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30 YOUNG ARTISTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

PHOTO PORTFOLIO BY JASON SCHMIDT



PLUS Harmony Korine, Brandon Maxwell,
Tarell McCraney, Mika Rottenberg,
Lynn Hershman Leeson and Ai Weiwei



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Sam McKinniss | [@wkndpartyupdate](#)

After a debut solo show at Team in 2016 and an album cover collaboration with Lorde, Sam McKinniss decided to take a step back. The New York-based painter spent the summer recovering, but is back at work on his follow-up exhibition at Team's Los Angeles bungalow in January.

To prepare for the show, he read “Helter Skelter” and Joan Didion's “White Album” to get in a “California mood.” “I was fascinated with the way Charles Manson really started vibing on the Beatles and wanted to be a singer-songwriter, but was a joke at it and failed, so he started killing people instead,” McKinniss says. “I thought, ‘I'm really into pop music too, what if I became psychotic?’ But I didn't. So I started making paintings instead.” Over a couple of weeks, he produced 30 full-color drawings, which became the basis for “Daisy Chain.”

Like “Egyptian Violet,” his exhibition at Team last year, “Daisy Chain” will pull

imagery from the perversely popular. A suite of portraits—including Jonbenét Ramsey with baby's breath in her hair and a naked Drew Barrymore crowned with daisies”—poke at hippy tropes co-opted by pop culture in the 1990s. “I just know that my work operates on this kind of romantic level and flowers are a shortcut to getting there,” McKinniss says. “There is such a history of painting flowers that you are allowed to use it as a shorthand for love plus death equals romance.”

It comes as no surprise that the painter admires the artist Maureen Gallace. “I think she is always about plausible deniability, like the beachside cottage as an alibi for more complicated things going on behind closed doors,” he says. “I don't think she'd ever admit this but I think darker themes loom large around that work and you'd be hard pressed to prove it.” One could say the same about McKinniss's investigation of celebrity and Americana.