

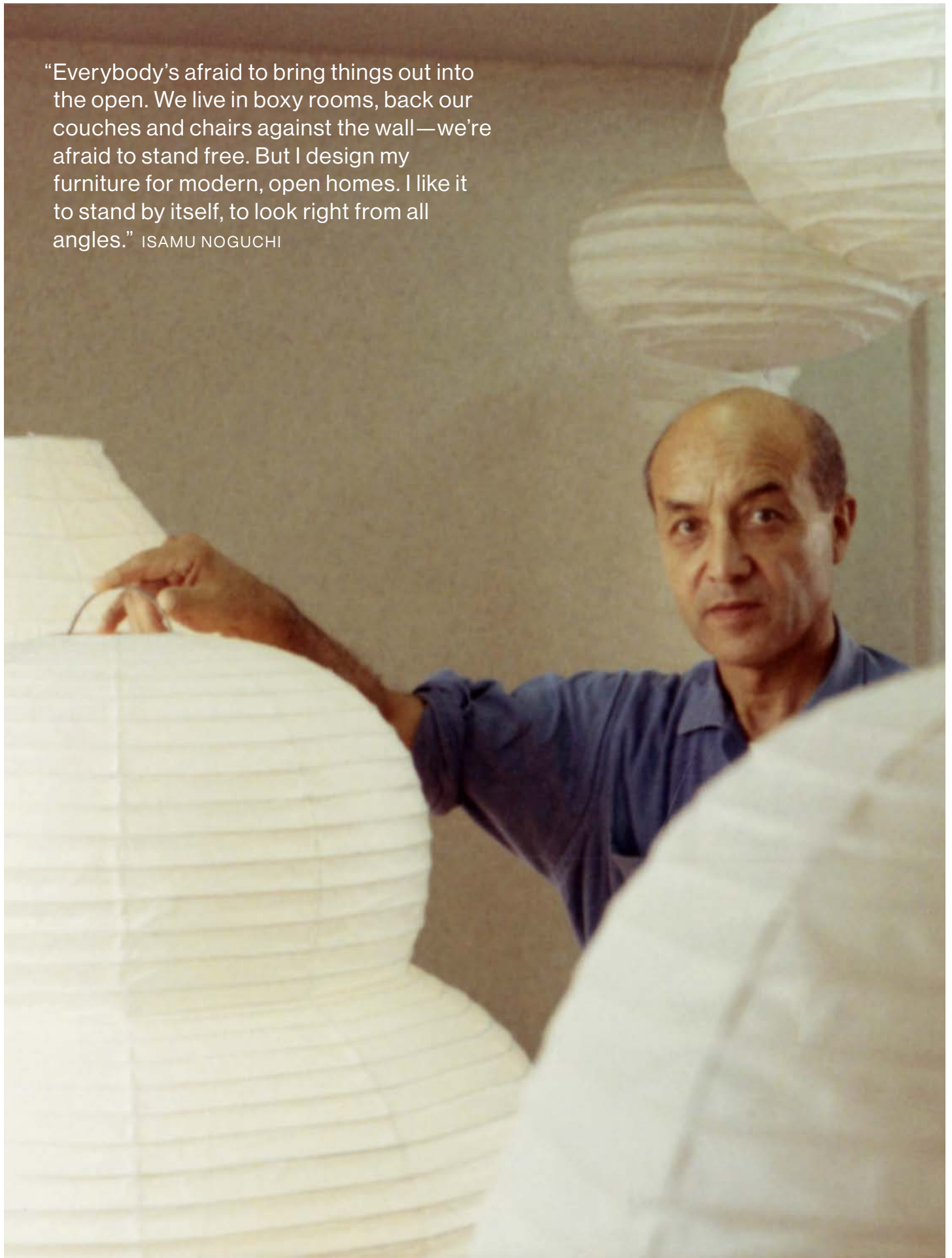


noguchi

Objects of Common Interest Hard, Soft, and All Lit Up with Nowhere to Go

Sep 15, 2021–Feb 13, 2022

“Everybody’s afraid to bring things out into the open. We live in boxy rooms, back our couches and chairs against the wall—we’re afraid to stand free. But I design my furniture for modern, open homes. I like it to stand by itself, to look right from all angles.” ISAMU NOGUCHI



