

Bronze version of 'Memorial to Marriage' sculpture of artist and her wife returning to Woodlawn

BY Tanyanika Samuels
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Thursday, September 15th 2011, 4:00 AM



"Memorial To A Marriage" will be installed next week at the gravesite of artists Patricia Cronin and Deborah Kass at Woodlawn Cemetery.

A popular grave monument is returning to The Woodlawn Cemetery with a new look.

New York artist Patricia Cronin will install the bronze version of "Memorial to a Marriage" Tuesday, on the site that is to be her final resting place.

The sculpture, originally done in marble, depicts nudes of Cronin and wife, artist Deborah Kass, embracing in bed. The two, who have been together for 18 years, married on July 24, the first day gay marriage became legal in the state.

"Making this was a little prophetic," Cronin said of the 2009 sculpture. "I never thought the law would change this quickly."

She's near giddy about installing the larger-than-life- sized piece, which measures 27 inches high, 46 inches wide and 84 inches long. Her sculpture is one of the most visited gravesites at the landmark cemetery along with those of jazz legends Miles Davis and Duke Ellington

"The other day I was thinking, 'Now when we die, it will actually be a memorial to a marriage,'" she said. "It's kind of nice."

While the piece has taken on new personal meaning, for Cronin the sculpture still makes a statement on a national scope.

"[New York's law] is one very important step in the right direction," she said. "Unfortunately, until the federal government repeals the Defense of Marriage Act, we still only get a fraction of all the benefits that heterosexuals get in any state."

The bronze sculpture replaces the original piece, which will go on exhibit across the country. The American neo-classical sculpture is carved from Carrara marble.

"We're so delighted to have the sculpture back where it belongs," said Brian Sahd, executive director of Friends of the Woodlawn Cemetery. "Many people have been asking about it. It's been a very popular monument."

While researching the sculpture's design, Cronin said she studied mortuary statues in France. She noted that visitors often rubbed certain body parts of nude figures for good luck, which over time creates a burnished effect on the statue.

She expects the same fate awaits her sculpture.

"I'm very interested in the viewership participation aspect of it," she said with a laugh. "It's going to be interesting."