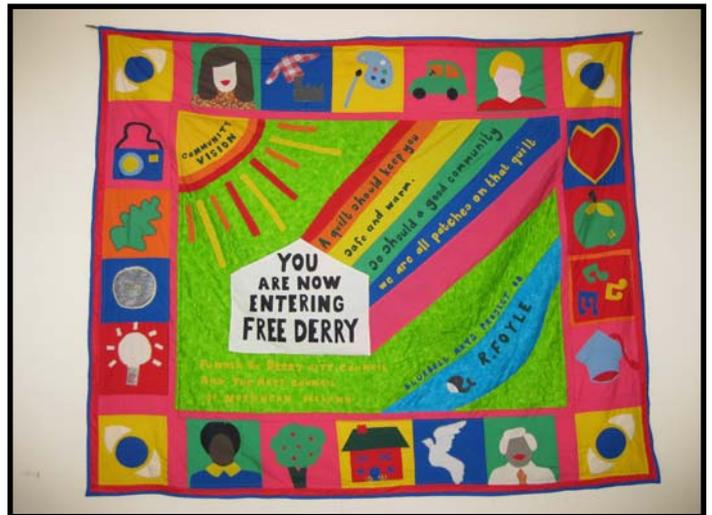
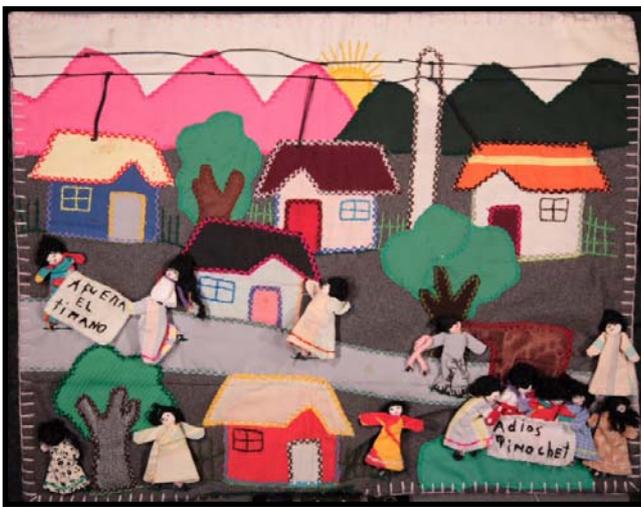


Threads of Life – Quilts & Arpilleras that speak out



17 October - 1 November 2009

Specially curated by Roberta Bacic to celebrate the
Guinness Liverpool Irish Festival 2009



NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL



Foreword by Guinness Liverpool Irish Festival

The Guinness Liverpool Irish Festival is delighted to have been involved in bringing this exhibition to Liverpool. The exhibition links with Ireland, not only through its themes, but directly through its subject matter. It provides a new dimension to the Festival and will be of great interest to the people of Merseyside; where finding a voice in circumstances of conflict has so often been theme, not only in the past but right up to the present day. We are especially pleased to have the Warrington quilt displayed here in Liverpool.

Each individual quilt has its own story. The combination of expression, creativity and commitment in the genesis of each, adds to the power of this exhibition. Our thanks to all those who made the event possible and especially staff at National Museums Liverpool, who have been such effective partners. Thanks also to the volunteer organisers and volunteers themselves who have so generously given their time. Thanks Roberta, for bringing the quilts to Liverpool; and thanks most of all to those quilters whose stories are told in these remarkable works of art.

Greg Quiery, Liverpool Irish Festival, October 2009

Foreword by National Museums Liverpool

We are delighted to be working in partnership once again with the Guinness Liverpool Irish Festival to celebrate the unique bond between the people of Liverpool and Ireland.

These beautiful textiles reflect the creativity and strength of communities and individuals around the world. The pieces on display represent a variety of communities in Ireland, England, Chile, Peru and parts of Europe; however the common bonds of love, hope and courage are clearly shown through each textile.

We hope that visitors to the exhibition will be inspired to ask questions about the work on display, reflect on their own stories and communities and maybe feel moved to create their own textiles.

Our thanks go to Roberta and Greg for all of their hard work in bringing this exhibition together and the volunteers who have donated their time to enable visitors to access the exhibition. Special thanks go to the quilt-makers, whose talents and creativity will enable us to share these amazing stories with the public.

Ann-marie McGaughey, National Museums Liverpool, October 2009

Introduction by Roberta Bacic, Curator

When asked to curate the present exhibition, I was pleased to be able to do so. It is with great pleasure that I put these pieces here on exhibition, as all 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. As part of this festival, their work will reach wider audiences than ever they dreamt of at the time they sewed them.

Quilting and textile traditions have been present in women's daily lives for centuries. In the book *5000 years of textiles* (published in 1993 and reissued by the British Museum Press in 2006) Jennifer Harris says,

'Textiles are made to be used primarily as furnishings and dress, and are expected to wear out and eventually be discarded. It is through decorated textiles that the history of textiles can be preserved.'

How and when did women break this tradition? In the catalogue's preface to the collection *Weavings of war, fabrics of memory* (published in 2005 by the board of Trustees of Michigan State University) we read,

'Textile artists, mostly women, have broken their traditions of non-figurative work to use pictorial imagery to communicate their personal experiences of war.'

Arpilleras (pronounced "ar-pee-air-ahs") are three-dimensional appliqué textiles of Latin America. *Arpilleras* are actually a Chilean tradition; an old regional pictorial appliqué technique from Isla Negra on the country's long west coast, where rags were used to create images and then embroidered on large pieces of cloth. Originally

Hessian fabric (or '*arpillera*' in Spanish) was used as the backing and that word then became the name for this particular type of tapestry. Generally they are known as quilts or wall hangings; however, they are now also considered to be a type of contemporary craft. Sometimes small dolls are attached giving the textiles a three-dimensional effect.

