

## MEET THE ARTIST

### Patricia Cronin talks about Harriet Hosmer, the inspiration behind her new series of prints

By [Artspace Editors](#)

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In Patricia Cronin's work, traditional forms of art making—oil painting, sculpture, and watercolor, for instance—are the channels through which she addresses various contemporary political issues.

Cronin first gained recognition in the 1990s for a series of performance-based photographs and watercolors depicting the artist in the act of love making with her partner, and since then, she has continued to develop a sophisticated and dynamic artistic practice.

The New York-based artist's themes take in homosexuality, feminism, the body, sex, class, and art history. She has expressed these themes in conjunction with historical and mythological figures such as Dante Alighieri and Aphrodite.

Her latest project, a series of prints exclusively launched by Artspace, were inspired by the artist Harriet Hosmer (1830–1908) who quite literally carved out a unique place in art history by becoming the first professional female sculptor.

Cronin has compiled a 'catalogue raisonné' of Hosmer's works, combining hand painted images with art historical research to create a volume that reveals the complexities of the 19th-century artist's career, reputation, and legacy.

Hosmer moved to Rome in 1852 and lived among a community of British and American artists and writers and a circle of learned and well to-do "independent women." She was praised by critics, won competitive private and public commissions, and earned enormous sums for her sculptures. Her works are still exhibited in museums today.

Drawn from Cronin's award-winning *Harriet Hosmer: Lost and Found, A Catalogue Raisonné* this American Series, a suite of prints chosen by Cronin to reflect Hosmer's rare position in the 19th century, comprises archival pigmented inkjet prints on Innova soft texture paper measuring 22" x 30" in an edition of 25.

There are seven works in total, each work an edition of 25. We asked Cronin a few questions about the editions, which you can take a closer look at and buy [here](#).



PATRICIA CRONIN - The Clasped Hands of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 2025

**Your work frequently engages with classical art history, can you remember your very first brushes with this kind of art and how you felt, intellectually and emotionally?** I'm really a conceptual artist with good technical skills. I choose historical images, forms, and materials that best suit my ideas. I first chose the 19th century American Neo-classical sculptural form for its inherent political properties and critical potential. It was the patriotic artistic genre of its day, and I used it to create *Memorial To A Marriage* (2002), a 3-ton Carrara marble sculpture, and the world's first Marriage Equality monument, to criticize the federal government denying same sex couples the basic human right of legal marriage and local municipalities for refusing to honor women and LGBTQ+ people in public monuments.

I followed the monumental sculptors into the cemeteries where I found specific women and queer people remembered. Back then the only legal rights gay couples could legally attain to simulate some of the 1200 benefits of heterosexual marriage were wills, health care proxies, and power of attorney documents that are only about the end of one's life.

It wasn't about celebrating the beginning of our lives together. So, I bought our future burial plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY, a National Historic Landmark, and permanently installed the sculpture. I had the radical imagination to reject my 2nd class legal status and my absence in the public square and envision a world where misogyny and homophobia didn't exist. I made the work for myself. I had no idea that it would resonate so strongly with so many people here in the U.S. and abroad. The rights I was denied in life, I would have forever in death.



