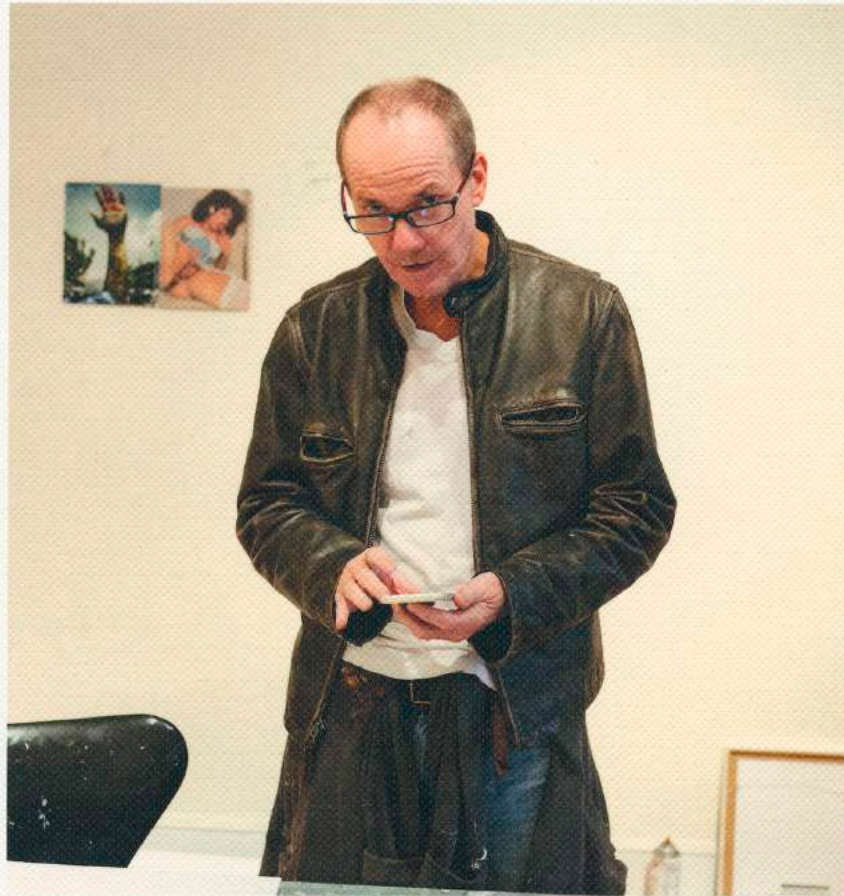


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# THE TRAVEL ALMANAC

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Richard Prince

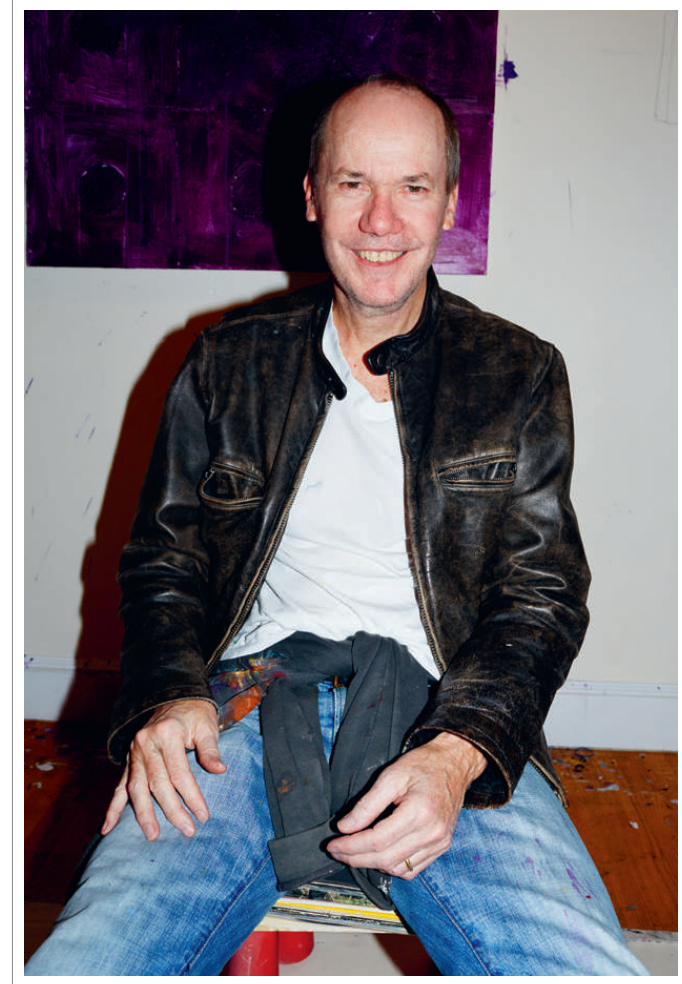
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# RICHARD PRINCE

