



Notes for Launch Conflict Textiles 19 Nov 2015

Professor Gillian Robinson

Good morning. It's my pleasant duty to welcome you here and say on behalf of Ulster University how pleased we are to see this website being launched today. Ulster University has a long tradition of education, research and practice related to peace and conflict. The long established Masters in Peace and Conflict studies is based in INCORE (International Conflict Research Institute) here at the Magee campus, Derry ~ Londonderry.

CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet) is our digital archive of the conflict which has been online since 1997 and contains an encyclopaedic range of materials relating to Northern Ireland's troubled years from 1968 to the present day. CAIN is very widely used with 50,000 unique visitors per month. Led by my colleagues Dr Martin Melaugh and Dr Brendan Lynn CAIN has, from the outset, sought to work with individuals and organisations to facilitate them to make their personal collections available online. As a university committed to civic engagement we were delighted when Roberta Bacic approached Martin to create a website to accompany The Art of Survival and Irish Quilts exhibition held here in the city in 2008. Those of you who know Roberta will recognise her vision, energy and enthusiasm and so from that beginning the site grew and expanded over time as the work, exhibitions and associated events gathered pace.

Last year we were privileged to have Roberta and Breege Doherty work with us on a specially commissioned exhibition Textile Accounts of Conflicts which was shown as part of a major international conference in Belfast to mark the launch of our Accounts of the Conflict website where we, working in partnership with story collecting projects, were making personal accounts of

the conflict available. Everyone here will be aware of the sensitive nature of the story telling process in relation to the experience of conflict and violence.. The power of the textiles in that regard was very evident to me at the conference where hundreds of delegates viewed the pieces on exhibition, reflecting on the 'stories' they tell, starting conversations with others and learning not only from the Irish/Northern Irish pieces but also from the international. That exhibition was subsequently shown at the Linenhall Library earlier this year.

It became clear that a new web site would have to be created to cater adequately for the amount of material and to facilitate searching functions. Today we're here for its launch. And what better way to launch than here at the Tower Museum where Roberta has deposited her collection. I'm delighted and proud that here in the city we have the physical collection for people to view but through the online website 'Conflict Textiles' the collection can be accessed internationally. The beauty, power and quoting Roberta the 'message of solidarity, resistance, resilience and return emerge' and can be shared locally and internationally.

Thanks must go to Roberta for her vision and to Breege who persevered to enter all the data into the databases. Thanks to our computing officer Mike McCool who designed the site and to Martin Melaugh, CAIN Director who worked closely with Roberta and Breege to develop the site. Thanks to Margaret Edwards and the Tower Museum staff for facilitating this event today. It really has been a pleasure to be part of this process.

We hope you will find this site of interest and use and that through the relationship between the physical collection now in the care of the Tower Museum and the digital archive with CAIN at Ulster University we can continue our work together to facilitate dialogue, change and reconciliation not only in this region but internationally.