Guide to symbols in this exhibition

- **Large Print**: Indicates the artwork's number in the large-print label booklet.

- **Headphones**: Indicates the artwork's number for audio description and information on the mobile guide. Access our free public Wi-Fi to download the Asian Art Museum app in the App store or on Google Play. You can also rent a guide at the Admissions Desk (free for members).

- **95**: Indicates the artwork's number in the gallery. To locate the discussion of an object, look for these numbers on the adjacent texts.
In Hasegawa’s own words, “I have long been troubled by the similarities and dissimilarities between Modern art, especially abstract art, and tea ceremony, haiku, and calligraphy. However, the moment I met with Mr. Noguchi, my concern evaporated. I am now seeing an open road before me, although I still have no concrete idea as to how to go forward on this road.”

In these works we see one of the subtle innovations of Hasegawa’s works on paper in the early 1950s—the application of printed images on vertical panels of paper usually associated with paintings and calligraphic works, displayed as hanging scrolls or screens. Although printing with carved woodblocks is among the best known and most intricate techniques in Japanese art, Hasegawa employed a markedly low-tech approach in a series of monoprints that he likened to the limited visual elements of Piet Mondrian’s paintings (black lines with rectangles or squares of white and the three primary colors, shown here in a 1921 Mondrian painting). He was similarly drawn to the seemingly simple architecture and gardens of the Katsura Imperial Villa outside Kyoto—a simplicity achieved through thoughtful constraint and elaborate planning. Instead of the carved blocks of cherrywood used by ukiyo-e printmakers, he recycled the small discarded boards used to steam kamaboko fish cakes (commonly found thinly sliced in soups) and used them to stamp patterns on paper.


LEFT

**Untitled**

1951

By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

*Koichi Kawasaki Collection, Japan*

Cat. 8

RIGHT

**Untitled**

1951

By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

*Koichi Kawasaki Collection, Japan*

Cat. 9
Hasegawa and Noguchi, both possessed of superb compositional skills and an appreciation for natural materials, eagerly experimented in several mediums during the years of their friendship. Noguchi explored three-dimensional compositions in stone, wood, ceramics, and metalwork while Hasegawa focused on two-dimensional techniques including painting, calligraphy, printmaking, and photography. This grouping of granite sculptures by Noguchi and an ink composition combining wood rubbings and block printing by Hasegawa show their thoughtful exploration of materials found in Japanese culture in relation to Buddhist concepts. Noguchi’s *Tsukubai* incorporates the basic geometry of a circle and square as seen in the basins used for ritual purification upon entering Japanese temple grounds. The rough-hewn edges and asymmetrical cantilevered wings are typical of Noguchi’s treatment of stone, showcasing the beauty of its natural state as well as his manipulation of the heavy, ancient material to achieve the illusion of weightlessness.

Hasegawa’s *Nature* integrates the Zen enso circle and other basic, though imperfect, geometric forms in a kind of ink landscape embedded with the marks of wood’s grain and texture. Noguchi’s *The Footstep* similarly incorporates a rhythm of natural materials in dialogue, in this case inset wood in a granite slab incised with a few lines that help define an image of the Buddha’s foot.
Hasegawa’s *Mu* is composed with the character 無, embodying the Zen concepts of void and nothingness—a central concept for both Noguchi and Hasegawa in their understanding of traditional Japanese culture. An exploration of the physical qualities of the lines and rectangular voids that comprise this character is expressed through ink and the impression of wood grain. The image also resembles a house with windows and a peaked roof, a reference to Chapter 11 of Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* and the text incorporated into two works by Hasegawa in this exhibition entitled *From Laozi*: “Cut doors and windows for a room; it is the holes that make it useful.” Noguchi’s *The Footstep* similarly incorporates Buddhist tradition with its rhythm of natural materials in dialogue, in this case inset wood in a granite slab incised with a few lines that help define an image of the Buddha’s foot.

