

CORCORAN

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 29 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>.

Alex Prager: Face in the Crowd is presented by

BOTTEGA VENETA

Additional support for the exhibition provided by The Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc. and Nion McEvoy.
The official media sponsor is



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, Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York, and M+B Gallery, Los Angeles.

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