

[232] NEO-FACTORY BY CAROL VOGEL PHOTOGRAPHS HEDI SLIMANE STYLING EMMANUELLE ALT

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NEO-FA

THEY ARE THE — IN SOME CASES TATTOOED —
FLESH AND BLOOD PROOF THAT NEW YORK IS STILL
IN THE RUNNING WHEN IT COMES TO TURNING OUT
HIGHLY ORIGINAL ARTISTS. THROUGH MULTIFORM
WORKS, USING A VARIETY OF MEDIA AND MATTER,
FROM VIDEO TO EXCREMENT, SIX YOUNG MEN VERY
MUCH OF THE MOMENT DO THEIR OWN THING
WHILST BEING PART OF A GROUP. AND EVEN THOUGH
THEY LOOK ON LIFE AND ART AS ONE VAST PLAYING
FIELD, THE CONTEMPORARY-ART WORLD TAKES
THEM VERY SERIOUSLY INDEED. by Carol Vogel

CTORY

The artists shown on these pages are all in their late twenties and early thirties, and they are all friends. But, unlike generations past, this New York School has no one, overriding style. Their common thread is a burn-the-candle-at-both-ends spirit and an urban grittiness. Theirs is a kind of art-making that is very much of the moment. And for many of them this moment revolves around sex, drugs, nightclubs and skateboarding. "Just when you thought New York stopped producing talented artists, along comes this group from the Lower East Side," said Mark Fletcher, a Manhattan art adviser. "In a way their work is like Basquiat's. It's very much in the street."

Prescient collectors like the British advertising magnate and gallery-owner Charles Saatchi zeroed in on several of them years ago, buying up the work of artists such as Ryan McGinley, Terence Koh and Dan Colen, and including them in his exhibition *USA Today* that was first staged at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 2006 and will travel to the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg this autumn. Museums have begun to collect some of these artists too.

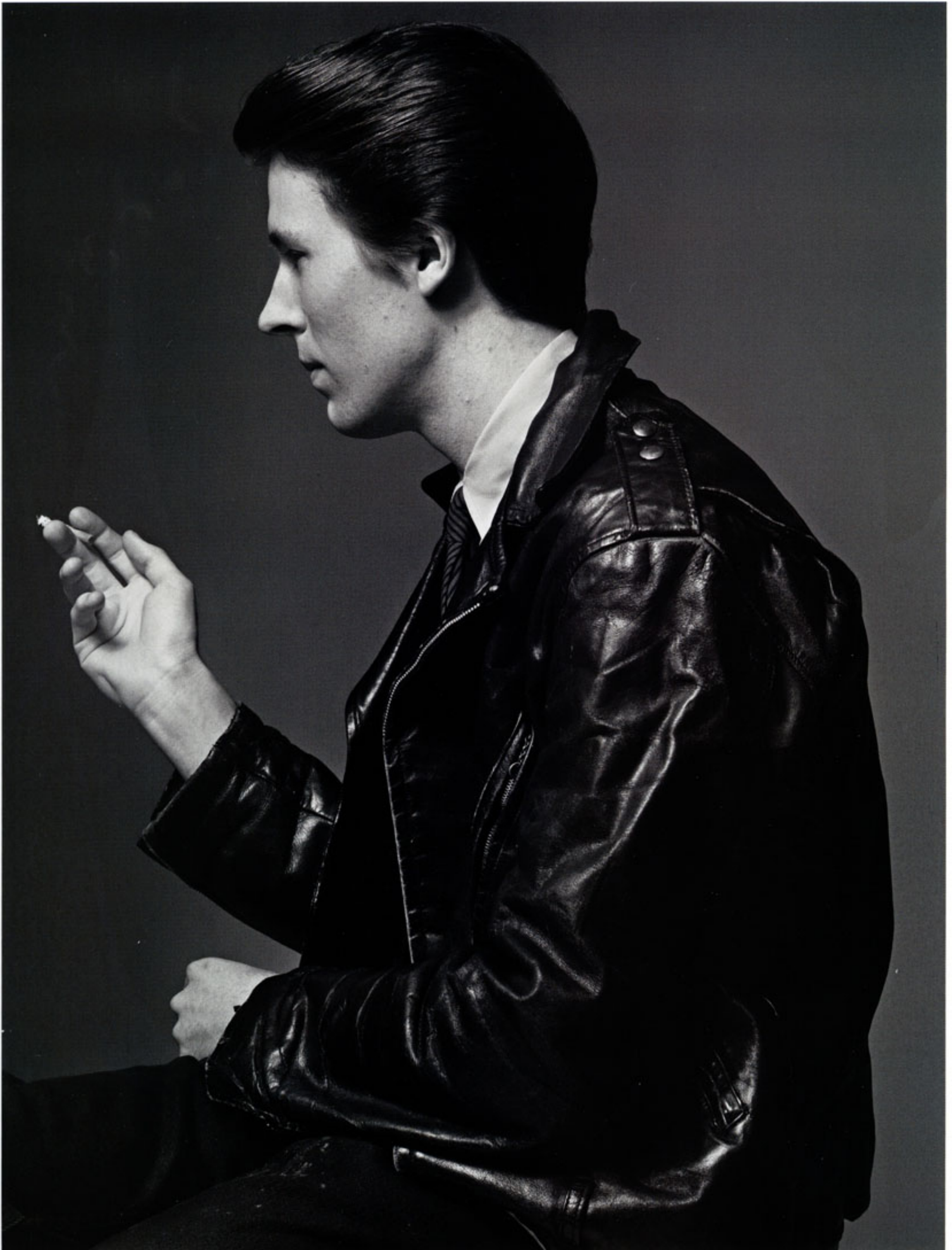
Each of them does his own thing. McGinley, a photographer, is the archivist of the group. A Warholian shutterbug, he chronicles his friends doing everything from romping naked in the woods to having sex. When he wanted to get attention he published a book of his work called *The Kids are Alright* and sent 100 copies of it to magazine editors and other artists.

