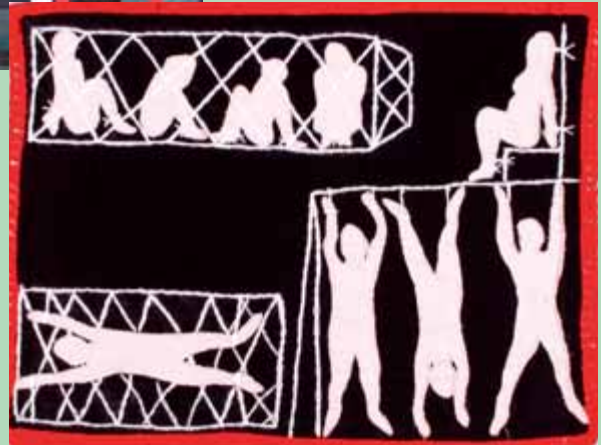


THE HUMAN COST OF WAR



*An exhibition of
quilts and arpilleras*



Movement for the Abolition of War

Foreword

The Arts have a special part to play in our lives. They encourage us to look anew and transform our view of the world without being instructional – they do not tell us directly what is right or wrong. They also make it possible to speak about difficult subjects with imagination.

Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW) has developed a special relationship with the Arts in its campaigning and education activities. It has recently produced two music CDs and includes the visual arts in its annual Peace History Conference held at the Imperial War Museum (London). It also works closely with the Peace Museum (Bradford) which holds the national collection of historical peace art and other artefacts. MAW's newsletter, *Abolish War* is now noted for its use of photographs to illustrate the inhumanity and futility of military conflict.

The human cost of war exhibition follows this theme. The curator, Roberta Bacic, has selected 22 quilts and arpilleras to illustrate the subject. They speak about the state of the world and leave it to us, those viewing the exhibition, to compare this experience with how we wish the world to be. From here we may be encouraged to think about how the wish could be made a reality.

Roberta has been a friend for nearly 15 years and I have come to know about her personal experiences of conflict and her strong commitment to peace and reconciliation. I am delighted that she has been able to bring her expertise to create this exhibition for MAW and share with us her knowledge of this special art form.

May I also thank the Imperial War Museum, St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, and the Whitechapel Gallery for hosting the exhibition and its associated events.

Enjoy the experience of viewing the exhibition and take seriously the impression it makes on you.

Tony Kempster
Chair of the Movement for the Abolition of War

The opening times for the exhibitions at the Imperial War Museum and St Ethelburga's are on the back cover.

Introduction

When I accepted the invitation to curate this exhibition I wanted to incorporate two features reflecting my personal beliefs.

So, on the one side, the exhibition addresses the moral and pragmatic stand that war is unnecessary and also avoidable; that we have the intelligence and feelings which enable us to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way. On the other, I have put together pieces created by women from different countries and diverse walks of life that express and highlight the effect war and conflict have in their daily lives and the impact it has had on their feelings and attitudes.

The use of traditional textile crafts to depict repression, violence, pain, trauma and misery is growing. Furthermore, it is giving women the chance to say NO to the continued eruption of violence into our lives. Handmade cloth works such as these convey experiences that are difficult or impossible to express in words and cross the barriers of language and culture to communicate with other people. They not only tell a story, a life experience, but also trigger in the viewer a response, be that an action or by just engaging. Most of the images speak for themselves.

Consider, for example, the five pieces related to the Spanish Civil War, made in Badalona, Spain. They are the product of workshops run by two young professionals, Alba Pérez and Maria Viñolo, who visited my exhibition “The politics of Chilean arpilleras” in Barcelona in November 2008 and heard my talk. Prompted by that experience, they ran workshops at Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc as part of International Women’s Day 2009. The outcome was a total of 56 arpilleras. For this exhibition I have only included some that relate to our theme, *The human cost of war*.

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?”

But see them also as contemporary art, as they have been exhibited around the world in museums, art galleries, schools, universities and libraries; by NGOs, Church institutions, women’s organizations and more. They are no longer a set of women’s crafts accessible only to those who know their stories and have felt compassion and solidarity with them. They have gone beyond. Those spaces made them accessible to us, to do more, to move beyond. Enjoy them in all aspects that are possible,

Roberta Bacic, curator of this exhibition, November 2009

The photos are by Colin Peck, Martin Melaugh, Jason Cresswell, Irene MacWilliam and Claus Sperr.

For more information on quilt and arpillera exhibitions since February 2008, visit the digital archive on www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts.

Northern Ireland Peace Quilt

A patchwork quilt made by Women Together

Photo Colin Peck

Northern Ireland is emerging from a long-standing conflict, known as “The Troubles”. It started in 1968/69 and continued until a ceasefire was declared in 1994. The Good Friday Peace Agreement was reached in 1998.

Women Together was founded in 1970. The idea was inspired by Ruth Agnew, a Protestant, who believed that women could unite and use their influence to promote peace and reconciliation within the troubled province. She was introduced to Monica Patterson, an English Catholic living in Belfast and, given the urgency of the situation, held a public meeting at which Women Together was born.

