

CONFLICT TEXTILES

Conflict Textiles Trust

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland No NIC 109368

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to March 31st 2024

621 Seacoast Road, Benone, Limavady, BT49 0LH



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INTRODUCTION

This the first year that Conflict Textiles Trust has been in existence. It origins go back to 2008 when Roberta Bacic began to curate exhibitions of *arpilleras* (appliqué textiles originating in Chile as resistance to the Pinochet Dictatorship) and other textiles from her own collection and those of friends and colleagues, in order to raise awareness of these textiles as an art form and the messages that they contained about the harmful effects of violence, oppression and conflict. The primary focus is on violations of human rights and their consequences for those caught up in violent conflict: specifically displacement, torture, and disappearances. Since then over 300 exhibitions and events have been organised and she collected a loyal group of supporters in Northern Ireland and across the world. Conflict Textiles became an entity with a registered name and a registered logo. On 11th October 2022 it was established as a trust and on 22nd February 2023 it became a registered charity. It was able to open a bank account in April 2023 and this report therefore covers the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The highlights of the year included the launch of the book *Arpilleras Poéticas* and the associated major exhibition at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Chile; the handover of five textiles to Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid to begin their collection; and a workshop with a visiting Colombian delegation from the Mampuján Women Weavers of Dreams and Flavours of Peace, accompanied by the Ambassador of Colombia to the United Kingdom. The delegation took back 2 pieces, originally from Colombia for the Museo de Arte y Memoria de Mampuján. Also noteworthy was the donation to Conflict Textiles of 16 arpilleras from the mid-1970s which had been collected as part of the solidarity between people in Germany and the opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Considerable effort was also devoted during this year towards the preparation for a major exhibition at the Ulster Museum in Northern Ireland, *Threads of Empowerment: Conflict Textiles' International Journey* starting in June 2024, and a number of other events and exhibitions as satellites of the Ulster Museum exhibition.

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In total, during the year, the Trust organised 12 exhibitions and 11 other events as follows:

Exhibitions:

1. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile: *Arpilleras Poéticas*
2. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile: *Archivos Textiles: memorias que persisten*
3. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile: *Diásporas textiles: Diálogos con la Colección*
4. McClay Library, QUB: *Story Threads: Creative Readings* Dr Fiona Clark, Schools of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast
5. Grossmann Gallery, Healey Library, University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA: *Connecting Ties: A Transatlantic Friendship and the Northern Ireland Peace Process*
6. Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc, Badalona, Catalonia: *Rincón de la Arpillera Embajadora*
7. Library, Derry-Londonderry campus, Ulster University: *Nicitu, LRA base, South Sudan, 1996 – 2001*
8. Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre: *Threads and Stitches of our Changing Landscape*
9. Void Gallery, Derry-Londonderry: *Mujeres Disruptivas / Disruptive women unveiling*
10. McClay Library, Queen's University Belfast: *ARK / Conflict Textiles*
11. Oshima Hakko Museum, Japan: *Never Forget September 11, 1973*
12. Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre: *The Good Friday Agreement: Work in Progress*

Pieces from the Collection are also included in the Ulster Museum exhibitions, *Troubles and Beyond* and *Inclusive Global Histories*, and were included in the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Museum Services exhibition in Coleraine Town Hall, *A World of Stories*, and the Environmental Peacebuilding Association (EnPAx) and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform-led Community of

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Practice on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace (ECCP) exhibition and online “story book” *Nature Footprints: Community Stories of Climate, Conflict, and Peace* launched at COP 28 in Dubai.

Other events:

- i. Book Launch: *Arpilleras Poéticas* Huenún, J. and Bacic, R. (eds) Chile: Pehuén Editores at Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Chile
- ii. Conference (Hybrid): *Mapping Memory: History, Texts and Cultures* Departments of English and History, Loreto College, Kolkata
- iii. Seminar: *Pensar el negacionismo y los crímenes de odio desde la perspectiva de la memoria y el patrimonio cultural* Biblioteca Nacional de Chile/Unidad Sitios de Memoria del Servicio Nacional del Patrimonio Cultural
- iv. Workshop: *Stitching our Stories: Displacement, Healing, New Possibilities*, Ulster University, Belfast Campus with Centre for Democracy and Peace Building (CDPB), Belfast
- v. Workshop: Level 2 Spanish students, Schools of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast
- vi. Seminar: *Responding to Disappearance in Chile, Northern Ireland and Turkey*, Belfast Campus, Ulster University
- vii. Private and Public Events to mark the Acquisition of 5 *Arpilleras* by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
- viii. Workshop: *Waking the Land*, ^ artist collective, Manorhamilton Co. Leitrim
- ix. Workshop: *Afghani War Rugs Reimagined*, Yorkton Workshop, London,/Ghafar Tajmohammad
- x. Participatory Textile Installation: *Woven Hug (Abrazo Entramado)* Flowerfield Arts Centre Tere Chad & Cordelia Rizzo
- xi. Book chapter: Hamber, B., & Bacic, R. (2023). Textile Language for Difficult Conversations: Reflecting on the Conflict Textiles Collection. British Council.

