

Claes Oldenburg - Clip 11

“A large scale project for the University of El Salvador” The Blasted Pencil

We wanted to make something for – a large scale project, this is what we call these large works – we wanted to make a large scale project for the University of El Salvador because it had been closed and many people had been tortured, and killed, and the library had been burned, and we wanted to make some kind of a symbol of the fact that despite all these things the university had continued to operate. And the Blasted Pencil was a symbol of that – that no matter how ripped up the intention got, it still continued to operate, and to write. And so you have the pencil lying on its side and one part is blasted, let's say it's been exploded or ripped away, but the other side still has its point and can continue to make statements. We had intended this to be a... a sculpture for the campus of the University but obviously it was not a time that they could handle such a thing and they couldn't finance it. So we just went through with it as if it was possible and we made plans, and we made models, and we presented it to them. And the understanding was that instead of putting it up they were free to sell it to raise money to restore the library. So, they did and it entered into the collections at auction houses. I'm not even sure where it is now, the model, but the plans are owned by the University and, I mean, the hope is always there that someday they could use these plans and

erect a model of it when times get better. And that's the story behind that piece – which is one of our favourite pieces.

