

still boundaries

“what makes the museum more aware?”

design proposal

This proposal for the Noguchi Museum Sculpture Garden explores interaction, spatial clarity, and subtle cues through ripple-inspired forms. Crushed stone rings encircle untouchable sculptures, creating boundaries that replace signage and preserve harmony. An interactive structure invites visitors to sit, play, and sculpt with curated stones, reflecting Noguchi’s theme of touchable vs. non-touchable.

precedent / inspiration

This proposal takes inspiration from Isamu Noguchi’s California Scenario, balancing interactivity and restraint. Visitors can engage with curated stones in one space, while natural boundaries preserve nearby sculptures. This interplay encourages movement and reflection, echoing Noguchi’s philosophy of blending sculpture, landscape, and human experience.



who

Invites visitors of all ages to enjoy a more interactive and playful experience in the Sculpture Garden.

where

Top corner of the Sculpture Garden and near each “non-touchable” sculpture.

what

Raises awareness of boundaries in the Sculpture Garden through visibility and interaction.

why

Encourages play and engagement with select sculptures while subtly marking untouchable pieces.

when

Designed for year-round use, with weather-resistant materials and durable stone boundaries.

how

Uses crushed stone rings as spatial cues around untouchable works, while a tucked-away structure invites interaction and reflection

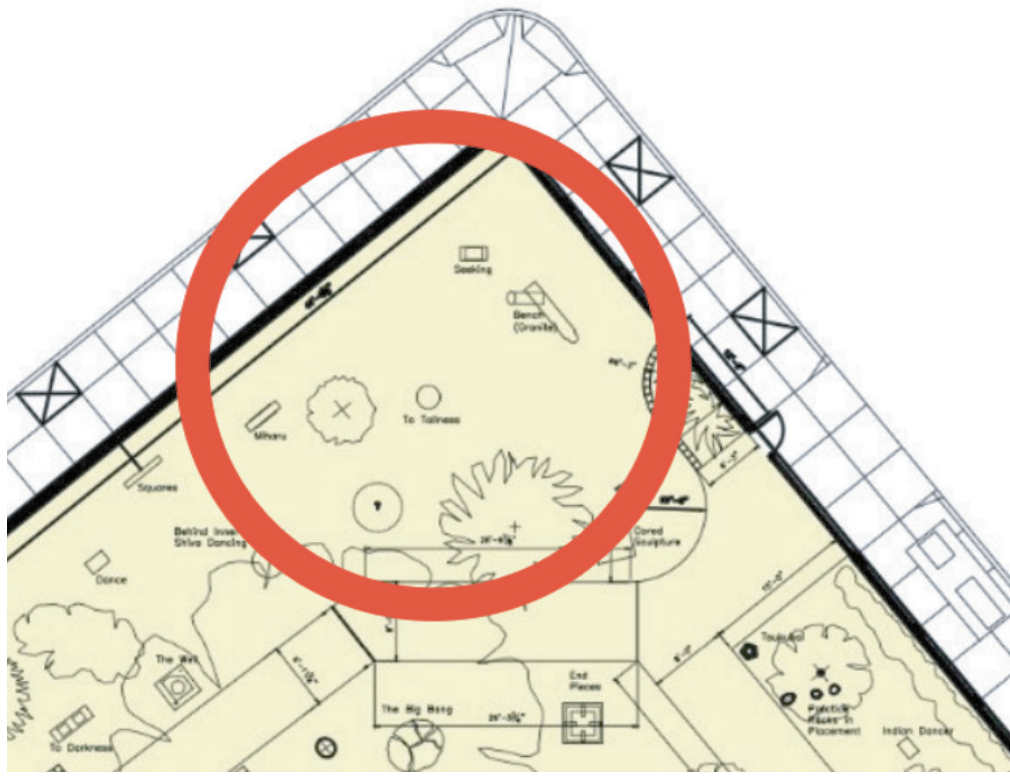


noguchi research / analysis

Isamu Noguchi was a visionary Japanese-American artist whose work transcended sculpture to include landscapes, gardens, and public spaces. His designs, like California Scenario and Moerenuma Park, invite exploration through form, movement, and interaction. Noguchi blurred the lines between art and environment, often creating spaces where the distinction between touchable and untouchable is guided by spatial context rather than signage. His thoughtful compositions encourage visitors to engage, reflect, and move intuitively, making each space a sculptural experience in itself.

