

LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN

ARTNEWS

Small Is Beautiful: Luxembourg & Dayan Will Stage Show of Alberto Giacometti's Tiniest Works, With Urs Fischer Exhibition Design

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A photograph by Eli Lotar of Alberto Giacometti in a room of the Hotel de Rive in Geneva, Switzerland, before October 1944.

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This summer, the Guggenheim Museum in New York has been hosting a well-reviewed, large-scale exhibition of work of Alberto Giacometti. It closes September 12, but just a month later, those in the city will have another chance to enjoy the work of the Swiss master, in a show focusing on a key stretch of his career that has

received less notice than the periods when he was devoted to making his famed Surrealist and Existentialist pieces.

On October 17, the Upper East Side gallery Luxembourg & Dayan will open “Intimate Intimacy: Alberto Giacometti Sculptures, 1935–1945,” looking at works by the sculptor that are almost impossibly tiny—one is made out of a matchbox and none is taller than three inches. Thinking deeply about questions of scale while making these pieces, the artist was laying the groundwork for the thin, elongated figures that are now his trademark.

The years bracketed by the exhibition were dark ones for Giacometti: World War II raged, and his mother died. But they were also ones of restless experimentation for the artist part, and it was also during this time that he began exchanging letters with the art dealer Pierre Matisse, the son of Henri Matisse, about his practice, and a sample of the letters will be shown at the exhibition. (The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation is among the show’s lenders, who also include the Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti and the Alberto Giacometti Stiftung.)

Describing that correspondence, the gallery’s founder, Daniella Luxembourg, who is a Giacometti expert, told *ARTnews* that the artist “spoke to Pierre Matisse, and he said, ‘My problem is that no matter how hard I try to start with the structure, I start in my head and it’s very big.’ And then his demon became abstraction. He said, ‘Then I enter into the eyes, and the nose and the mouth, and it becomes abstract. So for me to catch all the head at the same time, I need to make it very small so that I have control over the figure.’ ”

The modestly scaled nature of the work will have a special resonance at the gallery, which is the second-narrowest house in Manhattan, Luxembourg said. “The space and the work will look sort of like they’re talking to each other.” The exhibition will feature an installation design by Urs Fischer, another Swiss artist with a penchant for sculpting the human form in inventive ways.

“Intimate Immensity” is curated by Giacometti scholar Casimiro Di Crescenzo, who said in an email, “It is a privilege to open the first exhibition in the United States to focus on Alberto Giacometti’s sculptures from the years 1935–1945, a transformative decade in the life of one of the greatest sculptors of all time. This is a decade in which Giacometti found himself reducing the size of his work further and further and further until his sculptures vanished, as he later confessed, ‘into dust.’ Truly a revolutionary experiment.”