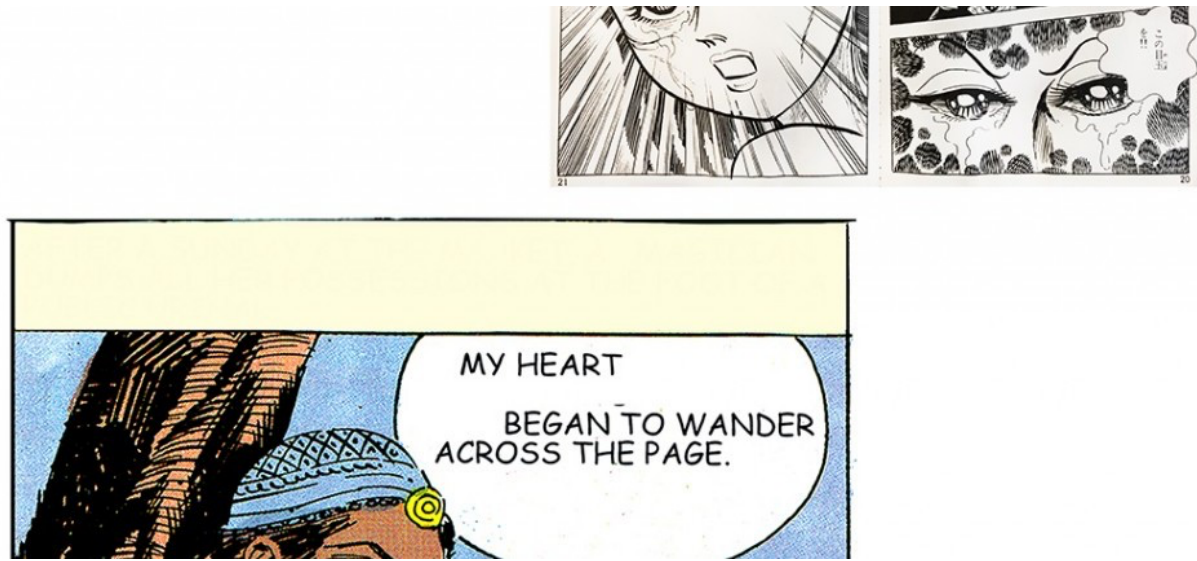


Chitra Ganesh & Sung Hwan Kim



By [Chitra Ganesh](#), [Sung Hwan Kim](#) August 16, 2018

Between You and Me is a series of dialogic exchanges between artists and their collaborators and peers to materialize the countless conversations, musings, and debates that are often invisible, yet play a significant role in the generative space of art-making.

This column is funded by the [Kenneth Rainin Foundation](#), a private family foundation dedicated to enhancing quality of life by championing and sustaining the arts, promoting early childhood literacy, and supporting research to cure chronic disease.



(first set)



(second set)

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THE GUTTER

SHK:

- 약동이와 영팔이, 방영진 (1939-1997), 한국만화영상진흥원, first published in 1962, Korea.
- I chose two sets of two cuts showing before and after lighting a match.
- (first set) A kid lighting hay with a match.
- (second set) Night shone by the moon vs. a moment later with a lit-up matchstick.

CG:

- Your fire in two cuts illuminates the gutter.
- The gutter is the space in between two panels in a comic.
- Gutters indicate the passage of time, the transformation of space, etc.



CG:

- Sometimes the gutter reveals itself as the flow of a river (in this case the Nile).
- The gutter also reminds me to read between the lines.
- For example, the mosaic floors of Palestrina show a literal and metaphoric fluidity in the relationship between Egypt and Rome....(a fluidity that would later be dissolved when the Roman Empire was appropriated as the root of Western Civilization)
- These scenes are Nilotic landscapes-->
- I find it interesting that Nilotic languages constitute a large sub-group of the Nilo-Saharan languages; spoken in South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and northern Tanzania.
Among these are the Luo, Sara, Maasai, Kalenjin, Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Ateker, and the Maa-speaking peoples.