Traditionally most *arpilleras* were made during especially hard political times, in a particular context and they reveal to us now what those experiences meant. The technique was then passed to Peru where it also became very popular.

Some of these quilts and *arpilleras* depict scenes of daily life and give us an insight into what the maker's life is like. There are others that go further in using traditional textile crafts to depict repression, violence, pain, trauma and misery; and this tendency is growing. Using quilting techniques in this way gives women the chance to say 'No!' to the continuing eruption of violence in all our lives. Handmade textiles such as these convey experiences that are difficult or impossible to express in words. They cross the barriers of language and culture to communicate with other people. Most of the images speak for themselves.

In this exhibition you have the opportunity to see traditional pieces from the early period of Chile's dictatorship (1973 – 1990), along with some Peruvian pieces and more modern textiles. These modern pieces have been created by women who were inspired by the traditional *arpilleras* and chose to use this technique to depict their own lives and circumstances.

They do not only tell a story and a life experience, but they also trigger a reaction in the viewer. Those that view the pieces may feel a need to respond, either by acting or just engaging.

'The arpilleras are story tellers, for it is through them that these women have recorded and preserved the memory of a period of Chilean history that many others have chosen to forget.'

[From *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love, The Arpillera Movement in Chile 1974 – 1994*; Marjorie Agosín; foreword by Isabel Allende, 2nd Edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, USA, 2008]

I invite you to immerse yourself in these pieces, looking into their stories and *listening* to what they tell us. Let us explore where we are in relation to them and the world they represent and ask ourselves, ‘What can we do about this?’

Last but not least, let us look at them as contemporary art. They have been exhibited around the world not only in museums, but also by NGOs, churches, art galleries, schools, universities, libraries, women’s organisations and elsewhere. They are no longer a set of women’s crafts only accessible in the circles of those who know their stories and feel compassion and solidarity. They have gone beyond. Wherever they are shown, these arpilleras and quilts make themselves accessible to us, and encourage us to do more, to move beyond.

Enjoy them in all their inspiring aspects.

Roberta Bacic, Curator, October 2009

Photos by Colin Peck and Martin Melaugh
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For an extensive archive on this subject, visit
www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts

**25 Years of Peacemaking
Women Together
Northern Ireland, 1995
2.40m x 2.40m**

This quilt was made by thirty women from Ireland and beyond, in the context of the 25th Anniversary of '*Women Together*' (1970 - 1995).

Northern Ireland is emerging from a long-standing conflict, referred to as 'The Troubles'. It started in 1968/69 and continued for almost thirty years, until a ceasefire was declared in 1994. The 'Good Friday Peace Agreement' was reached in 1998.

It was during this conflict that *Women Together* was founded in 1970. The idea was inspired by Mrs. Ruth Agnew, a Protestant, who dreamt that women should unite and use their influence to promote peace and reconciliation within troubled Northern Ireland. She was introduced to Monica Patterson, an English Catholic living in Belfast; and given the urgency of the matter they held a first public meeting during which *Women Together* was born.

Women Together's aims:

- To bring about a cessation of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.
- To give support to the victims of sectarianism.
- To give women a 'voice' in society.
- To create a pluralistic society, where there is a mutual understanding and respect for our diversities.

Amongst their other actions and activities, *Women Together* made quilts. Pat Campbell acts as the co-ordinator of the *Peace Quilt Project*. Although the organisation is no longer active, Pat was asked to make this quilt available for the *Threads of Life* exhibition and said,

Visions of the Community
Bluebell Arts Project & Tina McLaughlin
Northern Ireland, 2008
1.60m x 2.00m

The Visions of Community quilt was produced by the *Bluebell Arts Project* in the summer of 2008 and funded by the Northern Ireland Arts Council and Derry City Council's Urban Regeneration fund. *Bluebell Arts Project* is an innovative community arts programme based in the Gasyard Centre, Derry; which targets often marginalised and over-looked groups, raising their profile through the arts.

For this project the production and design of a quilt was used as a vehicle for local women to discuss and define the history, vision and aspirations of their community. The women thought about the things they want and need, within and from, their immediate surroundings. From good housing to education, each square represents an element of community vision.

The eye in each corner represents 'community vision' and the people represent friends and family as the most important component of a good community. The figures are from different genders, racial backgrounds and generations and they are celebrated for their diversity. Many of the patches represent the identity and ideals of the local community, including local history (The Shirt Factory), the arts, employment, education, and hopes for the future (peace, housing, good health, new industry and tourism). The focal point of the quilt is Free Derry Corner. As well as representing the Bogside and Derry, it also represents a symbol of civil rights and equality for all.

The creation of this quilt was facilitated by Tina MacLaughlin, who was joined by visiting artist Heather Tuffery and local quilting queen Jackie O'Doherty. Tina also facilitated the *Bluebell Arts* quilting project '*Fabric of the Community*', which saw women of all ages and backgrounds working together to map their local area within a quilt.

We can read on this quilt,

'A quilt should keep you safe and warm, so should a good community. We are all patches on that quilt.'



Sew & Sew's Quilt
Castlerock Sew & Sew Quilting Group
Northern Ireland, 2003
2.30m x 3.20m

The creation of this piece was inspired by a visit to a quilt exhibition in Cultra, based on the shirt making industry in the North West. The Curator, Valerie Wilson, approached the *Castlerock Sew & Sew Quilting Group* and asked them to produce a quilt for an upcoming exhibition.

