

INSTITUT-  
GIACOMETTI



**DOSSIER DE PRESSE**

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI - ANNETTE MESSAGER

**OURS ROOMS**

16 octobre 2018 - 13 Janvier 2019



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The Giacometti Institut donne carte blanche à Annette Messenger.

For this first invitation made to a contemporary artist to invest this new space dedicated to the work of Alberto Giacometti, Annette Messenger was invited to travel through the collection of the Giacometti Foundation and Alberto Giacometti archives, accompanied by the curateur, Christian Alandete.

In Giacometti's life and work, Messenger made rich and varied discoveries: sculptures and drawings, notebooks and personal documents, new works she created for the occasion. From all these constituents, she did not just create an exhibition, but a work in itself: not a "room of one's own", but several "rooms for two". It is difficult to talk about a "four-handed" creation when only one of the artists is still alive. Yet in the definition given by Messenger to each of these rooms, Giacometti can be seen as an exhibition partner rather than simply a source of inspiration.

Entering the institute, there is Giacometti's studio, the room of encounters, the room of legends, the "nose to nose" room, the room of disorders and the "room of Annettes". Close to Giacometti's studio hang the drawings and plans of Messenger's first studio ("artist", "collector") and a plan of the new exhibition.

**The room of encounters** is dedicated to Giacometti's entourage and acquaintances, with photographs, letters, notebooks and artworks, recalling people he "met, loved, admired and hated". Along with a declaration of love and a number of letters to his wife Annette, there are letters from Beauvoir, Sartre and Miró, discussions with André Breton, intimate drawings

**The room of legends** spatially reorganises the different components of *No caption*. The regular ticking of a clock inspires new drawings in which the legs of the *Walking Man* replace the hands.

**The "nose to nose" room** contains works by Giacometti and Messenger: Giacometti's iconic *Nose*, sticking out through the bars of a cage, meets various versions of Pinocchio's nose: Messenger's own work, along with her *Tribute to Giacometti*, 2015, and new pieces: *The Moon-nose*; *Mother with child*; *Middle-finger Giacometti*. Burlesque, grotesque or transgressive, these noses are brought together under the aegis of a litany inspired by Gertrude Stein: "a nose is a nose is a nose...".

**The room of disorders** has older and more recent works by Messenger, on themes related to works by Giacometti, including drawings and works in ink: drawings on photographs of bodies (*Song of Innocence*: Giacometti's *Dog* "tattooed" on a baby's arm); drawings of "Rorschach ink blots" (*Two Cries Together*); others combining the famous scene of the pram in *Battleship Potemkin*, and Giacometti's *Head on Rod*; two



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friezes (*Kafka-Giacometti* and *Meeting*)... There are also new works that refer to Giacometti: *Rodin with Giacometti on Barbie*, an unusual combination of two icons of modern sculpture with the famous trademarked doll, and *The Ball-Sleeping Bag*, in which a sleeping bag, folded into the shape of a vagina, recalls the crescent moon and ball of Giacometti's surrealist *Suspended Ball*.

Finally, **the room of Annettes** references three women wearing the same name, two the artist was very close: his mother Annetta, his wife Annette, and Annette Messenger, newly inducted into the family circle. *The Parade of the Squirrel for Annette* shows a stuffed squirrel on cushions, enmeshed in a net, showing off in front of a bronze sculpture by Giacometti representing his wife. It recalls with amused irony the parallels between mating displays and those of the artist.



**Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966)**

Born in 1901 in Stampa, Switzerland, Alberto Giacometti is the son of Giovanni Giacometti, renowned post-impressionist painter. It is in the paternal studio that he is introduced to art and that he realized, at 14, his first works: a still life with apples painted in oil and a sculpted bust of his brother Diego. In 1922, Giacometti went to study in Paris and entered the Académie de la Grande-Chaumière, where he studied under Antoine Bourdelle. At this time, he apprehends the technique of drawing after model and is interested in avant-garde compositions, especially post-cubist.

