

Inside the Studio: Notes from a Former Assistant

Greg Lindquist

Paintings lead to paintings; words never do.
—Henry Geldzahler, *Making It New*

Introduction

The idea for this essay arose from a conversation Ryan McGinness and I had about a review¹ I wrote of one of his recent exhibitions. One of the reasons I wrote the review was to formally gather my thoughts on Ryan's painting practice after working in his studio for two years. Because many insights are discovered through an active process of writing, one can go into a review with a certain opinion and finish with a radically different one. I was frustrated and somewhat distraught to finish the review on a highly critical tone. Still, I felt the exhibition was too even in its overall polished and glossy appearance. I ultimately acknowledged that this was probably the point of an exhibition presenting varied editions and multiples (which it was), but missing was the intuitive, painterly process that Ryan has consistently brought to the silkscreen technique.²¹

I hesitated to submit the review and almost didn't. After it was published, I worried that it had upset Ryan. I called him a couple months later to discover he hadn't even read it. When we finally discussed the review, I was relieved to hear that he thought it was good and wanted to talk about doing something even more critical at some point. Perhaps this incident is an example in itself of why people like to work with Ryan: he is receptive to criticism and continually thinking about how to better solve problems and improve processes.

This essay, which has proven just as difficult as the critical review, has become a further opportunity to appraise Ryan's processes, although in a different way. Rather than being overly critical, I fear being excessively complimentary, risking sentimentality and exaggerated praise. While discussing ideas for the essay, Ryan suggested interviewing past and present assistants to construct a broader timeline of experiences in the studio. I created a questionnaire² that developed into conversations and interviews aimed at forming a snapshot of each assistant's duties and how each was influenced by working with Ryan. The results helped confirm the surprising consistency of my observations. The aim of this essay is first to provide a transparent view of Ryan's studio practices and then, through specific accounts from both my and other assistants' experiences, a transparent portrait of his work habits through explanations of his organization, process, and business

practices. Finally, one may see how these individual aspects relate to his personality as a whole.

A Glimpse of the Studio

While in graduate school, I worked with organizations that connected my MFA program to the outside New York art world. A classmate, who ran the Visiting Artist Lecture Series, asked me one day to recommend artists to invite. I suggested she invite Ryan, after having a conversation with my studiomate about his work. At the time, Ryan was installing his 2005 exhibition "Installationview." This semester, before my thesis exhibition, was a formative time to connect with the art world at large, outside of the academic environment. When I asked Ryan if he needed any help, I was surprised to hear him reply, "As much as I can get!"

I assembled a crew of enthusiastic friends, and we painted human-size symbols and logos from scaffolding at Deitch's space on Grand Street in SoHo.²² We were immediately placed in various stages of the process. First, the symbols were enlarged from a digital projection of a vector-based Illustrator file. Using permanent marker and painter's tape, we created stencils that were then sealed and painted with matched colors. What seemed like straightforward tasks took twice as long as the specifics of these processes became more carefully considered in execution. According to my academic planner, we worked one day from 4 pm until 3 am and then another from 7 pm until 1 am. During this week before the opening, I imagine Ryan was there almost all day and night.³

Ryan's creative process immediately fascinated me. I had never considered how many people an exhibition's installation often involves. In the creative process, something always inevitably and unexpectedly goes wrong. In this case, it involved double-sided, fiberglass discs (resembling large lollipops) that extended from the gallery walls inbetween the symbols and logos. They were so massive that the walls could not support their weight. I remember overhearing a conversation between Ryan and Jeffrey Deitch during which Jeffrey sighed matter-of-factly, "This is certainly going to be a challenge for our collectors." Ryan, however, determined to make it work, eventually consulted a structural engineer, who

²¹ Yes, that was the point.

²² I really like that phrase, "human-sized symbols," to describe the wall paintings. It gives a logical sense of

scale to those drawings.

added circular plywood plates (painted white to blend into the wall) to help distribute the weight of the sculptures.

