

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

# Off the Wookiee

FREE



## RYAN MCGINNESS

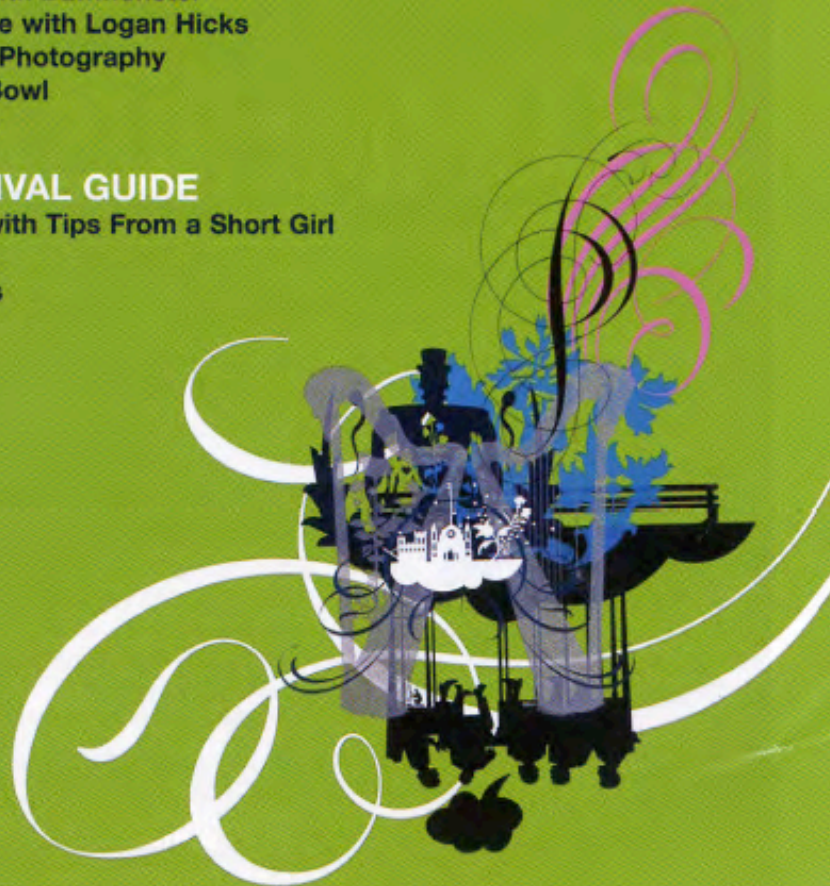
"Please stop biting my rhyme"

## HOW TO GUIDES

Wheat-Pasting with Buffmonster  
Make Prison Wine with Logan Hicks  
Tips for Concert Photography  
Make a Record Bowl  
Silkscreen Shirts

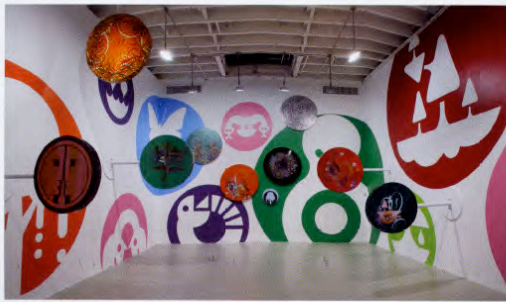
## SXSW SURVIVAL GUIDE

Venue Reviews with Tips From a Short Girl  
24 Hour Diners  
Getting Outdoors  
The Best BBQ  
Dive Bars



730 FIFTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK NY 10019  
TEL 646 336 7183  
FAX 646 336 7185  
WWW.GERINGLOPEZ.COM





"Installationview,"  
2005, installation view, mixed media, dimensions variable, Detch Projects, New York,  
Photo by Tom Powell, Courtesy Detch Projects

### Someone Write Ryan McGinness a Song

By Heather Edgar

When Ryan McGinness was 14-year-old, he wanted a new skateboard but didn't have the money for it. So, he did what any resourceful genius would do and wrote letters to companies requesting prizes for a bogus skate contest. His persistence paid off when, sure enough, these companies sent him all kinds of promotional gear that he in turn shared with his friends.

