



Vida en Nuestra Población, anonymous Chile, 1983. Photo: Martin Melaugh

Arpilleras and the Poetry of Survival

In Zulema Huaquipán's Home

Adjoining the river of the skies
 green and black towards the coast
 we raised Zulema Huaquipán's house.
 So many deaths ago the foundations,
 so many children for the red dust of the road
 facing the plane and the hillside of the west.
 We raised the mañío look
 of Zulema Huaquipán
 bewitched in her lightless eyes
 we built the walls of her dreams
 every board of pellín smells like the fog
 that is raised by the evening fields.
 Each doorway that looks to the river and the boaters
 preserves the flight of fishes and of birds
 beneath the eye of water in decline
 where animals from other worlds sleep
 we finished the windows
 and in the sand we buried our shadows
 like poles that hold up the roof
 of Zulema Huaquipán's home.

Jaime Huenún

from *Reducciones* (unpublished). Translated by James Park.

Arpilleras are three-dimensional appliqué textiles using hessian (arpillera in Spanish) as backing. They became a common form of expression in Chile during the 20th century, particularly under the ruthless military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

Arpilleras have since travelled the world and have inspired many to use the same technique as a medium to express that which may otherwise be difficult or even dangerous to voice in situations of conflict and injustice.

This exhibition, building on the theme of the poetry of life and survival, finds a textual expression in the work of award-winning poet Jaime Huenún from Osorno, Chile.

Mr Huenún's poetry, articulated from within the centenarian struggle for survival, justice and cultural recognition of the Mapuche people, will bring this event to a close at the Queen's Welcome Centre, 9 June at 6pm.

Exhibition curated by Roberta Bacic.

Hosted by the
Latin American Studies Forum