

After studying with the world-renowned Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, Thomas Crawford modeled his first major sculpture, Orpheus and Cerberus, in clay and plaster while in Rome in 1839. Its subject came from the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Orpheus lulls to sleep the three-headed hellhound Cerberus by playing the lyre, and then rushes past the beast through the gates of Hades in search of his wife Eurydice. For the figure of Orpheus, Crawford was inspired by what was long believed to be the most important masterpiece of antique sculpture, the Apollo Belvedere in the Vatican. Many Americans were introduced to this type of classical sculpture through Orpheus and Cerberus.

George Washington Greene, American consul in Rome, and Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts were among the admirers of Crawford's work. Sumner successfully encouraged Bostonians to pay by subscription for a marble version of the sculpture, which Crawford completed by 1843. Boston's Orpheus and Cerberus, in pristine Seravezza marble, was first exhibited at the Boston Athenaeum, where it was enthusiastically received and helped launch Crawford's career. It remained there until 1872, when it went on "permanent loan" to the Museum of Fine Arts.

