

I am delighted to welcome you all to the Library. Thanks so much for being with us for this very special occasion.

We are here to mark 10 years of the Linen Hall and Conflict Textiles working together by the very generous donation from Conflict Textiles of an arpillera and an embroidery to the collections of the Linen Hall.

Our relationship with Conflict Textiles is a long, sustained and deep partnership of mutual respect and benefit. We share the ethos of promoting knowledge and understanding, of empathetically reflecting on the past and the challenges of the present through heritage and collecting.

Our admiration for Conflict Textiles and Robert Bacic is immense. Their tireless work in shining a light on conflict, human rights issues, and injustices, here and around the world, is exemplary.

The Linen Hall has always been a place for difficult conversations to be had in the right way, and working with Conflict Textiles has engaged people, gave space to think and feel, and brought community through the arpilleras and other textiles conserved, exhibited and created through Conflict Textiles.

Their work is an incredible example of the power of craft and textiles, for remembrance, and protest, and healing, and we are privileged to be able to enrich our collections and cement our enduring relationship with these unique pieces.

It is particularly fitting on National Poetry Day that the inspiration for the pieces being donated is poets and poetry.

Our Lady of Words created in 2015 by Linda Adams is an arpillera representing the life of Chilean poet, Gabriela Mistral, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945, the first female Latin American poet to do so.

Linda has stitched the Nobel citation for Gabriela Mistral on the arpillera: 'for her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world'.

Linda also quotes two of Gabriela Mistral's poems: on the left of the arpillera are some stanzas from the poem 'Little Feet' and on the right is the poem 'Pine Forest'.

The central embroidered piece of the arpillera is a cotton and linen mix framed with a cotton border on hessian backing. The dolls, made in workshops facilitated by Conflict Textiles in different parts of the world, include mixed fibre (polyester, wool, silk, linen, cotton with some small beads and cardboard).

Flora Poetica created by Marlene Milner in 2007 is a piece of embroidery celebrating the work of the poet Seamus Heaney. It was created by Marlene when she was part of a group called The Crafty Quilters, who met regularly in Belaghy Bawn in Seamus Heaney's hometown of Belaghy.

In 2007, The Crafty Quilters held an exhibition celebrating the work of Seamus Heaney. 'Flora Poetica' was part of the exhibition and Marlene had the honour of presenting her work to Seamus Heaney and members of his family. Marlene Milner lives in Limavady and has been sewing, embroidering and quilting for over fifty years.

Our gratitude to Linda and Marlene for the creativity and passion put into producing these beautiful works.

And sincere thanks to Conflict Textiles and Roberta and Lauren for their generosity in donating these unique pieces to our Collections.

Thanks to Patsy, our Arts and Cultural Programmer, for putting together this great event to celebrate the donation coming to the Linen Hall.

And it is entirely appropriate that we hear some of the poetry which inspired the pieces.

Roberta is going to grace us with the words of Gabriela Mistral.

And great friend to the Linen Hall, poet Maria McManus is going to read from Seamus Heaney.

Samantha McCombe

Librarian

Linen Hall Library

3rd October 2024

