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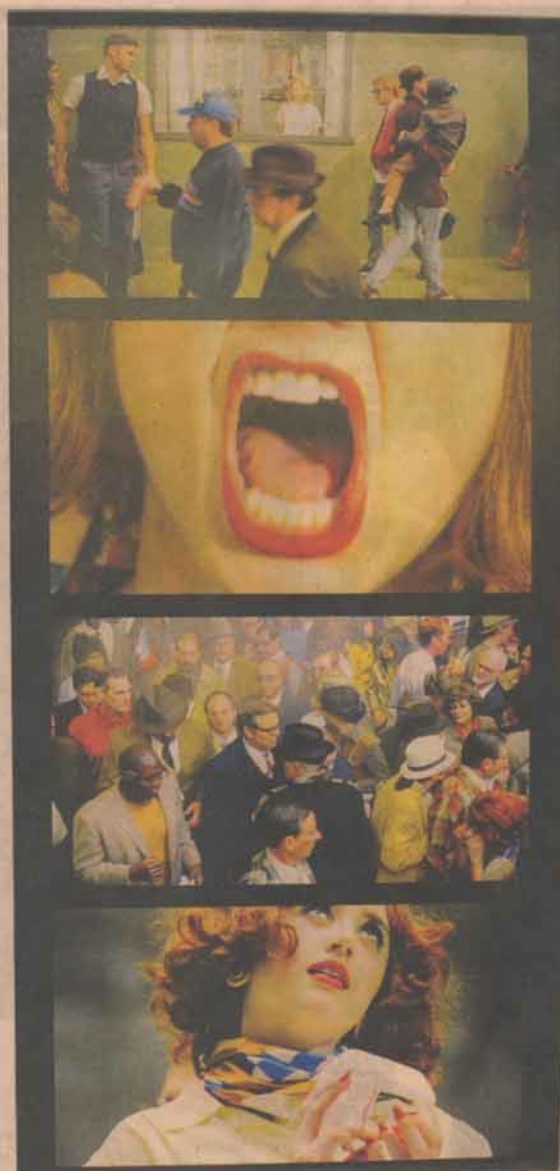
A CHRONICLE OF THE ART WORLD
IN NEW YORK AND BEYOND

'ALEX PRAGER: FACE IN THE CROWD'

LEHMANN MAUPIN

Alex Prager's *Face in the Crowd*, an immersive, three-channel video, is a delightfully weightless feat of engineering: *Synecdoche, New York* meets *Life of Brian* (specifically the scene in which Brian's would-be disciples obediently cry out, "Yes! We are all individuals!"). The settings—a beach, a stadium, a courthouse, a main street—and the costumes create a hipster-Norman Rockwell-style *Anywhere, USA*, with pasty skin, cigars, superannuated Pepsi logos and a deflating beach ball in the colors of the Irish flag. The story, conveyed in brief confessional monologues and a few silent nods from a cast that includes a striking teenage boy from Guadeloupe, a middle-aged Latin American, a fat man with a lisp talking about a girlfriend who "used to swim with Esther Williams," a much-made-up elderly divorcée and Elizabeth Banks—the only professional actor—as a former tap-dancing latchkey kid, is neither here nor there, serving in true Hollywood fashion only as an armature. The pleasure is in the mechanics: The banal observation that every member of a crowd has his or her own story becomes a roller-coaster special effect as the camera moves in and out; and when, at one point, the crowd freezes, notice the blonde trying not to laugh as Elizabeth Banks, the most individual of the individuals, slips past. (*Through Feb. 22*)—W.H.

Atmosphere
(2013) by
Alex Prager.



PAUL BRUNOISE/FARBICK MCNOLLAN