

ARTNEWS

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ART TALK

TILL DEATH DO US ART



Patricia Cronin's *Memorial to a Marriage* at Woodlawn Cemetery.

“This is the first piece of real estate I bought, and it will be my last,” says artist **Patricia Cronin**, referring to the plot she purchased at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. “I have it into perpetuity.” When Cronin and her spouse, artist **Deborah Kass**, are eventually laid to rest, they—or at least, the walking living—will be within strolling distance of **J. P. Morgan**, **Miles Davis**, **Duke Ellington**, and **Celia Cruz**.

Cronin chose the park for its beauty, its sunken garden, and especially its stellar neighbors. It was here that she decided to install her Neoclassical-style marble monument of two females embracing, *Memorial to a Marriage*. That was in 2002, before same-sex marriage was legal in New York. “I chose a 19th-century American form,” Cronin says, “to address my 21st-century political beliefs.”

To celebrate Woodlawn's 150th anniversary, Columbia University's Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery is exhibiting “Sylvan Cemetery: Architecture, Art and Landscape at Woodlawn,” through November 1.

The show, curated by **Deborah Cullen**, highlights the holdings and archives connected with Woodlawn in Columbia's Avery Library. There are artifacts, preparatory sketches for monuments, maps, building elevations, photographs, maintenance records, and letters. Cronin herself has lent a bronze version of her sculpture to accompany the library's small plaster one.

Woodlawn is the forever-home to more than 300,000 people, and houses memorials by such famous American architects and designers as **McKim, Mead & White**, **John Russell Pope**, **Cass Gilbert**, and **John LaFarge**. It also contains *The Outcast* (ca. 1904), an angst-filled statue by the Italian-born sculptor **Attilio Piccirilli**.

“I've fallen in love with the place,” Cronin says of Woodlawn, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2011. “When I installed the piece, I did it with Deitch Projects—and did it as if I were dead. It was a real funeral. We had a party, pizza, red wine. It was like *The Sopranos*.”

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