

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

Enigmatic forms and installations by Objects of Common Interest
interplay with Isamu Noguchi's works and spaces

September 15, 2021 – February 13, 2022



Objects of Common Interest, *Tube Light I* and *Tube Light II*, 2019, installed among Isamu Noguchi's monumental late-career basalt sculptures in The Noguchi Museum's indoor-outdoor galleries. Photo: Brian W. Ferry.
Artworks © Objects of Common Interest / © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum / Artists Rights Society

New York, NY (September 1, 2021) – The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum presents a collaborative exhibition with Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis of the Greece- and New York-based studio Objects of Common Interest. Works by Petaloti and Trampoukis, who take an intuitive approach to object and space making inspired by “moments of unfamiliar simplicity,” are interspersed within The Noguchi Museum’s garden and first floor permanent installation from September 15, 2021 through February 13, 2022.

EXHIBITION

Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis, co-founders and principals of Objects of Common Interest and LOT Office for Architecture, share with Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) a focus

on form as an abstract empirical tool of social function. Attempting to explain his perspective on what it meant to design as an artist, Noguchi said in 1949 with a 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.

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

Noguchi's purpose in invoking the relationship between art and design here was neither to elevate or forswear design. He recognized no fixed hierarchical relationship between the disciplines and was uninterested in such labels. He did want to make clear that, in his view, all sculpture should be functional. Function is what he means by "fundamental problems." From his point of view, a Play Mountain the size of a city block constituted a functional object.

Dakin Hart, Senior Curator and organizer of the exhibition, states, "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."

DIGITAL FEATURE

Noguchi in Greece, Greece Within Noguchi

In advance of the exhibition, Objects of Common Interest and The Noguchi Museum have launched a digital feature that explores Isamu Noguchi's relationship with Greece, "a place he was initially introduced to through mythology but later discovered so personally that he once described it as his 'intellectual home.'" The feature is presented as a visual collage in three sections: "Noguchi in Greece" collects photographs, correspondence, and other ephemera from the Museum's archive and independent research to create a portrait of Noguchi's travels, personal relationships, and impressions of Greece. "Greece Within Noguchi" follows influences of the culture, materiality, and atmosphere of Greece through his life's work.



Isamu Noguchi, *Study in the Classical*, 1958.
Greek marble. Photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt.
The Noguchi Museum Archives, 01839.
© Estate of Rudolph Burckhardt / INFGM / ARS

In the third section, “Tracing Noguchi,” the studio presents a collaboration with international photographers 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. In the words of Objects of Common Interest: “As we investigated, it became almost essential to express how our study of Noguchi has affected our quest for abstraction. Noguchi’s impact on us is not unlike that of the Greek landscape, sun, and culture: not in any direct way related to formal expression, but the essential backdrops to our journey.”

The feature is available to the public to explore at noguchi.org/noguchi-in-greece.

PUBLICATION

Objects of Common Interest is working on a set of books that expand upon the themes and content of the research presented in *Noguchi in Greece*, *Greece Within Noguchi*, and including an expanded set of photographs from the *Tracing Noguchi* project.

LOCATION

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

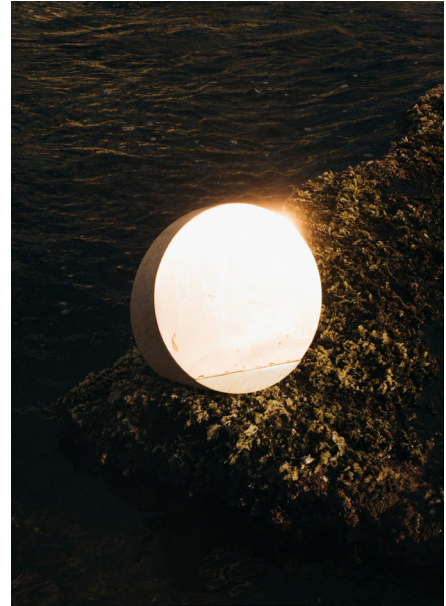
Open Weds–Sun, 11 am–6 pm,
by advance reservation: noguchi.org/visit