Ryan worked alongside us the entire time. He was personable and even, at times, shy about giving instructions. One night he provided beer and pizza, ate with us, and entertained our, at best, overly flattering questions.⁽²³⁾ (Now that I am out of school, I understand how valuable my own time is and appreciate how generous Ryan was with his.) Later that night, we helped him with some paintings in his studio, a 2,500-square-foot commercial loft in Chinatown. After seeing Ryan's studio space, I was determined to work for him in order to understand how he made his work and organized his studio, two concerns in my own career.

For an artist in New York, openings can be a tiring ritual. Many are quickly forgotten. However, the opening reception for "Installationview" felt undeniably personal. All of us who worked on the installation spent a lot of time admiring the result and pointing it out to our friends. We felt connected to the installation, and we enthusiastically greeted Ryan as he wandered around in a daze after what must have been a string of sleepless nights. A friend and former roommate heard about an after-party, and after the opening, a large group of us piled into the building's elevator, which let us off directly into Ryan's studio, overflowing with revelers.

As my friends mingled and drank, I wondered about how Ryan ran his studio. The walls were covered with finished paintings, silkscreens bearing the symbols in the paintings, and process sketches and notes. It occurred to me that everything on view was intentional, almost as if he had installed a second exhibition in his studio, which revealed glimpses of his process.⁽²⁴⁾ This approach also suggested a strategic presentation and a keen attention to detail. When I finally made my way to the rear of the studio, I shyly asked Ryan if he needed any help. I left the party satisfied, with a scrap of paper bearing his distinctive handwriting⁴ indicating his address and the time I was to report to work.

During one of the first sessions,⁵ I proposed a trade where my hours would be used towards earning one of his works on paper. I thought that a trade was better than the actual cash; in hindsight it was a wise decision.⁽²⁵⁾ The work's value would appreciate as Ryan's career progressed. And, I have also been long obsessed by documenting experiences in my life, having mementos and reminders of things past. Having one of Ryan's works seemed like an appropriate form of payment for my work and gave me an inspiring object with which to live.

My artist assistant duties began with helping Ryan make paintings, which basically meant that I kept the screen-printing process in order. With several paintings on flat surfaces across the studio, Ryan selected one color and screen image and used a squeegee to print the image on usually more than one painting. I recognized that there was a certain economy to this way of

working,⁶ especially with all the possible variations in proportions of the painting support, color of the background, and structure of the overall image.⁷ I was responsible for washing and drying these screens after their use and cleaning squeegees and paint spoons. At times, I would also hold larger screens for Ryan while he painted. We seldom talked during this time since he was usually deep in concentration. Because it was an intuitive process of which screen Ryan chose and where it was used, the resultant color combinations were often unpredictable. I became fascinated with how color relationships formed and was reminded that colors could often only be perceived in their proximity to other colors.⁸ In particular, this was true in the layering of warm and cool combinations in his paintings, where, for example, a cool brown would appear differently next to a cool blue and warm blue, and so on. Most likely, these observations had an influence on the warm and cool, muted colors in the paintings that composed my MFA thesis exhibition.

After Ryan became more familiar with my work around the studio and with my own painting, he asked me to mix colors. Given a laser-jet-printed swatch, I would match the colors with paint. Because there is no right way of mixing a color, I used this as an opportunity to experiment with color mixing.⁽²⁶⁾ Often, the required primary color wasn't available so I had to improvise, or change the color slightly. But because my color sensibility is based on subtle variations of a subdued gray palette, I think Ryan and I both began to realize that his colors were beginning to look a little muted, which is the opposite of what he was going for—he often talked about a color in terms of how much it "popped" next to another one.

Inside the Studio: A Laboratory for Ideas, A Model for an Evolving Process

Ryan actually used to wear a lab coat in the studio at times while painting, and a laboratory is an apt metaphor for Ryan's artistic practice. The studio is a place of experimentation, trial and error, and active discovery. This is reflected in three major characteristics in Ryan's methodology: organization, process, and business practice.

