

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Hussenot, Ghislaine. "Richard Prince." *Artforum*. Vol. XXIX, no. 8, p. 137. April 1991.

## RICHARD PRINCE

GHISLAINE HUSSENOT

Richard Prince's recent works effect a kind of postcritical involution. Momentarily abandoning the stupefying rhetoric of immediacy that characterized his earlier photographic appropriations, he is now reinscribing his work in the well-lit field of modern paradigms: by referencing the monochrome as he did in his previous "joke" paintings, by reintroducing collage and silk-screen superimpositions, and above all by coating some of his appropriations with a thin layer of white paint that is simultaneously on top of and underneath the imagery.

The lower portions of these pictures are relegated to jokes in the form of captions. Composed of elements that might almost be recycled from Prince's earlier works—cartoons, ads, images, and clippings from magazines—these superimpositions suggest the walls of demolished apartments that register traces of previous life as layers of peeling paper and paint. The images work in dialogue with the joke-captions; the ensemble leaves a diffuse impression of desolation, and the lighthearted tone of the anecdote becomes somewhat grating.

Prince's practice of quoting from his own work can be seen as one that simultaneously reiterates themes from his previous work and inflects their meanings. For in reusing elements from earlier works, Prince offers them to us again, but from a different angle. Not in their instantaneous seductiveness—nor in their *infra-mince* (to borrow Duchamp's term) intensity—but in their opaque density, their uneasy simplicity, their strangeness. These silk-screen superimpositions "painted" into the work are in keeping with his use of out-of-focus or unframed photographs of

photographs, but here they are subsumed in a post-Rauschenbergian pictorial field. Through the expedient of pictorial reproduction, Prince again practices the critical move backward, in order to destabilize the viewer's esthetic, which has been banalized to the point of emptiness.

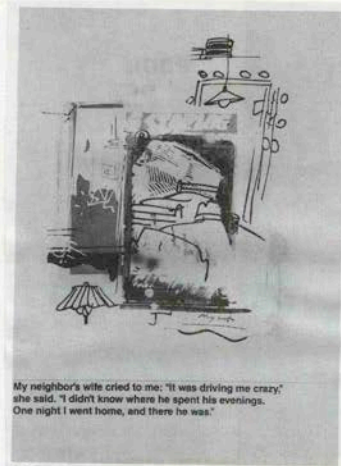
This is where insistent repetition is transformed or inflected. Prince is now appropriating himself; where his earlier work left behind the traditional values of manual facility and talent to address the production of contemporary values (sex, money, individualism, etc.), the new work turns to the question of artistic value itself. Decentering his own previous strategies by the same logic that he once applied to media images, Prince destabilizes the image's normative manner of signifying, without altering it.

It is as if Prince senses that today the intensity of his careful rhetorical manipulations of desire would fall flat—the minute gap that distinguishes them from their "original" by now obscured. He reintroduces a postcritical profundity to the very heart of his own practice.

In this way, through their self-reflexiveness, Prince's works demonstrate a rare audacity that serves as a lesson to those who remain fascinated with, and are rendered immobile by, the reified strategies of the '80s.

—Olivier Zahm

*Translated from the French by Diana C. Stoll*



Richard Prince, *My neighbor's wife*, 1989,  
acrylic and silk screen on canvas,  
ca. 69 x 48".

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