

# Stitching Solidarity: Activism in Textile Art Symposium



A day we will never forget

In a world that often denies the right to resist, in this symposium scholars, artists, textile-makers and activists will explore the multifaceted ways textiles can serve as a powerful medium for expressing, documenting, and archiving narratives of resistance. This symposium transcends traditional notions of protest and vocal activism, highlighting the quieter, more subtle forms of resistance that emerge through textile-making practices. We are particularly interested in examining how the imagery of a single thread or the accumulation of small, meaningful actions can weave together into a bold tapestry of dissent.

[Conflict Textiles](#) houses a large collection of international textiles, exhibitions, and associated events focusing on conflict and human rights abuse. Conflict Textiles is an Associated Site of [CAIN](#) at Ulster University.

The collection primarily comprises arpilleras, quilts, and wall hangings, emphasising the struggle for the disappeared and other human rights violations. Exhibitions featuring these textiles have been hosted globally in museums, universities, art galleries, embassies, and community spaces.

Currently, Conflict Textiles is holding a major exhibition entitled “[Threads of Empowerment: Conflict Textiles’ International Journey](#)” at Ulster Museum (June 21, 2024 – April 27, 2025). The Symposium is part of the programme.

The symposium is organised by staff from Ulster University (INCORE), Belfast School of Art (Ulster University), Queen’s University Belfast, Manchester University, University of Galway, University College Cork, the International Association of Women’s Museums, and the Conflict Textiles Trust.

## Sponsors



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# Stitching Solidarity: Activism in Textile Art Programme

## Abstracts

Abstracts as presented in the proposals for submission, unedited. All paragraph spacing removed and formatting of text. Some references were removed to save space.

### Symposium Paper Presentations

Presented in the order of the programme.

#### ***Paper Presented 1 March 2025***

**Lorna Dillon**

##### **“The Textiles Turn: Haptic, Embodied and Temporal”**

There has been a turn towards the medium of textiles in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This lecture will explore the development of textile art practices over the last seventy years, and in particular, since the turn of the millennium. I will briefly mention blockbuster exhibitions and the work of well-known artists like Faith Ringold, Violeta Parra and Cecilia Vicuna, but the main focus will be on Chilean art, the work of women's sewing groups and a form of appliqué known as the *arpillera*. *Arpilleras* were first created clandestinely in Chile in the 1970s and in the last few decades the practice has burgeoned into a feminist art movement in Latin America. I will discuss the way textile art is used in activism. This paper will explore the use of immersive, three-dimensional, and often embodied nature of Chilean environmental art. Reflecting on the work of the feminist art collective *Memorarte*, the needlework of the sewing group *Bordadoras de Angachilla*, and art installations such as *NAUfraga* by Cecilia Vicuña, I will consider structural biases in the artworld that mean that community needlework initiatives are generally excluded from the art canon. I will also consider the role that textile art can play in environmental struggles, thinking about direct responses to extractivism and installations which imply environmental fragility more broadly.

Lorna is a Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Edinburgh and a Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge. She has published two books on the Chilean textile artist Violeta Parra: *Violeta Parra: Life and Work* (2017) and *Violeta Parra's Visual Art: Painted Songs* (2020). A third, co-written book *Violeta Parra: A Visionary Praxis* is forthcoming with Bloomsbury Publishing. Lorna is also interested in contemporary embroidery collectives, and she has published journal articles on participatory needlework initiatives in Latin America.

#### ***Papers Presented 3 March 2025***

**Gaby Franger**

##### **“Listen to the Voices of Women. Embroideries from Afghan Villages”**

Textile works that document and denounce violence and human rights violations, that articulate forbidden desires and dreams, such as the desire for education, peace, or the right to freedom - we have been collecting such documents for many years in our museum Women's Culture Regional - International, and they are the starting point for strengthening and encouraging other women. But how can we responsibly exhibit such documents in a museum when they could potentially put the authors and artists in risk again? This is the dilemma we are currently facing with our project: Listening to the Voices of Women. Embroideries from Afghan Villages. There is no other country in the world where women are as vulnerable as they are in Afghanistan, and not just since the Taliban came back to power in 2021. All the artworks on display come from the Guldusi program, which has been running for 20 years in four villages, enabling some 200 women and girls to earn an income for their families. And it continues to this day. Thousands and thousands of embroideries have been created during this time. Among the mostly cheerful motifs and patterns, there are a few embroideries that refer to the war and violence in the country, often with clear statements against the war, for the right to freedom and the right to education. The exhibition is a starting point for the work with Afghan refugee women in Germany, who comment on these embroideries, relate them to their situation and write down their thoughts about them - as little poems, jewels, short statements...Do we endanger the authors of these embroideries by publishing them? On the other hand, the embroiderers are sending out messages with their work. These are village women who would find even less of an audience than the persecuted intellectuals in Kabul, for example. How can we deal with this as curators and as academics? A lecture with examples from the exhibition, actions, reflections and interpretations.

Prof. (em.) Dr. Gaby Franger, Curator of the Museum Frauenkultur Regional – International, Chair of the International Association of Women's and Gender Museums (IAWM).

## **Azadeh Sobout**

### **“Threading through witnessing: Palestinian Embroidery as an articulation and embodiment of Indigenous sovereignty”**

Over the past century, Tareez -the Palestinian women's embroidery- have turned into the narrative form of the history of the Palestinian people's struggle. The retelling of the history through stitched voices and threads, is important not only as a work of art, but also as an archive and as a historical evidence. I use ethnographic research, archival work and interviews of Palestinian women who currently embroider inside and outside Palestine to explore women's work with Palestinian embroidery as an articulation and embodiment of Indigenous Palestinian sovereignty. Tareez – Palestinian embroidery- is focused on history, experiences, and traditions connecting Indigenous communities to their land and space. This paper examines the ways in which the everyday practice of embroidery enables cultural preservation and cultural continuity in the face of erasure, fragmentation, and genocide. Discussing the history of Palestinian women's political struggles through embroidery is a way to document women's creative resistance and their central role in anti-colonial struggles, maintaining belonging to the land and its material and spiritual heritage. In this paper, I will combine history, cultural context, stories, and art forms common among Palestinians, and discuss how Tareez serves as a material expression of Palestinian experience, history, and identity. I also read the stitched narratives of Palestinian women as the material witnesses that depicts protest, disappearance, displacement, hopes for return, economic violence and inequality, among many other topics.

Azadeh Sobout's research and practice has centred on the complex encounters between critical urban studies, grassroots peace building and transitional justice processes, specifically engaging with post-war geographies, geographies of (in) justice and displacement, as well as radical epistemologies. As a post-doctoral scholar with University of Manchester, Azadeh completed a project on the intersection

of arts and peace building, investigating the role of art, aesthetics and creative methods in revolutionary practice. Leading the Art of Peace Project in Lebanon (2019-2021) she mobilised intersectional and decolonial feminist perspectives to engage with different forms of art, including Tareez as a form of political critique, storytelling, and resistance.

## **Esther Pardo Herrero**

### **“Which world do you live in? Textile making and social consciousness”**

I want to present my journey with arpilleras and textile making by working with groups in communitarian intervention and in training from a human rights-based approach. During these years of applied research and group facilitation, I've developed a methodology that helps people to realize their own position in society and how social, political, and historical events are related to and affect them. Textiles and their huge evocative power are the root of this process. A series of characteristics of textile language, such as the implication of senses, a slow rhythm, the possibility of sewing and unsewing, network construction, and weaving, make it possible, analogously, to add meanings step by step, like threads that intersect and interlace experiences, memories, and personal bondings. The starting point is that every person, no matter their personal history or experience, has memories that enable them to connect with others history and with the social sphere. The process is always a switch in looking inside and outside to link one's own memories with the social history and come to terms with what this interrelation means. The slow process of textile making facilitates a comprehension process that takes place by layers, just as knowledge is made. Furthermore, the possibility of developing the process within a diverse group adds richness and nuances to it. I will focus my presentation on a practical example of the process of creation and future journey of the arpillera “Inequality” created by Dolores García, in her 80s in the workshop, “Let us sew our rights”, facilitated by myself in 2017. This arpillera reflects, in a very concrete way, how inequality takes place in the Mediterranean Sea by contrasting refugees' deathly journeys with luxury cruises. The so-called “refugee crisis” was, until then, only a piece of the TV news, but the workshop helped Dolores to deepen her understanding of a topic of her concern and let her share that interest with other people in a simple and powerful call for action and justice. I will explain the process of creation, and the journey of the arpillera that is part of the Conflict Textile collection since 2019, and has been part of seven international exhibitions since then. If there is interest in that, I would also like to offer a small workshop to experience a way of starting an arpillera towards the link between personal and social history. This workshop would be called: “Which world do you live in? A way of starting an arpillera” and would have an hour of duration.

I am a Colombian sociologist, poet, and art therapist living and working in Catalonia. My working career is centered on gender and human rights-based approaches in public policy and psychosocial intervention through the arts. My experience on these topics is of more than 15 years. I've facilitated different intercultural groups about migratory grief, gender-based violence recovery, textile entrepreneurship, human rights awareness raising, and others. Two arpilleras made in my workshops are currently part of the Conflict Textiles collection. I have been the Coordinator of the Human Rights Resource Center of the Barcelona City Council since 2021. I am a supervisor and teacher in the Master of Expressive Arts Therapy, Trauma, and Embodiment of the Poiesis Institute in Barcelona, responsible for the training seminary “Narrative textiles: languages of memory and resistance. Communitarian approach in political trauma. I have published the poetry books “Diario de ciclos fértiles” (Ed. Paralelo, 2017) and “Descartar la verticalidad” (Ed. Versátiles, 2024) and participated in different collective publications.”

## **Brenda Mondragon Toledo**

## **“Crafting a Feminist Self: Politicising Textile Practices as a Feminist Praxis. A Comparative Study of Mexico and Ireland”**

The following paper aims to showcase the results of my PhD research. This research was carried out through the use of Participatory Arts-based Research, where data was collected via online textile workshops. Throughout a series of exercises, participants recounted key moments in which they experienced different forms of disciplining of their bodies within various institutions. Nonetheless, these experiences gave rise to different forms of resistance to oppression, expressed in their creative practices as textile activists. By analysing participants' personal narratives, a pattern emerges illustrating that embracing feminism serves as a form of resistance woven into their textile practices. This interconnection between resistance and oppression demonstrates a transformative process characterised by the deconstruction of traditional gender roles and the construction of new forms of self-expression, which I referred to as 'crafting a feminist self.' By examining societal norms and cultural practices in both Ireland and Mexico, this paper aims to shed light on how women's bodies are controlled and regulated within patriarchal systems that perpetuate violence against women, highlighting the need for a comprehensive analysis of these issues across different cultural landscapes. Additionally, this comparative approach helps uncover shared patterns and unique challenges that women face in both countries, ultimately aiming to contribute to a transnational understanding of GBV. The research showcases the effectiveness of using textile practices through a PABR methodology to facilitate comparative discussions across diverse scenarios and overcome language and distance barriers. Therefore, this study shines a light on how women navigate the complexities of post-colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal societies throughout their lives, developing a feminist consciousness evident in their textile practices and activism. Finally, the research aims to highlight the connections and unique experiences of women in both the Irish and Mexican contexts, illustrating how they construct a feminist identity as a form of resistance against normalized and extreme manifestations of gender-based violence."

