Guggenheim Presents *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better*, Opening February 5

First Comprehensive Survey Spans 33 Years of Collaboration by the Swiss Artists through More Than 300 Works of Installation, Photography, Sculpture, and Video

Exhibition: *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Rotunda and Tower Level 7
Dates: February 5–April 27, 2016
Media Preview: Thursday, February 4, 2016, 10 am–1 pm

(NEW YORK, NY – December 7, 2015) — From February 5 to April 27, 2016, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents *Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better*, the first comprehensive survey in a New York museum of the remarkable 33-year artistic partnership between Peter Fischli (b. 1952) and David Weiss (1946–2012). Gathering more than three hundred sculptures, photographs, slide projections, and videos, the presentation encapsulates and culminates the dynamic collaboration between the Swiss 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 readymade 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* is 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.

Unfolding along the museum’s spiraling ramps and into one Tower gallery, 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. 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 Large Question Pot (1984) and the series 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 postcardlike tourist views from Visible World (1986–2012) and Airports (1987–2012) that dare us to admit their beauty. In Fotografías (2005), hand-painted signs from amusement parks and carnivals are transformed into dozens of eerie small-format black-and-white photographs. Suddenly This Overview (1981– ), a series of tiny clay sculptures that chronicle an idiosyncratic world history, is installed on one of the Guggenheim’s ramps as a field of over 150 miniature tableaux. In the Aye Simon Reading Room, Untitled (Venice Work) (1995)—96 hours of real-time footage shot largely in the artists’ native Zürich and including myriad scenes of labor and leisure—serves as a meditation on what constitutes the everyday in this European city and beyond.

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 (1986–88/2005–06) 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.

Concurrent Projects
To coincide with the Guggenheim Museum’s exhibition, two public projects in New York bring Fischli and Weiss’s work to a wider audience. As part of the Midnight Moment program, Times Square Arts and Times Square Advertising Coalition show Büsi (Kitty) (2001) every night at 11:57 pm throughout the month of February 2016; the artists’ video of a cat drinking milk was first shown in Times Square in 2001. The Public Art Fund presents How to Work Better (1991), the artists’ text-based monument to labor, as a wall mural in Lower Manhattan, marking the first time it has been shown outside its original installation as a mural in Zürich. The Public Art Fund’s Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better is on view from February 5 through May 1, 2016, at Houston and Mott Streets.

Exhibition Funders
Major support for the exhibition has been provided by Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, Basel.

The Leadership Committee for Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better is gratefully acknowledged for its support, with special thanks to Chairs Maja Oeri and Hans Bodenmann. Additional support is provided by Matthew Marks; Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers; Galerie Eva Presenhuber; Glenstone; Collection Ringier; Alfred Richterich; Per Skarstedt; Walter A. Bechtler Foundation, Switzerland; Thomas Ammann Fine Art AG, Zürich; Ulla Dreyfus-Best; Hauser & Wirth; Gigi and Andrea Kracht; Arend and Brigitte Oetker; and Sylvie Winckler.

Funding is also generously provided by ART MENTOR FOUNDATION LUCERNE, the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, and New York State Council on the Arts.

Exhibition Tour
Following its New York presentation, Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better travels to Museo Jumex in Mexico City, where it is on view from June 9 through September 11, 2016.

Exhibition Catalogue
Peter Fischli David Weiss: How to Work Better is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue authored by Nancy Spector and Nat Trotman, with contributions by Ann Goldstein, Isabelle Graw, John Kelsey, and Anne Wheeler. 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. The catalogue is copublished with DelMonico Books, an imprint of Prestel Publishing. A hardcover edition priced at $75 will be available at the museum store and online at guggenheimstore.org.
Education and Public Programs

Find details about the public programs presented in conjunction with Peter Fischli and David Weiss: How to Work Better at guggenheim.org/publicprograms. Highlights include the following:

Artist Talk
Sunday, February 7, 4 pm
Peter Fischli in Conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist
As part of the Elaine Terner Cooper Education Fund Conversations with Contemporary Artists series, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes, Serpentine Gallery, London, joins Peter Fischli to discuss his 33-year collaboration with the late David Weiss. $15, $10 members, $5 students. Tickets will be available at guggenheim.org/calendar.

Multidisciplinary Program
It Takes Two
Wednesday, April 23, 9 pm–4 am
Why do creative minds gravitate toward one another? What is the unique result of creating in pairs? Why is the trope of the comic-tragic duo so prevalent in film and literature? In this extended program, the Guggenheim invites a wide range of speakers and performers from a variety of fields to address these questions on the occasion of Peter Fischli and David Weiss’s retrospective. The program is organized by exhibition curators Nancy Spector and Nat Trotman, with Ben Vershbow, Director, NYPL Labs. Ticket information and lineup will be announced in April.

Film Screenings
The Least Resistance (1980–81) and The Right Way (1983)
Fridays–Wednesdays, February 5–April 27
11 am, 12:30 pm, 2 pm, and 3:30 pm
Two films by Peter Fischli and David Weiss follow Rat and Bear, the artists’ iconic alter egos, as they set out to strike it rich in the Los Angeles art world (The Least Resistance, 1980–81, 29 min.) and wander through a bucolic mountainside landscape (The Right Way, 1983, 55 min.). Free with museum admission.

Curator’s Eye Tours
Free with museum admission.

Friday, February 12, 12 pm
Curator’s Eye Tour with Nancy Spector, Jennifer and David Stockman Chief Curator and Deputy Director

Friday, March 25, 12 pm
Curator’s Eye Tour with Nat Trotman, Curator, Performance and Media
This tour will be interpreted in American Sign Language.
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 Biennal (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 Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The Guggenheim network that began in the 1970s when the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, was joined by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, has since expanded to include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (opened 1997), and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (currently in development). The Guggenheim Foundation continues to forge international collaborations that celebrate contemporary art, architecture, and design within and beyond the walls of the museum, including the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative and The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative. More information about the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation can be found at guggenheim.org.

VISITOR INFORMATION
Admission: Adults $25, students/seniors (65+) $18, members and children under 12 free. The Guggenheim’s free app, available with admission or by download to personal devices, offers an enhanced visitor experience. The app features content on special exhibitions as well as access to more than 1,500 works in the Guggenheim’s permanent collection. Additionally, information about the museum’s landmark building is available in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Verbal Description guides for select exhibitions are also included for visitors who are blind or have low vision. The Guggenheim app is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Museum Hours: Sun–Wed, 10 am–5:45 pm; Fri, 10 am–5:45 pm; Sat, 10 am–7:45 pm; closed Thurs. On Saturdays, beginning at 5:45 pm, the museum hosts Pay What You Wish. For general information, call 212 423 3500 or visit the museum online at: guggenheim.org
guggenheim.org/social
#FischliWeiss

For publicity images, visit guggenheim.org/pressimages
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