

STORY MAKERS 2008-2012

Twenty-five textile stories



Story Makers 2008 – 2012

verbal arts centre

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Foreword

At the time we launched the exhibition: ***The Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts***, at the Verbal Arts Centre on the 8th March 2008, none of us ever envisioned the trail and footprints this adventure would spark.

The arpilleras and quilts, that have become part of the Verbal Arts Centre's identity, have come from near and afar, from this island both North and South, from remote countries and communities. All have a common maternity, women have sewn them together, have shared their stories, have reached out beyond their surroundings and have provided us with particular and universal insights into their daily life and struggles.

The primary interest of the Verbal Arts Centre's work is in storytelling, specifically purposeful storytelling with those groups, communities and or individuals who may be perceived as marginalised and who find it hard to get their voices heard in the public debate. For the Centre the tradition of arpilleras and quilting fits directly with that purpose and acted as the motivator for the Centre to work with Roberta as curator to establish the permanent-rotating exhibition.

A curator is the person who takes care, the custodian of something valuable, and it is through these lenses that Roberta has lived and experienced her work of putting together these 25 exhibitions.

This has been a stimulating process of engagement with a new constituency of participants. It has encouraged us to learn new skills and make new friends and has added a new dimension of colour to the Centre.

All this has been possible thanks to the women who have dedicated their time and effort to making these quilts and arpilleras and to whom we owe a considerable debt of gratitude.

James Kerr
Executive Director Verbal Arts Centre

Roberta Bacic
Curator

8th March, International Women's Day, 2012

Introduction

Story Makers is an exhibition of 25 textile installations displayed in the Verbal Arts Centre between 2008 and 2012. The permanent rotating exhibition has its roots in collaboration between James Kerr at the Verbal Arts Centre and Roberta Bacic, Chilean researcher, human rights activist and curator.

For the Verbal Arts Centre, whose mission is to give people of all ages, regardless of background, the opportunity and means to tell their own story, the tradition of quilting and arpilleras is an ideal medium both to get stories heard and to enable a flow of new stories. The 25 exhibitions hosted since 2008 depict a variety of themes: local, international, human rights issues and the experiences of new communities.

The title **Story Makers** signifies for James Kerr, Executive Director of the Verbal Arts Centre, that the participants (the majority of whom are women) author their own story, not mediated by a third person. For Roberta this collaboration with the Verbal Arts Centre was an opportunity to: *“give an international perspective to voicing women’s stories through sewing.”*

The power of textiles in giving voice to the experiences and stories of women, in all their diversity, resounds through these pages. Enjoy these stories made by women.

LOCAL ISSUES

Rathlin Reflections: threads from an Island home

Collective work, Rathlin Island women, 2011

Photo Alison Mc Faul

Nearly 20 years ago a group of Rathlin Island women gathered to piece together their stories of Island life. These stories were transformed into a beautiful 16 panel quilt which resided in the Island's Boathouse Museum. In 2010, a group of Rathlin women gathered again to continue the story. Supported by Roberta Bacic, they created a number of new textile panels. David Quinney Mee, community development worker for Rathlin, emphasises that these women were inspired by the arpilleras, introduced by Roberta: "*... the experiences of the Latin American women who met together to narrate their lives through this brave and creative medium.*"

The installation, **Rathlin Reflections**, centred around the women's first **Boathouse Quilt**, included new arpilleras as well as artistic creations from Rathlin children and other artistic expressions.

The launch and exhibition in the Verbal Arts Centre in March 2011, the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, was, in David's words: "*... a well-received opportunity for islanders to present their home with gentle pride and honour...*"



