

Conflict Textiles

This international textiles collection encompasses 390 arpilleras, quilts and wall hangings, focused on elements of conflict and human rights abuses. Arpilleras - three-dimensional appliquéd tapestries of Chilean origin - became the medium for women to denounce the human rights abuses of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (1973-1990). Since 2008, these textiles have been exhibited in a variety of venues worldwide, seeding many new partnerships in the process.

A digital archive set up in 2008, and maintained by Dr Martin Melaugh, CAIN Director at Ulster University, houses information on the collection.

<http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflicttextiles/>

This three-piece installation of Chilean arpilleras spans more than 45 years of Chilean resistance, primarily from the perspective of grassroots people. From the mothers in the 1970s stitching memories of happier times with family members and relatives who were disappeared by the Pinochet regime, to the student movement demanding reform of the neoliberal policies of the Piñera government in 2011 – a theme which recurs in the 2019 demonstrations sparked by the metro fare hike - we see repression, denouncement and demands for a transformation of the existing order.

1 Vamos a la playa en micro / Let's go to the beach by bus

Chilean arpillera, Anonymous, c.1977

A woman whose two sons were disappeared made this arpillera during a workshop, most likely in Santiago. It depicts travelling to the beach along the popular minibus Ovalle Negrete route; the vehicle packed to capacity with passengers and their belongings. These happy memories were a brief reprieve from the harshness of her present life, giving her strength to continue the struggle.

2 Paro de los estudiantes' chilenos 2 / Chilean students' strike 2

Chilean arpillera, Pamela Luque, 2012

This arpillera focuses on the mass student movement in Chile, which in 2011 organised a series of marches and creative actions across several cities, demanding free education and reform of the neoliberal policies imposed by the rightwing government of Sebastián Piñera. This piece draws on the techniques of the early Chilean arpilleristas, which Pamela, now resident in Ireland, learned as a young woman in Chile.

3 La revuelta de los \$30 chilenos / The \$30 Chilean pesos revolt

Chilean arpillera, Aurora Ortiz, 2020

Through these striking images Aurora Ortiz depicts the demonstrations that began in October 2019 in Plaza Dignidad, Santiago. A 30 peso increase in metro fares was the tipping point in a long litany of price hikes which galvanised people to demand reform of the 30 years of neoliberal policies in Chile. The black silhouettes denote the broad spectrum of protesters: the students' movement; the general public; and the anarchist movement. Each pupil, dripping blood, signifies the more than 445 people who suffered serious eye injuries or lost an eye from police fired pellets and tear gas. Their size symbolises an awakened Chile as articulated by the protesters' common slogan "Chile woke up".

