

The European Desktop

Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen

Exhibition from February 17th through April 17th 2010

Ivorypress Art+Books and PaceWildenstein are delighted to present

Claes Oldenburg + Coosje van Bruggen: The European Desktop.

The exhibition will be on view at Ivorypress Art+Books Space from February 17th through April 17th 2010.

The artist will be present for an opening reception on Tuesday the 16th of February 2010 from 6-8 pm.

This exhibition represents a decision by the artist to re-explore a work that he and his wife Coosje van Bruggen had made together in 1990. Van Bruggen had noticed a headline in the International Herald Tribune: "Undoing Yalta, 45 Years Later, and a New Europe" and this unqualified optimism became the spur for *The European Desktop*, a war torn landscape of desktop accoutrements. The work is comprised of a number of sculptures – a shattered desk pad, a quill, an ink pot, a blotter, and postal scales – all of which appear to have fallen from the sky and are now left languishing as forgotten victims of a previous time. It is a masterful play on historical skirmishes for national boundaries and the displacement of European cultures. Oldenburg and van Bruggen seem to declare that time is never passive and succeed in turning memories into relics. The political or otherwise drama has already been unpacked and is slowly fading away; only a desolate wasteland of abandoned objects remains.

The European Desktop is the third and final work in a series of theatrical installations that grew out of Oldenburg and van Bruggen's performance with architect Frank Gehry for the 1985 Venice Biennale, *Il Corso del Coltello* (*The Course of the Knife*). The first two works in this series were *The Haunted House* and *From the Entropic Library*. All three use history as a source material and are conceptually situated in a peculiarly European milieu.

Oldenburg returns to Spain, building on his and Coosje's impressive presentations at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Juan Miró Foundation in Barcelona, and the exhibition of *Knife Ship I* - the large prop from the *Coltello* performance which was installed at Palacio de Cristal here in Madrid in the summer of 1986.

About Claes Oldenburg

Claes Oldenburg was born in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1929. The son of a Swedish Consul General, he grew up in Chicago and attended Yale University (1946-50). He started to work as a reporter and in 1952 he attended the Art Institute of Chicago. At that time he began to publish drawings in several magazines. In 1956 he moved to New York. In the years that followed he created a series of performances and installations such as *The Street* (1960) and *The Store* (1961) establishing him as a leading figure in the Pop Art movement. Shifting his vision to *The Home* (1974), Oldenburg began a series of sewn and fabricated versions of ordinary household objects, later visualized in fantastic scale as "Proposed Colossal Monuments" for urban settings all over the world. In 1976, a 45-foot-tall sculpture in the form of a Clothespin was realized in downtown Philadelphia, the first such work in a 'feasible' scale.

In 1976, Oldenburg worked with Coosje van Bruggen for the first time on the reconstruction and relocation of the 41 foot tall *Trowel I* (1971-76)-originally shown at Sonsbeek 71-to the Kröller-Müller Museum grounds in Otterlo. Oldenburg and van Bruggen were married in 1977 and started a three decade artistic collaboration together.

Van Bruggen was born in Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1942. She received a master's degree in art history with a minor in French literature from the University of Groningen prior to serving as a curator at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam from 1961 until 1971. Van Bruggen was also a member of the selection committee for Documenta 7 in Kassel, Germany (1982); a contributor to Artforum (1983-88); and, Senior Critic in the Department of Sculpture at Yale University (1996-97). In addition to her extensive writings on Oldenburg's early work and their collaborative projects, she was also the author of essays on Richard Artschwager and Gerhard Richter and books on John Baldessari, Hanne Darboven, Bruce Nauman, and Frank Gehry. Van Bruggen and Oldenburg continued their artistic collaboration together until her sad death in January 2009.

Two of the more recent exhibitions of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen have been held at the Menil Collection museum in Houston, which was dedicated to their drawings, as well as a recent retrospective exhibition which took place in the Whitney Museum in New York.

About catalogue

The publications below, published by Elena Ochoa Foster and James Lindon, accompany the exhibition:

The European Desktop. Exhibition Guide

58 pages

Ivorypress / PaceWildenstein, 2010

London, Madrid, New York

The European Desktop, Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen

An exhibition catalogue which includes images from the installation at Ivorypress Art+Books, as well as texts by Richard Cork and Ida Gianneli.

Launch: March 2010