

WALKER ART CENTER

Noguchi's Imaginary Landscapes

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N O G U C H I ' S

IMAGINARY LANDSCAPES

Martin Friedman

**An Exhibition Organized by
Walker Art Center**

DQ 106/107

C O N T E N T S

5

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

7

INTRODUCTION

11

PRIMER OF SCULPTURAL FORMS

25

DESIGNS FOR THE STAGE

39

UNREALIZED PROJECTS

53

REALIZED PROJECTS

87

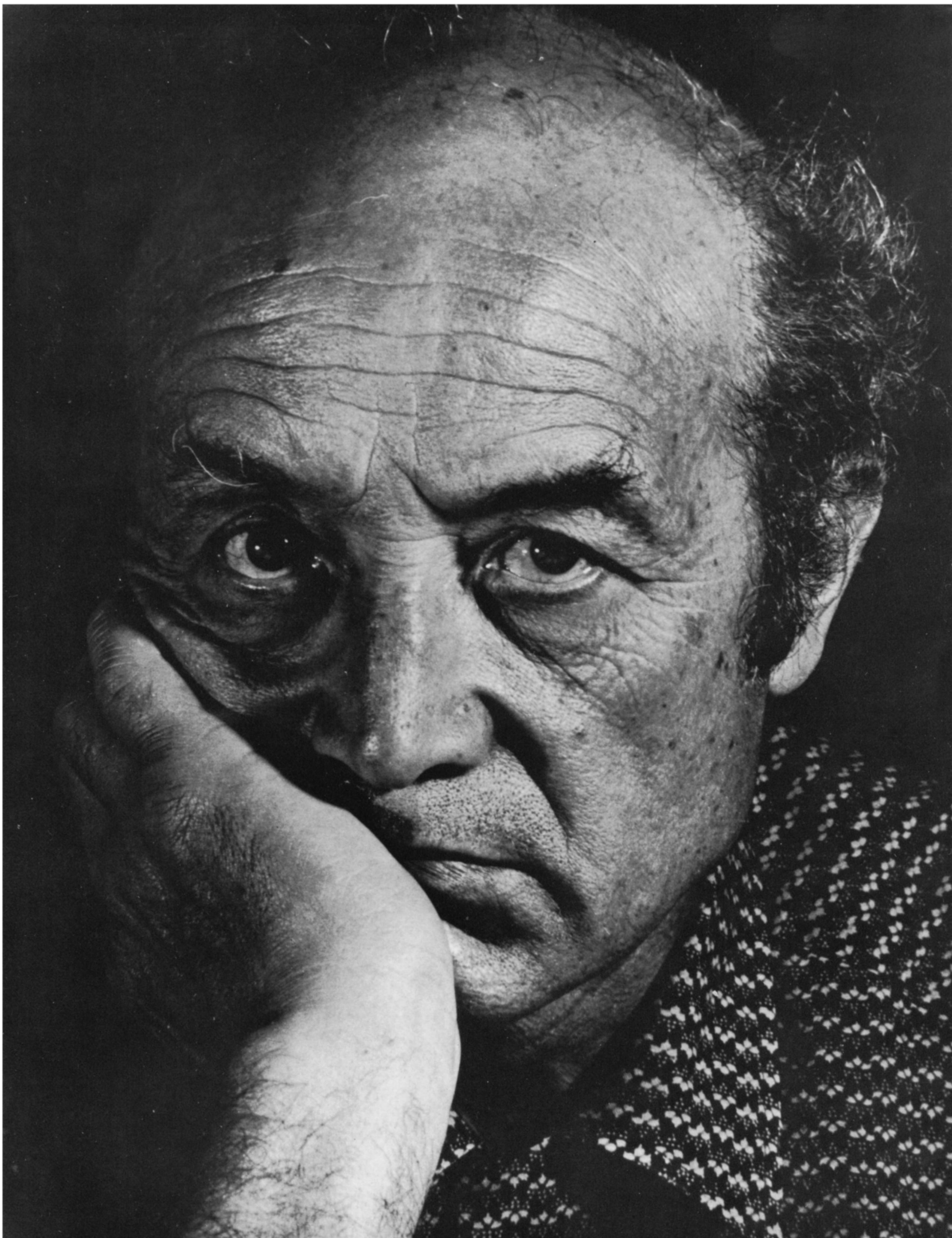
CHRONOLOGY

91

NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

99

BIBLIOGRAPHY



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From its inception three years ago, this exhibition has evolved with the collaboration and counsel of Isamu Noguchi. Our frequent wide-ranging discussions focused on the philosophical and formal relationships that prevail in his sculpture, theater designs, gardens and plazas. We agreed that the exhibition should stress these crucial associations as well as the commonality of form underlying the various spheres of his prodigious activity. During our lengthy talks it became increasingly apparent to me that Isamu Noguchi's art is, at basis, a humanistic phenomenon. His designs for the stage and especially his large-scale public projects are controlled environments—places for human interaction. While the public has long been familiar with Noguchi's elegant sculpture, which subtly fuses Western and Oriental attitudes, not enough is known about his pioneer designs for the theater which began in the mid-1930s, nor of his collaborations with distinguished architects which have resulted in some of the most impressive public spaces in this country, Europe and Japan.

Thanks to Isamu Noguchi, a number of crucial examples of his production were made available for this exhibition. Important sculpture came from his own collection and he oversaw the preparation of models for the realized and unrealized environmental works. Several pieces were made expressly for this occasion, including models of recent architectural projects in Detroit, Atlanta, Israel and Tokyo. The *Variable Landscape*, a performance area for dancers and musicians, is a new work designed for Walker Art Center.

The organization of this exhibition drew extensively upon the talents of Isamu Noguchi's associates and assistants in New York. The architect, Shoji Sadao, who has collaborated with the sculptor on many important projects, was an invaluable source of support during this process. He and his associate architect, Michael Janne, were responsible for preparing many impressive models of Noguchi's architectural schemes. Diane Botnick, Noguchi's assistant, generously made available archival material in the form of photographs and documentation. Nancy Grove, an art historian on the Pratt Institute faculty, is completing her doctoral thesis on the sculptor's work and has made her wide knowledge available to the Art Center.

Noguchi's theater designs are primarily associated with Martha Graham's dance pieces. Thanks to Miss Graham and the Martha Graham Foundation, this exhibition includes Noguchi's set designs for four productions. Her eloquent characterizations of her collaboration with Noguchi, which appear in this catalogue, are the result of an interview she generously granted to me. Noguchi's set for George Balanchine's ballet, *Orpheus*, was loaned to this exhibition through the courtesy of The New York City Ballet.

Gordon Bunshaft, chief architect for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, was Noguchi's sponsor for some of his most important gardens. I am grateful to Mr. Bunshaft for allowing himself to be interviewed as part of our research.

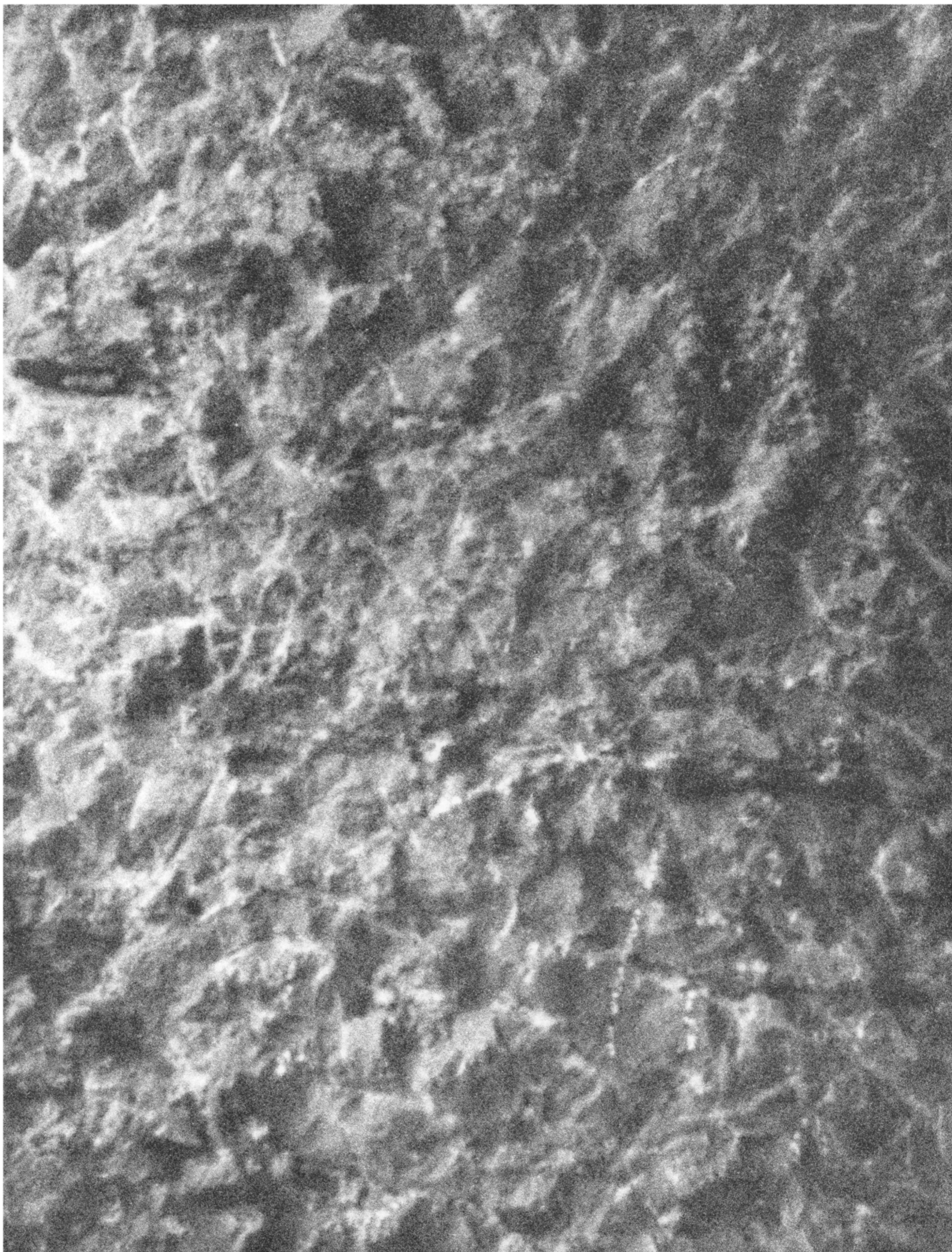
Arne Ekstrom, who for a number of years was Noguchi's dealer, provided useful background material on the artist.

The scale and complexity of this exhibition required the services of many Walker Art Center staff members:

Gwen Bitz, Assistant Registrar of the museum, attended to numerous details including packing, shipping and preparation of visual materials. Mildred S. Friedman organized and edited the catalogue and worked with James E. Johnson who designed its layout as well as other graphic material accompanying the exhibition. Marie Cieri, Rockefeller Foundation Fellow, conducted research for the exhibition, developed the illustrated charts and assisted in manuscript preparation. My secretary, Susan Higgins, provided assistance and counsel; Mary Unthank and Linda Krenzin also provided valuable secretarial services. Performing arts programs were organized by Nigel Redden, Coordinator of Performing Arts; the slidetape presentation was produced under the direction of Charles Helm; public information was supervised by Peter Georgas.

The installation crew included: Douglas Caulk, Terry Fisher, Peter Boswell, John Bowsher, Ronald Elliott, Hugh Jacobson, Eldor Johnson, Gary Krause, Darrel Page, Michael Reed, James Ristine and John Sonderegger.

Martin Friedman, Director
Walker Art Center



INTRODUCTION

Noguchi is a survivor, a legendary figure who obsessively pursues ambitious artistic goals. His work exists outside current styles. Though his sculpture is an ambiguous fusion of modern and historical impulses, it retains an identifiable character. A wanderer for half a century, he has moved from object-making to theater design to the creation of monumental urban spaces and, in the last category, he has realized impressive sculpture and garden commissions in the United States, France, Germany, Israel and Japan. The elegance and tranquility of his art belie the active life-style that produces it. While Noguchi's base of activity is in New York City, he is often in motion, traveling from one country to another to pursue his projects, equally at home in the Tuscan quarries of Querceta, where Michelangelo secured his marble, or the steel fabricating shops of Long Island City where he oversees construction of enormous metal sculptures.

All serious commentaries on Noguchi's art stress the coexistence of European and Oriental influences within its forms, for he operates in a cultural limbo. He is resigned to the fact that in America he is frequently perceived as a Japanese sculptor and in Japan he is regarded as an American. In his own view, he is first and foremost an American artist, but admits that he is a nomad, in spirit as well as in fact: "If you allow yourself to be—or imagine yourself to be—part of all phenomena, then you are able to be anywhere, and the artist is merely the shaman who is able to contact all these other phenomena. Therefore, you are really free and you really don't belong anywhere."

Noguchi describes himself as a traditional sculptor who makes contemporary images that relate to history, and in many respects his large-scale architectural conceptions have more in common with the awesome structures of Mesoamerica, Borobudur and Angkor Wat than with current forms. He identifies strongly with ancient art: "The more archaic and primitive, the better I like it," he tells us. From 1949-1951, he systematically familiarized himself with the magnificent vestiges of long vanished cultures, traveling with the assistance of a grant from the Bollingen Foundation. Of this experience he says, "I went to the caves of Lascaux, to Egypt, and all the places that people used to believe in as the congealments or cruxes of meaning within each culture."

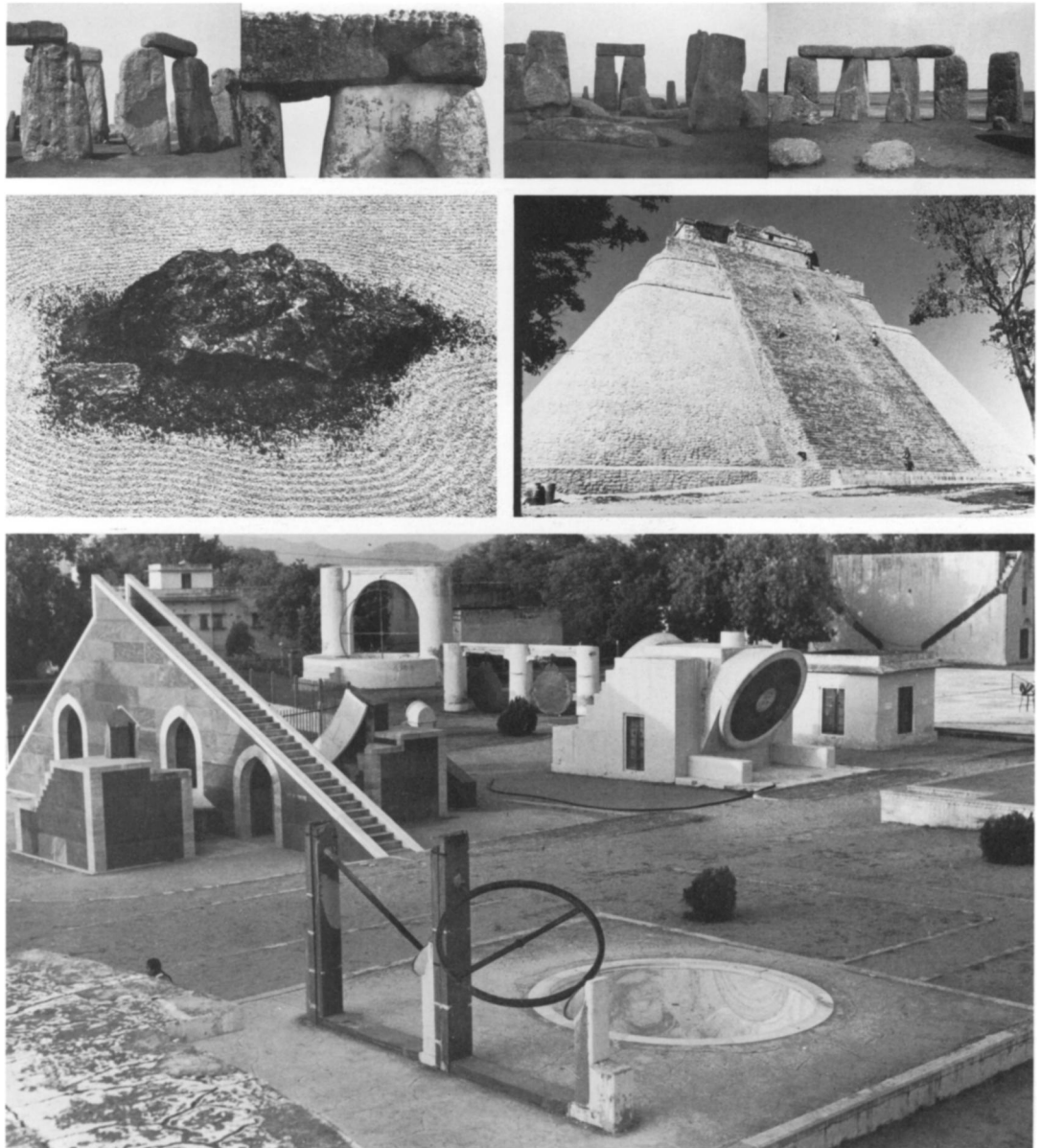
These encounters with the antique world had an enduring effect on his attitudes about form and, in large degree, his art is an homage to ceremonial structures of the past. Among his sculptures, groups of rudely carved granite posts remind us of the massive rocks of Stonehenge and the menhirs of Brittany. The eternal pyramid is a benign, recurring archaism in Noguchi's public spaces, and the great Indian mounds of the midwestern United States are evoked in a proposal to enclose the sacred Hawaiian rocks of Kukaniloko. But such primal images, which abound in his art, are his respectful allusions to history, never mere adaptations of ancient forms.

The fantastic imagery of aboriginal as well as archaic cultures has long attracted him and, amidst stone cutting and metal working equipment in his Long Island City studio, there are clusters of tribal objects collected years ago—masks and dance helmets from New Britain, Balinese half-face masks and Northwest Coast Indian carvings that are feverish hybridizations of animal and human forms. Such exotic influences affected his designs for theater masks in dance pieces by Martha Graham and George Balanchine.

In Noguchi's fluid conception of time, his imagination also extends well into the future. If an archaeological character underlies many of his creations, then conversely, many recent projects—such as his computerized fountain for the Detroit Civic Center Plaza—have a decidedly visionary quality.

His iconography derives as much from human anatomy as from nature, but a penchant for organic form is balanced by attraction to precisely defined, abstract shapes. Within the spectrum of his art both extremes exist; in certain works these opposites are combined. Critical efforts to define his stylistic evolution are constantly subverted by his frequent, erratic returns to earlier motifs. Noguchi's image bank is a protean source of rudimentary organic and geometric forms that express the intuitive and analytical aspects of his personality.

Mythological as well as historical forms have always intrigued him. As a child, his mother introduced him to classical Greek legends and his sense of fantasy was further nourished by youthful encounters



Noguchi identifies with the art of antiquity, particularly great ceremonial structures. He regards his sculpture, especially his monumentally-scaled public works, as part of an historical continuum. Among the ancient sites he visited on his 1949 Bollingen Foundation grant were:

(from top)

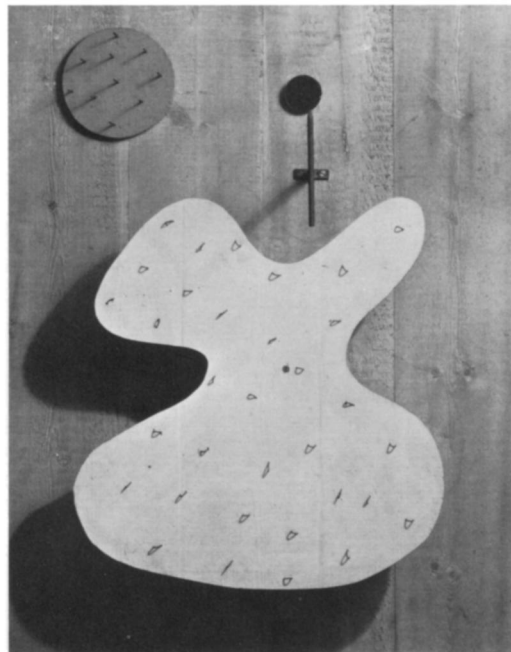
Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain, England, circa 1800 B.C.; Ryoanji Garden, near Kyoto, Japan, designed by Sōami, circa 1500; "Pyramid of the Magician," Uxmal, Yucatan, Mexico, 6th-10th century; and, Samrat Yantra, Jaipur, India, a giant astronomical instrument designed by Maharajah Sawai Jai Singh, II, circa 1734.

(opposite)

The Surrealists' vocabulary in sculpture was an ambiguous fusion of anatomy and nature. These forms embodied the idea of metamorphosis, an idea clearly demonstrated in these works (left to right): *Endless Column*, 1918, Constantin Brancusi; *Relief Construction*, 1930, Joan Miró; and *Growth*, 1938, Jean Arp.

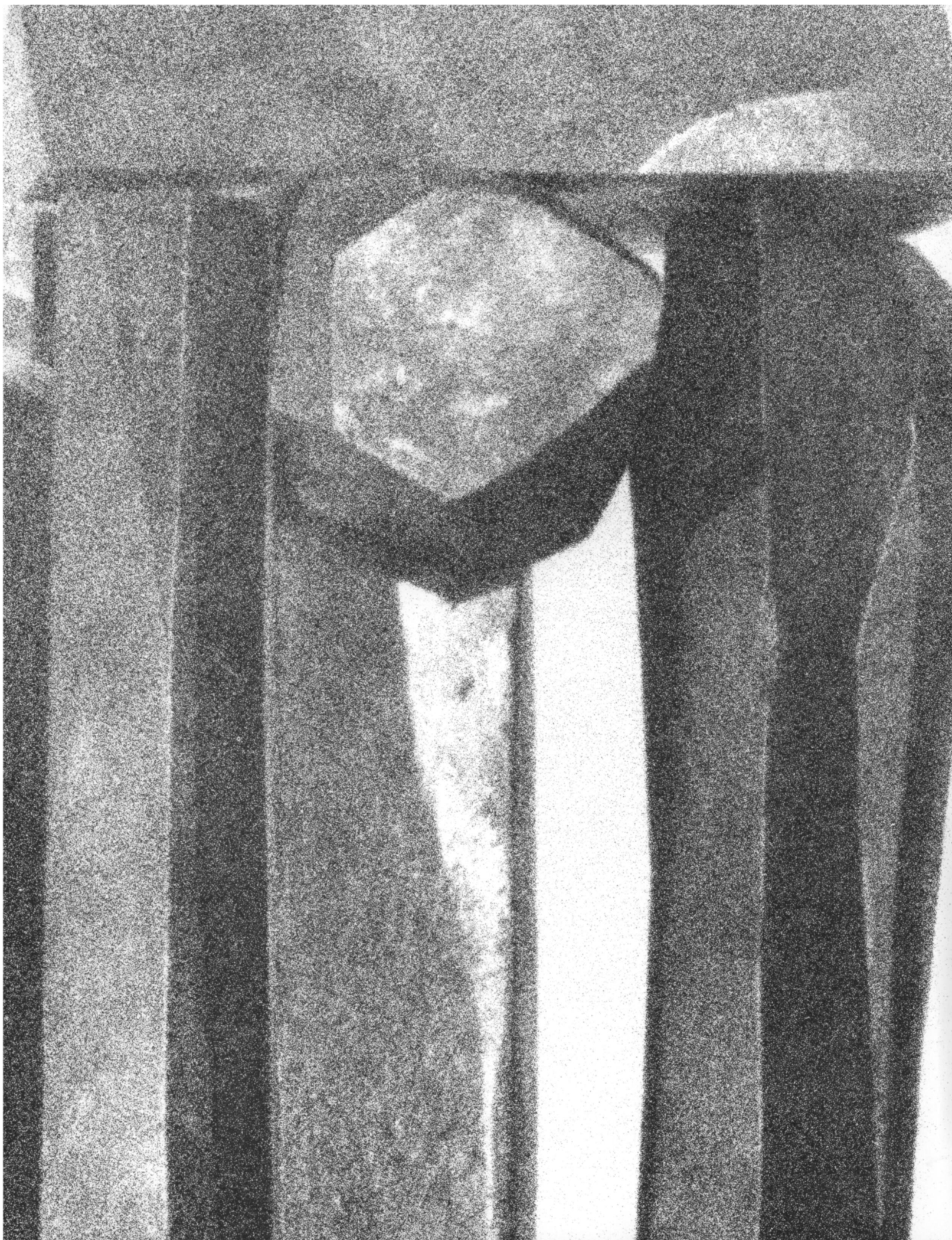
with Japanese folk tales. His understanding of mythology as a manifestation of the collective unconscious found vivid expression in his theater sets for Martha Graham. Though her dance pieces were based on Greek and biblical themes, Noguchi's designs for these were in no sense historical. In his art, mythology assumed enigmatic form. On the stage, his spare structures generated a timeless atmosphere, eluding interpretation, changing their identities; as dancers interacted with them, rocks became mountains and islands and trees were transformed into temple columns.

Noguchi came to artistic maturity in the 1940s when infatuation with the unconscious and the dream world inspired a generation of Surrealist artists to adventure in the hallucinatory landscape of the mind. Erotic and demonic entities inhabited this terrain, constantly varying their aspects to express a range of human emotion and elemental experiences—birth, love, anguish, jealousy, death. Analogies between universal myths and modern day human behavior, posited by Freud and Jung, exerted powerful appeal for American artists. In painting and sculpture, this took the form of "biomorphism," amoeba-like shapes that became the visual *lingua franca* of the period.



Partly because he was of the same generation as the Surrealists, Noguchi had firsthand contact with such organic form and understood its symbolic implications. Some of his orientation to it came in Paris, during his six-month apprenticeship to the great Rumanian artist, Constantin Brancusi, whose own sculpture is an inspired synthesis of biological and geometric elements. Inevitably, Noguchi's awareness of the work by other masters of stone, Arp and Miró, helped shape his formal language, and his approach is rooted as much in the elegant organic abstraction of the early 20th century as in the awesome forms of the oriental and classical worlds.

A fundamental quality of Noguchi's art is "a conscious and controlled ambiguity," according to the critic, Annette Michelson. The characterization is apt. His forms, so carefully defined in contour and finish, elude exact interpretation, and in this respect, they reflect the contradictory aspects of a complex personality. A visionary who thinks in grand designs, Noguchi also involves himself in all possible aspects of a project's development, constantly modifying and reworking ideas; he can be his own severest critic. On the one hand, he is the humanist who aspires to create art for all people; on the other, he is an embattled creative spirit, convinced that it is his fate to stand alone against the tide.



PRIMER OF SCULPTURAL FORMS



Among the readily identifiable sculptures that established Noguchi as a major artist in the mid-1940s is a group of effigy-like works consisting of interlocking pieces of slate, marble or bronze. About the height of the observer and rising directly from the ground, these attenuated structures have strong figurative associations. These are Noguchi's distinctive variation on the evocative shapes of the Surrealists that fused generalized anatomical and naturalistic elements. A lofty eroticism inhabits their smooth, rotund forms which are suggestive of arms, elbows and sexual organs.

Noguchi's utilization of the Surrealist idiom is less earthy than the sculpture of Arp, Miró and Moore, and in his work, references to the human body are more cryptic. In these interlocking pieces, thin-edged forms slice space, but do not displace it. In horizontal variations on this system, he made a number of table sculptures, many with distinct landscape connotations. (An interesting by-product of this group was the celebrated Noguchi table made in 1944, in which a thick, "free form" glass top rests on two sculptural wooden elements.)

These objects are constructed of separate elements and Noguchi places great emphasis on their demountable character.

They are not fixed in place by bolts; they are structural and held in place by gravity. In fact, it's exactly the same as a Japanese house, whose roof is also an interlocking system, with dovetailing, and so forth. A really good dovetail has no nails. A Japanese house is very easy to take apart. The house I have in Japan was in another village—an entirely different place. It was transported, piece by piece, and then put up again. Because it was an old house there were no nails. To me, not to use nails, not to use glue, not to use welding, is a very important element of honesty and also an element of art.

In the early 1960s, Noguchi cast several stone sculptures in bronze and aluminum editions. He oversaw every step of the casting process, paying close attention to details of finish and patination. Among them was a version of the interlocking theme, the bronze sculpture, *Gregory*, cast

from a 1946 work. It is an anthropomorphic image—but is it a prehistoric vestige or the sculptor's subconscious vision of an outer space being? Who is Gregory, anyway? On this subject, Noguchi's ruminations are helpful, if multi-directional. "*Gregory* was one of those images, you might say, that comes partly from the sun," Noguchi tells us. Another source for this form is a famous Polynesian wooden carving from the Austral Islands—an effigy of a sea god from whose body tiny figures of other gods and men emerge. *Gregory*, we learn from Noguchi, also has its origins in a tale by Franz Kafka.

Gregory is the creature who became a cockroach against his will in Kafka's story, *The Metamorphosis*. Remember? And the cockroach is like the Rurutu sculpture, with all his offspring attached to him.

If we follow Noguchi's Polynesian clue, then *Gregory* is a statement about birth and continuity; the Kafka reference, on the other hand, makes us think about metamorphosis. Both theories are valid speculations about Noguchi's art. In this light, *Gregory's* forms also invite many interpretations; its elongated, amoebic shape could be the head and torso of some androgynous deity. Within its outlines, however, mysterious biological processes seem to occur; we might well imagine that its cold, sinuous shapes could, under brilliant sunlight, resume some ancient process of biological transmutation.

Noguchi's fascination with ritualistic objects is evident in *Avatar*, a six-foot tripod of flattened, interlocking bone shapes whose nexus suggests a head. Like *Gregory*, it is a structure of great refinement. Its attenuated forms, brought to a high finish in the original marble version, are fitted with a jeweler's precision. *Avatar's* sexual character is emphasized by erectile shapes that spring bud-like from its tripod "legs," yet it resists absolute categorization, retreating into a hazy mythological realm.

A second major category in Noguchi's sculpture is the voluminous columnar form which, like the interlocking theme, is strongly figurative. For example, such sculptures as *Bird B* reveal themselves as birds' heads and bodies. But again, one must qualify such interpretations because

Sea god, Rurutu, Austral Islands
Collection The British Museum





Dimensions of all works are in inches: Height precedes width precedes depth.

All works not otherwise designated are courtesy of the artist.

The bird theme, familiar from the work of Brancusi, made a distinctive appearance in a series of Noguchi's marble carvings in the mid-50s.

Bird B 1952-58
marble with limestone base
52 x 24 x 12 (sculpture)
7 x 15 x 15 (base)

(opposite from left)

Gregory 1946
bronze 67½ x 16 x 13
(sculpture)
1½ x 11½ x 14¾
(base)

Avatar 1948
bronze 78½ x 33 x 23

this swelling, white, cylindrical mass is replete with anatomical associations suggesting limbs, breasts and a giant phallus.

Asked to discuss some of his germinal sculptural themes, Noguchi talks about emergence ("...emergence out of the earth, you might say") which in his art is a simile for birth. Primary examples are rock-shaped bronze sculptures, crudely fashioned circles reminiscent of volcanoes and prehistoric mounds, and angular mountain forms. In the Japanese garden, Noguchi observes, "Rocks are the bones of the earth." He cites the great abstract arrangements of such masters as Musō Kokushi and the revered Sōami, creator of the garden of Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto: "Plants and trees, no matter how large, are like weeds that come and go, but a garden's essential quality is maintained through the disposition of its rocks." His respect for the classical Japanese garden is evident in *Garden Elements*, a bronze floor sculpture made of three pieces that look like well-worn stones. In *Lessons of Musō Kokushi*, a cluster of five roughly formed bronzes originally shaped in clay, he honors the patron saint of the Japanese garden. ("Musō Kokushi, you might say, was the most original, the most ancient, the most renowned and esteemed of the people who worked in stone.") Although both sculptures consist of separate units placed in seemingly random fashion, the contrast between them is considerable. *Garden Elements* is a recessive arrangement of anonymous bronze pebbles; the rugged forms of *Lessons of Musō Kokushi* suggest boulders ripped from the earth.

Noguchi's interest in the Japanese ceremonial landscape is echoed in his designs for urban plazas and gardens. Many of its standard features are in his celebrated UNESCO garden: rocks, earth mounds, a reflecting pool and carefully pruned trees and shrubs. His circular garden at the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York, by contrast, is austere. There, with exquisite precision, Noguchi poised huge boulders on an undulating brick-covered surface to create a meditation space in the midst of urban frenzy.

Omphalos, a bronze sculpture originally modeled in clay, is as related to the human figure as to an emerging earth form. A mound from which two rudimentary cylinders project, it is a primitive

female form and Noguchi says it symbolizes birth and beginnings:

My sculpture refers to the original birthplace. *Omphalos* is not intended to look like a rock excepting that it is very primitive and more or less like the truncated limbs around a vagina—its origin, you might say. ‘Omphalos’ is a Greek word denoting the original, the center of everything. It could also mean the cave of origin; the Greeks were very attached to caves and sibyls and prophetesses, and they were always going to the caves for consultation with them. That cave, no doubt, has reference to the womb.

Another womb-like work is *This Earth, This Passage*, whose rudimentary form directly reflects the process of its creation:

I formed it of clay with my feet; then it was cast in bronze. This piece related to my 1931 experience in Japan when I was working in Kyoto at the pottery place of Uno Jinmatsu. I was working for myself, but he allowed me to work there to make terra-cottas. To do these terra-cottas, we got a large quantity of earth from a nearby brook; then I prepared it by kneading it with my feet. This process recalls that period. With clay I was making something emerge out of the earth in the same way that a mound would. In bronze it has become an art object, you might say.

Noguchi did not limit himself to floor pieces modeled in clay. Some works, such as the geometric *Floor Frame*, were carved in balsa wood, then cast in bronze, a technique Noguchi developed in the 1940s. (He used balsa wood for lightweight set pieces for Martha Graham’s dance productions, as in *Judith*, 1950.) Another geometric variation on the rising-from-the-floor process is *Cubic Pyramid*, a three-sided polished granite sculpture. It was made in 1969 when Noguchi was exploring pre-cut slabs as a structural technique. Its joining method, involving an internal steel frame, was a departure from his earlier attitude that eschewed any structural system other than slotting and a reliance on gravity. *Cubic Pyramid* shares the rhomboidal distortion of Noguchi’s heroic *Red Cube* sculpture, installed in 1968 at 140 Broadway. Its form is repeated

in two large steel sculptures made in 1972 for the Bayerische Bank in Munich, and its tent shape also occurs in *Sky Viewing*, 1972, a large, outdoor steel cube in Bellingham, Washington, whose sides are pierced by large circular openings.

Having probed one polarity of Noguchi’s sculptures—the cube—we can consider another theme that represents the artist at his most intuitive—the mountain. In his variable cosmos, the mountain can also be a rock or a boulder—the choice is the viewer’s. Few objects portray this theme as descriptively as a 1964 travertine carving called, simply, *The Mountain*. Its contour is a compact, double mound and its roughly textured surface is the result of all-over point chiseling. As a theme, the mountain—and its component rocks and stones—are basic units of Noguchi’s gardens and theater sets. But its materialization in his sculpture, he claims, is purely fortuitous. “You start with the rock, then you try to take advantage of whatever you can—of the shape—and make something of it.” More often than not, he says, the latent mountain shape emerges.

