

## **Peacemakers - The Launch of John and Pat Hume Commemorative Textiles, January, 28 2022**

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There is a moment of awe and a craning of necks to get a look from our prescribed social distance. The small gathering have come together on the first floor of the Magee Campus library; only the inner circle of the Hume family, and a handful of staff from each of the partner organisations: Ulster University, the Hume Foundation, and Conflict Textiles. Mo Hume and Dr Colin Davidson have the honour of unclipping the starched linen serviettes to reveal the carefully stitched artworks below (a small touch conceived by Conflict Textiles curator Roberta Bacic – inspired by her last conversation with Pat Hume in August about Derry's great textile industry).

This is of course the climax of the unveiling event, the first public viewing of two artworks dedicated to the memory of John and Pat Hume, commissioned respectively by the John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace and Conflict Textiles. The former, 'John Hume, Peacemaker' was made by Irish-American Donegal based artist Deborah Stockdale and the latter, 'Pat Hume', produced by English artist Linda Adams.

### **A textile language**

Before the unveiling Roberta Bacic explained the work of Conflict Textiles, seeking to develop a textile language and assert the value of textile art as means of processing traumatic or emotional experiences and sharing testimony that could not be shared in words. Conflict Textiles houses a physical collection of textile works produced in areas of conflict around the world, also managing a digital archive hosted by Ulster University's Conflict Archive on the INternet (CAIN). They run workshops, seminars, and exhibitions and although based in Northern Ireland, their outreach is transnational.

Sadly Brandon Hamber, the John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace, was unable to attend and was sorely missed. Professor Emeritus Gillian Robinson acted as MC, reading out a letter written by Professor Hamber, and sharing her own fond memories of the Humes. Professor Malachy O'Neill, Director of Regional Engagement also spoke of the lasting connections both John and Pat had with the Magee campus. Mo Hume, representing the whole Hume family stated the gratitude they all felt for the tribute to her parents. As much as they were architects of change, they were equally a loving partnership and the centre of a home.

Dr Colin Davidson, recently appointed Chancellor of Ulster University, and famed portraitist concurred with Bacic's earlier words, and shared his own thoughts on textile art. He described the work of the Humes as 'the drawing of threads... connecting people who were not connected before'.

The process began in 2021. It was Roberta Bacic who suggested to the John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair, the idea of commissioning a work in memory of John Hume. Once details were agreed, Pat Hume spoke with Deborah Stockdale about her late husband before her own passing in September 2021. It was not long afterwards that curator Roberta Bacic of Conflict Textiles commissioned a second piece to commemorate the woman who was not only a loving wife and mother, but a peace activist in her own right.

### **The stitches in the face**

In conversations with Deborah Stockdale, she revealed not only the extensive work that went into planning and sewing 'John Hume, Peacemaker', but the care that went into each stage. The oak branches for which Derry is named, with five acorns for each of the Hume children, the almost uncannily detailed eyes peering out behind glasses lenses of shimmering organza and a tie, made from one of John's own, given to Roberta Bacic by Pat. The stitches in the face are so dense the needle had to be pulled through at points with a pair of pliers.

Linda Adams, while not present, prepared to make her piece by poring over photos of Pat Hume, taking note of style, mannerisms and posture to best emulate her essence, from her pattern silk scarves to the tilt of her head. A member of the family said 'that was just Pat', speaking of how she engaged with others, always compassionate and understanding to any member of the community regardless of background or beliefs.

### **The 'peace baby' generation**

In front of the two textiles is a case of personal effects, mostly provided by Mo Hume: two silk scarves, a tie (given by Pat to curator Roberta Bacic), photos and an old pair of glasses. These artifacts have seen a lifetime of care and dedication for Derry. On the ground floor is also a case of memorabilia ranging from political leaflets, to documents from the Derry Credit Union (of which John Hume was a key founding member) to a hand written letter from a child in 1993 pleading for peace.

For myself, a young woman of the 'peace baby' generation, John Hume and his colleagues quite literally shaped my life. Without their perseverance I might have been born into a much more divided country, but instead it was one fresh with hope, the sort of hope that only comes with new beginnings. We have no memories of checkpoints or rifles, and for us a bomb scare has only ever been a scare. While the legacy of conflict still lives on, we have come so far not only as a country, but as a community.

*'John Hume, Peacemaker' and 'Pat Hume' is open to the public can be seen alongside personal effects, memorabilia and a selection of reading materials at Magee Library until 28 July 2022.*

*The exhibit is located on the First Floor of Ulster University Magee Campus Library, Block MM. Members of the public are advised to follow Ulster University's current Covid guidelines of wearing face coverings and remaining socially distanced while visiting the exhibit.*