CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Performing Globalization in the Textile Industry

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This chapter explores the impacts of economic globalization on the textile industry, considered in fibre-based performance works by American artists Anne Wilson and Mandy Cano Villalobos. It locates globalization within a historical trajectory of industrialization and deindustrialization, in an industry that has long been characterized by movement. Globalization is an economic phenomenon, but it is also a social and intersubjective one. The artists under study respond to globalization, Wilson through the deployment of weaving, and Cano Villalobos using hand embroidery. Each artist performs the repetitive motions that textile work requires, to draw attention to the devastating effects of globalization on individuals and communities. Wilson's projects *Local Industry* (Knoxville, Tennessee, 2010) and *Walking the Warp Manchester* (Manchester, UK, 2012) reflect on the demise of the textile industry in the United States and Britain, the result of increasingly deregulated global trade. Cano Villalobos's ongoing series of sewing performances, *Voces* (Voices) explores the violent impact of apparel manufacturing in Mexico, where numerous factories were established as a result of global trade deregulation. An analysis of these projects can contribute to a greater understanding of the effects of globalization on the textile industry and on local communities in the North and the South alike.

## ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION: KEY UNDERSTANDINGS

The term globalization often functions as a synonym for the pursuit of neo-liberal trade policies. However, a distinction should be made between more general understandings of globalization as a type of increased connectedness across national borders, and *economic* globalization, with which this chapter is centrally concerned. Economic globalization began over a century ago with the creation of the first international organizations and trade agreements (della Porta et al. 2006). It accelerated rapidly during the 1990s as a result of neo-liberal economic policies, the deregulation of cross-border commerce - also known as free trade - and the proliferation of trans- and supra-national trade agencies and institutions. With the elimination of trade barriers, economic globalization accelerated the widespread deindustrialization of the North and spurred

the almost constant movement of sites of production within the so-called developing world. Because the trade designations governed by various free trade agreements change over time, bestowing or limiting benefits in specific countries or regions, manufacturing remains almost permanently mobile, moving from region to region, country to country in search of the lowest possible taxes, duties, manufacturing, and labour costs (Collins 2003).

And because the key actors in global manufacturing are multinational corporations, they have no long-term commitment to the places where they operate. Production and job creation remain mobile, yet, 'Locations that, for capital, are a temporary space for profitable production, are for workers and their families places in which to live' (Benyon and Hudson, cited in Collins 2003: 9). Globalization has led to the mass migration of workers across space in search of jobs and better working conditions, together with the displacement of workers from stable and well-remunerated jobs into increasingly precarious, low waged, and unstable employment. Economic liberalization policies have also been particularly effective in redirecting the flow of capital from the public sector to the private sector, where wealth remains concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority.

Globalization is also connected to new types of collaboration and community building, and to modes of artistic production that seek to expose its unsavoury impacts. Perhaps it is no coincidence that growing numbers of artists like Wilson and Cano Villalobos are turning to fibre to critique economic globalization: after all, the rise of the multinational corporation and the deregulation of international trade dramatically reconfigured the textile industry. Yet changes in textile manufacturing are also linked to prior types of movement. Postcolonial scholar Arjun Appadurai asserts that today's globalization 'extends the earlier logics of empire, trade, and political domination in many parts of the world' (Appadurai 2000: 3). Textile production is inscribed with histories of colonization, enslavement, and exploitation that extend across time and space. The closure and relocation of factories in the USA, Britain, and Mexico can be traced back to prior instances of movement.

## MANUFACTURING AND MOBILITY IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Textiles were traded between Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East for centuries, travelling between cultures and containing designs and techniques from many different countries (Peck 2013). Trade occurred primarily over land until the fifteenth century, when maritime travel expanded dramatically. Wool and cotton were grown in one place and transported to centres where yarn and cloth were produced, then moved all over the world (Heerma van Voss et al. 2010). Cotton textiles, produced for many centuries in India, China, and Africa, entered European markets in substantial amounts during the seventeenth century, fuelling colonial trade in the eighteenth century and imperialism in the nineteenth (Maynes 2004).[1]

The modern textile industry was made possible by a combination of technical innovation and colonial domination, spurring new types of movement. The Industrial Revolution began with the mechanization of spinning and weaving; the invention of the cotton gin, spinning jenny, and mechanized looms intersected seamlessly with colonial systems of exploitation. With the construction of industrial textile mills in the north of England, Britain imposed steep protectionist tariffs on textiles produced in its colonies,

deliberately destroying textile production there. Yet their raw materials such as linen and wool and cotton in particular fuelled production in British mills. The British ships that carried raw materials and finished cloth to and from its colonies also transported slaves throughout its empire.

The American Industrial Revolution also began in textiles. Britain discouraged the development of competitive industries in its colonies, yet soon after Independence, English immigrant Samuel Slater copied the Arkwright spinning mill, and textile production began at his mill in Rhode Island (Blewett 2010). Textile mills opened in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Cotton began to be planted in the American south at the turn of the nineteenth century, feeding the textile mills in the northeastern United States together with those in the north of England. As the demand for American cotton skyrocketed, so did the demand for labour, and the number of African slaves forced to work on cotton plantations grew exponentially. Cotton 'changed the dynamics of the southern economy rapidly, with dire consequences for people of African origin' (West, 2011: 5).

Following the Civil War, textile manufacturing began to migrate from the northeastern United States to the south and southeastern parts of the country, to the Carolinas, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and other states, and 'Between 1875 and 1905, cotton mills industrialized an agrarian South' (Blewett 2010: 550). As textile workers in the New England states began to unionize and obtain better wages and working conditions, factory owners looked south in their quest for lower labour costs. Mill closures in New England began in the late 1880s, became common by the end of the 1920s, and continued for two decades; by mid-century, the south had replaced New England as the nation's leading centre for textile production.[2] Historian Beth English (2006) observes that these shifts marked an early step in the globalization of the textile industry, which began as a series of region-to-region relocations that continue today across national borders.

