

Michael Ray-Von is an artist from California living in Basel. He studied art at CalArts, Los Angeles and the Institut Kunst, Basel. Michael's recent exhibitions include "Hapax Smile", Can, Vienna (2023); "Time, please", Kunst Raum Riehen (2022); and "Something is burning", Kunsthalle Bratislava (2022).

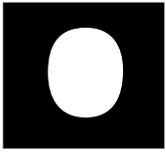
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Michael Ray-Von  
*Instrument Soundtrack*  
March 21 – May 1, 2025

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kay, the following is for reference only,” insists the voice that opens Fugazi’s soundtrack record for *Instrument*, a documentary film that followed the band as they gained prominence in the late 80’s American punk complex. Fugazi is, I suppose, an unusual entity to invoke here. Suffice to say that pre-Fugazi its members had unwittingly become key figures in the formation of hardcore and emo subgenres of punk, and Fugazi assembled in part to resist classification; an intentional mutation, one treacherously assigned the antithetic “post-hardcore”.

The above-mentioned record consists mostly of studio outtakes and is, as luck should have it, largely instrumental. The record’s title, borrowed for this exhibition, presents a puzzling syntactic ambiguity. Suppose we mean rather than the soundtrack for *Instrument*, the soundtrack of an instrument itself. How to understand that? As the background noise of instrumentation; as the sum of all an instrument’s sounds; or extending “soundtrack” by way of metonym, as an instrument’s unique fingerprint. Whatever way we bend the ribbon, we eventually happen again on the simple sense of “soundtrack for a film called ‘Instrument’”.

In the categorically evasive manner of the band itself, the title performs a semantic oscillation that finds affinity in a genre of gestalt games and epistemic dilemmas. Among those are bi-stable illusions like the famed rabbit-duck, where a chimeric doodle appears to be either a duck or a rabbit, or more ambitiously both and neither. Such situations arise when perception confronts conceptual discomfort, surfacing in experience in a way not dissimilar to those retinal afterimages or ringings in the ears that erupt when the sensory apparatus clips.

These perceptual anomalies make a case for a naïve realism, where the out-there is out there but experience never resembles the environment itself, as environments do not themselves resemble. When categorical processing of signals is confounded, an interference pattern appears in the fabric of experience. That moiré effect reveals the machinery of perception and, when isolated, illuminates opportunities for novelty.

2025

Moving head stage lights, single-board computer, software  
09 m 15 s

2025

Photographs in manipulated frame, with 2700 and 4000  
Kelvin lighting  
50 × 35 cm

**WARNING:**  
**THIS EXHIBITION**  
**CONTAINS**  
**FLASHING LIGHTS**  
**WHICH MAY NOT**  
**BE SUITABLE FOR**  
**PHOTOSENSITIVE**  
**EPILEPSY**