In 1929, he began a series of flat women, which made him noticed by the surrealist artistic milieu. In 1930, Giacometti adhered to the surrealist movement of André Breton; Surrealist subjects are important in his creation: love and death, dreamlike vision, objects with symbolic functioning. From 1935, he distanced himself from the surrealist group and devoted himself intensely to the question of the human head, which will be a central topic of research throughout his life.

After spending the war years in Switzerland, back in Paris, he resumed research on the human figure. His favorite models are those who live with him: Annette, his wife since 1949, and Diego, his brother and assistant. Working from nature, he aims to restore the model as he sees it, in its ever-changing aspect. At other times, his figures become anonymous, placed on pedestals that isolate them from the ground, or inscribed in "cages" that draw a virtual space.

In 1958, he was invited to submit a project for the Chase Manhattan Bank plaza in New York. He chose to take in large size the three motifs that haunt his work since 1948: a female figure standing, a man walking and a monumental head. Finally, the monument will not be installed in New York but Giacometti will present a first bronze version of this set at the Venice Biennale in 1962, where he won the grand prize for sculpture. After the great successes of his retrospectives from Zurich, Basel, London and New York, Alberto Giacometti, weakened by cancer, died in January 1966 at the hospital in Chur, Switzerland.



### **Annette Messenger**

Born in 1943 in Beck-sur-Mer (Pas-de-Calais). She lives and works in Malakoff. Major figure of contemporary art, Annette Messenger won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2005 for her installation Casino at the French Pavilion. In 2016, she received the Praemium Imperiale Prize in the sculpture category and in 2018 the Julio Gonzalez Prize. His work has been exhibited in the world's leading museums.

She was initiated very early to art and especially "art brut" by her father, architect. In the early 1960s, Messenger moved to Paris to begin studies at the National School of Decorative Arts she abandons in the course of road. In 1965, she received her first award (a world tour) through a landscape photograph. Since the 1970s, the artist has been developing installations that address the themes of identity, the body, the condition of women, eroticism and death. His hybrid work combines painting, embroidery, sculpture, assemblage, collage and writing.

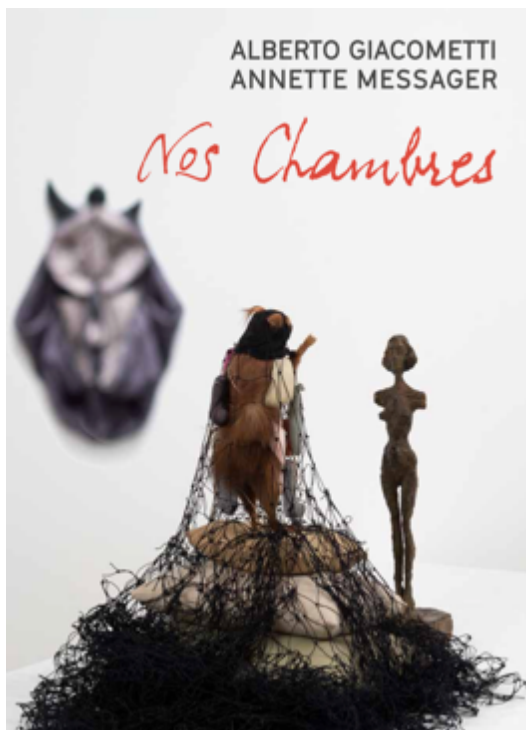
From 1971 to 1979, Annette Messenger is staged through several different characters. It thus multiplies its personality in various distinct and heterogeneous identities: Annette Messenger " collector ", " trickster ", " artist ", " handyman ", " woman ", " practical ", "hawker, lover ...

