

Soft Opening

Ryan McGinley

“Spirit of Pride”

5 July - 8 July 2018

Unit 7, Piccadilly Circus Underground Station

Pride is a sense of dignity and happiness.

It's a positive attitude against discrimination and violence toward LGBT people to promote our equal rights.

When I was a young teenager I would join my older brother Michael at the Pride March in NYC every June. When he got sick with AIDS I'd attend protests organised by Act-Up NY to help get him medicine and try and end the crisis he was going through.

Unfortunately he lost that battle and it sparked the spirit of rebellion in me. I was able to channel that energy later through my camera. I've been photographing my community of queer friends since that time.

Activism is important to me, in the last year I've joined a new group called 'Voices4' who are committed to using direct action to achieve global queer liberation. Their tactics and aesthetics are directly inspired by ACT UP. Some of the photos in this installation are from their protests in opposition to the violence against queer people in the former Soviet Union and all over the world.

The people in this installation are from many of the NY Pride Marches and my close friends showing queer affection. It's important for people to see images of gay people kissing, I don't think we see them enough.

The badges are historic queer buttons, many of them are from the Stonewall era. They were sent to me by the couple who runs the account @LGBT_History. Pinning buttons on my clothing has always played a large part of voicing myself, my identity, and been an important part of the gay movement. If you are wearing a gay badge you cease to be invisible. I like that many of them have a sense of humour, are colourful and camp. They are enlarged, bright symbols of liberation.

Completely covering my walls with images is nothing new to me, I've been doing it from a young age. Early on it was with photographs torn out of magazines and band posters wrapping the walls of my childhood bedroom. This installation is in that same spirit, tacking up everything I love that represents myself, my energy, my soul.

This installation was made to increase queer visibility, celebrate beauty, and spread the 'Spirit of Pride.'

- Ryan McGinley