

## Ryan McGinley

### Team

The reigning motif in Ryan McGinley's latest show was free fall. In color photographs of no particular technical ambition but enormous appeal, slender young bodies descend through space and water, roll down sand dunes, swan dive into yielding snowbanks. Fireworks illuminate solo nocturnal dances that could seem shamanistic but instead evoke, with their harmless clouds of starry lights, the flight of Tinkerbell. Already famous for being famous, the 30-year-old McGinley—taken up by Larry Clark as a subject when he was a teenage skateboarder and by the Whitney Museum for a solo show when he was 25, and last seen shooting Oscar nominee Ellen Page for the *New York Times* magazine—may or may not lead a charmed existence. But he's an established master at showing how a life without friction or gravity might look.

By his own admission, McGinley is not a fastidious photographer. His m.o. for the past few years has been to gather up some barely post-adolescent kids, set off with them on road trips to lovely places, and take thousands of pictures along the way (in the summer of 2007, we're told, he snapped the shutter 150,000 times; all works in this show are 2007-08). Oh, and everyone's always naked, except for shoes, sometimes (beat-up sneakers are the footwear of choice). The casual intimacy and the casual use of the camera—generally a 35mm; his prints sometimes get grainy when enlarged—shape McGinley's process and are also the subject of his work; you get the sense that just off-frame, in a couple of images, another camera or two might be in play. Trampolines (also unseen) are about as high-tech as his props get.

As luck would have it, these apparently aimless proceedings produce moments of breathtaking beauty. In a 14-by-11-inch photo (this modest format suits McGinley's enterprise; the handful of enormous prints shown did him no favors), a halo of light beatifies a tiny golden figure hovering, arms out, over a baby-blue field of snow, beneath a sky the same color, accented with fluffy pink clouds. A slightly larger, hot yellowish print features a blurry, feral-looking boy, crouching low and lunging camera-ward, his way-out-of-focus feet shod, the work's title reveals, in roller skates. In the less stylized *Falling Green Water*, two guys jump off a cliff into a dazzle of sunlight and water. But there is less ecstatic abandon than antic humor in a big print of four kids streaking across an empty, sun-baked rural highway.

The connections generally drawn from McGinley's work are to far darker bodies of photography, including Clark's and, especially, Nan Goldin's ballads of youthful misbehavior and violence. McGinley acknowledges the influence of both. But the sylvan idylls of Justine Kurland, and even the portraiture of Sam Taylor-Wood and Tina Barney, with its keen sympathy for the changing protocols of stardom and privilege, seem more relevant. If there's anything ominous in all the heedless leaps McGinley stages, it's discernible only if you're looking for the hidden costs of unearned grace.

—Nancy Princenthal



Ryan McGinley: *Roller Coley*, 2007-08, C-print, 20 by 16 inches; at Team.