

noguchi

Illustrations by James Yang, author of 'A Boy Named Isamu'



barbican

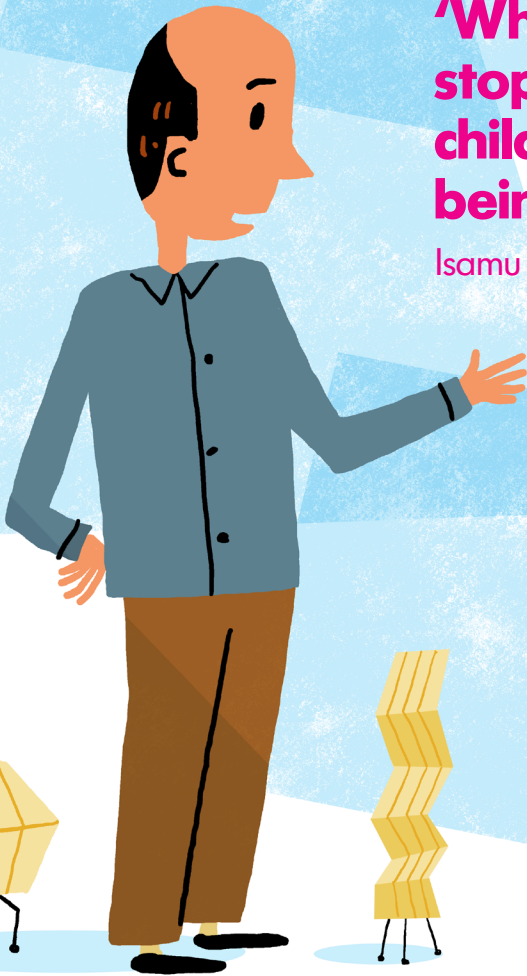
30 Sep 2021—9 Jan 2022
Activity Sheet

Introduction

Isamu Noguchi was a Japanese American artist who lived from 1904 to 1988. He created sculptures, and designed gardens, stage sets, and furniture. Noguchi explored how we can create objects that make the experience of our environment more interesting or exciting – he even designed playgrounds! With an American mother and a Japanese father, Noguchi's heritage played a big role in his identity. His artwork had both eastern and western influences, but Noguchi took inspiration from his travels around the world, exploring new technologies and learning from other cultures.

'When an artist stopped being a child, he would stop being an artist.'

Isamu Noguchi



New ways of seeing the world

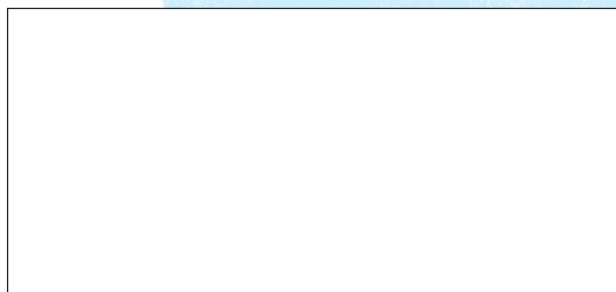
1

Early in his career, Noguchi began to explore questions of how we relate to our environment.

Find the sculpture *Globular*.

Look at the reflection on its surface.

Draw how the room changes when reflected by *Globular*:



Now find *Boy Looking through Legs* in the next room.

Noguchi was interested in seeing new perspectives, and made a portrait of himself as a young boy looking through his legs.

