

<b>Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, Case 29 (2022-2023) Chandelier for Peter Watson by Alberto Giacometti</b>	
<b>Statement from Expert Adviser</b>	Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the chandelier meets Waverley criteria one, two and three.  <b>See below</b>
<b>Statement from the Applicant</b>	Statement from the applicant referencing the three Waverley criteria against which the Committee will consider whether an item referred to it is of national importance.  a) <i>Is it so closely connected with our history and national life that its departure would be a misfortune?</i> b) <i>Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?</i> c) <i>Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?</i>  <b>See below</b>
<b>Note of case hearing</b>	<b>See below</b>
<b>Press release</b>	A press release was issued by the Secretary of State on 13 July 2023: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/giacometti-bronze-chandelier-at-risk-of-leaving-uk">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/giacometti-bronze-chandelier-at-risk-of-leaving-uk</a>
<b>Recommended price</b>	£2,922,000 (plus VAT of £104,000 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Deferral period</b>	12 November 2023
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Deferral period</b>	n/a
<b>Note of outcome</b>	<b>See below</b>

## RCEWA – Chandelier for Peter Watson by Alberto Giacometti

### Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the chandelier meets Waverley criteria one, two, and three.

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

##### 1. Brief description of object

*Chandelier for Peter Watson* was commissioned from Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) by Peter Watson (1908-1956) between 1946-47 and was probably cast with assistance from Diego Giacometti (1902-1985) c.1947-1949. The chandelier is made from bronze with a golden-brown patina and measures 134cm in height and 153.5cm in diameter. It has a multi-layered armature, with sharply pointed branches radiating out from a central stem. Each socket is decorated with organic detailing and hanging from the base of the main stem is a punctuated sphere. The chandelier is unique and is in excellent condition.

##### 2. Context

**Provenance:** The chandelier was commissioned from Giacometti by Watson in 1946 or 1947 for the offices of *Horizon* magazine. In 1950 the magazine was closed, and it is assumed that the chandelier was placed in storage. Christie's note that the chandelier was owned by Elizabeth Denton from c.1965 and believe she acquired it from the sale of *Horizon's* office contents. John Craxton RA (1922-2009) knew Watson well as a young artist and recognised the chandelier listed as by 'unknown' in Denton's antique shop, Marylebone in the late 1960s. Craxton paid £250 for it, and it hung in his home until his death in 2009. In 2015 the Estate of John Craxton sought to confirm the attribution to Giacometti. The chandelier was transported to the Fondation Giacometti in Paris for verification by insurance broker Aston Lark in December 2021.

**Key literary and exhibition references:** Exhibited at Holt, Holt Festival: Craxton-Picasso Exhibition, 15–29 July 2022. The Alberto Giacometti Database, no. 4333.

**No. of comparable objects by the same artist already in the UK, in both public and private collections?** There are nineteen sculptures by Giacometti in public collections in the UK (The Fitzwilliam Museum, The National Galleries of Scotland, The Sainsbury Centre and The Tate). One floor lamp and two table lamps are listed on the Alberto Giacometti Database as being in private collections in the UK (see appendices). No other Giacometti chandeliers are listed in UK collections.

##### 3. Waverley criteria

**Waverley 1:** The chandelier is closely connected to UK history and national life as it is symbolic of an extraordinary convergence of people in mid-century Britain. Peter Watson was a significant figure in the cultural life of mid-century Britain whose patronage of the arts shaped modern British painting, sculpture, and literature. His support of *Horizon* magazine enabled the publication and its offices to become a microcosm of cultural thinking and collecting of the avant-garde in mid-century Britain. Commissioned specially for *Horizon's* offices, the chandelier occupied a central position at this meeting point of British cultural life, and it is thought to be the only UK decorative art commission by Giacometti.

**Waverley 2:** The chandelier is of outstanding aesthetic importance as Giacometti is widely regarded as one of the most important sculptors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the chandelier should be regarded as a master-work by the artist. An ambitious culmination of his work in the decorative arts through its exploration of space and use of bronze, it is a remarkable hanging sculpture which blurs the boundaries between function and art, surrealism and abstraction.

**Waverley 3:** As the only known UK chandelier commission by Giacometti and one of only nine chandeliers by the artist, the chandelier is of outstanding significance for the study of mid-century European avant-garde art and the decorative arts. Moreover, the chandelier offers a unique

opportunity to study Giacometti's practice within the field of decorative arts, which is a much neglected and equally significant strand of the artist's output.

#### **DETAILED CASE**

The *Chandelier for Peter Watson* is an outstanding master-work by Alberto Giacometti, one of the foremost avant-garde sculptors, and was commissioned by Peter Watson, a highly influential figure in the international art world in mid-century Europe.

