

PRESS KIT



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

1.9.24 —
15.1.25

UNVEILED SURREALISM

The Max Ernst Museum of the LVR is supported by



Further information and tickets

www.maxernstmuseum.lvr.de

Co-organized with



CONTENT

PRESS RELEASE	P. 3
WALL TEXTS	P. 4
SUPPORTING PROGRAM	P. 8
CATALOGUE	P. 9
COLLABORATION	P. 10
PRESS IMAGES	P. 11
INFO SERVICE	P. 18

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PRESS RELEASE

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI – UNVEILED SURREALISM

On the occasion of Surrealism's centennial, the exhibition *Alberto Giacometti – Unveiled Surrealism* at the Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR presents over 70 works by the Swiss artist, examined through the lens of Surrealism. The exhibition is organized in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti, Paris.

The work of Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) is among the most original artistic creations of the modern period. Known for his elongated and expressive sculptures created after the Second World War, Giacometti also produced a significant body of highly inventive and psychologically charged works in the 1930s, at a time when he was actively involved in the Parisian Surrealist circles. The exhibition highlights this creative period, which is marked by the artist's interest in exploring the unconscious, aggressive and sexual impulses, and the ambiguity of signs. In addition, the exhibition explores how a "surrealist" spirit continues to permeate Giacometti's oeuvre after his break with the movement in 1935 and up to his post-war sculptures. The exhibition presents major works by the artist such as *The Couple* (1926), *Spoon Woman* (1927), *Suspended Ball* (1930), *Disagreeable Object* (1931), *The Nose* (1949) and *The Cage, First version* (1949–1950).

The exhibition is punctuated by works by Max Ernst, archival documents, and photographs, highlighting the two artists' friendship and creative ties for the first time. Ernst and Giacometti met in Paris in the late 1920s while they were both members of the Surrealist movement around André Breton. Although Giacometti was excluded from the group in 1935, he invited Ernst to join him a few months later in Maloja, his home region in Switzerland. Together, they devoted themselves to plastic creation, sculpting blocks of granite found in the Forno Glacier's moraines. Ernst's visit testifies to a friendship and a creative affinity that go beyond Giacometti's so-called "official" surrealist period.

The exhibition is on view at the Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR from September 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025. It is curated by Dr. Friederike Voßkamp, Head of Collection of the Max Ernst Museum Brühl des LVR and Laura Braverman, Associate Curator at the Fondation Giacometti in Paris. Accompanying it is a richly illustrated trilingual catalogue featuring contributions by Laura Braverman, Madeleine Frey, Friederike Voßkamp, and Jürgen Wilhelm.

Short version:

The Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR is dedicating a major exhibition to Swiss sculptor, painter, and draughtsman Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966). Organized in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti, Paris, the exhibition offers a unique perspective on Giacometti's work, explored here through the lens of Surrealism and for the first time, highlights the artist's friendship and creative ties with Max Ernst.

The work of Alberto Giacometti is among the most original artistic creations of the modern period. Known for his elongated and expressive sculptures created after the Second World War, Giacometti also produced a significant body of highly inventive and psychologically charged works in the 1930s, at a time when he was actively involved in the Surrealist circles in Paris.

On the occasion of Surrealism's centennial, the exhibition presents Giacometti's works from that period, testifying to the artist's interest in the unconscious, aggressive and sexual impulses, and the ambiguity of signs. The exhibition looks at the ways in which a surrealist "spirit" endures in Giacometti's production after his break with the movement in 1935 and his later works of the post-war years. It also explores moments of friendship and creative affinity between Giacometti and Max Ernst, who met in 1929 in Paris, worked in neighbouring studios in the 1930s, and remained friends thereafter.

The exhibition presents over 70 works—sculptures, drawings, paintings, and prints—by Giacometti, featuring several of his major sculptures such as *The Couple* (1926), *Spoon Woman* (1927), *Suspended Ball* (1930), *Disagreeable Object* (1931), *The Nose* (1949), and *The Cage, First version* (1949–1950). The exhibition will also display works by Ernst in dialogue with Giacometti's, as well as photographs and archives underscoring the ties between the two artists.

Further information on the exhibition and individual works can be found on our microsite:



www.maxernstmuseum.lvr.de and
www.fondation-giacometti.fr

WALL TEXTS

Alberto Giacometti: Unveiled Surrealism

The Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) is one of the most significant sculptors of modern times. He is especially renowned for his elongated and expressive figures made in the postwar period. However, between 1930 and 1935, he was also a key member of the surrealist movement that formed around the writer André Breton in Paris in 1924, exactly one hundred years ago.

