

## PRESS RELEASE



INSTITUT-  
GIACOMETTI



**exposition**  
exhibition

**22-06**  
**→ 06-11**  
**2019**

**Alberto Giacometti**  
**Histoire de corps**  
**Narrating the body**



## **NARRATING THE BODY**

THE NUDE IN THE WORK  
OF ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

### **PRESS PREVIEW**

**Friday 21 june 2019**

**11 am -1 pm**

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**Invisible Object**, 1934-1935 Plaster - 153 x 32 x 29 cm

© Succession Alberto Giacometti

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# **NARRATING THE BODY**

## **THE NUDE IN THE WORK OF ALBERTO GIACOMETTI**

**22-06 > 6-11-2019**



Alberto Giacometti in his Studio, Paris, July 1954, Fondation Giacometti, Paris. Photo: Sabine Weiss

**This unprecedented exhibition favours a thematic approach, and shows the diversity and originality of the treatment of nude figures in Alberto Giacometti's work.**

**In his sculptures as in his paintings, the artist focused on a quasi-unique motif throughout his whole career: the representation of the human being, and in particular the female nude, which he considered the "raison d'être" of the art gesture.**

The exhibition gathers more than 60 of the artist's works, among them an ensemble of sculptures from the smallest dimensions to the largest as well as paintings and drawings inspired by his wife Annette. Two of the sculptures presented feature among Alberto Giacometti's greatest masterpieces. Recently restored, they are presented to the Parisian public for the very first time.

Invisible Object, a major piece from the years 1934-1935, is one of the most enigmatic sculptures from the Surrealist period. *Tall Woman II*, from 1960, a monumental sculpture in painted plaster (258 x 32 x 57 cm), restored for this exhibition, will be shown to the public for the first time since 1961. This presentation gives an opportunity to comprehend the evolution of the treatment of nude figures in the artist's oeuvre throughout his various art phases, from the first nude drawings of the 1920s to the 'Tall Women's' of the 1960s.

The fully illustrated catalogue that accompanies the exhibition is co-edited by the Giacometti Foundation, Paris, and FAGE Éditions and is a French-English bilingual edition. This book, which comprises new authors' texts, focuses on the figures of the female nude for which the artist was trying to establish a new model of representation.

**Curator::** Catherine Grenier  
**Associated curator:** Michèle Kieffer  
**Exhibition design:** Eric Morin

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## AROUND THE EXHIBITION

Les visites guidées de l'Institut

### For the general public:

Visit with a guide comprising the reconstructed studio and the temporary exhibition.

Duration: 1 hour

Prices: 15€, 11.50€, 9.50€

### For families:

Family visit to the Institute with sketching sessions for children (from 6 years onwards) and adults, focused on discovering the universe of Alberto Giacometti.

Duration: 1 hour

Saturday at 11.15 a.m.

Prices: child 6€, adult 10€



**Tall Woman II**, 1960 Painted plaster - 283 x 32 x 57 cm  
 © Succession Alberto Giacometti

## WORKSHOP AT GIACOMETTI LAB 7/9 rue Schoelcher - 75014 Paris

### After model

Drawing session after a living model  
 6, 13 and 20 juillet

Available for everyone upon reservation



### ALBERTO GIACOMETTI (1901-1966)

Born in Stampa, Switzerland in 1901, Alberto Giacometti was the son of Giovanni Giacometti, a renowned post-impressionist painter. He was initiated into the visual arts in the studio of his father and made, at 14, his very first works: *Still life with apples*, an oil painting, and a sculpted bust of his brother Diego. In 1922, Giacometti left to study in Paris and entered the Académie de la Grande-Chaumière, where he took classes with the sculptor Antoine Bourdelle. At that time, he drew from models and became interested in avant-garde compositions, the post-cubists, among others.

In 1929, he started a series of flat women that drew the attention of the surrealist art scene. In 1930, Giacometti joined André Breton's Surrealist movement. In 1934-35, he made *Invisible Object*, an emblematic female figure, whose first title was *Hands holding the void*. From 1935, he distanced himself from the Surrealist group and focused intensely on the question of the human figure that was to remain his main subject of research throughout his life.

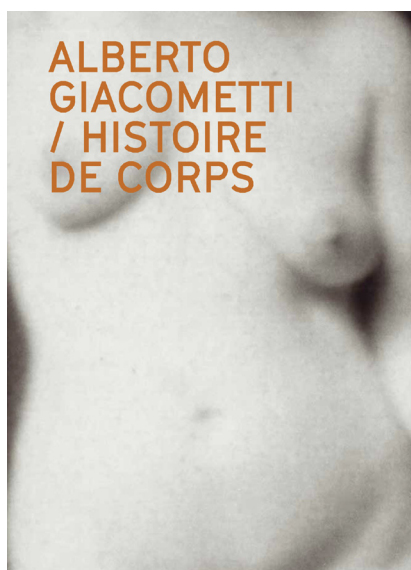
After having spent the war years in Switzerland, on his return to Paris, he resumed his research on the human figure. His favourite models were those who were at his side: Annette, whom he married in 1949, and Diego, his brother. Working from models, he aimed at rendering them as he saw them, in their evershifting aspect. At other times it was anonymous figures, placed on pedestals that isolate them from the ground, or placed in 'cages' that frame a virtual space. In 1958, he was invited to submit a project for the square of the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York.