#### **The Patron: Peter Watson**

Peter Watson was a significant figure in cultural life in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century whose patronage of the arts shaped modern British painting, sculpture, and literature. His father, Sir William George Watson, was the founder and chairman of the Maypole Dairy Company. He died in 1930 and left his fortune to his children, providing the 22-year-old Peter with the financial freedom to dedicate his life to the arts.

Watson spent much of the 1930s in Paris socialising with and collecting works by the European avant-garde, including Paul Klee, Salvador Dalí and Max Ernst. He returned to London at the outbreak of World War Two and focused on leading avant-garde British artists including Ben Nicholson, John Piper, and Henry Moore. He also supported early-career artists such as Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud by paying for their studies and studios, and commissioning work. He sat on the board of the London Gallery and was instrumental in the establishment of the Institute of Contemporary Arts. Watson died at the age of 47 in 1956, leaving behind a substantial art collection which has since been dispersed across public and private collections.

#### **The Commission: Bronze Chandelier**

In 1939 Watson co-founded and funded the literary and cultural magazine *Horizon* with the critic Cyril Connolly. The magazine became an influential and important showcase for leading British writers of the period with contributors including W.H. Auden, George Orwell, E.M. Forster, Nancy Mitford, and Dylan Thomas. During a trip to Paris in 1946 or 1947 Watson visited Giacometti's studio and commissioned him to make a chandelier for *Horizon's* new offices on Bedford Square in Bloomsbury. Giacometti rarely travelled out of France and is only known to have travelled to England once for his retrospective exhibition at Tate in 1965. The resulting chandelier is an exceptional realisation of Giacometti's work in the decorative arts and draws on his experience of making sculpture and functional objects to create a dramatic hanging bronze sculpture. James Lord —*Horizon* contributor and Giacometti's biographer —recorded the arrival of the chandelier: 'It was an intricate, airy, imposing bronze work... I felt privileged to have a hand in helping suspend the splendid fixture from the ceiling'.

In 1950 Connolly decided to close *Horizon* magazine. The offices were cleared, and it is assumed that the chandelier was placed in storage. Other artworks known to be in the offices include a painting by the French painter Balthus, possibly *Le Cerisier* (no.128), and edition number 3 of *La Place II*, a sculpture by Giacometti of four walking people on a plinth. These were owned by Watson and seem to have passed into Connolly's ownership either when the office closed in 1950 or when Watson died in 1956. Denton Antiques does not have records from the 1960s but believe that Elizabeth Denton purchased the chandelier from the sale of the storage contents.

John Craxton was the recipient of Watson's patronage as a young artist. Craxton's biographer Ian Collins notes that the artist 'would first have seen it [the chandelier] in *Horizon's* offices in the late 1940s'. Craxton later re-discovered it in Elizabeth Denton's antique shop in Marylebone in the late 1960s. The chandelier was listed as by 'unknown' and Craxton paid £250 for it. He hung it in the music room of his family's home in Hampstead where it remained until his death in 2009. Collins notes that 'Many leading players performed below the chandelier and anyone who asked was told exactly what it was: a masterpiece by Giacometti rendered priceless through association with the beloved Peter Watson'.

#### **The Artist: Alberto Giacometti**

Alberto Giacometti was a Swiss sculptor and painter and is widely regarded as one of the most important sculptors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His work was particularly influenced by Cubism and Surrealism, and he explored philosophical questions about the human condition. Around 1935 he

moved away from Surrealism to pursue an analysis of the human form and after the war began creating his celebrated tall and slender figurative sculptures.

Much less well known, but equally significant, are Giacometti's decorative art objects. He began making these in 1929, most likely initially for financial reasons, and produced unique interior commissions for clients. His more serious involvement with the decorative arts grew from an encounter with Jean-Michel Frank, one of the most influential Parisian decorators of the period with an international clientele. Giacometti's pieces were very popular, and Frank used pre-existing designs as well as ordering new pieces. He designed about one hundred pieces for Frank. More than half of Giacometti's decorative objects were lighting (floor lamps, sconces, chandeliers) but he also made bowls, vases, mantelpieces, fire dogs, doorknobs, mirrors, pedestal tables and other decorative accessories. His brother Diego supported Giacometti with the execution and casting of his objects. Frank's death in 1941 and the war halted production, but Giacometti returned to Paris in 1945 to resume work with Diego. Up to the early 1950s he produced some one-off commissions and distributed work through the decorator Jacques Adnet, Director of the Compagnie des Arts Français. In a letter to his gallerist Pierre Matisse dated 1948, Giacometti stated: 'I am able to make objects only because Diego works very well and deals with all aspects of casting, etc., but objects interest me hardly any less than sculpture, and there is a point at which the two touch.' Works by the Giacometti brothers are extremely popular and the highest price for a bronze chandelier, *Candlestick with Woman, Man and Bird*, at auction was £7,602,400 in 2018.