In celebration of Surrealism's centennial, this exhibition highlights Giacometti's lesser-known yet immensely rich surrealist oeuvre, which is characterized by the exploration of the unconscious, a play with ambiguous forms and perspectives, an engagement with themes such as sexuality, death, and violence, and an embrace of chance. The exhibition also examines how surrealist motifs, themes, and methods persist in Giacometti's art even after his break with the movement and into the postwar years.

Additionally, the exhibition delves into moments of friendship and creative affinity between Alberto Giacometti and Max Ernst (1891–1976). The two artists moved to Paris in 1922 where they met around 1929 and worked in neighboring studios in the 1930s. They were both active participants in the surrealist movement and remained friends even after Giacometti's exclusion from the surrealist group.

This exhibition is organized in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti.

Parisian Beginnings

At the age of twenty-one, Giacometti moved to Paris to study sculpture at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. After several years spent working from models, in 1925, he took the decision, as he would later explain, to "[attempt] to recapture reality through the imaginary." The fact that an idea should precede a work then became central to his creative process. An endlessly curious person, Giacometti looked at the works of the Parisian avant-gardes around him and drew inspiration from ancient and non-Western art displayed in Parisian museums. Absorbing these different vocabularies, he began to produce works with increasingly simplified and ambiguous forms, encouraging viewers to connect and interpret these elements freely.

A Dissident Surrealism

In 1929, the avant-garde Galerie Jeanne Bucher showed, in the words of a critic, "very curious sculptures" by Giacometti. The works in question were his "flat" sculptures, examples of which can be seen in this gallery. These slab-like works — which, when viewed from the side, are reduced to a simple line — quickly caught the attention of the dissident surrealists, a group of writers, poets, and artists who gravitated around the writer and philosopher Georges Bataille. Although most of them had participated in creating the Surrealist movement five years earlier, they had now parted ways with its founder André Breton, and focused on notions of formlessness, destruction, and the obscene. Joining the dissident circle, Giacometti was stimulated by its ideas, creating new linear sculptures with subtly erotic and violent allusions.

Mobile and Mute Objects

"A ball (...) marked with a feminine slit is suspended by a (...) string over a crescent whose ridge barely grazes the cavity. The spectator finds himself instinctively compelled to slide the ball against the ridge, a movement that the length of string only allows for partially." This is how the artist Salvador Dalí described Giacometti's sculpture *Suspended Ball* — on view here—which, soon after it was first exhibited in 1930, impressed the surrealists for its ability to animate viewers' unconscious thoughts. Immediately incorporated into André Breton's Surrealist group as a result, Giacometti began to produce highly evocative sculptures, which he referred to as "mobile and mute objects." Gathered here, these works are at once playful and threatening.

Silence Bird

In the early 1930s, Giacometti developed several cage-shaped works, including *Silence Bird*, a reconstituted version of which is presented here. This work features a compressed space in which spherical forms, sticks, and claws intertwine, evoking a scene of copulation or combat. Due to the small size of Giacometti's studio, the sculpture was stored on the terrace of Max Ernst's neighboring 10th floor apartment, where it was accidentally destroyed. Ernst's son, Jimmy, later recalled: „I enjoyed sitting there and seeing the breathtaking skyline through the static ballet of sculptures that Alberto kept there because his studio was too small.“

The title of the work, *Silence Bird*, establishes a connection to Max Ernst, who often used the bird as his alter ego in his works.

Maloja

In February 1935, Giacometti was excluded from the surrealist group due to his return to work from models and nature. However, he remained friends with several surrealists, including Max Ernst, whom he invited some six months later to visit him at his family's house in Maloja, in the Bergell region. At this time, Giacometti was in a transitional phase, seeking new forms of expression. During joint excursions to the Forno Glacier, they collected small and large blocks of granite. Max Ernst painted or carved into these stones, creatively expanding on their existing natural formations. Enthusiastically, he wrote from Maloja: „Alberto and I are in the throes of sculptural fever.“

This moment of shared creativity reflects a deep friendship and artistic affinity that persisted beyond Giacometti's official membership in the surrealist group.