His installations mix photographs, drawings, fabrics, objects. She cuts, triturates, assembles fabrics, stuffed animals, toys, shows stuffed animals, dolls, pictures of details of the body. In the early 1970s, she gathered her first Collections, composed of albums of photographs and excerpts of the press that she annotates and hijacks. In 1971, for the gallery Germain Annette Messenger creates Les Pensionnaires, an alignment of sparrows naturalized and swaddled in knits. His first solo exhibition was presented in 1973 at the Lenbachhaus Museum in Munich, Germany and the following year at the Museum of Modern Art in 1974 in Paris: Annette Messenger collector. The first major retrospective of his works takes place in Grenoble: Comedy Tragedy 1971-1989. In 1995, it is presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Admiring the work as Giacometti's personality, the artist has several times introduced winks to the work of the sculptor in his installations.



CATALOG



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**EXTRACTS FROM THE CATALOG**

**A room for two**

by Catherine Grenier

"A room of one's own": in her famous harangue in favour of women artists, Virginia Woolf made this a prerequisite for any personal, autonomous creative enterprise. Right from her first steps in the art world, Annette Messenger charted her own territory, creating a matrix for her future work. Transforming her small apartment into a domain of creation, she divided up her activities according to the topography of the venue. The bedroom was assigned to her work as a "collector", and the dining room, or "studio", to her work as an "artist". The ground plan of the apartment, precisely annotated, attests to this division of creative activities and their spatial arrangement. The pragmatic division that had presumably presided over this specialisation gave way to a specific artistic elaboration. On the one hand, the artist asserted her refusal to assume a unified identity. From the outset, on the other hand, she expressed an interest in topography and classification that has never diminished.

It is not unusual for an artist to assign particular tasks to particular studios. Sculptors have often had a one-storey studio for their main work, and another for drawing. But Messenger's idea is different. By installing a studio in a personal space, and situating art's place in a familiar area, she right away indicates a difference. The studio is not neutral; works are born, and develop, in the artist's private "chambers". This is a distinction that questions both the professionalisation of art and its institutional and public dimensions. The domestic character of her studio, and, by metonymy, that of her art, becomes a distinguishing sign, and even a programme. While constituting a voice that highlights the relegation of female artists to the private world, which it reclaims, this deliberate non-distinction between art and intimacy is also an effective way of freeing art from the canons of modernism. Messenger looks closely at marginal or obsolete forms of art that have fallen into desuetude. Among her references are outsider art and Surrealism, which disappeared from the collective imagination at the start of the movement that was to be known as "contemporary art". For the artists she looks at, the process of art is anchored in the most personal aspects of their being, and their work zone is not the conventional studio, but merges seamlessly with their immediate environment.

"I have several studios. There's the studio in the garden, the studio beside the bedroom, and another one. And then there's the large one." In 2015, describing the organisation of her work in the house she shares with Christian Boltanski in Malakoff, she explains: "Each of these studios is specific to a way of working. It depends on the technique and the season. The one that opens onto the garden is mainly used for drawing, because I have to be able to lay out the boxes on the grass. The one in the bedroom is for sewing. The third is for the computer. This is the one where I reflect, where I lay out plans, where I look at images on the Internet<sup>1</sup>." Thus, the separation of the studios has persisted, and even increased. All these places for creation remain connected to private space. And they are secret, restricted: few visitors are allowed in. Over the years, and with very few exceptions, Messenger's works have been conceived and developed in what she calls her "bases", located in or near her living space.



While Messenger has always made use of everyday materials – household objects and references – her imagination also borrows widely from multiple sources: art history, literature, exhibitions, travel, articles from newspapers and magazines, the Internet. She delves into, and exploits, disparate elements, recovered and dissected in the laboratory of creation. Since her first works, she has assimilated exogenous organs into the operations of deconstruction-construction of bodies and spaces that inform most of her installations. In 2011, she integrated the silhouette of several works by Alberto Giacometti into a large installation of elements scattered across the floor. Entitled *No caption*, and included in an exhibition bearing the evocative name *Black Continents*, this sombre work comprises a multitude of objects and shapes covered in black metal foil, casting shadows that come alive on the wall. The evening star, as the vanishing point of this melancholic installation, is a large, round luminous clock projected onto the wall. Giacometti's *Dog*, *Standing Woman* and *Walking Man* are among the banal or geometric objects that constitute the only precise references to a universe other than her own. Messenger draws her inspiration from many sources, and she is clear about this; but rare are the artists she quotes so precisely. On the occasion of this series of allegorical works inspired by Gulliver's travels, she offers a privileged place to Giacometti, whose most emblematic figures depict survival in a petrified world. (...)