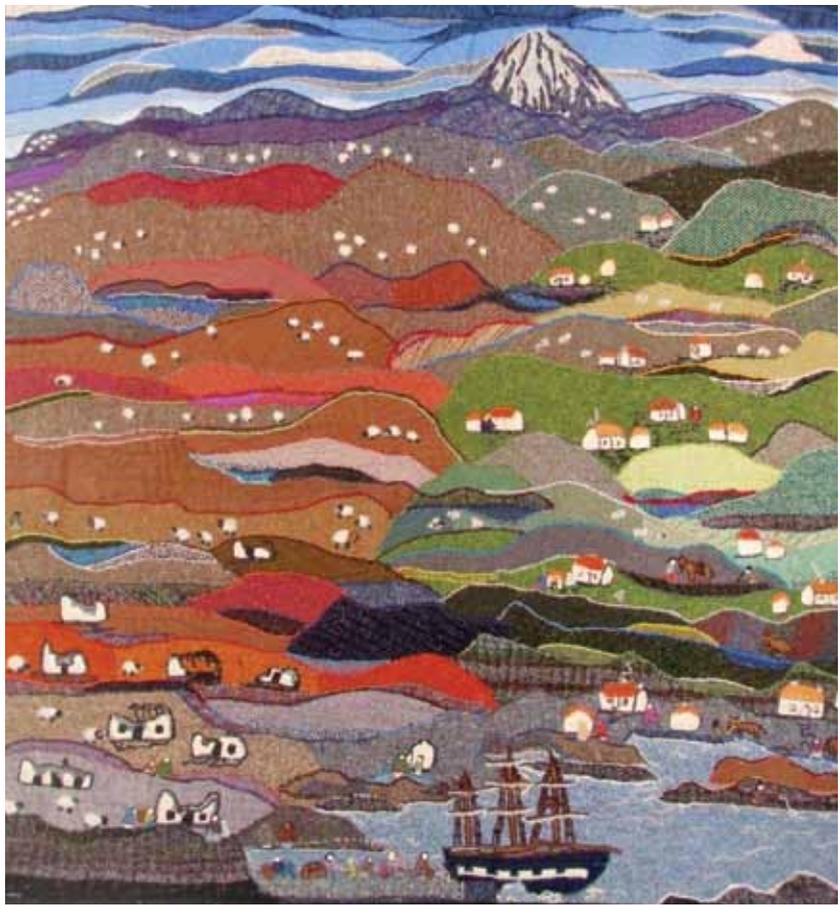
Sheep in Quilts – Caorigh agus Olann

Donegal County Museum project facilitated by
Deborah J. Stockdale, 2009

Photo Anne McGinley

Caorigh agus Olann was a project organised by Donegal County Museum as part of an international project involving partners in Norway and East Iceland. As the project theme was Sheep and Wool, Donegal County Museum chose **The Gweedore Sheep War** - an important historical event in Donegal in the mid 1800s - as the theme to create a quilt, using Donegal wool and tweed. Donegal based artist Deborah Stockdale, who believes strongly in the power of textiles to bring history alive, worked with Letterkenny Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) in creating the quilt.

A cross border Banner Project involving Tyrone, Derry and Donegal, organised by Community Dialogue, also formed part of this exhibition. **Castledearg Women's Institute Banner** (WI), made by members of Castledearg WI, portrays different elements of community life. Similar to **The Gweedore Sheep War**, it also uses sheep as a motif and tweed produced in Spamount Mill (now closed) near Castledearg.



Limavady Borough Millennium Quilt

Women's Institutes, women's groups & community organisations, 2009

Photo Pamela Hayes

This vibrant millennium quilt was the fruit of collaboration between Limavady Borough Council, the Community Relations Unit of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Women's Institutes, Women's groups and community organisations.

Comprised of 37 squares, the quilt depicts aspects and scenes of the Borough of Limavady which have deep and lasting memories for the person who created each square and no doubt for the community at large:

- The occasion when Limavady Borough was chosen as the location for the World Ploughing Championships in 1991 and all countries represented brought a stone which was built into a stone cairn at Kane's farm where the event was hosted.
- The beautiful stone church at Burnfoot where families have worshipped for generations.
- Happy days spent at the seaside on Benone Beach.

This quilt is now on permanent display in the new Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre in Limavady.



Visions of the Community Quilt

Bluebell Arts Project, facilitated by Tina Mc Laughlin, 2008

Photo Martin Melaugh

Visions of the Community Quilt was an initiative of the Derry/Londonderry based Bluebell Arts Project, facilitated by Tina Mc Laughlin, in the summer of 2008.

The process of designing and making the quilt was a vehicle for local women to discuss and define the history, vision and aspirations of their community. Vibrant colours were chosen, influenced by Tina who was inspired by seeing arpilleras exhibited in Pilots Row.

The eye in each corner represents “community vision” and the people represent friends and family as the most important component of a good community. The figures are of different genders, race and generations. Many of the patches represent the identity of the local community and hopes for the future.

