

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

Arts & Culture

## 'OY/YO' is back on Independence Mall, now the social media favorite sculpture's forever home

The renewed and restored bright-yellow Deborah Kass piece has been promised to the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History.



"OY/YO" by Deborah Kass makes it way back to Philadelphia's Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History on Friday. It had been away for restoration since May.

Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

by Peter Dobrin

Published Oct. 31, 2025, 2:53 p.m. ET

OY/YO is back. The bright yellow pop art-inspired sculpture has returned to its usual perch on Independence Mall.

Friday morning, a large flatbed truck hauled the piece to Fifth and Market Sts. Workers hoisted its Y and O into the air and down in place. And the witty, doubly palindromic work — OY from one side, YO from the other — was home again after a bit of restoration work.



'OY/YO' awaits its reinstallation in front of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History on Friday, Oct. 31.

Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

The sculpture's return came with news of its future.

It is now a promised gift to the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, on whose doorstep it sits. The piece had been on loan from the artist, Deborah Kass, and was then bought by local philanthropists Mitchell and Hilarie Morgan, who are donating it to the museum.



“Deborah had a relationship with the Morgans, and thankfully a lot of stars aligned to make sure it will have a long-term life at Fifth and Market Sts.,” said Josh Perelman, the Jewish Museum’s senior adviser for content and strategic projects.

“It’s nice to see it all pristine again,” he said Friday.



From left, Andrew Logan, head rigger with Johnson Atelier, rigger Jean Desravines and From left are Andrew Logan, head rigger with Johnson Atelier, rigger Jean Desravines and Andreas Scholtz, easing down the Y. It was later removed to put down the O first. OY/YO, pop art sculpture by Deborah Kass returns to the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, Friday, October 31, 2025. It was removed for restoration. ease the Y of "OY/YO" into place.

Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

The eight-foot-tall aluminum sculpture by the Brooklyn-based Kass left in May for restoration and repainting at the Johnson Atelier in Hamilton, N.J. It first came to Philadelphia in May 2022 when the museum was in dire straits.

The organization had filed for bankruptcy in March 2020, and two weeks later, the pandemic hit, forcing it to shut its doors (like almost all arts and culture groups). It reopened two years later after landing a gift of about \$25 million, according to tax

returns, from shoe manufacturer Stuart Weitzman that allowed the museum to buy its building and build endowment.

The sculpture's 2022 arrival and siting on a popular tourist footpath was "a recognition of revitalizing both the museum and the circumstances of coming out of the pandemic experience," said Perelman.

It quickly became the public face of the museum, and its recent absence has been felt.



Jean Desravines, rigger with Johnson Atelier, helps guide the Y in "OY/YO" onto its base on Friday. Josh Perelman, the Jewish Museum's senior advisor for content and strategic projects, looks on at left, behind traffic cone. Alejandro A. Alvarez / Staff Photographer

People have walked in the front door in the past few months asking where it was and when it would be back, said Emily August, the Weitzman's chief public engagement officer, which speaks "to the appeal of the sculpture."

Perelman said he was "amazed by how quickly OY/YO became a Philadelphia icon, and how often people post it on social media on their trips to Philadelphia. Classes take their class pictures outside. It has many meanings to so many different people."

It has also quickly become a full citizen in the city's public art collection that includes Robert Indiana's LOVE sculpture in the middle of the city, and a certain silver screen boxer captured in triumphant pose by A. Thomas Schomberg near the Art Museum steps.

Says Perelman: "It creates this lovely artistic through line from Fifth and Market to Love Park to the Rocky statue, these iconic moments that run through the artist corridor of the city and all speak to one another."

**find this article :** <https://www.inquirer.com/arts/oy-yo-statue-independence-mall-philadelphia-20251031.html?query=oy%20yo>

**archive.org :** <https://archive.ph/kxs4u>