

Cinco sitios de desaparición colectiva / Five sites of collective disappearance

Chilean arpillera, Irma Müller, Workshop Relatives of the Disappeared, 1988
Conflict Textiles collection

In this arpillera we are confronted with five black, hooded figures representing five areas in Chile from North to South, synonymous with enforced disappearances, detention, execution and torture during the Pinochet era: Calama, Pisagua, Tocopilla, Colina and Chihuío. Gazing outward at us are four resolute women. They symbolise all the Chilean women who persisted – at great risk to themselves – in going to the many detention centres seeking news of their disappeared loved ones and demanding truth and justice.



Cadê Heleny? / Searching Heleny

Brazilian arpillera, Estela Carvalho, 2021

Conflict Textiles collection

This arpillera was designed and curated by Esther Vital as the poster for her film “Searching Heleny / Cadê Heleny? (2022)”. The stop-motion animated documentary follows Heleny Guariba, who was arrested and disappeared in 1971 in an extermination centre in Brazil. In the film, the language of arpilleras acts as an aesthetic, conceptual and political framework, representing the point of view of the arpilleristas and their crafting of memory.



Desde la ventana / From the Window

Chilean arpillera, Anonymous, Association of Detained and Disappeared (AFDD), 1990

Oshima Hakko Museum collection, Japan

This arpillera was made in a workshop run by the Chilean Association of Detained and Disappeared (AFDD), seventeen years into the Pinochet dictatorship era (1973 - 1990). The anonymous arpillerista refuses to hide behind her yellow curtains, instead she pulls them back while wearing an image of her disappeared loved one over her heart, unveiling and denouncing the detentions, disappearances, torture and human rights abuses.



For Paul, Disappeared 8 February 2012

Zimbabwean arpillera, Shari Eppel, 2018

Conflict Textiles collection

During the Mugabe era, Zimbabwe experienced decades of human rights violations including mass killings, forced disappearances and brutal suppression. Paul Chizuzu, a human rights defender for over three decades, was disappeared on 8th February 2012. His colleague, Shari Eppel reconnected with him through creating this textile, which imagines his resting place: "I think of him so often, he was a dear friend."



La cueca sola / Dancing cueca alone

Chilean arpillera, Gala Torres, 1989

Oshima Hakko Museum collection, Japan

This arpillera shows women dancing the traditional Cueca, Chile's national dance which represents the different emotions and stages of romance. It is meant to be danced in pairs wearing colourful clothing. Here the women dance alone in black and white, wearing the image of their "disappeared" loved one over their heart. Performing the national dance in this manner was their way of publicly denouncing the government's actions.



Homenaje a los caídos / Homage to the fallen ones

Chilean arpillera, Anonymous, 1976c

Conflict Textiles collection

This arpillera presents a multitude of sombre reminders of the far-reaching consequences of the Pinochet dictatorship: villagers, unable to pay for electricity, tap into the main power supply, the road is lined with candles in remembrance of the disappeared, one person carries leaflets protesting against torture, and several women lie on the road protesting the torture and disappearances, and demanding truth.



Panfleteando en el 1979 en Santiago / Leafleting in Santiago in 1979

Chilean arpillera, Anonymous, 1979

Conflict Textiles collection

This colourful and somewhat childlike arpillera depicts a scene where campaigners are distributing pamphlets to pedestrians and drivers to raise awareness about the “Disappeared.” It illustrates the relentless attempts made to reveal the unsavoury hidden truths which plagued certain groups within society during the Pinochet era, truths which others often chose to ignore.



Nos hacen falta / We miss them

Mexican arpillera, Rosa Borrás, 2017

Conflict Textiles collection

43 students from the Ayotzinapa teacher training college in Guerrero, Mexico, were abducted by municipal police, in the rural town of Iguala, while en route to a protest in September 2014. This textile is a response by artist, Rosa Borrás: “I can’t stop thinking ...about the young students and their parents, the pain they feel...the lack of justice, the lies that the government has told. They are still missing, but we will not forget them”.



Presencia de Edime Peirano / Edime Peirano's Presence

Argentinean arpillera, Ana Zlatkes, 2018

Conflict Textiles collection

Edime Peirano, a 25 year old lawyer, was disappeared by the Argentinean military junta on the 15th April 1977. She was taken to ESMA (The School of Mechanics of the Navy), a torture centre in Buenos Aires, sedated, bundled into a plane which flew southwards, and thrown out alive over the Rio de la Plata. Textile artist Ana Zlatkes reconnects us with Edime through embroidering a forest onto this sweater, which Edime hand-knitted herself.