site analysis (area of interest)

The northern top corner of the garden, hidden behind greenery and often missed by visitors following the main path, offers a quiet, overlooked space. Placing the proposed structure here brings attention to this serene area, encouraging deeper exploration and engagement within the garden’s landscape.



process and ideation

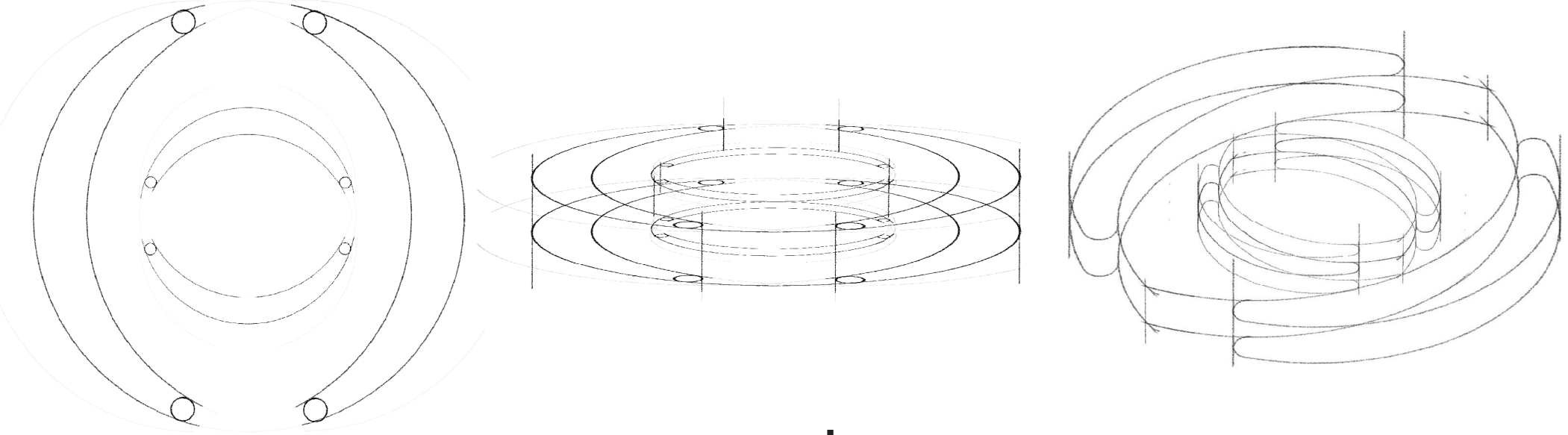
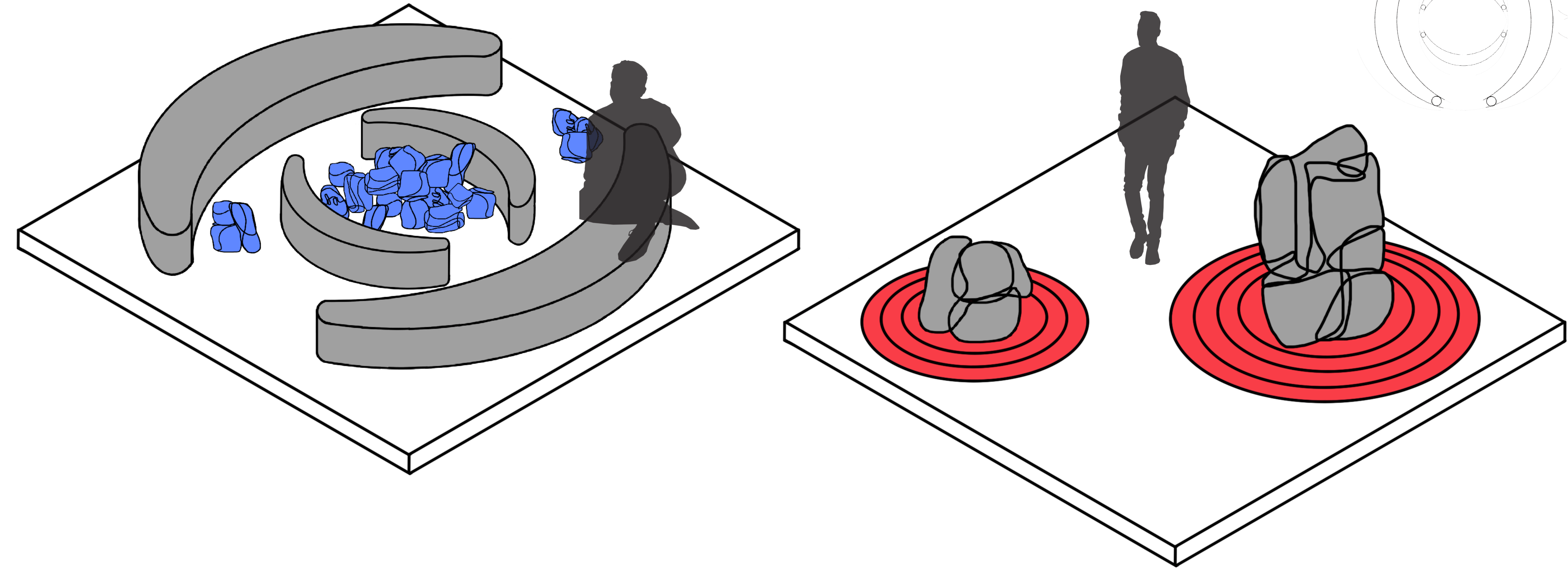


