

# RYAN MCGINLEY NOMINATES PHOTOGRAPHER SANTIAGO MOSTYN

*By Christopher Bollen*  
*Photography Santiago Mostyn*

*Published March 23, 2010*



“Growing up, I was always addicted to stories and movies about journeys and adventures,” photographer Ryan McGinley explains. “I loved everything from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to *The Goonies* (1985). When I was in sixth grade, we read a book in school called *Worldwalk*. It was the true story of an American man who walked all the way around the world by himself. The first time I saw Santiago Mostyn’s book of photographs, *Excerpt: All Most Heaven*, I got lost in it the same way I did looking at books as a young boy. It’s not very often you find someone making an amazingly consistent body of work. Some days, I’ll wake up and think, What’s Santiago doing? I imagine him walking down a long stretch of road carrying only a backpack, hitchhiking, maybe jumping a train.”

*Excerpt* (TV Books) is the first book released by the 28-year-old Mostyn, who, much like McGinley, creates his work almost as a documentary process achieved by constant traveling.

A peripatetic life is one that the artist has always known. Mostyn was born in San Francisco but moved with his mother to Grenada as an infant. A few years later, he moved to London, then to Barcelona, then to Zimbabwe, and finally to Trinidad, where he lived until he attended Yale. “I first started taking pictures when my mother gave me a camera at 15,” he remembers. “She had designed some of the costumes for Carnival and asked me to go out on the streets and take pictures.” His interest in photography became more serious at Yale, and he studied at Frankfurt’s Städelschule under Wolfgang Tillmans after he graduated. But Mostyn’s own motifs were really set during his drifter voyages through the U.S. He brought his medium-format Mamiya along on two artist-collective trips, sailing down the Mississippi River with the artist Swoon in 2006 and 2007, shooting fellow ragtag travelers along the way. He also made spontaneous trips out West, riding freight trains with new acquaintances through California.

The photographic results of these treks are hyper-real, shockingly intimate, and exquisitely celebratory portraits of a feral, unbounded freedom. The young subjects in Mostyn's pictures are not so much conventionally beautiful as emphatically alive. "It's easiest to relate to your peers," he says in explaining the nature of his work. "But I was definitely searching for some kind of description of community and a sense of home, which I never had as a kid moving around so much. Shooting is an attempt to lasso my experiences and take them back with me. I'm traveling in order to see things, to identify with people, to capture a sense of togetherness."

