



ARTS + CULTURE

Market forces

A bit of con, a bit of protest in Bienko/Vormstein
Artpace installations

by Scott Andrews

Upstairs in the Hudson (Show)Room is Berlin-based Gabriel Vormstein's *The Teeth of the Wind and the Sea*, covering all four walls of the large space with a cycloramic painting rendered on pages of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a German daily newspaper. Here, Romantic tendencies are unambiguous.

On entering the room, the bits copied from works by Egon Schiele, odd Van Gogh-like sunflowers or blackbirds, and rough gestural brush strokes seem to impatiently mark the floor-to-ceiling newsprint like out-of-focus graffiti. Only the red square transected by a scribed circle in the center of one of the long walls stands firmly. But after initial confusion the room comes into focus. Like the process of trying to find one's place after running pell-mell through trees into a forest clearing, pattern slowly emerges. Gazed at broadly, areas of light and dark form repeat in chiaroscuro, though again on closer look, details still dart away from the emerging composition.

The use of newspaper, an ephemeral material that Vormstein has used for the last decade, hints at the strains of duration and inevitable loss that concern the artist. A room off to the side of the large exhibition space is lined with shallow shelves that hold modest sculptural pieces incorporating white plaster with fragments of dead twigs and other detritus. Some are incised with line drawings. Referred to by Vormstein as a grotto, the room and its small



works are like a collection of architectural fragments, or relics. Linking the two rooms are common allusions to death and history, but in the room of painting, another affect is dominant. Though references to the past abound, the visual experience holds the present. •

Gabriel Vormstein has exhibited extensively in Europe in many group shows, including the 4th Berlin Biennial of Contemporary Art. This is his first solo museum exhibition and his first project for an American gallery.