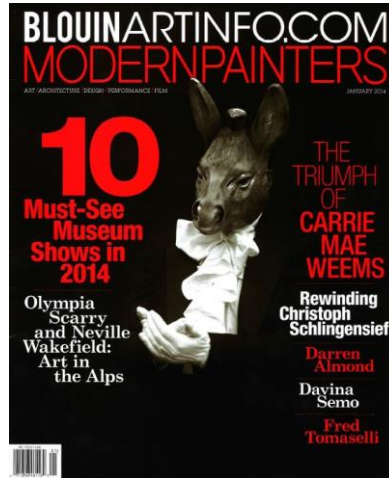


# BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

Modern Painters  
January 2014  
By: Wendy Vogel



## PHILADELPHIA

### Ryan McGinness

Bridgette Mayer Gallery // October 9–November 16

SKATE-SURF PSYCHEDELIA meets the schizophrenia of cultural signage in McGinness's works. Trained in graphic design, the artist forged his brand in New York in the late 1990s, when galleries like Jeffrey Deitch and Alife brought attention to his generation of post-Pop artists melding street- and high-art aesthetics. Today McGinness's compositions, populated with "icons" resembling perverse takes on symbols in the public domain, continue to bear allegiance to that era of decadence, globalization, and infatuation with digital-image proliferation. A recent body of work explicitly addressing gender iconography, however, raises questions about his critical currency of re-presentation.

"Finding Infinity," McGinness's debut at this gallery, includes three series that reference explorations of outer space and inner life. The "Black Hole" paintings, circular canvases covered in roulette curves, look as though they could have been drawn with a Spirograph. Compared to his large paintings and monoprint lithographs—environmentally themed works incorporating images of leaves, branches, and acid rain, bordered with squatting figures with spritzer-bottle heads—they appear declawed. Vertical paintings with titles like *Finding Meaning* and *Finding Infinity* (all 2013) seem to poke fun at the Western appropriation of Eastern



live models, run through a dehumanizing series of modernist abstractions. Accompanied by a *Cubistic Woman Trophy Study* from 2011 (coated in gold automobile paint, in case the connection between trophies and women isn't clear enough), the prints' careful clusters of overlapping female figures dissolve into a series of essentialist one-liners punctuated by perfectly round or teardrop-shaped breasts. It's no joke, however, to McGinness, who recently described his approach to the female nude as "very masculine." He explained, "I capture, analyze, reinterpret, invent, codify, destroy, distill, catalogue, and rebuild in my own image." If the post-structural lineage that McGinness has used to validate his practice has taught us anything, however, it's that we should question received image categories—especially when they're burdened by chauvinist cultural baggage. —Wendy Vogel

cultural tradition, and trade the artist's square all-over format for more daring formal decisions. *Finding Your Center*, its left side dominated by thick, multicolor chains and pyramid stacks of briefcases, recalls '60s political-protest posters.

But McGinness's eagerness to revisit the history of abstraction takes a misstep in his 2012 series "Women Sun-Stained Symbols." These cyanotypes catalogue various gestures wrested from porn and

**Ryan McGinness**  
*The Dancer vs. the Dance*, 2013. Acrylic on wood panel in artist's aluminum frame. 48 x 48 in.