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# PARIS CIRCUS NEW YORK JUNK: JEAN DUBUFFET AND CLAES OLDENBURG, 1959–1962

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SOPHIE BERREBI

My Dear Claes Oldenburg,

I am back from New York where I spent a week. Contrary to my habits (I never set foot in museums and galleries. I have little time and space to grant attention to works by other artists, being too completely absorbed by my own activity) I insisted upon visiting the exhibition of your works that is currently on show at the Museum of Modern Art. I have been so amazed that I wanted to write to you to share my emotion. You appear there as a very great creator.<sup>1</sup>

Jean Dubuffet

Dear Jean Dubuffet,

(...) That you saw my work in New York delighted me. That you liked it is the highest encouragement – I have admired your magical art for many years and it has inspired me from the beginning and continues to inspire me.<sup>2</sup>

Claes Oldenburg

This exchange of views originated in the visit that Jean Dubuffet made to the extensive retrospective of Claes Oldenburg's work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in October 1969 (plates 3.1 and 3.2). The sight of several works on paper dated 1959 and 1960 that paid homage to Dubuffet and to his all-time hero, the writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline, no doubt heightened Dubuffet's enthusiasm.<sup>3</sup> The written correspondence, followed by a meeting of the two artists in Oldenburg's studio in 1972, sheds a retrospective light on Oldenburg's sources and provides a clue as to the nature of Dubuffet's reception in the United States. Both issues can best be understood in the context of so-called 'junk culture', a term coined by the critic Laurence Alloway in 1960 to describe the assemblage and environment-based art that flourished briefly in New York in the period immediately preceding the advent of pop art in 1962–1963.<sup>4</sup>

This essay examines Oldenburg's engagement with the art and ideas of Jean Dubuffet as they may be traced through drawings, statements and the large-scale projects of *The Street* and *The Store*, spanning the years between 1959 and 1962. During this period art critics debated Dubuffet's influence over the then

Paris , 16 octobre 1969

Mon cher Claes Oldenburg ,

Je reviens de New York où j'ai passé une semaine . Contrairement à mon habitude ( car je ne mets jamais un pied dans les musées et galeries , et , trop complètement absorbé par mes propres travaux , je ressens peu de disponibilité d'esprit pour porter attention aux ouvrages des autres artistes ) j'ai tenu à visiter l'exposition de vos oeuvres qui se tient actuellement au Musée d'Art Moderne . Or j'en ai été si fort émerveillé que j'ai tenu à vous écrire pour vous faire part de mon émotion . Vous apparaissez là un très grand créateur .

J'ai été grandement touché de trouver là présentée au public une peinture à l'encre de 1959 dont le sujet est mon propre nom associé à celui du grand écrivain Louis Ferdinand Céline . Très curieusement je me trouvais au musée , pour regarder cette peinture , accompagné de l'épouse de Céline . Elle est amie de ma femme et je l'avais emmenée avec nous pour ce voyage d'une semaine à New York afin que ce lui fasse une petite fête .

J'espère vous rencontrer quelque jour . J'ai gardé vif souvenir de notre courte rencontre à Venise . S'il advenait que vous veniez une fois à Paris , ne manquez pas , je vous prie , de me faire signe .

A vous amicalement .



Jean Dubuffet

114 Bis Rue de Vaugirard , Paris 6e

3.1 Letter from Jean Dubuffet to Claes Oldenburg, 16 October 1969. New York: Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

emerging Oldenburg, and what this influence meant in the broader context of junk culture and early pop art. In discussing these critical views my aim is to question the well-rehearsed problematic of artistic influence. Oldenburg, I will argue, revitalized the issue of influence by the anachronistic gesture of anticipating his own reception. In so doing, he transformed influence from a burdensome perception imposed from the outside into a source of creative inspiration. The conclusion of the short text that Oldenburg wrote in 1969 for the exhibition catalogue *Dubuffet and the Anticulture* can be understood in this light: 'Dubuffet influenced me to ask why art is made and what the art process consists of instead of trying to conform and to extend a tradition.'<sup>5</sup>

April 4, 1970

Dear Jean Dubuffet,

I find myself sitting before my portable in a motel on the west side of Chicago with your kind letter of praise in my hand, and I realize how much time has gone by since I received it, and I am embarrassed. I have treasured the letter but I have forgotten to let you know that I got the letter, to thank you, and tell you how pleased I was to get it.

I have been travelling much since my show in New York. I am now on my way back to Europe, to Dusseldorf and London. One of these days, if circumstances permit, I will get back to Paris. I haven't visited there since 1964, the time of my show, which was also the year I met you at the Venice Biennale. If I come to Paris, I hope to find you there and that you will ask me to visit. I can't ask you to visit my studio because I don't have one just now - but I hope to have one in the fall. This summer I will be working in Los Angeles.

That you saw my show in New York delighted me. That you liked it is the highest encouragement - I have admired your magical art for many years and it has inspired me from the beginning and continues to inspire me.

Yours,

Claes Oldenburg

c/o Oldenburg  
300 Riverside Dr.  
New York 25 USA

3.2 Letter from Claes Oldenburg to Jean Dubuffet, 4 April 1970. New York: Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

Recent studies on Oldenburg's early work have examined *The Street* in reference to urban renewal in New York and the socio-cultural context of the Judson Gallery where it was first exhibited, overshadowing discussion of the intellectual and artistic sources of this first environment.<sup>6</sup> When these sources have been explored with particular reference to Dubuffet, the connection has often been reduced to superficial formal similarities.<sup>7</sup> Foregrounding Oldenburg's intense and productive interest in Dubuffet enables, by contrast, a new picture of Oldenburg's early questioning of the purpose and processes of art to emerge. It also opens the question of Dubuffet's reception in the United States. After the critical and commercial success of his work in the 1940s, at the end of the following

decade Dubuffet's newly gained institutional success began to coincide with a growing disinterest in his work on the part of younger artists and the progressive art journals.

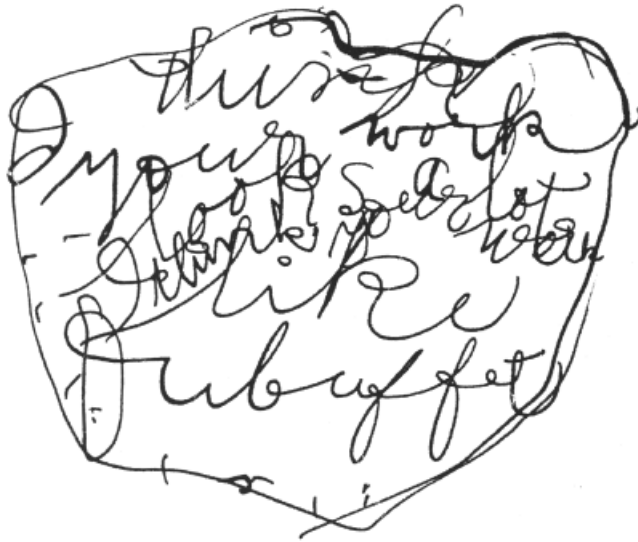
Finally, this relation is inseparable from the artistic and temporal context in which it occurred. Oldenburg's engagement with Dubuffet offers an alternative perspective to readings of junk culture that have typically foregrounded Allan Kaprow's activities. Kaprow's accepted role as the main spokesman for junk culture has meant that art historians have often privileged his particular historical rationale and theoretical interpretation of the movement. His articulation of an all-American artistic genealogy of happenings, for instance, has served to obscure the divergences that existed from the beginning between his position and that of Oldenburg, Jim Dine, Robert Whitman and other artists who experimented with these forms.<sup>8</sup> Following an exploration of the idea that Oldenburg anticipated his own reception in the context of *The Street* and other works from 1959–1960, I discuss Oldenburg's appropriation of Dubuffet's ideas and the way that he transformed them and ultimately reversed them in his second major project, *The Store*. In conclusion, and as an echo to Oldenburg's reworking of Dubuffet's ideas, I consider Dubuffet's series of paintings *Paris Circus* (1961–1962) in terms of a failed attempt by Dubuffet to engage with contemporary American art.