The organisation aimed to:

- * end sectarian violence in Northern Ireland
- * give support to the victims
- * allow women a “voice” in society
- * create a society where there is mutual understanding and respect for diversity.

Among other activities, they made quilts.

Pat Campbell, who acts as coordinator, said, in a recent interview when asked to loan this quilt for the exhibition, “It is the product of the work of women and women’s organisations all over Ireland, with one panel from Scotland. The patches on the quilt reflect the key elements of what is required for there to be peace. We, as women directly affected, many of us bereaved, wish to have contributed to the peace process and stop the violence.”

Pat, who lost one of her sons near the end of the conflict, is now the keeper of all the quilts made by the group and is always keen for these to be present at different exhibitions.

1.62 x 1.82 m

EQUALITY

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PEACE

Common loss: 3000+ dead between 1969 and 1994

Four-panel quilt made by Irene MacWilliam

Photo Colin Peck

Since I first visited Irene in Belfast in 2007 and saw this powerful quilt, it has become the emblem for most of the exhibitions I have curated. Each piece of red fabric represents someone killed between 1969 and 1994 in the Northern Ireland “Troubles”.

In this quilt, Irene expresses her deep concern for the loss of lives in this and other conflicts. She does not differentiate between groups of people. Each dead person counts as an equally valuable lost life. When she began the project she rang the police and was told that 3161 had died in the period. Since then, published official figures differ somewhat from this.

This quilt has touched the lives of many people, both here and abroad. Although Irene did not suffer any personal tragedy as the result of the conflict, her sensitivity to the losses of others is inspiring. As the quilt began to take shape, people sent pieces of fabric to Irene for inclusion. Cloth arrived from such diverse places as the USA, England and Japan, as well as Ireland. Each piece is torn making the quilt even more compelling. If you look closely, you can see a small teddy bear in a few red pieces. Each symbolises a child that died during the Troubles.

To learn more about Irene’s work, visit her website:
www.macwilliam.f9.co.uk or e-mail her at
irenemacwilliam@hotmail.com.

1.50 x 2.30 m



Detail



Executed at dawn

Quilt made by Irene MacWilliam

Photo Irene MacWilliam

On one of my visits to Irene's home I explained that the exhibitions I curated aimed at making a statement about the futility of war and the tragedy it brought to ordinary people living with the direct consequences. We talked about women using their traditional textile work to express those experiences and feelings. As a result of this conversation, she showed me this quilt made some years ago.

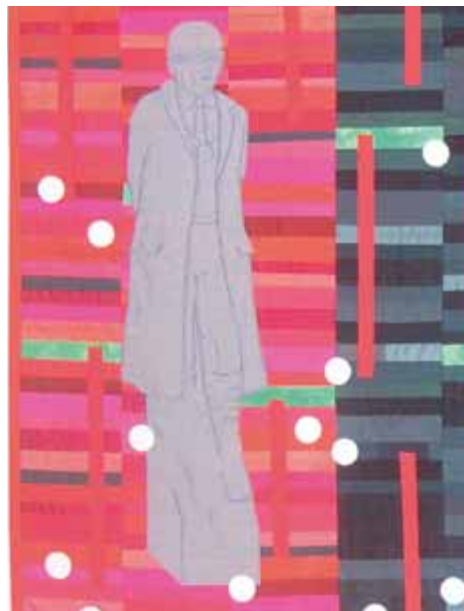
Irene went on to say, "When I first read about the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire, I was shocked. I had not heard of the soldiers who, in the First World War, were shot at dawn for cowardice. I read their stories on the internet and I was moved by them. Many of the soldiers were so very young; some had lied about their age so they could join up. They had no idea what war would be like. I wanted to make my personal tribute to them."

She added: "During that war, over 300 British soldiers were executed, mainly on the Western Front; shot by firing squad, following Courts Martial for alleged acts of cowardice, desertion or disobedience between 1914 and 1918.

"Firing squads were normally assembled from members of the soldier's own unit, for whom this is likely to have been a devastating task. It was one thing to be ordered to kill the enemy; quite another to be ordered to shoot a comrade. White discs were placed over the soldier's heart to denote the target area."

When deciding on the key pieces, this one was a must. It led us to the exhibition title: *The human cost of war.*

0.73 x 1.11 m



Detail

Encadenamiento / Women chained to Parliament gates

Chilean arpillera, anon.

Photo Martin Melaugh

Truth is the first casualty of any war. From 1973 to 1990 Chile suffered a bloody dictatorship, following the military coup of General Augusto Pinochet, who deposed Salvador Allende's democratically-elected socialist government. Some women's loved ones had been "disappeared" and Pinochet's regime denied all knowledge of this. In this arpillera, one can see women chained to the gates in front of the Congress building in public protest against what was happening. Others seemed to go on with life as if nothing were happening.

It was made in the late 1980's by one of the workshops run and supported by Vicaría de la Solidaridad. Many of the women had never sewn before and found solace working together. Supporters encouraged them to express their suffering and also helped them sell their work at home and abroad. This gave them badly needed income and, at the same time, made public their losses.



The piece was purchased to show international solidarity with the ending of Pinochet's dictatorship at the time. One of the international monitors supervising a referendum on the presidency - which Pinochet lost - heard about the arpilleras and went looking for them.