One of the quilt makers from the group said,

'It was our own design but based on traditional quilt patterns. Each of us took home shirt fabric which had been donated to the group and we made our own patch. The quilt is made from shirt and pyjama fabrics, embellished with cuffs, collars, tie pins, cuff links, shirt and pyjama buttons and ties.'

Another participant added,

'Some members of our group also included bits from shirts we had at home. The front of the quilt is made up of these traditional pieces while the back is made from squares of stack and whack. On the back are the names of the shirt factories that were based in the North West and also the names of all those involved with the making of the quilt.'

'We all enjoyed making the quilt especially when we came together as a traditional quilting bee for the binding of the quilt.'

A local newspaper from Northern Ireland produced an article about this quilt on the 25th August 2004. The article said,

'Those Crafty Sew and Sews!

A group of quilt makers from Castlerock are keen to show off their latest masterpiece – a quilt based on those made in the late 1700s. . . It took them six weeks to produce it. It was displayed at Cultra from the end of October until March this year.'



Side 1



Side 2

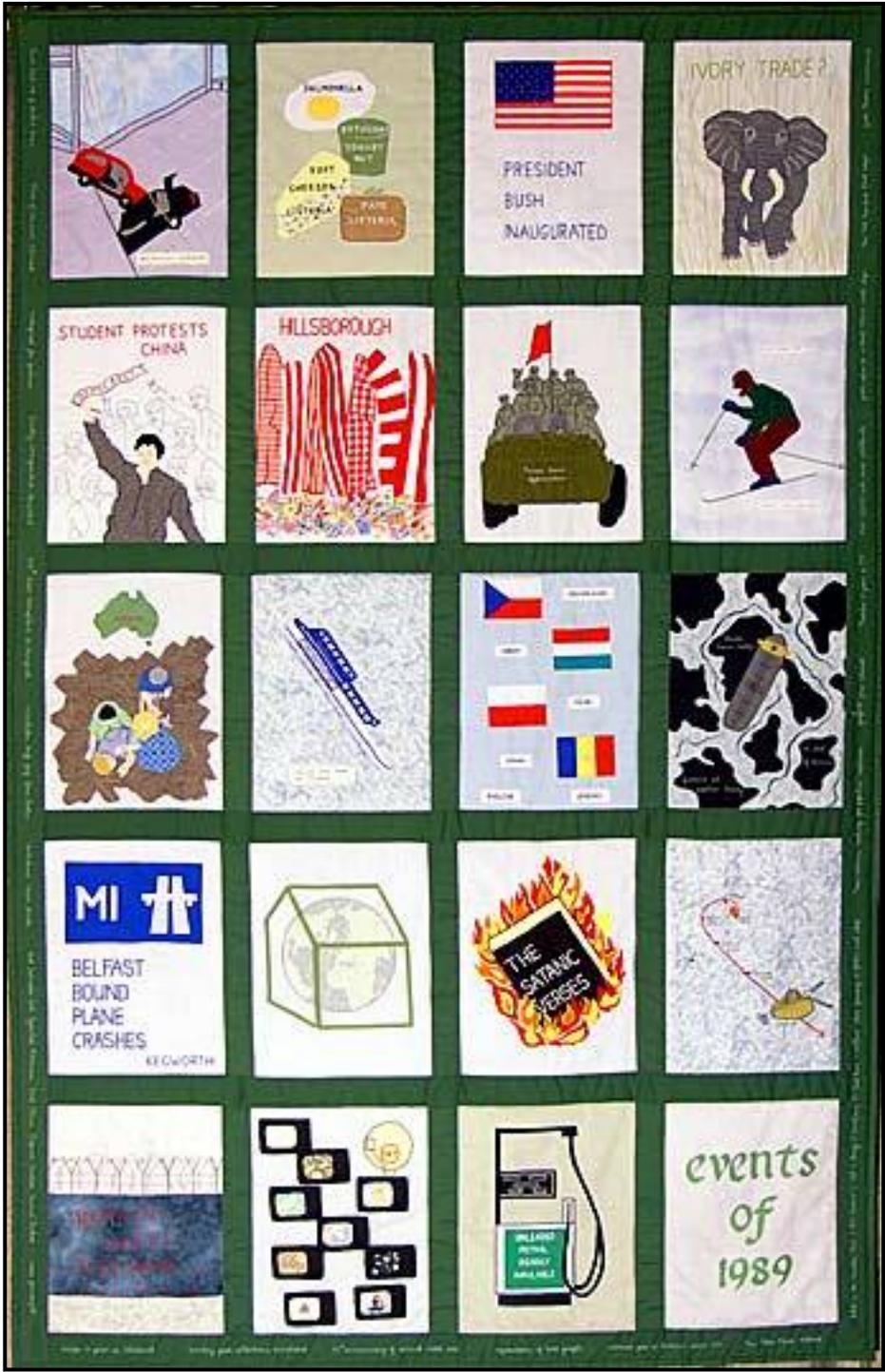
Yearly Quilt 1989
Irene MacWilliam
Northern Ireland, 1989
2.15m x 1.37m

Since 1986 Irene has made an annual 'Events of the Year' quilt. Each one consists of 20 panels depicting significant world events. Currently she is working on the 2009 quilt.

The following events of 1989 are shown on this quilt:

- San Francisco earthquake
- Salmonella, Listeria and Botulism scares
- President Bush inaugurated
- Ivory trading made illegal
- Student protests in China
- Hillsborough, football stadium disaster
- Russian troops leave Afghanistan
- Robert Swan walks to North and South Poles
- Australia's first fatal earthquake
- *Marchioness* disaster
- Fall of communist regimes
- Oil pollution from *Exxon Valdez*
- Belfast bound plane crashes
- Concern over the 'greenhouse effect'
- Publication of '*Satanic Verses*' and death threats on Salman Rushdie, publishers and booksellers
- *Voyager* rocket launched in 1979 reaches Neptune
- Opening of the Berlin Wall
- Launch of Sky TV
- Unleaded petrol now available in many garages
- Events of 1989

Irene's work can be found at <http://www.macwilliam.f9.co.uk>



¡Adiós Pinochet! (Goodbye Pinochet!)

