

Artist Resources – Coosje van Bruggen (Dutch-American, 1942-2009)

[Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen artist website](#)

[Claes & Coosje at the Guggenheim](#)

As a curator, writer, and artist, van Bruggen was on the selection committee for the international contemporary art exhibition [documenta 7](#) in 1982.

In 1984, van Bruggen guest curated the exhibition [Jenny Holzer, Stephen Prina, Mark Stahl, Christopher Williams](#) for Gewad (now the Gewad Centre for Contemporary Art) in Ghent and De Appel in Amsterdam.

Van Bruggen primarily collaborated with her husband, Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929), but she also worked with the architect Frank Gehry (b. 1929). In 1986, the three artists produced the monumental sculpture, [Knife Ship. Il corso del Coltello](#), at the Palacio de Cristal, Parque del Retiro, Madrid. The sculpture then travelled to the Centre Pompidou and the Guggenheim.

Read reviews of van Bruggen's monographs on [Bruce Nauman](#) (published 1988) and [John Baldessari](#) (published 1990).



Van Bruggen, 1992
Photograph: Vera Isler

Van Bruggen is the foremost scholar on Claes Oldenburg's work. She wrote five books on him and their collaborations, including [Bottle of Notes & Some Voyages, Claes Oldenburg: Drawings, Sculptures and Large-Scale Projects with Coosje van Bruggen](#).

Watch the [1992 documentary](#), *Large Scale Projects: Claes Oldenburg/Coosje van Bruggen* produced by Lana Jockel and Nicholas Doob.

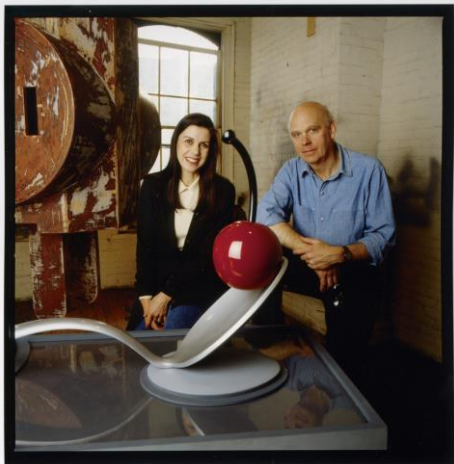
The 2007 exhibition *Claes Oldenburg Coosje van Bruggen: Sculpture by the Way* traced twenty years of the duo's collaboration. Read the [curators' statement](#) by Marcella Beccaria.

Van Bruggen was a [regular contributor](#) to Artforum. Read a [tribute](#) published in the magazine upon her timely death: "What's That Hanging on My Bicycle? Cristopher Williams on Coosje van Bruggen." The New York Times also published an extensive [obituary](#) in 2009.

Take a peek into Paula Cooper Gallery's [2015 exhibition catalogue](#) for *Things Around the House: Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen*

Pace Gallery installed [Claes & Coosje: A Duet](#) in 2021. [Watch a video](#) about the artists' three decades of work together and read Tessa Moldan's [Ocula Magazine](#) article, which insists on van Bruggen's crucial role in the partnership: "Whilst ideas were conceived jointly, it was van Bruggen who handled the coloring [sic], fabrication and siting of the works."

Read about the donation of [Oldenburg and van Bruggen's entire archive](#) to the Getty Research Institute in 2019.



Van Bruggen and Oldenburg (b. 1929) in their studio with *Spoonbridge and Cherry, Model (1987)*, 1987
Photograph: Jan Staller

Claes Oldenburg (Swedish-American, 1929-2022) and Coosje van Bruggen (Dutch-American, 1942-2009)

Plantoir, Red (Mid-scale), 2001-2021

Painted aluminum, stainless steel, fiber reinforced polymer

Private Collection; L2025:30.1

Claes Oldenburg was a prominent figure in the Pop Art movement when he met Coosje van Bruggen, who was working as a curator at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum. The two married in 1977, and their partnership soon extended to large-scale sculptural collaborations of familiar, everyday objects. **Plantoir, Red (Mid-scale)** augments a simple gardening tool to monumental scale, planted into its soil as if it fell from the sky. A trowel was the first sculpture the two artists collaborated on in the 1970s, and it remained a favorite subject throughout their careers.

On view April 7 – July 11, 2025





Claes Oldenburg (Swedish-American, 1929-2022) and Coosje van Bruggen (Dutch-American, 1942-2009)

Leaning Clarinet, 2006

Aluminum painted with acrylic polyurethane

Private Collection; L2024:33.1

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen met in 1971, when van Bruggen was a curator at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum and Oldenburg was a prominent figure in the Pop Art movement. The two married in 1977, and their partnership soon extended to large-scale sculptural collaborations. **Leaning Clarinet** is a whimsical depiction of the wind instrument in bright blue, with its keys flying up in musical motion. The sculpture was created for the artists' series *The Music Room* (1992-2006) that realized musical technique, scale, and melody in physical form.

On view October 30, 2024 – February 2, 2025

Claes Oldenburg (German, b. 1954) and Coosje van Bruggen (Dutch-American, 1942-2009)

Dropped Bouquet, 2021

Painted aluminum

Private Collection; L2021:101.1

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen met in 1971, when van Bruggen was a curator at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum and Oldenburg was a prominent figure in the Pop Art movement. The two married in 1977, and their partnership soon extended to large-scale sculptural collaborations of familiar, everyday objects. **Dropped Bouquet** is a realization of their final work together – it was initially conceived for the Indianapolis Museum of Art sculpture garden but never came to fruition there. The scattered bunch of bright aluminum flowers was finally produced in 2021 for an exhibition at New York's Pace Gallery entitled *Claes & Coosje: A Duet*. In response, their daughter, Maartje, said: "It is personally meaningful to realize **Dropped Bouquet** today to bring Coosje into a present with growing awareness of and appreciation for the too often minimized contributions of women."

On view August 11 – November 14, 2021

