

# art

## Team Work

### 25/34 Photographers

Feature Inc  
76 Greene Street  
Through April 30

**T**he list of gay male photographers who work as collaborative teams already includes Gilbert & George, Pierre et Gilles, Aziz + Cuchar, and Lovett/Codagnone. But add another pair to that roster: Ralf Marsault and Heino Muller, a Frenchman and a German who met in Paris in 1977 and five years later adopted the name 25/34 Photographers—their respective ages at the time. Their work eventually found its focus in a series of frontal, formal, black-and-white portraits of young outsiders—punks, skinheads, motorcycle toughs—in London, Paris, and Berlin. Set outside, against a backdrop of industrial decay, these pictures are anthropological in their attention to habitat and costume, but they also have the feel of performances.

Told they would be making a statement, many of Marsault and Muller's subjects dressed as if for a tribal rite or fashion shoot. In the spirit of self-invention the photographers obviously share, these men and women have decorated their bodies and deconstructed their clothes in a variety of often fanciful, always fuck-you styles. Sue and Debbie, a pair of dreadlocked women in Berlin, sport ripped stockings, rubber skirts, and bras made of molded machine parts: Mad Max meets Alexander McQueen. Davé, in London, has sewn a line of tiny flowers into one ripped shoulder of his leather jacket and put a curved metal plate on the other.

Marsault, in an introductory note to 25/34's 1990 book, *Fin de Siècle*, writes that they wanted their pictures "to be true to the poetry of the original," which suggests the level of romantic illusion here. "Lonesome heroes," Marsault calls these characters out of Genet or a drawing by Rex—actors in a "Theater of Cruelty" that he and Muller (who died of AIDS-related causes in 1995) flirted with. Though sex and violence are deliberately left offstage, their possibility and their threat gives these portraits a fascinating, unsettling charge.

—VINCE ALETTI