

HUMA BHABHA / ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

“ AND LOOSE
THE LOVED ONE’S
TRESSES KNOT
BY KNOT.
OR E’ER THE KNOTS
YOUR LIMBS BIND,
REND APART. ”



Huma Bhabha
Untitled, 2022
Terracotta, acrylic, sand, plywood and concrete
109,2 × 61,9 × 62,2 cm
© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

Alberto Giacometti
Standing Woman, circa 1961 (detail)
Painted plaster
46 × 7,6 × 11,2 cm
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti / Adagp, Paris 2026

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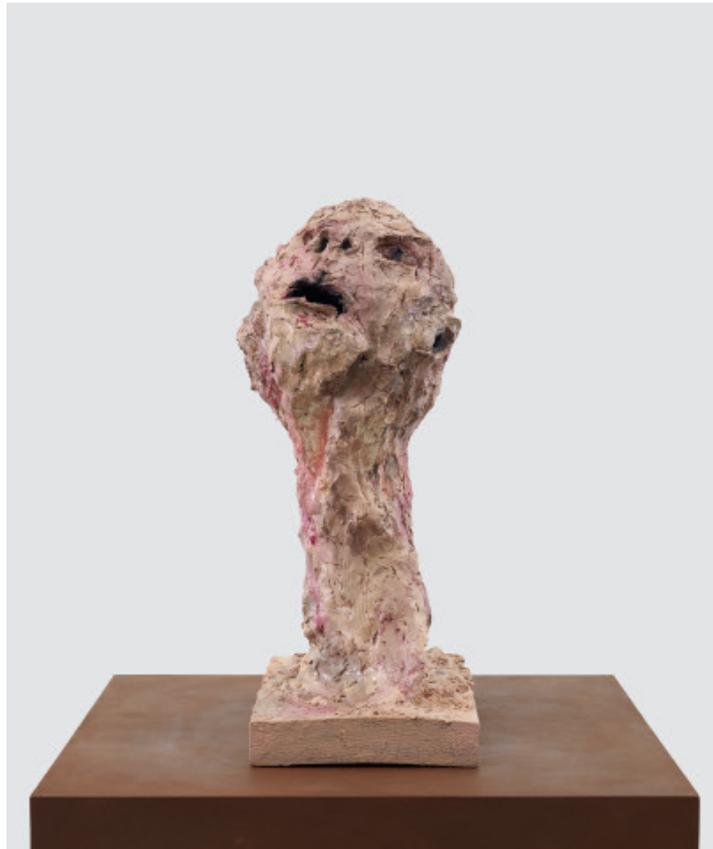
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HUMA BHABHA / ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

06.02.2026 > 24.05.2026

Press visit
Thursday 5 February 2026
3 p.m. to 5 p.m.



Huma Bhabha

Listen to What I'm Not Saying, 2021

Wood, plaster, clay, wire and acrylic

142,9 x 65,7 x 65,7 cm

© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

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Huma Bhabha / Alberto Giacometti

“And loose the loved one’s tresses knot by knot.
Or e’er the knots your limbs bind, rend apart.”

06.02.2026
24.05.2026



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Institut Giacometti presents an original exhibition showing the work of the Pakistani-American artist Huma Bhabha (born in Karachi in 1962, presently living and working in Poughkeepsie, United States) in response to Alberto Giacometti’s oeuvre.

Specially designed for the Institut Giacometti, the exhibition presents new pieces made by Bhabha for the occasion in addition to a set of major works by the artist: two standing figures, various sculpted heads, sculptures with the appearance of fragments of bodies as well as drawings and photographs. Not without some humour, those works enter into a dialogue with emblematic works by Giacometti, among them *Walking Man* (1960), *The Leg* (1958), *Women of Venice* (1956) and *Large Head* (1960). This exhibition follows a first presentation between the two artists at the Barbican Centre in 2025 titled “Nothing is Behind Us”.

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Inviting Huma Bhabha to work in response to Giacometti's œuvre was clear, since she has long been interested in his work. Claiming to be an "expressionist" artist, Bhabha creates assemblages, works in clay, cork and bronze to let human forms emerge and express emotions. The encounter between the two artists takes place in a confrontation around the figure, both fragile and strong, feminine and masculine, funny and melancholic, always resilient. An original artist among her contemporaries, Bhabha is in agreement with Giacometti, both artists convinced that "everything revolves around the human body".