Anon (Courtesy of Heidi and Peter Gessler, Switzerland)

Chile, mid 1980s

0.40m x 0.50m

Women have gathered in the streets of a modest neighbourhood in Chile to express their opinion and confront a situation, which they see is keeping them and their community from having a better life.

We can see that they are impoverished as they have no electricity supply in their little houses and have to steal it by attaching electrical cables to the source. In spite of this, they depict their homes in bright colours, with the classical mountains and sun in the background.

They are divided into two groups, each carrying a banner. One says, '*Out Pinochet!*' The other reads, '*Goodbye Pinochet!*'

This *arpillera* was made during a workshop delivered and supported by *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*. It was acquired in the context of international solidarity to end Pinochet's dictatorship.

Arpilleras are still available from www.fundacionsolidaridad.cl and other groups.



Corte de Agua (Water Cut)

Anon (Courtesy of Roberta Bacic, Northern Ireland)

Chile, late 1970s

0.40m x 0.50m

This is a traditional *arpillera* with the mountains of Chile and the sky and sun colourfully depicted in the background. Is this an indication of the *arpillerista*'s sense of courage and empowerment that underlies many of the messages in the quilts?

To stop this poor community from protesting, the government cut off their water supply saying, in effect, 'We don't care about you!' In order to survive, these women took their buckets to the homes of their middle-class neighbours to ask for water. Regardless of the government's water cut, not one woman went without water that day. The water they gathered from their neighbours was put into tanks to be shared by the community.

Such situations occurred often during Pinochet's regime and poor women were forced to find their voice. They realized that it was not enough to write complaints to the local newspapers, which were censored against such things anyway. Rather, they learned they must find different outlets, different ways to make their voices heard.

'Women have not forgotten the empowerment they gained when they learned they could change things by taking to the streets and protesting the dictatorship, and this confidence inspires them as they face Chile's contemporary problems.'



¿Dónde están los desaparecidos? (Where are the disappeared?)
Anon (Courtesy of Silvia Caspers, Germany)
Chile, 1980s
0.37m x 0.48m

This *arpillera* was made in the late 1980s in Santiago de Chile by one of the workshops at the *Vicaria de la Solidaridad*. It belongs to *Arpillera – Sammlung der Kinderhilfe Chile /Bonn* (The *arpillera* collection of a German solidarity group with Chilean children).

In this traditional *arpillera* the sun is in the sky, but there are also two large clouds showing, in what is normally a clear blue sky. We can not see the hills as the scene takes place in the midst of busy Santiago, the capital of Chile. A group of women dressed in colourful dresses are protesting in front of the Courts of Justice. They are holding a banner that reads, '*Where are the detained disappeared?*' We cannot see many passers-by; the action centres on this demonstration and aims to create awareness of the situation.

On the right hand side we can see two green silhouettes. The green corresponds to the colour of Chilean police uniforms. The figures are armed and standing next to a police car, but we can not see their features. They do not represent individual men who are acting, but the institution that represses the protestors.

The total number of officially recognized disappeared and executed people in Chile amounts to 3197, according to the statistics issued by the *National Corporation of Reparation and Reconciliation* at the end of 1996.

The *Chilean Truth Commission* and follow-up bodies were set up with the aim of finding out what happened to each disappeared person, trying to find the remains of the bodies where possible, or at least passing on information to the next of kin. Reparations have been put in place for directly related relatives of acknowledged victims.



**¡Municipio: escúchanos! (Council: listen to us!)
Elizabeth Basilio from Meeting Communal
(Courtesy of Gaby Franger & Rainer Huhle, Germany)
Peru, 1987
0.50m x 0.55m**

These Peruvian villagers have taken to the streets to demand that their local governing body guarantee their needs and enable them to live a normal life.

The banner at the front says, '*Communal meeting: Live Peru!*'

The other banners say,
'*The Mayor does not want to see us!*'
'*We demand solutions!*'
'*We have no sewage!*'
'*We want water!*'
'*We want electricity!*'
'*We have no mobility!*'

These indigenous people have not been consulted or listened to, so they have to demonstrate in the streets. They proudly identify themselves as indigenous by wearing their traditional clothing and plaiting their hair in the characteristic way of the Andean people. They also identify themselves as *Meeting Communal*, the name of their group. They have clearly decided to act as a group to solve their problems.

This *arpillera* uses unusual colours, though it keeps the classical pattern of mountains at the back and a big sun that shines for all.



***Baile Puneño* (Puno folk dance)**
Anon (Courtesy of Julie Coimbra, England)

Peru

0.40m x 0.50m

This Peruvian *arpillera* was made in one of the well-known workshops of Lima. I found it at the house of a librarian friend in Cambridge in October 2008. This wall hanging had been brought to England about 20 years ago and had been in her home all that time. It represents the traditional folk dance *Baile Puneño*, which is danced in Puno and other places in Peru.

The city of Puno is located in the southeast corner of Peru, on the shores of the magnificent Lake Titicaca, just 126km from the frontier with Bolivia. At an altitude of 3,827m, Puno is a mix of various cultures including the *Aymara* from the south and the *Quechua* from the north. This has earned Puno the title of 'Folklore Capital of Peru' famous for its huge number and variety of traditional fiestas, dances and music.

