

## ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

1901 Borgonovo - Chur 1966

### *Tête de femme (Flora Mayo)*

Bronze with brown patina. Signed, numbered and inscribed with the foundry mark *Alberto Giacometti, 8/8, Susse Fondeur, Paris*. Conceived in 1927; this bronze version cast in c.1990.  
30,2 x 22,8 x 9,3 cm

PROVENANCE: Annette Giacometti, Paris – Ernst Beyeler, Basle – Private collection, Switzerland

EXHIBITIONS: *Alberto Giacometti, Werke und Schriften*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt/Main, 1998-9, p. 33, no. 8

LITERATURE: *Alberto Giacometti, Sculptures, Peintures, Dessins*, exhib. cat., Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1991-2, p. 121, no. 35 (cast 1/8; repr.) – *Alberto Giacometti, Werke und Schriften*, exhib. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt/Main, 1998-9, p. 33, no. 8, repr.

In 1922, Alberto Giacometti moved to Paris to study under the French sculptor Emile-Antoine Bourdelle at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. It was here that he met Flora Lewis Mayo, a young American heiress from Colorado, an artist with whom he had a relationship in the mid-to-late 1920s. He held a keen interest in portraiture displaying his interest at that time in primitive art. Often he sculpted those he was close to, such as his brother Diego, his sister Ottilia and his wife Annette. The sculpture *Tête de femme (Flora Mayo)* (c. 1927) is one of a number of flattened, frontal compositions Giacometti made in the mid-1920s that included portraits of his parents. Modelled in plaster, the subjects' facial features are, in each case, etched directly into the flat surface of the head. It marks an important step in the artist's evolution from the realistic representation of the figure towards a greater sense of formal freedom.

Our *Tête de femme (Flora Mayo)* was cast posthumously from the 1926 plaster in c.1990 by Suisse Fondeur, Paris, one of the oldest foundries in France. The patina differs starkly from the plaster version, which bears traces of coloured paint applied to the surface to emphasise the lips and eyes [Fig. 1].

This cast was once in the collection of the Swiss dealer Ernst Beyeler. He was an enthusiastic art collector: among the works of other Modern artists, he owned many works by Alberto Giacometti, his greatest passion. Beyeler organized several exhibitions of his work and sold sculptures, drawings and prints of the Swiss artist constantly throughout his life.

Giacometti's drawings from the time of this sculpture are mostly studio still lifes, studies of the human body, or Egyptian and Sumerian sculptures that he would have seen at the Louvre. From the 1940s onwards, his drawings are characterised by a limited use of colours and repetition of rapidly applied lines reworked to form the image of the portrayed subject. *Tête de femme* has a clear relationship to drawing, bringing two and three-dimensional figuration together simultaneously, with the direct and spontaneous features symptomatic of Giacometti's portraiture.



Fig. 1: *Tête de femme (Flora Mayo)*, 1926,  
plaster with traces of coloured paint.  
Fondation Annette et Alberto Giacometti, Paris