#### THE STREET: NOT THE 'SUNNY CONCEPT OF ART'

In a drawing dated 1959 and entitled *I think your Work looks a lot like Dubuffet* (plate 3.3) Oldenburg inserted the barely readable sentence that gives the work its title in a squashed heart shape outlined on the upper middle half of a sheet of writing paper. The irregular, swirling and almost illegible lettering is reminiscent of the distorted and exaggerated loops of primary school writing, while the words overlap in a way that suggests a multiplicity of voices echoing one another – a device that appears in other drawings from this period. The standard explanation given by Oldenburg is that the sentence repeated a comment that he often heard when people discovered his work in the late 1950s.<sup>9</sup> The scarcity of critical comment before 1960 makes this claim difficult to corroborate. Still, the drawing can be fruitfully read as a productive anachronism by which Oldenburg anticipated the critical reception of his work before it appeared in print. As such, *I think your Work looks a lot like Dubuffet* raises a series of questions from which the modalities of Oldenburg's relations with Dubuffet can be investigated. Why would critics compare Oldenburg's work to Dubuffet's? What did this say about Oldenburg's and Dubuffet's work, and what meaning did this confer to Oldenburg's appropriation of this sentence?

From the start of Oldenburg's public exposure in New York, Dubuffet's supposed influence over him was a leitmotiv in his critical reception. After an exhibition at the Cooper Union in 1958 and two solo shows at the Judson Gallery in 1959 – in the context of which he presented a selection of his poems, drawings and papier-mâché sculptures – Oldenburg developed his first large-scale environ-

ment: *The Street* (plates 3.4 and 3.5). This work, shown at the Judson Gallery in February 1960, alongside Jim Dine's environment *The House* and in the context of the *Ray Gun* show, was the first to elicit notable critical interest. *The Street* evoked a derelict urban space, inspired by New York's East Village, in the form of a large assemblage of paper, cardboard, burlap and other found materials that covered the walls and floor of the space. Cardboard shapes with ragged edges stained in black were pinned onto the walls, representing cars, heads with speech bubbles and toy guns. Larger figures were assembled from second-hand materials including burlap, newspaper, paper bags, wire and string. They evoked street types designated under names such as *Big Guy* and *Street Chick*.



3.3 Claes Oldenburg, *I think your Work looks a lot like Dubuffet*, 1959. Ink on paper, 27.8 × 22.9 cm. New York: Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen

Critics who saw *The Street* at the Judson Gallery or when it was re-installed, with the figures freestanding, at the Reuben Gallery in May 1960 (plate 3.6), immediately noted the formal analogies with Dubuffet's painting. The anonymous writer in *Art News* presented *The Street* as 'realising Dubuffet's universe in three dimensions', pointing out the proximity between the raw evocation of the poorer areas of Lower Manhattan and Dubuffet's urban scenes from the mid-1940s, depicting figures wandering the grey Paris of the Occupation.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Oldenburg's palette of blacks and greys, the outlined figures and impression of continuous space derived from the space of painting seemed to owe a debt to works such as Dubuffet's *Façades d'immeubles* from 1947, albeit on a larger scale





3.4 Claes Oldenburg, *The Street*, 1960. *In situ*, Judson Gallery. Photograph: courtesy of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

(plate 3.7). In these paintings, the frontal, vertical structure of the buildings could also be read as a horizontal grid suggesting a city map with buildings separated by a network of streets. Oldenburg's use of rough materials was reminiscent of Dubuffet's *hautes pâtes* paintings such as *Archétypes*, from 1945 (plate 3.8), which had recently been on view at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959, in the exhibition *New Images of Man*.<sup>11</sup> In the *hautes pâtes*, Dubuffet accumulated gravel, sand and other non-painting materials to create all-over surfaces into which he scorched puppet-like figures. In *Archétypes* figures and background merged into an indiscriminate surface made of sand, paint and small gravel that gave the canvas a fossilized appearance. As he enlarged Dubuffet's paintings, Oldenburg, at least in the first version of *The Street*, similarly set his figures in an environment created from the same materials. This was true of *Street Chick* and *Big Guy*, who were made



3.5 Claes Oldenburg, *The Street*, 1960. *In situ*, Judson Gallery. Photograph: courtesy of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

from the refuse that covered the floor, but also of the artist himself when he dressed up as a tramp and immersed himself in heaps of rags for his first happening, *Snapshots from the City*, performed in the context of the exhibition. Oldenburg's types also recalled Dubuffet's signature works of the 1940s, the straight-faced urban puppets. These were visible in numbers in the retrospective exhibition organized at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York in 1959, which concluded Dubuffet's collaboration with Pierre Matisse.

In the eyes of the critics who staged the comparison, the unmistakable, if superficial, connection established between Oldenburg and Dubuffet was mostly disparaging. Notwithstanding the difference in scale and the move from painting to three-dimensional space, for the *Art News* critic quoted earlier, Oldenburg replicated Dubuffet's insincerity and gratuitous provocation: 'In realising Dubuffet's



3.6 Claes Oldenburg, *The Street*, 1960. *In situ*, Reuben Gallery. © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Photo: Charles Rappaport, courtesy of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

universe in three dimensions, Oldenburg's feigned depravity similarly seeks to wrench vision from convention.'<sup>12</sup> This view of Dubuffet in the pages of an art magazine dedicated to the support of avant-garde art revealed traces of a more general shift in the reception of his work by American critics. In the immediate postwar period Dubuffet had received support from leading writers on modern art, Henry McBride, Robert Goldwater and Clement Greenberg, who spoke of the 'all-over evenness' of the *hautes pâtes*.<sup>13</sup> Dubuffet's work had also been the subject of heated debate, with disgust being repeatedly expressed by the popular *New York Herald* journalist Emily Genauer, and a damning editorial published in *Life* magazine in December 1948 under the title 'Dead-end art – Dubuffet's mud-and rubble painting turns modernism into a joke'.<sup>14</sup> The Pierre Matisse Gallery, one of New York's most respected commercial spaces, provided Dubuffet with a strong showcase. His work was the subject of annual solo shows until 1959. It was through Pierre Matisse, who had first view of the artist's recent production, that Dubuffet's best works entered major public and private collections. Within the space of fifteen years, however, Dubuffet had come to be perceived as an institutional painter rather than a radical experimenter.

A sign of this change was the reception of two exhibitions organized at the Museum of Modern Art, in which Dubuffet's work featured prominently: *New Images of Man*, curated by Peter Selz in 1959, and *The Art of Assemblage*, organized by William Seitz in 1961. Dubuffet was one of the best-represented artists in the first

