

Atchugarry sculpts light in Rome national gallery

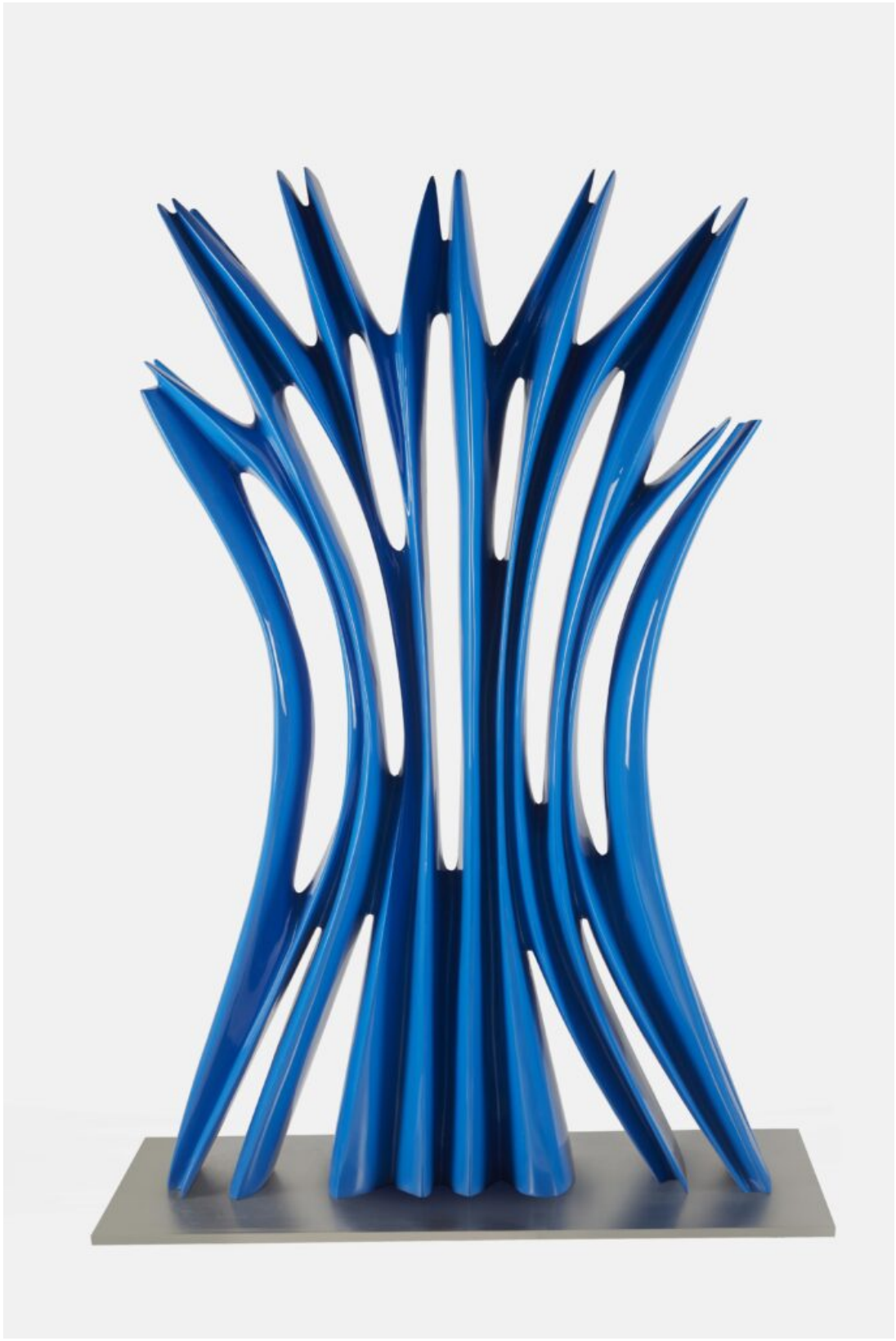
Posted on May 1, 2026 by Robin Gale

ROME — One of the last sculptors in the world to carve marble entirely by hand is set to open a major solo show at the *Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea* (GNAM, Italy's leading museum of modern and contemporary art) in Rome on May 19, 2026.

The show, titled *Scolpire la luce* (Sculpting light) and running through June 21, places Pablo Atchugarry in direct dialogue with four titans of 20th-century sculpture: Hans Arp, Lucio Fontana, Alberto Giacometti, and Henry Moore, all from the GNAM's permanent collection. It is the first time the museum has staged this kind of encounter between a living sculptor and its own historic holdings.

"The works and the exhibition of Atchugarry invite you to look upward," said Gabriele Simongini, the show's curator, "in contrast to a world that is now permanently head-down, bent over mobile phone screens. The exhibition provokes joy and vital energy."

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/atchugarry-sculpts-light-in-rome-national-gallery/



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Estrella de luz, 2022 (*Credits: Daniele Cortese – Courtesy Archive Pablo Atchugarry*)

Simongini described Atchugarry as “one of the last great sculptors who works marble directly and personally, without 3D technologies and without delegating the work to specialist craftsmen.” That distinction carries weight at a time when digital fabrication has transformed studio practice across the art world.

Two worlds, one stone

Atchugarry is Uruguayan by birth and Italian by adoption, dividing his year equally between the two countries. He has planted more than 16,000 trees on his native land, a commitment that speaks to his preoccupation with growth, nature, and organic form. Simongini noted that his sculptures in marble, alabaster, bronze, and steel produce “a flowering of metamorphic forms that unite within themselves traces of bodies, draperies, trees, angels, and architectures.”

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No title, 1994 (*Credits: Courtesy Archive Pablo Atchugarry*)

The dialogue with Giacometti is perhaps the most charged pairing in the show. Where Giacometti's elongated bronze figures carry the desolating tragedy of contemporary man, Atchugarry's marble works radiate what Simongini calls "an almost original and cathartic joy and luminescence." The contrast is the point.

The exhibition runs at Viale delle Belle Arti 131, Rome, through June 21, 2026.

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