

INVITATION
'Faces of Kabul Online'
Saturday January 22nd
12 - 1pm



Photograph: ©Nick Sidle - from Faces of Kabul

We hope you will join us for a first online presentation of 'Faces of Kabul', a photodocumentary exhibition produced by internationally acclaimed photojournalist and writer, Nick Sidle, on Saturday January 22nd at 12 noon with opening address by Mr Patrick Grady, MP, Mr Bob Doris, MSP and Mr Sabir Zazai, Director of the Scottish Refugee Council. It tells the human story of the people of Kabul and the surrounding areas of Afghanistan in the early months of 2002, shortly after the Taliban regime had fallen.

Nick, who is based in Highland Scotland, was one of the first photographers to be given special access at this time to tell a visual story of the world of Afghanistan in the six months after 9/11. He was 'embedded' with the soldiers of 1 Royal Anglian, who formed the British contingent of ISAF, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force whose role was as a peacekeeping mission to support the country post the Taliban regime era at that time.

The story he brought back was visually powerful. Nick was invited to tell this story because he has a policy of never manipulating or staging images, but telling a story with honesty and truth as it happens. During the period he was there, in following the soldiers in their day-to-day role and in contact with the Afghan people, he was able to capture ordinary life for the men, women and children of Afghanistan in a period of intense social change as well as the work of western forces. This included for example, the rebuilding of homes, de-mining the landscape, seeing women in professional roles and girls going to school for the first time in a number of years. It was a story of hope, resilience and reflected an optimism about the future. It was a unique portrayal, won international recognition, was presented at locations including the British Library in London, House of Commons, European Parliament in Brussels and prestige venues across the UK.

In 2020, Creative Scotland provided funding for Nick, as the individual artist, to produce a new exhibition, re-visiting this story with the purpose of presenting this in 2021, the 20th anniversary of 9/11. It opens with New York, to set the scene for what was to happen next, the world of Kabul and surrounding areas and the interface of local people with the soldiers of ISAF. No-one could have foreseen the historic events which unfolded in Afghanistan in August last year and which have made this exhibition so timely and relevant.

It is a story of Afghanistan from a different perspective, with a reminder that beyond the politics and conflict, we must never forget the lives of ordinary people – the men, women, children – lives not that dissimilar from our own. It is a moving story told through the power of images, and one which will take you into a world we have all seen through media coverage but will help you see it with new eyes. Viewing Afghanistan from the relatively recent historical setting of 2002, provides a route to help us all explore, understand and empathise further with the same world today.

Following the opening presentation of 'Faces of Kabul' at Eden Court, Inverness in October last year, the next live staging was scheduled for Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery this month. The Omicron surge has led to this being moved to March but in the meantime, we are staging this first online webinar event to highlight the forthcoming exhibition. We have asked the presenters to select a small number of images which evoke particular memories, experiences, opinions and thoughts. This is what you will see and hear, together with the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the event. This will also be the start of a series of online events taking shape between now and March.

On January 22nd, the event is being hosted by Sitakumari, Director of Heartstone, Abdul Bostani and Zainab Homam of Glasgow Afghan United who are partnering with Heartstone for this programme. As well as Nick Sidle, the photographer, special guest presenter is Cynthia Cohen, Director of 'Peacebuilding & the Arts', a unique US based programme working globally using the arts for the purpose of conflict resolution.

If you would like to register for the event and receive the Zoom link to join, please contact:

alice@heartstone.co.uk

For further information contact: Sitakumari, Director - Heartstone : Tel: 07835 367716
Mayfield, High street, Dingwall, Ross-shire IV15 9SS.



Photographs in this invitation are drawn from the exhibition: ©Nick Sidle

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Nick Sidle

As a photojournalist Nick Sidle's work has seen him cover documentary, environmental and social subjects with assignments in many countries, including images in Kosovo and Bosnia during the conflicts there and in Afghanistan immediately after the fall of the Taliban regime after the international response to 9/11. He is also known for his underwater images and coverage of military aviation and a major long-term documentary portrait of London. His work has received international recognition with publication worldwide and exhibitions in some of the UK and Europe's most prestigious and influential venues, including London's Southbank Centre, the British Library, Edinburgh's City Arts Centre and The European Parliament. As a writer, Nick Sidle has worked professionally since 1984 producing short stories, material for the stage and commentaries on political, social, environmental and scientific subjects. These activities have in the main been linked to his career as a photographer and photojournalist.

Clare Daly, Manager, Highlands & Islands Migrant and Refugee Advocacy (HIMRA) in early 2021, said:

'The events and aftermath of 9/11 cannot be underestimated – it essentially shifted our world into a new paradigm that has continued to bring into sharp focus issues such as security, terrorism, human rights, globalisation, and the relationship between the East and the West. One of the enduring legacies of 9/11 has been a reorientation in terms of what a globalised world means for all of us. In today's context, this reorientation has seen the increasing emergence of hate crimes, Islamophobia, anti-migrant rhetoric, increasing populism as a cultural 'backlash' and increasing anxiety regarding terrorist movements.

Nick Sidle's exhibition is timely for a number of reasons. Firstly, there are the most recent changes in Afghanistan which are directly connected to what happened 20 years ago. The exhibition encourages engagement and reflection on what might have been learned in the 20 years since 9/11, using artistic expression to do this....'

Sitakumari, Director of Heartstone says:

'This exhibition produced by Nick Sidle is in keeping with everything we do in Heartstone which is why we are supporting it. It is about seeing people, not prejudice but in this case, Faces of Kabul has a further purpose, reminding us all of the events from which it all started 20 years ago, the sadness, tragedies and loss but also the hopes and dreams that were there at that time, allowing us, through the power of photojournalism, to step into the shoes of people who we may perceive as so different from ourselves, but in fact to come to the understanding that they are not...'

Acknowledgements:

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