

Here's How to Linguistically Gussy Up That Sweet OY/YO Sculpture

Artist Deborah Kass brings some flavor to Brooklyn Bridge Park with one massive, amphibious word
By **Jonathan Zalman**

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Deborah Kass, a modern artist whose works often produce their meanings by re-imagining the style of Andy Warhol, for one, (also Gertrude Stein and Jackson Pollack) has created a huge, yellow, sculpture that reads “OY” when looking from Brooklyn into Manhattan, and “YO” when doing the opposite. It’s eight feet high, painted and made of aluminum. It will be on display until August. Kass told The New York Times that she hatched the idea from a painting she created in 2011, which itself was a play on Edward Ruscha’s “OOF” painting.

Of Kass’s approach, the director of the Andy Warhol Museum once said: “It’s not so much her attempting to become Warhol or Streisand or any other subject that appears in the work, but it’s how she as an individual identifies with them. As a lesbian Jewish artist from New York who is in love with Broadway and popular culture, she is thinking about artists of that background largely being steamrollered by the canon of art history—and making sure her voice is heard.”

Here, Kass voice is heard perhaps in one simple question: Are you an “Oy” kinda person (Brooklyn), or do you prefer “Yo” (Manhattan)? Geography, of course, is a matter of ample importance to New Yorkers—a symbol of status and the ideal means for conversation and argument. But this question, said Kass, is something people need to answer for themselves.

Rest assured tourists and New Yorkers alike will be taking pictures next to the sculpture. Here are some word suggestions to help small and large groups of people make new words by forming letters with their body when standing next to the OY or YO:

OY:

BBOY

AHOY! (exclamation point is optional)

BOY/BOYFRIEND

GOY/GOYIM

SOY

SOYLENT

TOMBOY (this one might be tough on the body as I’m not sure how to produce an “M” with my limbs; consider yourself warned.)

COWBOY

OYSTER<

OYEZOYEZ (I highly recommend abstaining from an attempt on this one at all costs. I heard once about a group of friends who tried to create this word using their limbs and one of them needed a backtomy afterward and his insurance didn’t cover that procedure.)

BOYZIIMEN

YO:

WYOMING

YOYO/MA

BYOB

KYOTO

MYOPIC

SAYONARA

BAYOU

YO, MAN