



Paolo Ventura's photograph "Automaton #11" (2010), at Hasted Kraeutler.

PAOLO VENTURA

Ventura photographs Italian history, or his vividly imagined version of it, by building wonderfully detailed scale-model sets and staging scenes within them. For his latest series, "The Automaton of Venice," he illustrates the story of a solitary Jewish watchmaker who constructs a cheerful companion to share his atelier in the winter of 1943. When Fascist police empty the ghetto, the pair elude capture, but not separation. As usual with Ventura, the atmosphere is as charged as the narrative and often more engrossing. Resonant and foreboding, his images of fogbound streets and canals are irresistible fictions. Through Oct. 15. (Hasted Kraeutler, 537 W. 24th St. 212-627-0006.)