Small Actions Big Movements

An arpillera and quilt exhibition as part of the International Conference of WRI (War Resisters International), co-hosted by Ceasefire Campaign of South Africa and Embrace Dignity

2 July - 9 July 2014, Cape Town

Foreword –

By Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge and Matt Meyer

Truth can be a powerful force, but alone it cannot guarantee victory.

India's champion of decolonization, nonviolence and freedom Mohandas Gandhi titled his autobiography "The Story of My Experiments with Truth" because he understood that truth was something one worked on and towards, and was not an immutable constant. Gandhi coined the term "Satyagraha" as a direct-action call to mass mobilization, using soul-force and love-force and truth-force to root out the enemies of justice.

South Africa and Chile share a curious contemporary history: both countries came through periods of despotism and destruction and attempted reconciliation by convening renowned truth commissions to deal with their collective futures. In Chile, the issue of immunity for those who supported Pinochet's brutal dictatorship was a central concern for human rights activists. In South Africa, the issue of reparations for the victims of vicious apartheid was a worry for those who poured their hearts out before the TRC. Everywhere in the world where people recover from theft, ignorance, violence, and greed, questions of justice and healing become central to building safe and peaceful tomorrows. Knowing, acknowledging, and understanding the truth behind what makes history as harsh as it can be is undoubtedly a vital stage in becoming whole and able to build a new day. But truth alone is not enough.

The forces which came together to bring this exhibition to Cape Town's City Hall one hundred years after the "war to end all wars" and twenty years after the elections which enabled Nelson Mandela to become President and shine a light on the world, might shed some insight as to what it takes to make lasting peace. A Chilean curator, a former educator and nonviolent activist who lived through the Pinochet years work-

ing to empower grassroots people in their daily survival and simple protests, collected the craft-work which made her countrywomen famous.

An Irish weaver, with rare talent for detail and careful eye towards organization, helped collect and prepare the textiles, which grace this special exhibit.

A South African freedom fighter – campaigner, politician, government Minister, and truth-teller – left her representative positions in Parliament to return to grassroots work, to help women and all people lead lives of peace with justice.

And a North American writer, student-visitor of the Chilean activist at the very end of the Pinochet regime, helped bring folks together, joining in with War Resisters International for a Pan-African conference which would intensify the ways in which people work together.

What attributes, then, build towards lasting peace and nonviolence? Those that are, like these textiles and this very exhibition:

Simple, people-to-people,

Self-funded and self-sustaining,

Locally-based,

Women-centered,

Action-oriented, and

Future focused.

The truths told in the images in this catalogue were often produced under great stress and duress – but the hope for change was always present. The truth about our shared, internationalist future is that we must face it together, with an eye towards "a just peace," towards reconciliation *and* resistance, towards a view of humanity as beautiful as all the diverse peoples of the precious planet around us.

The collection of the arpilleras in this catalogue affirms the role women play in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction. Like the women spinning a web of many colours outside the nuclear plant in Vermont or South African women marching to demand an end to unjust laws; the women who made the arpilleras are calling for an end to violence and like the women of Vermont are saying:

> "*We will meet, all of us women of every land, we will meet in the centre, make a circle; we will weave a world web to entangle the powers that bury our children."*

Through needle and thread, women are reweaving the web of life.

Introduction -

Exhibition curated by Roberta Bacic and Breege Doherty

In this exhibition **SMALL Actions BIG Movements**, the courageous, collective and creative responses of communities worldwide to the erosion and abuse of their human rights is a central theme. Here, women recount on cloth stories of disappearances, forced execution, torture, resistance, denouncement, displacement, forced exile, indigenous land struggles and the gradual transition to democracy. We are also brought face to face with the futility and the multi-layered destructive impact of modern warfare, far beyond the immediate conflict period and zone.

Working primarily through the medium of arpilleras (three dimensional textiles from Latin America, which originated in Chile), women, from various continents, depict nonviolent actions of protest, resistance and denouncement.

In the introduction to ***We Chile- Personal Testimonies of the Chilean Arpilleristas*** (1996) editor Emma Sepúlveda explains how making arpilleras was a response by these women to the extremely difficult circumstances thrust upon them:

"[They] clearly believed that their function was not merely the production of arpilleras, but rather to indefinitely continue the tireless search for their family members..." She describes their actions, portrayed in this exhibition: *"These women held hunger strikes, chained themselves to the fence of the National Congress, and constantly paraded with photographs of their disappeared family members..,"* Despite facing arrest, they persisted, resolute and unwavering, in their quest of demanding the truth and denouncing the actions of the Pinochet regime at home and abroad.

More recent arpilleras, wall hangings and quilts from Peru, Argentina, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Germany, Colombia and Zimbabwe, included in this exhibition, illustrate how the early arpilleristas seeded the use of such textile narratives in other jurisdictions as a way of articulating issues of human rights abuse and the community response to such atrocities.

Overall, the multifaceted, nonviolent resistance of communities threaded through this exhibition, in the face of violent persecution, is testimony to the powerful impact of individuals and small groups working together to effect change towards a society where warfare, whatever its nature and human rights abuse, is not tolerated.

Images left to right -

The day we will never forget by Killarney girls, Zimbabwe

Broken Rifle by Irene MacWilliam

SMALL Actions
BIG Movements

English arpillera by Linda Adams, 2014

Photo Martin Melaugh

This arpillera, which bears the conference title and encapsulates its essence, was commissioned specifically for this memorable event. It is rich in imagery, movement and colour. In the foreground, we see two groups of activists holding placards aloft announcing the conference **SMALL Actions BIG Movements**, while a third group display an image of a broken rifle, the powerful symbol adopted by War Resisters International (WRI), which represents the destruction of weapons and denounces the institution of war.

Amidst all of this nonviolent action, which is a core principle of WRI, children absorbed at play are undoubtedly being shaped by the surrounding activity. Linda included children in the arpillera: "*because they are taught to hate and become involved in fighting wars at a very young age.*"

The face of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, well known for his work in the field of nonviolence, is a prominent image. For Linda the combination of: *"his wisdom, courage and brilliant sense of humour make him one of the most well respected people of this and the last century."*

The convoy of three trucks, travelling left on the overhead highway, bearing the conference title, location and broken rifle image, convey the powerful sense of energy, movement and purpose of this event. It gives a sense of assurance that this conference, the culmination of small actions, dialogue and collaboration, is "travelling" in a new direction. It inspires hope that

a world without war is within reach.

Echoing the message from the conference organisers on the potential for change by working collaboratively, Linda reminds us that: *"we all have the responsibility to consider our actions and the results of them. We are never powerless and by doing even small things collectively we can produce big changes."*

Sala de torturas / Torture Chamber

Chilean arpillera by Violeta Morales, 1996

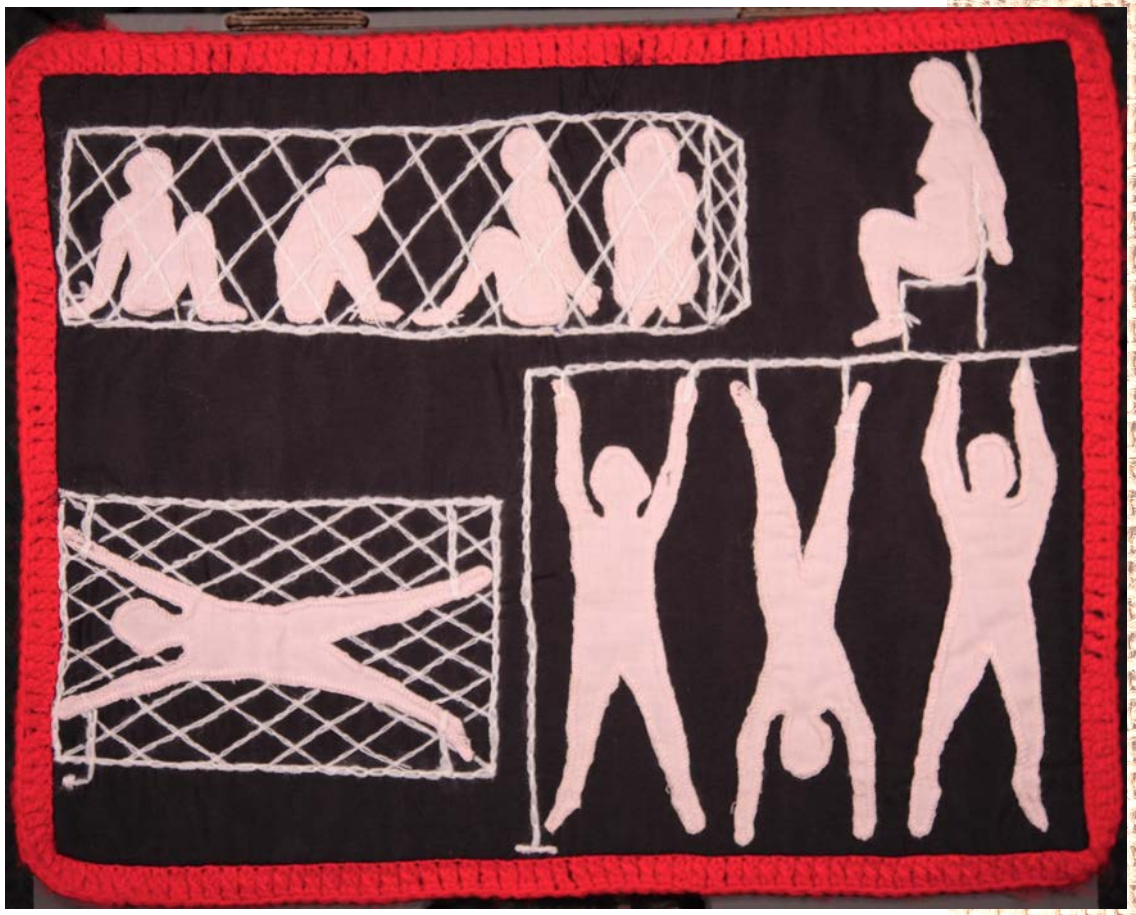
Photo Colin Peck

This is a most visually startling piece with its simple black background and stark white figures. It graphically depicts people being tortured in various ways, portraying them in a dehumanised way with featureless faces, just as torture dehumanises individuals. The symbolic enclosure of the people held in captivity accurately describes life in Chile during the Pinochet era.

Chile's fourth National Truth Commission Report on Torture and Political Imprisonment (Valech II) published in August 2011, states that the total number of people officially registered as torture victims, from the Pinochet era, is now 38,254.

In this arpillera, Violeta Morales is outspoken about Chile's infamous history of torture, which was long unknown in the wider world. As Co-ordinator of the group *Sabastián Acevedo Movement Against Torture (MCTSA)*, she denounced the state narrative on torture and human rights abuses at every opportunity and was relentless in ensuring that people everywhere were informed of the widespread use of torture in Chile. With other women, she founded the *Folkloric Musical Ensemble of Relatives of the detained-disappeared,* as: *"...we also wished to sing our message of protest."* Agosín, M., (2008)

Violeta Morales died in 2002, never having found her brother Newton Morales, who disappeared in 1974.