Obsessed with the movement from life to death and death to life, their works show at the same time the strength and the transient character of human beings, their violence and tenderness. The exhibition is tinged with a caustic, black, scathing humour. We find an echo of it in the title of the exhibition, "And loose the loved one's tresses knot by knot. Or e'er the knots your limbs bind, rend apart," an extract from a quatrain by the Persian poet Omar Khayyam (1048-1131).

Both artists draw from the art of all epochs and all civilisations - from the art of Ancient Greece to the Renaissance, as well as African arts and cinema - to create new forms and original modes of perception, other visions of humanity.

A fan of science-fiction, Bhabha continues here her dialogue with Giacometti, who was well-versed in the milieus of strange and surrealist films.

*Omar Khayyam, Quatrain 449, The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam of Nishapur, translation by Eben Francis Thompson, 1906.



Huma Bhabha

Listen to What I'm Not Saying, 2021

Wood, plaster, clay, wire and acrylic

142,9 x 65,7 x 65,7 cm

© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

Alberto Giacometti

Head on rod, 1947

Painted plaster

54 x 19 x 15 cm

Fondation Giacometti

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The catalogue

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Summary

HUMA BHABHA IN HER OWN WORDS

SPLITTING A GUT
Émilie Bouvard

APPROACHING SCULPTURE THROUGH A CINEMATIC FILTER
Shanay Jhaveri

Around the exhibition

A cultural programme is proposed to the public for the duration of the exhibition, as well as guided visits in French and English and workshops for families and children.

Guided visits in French

duration: 1 hour
Wednesday at 11 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.
Friday and Saturday at 2.30 p.m.
Every day during the school holidays in zone C

Guided visits in English

Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m.

Family visits (parents and children)

Sunday from 10 to 11 a.m.

Family workshops (parents and children from 5 upwards)

Sunday from 3 to 5 p.m.
Wednesday, Friday and Sunday from 3 to 5 p.m. during the school holidays in zone C

Bookings: institut@fondation-giacometti.fr



Practical information

Open from Tuesday to Sunday
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Weekly closing on Monday

Ticket office online and on site
Full fee: €9
Reduced fee: €3

Extracts from the catalogue. The artist is interviewed by Émilie Bouvard.

"In 1998, I saw a big retrospective of sculptures and paintings by Giacometti which greatly impressed me. At that time, I had not started to sculpt and model with clay myself, so the connection I felt with him was more that of a voyeur. I had not realized yet how much I could take or learn from his unique technique and style. It took another three years before I first tried my hand at making a clay foot."

[...]

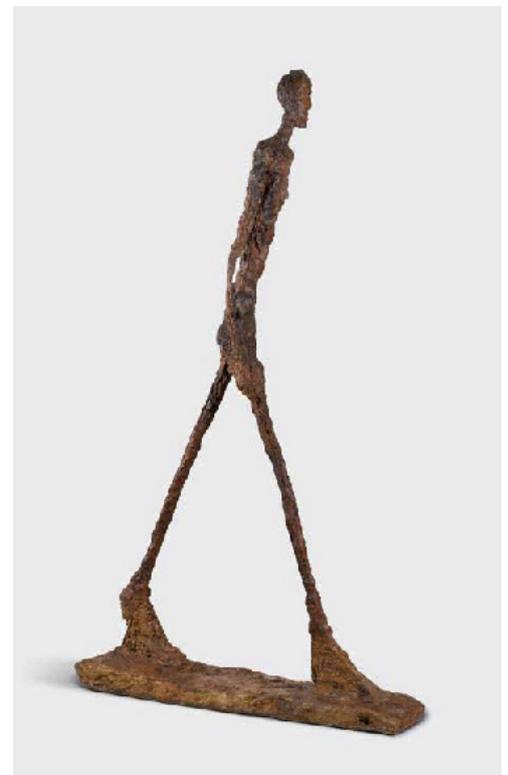
"Giacometti is 'post-cinema' - so even when he's talking about reacting against cinema and working in the studio directly from the model, his vision is very imbued with a cinematic aesthetic. The figures he creates seem out of focus, which gives them depth. He creates a perspective with something that is directly in front of him, a cinematic distance."