Organization of the Environment

The space in Ryan's studio is arranged based on his ever-evolving needs. When I first began work, the front of the studio contained an office area, the middle was a spray booth, and the back, a kitchen. A few months later, Ryan had the spray booth and kitchen wall removed and a closet built in place of the office area. The spray booth was no longer necessary since Ryan had stopped using airbrushed metallic car paints, while the office was moved to the rear of the studio, which was once his bedroom. This configuration made the center of the studio open work space, allowing Ryan to make larger paintings. During the construction, I helped Ryan with such reorganization as rewiring stereo speakers, rerouting printer cables, and painting walls. Like Ryan's painting process, the organization of his studio encourages efficiency. As his process grows, so does the way he orders his space.⁹

⁽²³⁾ The cost of beer and pizza during installation is a business expense, so no big deal.

⁽²⁴⁾ Absolutely everything that can be considered is considered.

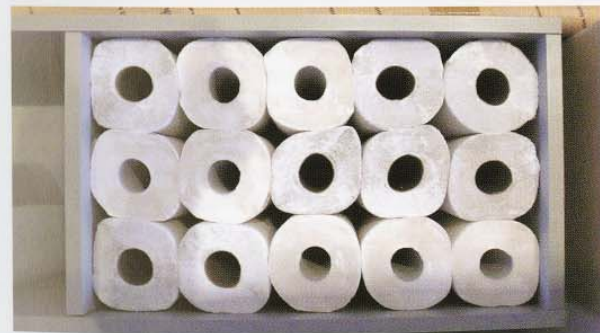
⁽²⁵⁾ Trade is culture.

⁽²⁶⁾ Assistants are discouraged from conducting experiments on my dime.

Greg Lindquist

Texts

Ryan McGinness
Works.



Systems of organization and various
studio views, 2008.

27 See Q 058 on p. 282.

28 Old screens are retired to an area
in the studio and saved for a future
project.

29 The coffee maker is perhaps the
most important tool in the studio.

30 KRINK.



Ryan is continually developing systems for organization. As he once said, “I’m constantly trying to bring order to my environment.” Lists of upcoming projects and exhibitions fill several white boards. Bookshelves hold binders—some archive all work, past and present, sold and available; others hold menus, labeled “Places to get food.”¹⁰ A computer devoted solely to music is connected to a stereo receiver and wired to speakers across the entire studio.¹¹ Tools are consolidated on a cart, various supplies stored in labeled boxes in his closet, and paints arranged in an orderly “RedOrange-YellowGreenBlueIndigoViolet” configuration on several shelves across a section of a wall.¹²

The more time I spent with Ryan’s vocabulary of symbols and icons, the more I recognized items in his studio that inspired this vocabulary. A Pac-Man machine, plants in his bathroom, a candelabra, an ornate Baroque-style couch, a velvet rope, and shields are all items that appear in his studio and as silhouetted symbols in his paintings.

A Process for Problem Solving

An interesting aspect of Ryan’s formal education is that he studied graphic design rather than studio art. While he has described his experience in design as learning how to “communicate visually,” I wonder if Ryan was also exposed to a design process for problem solving. The book *The Universal Traveler* describes such an ideation process as a “problem solving journey.”¹³ The main premise is that a logical and orderly systematic process applied to creative problems leads to more efficient and effective solutions.¹⁴ Fitting for Ryan’s interest in mass production of multiples, this way of thinking is commonly applied in new product and concept development and market research.

Most recently, Ryan has been developing a manual for standardized tasks in the studio, such as preparing canvases. This manual involves flow-chart diagrams detailing step-by-step instructions from start to finish. Although he had already developed preferred

procedures while I worked for him, these tasks have become more specific and specialized over time, evolving in efficiency like the space of his studio.

Such increased specialization also applies to the duties of Ryan’s more recent studio assistants. While his earlier assistants (myself included) had a wider range of duties—including help with painting, work in Illustrator, errands, packing, and administrative tasks—his recent assistants’ responsibilities appear much more specific. For example, former assistant Maria Wan described her duties as “mainly on the computer, making the illustrations that get used in the paintings and sculptures.” She also did floor plans and elevations for proposed installations, mock-ups for products, security badges, and miscellaneous research. Other assistants still help Ryan only with the painting process. The association between Ryan’s specialized processes and those used in the development and marketing of commercial products also relates to his business practices.

