

ALEX PRAGER

Press Pack



ALEX PRAGER

BORN 1979, Los Angeles, CA
Lives and works in Los Angeles

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Lehmann Maupin Hong Kong
- 2014 National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
Alex Prager, Quai1 Gallery, in collaboration with Festival Images, Vevey, Switzerland
Face in the Crowd, Art Basel Statements
Face in the Crowd, Arts Club in London
Face in the Crowd, M+B, Los Angeles, CA
Face in the Crowd, Lehmann Maupin, New York
- 2013 *Face in the Crowd*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
Mise-en-scène, Savannah Museum of Art, Savannah
- 2012 *FOAM Paul Huf Award 2012*, FOAM, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Compulsion, M+B, Los Angeles, CA
Compulsion, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York
Compulsion, Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
- 2010 *Week-end*, Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
Week-end, Ringcube Gallery, Tokyo
Week-end, M+B, Los Angeles, CA
Week-end, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York, CA
- 2008 *The Big Valley*, Michael Hoppen Gallery. London
- 2007 *Polyester*, Robert Berman Gallery. Santa Monica, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Face in the Crowd*, The Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas, TX
Alex Prager, Istanbul '74, Istanbul
Open Rhapsody, organized by Tarek Nahas, Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut, Lebanon
The Coca-Cola Bottle: An American Icon at 100", High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
Not Really: Fictive Narratives in Contemporary Art, Castle Gallery at The College of Rochelle, New York
Burn with Desire: Photography and Glamour, Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto, Ontario
FOAM Art Museum, Amsterdam
- 2014 *Melting Walls*, works from the Igal Ahouvi Art Collection, The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, Israel
Me and Benjamin, curated by M+B, Galerie Xippas, Paris
The Noir Effect, Skirball Cultural Center in conjunction with LACMA, Los Angeles, CA
Under the Skin, Lehmann Maupin, Hong Kong
Spotlight – Five Years of Talent, Foam, Amsterdam



- Total Art: Contemporary Video*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
Up, Close and Personal, Fuchs Projects Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
Trace 14, Proje4/Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art, Maslak, Istanbul
The Towering Inferno, Igal Ahouvi Collection Inaugural Exhibition, Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, Tel-Aviv, Israel
- 2013 *Color! American Photograph Transformed*, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX
- 2012 *Portrait of a Generation*, The Hole Gallery, New York, New York
Twisted Sisters, DODGE Gallery, New York, New York
State of the Art- New Contemporary Photography: exhibition and book project, Dusseldorf
Photography Portfolio II, Elton John Aids Foundation, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York
- 2011 *No Fashion Please!*- Photography between Gender and Lifestyle at Kunsthalle wien, Vienna
Intermission – Films, Videos and Photographic Works, James Cohan Gallery, Shanghai, China
Another Story: 1,000 Photographs from the Moderna Museet Collection, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden
- 2010 *New Photography 2010*, MoMA, New York
Put Your Finger on the Button – Women Photographers, New Image Art, Los Angeles, CA
Embarrassment of Riches: Picturing Global Wealth, 2000-2010, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- 2009 *Pro'jekt LA: Facing West – Presented by the Lucie Foundation*, Space 15Twenty, Los Angeles, CA
True Self, Jonathan Levine Gallery, New York, NY
Slideluck Potshow XIII, Canoe Studios, New York, NY
- 2008 *WeAre TheSuperlativeConspiracy*, Robert Berman Gallery. Santa Monica, CA
The Good Life, Yancey Richardson Gallery. New York, NY
Sugar and Spice, Photographic Center Northwest in Seattle, WA
Incognito, Santa Monica Museum of Art. Santa Monica, CA
Young Curators, New Ideas, Bond Street Gallery. Brooklyn, NY
- 2007 *Untitled*, Benjamin Fink & Alex Prager. Sarah Tecchia Gallery, New York, NY
Safe + Sound, London Institute of Fashion. London
Photo Miami, Miami, FL
- 2006 *Queen of the Night, Women under the Influence*, Berman/Turner Gallery. Santa Monica, CA
Dolls to the Walls, Project Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
- 2005 *The Book of Disquiet*, Downtown Independent Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
A True Story, White Trash Charms Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
Admire the View, ArtShare Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
- 2004 *America Motel*, America Motel. Los Angeles, CA
- 2003 *Pictures Like Punches, Stiches Like Screams*, Goodform Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
Group Show, White Trash Charms Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
Black and White and Color, White Trash Charms Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
- 2002 *The Cupboard Show*, City Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
Special Friend, New Image Art Gallery. Los Angeles, CA
- 2001 *Le Deux*, Dionicio Gallery. Los Angeles, CA



PUBLICATIONS

- 2013 *Face in the Crowd*
2012 *Compulsion*
2012 *Book of Disquiet/Weekend*
2007 *Polyester*
2005 *Book of Disquiet: Seven Deadly Sins*

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2014 Spring, Alexandra. "Alex Prager's Hollywood: glamour, menace and heroines dying horrible deaths," The Guardian, November 20
Zafiris, Alex. "On View | For Alex Prager, It's Lonely in a Crowd", T Magazine, January 10
Kelsey, Colleen. "Alex Prager, Crowdsourced", Interview Magazine, January 10
Cooper, Ashton. "25 Questions for Breakthrough Photographer and Wig Collector Alex Prager", Blouin ARTINFO, January 7
- 2013 "Alex Prager: Portfolio", Modern Painter, December
Cudlin, Jeffry. "Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd", Washington City Paper, November 29
Graver, David. "Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd", Cool Hunting, November 27
Bates, Rebecca. "Alex Prager's 'Face in the Crowd' Opens at Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C.", Architectural Digest, November 26
Boyle, Katherine. "At Corcoran, Alex Prager's color photographs of crowds depict detachment in togetherness", The Washington Post, November 22
Distin, Sara. "Staging Reality: Alex Prager's Timeless Faces in the Crowd", TIME LightBox, November 19
"50 Under 50: The Next Most Collectible Artists", Art + Auction, June 2013, pg. 130
Olda, Danny. "Cinematic Photographs of Turn-For-The-Worst Moments by Alex Prager" Beautiful Decay, May 8, 2012.
- 2012 Hyland, Veronique and Amanda FitzSimons. "Creative License", Elle Magazine, December, pg. 129.
Camhi, Leslie. "L.A. Noir: Alex Prager's 'Compulsion' Opens in New York, London and Los Angeles" Vogue, March 28.
Jacques, Adam. "Portfolio: Alex Prager", The Independent, April 22.
Hudson, Mark. "Alex Prager: Photography's Heir to Hitchcock", The Telegraph, April 20.
Davidson, Barbara. "In Conversation with Alex Prager", Los Angeles Times online, August 2.
Colbert, Jorg. "Compulsion: Eye and Artifice" Foam Magazine, Summer, 2012, pg. 165-168.
Frank, Peter. "Review: Alex Prager's Compulsion", Huffington Post, June 8.
Vesilind, Emili. "Alex Prager on Art Exhibit, Foray Into Films" LA Confidential, May 14.
Herndon, Jessie. "Alex Prager is Photography's Queen Voyeur", LA Weekly, April 19.
Swanson, Carl. "Can't Look Away", New York Magazine, April 2012.
Laurent, Olivier and Diane Smyth. "Alex Prager Wins Foam Paul Huf Award", British Journal of Photography.
VanZanten, Virginia. "Alex Prager's Compulsion", W Magazine, March.
- 2011 Dambrot, Shana Nys. "I'm Every Woman", LA Weekly, July 26, 2011
Elist, Jasmine. "Subliminal Projects Gallery's 'Eve' is All About Female Creation", The Los Angeles Times, July 28.
- 2010 Christopher Bonanos. "God Only Knows". New York Magazine, February 8, 2010
Julie Bloom. "Girls On Film". The New York Times. January 21, 2010
Smyth, Diane. "Fashion Restyled", The British Journal of Photography, September 2010, Pp. 41-43.
Conway, Megan, "The New Imagist" BlackBook Magazine, December/January, Issue 81, p. 47.
Lindholm, Erin. "Alex Prager's Girls on Film", Art in America, January 21.
Dos Santos, Gemma. "Interview: Alex Prager Brings Retro-Modern Women to Life", The London Daily News, June 1 2010.



- Homes, A.M. "Uneasy Pieces", *Vanity Fair*, September, pg. 315.
Gaspard, Hugo "Ghost World", *Artravel* (France), January, pg. 76-77.
Johnson, Ken. "AIPAD Photography Show New York", *The New York Times*, March 19.
O'Neill, Claire. "Out With The Old and in With The Old-Inspired: Fresh Photos at MoMA", *NPR*, August 26.
Moura, Sophia. "Your Future is in Their Hands" *Marie Claire*, September 2010
Piatti, Elixabetta. "Alex Prager", *Zoom* (Italy), January pg. 50-51.
Vogel, Carol. "New Photography 2010 Coming to MoMA", *The New York Times*, July 29.
Weaver, Cat. "Alex Prager: Where We Went From There", *The Huffington Post*, September 25.
Wolff, Rachel. "The Living Dollhouse", *The Daily Beast*, January 14.
Ed. "Girls on Film" *The New York Times*, January 21.
2008 Maxwell, Clayton. "Meeting with Alex Prager". *Eyemazing Magazine*. May 2008
Pitman, Joanna. "Valley of the Dolls". *Times Magazine*, May 3, 2008
Ed. "Alex Prager: Off to London" *Malibu Arts Journal*, April.
2007 Pistor, Rahne. "Flaunting Her Cinematic Style". *The Argonaut*, April 26, 2007
Gelt, Jessica. "Beauty Before Age". *The Los Angeles Times*. April 25, 2007
"Flaunting Her Cinematic Style" *The Argonaut*, April 26.
"Alex Prager Likes Flaws" *i-D Magazine*, April.
2006 Alvin, Julie. "Book Review: The Book of Disquiet" *New York Arts Magazine*, May.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY (VIDEO)

- 2014 "Alex Prager", National Gallery of Victoria, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKgl78ISqu4>
"A Look Inside Alex Prager's Face in the Crowd" by Jeff Vespa.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-5lkjsTURQ>
2013 "Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd", Corcoran Gallery of Art, <http://vimeo.com/82137061>
"A Small Portrait of Alex Prager" by Arnaud Uyttenhove, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vf1sJj7MP0I>
2012 "Alex Prager for Fourth & Main", Fourth & Main, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocgrjdVcb4M>
"Behind the Scenes of Alex Prager's new series Compulsion and La Petite Mort" by Jeff Vespa,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaAL2PjEx1c>
2010 "MoMA, Behind the Scenes: New Photography 2010", Interview with Roxana Marcoci, Curator, Department
of Photography. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plASq7T0H8>

SHORT FILMS

- 2014 Face in the Crowd
<http://vimeo.com/85038847>
2012 La Petite Mort
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULnrtEpMtrs>
2010 Despair
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5ZhLzIF5I0>
Sunday
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89zl1chshipM>



SPECIAL PROJECTS

2011 *A Touch of Evil*, The New York Times Magazine, April 2012

SELECTED SCREENINGS

- 2015 *Face in the Crowd*, Museum of Photographic Arts
 Despair, Museum of Photographic Arts
- 2014 *Sunday*, Art Basel, Miami Beach
 Despair, National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
 Sunday, National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
 La Petite Mort, National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
 Face in the Crowd, National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
 Sunday, Quai1 Gallery, in collaboration with Festival Images, Vevey, Switzerland
 Face in the Crowd, The Arts Club, London, UK
 Face in the Crowd, Art Basel Statements
 Face in the Crowd, Seattle International Film Festival
 La Petite Mort, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
 Face in the Crowd, M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
 Face in the Crowd, Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York
- 2013 *Face in the Crowd*, Corcoran, Washington, D.C.
 La Petite Mort, Corcoran, Washington, D.C.
 Sunday, Corcoran, Washington, D.C.
 Despair, Corcoran, Washington, D.C.
 La Petite Mort, Hollyshorts Film Festival, Los Angeles
 Despair, LA Film Festival
- 2012 *La Petite Mort*, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York
 La Petite Mort, Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
 La Petite Mort, M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
- 2010 *Despair*, Hollyshorts Film Festival, Los Angeles

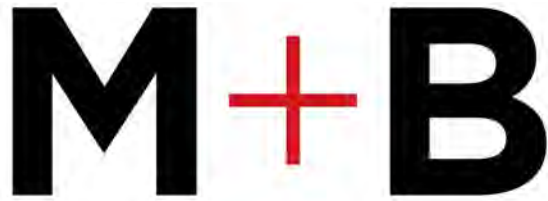
AWARDS

- 2012 Emmy Award, "Touch of Evil", video portfolio for the New York Times, Director
 FOAM Paul Huf Award 2012
- 2010 PDN's 30
- 2009 International Photography Award
 Lucie Award
- 2006 London Photographic Award



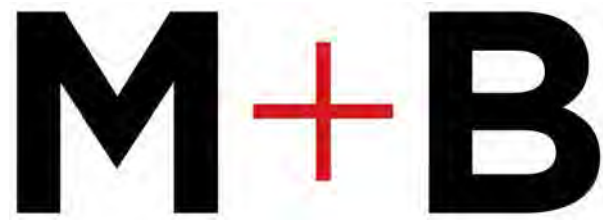
PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Texas
The Sir Elton John Photography Collection
Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art, Maslak, Istanbul
Igal Ahouvi Art Collection, Tel Aviv, Israel
High Museum of Art, Georgia
National Gallery of Victoria, Australia
Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire
Cincinnati Art Museum
Fondation Carmignac Gestion, Paris
Kunsthaus Zurich Museum, Switzerland
Moderna Museet, Stockholm
Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Australia
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC



ALEX PRAGER

Alex Prager (b. 1979, Los Angeles) is a self-taught photographer and filmmaker who is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York), National Gallery of Victoria (Australia), Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, North Carolina Museum of Art, Cincinnati Art Museum, Moderna Museet (Stockholm), Amon Carter Museum of Art (Texas), Elgiz Museum of Contemporary Art (Istanbul), National Gallery of Victoria (Australia), Kunsthaus Zurich Museum (Switzerland), among others. Prager has had a number of museum exhibitions in the United States and worldwide at the National Gallery of Victoria (Australia), Corcoran Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), Skirball Cultural Center (Los Angeles), SCAD Museum of Art (Georgia), National Museum of Women in the Arts (Washington, D.C.), FOAM (Amsterdam), Amon Carter Museum of American Art (Texas) and the *New Photography 2010* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (New York). Upcoming institutional shows in 2015 include a group show at Beirut Exhibition Center (Lebanon) and a solo show at Lehmann Maupin (Hong Kong). Major awards include the Paul Huf FOAM Award in 2012, the London Photography Award in 2006, and Prager's short film *Touch of Evil*, commissioned by *The New York Times Magazine*, garnered her a 2012 Emmy Award. Alex Prager lives and works in Los Angeles.



ALEX PRAGER

Selected Portfolio

M+B



Alex Prager

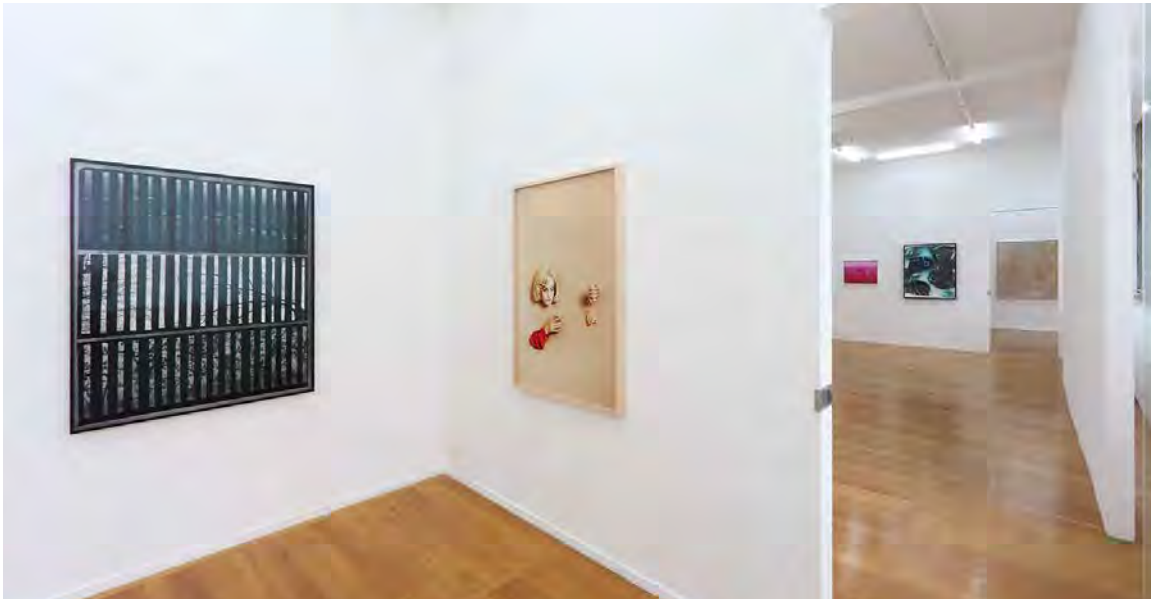
Installation view of the film screening of *Despair* at Soluna Music & Arts Festival, performed
live by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Texas
May 6, 2015

M+B



Alex Prager
Installation View of *Alex Prager*, solo show at Lehmann Maupin, Hong Kong
March 12 – May 16, 2015

M+B



Alex Prager
Installation View of *Me and Benjamin*, group show at Galerie Xippas, Paris
November 14, 2014 – January 10, 2015

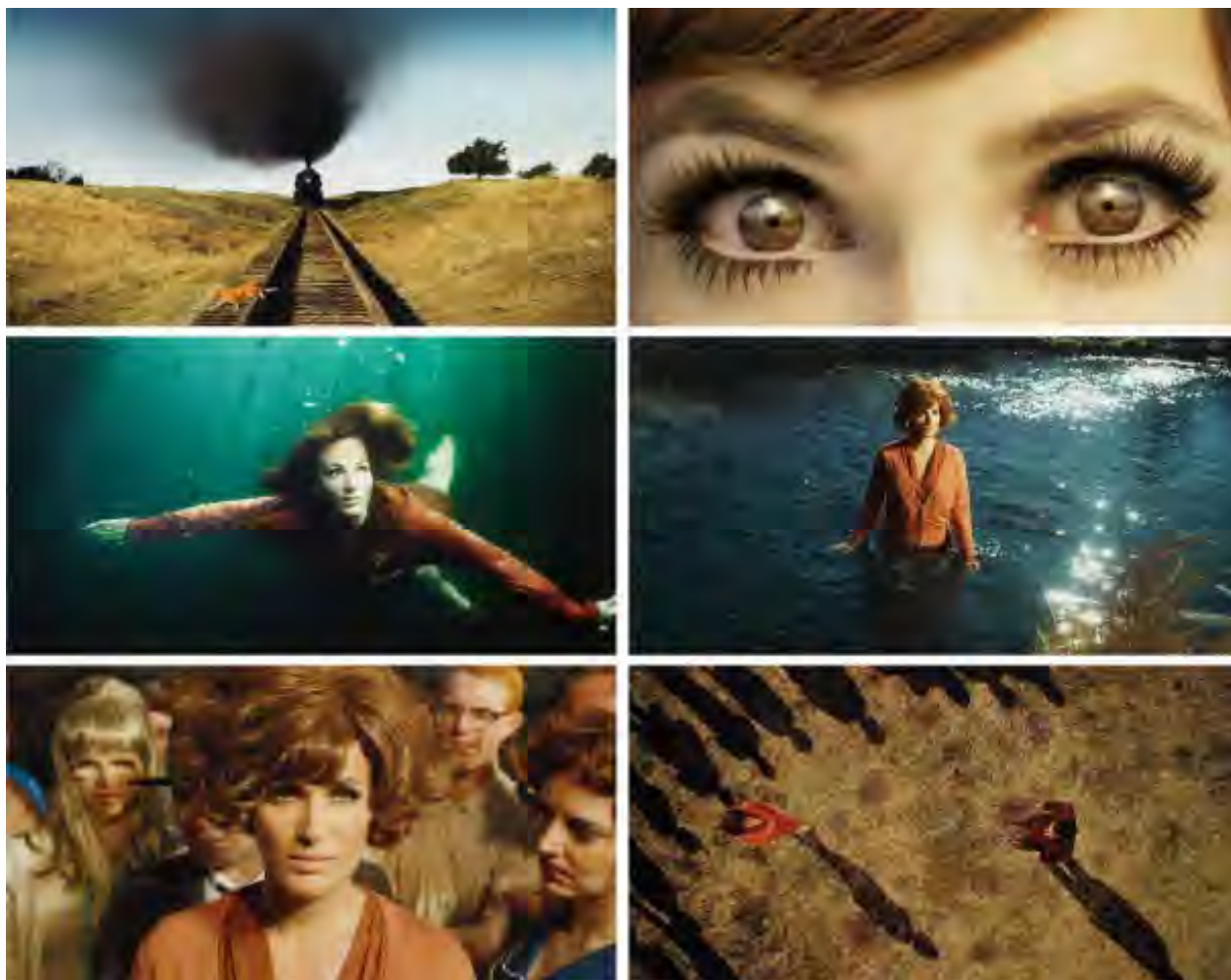
M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *La Petite Mort Film Still #3* at Festival Images, Vevey, Switzerland
September 13 – October 25, 2014

