

Noguchi Museum Presents *Futura Akari*

Installation of Akari light sculptures customized by FUTURA2000,
action painter and graffiti pioneer

November 11, 2020 – February 28, 2021



FUTURA2000 with Akari UF4-L6. Photo: Miss Wangy

New York, NY (November 9, 2020) –The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum announces *Futura Akari*, a collaboration with New York action painter Lenny McGurr, known as FUTURA2000 (b. 1955). Occupying the Museum’s former Shop (which is temporarily relocated and expanded in the lower-level studio for social distancing), this installation presents a group of Akari light sculptures designed by Isamu Noguchi from 1952–86 and hand painted by FUTURA2000 in 2020. It also includes two cosmic paintings, one of which, *El Diablo*, is a classic work from 1985.

EXHIBITION

Isamu Noguchi intended Akari light sculptures to be modular, customizable, and extensible. In his lifetime, he designed more than 200 models, but the possible permutations of base, shade, and extension rod make Akari an essentially limitless ecosystem. This openness extended to a



FUTURA2000 with Akari 10A. Photo: Miss Wangy

benefit sale of hand-painted Akari by twenty-nine artists, including Noguchi himself, held at Galerie Steph Simon, Paris, in 1970. Senior Curator Dakin Hart states, “Akari inspire many people to contribute creatively to what Noguchi called their ‘self-generative cycle.’ Owning Akari is like having and tending a garden; it’s a way to stay in touch with nature and the world. We are excited to see where Futura—like Noguchi, an open-to-the-world boundary-crosser—will take them.”

A pioneer when graffiti met the art world, FUTURA2000 was known as early as the 1970s for his radical approach in the street, introducing abstraction to a primarily letter-based discipline. Entirely self-taught in what he calls “the subway school,” his works on canvas caught gallery attention in the 1980s, concurrent with Noguchi’s final efforts to put Akari at the center of his sculptural legacy.

Coinciding with *Futura Akari* at The Noguchi Museum is *Futura 2020* (October 22–December 23, 2020) at Eric Firestone Gallery, 40 Great Jones Street, the first solo gallery show for the artist in New York City in over 30 years; and the release of the publication *FUTURA: The Artist’s Monograph* (Rizzoli, 2020).

BOOK RELEASE / SIGNING EVENT

Thursday, November 19, 5–6:30 pm

The Noguchi Museum will host a limited-capacity book signing and print release event to commemorate the publication of *FUTURA: The Artist’s Monograph* and the unveiling of a new collaborative limited edition print by FUTURA2000 and Takashi Murakami. Timed ticket and print availability announcement to follow.

LOCATION

The Noguchi Museum
9-01 33rd Road (at Vernon Boulevard)
Long Island City, NY 11106

Open Weds–Sun, by advance reservation:
noguchi.org/visit

ABOUT FUTURA2000

Radical from the genesis of his career, Leonard McGurr / FUTURA2000 (b. 1955) has been compared to Wassily Kandinsky for his mastery of color, geometric composition, and line—and is celebrated alongside his friends Dondi White and Rammellzee for his progressiveness and of-the-moment dynamism. Futura’s creativity—articulated across canvas, paper, sculpture, photography, graphic design, and large-scale mural work—shines as a result of its kinetic composition, elemental quality, and fully-original gestures.

His work has been exhibited at notable art institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles; MoMA PS1, the New Museum, and the seminal Fun Gallery in New York; as well as, most recently, the Beyond the Streets exhibitions in Los Angeles (2018) and New York (2019). As an artist who also has a dedicated commercial practice and product brand (Futura Laboratories), he has collaborated with partners such as Louis Vuitton, COMME des GARÇONS, Chanel, Nike, Off-White and Levis; he has also designed iconic album packaging for musicians such as The Clash, and DJ performance visuals for Virgil Abloh. **@futuradosmil | @futuralaboratories**

Artist Contact

Sky Gellatly: sky@icnclst.com

ABOUT AKARI LIGHT SCULPTURES

Isamu Noguchi’s electrified paper, bamboo, and metal Akari light sculptures have quietly become among the most ubiquitous sculptures on Earth. Their origins lie in 1951 when, on a trip to a still devastated post-war Japan, Noguchi was asked by the mayor of Gifu to help revitalize the local lantern industry by creating a modern lamp for export using the traditional washi paper (made by hand from the inner bark of the mulberry tree) and bamboo.

Inspired by the lanterns that illuminated night fishing on the Nagara River, Noguchi worked with local firm Ozeki Jishichi Shoten (now Ozeki & Co., Ltd.) to combine the elements of the traditional paper lantern with electricity. He designed a dizzying array of new forms—creating contemporary art by marrying a venerable craft with the defining technology of the twentieth century. He would go on to create more than 200 models of Akari, including an entire line for his exhibition for the American Pavilion at the 1986 Venice Biennale, in the process receiving five American and thirty-one Japanese patents. **shop.noguchi.org/akari**

ABOUT THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM

Founded in 1985 by Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), one of the leading sculptors and designers of the twentieth century, The Noguchi Museum was the first museum in America to be established, designed, and installed by a living artist to show their own work. Widely viewed as among the artist’s greatest achievements, the Museum comprises ten indoor galleries in a converted factory building, as well as an internationally acclaimed outdoor sculpture garden. Since its founding, it has served as an international hub for Noguchi research and appreciation. In addition to housing the artist’s archives and the catalogue raisonné of his work, the Museum exhibits a comprehensive selection of sculpture, models for public projects and gardens, dance sets, and his Akari light sculptures. Provocative installations drawn from the permanent collection, together with diverse special exhibitions related to Noguchi and the milieu in which he worked, offer a rich, contextualized view of Noguchi’s art and illuminate his enduring influence as a category-defying, multicultural, cross-disciplinary innovator.

noguchi.org | [@noguchimuseum](https://www.instagram.com/noguchimuseum)

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