Paz – Justicia - Libertad / Peace - Justice - Freedom

Chilean arpillera, anon., late 1970s

Photo Colin Peck

In this arpillera women are actively protesting against the Pinochet dictatorship, which by the late 1970s had become synonymous with arbitrary detentions, torture, disappearances, executions, assassinations and forced exile. Some of the women are boldly defiant as they clash cymbals in front of a police car. Others carry leaflets spreading word of a campaign to find their missing loved ones, who have disappeared without trace through the actions of the armed forces. Through all these nonviolent tactics women publicly withdrew their co-operation from the Pinochet regime, denouncing it as oppressive. The culmination of such actions succeeded in shifting support away from the regime, both at national and international level and contributed to its demise.

The material used makes this piece particularly poignant. The dark grey background material is from the trousers of a disappeared man and the road from the checked fabric shirt of another. Marjorie Agosín, in her book, *Tapestries of hope, threads of love: The Arpillera movement in Chile* (second edition, 2008*)* informs us that creating arpilleras from the clothing of missing family members, as welwell as from their own clothing, was common practice for the early arpilleristas who often had no other material available to them.

Hornos de Lonquén/Lime kilns of Lonquen

Chilean arpillera, anon., c1979

Photo Tony Boyle

This arpillera gives us an insight into the overwhelming nonviolent struggle for truth and justice of the relatives of the disappeared. In spite of police repression they persevered in their struggle to demand the truth, find their disappeared relatives and mourn them.

On 7 October 1973, 15 peasant men, members of an agricultural co-operative from the town of Isla de Maipo, were taken from their homes and arrested. For five years, the wives, mothers and daughters of these men went to jails and detention centres, trying in vain to find their relatives.

In November 1978, acting on a secret testimony, the Vicaría de la Solidaridad searched the disused lime kiln in Lonquén. There, the bodies of the 15 men, who were thrown alive into the lime kiln and died an agonising death, were found.

On 30 November 1987, Abraham Santibáñez, deputy director of the magazine "Hoy" chillingly describes the human remains found in Lonquén: "*Pieces of yellowish scalp, with some traces of loose black hair, torn clothes, amongst which you can recognise one pair of blue jeans and a man's cardigan.*"

This case shocked the Chilean nation and marked a turning point for relatives of the disappeared, who until then, had held on to the hope that they would eventually find their relatives alive. The Lonquén case brought home to them the reality that "disappeared" usually meant dead.

This arpillera is portrayed in the Perpetual Calendar prepared by War Resisters League to mark 90 years of Revolutionary Nonviolence (1923-2013).

In March 1976 a military junta led by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla seized power in Argentine and under the guise of the **National Reorganization Process** initiated a seven year period of military dictatorship characterised by human rights violations, forced disappearances and illegal arrests.

By May 1977 four young female students, one of whom was pregnant, attending the Pottery College/Escuela de ***Cerámica***, had disappeared without trace: Marta Virginia Esain, Patricia Virginia Villa, Hilda Adriana Fernandez and Irene Monica Bruschtein. These women, aged 21-25, active in the socialist movement, were all taken from different places with Irene being kidnapped from her home in front of her two children.

Almost 40 years later the college remembers these young women through this arpillera created by present day students as part of a human rights module. The process, which involved a visit to "Parque de la Memoria" linked in to the programme of activities of the exhibition **RETAZOS TESTIMONIALES: arpilleras de Chile y otras latitudes**/TESTIMONIAL SCRAPS: arpilleras from Chile and other parts of the world.

http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts/exhibit/followup.html#buenosaires280913

The title phrase "Ahora y siempre presentes/Now and Always Present" is testimony to the enduring legacy and presence of these young disappeared women and the reality that we have to deal with our past.


AHORA y
SIEMPRE
PRESENTES
ESCUELA DE CERÁMICA Nº1
IRENE
MARTA
HILDA
PATRICIA

¿Dónde están/ Where are they?

Chilean arpillera, anon., early 1980s

Photo Martin Melaugh

In this arpillera, we see women in colourful dresses protesting on the side of the road displaying a banner, which denounces the denied atrocities of the Pinochet dictatorship by publicly posing a simple question: *"¿Dónde están/ Where are they [the disappeared]?"* The answer to this simple question was repeatedly ignored by the regime, which gave implausible answers and frequently told the women that the people in question did not exist or that they had left the country. These women, gaining strength from working in solidarity, persisted in their quest of checking jails and detention centres, seeking news of their disappeared loved ones and refused to accept the answers given by the State.

It is likely that the road is crafted from the trousers of a disappeared relative. The sun, a common feature in the majority of arpilleras, has been replaced by four grey clouds. Indifference towards the plight of these women and their families is also apparent in this arpillera. The motorist and the pedestrians in the bottom right hand corner avert their faces from the protestors, in denial of the atrocities committed by the Pinochet regime made public by these women.

The Chilean Truth Commission of the post-Pinochet regime was mandated to find out what happened to the disappeared and also to determine where their remains had been disposed. According to Chile's fourth National Truth Commission Report on Torture and Political Imprisonment (Valech II), published in August 2011, there were a total of recognized 3,216 cases of forced disappearance or political execution.

La cueca sola / Dancing cueca alone

Chilean arpillera by Gala Torres, 1989

Photo Tomomitsu Oshima

This arpillera shows women solo dancing the traditional Cueca, Chile's national dance which represents the different emotions and stages of romance. It is meant to be danced in pairs wearing colourful clothing. Here the women dance alone and in severe black and white, wearing the image of their "disappeared" loved one over their heart.

Performing the national dance in this manner was their way of denouncing the repressive actions of the Pinochet regime in a public space. This ***Cueca Sola*** was made by Gala Torres, an active member of the Association of Detained and Disappeared (AFDD) and director of the *Folkloric Musical Ensemble of Relatives of the detained-disappeared*, a folk group created by arpilleristas to collectively compose and sing songs about their lives as women alone. For Gala, her active resistance stemmed from the arrest and disappearance of her brother, Ruperto Torres Aravena in 1973. She recalls: *"We women used to have a secondary role in political activities. But after the coup, we realised that we could no longer be spectators, we would have to play a major role in the struggle for our disappeared relatives."* (Agosin, ibid)

The boldness, determination and creativity of the women depicted in this arpillera have inspired people all over the world. The Sting song "They dance alone" was based on it and has been performed by many other singers including Joan Baez and Holly Near. In June 1986 Amnesty International sponsored a tour of six benefit concerts which included the song and such famous performers as Sting, Bryan Adams, Peter Gabriel, Joan Baez and the Neville Brothers.


La cueca sola

Encadena-miento /Women chained to parliament gates

Chilean arpillera, anon., late 1980s

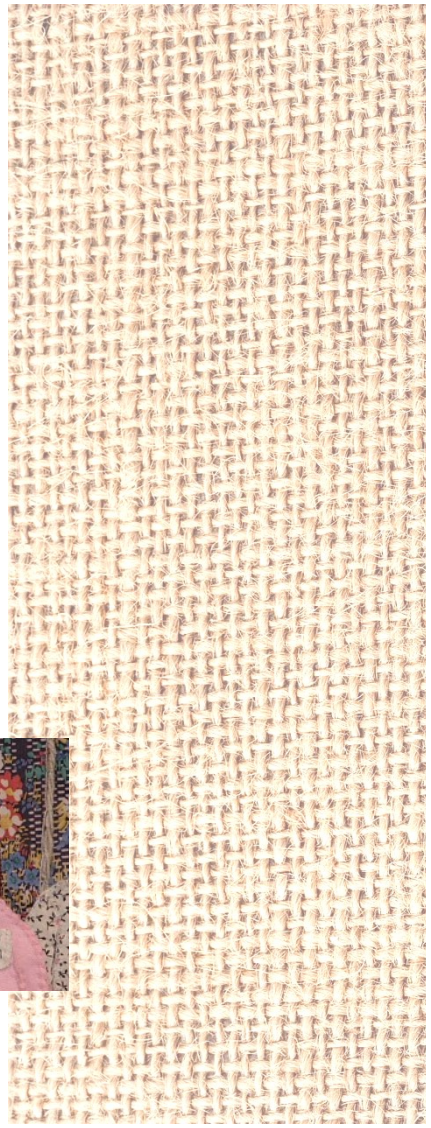
Photo Martin Melaugh

In the early months of the Pinochet dictatorship up to 7,000 people were detained by the junta. In response women began checking the jails and detention centres, seeking news of their disappeared loved ones, frequently being told that the people in question did not exist.

In this arpillera, a group of women have chained themselves to the gates in front of the congress in protest at the actions of the Pinochet regime, particularly the disappearance of their loved ones. Here we see women, with their lives in turmoil, denouncing the actions of the dictatorship in the public sphere: *"The military dictatorship obligated these women to confront public life, to make their pain and grief visible. They not only created tapestries, but also initiated street protests, obtaining through their own initiative, a power that had been previously denied to women."* Agosín (ibid).

For this act of civil disobedience, all of the women who took part in the protest were detained for five days.

For Anita Rojas who took part in this protest, making arpilleras was an opportunity to depict her own experiences and highlight and denounce the harshness of life under the Pinochet regime: *"I reflected on my moments of happiness when I was with my son and my moments of anguish when they took him away from me and these things I put in images in the arpilleras…we also denounced other problems…we wanted people living outside Chile to see how we live here."* Agosín (ibid).



AUSENCIAS – PRESENCIAS
Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo/ Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo

Argentinean arpillera by Ana Zlatkes and Mirta Zak, 2014

Photo Ana Zlatkes

The military junta led by Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla seized power in Argentine in 1976 and heralded an era of human rights violations, forced disappearances and illegal arrests.

The Nunca Más (Never Again) report (1984) by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons estimate that up to 9000 cases of forced disappearance and other human rights violations were perpetrated and conclude the real figure to be much higher. Approximately 30% of victims were women, with children under the age of 15 numbering 200. http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/nevagain/nevagain_001.htm Pregnant women, who gave birth under abysmal circumstances in detention centres were then generally killed whilst many of their babies were illegally adopted by military or political families affiliated with the administration.

Such atrocities seeded the beginnings of the Abuelas (Grandmothers) de Plaza de Mayo in 1977, a non-governmental organization dedicated specifically to highlighting and investigating the disappearances of their children and grandchildren.
http://www.abuelas.org.ar/english/history.htm

Here, Ana Zlates and Mirta Zak capture the anguish and determination of these grandmothers, who every Thursday for over forty years have continued to march around the obelisk in front of the government buildings in Plaza de Mayo, protesting at the disappearance of their loved ones, denouncing the actions of the military junta and demanding answers. The white stitches in circular format mark their weekly walk, whilst the bleak swirling nature of the arpillera alludes to this

dark period of history in Argentine and portrays that their walk is seemingly never ending.

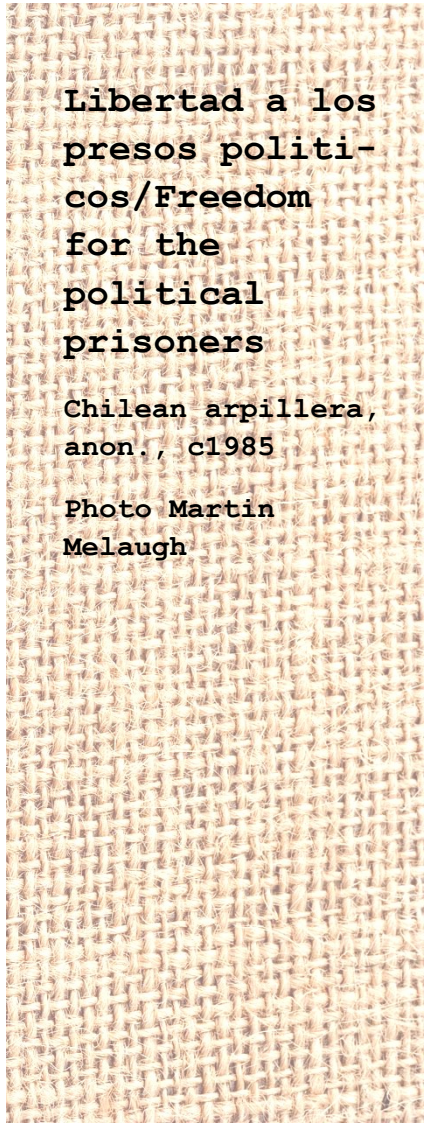
Commenting on the creation of this piece, Ana and Mirta remark: *"As artists we would like to give a testimony of the story lived in our country.."* Whilst the numbers who maintain the weekly nonviolent protest have declined due to ill health, time and death, their sense of purpose and determination in walking together to denounce these atrocities is captured by the artists who reflect through a poem.

