



Starting Points...

KERRY J DEAN

Kerry J Dean's *Observations and Orchestrations* draws inspiration from the daily rituals and domestic acts of Mongolian life. Through a combination of documentary and intervention, she explores how humans connect and disconnect to their environment.

Dean first visited Mongolia in 2005 as a kneejerk escape from London living. Overwhelmed by the chaos of the city, she found her flow by heading east. Switching off all distractions allowed her to tune into her senses, opening herself up to discovery. She spent the past few years building relationships with families who both host and collaborate with her. "Investment of time is critical. Relationships have grown over time, and we have built up trust through collaborating. I'm not interested in taking pictures and leaving. The project is a lifelong investment," she says.

The images capture the beauty and theatre in everyday actions, examining the space between tradition and contemporary culture. From trucks seemingly marooned in the desert wrapped in printed fabric to protect them from the extreme weather, to school girls adorned in oversized pom-poms, these unexpected and incongruous details have become obsessions for Dean. Through careful intervention, she reverses the normal order of things, expanding and exaggerating these acts to create sculptural spectacles in the landscape. These offbeat and surreal moments punctuate



uninterrupted vistas, situating the viewer in an unseen world with endless possibilities.

Pom-Pom Girls is a chapter within the larger project and documents young girls adorned in huge multicoloured pom-poms as they journey to school. This ritual is one of the last traces of communist times. "If girls arrived at school and didn't wear pom-poms, or they weren't tied properly or fixed perfectly, they would be sent home to adjust," Dean shares. "Mongolia is a country in flux. It has old-fashioned nomadic skillsets which clash against the tide of digitisation and urbanisation sweeping the nation. Right now, it creates these amazing scenes, which unravel before your eyes. I'm not sure how long these traditions will last, so I'm trying to capture them."

Outside of her fine art practice, she also brings her nuanced blend of documentary and intervention to fashion. With a strong focus on colour, texture and sculptural forms, her models come to life in epic spaces. While her work operates in two very different contexts, Dean's photography thrives in both worlds. ■

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