

WHITE CUBE

Isamu Noguchi

A New Nature

4 February – 3 April 2022

White Cube Bermondsey

'The nature of trees and grass is one thing, but there are many degrees of nature. Concrete can be nature. Interstellar spaces are also nature. There is human nature. In the city, you have to have a new nature. Maybe you have to create that nature.'

– Isamu Noguchi (1970)

White Cube Bermondsey is pleased to present 'A New Nature', an exhibition of works by Isamu Noguchi (1904–88) conceived in collaboration with The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum. The exhibition takes its title from a talk Noguchi gave to students at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1970 where he urged them to forge 'a new nature' from the materials of urbanisation and technology they encountered around them. Bringing together several bodies of work that reflect the artist's attempts to make us conscious of his broader understanding of nature, the works on show employ industrial methods and materials, yet appeal to our awareness of what is organic.

In 1955, the architect Robert Carson approached Noguchi about repurposing an unrealised design for a bank lobby in Texas for a new office building across the street from the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. Noguchi agreed to re-conceive what was initially a wall relief as a ceiling sculpture, on the condition that he could also make a waterfall. An undulating, wave-like arrangement of aluminium and stainless steel, together *Ceiling and Waterfall, 666 Fifth Avenue* (1956–57) transformed what was a severe, modernist space of black and white marble into Noguchi's favourite thing: an imaginary landscape and buffer from urban noise – a sea of clouds and the sound of falling water.

'Inherent in Akari are lightness and fragility. They seem to offer a magical unfolding away from the material world.' Noguchi's *Akari* lanterns, or light sculptures, epitomise his efforts to expand the concept, potential and purpose of sculpture. Useful, affordable, easily stored and shipped, their qualities are antithetical to our preconceived notions of sculpture. They encapsulate his interest in iterating upon old traditions, his consideration of heritage and the ways in

which these crafts can be pushed into the future as well as an openness to new technologies. Weightless and uplifting, their metaphorical and actual lightness and natural life-giving warmth offer, as he said, 'a foil to our harsh, mechanized existence'.

Octetra is a modular geometric play system Noguchi developed in the 1960s. Formulated from his friend R. Buckminster Fuller's theories about the fundamental structures of natural forms – each element is a truncated tetrahedron – they can be endlessly reconfigured. Though the earliest examples, for a playground in Japan (1965–66) and the plaza in front of Spoleto Cathedral in Italy (1968) were made in concrete, the five configurations here are made of Fiberglas, a material Noguchi wanted to use but was not yet available to him.

'Industrial process has its own secret nature – its own entropy, its own cycle of birth and dissolution... We try hard to subject the industrial process to man's supervision.'

– Isamu Noguchi (1982)

Late in life, through experimenting with the Japanese crafts of *kirigami* and *origami* (Japanese cut and folded paper) and industrial sheet metal manufacture, Noguchi produced a series of twenty-six galvanised steel sculpture editions with Gemini G.E.L. The sculptures represent a virtual retrospective of the artist's wide-ranging visual vocabulary – landscapes, bodies, abstract spatial concepts and natural forces – and offer a bridge between the natural and the manmade. Process-driven, playful, and oriented towards an increasingly urban environment, they are archetypal late works by this great artist.

The installation in 9 × 9 × 9 takes its inspiration from Noguchi's ideas for simple terracing for playgrounds as well as *Heaven* (1977–78), a complex step-pyramid environment he designed for the atrium of Sogetsu Kaikan, Tokyo. Heaven functioned as a public plaza for events and exhibitions, and embodied Noguchi's belief in empiricism as a form of intelligence. This is an homage to the artist's desire to extend sculpture to total environments.

BIOGRAPHY

Isamu Noguchi was born in 1904 in Los Angeles to a Japanese father and an American mother.

His work has been internationally exhibited throughout his lifetime and posthumously at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2004); the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2004); Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (1999); National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (1992); Yurakucho Art Forum (1985); Storm King Art Center, New York (1984); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1978); and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1977).

Noguchi's work with public space, the most important and consistent part of his practice, reflected his strong belief in the social impact of sculpture. His first major commission was History Mexico (1936), a large relief for a public market in Mexico City, followed by many others, including News (1938–39) a sculpture for the Associated Press Building in Rockefeller Center, New York City; gardens for Reader's Digest in Tokyo (1951; later destroyed) and UNESCO headquarters in Paris (1956–58); sunken gardens in stone for the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University (1960–64) and Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City (1961–64); and many other public spaces in cities from Los Angeles and Detroit to Jerusalem, Osaka, Munich and Bologna.