Huellas marcadas por miles de pisadas.
Una Plaza nunca más abandonada.
Un largo camino recorrido.

Mujeres luchadoras por la verdad y la justicia.
Mujeres hacedoras de historia.
Mujeres cuidadoras de la memoria, reivindicadoras de vida.
Dignidad verdadera.
Memoria encendida.

Traces marked by thousands of footsteps.
Square never again abandoned.
A long road walked.
Women who have struggled for truth and justice.
Women who make history.
Women who look after the memory.
Claiming for life.
True dignity.

Poem by Ana Zlatkes and Mirta Zak written to accompany their arpillera made for the exhibition in South Africa



Chilean arpillera, anon., c1985

Photo Martin Melaugh

In this arpillera we see a group of women defiantly protesting in front of a prison, demanding better conditions and the release of the prisoners within. For these women living within the repressive Pinochet military regime, coping with imprisonment of their loved ones, using their textile skills to craft this type of arpillera was a means of enabling them to live with conflict and its memory on a daily basis. As Marjorie Agosín (2008) comments: *"For the arpilleristas the political events of their country and their daily lives became inseparable"* (ibid).

The cumulative effect of the nonviolent struggle portrayed here was a catalyst for bringing international pressure to bear on the Junta and reducing their support base at home. This, together with internal disagreements within the Junta, resulted in General Pinochet signing the convention against Torture in 1988. In turn, this allowed Spain to indict General Pinochet on charges alleging human rights violations during his regime from 1973 to 1990.

The powerful effect of this type of political expression went unrecognised at first by the military. As Cooke, Zeitlin, & MacDowell explain: *"Ironically, war textiles are largely disregarded by modern military authorities because of their feminine connotations and can therefore be a relatively safe forum for dangerous or provocative ideas"* (2005 *Weavings of War* catalogue). When the Chilean military finally recognised the power of the arpilleras, they condemned these works as subversive materials and if found they would have been destroyed and prevented from leaving the country.


CARCEL DE CHILE
LIBERTAD A LOS
PRESOS POLITICOS

Olla común en una población/ Soup Kitchen in a barrio

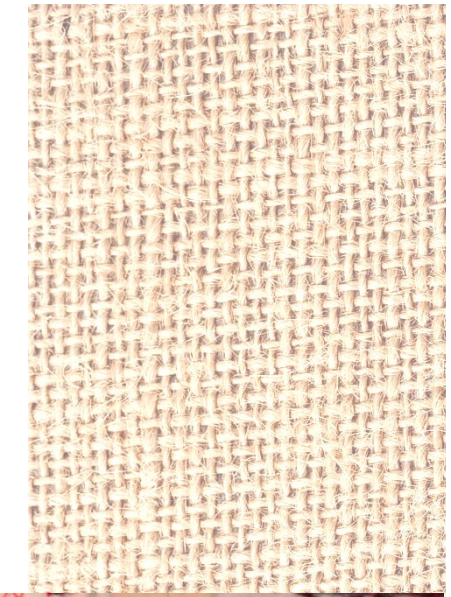
Chilean arpillera, Taller Fundación Missio, Santiago, 1982

Photo Martin Melaugh

This arpillera depicts the hunger and poverty wrought by conflict and social injustice. Created during the Pinochet dictatorship, it depicts both the desperation of hunger among the poor, forced to seek food from church charities, and also the resilience of those who find ways to ensure that the worst affected are not left hungry.

Soup kitchens similar to the one portrayed in this arpillera, were a life line for the impoverished during the Pinochet regime. Church charities such as the Vicaría de la Solidaridad and later, the Fundación Solidaridad, were in the forefront of setting up these kitchens which were generally run by local women. María Madariaga, whose husband was unemployed and who wondered how she could provide food for her children, recalls what the soup kitchen meant for her family, even though not all of them could benefit from it: *There was an age limit to abide by…of my three children at the time, only one was able to eat…We thought it was better that one eats than none…"* Agosín (ibid). The need was so great that difficult choices had to be made, both within the family and in the organization, which meant that for Maria and her husband: *"the days were especially long…because there was nothing to eat."*

Over thirty years later, the experiences of María have been echoed by families caught in conflict zones in various corners of the globe and is a sober reminder that all war and unrest leads to suffering and destruction.



Violar es un crimen / Rape is a crime

Peruvian arpillera from Mujeres Creativas workshop, 1985

Replica by FCH, Mujeres Creativas workshop, Peru, 2008

Photo Martin Melaugh

This arpillera depicts a protest by five courageous Lima women, denouncing the rape and forced resettlement of Ayacucho village women, during the destructive civil war in Peru from 1980 to 2000.

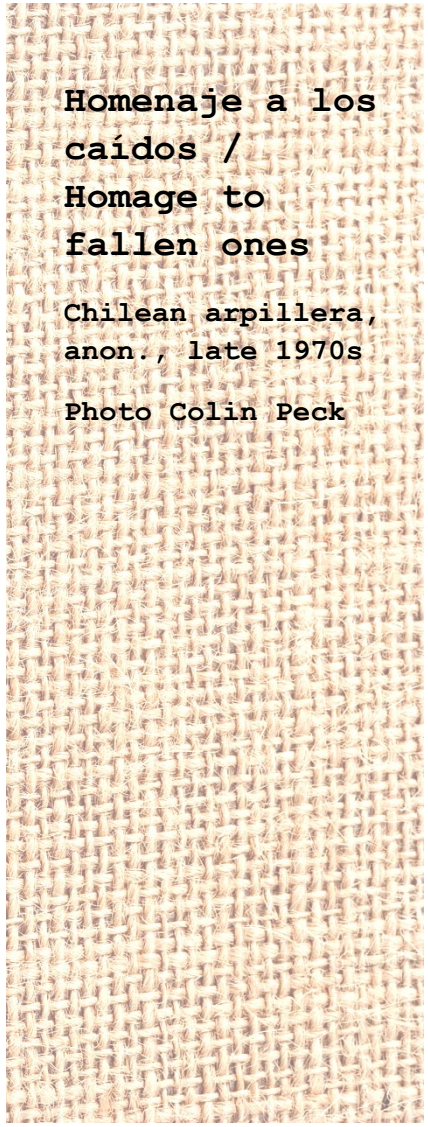
Maria, who created this piece, explains: *"In October 1985 many people were killed in Ayacucho and women were raped, but nobody protested. Two groups of us decided to demonstrate in front of Comando Conjunto (Joint Military Command) in Lima, since the people actually living in Ayacucho felt too vulnerable to do so. We displayed 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. Five of us decided to make an arpillera of our action to show we do not condone such brutality."*

War rape, which has until recently been a hidden element of war, and is seldom prosecuted, has a severe impact on victims. In addition to the impact of traumatic injuries, sexually transmitted disease, and pregnancy, long-term psychological injuries may include depression, anxiety disorders, flashbacks and shame.

During the civil war in Peru in the 1980s, the National Reparations Council (NRC) recorded 1,150 women reporting rape and sexually violent incidents. To date, no perpetrator has been sentenced. Diana Portal, a lawyer with the Organization for the Defense of Women's Rights, (DEMUS) castigates the Peruvian government for their ineffectiveness claiming that: "t*he closure of the NRC for the Victims of Violence is evidence of lack of political will, commitment and responsibility on the part of the government."* ("Politics of Rape: Peruvian Women Want Justice." Gender Across Borders organization, 5 January, 2011).

Despite the adoption of UN Security

Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000, safeguarding the rights of women in conflict zones remains a challenge.



Homenaje a los caídos / Homage to fallen ones

Chilean arpillera, anon., late 1970s

Photo Colin Peck

In this sombre traditional arpillera, there is no sun in the sky and the Andes are in mono-tone. Black dominates the foreground. In the background, poor villagers tap into the main power supply because they cannot afford to pay. The road is lined with candles in remembrance of the disappeared. The central figure carries leaflets protesting against torture. Some women lie on the road. In all, this arpillera gives voice to the sorrow and loss felt by so many and illustrates their tenacity and solidarity in denouncing the issues of torture and disappearance and demanding truth.

Based on direct testimonies, Elizabeth Lira, in ***Mujeres Historias chilenas del siglo XX***,(Chile, LOM Ediciones, April 2011) describes the seemingly unbearable struggle of families of the disappeared in Chile: *"The wives (mothers, daughters, wives, partners, sisters) in different parts of the world and in Chile have kept their pleas demanding their need to know what happened to them, organizing themselves around associations of relatives, postponing their own needs and placing in the centre of their lives the activities of denouncing and looking for their missing relative, hoping to find them alive. Hope is the fuel of their search that does not end."*

This arpillera was given as a gift to Professor Miralles, a university lecturer in Madrid, in honour of her work with child soldiers in Angola and other parts of the world.


HOMENAJE
A LOS
CAIDOS

En Chile se tortura / Demonstration against torture

Chilean arpillera by Violeta Morales, 1988

Photo Martin Melaugh

Here Violeta Morales depicts a demonstration against torture by the group ***Movement Against Torture Sebastián Acevedo (MCTSA)***, of which she was co-ordinator.

The anti-torture movement came into being in September 1983, ten years after the regime took power, when approximately 70 people unfurled a banner proclaiming "Torturing Done Here" in front of the headquarters of the National Civil Police Centre in Santiago.

On November 11 of that same year, Sebastián Acevedo Becerra, in despair following the arrest of his children Galo and María, whom he feared would be tortured by the secret police, publicly set himself alight. Such was the impact of his action on the Movement Against Torture that it henceforth became known as the ***Movement Against Torture Sebastián Acevedo (MCTSA).***

In the Chilean National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation, death as a consequence of political violence was how Sebastiáns' demise was described. Roberta Bacic, in her paper "*Stitching together non-violence and "Movement Against Torture Sebastián Acevedo (MCTSA)"* (2012) notes that his death: *"gave a public acknowledgement of the desperate situation people lived during those years and gave his family the right to reparations."*

www.menschenrechte.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/english.pdf

The very public demonstrations against torture of this group and their success in highlighting the issue at home and internationally is illustrative of the powerful impact of individuals and groups working together to enact

change and unbalance even the most repressive of regimes.

Violencia en las calles de Santiago de Chile durante toque de queda / Violence in the streets of Santiago de Chile during curfew

Chilean arpillera, anon., c1979

Photo Martin Melaugh

This is a traditional arpillera against the backdrop of the Andes Mountains of Chile. The dark background colour and the moon and stars signify that this is a night scene and we can guess that the area is probably under curfew. An injured person lying in a pool of blood is being ignored by the police who are walking away. It is not clear from the scene presented who is responsible for the wounded person, though we certainly see that the police are not fulfilling their duty of care.

