

Will Mitchell



This arpillera has two halves. The left side depicts a village, with houses and people carrying different items. The items are made out of wool, and the people all have pink arms, meaning I believe they are women. The right half shows a plane flying away, with people under it demonstrating by holding a sign saying “no mas exilio”, no more exile. There is one background for both sides, showing mountains, likely the Andes, and a red sun. This seems to be a coastal town, so the sun is likely rising in the east in this arpillera. I believe this is to represent hope, with the blood red color as a reminder of what has already been lost. Each new sunrise may be a reason to hope, but it also brings with it more death and loss. Pinochet’s brutal military dictatorship in Chile was known for “disappearing” people deemed to be enemies of the state or dangers to their regime. A majority of these people were men, leading women to have to lead more active lives outside the home to provide for their families. Sometimes, people were disappeared by being flown into the ocean and dropped into the water, never to be seen again. The plane in this arpillera has many red demarcations on it, likely to signify blood and death and

show how planes took people away into the ocean to dispose of them. The women (with pink arms) underneath protesting, I believe, are meant to show how people didn't submit at the time to the authoritarian regime, and that there was resistance. It also goes against the idea that women are weak or too fearful to do anything, showing women risking their lives for what they believe in. The left half has multiple layers. Firstly, I believe it is meant to show some semblance of normalcy, how everyday life can feel the same as it was. It also shows the strength of women, as they were the ones providing for their families and working through terrible grief and loss to provide for their families. Finally, it shows the ways in which people banded together and helped each other to survive. The items the women are shown to be carrying resemble haphazard and makeshift products, and one woman seems to be getting something from another's home. This was common as people had to help each other with the lack of basic goods being available. The house at the bottom of the left side could also represent an arpillera-making workshop, with the side serving to show how arpillera-making helped people to connect and get through the struggle. People were able to talk to one another, make extra money, and do something meaningful through arpillera-making. The arpillera-making workshop being on the left side (depicting a decent-looking town) could symbolize how arpilleras were not simply a way to remember and protest, but also a way for people to get through the struggle together. A way for life to feel less grim. I believe the trees, like the mountains, are meant to show continuity and normalcy through all the bad. I believe the sun being on the right side of the arpillera shows the balance of the two feelings, how there were brief moments of seeming normalcy and coming together to get through the brutality, but most of the time it felt like doing the impossible, standing on water and protesting at a plane flying further and further away. The "normal" moments interrupted the fear, helplessness, and desperation, not the other way around.