The Fondation Giacometti Database has 677 decorative art objects listed and of these there are only nine described as chandeliers or ceiling lights (including this chandelier) and they are all in private collections (see appendices). Four are made of bronze, four from plaster, and one from terracotta. There is some similarity between this chandelier and AG628 with regards to the radiating branches and organic details on the sockets. In addition, the chandelier's suspended sphere and sense of motion recall *Boule Suspendue* (Fondation Giacometti Paris), one of Giacometti's most important early surrealist sculptures from 1930. The hard beaten aspect of the chandelier's horizontal parts offset the geometry of the piece and evoke the handmade surfaces of bronze tabletops and other objects Alberto created with Diego in the 1930s.

*Chandelier for Peter Watson* is much more ambitious both compositionally and technically than Giacometti's other chandeliers. It demonstrates the culmination of his great experience in the fields of sculpture and the decorative arts, the porosity between artforms in the period and the application of sculpture in utilitarian objects, and his sophisticated understanding of form, space, and material. Although a working chandelier, it is as much a hanging work of sculpture owing to its balanced purity of line, commanding presence, and the suspended interplay of light and shadow it creates. The chandelier is an extraordinary feat of making and signals the mid-century direction of European sculpture towards abstraction and mobile form.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the chandelier is an exceptional realisation of Giacometti's work in the decorative arts, is the only known UK decorative art commission by the leading 20<sup>th</sup> century sculptor and is the last physical embodiment of an extraordinary convergence of people in mid-century Britain. It offers outstanding opportunities for the study of this neglected area of Giacometti's output and the meeting of European avant-garde art and decorative arts in the mid-twentieth century.

**APPENDICES ENCLOSED SEPARATELY**

## **RCEWA – Chandelier for Peter Watson by Alberto Giacometti**

### **Applicant's statement**

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

#### **Is the item closely connected with our history and national life?**

The Chandelier for Peter Watson is not connected to the history and national life of the United Kingdom. Giacometti was Swiss and worked in France; he did not have a studio in the United Kingdom, had limited ties to British Culture, and was never significantly collected in this country. The commission itself was arranged while Peter Watson had returned to Paris. The chandelier hung in his office where few people would have seen it, and had no bearing on Watson's cultural contributions. The chandelier was installed in 1949 and the magazine and its office was closed within a year, in 1950, at which point the chandelier was packed up with the office furniture and left in storage. Until the work was brought to auction, its presence in the United Kingdom was unknown to specialists and the broader public. On being offered at auction, the interest came from Continental Europe and the USA. There were no bidders from the UK.

#### **Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?**

The work is not of outstanding aesthetic importance. Giacometti had already created chandeliers, ceiling lamps, and wall lights for the interior designer Jean-Michel Frank prior to the Second World War; for example see lot 82 in Christie's Paris upcoming Design sale 22148. Though the post-war period was a highly productive one for the artist, there are several outstanding examples of his art from this period in public collections in the UK including exquisite pieces at Tate Modern, London; The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich; and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Giacometti regularly worked in bronze, so the material of the chandelier is not of significance. The chandelier was designed to be a functional piece of furniture for a working office. This was not an artistic commission, and Giacometti, who worked serially, did not return to this theme. Of the Giacometti brothers, Alberto was not known or highly regarded for his furniture or lighting, and his brother Diego was instead renowned for his lighting and furniture designs.

#### **Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?**

There are over twenty-five works by Giacometti in public institutions in the UK, the majority of which date to this period. These sculptures more clearly chart key developments within Giacometti's career including his use of suspension, elongation, and attenuated forms. The relative obscurity of the chandelier in the artist's oeuvre, and the availability of several other, more significant sculptures in public collections in the UK, suggest that this work is not of outstanding significance for study of a particular branch of art, learning, or history, nor would it properly serve as a benchmark in the assessment of other items.

<b>Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, note of case hearing</b>	
<b>Meeting date</b>	Wednesday 7 June 2023
<b>Object</b>	<i>Chandelier for Peter Watson</i> by Alberto Giacometti
<b>Expert Adviser's objection</b>	The Curator of Metalwork, 1900-Now, Victoria & Albert Museum, had objected to the export of the chandelier under the first, second and third Waverley criteria on the grounds that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it was so closely connected with our history and national life; it was of outstanding aesthetic importance and it was of outstanding significance for the study of Giacometti's work in the decorative arts and the meeting of European avant-garde art and decorative arts in the mid-20th century.
<b>Committee Members &amp; Independent Assessors</b>	Six of the regular eight Committee members were present and able to inspect the chandelier. They were joined in person by three independent assessors, acting as temporary members of the Committee. One Committee member recused themselves from voting due to a conflict of interest.
<b>Value on the licence</b>	The value shown on the export licence application was £2,922,000, which represented the sale price at auction on 28th February 2023 (sale 21609, lot 14), comprising the hammer price of £2,400,000 plus buyer's premium of £522,000.
	<p>The applicant was informed that there was currently an interim process in place for Committee hearings. The Committee was still holding hybrid meetings but any Committee members, including the independent assessors, were required to inspect the object/s under consideration prior to discussing the case and voting. Any permanent Committee members or independent assessors who were not able to view the object were not able to vote.</p> <p>The applicant confirmed that the owner understood the circumstances under which an export licence might be refused.</p>
<b>VAT</b>	The applicant confirmed that the value did not include VAT and that VAT of £104,000, on the buyer's premium, would be payable in the event of a UK sale.

