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**ART INSTITUTE PRESENTS WORKS BY CELEBRATED
SWISS CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS
First Major Exhibition of the Duo's Works in Chicago in More than 20 Years**

Questions, The Sausage Photographs, and A Quiet Afternoon

On View February 3–April 17, 2011

Lauded for their unmistakable wit and elevation of quotidian subjects, Swiss artists **Peter Fischli and David Weiss** have collaborated since 1979 in an exploration of the “poetics of banality”—the actions and objects of everyday life. The pair has worked in a range of media—including photography, video art, slide projection, film, books, sculptures, and mixed-media installations—and in 2006 received one of



Europe's most coveted art awards, the Roswitha Haftmann Prize. The Art Institute of Chicago has now organized the first presentation of Fischli and Weiss's works in Chicago in more than two decades by bringing together three key pieces from the duo's extensive portfolio: the 15-channel slide installation, **Questions** (1981/2002–03), and two photography series, **The Sausage Photographs** (1979) and **A Quiet Afternoon** (1984–86), totaling 92 images. On view in the **Modern Wing's Bucksbaum Gallery (G188) and Stone Gallery (G186)** from **February 3 to April 17, 2011**, these three works represent early iconic investigations that encompass the major themes—humor, playfulness, and an interest in language and everyday objects—that have come to define Fischli and Weiss's career.

Influenced by Dada, Surrealism, Pop, and Conceptual art, Fischli and Weiss's prolific production defies easy categorization. Though their art often involves a dialogue between opposites, such as order and chaos, work and leisure, or the everyday and the sublime, a fresh, childlike spirit of discovery forms a common denominator to their work. Fischli and Weiss revel in transforming materials and leading audiences to new perspectives on familiar objects and surroundings. Working project by project, the two have broken with artistic convention, made use of commonplace materials, and created an extensive archive of popular images, all with characteristic humor and an active avoidance of pretentiousness and affectation.

The Art Institute's presentation of Fischli and Weiss's works includes the 2003 Venice Biennale Golden Lion prize-winning *Questions*—an installation of more than 1,000 photographic slides of handwritten questions. Each set of projected questions slowly dissolves into the next, ranging from the profound to the trivial. "Can I restore my innocence?" and "Why does the earth turn around once a day?" mingle with "Does a hidden tunnel lead directly to the kitchen?" and "Does a ghost drive my car around at night?"—reflecting and mimicking the wonder and banality of everyday thought processes.

Included in this exhibition are also two early photographic projects: *The Sausage Photographs* and *A Quiet Afternoon*. Fischli and Weiss's first collaborative project, *The Sausage Photographs* from 1979 exemplifies their inventive and humorous use of everyday materials to create a compelling fictional world. Each photograph documents a dramatic scene composed using sausages, various cold meats, and common household goods. Reminiscent of a children's game, with its unbounded capacity for make-believe, the artists transform crumpled bedding into an Alpine landscape and slices of luncheon meat into patterned carpets. In *The Accident*, two sausage cars have collided in a narrow street lined with cardboard buildings while gawkers, in the form of cigarette butts, stare at the wreckage. The scene is extremely convincing, despite being made from such bizarre materials.

The later series, *A Quiet Afternoon*, showcases precariously balanced sculptures at what appears to be the exact moment before their collapse. This larger body of work features everyday items such as vegetables, kitchen utensils, tires, chairs, and tools piled in elaborate configurations that—for an instant, at least—appear stable. Some of these gravity-defying poses evoke amazement, while others provide a laugh. "We discovered that we could leave all formal decisions to equilibrium itself," Fischli has said of these sculptures. "There was apparently no way to do it 'better' or 'worse,' just 'correctly.'"

Peter Fischli David Weiss: Questions, The Sausage Photographs, and A Quiet Afternoon is organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and jointly curated by Lisa Dorin, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, and Matthew Witkovsky, Chair and Curator of Photography. This exhibition is generously supported by the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Maureen and Edward Byron Smith, Jr. Family Endowment for Exhibitions. Major financial assistance is provided by the Exhibitions Trust: Kenneth and Anne Griffin, Thomas and Margot Pritzker, the Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation, Donna and Howard Stone, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Sullivan, and an anonymous donor.

IMAGE: Fischli and Weiss. *In the carpetshop* from *The Sausage Photographs*, 1979. © Peter Fischli and David Weiss / Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.

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