

Zurich Development Center



Exhibition METTE TRONVOLL
June – August 2006
The series MONGOLIA



Dulamsuren and Cemegddorj, from the series „Mongolia“, C-print, 103,5 x 88cm, edition of five

Tronvoll's images are part of a long tradition of photographic expeditions, important since the medium's inception. In her new series, Mette Tronvoll again confronts us with people from the periphery: Mongolian horsemen, fighters, mothers, married couples, children, and youths. Set in their native landscape against a wide, unobstructed horizon, they face the camera directly. The steppes and mountains behind them are almost Arcadian, a backdrop for half-forgotten myths that speak of romantic freedom and heroic conquests. Thus preserved in their untouched natural surroundings, the figures become idealized images of remoteness, far from our urban centers and our grasp of time.

Mongolia has always been an independent state, but in the twentieth century it found itself geopolitically hemmed in by two superpowers: the People's Republic of China and the former USSR. Although alternately influenced by both, the country continually managed to preserve its own identity. Its nomadic citizens still set up their *gers* as they did in the days of Djenghis Khan, still gird their jackets against the wind and cold as they have since time immemorial.

(...) Yet, upon closer observation, our first impressions shift. For here, too, are traces of our own global consumer culture. (...) One almost yearns to be caught up in the old clichés, the ideal notions of purity and primordality that early-twentieth-century modern thinkers posited upon so-called aboriginal peoples. But the reality recorded here disrupts that dream. (...)

Sassa Trülzsch