

**MASI Lugano**

Museo d'arte  
della Svizzera italiana,  
Lugano

Via Canova 10  
CH – 6900 Lugano

comunicazione@masilugano.ch  
+41 (0)58 866 42 40  
www.masilugano.ch

# David Weiss

## The Dream of Casa Aprile

### Carona 1968 - 1978

28 september 2025 – 1 february 2026

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano

Curated by Tobia Bezzola and Virginia Marano, in collaboration with The Estate of David Weiss

PRESS RELEASE

Lugano, 27 August 2025

MASI Lugano presents "David Weiss. Il sogno di Casa Aprile. Carona 1968-1978". For the first time, the exhibition, which presents more than two hundred rarely exhibited works from public and private archives, traces the history of the artistic community that came into being in Casa Aprile in Carona: a charmed setting in which the young David Weiss – future half of the famed duo Fischli / Weiss – experienced art as an everyday practice, shared dream and act of community.

Carona, a small village in the Canton of Ticino between Lake Lugano and Monte San Salvatore, had been attracting and offering hospitality to artists, writers and politically engaged figures since the early twentieth century. In the late sixties and early seventies, Casa Aprile - which was bought by Meret Oppenheim and her brother Burkhard Wenger (née Oppenheim), and then entrusted to her nephew Christoph Wenger - became the setting for a series of significant international artistic encounters, out of which deep-seated connections formed.

One of the artists involved in this vibrant scene was **David Weiss** (Zurich, 1946–2012). Weiss spent his time as a guest in Casa Aprile drawing, recording and observing. Around him, the animated community that formed included like-minded figures such as **Esther Altorfer, Anton Bruhin, Maria Gregor, Matthyas Jenny, Urs Lüthi, Penelope Margaret Macworth-Praed, Iwan Schumacher, Peter Schweri** and **Willy Spiller**. The exhibition in MASI evokes the carefree, irreverent, community spirit of this collective workshop, in a rich selection of documentary materials, albums, books, letters, photographs, sound recordings, diaries and drawings by the artists invited to stay in Casa Aprile. It also takes a fresh look at the early visual art of David Weiss. The drawings and sketches he produced in that period exhibit early signs of the surreal humour, psychedelic lines and poetic vision of everyday life that went on to characterise his later work as part of the renowned duo Fischli/ Weiss.

*"Carona was not a school or a movement,"* observes Tobia Bezzola, Director of MASI Lugano, *"but a fleeting constellation of creative lives, people who shared a desire to explore new approaches to art*

*and life. For Weiss, it was a time of silent growth, observation, drawing and dreaming, which now affords us a glimpse of the lost paradise lauded by Meret Oppenheim in 1967."*

## The exhibition

Though rooted in that specific setting, the art produced in Carona challenges the dividing line between centre and margins, urban landscape and natural idyll, solemnity and playfulness, solitude and community. Starting from this standpoint, the exhibition in MASI opens by exploring the cultural milieu that characterised this particular period of history in Carona: the people who spent time there, and the family ties and ongoing connections that formed in the Ticino village involved a number of illustrious figures, including Hermann Hesse, who described the landscape in his texts and watercolours, as a setting for reflection and healing.

The exhibition also includes a priceless series of drawings and paintings by the famous Swiss artist Meret Oppenheim, who, together with her brother Burkhard Wenger, bought Casa Aprile in 1969. These works illustrate the point of encounter between the historical village of Carona and the experimental artistic community that gathered there.

The exhibition goes on to document the early urban experiments of David Weiss and his arrival at Casa Aprile, when its collective creative microcosm was coming into being. At this period in his life his work was dominated by drawing and poetic reflections on the landscape as a space of memory, imagination and everyday life.

From 1968 onwards, Weiss often left Zurich to spend long periods in the Ticino village. Yet the city did not disappear from his creative imagination, merely retreating into the background, like an echo. In his works and those of his contemporaries — Anton Bruhin, Peter Schweri, Iwan Schumacher and Willy Spiller — artificial lights, recorded sounds and architectural details resurface: fragments of city life transported into the peace and quiet of Carona, where they were reworked with a different eye.

Weiss's practice of this period already exhibited the surreal humour, and fragmentary, poetic narration that went on to inform the transformative spirit of his partnership with Peter Fischli. The works on display in MASI include the original drawings for the famous artist's book *up and down town*, also known as "Regenbüchlein" (Little Rain Book). It is part of the *Wandlungen* (Metamorphoses) series, a collection of graphic metamorphoses and free associations he developed from 1975, in Marrakech, Carona and Zurich. In these drawings, the uninterrupted flow of images, a chain of uncontrolled causes and effects, recalls the narrative structure of the famous children's book *Joggeli soll ga Birli schüttle!* (Joggeli should go shake the pear tree!) by Lisa Wenger (1908), which is also on show.

Also featured in the exhibition is *Lazy Days* (1974), a collaborative project between Weiss and the artist Urs Lüthi; Willy Spiller's photographs, and the recording of the sounds of Carona entitled *Carona Soundscape 18.3.76*, by Anton Bruhin. Along with drawing, independent publishing was another activity that characterised the practices of community-building and anti-conformism embraced in Carona, and the show features several issues of the magazine/autobiography *Nachtmaschine* (Night machine) by Matthyas Jenny, printed in Carona between 1976 and 1978. An energy akin to Jenny's versatile spirit can also be seen in the work of David Weiss, whose drawings were not just on art paper, but also inhabited jotters, *heftli* (booklets) and comix.