It is normally on permanent display at the headquarters of Club de Madrid, Madrid where it belongs to the Director.

Courtesy Sean Carroll, USA / Spain

You can still obtain arpilleras from www.fundacionsolidaridad.cl and other arpilleras workshops/groups

0.51 x 0.63 m

La cueca sola / Dancing cueca alone

Chilean arpillera, anon.

Photo Martin Melaugh

This Chilean arpillera was made in one of the workshops of the Association of Detained and Disappeared, probably in the late 1980s, shortly before the end of the dictatorship. It was acquired in Santiago in 1991.

In it we can see women dancing the traditional Chilean dance, “Cueca”. It is danced in pairs - an important fact, considering the dance is meant to represent the different emotions and stages of romance. But here they dance alone with only a photograph of their partner.

The arpillera exposes a situation where people were pushed to the limit. It was a common occurrence in Chile during the dictatorship for there to be a lack of respect, understanding or appreciation of diversity. Specifically, this piece shows what happened to people who had different political views or disagreed with General Pinochet. Some of them had been significant actors during Allende’s government.

The boldness, determination and creativity of these women has inspired people all over the world, including Sting, whose song “They dance alone”, based on “Cueca sola”, has been performed by many other singers, including Joan Baez and Holly Near. “A Conspiracy of Hope” was a short tour of six benefit concerts – which included the song - on behalf of Amnesty International - that took place in the United States during June 1986. The tour was to increase awareness of Amnesty on the 25th anniversary of its work for human rights; the shows were headlined by U2 and Sting, and also featured Bryan Adams, Peter Gabriel, Lou Reed, Joan Baez, and The Neville Brothers.

Courtesy Gaby Franger & Rainer Huhle, Germany

0.50 x 0.40 m



Homenaje a los caídos / Homage to the fallen ones

Chilean arpillera, anon.

Photo Colin Peck

This arpillera was made in the late 1970s. It was given as a gift to a psychologist who lectures at a university in Madrid when arpilleras were being sold by church organizations and NGOs that supported the women and groups. She has worked with child soldiers in different parts of the world, especially Angola. This arpillera has been part of different exhibitions since February 2008.

In this sombre traditional piece, there is no sun in the sky and the hills are made in one flat colour. Black material dominates the foreground. In the background, poor villagers use wires to tap into the mains power supply because they cannot afford to pay for their electricity.

The road in this poor neighbourhood is lined with candles, lit in remembrance of those who have disappeared. The central figure carries leaflets campaigning against torture. The women on the road are lying down as part of the protest and lighting the candles, while others carry a banner bearing the words, "Homage to the fallen ones." The arpillera gives voice to the sorrow and loss felt by so many.

Courtesy Fátima Miralles, Spain

0.38 x 0.50 m



Detail

Paz Justicia Libertad / Peace Justice Freedom

Chilean arpillera, anon.

Photo Colin Peck

This is a traditional arpillera made in the late 1970s with the mountains of Chile and the sun in the background. It depicts a protest by women, some of whom are clashing cymbals in front of a police car (centre foreground). Others carry leaflets under their arms about a campaign to find their missing loved ones.

The material chosen to create this arpillera makes it particularly poignant. The dark grey background material is made from the trousers of a “disappeared” man. Likewise, the checked fabric road comes from a “disappeared” loved one’s shirt. This was done in defiance of the military dictatorship.



Working on arpilleras could also be therapeutic. As Violeta Morales, arpillera maker, said, “I put all my energy into the arpillera workshop; it was sometimes the only thing that kept me balanced emotionally. There I found people who were suffering from the same thing and trying to help them sometimes helped me with my own tragedy.”

This textile shows us not only a memory of the past, but is a vibrant reminder of what is going on at present in many parts of the world. While we commemorate the soldiers who have died in recent years in Iraq and Afghanistan, local people in those countries are experiencing the same. Let us not forget them.

Courtesy Alba Sanfeliú, Spain

0.41 x 0.50 m

Dónde están los desaparecidos? / Where are the “disappeared”?

Chilean arpillera, anon.

Photo Martin Melaugh

This arpillera was made in the late 80s in Santiago de Chile at one of the workshops at the Vicaria de la Solidaridad. It belongs to *Arpillera – Sammlung der Kinderhilfe Chile/Bonn*.

In this traditional piece, the sun is in the sky and we can see two large clouds in what is normally shown as a clear sky. We cannot see the hills as the scene takes place in the in the centre of busy Santiago. A group of women in colourful dresses are protesting in front of the Courts of Justice. They are holding a banner that reads: “Where are the detained disappeared?” Although there are few passersby, they will now be informed of this denunciation of judicial action.



On the right-hand side we can see two green silhouettes of policemen. They are armed and standing next to a police car. The women have not shown the policemen’s faces to stress that it is the institution not the individual policeman that represses the protestors.

The total number of officially recognized disappeared and executed people is 3,197. The Chilean Truth Commission and follow-up organisations had the mandate to find out what happened to each disappeared person and to try to find the remains of the bodies where possible, or at least be able to tell their next of kin what happened to the missing person. Reparations are being paid to close relatives of the acknowledged victims.

