

The arpillera I observed depicts a powerful and emotional scene that reflects themes of violence, fear, and political repression. Arpilleras are hand-sewn textile artworks traditionally created in Chile, often by women whose family members were victims of political violence. These arpilleras were used as a way to document experiences, express grief, and communicate stories about injustice to the outside world. Through its materials, imagery, and setting, the arpillera I analyzed appears to represent the experiences of civilians who were detained or forcibly disappeared during the Pinochet period. It also raises questions about how many stories like this went undocumented and how many families were left without answers.

One of the first things I noticed about the arpillera was the materials used to construct the figures and objects within the scene. The piece appears to be made from repurposed materials such as pieces of clothing, yarn, and leather. The fabric used for the figures may represent clothing that once belonged to people in the community, which could symbolize the lives of those who were affected by the events depicted. The yarn used for the hair and the leather-like material used for the soldiers' guns add texture and detail to the artwork. These materials reflect the traditional techniques used in many arpilleras, which were often made from scraps of fabric that women had available in their homes. As noted by Teresa Bacic in *Arpilleras in Contested Spaces*, arpilleras are three-dimensional appliquéd textiles made on a backing of strong fabric, often from reused potato or flour sacks, with cloth figures sewn on separately to create a layered and personalized effect. Using recycled materials also gives the piece a strong emotional and symbolic quality, as the fabrics may represent the everyday lives of the people who experienced these events. It seems as though some of these materials belonged to actual victims or their families, further deepening the emotional connection of the piece.

The imagery shown in the arpillera suggests a scene of detention and violence. I noticed figures who were blindfolded with their hands behind their backs, which suggests that they have been captured or arrested. In the background, there are bodies being transported in the back of a truck surrounded by soldiers carrying guns. These details imply that civilians are being taken away by military forces. This imagery strongly reflects the idea of forced disappearance, a practice in which individuals were secretly detained or killed by the government. The overall theme of the arpillera appears to communicate fear, loss, and injustice experienced by communities during times of political repression. It also raises the question of how frequently scenes like this occurred and how communities coped with the constant threat of violence.

The broader geographic and historical context of the arpillera likely relates to Chile during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. During this period, many people were arrested, tortured, or forcibly disappeared by the government. Families often did not know what had happened to their loved ones, which caused widespread fear and grief throughout the country. Women whose family members had been taken often created arpilleras as a form of protest and storytelling. These textiles were sometimes secretly exported and sold internationally in order to raise awareness about human rights abuses occurring in Chile. This makes me consider how dangerous it must have been for these women to create and share these works, and how much courage it took to resist in this way.

The background of the arpillera also helps establish its geographic context. The mountains and sun depicted behind the scene may represent the Andes Mountains, which are a major feature of the Chilean landscape. Including these natural elements connects the personal experiences of the people shown in the arpillera to the larger geographic environment in which these events occurred. It may also symbolize how these tragedies were not isolated incidents, but

rather widespread across the country. Overall, this arpillera serves not only as a piece of art but also as a powerful historical and geographic record of the suffering and resilience of communities during a difficult time in Chile's history. It leaves the viewer questioning how art can serve as both evidence and resistance in times of injustice.

Abstract/Executive summary:

This analysis focuses on a specific arpillera that depicts a scene of detention and violence, likely representing the forced disappearance of civilians during the Pinochet period in Chile. The artwork uses repurposed materials such as fabric, yarn, and leather to construct figures of blindfolded individuals and armed soldiers, emphasizing both the humanity of the victims and the harshness of the violence depicted. The image of civilians being transported in a truck and the presence of military forces, suggests fear, loss, and political repression. The background, possibly representing the Andes Mountains, situates the scene within a recognizable geographic context. Overall, this arpillera represents the experiences of people affected by political violence and serves as a way to remember and communicate these events.