M+B



Alex Prager

La Petite Mort Boxset

DVD, six film stills (chromogenic prints) and poster
signed and numbered

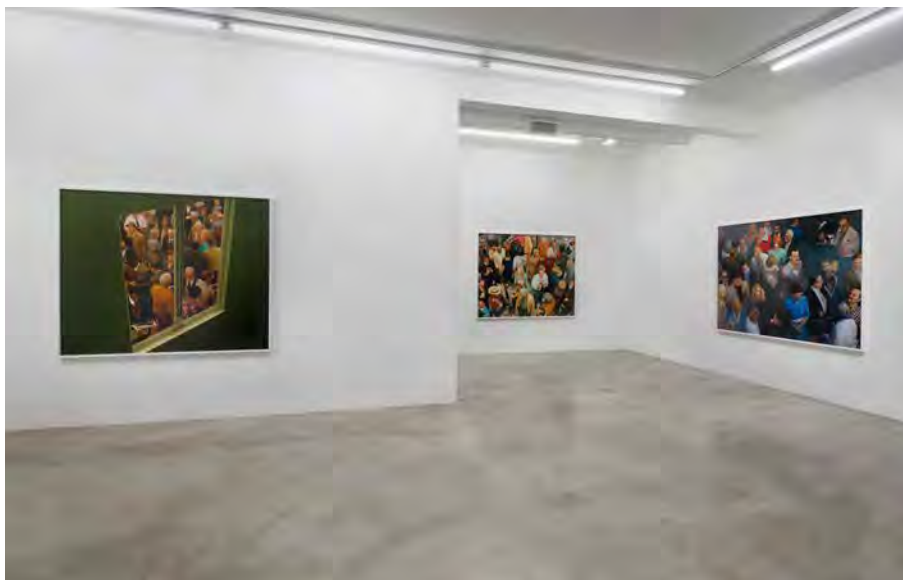
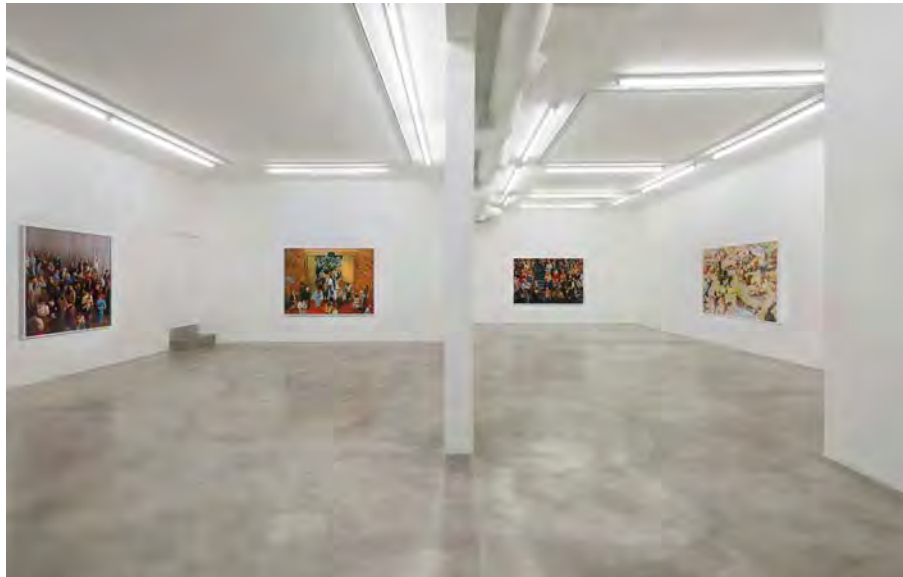
box: 18 x 23 x 1-3/4 inches (45.7 x 58.4 x 4.4 cm) (approximate)

film stills: 11 x 21 inches (27.9 x 53.3 cm) (image size) / 17 x 22 inches (43.2 x 55.9 cm) (paper size)

edition of 15 plus 3 artist's proofs

(AP.07.001.16)

M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *Face in the Crowd*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
January 25 – March 8, 2014

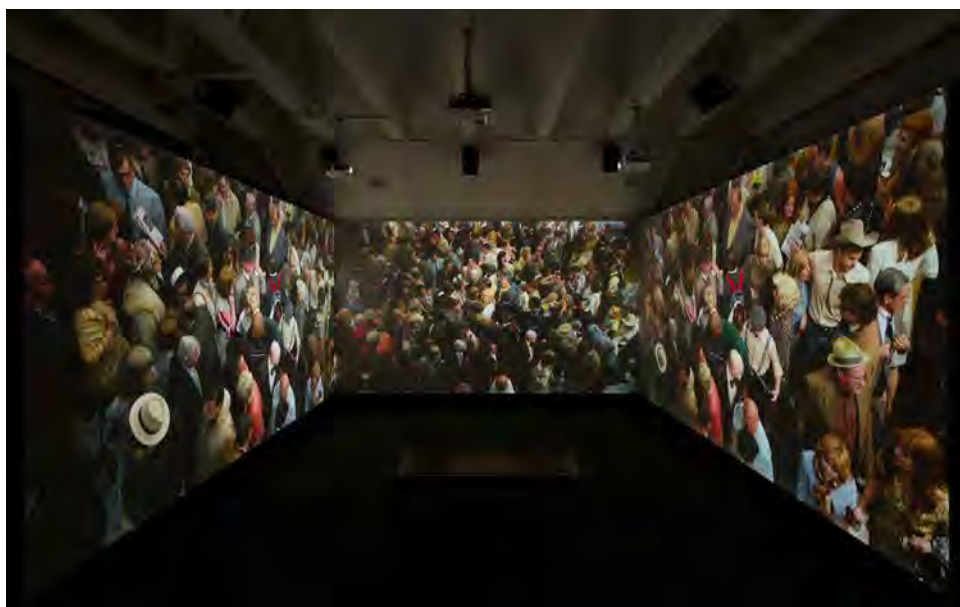
M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *Face in the Crowd*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
January 25 – March 8, 2014

M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *Face in the Crowd*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
January 25 – March 8, 2014

M+B



Alex Prager
Crowd #7 (Bob Hope Airport), 2013
archival pigment print
signed, dated, titled and numbered verso
59-½ x 79 inches (151.1 x 200.7 cm)
edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs
(AP.09.007.59)

M+B



Alex Prager

Face in the Crowd Film Strip #1, 2013

archival pigment print

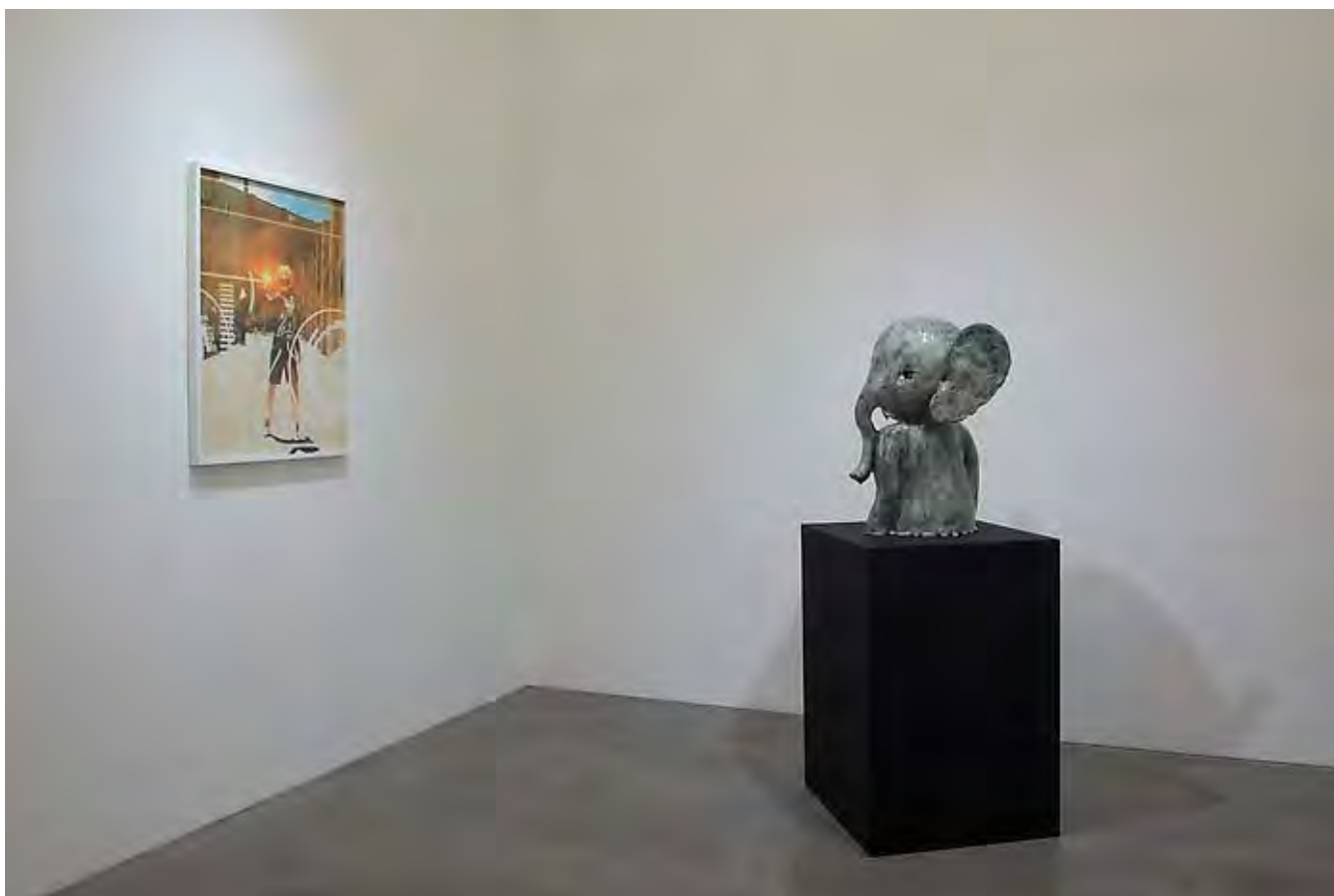
signed, dated, titled and numbered verso

48 x 23 inches (121.9 x 58.4 cm)

edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs

(AP.10.001.48)

M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *Under the Skin*, group show at Lehmann Maupin, Hong Kong
July 10 – Aug 16, 2014

M+B



Alex Prager
Vogue Outtake #2, 2013
archival pigment print
signed, dated, titled and numbered verso
36 x 25-2/5 inches (91.4 x 64.5 cm)
edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs
(AP.11.002.36)

M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *Hazelwood #2*, from the series *Face in the Crowd* at Art Basel, Basel
June 19 – 22, 2014

M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *Face in the Crowd*, solo show at The Arts Club, London
May 26 – Sep 27, 2014

M+B



Alex Prager

Crowd #8 (City Hall), 2013

archival pigment print

signed, dated, titled and numbered verso

59-½ x 80-½ inches (151.1 x 204.5 cm)

edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs

(AP.09.008.59)

M+B



Alex Prager
Paris Photo, Grand Palais, Paris
November 14 – 17, 2013

M+B



Alex Prager

Crowd #3 (Pelican Beach), 2013

archival pigment print

signed, dated, titled and numbered verso

59-1/2 x 92-7/8 inches (151.1 x 235.9 cm)

edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs

(AP.09.003.59)

M+B



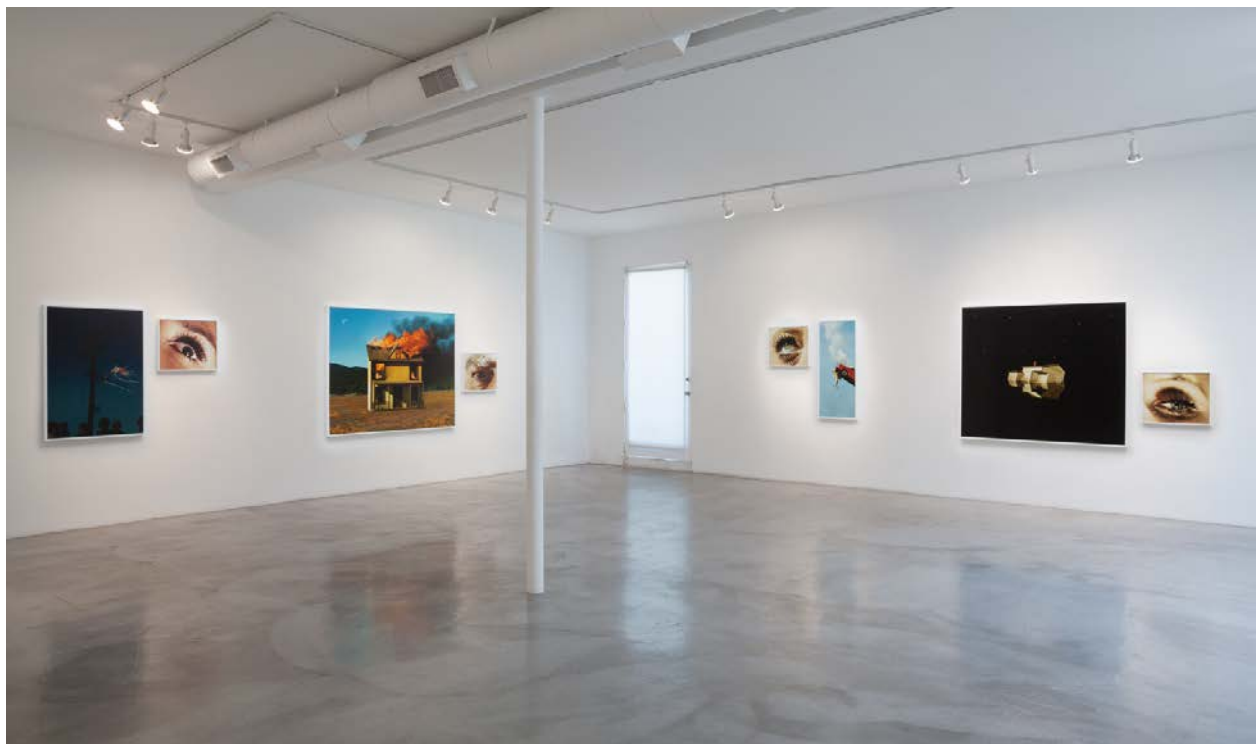
Alex Prager
Installation View of *Mise-en-scène* at SCAD Museum of Art
July 27, 2013 – January 31, 2014

M+B



Alex Prager
Installation View of *Compulsion*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
April 7 – May 12, 2012

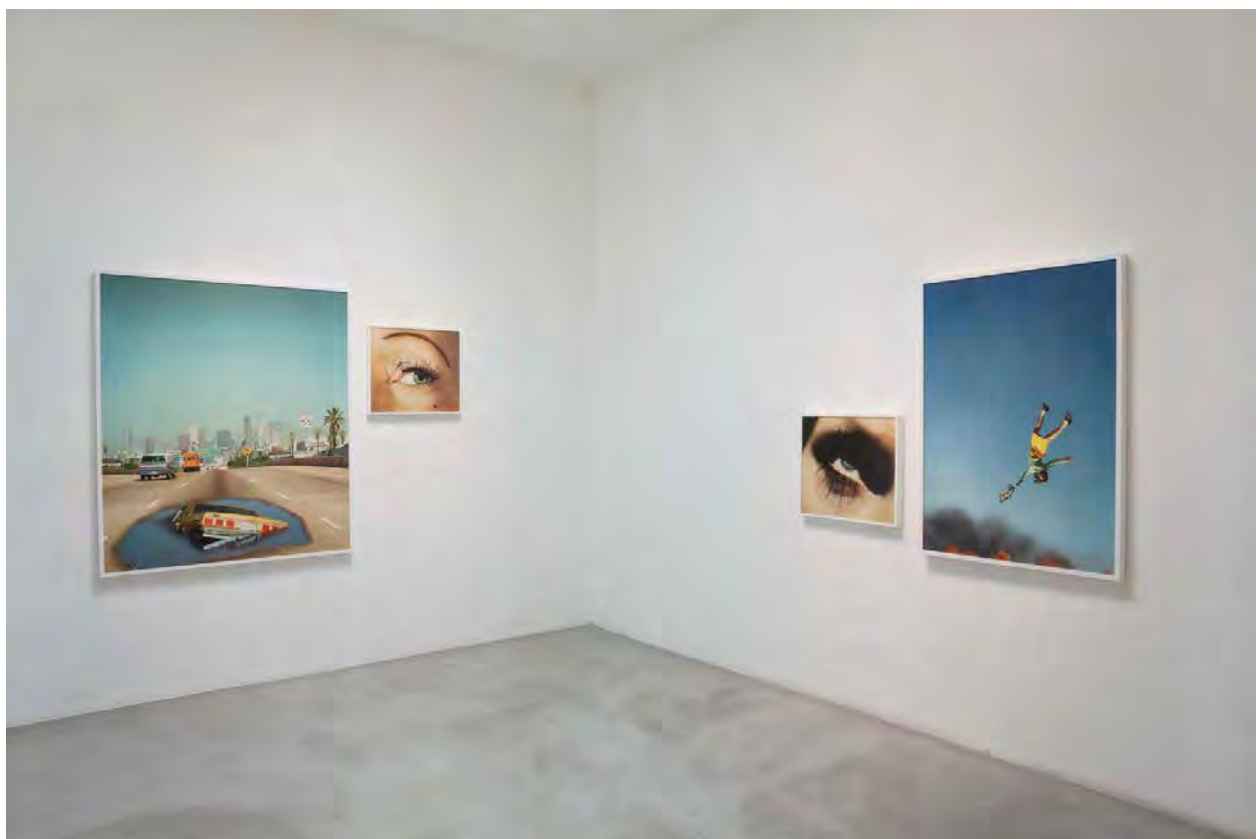
M+B



Alex Prager

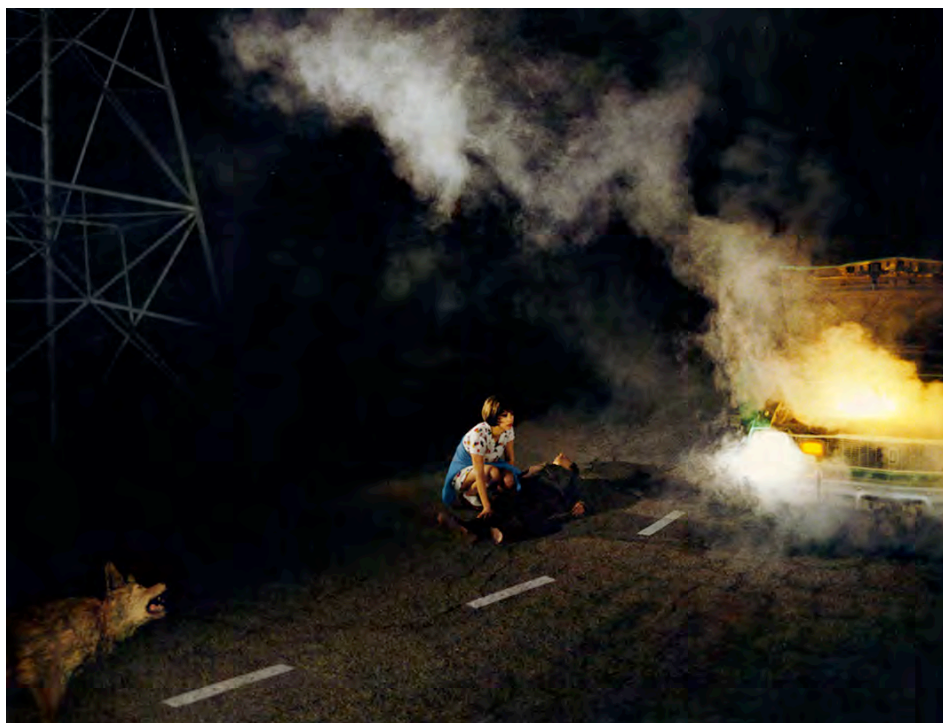
Installation View of *Compulsion*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
April 7 – May 12, 2012

M+B



Alex Prager
Installation View of *Compulsion*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
April 7 – May 12, 2012

M+B



Alex Prager

11:45 pm, Griffith Park and Eye #4 (Roadside Victim) (diptych), 2012

archival pigment print

signed, dated, titled and numbered verso

2 pieces: 48 x 63 inches (122 x 160 cm)

and 20 x 23 inches (51 x 58 cm)

edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs

M+B

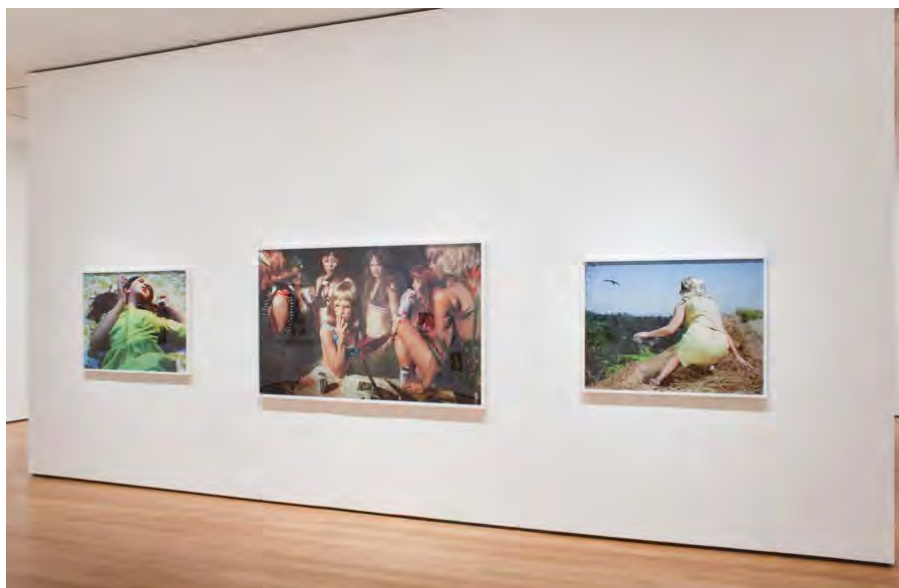


Alex Prager

3:32 pm, Coldwater Canyon and Eye #5 (Automobile Accident) (diptych), 2012
archival pigment print
signed, dated, titled and numbered verso

2 pieces: 48 x 19-4/5 inches (121.9 x 50.04 cm)
and 20 x 23 inches (50.8 x 58.4 cm)
edition of 6 plus 2 artist's proofs

M+B



Alex Prager

Installation View of *New Photography 2010*, group show at Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
September 29, 2010– January 10, 2011