I am a Mexican researcher at the Sociology Department in the HEA North-South Research Programme: Women of the Borderlands. I completed my PhD in the SPLAS Department and the Department of Sociology and Criminology at University College Cork. My PhD research was a comparative study of feminist textile practices between Mexico and Ireland to establish transnational solidarity (Mohanty, 1991). From a feminist standpoint, this research used a feminist Participatory Arts-Based Research (PABR) methodology. This creative approach enabled conversations between participants from both countries. Textile-making practices were used as a methodological tool to encourage reflexivity and collective knowledge creation. The data-gathering consisted of online workshops with women living in Mexico and Ireland using embroidery, patchwork, and doll-making. As a result, participants talked about their experiences of living in patriarchal, capitalist and postcolonial societies.

### **Lilyana Yazirlioglu**

## **“Weaving Solidarity Online: Exploring the Role of Online Stitching Communities in Networking Resistance”**

Textile-making as a group was a long tradition of showing solidarity by making together and reflecting on social, political and environmental issues. This tradition of soft resilience and resistance has its echoes today in the form of Stitch 'n Bitch groups, library knitters and some other textile craft gatherings. However, the presence of these groups within the online realm has not been a popular subject of academic investigation. Therefore, as part of a PhD study, this paper aims to investigate the

networking of stitching communities within online platforms. Online communities, driven by active users, offer a glimpse into the future - one defined by post-industrial, decentralised, open production systems and a shift towards slow and mindful consumption. By investigating the literature and examining current Online Stitching Communities (OSC) examples with virtual ethnography, the researcher maps out the driving forces behind these communities. 4 major motives are identified: Well-being, Craftivism, Response to Emergencies and Sustainability. The initial findings of the virtual ethnography show the OSC formed by some strong motivations such as increasing the individual's well-being as well as communities' and societies'. Or they can be formed due to the act of craftivism where communities raise their voices and stand against political and social situations. Whatever the reason of craftivism -stating political views, questioning status quo, raising voices of minorities and marginalised groups or to unite to respond emergent cases where governments and corporations fail to do so- it helps people create temporal craft communities to reflect their identities as a group, to collaborate and reflect on the social and political events. Supporting this, Von Busch (2008, p. 63) uses the term hacktivist to describe people challenging the status quo by "designing material artefacts as well as social protocols". Although there are different motivations behind the active participation in making and designing processes as users, to what degree the craftivist or hacktivist approaches carry along sustainability concerns can still be a question to be tackled with further research. The study suggests it is crucial to recognize the expertise and creativity of people and communities in shaping sustainable pathways.

I am a PhD student at Ulster University in Belfast, UK, conducting interdisciplinary research bridging the Product Design and Textile and Fashion Design departments within the Art and Design Faculty. My focus lies in exploring digitally-mediated grassroots textile communities, which offer insights into a future characterised by post-industrial, decentralised, open production systems and a transition towards slower, more mindful consumption patterns. Also, I examined textile-making communities located in Northern Ireland to investigate the networks of resistance and solidarity created for shared local and global concerns. Through surveys, interviews, and workshops, I examine design and manufacturing methods employed by these communities and aim to develop alternative scenarios within the sustainability framework. I would like to share my ongoing research process and outcomes with textile-making communities within this symposium which seems like a very good fit for my research focus. I am excited to learn from this community as well.

## **Deborah White**

### **"Remonstrance, Repeal and Revival: The Gifting of Irish Linen Damask to Daniel O'Connell, 1844"**

'This man,' warned Lord Anglesey, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on 17 January 1830 'has established a sort of tyranny that is indescribable. He seems to have fixed the opinion in Men's Minds that his person is sacred... Thus we live, and thus we shall remain, whilst O'Connell is at large'. Within weeks, despite initially being refused entry, O'Connell took his place in the House of Commons in Westminster on 4 February, the first Irish Catholic to benefit from the 'Catholic emancipation' he had triumphantly delivered the previous year. Marked by bonfires throughout Ireland and a 'chairing' from his constituency in County Clare to County Limerick, the victory could have marked the culmination of his career. But his greatest challenge was yet to come - repeal of the Act of Union and the restoration of an Irish parliament. Despite a decline in his popularity in the decade following election, his fiery oratory, force of personality and charisma came together for a last time to reawaken the singular connection he held with the people of Ireland. Leading a new national movement - the signature of which was the open-air 'Monster Meeting' that attracted people in their hundreds of thousands - the Establishment fear of demagoguery resurfaced, and on the eve of a meeting



summoned for 5 October 1843 at Clontarf the assembly was proclaimed and O'Connell, along with eight of his supporters, incarcerated in the notorious Richmond Bridewell in Dublin. An unprecedented outpouring of support followed: an 'extraordinary flying through town, of presents arriving to the prisoners by every coach from the country'. It is against this background that the paper examines a gift from a group of northern Catholic Repeal supporters in Banbridge, Co. Down, now housed in The National Museum of Ireland. A linen damask tablecloth, it coupled an advocacy of Irish political independence and modern democratic politics with a newly-emerging nationalist iconography reimagined from Ireland's past. An early example both of 'practical patriotism' and the influence of the Gaelic revival, its significance, to date, has been lost to view.

Deborah White, Lecturer in Woven Textiles at Ulster University, is a Master hand-loom linen damask weaver (a craft now listed as 'Critically Endangered') and an AHRC doctoral researcher. Her work is published internationally. She is presently restoring an early nineteenth-century linen damask broadloom which was used for the accession of Queen Elizabeth II as part of Ireland's last commercial handloom linen damask manufactory. Pure profile [www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/d-white](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/staff/d-white)

## **Wendy Wiertz**

### **“War Lace. Textile Testimonies of Resistance, Solidarity or Control?”**

Lacemaking is an important part of Belgium's cultural heritage. During the First World War this renowned industry was in danger of disappearing forever: demand for the luxury handmade fabric plummeted, while the supply of materials was interrupted. Thousands of lacemakers faced unemployment. In response, philanthropists, national committees and international humanitarian organisations developed lace-aid programmes with a twofold goal: saving an imperilled European tradition, and ensuring the wartime employment of Belgian lacemakers, working-class women who supported themselves and their families. The programmes were highly successful, bringing unprecedented publicity to the industry and employing more than 50.000 women in German-occupied Belgium. The women produced lace including war lace. War lace, with its unique iconography, referred directly to the conflict and included battle scenes, names and portraits of people, places, dates, coats-of-arms or national symbols of the Allied Countries, of the nine Belgian provinces or of the Belgian martyr cities. This paper investigates if the produced war lace is a textile testimony of resistance, solidarity or control. Drawing on extensive archival, collection and practice-based research across four countries, the nuanced answer will show that the patriotic designs were an act of resistance defying the German occupiers' ban on the expression of pro-Belgian sentiments, while the organisation of the lace aid programmes for the Belgian lacemakers was both intended and experienced as an act of solidarity and control.

Dr. Wendy Wiertz is lecturer of Applied Arts, Design and Material Culture at Utrecht University. Wendy was a Fulbright and honorary Belgian American Educational Foundation fellow at Columbia University (2018-19), an academic visitor at the University of Oxford (2019-2020) and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow at the University of Huddersfield (2021-2023). Her first academic book *Adellijk en artistiek. Amateurkunstenaressen met blauw bloed in België (1815-1914)* was published by University Press Leuven in 2023 and has been awarded the 2021 Prize of the Fonds Keingiaert the Gheluveld. Her current research project concentrates on war lace and its relations to craft, gender, and humanitarian aid in the First World War era. Her book *War Lace. Women, Food Aid and Patriotism during the First World War (1914-1918)*, destined for the wider audiences, was published in the Phoebe Focus series in 2021.

## Vasiliki Stasinaki

### “The Minor Gesture of the Hand: Retelling the Stories of the Exiles on the Islands of the Aegean Sea, Through Their Textile Traditions”

National histories often frame stories through grand gestures and monumental narratives, organizing them within a binary structure of victors and vanquished. But what happens to the nuanced, layered stories of resistance that exist on the margins of these official narratives? For this call, I want to explore how embroidery and textile practices can document, preserve, and communicate overlooked stories of resistance in a quiet yet persistent manner. My research aligns with the call's focus on alternative knowledge production, proposing an interdisciplinary approach. To reflect this, I suggest combining a paper presentation with a small exhibition of textile works I have created in response to archival material. These works are integral to my methodology, offering a tangible, visual dimension to my research. My focus is on reframing the stories of political dissidents exiled to the Aegean Islands during the Greek Civil War (1946-1950) using creative practices, artistic methodologies and speculative fiction. By examining their daily lives and craft practices, I aim to shed light on the smaller, often overlooked acts of defiance, against hegemonic structures. These acts are embedded in the textile traditions developed by the exiles, whose handmade artifacts, now preserved in various archival collections, serve as a testament to their survival and resistance. In this hybrid presentation, I will discuss the significance of the "small" and the "little" as subtle yet powerful forms of resistance. Drawing on Mika Hannula's concept of the 'small gesture' and Lyotard's 'little narratives,' both as methods of challenging grand narratives, I will also reference Erin Manning's idea of the 'minor gesture' as a way to unsettle the norm and explore alternative politics. A pivotal moment in my research occurred when uncovering the backstory of an artifact belonging to my family led me to a large archive of handmade objects, including textiles and embroidery. These works, created by both men and women, were born out of necessity but also served as acts of resistance against daily struggles and physical and mental abuse. I will explore the significance of these textiles in the context of survival and defiance, highlighting the role of craft in creating meaning beyond the traumatic circumstances of exile. In my process as a visual artist, I have engaged with these textile practices by learning traditional techniques, training my hand in a repetitive, meditative manner. This process has become a means of remembering and retelling stories—transmitting histories through the visual language of stitching. The repetitive act of embroidery has provided a space for reflection and tribute, offering a counter-narrative to the dominant heroic images of exile, instead celebrating the everyday, enduring acts of resistance. Through this practice, I aim to create a new, fictional archive—one that honours the small, yet meaningful gestures of defiance. The textile works featured in the exhibition will serve as a soft monument to these often-invisible acts of resistance. By expanding on the embroidery techniques of the exiles, I hope to weave together a narrative that speaks to the resilience of those who resisted, not through grand heroic gestures, but through quiet, persistent acts of survival and solidarity: a weaving thread that extends from the past to the present, creating potential for the future.