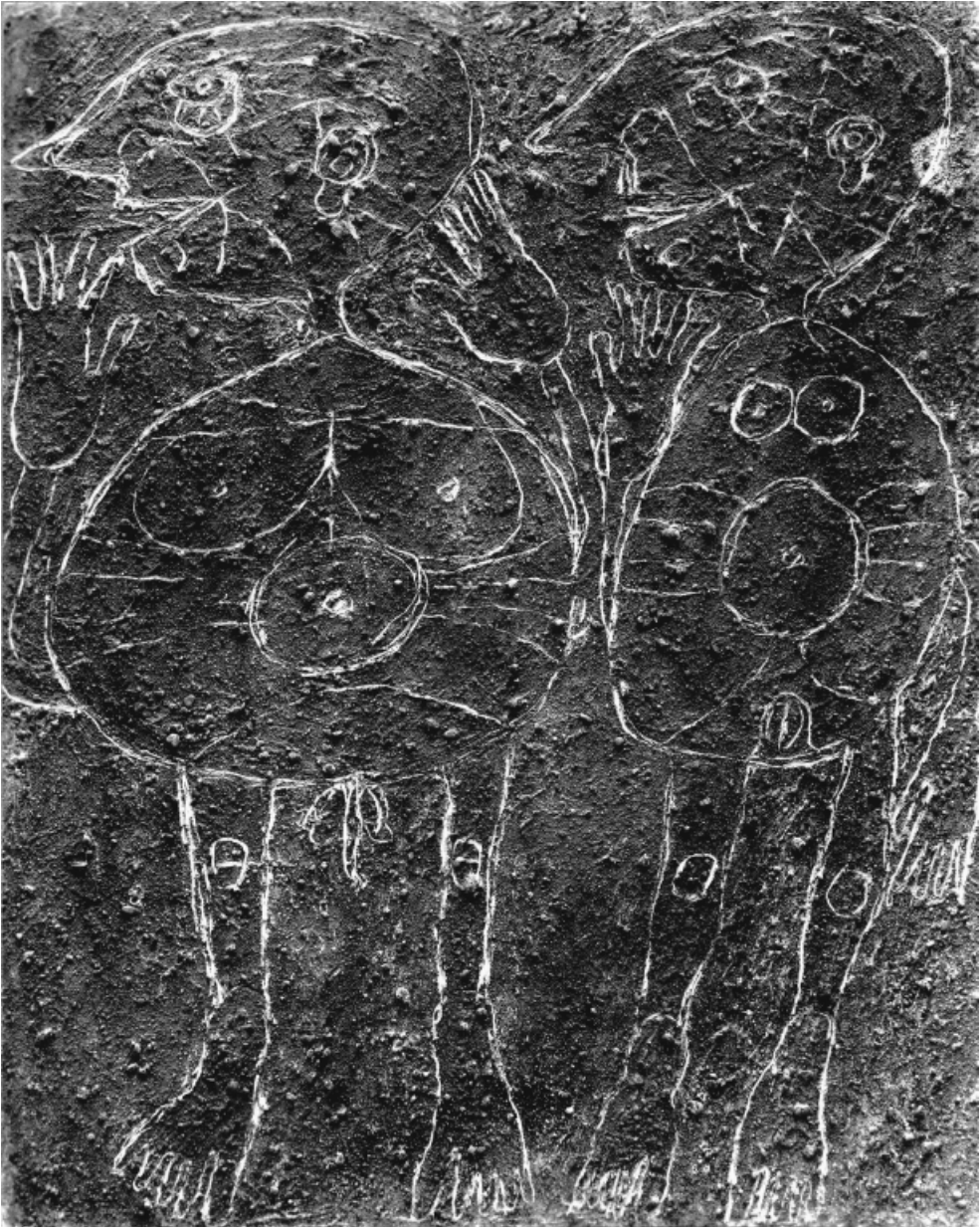




3.7 Jean Dubuffet, *Façades d'immeubles*, July 1946. Oil on canvas, 114 × 146 cm. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photograph: courtesy Fondation Dubuffet, Paris © Beeldrecht Amsterdam, 2006.

and credited in the catalogue of the second for coining the term assemblage. Both shows were criticized for their neglect of New York-based artists. Dubuffet, who was to have a large travelling retrospective organized by the Museum of Modern Art the following year, was strongly associated with these shows, and thus was perceived negatively in the context of what critics saw in both exhibitions as a strong bias towards European and figurative art and a rejection of abstract expressionism.<sup>15</sup> Even though Dubuffet was perhaps not the painter that an up-and-coming artist might have wished to be compared with, it made sense in the case of Oldenburg as regards his background and artistic education. Born in Sweden in 1929, Oldenburg had spent most of his life in Chicago until he moved to New York in 1956. With institutions such as the Field Museum of Natural History and the Chicago Arts Club, Chicago cultivated an art scene that, in the 1950s, marked its difference in relation to New York.<sup>16</sup>

Enthusiasm for surrealism and expressionism and interest in non-Western art enabled the city's young artists to forge a singular identity that the art historian and curator Peter Selz introduced with little success in New York when he moved there from Chicago. Chicago was a favourable place for Dubuffet's ideas to cir-



3.8 Jean Dubuffet, *Archétypes*, May 1945. 'Haute pâte' on canvas, 100 × 81 cm. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Photograph: courtesy Fondation Dubuffet, Paris  
© Beeldrecht Amsterdam, 2006.

culate, and it was there, on the occasion of a retrospective exhibition of his work at the Arts Club in 1951, that he delivered the lecture entitled 'Anticultural Positions'. This talk, which was informally circulated within art circles, became the most frequently cited of his statements in the United States. And it was in Chicago

that Oldenburg, amongst artists of a slightly older generation, including Leon Golub and George Cohen, was first exposed to Dubuffet's art and ideas. Chicago's artistic tradition and independence in relation to New York made Oldenburg somewhat of an outsider in New York in 1956, a feeling that subsided in the following years as he began to produce and exhibit his work. Amid the notes that he took during this period, and that were transcribed and reproduced in the monograph published to accompany his retrospective in 1969, a passage from 1960 makes explicit this sense of estrangement in relation to the New York art scene:

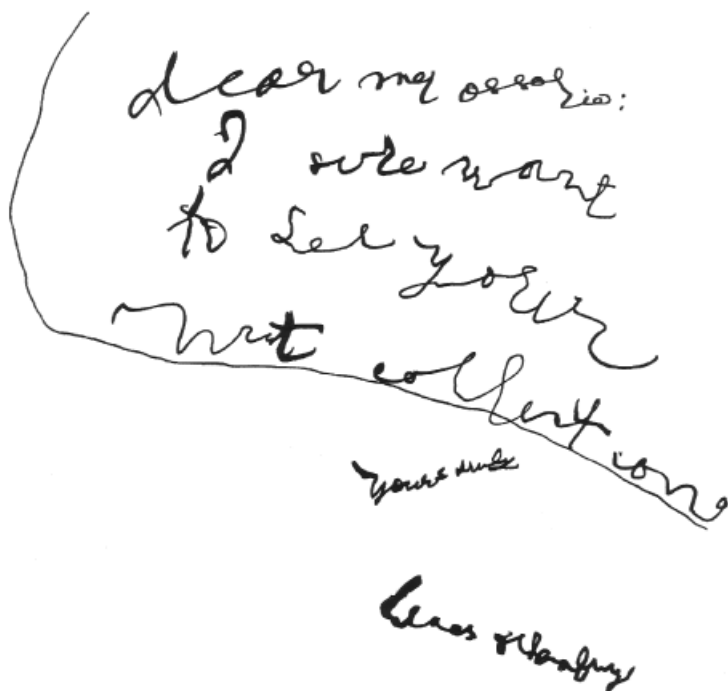
After all, I don't come out of Matisse or the sunny concept of art. I come out of Goya, Rouault, parts of Dubuffet, Bacon, the humanistic and existentialist Imagists, the Chicago bunch, and that sets me apart from the whole Hofmann-influenced school.<sup>17</sup>

Claiming proximity to European artists and to the Chicago Imagist painters of the 1950s, Oldenburg set up an opposition between these sources and the tradition that led from Hans Hofmann to the New York School and colour-field painting. The most direct heir of this genealogy in Oldenburg's immediate surroundings was undoubtedly Allan Kaprow, who had published his article on 'The Legacy of Jackson Pollock' in 1958 and would take part in 1963 in the exhibition *Hans Hofmann and His Students*.<sup>18</sup> Describing the way in which Jackson Pollock's large-scale paintings 'ceased to be paintings and became environments', Kaprow introduced an aesthetic project that was explicitly grounded in a reading of abstract expressionism.<sup>19</sup>

Contrary to the American genealogy that Kaprow traced in his articles, Oldenburg emphasized Chicago rather than New York and Europe rather than the United States. Furthermore, Oldenburg chose a tradition of figurative rather than abstract painting, and an expressionist vein rather than a formalist one. This was not, however, only a matter of exchanging one set of references for another: equally significant was the particular manner in which Oldenburg chose to make these references, incorporating them as a material into his work. This choice was not without risk: works could be misinterpreted, making his position sometimes difficult to understand for critics. Exemplary of this ambivalence was the drawing *I think your Work looks a lot like Dubuffet* (see plate 3.3) which is both an art work and a letter, and can be read as both a testimonial account and as a fictive construction.

The same could be said of a letter addressed to Alfonso Ossorio during the same period, in which Oldenburg asked for permission to visit Dubuffet's *art brut* collection then in his possession, in East Hampton (plate 3.9). Not knowing if this was a hoax or a serious request, Ossorio, says Oldenburg, never replied to the letter. In these works, as in the notes – signed under the name Ray Gun – pinned at the entrance of the *Ray Gun* show, Oldenburg merged private and public modes of address, poetry and aphorisms, concealing serious statements behind multiple voices. Oldenburg's writing offered a deep contrast with Allan Kaprow, a differ-




 A handwritten note in black ink on a piece of paper. The text is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. It reads: "Dear Mr Ossorio: I sure want to see your Nut collection yours truly Claes Oldenburg". The note is enclosed in a simple, hand-drawn rectangular border.
 

