



The Fabric of Protest

September 2023

Create a stitched square to commemorate
50 years since the Chilean military coup of 1973



A textile workshop by People's History Museum (PHM) and artist Helen Mather. Learn new techniques and discuss the issues that matter to you.

This resource introduces some of the ideas and techniques that will be explored during the workshop on Saturday 16 September 2023. Use it to prepare for the workshop or as inspiration for your own textile projects.

Suitable for 11+ (under 18s must have an accompanying adult).



#FabricOfProtest #InternationalSolidarity #Chile50Years

What will we be making?

This month we are taking inspiration from Chilean arpilleras to make squares which commemorate 50 years since the Chilean military coup of 1973. The act of stitching arpilleras in memory of the dead and disappeared is to seek truth, justice, and repair.

We will be using stitch techniques used by the makers of arpilleras (arpilleristas), as well as learning about the practice of stitching for memory with a talk by Bordando por la Memoria, a group of first and second generation Chilean exiles in the UK.



'50' Chilean patchwork textile, made by Helen Mather, Image courtesy of People's History Museum

Image description: Colorful patchwork '50' stitched onto the centre of the fabric square with the words 'truth', 'repair' and 'justice' stitched around it.

Inspiration: Chilean Arpilleras

Chilean arpilleras are brightly coloured pictorial appliqué patchworks made predominately by groups of women from the families of the disappeared. They tell the stories of the human rights violations that happened during the military dictatorship of the General Augusto Pinochet regime. The regime was introduced after the Chilean military coup of 1973.

Arpilleras were made from recycled fabrics including clothes that belonged to the disappeared, along with photos, images, and names of the missing, and stitched wording such as '¿Dónde están?' (Where are they?). Arpilleras were smuggled out of Chile and sold to raise income and support for the families of the disappeared.

Inspiration

Bordando por la Memoria - Embroidering Memory

Inspired by the arpilleras of Chile and the Bordandos por la Paz in Mexico, a group of first and second generation Chilean exiles began to embroider the names of the 3,000 men, women, and children who disappeared, and those who were executed during the brutal dictatorship in Chile between 1973 and 1991.



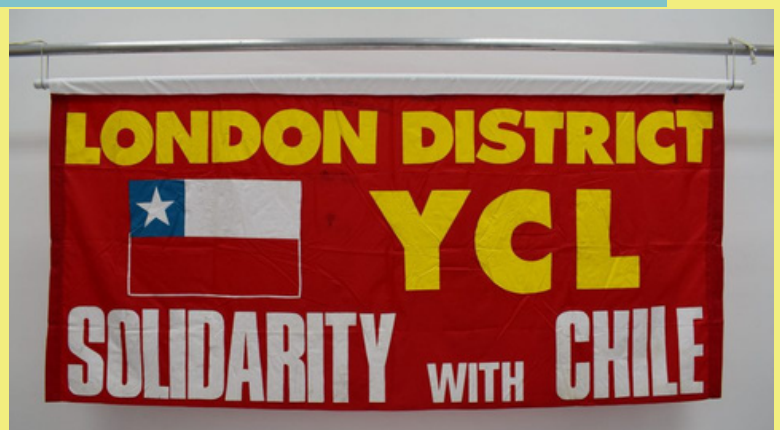
Image courtesy of Bordando por la Memoria.

Many of the participants in the group were imprisoned during the dictatorship and given asylum in the UK after being released from prison. Almost all have lost either family members or friends as a direct result of the dictatorship. Since 2018, the Bordando por la Memoria group has been meeting to embroider their collective memory.

Image description: Three vertical strips of textile pieces. Central textile consists of two larger pieces; wording includes: 'justice for the mapuches.' The two strips on either side display include many smaller stitched squares with motifs, photos of people, and wording including ¿Dónde están?

Chilean solidarity banner on display at PHM

The Young Communist League London District Solidarity with Chile banner is on display in PHM's 2023 Banner Exhibition. In the aftermath of the coup, individuals and organisations around the UK rallied to Chile's aid and those seeking sanctuary.



Young Communist League London District Solidarity with Chile banner, around 1974. Image courtesy of People's History Museum.