Thirty spokes share the wheel’s hub;  
It is the center hole that makes it useful.  
Shape clay into a vessel;  
It is the space within that makes it useful.  
Cut doors and windows for a room;  
It is the holes that make it useful.  
Therefore profit comes from what is there;  
Usefulness from what is not there.

Translation of excerpt from Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* that appears on Hasegawa’s *From Laozi*. Translated from the Japanese by Gia-fu Feng and Jane English.
The Footstep
1958
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Mannari granite and pine
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 83

Civilization
1951
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
*Hasegawa Family Collection*
Cat. 17

Tsukubai
1962
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Granite and water
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 7

Orpheus
1958
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Aluminum
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 85
In an invitation to a 1959 exhibition of Noguchi’s work at the Stable Gallery in New York, the artist acknowledged his indebtedness to Japan, to Constantin Brancusi, to the art of ancient Greece, and to the lighting designer Edison Price, in whose studio he had finished the marble pieces in the exhibition. Two of the sculptures in that exhibition, *Pregnant Bird* and *Space Elements*, show the influence of each of these on his work. The formal resemblance between *Pregnant Bird* and Brancusi’s iconic polished bronze *Bird in Space* (1941, pictured here) is a direct reference to the place that Brancusi’s work and European Modernism had in Noguchi’s oeuvre—he had worked in Brancusi’s studio in Paris in 1927 while on a Guggenheim fellowship. *Space Elements* is listed in the brochure for the 1959 exhibition under the category “Studies in Hypothetical Space”—a window into the sculptor’s approach to his work as a means of experimenting with space and volume in addition to form and material.


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**Space Elements**
1958
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Greek marble
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 84

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**Pregnant Bird**
1958
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Greek marble
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 81
These sumi ink paintings showcase the gestural and fluid quality of Hasegawa’s modern brushwork. Whether the ground is densely covered, as is the case in Self-Portrait and Non-Figure, or relatively spare as in Portrait of Laozi and the two works entitled Nude, Hasegawa channels the exuberant energy and power of ink in service of expressing the spirit of his subject rather than a physical likeness. Very familiar with European Modern art movements, he deliberately investigated the subject of the human figure and, conversely, non-figurative abstract art.

Self-Portrait
1951
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
The National Museum of Art, Osaka
Cat. 43

Nude
Approx. 1955
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Hasegawa Family Collection
Cat. 51
Non-Figure
1953
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Collection of the Oakland Museum of California, Gift of the Women’s
Board of the Oakland Museum Association
Cat. 44

Portrait of Laozi
1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Lucid Art Foundation, Inverness, CA
Cat. 40

But I alone am dim and weak.
Others are sharp and clever,
But I alone am dull and stupid.
Oh, I drift like the waves of the sea,
Without direction, like the restless wind.
Everyone else is busy,
But I alone am aimless and depressed.
I am different.

Translation of excerpt from Laozi’s Dao De Jing that appears
on Hasegawa’s Portrait of Laozi. Translated from the Japanese
by Gia-fu Feng and Jane English.

Nude
1956
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Hasegawa Family Collection
Cat. 52
These two works reflect Noguchi’s interest in employing traditional craft materials and modern, abstracted forms in the service of portraiture or representation of the face and figure. *Face Dish*, a self-portrait also referred to as *Boku* (Myself), was designed as a piece that could be displayed flat or hanging on a wall. Seen as either a frontal or profile portrait, or even as a landscape or abstract work, this seemingly simple composition is embedded with ambiguity and multiplicity. Rejecting traditional figural representation, *Mrs. White* uses the material properties of clay to create a simple undulating ribbon loosely reminiscent of a snake—an allusion to Noguchi’s wife, the actress Yoshiko Yamaguchi, and the leading role of Madame White Snake that she would play in the 1956 film *The Legend of the White Serpent*, an adaptation of a Chinese folk tale. Both these works were created during the couple’s period of residence on the estate of the ceramicist Kitaoji Rosanjin in Kita Kamakura.

