

Voice of the Arpilleras about  
**#Children'sRights**



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This exhibit is a result of the collaboration between Roberta Bacic, collector and curator of **Conflict Textiles**, and the arpillera group from the Ateneu Foundation San Roc, Barcelona. They have been networking and sharing for over a decade.

Through arpilleras from different countries, we approach the Rights of Children, specifically the rights related to family life, play and free time, education, health and the environment.

Stitch by stitch we discover the impact of and the response to the violation of their rights. We pose the question: “How can the culture of Children’s Rights become a reality?”

# FAMILY LIFE

## The right to live with our families

The best situation for a child is to grow up in a family and to have access to all that ensures a dignified life (food, health, housing, education) and to all that which ensures their physical, mental, spiritual and social development.

The government of a country should give support to families that cannot maintain themselves on their own.

These arpilleras depict stories of babies who were stolen at birth in order to give them to wealthy families where the mothers were told that their baby had died; precarious economic situations in which the families were not able to feed their children on their own so the community obtains food for everyone; children lost due to natural disasters or warfare who have to grow up alone while continuing to search for their families; the joy that accompanies having a family and a community that offers support so that one can enjoy daily life in peace.



## Bebés robados / Stolen Babies

Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc arpilleristas group (Badalona, 2020)

From the time the Spanish civil war ended (1939) until the 1990's, in some hospitals in Spain, babies were sold to families close to the regimen or to wealthy families. Meanwhile the mothers were told that their babies had died. It seems incredible to imagine that this situation lasted for so many decades and was not brought to light until many years later. In this arpillera we reflect upon the fathers, mothers and siblings who are searching without finding an answer; the struggle as well as the group unity of the families of the missing children; the desire to be reunited with their missing children and the desire to reveal the identity of those who were responsible of the abductions. We want to expose the powers of the state that permitted this situation: hospitals, the Church, judges, and public administration. But above all we want to demonstrate the struggling spirit, the claims and the resilience of the families who pursued the truth.

