

**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION**

**HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: CONFLICT TEXTILES PIECES ACQUIRED BY NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI**

Transnational textiles representing the personal experiences of those affected by conflict, including  
within Northern Ireland

**9 December 2022:** At an event held today at Ulster Museum, National Museums NI announced it has acquired 14 pieces from the Conflict Textiles collection. Conflict Textiles - whose online archive is hosted by CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) at Ulster University – holds a large collection of transnational textiles all of which portray conflict and human rights abuses. The selection of textiles acquired by National Museums NI includes quilts; wall-hangings; and arpilleras, primarily made by women from areas of conflict such as Northern Ireland, Chile, Nigeria, England, Peru and Colombia.

Commenting at the event, Hannah Crowdy, Head of Curatorial at National Museums NI said: “This is an important opportunity to communicate our commitment to local and international partnership and collaboration when it comes to developing rich collections that will appeal to new and diverse audiences.

“We look forward to exhibiting and interpreting more Conflict Textiles over the coming years, to help visitors understand the legacies of conflict. We have long-standing relationships with Conflict Textiles and Ulster University, and are delighted to acquire these items to share the stories of the women and groups behind them, and the challenging histories of the places they come from.”

Ulster Museum’s Troubles and Beyond exhibition has already featured pieces from Conflict Textiles and some of these will now have a permanent home with National Museums NI; *‘Peace Quilt - Common Loss’* by Irene MacWilliam and *‘No Going Back’* by Sonia Copeland.

Some of the other items acquired include *‘Where Are They?’* by Northern Ireland textile artist, Irene MacWilliam; and a Chilean arpillera, *‘No contaminar / Do not pollute’* by an anonymous arpillera.

*‘Where Are They?’* was created by MacWilliams following an invitation from Curator of Conflict Textiles, Roberta Bacic, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. The piece draws attention to the scale of those ‘disappeared, killed and spirited away’ worldwide; including those in Northern Ireland during The Troubles.

Depicting the effects of pollution on the inhabitants of a shantytown in the suburbs of Santiago, '*No contaminar / Do not pollute*' was created in 1983 in one of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad workshops, and shows people under a darkened sky going about their daily activities, choking on the smog and car fumes.

Also acquired, '*Mujer Paloma / Dove Woman*' from Olinda Gutiérrez represents the oppression of women in Peru in the 1980s, conveying a lack of freedom and sense of brokenness. The piece was gifted to Roberta Bacic from Alicia Villanueva, coordinator of the Peruvian Feminist Organisation.

Curator of Conflict Textiles, Roberta Bacic said: "Today's landmark event celebrates and embraces Human Rights Day 2022 which precedes the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary on December 10, and marks the transfer of 14 textiles to the Ulster Museum. As the Conflict Textiles Trust, we entrust Ulster Museum with these 14 pieces that have moved from our store to become part of the national collection.

"This year's Human Rights Day message is Dignity, Freedom and Justice for All, with a call to action to stand up for human rights and tackle pressing global issues. Conflict Textiles depicts a vast range of Human Rights issues from the perspective of the makers, and have been exhibited worldwide, portraying cultural stories of conflict, experiences and struggles which should not be forgotten. Not only shedding a light on the past but helping us to look to a more peaceful future, and creating an open discussion which engages new and diverse audiences."

**ENDS**

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