

2025/01/30 - 2025/04/20

HAURTZAROA GERRAN
zegoen mundu batean

Les **ENFANTS** dans un
monde en **GUERRE**

INFANCIAS en un
mundo en **GUERRA**

CHILDHOODS in a
world at **WAR**



1939
1945

← © Réseau Canopé –
Musée national de
l'Éducation
(1979.09324.33)

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Credits

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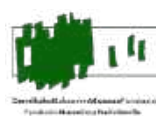
<https://remigraid.org/>

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND ASSEMBLY / GRAPHIC DESIGN

Brande Comunicación
Estudios Durero (para la exposición de Gernika)

ARTWORKS FOR THE EXHIBITION IN GUERNICA

Archivo Conflict Textiles "War Torn children"
Obras de J.C. Cubino "Mantener fuera del alcance de los niños"



PICTURES

Archives départementales du Finistère (Francia)

Archives départementales de la Manche/conseil dép. (Francia)

Archivo General de la Administración (España)

Archives du Comité International de la Croix-Rouge (Suiza)

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Musée de la Libération de Paris - musée du Général Leclerc - musée Jean Moulin (Francia)

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OEuvre de Secours aux Enfants (Francia)

Réseau Canopé - Musée national de l'Éducation (Francia)

Save the Children (España)

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This exhibition is the result of the complicity and teamwork of several people and institutions in different parts of Europe. On the one hand, it is the result of two years of team research work within the European Rememchild project financed by the European Commission in the framework of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values - European Remembrance programme. <https://rememchild.remigraid>. The project is a consortium of experts and professionals from European universities, foundations, memorials and museums: UNED, Spain; URJC, Spain; EUROM, Fundació Solidaritat-Universitat de Barcelona, Spain; Fundación Museo de la Paz de Gernika; Maison d'Izieu, France; Fondazione Campo Fossoli, Italy; EuroClio, The Netherlands; ICMEMO-HRI.

On the other hand, it is complemented by several pieces of different origins integrated into the exhibition, which help to complement it and to reflect on the theme of childhood in a world at war. The seven arpilleras on view in the exhibition belong to the Conflict Textiles Northern Ireland collection <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/> and are part of a large exhibition called War Torn Children in Northern Ireland. It is the fruit of complicity and teamwork that began almost a decade ago. The rest of the pieces represent a new collaboration with an artist who is very sensitive to children, J.C. Cubino, who through these dozens of imperfect, worn-out, broken toys - subsequently transformed into something that makes us think and reflect - wishes to keep wars out of the reach of children.

Keep out of reach of children



*There is nothing like a
child's smile*

Having to explain to a child that their country is at war is something most people hope they will never have to do. Although we should strive to avoid exposing children to images of war, since they will most likely find them traumatic, protecting their innocence through silence is not the solution either.

Children are keen observers; they know when something is happening, even if they are not yet able to understand it.

When the last war broke out (the latest among many that remain active but are often forgotten), nipping optimism in the bud and shattering evolution, I decided to compile a catalogue of objects that represent the cruelty of war while calling its very existence into question, using irony and formal doubt. It is an educational guide disguised as a catalogue of faded and jaded Christmas toys, made with unidentified, broken and abandoned toys; a handbook for grown-ups that leads to the conclusion that a horrific world can only be represented by taking absurdity to the extreme.

This inventory of visual poems entitled 'Keep out of the reach of children' forms part of the exhibition *Childhoods in a world at war* and describes extreme disappointment by simplifying the questions that may arise when talking about war with children. Impossible toys that help debunk erroneous messages and expose the mistaken ideas that both children and adults may have about the issue, in order to start conveying others through emotions, doubts and critical thinking.

Why? Because play symbolises our ability to be amazed, which in turn fosters receptivity and social awareness, leading to beauty and harmony. These playful objects offer a view of life and the world based on the values of happiness and kindness, both of which take us back to our respective childhoods. Childhoods that can, in contrast, be completely disrupted as those broken toys, if one is unlucky enough to be born in a war zone.