I am a multidisciplinary artist based in Belfast and I am a practice-based PhD researcher at Belfast School of Art, engaging with artistic practices in the GeoHumanities. Through my practice I question and explore my place in the world from a social and political point of view, by creating performative interventions that take place in a defined space. In the times we are living in, facing ongoing political and social changes, and an uncertain future of the world as we know it my practice questions how to engage with diverse social and political issues of urgent character by looking into the past within the context of historical and geographical research. My practice is dealing with how imagination, creative practices and artistic methodologies can probe historical truth, reconstitute, and preserve historical memory, by constructing alternative or counter narratives to those framed in the historic/national archive and against hegemonic structures. I am currently focusing on the geographical area of the

Aegean Sea, and the islands of that region which were used as places of exile for political dissidents during the Greek civil war. Through my practice I am exploring the small stories that manifest other ethics, politics and struggles and can be found and experienced through material, geographical and embodied research while using unarchiving methods and speculative strategies. I have a background in dance, as I studied dance at Greek National Opera Dance School and at Northern School of Contemporary Dance and performed in the UK, Ireland and internationally for several years. I studied fine art at Belfast School of Art and at Sint Lucas Antwerp. I have exhibited in Safehouse Peckham, Camden Image Gallery, Menier Gallery London, Platform Arts Belfast, Catalyst Belfast, PS2 Belfast, QSS Belfast, CCA Glasgow, Morpho Antwerp, Draiocht Gallery and Mart Gallery Dublin. My work *Motherland is Calling* was part of Array Collective's Turner Prize winning installation and was acquired by Ulster Museum in 2021. Over the years I have received funding by the Arts Council Northern Ireland and the Belfast City Council and I have also received funding by a-n artists information company and the Dancers Career Development Fund. International residencies include Frans Masereel Centrum and Morpho Antwerp in Belgium. I recently completed a residency with Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast. I am a member of QSS artists gallery and studios, and I am currently in residency with Fisga Space in Porto.

## **Lisa Raye Garlock**

### **“Activist Story Cloths and Art Therapy: Images from Art Therapy Graduate Students”**

Narrative textiles often begin as personal stories that need to be shared, and they may also evolve into powerful statements addressing broader issues of human rights and social justice. I find myself in a fortunate position, working alongside young people who are training to become art therapists. With this role comes a deep sense of responsibility to guide these future therapists in recognizing the wider context of the world we live in. I encourage them to confront the difficult, uncomfortable topics that affect us all—issues we might prefer to ignore. Living in the Washington, DC area, at the heart of political influence, it's impossible to avoid the continuous flow of news on human rights, climate change, inequality, and injustice. Since 2012, through my own practice of creating story cloths and facilitating story cloth groups, I've seen how working with fabric and hand sewing can contain and gently release intense emotions. Whether collaborating with client sewing circles, art therapy students, or groups of professional therapists both in the US and abroad, I have witnessed firsthand how narrative textiles and art therapy combine in transformative ways. Together, they offer a means of expression, spark necessary conversations, and foster healing—both on a personal and collective level. This presentation will be image-focused while also discussing how students develop their activist ideas and story cloths within the context of art therapy. Objectives: Participants will understand the intersection of activist and healing textile work through viewing a range of story cloths and stories. Participants will expand awareness of how making narrative textiles can be used in therapy, connect to larger issues, and bring people together.

As a US-based Licensed Clinical Professional Art Therapist (LCPAT) and certified, state-approved art therapy supervisor (ATCS), I've worked with adults, adolescents, and children in hospitals, schools, community-based organizations, and shelters. For 20 years, I taught art therapy full-time at The George Washington University and continue to teach a class on story cloths and art therapy. Additionally, I created the Storycloth Database, an online resource that highlights collections of story cloths focusing on human rights issues. Currently, I serve as the Education and Art Therapy Director at the international non-profit Common Threads Project, where I co-train therapists in using story cloths, therapeutic art, mind/body awareness, and psychoeducation to support women recovering from the trauma of gender-based violence. Common Threads Projects training has taken me to Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Ecuador, and various sites in the US; I've also facilitated Survivor workshops in Geneva, Switzerland, through the Mukwege Foundation. A lifelong interest in travel and cultural learning has led me to walk the Coast to Coast, Pembrokeshire Coast, and Thames paths in the UK, as well as take students to India for International Social and Cultural Diversity classes. I've taught art therapy in Croatia at the University of Osijek. As an artist, I work across various media, including textiles and mixed media. Three of my arpilleras are part of the Conflict Textiles collection.

## **Eileen Harrisson**

### **“Textile as Healing Agent and Witness Document”**

I believe the rhythmic motions of hand-stitching to be inherently therapeutic. In this paper, I discuss stitch as therapy and the important role it plays in aiding recovery for those who have suffered traumatic experiences, also considering how, communally, it becomes a form of protest against the injustices of brutal regimes and violence of conflict. As well as featuring my works which explore how the activity of stitch offers healing from traumatic memories of the Troubles, this discussion includes work by artists such as Heidi Drahota, Deborah J Stockdale and Angela Su, whose works also act as therapy and stand as witness documents and protest against the violence and consequences of conflict. It is not only the individual but groups, mainly of women, who have used the activity of stitching as therapy and as a form of resistance against brutal injustices in society. Here I discuss groups such as the women prisoners of war in World War II who made what became known as the Changi quilts, and in Northern Ireland, women who met to use stitch as therapy to help deal with traumatic experiences and memories of the Troubles, featuring the Women Together group and those who made the Petals of Hope and WAVE memorial quilts. My paper also discusses the role played by the arpilleras in Chile, including how women, many of them mothers, met to stitch their works known as arpilleras which acted both as a way of bringing closer their loved ones who had disappeared and as protest against the cruelly punitive extremes of General Augusto Pinochet's militaristic regime. All these works, by individuals and by groups, stand both as witness documents, testifying to the traumatic experiences of those who made them, and as protests against the violence that caused the depth of suffering for individuals, families and society. The importance of the group as resistance is epitomised not only by those discussed but also by my own experience. I was introduced to Conflict Textiles through meeting Roberta Bacic in Aberystwyth and, subsequently taking part in exhibitions with the group, my works became shared with a wider public and became part of something bigger and more far-reaching than I could have achieved alone. This shows how, in bringing individual stitchers such as myself together with others, not only is mutual support given to individuals but when the one voice becomes many, the quiet activity of stitching reaches out and becomes a powerful witness and advocate for peace. My presentation includes a slideshow of artworks and I will bring the work A Cape for Healing to stand by me on a tailor's dummy, also stitched pieces for those present to look at more closely afterwards. I will read and/or perform poems where appropriate, finishing with lines from my poem For the Others:

so I stitch paths of  
remembrance, red veining in  
lines of silk and cotton,  
blood red threads that are life and  
death and hope  
and grief  
and resurrection.

I have exhibited stitched works as a freelance artist in textiles for many years, obtaining an MA in Art and Art History from Aberystwyth University in 2013, using stitch and sound. Recently, I have focussed on textiles as witness documents of my experiences in the Troubles and have submitted a thesis for the degree of PhD Fine Art, again with Aberystwyth University. My thesis is titled 'A Sorrowful Healing: Experiences of the Troubles Seen through the Relationship Between Stitch as Fine Art, Sound and Word' and I held a successful PhD exhibition in the university gallery in 2022. I am a member of the Embroiderers' Guild, Disability Arts Cymru and the Textile Society, and I began exhibiting with Conflict Textiles in 2016. I now have two works in the Conflict Textiles Collection, Continuum and Her Pillow, the Earth, the latter featuring as an illustration in the book in Spanish *Arpilleras Poéticas* by Roberta Bacic and Jaime Huenún Villa. With a love of music and interest in the sounds both of textiles and within nature, I was awarded funding by the Arts Council of Wales to develop music for a proposed installation. I wrote the melody and words for the finished piece which my son, professional musician Ed Harrisson, arranged and harmonised in Russian Orthodox style for male voices The Beorma Ensemble, with female soprano solo. This was then made into the film Continuum and I further collaborated with Ed on the soundtrack for my PhD exhibition. I have poems, articles and illustrations published in several different outlets, including anthologies and peer-reviewed journals, and continue to exhibit my textile work as wall-hangings and as part of installations in which I use sound and poetry in connection with the stitched pieces. I also give talks about my work and enjoy giving performances of my poetry in workshops and within exhibitions, often as part of exhibition openings. See [www.eileenharrisson.com](http://www.eileenharrisson.com)

## **Carolina Espinoza Cartes**

### **"Intergenerational transmission of the trauma of exile in the arpilleras"**

The action of sewing, in which images and messages emerge slowly, not only dislocates the rhythms and temporality of the denunciation, but also makes it more urgent, materializes it and in its construction, collectivizes it. It is about denouncing injustices, fighting, but rescuing the sensitivity, the care and the colors of life; being together as a form of resistance and opposition to violence and its trivialization. Just as it was the canvas of struggle in the residence in the interior, the sackcloth also constituted another tool of resistance of women in exile and has had a constant evolution until today, moving to the denunciation in the present time of issues such as the Chilean Social Outbreak and other current demands. This paper wants to show examples of the sackcloth as a reparative instrument to try to overcome the trauma of the experience of exile, seen in the middle of the research for the book *Exiliadas*, developed with 60 Chilean exiled women in 12 countries. As has been pointed out, not only of the direct consequences it could have on the first generation or on those who suffered repression or political violence in first person, but also to unite, glue, sew together those two unfathomable worlds that were woven between mothers and daughters and that silence separated even more in exile. The sackcloth, for the interviewees, was a late and almost epiphanic discovery, which served as a blank canvas to recount the experience of exile, with all its prequels and sequels. In the case of the daughters of the exiled women, sewing together with their mothers or in groups of other exiled women of different generations, implied speaking of what had been silenced, without prejudice, in a safe environment, among peers, respectful and conciliatory with the past pains. But also with the present ones, since the pains and longings for a better Chile had been transformed and now it was embroidered to denounce other injustices, heirs of course of neoliberalism and dictatorship. In other cases, as well as in the original arpilleras made by women mothers, sisters or wives of disappeared detainees, in addition to the restorative and staging purpose of a rite that was not, also appears the economic component, of subsistence, becoming in exile and post-exile a tool for survival and subsistence. The idea of the presentation is to explain this situation that was discovered in the research of the book *Exiliadas*, to show the book and the chapter that refers to this situation.

Carolina Espinoza Cartes has a PhD in Social Anthropology and is a journalist. Her research topics are the transitional processes in Chile and Spain, the exile in both countries after processes of violence and the practices of political linkage with the place of origin, and in particular, the gender perspective and its comparison with contemporary processes of forced displacement in Europe. She has been a Margarita Salas Fellow at the University of Grenoble, France and at the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and collaborator at the Centro de Estudios del Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Reina Sofía. She has recently published in Chile and Spain the book “Exiliadas” (Cuarto Propio, 2024, La Parcería, 2024).