Knowing that this arpillera is from the first decade of the repressive Pinochet dictatorship, we are left to ponder if it is the heavy handed actions of the police that have resulted in this person's injuries. We see the people from the neighbourhood busy assisting the injured person.

Overall, this arpillera chillingly portrays the hardship and repression experienced by the people in this impoverished community. From the sewing and crochet borders, we recognize that the arpillerista is not a skilled sewer.

Nonetheless her piece is powerful in that it is bears witness to and publicly denounces yet another violent incident of the Pinochet regime. In highlighting it she ensures that the world is made aware of what was happening on a daily basis in Chile.

Panfleteando en el 1979 en Santiago/ Leafleting in Santiago in 1979

Chilean arpillera, anon., late 1970s

Photo Martin Melaugh

This vibrant and colourful arpillera from the late 1970s depicts a scene where a group of campaigners are distributing pamphlets to pedestrians and drivers to raise awareness about the "Disappeared."

According to Chile's fourth National Truth Commission Report on Torture and Political Imprisonment (Valech II), published in August 2011, there were a total of 3,216 cases of forced disappearance or political execution.

Again, the traditional style of the mountains is represented here, using a myriad of colourful scraps of cloth. The sun, however, is not visible – perhaps symbolising the dangers that still prevailed. The large houses and trees indicate that this is not a shanty town; here the campaigners have been emboldened to bring their campaign into middle-class areas – all part of their strategy to publicly highlight and denounce the human rights abuses perpetrated by the
Pinochet regime.

Overall, this arpillera illustrates the relentless attempts by campaigners to reveal the unsavoury hidden truths which plagued certain groups within society during the Pinochet era, truths which others often chose to ignore. However, the public tactics employed here did eventually yield dividends and culminated in shifting public opinion against Pinochet, both at home and abroad.

No a la impunidad/No to impunity

Chilean arpillera, anon., 1980s

Photo Tony Boyle

This arpillera, from the latter years of the Pinochet regime, was made for export to highlight globally the reality of the struggle that saw women in public protests chanting "we want democracy" and demanding "Truth, Justice and Reconciliation."

For these women, saying "No to impunity" was a core element of their struggle. In their opinion, law 2191, known as the Amnesty law (Amnesty to the perpetrators), enacted in 1978 in order to avoid legal action in the cases of human rights violation from 1973-1978, was a retrograde step.

Despite this amnesty law, described by many academics and human rights experts as a "self-pardon" by the military regime, the

Chilean courts prosecuted five senior officers in 1999 for their role in the disappearance and probable death of 75 political prisoners. In 2000, Pinochet was indicted. In these cases, the court bypassed the 1978 Amnesty law, judging that the crime of "disappearance" constituted an ongoing crime which could not be amnestied and was therefore not subject to a statute of limitation (Supreme Court Decision dated 20 July 1999).

http://www.trial-ch.org/en/resources/truth-commissions/america/chile.html

While these resolutions represented a major step forward in the fight against impunity in Chile, and despite the people always resisting, denouncing and demanding "No to impunity" it was only in 2010 that a bill to rule out amnesty was brought to parliament.

Marcha de las mujeres de los mineros / March of the miners' wives, daughters and sisters

Peruvian arpillera by María Herrera, Mujeres Creativas workshop, 1985

Photo Colin Peck

In this arpillera the maker, like other arpilleristas from Peru has adopted much from the Chilean tradition. As Cooke, Zeitlin & MacDowell observe in the 2005 ***Weavings of War*** exhibition catalogue: *"The Peruvian artists borrowed much from the Chilean arpilleristas: the idea of using pictorial patchwork as a vehicle for political activism,...They made an unfamiliar textile form their own..."* (p. 21).

Arpillerista Maria Herrera, outraged by the appalling working conditions and human rights violations within the Peruvian mines was motivated to document the struggles of this community and how they resisted and publicly highlighted their oppression. She reflects: *"Many men, women and children did these sacrifice marches, walking for many days from where they come from and heading to Lima to protest against the shameful working conditions in the mining camps. Once in Lima they collected money and organised soup kitchens in order to survive. They also had to face repression. I felt the need to document this."*

Today the struggle continues. Miriam Ramirez, from the Andean community in Peru, has been actively involved in protests against mining and has created an organisation of Quechua women to *"motivate the mothers so that we can defend the future."* She states: "*People say we are mad to resist mining.... But we know they just want us to work for them as labourers; they will get rid of us when they have finished. The mines come, they extract and then they go, leaving a desert*" *(Meet the Defenders* - New Internationalist 446 October 2011).


MINEROS
¡QUEREMOS
SOLUCION!

The day we will never forget

Collective arpillera by Killarney girls, Zimbabwe, facilitated by Shari Eppel, Solidarity Peace Trust Zimbabwe, www.solidaritypeacetrust.org

Photo Shari Eppel

This arpillera shows the total destruction of the Killarney informal settlement in Zimbabwe in May 2005, during Operation Murambatsvina in which the government of Zimbabwe, deploying the army and police, purposefully destroyed housing around the country. During this Operation, referred to by many as a crime against humanity, an estimated 500,000 people were evicted and displaced in the space of a month. Murambatsvina means "get rid of the filth' and the poor of Zimbabwe were left with the clear message that they were the filth that should be forced out of urban areas.

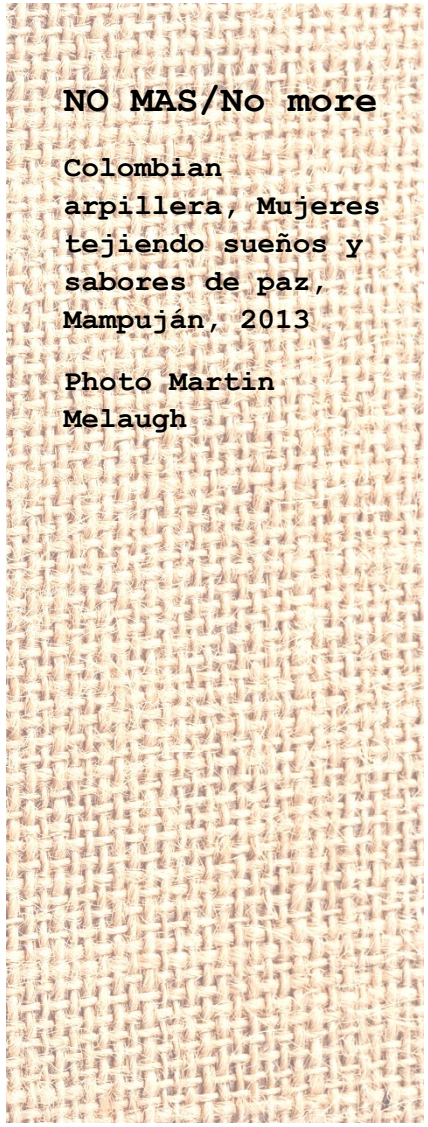
The most devastating and immediate effect of this operation was the fact that up to half a million people were rendered homeless and left without any viable form of livelihood. People were told to return to their rural origins, but many simply did not have a rural home to go back to.

The girls from Killarney informal settlement who created this arpillera all lost their homes in 2005. Some suffered deaths of their relatives, and one, the death of her baby, during the demolitions. From conversations held while sewing, Shari recounts: *"The girls have no comprehension of what the demolitions were about, and say they think the government was trying to kill people by taking everything away from them...."*

Following resettlement by the International Organisation for Migration and the Bulawayo City Council they now all

have homes. However, the location - 10km out of town- severely limits their employment opportunities. As Shari explains: *"Sources of income remain a serious challenge, and the girls continue to strive against hunger in their efforts to secure the future of themselves and their children."*

The process of creating this arpillera has enabled these women to share their stories with confidence and purpose, to audiences far beyond the Killarney settlement, again illustrating the powerful potential of small pieces of work in denouncing repressive actions globally.



NO MAS/No more

Colombian arpillera, Mujeres tejiendo sueños y sabores de paz, Mampuján, 2013

Photo Martin Melaugh

On 11 March 2000, a brutal massacre was carried out in the town of Mampuján, in northwest Colombia by the now demobilised United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a coalition of right-wing, counter-insurgency paramilitary groups which was alleged to have links to the military and members of government and congress. Twelve people were killed, from nearby Las Brisas, and more than 1,400 civilians were displaced. Initially scattered, about half of the group settled in 2002 in Mampuján Nuevo, on small plots of land about eight kilometres away from their old community.

Violence against communities in Colombia is not a recent phenomenon. Over the last thirty years more than 4.8million people have been forced to flee from their homes to escape violence, earning Colombia the unenviable title of having the world's largest population of Internally Displaced People (IDPs).

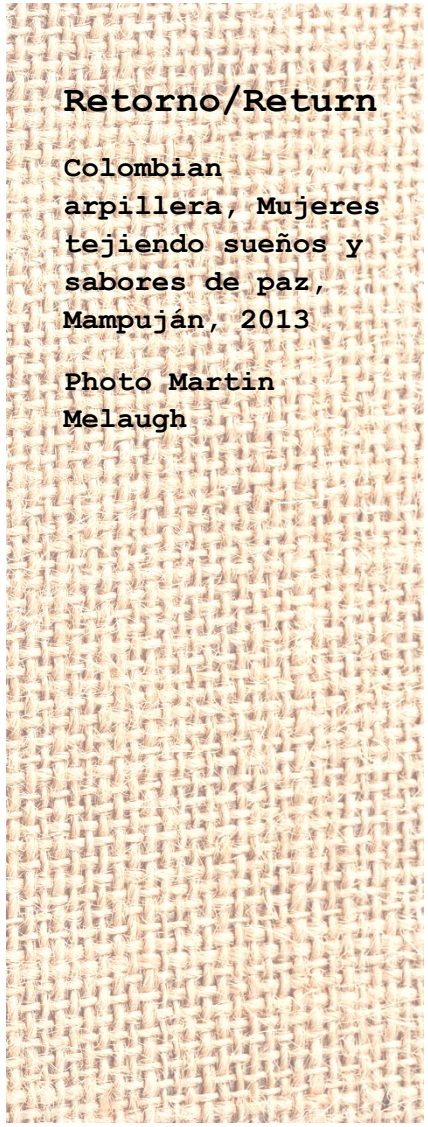
In 2011, the Victim and Land Restitution law (Victims law), enacted by the Santos government established a judicial process to return stolen and abandoned land to IDPs. On 27 June 2013, as part of this restitution programme, those displaced by the Mampuján massacre had their land rights officially restored, permitting them to return to their original land.

This arpillera, made by a group of 15 Mampuján women, envisions their return eight years later to a community free from violence. The central figure clad in white, with his broken rifle and military apparel thrown aside is a powerful symbol of peace. Open mouthed and with raised hands he gazes upwards declaring: "**NO MAS –** I will not do it any more." In the night sky, the white dove of peace, framed by the moon is clearly visible, whilst in the foreground we see crops growing, testimony to a return to peaceful stability for this community. The houses depicted in the vibrant colours of the

Afro Colombian people further reminds us that life has returned to normal.

