

## Photographer Ryan McGinley's New Direction

Known for his nude portraits of carefree twentysomethings, the photographer takes his latest work in a new direction

By MEREDITH BRYAN Nov. 2, 2015 11:25 a.m. ET



Photographer Ryan McGinley PHOTO: BAUD POSTMA

**DEEP IN NEW YORK'S** Chinatown, Ryan McGinley's assistant answers the door to the artist's unmarked studio wearing a plaid jumper and knee socks. McGinley, who at 38 maintains the dewy glow of an undergrad, is manning an oversize desk in his spacious office, attended by a friendly brindle mutt ("Meet Dick the dog!" he says) and surrounded by printouts of the work he will display this month at two simultaneous Team Gallery shows: *Fall* (November 15–December 20, at the gallery's Venice Beach, California, location) and *Winter* (November 5–December 20, in SoHo).

The photographs may be McGinley's most ambitious yet. Team describes them as "a momentous change" for the photographer, who made his name documenting the late-

night debauchery of his downtown friends—the subject of his solo Whitney show, *The Kids Are Alright*, in 2003—but has, for the past decade, captured young models and artists cavorting nude through the lower 48 on his famous summertime road trips. McGinley is still shooting young naked people, but he's changed the season—and that makes a bigger difference than you'd think.

In *Fall* and *Winter*, humans and nature share equal billing, with nubile flesh occasionally eclipsed by imposing ice formations (McGinley shot entirely in upstate New York but says people keep mistaking it for Antarctica). The photos portray a wider range of emotion than is typically associated with his blissed-out

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

oeuvre. In the winter photographs, especially, the kids don't look all right—they look cold and lonely, with one subject actually scraped up by the ice. To prepare for the shoots, McGinley consulted war photographs, old issues of *National Geographic* and Patagonia catalogs. Although Instagram has empowered anyone with a smartphone to approximate his signature sun-dappled style, McGinley has produced a series of images one can't copy, at least without an ice-fishing tent and a couple of really good space heaters.

McGinley is proud that he successfully shot nudes in the snow. But he disputes that they represent a loss of innocence or an evolution into a more mature style. "I think they feel lonely because they were really tough photos to make," he says. "In other seasons, people are freer with their bodies. There's a warmer spirit." He says he shoots mostly twentysomethings because that's whom he relates to and who's available to traipse off into the woods for days on end. He shoots nudes because it's exciting—and that, he says, will never change.



McGinley's peripatetic youth may be behind him, though. He's not planning a road trip next summer—"It's so scary for me to say I'm done," he admits—and will spend the colder months in Hudson, New York, his home base for the *Fall* and *Winter* shoots. (Some of those images, along with other recent work, can also be seen in *Ryan McGinley: Way Far*, a new book just released from Rizzoli.) Beyond that, he's not sure. "Maybe I associate being grown-up with knowing exactly what you're going to do all the time," he says. He pauses—the assistant in knee socks is now filming everything he says. "I don't know what I'm going to do a lot of the time," he continues. "But I think that's where the magic happens."

COLD CASE | One of McGinley's 'Winter' images PHOTO: COURTESY OF RYAN MCGINLEY AND TEAM GALLERY