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Kavi Gupta

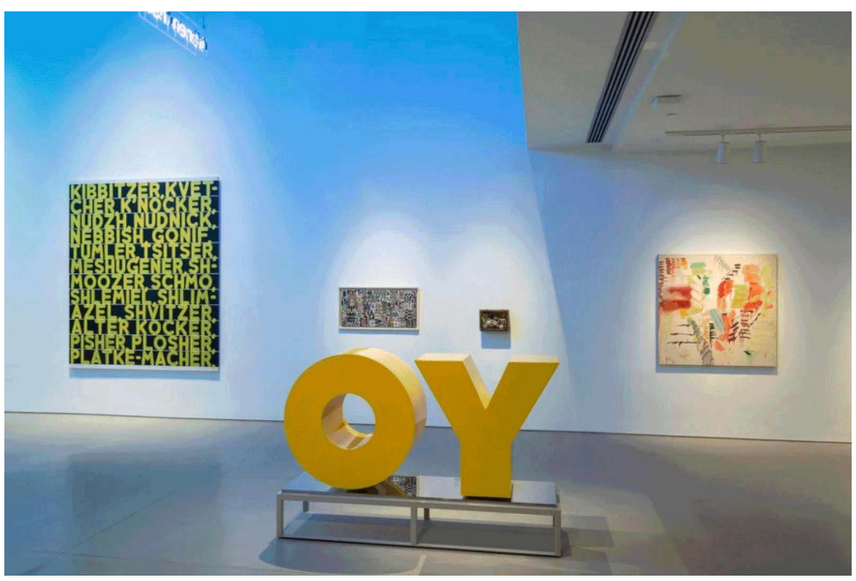
Kavi Gupta amplifies voices of diverse and underrepresented artists to expand the canon of art history. Through innovative and ambitious exhibitions, multimedia programming, and rigorous publications, we foster an evolving conversation among international communities about art and ideas.

SPOTLIGHT ON
DEBORAH KASS

Courtesy of Grace Roselli, Pandora's BoxX Project.

Deborah Kass is a living legend whose unflinching honesty, scintillating wit, and tireless scrutiny of American sensitivities has helped transform the contemporary art field into a more open, empathetic, and inclusive domain. Kass knows firsthand how art affects and informs the construction of self, and how important it is to foster an aesthetic culture in which all people can locate themselves.

“So much of my art is about who does, and who can,” Kass says. “Identity is a noun. It is WHAT you are. It’s how you come out of your mother. But when you identify with something outside of yourself, it’s active. It's a verb. That's how you start constructing WHO you are as a subject, a person—internally, emotionally, spiritually—and imagining how you can be in the world. When I saw Barbra Streisand take the world by storm when I was a 12-year-old Jewish girl from Long Island, that meant I could do it, too! Now people say, ‘If you can see it you can be it.’ This is the very meaning of inspiration.”



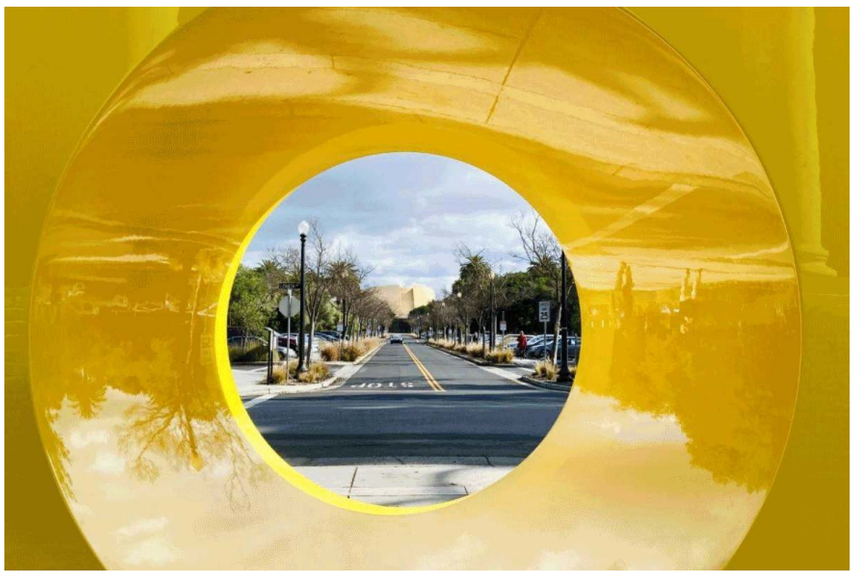
Installation views, Deborah Kass, *Before and Happily Ever After,* 2012-14. The Warhol, Pittsburgh, PA; *Scenes from the Collection*, The Jewish Museum, New York, NY; Deborah Kass and Linda Nochlin with Deborah Kass, *Orange Disaster (Linda Nochlin)*, 2020/21. National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.