Noguchi’s mountain has many personalities. *Mud Mountain*, a 1965 basalt piece, is a turbulent work with deeply slashed polished surfaces that contrast with the raw stone composing most of the form. Such sculptures that reveal the delicate tension between natural and processed forms are, spiritually, Noguchi’s most oriental works.

A sculpture that qualifies as either a generalized emerging or mountain form is the 1968 granite dome, *Origin*. Noguchi describes it as strongly related to the earth.

It is a broken rock, then it becomes a more precise thing. It is both determinate and indeterminate. It is a basic form—like a natural form except it is obviously man-made. It is related to its surroundings, but it is alone. It is not part of a composition, but becomes a part of everything else. It is a key piece.

As important in Noguchi’s earlier development as the vertical interlocking sculptures and his ground-based “emerging” pieces are works he characterizes as imaginary landscapes. Begun in the 1930s, these horizontal reliefs, suggesting anatomical and landscape forms, are the sources

(opposite)

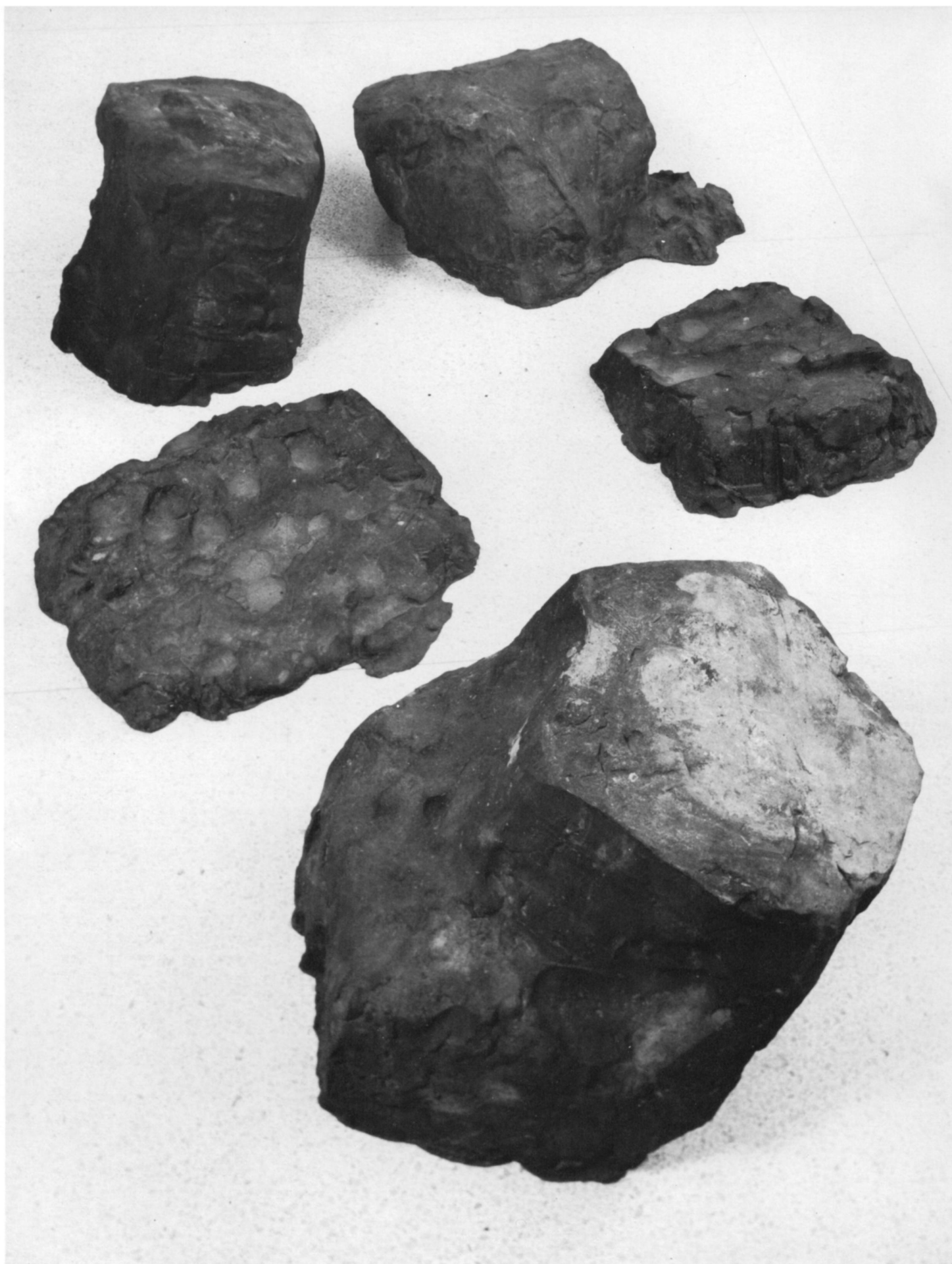
Noguchi’s variations on the scattered, seemingly random forms of the traditional Japanese garden represent a delicate balance between his regard for the “accidental,” or fortuitous effect, and the deliberate placement of objects.

(from top)

Garden Elements 1962
bronze 3 x 33 x 13½
(3 parts) 5 x 14 x 9¾
8 x 26 x 24

This Earth, This Passage 1962
bronze 8 x 42 diameter







Mortality 1959
bronze 74 x 20 x 18
Collection Walker Art Center

(opposite)

Lessons of Musō Kokushi 1962
bronze 5 x 20 x 21
(5 parts) 4 x 24 x 25
13 x 23 x 31
16 x 18 x 21
18 x 20 x 27

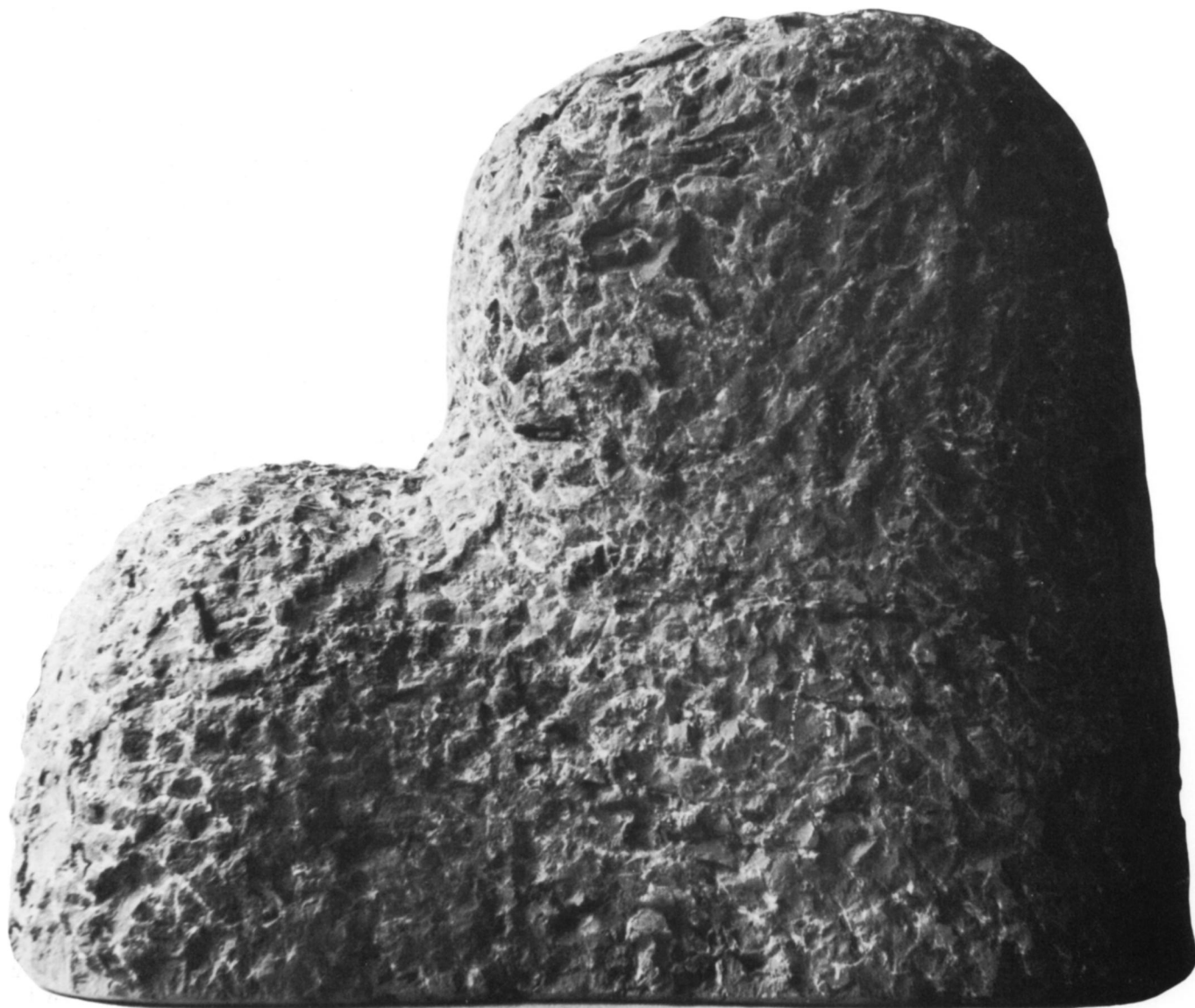
for Noguchi's later playgrounds, gardens and plazas. Some imaginary landscapes are little more than a rudimentary shaping of "earth planes" to create stylized ridges and valleys; others include complex, geometric elements such as terraces, pyramids and other elemental structures. Some resemble "emerging" floor pieces, with one major difference—each landscape is formed on a rectangular base. The earliest of these pieces, *Play Mountain*, was an idyllic 1933 proposal for a children's park. At the other extreme of the stylistic as well as emotional spectrum of the imaginary landscapes is *This Tortured Earth*, a 1942 rendition of a war-torn landscape, consisting of slashed and twisted shapes.

Noguchi's penchant for ritualistic forms is evident in *Stone of Spiritual Understanding*, 1962, a gleaming metal frame whose inverted "U" form suggests a Japanese torii gate marking the approach to a Shinto temple. In this visual paradox, a massive bronze rock is pierced by the frame's horizontal element. Such juxtapositions of man-made and amorphous natural forms occur frequently in Noguchi's work of the 1960s. Other mixed media sculptures of the period are metaphysical and actual balancing acts. In some sculptures, heavy chunks of polished marble seem to float on vertical aluminum supports. In others, stone masses resembling congealed liquid cascade down sheets of metal. These are odd, but insistent marriages of unlikely elements. Obviously, Noguchi relishes performing these exercises in dissonance.

In Stone of Spiritual Understanding
I was interested in the inter-relationship of disparate elements. I've done this sort of thing before in various materials. . . where stones don't interlock with stone but with something else, like metal. They are penetrated by metal or supported by metal. . . in this sculpture, it's a fake stone.

What may appear to be a somewhat perverse approach to form, however, has its logic in Noguchi's rich sense of fantasy. The *Stone of Spiritual Understanding*, he tells us, was inspired by a Chinese book called *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, and his thoughts about this tale help us to regard the sculpture in a new light.

It's a very famous, long, Chinese novel—very old, yes—about two philosophers who were walking



The Mountain 1964
travertine 20 x 11 x 24
with wood (sculpture)
base 11 x 24 x 50
(base)

and discussing this new thing that happened to be called earth—and what a curious place it was. There was a stone which happened to be alongside the road which had been left over from making heaven. It was the stone of spiritual understanding. The stone overheard those philosophers and because it hadn't been used in making heaven, it decided to visit the earth. So it transformed itself into a pebble and fell on earth where it was picked up by a young girl. After the stone of spiritual understanding landed, the little girl put a hole through it and strung it on her neck where it was suspended for a long while. It was quite contented.

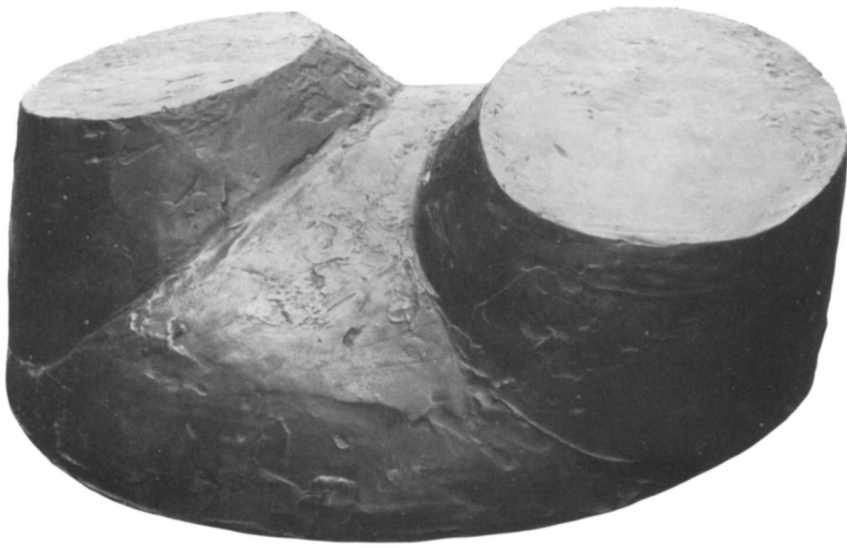
We can also think of the *Stone of Spiritual Understanding* as an anti-gravitational piece, an effort to levitate an earthbound mass. Noguchi has attempted to defy gravity in other works. The thin vertical forms of his pylon sculptures seem weightless as they pierce space. The slightly turned, attenuated pylon is a germinal theme in his art. In one 1970 manifestation, *The Spirit's Flight*, he literally portrays the gentle rotation of a pylon on its axis, thus giving permanence to a transitory phenomenon. (The same point can be made about representing other physical principles in his interlocking, radiating and shattered forms. We should distinguish, however, between forms that directly result from such processes and those that idealize them. The first implies improvisation, an approach foreign to Noguchi's way of working. Even though many of his sculptures may suggest improvisation, especially those roughly modeled in clay, his control over his form is absolute. What, for example, seems to be a random scattering of found forms in the *Lessons of Musō Kokushi* is, really, a precise deployment of carefully shaped elements.)

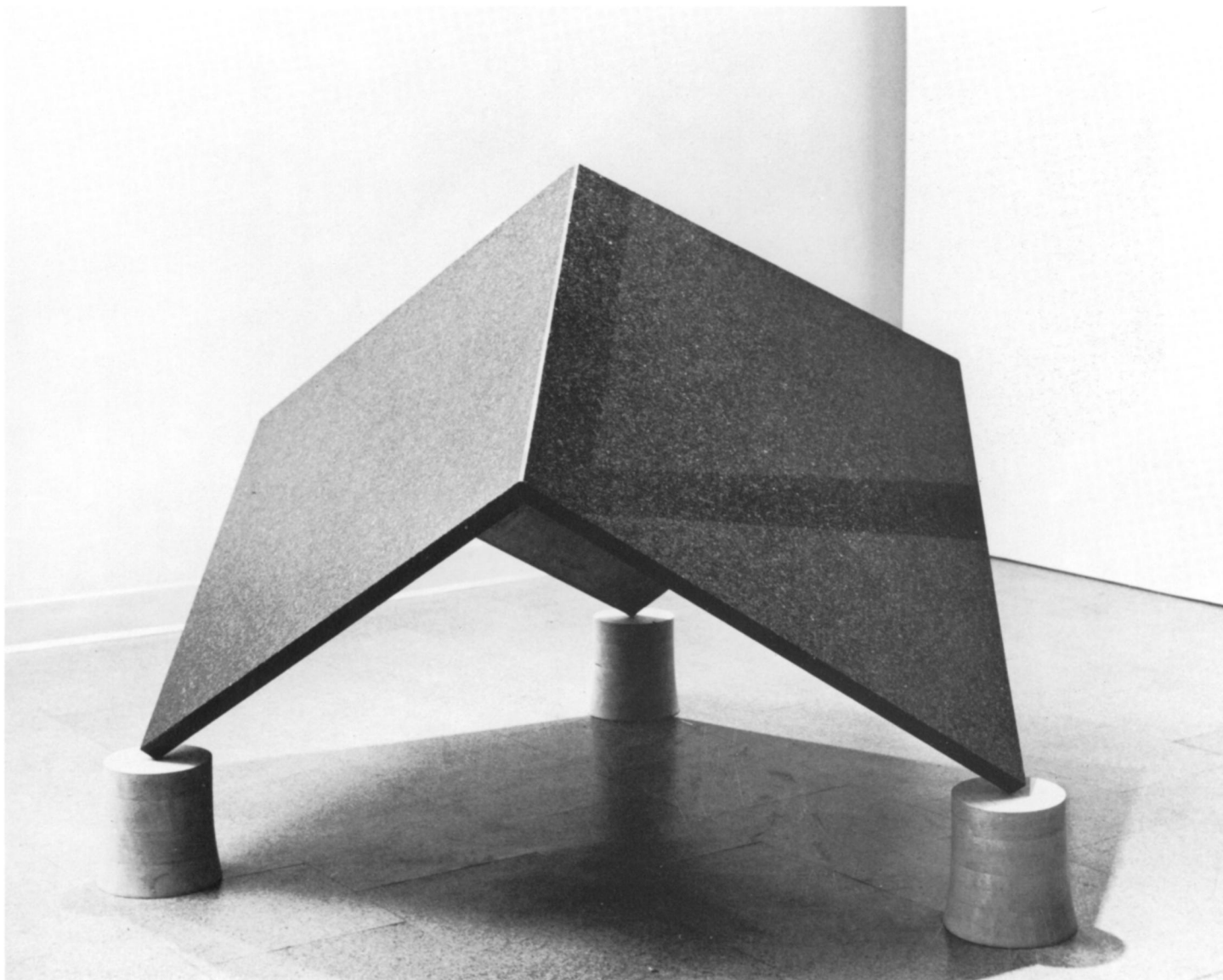
Noguchi's pylon derives from several sources. Its long, rectangular shape and twisting action relate it to his *akari*, paper lanterns that are suspended from the ceiling or hung on metal frames. And, of course, it is impossible to discuss the pylon without reference to Brancusi's *Endless Column*, also an elongated spiraling form. As Brancusi's young stone polisher and general factotum, Noguchi was especially susceptible to that spiritualized form in the master's atelier. Later, in his own endless variations, the pylon was stretched to

improbable limits. To accomplish this, Noguchi devised a structural system that enabled him to create a tall, thin form without sacrificing its tensile strength. He composed his pylon of separate units of marble, held together under tension to form a long shape; an internal metal structure became the spine of these vertebrae. Because *The Spirit's Flight* is composed of separate sections to ensure its strength, Noguchi decided to emphasize its structural system in a striped effect resulting from the combination of carrara and serpentine marbles. "It really was an afterthought," he says. "If you're making a sculpture of different pieces, why use the same color?" A more abstract influence on the turning pylon form is Noguchi's great interest in the helical configuration assumed by a DNA molecule, the cellular substance which contains the genetic code. He marvels at this discovery and feels that his turning pylon shape symbolically expresses this principle. Noguchi's turning column is a primary element in two recent monumental projects. His ambitious design for Detroit's Civic Center Plaza includes a 120-foot stainless steel pylon as well as a giant ring-shaped fountain. In Tokyo, a recently completed 40-foot granite pylon marks the entrance to the new Kenzo Tange-designed building for the Sogetsu School of Flower Arrangement. Carved of separate elements at Noguchi's studio in Shikoku, it was transported halfway across Japan without damage, a fact Noguchi attributes to its post-tensioning fabrication.

Sometimes the pylon appears in another incarnation—as a floor piece. The elegantly shaped components of *Ground Wind II* resemble a long, broken blade whose sections, carefully placed on the ground, abut. "It's made of different kinds of granite and there's a certain agitation between them," Noguchi says of this delicate form, noting that in making such a work, "You're not fighting gravity any more—you're reconciled to it." Its sharp clean edges, he tells us, approximate those of the Shinto sword, a favorite analogy of his.

The sharpness and purity of the Japanese sword is much admired, and this sculpture has that kind of elemental purity. You can say it relates to modern times and that it's an awareness of the helix, but it also relates to the past in that the sword and mirror are Shinto images.





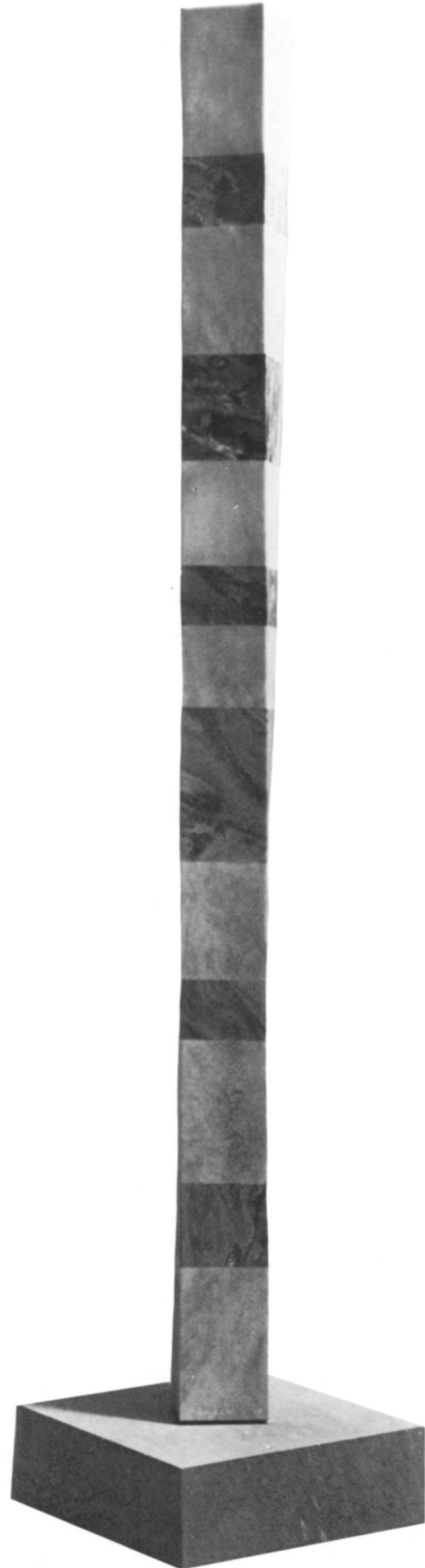
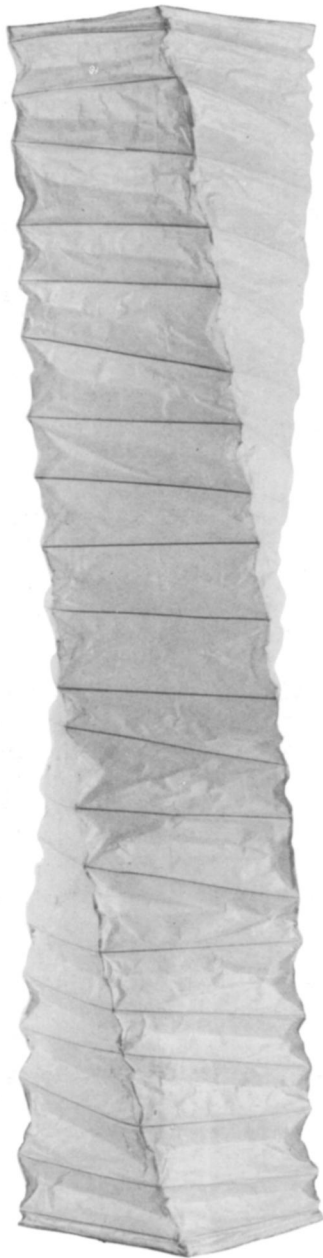
In contrast to such roughly finished organic works as *The Mountain*, *Cubic Pyramid* represents Noguchi at his most analytical. Its configuration is repeated in such large outdoor sculptures as *Sky Viewing* (p 74).

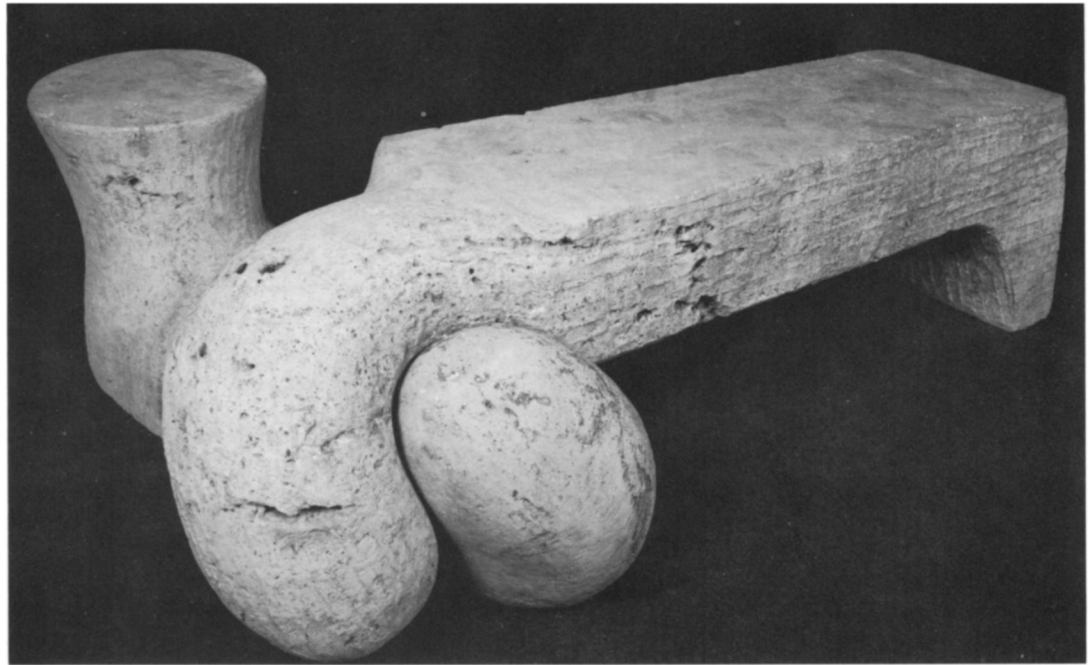
Cubic Pyramid 1969
granite 36 x 53 x 53

(opposite, from top)

Omphalos 1962
bronze 8 x 26 x 25

Origin with Young Balloon 1967-68
cast 28
aluminum





Noguchi plays with the idea of “shattering” to create new forms. On first impression, *This Place*, 1968, appears to be an imaginary landscape formed of granite, that might have been dropped and broken into seven parts. Like the units in *Ground Wind II*, its parts touch. But the breakage is an illusion; there is nothing accidental about this studied composition. It is another paradoxical image in which Noguchi presents an idea, then symbolically negates it in a single form. The large, dark gray relief, similar in form to a traditional Japanese ink dish, is related to Noguchi’s garden rock sculptures. For some time it lay on the ground outside his house in Japan where Noguchi watched it become part of the landscape as grass grew in its “cracks.”

A recent, persistent theme in Noguchi’s art is the void, eloquently expressed in a series of tubular sculptures. It is also a paradoxical theme, because the space enclosed is as much a part of the sculpture as the form that confines it. In Noguchi’s art, the void is a play on the relationship of positive to negative forms. Such sculptures may be regarded as metaphysical proposals that have their parallel in a venerable Buddhist *sutra*: “Form is emptiness, and emptiness is indeed form. Emptiness is not different from form, form is not different from emptiness.”

This esoteric theme has found heroic expression in Noguchi’s large-scale public monument, *Portal*, a recent commission for the Cuyahoga Justice Center in Cleveland. Though constructed of massive steel cylinders, its open structure is a marvel of calligraphic delicacy. The shape of a granite piece, *Energy Void*, is a distorted

“O” with flattened sides. “The pliable cylinder has its sources in human anatomy,” Noguchi observes, “Your legs are tubes, you know—one could build you out of pieces of pipe for your torso, and so on.” Another ambitious use of mass in tubular form is, of course, Noguchi’s new Dodge Fountain in Detroit. Its major component is an enormous circle supported by two massive cylindrical legs.

It is impossible to place Noguchi’s sculpture into neat categories or sequences. While we may, for the purposes of discussion, focus on certain major themes and construction processes, his forms are so elusive and generalized that they invite a variety of interpretations. For example, how does one neatly characterize a sculpture such as *She*? It combines elements of many themes just discussed. Its generally horizontal orientation relates it to the emerging floor pieces; its two flattened cylindrical units qualify it as a tubular sculpture; its alternating marble stripes associate *She* with Noguchi’s elongated, post-tensioned pieces. And, perhaps most important, its frankly sexual attributes—a fairly definite vulvar shape emerging from the top of the piece—place it squarely among Noguchi’s erotic columnar sculptures. The same ambiguity surrounds *Ding-Dong Bat*, an amiable striped priapic form that celebrates the male principle.

The game of stylistic analysis has its rewards and offers us constantly changing insights about Noguchi’s sculpture. Most rewarding, however, is the realization that all of his forms, in their various manifestations and combinations, are, fundamentally, expressive of life processes. They are about birth and continuity.

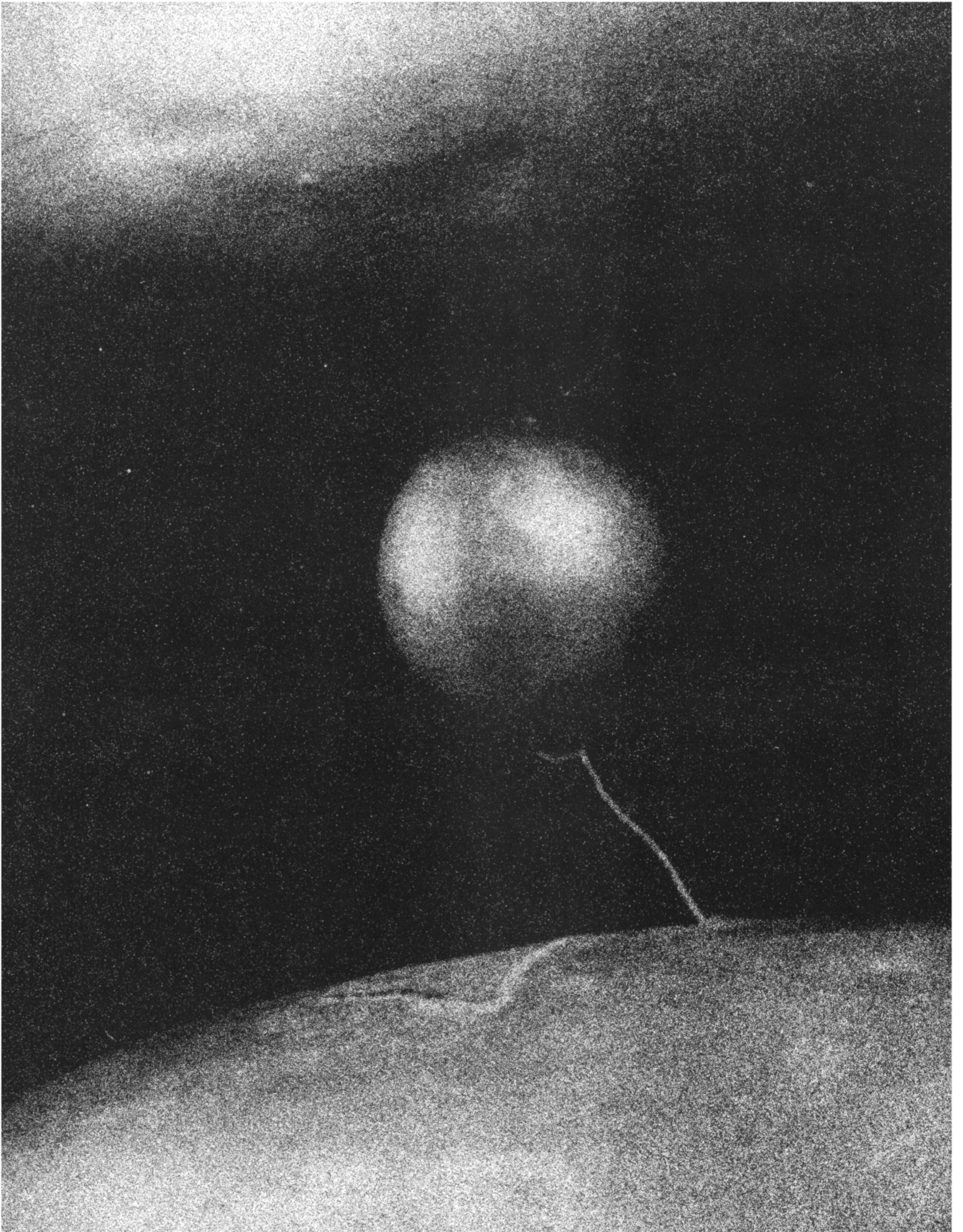
The principle of demountable, interlocking forms which characterized Noguchi’s art in the mid-40s finds latter-day expression in this massive, carved travertine piece, intended as a utilitarian object.

Bench 1966
travertine 20 x 72 x 20
(2 parts) 21½ x 49 x 18¼

(opposite)

Noguchi emphasizes the relationship between the gently twisting forms of his paper lamps (*akari*) and his elongated pylons.

The Spirit’s Flight 1970
serpentine and marble with marble base
94 x 5¼ x 5¼ (sculpture)
6½ x 20 x 20 (base)



DESIGNS FOR THE STAGE

When Martha Graham and Noguchi began their collaboration in the 1930s, modern dance in America was in its infancy and the public had little sympathy for what today is a well-established art form with a pantheon of superstars. A maverick phenomenon, it was perceived as something between theater and ballet, with a little vaudeville thrown in. Graham gave modern dance identity through her interpretations of mythology and historical events in modern, psychological terms. A product of the Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn dance tradition whose inspiration lay in picturesque antiquity and fantasies about noble savages, Graham brought her dramatic ideas to an early focus in the roles of tragic heroines and demigoddesses. Whether drawn from Olympus or the Old Testament, her themes were primal ones of birth, love and death.

The movements of her dancers were concise and authoritative, but the atmosphere in which they moved was indeterminate. Therefore, she needed a designer who could reflect her symbolic views by creating mystical environments. To provide this unspecific quality of time and space, she invited the young sculptor, Isamu Noguchi, to work with her. He had been introduced to Graham in 1928 (his sister had danced in her company) and in 1929 he made two portrait heads of her.

In 1935, Graham asked Noguchi to design a set for *Frontier*, a dance about the opening of the American West with music by Louis Horst. This was his first work for theater, and it was to be a new experience for Graham as well, since she had not previously commissioned a set. She could not have had a more basic introduction to the art. Noguchi provided her with the simplest possible background for her production. As Graham describes it, the set symbolizes:

... the distance of the plains that I feel this girl is looking at, almost for the first time. She's arrived in a new area, a new landscape, and Isamu brought me this very simple, elegant thing—just ropes indicating the distance, the trail and the tracks of the railroad train, and the inevitable fence that gets built as soon as the pioneers take over.