Market Street Chinatown in San Jose before the fire, 1887



White citizens observe the burning of Chinatown

SHK:

- Another example of two cuts with fire.
- *Driven Out*, Jean Pfaelzer, first published in 2008.
- A page from this book shows a Chinese town before arson and after arson.
- Pfaelzer, a scholar of American History at Humboldt State University in 1974, first notices the absence of Asian students in her school.
- She notices this absence during meetings against the Vietnam War and for Native American Rights.
- A local poet informs Pfaelzer that the absence of Asian students resulted from their memory of the massacre of the Chinese in Eureka in 1885.
- Thirty years later, Pfaelzer embarks on her research on Chinese immigrants living in the US between 1850 and 1906.
- One fact from her research: Out of the (at least) 302 lynchings that occurred in California between 1849 and 1902, 200 were of Asian people.

CG:

- A San Jose I never knew about
before you showed me this page,
a Chinatown I wish I saw with my own eyes.

SHK:

- Similar ideas to this are repeated by members of both major political parties to eventually justify the burning of habitats.

3. "War of extermination will continue to be waged between the two races until the Indian race becomes extinct...while we cannot anticipate this result with but painful regret, the inevitable destiny of the race is beyond the power and wisdom of man to avert." - Peter H. Burnett, the first governor of California

1:08 PM

CG:

- I highlighted this part from Clement Greenberg's essay, "American-Type" Painting, first published in *Partisan Review* in 1955.
- American nationalism, rooted in an emphasis on white + black.
- A matrix that becomes a rallying cry.

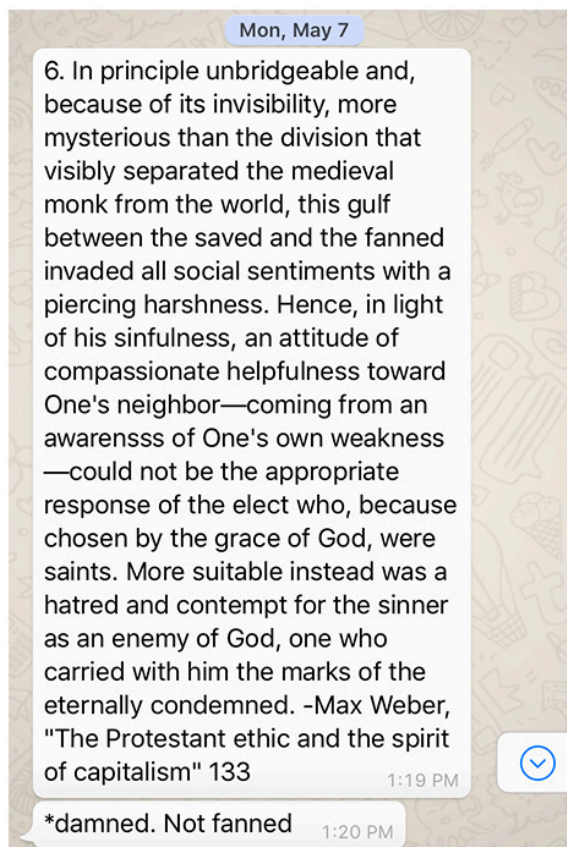
convincing illusion of three-dimensionality which distinguishes it most from other traditions of pictorial art. The eye takes its first bearings from quantitative differences of illumination, and in their absence feels most at loss. Black and white offers the extreme statement of these differences. What is at stake in the new American emphasis on black and white is the preservation of something—a main pictorial resource—that is suspected of being near exhaustion; and the effort at preservation is un-

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dertaken, in this as in other cases, by isolating and exaggerating that which one wants to preserve.

SHK:

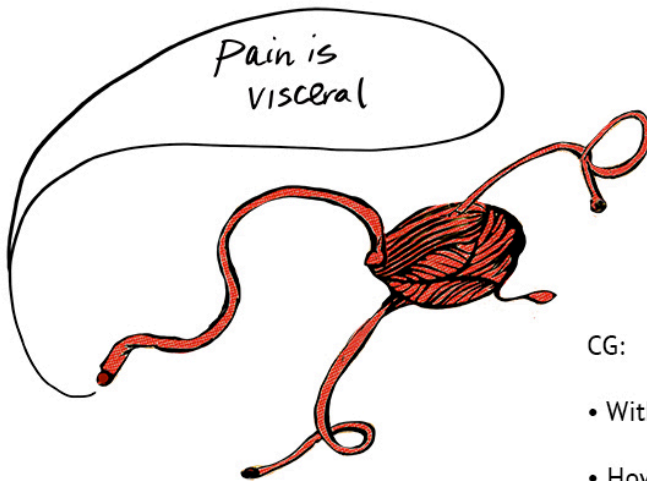
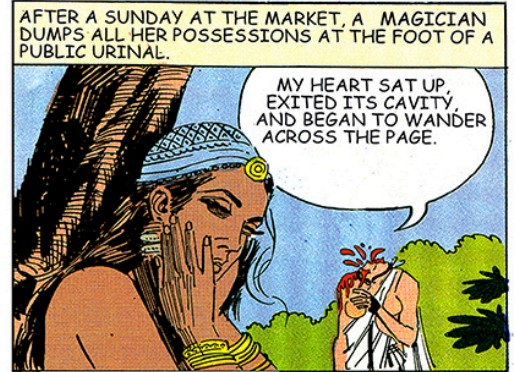
- There are structural affinities between preservation of American race and American art.