Kass is beloved not only for her fortitude and compassion, but for her amaranthine ability to visually distill the zeitgeist into artworks teeming with brevity, acumen, and humor—from the radiant joy of her nine-piece, COVID-era, neon sculpture *EVERYBODY*; to the punk rock prescience of her 2016 *VOTE HILLARY* painting; to her instantly iconic, monumental *OY/YO* sculpture, editions of which currently attract and inspire daily crowds in front of the Brooklyn Museum in Brooklyn, NY, the Cantor Arts Center in Stanford, CA, and the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, PA.

Working for decades within institutional structures that historically have hindered the progress of artists like her, Kass has repeatedly subverted those who would deny her, becoming an inductee into the New York Foundation for the Arts Hall of Fame and the National Academy of Design, a recipient of the Passionate Artist Award from the Neuberger Museum, and a Cultural Honoree at the Jewish Museum. She serves on the boards of the Sharpe Walentas Studio Program and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and her work has been shown in the most influential venues in the world, including the Venice Biennale, the Istanbul Biennale, and the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. Her work has also recently been acquired by the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, CT, the Yale Art Gallery in New Haven, CT, NYU's Grey Art Gallery in New York, NY, and Art in Embassies.

Read on to learn more about the dynamic and multi-faceted career of Deborah Kass, and to find out what she is working on right now!

OY/YO



Deborah Kass, *OY/YO* on view at the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA; Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn, NY; the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Stanford, CA; and Sculpture Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI.

Deborah Kass | The Many Lives of *OY/YO*

Kass painted her first *OY* painting in 2009 and her first *YO* in 2010. The two paintings are covers of a painting by Ed Ruscha from 1962 called *Oof*, currently in the collection of MoMA. For her paintings, Kass appropriated the same hues and font that Ruscha used in his.

Since its debut as a public sculpture in Brooklyn Bridge Park in 2015, *OY/YO* has become Deborah Kass' most instantly recognizable work. Its gleaming, modern form combined with its straightforward investigation of perspective—it says OY when viewed from one side, and YO when viewed from the other—elevates it to a perfect expression of both Pop Art and Pop Criticism.

Deborah Kass, *OY*, 2011, and *YO*, 2011, 8-color silkscreen on 4-ply

Large-scale, public versions of *OY/YO* are currently in the permanent collections of museums on opposite coasts: the Brooklyn Museum in New York and the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA. *OY/YO* is also currently on display at the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, PA and as part of Sculpture Milwaukee 2021/22 in Milwaukee, WI.

museum board, 21.5 x 20 in.

Kass has additionally created a range of non-sculptural manifestations of *OY/YO*. Many of these iterations are aligned with Kass' ongoing engagement with political and social activism. Most recently, Kass designed an *OY/YO* t-shirt as part of *OUT OF ORDER* Magazine's capsule collection benefiting grassroots organization UKRAINEPRIDE. All proceeds generated by this project will go towards supporting LGBTQ+ families impacted by the war in Ukraine. This design mirrors an earlier modification of Kass' *OY/YO* at the Brooklyn Museum in which the artist wrapped the 'O' in blue fabric. This was done in March of 2022 following the declaration of war in Ukraine. During the wrapping of the work, Kass reflected on her grandparents, who were from a small Jewish village outside Kiev. Additionally in line with Kass' history, this modification is a direct reference to Bulgarian artist, Christo, who was known for wrapping cultural monuments and buildings in fabric.

