



# Standing Woman

Alberto Giacometti

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## On display

**Title/Description:** Standing Woman

**Artist/Maker:** Alberto Giacometti

**Born:** 1958 - 1959

**Object Type:** Sculpture

**Materials:** Bronze

**Measurements:** h. 1307 x w. 200 x d. 345 mm

**Accession Number:** 48

**Historic Period:** 20th century

**Production Place:** France

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**Credit Line:** Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

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This large bronze sculpture was a variation on the group of standing female figures that he showed at Venice Biennale in 1956. It is a magnificent example of the artist's attenuated figures that are characteristic of his late style. This he famously announced to the world in his show at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York in 1948, with an essay by Jean-Paul Sartre. Although he was already highly regarded as the most important sculptor of the Surrealists of the 1930s, it is his late style that cemented his reputation as one of the most important artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Standing Woman* was acquired in 1959 after a visit to the artist's studio, where Robert and Lisa Sainsbury saw the sculpture in its plaster state. Although reluctant at first, they convinced him that it was completely satisfying and he agreed to their request to have it cast in bronze, keeping one for himself. Robert Sainsbury later explained that although they had known the artist for a decade this was their first purchase of a sculpture. He recalled that he had not yet seen a sculpture that touched him deeply. But one day, walking into Giacometti's studio he saw *Standing Woman* and remarked, 'This is it', he said to himself. He then told Giacometti how much he would like to have it. [1]

The work was originally intended to form part of his commission for the Chase Manhattan Plaza in New York but this project was never realised. The single figures of standing women almost invariably seem to remain beyond one's reach, whatever one's physical distance from them. They are

motionless relics seemingly of glacial time. The inspiration for his series of female standing figures was the artist Isabel Rawsthorne, who Giacometti had met in 1935. On one occasion, Giacometti glimpsed Isabel standing some distance away from him on the Boulevard Saint-Michel in the shadow of the surrounding buildings. The vision of a solitary figure, whom he desired, engulfed by darkness and as if unobtainable, made a lasting impression on him. He spent the following years desperately attempting to capture that impression of Isabel as he had seen her. This vision of Isabel as a lone figure would haunt his work for the rest of his life. There is a closely related drawing in the collection, *Standing Nude*, 1955.

Calvin Winner, February 2022

[1] Calvin Winner, *Alberto Giacometti: A Line Through Time* (Bloomsbury 2016), p.100.

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## **Provenance**

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1959. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.

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