Introduction By Dakin Hart, Senior Curator

Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis, cofounders and principals of Objects of Common Interest and LOT Office for Architecture, are among a handful of space and object shapers out there whose indistinct motives testify to an Isamu Noguchi-like focus on form as an abstract empirical tool of social function. Trying to explain his perspective on what it meant to design as an artist, Noguchi said, with a declarative certainty he would later largely relinquish:

I am not a designer. The word design implies catering to the quixotic fashion of the time. All my work, tables as well as sculptures, are conceived as fundamental problems of form that would best express human and aesthetic activity involved with these objects. I have done some work for mass production technique. Here the problem was approached entirely freely and without compromises so far as I was concerned. Art is an act. The act of creating a fundamental form, though it may be disciplined by the fundamental nature of the object desired, is not designing in the accepted sense.¹

This is quite a repudiation of art for art's sake and pure abstraction. Noguchi's purpose in invoking the relationship between art and design here was neither to elevate or forswear design. He really recognized no fixed hierarchical relationship between the disciplines and was generally uninterested in the labels. What he did want to make clear was that in his view all sculpture should be functional. Function is what he means by "fundamental problems." Of course from his point of view, a play mountain the size of a city block constituted a functional object.

Noguchi had a knack for identifying, isolating, using, and producing what we might call stem cells of sculpture—units so basic they are capable of being anything, have no age, don't wear out, and seem able to regenerate the matter around them. And like stem cells, the ability to do those things is their job. They are universal answers to fundamental biological problems. Noguchi associated his commitment to the basic building blocks of sculpture with his emulation

of nature. And to the realization that, "The problem always [is] scale: equivalent scale to large buildings and spaces are not necessarily met by bigness but rather by relative scale and simplicity of elements."²

When working on pretty much any kind of project, whether a table, a dance set, a public space, or a sculpture to show on a base in a gallery, he could start in the primordial ooze, develop an idea right up to a state of archaic universality, and then stop. His late large basalts—modeled on the standing stones erected by our ancient ancestors all over the planet, and worked just enough to be of ambiguous provenance—are that. He could also start with something as densely overloaded as the matrix of modern civilization and find the stem cells within. That's what he did, for example, with his cut and folded galvanized steel plate pieces, which seem to have derived from the bric-a-brac of the urban landscape, and then to have shed their contemporary commotions.

Even as the hierarchical boundaries separating design fields have become more porous and less visible, the status gaps between certain types of object making and space making and others have remained surprisingly rigid. Meanwhile, the pool of art and design field practitioners working hands-on, at a fundamental level, across a broad range of disciplines, has remained quite small.

What is so interesting about the things Objects of Common Interest makes is that despite often having no explicit, or essential, purpose, and even though their works are clearly in search of something more than function and attention, they never wander far from an unidentifiable usefulness. It's in those in-between states and zones, free from any particular requirement, that Noguchi's thinking thrived.

¹ Isamu Noguchi, "From an Interview with Isamu Noguchi," *The League Quarterly*, 20, No. 3 (Spring 1949): 8

² Isamu Noguchi, *Isamu Noguchi: A Sculptor's World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968; Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2004), 165.

QUOTE, FACING PAGE Isamu Noguchi, in Ann Pringle, "A Sculptor Plans a Home," *New York Herald Tribune* (Feb 15, 1949): p. 1