INTERVIEW *Brooke Grabiec*  
PHOTOGRAPHY *Juergen Teller*



*What's your first memory of foreignness?*

I was born in the Canal Zone, and in 1968 I looked like a hippie. I was 18. I was going through customs in London and they put me in a room. The combination of what it said on my passport (Canal Zone) and my crushed velvet bell-bottoms turned me into a debutante.

*Do you often revisit memories from your childhood?*

Collecting and pasting into books the stamps they would give my mother, after she did a big food shop at Stop 'N Shop. And hanging out with her when she was a food demonstrator in the same Stop 'N Shop. Stop 'N Shop is a huge memory for me.

*Tell me a childhood fantasy.*

Peanut butter. A white woman gets captured in the middle of Africa and gets taken into a hut by Amazonian warrior women, and gets laid out naked on a table and gets slathered in peanut butter.

*Does your view of the US change when you're outside it?*

It doesn't change at all, except when I travel to some exotic island. Then I think about if all the northern hemisphere is nuked, and I'll never be able to return. I have these dark On The Beach thoughts when I travel.

*How does traveling inform your work?*

By my reaction: "How is any of that possible?" I don't do a lot of traveling, but when I travel it means I'm outside of my studio. And when I'm outside of my studio I'm a tourist.

*Describe a trip that was disappointing.*

I just came back from a prize fight in Las Vegas. It sucked. There was nothing there that couldn't have been experienced better on TV.

*What do you notice when you're in airports?*

The display. The information is all boxed up, lit from behind, overly bright, very real, art-directed. The seating is fiberglass and nailed down. There's a combination of fog and pearls that I'm very aware of. When I'm inside an airport terminal its time for me to quit.

*Is there a new Wild West?*



After moving to New York in the '80s to work at *Time Life*, Richard Prince began to tear advertisements out of popular magazines—a process which would later become the basis for his iconic *Cowboys* series of rephotographs. Of this period in his life he later wrote, "Unlike the editorial parts, the ads didn't have an author and seemed to suggest something I could believe in [ . . . ] the truth? I wasn't familiar with the truth. Why would I have been? No one ever told it." The body of work Prince created in the ensuing decades has consistently questioned contemporary mediums of reproduction. They have changed the larger narrative around ideas of authorship, originality and authenticity, and how they continue to shift our social interactions, collective cultural fantasies and vernacular environments. Perhaps more than any other artist, Prince has shown that today's artistic mediums are the digital tools we all use for representation: the new advertisement, the new collective cultural and sexual fantasy. For *The Travel Almanac* he was photographed by his friend Juergen Teller, who also traveled to Beirut where some of Prince's recent works are on display in selected high-fashion stores, as part of Tony Salamé's new Aishti Foundation. From his studio in New York, Richard shared some thoughts about everything from big-breast cruise liners to the difference between his and his daughter's use of social media.

***“I used these ‘nudist’ cartoons by a guy John Dempsey and drew a kind of ‘hippie’ figure over them. Trying to turn the cartoon into some free-love ‘commune’ kind of thing.”***

“Wild West” suggests independence. You know the song “Don’t Fence Me In” by Cole Porter . . .

*What does your internet history look like?*

Wild history.

*What’s the difference between your daughter’s relationship to Instagram and yours?*

She can do anything she wants and I can’t, even though I think I can. I always try to go first. I need a head start. Everybody’s “year book” has turned into a day-to-day, hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute, early in the morning share-fest. Like the song says, “I could make it without you if I didn’t feel so all alone . . .” Everybody’s crying.

*Self-portraiture has changed a lot in the last couple of decades.*

It used to be a drag race. A showdown. Just don’t blame me if your wheels are on fire. I’ve never tried protecting my pockets.

*Your friend Juergen Teller shot the photos for this interview. What do you like about his work?*

Juergen isn’t afraid. His Go-Sees book is one of the best photo books on the planet. But being in front of a camera . . . being “the subject” isn’t something that feels good. The lady doesn’t treat me kindly.