M+B



Alex Prager

Irene, 2010

chromogenic print

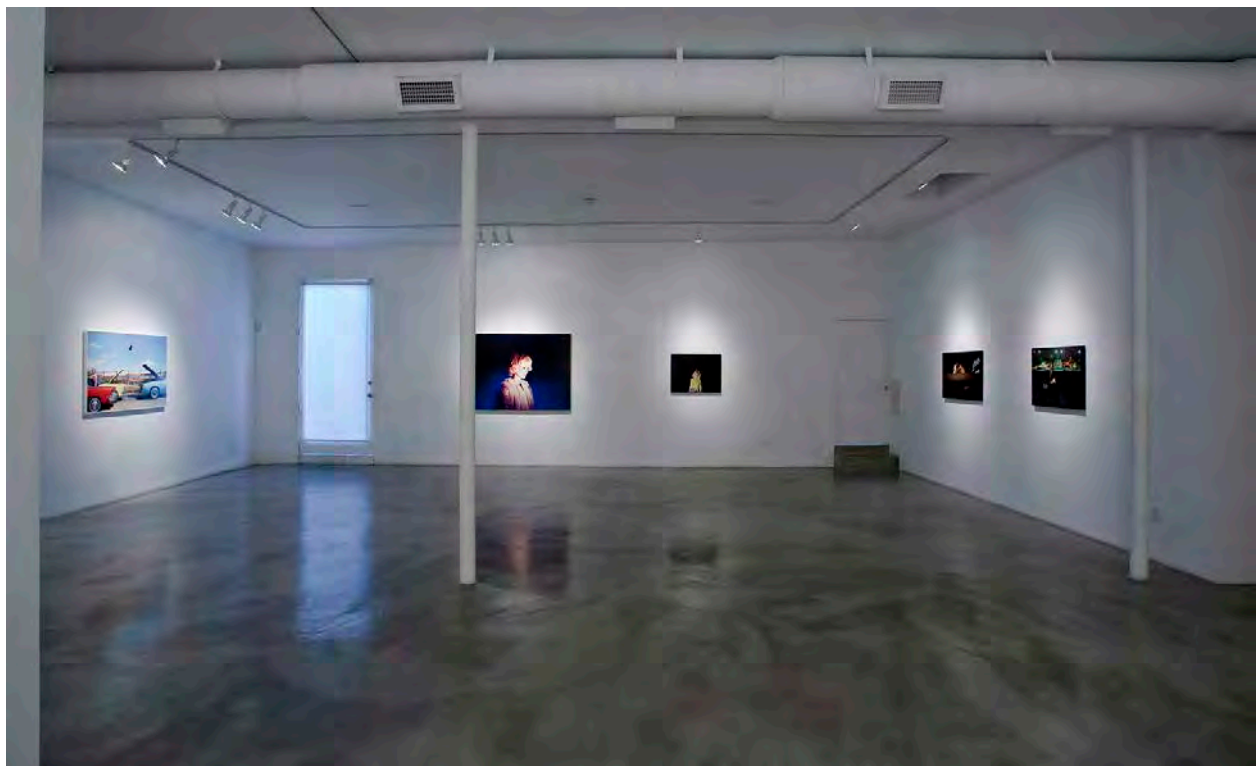
signed, dated and numbered verso

36 x 51.7 inches (91.4 x 131.3 cm)

edition of 5 plus 2 artist's proofs

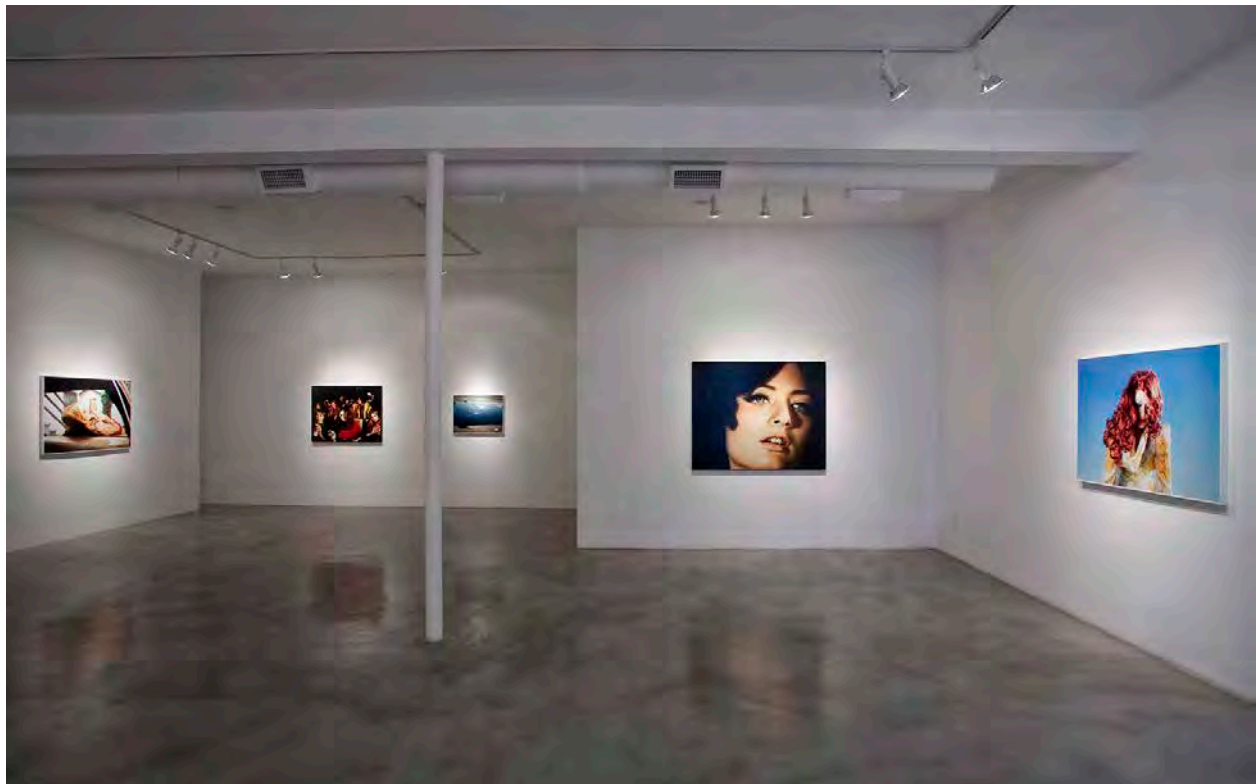
(AP.05.02.36)

M+B



Alex Prager
Installation View of *Week-End*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
January 30 – March 6, 2010

M+B



Alex Prager
Installation View of *Week-End*, solo show at M+B, Los Angeles
January 30 – March 6, 2010

M+B



Alex Prager

Amy and Michelle, 2009

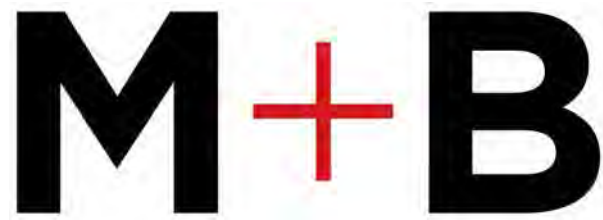
chromogenic print

signed, dated and numbered verso

24 x 36 inches (60.1 x 91.4 cm)

edition of 7 plus 2 artist's proofs

(AP.04.016.24)



ALEX PRAGER

Press and Press Releases

M+B

BLOUINARTINFO

American Alienation: Alex Prager and Pipilotti Rist in Dallas

By Craig Hubert
May 13, 2015



Alex Prager's "Despair" at Soluna Festival.

The relationship between sound and image is an essential element of film. This relationship, however has changed considerably from the early days of the art form, when the two were tethered through live performance. Watching a film today, we see a precise amalgam of sound and image. They flow in the same direction, two parts of one whole. But when a live orchestra plays music against moving pictures, even if the score is specific about the notes' placement, the two are pulled apart. Suspense is built into the process — what you're experiencing is unique to the moment, never to be exactly replicated.

Two such unique experiences were created at the Soluna Music & Arts Festival, running through May 24, which paired works by artists Alex Prager and Pipilotti Rist with live music played by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. The two performances highlighted both the differences between the two artists' approaches and the similarities in the ways they engaged with the festival's theme: Destination America.

For Prager, having the Dallas orchestra accompany three of her short films — "A Face in the Crowd" (2013), "La Petite Mort" (2012), and "Despair" (2012) — at the opening of the festival was both exhilarating and anxiety provoking. "It was my first time doing something with a live performance," says Prager. "I was really nervous, even though I knew the film and knew the orchestra was amazing, so they were not going to screw up. But it's different when you're doing something live."

According to Ali Helnwein, who composed the music for Prager's films, there was added pressure on the orchestra, since the synchrony between music and image needed to be exact to a fraction of a second. This was made more difficult by the fact that the scores — like the films themselves, which visually evoke everything from Hitchcock to Harold Lloyd — refer to classical pieces from the Golden Age of Hollywood, and the tempos shift constantly. The conductor and players needed to be on their toes.

Prager and Helnwein record the music for the films track by track, building their symphonic tapestries piecemeal. Recording with an orchestra had never been within their budget. But, says Prager, "it had been a dream since the beginning. So when somebody asked me if I wanted to show the films with a live orchestra, of course I said yes."

Prager's films are easy on the eyes, colorful and seductive. But they capture moments of dread and alienation, creating a tension between the beautiful surface and the ugliness underneath. The live soundtrack heightened this tension, with crashing waves of brass and crescendos of strings swirling around the concert hall. The result was exciting. But it was completely different from watching Prager's films as they were originally intended to be seen, in a gallery setting. We had a chance to compare the two experiences the night after the performance, when Prager screened "A Face in the Crowd" at Dallas's Goss-Michael Foundation. This was a revelation: Viewing the film in a small room, surrounded on three walls by images of crowds, you feel part of the throng of people, while also experiencing of its main character.

Appearing at the festival two days after the Prager performance, Rist's work presented challenges of a different sort. With no original score to follow, the orchestra accompanied the Swiss artist's video with "Andante for String Orchestra" by Hungarian composer Miklos Rozsa. The choice of Rozsa, who came to the United States to work on film scores after fleeing from the Nazis, complemented Prager approach to the festival's theme. Both works reflect the image of America as a place of exile and of alienation, as a destination and as the last place on a journey with nowhere else to go.

Alex Prager
March 12-May 16, 2015
407 Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street
Central, Hong Kong

#alexprager

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 12, 6-8PM



Alex Prager, *Untitled*, 2014, archival pigment print, 59 x 88.5 inches (149.9 x 224.8 cm). Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong.

Hong Kong, February 5—**Lehmann Maupin** will present **Alex Prager's** debut exhibition in Hong Kong from March 12 through May 16, 2015. Continuing her exploration of the psychological experiences of crowds and the individuals within them, Prager will exhibit five new, large-scale photographs as well as video work. **The artist will be present for an opening reception on Thursday, March 12, from 6-8PM.**

Celebrated for her meticulously constructed, theatrical, and richly cinematic images, Prager, a Los Angeles-based artist, is inspired by a wide range of influences, from popular culture, to street photography, to the cinematic history of Hollywood. The artist is also interested in the ways in which audiences perceive and experience the pervasive cultural power of Hollywood films. These references infuse Prager's works with a narrative quality, leading the viewer to speculate on the "before and after" of the moment and characters depicted in her images.

Prager's distinctive style and dialogue with Hollywood found full expression in her *Face in the Crowd* series, which debuted at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 2013 and was subsequently shown at Lehmann Maupin in New York in 2014. Prager managed large-scale sets, hundreds of extras, and a full production team to create precisely composed images of crowds. This series also includes a short film starring the American actress Elizabeth Banks. These works convey a sense of timelessness, extraordinary idiosyncratic detail, and the sometimes contradictory emotions that immersion in a crowd can produce, such as fear, camaraderie, isolation, claustrophobia, and a feeling of belonging to something larger than one's self.

In her Hong Kong exhibition, Prager further refines her examination of the psychological dynamics of crowds, focusing on feelings of isolation exaggerated by the extreme vantage points employed in these images. By creating contorted points of view, especially in the works where the viewer looks up from below at the subjects in the photographs, Prager captures moments of stillness and isolation impossible to view in reality.

Following her debut exhibition in Hong Kong, Prager will exhibit new works at the Goss Michael Foundation and at SOLUNA: International Music & Arts Festival, both in Dallas, Texas, in May 2015. Additionally, one of Prager's new photographs will be shown in Lehmann Maupin's booth (1C08) at Art Basel Hong Kong 2015.

About the Artist

Alex Prager (b. 1979) is a Los Angeles-based photographer and filmmaker. She has had a number of solo museum exhibitions including at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2014); Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (2013); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia (2013); and the FOAM Photography Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2012). Prager was also prominently featured in *New Photography 2010* at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Prager has been recognized with the FOAM Paul Huf Award (2012), among other honors. Her editorial work has been featured in prominent publications including *Garage*, *Vogue* and *W*, and her film series "Touch of Evil," commissioned by *The New York Times Magazine*, won a 2012 Emmy Award. Prager's work is represented in the collections of major museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden.

About Lehmann Maupin

Founded in 1996 by partners Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin, Lehmann Maupin has fostered the careers of a diverse group of internationally renowned artists, both emerging and established, working in multiple disciplines and across varied media. With three locations – two in New York and one in Hong Kong – the gallery represents artists from the United States, Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Known for championing artists who create groundbreaking and challenging forms of visual expression, Lehmann Maupin presents work highlighting personal investigations and individual narratives through conceptual approaches that often address such issues as gender, class, religion, history, politics, and globalism.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

Anya Gallaccio, through February 15, 2015, New York, Chrystie Street

Horizon, through March 7, 2015, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

Group show, February 28-April 12, 2015, New York, Chrystie Street and **New location: 536 West 22nd Street**

Mary Corse, April 23-June 13, 2015, New York, **New location: 536 West 22nd Street**

For more information on other Lehmann Maupin artists, please contact Graham Newhall at +1 212 2 255 2923 or visit lehmannmaupin.com.

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South China Morning Post

Exhibition: Alex Prager's crowd photos a personal GPS

By Edmund Lee
March 18, 2015



GLENDALDE FROM BENEATH.



Hollywood Park, a Los Angeles area racetrack.

Alex Prager's photographs might look like film stills from a forgotten Hollywood title half a century ago, but as she reveals at her solo exhibition in Hong Kong, her practice is much more personal than it appears.

"My work is very much about where I'm at psychologically and emotionally in my life," she says.

Prager's recent "Face in the Crowd" series consists of meticulously staged scenes of crowds, mixing the artist's friends and family with extras hired from a casting company and people she spotted in diners. Although her interest in the topic hadn't faded, she felt the urge to channel the "transitional feeling" in her life while working on her latest photos, which are featured at the current show alongside a recent video work.

"I have a lot of other projects happening right now. I just moved into a house that I'm renovating, and I have all these things going on with my family," says the 35-year-old artist.

"It felt like a very transitional time for me where things felt more like echoes of things past, with the feeling of anticipating things to come."

A Los Angeles native who decided to pursue photography after a visit to a William Eggleston exhibition, Prager began to learn her craft when "I had an overwhelming sense that I wanted to do it — now. I didn't see how the pictures in my head that I wanted to make were going to be made quickly enough if I went through school to learn everything, so I just taught myself one thing at a time."

The first photo she sold evokes the Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*, and was shot with a friend in a park near her house. Since then, Prager's portraits of women put in cinematic settings have drawn comparisons to the work of Cindy Sherman, although she confesses that whenever she's pressed for ideas, it's street photographers she turns to.

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"It was that exact thing he captured that I was attracted to," she says of Eggleston, her primary influence. "It was like juxtaposing the mundane and something very magical and life-changing and feeling very alive. The pairing of those worlds was so interesting to me and so powerful."

"William Eggleston, Bruce Gilden, Weegee, Enrique Metinides and Martin Parr: these people are capturing real life, but they're also attracted to the characters in the real people," Prager says. "I'm very influenced by that kind of documentary photography."

In her previous works, the artist has referenced films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *The Red Shoes* (1948), as well as selected works by Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard and David Lynch. Swedish director Roy Andersson, who makes absurdist comedies on the human condition with largely static tableaux, was a major inspiration for *Face in the Crowd*. "I don't try and hide my influences," says Prager, laughing.



Prager (camera in hand) sets up a shot.

Her connection with the film industry is growing deeper. Having picked up the movie camera since she was spurred on to show "the before and after" of her film still-like photos at a 2008 exhibition, she has also worked with a range of Hollywood actors, including Elizabeth Banks, Bryce Dallas Howard and, for an award-winning collaboration with *The New York Times*, Brad Pitt and George Clooney.

For now, Prager is cautiously optimistic about a future career in feature filmmaking. "I feel like it's best to just take things one day at a time," she says. "It'd interest me if the right project came along, or if I had some brilliant idea to turn into a two-hour film. Two hours is a long time. The longest film that I've done is 10 minutes."

But don't expect to spot Prager in her own photos. Unlike Sherman, she's never done that. "My sister is in almost all of them, and she and I look kind of similar, so I vicariously live in my photographs through her," she says of the painter Vanessa Prager, five years her junior.

"It's too much work. I'm there to make the picture and direct, and I can't take any time off to put the costume on and do the make-up and have somebody else behind the camera. It just doesn't feel right. I'm a control person."

She pauses for a second, and exclaims, "It's my set. I'm not going to let somebody else run it."

Lehmann Maupin, 407 Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Tuesday-Friday, 10am-7pm, Saturday, 11am-7pm. Ends on May 16. Inquiries: 2530 0025

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Alex Prager's knee-high perspective

The Californian photographer's new Hong Kong show offers a childlike view of her idiosyncratic

March 13, 2015

To say Alex Prager is a masterful photographer of crowds is to tell only half her story. In her 2013 series, *Face in the Crowd*, the 35-year-old US artist composed a series of moody, large-scale, colour group shots you might expect to find in the continuity photographs for a mid-seventies Robert Altman film, or exposures on some long-lost contact sheets of William Eggleston - an early Prager influence.

Yet there's an eerie psychological, Hitchcock-style charge to her shots. As we put it this piece last year, "the crowd of individual characters are connected by their close proximity yet, at the same time, isolated in their own private worlds."

Now, in her new series, (five large scale photographs and some video work) which just went on show at the Lehmann Maupin gallery in Hong Kong yesterday, Prager has pared back the extras, preferring instead to put together a set of nose-to-nose group discussions, viewed from a little person's perspective. At knee height, these groups seem perfectly composed yet, at the same time, somewhat sinister.

Given the outdated clothes and colour balances, Is there an element of nostalgia in here? Or does this new, infantilised world view make these lofty congregations look both more adult, and distant? As Lehmann Maupin puts it, "by creating contorted points of view, especially in the works where the viewer looks up from below at the subjects in the photographs, Prager captures moments of stillness and isolation impossible to view in reality."

Or, as *The Photography Book* puts it, "Prager's pictures are as carefully put together as any Renaissance altarpiece, but with iconography drawn from everyday life which we decipher instinctively: shades of lipstick, hairstyles, cell-phone usage."

You can get a better look by visiting Lehmann Maupin at 12 Pedder Street in Hong Kong any from now until 16 May. If you're in HK for Art Basel, do read our *Wallpaper* City Guide* recommendation; meanwhile, for more from Prager's perspective read our interview, and for greater insight into her place within photography, buy a copy of *The Photography Book* our newly updated canonical overview.



Installation view, Lehmann Maupin, Hong Kong
March 12 – May 16, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong



Alex Prager
Burbank, 2014
archival pigment print
59 x 78.58 inches 149.9 x 199.6 cm
Edition of 6
Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong

NGV NEWS

ngv
National
Gallery of
Victoria

30 October 2014

Alex Prager

NGV International | 14 November 2014 – 19 April 2015 | Free entry



Referencing the heightened drama and saturated colours of classic Hollywood cinema, self-taught Los Angeles-based artist Alex Prager will present her elaborately conceived photographs and films at the National Gallery of Victoria from 14 November. The self-titled exhibition is Prager's first solo show in Australia, and surveys her practice from the *Polyester* series, 2007, to her most recent body of work, *Face in the Crowd*, 2013.

Prager's intensely emotive and technicolour scenes feature a strangely familiar cast of characters; predominantly women, immaculately groomed and wearing wigs, fake eyelashes and adorned in retro fashion, who resemble actors of mid twentieth-century Hollywood. Characterised by the use of constructed sets, dramatic lighting, costumes and actors, and packed with emotion and human melodrama, her work openly references the aesthetics of artists and filmmakers including Alfred Hitchcock, Cindy Sherman and David Lynch.

-continues-

NGV NEWS

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Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV, said, 'We are delighted to present Alex Prager's evocative film and photography as part of the NGV's contemporary focus over summer. We have acquired three major works by Prager, including her acclaimed three-channel video *Face in the Crowd*, 2013, which was exhibited to much acclaim at the prestigious Art Basel art fair this year. These new acquisitions will be shown alongside twenty two other major works from the past seven years of Prager's prolific career.'

Initially working as a photographer, in 2010 Prager created her first short film, *Despair*, which the artist spoke of as being a 'full-sensory version' of her photographs. Complete with soaring string-based soundtrack, a large cast of characters and characteristically lurid colour scheme, it depicts a red-headed heroine, played by Bryce Dallas Howard, who reacts to a clearly distressing phone conversation by propelling herself out of an apartment window.

Prager's recent series *Face in the Crowd*, 2013, and accompanying three-channel video, examine the psychology of crowd behaviour. The series of photographs, staged to resemble specific sites frequented by Prager including Washington Square Park in New York, beaches, train stations, movie theatres and airports, were orchestrated on a Hollywood sound stage, and each participant's movements and appearance meticulously directed to create a complex tableaux of fascinating characters. The film sees a female protagonist, played by actress Elizabeth Banks, move in and out of a busy crowd, appearing at times curious about the throngs of people and, at other moments, tense and overwhelmed.

Born in Los Angeles in 1979, Alex Prager has exhibited at museums including The Museum of Modern Art in New York, The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and Foam Museum in Amsterdam. She has also completed fashion editorial work for publications such as *Vogue* and *W Magazine*, and her short film *Touch of Evil*, commissioned by *The New York Times Magazine* and starring celebrity icons Brad Pitt, George Clooney and Kirsten Dunst, won a 2012 Emmy Award.

Alex Prager will present a free artist talk on Saturday 15 November, 1.30pm, to discuss her first exhibition in Australia. Visit ngv.vic.gov.au further information.

A free *Alex Prager* ebook has been produced in association with the artist, featuring a curatorial essay, biography and multimedia elements including images and video. It will be available from the NGV website from 12 November.

Alex Prager will be on display at NGV International from 14 November 2014 to 19 April 2015. Open 10am–5pm, closed Tuesdays. Free entry.

-ends-

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Image caption:

Alex Prager

American 1979–

Film still 2010

from the *Despair* series 2010

pigment print

40.6 x 50.8 cm

Collection of Jeff Vespa, Los Angeles

© Alex Prager, courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong





BROADSHEET

Alex Prager's Hollywood Redux

By Katya Wachtel
December 3, 2014

With images that meld street photography with the retro glamour of 1960s cinema and a streak of film noir, the young LA-based photographer has grabbed the world's attention.

During a visit to the Getty Museum in 2001, Alex Prager first encountered the work of William Eggleston, the American photographer who pioneered the use of colour photography in the 1960s with his sublime images of quotidian, mundane scenes. The exhibition inspired Prager to buy a camera and darkroom equipment and teach herself to shoot. Eventually Prager's own photos would be exhibited at the Getty. And, as Eggleston's were, her images are now part of the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Prager produces photography and film in high definition, high contrast and high saturation, constructing elaborate and highly stylised scenes that meld the glamour and allure of 1960s Hollywood with the tension and menace of a film noir plot. Her vivid stills feature retro heroines and femme fatales in freeze-framed moments of cinematic melodrama, and owe as much to the street photography of Philip-Lorca diCorcia as the surrealist dreamscapes of David Lynch and the fashion editorial of Guy Bourdin.

Her short films – also laboriously conceived and staged – are set to original and rousing classical music scores (recorded with a live orchestra) or narrated by movie stars such as Gary Oldman. Asked by exhibition attendees several years ago about what had happened to the characters in her photos before or after that moment (“knowing full-well these were fictitious scenes,” she says), her video work is a response to that question. “I looked at film as still images lined up, and moving the viewfinder a little bit to the left and a little bit to the right,” she says. “I was really trying to show these extra moments on either side.”

Prager's fantastical still and moving works are currently on show in the artist's first solo exhibition in Australia, which runs at the NGV until April 19.

Friendly and softly spoken with a Californian accent, Prager has sandy blonde hair, dark slate-blue eyes and strong cheekbones. While in her youth she admits to having worn the type of hot pink, retro three-piece suit you might see in one of her photos, today Prager's look is minimalist and urbane – on the day of our interview she's dressed in a black t-shirt, black pants and heeled black boots. She has a girlish quality, but there's also something enigmatic and seductive about her.

Born in 1979 in Los Feliz in LA, Prager left high school at 14 and spent her youth living between LA, Tampa in Florida and Lucerne in Switzerland. Today she lives in Silver Lake, a residential neighbourhood in central LA where Walt Disney built his first film studio, and which, now gentrified, has become home to many of the city's young artists and creatives.

“The few times I shoot in other cities I'm always trying to make it look like California, specifically Southern California, and more specifically Silver Lake,” Prager says. “Most of these pictures were taken within a 20-block radius from where I was born and currently live.”