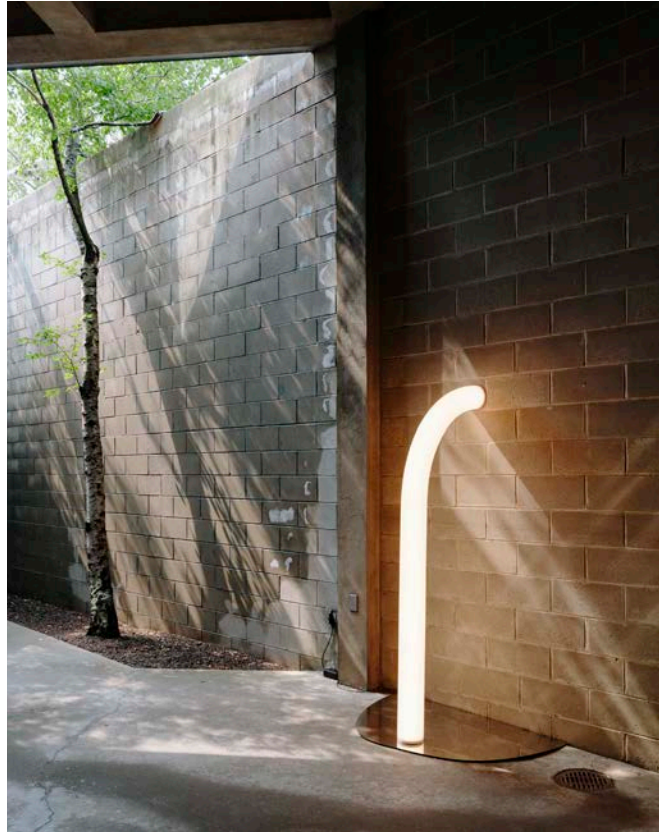
IMAGE Isamu Noguchi with his Akari light sculptures, c. 1968. The Noguchi Museum Archives, 03619. ©INFGM / ARS

