

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

2 June 2015

Alberto Giacometti Yves Klein

In Search of the Absolute

Curated by Joachim Pissarro

EXTENDED!

Through Friday, June 10, 2016, 4pm

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

20 Grosvenor Hill, London W1K 3QD
www.gagosian.com



Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present the first-ever exhibition to pair key works by Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) and Yves Klein (1928–1962).

At first glance, Giacometti and Klein, artists born a generation apart, could not be more different: Giacometti was a master of material form, and of the representation of the figure; Klein was an influential theorist whose art married the conceptual with the cosmic. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the two artists lived and worked within a mile of each other, in Montparnasse, Paris, but there are few clues in their work to suggest that they shared the same artistic milieu. What they did have in common was an acute consciousness of the catastrophic effects of the Second World War and its aftermath on European culture. Each dealt with it in his own way: in his sculptures, Giacometti struggled to evince a vital human presence from nothing; Klein shunned the personal, autobiographical mark, attempting to dematerialise painting to the point of pure saturated colour. Exhibition curator Joachim Pissarro remarks, “Both artists, rather than creating something that reflected the chaos, chose to rise above it, transforming and deciphering it into elegant, lyrical matter.”

In the large, light-filled galleries at Gagosian Grosvenor Hill, Giacometti and Klein will be shown together for the first time. In an ambitious and immersive installation conceived by Pissarro, Giacometti's nervously modelled figures and heads are confronted by Klein's intense and expansive colours. Each artist is generously represented by works on loan from the Fondation Alberto Giacometti, the Yves Klein Archives, the Beyeler Foundation, and distinguished private collections. Twenty-five sculptures by Giacometti—including such classics as the hieratic *Femme de Venise I* (1956), the austere *L'homme qui marche I* (1960), and the almost comic *Le Nez* (1947)—will be juxtaposed with as many works from Klein, including *Monochromes*, *Anthropometries*, *Fire Paintings*, and a *Sponge Sculpture*. It is in the *Anthropometries*—direct impressions of the naked female body in blue paint on large sheets of paper—that Klein comes closest to Giacometti in his desire to record the human trace, albeit without any overt evidence of his own hand.

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20 GROSVENOR HILL LONDON W1K 3QD T. 020.7495.1500 F. 020.7495.3500

LONDON@GAGOSIAN.COM WWW.GAGOSIAN.COM

The title of the exhibition, “In Search of the Absolute,” originates from an essay on Giacometti by the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre wrote that “Giacometti... is forever beginning anew;” that with each sculpture it is “necessary to start again from zero;” and that Giacometti’s images of humanity are “always mediating between nothingness and being.” In the conceptual and working processes of both artists, “nothingness” became “the void,” a space of infinite potential. Giacometti devoted much of his career to the struggle between matter and meaning: how to reduce the figure’s mass as far as possible while imbuing it with essential force; while Klein’s goal was to reinvest the vacuum of nothingness as a void of “blue profundity.”

In this speculative juxtaposition, “In Search of the Absolute” seeks to evoke the differences as well as the affinities between these two groundbreaking artists of the modern period, bringing new light to their aspirations and achievements.

The accompanying publication will include essays by Joachim Pissarro, Cecilia Braschi, and Richard Calvocoressi; interviews by Pissarro with Catherine Grenier and Daniel Moquay; and historical texts—some translated for the first time—by Isaku Yanaihara, Dino Buzzati, and Pierre Descargues; as well as detailed chronologies and a map of Montparnasse dating from the period in which both artists lived there.

This is the third time that Gagolian Gallery has collaborated with the Yves Klein Archives, following earlier exhibitions “Sponge Reliefs” (Gagolian New York, 1989); and “Fire at the Heart of the Void” (Gagolian New York, 1993). Exhibitions of Giacometti’s work have been presented in Europe, the U.S., and Asia with the support of the Fondation Alberto Giacometti, including “Living, Looking, Making” (Gagolian London, 2007); “Isabel and Other Intimate Strangers: Portraits by Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon” (Gagolian New York, 2009); “Giacometti in Switzerland” (Gagolian Geneva, 2011); and “Alberto Giacometti: Without End” (Gagolian Hong Kong, 2014).

Alberto Giacometti was born in 1901 in Borgonovo, Switzerland, and died in 1966 in Chur, Switzerland. In 1922, he moved to Paris and studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. Recent exhibitions include “Una retrospective,” Colección de la Fundación Alberto y Annette Giacometti, Museo Picasso Málaga, Spain (2011); “The Origin of Space: The Mature Works,” Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria (2011); “Space, Head, Figure,” Musée de Grenoble, France (2013); and “Alberto Giacometti,” Pera Museum, Istanbul (2015). The first retrospective of Giacometti’s work in China opened at the Yuz Museum in Shanghai on March 22.

Yves Klein was born in Nice, France in 1928, and died in 1962 in Paris. He began painting monochromes in 1950, exhibiting them publicly for the first time in Paris in 1955. In 1960, he patented the formula for International Klein Blue. In 1961 he presented “Yves Klein: Monochrome und Feuer,” a major retrospective in Krefeld, Germany. Recent retrospectives include “Yves Klein,” Guggenheim Bilbao (2005); “Body, Colour, Immaterial,” Centre Pompidou (2006-7) and “Yves Klein: With the Void, Full Powers,” Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. (2010).

For further inquiries please contact the gallery at london@gagolian.com or at +44.207.495.1500. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

Press Enquiries

Bolton & Quinn

T. +44.207.221.5000

www.boltonquinn.com

Contact: Erica Bolton

E. erica@boltonquinn.com

Contact: Jessica Baggaley

E. jess@boltonquinn.com

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Image: Left: Yves Klein making an *Anthropometry*, 14 rue Campagne Première, Paris, 1961, photograph by René Burri. Artwork © Yves Klein, ADAGP, Paris/DACS, London, 2016; Right: Alberto Giacometti in his studio, 46 rue Hippolyte Maindron, Paris, 1960, photograph by René Burri. Artwork © 2016 Alberto Giacometti Estate/Licensed by VAGA and ARS, NY.

Gagolian Gallery was established in 1980 by Larry Gagolian.