

# ARTFORUM

## Critics' Picks: Victor Man

by Lillian Davies

April 2009

### Victor Man

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ART ET DU PAYSAGE Ile de Vassivière

February 15, 2009–June 7, 2009

For his first solo exhibition in France, Victor Man presents collages, drawings, sculptures, and installations—but only one large oil painting—that reveal the breadth of the work he has made over the past twenty-five years. The Romanian artist, based in Cluj, references his nation's history in this exhibition, particularly in works such as *Mihai Viteazu* (Brave Mihai), 2006, which depicts a comic strip he drew as a child, enlarged and reproduced as wallpaper here along one wall of the main gallery. Battle scenes and a castle siege repeat, like a nightmarish frieze pattern, heightening drama without resolution. In the same space, a large black felt curtain, *Untitled*, 2009, hangs from bars below the ceiling and mimics the mysterious theatrical atmosphere of Man's lone figurative painting, *Untitled*, 2006–2007, which is installed on the farthest wall of the gallery. Five figures, griffins or masked humans, appear to be standing on an outdoor terrace, or a stage, enacting what could be an interrogation or an imminent execution.



View of "Victor Man," 2009.

In the second-floor galleries, recent drawings and collages and the installation *Untitled*, 2008, cement the enigma of Man's work. Employing a ham, a carpet, lightbulbs, rope, and a piece of white cloth in a Plexiglas box, Man seems interested in neither symbolism nor narrative, but the incitement of an immediate and visceral reaction. Likewise, for *Untitled*, 2009, a permanent installation in the island's sculpture garden, Man attached eleven vintage fur coats to a spindly tree. The work was unveiled in February, when snow was still falling, echoing, with the layers of forest moss, the texture and inherent vulnerability of Man's sculpture.