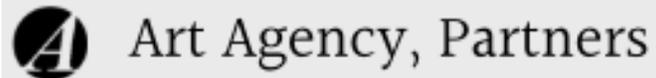


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Allan Schwartzman, "Great Art I've Recently Seen," *Art Agency, Partners*, October 26, 2017



Great Art I've Recently Seen

From Richard Prince's new paintings to a leading Latin American Modernist



Richard Prince, Untitled (#130) (2016). Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Painting for **Richard Prince** has always been a source of ambivalence. He came into his own as an artist in the age of Watergate, after painting had been declared dead, the object superfluous and originality a privilege of the past—at a time

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when just about everything that used to define what great art could be now provoked distrust for the artist and many of his generation.

Prince's standards for what and how to communicate have been so rigorous that (like Sherrie Levine), while he has been one of the most prescient and significant artists of his generation, the commercial success that greeted his peers and spiritual cousins Cindy Sherman, David Salle and Jeff Koons, evaded him for nearly a decade.

That was until, after a decade of re-photographing photographs to make statements about image and object making, he decided it was time to make a painting. The joke paintings that resulted (appropriated jokes stenciled on a flat monochrome field) challenged the fundamentals of painting and its capacity to transcend, by reducing it to an esthetic container for what could be called an enemy of painting—a one-liner. Though, in the case of Prince, the jokes did transcend precisely because, when it comes to Prince's painting, what things appear to be, and what they can be, is rarely as clear as it may seem.

It would be fair to say that Prince has retained much of his ambivalence towards painting (ambivalence often being the mother of rigor), his critics and his collectors. I am not confident that the market has always been right about Richard's work because the balance of gesture and imagery by which painting are typically valued doesn't apply to his work. The market has sometimes placed less financial value in certain bodies of Prince's work that are critically significant, and which I believe will be proven historically to be so.

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*Richard Prince, Untitled (#130) (2016-17).
Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and
Brussels*

Some of his finest bodies of work, in my opinion, have remained relative bargains while, on occasion, some of his less powerful work have become most coveted by the market. (This is similar to the ways in which the market for Picasso in recent years has placed so much more value in the decoratively beautiful portraits of the 1930s over the revolutionary analytic Cubist paintings made between 1910 and 1912.)

Prince's new paintings, which go on [view](#) at Gladstone Gallery on 3 November ("Richard Prince: Ripple Paintings", until 22 December), are to my eye the greatest paintings he has made since he first started to paint car hoods and jokes.

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In a sense, they fuse the two critical formats of his career—appropriated photography and painting in the form of a joke. The new paintings combine a monochromatic painted blob atop, and often greatly obscuring, the bawdy cartoons and punchlines of Playboy magazine from 1967 to 1970. They are jokes with received imagery and pure painting splatted one atop the other, though in truth—and true to Prince—the paintings aren't painted at all, but rather inkjet prints of painted collages of the original cartoons. They are funny, beautiful, profound—and very smart, in that sly way that this leading figure of this generation of ambivalence can simultaneously giveth and taketh away.