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Gagosian to Present *The Body as Matter: Giacometti Nauman Picasso in London*

On View from June 6, the Exhibition Is the First to Consider Sculpture by These Three Artists Together



Left: Alberto Giacometti working in his studio, Paris, 1956. Artwork © Succession Alberto Giacometti/DACS 2024. Photo: Pierre Vauthey/Sygma/Sygma via Getty Images. Middle: Bruce Nauman in his studio at the University of California, Davis, 1965. Artwork © 2024 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, and DACS, London. Photo: courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York. Right Pablo Picasso working in his sculpture studio at Le Fournas, Valluris, France, 1953. Artwork © Succession Picasso/DACS, London 2024. Photo: Edward Quinn © edwardquinn.com

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LONDON, May 14, 2024—Gagosian is pleased to announce *The Body as Matter: Giacometti Nauman Picasso*, an exhibition of sculpture by Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966), Bruce Nauman (b. 1941), and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). Curated by Richard Calvocoressi, the exhibition is on view at the Grosvenor Hill gallery from June 6 to July 26, 2024.

Radical investigations of the human body and how we perceive it characterize the distinct sculptural practices of Giacometti, Nauman, and Picasso, who are widely regarded as defining figures of their respective generations. From the modernist preoccupation with the fragmented or disintegrated body typical of Picasso’s and Giacometti’s work to the postmodern expansion of sculpture into a range of environmental and anti-monumental forms exemplified by Nauman’s, this is the first exhibition to juxtapose sculptures by these three artists. It features classic pieces by all three, including Picasso’s *La femme enceinte I* (1950) and *Bras vertical* (1961), Giacometti’s *La jambe* (1958) and *Grande tête* (1960), and Nauman’s *Henry Moore Bound to Fail* (1967/1970) and *Model for Room with My Soul Left Out, Room That Does Not Care* (1984).

A pioneer of Cubism best known for his paintings, drawings, and collages, Picasso produced numerous sculptures, which are among his most experimental works. He primarily sculpted in two distinct modes: modeling clay or plaster for casting into bronze, and constructing or assembling forms from discarded objects and cheap materials such as sheet metal, wood, and cardboard. In works of astonishing wit and originality, not to mention erotic suggestiveness, Picasso investigated means of manipulating mass and surface to incorporate multiple perspectives into a single head, limb, or figure.

In Paris in the 1920s Giacometti came under the influence of Surrealism, encouraging him to incorporate into his sculptures a sense of sexual violence or threat that Nauman would later take up. Giacometti’s modeled and cast sculptures from the postwar period—fragile, highly textured, and strikingly elongated—broke away from the conventions of classical sculpture to evoke instead the survivors of some human or natural catastrophe. These depictions of the fractured and vulnerable figure or of isolated body parts appear frozen in motion, prompting reflections on mortality. Focusing almost exclusively on the body, Giacometti’s paring of the figure to its bare essentials challenged tradition and paved the way for contemporary artists to consider new possibilities.

Since the 1960s Nauman has pursued a varied practice that builds on Picasso's and Giacometti's innovations. Nauman produces work in sculpture, performance, video, and neon that confronts viewers with their own physical limitations and employs repetitive actions, linguistic play, and stark imagery to disrupt perception and thought. The artist's invocation of corporeal presence echoes Giacometti's, yet he visualizes the human condition through the prisms of contemporary culture and modern technology. Addressing concerns such as the effect of surveillance and the allure of instant gratification, Nauman's works require the viewer's physical presence and mental engagement to activate them.

Giacometti, Nauman, and Picasso have all redefined sculpture—reshaping traditional mediums and pioneering new ones. Picasso's groundbreaking move away from a naturalistic representation of the human form was extended by Giacometti, whose elongated, modeled, and cast figures draw attention to material and process, while evoking the artist's struggle to capture a living, breathing presence in three dimensions. Nauman often uses his own body as subject, and encourages the viewer to become an involved participant. For all three artists, the space we occupy, the ways we are perceived, and our effect on others are crucial elements in their unique methods of existential inquiry.

THE BODY AS MATTER: GIACOMETTI NAUMAN PICASSO

Opening reception: Thursday, June 6, 6–8pm

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20 Grosvenor Hill, London

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