

KW

**Trix & Robert
Haussmann**

10 February – 29 April 18

Trix and Robert Haussmann
The Log-O-Rithmic Slide Rule: A Retrospective
10 February – 29 April 18
Opening: 9 February 18, 7 pm

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is pleased to present the first major survey of the work of Trix and Robert Haussmann, showcasing an array of projects that span over half a century of production and research.

The architect and designer duo Trix (born 1933 in Chur, CH) and Robert Haussmann (born 1931 in Zurich, CH) can be counted among the most important Swiss architects of the twentieth century. Their multifaceted practice ranges from architecture to product design, furniture, and textiles—each of which make use of creative plays on form, function, and language. They have realized about 650 projects in their lifetime including the legendary *Da Capo Bar* and *Shopville* in Zurich's main railway station, the *Boutique Weinberg*, the famous *Kronenhalle Bar*, and numerous successful experiments in artistic and handcrafted furniture. Since founding their "Allgemeine Entwurfsanstalt" (General Design Institute) in 1967, Trix and Robert Haussmann were amongst the first to break with the premises of modern canonical orders and concepts, playfully reinterpreting the linguistic dogmas of architecture theories.

Evading the dictum "form follows function", their designs pursue a *manierismo critico* (a critical Mannerism), letting them merge old and new, generate dissent, and work with ambiguity, contradiction, and chance. Their dedicated and thoughtful challenging of



Trix & Robert Haussmann, *Da Capo Bar* at main station Zurich, 1979–80, photo: Alfred Hablützel, Courtesy Trix & Robert Haussmann



S-Bahn Hof Museumsstraße, main hall and passages, main station Zurich, photo: Nick Brändli, Courtesy Trix & Robert Haussmann

aesthetic conventions was ahead of its time and provides an important contribution to contemporary discourse on art and architecture.

The exhibition occupies the first and second floor of KW. It showcases key highlights from their personal archive, works from the collection of the Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich, works from the estate by Peter Röhliberger, and actual interior design compartments. Early collaborative pieces from 1967 are presented on the first floor—the same year that Trix and Robert Haussmann founded the office that would later be called "Allgemeine Entwurfsanstalt Zürich". In the intervention *Chair Fun*, an exhibition initiated by the Swiss Werkbund, they pursued the principles of functionalism *ad absurdum*. For the exhibition—a variety of stool-objects made by a diverse array of artists and designers—they designed a luminous "Anti-Chair" made of neon lights, which threatens to collapse with the addition of the slightest weight.

In the following years, they developed numerous interior designs reflecting their unique flair, informed by citations from architecture history and the use of illusionist techniques. These techniques were consolidated in their 1981 exhibition *Trix and Robert Haussmann: Manierismo critico* at Studio Marconi in Milan, where they presented their concept of critical Mannerism, directed against architecture's stiff

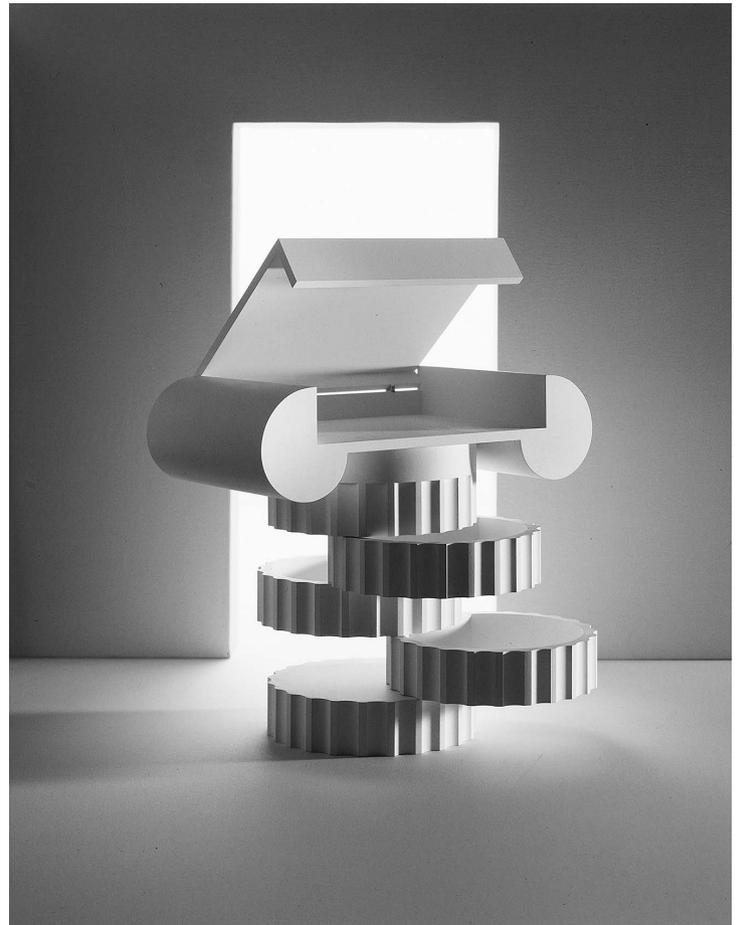
classicism. To that end, Trix and Robert Haussmann designed a series of so-called *Lehrstücke* (Didactics), of which a selection is presented on the second floor at KW. These *Lehrstücke* convey Haussmann's architectural doctrines in the form of a subversive manifesto. With the evocative title *Lehrstück II: Störung der Form durch die Funktion (Didactic II: The Function's Disturbance of the Form)* the stump of a classical column becomes a functional shelf. *Lehrstück VII: Ironisch-kritisches Objekt zum Begriff Multifunktion (Didactic VII: Ironic-critical Object on the Notion of Multifunction)* is at once a stool and a guitar.