[...]

"No one else can make the same mark. It is important for me to make my work and not to look for alternatives which for me would dilute the work's emotive power. I do what I was meant to do. Giacometti's marks on his sculptures have almost a graffiti touch and that takes us into his paintings. It's all connected."

[...]

"I'm a formal artist who's very much interested in figuration. And that is what I think I know the best. I use different materials because I think it's something that I respond to very naturally and I'm trying to be inventive. But at the same time, the idea of making a beautiful sculpture is very much in my mind. That's what I want to do. I'm very interested in all the formal aspects of making something."



Alberto Giacometti
Walking Man II, 1960
Plaster
188,5 × 29,1 × 11,2 cm
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti / Adagp, Paris 2026

Presentation of the exhibition

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Introduction

The exhibition "Huma Bhabha/Alberto Giacometti. And loose the loved one's tresses knot by knot. Or e'er the knots your limbs bind, rend apart" underlines the importance of Alberto Giacometti's work (1901-1966) for the Pakistani-American artist Huma Bhabha (1962). At the beginning of the 2000s, Bhabha progressively incorporated clay modelling into her work, which she associates with the contemporary practice of assemblage. Bhabha is interested in affects, those very profound emotions expressed in the oeuvre of Giacometti, and in the way he approached the human figure. Giacometti's expressive figures inspire her, as much as his capacity to master the perspective and distance between the sculpture and the spectator.



Exhibition trail

The exhibition opens on a confrontation between the two STUDIOS. Alberto Giacometti never left his studio at 46 rue Hippolyte-Maindron, focussing his creative practice in a 24 square metres space. It was in that narrow and cluttered space that he successfully made works that, for some, could be seen at a distance of several metres... Bhabha worked in New York till 2002, before settling in Poughkeepsie with her husband, the painter Jason Fox. She recently had a new studio built, bigger and more luminous, where the sculptures are set in a space that enables her to view them from as many perspectives as possible and from a distance. In that small town, she leads a life concentrated on her work.

The HUMANITY of Giacometti's work, his ability to embrace the whole of the human condition, at time suffering, with (black) humour, appeals to Bhabha, an artist mindful of the violence of the world. In the patio, *Walking Man* (1960) by Giacometti, persists in walking. Bhabha's *Untitled feet*, whose body has seemingly been blown off - as happens in zombie movies - are still firmly planted in the ground. Through the window, we can see legs walking in rubber boots, on a magic carpet, a humorous reference to *Walking Man*.



Huma Bhabha in her studio, Poughkeepsie (United States), 2025
© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner. © Photo Jason Schmidt

Alberto Giacometti painting in his studio, 1959
Photographed by Ernst Scheidegger
29,6 x 20,7 cm
© Stiftung Ernst-Scheidegger-Archiv, Zurich
© Succession Alberto Giacometti / ADAGP, Paris, 2026

Cabinet of graphic art and photography

Bhabha is passionate about cinema, from genre films and science-fiction to surrealist films and film noir from the 1940s and 1950s. In a recent interview, she declares: "Giacometti is 'post-cinema' (...). The figures he creates seem out of focus, which gives them depth. He creates a perspective with something that is directly in front of him, a cinematic distance." When Bhabha took on modelling at the beginning of the 2000s, she made wire figures looking like Giacometti's, as well as walking feet which she set up outdoors on the outskirts of Karachi, as if there were scenes in films, creating kinds of incongruous playlets. Opposite, contact prints of the Swiss film maker and photographer Ernst Scheidegger, in which Giacometti's sculptures are set outdoors, are exhibited for the first time. The series of images on the contact print is reminiscent of STORYBOARDS. The eye of the film maker Ernst Scheidegger was maybe also sensitive to the cinematographic quality of Giacometti's art.