SHK:

- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber, first published in 1904-1905.
- "Isolate" the sinners and "exaggerate" the saints.
- This is what I meant by "structural affinities" between preservation of American art and American race.

- Pain is visceral.
- like moving words?



CG:

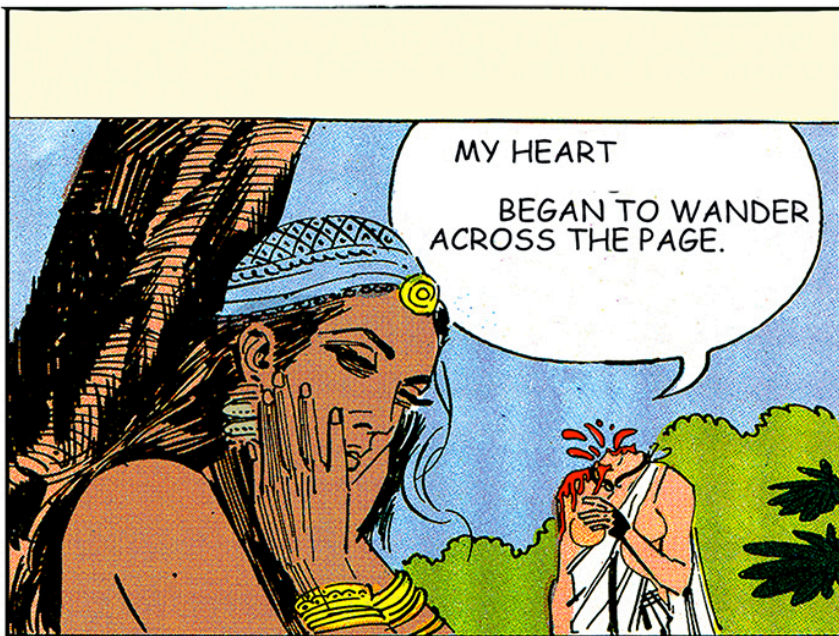
- With a gutter like this, does time move forward or back?
- How is the directionality of time and progress scrambled by the order in which we learn things?



21



20



CG:

- Martin Wong's 8 Ball is another heart wandering across the page.



- This 8 Ball was an oracle and toy of my childhood.
- The first time I saw Wong's work was at his posthumous New Museum retrospective in 1998.
- Before that, I had never encountered an American artist of Asian descent in a museum.
- He painted gay firefighters kissing in the
Loisaida rubble.
- What troubles did he tell the 8 Ball?
- After more than 20 years in New York City,
Wong went back to California to die in 1994.
- Somehow this fact struck me: what, ultimately,
was his relationship to family and home?



SHK:

In your interview with Linda Sarsour
(May 9, 2018 at the Rubin Museum),
she emphasizes intersectionality:

- [...If I am in a space where I am not uncomfortable, then I am in the wrong space...]
- [...If Black women and Native women are not free, then I am wasting my time...]
- <https://www.facebook.com/RubinMuseum/videos/10155364824196975/>
- I asked her how she prioritizes issues when she faces intersectional crises.
It is an overwhelming, yet timely, dilemma.

CG:

- Sarsour connects to Japanese Internment as a Muslim American:
[...It's not just that we have to learn history... I'm aware of the capabilities we have as a nation, if we don't step up and know our history. It took years of propaganda that the Japanese were not to be trusted, that the Japanese were the enemy within, that they were never going to be loyal to our country... and our country, generally speaking, turned a blind eye...]
- This photo of Frida, with Nayatara and Rita Seghal, could even be an earlier reminder of these unexpected connections.



