



# Isamu Noguchi: A Study of Space

*Ana Maria Torres*

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## **Isamu Noguchi: A Study of Space** Ana Maria Torres

Sculptor, garden designer, and architect, Isamu Noguchi throughout his long career designed exterior and interior spaces that deftly bring together influences from various disciplines. His conception of a "sculpture of space"—his most significant contribution to modern sculpture—was fundamental to these designs. *Isamu Noguchi: A Study of Space* is the first comprehensive study of Noguchi's public works, including playgrounds, earthworks, gardens, parks, plazas, memorials, interior design, fountains, and sculptures.

Noguchi moved between disciplines with ease, approaching landscapes from the point of view of an artist and seeking the absolute integration of sculpture, space, and building. An intricate system of material, aesthetic, cultural, and even mythic interconnections characterizes all of his works. Artist Constantin Brancusi, choreographer Martha Graham, and visionary thinker Buckminster Fuller were important early influences. The ancient environments of leisure and ritual and the ceremonial spaces of past cultures—the Samrat Yantra Observatory in India, the Great Serpent Mound in Ohio, Egyptian pyramids, Zen meditation gardens—served as important and enduring sources of inspiration. Noguchi's Japanese-American heritage—and his ongoing exploration of this dual identity—also infused his designs with a unique understanding of both Eastern and Western traditions.

More than seventy-five projects are presented in archival photographs—many showing Noguchi's beautiful bronze and plaster models—as well as plans and other drawings created especially for this book. Among the major works are the sunken gardens at Yale University's Beinecke Library in New Haven, Connecticut, and at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York (both in collaboration with Gordon Bunshaft of the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill); the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden in Jerusalem; the Jardin Japonais and Patio des Délégués at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris; five proposals for the Riverside Drive playground in New York (in collaboration with architect Louis I. Kahn); nine fountains for Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan; Tengoku at the Sogetsu Flower Arranging School in Tokyo; Red Cube at the Marine Midland Bank Plaza in New York; Black Sun at the Seattle Art Museum; and his own Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum in Long Island City, New York.

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