

The New York Times

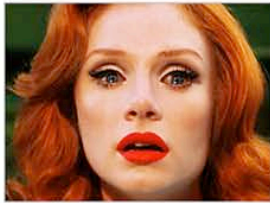
INSIDE ART

'New Photography 2010' Coming to MoMA

By CAROL VOGEL

Published: 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.



Yancey Richardson Gallery

Alex Prager's "Despair," a short film featuring the actress Bryce Dallas Howard, will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art.

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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THE ART NEWSPAPER

New Photography 2010

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York

29 September-10 January 2011

www.moma.org

New York's Museum of Modern Art's annual "New Photography" exhibition celebrates its 25th anniversary. This year the museum's curator of photography, Roxana Marcoci, has researched the state of American photography in 2010 and her investigation reveals the crossover between fine art and commercial photography. She has selected the work

of four artists: Roe Ethridge, Elad Lassry, Alex Prager and Amanda Ross-Ho. Their images represent a collective "re-assessment and reflection of the current mood of photography", says Marcoci.

New York-based Roe Ethridge works as a magazine photographer when he is not creating fine art and he incorporates many of his commercial images into the work on show here. Similarly, Lassry borrows images from what Marcoci calls the "fag-ends of consumer society" such as Hollywood publicity stills and his work conforms to the dimensions of a magazine spread.

The commercial thread that

runs through all the artists' work is a trend that Marcoci sees as a consequence of both artists and viewers being aware of "the current dominance of consumer society in visual culture", suggesting that all great photographs will inevitably "end up in magazines". The trend continues in the work of Prager, who uses images normally associated with film, fashion and advertising to construct narratives that contain what Marcoci calls "a touch of subversive conceptualism".

Prager has made one of the short films on show. *Despair*, 2010. Starring the young Hollywood actress Bryce Dallas Howard, the brief melodrama is based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, "The Red Shoes". Lassry's untitled 2009 16mm work depicts a choreographer teaching dance steps.

Three of the four photographers live in Los Angeles, confirming the city's position as a hotspot for contemporary photography. While all the works in the show are in some way intended to display the flexibility of the medium, another theme is the difference between "image" and "picture". According to Elad Lassry the two things are discrete distinguishing between what he calls the "raw" images of everyday life and the "cooked" pictures that emerge from artists' photographic studios. Left, Alex Prager, *Julie*, 2007. R.C.



Image courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York. © 2010 Alex Prager

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VANITY FAIR

—| Spotlight |—
UNEASY PIECES

October 2010, No. 601



She creates images of things that never happened, a world that never was, but at the same time is very familiar—we have been here before. A Los Angeles native, Alex Prager is among four photographers to be featured in “New Photography 2010,” opening at New York’s Museum of Modern Art this fall. Born in the back room of her grandmother’s Los Feliz apartment, Prager is self-taught, having learned about photography through library books and yard-sale finds. She never graduated from high school—instead, she spent her teens selling Swiss Army Knives in Lucerne, Switzerland. It was an exhibition of William Eggleston’s work that got her hooked—she bought her first camera the next day and ordered darkroom equipment via eBay. Taking aesthetic cues from film, fashion photography, and the world of pulp fiction, Prager constructs darkly playful cinematic moments, charged with melodramatic glamour. Her heroines are retro-styled women on the verge. “The construction of the images is intentionally loaded,” says MoMA curator Roxana Marcoci. “It reminds me of silent movies—there is something pregnant, about to happen, a mix of desire and angst.”

“I find my inspiration in the city of Los Angeles,” says Prager. “The sky is always blue; the birds are always singing. It’s a strange picture of perfection—but there is an eerie monotony that creeps in. It can slowly drive a person crazy, that sense of unease under the surface of all this beauty and promise.”

Prager's work is featured in *Water, Glass, and Desire*, by photographer Alex Prager, whose work will be featured in this fall's "New Photography 2010" exhibition at New York City's Museum of Modern Art.

—A. M. HOMES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEX PRAGER

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The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 2010

Aipad Photography Show New York

Park Avenue Armory
643 Park Avenue, at 67th Street
Through Sunday

Much of photography's past is on display at the Association of International Photography Art Dealers Photography Show, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary. But if you are concerned about the future of the medium, there are only a few hints of what might be to come.

Mainly it is a show for collectors of vintage prints. Among the 72 dealers, scores are presenting usual-suspect inventories: Evans, Weston, Arbus and so on. Some, however, have exercised more creativity.

