Sewn in Protest
Chilean Arpilleras from the 1970s and '80s
Gibson Gallery at SUNY Potsdam

FEBRUARY 14–MARCH 30, 2019

Thursday, February 14, at 5:00 p.m., in the auditorium across from the Gibson Gallery Faculty panel discussion on life in Chile under the Augusto Pinochet military dictatorship. Speakers include Liliana Trevizán, Oscar Sarmiento, Tamara Feinstein, and M.J. Heisey.

Opening reception to follow in the gallery from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 3, at 7:30 p.m., in Snell Music Theatre
La Vida Breve
Concert by Zapateado Duo with Angelica Sganga, piano, and Marie-Élaine Gagnon, cello, featuring engaging Latin works that have been forgotten or rarely heard by the public.

Monday-Saturday, March 25-30, in the auditorium across from the Gibson Gallery Francisco Letelier collaborative mural with students from SUNY Potsdam and St. Lawrence University.

Above: Women work on arpíleras in a small community center. A black crucifix hanging on the wall in the upper right hints at the Catholic Church’s role in creating safe spaces for arpílera production and distribution.
The Gibson Gallery at SUNY Potsdam and the Richard F. Brush Art Gallery at St. Lawrence University are pleased to present

**SEWN IN PROTEST**
Chilean *Arpilleras* from the 1970s and ’80s

Chilean folk music at both receptions by Caramelo Trio, featuring work by Violeta Parra and Victor Jara.

As part of a larger project called *Forging Memory: Chilean Art and Politics*, the exhibition *SEWN IN PROTEST* showcases Chilean patchwork tapestries called *arpilleras*, which were among the earliest expressions of political protest during the brutal dictatorship that ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990.

On September 11, 1973, a military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet—and secretly supported by the U.S. Nixon administration—overthrew Chile’s democratically elected socialist government. During the seventeen years that followed, the Pinochet regime abducted, tortured, and killed thousands of its perceived opponents. In response, Chilean women stitched patchwork tapestries that dramatically depict protest and repression, while also celebrating survival, community life, seasonal beauty, and the fruits of women’s labor. At the time, the *arpilleristas* connected to a growing national human rights movement that protested numerous state abuses and mobilized for the 1988 plebiscite that rejected the Pinochet dictatorship and set Chile on a path back to democracy.

Both exhibitions incorporate educational and cultural programs that deepen our understanding of the *arpilleras* as works of art and as symbols of the broader human rights movement. Presenters include Liliana Trevizán and Oscar Sarmiento, SUNY Potsdam professors who were university students and teachers in Chile during the dictatorship, and Chilean artist and educator Francisco Letelier, who is working with students to create a mural at SUNY Potsdam. Letelier’s father, the Chilean ambassador to the U.S. before the coup, was assassinated in Washington, D.C., by the Pinochet regime in 1976. The presenters are joined by Katherine Hite, an expert on the politics of memory, as well as other scholars and musicians in celebration of the *arpilleras*.

Above: *Arpilleristas* from original “Nueva Esperanza” workshop display historic collection of *arpilleras* housed at the Casa de la Mujer in Huamachua, Renca, Santiago, Chile. From left to right: Silvia González Reyes and Aída Moreno Reyes, Janis Broder (SLU), Ryan Hutchins (SUNY), and Gerardo Barrera Moreno Reyes, Aída’s son, August 2018. Photo courtesy of Tamara Feinstein.
Richard F. Brush Gallery at St. Lawrence University
MARCH 4–APRIL 11, 2019

Monday, March 4, at 7:00 p.m., in Griffiths 123
Keynote address by Dr. Katherine Hite, Vassar College, author of Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorial Struggles in Latin America and Spain.

Opening reception to follow in the gallery from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 27, at 7:00 p.m., in Griffiths 123
Lecture by Francisco Letelier
Blackboards of the People: Murals and Activism from the Americas

Above: Santiago neighborhood built in the 1960s for people with limited resources. People search for food to fill their bags and contribute to a communal cooking pot created by women. In the foreground, a distinctive black and white police truck looms ominously, surveilling the scene.

RICHARD F. BRUSH
ART GALLERY
& PERMANENT COLLECTION
ST. LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY
In addition to the *arpilleras* on display, the exhibitions include interpretive materials from students in Tamara Feinstein’s classes at St. Lawrence University and at SUNY Potsdam who created podcasts on Chilean history; a digital timeline; clips of interview with *arpilleristas* and other experts; an online photo gallery of the *arpilleras* in the collection; and digital narratives, including one on Francisco Letelier’s murals at St. Lawrence University. Both galleries will also display a SLU GIS Lab-produced map entitled “Memory Sites and Arpilleria Production in Santiago, Chile,” showing key sites related to the Pinochet dictatorship and city districts (*comunas*) with active *arpilleria* workshops.

Both the map and website feature materials collected on a summer 2018 research trip to Santiago, Chile, made by Tamara Feinstein and students Janis Broder (SLU) and Ryan Hutchins (SUNY). The research team visited memory sites; conducted eight oral histories; and researched at two archives.

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For more information about the exhibitions and related programming, visit http://www.forgingmemory.org or email forgingmemory@gmail.com.

SUNY Potsdam: (315) 267-3290 | St. Lawrence University: (315) 229-5174

Above: Joyful scene in rural outskirts of Santiago. In Chile, spring flourishes in September. People come together to celebrate as *pan amasado*, a traditional bread, is made in a communal oven.
Women produced *arpilleras* in workshops supported by the Vicaria de la Solidaridad, the human rights arm of the Roman Catholic Church in Santiago that offered legal protection and assistance. As women struggled to locate missing family members and to find food, they also created the visually striking *arpilleras*, a form of folk art made from cloth pieces stitched onto burlap to form intricate three-dimensional tapestries. The women sometimes used cloth from the clothing left behind by their abducted loved ones. Sale of the *arpilleras* provided income for these women, as well as for other working-class women who joined the workshops. The collection on display comes mostly from the working-class workshops operating towards the end of the dictatorship, depicting scenes of economic hardship, community survival, and political mobilization against the regime.

Jubilee Crafts, a Philadelphia fair-trade pioneer in the 1970s and 1980s staffed entirely by women, imported hundreds of *arpilleras* and marketed them nationwide to support the *arpilleristas* who made them. *Arpilleras* were also used to educate Americans about U.S. foreign policy toward Chile. The tapestries on display were provided by former Jubilee Crafts staff members. At the close of the exhibitions, the *arpilleras* will be returned to Chile and placed in the permanent collection of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago.

Front: Women demand “freedom for the political prisoners” during the Pinochet dictatorship. Always present are police with water trucks. People, too poor to pay for electricity, tap their houses into electric lines. (detail) Above: *Arpilleristas* sewing at the Instituto Chileno Frances. Santiago, Chile, December 1983. Photo by W.P., courtesy of the Vicaria de la Solidaridad Archive.