**Mrs. White**
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Shigaraki stoneware
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 13

**Face Dish**
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Shigaraki stoneware
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 61
Made of Bizen stoneware clay and wheel-thrown by a ceramicist in the studio of the potter Kaneshige Toyo (1896–1967), these jars are functional vessels as well as sculptural interpretations of the human form, created to Noguchi’s precise specifications. His interest in the history of craft in Japan was not just an interest in materials but in the formal possibilities of recombining traditional materials and shapes to create his own Modern visual language, influenced by Surrealism. Elongated necks and feet and rounded jar forms that serve as the central body of each figure were thrown separately and combined before firing. On Woman, incised decorations of simple lines, including the large “X” on the midsection, reflect the decorative details often used by Kaneshige in his tea wares and vases, a practice derived from Momoyama-period (1573–1615) ceramics. Chinese folk tale. Both these works were created during the couple’s period of residence on the estate of the ceramicist Kitaoji Rosanjin in Kita Kamakura.

Woman
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Bizen stoneware
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 63

Man
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Bizen stoneware
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 62
These two sculptural works in the pre-industrial medium of cast iron are a purposeful departure from functional cast-iron teapots and braziers—an example of Noguchi’s interest in adapting craft traditions to create a new hybrid of art, craft, and aesthetic objects for the home. The sculpture, titled after his wife Yoshiko Yamaguchi, suggests her long, flowing hair, tied and suspended by a rope, a simple material indicative of the rustic, pre-modern conditions in which they lived at Kita Kamakura. *The Self* uses the same medium of cast iron to interpret the recently developed visualizations of DNA that contributed to new understandings of molecular biology—science that was only three years old when Noguchi created this work in 1956.

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**The Self**
1956
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron on stone base
*Tate, London; purchased 1960
Cat. 77

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**Yoshiko-san**
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron and rope
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York; gift of Tsutomu Hiroi
Cat. 66*
When Noguchi and Hasegawa traveled together they visited many gardens, including the archetypal rock garden at Kyoto’s Ryoan-ji Temple and other gardens designed by the fourteenth-century Rinzai Zen Buddhist monk Musokokushi (1275–1351). Noguchi took away from the visits a deep appreciation for the manipulation of space in these gardens, modulated by the incorporation of sand, stone, plants, and water. This bronze work explores, in a portable kit, the more atmospheric qualities of stroll gardens like the one at Katsura Imperial Villa—another landmark Noguchi and Hasegawa visited together. The bronze “stones” of this work are installed in various configurations depending on the space.

This massive granite work synthesizes many of Noguchi’s ideas concerning space and materials derived from his study of Japanese architecture and gardens. The use of the word “element” in the title is especially interesting because as it denotes something basic, fundamental, and essential, it also connotes a degree of incompleteness—that even as an ensemble, these two fragments constitute part of a larger whole. The two elements, each of which looks like a salvaged, weighty building fragment, define a type of constructed space that is neither purely decorative nor completely functional. In this highly conceptual application of elements of Japanese garden design, Noguchi takes apart and reassembles components and shapes in order to understand how flexible the tradition could be.
Many of Noguchi's ceramic works from the 1950s can be viewed simultaneously as plans, maquettes, and surrealist compositions. Created from imprecise geometric shapes that evoke a barren landscape and lonely figures, A World I Did Not Make bears the hallmarks of all these things. The work is crafted from terra-cotta, the low-fired clay used for the ancient hand-built sculptural tomb figures (haniwa) that had fascinated Noguchi since his time in Japan in 1931. Both Hasegawa and Noguchi were profoundly impacted by the destruction of World War II in Europe and Japan, but they were also both conscious of new creative possibilities in its wake. For example, A World I Did Not Make and The Curtain of Dream both explore the open-ended possibilities of ceramics outside of the realm of functional vessels or traditional sculpture. In The Curtain of Dream, Noguchi allowed glaze to pool in the ridges of a wavy form punctuated by holes, slits, and protuberances, then tied the horizontally fired stoneware to a vertical support with hemp twine so it hangs like a curtain. These experiments in the tension of opposites and the expressive possibilities of a traditional medium are part of the common ground both artists wrestled with outside of the mainstream of either the American or Japanese contemporary art worlds.