Area 1

Objects of Common Interest

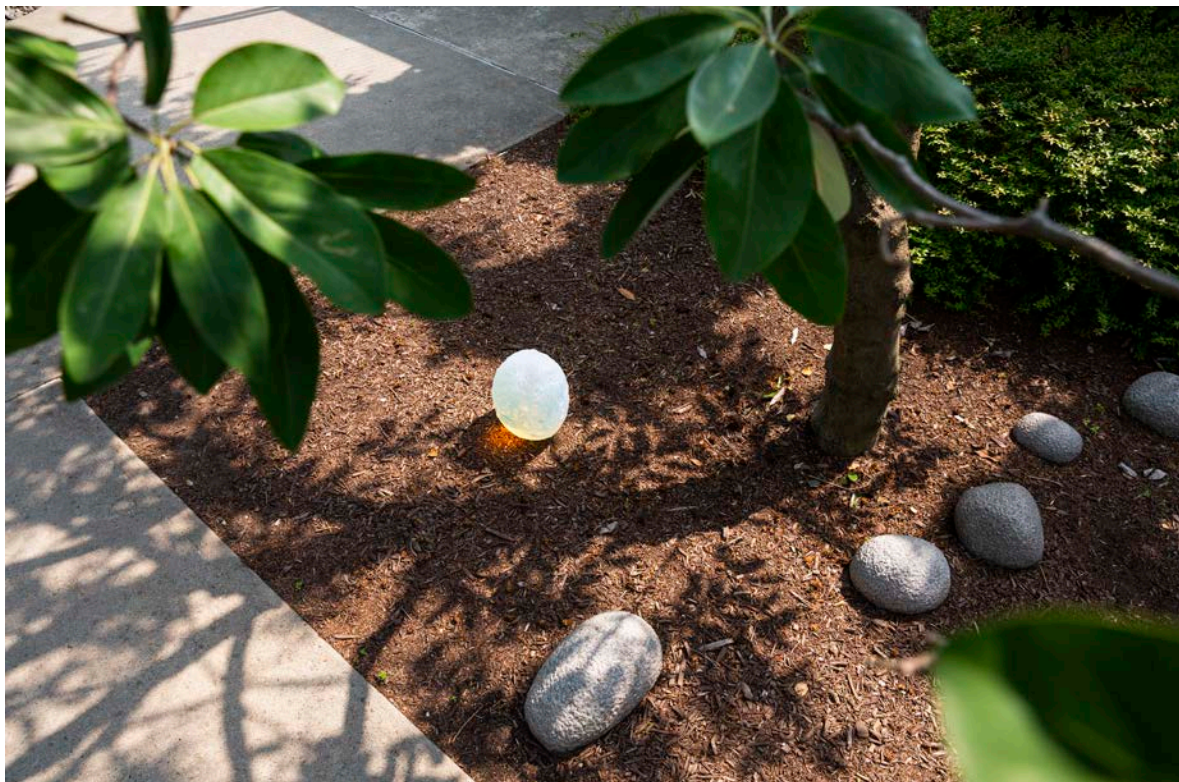


Tube Light I
Tube Light II
Tube Light III
2019
Light, acrylic, metal



Area 2 Garden

Objects of Common Interest



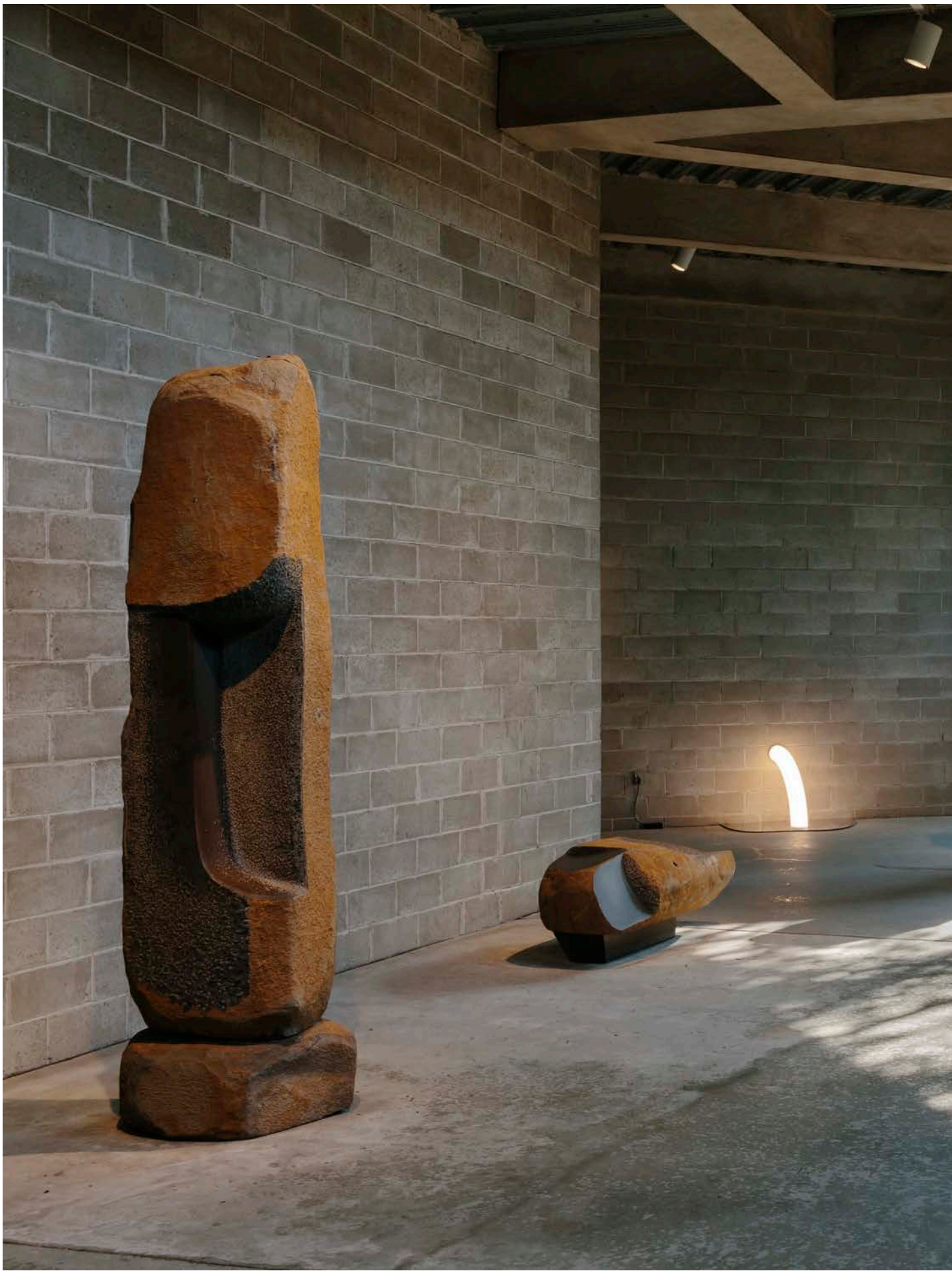
Standing Stone
2019
Plastic, mirrored
base

