

AUSTRALIA'S TOP EMERGING PHOTOGRAPHER 2016 WINNER NOW ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM

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RUSHER

Last night John Feely was crowned Australia's Top Emerging Photographer. Today Feely launches his first exhibition capturing Western Mongolian nomadic life to international critical acclaim.

The Outsider by John Feely Head On Photo Festival, Gaffa Gallery, 281 Clarence Street, Sydney 28 April – 9 May John Feely is available for interview and selected images are available for use. Please contact Emma Rusher atemala@houseofrusher.com or 0423 214 626 for more information.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR THE OUTSIDER 'John Feely's The Outsider is a remarkable achievement that shows Feely's exceptional talent not only as a photographer but as a story teller. One can only get images this rich and poignant by developing a real connection and understanding with their subject matter. Feely more than succeeds in this body of work.' — Simon Harsent, peer-voted world number 1 photographer and Cannes Gold Lion award-winner. 'John Feely critiques the shifting margins of Mongolian society by exploring life on the frontier between traditionalism and modernity. With an unsentimental but empathetic sensibility, Feely gives insight into the complexities of globalisation by penetrating the last bastions of a world gone by,' — Adam Ferguson, Time Magazine and New York Times photojournalist 'Beautiful and poignant work of John Feely, spend with the nomads of Mongolia. We are all aware how saturated the medium of photography has become. In this maelstrom you find here a rare work of compassion and self discovery.' — Ingvor Keene, Photographer

ABOUT THE OUTSIDER In 2014 a desire to seek out wild adventure led teacher of 'at risk' children and photographer John Feely to close his eyes, and commit to traveling wherever his finger landed on the map. He opened his eyes and his destination was revealed - Western Mongolia. Western Mongolia is an exposed Mars-like wilderness for three months of the year, and an icy landscape for the other nine. Kazaks and Mongols share a way of life in harmony with, and at the whim of, nature's every gesture. They are a community of outsiders, both physically and in a globalised context. A culture not yet irrevocably changed by modernisation. The Outsider is John Feely's photographic record of his personal journeys through Mongolia. No language was shared, the process was meditative and silent. Unimaginable events unfolded daily. Rounding up wild horses on mountain tops, climbing into eagles' nests, migrating cross country with nomads and eating dinner from a single plate with a family of eight. Feely spent time and forged a close friendship with the now famous family of 'Eagle Huntress' teenager, Aisholpan, currently the subject of a Hollywood feature animation bidding war. Feely's attributes his experience teaching 'at risk' children for eight years in helping him form meaningful relationships in difficult situations, allowing him to capture life moments and navigate delicate social terrain through his lens. John was the outsider, who became an almost family member in gerts of Western Mongolia. 'Simply wanting to learn from people and being prepared to sleep on their floors puts you in a space where you are yourself a little vulnerable, and people can sense this,' said Feely. 'Staying in our comfort zone all the time, always trying to get what we want all the time, seems to solidify our view of the world and our opinions of others. I want to try to get out beyond that, be the outsider and see what comes up to support me.' Rather than receiving news from the outside world it seems that a fresh internal experience of life is what truly connects us as people. No matter the size, a leap outside the comfort of what we know inspires a reduction in the distance between people. Moment after moment it also makes what was seemingly impossible a fresh new reality. Perhaps this is how our dreams become reality. Slowly Feely, 'the outsider' became part of the surrounds. The process was meditative and silent. The photographs are an extension of relationships formed from this place. In August, Feely returns to Mongolia to focus on how the forces of tradition and modernity intersect. The effect of this collision on family, identity, power, culture, health, resilience, survival, opportunity, happiness, providence and connection to the elements that sustain us is the crux of this work. 'I look for small things, situations that reflect something universal and contemporary that effect all of us. Tradition and globalisation are forces that impacted upon my everyday life and identity here in Australia,' said Feely. 'I will explore how a father relates to his son in a very different world; how a middle aged woman rediscovers her place in a less traditional society; how a family of nomads survives in a first generation city. I explore the romantic notion of living traditionally and why people chose to move into slums on the outskirts of a heavily polluted city. I want my photographs to raise questions about what we collectively as people and as a global culture gain and lose along the way as well as focusing on specific individual and interpersonal events.'

ABOUT JOHN FEELY John Feely's approach to photography is an extension of meaningful shared experiences in a range of diverse locations, circumstances and cultures. His previous careers as a behavioural advisor in public education and youth detention, and as a semi-professional footballer influence his photography. He trained at the Queensland College of Arts, and has assisted some of Australia's premier commercial photographers. He is committed to independent projects that provide him with the freedom to genuinely and deeply explore.