**PRESS RELEASE**

Matthias Schönweger  
**JANUS**

1914 - and No End in Sight

**Press conference**: September 18, 2014 at 11.00 a.m.

**Opening reception**: September 19, 2014 at 7.00 p.m.

**Exhibition period**: September 20 - November 9, 2014

**Curator**: Valerio Dehò

The exhibition project "JANUS - 1914 and No End in Sight" commemorates World War I, 100 years ago, taking the opportunity to make a pacifist and anti-militarist statement with regard to all the wars of the past and present century. Matthias Schönweger deliberately chose the two-faced Roman God Janus as a symbol and title of the exhibition, as he sees the past and the present at the same time. The Janus temple in Rome was opened in war times, and it remained closed in times of peace. The population and the priests asked it about the future, about the outcome of the wars.

The exhibition comprises various works. There are historical documents such as the important collection of original photographs of Merano when World War I broke out, but also assemblages - some of which are ironic in nature - of gifts, souvenirs, articles of daily use such as plates and glasses, cemetery sculptures, postcards and pieces of clothing, all of which do not only represent the unmistakable style of the artist, but form a true archive of historical records. Schönweger starts from the idea that art lets man overcome hatred and military violence: art can sublime the horrors of war, the suffering and the bloodshed of thousands of people.

Nevertheless, the artist's irony does not cover up the merciless historical events, but resists oblivion.

The urns, made specifically for the exhibition, are small-scale memorials that remind us of past stories, but they can also be personalized and thus become memorabilia of the present. Urns, as we know from Ugo Foscolo's poetry, are

places in which the collective memory is manifested, temples for the heroes, the outstanding personalities of various nations. Schönweger makes out of them something more simple, more direct, something that is closer to the persons. In doing so, he - tongue in cheek - allows everybody to become a hero.

An important part of the exhibition is the artist's long-term project that is devoted to the bunkers of World War II all over South Tyrol. Over the years, Schönweger has acquired 50 of those bunkers and turned them into small museums of all sorts by compiling and re-using finds again and again. Matthias Schönweger keeps collecting elements that form a museum in themselves, ranging from the history of South Tyrol to our present days, with their endless production of objects.

In the context of the exhibition at Merano arte, two excursions to bunkers will take place in cooperation with ES-Gallery, together with the artist: a long bunker walk on September 27/28 near Sterzing – Bolzano, and a short bunker walk on November 8 near Töll – Plars (Algund), including a "Keschtn-Party" (chestnut party).

For more information, please visit our website [www.kunstmeranoarte.org](http://www.kunstmeranoarte.org/)

To book a bunker excursion, please write to

[info@es-projects.net](mailto:info@es-projects.net)

or call: 339 5204025

Merano, August 2014

**Matthias Schönweger** (\*1949, Partschins, South Tyrol) lives and works in Merano, unless he is traveling.

He studied German philology, Italian, history, art, and philosophy at various universities, and he did his doctorate in Comparative Literary Studies with a historico-cultural dissertation on Merano around the year nineteen hundred and beyond (e.g. WW1). In his younger years, Schönweger worked in his parents' painting workshop. For years, he taught German at an Italian grammar school. Over the past years, the artist has held several exhibitions at home and abroad. In the art scene of South Tyrol, Schönweger is considered one of the most versatile artists: a man of letters, a performer, etc. He develops works of the most different kinds by playing and analyzing language and objects.

His irony is characteristic for Schönweger. He brilliantly adds a grotesque touch to his works of art by using, and thus ennobling, even the crassest kitsch for them. His works brim with creativity. One could also call him a conceptual artist and a global poet. He reflects the history of stories from the past and present, converting them into soft still lifes made out of words and images.

Over the years, his roughly 50 military premises, mainly bunkers, are turning into a Gesamtkunstwerk.

One of his best known publications is a trilogy (Skarabaeus and Edition Raetia). Each of the three volumes comprises more than 600 pages and includes not only contributions by curators and critics, but also reflects the oeuvre of Schönweger.