

Murray Guy

453 West 17 Street New York NY 10011 T: +1 212 463 7372 F: +1 212 463 7319 info@murrayguy.com

ARTFORUM

“Critic’s Picks: Matthew Buckingham”

Murray Guy

By Brian Sholis

May 2003



A Man of the Crowd, 2003

Matthew Buckingham’s *A Man of the Crowd*, 2003, is a formally elegant, conceptually rich 16 mm film installation that mimics the structure of Edgar Allan Poe’s similarly titled short story of 1840. Poe’s London is now contemporary Vienna; Buckingham’s camera tracks a young man obsessively trailing a slightly shabby older fellow through the city streets. The camera itself, ducking behind a tree or column as if to avoid being seen, unaccountably yet delightfully becomes a third protagonist. The noirish black-and-white film, shot in dramatic natural light, is projected through a small hole in the wall that separates the gallery from the office and onto a semitransparent two-way mirror in the middle of the room. The result is a set of twin projections—often rigorously symmetrical—“bookending” an almost empty gallery. Viewers are brought into the space of the film as their own reflections on the mirror mingle with the images of pursuer and pursued. Like Buckingham’s other works, *A Man of the Crowd* is filled with subtle cultural references. The nameless protagonists lead the camera down a street traveled by Orson Welles in *The Third Man* and through arcades described in Walter Benjamin’s book-length study. Poe’s story is central to much scholarship on the flaneur, including Benjamin’s; and Buckingham’s film is both an engaging visual corollary to this written corpus and a deftly realized project of its own.