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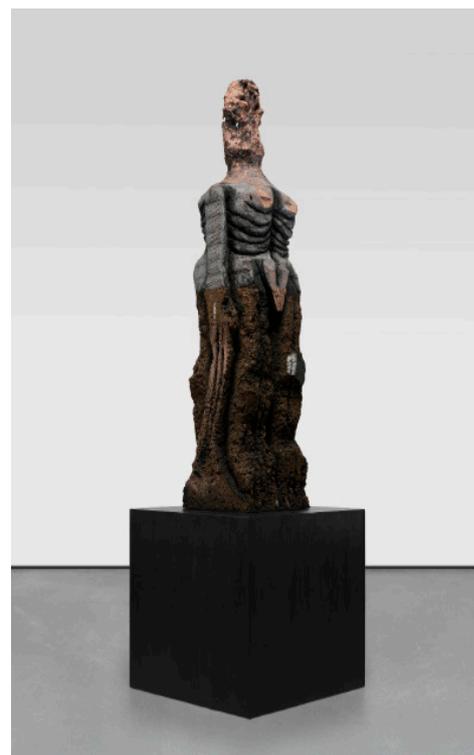
Large room

In the middle of the large room, *Don't Cast a Shadow* (2025) stands like a wounded body. This sculpture was completed by Huma Bhabha especially for this exhibition. Its body seems riddled with impacts but it's still standing. Its round head is touching, as is the almost naive simplicity of the marks that create grooves on its body, making the ribs and the navel stand out, the breath and life. This marking of the body was inspired by the practice of scarification in African statuary, and by the realism of "starving Buddhas" with protruding ribs of Asian tradition.

The heads created by Bhabha since 2020 combine violence and fragility. Some provoke a sensation of dread, and appear on the verge of collapsing, like the human condition itself. Assemblages, models in clay and painted bronzes give the impression of flesh between life and death. Facing them, the grotesque dimension of Giacometti's art and its scathing humour are all the more noticeable. The *Head on a Base (Head without a Skull)* has the back of its head missing, giving it an incomplete look, and conjuring up the idea of amputation.

Those monsters are facing us, fragile and dangerous at the same time, faces of our violence and our compassion, alien and human.

In the adjacent Follot salon, two films appreciated by Alberto Giacometti and Huma Bhabha, *THEY LIVE* (1988) by John Carpenter and *Beauty and the Beast* by Jean Cocteau (1946). The first is a reflexion on the totalitarian future of Western societies via science-fiction films, the second a meditation on the confusion of appearances: the Beast is not what he appears to be.



Huma Bhabha
So Am I, 2025
Cork, polystyrene, clay, wire, bone, acrylic, oil pastel, chalk and wood.
175,3 × 56,2 × 56,2 cm
© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

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Median room

The feminine figures of Alberto Giacometti and Huma Bhabha give off complex impressions. The use of colour in both artists enable them to underline various parts of the body. In Giacometti's work, it makes the structure stand out, and also gives it a ritual dimension, bestowing a special and mysterious status to the figure.

Seen close up, the paint emphasises the emaciated character of the body. In Bhabha's work, the paint reinforces the ambivalent perception of the sculpture, especially that of its sexual features. When she's questioned on the gender of her sculptures, Bhabha replies: "Yes, my sculptures have both sexes. Why can't we be hermaphrodites? For me, it's very interesting because it allows me to experiment. Sometimes my sculptures tend to have obviously female forms, also because that is what was needed to be done for that piece. But I think they are strong female figures."

Created by Huma Bhabha for the exhibition, a fierce feminine figure with an angular body and a face that seems to be dissolving, stands next to two *Women of Venice* (1956), and a *Tall Woman* (1958) by Giacometti. The impressions of nobility and power they all emit echo one another, like modern *MENADS*, those women of Thrace (Greece) sustained in their trance by the poetic breath of the god Dionysos, but which tore apart the poet Orpheus.



Alberto Giacometti
Woman of Venice I, 1956
Painted plaster
108,5 × 17 × 30 cm
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti / Adagp, Paris 2026

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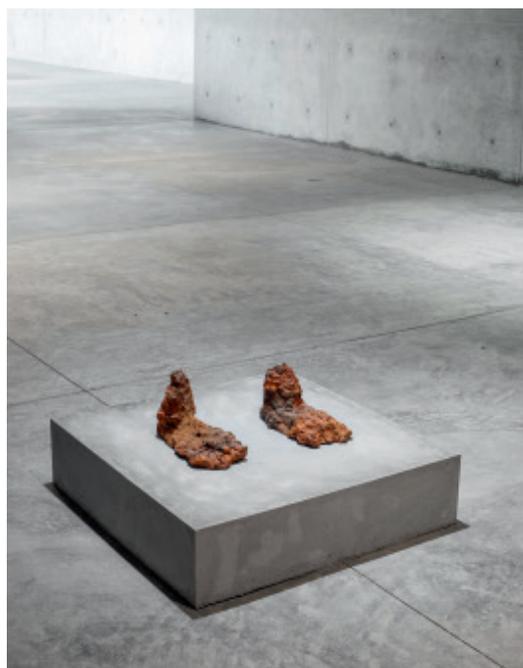
Last room and corridor

