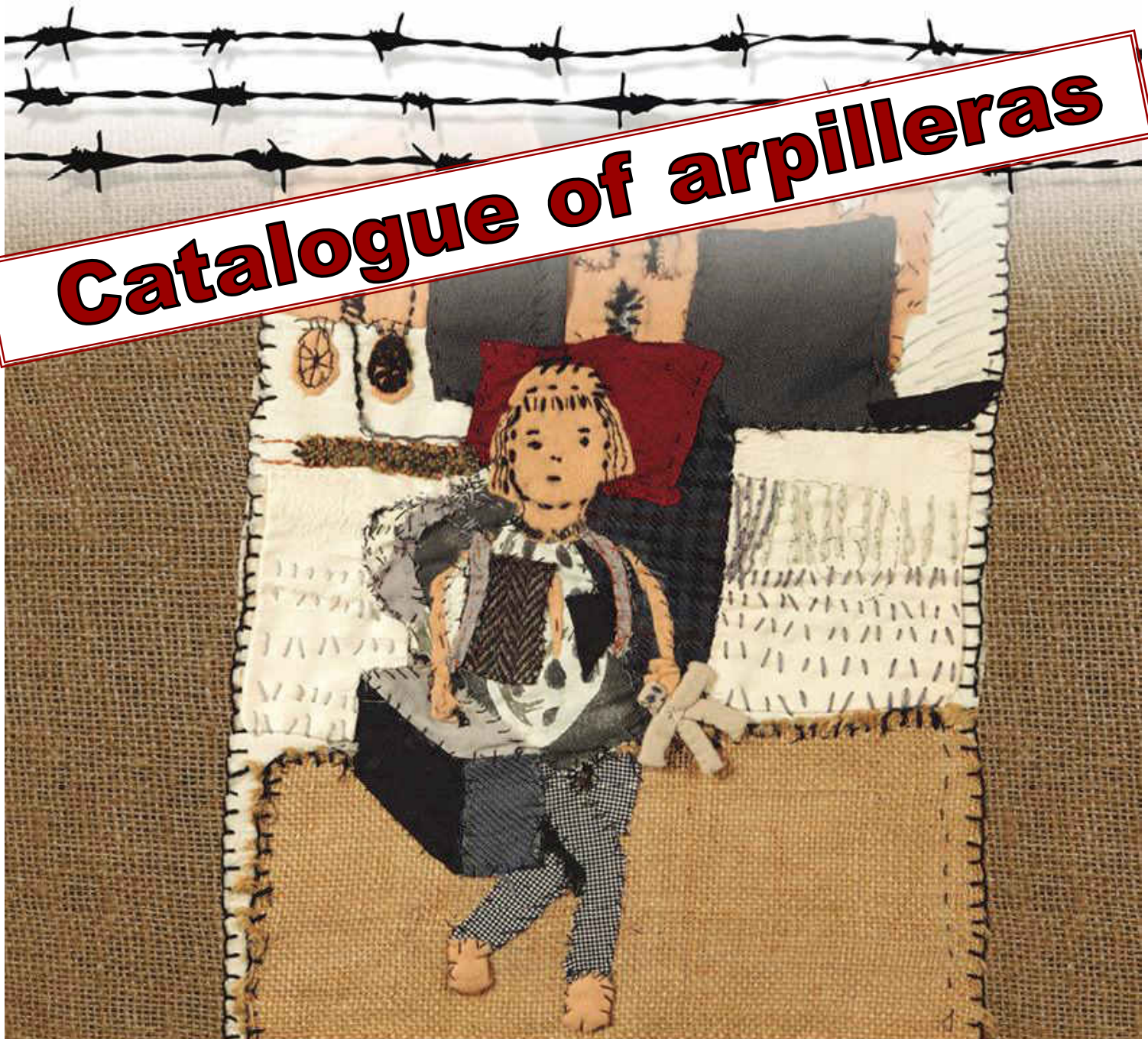


WAR-TORN CHILDREN

3-27 OCTOBER / 2017

Verbal Arts Centre - Derry / Londonderry

Catalogue of arpilleras





WAR-TORN CHILDREN

Introduction

The aim of the exhibition is to raise awareness of the human impact of war and injustice, and to promote a culture of hospitality and welcome for refugees seeking sanctuary from war and persecution.

This exhibition of arpilleras, photographs and posters, commissioned by the Verbal Arts Centre, Derry / Londonderry, highlights the devastating impact of war on children, their families and communities. It is an adaptation of War-Torn Children exhibited at the Linen Hall Library, Belfast, 1st March - 15th April, and at CB1 Gallery, Limerick (commissioned by Doras Luimní), 17th – 28th July 2017.

The arpilleras are drawn from Conflict Textiles, the photographs from Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc (Catalonia) and the posters from INNATE (Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education).

