

# Sadie Coles

# HQ

## RICHARD PRINCE

*Nurse Paintings*

23 April to 31 May 2003

private view Wed 23, 6-8pm

For his third exhibition for Sadie Coles HQ, Richard Prince presents a vivid new series of figurative paintings.

The images use as their starting point the pulp fiction genre of medical romance novels. Scanning in the front covers of stories with *Nurse* in the title, Prince then applies deep layers of paint to the ink-jet surface, obscuring all other text and imagery so that only the nurse and her moniker remain – *Surgical Nurse*, *Graduate Nurse*, and so on. Against the vibrant background of passionate purples, greens and pinks and other more menacing, darker tones, the white of the nurses' uniform takes on an almost supernatural glow, with the balance of light and dark making for a rich sense of drama, melodrama even. The nurse's face mask is accentuated, protecting her anonymity and allowing her to become a cipher for the viewer's fantasies. These paintings manifest a deep sense of nostalgia which draws on our collective view of the angel of mercy, an image from sixties America, but avoid becoming maudlin by retaining a hip edge.

While these paintings have their own distinctive aesthetic, they share many of the aspects that have characterised Richard Prince's works – both photographic and painting - over the years. There is the element of pop appropriation that lies at the core of the Cowboys, Girlfriends or more recent Publicity photographs. And with his Joke paintings they share the use of borrowed text and low humour, while their literary connection highlights the artist's bibliophile tendencies. The marriage of Prince's recent high, painterly aesthetic with the low origins of the subject matter, has by no means led to a muted meeting on a middle ground. Each end holds its own, and they sit surprisingly easily together.

This exhibition will coincide with the publication of Richard Prince's latest book, *American English*. Based around the artist's collection of English and American First Editions, it offers an insight into the knowledge and obsession of the bibliophile and comes with a text by Prince, *Bringing it all Back Home*.