As an artist, Ryan approaches problems with the same tenacity he employed back then and has a reputation for being very meticulous when it comes to the production of his work. In his new book, *Installationview*, he shares his thought process from concept to completion. Alongside the incredible artwork that results from all of his hard work, Ryan's strict work ethic may have sprouted from years spent as a graphic designer, but it is more likely the result of a personal dedication. His artwork does not fit into the traditional categories set up by critics because he uses both his graphic design and art background for his multi-media installations. This may complicate the response to his work, but Ryan is not concerned with maintaining the

status quo. In order to create art, he uses whatever resources are available to him, whether it is taboo or not. He once said, "If you let the world define you, you're at a loss, like a puppet".

The first time I saw an installation by Ryan was at the Beautiful Losers exhibition at the Orange County Museum of Art. His layered silk-screened paintings were surrounded by more imagery painted like colorful wild vines sprouting out onto the wall. I was blown away by the amazing attention to detail that unfolded as I focused onto details within his paintings. Layers of icons were combined as if to tell funny anecdotes in a language entirely made up of international symbols for tourists.

Lately, Ryan is enjoying a lot of international attention and has multiple exhibitions planned for the next few months. Because of his ability to synthesize the diverse worlds of art, graphic design, and pop culture, while retaining his credibility and integrity, it's no wonder he is receiving this recognition. Right in the midst of a very busy time for him, Ryan filled out this interview by e-mail.

H- When did you start to think of yourself as an artist?

RM- Childhood.

H- What was your childhood like?

RM- I grew up in Virginia Beach, VA; kindergarten through high school. I went to a school for gifted and talented children and studied art seriously from a young age. Virginia Beach was a suburban beach culture, and while I spent time at the beach and building ramps and skating, I was also academically-oriented and was president of my class in high school, on the debate team, honor society, the whole thing. I then went to Pittsburgh to study at Carnegie Mellon University.

H- Are there any artists/individuals that have inspired you stylistically or philosophically?

RM- Andy Warhol.

H- Andy Warhol is an enigma to me. The more I dig, the less I know. You did a cu-

ratorial internship at the Andy Warhol Museum after you graduated from Carnegie Mellon University. Do you look to his example when it comes to the balance between fine art and consumable products?

RM- Andy Warhol's paintings can definitely be described as art products, and I think that's neat.

H- Your pieces have a strong sense of movement to them, have you ever considered animating some of your images?

RM- Yes, I did a video piece in 2002 titled *North Star*. Bill McMullen co-directed it with me.

H- I would love to see that. Do you think that you will do more?

RM- No. Video is not my medium. It was a fun project, and I have actually done other video projects (compiled on a DVD titled *Video-Happiness*), but it just isn't real enough for me. I remember my mother telling me the story of when I was young and saw a television for the first time. I kept



"Now Forever,"  
2005, installation view, "Greater New York" exhibition, PS.1/MoMA, New York,  
Photo by Tom Powell, Courtesy Detch Projects

40



Untitled,  
2003, oil and silkscreen ink on wood panels, 24 x 48 in.,  
Photo by Tom Powell, Courtesy Detch Projects

41



42



# GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

grasping out into the air toward the screen and asking "But is it real? Is it real?"

H- Because of your background in graphic design, aspects of two-dimensional space, iconography and symbols have been prominent alongside painterly swirls in your fine art pieces. Did you ever hesitate to blend these two traditionally separated concepts?

RM- No, they're all symbols. The more baroque elements are just symbols for fanciness.

H- A lot of people assume that you cut and paste clip art when in reality you change the designs to your satisfaction. Do you think you are influencing the new clip art being produced?

RM- I actually do a lot of drawing, which is more process-oriented. It takes me quite some time to get a drawing exactly right. I don't know if I am influencing new clip art being produced.

