



MUSEO JUMEX

Peter Fischli David Weiss:

How to Work Better

09.JUN.16 - 04.SEP.16

FIRST COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY SPANS 33 YEARS OF COLLABORATION BY THE SWISS ARTISTS

THE ADAPTATION OF THIS SHOW FOR MUSEO JUMEX ALLOWS FOR AN EXPLORATION OF THE MYRIAD CONNECTIONS THAT FISCHLI AND WEISS'S WORK ESTABLISHES BETWEEN HIGH CULTURE AND THE EVERYDAY.

From June 9 to September 4, 2016, Museo Jumex presents *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better*. Originally conceived and organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, the exhibition offers a comprehensive overview of the remarkable partnership between Swiss artists Peter Fischli (b. 1952) and David Weiss (1946–2012). Gathering more than two hundred sculptures, photographs, slide projections, and videos, the presentation encapsulates and culminates the dynamic collaboration between the artists, bringing into focus the generative and incisive dialogue they sustained over the course of their joint career. Through its simultaneously witty and profound appropriation of cultural genres—from low-budget Hollywood flicks and picture-postcard views to the art historical trope of the ready made and the kind of amateur philosophy found in self-help books—the work continues to probe our grasp of reality and offer a deceptively casual meditation on how we perceive everyday life. As contemporary alchemists, Fischli and Weiss transformed the ordinary into something decisively not.

Initially planned during David Weiss's lifetime, *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better* was organized by Nancy Spector, Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator and Deputy Director, and Nat Trotman, Curator, Performance and Media, in close collaboration with Peter Fischli. The presentation at Museo Jumex is coordinated by Gabriel Villalobos, Curatorial Assistant.

Occupying spaces across all five levels of the museum, the exhibition departs from a traditional retrospective's chronological format. Instead, select bodies of work appear in dialogues that span the breadth of Fischli and Weiss's collaboration. In this way, the presentation highlights compelling connections among different series and underscores the conceptual coherence of the artists' multiform practice. The exhibition also focuses on the centrality of film and video to Fischli and Weiss's practice, with photographs, sculptures, and installations placed alongside moving-image works in order to represent the full scope of their oeuvre.

Throughout the course of their partnership, Fischli and Weiss probed the idea of dualistic thinking. Perhaps because they were a team of two involved in constant dialogue and debate, they consistently interrogated Western culture's reliance on contraries. In one way or another, everything they produced together playfully unravels what the artists understood to be "popular opposites"—labor versus leisure, fiction versus reality, kitsch versus beauty, and the banal versus the sublime.



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Through their sustained investigation into the everyday, Fischli and Weiss undid false dichotomies with the conviction that bewilderment might be a desirable state. The artists embodied this approach in their alter egos, Rat and Bear, who, for all their differences (rats being ugly and ubiquitous while pandas are lovable and endangered), appear as equal partners in their various misadventures. Rat and Bear surface throughout Fischli and Weiss's work in a range of forms, including appearances in the early films *The Least Resistance* (1980–81) and *The Right Way* (1983); as “authors” of the artists' book *Order and Cleanliness* (1981); and as a sculpture, *Rat and Bear (Sleeping)* (2008).

Never ones to issue statements or dictate meaning, Fischli and Weiss avoided the authoritative voice of the artist and acted instead as whimsical philosophers who pondered all questions, great and small. No inquiry was too extraordinary or too trivial, whether metaphysical or empirical, as evinced by works such as *Question Projections* (2000–2003), which features phrases both fanciful (“Is it true that traces of aliens have been found in yogurt?”) and serious (“Is everything meaningless?”). The artists aimed to confuse traditional hierarchies and value systems. Many of their projects take the form of vast archives that resemble subjective encyclopedias, accumulated over decades with little distinction made between the important and the mundane. The exhibition includes slide-show presentations of postcard like tourist views from *Visible World* (1986–2012) and *Airports* (1987–2012) that dare us to admit their beauty. *Suddenly This Overview* (1981–), a series of tiny clay sculptures that chronicle an idiosyncratic world history, is installed on Gallery 1.

When not documenting the world around them, Fischli and Weiss played with signs and symbols for that world. In their first project, *Sausage Series* (1979), the artists emulated vignettes from classical paintings and popular culture in photographed compositions of luncheon meats and household items. Subsequent series such as *Rubber Sculptures* (1986–88/2005–2006) and *Cars* (1988) bring heightened attention to the products that populate daily life. This impulse culminated in various polyurethane installations (1991–) that cannily subvert the Duchampian readymade with painstakingly hand-carved copies of ordinary objects ranging from table lamps, cassette tapes, and pizza boxes to the paint cans, wood scraps, and tools occupying the artists' studio. These surrogates are meant not so much to confuse as to give pause. They are simple reminders of a more complicated existence that become holes in our perception, like blank spaces or cutouts. Unstitching the fabric of reality, Fischli and Weiss consistently courted the implausible. They often spoke about their deliberate “misuse” of time and materials. In the series of photographs titled *Equilibres (A Quiet Afternoon)* (1984–86) and their renowned video *The Way Things Go* (1987), they recorded unlikely balancing acts and chemical reactions that animated the most mundane of objects in ballets of utter precariousness. The artists created systems doomed to fail and found delight in the entropic beauty of imminent collapse.

