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The art of impermanence

There's sad irony in the theme for gallerywest's last exhibition

By DAVID JAGER

→ **LEE HENDERSON** at gallerywest (1172 Queen West,) Thursday (July 3) to July 27, reception July 3, 7 pm. 416-913-7116. [See listing.](#)

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The Emptiness (Vanitas Still Life, After Claesz) riffs on a famous artwork, part of The Museum Of One Thing After Another.

After an eight-year run and 65 shows, gallerywest closes its doors with Lee Henderson's *The Museum Of One Thing After Another*. Fittingly, it addresses the mortality of objects, works of art and institutions.

In the series, Henderson invites the viewer to mull over the deeply Buddhist themes of emptiness and impermanence. He invokes the museum, too, as an institution waging war against the ravages of time, attempting to maintain a serene facade of immortality.

In three videos, Henderson films black-and-white recreations of iconic masterpieces (Andy Warhol's skull, Robert Mapplethorpe's lily and Pieter Claesz's still life *Vanitas*),

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subjecting them to conceptual scrutiny. Moving gently in and out of focus at regular intervals, the videos remind us that the human gaze is rhythmic, moving from moments of clarity to obscurity and back again.

Henderson suggests that our relationship to art as a whole also consists of moments of certainty and confusion. Our attentions and fixations waver.

He's also a master of the conceptual pun. In *The Crypt Of Marie Laveau*, a tintype of the final resting place of New Orleans's most famous medium and voodoo priestess, he makes a wry, if extremely subtle, joke by using a dead medium to record the final resting place of a dead medium.

In these spare evocations of art, time and decay, Henderson offers a sober coda for one of Queen West's most dynamic privately owned galleries.

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