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INTERVIEW



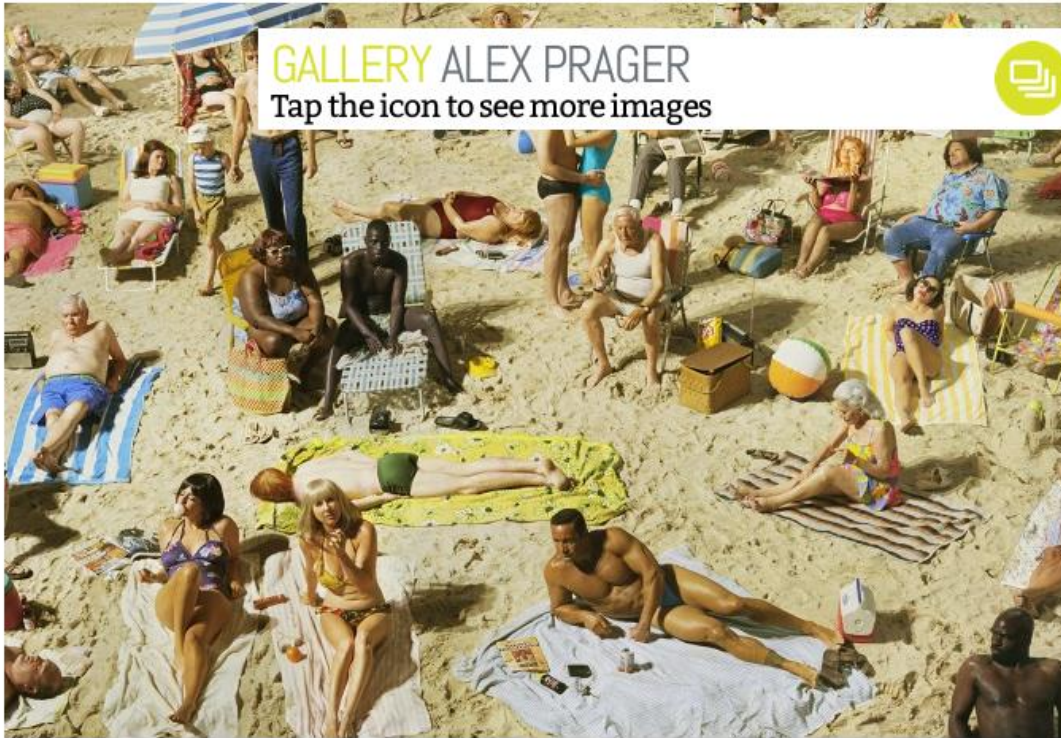
{Quickfire Q&A}

Alex Prager

Famed for her quirky crowd images, fine-art photographer Alex Prager gives us an insight into her unsettling, cinema-influenced world



OPEN



PRO-FILE



Who:
Alex Prager is a US-based art photographer who uses staged sets and models to create movie-like images.

What:
Alex was inspired to take up photography after seeing a William Eggleston exhibition in 2008.

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You were influenced by William Eggleston at the beginning – what was it about his work that attracted you?

There was a snapshot quality to it, something quite ordinary, but the way that it made me feel was quite the opposite. I felt very emotional when I saw his images for the first time. This made me become curious about photography – and then, very quickly, obsessed.

Where did you get the idea for your Face in the Crowd group shot series?

I had been wanting to shoot crowds for many years, but I wasn't trying to just re-enact crowds that we've seen before; I was trying to create a staged world for this crowd to live in. I wanted to construct crowds that brought the feel of cinema, a manufactured world, and meld them with reality. There was a very emotional aspect to that reality. Part of it was personal – having discovered a couple of years earlier that I had stage fright. Also, suddenly travelling more than I'd travelled before.



PRO-FILE

in 1999, and has won international acclaim with her uncanny, unsettling group shots and portraits that often resemble film stills. She draws inspiration from pulp fiction and Hollywood, and made her first film in 2010. She is currently exhibiting work at [The Arts Club](#) in London, UK.

Where:

Alex is currently based in LA.

forced me to see crowds differently. I became interested in how they affected me emotionally and psychologically.