*"Drawing, in conjunction with publishing, thus became a daily practice for Weiss, an intimate, personal act and a space of freedom, capable of generating forms, stories and associations not hindered by any established framework. In Carona, this approach found fertile ground: a community in which drawing, printing, photocopying and storytelling were not separate actions, but gestures characterising a collective, poetic lifestyle",* highlights Virginia Marano, co-curator of the exhibition.

## Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue published by Edition Patrick Frey in two versions (Italian/German and Italian/English). The publication presents critical essays by Bice Curiger, Stephan Kunz, Andreas Schwab, Stefan Zweifel and Virginia Marano, and a foreword by Tobia Bezzola, as well as archive materials that explore the legacy of Casa Aprile and the contemporary resonance of the "Carona period" in the work of David Weiss.

## The artist

David Weiss (Zurich, 1946 – Zurich, 2012) was one of the most significant Swiss artists of his generation. The son of a Protestant pastor and a teacher, he grew up in Zurich. A teenage passion for jazz led to his interest in art. At the age of sixteen he enrolled at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts) in Zurich, where he met Urs Lüthi. He then continued his studies at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Basel. He worked as an assistant to the sculptors Alfred Gruber (Basel) and Jacqueline Stieger (Yorkshire, England). In 1967 he moved to New York temporarily, where he came into contact with American minimalist and conceptual art.

Weiss arrived in Carona in the late sixties, and thanks to his friendship with Meret Oppenheim's nephew Christoph Wenger, he was able to stay at Casa Aprile in exchange for renovation work. In the seventies, Weiss developed his own independent artistic practice that ranged from drawing to visual narration, marked by an ironic, irreverent approach, and open to the unexpected. His works from this period were exhibited in numerous shows in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands.

In 1979 he joined up with Peter Fischli, forming the duo Fischli/Weiss, known for exploring the limits of everyday life, the absurd and the comic, through film, photography, installations and sculpture. The pair took part in major international exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale (1995, 2003, 2013), and retrospectives at Tate, London (2006), and the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2016). In recent years, Weiss's independent work has received increasing critical attention, with solo exhibitions staged by the Swiss Institute in New York (2014), the Bündner Kunstmuseum in Chur (2014), Weiss Falk in Basel (2021), the Matthew Marks Gallery in New York (2019, 2022) and the Taro Nasu Gallery in Tokyo (2023).

## Featured artists:

Esther Altorfer  
Cuno Amiet  
Maria Braun  
Anton Bruhin  
Theo Glinz  
Maria Gregor  
Hermann Hesse  
Karl Hofer  
Matthias Jenny  
Roberto Lupo  
Urs Lüthi  
Penelope Margaret Mackworth-Praed  
Meret Oppenheim  
Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti  
Iwan Schumacher  
Peter Schweri  
Willy Spiller  
Niklaus Stoecklin  
David Weiss  
Lisa Wenger-Ruutz

## **Press contacts**

MASI Lugano  
Press office  
+41 (0)58 866 42 40  
[comunicazione@masilugano.ch](mailto:comunicazione@masilugano.ch)

## **Exhibition venues**

**LAC**  
Piazza Bernardino Luini 6  
CH – 6900 Lugano

**Palazzo Reali**  
Via Canova 10  
CH – 6900 Lugano

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## Press Images

01.

Iwan Schumacher

*Carona, Edition II*

1977/2025

Inkjet print

Private collection

Courtesy Iwan Schumacher



02.

Meret Oppenheim

*Berge vor Agnuzzo (Tessin)*

*[Mountains opposite Agnuzzo (Ticino)]*

1937

Oil on cardboard

Private collection

© 2025, ProLitteris, Zurich



03.

Peter Schneri

*Untitled*

1972

China ink and watercolor on paper

Nachlass Peter Schneri / Stella Diess

© 2025, ProLitteris, Zurich



04.

Willy Spiller

*David Weiss in der Casa Aprile (David Weiss in Casa Aprile)*

1975

Photograph

Courtesy Willy Spiller



05.

Iwan Schumacher

*Carona, Edition II*

1977/2025

Inkjet print

Private collection

Courtesy Iwan Schumacher



06.

Hermann Hesse

*Carona, 28. Juli 1923 (Carona, 28 July 1923)*

1923

Ink on paper

Private collection





07.

Urs Lüthi

*Selbstportrait mit Landschaft (Self-  
portrait with landscape)*

1970

Black and white photograph on canvas

City of Zurich Art Collection



08.

Urs Lüthi & David Weiss

*Lazy Days*

1974/2018

Inkjet print on paper

Courtesy Galerie Oskar Weiss, The  
Estate of David Weiss and Courtesy Urs  
Lüthi



09.

Esther Altorfer

*Untitled*

1980 ca.

Mixed media on handmade paper

ART-Nachlassstiftung Bern,

Courtesy DuflonRacz Galerie

Photo Paola Caputo, Esther Altorfer

© 2025, ProLitteris, Zurich



10.

David Weiss

*Untitled*

1975

Ink on paper

Courtesy The Estate of David Weiss and  
Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich/Vienna



11.

David Weiss

*Micky's Cosmos*

1974

Watercolour and gouache on paper

Courtesy of Galerie Oskar Weiss and  
The Estate of David Weiss