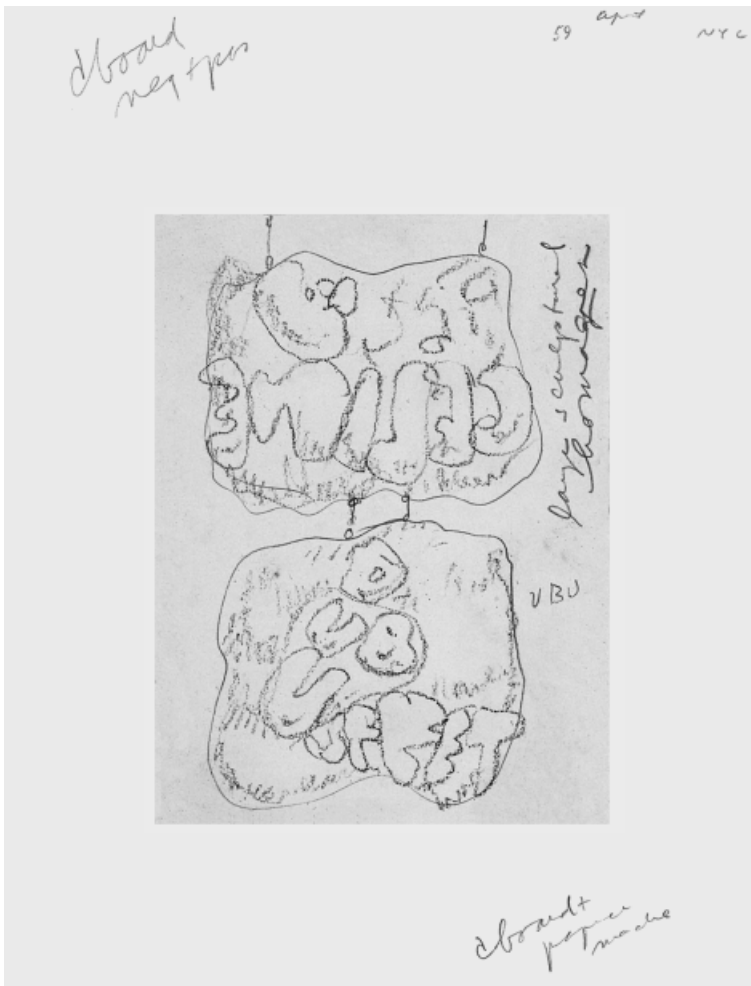
Dear Mr Ossorio:  
I sure want  
to see your  
Nut collection  
yours truly  
Claes Oldenburg

3.9 Claes Oldenburg, 'Dear Mr Ossorio, I sure Want to See your Nut Collection', 1961. Ink on paper, 27.8 × 22.9 cm. New York: Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

ence that also helps to explain why junk culture has been primarily interpreted through Kaprow's perspective. Kaprow's articles and his book *Assemblages, Environments and Happenings*, published in 1966, provided an art-historical justification of happenings, within which he sketched out his own position. Whether they agreed or not with Kaprow's thesis on the legacy of Pollock, art historians and critics immediately responded to his ideas. The impact of Kaprow's writing and its ability to elicit dialogue can be judged, for instance, from the proximity in style and content between his article "'Happenings" in the New York scene', published in *Art News* in 1961, and 'Happenings: an art of radical juxtaposition', written by the cultural critic Susan Sontag one year later.<sup>20</sup>

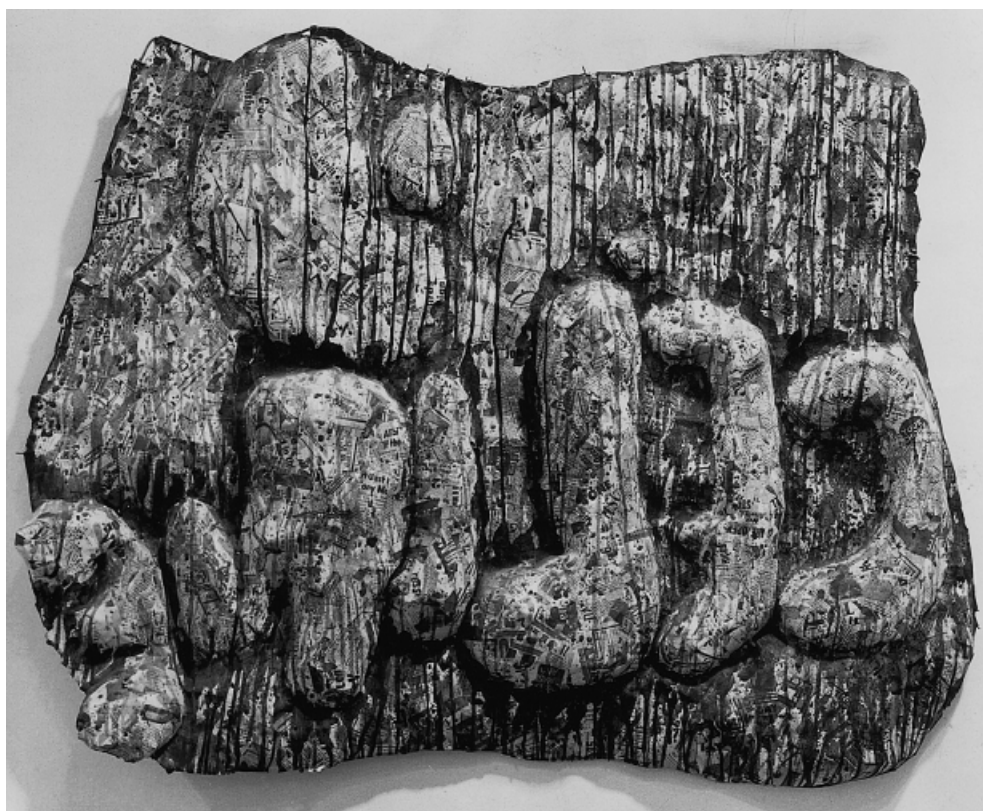
Also divergent were the ways in which Kaprow and Oldenburg envisaged the very idea of legacy. Kaprow's approach in 'The Legacy of Jackson Pollock' seems to be that of an artist as much as that of an art historian, questioning the aftermath of abstract expressionism. By contrast, Oldenburg, in his drawings and notes, gives a plurality of references, European and American, making the term legacy seem less pertinent than that of constellation. It is as if he constructs, through his work, various constellations of interrelated figures with which his art enters into a dialogue. Amidst these names, Dubuffet occupies an important position, his

name appearing on at least three works on paper that Oldenburg produced in the years that preceded and followed *The Street*. Aside from *I think your Work looks a lot like Dubuffet*, it could be seen on a drawing in ink on paper with charred edges, bearing the inscription *Dubuffet – Céline – Frenchmen*, and on a sketch for an unrealized sculpture, entitled *Homage to Dubuffet and Céline* (plate 3.10). Oldenburg described this second project as a ‘large sculptural homage’ made of two irregular cardboard and papier-mâché shapes hanging above one another, with ‘Céline’ spelt backwards on top, and ‘Dubuffet’ spelt from left to right underneath, to show that the influences of the painter and of the writer functioned in different ways. Only the Céline plaque, entitled *C-ELI-N-E Backwards* (plate 3.11), was even-



3.10 Claes Oldenburg, Notebook Page: *Study for an Homage to Celine and Dubuffet*, 1959. Crayon, pencil, ink spots, 17.2 × 12.7 cm on sheet 27.9 × 21.6 cm. New York: Collection Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.





3.11 Claes Oldenburg, *C-EL-I-N-E Backwards*, 1959. Newspaper soaked in wheat paste over wire frame, painted with casein, 78.1 × 100.7 × 7.6 cm). New York: Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen  
© Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

tually made, in newspaper soaked in wheat paste over chicken wire with black paint dribbling over its surface. In the original sketch the name 'Dubuffet' was planned in such a way that the letters 'u-b-u' would stand out in the middle of a speech-bubble shape circled by a faded line, evoking the black humour of Alfred Jarry's character Père Ubu (Paris, 1896). A note in the margins of the drawing reveals Oldenburg's intentional play with the letters, even though the reference to Jarry was not further developed.<sup>21</sup> Referring to *Homage to Dubuffet and Céline*, Oldenburg later declared 'the two were associated in my mind, that's why I set out to make the homage to both of them.'<sup>22</sup> This candid explanation, whilst avoiding the controversial issue of the relation between Dubuffet and Céline, brought together two figures whose work in painting and writing evoked the idea of what Clement Greenberg had once described as *lumpen art* in relation to Dubuffet. For Oldenburg, Céline was linked to Saul Bellow, whose novel *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), which he read in 1959, was set in Chicago.<sup>23</sup> Reading Céline's first two novels, *Journey to the End of the Night* (*Voyage au bout de la nuit*, 1932) and *Death on the Instalment Plan* (*Mort à Crédit*, 1936), around the time that he planned and

constructed *The Street*, Oldenburg associated the ‘direct experience that he [Céline] recorded in that first novel which was very gripping’, with his own ‘direct experience’ of the New York street and the materials that could be found there.<sup>24</sup>

