



History lesson

We first featured the work of Edmund Clark in the autumn of 2007 with *Still Life Killing Time*, a project that described the existences of elderly prisoners serving life sentences in the UK for an assortment of serious crimes. In our feature Clark described how, after spending much time at the outset of the project making portraits of his

subjects, then homing in on details such as jewellery and tattoos, he finally settled on representing their lives through photographs of their custodial environment and its telling content of everyday inanimate objects. Dewi Lewis published the work, as is the case with this latest project. In *Guantanamo* the photographic approach bears much in common

with Clark's earlier book, but the scope and ambition of the project is considerably greater. The photographs fall into three sections: the Guantanamo naval base, home to the Americans stationed there; the complex of detainment camps (right); and the homes of former detainees (above), many whose crime was "to be in the wrong place at the wrong time", the



majority eventually released without charge, and now trying to rebuild their lives. Clark began by photographing these post-detention spaces: "Within scenes of domestic ordinariness I was drawn to motifs of confinement, control, trauma and memory." And it is from this theme that the book's subtitle comes, in a quote from former prisoner #1458, Binyam Mohamed: "When you are suspended by a rope you can recover but every time I see a rope I remember. If the light goes out unexpectedly in a room, I am back in my cell." After the drawn-out process of gaining access to Guantanamo, Clark describes how at

the end of each day his digital files were screened by security personnel, with certain images being deleted for reasons explained. The three sections of photographs in the book are interposed with 'Letters To Omar', being a selection of letters and postcards from many hundreds sent to Omar Deghayes during his six years of detention before release without charge. They come from all over the world, from people he does not know, and bear the marks of military censorship, rounding off the story of confinement and control told in Clark's images. The work contained here has already won many

Above: Camp 1, exercise cage. Facing: Home. Images © Edmund Clark.

awards and accolades, with more to come no doubt. It has been exhibited widely, sometimes simultaneously across multiple venues. It is a remarkable, multilayered body of work, produced with consideration and subtlety, and with much more enduring power and intelligence than those notorious snaps from Abu Ghraib. **Guantanamo: If The Light Goes Out**, by Edmund Clark, is published by Dewi Lewis Publishing at £35, ISBN 978-1-904587-96-5.