

# Serpentine Gallery

Richard Prince: *Continuation*  
26 June – 7 September 2008



Richard Prince  
Untitled (cowboy), 1989  
Ektacolor photograph  
127 x 178 cm  
© 2008 Richard Prince

Presented by the Serpentine Gallery  
in collaboration with

**LOUIS VUITTON**

Media Partner

THE  INDEPENDENT

These notes are designed to support your visit to the Serpentine Gallery, including planning prior to your visit and suggestions for discussion and activities back at school when you return. They are aimed primarily at Key Stage 3 but include activities that can relate to all key stages, enabling you to develop them to suit your needs and inspire discussion and practical work.

The *Richard Prince* Teachers' Notes are also available to download free at [www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org) along with Teachers' Notes for the previous exhibitions:

Maria Lassnig

Derek Jarman

Anthony McCall

Matthew Barney: *DRAWING RESTRAINT*

Hreinn Fridfinnsson

Paul Chan: *The 7 Lights*

Allora & Calzadilla

Karen Kilimnik

*In the darkest hour there may be light*, works from Damien Hirst's murderme collection

Runa Islam: Conditional Probability

China Power Station: Part 1

Uncertain States of America

Thomas Demand

Ellsworth Kelly

Elmgreen & Dragset

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov

Oliver Payne & Nick Relph

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Andreas Slominski

Tomoko Takahashi

Monika Sosnowska

Glenn Brown

Gabriel Orozco

Cy Twombly

State of Play

Hiroshi Sugimoto

John Currin

Cindy Sherman

Takahashi Murakami

Kutlug Ataman

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## Background information

**Richard Prince** (b. 1949) is one of the world's most celebrated artists and one of its greatest artistic innovators. For his solo show at the Serpentine Gallery, Prince has created a uniquely personal exhibition of his work from his own significant artistic and literary collection.

Prince came to prominence in the 1980s through his celebrated series such as *Cowboys*, *Jokes* and *Hoods*, that appropriate images from magazines, popular culture and pulp fiction to create new photographs, sculptures and paintings that respond to ideas about American identity and consumerism. Prince's images are sourced from the artist's obsessive collecting of pictures that began when he worked for *Time-Life* magazine in the 1970s and that continue to resonate with celebrity culture. These works have also been critical in challenging ideas of authorship and raising questions about the value of unique artwork.

Prince is a voracious collector of art, furniture, memorabilia and books, which he houses in a variety of buildings alongside his own artworks. The installation at the Serpentine Gallery has a direct link with his spaces, mirroring the installation of Prince's work in his own buildings, creating an intimate and domestic setting in which to explore the work.

**Parental Guidance is advisable for this exhibition.**



Richard Prince: *Continuation*  
Serpentine Gallery, London (26 June - 7 September 2008)  
Installation view  
© 2008 Richard Prince  
Photograph: Jerry Hardman-Jones

## Themes, ideas and questions to explore

### 1. Early work - Appropriation

While working at *Time-Life* magazine in New York, Prince took the radical step of re-photographing existing photographic images from discarded advertising pages, cropping out text and logos, and then enlarging the new images. Once re-photographed, the images then became his artwork. This deceptively simple process changed approaches to creating art, making it possible to appropriate someone else's creation as your own.

#### Keywords

Photography – printing – design – image manipulation – appropriation – ownership – authorship – advertising – logos – text – crop – enlarge

#### Cross-curricular links

Art and Design – English Language – Media Studies – Creative and Media Diploma – ICT – Design Technology

#### Discussions

- What points of view, lifestyles and values are represented in Princes' early appropriation images?
- What advertising slogans do you think may have originally accompanied these images? What descriptive words and phrases would you include in a new slogan?

#### Practical Activities

- Removing text from advertisements allows us to look at them in new, alternative ways. Using strips of thin white card and view-finders block out slogans and logos over different magazine and newspaper adverts. Discuss how the meaning and impact changes when you do this.
- Digital cameras were not available when Prince created his early artworks. Make your own re-photographing experiments using images from magazine and newspapers and a digital camera. Load your images onto a computer and explore using cropping, altering colour balance, finding other ways to change your photograph. How do your finished images alter the impact and message? Who does the new image belong to? Is it the advertiser, the magazine, the original photographer or you?



