

# CONFLICT TEXTILES



## **Arpillera Workshop, Drumman National School, Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017 10.30-12.30pm**

Following their participation in the **READ DL** (Donegal) project, fifth and sixth class pupils of Scoil Colmcille, Drumman, Ramelton, Co. Donegal visited the War-Torn Children Exhibition in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast, in March 2017.

This workshop, facilitated by exhibition curator, Roberta Bacic and assistant curator Breege Doherty was a follow up to the visit.

Aidan O' Doherty, who joined us for the workshop, set the scene by giving a brief account of his voluntary work with children in the refugee camp in Elefsina, Greece.

Roberta showed pupils arpillera dolls made in previous workshops, some in Ireland and some further afield, and asked them to think about the character they wanted to represent in their doll. A variety of characters were chosen; famous footballers, grandmothers and a ghost. They agreed that Aidan would bring the finished dolls to children in the Elsefina refugee camp, on his next trip.

An array of materials, much of which was recycled, was laid out on the tables: fabrics of varying colours and textures, tights, wool, scissors, plain pins, needles and threads.



**Pupils working on their characters. (Photo: Aidan O'Doherty)**

With help from Roberta, Breege, Aidan and substitute teacher Deirdre, the pupils set about cutting tights to shape and form the body structure; head, torso, arms and legs. Next they selected and cut out fabric to shape their character. The dilemma of accurately portraying footballers in their team colours was discussed and compromises made based on the materials available.



**Teacher Deirdre McBride giving assistance. (Photo: Aidan O'Doherty)**

Then came the challenging part of threading needles and stitching the fabric to their dolls. Many students remarked that this was their first time using a needle and thread and their dedication to this new task was admirable.



**Threading those needles! (Photo: Aidan O'Doherty)**



Concentrating on the task. (Photo: Aidan O'Doherty)

As the workshop drew to a close, some dolls remained unfinished and Deirdre Mc Bride agreed to finish the process with the class in the afternoon.



Pupils displaying their dolls at the end of the workshop. (Photo: Aidan O'Doherty)

The students participated in the workshop with great enthusiasm. Their comments include:

*"I had never sewn before and find it good as I will be able to repair my jeans when I rip them."*

*"It is nice to know that my footballer will go to the refugees."*

*"What I did turned out different to the picture I had in my head"*

Coming at the end of the school year, this workshop was the final event in a series of activities which started with their participation in Read DL, led to their visit to the Linen Hall library, Belfast and finished back in their own classroom on 8<sup>th</sup> June.

Class teacher Maura Kelly has been a key driving force in preparing students for these events and following up post event. Further collaboration is envisaged for the forthcoming school year.

Breege Doherty  
19<sup>th</sup> June 2017