

PEACE LINES

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Belfast 2006

A labyrinth,
a meander of fences, bars on bricks and steel, caged cameras, barricaded houses, and, fluttering in the wind, the Union Jack.

Washed out clouds in a grey sky.

I´m walking in a park.

On the other side of the wall there is an old man riding a bike, I can just see his head floating in front of the green, the rest is hidden.

A tree is unsure whether he wants to grow on this side or behind the wooden fence.

It seems to be impartial.

A caged playground. Inane.

The empty swing faces the huge police department, protected by walls, fences, cameras, steelen doors and on top all all - barb wire.

Roses blossom in the hedges, wonderful, well smelling dots of colour.

An empty street. Suddenly a ball rolls in, children follow.

Distracted from their play they observe the stranger: me. Where might I belong to - am I friend or foe.

I´m taking photos of them and they seem to like it, just one girl is hiding behind a wall. While they are posing for the pictures, they notice her missing.

When she peers out for a second they start to laugh. First amused, but it´ s getting more and more a hysterical laughter, causing her to withdraw and disappear into the bricks, crying.

“Former Titanic contruction site”. Along the river Lagan there are plenty of contruction sites hidden behind wooden fences that wrap them gently like a present and they all wear posters that remind us of the glorious past of the harbour, promising an even more glourious future for this place.

Tall glass buildings shine in the sun, a new contemporary city of glass is born and the transparency stands in harsh contrast to there where the bricks are, here open spaces, there walls and fences, here shopping malls, there dead ends, here wealth, there unemployment.

“We live peacefully with each other here. My neighbour is Unionist, I´m not, but we barbecue together! This is the future to come, it will all be better”. Aman with a nice suit tells me, his wife smiling with a pastel dress and a baby in the push chair while tiny clouds wander over dozens of tall cranes.

How comes there is so much space to built? There was a fire, they told me. There were people living in this part of the former harbour, they didn´ t want to leave their houses. The Laganside Cooperation tried and tried to convince them, but people are quite stubborn at times.

Then came the fire. It left no negotiations open. For some it was luck, for others a loss.

A narrow path between construction sites bring us back to the other walls, those who separate the so called peace lines. In front of them a line of nice houses with barred windows.

Burned out houses and in front of it a Union Jack Flag with a camera above it.

A young woman passes by with a couloured baby-buggy, the little hand sticks out holding a teddy bear and on the streets some cats are lying in the sun,

their eyes almost closed.

Again: a burned-out-store "They used to sell to all fractions", they say.

Some people drink dark beer in front of a pub. A couple told me they are coming back from Poland. "It was so nice and peaceful - good beer and nice people. No walls. And then suddenly a huge fellow ran out of a pub, completely drunk, his eyes red with madness. He ran towards us, just because we happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and maybe because we are strangers and he broke the bottle on Ronans arm. See here," the girl points at the arm of her boyfriend, there is a big scar.

"It wouldn't have happened to me here" adds the boy " here I'm always alert, nothing can happen to me here. I know the rules".



Centre for Unemployed



Public green



Divided park



"Union Jack"



Playground in front of the police department