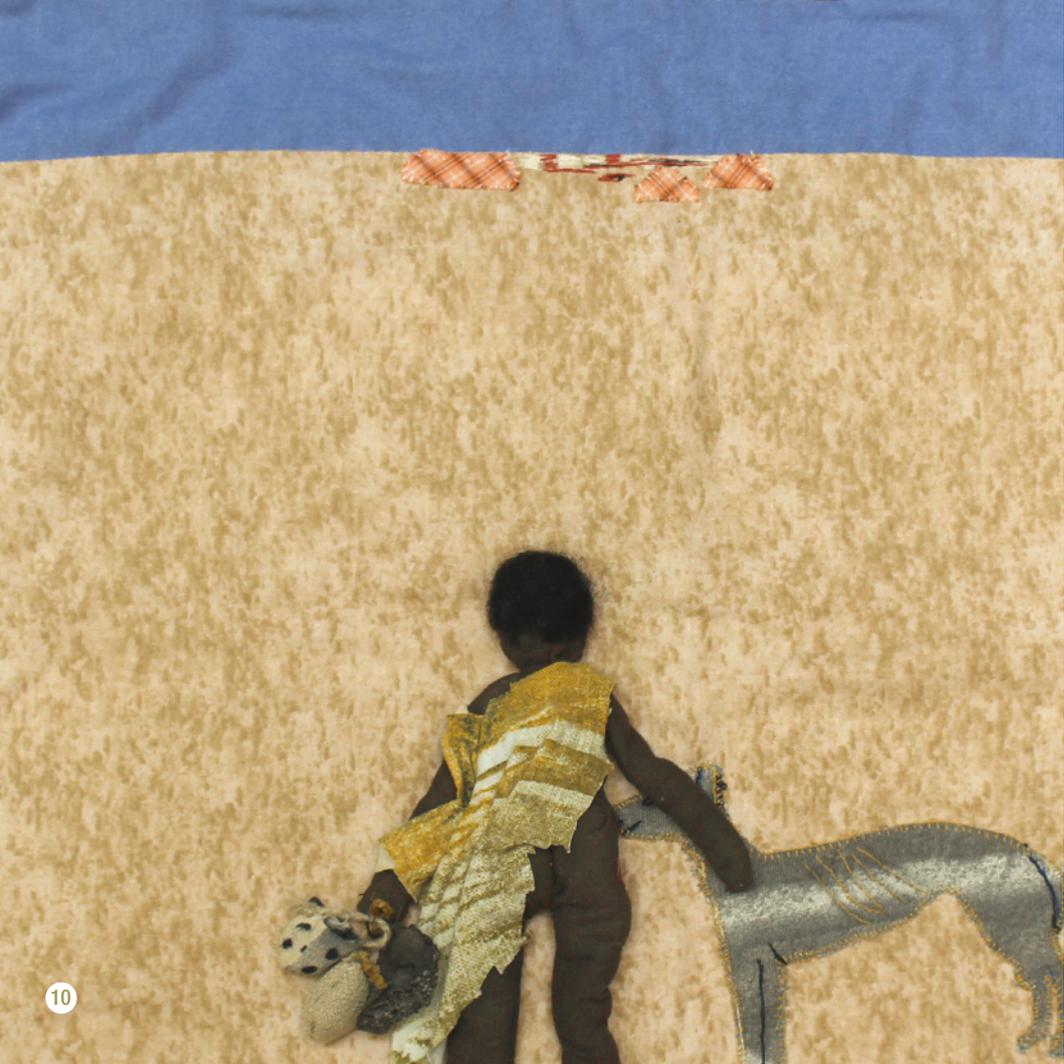


## Olla común en una población / Soup Kitchen in a barrio

Anonymous, Taller Fundación Missio, Santiago (Chile, 1982)

This arpillera depicts the hunger and poverty caused 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, as well as the resilience of those who find ways to ensure that those who are worse off are not left hungry.

Soup kitchens, similar to the one portrayed in this arpillera, were a life line for the impoverished during the Pinochet regimen. Church charities, such as the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, and later the *Fundación Solidaridad* were at the forefront in setting them up.



## **La soledad del desierto** **/ Alone in the desert**

Justa Martín (Badalona, 2017)

This young child, after having lost everything, his family, his home and maybe his country, is wandering alone in the desert.

He shares his hunger and his loneliness with his dog who, despite everything, does not abandon him.

Both of them are frail and carrying all of their sparse belongings. When they think that all is lost, on the horizon, they discover a bit of life and with that... hope!



12

## Fin de semana en una población / Weekend in a población

Anonymous (Chile, c1980)

This piece depicts the mountains and the wide-open blue skies of Chile with a bright sun shining down. This large arpillera reflects the daily life in a poor neighborhood. The vibrant energy of the people in the town is represented here as a hive of activity.

To the right of the foreground we see people around a table preparing traditional Chilean food, empanadas, which they will bake in the community clay oven.

We can also see children playing and boys fishing in the river; some women are washing clothes and others are beating the dust from blankets. We can see a busy soup kitchen that is feeding the poorest.

However, the sun still shines on all of them equally.

13

# PLAY AND FREE TIME

## The right to play and free time

Children have the right to rest, to play and to participate in cultural and artistic activities. They learn through play. Participating in outdoor educational groups, going on nature trips, hiking in the mountains give children the opportunity to enjoy and experience activities that can help them become balanced people, with values, motivation and commitment. Most importantly, they can obtain tools that will help them participate in and transform society.

These arpilleras depict children who are enjoying a game of football with their friends or a walk in a field; others enjoy a day at the beach with their family despite the oppression of the dictatorship; they tell stark unembellished stories which show that despite the consequences of war, children continue to play and share.



## **Nos gusta el fútbol / We like football**

Mateen Haq and Farah Javeed (Badalona, 2009)

We love football, we like playing this game a lot. Whenever we can, we watch Spanish or international football matches on TV with the whole family.

We especially like the Barcelona football team and some English teams like Manchester. Our favorite footballers are Messi and Eto'o.

Since we were little, we have played football and other typical games from our country like cricket or hockey.



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

Anonymous (Chile, c1980)

This arpillera was made in an arpillera workshop, probably in Santiago, during some of the worst years of the Pinochet dictatorship. The participants, who were mainly mothers of the disappeared, were prompted by their facilitator to draw on and depict memories of happier times. As the women were creating their pieces, their central focus was on remembering and celebrating the lives of their disappeared relatives rather than succumbing to anger about the abuses of human rights perpetrated by the dictator. The focus gave them brief reprieve and also strength to cope with the violence that they were experiencing.

The arpillera creator who made this piece had two disappeared sons. She depicts a trip to the beach, in a bus full of people and their belongings. For an instant, we, like her, can imagine ourselves stretched out on the warm sand, watching the sailboats go by and feeling the sun on our skin.