H- The swirls, layers and icons of your style have found their way into American culture; I see evidence of your impact everywhere from printed media to television. Do you

have a sense of your own influence? Do you think one aspect of your art has had more influence than others?

RM- I'd be careful about including the advertising and entertainment industries in "culture." Work produced with a corporate agenda behind it is not the kind of culture I want to celebrate. But yes, I also see my influence everywhere. It's very strange for me, because my work comes from a very personal place with a deep history behind it. When the spirit of my work is co-opted by corporations and a sales agenda is attached to it, the work is emptied of absolutely everything meaningful. I know that art directors and advertising schmucks come to my shows and buy my books. Those people are in the business of raping. But it's hard to blame people for being themselves. There will always be that element in society.

H- As technology and computer programs become more popular among artists, do you think art and graphic design will become one and the same?

RM- Art and graphic design are two completely separate things. Technology



Photo by Dirk Westphal

43



Universal (48d, No. 6), 2005, polyesterurethane on fiberglass with aluminum and wood armature, 48 in. dia., x 4 in. armature: 30 in. x 3 in. dia., Photo by Tom Powell, Courtesy Delich Projects

is just a tool. It cannot change, conceptually, the two professions any more than a microphone will make news reporting and singing the same.

H- It seems that as critics are trying to define the art movement you are a part of, they keep using terms like, "street art", "graffiti art", "skater art" and so on. Do you think it's a strategy to withhold fine art credibility?

RM- I think that they think it just sounds cool. Those kinds of terms are usually used to relate the work to a target audience - 18 to 30 year olds with disposable income. The targets usually include those who fetishize coveted objects from childhood like toys and sneakers and those who tend to believe in empty brand names, which cast only the shadows of something meaningful.

H- What do you think about all of the artist-designed toys/figures/urban-vinyl etc.?

RM- I don't think much of it. Some of my friends make those things, and I like my friends, but I am curious about fueling that

market. However, it really isn't much different than making expensive art and having it purchased by rich people. "Toys/figures/urban-vinyl" is just a smaller game.

H- Are there any that you personally like or dislike?

RM- It's all so wonderful.

H- In your book, Sponsorship, the catalogue to accompany your exhibition, you interviewed many artists on the subject of corporate sponsors, commissions and collaborations. Do you see the increase of this practice as a positive turn in an art movement? Or do you feel that it has spawned imitators who oversaturate and weaken your personal visual language?

RM- It is not positive. Corporations are not positive entities.

H- What I meant was, do you and your peers feel validated that everyone is seeking out your art because they find it cool? And/or also, do you worry that it is

44



Universal (36d, No. 3), 2005, polyesterurethane on fiberglass with aluminum and wood armature, 48 in. dia., x 4 in. armature: 30 in. x 3 in. dia., Photo by Tom Powell, Courtesy Delich Projects

becoming mainstream and you are associated with people who are biting you?

RM- I hope to never be associated with the people who are biting me. I'd hate to think that anyone would feel validated by the marketplace or by popularity. Is the best selling record the best record available? Does popular opinion yield us the best leaders? I'm most interested in making the best work that I can, and I recognize that I probably won't be making the best work of my career for at least another 15 years.

H- Do you have any words of advice for people who are interested in graphic design and/or art?

RM- Go to a university and not just an art school. Learn many things. Most artists are idiots.

H- Is there a band out there who you would love to do the cover art for?

RM- No. Do you think there is a band out there who would like to write a song for me?



Published by Rizzoli, 2005

47



"111,111,111 x 111,111,111," 2005, acrylic on linen, 72 in. dia., installation view, "Pain-Free Kittens" exhibition, Quint Contemporary Art, La Jolla, Photo by Roy Porello, Courtesy Quint Contemporary Art

48

730 FIFTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK NY 10019  
TEL 646 336 7183  
FAX 646 336 7185  
WWW.GERINGLOPEZ.COM