Jean Claude Cubino

jeanclaudecubino.com



“

I am an artist who seeks to raise awareness about current problems such as social exclusion and climate change. To gain first-hand information, for some time now I have collaborated with a range of socially-active institutions (Cáritas, Manos Unidas, Fundación Diagrama, Fundación Alcántara, Unesco, Secours Catholique, Amnesty International and the United Nations, among others). I believe in their work and in their message.

I work to consolidate the democratisation of art and to establish the importance of art, culture and education as elements that improve people's quality of life, with the aim of fostering gender equality, promoting social inclusion and raising awareness of the current situation of the natural environment.

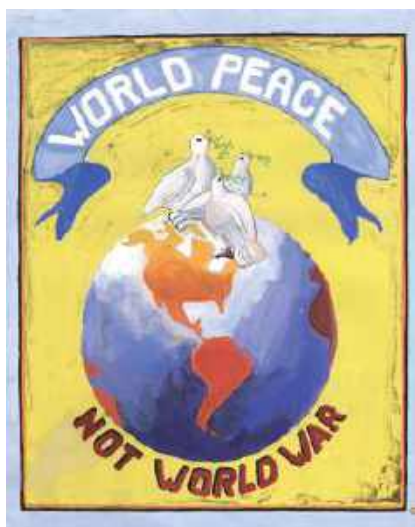
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Introduction

More than 100 years ago, the founder of Save the Children and fighter for the safeguarding and protection of children and their rights, Eglantyne Jebb, said:

“**All wars, just or unjust, disastrous or victorious, are wars against children**”

Her words have held the same force throughout the 20th century and the present, witnesses of conflicts that have claimed millions of victims among combatants and non-combatants. Since 1914, wars have become an increasingly atrocious experience both on the front lines and in the rearguard. And in them, the most vulnerable and defenceless segments of the civilian population - women, the elderly and children - were and continue to be protagonists, witnesses and victims.

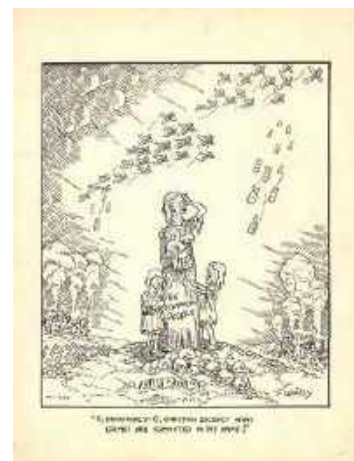


◀ *Work of art created for the 4th peace poster contest (1939), by Leonard Thomas Walter, aged 15, from Connecticut. ©Tri-College Libraries Digital Collections (Swarthmore College Peace Collection, sc:95759)*

In the context of armed conflict, the Second World War (WWII) represented the zenith of violence against civilians and, in particular, against children. World War II marked an entire generation of children on five continents. Their desires for a lasting peace after the disasters of the Great War were aborted on September 1, 1939, with a war that had multiple impacts on their lives and memories.

Gena Yushkevich was 10 years old at the outbreak of WWII, which shortly thereafter ravaged her native country, the USSR. Interviewed by Svetlana Alekseyevich, she recalls how shocked she was when she first saw death: "I woke up in the morning.... I wanted to jump out of bed, then I remembered: it's war, and I closed my eyes. I didn't want to believe it."

▶ *A woman and her children in a Europe under bombardment. Author Matysik, Theo "Whitey" (1945). ©TriCollege Libraries Digital Collections (Swarthmore College Peace Collection, sc:95564)*



This exhibition offers an overview of children's experiences during World War II and its lasting effects on childhood, while at the same time demonstrating the importance of peace for the present and the future through stories and examples from the recent past. From 1939 to 1945, millions of children experienced a radical transformation of their daily lives, lived through the war on a daily basis, tried to survive its horrors and took on responsibilities that did not correspond to their age.

Wartime scenarios represented a violation of the 1924 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, a historic text on Human Rights, promoted by the aforementioned Eglantyne Jebb. Through these panels, we reflect collective stories of children whose lives were characterized by educational and schooling difficulties, hunger, rationing, evacuations and separation from their families, bombings, deportation, forced labour, extermination or their participation on war fronts or as resistance fighters.

