

## Mark Verabioff at team (bungalow)

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Text by Christie Hayden



Mark Verabioff, *Poolside Drive-by* (2019) (installation view). Image courtesy of the artist and team (bungalow). Photo: Jeff McLane.

As the search for the 2020 opposition to our current disaster-in-chief ramps up, Mark Verabioff's current exhibition at team (bungalow) meets political turmoil where it's at. The exhibition, titled *Poolside Drive-by*, borrows language directly from the president's fumbled condemnation of the violence at the 2017 Charlottesville rally. Taking his own interest in queer culture and feminism as a tool for understanding present-day systems of oppression, Verabioff submerges the viewer in an autobiography-meets-critique.

An obvious motif across the exhibition is the word "Antifa." Entering into the gallery, one first sees a wall of several of the artist's signature magazine pages of famous actors and models—called page tears—with the word ANTIFA collaged over each image. It was a month after the Charlottesville rally that the president called Antifa "pretty bad dudes," proclaiming that there was "blame on both sides," essentially equating the anti-fascist group Antifa with neo-Nazis. Coming of age in New York in the '90s amid the AIDS crisis, Verabioff's work has taken cues from political feminist work of the era, such as that of the Guerrilla Girls and Barbara Kruger. The female-presenting bodies in his magazine glossies become weapons against this year's brand of bigotry; a page tear depicting Lauren Hutton in a plunging white dress, titled *ANTIFA* (all works 2018), suggests that to be female and to be sexual can be an act of defiance. In contrast, all of the male-presenting bodies in the page tears (mostly nude or leather-clad models that insinuate queer culture) are titled *ANTIFA (part-time)*, asserting that to be male is a privilege tied up with performance, but a privilege nonetheless. Verabioff champions the sexuality of the marginalized, though his usage of classically beautiful, young celebrity imagery in almost all page tears detracts from his stance of opposition to standing systems of power.

The works on canvas in *Poolside* make the personal connotation of the page tears more apparent. In the painting *IN L.A.*, spray painted abstractions resembling either bullet holes or nipples accompany a page tear of an ANTIFA-ed Mariel Hemingway and the quote: "I can't afford to be hurt by people who don't like me and what I do..." This sentence reframes the content towards the artist's autobiography. One now imagines him cathartically pouring over magazines, identifying portions of himself therein, and aligning the imagery with his personal politics. Through the combined elements of the exhibition, the artist draws himself and the observer into the visual universe of his own affirmations and commentaries—relishing in personal identity in the face of intolerance.

Mark Verabioff: *Poolside Drive-by* runs from January 6–February 17, 2019 at team (bungalow) (306 Windward Ave., Venice 90291).