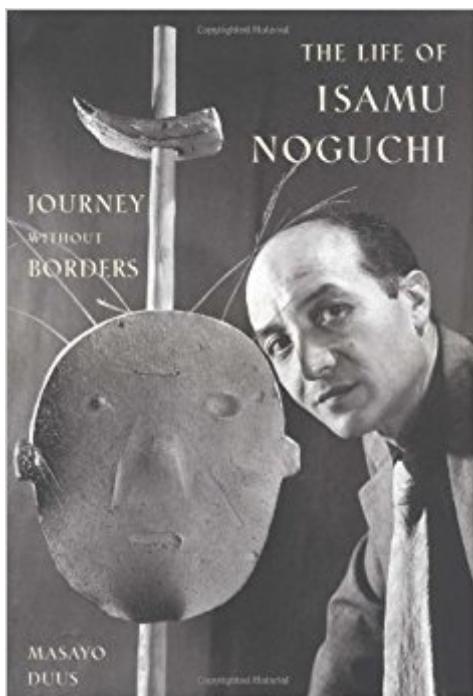


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# The Life Of Isamu Noguchi: Journey Without Borders



## Synopsis

Isamu Noguchi, born in Los Angeles as the illegitimate son of an American mother and a Japanese poet father, was one of the most prolific yet enigmatic figures in the history of twentieth-century American art. Throughout his life, Noguchi (1904-1988) grappled with the ambiguity of his identity as an artist caught up in two cultures. His personal struggles--as well as his many personal triumphs--are vividly chronicled in *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, the first full-length biography of this remarkable artist. Published in connection with the centennial of the artist's birth, the book draws on Noguchi's letters, his reminiscences, and interviews with his friends and colleagues to cast new light on his youth, his creativity, and his relationships. During his sixty-year career, there was hardly a genre that Noguchi failed to explore. He produced more than 2,500 works of sculpture, designed furniture, lamps, and stage sets, created dramatic public gardens all over the world, and pioneered the development of environmental art. After studying in Paris, where he befriended Alexander Calder and worked as an assistant to Constantin Brancusi, he became an ardent advocate for abstract sculpture. Noguchi's private life was no less passionate than his artistic career. The book describes his romances with many women, among them the dancer Ruth Page, the painter Frida Kahlo, and the writer AnaÃ±a Nin. Despite his fame, Noguchi always felt himself an outsider. "With my double nationality and my double upbringing, where was my home?" he once wrote. "Where were my affections? Where my identity?" Never entirely comfortable in the New York art world, he inevitably returned to his father's homeland, where he had spent a troubled childhood. This prize-winning biography, first published in Japanese, traces Isamu Noguchi's lifelong journey across these artistic and cultural borders in search of his personal identity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

That Isamu Noguchi's stature in the art world remains unresolved says as much about that unforgiving place as it does about this singular sculptor, designer, and garden creator. He could be stubborn, tempestuous, manipulative. His signature expressions--sleek elegance, a melding of Japanese traditions and Euro-American modernism, evocations of sensuous human forms bound with deep echoes of the earth's gifts--were rarely considered revolutionary. This studious and sympathetic biography, though, defines the essence of Noguchi (1904-88) as a lifelong struggle against unbelonging. Born to an American woman, who pointed him toward art, and a Japanese poet, who abandoned the family, Noguchi was an outsider in both countries and thus always in search of an identity and a home. He worked with Brancusi and Martha Graham; his friends included Buckminster Fuller and Robert Oppenheimer; his life intersected with America's Japanese relocation camps during World War II and McCarthyist hysteria. A ladies' man, Noguchi had his heart broken often, but Duus treats his flings with Frida Kahlo, Anais Nin, and a string of others with restraint, preferring to focus on the artist at work and the loneliness and longings that helped drive Noguchi to unlock the seductive secrets of space and stone. Steve PaulCopyright Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

Finalist for the 2005 Kiriyama Prize in Nonfiction, *Pacific Rim Voices* One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 2005"One artist who succeeded brilliantly in absorbing Asian and Western influences was American sculptor and designer Isamu Noguchi. . . . One of the many merits of Masayo Duus's biography of Noguchi is her lively treatment of Noguchi's estranged father, Yonejiro (Yone") Noguchi. . . . Whatever one makes of his poetry, Yonejiro was a pioneer in expressing his Japanese sensibility in a Western medium. . . . [Isamu] Noguchi pared his vision down to a basic sensuality, which owed something to Brancusi and European modernism, and something to Japanese traditional craftsmanship, but mostly to his own extraordinary talent and sensibility, which allowed him to find warm life in the hardest stones."--Ian Buruma, *New York Review of Books*  
"Masayo Duus's Life is well considered and never merely effusive. . . . Noguchi was a consummate professional who excelled at whatever he undertook. . . . [He] was forever a Japanese-American. This was a source of energy, and perseverance, and an ambition that never faltered. But it was not a source of serenity."--John Russell, *Times Literary Supplement* "Noguchi believed that 'my longing for affiliation has been the source of my creativity.' This is something that his biographer, Masayo

