



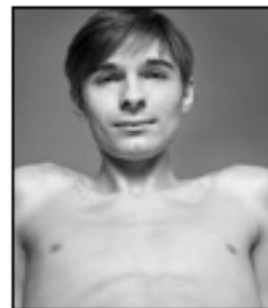
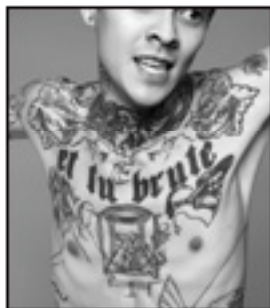
# A REAL NOWHERE MAN

*BY CARLO MCCORMICK // ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYAN MCGINLEY*

Ryan McGinley's "Everybody Knows This is Nowhere"  
Opens at Team Gallery.

The non place at once evident and invisible in "Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere," Ryan McGinley's new show of photographs opening this week at Team Gallery, is the artist's own Lower East Side studio. This title, taken from the 1969 Neil Young song on his record of the same name about the pleasures of returning home, might easily refer to McGinley's feelings after getting back from any of the epic road trips he takes yearly to create his more famous photographs featuring hordes of naked and unruly youth cavorting about naked in landscapes of sublime splendor and dreamy beauty. Here however it's all about the remarkable incidence that this is in fact the first time in his storied career that Ryan McGinley has created a body of work in the anonymous and characterless void of the photo studio.

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Stripped down (no pun intended) to a minimalist simplicity, McGinley's new suite of black and white studio nudes is at once remarkably restrained and utterly classic. While it is hard not to miss the over-the-top exuberance, visual inventiveness and enigmatic narrative tendencies implicit in Ryan's much celebrated youthscape of recent years, for anyone who is a fan of his work his more intimate and focused attention here makes this a project not to be missed. McGinley offered by way of explanation, "I wanted to see if I could do it, to be part of that history of classic nudes in black and white photography, and to see what a Ryan McGinley photograph in that lineage would look like." Indeed, if not typical of his cannon to date, these are recognizably his. But perhaps a more telling response he also provided us was that "for me the idea is to do it, kill it and do something else. I don't want to be one of those artists who keep repeating myself, I like that uncomfortable feeling where you are risking failure."

With every single photograph constituting the distilled essence of a daylong shoot that comprises thousands of pictures, the casualness of these images belies a craft that has been honed here from this artist's longstanding admiration of studio portraiture from the likes of Bernice Abbott and Peter Hujar, as well as his fascination with the motion study photographs of Eadweard Muybridge. But is it then we wondered a bit like the mandate of the great modernist photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson (the focus of a major survey opening in a few weeks at MoMA), who insisted a definition for photography based on the philosophy that "there is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment"? Hardly that much of a traditionalist, McGinley says that unlike those who wait forever to capture the one perfect photograph, "I'm about making it, not waiting for it. I shoot so much my studio becomes a kind of candid camera."

It is strange to see a young photographer such as Ryan, who has been so emblematic of our time, now reach for something so timeless. As a brilliant chronicler of youth and one whose dreamlike carnal excursions into the primal forces of our near vanished wilderness has worked so well to metaphorically invoke the energies and attitudes of youth today, the anonymous nowhere of the studio must be seen as a kind of side excursion along a life that is surely a far more adventurous trip. It's hard not to feel a certain loss of identity in these images, especially since so much of the construction of identity in the young today is predicated on the clothes they wear. What is bared here however is something a lot more meaningful perhaps. In fact, now removed from the dynamic of their interaction with nature, the previously anonymous characters that have heretofore populated McGinley's photographs come to the fore. All creative types in their real lives, they now partake in a collaborative fantasy that is much more about them. Stunning, sexy (how could they not be when their ages range between 18 and 29) and made glamorous with the kind of softbox photographic tropes reminiscent of old school Hollywood, they may be no place in particular, but they are fully and fantastically realized for who they are.

*"Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere" runs Mar. 18 to Apr. 17 at Team Gallery, 83 Grand St. (212) 279-9219.*