

SEAN FADER

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See Sean Fader's *#wishingpelt* in *New Portraits* @ Gagosian Gallery Organized by Richard Prince



FINAL WEEK: See Sean Fader's *#wishingpelt* in *New Portraits* @ Gagosian Gallery Organized by Richard Prince

Now in its final week, Sean Fader's *#wishingpelt* is on view at Gagosian Gallery's Madison Avenue Store in an exhibition organized by Richard Prince entitled *New Portraits*, September 19–Saturday, October 25, 2014.

Fader's *#wishingpelt* uses the social world of Instagram as its medium, and is a forum in which to perform work. Related closely to live events, the Instagram photograph is for Fader a contract with his participants, sealing a bond and producing a shared experience across the thousands of his participants who have not yet met. The images are not documentation. They are performative and utopic commitments.

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.

The New York live event for Fader's performance of *#wishingpelt* was held in 2014, produced by AKArt at the PULSE Art Fair and previously at SPRING/BREAK Art Show curated by Elizabeth Denny. Over the course of nine days, Fader stood motionless on a platform for a total of 80 hours. Visitors to the *#wishingpelt* were invited to whisper a wish in Fader's ear, run their hands through his chest hair, and seal the wish with selfie tagged on Instagram or Twitter with *#wishingpelt*. Their wishes are forever private and their photos were immediately made public. The website wishingpelt.com and Instagram's *#wishingpelt* hashtag aggregate these photographs, thus creating a growing archive of the public's experience with the *#wishingpelt*.

In today's media-saturated environment, where the private is regularly broadcast as public, there is little room for intimate and private honesty. We are constantly reminded how social media is altering our capacity to know others. Rather than deny or flee from this condition, Fader's work fearlessly makes space for sincerity in the heart of social media spectacle. What at first seems like a ludicrous proposition—rub a guru's chest hair and make a wish—became the vehicle for participants to express wishes, confess crimes, and have a single incontrovertible moment of physical intimacy and honesty. The spectacle got them there, but the private moment of intersubjective rapport between artist and participant was theirs alone. The Instagram photograph taken with their own cameras seals the contract, producing this moment for the demands of social media, and allowing them to participate in the fictitious communities that make up our networked world. What seemed like a preposterous ritual instead became deeply felt and infectious. During the two performances, over 2500 individuals made wishes to Fader, documented in the photographs they uploaded to Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook. After the performances, Fader received countless emails from visitors thanking him for making their wishes come true and for changing their lives. What at first seemed like a preposterous proposition was, instead, a dialectical and disarming way to produce intimacy within social media's compulsory exposure.

Prince's re-posting, in the physical space of his exhibition, is a testament to the fearless performances of attachment and rapport that Fader's participants found. Prince has extended the potential of Fader's social media art, becoming a viral host for hope. Fader's work could not have existed without the circulation of images that is Instagram's aim. The performance was documented on Instagram but also happened through it—being enacted by all those who took photographs of themselves with Fader and declared their participation in that online community of those who dared to wish. Prince honors the thousands of participants who shared with Fader a belief that—even while mediated and broadcast—the singular moment of connection counts.

To see all the images search for *#wishingpelt* on Instagram or go to wishingpelt.com. To follow Sean Fader on Instagram, follow [@photoartstar](https://www.instagram.com/photoartstar). For more about Sean Fader visit seanfader.com.

For further information please contact the Sean Fader at sean@seanfader.com or at 917.374.8690. All images are subject to copyright. Sean Fader's approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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