

Peace Dove

Northern Ireland wall hanging, by Irene MacWilliam, 1987

Photograph: Irene MacWilliam

Made in her very early days of working with fabric, this stunningly beautiful and colourful quilt was inspired, in Irene's words, by "*the conflicts throughout the world which have been recurring.*" Here, through her superb textile technique crafted at such a painful period of time in Northern Ireland, we see the traditional image of the peace dove upended.

Mirroring the obstacles to be overcome in campaigning for a peaceful nonviolent world, the dove is shown hurtling towards rocks as it flies over turbulent waters, with part of the olive branch missing from its beak. The dazzling patchwork used in this piece demands our attention and conveys a sense of resilience and a refusal to be silenced. Perhaps the dove will regain the fallen branch and fly above the rocks?

Irene's unorthodox depiction of the peace dove is a creative imagery for the conflict in Northern Ireland in 1987. In that year, there were 88 deaths as a direct result of the conflict, with 11 civilians killed during the annual Remembrance Day ceremony in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, when a bomb planted by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) exploded at the War Memorial. With entrenched views in evidence amongst the main political parties, a peaceful solution seemed remote at this time.

Conflict Textiles collection

Courtesy of the artist

Source:

Accounts of the Conflict (*archive*)

Bacic, Roberta. (*individual compiler*)

Conflict Textiles (*collection*)

<http://accounts.ulster.ac.uk/repo/collections/show/153>