He chose to retake, in large dimensions, the three motifs that had haunted his whole oeuvre since 1948: a standing female figure, a walking man and a head. In the end the monument was not installed in New York, but at the Venice Biennale in 1962, where it won the Grand Prix for Sculpture.

After the success of his retrospectives in Zurich, Bale, London and New York, Alberto Giacometti passed away in January 1966 at the hospital in Coire, Switzerland.



Alberto Giacometti in the Courtyard of his Studio with the plaster of Tall Woman IV, 1960  
Photo : Annette Giacometti  
Fondation Giacometti, Paris



A bilingual catalogue, fully illustrated with photographs from the archives and new authors' texts, offers a new look at the female nude in Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre.

Catalogue Co-edited by the Fondation Giacometti, Paris, and FAGE Éditions, Lyon

112 pages  
16,5 x 23,5 cm  
Bilingual French-English  
Public price: 24 €.

## **SUMMARY**

**Catherine Grenier**

The enigma of the nude figure

**Philippe Büttner**

Multiple bodies

**Michèle Kieffer**

The female body, an inexhaustible source of inspiration

**Biography**

Alberto Giacometti

## EXTRACTS OF TEXTS FROM THE CATALOGUE

### The enigma of the nude figure

Catherine Grenier

(...)

Initiated from his childhood into the history of art through the works of his father's library and endowed with a strong visual memory, the artist memorized a very large catalogue of images that he enriched throughout his life. Later, he demonstrated the original way in which all these references actualized in his mind, until annulling all feeling of temporal difference. «All art of the past, of all epochs, of all civilisations, surges before me, all is simultaneous, as if the space was taking the place of time.» The academic classifications and the hierarchy which organized them have thus no more sense for him than the teleologic vision of art. Giacometti, who focused the essential of his work on the Portrait and the Nude. (...)

This choice expresses his certainty that the fundamental principle of art (and in particular of sculpture) is the representation of the human form -- the representation, in his vocabulary, being inextricably bound to the notion of comprehension. «Sculpture is not, for me, a beautiful object, but a means to try understanding a little better what I see, to try understanding a little better what draws me and amazes me in any head.» Indeed, his sculpture focused on a very small number of subjects, all associated with human representation: the head, the bust, the figure, standing, walking, seated. Even in the works of the Surrealist period, which escape the scheme of representation and sometimes verge on abstraction, reference to the human body is central.

Giacometti neither looks for the diversity of forms, nor the expressivity of postures in this human body. After leaving Surrealism and going back to figuration, reduction and repetition are the characteristics most evident in his work. Reduction of typologies, models and poses first. All the standing female figures are naked.

All those created from life are made from a sole model, his wife Annette. The others, much more abstract, are inspired by the history of art. Whether they are made from a model or not, all have the same posture: still, hieratical, arms close to the body and feet stuck in a massive pedestal. The sculptures made during the sittings follow one another like multiple declinations of the same representation, the artist seeking day after day to register the variations of his gaze. The repetition of the same is not however duplication to the identical. «The day when one arrives at understanding totally a certain thing, one can redo it.

But that is impossible, because that thing and me are caught in the movement and the continual mutation of life, which cannot be made still. It is a condition at the same time agonizing and joyful, above all joyful. I have the illusion of moving forward each day, of being each evening a little more advanced than I was in the morning. Thus each day I see differently, I see more richly, thus the world becomes in my eyes more extraordinary and more interesting.» (...)



### **Multiple bodies**

Philippe Büttner

When Giacometti was working and reworking a nude, whether it was sculpted or painted, he did it less to show a nude than to render visible his perception of it. At times he even chose to emphasise the oscillation of his perception between one form and another.

An example taken among his sculptures involves the most important ensemble of female nudes in Giacometti's oeuvre: the famous *Women of Venice* from 1956. This ensemble initially contained at least eleven plasters, among them several painted with a brush by the artist. The creation of the original plasters was made during a process unique in the history of modern sculpture: Giacometti, who worked here without a model, created those famous sculptures in a few weeks of intense labour. As an ensemble, these sculptures form a simultaneous vision of the variations in Giacometti's perception of the nude. (...)

### **The female body, an inexhaustible source of inspiration**

Michèle Kieffer

Rare are the modern artists not interested in the genre of the Nude, and Alberto Giacometti was no exception. The female body is in fact particularly present in the work of the artist, known to the public at large principally for his sculptures of elongated and spindly women. His representation of the female shape, in painting and drawing, is nevertheless much more varied and has evolved considerably during the numerous artistic phases that Giacometti went through over the years. (...)

Annette Giacometti was his principal model, but she was not alone in sitting for the artist. He worked sometimes with professional models, but it was above all the meeting with Caroline Tamagno in 1958 that made a new woman appear, very present in the life of the artist. There only exists one sculpted bust of Caroline, but Giacometti made countless drawings and had his mistress pose for a series of paintings. Astonishingly, she was never represented nude, but dressed and seated in the studio.