*How important is physically seeing others’ artwork to you?*

Pointed shoes and bells. I’m not going to Russia to see Malevich. I’m staying in the neighborhood. I don’t need to punch my cigarette. The Guggenheim is ten blocks away.

*What are you working on now?*

I’m extending or “continuing” my mania for cartoons. I just finished up a group of ten paintings where I drew my own cartoon over an existing cartoon. I used these “nudist” cartoons by a guy John Dempsey and drew a kind of “hippie” figure over them. Trying to turn the cartoon into some free-love “commune” kind of thing.

*Where do you see your work in the world, even when you haven’t made it?*





A GOOD PLACE WITH



THE TRAVEL ALMANAC

RICHARD PRINCE



THE TRAVEL ALMANAC



“If I don’t make it, you know my baby will.” No, not really. I don’t know. I can’t help it. I keep thinking about outtakes. How someday, what I threw away, someone saved it and showed up later and said, “Here, wasn’t this really what you were thinking about?”

*What’s the function of writing for you?*

To get it right.

*Why sign your work?*

Most of the time I forget to sign it. I have to be reminded. Its really a gesture that simply says it’s mine.

*One hears people describe themselves as “outsiders” all the time . . .*

I thought it was the other way around.

*Although jokes rely on some kind of “insider” territory.*

Jokes are an alternative way of telling the truth.

*“Have you ever told yourself something that’s not really true? Told it to yourself so many times over the years that you really think now it’s true?” You once asked Alex Katz that.*

I’ve got about five of those truths in me today, completely made up shit that I’ve deluded myself into believing. What difference does it make whether its true or false?

*Who have you disagreed with recently?*

All I have to do is open up an art magazine and I disagree with almost everything I see inside. You want to make art? Don’t.

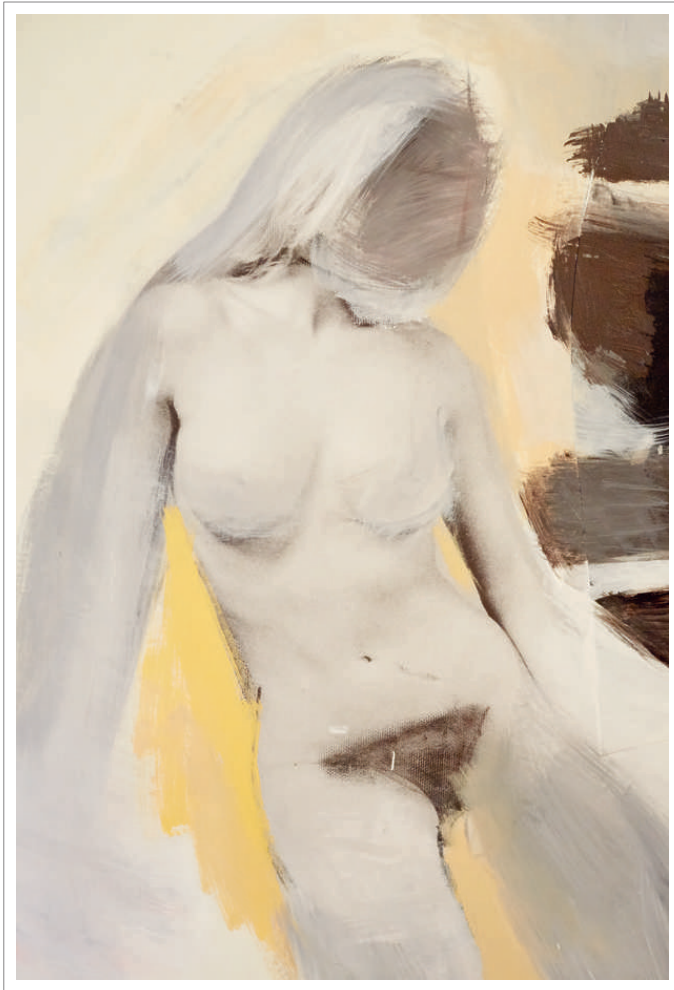
*Whose artworks do you wish you’d made?*