He isn't the only entrepreneur. Although not represented by the super-power dealer Larry Gagosian, Dan Colen hung five of his thrift-shop paintings in five different bathrooms at the Gagosian Gallery's Chelsea space. They were a sell-out. And Terence Koh first got noticed for www.asianpunkboy.com, a soft-core, gay-oriented site. While their work often looks hasty, almost

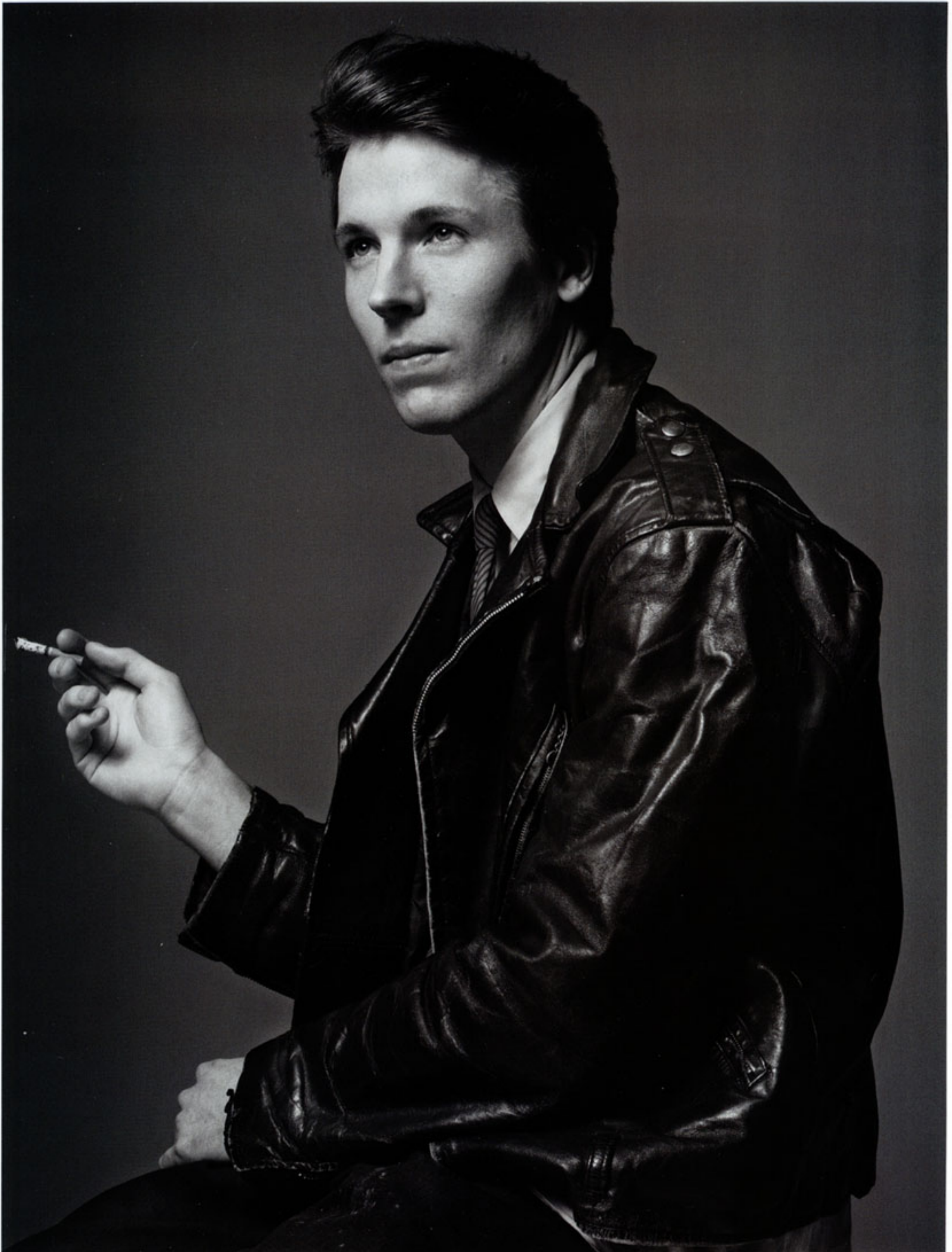
accidental, it isn't. Meticulously crafted and thought-out, paintings, sculptures and installations have a careful casualness about them that is an art unto itself. Take the Norwegian-born Gardar Eide Einarsson, whose art is extremely polished. His mostly black-and-white paintings of words and symbols appear spontaneous yet are painstakingly executed, despite the fact that he borrows and fastidiously reproduces freely from images he has picked up on the street. Dan Colen's installations may look spray-painted and casual. Sometimes they are. But often they are actually hand-painted and laboured.

Their world is their own brand of bohemia. It matters not whether someone is gay or straight. Unlike the macho scene of Greenwich Village in the Fifties or the East Village in the Sixties when there was more of a hippie environment than an art-making one, this crew has seamlessly combined lifestyle with art. Their view of life is often very much a downbeat, critical "live young/die young" look at American culture. Banks Violette, for example, worked as a tattoo artist in Hawaii after leaving home in Ithaca, New York, when he was just 16. But he ended up cleaning up his act, coming to New York and attending the Master-of-Fine-Arts course at Columbia University. He often uses real life as inspiration. One installation is about a murder in California in which three teenage boys, members of a band called Hatred, killed a classmate and left her body for months propped up against a log in the middle of a grove.

International in their reach and art historical in their references, the work of all these artists has a kind of vibe that is at once down-to-earth in content yet surprisingly luxurious in its materials. These self-starters are savvy, adventurous and their timing is just right: they are capitalising on the euphoria of contemporary-art collectors today.



Ryan McGinley. In 2003, when he was just 26, McGinley became the youngest artist to have a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The show featured twenty large-scale colour prints of his friends and lovers engaged in daily rituals of contemporary youth culture: they hang out, have sex, do drugs and romp naked through the woods. As a high-school student, when he came to Manhattan, he was the subject of American filmmaker Larry Clark's documentary



photographs of skateboarders. The two men became friends and later, while he was a graphic design student at the Parsons School of Design, he began to photograph his own Lower East Side circle, archiving their lives and produced a book of these shoots entitled *The Kids are Alright*, taken from a film about The Who. He sent 100 magazine editors and artists the 50-page book. That was in 1999. From there his work found its way into New York group shows and magazines.