



Linen Hall Library

BELFAST LIBRARY & SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE

PRESS RELEASE
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WOMEN'S WAR CRIES EXPRESSED THROUGH TEXTILES EXHIBITED IN FIRST-EVER PUBLIC VIEWING AT LINEN HALL

For the first time ever on public view, a collection of quilts, arpilleras* and personal items produced and collected mainly by women as a response to conflict in a number of global hotspots, will be exhibited in *Textile Accounts of Conflicts* at the Linen Hall Library from 6 February – 7 March.

This phenomenal collection includes quilts produced in Northern Ireland in response to the 'Troubles', as well as arpilleras and other textile work from England, Spain, Chile, Peru, Zimbabwe, Colombia and other countries. With titles such as *They Burned Our Homes, No More* and *Ballykelly Bombing*, the meticulously stitched pieces express the horror and repercussions of inhumanity and military conflict. There are also personal items kept or collected because of their associations with memorable people or events, such as a table cloth from a refugee camp and a towel used by Nelson Mandela.

A selection of posters and textile memorabilia from the Linen Hall Library's internationally recognised Northern Ireland Political Collection have been selected for inclusion in the display. The items were chosen for their peace building properties, a major theme of *Textile Accounts of Conflicts*.

Originally commissioned for the Accounts of the Conflict International Conference held at Ulster University, *Textile Accounts of Conflicts* is curated by Roberta Bacic, a lecturer, researcher and activist. She has worked for the National Corporation of Reparation and Reconciliation, the successor to Chile's Truth Commission, and taught in human rights at the Catholic University, Temuco, Chile. Roberta moved to Northern Ireland in 2004. Since 2008, she has curated more than 70 international exhibitions of arpilleras and other textiles.

Roberta Bacic says: "Submerge yourself in these pieces; look into their stories, listen to what they tell you, explore where you are in relation to them and the world they represent, and ask yourself: 'What can we do about this?'"

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*Arpilleras (pronounced "ar-pee-air-ahs") are three-dimensional appliquéd tapestries of Latin America that originated in Chile.

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Deborah Douglas, Linen Hall Cultural Programmer, says: “You can’t view this exhibition and not be affected by the stark messages that transcend the beautifully produced textiles. The messages of the futility of war contained in many of the pieces are universal and the Linen Hall Library, which holds one of the most important collections of conflict in the world (the Northern Ireland Political Collection), is the right space in which to exhibit this important artistic document.”

The exhibition will be launched on Friday 6 February at 1.00pm in the Library. Professor Gillian Robinson from INCORE International Conflict Research Institute, Ulster University; and Valerie Wilson, Curator of Textiles National Museums Northern Ireland, will be the guest speakers. The public is welcome to attend.

There will also be a talk, *Troubles Textiles*, with visual artist Dr. Karen Nickell on Saturday 7 March at noon. Dr Nickell will explore responses by women to the Troubles and the use of cloth and stitch as creative expression, storytelling, testimony, protest and memory.

Curator Roberta Bacic will lead two workshops on how to make an arpillera doll on Friday 13 February and Saturday 7 March at 2.00pm. Participants are invited to bring along scraps of material of significance to incorporate into their doll.

Textile Accounts of Conflicts is open free to the public from Friday 6 February – Saturday 7 March.

For more information visit the Linen Hall Library’s website at www.linenhall.com.

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Pictures and interviews are available upon request.

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The Linen Hall Library is open free to the public. Our opening hours are Monday – Friday 9.30am – 5.30pm and Saturday 9.30am – 4.00pm.

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