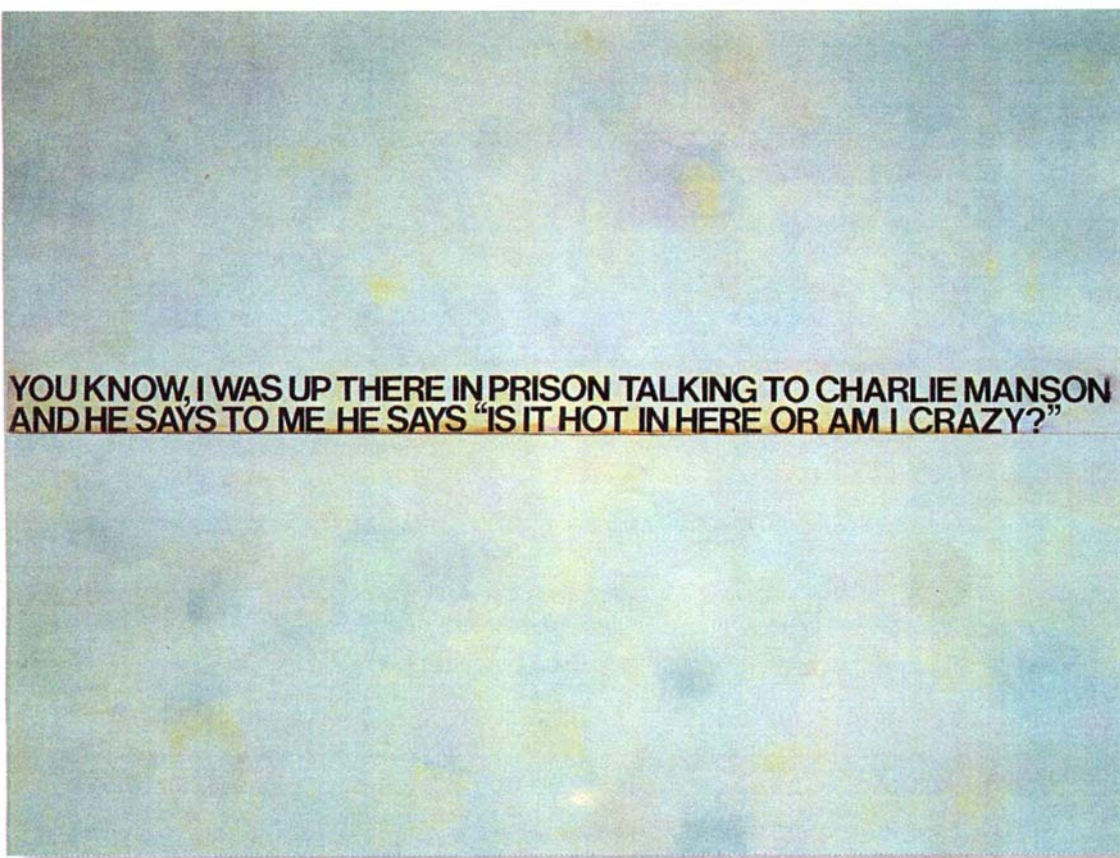


# RICHARD PRINCE

BY INGRID SISCHY

**THE  
INSTIGATOR'S  
TIME  
HAS COME**



is printed in magazines—he works in the Duchampian tradition of the found object—there is enormous range and surprise in what he has picked up on over the years. The exhibition, curated by Nancy Spector, gathers together choices from the various series that have been critical to his contribution, including his rephotographed ads. Then there are the unforgettable themed groups of pieces such as the *Cowboys*, the *Hood* sculptures, and the *Nurse* paintings; in addition, the exhibition will unveil a new body of canvases: the *De Kooning* paintings.

To me, though, it's always been Prince's *Jokes* that make him stand out from the crowd. For Prince, landing on this material was like striking artistic oil. He soon realized that if he wanted, he could eliminate the illus-

They say the days of artists wilting away undiscovered, uncelebrated, and unremunerated in damp garrets, starving and unheard of, are long gone. Indeed, today—thanks to the omnipresent media, a worldwide explosion of contemporary art, and the public's hunger for more—it's as if an artist still wet behind the ears just has to burp and he or she has a show, a collector, an article, and is off to a so-called career. But plenty of artists still have to wait for the kind of recognition that sticks and for the world to catch up with what they've done. It has only been in the last few years that Richard Prince has begun to get the credit he deserves, despite 30 years of thoughtful, challenging work and a following that was there from the start. Now comes the full-court attention for Prince, with "Spiritual America," a major exhibition that debuts at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City (September 28, 2007–January 9, 2008) and will travel afterward.

Apart from the fact that almost all of Prince's work has its genesis in what

trations and focus on the punch lines. He says, "I realized that the text was enough and would speak about what I thought was going on in my life and the lives of people around me." I doubt there is a wittier way to deal with the subject of artistic appropriation than what Prince did when he took the following lines and turned them into paintings: "I went to see a psychiatrist. He said, 'Tell me everything.' I did, and now he is doing my act."