examining craftsmanship

Each sculpture in the garden reveals Noguchi’s distinctive craftsmanship, showcasing a range of carving techniques, tool marks, and material choices that make each piece entirely unique. The diversity in stone types, textures, and forms highlights his awareness to natural material and his ability to shape it into expressive, timeless works. These characteristics serve as direct inspiration for the Ishihana stacking stones, which reflect the many different sculptural languages and material variation found throughout the garden’s carefully curated collection.



vs. design taxonomy



key

- touchable
- nontouchable

touchable vs. nontouchable

Natural boundaries like stone rings around untouchable sculptures offer a clearer, more intuitive visitor experience without traditional signage. This reflects Isamu Noguchi’s belief that spatial context and materials guide engagement. A structure in a hidden garden corner invites tactile interaction, encouraging exploration. Together, these elements create a balanced experience between touchable and nontouchable works using the environment itself.

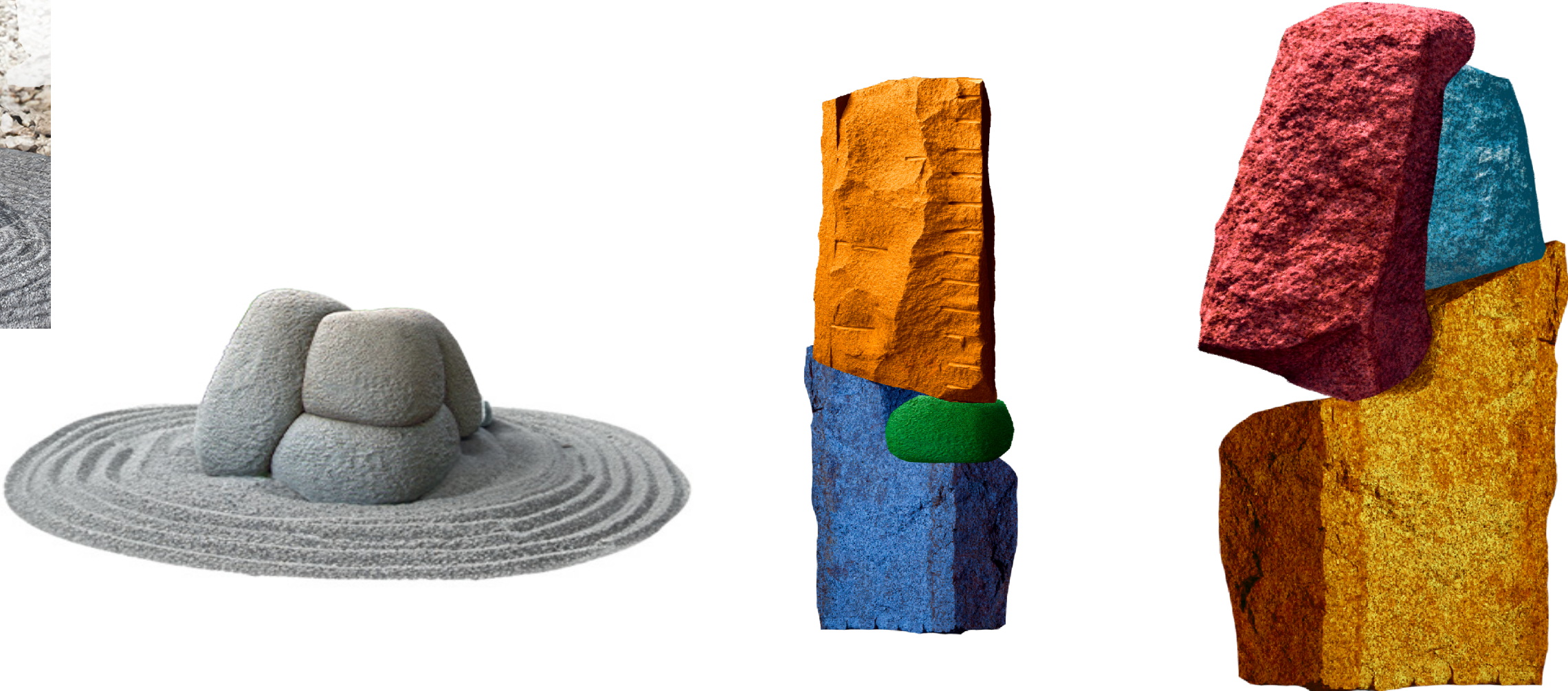
ishihana and karensansui

This proposal integrates the ideologies of Ishi-hana, the Japanese art of stone stacking, and karensansui, dry landscape gardens. Ishi-hana uses stones to create balance, while karensansui symbolizes life cycles through abstract forms. These traditions enhance the exploration of boundaries, touch, and non-touch elements, reinforcing Noguchi’s theme of interaction and restraint.

quote

“when the time came for me to work with larger spaces, I conceived them as gardens, not as sites with objects but as relationships to a whole.”  
- isamu noguchi

This proposal explores the theme of touchable versus non-touchable through a two-part intervention within the sculpture garden. Untouchable sculptures are surrounded by rings of finely crushed stone, creating soft yet clear boundaries that act as both a barrier and visual cue. These subtle interventions preserve the integrity of the works without the need for intrusive signage, aligning with Noguchi’s minimalist philosophy. In contrast, a primary structure placed in the garden’s secluded northern corner invites engagement and play. Shaped like ripples to mirror the rings around the sculptures, the granite structure features a smooth top for sitting and textured sides that reference the varied finishes Noguchi used in his own work. At its center, colorful stones, crafted from fragments inspired by the shapes, textures, and materials of the surrounding sculptures, invite visitors to create their own arrangements. These stones signal interactivity through color, encouraging a deeper, more tactile form of appreciation for the garden’s art, and invite visitors to look at the sculptures throughout the garden through new perspectives in ways that have not been encouraged yet to create a unique experience of their own.



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