

Alex Prager

*La Grande Sortie*

September 7—October 23, 2016

201 Chrystie Street, New York

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**Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 7, 6-8PM**



*La Grande Sortie*, 2015, 6 archival pigment prints, single-channel video with color and sound on blue-ray disc and thumb drive, storyboards, 17 x 22 in, 43.2 x 55.9 cm (print), duration: 10 minutes. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong.

New York, August 10, 2016—**Lehmann Maupin** is pleased to present *La Grande Sortie*, the gallery's third solo exhibition with Los Angeles-based artist and filmmaker **Alex Prager**. The exhibition will feature Prager's newest film, *La Grande Sortie*, in its US premiere, along with a new series of photographs shot on location during the film's production in Paris. In this body of work, the viewer is confronted with the dual perspectives of performer and audience and asked to consider the underlying tension inherent in this relationship. **The opening reception on Wednesday, September 7, will feature live ballet solos at 6:30PM and 7:30PM.** These performances, featuring original choreography to Bohuslav Martinů's "Film en Miniature," set amid the attendees and Prager's artwork, further underscore the artist's curatorial approach, which conflates the traditional roles of viewer and performer.

Prager has garnered acclaim for her intricately staged, highly complex imagery that makes use of cinematic convention as a tool to challenge narrative tropes and offer deeper psychological associations to seemingly

ordinary themes. With the release of her film *Face in the Crowd* (2014), an examination of crowd dynamics and the individual, Prager solidified her standing as an auteur whose ominous, experimental works conjure feelings of anxiety, apprehension, and dread, while simultaneously offering the viewing pleasure and intrigue of a Hollywood movie. Her images often allude to their own artifice by exaggerating the on-screen manipulations of the film industry, such as makeup or lighting effects, in an attempt to reveal the often-hidden reality of the human condition on film.

In her film *La Grande Sortie* (2015; 10 minutes), commissioned by the Paris Opera Ballet and debuted in September 2015 on its digital platform 3ème Scène, Prager tells the story of a prima ballerina, played by French *Étoile* (star) dancer Émilie Cozette. The film's score, sampled from Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," was composed by Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich, with choreography created in collaboration with the Paris Opera Ballet, adapted from Creative Director Benjamin Millipied's iconic piece, *Amoveo*. Shot in the renowned Ópera Bastille, the setting is opening night of Cozette's return to the stage after an unexplained hiatus. The performance is fraught with the dancer's stage fright and the indifferent and hostile reactions that escalate in the audience. Cozette's fears manifest in a series of awkward dances, each accompanied by a boorish audience member—played by a mix of retired Paris Opera Ballet dancers and dance teachers—who are magically transported from their seat to the stage. Culminating in a fantastical vanishing act, *La Grande Sortie* embodies a universal anxiety around performance and success that many people struggle with on a daily basis.

The new photography series installed in the gallery's main exhibition space delves further into the dynamics between artist and viewer through the opposing lens of performer and audience. Given the vantage point of the performer looking out onto the audience, the viewer is forced to be the focus of self-conscious awareness, and must interpret the variety of expressions of the theatergoers that range from boredom and judgment to concentration and enjoyment. An audio recording of ambient theater crowd noise played on a loop further heightens this illusion. As a final unsettling device, mannequins are interspersed among the audience members, creating a surreal and somewhat terrifying juxtaposition between actor and prop.

As Prager oscillates between these shifting points of view and duality of artifice and reality, she breaks the "fourth wall," an invisible barrier between the stage and audience, creating a liminal space that invites consideration of how we absorb notions of truth and fiction within visual culture.

### **About the artist**

Alex Prager (b. 1979, Los Angeles; lives and works in Los Angeles) has had solo exhibitions of her work organized at the Saint Louis Art Museum, MO (2015); Galerie des Galeries, Paris (2015); Goss Michael Foundation, Dallas (2015); National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2014); Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2013); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2013); and the FOAM Photography Museum, Amsterdam (2012). Select group exhibitions featuring her work include *Open Rhapsody*, Beirut Exhibition Center (2015); *The Noir Effect*, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles (2014); *No Fashion, Please: Photography between Gender and Lifestyle*, Kunsthalles Wien, Vienna (2011); and *New Photography*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010). Her work is in numerous international public and private collections 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, Stockholm. Prager has received numerous awards, most notably the FOAM Paul Huf Award (2012). 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.

### **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 & Upcoming Exhibitions**

Mr., *Sunset In My Heart*, through August 12, 2016, New York, West 22nd Street

*Repossession*, through August 12, 2016, New York, Chrystie Street

*Radical Materiality*, through August 27, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

OSGEMEOS, *Silence of the Music*, September 8—October 22, 2016, New York, Chrystie Street

David Salle, September 8—November 12, 2016, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

Liu Wei, November 3—December 18, 2016, New York, West 22nd Street & Chrystie Street

Mickalene Thomas, November 18, 2016—January 14, 2017, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

For more information on Alex Prager or other Lehmann Maupin artists, please contact Marta de Movellan or Kathryn McKinney at +1 212 255 2923, or visit [lehmannmaupin.com](http://lehmannmaupin.com).

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