

PAULA COOPER GALLERY



Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen
Plantoir, Blue
2001–2021

NEW YORK, NY – *Plantoir, Blue*, a sculpture by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, will have an appropriately timed spring installation at the Fifth Avenue entrance to the Channel Gardens at Rockefeller Center. Presented by Rockefeller Center in partnership with Paula Cooper Gallery, the work will be on display from March 18 to May 6, 2022.

Husband-and-wife team Oldenburg (b. 1929) and van Bruggen (1942–2009) are celebrated for their large-scale sculptures of ordinary objects that take pleasure in the forms found in everyday life. Delving into the fruit bowl, the toolshed and the toybox for familiar shapes and colors, the artists enlarged and animated their selected objects, fixing them in moments of energetic motion. *Plantoir* is a humble gardening tool that stands upright, its point submerged in the ground as if it had just fallen out of the sky.

Oldenburg was working on *Trowel* when he and van Bruggen met in 1970, and the work became the couple's first collaboration in 1975, when van Bruggen selected a blue finish borrowed from Dutch workers' overalls to replace the original silver at the time of the work's restoration. The couple revisited the form with *Plantoir* in 2001, soon after van Bruggen began work on an ambitious ecologically-minded landscaping project in the grounds of the couple's French property. Reinterpreting the simple tool, *Plantoir* generates growth as it descends into receptive soil.

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Oldenburg and van Bruggen are best known for their monumental public projects located around the world. Works such as the *Spoonbridge and Cherry* in Minneapolis, *Flying Pins* in Eindhoven, *Clothespin* in Philadelphia, and *Dropped Cone* in Cologne are iconic representatives of their host cities conceived in relationship to the surrounding architecture, and envisioned at a comparative scale. Despite spending much of their careers in New York, the internationally-lauded artists rarely presented large-scale work in their home city.

This is the first public installation of work by Oldenburg and van Bruggen in New York since a version of *Plantoir* in red was displayed on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2002. Editions of *Plantoir, Red* are permanently installed at the Fundacao de Serralves, Porto, Portugal and the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, MI. *Plantoir, Blue* at Rockefeller Center is the first cast of the blue edition.

“A tool for the garden, *Plantoir, Blue* is a symbol of optimism and rebirth for New York this spring. Oldenburg and van Bruggen have consistently delighted audiences with their astonishing public art, and their new sculpture is an ode to the city at the time of its long-awaited reawakening.” — Steve Henry, Senior Partner of Paula Cooper Gallery

Claes Oldenburg attended Yale University (1946–1950) as well as The Art Institute of Chicago before moving to New York City in 1956. The artist had his first one-person exhibition at the Judson Gallery, New York, in 1959 followed by shows at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1966) and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1969). “Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology” opened at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. in 1995 and traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn; and the Hayward Gallery, London. “Claes Oldenburg: The Sixties” opened at the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien in 2012 and traveled to the Museum Ludwig, Cologne; the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Oldenburg lives in New York City.

Coosje van Bruggen received a master’s degree in art history from the University of Groningen. From 1967 to 1971 she worked in the curatorial department of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and was co-editor of the Sonsbeek 71 catalogue. Van Bruggen was 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 School of Art (1996–97). She authored books on Claes Oldenburg’s early work as well as on John Baldessari, Hanne Darboven, Bruce Nauman and the architect Frank O. Gehry. In 1978 van Bruggen moved to New York, where she collaborated with Oldenburg on large-scale, site-specific works in urban settings, smaller-scale park and garden sculptures and indoor installations. Van Bruggen passed away in Los Angeles in 2009.