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More information on all the exhibition and events are available on the Trusts website: www.conflicttextiles.com.

In addition to curating and organising and co-organising activities, Conflict Textiles also attended other events and activities, and supported an international network of *arpilleristas* (makers of *arpilleras*), artists, academics, activists, film makers, musicians, museums and art galleries, poets and policy makers, all committed to creating and raising awareness of the textiles and the messages they convey. We also respond to requests for consultancy and advice by those studying the *arpillera* movement at post-graduate and post- doctoral level; researchers, owners, collectors and museums seeking information on the provenance and valuation of textiles; publishers seeking permission to use images: and mentoring makers in their creative processes.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

The income for the year was £26,129.04, and expenditure was £23,528.71, as follows:

Month	Expenditure	Income
Apr-23		
May-23	£2,637.98	£11,340.00
Jun-23	£1,839.83	£1,700.00
Jul-23	£1,963.30	£6,210.00
Aug-23	£3,576.45	
Sep-23	£1,686.46	
Oct-23	£2,173.32	
Nov-23	£4,158.68	£2,135.04
Dec-23	£889.72	£950.00
Jan-23	£1,483.81	£2,824.00
Feb-23	£1,433.10	£850.00
Mar-23	1686.06	120
TOTAL	£23,528.71	£26,129.04
		-
		£23,528.71
	Balance	£2,600.33
	31.3.2024	

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The biggest item of expenditure was payments for services rendered: £10959.13. From its early years, a colleague, Breege Doherty assisted with administration and curatorial activities, and was paid an honorarium of €1000 per month. On the establishment of the Trust this was formalised by an agreement for provision of services. In early 2024 she obtained full time employment elsewhere. Conflict Textiles was grateful for her contribution to the transition from a small personal project to a registered charitable Trust, and wish her well in her new career. The Trust now had to find some alternative arrangement to allow the activities and services to continue. Conflict Textiles has always engaged people with relevant expertise and skills in needlework, workshop facilitation, etc., on an *ad hoc* basis, and it was decided, at least in the short term, to engage a number of people to provide curatorial, archival and IT services as and when required. Agreements for the provision of curatorial support and IT support were made with suitable individuals. One is a connected person, being the granddaughter of a trustee and therefore in accordance with clause 7.3 of the Trust Deed, at the Trust Meeting on 11 April 2024 these arrangements were considered and it was decided to continue this practice as the most efficient and cost effective way to obtain IT support (the related trustees having absented themselves for the discussion). These contracts has reduced the overall cost of services and provided a high level of support.

The other main item of expenditure was travel and accommodation (£7,468.50), both for representatives of the trust visiting other locations and for partners coming to participate in activities in Northern Ireland. This is a variable commitment, and in some cases, travel is financed directly, so this may not be typical for future years.

In terms of income, an anonymous donation of £11,000 established the trust and a similar amount came from payments for commissions. Apart from the initial donation it has not been possible to identify a source of funding that would make the Trust sustainable, and the Trustees are exploring the possibility of a larger organisation taking over the work of the Trust. These explorations have continued into 2024/2025.

ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

It may be noticed that the expenditure of the Trust (£23,528.71) is risible when viewed in the light of all the activities of the Trust – i.e., 12 exhibitions and 11 other events, as well as the ongoing networking and support services. It has only been possible because of the significant time that is provided *pro bono* by the curator and the *pro bono* support from the other trustees. The level of activity is also made possible by the support in kind from commissioning organisations, including exhibition spaces, workshop and meeting spaces, travel costs and administrative support. All these contributions are appreciated, as well as CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet), located at the Ulster University. It hosts the Conflict Textiles online archive as an associated site: www.conflicttextiles.com. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the current level of activity is unsustainable without significant financial support or by locating the Collection in the care of a larger organisation which is committed to the current work of the Trust.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The record on the Conflict Textile website for each event includes a section on “Outcomes”, provided, where possible, by the commissioning agency or otherwise provided by the representatives of the Trust involved in the event. They provide useful information to guide future practice. It is often not possible to carry out a detailed assessment of exhibitions which may be on display for a considerable period of time without direct supervision. Only a small number of venues collect records on the numbers of visitors and rely on voluntary completion of forms to record their experience. We are told that there were one million visitors to the exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, but we are not in a position to confirm that. Seminars and workshops are usually oversubscribed and participants are enthusiastic. The constant demand for more exhibitions and the sharing of the Conflict Textiles experience is further evidence of the success of the initiative.