Portrait of Alex Prager by Jeff Vespa © 2013

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Alex Prager
Crowd #9 (Sunset Five) 2013 pigment print
153.7 x 235.4 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Bowness Family Fund for
Contemporary Photography, 2014 2014.105
© Courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong



Alex Prager
American 1979— Crowd #2 (Emma) 2012
pigment print
142.0 x 151.0 cm
Collection of Dr Clinton Ng, Sydney
© Alex Prager, courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York

Home to Hollywood and known for its perennially cerulean sky, LA has an inherently cinematic nature that has always consumed Prager's eye.

"When you walk around LA everything can look very grand and because of the backdrop of the blue sky, it gives you the impression that your dreams can come true there," she says. "You don't have to do anything in Photoshop to get the skies to look that perfect – that mix of cyan and perfect puffy, white clouds. But there is an underbelly of seediness and this really dark tone that you pick up in the city the second you start paying attention."

That dichotomy is Prager's enduring muse; her meticulously staged portrayals of women on the precipice – emotionally and physically – look beautiful but feel sinister.

Face in the Crowd (the NGV's newly acquired filmic work) and its associated photographs feel just like that. Shot over four days on an LA soundstage, the series' cinematic lighting, theatrical costumes and celebrity leading lady (30 Rock's Elizabeth Banks) typify Prager's nostalgic Hollywood aesthetic. But unlike her earlier photo series, with their unmistakably Californian texture, these compositions (featuring airports and street crossings and cinemas and beaches) are set in Anytown, USA. Prager's throngs of people could as easily be in Dallas as Des Moines or Chicago.

Prager's star rose significantly after she was included in the New Photography exhibition at MoMA in 2010 – public speaking requests and engagements poured in. Face in the Crowd is her reflection on the places and people she encountered on her travels and the extreme emotions she experienced at the time. She wanted to explore how a person can feel disconnected while seemingly connecting with others, and vice versa. "Depending on what kind of mood I was in that day or where I was going, I could feel lonelier than ever," she says. "Then there was the flipside of that, where if I was in a more curious mood, then I wouldn't even see that sea of strangers – it would just be about each individual and each aspect of their body and their characteristics and their clothing and where they were going that day." While Prager's narratives are clearly fictional, her work represents a distillation of some genuine emotion or feeling – like fear or longing or disconnectedness or love – she herself has experienced. "I'm interested in taking pictures with an honesty in them," she says. "I'm not going to take pictures all about men because I just don't know enough about the inside, secret compartments of a man's heart, but I know all about that from a woman's point of view."

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She's also devoted to maintaining a material honesty despite the artifice of her creations. "Every single picture that I take has real components shot in camera, on film. There's nothing that's created in Photoshop that wasn't actually there," she says to an audience who has come to hear her speak at the NGV before our interview. To prove the point she gestures to a 2009 photo called Molly, in which a young blonde woman is standing at the top of a hill, her blue dress swept up by a gust of wind to reveal white underwear as she peers toward something or someone out of the frame, and a piece of rope dangles in the upper-right corner.

"We hiked with those two bicycles and the rope and the girl in that little dress. It was a 45-minute hike up to the top of Griffith Park. And this one here, with the car," she says, referring to an image from the same series, called Cathy, "I bought a car and took the engine out of it and had scuba diver stuntmen holding the car in that twisted position under water while I shot the girl."

The image depicts a naked woman swimming in an expanse of inky blue water, while an old yellow Volvo sinks into the depths beside her.

"All day we were trying to get the car just to the right twist. For 10 hours we were trying to get that position, the car kept flipping and finally in the last 10 minutes of the time I had the permit for in this body of water we finally got the car to stay for a few minutes and the girl was able to get in the water – while it was flipping it was too dangerous."

It's a story that perfectly sums up Prager's fastidiousness. Her pictures are sometimes compared to those by Cindy Sherman, an artist who includes her own image in every single photographic work. The closest Prager gets to that is including her sister Vanessa in each series, but she has no intention of putting herself in the frame. "I need to direct," she says. "I'd feel anxious not being in control."

Alex Prager runs until April 19 2015 at the NGV International. Admission is free.

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theguardian

Alex Prager's Hollywood: glamour, menace and heroines dying horrible deaths

The Los Angeles artist talks about her first solo exhibition in Australia, layering lies over truth and hiding her sister in her work

By Alexandra Spring
November 20, 2014

If you're a certain person with a certain look having lunch in a cafe in Hollywood, don't be surprised if an Anita Pallenberg-lookalike with a valley girl accent and a broad smile asks for your phone number.

Chances are, it'll be Alex Prager. The Los Angeles-based artist is often on the lookout for those with a distinctive look to include in her hyper-colour, hyper-stylised photographs and short films. Recently she spotted a young French boy having lunch with his mother. "I knew that if I left the cafe before asking him to be in the film that I would regret it forever because he looked so cool. Now he's one of my go-to characters."

Prager's first Australian solo exhibition has just opened at the National Gallery of Victoria. With intricate staging, meticulous attention to detail and inescapable creepiness, her work is reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock or David Lynch, her glamorous noir-esque heroines dying horrible deaths by drowning, falling out of windows or suffering excruciating loneliness.



Eve (2008) by Alex Prager, part of the National Gallery of Victoria exhibition

The NGV exhibition includes 25 major works, including three newly acquired by the gallery. For Prager, it's almost a mini-retrospective, spanning her early photographs from 2008 right through to her latest series *Face in the Crowd*, which was exhibited at Art Basel art fair last year. Seeing it all together, she can appreciate the evolution of her work and some of the themes she's explored. "For me, as an artist, [it's about] trying to keep myself challenged and evolving. It's showing me that I am moving forward so that part is good."

It's a long way from her first show in an LA hair salon in 2001. The self-taught Prager picked up a camera in her early 20s after seeing an exhibition of the US photographer William Eggleston's work. She started with street photography but quickly moved to styling her friends in wigs and vintage Hollywood starlet getups and shooting them.

Growing up in Hollywood meant artifice and glamour have always been part of Prager's world and heightened drama often features in her work. "People can be murdered and there can be all kinds of violence and horrible seedy things going underneath all that glamour and people will still watch it and love it."

She uses saturated colour for the same reason. "I thought it added this strange lie on top of the truth that I thought was just a little bit creepier and more interesting to work with. When it's over the top with saturation and blue skies and bright red lips, over-the-top Kodachrome, I think it plays into our nostalgia and our familiarity ... but do we really know what's going in that picture? It's always that thing that throws you off balance."

Making short films was a natural progression, Prager says, after she noticed audiences asking for the backstory to the images. Video works including *Sunday* (2010) and *Despair* (2010) got plenty of attention and in 2012 she made an Emmy award-winning series of short films with the New York Times entitled *Touch of Evil* featuring Ryan Gosling, Jessica Chastain, Rooney Mara and others.

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Crowd #9 (Sunset Five) 2013

Face In the Crowd is her most ambitious series, including large-scale photographs of staged crowd scenes and an immersive video installation.

It was an epic shoot in every way, says Prager, with 350 extras, 150 crew members, four rotating sets and a tight schedule across four days. She directed the sea of extras by giving some specific characters, some photographic references and asking others to improvise. "You really feel like you are not quite sure what world you are in, if it's real or if it's fake and I think that's something we can relate to in the world that we are living in right now."

The video installation stars the actor Elizabeth Banks wading through unrelenting crowds. Although her work often centres on a heroine, Prager says it's not about women as much as about emotions she's keen to explore. Using female characters is her way of being honest about a topic, she says, because she's female.

"I don't know how men feel in the same way that I know how a woman feels. The emotional aspect is so important to me, that it rings true and that it's honest. On top of it, you can put all the glamour and the stylisation and the facade of everything else, but underneath it, there has to be something real, otherwise I just don't think I would be able to look at it; I don't think it would feel right to me."

The artist adds a dose of reality by including family and friends in the shoots. She laughingly dubs her sister, the artist Vanessa Prager, her "Waldo" as she appears in all her work. "All these strangers walking around me, all in costumes, who knows who anyone is? Then I see my sister in there, and I know exactly who she is because we're so close – it puts that bit of reality into the pictures."

Her next exhibition will be in Hong Kong at Lehmann Maupin in March, then she'll begin on new work. Surely she'll follow her Hitchcockian and Lynchian influences and make a feature film soon? "I haven't even done a film with dialogue yet so I don't know that that's the obvious next step," she says with a laugh.

But it might be on the cards: "If you had asked me 10 years ago if I was going to do even a short film, I would have probably said no, so who knows what is going to happen in the future. I'm kind of open for anything at this point."

• Alex Prager runs from 14 November to 19 April at the National Gallery of Victoria

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The Washington Post

'Total Art': A new vision of videos at National Museum of Women in the Arts

June 20, 2014

By Rebecca Ritzel

Kathryn Wat was never a huge fan of video art exhibits, until she was asked to curate one.

As chief curator of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Wat has seen many video art installations in her travels, and her chief complaint is that the clips are often mind-numbingly long. Her second is that after each reel finally ends, viewers stumble along in the dark until they reach the next glowing screen.

"I really don't like it when a video exhibit feels like it's just a series of darkened rooms," Wat said. And as to the long, drawn-out clip problem, she added, "I have curated this exhibit to suit my own attention span."



"La Petite Mort", Alex Prager

The result is the landmark exhibit "Total Art: Contemporary Video," which opened earlier this month at the museum in Northwest Washington. It is the museum's first all-video exhibit, and an occasion that marks the unveiling of several new acquisitions.

Going all-video also allows for a thematic shift. Some paintings and sculptures in the museum's collection date back to the 1500s, but for 400 years, the story behind most artwork by women is one of overcoming obstacles. Women would struggle to get an education, and then to find clients. That is not the case with video.

"Women have been involved with mechanically produced images from the very beginning — from the 1960s in the case of video art," Wat said. "I was really excited to tell a slightly different narrative, and to focus not on women overcoming, but on women's artistic vision, and all the awesome things that they've been doing."

With 10 carefully chosen installations, Wat has been able to represent artists from eight countries and feature works created over a span of 34 years. Best of all, "You can get in and out of here in about an hour and you'll have seen everything," Wat said.

The entrance to the exhibit is marked by a rotating neon searchlight that splashes "Total Art!" on the gallery walls. The cheeky greeting implies, correctly, that not every work will be a contemplative downer. Patrons who start chronologically begin in a room featuring Dara Birnbaum's "Technology/Transformation" (1978/1979), which is essentially a series of looped clips from the TV show "Wonder Woman." Watching Lynda Carter whirl around on repeat and trade a prim suit for spandex and golden manacles serves as a reminder that what was supposedly empowering about Wonder Woman was actually pretty silly.

"Many of the first videos were feminist in focus," Wat said. "The Birnbaum certainly is. Enough time has passed so now it's just full-on retro. It's just awesome. It's fun, and funny, and everyone is just in on the joke."

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The next oldest work in the exhibit is from 1996, and it's a trippy, space-age video of a Japanese model (who is also the artist, Mariko Mori) singing in an airport and dressed like she is en route to the fan convention Comic-Con. Starring in their own works has long been a calling card for video artists. In addition to Mori's selfie-as-a-cyborg, "Total Art" features a panned-camera, body-length shot of Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist called "Blauer Leibesbreif" ("Blue Bodily Letter"). The artist lies naked on a forest floor, with rhinestones embedded in her mouth and pubic hair. More modest, but also more politically charged, are the self-portrait videos of Kenyan-German artist Ingrid Mwangi, who arranges her dreads over her face and grunts like an animal in her discomfiting installation called "Neger Don't Call Me."

Most of the remaining artists in "Total Art" were more interested in setting scenes rather than starring in them, and none created a more elaborate tableau than English artist Eve Sussman. To film "89 Seconds at Alcázar," she hired 11 actors (and a dog) to recreate Diego Velázquez's circa 1656 masterpiece "Las Meninas." The 10-minute video culminates with the costumed actors assuming the positions in the painting, with a young actress playing the Infanta Margarita at the center. And if the dwarf off to the right looks familiar ...

"That's Peter Dinklage. From 'Elf,'" Wat said. Dinklage also stars in the TV series "Game of Thrones" on HBO.

The figures in Israeli artist Michal Rovner's "Data Zone, Cultures Table #3" are all anonymous. As viewed through five petri dishes positioned on top of computer monitors beneath a table, miniscule men dash back and forth, forming masses, patterns and a Star of David. Rovner started the project by filming a group of people, then edited the footage to create digital flashmobs. In Wat's estimation, Rovner's work required more manipulation than any other installation in "Total Art."

"Video art technology is improving, which enables artists to express things that are more seamless," Rovner said in an e-mail sent from Israel. "It's easier now to stretch the image in ways you couldn't before."

Rovner also works extensively with lighting. She said she doesn't identify as a video artist, but as an artist who works in multiple mediums. The same is true for Alex Prager, a 30-something California artist who may be better known as a photographer. If you missed her "Face in the Crowd" exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery of Art last year, "Total Art" includes a Prager film that Wat thinks represents the future of film-as-art.

"La Petite Mort" is a six-minute high-def odyssey depicting an Anna Karenina-esque tragedy. The French actress Judith Godrèche stars as a 1960s mod wearing heavy mascara and pink lipstick that clashes with her coral blouse. She dives into a pond, then emerges with a perfectly dry bouffant. A crowd that looks straight out of Norman Rockwell painting stares at her, frowning.

"You can tell that there's something just a little bit off about everything," Wat says, and her curatorial fellow, Rachel Gustafson, jumps in to coin the term "Awkward Americana." As the film ends, the camera spirals up into the sky, and a familiar voice chimes in with some lines about death and transcendent love and meeting God. That's the English actor Gary Oldman, who is well known for playing villains.

"We have famous people in our exhibit," jokes Gustafson, "There's Lynda Carter and Peter Dinklage and Gary Oldman."

"Total Art: Contemporary Video" showcases women artists. Through Oct. 12. National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1250 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 202-783-5000

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HUFFPOST ARTS

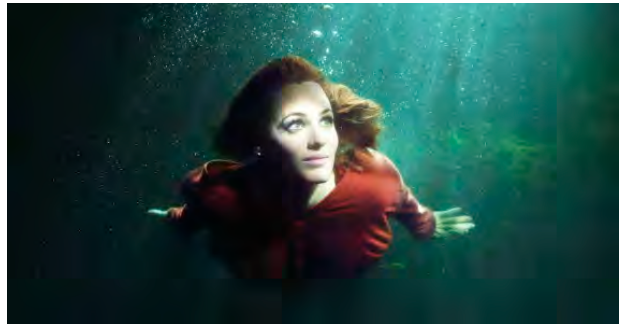
10 Radical Women Video Artists You Should Know

June 3, 2014

By Priscilla Frank

In the 1960s and '70s, artists began focusing their attention on the possibilities of the moving image through video art.

Some captured and later distorted documentation of historic events, while others explored the limits of the newly employed medium -- the guidelines of the ever-evolving technique was anything but fixed. In a somewhat rare occurrence for the sadly male-centric history of art, woman artists were pioneers of video art from the very beginning. While the histories of painting and sculpture often omit the female forces from the books, the chronological lateness of video art made way for a far greater female influence.



Alex Prager, *La Petite Mort*

Honoring the unarguable influence of women in video art, the National Museum of Women in the Arts has created an exhibition dedicated to the radical bodies without which video art would never have been the same. Dubbed "Total Art: Contemporary Video," the exhibition chronicles women artists from the 1960s to present day, whose subject matter ranges from surreal to political to confessional and everything in between.

"I think there is a playfulness to video," featured artist Janaina Tschäpe explained to The Huffington Post, "of inventing things on the spot. Video has a freedom in that you can travel anywhere. You don't need material or props, really. You can invent things on the spot with whatever is given to you."

Tschäpe also expressed the importance of all-women exhibitions. "During art academy there was all this talk like, we're all the same. But most of the professors at the academy were male. Kiki Smith and Marina Abramovic came as guest professors, but all of the permanent professors were male. In the '90s I grew up thinking we're all the same and then figured out that's not really true. We do have to fight a little more to have the same exposure. We have to be more there, to really want it. In a perfect universe everything would be equal but it's not. We want to make the younger generation aware that it's not the same for us."

Below, you'll see 10 women artists whose vision, strength and style didn't just contribute to a burgeoning medium, but helped to define it. Behold, some of the most influential women in video art.

1. Janaina Tschäpe explores themes of sex, death, nature, myth and transformation using her body as a vehicle. Her videos, at once organic, fluid and otherworldly, offer a space from which daydreaming can begin.

2. Dara Birnbaum (born 1946, New York) investigates televised media and how its content is edited and broadcasted. From creating unexpected avant-garde remixes of "Laverne and Shirley" to challenging why shows are edited as they are, Birnbaum is a critic whose influential works are still being unpacked.

3. Kimsooja (born 1957, Daegu, South Korea) uses video, site-specific installation and performance to navigate the many metaphorical implications of textiles and sewing, and their relationship to cultural identity, isolation and "inner structure." Much of her work features the physical act of sewing with a needle or, in other cases, Kimsooja uses her own body to symbolize a needle.

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La Petite Mort

4. Mariko Mori (born 1967, Tokyo, Japan) stars in futuristic videos that reveal the interconnectedness of all things. Mori appears in the works as a sort of alien, cyber-fantasy girl, and yet her work is more spiritual and feminist than anything else. Incorporating influences from Manga to ancient Japanese texts, Mori explores the many intersections of art, technology and everything in between.

5. Mwangi Hutter is the combined identity of Ingrid Mwangi (born 1975, Nairobi, Kenya) and her husband Robert Hutter, who have been in a collaborative partnership for years. The two, who consider their practice inseparable, aim to address personal or societal wounds with their work and seek to heal them through art.

6. Alex Prager (born 1979, Los Angeles) crafts stylish films in the style of retro Hollywood that, despite their nostalgic feel, can't be pinpointed to any particular time or place. Her mysterious clips often seem to linger before or after the cinematic climax, rather than in it.

7. Pipilotti Rist (born 1962, Rheintal, Switzerland) disrupts the female objectification typical of both Hollywood and art history, creating short and color-drenched works that are as sexual as they are strange.

8. Michal Rovner (born 1957, Tel Aviv, Israel) records real and staged scenarios and subsequently uses software to under- or overexpose them, mutate the color palette, and breakdown the image into something abstract and unrecognizable. Her work, not overtly political, takes conflicts and tensions and teases the reality out of them, leaving behind something altogether fuzzy.

9. Margaret Salmon (born 1975, New York) toys with cinematic tradition in her work, from post-war realist film to French cinéma vérité. Shooting all her pieces on her own without a crew or assistance, Salmon explores the dramatic underbellies of seemingly normal lives, with the help of some intensely sensitive soundtracks, which she also creates.

10. Eve Sussman (born 1961, London) formed the Rufus Corporation, an ensemble of performers, artists, and musicians, in 2003, creating a reimagining of Diego Velázquez's "Las Meninas." With her team, Sussman recreates well-known masterpieces as videos, and sometimes musicals.

"Total Art" will show from June 6 until October 12, 2014 at National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC.

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american PHOTO

Interview: Alex Prager's Nod to the Golden Era of Film

Alex Prager's images look like stills pulled right from a 1950's Hollywood film

May 22, 2014

By Marc Erwin Babej

You've had an unusual beginning in photography; one could even say you stumbled into it. How did you discover photography for yourself?

I certainly don't have the classical school background. I was 20 when I realized that if I didn't choose something to choose my energy and passion into, I'd be doing office jobs every day of my life. I was working as a receptionist at the time. So I started going to museums and art shows, and wanted to see if I could draw or paint. When I was 21, I came across the Eggleston exhibit at the Getty Museum. Within one week, I bought a used Nikon N90-S and equipment on EBay – from a lady who was divorcing her husband and getting rid of his stuff. It cost \$80 and came with a manual on how to use darkroom equipment.

There's a long way between a first camera and a career in art photography.

I was really excited about the pictures I was taking. Now, I'm mortified at them. I was developing pictures at night in the darkroom until 3 or 4 a.m. Above all, I felt like a picture wasn't totally done until I had an audience to react to it. I still feel that way



Hazelwood #2, 2014

© Alex Prager

How did they react, and who we're "they"?

At the time, I was living in an apartment building in Korea Town. I used to hang up pictures in the laundry room and in the morning I would see which pictures were gone. That way, I could see what people liked.

When I started showing in galleries, people would come up to me and tell me what they were feeling about the work. People were telling me that the subjects reminded them of people they knew, that images were reminding them of scenes from movies. I was trying to give people something that felt vaguely familiar to them?

Why?

It's the same way I use color to get people's attention, and then to have them discover something underneath that's not as cheery.

Your images are often described as having a filmic quality

I try to create a slight exaggeration of real life – something that is more intense and dramatic. A heightened representation of real life, like a parallel universe. Much of the filmic feel in a still photo comes from the lighting: Your lighting is really cinematic, so is Gregory Crewdson's and so is mine. Your work reminds me of the movie *Wings of Desire*: it has that glow to it, but in dilapidated old scenes, and the subjects look like angels.

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Crowd #2 (Emma), 2012"
© Alex Prager



"Crowd #7 (Bob Hope Airport)", 2013
© Alex Prager

Which kind of movies inspire your lighting?

I love the lighting from Hollywood movies of the Golden Era, from the movies of the 1920s until the 50s. With that kind of lighting, anything can happen. It draws you in. There can be a lot of dark things happening – things that might not have been pleasant to watch, but the lighting aestheticizes them and makes watching the movie irresistible.

Orson Welles once said: "'I passionately hate the idea of being with it; I think an artist has always to be out of step with his time.'" I want to communicate to the culture that I'm part of and live in. I want to be half a step ahead, but never out of step. It's important to me to connect with people who are around me. I don't want to die and 150 years later people go: "Alex Prager... now I get it!"

...Recognition in your own lifetime?

Not really. It's more about having a place to connect. Because maybe then you can change some ideas about culture a tiny bit, or to inspire people to do things that they wouldn't have done before.

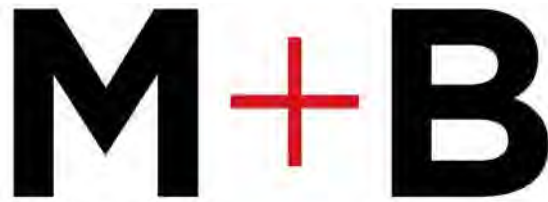
What kind of ideas?

For one, "what is beauty?" It's not so much about answering the question as about asking it –and showing a variety of answers. I find it really beautiful to have a colorful crowd with interesting faces, with unique noses, ears and fingers. Some people might find a six foot tall Brazilian model with a perfect ass beautiful. But when something is perfect, you look away because you feel you've seen it before. I'm more interested in things that are off, unique and strange.

Another idea I'm interested in is the role of a female is in our culture. When I first started to have the female as heroine it was more because I'm a woman and I knew it better. But when people reacted to me being a woman shooting women, in my first series Polyester and The Valley, I became aware of women in our culture as a theme.

Your recent work focuses on crowds.

Crowds fascinate me. Above all, what they see or don't see about their lives – what they connect with, or don't connect with. The crowds in my images include a range of people: My sister, who is also my best friend, is in all my pictures; but there are also strangers I found on the street and people I find through casting companies. The pictures were created in a staged setting, but after a while, things became real. People start acting differently once they enter the crowd – because they're people after all, and they connect or not. That's when unexpected things start to happen.



