

CONFLICT TEXTILES

Conflict Textiles Trust

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland No **NIC 109368**

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to March 31st 2024

621 Seacoast Road, Benone, Limavady, BT49 0LH

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INTRODUCTION

This the first year that Conflict Textiles Trust has been in existence. Its origins go back to 2008 when Roberta Bacic began to curate exhibitions of *arpilleras* (appliqué textiles originating in Chile as resistance to the Pinochet Dictatorship) and other textiles from her own collection and those of friends and colleagues, in order to raise awareness of these textiles as an art form and the messages that they contained about the harmful effects of violence, oppression and conflict. The primary focus is on violations of human rights and their consequences for those caught up in violent conflict: specifically displacement, torture, and disappearances. Since then over 300 exhibitions and events have been organised and she collected a loyal group of supporters in Northern Ireland and across the world. Conflict Textiles became an entity with a registered name and a registered logo. On 11th October 2022 it was established as a Trust becoming a registered charity on 22nd February 2023. A bank account was opened in April 2023. This report covers the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The highlights of the year included the launch of the book *Arpilleras Poéticas* and the associated major exhibition at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Chile; the handover of five textiles to Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid to begin their collection; and a workshop with a Colombian delegation from the Mampuján Women Weavers of Dreams and Flavours of Peace, accompanied by the Ambassador of Colombia to the United Kingdom. The delegation took back 2 pieces, originally from Colombia for the Museo de Arte y Memoria de Mampuján. Also noteworthy was the donation to Conflict Textiles of 16 arpilleras from the mid-1970s which had been collected as part of the solidarity between people in Germany and the opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Considerable effort was also devoted during this year towards the preparation for a major exhibition at the Ulster Museum in Northern Ireland, *Threads of Empowerment: Conflict Textiles' International Journey* starting in June 2024, and a number of other events and exhibitions as satellites of the Ulster Museum exhibition. In total, during the year, the Trust organised 12 exhibitions and 11 other events as follows:

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Exhibitions:

1. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile: *Arpilleras Poéticas*
2. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile: *Archivos Textiles: memorias que persisten*
3. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile: *Diásporas textiles: Diálogos con la Colección*
4. McClay Library, QUB: *Story Threads: Creative Readings* Dr Fiona Clark, Schools of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast
5. Grossmann Gallery, Healey Library, University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA: *Connecting Ties: A Transatlantic Friendship and the Northern Ireland Peace Process*
6. Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc, Badalona, Catalonia: *Rincón de la Arpillera Embajadora*
7. Library, Derry-Londonderry campus, Ulster University: *Nicitu, LRA base, South Sudan, 1996 – 2001*
8. Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre: *Threads and Stitches of our Changing Landscape*
9. Void Gallery, Derry-Londonderry: *Mujeres Disruptivas / Disruptive women unveiling*
10. McClay Library, Queen's University Belfast: *ARK / Conflict Textiles*
11. Oshima Hakko Museum, Japan: *Never Forget September 11, 1973*
12. Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre: *The Good Friday Agreement: Work in Progress*

Pieces from the Collection are also included in the Ulster Museum exhibitions, *Troubles and Beyond* and *Inclusive Global Histories*, and were included in the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Museum Services exhibition in Coleraine Town Hall, *A World of Stories*, and the Environmental Peacebuilding Association (EnPAX) and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform-led Community of Practice on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace (ECCP) exhibition and

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online “story book” *Nature Footprints: Community Stories of Climate, Conflict, and Peace* launched at COP 28 in Dubai.

Other events:

- i. Book Launch: *Arpilleras Poéticas* Huenún, J. and Bacic, R. (eds) Chile: Pehuén Editores at Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Chile
- ii. Conference (Hybrid): *Mapping Memory: History, Texts and Cultures* Departments of English and History, Loreto College, Kolkata
- iii. Seminar: *Pensar el negacionismo y los crímenes de odio desde la perspectiva de la memoria y el patrimonio cultural* Biblioteca Nacional de Chile/Unidad Sitios de Memoria del Servicio Nacional del Patrimonio Cultural
- iv. Workshop: *Stitching our Stories: Displacement, Healing, New Possibilities*, Ulster University, Belfast Campus with Centre for Democracy and Peace Building (CDPB), Belfast
- v. Workshop: Level 2 Spanish students, Schools of Arts, English and Languages, Queen's University Belfast
- vi. Seminar: *Responding to Disappearance in Chile, Northern Ireland and Turkey*, Belfast Campus, Ulster University
- vii. Private and Public Events to mark the Acquisition of 5 *Arpilleras* by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
- viii. Workshop: *Waking the Land*, ^ artist collective, Manorhamilton Co. Leitrim
- ix. Workshop: *Afghani War Rugs Reimagined*, Yorkton Workshop, London,/Ghafar Tajmohammad
- x. Participatory Textile Installation: *Woven Hug (Abrazo Entramado)* Flowerfield Arts Centre Tere Chad & Cordelia Rizzo
- xi. Book chapter: Hamber, B., & Bacic, R. (2023). *Textile Language for Difficult Conversations: Reflecting on the Conflict Textiles Collection*. British Council. Available online: doi.org/10.57884/XHBB-D246