## **Claire Flahavan**

### **“Grief Vessels: giving voice to experiences of loss due to termination for medical reasons (TFMR)”**

This paper will take the form of an art-based exploration of my practice as a perinatal therapist in contexts of pregnancy loss, through a series of hand-stitched objects (Grief Vessels) created as a response to my clinical work. The paper will focus on the experience of those who make the profoundly difficult decision to terminate a pregnancy for medical reasons (TFMR), following a diagnosis of a fetal anomaly. A growing body of research has delineated the multiple impacts of a TFMR, often described as a traumatic life-altering event, with significant effects on emotional well-being and mental health. The ethical issues involved in weighing up the intrapersonal and familial consequences of ending a wanted pregnancy impose a heavy burden. Public debates on the provision of abortion care in Ireland, Northern Ireland and elsewhere have historically been highly polarized, meaning that a personal decision to terminate a pregnancy is embedded in a charged socio-political context. Current legal frameworks in Ireland entail travelling abroad to access a termination in some situations, adding further distress.

There are gaps in contemporary cultural representations of the TFMR experience across all artforms. This mirrors a wider sociocultural environment that struggles to acknowledge the realities of ending pregnancies in complex circumstances, but in doing so, often denies women and couples the right to mourn. In recovering from any kind of loss, we borrow always from existing cultural repositories of relevant narratives, to shape a story that is fitting for ourselves. It is therefore imperative for those navigating the aftermath of a TFMR, that we broaden the repertoire of socio-cultural scripts in circulation. This paper documents the making of a series of hand-stitched 'vessels' as a form of narrative inquiry, bringing forward the under-represented experience of terminating a pregnancy for medical reasons, and therapeutic work in this context. It examines these circumstances using the word vessel, the definitions of which are evocative given the particularities of this kind of loss. The process of making documented here, represents a kind of slow, intimate cumulative art practice: the act of tending to each small, stitched object represents a careful gesture or an expression of care-giving. Collectively the vessels ‘stitch together’ a larger testimony from the many stories of loss through TFMR that I have encountered in clinical practice over a decade. In taking time to shape these vessels and to contextualize their meaning, I am asserting that the multiplicity of experiences they represent, matter enough to be attended to and given substance in the world. The incorporation of hand-stitching within this process, echoes the use of textile-based art as a form of social activism, calling attention to marginalized experiences. In clinical and academic environments, the placing of artwork into our conversations about the human condition, introduces the potential for approaching difficult subject matter in new ways, creating opportunities for dialogue and social change.

Claire Flahavan originally trained in medicine and subsequently specialized in psychiatry, completing her membership exams with the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 2008. She later undertook an MA in

Art Therapy at Crawford College (Cork) and worked at The Alders Unit, a therapeutic service for young people who have experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse between 2016 – 2024. She took up her current position as perinatal therapist with the Fetal Medicine team at the National Maternity Hospital in 2019, having previously held a special interest session with the onsite Perinatal Mental Health service. Claire has a keen interest in the benefits of the arts in healthcare, and has participated in several advisory groups in relation to arts in health practice nationally, as well as co-facilitating long-term participatory projects in healthcare settings. She contributes lectures and workshops to art therapy training programmes at Crawford College (MTU – Cork), at the University of Ulster (Belfast) and University College Dublin. Claire’s personal art practice is rooted in the creation of hand-stitched books, objects and textile-based artwork, and she incorporates this imagery into her teaching sessions, conference presentations and written publications.

## **Aurore Damoiseaux**

### **“We will be soft and woollen and colourful”: Handknitted garments as resistance at Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp (1981-2000)**

In an interview as part of my research project, Greenham woman and creator of Greenham Women Everywhere (2018) project Rebecca Mordan, recounted the use of wool as tactical symbolism at Greenham: “[Greenham women] regularly, in their costume, in their action, in their art, constantly try to offer an opposite look to what they’re up against. So, you are hard and grey and concrete so we will be soft and woollen and colourful, and you are orderly and man-made, and we will be womanly and anarchic and of nature” (2024). This paper proposes innovative research on the social and political weight of hand knitted garments as protest tools at Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp (1981-2000) set up near Newbury in Britain. The anti-nuclear protest at Greenham was embedded in traditions of craft activism, in feminist debates of the time, and in ongoing reflections on construction of community and systems of care. Current research on Greenham includes works on visual cultures flourishing at the camp (Kokoli, 2023), and art inspired from it (Lesperance, 2021; Ceschi & Lane, 2021). Previous research also includes gender politics and feminism at the camp (Eschle, 2017, 2018; Frazer & Hutchings, 2014). Knitting as protest tool has been analysed by fashion historians (Hackney, 2013; Close, 2018; Ey, 2019), as has the role of knitting in resistance and well-being (Faiers, 2014; Corkhill et al, 2014). My research innovates in its focus on the political power of knitwear at Greenham. This research expands on these existing sources, to argue that hand knitted garments were predominant in the culture of protest at Greenham. These objects were fundamental parts of non-violent direct actions and acted as embodiment of resistance through the context of their creation. In this paper, I investigate the debated place of knitting as feminist resistance. Through the exploration of the sensory power of knitting, I argue for it as repository of individual and collective memory in the case of Greenham Common. This paper also asserts that the act of knitting and weaving at the camp, as it was performed, was part of a larger movement to rethink the modes of caring and community-building in place in capitalist, patriarchal British society in the 1980s. I build upon political scientist Catherine Eschle’s work (2017) on female figures in peace camps of the 1980s. Eschle identifies four gendered subjects in the peace camps: the ‘Mother,’ the ‘Radical Feminist,’ the ‘Lesbian,’ and the ‘Earth Mother.’ In addition to these four subjects, I argue for the presence of a fifth one, the ‘Knitter.’ Through analysis of Greenham women’s written and oral memoirs, photographs and textile objects, I explore the possibility of the ‘Knitter’ figure whose role is, similarly to the myth of the tricoteuses of post-revolutionary France, to sit at ground zero of major historical events and knit to record memory.

Aurore Damoiseaux is a PhD student at the University of Brighton in the School of Humanities and Social Science. Her AHRC-Techne funded research project focuses on the use of clothing and textile

objects as tools to protest at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (1981-2000). She is co-lead of the Fashion and Dress Histories strand of the Centre for Design History and the University of Brighton.

## Keynote Address

### Sharri Eppel

#### **“Bones in the Forest: Exhumation and Reburial in Matebeland, Zimbabwe”**

Dr. Shari Eppel is Zimbabwean and lives and works in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She is the director of Ukuthula (meaning ‘peace’) Trust. Shari has a long relationship with ‘Conflict Textiles’, and was inspired by Roberta Bacic to start a textile art group in the wake of widespread peri-urban demolitions that took place in 2005 in Zimbabwe. Around one million people suffered loss of homes and/or livelihoods as a result of this state-driven destruction of entire suburbs and informal markets. Shari began a textile art group with around a dozen single teenage mothers, who lost homes, and in some cases, experienced deaths in the family as a result of the demolitions. Meeting weekly, this group created two large textiles, illustrating the ‘day they would never forget’, and their subsequent time being kept by church parishes in the first weeks post demolition. Some of these girls had their repeated attempts to build new shacks knocked down 16 times over the next year. However, the experience of being able to capture their experiences in fabric was empowering and also formed a supportive group for the girls, together with their young children. In 2011, Shari began a second textile art group, also in the wake of political violence, in a rural, peasant farming village south of Bulawayo, and in this instance, both perpetrators and victims of the violence worked together to create two textiles over the next few years. One showed the beatings and burning down of a centre, and the second showed the rebuilding of this same centre into a training centre for youths. Roberta Bacic made a journey out to this village of Enyandeni and undertook a workshop with the women of the area, in making arpillera dolls. This was much loved and appreciated. This second group continues to date. The women have taken it upon themselves to create a textile art piece every year, recording whatever is topical to the area. They have made a textile showing the COVID 19 epidemic, and also multiple years of hunger and drought. The Zimbabwean experience of standing endlessly in queues for everything from healthcare to food relief, to money from the banks have also been subjects of their art. The women are extremely proud of their role as historians and custodians of events in their community. The links between Shari's work and Conflict Textiles has continued for almost twenty years, now. The act of sewing has become an act of empowerment and history-making for some of Zimbabwe's most neglected and marginalized women.

## Screenings

### **Screening 1 March 2025**

#### **Tere Chad and Cordelia Rizzo**

##### **Woven Hug 2.0**

This documentary delves into the making process of Woven Hug 2.0 at Flowerfield Arts Centre (2023). Woven Hug 2.0 is a participatory textile installation that embraces Portstewart with a pair of 20m long ‘arpillera’ arms stitched with textiles recycled by its own community. The project facilitated



by Tere Chad and Cordelia Rizzo hosted 3 weeks of workshops that received near 200 participants, resulting in more than 120 embroidery donated. The embroideries tell narratives related to the social, political and environmental context of Northern Ireland. The project was made in collaboration with Conflict Textiles, Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast and is part of the Linen Biennale's programme. This film was produced by Kavod Films with the support of the National Lottery through Arts Council England, the Buffett Institute for Global Affairs and the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council. Woven Hug 1.0 was initially presented at LABNL, Monterrey, Mexico (2022).

Tere Chad is a Chilean artist and curator focused on fostering collective sustainable practices and the cultural values of the Global South, Tere Chad graduated in 2020 with an MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art, London, having previously graduated in 2018 with an MA in Art and Science from Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. In 2020 Chad was granted a Global Talent Visa to continue developing her practice in the UK, and in 2021 she was accepted as a member of the RSS (Royal Society of Sculptors). A marionette cut-out of Queen Elizabeth II, from Chad's short film 'The Spectacle of the Shadows,' was selected as part of the Platinum Jubilee collection displayed at the Civic Gallery at Kensington Town Hall (2022 – 2023). Chad has worked in over 15 countries, exhibited in more than 60 international shows, and had her works installed in public space in the UK, Italy and Mexico. She has curated over 20 international exhibitions, coordinating groups of over 70 people. She has managed public and private funding, including grants and sponsorship from institutions such as the Arts Council England, CAF – Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, Rotary Club Est Palermo (Sicily), Municipio San Pedro Garza García (San Pedro Borough – Mexico), Caruna (Finland), Stora Enso (Finland), Camden Giving, the Contemporary Bolivian Arts Trust, Paladar Restaurant, Fundación Cultural de Providencia (Chile) amongst others. Amongst her most important projects, it is definitely worth highlighting Neo Norte or the New North, a fifth edition of which she is currently developing (2024 – 2025) for the Memorial da América Latina, Sao Paulo, Brazil, the most important museum of integration in Latin America, designed by Oscar Niemeyer; and the participatory upcycling textile projects she has facilitated together with Cordelia Rizzo, such as Abrazo Entramado (Woven Hug), Zurciendo Vacíos (Mending Voids) and Hilando Organismos (Threading Organisms). Chad showcased 'Samka Meets Neo Norte' at the Bloomsbury Festival, London, where the image of her work from Neo Norte 4.0 was selected as the front cover of the festival. Her work remains/features in private and public collections in the UK, Germany, Finland, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Chile and the United Arab Emirates. Tere Chad has wide experience working with educational institutions in Latin America and Europe, interacting with groups of different ages, organising workshops and performing the role of visiting lecturer in England, Northern Ireland, Mexico, Finland, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, USA and Italy. She is currently a volunteer member of the board of The Design Education Trust.

