ALBERTO GIACOMETTI
1901 Borgonovo - Chur 1966

Tête d’Annette

Pencil on wove paper.
Signed and dated lower right: Alberto Giacometti 1959. 502 x 328 mm

PROVENANCE: Eberhard W. Kornfeld, acquired from the artist in 1959 – Klipstein & Kornfeld, Berne – Acquired from the above by the family of the present owner – Private collection, Zurich


Study of the human head and facial features in drawings, paintings and sculptures was Alberto Giacometti’s central artistic preoccupation from an early age onwards. He had himself served as a model for his father Giovanni as an infant in his mother’s arms. Giovanni Giacometti was a painter whose chief motifs were landscapes, and his wife and children. This is not surprising in an age in which personal responses to the visual world, the feelings prompted by the visual, were thought to be what painting should be about. In Giovanni’s work, members of the family usually appear to be going about their daily routine, working, resting and only very occasionally acting as sitters in formal portrait poses. Alberto’s approach was different in every way: his models had to look the young artist in the eye – to sit facing him, thoughts collected, body immobile. And this is where Giacometti’s work is at its closest – first, to late portraits by Hodler and second, to Byzantine icons he had studied and copied in his father’s well-stocked library of art history books. Dieter Koepplin poses a number of questions on Giacometti’s behalf:

What confronts me? The image a head projects, or the intensity of the eyes and all the pent-up mental energy inside that head? How does it present itself to me? How does the visual connection function? Can I put down anything of it on my sheet of paper? Is it consistent with the model before me and the visual process itself?

No matter how closely related the early portrait heads of Giacometti’s mother, Annetta [fig. 1] and the heads of his wife Annette may seem, over forty years separate them – long years of artistic reflection. And in all these years almost nothing comparable in terms of artistic excellence can be found in his work. The consummate skill with which the seventeen-year-old Giacometti fixes his model on paper is early evidence of his unmistakably singular style of draughtsmanship. The highly distinctive vitality of the line is clearly directed by his peering, investigative eye but at the same time it

vibrates with a nervous energy of its own, only to dissolve. It was years before he would return to such levels of artistic achievement.

Giacometti’s intense concentration on Annette’s facial features reaches its peak in the years 1960 to 1962. Curiously, this coincides with a period of intense emotional involvement with his youthful muse, a prostitute named Caroline. In this period, he produced twelve busts, a large group of paintings and an important body of drawings, among them a series of six numbered pencil drawings of Annette [fig. 2] which he gave to a friend, the poet, writer and critic Jacques Dupin. They were given special importance when reproduced in the first monograph on Giacometti published by Dupin in 1962 in cooperation with Giacometti.

The present drawing is something of a prologue to the intensely analytical Dupin drawings but displays greater softness and sensitivity. The structural delineation of Annette’s features melds effectively and evocatively with the intricate web of strokes encircling her face under his probing gaze. This creates a near-classical unity of form almost un paralleled in his oeuvre. Giacometti experimented with line, elaborating swirling concentric circles with vectors cutting across them at right angles to produce a whole energy-charged network of strokes. He would vigorously work the sheet with myriad pencil lines, going so far as to damage its outer surface with the sharp point of his pencil. His own words succinctly summarize his constant struggle and determination to represent the human head with a maximum of veracity: "It seems impossible to do! A head, the way I see it. And yet between now and tomorrow I have got to succeed." (Alberto Giacometti, 1965)3

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The drawing is registered in the archives of the Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti, Paris. It has been assigned registration number 2280.

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Fig. 1: *Annetta, the Artist’s Mother*, 1918, ink on paper, 254 x 199 mm. Alberto Giacometti Foundation, Zurich

Fig. 2: *Annette, the Artist’s Wife (Annette III)*, 1962, pencil on wove paper, 505 x 324 mm. Private collection, Paris
Alberto Giacometti, October 10, 1901, Borgonovo, Stampa, Switzerland - January 11, 1966, Chur, Switzerland) - Swiss sculptor and artist, who spent most of his life in France, in Paris. Features of the work of the sculptor and artist Alberto Giacometti: his main works will be recognized by several key signs. These are tall, thin, almost disappearing figures: walking men and women standing. They resemble skeletons of burnt wooden cult statues, trembling reflections in the water, or distant silhouettes dissolving in the fog. Alberto Giacometti's remarkable career traces the shifting enthusiasms of European art before and after the Second World War. As a Surrealist in the 1930s, he devised innovative sculptural forms, sometimes reminiscent of toys and games. Giacometti's work of the 1930s represents probably the most important contribution to Surrealist sculpture. In an effort to explore themes derived from Freudian psychoanalysis, like sexuality, obsession and trauma, he developed a variety of different sculptural objects. Alberto Giacometti was a prominent painter and sculptor of Swiss origin. This biography of Alberto Giacometti provides detailed information about his childhood, achievements, life & timeline. Who was Alberto Giacometti? Alberto Giacometti was a popular Swiss artist and surrealist sculptor. He was son of a non-impressionist painter - it is no wonder Giacometti came up with many groundbreaking concepts in arts and sculpture. He experimented with cubism and surrealism as a student of Antoine Bourdelle.