Offerings-Rock II
Offerings-Rock III
2000
Opal resin

Isamu Noguchi
*Practice Rocks in
Placement*, 1982-83
Aji granite
Garden Table, 1983
Granite



PHOTOS, FROM TOP Brian W. Ferry, Eleni Petaloti,
Kate Wiener NEXT PAGE, FROM LEFT Works by
Isamu Noguchi: *Deepening Knowledge*, 1969,
Basalt, *Human Sacrifice*, 1984, Basalt, *Brilliance*,
1982, Basalt, *Venus*, 1980, Manazuru stone.
Photo: Brian W. Ferry





Area 6 *Lounge*

Objects of Common Interest



Metamorphic Rocks

2021

Cast gel,
metal, casters

Inflatable Light 1

Inflatable Light 2

2021

Inflatable,
metal, LED

Rock Side Tables

2021

Opal resin, glass





Tube Light Column 1
Tube Light Column 2
 2019
 Light, acrylic, metal

Tube Chair
 2018
 Foam, fabric



IMAGES Courtesy of Objects of
 Common Interest. Rock Side Tables,
 photo: Luke Swenson. Inflatable
 Lights, photo: Piercarlo Quecchia.
 Tube Chair, photo: Charlie Schuck

Area 5 *Lounge*

Isamu Noguchi



Akari 20N
1968
Paper, bamboo, metal

Akari 21N
1968
Paper, bamboo, metal



Akari B
1954
Paper, bamboo, metal



Neo-Lithic
1982–83
Hot-dipped
galvanized steel



Coffee Table
(IN-50)
for Herman Miller
1948 (current production)
Walnut, glass



Akari 33S-BB3
1952 (shade), 1954 (base)
Paper, bamboo, metal



Garden Seat
1983
Basalt



Young Mountain
1970
Aji granite



Sky Mirror
1982–83
Hot-dipped
galvanized
steel



Freeform Sofa and Ottoman
for Herman Miller
designed c. 1948
(Vitra reissue, 2002–)
Fabric and stuffing over wood

Untitled
1982
Granite,
hot-dipped
galvanized
steel



IMAGES Akari light sculptures, *Untitled*, *Coffee Table*,
Garden Seat: photos: Kevin Noble. *Neo-Lithic*, *Sky*
Mirror: photos: Genevieve Hanson. Freeform Sofa:
Courtesy of Vitra.

