

# Daniele Buetti

“Speaking of Physical  
Attributes”

*Swiss Institute*

*495 Broadway, near Spring Street  
SoHo*

*Through March 22*

Daniele Buetti's Swiss Institute installation resembles a neo-Gothic sci-fi environment for a high-end fashion shoot. It is compelling in a slick, illustrative way but it's missing some deeper substance.

A wrap-around photo-mural dissolves the gallery walls into a vision of hazy sunlight filtering through a piney forest. Within this darkened enveloped space stands a rambling array of structures that suggest the ruins of a public bathhouse or a subway station. Posts and beams clad in dirty, often broken white tiles go this way and that, overhead and across the wooden floor. Though fabricated in the gallery, these elements resemble materials salvaged from an architectural junkyard.

Mr. Buetti, who is 51 and lives in Zurich, is known in Europe for Pop-surrealist photographic works, videos and sculptural installations that cleverly skewer consumerism. This is his first solo exhibition in the United States. Beyond the formally impressive dialogue between the primordial forest and the grungy architecture, his installation suggests a post-apocalyptic time in which nature has prevailed over the remnants of a failed human civilization. The forest photomural — a kitschy type of commercial wallpaper — also nods to how people compensate for their modern disconnection from nature by acquiring products that artificially mimic it.

Despite its thematic suggestiveness and moody ambience, the installation feels incomplete. It could serve as the foundation for a more elaborately imaginative scene, but in its present state it is more a dormant theater set waiting for actors — or supermodels — to bring the fantasy to life.

KEN JOHNSON