



01.05.07 Team Player

New York

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Left: Ryan McGinley with Richard Bars. Right: Participant Inc. director Lia Gangitano with artist Devon Costello. (Except where noted, all photos: David Velasco)

The ambitious, self-actualizing heroics of New Year's resolutions often give me hives; I much prefer sleeping in—a gentle awakening to the post-holiday cycle. So Wednesday I chose to ease back into the New York art world via a friendly, low-key party at Lower East Side nonprofit Participant Inc. celebrating Devon Costello and Ilya Lipkin's "Poster Project." Director Lia Gangitano noted that the gallery floor had been repainted for the occasion, a noble endeavor, since the numerous posters—created by over twenty different artists—were only up for the night. (Printed Matter is hosting another, more official, launch in February, though for now the works are on view in the Kantor / Feuer Window in Chelsea.)

In true DIY fashion, the black-and-white prints featured an eccentric mix of crude drawing, witty appropriation, and clever wordplay. Lipkin's reproduction of a Wal-Mart ad he found in *Vogue* was disarmingly funny, as was artist Michael Paulson's readymade list of the twenty-five things that make people laugh, despite the fact that there's something about a formula for jokes that really robs them of their punch. (Paulson may have put it best when he said "humor is desperate, pathetic, and ... just not funny.")

Thursday night I hit James Bidgood's opening at ClampArt, where the auteur responsible for the classic 1971 homo flick *Pink Narcissus* was exhibiting some of his gorgeous erotic photographs from the '60s. An obvious influence on artists such as Pierre et Gilles, I noted to him that the photos looked fresh and vibrant even today. "People are saying it looks contemporary!" the seventy-three year old artist exclaimed to an approaching friend. "You're not contemporary. You're an old fart!" his friend shot back.

I had planned the night as an all-gay outing, with my next stop Ryan McGinley's inaugural show at Team Gallery. But before heading to SoHo, I peeked next door at Peter Hay Halpert Fine Art—an early mover of McGinley's work—who, rumor had it, was throwing his own McGinley show to capitalize on the artist's move to Team. Sure enough, the third-floor shoebox space was advertising "Ryan McGinley: The Kids Are Alright & Other Work," even going so far as to mimic the dates of the Team show. But there was no party to speak of; Halpert apparently thought better of going head-to-head with José Freire et al in that department.

Time was running short, so I hailed a cab and zipped downtown, where I found McGinley's opening in full swing. McGinley went on a two-year road trip, traveling to dozens of Morrissey concerts in the US, the UK, and Mexico. The resultant photos, many of which are densely saturated in the concerts' colored lights, feature candid shots of fans, regularly zooming in for seductive close-ups of enamored youngsters—a celebration of the ecstatic cult of fame and its ardent enablers. A few oblique pics of Morrissey himself are scattered throughout the show, though the shots are careful to avoid the singer's face. It's McGinley's best work to date, solid evidence that he's a perfect fit for Team.

After the opening, one hundred or so of McGinley's friends and family eloped to the after party at new Lower East Side hangout The Annex. Lounging around the open bar and hefty hors d'oeuvres was a mix of downtown figures old and new: Clarissa Dalrymple, Leo Fitzpatrick, Banks Violette, Adam McEwan, Emily Sundblad, Benjamin Cho, Peter Coffin, Dan Colen, Nate Lowman, Melissa Bent, Mirabelle Marden, Neville Wakefield, and Sophia Lamar. McGinley noted that his first Smiths album was *Meat Is Murder* (he fell in love with the cover and had the poster up in his locker for a year before even listening to the record), while Team owner Freire admitted, "I don't actually like The Smiths or Morrissey. I always thought that Ian McCulloch had better hair."

McGinley's favorite band, New York-based quartet The Virgins, played a rare, crowd-pleasing acoustic set, at one point paying homage to McGinley's subject in a cover of "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now." I was curious to know more about the reclusive singer's habits, so I asked Ryan if it was true that Morrissey only communicates via fax. "Only if he doesn't want to talk to you," he said. Fair enough—it certainly gets the point across. But the always charmingly provocative Freire may have outdone Morrissey in his pointedness, commenting "keep your enemies close and your friends ... well, fuck your friends." A New Year's resolution I can live with.

—David Velasco



Left: Artist James Bidgood. Right: Team Gallery owner José Freire with artist Banks Violette.



Left: The Virgins play The Annex. Right: Actress Chloë Sevigny with Ryan McGinley.



Left: Richard Bars. (Photo: Ryan McGinley) Right: Nightlife impresario Sophia Lamar and Marc Kroop.



Left: Curator Clarissa Dalrymple with critic Roberta Smith. Right: Artist Ania Siwanowicz.



Left: Designer Benjamin Cho with Matthew Hall. Right: Dealer Pascal Spengemann.