

Lille métropole  
musée d'art moderne  
d'art contemporain  
et d'art brut



## ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, A MODERN ADVENTURE

EXHIBITION/EVENT

13 MARCH > 11 JUNE 2019



Alberto Giacometti, *Grande femme I (Large Woman 1)*  
Giacometti Foundation, Paris. © Succession Alberto  
Giacometti (Giacometti Foundation, Paris + ADAGP,  
Paris)

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In spring 2019, following the success of *Amedeo Modigliani. The Inner Eye* in 2016, the LaM will be inviting the public to take a fresh look at one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's greatest artists: Alberto Giacometti, whose works have previously been little exhibited in the museums of Northern Europe.

Almost 150 works will be brought together for an unparalleled exploration of the founding myths of the history of modern art.

Inscribed in the collective imagination, Alberto Giacometti's fragile elongated sculptures render the profiles of men and women either motionless or captured in movement. Presentation of these masterpieces will be complemented by a wealth of outstanding loans shedding light on Giacometti's unique artistic career: his early works influenced by cubism, his passion for Ancient Egypt (a source of inspiration and revitalisation throughout his life), his encounter with the surrealists, and his later pictorial works.

Offering a fresh viewpoint on the work of an artist whose career spanned almost half a century, the visit will continue on into Museum galleries providing a series of counterpoints to his body of work, including photographs of the artist in his studio and a work by Annette Messager paying tribute to Giacometti.

Born in Les Grisons in 1901 and active in Paris throughout his career, Alberto Giacometti divided his time between painting, sculpture and drawing up to his death in 1966. His links with cubism and surrealism, attraction for ancient and non-western arts and fascination for the human form made him an artist like no other, yet one who was fully involved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century's artistic issues.

### EARLY YEARS AND SURREALISM

After studying at Geneva's School of Fine Arts, Giacometti moved to Paris in 1922, where he enrolled in Antoine Bourdelle's studio and immersed himself in cubism, which influenced his early work. He developed a passion for ancient statuary, Egyptian in particular, as well as for African and Oceanian arts. Non-western arts helped him turn his back on sculptural relief, encouraging him to flatten out forms and employ a combination of signs to represent facial features. These formative years left him with a lifelong attraction for the world history of sculpture, and he went on to draw countless copies of famous works in the pages of the books in his library.

He came to the notice of the surrealists in 1929 and became their travelling companion for a few years. Some of his most disturbing works date from this period, creations that might have made their way out of some threatening dream: sculptures evoking cruel,

communiqué de presse



Alberto Giacometti, *Boule suspendue* (Suspended Ball). Giacometti Foundation, Paris. © Succession Alberto Giacometti (Giacometti Foundation, Paris + ADAGP, Paris)

#### GENERAL CURATORSHIP

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mysterious game boards, “cages” peopled with strange figures and “unpleasant objects” imbued with strong sexual connotations.

#### RETURN TO THE SITTER

Giacometti left André Breton's movement in 1935 and turned his attention back to the human form and portraiture, which were to remain central to his interest until his death in 1966. Friends and family, collectors, intellectuals and famous names succeeded each other in his studio. Over the years, he produced countless painted and sculpted portraits of his loved ones – his brother Diego, his wife Annette, his mistress Caroline – and such celebrities as Simone de Beauvoir, Marie-Hélène de Noailles and the poet, publisher and gallerist Jacques Dupin, who first met Giacometti in 1954 and wrote a biography of the artist.

Confronted with the problems of creation, Giacometti, ever dissatisfied, was caught up in an endless struggle with his materials. Resemblance to the living sitter remained a central concern in his painted and sculpted portraits.

In order to overcome his inability to depict the sitter as he perceived him or her, he called on the help of artists and civilisations that had preceded him, paying particular attention to Ancient Egyptian statuary. Several of his most emblematic works show its influence: sculpted in 1936, one of the first portraits of Isabel Nicholas, an artist who was his lover and friend, is topped by an Egyptianising headdress; the postures of some of his sculptures of standing women and seated men are reminiscent of deities depicted on sarcophagi lids or of “squatting scribes”; and, seen in profile, the famous *Homme qui marche* (Walking Man) has striking similarities to hieroglyphic writing.

#### THE HUMAN FORM REDUCED TO ITS ESSENTIALS

After the Second World War, Giacometti developed the model human form he is best known for. Extremely elongated and fragile, men and women, motionless or captured in movement, come into being, alone or in groups. The figure's setting in space – of fundamental importance in Ancient Egyptian statuary and painting – is the main focus in a series of works contained in a cage or grouped together on flat bases. Both open and closed, such structures enclose one or more figures in environments that may call to mind a theatre set, showcase, square or clearing.

His *Femmes de Venise* (Women of Venice), created for the 1956 Venice Biennale, embody this period in which men and women are envisaged as landscapes: the men's heads are stones, the women's bodies are trees. Cast in bronze following the Biennale, the original plaster sculptures were restored between 2015 and 2017 and will be on display for the first time in this configuration.



Alberto Giacometti, *L'Homme qui marche I* (Walking Man I). Giacometti Foundation, Paris. © Succession Alberto Giacometti (Giacometti Foundation, Paris + ADAGP, Paris)

At the very end of his life, commissions for monumental works were to turn such fantasies into reality. His paintings from the 1950s and 1960s also depict ghostly figures set in a space halfway between the studio view and the world of dreams, a parallel universe where humankind survives as best it can.

In the permanent exhibition galleries, several counterpoints will be inviting visitors to continue their exploration of Giacometti's body of work:

- *L'Atelier de Giacometti* which presents photographs of Giacometti's studio
- *Giacometti, poétique du livre* with a selection of plates from *Paris sans fin* (Paris without End), a book of the artist published in 1969
- The artwork *Sans légende* (Untitled - 2012), tribute of Annette Messager to Giacometti
- *Proches et lointains : Alberto Giacometti, Michael Noble, Carlo Zinelli* exploring influences between the three artists
- *Autour de la collection : Ubac, Miró, Dupin* about the association between poetic and plastic languages



Exhibition organised in collaboration with the Giacometti Foundation, Paris

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#### LaM PRACTICAL INFO

The *Alberto Giacometti, a modern adventure* exhibition is open Tuesday to Thursday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays from 1 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sundays and public holidays (including Mondays 22 April and 10 June) from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Open from 11 a.m. Tuesday to Friday (closing times unchanged) during Zone B school holidays  
Closed on Mondays (except Mondays 22 April and 10 June: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.) and 1 May

Exhibition + Permanent Collection admission fee: Full Fee €11 / Reduced Fee €8 / free