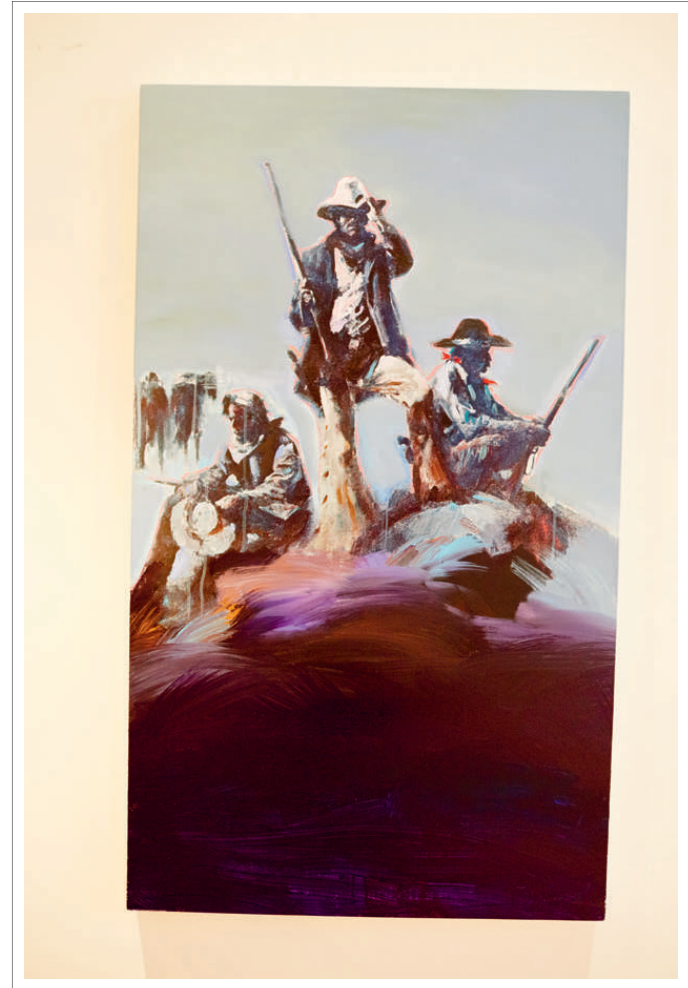
There are more artworks I’m glad I didn’t make. But I guess if it’s something recent, it would be something with style. I wish I had style, like Raymond Pettibon.

*Where do you look for entertainment these days?*

I don’t look, or want, or try. I know I’ll always end up back in my bedroom, and that “ending up” is











something of a promise I try to keep. I'm pledging my time. It's all I've got.

*What work environment do you prefer?*

The usual thing. A small room with windows on the street, a desk, a chair and a wall that has a surface that you can easily staple onto.

*Describe a room in your home.*

My library is my favorite. It's like living in a sanatorium.

*What connects the work in there?*

Culture.

*A library was originally about both keeping books, but also the possibility of lending...*

Lending is still an interesting concept, especially when it comes to artwork. It implies grace and friendship. What's exchanged is purity. You really can't complain, can you?

*Why is collecting first editions important to you?*

I like to read the way a book came out in its original form. If I could read the manuscript that would be even better. Something to do with being friends with the riverboat captain.

*What do you collect that you might consider a souvenir?*

Punk flyers.

*Would you ever go on a cruise trip?*

Sure, but only if I was alone. There's this one cruise out of Ft. Lauderdale called The Big Boob Cruise. It's for shutterbugs. You basically sail around and take pictures of women with huge tits. I've seen promos about it. It looks hilarious. It's a week out on the ocean with like twenty five women and fifteen hundred men with all their camera equipment hanging around their necks, trying to shoot some kind of center-fold. There's a couple of women passengers along too. I dig a pony. You can celebrate anything you want.

*What's the relationship between fashion and art?*

If I walk down any street in NYC nine out of ten people are wearing dungarees.







*“It might be better to have things just beyond reach. I mean, if you ever do get to the top of the mountain, you eventually have to turn around and walk back down.”*

*What’s your relationship with perfumes?*

I like the names of perfumes. I know they’re thought about. I know there’s a lot of effort in coming up with a clever, clear, good word to describe the smell.

*How does physical geography play into our fantasies?*

It might be better to have things just beyond reach. I mean, if you ever do get to the top of the mountain, you eventually have to turn around and walk back down. “Fossil fuel companies are flooding our elections with \$\$\$.” That’s just what dinged on my phone when I wrote “walk back down.”

