

Patricia Cronin

Dante's Inferno: The Way of All Flesh

From 2000 to 2009, virtually the entire time George W. Bush was president of the United States, I worked on two main projects with strong social justice themes, specifically gay marriage and women's history. Since 2010, I've been working on a series titled *Dante's Inferno/The Way of All Flesh*. It is a cycle of oil and watercolor paintings inspired by Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*, a timeless story of moral frailty.

This project uses the *Inferno* as a point of departure for an extended meditation on the human condition. For me, the *Inferno* is ripe for artistic re-interpretation in our post-modern world, where many of the same social issues — war, corrupt politicians, religious hypocrisy and strife, unstable economic markets, and natural disasters — still plague us.

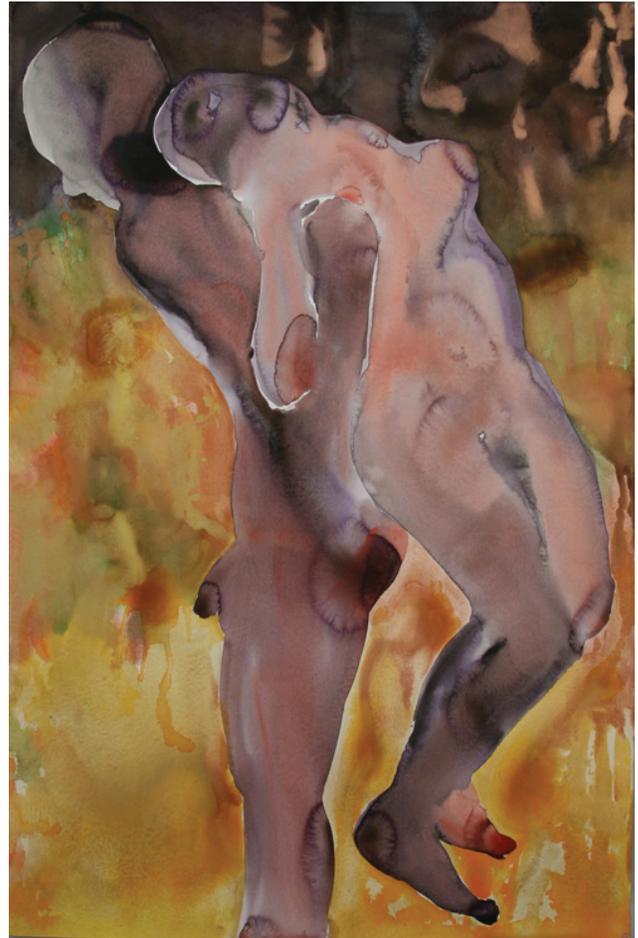
Inspired by 14th- and 15th-century illuminated manuscripts of the *Inferno*, artistic interpretations from the 16th through 20th centuries, Italian fashion photography, and tracings of my own body, these life-size "shades" as Dante refers to sinners act out a classic cautionary tale that has largely gone unheeded.

Dante's Inferno/The Way of All Flesh connects with my first decade of works that examined the erotic in the everyday (watercolors of intimate sexual acts as well as performance-based photographs) and extends my line of art historical examinations of the past decade (Memorial To A Marriage, my marble mortuary sculpture installed in Woodlawn Cemetery, and the watercolor meditation on the works of 19th-century sculptor Harriet Hosmer in the form of her catalogue raisonné).

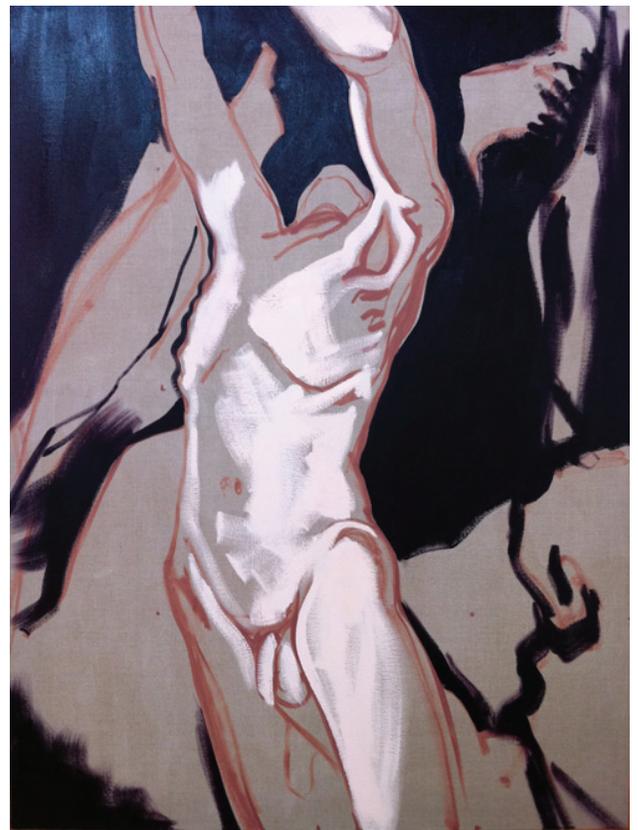
Oil paint has endured as a valued art medium since the 15th century and I'm drawn to the chromatic optical qualities unique to paint. Combining them with a timeless story from the same era, I'm re-imagining the rise of humanism. In this "winner take all" climate we live in, the spirit of generosity and the concept of good citizenship seem to be all but lost. How do we think about our fellow citizens and our shared common humanity? And what will we do about it?

Patricia Cronin is a New York-based artist and Professor of Art at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York, whose work has been exhibited extensively in the U.S. and internationally including at: David Zwirner Gallery, Marlborough Gallery, Yale University Art Gallery, the Neuberger Museum, and other venues. She has had solo exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum, Deitch Projects, and Brent Sikkema.

find this article : <http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/meaning/05/meaning-online-5.html#cronin>



Patricia Cronin, *The Lustful: Canto V, Circle Two*, 2010, watercolor and metallic watercolor on paper, 60" x 40".



Patricia Cronin, *Shade*, 2011, oil on linen, 64" x 46".