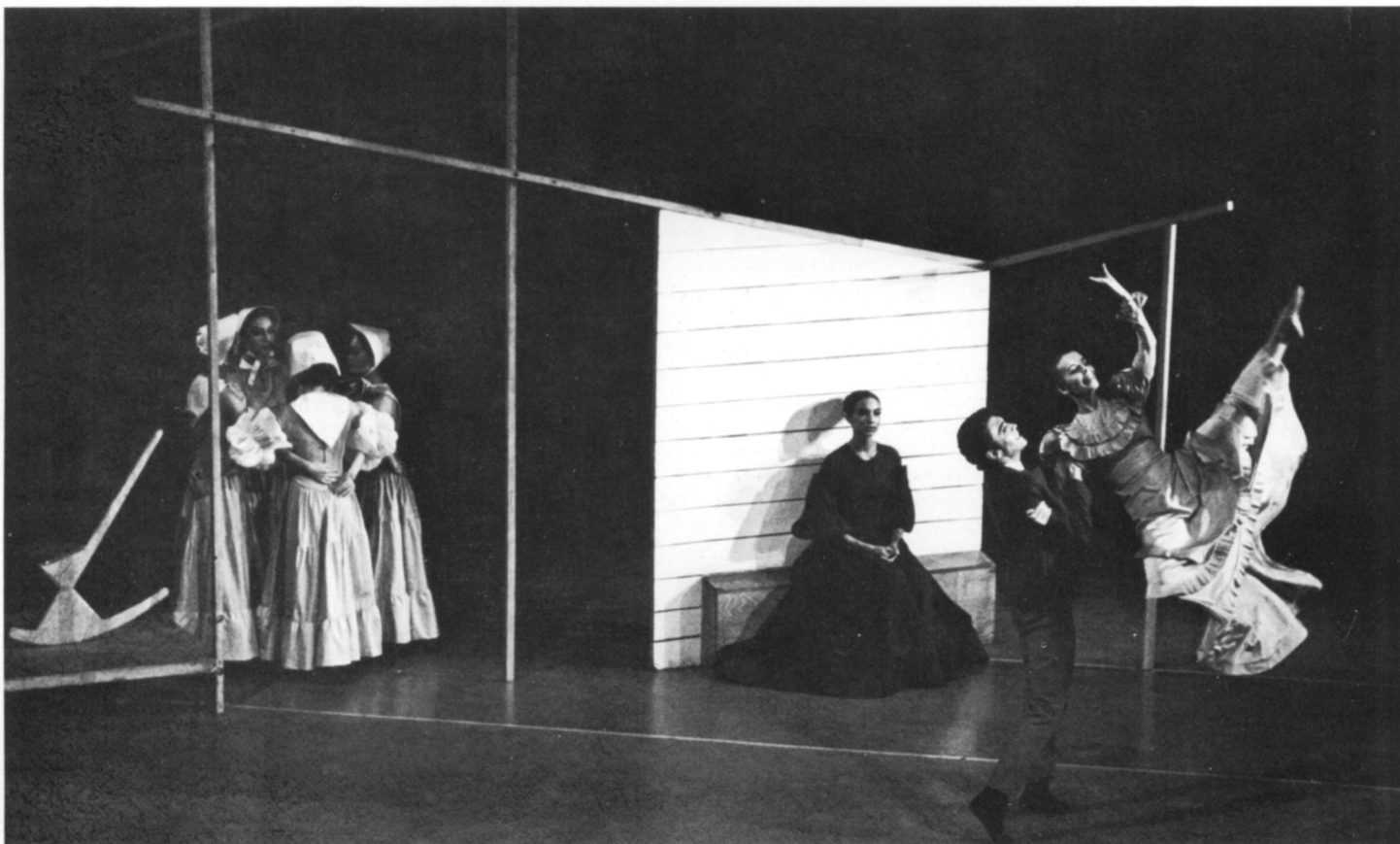
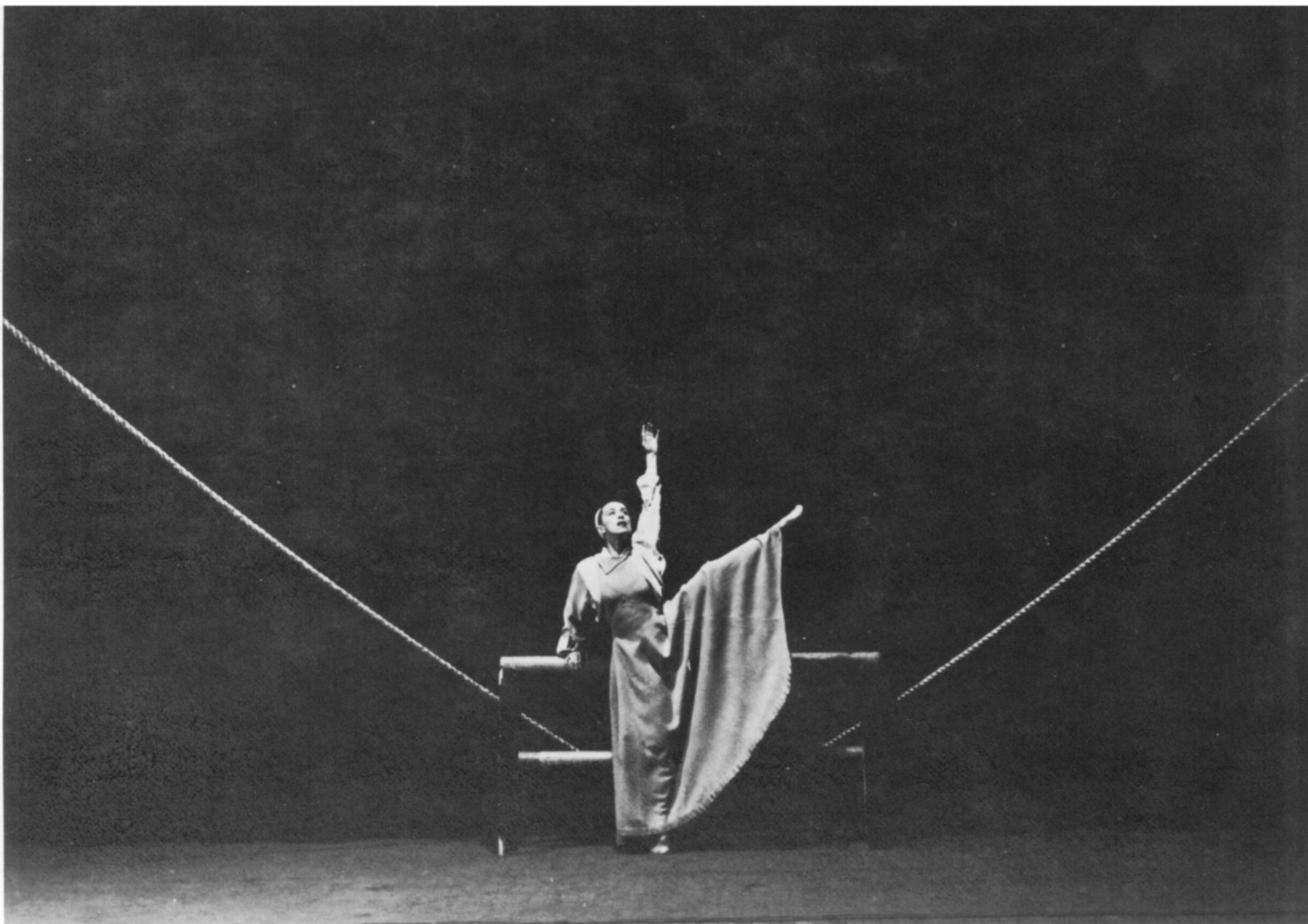
Compared to Graham's later tension-wracked interpretations of legendary

themes, *Frontier* was a relatively romantic, ingenuous statement. Even at that early stage, Noguchi understood her attitudes about the dance and the need to present it in a psychological rather than literal landscape. Though he did one other set for her in 1936, not until 1944 did their collaboration assume definite, continuous form. Graham invited him to create sets for three productions commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation in the Library of Congress. These were *Appalachian Spring*, with music by Aaron Copland, *Herodiade*, with music by Paul Hindemith, and *Imagined Wing*, with a score by Darius Milhaud.

Not only was Graham prescient in her utilization of Noguchi as a set designer, but as an avid early sponsor of new music, she commissioned leading American and European composers to create scores for her dances. She was totally open to their ideas as she was to Noguchi's, and states that she never began creating a dance until she had the music in hand. Using the score, she blocked out the basic choreography. In discussions with Noguchi, she further defined the mood and action. She always dealt with the composer and the designer separately, and Noguchi, in turn, rarely worked directly with composers, nor did he accommodate his designs to their scores. He claims he almost never heard their music beforehand, except for snatches on the piano. While designing the set for Balanchine's production of *Orpheus*, whose score was by Stravinsky, Noguchi, who enjoys working while listening to music, had Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* on the phonograph.

Even as Noguchi entered the new aesthetic arena of the theater, he continued to think of all of his work as sculpture, and the identification of his set pieces as sculpture, was clear. Most important, he felt free of traditional theater design with its painted backdrops. Because he and Graham began with no preconceived ideas about how her productions should look and because, until then, few modern dancers had utilized sets, he had a clear field.

The stage in his view is a hypothetically perfect space where objects assume animate quality. His designs were intended to create atmosphere for rituals. He has always conceived of theater as heightened reality, a process by which the audience could identify with the universal implications of the action.



The person who's gone to the theater is having a renewed outlook on life. My work in the theater has been an aid in the creation of a feeling, or whatever you want to call it, that is religious—a transformation.

Although Noguchi had not designed sets before working with Graham, he approached the task with an awareness of Japanese theater tradition, the most important influence being the abstract, ritualistic form of Noh drama, in which action and time are distilled. The studied randomness of the Japanese garden with its minimalistic forms—rocks on raked gravel—was another important source for his stage ideas. Noguchi's taste has always been for the symbolic rather than the descriptive or picturesque, and his sets, though in some measure predicated on oriental principles, are too idiosyncratic to be considered in that tradition. Their impassive, insistent forms are generalized, dimly alluding to many antique cultures, yet deliberately non-specific.

While today we marvel at the results of an artistic collaboration that endured for 31 years and resulted in some 22 dance productions, credit for its continuity as well as its inception is mainly Graham's. She decided on the theme and character of each dance but wisely left it to Noguchi to provide the environment for action. Once she became enthusiastic about a new project, he says, she made every effort to communicate this feeling to him.

Usually she called me up in the dead of night and said, 'Isamu I need your help and I have a wonderful idea and I want to tell you about it.' I'd go over there and she would go into a story about what she wanted to do. It would usually have a psychological basis, and she had very definite ideas about where the action would take place in relation to the stage. So, in a way, I was restricted or encouraged to conform to those requirements.

It was a monologue on the part of Martha who would talk about her idea. And then I'd go home and I'd give her the setting which would encompass such an emotional topic.

During the 1940s, when the Graham/Noguchi collaboration assumed its identifiable form, the influence of

psychoanalysis, especially personal interpretation of mythology and the dream world, had a pervasive influence on American artists. In the guise of Surrealism it affected the course of painting, sculpture—and in the case of Martha Graham—the dance. The organic quality of surrealist form permeated Noguchi's sculpture, which consisted of quasi-anatomical elements that interlocked and appeared to consume one another. In this spirit, his forms assumed multiple identities, and their configurations suggested endless possibilities.

Although Noguchi and Graham approached their work together from radically different positions, they were in agreement on basic issues. Each believed in achieving maximum results with the simplest, most direct means. Graham's spare, sharply articulated choreography and Noguchi's insistence on strong, elemental form provided a common foundation for their work.

Graham never dictated style to Noguchi. She confidently left these decisions to him. Her chief concern was that his designs function in a practical as well as symbolic manner.

The only thing I have demanded is that the sets, whatever we had, were to be used. They had to be mobile; in other words, they were to be in action. They were characters in this drama and as essential to me as the people. I don't want anything decorative, because I feel that's death.

The dancer and sculptor shared a vivid sense of the past and conceived of their artistic roles as part of a historical continuum. Neither was concerned with reproducing antiquity, but each was strongly imbued with the sense of universal myth. Their concern was with revelation, not description. Both were fascinated by ceremony, and Graham's events in Noguchi's settings became timeless rituals. Yet if Noguchi's forms, like Graham's choreography, evoked images of ancient civilizations, to the public they appeared defiantly contemporary.

Sharing so many philosophical attitudes made it possible for Graham and Noguchi to read each other's intentions. This tacit understanding greatly facilitated their collaborative efforts and, Graham says, took the form of an intuitive working method.

Noguchi's early designs for Graham were linear and spare, serving primarily to schematically define a dancer's space.

(opposite, from top)

Frontier 1935
music Louis Horst
choreography Martha Graham
and costumes
sets Isamu Noguchi

Martha Graham is shown in this solo work.

Appalachian Spring 1944
music Aaron Copland
choreography Martha Graham
sets Isamu Noguchi
costumes Edythe Gilfond

Set element in exhibition:
bronze chair 33 x 33 x 15½

Dancers (left to right, stage front):
Matt Turney, Robert Cohan,
Martha Graham, Ethel Winter



It was a voiceless thing, a non-verbal thing between Isamu and me. He would see part of the dance; then he would close his eyes and make doodles on paper, you know. And I thought oh, he's bored, he isn't paying attention, he isn't interested. Then he'd come back with his design—bring me a maquette, you see, and I remember the first time I saw the maquette for *Seraphic Dialogue*. I was floored by it; it was so much more beautiful than I had expected.

Once a design was accepted, Graham systematically incorporated it into the production.

Isamu decided where to place these things on the stage—as far as inches and feet were concerned—then I arranged diagrams in the studio. No change is ever made in this concept of space. I do that with music, too. I don't cut music. I don't change music. Otherwise I don't use it.

I got a great deal of excitement out of experimenting with those things. On the first day the sets were moved in, some of the company would say, 'Oh, don't tell us we have to work on that,' and I'd say, 'Yes you do,' and so we did. We found a way to do it.

Occasionally, after a few performances, a set might be retired. This had to do more with her changing notions about a production than with its design. After a period of banishment, a set might reappear in a new context. (An example is Noguchi's initial 1953 design for *Voyage*. Its elemental painted wood ship, with a cut-out sail that doubles as a cloud, reappeared in the set for *Circe*, 1963.)

In several cases, for one reason or another, Noguchi's designs were not used. Graham had either changed her mind about the original concept or decided that she and the sculptor were on different wavelengths. There was, she points out, the occasional problem of communicating her reservations about the appropriateness of a design to Noguchi.

Well, I have never said 'no' outright to Isamu, because one doesn't. If you know it won't work, you become very oriental. In other words I'd say, 'Well, that is

extraordinary. Now I have to think about it overnight because I have to accommodate myself to the image.' Well, in that way, Isamu knew that all was not well exactly, so he usually went away and brought back another set the next day. I never criticized anything deliberately and absolutely to him.

While Graham allowed Noguchi a free hand in evolving the formal concept for her sets, she implicitly reserved the right to add whatever props were required. This applied to her costumes which were frequently of her own design. Ornate jewelry, masks and headdresses, however, were often made by Noguchi. These sculptural objects were consistent in form with the architectural set elements.

Noguchi's ability to activate a huge area, using a few simple forms, is immediately apparent in his 1944 set for *Herodiade*. Though surprisingly small in scale, the set pieces, whose calcified presence dominates a large stage, seem to grow in size and emit powerful energies.

In *Herodiade*, Graham was probing the psychological nuances of the tale of Salome. The issue was mortality, and Noguchi provided Graham with sparse, bone-like forms, consisting of flat interlocking elements against a dark background. He thought of the set as an enclosed space that symbolized the mind of the aging temptress. Graham's personification of Salome is filled with intimations of death. Noguchi's forms are skeletal beings and Salome confronts her destiny in a symbolic mirror. A demanding experience for the audience as well as for Graham, she recalls that even the composer was disconcerted.

Mr. Hindemith did not like what I did and he did not like the set. He said, 'Where is the mirror, where are the legends?' I said to him, '... but I'm dealing with the magic of the mind, not the actuality.'

The piece on stage left is a human body in a certain aspect. The chair is the chair of memories which Plato speaks about. When you sit in the chair of memories, if you're strong enough and you've drunk deep enough of the river of memory in the underworld, you will remember not only the actual fact, but you will remember the past of thousands of years ago.

(opposite)

The *Herodiade* set's interlocking forms were the prototypes for a memorable group of marble and granite slab sculptures, such as *Gregory* and *Avatar* (p 12).

<i>Herodiade</i>	1944
music	Paul Hindemith
choreography	Martha Graham
sets	Isamu Noguchi
costumes	Edythe Gilfond

Set elements in exhibition:
 painted plywood clothesrack
 96 x 24 x 24
 chair
 40 x 16 x 26
 mirror
 72 x 25 x 18

Dancers (left to right):
 Martha Graham, May O'Donnell

And that mirror which stands on stage right is unconsciously what we see in ourselves. It is a skeleton. The ribs are there. The bird that lies in the heart is there. . . . When a woman looks in a mirror—I don't know about a man, I know about a woman—and if she's approaching the time when she's no longer young, she sees her skeleton, she sees her bones. Now, I've treasured my bones very much and I want always to keep them in my face. I never wanted a round face because it bears no scars.

With *Herodiade*, it is a moment of decision when she faces the fact that she is no longer young—she is no longer a radiant young thing.

When I looked in the mirror, there in *Herodiade*, I saw my finish. I saw my beginning and I saw my finish.

And it was on that level that Isamu and I met, but we never talked about it.

In strong contrast to the introspective quality of *Herodiade*, Graham's violently expressionistic dance, *Cave of the Heart*, 1946, dealt with passion, jealousy and revenge. It is based on the Greek legend of Medea, a princess of Colchis, who helps Jason, her husband and the leader of the Argonauts, to steal the Golden Fleece. He later abandons her, and in a frenzy, she slays their children and disappears.

For this stark drama, Noguchi created a set consisting of a mountain shape, a serpentine mound and a scattering of rocks—the islands to which the Argonauts journeyed. His genius in symbolizing legendary themes with such spare form was constantly put to the test in his association with Graham. In his designs, the most elemental shapes took on multiple identities. Their immediate sources, if somewhat hazy, were redolent of the minimalistic forms of the Orient. One man's Japanese stepping stone was, however, another's Greek island.

Graham admits that even while utilizing Noguchi's boulders as levels and supports in *Cave of the Heart*, she was unaware of their precise implications until years later.

I never realized exactly what those stones meant. We used them and they were wonderful and I thought of them as part of the design from which Jason leaps until (years later) I flew over Greece and saw the islands. Oh, my, I thought, I'm home!

The visual conception of *Cave of the Heart* was entirely Noguchi's, but Graham was specific about an important detail.

There was one request I made of Isamu at that time. I said I would love to have a dress which shows the spiritual, the half-goddess quality of Medea, but I don't want to wear it all the time. I wanted to walk in and out of it.

I said I wanted the dress transparent if possible, but I didn't put any limitations on him.

Noguchi's response provided the set with its most memorable element—the term “dress,” however, cannot possibly describe the fragile, radiating wire sculpture that Graham, as Medea, donned in her metamorphosis from grief stricken princess to daughter of the sun. He describes his conception of Medea's otherworldly garb:

The dress is actually the nimbus of the sun. At the end when she disappears it is the sunset. The dress is left there, shimmering.

In *Judith*, 1950, Graham cast herself in a difficult solo role, portraying the biblical heroine as she reviewed the events of her life. Their culmination was her encounter with the Babylonian general, Holofernes, whose favor she courted as a means of protecting her people from the oppression of his soldiers. In Graham's interpretation, *Judith* is an introspective, psychological drama—its action occurring in the recollection of a fateful act: the slaying of Holofernes in his tent. Graham's characterization of Judith's act was based on its account in the *Apocrypha* as she went forth to meet the enemy. “She put off her the garments of widowhood and put on her the garments of joy to give joy to the children of Israel.”

As in all Graham interpretations, this was no literal reenactment of a hallowed text. She told the tale in terms of ritual death

To symbolize the identification of *Cave of the Heart's* heroine, Medea, with the sun, Noguchi created a fragile, radiating form that Martha Graham (seen here) could literally walk into and wear, as part of the frenetic action of the dance.

Cave of the Heart 1946
 music Samuel Barber
 choreography Martha Graham
 sets Isamu Noguchi
 costumes (except brass dress) Edythe Gilfond
 Set elements in exhibition:
 brass dress 90 x 80 x 20
 painted 16 x 42 x 34
 plaster base
 magnesite
 rocks (5) 9 x 12 x 20
 each approximately



Judith 1950
 music William Schuman
 choreography and costumes Martha Graham
 sets Isamu Noguchi

Set elements in exhibition:

balsa wood
 tent (4 pieces) 108 x 4 (3)
 71 x 4

balsa
 wood lyre 75 x 28 x 5
 felt
 branches (2)
 hardwood
 stool 17 x 13 diameter

Dancer: Martha Graham

(opposite, from top)

Embattled Garden 1958
 music Carlos Surinach
 choreography and costumes Martha Graham
 sets Isamu Noguchi

Dancers (left to right): Glen Tetley, Matt Turney, Mary Hinkson, Bert Ross

Alcestris 1960
 music Vivian Fine
 choreography Martha Graham
 and costumes Isamu Noguchi
 sets Isamu Noguchi

Dancers (left to right): Helen McGhee, Bert Ross, Linda Hodes, Paul Taylor, Bette Shuler, Carol Payne, Ellen Graff

Clytemnestra 1958
 music Halim El-Dabh
 choreography Martha Graham
 and costumes Isamu Noguchi

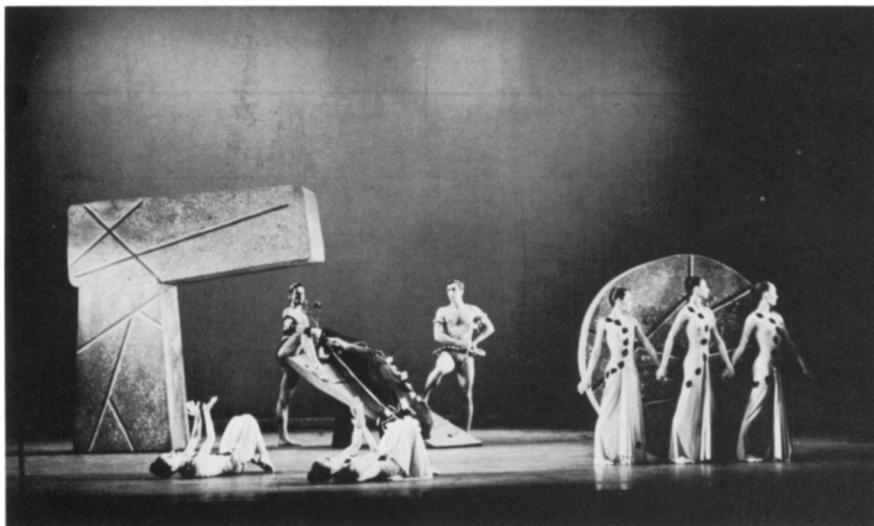
Martha Graham is seen here in the title role





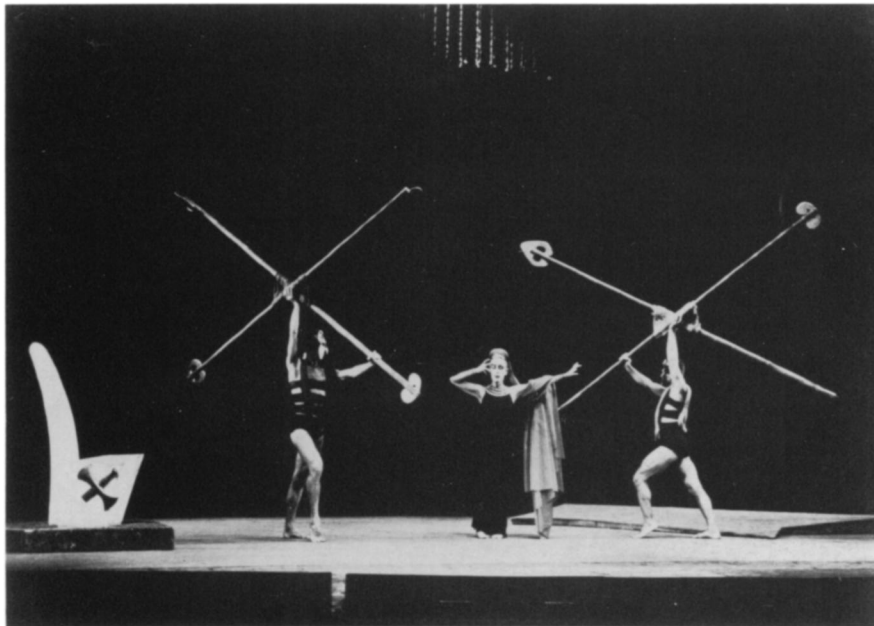
and renewal. Her feverish conception, based on the interrelationship between mythological and psychological forces, required an environment that would enable the audience to perceive the event on many levels.

Noguchi created such a setting for Judith's wild vision. Its elements bristled with militaristic and erotic images. Its major structure was a tall, tent-like framework suggesting crossed spears, an aggressive phallic form and a snarling heraldic beast. From the tent's horizontal beam hung a royal purple cloth. On the other side of the stage was a lyre, which also served as Judith's loom. Graham describes how, as Judith, she used these forms in her dance.

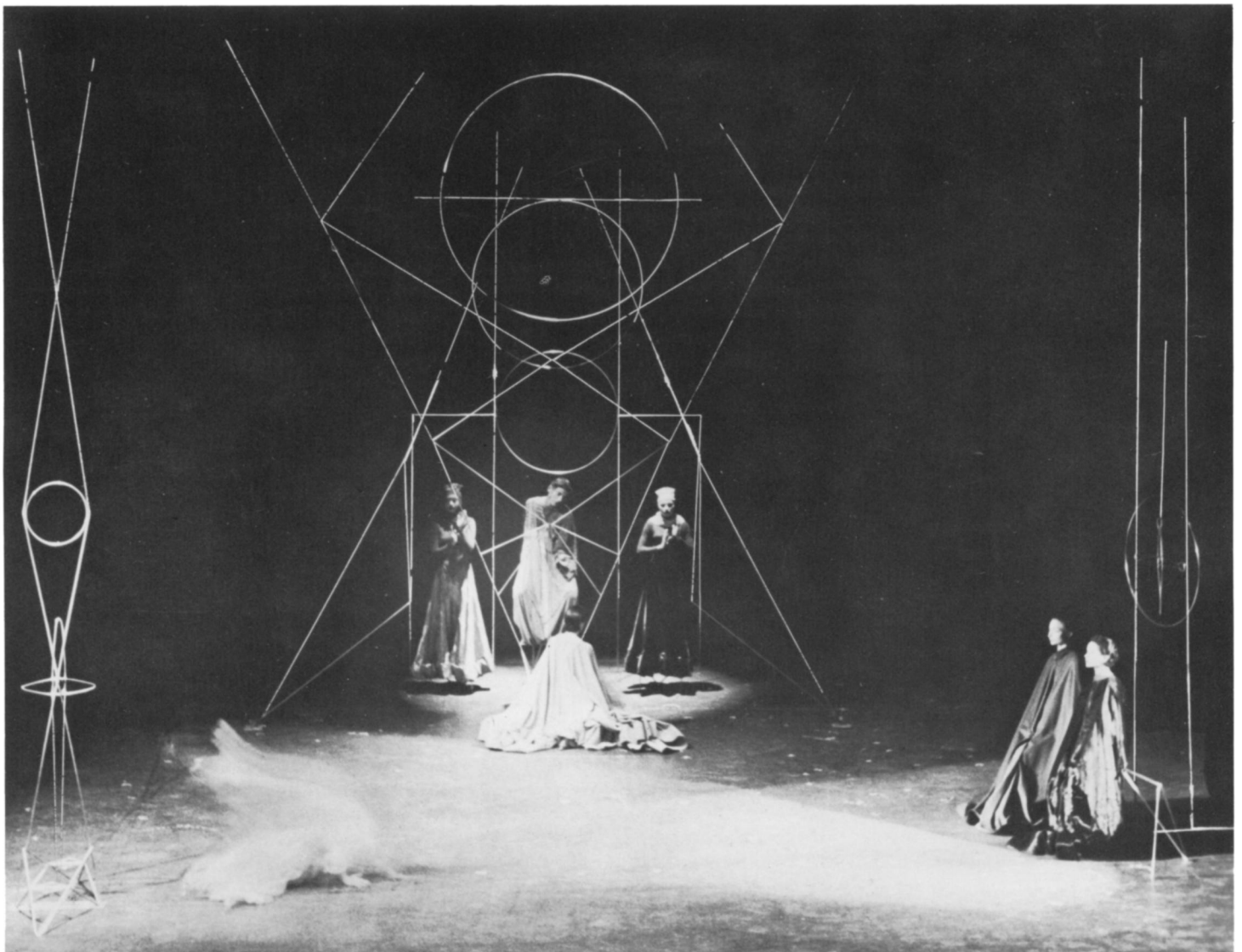
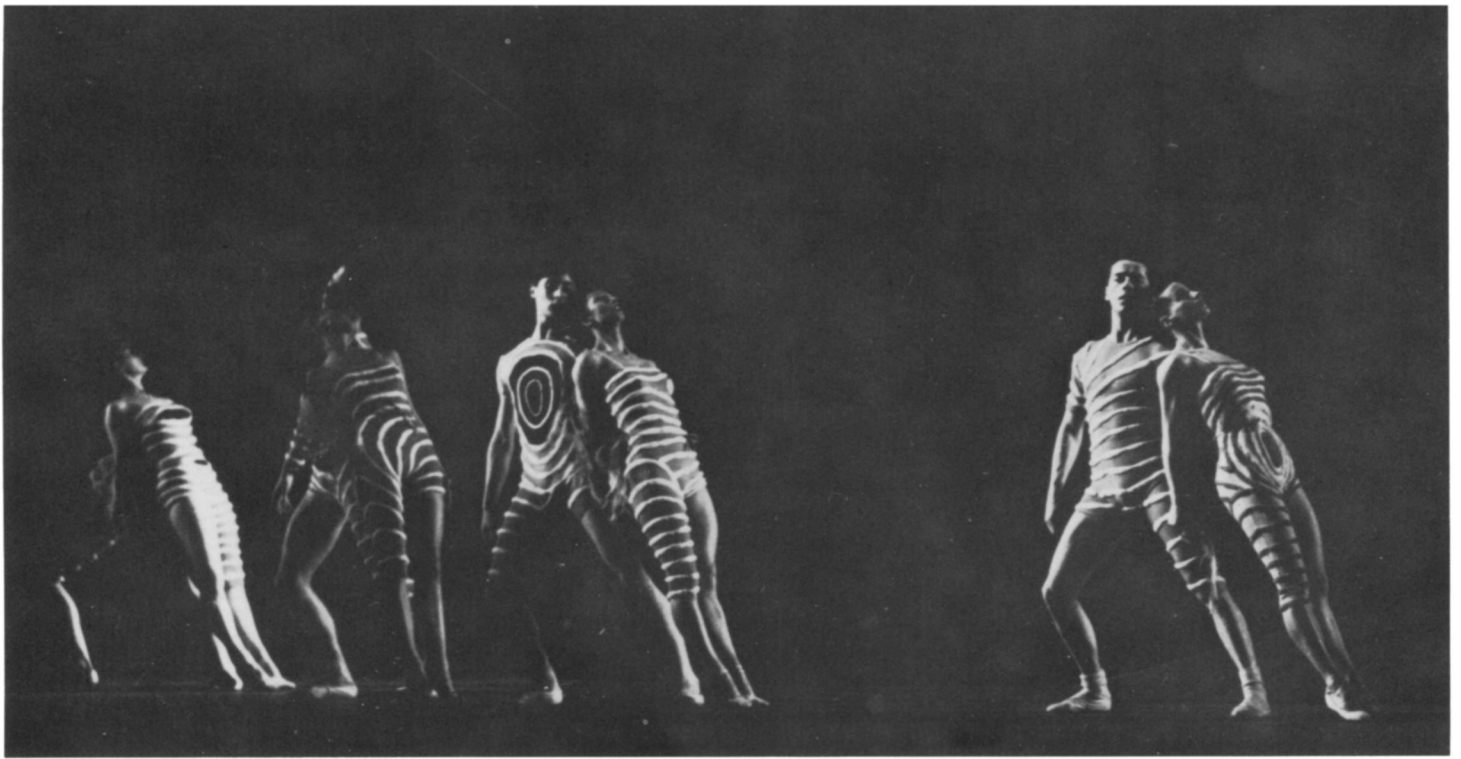


I dressed myself on the stage. All the jewelry hung on the back of the lyre, and piece by piece, I put it on. It was a belt, a very big necklace, a snake armband, a headdress and a veil, and it took absolute concentration, because I had no mirror in front of me.

The fabric over the animal in the tent was a very deep purple—not blue purple, but Tyrian purple. It hung in folds, and I went to it, and then there was a moment when the stage was empty of action. Slowly, slowly I pulled down the curtain until Judith stood there alone and in her hands she had two branches of white flowers and the dance ended by her crossing the stage with those flowers.



Well before the 1960s, Graham's dances, for all their symbolic overtones, were decidedly specific in their sexual imagery. And Noguchi's set pieces, *Judith* being a fine example, could be every bit as specific. One would think that by the 1960s, that liberated decade, there was little that could shock an audience. But Graham, probing ever more deeply into the collective psyche, came up with her version of *Phaedra* in 1962, a knock-down-drag-out saga of Olympian lust. Graham portrayed its aging protagonist, the wife of Theseus, who lusted for her stepson, the prince Hippolytus, and failing to seduce him accused him of rape and had him executed. The opportunities for design offered by *Phaedra* inspired some of Noguchi's most specific sexual images: Hippolytus appeared in a tall, blue and black phallic capsule whose strategically



placed apertures revealed various aspects of his anatomy to the love-sick Phaedra. A huge, womb-like shape opened to reveal an all-but-nude love goddess Aphrodite who, in order to torment Phaedra, had spitefully arranged this unhappy turn of events. It was all too much for some of the audience and there was even talk of closing the production. Two congressional representatives, Edna Kelley of New York and Peter Freylinghuysen of New Jersey, saw this dance during a State Department tour abroad and were appalled that federal funds had financed such an incendiary event. As the dance critic Walter Terry noted in his book *Frontiers of Dance: The Life of Martha Graham*, the Phaedra theme was not exactly new to literature, having served the dramatist Racine among others. Speculating that the French classic may have been unknown to the irate representatives, his account of the scandal cannot be improved upon:

Freylinghuysen was upset about a stage bed in which, he thought, Martha and a male dancer came together. In response to his criticism, Martha told an interviewer in a deceptively mild voice that the bed, designed by Noguchi, was unbelievably uncomfortable, that it could hold only one person, and that if the congressman thought that anything of an amorous nature could be accomplished in it, he was welcome to try it out. With the sweetest smile and in a soft voice she concluded, 'I think eroticism is a lovely thing, don't you?'

Fifteen years later, Graham, reflecting on this controversial set, recalls that the bed was:

... one of the most uncomfortable, yet divine and beautiful things. It slants two ways and you have to hang on to it like grim death or, like a greased pig, you'll slide off.

From 1944 to early 1950, Noguchi was Graham's only designer. He continued working with her for another 16 years, during which time she collaborated, off and on, with a number of other designers. Their association was finally ended in 1966 for several reasons. Graham became ill, and from 1969 to 1973 her company did not perform. Also, in the interim, Noguchi's interests shifted to other activities. As Graham tells it:

Isamu stopped working with me as he was more interested in gardens and playgrounds and pure monumental sculpture—I've tried to woo him back into doing sets for me, but he isn't interested anymore.

