

# Jeff Bark's SoCal Goldenboy in a Backyard Gone Awry

April 23, 2014



Goldenboy, 2014



Black Cup, 2014

Imagine the perfect Southern California backyard; it's bathed in the warm glow of the summer sun, sprinkled with the faint smell of saltwater, and the sweet chirping of tropical birds. Though this scenario may seem far-off for many, for New Yorkers this month, a perfect slice of SoCal, circa 1980, can be found right inside Chelsea gallery Hasted Kraeutler, courtesy of Jeff Bark. Bark found his roots as a photographer under these same circumstances, and for his new series of works, which premieres in "Goldenboy," he was inspired to recreate the context that fostered his formation as an artist. Inside his own New York studio, the artist constructed a stage set mimicking the original site, where he was able to install a world that measured up to his exact specifications, completed with the perfect atmospheric lighting, freed from the volatility of natural light and the elements. The resulting photographs, richly saturated in warm, orangey sepia tones, not only appear to be taken outdoors, but suggest a sweltering day at peaking temperatures.

His protagonist, the Goldenboy, is a dreamy vision of shiny tan skin and abs, an idyllic human specimen who ironically languishes in a world that has gone awry. Surrounded by dead grass littered with solo cups, smashed grapefruits, toppled vases, towels, and a fish tank filled with punch, all signs point to transgressive acts or a raging fête that transpired the night before. Stoically lounging—on armchairs, an inflatable raft, a lawn chair, and inside a car—he lethargically ruminates the encroaching chaos or recovers from it, eating popsicles and toiling away in the aggressive heat. While Bark was the same age as this young man when he took his first photographs, Goldenboy's narrative is far from the truth, a fictive journey from his backyard to a car where he sits in a towel, with 70 dollars in his lap.

These deeply layered, compelling photographs are activated upon exhibition at Hasted Kraeutler, where Goldenboy's world comes to life through an immersive site-specific installation, complete with salt-kissed air and live parakeets.

"Goldenboy" is on view at Hasted Kraeutler, New York, Apr. 24th–Jun. 14th, 2014.