

*Claes Oldenburg - Clip 2*

“I lived on the Lower East Side” New York

I lived on the Lower East Side, which was a very poor neighbourhood at that time, and... my daily activity there – walking to work, I worked at Cooper Union, I would be exposed to all the details of street life and I translated that into art using the materials of the street, such as cardboard. New York is particularly rich in debris, as anybody who has been here will notice. And...so that was a natural thing – especially if you didn't have any money to buy art materials. And if you had a radical intention which was mine, to make art that was involved with reality that sort of included reality. It changed, it transformed reality but it included reality. And then that was succeeded by – oh, I should say that the character of that... period was black and white with some cardboard colours. It was like a black and white film. And then the Store was about colour because I likened it to walking down the street and looking down at your feet where you see a black and white environment and then lifting your eyes and looking at the stores and you see a colour environment. So the shift to colour was stimulated by that and that another way of connecting with reality. And the paints that were used were bought in the hardware store so they were not artistic paints they were ordinary enamels, and the palette consisted of those paints and they were never mixed. They were

used straight – if they were mixed in a sense they would be overpainted but never stirred in a can or anything. So there were all these principles at that time, of how to operate, and then, as I said, it got too much after 1962. The way things happen in New York things start and then all of a sudden they catch on and they become overwhelming. My reaction to that is to flee, huh, and start again. If you stay you become extremely famous and that's a very great hardship. So Patti (?) and I left New York in September 1963 and went to Los Angeles where, at that time, Los Angeles was relatively removed from the East Coast. As far as the artists were concerned they had their own scene and they hardly ever went over the mountains to New York. In fact they had a kind of contentious attitude of New York and so it was a very fresh environment.