<b>Expert Adviser's comments</b>	<p>The expert adviser stated that she did not have anything further to add to her submission.</p> <p>When questioned about Giacometti's status as a decorative artist, the expert replied that this was an overlooked area of research. She noted that Giacometti's drawings from the 1930s showed interest in decorative arts and that there was an overlap with how he approached sculpture, but that this chandelier was less derivative of sculpture as the construction gave as much attention to the use of space as the metal. She stated that Giacometti's decorative arts deserved more attention and research.</p> <p>When asked about Peter Watson as a figure of national significance, the expert replied that he was an extraordinary collector and extremely good at spotting talent. He was also very influential in supporting up and coming modern artists. Although Giacometti never saw the London location of the Horizon offices where the chandelier hung before it was moved to Bedford Square, the expert adviser noted that Watson's experience and relationship with Giacometti meant that at the time of commission, Watson would have had a clear understanding of what he wanted and how the chandelier would work within the space.</p>
<b>Applicant's comments</b>	<p>The applicant stated that they did not have anything further to add to their submission.</p> <p>When questioned about the particular aspects of the piece, the applicant replied that the chandelier was atypical in Giacometti's oeuvre due to the heavy construction and gothic influence and that of his 7 chandeliers in existence (that we know of), the most representative examples of Giacometti's style were the ones in plaster.</p> <p>The applicant also asserted that the chandelier did not enter national consciousness as Peter Watson was not widely known in the UK and that the chandelier would have been seen by relatively few people in cultural circles, not the general public. Although Peter Watson and the chandelier may have influenced cultural life, they questioned how it related to history and national life.</p>

<p><b>Committee's discussion</b></p>	<p>The expert adviser and applicant retired and the Committee discussed the case. They were struck by power and beauty of piece, and how it was as sculptural as it was functional. Further to this, they agreed that Peter Watson was a pivotal figure, who greatly influenced British art and culture of the 1940s and 50s through his patronage and that the chandelier would have been seen by a large number of people. They also noted that Giacometti was a notable figure in Britain and that he had influenced post-war British sculpture.</p> <p>The Committee felt that this was a neglected area of Giacometti's work and that there was much to be done in terms of research. They considered the chandelier aesthetically very special, and that it would merit further investigation as a piece of art.</p>
<p><b>Waverley Criteria</b></p>	<p>The Committee voted on whether the chandelier met the Waverley criteria. Of the eight voting members, five members voted that it met the first Waverley criterion. Eight members voted that it met the second Waverley criterion. Eight members voted that it met the third Waverley criterion. The chandelier was therefore found to meet the first, second and third Waverley criteria for its outstanding significance to the study of Giacometti's work in the decorative arts and the meeting of European avant-garde art and decorative arts in the mid-20th century.</p>
<p><b>Matching Offer</b></p>	<p>The Committee recommended the sum of £2,922,000 (plus VAT of £104,000 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution) as a fair matching price.</p>
<p><b>Deferral periods</b></p>	<p>The Committee agreed to recommend to the Secretary of State that the decision on the export licence should be deferred for an initial period of four months. At the end of the first deferral period, if the Arts Council received notification of a serious intention to raise funds with a view to making an offer to purchase the chandelier, the owner will have a consideration period of 15 Business Days to consider such offer(s). The Committee recommended that there should be a further deferral period of four months that would commence following the signing of an Option Agreement.</p>

<b>Communication of findings</b>	<p>The expert adviser and the applicant returned. The Chairman notified them of the Committee's decision on its recommendations to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The applicant was informed that potentially interested parties would need to see the report and certificate of authenticity from the Giacometti Foundation and any provenance information required for an institution to do their due diligence.</p> <p>The expert adviser agreed to act as champion if a decision on the licence was deferred by the Secretary of State.</p>
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**Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest: Note of outcome: Chandelier for Peter Watson by Alberto Giacometti (Case 29, 2022-23)**

At the end of the initial deferral period, no offer to purchase the chandelier had been made and we were not aware of any serious intention to raise funds. An export licence was therefore issued.