

## Conflict Textiles as Counter Archives in Truth Commission Processes

Chilean curator Roberta Bacic

26<sup>th</sup> May 2022

12.00 – 12.10

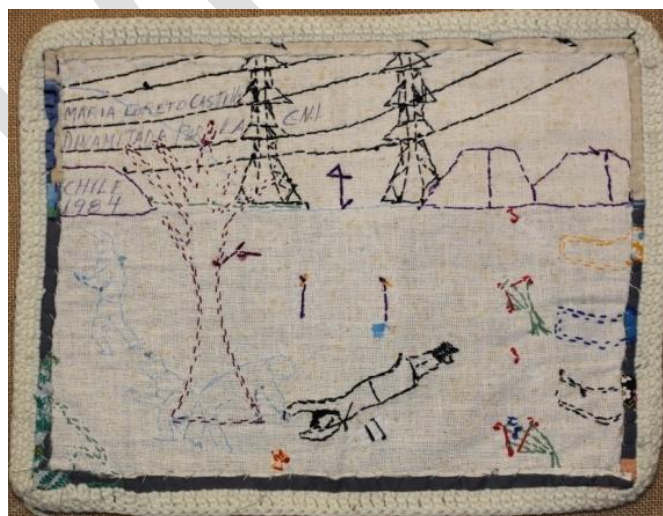
- I/we argue that what currently is described as counter archives are indeed archives that have their own nature and ways to testify, validate, resist, represent, document, protest and denounce lived experiences of human rights violations and war.
- At **Conflict Textiles** we use/archive arpilleras, wall hangings and other textiles to document these lived experiences of conflict. They do it via the sewn imaginary onto cloth which reminds us of the way the presented events and experiences have shaken the course of life.  
The textiles we display and document portray - via cloth and stitch - the materiality of everyday life and insert the events as part of life's landscape. Of vital importance is to acknowledge the time invested in doing so, in reflecting, representing, designing, sewing and processing the impact of what has happened and in most cases, has been denied by the State and the perpetrators.
- In the short time available for this presentation as part of the conference I will refer to 2 Chilean arpilleras that clearly put forward the points I have made. One represents the actual events/facts and the other refers to the emotional impact the events have had. These realities are of crucial relevance to consider when documenting and working with post conflict situations, the focus of this conference "The role of Transitional Justice Archives after war and dictatorship: International Experiences".

**María Loreto Castillo Muñoz (1984) anonymous**

This arpillera was made in Chile in 1984 and made its way to England via solidarity channels at the end of that year. It was acquired in 1984 at a Christmas market in London. When the owners decided to part with the piece, they reached out to **Conflict Textiles** curator to donate it in 2015. Once with the collection, research revealed that the arpillera documents a crime that was also recorded as part of CNRR (Corporación Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación – National Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation) report released in 1996.

I will here show the actual arpillera on both sides and will also show a copy of the report. The facts portrayed in the arpillera in 1984 coincide with the findings published by CNRR 12 years later.

I will mention that I was a research assistant of CNRR for the whole duration of its 4 years researching cases in the south of Chile, IX and X Region.

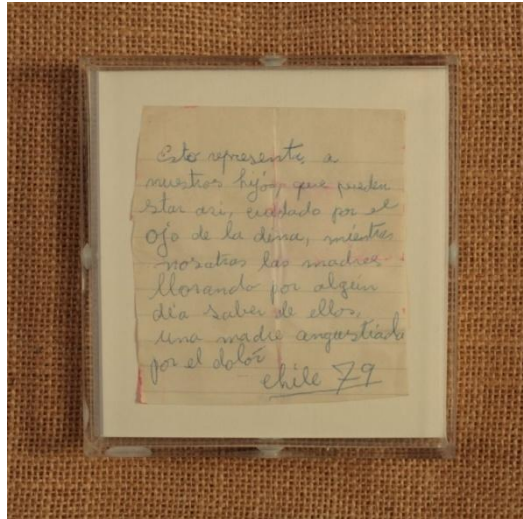


[¿Dónde están nuestros hijos? / Where are our children?](#) (1979)

This arpillera was acquired in the early 1980's by Jacquie Monty in England and donated to Roberta Bacic in 2009. It is now included as part of the **Conflict Textiles** collection. Since being documented it has been in 10 major exhibitions in 6 different countries.

I will be showing front, back and hidden message contained in a small pocket at the back of the arpillera





This is what the message reads:

"This represents our children ...where they are now.., under the eye of the 'DINA' [political secret police]; while we, the mothers, cry to one day hear about them". An anguished mother in pain, Chile, 1979.

The question/challenge I raise at this stage:

**Is reparation possible in situations like the 2 so vividly described? If so, what can or cannot be repaired.**

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Professor Gillian Robinson will refer to [Peace Quilt - Common Loss](#), (1996). It will be shown from the archive as the piece is now part of the History archive (heritage) of Ulster Museum having been in 18 exhibitions and travelled with curator Roberta Bacic transnationally.

Breege Doherty, will use this piece to present our archives and it will be also shown live.

[AUSENCIAS –PRESENCIAS Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo/Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo](#), (2014)