To combat the conformist impoverishment of expression in their time, the duo developed an experimental design instrument called *The Log-O-Rithmic Slide Rule*, first shown as part of the exhibition at Studio Marconi in 1980. Like a slide-ruler, this "concept-slider" makes use of the combinatorial potential of moving two scales against one another. In Trix and Robert Haussmann's adaptation of the instrument, however, words—predominately adjectives used in architectural discourse—replace numerals, which, through endless combinations, produce imaginative architectures, languages, and images. The Oulipo-inspired concept-slider was intended to expand on prevailing notions of stylistic diversity with the use of randomly combined pairs of words.

For Trix and Robert Haussmann, conceptual works are always tools in the design process for concrete projects. Therefore, in addition to architectural designs and models, the exhibition also presents realized projects like the arcades of *Boutique Weinberg*, sculptural objects that find themselves between art and design, as well as mirror-objects, like the *Knopfspiegel* (1987), that confound one's perception of the exhibition space through illusionistic distortions.

Throughout the exhibition, interventions by designer Inside Outside / Petra Blaisse and artists Liam Gillick and Karl Holmqvist seek to respond to the Haussmanns' oeuvre. Blaisse presents her golden drapery *Jubilee in Gold* (2017), which structures the room as exhibition architecture, taking up the Haussmanns' mannerist strategy of alienation with its opulent design. As an artistic application of *The Log-O-Rithmic Slide Rule*, Karl Holmqvist presents the work *Untitled (A LOG-O-RITHMIC SLIDE RULE EXERCISE...)* (2012) as wallpaper spanning both floors, which reflects on the erotic potential of the subversive recombination in Trix and Robert Haussmann's work.

In reference to Robert Haussmann's illustrated short story, *The Liberation of the Stool*, Liam Gillick describes a stool that is depressed because it would rather be a table. The stool succumbs to societal constraints until it decides to "transform" with the help of a design therapist. The story concludes with a romantic "orgy" between different pieces of furniture.



Ionic column stump, *Lehrstück V: Function Follows Form*, 1978, model, Zabrowsky Modellbau, Dumeng Raffainer, photo: Fred Waldvogel, Courtesy Trix & Robert Haussmann

Public program

Walk-through with the curators Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen

10 February 18, 2 pm

Starting point at the counter desk

ARCH+ features 70: Trix & Robert Haussmann – Störung der Form durch die Funktion

10 February 18, 4 pm

Studio, 1st floor, front building

On the occasion of *ARCH+ features 70*, Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen talk to the curator Oliver Elser and architect and author Ola Plämke about the work of Trix & Robert Haussmann.

The Berlin Sessions: Claudia Skoda on art and fashion in West Berlin

28 February 18, 7 pm

Berlinische Galerie, Eberhard-Roters-Saal,

Alte Jakobstraße 124–128, 10969 Berlin

For *The Berlin Sessions*, Claudia Skoda talks about her work as a designer, the interfaces to fine arts and her life in Berlin during the German (pre-) reunification time.

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Opening Hours

Wednesday–Monday 11 am–7 pm

Thursday 11 am–9 pm

Closed on Tuesday

Admission

8 €, reduced 6 €

Annual Ticket – KW Lover* 35 €, reduced 25 €

Combined Day Ticket KW / me Collectors Room Berlin

10 €, reduced 8 €

Admission free on Thursday evening from 6–9 pm

Guided Tours

KW offers free guided tours through the exhibitions during regular opening hours. For further information on tours for large groups (over 10 people), please contact Katja Zeidler at kaz@kw-berlin.de or +49 30 243459-41.

The Liberation of the Stool

A Reading by Liam Gillick

29 April 18, 4 pm

KW courtyard

Colophon

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gta Exhibitions, ETH Zurich

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