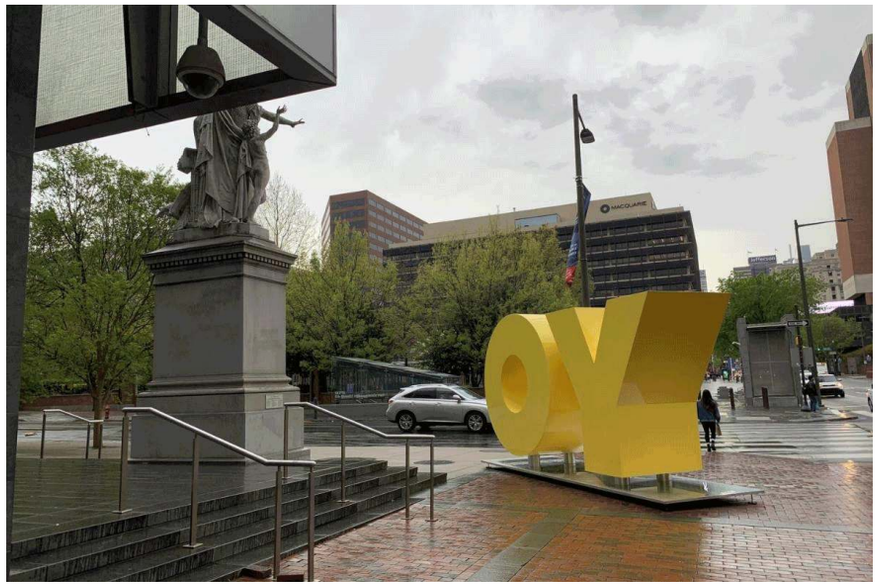
Installation view, Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, 2015/22. Courtesy of the artist and The Brooklyn Museum.

Deborah Kass for *OUTOFORDER* x UKRAINEPRIDE

SUPPORT UKRAINEPRIDE

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

WEITZMAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

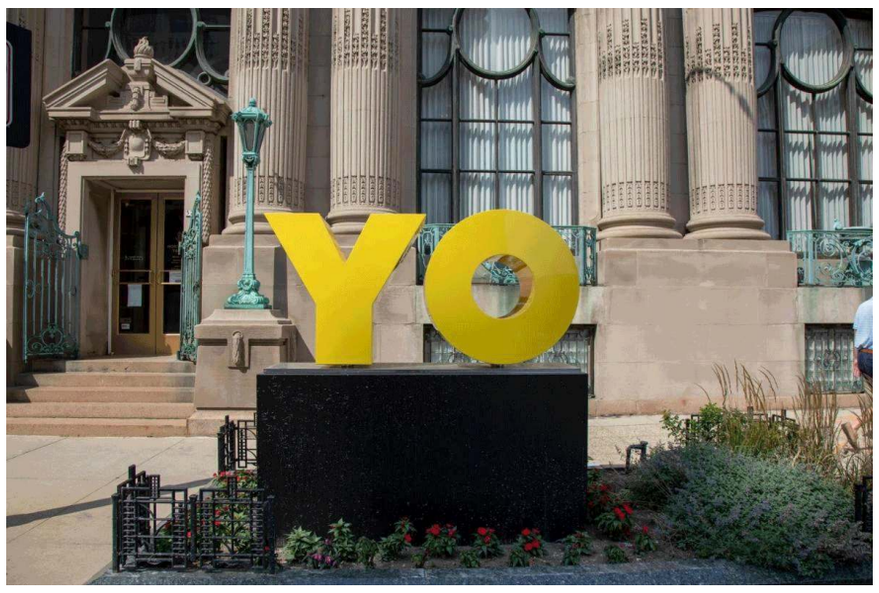


Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, 2022 at the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA.

Deborah Kass | *OY/YO*

Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History
May 1, 2022–May 1, 2023

SCULPTURE
MILWAUKEE



Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, 2020 in *there is this We*, Sculpture Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI.

Deborah Kass | *there is this We*

Sculpture Milwaukee
June 1, 2021–October 1, 2022

CANTOR
ARTS CENTER
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Stanford, CA. Images courtesy of the Cantor Arts Center.

Deborah Kass | *OY/YO*

Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University
December 20 2019–Present

Brooklyn Museum

Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, at the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY. Images courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.

