

ARTnews

Love Potions: Art and the Heart

BY *Barbara Pollack* POSTED 02/13/13

Despite an overall reluctance among contemporary artists to deal with issues of the heart, more than a few tell great stories of romance and heartbreak.

From Frank Sinatra to the Beatles to Taylor Swift- just turn on the radio and you can hear anthem upon anthem to love. But wander into a contemporary art museum, and such evidence of passion is, more often, nowhere in sight. Romantic love has been a subject of art throughout time- Francois Boucher in the Enlightenment, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and August Rodin in the 19th Century, and Roy Lichtenstein in the 20th- but nowadays most artists are far too cool and ironic or otherwise engages to wear their hearts on their sleeves. Despite this overall reluctance, there are more than a few contemporary artists who tell great love stories, even some who confess to a broken heart.



“When I made this piece, I really thought I was making a work for an audience that wasn’t even born yet,” says Brooklyn artist Patricia Cronin, “but within ten years, we were able to marry in New York State, which is unbelievable.” Her *Memorial to a Marriage*, a depiction of two women gently cradling each other in bed, was first made in marble in 2000 and then translated into bronze and sited in Woodlawn Cemetery at the burial plot of the artist and her then-partner, now wife, Deborah Kass. Cronin took her inspiration for the work from several historic artworks, including *Sleeping Children* (1859) by 19th-century sculptor William Henry Rinehart and Courbet’s painting *The Sleepers* (1866), which depicts two women in what is easy to imagine as a postcoital embrace. “When I originally called it a *Memorial to a Marriage*, it was a memorial, but we were still alive, to a marriage we couldn’t have,” says Cronin, who adds that “the political reality is catching up and hopefully will go past the political statement of the piece, so when we actually do die, it will be an actual memorial to an actual marriage.”