PATRICIA CRONIN - Beatrice Cenci, 2025

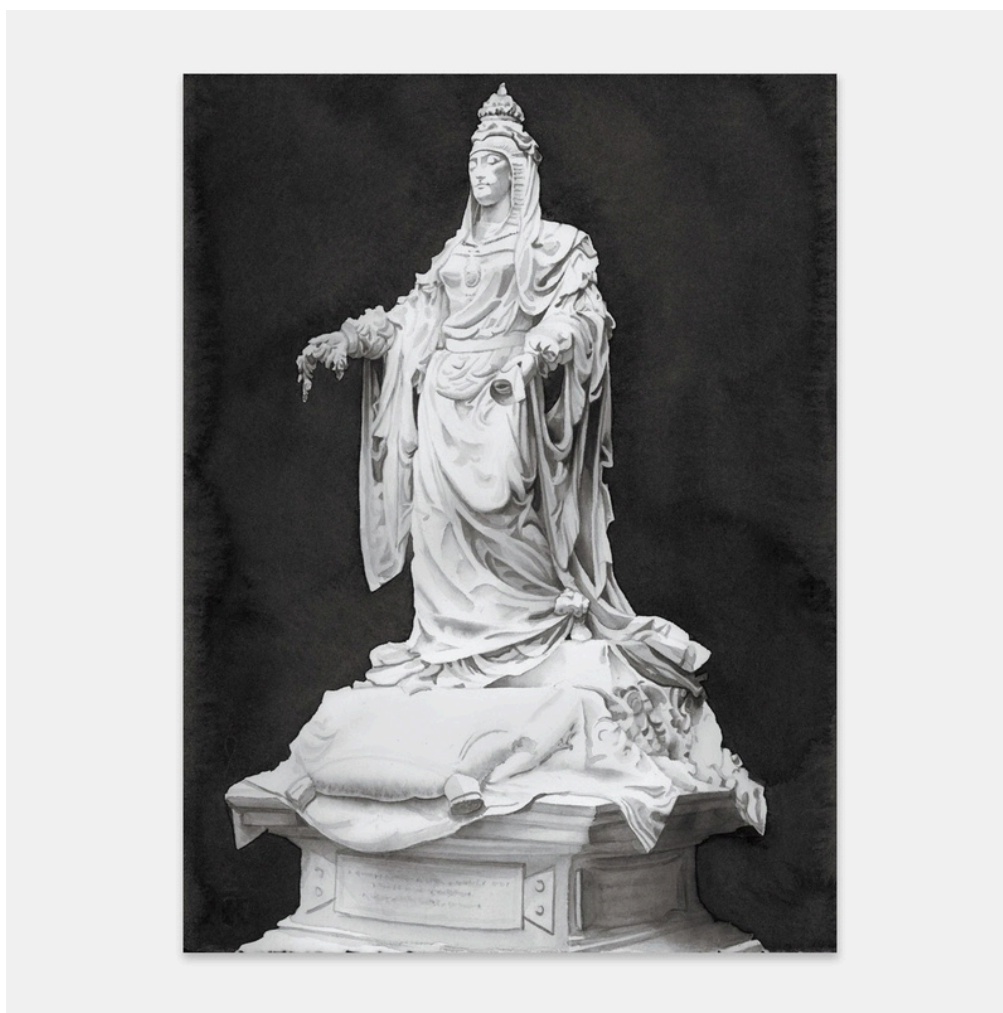
**Can you tell us a little about the thought processes behind this current series available on Artspace?** What sparked the idea, how was the artistic process, and what research went into the choices? While I was thinking about my own death, I discovered someone else's life. I found Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908) when I was researching and making Memorial To A Marriage. As I studied the history of Sculpture books, I found her Beatrice Cenci (1856) sculpture and it was superb. I read her name, thought huh, I've never heard of her. And then I wondered why had I never heard of her? I knew then she would be my next project. The more I researched her work, career, and life, how enormously successful she was by any metric - international

exhibitions, critical praise, important collections - I thought she deserved a catalogue raisonné, the most prestigious book an artist can have written on them.

It is the intersection of the ivory tower (scholarship) and the marketplace (sales) because it is the complete archive of an artist's production, including every artwork, exhibition, bibliography, collection, and location along with art historical texts. In 2006 when I began this series, I could count on one hand, how many catalogue raisonnés had been published on women artists, in any language. So, I decided to create one for her, Harriet Hosmer: Lost and Found, A Catalogue Raisonné.

To make my institutional critique of the lack of scholarship and sales of women artists' work visible, that this volume was created by an artist (not a scholar), in addition to my writing the catalogue raisonné, I also hand painted a monochromatic watercolor of each of Hosmer's neo-classical marble sculptures.

