

PRESS RELEASE

Peter Fischli David Weiss

Polyurethane Objects

March 3 – April 6, 2023

Opening on Thursday, March 2, 6 – 8 pm

Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *Polyurethane Objects*, the fifth exhibition by Peter Fischli (*1952) and David Weiss (1946–2012).

In the early 1990s, after a long run of projects dominated by travel, photography, appropriated materials, and interventions into public space, Peter Fischli David Weiss finally returned to the dirty work of making things by hand in the studio. But now, as they considered the site and context of this labor with fresh eyes, their flair for self-reference led them to methodically replicate the very conditions of such labor, resulting in a series of installations that would become hallmarks of their oeuvre. Returning to an old favorite among their material repertoire, they began to carve blocks of polyurethane foam into copies of the items populating their studio as well as the back rooms of the museums and galleries in which they exhibited: cleaning supplies, tools, paint cans and mixing buckets, rolls of tape, wooden pallets, pipes and containers, as well as furnishings (chairs, a cot, a desk, a small refrigerator, even a stove) and the personal items that one might find left on them (cassette tapes, six-packs of beer, a skateboard, a towel, a toothbrush and so on). Cannily subverting the accepted norms of art production, in which invisible labor merges with creative genius to transform raw materials into prized works of art, Peter Fischli David Weiss instead foregrounded the markers of work and workplace as fetishes in themselves (Nat Trotman, ed., *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better*, New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2016, p. 201).

One can argue that Peter Fischli David Weiss simulate readymades rather than the objects themselves, because in real life these object-replicants would immediately be exposed for what they are, namely useless in actual practice. In a museum context, however, the readymade is not required to pass a test of authenticity or practicability thanks to a firmly established convention, which prescribes that only surfaces may be viewed, for we are not allowed to touch, take away or use the objects on display... We can say that the ordinary object that escapes conscious notice, although we use it everyday, captures our attention in the context of a museum and acquires new meaning. Its once utilitarian value gives way to a new symbolic value: the object becomes mysterious, fraught with meaning, mythical... The classical practice of the readymade has the duality of mythical experience, about which Peter Fischli David Weiss obviously have misgivings. Their strategy evidently seeks to desecrate the distinction between art and reality. A thing made by Peter Fischli David Weiss becomes art by virtue of the fact that it has been carved out of polyurethane. This definition replaces an old one, according to which a thing become art upon being seen in the light of the inner enlightenment. The astonishing thing about this substitution of polyurethane for a higher spirituality is that the effect basically remains the same: divested of any practical, ordinary functionality, the thing can be used only as an object to be viewed (Boris Groys, *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better*, New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2016, pp. 205).

In 1982, Peter Fischli David Weiss started to carve objects from polyurethane, which represent ordinary objects found in their studio. Particularly noteworthy are *Das Geheimnis der Arbeit* (1982) and *Eine Ansammlung von Gegenständen* (1982–2013), which include the earliest carved objects. From 1982 to 1983, Peter Fischli David Weiss created the work *Floß*.

In 1991, Peter Fischli David Weiss exhibited their first installation of polyurethane objects named *Raum ohne Titel* on the occasion of the group exhibition *Chamer Räume – Kunst am Ort in Cham*, Switzerland. In 1992, Peter Fischli David Weiss reinstalled it in *Platzverführung* in a garage in Stuttgart-Schorndorf as well as in *Doubletake* at Hayward Gallery in London. Subsequently, it traveled to the former industrial quarter of Zurich. Here it was located until 1996 in an old building on Hardturmstrasse, illuminated and visible from a window at the sidewalk until late at night. Afterwards it was located inside the Löwenbräuareal. In 2003, *Raum ohne Titel* moved to a former fire department

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garage near the Somvih bus stop at the western village exit of S-chanf in the Engadin. Since 2014, the installation has been on permanent loan to the Kunsthaus Zürich.

In 1992, Peter Fischli David Weiss had a solo exhibition with polyurethane objects at Galerie Francesca Pia in Bern. Two years later polyurethane objects were exhibited at Sonnabend Gallery in New York (1994), and later at Monika Sprüth in Cologne (1995), at Matthew Marks Gallery in New York (2014), and at Sprüth Magers in Berlin (2014).

The polyurethane objects were shown in numerous large-scale institutional and other important exhibitions, such as *Peter Fischli et David Weiss* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (1993), where they exhibited the work *Tisch* for the first time, *Die Magie des Alltäglichen* at Kunsthalle Zürich (1993), at Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne (1993), at the Biennale di Venezia (1995), *Unnatural Science* (2000) at Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, *Wechsel-Strom* at the Ursula Hauser Collection in St. Gallen (2001), *Peter Fischli & David Weiss* at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2003), Bergen Kunstmuseum (2004), *Faites vos jeux!* at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2005), *Flowers & Questions. A Retrospective* at Tate Modern in London (2006) and at Kunsthaus Zürich (2007), *Life on Mars* at Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh (2008), *Reality Check* at Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen (2009), at Sammlung Goetz in Munich (2010), *Production Site. The Artist's Studio Inside-Out* at The Art Institute in Chicago (2010), *Peter Fischli David Weiss* at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa (2010), *How to Work Better* at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (2016), and at Schaulager in Basel (2006 and 2016).

Polyurethane objects are part of the Guggenheim Collection, the LUMA Foundation, the Bechtler Stiftung, the Glenstone Collection, the Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung, the Selvaag Art Collection, as well as the collections of the Museum MMK für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Tate Modern in London, and the city of Zurich among others.

The exhibition includes three polyurethane installations and one video. *Untitled (Rotterdam)* (2003) was previously exhibited at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2003), at Tate Modern in London (2006), at Galerie Eva Presenhuber in Zurich (2011), at the Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City (2016), and at Aspen Art Museum (2017). *Untitled (Door with Cleaning Utensils)* (1993–1994) was shown at Sonnabend Gallery in New York (1994) and at Aspen Art Museum (2017). *Untitled* (1999) will be publicly exhibited for the first time. The video *Atelier/Bus* (1994) was previously on view at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (2016).

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