1: Alberto Giacometti, *No more play (On ne joue plus)*, 1931–32, marble, wood, bronze, 4,1 x 58 x 45,2 cm, Washington, National Gallery of Art

Giacometti and the experience of presence

Reflections on Giacometti's *game-board sculptures*

Rosali Wiesheu

In the following, I would like to explore the question of temporality in the act of perception as well as the concept of movement and its role in the work of Alberto Giacometti. My analysis will focus on Giacometti's early work and will be based on a close reading of his so-called "table-top" or "game-board" sculptures, created between 1930 and 1934 (fig. 1).[1]

In 1922 Giacometti moved from his hometown of Borgonovo, in the Swiss Alps, to Paris, to study sculpture at the Académie de la Grande-Chaumière under the supervision of Antoine Bourdelle. While his first works were inspired by Pre-Columbian, African, and Cycladic art, as well as the aesthetic languages of Henri Laurens, Jacques Lipchitz, and Alexander Archipenko, his game-board sculptures belie their creative forerunners. For the first time, Alberto Giacometti established his own formal language by reducing the shape of his sculptures and rotating their axis by 180 degrees, thereby explicitly positioning his figures more horizontally than vertically.

The game-board sculptures :
Famille, Circuit, On ne joue plus

It is mostly because of their horizontal orientation that Giacometti's table-top sculptures take such a prominent place within the history of sculpture in twentieth-century art, because, as Friedrich Teja Bach states : "In ihnen tritt der Wechsel von der letztlich als Ebenbild des aufrechten Menschen zu verstehenden, anthropomorphen Vertika-

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1   Cf. Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture,* Cambridge, Mass., 1981, p. 118.

lität zu einer primär horizontalen Dimension zum ersten Mal in der Bildhauerei in Erscheinung."[2]

Circuit (1931) consists of a quadratic marble plaque, on which a small ball travels along an elliptical groove. In *Famille* (1931–32), Giacometti carved out three splines from a wooden board and, in their place, set three movable elements, which can be interpreted as visual metaphors for father, mother, and child. *On ne joue plus* (1931–1932) (fig. 1), like *Circuit*, is composed of a rectangular marble base that resembles a chessboard : Its surface is cratered with semicircular hollows; sunk into its centre are two tiny coffins, their lids askew so that "the literal space of the board on which pieces can be moved in real time fuses with the image of the necropolis."[3]

All three artworks, *Circuit*, *Famille*, and *On ne joue plus* suggest, even embody movability – they all consist of movable objects that are placed on or plugged into a wooden or marble surface. However, the potential for movement is not limited to the objects themselves but embraces the viewer as well. As Annabelle Görgen states in her article on Giacometti's early work for the Hamburg exhibition *Die Spielfelder* (*The Playing Fields*), what is defining for games in general is : "eine Folge von Wahrnehmungen, Gedanken, Gefühlen, Interaktionen, von imaginär durchgespielten und real vollzogenen Bewegungen – es sind die potenziellen Verbindungen zwischen Ansicht und Aufsicht, die Räume zwischen dem Spieler, den Elementen und dem Feld."[4] Therefore, for the players, only the moves as viewed from the top are comprehensible; however, it is the side view that brings the game to life.

What kind of experience was Giacometti trying to capture and evoke with his game-board sculptures? In order to answer this question, it is important to take into account the specific discourses in art, philosophy, and literature that were currant at the time.

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2   "The shift from a vertical adjustment of sculpture, which must ultimately be traced back to the desire of the artist to accomplish art as a counterpart and double of the human being, to a horizontal direction, appears for the first time in Giacometti's table top sculptures." (author's translation) Friedrich Teja Bach, "Giacomettis Spielbrett- und Platz-Skulpturen", in *Giacometti. Die Spielfelder*, Hubertus Gaßner and Annabelle Görgen (eds.), exh. cat., Hamburg, Deichtorhallen, 2013, pp. 46–54, p. 50.

3   Rosalind Krauss, "Alberto Giacometti", in *Primitivism in 20th Century Art,* William Rubin (ed.), exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1984, pp. 503–533, p. 524.