Deborah Kass | *OY/YO*

The Brooklyn Museum
October 3, 2018–July 14, 2019

Permanent acquisition

IN CONVERSATION

Brooklyn Museum

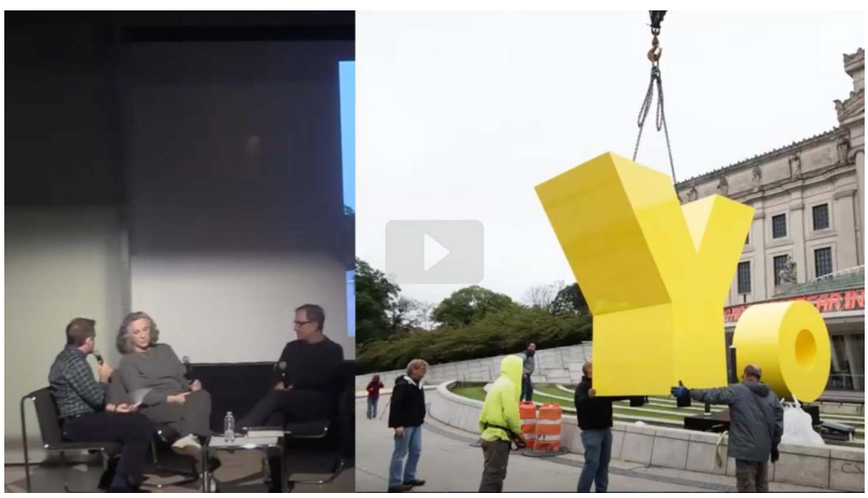
Video still, *Reclaimed* | Deborah Kass in *Andy Warhol, Revelation.* Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.

Reclaimed* | Deborah Kass in *Andy Warhol, Revelation

Deborah Kass joined the Brooklyn Museum in *Andy Warhol: Revelation* as the first subject of their new series, *Reclaimed*. The series explores the unique ways in which artists leverage their work to reclaim narratives of their lived experiences. During their conversation, Kass discusses her eight-year-long project inspired by Andy Warhol's highly recognizable imagery, which aspects of Warhol's life and artwork she finds most touching, and the continued role art plays in negotiating power and privilege.

WATCH

Jewish Museum



Video still from *Dialogue and Discourse I Deborah Kass in Conversation with Ross Bleckner and Eric Marcus*, 2019. Courtesy of The Jewish Museum.

***Dialogue and Discourse* | Deborah Kass in Conversation with Ross Bleckner and Eric Marcus**

Artists Ross Bleckner and Deborah Kass explore LGBTQ+ history and Jewish identity in this conversation moderated by Eric Marcus, creator and host of the Making Gay History podcast. This program was held in partnership with the Stonewall 50 Consortium, which brings together cultural institutions to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising and the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement.

WATCH

Art | Basel

Video still, *Art Basel OVR: Pioneers I Deborah Kass*, 2021.

***Art Basel OVR: Pioneers* | Deborah Kass**

Artist Deborah Kass and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Chief Curator Naomi Beckwith discuss her iconic *Warhol Project* as part of Art Basel 2021 OVR: *Pioneers.*

WATCH

BOMB MAGAZINE ARCHIVES

BOMB

Deborah Kass, *Double Red Barbra*, 1993; *Short Story II*, 1989. Collection of Dan Cameron; *Happy Days*, 2009; *Double Double Yentl (My Elvis)*, 1992. Collection of Norton Family Foundation; *Frank's Dilemma*, 2009.

***BOMB* Magazine's *Decades of Pride* | Deborah Kass**

BOMB Magazine celebrated this year's Pride month by releasing a curated selection from their archives entitled ***Decades of Pride***. The feature covered histories of queer sloganeering, movement, poetry, and documentary spanning from the 1980s to the present day. Included was Deborah Kass's comprehensive 2010 interview with renowned art critic and historian Irving Sandler. Their conversation covered an expansive array of topics including the evolution of the art world in relation to feminism, Barbra Streisand as a queer icon, and the root of Kass' enduring fascination with appropriation.

"Painting is just a medium. It's what you do with it that matters. You don't kill language because you don't like what someone wrote. It's food, it's language, it doesn't die, it just changes, and it's to be used."

–Deborah Kass

LEARN MORE

PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Photo by Jack Pierson.

Deborah Kass | A New T-Shirt Capsule Puts Ukrainian Pride Front and Center

VOGUE

Courtesy of *OUTOFORDER* and *W Magazine*.