A World I Did Not Make
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Terra-cotta
Sogetsu Foundation, Tokyo
Cat. 55

The Curtain of Dream
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Shigaraki stoneware with Iga glaze
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 56
These works touch on Noguchi’s consideration of the weighty subjects of war, death, nothingness, and a public need to memorialize the loss and destruction in Hiroshima. They offer insight into his framing of space and creation of tension with abstract visual elements. The model for the unrealized *Bell Tower for Hiroshima* attests to the artist’s belief that art in the postwar era would need to serve a social purpose. *Mortality*, carved in balsa wood to be later cast in bronze, was an exploration of his concept that “It is weight that gives meaning to weightlessness…. Our pendulous and precarious existence is shaped by gravity.” *My Mu* and *War* are two of Noguchi’s many takes on non-functional ceramic vessels. *My Mu*, with the central void common to all ceramic vessels turned on its side, is executed as a simplified shape related to the character *mu* (無) and the Zen concept of void and nothingness that it represents. According to Hasegawa, *mu* was among Noguchi’s favorite concepts, transmitted through the writings of D. T. Suzuki and R. H. Blyth. *War* draws from forms associated with ancient haniwa tomb figures and with medieval Japanese metal and lacquer helmets. Helmets along with armor and other components of a samurai’s full garniture were simultaneously objects of beauty, indicators of rank and affiliation, and tools of the martial class. The work also evokes the shapes of a bell, an elegiac theme that recur many times for Noguchi during this period.

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**My Mu**
1950
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Seto stoneware
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York* Cat. 2

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**Model of Bell Tower for Hiroshima**
1950 (partially reconstructed 1986)
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Terra-cotta and wood
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York* Cat. 10
**War**

1952  
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)  
Shigaraki stoneware  
*Sogetsu Foundation, Tokyo*  
Cat. 65

**Nature**

1952  
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)  
Wood rubbing; ink on paper  
*San Francisco Zen Center*  
Cat. 28

**Mortality**

1959  
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)  
Balsa  
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*  
Cat. 87

**Time**

1952  
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)  
Wood rubbing; ink on paper  
*Hasegawa Family Collection*  
Cat. 25
Originally an oil painter, Hasegawa began focusing on sumi ink in 1950, after many years participating in tea gatherings and studying Zen and Daoist poetry and philosophy. The work he created in the 1950s shows variation in his approach to deploying the medium of ink from painterly compositions in black and white to a fluid exploration of calligraphy and abstract imagery. Selectively turning to monoprinting, wood rubbing (takuhon), the brush, and lithography, Hasegawa was looking to the fundamental pictorial elements of Japanese characters. These words and numbers also allowed him to explore the possibilities of starting anew in the wake of World War II through the Zen-like exercise of beginning with the number one and counting up to ten. Another examination of the fundamental components of culture is I-Ro-Ha (The Japanese Syllabary). A color lithograph he made in New York, it reproduces a famous pangram—a sentence that uses every letter or character in a language—drawn from a poem dated to the Heian era (794–1185).

The abstract visual fragments brought together in Time and Nature, along with the characters 時 (toki, time) and 幽 (yu, ghostly mystery) seem scavenged from a decimated cultural landscape and reassembled with thoughtful care—evidence of the enduring underpinnings of human civilization, exposed after the violence and destruction of war.

**Pure Suffering**

Approx. 1956
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on burlap
Private collection
Cat. 53

**I-Ro-Ha (The Japanese Syllabary)**

1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Lithograph; ink on paper
Tia and Mark Watts Collection
Cat. 34
The representations of landscape—real, imagined, planned, fragmented, abstracted, cropped—in a variety of media offer some of the most powerful connections between the work of Hasegawa and Noguchi during the postwar period. The relationship and tension between natural and artificial environments was felt keenly by both artists, in their personal lives as individuals who traveled extensively and in their art practices that deeply investigated place and context. A particular resonance between Lessons of Musokokushi, Noguchi’s five-piece ensemble of bronze rocks (on view near the south entrance of this gallery), and Hasegawa’s untitled photography of found compositions is evidence of their common interest in the basic building blocks of landscape—rocks and earth—and the contemplation of their arrangement whether planned or found.

