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Vlassis Caniaris

'Sculptures: 1973-74'

Team Gallery
47 Wooster Street, SoHo
Through Oct. 29

The Greek artist Vlassis Caniaris, who died this year at 83, specialized in socially conscious assemblage: agitprop Arte Povera, of a sort. He was especially sensitive to the privations of immigrants and migrant workers, which he articulated, while living abroad himself, in abject sculptural tableaux. Six of these works are on view at Team Gallery's new-ish Wooster Street branch, where they look remarkably current, despite being nearly 40 years old.

"Interior," the biggest work, uses plywood partitions, faded wallpaper, shabby carpet remnants and old suitcases, among other sad items, to evoke an itinerant and semiprivate lifestyle. Certain motifs emerge, giving the piece a touching back story. Outside the structure, for instance, a red plastic boat sits on a child's wooden chair; inside, a drawing (perhaps by the same child), shows a similar vessel on the open seas.

Another piece, "Tourist," introduces a figure: a dummy made from plaster and chicken wire, with a hat made of newspaper and a camera around his neck. He strides Colossus-like through a fenced-in lot festooned with miniature national flags, and he silently mocks his contemporary counterparts through the gallery's large windows.

Elsewhere, dreams of escape are thwarted by the warped, rusting bicycle frame of "Aufenthalt/Stop," or the missing wheel of "Bicycle," or the wire-mesh figure whose roller skates are tied to a wooden crate. Here, Caniaris makes the depressing point that physical mobility, as in border-crossing, often results in social immobility.

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