4   "a sequence of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, interactions, of imagined or executed moves – it is the possible relations between top view and side view, which establish possibility rooms between the players, the different elements and the playing field." (author's translation) Annabelle Görgen, "Die Spielfelder. Die Skulptur als Platz – Von den surrealistischen Modellen bis zur Chase Manhattan Plaza", in exh. cat., Hamburg 2013 (note 2), pp. 21–35, p. 21.

Bataille, Dalí, Krauss

The historical context of Giacometti's work in this period is significantly characterised by two intellectuals : Georges Bataille, philosopher, writer, librarian, anthropologist; and André Breton, artist, writer, art theorist, and founder of French surrealism.[5] Both Bataille and Breton intended to provoke a *crisis of vision* in order to deconstruct established structures of perception and reason and empower mankind with an experience of wholeness, *totality* (Breton), and *continuity* (Bataille).[6]

In 1928, Giacometti became acquainted with Bataille through André Masson, whom Giacometti had met during his first exhibition, where he showed two plaque-like heads made that same year, at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher. Masson was thrilled by his objects and invited Giacometti to join a group that included Robert Desnos, Antonin Artaud, Raymond Queneau, Michel Leiris, and Georges Bataille.[7] The group was known as the "dissident Surrealists". Giacometti's close friendship with Leiris and Bataille brought with it a fascination with not only the intricacies and theories of ethnography itself but also the ways in which it was being used by the *Documents* group. In 1930 he left the group, joining André Breton and Salvador Dalí and engaging more deeply in the surrealist movement.[8]

Salvador Dalí, a prominent member and renovator of the surrealistic movement, developed his so-called "paranoid critical method" during this period. This method consists of a conscious utilization of the operational mechanism of paranoia. Dalí tried to establish a system of analogies, in which a single object could disperse into a flood of different, anamorphic pictures. Thus, the structure of the perception of reality, which, according to Dalí, was based on conventionalised concepts of vision, understanding, and reason, could crumble. As an exemplification of this method, Dalí referred to Picasso's "tilted images", in which landscapes turn into human faces.[9]

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5   See also Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind : The Life of André Breton*, London, 1995.

6   Cf. Bernd Mattheus, *Georges Bataille,* Berlin, 1984, p. 83, Martin Jay, "The Disenchantment of the Eye : Bataille and the Surrealists", in Martin Jay (ed.), *Downcast Eyes : The Denigration of Vision in the Twentieth – century French Thought*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1994, pp. 211–262; Christiane Ladleif, *Die Zerstörung des Auges. Ein Motiv des Surrealismus im Kontext der Histoire de l'Œil Georges Batailles,* Weimar, 2003.

7   Cf. Reinhold Hohl, *Alberto Giacometti,* Stuttgart, 1971, and James Lord, *Alberto Giacometti. Die Biographie*, Frankfurt am Main, 2009, pp. 102–104.

8   Compare Maurice Nadeau, *Geschichte des Surrealismus*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 2002, pp. 170–174.

9   Peter Gorsen, "Paranoia als methodischer Zweifel", in Axel Matthes and Tilbert Diego Stegmann (eds.), *Salvador Dali. Unabhängigkeitserklärung der Phantasie und Erklärung der Rechte des Menschen auf seine Verrücktheit. Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, 1974, pp. 419–424, pp. 419–420.

It was this method of analogising that he tried to apply to the surrealistic objects they started to produce in 1931, which were initiated by the works of Alberto Giacometti, notably the *Suspended Ball*. They were erotically connoted (Dalí himself presented a lady's shoe in which he placed a glass of milk alongside an arrangement of an erotic photograph and a bunch of pubic hair); with them, Dalí wanted to form a "culture of desire" that would replace the predominant "culture of reason".[10]

