



THE WHITE TIME

For Róisín Pierce

Róisín Pierce has made white her signature, which unites her zero-waste, ready-to-wear womenswear collections. Her choice does not limit her in any way, shape, or form, and it is not a rejection of colour – rather, Pierce embraces white to explore its myriad qualities. The absence of colour also says something: her collections respond to distinct sensibilities and communicate desired sensations to achieve a singular beauty. In fact, Pierce’s use of white is engrained with symbolism. White emits a calm, cool, fresh, dreamy, ethereal appearance imbued with lightness and softness to radiate an overall sense of tranquillity. White is economical in its simplicity and has an accord with function enhanced by this designer’s zero-waste ethos that turns such simplicity into luxurious and voluptuous looks.

Wearing white imparts a certain hauteur, indicating exclusivity, wealth, and status to socially elevate: white easily shows up dirt and necessitates time and money to maintain. Pierce’s use of white, often with various sheer fabrics, implies a move towards a higher realm. Here, white is absolute, conjuring up aspects of the unknown, the infinite, and transcendence. Appropriately, white has long-term ceremonial associations, especially religious ones – baptisms, christenings, confirmations, taking communion, weddings and bridal attire, funerals and shrouds. Pierce’s choice of an all-white palette also references Irish “whitework” embroidery.

Furthermore, white is traditionally used to mark occasions linked to nature’s renewal and change: May Day and the Summer Solstice. Pierce’s use of monochrome and the interplay of white-on-white draws attention to surface textures while highlighting details, layers, and structures. With her self-imposed colour restriction, Pierce’s reductive work is ultimately romantic and powerful. In its modernist leaning, it celebrates the visual and the tactile, where Pierce’s clothing decorates and protects.





Dublin-born, Galway-raised, and now based in Dublin, Pierce finds her native Ireland is an enduring inspiration – rural Ireland and nature frequently start her design-thinking. She is particularly fascinated with clouds and flower forms where her garments reveal themselves in organic ways; poems also inspire – their descriptive, expressive power often a catalyst. Her dresses and interchangeable separates are gossamer, gauzy, frothy, foamy, airy creations that float weightlessly around the underlying body. Fabrics are carefully sourced and selected, and their ability to retain shape and take manipulation is essential, as well as using deadstock and recycled materials. Textiles include organza from Japan and the UK, satin-backed crêpe, georgette, French cotton poplin, and guipure lace from Switzerland. Such fabrics interact well with light that subtly bounces off or is absorbed, while the edges of garments are less defined – slightly articulated for a graceful presence.

Irish crochet and lace, both complex artisanal techniques, use French mercerised cotton that imparts luminosity to the constructions. Pierce's mastery of intricate 3-D quatrefoil crochet echoes architectural form – the quatrefoil being an ancient symbol of good luck. Her chosen motifs abound with natural forms – flowers, petals, buds, posies, lattices, bows, ruffles, loops, and scalloped edges. Fabric manipulation, including smocking, gathering, tucking, ruching, and ruffling, creates buoyant puffs, peaks, troughs, and furrows, along with embroidery and patchwork. The fourth dimension of motion is also explored, where her dynamic garments undulate around the wearer's body – veiling and trailing.

Pierce studied textile design at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. She founded her eponymous brand in 2020, working with her mother, Angela, on annual collections. Passionate about Irish history and the work of craftspeople, she expertly makes items fluctuate between past and present. Her titled collections tell stories and speak of women's resistance to oppression – their resilience and liberation with a focus on femininity, patriotism, unmarried mothers, and religion, especially the Irish Catholic Church. ▶





A narrative train of thought is delivered while projecting a vision of optimism and hope.

Her début collection in 2019, *Mná i Bhláth* (Women in Bloom), was shown at the Hyères International Festival of Fashion, Photography and Accessories, winning the Priz du Public. This collection also won her Chanel's Priz des Metiers d'art. Her inspiration was the women of the Magdalene Laundries who had babies out of wedlock and were cruelly treated. Pierce reinvents these women as young, youthful, and fun instead of being portrayed as promiscuous and tainted, resulting in imagined perspectives that impart beauty and softness to such a complicated past. In 2020, she continued the theme by using floral symbolism to represent female sexuality in her *Bláthanna Fíáin* (Wild Flowers) collection. In the year 2020 saw her win the Royal Dublin Society Irish Craft Bursary for her work with traditional Irish lace makers, and in 2022, she was a finalist in the LVMH Prize for Young Fashion Designers.

In 2023, she showed her fourth collection at Paris Fashion Week, invited by the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode and elected by the Chambre Syndicale du Prêt-à-Porter. *Beware, Beware* for Autumn/Winter 2023 was presented at The Theatre of the American Church, Paris. The title comes from "Lady Lazarus" by Sylvia Plath. This intense poem, concerning birth and rebirth, describes the preparations for both a wedding and death; in former times, women in childbirth often died. Pierce evokes serenity and strength in looks that appear fragile but are strong. Her Autumn/Winter 2024 collection, *O lovely one, girl that fell from a star*, was shown at The Embassy of Ireland, Paris. This title references a poem Pierce wrote with the poet Michelle Freya that envisions a celestial angel's descent to Earth. Here, she introduced an Italian dark navy blue to contrast against her white palette.

Pierce's collections highlight sustainable and ethical practices with her zero-waste designs. Hers is a worthy cause, and her emphasis on craft and provenance aims to keep traditional skills alive. *** **Sarah E. Braddock Clarke**



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