Partners to this initiative are CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet), at Ulster University, Linen Hall Library Belfast, Peace People, Belfast, Doras Luimní and the Verbal Arts Centre.

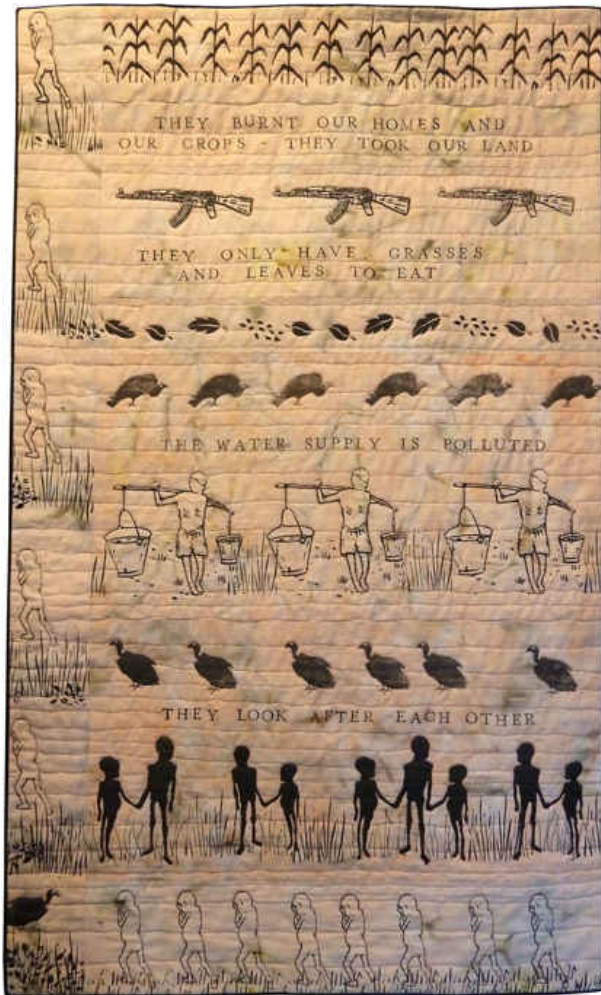
Further details at:

<http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts/fullevent/?id=173>

Curated by Roberta Bacic

Assisted by Breege Doherty

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



Children on the Edge
 Northern Ireland Wall hanging,
 Irene MacWilliam, 2016
 Photo Irene MacWilliam
 Irene MacWilliam collection

Details on all these arpilleras also on Conflict Textiles CAIN site at <http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts/fullevent/?id=173>

Conflict, both global and local, past and present, and the devastation it causes to children and families, is a recurring theme in the work of Irene MacWilliam. A picture in a newspaper: “of a starving and dying child hunched up on the ground; the vultures in the trees above ... waiting for it to die” inspired her to create this piece.

This desolate image is reinforced by stark statements on the impact of conflict: “They burnt our homes and crops – they took our land” and “the water supply is polluted.” The bleakness continues in the background colour, deliberately chosen, Irene says, “to depict barrenness and ravaged earth.” The desolation is accentuated on the reverse side with the addition of barbed wire.

Pondering on the inadequacy of words to explain the depths of these images, Irene reflects: “I find it impossible to write why I made it, the expression of my feelings is in the images.”

Ann M. Venemen, then Executive Director of UNICEF, in her foreword to the 2009 report “Machel Study 10 year Strategic Review: Children and Conflict in a Changing World” states that in 2006, over 1 billion children were living in areas in conflict, an estimated 300 million of whom were under the age of five.

http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Machel_Study_10_Year_Strategic_Review_EN_030909.pdf

Over ten years later, these statistics, so vividly brought to life by MacWilliam, show no sign of decreasing.



Lost children of war

Northern Ireland arpillera, Irene MacWilliam, 2009

Photo Irene MacWilliam

Conflict Textiles collection



Irene MacWilliam was deeply moved by the posters being circulated at one time to help families find each other after being separated and displaced by war. Especially concerned about the lost and displaced children, she created this piece, her first arpillera, to depict their desperation, making the children ghost like, devoid of nationality or race to express that they are living a half life. Irene chose to focus on children rather than adults: “*since the image of a distressed child is very emotive.*”

Recent reports reveal that worldwide, almost 28 million children have been forcibly displaced; 10 million of whom are child refugees, approximately 1 million of whom are asylum-seeking children and an estimated 17 million displaced within their own countries by violence and conflict.

<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>

Displacement poses real dangers for children, with unaccompanied children being the most likely to be killed, tortured, raped, robbed and recruited as child soldiers.

Much remains to be done to safeguard children affected by armed conflict so that they have an opportunity to live as children, grow to adulthood and contribute to their communities.





