

# W

## 20 Years of Karl Fritsch: Inside the artist's first U.S. retrospective at Salon 94

By Sue Williamson

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Installation view of Karl Fritsch at Salon 94. Courtesy of Salon 94.

"A ring can be everything," explains German-born, New Zealand based jewelry artist Karl Fritsch, whose first U.S. retrospective is now on view at New York's Salon 94. "There are so many reasons to wear a ring and there are often stories attached to them. Jewelry is like a memory container for all these life stories and I offer new containers for people to fill." Fritsch's "containers" straddle the line between sculpture and jewelry—an idea he has played up with by displaying them all on one long piece of plywood in the middle of the gallery. "I like it when jewelry is not behind cases. This is a way you can come really close to it and engage with it," he says.

"When I mix the pieces up, new stories and new communications happen and they talk to each other." Some baubles take on animal shapes, others are more classic, and Fritsch's style has clearly changed countless times in the last 20 years—yet his commitment to the ring remains steadfast. "I never get bored making a solitaire ring and I'm always trying to come up with a contemporary, today version," he says. "Narrowing the focus always opens up a new path."

*Karl Fritsch: A Retrospective is on view at Salon 94 through December 18, 2015.*



Gallery Funaki, July 8, 2014



Gallery Funaki presents a new body of work from Karl Fritsch, whose lovingly iconoclastic take on jewellery history has accorded him cult hero status in the world of contemporary jewellery and beyond. His rings, both precious and anti-precious, beautiful and proudly anti-beautiful, bear the weight and scars of centuries of embedded cultural belief about jewellery's manifestation of status. Using precious materials as well as rough hewn aluminium, stones and glass, Fritsch's work has the look of something buried for a thousand years while remaining utterly contemporary.

Selected works will also be shown from a recent collaboration between Fritsch and Auckland based photographer Gavin Hipkins. *Der Tiefenglanz*, which roughly translates as "deep gloss", reveals the playful exchange of ideas between two remarkable artists working at the height of their careers.

Gavin Hipkins' images are ambiguous, their black and white iconography hinting at narratives that remain suspended and nebulous. His photographs are hand printed using analogue techniques including solarisation, each image drawn from an archive of negatives taken in locations all over the world and often touching upon the realm of the *unheimlich*. Fritsch then intervenes using his own palette of precious and artificial stones, lumps of metal, scratches and handmade marks, further pushing the images into the realm of apocrypha and dreamscape. Together, Fritsch and Hipkins create material assemblages that explore surface and the illusion of depth with wit and subtlety.

Parts of this collaboration are currently on show at the Museum of Art and Design in New York as part of the *Multiple Exposures: Jewelry and Photography* exhibition.