

Virtual 
LAVENDER
 **Labels**

DEBORAH KASS
(American, b. 1952)

Triple Ghost Yentl (My Elvis), 1997

Silkscreen and acrylic on canvas | 72 x 64 in.

The Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College,
Gift of Barbara '68 and Theodore '68 Alfond, 2013.34.91. © 2021
Deborah Kass / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York



Jewish. Lesbian. Female.

The multiplicity Deborah Kass presents refuses singularity. Offering both an icon and something sacred, *Yentl* references a film and a character of the same name. It unites expressions of gender, sexuality, and trans identities, allowing Kass to embrace her own identities. She remixes culture and claims herself in her work through the subtitle (*My Elvis.*)

In the 1983 romantic musical drama film, Barbra Streisand plays the title character, a daughter of a Jewish teacher whom he secretly instructs until his death. She presents as a male student to enroll in a religious school to continue studying. Later, Streisand's character falls in love with a male classmate but eventually marries a woman, despite her interest in her wife's former fiancé, further complicating the plot. The wife begins to fall in love with her "husband" regardless. This image is Streisand embodying the male student, where Kass uses the gender-non-conforming character to affirm degrees of lesbian desire.

Kass also addresses the icons of 20th century art, invoking Elvis Presley and Andy Warhol. This silkscreen is in direct conversation with Warhol's many series of Elvis created in 1963. By reproducing a publicity still from the 1960 film, *Flaming Star* via silkscreen on canvas, Warhol explores cultural concepts of celebrity, image construction, popular media, and procedural remediation.

Using scale to communicate realism – *Triple Ghost Yentl (My Elvis)* is nearly life-size of its subject. The Jewish superlative can be expressed as three (holy, holy, holy) possibly inferring this work is the superlative of its expression. The three identical, overlapping, translucent figures cannot be visually pinned down, much like Yentl's own gender and sexuality. Viewers may see it as strangely metallic, silvery, and mirror-like: as a place to commune with their own reflection of intersectional identities.