ALMINE RECH

# Untitled (Cowboy)

## Dec 3, 2017 — Mar 25, 2018 | Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles

In the mid-1970s, Richard Prince (b. 1949, United States) was an aspiring painter working in Time Inc.'s tear sheet department, clipping texts for staff writers. After he removed the articles, he was left with the advertisements—glossy pictures of commodities, models, cowboys, and other objects of desire. Assuming ads were in the public domain, Prince began to re-photograph them with a 35mm camera, cropping them to eliminate text. He then took his slides to commercial labs to be developed and printed, and finally presented the largescale, limitededition prints as artworks of his own. Prince's re-photography had an explosive and polarizing effect in the artworld, provoking lawsuits and setting auction records. With this controversial practice, he redefined what it meant to "take" a photograph.

Between 1980 and 1982, Prince paid particular attention to the motif of the cowboy, as depicted in a long-running series of advertisements for Marlboro cigarettes. The "Marlboro Man" campaign is an elaborate fantasy, originally crafted in emulation of a 1949 Life Magazine photo essay about working cowboys in Texas. The figure of the rugged, independent cowboy helped Phillip Morris shift consumer's attention from the recently reported dangers of cigarette smoking to a dream life in the sweeping landscapes of the American West. Appropriating these images, Prince drew fire from the commercial photographers who had been paid to illustrate the campaigns, while taking aim at myths of masculinity and the frontier. In 2015, Prince revisited copies of Time from the 1980s and 1990s, once again homing in on Marlboro advertisements.

Using new technology but following the same basic steps, he scanned the pages at high resolution, eliminating text digitally but, in cases where the ad spanned two pages, retaining torn edges and pieces of tape as evidence of his removal and reassembly. The final prints have the scale and presence of landscape paintings. With this series, Prince reignited the debates he originally sparked and points out that the stakes around originality, appropriation, and truth in advertising are
as high as ever. The exhibition 'Richard Prince: Untitled (Cowboy)' presents the complete 2015–16 series Untitled (Cowboy), recently acquired for the collection and publicly exhibited for the first time. A comprehensive catalogue on the Cowboy paintings will be published for the occasion. Curated by Britt Salvesen, Department Head and Curator of Photography and Prints and Drawings, the exhibition is on view in LACMA's Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM) from December 3,
2017 to March 25, 2018. An adjacent gallery features selected works from the museum's collection that also represent the iconography of the American West.

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