

The Sculpture of Gonzalo Fonseca

**First New York Museum Exhibition of Important Uruguayan Artist
in Nearly 50 Years**

Opens October 25, 2017

WHAT

This focused retrospective of the work of the New York-based Uruguayan artist Gonzalo Fonseca (1922–97), a late-in-life friend of Isamu Noguchi's, is the first institutional exhibition of Fonseca's work in New York since 1971. The exhibition will include about 80 objects, primarily sculpture in stone, from the mid-1960s to the 1990s. These will range from an installation of works in travertine that evokes the environment of the abandoned marble quarry he made his studio in Italy: featuring fountains, a monumental tower, and a large wall-relief, to a variety of stone sculptures, wood reliefs, and other objects, as well as drawings and sketchbooks. In all of these, we see Fonseca—who studied in the Montevideo workshop of Joaquín Torres-García, and who traveled extensively throughout South America, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East—seeking a universal language of form with which to construct a Swiftian universe of imaginary civilizations.

The Sculpture of Gonzalo Fonseca is part of the Museum's ongoing efforts to illuminate the many contexts in which Noguchi worked, and to encourage the broadest possible understanding of his vision.



Gonzalo Fonseca, *White Façade*, 1987.
Roman travertine, 26 ³/₈ x 35 ¹³/₁₆ x 8 ¹/₄ in.

WHEN

October 25, 2017 – February 12, 2018

WHERE

The Noguchi Museum
9-01 33rd Road (at Vernon Boulevard)
Long Island City, New York

GONZALO FONSECA

Trained as a painter, Fonseca was among a group of exceptional artists who emerged from the theory-rich studio of Uruguayan modernist Joaquín Torres-García in the 1940s. He became a sculptor in the mid-1960s, when the language

of forms he had invented in two dimensions seems finally to have demanded development in three. Working first in found limestone, brownstone, and sandstone in New York City, and later, additionally, in a wide variety of marbles in Italy—in the same stone-working community as Noguchi—he produced wall reliefs, freestanding structures, and sculptures.

A voracious polymath, Fonseca steeped himself in the natural sciences, linguistics, and history, and his sculptures often feel synthesized from, or like an index to, the contents of the lost Library of Alexandria. Like the best imaginative literature, they are complex fictions: at once playful and serious, austere and whimsical, childlike and, above all, archetypal. Fonseca was interested in the commonalities among Earth’s civilizations, past and present, and in how they might be abstracted in a universal vocabulary of forms. In a sense, he spent his entire life reverse engineering the Tower of Babel, that great symbol of human ambition, pluralism, and impermanence. But though the sculptures appear inextricably connected to the ancient world, their intent is more postmodern than archaeological. Playfully aware of their artificiality, they evoke other realities in order to address fissures in the underlying fundamentals of this one. To encounter them is to enter, as one does at The Noguchi Museum, a virtual encyclopedia of ideas about the relationship between space, place, and human understanding.

ORGANIZATION *The Sculpture of Gonzalo Fonseca* is organized by The Noguchi Museum and curated by Senior Curator Dakin Hart.

PUBLICATION The Museum is working with the estate of Gonzalo Fonseca on a monograph of the artist’s work.

FILM A new documentary film on Gonzalo Fonseca by Michael Gregory will have its New York premiere at The Noguchi Museum to coincide with the exhibition.

NOGUCHI MUSEUM Founded in 1985 by Isamu Noguchi (1904–88), one of the leading sculptors and designers of the twentieth century, The Noguchi Museum was the first museum in America to be established, designed, and installed by a living artist to show their own work. Widely viewed as among the artist’s greatest achievements, the Museum comprises ten indoor galleries in a converted factory building, as well as an internationally acclaimed outdoor sculpture garden. Since its founding, it has served as an international hub for Noguchi research and appreciation. In addition to housing the artist’s archives and the catalogue raisonné of his work, the Museum exhibits a comprehensive selection of sculpture, models for public projects and gardens, dance sets, and his Akari light sculptures. Provocative, frequently-changing installations drawn from the permanent collection, together with diverse special exhibitions related to Noguchi and the context in which he worked, offer a rich view of Noguchi’s art and illuminate his enduring influence as a category-defying, multicultural, cross-disciplinary innovator. www.noguchi.org / [@noguchimuseum](https://www.instagram.com/noguchimuseum)

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