Drink wine, ere doth your name from Earth depart,
For cares take flight when wine doth reach the heart;
And loose the loved one's tresses knot by knot.
Or e'er the knots your limbs bind, rend apart."

Omar Khayyam, Quatrain 449, The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam
of Nishapur, translation by Eben Francis Thompson.

At the beginning of 2022, during an artist residence in Oaxaca, in Mexico, Bhabha made ceramics fired in an outdoors traditional kiln. The variations in temperature during the firing created subtle chromatic effects. There, the artist produced nine terracotta sculptures, all untitled, representing parts of the body. Bhabha made bodily forms similar to Giacometti's, and seems to give life back to matter. Bhabha chose to associate Giacometti's Leg with this series. A fragmentary piece, it echoes Rodin's work. Though separated from the body, it stands, upright, proud, a little tragicomic, as if it could still be useful. Dismembered, torn but standing.

Untitled (head) by Bhabha is presented in the adjacent corridor, with other fragmentary sculptures by Giacometti that all look like they have been standing on the ground for hundreds of years, and were inspired by ancient Egyptian and African arts, like Bhabha's *Waddah*. This title is the name of a prisoner who died in Guantanamo. In that room, the seemingly archeological remains are exhibited alongside drawings by Giacometti and Bhabha, inspired from the Italian painter Giotto.



Huma Bhabha
Untitled, 2022
Terracotta, acrylic, sand, plywood and concrete
39,4 x 81,9 x 81,9 cm
© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

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ALBERTO GIACOMETTI [1901-1966]

Alberto Giacometti was born near Stampa, in Switzerland, in the Grisons region, in 1901. His father Giovanni was a renowned post-impressionist painter. In the spectacular and harsh landscapes of the Swiss Alps, which he always kept in his memory, he learned painting with his father, and began to sculpt. He continued his education in Switzerland (Coire, Geneva) but especially in Paris with the modern sculptor Antoine Bourdelle at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière (1922-1926). There he was taught how to represent a body in the liberal and cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Académie, and became a sculptor. He hardly painted till after the war.

In tune with the artistic milieu of Paris, he tried his hand at cubism, approached abstraction, discovered African and Oceanic arts at the musée du Trocadéro and was inspired by them, constructing shapes more and more rigorously, going to the essential. His *Flat Women* drew the attention of the painter André Masson (1896-1987), the writer Michel Leiris (1901-1990) and the circle of Georges Bataille's

journal *Documents*, then the Surrealists gathered around the poet André Breton (1896-1966), with whom he became close. The thirty-year-old discovered the world of dreams and erotic and sadistic impulses, of life and death, whose representation Surrealism, in its revolutionary project, championed.

In 1933, his father's death was a great shock. Was it what pushed him to stop, a few months later "creating" surrealist "objects"? He went back to realist figuration with a live model, focused on one obsession: to model a head. His brother Diego, who was his technician, sat for him and did it till the end of the artist's life, as did other people. This return to figuration went with a long artistic crisis that lasted some ten years. In 1937, his sister Ottilia died. The works became sparse and gradually smaller, Giacometti being engaged in his research of the right scale in sculpture. He planted his tiny figures in massive bases, trying to fasten them to the ground. It was in Switzerland, where he found himself stranded during the Second World War, that he succeeded in finally creating a big figure: *Woman with chariot*, that heralded the larger and gradually elongated figures that multiplied in the post-war period. Giacometti had found his style, which firmly established him in the artistic landscape of the second half of the 20th century. The artist was capable of the most refined as well as the most expressive and rough, depending on whether the figure was seen from afar or from close up.