Although Noguchi's designs for Graham's productions represent his major work in the theater, he also designed sets for other choreographers. Before Graham's former husband, Erick Hawkins, left her company, he commissioned Noguchi to design sets for *John Brown*, 1945, and *Stephen Acrobat*, 1947. For Merce Cunningham, who had briefly danced with the Graham company, he designed the set and costumes for *The Seasons*, 1947, a satirical dance whose zebra-striped characters performed against the silhouette of a horizon. On the strength of his notable work for Graham, Noguchi was invited in 1955, by John Gielgud, to create the costumes and sets for the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *King Lear*. The effect of the tortured king and his entourage weighted down by Noguchi's heavy, sculptural, perforated robes was unusual, and *Lear* has probably never been conceived of before or since in such neolithic terms.

One of Noguchi's most important theater concepts was realized in Balanchine's 1948 production of the ballet *Orpheus*, set to Igor Stravinsky's brilliant score. In a 1965 recollection, Stravinsky told of the project's initiation:

I had not thought about the *décor*, nor had Balanchine, and it was Lincoln Kirstein's happy idea to invite the Japanese master, Isamu Noguchi, who at least saved us from the cliché 'Greek': the *chlamys*, Doric backdrops, and so on. Noguchi's *maquettes* promised a bleakly attractive landscaping of the stage, but at the performance his greatest success was the transparent curtain which fell over the scene like fog during the *Interludes*...

There were uptilting projections from the wings, too, hobgoblin-like and at the same time, as people said back in the 40s, 'Freudian.'

Noguchi's concept for *Orpheus* revealed him at his lyrical best. His designs, conceptualized in a sequence of colored paper collages, deal with the many events that

(opposite, from top)

<i>The Seasons</i>	1947
music	John Cage
choreography	Merce Cunningham
sets and costumes	Isamu Noguchi

<i>Seraphic Dialogue</i>	1955
music	Norman Dello Joio
choreography	Martha Graham
and costumes	Isamu Noguchi

Dancers: Patsy Binch (left), Bert Ross and Linda Hodes (center), Matt Turney and Mary Hinkson (right)

Noguchi's contribution to the conception of *Orpheus* is embodied in its remarkable masks and other props. Noguchi regarded all events portrayed in the ballet as the unhappy musician's hallucinations. Orpheus and Eurydice are shown here being led out of Hades.

Orpheus 1948

(commissioned for Ballet Society, predecessor of The New York City Ballet)

music Igor Stravinsky
choreography George Balanchine

sets and costumes Isamu Noguchi

Elements in exhibition:

fiberglass stones (3) each approximately 16 x 36 x 54

foam rocks (3) 18 x 42 x 24
24 x 18 x 36
28 x 88 x 60

lacquered cloth and paper over balsa wood masks (2)

4 x 8 x 6
10 x 16 x 18

painted polyester resin mask 6 x 20 diameter

sealed balsa wood lyres (2) each 28 x 20 x 2

sealed balsa wood bow 63 x 2

stained hardwood base 3 x 12 diameter

cloth, wire, screen mesh, polyester resin hairpieces (3)

plaster of paris and cloth tree 108 x 2 diameter

crocheted and knitted fabric costumes with twigs (5)

In this production, Jean-Pierre Bonnefous is seen as Orpheus.

(opposite)

Orpheus's gold mask covers the upper part of his face emphasizing his metaphorical blindness.



transpired during Orpheus's futile journey to Hades. In contrast to the strong, often primitive forms he made for Graham, the *Orpheus* sets and props are elegant.

Among its elements are huge boulders that levitate and transform into lanterns as the scene shifts from the sunlit world to the underworld. Orpheus's lyre, when not carried by him, is suspended from a tree branch. Particularly inventive is Noguchi's carved wooden mask for Orpheus, a bent tubular form that covers his upper face like goggles, and a flame-like mask which the dancer portraying Pluto holds by clamping his teeth onto a supporting pin.

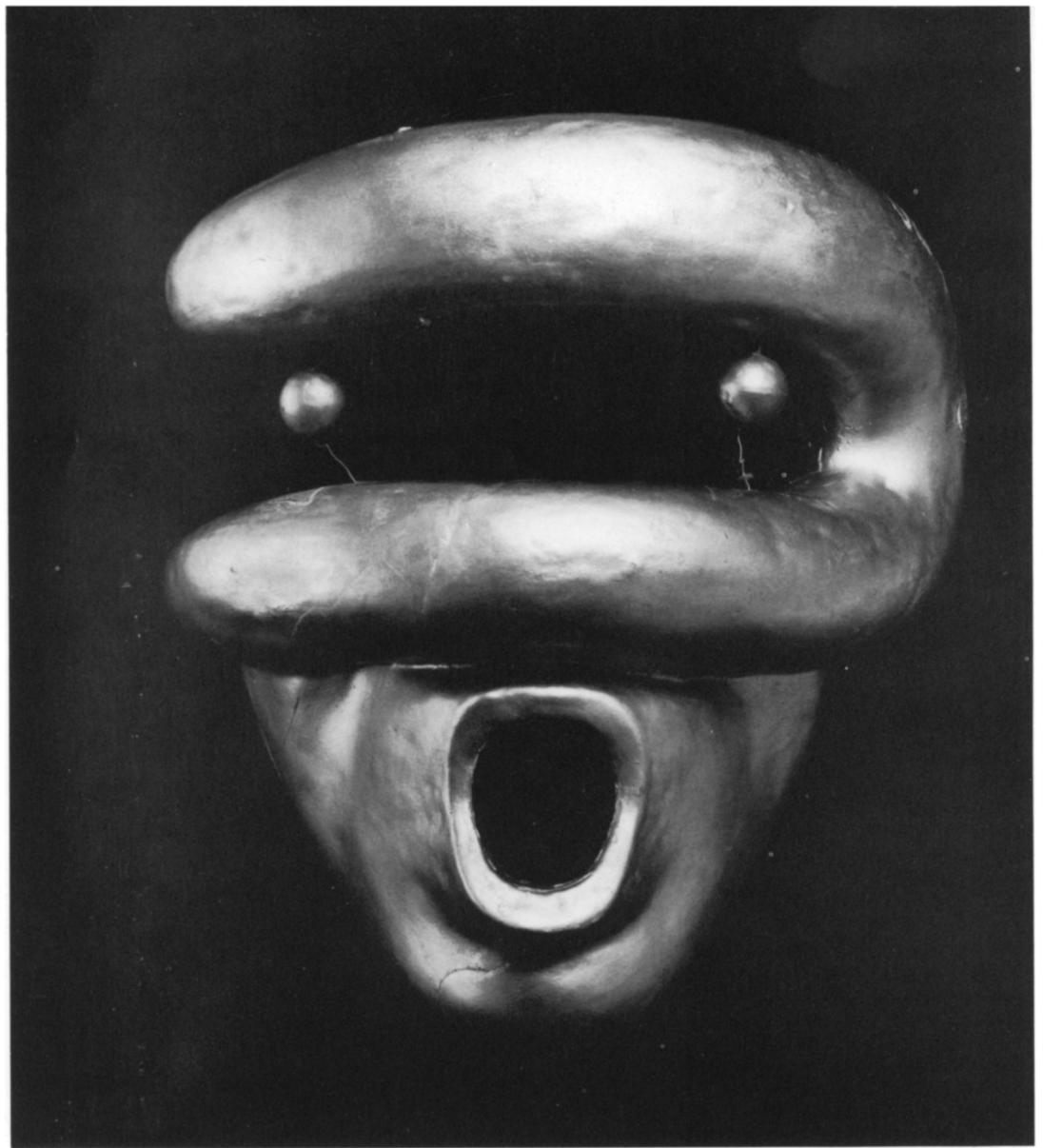
In Noguchi's interpretation, "Orpheus wears the mask of the artist."

He is blind, he is blind to reality. He only sees what he wants to see. But as they leave Hades, he grabs this mask, he wants to see Eurydice—what she is really like.

He pulls off the mask and, of course, she immediately disappears because she is dead, really. He just thought she was alive.

(In his recollection of the ballet, Stravinsky described the masks as beautiful, if somewhat ethnographic, stating that "...Orpheus looked like a baseball catcher in his, except that the hair flowed down his back like a horse's mane.")

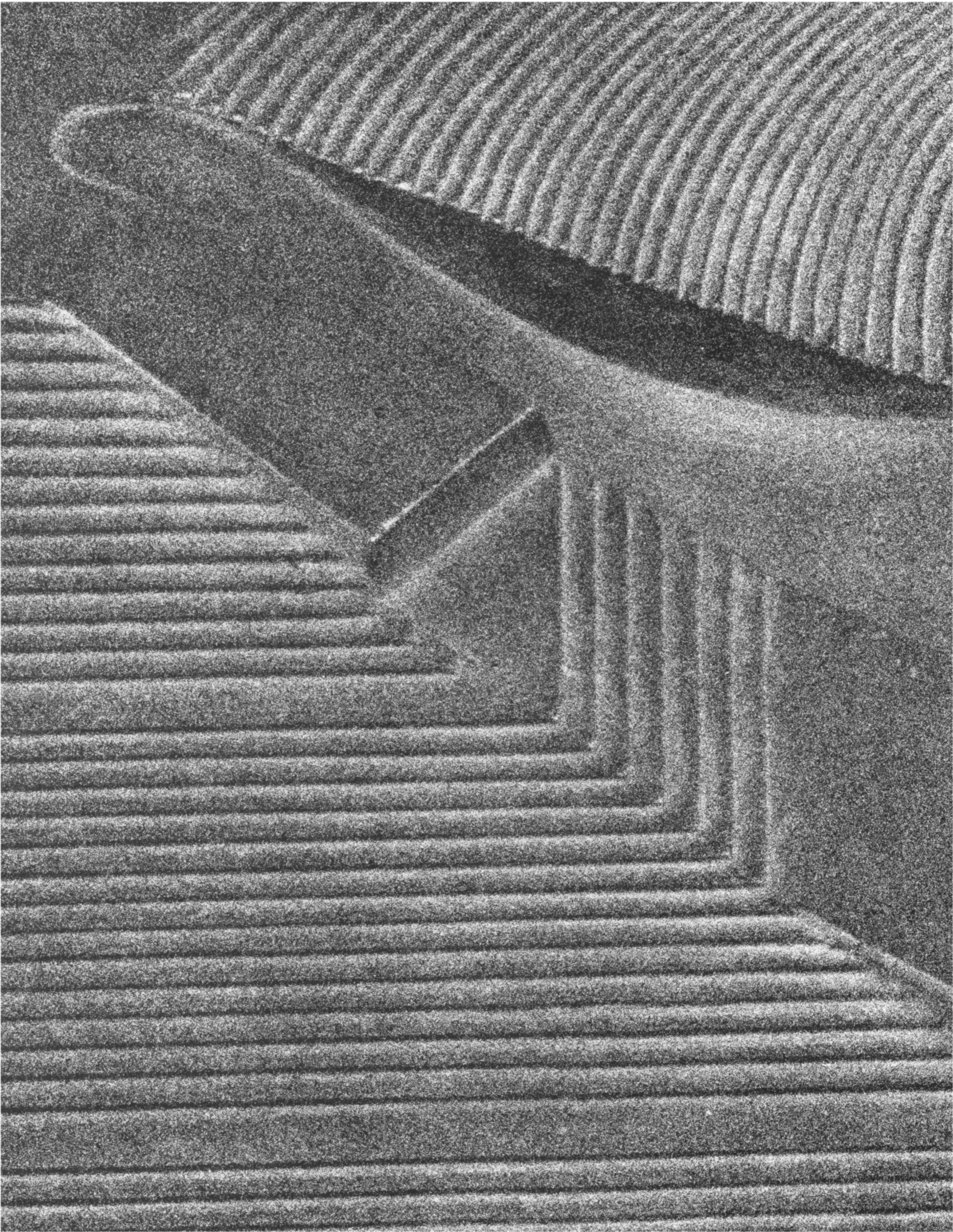
Noguchi's sculptures for the stage, fabricated of conventional theater set materials such as wood, painted canvas and wire, are strongly related to his stone carvings. Their emerging, interlocking and radiating forms are also variations on his fundamental themes. They differ, of course, from his stone sculptures, in their scale and rough finish; unlike those works, the set pieces are not precious objects but silent participants in a drama. Lightweight, demountable and easily transported, they must



function physically as well as symbolically. But these are not impersonal units of stage decor. Fabricated by Noguchi in his studio, they reveal his hand and are the product of a prodigious inventiveness, not only in form but in the use of materials—an inventiveness that matches his capacity to interpret the theme of each dance in a personal manner. In their spare surroundings, these stage objects interact magically with the performance. While their effect is largely attributable to their vital if enigmatic shape, a more basic explanation is that they reflect Noguchi's extraordinary sense of occasion. With the simplest means, he creates an atmosphere in which past and present merge, and in which cosmic events can be enacted. [At close range, these abstract shapes, like all stage props, show hard use, but under theatrical lighting and at some distance from the audience, they become magnetic.]

In his collaboration with Graham, she specified the type and number of stage elements for a specific dance, but it was Noguchi who provided its visual framework. The quality of work resulting from this long relationship was unprecedented in the American arts. This collaboration of dancer and artist provided a model for a succeeding generation. Designs for Merce Cunningham's productions by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and Mark Lancaster are an extension of this earlier cooperative idea.

As a pioneer designer for the theater, Noguchi was implicitly dissolving conventional boundaries between the arts, an objective of many younger painters and sculptors during the 1960s. Yet, curiously, that aspect of his activity seemed unknown to them. The prophetic nature of his work in the theater has yet to be fully credited.



UNREALIZED PROJECTS

In the last two decades, Noguchi has seen many of his ambitious designs for plazas, gardens and playgrounds take actual form. Instead of encountering chronic official opposition to his ideas, he finds himself in the unique position of being courted by major architectural firms, city and federal agencies and other potential sponsors for his ideas. Yet, prior to his belated "discovery" as a creator of public spaces, he had produced, in the form of drawings and models, many inventive designs that, for one reason or another, were never executed. These "unrealized" projects, in many respects, represent his most visionary thinking. Some are total fantasies, such as a 1947 proposal for a giant face, formed of earth, that would be visible from Mars; others, conceived as memorial structures to victims of the atomic bomb, possess an otherworldly quality; last, are the carefully detailed, unutilized designs for particular clients. (A notable example is Noguchi's 1952 proposal for a sculpture garden for Lever House in New York.)

Within the genus of imaginary landscapes are several relief sculptures which were actually proposals for specific locales. These rectangular reliefs, which are generalized models for playgrounds, are distinguished by their fusion of natural and geometric forms. The playground, then, is the focus of Noguchi's imaginary landscapes and, although two designs have been executed recently—one in Atlanta, the other near Tokyo—his most ambitious proposals have always been for New York City, where, consistently, they have met with official opposition. Of paramount importance to Noguchi, not only as a sculptural form but for its philosophical implications, the playground represents a miniature universe in which children, under the most favorable circumstances, can begin their relationship with the world. It is a heightened landscape for them, he says, with many of the illusions of theater.

It's their world, not a grown-up's world. It's a land in which a person three feet tall can run around. I want the child to discover something I created for him—and I want him to confront the earth as, perhaps, early man confronted it.

His first design, done in 1933, is *Play Mountain*, a sharply stylized *art deco* relief whose prominent features are a half-bowl-shaped amphitheater, wide terraces

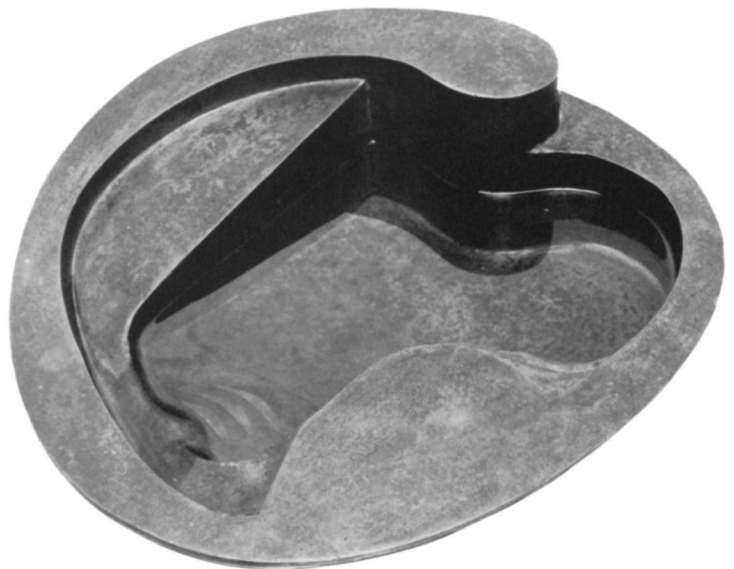
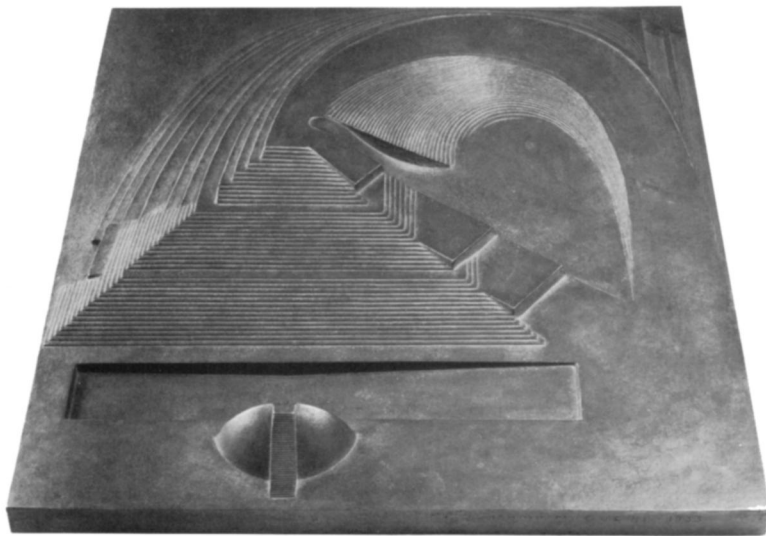
that rise above ground level and play spaces for small children within a pyramidal structure. The design recalls the streamlined classicism of a Norman Bel Geddes 30s stage set. It was Noguchi's plan that *Play Mountain* should occupy a substantial area in the heart of the city.

I thought of it as a city block, or part of a block. . . In those days, children had nothing more than a cement area with a fence around it high enough so they couldn't climb over it, in which they were left like birds in a cage or animals in a zoo.

The model for *Play Mountain* was shown to Robert Moses, New York's strong-minded park commissioner, and his staff, but the sculptor's unconventional use of concrete forms and disdain for traditional playground equipment disturbed the park department's bureaucracy and the plan was rejected. After what must have been a tense meeting, Noguchi was convinced that he had earned Moses's implacable hostility; the chemistry was obviously not right between them. Nor did it improve as the determined artist attempted, time and again, to have other playground projects realized in New York.

On occasion, forms pioneered in Noguchi's playground designs appeared in the context of less socially motivated projects. An example is the swimming pool he designed at the behest of the Los Angeles architect, Richard Neutra, for the latter's client, film director Josef von Sternberg. Noguchi took on the job with enthusiasm, deciding that the pool would be the ultimate in luxurious environments. Because von Sternberg was small, rotund and sybaritic, Noguchi gave him a setting in which he could move languidly and with ease from one area to the other. The handsome result, which suggests a well-appointed seal house, offered a revolutionary notion about the form and function of swimming pools. As Noguchi points out, in those days, kidney-shaped pools had not yet arrived and his was a prototype.

I had a ramp on one side down which water would flow, and von Sternberg could lie there with water running underneath him. Then, when he was sufficiently cooled off, he could lie in another area and be completely dry and warm. Then he could swim around. The whole thing would be



Well in advance of earth sculpture and conceptual art projects, Noguchi proposed an eternal reminder to the rest of the solar system that the planet earth, seemingly bent on self-destruction, once had its civilizations. To be visible from Mars, this pyramidal memorial to man, 1947, had a proposed nose height of one mile.

(opposite)

Within the format of the low relief imaginary landscape, Noguchi made a number of specific proposals for playgrounds and other recreation areas. These range from projects that would occupy several blocks in New York City to a kidney-shaped pool in Los Angeles for Josef von Sternberg.

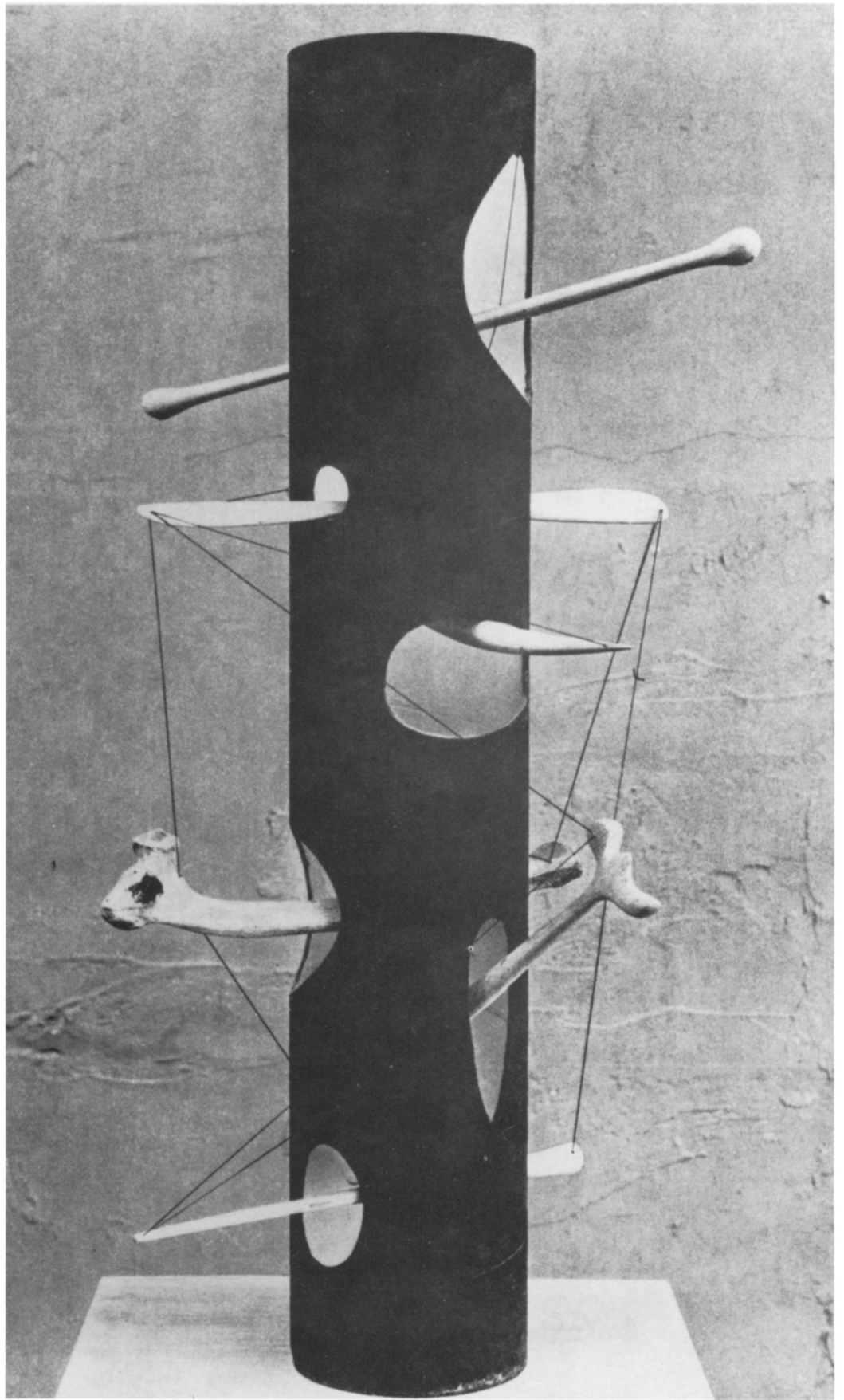
(from top)

Play Mountain 1933
bronze model 4 x 29³/₁₆ x 25¹¹/₁₆

Contoured Playground 1941
bronze model 3 x 26 x 26

Swimming Pool for von Sternberg 1935
bronze model 7 x 15 x 14





Monument to Heroes 1943
plastic, 38 x 18 diameter
bone model
(a new version of this work was
made by the artist for this
exhibition)

luminous, with lights coming from the steps. It was a comfortable sort of pool for one man—just one man, and maybe a friend.

According to Noguchi, von Sternberg liked the pool design, but Neutra decided not to use it.

Despite such diversionary activities, Noguchi did not give up the idea of creating a playground for New York City. In 1941 he showed his equipment designs—slides and swings intended (but never built) for Ala Moana Park in Hawaii—to members of Robert Moses's staff, hoping to generate interest in a commission that would utilize these. The staff decided that the equipment would be too dangerous for children to climb. In response to this objection, Noguchi made a new proposal—this time for an equipment-less recreation area—which he called *Contoured Playground*. It is an imaginary landscape consisting of gently mounded earth forms, shallow depressions and crawl-through areas. Less “specific” in terms of environment than *Play Mountain*, this was a wholly original approach to recreation space (and it should be regarded as the uncredited inspiration for numerous recent playground designs in New York and elsewhere).

Some official interest was actually engendered by *Contoured Playground* and there was even talk of constructing it somewhere in Central Park. At last, Noguchi had managed to find support—however qualified—for an urban-scale project. The advent of World War II, however, put a sudden end to that idea. (Another casualty of the period was his plan for a garden at The Museum of Modern Art, designed at the request of MOMA's architect, Philip Goodwin. The sculpture garden that presently borders the building was designed by Philip Johnson, who was responsible for the museum's overall postwar remodeling.)

For Noguchi, the war not only cancelled such ambitious projects but also harshly interrupted his personal life. He was in California at the outbreak of hostilities and had many friends among its large Japanese population. So appalled was he by the action of the United States government in uprooting Americans of Japanese ancestry and transferring them to internment camps—euphemistically known as

“relocation centers”—that he voluntarily joined a group in Poston, Arizona. In this black desert landscape, land which was part of an Indian reservation, the Nisei were housed in austere barracks with few amenities. Noguchi applied his energies to the design of playgrounds and swimming pools that were never built. He remained at Poston for six months before returning to New York, and the interlude, as traumatic and degrading for him as for all other internees, was never forgotten.

This experience found expression in his work, and one of the most specific and melancholic examples of this is his 1943 proposal for *Monument to Heroes*, a tubular structure with irregularly shaped apertures from which protrude bones and propeller shapes held in tension by taut wire. For Noguchi, this form was a radical departure from his usual techniques of modeling and carving in favor of working with “found objects.” His ghostly tower, filled with death images, was intended to act as a great flute that would emit mournful sounds.

I could see it as a large cylinder on a mountain top with the wind blowing through it and things dangling there like skeletons. It was a dirge for futile heroes who killed themselves—for what?

In similar spirit is *This Tortured Earth*, a relief sculpture of 1942. Although it is not a proposal for a specific site, it belongs among the unrealized projects. Its form relates it to the important sequence of horizontal reliefs from which, ultimately, the designs for Noguchi's gardens and plazas derive. We can consider *This Tortured Earth* as a representation of the darker side of his idyllic playground theme. Here, the land is a twisted slashed surface, reminiscent of a wounded body. Within its writhing forms there appears to be a scarred, grimacing face. This sculpture, like *Monument to Heroes*, is the artist's helpless commentary on the self-destructive character of civilization.

We were at war then, you know. The earth was being bombarded and torn up by bombing, just like Vietnam. In this piece I conceived of the earth as tortured by these bombardments. . . If you want to call the earth a playground, well, we were making a kind of playground.



Among the most moving of Noguchi's unrealized projects are those intended to commemorate the calamitous bombing of Hiroshima. These elegiac architectural forms were intended as inescapable reminders of the consequences of the atomic bomb and as enduring exhortations for the cause of peace.

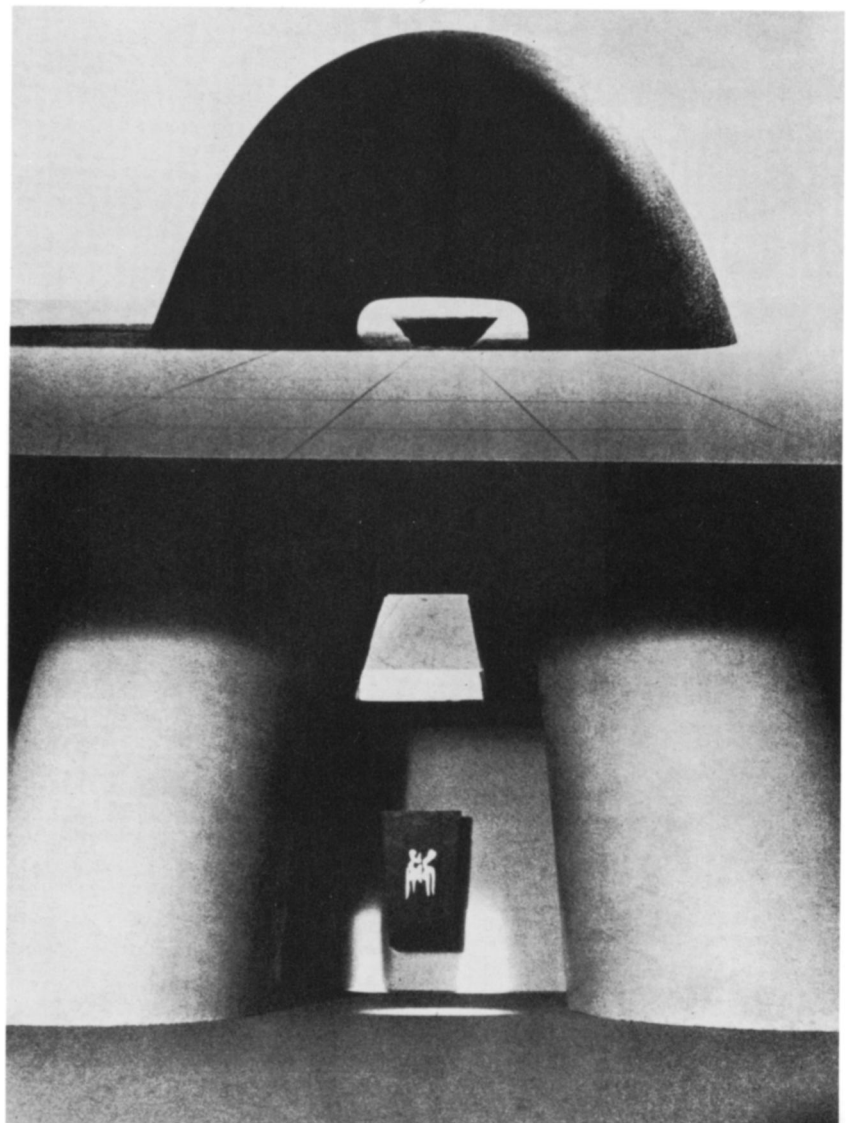
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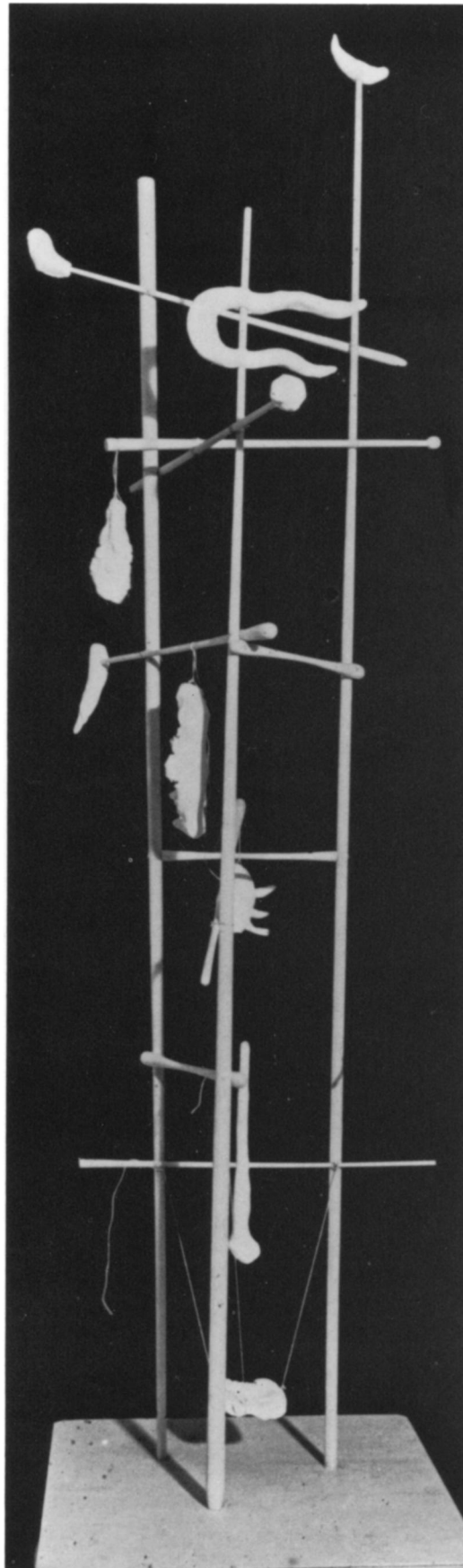
The relief sculpture, *This Tortured Earth*, can also be regarded as a highly generalized proposal for a monumental land sculpture. Its contorted forms symbolize war's ravaging effects on the earth and its inhabitants.

This Tortured Earth 1942
bronze model 4 x 28 x 28

Memorial to the Dead, Hiroshima 1952

Photograph of the plaster model showing the underground section. Proposed height above ground 20 feet.





The haunting flute sounds caused by the wind through the tubular forms of the bell tower suggest voices of the dead mourning war's wanton destruction. Noguchi had no specific site for this monument, but thought it belonged on a mountain top.

Bell Tower for Hiroshima 1950
white terra-cotta in wood frame
model 40
Proposed height 70 feet

This Tortured Earth, in its swelling forms and mounded orifices, has elemental female characteristics. It is an assaulted Mother Earth. Indeed, throughout his organically modeled landscape reliefs are maternal associations, though with the exception of *This Tortured Earth*, these are benign, protective forms. These works are in strong contrast to his vertical columnar pieces which, bristling with projections, have strong masculine identity. Such sexual undercurrents visibly underlie much of Noguchi's work; in many pieces, male and female elements are fused. The imaginary landscapes, whether proposals for specific sites or purely visionary conceptions, have been a constant fertile theme in Noguchi's art.

Noguchi's most impressive memorial to the futility of war is his 1947 proposal for a monumental earth sculpture that, from another planet, would be perceived as a human face. Although we may speculate about the existence of such a face in *This Tortured Earth*, there is no ambiguity about its presence in Noguchi's proposal for a *Sculpture to be Seen from Mars*. Its features are clearly defined by circular and triangular shapes projecting from the earth's surface. Noguchi wanted the visage, so abstract as to be of universal identity, to memorialize man, the vanished species. It was to be an eternal reminder to the rest of the universe that the earth was once inhabited.

