

Lesson Title: Richard Prince, Aesthetics, and the Value of Information

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Overview: This lesson was developed for a Photography course on the theory and psychology of photography (non-majors and majors both take this course). This lesson is typically presented at the beginning of a course section on the aesthetics of photography. It was meant to challenge their assumptions about art, information (online) as a commodity, and copyright practices of artists. Students may be asked to look up Richard Prince before class or during, as the lesson suggests.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify and discuss relevant issues related to the work of Richard Prince, including copyright, appropriation, and visual information as a commodity.
- Consider the original context of the work of Richard Prince and critique whether these images, in this new context, take on a different meaning.
- Discuss the choices that Richard Prince has made in the production of his work to influence interpretation and aesthetic value

Time: 60 minutes

Teacher Materials: Kahoot.it, google doc with attached questions for group contributions (emailed to students ahead of class), notecards, questions for class discussion on individual slips of paper

Student Materials: Any mobile device, computer preferable for group work

Pre-class assignment:

1. Spend 15 minutes looking up information about “Richard Prince” and his work
 - a. Answer the following questions in a short discussion:
 - i. What did you discover?
 - ii. What struck you as interesting about his work?
 - iii. What struck you as problematic about his work?
 - iv. What kind of publications did you learn about his work in? (blogs, articles, online art journals?)
 - a. Were the sources of your information presenting facts about his work, opinions, or both?

Session Instructions:

2. Introduction
 - a. So, who is Richard Prince?
 - i. Brief overview and introduction to the controversial aspects of his work
 - ii. or show video in Kahoot:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWhY99cjJ64>

- b. Kahoot.it questions:
 - i. Do you use instagram to post personal photos?
 - 1. Yes, all the time
 - 2. Only of my cat
 - 3. No, I don't use Instagram
 - 4. What's Instagram?
 - ii. How would you react someone else hung your instagram photo in a gallery?
 - 1. I would expect credit
 - 2. I would expect compensation
 - 3. I would expect they ask my permission
 - 4. I wouldn't really care
 - iii. What is the main issue YOU see with Richard Prince's work?
 - 1. It violates copyright
 - 2. It violates individuals' privacy/is unethical
 - 3. It takes original work by others out of context
 - 4. Nothing, it gives existing images a new context
- 3. Have students break into groups and each group will get a slip of paper with one question (from below) to work with and answer amongst themselves. They'll have 5 minutes to discuss before they are asked to share their question and lead a discussion on the question.
- 4. Bring up the Google doc with the following questions for them to answer and take notes as the discussion unfolds:
 - a. Copyright
 - i. Does RP give proper attribution to the original creators of the work he shares?
 - ii. What are the legal boundaries that RP is challenging through his work?
 - iii. Does this fall within fair use?
 - b. Privacy, Appropriation and Ethics
 - i. What are the ethical issues you found with RP's work?
 - ii. What kinds of issues arise considering that many of the people RP uses in his work are women and minorities?
 - c. Context
 - i. What is the original context of the work RP is sharing and who is the intended audience of that work?
 - ii. What meaning do these images have in the new context that RP has placed them in?
 - iii. What choices has RP made in the production of his work that influence the interpretation and aesthetic value of the original image?
- 5. One minute paper (notecards): Is this art? Pull in concepts discussed during class to defend your answer.

Assessment: One minute paper analysis

Reflection/final question for instructor: This work is polarizing for some students; did anyone disengage? If so, why?

Questions for student discussions (to be printed and distributed):

- Does RP give proper attribution to the original creators of the work he shares?
- What are the legal boundaries that RP is challenging through his work?
- Does this fall within fair use?
- What are the ethical issues you found with RP's work?
- What kinds of issues arise considering that many of the people RP uses in his work are women and minorities?
- What is the original context of the work RP is sharing and who is the intended audience of that work?
- What meaning do these images have in the new context that RP has placed them in?
- What choices has RP made in the production of his work that influence the interpretation and aesthetic value of the original image?