

barbican

Noguchi

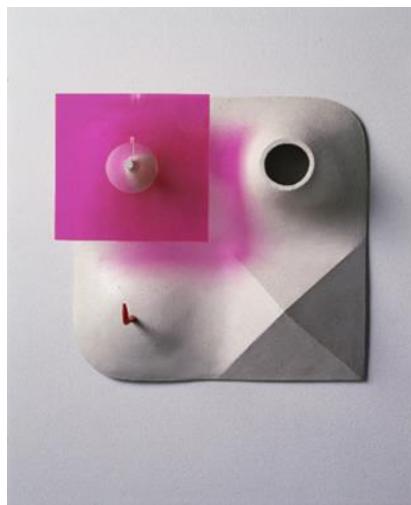
Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK

30 September 2021 to 23 January 2022

Media View: Wednesday 29 September 2021, 10am – 1pm

#Noguchi @barbicancentre

This exhibition is generously supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art



Left: Isamu Noguchi with study for Luminous Plastic Sculpture, 1943. Photo by Eliot Elisofon

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Right: *My Arizona* (second state with original elements), 1943. Photo by Kevin Noble

© Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum / ARS / DACS

'Sculpture can be a vital force in our everyday life if projected into communal usefulness.'
Isamu Noguchi

Japanese American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904 – 1988) is one of the most experimental and important artists of the 20th century. Barbican Art Gallery is pleased to stage the first European touring retrospective of his work in 20 years. This exhibition is jointly organised and curated by Barbican Centre (London), Museum Ludwig (Cologne) and Zentrum Paul Klee (Bern), in partnership with LaM - Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut.

Retracing the evolution of Noguchi's kaleidoscopic career over six decades across sculpture, architecture, dance and design, the exhibition celebrates the artist's inventive and risk-taking approach to sculpture as a living environment. Drawing from The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum in New York, as well as private and public collections, the exhibition brings together over 150 works, including an extraordinary range of sculptures – created in stone, bronze, ceramics, wood, aluminium and galvanised steel – as well as theatre set designs, architectural and playground models, lighting and furniture design. *Noguchi* opens at Barbican Art Gallery on 30 September 2021.

Mostly known as an icon of mid-century design for his celebrated coffee table and Akari lights, Noguchi pushed the boundaries of sculpture by embracing social, environmental and spiritual consciousness. This major survey celebrates Noguchi as a global citizen travelling across the world to China, Mexico and India, amongst other countries. Rarely exhibited archive materials and photographs also offer illuminating insights into the life of Noguchi, son of a Japanese father and American mother, highlighting the humanist values of this visionary artist.

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Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican, said: “We are thrilled to be staging this major retrospective of Isamu Noguchi’s work. I am immensely grateful to The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum in New York, for their generosity and expertise, as well as our partners at Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern and LaM museum in Lille where the show will travel after London. Noguchi constantly pushed the limits of art, experimenting with materials, scale and place to create art with a purpose. He saw sculpture as a means of creating harmony between humans, industry and nature, as a way to improve how we live, as invention, as play, as art. For fans of Noguchi or those yet to discover his work, I am sure this will be a joy and a revelation.”

Exploring all aspects of Noguchi’s prolific artistic practice, the exhibition presents an extensive range of his vast interdisciplinary output, from his early apprenticeship with modern master Constantin Brâncuși in Paris and celebrated Chinese brush painter Qi Baishi in Beijing, to his public and political art projects of the 1930s, and radical dance collaborations with pioneering modern choreographers Ruth Page and Martha Graham. The exhibition delves into his celebrated interlocking sculptures produced during the 1940s. They comprise multiple parts to be assembled and dissembled, displaying Noguchi’s outstanding creativity in the face of adversity during the Second World War.

