

The Encounter: Barbara Chase-Riboud/Alberto Giacometti

In 1961, at age twenty-two, the American artist Barbara Chase-Riboud moved to Paris from Philadelphia. The following year, she visited the renowned Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti, who had moved to the French capital forty years earlier. Seeing the older artist at work in his studio was an awe-inspiring experience. “Everything was covered in plaster—the walls, the floors, the ceiling,” she has recalled, “and the first I saw him, he himself was . . . entirely white, covered in white plaster.” Inspired by that encounter, this exhibition brings together the work of these two expatriate sculptors, who both looked to the past in order to reimagine the art of their time, and follows Chase-Riboud’s practice from that moment in Paris to the present.

While Giacometti often started with clay, modeling his works by hand before casting them in plaster, Chase-Riboud, who is also an acclaimed poet and novelist, favors the ancient lost-wax casting method for her bronzes. She combines the metal with knotted and braided wool, silk, and other fibers. In her work, it is “the wool,” she has explained, that becomes “the strong element,” while the bronze, paradoxically, appears soft.

This display brings together a large bronze and a group of plaster sculptures by Giacometti—five of which are from his landmark *Femmes de Venise* (Women of Venice)—with works from across Chase-Riboud’s seven-decade career. From her signature commemorative sculptures to her monumental projects for public space, the exhibition traces the development and ambitious scope of her practice. Shaped by her travels across Europe, Africa, and Asia and her lifelong fascination with ancient cultures, Chase-Riboud’s work embodies her idea that “sculpture must not sit still.”

The exhibition is co-organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Fondation Giacometti, Paris. Organized by Christophe Cherix, The Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawings and Prints, The Museum of Modern Art, and Emilie Bouvard, Scientific and Collections Director, Fondation Giacometti, Paris, with Danielle Johnson, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Museum of Modern Art. Thanks to Erin Jenoa Gilbert, Director of Exhibitions, Publications and Acquisitions for Barbara Chase-Riboud.

Leadership support for the exhibition is provided by Ronald S. and Jo Carole Lauder.

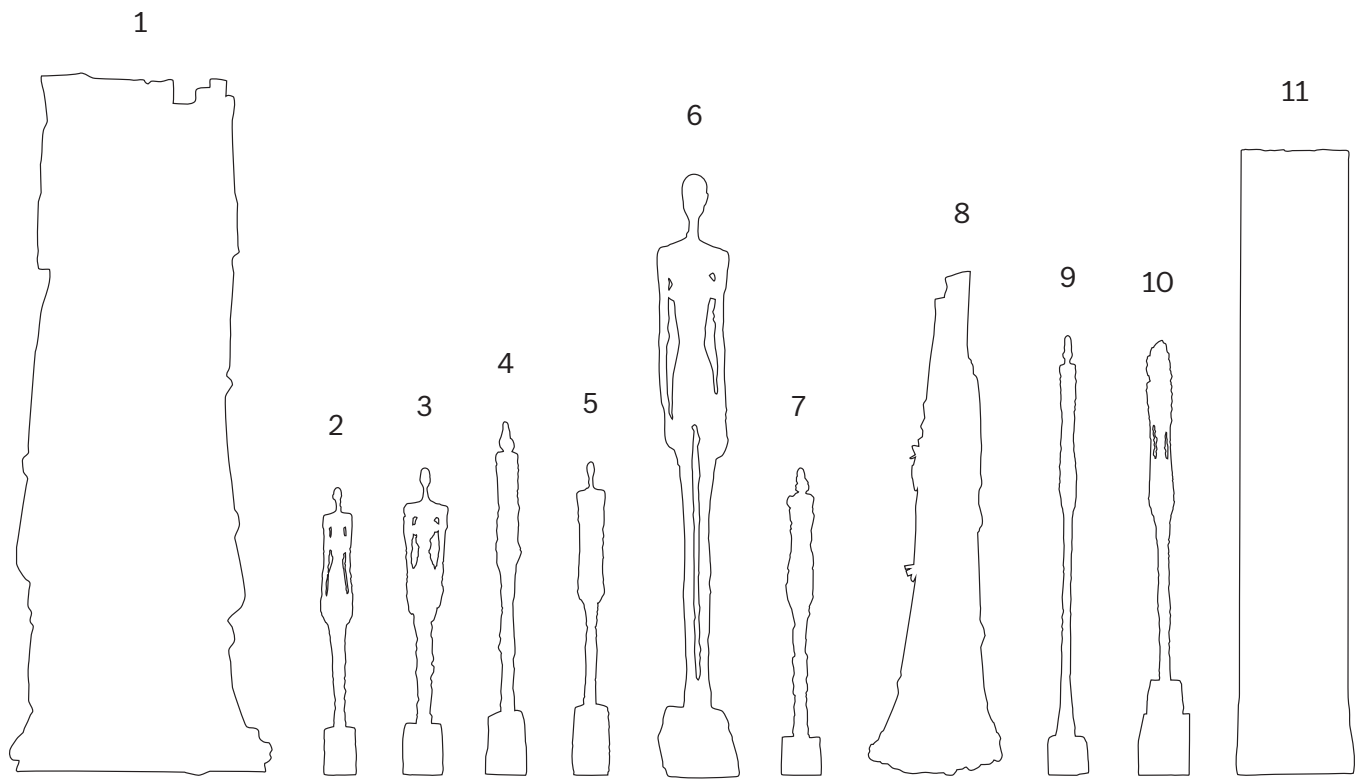
Major funding is provided by Steven and Lisa Tananbaum.

