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Salvatore Scarpitta: Cars and Sleds

Tricia Collins and Richard Milazzo

For thirty years, Salvatore Scarpitta's work has eluded the eternal stasis of the present moment—although the irony, here, is that no work during that time was more firmly entrenched in the mire of human existence, more thoroughly steeped in the process and agon of human extensions, or more grounded in the immediacy of the human condition than Scarpitta's. Even as the sleds from the wilderness of primal functions approached motionlessly the Spectacle of the Technological Age, and the racing cars from the abstract future of desire itself negotiated the operational stasis of standard realities, they (both the cars and the sleds) always referred the present moment to the metaphysical void and stillness of mortality. This metaphysical suspension bridged, in effect, the acute, impoverished forms of actuality, both in their weariness and weathered primacy and in their utter potential (which, in a sense, characterized the *arte povera* aspect of the work), and the extroverted vectors of readiness issued by the more mediated forces of culture (which characterized the Pop vector in the work). The propertied forces of this synthesis forged vehicles that instrumentalize states of mind, as well as dynamic movements of the body—vehicles that escape the Body but that simultaneously render the tenor of exceeded forms earth-bound. It is precisely here, in the work of Scarpitta, that these vectors are fundamentally predicated and reconciled—the vectors of radical consumption and the new poverty. Never was space consumed so utterly, nor time so utterly retrieved, than by these vehicles which entrust to their primary forms and mediated structures the formal artifacts and mortal limits of survival and imagination, irony and superfluity, defiance and sublimation.