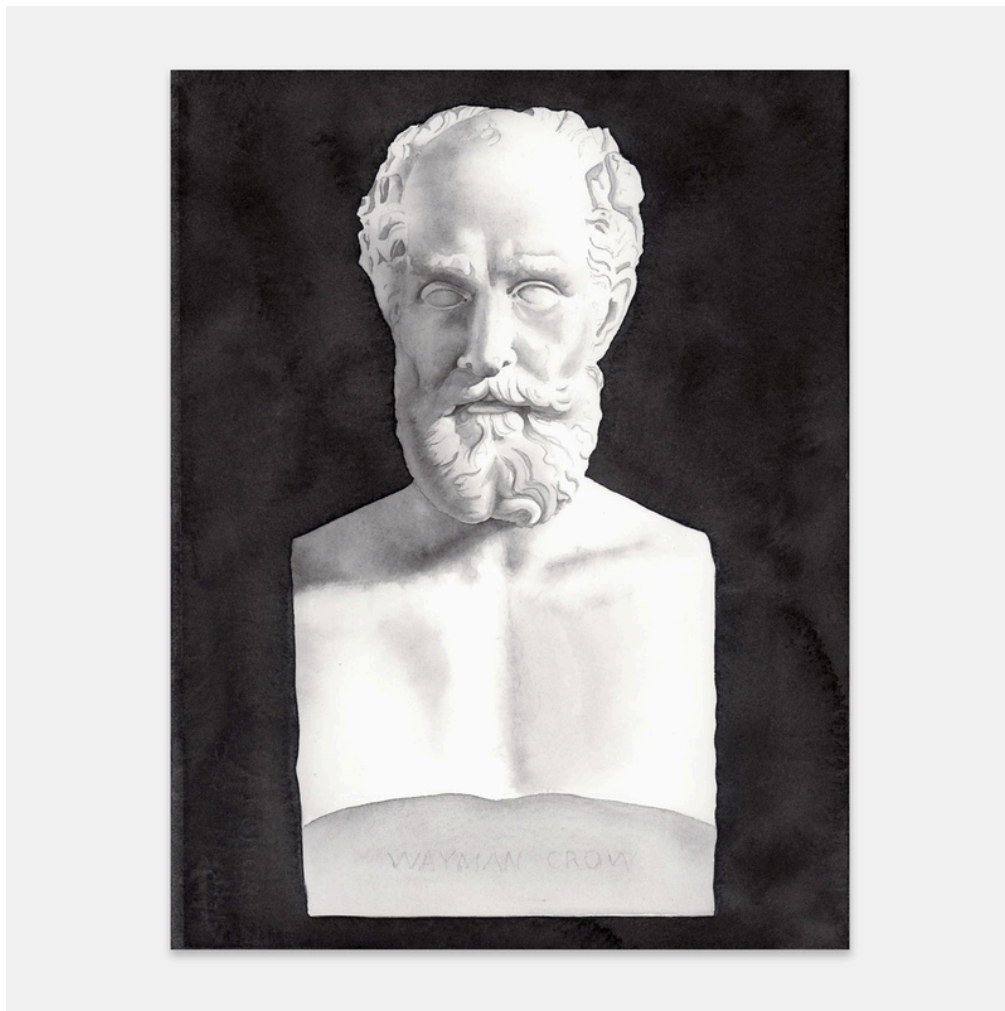
I've selected 7 prints from the series to amplify some of Hosmer's subversive subject choices and/or feminist formal decisions that were very different from her male count parts. I've included some of that rationale in the text that accompanies each print.