A central quote on the quilt states: *“A quilt should keep you safe and warm, so should a good community. We are all patches on that quilt.”*



Sew and Sew's quilt

Castlerock Quilting Group, 2009

Photo Martin Melaugh

While visiting a quilt exhibition in Cultra, Castlerock Sew & Sew quilting group were approached by the curator, Valerie Wilson, who inspired them to make a quilt on shirt making. The quilt, comprised of individual blocks, is made from shirt and pyjama fabrics, embellished with cuffs, collars, tie pins, cuff links, buttons and ties.

The back of the quilt is made from squares of stack and whack, inscribed with the names of the shirt factories that were based in the North West and the names of all who made the quilt. Working on the quilt evoked many memories for the group. As one woman stated: *"My great grandfather came over from Scotland to manage one of these factories – there's a bit of all our families in this quilt."*

The women enjoyed the communal experience of making the quilt: *"...especially when we were together as a traditional quilting bee for the quilting and binding of the quilt..."* commented one participant.



Shared Visions

Belfast women's groups, facilitated by Sonia Copeland, 2008

Photo Christopher Keenan

Four Belfast based women's groups participated in making this quilt: Ardmonagh Family Centre, Beechfield Parent Partnership, Women's Group Woodstock Alternatives and Women United Clifton Park Avenue. Here, the handcrafting of Loyalist, Nationalist, Republican and Unionist women demonstrates a tentative coming together to express a vision for a new inclusive society in Northern Ireland.

Quaker House Belfast, who funded and co-ordinated the making of the quilt and to whom it was donated on completion, urge us to absorb the messages of this quilt through viewing it with our senses: *"It has been said; 'Listen till ye hear.' As you stand before this quilt today let me suggest to you that 'You look till ye see:'"*

As women from diverse communities gathered to stitch, and at times unstitch, this piece together, they created a symbol for peace-weaving. *"Our women shared spaces together, meals together and conversations as each one explored their own vision for a shared future."*

Friendship through Quilting

Mission Hall Quilters, 2008

Photo Martin Melaugh

This quilt was designed and created by a group of women from Derry / Londonderry who met through Mission Hall Quilts while taking part in classes offered by The Calico Project. Learning about the ***Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts*** exhibition motivated them to create a quilt focusing on how friendships have formed through the love and art of quilting.

Many different ideas emerged on this theme. Some women focused on the quilting aspect of friendship by incorporating patchwork blocks, whereas others created blocks symbolising the city such as an oak leaf and statues. Each corner block of the quilt contains a friendship star, a well-known block to quilters world-wide. Here it is used to illustrate each woman's passion for patchwork and the friendships which were formed through making the quilts.



Micro Cosmos

Deborah J. Stockdale, 2008

Photo Deborah J. Stockdale

Micro Cosmos is part of a series of new work created by Deborah Stockdale, of Glencolmcille, Co. Donegal. Forms and images from the natural world, together with microscopic images of plants, animals and minerals were her source of inspiration for this work: *"...I have painted and quilted panels depicting micro crystals, feldspar, bacteria and viruses, single-celled pond dwellers and diatoms, etc. ... they began to burst with colour and energy as soon as I started painting and quilting them, so I knew it was a fruitful creative path to follow."*

Having her work exhibited at the Verbal Arts Centre was very positive: *"it put my work in a much larger social and academic context."*

Deborah is hopeful that **Micro Cosmos** may have deepened people's appreciation of art work on scientific themes and challenged some preconceptions: *"About what is 'art', what is a 'quilt' and I hope also it triggered some wonder in people about the microscopic world we all live in."*



A piece of me, a piece of us

IPOD Young women's quilt, Women's Centre,
Derry/Londonderry, 2008

Photo Martin Melaugh

The IPOD Young Women's Project (Identify, Plan Organise and Deliver) was an innovative Women's Centre project. **A piece of me, a piece of us** was crafted in the emotional health programme and made in conjunction with Eden Place Arts Centre. It was inspired by **The Politics of Chilean Arpilleras** exhibition held at the Harbour Museum, April 2008.

The quilt consists of seven individual arpilleras. As the group met over a ten week period, stories were shared and peer support was offered. Each piece offers a window into the life of the young woman who made it and gives an insight into what is important to each of them.

