



GEMINI G.E.L. ^{AT} JONI MOISANT WEYL



For Immediate Release

Claes Oldenburg: A Survey of Print and Sculpture Editions

May 16 – September 14, 2019

Reception For The Artist: Thursday, May 16, 6-8pm

Gemini G.E.L. at Joni Moisant Weyl is pleased to present a survey of **Claes Oldenburg's** print and sculpture editions, on view from May 16th through September 14th. The exhibition spans fifty years of the artist's creative output, ranging from imagery precisely rendered and architecturally inspired to lyrical and freely drawn. Internationally known for his large-scale, site-specific sculptures made with Coosje van Bruggen (1942-2009), Oldenburg's works on paper reveal how drawing is central to his creative process. Developing and reworking themes in various states, Oldenburg uses printmaking and editions as a way to explore themes of iteration, mechanical process, and object/body equivalents. Baseball bats and gym shoes, ice bags and light bulbs, pencils and typewriter erasers are everyday objects retooled as subjects.

Oldenburg began collaborating with the Los Angeles-based Gemini G.E.L. workshop in 1968 with *Notes*, a portfolio of twelve lithographs each accompanied by its own text. Included in the exhibition in its entirety, the portfolio parallels his long-standing practice of keeping notebooks with drawings, sketches, writings, and clippings from printed material. At the time, Gemini was one of the few print publishers to fully embrace new technologies, and this coincided with Oldenburg's own desires to mix industrial fabrications with art and his preoccupation with printed representations in mass media. The publishing of *Notes* was a way for Oldenburg to secure the print as a



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means to expand his drawing practice, becoming a significant representation of, in the artist's words, "the structure of multiplication which one feels very much in modern society. The idea of making many of one thing relates me to manufacturing." [Goldman, "Sort of a Commercial for Objects," pp. 118-19]

Many of the works on view propose monuments imagined out of the banal stuff of life in uncanny scenarios—a baseball bat towers over a landscape, a massive slice of strawberry cheesecake floats in the East River, two threaded screws combine to form a bridge. Each proposal challenges the long historic tradition of civic monuments built to memorialize historic events, and Oldenburg subverts them with a playful exaggeration. These are monuments to the human experience and our relationship to the world of objects around us.

One of Oldenburg's few self-portraits, *Symbolic Self-Portrait with "Equals"* from 1971, shows technically rendered objects surrounding the artist's face on graph paper like a schematic diagram. Depicted wearing an ice bag on his head, Oldenburg writes, "the subject was on my mind. It doubles as a beret—attribute of the artist." Many of the self-referential forms surrounding him in this print are seen in different states of development throughout this exhibition, including a Good Humor Bar stuffed with letters from the alphabet, and three differently-scaled *Geometric Mouse* sculpture editions shown alongside lithographs of the subject.

Also on view is an example of Oldenburg's only kinetic series, *Ice Bag-Scale B*, 1971, a four-foot version of the monumental 18-foot sculpture developed at Gemini G.E.L. in conjunction with Krofft Enterprises as part of the Art and Technology program at LACMA. Like the giant version, *Scale B* is fitted with a hydraulics system that inflates and deflates the form as the ice bag gently twists and turns, 'breathing' in a very animate way. Complementing this interest in dynamic movement, works on paper in the exhibition, such as *Wrist Watch Rising*, *Rolling Collar and Tie*, and *Hard Times Bulb*, among others – though not physically kinetic – are animated in their bold and expressive line quality.

The exhibition is installed in all three galleries, allowing for a comprehensive overview of Oldenburg's printmaking and edition-sculpture projects made in collaboration with the majority of his publishers. In addition to Gemini G.E.L., included are works done with Multiples, Inc., Petersburg Press, Brooke Alexander, Pace Editions, Landfall Press and others.



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Born in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1929, Claes Oldenburg grew up in Chicago and graduated from Yale University in 1950. After studying at the Art Institute of Chicago, he settled permanently in New York City in 1956. Oldenburg established himself at the beginning of the 1960s on the Lower East Side with a series of installations and performances, among them *The Street* (1960), *The Store* (1961), and *Ray Gun Theater* (1962). Oldenburg's first architecturally-scaled sculpture was *Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks* (1969), followed by other monumental works *Giant Trowel* (1971-76) and the 45-foot-high *Clothespin* in downtown Philadelphia (1976). He married Coosje van Bruggen (b. 1942; d. 2009) in 1977, and together they realized 44 site-specific sculptures for cities in the United States, Europe, Japan and Korea, including *Shuttlecocks* (1994) at the Nelson-Atkins Museum, and *Flying Pins* (2000) in Eindhoven, the Netherlands; the most recent, *Paint Torch*, was completed by Oldenburg in 2011 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Recent solo gallery and museum exhibitions include "The Sixties" retrospective at Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Guggenheim-Bilbao; MoMA, New York; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2012-2014), "Things Around the House" at Paula Cooper Gallery, NY (2015) and "Shelf Life" at Pace Gallery, NY (2017).

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