Alberto Giacometti’s Figures

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The primary author is the individual who drafted the first version of this section; a section that could have been modified since it was originally published.

Alberto Giacometti was a Swiss artist known for his sculptures, paintings, and drawings. Born 10 October 1901, Giacometti was the son of a painter and picked up a paint brush at a young age.

At age eighteen, Giacometti enrolled at Ecole des Arts-et-Metiers, in Geneva, where he began to draw and model. After a few years of getting some basic skills in artistry, Giacometti travelled to Italy where he had the honor to work with a sculptor named Emile Antoine Bourdelle. In 1888, Bourdelle did his first sculptures of Beethoven. He encouraged his students, including Giacometti, to make portrait busts.

Around 1927, a new art style of art called cubism was arising. Cubism was considered one of the biggest movements in the 20th century because it was the first form of three-dimensional art in drawing. This inspired Giacometti to open his own studio where he began to broaden his artistic capabilities.

Giacometti started with portraits of his father and mother. He had a bronze head of his father where he engraved facial features onto the face. Eventually, Giacometti was able to create his first mature sculpture entitled "Gazing Heads" which was an abstract piece of art.

As surrealism developed in the 1930s, Giacometti was part of that movement for the next five years. The person who influenced him into becoming a surrealist was Constantin Brancusi. Abandoning his abstraction ways of art, Giacometti "experimented with ways of unleashing the subconscious imagination" (Alberto Giacometti Biography) by using his new surrealist views of art. He wanted to represent the human figure in a convincing illusion of real space (The Art Story). Some of Giacometti’s work within this period of time was described as "perfect expressions of existentialist pessimism" (Fact Monster).

After World War II, most artists in the United States and Europe were still focused on abstract art, but not Giacometti. He combined all of his methods that he has learned throughout his artist journey into one; a plastic technique that has influenced modern sculpture. The message people portray from his figures was the fact that the modern world is a sense of loneness of human nature.
Suggestions for Further Reading