Transitions

After his exclusion from the surrealist group, Giacometti focused almost exclusively on representing the human figure, based on models or memory. However, while living in Geneva during World War II, he began to write several texts that retained a surrealist tonality for the journal *Labyrinthe*. One of these texts, published in 1946 upon his return to Paris and titled „The Dream, the Sphinx, and the Death of T.,“ merges dreamlike states with real memories. He created

several sculptures inspired by this story: for example, *Head on a Rod* echoes a vision he had of heads suspended between life and death. In Paris, he also reconnected with Georges Bataille and illustrated one of his books, testifying to their shared interest in deformations and violent imagery. The works from this period mark a transition towards the distinctive style that would characterize Giacometti's postwar works.

The 1950s: Lurking Surrealism

By the 1950s, Giacometti had developed the signature style for which he would become most famous: thin, elongated figures often set on bases. These were the result of his almost exclusive dedication to truthfully representing how human figures could appear in space. While these works were now closely connected to existentialist and phenomenological thought, a “surrealist spirit” sometimes reappeared in their themes or methods. Chance occurrences, psychoanalytical interpretations, and feelings of uneasiness could still lurk behind them. For instance, the two sculptures at the center of this gallery were composed after the artist noticed several figure studies that “happened to be standing together by chance” on his studio's floor, reminding him of a glade and a forest he had seen, “as if, unintentionally, [he] was realizing impressions felt long before.”

The Cage Motif

To anchor his figures within defined spaces, Giacometti often incorporated internal frames in his drawings and paintings. The cage motif, which he initially developed during his surrealist years, resurfaced in new works in the early 1950s. Cages also allowed him to explore concepts of space, while retaining a violent and transgressive symbolism — ideas that are quintessentially surrealist. For example, in one of the cage sculptures presented here, a female figure clings to the bars, embodying a tension between confinement and freedom. In 1965, a year before his death, Giacometti created a new version of his now-canonical cage-shaped surrealist sculpture *Suspended Ball* for an exhibition. On that occasion, he also painted it on a large canvas, underscoring his continued interest in his surrealist production.

BIOGRAPHY

1901

Alberto Giacometti is born on October 10th in Borgonovo (Bergell, Switzerland). He is the first child of post-impressionist painter Giovanni Giacometti and Annetta Stampa.

1919

He interrupts secondary school in Schiers and enrolls at the École des Beaux-Arts in Geneva, and later at the École des Arts et Métiers.

1920–1921

Trip to Italy.

1922

He moves to Paris to study sculpture under Antoine Bourdelle at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. He discovers the Parisian avant-gardes.

Max Ernst moves to Paris and actively participates in the emerging surrealist movement.

1924

André Breton publishes the surrealist manifesto.

1926

Giacometti moves into a small studio at 46 Rue Hippolyte-Maindron, which he will keep for the rest of his life.

1929

He meets painter André Masson, who introduces him to the surrealist circles. Exhibition at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher.

It is likely in this context that he meets Max Ernst, with whom he forms a lasting friendship.

He joins Georges Bataille's group of „dissident“ surrealists.

1930

First applied arts projects.

His sculpture *Suspended Ball* is enthusiastically received by André Breton and Salvador Dalí. He becomes part of the surrealist group and is soon regarded as the surrealist sculptor *par excellence*.

Giacometti and Max Ernst often see each other within this surrealist circle.

1932

Giacometti grows closer to the poet Louis Aragon and other surrealists who advocate for an explicitly politicized surrealism. Under a pseudonym, he publishes drawings in communist magazines.

1933

He becomes closer to André Breton, publishes surrealist texts, and exhibits with the surrealist group at the Galerie Pierre Colle in Paris.

Max Ernst moves to the 26 Rue des Plantes, a few minutes walk away from Giacometti's studio.

1934

Giacometti distances himself from surrealist ideas and gives renewed attention to representing the human figure.

Giacometti and Ernst present works in a group exhibition at the Kunsthaus Zürich. In the exhibition catalogue, Max Ernst highlights Giacometti as a major figure in surrealist sculpture.

1935

Giacometti's turn towards working from nature leads to his expulsion from the surrealist group. His friendships with certain surrealists remain unaffected.

Max Ernst visits Giacometti at his family home in Maloja (Switzerland).

1936

Despite no longer being a member of the surrealist group, Giacometti's works are shown in surrealist exhibitions in London and Paris.

1938

Due to political instability, Max Ernst leaves Paris and moves to Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche.

