



From top, clockwise:  
**Peter Fischli, David Weiss**  
*"How to Work Better,"*  
 installation view at Solomon  
 R. Guggenheim Museum,  
 New York (2016)  
 Courtesy of the Artist and  
 Solomon R. Guggenheim  
 Foundation  
 Photography by David Heald

**Olivia Erlanger**  
 Raft for Lotophag (2016)  
 Courtesy of the Artist and  
 What Pipeline, Detroit

**Adam McEwen**  
 Staircase (2016)  
 Courtesy of the Artist  
 and Petzel, New York

## Fischli and Weiss

The Guggenheim / New York

For their retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Fischli & Weiss have managed something truly amazing: they've made the venue feel like an actual art museum. Generally, exhibitions there have to take a stance, either battling or submitting to the building itself. For their part, Fischli & Weiss simply take advantage of the building's oddly linear exhibition space, treating it like the inclined plane from *The Way Things Go* (1987), letting the everyday mechanics of gravity impel viewers through the overview, a scaled-up version of one of their own numerous attempts to organize and catalogue the world around them.

Fischli & Weiss short-circuit the ascendant metric by which the museum gauges public engagement: the work presented is either too small to be seen from the lobby or looks like it might be merely construction materials and gallery detritus (*Polyurethane Objects*) — there's nothing to take a selfie with. Shutting out the experience economy from a contemporary museum exhibition calmly points out the kind of noisome hassle major exhibitions have become. It feels like an antidote to the spectacular displays of, say, Carsten Höller, Philippe Parreno or Olafur Eliasson.

The duo's work is uniquely persuasive when viewed as a career-spanning retrospective. From their second project onwards, the collaboration has been about figuring out exactly how they will spin the tale of their collaboration when finally asked. Projects like *Suddenly This Overview* (1981), *The Least Resistance* (1981) and *Visible World* (1997) evince not only their concern for the way history (art, social, natural and otherwise) constructs itself, but also a comic hubris wherein they imagined themselves in a central role.

The tragic underpinning of all this is that, after rehearsing this retrospective impulse countless times over the last thirty years, the untimely death of David Weiss in 2013 has drawn a line under the duo's production: nothing but retrospectives from now on.

by Steve Kado

## Adam McEwen

Petzel / New York

There's a deliberately yawning gulf between the title and the announcement image for Adam McEwen's exhibition at Petzel. The press release for "Harvest" is illustrated with Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners* (1857), which depicts women gathering stray grains of wheat. By contrast, McEwen's exhibition is austere and technical, opening with *TSA* (2016), a set of airport security trays, modeled on those used at Heathrow airport, rendered in graphite. The presence of a watchful security guard/invigilator at Petzel reminded me that people probably want to touch these graphite objects to see if they leave a gray smear on a finger. Yet what these objects represent is a kind of cleansing or inspection: the quasi-religious purification that occurs as one passes through a body scanner and is examined by nonhuman eyes.

Blocked sightlines are perpetuated throughout McEwen's exhibition. Two more graphite sculptures replicate the current manifestation of IBM's Blue Gene supercomputer, which appear almost Judd-like, yet read as more anonymous than graceful due to latches, hinges and vents. The idea of "harvesting" here appears to refer to the enormous wealth of data that such computers are able to read and process — data impossible for human eyes to pick through or make sense of. A series of printed images on kitchen sponge fabric depict the four tunnels that lead in and out of Manhattan. Unlike the airport trays, in none of these works can I fathom any particular sense or effect in the choice of material, though thematically the blindness of the images and objects build on the exhibition's theme. Lastly is an enormous wooden letter *K*, nearly six meters high, which McEwen has fabricated to create two interconnected sets of steps that lead to a viewing platform. From below, the isolated letter appears somehow arbitrary, save for a light Kafka association. Kafka did, however, remain with me as I ascended this vertiginously rickety architecture, having signed a release form. Lightly terrified, I persisted on my journey to nowhere, having set off on a certain course, somewhat blindly.

by Laura McLean-Ferris

## Olivia Erlanger

What Pipeline / Detroit

"The Oily Actor," a body of work by Olivia Erlanger presented at What Pipeline, manages to compress an ecosystem of information and association into a few extremely complex objects, referred to as "rafts." In addition to a sound piece and floor installation, the show includes three of these wall-hanging fabricated steel frames that provide housing for different fields of materials. Aesthetically, they demonstrate an evolution of Erlanger's approach to presenting objects and materials in highly compartmentalized scaffoldings.

Erlanger's work contains many references, from the experimental sci-fi of Mark von Schlegell to Timothy Morton's writings on "hyperobjects" — things so large and viscous that we can only consider them as an abstract concept. The two major hyperobjects that inform the artist's work here are the ecological crisis and the global financial crisis; at twenty-six, Erlanger came of age in the current state of systemic exigency. The inextricable influence of the housing crisis is represented by a sound piece, *I am No Viper, Yet I Feed* (2016). This work utilizes live data points from the real-estate valuation website Zillow to augment a twelve-song playlist, creating a distorted soundscape that builds throughout the exhibit.

"The idea of these [hyper]objects seeping over everything, an invisible kind of viscosity that is actually a system through which we have to navigate — that was very important," says Erlanger. Her rafts are the ideal psychological vehicles for negotiation of this system, resembling floating foundations or wireframe mechanicals. These structures are packed with trade materials and strains of pollen, which speaks to trading and economy as a wider function of nature, rather than a human invention.

I lay down — an impulse facilitated by Erlanger's decision to pad the floor with a layer of cardboard panels. I imagine myself floating on a sea of crisis, oily tongues of seawater lapping at my vessel, the familiar strains of cultural excess becoming an alien shanty.

by Sarah Rose Sharp