It was in 1945, wasn't it, when we dropped the atomic bomb? All of us were concerned about our place on earth, and that it might be rather precarious.

Noguchi wanted his enormous sculpture to be constructed "in some desert, some unwanted area." In conceiving such a visionary work, Noguchi, with his customary prescience, anticipated such present day phenomena as earth art and conceptual art. Yet the inspiration for the primal face derived from his knowledge and respect for ancient monumental forms. ("Earth sculpture is nothing new. It's just a new name for an old thing.") He speculates about the ancient linear configurations in the Andes which are only readable from miles above the earth, and although the people who made these were never able to see them extended over the hundreds of miles they covered, Noguchi is convinced that they were able to experience the results.

They probably had some means of letting their imaginations travel to outer space. . . I don't think it's necessary to be corporeally or visually in outer space. I believe that one day we will find a way of letting our inner selves travel to the moon or beyond—instantly. Our imagination does travel. I mean, who hasn't been on Mars and seen it? To the artist, going to the moon was nothing new. I've been up there all the time. I've been making moonscapes and I rather resented the government getting into the act and spending all this money when I could have done it so easily and cheaply.

Among Noguchi's most expressive unrealized proposals are two ceremonial structures for Japan. Reminiscent of an oriental wind chime, *Bell Tower for Hiroshima*, proposed in 1950, is a complex, open structure, a standing thicket of rods from which huge brass bells would be suspended. Noguchi intended that the bells, activated by the wind, would provide a muted, ghostly reminder of what had transpired. The bell tower model was included in an exhibition of Noguchi's sculpture in Tokyo. He had no site in mind for it but hoped the idea would attract a sponsor. It did not.

Noguchi's second proposal for Hiroshima was a massive cenotaph commemorating the 200,000 people who died during the atomic bombing of the city. It was designed in 1952 at the request of the mayor of Hiroshima and the eminent architect, Kenzo Tange, one of Noguchi's early sponsors in Japan. The memorial had the form of a reliquary, an enormous box pierced and surmounted by a 20-foot high black granite arch springing from the earth. This huge sculptural shape, based on the traditional Japanese *haniwa* roof, was to be a "concentration of energies." Below ground, between the giant pillars, there was to be a granite box containing the names of the world's first atomic dead. About this structure, Noguchi wrote in his autobiography:

It was the place of solace for the bereaved—suggestive still further of the womb of generations still unborn who would in time replace the dead.

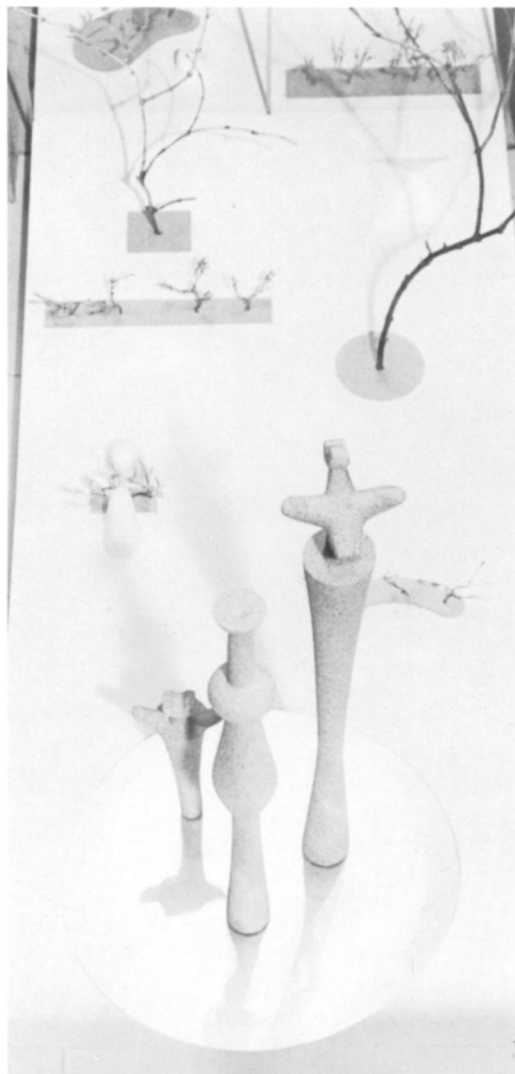
Above ground was to be the symbol for all to see and remember.

While working on the project in Tange's office, Noguchi suddenly got word that his role had been eliminated. The chairman of the Peace Park informed him that he was not to continue working on the design and that he would be replaced by Tange. Noguchi was shocked by the turn of events.

I could never quite find out why. I presume it was because I was an American. Tange did another version of the *haniwa* roof which is there now. Everybody was very unhappy and rather angry. But, of course, I could understand that, under the circumstances, having an American make the memorial to the dead was a little too much.

Noguchi's design for a memorial to Buddha resulted from a 1957 Indian government-sponsored international competition in honor of the 2500th anniversary of Buddhism. The winning proposal would be constructed in New Delhi. Noguchi's design, undertaken with a group of young Japanese architects, was in some respects evocative of traditional Indian structures. Its antecedents might be such fantasy palaces as the Taj Mahal; there is even a hint of the *Arabian Nights* about the design. The structure's central element is a large, white pavilion formed of three sphere sections, and it resembles both a great crown surmounted by a spire and a giant lotus through whose center a stamen-like column rises. Nine perforated forms, each containing a statue of Buddha, make up the bulbous segments of the shaft, which Noguchi says was to be 70 feet high. This tall, twisting form is as evocative of Brancusi's *Endless Column* as of spires that adorn traditional Buddhist temples and pagodas. Unlike Brancusi's famous sculpture, Noguchi's column consists of graduated elements that culminate in a finial, and in designing the column, he explains, Buddhist conventions were observed.

On top of every pagoda you find nine rings. The nine rings of Buddha are really the nine umbrellas and the umbrella form probably comes from the "naga," the serpent that shielded Buddha's head from the sun when he had his enlightenment.



Noguchi's first collaboration with architect Gordon Bunshaft, of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's New York office, was an urban garden for Lever House. These photographs of models show two versions of the plaza proposal (1952-53); neither was realized.

Although his design was among those widely publicized in the Indian press, the entire project was abandoned. "Instead," Noguchi says, "Nehru decided to make the site into a garden—and a Japanese garden at that."

Though battle-scarred by periodic encounters with authority abroad as well as at home, Noguchi was unable to resist challenging commissions. In 1952 he was invited by Gordon Bunshaft, chief architect of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, to plan an urban garden for the plaza of Lever House on Park Avenue in New York. Thus began Noguchi's most important and creative collaboration with an architect.

Bunshaft's approach to resolving the large open area under and adjacent to his building was relatively novel in the early 1950s, in that he thought of the surroundings as a site for an environmental work.

We hoped to have sculpture integrated with the total design, including landscape, and Noguchi was the only sculptor that I knew of in the world who had the requisite knowledge of architecture, of plant material and space design ... it seemed to us wrong to have a predetermined design for a plaza and terrace and then to say, 'Here, Mr. Noguchi, plunk your piece down here.'

Noguchi made two detailed designs that featured a large marble-encased platform perforated with planting areas, a shallow reflecting pool and containing sculptures that look like chess figures and columnar biological shapes. The scheme was a hard-edged, classicized variation on the imaginary landscape.

Noguchi saw his role in the Lever House commission evaporate like a giant soap bubble. The detergent firm settled for a routine planting area, remarkable only for its anonymity. Though the Lever House project must be listed on the unrealized side of the ledger, Noguchi regards it as among his most important efforts, and elements of his design did reappear in subsequent projects. The experience also formed the basis for other collaborative efforts with Bunshaft that were more successful.

Appropriately, Noguchi has made proposals for large-scale environmental projects



in Hawaii, the spiritual as well as physical stepping stone between Japan and the United States. One vision he dangled before the islanders in 1976 was an enormous earth mound, 80 by 40 feet, surmounted by another mound of rock. This double tumulus was projected to “connect” the East-West Center building near the University of Hawaii to the hill behind it. The prospect was mind-boggling even to Noguchi who, in his enthusiasm, predicted that it would be one of the great earth moving enterprises in history. To accomplish this awesome task he would need reinforcements—why not the U.S. Army? With finely tuned irony, he describes his feelings about the project which remains very much in the unrealized category:

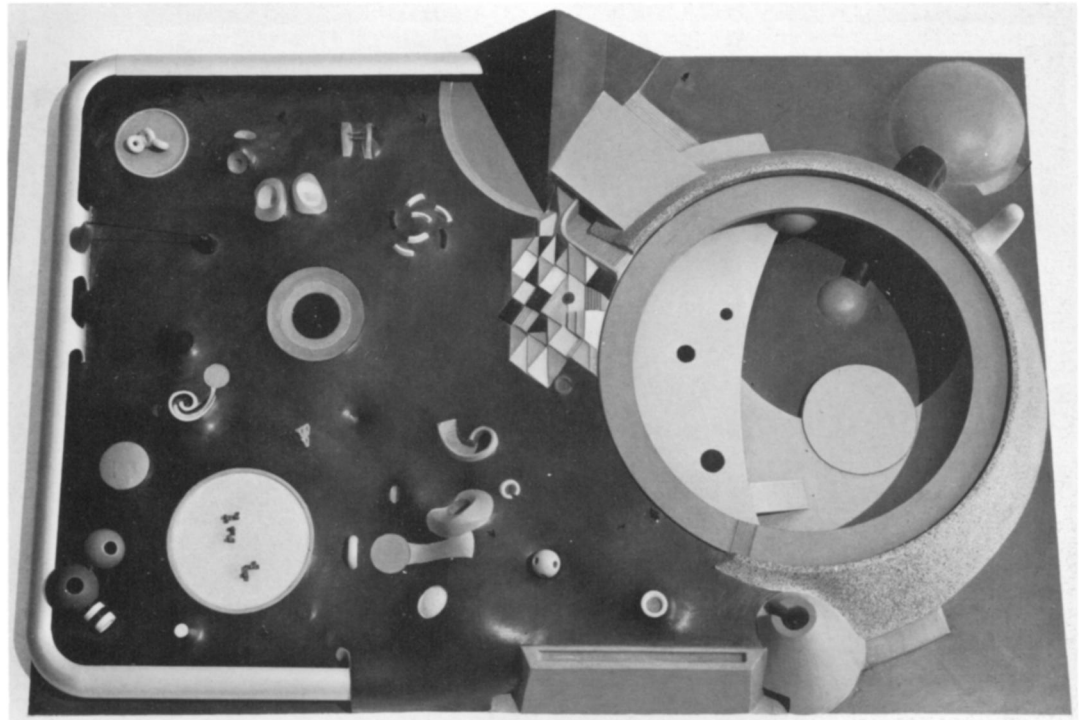
I liked the idea of stretching the possibilities of sculpture, and if you get the Army into doing it, my God! I mean, think of what they were able to do in Vietnam. Vietnam was the largest and most spectacular sculptural effort ever. They defoliated the land, they built airports. . . they transformed the whole terrain. Imagine what might

have happened as a consequence! The whole purpose of the Pentagon would have been changed over, you see, to a center of sculptural pollution!

In looking for boulders to form the upper part of his grandiose mound, Noguchi was taken to see the *Kukaniloko*, the sacred rocks of Hawaii. According to tradition, the queens of Hawaii have always given birth to their royal progeny amidst these. Today, the revered site is encroached upon by a pineapple field and a highway. So impressed was Noguchi with the form and symbolism of the *Kukaniloko* that he designed a low crater-like enclosure for them, open to the sky. Its shape, foreshadowed in the 1962 sculpture, *This Earth, This Passage*, appears frequently in the imaginary landscapes.

Noguchi's determination to create a sculptured play space for New York was undiminished, and, amazingly, every decade from 1930 to 1960 he came up with at least one design proposal. This single-minded concentration on the playground theme makes us wonder about its special place in Noguchi's life. One hypothesis is

Kukaniloko, Hawaii 1976
bronze model 15 x 24¼ x 25



that he fashioned this scaled-down surrogate world in order to deal with the real world, preferring the child's vantage to that of an adult. Since the playgrounds epitomize his fantasy universe, the classical psychological interpretation might be a regression to less complicated times, or nostalgia for an idealized childhood. Still, it's doubtful that his own playground days were totally euphoric since, as a child of mixed parentage, his acceptance in traditional Japanese society must have been qualified. (The Japanese are still xenophobic, Noguchi observes, but things are changing, and, significantly, it was the Japanese who commissioned him to construct his first playground from 1965 to 1966, Kodomo No Kuni, near Tokyo.)

Noguchi's design for the American pavilion in Osaka was not selected for the World's Fair, but many of its features, such as sunken amphitheaters and circular light wells, were incorporated into the more classical civic plaza in Detroit.

United States Pavilion for Expo 70 1967

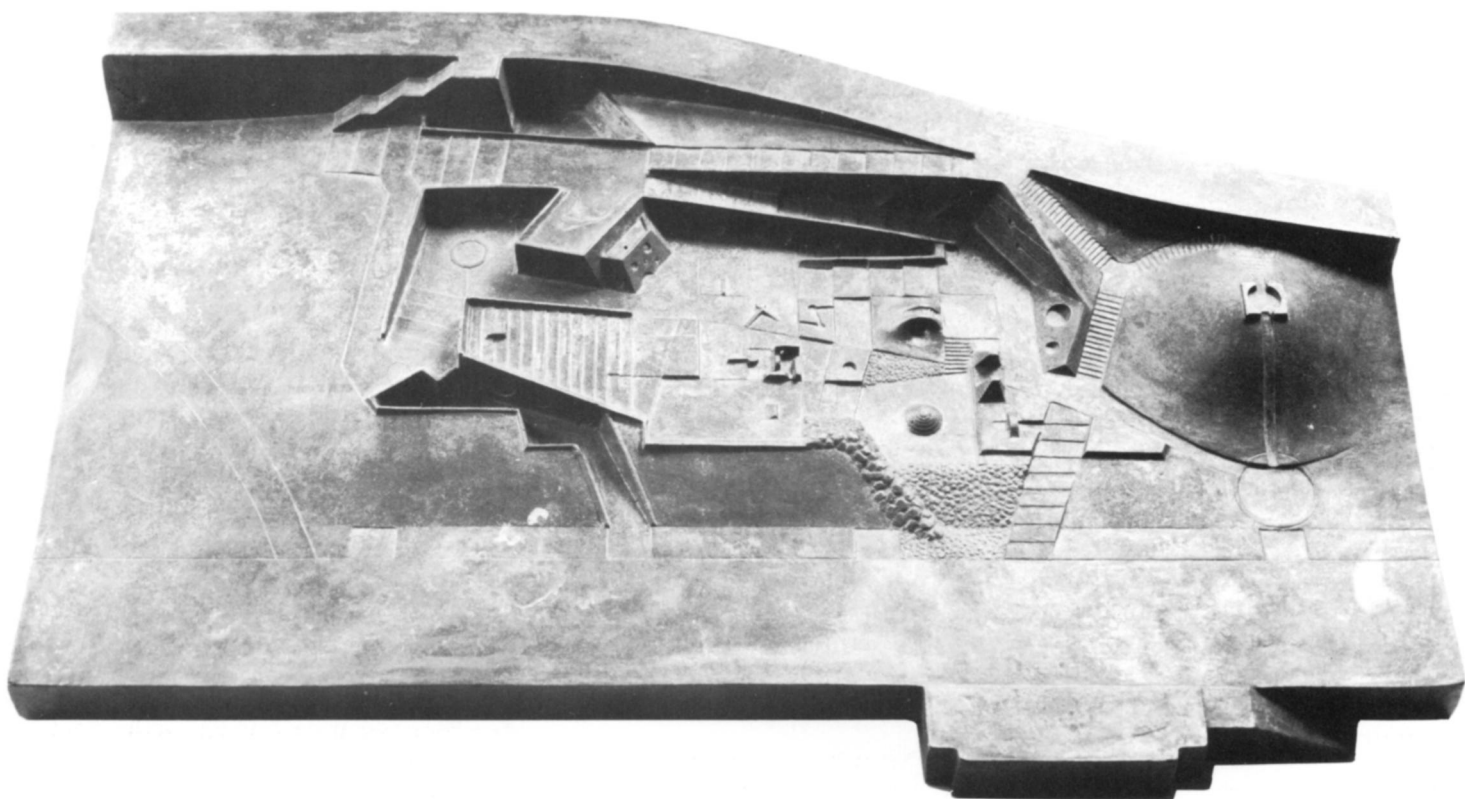
painted plaster model 7 x 22 x 33

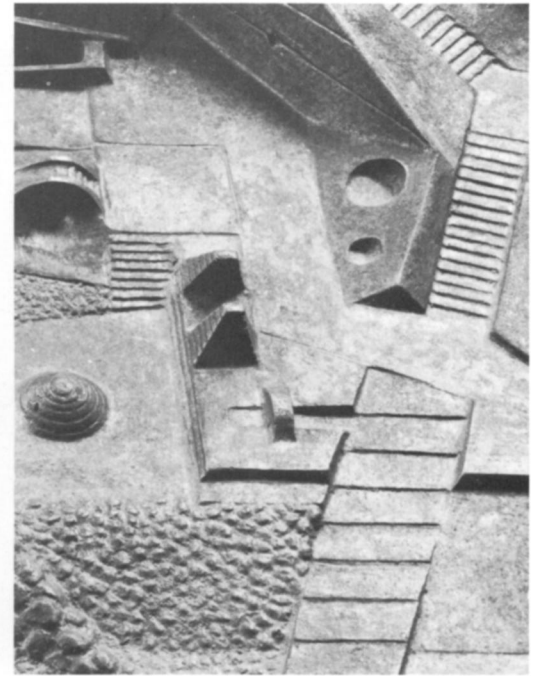
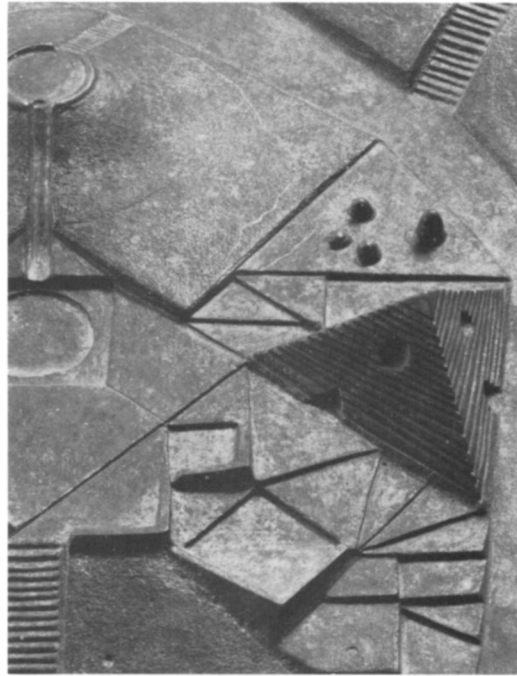
After his 1952 design for a playground at the United Nations headquarters in New York was rejected, Noguchi was understandably reluctant to involve himself in another confrontation with city officials. But any thought of retreating did not survive the persuasive power of Audrey Hess, the late wife of the art critic, Thomas B. Hess, who had originally proposed the UN project. She succeeded in enlisting Noguchi to work on a much grander plan

for Riverside Park as a memorial to her aunt, Adele Levy, a distinguished benefactor of the city. This project, for which Noguchi made five different designs between 1960 and 1965, represents his last and most ambitious attempt to see one of his playgrounds built in New York.

Recognizing that his batting average so far with the Park Commission was unimpressive and cognizant of the complex structural requirements of this project, Noguchi persuaded the architect, Louis Kahn, to work with him. For almost five years these planning sessions went on, with Noguchi loading plasticene models into his car and driving on the interstate highway to Kahn's office in Philadelphia.

The Riverside proposal is a more elaborate version of the United Nations design in which organic and geometric forms are combined. The major difference, of course, is scale. It was planned to extend for several city blocks, and all five versions of the design feature low buildings for indoor recreational activity, a small amphitheater and shallow pools. The earliest version included a structure whose cup-shaped roof formed a sun trap to illuminate its





Noguchi worked with architect Louis Kahn on a series of five proposals for a playground for Riverside Park in New York City. Neighborhood and official objections to the initial proposal were essentially political in nature and this complex situation made it impossible to achieve a usable result. In the end, the playground was designed by another team. Included here are the 1963 and 1965 proposals (opposite) and details from them (above).

*Riverside Park 1960-65
Playground*

bronze models (6 in exhibition)

- 3 x 24¼ x 25
- 2 x 37½ x 15
- 2½ x 29½ x 15½
- 4½ x 51½ x 19½
- 4½ x 35½ x 19½
- 4½ x 35 x 23

spaces. In its gentle slopes wide stairs were embedded, and giant slides were built into its undulating topography. Small children could play in sheltered sand and pebble areas. The entire playground was on a site raised above the river but below street level (because of the slope of the land). The initial enthusiasm from New York's housing and welfare departments was a pleasant change from the chronic indifference of the park administration. But this was countered by growing concern from residents that the sanctity of the area might be violated by children from "non-neighborhood" groups. While official resistance to his schemes was not a novel experience, neighborhood hostility was something new and disturbing to Noguchi. Nevertheless, he valued the experience of collaborating with Kahn, regarding it as an enrichment of his own work. Predictably, the project was abandoned. An injunction was obtained by area residents and the final blow came after an election; the new city administration did not support the project. Not until his 1976 design for Atlanta did he succeed in having one of his playgrounds built in this country.

While most of Noguchi's unrealized projects survive as models and drawings, some that exist only as verbal descriptions reveal the extraordinary scope of his creativity. In 1973, Noguchi was invited by the Indian government to build a park on a silt river mound across the water from

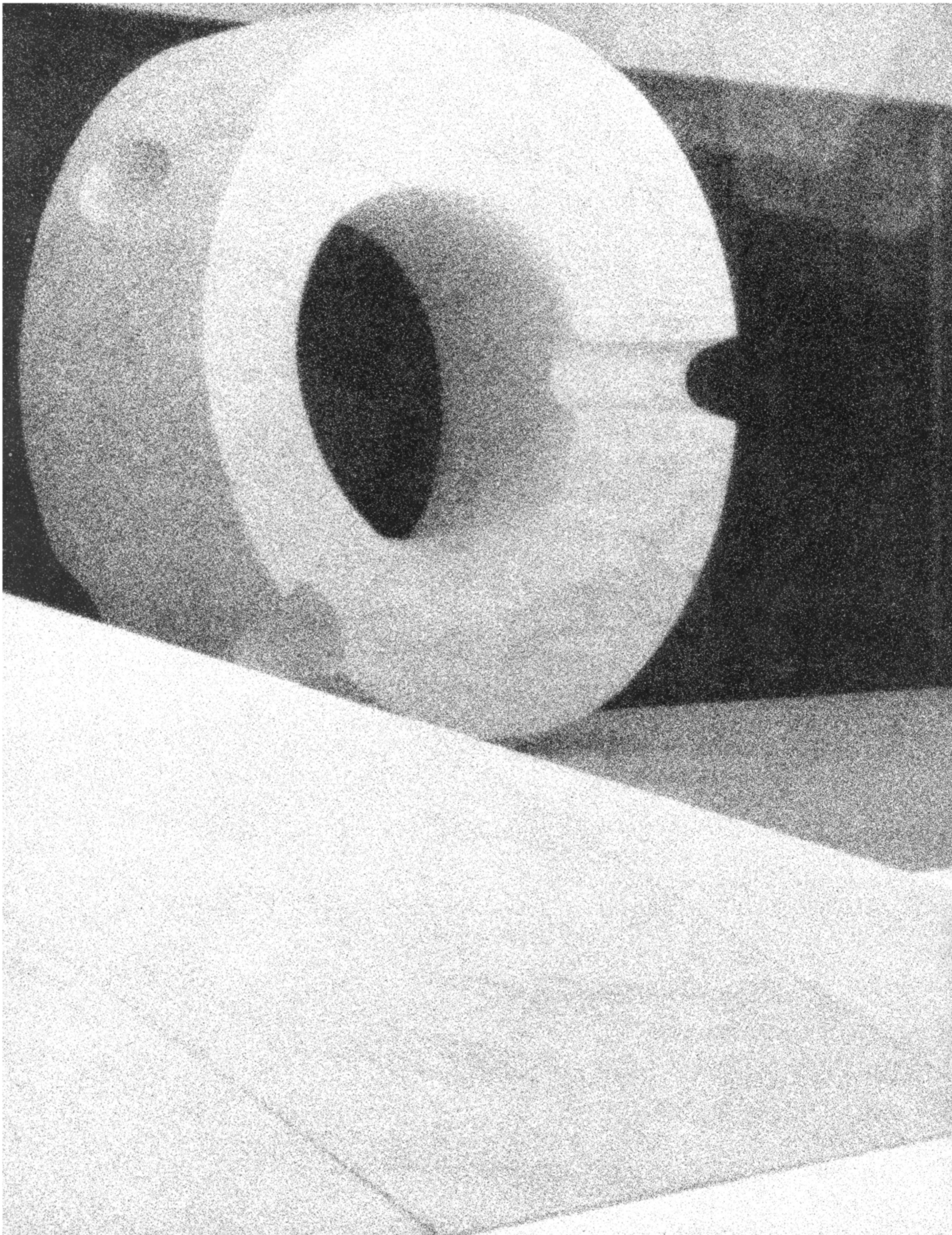
Bombay. There was only one problem with the site, he learned—it vanished when the tide came in.

I said, 'Well, how am I going to make a park when it disappears once a day?'

They said, 'But isn't that beautiful? All the birds come to it.'

It just vanishes and a lot of fish come up there and a lot of birds come down to get the fish. I thought, 'Oh well, the only thing to do, of course, is like in the Indian *Ramayana*, to get the assistance of the animal kingdom.' So I said, 'Let's make three large circular pools in there. In digging out these pools, you'd build up the land and in the pools you'd have catfish and eel farms, a good source of protein. That would be the economy of the place, you see. Gradually the people who tended the eels and catfish would bring their huts out there.'

The proposal remained only a bit of theorizing because the Indian authorities did not pursue it. Its scale and vision, however, reveal Noguchi's humanistic concerns and his desire to create environments to meet genuine needs. This has been a consistent goal, yet his interest in the symbolic continues as the dominant force in his work.



REALIZED PROJECTS

In 1950, when Noguchi returned to Japan, he identified closely with the Japanese people who had endured the cataclysmic experience of the atomic bomb. The physical and psychological evidences of this act seemed ineradicable and his guilt feelings were intensified because, as an American, he felt he had shared in the process of destruction.

He sought ways to expiate this guilt and contribute to the idea of peace. An opportunity came in 1951 when he was invited to design two bridges for the Peace Park in Hiroshima. The stark elongated forms of these bridges suggest the bleached bones of giant prehistoric creatures that perished in a holocaust. Both ends of each bridge are marked by ceremonial entrances. The railings of *Tsukuru*, the bridge symbolizing life, rise to form huge discs, like giant antennae. The curved portals of *Yuku*, symbolizing departure and death, are reminiscent of the prows of funerary boats. (Unfortunately, a succeeding generation of citizens of Hiroshima has been less sensitive to the symbolism of the bridges and their elegiac forms are obscured by traffic signs and other appurtenances of urban blight.) In Hiroshima, Noguchi made other proposals for memorial structures, including a monumental tower whose muted bell tones, activated by the wind, would be a constant reminder of what had befallen. He also envisaged a high-domed, granite shrine to contain the names and the ashes of those incinerated in the bombing. Although neither project took form, these designs must be included among Noguchi's most powerful conceptions.

Another memorial, one of a highly personal nature, permitted Noguchi to reaffirm his family ties with Japan. For Keio University in Tokyo, he designed a room and garden as a memorial to his poet father who had taught there. Completed in 1952, this was an act of respect to the memory of a man who, for so long, found it painful to acknowledge the existence of his half-Caucasian son. The memorial space invites contemplation. By day, natural light filters through its translucent shoji screens; by night Noguchi's *akari* lanterns provide illumination. The architect, Yoshiro Taniguchi, with whom Noguchi collaborated on the design, integrated the room and garden into his plan for Shin Banraisha, the university's new faculty building. Its distinguishing feature

is an altar-like open fireplace, in the form of horizontal flower petals, flanked by two massive cylindrical columns.

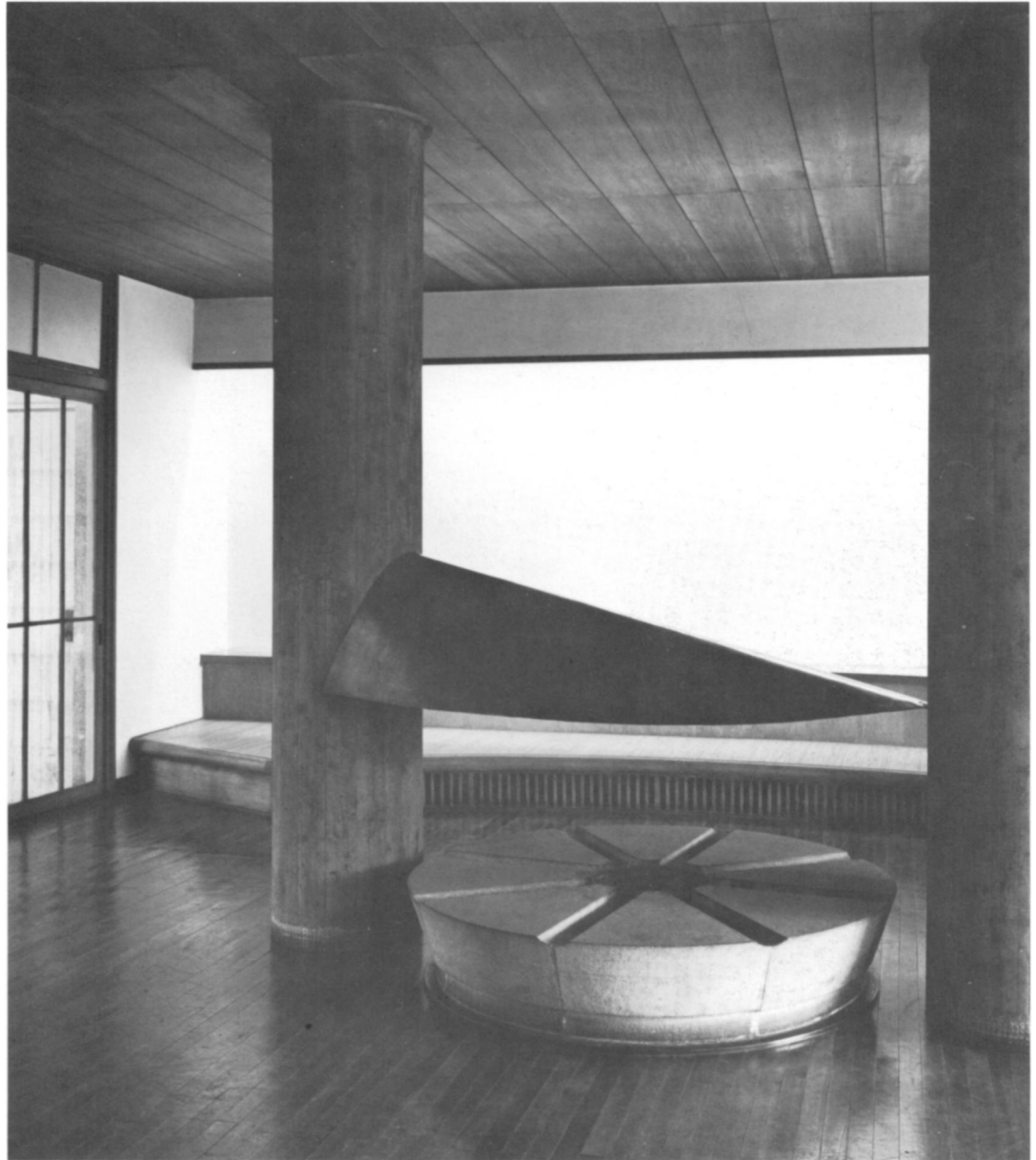
Noguchi's newly established Japanese connection also found dramatic expression outside Japan in a large project of international importance, the garden for UNESCO in Paris. The invitation to design this space came at the suggestion of Marcel Breuer, the architect of UNESCO's Secretariat building. Initially, Noguchi's charge was to design a patio, a triangular planted area at one end of the main building that would serve as a delegates' "outside" room for informal discussions and contemplation. His solution utilized rock in both natural and finished form. On the flagstone paving, stone cylinders and cubes provide rudimentary seating and a tall vertical slab forms the main element of a fountain. Not content to limit his activities to the assigned area, Noguchi persuaded UNESCO's authorities to allow him to create a masonry bridge to connect the new building with an older official structure. The bridge now crosses a low area of land, originally reserved for a Calder sculpture, which Noguchi claimed in the process. Transformed by him, this sunken terrain became a "lower garden" that can be viewed from the terrace.

Ever the organizer, Noguchi succeeded in forming a Japanese fund-raising committee to enable him to find and ship rocks from Japan for use at UNESCO. He went to Kyoto, the site of Japan's greatest gardens, where in his 1968 autobiography he tells us he was introduced to Mirei Shigemori.

...a man of tea (reflective taste), of knowledge (twenty volumes on gardens), and a master garden designer. He took me to a mountain area on the island of Shikoku (along the river, Ayu-Kui-Gawa, 'the river of eating ayu fish,' the source of the stone called Io-No-Ao—'the blue stone of Io'). Inside a ravine in a brook in the mountains there, I selected each stone...

Eighty-eight tons of rock were shipped to Paris, but frustrated by the inability of the French riggers to handle this precious cargo, he imported a group of Japanese gardeners to assist him. In the process, they also planted an astonishing array of trees and bamboo. Clearly, the little patio project had escalated and suddenly Paris found itself with a *jardin japonais*.





Among Noguchi's first commissions in Japan was a faculty room and garden in memory of his father, once a professor at Keio University in Tokyo. The garden includes two sculptures—one welded iron, the other this voluminous granite form (opposite). The wooden interior (above), designed in collaboration with architect Yoshiro Taniguchi (1951-52), is called *Shin Banraisha*. The garden sculpture is entitled *Mu*.

On the garden's upper terrace, transitions between "found" and finished areas are subtle and what appears from one vantage to be a huge rock in its natural state, from another angle shows signs of careful shaping and incising. Noguchi has always delighted in such contrast between organic and controlled forms, a fact apparent in his design of the total site. The lower garden consists of interlocking amoeba-like shapes, dominated by an island of concentrically-laid paving blocks similar to those found on French streets. Other features are mounded planting areas with huge boulders, carefully pruned cherry trees and pines, and a reflecting pool replete with carp and lily pads. The scale

difference between the bland official buildings and the complicated romantic garden is somewhat jarring, a situation of which Noguchi was aware from the start and which he feels is being resolved by natural processes.