1939–1941

Giacometti's works now focus almost exclusively on a truthful representation of reality.

Max Ernst emigrates to the United States.

1942–1945

During World War II, Giacometti lives in Switzerland and meets his future wife, Annette Arm. In Geneva, he writes several texts with surrealist tones for the magazine *Labyrinthe*. In September 1945, he returns to his studio in Paris.

1947

Elongated, slender forms become characteristic features of his sculptures, defining his post-war style.

1949-1950

Max Ernst meets Giacometti in Paris. It is likely on this occasion that Giacometti dedicates a drawing to Ernst, and that Ernst gives him the painting *Head of a Man* (displayed in this gallery).

He creates sculptures with cage- and board-like structures, which are rooted in existentialist questions while also referencing surrealist motifs, methods, and themes.

1953

Max Ernst moves back to France. The two friends meet at a surrealist reunion in Paris.

1955

First museum retrospectives in New York, London, and Germany.

1962

Giacometti receives the Grand Prize for Sculpture at the Venice Biennale.

Max Ernst had received the Venice Grand Prize for Painting eight years earlier.

Extensive retrospective in Zurich and publication of Giacometti's first monograph by Jacques Dupin.

1965

Retrospectives at the Tate Gallery in London, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Louisiana Museum in Denmark.

1966

Giacometti dies on January 11th in Chur.

SUPPORTING PROGRAM

Accompanying the exhibition, various events and workshops for children, teenagers, and adults, as well as special programs for kindergartens and schools, will be offered.

Please also check the announcement of dates on the homepage www.maxernstmuseum.lvr.de as well as on Facebook and Instagram.

Saturday, August 31, 2024 | 7 PM

Opening of the Exhibition

Alberto Giacometti: Unveiled Surrealism

with musical accompaniment by Pavel Efremov (accordion)

Free admission

Every Sunday | 2 – 5 PM (starting September 1, 2024)

GIACOMETTI-LAB

Creative workshop for children and adults on the mezzanine floor of the museum

Material fee 5€ per person (plus admission)



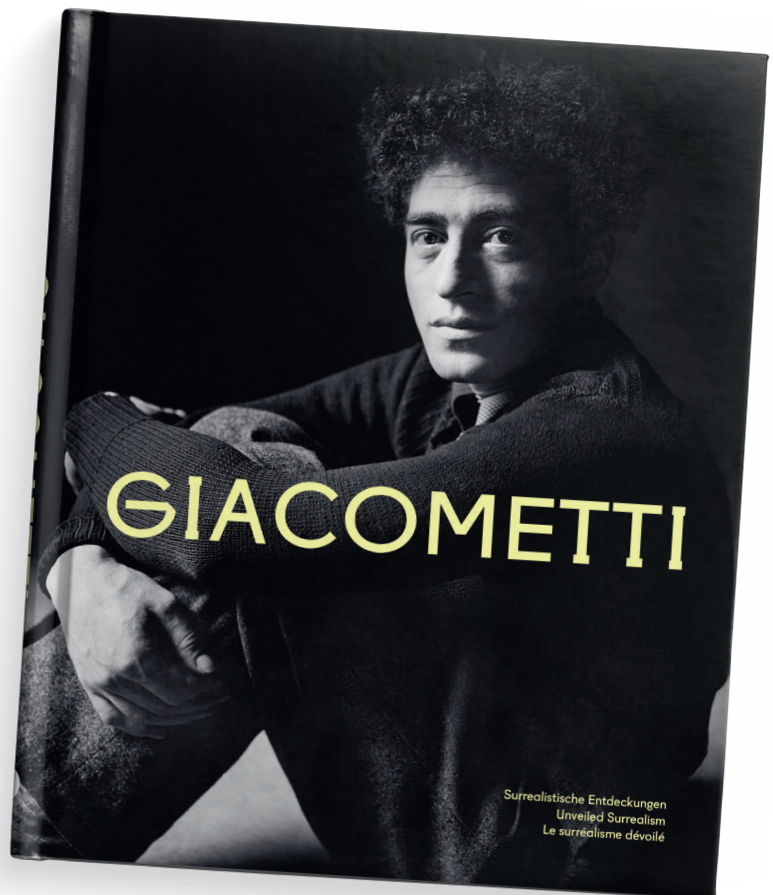
CATALOGUE

Richly illustrated and trilingual, the catalogue reproduces a wide selection of Giacometti's sculptures, drawings, paintings, and prints.