For many of these young women this was their first time working with textiles. Margaret Logue, co-ordinator of the Women's Centre, comments on the positive nature of the process: *"It worked very well... women got a lot out of it...[it] was a great achievement."*



THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Sant Roc, a Diverse Neighbourhood (Badalona, Spain)

Fundacion Ateneu Sant Roc, 2011

Photo Fundacion Ateneu Sant Roc

These arpilleras are the outcome of the community experience: ***Arpilleras, Women Sewing Stories***, which took place in the neighbourhood of Fundació Sant Roc, Badalona on the outskirts of the city of Barcelona in Spain.

In 2008 a Fundació Ateneu volunteer, who had discovered the power of Arpilleras, enthused women from Ateneu and Sant Roc parish to begin their journey into the Arpillera world. This culminated in an exhibition that travelled all around Catalonia.

In November 2010, three women from Sant Roc travelled to Derry for the launch of the exhibition ***The Human Cost of War***. The exhibition curator Roberta Bacic suggested that they exhibit at the Verbal Arts Centre. ***Sant Roc, a Diverse Neighbourhood*** is the result of this commitment.

Roser Corbera, of the Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc, who believes it was a very significant experience to have their work exhibited in the Verbal Arts Centre, tells us that through the arpilleras “...*women have found a way to express themselves...they feel valued.*”



The Africa Quilt

Roland Agbage & 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.

Oil is probably the single resource that has done more to cripple fragile democracies, particularly in Nigeria, where its extraction has caused terrible 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.



Events of 1998

Irene MacWilliam, 2008

Photo Irene MacWilliam

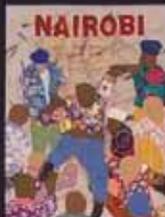
Since 1986, Irene has crafted an annual **Events of the Year** quilt, each one consisting of 20 panels depicting significant world events. A natural curiosity combined with a love of textiles inspired her to create these unique quilts.

Several factors motivated her to depict particular world events in her 1998 quilt: *"I am aware of our need to care for the environment, hence the many panels relating to this area. Having been a social worker I am interested in people...their situations ...and how many are unable to change their lives...either due to the politics of the states where they live or due to natural disasters that often seem to occur in disadvantaged areas."*

As Irene's quilts reflect world events, the repeated portrayal of war, civil unrest and natural disasters is a salutary reminder to world leaders of the need for new directions:

"...Natural disasters like earthquakes and flooding are regular events in certain areas. Wars and civil unrest are featured year after year."

www.macwilliam.f9.co.uk



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Peruvian Arpilleras that tell a story, cry out, challenge and question

Curated by Roberta Bacic for the Verbal Arts Centre, 2009

Photo Colin Peck

Arpilleras (arr-pee-air-ahs) are stitched appliqué textile wall hangings that tell a story. They became prominent in Chile during the time of the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990) and portray women's struggles in their everyday lives.

These arpilleras were created in workshops in Lima in the 1980s by **Mujeres Creativas**, displaced women from the Andean region of Peru, caught in the crossfire between Shining Path (an insurgent group in rural areas) and State Forces during the war in Peru. Impoverishment, political violence and the need to build new homes in the suburbs of Lima became the main themes depicted in these arpilleras which they started sewing as a cooperative venture and as a source of income. Scraps of material from women's everyday lives are sewn into these arpilleras.

An old Irish Paisley pattern quilt found in the loft of Roberta's home was used as a backing. True to its original purpose as a bed cover in cold weather, it has retained this practical purpose being now used to wrap arpilleras.



Guatemalan Textiles, 1980/90s

Courtesy of Denise Dickson, Julie Coimbra and Silvia Lauzzana

Photo Martin Melaugh

In the late 1980s/early 1990s, Guatemala was torn by civil war in which military dictatorships were systematically eliminating the indigenous Indian population. Women set up a shelter for children who were trying to survive on the streets. Scraps of covering cotton wraps already well used were sewn onto quilts and sold.

Every penny housed, fed, and clothed a few of Guatemala's street kids. The quilt exhibited at the Verbal Arts Centre was acquired by Denise.

The traditional Guatemalan garment shown here is known as a huipil. Each region of Guatemala uses a different traditional design, colour and textile technique in its creation. The huipil which formed part of the original exhibition was courtesy of Denise Dickson, Librarian at the Centre for Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge.

A series of compelling black and white photos taken by Dr. Silvia Lauzzana, portraying the everyday life of women in the village of Santa Maria Tzeja in the jungle in Ixcán, in the North of Guatemala, accompanied the original exhibition/installation.



