

The Anderson Gallery of Contemporary Graphic Art
Claes Oldenburg Prints and Multiples



FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO

Anderson Gallery of Contemporary Graphic Art

California Palace of the Legion of Honor

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Although Claes Oldenburg (American, born Sweden 1929) is perhaps best known for his monumental public sculpture, he has also produced a substantial body of over 250 prints. This exhibition, the sixth in an ongoing series presented in the Anderson Gallery of Contemporary Graphic Art, traces Oldenburg's work in printmaking from the early 1960s to the late 1970s at presses such as Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles, Crown Point Press in the San Francisco Bay Area, and Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York. Drawn primarily from the Fine Arts Museums' Anderson Graphic Arts Collection, the exhibition also includes prints from the Museums' Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts and the Crown Point Press Archive.

Right: Profile Airflow, 1969

Cover: Floating Three-Way Plug, 1976

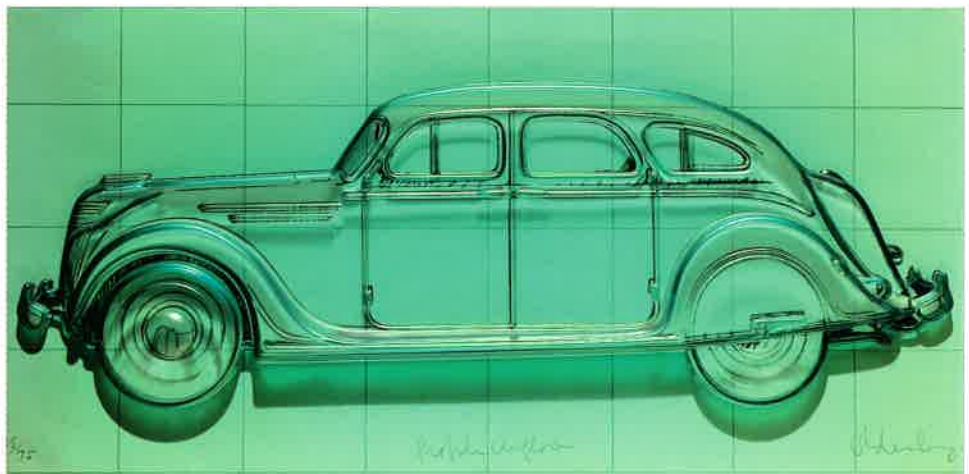
Claes Oldenburg: Prints and Multiples

by Karin Breuer, Curator

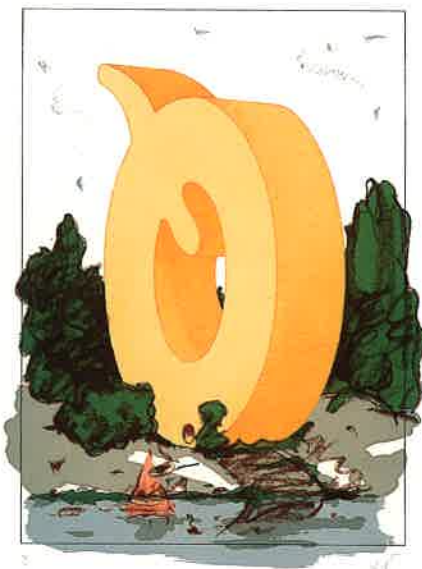
Collection Manager, Anderson Graphic Arts Collection

In his essay for the recent catalogue raisonné of Claes Oldenburg's prints, Richard Axson identifies three distinct periods in Oldenburg's forty years of printmaking: "an initial 'anti-print' phase of posters and mimeographed publications"; "a second 'experimental' period highlighted by the high-tech Gemini editions"; and "a traditional period, extending to the present" in which Oldenburg has collaborated with major American presses and experimented with all print media.¹ These periods have been marked by challenges, or problems as Oldenburg sometimes refers to them, that are directly related to printmaking processes and techniques. They have not conflicted with his embrace of the print as an effective artistic metaphor for the multiplicity of images prevalent in modern commercial culture. Moreover, Oldenburg has identified as practical his concerns related to printmaking protocol that conflicted with his way of art making. He cited particularly the challenge of creating art with printers in a print workshop environment (an experience that is very different from solitary work in a studio) and also the technical problems involved in translating his crayon and wash style of drawing to printed media. (Oldenburg has long maintained that, for him, printed images are a special class of drawings.) These concerns have eased considerably over the years with solutions being found through Oldenburg's sustained and prolific activity in printmaking. The works in this exhibition are testimony to these challenges successfully met by the artist and his collaborators.

