

## GRIMALDI FORUM MONACO

**“Alberto Giacometti. A retrospective. *Marvellous Reality*”**

Exhibition to be held from 3 July to 29 August 2021

In the summer of 2021 in Monaco, the Fondation Giacometti is joining forces with the Grimaldi Forum to present for the first time an exceptional retrospective of the work of the sculptor and painter Alberto Giacometti, the most important retrospective held in recent years and one organised by the curatorial office of Émilie Bouvard, the foundation’s scientific and collections director.

This voyage into the creative works of Alberto Giacometti will take place in an atmosphere of wonder, the wonder of Giacometti in the face of “marvellous” reality, as he often put it. He endeavoured to represent, without hierarchy, what he saw around him: loved ones, objects from his studio, everyday things, landscapes from his Swiss childhood or the suburbs of Paris.

The scenography of the exhibition, the richness of the works presented, will in turn amaze the viewer who is placed at the heart of the artist’s intimacy. The exhibition route will devote a significant part **to all periods, to all media**, sculptures (plaster, bronze), paintings, drawings and prints that make up Giacometti’s work. It will **allow a complete view of his creative output**, from early works to his surrealist period, from the return to figuration to his post-model work, and to the invention of the great icons of the post-war period.

Bringing together nearly **230 works accompanied by photographs**, the exhibition is punctuated with masterpieces and will offer the visitor the opportunity to make wonderful discoveries based around **14 original sequences**.

The route will in particular revivify the **atmosphere of the studio** by revealing the detours and questions that mark the creative process of Alberto Giacometti. The themes favoured by the artist – the representation of the human head, of the face, of the female body – will particularly stand out, but we will also discover his relationship to loneliness, to melancholy and to his hard work with his models: his wife Annette, his brother Diego and his close friends.

**The visitor will thus encounter another Giacometti**, one who experiments with the limits of sculpture, and the formidable painter who, as well as portraits, also worked with the genres of landscapes and still life.

*“For me, a sculpture is not a beautiful object but a means to try to understand a little better what I see, to try to understand a little better what attracts and amazes me about any head. Painting is a way of trying to understand what attracts and amazes me about any character, any tree or any object on a table.”*

*Alberto Giacometti, Diderot and Falconet Agreed, 1959*

## Some highlights from the exhibition



*The Invisible Object*

1934-35

Plaster

153 x 32 x 29 cm

Fondation Giacometti

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The original title of this work was *Hands Holding the Void (Mains Tenant Le Vide)*. It could be an image of mourning and loss, which is suggested by the homonymy of the title, which in French also sounds like the words for “now, the void”. André Breton renamed it *The Invisible Object*, thus evoking the “obscure object of desire” so dear to surrealists keen on psychoanalysis. During a visit to the Saint-Ouen flea market with Giacometti, Breton and he came across a mask from the First World War which inspired Giacometti to create the head, with which the sculptor was not satisfied. A strange figure inspired by an assembly, this sculpture is also one of Giacometti’s last surrealist works.

*“Loneliness is not psychological; there’s nothing you can do about it. It exists in space. Your head, when I look at it emerging from the void against this background of sky, has a funny allure. What do you want to do about it?”*

*Alberto Giacometti, interview with Jean Clay, 1963*



*The Nose*

1947

Plaster

82.5 x 71 x 37 cm

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This striking head suspended in the void is the expression of a nightmare that profoundly troubled the artist in 1946, and which echoes an old traumatizing experience. In 1921, he witnessed the death of Pieter van Meurs, whom he had met during a trip. He was fascinated by the nose which seems to him to elongate indefinitely as life escapes from the body. Taking up the device of the *Suspended Ball* once more, Giacometti deepens its disturbing character by suspending a head whose nose pops out of the cage. It invades the viewer's exterior space, creating an impression of uneasiness reinforced by the shape of the neck which evokes the butt of a revolver.



*The Walking Man II*

1960

Plaster

188.5 x 29.1 x 11 cm

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*Walking Man*, which has become Giacometti's most iconic work, had a first version in 1947, before being revived in 1960. The artist was then asked to create a work for the New York plaza of the Chase Manhattan Bank. The project's architect asked him to draw his inspiration from the work entitled *Three Men Walking*, created in 1948. The artist replaced the three men with three different figures: a *Walking Man*, a huge head and a gigantic woman. The project was abandoned in 1961, when the artist chose to give it up. With this sculpture, life-size and with the abandonment of any anecdotal element, Giacometti pays homage to human existence by representing man in his most universal dimension. The work presented here is the plaster original.

*"Deep down, I was annoyed by the life-size sculptures that five big guys couldn't lift. Annoyed because a man walking down the street weighs nothing or is in any case much less heavy than the same man when dead or unconscious. He balances on his legs. We don't feel his weight. This is what I unconsciously wanted to convey, this lightness, be refining my silhouettes..."*

*Alberto Giacometti, Interview with Jean Clay, 1963*



*Black Annette, 1962*

Oil on canvas

55 x 45.8 cm

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Annette Arm (1923 –1993) met Giacometti in Geneva in 1943 and became his wife in 1949. From 1946 when she moved to Paris and until the end of the artist's life, Annette was one of Alberto's favourite models. In this portrait, the figure of Annette is drawn in black, then coloured in grey, and finally retouched with white accents. The background is an almost homogeneous grey tone that does not fill the canvas right up to the edge, leaving a white margin. The pictorial space is delineated by a frame drawn by the artist. The gloomy tones of this portrait are present in many other paintings done in the early sixties. The contour of the head is the result of a multitude of approaches, as are the details of the face, giving them an intense vibration. The gaze of the model, with eyes wide open and fixed straight in front of herself, recalls the frontality of the Coptic funeral portraits that Giacometti greatly admired.

*"Now that I have started to draw your portrait, I feel sufficiently inspired to continue! At this precise moment, I would like to ask you to pose for me for months on end. You pose so well! We must not let go of this! I beg you not to abandon me among my first attempts! Sincerely, please do! Let's continue!"*

*Alberto Giacometti, Interview with Gotthard Jedlicka, 1953*



Alberto Giacometti in his studio, May 1954

Photo: Arnold Newman / Arnold Newman Collection / via Getty Images

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From 1926 on, Alberto Giacometti lived in the bare setting of his studio at 46 Rue Hippolyte-Maindron, but in 1954 he was on the verge of gaining international recognition. Retrospectives were held the following year at the Guggenheim Museum in New York and at the Arts Council in London. Photographers flocked to his door and wrote reports in the press. Among them was the American

photographer Arnold Newman who managed to capture both the asceticism and the audacity of Alberto Giacometti in a series of portraits done in his living and working environment.

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