Photology, for one, has a marvelous display of small, sexually provocative Polaroids by a select few, including Helmut Newton, Carlo Mollino, Andy Warhol and Robert Mapplethorpe. At Hemphill there is an understatedly poetic series of pictures of old buildings in the South taken in the 1970s with a Kodak Brownie by William Christenberry.

Two galleries present remarkable, though very different, trip-lets.

Monroe has Eddie Adams's famous 1968 picture of a South Vietnamese officer shooting a Vietcong suspect in the head, flanked within the same frame by shots in which the prisoner is being escorted by soldiers before his execution and has fallen to the ground after.

Bruce Silverstein has three variations on a subtly surreal 1948 portrait of a preteen girl with strangely bright eyes and curiously dark skin (she's white). She seems an eerie blend of innocence and witchy experience.

Similarly weird pictures of chil-

Art in Review



YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY

Alex Prager's "Rachel and Friends" (2009), from the series *Week-End*, at the Aipad Photography Show New York.

dren by Loretta Lux are at Yossi Milo, but they are in color and slightly distorted digitally. "Marianne," in a neat powder-blue coat, is lovely if a little spooky, but the strangely solemn, big-eyed twins in polka-dot dresses in another image are scary. They look as if they escaped from Stanley Kubrick's film "The Shining."

There is a lot of work in the show that blurs the line between commercial and fine art. Danziger has pictures of the punk goddess Patti Smith by Annie Leibovitz. At PDNB Gallery there are still-life pictures of food by Robyn Stacey. A watermelon with a chunk cut out of it simultaneously calls to mind Baroque-era Spanish Realist painting and illustration for a contemporary gourmet food magazine.

As for the future, Bryce Wolowitz offers a variety of electronically animated works, including a self-portrait by Shirley Shore that appears on a framed flat screen. Using a program she wrote, Ms. Shore created a composite image in which randomly changing pixels from pictures of herself and about 40 relatives and friends combine into a shimmering, constantly shifting single portrait.

One photographer who definitely has a future is Alex Prager, a young Los Angeleno who makes staged color photographs of women that synthesize the influences of Cindy Sherman, Philip-Lorca diCorcia and Douglas Sirk. Her coolly romantic pictures are at Yancey Richardson, and she will be included in a show of new photography at the Museum of Modern Art in the fall.

KEN JOHNSON

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OUR CHOICE OF NEW AND EMERGING
PHOTOGRAPHERS TO WATCH

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TAX TIPS:
SAVE MONEY
IN 2010

PRODUCT TEST:
CANON 1D
MARK IV

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MARCH 2010



PDN's
30
2010



ALEX PRAGER

AGE: 30

BORN: Los Angeles

RESIDES: Los Angeles

EDUCATION: Self-taught

AWARDS: International Photography Awards, 3rd Place, Fine-Art Portrait; Lucie IPA Award, 3rd Place, Portrait; London Photographic Award

SELECTED CLIENTS: *Details*, *i-D*, *Tank*, *Elle Japan*, *Flaunt*, *Island*, *Sony*, *Geffen*

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS: Solo: Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York; M+B Gallery, Los Angeles; Michael Hoppen Gallery, London; Ringcube Gallery, Tokyo; Robert Berman Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

KEY LESSONS LEARNED: "I didn't need a gallery to start showing my work. For the first six years there wasn't a gallery in L.A. interested in showing my photos, but I still had shows at least once a year (in friend's lofts, stores, hair salons, etc.)"

GREATEST CHALLENGE: "To keep moving forward with making new work that genuinely excites me. It's easy to get comfortable once you find out what people like, but it's not very fun to get my film back from the lab and realize that I'm looking at pictures I easily could have shot two years prior."

EARLY ON, Los Angeles-based fine-art photographer Alex Prager could scarcely get a gallerist to open her portfolio, much less give her a show. One woman even told her she should give up. Yet Prager found a way to organize exhibitions in friends' lofts and other spaces outside the art establishment, and her perseverance paid off. A curator took notice of her work at an exhibition she put on with a friend and invited her to participate in a group show at Berman/Turner Projects in 2006.