These traumatic events represent black holes in the memory of our societies that we must not forget in the face of the dramatic repetition that we still witness today

Furthermore, this small sample shows that war, and the concentration of all resources in the war effort by the belligerents, involved and affected children all over the world. Therefore, we do not want to forget that the conflict we are talking about was a global war that drew on the material and human resources of European colonies and countries in Asia, Africa and Oceania. The experiences of the children of these territories cannot be dissociated from the criminal machinery of war. Thus, with this exhibition we encourage reflection upon the deep imprint left by WWII in the European memory, but also in those parts of the world where the war and its implications did not end in 1945 and, above all, where they have not ended.



Evacuee boys and girls growing cabbages, 1940. Painting by Leila Faithfull. ©Imperial War Museums (ART.LD 428)



Group of women and children in the Hanh-Thong-Tay women's camp during the Indochina War, November 1952. © Archives du Comité International de la Croix-Rouge (V-P-INDO-N-00005-20)

Along with children's experiences, the exhibition recovers the role of women, as sometimes silenced agents. In this sense, we reflect that the wars were also fought and won by women with a variety of jobs in rearguards and on the front line.



Female work during the war, India. Cleaning and lubrication tasks in a Mumbai factory. ©Library of Congress (2017697626)



Auf der Flucht 1945 / Fleeing in 1945
Arpillera, Mara Loytved-Hardegg, 2010
Conflict Textiles Collection

In this arpillera Mara remembers fleeing in 1945 as a child from the Russians in the Soviet zone, north of Berlin. Almost 65 years after the event Mara reflects that "children are always the fragile ones" in such traumatic events "...mark[ing] their whole life."





GENOCIDE

Children and their uncertain future, always victims of the most terrible genocides, even today in the 21st century

2024, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 37x22x30 cm.

LORD "SLAUGHTER"

Weapons that cut short people's lives and leave so many children without childhood in this world full of wars.

2024, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 20x15x24 cm.



Childhood in everyday life

World War II is considered a "total war", among other reasons, because of the civilian component of its victims: 66% compared to 5% in the Great War (1914-1918). In it, children had to take on premature responsibilities such as helping with or fulfilling their parents' duties, leaving school, working or sometimes begging and trafficking on the black market. Scarcity of raw materials and hunger marked the daily lives of thousands of civilians during the war.

To obtain food, children often accompanied their mothers in long queues. In addition, rationing particularly affected children: at the end of the war, a French Red Cross report showed that the most malnourished group was adolescents between 13 and 21 years of age

Evacuations, the departure of men to the war front, deportation, disease and bombing meant that many children and teenagers found themselves on their own. Some had to engage in hunger-driven theft and robbery, such as the petty dealers in the Warsaw ghetto, the *szmugler*.

In particularly famine-stricken areas such as Greece, looting and smuggling of staple foods intensified. The authorities cracked down hard on the black market and propaganda warned of its consequences. Practices such as the collection of gunpowder for the ammunition trade were also dangerous: in Italy at the end of the war, there were 15,000 *mutilatini*, "little mutilated ones".



^ "Queue for food: milk and butter". Autumn of 1940. Painting by G. Lehoux, pupil at the Cours Complémentaire de l'École de jeunes filles, 123 rue de Patay, Paris. © Réseau Canopé - Musée national de l'Éducation (1979.09331.6)



^ Children looking for food in the rubbish. France. c. 1945. ©Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (A106104 /A106105)

The absence of the male figure meant that many women raised their children alone, which sometimes posed a problem of reconciling work and family life in a context of a high rate of female extramarital employment. To this end, women's support and childcare networks were created. In some countries, public day-care centres were provided for working mothers in the war industry.

In 1942, a conference on "child care and the war" was held in Australia, where the Commonwealth funded day-care centres for school-age and pre-school children. In the United States, the Lanham Act of 1940, which made possible a series of social programs during the war years, subsidized the care of between 500,000 and 600,000 children of working women.

It became common to "play at war". Figurines inspired by the leaders and armies of each country were marketed and games based on the exercise of power were developed, for example, imitating the attitude of the kapos in the Auschwitz camp. Likewise, governments were aware of the propagandistic use of games, songs or children's literature as a form of indoctrination.