In these works, all dating from around 1959 and 1960, references to Dubuffet thus coexist alongside allusions to other artists and writers. Working in a manner of free association, Oldenburg links one figure to another, creating a spectrum of references. Oldenburg’s cardboard *Street Chick* shared the cheerless grace of the Parisian prostitutes painted from 1902 to 1907 by the French artist Georges Rouault, to whom Oldenburg dedicated a drawing in 1959–1960. In the notes taken by Oldenburg in 1959–1960 and cited by Barbara Rose, Oldenburg defined Ferdinand, the hero of Céline’s novel *Journey to the End of the Night*, as a personification of death. Ferdinand, reports Rose, was represented by the androgynous *Street Chick*, whose face evoked a skull. Both a male and female character, *Street Chick*’s name as a man is Ferdinand, the hero of Céline’s novels.<sup>25</sup> These heteroclitite references, collected in a seemingly random, accumulative way, may be understood, thanks to more recent statements by the artist, as a working method, at odds again with Kaprow’s more theoretically articulated approach.<sup>26</sup> Bringing together literary figures, fictional characters and artists, Oldenburg undertook to connect, extrapolate and imitate ideas, works and personalities, thereby justifying his working method. For example, he seemed less fascinated by Bellow’s *Augie March* than by the way in which he believed Bellow derived his books not only from the experience of Chicago low life but also from Céline’s descriptions. Transposing Bellow’s Chicago to the context of New York’s Lower East Side, Oldenburg also incorporated into his experience of city life what he imagined as Dubuffet’s experience of Paris. ‘He seemed to derive – what I’d seen of his work seemed to derive from the ambience of the street and the dark colors of city poverty,’ Oldenburg later explained, then going on to describe how he modelled his practice after what he believed Dubuffet’s way of working to be: ‘the forms that I found came directly from the street. I would just improvise on that, which is probably the way Dubuffet worked himself too from the beginnings.’<sup>27</sup>

Oldenburg’s way of creating a network of references, appropriating the imaginary working methods of others and applying them in turn to his own projects, suggested playing with multiple identities and resorting to imitation in order to produce originality. Aside from verbal or written statements, Oldenburg also enacted role-playing in his work, through creating alter egos that enabled him to work in different styles. From 1959 to 1960 one of the most important of these doppelgängers was ‘Ray Gun’, an ubiquitous figure he described as evoking a primitive expression of the urban. Other alter egos followed throughout Oldenburg’s career enabling him to express diverse, sometimes opposed ideas. In this perspective, *I think your Work looks a lot like Dubuffet* (see plate 3.3) may be read as having a programmatic value: it laid out the method of imitation, appropriation and role-playing that paradoxically enabled Oldenburg to assert his originality as an artist and his particular position as regards the other junk culture artists. In

defining his artistic persona through the mediation of another, Jean Dubuffet, Oldenburg transformed the idea of influence as a burden, suggested by the anonymous critic's remark recorded in the drawing, into a dynamic process in which the reference became a creative tool. This became explicit in Oldenburg's second project, *The Store*, which moved a step forward in absorbing Dubuffet's ideas in order to extend and transform them.

### THE STORE: NEW YORK JUNK PARIS CIRCUS

I am for an art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.

I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero.

I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap & still comes out on top.<sup>28</sup>

When it appeared for the first time in the catalogue of the Martha Jackson exhibition *Environments, Situations, Spaces* in May 1961, this statement signalled a turn in Claes Oldenburg's career. The depressing, grimy atmosphere of *The Street*, with its discarded materials and black-and-white tones were left aside. *The Store* seemed to embrace wholeheartedly popular culture and its buoyant colours, vulgarity and plethoric character. Installed amid works by Allan Kaprow, George Brecht, Jim Dine, Robert Whitman and Walter Gaudnek in *Environments, Situations, Spaces*, *The Store* consisted, in its first version, of large relief plaques hanging against the walls and from the ceiling.<sup>29</sup> These plaques depicted objects of daily life, such as varieties of foods and items of clothing, as well as popular brand names represented in evocations of fragments torn from advertising posters such as *Pepsi Cola Sign* (plate 3.12).<sup>30</sup> After the exhibition closed in June, Oldenburg took over a shop front on New York's 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to use as studio space. Approximately sixty new pieces were added to the plaques presented at the Martha Jackson Gallery. These were mainly freestanding objects modelled using plaster over chicken wire and painted in bright and glossy colours. These pieces were shown together the following December in the front room of the shop (plate 3.13). In this manner, *The Store* could be defined as an environment, as in its previous version, but it now also functioned as a showcase for the display and sale of individual works. In spring 1962, after the end of the exhibition, *The Store*'s backspace hosted the *Ray Gun Theater*, a series of ten theatrical actions staged and performed by Oldenburg with friends and other artists. Oldenburg aimed at exploring what he called the 'consciousness of the United States', drawing, as the critic Sidney Tillim observed, the 'everyday American into art'. *The Store* was to become one of the most emblematic manifestations of pop art, and in making American culture and history his subject matter, Oldenburg became close to artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Indiana, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein and Peter Saul, whose work, Tillim argued, all epitomized 'America's rediscovery of America'.<sup>31</sup>



3.12 Claes Oldenburg, *Pepsi Cola Sign*, 1961. Muslin soaked in plaster over wire frame, painted with enamel, 148 × 118.1 × 19.1 cm). Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, the Panza Collection. Photo: courtesy of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

From this moment Oldenburg's relation with the art of Dubuffet confronted critics with a seemingly unbridgeable paradox. How could Oldenburg's attraction to the European constellation of literary and artistic figures around Dubuffet and their depiction of urban low life concur with his new involvement with the





3.13 Claes Oldenburg in *The Store*, 107 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York City, 1961. Photo: Robert McElroy, courtesy of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen © Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

particularities of American popular culture? For most critics, the answer was unambiguous; it meant that Oldenburg had abandoned references to Dubuffet. This was Tillim's opinion:

If *The Store* (...) came closer to obviously embracing that which it presumably deplored, it was partly because Oldenburg no longer depends on Dubuffet for what was both aesthetically and sociologically misleading. Dubuffet's basal and reflexive sophistication contradicted Oldenburg's very real infatuation with the tawdriness of specifically American kitsch.<sup>32</sup>

Other writers have shared this belief.<sup>33</sup> In 1969 Barbara Rose suggested that the word 'Frenchmen' inserted at the bottom of Oldenburg's *Céline – Dubuffet – Frenchmen* drawing from 1959 demonstrated Oldenburg's need to pinpoint and to reject the European references in his work in order to delve into American culture.<sup>34</sup> This necessity had already arisen at the time of *The Store* and its claim could be related to the larger framework of the antagonism between American pop and proto-pop trends coming from Europe.

Typical of the connection established between the emergence of pop, the fading of assemblage and the disregard for European art was the review of *The Art of Assemblage* by Thomas Hess, the editor of *Art News*. The negative criticism that had, in general, greeted the show at the end of 1961 stemmed in particular from what was then perceived as the Museum of Modern Art's partiality towards Euro-





3.14 Jean Dubuffet, *Vue de Paris – Le Petit Commerce*, 2 February 1944. Oil on canvas, 73 × 92 cm. Japan, Private collection. Photo: courtesy Fondation Dubuffet, Paris © Beeldrecht Amsterdam, 2006.

pean art. Hess particularly attacked what he saw as the Museum's 'eager' promotion of 'the flimsiest bit of Paris-approved chic as soon as it comes on the market'.<sup>35</sup> A similar trend was in view in the *New Realists* exhibition in 1962. Whereas Sidney Janis had wanted to show convergences between young European and American artists, his show was only remembered for bringing together for the first time Oldenburg, Roy Liechtenstein, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselman.

