

GES-2-----V

New Sculpture Unveiled on the Embankment at GES-2 House of Culture. Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's *Plantoir* Marks the Beginning of a New Public Art Programme.

3 October 2025 — A new temporary installation has been unveiled at GES-2 House of Culture: *Plantoir* (2001), a sculpture by pop art masters Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. The red version of the sculpture from a private collection has been installed in front of the GES-2 building. Created in 2001, this artwork was previously exhibited at *Oldenburg and van Bruggen on the Roof* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 2002) and is being shown in Russia for the first time. Other versions of *Plantoir* have been exhibited in the Netherlands, Portugal, the United States, and Qatar.

Plantoir replaces Urs Fischer's *Big Clay #4*, which has stood at the descent to the Vodootvodny Canal for four years from August 2021. The principle of artworks' rotation aligns with architect Renzo Piano's original vision, in which the area surrounding the House of Culture serves as a natural extension of the building and its programme, a space for interaction between art, viewers, and the city. Artistic expressions here take various forms, and unlike monuments and other memorial objects, contemporary artworks regularly replace one another. The sculpture by Oldenburg and van Bruggen is part of a new curatorial programme dedicated to public art and its role in contemporary culture, which will feature both Russian and international artists. Further details will be announced at a later date.

Artists Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen created sculptures in the shape of greatly enlarged everyday objects: ice cream cones, clothes pegs, safety pins, and badminton shuttlecocks. In their works, the play with scale, the elevation of the mundane, and an ironic approach to classical art soften the formal solemnity of historical monuments. Oldenburg and van Bruggen's sculptures are always displayed in open spaces; through their playful manipulation of form and content, they transform familiar urban landscapes, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination.

The seven-metre-tall red *Plantoir* not only references the theme of creative labour as a way to find harmony in a changing world but also reminds us of the close relationship between nature, humanity and culture—the Latin word *cultura* literally means “cultivation, tilling of the land”. This work is about the cultivation of new ideas and meanings that can emerge from the simplest things—play and imagination.

GES-2 House of Culture and V-A-C Foundation are covering all costs related to the installation of the sculpture.

Francesco Bonami, curator and art critic:

This giant gardening tool is an almost naïve celebration of art awakening to reality and the true nature of things. It is not a step onto a pedestal, but a dive into the ground—to plant something new. This sculpture is not a static object; it suggests activity and movement. If the “Big Clay #4” was a Paleolithic sculpture for today, a tribute to wild, untouched land, then “Plantoir” is the next step, a Neolithic moment when humans stopped running and started programming and growing for the future. Why the shift? Because culture cannot stand still. It must change and grow, using irony as one of its fuels. “Plantoir” is not just a gardening tool. It is an invitation to plant something new, to leave a trace. “Plantoir” speaks of how culture takes root in soil, in people, in gestures we share. And maybe it is art's stronger, more playful, and more organic contribution to our society.

Plantoir
Claes Oldenburg and
Coosje van Bruggen

Press-materials

GES-2 House of Culture
15 Bolotnaya Embankment
Moscow, Russia
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Entry to the House of Culture is free of charge, by prior registration.

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Alisa Prudnikova, Programme Director of V–A–C Foundation and GES-2 House of Culture:

We view the area around the House of Culture as a space for dialogue between art, the viewer, and the city. Urs Fischer's "Big Clay #4", installed in front of GES-2 in 2021, was the starting point in that dialogue, which continues today with Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's "Plantoir". This pop art masterpiece invites us to search together for beauty in the ordinary and to reflect on both the seriousness and irony of art. The appearance of a new sculpture at the House of Culture also marks the launch of a new programme initiative featuring Russian and international artists, dedicated to art in public spaces.

Key Facts about Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's *Plantoir*

- Dimensions: 729 × 132.1 × 144.8 cm; weight: 898,56 kg.
- Materials: stainless steel, aluminium, fibreglass, enamel paint.
- Created in 2001; first presented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) in 2002.
- *Plantoir* is a work by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, distinguished by their play with scale and ironic treatment of classical art.
- The work symbolises the connection between culture, nature, and humanity, referencing themes of creation and the cultivation of new ideas.
- It is a sculpture, not a monument.
- *Plantoir* launches GES-2's new curatorial programme dedicated to public art.
- Like *Big Clay #4*, *Plantoir* is from a private collection.
- The sculpture is installed as a temporary object on a pedestal leased from the city administration.
- GES-2 House of Culture and V–A–C Foundation are covering all installation costs.

General Information

Claes Oldenburg (1929–2022) was an American sculptor of Swedish origin, a pop art master known for his large-scale works in urban and public spaces. He received his artistic education at the Art Institute of Chicago. One of his most recognisable techniques was creating enlarged sculptural versions of everyday objects, which were exhibited in museums, office buildings, universities, squares and private homes worldwide. Oldenburg's solo exhibitions were held at MoMA (New York), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), the National Gallery of Art (Washington), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), Tate Modern (London), and Bundeskunsthalle (Bonn). Many works, including *Plantoir*, were created in collaboration with his wife, Coosje van Bruggen.

Coosje van Bruggen (1942–2009) was an American sculptor, art historian, and critic of Dutch origin. In her youth, she studied ballet before earning a master's degree in art history with a specialisation in French literature from the University of Groningen (Netherlands). She worked as an assistant curator in the painting and sculpture department of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1967–1971) before becoming an independent curator. In 1977, she married Claes Oldenburg and moved to the United States the following year. In 1982, she served on the selection committee for Documenta 7 in Kassel (Germany). Van Bruggen also taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

GES-2 House of Culture is an international institution opened in 2021. Its primary mission is to create conditions for the development of contemporary culture and the artistic community within the contexts

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of the city, country, and world, drawing on the values of accessibility, interdisciplinarity, and engaging everyone in cultural production.

GES-2 is the main venue of V-A-C Foundation, which has been operating since 2009. The House of Culture includes art residencies and the Vaults Centre for Artistic Production, where new works are created for the GES-2 programme.

The GES-2 programme encompasses exhibitions, cinema, theatre, music, dance, and publishing projects. The public programme combines academic formats with open discussions, meetings, workshops, and other events for adults and children.

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