

THE ART OF ALBERTO GIACOMETTI FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

10 July 2019 – For the very first time in the Czech Republic, the National Gallery Prague presents the work of one of the most important, influential and beloved artists of the 20th century, the sculptor and painter Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966).

This extensive retrospective exhibition maps Giacometti's artistic development across five decades. It follows its course from the artist's early years in the Swiss town of Stampa, through his avantgarde experiments in inter-war Paris and up to its culmination in the unique manner of figural representation for which the artist is known best. His impressive elongated figures, which Giacometti created after World War II and which carry a sense of existential urgency, reflect his sense for the fragility and vulnerability of the human being.



Walking Man, 1960

© Alberto Giacometti Estate, (Fondation Giacometti, Paris + ADAGP, Paris) 2019



The Cage, 1950–1951

"Thanks to a joint collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti in Paris, who administers the estate of Annette and Alberto Giacometti, we are able to present over one hundred sculptures, including a series of valuable plaster statuettes, to the Czech audience. The exhibition will also feature several of Giacometti's key paintings and drawings that testify to the breadth of his technical ability and thematic ambit," says Julia Bailey, the exhibition's curator from the NGP's Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art.

The exhibition at the Trade Fair Palace will feature such notable examples of Giacometti's works as *Walking Man*, *Standing Woman* or his *Women of Venice*, which intrigued

audiences at the famous Italian Biennale in 1956, as well as several other of his iconic works such as *Spoon Woman*, *Woman with Chariot*, *Nose* and valuable miniature plaster sculptures, intimate portraits of the artist's family and friends who have been Giacometti's favourite models all life long.

Giacometti, whom Jean-Paul Sartre described as one of the most important existential artists, refused strictly realistic representation because he perceived an insurmountable abyss between reality and art. "*The originality of Giacometti's work lies in the fact that it is situated on the very edge of this chasm. He internalised his earlier struggle with representation to such an extent that it became a motive force for his art,*" explains Catherine Grenier, director of the Fondation Giacometti, President of the Giacometti Institute, and co-curator of the show.

The exhibition *Alberto Giacometti*, prepared by the National Gallery in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti in Paris, will open on 18 July 2019 on the first floor of the Trade Fair Palace and run until 1 December 2019. It will be complemented by a rich accompanying programme as well as a companion volume.

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

Date: 18 July – 1 December 2019

Venue: Trade Fair Palace

Curators: Julia Tatiana Bailey (NGP), Serena Bucalo-Mussely (Fondation Giacometti), Catherine Grenier (Fondation Giacometti)

This exhibition is organised by the National Gallery Prague in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti, Paris.

BIOGRAPHY

1901

Alberto Giacometti was born on 10 October in Borgonovo (Stampa), a little village in Italian-speaking Switzerland. His father, Giovanni Giacometti (1868–1933), was a well-known Swiss neo-impressionist painter. Giovanni Giacometti and Annetta Stampa had three other children: Diego (1902–1985), Ottilia (1904–1937) and Bruno (1907–2012). The painters Cuno Amiet and Ferdinand Hodler were the godparents of Alberto and Bruno.

1904

The family moved to a house in Stampa where Giovanni set up his studio.

AROUND 1910

Giovanni acquired a summer house in Maloja, on Lake Sils, where he set up a second studio. Alberto added the finishing touches to a bust of his father made by Auguste de Niederhäusern-Rodo, by painting on it – his first attempt at fusing sculpture and painting. He made his first copies of Albrecht Dürer's engravings.

1914–15

Alberto Giacometti spent his childhood in Stampa. While very young, he was initiated by his father into drawing and painting. In December 1914, he made his first sculpture: a bust of his brother Diego, who became his main model. In 1915, he realised his first oil painting, *Still Life with Apples*. All his life he kept those first works in his studio. His brother Bruno, his sister Ottilia and his mother also sat for him.

1915–19

He studied at the Protestant senior school of Schiers, near Coire.

1919–20

He interrupted his studies and enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts, then at Geneva's École des Arts et Métiers. Under the influence of his father, he made several paintings in a neo-impressionist style.

