

Sofu Teshigahara and Isamu Noguchi

Dates: Dec 11, 2020 – Jan 31, 2021 [Winter Holidays: Dec 25 – Jan 1]

Location: SHOP Taka Ishii Gallery, Hong Kong

By appointment only

SHOP Taka Ishii Gallery is pleased to present a two-person exhibition of works by Sofu Teshigahara (1900-1979), founder of the Sogetsu School of Ikebana flower arrangement, who left an indelible mark on postwar Japanese art history, and Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), one of the leading sculptors of the 20th Century. The exhibit will feature Teshigahara's prints, sculptures, and calligraphic works made between the 1950s and 1970s, and the "Akari" lighting works that Noguchi started designing in 1951.

When Isamu Noguchi came over he said a pretty great thing

It's no good to arrange pine and have it look like pine

It's tough to make pine look like something else

He says his Japanese is poor, but Japanese is rarely spoken this well

Noguchi's words provide good contrast

To a phrase I hate

Arrange flowers as if they were in nature

They say the words are Rikyu's, but I know

They were spoken by an imbecile in his sleep

Sofu Teshigahara, *SOFU: His Boundless World of Flowers*, Japanese edition, p. 108, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1966

Like two old thieves who would never boast to the other about the things we seek, we're bonded by empathy.

We totally maintain silence.

Isamu Noguchi, "On Artist Sofu Teshigahara", *Maboroshi*, p.11, Tokyo: Kyuryudo, 1971

Teshigahara argued that Ikebana should neither depend on the beauty of flowers or arrange flowers as they are. He explained that Ikebana is a plastic art which requires one to listen to the flowers, take scissors to them, and bend their branches. He stated, "Flowers are beautiful, but Ikebana is not necessarily so. When arranged, flowers become something else; once arranged, flowers become human." ⁱ

Noguchi also said, "In facing a natural stone, my thoughts get in the way, but I must incorporate my form to the stone. The stone looks so beautiful that destroying its beauty takes tremendous courage and begins with failure." ⁱⁱ Throughout his career, Noguchi created numerous stone sculptures, which simultaneously felt familiar and serene, praising the natural beauty of stones while eliminating their stony heaviness and rigidity.

Commissioned by architect Antonin Raymond to design the Readers' Digest Tokyo Office garden, Noguchi came to Japan for the second time after the end of the World War II in 1951 when he met Sofu Teshigahara, who arranged flowers for the office's inauguration ceremony. Teshigahara approached Ikebana with the spirit of modernist experimentation and created many progressive pieces in the 1950s. He made "Mure" [Flock] (1953), for example, using materials unconventional for Ikebana, such as metal, to liberate the medium from ossification and stagnation.

Noguchi, on the other hand, had a keen interest in prehistoric Japanese art and designed the "Tsukuru" and "Yuku" handrails for

the Peace Bridge in Hiroshima in 1951 (they were completed in the following year). His works reflect the influence of Animism, the origin of Japanese culture. On his way to Hiroshima, he visited Gifu City, where the mayor requested Noguchi's advice on modernizing the traditional craft of Gifu lanterns. Noguchi's "Akari" light sculptures were born from this request. From 1952 on, Noguchi also created, under Kitaoji Rosanjin, many simple, yet sophisticatedly abstract ceramic works that were formally influenced by Haniwa terracotta figures and Magatama beads.

Noguchi and Teshigahara, who understood the essence of each other's creativity, continued their friendship and in 1977, Sofu Teshigahara and his son Hiroshi Teshigahara commissioned Noguchi to design the lobby of the new Sogetsu Kaikan, which was designed by Kenzo Tange and under construction in Akasaka, Tokyo at the time. For the enormous 540-square-meter space uniquely stepped to hold Sogetsu Hall directly underneath it, Noguchi created an innovative rock garden made of five levels of variously textured boulders. The garden is richly lit by natural light that falls from the ceiling and changes throughout the day and between seasons as water murmurs as it flows between the rocks from the top to bottom levels. This formidable work was titled "Heaven" and it served as an exhibition space where many flowers were arranged over the years.

This exhibition will feature Sofu Teshigahara's "Toge," which was made in 1957, and Isamu Noguchi's "Akari" series, which he began designing in 1951. Importantly, both were made in the 1950s, when the two artists met and developed their friendship. Teshigahara's "Toge" was shown at the First Tokyo International Print Biennale held in June 1957 and the three pieces from Noguchi's "Akari" series were shown at the "Isamu Noguchi Sofu Teshigahara Two Person Exhibition" held in "Heaven," Sogetsu Kaikan, in 1980.

This Exhibition is held in collaboration with the Sogetsu Foundation.

ⁱ Sofu Teshigahara, *SOFU: His Boundless World of Flowers*, Japanese edition, p. 109, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1966

ⁱⁱ Masatoshi Izumi, "Isamu Noguchi, 'Heaven' and stone," *ISAMU NOGUCHI*, p.56, Tokyo: Sogetsu Art Museum, 2002

SHOP Taka Ishii Gallery Inquiries: Stephanie Ho

Shops 4A & 4B, UG/F, Bo Fung Mansion, No.1 St. Francis Yard, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

tel +852 3619 0011 / fax +852 3618 9824 / web www.takaishiigallery.com / email tighk@takaishiigallery.com



Sofu Teshigahara, "Toge", 1957

Lithograph with watercolor additions

143.8 x 85.3 x 1.8 cm

© Sogetsu Foundation / Photo: Kenji Takahashi



Isamu Noguchi, "Akari L3", ca.1980

Mulberry bark paper, bamboo, metal, and electric components, H201 x 87.5 x 89 cm

Courtesy of Sogetsu Foundation / Photo: Kenji Takahashi



"Isamu Noguchi & Hiroshi Teshigahara: Two-

person Exhibition", installation view at indoor stone garden "Heaven", The Sogetsu Kaikan

1F, Tokyo, 1980. Courtesy of Sogetsu Foundation / Photo: Hiromi Tsuchida