

Celebrates versatile Naguchi

Art institute honors imaginative sculptor

By IRENE KUPFER

Detroit has a vast new playground in the recently completed Hart Plaza at the foot of Woodward. Detroit Institute of Arts is celebrating this with a one-man show honoring the designer, 74-year-old Japanese-American sculptor, Isamu Noguchi.

"Noguchi's Imaginary Landscapes" is a tribute to the artist's extraordinary versatility throughout an international career that is still going strong after 50 years.

Visitors to the museum will be able to trace the development of Noguchi's life-long interest in creating visually exciting and physically relaxing public environments.

SOME OF THE landscapes on display are called imaginary because they were never executed. One of these is Noguchi's 1947 proposal for a colossal monument to man, intended to be visible from Mars. Its form was to have been a human face sculpted from the earth, with a nose a mile high.

The exhibition also includes bronze models of innovative playground designs that Noguchi created as early as 1933. They were rejected at the time as, "too dangerous."

Other Noguchi projects that were successfully completed are called "imaginary landscapes" because they are so stimulating to the person who enters and observes them.

The artist considers these environments huge sculptures in themselves, although they frequently contain individual sculptures or groups of sculptural elements.

IN CREATING the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden of the National Museum in Jerusalem, Israel, Noguchi oversaw the sculpture of tons of earth from a six-acre mountainside. The garden is an outdoor setting for the impresario's international sculpture collection.

Noguchi included his own "Water Source Sculpture," carved of red granite from Elath, as his personal signature to the project. Rock forms have always been his greatest inspiration and carving his greatest pleasure.

In some gardens, Noguchi draws upon the beauty and diversity of nature, as in his Japanese-style garden at the UNESCO Building in Paris. Here he manipulated the materials of nature — water, plants, and rocks — to create a harmonious man-made world. Noguchi often juxtaposes highly finished forms with rough surfaces to emphasize their contrasts.

OTHER NOGUCHI gardens display a fondness for geometric forms that coalesce with his more romantic view of nature. The white marble garden he created for the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University is a classic expression of the relationship of three

geometric shapes — circle, pyramid, and cube.

In the Hart Plaza, Noguchi makes a more playful use of geometry, contrasting the pyramidal amphitheater, the circular ice arena and fountain, and the twisting pylon.

The Detroit project is the climax of his continuing interest in large public sculptural space. The stunning Dodge Fountain with its myriad possibilities of light-and-water-play is but the latest of many Noguchi fountains. Its nearest rival in splendor is the series of fountains he designed for three artificial lakes at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan.

Noguchi has always appreciated the vitality of water and its importance as the most kinetic of all sculptural possibilities.

His sunken rock garden at the Chase

Manhattan Bank Plaza in New York is bathed by a constantly flowing, bubbling, and sparkling pool of water. The garden is a literal oasis in the cement-bound Wall Street district, soothing the ear as well as the eye.

Noguchi has also created interior environments. He began in 1935 when he designed his first stage set for Martha Graham, the pioneer of modern dance. The museum displays several of Noguchi's sets resulting from this fruitful collaboration.

PARTICULARLY notable is the charming rocking chair from "Appalachian Spring," which seems like a tangible fragment of American history. The exhibit includes a videotape of several dances performed by the Graham company.

The artist has also designed an interior environment expressly for this show, "Variable Landscape" is a theatrical environment with several sculptural props that can be used in different ways by performers. Various music, poetry, and dance groups are scheduled to perform in this space on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays throughout the exhibition.

Noguchi's talents are so prodigious that even if he had never designed a single public work, his reputation would be secure as a sculptor of the first rank. Many of his individual pieces evoke landscapes of the imagination, like his travertine "Mountain," or the granite piece "Shodo Shima," whose stone forms have the delicacy of an egg-filled bird's nest.



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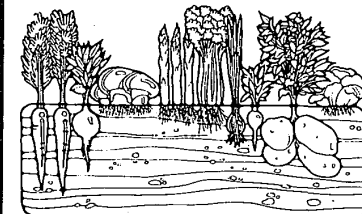
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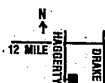
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