## Tiempo de flores / Flower Season

Carmen Maldonado (Badalona, 2009)

This is my childhood home in the town of Motril. It was a house in the country, a large farm where we all lived, we had horses, goats and pigs.

I have always been a very solitary person; I took the woven basket that my father had made for me and I went to the fields to collect flowers with my dog Canelo who was very well behaved.

Depending on the season we collected asparagus or almonds. My favorite season was when there were flowers. That was when I went to a wheat field, all full of poppies, little flowers that seemed like bells of all colors. I was taught to sew by a woman who was very kind to me because I grew up without a mother. She brought me some thread and some needles and during break time in the morning and at lunch, when the foreman was smoking his cigarette, she taught me how to do needlework.



# Landmines

Heidi Drahota (Germany, 2014)

Anti-personnel landmines are explosive devices that can lie dormant for years until a person or an animal unwittingly triggers their detonation mechanism. Designed to maim rather than kill, the explosion causes horrible injuries such as burns, blindness, mutilated limbs and shrapnel wounds that result in amputation, long hospitalizations and extensive rehabilitation.

Even though there has been extensive use of land mines in Cambodia, Columbia, Syria, Israel, Libya and Pakistan, by both government and non-state armed troops, Afghanistan is cited as one of the countries with the most anti-personnel landmines in the world.

This devastating impact of landmines prompted textile artist Heidi Drahota, to create this arpillera. Aware of the fact that the use of landmines extends to many more war zones besides Afghanistan, Heidi joins her voice with groups around the world who demand the prohibition of landmines and “calls on the world to work up the courage to solve conflicts differently”.

# EDUCATION

## The right to education

Education should help children develop their talents and abilities to the maximum, it should promote a culture of peace, tolerance towards others, and respect for the environment.

The state should guarantee, at a minimum, free and mandatory primary education.

These arpilleras speak about the importance of education so that children can reach their dreams for the future. Many children are not able to study because they live in extreme poverty or they have to work to bring home money to help support the family. Also depicted is the bravery of teachers, who, in the middle of an armed conflict, continue teaching and protecting the school as a place of peace and learning.



## **Finestres al futur, per Miriam, Gabriel i Ruth** / Windows to the future, for Miriam, Gabriel and Ruth

Grace Agho (Badalona, 2017)

My name is Grace and I have three children, Miriam who is 6, Gabriel who is 5 and Ruth who is 2 years old. I would like my children to study a lot, so that they could become the president of Spain, that way they would be the first black president, like Obama. I would also like them to be able to play football and basketball. I want them to be good people and help others.



## Escuelita de Otavalo / Otavalo Primary School

Anonymous (Ecuador, c2008)

This contemporary arpillera is from Otavalo, a largely indigenous town in the Imbabura province of Ecuador. It illustrates a classroom scene through an imaginary take on traditional indigenous Ecuadorian weaving techniques. The indigenous Otavaleños are famous for their textiles, which are sold at the Saturday market.

This arpillera was bought in 2009 by the Chilean moviemaker Vivienne Barry, who is known for her award winning short animated film about the arpillera movement in Chile. The largest image is of a woman with braided hair carrying a bag. She may be a teacher or perhaps she is the woman who made the arpillera. We can also see a row of children and a blackboard bearing the words: "My little house is the most beautiful house in the world." It is a simple but powerful image, reminding us of our human necessity for a home and for education: needs that are often denied or inaccessible to people living in conflict zones.



## Vareando las aceitunas / Knocking down the Olives

Isabel Alcalá (Badalona, 2009)

In the fields of Cáceres where I grew up, first we gathered the green olives very carefully and then we shook the trees to get the black ones. You must use a ladder and a bucket to climb up and pick the green olives carefully so that they do not break. When only the black ones were left, they were knocked to the ground with rods in order to make oil from them. We had olive oil all year long at home and we also had olives and other food that we grew and animals. When it was time to harvest the olives sometimes it was my brothers and I who picked all the olives in that field, which wasn't ours. The owners of the field provided the land and we put in the work. We lived off what we grew there, there was no salary whatsoever. After we did the harvesting, we brought the crops to the owners of the land in the town. Half for them and half for us. I remember this as a difficult time in my life because I had friends that went into town while I had to stay in the fields working.



