

205

HUDSON GALLERY

205 Hudson Street New York, NY 10013

Art & Design What to See in New York Art Galleries

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'Something Possible Everywhere'

'Pier 34 NYC, 1983-84'

205 Hudson Gallery

Hunter College Art Galleries

205 Hudson Street, TriBeCa

Through November 20

By Will Heinrich

In the late 1970s, David Wojnarowicz found himself a capacious studio. The walls were crumbling, the floors rotting and the windows broken, and it had no electricity or running water. But it had harbor views, proximity to night life and few restrictions. It was the old Ward Line shipping terminal at Pier 34, atop the Holland Tunnel, and having been neglected by the city it was pretty much his for the taking. He invited friends like Mike Bidlo and Kiki Smith, who spread the word to others. By 1983 it had become a sprawling collective that attracted an international coterie of artists and impresarios (and, inevitably, the police, who shut it down later that year).

The brief history of this dockside utopia is the subject of a rousing and evocative show at the Hunter College Art Galleries, one of several recent spotlights on the sometimes-illicit art and activities of the West Side piers in the 1970s and '80s. (Others include last spring's edition of MoMA PS1's "Greater New York" and, in 2012, "The Piers: Art and Sex Along the New York Waterfront" at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of



Gay and Lesbian Art, jointly organized by the same painter and art historian, Jonathan Weinberg, who has put together "Something Possible Everywhere.")

As Mr. Weinberg emphasizes in his catalog essay, Pier 34 was a refuge from the commercial East Village gallery scene. There were shared interests in Neo-Expressionist figurative painting, but at the pier it typically wasn't happening on salable canvases; artists painted on the walls and windows, or made sculptures with whatever was at hand, or intervened in the site and structure some other way. (Wojnarowicz seeded the floors with grass and flowers.)

The pier was demolished in 1984, and not much of the art survives, although it was assiduously documented by Andreas Sterzing, whose photographs are scattered through the exhibition and collected in a transporting slide show. Where possible, surviving works and parallel pieces by the show's artists recreate original installations; David Finn's figures with scavenged-wood heads and trash-bag limbs, for example, sit on the staircase to the gallery's mezzanine as they did at the steps outside Pier 34. With its optimistic title — a quotation from a 1983 statement by Wojnarowicz and Mr. Bidlo in *Benzene* magazine avowing that a Pier 34 could pop up in any abandoned building — "Something Possible Everywhere" is a call to action for New York's artists, an invitation to trespass and collaborate. But upon leaving the gallery and hearing the whir of nearby construction, you're likely to think: Maybe somewhere, but probably not here.

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/28/arts/design/what-to-see-in-new-york-artgalleries-this-week.html?_r=3D0