## Performances

Presented in sequence of the programme.

### ***Performance Lecture 1 March 2025***

**Saray Sanchez, Jye O'Sullivan & Nora Duggan**

**“An Threads of Care: Mourning Through Textiles as Collective Political Action”**

Known as the weavers of Mampuján, a group of women in Colombia document collective memory through their textile work. Years after their entire community was forced to flee overnight from a group of paramilitaries in Montes de María, and during a difficult process of losing communal identity, the women of Mampuján organised themselves to stitch the memories of what happened twenty five years earlier, on March 10, 2000. In the tapestry ‘desplazamiento’ these women sewed their own story of force displacement, amidst tears and painful memories that came alive in each stitch. This worked not only to document their own narratives but also to heal the trauma embodied by the loss of territory. Judith Butler’s concept of ‘shared vulnerability’ defines human condition of interdependence opening up the potential for collective political action. For this, grief is fundamental as it reveals both the ways lives are interconnected and human shared precarity. However, in times of conflict, this vulnerability is often denied or overlooked, resulting in uneven recognition of grievable lives. Hence, mourning, for Butler, becomes a deeply political and ethical phenomena that supports nonviolent solutions to the precariousness of life. Similarly, for Cristina Rivera Garza, grieving while making is a practice to create refuge with others. The weavers of Mampuján, it can be said, came together to process their shared grief through the threads and to heal and cope with their communal reterritorialization by sewing into collective tapestries. At a time of global tensions and ever-expanding world chaos, the radical potential of textiles allows for new forms of collective enunciation, memory, and grief, as is the case in the textile work of the Mampuján community. Increasingly, textiles take territory in fields such as art and academia where until a few generations ago they were excluded; this makes them an appealing medium for exploring the porosity of boundaries and challenging historical structures of domination. This audio-visual performance lecture begins by examining the relationship between mourning, materiality, textile production and our sensorial apparatus. By problematising clear cut distinctions between social-constructivist feminisms and materialist feminism, we demonstrate the varying ways in which the process of making objects tertiary to oneself, especially as collectives, can form a powerful mode of remembrance, mourning and catharsis. This process, tied to de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, is framed as a form of resistance both in the process and in the production of the tertiary retention. Similar to the Palestinian Sound Archives’ positioning of the recording of song as a means of both mourning and political justice, this session will discuss the textile object as not only a three-dimensional object situated and produced in a locale, but as mesh of interwoven signifiers that stack over time. Over the course of the lecture, we will explore several case-studies through different philosophical, decolonial, sonic and visual methodologies to question hegemonic models of display, attitudes towards textile-as-memory and relations between textiles, femininity and the natural. We do this in the hope of fostering a practice of caring for the traces of others. This is a collaborative proposal.

Jye O’Sullivan: Lecturer in Visual Cultures at NCAD where they specialise in research themes including: contemporary global art, posthumanism, the post-natural, philosophy of technology and queer theory. They teach a variety of modules including a CFA module on “Art and Design Ethics” and the ACW module “Becoming Public”. Jye, along with Meredith Tromble and Joshua DiCaglio, are the editors of the 2026 Bloomsbury publication “Visions of Scale”, they are a member of SLSA, the ECT Lab and Política de Indigestão. Jye has also exhibited various sound installations including A Matter of Care, in Cyprus 2023 and Wet Epistemologies in Rio de Janeiro in 2024.

Saray Sánchez: Designer and researcher from Mexico, currently residing in the West of Ireland. With a foundation in graphic design, visual communication has significantly influenced her professional journey so far. Having completed her MA in Visual and Critical Studies at TU Dublin in 2022 she is currently engaged in her doctoral studies, focussing on the production of knowledge plurality through participatory textile making in Ireland and Mexico.

Dr Nora Duggan is an experienced educator, researcher, and practicing artist specializing in creative media and visual culture studies. With a strong track record in academic programme coordination and curriculum innovation, she combines theoretical and practical expertise to engage in critical explorations of contemporary visual culture. Her academic practice is informed by interdisciplinary collaborative art based research. Most recently, and in collaboration with transnational historian Dr Maxine Keoghan and the Irish diaspora in Newfoundland, her ongoing research seeks to activate future cultural and economic exchange between these two regions that share strong historical ties and face comparable contemporary challenges, particularly in terms of Island community sustainability in a global economy.

## ***Performance 1 March 2025***

### **Bronagh Lawson**

#### **“Honour the women”**

Bronagh Lawson is the only artist in Northern Ireland that as a member of the Northern Ireland Women’s co-coalition (1996-2006) Stood for election in the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue the in 1996 the N.I.W.C was the only feminist political party in the world at the time. The forum was elected, with five members being elected for each Westminster Parliamentary constituency for Northern Ireland, under the D’Hondt method of party-list proportional representation. There was also a "topup" of two seats for the ten parties polling most votes; The women’s coalition worked out that if they put forward two women in every constituency they were in with a chance of getting some women’s voices into the forum as it was unlikely that any of the main parties would be doing it. All the women who stood contributed to Monica McWilliams and Pearl Sagar getting elected to the forum. The Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue was a body set up in 1996 as part of a process of negotiations that eventually led to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The Women’s Coalition participation in the Peace Process brought about the UN resolution 1325 which states: The resolution acknowledged the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. It calls for the adoption of a gender perspective to consider the special needs of women and girls during conflict, and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction. Northern Ireland’s militarised community’s have many ways in which they honour their dead masked men, flags over coffins, gunned salutes to name a few. Honour the women performance was developed to act as a way of honouring the women of the Women’s co-coalition as we slowly pass on. To be performed at our funeral’s. The textiles covering was made from pieces of the artists mother in laws trousseau, which was discovered on emptying her house as she moves into a care home. The trousseau consisted of embroidered tea towels, napkins, sheets, table cloths and doilies. The ribbons attached use the suffragettes colours of green and purple. The sash is made out of satin ribbon and echo's those of the suffragettes with a wry nod to beauty queen sashes and entrenched gendered perspectives. The appliquéd words are made from scarfs gathered at the Artichoke march in Belfast commemorating 100 years since women got the vote where for the first time women from all parts of the political and none political spectrum marched together. A developmental performance was held as part of PAB Open Performance Art Festival in Bergen 2024.

Bronagh Lawson is a socially and spiritually engaged artist, writer, curator. With a focus on visual art as a key transformational lever in the ongoing shift of our traumatised society. As a member of the Northern Ireland Women’s coalition she was the only artist to stand for election to the Northern Ireland Forum, the body for all-party talks which led to the good Friday agreement. 28 years experience cross border cross community development, 13 years collaboration with Adjunct Professor of Art Therapy Suellen Semekoiski at the School of Art Institute Chicago where together they have

developed a form of contemporary art underpinned with art therapy that acts as a healing mechanism. Writing: weekly art column for the Andersonstown News, Belfast Media Group contributor to Fortnight Magazine and Art UK. In 2020 she published a book *Belfast City of Light* based on her experience of going to every church in Belfast for a service. She set up the Inspire programme for artists with learning difficulties for Arts for all with Ngairé Jackson and Clare Lawson. She has won awards for her work with Art and Dementia with the Ulster Museum, A regional Talk Talk Digital Heroes Award for her development and running voluntarily an online Platform for artists, galleries and audiences in Northern Ireland for 3 years and during her 13 years of working on business/community development within the enterprise sector she won awards for her finance training from the FSA. A gender equality award from European Equal programme and has helped hundreds of people into full or part-time work, education or self employment in her role as a business adviser within the enterprise network on interfaces in Belfast where she set up the Business starts programme for North Belfast. She also helped set up Intercomm's women in enterprise programme which won a National Training award. She has 20+ years of board experience Current Chair of Bbeyond, previous chair of PsSquared focusing on securing paid positions for a voluntary run organisation Belfast Print Workshop with a focus on updating processes and overseeing a financially viable gallery and the Women's Tec consolidating multiple programmes gaining ISO accreditation. Board member of NI Mental Health Arts Festival. Graduate of Winchester School of art with a 1st class degree in textiles and fashion and her Calvin Klien Harvey Nichols Fulbright award took her for four months to Parsons School of Art New York. She did her foundation Art and Design at Bristol Polytechnic. Her exhibition of 140 etchings called *The ebb and flow of East Belfast* was exhibited in the Irish Architectural archive Dublin as part of the Easter Rising commemorations in 2016 with the support of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland and the British Council. Art Collections: including the Office of public works, UTV, South Eastern Health Trust, City East, Irish Architectural Archive, Ulster Museum (jewellery) and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

## ***Performance 2 March 2025***

### **Hollie Miller**

#### **“Defending Mother Earth”**

In my performances, I use costume, movement and sound as a highly visual and immersive way to explore alternative forms of quiet protest (non-verbal, sensory and somatic) as more unusual forms of resistance that have the potential to subtly seep through the cracks in a disarming manner. For the ‘Stitching in Solidarity: Activism in Textile Art Symposium’ I propose to do a prenatal performance in a handmade 3D arpillera style costume that stitches plastic waste bricolage items into fabric turning my pregnant body into a narrative landscape of expressive dioramas. The political messaging within the costume and scenes of social injustice seek to reflect the hallmark of arpilleras focusing on climate and feminism. By sewing small figurines such as toy soldiers, miniature scale scenic supplies, domestic models of women and children and different species of birds into the cloth to create different tableau vivants that turn my body into a fertile landscape to observe how mother earth is fought over, destroyed and pillaged and the politics of birthing bodies as a battleground. This work seeks to build on current PhD research exploring continuums of violence against women through the mythological framework of different species of birds. I am interested in using the ‘perceived naivety’ of the arpilleras (Doolan, 2019, p1) as a playfully beguiling tactic to explore how children’s miniature figurines can be used under the guise of innocence to politically act out and think critically about conflict, coating my body’s sculptural surface in a wearable textile to transform it into a contested living sculpture. Marjorie Agosin argues that arpilleras are anything but ‘an innocent art’ but rather

‘an art denouncing’ through a ‘cloth of resistance’ (Agosin, 2008, p.55). Furthermore, I am drawn in by the domestic aesthetic quality of the arpilleras, the matriarchal lineage of sewing has been passed down in my family as with many other generations of women. The language of cloth, says Karen Nickell, gives us a way to talk about the fabric of society (Nickell, 2015) especially women’s rights. I am keen to create domestic and idyllic rural depictions that on closer inspection, reveal stories of acts of destruction (e.g. burning of homes and land and dispersing people and animals) interwoven with themes of birth to explore new life as hope, renewal and strength. I am interested in the gendered nature and visual representations of largely masculine violence against the backdrop of colourful textiles with a domestic aesthetic maintain appeal. (Bryan-Wilson, 2017, p.165). Through the metaphor of how the tiny but repetitive and persistent act of sewing a thread and playful critical thinking with miniature figures can accumulate into larger macro gestures over a period of time to show determination and endurance. The creation and performance of this activist textile seeks to act as a testimony of dissent that conveys subversive narratives within the space of a formal institution and suits more unusual forms of curating and exhibiting textiles. I imagine performing it on the floor in the middle of the Threads of Empowerment Exhibition at Ulster Museum or laying in the costume in a glass vitrine at Ulster University in the foyer.

