

The Philadelphia Inquirer

News

YO - or OY - sculpture put in its place on Independence Mall

May 1, 2022. TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer

The aluminum sculpture with just two letters uses creative word play to convey several meanings, depending on the direction from which you're viewing it.



The first - or is it the second - letter of the sculpture is removed from the truck. TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



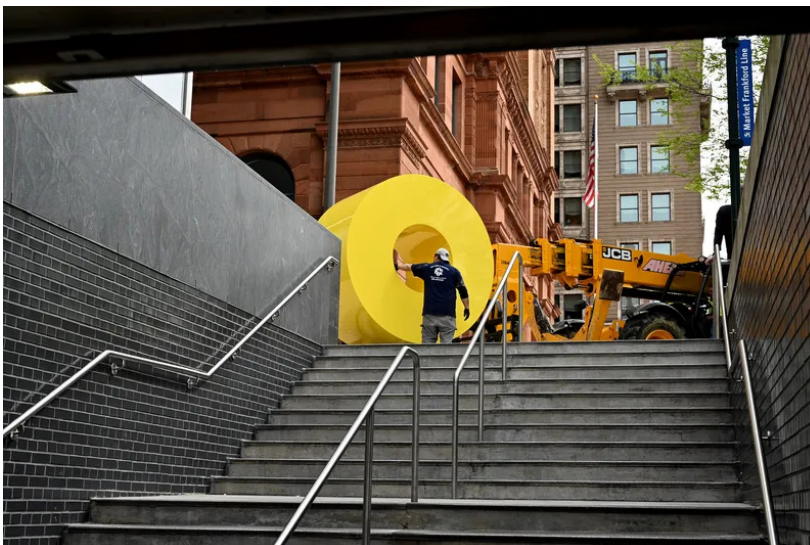
City officials expect the sculpture to become a social media favorite. TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



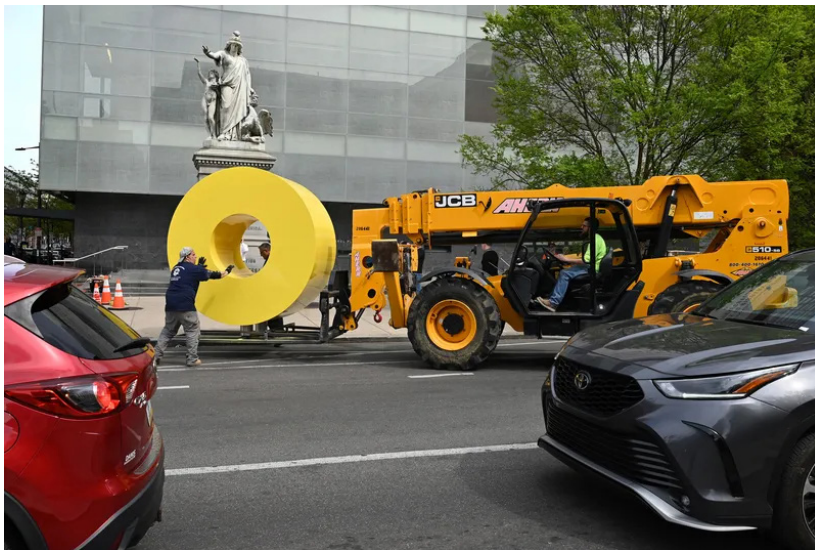
Friends of Havertown's Thomas Moore told him about the sculpture because it is the initials of his nickname: Y.O. - for Young Oldhead. He came into the city just to see it for himself. Like "Yo," oldhead is Philly slang. It is used to describe those older than you, used as a term of respect.
Read more [TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer](#)



Josh Perelman, chief curator at the museum, told Inquirer reporter Frank Kummer last month the work is connected with Philly through Rocky's "Yo, Adrian" scene, as well as the city's Hispanic community, with Yo translating as "I" and its use in hip-hop and slang. Read more [TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer](#)



