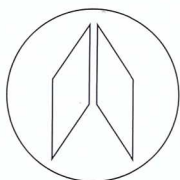




REMEMBERING GIACOMETTI

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Alberto Giacometti, whose distorted sketches and haunting effigies captured the isolation and futility of contemporary existence, earning him a place among history's greatest artists. *The Peak* travels across the vast terrain of chilly Switzerland to uncover the artist's amazing legacy that still lingers to this very day.

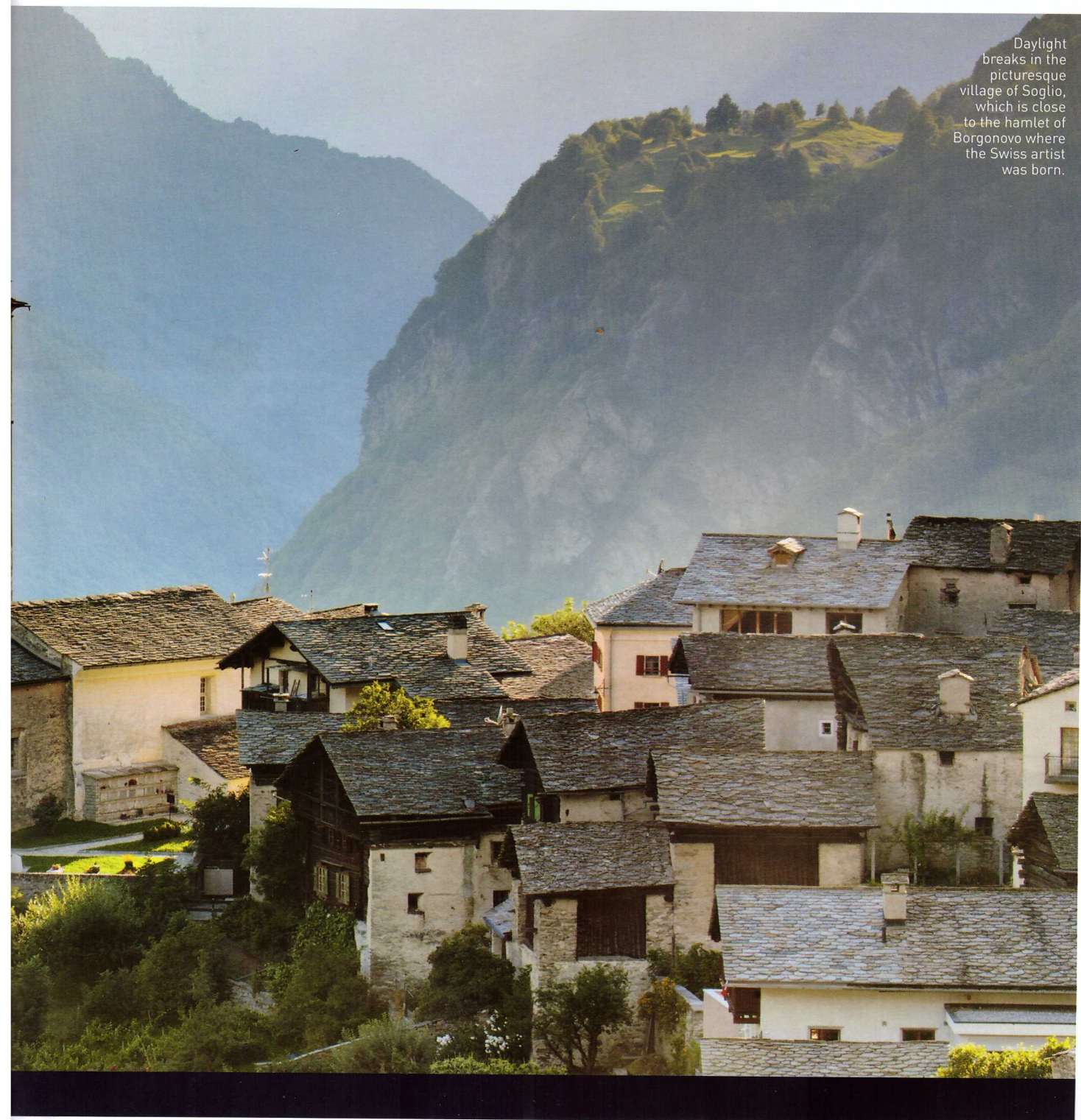
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LIFESTYLE

Daylight
breaks in the
picturesque
village of Soglio,
which is close
to the hamlet of
Borgonovo where
the Swiss artist
was born.