You almost sound like a biologist looking through a microscope

I am detached in that I use people whom I don't know as props. But there are also people I know, my sister and very good friends. That's very important. I'm not trying to reenact crowd scenes, but I'm trying to show the separation and disconnect between people. I'm very aware of the energy that surrounds my sister and me when we're shooting, and that energy influences the reactions of others. Insofar as there's an experiment going on, we're all part of it.

What are you working on now?

It's a secret. I feel when you have an idea and you tell someone before you've made it, you release some of the energy you have in it. You get a reaction, maybe even an acknowledgment. It lets the air out of the balloon a bit.

So, as much as you like the reactions to the images, you actively avoid reactions at the concept stage?

Yes. Because, in my view, I haven't made anything yet. The concept, after all, is not a thing, but just an idea about a thing. And as a visual artist, the only thing that really counts for me is an image that I can show people.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



ALEX PRAGER FACE IN THE CROWD

January 25 – March 8, 2014

Opening Reception

Saturday, January 25, 2014 from 6 to 8 pm

M+B is pleased to announce *Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd*, an exhibition featuring new large-scale color photographs of elaborately-staged crowd scenes and a film by the same name that explore the notion of the individual within the masses, the boundary between public and private space and the psychological complexities of human interaction. This body of work was created specifically for Prager's first major solo museum exhibition in the United States at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. that opened in November 2013. *Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd* will run at M+B from January 25 to March 8, 2014, with an opening reception on Saturday, January 25 from 6 to 8 pm.

For ten years, Prager has staged imaginary scenes for her camera—dream worlds in Technicolor, rife with tension and melodramatic fictions. Deftly blending archetypes from post-war America, her images have re-enacted and burlesqued media portrayals of women, drawing from classic Hollywood movies, fashion advertising and icons of documentary photography. *Face in the Crowd* expands on her tradition, but in her most ambitious and complex way to date. Blurring the line between fiction and reality, Prager directed the actions of hundreds of costumed actors on specially constructed sets creating congested public spaces including an airport terminal, a City Hall lobby, a beach and the Sunset 5 movie theatre. Densely detailed and shot from seemingly impossible vantage points, the work enacts psychological narratives of private and public revelation, repulsion, fear, personal safety and the desire for basic human interaction.

"I'm fascinated by the experience of being involved in other people's lives accidentally," Prager said, noting that her work has been influenced by time spent in busy cities such as New York and London. "Crowds have always been an interest of mine. It may look like a sea of people, but there are so many interesting stories, all colliding silently."

The stories of the various characters within these crowds culminate in a new film, featuring actress Elizabeth Banks. Together, the film and the photographs uphold a portrait of the individual within the complexity of the larger crowd. Prager's focus on this dynamic can be traced to specific influences: silent films like Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*; photographers Martin Parr, Garry Winogrand, Bruce Gilden and Helen Levitt; the darkness and the humor from Roy Andersson's film *Songs from the Second Floor*; and the well-known children's books *Where's Waldo?* Throughout *Face in the Crowd*, each character maintains their own agency within their cinematic circumstances. In exploring the notion of identity and the performative aspects of public life, Prager has created a universe where the crowd that gathers is the true spectacle.

Alex Prager (b. 1979, Los Angeles) is a self-taught photographer and filmmaker who was inspired to take up photography after seeing the color images of William Eggleston. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and institutions worldwide, most prominently in *Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd* at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 2013 (Washington, D.C.), *Alex Prager: Mise-en-scène* at SCAD Museum of Art in 2013 (Savannah, GA), *Alex Prager: Compulsion* at FOAM Museum in 2012 (Amsterdam) and the *New Photography 2010* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (New York). Major awards include the Paul Huf FOAM Award in 2012, the London Photography Award in 2006, and Prager's short film *Touch of Evil*, commissioned by *The New York Times Magazine*, garnered her a 2012 Emmy Award. Prager's work is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, North Carolina Museum of Art, Cincinnati Art Museum, Moderna Museet (Stockholm), Kunsthaus Zurich, among others. Alex Prager lives and works in Los Angeles.

Location:

M+B, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069

Show Title:

Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd

Exhibition Dates:

January 25 – March 8, 2014

Opening Reception:

Saturday, January 25, 6 – 8pm

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

For more information, please contact Alexandra Wetzel at **M+B** at (310) 550-0050 or alexandra@mbart.com.

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GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART + DESIGN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 21, 2013

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CORCORAN PRESENTS *ALEX PRAGER: FACE IN THE CROWD*
Los Angeles artist's first solo museum exhibition in the United States
November 23, 2013–March 9, 2014



WASHINGTON, D.C.—On November 23, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design** opens *Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd*, an exhibition of forty photographs and four films by the renowned Los Angeles artist. For 10 years, Prager has staged imaginary scenes for her camera—dream worlds in Technicolor, rife with tension and melodramatic fictions. Deftly blending archetypes from post-war America, her images have re-enacted and burlesqued media portrayals of women, drawing from classic Hollywood movies, fashion advertising, and icons of documentary photography. *Face in the Crowd* debuts Prager's latest series by the same title—elaborately-staged crowd scenes, both poignant and revelatory—alongside earlier photographs and video works.

Featuring large-scale photographs of people assembled in congested public spaces such as an airport terminal, lobby, beach, and movie theater, *Face in the Crowd* is the artist's most ambitious and complex series to date. Blurring the

line between fiction and reality, Prager directed the actions of hundreds of costumed actors on specially constructed sets. Densely detailed and shot from seemingly impossible vantage points, they enact psychological narratives of private and public revelation, repulsion, fear, personal safety, and the desire for basic human interaction. This series was created especially for the Corcoran's exhibition, which is organized by Kaitlin Booher, assistant curator of photography and media arts.

"I'm fascinated by the experience of being involved in other people's lives accidentally," Prager has said, noting that her work has been influenced by time spent in busy cities such as New York and London. "Crowds have always been an interest of mine. It may look like a sea of people, but there are so many interesting stories, all colliding silently."

The stories of the various characters within these crowds culminate in a new film, featuring actress Elizabeth Banks. Together, the film and the photographs uphold a portrait of the individual within the complexity of the larger crowd. Prager's focus on this dynamic can be traced to specific influences: silent films like Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*; photographers Martin Parr, Garry Winogrand, Bruce Gilden, and Helen Levitt; the darkness and the humor from Roy Andersson's film *Songs from the Second Floor*; and the well-known children's books *Where's Waldo?* Throughout *Face in the Crowd*, each character maintains their own agency within their cinematic circumstances. In exploring the notion of identity and the performative aspects of public life, Prager has created a universe where the crowd that gathers is the true spectacle.

Face in the Crowd is presented at the Corcoran alongside a selection of the artist's earlier photographs, as well as her videos *Despair* (2010), *La Petite Mort* (2012), and *Sunday* (2010). Visit <http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/alex-prager>.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alex Prager was born in 1979 in Los Angeles, California, where she lives and works. A self-taught artist, she was inspired to take up photography after seeing the color images of William Eggleston. Her work has been exhibited worldwide, most prominently in *Alex Prager: Compulsion* (2012) at FOAM in Amsterdam, and in *New Photography 2010* at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Prager has been recognized with the London Photography Award (2006) and the FOAM Paul Huf Award (2012), among other honors. Her editorial work has been featured in *Vogue* and *W* magazine, and her short film *Touch of Evil*, commissioned by *The New York Times Magazine*, won a 2012 Emmy Award. Prager's work is represented in the collections of major museums including New York's Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission is \$10 for adults, and \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID). Free: children 12 and under, active duty military (with ID), Corcoran Members.

MEMBERSHIP

Corcoran Gallery of Art membership offers special access to the Corcoran's renowned collection, temporary exhibitions, lectures, films, concerts and an array of social events. Members also receive valuable discounts at the Corcoran Shop,

Todd Gray's Muse at the Corcoran, and the Corcoran College of Art + Design. Corcoran Members may visit the Corcoran an unlimited number of times for free. For more information, contact the Membership office at (202) 639-1753, membership@corcoran.org or online at www.corcoran.org/membership.

ABOUT THE CORCORAN

Established in 1869, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art** was one of America's first museums of art—dedicated, in the words of founder William Wilson Corcoran, to “encouraging American genius.” Today it is Washington, D.C.'s largest nonfederal art museum, known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. A dynamic schedule of special exhibitions complements a range of educational programming, which together enrich the perspectives of the visiting public, support the local arts community, and encourage thoughtful interpretation of today's most compelling social issues. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded as a school of art in 1890 and stands as Washington's only four-year accredited college of art and design. The College is one of the few in the nation whose educational model includes an integral relationship with a museum, fostering the talent of the next generation of artists. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit www.corcoran.org.



Hours

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Wednesday: 10 a.m.–9 p.m.

The Corcoran is closed on Monday and Tuesday.

The Museum offers extended hours every Wednesday until 9 p.m.

Admission

Wednesday through Friday and Sunday: \$10 Adults; \$8 full-time students (with ID) and seniors (62+); children under 12 free; Corcoran Members free.

Image:

Alex Prager, *Crowd #2 (Emma)*, 2012. Archival pigment print. Courtesy of the artist.

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ARTFORUM



Alex Prager

LEHMANN MAUPIN

Alex Prager's recent photographic works depict crowds on streets, on a beach, and at the airport, among other locations where humans find themselves in close proximity to other humans, sometimes unwillingly. In fact, the photographs were all shot on sets in Los Angeles, carefully staged to produce an elaborately cinematic atmosphere heightened by costumes, makeup, lighting, and a saturated palette that renders the works intense and alluring. They are scaled large enough to immerse or even overwhelm the viewer and were mostly shot from above, some from almost directly overhead, suggesting the vantage point of some omniscient presence. As viewers, we find ourselves at once swallowed by the crowd and hovering above it.

Most of the works portray in-between-ness, a nonspace through which we are obliged to pass. In *Crowd #7 (Bob Hope Airport)* (all works 2013), the figures are set against the dingy-gray tiled floor of an airport terminal. There are a few happy-seeming greetings toward the edges of the frame, but mainly we see lonely individuals—a young man with severely parted hair, a man in a checked suit—stuck in a kind of lost time. *Crowd #12 (speedyclick.com)* appears to depict a speed-dating event, something else to be endured on the way to a more interesting and important situation. Here, a more self-conscious air

prevails. A man in a plaid jacket stands in noble profile, and another seems, rather strangely, to be conducting some kind of stretching exercise off to the side. Everyone is rendered in sharp focus; everyone seems to have a story, an inner life. As our attention is drawn to each member of Prager's crowds, we experience very little of the generalization—the sense of undifferentiated allover-ness—that often characterizes such images.



Alex Prager, *Crowd #7 (Bob Hope Airport)*, 2013, ink jet print, 59 1/2 x 79".

At Lehmann Maupin's Chelsea location, the photographs were accompanied by *Face in the Crowd*, a short film projected across three adjacent screens. In this work, Prager interviews some of the actors she hired for her photographs, asking questions on topics such as divorce, love, embarrassment, and illness (whether or not the actors stay "in character" is unclear). The film then cuts to crowd scenes set to orchestral music, showing people flowing out of a set of double doors and pushing through streets. A blonde ingénue type, played by the actress Elizabeth Banks, watches a crowd thoughtfully through a window and then, in an ecstatic moment, joins it—only to end up in a *Day of the Locust*-style mob.

Looking at these works, one cannot help but think of a number of precedents. The way in which many of the women are made up in an exaggerated fashion or sport hairstyles of improbable shape or height recalls Cindy Sherman, for example, and Jeff Wall comes to mind via the odd specificity and ambiguity of these meticulously staged moments. Both artists changed the way we look at cinematic images in an art context, and the strong presence of their sensibilities suggests a critique of mass-culture spectacle, perhaps signaled by a witness figure like Banks, the watcher of the crowd who is eventually swallowed by it. This figure—a young woman, prettier than most of those around her—appears in nearly all of the photographs, set off from the photograph's activity by suggestive lighting, by her placement relative to others, or by the direction of her gaze, which runs counter to that of everyone else. If the film, as the exhibition's press release asserts, reminds us that within a crowd there are "countless individual stories and unique experiences," does a focus on a pretty (and, in Banks's case, famous) young woman complicate this effort? At such points, the critique of the spectacle seems to borrow too cozily from the tools of spectacle itself, indeed becomes interchangeable with it, but the visual appeal of the photographs creates a compelling tension: We may know that the seduction is being used to deleterious ends, to distract us from real terror and maybe from real beauty, and we choose to be seduced nonetheless.

—Emily Hall

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WIRED

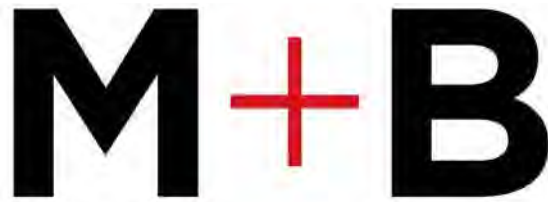
The Drama of an Entire Film, Collapsed Into One Frame

March 4, 2013
By Jaime Lowe



Photographer and filmmaker Alex Prager employs hundreds of extras, elaborate costumes and Hollywood sets to create cinematic crowd scenes that occupy a style similar to Alfred Hitchcock or David Lynch. The photos are filled with a palpable anxiety and confusion inspired by her own stress when addressing large groups of people.

"I've been wanting to shoot crowds for years," Prager says, "But the anxiety about speaking in front of crowds was getting worse, so I think subconsciously that was one of the key reasons why. To realize that my interest in crowds was greater than my fear of them."



The series is filled with mesmerizing images depicting brightly costumed characters milling around, each telling a self-contained story. The photos, and an accompanying film starring actress Elizabeth Banks, comprise Prager's first solo museum show *Face in the Crowd*.

"The video and the photos are saying different things," says Prager. "To me, the medium of still photography was better to show the emptiness, or the disconnect. And the video was meant to show the two sides of the crowd. Like a sea of anonymous faces or a bunch of individuals with their own stories to tell."

Prager attempted her first crowd shot in 2006, dressing close friends in wigs and photographing them on a set of bleachers. It didn't go well.

"It came out really bad," she says. "I learned that in order to make the crowds look the way I wanted them to look, I was going to need a lot more in the way of production. That was a good lesson for me."

It's a lesson she applied after almost a decade spent establishing herself in the art world. Prager revisited crowds with *Face*, her most ambitious body of work yet, with an eye towards polish and theater. The extensive production behind the series—lighting, sets, costumes—helped create the "bubble around the people to show that it's not totally real."

"Even in post-production their bodies can become distorted sometimes," says Prager, "So it makes our eye know that there's something a little off. To create that unsettling, uneasy feeling about the people and the crowd."

While directing the extras, Prager provided certain cues to the actors. For the video, which includes interviews with some extras in-character, she wanted one of the characters to have a lisp. The lisp is contrived, but the story he tells is real.

"Really it's kind of a union between ridiculous amounts of control from pre-production to shooting to post-production," she says. "And then this spontaneity and unpredictability that nobody can control because it's the energy that people bring with them, and that usually gets me the best moments."

Growing up in Los Angeles, Prager was also inspired by the required duplicity of the movie industry. "There's this strange thing happening with people becoming other people to succeed, or they think that's what they need to be in order to be here in the movie industry." Prager wanted to bring the disconnect to the viewer's attention—inside this "sort of empty, plastic world that looks very full and substantial, there's this realness of emotion."

And that's the nature of *Face*—something real is presented alongside something apparently staged, something strange paired with something completely familiar.

"It's the two worlds coming together that makes these pictures interesting (to me). I'm not trying to reenact crowds, or take pictures of real crowds. I'm trying to do a little bit of both and bring the reality and fiction together at once to see what happens."

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LOS ANGELES
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'Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd' Examines Busy Spaces

By Jessica Estrada
January 30, 2014



Crowd #4 (New Haven), Alex Prager

Bustling cities such as New York and London are what sparked LA-based photographer Alex Prager's obsession with crowds. To her, a busy space is more than just a transient sea of people—it's a collage of individuals with interesting stories. Prager professes this fascination in her latest collection of photographs and accompanying film, both titled "Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd." On display at M+B gallery through March 8, Prager's vibrant color photographs of staged crowd scenes artfully shine light on each person within a chaotic setting, while the film captures their movements and brings their stories to life.

From a beach and an airport terminal to a city hall lobby and the Sunset 5 movie theater, Prager had sets built for each of the busy scenes she captured. Prager then photographed and singlehandedly directed the actions and movements of hundreds of actors dressed in a creative mix of retro and modern costumes.

"It was a remarkable set because the extras were really the stars," says the film's producer Jeff Vespa. "They loved all the attention. It was incredible every day when the costume designer was finished dressing them. She would line them all up and Alex would go one by one and approve of each outfit."

The result is photographs and film clips that not only capture the big picture, but also force a closer look by showcasing the characters' unique personalities and stories. Prager further lures viewers in by illuminating a familiar face, actress Elizabeth Banks, who plays a beautiful, vulnerable character lost in the crowd. "She is the light in the center of all of the chaos," says Vespa.

The fact that Prager's photographs and film depict the same crowds allows them to seamlessly complement each other. "It gives the viewer a deeper insight and they play off of each other in a very interesting way," Vespa says. The film also allowed the characters to voice their stories via interviews, which he describes as "very intimate and heartfelt." 612 N. Almont Dr., West Hollywood, 310-550-0050

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ALEX PRAGER, LEHMANN MAUPIN, NEW YORK AND HONG KONG, YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY, NEW YORK AND M + B GALLERY, LOS ANGELES

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On View | For Alex Prager, It's Lonely in a Crowd

January 10, 2014
By Alex Zafiris



The photographer Alex Prager's new solo exhibition, "A Face in the Crowd," opened at the Chelsea and Lower East Side galleries of Lehmann Maupin last night. Using both still and moving images, the Los Angeles native riffs on the way individuals function in a large group: Physical proximity does not necessarily equate closeness, but there are a million stories in an anonymous mass.

Prager's work has often focused on moments of heightened emotional and physical upheaval: fear, shock, confusion. Her images, which rely on cinematic framing, heavily costumed protagonists and chilly color palettes, can feel hyper-real.

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Her 2012 series, "Compulsion," consisted of beautifully recreated disasters. For "A Face in the Crowd," she took cues from recent experiences. Thanks to her growing artistic success in recent years, Prager has had to travel extensively and speak in public. As a result, she developed stage fright and a pronounced fear of crowds. She conceived this latest series, in part, to control those anxieties.

For the shoot, Prager personally selected and dressed friends, relatives and 150 extras, and used a Hollywood sound stage to represent places where people gather: city streets, a movie theater, a beach, an airport. "Crowds amplify whatever emotion you happen to be experiencing at the time," she explains. "If you feel a little bit lonely, being around hundreds of people who aren't really aware of what you're feeling, or don't really care, can exaggerate that feeling."

Prager's direction and costuming deliberately exaggerates character, inviting the viewer in to search for clues, while her angles insist on distance. She hired a cinematographer to capture the movement, and invited the actress Elizabeth Banks to walk through the scenes, as if in a dream. She also interviewed a handful of the extras, some of whom were surprisingly open with her, telling stories of love and loss. Others spoke to her in character, improvising tales. She used the footage to create an immersive, three-channel installation at the Chelsea location, offering a mix of fiction and reality for anyone who enters.

On view at Lehmann Maupin, 201 Chrystie Street and 540 West 26th Street, through February 22



An exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of Alex Prager's "A Face in the Crowd."

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Interview

ALEX PRAGER, CROWDSOURCED

January 10, 2014
By Colleen Kelsey



To get lost in Alex Prager's most recent body of work is practically a requirement. Her latest exhibition, the astutely named "Face in the Crowd," marking her debut at Lehmann Maupin in New York, dissects the emotion range of solidarity, disconnection, and general unease that crowds can elicit. On view at the gallery's Chelsea and Lower East Side locations, Prager has produced a series of large-scale pigment print photographs depicting elaborately staged crowd scenes and a companion piece, an immersive three-channel film installation starring the actress Elizabeth Banks.



In these works, Prager fleshes out a world that possesses a cinematic surrealism. She directed hundreds of actors, including family, friends, and strangers, on a series of sets illustrating public spaces—beaches, airports, and city streets—pulling from classic Hollywood imagery and street photography to construct an optical and aesthetic pastiche of stylistic cues from the '40s, '50s, and beyond. Prager, who was born and raised in L.A., cites cinema as one of her major visual influences. "Seeing the process on a daily basis, all of that showed me how anything was possible," Prager says. "The films that I've seen, creating these surreal views of the world that we live in, really influenced me."

The lavish, hyper-saturated photographs meditate on a certain ennui that comes with urban isolation, but Prager's enveloping film has a welcoming openness.

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It begins with interviews of the subjects in character sharing recurring dreams, fears, and personal anecdotes, before transitioning to graphic title cards, a booming score, and Banks as a '50s-coiffed Girl Friday who emerges from her apartment to join the moving mass of people that has been streaming past of her window. "She's very familiar looking.

She has that all-American beauty. To have someone like that lead us through the crowd, we would want to follow her," Prager says of her heroine. The film cuts between the sets, alternating between the elaborate tableaux and close-ups of a variety of the extras' faces, revealing pieces of the full personalities and identities of the individuals pictured, and forging a connection with them, before zooming out on Banks, adrift and alone in a sea of faces. "It creates a completely different way of seeing loneliness," Prager asserts.

What Prager's created is a sensational and experiential account of something that permeates our daily lives—public interaction. "I've felt so many things within crowds. It's strange the way your emotions can be amplified," she says, citing how we connect, face-to-face in the digital age, as an overarching theme running through this project. "How we are as a culture, and how unaware we are of bigger things that are going on, we're willing to disconnect ourselves," she says. "I want to show [how] something that's seemingly boring and generic, is mesmerizing."

"ALEX PRAGER: FACE IN THE CROWD" IS ON VIEW AT LEHMANN MAUPIN, 540 WEST 26TH STREET, AND 201 CHRYSTIE STREET, NEW YORK, UNTIL FEBRUARY 22. SHE ALSO THE SUBJECT OF AN EXHIBITION AT THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART IN WASHINGTON D.C., ON VIEW UNTIL MARCH 9.

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BEDFORD + BOWERY

Alex Prager Used 20 Tons of Sand (and Her Sister) to Stage This Beach Scene

January 9, 2014

By Allyson Shiffman



ALEX PRAGER Crowd #3 (Pelican Beach), 2013 archival pigment print 59.5 x 92 inches, 151.1 x 233.7 cm 60.5 x 93.56 x 2.25 inches (framed), 153.7 x 237.6 x 5.7 cm Edition of 6 Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong

Alex Prager is not especially intimidating. The Los Angeles-based photographer is often smiling, rather petite and generally endearing. So it's amusing to envision her atop a cherry picker, directing hundreds of actors like some sort of omniscient being, which is precisely what she did for her latest body of work, *Face in the Crowd*. Shot over four days on a sound stage in LA, the project features a slew of universally relatable locations (bleachers at a sports game, the beach, an airport, a generic looking rec room) populated with Prager's friends, family and countless extras styled in flamboyant wigs and exaggerated makeup.

To coincide with the still images, there's a short film starring the actress Elizabeth Banks. The artist's most ambitious series to date (the beach scene alone took 20 tons of sand contained within a monstrous sandbox), its public opening reception is tonight from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at both Lehmann Maupin's Chelsea and Chrystie Street locations (the film and some prints are in Chelsea and other prints are in the Lower East Side).