In Bataille's theoretical approach, a similar method of achieving the same goal can be found, explicitly in the structure of his short novel *Histoire de l'Œil* as well as in the magazine *Documents*. This publication, of which 15 issues were released until it was discontinued in 1931, was founded by Bataille together with Carl Einstein and Georges-Henri Rivière in 1928.[11] *Histoire de l'Œil* consists of an erotic play within a structurally closed system.[12] As Roland Barthes pointed out in his article "La Métaphore de l'œil" from 1936, Bataille's short story is literally the story of an object – an eye – and what happens to it (not the novels' characters). A condition of migration is established in which the object is "declined" through various verbal states. As a globular element, the eye is transformed through a series of metaphors by means of which, at any given point in the narrative, it is substituted by other globular objects : eggs, testicles, the sun. As an object containing fluid, the eye simultaneously gives rise to a secondary series related to the first : yolk, tears, urine, sperm. The two metaphoric series thus establish a system of combination by which the terms can interact to produce a near infinity of images. Yet it is more correct to characterize them as two chains of signifiers, "because for each one it is obvious that any term is never anything but the signifier of a neighbouring term."[13] The structure of these symbolic substitutions thus produces not only the course of the erotic action of the narrative but the verbal fabric into which the *récit* is woven.

This method can also be found in the magazine *Documents,* as Georges Didi-Huberman points out in his 1995 published treatise *La ressemblance informe ou le gai savoir visuel selon Georges Bataille.* According to Didi-Huberman, the strategy of *Documents* consisted in establishing "impossible" references by combining two pictures that have nothing in common on a contextual level or in terms of content but that offer a certain aesthetic similarity on the surface.[14] An example of this is suggesting similarity by

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10 Salvador Dalí, "Objets surréalistes", *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 3, 1931, pp. 16–17.

11 Denis Hollier (ed.), *Documents,* Paris, 1991.

12 Georges Bataille, *L'histoire de l'œil,* Paris, 1928.

13 Roland Barthes, "La Métaphore de l'œil", in *Critique* 195–196, 1963, pp. 770–777, p. 770. Compare also Krauss, 1984 (note 3), p. 513.

14 Georges Didi-Huberman, *La ressemblance informe ou le gai savoir visuel selon Georges Bataille,* Paris, 1995, p. 25.

juxtaposing an image of severed cow legs with a snapshot of vaudeville dancers' legs. Corresponding to Bataille's premise that "the destruction of form results in the destruction of common structures of reason," the manipulation of perception should constitute a new experience of perceiving given objects. This method is comprised of Bataille's notion of *alteration*, and the man bereft of reason is *acéphale* : headless, without orientation, lost in analogies. In her article for the infamous exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art* on Alberto Giacometti's early work in 1984, Rosalind Krauss referred precisely to this *Bataillan* concept in order to explain the functional mechanism that underlies Giacometti's table-top sculptures :

> "*acéphale* : a transgressive thought of the human. The term is, of course, Bataille's, and in his work it functioned as a kind of password by which to enter the conceptual theater where humanity displays the richness of its contradictory condition. For *acéphale* opens onto the experience of man's verticality – his elevation in both its biological and moral significance – as a negation : a development toward the primitive, an ascendance downward. This conceptual inversion also played a structural role in the redefinition of sculpture that Giacometti explored in these years."[15]

The way in which Giacometti transformed his sculptures between 1930 and 1933 consisted in rotating the axis of the objects horizontally. This was further accentuated by the content of the works, resulting in the apparent "lowering" of the objects, which tied them simultaneously to the ground and reality – to the actuality of space and the literalness of motion in real time. From the perspective of the history of modern sculpture, Krauss sees in this the inaugural act of Giacometti's art, with implications for much of what would take place in the rethinking of sculpture after World War II.[16]

Rosalind Krauss interprets the horizontality of the table-top works as a realization of Bataille's concepts of *acéphale* and *bassesse* :

> "The preoccupation with real time […] opens onto a consideration of real space; and real space is defined by sculpture that has become nothing but its base, a vertical that is rotated into 'baseness'": this very operation was made continually by Bataille as he developed the concept of 'bassesse' – a low, or base, materialism – in *Documents*."[17]

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15   Krauss, 1984 (note 3), p. 516.
16   Ibid., p. 521.
17   Ibid., p. 523.

