Acknowledgements

This book is a reflection on what came after a momentous historical event, but it was completed just before other history-making events took place. On 22nd May 1998, a referendum on the Good Friday Agreement was held simultaneously in both parts of Ireland, North and South, ratifying a peace deal with significant cross-party support. Eighteen years later, on 23rd June 2016, a referendum on membership of the European Union was held across the United Kingdom. In England and Wales a majority voted to leave the EU; in Scotland and Northern Ireland, a majority voted to remain. The overall outcome was to be ‘Brexit’: the UK’s extraordinary, unexpected decision to leave the European Union, a referendum result that initiated deep constitutional crisis with far-reaching ramifications for North-South relations in Ireland. Long after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the potential of a return to a ‘hard’ militarised border between the North and the Republic – marking a line of separation between ‘British’ and European territory – was being anxiously debated. It suddenly seemed possible that old forms of division could yet reappear, under new conditions, for unexpected reasons.

Keeping apace with change in the North of Ireland – and remaining attentive to what stays unchanged – has been one of the challenges in writing this book. At its centre is a reflection on how the new always crosses over with the old, how time, in a period of apparent ‘aftermath’ always seems to flow in more than one direction. The artists studied in the book have been especially astute at capturing or questioning aspects of this disconcerting, backwards-and-forwards post-Troubles reality. I have learned a great deal from reflecting on their work, and, in many cases, from conversations with them about their experiences and perspectives. Among those artists – along with curators and gallery staff – who I would like to thank for various types of support, large and small, are: Patrick Bloomer, Ursula Burke, Duncan Campbell (and Rodeo Gallery, London), Phil Collins (and Siniša Mitrović), Brian Connolly/Beyond, Shane Cullen (& David Crawforth of Beaconsfield Gallery, London), Miriam de Búrca, John Duncan, Seamus Harahan, Mike Hogg, Daniel Jewesbury, Sandra Johnston, Jesse Jones,
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