Organised by interconnecting themes as well as chronological artistic development, the exhibition highlights Noguchi’s close and enduring friendship with inventor and futurist R. Buckminster Fuller. Their creative dialogue on the cosmic scale of the universe inspired Noguchi’s world consciousness and continued use of new technology from his artistic beginnings until his late career. The self-illuminating Lunar sculptures were created after his devastating experience of voluntary internment at a camp for Japanese Americans in Poston, Arizona in 1942. These experiments went on to influence some of his best-known works, the Akari light sculptures. Using washi paper and electric bulbs, Akari combine traditional and modern technology, while bringing sculpture to everyday households, in line with the artist’s democratic commitment to accessible public art.

The exhibition also includes an outstanding selection of his ceramics made in post-war Japan demonstrating Noguchi’s innovative approach to traditional craft techniques – he was one of the first sculptors to incorporate these within contemporary practice. His environmental designs produced in response to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima address themes of violence and peace, while conveying the Los Angeles-born artist’s negotiation of his own biracial identity. Photographs from his travels through Europe and Asia between 1949-50 reveal Noguchi’s exploration of artistic hybridity and expansion of sculptural media into large-scale architectural environments, including his fascination with the Jantar Mantar astronomical observatories in India, reiterating his combined interest in modernism and past civilisations. The exhibition culminates with iconic large-scale works from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, when he practised between studios in the USA, Italy and Japan, and finally realised his public designs for monuments, gardens and playgrounds.

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Press images available online from the Barbican Newsroom

A link to the image sheets can be found in the 'Downloads' box on the top right-hand side of the page from: www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room/isamu-noguchi

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Barbican Art Gallery, Silk Street, London, EC2Y 8DS, barbican.org.uk

Exhibition

- *Noguchi* is at Barbican Art Gallery from 30 September 2021 to 23 January 2022. The exhibition is organised and curated by Barbican Centre (London), Museum Ludwig (Cologne) and Zentrum Paul Klee (Bern), in partnership with LaM - Lille Métropole Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut. This exhibition would not have been possible without the collaboration of The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York. It is curated at Barbican by Florence Ostende and designed by acclaimed architect Lucy Styles with graphic design by Kellenberger-White. The exhibition will travel to Museum Ludwig, Cologne from 26 March to 31 July 2022, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern from 23 September 2022 to 8 January 2023, and Lille Metropole Museum of Modern, Contemporary and Outsider Art - 17 March 2023 - 2 July 2023.

The exhibition is generously supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Terra Foundation for American Art

The Terra Foundation for American Art supports individuals, organizations, and communities to advance expansive understandings of American art. Established in 1978 and headquartered in Chicago, with an office in Paris, its grant program, collection, and initiatives are committed to fostering cross-cultural dialogues on American art locally, nationally, and internationally.

Events

A dynamic programme of events accompanies the exhibition. Check the website for full listings: www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery

Book

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated book published by Prestel and designed by Tino Graß. The book provides rich and insightful essays by Fabienne Eggelhöfer, Florence Ostende, Rita Kersting with Nana Tazuke, Dakin Hart, alongside a conversation with Karen Ishizuka, Katy Siegel and Danh Vo orchestrated by Devika Singh, while a fully illustrated chronology details the entirety of Noguchi's career.

Barbican Art Gallery Shop

A selection of exhibition merchandise will be available from the Gallery Shop including tote bag, prints, postcard and exhibition book and poster. www.barbican.org.uk/shop

Barbican Art Gallery and The Curve

Our visual arts programme embraces art, architecture, design, fashion, photography and film. Many of our exhibitions explore the interconnections between disciplines, periods and cultures, and aim to imagine the world in new ways. Designers, artists and architects are our collaborators in this process.

We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow; The Curve is one of the few galleries in London devoted to the commissioning of new work. Through our activities we aim to inspire more people to discover and love the arts. Entrance to The Curve is free. Through Young Barbican we offer £5 tickets to 14-25 year olds for our paid exhibitions and free admittance for under 14s.

Our exhibitions are complemented by comprehensively researched catalogues and a full range of public events. We develop engaging online content for audiences and offer special tours for .../...

schools. In partnership with renowned museums and art galleries, many of our exhibitions travel to reach both national and international audiences.

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas One, Two and Three, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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