The "base" in Bataille's concept of bassesse, according to Krauss, is derived from a radical fixation on the rejected half of the human condition. The aim is to reverse the fragmentation of the human being into body and soul, materiality and spirit – which has existed since Descartes – and shift society's bias toward the spirit to the body, in other words, base materiality.". By focusing on the outcast parts of the human condition – eroticism, excess, death and violence, the tongue, the toes, excrement – and shifting the focus from a vertical to a horizontal alignment, the base becomes both axis and direction. Krauss sees in Giacometti's rotation of the axis of his works an accurate visualisation of Bataille's theoretical approach. Furthermore, Giacometti abandons the pedestal, thereby dissolving the separation of the representational space of the sculpture and real space. The sculpture transforms into an object as connected to the floor as it is to reality itself.

Krauss' interpretation of Giacometti's sculptures-as-game-boards, as realizations of Bataille's concepts of *acéphale* and *bassesse*, is illuminating; however, it covers only part of their artistic potential and subjacent content. By reconstructing a certain context, Krauss tries to come up with a theoretic explanation for the specific form of Giacometti's horizontal objects. If one focuses on these works form a different point of view, different conclusions may come to light that amend Krauss' analysis by opening up a dimension that bridges Giacometti's early works with his later ones, contributing to a deeper understanding of the horizontality that characterises his early oeuvre.
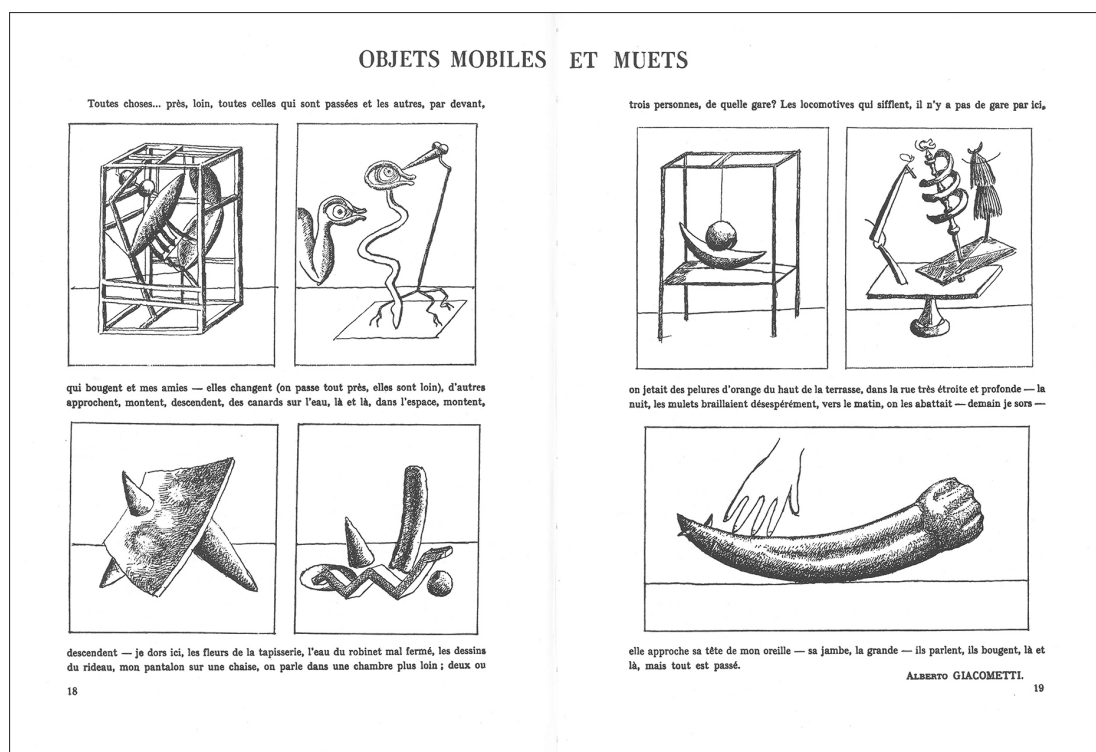
Objets mobiles et muets – Alberto Giacometti as an artist and a writer

