

BIG-\$\$\$ DOLL DUEL OVER BRATZ PACK



540 BROADWAY

41 WEST 34TH STREET

86TH & LEXINGTON



HOT BABES: The creator of the Steve Madden shoe ads (left) says the designer of the big-headed and lucrative "Bratz" dolls (above) stole his cartoon concept.

Madden man: I got ripped off

By BRUCE GOLDING

Will these big heads bring in equally big bucks?

The artist behind the cartoonish hotties featured in shoemaker Steve Madden's ads filed suit yesterday for the millions in profits generated by the popular Bratz dolls.

Bernard "Butch" Belair, of Brooklyn, claims his copyright designs of young women with "large heads, oval eyes, small bodies and large feet" were blatantly ripped off for the highly successful fashion-figurine franchise.

His Manhattan federal court suit doesn't specify damages, but evidence in a related case put profits from the sale of Bratz merchandise at somewhere between \$405 million and \$777 million since the multi-ethnic dolls were unveiled in 2001.

tel, the toy company that won the rights to the dolls.

He says he first learned that his images of "trendy or fashionable young women with a sassy attitude" were pilfered when Bratz creator Carter Bryant testified in 2008 that his initial sketches were "inspired by Steve Madden shoe advertisements which he saw in Seventeen magazine."

That testimony helped toy maker Mattel win \$100 million in damages from Bratz manufacturer MGA, because Bryant was working for Mattel at the time.

A California judge later ordered MGA to stop making and selling Bratz toys, which began with four originals — Yasmine, Chloe, Sasha and Jade — before branching out to include Bratz Boys, Bratz Pets, Bratz and Bratz

Mansion and Bratz Digital Camera.

There have also been Bratz games, videos and a live-action movie in 2007 that tanked at the box office.

MGA has until February to transfer all Bratz assets to Mattel, which saw its rival's upstart product line cut deeply into sales of Mattel's long-dominant — but far more conservative — Barbie toys.

In his suit, Belair says the Bratz dolls are "substantially similar" to his images, which have appeared on billboards, subway platforms and bus shelters in New York City while under license to Steve Madden.

The artist says neither MGA nor Mattel "sought or obtained permission ... to copy, reproduce, create derivative works from or distribute his copyrighted" work.

Neither Mattel nor