaborator and wife Coosje van Bruggen (Dutch/American, 1942-2009), a noted curator, artist, and art historian. The collection includes the individual archives of Oldenburg and van Bruggen, including substantial materials from Oldenburg's early career in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the joint archive covering large-scale public monuments that the couple developed collaboratively between 1976 and 2009.

“The Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen archives are among the most significant and visually rich archives ever to be acquired by the Getty Research Institute,” said Mary Miller, director of the Getty Research Institute. “Oldenburg kept meticulous and thorough records of his dynamic activity throughout his six-decade career, including an uninterrupted

set of diaries. Because of this, and of his and van Bruggen's broad range of high-level cultural production, these records will expand rich narratives around contemporary art. We are so honored to care for this monumental legacy. I'm thrilled."

Oldenburg's individual archive covers every period of his career, from youth to present, and includes more than 2,000 sketches and collages, 450 diaries and notebooks, and extensive collections of correspondence, photography, ephemera, and audiovisual materials, as well as plans and templates related to projects throughout his career, including a remarkable array of unpublished materials from his extraordinarily innovative activity in the 1960s.

The diaries, beginning in 1956 and continuing to the present, chronicle Oldenburg's daily activities, including projects he worked on, people he met, what he read, social engagements, and reflections on his work and the work of his contemporaries. More than 200 additional volumes are Oldenburg's largely unpublished "Notes," going back to the early 1950s, that document his ideas and thinking about specific projects from their earliest inception to their realization, sometimes decades later. There are extensive volumes relating to Oldenburg's performances, including scripts, renderings of set designs and props, and notes for such projects as *Ironworks/Fotodeath*, 1961, *Sports*, 1962, and *Moveyhouse*, 1965. The notebooks chart the development of major projects such as *The Street*, 1960, *The Store*, 1961-62, and *Mouse Museum*, 1965-77, as well large-scale projects by Oldenburg and van Bruggen such as *Spoonbridge and Cherry*, 1988, and *Shuttlecocks*, 1994. The archive also includes 10 volumes of Oldenburg's poetry dating from 1952-67 and 20 volumes logging his studio activity, including travel and shipments. Among Oldenburg's juvenilia are 15 sketchbooks and dozens of drawings from 1936-39. Additionally, there is a large body of loose writings, including drafts of statements, essays, lectures, and interviews that the artist gave over his lifetime.

"Claes Oldenburg is without a doubt one of the most significant artists of the 20th century and a figure whose influence has been felt across a surprisingly wide spectrum of artmaking," said Glenn Phillips, curator and head of modern and contemporary collections at



Notebook page: *Ray Gun* Advertisement for the Village Voice, 1950 or 1960. Watercolor, 8 ½ x 11 in. Photo courtesy of the Oldenburg van Bruggen Studio. Copyright 1959 Claes Oldenburg

the Getty Research Institute. "Though he is most commonly associated with Pop Art (a term he does not embrace), Oldenburg has influenced Performance Art, Installation Art, Minimalism and Postminimalism, and Conceptual Art. The public art projects of Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen have profoundly altered our thinking about public monuments, and it is time to reassess the role their works have played in the development of Postmodernism in both art and architecture. Oldenburg is also an exceptionally important figure in the history of modern printmaking and contemporary drawing. Practically speaking, this extensive archive is a detailed and intimate history of most of the major movements in American art since the middle of the last century and it will be a tremendous resource for art historians, curators, and artists."

The son of a Swedish diplomat, Oldenburg was born in Stockholm in 1929 and spent his early years in Oslo and New York. In 1936 his family moved to Chicago, where he would spend his formative years. As a child, he invented an imaginary country called Neubern, where the language was a hybrid of Swedish and English. Included in the archive are more than a dozen scrapbooks filled with collaged maps, drawings, lists, and other details describing this fantastic island nation. He had a keen interest in the built environment, and he was a naturally talented draughtsman, producing elaborate drawings of planes, ships, and cars. These passions would resurface throughout his artistic career.

After studying art and majoring in English at Yale University, Oldenburg returned to Chicago in 1950 and worked as an apprentice reporter at City News Bureau while taking night classes at the Art Institute of Chicago. He enrolled full-time at the Art Institute in 1952 and had his first exhibition in 1953, showing a collection of satirical drawings alongside painter Robert Indiana. In 1956 he moved to New York, where his interest in theater eventually led him to a group of environmental artists who had given up painting for performance. Among them was Allan Kaprow, who was developing his now historic series of scored performances called "Happenings." Fellow artists Red Grooms, Robert Whitman, Lucas Samaras, George Segal, Ray Johnson, and Jim Dine became part of his circle of friends and collaborators. During this time Oldenburg continued drawing and painting, creating large-scale portraits, nudes, and genre scenes, many of which featured his first wife, Patty Mucha, who also appeared prominently in Oldenburg's performances, and collaborated with him on the production of costumes and sets. Oldenburg had his first solo show in 1959 at the Judson Gallery, an independent venue located in the basement of the progressive Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village. Around this same time, he created the myth of the Ray Gun, a figure that

animated his sculptural practice and functioned as his alter ego. Oldenburg defined the Ray Gun simply as any right angle, found or constructed; countless examples could be found throughout the natural and built environment. The Ray Gun, which had the power to "take over and transform the world through magic," would appear in multiple exhibitions and events, including *The Street*, a visually cacophonous environment composed mostly of cardboard, newspaper, and other detritus found on the streets of the Lower East Side. The installation became in turn the setting for a series of Ray Gun Theater performances (called Ray Gun Spex), organized by Oldenburg and including his *Snapshots from the City*, as well as performances by Jim Dine, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, and Robert Whitman, among others.