Courtesy Sivia Caspers, Germany

0.37 x 0.48 m

Retorno de los exiliados / Return of the exiles

Chilean arpillera by Victoria Diaz Caro

Photo Martin Melaugh

This colourful arpillera was made in 1992, when the Chilean dictatorship had ended. It belongs to *Arpillera – Sammlung der Kinderhilfe Chile Bonn*. It shows a happy meeting of family members that have been separated by exile. As in most wars and conflicts, exile or displacement are immediate consequences that affect the essence of social life, be that the family or in society at large.

Exile took place in different ways. When the military took over in 1973, many of Salvador Allende's government and supporters took refuge in embassies wishing to escape persecution and human rights violations. Some escaped across the Andes or by other routes. Others, after imprisonment and often torture, were expelled and went to countries that would take them. A number had to take "economic exile" since they had lost their jobs and had no way to support themselves and their families. Some were even deprived of their Chilean nationality.

After the dictatorship, the return brought new problems. In 1990, on the establishment of what is called "transitional democracy", the newly elected president Patricio Aylwin tackled the issues involved. A law was passed that created "Oficina Nacional del Retorno" (National Office for the Returnees). It worked until 1994 and the number of people who were examined reached 52,557 from 70 different countries. Most came from Sweden, Argentina, Canada, France and Germany.

Courtesy Silvia Caspers, Germany

0.47 x 0.38 m



Walking to death

Small quilt made by Helen Heron

Photo Martin Melaugh

Helen Heron from Ireland works in many forms of textile art. She became interested in the history of the Irish involvement in the First World War, and the way the newly independent state ignored the involvement of Irish people in that war for many years, and the number of families who lost relatives and friends. She was also struck by the role of the war poets who recorded their experiences at the Front. If they had not enlisted as serving soldiers, they would not have had access to the forward positions. The same situation pertained to the war reporters.

She made this piece, originally entitled “Soldiers”, inspired by a poem of F.S.Flint, in January 2003 for the exhibition “Hanging on every word”, in Bangor, Co Down. The poem was written when Flint saw a friend marching towards the Front. He could not warn him of what was about to happen to the soldiers because the order was “silence”.

One can see soldiers who are carrying guns. Their faces are blank, anonymous, ready to walk to death as part of the huge numbers to die during that war.

Another quilt by Helen will be brought to the discussion at the Whitechapel Gallery on 21 November. This is a very recent textile she sewed for the Seamus Heaney exhibition which took place in Bellaghy Bawn, Northern Ireland, the poet’s home district, earlier this year. The exhibition was her personal interpretation of the 27 poems from the book *Field work* published in 1979 when the Troubles were at their height. It was in celebration of the poet’s 70th birthday. Her piece is a response to the poem “In memoriam Francis Ledwidge”. Ledwidge was an Irish Nationalist poet who enlisted and was killed at Ypres in July 1917.

0.87 x 0.57 m



Rape is a crime

Peruvian arpillera by M.H. from Mujeres Creativas workshop

Photo Martin Melaugh

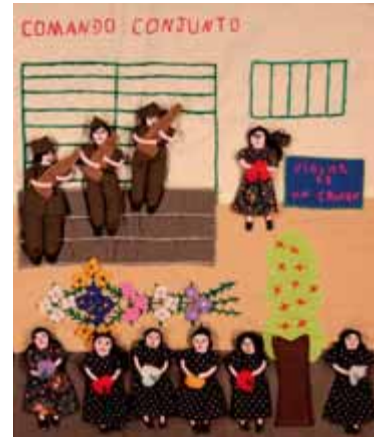
From 1980 until 2000 Peru fought an internal war. The main actors were Government Forces and Shining Path. Poverty and fear were the main factors that caused the war and were also a consequence of it. After the defeat of Shining Path, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up in 2001 to investigate what had actually happened. Its mandate ended in 2003.

Part of the Commission's remit was to write the history of the conflict, bringing together all the available evidence available, making it public and accessible. Reparation policies were introduced for those with human rights violations. Its most striking findings were as follows: 69,280 "dead/disappeared"; 40% of whom were from Ayacucho; 85% were from the poorest districts; 68% had no secondary education; 79% were from rural areas, mostly indigenous Quechua, 16% of the total population; 4000 burial sites were identified. For more information see www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/ifinal/index.php.

It is remarkable that in the midst of this, a group of women living in the poor areas of Lima, many displaced from other areas, dared to raise their voices and act. María H. who made this piece says, "In October 1985 many people were killed in Ayacucho and women were raped, but nobody protested. Two groups of us decided to demonstrate in front of *Comando Conjunto* (the Joint Military Command) in Lima since the people actually living in Ayacucho felt themselves too vulnerable to do so. We took a banner that read 'Rape is a crime' and we placed flowers shaped as a cross to make it known that so many had died. The same night we protested about a large-scale killing of political prisoners in Lurigancho. Five of us decided to make an arpillera of our action to show we do not condone such brutality."

