

The exhibition will be on view from May 27 to October 12, 2026

***SWEET REVENGE* MARKS THE FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION OF FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES'S WORK IN MADRID**



Felix Gonzalez-Torres. “Untitled” (*Revenge*), 1991. Caramelos azules en envoltorios transparente, suministro inagotable. Las dimensiones totales varían con la instalación. Peso ideal: 325 lb, y “Untitled”, 1989. Serigrafía sobre papel enmarcada. 16 ½ × 21 ¾” [42 × 55,2 cm]. Edición de 250, 10 AP Editado por Public Art Fund, Nueva York. Vista de sala de la exposición *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Dulce venganza*. Museo Reina Sofía, 27 de mayo a 12 de octubre, 2026. Comisariado por Alejandro Cesarco y Nancy Spector. Fotografía: Roberto Ruiz © Estate Felix Gonzalez-Torres

- The Museo Reina Sofía hosts the first large-scale presentation of the work of the Cuban-born, American artist in the Spanish capital.
- The exhibition, featuring more than fifty works by Gonzalez-Torres in various formats—including his give-away, endlessly replenishable sculptures—will be on view on Floor 1 of the Sabatini Building and will extend into the city with billboards installed in several metro stations
- The Fundación Museo Reina Sofía, in its mission to support the Museum, collaborates in this exhibition through the acquisition of a work.

The Director of the Museo Reina Sofía, Manuel Segade, presented today the exhibition *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Sweet Revenge* alongside its curators, Alejandro Cesarco and Nancy Spector. For Manuel Segade, the figure of Felix Gonzalez-Torres “is as paradoxical as the exhibition's very title, because his work possesses an apparent lightness, a melancholic softness, but also includes an enormous political and active force'.

Regarding this exhibition, curator Alejandro Cesarco points out that “we approach the oxymoron ‘sweet revenge’” not only as a title, but as a conceptual framework, a tool to understand the artist’s sustained use of subtlety, multiplicity, and paradox as artistic strategies. Here sweetness and revenge are not opposites, they coexist. Seduction becomes political, beauty becomes a form of verification, and abstraction a strategy of resistance!.”

The exhibition's co-curator, Nancy Spector, has highlighted that “I've always been struck by the presence and cultural relevancy of his vision. While made in response to a specific time and place, namely New York or broadly the United States in the late 1980s and early 90s during Ronald Breaken's presidency and the AIDS epidemic the work is infinitely applicable to the time we are in”.

From May 27 to October 12, 2026, Floor 1 of the Sabatini Building hosts an exhibition dedicated to the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres (Guáimaro, Cuba, 1957 – Miami, United States, 1996), one of the most influential figures in contemporary art of recent decades. His work—characterized by its impermanence, participatory nature, conceptual rigor, and profound political and emotional dimensions continues to deeply influence contemporary generations of artists.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Sweet Revenge includes more than fifty works by the artist, presented in a display space that has been architecturally adapted for the occasion. It features loans from institutions such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Glenstone, Potomac, Maryland, among others, as well as from private collections. Furthermore, this exhibition has been made possible thanks to the support of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation.

The city of Madrid was an emotionally complex place for Gonzalez-Torres. In 1971, he was sent to Spain as part of a program aimed at relocating children from Cuba to escape the regime. He remained here for a short period before moving to Puerto Rico and later to New York, where he would spend most of his adult life. He did not return to the city until 1991, on the occasion of a group exhibition. Recalling that first return, he wrote: “back to Madrid after almost twenty years: sweet revenge.” Under this notion of “sweet revenge,” the exhibition proposes, in the words of its curators, “an understanding of the powerful use of difference, contradiction, and paradox across the various bodies of work it brings together”. Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s works operate within a set of principles, instructions, and possibilities. For instance, certain works, composed of commercially produced materials, are fabricated anew for each presentation. Similarly, text portraits are alterable; the individual or institution that owns the portrait, as well as those responsible for exhibiting it, may modify its content. In this way, the artist challenges notions of authorship and permanence, embracing flexibility and open interpretation.