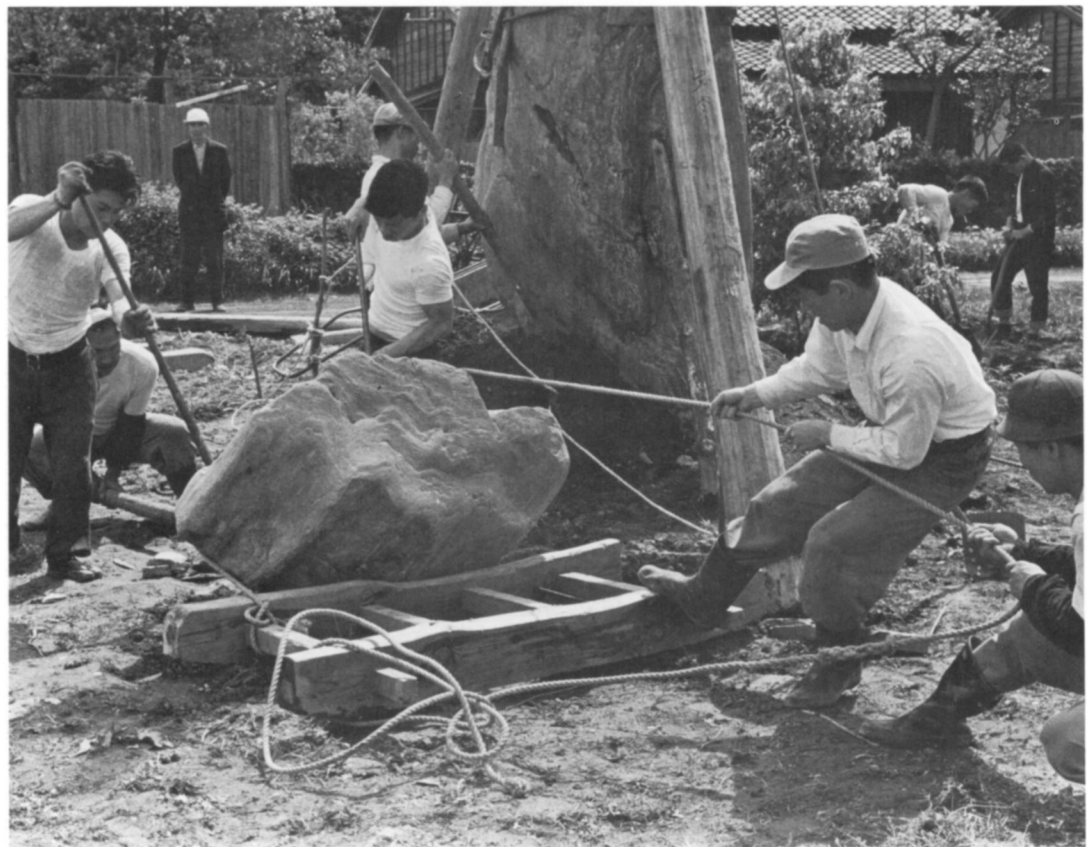
At the beginning the trees were the size of my finger. Now they have grown and you can see underneath them. You begin to see that the garden makes sense with the building.

Noguchi has invested the space with a great many formally varied areas that make tranquil vistas a rarity and, while the



Two concrete peace bridges are Noguchi's only realized projects in Hiroshima. Shown here are photographs of *Yuku* (to depart), 1952, and *Tsukuru* (to build), 1952 (opposite).





For the UNESCO building in Paris, Noguchi created his romantic version of a traditional Japanese garden. Its forms include a stone terrace with carved granite seating and a fountain. The lower garden consists of mounded planting areas, a stone-paved area and a reflecting pool. UNESCO, which he worked on from 1956 to 1958, was his first large-scale garden and many of its elements appear in subsequent projects. These photographs were taken in a quarry on Shikoku Island where Noguchi selected each stone for Paris. An aerial view and one of the raised granite-walled planting areas (opposite) indicate the complexity of this *jardin japonais*.





space is undeniably animated, from certain angles it can be disorienting. Possibly, the garden's complexity and sudden stylistic shifts might work better if there were fewer visual episodes. However, the garden is a virtuoso performance executed with enormous style, a happy incongruity in a formalist Beaux Arts city.

For Noguchi, UNESCO's garden was the seedbed for a brilliant sequence of designs in the United States. Simultaneous with his work in Paris, the architect Gordon Bunshaft, as chief designer for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, commissioned him to create several plazas and gardens, which would relate the firm's massive steel and glass structures to their sites.

Bunshaft's positive role in these projects must be stressed. It was his idea to have a sculptor design a total space adjacent to and interacting with the building as a means of humanizing the ground level areas around it. Such concern on the part of an architect was unusual in the mid-1950s. Most public sculpture, when it did occur, was arbitrarily plunked down next to a building that dwarfed it. Defining the physical limits of the project, serving as interpreter of the clients' needs and projecting his own definite views, Bunshaft constantly urged Noguchi towards inventive solutions for these spaces. Through constant dialogue, not without its abrasive effects, Bunshaft was able to elicit some of Noguchi's finest work. His admiration for the sculptor was sometimes put to the test during the experience of arriving at a design that he, Noguchi, and the client would agree on. After a particularly harrowing session, Noguchi might totally discard a scheme and return the next day with a new and ingenious resolution to the problem.

Noguchi's first realized project in this collaboration occurred at the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company in Bloomfield Hills, Connecticut. He was commissioned to create four interior courts and a garden which would border the elongated facade of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's modular building, and his scheme includes rectangular planting areas and reflecting pools from which an occasional carved stone form rises. Of far greater interest in this project, however, are three roughly chiseled, post-and-lintel effigies that would look at home on some



neolithic plain. For reasons of economy, as well as form, he decided to use stone, virtually in its natural state. Initially proposed for location alongside the insurance headquarters, these large mock-fierce shapes obviously projected too much personality. Sensing this, Bunshaft had wooden mock-ups of the sculptures placed near the building, but concluded:

They were inappropriate. The place didn't need sculpture—so we were all wrong. It was suggested, I don't recall by whom—either Noguchi or the owner—that we try putting them out on the hill we were looking at. We immediately hauled one out and stood back. It took all of two hours but it seemed obvious to us that it was the right place to put it. So, in addition to wisdom, there has to be trial and error.

On their new site, the stone trio functions as a barbaric interloper, kept at a distance from the serene, classicized atmosphere that envelops the building. Obviously, the momentous decision to redeploy the massive granite chunks weighed heavily on a few egos, and reflecting on the trauma of the experience, Noguchi says, philosophically:

I do not deny that the results seem to have justified the dispute—which teaches me never to be tied to preconceptions, but to be open to chance and change to the end.

Two environmental projects of the early 1960s represent Noguchi's most successful collaboration with Bunshaft: a sunken circular garden for the plaza of Chase Manhattan Bank and a marble garden for Yale's Beinecke Library. The most controlled and understated of his urban projects, these hermetic enclosures are viewed through adjacent windows or from above. Neither garden is entered by visitors and, in this regard, both are close to the contemplative spaces of the traditional Japanese gardens of Kyoto.

In 1961, Noguchi was asked by Bunshaft to help resolve the overall plaza design for the Chase Manhattan Bank's new building in New York's Wall Street area. The architect had determined that 70 percent of the site—the unusually large area not occupied by the building—should serve as a

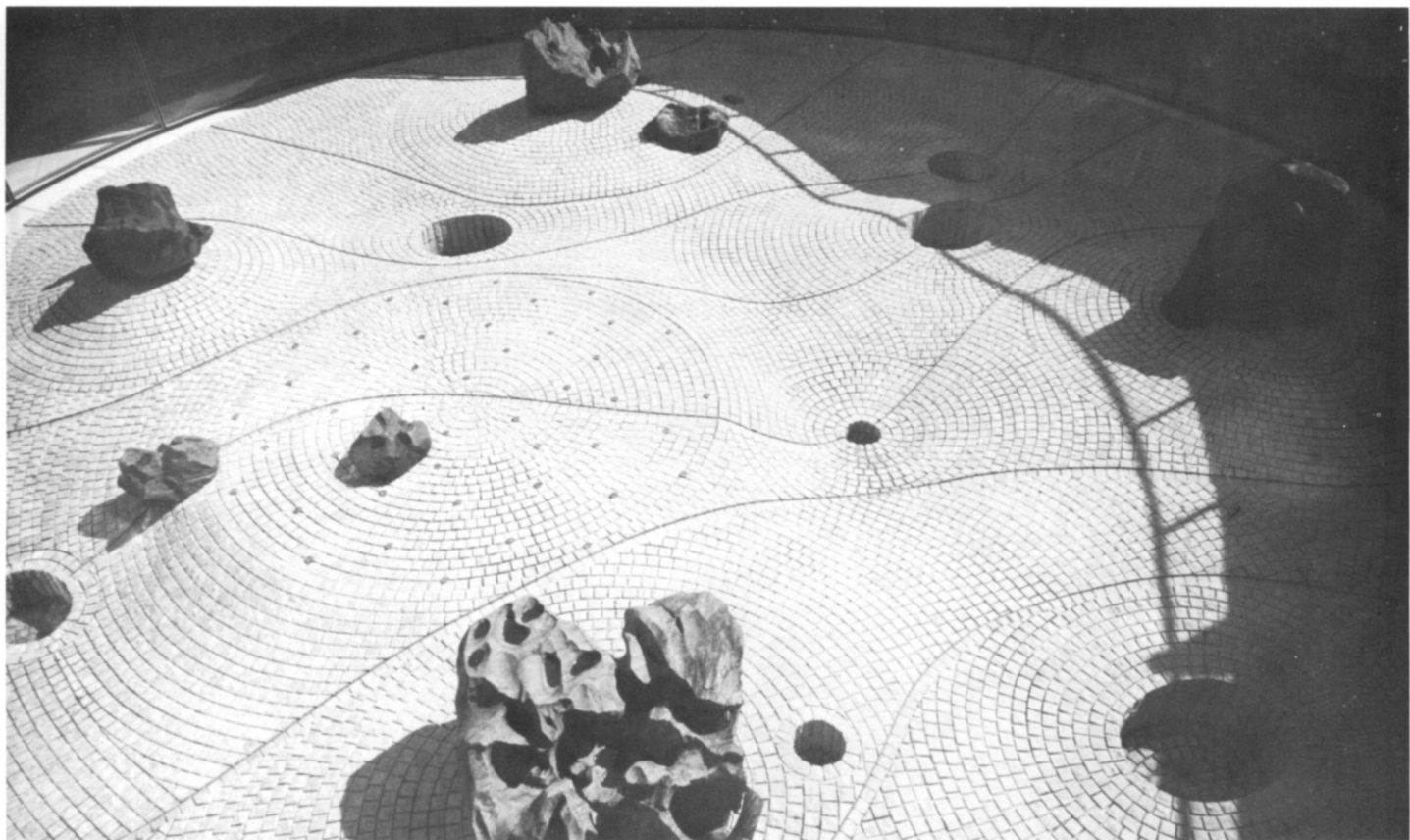
large public space. Noguchi proposed a plaza design that would contain a sunken garden to be viewable from above and visible to employees on the lower level banking floor; he also suggested that a major sculpture be located on the plaza, with himself in mind for both commissions. The attention of the architect and building owner immediately turned to the sculpture project and, to his dismay, Noguchi found himself in competition for it with Calder and Giacometti. Eventually, consideration of all three artists was ruled out and Noguchi, who had produced ten schemes for the large piece, was stung by the experience. Meanwhile, his plaza design underwent lengthy review. His ideas for the garden had crystallized; it was to be a circular form whose undulating surface would support carefully placed, giant rocks. So impatient was he to realize this project that, even before a decision was made, he went to Japan to select the stones.

It took them [the bank] a year to decide and, in the meantime, the great big stone (which is the most beautiful thing) was sold and I had a hell of a time trying to get it back again. It had been shipped to the other end of Japan by somebody who had purchased it. I used every kind of pull I had to get it back.

Fortunately for all concerned, the job was approved, but designing the plaza and selecting stones were by no means the end of Noguchi's travails. With characteristic compulsion, he supervised all aspects of laying the granite bricks that form the garden's base. Only through such continuous monitoring could his ideas be realized to his satisfaction. The garden's surface is patterned with concentric circles that suggest ocean currents and Noguchi likens such form to the representation of water in Chinese painting. In the summer, in fact, water springs from a cluster of fountain jets installed in the granite floor and around the boulders, intensifying the observer's illusion of islands in the sea. (A footnote: well after Noguchi's garden became a classic, the French artist, Jean Dubuffet, received the commission to construct his giant marshmallow-shaped sculpture, *Four Trees*—which, in 1973, was installed on the bank's plaza.)

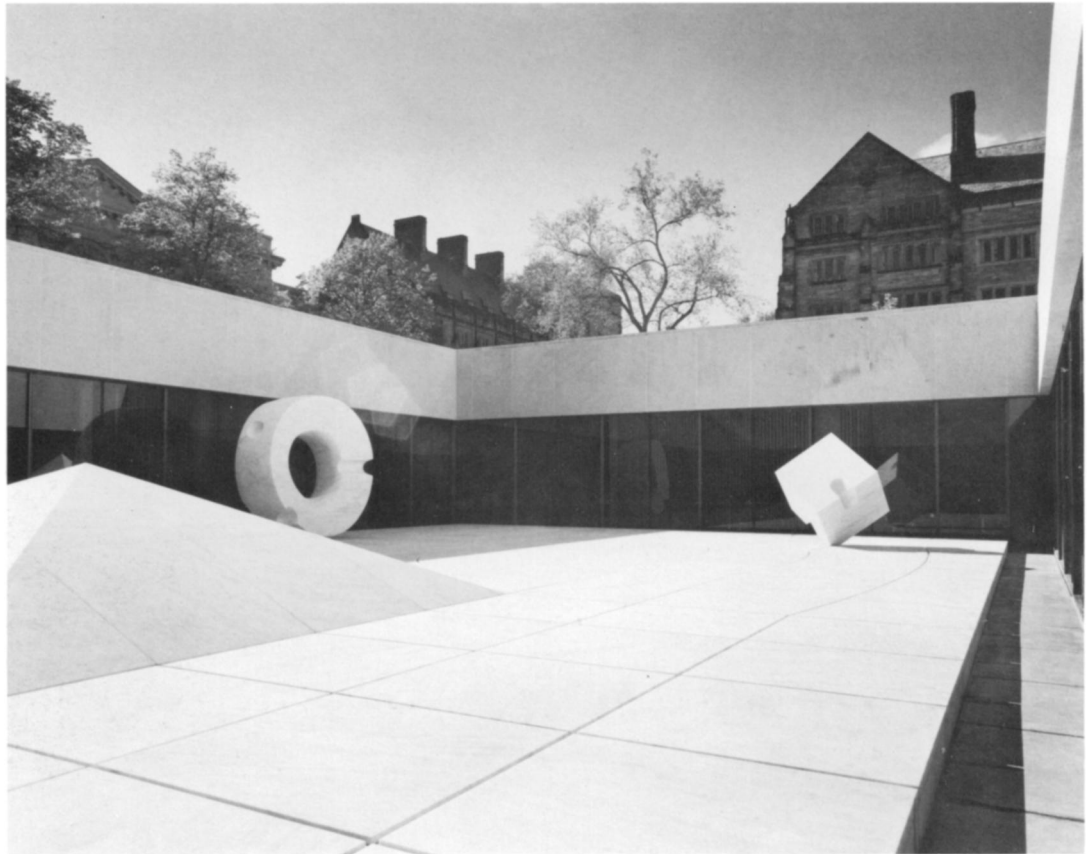
(opposite)

Noguchi's first realized project (1956-57) for the architectural firm, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, consisted of four interior courts with reflecting pools containing low sculptural elements, a long terrace and a trio of stone sentinels placed on a low rise at some distance from the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company building.





The sunken garden, a characteristic Noguchi form, achieved grand scale in the plaza of the Chase Manhattan Bank (1961-64). Based on the traditional Japanese contained, miniature landscape, the garden allows many interpretations including that of islands in the sea. Noguchi created a place for contemplation amidst the confusion of New York's Wall Street area. Details of the granite paved, 60-foot diameter plane with its carefully selected black river boulders and recessed water jets are seen on the opposite page.

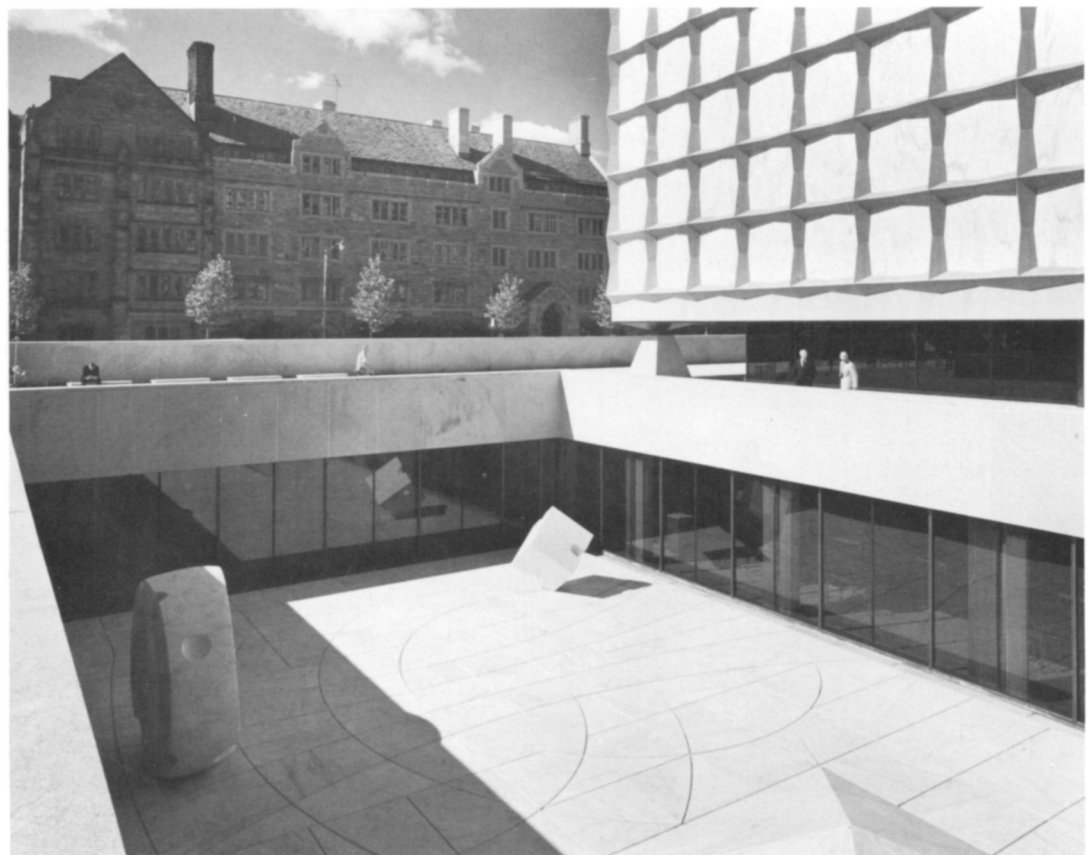


The most austere and minimalistic of Noguchi's "contained" gardens is his design for the Beinecke Library at Yale. Its three white marble primary geometric forms, placed on a scored grid, are a cerebral variation on the sunken garden theme.

(opposite)

Garden for Beinecke Rare Book Library 1960-64

painted plaster model
6 x 24 x 36





The purest, most restrained of Noguchi's gardens is Beinecke. On its marble platform, scored like a grid, are three elemental forms—a pyramid, a ring and a cube, the latter balanced on a point. In this pythagorean ambience, symbolism is up to the observer. Noguchi generalizes about the sources of his forms: the pyramid represents the earth's past, the ring is a circle of energy, and the tipped cube signifies chance—or the roll of a die. The pristine geometry of Beinecke has its antecedents in the astronomical gardens of India. Under changing light, its minimalistic forms appear in many variations and the absence of vegetation contributes to its lunar quality. Its distilled quality makes Beinecke the diametric opposite of the UNESCO garden, which is a convoluted, richly textured space. Some aesthetic subversion, however, is at work. What initially appears to be unadulterated geometry at Beinecke is, on closer inspection, a subtle variation on mathematical principles: the circle's vertical axis tilts, its opening is off center; the sides of the pyramid are not equilateral; and the cube's planar surface is interrupted by scooped depressions. Spatial tension among these three forms is palpable and their interrelationships change radically as the observer's position shifts. Noguchi explains:

I prefer to work with a relationship because then you're not working with a single thing but you are working with several things which accumulate energy between them—they call to each other. And pretty soon, there's a kind of a hum because of this vibration that is occurring between objects and between the spaces and presently there is a kind of magnetic gyration into which you are then caught.

To generate such a field of energy, Noguchi states, at least three forms are needed:

You see, three is a very convenient, elemental number. After all, one is a unit, you don't have any place to go. With two, you have a choice, but with *three*, you have an asymmetrical situation. Three is a triangulation. With a triangulation you can go into trigonometry and all sorts of relationships of viewpoint. It's about the minimum you can have.



At Chase and Beinecke, Noguchi developed a new form of urban garden. Both are rarified spaces, reflecting the characters of the buildings they adjoin. Beinecke, a place for preserving rare books and ancient manuscripts, is a sealed, private area accessible only to scholars, and Chase, after all, is a bank concerned with security. Both are sealed buildings; so are their gardens. For practical reasons, then, these gardens are areas for contemplation, not entry. Their elemental forms enable the observer to populate these formal spaces with personal associations.

The last of the mid-1960s sealed gardens was Noguchi's design for IBM's Armonk, New York, headquarters. He conceived of the area in two parts, representing the past and the future of civilization; the history of mankind was symbolized by an arrangement of partially carved rocks, but it was the garden of the future that inspired the more interesting design. In that space, Noguchi symbolically commemorated the aspirations and accomplishments of science. The garden's rectangular enclosure has four elements: a large red concave fountain embedded in the earth, which suggests the dish-shaped antennae that monitor mysterious sounds in the universe. In the center of the garden, a black dome emerges, its surface incised with esoteric equations relating to nuclear functions and astronomy. An asymmetric pyramid symbolizes atomic energy. The fourth element, a new one for Noguchi, is a tree-like sculpture consisting of three bronze cylinders. The form, we are told, is based on the helical structure of the DNA molecule. By contrast to the discreetly placed rocks and marble geometry of Chase and Beinecke, the IBM forms are relatively descriptive. In fact, their symbolism is somewhat forced in relation to his purer conceptions. Noguchi recognizes that the space is also crowded, explaining that his original idea was to have fewer objects and no planting.

I prefer the garden without the trees, as a matter of fact. They came to me about a year ago and said that IBM was debating whether to build another building over here and whether to keep their headquarters and improve them. What would I suggest to improve the garden? I said I would take out the trees first, then get rid of the bronze sculpture and put it on a truncated pyramid in front of the building. It would look nice there.

In the mid-1950s, Billy Rose, the show business personality, visited Noguchi with a proposal. He wanted an outdoor display area at his home for his collection of 19th and 20th century sculpture. But the project never got beyond the talking stage—Rose's Mt. Kisco house burned down.

In 1960, Rose came to Noguchi with a new scheme. His dream of a sculpture garden would now be realized on a much grander scale in Jerusalem where it would adjoin the Israel Museum. To acquire Rose's impressive collection, the museum had enthusiastically agreed to designate a vast outdoor site as the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden, and its donor was prepared to contribute substantially to its realization. Although the prospect intrigued Noguchi, he viewed it with suspicion. After all, Noguchi thought:

Rose was not what you would call a Zionist. He was dubious about the whole venture, but still it was one place where he could build himself a monument. Anyway, I was very hesitant to do anything with Billy because he was a very amusing character, but very unpredictable, and I wasn't about to get abandoned in Israel.

But consistent with his legend, Rose was persuasive and backed up his offer with a generous contract to begin the design. Noguchi, on his first visit to Israel on behalf of this proposal in 1961, was overcome by the drama of the stark, rock-strewn landscape and the brilliant light quality. Almost from the start, he felt a kinship with the country and its people.

My going to Israel was in a way like going home and seeing people like myself who craved for some reason or other a particular spot on earth to call their own. . . The Jew has always appealed to me as being the endless, continuously expatriated person who really did not belong anywhere. That is the way the artist feels.

His concept for the sculpture garden was a series of huge, curved retaining walls formed of local rubble to create spacious outdoor galleries. Though the project got off to a speedy beginning and the initial relationship between Noguchi and Rose was euphoric, one could have predicted its course, given the powerful personalities

involved. For starters, Rose was explicit about having a boundary between the museum building and his garden, and according to Noguchi, drew a line, defining it. Nevertheless, Noguchi's design had his unqualified support as well as that of the museum officials.

The heroic process of earth moving soon began. The great, curved walls became imposing sculptural forms that echoed the surrounding hills and seemed always to have been part of the landscape. Of their appropriateness to the site, Noguchi says:

Everybody seems to think my walls were evocative of Israel, but all around Jerusalem and all through the Near East you have these retaining walls because of the dryness of the land. But those are all straight, not curved.

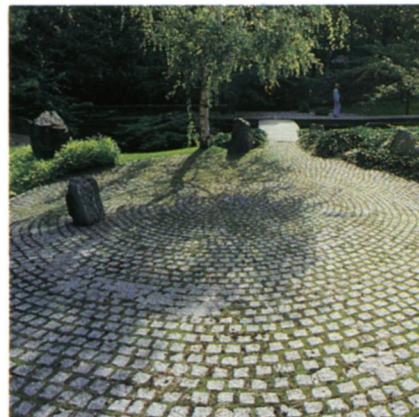
His design was a complex of roofless chambers on wide terraces rising from the desert landscape. He gradually became aware that Rose's small sculptures might be orphaned in these vast rock lunettes, and decided that a small-scale outdoor exhibition area had to be created—immediately—near the museum building, apart from the huge terraces. Admittedly, this was an afterthought, but a creative one. Rose, sensing a bottomless pit, was beginning to panic, and the tension escalated. Noguchi won his point and designed a sequence of "architectural spaces" with geometric dividers that provide a hospitable environment for small works. In forming the concrete walls of these enclosures, Noguchi modified their planes, slicing off a corner here, perforating a surface there.

The Rose collection, which includes examples by 19th and 20th century European and American masters such as Rodin, Bourdelle, Moore, Calder, David Smith and Noguchi himself, as well as works by a group of contemporary Israeli sculptors, was comfortably deployed within Noguchi's commodious spaces.

Impressive as the venture is, the relationship of the sculptures to their surroundings is not without problems. Many massive works manage to hold their own within Noguchi's idiosyncratic spaces, but smaller sculptures are sometimes diminished by them. Noguchi is the first to assert that his curved, rubble-formed walls are not always hospitable to traditional,

(opposite)

More specifically descriptive than the forms in Noguchi's gardens for Chase and Beinecke, those in the IBM garden in Armonk, New York, commemorate the advances of mathematics and astronomy and one of its forms, the black emerging dome, is inscribed with mathematical equations. The artist is standing in the base for the concave fountain, shown during construction.





Noguchi's monumental project for the Sogetsu school in Tokyo is a great stone mountain. The architect, Kenzo Tange, had designed a theater whose roof projected, pyramid-like, into a lobby space above it. Noguchi's task was to give credibility to this intrusion. The indoor mountain's granite ledges support simple flower arrangements that advertise the school's curriculum.

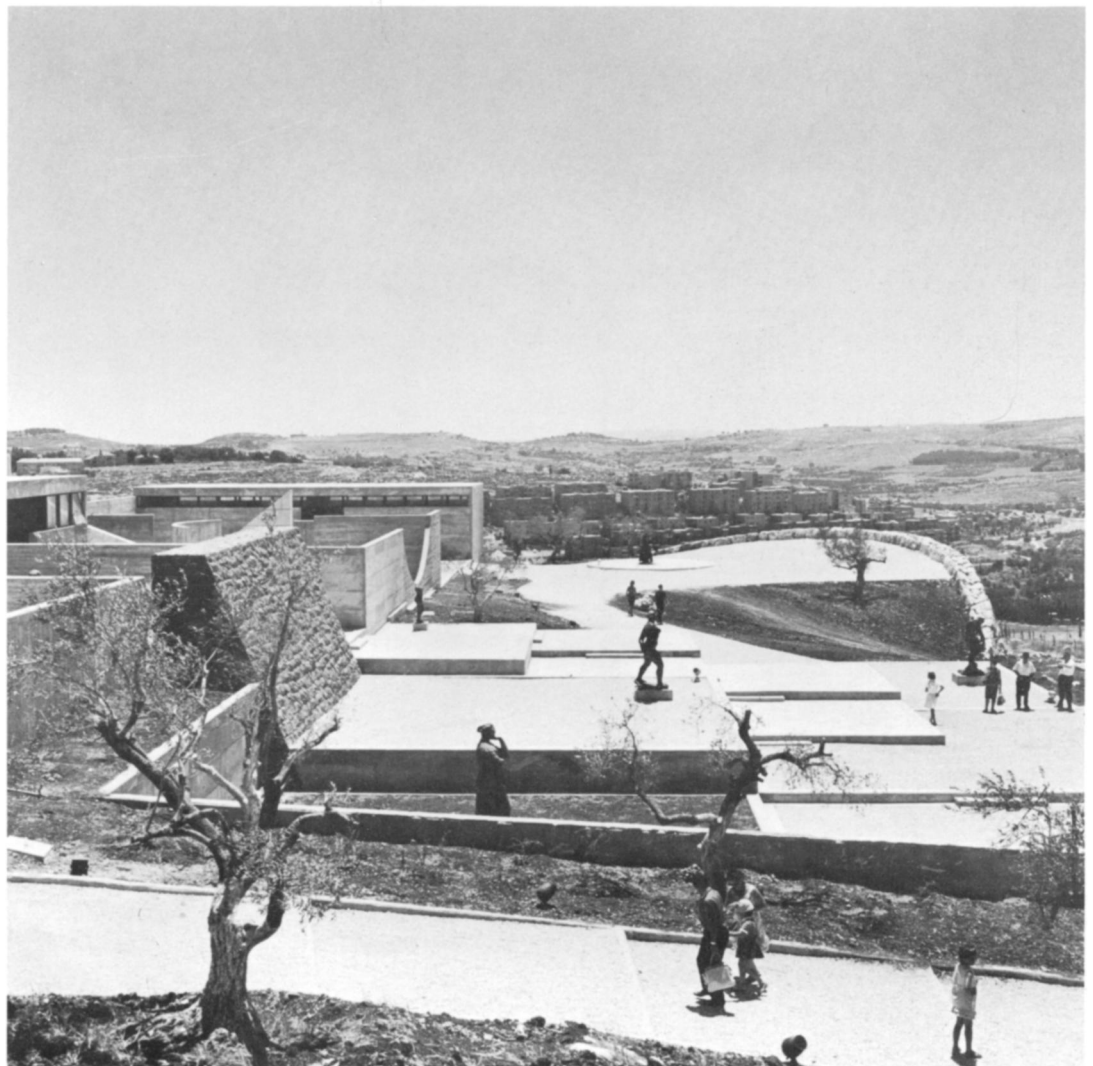
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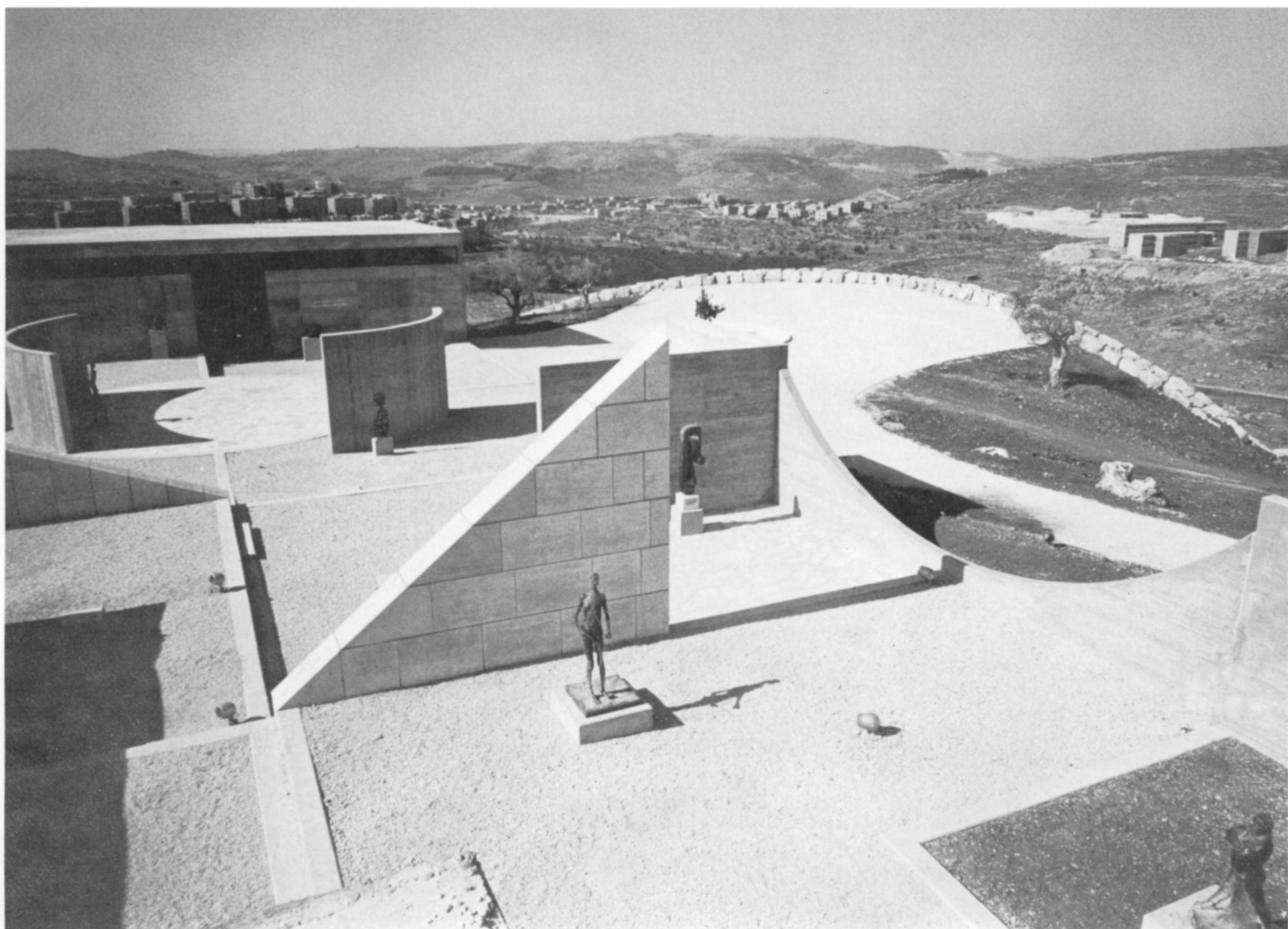
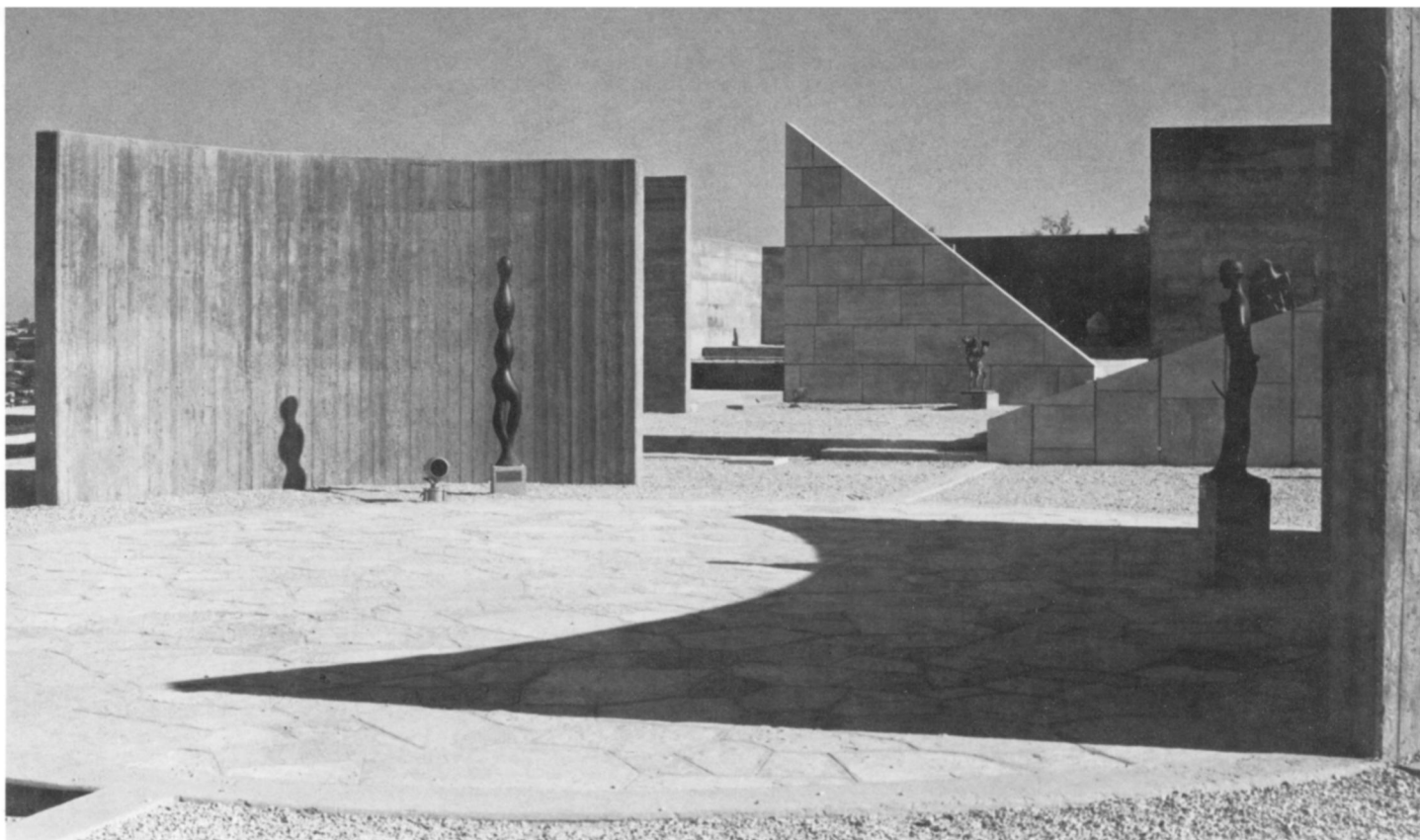
The UNESCO garden consists of many richly detailed incidents combining natural forms with sculptural elements. Once in the garden, the viewer's space perceptions are radically altered, a calculated process on Noguchi's part that succeeds in eliminating consideration of the stark building which the garden adjoins.