At this point in my analysis, I would like to concentrate on two literary contributions that Giacometti made to the surrealistic magazine *Le Surrealisme au Service de la Revolution* between 1931 and 1933, which enlighten the aesthetic concept of his game-board sculptures and which have hitherto been neglected by Krauss and others. Giacometti made Breton's acquaintance in 1930 and agreed to contribute to two issues of Breton's surrealist magazine. For the third issue of the magazine, published in 1931, he submitted his article "Objets mobiles et muets", which consists of seven sketches of his artworks accompanied by a cryptic text. For the fifth issue, published in 1933, Giacometti filled a whole page with three poems : "Poème en 7 espaces", "Le rideau brun" and "Charbon d'herb". All four poems are connected by a double reference system, which can be found, on the one hand, in an internal grid of allusions and references and, on the other hand, in an external relation Giacometti playfully esta-

blishes between the texts and objects, the poems and his sculptures, as the following analysis will show. Since a widespread interpretation of these multi-connotational references would exceed the scope of this publication, I will focus only on the references between the text "Objets mobiles et muets" from 1931 and the so-called "poème-objet", "Poème en 7 espaces", from 1933, because they most articulately clarify the specific configuration of time and space within Giacometti's work and most accurately illustrate the relation between his literary and sculptural work.

"Objets mobiles et muets" (1931)

The article, a text written in the mode of *écriture automatique*, bestrides a whole page showing seven sketches of Giacometti's surrealist objects[18] (fig. 2). On a structural level, Giacometti constructs an interplay between horizontality and verticality : The conventional reading direction, which

2 Alberto Giacometti, "Objets mobiles et muets", in: *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 3, 1931, p. 18–195

18   Alberto Giacometti, "Objets mobiles et muets", *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 3, 1931, pp. 18–19.

goes from left to right, from upwards to downwards, establishes a vertical line, which is broken by the horizontal line resulting from the arrangement of the sketches. The sketches themselves differ in their orientation as well. While the artworks in the upper half of the page are marked by their vertical orientation, the artworks in the lower part display a horizontal structure. The text itself is composed of different impressions and meanders between inchoate variables like "toutes choses" and "mes amies", which are in constant movement – "elles changent […], montent, descendent". In the midst of this vague temporal configuration lies a lyrical ego, which establishes a specific reflection between an undetermined presence ("Je dors ici") and a blurry future ("demain je sors"). In total corporeal immobility, thoughts, which are actually dreams, float in a undefined space :

> "je dors ici, les fleurs de la tapisserie, l'eau du robinet mal fermé, les dessins du rideau, mon pantalon sur une chaise, on parle dans une chambre plus loin; deux ou trois personnes, de quelle gare ? Les locomotives qui sifflent, il n'y a pas de gare par ici […] – la nuit, les mulets braillaient désespérément, vers le matin, on les abattait – demain je sors – […]".[19]

Between "je dors ici", which raises a spatial implication, and "demain je sors", which indicates a temporal component, Giacometti devises a fluxionary discourse of oppositions :

"de quelle gare" is followed by "il n'y a pas de gare par ici", "le matin" suceeds "la nuit". The text somehow flows around the objects that are framed by rectangles and thereby separated from the text. At the same time, the text breaks through the objects described as "muets" and gives them speech. The mobility attributed to the objects, which, however, is de facto not exercisable, devolves to the subjects in the text, which educe what the mute objects cannot express. In the words of Donat Rütimann, who wrote his doctoral thesis on Giacometti's literary work :

> "images et paroles s'éclairent les unes les autres par une identique rigueur. Pour rendre plus intenses les images et amplifier leur force de suggestion, Giacometti s'exprime en deux langages poétiques. L'image graphique met en valeur certains aspects du texte ou explicite des idées sous-jacentes au texte."[20]

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19 Ibid.

20 Donat Rütimann, *Alberto Giacometti. Ecrire la déchirure*, Diss., École Normale Supérieure Paris and ETH Zurich 1999, Paris 2006, p. 95.

To what extent can one establish a relation between this early article and Giacometti's poem "Poème en 7 espaces", which was written two years later and published in the fifth issue of *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*?