Textile Installation on Afghanistan

Heidi Drahota, 2010

Photo Heidi Drahota

The central feature of the installation uses textiles made by women from Afghanistan, incorporated in a piece by class 6c from the Hauptschule Kiderlinstraße, Germany, completed under the guidance of textile artist, Heidi Drahota.

The seeds for this connection were sown when Heidi brought her students to the exhibition ***Threads of destiny: Testimonies of violence, hope and survival*** in Fürth, Germany in 2009. There, they gained an insight into the Afghanistan/Germany embroidery project, started by Pascale Goldenberg.

Heidi explains that the pupils were very motivated and wanted to support the girls and women from Afghanistan. *“The embroidered squares, made by girls in Afghanistan were bought by the pupils and then enhanced by each student and turned into a quilt.”*

This connection was mutually beneficial for both the Afghan and German girls. The money raised from buying the embroidered squares supported education projects in Afghanistan and it provided an opportunity to discuss racism and intolerance within the multi-cultural class that worked on the quilt.



Nuestra Travesía / Our Journey

Mujeres del Mundo-Babel, 2011

Photo Rory McCarron

This arpillera was made by a group of women called **Mujeres del Mundo-Babel** (Women of the Babel-World), from various parts of the world, who live in Bilbao. The inspiration for this arpillera stemmed from a visit by Esther Vital to **The Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts** exhibition in Derry/Londonderry, 2008. She was moved by the power of textiles, especially arpilleras.

Later in Bilbao, Esther shared her experience with the group. Enthused by her, they created an arpillera to commemorate their 10th anniversary: *"to document and recognize to ourselves our 10 years of surviving, struggles and challenges."*

A collective arpillera represents their journey as an organization (the boat), supported by small individual arpilleras (the sea). Esther reiterates the power of textiles as she reflects: *"We had a feeling of power when we were making the arpillera, the feeling of writing...our own history, and the power of crying out our claims, our wishes to the universe."*



The Tree of Life

Women to Women for Peace, 2010

Photo Rory McCarron

Women to Women for Peace (formerly Mothers for Peace, 1981–2011) is a network of women whose work is about bridge-building between people from countries which have contrasting and often conflicting, political, philosophical, cultural and religious approaches.

Believing that trust and understanding are fundamental conditions for peace and disarmament this group develops friendships across cultural divides. They question war as a means of resolving conflict and have helped to develop conflict resolution training in workshops shared with women from other countries.

In 2011 they celebrated their 30th anniversary. **The Tree of Life** quilt, made in 2010, with women from the Muslim community, coincided with their 30th anniversary celebrations. It was chosen as a cross cultural symbol, relevant to many faiths and cultures. The roots bear the birth place of each person involved in the project. Leaves, seeds and fruits, all symbolic in different ways, make up the leafy body of the tree. The four corner symbols are drawn from Islamic and Christian traditions.



HUMAN RIGHTS

A Quilt for the World

Women of One World, facilitated by Gaby Franger and Ragnhild von Studnitz (+), 1995

Photo Martin Melaugh

This quilt was designed and created by a group of women from 35 countries, spanning all continents, who met at a conference **The Art of Survival** in Nuremberg/Germany in 1995. This quilt, which they created: *"to present to all women in this one world our many views, experiences and concerns"*, was first exhibited at the 4th UN Women's World Conference in Beijing, 1995.

It is rich with symbolism, the symbol of hands reflecting solidarity, friendship and caring. Among the other symbols is the volcano, whose eruption and power stands for the explosion of women's ideas and struggles for their rights. The sun symbolises its life giving power. The cross is where some women have placed their burdens.

The positive dedication by the makers states: *"We extend our hands to our sisters across the globe. Together we can fight for a social order free from all forms of exploitation and oppression, a world where there is solidarity, freedom, dignity and equality for all."*



Women's Rights are Human Rights

Committee for the Administration of Justice (CAJ) with participation of women from the whole of Ireland, created for display at the 4th UN World Conference on Women Beijing, China, 1995

Photo Liz McAleer

In February 1995, the Committee on the Administration of Justice's gender equality group (CAJ), met to discuss the production of what was to become the **Beijing Quilt**. It was agreed that the quilt, to be displayed at the Beijing World Conference on Women, would focus on the theme of **Women's Rights are Human Rights**.