Deborah Kass | These Artist Designed T-Shirts Help Ukrainians on the Ground

W

Deborah Kass for *OOO* x UkrainePride.

Deborah Kass | *OUT OF ORDER* Magazine's T-Shirt Collection Benefiting UKRAINEPRIDE

COOL HUNTING®

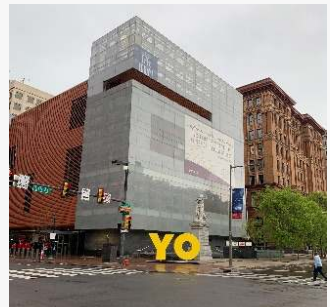
Installation view, Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and The Brooklyn Museum.

Deborah Kass | The Brooklyn Museum's *OY/YO* Sculpture is Now Wrapped in Blue

"Her activation aligns with her original motivation in creating this sculpture—to connect communities and to see our commonalities."

–The Brooklyn Museum

Time Out



Photograph by Jessi Melcer. Courtesy of Philadelphia Magazine.

Deborah Kass | Of Teacups, Shared Trauma and Shared Destiny: Reflections on the Weitzman's Reopening

"'I created OY/YO thinking about the American promise of equality and fairness and our responsibilities to make the country a better place for all,' says Kass. '*With hate and division now on the rise, it is urgent to see our commonalities, what we share, and what brings us together.'"*

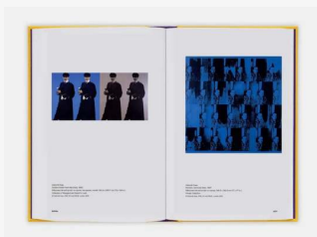
Philadelphia

Courtesy of Tom Gralish for the *Philadelphia Inquirer.*

Deborah Kass | *YO*—or *OY* —Sculpture Put in Its Place on Independence Mall

"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, jubilance, grittiness, or struggle—depending on who is saying it, and how."

The Philadelphia Inquirer



Writings on Art 2006–2021 by Robert Storr, featuring Deborah Kass, Published by HENI, 2021.

Deborah Kass | Featured in Robert Storr's Writings on Art 2006–2021

HENI

Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, 2020.

Deborah Kass | A New Shtick for Philly

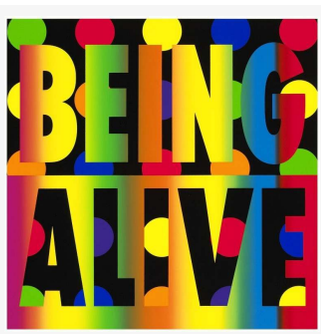
"'It's a pretty famous painting, and I regularly visit the Museum of Modern Art [in New York], so I've seen it a million times,' Kass said Monday. 'But one time I was looking at it, the word Oy just popped into my head. So I made the painting, same size, same colors, but instead of OOF, it said OY.'"

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Courtesy of Deborah Kass.

Deborah Kass | "It's Not Surprising, But it's Totally Shocking;" Artists Respond to Leaked US Supreme Court Document Threat

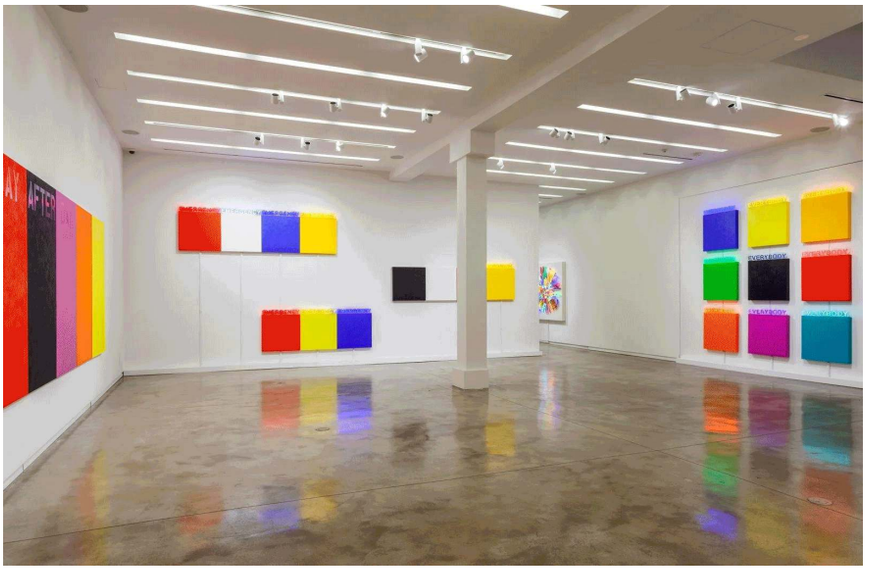
THE ART NEWSPAPER



Deborah Kass, *Being Alive*, 2012.

