



## tough guys don't paint

Two artists take on New York—one with his own motorcycle gang, the other armed with a hammer.



One night this month, 10 riders on high-performance motorcycles will stage an assault on Manhattan's Upper East Side, tearing into the Seventh Regiment Armory to torture their engines, shred their tires, and fill the air with an acrid stench. On signal they'll kill their engines, the smoke will rise, and a work of art will become visible on the floor. "We hope...I mean,

this is all up in the air," says the ringleader, **Aaron Young**, who has been set loose on this staid Park Avenue block by the Art Production Fund.

Young is an art-school kid who not only excelled in the competition to shock the faculty but is actually making the formula work in the real world. The student project that put him on the map involved hiring a local biker to come to the San Francisco Art Institute's gallery and drive around until either he couldn't see from the smoke or his tire gave out, creating a drawing on the floor of what was once Diego Rivera's studio. It lasted three and a half minutes; Young paid the biker in beer and was *critics* >114



nearly kicked out of school. MoMA bought a video of the performance for its permanent collection soon after.

his latest project may well inaugurate a new series of sixties-style happenings at the Armory. On a preparatory visit, Young stood at the center of the vast drill hall examining its ongoing renovation. In one hand, he held the blue hard hat he was supposed to be wearing; in the other, he clutched a lit cigarette. There's a chain-link fence around the balcony where the audience will stand—it should provide a nice *Rollerball* touch.

"Burnout and wheelie specialists," as Young calls them, led by the legendary practitioner he found in the South Bronx, Wink 111, will mimic the lines of a Jackson Pollock greeting card from 1943 at over 1,000 times its original scale. (See a video test run at [mensvogue.com/arts](http://mensvogue.com/arts).) They'll do this on 288 sheets of three-quarter-inch plywood (making the resulting "canvas" 72 by 128 feet) that has been stained, layered with fluorescent colors, and then covered over in black. The tire marks that scrape away the black top coat have a snaky, smeared beauty to them that Young compares to Gerhard Richter's effects.

He calls the process "totally territorial," something akin to a dog marking his favorite spots on a walk, and in the next breath he cites Rauschenberg erasing de Kooning's drawings. He says, of critics calling him an Art Jock: "At first you cringe. But at the same time, that's been said of Matthew Barney too, so—whatever—I'll take it." He also seems to like the comparisons he's getting to Chris Burden, whose most famous moment was when he had his friend shoot him in the arm at his own opening. But don't worry that such an influence will cause Young to endanger his own life—he won't even ride a motorcycle. "No way," he says. "I'm too scared... I live vicariously through these guys."