**Numbers One to Ten**
1955
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Lithograph; ink on paper
_Hasegawa Family Collection_
Cat. 36

**Untitled**
1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Lithograph; ink on paper
_Tia and Mark Watts Collection_
Cat. 35
**Mountain and Water, Forming a Landscape**
1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Lithograph; ink on paper
_Hasegawa Family Collection_
Cat. 37

**Fence**
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Terra-cotta
_Sogetsu Foundation, Tokyo_
Cat. 60

**Young Mountain**
1970
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Aji granite
_The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York_
Cat. 95

**Study for a Waterfall**
1961
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Granite
_The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York_
Cat. 90
Cloud
1959
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Aluminum
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 88

Local Journal—Path
1939
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Gelatin silver print
Hasegawa Family Collection
Cat. fig. 50

Local Journal—Sand
1939
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Gelatin silver print
Hasegawa Family Collection

Model for garden for Readers Digest Building
1951
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Plaster
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 54
Music, sound, and resonant silences were of mutual interest to Hasegawa and Noguchi, explored individually in a variety of ways. Noguchi played with the forms of subjects that make sound or music in *Bird Song*, *Noh Musicians*, and *Bell Image*. Hasegawa also sometimes alluded to music in his titles—for example, *Great Chorus*, *Symphonic Poem*, *The Harmonious*, and *Rhapsody: Fishing Village*. Perhaps he was thinking about the music accompanying the “ballet of nothingness” he noted in describing his visit to Katsura Imperial Villa with Noguchi. Read as musical scores, or alternatively as visual representations of aural experiences, his works on paper incorporate simple woodblock monoprinting techniques to repeat and revisit shapes and patterns that speak to the languages of rhythm, meter, and harmony common to both visual art and music.

**Symphonic Poem—Fine Day**

1951
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Four-panel folding screen; ink on paper
*Miyazaki Prefectural Art Museum*
Cat. 16

**Katsura (Imperial Villa)**

1951
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Woodcut monoprints; ink on paper mounted to canvas
*The National Museum of Art, Osaka*
Cat. 18
Hasegawa’s exploration of abstraction created a diverse body of work. In places, these compositions resemble figures, city plans, and natural motifs, but all are united by a fluidity particularly compatible with the sumi ink medium. Hasegawa wrote extensively on art history and theory, as well as about his own work and artistic process, both in prose and as poetic compositions like “The Controlled Accident”:

TO BE
CONSCIOUSLY UNCONSCIOUS
AND
UNCONSCIOUSLY CONSCIOUS
BOTH
PHYSICALLY
AND
MENTALLY
IS
NOT IMPOSSIBLE
WHEN THROUGH ENLIGHTENMENT ONE COULD CONCEIVE
THAT
SPONTANEITY IS EVANESCENT
AND
EVANESCENCE IS SPONTANEOUS
IN
MAN
NATURE
AND
ART

MY
WORK
CONSISTS OF
CONTROLLED ACCIDENTS
AS MUCH AS
MY LIFE

Environment
1953
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Woodcut monoprints; ink on paper mounted to canvas
The National Museum of Art, Osaka
Cat. 19

Rhapsody: Fishing Village
1952
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Four-panel folding screen; ink on paper
The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo
Cat. 24
**Bird Song**
1952 (cast 1985)
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Bronze
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 1

**Great Chorus**
1952
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
*Japan Society, New York*
Cat. 20

**Bell Image**
1956–1957
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 11

**Noh Musicians**
1958
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Aluminum and paint
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 82
Noguchi created many artworks conceptually inspired by functional objects but physically altered to the point where their use value is eliminated or diminished: a cast iron *tetsubin* (teapot) with no handle or spout; a millstone carved and embellished, then displayed on its side; vases, boxes, and an enigmatic ceramic “vessel” with no access to the interior void. His smaller works that experiment with tensions or contradictions between form and function offer important insights into his larger works like *Endless Coupling* — an iron sculpture that suggests a series of stacked train couplers that serve to connect nothing to nothing while also lending a sensual biomorphic quality to a utilitarian material. The massive basalt sculpture *The Seeker Sought* also explores biomorphic curvatures while serving as a masterful study in the extremes of texture that can be achieved in stone: rough, smooth, honed, polished, stippled, and gouged.

