

Issue 04  
£4.90

# Art Review:

'Art is full of possibilities. That's the whole idea. It's one of the basic premises of art—why we do it. Nothing else has that.'

OCTOBER  
2006

## A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY: RYAN MCGINNESS

Ryan McGinness' work has always played a game of hide and seek with our recognition. His early pieces from the mid and late 1990s channeled Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg but updated their pop aesthetic with a Southern California skater sensibility. By 2000, McGinness had moved more fully into graphic design, where Pantone colour and Adobe Illustrator combined to create a vocabulary of symbols and signage – hands, arrows, speech bubbles; all in the manner of those universally recognisable icons that point the way in airport men's rooms – that appeared at once immensely familiar yet without direction.

This was the key. Freed from the constraints of communication, McGinness' graphic vocabulary became increasingly layered. A kind of Art Nouveau organicism entered the picture with imagery of silhouetted plants, and free-form, whiplash lines joining the icons. Through immense wall drawings and smaller, discrete panels, McGinness offered narratives with no content – a new hieroglyphics: elusive, elaborate, seductive, but in the end, unreadable. It was work that asked what the world would be like if it only had two dimensions and the palette of a colour wheel.

McGinness's newest work, the exhibition *NEVERODDFOREVEN* that will go on view at venues in Milan (Paolo Curti/Annamaria Gambuzzie & Co), Amsterdam (Vous Etes Ici) and Madrid (Galeria Moriarty), leaves the hieroglyphics behind in favour of an exponential increase in line; think art nouveau on *Miracle Grow*. A third dimension emerges here, especially with the concentric compositions that recall Kenneth Noland's colourfield targets from roughly 50 years ago (or a chronophotograph of treble clefs circling a drain). Noland's works were

once described as striking the viewer with the "visual efficiency of the man in a hurry" (a comment easily applied to McGinness's earlier icon aesthetic); but McGinness's new pieces eschew such efficiency. Instead, they indulge the viewer with what the artist calls, simply, a symbolism of "fanciness".

Though he has stated that these new works, "do not differ too much conceptually or aesthetically from [his] work in the past," McGinness does maintain that, "something strange is happening in the studio". That "something strange", however, has to do with the artist's new attitude towards process: "The thumbnail process sketches I make for each drawing want to be folded into the final work. I usually go through a process of sketching, drawing, refining, tweaking, and that is now starting to collapse. I think it is the result of me not being able to get my drawings out of me fast enough for my own satisfaction." Perhaps McGinness is in a hurry after all.

Jonathan T. D. Neil

*NEVERODDFOREVEN*, PAULO CURTI/ANNAMARIA GAMBIZZIE & CO, MILAN  
22 SEPTEMBER – 3 NOVEMBER  
[WWW.PAolocurti.com](http://WWW.PAolocurti.com), VOUS ETES ICI, AMSTERDAM,  
14 OCTOBER – 11 NOVEMBER  
[WWW.VOusetesici.nl](http://WWW.VOusetesici.nl),  
24 NOVEMBER – 8 JANUARY,  
GALERIA MORIARTY, MADRID  
[WWW.GALERIAMORIARTY.COM](http://WWW.GALERIAMORIARTY.COM)

Ryan McGinness, *Soi Lucet Omibus*, 2006, acrylic on linen, 96 x 96 inches.  
Photo: Tom Powell Imaging. Courtesy Deitch Projects, New York