

If Everything Is Sculpture Why Make Sculpture?

Artist's Choice: Peter Fischli

Initiated in 1989, MoMA's Artist's Choice series invites contemporary artists to organize exhibitions of works drawn from the Museum's collection. Peter Fischli is the thirteenth artist to participate, and the first to stage a presentation in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. Here, Fischli borrows a question inscribed on a painting by Ben Vautier that hangs just outside the Agnes Gund Garden Lobby: "If everything is sculpture why make sculpture?" Through a selection of nearly twenty outdoor sculptures, Fischli invites viewers to contemplate this question.

The point of departure for this exhibition is *Snowman* (2016), a sculpture composed of an actual snowman encased in a glass-door freezer. It is an updated version of a 1987 site-specific work by Fischli and his longtime collaborator, David Weiss, that was commissioned by a German thermic power plant whose energy—in the form of heat, paradoxically—was used to keep the snowman perpetually frozen. A snowman is, as Fischli observes, a "sculpture that almost anyone can make," simply by rolling three spheres of snow and setting them atop one another. Fischli and Weiss's *Snowman*, however, depends on a technically complex apparatus to ensure the cold climate necessary for the snowman inside it to subsist year-round. Over the

course of more than three decades of collaboration, Fischli and Weiss explored and exploited contradictions such as this one and investigated the potential of ordinary objects and situations.

In this exhibition Fischli makes several interventions that prompt us to think about how we understand and relate to objects we encounter and the contexts in which we encounter them. In addition to the installation of *Snowman*, he juxtaposes works of vastly varying scale, hangs a painting in the open air, conspicuously removes one in a series of sculptures, erects an interior gallery wall outdoors, and makes other maneuvers that call attention to details that we might otherwise take for granted in MoMA's Sculpture Garden. Within this storied setting, *Snowman* and its companions—artworks that span the last century, by artists from Henri Matisse and Aristide Maillol to Tony Smith and Katharina Fritsch—testify to the expansive possibilities for sculpture today, and to the role of museums in nurturing and preserving their collections.

Organized by Peter Fischli and Cara Manes, Assistant Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture

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