**The Seeker Sought**
1969
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Basalt
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 93
Noguchi produced these studies for a *doncho* (theater curtain) for a new Tokyo theater, a project that emerged as an offshoot of his long-running interest in Noh set design as a philosophy of space. One of the hallmarks of Noguchi’s experience in Japan was the privileged access he received, through friends and associates, to the most innovative and respected masters in every field. The theater curtain was no exception. Noguchi was commissioned by Jimbei Kawashima IV, the president and owner of the Kawashima Textile Co., to design the *doncho* for Toyoko Hall, part of architect Junzo Sakakura’s new Tokyu Kaikan terminal building in Shibuya, Tokyo.

Noguchi worked in Kawashima’s home over the course of two weeks, and made six studies in paper collage for a model of the theater. One of them, *Yukyo* (*Eternal Vastness*), was chosen. In use for more than thirty years, the curtain was destroyed in 1985 when the hall was demolished.

Two of the six studies are being shown at a time.

**Study for doncho**
Approx. 1953
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Mulberry paper on plywood
*Kawashima Textile Museum*
Cat. 70
Study for doncho
Approx. 1953
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Mulberry paper on plywood
Kawashima Textile Museum
Cat. 72

Study for doncho
Approx. 1953
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Mulberry paper on plywood
Kawashima Textile Museum
Cat. 74

Study for doncho
Approx. 1953
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Mulberry paper on plywood
Kawashima Textile Museum
Cat. 73

Study for doncho
Approx. 1953
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Mulberry paper on plywood
Kawashima Textile Museum
Cat. 75
Untitled
1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Saburo Hasegawa Memorial Gallery, Konan Gakuen, Ashiya
Cat. 45

Distance
1952
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper
University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive,
Gift of Nobuko and Joe Brotherton in appreciation of James Cahill
Cat. 22
Created the year after Hasegawa’s passing, Sesshu references both Hasegawa’s reverence for the art of the Zen monk painter Sesshu (1420–1506), and for a particular reproduction of a long handscroll painting by that artist, *Landscape of the Four Seasons*, that Hasegawa had purchased in a second-hand bookstore and considered one of his prized possessions. According to Hasegawa’s recollection, he spent many hours with Noguchi, “sighing and raving over its composition, brushwork, Sesshu’s distinctive ‘moss dots,’ the expression of the artist’s humanity, and its sense of power.” A recurring subject of Hasegawa’s scholarly attention, he described his own connection to Sesshu’s ink painting the year prior to first meeting Noguchi: “That dull, blurry gray tone with its sorrowful quality hits with a resonance in my chest and lingers afterward.”

This anodized aluminum sheet-metal sculpture subtly alludes to Sesshu’s mastery of ink wash and angular brushwork, bringing out variations of the metal’s gray tonality through the surface treatment as well as through the angles of its screen-painting-like folds and *kirigami*-like cuts. Noguchi manages this allusion to Sesshu in an oblique fashion that Hasegawa surely would have admired for its subtlety and creativity.

**Eco Sum Via Verita**
Approx. 1955
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Monoprint; ink on paper
*Hasegawa Family Collection*
Cat. 50

**Sesshu**
1958
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Anodized aluminum
*Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; gift of an Anonymous donor, 1962.259*
Cat. 4
In both these works Noguchi’s appreciation of the graphic quality of experimental calligraphy was translated into three dimensions and rendered in inky, near-black iron and bronze. Neither Shodo Flowing nor Calligraphics can be read as characters, but they incorporate the shapes of brushstrokes and the proportions inherent in character forms. Shodo Flowing was originally carved in balsa wood (like Mortality, on view in Osher Foundation Gallery) and then cast in bronze, reflecting Noguchi’s interest in translating between two- and three-dimensional arts, and between sculptural mediums. In Calligraphics, the abstract forms lashed to a pole with rope resemble weapons, connecting to many references in his work to the tension between culture and war.

