

## ***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 and the binding connection that is unseen and strongly felt.

Sophie brings ***Soaring*** to the Royal North Shore Hospital, 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. Kazakh hunters in Bayan-Olgii live and hunt with the use of eagles as generations before then have done. It is a strong bond. At the festival there are a series of games that showcase their skill, speed, agility and accuracy as a team. The hunter is also scored on his or her traditional Kazakh dress of themselves and horse and their riding style.

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 captures the essence of the eagle, too – its extraordinary power to see clearly from great heights and across vast distances. Eagles still have a mythical resonance in the Asian eagle hunting nations of Mongolia, southern Siberia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. The hunters call it a ‘soul connection’ what lies between them and their eagle, land and all their animals. This relationship of the souls can clearly be seen in their daily life expressed as a reverence for nature. It looks like a thread that binds man and nature because of their traditional belief system and their dependence on this relationship for their survival.

***Soaring The Golden Eagle Festival*** exhibition and Sophie's personal experience with the Eagle Hunters 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. A print of Aisholpan is featured here at RNSH - photographed just after she received her prize at The Golden Eagle Festival in 2014. The Eagle Huntress captured many people the world over with it's empowering message for girls.

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.

**Prints For Sale - [sophiehowarthphotography.com](http://sophiehowarthphotography.com) - go to 'Purchase Page'**

Edition prints. Printed on Fine art, museum quality paper.

**\$400/\$600** per print, print only/framed

**\$600/\$800** per print, print only/framed for Large Eagle print

**What**

Fine Art Photography Exhibition

*Soaring* - The Golden Eagle Festival of Mongolia

**When**

**Now Showing!!!**

until April 30th, 2018

**Where**

Royal North Shore Hospital Foyer

St Leonards, NSW, 2065

Main Entrance

**Sophie Howarth contact/ read more online**

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*A footnote from me:*

Mongolia, it took me because of The Eternal Blue Sky and the steppe but mostly because of its spaciousness.

Haruki Murakami in his novel *The Wind Up Bird Chronicle* describes the feeling so perfectly:

*“Sometimes, when one is moving silently through such utterly desolate landscape, an overwhelming hallucination can cause one to feel that oneself, as an individual human being, is slowly unravelling. The surrounding space is so vast that it becomes more and more difficult to keep a balanced grip on one’s own being. I wonder if I am making myself clear? The mind expands to fill the entire landscape, becoming so diffuse in the process that one loses the ability to keep it fastened to the physical self. That is what I experienced in the midst of the Mongolian steppe. How vast it was! It felt more like an ocean than a desert landscape. The sun would rise from the eastern horizon, cut its way across the empty sky, and sink below the western horizon. This was the only perceptible change in our surroundings. And in the movement of the sun, I felt something I hardly know how to name: some huge, cosmic love.” pp. 138-139.*