◀ *Fellow citizens! Women and children are the victims of the Black Market! Théophile Alexandre Steinlen, Belgique, 1940. ©Musée de la Libération de Paris - musée du Général Leclerc - musée Jean Moulin (2013.1.11)*



▲ *A small group of Spanish children sitting at a table in the Rivesaltes internment camp, playing with blocks. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (54696)*

In this context, being able to do "children's things" such as playing or going to school were real oases. The aid organizations were aware of this and tried to provide spaces for play and disconnection from reality, as did the totalitarian regimes, for example with the celebration of the fascist Befana in Italy in the occupied territories.

▶ *Working mothers. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943. © U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (516193, Creative Commons CCO License)*





Children's Soup Kitchen

Arpillera, anonymous, 1977

Conflict Textiles Collection

In 1975, the Pinochet regime put in place extreme economic reforms which hurt most the families who were already poor. Responding to many people struggling to feed their families, church sponsored organisations set up children's soup kitchens, feeding over 25,000 children.





HUNGER I

Always associated with war, hunger is one of those elements that have a devastating effect on children's lives.

2022, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 30x5x20 cm.

S.O.S

Shortages, rationing and difficulty getting hold of food are indelibly etched onto childhood experiences during both wartime itself and the postwar period.

2022, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 10x30x20 cm.



Education in the face of barbarism

The beginning of the 1939-1940 school year was disrupted by the declaration of war in Western Europe and the displacement of civilian populations. In Great Britain, schools were closed for between one week and three months. Forty-seven percent of the schoolchildren - 637,000 - were evacuated inland and only 300 teachers remained in London, where schools were sometimes requisitioned and used as staging areas for refugees, fire or emergency stations.

In France, Belgium, the Netherlands (from May 1940) or Italy (from 1942), schoolchildren were also evacuated and emergency schools were opened, even in internment and concentration camps. As a consequence of the evacuations, in countries such as Denmark, children arriving from Finland faced serious learning difficulties due to the change of language.

In the countries occupied by the German army, one of the measures that most affected children was the restructuring of the educational system. In the words of Heinrich Himmler, it was considered that the non-German population should not have universities and that a four-year school "was enough for them". In response, secret educational networks were set up in territories such as Ukraine and Poland. Thanks to the Tajna Organizacja Nauczycielska (Secret Teachers' Organization), approximately 27,000 Polish children graduated between 1939 and 1945.

In countries such as Slovenia, the imposition of German - a language the students did not know - changed the academic curriculum. The advance of the fronts and material and food shortages led to the reduction of the school day (France) or the closure of schools (Netherlands). In Greece, the 1941-1942 school year lasted only three months and that of 1942-1943, 20 days.



▲
School on a farm (Normandy, 1944). ©Archives départementales de la Manche/ conseil dép. (13Num-1754).



▲
Schools had to adapt to wartime conditions (London, 1941). © Imperial War Museums (D 3151)

Educational changes in the war years had in sport and physical activity one of their main manifestations. The desire to create a "strong youth, healthy in body and spirit" led to the imposition of physical education in schools.

Youth movements such as the Compagnons de la jeunesse (from the age of 14 to 20), the Hitler Youth or the League of Young German Girls (from the age of 10) or the L'Opera nazionale balilla (from the age of 6) also emphasized the centrality of sport.

During the war, 15,000 primary schools were totally or partially destroyed in France, almost 300 in Belgium and nearly 23,000 in Italy. Austria lost 640 schools and Poland 6,152. In Greece and Yugoslavia, up to 91% and 81% respectively were destroyed. In addition, the fall of authoritarian regimes meant the almost complete reorganization of educational systems, as well as the implementation of projects, such as colonies for children who had suffered violence, based on peace and the construction of a better world.



The role of artistic expression and its therapeutic capacity highlighted during the war and in the post-war period by pedagogues and psychiatrists such as Alfred and Françoise Brauner. "Happy again far from the bombs and suffering; thanks to the Secours National, but thanks above all to your generosity".

