



Publication: The Straits Times Life!

Date: May 2 2008

Headline: The art of being human

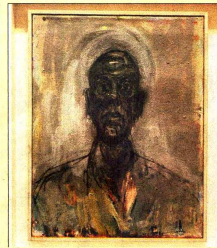


The art of being human

The works of Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti draw inspiration from the ordinary



ST PHOTOS: MUGILAN RAJASEGERAN
SEEING IS BEING: Giacometti's bronze sculptures (from far left) Man Crossing A Square (1949), Standing Male (1964) and Diego (1950), and his only oil on canvas on show here, Man's Head (1964, below left).



Deepika Shetty

SWISS artist Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966, below) is considered to be in the same league as Spanish artist Pablo Picasso and French artist Henri Matisse. But his work is neither surreal nor wildly colourful.

Instead, he drew inspiration from the ordinary – the way a person sits in a car, the way a man crosses the street, the way a cafe table looks. Each small object, each everyday movement held deeper meaning for him.

This is evident in the '95 lithographs, five drawings, five sculptures and a painting currently on display at an exhibition called Seeing, Feeling, Being: Alberto Giacometti at the Singapore Art Museum until June 15.

The exhibition features several of the Swiss master's iconic works and is presented as part of Credit Suisse's Innovation In Arts Series. It is backed by the Swiss Embassy and most of the artworks come from the Alberto Giacometti Foundation.

Accompanying the exhibition is a documentary on his life, and there is also a series of photographs of the master at work, taken by Swiss photographer and film-maker Ernst Scheidegger.



PHOTO: WWW.GIACOMETTI.HOMMAGE.DE

In addition to those famous stick-thin sculptures, what stands out is a series of lithographs the artist created between 1958 and 1965. Titled Paris Sans Fin, or Never-ending Paris, these are a visual journey of his life in Paris, which he documented up to his death.

They are said to be his most complete work, in contrast to his often unfinished sculptures, and show the people and places he saw. In vignettes of fleeting landscapes and languid cafe scenes, the lithographs capture his constant search for eternity in a moment.

As museum director Kwok Kian Chow, 52, puts it: "Giacometti's art touches the very consciousness of human beings."

He adds that the artist was one of those "who truly believe in art being what they see". Giacometti first concentrated his sculpting on the human head, focusing on the model's intense gaze. This is evident in bronze sculptures such as Diego, a sculpture featuring his brother Diego, and Man's Head On Stem.

This artistic phase was followed by another one in which his statues became stretched out, their limbs elongated. Obsessed with creating his sculptures exactly as he saw them, he often made them thin as nails.

He worked and re-worked the sculptures many times and often called them "unfinished".

Swiss ambassador Daniel Woker, 59, who played a key role in bringing this exhibition here, says: "When you first look at his sculptures, what strikes you is the fact that they are thin and long. But at a deeper level, they show a master at work who captured the human condition as he saw it."

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Seeing, Feeling, Being: Alberto Giacometti is on at the Singapore Art Museum till June 15 from 10am to 7pm daily. Admission is free after 6pm on Fridays and from 11am to 5pm on weekends. At other times, entry fee is \$8 for adults and \$4 for students and senior citizens.