

BERNHARD SCHOBINGER

*Gimme Danger*

Curated by Saim Demircan

17 February 2023 – 25 March 2023

Opening Thursday 16 February, 6 - 8 pm

Martina Simeti is pleased to present Bernhard Schobinger, *Gimme Danger* curated by Saim Demircan, a show of the artist's jewelry and sculpture spanning the 1980s to the present day.

Whether salvaging door handles from demolished houses in his hometown of Richterswil, diving to the bottom of Lake Zürich for fishhooks, or collecting smashed bottles from concerts, Swiss artist Bernhard Schobinger transforms found objects, often broken, rusting, or discarded metal and glass, into jewelry and sculptures with a sense of danger and wit. His reuse of ordinary, almost crude, materials shares some of the methods of Surrealism and Arte Povera, as well as display an early influence of Constructivism's industrial, angular style. But overall, it's a punk ethos that has permeated Schobinger's work ever since he encountered the burgeoning subculture in the late-1970s. Fashioned out of the destroyed remnants of the everyday, his jewelry can often appear physically dangerous – shards of glass, saw blades, and other threatening tools are placed in sharp contrast to human necks, wrists, and fingers – even though each piece is meticulously designed and engineered to be wearable.

This exhibition homes in Schobinger's distinctive approach to making over the past forty years. After a brief stint at the School for Applied Arts in Zürich in 1962/63, he apprenticed in goldsmithing for a Swiss industrial firm. By the end of the 1960s, however, the artist had opened his own workshop and gallery in Richterswil on Lake Zürich. A decade later, Schobinger's self-determined attitude would coalesce with the ferment of the punk movement, manifesting the raw, propulsive energy that was palpable at the time in his jewelry. Many of the pieces in *Gimme Danger* were produced in the 1980s, the start of which is a cultural touchstone for the artist – both the "Züri Brännt" (Zürich is burning) protests in Zürich and Joy Division singer Ian Curtis' death took place in May 1980 – events that mark both a beginning and an end politically and in music. Since then, Schobinger's commitment to bricolage has remained steadfast throughout his practice as evidenced by recent work made during the last decade also included in the show.

For instance, Ring of rings (2022) is made up of wedding bands that Schobinger found while diving. Similarly, Mermaid's Wedding (2020) is a corroded mass of fishhooks retrieved from Lake Zürich. His scavenging of materials also locates pieces in certain times and places that have themselves ruinous pasts. The necklace NYC 1980 (1980) consists of metal fragments the artist pried out of asphalt on West Broadway in Manhattan at a time when the city was famously degraded. Others have, often humorous, backstories such as Sägen Ring (for Walter Stürm) (1989), a ring with a single saw blade dedicated to the notorious Swiss convict Walter Stürm who was famous for escaping prison (leaving notes such as one saying that he had 'gone hunting for Easter eggs'). Schobinger's jewelery often walks a line between art and ornament, which is perhaps exemplified by Mobius Strip (1990). Neither strictly sculptural object nor necklace, it hangs, like many of his works, dangerously, in the balance.