

Press release, 27 November 2020

The Fondation Beyeler celebrates the arrival of *Snowman* by Fischli/Weiss in Berower Park by offering free admission for all this weekend



***Snowman*, a sculpture by Swiss artists Fischli/Weiss, has taken its place in the Fondation Beyeler's Berower Park for one year. It represents a friendly snowman standing in a glass-fronted refrigerator. The Fondation Beyeler celebrates its arrival with free admission to the museum for all on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November 2020.**

The sculpture *Snowman*, newly installed in Berower Park, shows the friendly and familiar figure of a snowman, consisting of three stacked snowballs, the top and smallest one displaying two holes for eyes and a dash for a mouth. It stands in a refrigerator with transparent front, allowing it to exist throughout the year.

Snowman illustrates the contradiction between nature and artificiality, displaying the penchant for the absurd typical of the work of Fischli/Weiss. Even though, as Peter Fischli points out, a snowman is "a sculpture almost anyone can produce" by simply forming and stacking three snowballs, for its year-round survival Fischli/Weiss' sculpture relies on a technically complex device. The current context is different from the one the snowman in the fridge was originally conceived in. The image of complete energy dependency, so endearingly embodied by *Snowman*, acquires a new, poignant and terrifying dimension in view of the climate crisis.

Peter Fischli (*1952) and David Weiss (1946-2012) originally developed the work in 1989/90 for a public space exhibition in Saarbrücken. In response to the site they had been allocated near a newly commissioned thermal power station, they decided to come up with something dependent on the power

plant's energy. The snowman was thus imagined using the power station's residual energy, which – in an inversion typical of Fischli/Weiss – was converted to cold. The execution did not fully meet the artists' expectations, but the wish remained to turn the idea into a work.

A rough design was created at the invitation of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in the late 1990s, yet it was not executed. Finally, the sculpture *Snowman* was realised in 2016. It travelled to the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, to the terrace of the Art Institute in Chicago, and further onward.

The *Snowman* now on view at the Fondation Beyeler (one of four) is the only one in Europe and in Switzerland, and the first one operated by solar power. *Snowman* is the most recent work to join the Fondation Beyeler's collection.

The collaboration between Swiss artists Peter Fischli (*1952) and David Weiss (1946–2012) lasted more than three decades. Their works, executed in a wide range of media, display a pronounced sense of humour, a love of poetry and a fascination with the everyday. In 2016, Fischli/Weiss were represented at the Fondation Beyeler in the exhibition «Alexander Calder & Fischli/Weiss».

Press images are available under www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/media/press-images

Image: Fischli/Weiss, *Snowman*, 2016, copper, aluminium, glass, water, cooling system, 218 x 128 x 165 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel; Photo: Pati Grabowicz

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Fondation Beyeler opening hours: 10am to 6pm daily, Wednesday 10am to 8pm