



Claes Oldenburg and the Feeling of Things

Germano Celant

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Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929) first made his mark on the New York art scene in the early 1960s, and from that time he has been widely regarded as one of America's most influential and appealing artists. His subject matter is the everyday object--food, clothing, mechanical devices, and the like--which he reincarnates into witty and provocative sculptures ranging in scale from the intimate to the expansive. This essay comes from *Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology*, the comprehensive 1995 retrospective. Germano Celant's "Claes Oldenburg and the Feelings of Things" probes the theoretical underpinnings of Oldenburg's work, focusing on the artist's uncanny ability to transform everyday objects into works of art imbued with human traits, even a palpable sexuality. Among the subjects presented in Celant's penetrative overview are *The Street*, his early exhibition devoted to the street life of New York City; *The Store*, his infamous array of painted plaster sculptures of food and clothing, which he sold in a Manhattan storefront; the celebrated soft-sculptures; and the large-scale public projects made in collaboration with Coosje van Bruggen.

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