

# SEAN FADER

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## #wishingpelt to Backdrop Minidoc Voice Over

In 2014 I created the #wishingpelt for Spring Break Art show and Pulse New York. Over the course of 8 days, 10 hours each day and without breaks I stood nearly motionless on a platform.

Visitors were invited to whisper a wish in my ear, run their hands through my chest hair, and to seal their wish they needed to upload a selfie to Instagram with the #wishingpelt.

Over 2500 individuals participated, documented in the photographs they uploaded to Instagram. As of today I have been contacted by more than 400 visitors thanking me for making their wishes come true.

I have never spoken their wishes allowed but I can say that 99% of people wished for love understanding and connection not power, money and control.

These intimate performances are sealed by photographic contracts and shared publically, fulfilling the demands of social media, while maintaining private moments of intimacy.

What at first seemed like a preposterous proposition was, instead, a dialectical and disarming way to produce intimacy within social media's compulsory exposure.

I began thinking about what authorship looks like in digital spaces, memes, and a kind of new authorship I call collective authorship.

During the course of the show Richard Prince commented on one of my images from #wishingpelt, took a screenshot, printed it large-scale on canvas, and later included it in his New Portraits show at Gagosian.

It felt strange to see a giant image from #wishingpelt that claimed to be authored by Richard Prince at Gagosian gallery on Madison Avenue and on top of that it had a 40,000 price tag. #wishingpelt was supposed to be small digital and free. He made it large expensive and a so called painting.

Though many people urged me to sue Prince, #wishingpelt is about generosity. Suing him would have undermined the piece. Instead, I sent out a press release stating

Sean Fader's #wishingpelt is on view at Gagosian Gallery's Madison Avenue Store in an exhibition organized by Richard Prince entitled New Portraits

It went on.

Prince, by placing #wishingpelt in his exhibition, now serves as witness to those many declarations, wishes, hopes, and confessions that are the content of Fader's social media performance. Providing a venue for simple acts of sincerity and honesty, Fader's work values the desire for meaning and hope that is often disallowed in the prevailing orthodoxy of cool irony. It took a great feat of self-denial for Prince to set aside his role as the poster child of such safe sarcasm and, instead, to promote sincerity by lovingly re-posting Fader's work in his own exhibition.

At first glance, one might be led to believe that Richard Prince's intentionally naïve commentary on Instagram images to be merely a last gasp at colonizing the work of others. Rather than just a replaying of that white male privilege as an attempt to stay relevant in a world he doesn't understand, Prince's curatorial effort represents a new turn in the form of his affectionate and deep engagement with the work of his peer, the photographer and performance artist Sean Fader.

Hyperallergic interviewed me and both the article and press release went viral. I was then invited to participate in the exhibition Share This! Appropriation after Cynicism at Denny Gallery.

Prince is the poster child for death of the author and yet what he did was not only did he erase me from the work but he also erased the thousands of people who can and wished and wished and share and collectively author #wishingpelt... instead he declared it his.

For the exhibition at denny gallery we took it back.

I created Backdrop for the Rebirth of the Collective Author ("There's a Whole Lot of Authorship Going On." - Richard Prince) In the title I quote and credit richard prince

For the piece I re-appropriated the Prince piece and added a second panel to create a diptych. Printed on the second panel is "Our Pictures Are For Each Other #collectiveauthorship #wishingpelt #artselfie." Next to the piece was a selfie stick and the last hashtag explicitly invites viewers to photograph themselves with the piece. I was present in the gallery for the entire run of the show to talk about the work and to take selfies with anyone who wanted to.

The exhibition text stated "Intended to live in Instagram, this work expands its authorship to everyone who takes an #artselfie with it as a backdrop. Each time you take an #artselfie with this work, it sends the photo back to its home in Instagram and engages you with its collective authorship. Remember, our pictures are for each other. Share."