Beginning in the 1970s and accelerating in the 1990s, American textile manufacturing started migrating offshore. Meat processing plants relocated to the southeastern United States from other parts of the country, drawn by low wages and unionization rates, and high levels of unemployment. This reflects a larger trend, as manufacturing jobs are replaced by jobs with lower pay and no healthcare benefits (Minchin 2009). In Britain, call centres are now clustered in the areas where the English textile industry once thrived, paying low wages to mostly immigrant workers - and prompting comparisons about exploitative working conditions across time and industry *(The Economist* 2001).

The textile industry in the southern United States has been in stark decline since 1972. The causes are complex, and include factors such as the industry's growing concentration in the hands of large retailers and multinational corporations; restructuring and downsizing; increased outsourcing and subcontracting; automation and the shift to retail-driven supply chains; the decline of long-distance transportation costs; and foreign competition.[3] Some companies responded by cutting wages or moving production to more remote rural areas, hiring primarily African-American and immigrant workers (Blewett 2010). Numerous mills moved offshore; many others declared bankruptcy.[4] Between 1994 and 2002 the industry lost 700,000 jobs, most of them in the American south; in 2002 alone, 116 mills closed their doors (Minchin 2009).

Trade deregulation also took a toll on the industry. Following the Second World War, new trade agreements and regulatory bodies began to relax international restrictions on imports. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was adopted in 1947 to promote unrestricted trade; however, exemptions were made for the textile industry to

ensure strong domestic production. The Multi Fiber Arrangement (MFA), implemented in 1974, established specific quotas for textile manufacturing in an effort to strategically create or expand production in countries like Bangladesh and Cambodia. However, the MFA failed to promote the orderly growth of textile sectors in developing nations, and its main beneficiaries were multinational corporations with multiple sites of production (Collins 2003). The MFA was phased out in 2005, and today there are no international quotas governing the industry. The passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, and China's admission to the World Trade Organization in 2001, also helped open the doors to a flood of competition from cheap foreign imports (Minchin 2009).

Projects by Wilson and Cano Villalobos explore the complex relationships berween movement and migration, and the effects of globalization, industrialization, and deindustrialization on contemporary textile production.

## ANNE WILSON: LOCAL INDUSTRY

Chicago-based artist Anne Wilson works across weaving, sculpture, drawing, sewing, installation, video, and performance. Her expanded fibre practice is rooted in the complex histories and meanings of materials in contemporary culture. Her work has been exhibited extensively, including at the Hangzhou Fiber Triennial, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and as part of the 2002 Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Wilson's weaving performances *Local Industry* and *Walking the Warp Manchester* pay tribute to local textile histories, while examining the impacts of globalization on production, labour, and social relationships.

*Local Industry* was created as part of Wilson's larger exhibition *Anne Wilson: Wind/ Rewind/Weave,* curated by Chris Molinski at the Knoxville Museum of Art in Tennessee in 2010. Also included were *Rewinds,* a sculptural glass work, and video documentation of *Wind Up: Walking the Warp,* performed in Chicago in 2008.[5] *Local Industry* 'rook the form of an active weaving factory set up in a large museum space'.[6] A floor loom was set up in the exhibition space, and 79 experienced weavers - most of them from Tennessee and surrounding states - wove a continuous length of striped cloth over the duration of the exhibition (see Plate 11.1). Viewers were invited to wind yarn around bobbins for the weavers to use. The yarn used to produce the cloth was donated to the Museum by individuals and by textile mills and factories, some of them facing bankruptcy.

Conceived through a rigorous process of site visits, historical and academic research, and interactions with local hand weavers, *Local Industry* was created specifically for the Knoxville Museum of Art, located in 'the historical heartland of hand-weaving traditions *and* industrial textile production' (Molinski 2011: 1). Hand weaving in the southern Appalachian region declined sharply after the Civil War with the availability of mass-produced fabrics, but it was reinvigorated at the turn of the twentieth century, when settlement schools were established to improve education and socio-economic conditions.[7] The schools turned to weaving in an effort to promote women's economic development, while also reviving local craft skills. Weaving 'possessed some cultural and traditional ties to the area' (Alvie 2003: 152); materials were readily available; and work could be done in the home without disturbing rural lifestyles. Weaving centres and schools offered instruction and coordinated the production, marketing, and sales of consumer goods woven by women in their homes. Working on four harness looms, women wove coverlets,

towels, runners, tablecloths, napkins, potholders, pillow tops, scarves, and curtains. Over the years, weavers in the region developed excellent technical skills.

The Depression hit the region hard; most weaving centres survived but never regained their former size. Cutbacks to production, the failure to introduce new designs, and a lack of knowledge of business practices led to lower sales, and many centres closed. Today, centres such as Churchill Weavers, Fireside Industries at Berea College, and Allanstand continue to supply hand-woven consumer products, while schools like Penland School of Crafts and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts continue to fulfil craft educational missions. Hand weaving remains strong in the region.

Yet the demise of textile manufacturing took its toll. The downsizing and closure of mills was accompanied by the loss of jobs, wages, pensions, and health benefits, increasing economic precariousness in a region with a history of poverty and inequality. In addition to economic impacts, Anderson (2000) notes that automation and the closure of mills profoundly affected family and community relations, citing for example, increased tensions resulting from racism toward migrant and immigrant workers; and substantial reductions in time spent with family and friends as a result of longer shifts, travelling greater distances to work, and the need to work multiple part-time jobs.[8]

In the southeastern United States, a region imbued with histories of slavery and suffering and poverty, it is almost impossible to compartmentalize the various modes of production that bump up against each other. *Local Industry* straddles the uneasy ground that connects hand and industrial modes of textile production in the region, while acknowledging the often invisible, gendered forms of labour that help sustain entire communities.