In reality the process of returning is ongoing and not without its challenges. In the words of one of the arpilleristas: *"There is fear and uncertainty on the side of the victim."* Such fear is not unfounded. A report by Human Rights Watch (2013) states that since January 2012, more than 500 land restitution claimants and leaders have reported being threatened and that crimes targeting IDPs for their restitution efforts almost always go unpunished. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/colombia0913_brochure_web_0.pdf

For the peaceful society envisioned in this arpillera to become a reality, it is imperative that prosecutors work with land restitution authorities to vigorously pursue crimes against claimants in the areas where restitution is being implemented.



Retorno/Return

Colombian arpillera, Mujeres tejiendo sueños y sabores de paz, Mampuján, 2013

Photo Martin Melaugh

This second piece by Mampuján women, on exhibit for the first time, is rooted in their experience of forced displacement. Following a brutal massacre in which 12 people were killed on 11 March 2000 by the now demobilised United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a coalition of right-wing counter-insurgency paramilitary groups, more than 1,400 civilians, including these 15 arpilleristas were displaced.

Sadly, Colombia has the world's largest population of Internally Displaced People (IDPs), as more than 4.8million people have been driven from their homes over the last thirty years due to violence associated with Colombia's internal conflict. However, in 2011, the Victim and Land Restitution law (Victims law), of the Santos government established a judicial process to return stolen and abandoned land to IDPs and in 27 June 2013, those displaced by the Mampuján massacre had their land rights officially restored, permitting them to return to their original land.

http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/colombia0913_brochure_web_0.pdf

In this arpillera, we are given an image of how these women envision their return. Homes are rebuilt, children are playing, adults are engaged in the daily tasks of village life in this seemingly fertile area against the backdrop of rolling hills and a bright yellow sun. Through these scenes we get a sense of their palpable yearning to resettle in their home village, which is presented as idyllic. Juana Alicia Ruiz, one of the arpilleristas who worked on this piece recalls the sudden forced displacement: *"people were not prepared for what came upon them, they left with their belongings on their heads, kept in big pots and bags using the only means of transport they had, the donkey."* Juana is sceptical that the idyllic return envisioned here may not match the reality:

"I do not see the return like this, but it is what some have in their imagination and it is what they left behind."

It is clear that there are different perspectives on the longed for return, with some anticipating a utopian type homecoming, others, perhaps more realistic, fearful of the many challenges that lie ahead. The reality, as with many cases of return from exile or displacement, is undoubtedly somewhere in between these polar opposites and illustrates the chasm in perspectives that can exist where people have suffered similar grievances yet live it differently.

Lost children of war

Northern Ireland arpillera by Irene MacWilliam, 2009

Photo Martin Melaugh

Irene MacWilliam was deeply moved by the posters being circulated at one time to help families find each other after being separated and displaced by war. She was especially concerned about the lost children, some of whom were so young that they could not give people helping them any information to assist the search. She created this piece, her first arpillera, to depict their desperation, making the children almost transparent so as not to show any nationality or race and to express that they are living a half life. They are like "ghost" children. Irene has said: *"I chose to focus on children rather than adults since the image of a distressed child is very emotive."*

Displacement poses real dangers for children. Of the millions of children displaced by war, unaccompanied children are the most likely to be killed, tortured, raped, robbed and recruited

as child soldiers. Ann M. Venemen, then Executive Director of UNICEF, in her foreword to the report (2009) *"Machel Study 10 year Strategic Review: Children and Conflict in a Changing World"* states that in 2006, more than 1 billion children under the age of 18 were living in areas in conflict or emerging from war, an estimated 300 million of whom were under the age of five. She cautions that children living in war-affected areas are less likely to be in school, have access to clean water and basic sanitation making them more vulnerable to early mortality as a result of disease and under nutrition.
http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Machel_Study_10_Year_Strategic_Review_EN_030909.pdf

Undoubtedly, much remains to be done by a variety of stakeholders to safeguard children affected by armed conflict so that they have an opportunity to live as children, grow to adulthood and contribute to their communities.

Further information on the work of Irene MacWilliam is available from her website http://www.macwilliam.f9.co.uk

Retorno de los exiliados / Return of the exiles

Chilean arpillera, anon., 1992

Photo Martin Melaugh

This arpillera shows a joyful reunion of family members who were forced into exile during the Pinochet dictatorship. It was made immediately after the regime ended.

Exile took many different forms. When the military coup toppled Salvador Allende in 1973, many government workers and supporters took refuge in embassies and some managed to leave the country. Others, after imprisonment and often torture, were deported and went to countries that accepted them. A third group were forced to take "economic exile" as they had been dismissed from their jobs and had no income. Some were even deprived of their Chilean nationality.

For the returned exiles, finding the country much changed in their absence, resettling in their native country was not always the joy they had anticipated. Furthermore, their children who grew up outside Chile were at a loss to understand their parents' longing to return to a country that had violated their human rights.

To deal with the new problems created by the mass return of exiles, the Oficina Nacional del Retorno (National Office for the Returnees) was created in 1990. It operated until 1994 and considered 52,557 cases. It was revealed that most of the exiles had been taken in by Sweden, Argentina, Canada, France and Germany.


El retorno...

Queremos Democracia/ We want democracy

Chilean arpillera, Vicaría de la Solidaridad, 1988

Photo Martin Melaugh

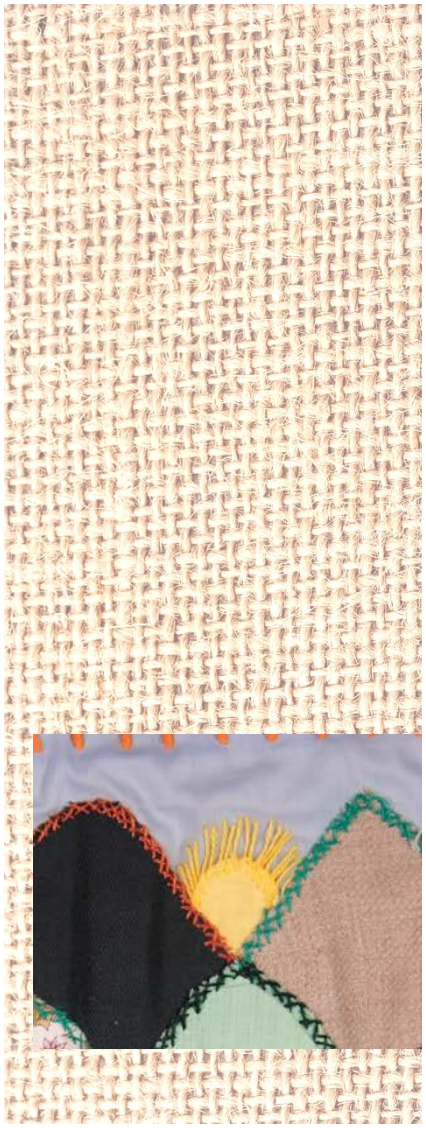
This arpillera, from a Chilean church community workshop, depicts the "people's power" in insisting on their rights to a peaceful, non violent society. The bright colours of the houses and the women's clothes convey hope. However, the presence of the police car reminds us that overcoming the barriers to poverty and peace are not easy. In this difficult context they carry a banner that reads "democracy" hoping that if this is achieved, things will change. They demand to be part of the process.

However, Marjorie Agosín (2008) maintains that women were not given due recognition in the new democracy: *"... democracy has not acknowledged the significance of the arpilleristas and other women's groups...who had a fundamental role to play in the return of democracy."* (ibid).

Globally, despite the fact that women have often been at the forefront of peace building and disarmament initiatives, and notwithstanding the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, the meaningful inclusion of women in peace talks and post conflict democracies is never guaranteed.

The Women Peacemakers Program, who work to achieve gender-sensitive nonviolent conflict resolution and the inclusion of women's voices and leadership in such processes, celebrate International Women's day for Peace and disarmament on 24 May annually. Their thesis that: "*There is no peace without gender equality, and there is no gender equality without women's leadership!*" has clearly not been taken on board in many post conflict societies

https://www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org/events/international-womens-day-for-peace-and-disarmament/



Ganó la gente/ People have won

Chilean arpillera, anon., early 1990s

Photo Martin Melaugh

There is a sense of jubilation in this arpillera which depicts the outcome of the Chilean national plebiscite (referendum) held on October 5 1988, to determine whether or not dictator Augusto Pinochet would extend his rule for another eight-year term. "La democracia ya veine (democracy is coming)" and "Ganará la gente (the people will win)," was the slogan from the No campaign. Pinochet renounced office after the No vote was carried by 55.99%, putting an end to the almost 17 year military dictatorship.

This arpillera announces that: "The people have won" and "Democracy has arrived."
Instead of seeing police cars, the name of the newly elected president Patricio **AYLWIN** adorns the black cars. People are cheering and expressing their excitement at this new phase in Chilean politics, testimony to the cumulative impact of political participation, resistance and nonviolent actions of grassroots people in the poor neighbourhoods of Santiago and elsewhere in Chile.

Exercising one's right to vote has always been of paramount importance in Chilean culture, with at least 90% of the electorate voting in elections. Socialism came to power by the way of elections and, as depicted in this arpillera; Pinochet was defeated through the mechanism of elections.


LLEGO LA
DEMOCRACIA
GANO LA GENTE
AYLWIN
AYLWIN
AYLWIN

Hermanos Mapuche en huelga de hambre /Mapuche people on hunger strike

Chilean arpillera, Aurora Ortiz, 2011

Photo Martin Melaugh

This poignant arpillera portrays quite recent repression experienced by the Mapuche people in Southern Chile, a people who have suffered colonisation for over 500 years. Thirty four peasant Mapuche prisoners went on hunger strike in protest against being imprisoned for defending their land. They were seeking a fair trial and contested the state's argument that they were terrorists. They demanded that in their case, the anti-terrorist law should not be applied.

In this arpillera, we are brought inside one of the prisons where the hunger strike took place. Women supporters in their traditional dress surround the 10 men languishing on the floor covered by blankets provided by their relatives and friends. On one of the tables, a sign informs us that these men have been on hunger strike for 81 days.