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this capital city of the mountainous canton of Graubünden is believed to be the oldest city in Switzerland, with a settlement history that dates back to over 5,000 years, while the oldest archaeological finds in this area have been dated back to as far as the late Palaeolithic Age (12,000 to 9,000 BC).

To explore the city's rich past, one need only to follow the cobblestone pavements and winding alleys that lead to well-preserved medieval buildings, churches and fountains that are nestled in its charming **Old Town**. Also worth investigating is Chur's cultural side, as the city is home to two theatres as well as 16 art galleries and museums, including the **Bündner Kunstmuseum** (Grisons Museum of Fine Arts). Situated on Bahnhofstrasse 35, this newly revamped museum comprises of two separate buildings that are linked via a secret underground tunnel. The first is the neoclassical Villa Planta, a 140-year-old private residence that was built by Jacques Ambrosius von Planta. Distinguishable by the Byzantine-style dome and grand main entrance flanked by two sphinxes, other unexpected surprises to be found here include a provocative biomechanoid sculpture in the garden that was created by the late HR Giger, an Academy Award-winning artist whose otherworldly art-style is best remembered in the 1979 Ridley Scott film, *Alien*.

Located just beside Villa Planta is the latest addition to the museum designed by Barcelona-based architects, Barozzi Veiga. Unlike its flamboyant neighbour, this minimalist new wing features a cuboid façade constructed from cool concrete. Once inside, visitors will be able to while away the hours by exploring the vast and ever-growing collection of visual arts spanning from the 18th century to the present, and includes numerous works from notable names such as neoclassical painter Angelika Kauffmann (who was born in Chur in 1741), the German expressionist painter and printmaker Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and, of course, the Giacometti family of artists.

By the time of his death in 1966, Alberto Giacometti had become one of the most influential and prolific artists of the 20th century. Best known for his distinctive bronze sculptures that resemble hauntingly emaciated figures trapped in time, his priceless works are still, to this very day, capable of stirring up conversations while fetching millions at auctions across the globe. Having lived through the horrors of the two World Wars, Alberto stood witness as Europe struggled in the grip of Existentialist angst – despite all the suffering that surrounded him, however, the printmaker, painter and sculptor remained steadfast as he continued to work tirelessly to refine his craft.

For those who wish to deepen their understanding of this influential artist, a visit to his homeland of

Switzerland would be well worth the trip. Scattered throughout the small but prospering nation are various pieces to the puzzle that was Giacometti's life; and with each discovery, it becomes evident as to how this troubled soul had lived a life that was, in many ways, as complicated as his creations. Like many great artists before him, it is perhaps this inner torment that would ultimately feed his creative spirit, allowing future generations to understand his unique views of the world through his art.

STEP BACK IN TIME

To retrace the footsteps of Alberto Giacometti, one must first journey to the charming Alpine town of **Chur**, where the artist passed away at the age of 64 in the Cantonal Hospital. Situated in the heart of Europe,

01 Giacometti was fond of creating sculptures that imitated human poses. In this photo, he is shown striking a pose with the famous 'Pointing Man', that was sold for a record-breaking USD141.3million back in May 2015.

02 The charming city of Chur is reputedly the oldest in Switzerland.

03 History buffs will be amazed by Chur's fine mountain setting, twisting alleys and historic buildings.





THE VALLEY OF ARTISTS

Towards the south of Chur lies the mountain hamlet of Borgonovo, which was where Alberto Giacometti was born in 1901 to Annetta Giacometti-Stampa, whose family was among the area's prominent land owners, and Giovanni Giacometti, a well-known post-Impressionist painter who was also the cousin of the revered painter and stain-glass artist, Augusto Giacometti. Alberto was the eldest of four children, and had a sister named Ottilia as well as two brothers: Diego, a prominent artist in his own right who served as the artist's constant companion, and Bruno, an architect whose notable works include the Swiss pavilion that debuted at the Venice Biennale in 1952.

A couple of years after the birth of Ottilia, the Giacometti family

relocated to the nearby town of **Stampa**. Like a painting brought to life, this idyllic haven is truly a sight to behold, with its breathtaking surrounding landscape comprising of dense forests, rolling green hills speckled with quaint wooden cottages and shadowy valleys bordered by towering mountains as far as the eye can see. As for the Giacometti family residence, it was located just opposite the Hotel Piz Duan (operated by the artist's grandfather), while an adjacent wooden stable was converted into a makeshift studio.