Area 3

Objects of Common Interest



Doric Columns

2020

Kvadrat fabric, metal

Collection of Kvadrat

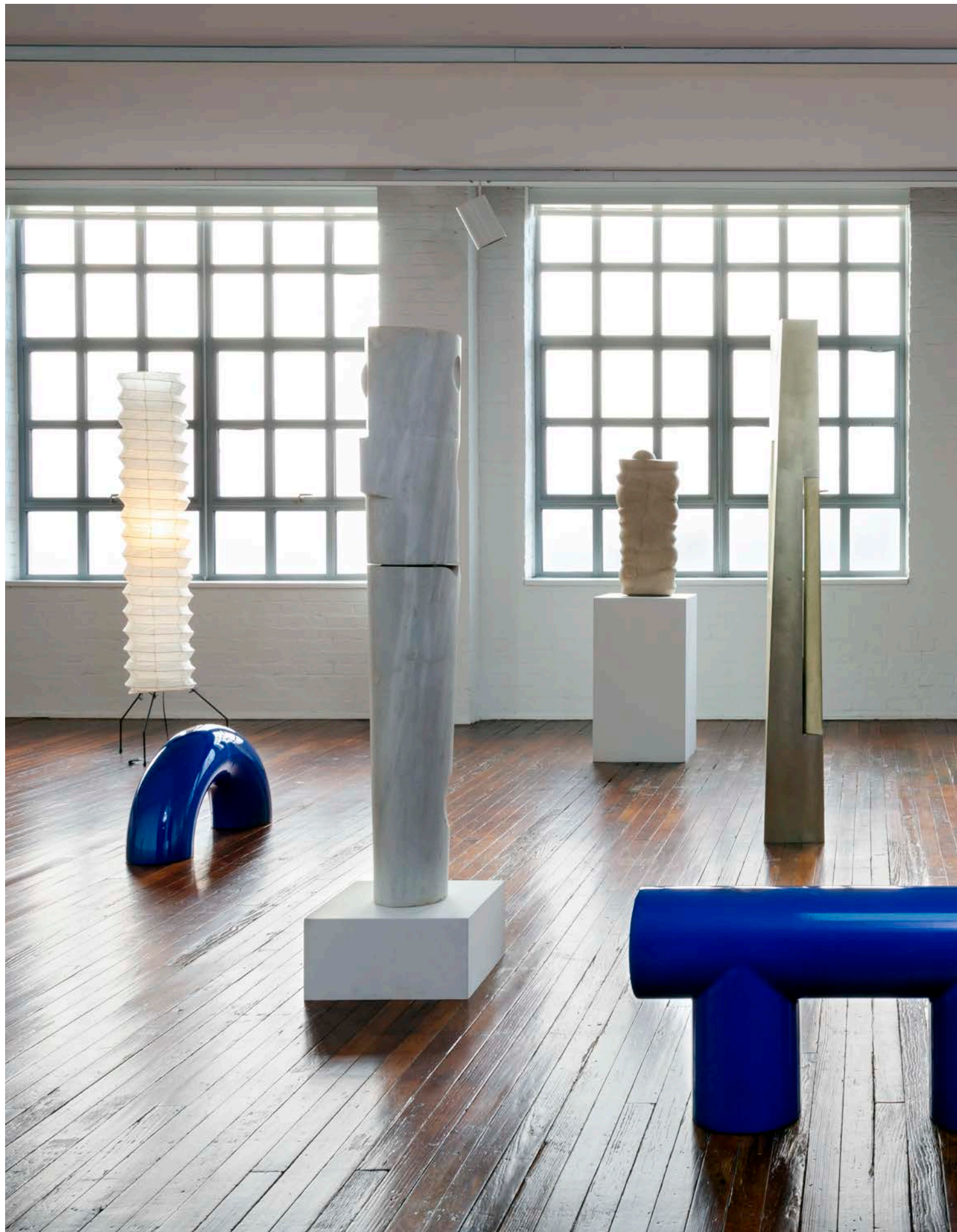
Area 12 *Second Floor*

Objects of Common Interest

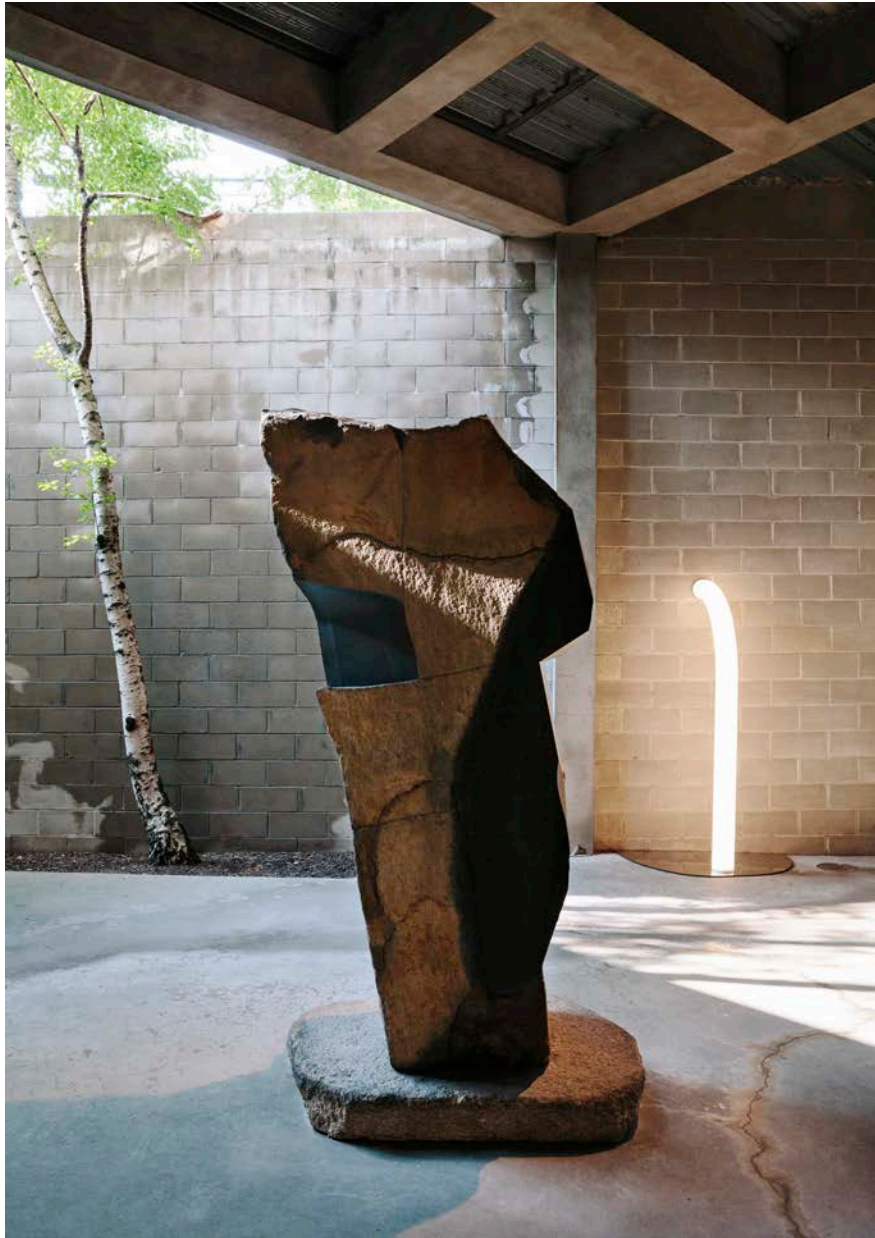


Formations
2018
Steel

NEXT PAGE, FROM LEFT Works by Isamu Noguchi: *Akari UF4-31N*, 1984. Paper, bamboo, metal. *Figure Portion of Composition for Arrivals Building, Idlewild Airport*, 1958. Greek marble. *Wrapped Figure*, 1962. Botticino marble. *Sentry*, 1958. Anodized aluminum. Private collection. *Becoming*, 1966–67. Marble. *Capital*, 1939. Georgia marble. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; gift of Miss Jeanne Reynal, 561.1941. Unfinished work, n.d. Marble.







Isamu Noguchi
Brilliance, 1982
Basalt

Objects of Common Interest
Tube Light II, 2019
Light, acrylic, mirrored metal plate

Objects of Common Interest

Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis are Objects of Common Interest, a studio operating within the realms of art, design, and architecture. Their work is rooted in an amalgamation of thinking and making between two diverse poles, Greece and New York, switching between the formal and the intuitive, embracing the handmade and the tactile, the experimental and the poetic. objectsofcommoninterest.com

Noguchi in Greece, Greece Within Noguchi

Objects of Common Interest and The Noguchi Museum have launched a digital feature that explores Isamu Noguchi's relationship with Greece, a place that he once described as his "intellectual home." The feature highlights the studio's ongoing research into Noguchi's relationship with the culture, materiality, and atmosphere of Greece and reflects upon their own practice in relation to Noguchi's ways of thinking. noguchi.org/noguchi-in-greece

Publication

Objects of Common Interest is also working on a set of books that expand upon the themes and content of *Noguchi in Greece*, *Greece Within Noguchi*, published by Atelier Editions. This will include an expanded set of photographs from their *Tracing Noguchi* project, in which photographers were invited to interpret Objects of Common Interest's works in relation to Henry Miller's *The Colossus of Maroussi* (New Directions, 1949), which Noguchi carried with him on his initial travels through Greece in the 1950s.