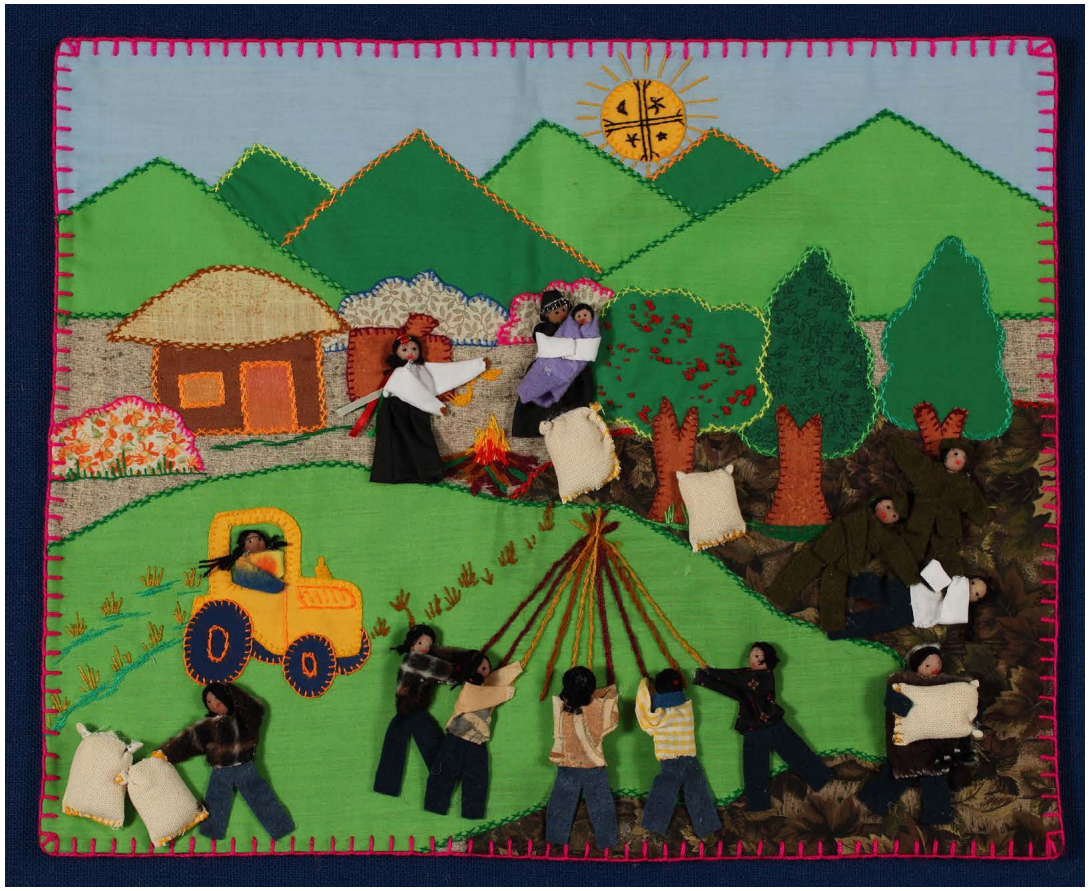
Through the window, memories of their native homes are visible, volcanoes, monkey-puzzle trees and flowers; the land and home they defend to death. The Mapuche flag is placed in a prominent place to reinforce their identity. The artist has added her support by embroidering a banner that reads: "Strength Compañeros."

While this issue is local to the indigenous Mapuche, their struggle to resist and denounce oppression and exercise their rights is mirrored in the experience of indigenous and minority communities around the world. Through the art of arpilleras, this struggle has been captured globally, prompting challenging debate on their experiences and concerns.

Carabineros desaloja comunidad Mapuche/Police entering Mapuche territory

Chilean arpillera, Aurora Ortiz, 2011

Photo Martin Melaugh



The second arpillera of this series portrays the carabineros (police) violently evicting the Mapuche people from their land. At the time the police entered their land, the community was engaged in the age old task of harvesting the wheat and storing it in bags for use in the lean winter months ahead. We see a tractor being driven by a Mapuche woman. The men are holding their trutruca towards the sky (a wind instrument used in their ceremonies), beseeching their God - Ngenechén - for help.

The artist Aurora has portrayed the Mapuche flag as the sun, prominent in the sky along with the Andes. This iconic mountain range and the sun are common design features of Chilean arpilleras.

Aurora has described how she and her husband have been closely involved in the Mapuche struggle since the early 1980s. "*When El Consejo de Todas las Tierras (The Council of all the Land) leadership was being persecuted by Pinochet's dictatorship, we as a family helped bring them undercover to Santiago and sheltered one of them in our home. We had insightful conversations and we took on their struggle.*"

Libertad a nuestros hermanos Mapuche / Freedom to our Mapuche brothers

Chilean arpillera, Aurora Ortiz, 2011

Photo Martin Melaugh

The scene for this third arpillera is also set in the south of Chile. We see Mapuche women carrying a banner that reads, "Freedom to our Mapuche Brothers." Demonstrations of this kind, expressing solidarity, took place in and around the communities affected by the imprisonment of their community members. Similar to the preceding arpillera, strong symbols of their cultural identity are depicted; we see the national climbing flower called copihue (co-pee-way / Mapudungun kopiwe) or Chilean bellflower. This flower, which has been adopted as the national flower of Chile, grows in the Southern forests and blooms in the late summer, early autumn.

Jaime Huenún, a Mapuche poet, who compiled and edited the book ***Lof Sitiado*** *(Besieged group of families living in a determined piece of land),* (Chile, LOM Ediciones**,** July 2011) comments on the solidarity extended to these Mapuche political prisoners from far beyond Chile: *"This book is a testimony and offers its readers the genuine literary solidarity of the 105 authors of Chile, Latin America and Spain who were moved and reacted poetically in connection to the long hunger strike that 34 Mapuche political prisoners started on the 12th of July 2010."*

Curator Roberta Bacic, on first exhibiting this piece in 2011, was moved to state: *"I also extend solidarity through the textile language of these arpilleras, as they too have been born from hard and painful experiences of human rights violations."*


LIBERTAD A NUESTROS
HERMANOS MAPUCHES

NO a la ley antirre-rorista/ NO to the antiterrorist law

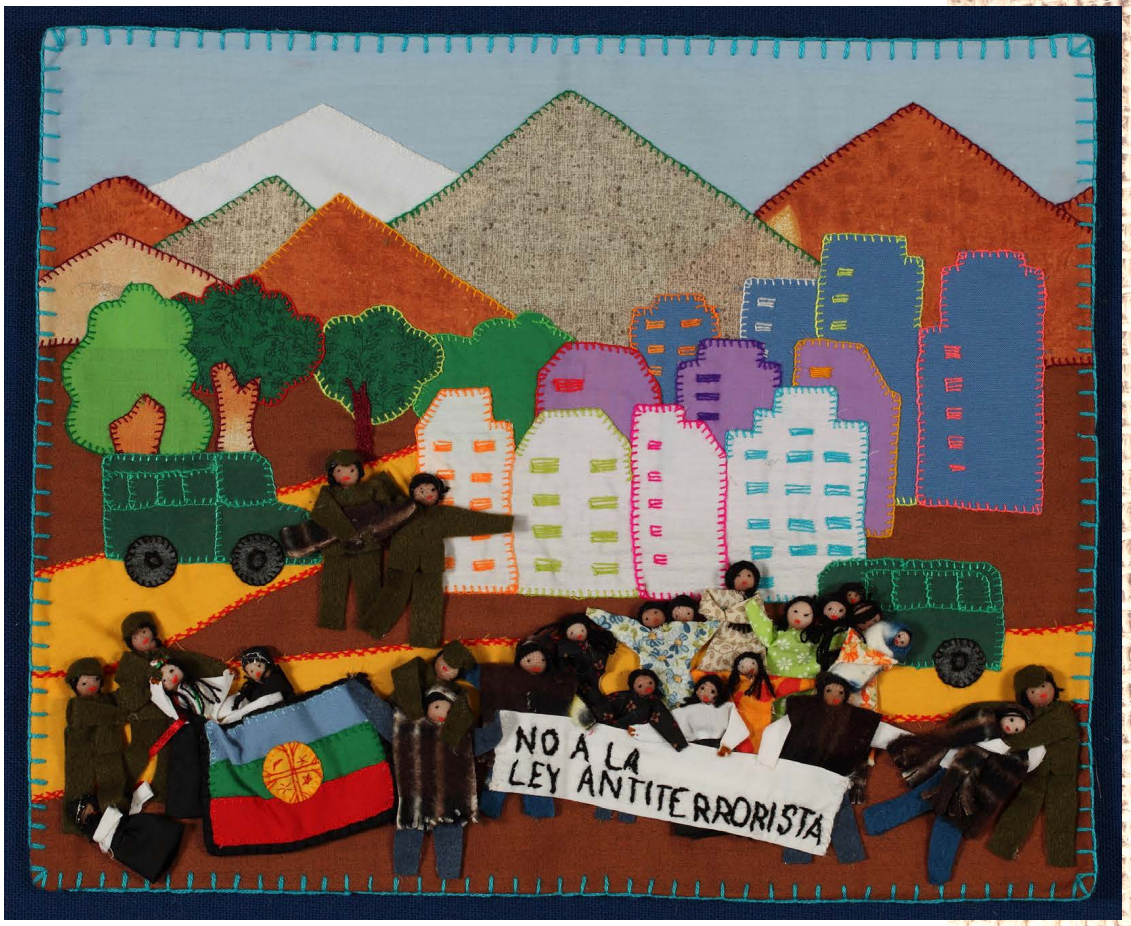
Chilean arpillera, Aurora Ortiz, 2011

Photo Martin Melaugh

In this arpillera, the artist depicts one of the many actions that took place in Santiago, the Chilean capital, during the time of the hunger strike by 34 Mapuche prisoners, imprisoned in 2010 for defending their land. A large number of Mapuche have been forcibly displaced from their land and now live in the capital Santiago, generally doing menial jobs. Living without land is in itself a denial of their identity, as Mapuche means People of the Land.

The Mapuche who live in Santiago publicly demand that the rights of their people imprisoned and on hunger strike are respected and upheld. They demand that the anti-terrorist law should not be applied.

We can see that everyday people have joined the nonviolent action taking place in the centre of the capital in solidarity with the Mapuche. Leading the march are Mapuche women, dressed in their indigenous clothes, and men wearing ponchos, carrying their flag. The police have violently disrupted the march. There is no sun in the sky but it is in the flag itself. Aurora, the artist, is one of the participants in this action.


NO A LA
LEY ANTITERRORISTA

Soldiers back from the wars

English arpilleras by Linda Adams, 2010

Photo Tony Boyle

In order to make this compelling set of three arpilleras, titled: **Attack, Return, Ghost**, Linda interviewed local men who had survived war. She then expressed her understanding of the personal cost of war to them, both during the fighting and on their return home, through the medium of her craft.

Attack shows the aftermath of an attack next to the barracks. Fighter jets fly overhead, plumes of smoke fill the sky and the soldiers lie injured or dead.

Return depicts the life of a soldier, back home from the war, living rough on the streets, seeking solace in alcohol, undoubtedly finding it difficult if not impossible to return to civilian life.

Ghost portrays fears, nightmares about and flashbacks to the war and, suicidal behaviour, all elements of post traumatic stress disorder.

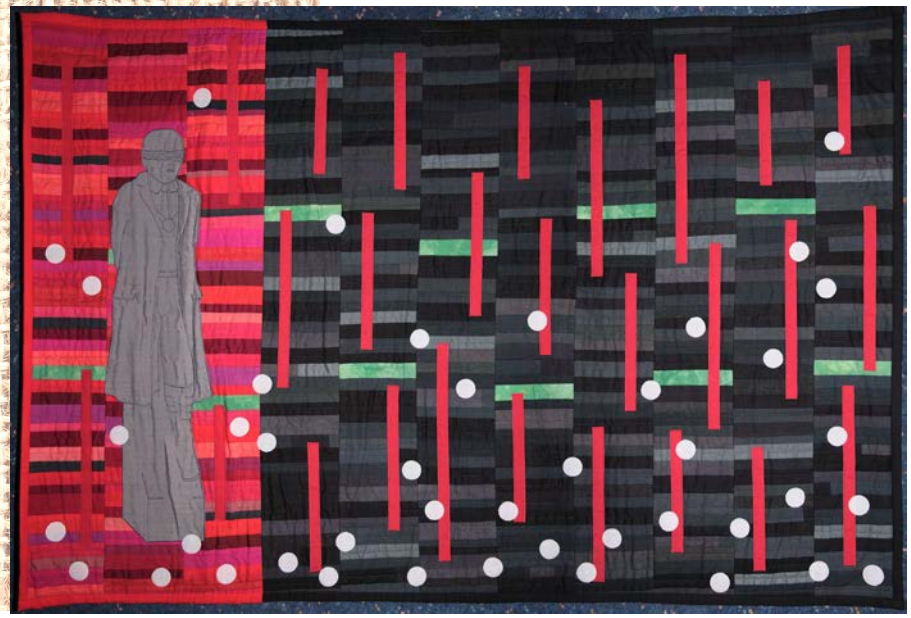
This trilogy of arpilleras, which depicts the horrors of the aftermath of war for ex-soldiers, has resonance in many post conflict zones today. As Linda states: *"Although in these pieces I did focus on the story of the ex-servicemen who have come back and who are living rough in my area, they are meant to tell the story of the hopelessness faced by those coming home from any war. I have read many accounts of what it was like in other countries as well as the stories told to me and they always follow the same pattern."*

The text stitched by Linda at the bottom of the arpillera titled **Return** is a chilling reminder of the futility of war and the cost in human terms:
"For the veterans and their loved ones, the war was only the start of the nightmare."