More information on all the exhibition and events are available on the Trusts website: www.conflictextiles.com.

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In addition to curating and organising and co-organising activities, Conflict Textiles also attended other events and activities, and supported an international network of *arpilleristas* (makers of *arpilleras*), artists, academics, activists, film makers, musicians, museums and art galleries, poets and policy makers, all committed to creating and raising awareness of the textiles and the messages they convey.

We also respond to requests for consultancy and advice by those studying the arpillera movement at post-graduate and post- doctoral level; researchers, owners, collectors and museums seeking information on the provenance and valuation of textiles; publishers seeking permission to use images: and mentoring makers in their creative processes.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS

Income for the year was £26,129.04, and expenditure £23,528.71, as follows:

Month	Expenditure	Income
Apr-23		
May-23	£2,637.98	£11,340.00
Jun-23	£1,839.83	£1,700.00
Jul-23	£1,963.30	£6,210.00
Aug-23	£3,576.45	
Sep-23	£1,686.46	
Oct-23	£2,173.32	
Nov-23	£4,158.68	£2,135.04
Dec-23	£889.72	£950.00
Jan-23	£1,483.81	£2,824.00
Feb-23	£1,433.10	£850.00
Mar-23	1686.06	120
TOTAL	£23,528.71	£26,129.04
		-
		£23,528.71
	Balance	£2,600.33
	31.3.2024	

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The biggest item of expenditure was payments for services rendered: £10959.13. From its early years, a colleague, Breege Doherty assisted with administration and curatorial activities, and was paid an honorarium of €1000 per month. On the establishment of the Trust this was formalised by an agreement for provision of services. In early 2024 she obtained full time employment elsewhere. Conflict Textiles was grateful for her contribution to the transition from a small personal project to a registered charitable Trust, and wish her well in her new career. The Trust now had to find some alternative arrangement to allow the activities and services to continue.

Conflict Textiles has always engaged people with relevant expertise and skills in needlework, workshop facilitation, etc., on an *ad hoc* basis, and it was decided, at least in the short term, to engage a number of people to provide curatorial, archival and IT services as and when required. Agreements for the provision of curatorial support and IT support were made with suitable individuals. One is a connected person, being the granddaughter of a trustee and therefore in accordance with clause 7.3 of the Trust Deed, at the Trust Meeting on 11 April 2024 these arrangements were considered and it was decided to continue this practice as the most efficient and cost effective way to obtain IT support (the related trustees having absented themselves for the discussion). These contracts has reduced the overall cost of services and provided a high level of support.

The other main item of expenditure was travel and accommodation (£7,468.50), both for representatives of the trust visiting other locations and for partners coming to participate in activities in Northern Ireland. This is a variable commitment, and in some cases, travel is financed directly, so this may not be typical for future years. In terms of income, an anonymous donation of £11,000 established the trust and a similar amount came from payments for commissions.

Apart from the initial donation it has not been possible to identify a source of funding that would make the Trust sustainable, and the Trustees are exploring the possibility of a larger organisation taking over the work of the Trust. These explorations have continued into 2024/2025.

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ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

It may be noticed that the expenditure of the Trust (£23,528.71) is risible when viewed in the light of all the activities of the Trust – i.e., 12 exhibitions and 11 other events, as well as the ongoing networking and support services. It has only been possible because of the significant time that is provided *pro bono* by the curator and the *pro bono* support from the other trustees.

The level of activity is also made possible by the support in kind from commissioning organisations, including exhibition spaces, workshop and meeting spaces, travel costs and administrative support. All these contributions are appreciated, as well as CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet), located at the Ulster University. It hosts the Conflict Textiles online archive as an associated site: www.conflicttextiles.com.