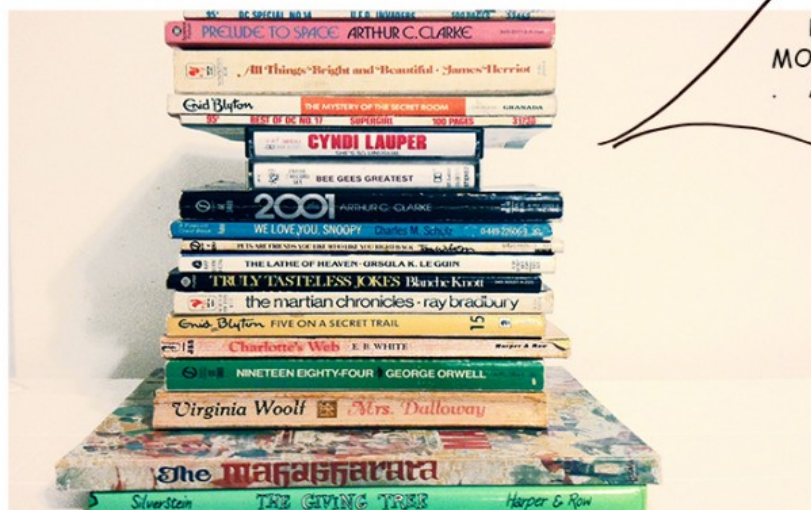
Which is why re-reading Orlando knocked the wind out of my sails
Beloved Orlando was no longer a shapeshifter across
history and gender. When my eyes couldn't unsee
young man delighted by violence & empire

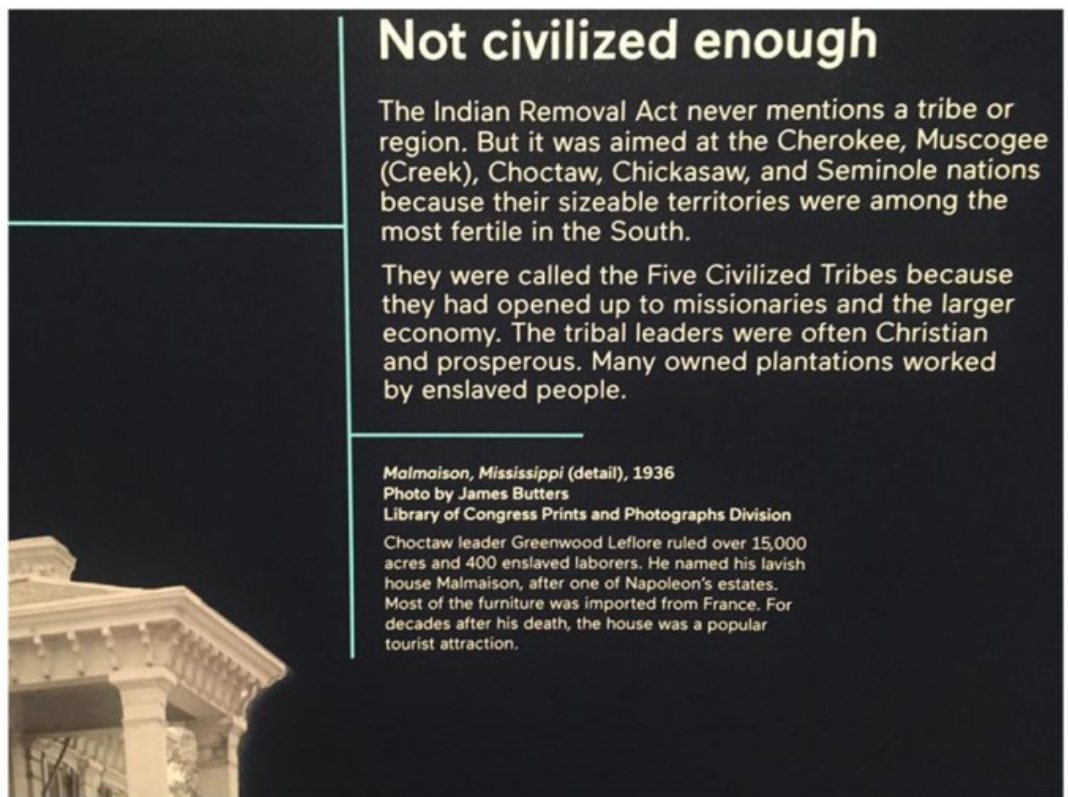
Orlando, by Virginia Woolf

CHAPTER 1.