In the last twenty years of his life (1946-1966), Giacometti returned to previous forms and invented new ones. He worked intensely, achieving a more and more complex and expressive treatment of the "skin" of his figures, busts and more rarely, parts of bodies. He created from imagination or facing his models. He periodically painted in an obsessive manner, and made engravings. Annette Arm, his wife since 1949, was among those who sat for him for hours on end. He was represented in New York by Pierre Matisse Gallery, in France by Galerie Maeght. He associated with authors, writers, poets like Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Jean Genet (1910-1986), Jacques Dupin (1927-2012) and Olivier Larronde (1927-1965). He passed away in January 1966, a few months after a series of retrospectives throughout the world. In 1962, he was awarded the Grand Prize for Sculpture at the Venice Biennial.

Giacometti in his studio
Photo: Denise Colomb, 1954
Archives Fondation Giacometti

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HUMA BHABHA

Huma Bhabha was born in 1962 in Karachi (Pakistan). Her mother painted, the house was full of books. She grew up developing a taste for painting and drawing in the context of the civil war that led to partition and the creation of Bangladesh (1971). She lived under the reformist regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971-1977), then under the military and Islamist regime of Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988). The country had borders with India but also with Afghanistan and Iran. As she said herself: "At the beginning of my adult life, when I went to university, there was, very close, a war between Iran and Iraq. A change in the world's balance of power was taking place. There where I grew up, we were aware of the war around us because it affected everything. We were not as sheltered from it as people were in the Western world. The region I'm coming from was right in the middle of it."

Bhabha left for the United States in 1981 to study at the Rhode Island School of Design (Providence), where she gained her Bachelor of Fine Arts in engraving and painting before returning to live in Pakistan for two years. After her father's death in 1986, she continued with her studies at the School of the Arts in Columbia University, New York, where she was given a Master in Fine Arts in 1989. During her master years, she progressively used bits of wood and scraps of metal she found around, creating reliefs before moving on to sculpture.

She met her future husband, the painter Jason Fox, whom she married in 1990.

The 1990s were years of experimentation. Her sculptures, often trash, resemble special effects in sci-fi and horror movies which she's very fond of, like those of the film maker David Cronenberg (1943). She combined industrial (plastic or rubber pipes, polystyrene, etc.) and natural (wood, textiles) materials to create frightening creatures. She practices engraving and photography.

At the turn of the 2000s, her sculptures gained in volume and became real assemblages partially painted, reminiscent of the work of Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008). She looked at traditional African art, the art of Ancient Egypt and of the Italian Renaissance as well as the art of Gandhara, the antique art of synthesis between Greek art and Easter traditions (North-West of Pakistan). She worked for a taxidermist, and began using skulls. She referred more and more to film noir and Sci-fi. She began modelling in clay.

Throughout the 2010s and the 2020s, she started to carve directly in cork, that she also painted, and from which she drew bronzes, making figures whose gender is ambiguous, more and more monumental and massive, tottering between the totem and the figure of goddesses or gods, while continuing with modelling, assemblage and developing a rich practice in painting on photographs - in which animals took on a more and more important place.

Her work has been exhibited in many solo shows (Aspen Art Museum, 2011, PS1, New York, 2012, MO.CO, Montpellier, 2023, Barbican Centre, London, 2025). In 2018, she produced, for the roof of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the installation "We come in peace", and in 2024, "Huma Bhabha: Before the End", a monumental public installation of bronzes for the Brooklyn Bridge Park (New York).

Since 2002, she's been living in Poughkeepsie with her husband and her dogs.

Huma Bhabha in her studio, Poughkeepsie
(United States), 2025
© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist
and David Zwirner. © Photo Jason Schmidt

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The Giacometti Institute is the part of the Fondation Giacometti devoted to exhibitions and research in art history and pedagogy. Created in 2018, it is chaired by Catherine Grenier, the director of the Giacometti Foundation since 2014. A museum on a human scale, enabling the visitor to get close to the works, the Giacometti Institute is an exhibition space, a place of reference for the oeuvre of Alberto Giacometti, a research centre in art history specialising in modern art practices (1900-1970) and a place for discovery accessible to all the public. Alberto Giacometti's mythical studio, whose elements, in their entirety, had been kept by his

widow, Annette Giacometti, is on permanent display. Among these elements are several very fragile plaster and clay pieces, some of them not shown previously in public, as well as the furniture and the walls painted by the artist. The ambition of the Institute is to refresh the way we look at the work of the artist, and at the creative period in which he was involved. The programme for research and teaching, L'École des modernités, is open to researchers, students and art lovers. Conferences, symposiums and master classes give a platform to art historians and curators who present their works and the current state of research.



