



Alberto Giacometti, *Grande tête/Tête mince*, 1954, bronze, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

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## 'In Giacometti's Studio'

Eykyn Maclean

For those of us who grew up on Alberto Giacometti, the artist's extremes of stylization and evocations of raw emotion can sometimes seem clichéd and self-parodic. The strength of this relatively small and well-selected show, then, was its ability to lend context to the artist's pinched, elongated, angular sculptures and, in effect, flesh them out and add dimension. There were familiar works on pedestals and in vitrines—versions of the iconic "Walking Man," self-portraits, and the surrealist Pinocchio-nosed head in profile *Le Nez* (1947)—but there were also less known early busts of the artist's father and mother. These sculptures, reminiscent in style of Matisse, were naturalistic, softly modeled, individualistic, and warm.

The some 100 works in the show included such rarities as Giacometti's doodle on a telegram from dealer Pierre Matisse, a 1946 portrait of Jean-Paul Sartre looking more

businessman than intellectual, and drawings over texts opposite images, as in his riff on a van Gogh self-portrait.

The drawings here for the most part were not terribly impressive. They described friends and family and, occasionally, the studio. But they provided glimpses into the artist's thinking processes and practices—how he thought with his hands.

The warmth was in the show's informality—with fully realized drawings and studies, photographs, and documents adding amplitude. One of the most arresting sculptures was the 1958 *Annette assise (grande)*, capturing the artist's wife, elongated to the waist. Here Giacometti could merge his stylistic predilections, introducing a bit of naturalism and individual expression to his customary treatment. And here, too, the characteristic Beckettian angst is absent.

The show was sensitively curated by Michael Peppiatt, who wrote and edited the catalogue (just published by the gallery and Yale University Press). The presentation, on two floors of this elegant townhouse, was a far cry from the cave-like Montparnasse studio where Giacometti worked and lived between 1927 and 1966, but it nonetheless captured the spirit of his agitated enterprise.

In 1965, Peppiatt writes, Giacometti summed up his and his cohorts' endeavors, remarking: "All that doesn't amount to much, all the painting, sculpture, drawing, writing or rather literature. Everything has its place and no more than that. Only trying counts. How marvelous!" —**Barbara A. MacAdam**