

May 5, 2020

Richard Prince  
New York, New York  
USA

Dear Richard,

My name is Jerry Cimino, Founder and Director of The Beat Museum in San Francisco. The Beat Museum is dedicated to preserving the memories and celebrating the work of the counterculture in general, and the Beat Generation specifically.

I've been trying to reach you regarding a matter of importance to both of us for the last two years, with no success. I've asked mutual acquaintances to connect us, I've mailed letters—I even had the opportunity to speak with you for 30 seconds at a gallery event in San Francisco before you were whisked away to make some remarks to the attendant crowd.

I appreciate that you're likely approached by a lot of strangers every day. I imagine, like many in your position, you probably employ people whose job it is to keep people like me at bay. Hence my turning to an open letter.

Two years ago, while doing some research on Jack Kerouac, I happened to find your website and I was awestruck by the photographs of your magnificent collection. It was heartening to see so many important items gathered together in one place. I quickly realized you possess the greatest private collection of Beat Generation and other counterculture materials in the world.

As I'm certain you know, Beat scholars and enthusiasts have long been curious as to the whereabouts of many of the items in your collection. Jack Kerouac's original typewritten scroll of *Big Sur*; or the copy of *On the Road* he read on *The Steve Allen Show* in 1959; copies of *Howl* inscribed to Kerouac and Lucien Carr. I won't belabor the point by listing them all, as you obviously know the significance of what you have.

I am very grateful you have taken it upon yourself to safely acquire and preserve in a single collection so many irreplaceable artifacts that mean so much to so many. I read in an article that it is your intention to one day bequeath many of the important literary items you've collected over the years to an appropriate institution.

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In that regard, my firm belief is The Beat Museum is the best choice you can make for a permanent home for your collection.

You're a serious counterculture enthusiast, Richard. That much is extremely obvious to a guy like me, who would be doing exactly what you're doing were I in a position to do it. When it comes time for you to let these items go, do you really want them to go to some conventional institution, where these unique and precious items are more likely to be stored away and forgotten than to be seen by genuine fans and scholars who will appreciate their true value?

The way I look at it, bequeathing these magnificent items to a large institution, no matter how great that institution might be, can only diminish their enduring standing as they are relegated to obscurity amongst older and more "classic" literary works. We're talking about the *counterculture* here! These are the very people the established galleries, museums, and universities ignored, dismissed and sneeringly rejected.

You've clearly spent considerable time, money, and energy collecting these "outlawed" treasures. Why not place them where they will be lovingly cared for, displayed and regarded with the prominence they deserve?

I'd love to hear from you at [jerry@kerouac.com](mailto:jerry@kerouac.com) or [1-800-KER-OUAC](tel:1-800-KER-OUAC). And when the time comes when we can all travel again, I'd love to meet you in New York to discuss this matter in person.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jerry Cimino'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Jerry Cimino  
THE BEAT MUSEUM