

Juan Medina – Cruel Sea

12 April – 7 May 2006



Juan Medina, a Reuters photographer based in the Canary Islands, has been documenting the arrival of African migrants to the island of Fuerteventura since 1999 – a phenomenon he describes as ‘one of the most horrific, cruel and important immigration movements of our time’.

If you set sail at dusk from the coast of Western Sahara in a small boat, it is possible that by morning you would reach the lighthouse at Fuerteventura, the closest of the Canary Islands to Africa. More than 7,000 immigrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa – drought-ridden places like Mali and Niger – but also from such distant locations as Kashmir, attempted this desperate Atlantic passage in 2003, and the numbers show no signs of diminishing.

For most immigrants, the Canary Islands are not their final destination, but rather the first obstacle they need to overcome en route to other, bigger, richer European cities. Those who survive the dangerous voyage are served with expulsion forms as they arrive, and charged with illegal entry. Yet many do not ever set foot on Spanish shores; their overcrowded handmade boats no match for the powerful Atlantic currents. Barely a week passes without a report of a boat carrying immigrants smashed on the rocks, its occupants drowned, lost at sea or washed up on the beach of the Island of Eternal Spring that represented so much hope. Those that are recovered by the Guardia Civil will be buried in cemeteries closest to the spot where they were found. Such deaths – such lives – will be commemorated by a numbered plaque.

Juan Medina, working as a press photographer in the Canary Islands tells the desperate story of human tragedy unfolding on their shores. Working at night and in the cold light of morning his striking and unflinching photographs uncover the unseen life and death struggle of immigrants as they attempt the perilous journey to a better life in Europe.

Cruel Sea is accompanied by a digital presentation of Reuters wider coverage of immigration to Spain. This exhibition is shown in conjunction with the exhibition, *Weegee – Photographs 1935-1960* at HOST.

Editors notes:

Photographs from this exhibition are available for press purposes. Please contact Michael Regnier on 020 7253 2770 or by email at: press@hostgallery.co.uk

For further information visit: www.hostgallery.co.uk

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**FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE
20 March 2006**

**Juan Medina
Cruel Sea
12 April –
7 May 2006**

Free admission.
Opening times:
Monday—Friday
10am—6pm or by
appointment at
other times.

Nearest tubes:
Old Street, Barbican.
Buses: 55, 243