Nevertheless, it is recognised that the current level of activity is unsustainable without significant financial support or by locating the Collection in the care of a larger organisation which is committed to the current work of the Trust.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The record on the Conflict Textile website for each event includes a section on “Outcomes”, provided, where possible, by the commissioning agency or otherwise provided by the representatives of the Trust involved in the event.

They provide useful information to guide future practice. It is often not possible to carry out a detailed assessment of exhibitions which may be on display for a considerable period of time without direct supervision.

Only a small number of venues collect records on the numbers of visitors and rely on voluntary completion of forms to record their experience. We are told that there were one million visitors to the exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, but we are not in a position to confirm that. Seminars and workshops are usually oversubscribed, and participants are enthusiastic. The constant demand for more exhibitions and the sharing of the Conflict Textiles experience is further evidence of the success of the initiative.

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Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name

Conflict Textiles Trust

Charity Number

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland, No. **NIC 109368**

Principal Address

621 Seacoast Road
Benone
Limavady
BT49 0LH

Charity Trustees as of 31st March 2024

Brandon Hamber
Clem McCartney
Gillian Robinson
Lauren Dempster
Roberta Bacic

Note: John Peto was appointed a trustee at the Trust Meeting on 11th April 2024

Bank

Co-operative Bank,
P.O. Box 101
1 Balloon Street,
Manchester,
M60 4EP

Independent examiner of accounts

Lorraine O'Neill

Structure, Governance, and Management

Governing Document and Constitution

Conflict Textiles is a charitable trust, governed by a trust deed adopted 11th October 2022.

The Society is run entirely by its Trustees. There are no formal officers and duties rotate between the trustees.

Trustees are appointed for life.

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Trustee Involvement and Management

The trustees meet quarterly, in the current year 25th May, 1st September 2023, 11th January 2024, and 11 April 2024. Two special meetings were held on 29th January and 19th February to consider how to adjust to the loss of the services provided on a regular basis for a number of years, because the service provider had obtained a full-time job. The meetings rotate between Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Coleraine and Benone, where the collection is presently stored. Attendance has been high, though on occasions some members have had to join virtually.

At each meeting the latest accounts are reviewed against budgets and forecasts; spending is discussed and approved, and decisions made about taking up new opportunities in the light of available funds and personnel. Spending decisions are also taken between meetings and reported at the next Trustees meeting. The meetings also provide a forum to review recent activities within the programme and to plan forthcoming events and discuss problems and issues that have arisen. These are regularly discussed informally by the Trustees.

Objectives and Activities

Charitable Objects

The object of the Trust as set out in the Trust Deed (Clause 2) is to use the visual-tactile medium of textiles (textile language) to:

- 2.1.1 raise awareness of and communicate the experience of conflict and human rights abuses and its consequences;
- 2.1.2 facilitate the expression of feelings and experiences of people in situations of conflict;
- 2.1.3 share stories of conflict with others around the world to build social cohesion and solidarity; and
- 2.1.4 empower those whose voices are often ignored in situations of conflict bringing new voices into public discourse.

The activities of the Trust

In order to further the Objects of Conflict Textiles Trust, under Clause 3 of the Trust Deed, the Trustees have the powers, which they exercise in line with the charitable purposes laid down in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 section 3, as amended:

- 3.1 To run exhibitions and associated activities, including workshops.
- 3.2 To lend items from the collection for other exhibitions provided borrower commits to a loan agreement and undertakes proper care and security.
- 3.3 To maintain and preserve a digital and physical archive.
- 3.4 To promote or carry out research.
- 3.5 To provide advice.

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3.6 To publish or distribute information.

3.7 To co-operate with other charities and bodies.

Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of Conflict Textiles Charitable Trust confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 2 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, as amended, to have regard to the Charity Commission NI's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the Society in the year to March 31st 2024.

In evaluating public benefit, we aim to make our activities and events available to all regardless of personal circumstances, race, gender, ability, or faith, and ensure that any restrictions placed on that availability are both necessary and reasonable. Virtually all activities are free. Most activities take place in Northern Ireland though events during the year took place in Ireland, Great Britain, Chile, Japan, Spain, United States of America and virtually online. The public benefit policy guided the planning and implementation of these events.

This report approved and adopted by a meeting of the Trustees on 17th January 2025 and signed on their behalf:



Brandon Hamber (Conflict Textiles Trustee)