In 1985 he founded the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum (now The Noguchi Museum) across the street from his studio in Long Island City, NY. It was the first, and is still the only, museum in the United States created by an artist to show their own work. The following year, Noguchi represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, the first time the U.S. Pavilion had been devoted to a single artist.

White Cube Bermondsey is open
Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm and Sunday, 12 – 6pm.
Admission is free.

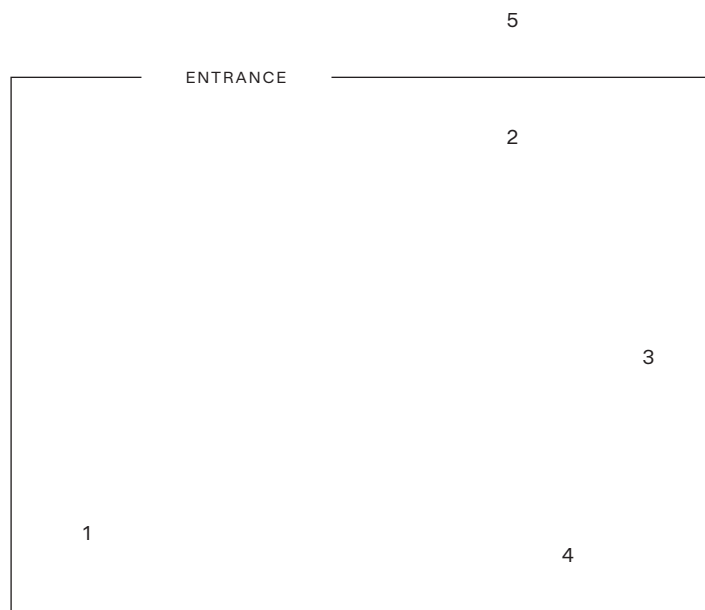
Do not visit if you have any Covid-19 symptoms.
Please use hand sanitiser on entry.
Masks are required while you are inside the gallery.
Please adhere to social distancing.
Children must be kept in hand at all times.
For more information visit whitecube.com to read our COVID-19 FAQs.
For further information, please contact enquiries@whitecube.com or +44 (0)20 7930 5373.

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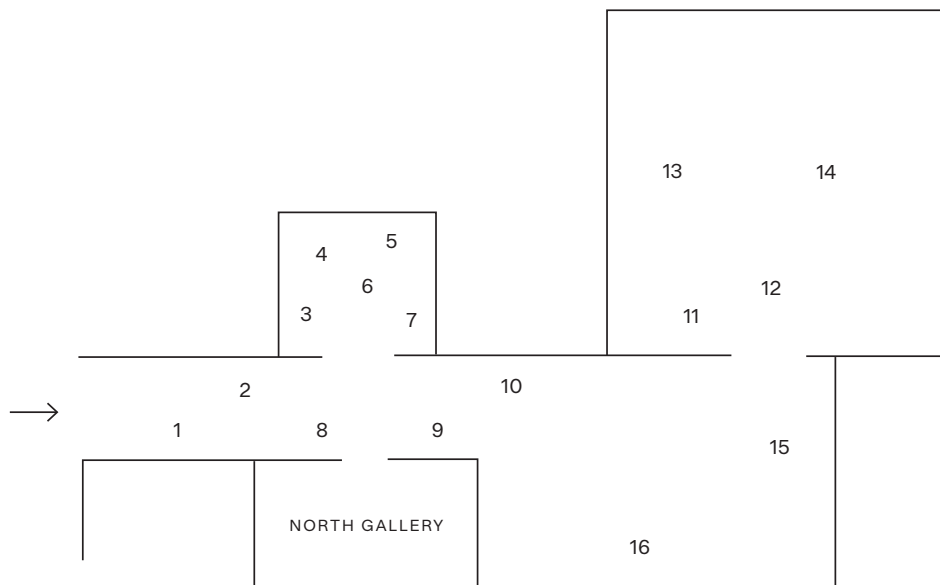
COURTYARD

- 1 *Octetra (two-element column)*
1968 (2021)
Fiberglass reinforced plastic and paint
224.2 × 135.8 × 135.8 cm | 88¼ × 53⅞ × 53⅞ in.
- 2 *Atomic Haystack*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
121.9 × 118.7 × 41.3 cm | 48 × 46¾ × 16¼ in.
- 3 *Pierced Seat*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
78.7 × 35.6 × 43.2 cm | 31 × 14 × 17 in.
- 4 *Pierced Table*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
56.5 × 94 × 94 cm | 22¼ × 37 × 37 in.
- 5 *Octetra (one element, inverted)*
1968 (2021)
Fiberglass reinforced plastic and paint
112 × 135.8 × 135.8 cm | 44⅞ × 53⅞ × 53⅞ in.



