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THE WHY OF LIFE
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“THE WHY OF LIFE”

Why bother with the little questions? This show heads straight for the deep end, considering the “reason of our existence.” Gregory and Cyril Chapuisat’s giant geometric wood construction looming over viewers and Sean Lander’s paintings of tough-looking, painting-sniffing dudes—as well as his epic, rambling text painting—posit awe, anesthetization, and existential confusion as central to the human condition. Roman Signer’s candle (rigged to be snuffed out) and Carsten Höller’s “Suicide Gerbera Daisy Plant,” hooked up to an electrical socket, remind us of the fragility—if not, precisely, “the why”—of life. Through May 17. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway. 212-925-2035.)