

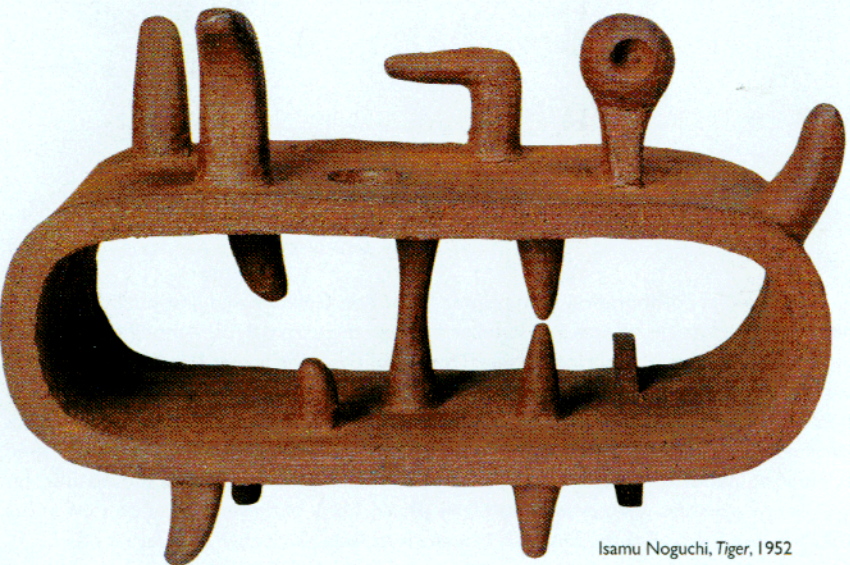
Cross-Cultural Clay

You may know Isamu Noguchi's Akari light sculptures, those elegant first cousins to the traditional Japanese lantern. And you've probably seen his kidney-shaped coffee tables and massive granite sculptures. But as a new show at the **Japan Society** reveals, Noguchi also worked with clay—sculpting it and firing it in the kilns of some of Japan's leading ceramic artists during three visits there in the 1930s and '50s.

Son of an American writer and a Japanese poet, the U.S.-born Noguchi spent his childhood in Japan, then returned to this country for schooling. After studying sculpture in New York and Paris, he traveled to Asia, arriving in Japan in 1931. In Kyoto, he became entranced by *haniwa*—unglazed, prehistoric tomb sculptures—and made *The Queen* (c. 1931), a terracotta figure resembling an oversized chess piece. Ceramic portrait heads, figure studies, and urns quickly followed.

When Noguchi again visited Japan in 1950, he was an internationally renowned artist and designer. Invited to present an exhibition but unable to ship artworks from the States in time, he turned once again to clay. Working feverishly at a local ceramics facility, he produced more than 20 whimsically abstract pieces in a single week. In 1952, he traveled again to Japan, staying with potter Kitajoli Rosanjin. Here, Noguchi's interest in Zen Buddhism, the tea ceremony, and *ikebana* (flower arranging) surfaced in nonfunctional clay works that, while modern in every sense, referenced centuries-old Japanese artistic traditions. These radical pieces dazzled young Japanese sculptors eager to transcend their country's traditional view of ceramics as simply utilitarian objects.

Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics brings together close to 75 pieces by nine artists, including almost 40 by Noguchi himself—clay expressions of his dual Japanese and American identity. There are also vessels, utensils, and sculptures by artists he influenced, including Rosanjin, Okamoto Taro, Yagi Kazuo, and others. See the cross-cultural encounter unfold through January 11.



Isamu Noguchi, *Tiger*, 1952

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

SKETCHPAD

- It's been 300 years since the birth of François Boucher, the French painter best known for his voluptuous, idyllic paintings depicting the light-hearted pursuits of the French aristocracy. **The Frick Collection** is celebrating with ***The Drawings of François Boucher***, a show of 75 works on paper—many of which have never before been exhibited in the U.S.—revealing the artist's extraordinary talents as a draftsman. Through December 14...

- In the 17th century, magnificent vistas drew artists to the Chinese city of Jinling (now Nanjing). A handful of those artists went on to become the most important landscape painters of the time, known as the Eight Masters of Jinling. ***Passion for the Mountains: Seventeenth Century Landscape Paintings from the Nanjing Museum*** offers a rare look at more than 60 works by the Eight Masters and their contemporaries, including handscrolls, hanging scrolls, painted fans and more. Chances are, you'll be "drawn" to this show, on view at the **China Institute Gallery** through December 20...

- Living in cities such as Baghdad, Jerusalem, and New York has had a profound impact on Iraqi-born sculptor Oded Halahmy. It's evident in his bronze abstract sculptures, in which he lyrically incorporates everything from childhood memories of palm tree fronds to ancient Near Eastern art and his personal philosophy of peace. ***Homelands: Baghdad-Jerusalem-New York: Sculpture of Oded Halahmy, A Retrospective*** at the **Yeshiva University Museum** proves that conflicting cultures can live in harmony—in Halahmy's sculptures, at least. Through January 15...



- From the 13th through the 16th centuries, Italian painters didn't just illustrate books—they lit up their pages with gold, silver, and intensely colored illustrations. These exquisite creations, called illuminated manuscripts, are the subject of ***Treasures of a Lost Art: Italian Manuscript Painting of the Middle Ages and Renaissance***. See more than 100 these masterpieces in miniature at **The Metropolitan Museum of Art** through February 1.

Oded Halahmy, *Silver Pomegranate Moon*, 1983, at the Yeshiva University Museum

Yeshiva University Museum