The scene is centred on the dancers who are wearing festival clothes and hats, like those worn in Bolivia. *Bailes Puneños* is danced at the time of *La Candelaria* festivity which is a religious Catholic celebration marked by a carnival. The couples dance in pairs on stage or in a specially prepared arena only for dancers and players. Everyone else stands behind a fence, watching and cheering on the performers.

Indigenous people in Peru, along with many other Peruvians, keep their traditions alive as a way of maintaining community bonds and asserting their identity.



***Retorno de los exiliados* (Return of the exiles)**

Victoria Diaz Caro (Courtesy of Silvia Caspers, Germany)

Chile, 1992

0.50m x 0.40m

This colourful *arpillera* was made in 1992, when Chile's dictatorship had ended. It belongs to *Arpillera – Sammlung der Kinderhilfe Chile /Bonn* (The *arpillera* collection of a German solidarity group with Chilean children).

It shows the happy reunion of a family group that had been separated by exile. Like in most wars and conflicts, exile or displacement are immediate consequences that affect the core of social life, either that of a family or the larger society.

Exile in Chile took place in a number of different ways. At the time of the military coup in 1973, many people who were part of Salvador Allende's government took refuge in sympathetic embassies to escape persecution and human rights violations. Some escaped by crossing the Andes or using other routes. Others, after being imprisoned and often tortured, were expelled and had to leave the country to wherever they were received. Other people had to take what was called 'economic exile', as they had been fired from work and had no way to survive in their homeland with their families. Some were even deprived of their Chilean nationality.

After the end of the dictatorship, returning home brought new problems. The magnitude of the problem meant that in 1990, on the establishment of what is called 'transitional democracy', the newly elected president Patricio Aylwin tackled the issue. A law was passed through parliament [18.1994] that created the '*Oficina Nacional del Retorno*' (National Office for the Return). This office remained until 1994 and the number of people registered reached 52 557. These people had been living in 70 different countries around the world, with the highest numbers returning from Sweden, Argentina, Canada,

France and Germany. [Source: *Reparation Policies in Chile 1990-2004*; by Elizabeth Lira and Brian Loveman]



***No al plebiscito* (No to the plebiscite)**

Anon (Courtesy of Roberta Bacic, Northern Ireland)

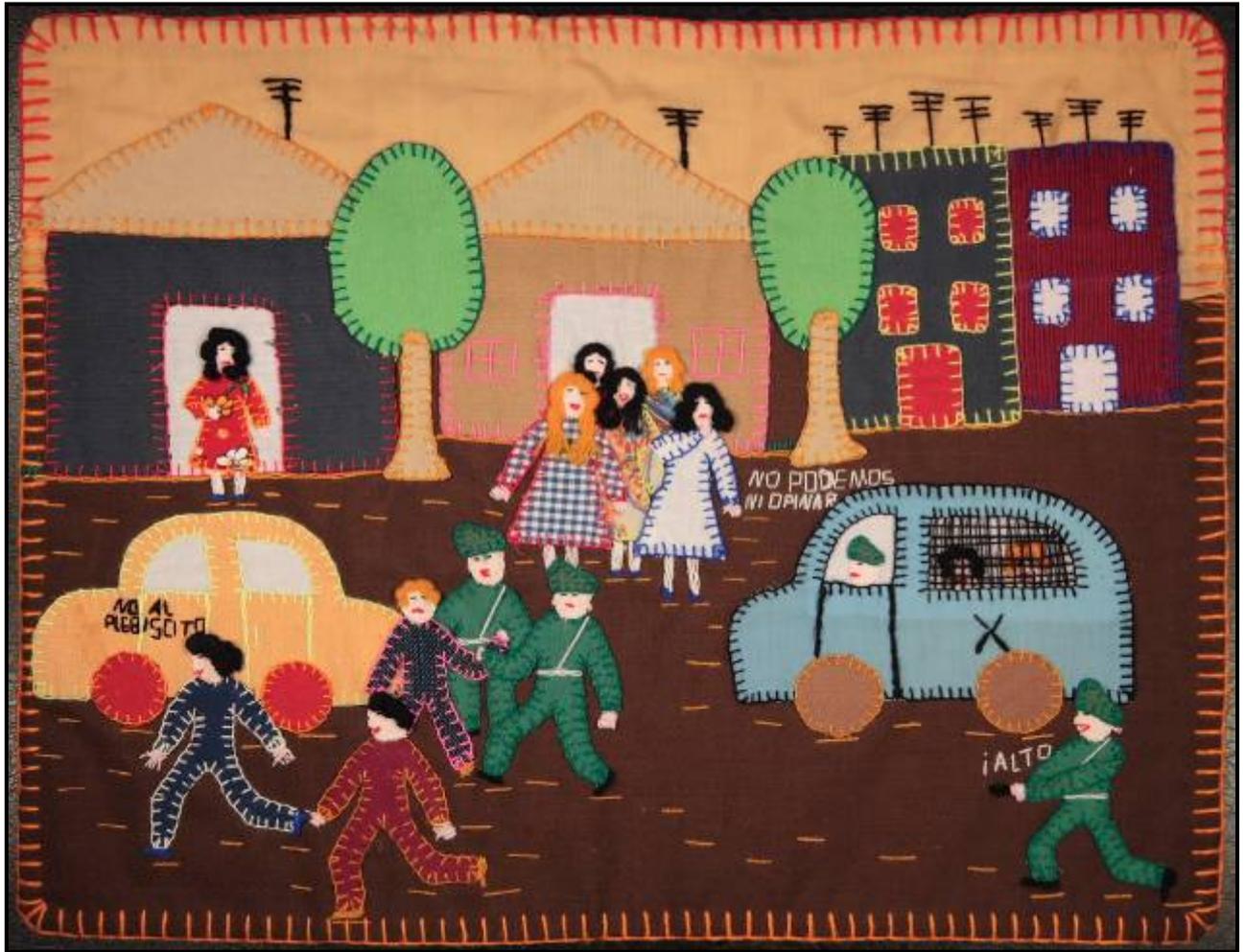
Chile, 1980

0.38m x 0.48m

I acquired this *arpillera* in July 2009 in Germany. It belonged to a retired crafts Teacher who had received it as a present around 27 years ago. I was put in touch with her, having spread the word of my interest in being able to get hold of pieces that would benefit from exposure.