Business Practice

Ryan’s entrepreneurial spirit and business practices, which he may have learned from his experience as a graphic designer, are great assets to his artistic practice. Wherever and whenever possible, Ryan presents himself as a professional. His interest in business was first apparent when he asked me to invoice him and fill out a W-9 form in order to be paid after I had completed our trade. I then learned that he has an accountant manage his books each month, has established Ryan McGinness Studios as an S-Corporation, and has a federal tax identification number and a resale certificate to receive sales tax exemption for art supplies.³² In addition, he has Ryan McGinness Studios, Inc. letterhead, envelopes, and business cards that are branded with his signature crown logo and typeface. These formalities reflect the detailed professionalism he devotes to his career and also demonstrate the extent to which he is financially and logistically committed.

Studio views, 2007–2008.

³¹ A four-color reproduction of *Guernica*—quite possibly the best painting in the world.

³² All of this, of course, is standard practice.

³³ Pierre saved all the notes I wrote him and based his typeface on these. Of particular interest is Pierre’s successful

integration of my ligatures.

ALPHABET

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

LIGATURES

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T E T F T H T I T A E T A T E S A S E

NUMBERS & SYMBOLS

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PUNCTUATION & SYMBOLS

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Additionally, Ryan's understanding of advertising and marketing has enriched the scope of his work. Because his style lends itself to many forms, blurring the boundaries of commercial product and work of art, he is able to offer more price points to establish a wider audience. Producing wrapping paper, soccer balls, calendars, buttons, and books, and print multiples, original works on paper, and paintings allows Ryan to build an economically diverse collector base. A variety of papers, from butcher's paper and exhibition posters to printmaking paper, generates various pricing differences within the category of works on paper. The paintings' prices vary by support (linen, canvas, or panel), size, and shape.

Although his studio is structured like a company, Ryan has a specific vision for his work that rejects corporate sponsorship, or any alliance that places his work in the service of another entity or idea. For him, authorship and control are key components in making art—he is not interested in co-branding or coopting the work.³⁴ In maintaining this artistic integrity, Ryan has rejected offers to use his work in advertising campaigns for Nike, Coca-Cola, and major car, cell phone, and record companies. In addition, Ryan has filed lawsuits against companies who have blatantly marketed copies of his work without his knowledge or licensing. For example, I arrived one day at the studio entrance to find piles of boxes filled with t-shirts that featured Ryan's drawings, studio logo, and hang tags. A friend of Ryan's had noticed that Urban Outfitters had been selling "Ryan McGinness" shirts. Ryan was astounded; he had approved no such deal. When I asked him what he had done next, he replied, "I sued them!"³⁴

The settlement apparently involved acquiring the merchandise, so that Ryan had all the shirts in his possession, cluttering the studio. Former assistant Pierre Tardif asked Ryan what he was going to do with them, to which Ryan responded, "Sell 'em in Japan?" We were never sure if he was completely serious or what happened to the t-shirts. It became part of our job to fold the shirts, removing

Typeface based on Ryan's handwriting,
designed by Pierre Tardif, 2005.

³⁴ A company called UARM made bootleg shirts with my drawings and sold them to Urban Outfitters.

³⁵ For the record, I don't ever remember writing the word "love" to Pierre, unless I wrote him a note that said,

the defective ones. Ryan, of course, had a specific way for the shirts to be folded. Embarrassingly, I remember realizing that I never quite learned how to fold shirts in any consistent way until that moment. Pierre recalls, "I still don't know where all the tees ended up, but Ryan ran a great hustle. He confiscated the bootlegs, did a quick quality control check, and thought to release them as official gear. It was a clever table-turning strategy. All that time near Canal Street must have rubbed off on him."

The Influence of Ryan McGinness, the Person

While compiling the questionnaires from assistants, I noticed some consistent remarks about Ryan's personality: Ryan is hardworking.¹⁶ He is great with people.¹⁷ He is very clear about his instructions and patient. In these responses, a deep respect for Ryan as a person is clear. An assistant told me recently, "despite his fame and talent, he is empathetic and retains human decency... which I believe contributes to his success since people are eager to work for him.... During many experiences working for him, I have left feeling insecure and frustrated with my performance.... However, he was usually sensitive to this, did not lose his temper, and was always willing to give me a second chance. He once even called me to assure me that he was not upset with me..."

