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PAOLO VENTURA

In photographs of people, places, and fragile moments from what he calls “a dream past,” Ventura captures the sombre but warily optimistic mood of postwar Italy. Since his pictures were all made this past year, he does this with meticulously constructed scale-model figures and sets, one element of which is on display here. The sets themselves—a bookstore, an atelier, the booths and tents of a travelling circus—are wonderful, but when “people” occupy them they’re even more engaging. This is make-believe at its most magical, at once sophisticated and sincere; every detail tells a story. Through April 12. (Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006.)