TAKE AN ART WALK!
EXPLORE THE ART AROUND YOU

Split Button

Claus Oldenburg

This iconic work of art was created in 1981 and was commissioned by the University and the NEA, plus contributions from donors.

The sculpture was not immediately accepted and was called "intrusive" by the students. Of course now it is a beloved part of campus. Children climb on it, and skateboarders coast on it. Penn renovated it in 2017 to bring it back to the original finish.
But again, the Schuylkill River was part of the inspiration. The artist said the split in the button represents how the river splits the city of Philadelphia.

Claus Oldenburg was famous for creating large depictions of common objects. There are two other famous works in our fair city.

There is a popular myth that the artist created the piece to represent a button that popped off Ben Franklin’s vest when he sat in his chair posing for the statue close by. They say the button rolled away and broke in two.

Split Button is located at Blanch Levy Park in front of the Van Pelt Library. It takes 10 minutes to walk there from the HUP White entrance. On leaving the hospital, walk towards Spruce St. Cross over Spruce and go past the Irvine Auditorium. Then go left on the path leading into campus. At the end of the path, go right and walk towards the library. You can see both the button and the seated Franklin!

Brought to you by the PML Wellness Committee