## Aleppo school

Linda Adams (England, 2016)

In March of 2011, inspired by the Arab Spring movement, Syrians took to the streets to demand an end to the oppressive regimen of Assad. The repression of these non-violent protests by the Syrian Armed Forces and allied militia was immediate and brutal. By the end of 2018 more than 400,000 people had died as a result of the conflict, 6.2 million had become displaced persons within their own country and an estimated 11.7 million people were in need of humanitarian aid. Thousands of miles away, in England, the arpillera textile artist Linda Adams was shocked by the images of Syrian children trapped in the chaos of war.

Digging deeper she “watched the images on the news and read first hand reports for days” and with needle and thread she stepped into their world. In this piece, as the bombing continues relentlessly overhead, we descend into the underground school where the teachers, at great risk to their own safety, persist in educating their pupils.

# HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

## The right to health and a healthy environment

Children have the right to enjoy the best level of health possible, which includes clean water, good hygiene and food, and access to medical attention when they are sick.

States must recognize that all children have the right to benefit from security in the society and should provide the means so that this right becomes the reality.

Children have the right to grow up in a healthy environment and it is the obligation of societies and governments to work for a sustainable world in the future.

These arpilleras speak to us about access to public healthcare from the moment of birth, community responsibility for health needs, preferential treatment for children in critical situations and the need to work together against climate change in order to leave behind a more sustainable world for the children of today.



## **Mi alegría / My Joy**

Rocío Cortés (Badalona, 2017)

The whole family went together to the hospital with my two-month-old daughter Sephora, when she had the hearing test done. I gave her a bottle and went in with my mother and my baby girl, while my husband and my father were outside waiting nervously in the waiting room. All of our hearts were beating rapidly.

Sefora was asleep, they put some headphones on her and she was startled. The doctor told us that she was fine, that our daughter was perfect.



## Play Today, Pay Tomorrow

Irene MacWilliam (Northern Ireland, 2010)

This arpillera style piece was made by a well-known quilt maker Irene MacWilliam who expresses her personal concerns about the environment and the different aspects that we should consider when dealing with this subject. She sets it in first person by depicting children carrying balloons that show how we have seriously damaged nature and our environment. It also shows the carbon footprints that we have left all over the world. The hourglass shows us that the time we have to solve this problem is running out.

It is particularly poignant that it is a child carrying the huge hourglass; this is the legacy that adults are leaving future generations to deal with.



## Fugir / Fleeing

Mònica Moro (Badalona, 2017)

Imagine fleeing from your house, from your town, from your country, leaving behind your family, your friends, your job. Imagine escaping to look for a better, but uncertain, future. How brave those who do this must be as they cross hostile, unknown regions!

All of this was in my mind as I began this simple, flat arpillera, each stitch was a touch of reality, the beach of Lesbos, the life rafts overflowing with people, the rescue and finally reaching land.

Three little worlds depicted on the fabric: children playing despite everything, the Open Arms rescuers giving their all to save lives and a doctor attending to a child who has managed to survive.

What heartbreak! What a grim reality! We must not forget.



## **Policlínico** / Community Health Clinic

Anonymous (Chile, 1980)

This arpillera was sewn in one of the many workshops in Santiago, seven years into the military dictatorship. This was the time when the impact of the repressive social and economic policies of Pinochet's regime was at its peak. In addition to losing loved ones by execution, forced disappearance and exile, the community suffered severe difficulties brought on by unemployment and lack of basic services such as water, electricity and healthcare.

The creation of local community health centers was the response to the lack of healthcare provided by the state.

In general, we see an active community, taking responsibility for its own health care needs, resilient against adversity.

# PROTECTION

## The right to protection

**Nobody has the right to mistreat a child. Children are only permitted to do work that corresponds to their age. Children cannot be obliged to go to war.**

**If a child does not have a family, the government should find a place for the child where they can be safe and well taken care of.**

**These arpilleras depict a child living in extreme poverty, begging in the streets or searching for food in the garbage; children who suffer violence of the state, war or discrimination due to religion or origin; and we are reminded that it is the obligation of the State to provide safeguards so that these rights are protected.**



# Violencia en Ayacucho / Violence in Ayacucho

FCH Mujeres Creativas Workshop (Peru, 2009)

This piece is a replica of the original arpillera which was created in 1985. It was made by the Creative Women's Group Workshop in Lima. It was inspired by the drawing of a child, who was depicting his memories of when the military arrived in the city of Ayacucho in the south-central region of Peru. His mother, through the Creative Women's group, created this arpillera which shows the harshness, violence and repression of this period. More than 600,000 people were displaced within Peru between 1980 and 1990 as a result of the armed conflict between the government, those who were defending themselves in villages, and the insurgent forces of the groups called Sendero Luminoso and the Movimiento de Resistencia Tupac Amaru. The commission of Truth and Reconciliation estimates that more than 69,000 people died as a result of this violent conflict, with more than 40 percent of the deaths and disappearances reported concentrated in the region of Ayacucho.



