MARTIN FREI

Co-Founder - Chief Designer of URWERK

Born in 1966 in Winterthur (Switzerland) **Martin Frei** grew up between two worlds: precision engineering from his father and artistic exploration from his mother. This dual foundation shaped his approach — design as a disciplined craft, guided by cu-riosity and method.

He earned a Diploma in Graphic Design from the School of Visual Arts in Zurich (1987), followed by a Bachelor of Arts at the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst in Lucerne (1989), where he studied under Swiss artist Roman Signer. He later completed a one-year program in Video and Film at the same institution. In the mid-1990s, he co-founded the artist collective U.S.A. – United Swiss Artists, producing exhibitions, installations and video works.

In 1995, **Martin Frei** met **Felix** and **Thomas Baumgartner** to discuss the design of a watch. Martin arrived not only with sketches of what would become URWERK's first models (UR-101/102), but also with a name — **URWERK**. He approached watch design with the same methodology as sculpture or film: start with a concept, build the structure around the idea, and respect the integrity of the form.

In 2020, Martin Frei and Felix Baumgartner received the Gaïa Prize – Entrepreneurship category, honoring URWERK's pioneering role in shaping 21st-century independent watchmaking.

"When the world of watchmaking opened its doors to me, I entered with all my artistic luggage. Technique, concept and aesthetics are, above all, acts of creation."
Martin Frei

URWERK ®
BY BAUMGARTNER + FREI