Look at something through your legs, or tilt your head to the side. How does it look different when you do this? Write your answer below:



2

Circle any shapes in the Arizona desert landscape below that you see in the exhibition:



Akari

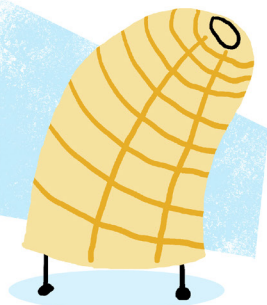
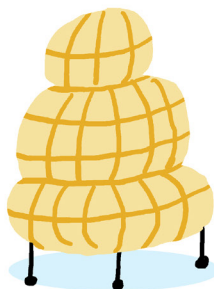
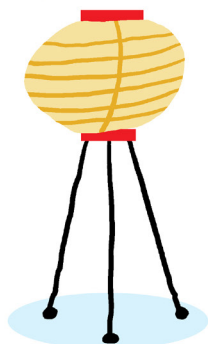
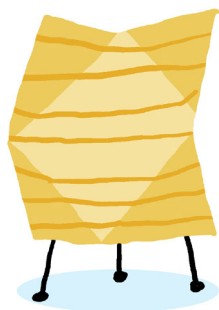
3

Look downstairs for the glowing lamps and make your way towards them.

Noguchi invented many different shapes for these Akari light sculptures, starting in 1951. He used traditional Japanese paper lantern techniques with modern electric lighting. Akari is the Japanese word for light (as in illumination).

Akari come in different shapes – some are purely geometric, while others sometimes look like little creatures, the sun, or the moon. Find your favourite one!

What shape Akari would you create? Draw it below:



Akari are made using bamboo and paper from the bark of the mulberry tree.

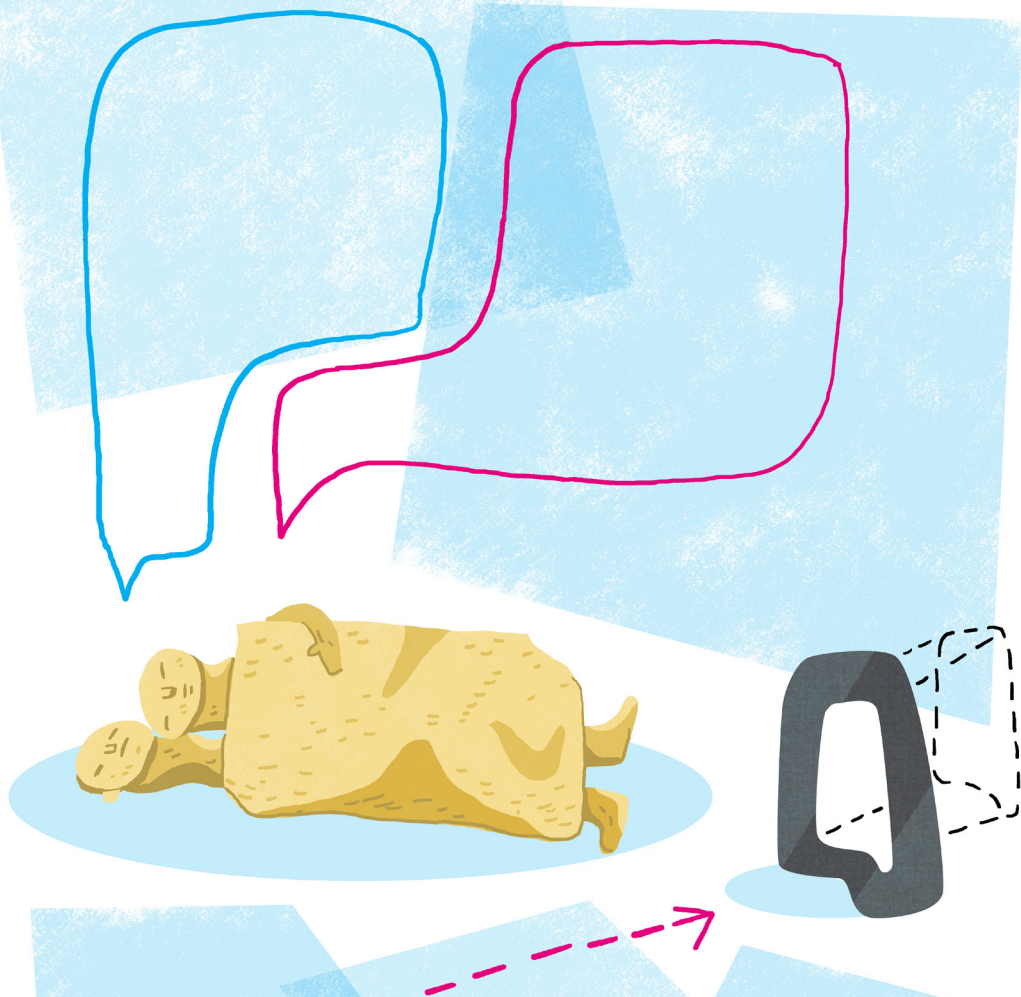
Little and Large

4

Noguchi made ceramic sculptures out of clay.