## En las ramblas de las flores / In the market of the flowers

Teresa Amaya (Badalona, 2009)

When I was little there were 9 children in our family and I was the oldest. In those days when we were young and growing up, the only one of us that had gone out into the world was me. I was in charge of the care of my siblings. When I was about 12 years old, I went to look for scrap metal to sell in the junk yard. I helped my mother beg and also, I went searching for food, because in those days there was a lot of hunger. I was a girl when I went to beg in Barcelona, on the Rambla de las Flores street. There were foreigners, marines who came off ships and all of them gave me money. I didn't sing or give them branches of rosemary, because that is lying to people, I only put out my hand. I was barefoot, without any cloak or anything. Sometimes the Guardia Civil, the national police, would catch us and take us to the police station. I went many times with other gypsies that they caught. I had to pay to get out with the money I got from begging or if my mother had any money, she paid.



## Any time and everywhere - Anna Frank's universality

Heidi Drahota (Germany, 2011)

This was the first arpillera created by the textile artist Heidi Drahota. This piece is “my personal expression as a German deeply affected by the Second World War”. On the top we can see a teenage Anne Frank working on her diary. This was during the period from 1942 to 1944 when she and her family had to live in hiding in Amsterdam, during the German occupation of the Netherlands.

In the foreground we can see the historic context. The glasses, the presence of the guards, and the yellow stars piled up remind us of the holocaust/genocide inflicted on the Jews by the Nazi regime.

This arpillera also depicts the gradual increase of neo-Nazism and reminds us of the problems of discrimination, violation of human rights, and genocide which continue to threaten children and young people 80 years later.



## LA obligación del estado / The Obligation of the State

Group arpillera (Human Rights Workshop, Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc, 2013)

Human rights were defined in order to guarantee all individuals a dignified life. The obligation of each state is to safeguard and protect each and every one of these rights, so why do we have to go out into the street to demand these rights? Why is our state of well-being in danger with so many cutbacks?

It is our leaders who should protect and ensure that each and every one of the citizens of this world have their rights respected. Until this becomes a reality, we will continue the struggle.

# PARTICIPATION

**The right to participate in the social, political and cultural aspects of life**

**Children in the Aula oberta project at the Fundacio Ateneu San Roc (Badalona)**

**Children have the right to express their opinions about any topic that affects them and the right to be listened to by adults.**

**These arpilleras depict the demand for the Right to free time by the children in the after-school projects at the open Classroom project at the Fundacio Ateneu San Roc. It is important that children have a voice and that they feel listened and attended to.**



## Jugar per aprendre i fer-se gran / Play as a way of learning and growing up

Children in the after school open program at Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc (Badalona, 2020)

The boys and girls in our open program have made an arpillera about the right to free time.

We like to play and it is important to learn and to grow up. In this arpillera we can see boys and girls playing in many different ways: tag, Legos, dominos, basketball and football, with dolls, on a cell phone, in the pool when they go on trips and many other kinds of games.

We made this together with the women who know how to make arpilleras, we learned a lot from them and we had a really good time doing this.

# Convention on the Rights of the Child

**The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first international treaty that recognized the rights and obligations of children.**

- Boys and girls under the age of 18 shall be considered children.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child , approved by the Assembly of the United Nations on 20th of November, 1989, offers a new vision of children.
- Children are considered to be persons that form part of a family and of a community and who have rights and responsibilities suitable to their age.
- The states that sign the Convention commit to make it known within their country, to define policies that defend the best interest of children and to take actions to ensure that these rights are upheld.
- This is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, with 196 countries signing.
- The 54 articles of the Convention define as basic principles: the right to a dignified life, respect for the opinions and points of view of children, non-discrimination based on race , religion, language or culture, and the best interest of the child.
- On 24th February 2014 the Council of Ministers of Spain approved the signing of Protocol III of the Conference on Rights of the Child , which entered into effect on 14th April 2014.

*This text has been elaborated by the City Council of Barcelona with the collaboration of the Association of Easy Reading in order to facilitate comprehension.*



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