

# Solid Doubts: Robert Stadler at The Noguchi Museum

Areas 2, 3, 5 & 6



April 26 – September 3, 2017

#StadlerNoguchi

## Solid Doubts: Robert Stadler at The Noguchi Museum

We bring the category-defying work of Isamu Noguchi (1904–88) and Robert Stadler (b. 1966) together in the secluded precincts of The Noguchi Museum—where art and design frequently lose themselves in each other’s eyes—as co-conspirators in the resisting of labels and the confounding of definitions. With its psychological remove from the New York art world, The Noguchi Museum is, for all intents and purposes, another land, an oasis, as Noguchi called it. And thanks to Noguchi’s foresight, its only real responsibility is to ensure that here at least the fertile uncertainties to which he devoted himself live, breathe, and are perpetually renewed. (Noguchi’s 1986 Venice Biennale exhibition for the United States pavilion—like this Museum, an apotheosis of his life’s work as a subversive—was entitled *What Is Sculpture?* and featured 33 Akari lanterns, a usable, 30-ton, marble slide, a full-scale model for a structural system called Tetrahelix, and two (unconventional) stone sculptures.)

Stadler’s works share with Noguchi’s a fundamental resistance to disambiguation—particularly those works made within the constraints of conventional functional categories (e.g., table, mirror, lamp, bench). Both artists design objects to remain steadfast in their categorical ambivalence, even when and as they toy with the specifics of usefulness. In neither of their universes does use disqualify an object from the responsibilities of self-doubt.

These rendezvous between Stadler and Noguchi, which Stadler has likened to a blind date, are meant to destabilize both artists’ works, for their own benefit—in much the same way that Shakespeare’s lovers are put through their paces in an identity farce. If all goes to plan, every object will emerge with a more flexible, correspondingly stronger sense of self, as well as an enhanced capacity for salutary, open-ended fraternization.

### About Robert Stadler

Robert Stadler studied design at the Istituto Europeo di Design, in Milan, and the École nationale supérieure de création industrielle, in Paris, where he continues to work. In 1992, he co-founded RADI Designers collective, whose varied practice revolved around the marriage of the everyday and the unusual. In 2001, he began working on solo projects while continuing to collaborate with RADI until its dissolution in 2008. Stadler’s work ranges from furniture, product, and interior design to art-based installations, exhibitions, and curating. His designs may be found in international collections, including Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris; MAK, Museum for Applied Arts—Contemporary Art, Vienna; FNAC—Fond National d’art contemporain, Paris; and Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain, Paris. [robertstadler.net](http://robertstadler.net)

In addition to the exhibitions at right, *Solid Doubts* coincides with Stadler’s first retrospective at the Kunsthalle im Lipsiusbau, Dresden, Germany (*You May Also Like: Robert Stadler*), March 18–June 25.

### Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with essays by design writer Emily King, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Associate Curator of Architecture and Design Joseph Becker, and Noguchi Museum Senior Curator Dakin Hart; photographs by Naho Kubota; and art direction and graphic design by Geoff Han.

### Related Exhibitions in New York

*Waiting Room: Noguchi/Stadler*  
Installation at Collective Design Fair  
May 2–7, 2017

In a raw loading dock at the southern end of Skylight Clarkson Square, the works of Isamu Noguchi and Robert Stadler come together in a somewhat surreal pastiche of waiting. Co-curated by Hart and Stadler.

*Weight Class*  
Solo Exhibition at Carpenters Workshop Gallery  
April 27–June 17, 2017  
An installation of more pieces from Stadler’s *Cut\_Paste* series, with his *Anywhere #2* light fixture hung with Noguchi’s Akari lanterns.

**The Noguchi Museum** 9-01 33rd Road, Long Island City, New York [noguchi.org](http://noguchi.org)

All Robert Stadler works are courtesy of the artist and Carpenters Workshop Gallery, unless otherwise noted. All Isamu Noguchi works are Collection of The Noguchi Museum, unless otherwise noted. Cover and centerfold photographs by Nicholas Knight.

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**Dakin Hart** Senior Curator, The Noguchi Museum



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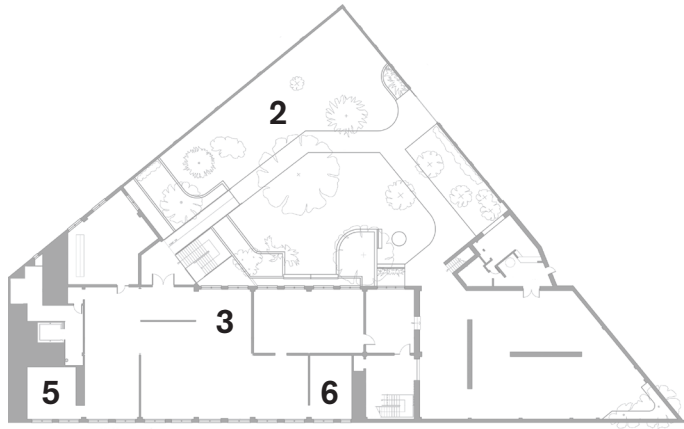






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## Area

Stadler's *Pools & Pouf!* has been described as an exploded Chesterfield molecule—a tufted, tightly upholstered piece of leather furniture in the mercurial process of recombining in search of forms and lives outside the conventional sofa and its associated lifestyles. Stadler's ambiguous biomorphic assault on traditional furniture typologies is analogous to Noguchi's lifelong exploration of light as a material and his determination to use its ubiquity and subtlety to dramatically reshape our relationship to our environment.



