

**Revised Sept. 2011**

**FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES: CLAES OLDENBURG (b. 1929)**

“Spoonbridge and Cherry” fountain and sculpture (1977)

Aluminum, stainless steel and paint

Total weight 7,000 lbs. (Cherry 1,200 lbs.)

Spoon – 52’ long

Walker Art Center, MN

**Supplies Needed:**

- \* Framed print of “Spoonbridge and Cherry” and Warhol’s “Soup Can”
- \* Laminated examples of Oldenburg works from supply box (11 total)
- \* Copies of **Parent Letter** requesting 3 recyclable items from home for class sculpture or you can provide items yourself
- \* Bin from supply closet containing extra recyclable items
- \* Duct tape and glue gun from supply box
- \* Foamboard/cardboard to secure sculpture
- \* **Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen: Large Scale Projects** book from supply box for reference. As this book is very large and very heavy, it may be **on the shelves in the supply closet**.

***AHEAD OF TIME NOTE: If you need students to bring in items, make copies and send the “Parent Letter” home a few days ahead of time asking that parents send in 3 recyclable items for the student to contribute for the building of the class sculpture. Plan on bringing extra items yourself, however, as not all students bring in things, or let them use things from the box in the supply closet. Please make copies of master “Famous Artist Series- Oldenburg” note for each student.***

***Ask the students what they think of when they hear the word “sculpture”. Allow time for discussion. Show laminate #1, picture of classical sculpture.***

Often we see classical statues made of bronze or stone. These sculptures or monuments honor heroes or commemorate historical events.

***Show print of “Spoonbridge and Cherry” and also laminated picture of “Batcolumn”. In addition, you may flip through the large art book of Oldenburg’s works. Ask the students what they think of these “sculptures”. What do they think the artist is trying to say?***

**Show laminate #2, picture of Oldenburg and his wife.**

This is a picture of the artist Claes Oldenburg and his wife, Coosje van Bruggen (her first name pronounced Koh Shah). Many of Oldenburg's sculptures were created by both he and his wife. Claes Oldenburg is a well-known "Pop" artist. "Pop Art" started 40 years ago with artists like Andy Warhol. **Show Warhol's Soup Can.** Pop artists found beauty in every day "popular" items and liked to have fun with them.

Oldenburg was born in Sweden and lived in Chicago. He was a newspaper reporter before he became an artist. He said that drawing was a way to represent your imagination. He decided that drawing was too flat, and he began to make sculptures.

At first, Oldenburg liked to pick up things off the street -- items that were thrown out by other people, and think about how he could find art in them. He saw a picture of an ice cream cone on a storefront and developed the first soft sculpture -- an ice cream cone made of fabric. If you were to see it at the museum, it would almost look like a giant stuffed pillow in the shape of a yellow cone with green ice cream.

Oldenburg's new way of using fabric to make soft sculpture, what we thought before could only be made of stone or metal, opened doors for other artists to also think of things in new ways.

Oldenburg liked the idea of objects turning into other objects. He looked at something and imagined it becoming something else. A big word that means things turning into other things is "metamorphosis". **Have the students try to repeat the word.** For example, the ice cream cone could look like a tornado, or a pencil, or a flaming torch. Oldenburg picked up things that others may have thought were garbage. He drew shapes and sculptures that showed that even ugly and dirty objects had form and color if we look hard enough. He made many, many art objects using ideas that were from everyday life — a spoon and cherry, (**show print of "Spoonbridge and Cherry" in Minneapolis**) a flashlight that lights up at night in Las Vegas (**show laminates #3 and #4 of the flashlight**), a buried bicycle tire in Paris, France (**show laminate #5 of the Buried Bicycle**). He made a sculpture of some tools in Germany (**show laminate #6 of tools**), a giant clothespin in Philadelphia (**show laminate #7**), and even a giant matchbook in Spain (**show laminate #8**).

**Show laminate #2, picture of "Batcolumn"**

One of his first outdoor public sculptures was "Batcolumn". He wanted the sculpture to be a shape that anyone could identify. The first idea for

this sculpture was for a fireplug or a spoon standing on end with the round part inside a bowl. The tall spoon reminded him of the tall up-and-down shape of the skyscrapers in Chicago. When he looked at his drawing for a spoon, he thought of a baseball bat. He made the bat portion of the sculpture out of criss-cross metal, leaving open spaces, so the bat wouldn't seem so heavy. Oldenburg wanted people to touch his sculpture. If you take the train into Chicago, you might get to see the Batcolumn sculpture. It is a few blocks west of the Northwestern and Union Train Stations on Madison Street. **Show laminate #9 of the welders creating the giant bat.**

**Project:**

**When Claes Oldenburg designed his sculptures, he first drew pictures of his ideas. Show laminates #10 & #11 of his drawings.**

**Let us make our own class sculpture like the ones we have seen. Remind them that the sculpture should be simple. All of Claes Oldenburg's sculptures were very simple!**

**Have each child place their recyclable items in a group pile. Then have each child take turns picking an item from the pile. After the child selects the item, have him/her place the item in desired position onto the foamboard ( secure the sculpture with duct tape/glue gun). Use the duct tape/glue gun to secure the items as the students add them one at a time.**

**Use items such as pieces of wrapping paper, ribbons, bows and flags to add whimsy to the finished sculpture!**

**You can build the sculpture as big as time permits! But, have each student start with just one item to ensure that each child has a turn.**

**After the sculpture is completed, have the class name their masterpiece.**

**Take a photo if you can for display at Open House or in the Art Closet!**

# FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES

## Oldenburg

Today in class a volunteer parent presented the works of American sculptor Claes Oldenburg. They learned about his interest in Pop art. Ask them about the word “metamorphosis”. Oldenburg liked to use objects from everyday life as the inspiration for his works.

Oldenburg’s sculpture “Batcolumn,” a giant metal baseball bat standing on end, is in front of the Social Security building in Chicago on Madison Street, a few blocks west of the Northwestern and Union train stations.

Sincerely yours,

**Art Volunteer**

# FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES

## Parent Letter

Dear Parents:

Please send to school with your child **THREE** empty, clean and dry recyclable items such as:

toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, egg cartons, tissue boxes, cereal boxes, milk cartons, jugs, plastic bottles, etc.

You also may include whimsical items such as:

Pieces of wrapping paper, ribbon, bows, discarded toys etc.

We will be using these items for our Famous Artist Series class art project.

Have your child bring these items to class on:

---

Sincerely yours,

The Art Appreciation Program Volunteers