

20 Works of Public Art to See in New York City

Howard Halle | November 27, 2023 8:36am



Passers-by rotate Tony Rosenthal's *Alamo* (1967) in Cooper Square, New York City, October 10, 1974. Allan Tannenbaum/Getty Images.

Public art is nearly as old as human civilization itself, with countless monuments and statues erected over the eons. Though today public art is generally associated with temporary outdoor installations, New York City does have its fair share of permanently fixed alfresco artworks, including many modernist and contemporary examples dating from the mid-20th century onward. If you want track down some of the most important of them, consult our list below.

Deborah Kass, OY/YO (2015)



Deborah Kass, OY/YO(2015), Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn, New York

Photo : Raymond Boyd/Getty Images.

Like Hank Willis Thomas's piece, Deborah Kass's OY/YO could be construed as a paean to Brooklyn, or perhaps to anywhere in New York City where both words are routinely uttered—in other words, everywhere. Measuring 8 by 17 by 5 feet and painted in bright safety yellow, the sculpture comprises a capital O and Y in extra-bold, sans-serif letters. Essentially it's a monumental palindrome reading from one side as "oy" and from the reverse as "yo." The former factored into the origin of the idea in 2011 when Kass painted the word in the same color and font as the titular onomatopoeia appearing in Ed Ruscha's OOF from 1962. Kass added "yo" in later renditions, including a two-sided billboard project. The sculpture was first installed as a temporary project in Brooklyn Bridge Park before it was acquired by the Brooklyn Museum (200 Eastern Parkway), where it sits in front of the entrance.

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