

Looking at Alberto Giacometti's *Walking Man*

A sculpture exists in three dimensions. It exists in space, and you can view it from all sides. But how do we talk about it?

First describe what you see. Is the sculpture a figure, an object, or an abstract form? An abstract form means the artwork has no recognizable subject matter. In a book, museum, or gallery, take a look at the label. It will tell you the title, size, material, and the year the sculpture was made.

The 6½-foot-tall man is walking with hands by his sides, his body thrust forward. The hands and feet look large, out of proportion. He seems to be walking on a muddy base that sticks to his back heel and toe.

Using the elements of art—color, shape, line, and texture—let's describe some sensory properties of the artwork, those we perceive through our senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste, and smell.

lines—straight and angular. The figure looks masculine, but cannot be identified as a recognizable person.

form/shape—elongated and stiff. The man is tall, and so thin that you can see on his chest the outlines of his ribs.

texture—lumpy, uneven, as if the artist left his finger marks everywhere

color (or patina on the bronze metal)—gray with touches of brown

If he could speak, what might he say? Would he speak in a whisper or in a loud, booming voice?

If the figure suddenly came to life, how would he walk? Slow or fast? What qualities of the sculpture give us a hint?

The last and most important question is: What is the feeling expressed? Is he sad or happy? What is the expression on his face? Although he is anchored to the ground by his large, heavy feet, his thin, bony body gives him a feeling of fragility. But at the same time, by his forward stride, we know he isn't indecisive or unsure. We don't know where he came from or where he is going, but there is a sense that he is single-minded about getting there.



Alberto Giacometti

Walking Man II, 1960

Bronze, 74 3/16 x 11 x 43 9/16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Gift of Enid A. Haupt

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