If the idea of proximity between Oldenburg and Dubuffet was now rejected by critics and not favoured by the more general context, Oldenburg's environment *The Store* and the statement 'I am for an art' nevertheless still articulated an affinity with Dubuffet's ideas. Associations could be made, for instance, with Dubuffet's garish-coloured paintings from the *Marionettes de la Ville et de la Campagne* series, made in the early 1940s. In sloppily applying glossy paint over his plaster objects, Oldenburg achieved a crude, primitive style that recalled the child-like forms of such paintings as *Vue de Paris – Le Petit Commerce* (plate 3.14). Oldenburg's references to the bright and straightforward design of advertising posters were reminiscent of Dubuffet's borrowings from folk art and the simplified pictorial

language of shop signs. More than simply resembling or evoking Dubuffet's paintings, however, *The Store* gave a new actuality to Dubuffet's celebration of the everyday and his wish to create an art that appealed to the 'common man'. Like Dubuffet, Oldenburg drew on popular culture, but he associated it with the particular context of the United States, remarking once, 'There's this about America – the popular arts succeeded very well here even among those who might be thought to be above them. They are taken very seriously.'<sup>36</sup> Also different from Dubuffet was the scale of Oldenburg's work. *The Store* was comparable to a walk-in painting filled with daily-life objects. It exuded an enthusiasm and *joie de vivre* that only painstakingly emerged from Dubuffet's pictures of locked-up shops and rare passers-by, despite their bright primary and secondary colours. Furthermore, Oldenburg's decision to craft, show and sell his work from a store directly on the street seemed to concretize Dubuffet's wish for a greater proximity between art and the 'man on the street', by breaking away from an elitist system only available to initiates.<sup>37</sup> Located in a busy neighbourhood, Oldenburg's *Store* was successful. Whereas Dubuffet often received the most relentless attacks on his works from the popular press, Oldenburg's exhibition was prolonged by a month in January 1962, due to popular demand.<sup>38</sup> And, as I have indicated, the performances staged from February to May 1962 in the backspace of *The Store*, and captured on film, brought to life characters of the kind that populated Dubuffet's *hautes pâtes* paintings. In the *Ray Gun Theater* Oldenburg gave his characters stereotyped roles, such as the 'beggar' and the 'street chick', and enacted simple, often absurd and repetitive actions that were incorporated into a narrative.

If both *The Store* and the *Ray Gun Theater* seemed to prolong, enlarge, and give an actuality to Dubuffet's paintings, so did Oldenburg's 'I am for an art'. In this text Oldenburg listed a series of subjective propositions that seemed to echo directly Dubuffet's 'Avant-propos d'une conférence populaire sur la peinture', in which the French painter criticized museums, comparing them to cemeteries. He rejected 'boring' art, and encouraged his audience to find art in the small events of daily life. This last point, in particular, seems directly to anticipate the first two propositions made by Oldenburg in his text:

I am for an art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.

I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero.

Oldenburg's statements often echoed themes developed by Dubuffet in the 1940s. When *The Street* was on show at the Judson Gallery, Barbara Rose recalled that Oldenburg 'typed up and pinned to a bulletin board . . . random thoughts', some of which read 'Look for beauty where it is not supposed to be found [. . .] the city is a landscape well worth enjoying – damn necessary if you live in the city', and 'Dirt has depth and beauty. I love soot and scorching.'<sup>39</sup> Oldenburg's imperative tones

were reminiscent of Dubuffet's exhortations to look for alternative criteria of beauty in the short essay 'Notes pour les fins-lettrés' and the lecture 'Anticultural Positions'.<sup>40</sup> The differences between the two, however, are easy to discern. The elegant way in which the besuited Dubuffet delivered his 'Anticultural Positions' lecture in 1951 was at odds with the speechless, but dramatic-looking, performances of Oldenburg in *Snapshots from the City*.<sup>41</sup>

In his process of re-inventing Dubuffet, Oldenburg found himself, in the end, creating works that opposed Dubuffet's original ideas by stretching and transposing them into new contexts which deeply altered or even contradicted their original meaning. When Dubuffet, in the context of postwar France, stated: 'True art is always where it is unexpected. Where nobody thinks about it or mentions its name', he directed his argument against the French cultural establishment and against the figure of the intellectual.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, when Oldenburg urged the public to see art in each of its small or unexpected manifestations, he was already placing himself within a framework which, by incorporating popular culture into art, gave birth to pop art.

I am for an art that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent, or whatever is necessary.

I am for an art that takes its form from the lines of life itself that twists and extends and accumulates, and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself.

In the context of America in the early 1960s, Oldenburg displayed a fascination for the manifestations of popular culture. Although similar to Dubuffet in wanting to attribute new roles and places for art, Oldenburg's all-inclusive conception was, in reality, opposed to Dubuffet's more exclusive idea that 'true art' was to be found in the most unexpected places but disappeared as soon as it was labelled 'art'.

Dubuffet's idea of the 'common man' remained largely an abstraction and a theoretical construction, and his rejection of the museum and the professional art system purely rhetorical. His dismissal of culture was coupled with an attraction to the timelessness epitomized by the *art brut* artists, who created art whilst seemingly being outside time, untouched by cultural trends. By transposing such notions into the American reality of the early 1960s, Oldenburg twisted Dubuffet's timeless conception of *art brut* to make it espouse the particularities of what Oldenburg described as the American 'culturelessness' of the early 1960s.<sup>43</sup> It was in this move away from the a-historical quality of Dubuffet's theoretical standpoint to the specific context of 'present-day America' that Oldenburg ultimately came to oppose Dubuffet's aesthetic conceptions.

When, in 1945, Dubuffet realized that he received mostly scathing responses from the man on the street, whose interest he claimed to seek, his art changed from the coloured *Marionettes* to the dark encrusted *hautes pâtes*, exuding, as he



3.15 Jean Dubuffet, *L'Automobile, Fleur de l'Industrie*, 1920 June 1961. Oil on canvas, 220 × 165 cm. Photo: courtesy Fondation Dubuffet, Paris © Beeldrecht Amsterdam, 2006.

remarked, a more misanthropic mood.<sup>44</sup> It was clear that his work would always remain part of the museum system, and Dubuffet, aside from his manifestos, would not do anything to oppose this.<sup>45</sup>

Some fifteen years later Oldenburg drew upon the idea of an art for the common man previously developed by Dubuffet when he set off to create his first environments. *The Store*, which followed *The Street*, became an early emblem of pop art. Far more than Dubuffet's art, *The Store*, and pop art in general, played on both registers of high and low, of avant-garde and mainstream, and encountered unprecedented appeal to audiences. The positive and colourful ambience of *The Store* signalled Oldenburg's move from the hand-made aspect of his work, which related to junk culture, to the cleaner and more distinct shapes with a quasi-industrial finish that would soon become the trademark of his work and the signature of pop art in general, starting in 1963 with his *Bedroom Ensemble* (1963, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada).

Through *The Store* and *The Street* Oldenburg conferred in 1959–1961 a new attractiveness to Dubuffet's paintings from the 1940s. His environments suggested that Dubuffet's depiction of Paris and its archetypal characters and his ideas on the 'common man' could resonate in another context. They could be re-actualized and transposed from postwar Paris to pre-pop New York. In so doing, Oldenburg



simultaneously contributed to historicize Dubuffet – a process also reflected in Dubuffet’s critical reception – by giving an actuality to paintings that were no longer new. Had Dubuffet, who was a generation older than Oldenburg, been only an artist of the past, this would have been an issue of chronology. But Dubuffet continued to work and to exhibit widely, producing, in the early 1960s, a body of work that can be read in relation to Oldenburg’s development. It is impossible to envisage the connection between Dubuffet and Oldenburg strictly as temporally delimited, a one-way process of influence of one artist over another, and it questions the multiplicity of forms that influence may take. While there was no direct relation between Oldenburg and Dubuffet at the time when Oldenburg made and exhibited *The Store*, Dubuffet produced, between February 1961 and July 1962, eighty-eight paintings entitled, as a series, *Paris Circus*, which bear many similarities with Oldenburg’s project. The paintings stage the conspicuous consumption of the 1960s in jittery views of Paris filled with people, automobiles and advertising signs. The obsession with cars recorded in *L’Automobile*, *Fleur de l’Industrie* (plate 3.15) and the impression of continuous movement evoked in the swirling lines of *Paris Montparnasse* (plate 3.16) anticipate Jacques Tati’s humorous depictions of modern society in *Trafic* (1971). These pictures are also reminiscent of the interest in the object and daily life recorded in the works of the French



3.16 Jean Dubuffet, *Paris Montparnasse*, 521 March 1961. Oil on canvas, 165 × 220 cm. Photo: courtesy Fondation Dubuffet, Paris © Beeldrecht Amsterdam, 2006.