PATRICIA CRONIN - Queen Isabella of Castile, 2025

**You've used various media throughout your career, how do you choose which medium best serves your artistic intentions and how has that changed over the years? Where do limited edition prints fit into your artistic practice?** Prints allow me to expand each project and make them accessible to people that wouldn't normally collect more expensive paintings and sculptures. I'm trained as a painter, but when prestigious or interesting exhibition invitations come in, I look for the perfect combination of the right image and/or form, and materials to match the content that will be right for that specific venue at that particular moment in time. And painting isn't always the right medium, so I conceptually and formally expand and reach outside of my comfort zone to create the new work. For example, in 2014 when Italian curator Ludovico Pratesi invited me to propose a solo Collateral Event for Okwui Enwezor's 56th Venice Biennale, we only wanted one venue, the smallest church in Venice, Chiesa di San Gallo, near Piazza San Marco.

When we met with the priest who was in charge of all 200 churches in Venice, he informed us only the 3 stone altars could be used, nothing could be hung on the walls. I had to reconsider my initial project addressing the crisis in masculinity that I was working on in my studio and turn my attention to the victims of three horrific gender violence events in India, Ireland and Nigeria, that I couldn't get out of my head. So, I made a shrine in their honor instead. Shrine For Girls, was a site-specific sculptural installation reflecting on the global plight of exploited women and girls comprised of clothing from their countries arranged and placed on top of where the religious relics previously were placed along with a small photograph of each atrocity off to the side. I brought three of world's major religions under one roof to focus on how sacred texts have been misinterpreted and perverted to subjugate women and girls. With this installation I attempt to restore some of the dignity they were denied in life.



PATRICIA CRONIN - Portrait of Wayman Crow, 2025

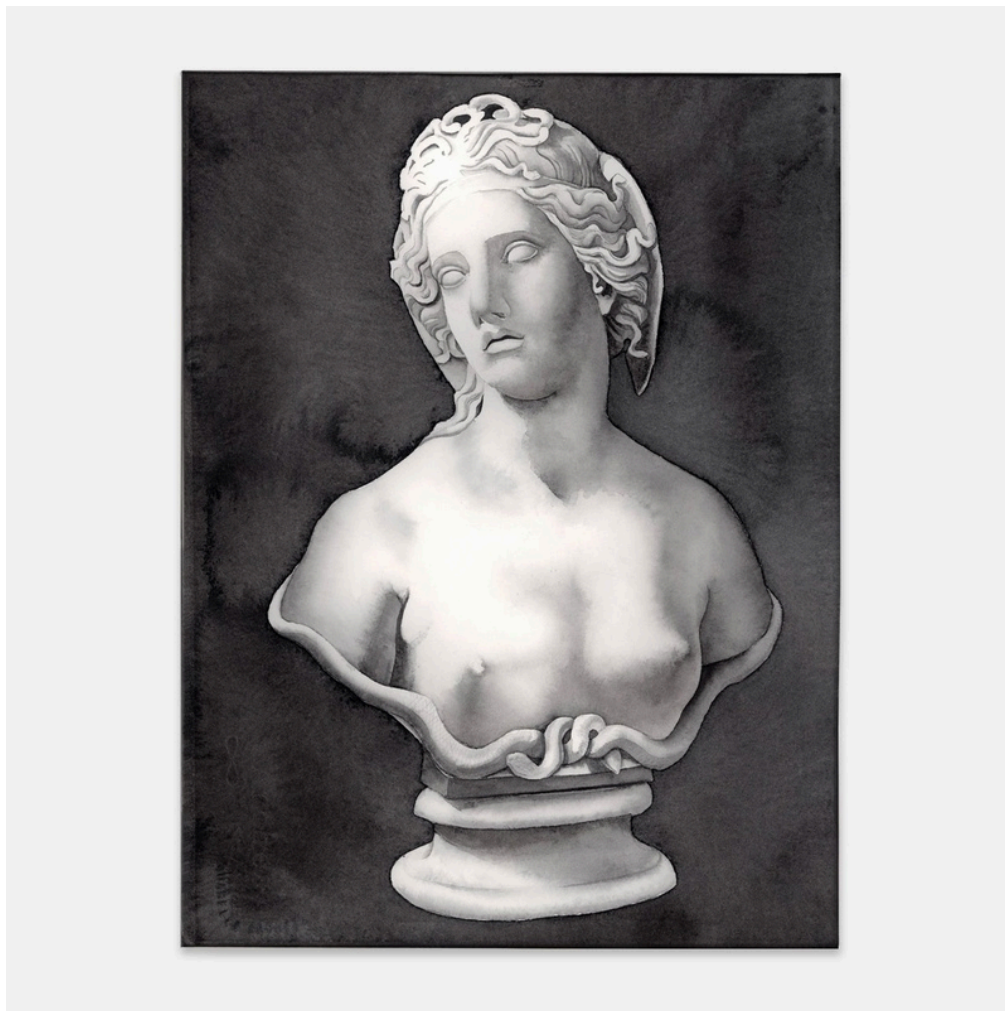
**You've managed to remain a pioneer for a good while now, what draws you to the subjects you currently choose and, as time goes on, are you more aware of how the choices you make will impact the contemporary culture?** Thank you. I'll have some injustice burning in my head that I want to address visually. Usually, it is around the issues of international human rights of women, girls and LGBTQ+ people. I look out at the cultural landscape and if no one else is addressing it, I must. I only make art that I need to exist in the world, so that future audiences know we knew, and we did object, we did speak up, that we did not remain silent - to bear witness and a call to action. If someone else was working around legalizing same sex marriage and the absence of women and LGBTQ+ people in public monuments over 22 years ago, I never would have had to teach myself how to carve marble! If someone else had already written Harriet Hosmer's Catalogue Raisonné, I never would have had to learn how to write one.



