

Tender Cargo: How can garments speak a person's pain?

"What does it mean to wear one's pain?" asks a new exhibit by textile artist **Taleen Batalian** at the WaterFire Arts Center through November 20. Inspired by her parent's memories of the Armenian genocide that claimed her grandparents, Batalian developed a set of prints on fabric and some fabric designs that read almost like statues which try to embody the experiences related by her ancestors. To accompany this exhibit, she developed a runway show from some parallel universe, in which dim lighting and quadrophonic soundscapes support the slow, agonizing progress of three models in Batalian's garb, as they traversed the length of the Waterfire Arts Center. The audience was set up on either side, much like a fashion show, but single file, facing the minimalist runway designed by **Keri King**. The music was developed from manipulations of Batalian's Grandfather's recorded musings, by audio engineer **Antonio Forte**.

"I thought of the movement as postures of grief. The choreography was really, 'Go slow and sink sometimes.' But keep moving, because to me that meant there was some hope as well. Otherwise, we would just end up on the floor the whole time," said choreographer **Heidi Henderson**.

Batalian added, "It's about shape. Shape and texture. The garments were refined based on what I saw as the dancers were wearing, but I really thought of them as garments I get to inhabit, as opposed to traditional costuming that's meant to add to a dancer's character." The designs themselves came to form with "not intention, just trust."



Waterfire Arts Center, 475 Valley St, PVD. waterfire.org through Nov 20.