Courtesy Roberta Bacic, Chile/Northern Ireland

0.42 x 0.47 m



Detail

Lost children of war

Arpillera made by Irene MacWilliam, 2009

Photo Martin Melaugh

Over the years Irene has been very moved by the stories of children and, indeed, adults who have been displaced from their homes and villages because of conflict. Families are split up; sometimes male members are taken away in trucks and disappear, often without trace. In the confusion children and adults flee, are taken to camps or even imprisoned. It may be years before they are reunited, if ever. Trying to reunite families or find information about the relatives is a very difficult job. Irene was moved by the posters that are circulated in an effort to help these people. Some of the lost children are so young that they can not give their helpers any information to assist with these searches.

Irene made the children white so as not to show any nationality. They are almost transparent to indicate their vulnerability and the fact they are living a half life, not knowing if they have family or not, or for how long they will be unclaimed. They are like “ghost children”. Irene said: “I chose to focus on children rather than adults since the image of a distressed child is very emotive.”

To learn more about Irene’s work, visit her website:
www.macwilliam.f9.co.uk.

0.30 x 0.50 m



Detail

Gegossenes Blei / Cast lead

Quilted felt wall hanging by Heidi Drahota, Germany

Photo Claus Sperr

“Gegossenes Blei” was first exhibited at the international exhibition, “Threads of destiny: testimonies of violence, hope and survival”, at Museum Frauen Kultur, Regional, International in Fürth, Germany, from May to July 2009.

It was chosen as the cover photograph for that exhibition’s catalogue and leaflet. The decision was based on the striking textile work and the compelling approach to a recent war. Heidi Drahota, the German artist who made it, says about her piece: “With the military offensive ‘Operation Cast Lead’ women and children suffered badly in the Gaza strip caught in the fighting. No protection, no path of escape, no bunker, closed borders. Many of the defenceless fled into schools or public buildings and were killed or injured there. In the Gaza strip alone, 760 people were killed during the two weeks up to 8 January 2009. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, 42% of the victims were children and women.”

To highlight this, Heidi felted and sewed 760 threads onto the backing material, like streaks of lead falling from above, every one representing the lost life of a child or a woman in Gaza.

The name “Operation Cast Lead” is taken from a poem “For Hanukkah”, by the national poet of Israel, Haim Nachman Bialik, who died in 1934, long before the state of Israel was established. The war began on the last day of Hanukkah.

Another meaning of “lead” is munitions and “to cast” is to wantonly disperse. It is ironic, and rather macabre, that the name of a military operation, which killed so many children and disrupted the lives of others, should be taken from a poem about a children’s toy – a spinning top made from solid or cast lead (ofert yetzuka).

*Teacher bought a big top for me,
Solid lead, the finest known.
In whose honour, for whose glory?
For Hanukkah alone.*

1.55 x 1.10 m



No going back

Northern Ireland arpillera by Sonia Copeland

Photo Martin Melaugh

Sonia has made quilts for a long time but this is her first arpillera. She made it specially for the June/July exhibition at Flowerfield, Northern Ireland, entitled “Arpilleras that cry out”. Sonia had been involved in other exhibitions and had seen arpilleras on numerous occasions.

More than ten years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, that paved the way to peace after 30 years of conflict, civil society continued to hope that the problems of the past would never return. But, early in 2009, two incidents caused three deaths and people took to the streets to protest about them.

When asked to talk about her arpillera, Sonia said, “My piece of work shows the Belfast City Hall, and in the foreground a representation of one of the cross-community demonstrations, which followed the murders of Constable Stephen Carroll and Sappers Mark Quinsy and Patrick Asimkar, by so called ‘Republican terrorists.’ This demonstration of support and solidarity for the victims and their families was important to me personally, as I had served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary during the worst years of the Troubles, and had suffered as a result of terrorist attacks on four occasions. It seemed to me that the peace, that was won as a result of so much pain and suffering, was once again to be snatched away. At the demonstration, I resolved that nothing and no-one would steal from my children the right to a peaceful life, which was stolen from me and my generation.”

Fear about going back to a time of war is the feeling that often prevails in post-conflict situations.

0.45 x 0.56 m



Detail

Al Servicio de la Vida / Servicing life

Chilean arpillera, anon.

Photo Martin Melaugh

This powerful piece belongs to *Arpillera – Sammlung der Kinderhilfe Chile Bonn*. It relates to the fact that non-state organisations often have to take on responsibilities that normally belong to the Government in war torn countries and conflict zones. This happens because those taking countries to war often make no provision for its impact on the lives of ordinary people.

The Chilean Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez asked Pope Paul VI for permission to create the Vicariate of Solidarity owing to the pressing need to assist a substantial part of the population abandoned in 1973 after the Pinochet coup. His first task was the defence of human rights of those persecuted by the regime. The Vicariate worked from 1976 to 1992, continuing for two years after the change to democratic government.

This arpillera was made in one of the workshops supported by the Vicariate. It shows us the kind of activities and areas of support the church undertook. We can see, in the headquarters of the church, the following taking place: actions regarding legal defence, exile, political imprisonment, the detained disappeared and the presentation of habeas corpus to the courts. It is important to understand that these activities involved the affected people and their relatives.

The Vicariate also supported community organisation in the poor districts that were affected by poverty, unemployment and isolation. This included arpillera workshops, training in human rights and how to prepare bulletins, as well as setting up first-aid centres.

