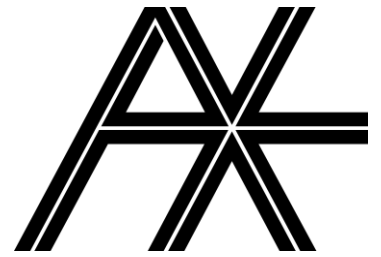


Aargauer Kunsthaus

Aargauerplatz
5001 Aarau

kunsthhaus@ag.ch
aargauerkunsthhaus.ch
+41 62 835 23 30



Augusto Giacometti. Freiheit | Auftrag [Freedom | Commission] 27/01 - 20/05/2024

Media release

Aarau, December 2023

The comprehensive presentation focuses on a multi-faceted artistic personality whose *oeuvre* is considered to be one of the highest expressions of art from the first half of the 20th century. Co-curated by the Aargauer Kunsthaus and the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA) the exhibition explores the relationship between free creation and commissioned art along the axes of "Freedom" and "Commission". It reveals the field of tension within which Augusto Giacometti (1877-1947) spent his productive life as an artist and cultural policy maker.

Augusto Giacometti, member of the famous dynasty of painters from the village of Stampa in the Bergell mountain region, is considered to be a central figure in the evolution of Swiss art of the early 20th century. Contemporaneous with works in the tradition of Art Nouveau and Symbolism, the artist made a significant contribution to the dawn of modernism in Switzerland with his early abstractions, and helped shape the Swiss art landscape as a member and, from 1939 onwards, as President of the Federal Art Commission.

The exhibition *Augusto Giacometti. Freiheit | Auftrag* [Freedom | Commission] at the Aargauer Kunsthaus is the result of a close collaboration with the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK-ISEA). It is based on the *Catalogue raisonné*, which was published by SIK-ISEA in the autumn of 2023 and provides the first systematic record of the entire *oeuvre* by Giacometti as a painter, comprising some 560 works. With its juxtaposition of free creations and commissioned works, the exhibition gives concrete insight into Augusto Giacometti, his diverse life and creativity.

While Giacometti received ample praise for his unprecedented free use of colour, his glass and wall paintings, or his impressive production of flower paintings never received much attention in the past. The exhibition seeks to close this gap and explore questions of artistic autonomy in relation to commissioned art and self-initiated projects. The thought and creativity models of the prevailing understanding of art, the search for a national cultural

identity, as well as public grants for unemployed artists, influenced the production of art by Giacometti and his contemporaries.

Key works from all creative phases illustrate how Giacometti tackled the possibilities of painting in a way that was both experimental and genre-transcending, and they show the particularities of his methods and techniques. The artist dedicated significant effort to the luminance of colour, which can be appreciated in both his own, freely conceived art and his commissioned works. His large cycle *Das Leben auf dem Lande* [Country Life], 1920, consists of forty glass paintings that originally adorned the Villa Bloch-Hilb in Zürich. The exhibition also displays sketches for his mosaics and murals, including preliminary drawings for his most monumental work—the *Blüemlihalle* [Flower Hall], —in the entrance hall of the Zürcher Amtshaus I [Zurich Police Station]. The fresco is considered to be one of Giacometti's largest and most important works of art in the city of Zurich.

As an important field of experimentation for Giacometti, the exhibition dedicates an entire room to the colourful flower still life. In more than 220 flower motifs—about one-third of his entire *oeuvre*—Giacometti demonstrated his finesse as a painter, largely without linear drawing and contours. Reflections on colour in nature and art also enter his famous flower paintings of the Bergell flora in bloom, which occupy the space between abstract representationalism and objectlessness. Similar to the large-format city nightscapes with their colourful neon advertising and street lighting, they condense into a single, intense tissue of colour for visitors to immerse themselves in.