Generous support is provided by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Additional funding is provided by the Annual Exhibition Fund. Leadership contributions to the Annual Exhibition Fund, in support of the Museum’s collection and collection exhibitions, are generously provided by the Sandra and Tony Tamer Exhibition Fund, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley, Eva and Glenn Dubin, the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, Anne Dias, Kenneth C. Griffin, Alice and Tom Tisch, the Marella and Giovanni Agnelli Fund for Exhibitions, Mimi Haas, The David Rockefeller Council, The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr., The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis, and Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder. Major contributions to the Annual Exhibition Fund are provided by Emily Rauh Pulitzer, The Sundheim Family Foundation, and Karen and Gary Winnick.



For related content and programs, visit moma.org/theencounter.



Barbara Chase-Riboud

American, born 1939

- 1 *Zanzibar* 1974
Bronze, wool, and synthetic fibers
- 8 *Black Obelisk #2* 2007
Bronze, wool, and synthetic fibers
- 11 *Standing Black Woman of Venice* 1969/2020
Bronze

Private collection

Alberto Giacometti

Swiss, 1901–1966

- 2 *Femme de Venise V* 1956
Painted plaster
- 3 *Femme de Venise IV* 1956
Painted plaster
- 4 *Femme de Venise VI* 1956
Plaster
- 5 *Femme de Venise II* 1956
Plaster
- 6 *Tall Figure, III* 1960
Bronze
The Museum of Modern Art,
New York. Gift of Nina and
Gordon Bunshaft in honor of
the artist, 1970
- 7 *Femme de Venise VII* 1956
Painted plaster
- 9 *Tall Figure II* 1948–49
Plaster
- 10 *Femme Leoni* 1947–58
Painted plaster

Unless otherwise noted,
artworks are courtesy
Fondation Giacometti.

“In my mind,” Giacometti said, “the most beautiful statues are neither Greek nor Roman, and certainly not from the Renaissance—they are Egyptian.” The artist’s admiration of ancient Egyptian standing and walking figures is evident in his *Femmes de Venise* (Women of Venice), a landmark group of sculptures he made in 1956 for the French pavilion of the Venice Biennale. The plaster objects—five of which are on view here—were cast from figures the artist had modeled in clay, and he continued to work on them over time, scratching, scraping, painting, and scoring the forms even after their initial exhibition. While nine of the *Femmes de Venise* were cast in bronze and shown in New York in 1958, this is the first exhibition of the original plaster sculptures in the United States.

Chase-Riboud was nineteen when she made her first lost-wax bronze casting while studying at the American Academy in Rome, establishing a lifelong relationship with both the technique and the city. She began adding fiber to her sculptures a decade later in an attempt to reverse the properties of the materials—to make metal look soft and delicate and fiber appear ridged and hard. This work may be shown two ways: as you see it here (titled *The Albino*) or with its “arms” upstretched to the ceiling (*All That Rises Must Converge/Black*). Both names have literary resonances: the former is the title of a poem by the artist, and the latter is a reference to a 1965 short story about race and class by the Southern American writer Flannery O’Connor.

Exhibition Title
2023 Spring
4th Floor_400

Label Format
Regular

Label ID
6132250a

Last Updated
4/12/2023
8:46:47 PM

Updated By
Jade Wang

This is the first in a series of sculptures by Chase-Riboud dedicated to Cleopatra VII, queen of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, and exploring, as the artist has noted, “power as wielded by women.” Inspired by the jade burial suits of the ancient Han nobles Liu Sheng and Dou Wan, excavated in China in 1968, *Le Manteau* is made of hundreds of metal squares sewn together with wire. The squares were forged in a French foundry using an alloy of aluminum, copper, and iron designed to produce an iridescent effect.

Exhibition Title
2023 Spring
4th Floor_400

Label Format
Regular

Label ID
61322504

Last Updated
4/12/2023
8:46:50 PM

Updated By
Jade Wang

In 1995 Chase-Riboud was commissioned to create a memorial sculpture for the African Burial Ground National Monument, the site of a recently rediscovered eighteenth-century cemetery for people of African descent in lower Manhattan. The bronze figure was inspired by Sarah Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman from South Africa who was exhibited to the public by white showmen in England and France in the early nineteenth century. This exploitation led to her death, around age twenty-six, after which her remains were displayed in a Paris museum until the 1970s. Baartman’s story, with its dehumanizing horrors, is just one account of the costs of racist and colonial violence. In the sculpture, Chase-Riboud presents the figure in the style of the Winged Victory of Samothrace (a famed ancient Greek sculpture), exalting and honoring its subject. This work is a study for the final memorial, which is installed in the lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building, at 290 Broadway in New York.

Exhibition Title
2023 Spring
4th Floor_400

Label Format
Regular

Label ID
613224f8

Last Updated
4/12/2023
8:46:58 PM

Updated By
Jade Wang

“In my mind,” Giacometti said, “the most beautiful statues are neither Greek nor Roman, and certainly not from the Renaissance—they are Egyptian.” The artist’s admiration of ancient Egyptian standing and walking figures is evident in these five works from his Femmes de Venise (Women of Venice), a landmark group of sculptures he made in 1956 for the French pavilion of the Venice Biennale. The plaster objects were cast from figures the artist had modeled in clay, and he continued to work on them over time, scratching, scraping, painting, and scoring the forms even after their initial exhibition. While nine of the Femmes de Venise were cast in bronze and shown in New York in 1958, this is the first exhibition of the original plaster sculptures in the United States.

Exhibition Title
2023 Spring
4th Floor_400

Label Format
Regular

Label ID
613224fe

Last Updated
4/12/2023
8:46:54 PM

Updated By
Jade Wang