

Shio Kusaka and Toshiko Mori to Receive 2021 Isamu Noguchi Award

Award to be presented at The Noguchi Museum's annual benefit
on October 5, 2021



Shio Kusaka. Photo: Wood Kusaka Studios



Toshiko Mori. Photo: Ralph Gibson

New York, NY (August 18, 2021) – The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum will present the 2021 Isamu Noguchi Award to artist Shio Kusaka and architect Toshiko Mori at the Museum's annual benefit celebration on Tuesday, October 5, 2021. Now in its eighth year, the Isamu Noguchi Award is conferred annually on highly accomplished individuals who share Noguchi's spirit of innovation, global consciousness, and commitment to Eastern and Western cultural exchange. noguchi.org/award

Noguchi Museum Director Brett Littman states, "The Isamu Noguchi Award was created to recognize exceptional individuals whose creative practice shares a thoughtfulness and boundary-transcending point of view found in Isamu Noguchi's work and extends his ideals into our own times. We are honored to present this year's Award to artist Shio Kusaka and architect Toshiko Mori. Their very different work shares a profound sensitivity to nature, playful and clear-minded approaches to materials and function, and quiet reflectiveness, carrying forward and extending Noguchi's principles."

The quintessential sculptor in an expanded field, Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) was a future-focused idealist whose timeless work blended the ancient and the modern; formalism and conceptualism; art, architecture, and design. His multidisciplinary and ability to bridge many of the supposedly irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of contemporary life—such as the one between traditional cultures and technological innovation—remain an inspiration for a wide range of creative people. Using everything he learned designing playgrounds, dance sets, and gardens, he remade sculpture into a discipline for understanding our place in the universe, a technology for transcending limited thinking, and a technique for integrating the best habits and effects of craft into daily life.

2021 ISAMU NOGUCHI AWARD HONOREES

Shio Kusaka is known for her innovative and open approach to the ceramic medium, crafting vessels and forms that are both functional and abstract. Painting and incising on thrown porcelain and stoneware surfaces, Kusaka merges sculpture and drawing, representation and minimalism. Her work synthesizes from a broad range of visual culture, from ancient Japanese pottery to Sol LeWitt’s wall drawings, asserting the role of ceramics within the realm of contemporary art. The Award is presented in recognition of her mastery of her medium, and the thoughtfulness with which she stretches and extends it—a quality she shares with Noguchi.

Kusaka was born in 1972 in Morioka, Japan, and moved to San Francisco in the early 1990s. After receiving her BFA in 2001 from the University of Washington, Seattle, she moved to Los Angeles, where she currently lives and works.

In early 2020, the historic Neutra VDL Studio and Residences in Los Angeles held a solo exhibition of Kusaka’s work, curated by Douglas Fogle and Hanneke Skerath. Museum Voorlinden in Wassenaar, The Netherlands, held the two-person exhibition *Shio Kusaka and Jonas Wood*, in 2017. Kusaka’s work has also been included in important group exhibitions, such as the Whitney Biennial 2014; *Going Public: The Napoleone Collection – International Art Collectors in Sheffield*, Graves Gallery, Sheffield, England (2016), which traveled to Touchstones Rochdale Museum, Rochdale, England (2016–2017); *Recent Acquisitions in Asian Art*, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio (2017); and *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950–2019*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2019–22).

Kusaka’s work is held in public collections worldwide, including the Allen Memorial Art Museum; The Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum Voorlinden; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas; and Whitney Museum of American Art. Kusaka is represented by David Zwirner; Blum & Poe, Los Angeles/New York/Tokyo; greengrassi, London; and The Modern Institute, Glasgow.

Born in Kobe, Japan, in 1951, **Toshiko Mori**, FAIA, is the founding principal of Toshiko Mori Architect PLLC, and the Robert P. Hubbard Professor in the Practice of Architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design (GSD). Through nearly four decades of influential projects, her practice has continually emphasized a sensitivity to ecology and history, innovative and intelligent use of materials and light, and functionality in the most

expansive sense. The Award is presented in recognition of her diverse body of work—from early work designing for clients such as Commes des Garçons and Issey Miyake, to exhibition designs for the Museum of Modern Art and Cooper Hewitt, to numerous residential, cultural, and civic projects around the globe. Her integration of the surrounding environment in her designs, her thoughtful sensitivity in selecting materials, and her advocacy and activism for sustainability in architecture reflect values that she shares with Noguchi, with whom she interned while an architecture student at Cooper Union.

Mori served as chair of the Department of Architecture at the Harvard University GSD from 2002 to 2008. She was inducted to the Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Academy of Design in 2020 and has been a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 2016. Toshiko Mori Architect PLLC (TMA)’s recent work includes master plans for the Brooklyn Public Library Central Branch and the Buffalo Botanical Gardens; “Thread: Artists’ Residency and Cultural Center” in Sinthian, Senegal; “Fass School and Teachers’ Residence” in Fass, Senegal; and the expansion of the Brown University Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. Their projects have won awards from Architizer, The Plan, and AIA, and have been internationally exhibited, including at the 2012, 2014 and 2018 Venice Architecture Biennales. TMA has been listed in Architectural Digest’s biennial AD100 in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021, and in Elle Décor’s inaugural A-List Titans in 2021. Recent publications include the Fass School and Teachers’ Residence in Architectural Record, the Mott Street Development in Architect’s Newspaper, and three features in Architectural Digest for the Fass School, Treeline a private art barn, and a beach house in Suffolk County, New York. Last year, TMA published two new monographs, one with a+u magazine for their February 2020 issue and another with ArchiTangle Berlin titled *Toshiko Mori Architect: Observations*.

Mori’s recent awards and honors include the Louis Auchincloss Prize from the Museum of the City of New York in 2020; the ACSA Tau Sigma Delta National Honor Society Gold Medal in 2016; Architectural Record’s Women in Design Leader Award in 2019; and the AIA / ASCA Topaz Medallion for Excellence in Architectural Education in 2019. Her project “Thread: Artists’ Residency and Cultural Center” was awarded the AIA 2017 Institute Honor Award for Architecture and was one of the winners of the inaugural FIBRA Award for Contemporary Plant Fiber-based Architecture in 2019. This year, the Fass School was one of the recipients of the AIA Architecture Award.

2021 NOGUCHI MUSEUM BENEFIT

The Award will be presented at The Noguchi Museum’s annual benefit, on **Tuesday, October 5, 2021**. Hosted by Museum Director Brett Littman, the evening will begin with a cocktail reception in Isamu Noguchi’s former studio building, located across the street from the Museum and never before open for an event. The program will continue with the presentation of the 2021 Isamu Noguchi Award. The event will then move across the street to the Museum, with a special freeform dining experience in the Museum’s open-air sculpture garden and indoor-outdoor gallery—the first dinner to take place among Noguchi’s monumental later works. The evening will also include a silent auction, and guests will have the opportunity to explore the Museum’s galleries and new exhibitions. Details and tickets: noguchi.org/benefit

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 two floors of gallery space 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 or 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)**

PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS

Previous recipients of the Isamu Noguchi Award include: 2014—Lord Norman Foster and Hiroshi Sugimoto; 2015—Jasper Morrison and Yoshio Taniguchi; 2016—Tadao Ando and Elyn Zimmerman; 2017—John Pawson and Hiroshi Senju; 2018—Naoto Fukasawa and Edwina von Gal; 2019—Rei Kawakubo; and 2020—Sir David Adjaye OBE and Cai Guo-Qiang.

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