

By **DON TSE**

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My gateway beer — the beer that first taught me how wonderful craft beer can be — was a schwarzbier, sometimes called black lager. Since that first one over 15 years ago, schwarzbiers have held a special place in my heart.

While many people believe (wrongly) that dark beers must always be heavy, schwarzbiers are not, despite being very dark brown to black. Instead, schwarzbiers tend to be medium or even light-bodied. They are very smooth and even though they have malty flavors including bitter chocolate, nuts, biscuits, smoke and roasted malts, they should not be astringent. Like all lagers, schwarzbiers ferment cleanly and have minimal fruitiness or diacetyl, which are flavors often created by ale yeasts. Schwarzbiers differ from dunkels, which are also dark lagers, by being darker in color with more roasted flavors in a drier beer.

The most famous commercial example is Köstritzer Schwarzbier from Germany. American examples include Samuel Adams Black Lager,

Gordon Biersch Schwarzbier and Rogue's recent Chatoe Rogue Dirty. My gateway schwarzbier was Brew Brothers Black Pilsner, which is amazingly hard to find even in its hometown of Calgary, Alberta. All good schwarzbiers should display an amazing amount of flavor and complexity in a beer of delicate composition.

Such wonderful, dark flavors in a thin body are immediately reminiscent of the sculptures of Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966). Born into a family of artists, Giacometti is most famous for very thin sculptures of people, though he did also sculpt cats. Although cast in bronze, the sculptures appear to be black, just like schwarzbiers.

It wasn't that Giacometti set out to make his sculptures so thin. Rather, Giacometti would continuously carve at his sculptures, trying to make them look the way he wanted, but what was left was often the size of a nail.

Eventually, Giacometti came to accept his thin-bodied sculptures and made larger ones, though they continued to be inordinately thin. One of his models complained that Giacometti "would make your head

look like the blade of a knife." Giacometti himself was uncertain of his own work. At times he would say that he was attempting to sculpt what he saw, but was never satisfied with the result and so he continued to carve at them. But at other times, he would claim that he was intentionally sculpting the shadow cast by the figures posing for him.

Giacometti was prolific and his work is highly collected. His sculptures can be seen in America at the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

In 2010, a six-foot tall sculpture entitled *L'Homme qui marche I* (known in English as *Walking Man*), sold for over \$100 million at auction, making it the most expensive work of art ever sold at auction (although such records tend to be fleeting). For a tiny sliver of this price, you can enjoy some schwarzbier instead.