

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

September 30th, 2008 12:48 PM

Richard Phillips Unveiled on 'Gossip Girl'

By Bill Powers



"Spectrum" (1998) by Richard Phillips.

Not since Andy Warhol had a cameo on "The Love Boat" in 1985 have contemporary art fans had this great an excuse to watch prime time television. As the Van der Woodsens — Lily (Kelly Rutherford) and Serena (Blake Lively) — moved back into their renovated loft on "Gossip Girl" this week, viewers got a taste of some splashy new editions to the space, namely a Ryan McGinley photograph, a piece by Kiki Smith and a scaled-down

version of Richard Phillips's 1998 painting "Spectrum." A licensing deal to use his imagery was brokered by Art Production Fund, which even managed to angle a walk-on part for Mr. Phillips in a future episode where the painting is formally unveiled. Although the source material for his piece was a fashion advertisement from the late 1960s, "on set they remarked that it looks a lot like Leighton Meester," the artist recalls. Inkjet prints of original artwork are generally the norm in this type of licensing arrangement — Lisa Yuskavage's painting on "[The L Word](#)" comes to mind — mostly because it proves less expensive insurance-wise for the television production company. Professing his deep admiration for the show's revelatory narcotic effect, Mr. Phillips cited the overlap between issues he's tackled on canvas and the many themes explored on "Gossip Girl," such as "lost virginity, teen pregnancy, divorce, rape, manslaughter, suspected homicide, teen suicide, gay sexual identity, eating disorders, criminal blackmail, theft, as well as drug addiction and sex with multiple partners."

An exhibition of new work by Richard Phillips is on view at [Gagosian Gallery](#) next March. Gossip Girl is on Monday nights at 8 p.m. on the CW.