



## ART COMMENTARY

by Marion W. Weiss

### **RICHARD PRINCE'S "UNCOVERING POLLOCK" AT GUILD HALL**

The first time this art critic really took notice of Richard Prince was at Glenn Horowitz' New York gallery several years ago where his "Naughty Nurses" series appeared on book covers. Prince's work evoked not only pulp-fiction novels of the 1950s and 60s but also provocative porn movies of the same era. Oddly enough, that show has a connection to Prince's current one at Guild Hall that features photographs of model Kate Moss. (Moss had previously served as a subject when Prince took photographs of her dressed as a nurse for *W Magazine*.)

Yet there's also a disconnect between those "Naughty Nurses" of yesteryear and Moss in the present exhibit. The previous images were not overtly suggestive. However, most of the current photographs show Moss nude. In the earlier nurse series, generally, there was fragmentation of the subject (for example, only a face is shown on one book cover, *Surgical Nurse*). Moss is now presented in full-body poses. So, too, are the numerous images of couples engaged in sexual activity. These photographs leave little to our imagination.

Even so, the large photographs of Jackson Pollock (over which images are juxtaposed) also favor Prince's fragmentation: Pollock's body is covered by smaller pictures, revealing only his hand or

arm or paint bucket. Yet we must question what such a device means. Is Prince saying that Pollock was fractured himself and needed other people and experiences to make him "whole?" In order to "cover" Pollock (the exhibit's theme), must he be "uncovered" to reveal what's underneath? There's a hint of this in a photograph showing Pollock lying on the ground with his eyes closed. It's as if he is daydreaming about his life and the people in it.

Or does the opposite ring true as well? Are all those collages over Pollock's image there to protect him from being discovered for who he really was? That's probably unlikely, since the images apparently reinforce both Pollock's rebellious demeanor and Prince's "preoccupation with the tawdry and illicit," according to Guggenheim Museum curator, Nancy

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Spector. Thus, are we to assume that this series, "Uncovering Pollock," is really about "uncovering Prince?"

Seen from such a psychological perspective, perhaps the series is a "stream of consciousness" deriving from Prince or psychodrama as a form of visual art. And why not, considering that Prince's appropriations are personal and subjective with photos of his punk favorites, like Sid Vicious and Gene Simmons, indicating an interest in music and perhaps pop culture. His pictures of Kate Moss also convey a similar interest in American culture. Then again, do we dare suggest that perhaps Prince is criticizing these icons at the same time that he values them?

If we are coming up with no definite answers, that's OK. According to Guild Hall curator Christina Mossaides, "Appropriation artists encouraged the viewer to bring his/her own associations with the imagery in the artists' new context."

We welcome that idea with open arms.

*Richard Prince, "Uncovering Pollock," will be on view at East Hampton's Guild Hall (158 Main Street) until Oct. 17. 631-324-0806.*