Find the below sculpture, *Marriage*, on the ground floor!

What do you think these figures are saying or thinking? Use the speech bubbles to give them a voice!



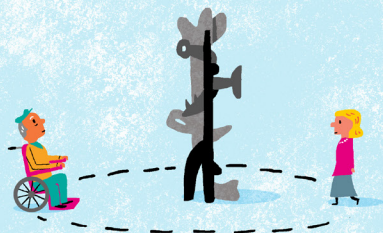
Find the sculpture *Walking Void*. Noguchi played with 'negative space' in his work, which is the empty space inside the sculpture. Look through the sculpture, using it like a picture frame, to see your surroundings in a new way!

Interlocking sculptures

5

Find the sculpture *Trinity* on the ground floor.

Move all the way around it and see how the shapes you see change depending on where you are standing.



Complete the image below. Find the right place to stand where the left side matches with what you see. Now look and draw the right side of the sculpture to complete *Trinity*!



Ask someone you're with if they'd like to make a living interlocking sculpture with you using your bodies!

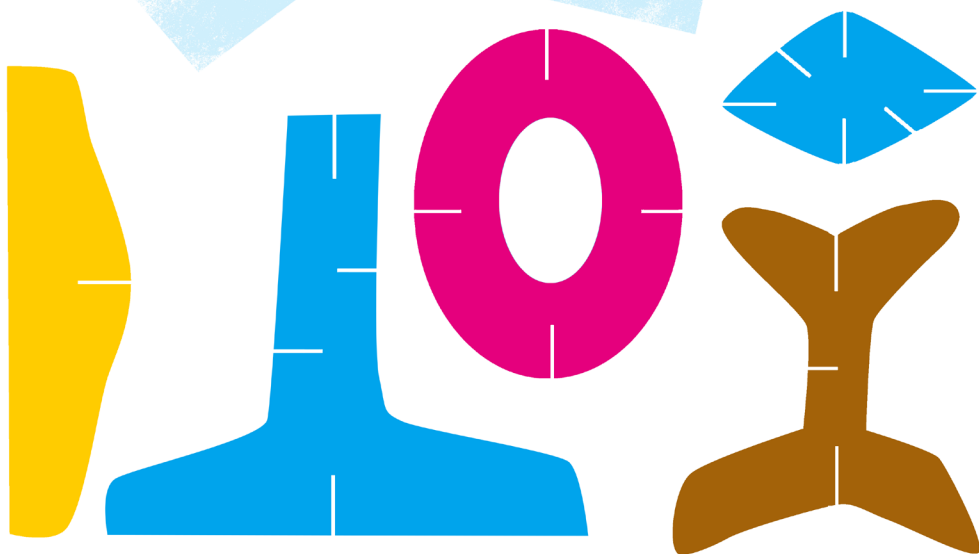


Make your own sculpture at home

6

Noguchi was famous for interlocking sculptures such as *Trinity*.

These are created out of individual pieces that are assembled into one piece. They are not stuck together, so the pieces can be moved, creating a different set of shapes. So just like people, sculptures can change in the way they look and the atmosphere they create.



Create your own interlocking sculpture!

When you get home, cut out the above shapes and use them to assemble your own interlocking sculpture! Play around with all the different ways the pieces can be put together!

We would love to hear any feedback you have on this activity sheet. Please email creative.learning@barbican.org.uk

Illustrations: James Yang @yangblog

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