Noguchi's task for the Israel Museum was to create outdoor forms to serve as backgrounds for an extremely diverse collection of 19th and 20th century European, American and Israeli sculpture. His solution took the form of a sequence of huge, curved walls made of rubble (top). These appear to have evolved from the desert landscape and their form echoes that of the nearby mountains.

A second group of roofless galleries (opposite), adjacent to the museum building, was formed of poured concrete and accommodates smaller sculptures.







(from top)

Noguchi regards *Origin* as one of his most crucial works. Within it, stone appears in a rough as well as highly finished state—a paradoxical situation that underlies many Noguchi sculptures.

Origin 1968
granite 22 x 31 x 35

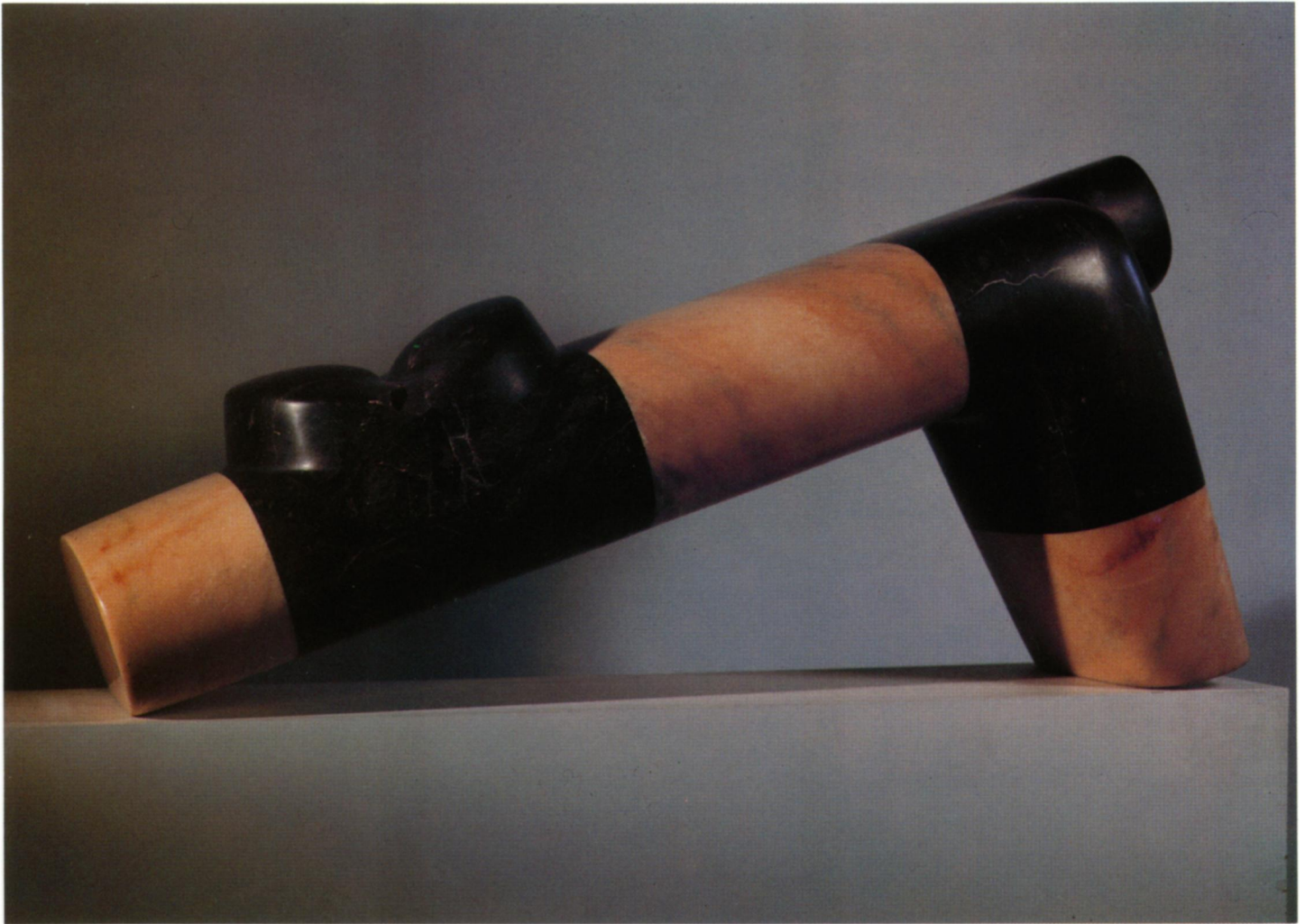
Paradox also characterizes *This Place*. The sculpture is a play upon the idea of broken or accidental form. In fact, the seven elements of this granite floor sculpture are carefully formed and fitted with precision.

This Place 1968
granite 6 x 43 x 42½
(7 parts)

In *Ground Wind II*, the elongated, twisted pylon makes its appearance as a segmented floor piece whose parts touch. The contrast between its roughly chiseled and highly polished areas contributes to the psychological tension of the sculpture.

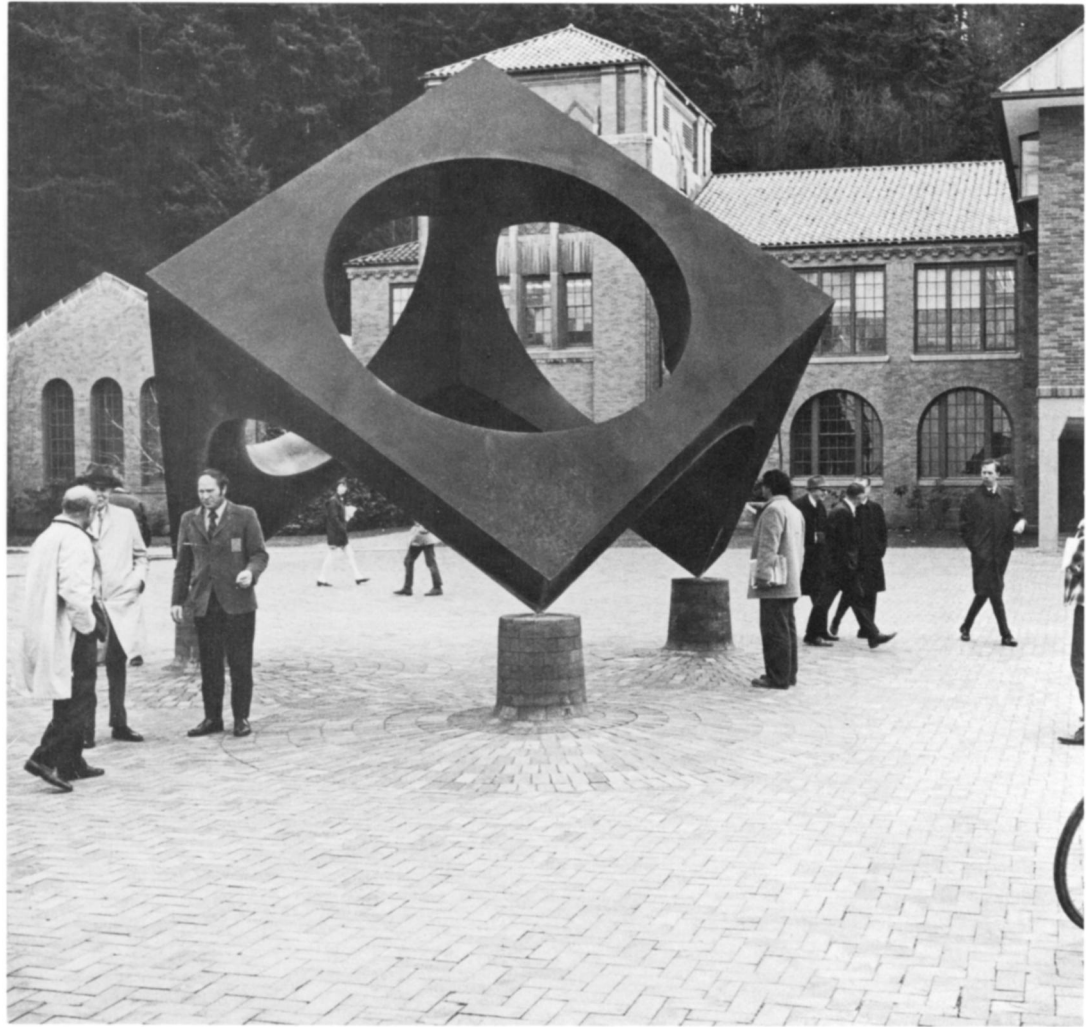
Ground Wind II 1968
granite 8 x 129 x 6
(7 parts)





Two flattened cylinders form this delicately toned marble work which belongs to a group of "striped" sculptures Noguchi produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These were based on the principle that longer and stronger forms were attainable by joining components with an internal tension system. The rubber band analogy applies here.

She 1971
marble 22 x 46 x 13
(small
version)



Sky Viewing, 1972, is another tipped cube variation, this time in painted steel, shown here installed at Western Washington State College in Bellingham. It is closely related to Noguchi's *Cubic Pyramid* (p 21). It is shown during its manufacture at a steel foundry near Seattle (below).



Portal, 1976, a 36-foot high work for the Cuyahoga Justice Center in Cleveland, was fabricated of standard industrial four-foot diameter hollow steel pipe. Another utilization of this structural system is *Sky Gate*, 1976-77, a sculpture near the University of Hawaii campus in Honolulu. *Portal* is a monumental variation on Noguchi's "void" motif.

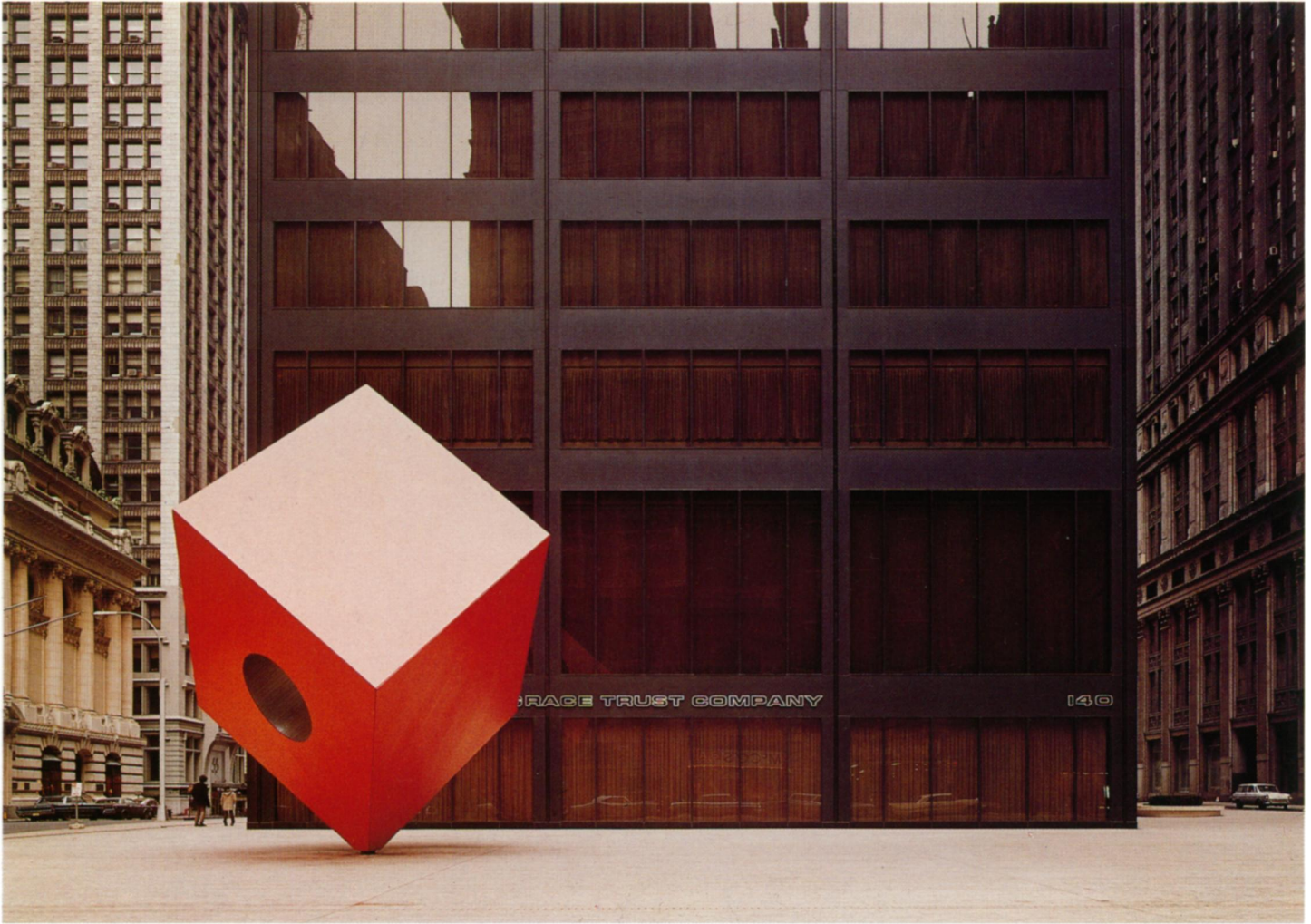
base-oriented sculpture. His spaces, he feels, serve best as backgrounds for tall, linear shapes that can work against rough mass; the ideal form for exhibition in these, he wryly suggests, might be a lunar lander.

I accepted that job with great hesitation, not just out of ego, but wondering how in the world other people's sculptures would fit into a sculpture which I would do. And people have accused me of making a sculpture which nobody else could put any sculptures into—and it's true in a sense.

The overall result, nevertheless, is an awesome space in which sculptures, representative of diverse styles, interact vividly with their surroundings. Billy Rose, who died in 1966, is certainly well memorialized by his garden, but for Noguchi the project is not complete and he urges the Israel Museum to construct great new curves to enlarge its exhibition areas. He thinks of the space as a great, evolving phenomenon.

Well past conventional retirement age, Noguchi during the 1970s has shown no signs of curtailing his creative activities. Instead, he has indefatigably traveled around the world, proposing projects and overseeing construction of huge sculptures, fountains and recreation areas.

Many recent commissions have been for large-scale public sculptures. The precariously balanced *Red Cube*, serenely dominating the plaza of the Marine Midland Bank at 140 Broadway, was his first giant object commission in New York—another felicitous example of the Noguchi-Bunshaft collaboration. This exuberant addition to the city, a focal point for public gatherings, resembles a rectangular hot air balloon. A bit further south on Broadway, Noguchi's cube takes the form of a rhomboidal stalactite, suspended from the ceiling of the Bank of Tokyo. His tipped cube has migrated to the other end of the continent, and on the Bellingham campus of Western Washington State College is another manifestation, *Sky Viewing*, a 1972 painted steel piece whose planar sides are perforated by huge circles. In this work the circle-in-the-cube becomes a geometric paradox. In nearby Seattle, the circle itself is the theme for a granite sculpture, *Black Sun*. Its surface, modulated by radial scoopings, suggests



In addition to designing gardens for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Noguchi produced several large-scale sculptures for the firm's buildings. A favorite Noguchi theme, a cube balanced on its point, makes its most dramatic appearance in this 28-foot high steel work.

(opposite)

After years of unsuccessful efforts to construct a playground in the United States, Noguchi, in 1975-76, was able to utilize many earlier forms in his colorful design for Piedmont Park in Atlanta, Georgia.

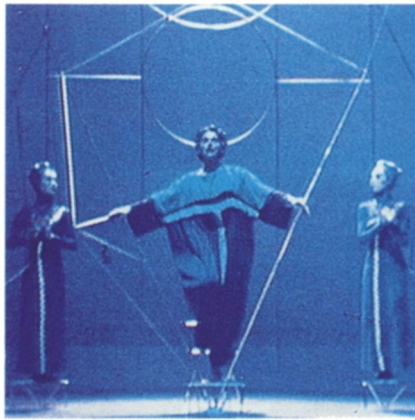
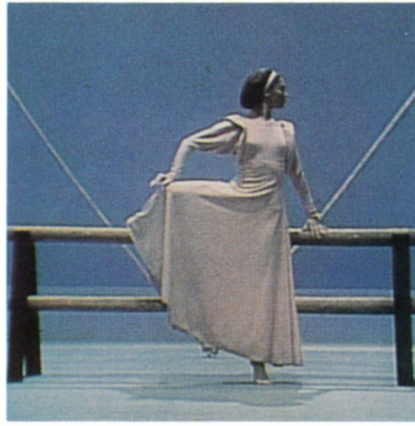


solar rays; these depressions create patterns of light and shadow that constantly modify its doughnut shape. By its sensitive placement on a long, low pedestal, *Black Sun* functions as a surveyor's sighting device which frames the distant landscape.

In the mid-1970s, Noguchi began working with continuous tubular forms that suggest massive calligraphy in space. The finest sculptures in this mode are several "void" pieces carved in granite. A monumental version is *Portal*, a 36-foot, 15-ton tubular steel sculpture commissioned for the entrance of the Cuyahoga Justice Center in Cleveland. For this formidable edifice, which incorporates the local jail as well as courts of law, Noguchi chose not to utilize accepted symbols that reflect the concepts of justice and equality, but conceived of his work as marking the entrance to an awesome ceremonial space.

In recent years, Noguchi's projects have assumed greater scale and gravity, and his activities have revealed a deep concern with making public art. His penchant for creating play areas for children finally found sponsorship under the auspices of the High Museum in Atlanta, where he was invited to design a playground for a park in an economically depressed area.

After more than 35 years of hibernation, sculptural forms initially developed, but not used, for a playground in Hawaii suddenly emerged in 1976 like exotic mechanical vegetation as part of a scintillating polychrome landscape, constantly aswarm with children. In Atlanta's Piedmont Park, triangular swings and a giant cylinder slide are syncopated variations on characteristic Noguchi shapes. The continuous sculptural element of the playground is a curved, concrete wall that serves as a backdrop for these shapes and protects the recreation area from street traffic.



Ever willing to expand his field of activity, Noguchi, at an early stage of his artistic career, became interested in designing fountains. These offered a means of combining sculptural forms with water and of introducing motion and reflection into his work. Waterfalls, jet sprays and reflecting pools have long been components of his plazas and gardens. A prominent feature of his UNESCO garden is a Japanese-style lily pond. A more austere version of the Japanese garden is the minimalistic design of five great black granite elements on a gravel bed in the interior garden of the Supreme Court building in Tokyo. These ritualistic forms, filled with water that spills over their edges, function as dark mirrors; arranged processionally, they are nuclei of quiet energy that invite contemplation. Still another utilization of water in an area intended for quiet viewing is the Chase Manhattan Bank's sunken circle; in summer its fountain creates a shallow pool that reflects the sky. But Noguchi's first *magnum opus* utilizing water on a heroic scale was his waterworks design for Expo 70 in Osaka. For this project, his theatrical sense served him well. Emerging from a large rectangular pool, 12 enormous sculptures—cubes, spheres and cylinders—bristling with jet nozzles provided an exuberantly choreographed water display, dramatically illuminated at night. Through the resulting vapor, the sculptural elements became atmospheric forms. Today, the exposition site has been emptied of its fantasy architecture, but Noguchi's fountains remain.

In contrast to such extravaganzas as the Osaka project, Noguchi has combined sculptural form and water on a more intimate scale. A recent example is a stainless steel pyramidal fountain at the end of a long, palm-tree-lined mall in Palm Beach. Supported on a low, inverted base which one can interpret as an upside-down pyramid, its point embedded in the earth, the fountain's structure evokes the dymaxion geometry of Noguchi's old friend, Buckminster Fuller, whom he met in 1929. Each surface of the pyramid is pierced by a triangular opening, and within this great eye is a rainbow mist created by internal water jets. The fountain came into existence as a result of a competition organized by a local sponsor, the Axton Foundation. First prize went to the sculptor Robert Morris, who proposed a massive

earthwork maze, but the sponsor decided not to proceed with it, preferring Noguchi's design. It is not clear why Noguchi chose a pyramidal structure for this site. Its gleaming technological form suggests a science fiction vision of ancient Egypt. Continuing in this vein, it resembles a spacecraft whose extraterrestrial inhabitants might be monitoring the daily life of the well-heeled inhabitants of Palm Beach. Such interstellar aspects must have also occurred to Noguchi, who recalls the dedication of the sculpture as a unique experience.

I must say at the opening, where all those elegant people were standing around there in tuxedos and white jackets, and the evening darkened—it looked exactly like a visitation from Mars or the end of the world.

Noguchi's association with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill extended to collaborating with its Chicago office on some projects such as the new art school building at the Art Institute of Chicago. His design solution for the narrow space between building and sidewalk is ingenious. His problem was to create a form that would clearly designate the entrance to the steel and glass cube and help mitigate the "sunglass" effect of its mirrored surface. Noguchi's solution consists of two 40-foot granite forms, one vertical and the other horizontal: from the top of the vertical pier, water cascades down a V-shaped notch and into the pool below; water also spills over into the pool from a split in the top of the horizontal element.

After many years of seeing his proposals for public spaces routinely rejected, Noguchi in the 1970s finally got his chance to apply his theories about the urban landscape on a very grand scale. In downtown Detroit, construction will soon be completed on the Civic Center Plaza he helped design, which occupies eight acres in the center of this beleaguered city. Its overall purpose is to provide amenities for people living and working in the city. Part of an ambitious renewal scheme, this area, adjacent to Detroit's newly opened Renaissance Center and the Detroit River, will function as a park and provide facilities for concerts, ice-skating, theater and community festivities.

(opposite, from top)

Some of Noguchi's most ingenious designs were for Martha Graham's dances, including: *Frontier*, 1935, *Cortege of Eagles*, 1966, *Seraphic Dialogue*, 1955, and *Cave of the Heart*, 1946. (For a complete listing of Noguchi's work with Martha Graham, see p 99.)

Dancers:

top row: Janet Eilber
second row: Matt Turney (left)
third row: Bert Ross (center)
fourth row: Takao Asakawa

Noguchi's initial role in the project was the design of a large fountain, funded by a bequest from Mrs. Horace E. Dodge in memory of her husband and son. A committee of architects, museum personnel and prominent citizens selected him for the task—his design for Osaka being a major factor in their decision. The committee was chaired by Robert Hastings, whose Detroit architectural firm, Smith, Hinchman & Grylls Associates, Inc., had the task of designing the plaza. Soon, Noguchi was collaborating with the architects on the concept of the plaza itself and his ideas determined its ultimate character. He thought of the space as an uncluttered, open area for leisurely pedestrian activities and his initial design concepts were accepted with enthusiasm by Detroit's new mayor, Coleman Young, who had inherited the project from the previous administration. But, Noguchi recalls, Mayor Young felt there were a few unresolved issues in the proposal:

He saw what we were doing; our models, our plans and so forth. The first thing he said was, 'Well, where's the ethnic festival?' You see, the ethnic festival was something that had been going on for years along the river. I immediately said, 'Well, downstairs, Mr. Mayor.'

The only problem was, no downstairs had been planned, but the mayor's question prompted some hasty redesigning, with the happy result that some two acres were retrieved from below ground. From the beginning, the project required a massive engineering effort. The original site was a parking lot, and initially, the plaza had to be raised 16 feet because of unstable soil and the need to minimize pressure on an existing wall adjacent to the Detroit River. Noguchi's solution allowed the salvaged subterranean space to be used for a road, parking areas, a restaurant, access to theater and ice-skating areas and, of course, commodious areas for ethnic celebrations.

By sweeping the plaza clear of these disparate functions, Noguchi was able to focus attention on its dominant features, a massive fountain and a soaring pylon. In his design for the plaza, Noguchi's ever-present motif, the imaginary landscape, achieves its grandest scale. The landscape simile is appropriate because, in Noguchi's mind, the Detroit plaza is reminiscent of

indigenous American forms—"pyramids and other earth shapes that characterize the North American landscape, whether in Mexico or Ohio." Its most lavish feature is the 30-foot-high stainless steel ring fountain that is programmed to change its spray with the weather conditions. Given the monumental space of the plaza and a fountain budget to match, Noguchi went all out on its design.

To spend \$2,000,000 on a fountain isn't easy. I mean, how are you going to spend \$2,000,000 on a fountain, and, besides, I wasn't interested in making the type which the donor had specified, such as the Barcelona Fountain with a lot of jets going up all over the place in a circular area. I wanted to make a new fountain, a fountain which represents our times and our relationship to outer space.

Though the plaza may evoke historical spaces, the fountain itself is a future-oriented phenomenon, utilizing every manner of control device to orchestrate its effects. Detroit's gigantic new water toy certainly qualifies as space age fantasy and its sophisticated engineering will enable it to deliver memorable performances. Incorporated in its four-foot diameter ring are huge nozzles and a complicated lighting system to illuminate the showy waterworks. From the pool below, a circle of jets forms definable columns of water that interact with the great circle's downward spray. Noguchi's fountain will provide the public with all manner of amenities, which he discusses with delight:

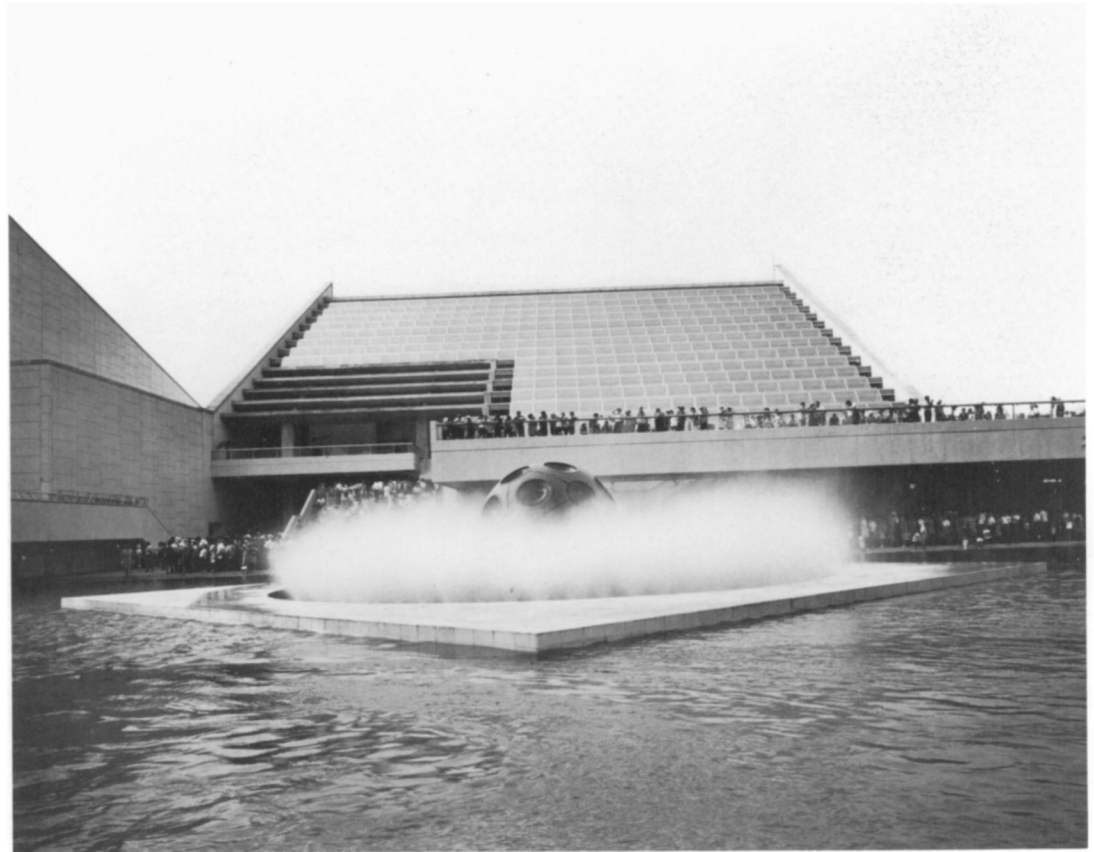
The water is recycled and purified so if you drink it, you're not going to get sick. . . There's no lake around it because if you had one, all that space would be removed from pedestrian use. . . and (of great importance) it won't spray people too much.

In the architect's early plan, before Noguchi was involved, a tall tower surmounted by a statue was located at the plaza's edge. When Noguchi transformed the design it became a gleaming stainless steel pylon, a seven-by-seven-foot square helix that, in ascending to its full height of 120 feet, appears to make a quarter turn. By means of elaborate steel tubing and angle-iron trussing, the project's structural engineers were able to bring Noguchi's fantastic needle into existence.



Detroit's new Civic Center Plaza, 1973-78, can be described as the culmination of Noguchi's imaginary landscape theme. Adjacent to Detroit's Renaissance Center, its dominant forms are a 30-foot high circular fountain and a 120-foot high twisted stainless steel pylon. Noguchi's contribution to this project included the overall concept for the plaza design which provides for two levels of activity. Beneath the plaza are facilities for parking, an ice-skating arena and a theater.





Although Noguchi's design for Expo 70's American pavilion was not accepted, he was commissioned to create a group of 12 geometric fountains, rising from a huge reflecting pool. The ensuing spectacle, involving colored lights playing on jets of water, created an elaborate choreography in the best tradition of World's Fair architecture.

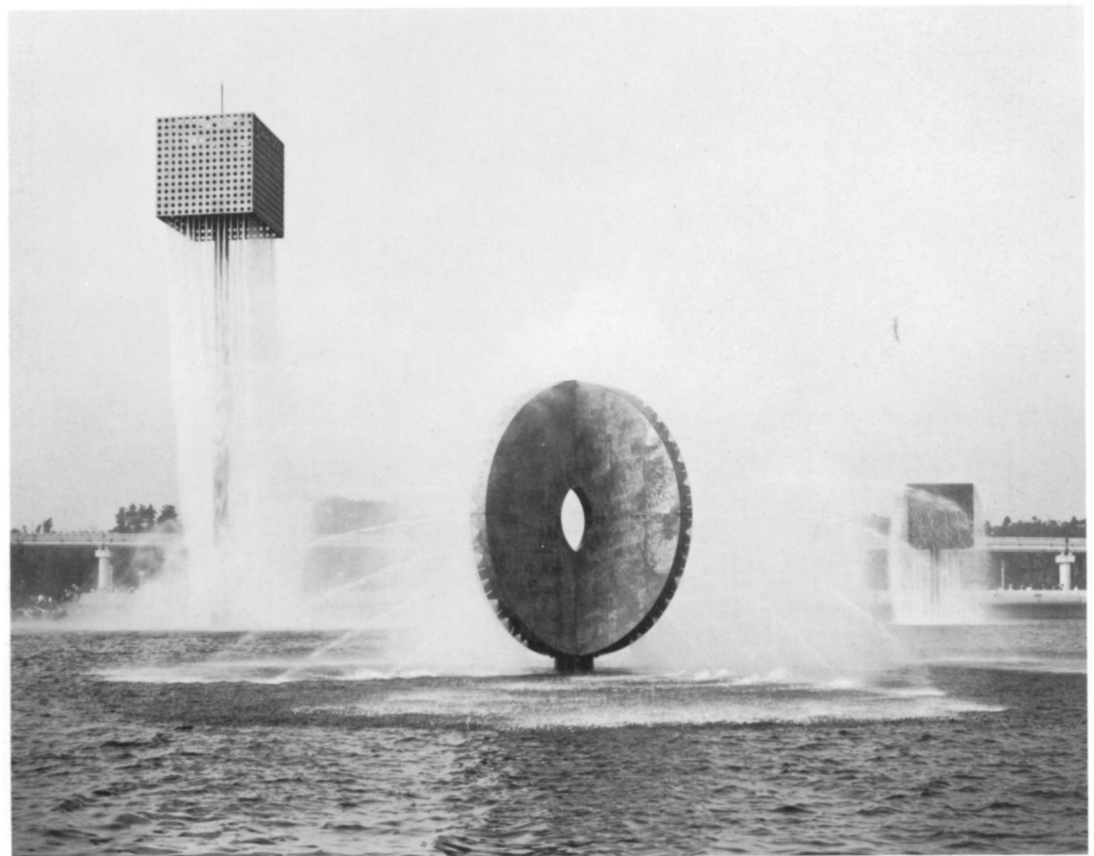
(opposite)

The mountain has been a consistent subject for Noguchi, and it appears in his sculpture, theater designs and large environmental projects. In its purest form it is a dense, roughly chiseled mass, or an irregular mass emerging from a plateau.

