

# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

27 May 2008

PRESS RELEASE  
GAGOSIAN GALLERY  
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Monday – Friday: 10:30am–7:00pm and by appointment  
Also open Saturday, 21 June 2008, 10:30am – 7:00pm



## RICHARD PRINCE: *Four Blue Cowboys*

Friday, 20 June – Friday, 8 August 2008

Opening reception for the artist: Friday, June 20th, from 6:30 to 8:30pm

*I'm interested in what some of these images imagine... most of the time, what's represented is just wishful thinking. I'm interested in wishful thinking.*

--Richard Prince

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of Richard Prince's photographic series, *Four Blue Cowboys*.

An avid collector and perceptive chronicler of American subcultures and vernaculars and their role in the construction of American identity, Prince has probed the mythical status of cowboys, bikers, customized cars, and celebrities; the push-pull allure of pulp fiction and soft porn; and the depths of racism, sexism, and psychosis in mainstream humor –producing such unlikely icons as the highly coveted *Joke* and *Nurse* paintings.

Prince has been mining images from mass media, advertising and entertainment since the late seventies when he worked in the tear-sheet department at TIME/LIFE in New York. Through “re-photographing” magazine ads --by cropping, removing any ad copy, or reshooting black and white images on color film -- from jewelry, furniture, and models to the cowboys of Marlboro Country, he redefined the concepts of authorship, ownership, and aura. Applying his understanding of the complex transactions of representation to the making of art, he evolved a unique signature filled with echoes of other signatures yet that is unquestionably his own.

The representation of the cowboy in Prince's oeuvre--which can be divided into three phases between the early 1980s and the present--reveals as much about Prince's shifting relationship to the great American icon, and its construction by the media machine, as his use of evolving photographic and digital technologies. In the earliest iterations, he was forced to shoot around ad copy to obtain the final edit, resulting in tightly cropped, grainy close-ups of the larger-than-life ranchers, printed in standard format. In the second stage, enhanced laboratory techniques allowed him to substantially increase the scale and intensity of the final images. In the most recent phase - which includes the consecutive series *Four Blue Cowboys*, *Mountain Cowboys*, and *Silhouette*--he was able to work from high quality images totally devoid of copy. In *Four Blue Cowboys*, the figures are reduced to diminutive yet still recognizable symbols in vast, bucolic landscapes wreathed in morning mist or lit by the rays of the dying sun. Transposed into the world of art, these cinematic vistas recall, not without a trace of irony, the great Romantic tradition in painting.

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**Richard Prince** was born in 1949 in the Panama Canal Zone and lives and works in upstate New York. Previous major exhibitions include the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; and Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg. A retrospective survey opened at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2007, and is currently on view at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. A project exhibition opens at the Serpentine Gallery, London in June 2008.

**Press Enquiries**

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