**Auf der Flucht 1945 /
Fleeing in 1945**
German arpillera,
Mara Loytved-Hardegg, 2010
Photo Martin Melaugh
Conflict Textiles collection

In this arpillera Mara vividly remembers fleeing in 1945 as a child from the Russians in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in the Soviet zone north of Berlin.

“We were about three months running westwards during the nights and hiding in the woods during the days. I was not yet three and had to run with my bigger brother of five years old. My mother took the one year old sister in her arms. Finally my mother returned with us to Ulrichshusen where we had found shelter in 1943 when bombing in the cities became too hard. When we returned ... my mother had to work in the fields for the Russians. There was little food and a lot of people died of Typhus.”

More than sixty years after the event Mara reflects that *“children are always the fragile ones”* in such traumatic events *“...mark[ing] their whole life.”* She connects her experience to our present: *“all these children suffering now in these new wars is deeply concerning.”*

This arpillera was sewn by Mara in one of the workshops - EVACUATION - that took place as part of the associated activities during the exhibition *The Human Cost of War* at the Tower Museum, Derry City Council Heritage and Museum Service, 2011.



Violencia en Ayacucho /

Violence in Ayacucho

Peruvian arpillera, FCH Mujeres Creativas workshop, 2009

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

Provenance Rebecca Dudley,

USA / Northern Ireland



Made by the Mujeres Creativas workshop in Lima, Peru, this piece, a replica of the 1985 original arpillera, takes as its inspiration a picture drawn by a child portraying his memories of the military arriving in the city of Ayacucho in south-central Peru. His mother, through the Mujeres Creativas workshop, created this arpillera depicting the harshness, violence and repression of this era.

Over 600,000 people were displaced within Peru during the 1980s and 1990s as a result of an armed conflict between the government, self defence groups and insurgent forces of the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Resistance Movement. In 1980, the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) used Ayacucho as its base for its campaign against the Peruvian government.



**Olla común en una población /
Soup kitchen in a barrio**
Chilean arpillera, anon., Taller Fundación
Missio, Santiago, 1982
Photo Martin Melaugh
Conflict Textiles collection. Provenance
Kinderhilfe arpillera collection, Chile/
Bonn



This arpillera depicts the hunger and poverty that is wrought by conflict and social injustice. Created during the Pinochet dictatorship, it depicts both the desperation of hunger among the poor, forced to seek food from church charities, and also the resilience of those who find ways to ensure that the worst affected are not left hungry.

Soup kitchens, similar to the one portrayed in this arpillera, were a life line for the impoverished during the Pinochet regime. Church charities such as the Vicaría de la Solidaridad and later, the Fundación Solidaridad, were in the forefront in setting them up. María Madariaga, whose husband was unemployed and who wondered how she could provide food for her children, recalls what the soup kitchen meant for her family, even though not all of them could benefit from it: *“There was an age limit to abide by...of my three children at the time, only one was able to eat...We thought it was better that one eats than none...”* (Agosín, 2008).

The need was so great that difficult choices had to be made, both within the family and in the organization, which meant that for Maria and her husband: *“the days were especially long...because there was nothing to eat.”*



Shannonwatch (Extraordinary rendition)

Irish arpillera, Deborah Stockdale, 2011

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection



Extraordinary rendition, the international transfer of individuals from the custody of one state to another, in the absence of following procedures for extradition agreements, is against international law. Yet this practice was admitted to in 2006 by then US President George W. Bush, when he referred to a programme implemented by the CIA to arrest, detain and interrogate terrorist suspects outside of US jurisdiction. The use of planes masquerading as civilian aircraft is a deceit practised by the US since the mid-1990s, as civilian status bypasses restrictions placed on military aircraft.

Shannonwatch, the work of a small group of peace and human rights activists based in the mid west of Ireland, has played an important role in monitoring Shannon airport's links with renditions. Their documented evidence indicts Shannon as a stopover for CIA rendition planes and by the US military.

Here, artist Deborah Stockdale depicts the actions of the Women's Peace Camp at Shannon set up in 2010. In support of the numerous Afghani women who were innocent victims of the conflict there, they demonstrated in white burkas at the airport gates. As Deborah comments: *"this arpillera reflects an ongoing dialogue about a contentious international 'arrangement'...."*

The Irish government consistently denies that Irish airports and airspace have been used by US rendition flights, insisting that US assurances are its guarantee against violation of international law.





Aleppo school
English arpillerera,
Linda Adams, 2016
Photo Linda Adams
Conflict Textiles collection

In March 2011, inspired by the Arab Spring, Syrians took to the streets, in ever-increasing numbers, demanding reform of the oppressive Assad regime. Repression of these nonviolent protests by Syrian Armed Forces & Allied militia was immediate and brutal. Soon the conflict escalated into civil war between government and rebel forces, with both sides aided by a proliferation of armed groups and powerful external players. As 2016 drew to a close, the country's infrastructure was in ruins; over a quarter of a million Syrians had been killed and an estimated 13.5 million people, including 6 million children, were in need of humanitarian assistance.