One particular situation reveals Ryan's empathic and understanding nature: assistants Pilita Garcia and Ben Callaway rolled a painting in order to move it, but it had a varnish layer that was not fully cured. Pilita recalls, "I can't remember why we rolled it... Ryan was definitely not in the studio. All I remember is when we started to unroll it. I was ready to faint. I... grabbed a sponge, pouring a bucket of soapy water and began scrubbing the millions of gesso marks that had stuck to the uncured varnish. We kept scrubbing; still Ryan did not show up. When he did, he reacted like a prince, saying, 'Oh, it's okay. It's just a painting.'"

Assistants also discussed the influence Ryan had on their professional lives. While many recognized and learned from his commitment to a daily practice of work, Pierre Tardif, while studying graphic design, found particular inspiration in Ryan's distinctive handwriting. In the fall of 2005, Pierre designed a working typeface called "Ryan McGinness," based on Ryan's handwriting. "When Ryan writes, he combines certain letters with a shared stroke, creating two- or three-letter ligatures," Pierre explained. "He also reserves certain letter styles for single words. For example, Ryan always draws the letter 'L' as a short, blocky uppercase letter except when he writes the word 'Love,' in which case he draws a cursive capital 'L,'" Pierre continued. These scrawls became interesting subjects for digital translation when used with open typeface font files (.otf), which automatically swap ligatures for certain letter combinations.³⁵

It took Pierre four months to finish the font. Pierre admitted, "When I finally showed it to him, he seemed sort of uninterested. I guess it's hard to impress someone by showing them a font that they can pen themselves." He added, "Because the font is based

"Please buy more beer, which I love."

on his calligraphy (and because of his kindly worded request), I felt I should not publish it lest it turn up in a ubiquitous ad campaign and end up branding Ryan's handwriting."

Despite Ryan's conflicted feelings about other people's demands on his time,³⁶ he is an extremely generous person. Even though I earned the work on paper five months into working, Ryan allowed me to take it home three months earlier in December 2005. On the day I received the piece, we stopped work early and spent the last hour sitting at a diner booth³⁷ in the kitchen area. Because I was growing anxious about my approaching MFA thesis exhibition, I asked for Ryan's advice and general guidance.

He told me that being an artist is a calling, much like that of a teacher, and advised not to let relationships get in the way of your work. At the time, a Brooklyn gallery had approached me about having a solo exhibition. I was hesitant about whether it was a good fit, and I was hopeful about a contact I had made with a Chelsea gallery. Should I commit at the risk of something else happening? Ryan told me that I don't want a show in June or July, but not to worry about losing my slot and to hold out for the best fit.

Ryan is extremely careful about the galleries with which he chooses to work. One reason he respects Jeffrey Deitch is that, in Ryan's experience, he is one of the few dealers who actually looks at the work when he comes to the studio. He takes a lot of time investigating what is happening with the work and makes himself available to Ryan to call for his opinion. Ryan told me that the most important thing to remember is context (of show, artist, location, collectors) and to focus on my work. "This might sound cheesy," he said, "but if you're focusing on the work and where it's going, everything will fall into place." Looking at my business card, Ryan made some suggestions: Get my e-mail address through my Web site (gmail and AOL look amateur). Don't list my phone number and street address. Don't have an image on the card—you don't want to apologize for it not reproducing accurately. I left the studio that day in a daze. As I said goodbye, Ryan casually encouraged, "Be productive."

As an aspiring artist, working for an established artist is a necessary stage in a career path. What I learned from working for Ryan could not be taught in graduate school. My experience in Ryan's studio motivated me to find my own commercial space when I finished my MFA. I also made my own stationery, envelopes, business cards, and Web site. Having discussions with Ryan about his S-Corp inspired me to form Greg Lindquist Studios LLC, acquire a federal tax identification number, set up a business checking account and credit card, and acquire a resale certificate. I even wired a stereo with speakers throughout my studio, after Ryan's model, using zip ties as I had learned while helping him organize his studio.³⁸ I have hired assistants—one who, ironically, worked for me when I was still working for Ryan—and even used the money Ryan paid me to pay my assistant. For my first solo exhibition,

I organized an after-dinner and after-party, loosely modeled on Ryan's after-parties. Ryan inspired me to invest in my career, to be dedicated and committed to making work. I'll still call him or stop by his studio to ask for advice, see his most recent work, and observe his ever-evolving studio practice.

