

# RICHARD PRINCE COWBOYS

SELECTED WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION

04.13.2018 \_\_\_\_\_ 09.02.2018

For its third exhibition, the Espace Louis Vuitton Beijing presents *Cowboys*, an exhibition dedicated to American artist Richard Prince. This exhibition has been produced in the framework of the Fondation Louis Vuitton's "Hors-les-murs" program, showcasing previously unseen holdings of the Collection at the Espaces Culturels Louis Vuitton in Tokyo, Munich, Venice and Beijing, thus carrying out the Fondation's intent to realize international projects and make them accessible to a broader public.

Richard Prince belongs to the generation of American artists who grew up in the 1950s at the time of the explosion of mass media (television, cinema, magazines). He appeared on the international scene during the late 1970s alongside Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine and Barbara Kruger, as a major proponent of appropriation art. He deconstructed the mechanisms of representation and communication promoted by American popular culture. In 1977 his practice took a radical turn when he started re-using advertising images, which he photographed and appropriated. Cutting out the text logo, he reframed the images, creating blurred effects and emphasising colour. Working largely in series form, his subjects were models, cowboys and women on motorbikes. One of his most well-known series working in this vein is the *Cowboys* series, appropriating the advertising campaign images of Marlboro cigarettes.

Beginning in the 1950s Marlboro ads featured cowboys riding through the wide open terrain of the Wild West in the United States of America. The cowboy was an instantly recognisable icon, wearing denim, leather chaps, boots, spurs, and Stetson hat. Almost exclusively white, he is portrayed as handsome, weathered, and physically fit. Both a role model and sex symbol, the cowboy appeals to men and women alike. By the mid-1960s the "Marlboro Man", as this figure became known, was so recognisable and brand-identified that Philip Morris was able to drop all direct references to cigarettes in its ads in favour of subtly alluring smokers to come, and be part of, the epic Western landscape of "Marlboro Country".

The Espace Louis Vuitton Beijing invites you to experience emblematic works from the Collection of Prince's *Cowboys* series, including: *Untitled (Cowboy)* (1994), *Mountain Cowboys* (1998-89) and *The Blue Cowboys* (1999). Comprised of eight works in total, these photographs exemplify this important and renowned moment in Prince's oeuvre. Through appropriation by the means of 're-photography', Prince turned the cowboy into an emblematic, complex object, expressing nostalgia for a mythical, foundational period while highlighting the stereotype through "clichés".

### About the artist

Since the late 1970s, **Richard Prince** (b. 1949, Panama Canal Zone, USA) has redefined the concepts of authorship, ownership, and aura by appropriating images from mass media, advertising and entertainment. 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 humour; the mythical status of cowboys, bikers, customised cars, and celebrities; and the push-pull allure of pulp fiction, producing unlikely icons such as the highly coveted *Nurse* paintings. Working mostly in series form, his most renowned series began in the 1980s with his Cowboy photographs, using the notable figure of the "Marlboro Man" taken from cigarette advertising campaigns.

### About the Fondation Louis Vuitton

The Fondation Louis Vuitton serves the public interest and is exclusively dedicated to contemporary art and artists, as well as 20<sup>th</sup> century works to which their inspirations can be traced. The Collection and the exhibitions it organizes seek to engage a broad public. The building created by architect Frank Gehry, and already recognized as an emblematic example of 21<sup>st</sup> century architecture, constitutes the Fondation's seminal artistic statement. Since its opening in October 2014, the Fondation has welcomed more than a million visitors from France and around the world per year.

Confirming the international recognition of its artistic commitment, the exhibition *Icons of Modern Art, The Shchukin Collection* received a record-breaking 1.2 million visitors in six months (Oct. 2016-Mar. 2017).

The Fondation Louis Vuitton commits to engage into international initiatives, both at the Fondation and in partnership with public and private institutions, including other foundations and museums. It is also responsible for the artistic direction of a specific "Hors-les-murs" program within its cultural spaces in Munich, Beijing, Tokyo and Venice, which are exclusively devoted to exhibitions of works from its collection. The exhibitions they organize are open to the public free of charge, and their programs are promoted through specific cultural communication.

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Open from Monday to Sunday, from 11am to 7pm  
Open on public holidays. Free entrance