In so doing, *Local Industry* may also be linked to a lineage of performance works that demand that we value unrecognized, hidden, and abject aspects of labour, work often relegated to women and immigrants and people of colour: Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Touch Sanitation* project; Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance: Time Piece;* Hi Red Center's *Cleaning Events,* Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen,* Minerva Cuevas' *Mejor Vida Corporation;* and more recent, durational performance-meditations on labour by artists Aram Han Sifuentes, John Paul Morabito, and Anne Elizabeth Moore.

Weaving is a corporeal process. The throw of the shuttle, the lifting of pedals, the counting of threads, require the body. In some types of weaving, the loom is attached to the body: it becomes a type of prosthetic, a physical extension of the body. Weaving requires the physical winding of the warp - a process explored by Wilson in collaborative weaving performances staged in Chicago (2008) and Houston (2010). Even today's most technologically sophisticated, automated plants require the body of the worker: Anderson (2000) observes that workers walk the equivalent of several miles during their shifts, as they monitor the looms on which fabric is woven.

Art historian Jenni Sorkin uses the term 'live form' to describe 'the simultaneity of the craft-based performance and its produced object' (Sorkin 2011: 37).[9] She observes that, 'a form is "live" in that the actions of the artist are permanently registered within the very form of the fabric' (Sorkin 2011: 37). On the one hand, the notion of 'live' art - a term used in the UK to describe what we in the United States call 'performance' - is an apt framework within which to consider the making of art objects, a process that generally still requires the presence and attention of the artist. On the other hand, performance scholars such as Peggy Phelan and Erika Fischer-Lichte insist on the bodily co-presence of the performer and spectators as a condition for performance. Both these theoretical frameworks can help to situate the act of weaving in the space of the Knoxville Museum of Art as *performance.*

Enacted in the museum space, co-presence can transform weaving into a shared act that unfolds between the weaver and the viewer. The live performance of weaving in the context of the museum produces expanded forms of spectatorship and viewer interaction. The winding of bobbins and the active participation of viewers in the weaving process transform them into co-performers, their actions and gestures forming an integral part of the weaving process and by extension, the woven cloth. Fischer-Lichte (2008) further observes that performance wields transformative potential: it can produce physical or psychic transformations for the performer or the viewer or both; it can transform viewers into performers; and it can create community.

Co-presence also allows for the transformation of *space.* By acting together, bodies bring the space of politics into being (Hannah Arendt, in Butler 2011). The accumulation of bodies in the act of weaving in the Knoxville Museum of Art transforms the space into a site of shared labour.[10] Anne Wilson has described the act of viewers working together for *Local Industry* as being connected to the collective labour that unfolds in the textile mills (Wilson 2011). What's more, because this space is constituted through collaborative co-presence rather than hierarchical relations, the space that emerges provides an alternative to the actual conditions of factory labour, conditions that have long been associated with the textile industry, and that have expanded and intensified with globalization.

Sociologist Richard Sennett (2012) observes that the process of de-skilling brought about by industrialization also precipitated a loss of cooperation skills among workers, while eroding the skills required for dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration in society at large. He identifies cooperation as a skill that must be strengthened if our society is to truly be inclusive (Sennett 2012). By promoting participation and collaboration, *Local Industry* transforms the Museum space into shared social space. The act of weaving becomes a means of enacting the social, of fostering exchanges, and creating temporary forms of community within institutional space. The types of collaboration that produce woven cloth also serve to strengthen social bonds. Anne Wilson notes that weaving is a metaphor for ideas about coming together and for community (Wilson 2011: 45); in the context of *Local Industry,* fostering cooperation through the act of weaving may also be considered a type of re-skilling.

The completed *Local Industry* cloth measures 24 inches (30 centimetres) wide and 75 feet, 9 inches (about 23 metres) long. It could not have been realized without the active involvement of the local community. The completed *Local Industry* cloth was exhibited at the Knoxville Museum of Art in 2011. Over 2,100 people worked on the cloth, which was donated to the Museum collection. It must always be exhibited accompanied by the archive of names of all those who helped to produce it. The cloth is durational and inscribed with the time and labour of its making. It is part of the fabric of the region's complex histories of textile production - of a decimated industry and a persistent hand-making tradition.

## WALKING THE WARP MANCHESTER

Whereas *Local Industry* mobilizes co-presence, Anne Wilson's performance *Walking the Warp Manchester* is anchored in material absence. It was staged on 25 February 2012, as part of Wilson's larger contribution to the exhibition *Cotton: Global Threads* at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester.[11] The performance was a collaboration with composer Shawn Decker, choreographer Bridget Fiske, textile students from Manchester Metropolitan University, and dancers from The Lowry Centre for Advanced Training in

Dance. Twenty-one dancers performed *Walking the Warp Manchester,* a five-hour durational performance inspired by the histories of textile production in the northwest of England. [12]

Like *Local Industry, Walking the Warp Manchester* privileges the body and in so doing, highlights the collaborative nature of textile making. Whereas *Local Industry* performs that very making and attests to the survival of hand-weaving traditions within a larger historical trajectory of the demise of industry, *Walking the Warp Manchester* is a performed meditation on the loss of the local textile industry. Unlike Wilson's previous weaving performances, *Walking the Warp Manchester* was performed without any physical warping structure or thread. The performers wind invisible bobbins, walk an invisible warp, and count and measure invisible threads (see Plate 11.2). As such, *Walking the Warp Manchester* seeks to materialize the absence of Lancashire's once booming textile mills. While textiles often serve as a meronym for the absent body in contemporary art, here the body enacts the very absence of the textile and by extension, of the industry itself.

