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Archives of American Art

Claes Oldenburg

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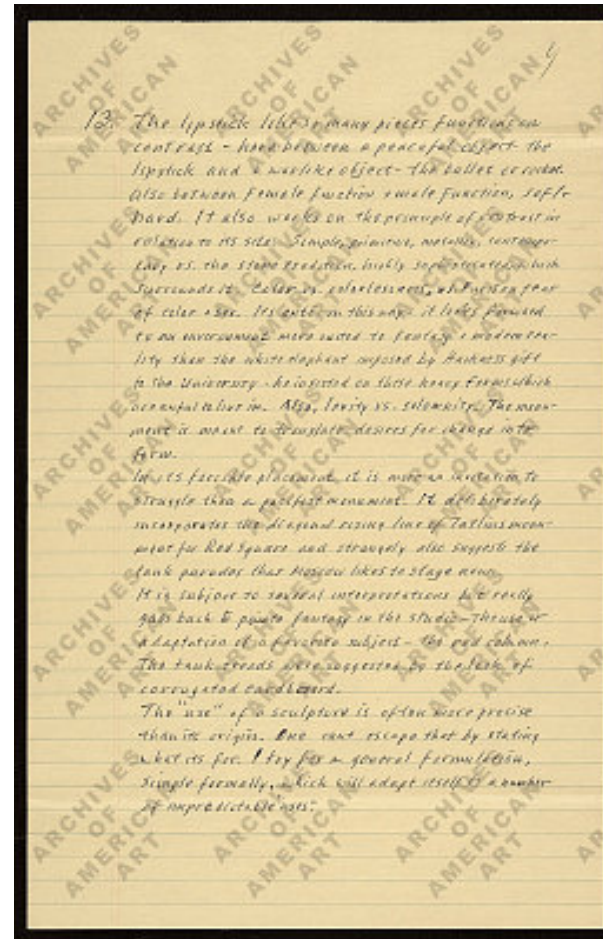
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13. The lipstick like so many pieces functions on contrast - here between a peaceful object - the lipstick and a warlike object - the bullet or rocket. also between female function + male function, soft + hard. It also works on the principle of contrast in relation to its size: Simple, primitive, metallic, contemporary vs. the stone tradition, highly sophisticated, which surrounds it. Color vs. colorlessness, vs. Puritan fear of color + sex. Its anti - in this way - it looks forward to an environment more suited to fantasy + modern reality than the white elephant imposed by Harkness gift to the University - he insisted on these heavy forms which are awful to live in. Also, levity vs. solemnity. The monument is meant to translate desires for change into form. In its forcible placement it is more an invitation to struggle than a pacifist monument. It deliberately incorporates the diagonal rising line of Tatlin's monument for Red Square and strangely also suggests the tank treads that Moscow likes to stage now. It is subject to several interpretations but really goes back to private fantasy in the studio - the use or adaptation of a favorite subject - the red column. The tank treads were suggested by the look of corrugated cardboard. The "use" of a sculpture is often more precise than its origin. One can't escape that by stating what its for. I try for a general formulation, simple formally, which will adapt itself to a number of unpredictable "uses."



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