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The Tombs of Artists: A Last Statement From the Grave

by **Allison Meier** on August 1, 2013



Sculpture by Patricia Cronin for the future grave of she and her wife Deborah Kass (all photographs by the author for Hyperallergic)

As a last final statement, artists' tombstones don't disappoint. From the wildly eccentric to those that incorporate their own creations, the graves of artists are a fascinating reflection of their work. Even those tombstones that are simple, or sometimes even unmarked, often find a tribute from visitors who leave mementoes to these artists. I've spent much time visiting cemeteries during my travels, and spotted these artist memorials among the tombs.

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Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988)
Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York



Grave of Jean-Michel Basquiat

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Notes on Basquiat's grave

Visitors regularly leave art materials, museum stickers and buttons, and notes at Jean-Michel Basquiat's simple tombstone in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

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Baltasar Lobo (1910-1993)
Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Baltasar Lobo

Baltasar Lobo, the Spanish sculptor who often depicted buoyant visions of motherhood, has one of his own sculptures of a figure mourning or at rest on his grave in Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris.

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Henri Laurens (1885-1954)
Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Henri Laurens

Several artists in Montparnasse Cemetery have their own work decorating their tombs. Sculptor and illustrator Henri Laurens has his contorted figure “La Douleur (Grief)” over his grave.

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César Baldaccini (1921-1998)
Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of César Baldaccini

Someone placed a giant flower in the waiting hand of César Baldaccini's "Le Centaure" sculpture on his grave in Montparnasse Cemetery. It's a smaller version of his public art "homage to Picasso" that stands in the Carrerfour Croix Rouge in Paris.

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Henri Matisse (1869-1954)
Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez, Nice, France

Grave of Henri Matisse

Rather than flowers, the grave of Henri Matisse is covered in stones, some which come from the rocky beach of Nice down below from the monastery on the hill where he is interred.

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Bruce Goff (1904-1982)
Graceland Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois

Grave of Bruce Goff

One giant shard of glass, actually taken from one of his buildings destroyed by arson, marks the grave of architect and artist Bruce Goff in Chicago's Graceland Cemetery.

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William Mulready (1786-1863)
Kensal Green Cemetery, London, UK

Grave of William Mulready

While most artists graves are diminutive, as the artist lifestyle doesn't generally fund ostentatious monuments, painter William Mulready rests beneath a massive stone catafalque showing him on his deathbed in an artist's smock, with works of his art carved along the base.

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Joseph Severn (1793-1879)
Protestant Cemetery, Rome, Italy

Grave of Joseph Severn

Portraitist Joseph Severn is buried alongside his good friend the poet John Keats, who he sketched on his deathbed, in the serene Protestant Cemetery in Rome, a painter's palette carved on his tombstone.

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Patricia Cronin & Deborah Kass (still living)
Woodlawn Cemetery, The Bronx, New York

Sculpture by Patricia Cronin

Artist Patricia Cronin is still very much alive, as is her wife artist Deborah Kass, but the memorial for their future grave is already in place in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. The sculpture by Cronin, called "Memorial to a Marriage," shows the two in bed. You can read more about it [here](#).

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Alexander Archipenko (1887-1964)
Woodlawn Cemetery, The Bronx, New York

Grave of Alexander Archipenko

Woodlawn Cemetery already has its share of interred artists who have their own sculpture as their grave, such as Ukrainian Cubist Alexander Archipenko, with a curious sculpture of an angel-like woman.

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George Caitlin (1796-1872)
Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York

Grave of George Caitlin

Sometimes there are limits to your fame and your gravesite becomes wheelbarrow storage, as shown here with George Caitlin. However, to be fair, Green-Wood Cemetery did recently unveil this giant bronze Native American statue for the painter of the Old West.

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William Holbrook Beard (1825-1900)
Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York

Grave of William Holbrook Beard

Artist William Holbrook Beard's grave in Green-Wood Cemetery was long unmarked, until renewed interest in his art resulted in the installation of this statue created and donated by Dan Ostermiller, a tribute to Beard's painting of anthropomorphic bears like in his "The Bulls and Bears in the Market."

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Ricardo Menon (1952-1989)
Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Ricardo Menon

Niki de Saint Phalle's assistant Ricardo Menon also has an animal grave — this giant mosaic cat in Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris created by de Saint Phalle herself.

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John James Audubon (1785-1851)
Trinity Cemetery, Manhattan, New York

Grave of John James Audubon

John James Audubon's Celtic-cross style tombstone in Trinity Cemetery in Washington Heights is covered in creatures.

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Gustave Achille Guillaumet (1840-1887)
Montmartre Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Gustave Achille Guillaumet

In Montmartre Cemetery in Paris, artist Gustave Achille Guillaumet is buried beneath a sculpture by Louis-Ernest Barrias, who drops flowers on his image.

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Auguste Feyen-Perrin (1826-1888)
Montmartre Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Auguste Feyen-Perrin

Sad girls dropping flowers seems to be a trend for 19th century French painters buried in Montmartre Cemetery. Here is the tomb of artist Auguste Feyen-Perrin.

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Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805)
Montmartre Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Jean-Baptiste Greuze

Painter Jean-Baptiste Greuze also has a mournful young lady in Montmartre Cemetery, although here someone has had to give her a flower.

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Henriette Henriot (1857-1944)
Passy Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Henriette Henriot

The decapitated marble head of Henriette Henriot, the favorite model of Renoir and actress, is surrounded by carved flowers in Passy Cemetery in Paris.

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Edgar Degas (1834-1917)
Montmartre Cemetery, Paris

Mausoleum of Degas

Disembodied heads for artists, floating up in the cemetery, include that of a dour-looking Edgar Degas on the door of his family mausoleum.

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Édouard Manet (1832-1883)
Passy Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Manet

Édouard Manet has a much happier head on his tomb in Passy Cemetery in Paris, belying the fact he died rather unpleasantly after having his foot amputated due to gangrene.

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Victor Brauner (1903-1966)
Montmartre Cemetery, Paris, France

Grave of Victor Brauner

And finally, as for heads on artist tombstones and the use of their own art as a memorial, you can't do better than surrealist Victor Brauner's double-head sculpture on his tomb in Montmartre Cemetery. His epitaph reads: "Peindre, c'est la vie, la vraie vie, ma vie," or "Painting is life, the real life, my life."

Tagged as: [cemetery](#), [Edgar Degas](#), [Edouard Manet](#), [green-wood cemetery](#), [Henri Matisse](#), [Jean-Michel Basquiat](#), [john james audubon](#), [Niki de Saint Phalle](#), [patricia cronin](#), [woodlawn cemetery](#)

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