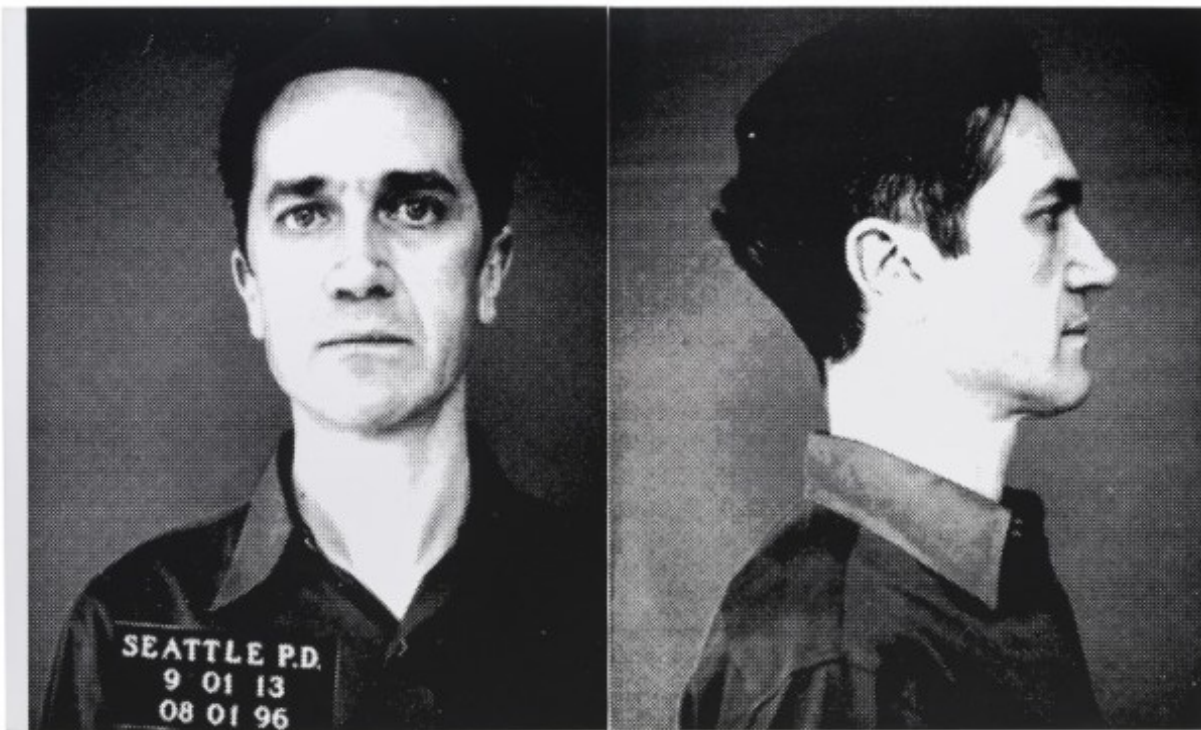


# filthy dreams

ART

## Deborah Kass and America's Most Wanted Curators

Posted on [June 3, 2015](#) by [OSMAN CAN YEREBAKAN](#)



Deborah Kass *America's Most Wanted*, Trevor F., 1998 (all photos courtesy the artist and Sargent's Daughters)

Call it Stockholm Syndrome or millennial ennui, but idolizing and objectifying bad boy attitude, especially over media, is embedded in our culture. From [the \*Rolling Stone\* cover](#) of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev to [Jeremy Meeks](#), who became an overnight sensation as 'hot mugshot guy,' the act of being bad—even in such extreme cases—sparks some obscure fascination in the society.

On view at Sargent's Daughters until June 28th is *America's Most Wanted*, a series of silkscreen prints by Deborah Kass. Known for her appropriation-based oeuvre, in which she rethinks Post-War American art through the lens of popular culture and its preeminent influence, Kass investigates, analyzes and dismantles not only imposed constitutions of the artistic cannon, but also of some set codes of dominant media. Another crucial element in Kass' work is her self-referential tone that allows her a vast and fruitful terrain to nourish from.



America's Most Wanted, Lisa D., 1998

Her *The Warhol Project*, for example, juxtaposes an alternative to Warhol's infamous series of silkscreens of iconic figures from the 60s. As a gay Pop-Artist in his time, Warhol, revolutionary and blasé as usual, grasped the irony of his zeitgeist, while portraying some lead players in their most exposed yet hyperbolic forms. Kass, on the other hand, twists Warhol's plan a notch, idolizing her own icons and influences with that same feminist tone her fellow *appropriation divas*, such as Sherrie Levine and Barbara Kruger, possess. What was done before repeats here in Kass' way. In her version, Cindy Sherman, Linda Nochlin or Elizabeth Murray fill Marilyn Monroe's or Elizabeth Taylor's shoes or, most famously, *My Elvis* presents a Barbra Streisand in drag from her 1983 *Yentl* (heads up for this film's parallels to Kass' work: feminine self and appropriation of male identity) covering for Warhol's Elvis Presley deliverance.

*America's Most Wanted*, a part of this *Warhol* series, adds another spin to Kass' statement on authorship and (fe)male gaze, problematizing certain connotations within the art world at the same time. Museum curators—call them 'decision makers of the next big thing' or 'captives of corporate loops'—strike here as the cool kids posing for their mugshots. Aligning with Warhol's *13 Most Wanted Men*—that had caused major controversy when it was first unveiled at New York World's Fair in 1964 due to

its *crimino-phile* content at such level that fair officials had decided to cover it with paint—Kass studies her and other artists' relationship with museum curators. An enfant terrible himself, Warhol had grabbed thirteen mugshots from NYPD records of the most wanted criminals at that time, and Kass grabs famous museum curators from their chairs.



America's Most Wanted at Sargent's Daughters

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Created in the late 90's, Kass' series take curators, among which are Dan Cameron (looking particularly 'bad' and dapper), Thelma Golden, Paul Schimmel and Robert Storr, from backstage into the spotlight. Influential and respected in the realm of art, yet anonymous for the rest of the world; these powerhouses stare into Kass' camera/gaze with decisiveness and self-esteem.

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