The decline of Britain's textile industry began following the Second World War. The international demand for textiles created a seller's market, but there was little investment in new technologies needed ro modernize the industry (Fowler 2010). GATT accelerated the decline of Britain's cotton industry, and protective tariffs could not defend it from the growing flow of cheaper imported textiles from Italy, Japan, and India. The Corron Industry Act of 1959 attempted to modernize the industry, but was ultimately unsuccessful in increasing efficiency or staving off foreign competition. What's more, under the Act countless mills across Lancashire were closed rather than upgraded. [13]

The decline of the British textile industry is also linked to more recent domestic policies favouring downsizing, privatization, and the utopian transition to a knowledge economy: the replacement of manufacturing with high-tech industry, and by extension, of traditional manufacturing skills with the skills required to operate technology. *The Guardian's* economics writer Aditya Chakrabortty notes that over the past 30 years, 'the UK's manufacturing sector has shrunk by two-thirds, the greatest de-industrialisation of any major nation' (Chakrabortty 2011: unpag.). Yet this decline has not been accompanied by a matching rise in the high-tech sector. Instead, the service industry has largely filled the void left by manufacturing. Wilson's performance mirrors what Chakraborrry calls Britain's 'de-industrial revolution' (Chakrabomy 2011: unpag.) or 'the gradual shift from a mostly regional industrial economy to an internationally networked service economy' {Gutelius 2010).

Here it is also useful to cite cultural theorist Tiziana Terranova who uses the term 'post-material' economy in her analysis of the knowledge economy (Terranova 2006: 30). *Walking the Warp Manchester* is a meditation on the de-industrialized, post-material economy, and by extension, on Lancashire's supposed transition to a knowledge economy. Gone are the textile factories, the jobs, the industry that came to sustain and define a region. Factories may close or relocate, yet the body of the worker remains. *Walking the Warp: Manchester,* with its insistence on the body, calls attention co the precarious position of labour, and by extension, the precarious position of the subject under late capitalism.

## MANDY CANO VILLALOBOS: *VOCES*

Mandy Cano Villalobos works across painting, fibre, performance and object making. She explores the impact of the past upon the present, choosing materials imbued with cultural meaning and symbolism - textiles, dirt, hair, and blood - to explore personal and

collective memory and history. Her work is often exhibited and performed in spaces that allow for dialogue and the sharing of experiences with members of the public, providing an opportunity for reflection and exchange.

Initiated in 2008, Cano Villalobos's ongoing series of sewing performances, *Voces* (Voices) memorializes the hundreds of *feminicidios,* or murdered women in Ciudad Juarez, located in the border state of Chihuahua, Mexico, just south of El Paso, Texas. Many of the victims are garment workers who labour in northern Mexico's free trade zones, and *Voces* seeks to raise awareness about the violent impact of export and apparel manufacturing on those living in Mexico's border region. To date, the project has been exhibited and performed in cities including Long Beach, Madison (Wisconsin), Grand Rapids (Michigan), Washington DC, and Chicago.

Cano Villalobos spent part of her childhood living in El Paso, Texas, where her parents were stationed as part of their military service. She would often cross the border into Ciudad Juarez with her mother. Juarez was a magical place for her as a child, with women selling huge red paper flowers, and cab drivers with moustaches; it was only as an adult that she became aware of the economic inequality, violence and murders there. [14]

The Mexican NGO *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas* (Justice For Our Daughters), a group that advocates for justice on behalf of the victims and their families, estimates that there have been at least 2,200 *feminicidios* in the state of Chihuahua since 1993 (Martinez 2014). For *Voces,* Cano Villalobos hand embroiders the names of individual victims onto second-hand white blouses and shirts. Each name is comprised of hundreds of individual stitches, carefully and caringly sewn by hand by the artist. The names are embroidered in pink thread, the colour used by organizations seeking justice for their murders. Some of the shirts are embroidered with *'desoconocido'* or unknown, representing the women whose names remain unknown, or whose bodies were so mutilated or decomposed that they could not be identified. The laborious act of hand embroidery provides a site for personal reflection, while materializing the labour of the *feminicidios,* many of whom were garment workers. Cano Villalobos explains, 'As the needle pierces each shirt, the suffering of each woman is lamented and recorded in thread.... The time taken to hand-stitch one name is a time taken to remember one person; it is to lovingly declare, "No, you are nor forgonen. I remember you. I value you" ' (in Lautenbach 2010: unpag.). She spends part of each exhibition sewing names onto shirts in the gallery space. Sewing in public creates space for dialogue and discussion with viewers, and provides an opportunity for education and exchange.

Hundreds of shirts fill the spaces in which they are exhibited, sometimes stacked in piles, sometimes hung neatly on threads that crisscross the gallery, and sometimes installed on wood crosses. On the one hand, naming each individual woman is a humanizing gesture in a context where the *feminicidios'* deaths remain unprosecuted, the lives of the women thereby rendered disposable (see Plate 11.3). On the other hand, the imposing presence of so many shirts drives home the monumental narure of the killings.

Posters of the missing women line the walls of the exhibition space. Each poster is comprised of a photo of an individual missing woman, along with her name, biographical details, and the date on which she was last seen. They plead for information about her whereabouts, and attest to the fact that each missing woman belongs to a family and a larger community that wishes for her return. While the stitched shirts name individual *feminicidios* and memorialize them after their deaths, the posters provide the viewer with visual images of the women while they were still alive - smiling, vibrant, their faces looking back at us. For each iteration of *Voces,* Cano Villalobos erects memorial altars in

honour of the women, with photographs, incense, candles, paper flowers, and statues of saints - recalling those created by activists fighting for justice for the *feminicidios* (Staudt 2008). The combination of shirts, posters, and altars helps to keep the memory of the women alive, while calling attention to the violence that contributed to their untimely deaths - violence that can in turn be connected to globalization in the apparel industry.

