

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Exhibition reveals Paris through Alberto Giacometti's work

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Sculptures are among more than 200 works in the Giacometti exhibition. Photo: Thomas Yau

This show is a trip into Alberto Giacometti's mind, following him from the isolation of the studio, to the social life of the cafes and the printing house, says Véronique Wiesinger, director of the Alberto and Annette Giacometti Foundation in Paris. "It really is the magnum opus of a man in the peak of his art and in the fall of his life."

Wiesinger is referring to "Paris sans fin (Paris without end)", an exhibition of the Swiss-born artist's works that she has curated at the Gagosian Gallery in Central.

It is an impressive journey into the mind of the artist, showcasing rare lithographs and drawings, some of which are on show for the first time.

The exhibition also comprises 14 important bronze sculptures including Diego (tête au col roulé) from around 1954, and Annette assise (petite) (1956); and paintings such as Caroline (1965). And with more than 200 works by the artist, it's one of the largest and most ambitious exhibitions to date in terms of volume.

The show, organised in collaboration with the foundation, is accompanied by a fully illustrated book.

Giacometti's love for Chinese art makes Hong Kong an apt location for such a substantial show of the artist's work. "The artist publicly stated more than once that he counted Chinese sculpture and painting among the rare works from the past that 'most closely resembled reality'," says Wiesinger.

But while Giacometti admired Chinese landscape paintings, his true love was Paris and its people. Between 1930 until his death in 1966, the artist celebrated the city of light and love through a series of 150 lithographs with text.

"Paris was more than a city for Giacometti - it was a spirit, it was the essence of civilised behaviour and creativity," says Wiesinger. With friends like André Breton, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, it's easy to see why his creative juices were ceaselessly flowing.

Giacometti characterised the pieces on show as "images and memories of images", an apt description of the volatile, fleeting scenes.

Intersections jammed with cars are depicted alongside crisscrossing electric cables and elevated railways, and historic buildings, surrounded by these symbols of change, are rendered in nearly flat perspective.

The show gives viewers an intimate insight into the artist's life from the solitude of the studio, and presents city scenes which include the towers of Saint Sulpice and the Boulevard Montparnasse, where he frequented the Dome and Select brasseries.