

Guatemalan Textiles

Huipil

Usually woven on a back-strap loom, the *huipil* is a traditional garment, consisting of a rectangular piece of cloth that is folded and stitched at the sides. Each region of Guatemala uses different traditional design, colour and textile technique. The one on exhibition is courtesy of Julie Coimbra, Librarian at the Centre for Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge.



Guatemala Streetwise Quilt

In the late eighties/early nineties a group of youth and social workers in Nottingham became involved in a youth project in Guatemala City - Streetwise. This was youth work of a kind we had never experienced. Guatemala was torn by civil war in which military dictatorships were systematically eliminating the indigenous native Indian population. The children were the real victims of adult politics and global wars. Orphaned, abandoned and persecuted children as young as four/five were trying to survive in the streets. Ever resourceful women found the ideas and provisions needed to set up a shelter. Women spin, dye, weave covering cotton wraps (as shown in these textiles) which are used for anything and everything - blankets, baskets and baby carriages, these wraps are never thrown away. Scraps of the fabric, often smelly and well used, were sewn into quilts and sold, usually, to tourists. Every penny housed, fed, clothed and tried to heal a few of Guatemala's street kids. The quilt on display and the text to it is courtesy of Denise Dickson, UUM.

Photos

These compelling photos were taken by Dr. Silvia Lauzzana in Guatemala in 1999 while wanting to experience life in poor countries. They are an invaluable contribution to this display and allow us to have a glimpse into the reality and daily life of some indigenous women in Guatemala.

[This textile display has been curated by Roberta Bacic, as part of the permanent rotating exhibition at the Verbal Arts Centre since March 2008. It will be on display April to June 2010.](#)