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## Violence Against Girls and Women Remembered at Venice Biennale

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Patricia Cronin, Shrine for Girls, Venice, Saris and Photograph, 2015 , La Biennale di Venezia – 56th International Art Exhibition. Violence against girls and women. Photo : Mark Blower

## ART REVIEW

### New York artist highlights violence against girls and women at the Venice Biennale with altars

BY KAZAD

**VENICE, ITALY**— When [Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani girl](#), was shot in the head three times by the Taliban on October 9, 2012, she became the new face of violence against girls and women across the globe. Her only crime was advocating that young girls in Pakistan have access to education that will help them do better in this patriarchal society.



Patricia Cronin, Shrine for Girls, Venice, Hijabs and Photograph, 2015, La Biennale di Venezia – 56th International Art Exhibition. Violence against girls and women. Photo: Mark Blower

With the increase in war, [terrorism](#), religious and gender intolerance across the globe, [girls and women](#) have become even more subjected to horrifying existence. They are constantly confronted with increased violence, subjugation, repression, and enforced ignorance.

For many of the terror groups, women are pawns to be wasted in the effort to assert their own authority. Besides rape, many young girls and women have been sold into slavery where they are subjugated and maltreated. Those who protest their maltreatment are killed. From ISIS to Hezbollah and Boko Haram, the examples of cruelty against girls and women are limitless. Just recently, Boko Haram, an Islamist group in Nigeria, kidnapped about 300 hundred girls. Up till now, no one knows where the girls are. When the group was asked to return the girls, the response was “they have been sold.” Even with all the cries of “[Bring Back Our Girls](#),” that reverberated across the world, the girls have still not been found.

The horrifying experience of girls and women across the globe informed the thought provoking exhibition at the [56th Venice Biennale](#). Located inside the exquisite sixteenth-century Church of San Gallo where Bill Viola showed in 2007, the show is a reminder that the world continues to be a violent place for girls and women.

Titled *Shrine for Girls*, the exhibition features work by New York-based conceptual artist [Patricia Cronin](#). For over two decades, the critically acclaimed artist has created compelling works, many with social justice themes focusing on gender.

*Shrine for Girls* features several shrines paying homage to girls and women who have been victims of violence. To create the works, Cronin gathered hundreds of girls' clothes from around the world which were then arranged on three stone altars to act as relics of these young martyrs.

Each altar addresses specific violence against girls and women across the world. Collectively, each altar is a reminder of unfulfilled dreams, unrealized potentials and hopelessness in the face of unfathomable human cruelty. They are reminders that every effort must be made to confront prejudice against girls and women across the globe.

The central altar borrows from the experience of three girls who were recently gang raped, murdered and left to hang from trees in India. This dreadful act not only shocked the world, but also provoked outcry from across the globe. Made of brightly colored saris worn by girls in India, the central altar is a reminder that more and more girls and women continue to lose their lives to violence, repression, and enforced ignorance. What is left after all the violence is a pile of saris that bears memory of unfulfilled ambitions.

On the left side of the central altar is another altar made up of a pile of hijabs. The left altar borrows from recent events in Nigeria where 276 schoolgirls were kidnapped by Boko Haram, a terror group that abhors the education of girls and women. To actualize their dreadful objective, girls and women are kidnapped, subjugated and sold into slavery. The girls kidnapped by Boko Haram have still not been found years after they were kidnapped.

The third altar pays homage to girls and women who were subjected to forced labor. Made up of a pile of aprons & uniforms, the altar symbolizes aprons & uniforms worn by girls at the Magdalene Asylums and Laundries, forced labor institutions for young women without options in Europe and America as recently as 1996.

*Shrine for Girls* is an important exhibition as it brings deeper attention to violence against girls and women across the globe. Although the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, women and girls around the world continue to be the subject of increased violence. In addition to being among the most vulnerable members of our global society, they are often the subject of violence, repression, and enforced ignorance.

In addition to altars, framed photographs of each of the three tragic events represented by the altars accompany this installation. The hope is that they will engender a new and reflective dialogue between gender, memory and justice.

Curated by Ludovico Pratesi, *Shrine for Girls* is an opportunity to reflect on the plight of girls and women across the globe. The shrines are not just homage to the girls and women who have suffered great violence, but reminders that many of these women are vehemently deterred from archiving their ambitions. Viewers are reminded that violence against girls and women has reached a crisis point everything must be done to bring attention to the plight of girls and women in the world.