

Press Release
Zurich, 5 June 2007

Kunsthau Zürich hosts Switzerland's first retrospective of works by Peter Fischli and David Weiss.

From 6 June to 9 September 2007 Kunsthau Zürich will present Switzerland's first retrospective of works by contemporary artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss. The show, mounted by curator Bice Curiger in collaboration with Tate Modern, London, is called «Questions & Flowers». Organised with the artists' support, it boasts the most comprehensive overview to date of an oeuvre as varied as it is enigmatic. Comprising sculptures, photographs, films and videos, the work of Fischli/Weiss resists glib classification.

Peter Fischli (born 1952) and David Weiss (born 1946) have been collaborating since 1979, and have contributed significantly to the international renown enjoyed by contemporary Swiss art. They focus their attention on unspectacular, everyday things, on the ostensibly banal. Their regard is deliberately uncynical as they usher us into the grey areas of our functionalist world. In their first joint creation, «The Sausage Photographs » (1979), which has since come to enjoy considerable popularity, the playfully experimental tendency of their work is already evident, in the form of an anti-heroic artistic programme unafraid to be humorous. This is art that has over the past decades contributed to the serious debates about a post-avant-garde while at the same time managing to appeal to a broad public – as was glowingly confirmed at recent shows in London and Paris.

RETROSPECTIVE FEATURING ALL KEY GROUPS OF WORKS

Early in what was to become a sustained collaboration, Fischli/Weiss made two films, «The Least Resistance» (1980/81) and «The Right Way» (1982/83), in which the artists, disguised as a rat and a bear, explore the world. Manifest in both works is that same inclination to universalism and ironic empiricism that would make itself felt in «Suddenly this Overview» (1981), a magisterial assemblage comprising hundreds of small, unfired clay figures. In that work the artists capture moments of world history, and, by slyly altering their perspective, seem to have knocked the whole of historiography out of kilter. The resultant panorama view of the world is subjective even as it transcends individualism. It does not shy away from taking on deeply rooted clichés, which in the hands of Fischli/Weiss mutate into something like an index of veracity. One of the disarming «Questions» posed by a group of works by that name, created over the course of decades, asks, «Can Truth get away with everything?» In addition

to «Questions», the ambitious «Visible World» (1987-2000) will be given considerable scope in the exhibition, in view of the project's role in the development of the popular series «Airports», «Flowers» and «Mushrooms».

WORLD OF OBJECTS

Peter Fischli and David Weiss took on the world of objects soon after beginning their work together, using kneading, carving and casting to create sculptures from unusually «ordinary» material. They were interested in these substances' capacity for transformation, as demonstrated for instance by the terrifying dimensions taken on by black rubber. Featuring such items as a giant rhizome and a minimalist cupboard, as well as animals of an unimaginable blackness, the show testifies to the mute absorptive energy of the material.

With objects carved out of polyurethane, meanwhile, such as tools, bottles and utensils, Fischli/Weiss suddenly confront the sceptical viewer with the quotidian life of the museum itself. In this lofty ceremonial context, their imitations of everyday objects take on the appearance of «reverse readymades». They are perfect imitations built upon painstakingly mimetic manual labour, of the kind we are familiar with from the annals of art history.

WONDERS OF THE WORLD, AS DISCOVERED BY TWO «META - TOURISTS»

The work of Peter Fischli and David Weiss uses surprise, the technique of «détournement», and thus acknowledges the uses of enchantment, as if to provide an antidote for a «disenchanted world». For decades now they have been deploying their camera to tease out beauty, whether as globetrotting «meta - tourists» or from the perspective of the snails and the bees. The Zurich exhibition will feature «Visible World» as an illuminated viewing table some 30 metres in length, along which 3'000 pictures have been arrayed.

PANORAMA FEATURING NEW CINEMATIC MATERIAL AND OTHER FIRSTS

The retrospective was not organised chronologically, and in this it is true to the spirit of the oeuvre as a whole, which is composed of many larger and smaller groups of works as well as partially interlocking series, all developed over a long period. Considering this genealogy, the artists' perennially successful film «The Way Things Go» (1986/87) seems, with its chain reactions, like an ironic commentary on an excessively narrow-minded conception of an artist's career, with its compulsive, mercilessly linear conformity. Connoisseurs of the duo's work will also find things to discover at the show. For instance, the artists' long-time friend, the former art critic Patrick Frey, used a video camera to document certain of the elaborate tests for their 16mm film comprised of scurrilous physical reactions; the material has been reviewed and edited for the exhibition. The film grants viewers more than just a glimpse backstage: it is also an insistent exposé of the half-serious, half-comic foundation of the Fischli/Weiss project, a dream-like search for meaning in meaninglessness.

This is the basis of their claim to a place in art history. And thirty years after the

first appearance of Fischli/Weiss, they seem to have reached a new acme. In 2006 the duo won the Roswitha Haftmann Prize, Europe's best-endowed award for contemporary art, and thus added a further laurel wreath to a career featuring contributions to the documenta and Biennale as well as more recent curatorial work. With its presentation of «Questions & Flowers», Kunsthaus Zürich invites visitors into the world of two artists whose intention has always been to share that world with others.

The exhibition is supported by Swiss Re – Partner for contemporary art.