It is a very striking image that recalls a political momentum which I have not seen recorded before in the *arpilleras* literature. In 1973, when the military dictatorship took over the country, Chile lived under a state of emergency. General Pinochet ordered a new Constitution which was to be ratified by a plebiscite in 1980. Government propaganda said that a 'Yes' vote would bring about full democracy. Many people were not fooled by this propaganda, but some people argued that it was better to have a constitution than to continue under the state of emergency, which had already lasted seven years.

The scene in the *arpillera* vividly describes what happened to people who opposed it. They were confronted with violence by the police, arrested and cruelly beaten. But many voted 'No' none the less.



Como hacer una arpillera (How to make an arpillera)
Taller Fundación Solidaridad (Courtesy of Roberta Bacic)
Chile, 2007
0.40m x 0.50m

This modern *arpillera* was made in 2007 in one of the workshops supported by *Fundación Solidaridad* in Chile. It was given to me by a Chilean friend as a way to be present in spirit at the launch of the exhibition '*The Politics of Chilean Arpilleras*' in 2008, at the Harbour Museum in Derry, Northern Ireland. The *arpilleras* workshops of today are a testimony and continuation of those started during the harsh times of the dictatorship. Today they use different topics, they are sold as crafts and souvenirs and they also use more standardised materials.

The history of the *Vicaría arpilleras* workshops dates back to the 1970s. The Chilean Catholic Cardinal, Raúl Silva Henríquez, asked Pope Paul VI to be allowed to create the *Vicariate of Solidarity*, due to the urgent need to assist a substantial part of the Chilean population that had been under total neglect since the start of the military coup on 11 September 1973. His first task was the defence of human rights violations against those persecuted by the regime. It worked from January 1976 and continued until 31 December 1992, by which time Chile had a transition to democratic government, a Truth Commission had been put in place by the Chilean government and its outcome had been made public. It is in this scenario that the *arpilleras* workshops started to operate.

What does this *arpillera* show us? It wants us to focus on the *arpilleras* as a craft, art and working activity of women. It shows us the different stages and elements of how to make an *arpillera*. These modern pieces do not compare to the traditional textiles that told us the stories of repression, hardship and human rights violations, they want us to value *arpilleras* in their own right.

New *arpilleras* can be bought at <http://www.fundacionsolidaridad.cl/>



Crossing Paths
Group of professional women from Barcelona
Spain, 2008/2009
0.45m x 0.58m

This piece shows how six women crossed paths in Derry, during 'The Art of Survival Exhibition' in 2008.

These women participated in 'Women's real lives', an International Women's Day event in Derry. The piece was exhibited in March at the Tower Museum together with other pieces submitted by individual women and women's groups. When invited to write a caption for their piece they wrote,

'We are from different countries, with different professions and of different age groups. As our paths crossed we were able to travel to Derry to network with people from here.'

'We saw quilts and *arpilleras* from all around the world which showed us how much human experience has in common. This group came together when Roberta Bacic taught a post graduate course in Barcelona and invited those interested to come to Derry. Therefore, the five of us; a professor (who is a Doctor), three students (who are two Social Workers and a Community Psychologist) and the mother of one of them (who is a Nurse) travelled to Derry.'

'We learned from each other, from those we met in Derry, from the history of the place and from viewing the quilts and *arpilleras*. This inspired us to create our own *arpillera* which depicts our experience. In the piece you can see some houses, the Tower Museum and the women whose paths crossed.'



Vareando las aceitunas (Knocking down the olives)

Isabel Alcalá Olivera

Spain, 2009

0.49m x 0.44m

This piece was made by 69 year old Isabel Alcalá Olivera in Barcelona, Spain, during an International Women's Day course. Isabel attended the 12-sessions course at *Fundacio Ateneu San Roc*, which was facilitated by María Viñiolo and Alba Pérez.

When asked to describe her work, Isabel said,

'In the countryside in Cáceres, where I was raised, the first step was to carefully gather the green olives and then knock down the black ones by beating the branches with a stick. You have to use ladders and buckets to carefully collect the green ones, so that they don't break. When they are all black they fall to the floor when the branches are struck, and from these we made olive oil. All the oil that we needed for the house was just there all around us. As well as the olives we had other harvests and animals too.'

'When we would harvest the olives, sometimes my brothers and sisters and I would collect all the olives from a property which wasn't ours. The owners would provide the land and we would provide the labour. We lived from what we grew ourselves; there was never any kind of wage paid. Whatever we harvested we would take to the landowners in the local town. Everything was divided in half; it was a job for my whole family.'

'It was a hard time for me because I had friends that would go into town whilst I had to stay and work in the country.'

This image captures in arpillera technique the whole story behind the production of olive oil; an essential commodity of everyday life for rural Mediterranean communities. It was surely a hard form of self-

sufficiency with the surplus harvest sent to market. No comparison with us buying olives and olive oil today in markets and delicatessen shops.



No Going Back
Sonia Copeland
Northern Ireland, 2009
0.45m x 0.56m

Sonia has made quilts for a long time, but this is her first *arpillera*. She made it specially when invited to do a piece for the exhibition '*Arpilleras that cry out*', at Flowerfield Arts Centre, Northern Ireland, Sonia had been involved in other exhibitions and had seen *arpilleras* on numerous occasions.