Richard Prince  
*Untitled (fashion)*, 1982-84  
Ektacolor photograph  
Unique  
152.4 x 101.6 cm  
© 2008 Richard Prince

## 2. American Romanticism



Richard Prince  
*Untitled (cowboy)*, 1989  
Ektacolor photograph  
127 x 178 cm  
© 2008 Richard Prince

Richard Prince consistently produces artwork in series, reflecting his interest in categories, groupings and collecting.

### Cowboys

Prince's appropriated photographs reveal that products are advertised and sold to the consumer using visual codes that appeal to cultural stereotypes, prejudices, desires and fears. Beginning in the 1950s, Marlboro advertisements featured cowboys riding through the wide-open terrain of the Wild West, portrayed as a lonesome hero. In the early 1980s Richard Prince began to exhibit examples from his *Cowboys* series in which he re-photographed Marlboro cigarette advertisements by removing all the text and logos, enlarging the images and then framing them as pieces of art. He identified the cowboy image to be a strong symbol in American culture that embodied adventure, spirit, freedom, a role model and a sex symbol.



Richard Prince, *Untitled (girlfriend)* 1993  
Ektacolor photograph.  
152.4 x 101.6 cm.  
© 2008 Richard Prince

### Motorbikes

Staged images of women draped over motorbikes, posing in various states of undress also allude to American culture and romanticism. The Wild West, along with motorbikes both have their roots in the concept of freedom and individualism. The

photographs hijacked by Prince are taken from the pages of magazines such as *Easyrider*, which devote sections to their readers' contributions. Here, objectified, the women are essential props in the American bikers' macho image.



Richard Prince  
*Continuation*, 2004-05  
Fiberglass, polyester resin,  
acrylic and wood  
112 x 177 x 209.6 cm  
© 2008 Richard Prince

### **Cars**

Another of Richard Prince's series, the *Hood* sculptures, focuses on America's love affair with cars, particularly in the 1960s. It conjures dreams fuelled by a desire for escape, speed and the lure of the open road- a passion that the artist shares. For Prince, ready-made car hoods fit well into the theme of appropriation in his work. He has developed a personalised process to transforming the car hoods into art. They become painterly and abstract objects, with surfaces revealing the layers of paint.

### **Landscape**

Many artists find inspiration in their immediate landscape, this is true of Richard Prince. In his photographs of American landscapes he reveals traces of American culture in abandoned spaces, overgrown fields and open roads. These places appear overlooked, forgotten or detached.



Richard Prince  
*Untitled (upstate)*, 1995-99  
Ektacolor photograph  
101.6 x 152.4cm  
© 2008 Richard Prince

## **Keywords**

**Collecting – design – identity – romanticism – objects – transformation – sculpture – painting – history – series – popular culture – meaning – communication – language – tone – composition – view point – abstraction – advertising – scale – consumerism – symbolism – gender – stereotypes – lifestyle – image – forgotten – celebrated**

## **Cross-curricular links**

**Art and Design – English Language and Literature – Media Studies – Creative and Media Diploma – ICT – Design Technology – Citizenship**

## **Discussions**

- What words come to mind looking at these images and sculptures?
- Discuss the qualities associated with the Cowboy image that might be attractive to a consumer? How has Prince changed the message of this image from its original purpose?
- How does the slick image of the Cowboy compare to snapshots of women and motorbikes?
- What do you think Prince finds interesting about cars? How do these works relate to their titles?
- If you were to rename one of these works, what title would you choose?
- What qualities do the cars share with the other works in the exhibition?
- What other everyday objects are symbolic of America appear in Princes' work?
- In Princes' photographs of American landscapes, what do the places remind you of? What makes them familiar? What makes them strange?

## **Activities**

- Look at advertisements in magazines and newspapers and discuss ways in which advertisers make their products attractive. You can use the following questions:  
What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?  
How might different people understand this message differently than me?  
What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in this message?
- How has cigarette advertising changed in the UK, and why is this? Look through a magazine and find an advert that you can transform by making it an honest representation e.g. the true effects of smoking or fast food.
- Prince has taken an everyday object and transformed it into an artwork. Use a found object to transform into your own artwork. Describe your reason for choosing it and the process of transformation. Where would you display your artwork and why?
- Research the 1960s by listening to its music and watching films. How and why are cars and motorbikes romanticised? Are they still perceived in this way today?
- What aspects of contemporary popular culture do you think will be remembered and romanticised in the future? Explain your choices.



## Discussions

- What are your personal responses to the joke paintings?
- What similarities do the paintings have with the other works in the exhibition?
- In what ways are they different to other works in the exhibition?