Though the cinematic quality of the images – a characteristic inherent in Prager's entire body of work – harkens to Los Angeles, the use of crowds reads very NYC. New York is also exemplified in the sense of alienation evident in many of the individuals featured, despite being surrounded by other people. We sat down with Prager at Lehmann Maupin's Chelsea outpost to discuss the exhibition.

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A I sketch everything out beforehand. I'll pull things from the Internet and do collages of old photographs just to make sure that it is really what I want to shoot. So everything looks very similar to what I intended it to look like, but the characters are something I can never totally imagine until we're on set. We put the blush, the fake eyebrows and the mustaches on the men and for the women we paint their eyebrows and put the wigs on and everyone transforms into these characters. That part of it is always surprising – the way it feels on set and the energy people bring.

Q People who live in New York are all too familiar with this notion of crowds. As someone from Los Angeles, do you feel more connected to New York having realized this project?

A I love New York. I spent a few stints trying to live here, where I was looking for an apartment and never ended up getting one. I was going from hotel to Air BnB to hotel and extending trips for months at a time, so I've always had this love/hate relationship with New York on a personal level, but I don't feel like I was trying to recreate crowds from New York. The crowds were supposed to exist in a generic city. That city could easily be New York, but they're definitely not about New York. It's an imaginary land.

Q In some of the images there's a very obvious focal point. Is there a common thread that runs between the "heroines?"

A Often that person you focus in on represents something I've experienced or something I've felt or imagined while in a crowd. My emotions are heightened when I'm in a crowd, so it was easy for me to pick out a girl around my age that I'd want to look like — if I wore wigs and lots of makeup — and pretend that's how I've felt in that type of crowd at one point in my life. It's not totally contrived, like, "This is the girl that I'm going to be," but I'm using friends and my sister — who's in all the photos...



ALEX PRAGER Crowd #11 (Cedar and Broad Street), 2013 archival pigment print 59.5 x 56.5 inches 151.1 x 143.5 cm 60.5 x 57.5 x 2.25 inches (framed) 153.7 x 146.1 x 5.7 cm Edition of 6 Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong

Q Your sister is in every single one?

A Yes! She's the Waldo. [points to beach scene] She's here, with her boyfriend. My sister and I have such a strong bond. She's five years younger and an artist as well. She's a really strong influence for me, as a person as well as an artist, so having that deeply connected person floating around changed the crowds for me when I was shooting.

Q Did you find it easier to direct the strangers or the people you knew?

A It's the same. The second I'm shooting I feel like I'm looking at a prop or a doll that I can dress however I want and put into any position. The dolls come with their own unexpected and spontaneous energy but the way I can direct them and influence them is the same way I can move this glass of water [moves glass of water]. I always say I lose my sense of gender when I'm shooting and become this working energy force. I have to be careful about it sometimes. I'll be moving someone's hair and hurting them because I forget it's a real person.

Q Is it coincidental that you and Elizabeth Banks look a lot alike?

A It was a coincidence. I didn't even realize that until we were looking at the footage afterwards [laughs].

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- Q** Really? You could be sisters.
- A** That's what people have been saying, which is a huge compliment. I was looking for someone all-American and familiar. I wanted her to not be intimidating but to still be really beautiful. I wanted her to be a glamorous working girl.
- Q** I always wish I could go up to strangers on the subway and ask about their lives, which is precisely what you did in this film. Do you now find yourself thinking about people's individual back stories when you're riding the subway?
- A** I was always thinking about that. Sometimes I notice details and daydream about where a person is going or the hairstyle they've probably been wearing for the past four years. But there are other times that I just want to get through the crowd as fast as possible — like, "Fuck everyone, I need to get out of this airport terminal."

"Face in the Crowd" at Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. and 201 Chrystie St. through Feb. 22.



ALEX PRAGER Crowd #7 (Bob Hope Airport), 2013 archival pigment print 59.5 x 79 inches 151.1 x 200.7 cm 60.5 x 79.93 x 2.25 inches (framed) 153.7 x 203 x 5.7 cm Edition of 6 Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong

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BLOUINARTINFO

25 Questions for Breakthrough Photographer and Wig Collector Alex Prager

January 7, 2014

By Ashton Cooper



With an exhibition currently up at the **Corcoran Gallery of Art** in Washington, D.C. (her first U.S. solo museum show, in fact), a two-venue show of new works opening on January 9 at **Lehmann Maupin's** Chelsea and Lower East Side locations, and an exhibition opening January 25 at L.A.'s **M+B Gallery**, Alex Prager has officially broken through in the art world. The 34-year-old photographer, who frequently takes pictures for **W** magazine, is presenting new large-scale works and a new film featuring **Elizabeth Banks** at both the Corcoran and Lehmann Maupin. We spoke to Prager about her obsession with classic film, her wig collection, and Steinbeck.

Name: Alex Prager

Age: 34

Occupation: Artist

City/Neighborhood: Los Angeles (Silver Lake)

Much of your work seems to be inspired by vintage Hollywood. Hitchcock in particular. What sources do you look to for inspiration? Have there been particular films or photographic works that have been muses?

"Birds," "Songs from the Second Floor," "Night of the Hunter," "Blue Velvet," "Orpheus," "Meshes of the Afternoon."

The Corcoran show features a new film starring Elizabeth Banks. In your “New Photography” presentation at MoMA in 2010 there was a film with Bryce Dallas Howard. Do you ever think about directing feature-length films?

I do. Films are very challenging and I can only imagine how much more intense a full-length feature would be.

This is your first solo museum show in the US. How does it feel to be getting that kind of institutional recognition?

The Corcoran is a historical American museum. It is an honor to have them show my work.

What project are you working on now?

The project of rest and coming down. I feel a bit deflated. Happy, but deflated.

What’s the last show that you saw?

I saw Beck’s “Song Reader” at the L.A. Philharmonic. It was one night only, very special.

What’s the last show that surprised you? Why?

I know you mean visual art, but the last show I saw that surprised me was a choir performing “Carmina Burana.” The moment they started singing I was hit hard with emotion.

Describe a typical day in your life as an artist.

Coffee, emails, more emails, Photoshop, Photoshop, Photoshop, rest. Somewhere in there I eat.

Do you make a living off your art?

Yes.

What’s the most indispensable item in your studio?

My wig collection.

Where are you finding ideas for your work these days?

In Los Angeles. This city just gives and gives.

Do you collect anything?

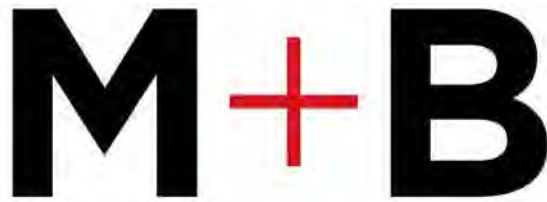
Vintage clothing and wigs.

What is your karaoke song?

4 Non Blondes’ “What’s Going On?”

What’s the last artwork you purchased?

A strange little ostrich portrait by Asger Carlsen



What's the first artwork you ever sold?

\$300. It was a black and white photo that I took on the street at one of those NY card-playing scams. I was really young. I naively believed they would double my money if I guessed the right card. Instead, before they even gave me a chance, they grabbed \$300 cash from my hands and ran. I managed to take a picture of the guy as he was grabbing for my money. It's all in the shot, the money, the box with the cards on it, and the guy trying to cover his face from the camera. I sold that picture at my first show for exactly \$300.

What's the weirdest thing you ever saw happen in a museum or gallery?

I think the weirdest things I've witnessed came while I was participating in crits at Yale earlier this year. I like how the students are pushing themselves to think in new ways about photography and sometimes that meant things got really strange... We never knew what we were going to be in for.

What's your art-world pet peeve?

When art theory becomes more important than the art.

What's your favorite post-gallery watering hole or restaurant?

Elf Café for good food.

Do you have a gallery/museum-going routine?

No. To be honest I'm usually too busy to get to all the shows. I'm going to try to make that more of a thing.

What's the last great book you read?

I just read "The Wayward Bus" by Steinbeck. You can't go wrong with him.

What work of art do you wish you owned?

I want a Baldessari in my house.

What would you do to get it?

I could offer a trade or an incredibly long payment plan, because I certainly can't afford to pay cash for it.

What international art destination do you most want to visit?

I haven't spent enough time in Berlin yet.

What under-appreciated artist, gallery, or work do you think people should know about?

My sister, Vanessa Prager makes strange and beautiful paintings. She is 5 years younger than me and mostly known in L.A., so far.

Who's your favorite living artist?

Doug Aiken is always doing something cool.

What are your hobbies?

Cooking, tennis, ceramics, renovating my house.

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HUFFPOST ARTS

Alex Prager Photographs The Dark Underbelly Of Crowds

by Priscilla Frank
December 16, 2013



Though we experience being in them all the time, there is something oddly unsettling about crowds. Swarms of strangers brushing past each other, occasionally bumping into one another, all having arrived at the very same place. Despite the physical proximity, most members remain in their own worlds, ignoring or looking past the sea of bodies in their path. This space between clutter and isolation, familiarity and a strange, even threatening otherness permeates "A Face In The Crowd," the newest photography series from Alex Prager.

The Los Angeles-based photographer is known for her suspenseful cinematic images, which use staged, over-dramatized scenarios to reveal what lies beneath the artificial lights and gobs of makeup. Prager dresses her subjects in costumes from a variety of bygone eras, giving her characters the guise of cinematic fantasy without tethering them to a specific background. Viewers get the odd feeling they've seen this all before, and yet the scenes remain beyond their understanding. In this phantom realm, centered on the beauty of the surface, deeper realities creep into sight. The contemporary crowd is revealed to be a multiform beast made from sundry personalities, narratives, images and, these days, social media accounts.

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While the photographs in Prager's exhibition dwell on the isolating residue of the crowd, her film, also titled "A Face In The Crowd," presents the crowd not as a series of individuals, but something greater. Prager creates a three-channel video installation, featuring inner monologues of select crowd members that reveals the struggles, memories and nightmares of that stranger who pushed you in line. Elizabeth Banks, the heroine of the film, wordlessly navigates the crowd, drawing the viewer through the mass of individuals in a frenzied and lonely state. The film journeys beneath the surface, illuminating the invisible stories and experiences that pack the empty space between silent strangers.

We reached out to Prager to discuss her upcoming exhibition.

There aren't many crowds in Los Angeles. How did you first become interested in the crowd as an artistic theme?

I've always been interested in individuals and characters. When I first started I was taking black-and-white photos of strangers who interested me on the streets. Weegee's photos were also a big inspiration for me. After my MoMA show in 2010 I started doing a lot more travel. Going through airport terminals, subways, living in London and New York for a while. Being from Los Angeles, which like you said, you aren't often thrown into situations where you're surrounded by strangers. You're usually in the car or around people you know. I felt like I saw crowds a bit differently than other people; it was a bit jarring. It's interesting when people are surrounded by each other, the feeling of being really close and all being there for similar reasons but also having your own agenda and your own intentions of why you're there. It can feel a bit isolating as well and since you're around so many people it exaggerates that feeling of isolation.

The crowd was introduced as an artistic trend in turn of the century Paris. Do you see the contemporary crowd as a different beast?

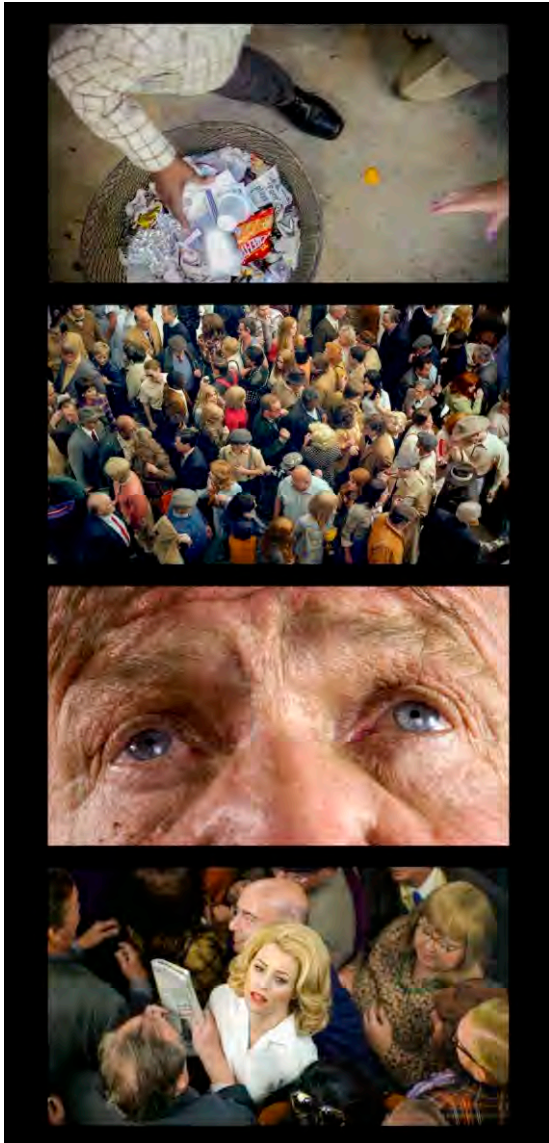
I think they're all connected because they're dealing with crowds but I think I'm commenting on them in a different way. Everything that's happened with technology and how people act with each other, communicate with each other, I think it's different now than it ever was. I'm the last generation that understands what like was like before the internet.

How much did you direct your crowds in terms of their facial expressions and emotions? How much is staged?

It's very directed before we start the shoot. I'll put people in position and give them some kind of character I want them to be. I will give the overall group a direction right before we start shooting, then I let people do their thing. I want it to be as natural as possible. I want it to feel staged to create that sort of isolation and disconnected communication but these aren't reenactments of real crowds. I don't want to show people what a crowd looks like. I'm creating the feeling of a crowd that has no substance to direct people to what's going on right now in our culture.



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What drew you to Elizabeth Banks as a protagonist for the film in the exhibition?

I felt like I really needed an all-American looking girl who could lead people through these crowds and have us want to follow her. I didn't want her to be intimidating; I wanted her to be interesting, pretty, emotional and vulnerable. And familiar looking, I feel like she has a very familiar look to her.

There is something interesting about having a real movie star featured in something that feels like a film we've seen before, though we haven't. It adds to your signature combination of familiar and alien. Is this a factor you consider when choosing your female protagonists?

Yes, in all of the pictures I use clothes from the past and gestures, makeup, hair from different time period to create a familiar, timeless identity for the work. I try to capture that same feeling in the movies. People are used to having a movie star type figure to lead a narrative so I thought that was necessary for my film. Also I need the strength of a movie star and also... [laughs] the acting skills.

In "Compulsion," you zoom up close to capture the eyes of your subjects. Here you zoom out to capture a flood of faces. Were there any unexpected outcomes of toying with perspective in this way?

I did want it to feel kind of voyeuristic, the same way I had that going on in "Compulsion." Somebody is watching from a disconnected viewpoint or a perspective that doesn't feel involved. Whether it be surveillance cameras or a person that feels isolated and alone within the crowd, I felt that perspective really worked.

"A Face in The Crowd" will show at Lehmann Maupin from January 9 until February 22, and at M + B from January 25 until March 8.

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ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

ALEX PRAGER'S "FACE IN THE CROWD" OPENS AT CORCORAN GALLERY IN WASHINGTON D.C.

Text by Rebecca Bates
November 26, 2013



Crowd #1 (Stan Douglas), Alex Prager, 2010. Photo: © Alex Prager and courtesy of the Corcoran Gallery of Art



Crowd #3 (Pelican Beach), 2013. Photo: © Alex Prager and courtesy of the Corcoran Gallery of Art

Living in a city where commuting on public transportation is a must, one quickly learns how to steel oneself against the chaos of crowds. This is a skill that Los Angeles-based artist Alex Prager only acquired recently, specifically, after showing her work at MoMA's "New Photography" exhibition in 2010. "I became more of a public person," she tells AD. "I was traveling more than I had ever traveled, and I was being shuffled around from airport terminals and subways." Prager's newfound fascination with public spaces forms the crux of her first U.S. solo show, "Face in the Crowd," now on view at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Unlike the candid street photography by masters such as Robert Frank or Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Prager's color-saturated images are meticulously staged, often featuring the artist's sister and friends. "I wanted to create a world in which these crowds could live that felt familiar but didn't necessarily feel like present day," she explains. To this end, the costumes within each photograph are varied, with women sporting 1940s headwear or Mad Men-era bouffants and some men clad in plaid suits that look straight out of the '70s. The blurring of time periods is key for Prager: "I wanted the crowds to have an awkwardness, a kind of 'is this real or is this fake' feel."

There's a robust cinematic quality to these vignettes, and viewers may find themselves drawn to certain figures as they might be to characters in a film. In Crowd #2 (Emma), a young woman dressed in red stands amid a swirl of pedestrians, her expression a mixture of amusement and confusion. In Crowd #3 (Pelican Beach) a couple is seen locked in embrace, surrounded by sunbathers.

In fact, a comparison to vintage movies is apt, as Prager has begun experimenting with short films, four of which appear in the Corcoran show. "I was getting a bit bored with the photographs I was taking," Prager admits. "Somebody mentioned that I could show people what happened before and after each picture, and I thought that would be an interesting challenge." Prager's most recent film, also titled Face in the Crowd, depicts actress Elizabeth Banks struggling through a sea of commuters, adding a flurry of movement to the artist's already busy scenes.

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The Washington Post

At Corcoran, Alex Prager's color photographs of crowds depict detachment in togetherness



Astrid Riecken/For The Washington Post - Alex Prager, artist photographer, surrounded by her art work of her upcoming show at the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

By Katherine Boyle
Published: November 22

Shortly after self-taught photographer Alex Prager exhibited her technicolor photographs at MoMA's "New Photography 2010," she discovered she harbored a common fear. Traveling extensively for engagements, she shuffled through airports and metro stations in unfamiliar cities, partaking in the pings and patterns of urban life. For many, crowds are routine banality, but for some, including Prager, they're terrifying.

"Suddenly, I was traveling from airport to airport and becoming more of a public person," Prager said. "It was jarring. Having to speak publicly and be in public, I realized I had huge anxiety that I didn't know existed."

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Prager, 34, confronts that anxiety headfirst in “Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd” at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, opening Saturday. At first glance, the works seem like melodramatic images from Alfred Hitchcock films or spreads from fashion glossies. But a fuller examination of these seemingly retro moments — sometimes comprising 70 or more posed character actors on soundstages — reveals more ominous themes in her work. When her subjects are viewed individually, they have narratives and quirks, but when viewed in the totality of the frame, the viewer becomes a surveyor with a privileged vantage point, something only birds and cameras in the post- Sept. 11 surveillance state can see.

Prager’s images capture the duality of modern life: The anonymous crowds Ezra Pound celebrated no longer exist in a culture where mass shootings and Reddit sleuthing have become the norm. And while digitally, the crowd seems more connected than ever, her characters are detached. In postproduction, she reconstructs the images, removing interaction among the subjects, ensuring their individualism.

“As a culture right now, we’re not as connected as we seem,” she said. “We’re constantly tweeting and instagramming, and the media is always showing us exactly what’s happening when it’s happening, but it’s an illusion. Are we really so connected?”

Although contemporary, Prager’s work draws heavily on the past, echoing the costuming of Cindy Sherman and the scope of Weegee’s beach scenes. She draws from Douglas Sirk and William Eggleston, plucking her subjects from other eras, though not a uniform one. (The woman wearing the ’70s hairdo carries a magazine with Michelle Obama’s face on the cover, making the images retro and current simultaneously.)

That’s part of what drew curator Kaitlin Booher, assistant curator of photography at the Corcoran, to Prager’s work.

“There’s a lot of different levels and layers to what she’s doing,” Booher said. “She’s synthesizing so many influences and themes in American culture, in a style that is distinctly hers.”

With Prager, the Corcoran also found a commercial up-and-comer, as Prager has become something of a fashion industry darling. “Face in the Crowd” is co-sponsored by W Magazine, a product of Conde Nast, and the Italian fashion house Bottega Veneta, for which Prager has shot ad campaigns. The fashion industry-museum collaboration is becoming a familiar norm at a time when galleries are catering to style-literate young audiences and trying to increase ticket sales. The Corcoran certainly took this trend into account when choosing the exhibition.

But it’s a mistake to view “Face in the Crowd” as mere fashion photography or a retro romance. Her earlier works of beautiful Breck girls were more closely tied to fashion photography and would have been out of place in Washington. But her crowd scenes capture life as much of federal Washington sees it: from the vantage point of cameras watching our morning commutes.

One of the four short films in the exhibition characterizes the post-Snowden anxiety that follows from fear of surveillance. The protagonist, played by actress Elizabeth Banks, watches the crowd before joining its movement. She becomes panicked, evoking the expressions seen in “The Birds” or “Vertigo,” but there’s no clear pursuer or maniacal threat. The film poster is even more ominous, showing Banks staring up, her face circumscribed in a red circle. But the film ends without the expected climax. Life seems to continue as normal.

Prager’s struggles with anxiety are shrewdly replicated in these photos, but she doesn’t bombard us with fear. Instead she dresses her subjects in platinum wigs and strange mustaches, making themes of surveillance easier to stomach when viewing her work just steps from the White House lawn. After all, with such a beautiful and well-heeled cast of characters, how could anything be awry?

Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd

Through March 9 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 500 17th St NW. Adults, \$10. Children younger than 12, free. www.corcoran.org or 202-639-1700.

M+B

TIME LightBox

Staging Reality: Alex Prager's Timeless Faces in the Crowd

By Sara Distin
November 19, 2013



Alex Prager—Courtesy of Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York and M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
Crowd #11 (Cedar and Broad Street), 2013

Sometime last year, Kaitlin Booher, Assistant Curator of Photography and Media Arts at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, asked Alex Prager for four new pieces for an upcoming show at the Gallery. Prager, who's been ceaselessly swinging from one project or exhibition to the next for the last ten years, steadily gaining momentum as she's moved along, knew exactly what she wanted to do. She responded with something significantly bigger. As Booher put it, "It's like Alex Prager on steroids." It took Prager only a year to complete all of the new works included in *Face in the Crowd*, on view at the Corcoran from Nov. 23, 2013 to March 9, 2014. The ambitious exhibition features several elaborately staged photographs of crowds (that have already been well-received at London's Frieze) as well as a new film (we're exclusively previewing the trailer here) and a three-channel video installation.

Of her efforts Prager says, "You could say the show took a year to make but really I've been shooting crowds and trying to shoot crowds and failing to shoot crowds and sometimes figuring out how to do crowds for the past four or five years." As evidence, *Face in the Crowd*, also features several of Prager's earlier photographs, including "Crowd #1 (Stan Douglas)" — an image that then took her a year and a half to make and was presented in both the November issue of *W Magazine* and MoMA's *New Photography* in 2010 — as well as her videos *Despair* (2010), *La Petite Mort* (2012), and *Sunday* (2012).

M+B



Courtesy of the artist

Behind the Scenes of Crowd #3 (Pelican Beach), 2013.

