

12 YEARS OF VISION AT NAHMAD CONTEMPORARY: 2013

In its inaugural year, Nahmad Contemporary introduced its program with exhibitions of John Armleder and Richard Prince, laying the foundation for 12 years of bold exhibitions and stories to come



Installation view, *John Armleder*, Nahmad Contemporary, 24 September–2 November 2013.
Photograph by Tom Powel Imaging. © 2025 John Armleder



Installation view, *Richard Prince: Monochromatic Jokes*, Nahmad Contemporary, 11 November 2013–25 January 2014. Photograph by Tom Powel Imaging. © 2025 Richard Prince

Nahmad Contemporary opened its doors in spring 2013 with a solo exhibition of [Sterling Ruby](#), establishing a program committed to artists who challenge the limits of modern and contemporary art. The year unfolded with [John Armleder](#) and [Richard Prince: Monochromatic Jokes](#) — two exhibitions that, though distinct in form, shared an investment in appropriation, humor, and the redefinition of artistic categories.

Both artists employ minimal means — a pour of paint, a heap of bulbs, a single line of text — to create works layered with meaning. Humor, whether Armleder's unexpected juxtapositions or Prince's deadpan delivery, becomes a vehicle for ambivalence. Together, their practices show how appropriation and contradiction can drive reinvention, transforming the familiar into something playful, unsettling, and unresolved.

John Armleder and Richard Prince: Monochromatic Jokes signaled a focus on innovative, historically informed presentations, bringing forward artists whose practices elude easy classification and expand the possibilities of painting and sculpture. As we look toward the gallery's next chapter, in the next 12 months, we will reflect on Nahmad Contemporary's 12-year journey.

[John Armleder](#)

24 September–2 November 2013

John Armleder has spent his career dismantling the idea that art must follow a single, fixed trajectory. Since co-founding Geneva's Fluxus-inspired Ecart group in the 1970s, he has embraced chance, interdisciplinarity, and anti-establishment irreverence. "I have no genre," Armleder has said. "I believe in everything. It avoids being stuck in a frame of understanding."

Surveying two decades of his production from the 1990s to 2000s, the exhibition included works never before seen in New York. Two key installations anchored the show: *Untitled (Light Pile)* (1995), a scatter of fluorescent bulbs in dialogue with the art of Dan Flavin, and *Ciliata* (1994), a flower garden sprouting from tractor tires that fuses industrial detritus with organic life. Together these works bring playfulness and wit to the fore, recasting familiar materials into new visual and conceptual registers. A wall painting extends this exploration, treating the gallery's architecture as surface and blurring the boundaries between mural, canvas, and site.

Across the exhibition, Armleder's restless production revealed a practice poised between rigor and chance. The *Pour Paintings* — including *Honu Manu* (2006) and *Galanthus nivalis* (2008) — demonstrated a seemingly casual approach to process, their luminous surfaces often infused with glitter or Styrofoam. Other works, such as *Chabasite* (2008), with its sharp zips of cream, olive, and rose pink, push geometric abstraction into dizzying optical rhythms, at once precise and destabilizing.

Richard Prince: Monochromatic Jokes

11 November 2013- 25 January 2014

Richard Prince has made a career collapsing the divide between mass culture and fine art. Since the late 1970s, when he began rephotographing advertisements, his work has probed authorship, originality, and cultural memory. By the mid-1980s, he shifted from images to language, isolating jokes drawn from magazines, stand-up routines, and oral tradition, creating a series of joke paintings that lent permanence to language otherwise destined to circulate and vanish.

This exhibition, the first of its kind in New York in over 15 years, surveyed paintings from the artist's iconic series created between 1987 and 1994. *If I Die* (1990) records the line, "Jewish man talking to his friend: If I live I'll see you Tuesday. If I don't I'll see you Wednesday," its tragic logic sharpened by the sparseness of its presentation. *Five Years Ago* (1994) reads, "Did it work? I don't know, I haven't seen her in five years," converting levity into something darkly unresolved. Across the joke paintings, Prince divulges how humor can function as both entertainment and critique, exposing the anxieties and prejudices within a culture.

Painted in traditional materials, the *Monochromatic Jokes* offer an austere counterpoint to the Neo-Expressionist bravura of their time. Prince has described the series as "radical...the idea of taking jokes as a pictorial theme was really new, a virgin territory." Simultaneously banal and profound, these paintings ask whether language itself can sustain the weight of painting.