**Interview Annette Messenger**

by Christian Alandete

(...)

**Annette Messenger**

I did a year at the Grande Chaumière school. The neighbourhood attracted artists, and I had artist friends. We often went to Le Sélect, which is where I first saw Giacometti, at the start of the 1960s. He ate alone.

**Christian Alandete**

What did he represent, for the young people of your generation?

**AM**

For me he was an important person – a famous sculptor. What I liked about Giacometti was that he was an anti-hero. Picasso was a hero, an ogre, the quintessence of the artist who has houses, women, money. Giacometti was a man in a raincoat who never changed his way of life. He kept to his small studio in the 14th arrondissement. I'm not saying he was humble. He was a highly intelligent man, highly cultivated. He understood that his studio was his cave; that his den was integral to his oeuvre. And in spite of everything he said about failure, I think he had a sense of his own worth. Any artist who doesn't have that sense, that confidence in himself, can do nothing. He can't move forward.

**CA**

Was it a kind of false modesty? A game?

**AM**

No, but certainty isn't exempt from doubt. "Doubt's a mug's game!" He had the strength of character to break with the surrealists, and for ten years he was almost invisible.

**CA**

At what point did you start making reference to Giacometti? What were the first of your works to feature images derived from him?

**AM**

In the 1970s, I didn't dare to say I liked either Giacometti or Bacon. It was a very conceptual period, very minimalist.

In *No caption*, which I began in 2012, I was virtually copying Giacometti. It was a sort of burnt-out city where there was no one left. Chernobyl and Fukushima had made their mark on me. I took pieces of cardboard, miscellaneous elements that I covered in black... For me, the only survivors were Giacomettis, straying people, and the dog... In Fukushima there were only stray dogs.

I also see links between Giacometti's *Nose* and Pinocchio, who's been with me since the 2005 Venice biennial. Given that Giacometti was Swiss-Italian, I imagine he grew up with that image, and with carnival figures, which are prominent in Switzerland.



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**CA**

It's possible, though he never mentioned it.

**AM**

There are two things that interest me about Pinocchio, and that I like. To begin with, a sculptor took a piece of wood that suddenly came alive. It was fantastic! And also, he was a bad boy; his story was one of initiation. He didn't go to school; he sold his reading book and went off with his friends... It was like the image of an artist who doesn't want to go to the office, and feels different from other people. Thanks to his multiple adventures and unsavoury encounters, he became human.

**CA**

In the exhibition, there's also an assemblage with a small reproduction of Rodin's *Thinker*. Are there other artists that you refer to, and play around with, in your works?

**AM**

I'm 200% with Giacometti. He takes up all the space. I have a "love affair" with him – something between love and hate.

Rodin, then Giacometti and Brancusi, understood the importance of plinths for sculptures. I don't know if Brancusi and he were close...

**CA**

They weren't close, but Giacometti was aware of his work. They were a generation apart. Giacometti was quite proud to exhibit along with Brancusi in the "avant-garde" room at the Salon des Tuileries. He wrote to his father about it. In a sketchbook, he drew Brancusi's *Bird in Space* beside his own sculpture *Spoon Woman*, which he set on a plinth that was slightly higher than Brancusi's work – as though he wanted to locate himself in relation to this important sculptor, or even to go beyond him. Both of them were interested in the question of the plinth.

**AM:**

Giacometti puts his figures on pedestals that magnify them and raise them to the rank of the sacred; or, on the contrary, he encloses them in cages.

