



ALIEN AMERICAN

CalArts film grad Alessandro Mercuri dives headfirst into the supremely strange soup known as the American cultural psyche with his dream-like video *Alien American* (2001). The 52-minute piece focuses on Basia, a Polish-American woman living in Los Angeles who takes us through the sedimented layers of conventional American history, accounts of paranormal activity, testimonies of spaceship encounters, episodes of *Star Trek* and her own unusual experiences on the 405 freeway. All of these narratives, both factual and counterfactual, hover together in an ephemeral cloud that refuses the hierarchy of fact over fiction and, more usefully, shows that this phantasmagoria constitutes American ideology. As C.G. Jung notes in one of the video's text fragments, it's not so much how "real" these narratives are, but rather what their occurrence and repetition reflect about the American unconscious. Using digital collage techniques, Mercuri underscores the video's melding of phenomena with a similarly complex visual style made up of layered images, slow motion and digital effects. Mercuri likes to assert that the video is neither a "fake documentary nor a real fiction," which neatly summarizes the project's unsettling view of the dichotomy between the real world and its multiple representations. (Gallery 825, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd.; Thurs., Feb. 21, 8 p.m. 310-652-8272)

—Holly Willis