Media Visits and all Press Inquiries:

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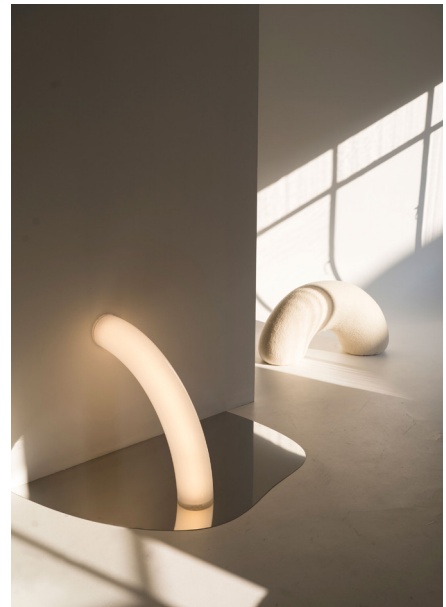
SUPPORT

Exhibitions at The Noguchi Museum are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



Objects of Common Interest, *Marble Mirror*, 2020.
Photograph by Marco Arguello.

Tracing Noguchi project, noguchi.org/noguchi-in-greece



Objects of Common Interest, *Tube Lights*, 2020.
Photograph by Marco Arguello.
Courtesy of Objects of Common Interest

The digital feature *Noguchi in Greece, Greece Within Noguchi* has been made possible through major support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this article do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ABOUT OBJECTS OF COMMON INTEREST

Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis founded Objects of Common Interest in 2015. Based in Athens and New York, their work roots from these two diverse sources, switching between the formal and the intuitive, embracing the handmade and the tactile, the experimental and the poetic. They received their academic education at Aristotle University in Greece and Ecole Supérieure d'Architecture de La Villette in Paris, hold masters degrees in architecture from Columbia University in New York, and are founding partners of sibling studio LOT office for architecture. objectsofcommoninterest.com

ABOUT ISAMU NOGUCHI

The quintessential sculptor in an expanded field, Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) believed that the purpose of art is to make us more human and in his own work sought to help humanity reestablish its sense of scale with nature. He was born in Los Angeles to a white American mother and a Japanese father. He grew up in Japan and Indiana, before relocating to New York, and eventually also establishing studios in Japan and Italy. Never feeling at home anywhere, he learned to make himself at home everywhere. Having made voluntary exile from any one dominant culture a creative platform, he operated as a universal person and a citizen of the world. His transdisciplinarity and refusal to be categorized led him to seek a mission for sculpture outside the art world. Looking beyond what he termed the false horizon of the pedestal, he anticipated land art, art as a social practice, and the mix of formalism and conceptualism that we now take for granted in sculpture. His 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—have made him an influential source for a wide range of creative people and a cultural icon. 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 small-mindedness, and a technique for integrating the best habits and effects of craft into daily life. Focused from first to last on a better future, he aimed for nothing less than leaving his friend R. Buckminster Fuller's Spaceship Earth a more interconnected and sustainable sculpture than he found it. To learn more about Isamu Noguchi, visit noguchi.org/biography.

ABOUT THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM

Founded in 1985 by category-defying artist Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), The Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum (now known as The Noguchi Museum) in Queens, New York, was the first museum in the United States to be established, designed, and installed by a living artist to

show their own work. Itself widely viewed as among the artist's greatest achievements and holding the world's largest collection of his works, the Museum features open air and indoor galleries in a repurposed 1920s industrial building and a serene outdoor sculpture garden. Since its founding, it has served as an international hub for Noguchi research and appreciation. In addition to managing the artist's archives and catalogue raisonné, the Museum exhibits a comprehensive selection of Noguchi's material culture, from sculpture, models, and drawings to his personal possessions. Provocative installations drawn from the permanent collection, together with diverse special exhibitions and collaborations with contemporary practitioners across disciplines, offer a multifaceted view of Noguchi's art and illuminate his enduring influence as an innovator. **noguchi.org | @noguchimuseum**

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