

ARTnews

JANUARY 2003



COURTESY DEITCH PROJECTS, NY.

Patricia Cronin's *Memorial to a Marriage*.

Plot Twist

On a cold Sunday last November, about 100 New Yorkers rode the Number 4 train to its last stop, Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. Nobody had died- the group was celebrating **Patricia Cronin's** *Memorial to a Marriage*, a sculpture depicting the artist and her partner, sculptor **Deborah Kass**, embracing in their bed. Sited on the couple's future plot, the Neo-Classical-style monument puts a feminist spin on 19th century mortuary sculptures, casting the decidedly non-Victorian subject matter in the period's romantic, idealized style.

Cronin embarked on the project while she was researching equestrian statues and discovered that public monuments rarely featured women as individuals. "I started looking for specific women honored in public in New York," she says. "I found Joan of Arc in Riverside Church, a bust of Eleanor Roosevelt, and then . . . Mother Goose and Alive in Wonderland!" It was in mortuary sculptures, often carved by the same public-monument artist, that many historic women were remembered.

Before the unveiling, Woodlawn guides led a tour around the sprawling cemetery, where Herman Melville, Joseph Pulitzer, and Miles Davis are (already) buried. There were the requisite outer-borough jokes, plus some cemetery jabs added for the occasion ("How will we tell which people in black are here for the opening?" quipped sculptor **Elana Herzog**). After the ceremony, sponsored by Deitch Projects, guests dined on white wine and donut holes. Cronin proclaimed, "If I can't have a wedding, I'll have a funeral!"

-**Melissa Gronlund**