The body of Annette is recognizable also in the four very large sculptures that he made at the end of his life. Working on a commission at the initiative of the architect Gordon Bunshaft and his gallerist Pierre Matisse for the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York, Giacometti undertook to create three sculptures for a public square: a large head, a walking man and a standing woman. Research for this project caused a great feeling of dissatisfaction for the sculptor, notably because of the impossibility to visualize the three works in the space. The project was finally abandoned but the plasters created for the occasion are not lost and are preserved as independent works.

Giacometti sculpted on that occasion four women of monumental size, between 247 and 283 cms. As the *Women of Venice*, the *Tall Women* have a hieratic pose, arms placed alongside their bodies and feet anchored in a base, their forms accentuated at the extreme to almost become caricatures. In these figures, still and slender, like trees, the tension of the body replaces the intensity of the representation of the movement.

## **INSTITUT GIACOMETTI**

The Giacometti Institute is a place devoted to exhibitions and to research in art history and pedagogy. Chaired by Catherine Grenier, the director of the Giacometti Foundation since 2014, it is a museum on a human scale, enabling the visitor to get close to the works. The Giacometti Institute is an exhibition space, a place of reference for the oeuvre of Alberto Giacometti, a research centre in art history specialising in modern art practices (1900-1970) and a place for discovery accessible to all public, under the artistic directorship of Christian Alandete.

An exceptional reconstruction of Alberto Giacometti's studio, whose elements, in their entirety, had been kept by his widow, Annette Giacometti, is on permanent display. Among these elements are several very fragile plaster and clay pieces, some of them not shown previously in public, as well as the furniture and the walls painted by the artist. Its ambition is to refresh the way we look at the work of the artist, and at the creative period in which he was involved.

The programme for research and teaching is open to researchers, students and art lovers. Conferences, symposiums and master classes give a platform to art historians and curators who present their works and the current state of research.

## **PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

Institut Giacometti  
5, Rue Victor Schoelcher  
75014 Paris

Visits by reservation

Possibility of buying tickets on site with bankcard only  
(subject to availability).

[www.fondation-giacometti.fr/institut](http://www.fondation-giacometti.fr/institut)

Price: 8,5 euros

Reduced price: 5 and 3 euros

Open from Tuesday to Sunday

Close on monday

Everyday guided tours for individuals

Guided tours for groups upon request



Photo : Man Ray

## **CRUELS OBJECTS OF DESIR GIACOMETTI / SADE**

20 - 11 - 2019 > 9 - 02 - 2020

A reminder of the reading of Sade by Giacometti during his Surrealist period, through a selection of the masterpieces combining eroticism and violence.

Curators: Christian Alandete & Serena Bucalo-Mussely

# ON PERMANENT DISPLAY



## **THE STUDIO OF ALBERTO GIACOMETTI**

Introducing visitors to the intimate universe of the artist's creative process, the studio offers around sixty original works and faithfully restored the furniture and the studio walls painted by Alberto Giacometti.

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**Alberto Giacometti in his studio, Paris, July 1954**

Silver print on paper

Photograph : Sabine Weiss

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ADAGP, Paris) 2019



**Alberto Giacometti  
Invisible Object, 1934-1935**

Plaster - 153 x 32 x 29 cm

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(Fondation Giacometti, Paris + ADAGP, Paris) 2019



Alberto Giacometti  
**Tall Woman I**, 1960  
Bronze - 272 x 34,90 x 54 cm  
©Succession Alberto Giacometti  
(Fondation Giacometti, Paris +  
ADAGP, Paris) 2019



Alberto Giacometti  
**Notebook**, circa 1963  
14,7 x 10,9 cm (closed)  
©Succession Alberto Giacometti  
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## PRESS IMAGES



Alberto Giacometti  
**Figurine of London I**, 1965  
Painted plaster - 26,20 x 9,50 x 13,50  
cm  
©Succession Alberto Giacometti  
(Fondation Giacometti, Paris +  
ADAGP, Paris) 2019



Alberto Giacometti  
**Tall Woman**, 1958  
Painted plaster - 188,30 x 28,80  
x 40,90 cm  
©Succession Alberto Giacometti  
(Fondation Giacometti, Paris +  
ADAGP, Paris) 2019





Alberto Giacometti  
**Tall Woman II**, 1960  
Painted plaster - 283 x 32 x 57 cm  
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(Fondation Giacometti, Paris +  
ADAGP, Paris) 2019



Alberto Giacometti  
**Standing nude**, circa 1961  
Oil on canvas – 92 cm x 73 cm  
Private Collection  
©Succession Alberto Giacometti  
(Fondation Giacometti, Paris +  
ADAGP, Paris) 2019



Alberto Giacometti  
**Nude from back**, 1955 - 1965  
11,50 x 8,80 cm  
©Succession Alberto Giacometti  
(Fondation Giacometti, Paris +  
ADAGP, Paris) 2019



Alberto Giacometti next to the  
model Carmen Damedoz at the  
**Académie de la Grande Chaumière**, 1922  
Silver print on paper  
Archives de la Fondation  
Giacometti, Paris  
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