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DAVID ZINK YI: ‘Pneuma’

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

Hauser & Wirth

32 East 69th Street, Manhattan

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Working in multiple mediums is by now an established style, with either slackerish dishevelment or slick, impersonal competence among its pitfalls. Competence prevails in the smart, exquisitely tasteful [New York debut](#) of David Zink Yi, an artist born in Peru and educated in Germany who lives in Berlin. The work is a familiar mix of video, photography, performance, installation and sculpture that uses elements of language, identity and exotic zoology, all held together by a restrained, poetic lyricism.

As is often the case, the show is anchored by some bravura object-making, in this case a life-size, quite realistic glazed ceramic sculpture of a giant squid resting in a pool of dark liquid. Like the helpful label in a natural history museum, the press release explains that this ancient deep-sea creature is seen only after death, when its deflated body floats to the surface.

Other works are more hermetic. Large photographs show ceramic vessels or an oddly artificial cedar tree. “Pneuma” is a film loop of a man blowing into a trumpet until his breath runs out, about 40 seconds. “Around the Canopy” is a spare installation concerning an avian version of the squid: the large, rarely sighted [harpy eagle](#), whose habitat includes the Amazon’s highest trees. Reading its single-line wraparound text and then turning to a vertiginous video that pans up and down an immense tree trunk can induce a kind of vertigo if not a sense of flying.

The most self-sustaining piece is an oddly poignant black-and-white image of the bare brown feet of a man who seems to hold another, smaller barefoot man on his back. Installed at floor level on a darkened window near the entrance, it is titled “Angel, is it you? (Twilight).” It is the show’s high point.