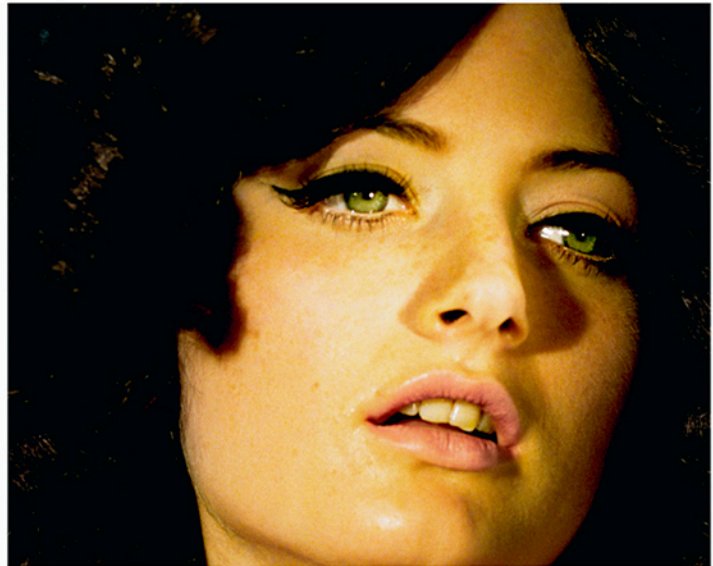
Robert Berman then offered Prager her first solo show in 2007, where she debuted "Polyester," a body of work that introduced her as a promising young talent. Though Prager felt people liked and took an interest in her earlier work, with "Polyester" she challenged herself to make photographs that people wanted to hang on their walls, but that also conveyed a feeling of tragedy that reflected her worldview.

In her tableaux she used bright, bold color and pretty (mostly female) friends dressed in vintage clothing and wigs to draw viewers into images that were dramatic and often troubling. "One way to get someone to confront something that's not that happy is to have a façade so they will want to look at it, and then to have something else going on too, to get the other communication across," she says.

Newly confident, she convinced London's Michael Hoppen Gallery to take her on, and several solo and group shows have followed. "Her work was fresh and immediately visually strong and striking," says Michael Hoppen Contemporary director Charlotte Nation. "Hitchcock's undercurrent of fear, Cindy Sherman's themes of female identity, Gregory Crewdson's nightmarish suburbs, the cartoonish drama of Roy Lichtenstein's women—she takes all of this visual language and creates something entirely her own."

Prager is tight-lipped about her plans for her next project, but she says her recent success has given her a sense of freedom that will allow her to continue evolving. "Now that I have these galleries representing me and I'm selling work, I feel like I don't necessarily have to stay with that thing that got people to want to buy my stuff."

—Conor Risch



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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

YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL • REVIEW

Alex Prager's Girls on Film

by *erin lindholm* 01/22/10

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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 (FROM THE SERIES "POLYESTER," 2007. COURTESY YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY)

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Art in America

INTERNATIONAL • REVIEW

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?

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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?

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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.

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YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY

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.

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the girl stays in the picture



PHOTO BY ALEX PRAGER

art

THE GIRL STAYS IN THE PICTURE

Alex Prager's new gallery show is a must-see.

Damsels in distress are a common theme in Western art (Picasso's women don't even get an even number of arms and eyes), and even modern art photographers have to resort to sex to get a woman to look powerful (thank you, Nan Goldin). But 30 year old California native Alex Prager, whose third solo exhibition premieres in New York City and Los Angeles this year, strays from the usual pattern. Her photographs have a 1960s cinematic feel, and portray women on the edge of beauty and disaster.

Prager's hometown of LA serves as her biggest inspiration, but she also takes cues from Cindy Sherman, creating in-depth narratives within each solitary shot. The larger format photography (Prager uses a Contax 640, which is bigger than average 35 mm cameras) opens the playing field to the characters she creates in each photograph. These character's names, which are also the artworks' titles, comes to Prager after the developing process (the actual models are Prager's friends).

Media buzz ensued after the success of her first two solo exhibitions, Polyester (2007) and The Big Valley (2008-09) and Prager became one of the latest recipients of the International Photography Award (IPA) for Fine Arts Portraits. Her latest exhibition, Week-end, is a culmination of photos that all create a sense of foreboding drama and together weave a story of theatrics and promise – just don't expect any major rescue scenes featuring Prince Charming in the next room.

The Week-end exhibit will be featured at the Yancey Richardson Gallery in New York City from January 14th to February 20th and the M+B Gallery in Los Angeles from January 30th to March 6th. Some of her work can also be seen at www.alexprager.com.

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