



And its associated programme

A report by Dr. Lydia Cole, 18/06/19

From 3<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019 textiles from the [Conflict Textiles](#) collection were displayed at The Byre Theatre in St Andrews. The exhibition aimed to explore war, conflict and its many layers of hope and suffering. To achieve this the pieces were displayed in loose grouping which focused on resistance, drone warfare, migration and displacement, memory, and familial loss. Students, staff, members of the public, and representatives of Scottish cultural institutions attended the exhibition and its associated programme of events.

### ***Threads, War and Conflict at the Byre Theatre***



On the ground floor of the exhibition: *Arpilleras* depict different stories of resistance to conflict and political violence (Photo: Lydia Cole)



On the second floor of the exhibition: 'It's no \*\*\*\*\* computer game!' hangs over the gallery space (Photo: Lydia Cole)



On the third floor of the exhibition: Textiles speak to the themes of migration and displacement, memory, and familial loss (Photos: Lydia Cole)

## Threads, War and Conflict Satellite Exhibition at University of St Andrews Library

From the 29<sup>th</sup> March to the 29<sup>th</sup> April, there was an exhibition of library materials to complement the exhibition. Books and other items from the library collection were chosen for display, alongside promotional materials and several textiles by Deborah Stockdale. Students and staff members who use the library were free to borrow the books on the exhibition table. Items were regularly updated and changed throughout the exhibition.

Commenting on the library exhibition, several students noted that it had created 'quite a buzz' ahead of the *Threads, War and Conflict* opening in the Byre Theatre.



Items on display in the University of St Andrews library (Photo: Lydia Cole)



**March 2019**

**9th: *Threads, War and Conflict*: An Exhibition of Women's Textiles from Around the World at Red Box, Verdant Works**

As part of Dundee Women's Festival 2019, the team speak about the *Conflict Textile* collection and the upcoming exhibition at the Byre Theatre. The event took place in Verdant Works, a museum and historic textile mill, which tells the story of Dundee's textile industry. The event was well attended by members of the public and many stayed to ask questions and take a closer look at some of the textiles.



Above: Members of the public listen to Dr Natasha Saunders and Dr Lydia Cole speak about the textiles in the exhibition. Below: 'Red Box' and 'Paz-Justicia-Libertad' (Photos: Laura Mills)



**April 2019**

**3<sup>rd</sup>: Exhibition Launch at the Byre Theatre**

The exhibition launched on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April with introductions by Principal Professor Sally Mapstone (University of St Andrews) and the Threads, War and Conflict team (Dr Lydia Cole, Dr Faye Donnelly, Dr Laura Mills, and Dr Natasha Saunders) at the Byre Theatre. *Conflict Textiles* curator Roberta Bacic, who gave further context about the various stories of the textiles, guided those who attended the launch through the exhibition.



Roberta Bacic discusses [La cueca sola / Dancing cueca alone](#) at the Threads, War and Conflict Launch (Photo: Lydia Cole)

**5<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>: A Thread that Leads Home: Turning Ukrainian narratives of displacement into textile painting**

Darya Tsymbalyuk, PhD student at University of St Andrews and a co-author of Donbas Odyssey art project, facilitated a series of textile workshops with members of the public and students at the university. The textile workshops built on her research and artistic practice which centres on oral histories of the internally displaced in Ukraine. Along with colleagues from Donbas Odyssey, she interviews displaced persons and asks them to draw maps of their hometowns. These maps and interviews are later used for exhibitions and other artistic interventions. During the St Andrews workshops, Darya shared these narratives and drawings with participants and asked them to use them as the basis of a textile response.





Participants at 'A Thread that Leads Home' stitch in response to images and maps from the Donbas Odyssey art project (Photos: Darya Tsymbalyuk)

### 8<sup>th</sup>: Visualising War in Different Media: Interplay and Intervention (organised by Dr Alice König, School of Classics)

This workshop offered an opportunity to reflect on war as it is depicted across a variety of media. The workshop began with a short talk about the exhibition *Threads, War and Conflict* with Dr Lydia Cole and a guided tour with our research assistant, Selena Jamalullail. Participants at the workshop particularly noted how the exhibition animated their conversation throughout the day, and they were impressed with the way the tour brought the textiles to life.