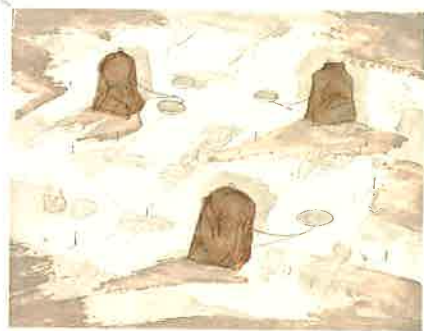
Oldenburg showed little interest in traditional printmaking in the early 1960s. The printed works that he did make at this time were usually mimeographed or commercially printed materials that related to his performances and installations. By the mid-1960s Oldenburg was championing "multiples," small-scale editioned sculpture produced in large editions. His first effort was *Baked Potato* (1965) for the Tanglewood Press portfolio of multiples, *7 Objects in a Box*. Invited to work in lithography for his first visit to Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles in 1968, Oldenburg insisted on producing a kind of multiple or hybrid print for his first project. The result was *Profile Airflow*, made of a cast polyurethane relief mounted over a lithograph. His first major printmaking project, *Notes*, came afterwards, and likely because of the technically inventive and accommodating attitudes of



Kenneth Tyler and the Gemini G.E.L. shop. For the *Notes* project, Tyler devised a paper holder and a special pen filled with lithographic ink that enabled Oldenburg to work wherever he chose and later transfer the drawings to lithographic plates in the workshop. In much the same way, Kathan Brown introduced Oldenburg to the traditional techniques of soft-ground etching and aquatint during a three-week period at Crown Point Press in 1975 that Oldenburg used to successfully translate his crayon-and-wash style of drawing into print. Brown also helped Oldenburg create a workshop environment at the press that was akin to his studio where he was able to work with great intensity. With positive experiences such as these, Oldenburg found that his art could actually be stimulated by collaborations in the print workshop. It certainly also encouraged him to work on a larger scale. Monumental prints became a hallmark of his production in 1976 with *Floating Three-Way Plug*, made at Crown Point, and the prints in the *Soft Screw* series produced at Gemini. For the *Soft Screw* prints, Oldenburg did not work directly on the lithographic plates but instead drew on large, especially prepared sheets of paper that were transferred directly to the matrix. This pleased Oldenburg, who observed that with this method his drawing was more spontaneous and direct.



In this exhibition, the examination of Oldenburg's prints ends in the late 1970s, a time that coincidentally also marked the end of his prodigious printmaking activity. During the 1980s, Oldenburg and his wife, Coosje van Bruggen, concentrated on producing large-scale public sculpture, also producing a few traditional prints, many of which were posters and book covers. With a burst of activity in the 1990s, Oldenburg returned to printmaking. At the decade's end, it remains an important creative activity for him.



¹ Richard Axson and David Platzker, *Printed Stuff, Prints, Posters, and Ephemera* by Claes Oldenburg, *A Catalogue Raisonné 1958-1996* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with Madison Art Center, Wisconsin, 1997), p. 42.

Colossal Tea Bags in City Square, 1976

Checklist of the Exhibition

Unless otherwise noted, all prints are from the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, gift of the Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson Charitable Foundation. Sheet measurements for prints are in inches, height preceding width. "P." numbers refer to David Platzker, **Printed Stuff, Prints, Posters, and Ephemera** by Claes Oldenburg, *A Catalogue Raisonné 1958-1996* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with Madison Art Center, Wisconsin, 1997).

Two untitled illustrations for the poem "All Kinds of Love," 1963, from *Walasse Ting, I & Life*, edited by Sam Francis (Bern: E.W. Kornfeld, 1964) pp. 136 and 137

Lithograph (left) and color lithograph (right) on two sheets of paper, 16 1/8 x 22 13/16 in. (overall), P. 28.1 and P. 28.2

This is number 33/100 from the Special Paris Edition

Printed by Maurice Beaudet, Paris 1996.74.1

Flying Pizza, 1964, from the portfolio **New York Ten**, 1965

Color lithograph, 17 x 22 1/8 in., P. 33
Printed by Irwin Hollander at Hollanders Workshop, New York
Published by Tanglewood Press, New York
Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts
Gift of Gump's, Inc.
A025607

Baked Potato, 1966, from **Seven Objects in a Box**

Molded aluminum, fiberglass, and polyester metal handpainted with synthetic polymer color paint on a white Shenango china plate, 7 1/4 (height) x 10 7/16 (length) x 5 1/8 (width) in.
Manufactured by Knickerbocker Machine and Foundry, Inc., New York
Published by Tanglewood Press, New York
Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, gift of Allan P. and Lenore B. Sindler
1988.1.199.4

