

Celebrating Women in Photography Today

BLUE BAG, 2007-17

Marysa Dowling

Blue Bag and *The Conversation* examine how portraiture and the camera can be utilized to unpick, enquire into, play with, hide and expose identity through representation. My intention is to create evocative, intimate images that become expressions of identity, and uncover new narratives between the sitters, their communities and place.

Introduction by Janice McLaren, The Photographers Gallery.

'Blue Bag is a 10-year project involving around 400 portrait sitters. What began as a commission by The Photographers' Gallery in London to work with 30 people across the city became a long-term personal project spanning 11 cities across the world.

Utilizing the once-ubiquitous blue plastic bags from UK corner shops, Marysa Dowling created a series of unusual, collaborative portraits based on the simple premise of passing this ordinary, banal object from one person to the next with the intention of connecting communities and people while capturing the unique responses of each individual. Following the portraits in London, the series expanded to Havana, Los Angeles, Cape Town, Beirut, Ekenas, (Finland), Kochi (India), and Oaxaca, Guadalajara, Monterrey & Sayulita (Mexico).

Blue Bag began with a simple set of instructions to choose a relevant location to the sitter, to use the bag and their body within the portrait, and then to invite someone else in the city to take part. As the project evolved, different ways of passing the bag developed, each particular to the city and the social codes of each location. In the hands of each participant the animation of the bag is a creative act, and meaning is made. The participant finds personal ways in which to re-imagine the object; in doing this we can speculate about what the bag signifies for the participant.'

The three works shown here from *Blue Bag*, were made in Beirut in 2010.

My photographic practice is embedded within portraiture and concerned with humanity, behaviour, interconnected relationships, interaction and communication. My focus is on building community through shared photographic experiences; participation is key. I set simple rules and parameters to encourage people to explore how they communicate and relate to each other and the places they live. Predominantly my work is an exploration and observation of how people co-exist, relate to and interact with each other, and the various environments they inhabit. I often cultivate the same theme in several countries, building connections across communities, societies and cultures. My intention is to create thoughtful and playful photographic works that comes into being through social interaction.

MORE INFO

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