Of course, there are more challenging aspects to Ryan's personality. Several assistants discussed his obsessive-compulsive tendencies. These comments remind me of a time he asked me to scrub a label off a clear soap dispenser, so that it would be more attractive and he didn't have to look at the logo on the label. Another assistant commented that lids of boxes had to be placed in a certain direction, and during studio cleaning days, "sometimes he would run his finger through nooks and crannies to find dust and be completely grossed out, but it would probably be five specks of dust."³⁷ Another assistant was disappointed to find, "when he wrote inscriptions in the books he published, seven out of eight of them say, 'Thanks for all your help!'"

Although many assistants commented on the low pay, former assistant Pierre Tardif explains, "The pay was decent for a student, but that's not the reason that I worked for him." At times I, too, had similar reservations about pay and overall value of the experience. Sometimes it just felt like I had learned all that I could. During difficult days, I felt an inherent monotony and imminent lack of glamour in the work. I realized at one point that I had found myself in essentially the same job I had in high school—a screen-printing production job—but rather than doing the actual printing (which were mostly t-shirts), I was often cleaning up after Ryan. Also, at times, I was frustrated to realize that I had worked 80 hours for a work on paper that took Ryan five, at the most, to produce. But, I was the assistant and my time was valued as such. To be early in a career in New York means almost working for free in many situations in order to gain experience. In contrast, I've heard horrific accounts from friends who, as assistants, have endured extensive abuses from difficult, disorganized, and unstable artists.

Ryan's studio practice goes against a misconception we have as a culture that making art is magical and mysterious.²⁰ The assumption that work materializes from the artist's imagination and flows directly to its form is troubling because it overlooks a process present in creativity. Contrary to popular stereotype, it's not madness, fits of manic inspiration, bipolar mood swings, or suicidal predispositions that make good art. Rather, a singular vision, ambition, organization, business aptitude, and entrepreneurial spirit have become defining characteristics of a work ethic like Ryan's.³⁸

Notes

1. To read the review, visit: <http://artcritical.com/lindquist/GLMcGinness.htm>

2. The questions included:

1. When did you work for Ryan? (month/year) If presently working: since when have you worked for Ryan? (month/year)
2. How did you get to work for him? Did he find you or vice versa?

³⁶ I cannot stress enough the importance of a decent sound system in a studio.

³⁷ All of this makes perfect sense to me.

³⁸ There are parts of this essay that were edited out in order to fit in this book. Those missing parts can be found

[here: .com/missinglindquisttext](http://www.missinglindquisttext.com/missinglindquisttext)

