

ArtSee: Coloring DC

Patricia Cronin Exhibits Bodies and Soul at Conner Contemporary Art

February 7, 2012

Already boasting trendy restaurants, hipster bars and indoor mini-golf, H Street is giving residents yet another reason to visit the NE neighborhood this month. February 4 – March 10, Conner Contemporary Art is hosting Patricia Cronin's Bodies and Soul exhibit – the artist's first solo exhibition in the District.

Hosting Cronin's exhibit in D.C., however, bears more significance than it simply being the NY-based artist's first solo display in the city. This is because the focus of the exhibit, a sculpture titled Memorial to a Marriage, sends a very powerful political message at the height of a presidential election year.

The near-life size bronze sculpture, cast after a funerary portrait Cronin created in 2002, depicts the artist and her life mate tangled in a sleeping embrace. The tomb-like piece represents the frustrations Cronin and many others felt (and still feel) over two women not being able to marry. In describing the piece upon completion in 2002, Cronin explained, "I'm resolved: If I can't have it in life, I'm going to have it in death."

Not predicting that the law would change (in some states, at least) within a decade from completing her piece, Cronin says, "What started out as political art turned out to be prophetic. It is now really a Memorial to a Marriage."

Even though gay marriage is legal in D.C., only six other states in the nation allow women and men to marry another person of the same sex. This election year, gay rights remain an important social and political issue. Therefore, exhibiting Cronin's art in the nation's capital sends a message calling for continued change and a reminder of frustration shared by many.

When discussing Memorial to a Marriage during the opening reception on Saturday night, Cronin explained the irony in the medium she chose. "Bronze is so masculine... but the piece, overall, is very feminine."

Both the masculine and feminine qualities of the sculpture are evident upon first glance. The flowing locks of curly bronze hair, the whimsically folded sheets and two curvy bodies locked in an embrace lie in contrast to the hard, cold bronze medium and the realistic element of the piece caused by the effects of gravity when the bronze was poured.

Ultimately, the piece flawlessly combines beautiful aesthetics with the inherent symbolic messages of love, frustrations with political obstacles and hope in changing times.

- Rachel Nania

find this article: <http://artseedc.tumblr.com/post/17212891412/patricia-cronin-exhibits-bodies-and-soul-at-conner>

