

Press Release

**From 27 June at Museum Beelden aan Zee:**

## **Rui Chafes X Alberto Giacometti Gris, Vide, Cris III**

**From 27 June 2026 to 10 January 2027, Museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague will be presenting *Rui Chafes X Alberto Giacometti: Gris, Vide, Cris III*. This international exhibition brings together the work of the Portuguese artist Rui Chafes with that of the Swiss modernist Alberto Giacometti. With his impressive installations, Chafes offers a new, tranquil and sensory experience of Giacometti's world-famous sculptures. *Gris, Vide, Cris III*, the third exhibition in an international series, is being staged by Museum Beelden aan Zee in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti in Paris and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. [www.beeldenaanee.nl](http://www.beeldenaanee.nl).**

*Curators: Helena de Freitas and Brigitte Bloksma*

The Portuguese contemporary artist Rui Chafes (Lisbon, 1966) was born in the same year in which the Swiss modernist Alberto Giacometti (Borgonovo, 1901 – Chur, 1966) died. Although both artists are separated by time, place, and form language, they share an artistic pursuit: transcendence and making the invisible visible. In their own way the two artists explore how sculpture bears witness to both presence as well as absence, a tension between body, space, and mind. While Giacometti achieves this through a process of reduction, Chafes explores the boundaries of iron.

The *Rui Chafes X Alberto Giacometti: Gris, Vide, Cris III* exhibition, organised in cooperation with the Fondation Giacometti and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, will show the sculptures by both artists for the first time together in the Netherlands. "After the successful *Ryan Gander X Edgar Degas* exhibition, museum Beelden aan Zee once again has the opportunity to bring two grandmasters together in a unique meeting," says Brigitte Bloksma, director and co-curator of the exhibition. "The architecture of our museum with the natural play of light forms the ideal space for this encounter. It's an exhibition that not only needs to be seen but also experienced."

The concept of *Gris, Vide, Cris* — Grey, Emptiness, Scream — is borrowed from the poem of the same name by Giacometti and summarizes the thematic core of the special meeting between the two artists. In Chafes' reading, the grey refers to the moment between visibility and disappearance, the emptiness to the space in which the experience takes shape and the scream to the intensity of the human experience. The exhibition unfolds in that border area, where Giacometti's fragile human figures resonate within Chafes' silent, contemplative world.

The sculptural work *La Nuit* is one of the high points of the exhibition; Rui Chafes designed this iron structure around *Le Nez* (1947–50), Giacometti's first study in plaster, commissioned by the Fondation Giacometti in 2018. In that year, the first *Gris, Vide, Cris* exhibition was staged at the French branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, in collaboration with the Fondation Giacometti. Five years later, the partnership led to a new exhibition in the main building of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. For *Gris, Vide, Cris III* in Museum Beelden aan Zee, curators Brigitte Bloksma and Helena de Freitas selected ten sculptures by Giacometti which formed the basis for Chafes' series of sculptures, some of which were made especially for the occasion.

Central in the exhibition is not only the body as sculpture, but also its relationship to the space and the viewer. In the interplay between Giacometti and Chafes a statue of a man manifests itself that is as vulnerable as it is timeless. While Giacometti's elongated figures hover between materiality and stillness, Chafes' iron sculptures explore the boundaries between corporeality and emptiness. He invites visitors to enter his works. *Au-delà des yeux* and *Lumière* are dark installations containing architectural passageways in which various sculptures by Giacometti can be viewed in a completely different way. With these works, the Portuguese artist shows the human figure as a temporary manifestation in an infinite space. This creates a powerful field of tension between vulnerability and monumentality, and between form and the invisible.

### **Alberto Giacometti**

Alberto Giacometti studied drawing, painting and sculpture briefly in Geneva and then in Paris. Soon he departed from the academic approach, as he became more and more interested by Cubist sculpture and non-western art forms, eventually joining the Surrealist group. From his modest studio in Paris, the artist collaborated with the Surrealists until he was expelled from the group in 1935 due to his renewed focus on modelling from direct observation.

Progressively during and after the Second World War, Giacometti elaborated smaller and thinner that led to his famous slender, solitary figures, which mirror the conflict and alienation of that time. The insignificance of man is powerfully expressed in his thin, elongated forms that seem to dissolve into space. These figures, which are simultaneously present and absent, convey a feeling of loneliness and existential uncertainty. Giacometti attempted to make the elusive feeling of human presence and inner life tangible. His paintings and drawings are also evidence of this ongoing quest, through which he created an exceptional body of work that continues to inspire to this day.

### **Rui Chafes**

Rui Chafes studied sculpture in Lisbon and continued his education at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf under Gerhard Merz. During this period, he translated Novalis' *Fragments* into Portuguese and published the text in a book with drawings. Chafes was deeply influenced by the Romantic poet and his ideas about melancholy, longing for death, and the night, as keys to understanding reality and the 'true' human soul. Novalis's assertion that "all forces of nature are essentially but one single, all-encompassing force" is the guiding principle in the creation of Chafes' abstract and sometimes semi-figurative sculptures.

Chafes belongs to a generation of artists who are redefining the sculptural as a spiritual experience. Since the nineteen-nineties, he has been building a consistent oeuvre of iron sculptures, often matte black and closed in form, yet imbued with an intense charge. His works almost seem to float, breathe, or sometimes shelter. In the spirit of late Romanticism, they refer not only to the emptiness of human existence but also to the ambivalence of the body, which is both a 'cage' in which the 'self' is imprisoned and a protective shell that shields the inner self from a physically and mentally threatening environment. His sculptures are not cast but folded from sheet steel, thus emerging 'from nothing'. Despite their heavy weight, their pure form and apparent absence of materiality they almost appear to be floating. Hence they are always situated in a zone between perception and reality, between life and death, between mind and body. This disquieting effect, combined with the romantic and existential themes atypical in this day and age, which evoke 'forgotten' feelings of loneliness, detachment, and melancholy, makes Chafes one of the most relevant sculptors of our time.

### **Museum Beelden aan Zee**

With its unique seaside location and distinctive architecture, museum Beelden aan Zee in The Hague has grown over the past thirty years into a leading venue for modern and contemporary sculpture in the Netherlands and far beyond. Since its foundation in 1994, the museum has gained national and international recognition through its exhibition and public programmes. Notable past exhibitions include Ryan Gander and Edgar Degas (2025–26), Joan Miró (2024–25), Henry Moore (2023), Niki de Saint Phalle (2019), Zadkine (2018) and Picasso (2016).

### **The exhibition is co-organised by:**

MUSEUM  
BEELDEN  
  
AAN ZEE

FONDATION-  
GIACOMETTI  




CENTRO DE ARTE MODERNA  
GULBENKIAN

### **Partner:**

**VRIENDEN  
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elke dag plezier

### **Note for editors:**

The press preview will take place on Thursday, June 25, from 12:00 to 14:30 hrs.

For questions kindly contact Museum Beelden aan Zee, Marita Smit:  
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Press release and images in low resolution can be found at:  
<https://www.beeldenaanzee.nl/en/press>. For high-resolution images, please contact the press department of Museum Beelden aan Zee: [pr@beeldenaanzee.nl](mailto:pr@beeldenaanzee.nl).