PATRICIA CRONIN - The Sleeping Faun, 2025



Memorial To A Marriage has obviously proved to be an incredibly powerful exploration of love and loss. Can you talk about the significance of this work and how it might have changed for you personally over the years and how do you view it now with the passage of time? When I first unveiled the sculpture in Woodlawn Cemetery, I thought I had made it for an audience that hadn't been born yet. What began as a poetic protest work, became a celebratory one when the U.S. Supreme Court 2015 decision legalizing same sex marriage. And now I fear that the human right of marriage might be taken away again in the U.S., and it will probably go back to being a protest work. And that's crazy! It's the exact same sculpture, but the socio-political climate keeps changing. Human rights are so precarious, the backlash is based in ignorance, fear, and irrational prejudice. I'm glad I answered the call with something solid, heavy, and permanent, because I bought the land and it's on view through eternity! I'm also so proud that I answered hatred with love.



PATRICIA CRONIN - Medusa, 2025

**You're a distinguished professor at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York, how has your advice to students changed to reflect the current political moment?** Well because misogyny and homophobia never go away, and my work always addresses these subjects, my position is always one of the opposition party. I lead by example and my advice to my students remains consistent. Try to be as brave as possible, even when the apparent artworld power brokers and gate keepers reject your values. Stick to your guns because if you're on the right side of history, you're usually on the wrong side of power. Paintings and sculptures can be intellectual, psychological, challenging, not just decoration, pretty wallpaper for wealthy people clinging to a patriarchal worldview. With our aesthetic toolboxes and the highest skills of art making coupled with solid critical thinking and we can show people what art can be, not just please the ruling class. Always make something important and aim for making art history.



PATRICIA CRONIN - Zenobia in Chains, 2025

Patricia Cronin has had solo exhibitions in New York at the Brooklyn Museum, the FLAG Art Foundation and White Columns, as well as in Rome at Centrale Montemartini Museo and the American Academy in Rome Art Gallery, Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL, the Lab Gallery, Dublin, Ireland, and an Official Solo Collateral show at the 56th Venice Biennale.

Her work is in the permanent collections of: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, Scotland, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC, Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL.

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