

Alberto Giacometti †

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ALBERTO GIACOMETTI †

The death occurred on 12th January of the famous Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti. He died in the Grisons Cantonal Hospital in Chur at the age of 64. His death, as Federal President Schaffner said in a telegram to the artist's family, is mourned by friends of the arts the world over, for he was an extraordinary man and artist.

In an obituary in the "Times", he was described as "one of the most eminent modern practitioners of plastic art and one also who arrived at a form of expression in which he was so individual as to stand alone — in its elemental nature his work had an attribute of greatness."

Alberto Giacometti was born on 10th October 1901 at Stampa (Bergell), the eldest son of the Swiss artist, Giovanni Giacometti, a well-known impressionist painter. He started to draw at an early age, and in 1919, his father sent him to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Geneva. But already after three days, young Giacometti left the school and went to the Ecole des Arts et Métiers. After six months there and a short period in Italy, he went to Paris in 1922. For three years he studied under Bourdelle at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. In his early efforts in sculpture he was naturalistic, but he abandoned this style and came under the influence of Cubism. In 1930 he got attached to the Surrealist movement. His first one-man show was in Paris in 1934. Just as he became known and received a number of commissions, he turned away from Surrealism and began to experiment. He often worked with his brother Diego, an able furniture designer, in producing decorative objects such as chandeliers and standard lamps.

It was only in 1947 that he began to keep again his long, thin plastic figures and groups, having destroyed previously everything which had not satisfied him. In 1948, he gave an important exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York. It was a great success. Jean-Paul Sartre called his works "figures between being and nothingness".

Giacometti gave several more exhibitions in New York, Paris and twice at the Venice Biennale. The first complete show of his sculpture paintings and drawings in England was the retrospective exhibition organised by the Arts Council in 1955. He figured again prominently in "From Hodler to Klee", an exhibition of Swiss art arranged by the Arts Council and the "Pro Helvetia" Foundation at the Tate Gallery in 1959. Last summer, a complete exhibition of his work from 1913 to 1965 was organised at the Tate Gallery. At the same time, a similar exhibition was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Giacometti travelled little, but every year he returned to his native village in the Grisons. From 1942 to 1945 he stayed in Geneva. There he met his future wife, Miss Annette Arm. Most of his work was done in his Paris studio in the rue Hippolyte Maindrou, which he has had ever since 1927.

Today, his works are in Baltimore, New York, the Tate Gallery in London and in the major art collections of France, Italy and Switzerland. In November 1965, Berne University awarded him an honorary doctorate. A few days previously, he had received the "grand prix des arts" in Paris.

To finish, we quote "The Times" of 13th January: "His thin, elongated figures often conveyed an impression of suffering and mysterious isolation, and could be regarded as the product of a romantic imagination viewing the tragic side of the twentieth century".

(Based on news from A.T.S. and "The Times".)

RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland:

Emil Wiedmer (76), Solothurn, Editor of the "Solothurner Zeitung"; author.

Ernst Geiger (89), Schafis/Lake of Bienne, well-known painter; a former ETH forestry engineer and a doctor of natural sciences.

Corps Commander Colonel Marius Corbat (72), Berne; he joined the instruction service of Infantry in 1920, was given the command of the Sixth Division in 1944 and that of the Second Division three years later; from 1950 he commanded the First Army Corps, and in 1954 he became Chief of Training of the Swiss Army; he retired in 1957.

Ernst Briner (54), Aarwangen, Tribunal President of the "Amtsbezirk" Aarwangen.

Elie Bussard (58), Gruyères, member of the Fribourg Parliament and former Commune President of Gruyères; he died following a street accident.

Henri Zumbrunn (55), La Chaux-de-Fonds, Commander of the fire brigade and instructor for civil defence.

Colonel Charles von Wattenwyl (81), Berne, former Swiss Military Attaché in Rome.

Josef Camenzind (92), Gersau, silk manufacturer; from 1911 to 1930 he managed the Schappespinnerei Gersau with his brother; he held many offices, amongst them from 1942 to 1946 that of Cantonal Judge; oldest inhabitant of the district.

Armin Stierlin (80), Zurich, first a teacher, he became a journalist, specialising in natural science; member of the editorial staff of the "Tat".

Prof. Dr. Adolphe Kuenzi (67), Bienne, President of the "Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund"; teacher in Bienne, the first layman to be called to the top of this Church federation; member of many organisations; President of the Bernese Church Synod; he often represented Switzerland in the Ecumenical Council and was a member of the Executive Committee of the "Reformierter Weltbund".

Charles Junod (76), Leubringen, former Director of the Delsberg Teachers' Training College; doctor of philosophy.

Pater Dr. Bonaventura Thommen (68), Sarnen, for thirty years teacher of German at the Cantonal School at Sarnen, whose Principal he was from 1945 to 1964; member of the Council of Fribourg University.

Gilbert Beley (65), Delsberg, for many years Clerk of the Court in Delsberg; writer; Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army.

Felix Perrin (62), Moutier, industrialist and manufacturer of precision instruments; President of the Jura section of the Bernese "Handels-und Industrieverein".

Melchior Hefti (86), Glarus, former "Landammann" and Democrat Councillor of States; local politician and member of many organisations in banking, industry; imposing personality in the Canton of Glarus.

Edmond Racheter (86), Geneva, industrialist; President of the Bellevue Commune from 1937 to 1962.

Jean de Carlini (88), Geneva, Honorary President of the "Pharmacies Populaires" in Geneva and President of the "Fédération des Sociétés de Secours Mutuels".