In all of Prager's works, her characters are carefully costumed, donning outfits that span from mid-century to present day. Any sense of real time is immediately displaced, distorting the pictures' distance from the present as well as the characters' space from each other. While their gazes are deliberate, they often don't make eye contact with anyone else within the frame. The images are, as described by both Prager and Booher, not quite real and not quite fake, which gives us freedom to enter them ourselves. And this part is important. While they don't commit to one time period or another, Prager's crowds are very much about the world we're living in right now.

But Prager also says, "it's not like recreations of real crowds. These are forced." She continues, "I mean that's what I get from it. I also don't really like to tell people what to get from the pictures."

Don't be fooled by her seeming ambivalence. Booher notes that Prager's prowess as a director has increased over time and it's definitely evident in her new work. While Prager is candid about the amount of post-production editing — saying: "If people got a little too happy and a little too connected, then I'll separate them in post;" and laughing: "I like to keep it awkward"— the actual production was movie-sized. Prager's direction extended to overseeing all aspects of costuming, hair, and make-up with an impressive level of attention to detail. For the new film, for the first time, she's also ventured into dialogue, giving some characters scripts, others only prompts, and letting a few individuals improvise or tell their own tales.

While what's true or not, we'll never know, this part of the production was a highlight for Prager. She says, "It was amazing [to hear] the stories that came out of people with one little push or a nudge. It just got me thinking about the two sides of a crowd. It can be a massive sea of strangers that become this anonymous cloud in your way. Or it can be all hundreds of beautiful special little individuals with their own experiential tracks. I mean, it's very obvious that that's what a crowd is but when you dig into that and look for that, it's really beautiful."

Alex Prager is an American photographer and filmmaker who lives and works in Los Angeles and New York City. Face in the Crowd is on view at the Corcoran Gallery of Art from Nov. 23, 2013 – March 9, 2013.

M+B

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALEX PRAGER: COMPULSION

April 7 – May 12, 2012

Artist's Opening Reception: Saturday, April 7, 2012 from 6 to 8 pm



M+B is pleased to present *Compulsion*, an exhibition of new work by contemporary artist Alex Prager. The exhibition will feature a selection of color photographs from the series, as well as the artist's new short film, *La Petite Mort*, with accompanying film stills. The exhibition will be shown simultaneously in Los Angeles, New York and London. *Compulsion* runs from April 7 through May 12, 2012, with an opening reception for the artist on Saturday, April 7 from 6 to 8 pm.

MoMA curator Roxana Marcoci has described Prager's work as "intentionally loaded," saying

"it reminds me of silent movies — there is something pregnant, about to happen, a mix of desire and angst." Prager's new work furthers her exploration of subversive narratives through the construction of "scenes" inspired by media tragedies and paired with emotive close-ups of eyes. The eyes, whether interpreted as belonging to the viewer or the subject, operate as a mode of investigation — an aid to decoding the scenes and implicating the viewer by provoking an emotional response.

Inspired by the photography of Weegee and Enrique Metinides and films such as *Metropolis* and *Un Chien Andalou*, *Compulsion* confirms Prager's vivid cinematic aesthetic. Unlike her previous work, however, the protagonists now remain anonymous and distant. Prager's new series investigates the complexity of observation within a society inundated by compulsive spectators, as well as the recurrent discourse in photography—that "meaning" is often derived from a multiplicity of gazes.

In addition to provocative juxtapositions, Prager manipulates the scenes through her choice of cropping, continually interrogating the truth content within photography — a trope as old as the medium itself. As artist John Baldessari has noted: "For most of us photography stands for the truth, but a good artist can make a harder truth by manipulating forms . . . It fascinates me how [one] can manipulate the truth so easily by the way [you] juxtapose opposites or crop the image or take it out of context." Prager's altered and manufactured scenes, in conjunction with the evocative eyes remove the images from their original context and allow them to acquire new associations.

In her new short film, *La Petite Mort*, starring French actress Judith Godrèche, Prager navigates the mysteries of death through a woman experiencing the boundaries of her body and those of this world. Prager's *La Petite Mort* (which literally translates to "the little death," but is a common French expression for an orgasm) declares that "the act of dying and the act of transcendent love are two experiences cut from the same cloth — the former a grand exit, and the latter a slow escape. Indeed, many of the world's greatest poets have long considered a passionate interlude as man's closest moment to seeing god." The film features music by composer Ali Helnwein and Director of Photography Matthew Libatique (*Black Swan*, *Iron Man*, *Requiem for a Dream*).

Born in 1979, Alex Prager is a self-taught photographer who lives in Los Angeles, California. Featured in MoMA's *New Photography 2010*, Prager's work has been exhibited at institutions worldwide. Additionally, her photographs are in the permanent collection of several major museums, including the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Moderna Museet (Stockholm). Her work has been featured in publications such as *The New York Times Magazine*, *Vogue*, *W Magazine* and *Art in America*.

Location:	M+B, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90069
Show Title:	Alex Prager: Compulsion
Exhibition Dates:	April 7 – May 12, 2012
Artist's Reception:	Saturday, April 7, 2012 from 6 – 8 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

For more information, please contact Shannon Richardson at M+B at (310) 550-0050 or shannon@mbart.com

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THE NEXT MOST COLLECTIBLE ARTISTS



WHO AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS WILL HAVE THE STAYING POWER TO RULE THE MARKET OVER THE LONG HAUL?

■ LAST YEAR WE SET OUT ON WHAT SOME MIGHT CALL A FOOL'S ERRAND by selecting the 50 most collectible living artists. Hoping to elevate this sort of list-making beyond a parlor game, we defined the parameters and embarked on research to find those artists who have a proven record in the market and also show promise of the continuing innovation and devotion to craft that will warrant attention for decades to come. The result was a list that peered beyond the headlines.

A year is no time at all in the long game that is serious collecting. For this second outing we decided to add to the challenge by focusing on artists under the age of 50. For such a group, auction stats can be erratic, and artists may just be adding a major museum solo to their exhibition history.

But what follows is not an "emerging" artist list in the style of many art magazines, naming favorites from the latest MFA graduating class. Most names will be familiar to readers from years of gallery shows and even awards. The vast majority among the final selections are in their 30s, because the reality is that artists are still coming into their practice through their 20s, and only after that begin to build a committed collector base. Readers will also note the preponderance of painters. In the discussions during which we hashed out the list, two reasons for this emerged. First, there is a genuine resurgence of nonrepresentational painting as artists under 50 reexamine that key modernist pursuit. Second, collectors perennially favor painting because it is understandable within an established tradition and is comparably easy to display and conserve.

Diversity is the other big trend seen in this list, in terms of geography as well as in the individual artists' practices. The language of contemporary art is global, and collectors are increasingly interested in seeing differences in dialogue. Today artists may be born in the Middle East, live in Europe, and sell to collectors in Asia and America, and our list reflects that ubiquitous internationalism. Just as pervasive, it seems, is the desire among artists to operate free of the constraints of medium. Even as recent years have seen a return to a focus on craft and the object and, sometimes, beauty, it seems that the ultimate triumph of Conceptualism has come in the form of younger generations who embrace the artist's role as that of universal creator. Photographers sculpt, sculptors bridge the divide between two and three dimensions, and painters make films. Innovation is everywhere. —THE EDITORS

NEXT MOST COLLECTIBLE ARTISTS

Ⓐ **ADAM PENDLETON**

Some might call Pendleton a force of nature. Having work collected by Sol LeWitt and MOMA, initiating his Black Dada manifesto, which promises to revive the moribund form, and joining the blue chip Pace Gallery all by the age of 28 seem to be signs of a career on the fast track to superstardom. Yet despite multiple references and complex configurations, Pendleton renders objects so polished, it's hard not to wonder if they're simply bait to lure the uninitiated into an ideological conversion. (His breakout moment is widely considered to be *The Revival*, a mock ministry staged at Performa in 2007.) His work asks probing questions about how we understand the present through multiple layers of cultural artifacts from history, taking them apart and reconstructing them in elegant and novel formats, says Dominic Molon, chief curator of the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis and a longtime Pendleton champion. The artist's work is currently casting its spell on the public through the collections of the Studio Museum in Harlem, Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. The response to his first Pace exhibition at the gallery's London venue, where pieces ranged from \$15,000 to \$75,000, was enormously positive. After his outing with Shane Campbell at Frieze New York last month and by the time his show opens at Pace New York next year, his following will only have grown. **DW** | **LARRY HINTON (WHITE), 2012. SILKSCREEN INK ON FORMICA PANEL, 10 X 8 FT.**

Ⓢ **ALEX PRAGER**

Prager's glossy, cinematic photographs of carefully styled, noir-inflected vignettes (think Cindy Sherman meets David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*) have been remarkably in demand since her inclusion in the 2010 edition of the Museum of Modern Art's career-making New Photography series. The artist is represented by Yancey Richardson, in New York, M+B Gallery, in Los Angeles, and Michael Hoppen, in London, and her photographs have been acquired by MOMA, the Whitney, SFMOMA, Kunsthau Zurich, and Stockholm's Moderna Museet. In addition to attracting substantial primary market interest, Prager's work has been successful on the auction block: *Annie*, from 2007, sold for \$30,000 on a \$5,000 to \$7,000 estimate at Phillips New York in April.

The secondary market is just developing, says Phillips specialist Benjamin Godsill.

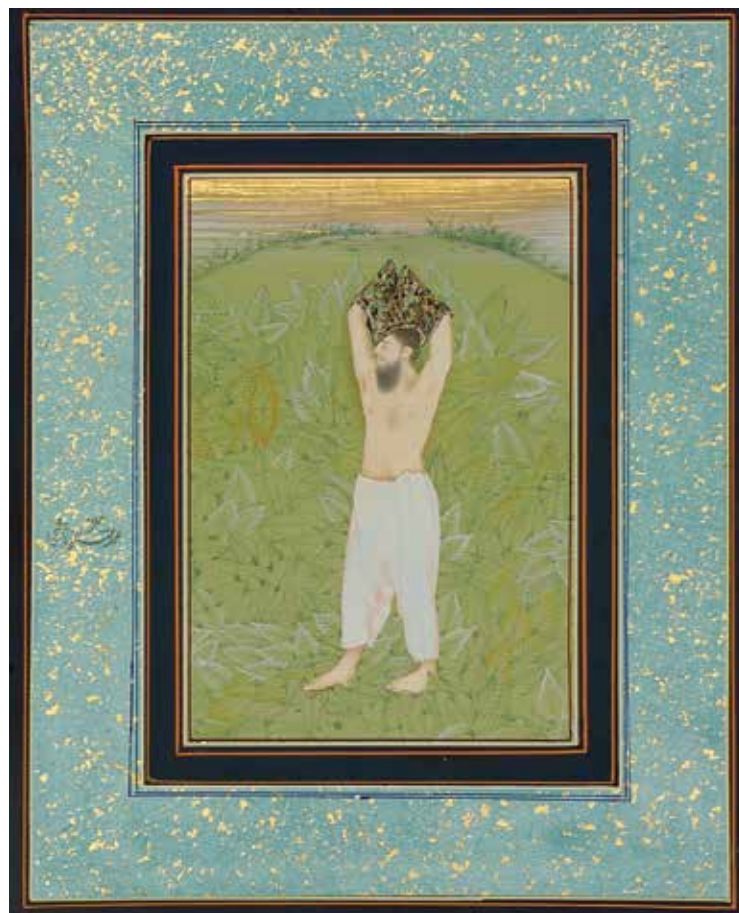
Young collectors especially have a real feel for the work—it speaks to them quite clearly.

RW | **3:32 PM, COLDWATER CANYON, 2012. PIGMENT PRINT, 48 X 19 3/4 IN.**

Ⓐ **SETH PRICE**

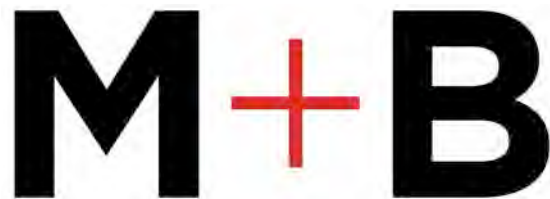
Price burst onto the scene as a Conceptualist artist-philosopher in the mid-aughts, and his market has recently come into focus thanks in large part to his ongoing series of vacuum-formed tableaux. The works—bomber jackets, knotted lassos, Gerbera daisies, and sculpted breasts in vacuum-sealed shells—have been acquired by such collectors as Dakis Joannou. One piece fetched \$158,500 on a \$30,000 to \$40,000 estimate at Sotheby's New York in May 2012.

His work is very much of the zeitgeist, using unusual materials but still with a reference point to painting, says Alexander Branczik, head of contemporary art at Sotheby's London. Price exhibits with Friedrich Petzel and Reena Spaulings Fine Art, in New York. **RW** | **NOODLES, 2010. ACRYLIC AND ENAMEL ON INKJET-PRINTED PVC VACUUM-FORMED OVER KNOTTED ROPE, 46 1/4 X 44 1/2 X 3 IN.**

Ⓢ **IMRAN QURESHI**

Qureshi shot to fame after winning the 2011 Sharjah Biennial prize for his poetic and political site-specific installation, *Blessings upon the Land of My Love*, spread across a brick courtyard at the Beit Al-Serkal show site. Qureshi's work, steeped in traditional Mughal miniature painting techniques that make use of squirrel-tail brushes and natural pigments, is infused with the current sociopolitical pathos of his native Pakistan, where he is represented by Canvas Gallery. According to Abha Housego, a specialist at Indian auctioneer Saffronart, this year he was awarded Deutsche Bank's Artist of the Year prize, invited to undertake the roof commission at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and selected for the Venice Biennale, indicating that he is moving from strength to strength. Adding fuel to the fire was the \$35,000 final bid on one of his miniatures at Christie's New York in March, besting prices for similar works in the Armory Show booth of his London gallery, Corvi Mora, which ranged from \$20,000 to \$30,000. **SM**

MODERATE ENLIGHTENMENT, 2009. GOUACHE ON WASLI PAPER, 8 X 5 IN.



Los Angeles Times

In conversation with Alex Prager

Posted By: Barbara Davidson

3:00 a.m. | August 2, 2012

“reFramed” is a bimonthly feature showcasing fine art photography and vision-forward photojournalism. It is curated by Los Angeles Times staff photographer Barbara Davidson. [twitter@photospice](#)

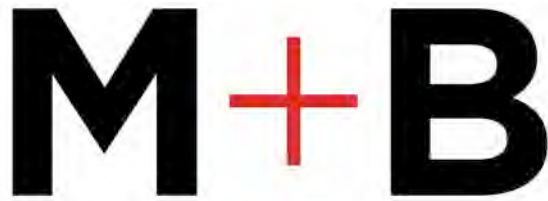


Born in 1979, Alex Prager is a self-taught photographer who lives and works in Los Angeles. Featured in the Museum of Modern Art’s “New Photography 2010,” Prager’s work has been exhibited at institutions worldwide. Additionally, her photographs are in the permanent collection of several major museums, including MoMA, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Her work has been featured in publications such as the New York Times Magazine, Vogue, W Magazine, and Art in America. Prager is represented by M+B Gallery, Yancey Richardson Gallery and Michael Hoppen Contemporary.

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Q: William Eggleston’s work inspired you to pick up a camera. How did that happen?

A: I stumbled upon a William Eggleston exhibition at the Getty Museum in 2000 and I still remember exactly how I felt when I first saw his pictures. Before this I’d only ever seen photography be used in advertising. There was something so powerful about the way he could take what looked like a mundane, two-dimensional snapshot and make it feel completely alive and unique. That got me really interested with both him as a photographer and also with photography as a medium. Only about a week went by before I’d purchased a professional camera and set up a fully functional darkroom in my bathroom. It was



all very fast for me, with the same intensity that falling in love can have.

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Q: Before you had gallery representation, how was your early work shown? How did your work start to gain a following?

A: For the first seven years, there wasn't a gallery in Los Angeles interested in showing my work, but I still had shows at least once a year. I put them on with friends in spaces for one night only. The fact that they were in friends' lofts, stores, motels, etc., didn't stop people from coming and buying the work. We would ask our actor friends to host the evening, and they would invite people they knew and tell them to bring people. ... I had a lot of help from my friends in those early years. The first gallery that asked me to be in a group show found me through one of those pop-up shows.

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Q: Your photographs are a surreal collection of meticulously crafted moments — much like movie stills. Can you tell me about the staging process and casting for your images?

A: I'll come up with an idea of what kind of scene I'm going to create, then I'll start looking around for locations and start casting by going through my phone book of people I know, or looking on Facebook at friends of friends. If I can't find what I'm looking for that way, I'll post an ad on Craigslist or go to a casting company. The productions I do now can be very involved, like movie sets, or they can still be really small with just me and the model. It all depends what the idea is.

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Q: How much of your final image is crafted in post-production?

A: I'd guess that only about 70% of the image is complete after the initial photo shoot. A lot of my creative process takes place in post now, as well as on the shoot. ... The ideas I have for a picture don't always work out as well on the actual photo shoot, so sometimes I'll spend a lot of time creating an entirely new concept in post-production with the images I have shot. This isn't always the case, but I'm very open to my shoots not coming out as planned because I know I have a whole other process afterward that allows me to create something that might be even better than the idea I had originally thought up.

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Q: There is a seamless cinematic reference between your still photographs and your short films. Have you always had a passion for film? How did the evolution from still images to moving images come about?

A: People kept coming up to me and asking me what I thought had happened just before, or after, one of my still photographs. That gave me the idea to play around with that concept of moving images, which is how I got to "Despair." Since I began working more in film, it has become something else for me. There's so much for me to explore in the area, and it's challenging for me in a different way than photography.

M+B

June 8, 2012

HUFF
POST ARTS

Review: Alex Prager's *Compulsion*
-Peter Frank

Alex Prager has an eye for the theatrically ominous - the absurd, the dreamlike, the unlikely but all-too real-seeming juxtaposition that rips a huge hole in the equilibrium of one's existence - that harks back to surrealism and also reflects the recurrence of that sensibility in contemporary filmmaking. Fortunately, Prager does not invest her uncanny images with the narrative portent found in, oh, David Lynch; but she does send us looking for it, signaling its presence with an extraneous device, a small panel hung pendant to each large one showing just a human eye. The large panels stand quite nicely, and weirdly, on their own, and the eye panels can become quite irksome, but that seems to be the point, a way of challenging us, even getting in our faces, to "make sense" of her plummeting figures, misplaced road objects, destructing houses, and other disquieting apparitions. Do dreams "mean"? Do Prager's photographs? Does her short film, *La Petite Mort*, a dizzying meditation on filmic tropes that ladles on the existential clichés until even Hitchcock and Truffaut are begging for mercy? Prager is a consummate photo-technician, framing and shooting her set-ups with brittle exactitude and exactly the right amount of available (Mediterranean) light, to the point where her pictorial manner becomes as much her subject as does her subject matter. Her ultimate concern, however, is our perception, what we see and how we comprehend it. (M+B, 612 N. Almont Dr, W. Hollywood; closed. www.mbart.com)



M+B

NEW YORK
ART

Can't Look Away

Photographer Alex Prager's high-intensity L.A. melodrama

By Carl Swanson, April 1, 2012

Alex Prager became a photographer during a postadolescent panic, when she suddenly feared that her life might turn out boring. She'd traveled in Europe and never got around to attending high school, and back home in Los Angeles with a GED, she was working dead-end jobs. "I found myself 18 years old without a normal background and realized I could be working as a receptionist my whole life," she says. "I was very unhappy and had gotten myself into debt traveling on my credit cards and buying my friends sushi all the time, and I had this moment when I -realized it wasn't a temporary situation that would disappear when my real life began. I needed to do something that I thought was important." When she was 21, she walked into the Getty Museum and saw a William Eggleston picture of "a pair of dirty shoes under a bed" and knew she had to be a photographer. She went home and bought a 35-mm. Nikon and some darkroom equipment on eBay.

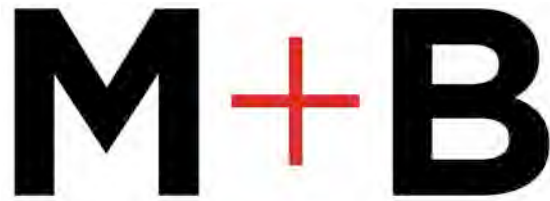


Eleven years later, Prager's work, full of cinematic sex, death, and portent, takes place in a sort of receptionist's daydream world, if that receptionist often stays up too late watching vintage melodramas and likes to stare at herself in the mirror while crying. They're elaborate film outtakes, frequently starring her stylish young friends, as well as her hometown.

"Everywhere you look in L.A., you can imagine some sort of drama taking place," she explains.

Prager's work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney, and she's also shot for fashion magazines like *W* and *Vogue*. In the last few years, her cinematic perspective has turned into actual mini-cinema. "People kept asking me: 'What was happening just before or after, in the story line of the character?'" she says. "To move the still photograph a little to the left and the right." That turned into *Despair*, a video art piece starring an overwrought Bryce Dallas Howard, hell-bent on suicide, wearing the perfect sea-green dress to complement her red hair. *Despair* was inspired by the 1948 feature film *The Red Shoes*, in which a ballet dancer can't resolve her professional ambition and her need to be loved, and kills herself. Prager says she identifies with the character's disconsolateness, if not with the desire to end it all.

She's had some help making the transition to moving pictures: *Despair*, for example, shared a director of photography with *Black Swan*, and a top special-effects house took her work on as a labor of love. "I think people in the movie industry get excited about doing something a bit different," she suggests. They also know an up-and-coming star when they see one.



Her next short film, called *La Petite Mort*, will be released later this month, jointly with her latest photo series. The film is inspired by the “intensity of feeling you get in orgasm or right before death,” she says, adding quickly that “It’s not soft porn or anything.” (It opens with a narration based on a story her mother told her about being in such intense pain when giving birth to her that she had an orgasm. Then Prager mentions that she’s not sure her -mother would want her to tell that story.)

The photos themselves, a selection of which appear on these pages, and a show of which opens at Yancey Richardson this week, are from a series called “Compulsion.” They’re elaborately staged, and then digitally manipulated. “The photo shoot is only about 40 percent of the image,” she says. “I can do all my planning and prepping, but I know that 95 percent of what I shoot is not what I see in my head. I’m using it as a foundation, in the same way a painter might: adding clouds, adding a car.” They speak to our inability to avert our gaze from disaster, and to that end, each is paired with a Man Ray-ish close-up of an eye. Some eyeball models she recruited off -Craigslist, which is also where she got the Chevy that she (digitally) sank into Highway 101. “I still had to buy it and take the engine out and put it in a body of water to get the right reflection. There are some things you can’t fake.”

The inspiration, she says, comes from her reading too much local news online. “It wasn’t like I wanted it to be the theme,” she says. “It just kind of happened. Who can deny all the apocalyptic talk of 2012, the birds falling from the sky? There was some creepy shit going down.”