## THE GLOBAL APPAREL INDUSTRY

Management Professor Andrew Godley observes that the ready-to wear-clothing industry is 'perhaps the single most important industry in the economic history of the western world' (Godley 1997: 3). Historian Beverly Lemire (1997) traces its origins to the mid-seventeenth century, when apparel became a necessity rather than a luxury, and increased periods of war prompted higher demand for clothing for members of the military. The ready-to-wear industry was made possible by the development of standardized garment sizes, introduced into the consumer market in the mid 1800s in London, and soon after in Paris (Godley 1997). With the emergence of the modern apparel industry, clothing went 'from being "made for somebody" co being "made for anybody" ' (Collins 2003: 30).

Labour - most often performed by women -constitutes the most significant production cost associated with apparel manufacturing, and producers have consistently attempted to drive down wages.[15] By the turn of the twentieth century, almost all apparel was manufactured in an assembly line or piecework system in which each individual item is assembled by a multitude of workers. Collins (2003) estimates that it took 25 to 30 pairs of hands to produce a single white shirt. The division of labour lowers costs by ensuring that each part of the process can be purchased more cheaply (Braverman 1998).

The apparel industry has historically been associated with low wages and poor working conditions, and with the sweatshop in particular (Hapke 2004). The term sweatshop derives from the terms 'sweating' or 'sweated labour', originally used to describe a subcontracting system of farming work out to competing contractors (Howard 2007; Hapke 2004; Collins 2003; Ross 1997). For sociologist Andrew Ross, 'Sweating was indigenous to garment production because of its division of labor' (Ross 1997: 13).

Historically, garment production involved relatively low investment costs limited mainly to buying or renting sewing machines, and so almost anyone could set up shop and produce clothing. At the turn of the twentieth century, sweatshops could just as easily be found in tenement homes as they could in factories in urban centres like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, cities where thousands of immigrants found employment in the needle trades. Today the US Department of Labor defines a sweatshop as 'a place of employment that violate[s] two or more federal or state labor laws governing minimum wage and overtime, child labor, industrial homework, occupational safety and health, workers' compensation, or industry regulation' (in Hapke 2004: 2). Sweatshops come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from suburban compounds and dwellings in cities like Los Angeles, to new, modern factories policed by armed guards in Central America's free trade zones (Ross 1997).

While it continues to be associated most closely with the apparel industry, workers in other sectors such as food and data processing are also subject to sweatshop conditions (Hapke 2004). For writer and union organizer Alan Howard, the function of the sweatshop is 'to minimize the cost of labor by whatever means necessary' (Howard 2007: 38). Despite substantial technological developments in the garment industry over the past

hundred years - in design, warehouse management, inventory, and distribution - sewing itself has not changed very much. Sweatshop conditions today remain more or less the same as 100 years ago.[16] Yet the sweatshop has expanded exponentially and internationally.

## *MAQUILADORAS* AND MURDER

Sweatshop conditions prevail in the dozens of *maquiladoras* - facilities for the assembly, processing, or manufacturing of goods for export - located in Ciudad Juarez. While textiles and apparel represent the largest share of production, *maquiladoras also* produce electronics, furniture, chemical and food products, toys, and sporting goods (Pantaleo 2006). They employ over a million workers, most of them women. The *maquiladoras* are associated not only with abusive working conditions, but with hundreds of *feminicidios,* or femicides, the violent murders of women based on their gender.[17]

What distinguishes the *feminicidios* from other types of female homicide in Mexico is the extreme degree of brutality directed against women's bodies, notably sexual violence (Romero et al. 2012; Schmidt Camacho 2005). Numerous women are raped and subjected to horrific sexual violence and torture before being killed, their bodies dumped on the outskirts of the city. Many victims have been beaten or found with their nipples and breasts bitten or cut off, and some were burned or poisoned. The women tend to be young, poor migrants who came to the area seeking employment from other parts of the country. Many of them have to walk long distances through isolated areas to get from their places of employment to their homes in the *colonias* (shantytowns) that surround the city. Waitresses, students, and women in the informal economy have all been targeted. So too, have numerous women working in the *maqui/adoras.*

Scholars and human rights advocates attribute the *feminicidios* to a complex web of interconnected factors including misogyny, gender discrimination, and a backlash against changing socio-economic roles for Mexican women; drug trafficking and high crime rates in the border region; and American immigration policy and the militarization of the border zone.[18] Importantly for the purposes of this writing and its focus on globalization in the textile and apparel industries, numerous authors assert that the murders are inextricably connected to trade deregulation, and specifically, to the *maqui/adora* industry in the free trade zones of Ciudad Juarez (Romero et al. 2012; Staudt 2008; Pantaleo 2006; Olivera and Furio 2006; Schmidt Camacho 2005; Livingston 2004; Amnesty International 2003).[19]

The *maqui/adora* industry emerged in 1963 with changes to US tax regulations that permitted the offshore assembly and re-importation of domestically manufactured and cut fabric. The Border Industrialization Program was implemented two years later by the Mexican government in an effort to attract foreign production to the border area. The implementation ofNAFTA in 1994 abolished all quotas and duties on apparel assembled in Mexico and imported to the USA, and created additional incentives for American companies to produce goods in Mexico, ultimately destroying Mexico's domestic textile industry. Since NAFTA went into effect, Mexican wages dropped dramatically (Rosen 2002).[20]

Widespread poverty and the predominance of poorly paid jobs have 'forced women to join the labor market under conditions of great inequality and vulnerability' (Olivera and Furio 2006: 108), a view also shared by Staudt (2008), Pantaleo (2006) and Livingston (2004). Juarez is the largest export-processing zone in the country. Political scientist Kathleen Staudt observes that, 'Under the economic model of export-processing industrial

production, conditions foment rampant violence against women' (Staudt 2008: 144), while Professor Alicia Schmidt Camacho asserts that, 'The peculiar features of the Juarez killings correspond to the physical and political geography of the northern city, its shared boundary with the United States, and its importance as a site of Mexican partnership with global capitalist institutions' (Schmidt Camacho 2005: 259). Yet the signatory countries to NAFTA have yet to develop any kind of human rights agreement {Staudt 2008).

