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Kavi Gupta

In consideration of ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, viewing of our fall exhibitions will be limited. Groups of up to four people may book private viewing appointments between the hours of 11 am and 5 pm, Tuesday through Friday, and between 12 and 4pm, Saturday. All visitors to Kavi Gupta will be required to wear masks at all times and to maintain social distancing of at least six feet. Temperatures will be taken at the door.

To schedule a viewing, please email info@kavigupta.com.

DEBORAH KASS PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

OPENING SEPTEMBER 10
KAVI GUPTA | ELIZABETH ST.



Deborah Kass: Painting and Sculpture (installation view), 2020, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St.

Kavi Gupta proudly presents *Deborah Kass: Painting and Sculpture*, the gallery's inaugural solo exhibition with the artist. Pairing a stunning new body of work with select historical

pieces, the exhibition creates 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, expresses itself abundantly in this show.

Kass first sketched *DON'T STOP* (2020) immediately after watching the finale of *The Sopranos*. Tony picks Journey's *Don't Stop Believin'* on the jukebox as a possible assassin in a Members Only jacket walks out of the bathroom towards him, à la Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. Kass knows, of course, the words are also in Michael Jackson's *Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough* and countless other pop songs. Yet, it wasn't until the Trump era that she actually felt compelled to make these enlarged, neon versions of the piece. The phrase was something of a mantra to herself, about not giving up despite the overwhelming tragedy that is the Trump presidency.



Don't Stop 3 (Yellow/Yellow/Yellow), 2020, acrylic and neon on canvas, 72 x 72 inches

Just a Shot Away (2015) references the Rolling Stones song *Gimme Shelter*, in which background singers mournfully repeat, "Rape, murder." Kass made the piece during the first wave of Black Lives Matters protests. Its color palette—black and blue—simultaneously

references police violence against people of color, and Ellsworth Kelly's black and blue Minimalist works. We might also read something hopeful in these words, as a return to public life is theoretically just a (vaccination) shot away.



Just a Shot Away, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 96.5 x 72 inches

Kass's nine-panel *EVERYBODY* (2019) was inspired by the Martha Wash/Black Box club jam *Everybody Everybody*, while its color palette suggests Ellsworth Kelly's installation in the lobby of the National Gallery in Washington, DC. Her multi-panel *EMERGENCY* series (2019–20), meanwhile, references everything from Kazimir Malevich to Jasper Johns to the Bauhaus. Is Kass telling us to open up the art historical canon to everybody? Is the need for equity and equality in society at emergency levels? These works, which were started before the onset of COVID-19, are incredibly prescient expressions of the ethos of our time: that *EVERYBODY* is in this *EMERGENCY* together.



Deborah Kass: *Painting and Sculpture* (installation view), 2020, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St.

The seven-panel *Day After Day* (2010) was made during the Obama administration, when oil from a damaged BP rig was gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, day after day. The lyric is from Stephen Sondheim's *Not a Day Goes By*, from the musical *Merrily We Roll Along*. In this moment, it seems also to speak to inescapable waiting.

Kass's iconic OY/YO sculpture sits in anti-patriarchal protest with her painting *Daddy, I Would Love to Dance* (lyrics from *At the Ballet*, which Kass describes as the first emotional epiphany for the women in the musical *A Chorus Line*), and her neon sculpture *After Louise Bourgeois* (2010), which features an altered quote from the legendary artist: "A woman has no place in the art world unless she proves over and over again she won't be eliminated."



“The resonance with this work is that so many can identify with it,” Kass explains. “Identity is a noun. It is WHAT you are. It’s how you come out of your mother. But when you identify with some-thing 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. Now people say, ‘If you can see it you can be it.’ This is the very meaning of inspiration.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS



OY/YO installed at the Cantor Arts Center, 2019, Palo Alto, CA.

Gift of Debi and Steven Wisch and the Rehmus Family. Photo: Farrin Abbott

We are pleased to announce that Deborah Kass’s beloved OY/YO sculpture has officially joined the permanent collections of both the Cantor Arts Center in Palo Alto, California, and the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

Playful and inviting, OY/YO hits the topic of perspective head on. It spells YO when viewed from one side, and OY if you change where you stand. One is a salutation, the other an expression of angst. Situated in front of museum entrances on opposite coasts, the sculptures seem to invite every American in between to enlarge their point of view.

OY/YO debuted in 2015 on a grassy swath of Brooklyn Bridge Park. That’s where Susan Dackerman first saw it. Two years later, when Dackerman was named the John and Jill

Freidenrich Director of the Cantor Arts Center, *OY/YO* was the first piece she commissioned for the museum's permanent collection.

Dackerman notes that Californians react as warmly as New Yorkers to the work. "When Deborah Kass spoke to our community earlier this year, we discussed that *OY/YO* simply makes people happy. Whether it's the color, scale, resonance or some combination of factors, it brings a smile to visitors—and that's important during difficult times. We've heard from students that the sculpture is a bold celebration of diversity and inclusivity, and that's as high of a compliment as we could ask."

"In some ways, *OY/YO* acts as a mascot for the Cantor's encyclopedic collection," Dackerman says. "It recalls numerous movements from the history of art while enabling viewers to ask profound questions about communication, process and form in a contemporary, approachable way. Its placement at the base of the museum's neoclassical facade, graced by statues of Faith and Menander, is intended to blend the old with the new while making the museum more friendly and beckoning, especially for students."



OY/YO installed at the Brooklyn Museum, 2019, Brooklyn, NY. Photo: Jonathan Dorado

In 2018, *OY/YO* re-appeared in Brooklyn as part of a year-long public art activation in front of the Brooklyn Museum. The piece remained in place after year's end and became a central gathering point for civil rights activists earlier this summer. Kass received word this summer that the museum has decided to permanently acquire the sculpture.

"As a New Yorker, as a Brooklynite, the *OY/YO* installation in front of the magnificent Brooklyn Museum is a dream," Kass says. "The plaza has been a rallying place during this inflection point of rage and activism, for Black Trans Lives Matters and Juneteenth. I couldn't march or rally—too vulnerable and also broke a toe. But I felt like the best of me was there in solidarity. Nothing has moved me more than seeing *OY/YO* surrounded by 10,000 of my sisters and brothers in love and power and pride. So incredibly emotional. It made me cry."



Black Trans Lives Matter Rally surrounding *OY/ YO* sculpture in front of the Brooklyn Museum, 2020, Brooklyn, NY.

Photo: Julie Ann Pietrangelo

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Deborah Kass (born 1952) is an American artist whose work explores the intersection of pop culture, art history, and the construction of self. Work by Kass is in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of Art, The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, The Jewish Museum, The Museum of Fine Art, Boston, The Cincinnati Museum, The New Orleans Museum, The National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute, Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, as well as other museums and private collections. Kass' work has been shown nationally and internationally including at the Venice Biennale, the Istanbul Biennale, and the Museum Ludwig, Cologne. The Andy Warhol Museum presented *Deborah Kass, Before and Happily Ever After, Mid-Career Retrospective* in 2012, with a catalogue published by Rizzoli. In 2018, Kass was inducted into The National Academy. In 2014, she was inducted into the New York Foundation for the Arts Hall of Fame. She was honored with the Passionate Artist Award by the Neuberger Museum in 2016, and was the Cultural Honoree at the Jewish Museum in 2017. She serves on the boards of the Sharpe Walentas Studio Program and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

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