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GALLERIA D'ARTE

Pablo Atchugarry. Scolpire la Luce

Curated by Gabriele Simongini

Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea

Viale delle Belle Arti, 131, Rome

Press preview: Monday, May 18th, 2026, 11:00 AM

Opening: Monday, May 18th, 2026, 6:00 PM

Open to the public: May 19th - June 21st, 2026

Ten years after his last exhibition in Rome at the Mercati di Traiano and five years after the one at Palazzo Reale in Milan, the **Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** (National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art) presents *Scolpire la Luce* (*Sculpting Light*), a major exhibition dedicated to **Pablo Atchugarry** (Montevideo, 1954), Uruguayan by birth and Italian by adoption, curated by **Gabriele Simongini**, on view **from May 19th to June 21st, 2026**.

A master of the sculptural technique of carving through subtraction, according to Michelangelo Buonarroti's famous definition "*per forza di levare*", **Atchugarry personally carves marble**, with a particular preference for Carrara statuary marble. His practice is rooted in the Western sculptural tradition of classical origin, yet it opens toward a deeply spiritual vision of form: for him, **sculpture is an "inner inquiry, prayer, invocation, a search for the infinite."**

For Atchugarry, the act of sculpting is a radical and necessary gesture, grounded in the centrality of the hand and in direct confrontation with technical and material challenges. Each work emerges as both a challenge and a quest for balance between permanence and movement, memory and contemporaneity.

His works are distinguished by metamorphic, sometimes almost aerodynamic forms that evoke abstract traces of trees, columns, flames, bodies, drapery, and architecture, guiding the viewer's gaze upward and suggesting a contemplative and regenerative experience.

As underlined by GNAMC Director **Renata Cristina Mazzantini** in her text published in the catalogue: *«In his sculptures, the hardness of marble seems to soften: a dense succession of 'disciplined' fissures that cut deeply through the volumes and break their granite compactness. By creating rhythm and movement through the alternation of light and shadow, the artist gives the sculptures both rigor and lightness. A sort of 'ordered lightness' that only apparently evokes pleating, as a symbol of refined elegance»*.

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As curator **Gabriele Simongini** observes in his catalogue essay: «*Looking at Atchugarry's sculptures, we must lift our faces and eyes, experiencing a primordial, instinctive joy, because these works are filled with an original light, that total light toward which we all tend, perhaps unconsciously [...] each of Atchugarry's works is not closed or complete in itself, carries an intimate, inner, potential dynamic force that could lead it to blossom into space with its inflorescences*».

The exhibition brings together **around fifty sculptures, offering a broad overview of the artist's research** over the past fifteen years. On this occasion, **Atchugarry will donate to the museum "Energy", an important white marble work (163 × 35 × 29 cm), specifically conceived and created to enter the GNAMC collection.**

Alongside the celebrated marbles, the exhibition includes works in wood carved from centuries-old olive tree trunks, alabaster, enameled bronze, and steel, materials through which the artist explores different expressive approaches: from the organic intimacy of the sinuous forms of carved trunks to the powerful aerodynamics of bronze works, up to great environmental steel sculptures that interact with light, air, and landscape.

The exhibition path is exceptionally enriched by four sculptures placed within the spaces of the permanent collection, where the artist's works establish new dialogues with major figures of modern art such as Jean Arp, Lucio Fontana, Alberto Giacometti, and Henry Moore. This comparison highlights affinities, distances, and continuities across different eras, reaffirming the value of tradition as a space of living relationships between past and present.

On the occasion of the exhibition, two catalogues (Allemandi Editore) will be published: the first featuring photographs of all the works on display, the curator's essay, and texts by David Anfam and Arnau Puig, along with an extensive critical anthology and biography; the second including photographs of the works and the exhibition installation in the museum galleries.

Pablo Atchugarry

Encouraged from a young age by his family to study the arts, Pablo Atchugarry initially approached painting, holding his first exhibition in Montevideo in 1972. In the following years, he participated in numerous exhibitions in Uruguay and Brazil.

After exploring sculpture through various materials - including cement, iron, and wood - he embarked on a journey to Europe in 1977. In Italy, after visiting Carrara, he discovered marble in 1979 and, following his first Italian solo exhibition held in Lecco in 1978, decided to settle permanently in the city.

*Twenty years after his arrival in Italy, in 2001 the city of Milan dedicated a retrospective to him at Palazzo Isimbardi (*Le infinite evoluzioni del marmo - The Infinite Evolutions of Marble*); the same year, the artist began working on his monumental *Obelisco del Terzo Millennio*, a Carrara marble sculpture intended for the municipality of Manzano in the province of Udine.*

In 2002, the city of Carrara awarded him the prestigious Michelangelo Prize. The following year, he represented Uruguay at the 50th Venice Biennale.

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GALLERIA D'ARTE

In early 2007, he founded the Fundación Pablo Atchugarry in Manantiales, Uruguay, with the aim of promoting the arts and creating a meeting place for artists.

Between 2015 and 2016, an important retrospective was dedicated to him at the Mercati di Traiano Museo dei Fori Imperiali di Roma (Pablo Atchugarry. Città Eterna, eterni marmi - Pablo Atchugarry. Eternal City, Eternal Marbles).

Between 2021 and 2022, a major exhibition was held in the Sala delle Cariatidi at Palazzo Reale in Milan.

In 2022, he inaugurated MACA, the Museo di Arte Contemporanea Atchugarry, designed by architect Carlos Ott. Numerous works by the sculptor have been exhibited in museums and public institutions, including the Frost Art Museum (Miami, USA), the Groeninge Museum (Bruges, Belgium), the Lewis Family Foundation (Boston, USA), the FAO Museum (Rome, Italy), the Fran Daurel Museum (Barcelona, Spain), the National Museum of Visual Arts (Montevideo, Uruguay), the National Museum of Fine Arts (Buenos Aires, Argentina), the Muscarelle Museum (Williamsburg, USA), the Norfolk Museum (Virginia, USA), the Pérez Art Museum (Miami, USA), and the Lercaro Collection (Bologna, Italy).

Press materials and photos:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/4e05iexl6u6zg382e2d4b/AJSYxxZ7Jo_FNAcJpUuyhRY?rlkey=mjv6o2bi7s8okrozwancg9syd&dl=0

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INFORMATION:

Exhibition: Pablo Atchugarry. Scolpire la Luce

Curator: Gabriele Simongini

Location: Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Viale delle Belle Arti 131, Roma

Information: T +39 06 32298221 | gnamc.cultura.gov.it

Open to the public: 19th May – 21st June, 2026

Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday 9:00 AM – 7:00 PM, closed on Mondays

Tickets: full: € 17,00 | reduced: € 2,00 (visitors between 18 and 25 years old)

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Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lagallerianazionale/>



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