In response to the murders, families organized and formed coalitions with women's and human rights organizations throughout Mexico and the USA. Artists have also been working to raise attention nationally and internationally. Mexican artist Teresa Margolles's *La busqueda* (The Search; 2014) combines freestanding glass panels from Ciudad Juarez affixed with posters of the missing women and a sound installation. Norwegian artist Lise Bj0rne Linnert's project *Desconocida Unknown Ukjent* asks viewers to hand embroider names of the victims. *NI UNA MAS (Not One More): The Juarez Murders,* exhibited at the Leonard Pearlstein Gallery at Drexel University in 2010, featured over sixty works by twenty international artists.

## SEWING, MEMORY, AND HISTORIES OF VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

Cano Villalobos chose embroidery in an effort to respond to the murders and injustices associated with the *maquiladoras* and free trade zones in Ciudad Juarez and the state of Chihuahua 'through a medium I was familiar with ... I turned to a silent, sort of meditative activism through an artistic process.'[21] In so doing, she joins other contemporary artists like Carole Frances Lung, Margarita Cabrera, and Celia Alvarez Munoz, who use sewing to raise awareness about globalization and the abuses of the global garment industry.

*Voces* is also linked to other initiatives in which sewing has served a memorial function, bringing people together to remember their lost loved ones; to memorialize those who passed away due to illness or violence; to help transform their grief and loss; and as part of collective healing efforts in the wake of political violence. These projects include, for example, The Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, the *Amazwi Abesifazane* (Voices of Women) project initiated in South Africa in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Walking With Our Sisters project demanding justice for the hundreds of disappeared and murdered Native women in Canada, and the Hmong story cloths that depict scenes of ethnic persecution and forced exile.

Importantly, *Voces* connects to a contemporary history of textiles mobilized in political protests and human rights campaigns in Latin America, and in particular, those demanding justice for people murdered and disappeared under military and dictatorial regimes during the 1970s through 1990s. In countries such as Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Uruguay, regimes installed to maintain American corporate interests facilitated the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies, the eradication of unions, and the privatization of state-run industries. With the backing of successive American governments, these regimes were responsible for the murders of tens of thousands of their citizens - many of them labour activists, union organizers, and workers. The neo-Liberal policies implemented by these governments were precursors to the free trade agreements and free trade zones that proliferate in the region today.

In countries like Chile, Peru, and Argentina, textiles and sewing in particular have been deployed in efforts to call national and international attention to the atrocities of the

region's Dirty Wars, and to demand justice for tens of thousands of victims who were disappeared and murdered under military rule. In Peru, the *Chalina de Esperanza* (Scarf of Hope) is a half-mile-long collection of hand-knit panels memorializing the 15,000 victims of the country's internal wars. Knit collectively in public spaces, the scarf is pan of larger efforts to obtain justice for the families and victims of those murdered and disappeared. Chilean *arpilleras* - named for the canvas bags on which they are sewn - combine colourful thread and cloth applique to depict scenes of harsh brutality unleashed on the population under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, and demanding an end to the violence suffered by Chileans under his rule between 1973 and 1990. In conjunction with Catholic Church groups, the *arpilleras* were smuggled out of the country to alert the world to human rights abuses, telling the stories of individual children, husbands, and siblings who were detained and disappeared (Caldwell 2012).

In Argentina, *The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) came together in 1977 to protest the disappearances of their sons and daughters under military rule. It is estimated that 30,000 people were disappeared, tortured, and murdered between 1976 and 1983. Every Thursday, the mothers would walk around the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires carrying banners and placards of their children. They wore white fabric head coverings - often cloth diapers - to signify their motherhood. They hand embroidered the names of their disappeared children into the cloth, together with the phrase *Aparici6n con Vida,* a plea for them to come back alive.[22] They continue to march every Thursday demanding justice, their stitched inscriptions helping to keep the memory of their children alive while naming individual victims of horrific crimes.

As part of *Voces,* Cano Villalobos holds sewing workshops and invites others to sew with her. She has organized sewing circles with students at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she is an Assistant Professor, and created sewing workshops with Pailalen, a family empowerment group serving the Spanish-speaking community of West Michigan. Here too, *Voces* connects to prior instances of collective political sewing: the British suffragettes organized skills sharing and banner-making workshops, while Chilean *arpilleristas* organized *talleres* or workshops where they taught and shared rraditional *arpillera* sewing and applique skills (Perez Hernandez and Vifiolo Berenguel 2010). Using participatory sewing, *Voces* helps raise awareness about the plight of the *(eminicidios,* while bringing members of diverse communities together. As such, the project is connected to the notion of performing with - rather than performing for - a concept explored in critical ethnography and implemented in community based, inter-cultural and socially engaged performance by scholar-practitioners such as D. Soyini Madison and the late Dwight Conquergood.

