

JIL SANDER'S NEW LOOK CHANNELS RICHARD PRINCE

At Milan Fashion Week, Simone Bellotti's debut took its cue from Richard Prince's architectonic Hoods, extending the artist's ongoing dialogue with fashion

By Canada Choate



Richard Prince, *Point Courage*, 1988–89. Photograph by Tom Powel Imaging.

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More than four decades after the debut of Richard Prince's *Fashion* (1982–84) rephotographs, the artist remains à la mode. At Milan Fashion Week earlier this month, former Bally designer Simone Bellotti unveiled his first collection for Jil Sander, citing among his chief inspirations the architectural qualities of Prince's *Hoods* (1988–2013), sculptures hewn from parts of classic 1960s and

'70s muscle cars purchased by mail from magazines. One especially striking piece — [a crisp white dress](#) — held a stiff, away-from-the-body silhouette, mimicking the convexity of Prince's wall-mounted fiberglass hoods. With its soft central pleat, [a purple leather shift](#) likewise recalled the ridged contours of a car bonnet, referencing Prince's *Point Courage* (1989), displayed on Bellotti's mood board during fittings two days before the show.

Prince's influence, however, extends beyond form. Just as the *Hoods* evoke the golden days of California car culture — nodding to the Minimalism of Donald Judd and Robert Grosvenor as well as to monochrome painting — Bellotti's Jil Sander looks back to and expands on the legacy of the German designer, who debuted her first collection in 1975 and went on to cement her status as a leader of late-20th-century industrial minimalism.

Today, reinventing a fashion house demands the kind of appropriation Prince helped pioneer in the late 1970s, with his decades-long exploration of rephotographed and subtly altered glossy-magazine editorials, codified in his *Fashion* series. Case in point: [the opening look](#) in Bellotti's collection — a simple white pencil skirt with an Yves Klein-blue top — was worn by Guinevere van Seenus, whose appearances in Sander's 1990s ad campaigns and lookbooks made her image synonymous with the brand. In an [iconic photograph](#) by Craig McDean, who would later photograph Prince for *Interview Magazine*, Van Seenus sports a white pencil skirt strikingly similar to the one she modeled in Milan.

Prince's appropriations have made him a touchstone for designers seeking to deepen the abyss of references embedded in any contemporary garment. His collaboration with Marc Jacobs on Louis Vuitton's Spring/Summer 2008 collection remains his most celebrated dalliance with the industry, and for good reason. Their partnership produced a runway seared into the minds of

the fashion- and art-obsessed. The show opened with a parade of anonymized models in sheer organza nurse coats and tulle face masks — a real-life staging of Prince's *Nurse* paintings, canvases drawn from the covers of his extensive 1950s-'60s "naughty nurse" pulp-fiction collection. Each of Jacobs's costumed nurses clutched an acid-bright Vuitton handbag emblazoned with an off-color joke reminiscent of Prince's joke paintings from the late 1980s ([Glenn Ligon's 2007 transcribed Richard Pryor jokes](#) form another link in this chain of quotations). Among the [one-liners](#): "Every time I meet a girl who can cook like my Mother... She looks like my Father" and "I've been married for thirty years and I'm still in love with the same woman. If my wife ever finds out she'll kill me." Courting controversy, embracing camp, and flirting with fetish, Jacobs and Prince transformed the staid French luxury house into a provocation — if only for the length of the catwalk.

Caught in the contemporary loop of "intellectual property," heritage houses, and referential runways, designers look to artists for new ways to remix culture. Bellotti's Jil Sander may be fashion's latest appropriation of Prince's practice, but it is unlikely to be the last. In the words of Jacobs, commenting on Prince's particular suitability to re-imagine a signifier as potent as the Louis Vuitton monogram: "it just makes perfect sense."