

Annex A

Biographical information of Alberto Giacometti

1901

Alberto Giacometti is born on the 10th of October in Borgonovo in the Bergell, a mountain valley in the Italian speaking part of Graubunden in the heart of the Swiss Alps. He is the son of the post-Impressionist painter Giovanni Giacometti (1868-1933) and Annetta Giacometti Stampa (1871-1964) who are well-known outside Switzerland. Cuno Amiet (1868-1961), Fauvist painter and close friend of the father, became Alberto's godfather. Augusto Giacometti (1877-1947), an important Symbolist for both Swiss and European painting, is a second cousin of the parents.

1902

Birth of his brother Diego (t1985), who shares Alberto's life in Paris from 1925, supports his work and often sits for him as a model.

1904

Birth of his sister Ottilia (t1937 during the birth of her son Silvio). The family moves to neighbouring Stampa.

1907

Birth of his brother Bruno, who later trains as an architect.

1911-1914

Alberto, who grows up in a strongly artistically influenced family, begins his own artistic activity at an early age. His starting point is his father's painting which lives from colour. Alberto makes landscape sketches and portraits of the members of his family, but also makes copies from his parents' art books. In 1913 he creates his first oil painting and in 1914 he models his first heads. His artistic interests are recognized at a very early age and encouraged by his father.

1915-1919

Attends the Grammar School in Schiers near Chur as a boarding school pupil. A small studio is equipped for him there due to his talent.

1919-1920

On the recommendation of his father Alberto attends the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Ecole des Arts Industriels in Geneva. In May 1920 his father takes him on a journey to Venice and Padua. Alberto discovers the art of Tintoretto and Giotto. In November of the same year he sets off again for Italy. His journey leads him from Florence via Perugia and Assisi to Rome, where he lives with relatives for several months. Naples, Paestum and Pompei are further stops on his journey. His encounter with ancient, mainly Egyptian, art and the Old Masters again leave lasting impressions. The sudden death of his travelling companion Pieter van Meurs causes him a lasting trauma. The experience will haunt him for his whole life.

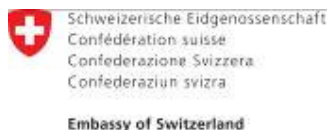
1922-1924

At the beginning of 1922 Giacometti travels to Paris - the centre of art at that time. He enrolls himself into the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere into the sculpture class of the Rodin pupil Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929) - at that time this was the most important training centre for sculptors. He attended the sculpting class until 1925, then with longer interruptions until 1927. During these first Paris years he returns annually for a longer visit to Bergell. In later years he will always spend several weeks a year in his homeland.

1925-1926

In Paris Giacometti first moved in Swiss artistic circles. They include Serge Brignoni, with which he shares an interest in tribal art and Surrealism which starts blossoming from 1924. His circle of acquaintances soon widens through his studies at the Academy to include artists from Italy and Scandinavia. An important acquaintance is Pierre Matisse, son of Henri Matisse, who as an art dealer in New York after the Second World War will strongly promote Giacometti. In November 1925, Giacometti exhibits publicly for the first time in the Salon des Tuileries. Amongst other things he shows an early version of the Torso from 1925. It is a highly stylized Torso made out of a combination of geometric forms. This work, with its transition to the cubist stylistic idiom, marks Giacometti's detachment from figurative modelling. He creates a few sculptures using classic themes - the standing male and female figure, the pair, the head with the seeing motif - using Cubist form vocabulary, influenced amongst other

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things by Laurens and Lipchitz. Besides this he produces a series of works which through dealing with the art of non-European cultures dedicate themselves to the search for the symbolic representation of reality.

1927-1930

In the summer he creates several portrait heads in Stampa based on the work of his father and mother. Through these works Giacometti systematically explores the possibilities of form. Together with his experience of Cubism in Paris and in conjunction with the planar representation of primitive art they lead to the Looking Head work of 1928. This consists of a head which is reduced to a rectangular plate with introduced depressions. Looking Head is Giacometti's first independent contribution to modern sculpture. Through this work he obtains the reputation of an innovative sculptor in Paris. From now on his works are shown at important exhibitions beside those of already renowned artists such as Maillol, Brancusi or Lipchitz. Tete qui regarde and the works that follow - works with strong sexual connotations or "anti-artistic" objects, which are taken from everyday life and which are placed directly on the floor without a base - excite the attention of the Surrealists. They see in them a visualisation of internal events, obsessions, fears and impulses, elements from the unconscious. He knows amongst others Andre Masson, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Andre Breton and Georges Bataille. In 1929 Michel Leiris writes the first critique about the artist in Batailles magazine Documents. Giacometti joins the group of Surrealists in 1930 and participates in their activities until 1934. In order to earn a living he and Diego make decoration objects for Jean-Michel Frank's interior arrangement business.

1933-1934

On the 25th of June 1933 his father Giovanni Giacometti dies. Shortly afterwards Alberto creates his last avant-garde works: Head-Bronze and Cube from 1934 are stylized representations of the human head which deal with death in different ways. With these works and the realization that living reality - which is Giacometti's true interest - cannot be grasped with geometrical stylistic forms, Giacometti bids farewell to Surrealism and returns to the living model and to figurative representation, although he loses a lot of friends thereby.