To coincide with this exhibition, a new version of the mural has been produced on Balderas avenue in Mexico City's Historic Center, extending this critical reflection on labor onto the urban fabric.

CATALOGUE

Museo Jumex is also presenting the Spanish edition of the catalogue *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better*. The publication, a definitive account of Fischli and Weiss's vital contribution to contemporary art, features an in-depth examination of the artists' collaboration, augmented by hundreds of archival images, notes on process, and interview excerpts culled from their archives.



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COLECCION JUMEX

The exhibition includes works that are part of Colección Jumex:

Rat and Bear (Sleeping), 2008

Cotton, wire, polyester, and electrical mechanism

Selections from

Equilibres (A Quiet Afternoon), 1984–1986

Gelatin silver prints and chromogenic prints

Car, 1988

Plaster

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Peter Fischli (b. 1952) and David Weiss (1946–2012) began their 33-year collaboration in 1979. Resisting any specific style, medium, or material, their work explores the poetics of banality the sublimity of the objects and events constituting everyday life. Indebted to Dada, Surrealism, Pop Art, and Conceptual Art, their photographs, videos, slide projections, films, books, sculptures, and multimedia installations rely on keen observation and uncanny wit. Solo exhibitions of their work have been organized by Kunstmuseum Basel (1985); List Visual Arts Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge (1987); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1992); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1996); Museu d'art contemporani de Barcelona (2000); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2003–04); Tate Modern, London (2006–07); and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2009), among others. Their work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including significant presentations at Documenta, Kassel, Germany (1987); Skulptur Projekte Münster (1987 and 1997); the Venice Biennale (1988, 1995, 2003, and 2013); the Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (1988 and 2008); the São Paulo Biennial (1989); and the Yokohama International Triennial (2008). In 2003 Fischli and Weiss received the Leone d'Oro at the 50th Venice Biennale, and in 2006 they were awarded the Roswitha Haftmann Prize.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Nancy Spector

Deputy Director and Chief Curator, Brooklyn Museum as of April 2016

Nancy Spector received her MPhil in Art History from City University Graduate Center in New York. During more than 29 years at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation, including the past decade as Deputy Director and Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator, she organized exhibitions on conceptual photography, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* cycle,



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Richard Prince, Louise Bourgeois, Marina Abramovic, Tino Sehgal, Maurizio Cattelan, and Peter Fischli/David Weiss. She also organized the group exhibitions *Moving Pictures; Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated)*; and *theanyspacewhatever*. She was Adjunct Curator of the 1997 Venice Biennale and co-organizer of the first Berlin Biennial in 1998. Under the auspices of the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin, she initiated special commissions by Andreas Slominski, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Lawrence Weiner, and Gabriel Orozco, as well as a special exhibition on the work of Joseph Beuys and Matthew Barney. She has contributed to numerous books on contemporary visual culture with essays on artists such as Maurizio Cattelan, Luc Tuymans, Douglas Gordon, Tino Sehgal, and Anna Gaskell. In 2007 she was the U.S. Commissioner for the Venice Biennale, where she presented an exhibition of work by Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Spector is a recipient of the Peter Norton Family Foundation Curators Award, five International Art Critics Association Awards and a Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Award for her work on Youtube Play, a Biennial of Creative Video. In 2014, she was included in the 40 Women Over 40 to Watch list.

Nat Trotman

Curator, Performance and Media, Guggenheim Museum

Nat Trotman first joined the curatorial staff in 2001 as curatorial assistant for the exhibition *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle*. In the years since he has organized numerous exhibitions for the museum, including *James Turrell* (co-organized with Carmen Giménez) in New York, *Pawel Althamer: Almech* in Berlin, *Found in Translation* in New York and Berlin, *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance* (co-organized with Jennifer Blessing) in New York and Bilbao, and a pair of yearlong presentations of installation art in Bilbao. He has developed performative and site-specific projects for the Guggenheim rotunda in collaboration with artists such as Sharon Hayes, Meredith Monk, Susan Philipsz, Tino Sehgal, James Turrell, and Francesco Vezzoli. He also works with Jennifer Blessing in developing the Guggenheim's collection of photography, video, and film, and is closely involved in the museum's performance programming.

Besides catalogue essays for several of the above exhibitions, Trotman has published on Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys, Jane and Louise Wilson, and others. He also co-organized *The Shapes of Space* with Ted Mann and Kevin Lotery, and served as assistant curator for *Catherine Opie: American Photographer* and *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: America*, and as curatorial assistant for *Spanish Painting from El Greco to Picasso: Time, Truth, and History*; *David Smith: A Centennial*; *Richard Serra: The Matter of Time*; and *Constantin Brancusi: The Essence of Things*. Trotman holds an M.Phil. from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where he focused on performance, photography, and time-based art, and is a graduate of the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program.

ABOUT FUNDACIÓN JUMEX

Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo was established in 2001, with the aim of supporting and promoting contemporary art. Through each one of its platforms—Museo Jumex, Colección Jumex, and Grants and Scholarships—the foundation aims to foster the production and knowledge of contemporary art and culture.



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