<http://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-country-profile/about-crisis>

Thousands of miles away in England, arpillerista Linda Adams was shocked at the images of Syrian children caught in the chaos of war. Digging deeper she *"watched newsreel film and read first hand reports for days"* and with needle and thread she stepped into their world. In this piece, as the barrel bombing continues relentlessly overhead we descend into an underground school, where teachers, at great risk to their own safety, persist in educating their students.

Absent children and adults, killed during the war *"are represented ...as shadows in the spaces where they would have been."* Childrens' drawings cover the walls, a common sight in schools worldwide. Linda reminds us that these images *"came from childrens' drawings [in] Aleppo [and] show things children shouldn't have to see."*

Mindful of the fact that that *"new news [items] ... push stories like this away from the front pages"* Linda is hopeful that her work will bring *"some attention and understanding"* to the crisis in Syria, where, as we see in this arpillerera, people are striving, against all the odds, to educate children and rebuild communities.



Escuela en la población /

School in a población

Chilean arpillera, anon., c 1980

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

Provenance Kinderhilfe arpillera collection,
Chile/Bonn



This arpillera belongs to a series of three big arpilleras, the complete size of a flour sack, with a specific focus on each. This particular piece titled: "Vida cotidiana poblacional; vamos a la escuela." depicts dwellers in a shantytown community of Santiago going about their daily routines, engaged in a myriad of family, community and economic activities.

On the left hand side we see a community school where children are attending lessons. Here in this community, where life is a daily struggle for the majority, education remains at the heart of the community, highlighting the resilience of families in finding community solutions during the dictatorship. Attending classes in these small schools also protected children from being involved in riots or detained for breaking curfew.



La Maternidad del Elna
 Catalanian / Spanish arpillera,
 Arpilleristas Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc, 2012
 Photo Roser Corbera
 Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc collection,
 Catalonia / Spain



In the closing days of January 1939, with the Spanish civil war in its third year, Nationalist troops captured Barcelona. As the whole of Catalonia soon fell to Franco, an estimated 500,000 Republican supporters began their exodus across the border into refugee camps in Roussillon, France.

In these overcrowded camps, where infant mortality exceeded 90%, the Elna Maternity Home was set up nearby by Swiss National Elizabeth Eidenbenz. It is remembered by Arpilleristas Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc as: *“the only refuge and space for pregnant women who endured misery for their babies and themselves in the camps.”*

Here, the arpilleristas pay tribute to this remarkable centre where, between 1939 and 1944, almost 600 babies were born to women fleeing the Spanish civil war and later, Jewish refugees and gypsies fleeing the Nazi invasion. We see women about to give birth, the new babies in the nursery and women engaged in the general running of the centre; women of so many different origins sharing the experience of motherhood. Overall, a sense of dignity, calm, care and welcome pervades this arpillera, a far cry from the chaos and disorder of camp life.

In the words of its founder Elizabeth Eidenbenz, it was as *“an island of peace amongst an ocean of destruction.”* For the arpilleristas reconnecting with it through their stitching almost 80 years later, it was a respite from *“their [experience] of suffering, human rights’ violations and fears”* endured during the Nationalist occupation and their journey into exile.

http://memorialdemocratic.gencat.cat/web/.content/04_demana_una_exposicio/05_documents/maternitat_montjuic_ang.pdf



**Any time and everywhere -
Anna Frank's universality**
German arpillera,
Heidi Drahota, 2011
Photo Heidi Drahota
Heidi Drahota collection



This is the first arpillera by textile artist Heidi Drahota. She created it after participating in several arpillera workshops connected to International arpillera exhibitions, 2009 – 2011. For Heidi "Arpilleras are like a diary. ... and like every diary they are personal documents."

This piece is: *"[my] personal expression as a German profoundly affected by the Second World War."* In the top section, Heidi, inspired by the arpillera doll technique used by Chilean women, depicts teenager Anna Frank at work on her diary during the period 1942 to 1944, when she and her family lived in hiding in Amsterdam, during the German occupation of the Netherlands.

Directly below she portrays the historical context in which this happened. Her vivid images of peoples' glasses, the presence of guards and dishevelled yellow stars reminds us of the genocide inflicted by the Nazi regime on Jews during World War II, a fate which befell Anna Frank and several family members.

The third section links the historical and current context. The end of World War II and the decline in Nazism is symbolised by brown helmet shapes, whilst the grey brickwork portrays the emergence of the UN declaration of human rights, the building blocks for a more equal world.

Worryingly, on the bottom right we see a gradual rise in Neo Nazism, reminding us that the issues of discrimination, denial of human rights and genocide faced by Anna Frank in the 1940s, is still a threat for children and young people 80 years later.





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