

## Poolside Drive-by

January 31, 2019 | Text by [John Martin Tilley](#)



**Mark Verabioff's** new show at **Team Bungalow** is a warped chamber of silent violence—who it is directed at seems not to be the point, but his focus is rather the oozing aftermath, like the underlying discomfort of total quiet after the brandishing of a firearm: the world reverberates, and yet is still. Something like an image: it can echo through time but always remain effortlessly the same.

I had to look up 'ANTIFA,' the either accusatory or inclusive stamp that the artist has emblazoned like an ad campaign label on each of his signature 'page tears'—it's short for 'anti-fascist,' and is a Fight Club-style movement opposing extremist right-wing ideology. I say accusatory or inclusive because it is unclear whether he is labeling these nostalgic celebrities of not-so-long-ago (entrancing in their own right) as fascists, or enlisting them in the cause—they all bear a form of a prison teardrop tattoo, a symbol implying they're a part of some illicit organization they had to murder their way into.

But clarity would ruin the effect, as is often the case with art. One is inclined to wonder if the artist himself isn't the perpetrator of the 'Poolside Drive-by,' aiming his artist's weapon, it would seem, at his own obsessions: celebrities and the glossy, unreal world they seem to inhabit, combined with a sense of political unrest and conspiracy theory. The drive-by has already occurred, after all, but was unseen and unheard other than by the artist. It is like a conspiracy theory in that way—an invention that seems perfectly plausible, but which is inlaid with a nagging sense of doubt even within its own creator.

Large-scale pieces that are marred with bullet holes are inlaid with scenes of candid intimacy, even a shot or two from gay porn—there is a connection to the sense of blatant sexuality in the imagery of the page tears that is virtually unnoticeable because we are so accustomed to such imagery, especially in regards to celebrities, but when we see the literal thing (porn), and the softer version (an embrace) we are reminded of where all this titillation really ends.

The pictures below the energetic layers of spray paint are like a tunnel of thoughts sparked in an innocent queen when he lays eyes on such beautiful bodies in magazines. Pictures of boys who aren't necessarily famous but are nonetheless beautiful are referred to in the catalogue as 'Trade,' gay lingo for an especially good-looking man, one who could make a bit of coin with such looks (and, in this case, since these were paid models at some point, indeed have). A sense of shame pervades this almost-hidden explicit sexuality, but manages not to strip it of its power. The prickly political implications the show hurls around are like a sport that the stars therein play for fun—an inside joke in a menacing club that is glamorous from the outside, unnerving from within.

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*Mark Verabioff's 'Poolside Drive-by' will be on view at team (bungalow) in Venice, California through February 17th. Images courtesy of the artist and Team Gallery. Lead image: 'Yellow Hole.'*