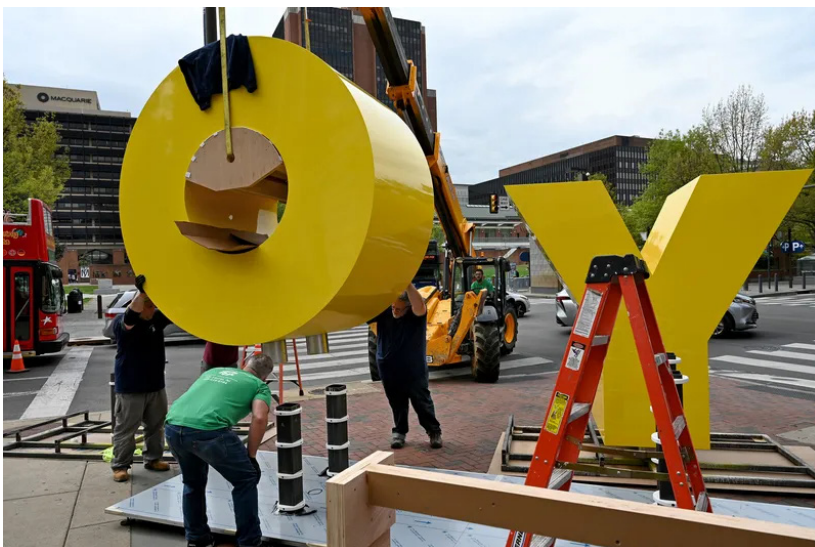
The installation is seen from inside SEPTA's 5th St Independence Hall Station. [TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer](#)



The sculpture "Religious Liberty" by Sir Moses Jacob Ezekiel (1844 - 1917) has been in front of the museum since 1984 (it will remain). TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



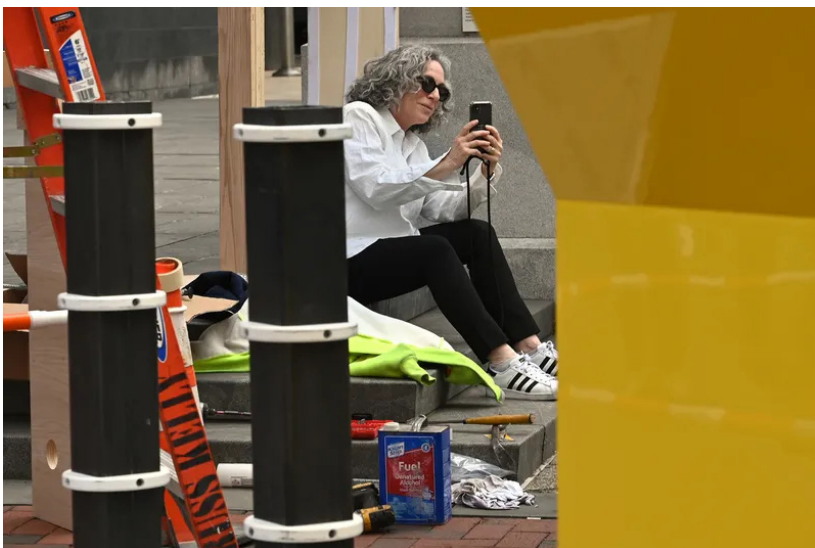
The piece is 8 feet tall, 16 feet wide, and 5 feet deep, and will be on loan to the museum for one-year. TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



The sculpture reads "YO" to those on Independence Mall. The "OY" faces the Jewish museum as if in a lighthearted wink toward the Yiddish word signaling exasperation, jubilation, grittiness, or struggle — depending on who is saying it, and how. Read more TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



Kass has said the inspiration for “YO” came from the Ed Ruscha’s 1962 “OOF” painting — large yellow letters on a blue field - at the Museum of Modern Art TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



Artist Deborah Kass documents the installation. She lives in Brooklyn, but is originally from San Antonio, Texas. She earned her BFA in painting from Pittsburgh’s Carnegie-Mellon University. TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



The OY/YO sculpture by artist Deborah Kass is installed outside the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History on Independence Mall May 1, 2022. TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



Like Robert Indiana's "LOVE" sculpture, there is more than one "OY/YO." The original was installed in Brooklyn Bridge Park in 2015, and was then moved to outside the Brooklyn Museum. TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



Laci Holden of Ocean City, Maryland is the first, but is unlikely to be the last person, to climb into the "O" after installation is complete. She was in Philadelphia with friends to attend a wedding. Artist Kass' website has a page full of photos of people getting creative with the Brooklyn version. Read moreTOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



The Independence Visitor Center is seen through the "O." TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer

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