

M+B

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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)

