

# Basque Children in Salford and Eccles

## Exhibition of art by Claire Hignett

*Report by Simon Martinez*

The exhibition of work by conceptual artist Claire Hignett has opened in Ordsall Hall, Salford. It runs till September.

Claire tells the story of the 33 children who were homed in two places - Salford and Eccles - through cloth dolls suspended in school slipper bags. The bags hang from coat hooks timelessly looking back at the audience viewing them. They each seem to represent an individual narrative of the cost children paid and continue to pay for the wars fought around them.

The floor game invites participants to reflect on how happy or even childlike children can remain when faced with such adverse terrors as air raids, hunger, or separation from parents.

The exhibition is in Ordsall Hall - a recently restored local history museum - a grand building with a much longer history than the twentieth century. Perhaps it is like some of the buildings in which the Basque Children were homed while they were here in Britain.

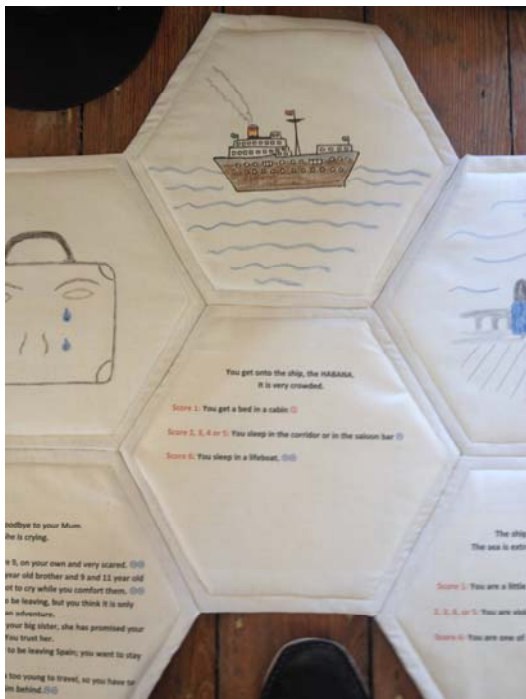
Claire has created a powerful and thought provoking exhibition and one of the dolls represents Alan Kurdi whose lifeless body was plucked from the Mediterranean Sea last year and whose picture came to represent the children fleeing war in our own century.

Through this and the other images Claire invites us to reflect on the kindness of strangers conversely the cruelty of governments and the fragility of childhood for some unfortunate children.

*(The exhibition continues until September 2017)*



Simon Martinez BCA (left) and Claire Hignett (right) discussing the exhibition.



Part of the floor game to see if the children staying in Salford were happy to be there



One of the cloth dolls reproduced from a group photo of the children in Salford



Two boys brought back to life in the exhibition.

A *niño vasco* on the left and Alan Kurdi on the right.

Arm in arm they look out on us and seem to ask why?'



The group photo of the children and helpers and their Spanish teacher.