

Woven Hugs at Queen's University Belfast

By Dr Fiona Clark, Spanish and Portuguese Studies



In January 2023, Chilean artist and sculptor, Tere Chad, travelled to Queen's University Belfast to take part in classes with level 2 and level 3 Spanish students and to offer a 'Woven Hug' workshop open to anyone in the University.

The classes in Latin American culture focus on the role of the arts in highlighting issues around the environment and sustainability, and benefited from hearing directly from a Latin American artist about how these themes impact her

work and how she has engaged with colleagues and communities in Spain and Latin America to open discussions and share ideas. Inspired by the tradition of *arpilleras*, hessian-backed textiles from Chile, and using repurposed materials, Tere Chad's work seeks to bring together communities through sustainable practices and promote the tradition of textile art with a particularly 21st-century dynamic.

Her workshop also engaged with the ongoing exhibition in the McClay Library that forms part of the Conflict Textiles collection curated by Roberta Bacic in collaboration with the School of Law, and with the upcoming events in the Flowerfield Arts Centre, Portstewart, where Tere and her colleague, Mexican scholar, Cordelia Rizzo, will take part in further community textile projects: <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/search-quilts2/fullevent1/?id=288>



Becca Redmond kindly agreed to reflect on how taking part in the class and workshop enhanced her experience and opened up new avenues to be explored.



A creative heart and a sustainable mind

'As part of a combined degree, I have the joy of studying both Geography and Spanish, so I couldn't resist from selecting Dr Fiona Clark's 'Recycling Cultures of Latin America' module in my second year.

As someone with both a creative heart and a sustainable mind, it beautifully combines some of my biggest interests including environmental consciousness, climate justice, culture, and art. As an extension of the module, I had the opportunity take part in an upcycling workshop with some extraordinary

Chilean Artist, Tere Chad, and *arpillera* curator, Roberta Bacic, which was both enjoyable and insightful.



Roberta taught us the history and importance of the Chilean *arpillera*; how one can not only use art to build communities, but also as a powerful, political language or tool of resistance, to protest repression, violence and uplift voices that can otherwise go unheard. Whilst Tere on the other hand, got us thinking and feeling, discussing how important it is to

disconnect from screens and reconnect with the world around us, whether it be the soil under our feet, the abundance of resources at our fingertips or the relationships that are forgotten or dismissed whilst scrolling. This environmentally sustainable project of embroidery and upcycled fabrics brought together a room of contrasting personalities and backgrounds, yet in the end built a collective art piece and a community of common interests and ideas, so, I would encourage all new students to get involved.'



By Becca Redmond (level 2, Geography with Spanish)



Photos by Harry Thompson. With many thanks to the support of the School of Arts, English and Languages Education Fund for making these events possible.