*nouveau réalisme*, defined by Pierre Restany in 1960, and of emerging British and American pop artists. But Dubuffet's hand-scribbled brand names, his broken colours, the motifs he lifts from one painting to repeat in another, seem to share more particularly the painterly quality and wryness of Claes Oldenburg's plaster signs with garish, roughly mixed colours and dribbling paint (see plate 3.12).

The convergences between the *Paris Circus* series and *The Store* seem less surprising when traced back to Dubuffet's paintings of views of Paris from the mid-1940s. Dubuffet explicitly made reference to his earlier work when he described the impetus behind *Paris Circus* in a letter of August 1961 to the French art critic Geneviève Bonnefoi:

I live locked up in my studios doing, guess what? Paintings in the spirit and style of those I was making in 1943. I have reversed gears after ending the *Matériologies* and have decided to start all over again, in the hope of leading to a better conclusion all of my older experiments which I feel I have insufficiently developed and stopped prematurely.<sup>46</sup>

This backward glance at his earlier work, made in the hope of creating something new, spells out the process of influence as creation as it was envisaged by Oldenburg when he drew on Dubuffet's paintings of the 1940s. The coincidence of both artists looking back to the *hautes pâtes* and the *Marionettes de la Ville et de la Campagne* (a series of paintings made in 1943 and 1944) may suggest that the time was ripe for those works to resurface, as they did when included in several exhibitions between 1959 and 1962. Yet the coincidence conceals divergences. When Oldenburg claimed – thereby anticipating his critical reception – that his 'work looked a lot like Dubuffet', he turned a comment implying the weight of one artist on another into a statement introducing an artistic programme. But when Dubuffet explained, in 1961, that he was looking back at his old work, he could be perceived as enacting a somewhat regressive anachronism, reverting to his earlier and successful works. What did Dubuffet hope to achieve? Despite the unenthusiastic response that they elicited in New York, the *Paris Circus* paintings, when compared to the earlier *Marionettes*, are striking not only for their change of atmosphere but also for their treatment of space on a larger scale. The vertical–horizontal structure of paintings like *Facades d'immeubles* (1946, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), in which the small rectangles of windows and doors repeated the overall shape of the canvas, is cast aside in favour of a continuous, undulating, seemingly endlessly shifting space. In one of the major works of the series, *Rue Passagère* (plate 3.17) the line dividing the painting horizontally across its centre is curved, suggesting a concave, haptic space, seemingly stretching to accommodate the figures and cars moving within it. In light of Oldenburg's *Store*, this treatment of space appears as an embryonic attempt to go beyond the limits of the canvas in order to create a large-scale three-dimensional painterly space, a point that Oldenburg stressed as being, for him, one of the motivations for moving from painting to environments. Read from this perspective,



3.17 Jean Dubuffet, *Rue Passagère*, 1219 July 1961. Oil on canvas, 130 × 162 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou © Beeldrecht Amsterdam, 2006.

the *Paris Circus* series anticipates the blue-, red- and white-painted polystyrene sculptures that Dubuffet began to make in 1966, the monumental 'walk-in pictorial spaces', such as the *Cabinet Logologique* (1967, 1974–76, Périgny-sur-Yerres: Fondation Dubuffet) and the *Jardin d'hiver* (1968–70, Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou). That the space in *Paris Circus* anticipated Dubuffet's move towards three dimensions can be interpreted from the sequence of works from the beginning of the *Hourloupe* cycle in 1962, to the monumental structures. Dubuffet explicitly acknowledged the connection, but only retrospectively, in 1980, when he wrote in the preface to the thirty-first volume of his catalogue raisonné.

The desire to create habitable sites – or more specifically, mental interpretations of three-dimensional sites built at the scale of real sites – evoked so as to render these interpretations liveable in – originated in 1962, with the Paris views from the series *Paris Circus*. The idea to construct a many-coloured architectural element (a shop, or preferably a group of shops, a street fragment) in the same whimsical form as the paintings and gouaches of that series evoking Paris streets occupied from that moment the author's mind ...<sup>47</sup>

While the publication of his catalogue raisonné inevitably allowed Dubuffet a retrospective glance at his own work, his description of ‘a shop, or preferably a group of shops, a street fragment’, items never featured amidst the monuments from the *Hourloupe* series (which privileged ‘gardens’, ‘trees’ and unspecified ‘edifices’), raises the question of Dubuffet being influenced in his retrospective interpretation by a knowledge of Oldenburg’s *Store*, which he had seen in 1969 in the retrospective that had prompted him to seek contact with Claes Oldenburg.

Although this possibility may not be verified, it nevertheless gives credence to the idea of influence as dialogue rather than one-way process, a dialogue that Dubuffet instigated on 16 October 1969, when he wrote to Oldenburg. This dialogue between works and artists took place, over the years, within the interstices of a context largely dominated in American and European cultural politics by a likening of national with cultural identity. The reluctance with which critics discussed Oldenburg’s possible influence of Dubuffet, just as the negative reactions that Dubuffet’s work encountered in the late 1950s reveal the extent to which institutional discourses and art criticism were interrelated, a process that Serge Guilbaut’s pioneering work carefully analysed in relation to the immediate postwar period.<sup>48</sup> If recent scholarship has shown that a certain level of exchange between Europe and American artistic institutions took place,<sup>49</sup> the investigation of institutional policies has often overshadowed discussion that considers European and American art together. The relationship between Dubuffet and Oldenburg suggests that studies of transatlantic influences at the level of artistic production can contribute to a shift in this perspective, even, or particularly, as these narratives fall in-between the broader lines of institutional history.

Discussion of influence may offer a privileged means to re-evaluate transatlantic artistic exchanges from the postwar period onwards only if it goes beyond the simplified notion of influence as weight or even as ‘collage’, to quote Thomas Hess, one of the many critics focused on the question of cultural domination in the extended postwar period.<sup>50</sup> By contrast, varied forms of influence as creation, antithesis – as proposed in particular by Harold Bloom – and productive anachronism can prove an effective tool in reconsidering the historical narratives that have shaped, at the broad level of cultural politics, the dominant reading of European and American art since 1945.<sup>51</sup>

The arguments outlined here suggest that influence may be inverted, that influence may exist more as a dialogue between artists than as a one-directional process or as a straight line from past to future. In these senses, influence becomes inseparable from productive anachronism.

## Notes

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- 1 'Mon Cher Claes Oldenburg, Je reviens de New York où j'ai passé une semaine. Contrairement à mon habitude (car je ne mets jamais un pied dans les musées et galeries, et, trop complètement absorbé par mes propres travaux, je ressens peu de disponibilité d'esprit pour porter attention aux ouvrages des autres artistes), j'ai tenu à visiter l'exposition de vos oeuvres qui se tient actuellement au Musée d'Art Moderne. Or j'en ai été si fort émerveillé que j'ai tenu à vous écrire pour vous faire part de mon émotion. Vous apparaissez là un très grand créateur.' Unpublished letter from Jean Dubuffet to Claes Oldenburg, 16 October 1969. Claes Oldenburg archives, New York. The exhibition referred to is *Claes Oldenburg*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 25 September–23 November 1969. Author's translation.
- 2 Unpublished letter from Claes Oldenburg to Jean Dubuffet, 4 April 1970. Claes Oldenburg Archives, New York.
- 3 Dubuffet's admiration of Céline appears in his correspondence with the writer and editor Jean Paulhan and in his essay, 'Céline Pilote', written in 1973.
- 4 L. Alloway, 'Junk culture as tradition', *New Media New Forms*, New York, 1960.
- 5 Claes Oldenburg, statement in *Dubuffet and the Anticulture*, New York, 1969.
- 6 See, in particular, J.A. Shannon, 'The Street and urban renewal in Greenwich Village, 1960', *Art Bulletin*, 86:4, 2004, 136–61, which discusses the Street as a metaphor for urban renewal, and R.E. Hayward, 'Heretical Alliance: Claes Oldenburg and the Judson Memorial Church in the 1960s', *Art History*, 18:2, June 1995, 185–212, on *The Street* in the context of New York politics and cultural debates.
- 7 Oldenburg's interaction with Dubuffet is briefly discussed in B. Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, New York, 1969; Ellen H. Johnson, *Claes Oldenburg*, London, 1971; A. Franzke, 'Jean Dubuffet und die Amerikanische Kunst', *Europa/Amerika. Die Geschichte einer künstlerischen Faszination seit 1940*, Köln, 1986. Aruna d'Souza interestingly describes Oldenburg's drawing *I think your Work...* as displaying a 'typically pop strategy of quotation' which, however, ill fits the date of the drawing, 1959. See A. d'Souza, 'I Think your Work Looks a Lot Like Dubuffet: Dubuffet and America, 1946–1962', *Oxford Art Journal*, December 1997, 61–73.
- 8 See, for instance, Julie Reiss's book on the history of installation art *From Margin to Center, The Spaces of Installation Art*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989. Most of her first chapter is based upon information provided by Allan Kaprow. Barbara Haskell's *Blam, The Explosion of Pop Minimalism and Performance 1958–1964*, New York, 1984, offers a more balanced approach of the phenomenon.
- 9 C. Oldenburg, interview with the author, 20 February 1997, also see Rose and d'Souza.
- 10 'Reviews and previews', unsigned review of *The Street*, *Art News*, 1960.
- 11 This was the generic name given to the series of paintings exhibited by Dubuffet at the Galerie René Drouin in Paris, 1946, in the exhibition entitled *Mirobolus, Macadam et Cie, Hautes Pâtes*. This title was re-used for vol. 2 of Dubuffet's catalogue raisonné.
- 12 'Reviews and previews', *Art News*, 1960.
- 13 Clement Greenberg, untitled review of exhibitions by Jean Dubuffet and Jackson Pollock, *The Nation*, 1 February 1947. Reprinted in *Clement Greenberg, the Collected Criticism*, Chicago, 1992, vol. 2.
- 14 'Dead-end art. a Frenchman's mud-and-rubble paintings turns Modernism into a joke', *Life*, December 1948.
- 15 On the critical assessment of the Chicago artists, see M. Farber's review of *New Images of Man*, 'New Images of (ugh) Man', *Art News*, 58, 1959, 38–9.
- 16 For the main studies on the development of Chicago art in the 1950s, see D. Adrian, 'The ar-



