

“Research and In-Depth Study Laboratory of the Conflict Textiles Collection”

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Summary of the Proposal

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The project “*Research and In-Depth Study Laboratory on the **Conflict Textiles Collection***” aims at strengthening and expand community-based work related to textile art exhibitions on human rights and social justice. It seeks to do so via a visit to part of the Conflict Textiles collection exhibited in the libraries of Ulster University (Belfast Campus and Derry–Londonderry Campus) and Queen’s University Belfast.

Summary of specific objectives:

- Connect textile research of Verónica Sánchez and Daniela Pizarro with the territorial work of *Conflict Textiles* through meetings with its curator, Roberta Bacic.
- Share this research with communities linked to the collection.
- Consolidate the professional collaboration between the researchers and practitioners.
- Strengthen curatorial skills related to textile pieces displayed in non-traditional territorial contexts.
- Raise awareness among new audiences and generate new narratives about the relationship between textile artworks and the communities that engage with them.

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The team, composed of Verónica Sánchez and Daniela Pizarro, has developed collaborations related to the curatorship of previous exhibitions *Bordando, mujeres creando historias* at the XXI Festival de Artesanías de América in Cuenca, Ecuador (2023), and *Bordando, mujeres creando historias* at the LUM in Lima, Peru (2024). They have also maintained an ongoing research relationship focused on the role of historical arpilleras and contemporary community textile practice, highlighting the material significance of the development and persistence of arpilleras within the local artistic field.

The project aligns with the objectives of the call by focusing on the international circulation of content produced within the visual arts. This will be achieved through a residency at Conflict Textiles in Belfast & North West of Northern Ireland, where textile artworks, methodologies, and artistic research previously developed by the team would aim to be exhibited and shared.

Conflict Textiles, which is hosting this residency, was founded in 2008. It conceives textiles as powerful vehicles that capture the complex narratives of human resilience in times of conflict. Committed to preserving these tangible testimonies, Conflict Textiles seeks to create and maintain a comprehensive, globally accessible digital archive. It goes beyond preservation, aiming to cultivate a platform that fosters dialogue, and understanding. It builds networks of solidarity at a global scale.

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Conflict Textiles strives to be a unifying force, engaging with diverse narratives of political conflict, art, and social justice. Grounded in collaboration and dedicated to amplifying marginalized voices, Conflict Textiles' philosophy canters on empathy and a strong commitment to sharing the power of textiles as a means of expression. Through this work, Conflict Textiles aims at deepening understanding of the complexities surrounding conflict, nurturing empathy and solidarity. The organization's identity is rooted in its dedication to highlighting human experience, promoting healing, and inspiring positive change through the profound threads of creativity and storytelling.

Arpilleristas are recognized as key figures who, through stitching and embroidery express pain, resistance, and resilience in a context of political violence. The study highlights their cultural, political, and artistic value, showing how their works bore witness at their time and helped building a collective narrative that challenged the silence imposed by the Chilean dictatorship. The arpillera thus becomes a medium for conveying both individual experiences and shared memories and hopes.

The arpilleristas appears as emblematic figures who not only worked with threads and fabrics, but also wove together stories of pain, resistance, and resilience during a period marked by violence and repression. This research examines the heritage values of the historical arpilleristas, recognizing their relevance from both political and textile perspectives. It also explores how these women, through their art, were able to express their struggles and bear witness to in the present. The arpilleristas were not only creators of art but also protagonists in a collective narrative that challenged the silence imposed by the dictatorship and affirmed their memories.

The arpillera, as an artistic medium, becomes a vehicle for expressing not only individual experiences of suffering, but also a collective sentiment that embraces the pains and hopes of a society striving to make their memories visible.

The activation of memory through arpilleras is an essential tool for historical memory, as every element of the textiles conveys stories that demand acknowledgment. The team seeks to reclaim the artistic status of arpilleras—across patrimonial, aesthetic, and political dimensions—and to deepen their understanding of how Conflict Textiles engages with the university setting in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry. A key aim / goal is adapting /adopting this model of collaboration in Chile. They also consider it fundamental that textile works be public and accessible to diverse communities, emphasizing the contexts in which they were created and shared.

As a form of reciprocity in Chile, activities open to the community will be carried out: one in the Coquimbo region for a general audience, and another for specific audiences associated with DUOC UC library (Universidad Católica de Chile <https://bibliotecas.duoc.cl/inicio>).