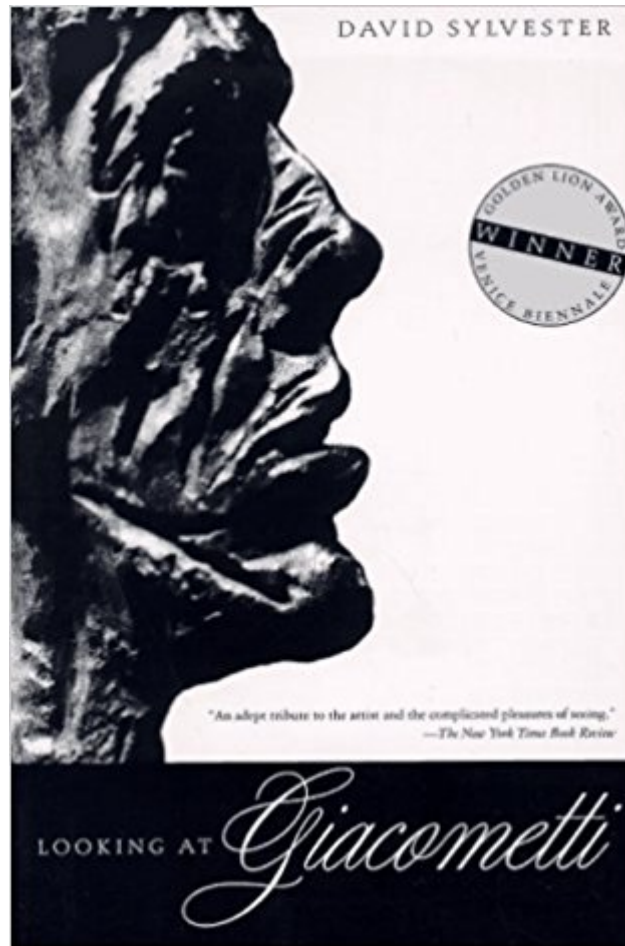




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# Looking At Giacometti



## Synopsis

Winner of a Venice Biennale Golden Lion Award, *Looking at Giacometti* is a compelling mixture of biography and criticism, including an extraordinary interview with Giacometti. Written over a period of forty years, *Looking at Giacometti* is a profound response to the art of one of modernism's greatest sculptors. It takes students from world-renowned art critic David Sylvester's first visits to Giacometti's studio in the late 1940s to the author's prolonged sitting for the artist's portrait of him in the 1960 and reflections on his complete oeuvre after Giacometti's death. A compelling mixture of biography and criticism, and including a sixteen-page insert of black and white photographs by Patricia Matisse, this book sheds new light on twentieth-century art and thought.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Sylvester (Rene Magritte) befriended Alberto Giacometti in Paris in 1948, visited him frequently in his studio and curated a retrospective of the Swiss sculptor's works in London in 1965, a year before Giacometti died. In this searching, lyrical appreciation, Giacometti's fragile, long, slender but never ethereal human figures, forever "trembling on the brink of movement," are seen as emblems of our transitory existence, evoking a sense of loss and impermanence. Sylvester analyzes the "reciprocal relationship" between a Giacometti sculpture and the spectator, a confrontation that reveals the solitude of each. By underscoring affinities and parallels between Giacometti's works and those of Cezanne, Miro, Lipchitz, Magritte, de Chirico and Francis Bacon, Sylvester places him

firmly among modern artists who "render visible the process of translating reality into art." Featuring photos of Giacometti's sculptures and paintings, this perceptive study includes a biographical sketch as well as two interviews from 1964. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Arguably the greatest sculptor of the century, Alberto Giacometti (1901-66) was an intensely driven and obsessive artist. Evolving from earlier surrealist abstractions, his work gradually became restricted to the wispy, attenuated standing or walking figures for which he is best known. English critic Sylvester (*The Banality of Fact: Interviews with Sir Francis Bacon*, Thames & Hudson, 1987) has spent much of the last 50 years talking to the Swiss sculptor and looking at his work, and he now has adapted many of his writings to create this delightfully lyrical meditation on Giacometti's art. In this sparsely illustrated, surprisingly compact volume, he describes Giacometti's fierce aesthetic convictions more attentively and thoughtfully than most writers. An excellent companion to James Lord's definitive *Giacometti: A Biography* (LJ 9/15/85), though libraries looking for something with more pictorial content should consider the handsome *Alberto Giacometti: Sculpture, Paintings, Drawings* (LJ 7/94).?Douglas F. Smith, Oakland P.L., Cal.Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This short volume betrays the late David Sylvester's masterful understanding not only of his subject, but of modernist aesthetics overall. "Looking at Giacometti" documents the way an extraordinary analytical mind came to understand a critical modern artist. The book has a tripartite structure: the first five essays were written while its subject was living; the next five offer a retrospective view of the artist and his work; and the final chapter, written during the 1980s, offers yet another perspective. With each successive chapter, Sylvester's understanding of Giacometti's work deepens, and his passionate, probing curiosity leads him to greater insights. Of course, Sylvester may be remembered most as a sensitive interviewer (cf. his brilliant interviews with Francis Bacon, his probing Duchamp interview, and his book of BBC interviews with American artists); but his criticism -- particularly on Giacometti and Bacon -- remains exemplary, and indispensable. This brief but exceptionally insightful study of Giacometti's work is highly recommended to anyone interested in modern art -- and to anyone hoping to write precise, incisive art criticism.

One of the best studies of Giacometti available in English, written by a professional critic who knew, interviewed, and even posed for a portrait by Giacometti. It covers all of Giacometti's artistic

periods, his work as both painter and sculptor, and takes into account his writings, to produce a detailed and nuanced portrait of the artist and his work. And, it's especially refreshing to read a book about Giacometti that focuses more on his work than his personality. As a general introduction to Giacometti, Sylvester's book is far superior to James Lord's overrated "A Giacometti Portrait," and is much more useful than Lord's biography, if you want to understand what Giacometti was trying to accomplish. This book is obviously not as exhaustive as Bonnefoy's enormous study on the subject (160 pages versus 574), but Sylvester's analysis is sharper and more hard-headed. The photographs of Giacometti's work are limited and rather poor in quality, and none are in color. You'd have to go to the Scheider or Bonnefoy studies of Giacometti for reproductions. But for a serious analysis of Giacometti's work as it developed over his career, read Sylvester.

This excellent volume offers an in-depth look at the evolution of Alberto Giacometti's sculpture and painting. Having often visited Giacometti's Paris studio during the last twelve years of the artist's life, the author is able to provide an intimate portrait of one of the major figures of 20th century art and presents a comprehensive, analytical survey of the artist's work. Included is an extensive interview with Giacometti from 1965 and sixteen of Patricia Matisse's black-and-white photographs of the artist's work and studio. The author explores the artist's interest in the process of objectifying reality, the question of how art is perceived, and how Giacometti's work is related to the work of other modern artists. In so doing, he has written a book that is valuable not only for the study of Giacometti's paintings and sculpture but also for a deeper understanding of modern art as a whole.

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