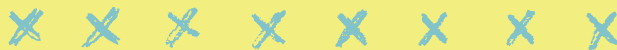
The Chile Solidarity Campaign (CSC), the World University Service, and other support groups worked together to bring almost 3,000 Chilean refugees to the UK. This banner was used at a demonstration in London in September 1974, marking the first anniversary of the coup.

Image descriptions: Red landscape banner with the Chilean flag. The wording 'London District YCL Solidarity with Chile' in adhesive PVC white and yellow block letters cross the banner.

Materials



- Fabric scraps
- Backing fabric – approx 30cm x 30cm
- Embroidery threads
- Fabric scissors
- Pins and needles
- Marking pencil or pen



Draw number '50' shape

- 1** Draw out the number '50' on your fabric in pencil, chalk or erasable pen. You might want to draw out a few ideas first on paper before you commit your design to fabric.



Lay out scraps of fabric onto number shape

- 2** Cut scraps of fabric to fill the shapes of the number '50'. To do this, find scraps and lay them onto the shapes, just overlapping the pencil lines. Cut the scraps to fit the shape, patching more scraps to fill, like a collage. Your scraps of fabric can be as small or as big as you like, just remember you will be stitching them down so tiny scraps will be quite difficult to stitch.



3

Pin the scraps of fabric in place as you go.



Stitch your scraps of fabric together onto number shape

4

There are many stitches you can use to attach the scraps of fabric to the background. The stitch guides below on pages 7, 8 and 9 will show you blanket stitch and herringbone stitch.

Stitch around the outline of the numbers with your chosen stitch, then stitch inside where the patches overlap. The sample pictured below has blanket stitch around the edge and herringbone stitch inside.



Add further motifs or words to your textile piece

5

In the online session we will have a talk and discussion which might generate further ideas for your piece, for example you might want to add motifs or words that you feel are important.

In the finished sample piece we added the words 'truth', 'repair' and justice.

Finished piece

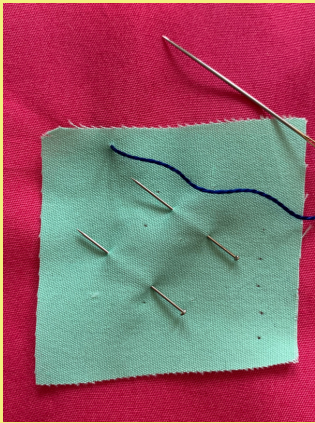


Stitch guides: blanket and herringbone

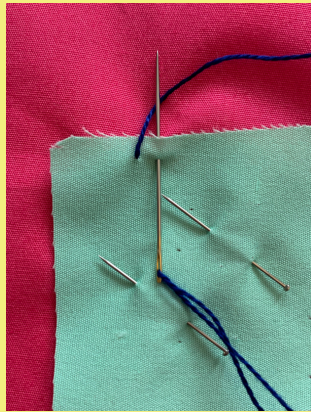
Blanket stitch

- Bring the needle up from the back of the fabric at the depth you want your stitch to be.
- A stitch length away, bring the needle in and out through the layers of fabric (to the top edge of the fabric) making sure the thread from the last stitch is behind the needle.
- Pull thread through, not too tight, to make a loop. Repeat this stitch remembering to keep the thread to the back of the needle to make the loop.

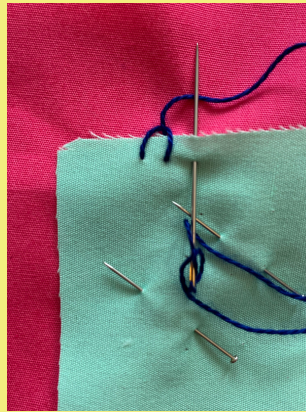
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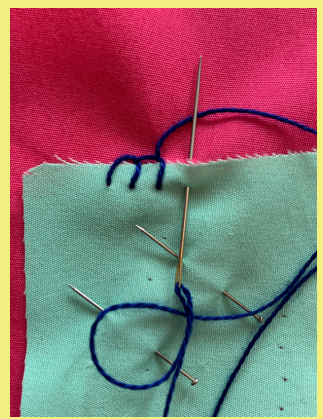
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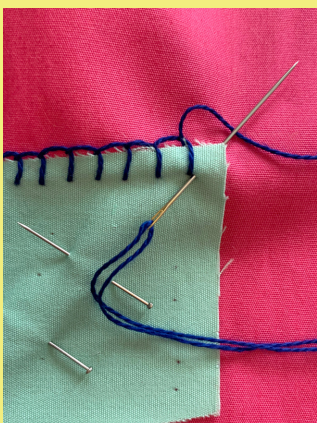


