



# The Life of Isamu Noguchi: Journey without Borders

*Masayo Duus*

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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 Anaïs 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.

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