But, needless to say, Prince has met his share of naysayers. When he first started the *Jokes*, he wrote them out by hand on 11-by-14-inch pieces of paper. He'd invite people over to his studio to show them what he was up to, and he remembers their reactions: "I'd say, 'This is my work.' And they'd look in disbelief. They'd say, 'That's it?' I'd say, 'Absolutely.'" In those days some of these gems would fetch \$10 a piece. And that's no joke.

Ingrid Sischy is *Interview's* editor in chief.



**GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS:** A man walked into a doctor's office to get a check-up. After the examination the doctor says to the man, I've got good news and I've got bad news. The bad news is your going to die in a year and there's nothing you can do about it. The good news is I'm having an affair with my secretary.

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the bad news is your going to die in a year and there's nothing you can do about it. There's nothing that can be done.

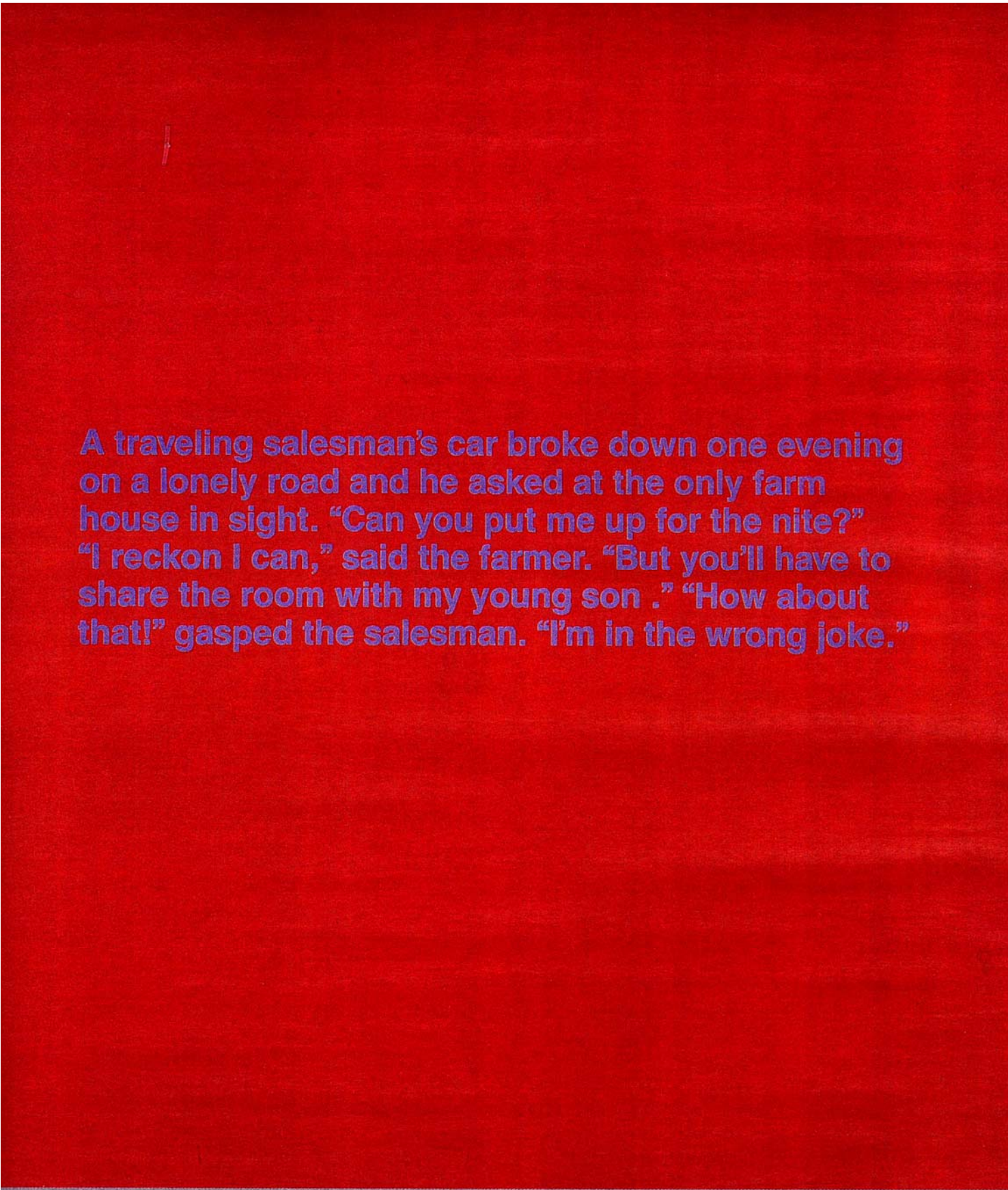
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A man WALKS into a doctor's office, to get a check-up.

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A traveling salesman's car broke down one evening on a lonely road and he asked at the only farm house in sight. "Can you put me up for the nite?" "I reckon I can," said the farmer. "But you'll have to share the room with my young son ." "How about that!" gasped the salesman. "I'm in the wrong joke."

Richard Prince's *Untitled (Joke)*, 1987, acrylic on canvas, 56 x 48 in.



I MET MY FIRST GIRL,  
HER NAME WAS SALLY.  
WAS THAT A GIRL THAT'S  
WHAT PEOPLE KEEP ASKING.  
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Richard Prince's *Just Asking*, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 78 x 62 1/8 in.