*Voces* is one of several projects initiated by Cano Villalobos and grouped under the title *Recuerdos* (Memories), which use sewing in public performance to keep alive the memory of those who were brutally murdered under American-sponsored military dictatorships and regimes in South America. For the project N.N. *(Ningun Nombre* or No Name), Cano Villalobos sews a piece of white cloth over photographs of victims of military violence from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela. The initials 'NN' are used to mark the graves into which thousands of mutilated, unknown bodies were dumped, and the project attests to the fact that even today, some governments are attempting to obscure the atrocities of the past. *Identity/Identification* is a gridded quilt, sewn by hand using human hair, of identification numbers assigned by the Chilean government to its citizens. The artist is in the process of embroidering the numbers of all 27,153 political prisoners tortured, disappeared or executed under the Pinochet dictatorship.

The various projects that comprise *Recuerdos* draw inspiration from a contemporary history of sewing used to commemorate and demand justice for victims of violence in Larin America, a region that has undergone substantial political and economic upheaval over the past fifty years. Cano Villalobos reminds us that direct, state sanctioned violence and indirect, economic violence, while not equivalent, are most certainly connected.

Mandy Cano Villalobos harnesses the cultural histories and politics of sewing to make traces of the past visible today, and to at least symbolically undo the violent erasure of peoples' lives. Cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen calls for a 'productive remembering' (Huyssen 2003: 27), noting that memory is 'a mode of re-presentation' that belongs ever more to the present than the past (Huyssen 2003: 3). He observes that in the context of globalization and the weakening of national structures, 'We need both past and future to articulate our political, social, and cultural dissatisfaction with the present state of the world' (Huyssen 2003: 6). For Huyssen, the future of memory remains a social process, and artists have an important role to play in the re-presentation of the past. For performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, the memory of violent and traumatic pasts also demands new types of spectatorship. She asks, 'How can we, as spectators in a global, scopic economy, look across national borders?' (Taylor 1997: 264). 'Are we complicit? Can we work to end violence, or will we go on "just looking"?' (Taylor 1997: xii).

With its emphasis on memory and mourning for the murdered women, *Voces* also demands more empathic forms of spectatorship. The project sheds light on the exploitation and violence associated with apparel production, but perhaps even more importantly, asks us to reflect on our own roles as consumers of goods produced in Mexico's border region, and by extension, our own (perhaps unwilling) complicity and participation in an economic system that has led to the deaths of thousands of women.

## CONCLUSION

Economic globalization is an uneven and durational process, and one characterized by movement. Textile manufacturing is inextricably linked to histories of movement and migration. Through the performance of the repetitive movements of textile work, Anne Wilson and Mandy Cano Villalobos examine the impacts of globalization on local sires of production, Wilson in the North, and Cano Villalobos in the South. These performed movements link the emergence of the modern textile industry, its demise in the West, and its movement offshore; and they connect histories of textile production in the southeastern United States, the northwest of England, and Mexico. They are connected to the ongoing survival of traditional skills and local knowledge, and to histories of resistance and empowerment. Finally, these movements connect us to history, and to each other, and they locate our historical past within a precarious present, and an increasingly uncertain future.

## NOTES

1. A comprehensive account of textile trade and movement in the early modern period can be found in Peck (2013).
2. Southern mills also started producing synthetic fabrics like rayon, nylon, acrylics and polyesters (Blewett 2010). For a case study of the relocation of the Dwight Manufacturing Company's mills from Massachusetts to Alabama, see English (2006).
3. For details see in particular Mosley (2011); Minchin (2009); Collins (2003); and Anderson (2000).

4. For a case study of the rise and fall of Cannon Mills, see Anderson (2000); on its sale and subsequent bankruptcy as Pillowtex Mills, see Minchin (2009); on the relocation of Tultex from Virginia to Mexico, see Collins (2003).
5. See in particular the excellent exhibition catalogue *Anne Wilson: Wind/Rewind/Weave.* Knoxville, TN: Knoxville Museum of Arr and WhiteWalls (2011).
6. Art:21 interview with Anne Wilson, http://blog.art2l.org/2011/05/31/center-field-threading-infrastructure-an-interview-with-anne-wilson/ (accessed 15 May 2012).
7. The writing on hand weaving in the southern Appalachians is compiled from Alvie's extensive study (2003).
8. On a positive note, she also cites instances of increased collaboration, for example, sharing childcare duties, pooling resources, and community organizing (Anderson 2000).
9. See also, Interview with Jenni Sorkin, Bad at Sports Episode 353, 2012, available from http://badatsports.com/2012/episode-353-jenni-sorkin/ (accessed 23 May 2012).
10. On institutional space and artistic labour, see Bryan-Wilson (2011: 53-60).
11. The performance was accompanied by projections of earlier walking performances (Chicago - 2008 and Houston - 2010); the display of the *Local Industry* cloth; and Egyptian first millennium cloth fragments from the Whitworrh's textile collection, curated by Wilson. *COTTON: Global Threads* was curated by Jennifer Harris, see www.cotronglobalthreads.com (accessed 5 May 2012).
12. See www.annewilsonartist.com/project-statement.html (accessed 24 March 2012).
13. On the demise of British textile manufacturing, see Sandberg (1974). Today there remains a very small amount of textile manufacturing in the UK, specializing primarily in textiles for medical, automotive, aerospace, and architectural applications.
14. Discussion with the artist, Chicago, 6 June 2013.
15. On gender in the industry see MacNaughtan and Hunter (2010: 707-724); Hapke (2004); Collins (2003); Rosen (2002, and in particular Chapter 2, pp. 13-26).
16. In the United States, union organizing and government regulations succeeded in substantially restricting sweatshop conditions between the 1930s and the 1960s; see Howard (2007); Rosen (2002); and Ross (1997).
17. For a derailed study of femicide worldwide, see *Strengthening Understanding of Femicide,* Conference Proceedings, Washington, DC, 2009.
18. For details see Olivera and Furio (2006); Pantaleo (2006); Schmidt Camacho (2005); Livingston (2004); and Amnesty International (2003). Ciudad Juarez has the highest rate of domestic violence in the country (Livingston (2004)). Staudt (2008) observes that the *feminicidios* occur within a larger global context in which violence against women is normalized and accepted.
19. Since 2008, *feminicidios* in Ciudad Juarez have increased dramatically while spreading to other pans of Mexico; see http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/9160 (accessed 7 June 2014).
20. On the impacts of NAFTA on Mexico see Chapter 9 in Rosen (2002: 153-176). Olivera and Furio (2006) further observe that globalization and neoliberalism have deepened historical inequality and led to greater unemployment, the privatization of communal lands, the disintegration of the peasant economy, and social polarization. They also cite an increase in violence in Mexico more generally as a result of neo-liberalism.
21. Email correspondence with the artist, 23 June 2014.
22. On the Madres, see Taylor (1997).

