

CONFLICT TEXTILES



War-Torn Children Event

Film screening, post film discussion and book launch

15th March, 7 – 9pm

Breege introduced the speakers and gave an overview of the event, emphasising that it focused on the exhibition themes of the consequences of war and conflict as well as campaigning against and resisting war.



Curator Roberta Bacic giving a brief, pre-event guided tour of the exhibition.

Film screening

The evening commenced with a screening of **“Armagh Stories: Voices from the Gaol”**. This film was directed by Cahal Mc Laughlin, Professor of Film Studies, School of Arts, English and Languages, Queen University, Belfast.

This documentary film, which is now part of the Prisons Memory Archive, tells the stories of some of those who passed through the gates of the mainly female prison that operated during the Troubles in Northern Ireland from 1971 - 1986. It has been screened internationally and in Northern Ireland, where it has been used by community groups to facilitate discussions on how to address the legacy of a violent past. This is its first screening in Donegal.

Post film discussion

This was chaired by **John Lannon**. John is active in the fields of international development and human rights protection, and is chairperson of Doras Luimní, an NGO which supports & promotes the rights of migrants in Limerick & the mid west region. Doras Luimní commissioned the War-Torn Children in July 2017.

John was joined by Cahal Mc Laughlin and Margaretta D’Arcy, in her capacity as peace activist, pacifist and author of **“Tell Them Everything”**, a 2nd edition of her 1981 original, in which she recounts her time in Armagh Gaol in the 1980s. Margaretta has been part of the War-Torn Children exhibition in the Linenhall library, Belfast and Doras Luimni.



L-R: Cahal Mc Laughlin, John Lannon and Margaretta D’Arcy responding to comments from the audience

During this animated discussion which drew on **“Tell Them Everything”** and **“Armagh Stories: Voices from the Gaol”** a broad spectrum of perspectives and questions were raised and debated, both by the panel and attendees. The key points arising included:

- The events portrayed in the film are mirrored in many jurisdictions today, Guantanamo being one example.
- Margaretta emphasised the degradation and humiliation of strip searching and the general anxiety felt by young women in Armagh Gaol in the 1980s about their health and fertility.
- The sense of comradeship and solidarity evident in the documentary was raised, prompting further comments on the sometimes nostalgic remembering of comradeship during incarceration and a denial of interpersonal conflict and friction.

Roberta Bacic noted that when taking testimonies for the Truth Commission in Chile, survivors rarely focused on conflicts they had experienced with each other. Cahal spoke of a body of work on memory studies, which argues that what people choose to remember and articulate is an indication of the present rather than the past, particularly when there is still a contested narrative and space.

- The patriarchal society that we live in was hotly debated. Margaretta argued that its male dominated, male identified and male centred nature, which contributes to war and militarisation, must be challenged. She questioned why women should bear children who may be sent to war. Contributions from the audience contested this view, emphasising many examples of positive gender relations in peace work and in society generally.



Maire Magenis making her point during the post film discussion.

This discussion culminated with the launch of a new edition of Margaretta's book "**Tell Them Everything**".

The evening concluded with a brief input by John Lannon on Shannonwatch, a group of peace and human rights activists based in the mid-West of Ireland whose objectives are to end US military use of Shannon Airport, to stop rendition flights through the airport, and to obtain accountability for both from the relevant Irish authorities and political leaders. They hold monthly protest vigils at Shannon on the second Sunday of every month. They also do continuous monitoring of all military flights and rendition-linked flights in and out of Shannon and through Irish airspace.

Both John and Margaret spoke of their involvement in the monthly protests and Margareta gave an overview of the Women's Peace Camp.

Report and photos by Breege Doherty

28th March, 2018