Gonzalez-Torres’s work is inseparable from the context in which he developed his practice, marked by the AIDS crisis and conservative politics in the United States during the 1980s and ‘90s. As a queer artist, he developed a deliberately unstable and deeply personal visual language, profoundly shaped by the death of his partner from AIDS in 1991. Aware of the imminence of his own death from the same illness, Gonzalez-Torres anticipated the future of his work and left behind an influential legacy in which aesthetic forms become vehicles for emotional resonance and political urgency.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Sweet Revenge, a participatory and personal journey

Following a carefully conceived architectural adaptation of the exhibition space on Floor 1 of the Sabatini Building, *Felix Gonzalez-Torres: Sweet Revenge* unfolds across multiple interconnected rooms featuring more than fifty works, in which visitors take center stage as active participants, invited to engage with many of the pieces.

The exhibition begins with “*Untitled*” (*Revenge*), 1991, a free-for the-taking, endlessly replenishable candy spill, and leads into a gallery that reveals the artist’s more intimate side through a text portrait, “*Untitled*”, 1989, thought to be autobiographical and early works shaped by his time in Madrid, such as the puzzle “*Untitled*” (*Madrid 1971*), 1988. Concerns regarding politics, the relationship between the public and the private and how these issues

affect people's lives—recurring themes throughout the exhibition, is reflected here and elsewhere in the exhibition in works such as “*Untitled*” (*Public Opinion*), 1991.

Some of the gallery sections are divided by permeable beaded curtains that invite reflection on ideas of transition and passage. Each gallery presents a unique combination of work from the artist's multidisciplinary oeuvre including paper stack, candy spills, portraits, framed photographs, light strings, photographic billboards and jigsaw puzzles. Other formats explored by Gonzalez-Torres—situated between installation and performance—are also included, inviting activation by the visitor, as in the case of the work “*Untitled*” (*Arena*), 1993.

The exhibition proceeds from room to room with subtle shifts in tone and theme, invoking subjects alluded to in Gonzalez-Torres's multivalent practice, including notions of exile and travel, the AIDS epidemic and homophobia, authority and history, the need for social justice, and the hope for renewal. Throughout, the installation adheres to and rehearses the idea of “sweet revenge” in its activation of the subtle contradictions the artist embedded in his work.

A section at the end of the exhibition presents examples of printed matter related to exhibitions and installations of Gonzalez-Torres's work during his lifetime. Some of this ephemera reflects the unique rhetorical framing devices that Gonzalez-Torres developed for a select number of invitations, press releases, artist statements, and publications. Also displayed are books and exhibition catalogues containing quotations by Gonzalez-Torres, which are used by the curators throughout the exhibition as part of their didactic program designed to highlight the relevancy of the artist's ideas today.

***Sweet Revenge* beyond the Museum**

For Gonzalez-Torres, the presence of his work and its interrelation with public space were essential. In this sense, the exhibition extends beyond the Museum to expand across the city of Madrid through the installation of one of his pieces on Metro de Madrid billboards, thanks to a collaboration with the company JCDecaux, in various stations such as Cuzco, Guzmán el Bueno, Retiro, O'Donnell, Legazpi, and Tirso de Molina.

Collaboration with the Fundación Museo Reina Sofía

In alignment with its mission to support the Museum, the Fundación Museo Reina Sofía has acquired for 2026—thanks to a donation from the Butinof family—the work “*Untitled*” (*For Parkett*), 1994. When commissioned by *Parkett* magazine for a multiple accompanying an

issue dedicated to the artist, Gonzalez-Torres created a photographic billboard in a limited edition of eighty-four copies, each of which can be installed only once. Unlike his other billboards, which can be reproduced indefinitely with the authorization of their owners, each edition of “*Untitled*” (*For Parkett*) cannot be produced again once installed in a specific location. Its first placement is, in essence, also its last.

Opening talk and brochure

This afternoon at 7:00 pm, an opening conversation will take place between the curators, Alejandro Cesarco and Nancy Spector, moderated by the Museum’s Director, Manuel Segade, in Auditorium 400 of the Nouvel Building.

In addition, a digital brochure has been produced for the exhibition featuring texts by the curators. It will be available, thanks to the download through a QR code, in the galleries for all visitors in both Spanish and English.

Madrid, May 26, 2026

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Press material



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