Isamu Noguchi  
*Lunar Lamp*  
*Prototype*, c. 1951  
Fiberglass  
resin, metal,  
electric components



Robert Stadler  
*Pools & Pouf!*, 2004  
(fabricated 2017)  
Upholstered leather,  
plywood,  
synthetic textile



Isamu Noguchi  
*Floating Lunar*, 1945  
Magnesite, electric  
components  
Private collection



Isamu Noguchi  
*Akari [VB13-S]*,  
1986  
Paper, bamboo,  
metal, electric  
components



Isamu Noguchi  
*Akari [1N]*,  
1968  
Paper, bamboo,  
metal, electric  
components

## Area

2

## (Garden)

Noguchi loved stone as an index of both time and the operations of nature. He worked it in the full, happy awareness that he would not be its only sculptor. Everything in the Museum garden is weathering, albeit on a geologic timescale—except, temporarily, Stadler's *Rest in Peace* #2 chair and table, which represent the inorganic monkey wrench we have introduced into the natural cyclical dissolution and reconstitution of matter. With *Rest in Peace*, Stadler arrests, aestheticizes, and monumentalizes in cast aluminum the shoddy, yet virtually everlasting, disposability of cheap plastic garden furniture—and by extension its impact on our relationship to nature.



Robert Stadler  
*Rest In Peace* #2  
(chair 2), 2004  
(fabricated 2012)  
Cast aluminum,  
epoxy paint  
Courtesy of the artist



Robert Stadler  
*Rest In Peace* #2  
(table), 2008  
(fabricated 2016)  
Cast aluminum,  
epoxy paint  
Courtesy of the artist

## Area

3

With their challenging form factors, pointedly anarchic veneering, and counterintuitive construction, Stadler's *Cut\_Paste* pieces explore how digitization has introduced a newly dissociative quality to the way that functional objects are conceived, designed, and assembled. The plans for these objects are meant to appear to have been executed in Photoshop using flat layers rather than in a fully three-dimensional CAD program, and their fabrication overseen by a graphic designer instead of an engineer. Noguchi's commitment to harmonizing handcraft and industrial production in "fine art," also epitomized here by complex combinations of stone and sheet metal, is an obvious inspiration.



Isamu Noguchi  
*Pierced Stone*,  
1982  
Granite, hot-dipped  
galvanized steel



Robert Stadler  
*Cut\_Paste* #5, 2015  
Nero Marquina,  
Olimpo Striato,  
Rosa Portogallo,  
Travertine marble  
and AluCore



Robert Stadler  
*Cut\_Paste* #4, 2015  
White Carrara,  
Olimpo Striato,  
Rosa Portogallo  
marble and AluCore



Isamu Noguchi  
*Big Id*, 1971  
Belgian black  
marble, white  
Bianco P. marble,  
stainless steel



Isamu Noguchi  
*Baby Figure*,  
1958  
Anodized aluminum



Isamu Noguchi  
*Pink Jizo*,  
c. 1960  
Marble, brass



Isamu Noguchi  
*Gift*,  
1964  
African marble



Robert Stadler  
*Cut\_Paste* #8, 2015  
Nero Marquina,  
Olimpo Striato  
Stonewood marble  
and AluCore

## Area

6

Noguchi used the sets and props he made for Martha Graham's ballets to investigate ways to invest his sculptures with the social agency and impact of furniture, religious and civic monuments, and public spaces. Conceived with similarly theatrical intent, Stadler's digitally milled *PDT* furniture transports us to the ruins of a fictional past, not far in mythic significance from the setting of Graham's *Hérodiade*. Further eroding the distinctions between objects and subjects, Stadler's flexible *Anywhere* #2 light fixture, outfitted here with one of Noguchi's endlessly adaptable Akari lanterns, puts the spotlight of the sun in our hands.



Isamu Noguchi  
*Chair for*  
*Martha Graham's*  
*"Hérodiade,"* 1944  
Plywood, paint



Robert Stadler  
*PDT* (table),  
2015  
(fabricated 2016)  
Ashlar



Robert Stadler  
*PDT* (bench),  
2015  
(fabricated 2016)  
Ashlar



Isamu Noguchi  
*Mirror for*  
*Martha Graham's*  
*"Hérodiade,"* 1944  
Plywood, paint



Robert Stadler  
*PDT* (mirror),  
2015  
(fabricated 2016)  
Ashlar



Robert Stadler  
*Anywhere* #2, 2017  
Carbon fiber,  
polypropylene,  
polyester, resin, steel



Isamu Noguchi  
*Clothes Rack for*  
*Martha Graham's*  
*"Hérodiade,"* 1944  
Plywood, paint

Isamu Noguchi  
*Akari [30A]*, 1954  
Paper, bamboo,  
metal, electric  
components