

Urs Frei. A–Z
April 25–September 13, 2026



Urs Frei, *Untitled*, 1990, Lacquer paint on fabric, 78 x 86 x 23 cm,
Collection Luigi Archetti, Photo: Luigi Archetti

Exhibition Dates

April 25–September 13, 2026
Kunstmuseum St. Gallen

Press Conference

April 23, 2026
11:00 a.m.

Exhibition Opening

April 24, 2026
6:30 p.m.

Opening Hours

Tue – Sun: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Thu: 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Press Contact

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Kunstmuseum St.Gallen presents the first retrospective of Swiss artist Urs Frei (1958–2023). Three years after his death, Frei's work is being honoured for the first time in a comprehensive exhibition. Frei is considered one of the most significant artists of his generation and gained international attention in the 1990s.

Urs Frei's oeuvre stands in the tradition of artists working with simple, everyday materials—an approach that is currently experiencing a remarkable revival among emerging international artists. Using semi-finished construction and packaging materials such as wood, metal, cardboard, and plastic, Frei created works that move between abstract painting, sculpture, and object art. At the core of his practice, unique within the contemporary art landscape, is an engagement with not only material, colour, and space but also, and above all, fragility, balance, and the process of making itself.

The exhibition brings together key groups of works spanning more than four decades: from the analytical works of the early 1980s to the intensely coloured cushion objects and assemblage-like works of the 1990s, with their slotted, kinked, and bound elements, and his painterly late work. The

retrospective vividly conveys the aesthetic and conceptual radicality of Frei's practice, which has lost none of its relevance today.

A richly illustrated, art historically grounded publication will be released in autumn 2026 by Scheidegger & Spiess, comprehensively documenting Urs Frei's artistic oeuvre and discussing it within the context of Swiss and international contemporary art.

Urs Frei was born in 1958 in Zurich, where he lived and worked until his death in 2023. From 1982 to 1984 he studied at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste (the Städelschule) in Frankfurt am Main. In 1997 he represented Switzerland at the Biennale di Venezia. His major solo exhibitions included those held at Kunsthalle Luzern (1991), Kunsthalle Zürich (1994), and the Vienna Secession (1999). He gained international recognition particularly through Galerie Rolf Ricke in Cologne and Galerie Walcheturm (then under the direction of Eva Presenhuber) in Zurich. Residencies took him to London, New York, and Delhi.

Works by Urs Frei are held today in the collection of Kunstmuseum St.Gallen as well as in other significant public and private collections, including those of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture (BAK), Aargauer Kunsthaus in Aarau, Kunsthaus Zürich, Kunst(Zeug)Haus Rapperswil-Jona, and the City and Canton of Zurich.

Curated by Henna Keski-Mäenpää, Curator, Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, and Christoph Schenker, Guest Curator.

Factsheet

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