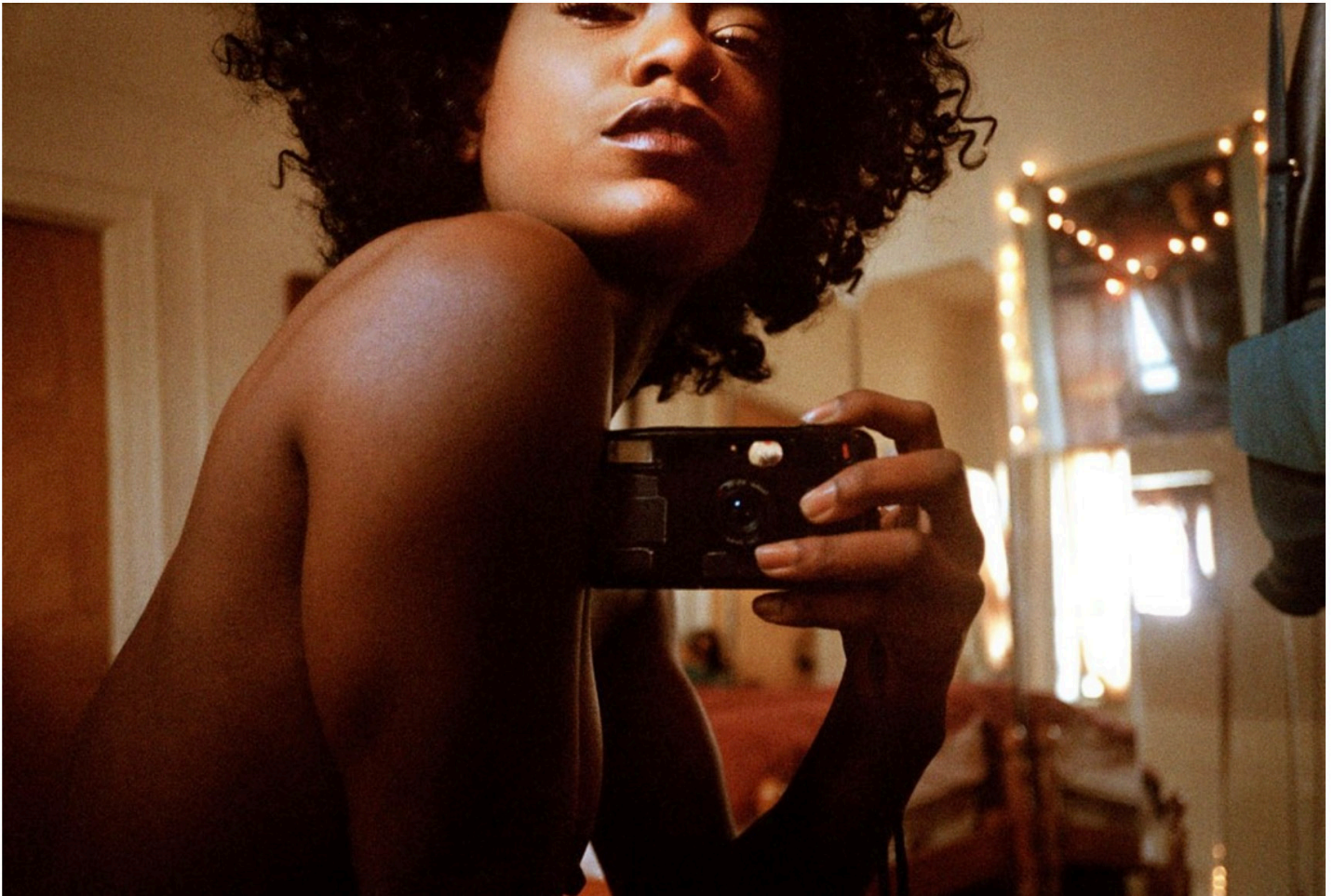


Ryan McGinley looks to Yoko Ono as inspiration for his latest show

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Jade Photography Ryan McGinley

The artist presents a new body of work that explores conceptualism through the camera lens

Over the last two decades, [Ryan McGinley](#) has undeniably carved out his own spot as a major figure in the world of contemporary photography. Born in Ramsey, New Jersey in 1977, McGinley moved to New York City where he first picked up a camera in 1998. Five years later, aged just 25, he became one of the youngest artists to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Evidently, the image-maker has never had trouble gathering the widespread recognition of both his peers and the public at large. Yet, despite the stratospheric ascent of his career, he isn't one to get caught up in the *hype* zeitgeist. His work is intimate, often ethereal, always sincere, and infused with raw emotion. While visually beguiling, the photographer's frames don't shy away from crystallising grief, suffering or tragedy with unflinching honesty – from the devastated generation coming-of-age in the aftermath of the Aids epidemic to the chaos and confusion of a post-9/11 world, and, most recently, America's gun control activists, McGinley has established himself as a visual storyteller passionately documenting the ever-changing struggles, energy, and multi-faceted identities of the youth.

“I wanted to see how I could explore conceptual ideas through photography. We are used to seeing them in painting or through performance but rarely done with a camera” – Ryan McGinley

The artist's latest solo exhibition, however, subtly breaks from that narrative. Held at New York's Team Gallery, Mirror, Mirror spotlights the more experimental side of McGinley's creative persona. “The project was born out of conceptual art,” he tells us. “I've always wanted to do an instructional project in the same vein as some of my heroes like Yoko Ono or Sol LeWitt – and, most importantly, I wanted to see how I could explore conceptual ideas through photography. We are used to seeing them in painting or through performance but rarely done with a camera.” As such, the body of work is entirely comprised of images made without the physical interference of the artist. “I was not present for any of the shoots,” he explains. “I would send a set of instructions that the model could either choose to complete on their own or have read out loud to them by my assistant over the course of an hour.”

The subjects were provided with a camera, a set of instructions, five rolls of 35mm film and 20 mirrors, all of which were delivered to their homes. The undeveloped rolls of film were then returned to McGinley, who sorted through the material and selected a single image to represent each participant.



Nicole Photography Ryan McGinley

The resulting photographs investigate how the camera functions as an increasingly ubiquitous mediator in the presentation of contemporary identity. These self-portraits transmit intimate information not only about their subject's emotional states but also about the construction of their idealised physical selves. The variables provided by choice – how much of the body is shown, how much of the *self* is shown – indicate that agency perseveres, even within the confines of prescription.

A reflection on the meaning of beauty, identity, and community in an era mediated through the prism of digital culture, the series showcases models aged from 19 to 87, prompting the viewer to embark on a nuanced, almost psychedelic exploration of the human body by embracing difference and acknowledging it as an essential driving force of human connection. "This project is populated by photographs of my friends," the photographer concludes. "Most of them are artists; dancers, architects, actors, painters, musicians, fashion designers, choreographers, performers. But at the end of the day, this work is about community – my community. Some are family, college friends, brothers-in-law, mums, aunts, former models or ex-boyfriends, many of whom I've been photographing for years. The camera has always been a broker to create and shape identity, allowing people to reinvent themselves, create their reborn identities. The aim of my work is to celebrate that."

Mirror, Mirror runs at Team Gallery until 29 September 2018