

JANNIS VARELAS

SLEEP MY LITTLE SHEEP SLEEP

The 2008 financial crash has globally impacted our way of life. Varelas' work is informed by characters and narratives that reveal an intense interest in understanding social shifts. The artist approaches specific world events and there is an obvious suggestion of recent global sociopolitical changes, albeit through metaphor and allusion. Literary, cinematic, theatrical references and techniques are employed to expose timely and pertinent questions for the new world order.

The artist's collaged figures and portraits constructed of traditional art materials, condiments and images of food come to represent the amenities no longer attainable to those hit hardest by the crash. In his video *I Not*, the artist references Samuel Beckett's play *Not I* in which a mouth expounds upon the malaise of existence. In Varelas' video the mouth is speechless is chews mindlessly on a piece of gum-seemingly a commentary of the apathy of today's youth. Another video, *Solange's Dream*, depicts a puppet engaged in a distressing surreal dream concerning themes of class structure and murder. The tension in this exhibition is only further heightened by the oppressive presence of chain link fencing and the ominous metallic clank of a coin bank echoing though the gallery.

Varelas spent a month on-site at the Contemporary Arts Center in order create this installation-drawing upon old and new works to create a cohesive narrative.

Jannis Varelas (b. 1977) lives and works in Athens and Vienna. He studied at the Athens School of Fine Arts, University of Fine Arts in Barcelona, and The London Royal College of Arts. His work has been included in exhibitions at the New Museum, Prospect. 1 New Orleans Art Biennale, the Athens Biennial and the Cairo Biennial. This is his first one-person exhibition in the US.

Jannis Varelas: Sleep my little sheep sleep is curated by Xenia Kalpaktsoglou, the curator and co-director of the Athens Biennale, and organized by the Contemporary Arts Center.

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