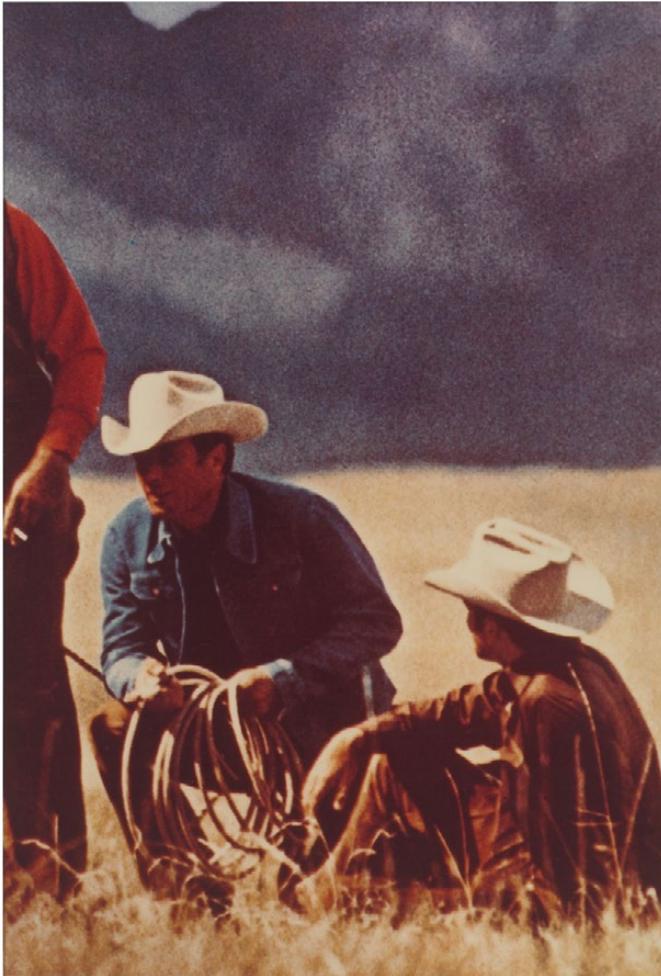


# GAGOSIAN

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Richard Prince to Exhibit More Than Eighty Key Early Photographs at Gagosian in New York  
*Early Photography, 1977–87* at the 522 West 21st Street Gallery Also Features *The Entertainers*

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Richard Prince, *Untitled (Cowboy)*, 1980–84, Ektacolor photograph, 24 × 20 inches (61 × 50.8 cm), edition of 2 + 1 AP  
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*Most of what's passing for information right now is total fiction. I try to turn the lie back on itself.*  
—Richard Prince

**NEW YORK, February 22, 2024**—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Richard Prince: Early Photography, 1977–87*, at the 522 West 21st Street gallery in New York, opening on March 9, 2024. The exhibition, which was presented at the gallery's Davies Street and Grosvenor Hill locations in London in 2023, features many of Prince's iconic cowboy, girlfriend, and advertisement photographs, some of which have not previously been exhibited in the city. It also includes the complete series of *The Entertainers* (1982–83), a rarely seen set of manipulated photographs taken in the bars, clubs, and

restaurants of New York's Times Square that captures the location's sleazy glamour. Archival material including writings by the artist and source material from his time in the tear-sheet department at *Time* magazine, some of which has not been shown before, will also be on view.

Collecting, chronicling, and repurposing examples of discomfiting mainstream humor alongside images from a variety of mass media, Prince chronicles the intersection of America's vernaculars and subcultures in the construction of its national identity. In 1977, he began using a process of "rephotography" to appropriate shots from advertising and the lifestyle press, redefining the concepts of authorship and originality—an approach he would later extend to include social media. A conscious elision of the aims and techniques of traditional picture making, the technique allows Prince to redirect the authority of a visual referent. "When you put an already existing image in front of a camera," he explains, "you know what you're going to get. You've taken out the decisive moment."

In the black-and-white photograph *Untitled (Self-Portrait)* (1980), Prince portrays himself in eye makeup and lipstick along with a suit and tie, plumbing themes of alienation and uncertainty found throughout his oeuvre. As the artist wrote in his 1983 essay "Cowboys: The Perfect Tense," "Some people would like to try to change places, just for a day, with maybe someone they admired or even envied, to see what it would be like, to see if it would be what they'd always heard it would be." In *Untitled (Cowboy)* (1980–84), Prince shows his subject merging with the landscape of the American West, accentuating a heroic individualism.

In works such as *Untitled (Couple)* (1977) and *Untitled (Man Looking to the Left)* (1978), Prince explores tropes of masculinity in rephotographed images of square-jawed, suit-wearing models, calling their authenticity into question through a focus on heavily styled representation. Other works depict advertisements for objects such as luxury watches and pens—items that Prince has described as being foreign to him—in a polished but generic manner that suggests a lack of individual author. From Prince's perspective, this makes his sources fair game for recontextualization; he categorizes the original photographers as having been commissioned: "They were for hire," he states, "I was working in a completely different way."

Many of the works reveal a fascination with the photographic medium as a tool for categorization and cataloguing that exhibits a sociological and anthropological slant: *Untitled (Three Women Looking in the Same Direction)* (1980) assembles its subjects purely according to the attitude of their heads; *Criminals and Celebrities* (1986) groups images of the famous and the infamous in the act of attempting to shield themselves from the camera's intrusive gaze; and *Untitled (Fainted)* (1980) gathers four stills of unconscious women. In this, Prince's organization of images mirrors the currency (and inherently partial nature) of stock photography and anticipates the ubiquity of categorized and labeled photographic images in the era of Internet searches and artificial intelligence—a period during which the medium has become at once more available and less "reliable" than ever.

#RichardPrince

## **RICHARD PRINCE**

*Early Photography, 1977–87*

March 9–April 13, 2024

522 West 21st Street, New York

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