With contributions by

Laura Braverman, Associate Curator at the Fondation Giacometti Paris;
Madeleine Frey, Director of the Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR;
Friederike Voßkamp, Head of the Max Ernst Museum Brühl Collection of the LVR;
Jürgen Wilhelm, Chairman of the Board of the Max Ernst Foundation

The catalogue is published by Deutscher Kunstverlag and is available in the museum shop for 39,00 €.



COLLABORATION

FONDATION GIACOMETTI, PARIS

Created in December 2003, the **Fondation Giacometti, Paris** is a private institution and a state-recognized non-profit organization whose purpose is the preservation, dissemination, and promotion of Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre. As the sole legatee of Annette Giacometti, the artist's widow, the Fondation holds the largest collection of works by Alberto Giacometti in the world. It comprises nearly 10,000 works, including sculptures, paintings, drawings, and prints, as well as a remarkable collection of archival materials such as photographs, documents, and correspondence by the artist. The Fondation also preserves the artist's manuscripts and notebooks, copper plates, and most of his personal library: magazines, books, exhibition catalogues, and newspapers, some of which he annotated or drew on. The Fondation Giacometti is dedicated to conserving, enriching, and sharing this collection.

Directed by Catherine Grenier, the Fondation Giacometti promotes Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre on an international level. Its activities include: presenting Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre to the public through the organization of monographic and thematic exhibitions in French museums and abroad, establishing a catalogue of the artist's authenticated works, organizing and participating in various cultural events, and contributing to research on Alberto Giacometti's oeuvre through publication projects. The Fondation organizes the authentication committee for the artist's works and handles the protection of his oeuvre in France and abroad.

In 2018, The Fondation Giacometti opened the Giacometti Institute, located at 5 rue Victor Schoelcher (Paris 14), where it presents its exhibition, pedagogical, and research programs. The Fondation Giacometti is currently working toward opening the Alberto Giacometti Museum & School on the Esplanade des Invalides in the heart of Paris.

MAX ERNST MUSEUM BRÜHL OF THE LVR

In the former „Brühler Pavillon“, where Max Ernst once danced, **the Max Ernst Museum** opened in 2005. It is the world's first and only museum dedicated to the life and work of Max Ernst (1891–1976), the internationally renowned artist born in Brühl. The collection spans 70 years of one of the 20th century's most significant artists: his time in Brühl and Bonn, his Dadaist activities in the Rhineland after World War I, his contributions to the Surrealist movement in France, his exile in the USA, and finally, his return to Europe in 1953.

The collection includes almost the entire body of his graphic oeuvre as well as a unique ensemble of over 70 sculptures that showcase his sculptural work over decades; these pieces come from the artist's personal collection. Another highlight and at the same time the centerpiece of the exhibition are the 36 „D-paintings“, birthday and love gifts from Max Ernst to his wife, the artist Dorothea Tanning, with whom he shared over three decades of his life. Additionally, a collection of over 900 photographic documents enriches the collection, tracing the artist's life with contributions from prominent photographers such as Lee Miller and Henri Cartier-Bresson.

The Max Ernst Foundation was established on February 13, 2001. Foundation partners include the city of Brühl, the Kreissparkasse Köln, and the Rhineland Regional Council (Landchaftsverband Rheinland, LVR). The foundation's purpose is to promote art and culture as well as science and research. Its mission is to collect works, memorabilia, and documents related to Max Ernst.

The museum regularly hosts exhibitions featuring international artists from Classical Modernism to contemporary art, offering new perspectives on the collection.

PRESS IMAGES

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI: UNVEILED SURREALISM
at the Max Ernst Museum Brühl,
September 1, 2024 – January 15, 2025

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< Press image 1
Alberto Giacometti,
***Le Nez (The Nose)*, 1949,**
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



Press image 2 →
Alberto Giacometti,
Femme couchée qui rêve
***(Reclining Woman Who Dreams)*, 1929,**
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti / Adagp,
Paris 2024



< Press image 3
Alberto Giacometti,
***Boule suspendue (Suspended Ball)*,**
1930 (1965 version),
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



← Press image 4
Alberto Giacometti,
Femme cuillère (Spoon Woman), 1927,
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



Press image 5 →
Alberto Giacometti,
Objet désagréable à jeter
(Disagreeable Object To Be Thrown Away), 1931,
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



