

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI STIFTUNG

Alberto Giacometti – Biography

1901

Alberto Giacometti is born on 10 October in Borgonovo in Val Bregaglia, an alpine valley in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. He is the son of the artist Giovanni Giacometti (1868–1933) and his wife Annetta (1871–1964).

1902

Birth of his brother Diego on 15 November († 1985).

1903

Birth of his sister Ottilia on 31 May († 1937).

1904

The family moves to Stampa. This village will remain an important point of reference for Alberto all his life.

1907

Birth of his brother Bruno on 24 August († 2012).

1911–1915

Alberto makes copies of Old Masters based on illustrations in books. In 1913 he produces his first painting in oil and the following year makes a bust of his brother Diego in Plasticine.

1915–1919

Alberto attends a boarding school in Schiers, where he is able to have his own studio.

1919

Begins his art studies in Geneva.

1920–1921

On his first trip to Italy—accompanying his father—he visits Venice and Padua, a second trip takes him to Florence, Perugia, Assisi, and finally to Rome. He visits museums and churches and fills his sketchbooks with studies and copies after works from antiquity to the Baroque era.

1922

On 9 January Alberto arrives in Paris, where for the next five years he attends the sculpture class taught by Antoine Bourdelle (1861–1929) at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière.

1925

His brother Diego arrives in Paris and from now on plays an integral role in Alberto's life and work.

1926

Alberto moves into his third studio at 46, Rue Hippolyte Maindron in Paris. He will keep this studio for the rest of his life.

1928–1929

Giacometti shows works regularly at exhibitions and chalks up his first successes. He also socialises with many artists.

1930

Together with Diego, Alberto produces furnishings for clients including interior designer Jean-Michel Frank. He is accepted by the Surrealists into their circle.

1932

His first solo show opens in Paris, with Pablo Picasso attending the opening.

1933

He gradually moves away from Surrealism, however, and returns to figural sculpture. On 25 June his father Giovanni Giacometti dies.

1934

Giacometti's first solo show in the US is held in New York. His works are also featured in exhibitions throughout Europe and the US.

1935

His return to working with real-life models leads to a break with the Surrealists.

1937

On 10 October his sister Ottilia dies in Geneva following the birth of her first child Silvio.

1939–1941

The figures on which Giacometti is working are barely more than a few centimeters tall. The artist hides these miniature sculptures in his studio just before the German army enters Paris.

1941–1945

From December 1941 to September 1945 Giacometti lives in Geneva, where his mother Annetta is raising her grandson Silvio. Giacometti returns regularly to the Val Bregaglia for periods of several weeks. In October 1943 he meets Annette Arm in Geneva.

1946–1947

His drawings of passers-by lead Giacometti to a new concept of the human figure, encapsulated in the elongated, sticklike figure striding along.

1948

Solo show of works since 1925 at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York. The Exhibition marks Giacometti's international breakthrough.

1949

On 19 July Giacometti marries Annette Arm (1923–1993).

1951

Giacometti's post-war works are shown in Paris for the first time in the Galerie Maeght and establish his fame in Europe, too.

1956–1958

Giacometti creates the series Femmes de Venise for the Venice Biennale. Later, he is invited to design a work for the plaza in front of Chase Manhattan Bank in New York. Even if the mandate is suspended shortly after, Alberto creates in 1959 large-size figures and a head.

1962

At the Venice Biennale Giacometti wins the main prize for sculpture.

1963

Giacometti undergoes major surgery. Back in Paris, he resumes work with an obsessive energy, living each day and working on each piece in the awareness that death may be near at hand.

1964

On 25 January his mother Annetta dies. With Eli Lotar, Diego and Annette as his sitters, Giacometti works his way towards the style of his last portrait busts.

1965

In early December Giacometti goes to the Cantonal hospital in Chur for treatment.

1966

On 11 January Alberto Giacometti dies. On 15 January he is buried in Borgonovo in a large ceremony attended by family, friends and colleagues from Switzerland and abroad.