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"Trendy" Giacometti sculpture sale breaks record

Sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901 - 1966) has retained his title as the most expensive Swiss artist after one of his pieces fetched a record price at a New York auction.

"Grande femme debout II" sold for \$27.5 million at the Impressionist and Modern Art sale at Christie's, well above its \$18 million estimate.



Grande femme debout II

Previously another of his works, "L'homme qui chavire", became the most costly Swiss work of art when it went for \$18.5 million in 2007.

A spokesman for the auction house said Swiss artists were becoming increasingly desirable among collectors and Giacometti in particular had become fashionable.

Internationally, he is the most important Swiss artist, according to Nadia Schneider, curator for 20th and 21st century collections at the Museum of Art and History in Geneva, and creator of its upcoming retrospective on the Graubünden-born sculptor.

"Sculpture was his strong point. You cannot mistake him for other artists. He really created a style that is unique and

had originality," Schneider said. However, she says overly high prices for art are not justified. "It's private collectors who pay these prices. Institutions cannot afford to pay them.

The price paid by a collector for a work does not guarantee the artist a place in history. Sometimes the price is not in relation to the quality of an artist. But for Giacometti, this is not the case. He is already a classic in the history of art," she said.

Giacometti studied in Geneva and Paris, where he later settled and developed an interest in the human figure. He gained fame in the mid-1950s and since his death in 1966 retrospectives of his work have been held worldwide.

At 274cm high, Grande femme debout II was the largest work he ever created, one of a group of four figurative sculptures. At one time the group was intended to adorn a new building being built in Manhattan, but the project encountered difficulties.

A cast of one of the sculptures has been on display at the Foundation Beyeler in Basel since 1997.

Christie's said the "sheer scale" of Grand femme debout II made it a very rare piece on the market, and could explain why it fetched a record price.

Painter Ferdinand Hodler ranks as the second most expensive Swiss artist, his latest work selling for SFr10.9million last year.

"Top range works of art are in demand, whether they are Swiss or not. Apparently Giacometti is very trendy," said a Christie's Geneva spokeswoman.

"He is an artist who is very much at the top of the list now. He is really international and has been for some time. He no longer goes in our Swiss art sales. Maybe that will be the case for Hodler in five years' time." *swissinfo*

Omelette Jurassienne

- 4 grosse gekochte Kartoffeln
- 4 Esslöffel Speckwürfel
- 100g Jurakäse gerieben
- 4 Eier
- 1 Peperoni fein geschnitten
- 1 gehackte Zwiebel
- 1 kleingewürfelte Tomate
- Salz und Pfeffer
- 1 Esslöffel Bratfett

Den Speck langsam in Fett auslassen. Die kleingewürfelten Kartoffeln, die Zwiebel, Peperoni und Tomate ca 5 Minuten auf kleiner Flamme ständig wenden. Käse, Eier, Salz und Pfeffer kurz verklopfen und über das Gemüse giessen. Stocken lassen, dann wie eine französische Omelette auf eine Platte stürzen.

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- 8 Scheiben Weissbrot getoastet
- 6 Esslöffel Weisswein; Brotscheiben damit beträufeln
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- 2 Esslöffel Mehl daruntermischen
- 2 Eier verklopfen
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- Pfeffer aus der Mühle

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