



## RYAN MCGINLEY

**MY PHOTOGRAPHS** are about removal: bringing people to nondescript locations, to places that aren't recognizable, removing their clothes, capturing them with a very limited style palette. I try to think about how timelessness, isolation, and style interact.

This year, I began a series of studio portraits, completely changing the look of my work—removing the color, removing the landscape, leaving nothing but a person and a white backdrop. The most important part was casting: finding people who were at a specific time in life, their late teens or early twenties, an exploratory age when you have a lot of free time and before you realize what you really want to do. We did a casting search for three years and then, out of thousands, selected two hundred people to shoot, ultimately narrowing down that selection to eighty-seven finished portraits.

Since all that's left is someone standing there nude, the work is really about the remaining details—all the homemade tattoos or haircuts; how the person moves or holds their body. At the same time, I think of black-and-white portraiture styles from Avedon to Hujar to Arbus to early gay magazines such as *Physique Pictorial*, contributing to that tradition.

Shooting editorially for magazines or for an advertising campaign—whether pictures of M.I.A. or a short film with Tilda Swinton for Pringle of Scotland—becomes another process of elimination and addition. Recently, I photographed Winter Olympics athletes for the *New York Times Magazine*; when I first started doing research for the project,

I was looking at all the athletes' clothes. They have so many sponsors, and their logos are all over what they wear. My instinct was to take those off and replace them with something else, so I asked Rodarte to design costumes for them, garments the athletes would probably never otherwise wear.

It's funny that I get asked to do fashion work, since most of my photos are nudes. I think people in the fashion industry look at my photographs and it's like they're seeing mannequins. They picture their clothes on the bodies in my photos.

The work I've been making for the past five years, traveling across the US every summer, is about finding models who resemble my seven brothers and sisters and re-creating a family on the road. I was raised by my teenage siblings; their '70s look was what I grew up around, and it affects the pictures I take during my trips: the Rolling Stones, shaggy hair, a saturated palette.

That historical moment also carries specific styles of traveling, from *Two-Lane Blacktop* to Robert Frank to my friends' parents' tales of Woodstock. When you're traveling you make your own environment. I own a short bus and a trailer, and we bring any number of props—a trampoline; a big inflatable stunt-fall mattress, so you can jump off everything from buildings to cliffs; equipment to make people fly or to make it snow. We have snow machines and rain machines and smoke machines to create all of these distractions, these elements, so that the subject is unaware of the presence of the photographer. That's how you make a picture that feels real. □

RYAN MCGINLEY IS A NEW YORK-BASED ARTIST. (SEE CONTRIBUTORS.)