"Poème en 7 espaces" (1933)

The so-called "object-poem" consists of a square in which seven syllables and two small, empty, identical rectangles are placed (fig. 3).[21] By the specific arrangement of geometric figures and text passages, Giacometti manages to establish, on a structural level, a spatialisation of language and a discursivation of space. The combination of text field and geometrical figures presented in "Poème en 7 espaces" creates, on the one hand, a certain spatiality and, on the other hand, bypasses the chronology of a conventionalised narrative structure and a coherent textual coherence.
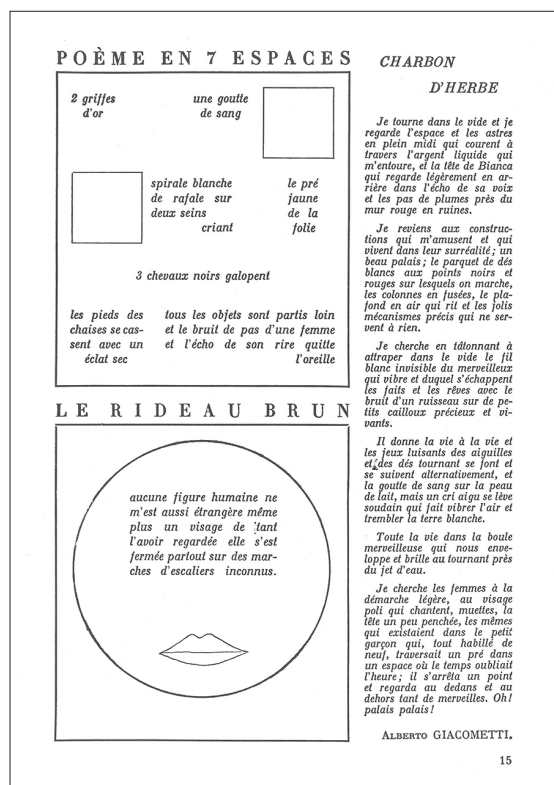
3 Alberto Giacometti, "poème en 7 espaces", in: *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 5, 1933, p. 15

21 Alberto Giacometti, "Poème en 7 espaces", in *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 5, 1933, p. 15.

Indeed, there are several commonalities between "Objets mobiles et muets" and "Poème en 7 espaces". As Donat Rütimann has shown, the "Objets mobiles et muets" inscribe themselves to some extent in "Poème en 7 espaces" : "Toutes choses… près, loin" emerge in "Poème en 7 espaces" in the quotation "tous les objets sont partis loin". The woman who drew her head toward the ear of the lyrical ego in "Objets mobiles et muets" ("elle approche sa tête de mon oreille"), is present in "Poème en 7 espaces" only in her absence : "le bruit de pas d'une femme et l'écho de son rire quitte l'oreille." Thus, there is a certain movement, which unfolds between the two texts and is embodied mainly by the female figure.[22] The text objects of the two poems meander between the years, between issues. By citing parts of "Objets" in "Poème", Giacometti brings a distant past into the present and inscribes not only a certain form of temporality, of "immediacy" into his poems, but also builds parallels to a the realm outside of the fictional text corpus. Especially with regard to their respective structures, both poems seem, at first sight, to be diametrically opposed. Where the composition and title of "Objets mobiles et muets" focuses on motion and therefore temporality, "Poème en 7 espaces" indicates spatiality, wherein the field of representation and the text corpus intermingle. Yet both poems show a decisive commonality : They both represent a combination of top view and side view. Whereas the interlocking of top view and side view are realized in "Poème en 7 espaces" on a more abstract level, in "Objets mobiles et muets", Giacometti emphasizes it explicitly when he combines the top view with an accented side view in presenting the sketches of his art works. In both texts, there is spatiality, which is dynamised by the movement of the viewer's gaze, and temporality, which contemporises itself by the chronological continuity displayed by the poems' contents; throughout the texts, an interplay between concrete memories, spontaneous associations, and construed inter-textual allusions is established.

