

GLADSTONE GALLERY

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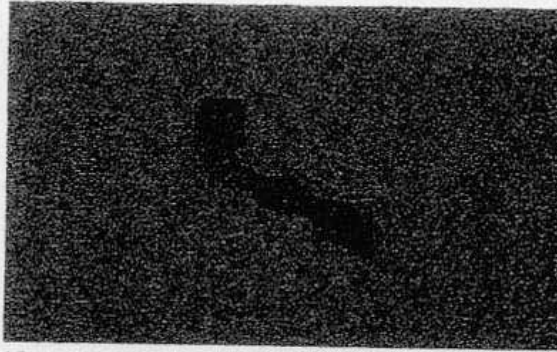
Victor Man at Plan B

Romanian artist Victor Man produced a dark thriller for the inaugural show at Plan B, the only independent, artist-run gallery in Transylvania. "Perfect Crime" consisted of one white-on-black painting, one blackened chimney and 13 black acrylic drawings painted directly onto the gallery wall of the rundown and evocatively beautiful 19th-century building.

The title of the show refers to an imaginary yet plausible gothic narrative that is essential to the interpretation of the piece. Two men engage in a duel. The victor loads the vanquished man's body onto a cart, then drives the horses to a remote place where no one can witness his heinous incineration of the body. No trace remains except ash, which the industrious murderer makes into pigment that he uses to paint a pictorial account of

the terrible tale onto the wall. The artist's message is clear: the evidence is always there, but we have to be prepared to look closely enough to see it.

The sensitively rendered drawings, measuring approximately 11 inches high, varied in width according to each scene, and were spaced evenly along two adjacent walls of the gallery. They were situated on a roughly painted swath of what Man describes as "communist- and concentration-camp gray," which extended halfway up the walls. The drawings conveyed the action in a filmic fashion, beginning with the duel, which featured the two men in 19th-century dress, followed



Victor Man: Untitled acrylic wall drawing, 2005; at Plan B.

by galloping horses, the act of incineration and ending with the depiction of a hand painting a single brushstroke.

The drawings were adeptly executed in spare, quick strokes and fluid brushwork. The gray background set the tone for the narrative, but it also facilitated a symbolic connection with the ash of the narrative and a chimney in the gallery. The latter was blackened by the artist, causing one viewer to inquire, worriedly, whether the pigment was the ash of human remains.

The element of the show that felt most arcane was the painting, a 52-by-66-inch oil on canvas. It features, in stark white against a deep black background, like stars in a night sky, an inscription of its title, *Auguri*, one meaning of which is "foretelling," along with the depiction of a solitary figure. Man characterizes the work as "a surveillance of the cosmic order"—a pertinent comment, considering how much the white-on-black resembles a constellation.

—Jane Neal