



The Pink Bear Explores The Mongolian Wilderness On Horseback

In 2015, the British artist Paul Robinson (better known by his moniker LUAP) climbed the four highest peaks of the Atlas mountains for the National Autistic Society charity, the first of the challenges that the artist set himself while overcoming a period of darkness. As the light hit his face at the peak of the final mountain, LUAP was hit by an epiphany which would guide his life and his artistic practice: adventure is a necessity. Therapy had been helpful, but travel was a revolution. Venturing out of his comfort zone went from an unconscious therapy to a conscious one - and one which would dictate the direction of his career from that point forward and unlock his artistic potential.

During an earlier period of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, the artist had turned to a long-forgotten childhood memory for comfort: a family photograph of LUAP with his parents, brother, and a large pink bear. The photograph now hangs in Robinson's home while The Pink Bear has evolved into the protagonist of LUAP's multimedia practice. The Pink Bear symbolises both the artist's childhood hopes and his adult dilemmas.

The Pink Bear has featured in different formats around the globe and is now an immediately-recognisable signature of LUAP's work. The Bear has appeared in Street Art murals in London, as soft-toy collectables worldwide, on a billboard in Times Square, on the front cover of an Italian fashion magazine, in photographs, prints, and live performances. The photographs LUAP takes are never digitally edited, and each shot of The Pink Bear is achieved by a real figure wearing a human-size character-suit. Taking these photographs live - rather than fake the bear in a post-edit - is a non-negotiable element of LUAP's practice. In an age where everyone has a camera in their pocket, to choose to set up and use full camera gear is key to the authenticity that is so central to LUAP's work and world. This commitment adds to an additional physical challenge to the artist as he negotiates the practicalities of taking heavy equipment with him on artistic missions which are frequently arduous if not flat-out dangerous. This Autumn, in the year of the artist's 40th birthday, the Bear will be making its most complex and physically-demanding trip yet.

In September, Robinson is travelling to Mongolia to ride for 10 days on horseback through one of the world's most remote landscapes in order to create new photographic artworks of The Pink Bear. The journey will be incredibly physically demanding. The artist has already given up alcohol (and will have done for 120 days before arrival) and begun horse-riding lessons in order to prepare for this challenge. This is an entirely new skill to him and particularly challenging given a life-long fear of horses. The British survival expert Megan Hine (consultant to Bear Grylls) will be accompanying LUAP, along with 20KG of artistic kit which will be carried by the artist each day as they

make their way through Mongolia. Each day will require 8 hours on horseback, with up to 12 hours of hiking on summit day. LUAP will be experiencing the nomadic lifestyle lived by Mongolian locals for generations, eating fatty, offal-heavy meat dishes cooked on an open fire and sleeping in below zero conditions. He is now the proud owner of a sleeping bag designed to compensate for minus 15 degrees!

The nomadic way of life is slowly dying out in Mongolia, as successive generations are drawn to life in the large cities. As the ancient traditions fade away and a life lived sustainably from the land is replaced by the instant-gratification of globalised attitudes, it is more important than ever to shine a light on the traditional. The final objective of the mission is to photograph The Pink Bear on horseback with the Golden Eagles of the isolated landscape of the Altai region. A key focus of LUAP's practise is the impact on the planet of Western attitudes to consumption. This year the artist is collaborating with Le Good Society in a stand against plastic pollution. The decision to ride on horseback was made because the journey will have no carbon footprint other than the feeding of the horses. With the changing employment ecosystem worldwide, the hunters of the Golden Eagles may soon be relegated to legend, and the traditional way of living in Mongolia may vanish too. Now is the time for LUAP to capture the precarious identity of Mongolia, before global warming and westernisation change the country irreparably. This expedition is a call for our collective return to care for the Earth.

LUAP is dedicated to liberating art from the confines of traditional gallery space and bringing it to broader audiences. The adventures he goes on with The Pink Bear do just that, and this Mongolia trip is no different. In the remote Mongolian landscape The Pink Bear will also enable LUAP to rise to an aesthetic challenge, combining the quirks of Pop Art with the drama of Romantic landscape painting. Such dualities - both literal and conceptual - appear regularly in LUAP's work: The Pink Bear represents both childhood comfort and adult anxiety, nostalgia in a modern setting and new commercialism in a natural landscape - hope and warning. In all that he does, Robinson advocates for finding balance between these pairings, and creating a world in which we can all live harmoniously. The relatable joy of LUAP's work is that The Pink Bear is as much a part of his audience as it is of the artist, as much 'us' as 'them', a hero and an anti-hero.

**For further images and information please contact verityb@gmail.com
Interviews with LUAP are available**