

richard prince dentist...or...i must be in the wrong joke

i'm writing down these stories as i remember them...it's not so important if they are completely true and accurate because i am writing about richard prince who has taught us that differentiating between fact and fiction can be a can of worms...

i first met richard prince in the mid-eighties shortly after he had had a show at international with monument where he exhibited a group of his large "gangs". ...classics like "criminals and celebrities" (those who hide their faces from the camera)...and a broken up new yorker cartoon with the text "missing and presumed dead"

around this same time...i spent the summer in my chinatown studio playing with stenciled letters I had found at pearl paint ...this led to larger ptgs and an installation with bob gober at 303 *gallery* where i showed one of these "text" paintings for the first time...all i can remember about the opening was paula cooper coming in and carefully reading the text of the ptg (sell the house sell the car sell the kids" and with mock seriousness said out loud to nobody in particular "my sentiments exactly"...i had been so self-conscious about showing such new work paulas response was enough to at least get me through the opening...303 was lisa spellmans gallery which was on 6th street and was next door to colin delands american fine arts...richard was at that time married to lisa and had supposedly "discovered" the artist john dogg who showed with colin ...i had seen john doggs show and was curious enough to ask richard about him since he was such a mystery...nobody seemed to know who he was...richard reflecting on an interview he had done with dogg told me his favorite dogg quote which to me only added to the mystery...something like..."as an artist i dont want to be seen

as ahead of my time i want to be seen as of my time"...it was richards telling of the story not the story itself that made it memorable...

david robbins in an early art work had dubbed richard prince the 5th beatle...also richard had signed a 45 record of his that he had given me "little richard"...and he had become famous...or infamous for updating a well known warhol maxim...his version "in the future nobody will be famous"... ...at the time he was making drawings by simply hand writing the texts of his growing repertoire of jokes ...he had still not made ptgs and of course they were not really richards jokes in that he hadn't written them...it was the choice of jokes that made them art...

a decade earlier in 1977 the collective for living cinema showed a print of warhols *vinyl* which had not been screened since shortly after it had been made in 1965...*vinyl* is an hour long and based on anthony burrress' *a clockwork orange* and was made 5 years before the stanley kubrick film ...**oddly there is a cut in this film.... though as a rule warhol never cut his early films preferring to doing all editing in camera...but ondine who introduced the program explains that at this point in the filming someone had knocked the camera off its tripod thus the need for the odd cut** ...shortly after the screening eric mitchell one of the founders of the "new cinema" a super 8 downtown film collective who had also attended the screening was quoted in the village voice explaining grandly that for artists it "no longer mattered what they did it was only a matter of what you re-did".....eric went on to make his version of *vinyl* (a clockwork orange)... a super 8 film titled *kidnapped* featuring a cast of "no wave" illuminati... ...that same year 1977....richard wrote an essay detailing his use of photography as "practicing without a license"...his idea was that his use of photography was not really photography in any historical manor...more of a tool to copy images...he actually used a copy stand...for me these were the first rumblings of

artists questioning originality and the ability of art to be “new”
...artists had always striven to be “real” while richards ambitions
were less clear... as the ad asked....is it real or is it memorex?...

having seen the ptg of mine at 303 richard asked if i would be
interested in collaborating...of course i said yes and was back in
his studio where he had a typed list of jokes...again they were his
jokes not because he wrote them but because he
had rewritten them....richard asked which jokes i was most
interested in for our collaboration and i chose a few of my
favorites and he hand wrote each chosen joke on a single sheet
of blank paper for me to take back to my studio....and that was
it...i was to make ptgs and when i later asked him some aesthetic
questions (composition?) he shrugged...clearly he wasn't into
aesthetics...at first i was drawn to the standard jokes that had a
variety of punch lines...doctor jokes or traveling salesman
routines...or the many ironic jokes where the punch line is “....i
must be in the wrong joke” (breaking the forth wall)...but
afterwards i went back to my studio and simply selected the 2
shortest jokes...“i never had a penny to my name so i changed
my name”...and “i went to see a psychiatrist and told him
everything and now he's doing my act”...i chose these 2 texts
because they had the least letters (compositional imperative)
...when i came to title the ptgs i realized these 2 jokes had much
in common....the punch lines in both jokes were written first
person...thus i titled the 2 ptgs *my name* and *my act*....both jokes
were about changing identities...richard had given me jokes to
work with that weren't his jokes and i took those jokes...changed
my name to *prince* and was doing his act...*rimshot*...

a few years later richard and i were at martin kippenbergers
opening of his paris bar installation/collection in berlin...richard
had recently explained in an interview that his idea of a great
assistant was someone who came to work made coffee and
handed him the hot mug while he was having his morning

shower...like with humor timing being everything....a young woman artist in berlin thought this sounded sexist and approached richard at the opening asking if he was the notorious richard prince who wanted hot coffee brought to him in the shower?...richard at first taken aback simply replied “you must mean richard prince the artist i’m richard prince the dentist” and turned his back and walked away heading for the street...