

In September, *Going Underground: The Jewels of Bernhard Schobinger* highlights the groundbreaking work of the Swiss avant-garde artist

Houston, Texas - June 29, 2026 – In September the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston will present *Going Underground: The Jewels of Bernhard Schobinger*, tracing the radical career of Swiss avant-garde artist Bernhard Schobinger, who has created some of the most distinctive, influential and pathbreaking jewelry of the past five decades. This is the first exhibition in the U.S. to examine Schobinger's groundbreaking work.

Going Underground will feature 53 pivotal pieces of experimental jewelry and select sculpture from 1968 to the present, with necklaces, bracelets, and rings drawn from prominent private collections and the holdings of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The installation will be on view on the second floor of the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building September 3, 2026 – January 3, 2027.

Commented Gary Tinterow, director and Margaret Alkek Williams chair of the MFAH, "Over the course of more than five decades, Bernhard Schobinger has articulated a singular and influential vision for contemporary jewelry, positioning the medium within the broader field of postwar art. This exhibition, the first of its kind in the United States, reflects the museum's dedication to presenting rigorous, historically grounded examinations of artists whose work has redefined the boundaries of artistic practice."

Cindi Strauss, Sara and Bill Morgan Curator of Decorative Arts, Craft, and Design and Elizabeth Essner, Windgate Foundation Associate Curator of Craft, noted, "Schobinger's practice engages deeply with the material and conceptual legacies of movements such as Dada and Concrete Art while embracing the disruptive ethos of punk. His works operate as complex assemblages in which found and precious materials coexist, challenging traditional hierarchies of value and inviting critical reflection on the cultural and physical histories embedded within each object."

One of the most significant artists working in contemporary jewelry, Bernhard Schobinger (born 1946, Zürich) reimagines it as a subversive medium, using scavenged and alternative materials to reveal their hidden histories: fishing lures and wedding rings foraged over his decades of diving to the bottom of Lake Zürich, near his longtime home in Richterswil;



Bernhard Schobinger, *Lightning Rod Necklace (Blitzableiterkette)*, 1992. Lightning conductor, fire-gilded copper, rose quartz, stainless steel and gold.

metal and asphalt shards dug out of a decrepit New York City street in the late 1970s; salvaged glass, nails and sawblades.

Going Underground will explore the artist's work in critical dialogue with the long shadow of World War II, the anarchy of Punk music, and the political and cultural forces that have shaped his life. Schobinger's aesthetic inspirations include Dadaism and Concrete Art. His Swiss cultural inheritance as well as an abiding interest in Japanese culture have also shaped his jewelry. Schobinger's pioneering work will invite audiences to explore the ways in which jewelry made from detritus, nature, and precious metals provoke new and unexpected meanings.

Catalogue and Public Program

Going Underground: The Jewels of Bernhard Schobinger will be accompanied by a fully illustrated scholarly catalogue with essays by Cindi Strauss, Sara and Bill Morgan Curator of Decorative Arts, Craft, and Design, MFAH; Elizabeth Essner, Windgate Foundation Associate Curator for Craft, MFAH; Claudia Schmuckli, Holly Johnson and Parker Harris Chief Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; as well by as the artist.

The MFAH will host the symposium *Perspectives on Contemporary Jewelry: An International Symposium* on September 26, 2026, focusing on Bernhard Schobinger and the German artist Dorothea Prühl's work and influence across the field. Speakers include scholar Renate Luckner-Bien on an in-depth look into Dorothea Prühl's life and work; artist Iris Eichenberg, head of metalsmithing at Cranbrook Academy of Art, discussing Prühl's impact as a thinker, teacher, and form maker; Claudia Schmuckli, Holly Johnson and Parker Harris Chief Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, examining Bernhard Schobinger's practice and its relation to Swiss contemporary art; and Cindi Strauss, Sara and Bill Morgan Curator of Decorative Arts, Craft, and Design at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, positioning Schobinger's jewelry as part of a global conversation within the field.

Organization and Funding

The exhibition is organized by Cindi Strauss, Sara and Bill Morgan Curator of Decorative Arts, Craft and Design and Elizabeth Essner, Windgate Foundation Associate Curator for Craft.

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