Drawing by Marie Lauffer, pupil of the Institution Jeanne d'Arc, 1943. ©Archives de la ville de Saint Denis (19 S 10/19); "Back home and to school". Drawing by a child at Izieu (1942-1944). ©Bibliothèque Nationale de France



◀ *Children exercising in a group organized by Secours Suisse aux enfants en Rivesaltes (1941-42). ©United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (32228)*



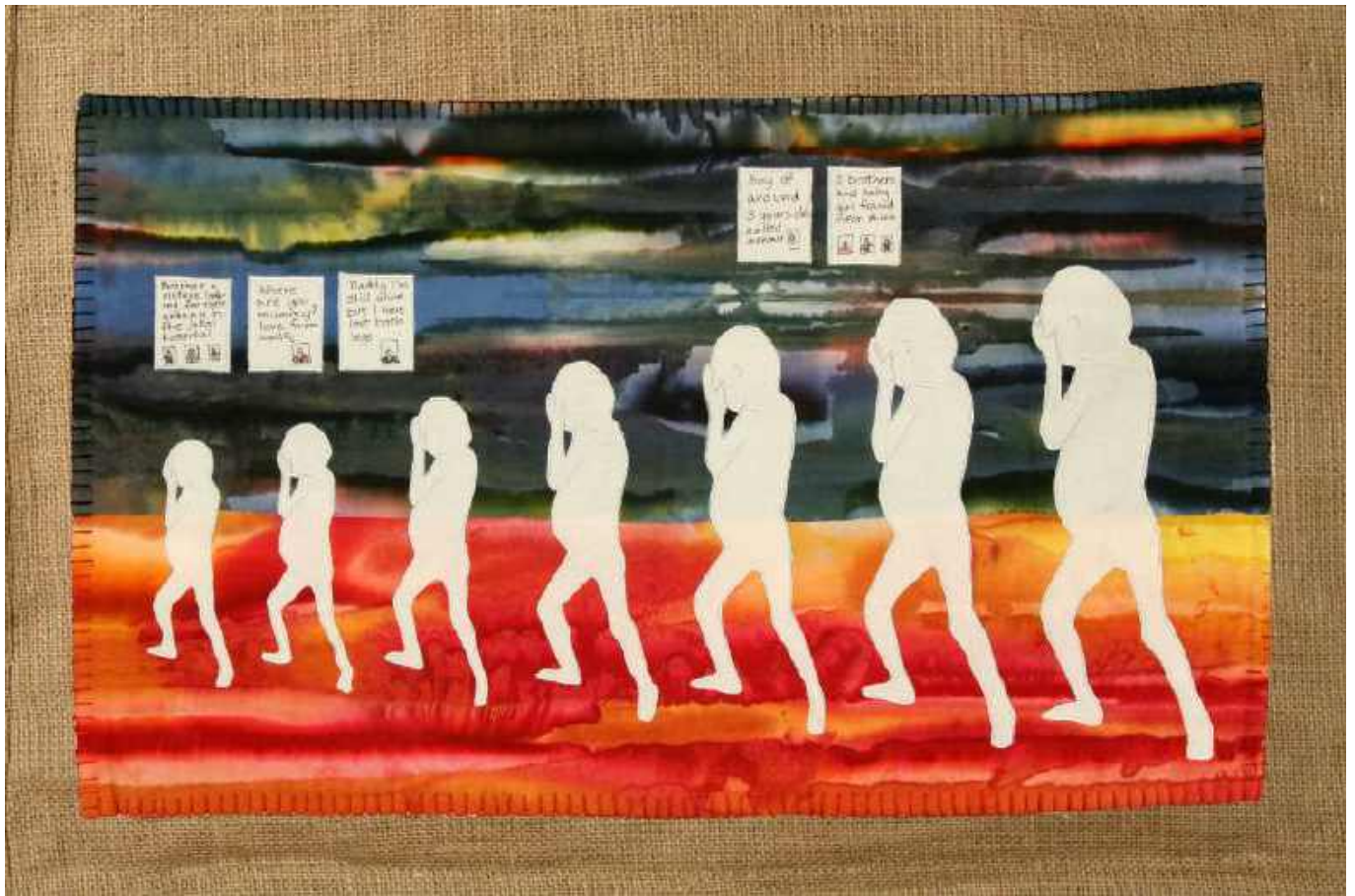
School in a “población”

Arpillera, anonymous, 1980

Conflict Textiles Collection

This arpillera shows dwellers in a shantytown community of Santiago engaged in family, community and economic activities. Even though life is a daily struggle, education remains at the heart of the community.