## Activities

- What makes a joke funny? Set up a Joke Shop where you and classmates can make and exchange jokes and funny props.
- A popular feature in many magazines is a 'caption contest'. As a group choose a weekly image and a funny caption for the image. Share your captions with classmates and vote for the best entry.
- What are your responses to Whitney Darrow Jr's work? Discuss why Prince might have found these cartoons inspiring.

## 4. Nurse Paintings and Pulp fiction



Richard Prince  
*Student Nurse*, 2005  
Acrylic and inkjet on canvas  
193 x 137.2 cm  
© 2008 Richard Prince

Books are extremely important to Richard Princes' artwork. Inspired by the covers of medical romance novels, a subgenre of American pulp fiction, his Nurse paintings play on stereotypes embodied in the figure of the nurse e.g. good Samaritan and seductress. The paintings are created by enlarging and transferring prints of the book covers to canvas. All supporting figures and text have been removed and layers of smudged and dripping paint have been applied by the artist in vibrant colours. Surgical masks exaggerate the menacing tone of the paintings.

## Keywords

Painting – gesture – stereotypes – meaning – gender – text – comics – desire – title – language – popular culture – pulp fiction – fantasy – collector – literature – books

## Cross-curricular links

Art and Design – English Language – Media Studies – Creative and Media Diploma – ICT – Design Technology – Citizenship

## Discussions

- How are women portrayed in the artwork? Why has he chosen to present women in this way?
- How do the paintings relate to cultural tastes, desires and prejudices?
- What meanings and messages are attached to the Nurse paintings?

## Activities

- Consider the meanings and messages in book cover images, by concealing the texts. Collect book covers from different genres such as biographies/ autobiographies, thrillers, romance, crime and group according to concept, gesture or subject.
- Investigate the history of pulp fiction and find out where the name came from.

## Further information and related links

An exhibition catalogue will be available after the exhibition has opened. For further details go to [www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org)

*3<sup>rd</sup> Place*, A Children's book by Richard Prince. © 2008 Richard Prince, Serpentine Gallery, London and Koenig Books London.

*Richard Prince*, Spector, Nancy. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2007.

*Richard Prince*, Brooks, Rosetta, Jeff Rian, and Luc Sante. London: Phaidon Press, 2003.

*Richard Prince*, Phillips, Lisa. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992.

### Web links:

[www.cartoonbank.com](http://www.cartoonbank.com)

[www.about-face.org](http://www.about-face.org)

[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)

<http://www.asa.org.uk/asa/about/Guided+Tours/Schools+and+Colleges>

## Planning a Visit to the Serpentine Gallery

### Contact Details

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[www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org)

### Transport

The nearest tube stations are South Kensington (1.25 km walk), Knightsbridge (1.25 km walk) or Lancaster Gate (1 km walk)

Bus routes 9, 10, 52, 452, 94 and 148 stop near the Gallery

### **Group Visit Guidelines**

To make your visit as enjoyable as possible, please read the following:

#### **Before your Visit:**

- Adult supervision of students under 16 is required at all times, including in the shop. An adult student ratio of 1:5 for under 5's, 1:10 for 5 - 11 year olds, 1:15 for 11 - 16 year olds and 1:20 for 16 - 18 year olds is required.
- We recommend a preliminary planning visit, as for some exhibitions there may be works that you consider unsuitable for your group.

#### **During your Visit:**

- Teachers/group leaders and accompanying adults are responsible for their group's behaviour whilst at the Serpentine Gallery.
- Please make sure your group is aware of the following Gallery guidelines:
  - No running
  - No touching
  - No leaning against walls or plinths
  - No shouting
  - No photography
- Many contemporary artworks are fragile and damage easily. Please make sure that your group understands that this is why they are not allowed to touch the art.
- Lecturing: If your group is larger than 30 please split them into smaller groups in the exhibition space and do not lecture in rooms where talks are already in progress.
- Drawing: If you would like to do some drawing please check with the gallery what materials you will be able to use in the exhibition

### **Education and Family Events**

Education is at the core of the Serpentine Gallery's activities. Through practical, artist led workshops and discussion, talks, events and projects the Education Programme offers a diverse range of innovative ways to engage with modern and contemporary art and architecture for all ages.

Please refer to the Serpentine Gallery Bulletin or [www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org) for information on events and activities taking place as part of the Education Programme during the *Richard Prince: Continuation* exhibition.