

Nasher Sculpture Center



Press Release

Nasher Sculpture Center Presents *Return to Earth: Ceramic Sculpture of Fontana, Melotti, Miró, Noguchi, and Picasso*

Nasher-curated exhibition held in conjunction with museum's 10th anniversary; On view September 21 through January 19, 2014

DALLAS, Texas (September 24, 2013) – Held in conjunction with the museum's 10th anniversary, the Nasher Sculpture Center presents *Return to Earth: Ceramic Sculpture of Fontana, Melotti, Miró, Noguchi, and Picasso, 1943–1963*, from September 21, 2013 through January 19, 2014. This is the first exhibition to explore the phenomenal increase in interest ceramics received from artists of the avant-garde during this period.

“We are experiencing something of a renaissance in clay sculpture,” notes Nasher Sculpture Center Director Jeremy Strick. “A number of younger artists are exploring the medium, while mid-career artists who work primarily in ceramic are finding increasing recognition. *Return to Earth: Ceramic Sculpture of Fontana, Melotti, Miro, Noguchi, and Picasso* demonstrates that the roots of radical expression in clay go deep into the history of modernism, and that in the immediate postwar years, key artists produced works that are as extraordinary and surprising as they are little-known.”

Responding to a variety of personal impulses and historical circumstances, Lucio Fontana, Fausto Melotti, Joan Miró, Isamu Noguchi, and Pablo Picasso produced significant bodies of work in fired clay that engaged the material in inventive and radical ways, and often challenged the traditional boundaries between sculpture and ceramics. The Nasher's exhibition will offer an in-depth look at this subject through nearly eighty ceramic works from American and European public and private collections, ranging in scale from the intimate to the monumental. In contrast to these artists' work in other media, their pursuit of ceramics has for the most part received scant attention, particularly in the United States.

World War II imposed significant disruptions and displacements on each of these artists, and clay offered them a way to regroup themselves while moving their art forward. Fontana, who had sought refuge from the war in his native Argentina, returned to Italy and began a radically new path in ceramics and clay related to his burgeoning ideas about Spatialism. Melotti, who stayed in Milan, emerged from the conflagration to become one of the primary proponents of architect Gio Ponti's populist agenda making high modernism an accessible part of everyday life. Miró, who had returned to France at the outset of the Spanish Civil War, only to be forced back to Spain by German bombs, longed to establish roots and dreamed of a large studio in which to pursue his expanding artistic interests and efforts to move beyond painting. For Noguchi, who voluntarily spent seven months in a relocation camp for Japanese-Americans in Arizona after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, ceramics became a medium through which to explore the Japanese side of his cultural heritage. During the German occupation of Paris, Picasso decamped to the south of France where he enlivened a quiet

industry of potters, reconnecting with his bohemian roots and pursuing a more seamless integration of art and life that offers an unexpected precedent for avant-garde modes prominent in the later 1960s and 1970s. Despite their disparate contexts and circumstances, the artists featured in *Return to Earth* were drawn to clay as much for its immediacy and tactile responsiveness as to its commonplace status, metaphorical associations, and broader cultural implications.

Organized by the Nasher Sculpture Center, *Return to Earth* is curated by Nasher Sculpture Center Chief Curator Jed Morse. It will be accompanied by an illustrated scholarly catalogue and plans are underway for a symposium to be held at the museum during the exhibition.

Download Images Here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wjqxbugivbknzd/YhVd-6Rxut>

About the Nasher Sculpture Center

Established in 2003, the Nasher Sculpture Center is home to one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in the world, the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, featuring more than 300 masterpieces by Calder, de Kooning, di Suvero, Giacometti, Gormley, Hepworth, Kelly, Matisse, Miró, Moore, Picasso, Rodin, Serra, Shapiro, and Turrell, among others. The longtime dream of the late Raymond and Patsy Nasher, the museum is an urban oasis in the heart of the downtown Dallas Arts District.

Occupying a 2.4-acre site, the Nasher is comprised of a 55,000 square-foot building designed by world-renowned architect Renzo Piano and a 1.4 acre garden designed in collaboration with landscape architect Peter Walker. The building is enclosed by glass facades that create a seamless transition between indoor and outdoor galleries. An innovative sunscreen of cast aluminum, specifically designed for the Nasher, floats above the glass roof and allows controlled natural light to filter into the galleries, eliminating the need for artificial illumination much of the time, creating a “roofless museum”. In addition to the indoor and outdoor gallery spaces, the Center contains an auditorium, education and research facilities, a cafe, and a store.

Conceived for the exhibition, study, and conservation of modern and contemporary sculpture, the Nasher Sculpture Center features rotating exhibitions drawn from the Nasher Collection as well as special exhibitions in its indoor and outdoor galleries. The Nasher Sculpture Center also presents a diverse array of educational and cultural programs, including *Sightings*, a series of small-scale exhibitions and installations that explore new work by established and emerging sculptors; the highly-acclaimed *Soundings* series that introduces new music to Dallas audiences; and *360: Artists, Critics, Curators*, a lecture series featuring art-world visionaries in conversations focused on sculptural themes.

The Nasher Sculpture Center is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm, and from 10 am to 5 pm on the first Saturday of each month. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$5 for students, and free for children 12 and under and members, and includes access to special exhibitions. For more information, visit www.NasherSculptureCenter.org.

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