← Press image 6
Alberto Giacometti,
La forêt (The Forest), 1950,
Fondation Giacometti,
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



← Press image 7
Alberto Giacometti,
Buste d'homme
(*Bust of a Man*), 1961,
Fondation Giacometti,
© Succession
Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



Press image 8 →
Alberto Giacometti,
La Cage, première version
(*The Cage, First version*), 1949-1950
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



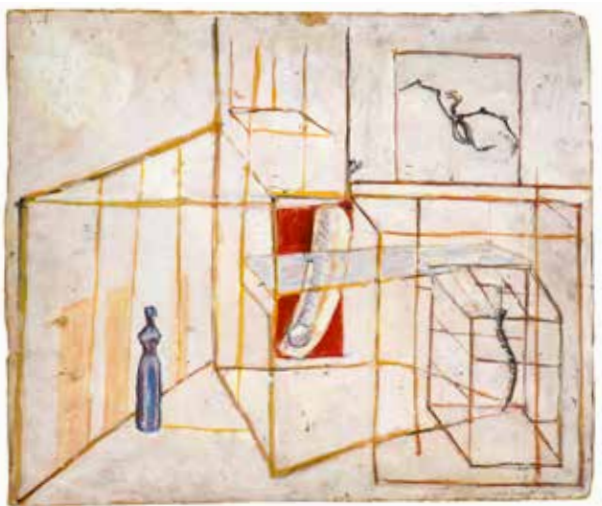
← Press image 9
Alberto Giacometti,
***Le Couple (The Couple)*, 1926,**
Fondation Giacometti
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Adagp, Paris 2024



← Press image 10
Alberto Giacometti,
Homme debout (Standing Man), ca. 1951,
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



Press image 11 →
Alberto Giacometti,
Objet (Object), 1931–1932,
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



← Press image 12
Alberto Giacometti,
Le palais à 4 heures du matin
(The Palace at 4 a.m.), 1932,
Fondation Giacometti
© Succession Alberto Giacometti /
Adagp, Paris 2024



← Press image 13

Max Ernst,

Tête d'oiseau mordant une pierre

(Head of a Bird Biting a Stone), 1935,

Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR,

gift of Dorothea Tanning,

Max Ernst Foundation

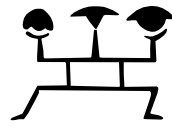
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Press image 14 →
**Unknown Photographer, Luciano, Odette,
Diego Giacometti, Bianca, Ada,
Alberto Giacometti, und Max Ernst
bei der Forno-Hütte
(Luciano, Odette, Diego Giacometti, Bianca,
Ada, Alberto Giacometti, and Max Ernst
at the Forno Cabin), 1935,**
1989 copyprint, gift from Bruno Giacometti
© Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR,
Max Ernst Foundation





Press image 15
Rogi André,
Alberto Giacometti, ca. 1935,
Archives Fondation Giacometti



**MAX ERNST
MUSEUM BRÜHL
DES LVR**

INFO SERVICE

Max Ernst Museum Brühl of the LVR (Rhineland Regional Council)

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Administration | Fantasie Labor*

Schlossstraße 21, 50321 Brühl

*At the so called Fantasie Labor the workshops of the educational department take place.

Permanent Collection

MAX ERNST – LIVE AND WORKS – 70 YEARS OF WORK
70 years of work

Temporary Exhibitions

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI – UNVEILED SURREALISM
September 1, 2024 – January 15, 2025

NANDO NKURUMAH – TODAY IS ALREADY TOMORROW
New Perspectives in the Leonora Carrington Hall
until November 3, 2024

Upcoming Exhibitions

FRAUKE DANNERT – DESERT AFTER RAIN
New Perspectives in the Leonora Carrington Hall
November 29, 2024 – March 9, 2025

HYPERCREATURES – FUTURE MYTHOLOGIES
March 22 – October 5, 2025

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. also on
October 3rd, November 1st, and December 26th
Closed on Monday

Admission Fees

Adults 13 € (Combination Ticket Exhibition and Collection) |
reduced rate 8 €
(Combination Ticket Exhibition and Collection)

Children and teenagers up to 18 years: free admission

Last Thursday of each month: free admission
(except on public holidays)

Further information: www.maxernstmuseum.lvr.de

Tickets

available at the webshop or from the museum cashier
www.shop.maxernstmuseum.lvr.de

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