Deborah Kass | Art Marketplace: Her Clique is Highlighting Female Artists Who Are Selling Works to Aid Ukraine

HYPEBEAST



Installation views & details, Deborah Kass, *Painting and Sculpture*, 2020/21. Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St. Fl 1.

Deborah Kass | *Painting and Sculpture*

Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St. Fl. 1
September 11, 2020–June 18, 2021

In 2020, Kavi Gupta Gallery opened its inaugural solo exhibition with New York-based artist Deborah Kass, entitled ***Painting and Sculpture.*** Pairing a stunning new body of work with select historical pieces, the exhibition created an unflinching examination of the American condition before and during the Trump presidency.

The canonized giants of Pop Art and Minimalism defined themselves by their opposition to each other—Pop Art could be anything; Minimalism was everything Pop Art wasn't. However, as a young artist, Deborah Kass saw things differently. Pop and Minimalism were both equally radical. Her dual admiration, along with her commitment to examining the political climate of today, expressed itself abundantly in this show.

EXPLORE IN 3D

Kavi Gupta

GUGGENHEIM

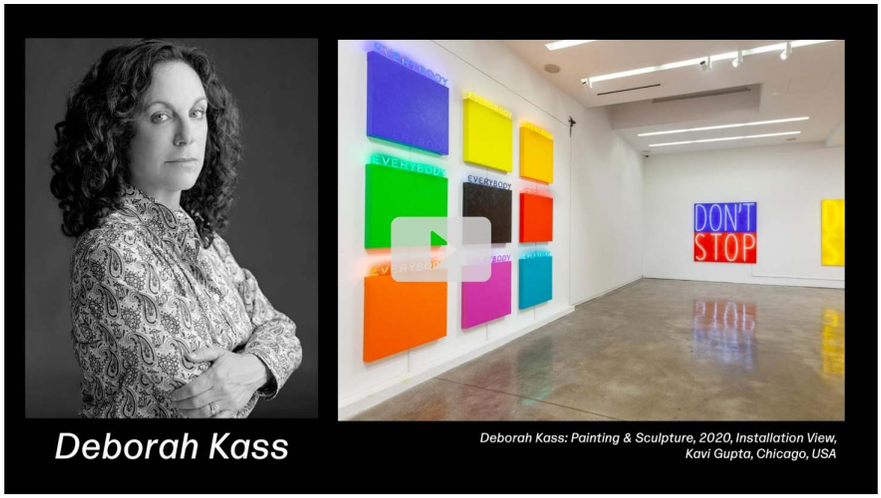
Video still, *Deborah Kass in Conversation | Painting and Sculpture*, 2020. Kavi Gupta.

Deborah Kass & Naomi Beckwith in Conversation | *Painting and Sculpture*

Listen to artist Deborah Kass and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Chief Curator Naomi Beckwith discuss her 2020/21 exhibition *Painting and Sculpture* at Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St. Moderated by Kavi Gupta Associate Director of Interpretation Phillip Barcio.

WATCH

Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St.

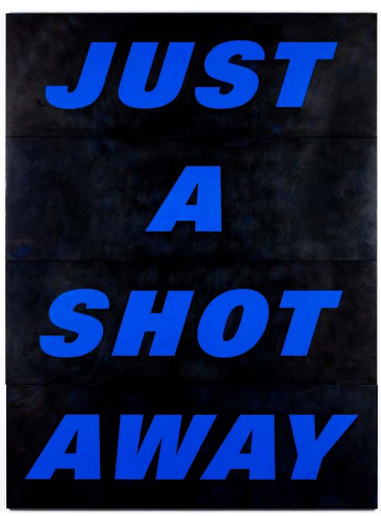


Video still, *Deborah Kass in Conversation | Painting and Sculpture*, 2020. Kavi Gupta.