Practical information

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75014 Paris

Open from Tuesday to Sunday,
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Weekly closure on Monday

Booking online and on site
(bank card only):
[fondation-giacometti.fr
/fr/billetterie](https://fondation-giacometti.fr/fr/billetterie)

Full price: €9
Reduced price: €3

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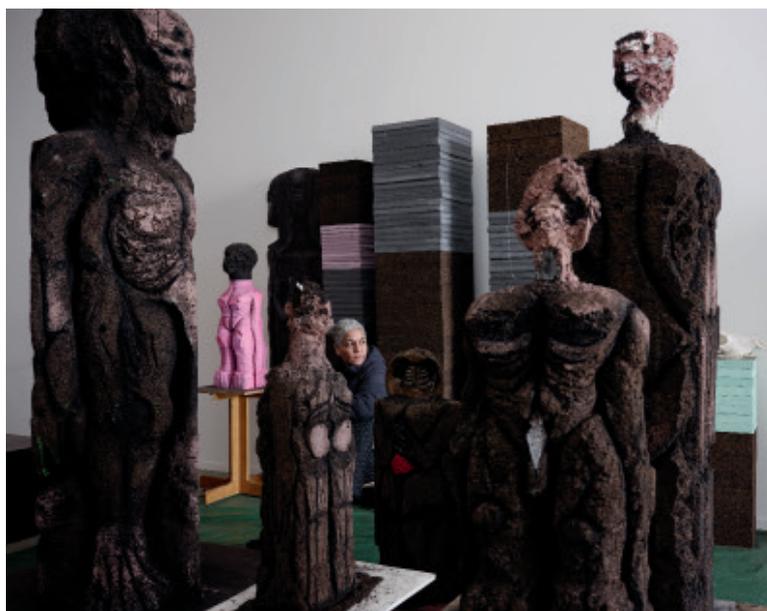
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Huma Bhabha in her studio, Poughkeepsie,
(United States) © Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist
and David Zwirner.
© Photo Jason Schmidt



Alberto Giacometti painting in his studio, 1959
Photographed by Ernst Scheidegger
29,6 × 20,7 cm
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Huma Bhabha

Listen to What I'm Not Saying, 2021

Wood, plaster, clay, wire and acrylic

142,9 × 65,7 × 65,7 cm

© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

Huma Bhabha

Untitled, 2022

Terracotta, acrylic, sand, plywood and concrete

109,2 × 61,9 × 62,2 cm

© Huma Bhabha / Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

Huma Bhabha

Untitled, 2022

Terracotta, acrylic, sand, plywood and concrete

39,4 × 81,9 × 81,9 cm

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Alberto Giacometti
Walking Man II, 1960
Plaster
188,5 × 29,1 × 11,2 cm
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti / Adagg, Paris 2026

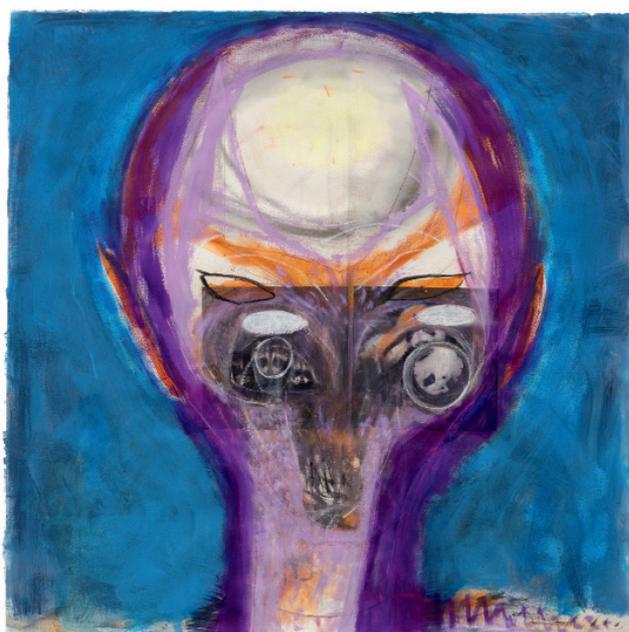
Alberto Giacometti
The Leg, 1958
Plaster
223 × 30,3 × 46,1 cm
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti / Adagg, Paris 2026

