



McGinley, left, with traveling companions.

Nudie Picks

Ryan McGinley loads up his EuroVan with naked youth and heads to California. BY EMMA PEARSE

FOR THE PAST THREE summers, photographer Ryan McGinley, 29, has piled a group of carefully selected long-limbed twentysomethings into his Volkswagen EuroVan for a road trip to California. They stop on the way to revel with charming dissoluteness in roadside motels, in hot springs, and among scratchy bushes. This is how he makes his art. The New Jersey native first became known for documenting the druggy downtown bohemia of his peers. After the Whitney gave him a solo show at 25, McGinley, having spent years barely leaving Manhattan, came to realize the appeal of escaping this city's stinky summers. But even though he has shot Kate Moss for *W* and won the Young Photographer award at the International Center for Photography last month, he wasn't going to wallow in the Hamptons.

For the past three months, postadolescent hopefuls—aspiring photographers, local musicians, models—have been getting naked in McGinley's Lower East Side studio, chatting and bonding while he assesses them for “mellowness and strong personalities.” From 100, he selected fifteen

soft-skinned youths to join the road trip in two shifts.

“It's all pretty crazy how he does the casting,” said McGinley's intern, Coley Brown, 20, who will be modeling this summer and also driving the van—McGinley prefers the passenger seat so he can look out the window and write. “He gets recommendations. I know he's had some help from agencies in the past. People send pictures themselves.” Says McGinley, “We do these nude castings. We chat and then I ask them to take their clothes off.”

There will be more smoke machines this year. “I'm obsessed with smoke,” McGinley explains. Another van follows the VW to provide space for the whole party (there are four assistants, one of whom is in charge of carrying around a boom box to make sure there is a soundtrack for McGinley's creativity). There needs to be room for props too: Fireworks and trampolines are strapped to the roof. There are signs that say CAN I RIDE NUDE ON YOUR MOTORCYCLE? that models hold out the window. Twice, drivers have agreed, and this year he hopes for more. McGinley, for his part, wears a T-shirt that reads DON'T TALK TO ME UNLESS YOU'RE NAKED.

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