

Modern Painters

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**PETER FISCHLI AND
DAVID WEISS**

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

Ever since Bruce Nauman's mid-1960s videos celebrating messing around in the studio, studio play has developed into a thriving genre. Enter Peter Fischli and David Weiss, who similarly used the miscellany of their studio in "Equilibres," a series of 82 photographs taken between 1984 and 1987. Composed almost entirely of everyday objects in various states of improbable balance, the works cleverly animate and make good use of the random stuff that pack rats pile up.

Also on view was the debut screening in the US of the film *Making Things Go* (1987), a behind-the-scenes look at the nonsensical kinetic tinkering that went into the creation of the Swiss duo's masterpiece, *The Way Things Go*. In the latter of the two films (which was not on view), an extended chain reaction occurs between staged objects, resulting from a single absurdist gesture. *Making Things Go* is another carefully orchestrated domino effect done with low-budget resourcefulness. Witness, for example, the artists' painstaking engineering of a makeshift vehicle from tin cans and wooden dowels, all so they could nudge it merely an inch or two in order to bump a tire down a slanted two-by-four. In the still photographs and both films, Fischli and Weiss animate the mundane and charge the familiar with estranging potential, showing how objects are not only acrobatic circus performers, but also more serious actors



FISCHLI AND WEISS, *ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE*, 1984-86. G-PRINT, 11 7/8 X 15 7/8 IN. COURTESY MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY, NEW YORK. © PETER FISCHLI/DAVID WEISS.

in a drama of tranquillity, hesitation, outburst, and stasis. Once presented with photographs of a cucumber in a chance encounter with a patent leather pump, or a wine bottle cantilevered off a severely arched handsaw, you'll never look at the stuff lying around your house innocently again. —EVA DIAZ