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REVIEWS

Ari Benjamin Meyers

RaebervonStenglin / Zürich

"The Name of this band is The Art," Ari Benjamin Meyers first exhibition at RaebervonStenglin, examines the melancholy and destruction within a creative endeavor. The eponymous installation consists most prominently of a hip band Meyers has put together and paid to appear for the duration of the exhibition.

Young and attractive, the vocalist, guitarist, bassist and drummer rehearse during opening hours in the gallery's industrial garage. Dressed by the artist all in white, they experiment with a defined set of choruses, bridges and verses Meyers has created and provided. The players are free to mix and interpret but never to stray. This creative premise, controlled from the beginning, flowers anyway. Already at the opening the group meshed, and as the show progressed they got better. Still, it will all come to an aborted end.

The members had never collaborated before the show opened. After the close of the show they are obligated to break up. The framed contract they each signed hangs prominently near the entrance of the space, reminding them and everyone who enters of The Art's short life. Meyers, in forcing the cliché of the doomed band as a memento mori, has inverted the trope and made it relevant and moving once more.

With its direct reference to art-school bands, the installation draws attention to the gallery's location in this rapidly changing part of west Zurich. Here the tallest building in Switzerland shades the few remaining industrial structures in the area, while the Googleesque art school campus of ZhDK sprawls nearby. Gentrification is in the air, but Meyers refuses the one liner. The band members are students at that school, and it is galleries like this that have made this real estate valuable. Like The Art, in this system we all have a hand in our own destruction; but for now, beautiful and damned, the band plays on.

by Mitchell Anderson