

DETAILED INFORMATION

Title	OBJECTS OF COMMON INTEREST: HARD, SOFT, AND ALL LIT UP WITH NOWHERE TO GO	Duration	15 SEPTEMBER 2021 TO 22 FEBRUARY 2022	Venue	NOGUCHI MUSEUM
Opening Hours	WED-SUN 11 A.M. - 6 P.M.	Location	9-1 33RD ROAD, NEW YORK, NY, 11106, UNITED STATES	Telephone	+1 718 204 7088

It's not often when intergenerational artists and designers converse in an exhibition format that allows visitors to interact with their work freed from museological constraints - to be able to touch and feel the exhibits as opposed to viewing them from a distance or through glass displays. Combined with our post-pandemic thirst for cultural experiences in the physical rather than the digital world, we're delighted to welcome the **Noguchi Museum's** latest exhibition, "**Objects of Common Interest: Hard, Soft, and All Lit Up with Nowhere to Go**". Inspired by Japanese-American artist Isamu Noguchi's profound connection to Greece, the exhibition brings together Noguchi's seminal oeuvre with contemporary work by **Objects of Common Interest (OoCI)**, an Athens and New York-based design studio that shares the acclaimed 20th century sculptor's non-doctrinal approach to design, amalgamation of cross-cultural inspirations, and experimental ethos.

Running until February 2022, the exhibition is a collaboration between the Noguchi Museum, which the late artist established in 1985 in Queens, New York, and OoCI's founders, Greek husband-wife designers **Eleni Petaloti** and **Leonidas Trampoukis**, whose interest in Noguchi goes back more than a decade, evolving a few years ago into an ongoing research project. With the museum's decision to publish its extensive archive online in 2019, Petaloti and Trampoukis' project intensified, culminating in a digital feature, *Noguchi in Greece, Greece Within Noguchi* — **a visual collage that explores Noguchi's relationship with the culture, materiality and atmosphere of Greece, as well as maps how their research has affected their quest for abstraction** — eventually sparking the idea for the exhibition.

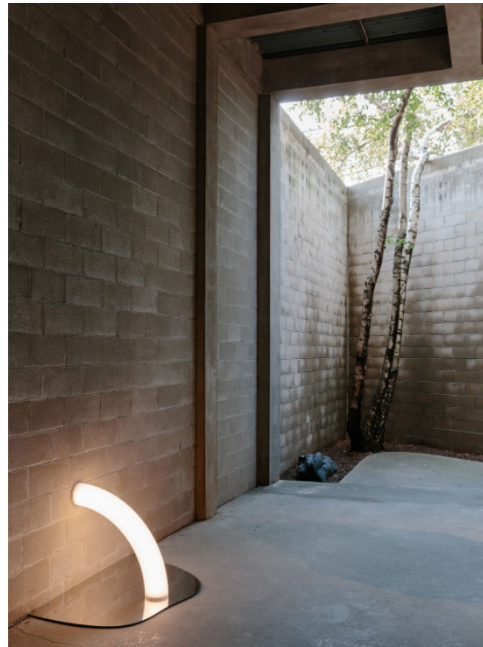
<https://www.yatzer.com/objects-of-common-interest-noguchi>



Installation view, "Objects of Common Interest: Hard, Soft, and All (It Up with Nowhere to Go)", Noguchi Museum, New York. Photography by Brian W. Ferry. Artworks © Objects of Common Interest and © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum / Artists Rights Society



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Senior curator **Dakin Hart** has thoughtfully interspersed OoCI's furniture, limited series and unique objects throughout the museum, from the ivy-covered walled garden, to the ground floor permanent installation, to the upper floor galleries which host "**Useless Architecture**", a temporary exhibition exploring how Noguchi drew on architecture to deepen the civic, communal, and environmental aspect of his sculptures. Combining older and newer pieces from OoCI's portfolio, **the exhibition not only draws parallels between Noguchi and OoCI's ideas and practice but also evocatively highlights their shared affinity for blurring the distinctions between art and design.**

As one of the twentieth century's most acclaimed artists, Isamu Noguchi was also one of the most prolific having created, during his 80-year career, sculptures, gardens, furniture, lighting (most notably the iconic *Akari* lamps), ceramics, architecture and set designs such as those for acclaimed choreographer Martha Graham. **Firmly uninterested in labels, Noguchi believed there was no fixed hierarchical relationship between the disciplines.** Known for his abstract organic shapes, his creative practice was powered by an intuitive drive for exploring formal possibilities rather than

producing a specific result, a fundamental tenet shared by Petaloti and Trampoukis. **“We always assign a label, a role onto an object”,** but **“it is often the case that the use changes through the design process to production”,** they explained to Yatzer in a **previous interview**. **“A stool can be a side table, a sculptural piece, or an abstract snapshot from a larger installation”**. Working with notions of flexibility, ambiguity, illusion or de-familiarization, OoCi’s work echoes Noguchi’s intuitive approach to design in the way he valued form over clarity and inherent usefulness over an explicit or marketable purpose.



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Noguchi's dual heritage (his mother was American, his father Japanese) underpins another touchpoint between the late sculptor and the Greek design duo. "As Greek designers and architects living and working in New York we share - with Noguchi - the in-betweenness of two worlds" Petaloti and Trampoukis explain.

