

Press release
Zurich, 20 July 2016

Kunsthhaus Zürich presents 'Alberto Giacometti - Beyond Bronze. Masterpieces in Plaster and Other Materials'.

From 28 October 2016 to 15 January 2017 the Kunsthhaus Zürich presents an exhibition of 150 works that, for the first time, focuses on Alberto Giacometti's approach to the material nature of his chosen media. It takes as its starting point 75 precious plasters from the artist's estate that have been restored at the Kunsthhaus and, owing to their fragility, are rarely exhibited.

'Alberto Giacometti - Beyond Bronze. Masterpieces in Plaster and Other Materials' sheds new light on fundamental aspects of the work and methods of Switzerland's most internationally celebrated sculptor. It answers questions such as: what did the plasters mean to Giacometti, what is their relationship to his work as a whole, and what is the specific character of the other creations in stone, clay, bronze, wood and plasticine that, like the plasters, were fashioned by the artist's own hands?

RARELY SEEN LOANS

Major loans, notably from the non-public Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti in Paris, are receiving their first showing on this scale in Switzerland. For a limited period, they combine with the world's most extensive and important collection, held by the Alberto Giacometti Foundation at the Kunsthhaus Zürich, to present the complete Giacometti: around 150 works by this epoch-making artist with a fascinating love of material experimentation. Exceptionally, the presentation brings together for the first time a number of versions of individual works – such as the Cubist 'Tête qui regarde' in fired clay, plaster, marble and bronze, and the 'Femme de Venise' from 1956 in various materials and states of restoration. A number of works in stone, some of them from private collections, have not been shown in public for decades.

A SENSUOUS, UNCLUTTERED PRESENTATION

The presentation will be housed in the exhibition gallery, which measures more than 1000 m². Small units, similar in size to Giacometti's famous studio in Paris, form islands in the largely open space. Groups of works are placed together on long dark tables and bases of varying heights. They are arranged more or less chronologically and thematically. The distinctive feature of this presentation is that a range of materials and methods of working are compared. Plexiglas covers have been dispensed with as far as possible, to enable visitors to experience the surfaces and materials with maximum immediacy. Meanwhile

important examples of the celebrated bronze casts – which were produced away from the studio in the foundry – are located outside the booths, standing freely in the room. At the end of the presentation, the plasters too are ‘liberated’ from the studio situation and juxtaposed with the bronzes as works of equal status – the mode of presentation Giacometti himself advocated in the last exhibitions during his lifetime. Owing to the fragility of many of the plasters, this event will be impossible to repeat.

A FULL SPECTRUM OF RESEARCH

A technology section graphically presents the results of the four-year research and restoration process at the Kunsthaus. In particular, it highlights the working processes employed to create the plasters, and the technically complex casting procedures used. Film-maker Roy Oppenheim has accompanied the project. His as yet unpublished documentary ‘Spurensuche’ (‘Searching for Clues’) offers an insight into the work behind the scenes, in which his camera gets closer to the plasters than the human eye. X-rays penetrate the interior of the sculptures to reveal much about their structure and condition. Photographs by Ernst Scheidegger taken in the studio during Giacometti’s lifetime document the genesis of individual works in the context of their times.

THE VISION IS IN THE MATERIAL

What does this ‘white Giacometti’ tell us? For Alberto Giacometti, plaster was far more than just an intermediate stage between clay model and bronze cast. It allowed him to paint or rework his objects in a wide variety of ways; indeed, a significant number of his sculptures exist only in a plaster version.

He valued the material in its own right: partly for its unique colour and presence, but partly also for its material properties. Plaster can still be worked in its finished state – by painting, or by removing or adding plaster compound. Giacometti was unafraid of radically reworking his creations, as the knife marks on the plasters testify. Plasters that he altered in this way became valuable one-offs. They convey something different from the bronzes. The exhibition concludes with a descriptive presentation of the restoration of the Zurich plasters, and the technical processes used in the creation of Giacometti’s plasters and bronzes. It shows how, through the use of different materials, the artist was able to achieve widely differing effects as he set about implementing his artistic visions. The exhibition thus offers a new perspective on Giacometti’s production, from his early works as a pupil to the celebrated, now classic works of his mature and late periods. Curator Philippe Büttner’s presentation offers an almost unprecedented opportunity to appreciate, in a direct and sensuous way, the richness and diversity of the works crafted by the artist himself.

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) is the most important Swiss artist of the 20th century. In 2016, the art world marks the 50th anniversary of his death. Competition for his works among collectors, galleries and museums is fierce, and his sculptures are fetching record prices on the art market. Yet Giacometti, an obsessive worker, lived modestly in both Stampa and Paris. He never courted personal fame but strove constantly to advance and improve his works. The plasters, which were donated to the Alberto Giacometti Foundation at the Kunsthaus by Bruno and Odette Giacometti in 2006, are the best example of this.

Supported by Credit Suisse – Partner of the Kunsthaus Zürich and Ars Rhenia, the foundation for the transregional promotion of art and culture.

ART EDUCATION AND PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with scholarly contributions from Philippe Büttner, Casimiro Di Crescenzo, Catherine Grenier, Christian Klemm and Stefan Zweifel as well as technological analyses by Kerstin Mürer and Tobias Haupt. Published in English, German and French by Scheidegger & Spiess, it has approximately 256 pages and 215 colour illustrations. New images present the entire holdings of Alberto Giacometti plasters at the Kunsthaus Zürich for the first time. The catalogue is available from the Kunsthaus shop and bookstores, price CHF 59.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich

Tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthaus.ch.

Fri-Sun/Tues 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Wed, Thurs 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. Public holidays: Christmas 24/26.12.16 and 1/2.1.17: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. 25 December closed.

Admission incl. audioguide: CHF 22 / CHF 17 (concessions and groups).

Combination tickets including the collection and exhibition CHF 25 / CHF 18.

Admission free to visitors up to the age of 16.

Public guided tours:

German: Wednesdays and Thursdays 6 p.m., Fridays 3 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.

Private guided tours by arrangement.

English: Sunday 13 November, 4 p.m. and Saturday 3 December, 1 p.m.

French: Saturday 26 November, 1 p.m.

Details of lectures and other offerings will be published on the exhibition website from October.

Advance sales: SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on travel and admission: at stations and by phoning Rail Service 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/min. by land line), www.sbb.ch/kunsthaus-zuerich.

Zurich Tourism: hotel room reservations and ticket sales, Tourist Service at Zurich Main Railway Station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, information@zuerich.com.

INVITATION TO EDITORS

This press release as well as images are available at www.kunsthhaus.ch > Information > Press. The press conference will take place on Thursday 27 October at 11 a.m. in the Kunsthaus Zürich. Doors open at 10.30 a.m. Registration is not required. We will be happy to organize interviews with curator Philippe Büttner.

Contact: Kunsthaus Zürich, Press & Public Relations

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