

# Ms.

M A G A Z I N E

SPRING 2004

## Brave Grave



**ETERNAL GAY MARRIAGE**  
Cronin's subversive Bronx Memorial

Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx is the final home of many famous souls, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Nellie Bly and Celia Cruz. But one of its most visited sites is a marble sculpture of two less known women - both still very much among the living - seen entwined half naked in a loving embrace.

“Memorial to a Marriage,” created by 40-year-old artist Patricia Cronin, depicts her and her artist partner Deborah Kass. As *The Village Voice* art critic Jerry Saltz points out, the sculpture “doesn’t stand out, it blends in. So much that it’s almost invisible- just another monument to death, love, and loss in this amazing garden of graves. Only when you think about why ‘Memorial’ blends in does it stop being conventional and start being insurrectionary.

”The sculpture is technically proficient,” he continues, “but stylistically ordinary: Saint-Gaudens by way of Courbet’s painting of female lovers, ‘the Sleep.’ But after wandering through Woodlawn and understanding what this place represents and how status quo it is, Cronin’s queer cloaking tactic blossoms. If it were some sensationalistic girl-on-girl pron sculpture, ‘Memorial’ would be obvious, ironic finger-pointing- little more than grandstanding. Instead, she plays not only with art history but also with the law. In the process, she subverts both.”