

CLAES OLDENBURG



TRANSLATED BY NORMAN CHAN

MANPUKUYA MOGUMOGU

CLAES OLDENBURG WAS BORN ON JANUARY 28, 1929 IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN TO GÖSTA OLDENBURG, A SWEDISH DIPLOMAT, AND ELISABETH LINDFORSS, AN OPERA SINGER WHO LATER BECAME A PAINTER OF ABSTRACT ART.



AFTER LIVING IN NEW YORK AND OSLO, THE FAMILY MOVED TO CHICAGO IN 1936. CLAES, WHO AT THE TIME COULD NOT SPEAK ENGLISH, CREATED WITH HIS YOUNGER BROTHER RICHARD AN IMAGINARY COUNTRY FOR WHICH THEY MADE DETAILED MAPS, GRAPHS AND DRAWINGS. THESE INCLUDED DRAWINGS OF AIRPLANES, FLAGS AND GUNS THAT WOULD APPEAR IN HIS LATER ARTWORK.

THE IMAGINARY COUNTRY OF NEUBERN WAS LOCATED IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN.



Neubern Railroad Network, 1938.

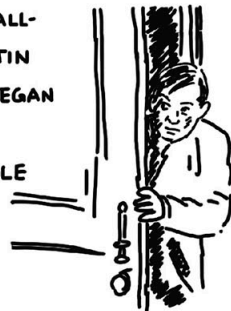


A COLLAGE FROM A SCRAPBOOK MADE BY KARIN LINDFORSS (CLAES'S AUNT).

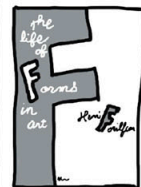
CLAES'S AUNT IN SWEDEN WOULD SEND HIM SCRAPBOOKS WITH COLLAGES MADE UP OF ADS CLIPPED FROM MAGAZINES FOR FURNITURE, APPLIANCES, FOODS AND CLOTHING.

* HIS BROTHER RICHARD E. OLDENBURG (1933-2018) WAS THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK FROM 1972 TO 1994.

HE ATTENDED THE ALL-MALE CHICAGO LATIN SCHOOL WHERE HE BEGAN TO ACT IN PLAYS. HE PLAYED THE ROLE OF EINSTEIN IN "ARSENIC AND OLD LACE."

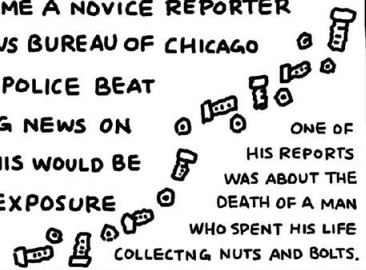


HE MAJORED IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND ART AT YALE UNIVERSITY.



Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*

AFTER GRADUATING, HE RETURNED TO CHICAGO WHERE HE BECAME A NOVICE REPORTER FOR THE CITY NEWS BUREAU OF CHICAGO COVERING THE POLICE BEAT AND GATHERING NEWS ON THE STREETS. THIS WOULD BE HIS FIRST REAL EXPOSURE TO THE CITY.



ONE OF HIS REPORTS WAS ABOUT THE DEATH OF A MAN WHO SPENT HIS LIFE COLLECTING NUTS AND BOLTS.

IN 1952, HE QUIT THE NEWSPAPER TO ATTEND DAY CLASSES AT THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO. HE SUPPORTED HIMSELF WITH JOBS AT A BOOKSTORE, AT AN AD AGENCY, DOING ILLUSTRATIONS AND SELLING CANDY AT A TRAIN STATION. AT SCHOOL, HE ATTENDED THE CLASS OF PAUL WIEGHARDT (1897-1969). HIS SCHOOLMATES INCLUDED H.C. WESTERMANN (1922-1981).



ILLUSTRATION FOR CHICAGO MAGAZINE.

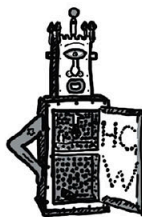


George Cohen, *Emblem for an Unknown Nation #1*, 1954.

HE STUDIED OIL PAINTING AT THE OXBOW SUMMER SCHOOL OF PAINTING. THERE HE PUT ON HIS FIRST THEATER PIECE AND ALSO MET PATTY MUCHA (PATRICIA MUSCHINSKI) (b.1935) WITH WHOM HE WAS MARRIED FROM 1960 TO 1970.



Paul Wiegardt, *The Anniversary*, date unknown.



H.C. Westermann *Memorial to the Idea of Man If He Was an Idea*, 1958.

IN 1953, HE PARTICIPATED IN HIS FIRST EXHIBITION. THE SHOW ALSO INCLUDED ROBERT CLARK (WHO LATER CHANGED HIS NAME TO ROBERT INDIANA (1928-2018)). CLAES'S WORKS WERE SATIRICAL DRAWINGS OF PEOPLE LIVING IN THE STREETS, INSPIRED BY ONE OF NELSON ALGREN'S SHORT STORIES. FOR THE MAGAZINE CHICAGO, HE DREW ILLUSTRATIONS AND OVERSAW A SPECIAL FEATURE ON THE PAINTER GEORGE COHEN (1919-1999), LEADER OF THE CHICAGO AVANT-GARDE.



Girl with Fur Piece (Portrait of Pat), 1959-1960.

PATTY APPEARED IN MANY PERFORMANCES AND MOVIES FROM THE LATE-1950S.

IN 1953, HE BECAME A NATURALIZED CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

* AT THAT TIME IN CHICAGO, A LECTURE GIVEN BY JEAN DUBUFFET IN 1951 CAUSED A SENSATION AND MADE ART BRUT A FOCUS OF GREAT ATTENTION.