Executed at dawn

Northern Ireland wall hanging by Irene MacWilliam, 2009

Photo Martin Melaugh



Irene made this quilt as a personal tribute to a group of soldiers who, in 1916, during the First World War, were shot at dawn for alleged cowardice. They were pardoned and exonerated many decades later, after much effort by their families and friends.

Irene said: *"When I first read about the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, I was shocked…Many were so very young; some had lied about their age so they could join up. They had no idea what war would be like."* This sense of shock and her need to bear witness to this atrocity inspired her to create this powerful textile.

A campaign for justice was run for decades on behalf of the 306 soldiers shot at dawn, during the battle of the Somme in 1916. Relatives have long argued that many soldiers were suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, or shell-shock, as it was known in 1916. When initiating the process of granting a group pardon in 2006, 90 years after the event, the then Defense secretary, Des Brown explained: *"… The circumstances [of the war] were terrible, and I believe it is better to acknowledge that injustices were clearly done in some cases …and to acknowledge that all these men were victims of war"* (The Telegraph, 16 Aug 2006).

Janet Booth, granddaughter of Private Harry Farr, one of the men shot at dawn, at 23 years of age, speaks of the impact this had on her grandmother: "*My grandmother had to live with the shame and stigma of how her husband died, keeping the secret to herself for 80 years...*" She describes her own involvement in the campaign: "*With the help of the Shot at Dawn organisation (SAD), MPs, historians and eventually the Farr family taking the Ministry Of Defence to the High Courts we were able to secure a pardon. It had taken 14 years of campaigning but in 2006 all 306 executed soldiers were granted a Conditional Pardon.*"

For Janet, whose family lived with the burden of war for 90 years, Irene's wall hanging captures the horror and futility of war: "*I personally found Irene's wall hanging to be very moving ... [it] represented not only the needless killing of men but also the horrors of subsequent wars that have followed since World War 1.*"

Such sentiments concur with the views expressed by War Resisters International that: *"War is a crime against humanity...."* They argue that: *"All war... leads to suffering, destruction and new structures of domination."*

Los precios están por los nubes/Prices are sky high

LCC, Mujeres Creativas, Peru, 1980s

Photo Colin Peck

Returning to issues of poverty, this arpillera from the 1980s illustrates the Spanish saying "Los precios están por los nubes," literally meaning "the prices are in the clouds" or "prices are sky high."

In its colourful depiction of economic woe, we see queues of women, with angry, frustrated expressions, waiting for their ticket at the shops and holding empty bags. Those who get a turn at shopping buy only meagre amounts, as illustrated by the small bags that do not bulge with purchases.

In the skies above this scene, we see the basic commodities of flour, sugar, rice, corn and oil, the prices of which are out of reach for these women. As always, it is the poor who endure the consequences of state policies, actions and inactions regarding development and poverty.

Living standards for Peruvian people, as depicted in this arpillera, were extremely difficult in the late 1980s due to an unmanageable foreign debt and high inflation. The economic policies of successive government administrations under Belaunde, Garcia and Fujimori did nothing to improve distribution of wealth for the poor. The war between the government and two insurgent groups, (Shining Path in rural areas and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in Lima) in addition to a series of natural disasters and a drop in the world price of Peru's major export commodities created a severe economic crisis. Inflation for consumer products increased by 52% from 1981 to 1983, further worsening the already difficult lives of those experiencing the daily grind of poverty.


AZUCAR
ARROZ
HARINA

The Africa quilt

Nigerian quilt by Roland Agbage (Nigeria) and Polly Eaton, 2009

Photo Julian Eaton

This quilt was made by Roland Agbage, a young quilt-maker from Kogi State in Nigeria and designed with Polly Eaton from Britain, who lived in Abuja Nigeria for many years.

In The Africa Quilt the devastating impact of the exploitation of Africa's natural resources, on both her people and landscape, is depicted. Congo and Liberia have both suffered from the West's dependence on rubber, and the forests of Africa continue to be exported for making furniture and housing abroad. Sierra Leone's wars were fuelled by diamond money. The wars in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo continue because of the profits to be made from stripping the land of coltan (essential in mobile phones), copper, gold, tin and diamonds.

Probably the single resource that has done more to cripple fragile democracies is oil, particularly in Nigeria, where its extraction has caused immeasurable environmental damage.

The quilt shows us that the abundance of Africa has gone a long way to support the lifestyles of those in the wealthier nations of the world.

No a la represa/ No to the dam

English arpillera by Linda Adams, 2010

Photo Martin Melaugh

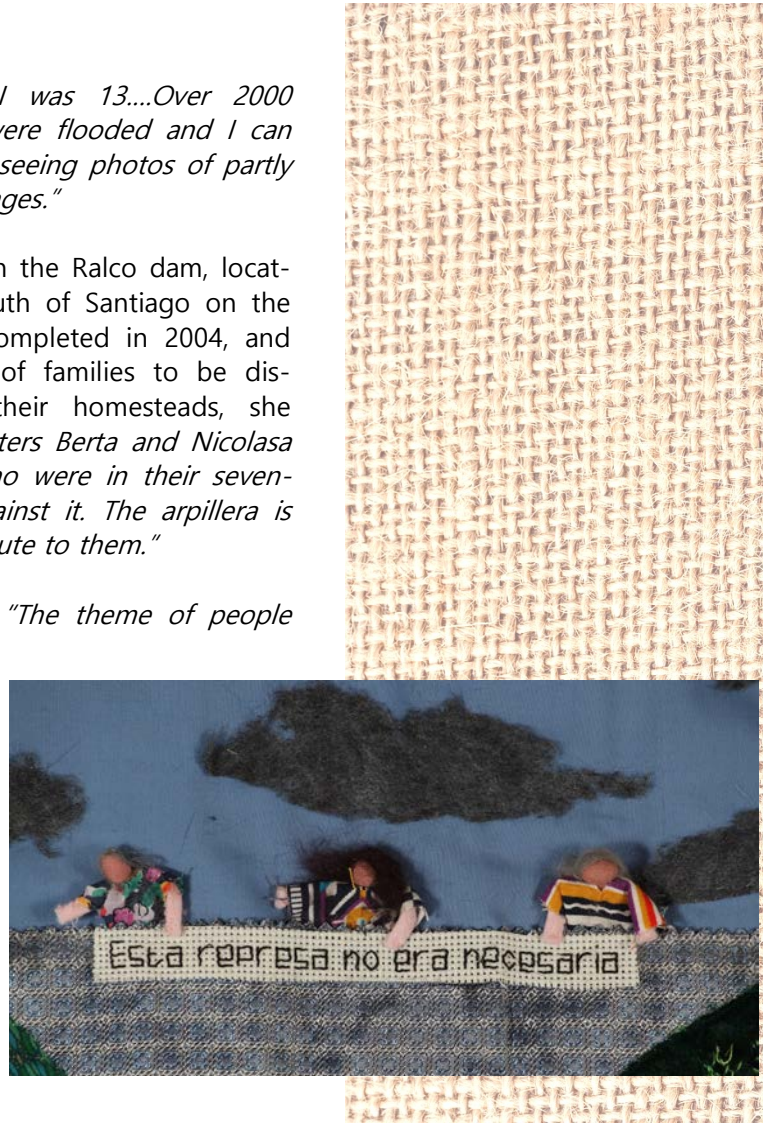
Moved by the power of arpilleras while attending an exhibition in Cambridge, England, 2008, Linda began her own journey of creating arpilleras. This culminated in her solo exhibition ***The poetry of arpilleras*** hosted by the Centre of Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge, in 2011.

This arpillera focuses on the Mapuche people in Southern Chile. In preparation for this piece, Linda studied the history of the Mapuche for over a year, an indigenous group whose land struggles culminated in an 81 day hunger strike in 2010.

The two prominent banners proclaim: **"**This dam was not necessary" and "How much more land are we to lose?" Here she links the current land struggles of the Mapuche people in Southern Chile and their resistance to the Ralco dam, to the impact of the Aswan Dam in Egypt constructed on the river Nile during the 1960s. She recalls: *"the Aswan Dam in Egypt ... was begun when I was 13....Over 2000 square miles were flooded and I can still remember seeing photos of partly submerged villages."*

Commenting on the Ralco dam, located 500 km south of Santiago on the Bíobio River, completed in 2004, and the resistance of families to be displaced from their homesteads, she comments: *"Sisters Berta and Nicolasa Quintremán who were in their seventies fought against it. The arpillera is my humble tribute to them."*

Her comment: *"The theme of people fighting to keep their lands is one that I've come back to several times in my life,"* illustrates the universal nature of land struggles.



Reflections on violence

English arpillera by Linda Adams, 2009

Photo Colin Peck

This arpillera depicts the "Free Tibet" protest in London in 2008 when the Olympic torch was carried through the city on the way to Beijing. The protestors, displaying their placards against Chinese oppression in Tibet, are kept behind a barrier, and can only watch the Chinese security personnel and British police.

Taking part in the protest with her daughter, Linda was amazed at the repression of peaceful protesters in London trying to raise awareness of and denounce repression elsewhere. She describes the response of those guarding the flame: "*…anything in the way was violently pushed to one side… The violence was sickening….*"

Seeing this event portrayed as an insignificant news item prompted Linda to create this arpillera: "*I was eager to make the arpillera to add my voice to the protests, to say 'This is what I saw'.*" For her, creating arpilleras: "*…gave me a powerful voice and the confidence to stand up and use it.*" She is mindful that this can have repercussions: "*By using this voice I leave myself and my friends and family open to retaliation by those who disagree with my views.*"

Through her arpillera, Linda, by capturing the demonstration in London, has highlighted the suppression of the Tibetan people, thousands of miles away and the manner in which the tour, intended as a positive promotion of China, was threatened to the extent that it responded with violence to the actions of peaceful protestors.


FREE TIBET
FREE TIBET
FREE TIBET
SHAME ON YOU
FREE TIBET
FIRE

Juan Pablo te esperamos/ John Paul we are waiting for you

Chilean arpillera, anon., 1986

Photo Martin Melaugh

From March 31 to April 13, 1987 there was an historic visit by Pope John Paul II to Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. For Chile, a Catholic country, this visit was of major significance to the people, coming at a time when the oppressive Pinochet regime had pushed people to the limit of their endurance.

In this arpillera, we see women carrying banners which proclaim: "Peace, Justice, come soon," and "John Paul we are waiting for you." This classic arpillera makes it clear that, having had so much support from the local church, the women had socio-political expectations from the pastoral visit of Pope John Paul II. Actions such as this from all sectors of Chilean society as well as pressure from international sources led to general Pinochet calling for a plebiscite in 1989, the result of which deposed him.

