

Press Release

SOARING The Golden Eagle Festival of Mongolia

A Photographic Exhibition by Sophie Howarth

As official photographer for one of the world's most successful rock music festivals, The Big Day Out, Sophie Howarth became fascinated in capturing the festival experience – the audience, the gaze, the energy.

Sophie brings ***Soaring*** to the Art Space on The Concourse, an exhibition of fine art photographic prints featuring ***The Golden Eagle Festival of Mongolia***.

The old Kazakh tradition of horseback eagle falconry is celebrated each October in the Bayan-Olgii Province in far western Mongolia. Participants train an eagle to hunt for them and the kill is shared - the pelt for the trainer and the meat for the eagle.

Horse-riding with her host family allowed Sophie to create shots that communicate her signature theme – the connection between performer and audience, of hunter/huntress and eagle – against the dramatic landscape of the wild Altai mountain range.

“My work is a study of reverie, a powerful alchemy that the performer and audience inspire, exist in, and respond to during the cycle of a festival. A presence that everyone has a part in, that brings an otherworldliness to the occasion; an atmosphere of something greater than ourselves,” Sophie says.

Her works capture the essence of the eagle, too – its extraordinary power to see clearly from great heights and across vast distances, inspiring personal transformations.

Eagles still have a mythical resonance in the Asian eagle hunting nations of Mongolia, southern Siberia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. They are a powerful symbol of transformation – signifying a higher ‘self’ taking flight, lifting free from worldly entanglement and soaring to an expanded vision of reality.

At the festival there are a series of games that showcase the speed, agility, accuracy and Kazakh dress of the eagle and trainer.

The theme that runs through Sophie's work has its own traditional name – the *baraka* – which is best described as the spiritual thread that lies between nature and the divine experience so often experienced at festivals.

“My personal practice has resulted in an anthology of imagery that documents stories of the festival experience, while visualising the change in the psyche of those swept away,” she says.

“In the moment I can feel what I call the *baraka* that the performer and audience inspire

together, exist in and respond to. The way I interpret this is that it makes people feel like they are involved in something greater than themselves. It is a magical experience.”

This exhibition is part of a larger body of work on festivals, which has continued since Sophie’s early career where she worked solely in the music industry, largely at rock festivals. The creation of her book ‘Peace Love and Brown Rice - A Photographic History of the Big Day Out’ was self published to enduring popular and critical acclaim.

Earlier this year Sophie’s **Soaring** exhibition of work was included in the Australian release of the documentary - The Eagle Huntress. Soaring was captured during the festival in which Aisholpan, The Eagle Huntress made her history making, record breaking win.

What

Fine Art Photography Exhibition
Soaring - The Golden Eagle Festival of Mongolia

When

1st to 19th November, 11 - 5pm Wed-Sun
Art After Hours : Fri 3rd & Sat 4th until 10pm

Where

Art Space on The Concourse
409 Victoria Ave,
Chatswood, Sydney (next to Box Office)

Also..

‘The Eagle Huntress’
FREE documentary film screening
Thursday, 9th November at 6pm
Willoughby Library on The Concourse,
Lower Ground, 409 Victoria Ave, Chatswood
Bookings essential @ willoughby.nsw.gov.au

Presentation by Karen Smith, Education Officer Aboriginal Heritage Office.

Saturday 11th November

Time: 2.30 - 3.30pm

Synopsis : The Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) is a joint initiative by Lane Cove, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Strathfield, Willoughby and Ku-ring-gai councils, in a progressive move to protect Aboriginal Heritage. The AHO develops and implements community education programs and events aimed at increasing the collective knowledge of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Learn about Willoughby’s local peoples and their saltwater lifestyle. With a brief introduction by Sophie.

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