Alberto Giacometti
Large Head, 1960
Plaster
100,5 × 31,7 × 43,1 cm
Fondation Giacometti
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Alberto Giacometti
Standing Woman, circa 1961
Painted plaster
46 × 7,6 × 11,2 cm
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2026

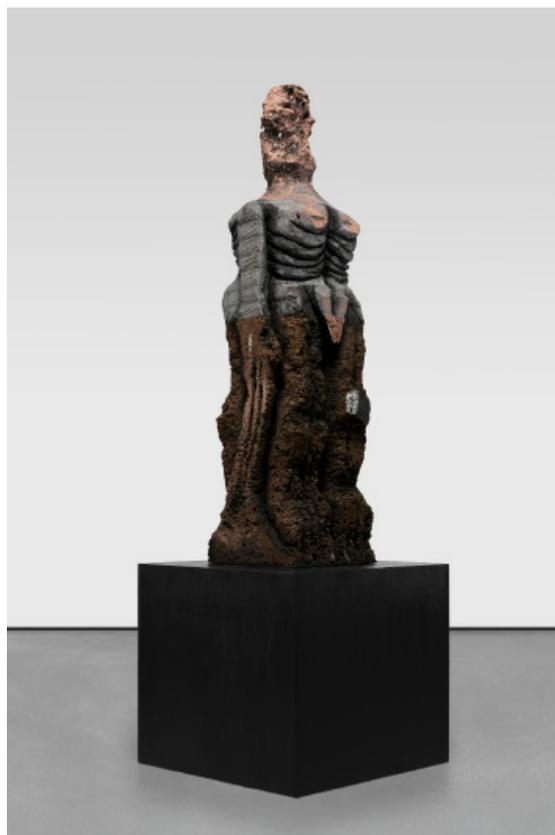
Huma Bhabha
Untitled, 2023
Ink, acrylic, pastel and collage on paper
132,1 × 132,1 cm
© Huma Bhabha /
Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner

Alberto Giacometti
Annette, c. 1952
Oil on canvas
47,2 × 33,8 cm
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Huma Bhabha

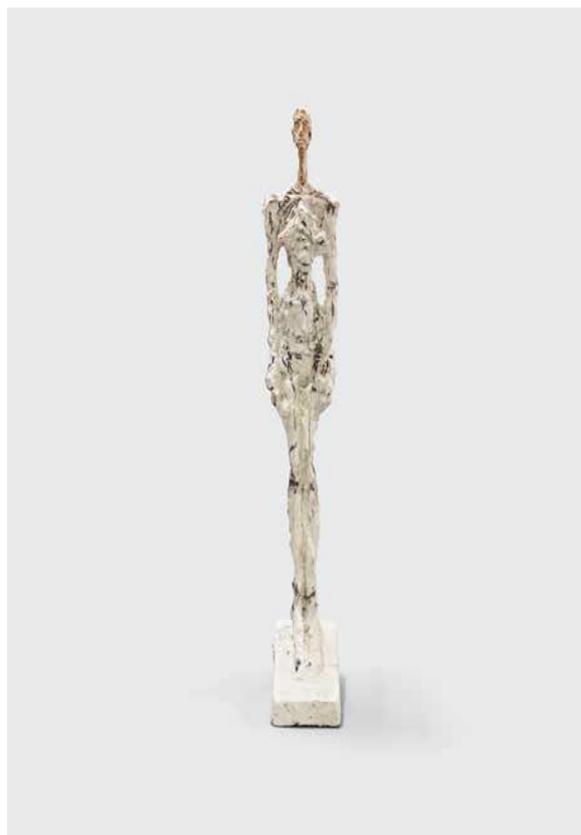
So Am I, 2025

Cork, polystyrene, clay, wire, bone, acrylic, oil
pastel, chalk and wood

175,3 × 56,2 × 56,2 cm

© Huma Bhabha /

Courtesy of the Artist and David Zwirner



Alberto Giacometti

Woman of Venice I, 1956

Painted plaster

108,5 × 17 × 30 cm

Fondation Giacometti

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Fondation Giacometti wholeheartedly thanks

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