**12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>:** Masters Workshops, 'Responding to Threads, War and Conflict: Letters to Arpilleristas' at The Byre Theatre

Over three workshops, Masters students in the School of International Relation, University of St Andrews, as well as students from other Scottish Higher Education Institutions worked with textile artist, Sheila Mortlock, and lecturers in the School of International Relations, Dr Lydia Cole and Dr Laura Mills, to create a series of textile pictures responding to the themes of the exhibition.

Inspired by *arpilleras* such as [¿Dónde están nuestros hijos? / Where are our children?](#) which contain concealed letters from their makers, students created an envelope and letter. These were then incorporated into the design of the textile. The completed collective display will become part of the *Conflict Textile* collection.



Textile artist Sheila Mortlock with participants at the workshop (Photo: Lydia Cole)





Participants get stitching at the first 'Letters to Arpilleristas' workshop (Photo: Lydia Cole)



**22<sup>nd</sup>:** 'Knowing Through Needlework? Conflict Textiles and the Study of War and Violence in International Politics' with Dr Berit Bliesemann de Guevara (Aberystwyth University)

Dr Berit Bliesemann de Guevara (Aberystwyth University) travelled to St Andrews to discuss her current projects on textile work and politics in Wales, Colombia and beyond.



The Colombian dolls from 'La larga espera de las mujeres de luto / Long wait of the mourning women' introduce Dr Berit Bliesemann de Guevara's talk, 'Knowing through Needlework' (Photo: Lydia Cole)

## 24<sup>th</sup>: *Threads, War and Conflict* Conference

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, twenty participants including academics and representatives from Scottish arts institutions and organisations gathered for a one-day conference on textile, art, and global politics. The day started with a guided tour with Roberta Bacic which focused on the process of curation, as well as the individual textiles in the exhibition. The morning continued with a panel on 'Stitching War, Conflict and Resistance'. Speakers in this panel reflected on the different contexts and purposes for which stitch is used, including embroidering to rehumanise the dead and missing in Mexico, in solidarity in Wales, to send messages from POW camps, or in mapping home in the context of Ukraine.

The afternoon continued with a panel on 'Art, Textile and Representation' which discussed the theme of memory, conflict, and political violence. One paper reflected on 'memory workshops' for demobilizing combatants which involve stitching, drawing, and other narrative components. Another presentation discussed the emergence of murals in Northern Ireland which abandon a militarized style, focusing instead on positive imagery of change, including one of a women's peace quilt. With a final participant focusing on the documentation of everyday life in the separatist region of Transnistria.

The day ended with a collective discussion on the role of textile in research and our work. The group also discussed some preliminary ideas for a special issue of 'Openings' in *Contemporary Voices in International Relations*.



Roberta Bacic speaks on the process of curating *Threads, War and Conflict* to conference participants (Photo: Berit Bliesemann de Guevara)





Left: Dr Danielle House discussing 'Bordando por la Paz y la Memoria: Re-building worlds and the *narco-machine*'. Right: Clare Hunter reads from her new book *Threads of Life* (Photos: Berit Bliesemann de Guevara)

## 26<sup>th</sup>: Creative Evening at The Byre Theatre

The creative evening concluded the events programme and included a screening of the film 'Scraps of Life / Retazos de Vida' and a guided tour with our research assistant Selena Jamallulail. It also featured two displays of artwork made by students in the School of International Relations. One presented artwork created for Dr Laura Mills' module 'Everyday Life and Global Politics', and the other featured works-in-progress stitched by participants at the 'Letters to Arpilleristas' workshops. The evening concluded with a discussion about the various threads of war and conflict encountered during the creative evening.

Right: Threads, War and Conflict team members Lydia and Faye introduce the creative evening (Photo: John Cole)





Threads, War and Conflict team members, Lydia, Laura, and Faye take questions after the screening of 'Scraps of Life / Retazos de Vida' (Photo: John Cole)



Selena talks to attendees of the Creative Evening about the textile [No al plebiscito, No podemos ni opinar / No to the plebiscite](#) (Photo: John Cole)