Hollie Miller has performed internationally in the UK, Europe, Finland, Switzerland, Japan, Argentina and New York. Her films have been shown in South Korea, Dubai, Afghanistan, Mexico and Colombia. She has been artist in residence at La Ira de Dios (ARG), Serlachius Museum (FIN), Nairs Contemporary Art Centre (SWTZ) and Watermill Centre International Summer Program (NYC). Select performances: V&A Museum, Nottdance Festival, The Place Theatre, Leeds Art Gallery, FOLD, Land Art Biennale Art Safiental and Spiral Tokyo. Select exhibitions: Somerset House, Baltic 39 Gallery, Hastings Contemporary and Golden Thread Gallery. Select screenings: Bury Art Museum, Unit Gallery, Cube Cinema, BS Moving Image Festival Frankfurt and Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Seoul. Miller holds an MA from The Royal College of Art and BPA from The Northern School of Contemporary Dance, she is currently doing a PhD in Fine Art at Ulster University.

## ***Performance 3 March 2025***

### **Marina Iodice**

#### **“Through the fabric. Against it”**

Textiles speak in a language uncoded, threading together histories, silences, and forgotten gestures. What happens when we listen to textiles, not as a material, but as performative bodies? My artistic practice has always been entangled with textiles, materials that weave together the known and unknown. Initially, my work focused on the cutting and stitching of fabric, as practice of creation, of individual action and collective response. Yet, over time, the act of stitching, like the fabric itself, began to unfold into something larger, a language that extends beyond words, beyond the immediate touch. There was a moment during a collaborative project with participants who spoke in different tongues, where I, as an artist-in-residence, facilitated a collective sewing project. It was in this space of shared action, without the need for spoken language, that I discovered the performative power of the textile. The threads in our hands spoke in ways our words could not. The fabrics performed quietly and powerfully, transcending the boundaries that language - both spoken and written - erects between us. It was then that I began to question: What is the language of fabric, and how does it speak back to us, without words? Through this encounter, my focus shifted. I began to look not at textiles as mere materials, but as a tool of linguistic expression, strictly related to the histories of women. At

first, it was a subtle shift, almost unconscious, but soon it became an overt question: what does fabric say when it is not bound by its purpose, by the confines of form and structure? This question initiates deeper reflections on text and textiles - the written and the woven - and their entangled histories. Over time, my focus shifted from textiles as objects to textiles as linguistic instruments, revealing their latent narratives. This shift has been particularly resonant within the feminine sphere, where sewing has historically navigated the line between silence and resistance, offering a subversive language through which women have communicated across centuries. In my most recent works, I utilize the skeletal frame of a stripped sewing machine as a sonic object - a relic reimagined. Amplified and paired with sewing tools and textiles, this object becomes a conduit for soundscapes that explore the slow, silent, and enduring rhythms of resistance embedded in sewing practices. These sounds, amplified and interwoven, reflect the layered temporalities of women's labor - persistent, resonant, and deterritorialized. Here the stitch is no longer just a method of constructing; it is a form of subversion, a quiet rebellion. It speaks not in words, but in the tension between the threads, the tools and the machinery, the way they pull at each other and resist. The stitch becomes a quiet symbol of what is not said, of what remains hidden, of what resists being understood in linear ways. This sound performance is an act of transposition, a translation from a productive act to a subversive statement. The language is slow, deliberate, and repetitive, quiet in its power, but insistent. It is a language that strengthens over time, like the memories of women who have stitched for years, their hands moving with a rhythm that is not only learned but embodied. Over time, the gesture becomes meaningful: the more it is listened to, the more it reveals its trace accumulating intensities revealing an endless play of meanings always shifting, always deferred.

I am an artist from Southern Italy, currently living and working in Belfast. My practice evolves from the dialogue between the isolated individual and the social group. Through themes of language, identity, femininity, innocence, and sin, I explore the ways in which we fragment and repeat ourselves, to meet each other. These ideas manifest as physical sensations, sounds, and gestures. I am particularly interested in what occurs at both inner and outer borders. As a PhD researcher at Ulster University, I examine these boundaries through sound, focusing on how the sonic qualities of a space can reflect and shape our understanding of these limits. Sound, for me, is a way to hear the unspoken and give voice to the in-between moments where meaning is not fixed but constantly shifting. I invite audiences to listen more closely, to the edges of things. I am also the co-founder of the Non Place Collective and a member of the Institutum Pataphisicum Partenopeum.

## ***Performance 4 March 2025***

**selina bonelli**

**“texture and materiality in landscapes of matter”  
(golden thread: know safe place)**

In my performance practise research i expand on the methodologies of wit(h)nessing. Being for and with a landscape that bears witness and takes into account all of the factors that contribute to this. It includes matter, vibrations and our relationship between ourselves, the more than human and the factors beyond our own materiality that carry the affects of what material wit(h)nessing can be. It is at the liminal space between listening at the intersections of personal and collective complicities and more than human relationalities. This aspect of material wit(h)nessing, through the use of performance art, is where the body can act as a trigger to unpack its relationship to our own trauma and that of others. In attempting to feel the silence in these spaces and places, performance art is part of the ‘toolset’ used to re-cover, dys-cover and un-cover the ‘othered’ fragments that are imperceptible

yet sensed. Within this is an invitation to allow the emergence of affective gaps that inhabit the hauntings within our bodies and the land in order to connect current material and environmental conditions to past stories and voices affected by conflict. This performance is a proposal to explore the weighted silence of wit(h)nessing using golden thread. This is a repetitive material in my work associated with seemingly disparate aspects of safety[1], golden ‘couching’ and the historical religious aspect of it. (The golden thread [2] of a high risk building is the information needed to keep people safe in and around it).

[1]<https://buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk/building-safety-regulator-making-buildings-safer/building-safety-regulator-news/understanding-the-golden-thread/>

[2]<https://buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk/building-safety-regulator-making-buildings-safer/building-safety-regulator-news/understanding-the-golden-thread/>

gold thread sticks in nails, taught.

white liquid loops within the indigestion of the trauma-tic,

between the space

of dysbelief

and

response- ability.

selina bonelli is a researcher at Ulster University, Belfast, Northern Ireland. Their thesis is exploring abandoned conflict architecture in the landscape through performance and materials. They are developing a methodology of an affective trail of embodied witnessing of marginalised voices through the borders drawn into the landscape around these structures. A part of that methodology is to explore the spaces outside of language by expanding on a listening through what touch could be to uncover the resonances trapped in ruins, utterances and hauntings.

## Workshops

Presented in sequence of the programme.

### ***Workshop 1 March 2025***

**Louise McGowan**

**“Women Stitching Resistance: Holding, moving, piercing”**

Women’s subversion of the gendered and domesticated connotations of textile-making through craftivism – whether acknowledged as such or not – demonstrates the interplay between embracing and challenging ‘tradition’ that occurs within this genre. The ‘Craftivism Manifesto’ (Callahan

Baumstark et al. 2017) speaks to remembering and respecting those who have crafted for activism before us. As many women try to ‘do craftivism’ presently in a context of ongoing injustice and political repression around the world, it is important that we learn from our foresters, or more aptly, our forere-sisters. This workshop will examine and compare two craft pieces. The first, a Chilean arpillera entitled ‘Cacerolazo / Women banging their pots’ by Felicia made in 1988 from Conflict Textiles, that depicts a group of women in the street in front of homes banging their cooking pots with sticks to denounce the Pinochet regime. The second, an intifada dress from Palestine, maker unknown, (1987-1993) from the Tiraz: Widad Kawar Home for Arab Dress with motifs such as the Palestinian flag (which was banned for public display by the Israeli Knesset at the time) embroidered onto it, rendering the wearer’s body a site of protest. Both pieces connect to more confrontational styles of activism and yet will likely have taken time, patience and sensitivity with cloth and thread to create. Resistance can be approached in the same moment with both anger and tenderness: holding, moving and piercing a soft and malleable thing and altering how it appears. In addition to analysis of the two pieces, this visual paper will engage with photos, posters and murals to unpack representations of women’s resistance and will investigate the notion of interconnectedness within and across struggles with a nod to Dedman’s assertion that resistance “is a process, not an event”. (2024: p.46) The presentation of the paper will include a workshop for attendees to experience the psychosocial power of textile creation in real time. The presentation will take the following format (total time 45mins): Introduction (5mins); Short explanation of activity (small individual tatreez motifs onto Irish linen) (10mins); Presentation of paper attendees can sew at their own leisure throughout (20mins); and Time to continue working on or complete motifs and assist each other: open conversation (10mins).

Louise McGowan is a first-year PhD student at the Belfast School of Art (BSOA) at Ulster University. Her research project examines how ‘craftivism’ by women subverts the restrictive social, political and cultural conditions of societal oppression specifically in relation to Chilean arpilleras made during the Pinochet dictatorship and Palestinian tatreez made during the First Intifada as well as in present times. Louise graduated with a (first class) BA(hons) in Bespoke Tailoring from LCF in 2014 and continued her training as a bespoke tailor at Thom Sweeney, working as a coat-maker for several years before becoming involved in community work and the voluntary sector. Louise completed a masters in Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at QUB in 2019 and has continued to work with a range of organisations focusing on human rights and social justice since then, such as the Red Cross, Refugee Women’s Centre, Extern NI, Anaka Women’s Collective (Participation and the Practice of Rights) and the Quakers EAPPI engaging with women, young people and people facing marginalisation.