0.75 x 0.90 m



Detail

Reflections on violence

English arpillera by Linda Adams 2009

Photo Colin Peck

Linda Adams attended the exhibition of arpilleras in Cambridge in October 2008 as part of the Festival of Ideas. Since then, she has made a number of arpilleras which portray her concerns and feelings about current issues in different parts of the world. She has said, "I knew how to sew with my hands but seeing the Cambridge exhibition and listening to the presentation taught me how to sew with my heart." Her style captures the spirit of the Chilean arpilleras and is marked by very fine details and the innovative use of materials.

"Reflections on violence" is a good example of her work. It shows the Free Tibet protest in London when the Olympic torch was carried through the city on its way to the Beijing. The event demonstrated how states use and abuse sport, like many other things, for propaganda purposes. At the same time, this event provided an opportunity for people to express their opposition to what China is doing in Tibet, and to the British Government's decision to allow the torch to travel via London. The torch carrier in white is in the foreground, surrounded by Chinese security personnel in blue. Around them are the police in Day-Glo jackets. Behind the barrier, the protestors are making their views clear; one has got onto the torch's route. In the background the emergency services stand by.

"The police helicopter was taking photographs of the protestors, and police filmed on the ground as well. I was proud to stand among the protestors and was prepared to be arrested to bring attention to the campaign. China was only selected for the games because of promises to change its attitude to civil rights, but the promises were just hot air."

Linda was amazed that repression against protestors was used in London when they were trying to raise awareness of repression elsewhere. She commented: "Where is our free expression?"

0.33 x 0.46 m



Detail

La mano que les cuidó / The hand that cared for them

Arpillera made by María Bonilla Armada,

Women Sewing History Workshop, Badalona, Spain, 2009

Photo Jason Cresswell

María, now 86, grew up during the Spanish Civil War and in the post-war period. During the war she moved to Cuenca, where she lost almost all her family: her father died, her brothers were killed fighting on the front, and her mother emigrated to France for a better life. Here, María describes the moment when, after the war ended, she returned to the village of her birth, “We found that we had no home, no furniture, nothing. We had nowhere to sleep or eat: we had absolutely nothing until we found it ourselves.” This experience was the consequence of the country’s destruction.

The post-war countrywide lack of food and basic necessities meant that women from the working classes had to find many different ways to survive. Despite the difficulties of the Franco era, María and her husband were able to build a home where they could live and raise their family. The effort and sacrifice required is reflected in her quilt which shows her home and three children. Her own hand - the hand which cared for them – is dominant. In the economic crisis of the 1950s and 60s many people had to move to the cities in search of a better life. María and her family moved from Cordoba to Barcelona where she has remained ever since. The rural house reflects a nostalgic memory of her previous home.

The arpilleras have provided artistic support through which María and her companions have been able to recount their experiences. It has also given them the confidence to continue telling their stories.

0.48 x 0.55 m



As the women sew, a song by Sue Gilmurray

1. When the times are hard and the going's tough,
when you work all day and it's not enough,
when there is no bread, and the children cry,
and the menfolk curse, and the women sigh,
then the women sew,
and their stitches speak
of a spirit strong
though the body's weak;
with a grip on love
that they won't let go,
see their fingers care
as the women sew.

Recuerdos de trabajo y guerra / Memories of work and war

Arpillera made by Rosa Cortés García,
Women Sewing History Workshop, Badalona, Spain, 2009

Photo Jason Cresswell

Inspired by her father's memories of the hardship he suffered during the Spanish Civil War, the lower part of Rosa's arpillera shows the moment when he was imprisoned in a concentration camp in the Andalusian city of Seville. She said, "My father told us how he would hear the clunk of the bolts of cell doors in the middle of the night, knowing that when the guards took prisoners away, they wouldn't return; that they would be taken to the fields and shot. He was scared. He was behind bars for two years working in the camp without food until eventually his hair and teeth fell out."

In the upper part, Rosa shows her personal experiences from the post-war period. Like many poor and illiterate women, she had to work to survive. Rosa was unable to educate herself and began working in the country in harsh conditions: "I had been working since I was a child. I remember that when I was 12 I worked wrapping oranges in paper for export. When we weren't doing that, they made us peel the bitter ones and put the skins out in the sun to dry. They were used to make gunpowder. I was paid hardly anything; I earned hardly anything."

In the stories and personal experiences we see the human cost of war. On the one hand, via stories passed down from one generation to another, there is the violation of human rights of those who resisted; and, on the other, via the experiences of the maker, the consequences suffered by women in their daily lives in an oppressive state.

0.45 x 0.48 m



2. When you live your life in the grip of fear
of the bomb and gun that are always near,
when they come at night to disturb your sleep,
when they take the men, and the women weep,
then the women sew,
and their stitches shout
against violent power
shutting justice out;
with a grip on rage
that they won't let go,
see their fingers fight
as the women sew.

