

CONFLICT TEXTILES



Stitched Voices exhibition

**Planning meetings at the International Development Department, College of Social Sciences, University of Birmingham
19th – 20th October 2017**

Thursday 19th October

Travelling by car, train, plane and taxi, we arrived at the University of Birmingham around 1pm. Jonathan Fisher, Senior Lecturer in African Politics at the International Development Department, well prepared for the inclement weather, was waiting at the North Gate with a large umbrella.

After a brief chat with Claire Groom, Administrator – International Development Department, we unpacked the textiles from Africa that Roberta had brought and had a quick review of our itinerary. We proceeded to Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) Centre for 2pm, where we met Samara Guimaraes, PhD student in the International Development Department, who is part of the exhibition team.

In this bustling centre, Emma Clarke – Allsopp, BVSC Enterprise Development Co-ordinator, brought us into the exhibition space and explained the various possibilities for hanging the pieces. Set up schedule, opening times and publicity channels were discussed in detail.



Emma Clarke – Allsopp, BVSC Centre, explaining the scope of the exhibition space to Samara Guimaraes (left) and Jonathan Fisher, International Development Department and Roberta Bacic, exhibition curator. (Photo: Breege Doherty)

At 3.30pm we visited the library of Birmingham, where the team are exploring options for hanging a limited number of pieces and displaying publicity material in an upstairs area.

Louis Monroy Santander, PhD student in the International Development Department, joined us for dinner later in the evening and we continued the discussions.

Friday 20th October

For this morning session, we were joined by Dr Berit Bliesemann de Guevara and Lydia Cole from the Department of International politics, Aberystwyth University. Berit and Lydia proceeded to unpack the textiles from the Stitched Voices / Lleisiau wedi eu Pwytho exhibition at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth University, Wales, 25th March - 13th May 2017.



Viewing the first piece unpacked from the suitcase brought by Berit and Lydia from Aberystwyth. (Photo: Breege Doherty)



Jonathan examining the detail of the exhibition banner, which Berit and Lydia brought from Aberystwyth. (Photo: Breege Doherty)

Samara and Louis experienced the textiles first hand and had a chance to discuss and begin to formulate a programme of events. Roberta, Berit and Lydia answered their many questions on the process of setting up associated activities, giving guided tours and engaging with the wider public. At various intervals we consulted the Conflict Textiles website to give a further insight into what had worked elsewhere. At noon we reconvened in the International Development Department and Claire joined us to check the list of textiles which we have left in their care until exhibition set up and for the duration of the exhibition.



Roberta discussing an arpillera with Samara and Louis. (Photo: Breege Doherty)



Breege demonstrating the Conflict Textiles website. (Photo: Breege Doherty)

Finally, Berit, Roberta, Jonathan and I had a brief concluding meeting to review progress and agree next steps re set up, launch, invitations and the emerging exhibition programme.

Outcome

At the end of this 24 hour period, we now have a clear sense of the exhibition spaces; the team have a greater understanding of the power of textiles, having experienced them first hand and an associated programme of activities is emerging.

Several times over this preparatory visit, the team commented on how this onsite “face to face” meeting worked extremely well in facilitating the building of relationships, sharing of insights, clarifying possibilities and firming up plans for the Stitched Voices exhibition.

Breege Doherty

<http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflictextiles/>

23rd October 2017