

Auguste Rodin
L'Homme qui marche, grand modèle
[Walking Man, large model], 1907
Plaster, 219 × 160 × 73.5 cm
Musée Rodin, Paris
INV. S.05716
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Alberto Giacometti
Homme qui marche II
[Walking Man II], 1960
Plaster, 188.5 × 29.1 × 111.2 cm
Fondation Giacometti, Paris
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Rodin — Giacometti



Alberto Giacometti dans le parc d'Eugène Rudier
au Vésinet, posant à côté des Bourgeois de
Calais de Rodin [Alberto Giacometti in Eugène
Rudier's park at Vésinet, posing next to Rodin's
Burghers of Calais], 1950
Photography: Patricia Matisse
Gelatin silver print, 19.5 × 12.5 cm
Fondation Giacometti, Paris
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Auguste Rodin (Paris, 1840–Meudon, 1917) and Alberto Giacometti (Borgonovo, Switzerland, 1901–Coira, Switzerland, 1966) never met and it was not until five years after Rodin's death that Giacometti arrived in Paris in 1922. Nonetheless, their careers offer a fascinating dialogue and one that reveals numerous points in common, despite the inevitable differences between the works of two such free-spirited artists separated by more than a generation.

The present exhibition thus focuses on Rodin, a master of modern sculpture, and Alberto Giacometti. This connection is immediately evident in the latter's chosen means of expression, as Giacometti cultivated sculpture and painting and was also an expert draughtsman, sharing this practice with Rodin.

Although much of his career took place in the 19th century Rodin can be fully located in the context of modern sculpture. Through the expressivity of his works, the resources he used to achieve it, such as distortion, and his interest in modelling and the fragment, he succeeded in conveying universal emotions, moving away from the concept of commemorative and monumental sculpture that had prevailed until that time.

In the avant-garde period, however, numerous sculptors focused on developing their own artistic language of a type different to Rodin's, which they considered too traditional. For his part, while Giacometti admired Rodin from an early age—as evident in the numerous books on the artist which he kept throughout his life and in which he drew copies of the reproduced works—he “forgot” him for a period and turned his gaze to new artists such as Ossip Zadkine, Jacques Lipchitz and Henri Laurens. After that brief “Neo-cubist” period Giacometti affiliated himself with Surrealism. However, from 1935 onwards and particularly after World War II the human figure once again assumed the central position in his work.

Pierre de Wissant nu dans l'atelier (terre)
[Pierre de Wissant nude in the Studio (clay)],
c. 1886
Photography: Charles Bodmer
Gelatin silver print, 25 × 18.8 cm
Musée Rodin, Paris. Donation Rodin 1916
INV. PH.02773
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Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti, Paris
[Alberto Giacometti's studio, Paris], 1966
Photography: Sabine Weiss
Gelatin silver print, 16.7 × 25.1 cm
Fondation Giacometti, Paris
© Fondation Giacometti, Paris



Curators

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RECOLETOS EXHIBITION HALL

Paseo de Recoletos, 23
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Dates

February 6 – May 10, 2020
extended until August 23, 2020

Opening hours

Monday: 5 pm – 9 pm
Tuesday – Sunday and holidays:
11 am – 3 pm / 5 pm – 9 pm
(The exhibition hall is cleared ten minutes
before closing time)

Admissions

General price: 3 €
Reduced price: 2 €
Free entry: Monday (except holidays)
from 5 pm to 9 pm

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#RodinGiacometti

Giacometti assimilated many of the characteristics of his great French predecessor's work. In addition to an interest in the fragment, in modelling and in working with the material—aspects evident, for example, in the studies that Rodin made for the clothing of his *Balzac* and in Giacometti's portraits of his brother Diego—he also incorporated chance into his creative process and made comparable use of the sculptural base in order to play with the proximity/distance of the figure in relation to the viewer. This is evident in Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*, an outstanding example of the group format that both artists developed. The head of Hanako, a Japanese actress whom Rodin met in Marseilles and who was the subject of 58 of his sculptures; that of the sculptor Camille Claudel, with whom he had a lengthy relationship; and the numerous heads that Giacometti produced of the professional model Rita Gueyfier, of his brother Diego and of Matisse reveal another shared feature in their creative practice, namely the insistence on repetition and series, as if the work could never be accepted as finished.

Giacometti's pessimism regarding what he saw as his inability to capture the essence of his models is well known. Some of these models described the innumerable posing sessions to which he subjected them only to frequently destroy the resulting drawings and studies. For his part, Rodin kept his clients waiting for many years before handing over a work that had been restarted, recomposed and endlessly modified. In his own words of 1911: "I see all the truth and not just that of the surface. I accentuate the lines that best express the spiritual state that I'm interpreting [...]. I emphasise the relief of the muscles that convey anguish. Here, here, there... I've exaggerated the separation of the tendons that express the ecstasy of prayer [...]. If I'd wanted to change what I saw and make it nicer looking I would never have produced anything good."

For both Rodin and Giacometti ancient art was the basis for innovation in their work. In 1965 the latter noted this in relation to the copies that he made throughout his life: "All the art of the past presented itself to me, of all ages, of all civilisations; everything becomes simultaneous, as if space had taken the place of time". Finally, while both returned to their subjects with the insistence of Sisyphus, they also did so with the spirit of Pygmalion, wishing their sculpture to come to life and aiming to imbue it with the "inner" nature of the motifs represented, with complete emotion and with the most abstract concepts.

It is within that process and within the dialogue established in the exhibition that the two artists finally encounter each other in "the walking man", an iconic figure in their respective oeuvres and a universal symbol of the human condition. ●