Continued on page 30

El recuerdo de esa historia / The memory of this story

Arpillera made by by **Ángela Matamoros Vázquez and Ángela Vázquez González,**
Women Sewing History Workshop, Badalona, Spain, 2009

Photo Jason Cresswell

The Franco regime tried to enforce a “collective amnesia” on the population about the atrocities suffered during the war and the subsequent dictatorship. In violation of the people’s democratic freedoms, it silenced those voices that spoke about the past and criticized the present and those that could imagine the possibility of social change. Despite the repression, some individuals wouldn’t allow their voices to be silenced.

Ángela and her daughter show here how our memories and experiences can be passed down from generation to generation. It represents the stories told by Ángela’s parents. In this way Ángela, now 72, can share with her daughter the things that happened in her hometown during the Spanish Civil War. She says, “The truck travelling along the road is carrying men on their way to be executed. The crosses show the graves where they were buried. When the men were rounded up and

put on trucks, the women would come against the odds to say goodbye to sons and husbands. They would be in tears because they knew they would never see them again.”

The men who fought for the losing republican side were often tortured and murdered, leaving their wives with the sole responsibility for the survival of their families. Many devastated women faced hardship making ends meet.

With this arpillera, Ángela and her daughter were able to contribute to the retrieval of these untold stories from a female perspective, allowing future generations to better understand what happened during this violent period of Spanish history. And both showed a real desire and excitement at being able to put down and transmit these untold memories.

0.49 x 0.55 m



Mis memorias de la guerra / My memories of the war

Arpillera made by by Rosalía Rodríguez Hernández,
Women Sewing History Workshop, Badalona, Spain, 2009

Photo Jason Cresswell

Rosalía's sadness about the Spanish Civil War period came from knowing that her mother had suffered torture; this because she was an anarchist's wife. The other sad memory was seeing her widowed mother struggling with the responsibility of maintaining and caring for her family.

When the war began, Rosalía was eight. Her particular experience illustrates the repression suffered by the wives of the "Reds", who were punished and humiliated through physical abuse and other forms of violence: "They said that my father was an anarchist. A year after my father died, the police came to our home armed with rifles. They kicked us and took my mother away by car. They drove her through a road with many dead bodies, cut off her hair and forced her to drink castor oil."

In the Women Sewing History workshop, the arpilleras were made using various sewing and embroidery techniques. This arpillera, however, is one of the few that were completely handmade. Rosalía explained that for her this approach was a kind of therapy. She felt that the stitches were like writing the words of her story and sharing her sorrow with the rest of the group.

0.45 x 0.51.5 m



Recogiendo leña / Fetching firewood

Arpillera made by Ángela Vázquez González,
Women Sewing History Workshop, Badalona, Spain, 2009

Photo Jason Cresswell

At the height of the Franco regime, in the 1940s, the daily life of the population was transformed by the economic policies of the dictatorship. With the privatisation of land that was previously collectively owned, the Guardia Civil became responsible for the security of landowners. Consequently, common daily activities of people, such as collecting firewood, had to be done with increased caution.

Ángela started collecting wood when she was only nine to help her widowed mother care for her four children and elderly father. While Ángela was working at home, her mother was “Working in the houses of rich people, washing their clothes, to be able to provide food for us. She couldn’t help me collect the firewood, so I had to do so myself and get it ready for her to do the cooking when she came home.” At the time, nearly all basic necessities were in short supply, which is evident because she shows herself collecting wood without any shoes. All this happened as women came to take the lead role in the family.

Of the 69 women that participated in the Women Sewing History workshop, Ángela was the only one who wanted to make two arpilleras. Not being completely satisfied with the quality of this arpillera, she asked her daughter to help her complete a second one, “El recuerdo de esa historia”. Both are about the war and post-war period and told in the first person.

0.51 x 0.45 m



Sala de torturas / Torture chamber

Chilean arpillera, by Violeta Morales, 1996

Photo Colin Peck

This is one of the most visually startling pieces in the collection. Set against a simple black background, this arpillera speaks unapologetically about Chile's history of torture.

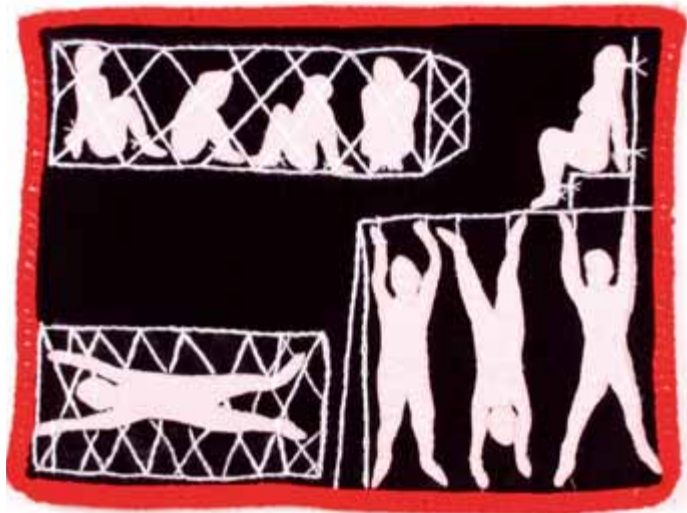
Torture is a difficult subject. According to the Valech Report, thousands of people were subjected to some form of torture during Pinochet's regime. 35,868 approached the Commission. Out of this group, 27,255 people were officially registered as victims of torture.