1935-1945

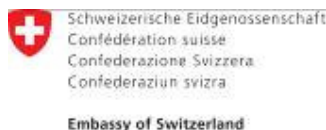
The return to the model plunges Giacometti into a deep creative crisis. He does draw very intensively and creates a few paintings. However modelling causes him great difficulties - the heads, which he stubbornly attempts to form from models, do not seem to him to be formed in accordance with his perception; Persons, whom he sees in the distance and whom he seeks to represent in their distance, lead to little figures that become smaller and smaller and which at the end can fit into matchboxes. During the Second World War Alberto lives for three years in Geneva from 1942. He operates in the circle of exiled Paris literati and writes a few texts for Albert Skira's magazine Labyrinthe. In Geneva he becomes acquainted with the 20 year old Annette Arm (1923-1993), whom he will marry in 1949. In September 1945 he returns to Paris, where he resumes his lonely work, but also takes up his sociable night life again.

1946-1955

His war experiences find expression in the so-called fragment sculptures with their broken up surface modelling which is typical for his mature work. During a visit to the cinema Giacometti has a visual-visionary experience which fundamentally changes his perception of people and things in space. In his works he approaches the slim, over-extended figures which define his mature style and with which he definitively gets over the small format. He begins to model or paint heads according to nature as he sees them at a particular distance in front of himself. They lay the foundation for his so-called "Phenomenological Realism".

In 1948 the Pierre Matisse Gallery presents Giacometti's new works which are poured into bronze for the occasion. The first monographic catalogue is produced. The introductory text by Jean-Paul Sartre places Giacometti - not quite accurately - close to the Existentialist attitude to life. In 1950 the second exhibition takes place at Pierre Matisse. It is followed by significant solo exhibitions in Europe which lay the foundations for Giacometti's fame. All-encompassing exhibitions of 20th century art now almost without exception contain Giacometti's art. This is also the period which marks the beginning of his mature painted work. Giacometti begins to produce graphic work again on the advice of the dealer Pierre Loeb and the gallerist Aime Maeght. In 1952 Giacometti meets the American author James Lord. Thanks to the friendship that develops Lord becomes a witness to Giacometti's life and work. He keeps a diary about it and collects material which he compiles in a biography that was published in 1985 (James Lord: Alberto Giacometti. A Biography. New York. 1985). In autumn 1955 Giacometti meets the Japanese philosophy professor Isaku Yanaihara who is studying Existentialism under Sartre in Paris and who is supposed to write an article about the artist for a Japanese magazine.

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1956-1958

The first large-scale retrospective of Giacometti's work is staged in Bern in 1956. Yanaihara sits as a model for Giacometti in the autumn of the same year. The artist however can't get to grips with the likeness and Yanaihara's return to Japan has to be put off several times. This experience plunges Giacometti into a crisis again which lasts until 1958 and leads him to his last artistic transformation and to a new perception of reality.

1958-1961

The Swiss photographer Ernst Scheidegger publishes a collection of texts by Giacometti for the first time, accompanied by numerous photographs by the artist. In 1959 Giacometti agreed on a comprehensive series of litho-graphs using motives from his Paris home and surroundings with the publisher Teriade. It appeared in 1969 under the title Paris sans Fin. Giacometti has in the meantime become a famous and also well-paid artist. However he does not give up his humble lifestyle until his death.

In 1956 Giacometti was invited by the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York to create a sculpture for the square in front of the bank building - Giacometti's long held dream to sometime create a large plastic sculpture seems finally to be going to be fulfilled. He forms smalls model figures of the themes that he is always working on: a striding man, a standing woman and a big head. As a consequence of this he overcomes his difficulties in the forming and painting of his models Annette, Diego and Yanaihara as well. His figures do stand there in a hierarchical way but they appear to be more plastic and nearer to nature than before. The paintings, most of all the portraits, radiate a mature dignity.

The figures for the Chase Manhattan Plaza are poured into bronze in 1960, but they never reach their intended destination.

1962

The poet Jacques Dupin, who works for the Maeght Gallery in Paris, publishes the first monograph about Giacometti. In the autumn the artist is awarded the State Prize for Sculpture at the Biennale in Venice. An extensive retrospective exhibition with over 300 works takes place in the Kunsthau Zurich.

1963-1965

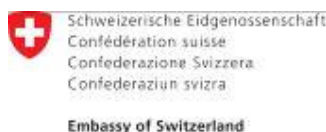
Giacometti has to undergo a serious operation to remove a stomach tumour. Afterwards he spends a long time with his mother in Stampa where he makes numerous drawings and lithographs of her. She dies in January 1964. After his operation every day and every work stands in the shadow of inevitable death for Giacometti. He does not, however, change his punishing lifestyle. Exhibitions, awards, honours and publications mount up. In 1965 the Alberto Giacometti Foundation is set up by art-lovers in Zurich. The foundation is able to purchase the extensive collection of the Pittsburgh industrialist G.David Thompson. Giacometti supports the foundation himself by the donation of numerous works. He travels to his exhibitions in London, Copenhagen and New York. In 1964 James Lord publishes his book A Giacometti Portrait in which he records the conversations that he had with the artist while he was sitting for him as a model. The photographs taken at various stages bear witness to the constant painting over of the portraits. In September 1965 Ernst Scheidegger directs the first film about Alberto Giacometti. This also turns out to be an extraordinary document of Giacometti's untiring, creative method which is marked by constant repetition and new beginnings.

In December 1965 Giacometti travels to Chur, the cantonal Capital of Graubunden, to undergo a check-up in the hospital. Although the result is negative his condition worsens. Stampa, the Bergell Valley and Graubunden are where he was born and raised, where he kept exceptionally strong roots throughout and to where he returns at the end of his live.

1966

Alberto Giacometti dies on the 11th of January in the Canton Hospital in Chur. On the 15th of January he is buried in his birthplace Borgonovo in the presence of the population of the Bergell, of representatives of the Swiss and French Governments together with friends, museum directors and art experts from all over the world.

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Annex D

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