

# CONFLICT TEXTILES

Power point, 1<sup>st</sup> slide

Not for publication

The Poetry of Stitching:

arpilleras and their transnational voices

Roberta Bacic, Conflict Textiles collector and curator

1. It is a real honour to be able to join you in person at Oshima Hakko Museum in Nagano, Japan, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the military coup in Chile. This gathering has been made possible by Tomomitsu Oshima and all the collaborators at the museum.

It is also 50 years since the death of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who is well known here in Oshima Hakko Museum.

I would like to offer our tribute to Professor Masaaki Takahashi who had the vision to feel and read the language and power of arpilleras.

He met arpilleristas in Chile; he did solidarity work with them and incorporated arpilleras as visual testimonies in his writings.

Show his book



Even more so, he acquired many arpilleras to be in solidarity with the makers, engaged in solidarity activities to bring their testimonies to Japan, spread the voice and supported the women in the shantytowns of Santiago

and beyond.

He then donated the arpilleras to the Oshima Hakko Museum and they constitute the backbone of the arpillera collection this museum holds. I am sure you have all seen prior to this event the arpilleras display that we have also uploaded onto the Conflict Textiles live archive, [Never Forget September 11, 1973](#)

From a curatorial point of view, they are displayed in a very special way, they resemble the humble home of an arpillerista and her family, and it is almost like being in their home.

I will leave at the museum a crochet cloth made in Chile in the 1980's and a linen hand crocheted family heirloom made in Northern Ireland at least 100 years ago. *Will show them and refer very briefly to them.*

2. Over the years, through needle and thread, pencil and paper we have been able to share the experiences of community building and loss using the textile language of arpilleras and poetry. For centuries, POEMS have been built into testimony, feelings and memory and now we stitch together ARPILLERAS. These textiles are born, as Primo Levi states in his book *If This Is a Man*, from the urge to find a new language with which to tell the story and bear witness to the experiences that have disrupted the normal course of life.

I will read in Spanish the poem by Jaime Huenun. Attach the English version for translation in advance into Japanese. Maybe hand out? I will introduce the poet briefly.

3. 11<sup>th</sup> September 1973 destroyed a social and political project and dream that aimed at building a fairer society. It is very graphic to visualise the needle in, needle out as a way to mend or build the narrative that the dictatorship decided to suppress.

Arpilleristas became the voice of the voiceless, the ones who spoke out. They became the protagonists of their own circumstances; speaking out instead of being forgotten or taking on the role of simply the victim. We will share in

**Violeta Morales's own words how arpilleras were born.**

**Before the clip will introduce very briefly Violeta.**

**Show clip from Scraps of Life, 00.01 to 01.12. Translate subtitles into Japanese**

**4. We are here together today to celebrate our journey. We have built trans-national and trans-cultural bridges, with understanding, camaraderie, collaboration and much more. We are leaving a trace; footsteps for others to follow and for us to strengthen and deepen. It is important to mention today Tomoko Sakai who came to Northern Ireland in December 2006 to study the Northern Ireland conflict. In her search for exploring peace initiatives in Northern Ireland, she met the Chilean arpilleras and me. What captivated and called her attention? It does not need an answer. It is built into the visible and invisible threads that are tangible in this exhibition in Oshima Hakko Museum. These threads wind back to Osaka, Sendai, Kyoto, Nagasaki and are kept alive via our constantly updated archive at CAIN Ulster University.**

**Go into the link to share screen of CAIN, will very briefly refer to each and stop at Curatorial Visit and read the highlighted**

**[Visit to Oshima Hakko Museum by Roberta Bacic to assist in the documentation of a set of 88 Chilean arpilleras formerly held in storage by the museum.](#)**

**In February 2013 Tomoko and I did a curatorial visit to study and document the arpilleras which Masaaki Takahashi had brought back from Chile. In bringing back these arpilleras he wished to be in solidarity with the arpilleristas and also to insert them into the Japanese culture. What better place than a local museum dedicated to poetry! Here is a memento photo of that visit. The mountains of Nagano provide the background to this photo and the Andes Mountains are the background material of so many of the Chilean arpilleras. We are also marking 10 years since the 1<sup>st</sup> exhibition of arpilleras at the museum.**

**It is also important to say that arpilleras from Oshima Hakko museum have**

travelled transnationally, have been part of exhibitions in many countries and keep testimonial presence in museums, communities, universities and libraries. Once the exhibitions are over they remain forever in our archives, leaflets, articles and populate different geographies and social contexts.

5. Insert on screen a photo of Oshima Hakko & Pablo Neruda on PowerPoint Poet Oshima Hakko, a poet of the earth, translated Pablo Neruda, a Chilean poet of the earth. Inspired by the “Ode to the onion”, will unveil the journey and life of one of the arpilleristas well represented in the collection in this museum which is interwoven with our Conflict Textiles collection.

Hand over the arpillera

Here will read in Spanish, requires Japanese translation that could be on screen.

*Onion,  
luminous flask,  
your beauty formed  
petal by petal,  
crystal scales expanded you  
and in the secrecy of the dark earth  
your belly grew round with dew.*

*Cebolla  
luminosa redoma,  
pétalo a pétalo  
se formó tu hermosura,  
escamas de cristal te acrecentaron  
y en el secreto de la tierra oscura  
se redondeó tu vientre de rocío.*

6 + 7. Will use CAIN archive to navigate through Violeta Morales’s documented arpilleras on Conflict Textiles. Will refer to number 1, 3 & 4

Open web on <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/conflictextiles/search-quilts2/searchtextiles1/?quilter=morales&Search=Search>

I now refer to number 5, Violeta Morales' life story that was donated in 2015 by Koos Bartels, the Netherlands, via Lidwien vos the Wael, in the context of the exhibition "Arpilleras: Verhalen over leven / Arpilleras: stories of life and survival".

Show on screen these 2 photos, she and I participating in a non violent action. I will speak very briefly to it as we demonstrated together in several opportunities. Photo 2 was an action in 1988 in front of Government Palace in Santiago.





**8 -10. La Cueca Sola, national CUECA dance transformed into a denunciation performance.**

**Show briefly the 2022 arpillera by Aurora Ortiz that shows Cueca chilena.**

**It has Arabic-Andalusian origin, an art that was brought by the colonial hero José Miguel Carrera. This traditional folk dance has four fundamental pillars: singing, poetry, music and dance. Play briefly 1 minute <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6Yc08jxor0>**

**Oshima Hakko, by Gala Torres, owns the arpillera La cueca sola / Dancing cueca alone. It was made by her in 1989 and presently it is part of the Ulster Museum exhibition Inclusive Global Histories It will come down in November 2023 and travel back to Oshima Hakko in early 2024.**

Here Gala Torres dancing Cueca Sola on the 12th March 1990 with the Folk Group of the Relatives of the Disappeared People. It took place in the National Stadium of Santiago de Chile on the day the new democratically elected president took office.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2fQ4WNafDg>

11. To end this presentation I want to launch with all of you the just published book *Arpilleras Poéticas*, co-authored by Chilean poet Jaime Huenun and myself. It is in vein with our event today as it commemorates 50 years since the Chilean military coup, 40 years of journey between the authors and also 40 years of life of the publisher PEHUEN.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December it will be launched in Chile, together with an exhibition of all the 34 included arpilleras, at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

#### Arpilleras Poéticas

It is moving to know that the 1<sup>st</sup> person to receive the book was the Museum's director, Tomomitsu Oshima, as I had to wait 2 weeks to hold it in my hands, and today I can share it with you.

Let us now celebrate together.

Roberta Bacic, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Reviewed 15 September 2023