In 1963 Oldenburg spent a short time in Los Angeles and began a new body of work, which would continue throughout the decade, called *The Home*. The works in this series include depictions of domestic and consumer objects, enlarged in scale, and often presented in "soft" and "hard" versions, with the "soft" sculptures sewn by Patty Mucha. He also created *Autobodys*, a performance about Los Angeles traffic. This drive-in performance made use of the spectator's headlights to illuminate the choreographed movements of cars and bodies. In New York, he realized another car-themed work, *Airflow*, 1965, a series of soft sculptures depicting all the component parts of the 1935 Chrysler model. These were the first in a series of mechanically-themed soft sculptures that Oldenburg would render between 1965 and 1968, including a typewriter, giant fan, and drainpipe.

In 1965, Oldenburg began sketching a series of *Proposed Colossal Monuments*, public monuments that would transform sculptures of ordinary objects into geographical interventions on an architectural scale. These proposals included *Wing-Nut* for Stockholm in 1966, *Floating Ball*, 1967, for the Thames River in London in 1967, and *Bat Spinning at the Speed of Light* for Chicago in 1967.

Among the early monuments Oldenburg realized was *Trowel I*, the first version of which was commissioned for the major international exhibition of contemporary art in Arnhem, the Netherlands, Sonsbeek 71. It was on the occasion of Oldenburg's 1976 re-installation of *Trowel I* at the Kröller Müller Museum in Otterloo that he was reacquainted with Dutch art historian and curator Coosje van Bruggen, who advised him about the placement, design, and fabrication of the monumental work. She would become his formal collaborator that year, and his spouse in 1977, sharing credit with Oldenburg for their numerous subsequent large-scale public projects.

Van Bruggen was trained as an art historian at the Rijksuniversiteit in Groningen, and she worked as Assistant Curator for Painting and Sculpture at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam from 1967-71. She then taught art history at the Enschede Academy of Visual Arts. Throughout her artistic partnership with Oldenburg, van Bruggen also continued her independent work as a curator and art historian, serving on the curatorial team for Documenta 7 in 1982, and writing monographs on John Baldessari, Bruce Nauman, Hanne Darboven, and Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao—projects which are documented in her individual archive.

Over the course of their more than three-decade-long collaboration, van Bruggen and Oldenburg designed and produced more than three dozen large-scale monuments in a variety of sites ranging from civic centers and museums to public parks. The Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen Archive contains extensive planning and logistical materials, correspondence, research, ephemera, and photographic and audiovisual documentation of these projects. Each commission entailed a lengthy process in which the artists would research the history of the site and broader context as well as the structural contingencies of a location before working out an idea and methods for construction. The exaggerated proportions of their monumental icons—billiard balls, a flashlight, shuttlecocks, a broom and dustpan, a torn notebook, and tumbling tacks among many others—heighten their inherent symbolism and particular resonances with their sites of installation. Transforming the built environments in which they are placed, Oldenburg and van Bruggen's monuments of vernacular objects stand out in the discourse of postmodernism in architecture.

"The collaboration between Oldenburg and van Bruggen produced some of the most memorable sculptures of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, said Andrew Perchuk, deputy director of the GRI. "To acquire the records of their extraordinary partnership, as well as their individual archives, will provide foundational research material for generations to come."

In the early 1980s, van Bruggen and Oldenburg embarked on a series of collaborations with architect Frank Gehry (whose archive the GRI acquired in 2018), including a theatrical production titled *Il Corso del Coltello (The Course of the Knife)*, staged in the canals of Venice in 1985 with Oldenburg, van Bruggen, and Gehry as performers. For this project, Oldenburg and van Bruggen created *Knife Ship*, a monumentally-scaled prop in the shape of a Swiss Army knife. The artists also developed large-scale sculptures for two of Gehry's architectural projects in Los Angeles. *Toppling Ladder with Spilling Paint*, 1987, was installed at Loyola Law School

and *Binoculars*, 1991, is incorporated into Gehry's building commissioned by the Chiat/Day advertising firm in Venice (now occupied by Google).

The couple continued to create large-scale public sculptures until van Bruggen's death in 2009. Oldenburg continues to work and is currently finishing the production of *Dropped Bouquet*, a new sculpture edition. His most recent series, *Shelf Life*, 2017, consists of 15 works in which small sculptures and maquettes of Oldenburg's key imagery—trowels, bowling pins, apple cores, etc.—are arranged on shelves, creating tableaux that reflect upon the history of Oldenburg's and van Bruggen's visual vocabulary and artistic output.

The Claes Oldenburg Archive, Coosje van Bruggen Archive, and Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen Archive will be catalogued and digitized by the Getty Research Institute and ultimately be made available to researchers.



Notebook Page: Proposal for Sculpture in the Form of a C clamp for Hudson River Esplanade, New York City, 2001. Pencil and watercolor. 5 5/16 x 7 7/8 in. Photo courtesy of the Oldenburg van Bruggen Studio. Copyright 2001 Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen

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The Getty Research Institute is an operating program of the J. Paul Getty Trust. It serves education in the broadest sense by increasing knowledge and understanding about art and its history through advanced research. The Research Institute provides intellectual leadership through its research, exhibition, and publication programs and provides service to a wide range of scholars worldwide through residencies, fellowships, online resources, and a Research Library. The Research Library—housed in the 201,000-square-foot Research Institute building designed by Richard Meier—is one of the largest art and architecture libraries in the world. The general library collections (secondary sources) include almost 900,000 volumes of books, periodicals, and auction catalogues encompassing the history of Western art and related fields in the humanities. The Research Library's special collections include rare books, artists' journals, sketchbooks, architectural drawings and models, photographs, and archival materials.

The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that include the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades.