

Catalogue

Textile Language of Conflicts Exhibition



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

Minor Hall,
Magee campus,
Ulster University
6th—10th November 2017

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Community Relations Council



Nuestras Víctimas 2 de mayo 2002 /

Our victims of 2nd May 2002;

Bellavista - Bojayá - Chocó

Group Artesanías Choibá and Ursula Holzapfel,
Life, Justice and Peace Committee, Quibdó diocese
2016.

Conflict Textiles collection.

Photo Steve Cagan



On May 2, 2002, in the Bellavista area of the town of Bojayá, in the Chocó district of Colombia the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) launched a cylinder bomb into a church full of civilians being used as a human shield by the now demobilised United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). Over 79 people, including children, were killed in this massacre and 5,771 people were forcibly displaced to Quibdó, the capital town of Chocó district. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/tenth-anniversary-of-bojaya-colombia-massacre/>

Before the first anniversary, relatives of the victims displaced to Quibdó embroidered the names of the dead on a large 6 x 2.5 metre fabric. This piece, known as the Bellavista backcloth, has been part of, and continues to be requested for, many commemorative events.

In 2016, these women, driven by a need to: “tell our children and grandchildren what happened” created this smaller piece depicting their memories of the massacre and the identity of the victims. They firmly believe that we need to learn from these memories and pass them on to coming generations so that they will not be repeated. Resolute in their quest of ensuring that the wider world also remembers: “we send it to different places where people are open to hear about our pain.”

As they revisit their traumatic experiences through stitch and fabric, they courageously bear witness: “...mak [ing] history through the rivers and forests that keep the memory of so many black people.” In so doing, they seek to shape a peaceful future in a country scarred by a five decade armed conflict, the longest in the Western hemisphere, in which 280, 619 people have been killed, 45,000 forcibly disappeared and more than seven million displaced. (“Peace in Colombia: Hopes and Fears” New Internationalist 497, November 2016)

**Caín, ¿dónde está tu hermano? /
Cain, where is your brother?**

Anonymous

Chile

c1983

Conflict Textiles collection.

Photo Martin Melaugh



This unique arpillera brings us indoors. The setting allows us to come close to the way the church groups in Chile worked around issues of human rights violations, such as killings, disappearances, torture, exile or others.

In this vivid scene, we are almost invited to join the group around the table where we can see the candles, burning brightly next to the Bible. A woman is reading aloud: it could well be information relating to the detained disappeared people they are searching for and of whom they have photos on one of the walls. A second woman has lifted her hand to signal that she wants to speak. Other men and women are actively listening.

The meeting has challenged the participants to respond to a well-known quote from the Bible: "Cain, where is your brother?" The scene evokes a deep sense of solidarity and community. In the catalogue to the Weavings of War exhibition (2005), James Young, curator of The art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History, says: "This needlework expresses such memories outwardly and it gives the storyteller an inward time and space to work through such memory" (Cooke, Zeitlin A., & MacDowell M., eds. 2005, Weavings of War: Fabrics of Memory, Michigan State University, p21).

Carmen Gloria quemada viva / Carmen Gloria burnt alive

Elizabeth Zelada

Chile

1990

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



When Professor Masaaki Takahashi visited Chile after the fall of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1990, he asked a group of arpilleristas: "What are the events you will never forget from those times?" This scene stitched by Elizabeth recalls an event strongly engraved in Chilean collective memory.

On 2 July 1986, as part of a two day national protest against the Pinochet dictatorship, a group of demonstrators near the Estación Central in Santiago de Chile were intercepted by a military patrol as they erected makeshift barricades. Most people managed to escape; Carmen Gloria Quintana, an 18 year old university student and Rodrigo Rojas DeNegri, a 19 year old photographer, recently returned from visiting his exiled mother in the USA, were caught.

Elizabeth, in a letter placed in the pocket of her arpillera, states: "In one of the many protests that we had during the dictatorship Carmen Gloria Quintana was set alight with acid and in other occasions many people died in the struggle for their ideals."

While in flames, Rodrigo and Carmen Gloria were wrapped in blankets and dumped in a ditch off the main highway. Rodrigo died four days later and Carmen Gloria survived despite having over 60% of her body burnt.

On 10 September 2013, to mark 40 years since the military coup, BBC World News published an article by Mike Lanchin titled: "Carmen Quintana: Set on fire by Pinochet's soldiers." <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24014543>

La Batalla del Ebro / The battle of Ebro

Núria Bonavila Magriñà,
Participant of Casal de barri Congrès-Indians
arpillerista group, Barcelona
Catalonia / Spain
2016

Núria Bonavila Magriñà, Catalonia / Spain
Photo Mariona Zaragoza Saltó



The battle of Ebro, which lasted 116 days, was the longest and cruellest of the Spanish civil war (1936-1939). This offensive, launched by the Republican army, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Modesto, took place between July and November 1938, with fighting mainly concentrated in two areas on the lower course of the Ebro River.

In this piece Núria, almost 80 years later revisits, through fabric and stitch, the bombardment and shortages suffered during this traumatic period: "Sourcing food and other basic needs in the areas of Pàndols and Cavalls was very difficult because the air force bombed up to 24 hours a day. Transporting these supplies was the job of 'Cuerpo de Automobilismo / Self Mobilization Group'. If they brought water up during the day they were shot dead. In these circumstances they did it during the night, without lights and with a soldier on the roof of the van who indicated whether to turn right or left."

She recalls the difficulty in tending the wounded: "During the day ambulances could ... pick up the wounded but they could not bring them down [the mountains]. If they were packed they were also bombed. The ambulances were covered internally with mattresses so that the wool could stop the bullets."

Both sides suffered heavy losses in this battle. Estimates of casualties for the Republicans are as high as 75,000, including wounded and captured with a slightly lower figure of 60,000 for the Nationalist side, who retained control of the contested territory.

Our Lady of Words

Linda Adams

England

2015

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Rory McCarron



In this arpillera, Linda, after much research and deliberation, chose to represent the life of Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, by stitching her poems; eventually naming the piece *Our Lady of Words*. Gabriela won the 1945 Nobel Prize for Literature, the first female Latin American poet to do so. The Nobel citation, prominently stitched by Linda, reads:

“for her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world“

Born in Vicuña, Chile, in 1889, of Basque and Indian heritage, Gabriela became a school teacher at the age of 15. She went on to play a key role in shaping the educational systems of Mexico and Chile, as well as becoming a renowned international author and diplomat.

Working on this arpillera was a very intense process as “...there was a lot to read and I wanted to use [poems] that I hope say something about the special kind of person she was; her strength, compassion and love of people.” For Linda the poem “Tiny Feet” (1922) “the blue cold little feet was the one that moved me emotionally ... and I had to include it.”

Linda feels that the slow rhythm of stitching brought her closer to the work of Gabriela: “Sewing gave me the chance to read the words over and over because sewing is a slow process and the more I read them the closer to her I feel.”

The arpillera dolls (19 in total), created in workshops connected to various exhibitions, were added by Deborah Stockdale. These figures symbolise the central role of children and ordinary people in the remarkable life of Gabriela Mistral; educator, diplomat and poet (1889 - 1957).

Una Mirada a mi Tierra Desde el Barco / A Look to my Homeland from the Boat

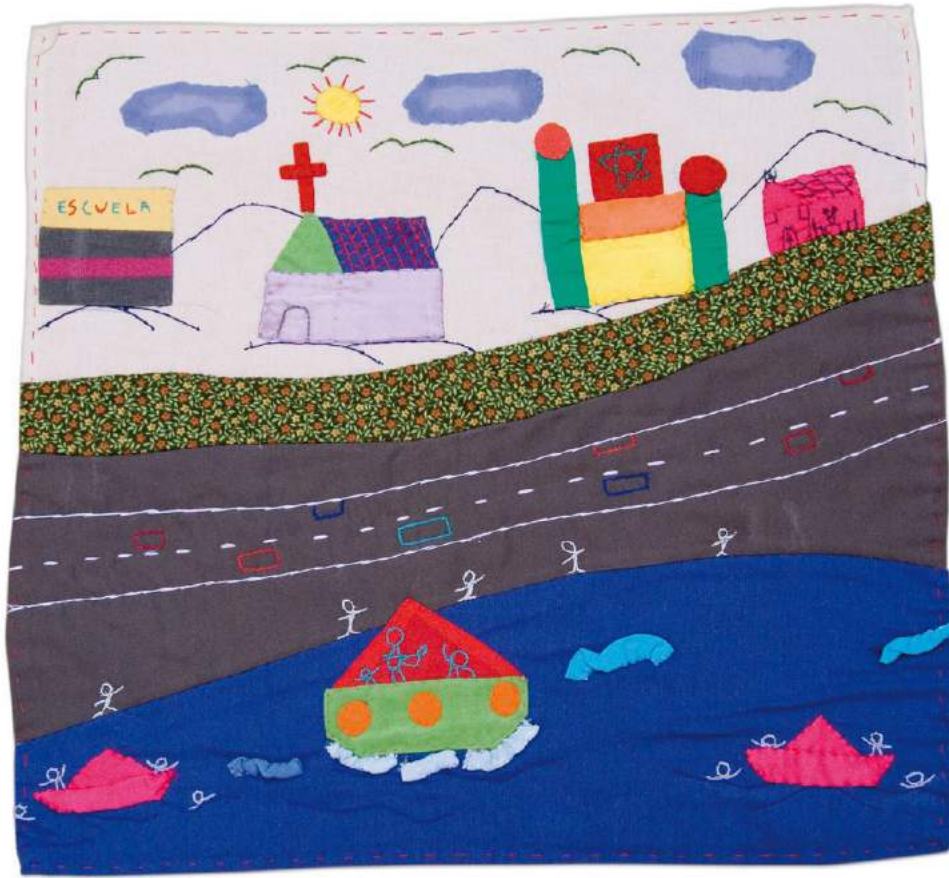
Francisca Báez Avila

Catalonia / Spain

2009

Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc collection, Catalonia / Spain

Photo Roser Corbera



This arpillera by Francisca Báez Avila, Barcelona, Spain, was made for International Women's Day 2009, during a 12 session course at Fundacio Ateneu San Roc, facilitated by María Viñolo and Alba Pérez.

Francisca, now 67 years old shared with the facilitators the story behind her piece: "This is the story of the time I came from Tangiers. I was 21 at the time and had already had my daughter. My parents lived in Tangiers as they had emigrated when they were young. I lived happy there [during] my childhood and youth. At the time the Arabs wanted their independence, by 1957, things changed. Spaniards preferred to leave [rather than remain and endure] misery. My husband and I wanted to stay and adapt, though my parents were very old and did not want to die there. They wanted to come back to Spain as they had nothing.

This is what I saw from the ship that came to Spain. I could see the Mosque, the Church, the school. Churches and mosques were very beautiful. They are emblematic buildings of different styles. It is all rather run down now as there is no money, there is misery, and it is not like it was.

In my representation of the boat I tell the story of how I crossed the strait, with my daughter clinging to me as she was about seven months old. I have also depicted some small men that are drowning or dying. This to show the situation some Arabs were undergoing at the time they crossed the strait, sometimes, dying.

The first time I arrived here, as I left the train station in France, I saw the sky so dark and grey that I was shocked. That is why I have depicted the sky so bright, as I remember it from Tangiers and with its beautiful sea."

**Lavandería popular /
Community launderette**

Anonymous

Chile

1979

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Rainer Huhle



While demonstrating the physically hard life of the women laundry workers, this arpillera, created in the early years of the Pinochet dictatorship and acquired in 1983, also reflects on the continuity of life in the midst of chaos. Here in the routine of their daily work of scrubbing, washing and beating the dust from the clothes brought to the laundry, there is a familiarity and a kind of normality, absent and unattainable in the bigger picture.

No a la represa / No to the dam

Linda Adams

England

2010

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



Moved by the power of arpilleras while attending an arpillera exhibition in Cambridge, England, 2008, Linda began her own journey of creating arpilleras. This culminated in her solo exhibition "The poetry of arpilleras" hosted by the Centre of Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge, in 2011.

This arpillera focuses on the Mapuche people in Southern Chile. In preparation for this piece, Linda studied the history of the Mapuche for over a year, an indigenous group whose land struggles culminated in an 81 day hunger strike in 2010.

The two prominent banners proclaim: "This dam was not necessary" and "How much more land are we to lose?" Here she links the current land struggles of the Mapuche people in Southern Chile and their resistance to the Ralco dam, to the impact of the Aswan Dam in Egypt constructed on the river Nile during the 1960s. She recalls: "the Aswan Dam in Egypt was begun when I was 13. Over 2000 square miles were flooded and I can still remember seeing photos of partly submerged villages."

Commenting on the Ralco dam, located 500 km south of Santiago on the Bío-Bío River, completed in 2004, and the resistance of families to be displaced from their homesteads, she comments: "Sisters Berta and Nicolasa Quintreman who were in their seventies fought against it. The arpillera is my humble tribute to them."

Ausencias - Presencias 2 / Absences – Presences 2

Creative Group Z – Z
(Ana Zlatkes and Mirta Zak)
Argentina
2015
Conflict Textiles collection
Photo Ana Zlatkes



The military dictatorship led by Lieutenant General Videla in Argentina from 1976-1983 was characterised by human rights violations, forced disappearances and illegal arrests. Abducted pregnant women, who gave birth in detention centres were then generally killed whilst many of their babies were illegally adopted by military or political families. These atrocities seeded the beginnings of the Abuelas (Grandmothers) de Plaza de Mayo in 1977, a non-governmental organization which highlighted and investigated the disappearances of their children and grandchildren. <https://abuelas.org.ar/idiomas/english/history.htm>

In this arpillera by Creative Group Z - Z, exhibited in "Women that Sew Days Together" Buenos Aires, 2013 we see these grandmothers marching around the obelisk in front of the government buildings in Plaza de Mayo. Every Thursday, for over forty years, they have continued this action, protesting and denouncing the disappearance of their loved ones, and demanding answers.

**Irene, Marta, Hilda, Patricia: Ahora y Siempre Presentes /
Irene, Marta, Hilda, Patricia: Now and Always Present**

Students from Escuela de Cerámica

Argentina

2013

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Liliana Adragna



In March 1976 a military junta led by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla seized power in Argentina and under the guise of the National Reorganization Process initiated a seven year period of military dictatorship characterised by human rights violations, forced disappearances and illegal arrests.

By May 1977 four young female students, one of whom was pregnant, attending the Pottery College/Escuela de Cerámica, had disappeared without trace: Marta Virginia Esain, Patricia Virginia Villa, Hilda Adriana Fernandez and Irene Monica Bruschtein. These women, aged 21-25, active in the socialist movement, were all taken from different places with Irene being kidnapped from her home in front of her two children.

Almost 40 years later the college remembers these young women through this arpillera created by present day students as part of a human rights module. The process, which involved a visit to "Parque de la Memoria" linked in to the programme of activities of the exhibition RETAZOS TESTIMONIALES: arpilleras de Chile y otras latitudes/TESTIMONIAL SCRAPS: arpilleras from Chile and other parts of the world. <http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts/fullevent/?id=122>

¿Quién carga con la deuda externa? /

Who Carries the External Debt?

FCH, Mujeres Creativas workshop

Peru

2008

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



This Peruvian arpillera, from the Mujeres Creativas workshop in Peru, depicts the inequities between rich and poor in that society. The arpillera, which is a replica of the 1986 original by FCH, Mujeres Creativas workshop, asks: "Who carries the debt?" and we see that it is the poor who shoulder the burden of debt and those with plenty are oblivious to their plight.

It was the poor indeed who shouldered the debt in Peru in the 1980s. Servicing the foreign debt, secured from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), impacted on the daily lives of poor people through reduced services and a general decline in already abysmal living standards.

Furthermore, the violent conflict in Peru at this time resulted in further devastation for those who were already scraping by, and their lives of grinding poverty became ever more desperate. The extent to which conceptions of peace in Peru have addressed the violence of poverty, considered where responsibility lies and how the burden might be shouldered more fairly is questionable.

**Vamos a la playa en micro /
Let's go to the beach by bus**

Anonymous

Chile

c1977

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



Made in an unknown arpillera workshop, most likely in Santiago, during some of the worst years of the Pinochet dictatorship, this piece depicts a scene so far from the violence of disappearances and torture of the time that it seems like another world. By continuing to find pleasure in the midst of repression and fear, the trips to the beach were a form of peaceful protest against the regime and symbolised people's hope for a better future.

Ovalle Negrete is the route of a popular bus that conveys memories of a day journey to the beach of working class families, when holidays were not financially possible.

No contaminar / Do not pollute

Anonymous

Chile

c1980

Conflict Textiles collection.

Photo Martin Melaugh



The effects of pollution on the inhabitants of a shantytown in the suburbs of Santiago is depicted in this arpillera, made in one of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad workshops. We see people, under a darkened sky, going about their daily activities, choking on the smog and fumes from cars. Clearly they are frustrated by this. The cars speed by, oblivious to their impact on the shantytown dwellers and the environment. In the bottom corner, we see that the community have come together to protest in the street and are carrying a banner that says "Do Not Pollute."

Clearly, in this arpillera, it is the poor who bear the brunt of pollution and who stand to be most severely impacted by it, whilst being largely excluded from political decision-making. The government at this time viewed environmental protection as detrimental to economic growth.

Santiago's air pollution, primarily from heavy industry and also from a rapidly increasing population, represents a huge challenge for the authorities responsible for reducing the damage caused during the years of environmental negligence. Air pollution levels in Santiago have had significant effects on human health, including premature death and respiratory diseases such as chronic bronchitis, pneumonia, and asthma.

**Juguemos en el bosque mientras el aire está 2 /
Let us play in the Woods while the air is still here 2**

Creative Group Z – Z (Ana Zlatkes and Mirta Zak)

Argentina

2015

Creative Group Z-Z collection

Photo Ana Zlatkes



This arpillera, the second in a series of two, focuses on the environment. Specifically, it reminds us of the necessity of safeguarding our forests, which are the lungs of the planet. In addition to providing a restful place to walk, these 'lungs' guarantee the purity of the air we breathe, they regulate the cycle of the waters and protect against soil erosion.



NO MAS/No more

Mujeres tejiendo sueños y sabores
de paz, Mampuján

Colombia

2013

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh

On 11 March 2000, a brutal massacre was carried out in the town of Mampuján, in northwest Colombia by the now demobilised United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a coalition of right-wing, counter-insurgency paramilitary groups which was alleged to have links to the military and members of government and congress. Twelve people were killed, from nearby Las Brisas, and more than 1,400 civilians were displaced. Initially scattered, about half of the group settled in 2002 in Mampuján Nuevo, on small plots of land about eight kilometres away from their old community.

Violence against communities in Colombia is not a recent phenomenon. Over the last thirty years more than 4.8million people have been forced to flee from their homes to escape violence, earning Colombia the unenviable title of having the world's largest population of Internally Displaced People (IDPs).

In 2011, the Victim and Land Restitution law (Victims law), enacted by the Santos government established a judicial process to return stolen and abandoned land to IDPs. On 27 June 2013, as part of this restitution programme, those displaced by the Mampuján massacre had their land rights officially restored, permitting them to return to their original land.

This arpillera, made by a group of 15 Mampuján women, envisions their return eight years later to a community free from violence. The central figure clad in white, with his broken rifle and military apparel thrown aside is a powerful symbol of peace. Open mouthed and with raised hands he gazes upwards declaring: "NO MAS – I will not do it any more." In the night sky, the white dove of peace, framed by the moon is clearly visible, whilst in the foreground we see crops growing, testimony to a return to peaceful stability for this community. The houses depicted in the vibrant colours of the Afro Colombian people further reminds us that life has returned to normal.

In reality the process of returning is ongoing and not without its challenges. In the words of one of the arpilleristas: "There is fear and uncertainty on the side of the victim." Such fear is not unfounded. A report by Human Rights Watch (2013) states that since January 2012, more than 500 land restitution claimants and leaders have reported being threatened and that crimes targeting IDPs for their restitution efforts almost always go unpunished. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/colombia0913_brochure_web_0.pdf

For the peaceful society envisioned in this arpillera to become a reality, it is imperative that prosecutors work with land restitution authorities to vigorously pursue crimes against claimants in the areas where restitution is being implemented.

Represión a los Mapuche / Repression of the Mapuche

Pamela Luque

Chile

2015

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



The Mapuche indigenous people in the Araucanía region of Southern Chile have endured colonisation for well over 500 years, first at the hands of the Spanish settlers and later by the Chilean state. Land struggles and demanding restitution of their former lands is an ongoing issue for the indigenous Mapuche. For them, living without land is in itself a denial of their identity, as Mapuche means People of the Land.

Chilean Pamela Luque, living in Ireland for 20 years, was moved to create this arpillera depicting the oppression of the Mapuche in her native Chile, after viewing a video clip of the aftermath of a Mapuche demonstration in 2012. Here we see the police entering the home of Guillermina Painevilu and her daughter Susanna Guzman, who were onlookers at the demonstration. In the presence of Susanna's children the police strike the Grandmother and forcibly remove her daughter.

For Pamela, this event represents: "how the Mapuche, particularly women are oppressed and targeted by the police...[who] have the power and feel they can do what they want."

In the background we see hills dotted with the ancient Arucaria (monkey puzzle) trees, above which the words of a Mapuche poem are inscribed, illustrating the deep Mapuche connection to the land: "Don't imprison me...let my rivers flow...let the blossoming freedom return."

No a la impunidad 2 / No to Impunity 2

Maria Madariaga, Arpilleristas de Lo Hermida, Santiago de Chile
Chile
2011
Conflict Textiles collection.
Photo Martin Melaugh



This arpillera dates from the latter years of the Pinochet regime in Chile. It is a classical arpillera, framed by the sun and mountains. It was made for export to highlight the reality worldwide of the struggle that saw women in public protests chanting "we want democracy" and demanding "Truth, Justice and Reconciliation."

For these women, already very engaged with the struggle for democracy, saying "No to impunity" was a core element of this struggle. In their opinion, law 2191, known as the Amnesty law (Amnesty to the perpetrators), written in 1977 by the then minister of Justice, Mónica Madariaga, was a retrograde step.

This law, written five years after the start of the military coup that took power from the democratically elected President, Salvador Allende, was enacted in 1978 in order to avoid legal action in all cases of human rights violation from 1973-1978.

In 1998 Chile's Supreme Court ruled that the law should not apply to cases of human rights violations, paving the way for investigations in cases of detention, disappearances, torture, and execution to proceed. This resulted in prosecutions and prison sentences for former agents of Pinochet's secret police (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional, DINA).

These prosecutions are positive steps in progressing the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation process. However, the 1978 Amnesty Law is still valid and it was only in 2010 that a bill to nullify it was brought to parliament; a bill which is still being debated. Declaring it void "would force Chile to come face-to-face with its troubled past and finally send the message that the abuses of the Pinochet era will not be tolerated again," claims Guadalupe Marengo, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/chile-amnesty-law-keeps-pinochet-s-legacy-alive/>



They Fell like Stars from the Sky

Deborah Stockdale

Republic of Ireland

2013

Deborah Stockdale

Photo Deborah Stockdale

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In this arpillera, Deborah conveys the devastating impact of the estimated up to 30,000 disappeared people in Argentina, during the seven year military dictatorship led by Lieutenant General Videla, 1976–1983. <http://www.desaparecidos.org/arg/>

The figures falling through the night sky, each with a small red heart, represent the bodies, sometimes still alive, hurled from aeroplanes. The circle of women are the Abuelas (Grandmothers) de Plaza de Mayo, keeping vigil for their disappeared loved ones.

In the middle area (the 'water' area) and on the reverse side, tangible memories are encapsulated - a tablecloth, photograph and letters- from Miguel Angel de Boer's young wife, María Haydée Rabuñal. She was a medical student, who was 'disappeared' in the 1970s.

Integrating these three strands afforded Deborah: "a way of comprehending the absolute scale of this tragedy for the people of Argentina."

Common loss: 3000+ dead between 1969 and 1994

Irene MacWilliam
Northern Ireland
1996

Irene MacWilliam
Photo Martin Melaugh



In this quilt, Irene MacWilliam expresses her deep concern for the loss of lives during The Troubles which impacted on every county and community in her native Northern Ireland. More than 3000 people died as a result of the conflict between 1969 and 1994, many of whom were civilians. Each piece of red fabric, deliberately torn to convey a sense of destruction, represents a dead person, some of whom lived their lives in this area. There is a tiny teddy bear in some, symbolising a dead child.

Although Irene did not suffer any personal tragedy during The Troubles, her sensitivity to the loss of others in all conflicts is boundless and has touched a chord in many people. As the work began to take shape, people from around the world as well as Northern Ireland sent pieces of red fabric to Irene for inclusion. The contributions came from Japan, the USA and England, among other far flung countries.

Whilst the legacy of this 30 year conflict still remains for individuals and society as a whole, grass roots community and cross community projects across Northern Ireland are working tirelessly to address the legacy of the conflict and build a peaceful society for the present and future generations.

Further information on the work of Irene MacWilliam is available from her website
<http://www.irenemacwilliam.co.uk/>

No going back

Sonia Copeland

Northern Ireland

2009

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



This arpillera, the first made by long-time quilter Sonia Copeland, came about when it looked like the hard-won peace in Northern Ireland was threatened by three killings in early 2009.

Sonia explains: "My piece shows the Belfast City Hall, and in the foreground, a representation of one of the cross-community demonstrations, which followed the murders of Constable Stephen Carroll and Sappers Mark Quinsy and Patrick Asimkar by so called 'Republican terrorists'." This demonstration of support for the victims and their families was important to Sonia, who had served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) during the worst years of The Troubles and had suffered as a result of terrorist attacks on four occasions.

Fear about going back to a time of war strengthened Sonia's resolve for peace: "It seemed to me that the peace that was won with so much pain and suffering was once again to be snatched away. I resolved that nothing and no one would steal from my children the right to a peaceful life, which was stolen from me and my generation."

The theme and sentiments depicted by Sonia illustrate the continuing fragility of peace in present day Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, the proliferation of cross community projects promoting a shared understanding and peaceful co-existence between diverse groups is building foundations for a more peaceful future for the next generation.

Violar es un crimen / Rape is a crime

MH, Mujeres Creativas workshop

Peru

2008

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



This arpillera, a replica of the original made in a Mujeres Creativas workshop in 1985, depicts a protest by five courageous Lima women, denouncing the rape and forced resettlement of Ayacucho village women, during the destructive civil war in Peru from 1980 to 2000. Maria, who created both the original piece and replica, explains: "In October 1985 many people were killed in Ayacucho and women were raped, but nobody protested. Two groups of us decided to demonstrate in front of Comando Conjunto (Joint Military Command) in Lima, since the people actually living in Ayacucho felt too vulnerable to do so. We displayed a banner that read 'Rape is a crime' and we placed flowers shaped as a cross to make it known that so many had died. Five of us decided to make an arpillera of our action to show we do not condone such brutality."

War rape, which has until recently been a hidden element of war, and is seldom prosecuted, has a severe impact on victims. In addition to the impact of traumatic injuries, sexually transmitted disease, and pregnancy; long term psychological injuries may include depression, anxiety disorders, flashbacks and shame. During the civil war in Peru in the 1980s, the National Reparations Council (NRC) recorded 1,150 women reporting rape and sexually violent incidents. To date, no perpetrator has been sentenced.

Diana Portal, a lawyer with the Organization for the Defense of Women's Rights, (DEMUS) castigates the Peruvian government for their ineffectiveness claiming that: "the closure of the NRC for the Victims of Violence is evidence of lack of political will, commitment and responsibility on the part of the government." ("Politics of Rape: Peruvian Women Want Justice." Gender Across Borders organization, 5 January, 2011).

Despite the adoption of UN Security 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000, safeguarding the rights of women in conflict zones remains a challenge.

**No al plebiscito, No podemos ni opinar /
No to the plebiscite, we are not allowed our opinion**

Anonymous

Chile

1980

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



This arpillera was acquired by curator Roberta Bacic in Germany, 2009, from a retired crafts teacher who had received it as a present 27 years earlier. For Roberta this arpillera is unique: "It is a very striking image that recalls a political momentum which I have not seen recorded before in the arpilleras literature."

In 1973, when the military dictatorship, headed by General Pinochet, deposed the democratically elected President, Salvador Allende, Chile was ushered into a state of emergency. In 1980, General Pinochet ordered a new Constitution which was to be ratified by a referendum, known as the National Plebiscite. Government propaganda urged that a yes vote would bring about full democracy. While many people were not fooled by this propaganda, a significant number of influential people often argued that having a constitution was preferable to continuing under the state of emergency, which had already lasted seven years.

The scene in the arpillera vividly describes what happened to people who opposed the plebiscite. They were confronted with violence by the police, arrested and cruelly beaten. Nonetheless, almost a third of the Chilean electorate still voted NO in this referendum held on 11 September, 1980. Although defeated, grassroots people continued to publicly oppose the repressive regime. Facing great personal risk, they persevered in their collective struggle for democracy, a struggle which bore fruit in 1998, when General Pinochet renounced office, marking the end of his 16½ year military rule.

Ônde estão nossos direitos? /

Where are our rights?

Women of the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB)

Brazil

2013

Conflict Textiles collection

Photo Martin Melaugh



This arpillera, inspired by the question posed in the Chilean arpillera "¿Dónde están?/ Where are they?" prompted 11 women victims of dam construction in various regions of Brazil to question: "Where are our rights?"

Here we see the Brazilian map encased in a dam with the ensuing denial of rights depicted: loss of land; privatization of the river; increase in violence against women, human trafficking and sex work; and the weakening of community infrastructure due to forced displacement.

In 2006, Brazil's Council for Defence of Human Rights (CDDPH) created a special commission to investigate the treatment of the populations affected by dams through seven study cases. In October 2010, the commission concluded that the current methods of dam construction in Brazil "have consistently caused grave violations of human rights, accentuating already grave social inequalities, resulting in destitution and damaging lives at the social, family, and individual level."

<http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/letter-from-the-alliance-in-defense-of-the-rivers-of-the-amazon-to-president-dilma-3076>

