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Artists Take Over Two Outdoor Malls in Massachusetts and Florida



An installation view of Deborah Kass's "Oy/Yo" at The Street shopping center in Chestnut Hill, Mass. Michael Blanchard, courtesy of Art Production Fund

By ANN BINLOT
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As the daughter of two art collectors — the fashion designer Lisa Perry and the hedge fund manager Richard Perry — Samantha Perry David grew up surrounded by Jeff Koons sculptures and Andy Warhol paintings. Now the head of upMarkets, a division of the retail real estate firm WS Development, David realized there was a dearth of public art at two of its properties, the luxury shopping center The Street in Chestnut Hill, Mass., and Hyde Park Village in Tampa, Fla. So she called on two of her mother's friends, Yvonne Force Villareal and Doreen Remen of Art Production Fund, to do something about it. "We were compelled by this notion because there is no public art within that community," Force Villareal says, "and we always strive to bring the vision of contemporary artists to new audiences that have little exposure to such projects."

Force Villareal and Remen approached the artist Deborah Kass — known for her irreverent and colorful word art — and the photographer Jessica Craig-Martin, whose photographs slyly critique the fashion and social scenes, about creating public installations. "Basically I let them take the lead and they had some ideas and we just sort of edited a little together, and came up with what we wanted to do," Kass says. Starting tomorrow, 39 banners reproducing Kass's work are on display in spaces that usually are reserved for advertisements throughout The Street. Included are her pieces "C'mon Get Happy," "Forget Your Troubles," "Sweet Thing" and "Let The Sunshine In," which are also lyrics from the Broadway musicals "Hair" and "Summer Stock." The centerpiece of Kass's public art installation is a billboard facing Route 9 that reproduces her work "OY YO" — an anagram that uses terminology from the Jewish, African-American and Latino communities. "To me," Kass says, "it was three great communities coming together in this linguistic flip."

And beginning Friday, 46 of Craig-Martin's photographs — slyly cropped close-ups of perfectly manicured nails, feet in strappy sandals and glamorous women — will receive the same treatment at Hyde Park Village. After six months, the installations will swap locations. Says David of the project: "We want to offer people an opportunity to think about and experience new things while they are enjoying their everyday lives."

The Street, 55 Boylston St., Chestnut Hill, Mass., thestreetchestnuthill.com; Hyde Park Village, 1602 W. Snow Avenue, Tampa, Fla., hydeparkvillage.com.

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