(from top)

Double Red Mountain 1970
travertine 13 x 30 x 40

Mud Mountain 1965
basalt with wood base
12 x 22 x 34 (sculpture)
10½ x 47¼ x 19½ (base)







Noguchi's most recent completed project for the Sogetsu School of Flower Arrangement in Tokyo is a great indoor-“mountain,” called “*Heaven*,” formed of granite slabs. The school's building, designed by Noguchi's friend, Kenzo Tange, contains on its lower level a theater whose roof projects, ziggurat-like, into the building's lobby. The architect had added railings for this stepped structure to protect anyone who might climb it, but it had no obvious function in the activities of the building. The head of the school, the renowned flower-arranging master Sofu Teshigahara, turned to Noguchi to give plausibility and purpose to this awesome intrusion.

Noguchi took on this job, he says, for three reasons: first, there was the element of challenge. “I rather enjoy it when somebody says, ‘all right I have this problem—I can't get this thing to work.’ That's the situation I'm often brought into, whether in the theater or with architects;” then, he wanted a major project to provide employment for his assistant stone cutters on the island of Shikoku, where he lives and works while in Japan; finally, this was to be a private, not a government commission. He was given *carte blanche* by the owner—“In the same way that he let Tange do whatever he pleased, he let me do whatever I pleased. He had no interest in seeing what I was doing—he merely wanted me to do it.”

Noguchi's solution to Mr. Teshigahara's design problem provided the school with a spectacular display area for flower arrangements that would publicize its func-

tion. Without altering the underlying structure, he ingeniously converted Tange's ledges into an abstract mountain, complete with ridges and flowing water. In effect, Noguchi says, he provided his patron with a giant *tokonoma*, the area in a Japanese house traditionally reserved for flower arrangements and scrolls.

In a sense it's the most sacred spot in a Japanese house. It's heaven, and what I've done there is heaven, you see.

Outside the building, he also constructed a 40-foot black granite pylon, a modern version of the *tokobashira*, or ritual post, traditionally placed inside the Japanese house.

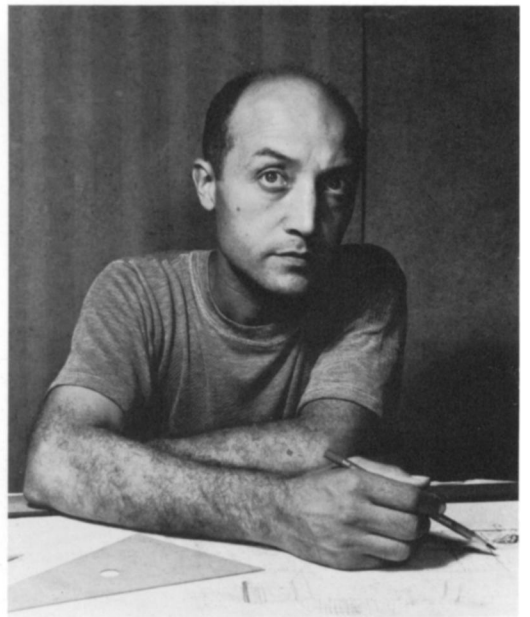
Characteristically, Noguchi manages to keep a number of large projects in motion at the same time. While his largest commission, the Detroit Civic Center Plaza, has been planned, constructed—and constantly refined by him from 1973 to the present—he has overseen completion of a playground in Atlanta, fountains for the supreme court building in Tokyo, the Chicago Art Institute and the Society of Four Arts in Palm Beach, and several large-scale sculptures, including *Portal*, for the Cuyahoga Justice Center in Cleveland. This capacity to work, simultaneously, on so many levels and in so many places demands not only enormous energy but the discipline to focus totally on the project at hand. What for most artists would be a shattering, schizoid process is, for Noguchi, the natural way to work.

(above)

The interior granite “mountain,” called “*Heaven*,” was designed for the Sogetsu School of Flower Arrangement in Tokyo (shown in color, p 69).

(opposite)

Prior to creating the large work, *Portal*, for Cleveland's new justice building, Noguchi designed a series of black granite fountains for the supreme court building in Tokyo. Unlike *Portal*, these sculptures are in an enclosed courtyard, not visible to the public.

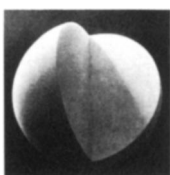


Portraits of Isamu Noguchi — one for each decade since the mid-20s — by various photographers, are expressive of the dominant portrait style of each period. The most recent in the series appears on p 4.

CHRONOLOGY



Undine 1925



Sphere Section 1927



Positional Shape 1928



Martha Graham 1929



Buckminster Fuller 1929



The Queen 1931

Primary sources for this outline of Noguchi's life were Nancy Grove, who is currently writing her dissertation on his work, and the artist's 1968 autobiography, *A Sculptor's World*, published by Harper & Row, New York. A comprehensive account of Noguchi's life, by Sam Hunter, will be published this year by Abbeville Press, Inc., New York.

1904-17 Born in Los Angeles November 17, 1904. Parents, Japanese poet Yonejiro (Yone) Noguchi and American writer Leonie Gilmour. Moves to Japan two years later. Attends Japanese and Jesuit schools.

1918-22 Sent to Interlaken, experimental school near Rolling Prairie, Indiana. Moves to La Porte, Indiana, when school becomes Army training camp, and boards with minister's family. Graduates from local high school. Three-month apprenticeship with sculptor Gutzon Borglum in Connecticut.

1923-25 Enrolls in Columbia University as premedical student. Concurrently attends sculpture classes at Leonardo da Vinci School. Leaves Columbia, makes permanent commitment to art. Produces skillful, academic nudes and portraits (*Undine*, 1925). Exhibits at National Academy and Architectural League. Elected to National Sculpture Society.

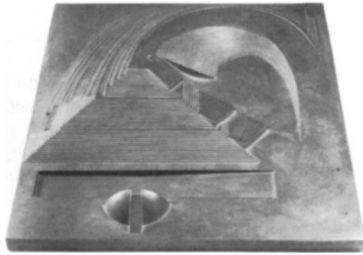
1926-27 Frequents avant-garde galleries in New York. Receives Guggenheim Fellowship. Goes to Paris, where he becomes Brancusi's studio assistant. Makes first stone carving, influenced by the compactness and purity of the older artist's work (*Sphere Section*, 1927).

1928-29 Produces series of stone, wood and sheet metal abstractions, influenced by Brancusi, Picasso, Constructivists (*Positional Shape*, 1928). Knows Pascin, Kantor, Ruellan, Stuart Davis, Calder (assists at performances of the latter's Circus). Returns to New York and shows abstractions in first one-man exhibition (Eugene Schoen Gallery, 1929) none of which is sold. Turns to portraiture to support himself (*Martha Graham*, 1929; *Buckminster Fuller*, 1929).

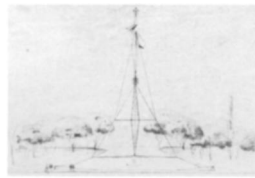
1930-31 Exhibits portrait busts (Marie Sterner Gallery, 1930). Financial success enables him to travel to the Far East. Studies calligraphic brush drawing with Chinese master, Chi Pai Shih, in Peking. Goes to Japan to work with famous potter, Uno Jinmatsu. Develops interest in prehistoric Japanese art and traditional stone gardens. Produces terra-cotta pieces reminiscent of pre-Buddhist *haniwa* mortuary figures he sees in Kyoto Museum (*The Queen*, 1931). Returns to New York.



Miss Expanding Universe 1932

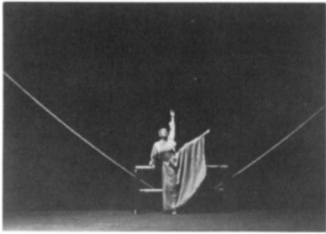


Play Mountain 1933



Monument to Ben Franklin 1933

1932-33 Exhibits his terra-cottas and brush drawings in New York (John Becker and Demotte galleries, 1932); portraits, drawings and some new works related to the *haniwa* figures (*Miss Expanding Universe*, 1932), (Reinhardt Gallery, 1932). Political ideology influenced by hardships of the Depression and heightened by associations with socially conscious artists—Chaim Gross, Arshile Gorky, John Graham, Moses and Raphael Soyer. Turns to creating art with social significance. Designs first playground (*Play Mountain*, 1933) and monument (*Monument to Ben Franklin*, 1933), both unrealized.



Frontier 1935



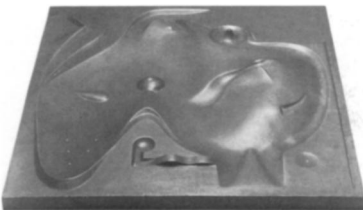
History Mexico 1935-36

1934-36 Works briefly for government's Public Works of Art Project; proposals for monuments, an earthwork and a playground rejected. First theater sets commissioned by modern dance pioneer, Martha Graham (*Frontier*, 1935; *Chronicle*, 1936). Exhibits project designs, socially conscious sculptures (*Death*, 1934), (Marie Harriman Gallery, 1935). Goes to Mexico City, produces 72-foot-long wall mural encapsulating the history of the Mexican revolution (*History Mexico*, 1935-36).



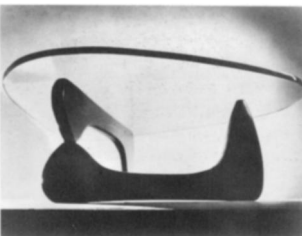
Associated Press Relief 1938-39

1937-40 Returns to New York. Wins major commission for relief sculpture over entrance to Associated Press building in Rockefeller Plaza; casts nine-ton stainless steel piece. First realized fountain proposal, Ford building, New York World's Fair. Designs Martha Graham dance production (*El Penitente*, 1940).



Contoured Playground 1941

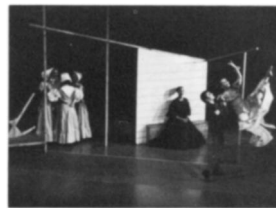
1941-42 Proposes shaped-earth *Contoured Playground* (1941) for New York (unrealized). Lives six months in Japanese-American "relocation camp," Poston, Arizona, at outbreak of World War II, where he designs recreation areas for camp community (unrealized). Begins relief sculptures in the form of imaginary landscapes. Returns to New York; establishes studio, 33 MacDougal Alley.



Coffee Table 1944



Herodiade 1944



Appalachian Spring 1944

1943-44 Designs table for Herman Miller Co. related to his table landscape sculptures. Creates three sets for Martha Graham dance productions (*Herodiade*, 1944; *Appalachian Spring*, 1944; *Imagined Wing*, 1944).



Cave of the Heart

1946



The Seasons

1947



Sculpture to be Seen from Mars

1947

1945-47 Produces series of interlocking sculptures. Designs four sets for Martha Graham (*Dark Meadow*, 1946; *Cave of the Heart*, 1946; *Errand into the Maze*, 1947; *Night Journey*, 1947), one set for Merce Cunningham (*The Seasons*, 1947). Makes numerous unrealized visionary proposals, including a large earthwork (*Sculpture to be Seen from Mars*, 1947). Participant in *14 Americans* exhibition (Museum of Modern Art, 1946).



Orpheus

1948



Memorial to Gandhi

1948

1948-49 Set for Martha Graham (*Diversion of Angels*, 1948), and Balanchine (*Orpheus*, 1948). One-man exhibition (Egan Gallery, 1949). Receives Bollingen Foundation Fellowship to research book on leisure. Travels throughout Europe, Near East, India, Southeast Asia, Japan, studying cathedrals, plazas, temples, monoliths, monuments.



Memorial to Father, Keio University

1951-52



Garden, Lever House

1952



Judith

1950



Akari

1951-78

1950-52 In Tokyo, creates garden for Readers Digest headquarters and father's memorial room and garden at Keio University. Designs two bridges and a number of unrealized monuments for Hiroshima. Begins collaboration with Japanese lantern makers on development of *akari*. Creates set for Martha Graham (*Judith*, 1950). Works with potter Rosanjin Kitaoji. Makes abstract and figurative ceramic and terra-cotta pieces. Playground model for United Nations Headquarters vetoed by New York Parks Department, exhibited at Museum of Modern Art. Several exhibitions in Japan. Designs sculpture garden (never realized) for Lever House, New York.



Seraphic Dialogue

1955



Bird B

1952-58



King Lear

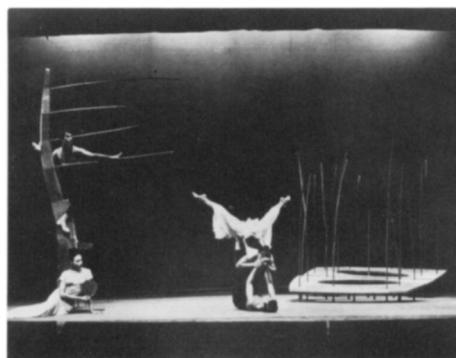
1955

1953-55 Exhibits ceramic and terra-cotta works (Stable Gallery, 1954) and has first *akari* exhibition. Begins series of hieratic abstractions in cast iron. Designs sets for Martha Graham (*Voyage*, 1953; *Theater for a Voyage*, 1955; *Seraphic Dialogue*, 1955), sets and costumes for Royal Shakespeare Company (*King Lear*, 1955), London.



Garden, UNESCO

1956-58



Embattled Garden

1958

1956-59 Continues cast-iron pieces. Begins austere abstractions in Greek marble and granite and standing sculptures made from bent, anodized aluminum. Creates gardens for UNESCO in Paris and Connecticut General Life Insurance Co., Bloomfield Hills, Connecticut. Builds sets for Martha Graham (*Clytemnestra*, 1958; *Embattled Garden*, 1958). Exhibits environmental designs, iron and stone sculptures (Stable Gallery, 1959).



Alcestis 1960



*This Earth,
This Passage* 1962

1960-62 Begins series of floor sculptures related to landscape forms. Designs fountain for John Hancock Life Insurance Co., New Orleans; plaza for First National Bank, Ft. Worth; sets for Martha Graham (*Acrobats of God*, 1960; *Alcestis*, 1960; *Phaedra*, 1962). Establishes studio in small factory building in Long Island City, New York. Exhibits anodized aluminum and wood pieces (Cordier and Warren Gallery, 1961).



Garden, Chase Manhattan Bank 1961-64

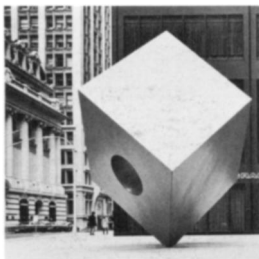


Circe 1963

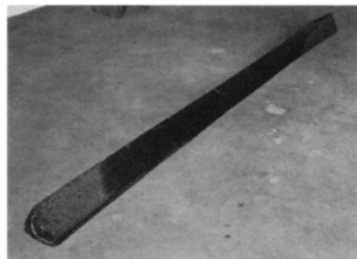


Sculpture Garden, Israel Museum 1960—continuing

1963-66 Creates gardens for Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (begun 1960); Israel Museum, Jerusalem (begun 1960); Chase Manhattan Bank, New York (begun 1961); IBM headquarters, Armonk, New York. First playground design realized for Kodomo No Kuni, near Tokyo. Creates five unrealized designs with architect Louis Kahn for a playground in New York's Riverside Park (begun 1960). Builds sets for Martha Graham (*Circe*, 1963; *Cortege of Eagles*, 1966). Exhibits bronze sculptures (Cordier and Ekstrom, 1963). First one-man show in Paris (Galerie Claude Bernard, 1964). First group of Italian stone carvings exhibited (Cordier and Ekstrom, 1965).

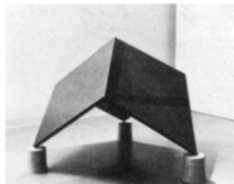


Red Cube 1968



Ground Wind II 1968

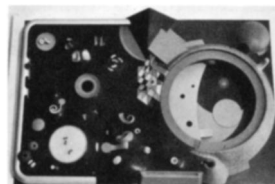
1967-68 Begins practice of working in New York City, Japan and Italy each year. Stone sculptures shown (Cordier and Ekstrom, 1967). Has exhibition of 1931 brush drawings made in China (Cordier and Ekstrom, 1968) concurrent with opening of retrospective (Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968). Makes large outdoor sculptures for Marine Midland Bank building in New York (*Red Cube*, 1968), and for a plaza in Spoleto, Italy (*Octetra Playpiece*, 1968).



Cubic Pyramid 1969



Black Sun 1972



American Pavilion Model, Expo 70

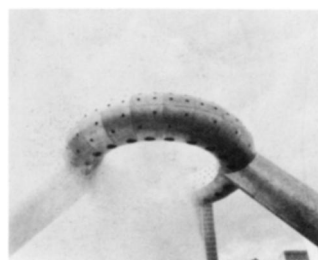
1969-72 Installs large outdoor sculptures at Seattle Art Museum; Western Washington State College, Bellingham; Bayerische Vereinsbank, Munich. Twelve metal fountains designed for Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan. Exhibits new *akari* (Cordier and Ekstrom, 1969) and striped, stone constructions (Cordier and Ekstrom, 1970). Shows work in London, Zurich.



Fountains, Supreme Court, Tokyo 1974



Portal 1976



Fountain, Detroit 1973-78

1973-78 Makes large-scale outdoor sculptures for Pepsico building, Purchase, New York; Federal building, Seattle; Cuyahoga Justice Center, Cleveland. Builds indoor granite "mountain" for Sogetsu School of Flower Arrangement, Tokyo. Fountains created for supreme court building, Tokyo; Society of Four Arts, Palm Beach; Art Institute of Chicago. First playground constructed in the United States, Atlanta, Georgia. Designs eight-acre plaza, fountain and pylon for city of Detroit. Retrospective (Minami Gallery, Tokyo, 1973); new metal pieces (Pace Gallery, 1975); *akari* (Museum of Modern Art, 1977). Comprehensive exhibition of sculpture, theater set designs and environmental works (Walker Art Center, 1978).

NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Circles/ Spheres

Noguchi's imagery ranges from barely modified natural forms to pure geometry. Some works combine both extremes and, seen as a whole, his production is an interaction between organic and analytical impulses.

Certain primal forms occur frequently in his sculpture, theater set designs and large public projects which include gardens, playgrounds and plazas. Some of these forms, such as cubes, cylinders and pyramids, are his variations in solid geometry. Others are more concerned with physical processes, such as interlocking, twisting and emerging. The resulting shapes, some of which are illustrated here, constitute Noguchi's eloquent visual vocabulary.

1 *Sphere Section* 1927
marble 16

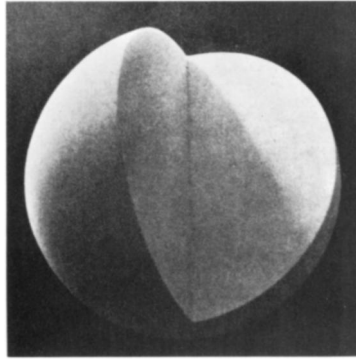
2 *Alcestis* 1960
set design, Martha Graham
Dance Company

3 *Swimming Pool for von
Sternberg* 1935
bronze model 7 x 15 x 14

4 *Black Sun*, Seattle 1972

5 Garden, Chase Manhattan Bank,
New York 1961-64

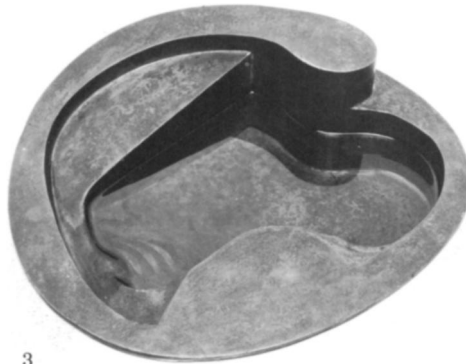
6 Fountains, Expo 70,
Osaka 1970



1



2



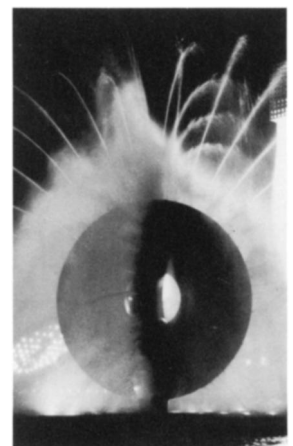
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4



5



6

NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Cubes

1 *Cubic Pyramid* 1969
granite 36 x 53 x 53

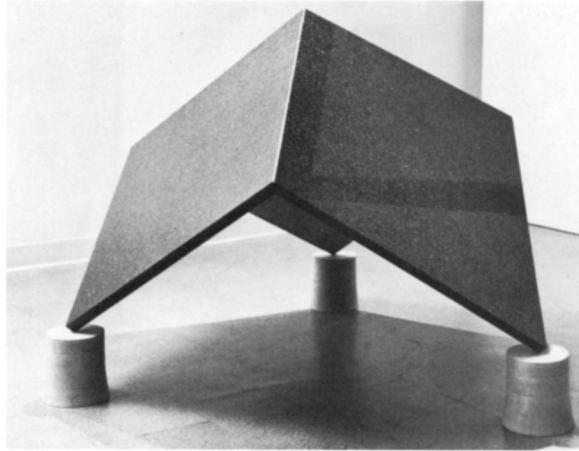
2 *Fountains, Expo 70,*
Osaka 1970

3 *Sky Viewing, Western*
Washington State
College 1972

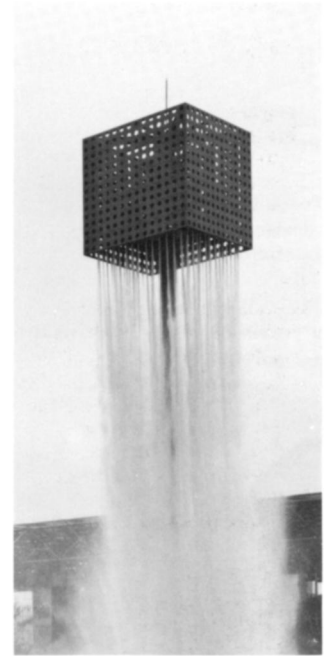
4 *Alcestis* 1960
set design, Martha Graham
Dance Company

5 *Red Cube, New York* 1968

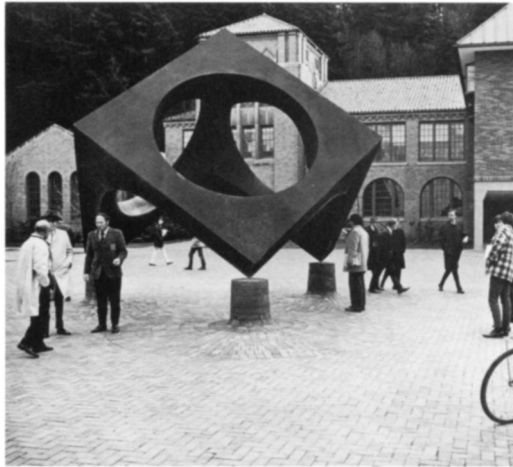
6 *Shinto, Bank of Tokyo,*
New York 1976



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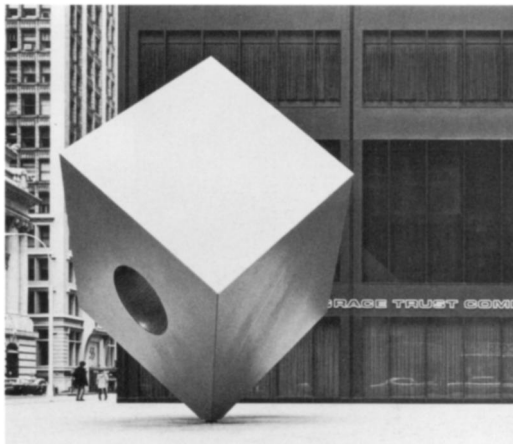
2



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6

NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Pyramids/ Triangles

1 Fountain, Detroit 1978

2 *Playscapes*, Atlanta 1975-76

3 *Society of Four Arts Fountain*,
Palm Beach 1975-76

4 *A World I Did Not
Make* 1952

terra-cotta (dimensions and
whereabouts unknown)

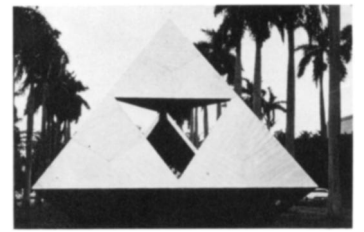
5 *Play Mountain* 1933
bronze model 4 x 29³/₁₆ x
25¹¹/₁₆



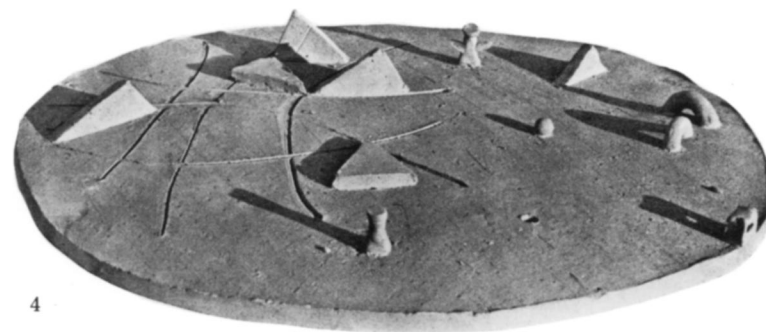
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NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Columns

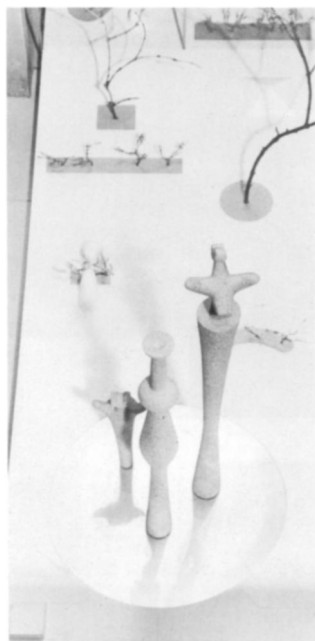
1 Garden, Lever House,
New York 1952
model

2 Garden, Connecticut General
Life Insurance Company,
Connecticut 1956-57

3 *Memorial to Buddha*, New
Delhi 1957
plaster model (exhibition
version in plaster and
bronze) 18½

4 *Bird B* 1952-58
marble with
limestone base 52 x 24 x 12
(sculpture)
7 x 15 x 15
(base)

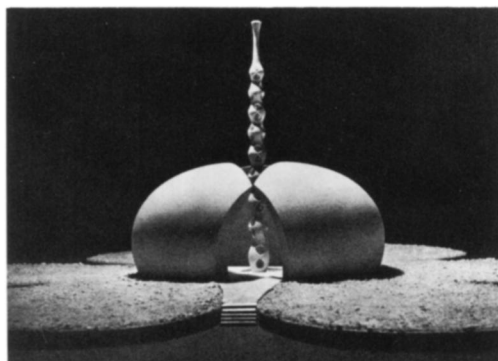
5 *The Queen* 1931
terra-cotta 45



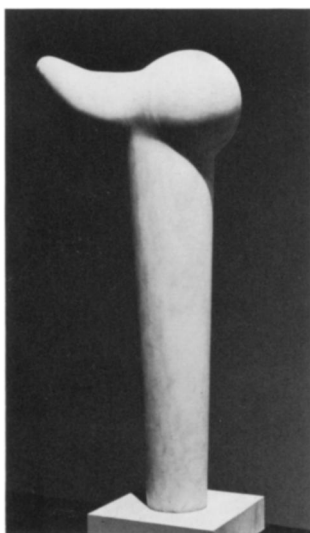
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NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Voids

1 *Energy Void*, Shikoku,
Japan 1971

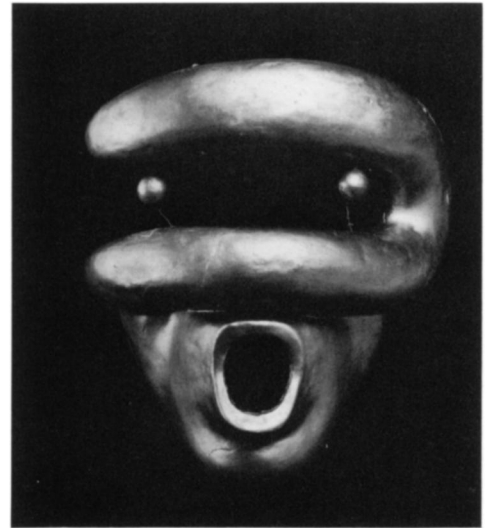
2 *Mask for Orpheus* 1948
design for Ballet Society
(predecessor of The New York
City Ballet)

3 *Portal*, Cuyahoga Justice
Center, Cleveland 1976

4 *Red, Untitled* 1965-66
travertine 67



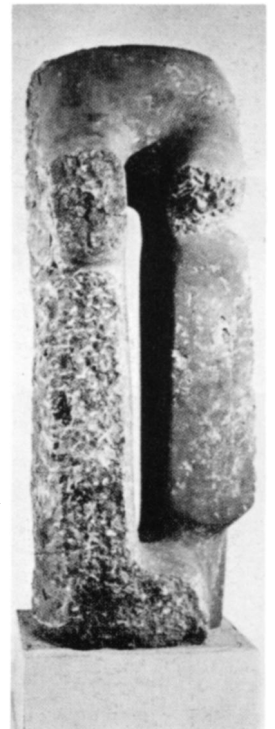
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NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Twisting Pylons

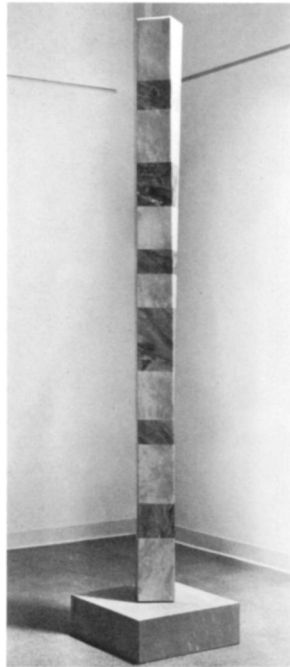
1 *The Spirit's Flight* 1970
serpentine and marble with
marble base
94 x 5¼ x 5¼ (sculpture)
6½ x 20 x 20 (base)

2 *Akari* 1951-78
rice paper, bamboo, metal lamp

3 *Pylon*, Sogetsu School,
Tokyo 1977-78

4 *Pylon*, Detroit 1973-76

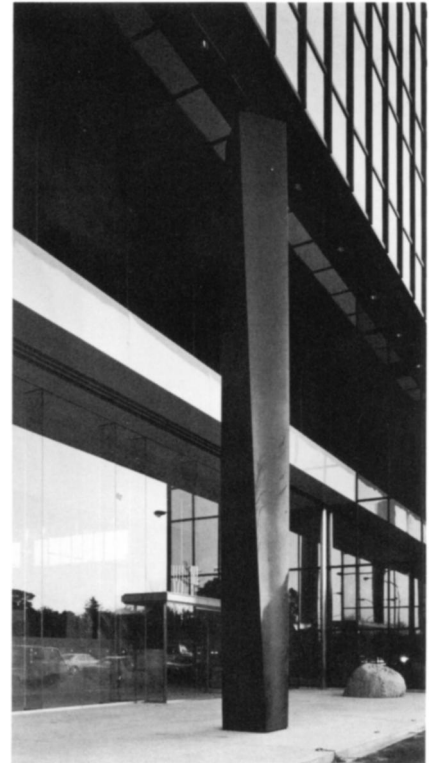
5 *Ground Wind II* 1968
granite (7 parts) 8 x 129 x 6



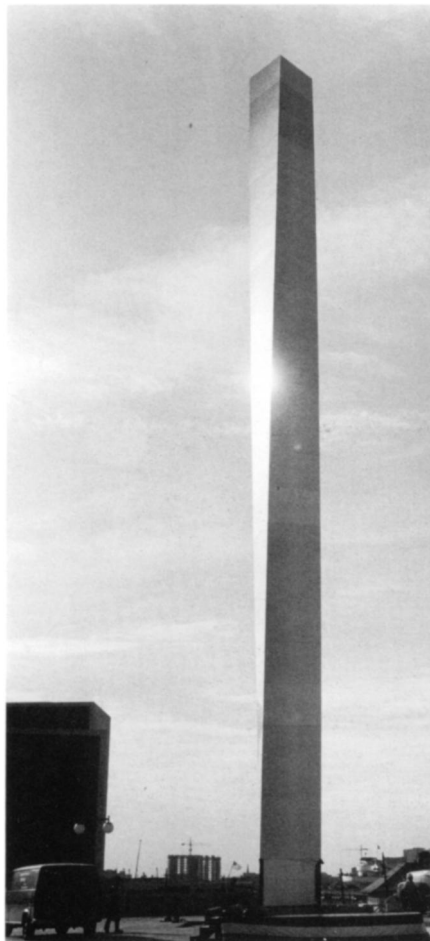
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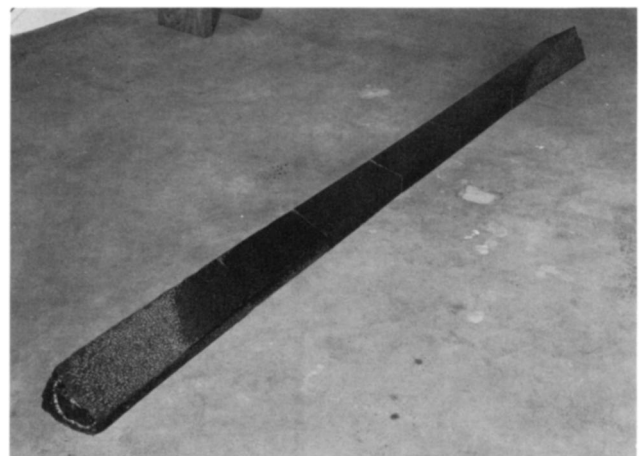
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NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Interlocking Elements

1 *Avatar* 1948
bronze 78½ x 33 x 23

2 *Herodiade* 1944
set design, Martha Graham
Dance Company

3 Coffee Table, Herman Miller,
Inc. 1944
wood and glass

4 *Bench* 1966
travertine (2 parts)
22 x 15 x 48
21 x 18 x 72

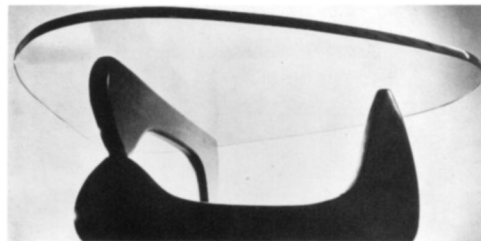
5 *Gregory* 1946
bronze 67½ x 16 x 13
(sculpture)
1½ x 11½ x 14¾
(base)



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NOGUCHI'S FORMAL VOCABULARY

Emerging Earth Forms

1 *Garden Elements* 1962
bronze (3 parts) 3 x 33 x 13½
5 x 14 x 9¾
8 x 26 x 24

2 Garden, UNESCO,
Paris 1956-58

3 *Cave of the Heart* 1946
set design, Martha Graham
Dance Company

4 *Lessons of Musō Kokushi* 1962
bronze (5 parts) 5 x 20 x 21
4 x 24 x 25
13 x 23 x 31
16 x 18 x 21
18 x 20 x 27



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4

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