This piece relates to two events in Northern Ireland early in 2009, in which three deaths occurred. More than ten years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement had paved the way to peace and brought an end to 30 years of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, these deaths shook people on all sides of the community. Many people took to the streets to protest and to express their rejection of these attacks.

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 Azimkar.'

'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 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 by certain sections of our society. 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.'



A Special Place in our Hearts

Linda Adams

England, 2009

1.95m x 0.69m

In October 2008, Linda attended the exhibition '*The Politics of Chilean Arpillera*' at the Centre for Latin American Studies, Cambridge University. This exhibition was held in the context of the *Festival of Ideas*.

Linda's genuine interest in *arpilleras* led me to invite her to participate in '*Women's real lives*', an International Women's Day event in Derry, Northern Ireland. Her work was exhibited at the Tower Museum, together with other pieces submitted by individual women and women's groups. This collection of four pieces shows the park nearest to her home in spring, summer, autumn and winter.

When asked about this piece, Linda says,

'The park has a special place in the snapshots of women's lives. From the first faltering steps supported by a proud mother, to giggling teenagers experimenting with make-up and drink, lovers carving their initials on a tree, bridal photos and elderly couples on a bench.'

'These textiles, inspired by Roberta Bacic's collection of Latin American arpilleras, are an attempt to express my feelings about the park and the women who go there. The fabrics I used are scraps from years of dressmaking and embroidery which remind me of my children and women I met on an embroidery course.'

With these *arpilleras* Linda clearly shows she has paid attention to what is going on in her community, the characteristics of each season and that she is willing to share her feelings and experiences with us. Her work could also inspire viewers to express their observations and insights into community life in any form that appeals to them.



Overdue, Overdrawn, Over-extended: Rural Poverty in Ireland
Deborah Stockdale
Ireland, 2009
0.50m x 0.60m

Deborah is a well-known textile artist who has had solo and group exhibitions. She also facilitates workshops and acts as an arts advisor to community projects. This is her second *arpillera*. She made it specially when invited to do a piece for an exhibition called 'Arpilleras that cry out' at Flowerfield Arts Centre, Northern Ireland, Deborah had been involved in other exhibitions and had seen *arpilleras* on numerous occasions.

This piece represents a very current and topical issue that affects us all. When asked about her work, Deborah said,

'The inspiration behind this piece stems from the entire economic shutdown we see around us. This affects people in rural areas in specific, but not always obvious ways. Many farming families are feeling incredible economic pressure as subsidies are being withdrawn, the market is contracting and cash flow is drying up.'

'A lot of farmers are over-extended financially to banks and other institutions. During boom times they spent heavily on new machinery, or expanding their farms, but now they are facing massive debts with no means of repayment, except by the sale of land, which is also a very depressed market.'

'Although from an outsider's point-of-view, they seem prosperous enough on their farms; they can be quite without the means to continue their lives in the former way, and it is likely many will not be able to continue on the land, nor pass that land to their families later.'

'Thus a whole lifestyle and an important segment of society is lost. Many are living lives of quiet desperation, with foreclosures and bankruptcies more and more common. Many farming families see no way forward.'



The Pride of New Barns
Linda Adams
England, 2009
0.60m x 0.70m

This *arpillera* was made especially for the Guinness Liverpool Irish Festival 2009. When asked to describe this piece, Linda said,

'All of the fabrics for this piece are from clothes belonging to a girl who had just left home to go to college. Some date from when she was 14. Her mother was upset to part with them and having seen my other arpilleras, asked me to do one using her daughter's clothes. She did not want to give them to a charity, destroy them or leave them on the shelves, as they would make her feel the void left by her daughter leaving home. I was very moved by this and offered to give it to her when it had been exhibited. She refused, but said she would like some photographs of the finished piece.'

'This arpillera is my tribute to those who come together and turn parts of the concrete jungle into places where people can experience growing and harvesting healthy vegetables. At New Barns allotments we had a lot of problems with vandalism, but we refused to give up.'

'Working on an allotment is a great way to make friends and share ideas. Everyone is welcome. We have many immigrant families in the area. When a shed is built everyone brings what they can and we have a party, which is a good chance to enjoy food from other countries.'



**The Hills of Donegal - Remembering
Deborah Stockdale
Ireland, 2009
1.35m x 0.80m**

This Irish appliqué and embroidered wall-hanging was made especially for the Guinness Liverpool Irish Festival 2009.

