



Richard Prince

***Untitled (Cowboys #8)*, 1980–84**

Ektacolor print

48 x 72 inches, edition of 1

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,

Museum purchase made possible by a grant from The Burnett Foundation

Acquired in 1995

Richard Prince's photographs of cowboys contain all of the heroism, ruggedness, and action that we have come to associate with the American West. Prince makes an interesting comment on not only these ideas, but also on how we come to learn about them through his source – Marlboro cigarette ads. Prince is considered one of the first artists to use the method of appropriation (or as he calls it, "stealing"), which is to take an image or composition and re-present it with little or no change to the original. In *Untitled (Cowboys #8)*, Prince has re-photographed the Marlboro ad and presented it as his own. He has made some precise changes, however, and the artist's intervention alters the way we view the piece. First, he has cropped out the text from the advertisement. There is no slogan or logo, and the Surgeon General's Warning has been omitted. In this way, the image no longer serves as an ad, since it is not trying to sell us something. In most cases, by omitting the text, he has omitted the presence of the cigarettes. He has also enlarged the image, shifting its size from the format of a magazine to the format of museum display. Prince's re-photograph brings up a number of questions: What is original about the work? What is the role of the artist in creating a work of art? Where is the artistic intervention? Without the advertising, what do these images communicate? How do we learn about our culture, our past, and other people through advertising? Surely, Prince is fascinated by all of these questions, and this curiosity led him to create work from the most available, if not the most powerful, medium in the world today – advertising.