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Patricia Cronin's Army of Love: Ode to Aphrodite at CHART Gallery, NYC

Bash Ortega 09/19/2025



Installation view, Patricia Cronin: Army of Love at CHART Gallery, NYC, 2025. Photo Credit: KC Crow Maddux

Patricia Cronin: Army of Love at CHART Gallery, NYC
5 September – 18 October 2025

Patricia Cronin is a groundbreaking feminist artist. Army of Love, currently showing at Chart Gallery, is representative of the boundary-pushing work she has done throughout her career. The show presents interpretations of Venus and Aphrodite statues from various periods and locations. Cronin also happened to be at the show at the time I was viewing and offered Artefuse a peek behind the curtain.

Cronin's use of negative space as a silhouette in her work is an interesting feminist subversion of women's socialization. Women are often socialized to take up less space, but Cronin's silhouettes do much the opposite. Similar to Ana Medieta's "Silueta Series", the outlines of Aphrodite create an archetypal feminine with which the viewer can identify themselves. Furthermore, the work's scale denotes a powerful and protective, but not imposing energy. The artist shared that when she was working on them in her studio, their presence made her feel safe.

Cronin's materials are of particular symbolic importance in her work. While there is, of course, inspiration from Arte Povera in using regular, household materials, Cronin's materials draw specifically from the domestic realm. For her monumental silhouettes, she uses marble contact paper, which she noted reminded her of decorating a rented first apartment. The large paintings on blue cotton use bleach, a household cleaner, as their medium. Finally, Cronin uses tarps in her large negative space paintings to evoke safety during disaster.



Patricia Cronin, Aphrodite of Capua (Naples National Archaeological Museum), 2025, mixed media on paper, 96 x 48 in | 243.8 x 121.9 cm. Photo credit: KC Crow Maddux



Patricia CroninTownley, *Venus (British Museum)*, 2025, bleach on cotton, 79 x 55 1/2 in | 200.7 x 141 cm. Photo credit: KC Crow Maddux

Cronin shared some of the process behind these large tarpaulin paintings. Their creation was somewhat spontaneous – after laying down fabric to paint, an image of the work was transferred onto it. The brush strokes and water texture created a seafoam scape, like that of which Venus was born from. Spontaneity, intentionality, and technique combine in the pieces to make finished work that is dimensionally and conceptually layered.



Patricia Cronin, *Aphrodite of Cnidus* (National Roman Museum, Palazzo Altemps), 2018, polyethylene, acrylic on canvas, and dye sublimation on fabric, 120 x 84 in | 304.8 x 213.4 cm. Photo credit: Patricia Cronin

In contrast to the regal and monumental ground-level gallery space, the basement is intimate. Its tight, underground space mirrors the narrative of Iris Love's 1969 discovery of the temple in Knidos, Turkey, by which Cronin was deeply inspired to make the works in the show. Many of the smaller watercolors in the basement mirror the larger ground-level works. It is also exciting to see Cronin's sculpture, as likely her most well-known piece, *Memorial to a Marriage*, is in this medium.



Installation view, Patricia Cronin: *Army of Love* at CHART Gallery, NYC, 2025. Photo Credit: KC Crow Maddux

Upon leaving the gallery, I asked Cronin if she drew at all from Yves Klein, given the works' color and female subjects. Cronin responded, "I can see why you would think that, but no female models were harmed in the making of this work."

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