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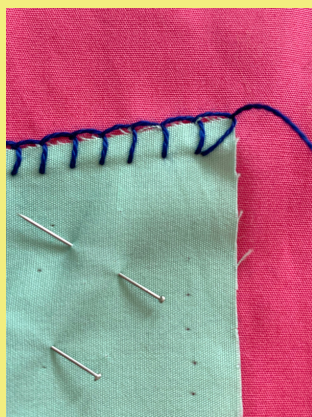


- At a corner, envisage a square the same size as your stitches. Make a diagonal stitch through the same hole as the last stitch.
- Turn the shape around and make another stitch to complete the square.

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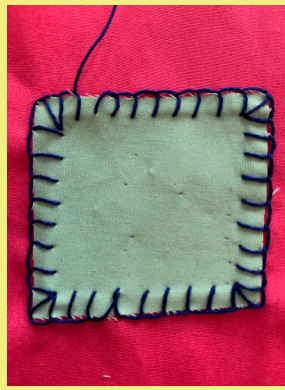


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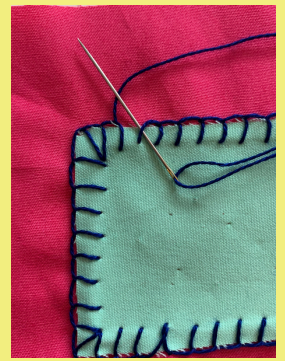


To finish, bring your needle under the first stitch that you made and draw the thread up. Place a securing stitch into the fabric to finish.