And so, the final quilt was comprised of 30 panels from a variety of groups (and some individuals) across the island of Ireland: Women's groups, Irish Country Women's Associations, Traveller groups, Women's centres, Youth groups, Resource centres, Prisoner groups, Mother & Toddler groups and Peace groups.

Discrimination and repression of women across many spheres of society, on a global level, coupled with a strong sense of the power of women working in solidarity for a better world, are some of the key themes depicted in the quilt.

Liz McAleer from the Committee for the Administration of Justice (CAJ) has been the custodian of this quilt since 1995.



The Bill of Rights

Caw/Nelson Drive, Tullyalloy Women's Centre & Galliagh Women's group, 2010

Photo Martin Melaugh

This piece was completed for the **Women Building Bridges** art exhibition and programme celebrating International Women's Day in Derry/Londonderry, 2010. In this quilt, women demand equality and progress on several issues. Stark messages such as "No to all violence" and "Education no boundaries", complement equally strong symbols.

The women from the three groups, the majority of them new to textile work, discussed during a residential which issues to depict in their quilt. On their return, they visited each other's centres to continue the work. This, according to Rosemary Doherty of the Galliagh Women's group, was a very valuable part of the process: *"For some women this was their first time in each other's centres ...it opened us up to other cultures and led to great friendships."* This quilt is now on permanent display in the office of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, having been presented to Monica Mc Williams in 2011, in her role as Chief Commissioner.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS



NEW COMMUNITIES

Cultures from the heart

The Women's Centre, Multi-Cultural Group, 2009

Photo Colin Peck

Cultures from the heart was crafted by the multi-cultural group in the Women's Centre, Derry and was inspired by **The Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts** exhibition 2008. Ten participants from six different countries used each panel to express their own unique idea of identity and culture through the medium of thread and textile.

Margaret Logue, co-ordinator of the Women's Centre participated in the process: *"I depicted some memories from my life as a child in Derry... It's a great thing to work together and have something at the end... Participants are very proud of it."*

For her, learning about other women's countries of origin was very important: *"All of the women picked a theme from their own country and this made it really interesting ...there were at least eight to ten regions in different countries represented."* **Cultures from the heart** is now on permanent display at the Women's Centre, where it was crafted.



The Alphabet Quilt

Minority Ethnic Women's group, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal,
facilitated by Deborah J. Stockdale, 2010

