



Shanghai surprises

China Dreaming

Customs House
Photography



China is quickly emerging as the new superpower. Its fast-paced living, combined with traditional values,

makes it one of the most dynamic countries in the world. Photographer Olivia Martin-McGuire managed to overcome her apprehension and infiltrate the very epicentre of modern Chinese culture.

After spending three months in Shanghai, holding an artist-in-residency, Martin-McGuire produced an innovative sequence of images called *China Dreaming*. The series has two parts, *Waking Dream States* and *Awake*, and demonstrates China's coming of age.

"I chose China because it is quite amazing," she says. "It has a rapid pace combined with this old-school generation. There is no in-between."

Martin-McGuire wanted to make a social comment about not living in the present.

"So many people are either stuck in the past or always thinking about the future and China seemed the perfect place to do the series as it was literally what was happening," she says.

She likened the experience to watching history in the making.

When looking for subjects,

Martin-McGuire aimed for average, everyday citizens. "I wanted ordinary people," she says. "I wasn't interested in getting a pretty picture."

She took with her a camera and a translator, and nothing else. Despite the language barrier, Martin-McGuire had no trouble communicating.

"A lot of them thought it was hilarious that I wanted to take photos of them," she says.

While in Shanghai Martin-McGuire spoke to Australian cinematographer Christopher Doyle, who told her that speaking the language can actually hinder the experience.

"I agreed with him completely. When you're forced to communicate without language it heightens your senses, giving you a better idea of the place you're in," she says.

Martin-McGuire is already thinking about her next project.

"I might do something in Korea, although that may be a little obvious," she says.

China Dreaming is open from January 17, although the official opening is on the 24th.

"There's going to be lion dances, dumplings and mist machines, along with 200-300 guests," she says.

"It should be a lot of fun."

□ 31 Alfred St, Circular Quay;
January 17-February 24, opening times vary, free, 9242 8593
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Tiny dancer ... (clockwise from above) images from the photographic exhibit *China Dreaming*