**Album of four poem drawings**
1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Hasegawa Family Collection
Cat. 48

**Shodo Flowing**
1959 (cast 1969)
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Bronze
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 89
The Butterfly Dream—from Zhuangzi

1956
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Hasegawa Family Collection
Cat. 42

Once upon a time, I, Zhuangzi,
dreamed I was a butterfly flying happily
here and there, enjoying life without
knowing who I was. Suddenly I woke up
and I was indeed Zhuangzi.
Did Zhuangzi dream he was a butterfly,
or did the butterfly dream he was Zhuangzi?
There must be some distinction between
Zhuangzi and the butterfly.
This is a case of transformation.

Translation of excerpt from a story by Zhuangzi that appears on
Hasegawa’s The Butterfly Dream. Translated from the Japanese by
Gia-fu Feng and Jane English.

Calligraphics

1957
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron, wood, rope, and metal
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 80
From Laozi
1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
*Hasegawa Family Collection*
Cat. 38

The Butterfly Dream—from Zhuangzi
1956
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
*Hasegawa Family Collection*
Cat. 41

Thirty spokes share the wheel’s hub;
It is the center hole that makes it useful.
Shape clay into a vessel;
It is the space within that makes it useful.
Cut doors and windows for a room;
It is the holes that make it useful.
Therefore profit comes from what is there;
Usefulness from what is not there.

Translation of excerpt from Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* that appears on Hasegawa’s *From Laozi*. Translated from the Japanese by Gia-fu Feng and Jane English.
This work was created after Hasegawa’s move to the United States—a move sustained by an audience eager for his demonstrated knowledge of East Asian philosophy, art, and culture. *Flower* was one of several demonstration paintings he made over two days on the SS Vallejo, a former ferryboat moored in Sausalito Harbor. The boat was a nexus of Bay Area alternative culture that convened artists, writers, and intellectuals, including Ruth Asawa, Alan Watts, Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsburg, and Jack Kerouac.

*Flower*
1954
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
*Lucid Art Foundation, Inverness, CA*
Cat. 49
From Laozi

1953
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Ink on paper
Collection of Matthew Reichman
Cat. 39

Endless Coupling

1957
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 78

Large Square Vase

1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Karatsu stoneware
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York
Cat. 69

Their food is plain and good, their clothes
fine but simple, their homes secure;
They are happy in their ways.
Though they live within sight of their
neighbors,
And crowing cocks and barking dogs are
heard across the way,
Yet they leave each other in peace while
they grow old and die.

Translation of excerpt from Laozi’s Dao De Jing that appears on
Hasegawa’s From Laozi (1953). Translated from the Japanese by
Gia-fu Feng and Jane English
**Variation on a Millstone #2**
1962
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Granite on wood base
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 94

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**Large Walking Box**
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Karatsu stoneware on wood dowels
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 58

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**Enigma**
1956–1957
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron
*Private collection*
Cat. 79

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**Untitled**
Approx. 1952
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Wood rubbing; ink on paper
*Tia and Mark Watts Collection*
Cat. 26
The variety of mediums that Hasegawa and Noguchi turned to during the postwar period speaks to their overall exploration of culture, aesthetics, and conceptions of craft and utility in service of an expanded understanding of art—all underpinned by a fundamental respect for their materials and the mastery involved with working with them. Hasegawa turned to found and salvaged wood, rough carved or left relatively unaltered, as the basis for a new kind of abstract ink art distinct from but conscious of the lineage of classical East Asian painting and calligraphy.

