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# ARTNEWS

## Giacometti's Legacy

BY *Laurie Hurwitz* POSTED 12/18/14

***After years of feuding, Giacometti experts and heirs are now united, moving ahead with a catalogue raisonné and planning the Institut Giacometti***

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For more than two decades, in a situation well-documented by Marc Spiegler in "[The Giacometti Legacy: A Struggle for Control](#)" (*ARTnews*, October 2004), the legacy of the Swiss painter and sculptor Alberto Giacometti was mired in controversy. The market had been flooded with forgeries. Scandals and lawsuits abounded, not only between the French and Swiss heirs, but also among the French experts, with two separate French organizations dedicated to Giacometti—an association and a foundation. However, most of these contentious issues were largely resolved when Catherine Grenier, the former deputy director of the Musée national d'art moderne at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, took over as director of the [Giacometti Foundation](#) last March.



Alberto Giacometti modeling a bust of Yanaihara in his studio, September 1960.

ANNETTE GIACOMETTI/COLLECTION FONDATION GIACOMETTI, PARIS

Seated in her sleek office, discreetly located at the end of a narrow courtyard on the rue du Grenier Saint-Lazare near the Centre Pompidou, Grenier explains, “I’m not interested in *archéologie*, in digging up the past. I’m only interested in progress, in moving forward in a positive way.” The foundation, she continues, “has now established a very friendly and trusting relationship with the Swiss owners of the rights, as well as the Zurich-based foundation and the Kunsthaus. And here in Paris, the board has embraced the cultural project and vision I’m developing for the foundation, which focuses on establishing a new exhibition and research center in Paris, while forming an ambitious program of international exhibitions.”

The artist’s widow, Annette, created the Giacometti Association in 1989. It was intended as an intermediate step toward establishing a foundation; once the foundation had been approved by the government, the association was to be disbanded. After years of strife, it finally disbanded of its own accord last spring, with its president joining the foundation’s board.

Until now, much of the foundation’s work has been concerned with issues of counterfeits and authentications, which are especially important given the market for Giacometti’s work (at Sotheby’s London in February 2010, the artist’s 1961 sculpture *L’Homme qui marche I*, or Walking Man I, sold for the record price of £65 million, and at this writing, a rare 1951–52 version of Chariot was expected to establish a new record for the artist at Sotheby’s New York’s November 4 auction).

With Catherine Grenier taking office, the French and Swiss experts, formerly divided, have come together “into one committee” that includes Christian Klemm, a prominent specialist and head curator of the Swiss Giacometti Foundation, and Hubert Lacroix, director of Giacometti’s Swiss foundry, as well as Grenier herself. The committee meets approximately every two months, studying, on average, 15 to 20 works, mostly in order to prepare for important pieces that will be coming up at auction. Results of the committee’s ongoing research are made progressively available [online](#) in the Alberto Giacometti Database, including a link to detailed information on frauds.

One lingering problem with Giacometti’s legacy has concerned the publication of the catalogue raisonné. Now Grenier is moving forward with that, and the foundation is preparing to publish the first part of the catalogue raisonné devoted to the artist’s graphic work, which has been compiled in collaboration with Eberhard Kornfeld. It is slated for publication in early 2015 and will be produced in book form and online, where it can be continually revised and enriched. Next, the foundation plans to tackle sculpture, painting, and decorative objects, in that order—“much more complicated in terms of authenticity, and for which there are fewer archives,” Grenier says—and then finally they will address the drawings. “In any case,” she explains, “we will be cataloguing them, but the number of drawings is so huge that one cannot really talk about establishing an exhaustive catalogue raisonné.”

But first and foremost, Grenier has established new priorities for the foundation. She is planning a series of important exhibitions showcasing the spectacular depth of the collection, which has remained largely shielded from the public. The foundation’s holdings boast over 5,000 works, including 150 paintings, more than 300 sculptures—both bronze casts and original plasters—as well as thousands of works on paper, photographs, and archives. The first exhibition opened in October 2014 at the [Galleria d’Arte Moderna in Milan](#) and runs through February 1. Meanwhile talks are underway with the Musée des arts décoratifs in Paris to present a much-awaited exhibition dedicated to the two brothers, Alberto and Diego Giacometti. And there is an important retrospective slated for Tate Modern in 2017. Grenier is particularly eager to promote Giacometti’s work in more remote places. “One goal we’re absolutely determined to achieve,” she says, “is ensuring that Giacometti is represented in emerging institutions that will one day become major arts centers—in Asia and the Middle East, for instance, as well as in Eastern Europe.”

Over the next two years, Grenier says, the foundation will move its archives and offices to an elegant *hôtel particulier*, or townhouse, on a cobblestone courtyard in the heart of the Latin Quarter. But more importantly, she is making plans for the foundation to establish an institute that is open to the public in the Montparnasse district in Paris, a stone’s throw from the artist’s lifelong studio.

The Institut Giacometti will be quite unlike any existing museum, Grenier points out. “I see it as highly innovative and modern, a research institute cum intimate gallery space. We are in the process of acquiring a former artist’s studio and showroom very much in the Montparnasse spirit, not far from the Fondation Cartier. It is an extraordinary heritage apartment from the 1910s, with spectacular skylights. It will allow us to re-create Giacometti’s former atelier on the nearby rue Hippolyte-Maindron, displaying his plaster figures and busts, all carefully preserved by Annette, along with the original furniture and the studio walls still covered with his graffiti.”

The Institut Giacometti will incorporate a research library and a *cabinet d'arts graphiques* for prints and drawings. "Quite unlike any museum, this space will allow visitors a very intimate relationship to the works. I am particularly interested in supporting research on modern sculpture, because there are too few academics specializing in modern sculpture," she says. "I also want it to be a place where we can explore the influence of Giacometti on younger artists, where we can stage vibrant encounters between some of his most iconic pieces and the works of contemporary masters as well as emerging artists."

Grenier concludes, "Art history is not a fixed science; we are perpetually making new discoveries, developing new ways of thinking, of interpreting artworks. Giacometti may be a modern artist, but today, his work still touches the general public and other artists as well. If we can help a generation of young curators and scholars from around the world learn about Giacometti's works, they will last forever."

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