



Linen Hall Library

BELFAST LIBRARY & SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE

PRESS RELEASE
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THE DEVASTATION OF WAR ON CHILDREN IS THEME OF NEW TEXTILE EXHIBITION EXCLUSIVELY AT LINEN HALL IN MARCH

Powerful, emotional and deeply disturbing – *War-Torn Children* - launching on 1st March, is a new and exclusive exhibition at the Linen Hall Library in partnership with Conflict Textiles and INNATE. The panic, fear and terrifying repercussions of war on children are expressed through a collection of intricately stitched arpilleras (three dimensional textiles) and other items such as photographs, posters, newspaper articles, books, letters and items of clothing.

The exhibition brings together a number of complementary events including a display of UK photographs of refugees entitled *After the Waves* lent by Spanish social cohesion organization Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc (Catalonia). These have never been exhibited previously together. The event will also include the Belfast launch of a new book, *Ireland's Guantanamo Granny* (2015), by peace activist Margaretta D'Arcy in conversation with Phil Scraton, Professor Emeritus at the School of Law, Queen's University, Belfast.

War-Torn Children is curated by Roberta Bacic, a lecturer, researcher and human rights advocate. She says:

“The pain and horror suffered by children trapped by wars - not waged by them - empowers us to bear witness and explore through textile language, as well as via photos, posters and other memorabilia, what we can still do. We want to highlight not only the horrors but also the resilience amidst conflict.”

The colourful and expressive arpilleras and wall hangings, drawn from South America and Europe, uncover the raw emotions and consequences endured by children caught in the centre and on the fringes of wars, both historical and current. Themes include genocide, landmines, incarceration, displacement and starvation.

Irene MacWilliams, from Northern Ireland, was compelled to create her arpillera entitled 'Children on the Edge' after seeing “a picture in a newspaper of a starving and dying child hunched up on the ground, the vultures in the trees above were waiting for it to die.”

Along with other items, a selection of letters sent by students of Gort Convent primary school, Galway, and Beneavin de la Salle College, Finglas, Dublin, to non-violent peace activist Margaretta D'Arcy during her imprisonment in 2014 for anti-war campaigning will be on display.

Below is the schedule of events taking place under the banner of *War-Torn Children*

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Wednesday 1 March – Saturday 15 April: *War-Torn Children* Exhibition – free to view

New and exclusive to the Linen Hall Library, children's responses to the horrors of war are captured in a series of arpilleras and wall hangings. There is also a selection of other items such as newspaper articles, photographs, books and letters that capture the fear and desolation experienced by young people in traumatic circumstances associated with war and conflict.

Wednesday 1 March at 1.00pm: Exhibition Launch – free to attend

1976 Nobel peace laureate Mairéad Maguire will deliver the keynote address to launch this phenomenal exhibition.

Wednesday 1 March at 6.00pm: *Ireland's Guantanamo Granny*– free to attend

Join the well-known nonviolent peace activist Margaretta D'Arcy at the Belfast launch of her book *Ireland's Guantanamo Granny* (2015) and a new edition of *Tell Them Everything* (1st edition 1981). Phil Scraton, Professor Emeritus in the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast, has written the foreword to the second edition of *Tell Them Everything*, and will facilitate a discussion with D'Arcy at this event.

Friday 14 April at 2.00pm – 4.00pm: Arpillera Doll Making Workshop, facilitated by Roberta Bacic – free to attend

War-Torn Children curator Roberta Bacic instructs in the creation of three-dimensional arpilleras and discusses their history and significance.

***War-Torn Children* runs from Wednesday 1 March – Saturday 15 April 2017. The exhibition is free to visit.**

For more information about this exhibition and the Linen Hall Library, go to www.linenhall.com.

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Notes to editors:

Interviews and pictures are available on request. Please contact Linen Hall Digital and Marketing Comms Specialist Rachel Wetherall on r.wetherall@linenhall.com or 028 9032 1707.

War-Torn Children is an initiative of Conflict Textiles and INNATE (Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education) in collaboration with the Linen Hall Library, CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) and Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc (Catalonia).

Other participating organisations are: Museum of Basque Nationalism Sabino Arana, National Museums Northern Ireland, Causeway Coast & Glens Museum Service, and Northern Ireland Community Archive.



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People:

Roberta Bacic (curator of *War-Torn Children*) has worked for the National Corporation of Reparation and Reconciliation, the successor to Chile's Truth Commission, and taught in human rights at the Catholic University, Temuco, Chile. Roberta moved to Northern Ireland in 2004. Since 2008, she has curated more than 100 international exhibitions of arpilleras and other textiles.

Margaretta D'Arcy is an Irish actress, writer, playwright, and peace-activist. In 2014 she was in the news for imprisonment after refusing to sign a bond saying that she wouldn't trespass on non-public parts of Shannon Airport. Her arrest was a consequence of trespassing on airport property during protests over United States military stopovers at Shannon Airport.

Mairéad Maguire is a peace activist from Northern Ireland who co-founded Women for Peace, which later became the Community of Peace People, an organisation dedicated to encouraging a peaceful resolution to the Northern Ireland Troubles. In 1976 she was awarded a Nobel peace laureate.

Phil Scraton is a critical criminologist, academic and author, currently Professor Emeritus at the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast. He is known particularly for his investigative work into the context, circumstances and aftermath of the Hillsborough disaster and his universally acclaimed book *Hillsborough - The Truth*. For this work he was awarded the Freedom of the City of Liverpool. His research also focuses on deaths in custody and prisoners' rights.

Organisations:

Conflict Textiles is home to a large collection of international textiles, exhibitions and associated events, all of which focus on elements of conflict and human rights abuses. Conflict Textiles is an 'Associated Site' of CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) at Ulster University, Northern Ireland.

Website: <http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles>

Fundacio Ateneu Sant Roc (Catalonia) is an organisation based in Badalona, Spain, promoting social cohesion in the neighbourhood of Sant Roc and surrounding areas through the promotion of various educational projects, stressing in particular the risk of social exclusion of vulnerable groups.

Website: <http://www.fundacioateneusanroc.org>

INNATE (Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education)

INNATE was established as a result of the need for an umbrella group to support groups and individuals exploring nonviolent approaches to conflict issues.

Website: <http://www.innatenonviolence.org>

The Linen Hall Library, one of Belfast's oldest charities, is open free to the public.

Our opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am – 5.30pm, and Saturday 9.30am – 4.00pm.