

# Conflict Textiles

This international textiles collection encompasses over 360 arpilleras, quilts and wall hangings, focused on elements of conflict and human rights abuses. Arpilleras - three-dimensional appliquéd tapestries of Chilean origin - became the medium for women to denounce the human rights abuses of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (1973-1990). Since 2008, these textiles have been exhibited in a variety of venues worldwide, seeding many new partnerships in the process.

A digital archive set up in 2008, and maintained by Dr Martin Melaugh, CAIN Director at Ulster University, houses information on the collection at <http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/>.

In recent years, Conflict Textiles exhibitions have incorporated memorabilia and other art forms that complement textile language. In this three-piece display, the deconstructed, unorthodox dove symbol dominates across wall hanging, painting and arpillera. It challenges us to broaden our perception of traditional dove imagery.

## 1 Peace Dove

**Northern Ireland wall hanging, Irene MacWilliam, 1987**  
**Roberta Bacic private collection**

Irene's depiction of the peace dove upended aptly portrays the conflict in Northern Ireland in 1987; a year when 11 civilians were killed during the annual Remembrance Day ceremony in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh by a bomb detonated by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Mirroring the many challenges in that decade to achieving peace; the dove, with part of the olive branch missing, flies over turbulent waters, towards jagged rocks. Will it regain the fallen branch and fly above the rocks?

## 2 Fulmar

**Northern Ireland painting, Susan Hughes, 2020**  
**Conflict Textiles collection**

This Fulmar, in full flight extends its wings over Belfast like a protective cloak. Susan, for whom birds are “...*elusive creatures, wild and alien*” painted the fulmar on an old Ordnance Survey map from a photograph taken on Rathlin Island. The map itself dates from an era when all communities throughout Northern Ireland, especially Belfast city, were impacted by the Troubles on a daily basis. The fulmar, gliding forward has echoes of “Peace Dove”, by MacWilliam. Will it stay on course and overcome the many obstacles in its path; the path to peace?

## 3 Mujer Paloma / Dove Woman

**Peruvian arpillera, Olinda Gutiérrez, Mujeres Creativas, Lima, 1985**  
**Conflict Textiles collection. Donated by Alicia Villanueva, coordinator of Movimiento Manuela Ramos, Peru**

Alicia was gifted this piece from Olinda, who created it to represent the dire situation of women in Peru in the 1980s; the brokenness, oppression and a lack of freedom. She wanted to fly like a bird, as represented by the dove. Giving it to Alicia, enabled it - an extension of herself - to ‘fly’ to places she would never travel to. Since it was first exhibited in Northern Ireland in 2010, it has ‘flown’ to many places.