The Catholic Church established various support measures to assist those persecuted by the Pinochet dictatorship. In the wake of the military coup in September 1973, it established an office for the defence of human rights, the Pro-Paz (For Peace) committee, in collaboration with Protestant and Jewish faith communities. When closed by order of the junta, it reorganised under the exclusive sponsorship of the archdiocese of Santiago as the Vicarage of Solidarity/Vicaría de la Solidaridad. Through funding from international

sources it valiantly collected information on human rights violations during the nearly 17 years of military rule. Its lawyers presented thousands of writs of habeas corpus, and provided for the legal defence of prisoners. The church also supported popular and labour organizations and called repeatedly for the restoration of democracy and for national reconciliation.

Such assistance from the church was instrumental in harnessing the energies of local grass roots communities to engage in various non violent actions, highlighting and denouncing the atrocities of the Pinochet regime.

Al servicio de la vida / Servicing life

Chilean arpillera, anon., c1978

Photo Martin Melaugh

This arpillera depicts the type of activities and areas of support the Catholic Church undertook to assist a substantial part of the population persecuted and abandoned by the Pinochet dictatorship. Initially, the Catholic Church responded through the Pro-Paz (For Peace) committee, an ecumenical group of religious leaders, formed in 1974, to support those whose human rights were violated. After two years, this organisation was closed down by order of the junta. Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, archbishop of Santiago, immediately formed a new organisation called the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, which could not be dismantled as it was under the exclusive auspices of the Catholic Church.

In this arpillera, we see the headquarters of the church where problems such as legal defence, exile, political imprisonment, the detained-disappeared, and the presentation of habeas corpus to the courts are being dealt with, on behalf of and with af-

Landmines (title in progress)

German arpillera by Heidi Drahota, 2014

Photo Heidi Drahota

Antipersonnel landmines are explosive devices, which can lie dormant for years until a person or animal unwittingly triggers their detonating mechanism. Designed to maim rather than kill, landmines when detonated, be they blast, fragmentation or bounding type, cause horrific injuries such as burns, blindness, destroyed limbs and shrapnel wounds resulting in amputations, long hospital stays and extensive rehabilitation. www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/problem/landmines/What-is-a-Landmine

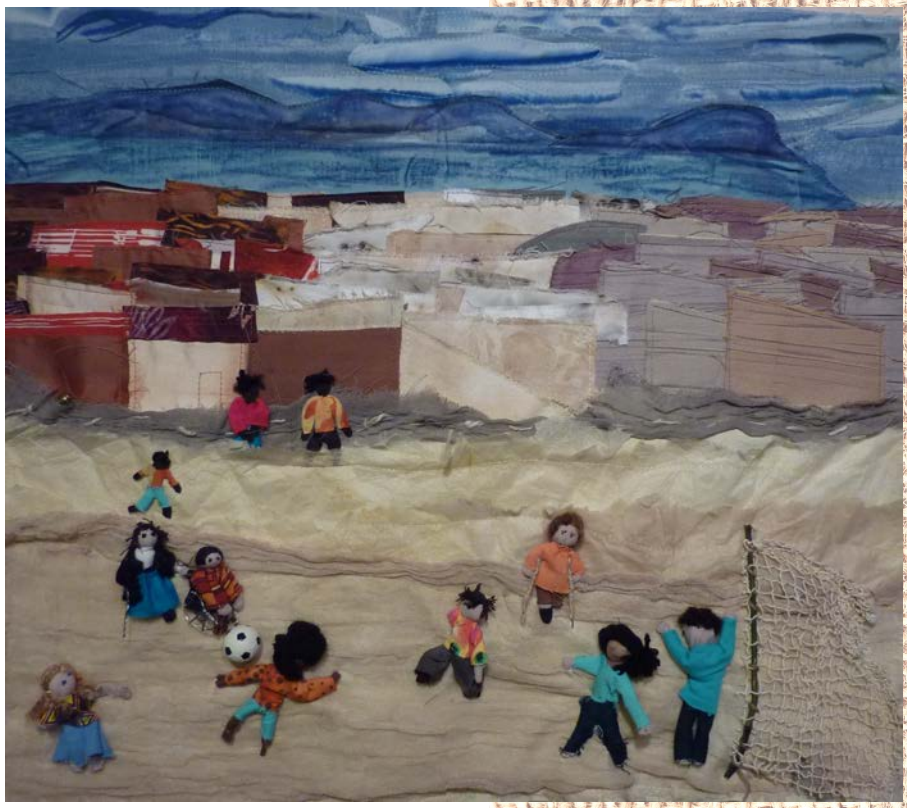
While there has been extensive use of landmines in Cambodia, Colombia, Syria, Israel, Libya and Pakistan, by both government and non state armed troops, Afghanistan is cited as one of the most mined countries in the world, by HALO Trust, a humanitarian landmine clearance organisation, who estimate that up to 640,000 mines have been laid in Afghanistan since 1979. www.halotrust.org/where-we-work/afghanistan

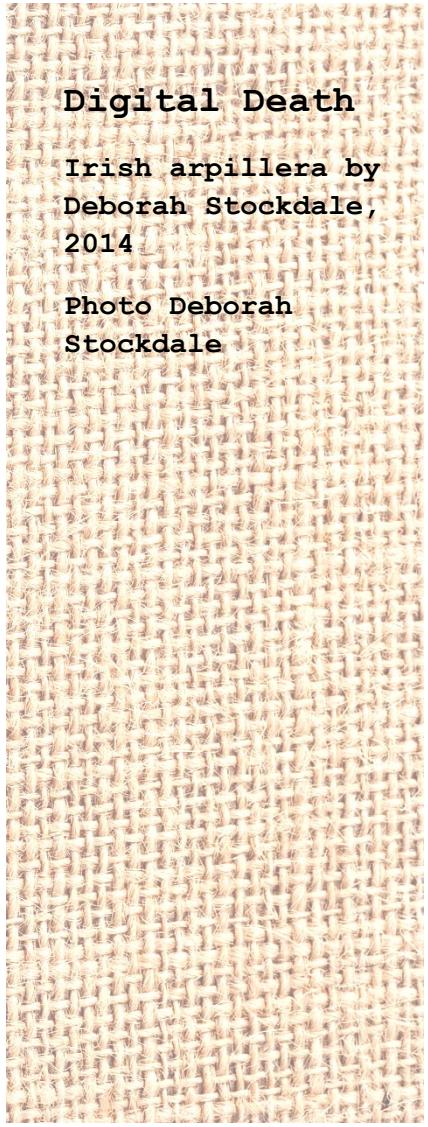
The devastating impact of landmines prompted textile artist Heidi Drahota, to create this arpillera. Heidi, who has connections with women in Afghanistan through her textile work describes how she: "*came into direct contact with the incredible consequences of landmines for the first time.*" The impact on children affected her deeply: *"These children are innocent victims of the actions of adults and governments."* Many of these Afghani children would have unwittingly picked up a "butterfly" mine, a type used during the Soviet occupation, which resembled a butterfly or toy. The image of a playful child about to pick up a fluttering butterfly, which will have life shattering consequences, surely reveals the futility of war and combat to its fullest. www.afghan-network.net/Landmines/

Cognisant of the fact that landmine use extends to many conflict zones far beyond Afghanistan Heidi adds her voice to the global network of groups demanding a ban on the use of

landmines. While the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, also known as the Ottawa convention, has succeeded in stigmatising the use of landmines throughout the world, they are still being used by states who are not signatories to the treaty, including Syria, Israel, Libya and Myanmar.

Notwithstanding the fact that the United States, Russia and China are not signatories to the treaty, it is heartening that more than 80 percent of states have joined the Mine Ban Treaty, including many nations that at one time produced mines. It is also testimony to the power of humanitarian groups working together to effect change to a world free of the devastating impact of war and is evidence that the plea made by Heidi, who: *"calls on the world to work up the courage to solve conflicts differently"* is being actualised.





Digital Death

Irish arpillera by Deborah Stockdale, 2014

Photo Deborah Stockdale

The use of drones, also known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVS), for surveillance purposes and direct missile and bomb strikes has escalated dramatically in recent years, particularly in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. Typically, ground crews launch drones from the conflict zone, while controllers at army bases in the US, 'fly' the drone, monitor cameras and sensors and maintain contact with ground troops in the war zone. The CIA programme of using drones to assassinate "terrorist leaders" has increased under the Obama administration and it is estimated that for every militant leader killed, 10 civilians have also died.

http://dronewars.net/aboutdrone/

In this arpillera, Deborah Stockdale, who *"feel[s] strongly that drone warfare … is soul destroying"* graphically depicts the chilling reality of it. She presents an image of drone operators, in a control room monitoring the drone flight, seemingly desensitized to the carnage they wreak in a country unknown to them, side by side with areas devastated by their actions. For Deborah, the image of a child's face "*is symbolic of all the innocent civilians killed by mistake in drone strikes."*

The psychological detachment of drone operators from their actual living targets deeply concerns Deborah: *"… their actions and attitudes remind me of gamers, with their controls and screens… their world seems artificially constructed and at a great remove from reality."* She continues: "*Warfare has turned into nameless operatives working under remote leadership, from undisclosed locations… inured to the fact that their targets are … very often, women, children and elderly who cannot escape or take cover quickly."*

In the process of creating this arpillera, Deborah drew inspiration from the work of an artist collective in the Pukhtoonkhwa region of Pakistan, an area which has suffered high civilian drone

casualties, 200 of whom were children. To combat the insensitivity of American predator drone operators who refer to civilian causalities as "bug splats" alluding to the killing of an insect, the collective installed an enormous portrait of a little girl who lost two siblings and both parents in a drone attack.
http://www.techly.com.au/2014/04/08/massive-art-installation-targets-drone-operators/

Such creative use of art by artist collectives in remote areas to highlight and challenge the reality and devastating impact of drone warfare is testimony to the powerful potential of small movements to effect change towards a society where warfare, whatever its nature, is not tolerated.

Notes -


SHAME
ON
YOU
HOMENAJE
A LOS
CAIDOS

Acknowledgements -

We would like to thank various people for their contribution to this initiative; the arpilleristas and quilters for their textile testimonies; the collectors for lending their pieces; the photographers for creating a graphical archive; and vocal and silent supporters for their help and patience with technical issues.

Special thanks should be given to WRI and Ceasefire Campaign of South Africa and Embrace Dignity for the opportunity to hold this exhibition that brings together stories which deal with conflict experiences and human rights violations.

Funding for this exhibition was provided, in part, through a grant from the Thomases Family Endowment of the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation.

- RB, BD

Broken Rifle, the striking image of two raised hands clenching a rifle broken in half is vividly depicted here in textile form by MacWilliam. The symbol itself, which represents the destruction of weapons and denounces the institution of war, was first used in the masthead of the January 1909 issue of De Wapens Neder (Down With Weapons), the monthly paper of the International Anti-militarist Union in the Netherlands. During the twentieth century it has become synonymous with the pacifist/nonviolent section of the anti-war movement.
http://www.ppu.org.uk/ppu/rifle.html

War Resisters International (WRI), a global pacifist and anti-militarist network which came into being in 1921 has adopted the broken rifle as its core symbol. With over 80 affiliated groups in 40 countries committed to their founding declaration which states that: *"War is a crime against humanity. I am therefore determined not to support any kind of war, and to strive for the removal of all causes of war..,"* the broken rifle is indeed an apt symbol.