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Victor Man



Synopsis

Victor Man, born in 1974, won international renown when his work was presented in the Romanian pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale. This first monograph documents a large portion of his artistic output, which ranges from painting to sculpture, installation, wall painting and printing.

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Customer Reviews

I did a Google image search of his work and found a majority of strong paintings but this contains very few of them - 1 or 2 of the stronger paintings. This is NOT a retrospective collection like the 5 review states. If you're interested for the paintings DO NOT BUY.

This book had some great images, but not many. The interview with Man is great, but the intro is way heavy handed and full of mixed metaphors. Not a bad book, but it could have been better.

Like the title expresses, the book is informative, has some good essays and interviews, but I was hoping for a bit more on the reproduction of Man's work. I understand his work is not easily reproduced, especially the darker paintings, but I still think the book's design is on the boring side. Still, a good companion to his work.

This retrospective accompanies Victor Man's naming as the '2014 Deutsche Bank Artist of the Year', a prestigious award that's kinda tainted by the fact that it's named for an imposing, soulless financial institution. Whatever. It shouldn't diminish the artist's accomplishment, which solidifies the

status of Man and the Cluj School as some of the most inventive, profound, and emotionally engaging painters alive. For anyone who is unfamiliar with the Cluj painters, Victor Man is just one of several Romanian artists who have put their nation back on the Contemporary Art map. It's been 25 years since the nightmarish regime of Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena came to its suitably bizarre and violent end. The doddering old peasant couple instituted draconian tactics that mirrored the Stalinist model of Communism; but using his own version of the Gestapo or KGB -- the Securitate -- Romania became the most brutally oppressed nation in the Eastern Bloc, and perhaps Europe. This secret police force was a disproportionately massive bureaucratic terror -- 11 000 agents and over a half million subsidized informers, for a country of just 22 million in 1985. Its primary mandate was spying on its own populace and launching viciously punitive measures against any hint of dissent. Even the USSR condemned Ceausescu's tactics, which included the vicious repression of any political or cultural discourse that even vaguely hinted at criticism. Instituting the kind of cult-of-personality that worked for Mao, Stalin, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Kim Jon-Il, the nation became a playground for two tragically underqualified and terrifyingly arrogant rulers who built palaces for themselves while the people starved, and the population growth-rate became the lowest in the world. His attempts at relieving Romania's debts were disastrously short-sighted; seizing and selling-off most of the nation's crops to neighboring Bloc countries, leaving a huge percentage of the population on the brink of death. In 1989, the Ceausescus were betrayed by their own appointed military commander. Before the revolution had even begun to simmer, a brief trial was conducted, a sentence of death was passed, and Nicolae and Elena Ceaucescu were executed by firing squad. The whole affair was videotaped, and soon images of Nicolae's dead, twisted face and Elena's bullet-riddled corpse were broadcast on TV's across Romania. In the quarter century since then, the Romanian art scene has quickly established itself as fertile ground for a unique and profound artistic perspective; the group known as the 'Cluj School', in particular, has attracted international attention and acclaim. Victor Man is one of its most important practitioners, using a figurative style that has similarities to the enigmatic approach of Belgian painters Luc Tuymans and Michael Borremans. The dark, low-contrast tones and disturbing imagery seem like a perfect encapsulation of the nation's traumatic history, and it's tempting to seek out direct corollaries. Another Romanian painter, Adrian Ghenie, is just as vital, powerful and respected as Man, and his work shares many of the same disturbing themes. Serban Savu uses brighter colors and a seemingly simple representational style, but there is a slightly washed-out feel, and his human subjects remain faceless, and are dwarfed by the crumbling concrete remnants of bleak Communist architecture. While thematic elements like power, impotence, individuality, conformity

and fear are explored by all three artists, the legacy of the Ceausescu regime is just one aspect of each man's work. The broader existential concerns in Victor Man's work are expressed with an originality and subtlety that has made him one of the most important contemporary artists in the world.

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