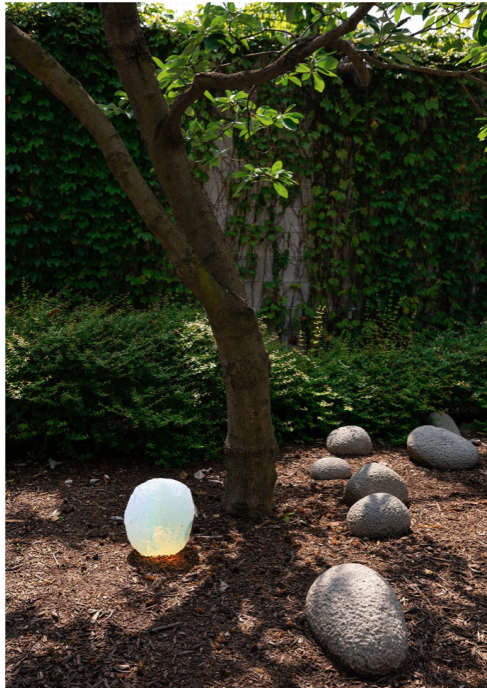
Living and working between East and West, with studios in New York, Japan and Italy, Noguchi continually absorbed inspiration from a global perspective, from Brancusi's abstraction and Surrealist biomorphism, to ancient Greek sculpture. The latter attests to a significant connection between Noguchi and Greece, his "intellectual home" as he once described it, which goes much deeper than the artist's admiration for the country's classical heritage and use of Penteli white marble, which he had shipped to his studio from Athens, "tapping into the transformative relationship between him, the place, and its people" in Petaloti and Trampoukis' words.

In the museum's indoor/outdoor gallery, the primordial forms of Noguchi's basalt sculptures are paired with the geometric simplicity of the *Tube Light* series, OoCI's first light project featuring glowing curved shapes that appear to be pliant and soft. Terminating on puddle-like, mirror-polished, stainless-steel bases, OoCI's sculptural lights seem to extend into the ground and walls. **Experienced together, Noguchi's sculptures and OoCI's objects read as an interplay of contradictions (rough/smooth, dark/light, heavy/light, organic/artificial), and yet stand in harmony comprising an otherworldly landscape, both prehistoric and modern.**



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Installation view.
"Objects of
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Museum, New York.
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This kind of playful choreography of seemingly contrasting yet soulfully kindred pieces runs throughout the exhibition. In the museum's rock garden, OoCI's acrylic-cast *Offerings—Rock III* and inflatable *Standing Stones* are nestled amongst Noguchi's stone sculptures including *Practice Rocks in Placement*, an artistic-cum-landscaping installation conceived by Noguchi as an exercise in the placement of rocks. **Taking the form of rocks and boulders, OoCI's work playfully subverts their formal naturalness with their luminosity and transparency, in juxtaposition to Noguchi's sculptures.**

On the museum's upper floor, OoCI's Formations series are interspersed among Noguchi's pillar and totem-like sculptures in the context of the *Useless Architecture* concurrent exhibition. Rendered in a vibrant cobalt blue, OoCI's glossy, curvy-shaped objects stand out among the muted colour palette and natural textures of Noguchi's work, but at the same time fit right in, courtesy of their ambiguity of form and purpose.

Finally, in the Lounge area, OoCI's voluptuous *Tube Chair*, *Inflatable Lights* and *Tube Lights* echo the curvaceous forms of Noguchi's *Freeform Sofa & Ottoman* and *Coffee Table*, which were designed for **Herman Miller** in the 1940s and reissued by **Vitra** in 2002, along with his famous *Akari* lamps, and granite sculptures, while the translucent forms of OoCI's *Rock Seats* and *Rock Side Tables* converse with Noguchi's basalt *Garden Seat* and galvanized steel pieces.





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Installation view: VOLAX at Carwan Gallery, Athens. Photography by Giorgos Sfakianakis.



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While the anthological exhibition at the Noguchi Museum effectively functions as an impromptu retrospective of OoCI's practice, another exhibition currently running at **Carwan Gallery** in Athens, Greece, presents the studio's latest work. Named after a village on the Cycladic island of Tinos, "**Volax**" consists of life-size lighting and seating pieces inspired by the large granite boulders that dot the village's wind-swept landscape. The collection marks the studio's first ever use of wood, featuring a series of low chairs, benches and side tables whose abstract, geometric forms and monolithic design defy categorization. **Monumental yet playful, primitive yet sophisticated, the pieces comprise a sui generis sculptural garden amid the gallery's crumbling industrial setting, creating in Petaloti and Trampoukis' words "moments of unfamiliar simplicity".**

The exhibition further highlights the design duo's creative exploration of their Greek heritage, but also serves as a reminder of the importance that they bestow on the exposure of their work to unexpected public behaviour, which brings us right back to Noguchi — his definition of sculpture was directly related to the lived experience, a concept underpinning his commitment to public spaces and his idea to design the Noguchi Museum in the first place.



Installation view: VOLAX at Carwan Gallery, Athens. Photography by Giorgos Sakamalis.



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Carriac Gallery, Athens.
Photography by Giorgos
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