

REVIEWS

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI YVES KLEIN: IN SEARCH OF THE ABSOLUTE

Gagosian Gallery
April 27–June 17

In Search of the Absolute, is the first exhibition to pair works by modern masters Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) and Yves Klein (1928–1962). Working almost a decade apart, but within a mile of one another in Montparnasse, Paris, both artists shared the experience of living through the Second World War. It is this common territory for their art that has been observed and explored by the exhibition's curator, Joachim Pissarro.

Pissarro focuses on the parallels which can be found in their response to the catastrophic aftermath of the war in Europe. After the war ended, Giacometti turned to Existentialism in an attempt to make sense of the universe's irrationality. His distinctive works express the emotions and themes of isolation, bewilderment, anxiety and despair. By contrast, Klein's art works of pure saturated colour ooze energy and vibrancy. Through his monochromes, often in his own International Klein Blue, he aimed to dematerialise painting and consciously rejected the autobiographical. Best known for his *Anthropometries* series, in which he used the naked female form as his 'paint brush', the freedom in his works could be interpreted as reflecting the new freedom in Europe after 1945.

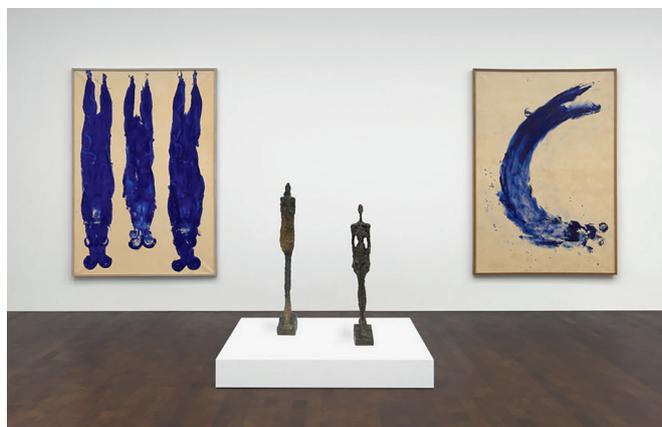
Whilst both artists contrast stylistically, their theoretical intentions

are complementary. The title *In Search of the Absolute* originates from Jean-Paul Sartre's essay on Giacometti, in which the Existential philosopher observed Giacometti's works of humanity as "always meditating between nothingness and being." In this exhibition we are invited to compare both artists' attempts at creating works that are refined in their visual simplicity but are powerful expressions of their search for universal truths.

Klein's monumental paintings, defined by the bold, blue figurative shapes of his female subjects, almost challenge Giacometti's fragile, elongated sculptures. Yet there is a synergy in their elegance and clarity. Take the provocative and inspired pairing of Klein's 'Célébration d'une Nouvelle Ère Anthropométrique'

(dry pigment and synthetic resin on paper mounted on canvas, 1960) and Giacometti's 'La Clairere' (bronze sculpture, 1950); there is a harmonious use of spacing between the figures in both pieces and the artists' drive to replace chaos with beauty, form and rhythm is expressed here with a lyricism that unites their work. In this respect the show successfully reflects not only their mutual artistic merit, but also their determination to make sense of post-war devastation.

— LARA MONRO



Alberto Giacometti Yves Klein: In Search of the Absolute
Installation view

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Yves Klein artworks © Yves Klein, ADAGP, Paris/DACS, London, 2016

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