

CONNER CONTEMPORARY ART

January 11, 2012

PATRICIA CRONIN: *Bodies and Soul*

DIE VETTERN: *Wir packen in unseren Koffer / Packing Our Suitcase*

February 4 – March 10, 2012

Conner Contemporary Art is honored to present Patricia Cronin's first solo exhibition in Washington, DC, *Bodies and Soul*. The exhibition features *Memorial to a Marriage*, a new bronze sculpture depicting the nearly life-size, sleeping figures of Cronin and her life mate, artist Deborah Kass, joined in a tender embrace.

Cronin's work is cast after the iconic double funerary portrait she created in 2002 for the couple's burial plot in the Bronx, NY, at Woodlawn Cemetery. Though *Memorial to a Marriage* subversively recalls the controversial lesbian imagery of Gustave Courbet's *The Sleepers*, its traditional style blends well with Washington's sculptural monuments, including the memorial by Augustus Saint-Gaudens in Rock Creek Cemetery for Marian Hooper Adams, which inspired the title of Cronin's memorial. The artist explained, "I chose a nationalist form for the work, 19th-century American neo-classical sculpture, to address what I consider a federal failure - not allowing gay Americans the right to marry."

When Cronin completed her tomb sculpture, in 2002, she stated, "It is a memorial to something that can't happen. It is created out of grief in being unofficial because we're two women. I'm resolved: if I can't have it in life, I'm going to have it in death. I'm basically trying to find a permanent resting place or home." In 2012, *Memorial to a Marriage* exemplifies the capacity of art to make a home for revolutionary ideas whose time will come.

"I never thought the law would change within a decade of making the sculpture," Cronin reflects, "What started out as political art turned out to be prophetic. It is now really a Memorial to a Marriage." Cronin and Kass married in New York last summer. Recent laws have cleared the way for gays to marry in DC and six states and to serve openly in the military. Yet, much ground remains to be gained for gay rights nationally and the importance of exhibiting *Memorial to a Marriage* in DC at the outset of an election year resonates in Cronin's show title. *Bodies and Soul* underscores the work's mortuary theme, while alluding to the unification of disparate political bodies within the ideal of a national spirit of equality.

Ten years ago, the sculpture that marked a resting place for a couple whose union was unrecognized by the state established a place for Cronin's art in cultural history. Today, *Memorial to a Marriage* embodies a new home for gay marriage within contemporary society and advocates greater room for diversity in the fluid narrative of American history.

Patricia Cronin has been exhibited extensively internationally at venues including the Brooklyn Museum, NY, Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Glasgow, Cobra Museum, Amsterdam, Museo d' Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Rome. She is the recipient of grants and prizes from the American Academy in Rome, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, and the Pollock Krasner Foundation. In addition to numerous private collections, her works are in the permanent collections of The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, Scotland.

Conner Contemporary Art is also pleased to present a special *gogo projects installation, *Wir packen in unseren Koffer / Packing Our Suitcase*, by Die Vettern, an international artist group formed by Lina Vargas De La Hoz, Christine Aue, Evi Leuchtgelb and Christa Aistleitner. In their collaboration, the four artists draw upon individual perceptions of living respectively in the Austrian cities of Vienna and Linz and here, in Washington, DC. Die Vettern reimagined the three cities, exploring themes of growth, tourism and migration through imagery inspired by natural forms, monuments, and rhythms of life to create drawing, sculpture, photography and video. Their installation transforms our second gallery into an immersive environment that offers experiences ranging from introspective to engagingly playful.

Wir packen in unseren Koffer is generously supported by the Austrian Cultural Forum Washington, Kultur Niederösterreich and Kulturland Oberösterreich.



There will be an opening night reception, Saturday, February 4th from 6 to 8pm. Artists in attendance.

For further information or images, please contact the gallery @ 202-588-8750 / info@connercontemporary.com. Conner Contemporary Art is located at 1358 Florida Avenue, NE -Washington, DC 20002 in the Historic Atlas/H Street Area. Winter gallery hours are Wednesday - Saturday 10-5pm and by appointment.

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