

Border Country

By Melanie Friend

Exhibition & book launch event at Belfast Exposed Gallery of Photography, Thursday 15 November, 7 – 9pm

Belfast Exposed's latest exhibition, Border Country by Melanie Friend opens this Thursday evening in the gallery at 23, Donegall Street, Belfast BT1.

Melanie Friend spent four years documenting the physical structures of UK Immigrant Removal Centres (IRC), while recording the voices of detainees. She will make a short presentation about her work at the opening on Thursday evening:

'By August 2003 I had negotiated access with the Home Office and the Governor of Dover... over three years I interviewed nine detainees... however transfers from and to IRCs across the country can happen suddenly as can removals... I listened to Afsham's story of flight from persecution, and of her fear of punishment from Sharia law, I felt the immense gulf between her life and mine.'

Anna Morven, Immigration Advisor at the Law Centre and Chair of Northern Ireland's Refugee Action Group will open the exhibition and talk about her experience as legal officer of the charity, Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID).

'In Northern Ireland, immigration detainees were held in prisons here until a recent policy change. It is now the practice of the Border and Immigration Agency that people are moved from Northern Ireland to Scotland or England where they are detained in Immigration Removal Centres... Immigration detention is an administrative power. It is not sanctioned by any court and there is no maximum time limit on detention. Every detainee has the right to apply for bail. Yet a vast number of immigration detainees have no lawyer who is willing to assist them to challenge their detention' Anna Morven

Melanie Friend will be in Belfast until the 16th of November and available for interviews to discuss her four year investigative project into immigration, detention centres and asylum seekers in the UK.

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PRESS RELEASE ATTACHED

Exhibition runs from 16 November 07 – 11 January 08

NOTE TO EDITOR:

For further information or hi-resolution scans, please contact Rachael Wilson on +44 (0)28 90230965 or email info@belfastexposed.org

Border Country is supported by Belfast Exposed Photography, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), Belfast City Council, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Arts Council of England (ACE), the Research Fund of the School of Humanities, University of Sussex, Fotonet, the University of Southampton,

Spectrum in Hove and Metro Imaging in London. The book is co-published by Belfast Exposed Photography and the Winchester Gallery.

Image Caption: Harmondsworth.jpg

Domestic Visits Room, Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre, July 2006
From Border Country by Melanie Friend
Courtesy of Belfast Exposed Photography

Image Caption: Lindholme.jpg

Detainees' recreation area, Lindholme Immigration Removal Centre, April 2006
From Border Country by Melanie Friend
Courtesy of Belfast Exposed Photography

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