## ***Workshops 4 March 2025***

**Lisa Raye Garlock**

### **“Finding Peace through Stitching and Stories”**

Hand stitching requires slowing down, focusing, and being open to its meditative quality. Stitching can calm the autonomic nervous system, and provide much of what Bruce Perry describes in his Neurosequential Model, used when working with trauma survivors. This model requires engaging in activities that are rewarding, relational, repetitive, rhythmic and relevant. Using felt or other soft fabrics is often comforting and some artists who normally paint or use more traditional art materials switch to sewing or quilting when what they need to express requires a deeper, more complex process. Slow stitching is simple and generally easy to learn, though there may be some initial frustration if the stitcher is new to sewing. This workshop will explore slow stitching and how to use it with groups



and/or as a meditative practice. Basic materials will be provided, though participants are welcome to bring their own, as well. Therapeutic rationale: Stitching experiential: process-focused art expression, exploration of materials, observe self (perfectionistic, impatient, frustrated, relaxed, etc.), creative practice, skill building, non-verbal communication, body/mind connection, calming nervous system, meditative, creative, thoughtful/mindful, connection to ancestors, reduces anxiety, can lift mood. Objectives: Participants will design and create a small slow stitch story cloth that embodies a symbolic element of peace, activism, and/or healing. Participants will learn 3 grounding techniques. Approximate Workshop Agenda: 1. Introductions/warm up; 2. Brief overview of workshop; 3. Examples of slow stitch: Materials gathering, Running stitch, Stitching and the breath; 4. Stitching time: Stop and discuss/process; 5. Closing discussion, Q & A

As a US-based Licensed Clinical Professional Art Therapist (LCPAT) and certified, state-approved art therapy supervisor (ATCS), my art therapy work included adults, adolescents, and children in hospitals, schools, community-based organizations, and shelters. For 20 years, I taught art therapy full-time at The George Washington University and continue to teach a class on story cloths and art therapy. Additionally, I created the Storycloth Database, an online resource that highlights collections of story cloths focusing on human rights issues. Currently, I serve as the Education and Art Therapy Director at the international non-profit Common Threads Project, where I co-train therapists in using story cloths, therapeutic art, mind/body awareness, and psychoeducation to support women recovering from the trauma of gender-based violence. Common Threads training has taken me to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ecuador, and various US sites, and I've also facilitated Survivor workshops in Geneva, Switzerland, through the Mukwege Foundation. A lifelong interest in travel and cultural learning has led me to walk the Coast to Coast, Pembrokeshire Coast, and Thames paths in the UK, as well as take students to India for International Social and Cultural Diversity classes. I've taught art therapy in Croatia at the University of Osijek. As an artist, I work across various media, including textiles, jewelry, painting, and mixed media. Three of my arpilleras are part of the Conflict Textile collection.

## **Andrea Dickson**

### **“Threads that weave use together”**

I would like to run a weaving workshop with the theme of recovery from conflict. The workshop plan would use left over yarns of various types to give selection of choice but also to subtly show worth and value even when all that might be seen is leftover scraps and show that these are still beautiful and useful. Participants will be asked to choose threads that communicate their experiences of both conflict and recovery, and which calls to them. Beads and objects of meaning can be included in the weaving. The workshop will explore the use of colour and texture as a means of communication. The idea of weaving being connected to life and stories is repeated in many mythologies and I feel it is perfect to be used to communicate subtly the effects of conflict on individuals. Each piece will be woven using a basic weaving techniques to simplify the weave process, aid in finding joy working with the thread and help focus on communicating the meaning of the individual weaving. Participants will be asked to try and be mindful during weaving of the individual stitches' meaning and asked to think of personal positives and affirmations to aid recovery and confidence building. Whilst weaving does require time this workshop can be done on various types of looms and sizes to accommodate various lengths of time based on the need and availability. To aid the workshop all looms will be prepared ready for use beforehand.

I passionately believe that art not only has a therapeutic effect (Catharsis) but transcends age, race, gender, ability and should be enjoyed. My art and weave process takes inspiration from Saori

weaving practices and its connection to Japanese Zen seeking to be mindful and find joy in each individual process of creation and weaving. I find inspiration in history, mythology, heritage art crafts, the human psyche and interconnection. I seek insight into the practices, beliefs, and lives of those that have come before as my answer to consumer fast fashion by looking at a modern take on the heritage and handcraft art skills of the past. My love of the environment and preservation of heritage art crafts leads to a preference for natural art mediums from protein and cellulose fibres to natural pigments, oxides, inks, chalks, and dyes. I work best organically in a tactile driven, hand on way that values trial, error, and practical testing as important aspects of my design and making process. Frequently, this process starts with hand processing and preparing my own raw fibres and in future I would like to be able to grow my own fibres, pigments, and dyes. As a disabled artist I use my art as a coping mechanism and means of exploring the world around me, my own internal headspace and to visually express and communicate these concepts.

## **Gemma McKenzie**

### **“Threads of Protest: Human Rights in Childbirth”**

This is a short workshop outlining my Threads of Protest project. The project centres on my research on human rights in childbirth/obstetric violence and a public engagement crochet and knitting exhibition. In short, members of the public have donated small crochet/granny squares to the project. Based on the idea of yarnbombing, these will be sewn together and displayed in 2 gallery spaces over a 6-month period. In addition, professional artists and experts/activists have collaborated on individual pieces that will also be displayed. This has followed a number of workshops in which members of the public learn to crochet and donate a square to the project. The idea is to raise awareness of human rights in childbirth. I think I will need around 15 minutes to present the the project and 10 minutes for questions.

I am an ESRC post-doctoral fellow at King's College London working at the Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Palliative Care. My background is in law, human rights, public health and bioethics.

## **Pamela Whitaker**

### **“A Badge of Honour”**

This is an open studio to create a stitched badge of honour to be worn as a testimony to resilience and fortitude. The badge will represent each person's story of persistence, a stitched emblem for overcoming adversity and the living out of purposeful convictions. This sewing circle will highlight passages from the article Textile Pedagogies: Stitching as Reflective Practice written by Pamela Whitaker, Lorna Dillon and Érika Silva earlier this year which advocates on behalf of textile activism and women's sewing circles.

Pamela Whitaker is a lecturer in art psychotherapy at the Belfast School of Art. She has a public practice with a focus on festivals, the art of gardening, the walking studio and health promotion in everyday places. She also considers the home studio to be a place where people can be makers with the materials of their lives.

## **Jasmina Ferček**

### **“The Activist in Me”**

The activist in me"" offers an opportunity to explore areas in personal life and society that matter to us. These could include environmental issues, wars, children's rights, or acts of injustice. Often, when confronted with harsh, unjust, or distressing events in our surroundings, country, or globally, we feel helpless because we don't know how we can contribute to improvement or change. We struggle to find the right way to express our disagreement and might end up feeling powerless. This workshop provides an opportunity to explore our activist needs and depict the part of ourselves that resonates with activism, desiring to express itself socially and politically and contribute to changes in the community, society, or the world. To this end, we will create a textile doll that represents the image of our inner activist. The dolls will be made in a quiet, mindful creative process. Making the doll happens spontaneously, in dialogue with our inner voice. As soon as the doll begins to take shape, it will also start to ""speak"" to its maker, suggesting what it needs. Due to its human-like form, the activity supports self-understanding, fostering a compassionate dialogue with oneself and developing other self-nurturing habits. Through making the doll, we will give voice to a neglected part of ourselves that wants to express itself actively and contribute to change. Dolls and figurines have existed for millennia, as people have always been fascinated by their unique appearance and form. In the past, human figurines were made to document, symbolically express, educate, and serve religious rituals, interpersonal communication, and cultural preservation. Many cultures are familiar with the healing practice of doll-making—for spiritual support, healing, wish fulfillment, and releasing worries: healing spirit dolls, wish dolls, and worry dolls. In the field of mental well-being and health, doll-making is recognized as an important therapeutic intervention. The doll becomes a transitional object, carrying special meaning for its maker and representing “something more” beyond what it physically is. It brings an aspect of the creator's self from the unconscious to the surface, acting as a bridge between their inner and outer world.

Jasmina Ferček is a textile designer/artist and art therapist living and working in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She studied Arts Therapy at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and earned her Master of Science in Arts Therapy (2021). Prior to that, she studied Textile and Fashion Design at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, University of Ljubljana, where she obtained her Master of Science (MSc) degree (2007). She is currently a doctoral student at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design at University of Ljubljana. She has been self-employed in the arts under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia since 1999. For 20 years, she has been a member of the Oloop collective and a co-founder of the Institute for Contemporary Textile Art and Design, Oloop Ljubljana.

She is full member of the Slovenian Association of Arts Therapists (SZUT), the Croatian Art Therapy Association (HART), and the European Federation of Art Therapy (EFAT). She is the secretary of the Slovenian Association of Arts Therapists (SZUT). The work in the Oloop collective initially focused primarily on product design and textile art installations. Over time, it became increasingly socially engaged and participatory. The projects from the last 10 years fall within a field of arts in health that is garnering growing interest both domestically and internationally. Jasmina researches the impact of textile arts and crafts on women's well-being. In her participatory and socially engaged artistic practice as part of the Oloop collective, she utilizes textiles as a medium for promoting well-being and health. Through projects, exhibitions, and writing, she raises awareness of the importance of creating with textiles and its impact on individuals, communities, and society. Since 2012, she has primarily worked with migrant women. Since 2022, she has occasionally lectured on the use of textiles and other art media for therapeutic and counseling purposes to students at the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Social Work at University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. In the Oloop Design collective, she collaborates with two other textile artists/designers – Tjaša Bavcon and Katja Burger Kovič. Together, they have received numerous prestigious awards for the collective's work, including the Alpine Pluralism Award, Red Dot Concept Award, several awards from the Designers Society of Slovenia (DOS), and an award at Zagreb Design Week, among others.

## **Aidan O'Neill**

### **“Collaborative Storytelling and Testimony Through Textile and Image: A Workshop on Narratives of the Yezidi Genocide”**

The 2014 Yezidi genocide, perpetrated by ISIS, led to the mass killing, abduction, and enslavement of thousands of Yezidis in northern Iraq. This atrocity has left deep scars on the community, many of whom remain displaced nearly a decade later, residing in camps and facing ongoing challenges of survival and justice. Despite the passage of time, their stories remain urgent, requiring continuous engagement and amplification to confront the enduring injustices they face. The proposed workshop builds on a long-term project and, in particular, a two-week collaborative engagement with survivors of the genocide facilitated by the Free Yezidi Foundation. During this time, I commissioned a textile piece crafted by Yezidi women, its length symbolising the duration of my stay in Iraq. The textile, imbued with the experiences and labour of the community, serves as a material testimony to the shared moments and stories I encountered. In many ways, serving as a closer representation of my time there than any image could capture. Beyond this initial engagement, our connection continues through a shared WhatsApp group, a space for exchanging photos and maintaining dialogue, reflecting the evolving nature of our collaboration. The workshop invites participants to engage with this narrative-making process by actively constructing their own stories using a curated collection of images from mine and the community's work. Participants will explore the role of viewer in shaping and communicating narratives, emphasising the responsibility and power inherent in storytelling. Working around/on top of the textile piece created by the Yezidi women, participants will select, edit, and interpret images to create new narratives. These stories may take the form of stitched photo collages or small, hand-bound books, using textiles and thread to symbolise connection and continuity.

The workshop begins with a 15-minute introduction to the Yezidi genocide and its aftermath, my position as a PhD researcher engaging with the community, and an outline of the workshop process. The remaining time (approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes) will be devoted to hands-on creative work, fostering reflection on how narratives are shaped, received, and communicated. The tactile process of stitching directly onto photographs or literally and metaphorically stitching narratives in book form reinforces the theme of collaborative responsibility. It opens a space for discussion around current practices and alternative approaches. At the workshop's conclusion, participants will have the opportunity to share their completed pieces. I propose returning these works to the Yezidi women in Iraq on my next visit. This gesture underscores the workshop's intention to keep the global conversation alive about the atrocities and injustices faced by the Yezidi people, symbolising solidarity and acknowledgement. This workshop is designed for flexible participation and can accommodate varying numbers of attendees. Combining education, artistic engagement, and cross-cultural dialogue provides a platform to examine how narratives are constructed and how creative practices can foster empathy, understanding, and a sense of shared responsibility.

