



## Artist



**Margareta Kern** came to the UK in 1992, fleeing civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2003 she set up 'Leave to Remain', a website which showcases work by contemporary artists who are refugees and asylum seekers.

### Tell us about Leave to Remain

Leave to Remain explores the experience of displacement through contemporary visual art. It provides visibility to contemporary visual artists who are refugees, asylum seekers and aims to create new spaces for discussion.

### Where did the idea come from?

The name is a play on Home Office terminology. I had the title in mind ever since my own displacement from Bosnia triggered the endless process of asylum and visa applications. The term 'leave to remain' therefore signifies and represents this experience of suspension, where one might be asked to leave or to remain in the UK.

### What are your plans for the future?

I am currently focusing on several projects, working as a freelance visual artist. Both projects are lens and time-based, and are involving women from the Balkans, mostly Croatia and Bosnia. I would like to publish a book of photographs that stem out of these projects. I also aim to continue developing Leave to Remain web site, into a comprehensible and wider database of visual artists.

### How do refugees and asylum seekers contribute to UK life?

Migration, whether forced or economic, has shaped British society for a very long time, it isn't just a contemporary phenomenon. Refugees are forced to flee their homes in search of safety, and they bring with them not only their skills, cultural heritage and experience but also a great desire to make a new home. As a refugee myself, and it is sometimes easier to speak only of one's own experience, living in Britain has provided me with enormous challenges and opportunities, which I continue to cherish and which have formed the bases of who I am.

### What's your involvement with Refugee Week?

Setting up Leave to Remain made me aware of Refugee Week and its significance in raising important issues around refugees and exile. In 2003, Leave to Remain had a showing at Central Space in London followed by a showing at the BBC and the Museum of Immigration and Diversity where work by three artists can still be seen. This year I hope to run some educational workshops.

## Links

[Leave to Remain](#)

[Margareta Kern's website](#)

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