

# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE  
**GAGOSIAN GALLERY**  
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## RICHARD PRINCE

Thursday, 19 June – Friday, 8 August 2008

Opening reception for the artist: Thursday, June 19th, from 6 to 8pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of *Nurse* paintings by Richard Prince.

Mining images from mass media, advertising and entertainment since the late seventies, Prince has 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. An avid collector and perceptive chronicler of American subcultures and vernaculars and their role in the construction of American identity, he has probed the depths of racism, sexism, and psychosis in mainstream humor; the mythical status of cowboys, bikers, customized cars, and celebrities; and most recently, the push-pull allure of pulp fiction and soft porn, producing such unlikely icons as the highly coveted *Nurse* paintings.

Like blue jokes, the nymphomaniac or “naughty nurse” is a deeply ingrained and persistent stereotype with its origins in sexual fantasies, appearing in vaudeville, fashion magazines, and pornography. The covers of *Naughty Nurse* books from the fifties and sixties – just one aspect of his wide-ranging collection of rare first editions -- provided Prince with inspiration for a major series of paintings, first exhibited in 2003 and bearing the same titles as its original sources – from *Registered Nurse* to *Park Avenue Nurse*, to *Man-Crazy Nurse*. Scanning the original covers to produce inkjet prints and transferring them to canvas, Prince then painted over the prints in a manner evocative of post-war Abstract Expressionism, from its sedimentary layers and floating blocks of color to the swipes and splatters of its more animated moments. At a glance, his paintings are ironic appropriations intended to deconstruct both a regressive stereotype and the truth of uninhibited gesture. But on closer scrutiny, there is an undeniable element of complicit pleasure in his masterfully casual yet luscious renderings of his coy subjects.

In this subsequent untitled series of nurses, his approach verges on punk. He has eliminated all background elements, reducing each composition to its most basic scheme. The sketchy female figures, streaming with gore and embellished with scrawled litanies of physical ailments and shortcomings -- flatulence, crooked teeth, and greasy hair, and so on-- occupy the empty backgrounds like so many perverse niche sculptures set against neutral fields otherwise drained of innuendo and temperament.

**Richard Prince** was born in 1949 in the Panama Canal Zone and lives and works in upstate New York. His work has been the subject of major exhibitions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; 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.

For further information please contact the gallery +44.207.493.3020 or london@gagosian.com.