Untitled [ice cream cones], 1968, from the portfolio **Notes**

Color lithograph, 22 11/16 x 15 3/4 in., P. 55.3
Printed by Robert de la Rocha
Published by Gemini G. E. L., Los Angeles
1996.74.352

Untitled [geometric mouse], 1968,
from the portfolio **Notes**
Color lithograph, 22 11/16 x 15 3/4 in.,
P.55.6
Printed by James Webb
Published by Gemini G. E. L., Los Angeles
1996.74.349

Profile Airflow, 1969

Cast-polyurethane relief over lithograph
printed in gray and black, 33 1/2 x 65 1/2
x 4 in., P.59.
Lithograph printed by Richard Wilke
Polyurethane fabricated at CalPolymers,
Los Angeles
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.353

Ice Bag—Scale B, 1971

Programmed kinetic sculpture, yellow nylon,
fiberglass, and mechanical movement, 40 in.
(height), 48 in. (diameter)
Published by Gemini G. E. L., Los Angeles
Fabrication supervised by Kenneth Tyler and
Jeff Sanders, assisted by Lou Faibush, Frank
Doose, Pete Hoefler, Paul Muff, Bud Rogers,
Frank Arnott, and Myron Judson
1996.74.354

Soft Toilet #1, 1972

Lithograph printed in gray and black, 21
x 15 1/2 in., P.92
Printed by James Webb
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.355

Soft Toilet #2, 1972

Lithograph, 20 x 14 1/2 in., P.93
Printed by Kenneth Tyler
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.357

**The Letter Q as Beach House, with
Sailboat**, 1972

Color lithograph, 39 x 29 1/2 in., P.96
Printed by George Page
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.359

Landscape with Noses, 1975

Color sugar-lift and spit-bite aquatint,
26 5/8 x 20 1/8 in., P.126
Printed by John Slivon at Crown Point
Press, Oakland
Published by Multiples, New York, and
Castelli Graphics, New York
Crown Point Press Archive
Museum purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Laney Thornton
1991.28.961

Strawberry Skull Bike Seat, 1975

Color sugar-lift and spit-bite aquatint
on white paper colléd and embossed on
Farnsworth handmade paper; 24 1/8 x
18 3/8 in., P.128
Published by Multiples, New York, and
Castelli Graphics, New York
Crown Point Press Archive
Museum purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Richard W. Goss II
1991.28.977

Tea Pot, 1975

Lithograph on Balinese handmade paper
tipped onto brown Moriki Japanese paper;
18 1/4 x 26 in., P.129
Printed by Bill Goldston and John A. Land
at Universal Limited Art Editions, West Islip
Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts
Gift of Linda Unrad Gore
1996.148

Soft Screw as Balloon Ascending, 1976

Lithograph, 67 1/2 x 45 in., P.144
Printed by Charly Ritt
Published by Gemini G. E. L., Los Angeles
1996.74.365

Soft Screw in Waterfall, 1976

Lithograph, P.145
Printed by Anthony Zepeda
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.362

Arched Soft Screw as Building, 1976

Lithograph, 67 1/2 x 45 in., P.146
Printed by Charly Ritt
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.366

Butter Pat in Berkeley Hills, 1976

Color soft-ground etching and aquatint,
26 x 20 in., P.150
Printed by John Slivon at Crown Point
Press, Oakland
Published by Multiples, New York
Crown Point Press Archive
Gift of Kathan Brown
1991.28.985

Colossal Teabags in City Square, 1976

Color aquatint and etching,
22 x 26 1/2 in., P.151
Published by Multiples, New York
Crown Point Press Archive
Gift of Kathan Brown
1991.28.1060

Study for Steel and Lead Ashtray, 1976

Color aquatint and soft-ground etching,
21 7/8 x 25 7/16 in., P.153
Printed by John Slivon at Crown Point
Press, Oakland
Published by Multiples, New York
Crown Point Press Archive
Museum purchase, Earthquake Fund
1991.28.249

Floating Three-Way Plug, 1976

Color spit-bite aquatint and soft-ground
etching, 49 5/8 x 38 3/8 in., P.154
Printed by John Slivon at Crown Point
Press, Oakland
Published by Multiples, New York
Crown Point Press Archive
Gift of Kathan Brown



Ice Bag—Scale B, 1971