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**Matthew Buckingham, *A Man of the Crowd*, 2003**

**Matthew Buckingham,  
“A Man of the Crowd”  
Murray Guy, through Dec 20  
(see Chelsea).**

In Edgar Allan Poe’s story “The Man of the Crowd”, the first-person narrator follows an old man through London from dusk to dawn, along avenues and down side streets, through a carnival and to a bar (described in true Poe style as “one of the huge suburban temples of Intemperance – one of the palaces of the fiend, Gin”).

Matthew Buckingham has taken Poe’s story as his starting point, altering the title slightly to “A man of the Crowd”, and creating a black-and-white film in which a younger man follows an older one through a city. Projected from the office through a square hole in the gallery wall, the film is filtered through a two-way mirror in the middle of the room. The final effect is an installation in which the same film runs

simultaneously on opposite walls, with the image reversed.

The piece raises several questions: specific ones like what’s been altered from Poe’s story to Buckingham’s film (Buckingham changes London to Vienna; meanwhile the sun shines in his film – unlike Poe’s rainy, nocturnal prowling), and more general ones of the sort that always arise when a text is made into a movie – like what happens when the eye of the camera is substituted for the “I” of the narrator?

Another issue: Poe had never been to London when he wrote his story; Buckingham, on the other hand, obviously made his film on location. So what is more truthful: the photographed version or the imagined one?

None of these questions are answered, exactly. But the slow, meditative quality of the installation, heightened by the hypnotic whirl of the projector, offers an apt setting in which to contemplate them. – *Martha Schwendener*