ARTnews

Ryan McGinness

DEITCH PROJECTS

Ryan McGinness is an original. An accomplished graphic designer, the 31-year-old artist has created corporate logos (Sony, IBM, MTV) and has published several books of his often-humorous trademark silk-screened motifs. In this ambitious exhibition, these graphics appeared in paintings, on skateboards, and on mirrors that were arranged as a walk-through labyrinth.

An unusual marriage of abstraction and representation, McGinness's slick, colorful paintings consist of layers of images tidily clustered into baroque compositions. He invokes fantastic visions of imperial pageantry, with heraldic themes—castles, crests, fleurs-de-lis, guillotines, troubadours—interwoven with laurel wreaths, flowing ribbons, and the arabesques of giant treble clefs. Sometimes a unicorn appears. McGinness also sneaks in modern elements, such as safety pins or silhouettes of people on cell phones. The images read like hieroglyphs, though their arrangements only tantalize, evoking a mood but never a meaning.

McGinness struck a similar balance between graphic simplicity and lyrical, baroque complexity in the installation *Worlds within Worlds*. Here he painted white disks on a disorienting maze of mirrored walls. Within each disk was a silhouetted image where the artist had left the mirror bare. The imagery was more contemporary, featuring, for example, various incarnations of street-sign figures. The mirrors created infinite reflections that incorporated us in the ever-evolving design. And this brings us to his point: even in a carefully ordered universe—natural or contrived—there's still room for the creative and the idiosyncratic. —*Meredith Mendelsohn*

Ryan McGinness,
Untitled (Project Rainbow Series)
detail,
2003,
silk-screen
ink on vellum,
24" x 19".
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