

**Claes Oldenburg**  
**Coosje van Bruggen**

(Stockholm, 1929 / Groningen, Holland, 1942—Los Angeles, 2009)

Through their dialogue, based on a continuous exchange of images and words, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen have redefined the concept of sculpture in the contemporary arena. Their collaboration, which began in 1976, thrives on Oldenburg's propensity for drawing and van Bruggen's ability to transform language into an acute instrument of artistic investigation. While the two artists often worked on the production of large-scale projects, related to various urban contexts in Europe, America, and Asia, their art originates in the privacy of the studio, where their ideas, in continuous transition, take the form of sketches, drawings, studies, and models. With *Il Corso del Coltello / The Course of the Knife*, Oldenburg and van Bruggen opened an interdisciplinary relationship with architecture, literature, and theater. Installed in Venice in 1985 and created in collaboration with the architect Frank O. Gehry, the performance developed around the image of a Swiss Army knife, chosen as the symbol of an architectural method based on concepts of cut and incision. In the plot of the performance, the Swiss pocketknife, transformed into an actual boat capable of interacting with the historical context of the lagoon, becomes the fulcrum of the actions of three main characters: Dottor Coltello, Georgia Sandbag and Frankie P. Toronto, played respectively by Oldenburg, van Bruggen and Gehry. *Houseball*, 1985, is the stage prop that accompanied Georgia Sandbag, a former travel agent turned writer whose name alludes to George Sand. The *Houseball* represents a way to move one's possessions by tying them all together to form a ball that can be rolled. The work includes household objects such as chairs, tables, brooms, doors, ironing boards and lampshades, reproduced in painted foam rubber.

A sensual image that is at the same time painfully imbued with caducity, *Dropped Flower*, 2006, reveals the artists' interest in obsolescence and its poetic value. The work has the form of a poppy that has just been picked but is already compromised by its impact with the ground. An explosion of color that captures the eye, it seems like a large-scale maquette. The artists created the work on the occasion of their retrospective organized by Castello di Rivoli in October 2006. (MB)