**Printing block for Nature**
1952
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Tree trunk section
*Tia and Mark Watts Collection*
Cat. 29

**Profundity (Yugen)**
1952
By Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Wood rubbing; ink on paper
*Collection of Matthew Reichman*
Cat. 6
**Tetsubin**
1956
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron
*Private collection*
Cat. 5

**Akari [E]**
1954
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Mulberry bark paper, bamboo, iron, and steel
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 76

**Celebration**
1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Iron
*Japan Society, New York; gift of Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller, 1971, JS32.03*
Cat. 59

**Akari [13A]**
Approx. 1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Paper, bamboo, and metal
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York*
Cat. 64
Inspired by lanterns he encountered at a night fishing festival in the town of Gifu, Noguchi’s iconic Akari lanterns were described by the artist as opaque paper receptacles that either shaped or were filled by light. Named for a term that means “light as illumination” that also carries a connotation of weightlessness, these light sculptures embody his interest in working with Japanese craft culture without imitative nostalgia. He introduced electric lightbulbs to a traditionally candle-powered paper lantern, accomplishing two of his most cherished goals: synthesizing new and old technology and turning a local handicraft into a global industry. Akari [E] is a prime example of how this form and medium straddles the line between organic and inorganic, between something natural but geometric, like a snowflake, and something fabricated but imperfect, like a Greek column with purposeful optical corrections.

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**Akari [16A]**

1952  
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)  
Paper, bamboo, and metal  
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York  
Cat. 68

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**Akari [1A]**

1952  
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)  
Paper, bamboo, and metal  
The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York  
Cat. 67
**Akari [BB1-30A]**
1962
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Paper, bamboo, and metal
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum,*
New York
Cat. 92

**Untitled [A.I-IV]**
Approx. 1952
Attributed to Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Photographic prints
*Tia and Mark Watts Collection*
Cat. 32

**Akari [15A]**
Approx. 1952
By Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Paper, bamboo, and metal
*The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum,*
New York
Cat. 57

**Untitled [C.I-V]**
Approx. 1955
Attributed to Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Photographic prints
*Tia and Mark Watts Collection*
Cat. 31
The photograms on view here show Hasegawa’s interest in the relationship between black and white when they are manipulated, in the context of photography, as darkness and light. In a 1953 essay entitled “New Photography and Painting,” Hasegawa hypothesized, “It may be no more than an object lesson, but we may perhaps consider that there is a good reason that painters have taken up photography—that is, they paint on photographic paper.” He was attuned to avant-garde photography practices that gained momentum in Europe in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the contemporaneous New Photography (Shinko Shashin) movement in Japan. There, interest in Surrealism, Constructivism, and the graphic experimentations of the Bauhaus translated into experimental photography, including photograms, photomontages, multiple exposures, and solarized images. The Kansai region, the location of Hasegawa’s hometown of Ashiya, was a major center of this movement.

Decades later, when he had turned to the black and white palette of sumi ink as his primary preoccupation, Hasegawa engaged in a series of collaborative, experimental photograms with the photographer Kiyoji Otsuji in 1953 and 1954. Published in Asahi Picture News, they were described by Hasegawa: “What we are trying to do is to compose subject matter through the eyes of a painter and to organize them through the eyes and techniques of a photographer.”

Untitled [C.2-6]
Approx. 1953
Attributed to Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Photographic prints
Tia and Mark Watts Collection
Cat. 33

Untitled [E.1-4]
Approx. 1953
Attributed to Saburo Hasegawa (Japanese, 1906–1957)
Photographic prints
Tia and Mark Watts Collection
Cat. 14
Noguchi and Hasegawa’s friendship in words and pictures

1950–1956
The Noguchi Museum Archives and Saburo Hasegawa Memorial Gallery, Konan Gakuen, Ashiya

The tablet on the left shows photographs of travel experiences the artists shared as well as installation views of Hasegawa’s 1956 exhibition at Gump’s here in San Francisco. The tablet on the right features a selection of Noguchi’s travel notes and letters from Hasegawa to Noguchi.

Noguchi and Hasegawa in Their Own Words

2019
Compiled by Michael Rohde for the Asian Art Museum
Duration: 9:41 min.