



The big picture

Rania Matar's photograph of a Lebanese woman on the border with Israel is revealing due to what it keeps hidden

The building in the foreground is in Kfarkila, in southern Lebanon. The land beyond it is northern Israel. The border wall then in construction between the two countries runs below this building. On her tiptoes, with the breeze picking at her robe, it looks as though the young woman, Mariam, could rise up and sail across the wall to that horizon.

This striking shot is by Lebanese-American photographer Rania Matar, who began photographing young Lebanese women in the wake of the Beirut port explosion in 2020, when the country was also reeling from a financial meltdown. "I was in awe of the young women working in the reconstruction," Matar says. She spent the next five

years documenting their lives for her new book *Where Do I Go?*

She had photographed Mariam years earlier for a different project. This time she wanted to explore what life was like in close proximity to this hostile border. "We found a building under construction [from which] we could see into Israel," Matar recalls. "It was very eerie,

because it's a landscape that looks identical to the one we were in."

Since the photograph was taken in 2022, much of the border region has been pummelled by Israeli shelling, and in recent weeks Israeli troops have crossed into Lebanese territory. One million residents have been displaced. "I keep checking on them," Matar says of Mariam and her

family. "I don't know where they are."

For all the jagged edges in this image, there is beauty too. Matar found something "almost hopeful" in it, she tells me. "Little did I know it would be shattered now." **Killian Fox**

Where Do I Go? will be published by KAPH and the Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Museum of Art on 2 April