

David Weiss  
*Wandlungen*  
08.11.2023–27.01.2024

List of Works:



Oskar Weiss and Oliver Falk are pleased to announce *Wandlungen*, the second exhibition at the gallery focusing on the late Swiss artist David Weiss's early work. The exhibition presents thirty-two of the artist's *Wandlungen* [*Metamorphoses*] made between 1975 and 1978. For the first time, the gallery mounts a single exhibition throughout both venues in Zürich and Basel — two cities which were eminently formative for the artist.

Weiss grew up as the son of a parish priest and a teacher in Zürich. After discovering a passion for jazz at age 16, he enrolled in a foundation course at the Kunstgewerbeschule, Zürich, where he befriended fellow artist Urs Lüthi. Having rejected careers as a decorator, a graphic designer, and a photographer, Weiss soon came to view a career as an artist as a realistic prospect while studying at the Kunstgewerbeschule from 1963–64 and the following year at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Basel, and subsequently working as a sculptor for Alfred Gruder (Basel) and Jaqueline Stieger (Yorkshire, England). In 1967, he traveled to New York for the first time, where he familiarized himself with the important minimalist art of the time.

Early in his career, Weiss explored a range of visual idioms in his drawings with the same playful curiosity that later infused his collaborative work with Peter Fischli. The *Wandlungen* [*Metamorphoses*] are drawings in black or blue ink on multiple sheets of standard letter-size paper. Each image organically generates the next, resulting in a series of complex visual associations that anticipate Fischli Weiss's celebrated film *The Way Things Go*, 1987. By 1978, he had produced 84 series, covering over 400 sheets of paper. The series vary from one to 52 pages in length.

David's close friend Iwan Schumacher recalls: «The first series of *Wandlungen* dates from 1975 when, deeply upset because his girlfriend Carmen has started seeing Guy Barrier, a Zürich 'revolutionary,' David goes abroad. His travels take him via Yorkshire in England to Morocco, where he spends quite some time in Marrakesh. Without knowing in advance what he wants to draw, he begins each time at the upper left-hand corner of the sheet of paper, for example with a scribble, a dart, or a cube. The cube turns into a matchbox with a picture of a lion on it and a small deer inside it, which turns into a bone. The bone turns into a little man who pushes with all his might against the sides of the matchbox until the box collapses. The little man gets scared and, flat on his stomach, looks down over the edge of the cardboard base. The series of images ends with an ear of corn in which every grain has a face with a long nose. Pictures of those faces continue over several pages—each page showing between six and eight single drawings—until a new series begins.»<sup>1</sup>

David Weiss's early work was shown in numerous solo exhibitions in the 1970s and 80s in Zürich, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Cologne, and was part of significant group exhibitions at the time such as *The Desert is Across the Street*, Galerie Stähli, Zürich and de Appel, Amsterdam, 1975; *Mentalität: Zeichnung*, Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1976; *Saus und Braus*, Städtische Galerie Strauhof, 1980; and *Bilder*, Kunstmuseum Winterthur, 1981. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Taro Nasu Gallery, Tokyo, 2023; Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 2019 and 2022; Weiss Falk, Basel, 2021; Swiss Institute, New York, 2014; and Bündner Kunstmuseum, Chur, 2014.

Weiss collaborated with Peter Fischli from 1979 until his death in 2012. Together, they have taken part in many international biennials, including the Venice Biennale 2013, 2003, and 1988; the Venice Architecture Biennale, 2012; and the Gwangju Biennale, South Korea, 2010. Retrospectives have been held at Tate Modern, London, 2006; Kunsthaus Zürich, 2007; Deichtorhallen Hamburg, 2008; Salomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2016; and Museo Jumex, Mexico City, 2016. In 2003, they were awarded the Golden Lion at the 50th Venice Biennale for *Fragenprojektion* (*Questions*).

<sup>1</sup>Weiss, David. *Werke 1968-1979* (Chur: Bündner Kunstmuseum, 2014). Ed.: Stephan Kunz.