

## --- 'Following the Thread' ---

In 2009, as part of the Liverpool Irish Festival, there was an exhibition at the World Museum Liverpool of arpilleras and quilts from Chile, Peru and Northern Ireland. Arpilleras (arr-pee-air-ahs) are stitched appliqué textile wall hangings that tell a story.

'Threads of Life – Quilts and Arpilleras that Speak Out.' Liverpool World Museum Oct 2009

Roberta Bacic exhibition curator:

*"The quilts and arpilleras come from grassroots groups and women who have found the need and a way to express themselves as individuals, as members of a family, a group and a community. They have felt compelled to share their experiences and feelings; to reach out so as to be heard and also to hear what others have to say."*

To accompany this exhibition a series of twenty textile workshops on the theme of heritage were set up between October 2009 and March 2010. The purpose of the workshops was to enable people in Liverpool to create personal arpilleras that told their own stories. All these arpilleras are now here on display in the 'Following the Thread' exhibition at the World Museum Liverpool.

The workshops varied from half hour drop in sessions at the museum for children and their families to full days offered to exhibition visitors who wanted to stitch a piece of their own. There were half days with adult education groups and a series of workshops with a local junior school and with two Irish community groups. Some groups were relatively new to Liverpool and from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The groups were encouraged to talk, to share life experiences, and this was as important a part of the work shops as the final textile pieces. After deciding on a scene from their lives that they wanted to portray, participants chose fabrics from a large selection on offer. They composed their pictures by cutting fabrics and stitching them onto a background. At the end the pictures were laid out and everyone spoke about the experience of making the arpilleras and recorded their impressions on a card that accompanies each piece.

There are twelve hangings on show here, containing the work of approximately 160 individuals. The pieces from each group have been mounted on a large backing of hessian type cloth (which is the meaning of the word 'Arpillera'). Also on display is one of the inspirational Arpilleras kindly loaned to this exhibition by Roberta Bacic.

Everyone has enjoyed the opportunity to be creative, the talking and sharing. Some groups and individuals are going to continue with arpillera making and other sorts of stitching. For some individuals the making of their arpillera was a profoundly moving experience, re-awakening old memories and emotions. All are excited at having their work on show.

We would like to thank everyone for their wholehearted participation in the workshops and for the opportunity to show their work to others.

Susan Beck and Janet Wilkinson (Workshop facilitators 01928 788034 - 0151 733 2530)

Further information at [www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts](http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts)



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