3. What were/are your responsibilities? Did/do you work primarily in the studio or on any exhibitions?
4. What have you learned from the experience? Did anything have a lasting impact on your own creative endeavors?
5. Are you an artist? Designer? Where else do you work?
6. What did you learn about Ryan's process by working for him?
7. Was there anything that you didn't like about working for him or the studio environment? Please be specific and honest.
3. This work ethic extended beyond the time crunches of installations. Former assistant Pierre Tardif confirms this experience in the studio: "Some days went on into the night. When I was finally excused for the evening Ryan would stay on longer still. His stamina is hard to keep up with." Tardif, interview by the author, e-mail June 4, 2008.
4. See Pierre Tardif's Ryan McGinness typeface and discussion of Ryan's handwriting script on p. 19.
5. Soon after beginning work, Ryan commented on my work, which initiated a growing rapport: "Hey Greg, I... think your work is refreshing. I was pleasantly surprised to see it wasn't all wild-styled out and doesn't aspire to be anything like mine. That's really good." Ryan McGinness, e-mail correspondence, October 10, 2005.
6. Former assistant Piilita Garcia explains, "Ryan likes to work on many pieces at the same time in a way of transgressing the boundaries of the format. In order to do that, an assistant is needed to deal with all the gear involved, so that he can focus on looking and painting." Garcia, interview with the author, e-mail June 12, 2008.
7. Ryan had sketchbooks with these different structures, some based on symmetrical decorative patterns, others on cosmic patterns, such as black holes.
8. Former assistant Dustin Schuetz⁽³⁹⁾ elaborates on Ryan's method of working: "While working on sometimes 10 different paintings at once, he would use the same image and bounce back and forth from one painting to the next, screening layer after layer in a rapid fashion while not dwelling on the decision he had just made for more than a few seconds before moving on—each move determined by the previous one." Schuetz, interview with the author, e-mail May 27, 2008.
9. Regarding the continual problem solving that occurs in Ryan's organization, I am reminded of when painter Will Cotton once told me, quoting his father who is a pilot: "Every safety system on an airplane is there because something has previously gone wrong."
10. Joe Fig, an artist who builds miniature models of artists' studios and has made two models of Ryan's studio, told me he took an interest in the bookshelves in the back of the studio, whose binders and CD cases are neatly arranged in a grid format, which, for Fig, recalls a minimalist Donald Judd sculpture. Fig, interview with the author, telephone, June 16, 2008.⁽⁴⁰⁾
11. Music was a popular topic of conversation in interviews with assistants. Ryan was open to others' musical taste and would allow assistants to play music. He introduced me to Podcasts and former assistant Pierre Tardif to NPR radio shows, such as *This American Life*. I still listen to Podcasts while working in my studio.
12. Assistant Maria Wan commented that "his organization: a spot, box, or place for EVERYTHING, and his ability to regularly keep everything organized" was a valuable thing she learned while working for Ryan. Wan, interview with the author, e-mail June 3, 2008.
13. During the editing stages of this essay, I asked Ryan if he encountered the ideation process in his undergraduate studies. He replied, "Totally—it was the bulk of the theory I studied."
14. The steps detailed in *The Universal Traveler* are: Accept Situation, Analyze, Define, Ideate, Select, Implement, and Evaluate. Former assistant Pierre Tardif added, "I learned the best way to get a lot done is to systematize the process using lists, routines, tests/measurements, and attention to details to the point where I would later

Greg Lindquist's apartment with diner booth acquired from Ryan, 2005.

- find paint on the tip of my nose." Tardif, interview with author, e-mail June 4, 2008.
15. During the editing of the book, Ryan commented, "However, I am interested in making the kinds of things on my own terms that compete directly against corporations. Furthermore, the best way to fuck 'the man' is to create that which he can never make for himself and never allow him to coopt for his own agenda—art."
16. Former assistant Nina Stojkovic said, "I learned that if you want to make it, you have to work hard, very hard."

17. During editing this essay, Ryan asked, "Is it worth noting that I am actually not great with people? I cannot manage people, I hate people around me when I am trying to work, and consequently, I often spend all night in the studio alone trying to get the work done that I cannot get done during the day—like now at three in the morning." Maybe it's a matter of perspective, how one defines or evaluates management, or just having expectations of oneself that are nearly impossible to meet. Probably a bit of each in Ryan's case.

18. A button fastened on a painting in a recent exhibition expresses this best: "Most people just steal your time." This sentiment is also echoed in a post-it note that has resided on his computer monitor for the past few years, stating, "SAY NO."⁽⁴¹⁾

19. When Ryan did renovations, he gave me the diner booth, above which hung his framed work on paper, in a sense, a kind of reminder of this conversation. Today, the booth is a permanent fixture in my studio.

20. Former assistant Maria Wan adds, "The experience has been really insightful to how an established art studio runs, even though it probably varies from artist to artist. For me, there has always been this glamour to how art was made from only seeing the finished result beautifully exhibited in shows. Working in the studio and getting to see how pieces are made, the process, from start to finish made it more believable and more realistic. In some ways, it took the magic out of the artwork but has also shown me the ease and difficulties of making art on a large scale." Wan, interview with author, e-mail June 3, 2008.



⁽³⁹⁾ See p. 84.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ See p. 61.

⁽⁴¹⁾ .com/sayno