With *Augusto Giacometti. Freiheit | Auftrag*, the Aargauer Kunsthaus illustrates insights from the history of art for a broader audience—such as example cases from the restoration and the art-technology lab of the SIK-ISEA. The interaction between originals, archival documents, and scientific restoration examinations allows for the presentation of current research results and highlights new aspects of the artist's reception. Scenographic mediation islands placed around the exhibition rooms offer a low-threshold approach to the individual exhibits, promoting a multi-sensorial interaction with and exploration of the art and Giacometti's artistic method. The mediation stations invite the public to engage and explore.

Linking research work, museum presentation, and integrated mediation, the show also pays scientific tribute to Augusto Giacometti as a relevant historical figure in Swiss art and makes him accessible to a broad audience.

Publication

The catalogue of works published by the SIK-ISEA in November 2023 will be available during the exhibition as the new standard reference on Augusto Giacometti's work. The Aargauer Kunsthaus publishes an accompanying exhibition guide, which will serve as an introduction to the themed exhibition rooms in handbook format. With an inclusive approach in mind, each text starts with a summary in Simple Language.

Augusto Giacometti. Contemplazione

In parallel with the exhibition in the Aargauer Kunsthaus, the Bündner Kunstmuseum Chur presents works on paper by Augusto Giacometti.

Curation

Dr. Katharina Ammann, Director, Aargauer Kunsthaus

Michael Egli, Co-project Lead and Author of the *Catalogue raisonné* Augusto Giacometti, SIK-ISEA

Denise Frey, Author of the *Catalogue raisonné* Augusto Giacometti, SIK-ISEA

Project Director

Nicole Rampa

Project Assistant

Florian Brand

Mediation Expert

Laura Nina Flück

Exhibition Coordination / Loans

Karoline Harms

Media Preview

Thursday, 25/1/2024 11 am

Exhibition Opening

Friday, 26/1/2024 6 pm

Commissioned – Funding of the Arts Then and Now

Thursday, 15/2/2024 6 pm

Roundtable with Barbara Basting (Director of the visual arts department, cultural division, city of Zürich), Denise Frey (scientific staff, SIK-ISEA, Zürich, co-author work catalogue Augusto Giacometti), Florian Graf (artist), Patrizia Keller (Curator, Kunsthalle Arbon) and Dr. Katharina Ammann (moderator, Director, Aargauer Kunsthaus), followed by an apéritif reception.

Augusto Giacometti and Glass Painting

Sunday, 25/2/2024 1 pm

Guided tour with Fritz Dold (glass painter and glass artist), Aline Dold-Garcia (glass painter, conservator at SKR) and Michael Egli (moderator),

Guided exhibition tour with Marco Giacometti

Sunday, 14/3/2024 1 pm

President of the Centro Giacometti and Augusto Giacometti's biographer,

Flowers & Art: Between Commercialisation and Artistic Virtuosity

Sunday, 7/4/2024 1 pm

With Philipp von Arx (Master Florist) and Dr. Beat Stutzer (art historian, co-author work catalogue Augusto Giacometti),

The entire programme of events can be found at aargauerkunsthhaus.ch.

Aargauer Kunsthaus Opening Hours

Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am - 5 pm

Thursdays, 10 am - 8 pm

Closed on Mondays

Special Opening Hours

Maundy Thursday 28 March 2024 10 am - 5 pm

Good Friday 29 March 2024 10 am - 5 pm

Easter Sunday 31 March 2024 10 am - 5 pm

Easter Monday 1 April 2024 10 am - 5 pm

Labour Day 1.5.2024 10 am - 5 p.

Ascension 9.5.2024 10 am - 5 pm

Whitsun 19.5.2024 10 am - 5 pm

Whit Monday 20.5.2024 10 am - 5 pm

Images

Our website www.aargauerkunsthhaus.ch > media has images available for download. Please note the image credits.

Additional information

Nicole Rampa, Project Director

nicole.rampa@ag.ch

+41 62 835 57 49

Christina Omlin, Communications & Media

christina.omlin@ag.ch

+41 62 835 44 79