CORRIDOR, 9 × 9 × 9 & SOUTH GALLERY

- 1 *Octetra (one element)*
1968 (2021)
Fiberglass reinforced plastic and paint
112 × 135.8 × 135.8 cm | 44 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 53 $\frac{7}{16}$ × 53 $\frac{7}{16}$ in.
- 2 *Octetra (three-element stack)*
1968 (2021)
Fiberglass reinforced plastic and paint
224 × 233 × 135.8 cm | 88 $\frac{3}{16}$ × 91 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 53 $\frac{7}{16}$ in.
- 3 *Cloud*
1959
Aluminium
67.9 × 102.2 × 14.3 cm | 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 40 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
- 4 *Trinity*
1988
Bronze plate
142.2 × 55.9 × 55.9 cm | 56 × 22 × 22 in.
- 5 *Sky Mirror*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
26 × 63.5 × 58.4 cm | 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 25 × 23 in.
- 6 *Akari Rain Cloud*
2022
Paper and bamboo
Dimensions variable
- 7 *Figure Emerging*
1982-83
Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
180.3 × 55.9 × 35.6 cm | 71 × 22 × 14 in.
- 8 *Octetra (five-element pyramid)*
1968 (2021)
Fiberglass reinforced plastic and paint
224 × 272 × 253 cm | 88 $\frac{3}{16}$ × 107 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 99 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
- 9 *Landscape*
1987, Edition of 6
Bronze plate
15.6 × 139.7 × 99.7 cm | 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 55 × 39 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
Base: 124.1 × 115.9 × 55.6 cm | 48 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 45 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.
- 10 *Neo-Lithic*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
183.5 × 71.8 × 41.3 cm | 72 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
- 11 *Magritte's Stone*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
130.2 × 76.2 × 30.5 cm | 51 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 30 × 12 in.
- 12 *Waterfall, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York*
1956-57
Stainless steel and water
472.4 × 1,178.6 × 53.3 cm | 186 × 464 × 21 in.
- 13 *Ceiling, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York*
1956-57
Aluminium and steel
48.3 × 3,291.8 × 2,598.4 cm | 19 × 1296 × 1023 in.
- 14 *Sparrow*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
49.5 × 48.3 × 40.6 cm | 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 19 × 16 in.
- 15 *Space Blot*
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
132.7 × 39.4 × 29.8 cm | 52 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
- 16 *Akari Cloud*
2022
Paper and bamboo
Dimensions variable



NORTH GALLERY

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Wind Catcher
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
306.1 × 43.8 × 44.5 cm 120½ × 17¼ × 17½ in.</p> <p>2 Rain Mountain
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
243.8 × 79.4 × 63.5 cm 96 × 31¼ × 25 in.</p> <p>3 Duo
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
222.3 × 67.3 × 61 cm 87½ × 26½ × 24 in.</p> <p>4 Cloud Mountain
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
177.2 × 125.1 × 71.8 cm 69¾ × 49¼ × 28¼ in.</p> <p>5 Shaft & Root
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
309.9 × 48.3 × 65.4 cm 122 × 19 × 25¾ in.</p> <p>6 Goddess
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
154.9 × 104.8 × 32.4 cm 61 × 41¼ × 12¾ in.</p> <p>7 Mountains Forming
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
154 × 123.5 × 112 cm 60¾ × 48¾ × 44½ in.</p> <p>8 Cactus Wind
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
29.2 × 142.9 × 22.9 cm 11½ × 56¼ × 9 in.</p> <p>9 Secret
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
22.9 × 29.2 × 21.6 cm 9 × 11½ × 8½ in.</p> | <p>10 Tongue
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
44.5 × 60.3 × 26 cm 17½ × 23¾ × 10¼ in.</p> <p>11 Folding In & Out
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
82.6 × 17.8 × 15.9 cm 32½ × 7 × 6¼ in.</p> <p>12 Kaki Persimmons
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
34.3 × 45.7 × 22.9 cm 13½ × 18 × 9 in.</p> <p>13 Giacometti's Shadow
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
197.5 × 41.9 × 43.2 cm 77¾ × 16½ × 17 in.</p> <p>14 Fat Dancer
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
132.1 × 69.9 × 31.8 cm 52 × 27½ × 12½ in.</p> <p>15 Root & Stem
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
182.2 × 31.8 × 31.8 cm 71¾ × 12½ × 12½ in.</p> <p>16 Zazen
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
78.7 × 76.8 × 26.7 cm 31 × 30¼ × 10½ in.</p> <p>17 Lady Mirror
1982-83, Edition of 5
Hot-dipped galvanized steel
146 × 30.5 × 28 cm 57½ × 12 × 11 in.</p> |
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