Aidan is a Dublin-born photographer/filmmaker. In recent years, he has worked predominantly on documentary projects and for international NGOs. Recent work has seen him cover the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, trade partnerships between the UK and the "global south", the situation facing female survivors of war and genocide in Rwanda and Iraq, life within Kibera (Africa's Largest "slum") and several animal welfare projects. He works with The United Nations and a wide-ranging selection of NGOs, including Mothers 2 Mothers, Wild at Heart Foundation, Women for Women International, Trócaire & The Free Yezidi Foundation, among many more. Aidan is working towards a PhD focusing on engagement between genocide survivors and the people who document their stories. Aidan passionately documents and advocates for social justice and

equality for all through his work. Education: Current PhD researcher at Ulster University. 2020/21 MFA in Photography, Ulster University. 2000/03 BA in Photography, Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art & Design. Selected Exhibitions: 2024 Curating Activism, Frederick Douglas Festival, Belfast, Ireland. Curated by Dr. Clare Gallagher. (Group Show). 2023 Re-imagining a Line, Architecture at the Edge Festival, Galway, Ireland (Collaboration with Ruby Wallis and Joe Lavery). 2023 When The Gusts Came Around, Bloomsday Film Festival, Dublin, Ireland. 2022 A Trace of Ownership, BX Gallery, Belfast, Ireland (Group Show). 2018 The Kingdom, Bermondsy Project Space, London, UK. 2018 Huruma, A&A Gallery, Margate, UK. 2015 Portrait of The Kingdom, Yebo Arts Centre, Eswatini. 2012 The World in London, The Photographers Gallery, London, UK (Group Show). 2009 DIY London Seen, Covent Garden, London, UK (Group Show). 2004 The Wrong Time, Civic Theatre Tallaght, Ireland. 2003 Epoch, Stella Cinema, Dublin, Ireland (Group Show). 2003 Square Vision, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (Group Show).

## **Tracy Tsang**

### **“End violence against women banner making workshop”**

As part of the United Nations 16 days of activism to end violence against women campaign (25 November to 10 December), I organised workshops in public spaces and community centres, women's centres (from April to September 2024) to hand stitch messages of support for women experiencing abuse and violence. I partnered with Women's Aid Belfast and Lisburn and White Ribbon NI to raise awareness about ending male violence against women. Over 630 mini banner messages were created with messages like 'we believe you'; 'you are not alone'; 'it's not your fault'. The banners were made from recycled materials e.g. shirt fabric, curtains, table cloths, etc. The banners were sewn up into banner strings, so in total there were 50 banners, displayed in 36 locations across Belfast (including libraries, community centres, Linen Hall, Cityside Retail Park, etc). The banners were translated from English into 8 languages. By using craftivism (craft and activism), it was a gentle protest using textiles to protest against an important issue - violence against women. Since the exhibition displays finished, we've been invited to display the banners outside of Belfast. I'll look into the possibility of touring with the banners next year. Students from Queen's and Ulster have asked if they can get involved in a banner making workshop. I would like to apply to run the craftivism workshop in the art symposium for attendees. The workshop will take 1.5 hours. I will provide all the supplies, there is no cost for the materials.

My name is Tracy Tsang, and I'm based in Belfast. I've worked in Marketing and Communications for 25 years. I started a full time PhD in Ulster University Business School (York Street) in September 2024. My research is on Creative Arts, climate action and sustainability. During Covid, I joined a few online Craftivist groups e.g. I made origami hearts with messages in them for G7 Summit. In my spare time, I teach sustainable craft workshops in the community e.g. making beeswax wraps, Sashiko Japanese mending; wildflower seed bomb making; jewellery repair workshop, etc. I have won funding from the Belfast City Council and Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful to run these workshops for free in the community.

## **Exhibition Visits**

**2 March 2025**

**Roberta Bacic**

## “Tour of Threads of Empowerment”

Roberta Bacic is a Chilean Human Rights advocate and researcher living in Northern Ireland. She is the collector and curator of Conflict Textiles. Her work is available at the CAIN Archive, Ulster University, which holds and documents the collection. The material collection currently comprises 432 documented textiles, and the archive also keeps the record of 313 exhibitions and events.

### Participant Biographies

Biographies of participants attending events. It was optional to provide bios so not all attendees are listed.

#### **Bavatharani Anantharaj**

Bavatharani Anantharaja is a Master's student in Film and Television Production at Ulster University, Belfast. With a strong passion for visual storytelling, she is particularly interested in documentary filmmaking and exploring narratives that highlight social and cultural issues. Originally from India, she brings a diverse perspective to her work, drawing from her personal experiences and academic background to craft compelling visual narratives. Currently, Bavatharani is working on a social documentary focusing on Conflict Textiles, an international collection of textiles that document conflict and human rights abuses. This project is part of her coursework, where she aims to examine the power of textile art as a medium for storytelling, memory preservation, and activism. She is keen on understanding how these handcrafted pieces serve as testimonies to historical and contemporary struggles, particularly in the context of post-conflict societies. Beyond this project, her interests lie in immersive storytelling, Meta modernism in media, and the intersection of art and activism in film. Through her participation in this symposium, Bavatharani hopes to engage with scholars, artists, and curators to gain deeper insights into the role of textiles in visual storytelling. She is eager to explore how film and documentary can complement textile narratives, creating a bridge between traditional and digital storytelling mediums.

#### **Caitlin Hinshelwood**

Caitlin Hinshelwood is a London based artist and educator who produces distinctive collections of illustrative, hand-worked textiles. Research interests lie in the narrative possibilities of textiles: how textiles can be used to communicate, how they can act as repositories of personal or social history and how they function as acts of resistance or protest. Large-scale works use motifs and symbols to suggest narratives or tell untold histories. Caitlin is currently Joint Course Leader on BA Textile Design at Central Saint Martins (UAL).

#### **Daniela Pizarro Torres**

Daniela Pizarro Torres (Dani Negri) Artist/Textile Artisan. Researcher of community practices. Contact: [negridellabici@gmail.com](mailto:negridellabici@gmail.com) Instagram: [@\\_dani\\_negri\\_](https://www.instagram.com/_dani_negri_) [@\\_archivoemotivo](https://www.instagram.com/_archivoemotivo).

#### **Cherie Driver**

Dr Cherie Driver is the Associate Head of the Belfast School of Art.

## **Carmel Ennis**

Gardener. Eco Artist. Performer. Textile Grower.

## **Margaret Moore**

Margaret Woods Moore is a multidisciplinary artist living in Belfast. After a long career as an Art teacher she now works as full time artist based in Vault Artists Studios, Belfast. Her work process generally begins with observational drawings which she develops into prints and paintings or reworks into finely detailed finished drawings. Margaret explores the themes of vulnerability, misconception and misunderstanding. She is inspired by the natural world and people, especially children in everyday situations and often references elements of well known myths and stories within her images. She has recently produced a series of works on crows and the corvid family, as well as some small garden birds and seabirds and a series of pastel drawings of children at play. Margaret also does illustrations which have been included in various publications. Margaret loves to explore new materials and will often incorporate these within her drawings and prints to produce multimedia pieces. She particularly loves intaglio based printmaking methods which she uses as an extension of her drawing based practice. Etching and drypoint are her preferred processes. Margaret's work has been exhibited at home and abroad including Japan and America and has been purchased for private and public collections.

## **Meadhbh McIlgorm**

Meadhbh McIlgorm is an Irish artist and creative producer. Freelance programmer for Linen Biennale NI, a project led by R-Space Gallery Lisburn.

## **Brandon Hamber**

Professor Brandon Hamber is John Hume & Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace based at the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) at Ulster University. He is also a member of the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University. He was born in South Africa and currently lives in Belfast. In South Africa he trained as a Clinical Psychologist at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and holds a Ph.D. from the Ulster University. Prior to moving to Northern Ireland, he co-ordinated the Transition and Reconciliation Unit at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg. He co-ordinated the Centre's work focusing on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He was a visiting Tip O'Neill Fellow in Peace Studies at INCORE in 1997/1998. He was also the recipient of the Rockefeller Resident Fellowship (1996) and was a visiting fellow at the Centre for the Study of Violence in Sao Paulo, Brazil. In 2010-2013 he was a Mellon Distinguished Visiting Scholar at University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He was also a Visiting Professor at the African Center for Migration and Society at Wits. He has been awarded The Paul Harris medal for contributions to peace by Rotary and was listed as one of the Top 100: The most influential people in armed violence reduction by the Action on Armed Violence Network. He has consulted to a range of community groups, policy initiatives and government bodies in Northern Ireland and South Africa. He has undertaken consulting and research work, and participated in various peace and reconciliation initiatives in Liberia, Mozambique, Bosnia, the Basque Country and Sierra Leone, among others. He has lectured and taught widely, including at the Geneva Academy (Switzerland), The International Trauma Studies Programme at Columbia University (New York) and the Post-War and Reconstruction Unit, University of York among many others. Professor Hamber is the Course Director of the MSc Peace and Conflict Studies programme at Ulster University. He has written extensively on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the psychological implications of political violence, masculinities in transition and the process of transition and reconciliation in South Africa, Northern Ireland and abroad. He has published some 30

book chapters and 40 scientific journal articles, and 7 books. His book “Transforming Societies after Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation, and Mental Health” was published by Springer in 2009, and published in 2011 in Spanish by Ediciones Bellaterra and entitled Transformar las sociedades después de la violencia política. Verdad, reconciliación y salud mental. Most recently, “Masculinities and Queer Perspectives in Transitional Justice” with co-editors Philipp Schulz and Heleen Touquet published by Routledge in 2024. He also enjoys writing poetry and short stories. His creative work has been published in New Contrast, Context and Botsotso and one of his short stories was selected for the WriteAgain online workshop sponsored by Penguin Books.

## **Siobhán Bereen**

Siobhán Bereen is a Lecturer, Practising Art Psychotherapist, Cross Professional Supervisor and Course Director of the MSc Art Psychotherapy Programme in Ulster University, Belfast. Siobhán trained in Goldsmiths College, University of London, and has worked in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Middle East where she was part of a multi-disciplinary international team designing and delivering a health centre for the treatment of substance misuse and persistent pain. Siobhán has worked with individuals and in group sessions with children, families, adolescents and adults. Co production, group process, diversity and inclusion are central to Siobhán’s practice. Siobhán has an advanced diploma in applied group analysis and has presented at conference nationally and internationally. She is a member of the Irish Association of Creative Arts Therapists, The British Association of Art Therapists and is registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.