

BIOGRAPHY

Isamu Noguchi

1904 Born on November 17 in Los Angeles. Mother Léonie Gilmour was an American author, father Yonejirō (Yone) Noguchi was a Japanese poet who returned to Japan before Noguchi's birth. For a long time, their child did not have a first name.

1907 Léonie moved with her son from Los Angeles to Tokyo, where his father had started a new relationship.

1911-17 Attended Japanese school in Chigasaki, then English-language school in Yokohama. Helped build the family's house.

1918 As Sam Gilmour, he traveled alone to the United States to attend Interlaken School, a boarding school in La Porte, Indiana.

1922 Began studying medicine at Columbia University in New York.

1924 Attended sculpture classes with Onorio Ruotolo on the Lower East Side. Worked as an artist, making a living from portraits.

1927 Received a Guggenheim Fellowship. Worked as a studio assistant to Constantin Brâncuși in Paris.

1929 In New York he met the engineer and inventor Buckminster Fuller and the dancer and choreographer Martha Graham, with whom he collaborated on various projects throughout his life. Solo exhibition at Eugene Schoen Gallery in New York.

1930/31 Traveled via Paris and Moscow to China, where he learned ink painting from master Qi Baishi. In Japan he saw his father again after more than fourteen years. Studied ceramics in the workshop of Jinmatsu Uno. The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York acquired the portrait *Ruth Parks*.

1932 His Bakelite casing for alarm clocks went into mass production. Collaborated with Buckminster Fuller to design the Dymaxion Car. Dancer and choreographer Ruth Page performed *Miss Expanding Universe* in his *Sack Dress*.

1933 Designed land art and monuments (mostly unrealized). Had to auction off his ink drawings. Traveled to Haiti with girlfriend Dorothy Hale and A. Conger Goodyear, president of MoMA in New York. Mother died in New York.

1935/36 Designed the first stage set for the dance performance *Frontier* by Martha Graham. *Working Class Sculpture* exhibition at the Communist Party's John Reed Club. Designed a pool for Richard Neutra's house for Josef von Sternberg in Hollywood. Created the wall relief *History Mexico* at the Mercado Abelardo L. Rodríguez in Mexico City. Friendship with Frida Kahlo.

1937 Donated one of his *Peking Brush Drawings* to benefit China's defense against the Japanese invasion.

1938 First major commission in the United States, the relief *News* for the Associated Press Building in New York, followed by *Ford Fountain* in magnesite for the Ford pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

1939 Collaborative drawings with Arshile Gorky and De Hirsh Margules in response to Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland.

1941 With Gorky in San Francisco. On the car radio he heard about Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, which led to the United States entering World War II.

1942 Co-founder of the group Nisei Writers and Artists Mobilization for Democracy. Starting in February: Internment of Japanese-Americans and Japanese living in the western United States. In May, volunteered at the Poston War Relocation Center in Arizona to work as an artist to improve the living conditions of the internees. Designed a large park project (unrealized) and wrote the

essay "I Become a Nisei." In November he was allowed to leave the camp temporarily and immediately returned to New York.

1943 Created his illuminated sculptures, the *Lunars*. Became involved with the India League of America.

1944 Three productions by Martha Graham with his stage designs, including *Herodiad*. Worked on *Interlocking Sculptures* and *Coffee Table*.

1945 Erick Hawkins's dance performance *John Brown* with stage set by Noguchi.

1946 Exhibition *Fourteen Americans* at MoMA in New York.

1947 Designed stage sets for Martha Graham, Erick Hawkins's *Stephen Acrobat*, and Merce Cunningham's and John Cage's *The Seasons*. Surrealism exhibitions: *Bloodflames*, Hugo Gallery, New York, designed by Friedrich Kiesler; Galerie Maeght, Paris, organized by Marcel Duchamp with *Lunar Landscape (Woman)* and *Contoured Playground*. Father died in Tokyo.

1949 Solo exhibition at Charles Egan Gallery in New York. Received the Bollingen Grant, traveled to France, Italy, Spain, and Greece. Met with Breton, Brâncuși, and Giacometti in Paris, and with Le Corbusier at the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille. Worked at the American Academy in Rome. Traveled on to Luxor, Abydos, Saqqara, and Cairo, met architect Hassan Fathy. In India he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru (unrealized). Met the artist Ramkinkar Baij.

