

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

What's Hanging in Three New York's Galleries

Patricia Cronin, Bo Bartlett and Paul Inglis in this week's Fine Art

By **PETER PLAGENS**



July 29, 2016 5:53 p.m. ET

Patricia Cronin: Shrine for Girls, New York

[FLAG Art Foundation](#)

545 W. 25th St.

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Through Aug. 12

An exhibition whose subject matter is the “global plight of exploited girls and women who have been victimized, brutally silenced, and written out of history simply because of their gender” is, from a moral point of view, beyond criticism.

Such might be the case, for example, with the installation of three packing crates, each with a small, disturbing photograph perched on a corner, and on top of which are piled different sorts of women's and girls' clothing. The author of the work, Patricia Cronin (b. 1963), specializes in consciousness-raising art. Her previous work includes a marble tombstone, made for a plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, of her and her female partner in a sleepy embrace. The installation here calls attention to three infamous events, two of them quite recent—a heinous double rape and murder in India, the kidnapping and disappearance of more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls, and the enslavement of women in the Magdalene Laundries in Ireland. (The U.S., where a relatively few Magdalene institutions existed briefly, is included in the wall text mostly, one suspects, to keep American viewers from thinking the evil was all “over there.”)

The original exhibition was a collateral event of the 2015 Venice Biennale, presented at the Church of St. Gallo. There the clothes were piled not upon crates but on three altars, which made the “shrine” aspect of the work heartrending. In an austere Chelsea showroom, however, with crates—putatively symbolizing the additional crime of human trafficking—instead of altars serving as sculptural bases of sorts, the impact is less outrage-inducing and more clinically and coldly aesthetic.

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