This latent system of references, which, as shown, can be found in his early literary work, lead Giacometti, in 1946, to a concrete model of perception displayed in his article "Le rêve, le sphinx et la mort de T.", which he wrote while in exile in Geneva during World War II for Albert Skira's Swiss magazine, *Labyrinthe*. In this semi-biographical text, Giacometti deals with the devastating experience of witnessing the death of the former caretaker of his apartment on rue Hippolyte-Maindron (fig. 4). In attempting to verbalise this experience, he is confronted with the problem of visualising a network of events that are inseparable in his memories, that all take place at the same time : The description of

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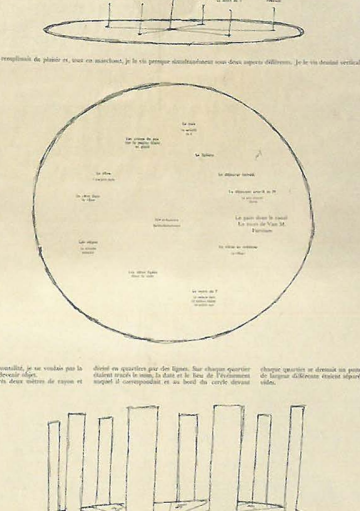22   Rütimann, 2006 (note 20), pp. 123–125.

4 Alberto Giacometti, "Le rêve, le sphinx et la mort de T.", in: *Labyrinthe: journal mensuel des lettres et des arts* 22/23, 1946, p. 11–12

this incisive experience is constantly pervaded by associative elements, dream sequences, and his experience with an "ulcerous disease" he contracted on his last visit to the brothel he frequented, Le sphinx.

Giacometti was irritated by the simultaneity of the events that occupied his mind and memory while he tried to write down the story sitting in a café in Paris on boulevard Barbès-Rochechouart : "Soudainement, j'ai eu le sentiment que tous les événements existaient simultanément autour de moi. Le temps devenait horizontal et circulaire, était espace en même temps, et j'essayai de le dessiner."[23]

The result of this revelation is the graphic equivalent of the text, a kind of a "space-time disk", with which Giacometti tried to visualise the simultaneity of the events in his memory and his actual perception. The horizontal planes on the desk indicate the keyword linked to his respective association, its location, and the date on which it occurred,

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23   Alberto Giacometti, "Le rêve, le sphinx et la mort de T.", in *Labyrinthe* 22–23, 1946, pp. 12–13.

while the corresponding steles constitute the story of the incident in its entirety. Giacometti imagined himself walking around the horizontal planes, standing on one memory while beholding another. In this space-time disk, spatial references dissolve the temporal chronology of the events. The story Giacometti tried to assemble into a coherent lineal narrative can only be expressed in a non-linear way, which opens the arrangement to a vast number of combinations.

How can a correlation be established between this article, this mode of expression, and the previously analysed poems? To what extent do these relations elucidate Giacometti's game-board sculptures?

Object-poems and the space-time disk

Comparing the horizontal round disk from 1946 with the poem "Poème en 7 espaces", the parallel in their arrangement is evident. While, in 1933, Giacometti still held onto a rectangular model as a basis for the free play of associations, in 1946, the horizontal space of perception was transformed into an orbital area. The panorama of the stele-field-correspondence opens up, and the movement becomes circular. Focusing on the relationship between the modes of pictorial presentation and the arrangement of words in "Objets mobiles et muets", it is obvious that the emphasis is placed on the top view, which finds its correspondence in the vertically rising steles on the space-time disk. Therefore, it can be concluded that Giacometti's model of space-time configuration, designed in 1946, can be understood as a condensation and concretion of his literary work from 1931 to 1933. Furthermore, it is evident that, in his literary work from this period, he had already begun to experiment with the configuration of perception by developing literary and material "disks", which have an inherent movability. As a result, he permitted himself the option of boldly combining the configurations of time and space in telling the story, which consists of associations, dreams, and veiled memories. This conclusion leads us to a deeper understanding of Giacometti's game-board sculptures.

