

CONFLICT TEXTILES



Stitching Memoryscape guided tour and workshop Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum, Sunday 3rd September 2017



Entrance to the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum

As this exhibition came to a close after years of preparation and team work, it seemed relevant to share common space, time, processes and generate a context to communicate arpillera power and textile language.

On Sunday 3rd September, **Stitched Memoryscape** exhibition ended with a guided tour and arpillera doll workshop in this impressive and modern art gallery. So very different in every way to an arpillera workshop held in a poor Chilean neighbourhood during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990). Yet there were close similarities in three fundamental aspects:

- a. A group had come together to experience and communicate via the arpillera doll technique their connection to community sewing and become immersed in the technique as well as the context that allowed them to express their thoughts and feelings about the realities present in the room.
- b. Serious topics and issues were approached in a way that was not confrontational and which created an atmosphere of camaraderie and bond amongst participants which will last over time, no matter where we are.
- c. Japanese and Chilean “arpilleristas” were confronted with human made catastrophes that ordinary people have to endure on a daily basis and which are the result of decisions by political authorities.

It was especially poignant to have women and men participants from different roads of life sharing the space. Some were local; some had come from further away to join us in this emblematic city with strong and stark presence of the atomic bomb, at a time that the threat is so close again.



Tomoko Sakai, academic from Tohoku Gakuin University, who made this exhibition possible, and Roberta Bacic, Chilean curator of Conflict Textiles, explaining arpilleras during the guided tour.



Participants engrossed in the doll making activity around the workshop table placed in the middle of the exhibition room.



Arpillera dog figure made by participant Yoko Masuyama to complement one of the arpilleras on exhibition. It represents a loyal dog trying to find his master at the time dead bodies of Chilean disappeared were recovered at the end of the dictatorship. The arpillera belongs to Oshima Hakko Museum.



The male participant who made this arpillera doll connected his actual piece to the present situation of pollution, making a direct link between the struggle of the Chilean arpillera in the 1980s and the current struggles in his Chinese hometown.



As the exhibition was coming to an end, a closing activity that requires reflecting on content and feelings was facilitated as a way of creating a climate of continuity after the events. Participants holding a piece of wool express themselves while the others listen and the thread is kept tight to feel the tension and togetherness. All in all a great experience to feel that this was not the end, but a new stage in the arpillera world.

Photos provided by Yoko Masuyama

Roberta Bacic,

Notrthern Ireland, 11th September 2017