ART EDUCATION: A BOOK AND A SERIES OF WORKSHOPS

Contributors to the book accompanying the exhibition are D.Birnbaum, C.Bishop, I.Blazwick, F.Bonami, L.Cooke, B.Curiger, A.C.Danto, T.Dean, R.Fleck, P.Frey, A.M.Gingeras, M.Godfrey, R.Goldmann, D.Gonzales-Foerster, V. Groebner, B.Groys, J.Heiser, T.Kapielski, J.Kelsey, M.Küng, C.Lange, V.Loers, A.Lutz, H.Ulrich Obrist, V.Pécoil, N.Spector, F.Tuten, J.Waters, M.Wechsler, B.Wyss, S.Zweifel. 'Fischli/Weiss, Questions & Flowers, A Retrospective', editors Bice Curiger, Peter Fischli, David Weiss, 352 pages, 182 coloured illustrations, published in German by JPR Ringier as museum and trade edition. The museum edition is available at the Kunsthaus-Shop for CHF 45.-.

With the support of the Vontobel Foundation, Kunsthaus Zürich is also organising a summer series of 29 workshops for children, young people and adults. The programme is available on www.kunsthhaus.ch.

VISITORS' INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, 8001 Zurich, Tues–Thurs 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Fri–Sun 10 a.m.–5 p.m. 1 August (Swiss national holiday) 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Admission: CHF 16.- / 10.- (concessions) / CHF 12.- per head for groups of 20 or more. Young people up to the age of 16 free of charge

Public guided tours Wednesday 6.30 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. Private guided tours can be arranged upon request by phoning +41 (0)44 253 84 12 (Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–12 noon). Additional information and online agenda: www.kunsthhaus.ch

Advance sales

Switzerland: RailAway/SBB Kombi-Ticket, with reduction on rail travel and entrance to the museum. Available at local stations and by phoning Rail Service: 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/Min.), group rates possible. Magasins Fnac, tel. +33 1 4157 3212, www.fnac.ch

After Zurich «Questions & Flowers» will be on view at Hamburg's Deichtorhallen from 24 April to 31 August 2008.

For further press information and visual material, please contact Kunsthaus Zürich, Kristin Steiner, Press and Communication kristin.steiner@kunsthhaus.ch tel. +41 44 253 84 13

Peter Fischli und David Weiss. Fragen & Blumen

Kunsthaus Zürich

6. Juni bis 9. September 2007



Peter Fischli und David Weiss erhalten den Roswitha Haftmann-Preis, November 2006
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Airports, 1987-2006
C-Print
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



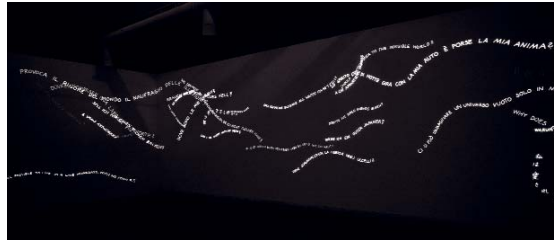
Büsi, 2001
Auf Grossbildschirm vorgeführt, im Rahmen von «The 59th Minute: Video Art on the Time Square Astrovision», Creative Time, New York
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Filmstill aus «Der geringste Widerstand», 1980/81
Kamera: Jürg V. Walther
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Filmstill aus «Der Lauf der Dinge» 1986/87
Kamera: Pio Corradi
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Fragen, 1981-2003
Dia-Projektion, gross
Installationsansicht, Biennale Venedig, 2003
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Gegenstände vom Floss, 1982
Geschnitzte und bemalte Polyurethan-Objekte
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



In den Bergen, 1979
Fotografie
Kunsthaus Zürich
Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Kanalarbeiter, 1987
Gummiabguss
Kunsthaus Zürich
Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Natürliche Grazie (Equilibre), 1984
Fotografie
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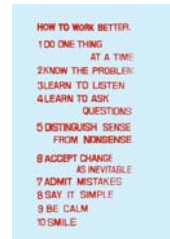
Still aus Patrick Freys Video «Lauf der Dinge: In der Werkstatt», 1985/2006 (aufgenommen während der Dreharbeiten zur Skizze zu «Der Lauf der Dinge», 1985)
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



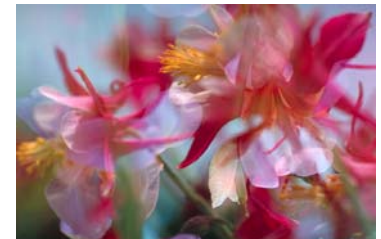
Mick Jagger und Brian Jones befriedigt auf dem Heimweg, nachdem sie 'I Can't Get No Satisfaction' komponiert haben, aus der Serie «Plötzlich diese Übersicht», 1981
Ungebrannter Ton
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Modeschau (Die Wurstserie), 1979
Fotografie
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



How to work better, 1991
Wandbild in Entstehung
Zürich-Oerlikon
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Ohne Titel (Blume), 1997
Fotografie
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



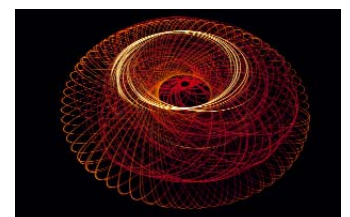
Ohne Titel, aus der Serie «Tate», 1992-2000
Stillleben im Atelier
Geschnitzte und bemalte Polyurethan-Objekte
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Siedlungen, Agglomeration, 1993
Fotografie
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Haus, 1986
Fotografie
Unrealisiertes Projekt für Zürich
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss



Surrtli, 1989
Dia-Projektion
© 2007 Peter Fischli / David Weiss