

Press release
Zurich, 27 February 2014

Kunsthau Zürich presents drawings and watercolours by Alberto Giacometti

From 28 February to 25 May 2014 the Kunsthau Zürich will be showing little-known works on paper by the Swiss painter and sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966).

Alberto Giacometti's extensive repertoire of works on paper is generally known, but the drawings and watercolours held by his brother Bruno (1907–2012), which were recently bequeathed to the Kunsthau Zürich, are much less familiar. The approximately 80 items on display, including drawings in pencil and pen, along with a few in ballpoint, coloured crayon and lithographic chalk, as well as six watercolours and a pastel, have rarely been exhibited and include some genuine revelations.

INTIMATE, INFORMAL, SURPRISING

This intimate and informal collection of drawings by Alberto Giacometti underlines the fundamental importance of the medium to his work. It spans his entire artistic career, from the early years in Stampa to the late works from Paris. Creations from his youthful period are particularly well represented; they include watercolours that are striking in their exuberant deployment of colour and their carefreeness. There are landscapes from the Val Bregaglia and around Maloja, as well as a self-portrait with a blue Basque beret dated 1916. Also from this early period are the first sketches and copies from originals by Old Masters such as Dürer, Holbein and Mantegna, but equally from works by Giacometti's father Giovanni and by Ferdinand Hodler. An intensive engagement with the pictorial canon of art history was a key aspect of Alberto's work throughout his career. The sensitive portraits of family members, and in particular the pen self-portrait from 1918 in which Giacometti depicts himself in an academic pose as an artist and personality, are remarkably mature drawings and reveal a mastery of the medium that gave him a unique status within this family of artists. He constantly recorded his environment and the places that were familiar to him, drawing his mother doing the housework or the family gathered together at meal times and, like his father, making portraits of the youngest child Bruno. His father, whose works inspired and influenced him every bit as much as the reproductions of paintings that he discovered in books in the studio, consistently fostered and supported his creative interests.

NUDES, PORTRAITS, VIEWS OF THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

In the 1920s, and in particular while studying in Paris, he followed these with a number of nudes, chiefly female, that are a central theme throughout the

drawings. Sometimes employing broad lines, sometimes just a few gentle strokes, Giacometti was already producing sculptural figures that reveal his striving to engage with the dimensions and proportions of a body in space. Through copies and sketches of Romanesque sculptures and frescoes, Giacometti achieved a closeness to reality which, he felt, was no longer to be found in modern art. The presentation also includes copies of paintings by Matisse, Derain and, later, Poussin as well as, once again, Dürer. From 1925 onwards, Alberto's brother Diego lived in Paris and the two worked together. There are three angular, stylized portraits from this period, during which Diego repeatedly acted as a model for his brother. In drawings featuring motifs from Stampa and Maloja, which he also executed as paintings, Giacometti seeks to lay bare the fundamental essence of a landscape and, through the graphic medium of line, to explore its elemental structures and spatial relationships. He also produced object studies and studio views.

FIGURES IN SPACE

An exceptional figure study from 1960 entitled 'Four "Tall Women" and a Head' sheds light on Giacometti's conception of proportions, which manifests itself in the delicate sculptures from this period. The execution of the lines, which varies from one female figure to another, underscores the figures' differing presence in space. A number of sketches, probably made spontaneously on small sheets of paper or pages from books, show that Giacometti was constantly at work, drawing on almost anything that came to hand. The exhibition, designed by guest curator Monique Meyer, clearly reveals that drawing was an indispensable means for Alberto Giacometti to comprehend what he saw around him and thus was crucial to his work as an artist.

PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS AND PUBLICATION

The presentation of drawings and watercolours is located in immediate proximity to the Alberto Giacometti sculptures. Entrance is included in the price of admission to the entire Kunsthaus collection: CHF 15 / CHF 10 (concessions and groups), children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge. Public guided tours in German take place on Thursday 6 March at 6 p.m., Saturday 29 March at 11 a.m., Friday 25 April at 2 p.m. and Sunday 18 May at 1 p.m. Registration is not required. We will be pleased to organize private guided tours on request.

The publication to accompany the exhibition, in German and English, is produced by Scheidegger & Spiess. In addition to an essay by Monique Meyer, it includes over 90 illustrations on 96 pages as well as a detailed biography of the artist. Part of the series of publications on the collection of the Kunsthaus Zürich, it can be purchased from the museum shop, price CHF 26.

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KUNSTHAUS ZÜRICH

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich, tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthhaus.ch. Open: Fri-Sun/Tues 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Wed, Thurs 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. Public holidays: Easter 18-21 April, 1 May: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

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NOTE AND CONTACT FOR THE MEDIA

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