Shooting the crowds took years of practising lighting much smaller groups, as well as figuring out how to direct people into becoming types of characters. In a way, everything I've shot since I first started led me to realising *Face in the Crowd*.

Are you happy being labelled as an 'art' photographer, or do you think it's something of a false distinction from, say, a commercial photographer?

I think there is a difference between an 'art' photographer and a commercial photographer. An art photographer has full creative freedom at all times, whereas generally, collaborating with brands is just that, a collaboration. That can be difficult when you're used to having your way. That's not to say that commercial photographers aren't making art, though. In my opinion these are just labels to distinguish whether it's a brand collaboration or not



PRO-FILE

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Kit list:

Alex has always shot on a Contax 645 with an 80mm lens and Kodak Portra film.

Does your crowd photography take a lot of setting up? And do you sometimes yearn for a more simple and spontaneous type of street photography?

It takes a lot of pre-production, and an enormous amount of post-production, but honestly I'm so interested in how everything will turn out that it really isn't an issue. Street photography has its own set of challenges. I would never say that one is simpler than the other.

In an interview with *Modern Painters* you said you sometimes get bored of photography and switch to film-making. Is this still the case?

I said that when I was in the process of figuring out what moving images meant to me. Now I can't imagine having one without the other. Both are such great mediums for communicating in very different ways. I'm beginning to



moving images meant to me. Now I can't imagine having one without the other. Both are such great mediums for communicating in very different ways. I'm beginning to understand both mediums better now that I can move freely between them.

You've said that you chose to call yourself Alex because commissioning editors might have felt more comfortable dealing with a man. Is it easier for female photographers starting off today?

There are plenty of amazing women out there doing incredible things. It's funny, though, because when I'm working I'm never thinking about my gender, I'm just working. Keeping my name as Alex instead of Alexandra kept my gender out of it, and my work could just be looked at for exactly what it was, which suited me better.

To view more of Alex's fascinating images, visit www.alexprager.com.

SCROLL FOR MORE



GALLERY ALEX PRAGER

Tap the icon to see more images



Alex is currently based in LA

Alex has always shot on a Contax 545 with an 80mm lens and Tokina Perovonim

starting off today?

there are plenty of amazing ways that there doing for people things it's funny though because when i'm working i'm never thinking about my camera or my walking keeping my name as alex instead of alex prager and my gear out of it and my camera is a Contax 545 with an 80mm lens and Tokina Perovonim

+ CROWD #3, PELICAN BEACH, 2013

To create beach scenes like this, Prager pours up to 20 tons of sand into a Hollywood soundstage, then shoots from high viewpoints to give the impression of a camera suspended from above.

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GALLERY ALEX PRAGER

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...there are plenty of artists who are doing incredible things. It's hard though because when I'm walking I'm never thinking about my name. I'm just walking. Keeping my name as Alex is weird. ...my gender out of it, and my ...and it was worth

+ CROWD #6, HAZELWOOD, 2013

Prager dresses actors using items from her personal collection of wigs and vintage clothing, and arranges them in surreal and often unsettling compositions.

GALLERY ALEX PRAGER

Tap the icon to see more images



Prager recently
based in LA

Alex has always shot
on a Dancer 545 with
an 80mm lens and
Vocal Protra film

things is hard though because when I'm working I'm never thinking about my camera or my lighting. Keeping my name as Alex instead of Prager is a little bit of a con game. I don't want to be known for exactly what it was, which



+ EXIT DOORS, 2013

If her subjects get a little too happy and connected, Alex will separate them in post-production. "I like to keep things awkward," she says.

GALLERY ALEX PRAGER

Tap the icon to see more images



PRO-FILE

shots and portraits that often resemble film stills. She developed her reputation from fiction and Hollywood and made her first film in 2010. She currently exhibits work at in London, UK.

Alex is currently based in LA

Alex has always shot on a Contax 645 with an M-mount and Kodak Portra film

+ FACE IN THE CROWD FILM STRIP #3, 2013

Alex also likes to work with film stills, rather than posed photographs, often shooting both stills and movie footage simultaneously.