

ARTFORUM

San Antonio

Gabriel Vormstein

ARTPACE SAN ANTONIO

445 North Main Avenue

January 13 - May 1

Those familiar with Gabriel Vormstein's paintings and interest in the avant-garde will find it appropriate that not all the elements in his first solo museum exhibition come together flawlessly. The artist is known for using watercolors, spray paint, and everyday materials to redraw figures and shapes from art history—the angular women

of Viennese Expressionism, the geometric forms of Minimalism—on newspapers. Today's news is partially obscured by Vormstein's re-creations; past and present coexist uneasily. This exhibition includes one of his newsprint paintings (*The Winter*, 2010) and some terrific new sculptures (a plaster "piece of pie" is embedded with a banana chip), but the main attraction is in the larger gallery. Here, for the first time, Vormstein has papered a room floor-to-ceiling with newspaper paintings. Though the experiment in scale is not fully resolved, the concurrence of disparate moments does raise compelling questions about how we give shape to history.



View of "The Teeth of the Wind and the Sea," 2011.

The show and main installation have the same hefty title: "The Teeth of the Wind and the Sea." This evokes might and flux, and both are at play here. Vormstein has covered every inch of wall space by gluing together sections of newspaper paintings made on the ground (as evinced by footprints). In the most engaging areas, images—a woman in the style of Egon Schiele, a bunch of van Gogh-like sunflowers—are only partially fleshed out. Art history is coming apart as it comes together.

But where in Vormstein's painting-sized works newspaper provides a provocative noncanvas support for this slippage, at mural scale the material seems less justified. Why not make the ghostly images directly on the wall? Perhaps in Vormstein's next experiment he will find an even more daring way to explore how we enact and might even anticipate history in the present.

— Kate Green