i



j



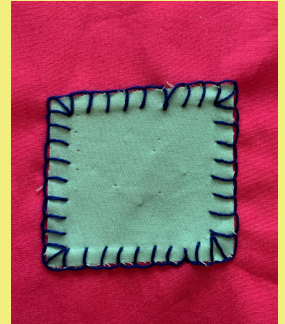
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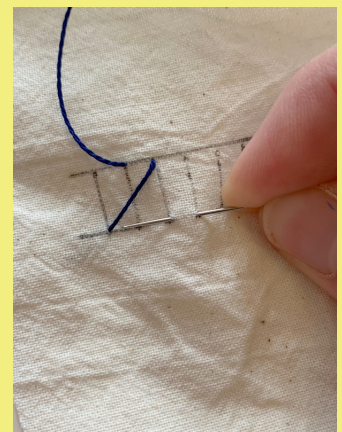
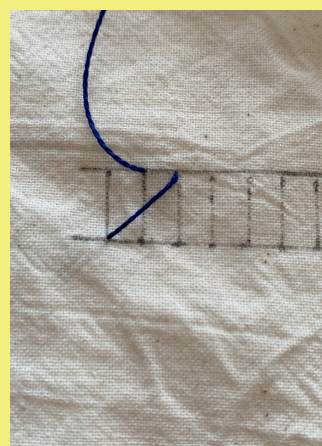
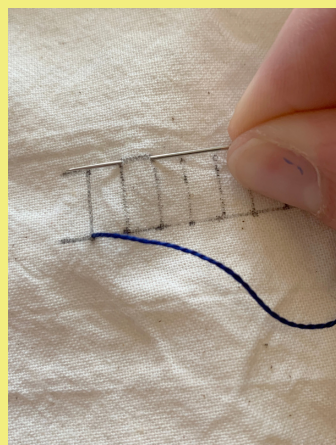
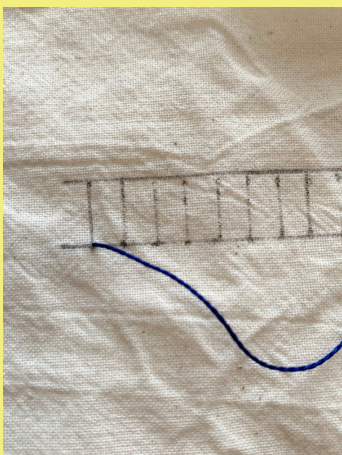
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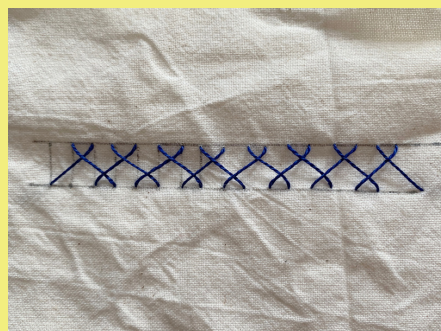
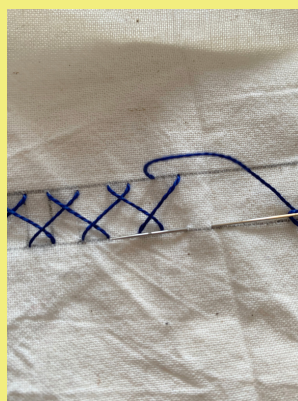
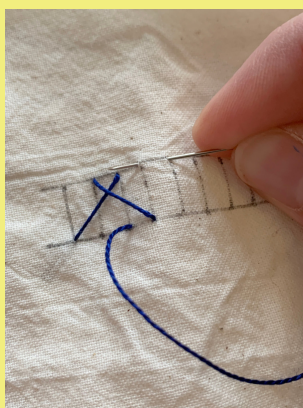
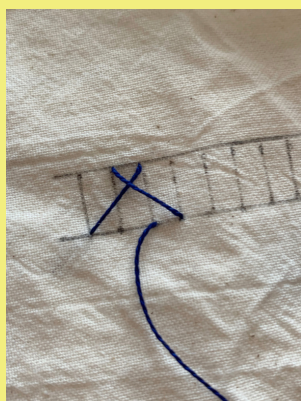


Herringbone stitch

This guide uses drawn lines to help visualise the position of the stitches.

- Bring the thread up from the back on the first line.
- With a diagonal stitch, bring the needle in at line 3 and out at line 2.
- With a diagonal stitch, bring the needle in at line 4 and out at line 3.
- With a diagonal stitch, bring needle in at line 5 and out at line 4.
- Continue stitching beyond the guide, using your eye to find the stitch positions.
- To finish, bring thread to the back and anchor with a knot.





Find out more

- Explore the [Bordando por la Memoria Facebook group](#)
- Read more about the arpilleras of Chile on [Wikipedia](#)
- [Explore examples of Chilean arpilleras that were on display in Harbour Museum in Derry, Northern Ireland](#)
- Find out what [events](#) are happening to commemorate 50 years since the Chilean military coup
- Read a recent [opinion piece in the Guardian](#) on the Chilean military coup and its relevance today

[Read PHM's guest blog post by Carole Concha Bell](#), who arrived in the UK with her family as a child refugee fleeing the Pinochet regime in 1975, and is a founding member of the Chile Solidarity Network and press officer for Mapuche International Link. Carole reflects on the Chile Solidarity Campaign (CSC) that emerged in Britain.

Join us on Zoom to get creative

If you would like to join artist Helen Mather and others to stitch, chat, and share ideas inspired by this resource, book onto the online Zoom workshop.

Don't forget to bring a cuppa!

This month we will be online on:
Saturday 16 September
1.00pm - 2.30pm

Scan the QR code for details and to book.



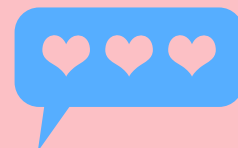
Share what you have created



We would love to see what you have created!

If you use social media, please share photos of your creations using #FabricOfProtest.

Or if you prefer you can email a photo of your creation to learning@phm.org.uk.



@phmmcr



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