This arpillera shows people being tortured, graphically depicting the nature and experience of torture. It portrays the victims in a dehumanized way, with featureless faces, reminding us that each person in the many groups who endured this awful experience did so as an individual human being. It was striking to see in the woman who made this arpillera her willingness to talk about the past, her refusal to forget, to consign the torture to oblivion. This is a constant that reappears in both conversations and in arpilleras that deal with the memories of torture.

In recent times, torture has become a topic of public debate. In our present wars it has been denounced, reported and its legitimacy has been challenged

Courtesy Marjorie Agosín's private collection (Chile/USA)

0.47 x 0.52 m



Completion of *As the women sew*, by Sue Gilmurray

3. When you live aware of a bloodstained past,
and it's peaceful now, but it may not last,
when suspicions lurk, on which hatreds feed,
when the children doubt, and the women plead,
then the women sew,
and their stitches sing
of the fairer world
only peace can bring;
with a grip on hope
that they won't let go,
see their fingers build
as the women sew.

4. Yes, the women sew, and their stitches hold,
till the picture's made and the story's told,
with a grip on life that they won't let go,
see their fingers heal as the women sew.
Yes, the women sew,
and their stitches hold,
till the picture's made
and the story's told,
with a grip on life
that they won't let go,
see their fingers care,
see their fingers fight,
see their fingers build,
see their fingers heal
as the women sew.

MOVEMENT FOR THE ABOLITION OF WAR

11 Venetia Road, London N4 1EJ 01908 511948 www.abolishwar.org.uk

The Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW) was founded in 2001, following the Hague Appeal for Peace. It is non-partisan and organised and run by volunteers. Its purpose is to challenge popular thinking about the acceptability of war and raise awareness of constructive alternatives.

War is not inevitable. Civilised individuals do not solve disputes by incinerating their children. Yet in times of war, bombs which may burn and kill children are seen as a legitimate way to resolve disputes between nations.

There are many forms of non-violent conflict resolution and people everywhere need to be informed about them and educated in their use. We work in schools, encourage discussion and public debate, and use the arts to promote the belief that we can have a world without war.

We produce music CDs and films. Our latest CD, *Call back the fire*, was launched on Remembrance Sunday at the Imperial War Museum last year. Following our successful *War no more* DVD which is now used widely in schools, we are producing a new DVD on the relationship between climate change and armed conflict.

Whitechapel Gallery, 21 November

77 to 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1

(Nearest underground station: Aldgate East)

The events here are related to *The human cost of war* exhibition at St Ethelburga's, a 15-minute walk away from the Whitechapel Gallery. A small number of selected quilts and arpilleras from that exhibition will be used.

The events will be part of *The nature of the beast exhibition* by Goshka Macuga (www.whitechapelgallery.org).



They will take place in Gallery 2 around the table, which is part of the exhibition, and close to the tapestry of Picasso's *Guernica* on loan from the UN.

11.30 to 13.00 pm Discussion with Bruce Kent (MAW vice-president) and invited guests on Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.

2.30 to 4.30 pm Discussion facilitated by Dr Clem McCartney on the linkage of past and present conflicts with reference to the Spanish Civil War. Selected quilts from *The human cost of war* exhibition will be displayed and quilt makers will be among the speakers. Poems relevant to the period will be read.

Visitors to the gallery will be able to listen to the proceedings. Entrance is free.

EXHIBITION OPENING TIMES AND DETAILS OF ASSOCIATED EVENTS.

Details for the Whitechapel Gallery are on page 31



Imperial War Museum, 8 November

Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ

(Nearest underground station: Lambeth North)

Cinema on the ground floor

Exhibition open from 11 am to 5 pm

Roberta Bacic, curator of *The human cost of war exhibition*, will give a talk on the exhibition in the Museum's conference room (first floor) at 11.15 am. Entrance is free.

Roberta will also introduce the exhibition at 2.00 pm in the cinema.

Janet Booth, who led the successful campaign to pardon the 306 soldiers shot for "cowardice" in the First World War, will also speak. The exhibition's lead quilt (above) was made in remembrance of those soldiers, one of which was her grandfather Harry Farr.

A performance of the song *And the women sew* composed specially for the event by Sue Gilmurray (see page 24).

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 18 to 21 November

78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG

(Nearest underground station: Liverpool Street)



Wednesday 18 November

Exhibition open from 1.00 to 5.00 pm.

- 1.00 pm Talk entitled *Ending war* by
 Professor Robert Hinde, MAW president
- 3.00 pm Talk by Roberta Bacic, exhibition curator
- 4.30 pm Music and poetry

Thursday 19 November

Visits by arrangement from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm.

School visits and events based around the exhibition.

Friday 20 November

Exhibition open from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm.

A Northern Ireland event is being planned
(www.stethelburgas.org for further information).

Saturday 21 November

Exhibition open from 11.00 am to 7.00 pm.

7.30 pm Music with Sofia Buchock (Chile) and the
 Andean Band KILLARAYMI

Admission £12. Refreshments.

Advance booking www.stethelburgas.org.