



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

1901 Borgonovo - Chur 1966

Nu allongé, les bras derrière la nuque (Isabel)

Pencil on paper. Signed and dated lower right: *Alberto Giacometti 1940*. The date possibly added later by the artist.

315 x 483 mm

PROVENANCE: The Allan and Jean Frumkin Collection - Acquired by the late owner by 1969

LITERATURE: James Lord, *Alberto Giacometti, Drawings*, London 1971, p. 80, no. 29, repr. – Yves Bonnefoy, *Alberto Giacometti, A Biography of His Work*, Paris 1991, p. 253, fig. 232

EXHIBITION: *Alberto Giacometti, Sculpture, Paintings, Drawings, 1913-1965*, Tate Gallery, London, July-August 1965, no. 159, pl. LXIV – *Alberto Giacometti*, Orangerie des Tuileries, Paris, October 1969 - January 1970, p. 159, no. 222, repr. p. 44 – *Alberto Giacometti, Le dessin à l'œuvre*, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, January - April 2001, p. 227, no. 70, repr. p. 118

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST

After some hesitation, Alberto Giacometti took the decision to move to Paris in autumn 1921. He enrolled in the class of sculptor Antoine Bourdelle at the Académie de la Grande-Chaumière, attending the Académie from 1922 to 1925. Only a few months earlier he had returned from his third journey to Italy, a trip that was to change the course of his life.¹ It is hardly surprising that he chose to begin his training under Bourdelle. A studio like Bourdelle's would have been the perfect place to delay the search for self-knowledge a little longer and enjoy a brief respite from the pressure he frequently felt.

Both Bourdelle and Alberto's father Giovanni Giacometti attached great importance to studies and used an impersonal approach to the model. Training under Bourdelle, Giacometti could apply to drawing what he had learnt from theory and practice – an understanding of muscles, ligaments and anatomical detail, of parts rather than the whole. A group of studies dating from the years 1921 to 1925 demonstrate the pleasure and interest he took in this.²

He would first analyse the fundamental concept and map out the general sense of physical presence, before focusing on one aspect of the model – volume. He would then painstakingly break this down in a manner reminiscent of the work of Piero della Francesca and Paolo Uccello. Both artists relied on methodical planar analysis in their perspective drawings of a *mazzocchio*.³

As a draughtsman Giacometti adopted a method derived from analytical cubism.⁴ He replaced lines perceived as curves on the body's surface with adjacent subdivisions, using verticals and diagonals to break down volumes into planes and build up the figure in a facet-like, fragmented manner. The multiple planes produced in this intensely analytical process lend motion, fluidity and momentum to his figures.⁵ It seems as if the living form is absorbed into the geometric space and the elegance it develops in the drawings far outshines that of the model.⁶

The present study of a reclining female nude was produced with the same analytical resolve. In this way he could divert his attention from the invasive power of personal history, physical expression and psychological identity in the figure before him. The method allowed him to concentrate merely on the line of the body, its outer shell. In this study, however, he has succeeded in catching something of the character and presence of the young woman. He has modelled her as she appeared, that is to say, as if from a distance.⁷ Intimate knowledge is somehow combined with the sense of viewing a far-off figure. A drawing depicting a *Reclining Nude*, executed in 1925 and now in the Paule and Adrien Maeght Collection, is very closely related [Fig. 1].⁸

¹ Yves Bonnefoy, *Alberto Giacometti – Eine Biographie seines Werkes*, Sulgen 1991, pp. 111 ff.

² *Alberto Giacometti, Le dessin à l'œuvre*, op. cit., Paris 2001, nos. 24–30.

³ *Mazzocchio*: a form of support used in male headwear in Renaissance Italy. The geometric shape of the *mazzocchio* made it a good subject for practising the art of perspective and students were expected to have mastery in it by the end of their studies. Geometric shapes, particularly the *mazzocchio*, had a great fascination for Paolo Uccello and feature in at least three of his paintings. A drawing by Leonardo da Vinci of a *mazzocchio* is also recorded. Many other Renaissance artists took an interest in the perspective of geometric forms.

⁴ Examples here include Picasso's *Large Dryad* (1908) and Georges Braque's 1909 *Female Head* (Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris).

⁵ Reinhold Hohl has identified a passage in Daniel Marquis Sébie's *Le Message de Bourdelle* (Paris 1931, p. 127) which might be seen as a reference to Alberto Giacometti modelling in Bourdelle's studio; see Hohl, *Alberto Giacometti*, Stuttgart 1971, p. 232.

⁶ Yves Bonnefoy, op. cit., 1991, p. 118.

⁷ Bonnefoy, op. cit., 1991, p. 252.

⁸ *Alberto Giacometti*, exhib. cat., Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, Munich 1997, p. 87, no. 27.

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The model for the present drawing was Isabel Rawsthorne (née Nicholas, 1912–92). She was a charismatic British painter, designer, artists' muse and occasional artists' model. She was married three times – to the journalist Sefton Delmer, and to the composers Constant Lambert and Alan Rawsthorne. She was a member of the literary and artistic avant-garde in Paris. She befriended a dazzling line-up of artists, among them André Derain, Balthus and Picasso. She was particularly close to Francis Bacon. Her long friendship with Giacometti began in Paris in 1935 when she was twenty-three. She became one of his principal models. One of Giacometti's most famous busts after her is the *Egyptian Woman I* executed in 1936 [Fig. 2]. Giacometti and Isabel wrote to each other during his wartime exile in Geneva. She fled Paris for London in 1940 but they were re-united in 1945 and lived together for three and a half months in Giacometti's studio at 46 rue Hippolyte-Maindron in Paris.

The Comité Giacometti has confirmed the authenticity of this work in a certificate dated June 2016. The work is registered by the Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti in the online Alberto Giacometti Database (AGD) under the number 3631.

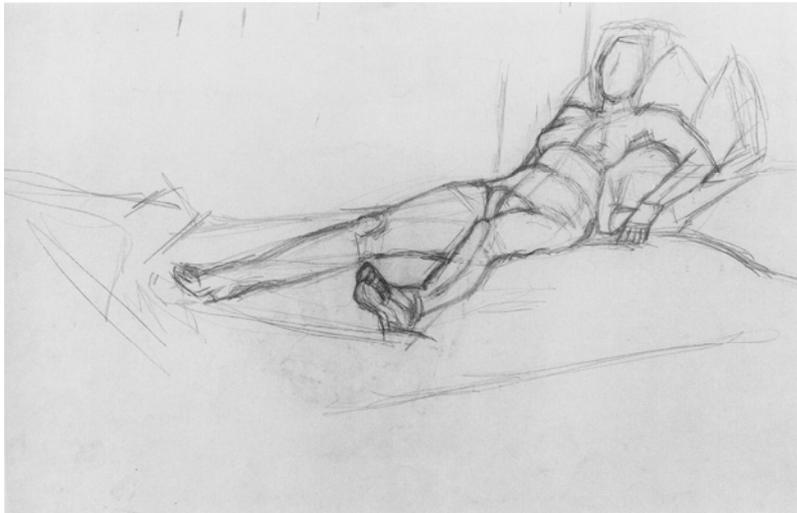


Fig. 1: *Reclining Nude*, pencil, 300 x 475 mm, 1925.
Paule and Adrien Maeght, St. Paul de Vence



Fig. 2: *Egyptian Woman I*, plaster, height 30.3 cm, 1936.
Fondation Giacometti, Paris [inv. 1994-0343 (AGD 400)]