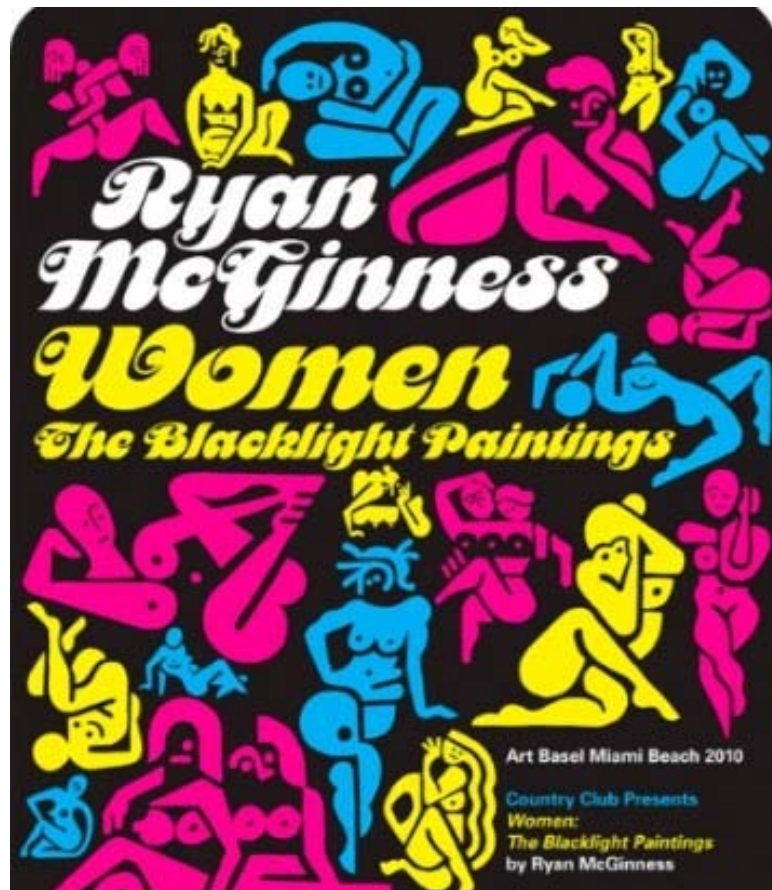




PAPER

Ryan McGinness's Painted Ladies

By Paul Laster
November 30 2010



Starting his career as a graphic designer, Ryan McGinness realized the importance of symbols early on and developed his own vocabulary of visual signs and logos that get repeated throughout his diverse body of work.

McGinness remixes digital information-referencing street culture, logos and nature-to make paintings, sculptures and products that engage the moment in a new way through a conflux of imagery. Recently devoting a year to throwing a series of 50 Parties, conceived as a monumental artwork, the New York-based artist has fine-tuned his ability to create the ultimate event. Writer Paul Laster caught up with him to discuss his planned VIP event for Club Madonna this Friday, a Miami Beach strip joint, and other projects during Art Basel Miami Beach.

What projects are you presenting during ABMB this year?

First and foremost, there's the debut of the new black-light women paintings, presented by Country Club at Club Madonna. Then there's a 14 x 30 foot black-light mural for Wynwood Walls. It's the first of its kind, organized by the Hole. And, more conventionally, I'll have some new work with Michael Kohn Gallery and Pace Prints at Art Basel Miami Beach.

Are the black-light women paintings based on photos or real models?

They're made from real models. In this past year I've been working on a series of abstract, universal, nude female symbols based on figure drawings from life. I have about 70 different models. My hope is to get 200 final drawings that will make up this whole body of work. I have about a hundred drawings done now, and they all start with life drawing.

When did this new interest in abstracting nudes begin?

Over the past eight months. It first started when I was attending Will Cotton's drawing salons, which he hosts every now and then. He hires a model for the evening and invites artist friends over to draw. I was attending those for the past couple of years and then I invited him to host one of our 50 Parties in the studio. We had models all over the studio and people were drawing. Additionally, I drew related figures from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Project, where I was appropriating paintings from their collection. The collection had some nude figures and I was trying to abstract them. The combination of those experiences over the past few years led me to this whole series.

What delight do you get in transforming the female figure into a universal symbol?

Finding those beautiful forms and making them absolutely perfect to my eye and finding the underlying geometry that make those forms kind of visually logical to me.

Club Madonna is a strip club. Are you going to be painting the dancers?

Exactly. I'm going to be camping out there doing figure drawings of models and dancers during the day, doing figure drawings by appointment, and airbrushing some of the dancers for an event.

Is this the beginning of a mid-life crisis?

I hope not. I'm not that old.