Lost children of war

Wall hanging, Irene MacWilliam, 2009

Artist's own collection

Irene was deeply moved by the posters to help families find each other after being separated and displaced by war. Especially concerned about the lost and displaced children, she created this piece to show their desperation.



BROKEN TEDDY BEAR ---

Who didn't have a favourite object as a child? a much-loved cuddly toy that calmed you down when you were scared or sad and transported you to a happier place?

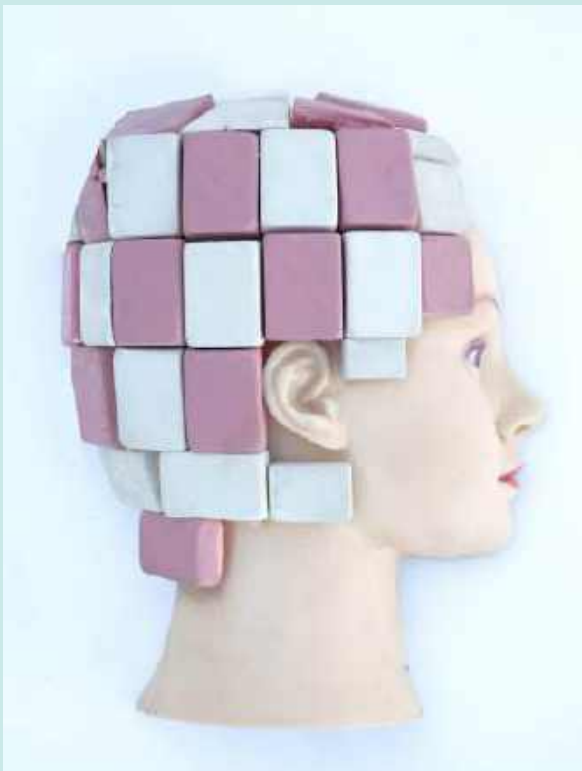
2022, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 15x5x25 cm

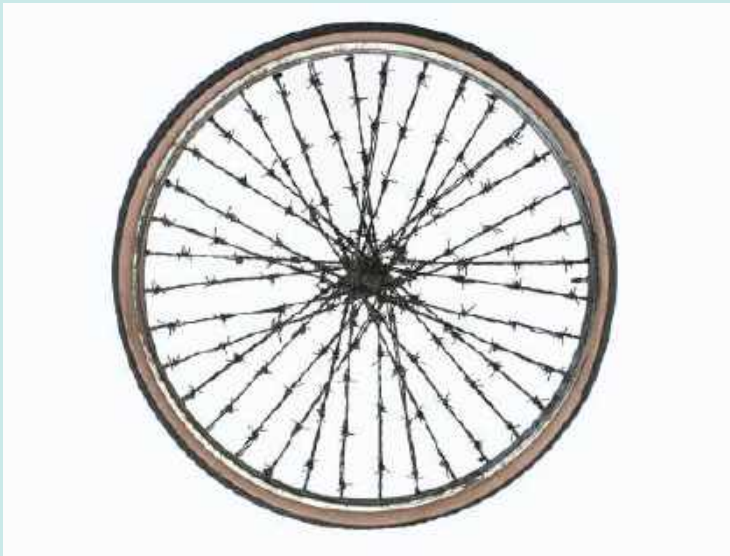


SCARS OF WAR THAT TIME CANNOT ERASE ---

The atrocities of war, especially when seen through the eyes of children, remain engraved forever in our beings and awareness and can never be erased.

2022, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 20x10x25 cm.





EXODUS I

Hurried departures, the crossing of hostile borders, fragility at a specific time of life, and of memory, all form part of the exodus of those forced to flee due to war and violence.

2022, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 10x70x70 cm.

BIRTH AND WAR

Millions of children are born in subhuman conditions in the midst of violent conflicts. Their lives and those of their mothers are at risk from the very moment they first draw breath.

2021, an object poem made using the assemblage technique, 7x4x10 cm.