1920

He left school. He accompanied his father to Venice, where Giovanni officially represented Switzerland at the Biennale. Alberto discovered Tintoretto, then visited Padua, where he saw Giotto's frescoes. In November, he visited Florence, where he discovered Egyptian art, followed by Rome. The influence of Egyptian sculpture was crucial for the evolution of his art.

1921

He settled in Rome at his father's cousin's home, then in a small studio in Via Ripetta. He travelled to Naples and Pompeii, before returning to Maloja for the summer. During that period, he made countless copies of works by the Old Masters. On 3 September, he began a journey with a Dutch librarian named Pieter van Meurs. His elderly travel companion would die in front of him two days later. His work would be influenced by this traumatic experience of death on numerous occasions.

1922

In January, he moved to Paris to study sculpture in the class of Antoine Bourdelle at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. He stayed there until 1927. His sculptures of the time evolved to embrace post-cubism and primitivism.

1925

He rented a small studio in rue Froidevaux, near the Montparnasse Cemetery, where his brother Diego joined him. Diego started sitting for his brother again, and began helping him in his work. Alberto met Pierre Matisse, son of the painter Henri Matisse, who was to represent him in his New York gallery. He sculpted and painted the portrait of Flora Mayo, an American he met at the Grande Chaumière. First participation in the Salon des Tuileries, and first commission from the collector of African art, Josef Müller.

1926

On 1 December, he moved into the studio at 46, rue Hippolyte-Maindron, where he would remain until his death.

1927

He exhibited for the second time at the Salon des Tuileries, alongside Brâncuși and Zadkine in the room for the avant-garde.

1928

He made his first "plaques" ("flat figures"), among them *Gazing Head*, which he presented at the exhibition *Les artistes italiens de Paris (Italian Artists of Paris)*. A version of that work was bought the following year by the Argentinian collector Elvira de Alvear, and another by the Vicomte de Noailles.

1929

Jeanne Bucher exhibited his work in her gallery. He met Jean Cocteau and André Masson, who introduced him to the avant-garde milieu, then Louis Aragon, Georges Bataille and the historian Carl Einstein. First enthusiastic article on Giacometti by Michel Leiris in the magazine *Documents*. He signed a one-year contract with Galerie Pierre. He met the photographer Eli Lotar.

1930–31

Man Ray presented him to the interior designer Jean-Michel Frank, for whom he made his first decorative art objects. At Galerie Pierre he exhibited *Suspended Ball*, which Salvador Dalí named as the prototype for "objects with a symbolic function". He officially became a member of André Breton's surrealist group, and took part in its activities.

1932

First solo exhibition in Paris at Galerie Pierre Colle. Christian Zervos wrote an article in *Cahiers d'art* illustrated with photos taken by Man Ray in Giacometti's studio.

1933

First print for the illustration of the novel *Les pieds dans le plat (Putting My Foot in It)* by René Crevel. He published several texts in the magazine *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution (Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution)* and, at Tériade's request, in the magazine *Minotaure*. He took part in the surrealist exhibition at Galerie Pierre Colle where he sold *Table* to the Noailles (the work was eventually donated to the Musée national d'art moderne in 1951). His father died a few days later, on 25 June.

1934

In the following months, Giacometti made *Head-Skull*, *Invisible Object* and *Cube*, as a last portrait of his father. He began to distance himself from the surrealist movement, by going back to working from nature. In December, the Julien Levy Gallery organised his first solo exhibition in New York.

1935

Break with the surrealist group. He undertook solitary research on the theme of heads, using as models his brother Diego and the young Rita Gueyfier, who took turns to sit over several months. He befriended Balthus, Francis Gruber and Pierre Tal-Coat. At the end of the year he met Isabel Nicholas, who became his friend and model.

1936

He entrusted Pierre Matisse with representing his work in the United States. *The Palace at 4 a.m.* entered the collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art, his first work in that museum. In Paris, the important Cézanne retrospective at the Musée de l'Orangerie confirmed for him the importance of questioning the vision of reality.

1937

Giacometti became friends with Samuel Beckett, with whom he frequented Montparnasse at night. He visited Picasso in his studio in Grands-Augustins, while he was working on his masterpiece *Guernica*. His sister Ottilia died in Geneva as she was giving birth to her first child, Silvio.

