

Who is the Goldenboy?

Photographer Jeff Bark's latest series evokes '80s Southern California—with a tinge of darkness

April 25th, 2014

OUT



70 Bucks, 2014



Black Cup, 2014

Photographer Jeff Bark's work—which include still life, nudes, domestic interior and landscapes—evokes an ignorable sensuality. Whether its the alabaster skin of a female nude in despair or a young man trapped in a narcissistic state, he combines classical poses with contemporary tableaux. In his latest series, *Goldenboy*, currently on view in New York City, he returns to the themes of his Southern California upbringing. Although the material may seem autobiographical, it's actually completely constructed.

As stated in the press release for the show:

"Although most of the photographs appear to take place outside, and have an authentically rich, saturated West Coast palette, every one of them was actually taken inside Jeff Bark's New York garage, on a meticulously constructed set meant to replicate the California backyard in which he made his first photographs. Bark's insistence on building these complex, intricate sets from the ground up—working in the controlled environment of his studio, rather than at the whim of the elements—is an essential element of his meticulous, time-consuming process. In that spirit, the exhibition includes a site-specific installation that offers a

wholly sensory and immersive experience. Soaked in the warm light so masterfully captured in the photographs, and scented to evoke the salt-kissed air of the sea, the installation is fitted with live parakeets, transforming Hasted Kraeutler into Southern California, circa 1980."

Bark's photographs explore human life on a closer, more intimate scale, rendering epic the minutia of quotidian existence and revealing the mysteries contained in the commonplace... a disturbing clash of the idyll and decay.

Here we see an elegant arrangement of yellow roses—marred by the plastic Solo cups (including one black one) of a kegger. The photographic tableaux in Jeff Bark's newest body of work exist in an eerily ambiguous time of day, somewhere between the burning, first rays of dawn and the last glow of sunset. It's both indulgent and morbid. It begs the question: Will this young man live up to embrace his own potential for greatness—or will he turn away and perhaps choose a darker destiny?

Goldenboy is on view April 24 - June 14, 2014 at Hasted Kraeutler, 537 W. 24th St., NYC.