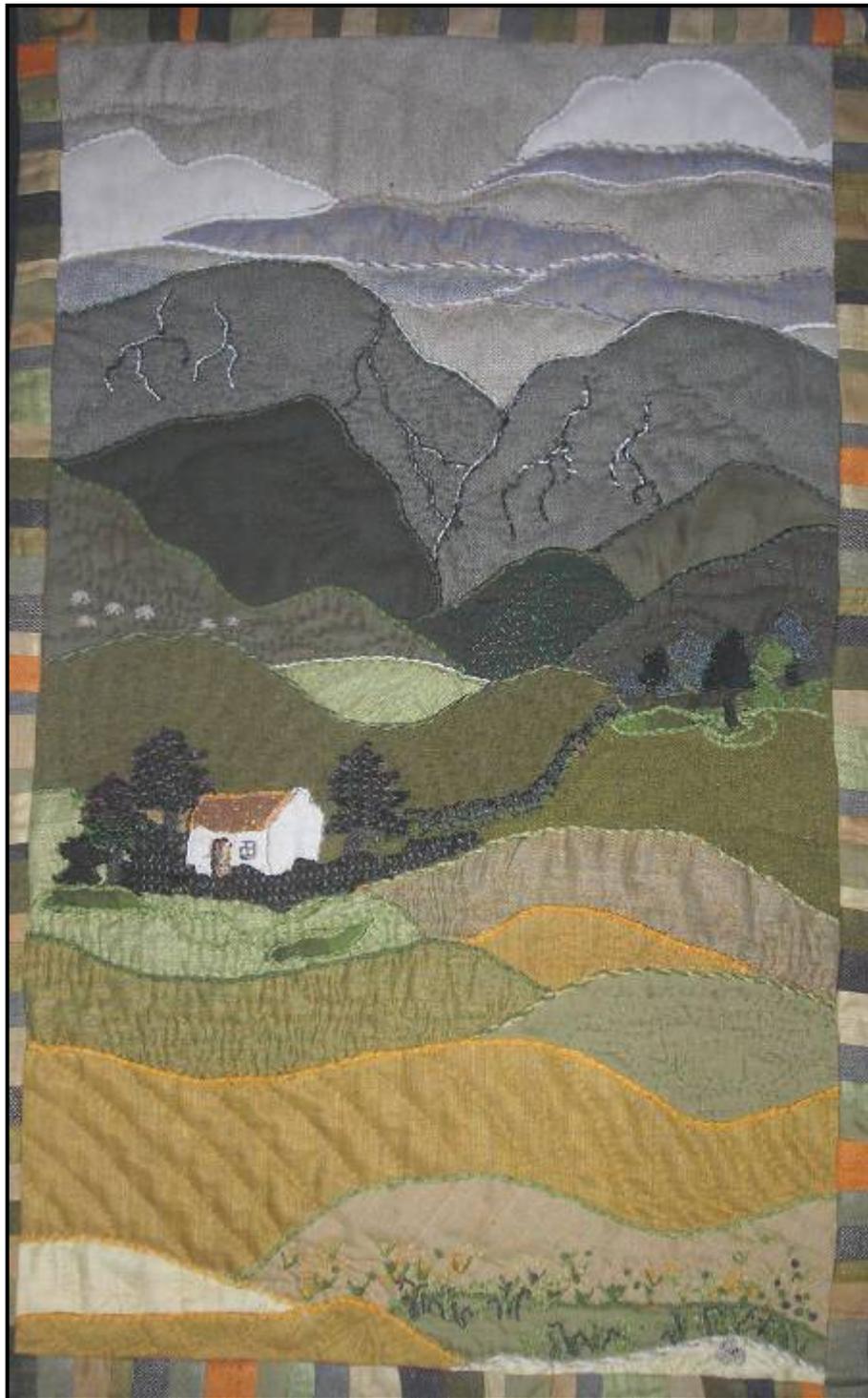
In Deborah's own words,

'The images that appear on this wall-hanging are at first glance, peaceful, bucolic, and nostalgic. Golden fields in the foreground move upward to rising hills. Darker, more massive shapes of high hills and glaciated mountains move towards the sky line. A single cottage sits nestled in trees, half obscure, perhaps even half derelict. To many this is an idyllic scene, something from a picture postcard of Ireland in the past; a relic of a part of traditional and rural Irish history. But to me, it represents a somewhat different history and a different story.'

'The cottage sits alone in a much marginalised farming area. The juxtaposition of a homely house and an awesome, rugged landscape represents a vanishing way of life; that of the hill farmers of Donegal. Humanity seems insignificant in contrast with such geologic scale. Depopulation due to economic and physical hardship, long distances to travel to services and social interaction; these are the fate of the hill farmers.'

'In an increasingly fast-paced and technological world, they have become an anachronism; a relic of a bygone lifestyle. Their cottages, often abandoned when the cottagers die without heirs, become memorials to a lost ways of life; a symbol of entire generations, who worked the land for centuries, living in close harmony with the seasons, crops and animals.'

'The countryside in Donegal is scattered with abandoned homesteads, the marks of their crops still apparent on the soil, the stone walls sagging and broken, as are the cottages. They are still beautiful, but in a way that serves as a reminder of all the vanished men and women who called them 'home' for so long.'



Warrington Peace Quilt
Sylvia Burgess
England
1.30m X 1.05m

This piece was loaned to this exhibition by Pat Campbell, the Coordinator of the *Peace Quilt Project*, which began in 1970. When asked about this piece, Pat said,

'In March 1993 a bomb went off in Warrington, killing two little boys out shopping for Mother's Day gifts. The disaster, sadness and loss for the families and the town's folk alerted peace groups in England and Ireland and a young mother from Dublin, Susan McHugh, formed a group called Peace 93.'

'I had been in peace work in Northern Ireland for almost 20 years then. Susan and her group and some of us from Northern Ireland started a network with Warrington. A gentleman and his wife, Chris and Tina Whitehead started the Warrington Community Peace Walks. These walks were held all over England and Ireland, North and South, raising money to help peace and the victims' families.'

'It was through the network with the Whitehead family and the Peace Walks that we travelled to Warrington, where we met Sylvia Burgess. Sylvia had organised the making of the Warrington Peace Quilt with a group of other women. On one of our visits to Liverpool, when we were peace-walking in Hope Street, towards the Anglican Cathedral, Sylvia and her helpers presented us with this quilt. We all walked together to the Roman Catholic Cathedral at the opposite end of Hope Street carrying the quilt. It seemed appropriate to be walking along Hope Street, full of hope for peace in Northern Ireland, Warrington and all over.'

'This quilt is an emblem for peace and we were proud to take it home after the services in both cathedrals. By then it was 1998, things were changing and peace was on the horizon. Sadly Sylvia is not longer with us. She died from cancer some time later.'