

# Aesthetica

Patricia Cronin, *Shrine for Girls*, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice



Curator Ludovico Pratesi and **The Brooklyn Rail Curatorial Projects** present *Shrine for Girls* by New York-based conceptual artist Patricia Cronin at **La Biennale di Venezia**. Recipient of the prestigious Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome amongst a host of other accolades, Cronin creates compelling, often political works, which illuminate the struggles of oppressed peoples around the world. *Shrine for Girls* is at once a poignant memorial to the victims of gender-based violence and a call to emancipatory arms to combat prejudice wherever and however it manifests. The installation is located at the Chiesa di San Gallo, a historic-site destination close to the heart of Venetian culture and society, Piazza San Marco, and a setting fit to house the relics of these young female martyrs.

Cronin has gathered hundreds of girls' clothes from around the world and arranged them on three stone altars bathed in carefully arranged spotlights, which denotes a sense of urgency and lends gravitas to the items on display. The light which shines on the clothes simultaneously shines on the broader issue – the continued repression of women from all corners of the globe in the 21st century. The first altar exhibits vibrantly coloured sari dresses belonging to a selection of India's subjugated women, three of which belonged to women who were gang raped and murdered in cold blood. To the left, the second altar bears scattered hijabs commemorating the 276 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria, and the third altar displays a pile of aprons & uniforms worn by girls at Europe and America's infamous labour institutions for 'disturbed' and 'sinful' young women, the Magdalene Laundries. Catholic girls across Europe and America were condemned to a life of labour and subjugation until as late as 1996 when the last institution was finally, formally, closed down.

The installation as a totality is a meditation on the incalculable loss of unrealized potential and hopelessness in the face of unfathomable human cruelty and a stark reminder that gender-based violence and subjugation, which is often underpinned by interpretations of religious doctrine, are all too present evils that will continue to persist so long as good people do nothing. A framed photograph of each of these tragic events will adorn the installations to encourage dialogue about notions of gender, memory and justice.

Patricia Cronin, *Shrine for Girls*, until 22 May, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice.

To find out more, visit [www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org) or [www.shrineforgirls.org](http://www.shrineforgirls.org).

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## Credits

1. Patricia Cronin, *Shrine for Girls*, Venice. Installation View. La Biennale di Venezia – 56th International Art Exhibition. Photo: Mark Blower.

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