

**NOGUCHI MUSEUM PRESENTS
*BRENDAN FERNANDES: CONTRACT AND RELEASE***

*Internationally celebrated artist transforms Noguchi Museum exhibition;
activates collection installation with dance performances*

September 11, 2019 – March 8, 2020



LEFT Brendan Fernandes, concept drawing and photomontage for *Contract and Release*, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago. RIGHT Dancer Oisín Monaghan performs a preview for *Contract and Release*, with assembly model for Isamu Noguchi's *Strange Bird* (1945) by Danny Da Silva, 2019. Photo by Don Stahl. ©INFGM / ARS

New York, NY (July 25, 2019) — This fall, the Noguchi Museum's current collection installation, *Noguchi: Body-Space Devices*—a group of about thirty works that motivate and modulate our physical understanding of space—will be reconfigured as a set for *Brendan Fernandes: Contract and Release*, a performance-based collaboration with artist Fernandes (b. 1979), who works at the intersection of dance and the visual arts.

Contract and Release, which takes its title from a Martha Graham technique, is the second iteration in a developing series of autobiographical examinations of the movement vocabularies that are intrinsic to Fernandes's work. The first, *The Master and Form*, commissioned by the



Installation view, *Noguchi: Body-Space Devices*, with performance copy of Isamu Noguchi's set for Martha Graham's *Appalachian Spring* (1944) in foreground. Photo by Nicholas Knight. ©INFGM / ARS

Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, examined the mastery of balletic form and its relationship to pain and pleasure. (The third, opening next year at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, will explore *shibari*, Japanese rope bondage.) With *Contract and Release*, Fernandes explores the ways in which often grueling techniques—including those of Martha Graham—are fetishized, and how that fetishization can be manifested in sculpture. The installation, developed with architecture and design collaborative Norman Kelley, features six “training devices” inspired by the blade-like (non-rocking) rocking chair that Noguchi produced for Graham’s *Appalachian Spring* (1944). These chairs, which will actually rock, will create an endurance test for dancers who will have to sit on them and try to remain balanced while working through a version of Graham’s “contract and release” exercise, thereby activating the installation by using Fernandes’s devices in the context of Noguchi’s.

Noguchi Museum Director Brett Littman notes, “*Contract and Release* opens new windows onto Noguchi’s sculpture and the ways in which it invites active participation. It is also a sign of the Museum’s interest not only in the multicultural, but also the multidisciplinary, which we will continue to explore in future programming.”

Noguchi Museum Senior Curator Dakin Hart, who organized both the original installation and the collaboration with Fernandes, adds, “Noguchi wanted sculpture, as a discipline, to bring texture, depth, and sophistication to our existence in a physical universe. The props and sets he made for Martha Graham, he often suggested, were the purest, most successful and satisfying distillation of his conception of how this could work—with objects organizing action. In another context, Noguchi described this approach to sculpture as ‘an appreciation of matter in space through which flows a spirit.’ Working with Brendan Fernandes—whose dual training in dance and sculpture, and borderless humanism, make him an ideal collaborator—we have reimagined a wide range of Noguchi’s sculptures as sculptural devices (body-space props) and installed them to unlock the motion within them.”

The performances of *Contract and Release* will take place regularly throughout the run of the exhibition. Dates will be announced in the coming weeks.

ABOUT BRENDAN FERNANDES

Brendan Fernandes (b. 1979, Nairobi, Kenya) is an internationally recognized Canadian artist working at the intersection of dance and the visual arts. Currently based in Chicago, Fernandes creates projects that address issues of race, queer culture, migration, protest, and other forms of collective movement, while developing new spaces and new forms of agency. His work takes hybrid forms: part ballet, part queer dance hall, part political protest, and is always rooted in collaboration and fostering solidarity.

Fernandes is a graduate of the Whitney Independent Study Program (2007) and a recipient of a Robert Rauschenberg Fellowship (2014). In 2010, he was shortlisted for the Sobey Art Award, and is the recipient of a 2017 Canada Council New Chapter grant. His projects have been shown at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), The Museum of Modern Art (New York), The Getty Museum (Los Angeles), the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), and MAC (Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal); among many others. He is currently artist-in-residence and a faculty member at Northwestern University and represented by Monique Meloche Gallery, in Chicago. Projects in 2019 include performances and solo presentations at the Guggenheim Museum (New York); the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York); the Smithsonian Museum of American Art (Washington, D.C.); and the Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago). brendanfernandes.ca



Brendan Fernandes.
Photo by Eva Deitch. ©INFGM/ARS

ABOUT THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM

Founded in 1985 by Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), 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 milieu in which he worked, offer a rich, contextualized view of Noguchi's art and illuminate his enduring influence as a category-defying, multicultural, cross-disciplinary innovator. noguchi.org | [@noguchimuseum](https://www.instagram.com/noguchimuseum)

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