

The arpillera I chose to analyze has a deep blue woven border with a dark rendition of the Andes mountains with the sun shining from the background, casting light on what appears to be a funeral, attended solely by women, their clothes often made from scraps of clothing textiles likely from disappeared loved ones. They hold plastic flowers as they surround two coffins in a field of gravestone crosses. Above them sits an arch, "patio 29", a mass grave site and monument to those who were silenced and disappeared during the military dictatorship. "NN" etched into all grave stones, "no name" an echo of the lack of closure surrounding the status of the disappeared. Beyond the gravesite sits the city of Santiago, home of the patio 29 monument, situated within the Andes mountains, the numerous houses made from a colorful series of fabrics with reds, pinks, and yellows strewn across the landscape.

In the artists rendition of the everyday life experienced by Chilean women, this piece of art depicts the lived experiences of numerous individuals who are within the military dictatorship, were forced to live without closure as to the whereabouts of the disappeared, closure that is still unacknowledged by the current Chilean government; shaping current political resistance and human rights advocacy for modern day activists. The disappearances conducted by the Pinochet dictatorship after the Sept 11th coup and his subsequent installation as leader of Chile; were often men; the primary victims of political violence, subject to torture and execution. The extent of political violence, a grief which caused Chilean women to take the lead in the fight against the military dictatorship by occupying public memory and reclaiming their history, sharing their art in large numbers, another tactic of resistance, an elusive use of a gendered system of labor which utilized culturally significant uses of textiles to express their lived experiences and history in visual medium able to speak volumes years after the dictatorship. These textiles serve to tell the stories of the marginalized, voices often left out of historic narratives; giving a voice to the disproportionately silenced.

In a larger geopolitical context, arpilleras represent a historically culturally significant use of textiles and weaving as a means of individual and collective resistance during the Pinochet dictatorship. Life as it was before the military dictatorship will never be the same, during it however, women who came together in support of one another built new communities of trust and mutual aid, echoing the fight against authoritarianism still felt by the working class people of the world today. Women took over work, teaching one another skills which will be useful in the creation of these pieces of art but also community building at a much larger scale, improving trust and communication by building bonds amongst the members of the community; these textile practices having a long historical precedent as an act of resistance in the Latin American region and across the world.

The materials used to make this Arpillera, and many others, were more likely than not made from material that was readily available along with significant articles of clothing from the disappeared; collective and individual creation of these pieces reflecting the community members that came together to document their stories and history. This can be seen as a powerful form of collective resistance; utilizing materials on hand shaped by the current economic hardship.