1938

He was run over by a car. As a result of that accident he afterwards walked with a slight limp. The collector Peggy Guggenheim exhibited and sold Giacometti's work in New York.

1939

He met Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. The Second World War started on 1 September.

1941

France was invaded by the German Nazi forces. In December, he went to Switzerland, where he stayed for the duration of the war. He made several portraits of his nephew Silvio and met the editor Albert Skira.

1943

He met Annette Arm in Switzerland. She became his wife in 1949 and one of his favourite models.

1944

Eli Lotar met up with Giacometti in Geneva, where he photographed for the magazine *Labyrinthe* the room in the Hôtel de Rive where Giacometti was working on his series of tiny figures.

1945

The war ended on 8 May with the capitulation of Germany. In September, he returned to Paris, where Diego had managed to keep his studio in the same state in which he had left it. He returned to the Parisian literary milieu.

1946

He made a series of portraits of personalities of the arts and literature: Marie-Laure de Noailles, Simone de Beauvoir and Georges Bataille. At Aragon's request, he also sculpted the head of Rol-Tanguy, the communist leader of the French Resistance. He published "Le Rêve, le sphinx et la mort de T." ("The Dream, the Sphinx and the Death of T.") in the magazine *Labyrinthe*.

1947

Annette Arm moved into rue Hippolyte-Maindron.

1948

First solo exhibition of his works since 1934 at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York. Sartre wrote "La Recherche de l'absolu" ("The Search for the Absolute") as the preface to the catalogue. The gallery set up solo exhibitions in 1950, 1958, 1961 and 1964.

1949

Man Pointing was bought by the Tate Gallery in London, the first of Giacometti's works to be acquired by a European museum. He continued his series of portraits of intellectuals with Jean-Paul Sartre and Tristan Tzara. He married Annette Arm on 19 July.

1950

He presented new sculptures, among them his figure compositions on square bases, at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York.

1951

First exhibition at Galerie Maeght in Paris, where other exhibitions followed in 1954, 1957 and 1961. First lithographs. Responsibility for the exhibition and sale of his output was shared between two galleries.

1952

The Musée de Grenoble bought *The Cage*, the first of his post-war works to enter a public collection in France. Donation of *Table* to the Musée national d'art moderne by the Noailles, the first surrealist work in the French national collection.

1954

First solo exhibition in a museum, in Santa Barbara in California. Project for a medal to Henri Matisse. He made his first portraits of Jean Genet, who was to sit for him until 1958.

1955

First retrospectives in museums: the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Arts Council Gallery in London (organised by David Sylvester) and in Germany (Krefeld, Düsseldorf and Stuttgart).

1956

He represented France at the Venice Biennale, where he exhibited a group of sculptures: *Women of Venice*. He drew the cover for Jean Genet's *Le Balcon* (*The Balcony*). He met Isaku Yanaihara, who sat for him over several summers (in 1957, 1959, 1960 and 1961).

1957

Jean Genet wrote "L'atelier d'Alberto Giacometti" ("The Studio of Alberto Giacometti"), which first appeared in the magazine *Derrière le miroir* (*Behind the Mirror*), and was then published in 1963 as a book, illustrated with photographs by Ernst Scheidegger.

1958

First solo exhibition in Japan. He met Caroline, who became his mistress and model until 1965.

1959

He was invited to take part in a competition for a monument in the plaza of Chase Manhattan Bank in New York, but the project was never completed. He started the book of lithographs *Paris sans fin* (*Paris Without End*), which was published in 1969.

1961

First Prize for sculpture at the annual Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Beckett commissioned the set for his play *Waiting for Godot* at the Théâtre de l'Odéon.

1962

Invited to the Venice Biennale with a solo exhibition, he won the Grand Prize for sculpture. He took part in the hanging of his large retrospective at the Kunsthaus in Zurich, organised by René Wehrli and his brother, Bruno Giacometti. Jacques Dupin published the first monograph devoted to Giacometti for Maeght Éditeur.

1963

His ulcer had turned cancerous and Giacometti had to have most of his stomach removed.

1964

He received the Guggenheim International Award for painting. Opening of the Giacometti room and courtyard at the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. He installed the works planned for Chase Manhattan Bank: two men walking, two large women and a large head. He also made a group of *Women of Venice* in bronze. His mother died on 25 June.