It was within these four walls that Giacometti would spend his formative years observing his father's creative process while tapping into his own creativity. By 1913, he would produce his very first oil painting, at the age of 12, of apples strewn across a folding



Besides the studio, Giacometti would often spend countless of hours in solace inside this cave that was tucked away in the surrounding hills of Stampa.



04 The rustic stable in Stampa that was converted into a studio by Giacometti's father still exists to this very day.

05 A glimpse inside the studio where Giacometti produced his very first oil painting at the tender age of 12.

06 The Kunsthhaus Zürich is home to the most comprehensive collection of Giacometti's works.



table. In Christmas the following year, he had moved on to moulding busts of his brothers using plasticine. Several of these earlier works, along with those made by Giacometti's father and brother Diego, can still be viewed at the nearby **Ciasa Granda Museum**, a former patrician residence built in 1581 that also houses several rooms recreating rural life in the village before the advent of modern technology.

Even when Giacometti was based in Paris, the artist would make frequent visits to Stampa to see his family and explore the surrounding wilderness, before retreating to his studio to work on his next masterpiece. For those who wish to immerse themselves

within the sacred space where Giacometti's talent first came into bloom, a public tour can be arranged via the **Giacometti Foundation Center** (centrogiacometti.ch). Inside the studio, visitors will be able to view up close various interesting bits of memorabilia ranging from fine paintbrushes and metal palettes caked with paint, to mysterious etchings and random paintings displayed on the wooden walls.

Signs of what everyday life must have been like for the artist can also be found throughout this space. This includes a bed where the artist's loyal wife Annette would sleep during their annual family visits (Giacometti's family didn't approve of their

relationship), and burn marks on the floor, indicating the exact spot where the artist would either sketch or sculpt his muse of the day while smoking up a storm. Following his death in Chur, Alberto's coffin would journey to the studio in Stampa for one last time before he was finally buried with the rest of his family in a cemetery in Borgonovo.

TALES OF THE CITY

To conclude this grand adventure, it is time to bid adieu to the magical mountains of the Swiss wilderness, and head towards the bright lights and busy streets of Zurich. Located about 225km away from Stampa, the fastest route would involve booking a First

ABOVE The precious plasters that were used by Giacometti to construct many of his famous sculptures. (© Succession Alberto Giacometti / 2016 ProLitteris, Zürich).



Class ticket with the **Swiss Travel System** (swisstravelsystem.com/pass), the high-speed and extremely efficient rail network that includes a premium experience on the famous panorama trains such as the Glacier Express, the Bernina Express, the GoldenPass Line and the Wilhelm Tell Express.

Besides being the second-most important financial centre in Europe, Zurich is also renowned for its flourishing art scene. Hidden gems include **Cabaret Voltaire** at Spiegelgasse 1, which is the birthplace of the dynamic Dadaist movement; the former industrial district turned trendy quarter known as **Zurich-West**; and (surprisingly!) the halls

of the city's police headquarters to gaze upon the vibrant mural that was painted by Augusto Giacometti.

For connoisseurs of fine art, no visit to Zurich could possibly be complete without a trip to the grand **Kunsthaus Zürich** (kunsthau.ch). Located on Heimplatz 1, not only does this impressive institution boast an exemplary collection of Swiss and western art that spans from the Middle Ages to present day, it also houses the most comprehensive collection of works by Alberto Giacometti – many which have been generously loaned by the **Alberto Giacometti Foundation** (fondation-giacometti.fr/en).

To coincide with the 50th anniversary of the artist's passing

this year, the museum is currently conducting an exhibition, *Alberto Giacometti – Beyond Bronze. Masterpieces in Plaster and Other Materials*, that showcases 150 of the artist's best works, including exceptional pieces that have been loaned from private collections. Curated by Philippe Büttner, this exhibition, which ends 15 January 2017, also displays 75 original plasters that have been sourced from the artist's estate with the intention of shedding light on his unique creative process, while also serving as a reminder to the art world of the artist's unyielding spirit that continues to withstand the test of time. ①

ABOVE Crafted using plaster with an iron rod frame, this famous masterpiece titled 'The Hand' was created by Giacometti in 1947. (© Succession Alberto Giacometti / 2016 ProLitteris, Zürich).