Giacometti's literary work and his sculptures-as-board-games

In Giacometti's "sculptures-as-board-games", top and side views intermingle. While the player's moves can only be understood, followed, and controlled from the top view, it is the side view that makes the moves tangible and sets them in action. This is the same mechanism that lies at the basis of Giacometti's object-poems. While the interlock-
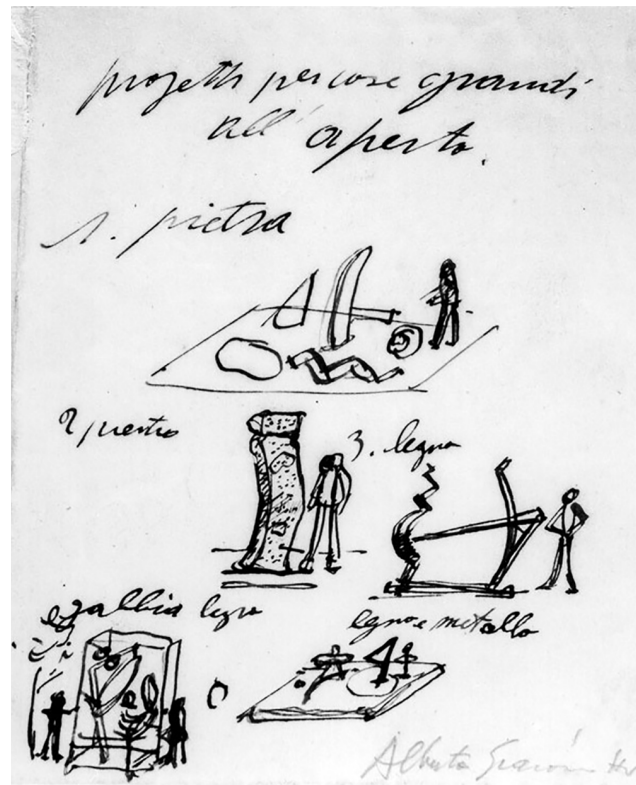
5 Alberto Giacometti, "Progetti
per cose grandi all'aperto",
1931/32, pen and ink
drawing, 12 × 10,4 cm,

ing of top and side views is explicitly demonstrated in "Objets mobiles
et muets", "Poème en 7 espaces" resembles, functions as, and must be
understood more like a cartographic document. The poem expresses
patiality in a more abstract manner; the movement occurs between
the elements within the square frame, which triggers associations in
the mind of the reader or viewer. Whereas the reading movement is
inscribed structurally in Giacometti's literary pieces, it radicalises itself
in his sculptures-as-board-games, as these artworks consist of movable
(and moving) elements elements, which constantly challenge the view-
er's gaze.

The viewer must position her- or himself in relation to the arrange-
ment and the change in the arrangement of the particular elements.
Hence, from the very beginning, Giacometti involves the viewer as an
active player, in whom gaze and action converge. This specific con-
junction obviously bears a Bataillan moment of *alteration* and *acéphale* :
By surrendering itself to the playing area, the subject puts itself at stake.
And yet, something more is happening. While Krauss restricts the play-
ing areas to spaces of potential viewing that lead to an act of subjective
transgression, Giacometti seemed, from the very beginning, to play-
fully ponder the configuration of reality itself. His sketch *Progetti per cose*

grandi all'aperto (Drafts for grand outdoor works) from 1931/32, which was largely unknown until the previously cited Hamburg exhibition in 2013, reveals this intent very clearly (fig. 5). The addition of a human figure next to every sculpture shows that Giacometti planned to realise each of the works life-size or even bigger.[24] His early sculptures, there-fore, seem to have already been intended as drafts for large-scale projects in public spaces, where the viewer was meant to actively engage with the artworks.

Thus, one can conclude that Giacometti's game-board sculptures can be read not only metaphorically, as models of subjective transgression, but also very pragmatically, as attempts to interfere with reality itself and to design a space between art and life. His literary work is, therefore, an important source for obtaining a deeper understanding of the interplay between vision and experience. It not only allows us to comprehend the steps that link the early game-board sculptures with his later work but also reveals the tall, vertical groupings of humanlike figures as the result of a continuous and systematic development.

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24 Cf. exh. cat., Hamburg 2013 (note 2), p. 13.