Deborah Kass in Conversation | *Painting and Sculpture*

Listen to artist Deborah Kass and Kavi Gupta Associate Director of Interpretation Phillip Barcio discuss her 2020/21 exhibition *Painting and Sculpture* at Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St.

WATCH



Deborah Kass, *Just A Shot Away*, 2015. Acrylic on canvas, 96.5 x 72 in.

"The graphically composed painting and its appropriated stanza set the stage for a scintillating collection of works that graft borrowed language—funny, banal, upbeat, and grim—onto Minimalist-inspired compositions with bright Pop flourishes."

–Michelle Grabner

ARTFORUM

Kavi Gupta | editions

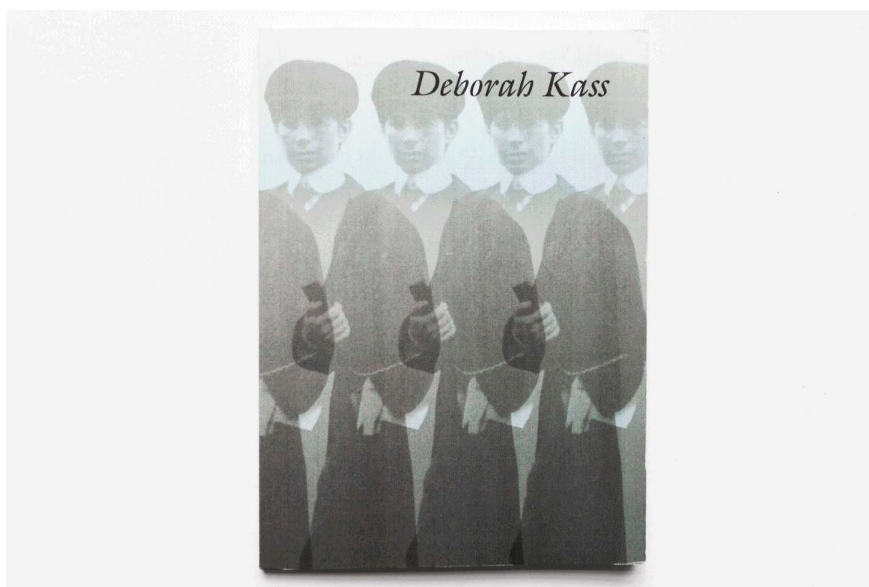
Featuring contemporary art publications and artist's multiples, Kavi Gupta Editions is the gallery's publishing imprint and bookshop, located at 835 W. Washington Blvd. and online.

Writings on Art 2006–2021 by Robert Storr, featuring Deborah Kass, Published by HENI, 2021. Clothbound hardcover, 720 pages, 9.7 x 6.2 in.

Writings on Art 2006–2021 by Robert Storr **|** Featuring Deborah Kass

Published by HENI, 2021.
Clothbound handover, 720 pages, 9.7 x 6.2 in.

Featuring the best of Robert Storr's criticism—reviews, essays and articles, many of which are previously unpublished—from 2006 to the present day, the book includes his texts on artists such as Deborah Kass, Carrie Mae Weems, David Hammons, Jenny Holzer, Jasper Johns, and Gerhard Richter. Written with his signature intellect and wit, his writings range from essays on performances of femininity in Cindy Sherman's photographic oeuvre to dialectics of race in the work of Kara Walker.



Deborah Kass, 2021. Paperback, 84 pages, 7 x 5 in.

Deborah Kass

Published by Kavi Gupta, 2021.
Paperback, 84 pages, 7 x 5 in.

Kavi Gupta X Deborah Kass | COVID 19 Mask Project. Limited edition of 200.

Kavi Gupta X Deborah Kass | COVID 19 Mask Project

Kavi Gupta, 2020.
Polyester, Edition of 200

Based on Kass's large-scale painting *Being Alive* (2010), the ALIVE mask is washable and reusable and features two breathable polyester fabric layers with a bendable nose wire. Proceeds from the sale of the Deborah Kass ALIVE face mask benefited **THE CENTER**, an organization that offers the LGBTQ communities of New York City advocacy, health and wellness programs, arts, entertainment and cultural events, and recovery, parenthood and family support services since 1983.

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