

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY



### Richard Phillips on the “Missing Pieces”

Richard Phillips



*Richard Phillips, Persia, 1996.*

“When we’re opening up the crates, finding some of these paintings I haven’t seen in so many years—they’re like presents,” Richard Phillips said of the works included in his first solo museum exhibition in the U.S., at the Dallas Contemporary museum. But among the gifts, a handful of paintings—representing milestones in Phillips’s career—were noticeably absent. Referring to the works as the “Missing Pieces,” Phillips spoke to Artsy about the selection of paintings he’s brought together to accompany the exhibition on Artsy:

#### ***On the “Missing Pieces”:***

“On one level, while it’s disappointing that one can’t get those works if you participate in the market, you have to be willing to accept this as a possibility. In some cases, it’s that [collectors] don’t want to [lend works] and in other cases, it’s that the auction houses simply have to honor their confidentiality agreements. Fortunately, for every work we *don’t* have in the show that I may have wanted, I have works in the show that I just am so happy that I *do* have. It’s incredible. I’m very grateful to the collectors who did lend. Paintings like *Nuclear* or *Scout*, or the painting, *First Point*, from my exhibition at Gagosian, which is coming all the way from Europe. So we have these kind of oppositions. It’s like a scale; if you’re missing one, another one can come in and take on the role of providing critical toughness in its place.

### ***Persia, 1996***

“*Persia* is such an important painting of mine, from 1996. It was in my first exhibition at Edward Thorp Gallery in SoHo, and it really was one of my very favorite paintings, I think one of the best pet paintings [laughs] kind of in existence. Not to be immodest, but I really feel it’s a good one. It’s a large painting, and there is just a quality to the paint—the expression, these kind of David Bowieeyes. I clearly remember finding the image for the painting when buying pet food in Connecticut, and being struck by the image because it appeared to be like one of my paintings, of the models from the late ’60s and ’70s. It had a similar expression. It’s missing from the show because the painting was sold at auction. This is something that happens to artists; I think it was sold at Christie’s some years ago, around the early 2000s. It was probably 11 years ago that I saw the painting for the last time.”

### ***Spectrum, 1998***

“*Spectrum* is probably one of my most well-known paintings, that has appeared on television, including multiple seasons of *Gossip Girl*. It’s a painting that I attempted to put back into popular culture, to become an entity of its own, and it’s a painting that has really been identified with my work around the world. Unfortunately, the owners of the painting declined to lend it. It’s one of those things where you make your best attempt to appeal to their sense of being a custodian of the work, and to participate in important survey shows. It’s a shame that it’s not in the show, but it’s just one of those things where you make your very best attempt at personal appeal, and then from there you just have to kind of see where it goes.”

### ***The President of the United States of America, 2001***

“I wasn’t able to get the painting of *The President of the United States of America*, which is a painting that I tried several times to get for various survey shows, and I’ve never succeeded. And yet again, for this show, I still have not succeeded. We tried to get it for the last election. I had my own small version of the painting that I made for the exhibition that Neville Wakefield curated in 2004, and so we’ll have the small version of *The President* in our exhibition.

“President Bush has an exhibition of his own portraits of world leaders that are on display. So he will be in my exhibition. You know, I always say that when I retire from being an artist, I’ll become the President of the United States of America. If Bush thinks of painting and making art as a retirement plan, and something that’s fun to do when he’s retired, then I think that being the President of the United States of America will be just as fun to do when I retire from being an artist.”