MoMA's ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES HIGHLIGHTS FOUR CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS WITH *NEW PHOTOGRAPHY 2010*

The 2010 Edition Marks the 25th Anniversary of MoMA's New Photography Series and Features the Work of Roe Ethridge, Elad Lassry, Alex Prager, and Amanda Ross-Ho

U.S. Debut of Alex Prager's *Despair* (2010) and Elad Lassry's *Untitled* (2009) Marks the First Time Film Has Been Included in a New Photography Installation

***New Photography 2010*:** Roe Ethridge, Elad Lassry, Alex Prager, Amanda Ross-Ho
September 29, 2010—January 10, 2011
The Robert and Joyce Menschel Gallery, third floor

NEW YORK, September 16, 2010—For ***New Photography 2010***, The Museum of Modern Art highlights four artists in its annual showcase of significant recent work in contemporary photography, with the 2010 edition marking the 25th anniversary of the series. The exhibition is on view from September 29, 2010, through January 10, 2011, and features the work of Roe Ethridge, Elad Lassry, Alex Prager, and Amanda Ross-Ho, all of whom engage photography as a medium with fluid borders between editorial work, film, and art. Their pictures—shot in the real world, posed in the studio, or culled from pop culture and the movie industry—constantly shift contexts, often circulating from the magazine page to the wall. *New Photography 2010* is organized by Roxana Marcoci, Curator, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art.

Since its inception in 1985, the New Photography series has introduced the work of over 70 artists from 16 countries. The Museum continues this tradition of highlighting significant accomplishments in contemporary photography with this year's edition featuring four artists and 36 works of photography and film.

"These artists engage in a kind of post-appropriative practice," explains Ms. Marcoci. "If in the 1970s Richard Prince questioned notions of originality by rephotographing advertising images and presenting them as his own, this younger group of artists reinvest in photographic authorship, creating pictures that often exist simultaneously as commercial assignment and artwork. They recognize photography to be a fluid medium."

Roe Ethridge (American, b. 1969), who studied photography at The College of Art in Atlanta, takes his shoots in "editorial mode," directly borrowing images already in circulation, including outtakes from his own commercial work. Drawing upon the traditions of descriptive photography and photography as a resource of mass imagery to be duplicated and recombined, the artist orchestrates visual fugues: a plain white plate grabbed from Bed Bath & Beyond's website is superimposed on a checkered Comme des Garçons scarf; a model dressed in an Alexander McQueen shirt poses against a tripod at Pier 59; two filmic pictures of a Juilliard ballet student were initially published in *Vice* magazine; a model from the Chanel Spring '09 fashion

show is culled from *The New York Times*; a pumpkin sticker is shot in close-up view and magnified; a red bag is featured in a corner of the artist's studio; and a still life displays moldy fruit. Abandoning conventional photographic aesthetics in favor of intentionally inconsistent modes of representation, Ethridge's pictures acquire their distinct meaning from the salient way they are reshuffled, sequenced, and laid out.

Elad Lassry (Israeli, b. 1977) defines his practice as one consumed with pictures, meaning with generic images culled from vintage picture magazines or film archives. After attending CalArts as a film student, the artist earned an MFA from the University of Southern California. Tapping into the visual culture of still and motion pictures, Lassry's practice is as much engaged with the history of building stories with images as with the ghosts of history that persist long after images have been lifted out of their original context. Lassry demands viewers to rethink what it means to arrive at a point visually. His vibrantly colored pictures—studio portraits of friends and celebrities, still life compositions, and photocollages—never exceed the format of a magazine spread and are displayed in matching frames that derive their color from the dominant hues in the photographs. In their deadpan objecthood and Pop subject matter, Lassry's images mimic the condition of non-art; yet his most direct shots are upended by an occasional blur, double-exposure, or the sandwiching of multiple negatives. Lassry often places his photographs beside 16-mm film projections. *Untitled* (2009), featuring Eric Stoltz in the role of choreographer teaching steps to a dancer dressed in red bodysuit, heightens the tension between stillness within the moving image and the temporality of the static image. A deft explorer of the relationship between image and picture, Lassry perks up the seductive language of film and advertising with a touch of subversive conceptualism.

A self-taught photographer, **Alex Prager** (American, b. 1979) takes her cues from pulp fiction, the cinematic conventions of movie directors such as Douglas Sirk and Alfred Hitchcock, and the stylized fashion works of Guy Bourdin to construct images that are intentionally loaded, not unlike silent movies. Her unnerving narratives feature women disguised in synthetic wigs, dramatic makeup, and retro polyester attires. Shot from unexpected angles and dramatically lit, her crisp, boldly colored photographs offer a feeling of disquiet. *Crowd #1 (Stan Douglas)*, one in a series of pictures shot for the November 2010 issue of *W* magazine, makes its debut here. It draws from Stan Douglas's *Hastings Park, 16 July 1955* (2008), among other sources, but Prager has enlisted a new cast of characters, dressed in 1970s outfits (which she selected), and shot the scene in her own signature style. The exhibition also presents the U.S. premiere of Prager's debut film, *Despair* (2010). This four-minute film starring the actress Bryce Dallas Howard is, according to the artist, a "full-sensory version" of her photographs. Set in 1960s Los Angeles to a score by composer Ali Helnwein, this short is inspired by the 1948 film *The Red Shoes*, about a prima ballerina whose obsession with dance conflicts with her need for love, ultimately leading to her suicide. Focusing on the actress's face to capture one intense emotion, Prager's construction of

images is intentionally loaded, reflecting her fascination with, and understanding of, cinematic melodrama.

Amanda Ross-Ho (American, b. 1975) received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from the University of Southern California. Nodding to various stages of the creative process, her distinctive installations typically include a mix of collages, assemblages, mural-scale inkjet prints of studio residues, and hand-drilled Sheetrock panels propped against the wall that function like architectural backdrops. The Sheetrock panel in this exhibition is lined up with found images scanned from the pages of craft manuals and photography textbooks, but also includes pictures that have familial significance, such as a gelatin silver print portrait taken by the artist's mother in the 1970s, and a reprint from a large color transparency of a composition with glasses, originally taken by her father in the context of his work as a commercial photographer. Ross-Ho grew up in a family of photographers, both commercial and artistic. As a child she spent time with her mother while she worked in the darkroom, and often stood as a model for test shots taken by her uncle and father. Within this framework of relationships, Ross-Ho renegotiates the definition of craft processes and commercial photography in contemporary practice.

SPONSORSHIP:

The exhibition is made possible by the Carl Jacobs Foundation.

No. 54

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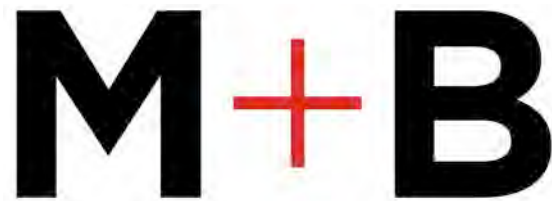
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Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
Closed Tuesday

Museum Admission: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

Film Admission: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)



THE HUFFINGTON POST

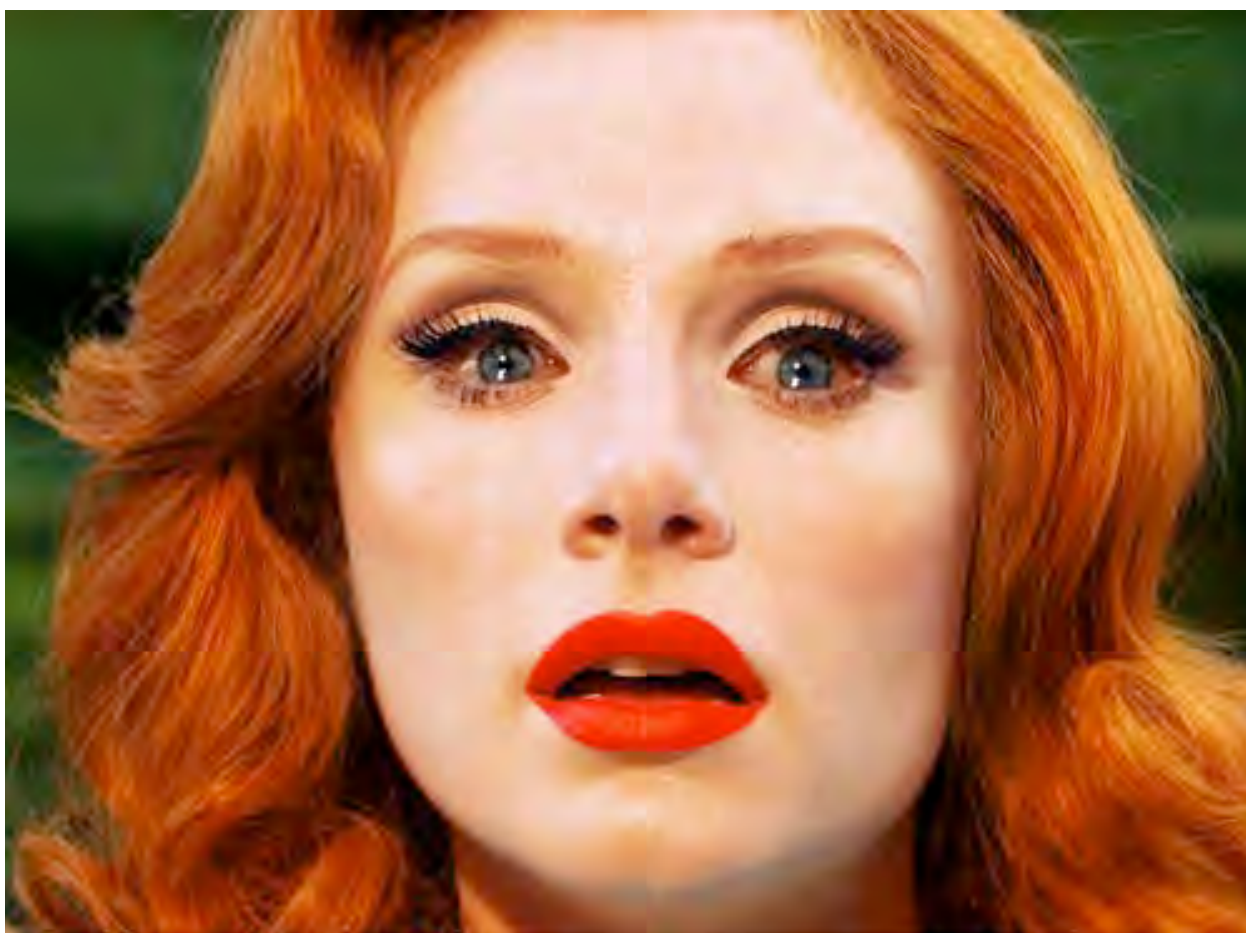
THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

Alex Prager: Where We Went From There

Cat Weaver

The Art Machine

Posted: September 25, 2010 01:10 PM



Alex Prager (American, born 1979) Despair. 2010. Chromogenic color print, 16 x 20" (40.6 x 50.8 cm) Courtesy the artist and

Yancey Richardson Gallery © 2010 Alex Prager, courtesy Yancey Richardson Gallery

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This is now; that was then: LEFT: Alex Prager *Desiree* from the series *The Big Valley*. 2008. Chromogenic color print, 36 x 48 1/2" (91.4 x 123.2 cm) RIGHT: Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still*, 1978, Black and white photograph, 8 x 10 inches, 20.3 x 25.4 cm, Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures, (MP# 11)

There are moments throughout the history of art when, marveling at the latest aesthetic affront, the public, the critics, and even fellow artists have thrown up their hands and asked, "*Where can we possibly go from here?*"

And, lately, as art has grown ever more referential and every medium, self-referential -- when there is nary an image that does not lay claim to a legacy of irony that is now generations deep: well: what *can* possibly come next?

Answer: **Alex Prager**.

The colors are saturated, livid, one might say; you might think it's a still from a movie, or a perhaps a cover torn off the latest J.Crew catalog, but it is neither. It is one of the many super sexy trope-portraits that the artist, Alex Prager, has become known for.

Yes, I went ahead and coined 'trope-portrait' just for Prager's work because it otherwise defies category. These are, after all, not pictures of women, nor are they the loaded narratives constructed by **Cindy**

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Sherman, whom she references to heavily; instead, Prager's photos are of tropes. They depict *kinds of women in kinds of situations*, ones that have already been created and have already been referenced.

And they do it with a no holes barred sexy panache a la **David LaChapelle** and a shameless balls-out approach to appropriation that snickers at the earnest loyalty of **Richard Prince's** pix.

Glamour and defiance: this is a have your cake and bath in it too, generation.

Whereas Cindy Sherman referred to movie tropes -- not so much kinds of women as the *ways we have told stories about women* -- Alex Prager refers to the "capture" as they say in photography, the moment of clarity when what the artist sees gels into what she wants you to see. Sometimes that capture is a sly wink at the viewer, where the focus is shifted toward sheer, brightly lit, sex.



Lost Girls at your mercy: LEFT: Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still, 1979, black and white photograph, 8 x 10 inches, 20.3 x 25.4 cm, Courtesy of the Artist and Metro Pictures, (MP# 48) RIGHT: Desert, 2007, © Alex Prager, C-type print, Robert Berman Gallery

These pictures throw wit and cleverness away like so much tedious homework. And although Prager has also tossed aside the postmodern mantle of irony that protects the serious artist from coming off

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downright crass -- she manages to score big with critics and fans because her references to Hitchcock are flat out endearing, and her **David Lynch/Greg Crewdson** sense of foreboding keep many of the images on your mind.



LEFT: Alex Prager, *Beverly*, 2008 © Alex Prager, Digital C-Type Print , courtesy Michael Hoppen Contemporary RIGHT: Screen shot of Google Search!

And then there's super-saturated colors that produce an irresistibly juicy wall power. It's hands-down pretty stuff and you can't help but like it.

Alex Prager, Desiree and Despair: Courtesy, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the generosity of the Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Linda and Gregory Fischbach, and William S. Susman and Emily Glasser © 2010 Alex Prager, courtesy Yancey Richardson Gallery

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The New York Times

'New Photography 2010' Coming to MoMA

by Carol Vogel

July 29, 2010



When it comes to photography there is nothing new about appropriation, specifically, photographing other photographs, often from magazine ads, then enlarging and exhibiting them in galleries. It is an art form that has been practiced for decades by [Andy Warhol](#), Richard Prince and [Dash Snow](#). Generally, however, those doing the appropriating start with someone else's work.

But this fall, when the [Museum of Modern Art](#) opens "New Photography 2010," many of the young practitioners will be putting a new twist on the concept: They are taking their own images from their commercial assignments — a past portrait for a magazine article, for instance, or a photo for a

cosmetic advertisement — and remaking them in new ways.

"They often borrow from their own work and use it in different formats," said Roxana Marcoci, a curator in the photography department at [MoMA](#) who has organized the show. (She also organized "The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today." Review, Page 23.) "These photographers also use imagery culled from other sources, which they alter as a kind of punctuation mixed in with their own work. It's a kind of postappropriative art."

The show will feature four photographers: Roe Ethridge, Elad Lassry, [Alex Prager](#) and Amanda Ross-Ho. Mr. Ethridge lives in New York, the others in Los Angeles. "They recognize photography as something that is fluid," Ms. Marcoci added.

Ms. Ross-Ho has taken images from disparate sources like craft manuals and shots that she found on Amazon.com as well as a photograph of a pair of glasses that her father, Ruyell Ho (who is also a professional photographer), took for an advertisement.

The exhibition will also include a 16-millimeter film, by Mr. Lassry, which features the actor [Eric Stoltz](#). There is also a four-minute film by Ms. Prager, her first, with the actress [Bryce Dallas Howard](#). Set in 1960s Los Angeles, it is inspired by the 1948 film "The Red Shoes," about a ballerina whose obsession with dance conflicts with her need for love, ultimately leading to her suicide. Ms. Prager melds pulp fiction and fashion imagery (using the same stylistic devices that she uses in her photographs) in a film that stars women wearing synthetic wigs, and colorful period clothes.

"The idea is to expand the notion of what photography is," Ms. Marcoci said.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALEX PRAGER: WEEK-END

January 30 – March 6, 2010

Artist's Opening Reception: Saturday, January 30, 2010



M+B is pleased to present the exhibition *Week-end*, the latest body of work by 29-year old photographer ALEX PRAGER. Completely self-taught and recognized for her trademark vision that trumps any formal training, Prager's *Week-end* is a collection of 18 color photographs as dazzling as they are bizarre. The exhibition opens January 30, 2010 and will run through March 6, 2010, with an opening reception for the artist on Saturday, January 30 from 6 – 8 pm.

The culmination of a trilogy that began with *Polyester* and *The Big Valley*, Prager's *Week-end* began as organically as her other series. Inspired by the high drama of classic movies—which, despite their theatricality, touch upon genuine emotions of alienation, fear, anger, longing, and lust—Prager's images seem at first to be all exquisite surface. However the girls of this series—named “Barbara,” “Jane,” “Lois” and other such conventional and slightly old-fashioned monikers—conceal pain beneath their lipstick-lined smiles and dead eyes. Informed largely by Los Angeles, with its perpetual blue skies and birds singing from imported palm trees, Prager's work exudes an underlying sense of the eerie monotony and unease that can permeate beneath the surface of beauty and the promise of happiness.

In the artist's own words, she is “documenting a world that exists and doesn't exist at the same time.” The trilogy began with girls playing archetypal roles in *Polyester*. Then in *The Big Valley*, the roles took on lives of their own, and the separation between make-believe and real life began to dissolve. With *Week-end*, which signifies the peak as well as the extent of the period, the façade becomes so thick that the illusion is now more real than the world they actually live in

Alex Prager was born in Los Angeles in 1979. Prager's interest in art began as an adolescent shuttling between Florida, California and Switzerland, but it wasn't until viewing an exhibition of William Eggleston at the Getty Museum in her early twenties that she began to focus on photography. In keeping with her independent spirit, she eschewed art school and began taking photographs on her own, learning equipment and lighting through trial and error. Since then her photographs have been included in over 20 exhibitions in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, London and elsewhere and have been included in a number of publications including *Details*, *i-D*, *Tank*, *Elle Japan*, *MOJO*, and *Complex*. This will be her first solo exhibition at M+B and third in Los Angeles.

Location:	M+B, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90069
Show Title:	Alex Prager: Week-end
Exhibition Dates:	January 30 – March 6, 2010
Artist's Reception:	Saturday, January 30, 6 – 8 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appt

For more info, please contact Shannon Richardson at M+B at (310) 550 – 0050 or shannon@mbart.com

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NEW YORK

February 8, 2010



At first, Alex Prager's images seem sunny as an early Beach Boys song—what could be wrong with all those California blondes hanging out by the pool or silhouetted against a bright blue sky? But check out the way they're looking at one another, the weirdly forceful body language, the waxiness behind the tans. Something's deeply wrong in those lives, and all the saturated Kodachrome-y color and retro buoyancy in the world can't disguise it. These new photographs add an extra, more personal dimension to the otherworldliness: They were all shot in the L.A. neighborhood where Prager grew up, and the models' clothes came from an actress friend of her grandmother's. If you're a David Lynch fan, this is the photographer for you (at Yancey Richardson through February 20). — Christopher Bonanos

Alex Prager's Girls on Film

by [erin lindholm](#) 01/22/10

Alex Prager's scene-stealing heroines have arrived in New York in *Week-end*, currently on display at Yancey Richardson Gallery. Like the two previous shows in this series (*Polyester* and *The Big Valley*), *Week-end* features large-format Technicolor portraits of luminous beauties done up in vintage Hollywood glamour. The Los Angeles native employs cinematic conventions such as the close-up and the damsel in distress, and the rich use of negative space to draw us into each carefully constructed scene. She leaves us just enough clues that we can piece together the narrative without giving away the big reveal. Stare long enough and you'll half expect the women to jump to life at the sound of a clapboard's loud *snap*.



JULIE 11x14, 2009. COURTESY YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY

ERIN LINDHOLM: Your photographs, the way you use light and frame the scenes, they're strikingly cinematic—they feel like they could be a stills from a film. Where did that interest stem from?

ALEX PRAGER: I love old things. I love old clothes, old cars, the way makeup used to be—aesthetically, everything was better back then. The actress looked amazing and the lighting was perfect and the background was never over-exposed because they used these huge painted backdrops, or projected screens. Everything looked so incredible that no matter what dire situation the actress was in, you never felt like something horrible was really going to happen.

In my photos, there is that same element of making something seem less serious, because you're instantly drawn to the beautiful woman and the beautiful lighting and this kind of surreal world. But they [the photographs] aren't as happy and beautiful as they first appear. I feel like I trick people into looking at them. Does that make sense?

LINDHOLM: Now that you say that, you're right, there aren't really too many, if any, happy women in your photographs.

PRAGER: They aren't meant to be happy photos.

LINDHOLM: In your work, the city of Los Angeles plays the role of a supporting character. There's such a striking presence of the city in all of the scenes, whether it's the incredible saturated blue of the sky, or the beach, or those very specific locations that you scouted out. How has Los Angeles informed your work?

PRAGER: It's my home; I was born here. I love L.A., but it's a weird city because it's one of the only cities in the world where people aren't really walking down the street. It's easy to fall in love with the beauty of everything—the perfect weather all the time, everyone looks great. It's got this façade of being perfect, just like what you see in the movies. And then after living here for a while, you think, "Where are my friends? Where are all the people?" It can get really lonely and devastating.

LINDHOLM: How would your work be different if they were set in a different city?



EMILY 11x14, 2009. COURTESY YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY.

PRAGER: I've been wondering that actually. My photos haven't always been based around L.A. That was something that just happened one day when one of my grandmother's friends gave me her old clothes. She was an actress in the '50s; she had all these old clothes she was getting rid of because her kids didn't appreciate them and she knew that I did.

LINDHOLM: So the clothes inspired the series?

PRAGER: The clothes were kind of a set; they were intended for a famous actress to wear. A normal person wouldn't necessarily have worn them even back in the '50s. They were outrageous.

The girls, too—with *Polyester* [the first segment in the trilogy], it seemed like they knew they were acting in the photos, and they were giggling about it the whole time. Whereas as the series progressed, it seemed less and less like they were having a good time while they were playing "pretend." In *Week-end*, they've forgotten that they were acting to begin with, almost.

That's how I look at the series. It wasn't intentional; it just organically happened this way. *Week-end*, for me, feels like the end of the trilogy because it does seem more real and more devastating. The emotions seem more real; it seems like real-life. It doesn't seem like the girls know that it's this "pretend" world anymore.

WEEK-END OPENS AT M+B FINE ART IN LOS ANGELES ON JANUARY 30 AND REMAINS ON DISPLAY AT YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY IN NEW YORK THROUGH FEBRUARY 20. WEEK-END WILL BE ON DISPLAY AT RINGCUBE GALLERY IN TOKYO IN LATE APRIL AND AT MICHAEL HOPPEN GALLERY IN LONDON IN JUNE.

The New York Times

URBANEYE

JANUARY 21, 2010



Girls on Film

"Barbara" wears a fur coat, a Marilyn wig and a blank stare. "Deborah" leans against the rear window of a car, casually smoking and "Beth" just sets things on fire in a parking lot. Inspired by **Alfred Hitchcock**, **David Lynch**, **Douglas Sirk** and other masters of sexy darkness, the photographer **Alex Prager** specializes in cinematic images of women. Her latest portraits can be seen at [Yancey Richardson Gallery](#), which is presenting "Week-End," now through Feb. 20. The exhibition of new work by Ms. Prager is the third installment in her trilogy of staged female portraits set in the artist's native city, Los Angeles. Ms. Prager examines female types with wigs, makeup, retro costumes and intriguing narratives lurking just outside the frame that make you want to look.