

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Lonely Figures Visit Russia for the First Time

16 September 2008 By Marina Kamenev / Staff Writer
The lonely figures of Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti grace some of the grandest museums in the world, from Tate Modern in London to New York's MOMA, but until this week his textured silhouettes have not made much of an appearance in Russia.

From this week, the Pushkin Museum of Private Collections is displaying more than 50 of his works, including his lesser-known paintings and drawings in an exhibition titled "Alberto Giacometti."

Giacometti was born in Switzerland in 1901. His father was a painter, and Giacometti began to follow in his footsteps in high school. It was not until the early '20s that he started to study sculpture seriously.

One of his first key pieces, which is displayed at the exhibition, is "Spoon Woman," a figure that borders on the abstract, with the large bowl of a spoon in place of a woman's torso. Giacometti was influenced by African art at the time he produced this work.



Pushkin Museum Of Fine Arts
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Alberto Giacometti was influenced by African art (below) before he established his signature style (above and left).

Another interesting work is "Diego in a Sweater," a bust of the artist's younger brother, created in 1953. The head is small and narrow with a defiant expression. Proportionately, the shoulders and torso look as if they belong to another sculpture. The arms are folded into the rough expanse of the sweater, and the hands are considerably bigger than the head.

By the early '60s, Giacometti had reached a certain level of fame. In 1961, Samuel Beckett asked him to design the set for "Waiting for Godot," and the sculptor made a barren plaster tree. A year later, Giacometti had his own pavilion at the Venice Biennale. He also met Francis Bacon during a trip to London. Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with stomach cancer soon afterward, and he died in 1966.

"Alberto Giacometti. Painting, Drawing, Sculpture" runs to Nov. 20 at the Museum of Private Collections, located at 10 Ul. Volkhonka. M. Kropotkinskaya. Tel. 203-7998. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Giacometti's trademark bronze figures of skeletal men and women did not come until after World War II.

One of the exhibits, "Man Crossing a Square," looks as if it would crumble in your hand if you were to touch it. While the man appears to be walking, his large heavy feet weigh him down and the top half of his body looks resigned to the fact that there is no possibility for movement.

Many of the post-war sculptures have vaguely molded heads and crudely shaped bodies, but despite their lack of detail, they express a sense of tragedy. "Dog" shows a dog walking, its feet glued to the base and its head lowered toward the ground. It is painfully thin and the skin seems to hang off its frail body.



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