These figures are earthlings rather than humans. They're rooted in the earth. *Walking Man* – well, I'm not sure he's walking. The *Four Women*, presumably prostitutes, stand on a sacral architectural base. And he says that when naked they're goddesses. They're small, and not looking at one another.

All his figures are solitary, and when there's a group of them, they don't see one another.



## **INSTITUT GIACOMETTI**

The Giacometti Institute is a unique permanent place dedicated to exhibitions, research in art history and pedagogy.

It is chaired by Catherine Grenier, Director of the Giacometti Foundation since 2014. As a museum on a human scale, the Giacometti Institute allows a brand new proximity with the artworks. It is at once an exhibition space, a key reference venue for the work of Alberto Giacometti, a research center dedicated to modern artistic practices (1900 - 1970) and a place of discovery accessible to all.

It permanently presents an exceptional reconstruction of the studio of Alberto Giacometti, all of whose elements has been preserved by his widow, Annette Giacometti. Among them, very fragile plaster and unfinished works, some of which have never been shown to the public, his furniture and the walls painted by the artist. It aims to renew the look on the work of the artist and the creative period in which it is inscribed. The research and teaching program is open to researchers, students and amateurs. Conferences, seminar and master-class give the floor to art historians and curators who present their work and current research.

### PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Institut Giacometti  
5, Rue Victor Schoelcher  
75014 Paris

Visits by online reservation system  
[www.fondation-giacometti.fr/institut](http://www.fondation-giacometti.fr/institut)

Admission : 8,5 euros  
Concession ticket: 5 et 3 euros  
Closed on Monday

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**VISUELS DISPONIBLES POUR LA PRESSE**

	<p>Annette Messenger          Sans légende, 2011-12          Eléments divers enveloppés          d'aluminium noir, toiles de spy peintes,          moteurs et éclairages computerisés.          Dimensions variables          Collection Musée d'Art Moderne et          Contemporain de Strasbourg, France          Photo Mathieu Bertola          © Annette Messenger et Galerie Marian          Goodman</p>
	<p>Annette Messenger          La parade de l'écureuil pour Annette,          2018          Technique mixte</p> <p>Alberto Giacometti          Annette Debout, vers 1954          Bronze          47,5 x 10,5 x 19,5 cm          Collection Fondation Giacometti, Paris</p> <p>Photo Marc Damage</p> <p>© Annette Messenger et Galerie Marian          Goodman          © Succession Giacometti (Fondation          Giacometti, Paris + ADAGP, Paris)</p>
	<p>Alberto Giacometti          Nu debout (Annette), 1961          Huile sur toile          69 x 49,5 cm          Collection Fondation Giacometti, Paris          © Succession Giacometti (Fondation          Giacometti, Paris + ADAGP, Paris)</p>



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		<p>Annette Messenger La mère et l'enfant, 2018 Métal, tissu, corde 125 x 50 x 17 cm Photo Marc Damage © Annette Messenger et Galerie Marian Goodman</p>
		<p>Alberto Giacometti Le Nez, 1947 Plâtre et métal 82,5 x 37 x 71 cm Collection Fondation Giacometti, Paris © Succession Giacometti (Fondation Giacometti, Paris + ADAGP, Paris)</p>
		<p>Annette Messenger La boule-sleeping Bag, 2018 Sac de couchage, matériaux divers 110 x 82 cm Photo Marc Damage © Annette Messenger et Galerie Marian Goodman</p>



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Annette Messenger  
L'homme qui marche à l'envers du  
temps, 2018

© Annette Messenger et Galerie Marian  
Goodman



Alberto Giacometti  
Tête de la mère et tête d'homme, vers  
1963

Plume et encre bleue sur enveloppe  
17,6 x 25,4 cm  
Collection Fondation Giacometti, Paris  
© Succession Giacometti (Fondation  
Giacometti, Paris + ADAGP, Paris)