1965

Three retrospectives were held in London, New York and Copenhagen, which he attended. He actively took part in the one in London at the Tate Gallery. Creation of the Alberto Giacometti-Stiftung in Zurich, through the purchase of part of the collection of American industrialist, G. David Thompson. He received the National Arts Award from the French Ministry for Cultural Affairs.

1966

He died suddenly at the hospital in Coire on 11 January. He was buried on 15 January in the cemetery in Borgonovo.

FONDATION- GIACOMETTI



THE FONDATION GIACOMETTI

Created in December 2003, the **Fondation Giacometti, Paris** is a private institution, an officially recognised non-profit organization. Its purpose is the protection, dissemination and promotion of Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre. Sole legatee of Annette Giacometti, the artist's widow, the Fondation owns the largest collection of works by Alberto Giacometti in the world. It comprises more than 350 sculptures, 90 paintings, 2,000 drawings and as many prints, a collection it is in charge of preserving, restoring and enriching. The Fondation Giacometti has at its disposal remarkable archival fonds of photographs, documentations and correspondence by the artist. The Fondation is directed by Catherine Grenier.

The missions of the Fondation

The Fondation Giacometti is dedicated to the preservation and diffusion of its collections (drawings, paintings, prints, plasters and bronzes), and works at promoting and enhancing Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre on an international level.

Its activities include: the presentation to the public of Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre through the organisation of monographic and thematic exhibitions in French and foreign museums, the establishing of a catalogue of the artist's authenticated works, the organisation and participation in various cultural events, the publication and participation in the publication of research on Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre. The Fondation organises the committee of authentication of the artist's works, and takes charge of the protection of his oeuvre in France and abroad.

THE GIACOMETTI INSTITUTE

The Giacometti Institute, Paris opened its doors in June 2018. An innovative and permanent place dedicated to exhibition, research in art history and pedagogy, the Giacometti Institute is chaired by **Catherine Grenier**, director of the Fondation Giacometti since 2014. Its ambition is to revitalise the way we look at the artist's oeuvre and the creative period in which he belongs.

On permanent exhibition: Alberto Giacometti's studio

Introducing visitors to the intimate universe of the artist's creative process, this reconstitution gathers together around sixty original works, and faithfully reproduces the whole studio setting, the furniture as well as the walls painted by Alberto Giacometti.

Programme – forthcoming exhibitions

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI – NARRATING THE BODY
21 June – 9 November 2019

The exhibition and the book 'Narrating the body' focus on the figures of the female nude, for which, since the very beginning, Giacometti tried to establish a new model of representation. The exhibition includes several exceptional works recently restored and presented for the very first time to the public. Curator: Catherine Grenier – Associate curator: Michèle Kieffer

CRUEL OBJECTS OF DESIRE – GIACOMETTI/SADE
20 November 2019 – 9 February 2020

A reminder of Giacometti's reading of Sade during his Surrealist period through a selection of major works combining eroticism with violence. Curators: Christian Alandete and Serena Bucalo-Mussely

Information

Giacometti Institute – 5, Rue Victor Schoelcher 75014 Paris – Phone: 01 87 89 76 77
Open Tuesday 2 p.m. – 6 p.m. / Wednesday to Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Closed on Monday all day and Tuesday morning
www.fondation-giacometti.fr/institut
www.fondation-giacometti.fr/fr/presse

GIACOMETTI LAB
Launched May 2019

The Giacometti Lab, a place associated with the Giacometti Institute, is dedicated to pedagogy and research. The pedagogic programmes of the Giacometti Institute and the "École des Modernités", a programme of research in modern art history, takes place here. This programme contributes to the better understanding of the influential period in which Giacometti evolved (1910-1960). Paris' cosmopolitan modernity is its central axis.

The École des Modernités programme supports young researchers, art historians and curators by providing annual scholarships given out by a jury: a scholarship for research (€10,000) and grants for publication. This art history research programme also offers lectures, seminars, study days and symposiums. The conferences, which are filmed, form a corpus of references accessible on the Fondation Giacometti's site.

The Collection École des Modernités publishes short books on original subjects focused on the modern period.

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Responsible for the École des Modernités: Hugo Daniel

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