*Are you interested in a virtual reality that substitutes this world for another?*

Substitute? I think people will always be interested in what was there in the first place. Virtual reality will only work if you’re in a room, alone, listening to the Beach Boys.

*Which realities feel like dreams to you?*

YouTube videos of Groucho Marx.

*What feels spiritual?*

Art history.

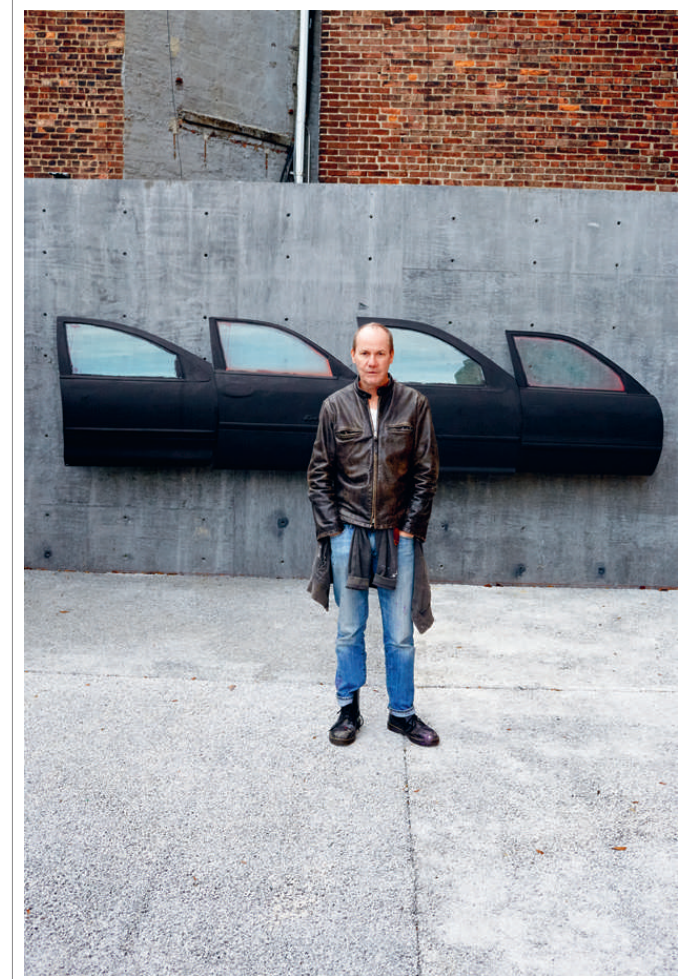
*What do you think an art teacher should teach?*

I’ve never taught. I’ve done some crits. I guess if I did teach I would say: Come to NYC and go to galleries and museums.

*What kinds of technological etiquette are you a proponent of?*

Etiquette? That’s like a dainty word. I’m not sure if that fits into where my head is at. I like “satire.” I wish National Lampoon was still being published.

*Are the terms “original” or “authentic” useful to you?*





I don't describe what I do with those words, I think other people use them to try to describe what I do. Those words don't describe the feelings I have for what I do. My advice is not to let the boys and girls in. I'm really only interested in grown-ups.

*What's your relationship to "the beautiful?"*

It's a great way to put your finger on it. I wish I could do it more often.

*What interests you about fame?*

Nothing. There's nothing about fame that interests me. I like beating a dead horse.

*What do you enjoy buying?*

My wife does the shopping. I mean that literally. I don't buy anything.

*What daily rituals do you have?*

I read the newspaper.

*Have the changes in film mediums changed your movie-watching rituals?*

I don't go to the movies anymore. I don't go to theaters. I watch them at home. Alone. On demand.

*Do you have any predictions for the future of gallery culture?*

No joke, more galleries should think about serving lunch. If I owned a gallery, I would have a couple of comfortable banquettes and some take-out menus.

*You are passionate about cars. Do you remember getting your driver's license?*

Sure. My first trip was in a 1949 Chevy Thriftmaster. I paid a hundred dollars for it. The brake linings leaked and you had to pump the brake pedal if you wanted to stop, and I ran into the side of a brand-new gas station. The place had just opened up and I cracked the cement wall. The owner was pissed. He was really pissed when he found out I didn't have any insurance. I probably bought and sold two hundred junkers over my lifetime. Bought some real flashers too. Not sure why. I don't drive anything fancy anymore. In fact I don't drive at all. I got a guy who drives me. I like to sit in the back and work on my phone. •