Duus, also knows, and she has here most persuasively presented the interpretation that Noguchi would most have endorsed. The amount of material in her book is prodigious."--Donald Richie, Times Higher Education Supplement "Factually dense but lyrically written, Duus's vivid biography of Japanese American artist Isamu Noguchi is as sleek and sophisticated as her subject's marble sculptures. . . . Duus animates this packed biography with her detailed research and poignant anecdotes."--Publishers Weekly "Masayo Duus . . . has very persuasively presented the interpretation that Noguchi himself would most have endorsed. The amount of material given is prodigious and her labors must have been enormous."--Donald Richie, Japan Times "[A] magisterial biography, based on archival research, thorough readings, and extensive interviews with almost 200 individuals. . . . Duus seems to have ferreted out every piece of data on Noguchi's life and placed it in streams of accessible and fascinating reading, populated with major personalities of the time. . . . Noguchi's work is placed sensitively in the context of his life and times."--Choice "Masayo Duss's recent biography of the artist is a refreshing change of pace. Duus highlights the diversity of Noguchi's life and artistic experience while refraining, for the most part, from pigeonholing him as an artist whose work reflects an essentially Japanese aesthetic. . . . [S]he seems to think . . . that Noguchi's unwavering commitment to artistic experimentation and a diversity of viewpoints and his unwillingness to be pinned down as an artist are what make his work and his life so compelling."--Amy Lyford, Art Journal

Outstanding book on the complex American-Japanese artist Isamu Noguchi, universally recognized modern sculptor. In depth research by author Duus gives insight into the drive and conceptions that were the perapethetic life that Noguchi lead.

Loved reading about this amazing artist and his fascinating life

"Sam" Gilmour, heartlander, great sculptor, world traveler, free spirit, aka "Noguchi"--The sadly neglected tale of a shy 13 year-old boy traveling alone to LaPorte, Indiana for early schooling "as a true American" and known there as "Sam" Gilmour, was later to become widely known as one of the world's greatest sculptors -- Isamu Noguchi (a future Jeopardy question?). A new biography "The Life of Isamu Noguchi: Journey Without Borders" includes revealing details and childhood snapshots for the first time from the archives of Lilly Library at Indiana University. This biography, only recently published in English, unfolds like a panoramic tapestry of life ... colorful, insightful, personal. It includes his stressful adaptations to cultural duality, personal relationships with notable

companions, and his bonding with the idea of "mound builders" of native Americans. After traveling alone across the ocean and the country, he began his new, Midwestern experience by hiking down the remote dirt road for the first time past the farms, fields, and woods to the Interlaken boarding school, feeling overwhelmed by the "vastness, the sweep, the panorama of that open Indiana countryside." Soon, when fateful WW I events abruptly closed the boarding school, he lived alone on the abandoned premises for a month "like Daniel Boone". Finally good fortune had him transferring to the public LaPorte High School and living with a locally prominent family in town, he graduated four years later in 1922. Typically, he had a newspaper route. Aspiring to be an "all-American boy", the yearbook included his illustrations and classmates elected him "Biggest Bull-Head." And so goes the first 100 pages. The next 340 pages of this epic follow his footprints through the Sands of Time, continuing 'Sam's Splendid Adventure' to the peaks of artistic expression in dance theatre, architecture, and sculpture. Along the way, this "Hoosier" sojourns with many of the greatest artistic spirits this world has ever seen. On a very personal note, I met with Noguchi a couple of times ('70s) in my New York work, and had once played a basketball game ('50s) at his Indiana high school (big deal there, then). Regrettably, I didn't realize at the time that our paths had previously crossed, albeit if only in space-time. Somewhere, sometime, "somewhat" dedicated individuals must necessarily put out a wake-up call to the Arts in Indiana patrons at colleges, museums, and libraries on this wholly unusual and neglected chapter of American cultural history at the turn of the 20th Century with its demographic changes of nation building immigration, new industrialization, and new urbanism. Fittingly, the Noguchi Foundation has an extensive curriculum guide available. His centennial birth date is November 17, 2004.

Just as described. Awesome. Loved it!

I was doing research for a movie I was working on. Learned a lot....

This book is an insightful narrative on the life of Isamu Noguchi - a must read for all Noguchi fans.

Both books were just what I wanted, I'm only sorry I couldn't get also the other ones I tried to order.

I really enjoyed reading this book .Not only was it informative but beautifully written .The book deals with Isamu Noguchi's life with insight and sensitivity .Definitely worth buying.

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