



CONTEMPORIZING THE COLLECTION: NOGUCHI ARCHAIC / NOGUCHI MODERN

ON VIEW THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2014

**New Exhibition Explores The Timelessness Of Noguchi's Works,
Which Embody Both The Ancient Past And Distant Future**



Left to right: *Mountain*, 1978, obsidian; (on wall) *Cloud*, 1959, aluminum; *The Mountain Core*, 1967, Maji granite. Photograph: Katherine Abbott. The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York

April 2, 2014 (New York) - The Noguchi Museum has drawn from its extensive holdings to organize an exhibition of sixty-five sculptures, works on paper, and design objects by Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), many that have never been on view in the Museum before, including working proofs, studies, and pieces that were never signed by the artist, even if finished. *Collection Highlights: Noguchi Archaic / Noguchi Modern* is inspired by Noguchi's fascination with space, built and natural landscapes, and the impact of weapons of mass destruction on our world. Organized into four sections on the Museum's second floor, the exhibition explores how the simplicity of form in Noguchi's work simultaneously links the sculptures to both the ancient past and the distant future. The exhibition is organized by senior curator Dakin Hart, and on view through August 31, 2014.

Director Jenny Dixon stated, "We are delighted to give visitors the opportunity to see important works from the collection that have rarely been exhibited before. Themed installations of the collection encourage viewers to experience Noguchi's work in a contemporary light—opening up his oeuvre to new interpretations while further contextualizing the artist's ideas."

Exhibition Background and Overview

Noguchi Archaic / Noguchi Modern has two sources of inspiration outside Noguchi's work. The first is an association that developed in the middle of the 20th century between the Stone Age and the Atomic Era when—after Hiroshima and Nagasaki—it seemed inevitable that atom smashing would culminate in our bombing ourselves back into the Stone Age.

The second inspiration is the monolith at the center of Stanley Kubrik's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which closely resembles both an Egyptian stele and an iPhone. Largely staged in clean, simple spaces—either black and limitless (outer space) or white and rectilinear (the interior of a space ship)—*2001* helped establish the science fiction motif that our departure from Earth in the future will be signaled, precipitated, or impacted by a mysterious Euclidian object probably left here by visitors sometime in the distant past. The further you go into the past or the future, the simpler the design of everything appears to become.

These two wormholes—technology, which helps us progress but when misused can just as easily return us to a primitive state, and simplicity as a design imperative—seem to link the ancient past and the distant future in Noguchi's work. In order to illustrate how these opposite ends of time are manifested in the artist's work, sometimes distinctly and identifiably, but often blending seamlessly together, the exhibition is organized into four sections: *Home Chapel and Space*; *Archaic or Modern*; *Atomic Apocalypse*; and *The Timeless Landscape*.

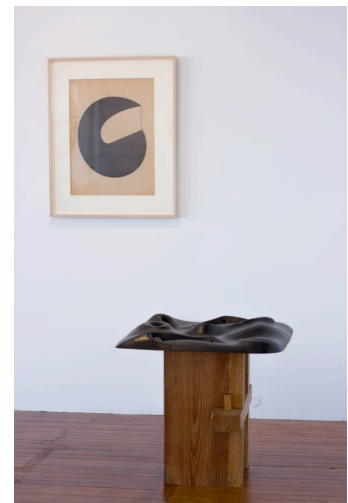
Home Chapel and Space

On view in the exhibition's first gallery is a selection of Noguchi's columns surrounding one of his Japanese garden basins, *Tsukubai* (1962), giving the space a chapel-like feeling mixed with a modern living room. Hanging orbit-like Akari Light Sculptures and abstract basalt and granite sculptures such as *Nameless* (1982–83) and *Re-Entry Cone* (1970) also evoke an otherworldly yet eternal quality. Noguchi's fascination with outer space—from the engineering required to get there to the composition, and shape of everything in it—coincides with his interest in the juxtaposition of old and new, as space is often associated with a sort of science fiction future, while the objects within space are billions of years old.

Archaic or Modern

Noguchi's ability to invoke the ancient history of art while conjuring the future continues to be evident in the second grouping of the exhibition, *Archaic or Modern*. *Untitled* (c. 1957) is a small, Cycladic-inspired marble sculpture that Noguchi has updated into a modern capsule-like form. Also on view is *Baby Figure* (1958), a medium-sized version of a shape Noguchi made several times. Fabricated from sheet aluminum and anodized in gold, this work harkens back to the gleaming cult figures around which many Greek temples in the classical era were built. The extreme abstraction of the figure renders her appearance as more futuristic than archaic, however, she too is rooted in ancient sculpture—specifically, the dancing clay Tanagra Figurines of 4th century BCE Boetia.

Atomic Apocalypse



Left to right: (on wall) *Paris Abstraction*, 1928, gouache on paper; *This Tortured Earth*, 1942–43, bronze. Photograph: Katherine Abbott. The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York.

Nowhere do the Stone Age and the future overlap more completely than in the paradoxes of the Atomic Age, which gave us both the moon landing and the massacres at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Noguchi's attraction to technology's potential—the beneficial and the disastrous—is represented in the third gallery, *Atomic Apocalypse*. Four *Atomic Haystacks* (three galvanized steel and one bronze) from 1982–83 are scattered throughout the room, along with the iron mask *Okame (Atomic Man)*, 1954, Noguchi's play on the Japanese theatre mask that originally represented beauty but later developed a distorted and comic quality. Also on view is a granite head of *Vishnu* (c. 1968), the Hindu deity known as creator and destroyer, often called the formless one, a subject that exemplifies Noguchi's interest in the complexity of ideas.

The Timeless Landscape

The final section of the exhibition focuses on how Noguchi emulated the earth and its timeless quality by employing design that mimics nature's constructs. Noguchi's variations on the subject of the peak are evident in the layered landscape created in this gallery, which is at once full of nostalgia for the remembered Mt. Fuji of the artist's childhood and teeming with ideas for shaping a more perfect earth. Some highlights include the aluminum wall sculpture *Cloud* (1959), the Persian travertine sculpture *The Mountain* (1964), which almost appears to be a sideways heart, and *Roof Frame*, a shiny stainless-steel, pyramid-shaped sculpture from 1974–75.

The Noguchi Museum

Occupying a renovated industrial building dating from the 1920s, The Noguchi Museum, founded by the artist for the display of his work, comprises ten indoor galleries and an internationally celebrated outdoor sculpture garden. Since its founding in 1985, the museum—itsself widely viewed as among the artist's greatest achievements—has exhibited a comprehensive selection of sculpture in stone, metal, wood, and clay, as well as models for public projects and gardens, dance sets, and Noguchi's Akari Light Sculptures. Thought-provoking and frequently changing installations of the permanent collection together with the Museum's diverse special exhibitions offer a rich, contextualized view of Noguchi's work and illuminate his influential legacy of innovation.

For more information: www.noguchi.org.

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