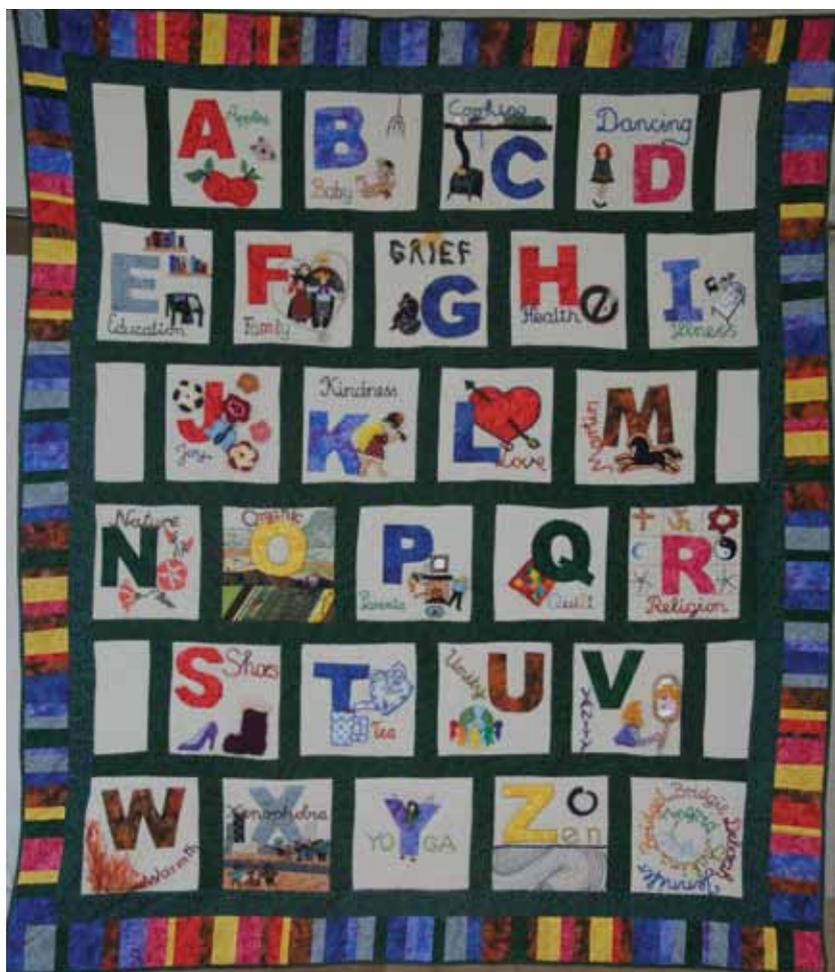
Photo Rik Walton

Working together over a six month period, identifying common issues and concerns, a group of women from five countries and the Irish Travellers' Community created **The Alphabet Quilt**. Using hand-woven Irish tweed and a rainbow selection of coloured cotton batiks (representing the multi-cultural backgrounds within the group), they identified words for each letter of the alphabet, and illustrated them using a variety of textile techniques.

The themes reflected were quite wide ranging, explains Deborah Stockdale, who facilitated the process: *"from children, to cooking, from grief to xenophobia, tea to yoga, the topics we selected were a wide ranging snapshot of our lives."*

The hands-on nature of the work facilitated lots of discussion and exchange of views: It is an engaging piece of work. As Deborah reflects: *"[it] strikes a chord with almost everyone who views it."*

The Alphabet Quilt was part of a larger alphabet project sponsored by Port na Fáilte, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.



From Threads of Life to Following the Thread

Janet Wilkinson and Susan Beck, 2009

Photo Rory McCarron

Following the Thread developed out of an exhibition of arpilleras and quilts from Chile, Peru and Northern Ireland at the World Museum Liverpool in 2009 which was part of the Liverpool Irish Festival 2009.

Susan Beck and Janet Wilkinson designed and delivered a series of 20 workshops on the theme of Heritage, to enable people in Liverpool to create personal arpilleras and figures that told their own stories. Two textile hangings from this project, ***The Sun Quilt*** and a collection of small arpilleras by the ***Granby Soft Furnishing Group***, were displayed at the Verbal Arts Centre in 2010.

The People Make the City is a reflective piece by Janet and Susan on the workshops and subsequent exhibition in the Verbal Arts Centre. For Susan, arpilleras communicate on an emotional level: *“when arpilleras are made from real personal experience there is a real emotional connection with the work and this is stitched into the piece and communicates eloquently with the viewer.”*



WEAVING WORDS

To the Lighthouse

Marlene Milner, 2011

Photo Rory McCarron

In this exhibition, Marlene Milner presents an interpretation of the literary work of Virginia Woolf in stitch and textile. She gives us an insight into what inspired her to create this piece: ***“To the Lighthouse*** by Virginia Woolf is my favourite book by my favourite author. The three panels, made for a screen, and the ottoman cover use techniques and embellishments including trapunto, appliqué, printing on calico, many folded techniques, hand quilting, applying buttons, beads and ribbons, that I think represent the sea and family holidays spent on the coast.”

The exhibition launch was complemented with a workshop by Helen Mc Laughlin titled “How women tell their stories.” Sandra Montgomery who viewed the exhibition was clearly inspired: *“the biggest impact for me was her source of inspiration. I had never thought to use a book as the starting point. So Marlene has made me think outside my box.”*



An interpretation of Seamus Heaney's "Field Work" through the medium of Fabric and Thread

Helen Heron, 2010

Photo Martin Melaugh

In this collection of work, Helen Heron has used Seamus Heaney's compilation **Field Work** (1979) as her grounding source of inspiration, interpreting the themes behind each poem through the medium of fabric and thread.

This exhibition was completed for the Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney's 70th birthday in April 2009. Helen describes this exhibition as: *"a personal interpretation of each of the 27 poems from **Field Work**. Each of the pieces is accompanied by the relevant poem and a written explanation as to how I arrived at the interpretation..."*

She explains the techniques she uses and her preference for hand work: *"Sometimes I employ new techniques, most of the time I use my favourite mode of expression – appliqué, embroidery, quilting, fabric painting. I prefer hand work as I find the quality softer to the touch, and whereas it may be time consuming, it also gives its own 'thinking time', plus a great deal of personal pleasure."*



verbal arts centre

Further information on each of these 25 textile exhibitions is available from the CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet) website, located in the University of Ulster, Derry/Londonderry

http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts/exhibit/vac_quilts.html