



Alberto Giacometti. *The Forest*. 1950. Bronze, 57 x 61 x 49.5 cm. Fondation Giacometti
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Alberto Giacometti takes over SMK

From February 2024, SMK (Statens Museum for Kunst) presents an extensive exhibition featuring the famous Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti. Featuring major works within the fields of sculpture and drawing, the exhibition homes in on Giacometti's fascination with what you actually see when you look at the world.

PRESS RELEASE

Tall, slender figures with rough, organic surfaces: the Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) is internationally known for his iconic representations of long-limbed human figures. They are highlights in the collections of some of the world's leading museums, such as the Tate Modern in London, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Fondation Giacometti and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In Denmark they can be found at Louisiana and in the square in front of the old town hall in Holstebro, among other places.

Giacometti's fame rests very much on his sculptures. This held true in his own day and remains so today, when he is considered one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. But the scope of his art is far wider than that.

On 10 February 2024, SMK will open the exhibition *Alberto Giacometti – What Meets the Eye*, which unfolds the story of Giacometti across his various art forms: sculpture, painting, printmaking and drawing. The extensive exhibition takes its point of departure in the SMK collection, which is home to several important examples of Giacometti's works on paper.

Created in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti in Paris, the exhibition offers an extraordinary opportunity to experience some of Giacometti's popular masterpieces like *The Nose* (1947), *The Cage* (1950-51) and *The Walking Man* (1960) side by side with a number of lesser-known works that have only rarely been on public display. In total, the exhibition contains around 90 works, and it takes its starting point in the 1920s and 1930s – a period that left a decisive mark on Giacometti's art and would continue to affect his style and idiom until his death in 1966.

Obsessed with the visible world

Giacometti moved to Paris at the age of 21, and from 1930 he became part of the Surrealist circle around the French poet and writer André Breton (1896–1966). For several years, Giacometti was inspired by the idiom used by the Surrealists to represent the subconscious and humanity's inner life. But in 1934 his artistic practice took a significant turn. He began to work from the life again, working from models and turning to physical reality.

The exhibition *Alberto Giacometti – What Meets the Eye* unfolds Giacometti's years-long obsession with visual perception and his dedicated struggle to capture the world as he saw and perceived it. Heads and full-length figures were his most used subjects, and by working with scale, direction, space and distance, he strove to translate his visual sensory impressions into truthful and authentic works of art.

Giacometti was uncompromising in his quest. He often repainted his works and sometimes he made countless drafts of the same portrait. He himself described his endless project in these terms: 'It's as though reality were always behind a curtain that you pull away ... There's always another ... and another. But I have the impression, or perhaps it's an illusion, that I'm making some progress every day. That's what makes me take action, as though you had well and truly to succeed in understanding the core of life'.

Existentialist connections in Paris

Giacometti's artistic project was in line with the period's general focus on humanity's being in the world. In the 1940s, a new circle of existentialist thinkers emerged in Europe, and Giacometti formed ties with French philosophers and writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.

The exhibition and the accompanying publication delve into these relationships with leading thinkers of the time. At the same time, the exhibition unfolds the artist's close relationship with Paris, where Giacometti lived most of his life. For example, it presents a number of lithographs from the book *Paris sans fin* (*Paris without end*), on which he worked until his death, and which describes life in the French capital.



Anonymous, *Alberto Giacometti in his studio with The Forest in plaster*, around 1950, Fondation Giacometti
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ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) was born in Borgonovo, Switzerland. As an artist, he worked with sculpture, painting, printmaking and drawing. In 1922 he settled in Paris, where he became associated with the city's avant-garde milieu. He was taught by Antoine Bourdelle at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, and from 1930 he became associated with the circle of Parisian Surrealists. In 1934 a shift occurred in his art: he turned away from the Surrealists' fascination with humanity's inner life and began instead to take an interest in physical reality. Philosophical questions about the human condition, including existentialist and phenomenological debates, played a central role in his art, and from 1941 he came into contact with thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Giacometti won great acclaim during his own lifetime, and today his works are featured in several museum collections, including SMK's collection.

PUBLICATION

To coincide with the exhibition, SMK publishes a richly illustrated catalogue which takes readers deeper into Alberto Giacometti's world and provides an introduction to his complex thinking and his simple, aesthetic universe.

The catalogue is the result of a unique collaboration between the Fondation Giacometti in Paris and SMK. The book is the first to be published in Danish about Giacometti in recent times. Available in both Danish and English, the catalogue presents all-new research and contributes to our understanding of Giacometti's perception of space, time and life, which prompted him to arrive at the unique idiom for which we know him today.

A range of experts delve into Giacometti's art and, in particular, the relationship between post-war phenomenological thinking and his works. The book also contains two original texts by the philosopher and friend of the artist Jean-Paul Sartre and by Alberto Giacometti himself, which are published here in Danish for the first time ever.

The catalogue articles are authored by:

- Alberto Giacometti
- Jean-Paul Sartre, philosopher
- Émilie Bouvard, Director of Collections and Scientific Programme, Fondation Giacometti
- Thomas Lederballe Pedersen, senior researcher and chief curator, SMK
- Dan Zahavi, professor of philosophy, University of Copenhagen
- Esther Demoulins, PhD in literature, Sorbonne University

Alberto Giacometti – What Meets the Eye

10 February - 20 May 2024

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The exhibition *Alberto Giacometti – What Meets the Eye* is arranged in collaboration with Fondation Giacometti

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