1950 Traveled to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Hong Kong. Returned to Japan for the first time in 20 years, met architect Kenzō Tange, half-brother Michio Noguchi, writer Saburo Hasegawa, and designer Isamu Kenmochi. Designed a room at Keio University in Tokyo in honor of his father. Solo exhibition at Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo. Met the Chinese-born Japanese actress Yoshiko (Shirley) Yamaguchi (1920-2014) in New York.

1951 Visited the Ozeki lantern factory in Gifu, Japan. Created the prototype of his first *Akari*. Visited Hiroshima. Participated in the first São Paulo Biennial. Traveled to Hollywood with Yamaguchi, and then to India and Europe. Married Yoshiko Yamaguchi in Tokyo.

1952 *Memorial to the Dead, Hiroshima* was rejected. Lived with Yamaguchi in Kita Kamakura and created new ceramic works in Rosanjin Kitaōji's studio. Solo exhibition at the museum in Kamakura.

1953 The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York acquired *Kouros* (1945). Returned to New York. Yamaguchi's visa was denied due to ties to communists in Hollywood. Met with Yamaguchi in Paris and traveled in France, Italy, visited marble quarries in Carrara, traveled to Greece, Egypt, Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong, Macau, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

1955 Lived with Yamaguchi in London and Paris. Designed costumes and stage sets for the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *King Lear*. Met the architect Shoji Sadao. Traveled to London, Paris, Zurich, Karachi, Kathmandu, Patna, Kolkata, Hong Kong, and Japan. Noguchi and Yamaguchi divorced.

1957 Looked for rocks for the *UNESCO Garden* in Paris in Shikoku and Okayama. Rented a studio in Paris and designed the *Prismatic Table*. Constantin Brâncuși died.

1958 Looked for marble in Greece. Martha Graham's *Clytemnestra* and *Embattled Garden* with stage sets by Noguchi. Stainless-steel sculpture in the United States pavilion at Expo 58 in Brussels. Opening of the *UNESCO Garden*. Created works in aluminum sheet.

1959 Participated in Documenta 2 in Kassel.

1960 Went to Jerusalem to design a sculpture garden for the planned Israel Museum. Met with Le Corbusier in Chandigarh, visited the Jantar Mantar observatory in Jaipur.

1961 Designed a studio and home in Long Island City, Queens, alongside stonemasonry and metalworking companies (later he founded the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum there).

1962 Studio at the American Academy in Rome. Worked in the marble quarries in Pietrasanta, Tuscany.

1964 Participated in Documenta 3. First solo exhibition in Europe at Galerie Claude Bernard in Paris.

1965 Opening of the Art Garden at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

1967 *Cortege of Eagles*, his last collaborative work with Martha Graham. Design for the United States pavilion at Expo '70 in Osaka (unrealized).

1968 First retrospective at the Whitney Museum in New York.

1969-71 Established a studio in Mure, Japan, where he later often worked.

1974 Exhibition *Japan: Tradition und Gegenwart* at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. *Playscapes* at Piedmont Park in Atlanta, Georgia.

1977 Solo exhibition at MoMA in New York and many other museums in the United States.

1980 Worked on *California Scenario*, Costa Mesa, California. Solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York.

1981 Traveled to Târgu Jiu to see Constantin Brâncuși's environment from the 1930s.

1982 Galvanized-steel sculptures.

1983 Traveled to Peru, visited Machu Picchu. *To the Issei* at the Japanese American Center in Los Angeles. Solo exhibitions in the United States and Japan.

1984 Eightieth birthday. New stone works at the Sōgetsu Kaikan ikebana and art center in Tokyo. Herman Miller restarted production of the *Coffee Table*.

1985 Opening of the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum.

1986 Represented the United States as the first solo artist at the Venice Biennale. In the United States pavilion he showed sculptures made of stone, metal, and paper (*Akari*). Worked on the *Challenger Memorial* for Bayfront Park in Miami.

1988 Began *Time and Space*, composed of hundreds of basalt rocks, for Takamatsu Airport in Kagawa, Japan. Design for Moenuma Park in Sapporo, Japan. Worked on marble sculptures in Querceta, Tuscany. December 30: Noguchi died of heart failure in New York. He was buried in Mure, Japan.