

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

Sep 15, 2021–Feb 13, 2022



Area 1

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



Area 2

Offerings–Rock II
2000
Opal resin



Tube Light III
2019
Light, acrylic,
metal



Offerings–Rock III
2000
Opal resin



Area 3

Doric Columns
2020
Kvadrat fabric,
metal
Collection
of Kvadrat



Standing Stone
2019
Plastic, mirrored
metal base



Area 12

Formations
2018
Steel

All works by Objects of Common Interest
Collection of the artists, unless otherwise noted

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Area 6 *Lounge*

Objects of Common Interest



**Rock
Side Tables**
2021
Opal resin, glass



Tube Chair
2018
Foam, fabric



Rock Seats
2021
Cast gel, metal,
casters



**Inflatable Light 1
Inflatable Light 2**
2021
Inflatable, metal,
LED



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

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Area 5 *Lounge*

Isamu Noguchi



Neo-Lithic
1982–83
Hot-dipped
galvanized steel



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



Akari B
1954
Paper, bamboo,
metal



Akari 20N
1968
Paper, bamboo,
metal



Akari 21N
1968
Paper, bamboo,
metal



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



Garden Seat
1983
Basalt



Young Mountain
1970
Aji granite



Sky Mirror
1982–83
Hot-dipped
galvanized steel



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



Untitled
1982
Granite,
hot-dipped
galvanized steel

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Areas 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 & 12

Introduction By Dakin Hart, Senior Curator

Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis, co-founders 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.