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PLATE 1J.1: Kathrin Weber weaving on the *Local Industry* loom within the exhibition *Anne Wilson: Wind, Rewind, Weave,* Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010. Photo courtesy Knoxville Museum of Art.

PLATE 11.2: Anne Wilson, *Walking the Warp Manchester* performance at the Whirworth Art Gallery (Performers: Students from The Lowry Centre for Advanced Training in Dance; Choreographer: Anne Wilson; Composer: Shawn Decker; Collaborating Choreographer: Bridget Fiske), 20 J2. Photo courtesy Anne Wilson Srudio.

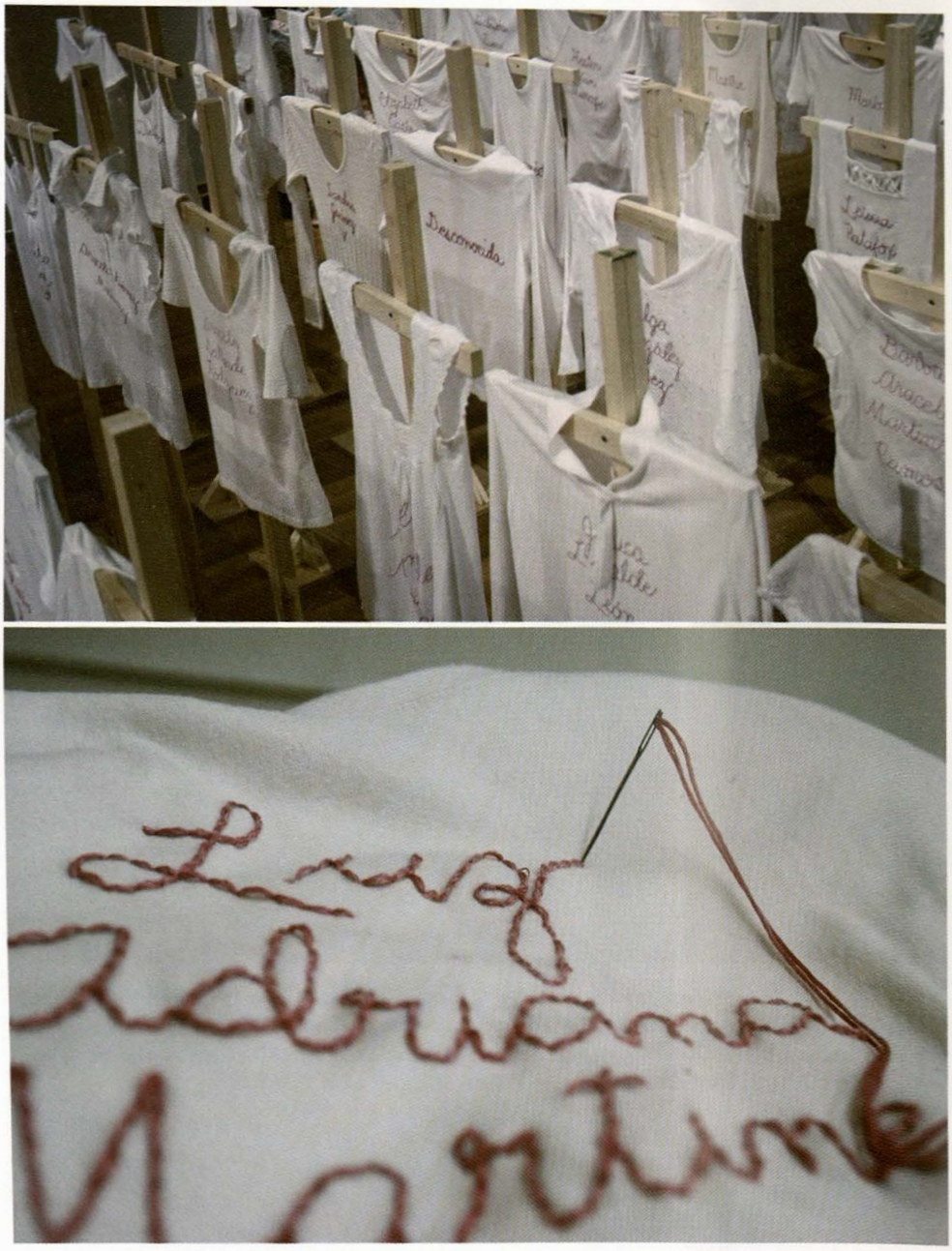


PLATE 11.3: (Top): Installation of *Voces* at the Center Art Gallery, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Ml, 2012. *(Bottom):* Derail of shirr for Luz Adriana Marrfnez *Reyes* (year of death: 1996, body found in Ciudad Juarez), 2009. Photo credits: Mandy Cano Villalobos.

# THE HANDBOOK OF TEXTILE CULTURE

*Edited by Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark*

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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