

VOGUE

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Tome

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Ramon Martin and Ryan Lobo typically look to a female artist for inspiration when they're designing their collections for Tome; it's much rarer that the artist looks back. But such was the case on Tuesday, when Lobo took this reviewer on a tour of The FLAG Art Foundation's exhibition of Patricia Cronin's "Shrine for Girls," which he and Martin had initially seen at the 56th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale. Cronin, who was on hand at the gallery (and later at Tome's studio) to discuss her work, was inspired by three recent tragedies that had to do with the global plight of exploited women— the 276 Nigerian Chibok schoolgirls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram in 2014; two teenage Indian girls who were gang-raped, and lynched at the edge of their village, Katra Sahadatganj, in 2014; and the "fallen" women who worked in forced labor during the 20th century at Ireland's Magdalene asylums and laundries (memorably shown in the 2013 film *Philomena*).

In Venice, the installation consisted of what Cronin called three "shrines" that she created by heaping garments on the marble altars of Venice's 16th-century Chiesa di San Gallo: brightly colored saris for the Indian girls; hijabs for the Chibok girls; and gray and white aprons for the fallen women in Ireland. Small photographs set off to the side of each depicted scenes from the tragedies, and there were three large-scale painted portraits of a victim from each at the other end of the gallery, part of Cronin's intention to magnify what is called "the identifiable victim effect." Naming a victim makes them more sympathetic, and thus harder to ignore. As the exhibition came to New York and continues on its international tour, the Venetian marble altars have been replaced by wooden crates, in which the clothes themselves are packed and sent.

Cronin's shrines bring to mind a massacre, a genocide, a reckoning; one realizes that a great quantity of discarded clothes in large, careless piles is never a good sign. "Clothes felt especially powerful, because they're so personal," said Cronin, "and we know the form they're supposed to take, what they look like in [Tome's] studio right now, for instance—and this is

not that. This is powerful because it reminds you what is absent, which are the bodies.”

Which brings us back to the point of this review:

Those looking to clothe their own bodies will do well with Tome’s latest collection, which relayed those three shrines not into any literal translation, but into a celebration of textile as totem, the personal becoming (somewhat) political. “We’re very invested in sustainability,” explained Lobo. This season, that meant more up-cycled denim (here with some recycled leather accents) and responsibly sourced cashmere, but above all, creating pieces that women will want to buy and wear again and again (often inspired by Tome’s own customers, who, for instance, clamored for a resurgence of pink tulle from Spring, here shown in a pleated skirt). The best examples here? Charming cabana-stripped cotton jumpsuits with generous bows tied at the waist, Malhia Kent tweeds woven into trousers and jackets, and the easy shirtdresses and sexy-yet-easy sheaths that laced up the sides to a waist-whittling effect, and promised to take all of the drama out of day-to- night dressing. All the better to focus on what really matters.

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