- tistic presence of Jean Dubuffet in Chicago and the Midwest', *Jean Dubuffet. Forty Years of His Art*, Chicago, 1984, and F. Schulze, *Fantastic Images – Chicago art since 1945*, Chicago, 1972. They offer opposite interpretations as to the impact of Dubuffet's art on artists working in Chicago.
- 17 C. Oldenburg, extract from notebooks dated 1960, reproduced in Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 189.
  - 18 Reiss, *From Margin to Center*, 31.
  - 19 A. Kaprow, 'The Legacy of Jackson Pollock', *Art News*, 57:6, 24–6, 55–7.
  - 20 Kaprow, 'The Legacy of Jackson Pollock'. Before he introduced happenings in New York, Kaprow had studied with Meyer Shapiro and John Cage, who initiated performance-like events at Black Mountain College in 1952.
  - 21 C. Oldenburg, recorded interview with the author, 24 February 1997.
  - 22 C. Oldenburg, recorded interview with the author, 24 February 1997.
  - 23 Unpublished interview of Claes Oldenburg with Alfred Paquemet and Pontus Hulten, November 1976, excerpted in *Paris-New York*, exhib. cat., Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1977, 686.
  - 24 C. Oldenburg, recorded interview with the author, 24 February 1997.
  - 25 Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 39.
  - 26 Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 39.
  - 27 C. Oldenburg, recorded interview with the author, 24 February 1997.
  - 28 C. Oldenburg, 'Statement', *Environments, Situations, Spaces*, New York, 1961. Republished in C. Oldenburg and E. Williams, eds, *Store Days – Documents from The Store (1961) and Ray Gun Theater (1962)*, New York, Villefranche-sur-mer, Frankfurt am Main, 1967.
  - 29 *Environments, Situations, Spaces*, Martha Jackson Galley, 25 May–23 June 1961. The exhibition catalogue included statements by several artists as well as Oldenburg.
  - 30 See the detailed description of Oldenburg's installation at the Martha Jackson in Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 64.
  - 31 S. Tillim, 'Month in review: New York Exhibitions', *Arts Magazine*, 36, February 1962, 34–7. Reprinted in Madoff, ed., *Pop Art – A Critical History*, Berkeley, 1997, 25–8.
  - 32 S. Tillim, 'Month in review', 34–7.
  - 33 The efforts to read Oldenburg's aesthetic origins with reference to American art recur in the Oldenburg literature. Recently, Germano Celant chose to emphasize the affinities of Oldenburg with Jackson Pollock, whilst swiftly mentioning Dubuffet. G. Celant, 'Claes Oldenburg and the feeling of things', in *Claes Oldenburg. An Anthology*, New York, 1995, 18, 22.
  - 34 Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 150.
  - 35 Thomas B. Hess, 'Collage as an art historical method', *Art News*, 60, November 1961, 71.
  - 36 Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 53.
  - 37 In 'Avant-Projet d'une conference populaire sur la peinture' (1945), Dubuffet wrote: 'Moi aussi (...) j'ai un marchand de tableaux qui a une galerie a Paris [...] mais cela ne répond pas tout à fait à ce que je souhaiterais. Il faut se détourner de son chemin pour entrer dans ces galleries; il faut avoir pris l'habitude de s'y rendre, et ceux qui le font, en fin de compte, c'est seulement les amateurs maniaques de la peinture.' I too (...) have a picture dealer who has a gallery in Paris (...) But that is not exactly what I like best. One has to make a detour to go to these galleries, make a habit of visiting them and, at the end of the day, it is only the fanatic art lovers who do that. Reprinted in *Prospectus, aux amateurs de tout genre*, Paris, 1946. vol. 1, 36. This is the first, short collection of writings by Dubuffet to appear in print. The texts in this volume are included in *Prospectus et tous écrits suivants*, Paris, 1967 for vols 1 and 2, 1995 for vols 3 and 4. Extensive Collection of Dubuffet's writings edited by Hubert Damisch and published by Gallimard.
  - 38 Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 70.
  - 39 Quoted in Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, 46.
  - 40 Jean Dubuffet, 'Anticultural positions'. Reprinted in *Prospectus*, vol. 1, 97.
  - 41 In a letter to Richard Feigen in October 1969, the artist George Cohen remembered Dubuffet's allure during this lecture: 'The talk was about the value of savagery and the subject contrasted nicely with Dubuffet's trim black suit, dark tie, white shirt and long, black cigarette holder.' Reprinted in *Dubuffet and the Anticulture*, New York, 1969, 11.
  - 42 'Le Vrai art est là ou on ne l'attend pas (...)', Jean Dubuffet, 'L'art brut préféré aux arts culturels' (October 1949). Reprinted in Jean Dubuffet, *L'Homme du commun à l'ouvrage*, Paris, 1973, 90–1.
  - 43 The reference to Dubuffet and the 'common man' first occurred in Pierre Seghers's *Jean Dubuffet ou l'homme du commun*, Paris, 1944. Dubuffet used it again for the paperback pocket edition of his writings, *L'Homme du commun à l'ouvrage*.
  - 44 Jean Dubuffet, 'Avant-propos d'une conference populaire sur la peinture', first published in *Prospectus*, 1945. Reprinted in *Prospectus* vol. 1.
  - 45 Dubuffet's pamphlet *Asphyxiante culture*, Paris, 1968, New York, 1986, reiterated positions developed in his writings over the past thirty years.
  - 46 Letter from Dubuffet to G. Bonnefoi dated August 1961, reprinted in *Prospectus*, vol. 2, 479 (author's translation).



- 47 'Le désir de constituer des sites habitables – ou plus précisément des interprétations mentales de sites édifiés en trois dimensions et à l'échelle même des sites réels évoqués, de manière à rendre habitables ces interprétations – prit origine en 1962 à partir des vues de Paris du cycle Paris Circus. L'idée de construire un élément architectural bariolé (une boutique, ou préférablement un groupe de boutiques, un fragment de rue) dans la même forme fantasque que les peintures et les gouaches de ce cycle évoquant les rues de Paris occupa dès ce moment la pensée de l'auteur(...)' Reprinted in *Prospectus*, vol. 3, 366 (author's translation).
- 48 Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Chicago, 1983.
- 49 See, for example, Nancy Jachec, 'Transatlantic cultural politics in the late 1950s: the Leaders and Specialists Grant Programme', *Art History*, 26:4, September 2003, 533–55.
- 50 Hess, 'Collage as an art historical method'.
- 51 H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Oxford and New York, 1973.