He — for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it — was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters. It was the colour of an old football, and more or less the shape of one, save for the sunken cheeks and a strand or two of coarse, dry hair, like the hair on a cocoanut. Orlando's father, or perhaps his grandfather, had struck it from the shoulders of a vast Pagan who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa; and now it swung, gently, perpetually, in the breeze which never ceased blowing through the attic rooms of the gigantic house of the lord who had slain him.

BOOKS THAT SHE READ
AS A CHILD BECAME THE
ARCHITECTURE OF HER
PERSONALITY - AT TIMES
MORE SO THAN LIVED EXPERIENCE;
A COLLECTIVE IMAGE BANK OF
SHARED ALLEGORIES.





Not civilized enough

The Indian Removal Act never mentions a tribe or region. But it was aimed at the Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations because their sizeable territories were among the most fertile in the South.

They were called the Five Civilized Tribes because they had opened up to missionaries and the larger economy. The tribal leaders were often Christian and prosperous. Many owned plantations worked by enslaved people.

Malmaison, Mississippi (detail), 1936

Photo by James Butters

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Choctaw leader Greenwood Leflore ruled over 15,000 acres and 400 enslaved laborers. He named his lavish house Malmaison, after one of Napoleon's estates. Most of the furniture was imported from France. For decades after his death, the house was a popular tourist attraction.

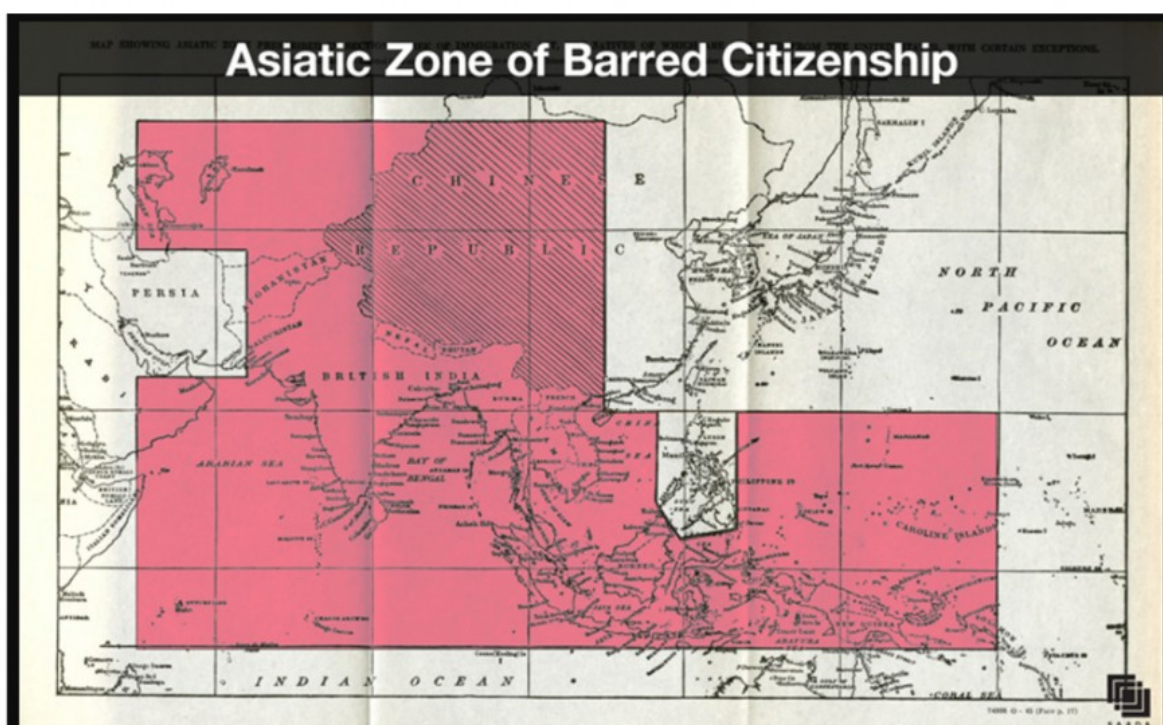
SHK:

- I did not know this fact before visiting the exhibition, *Americans*, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C., curated by Paul Chaat Smith.
- While I attended elementary through high school in Korea, between 1981 to 1994, all the teachers, without exception, skipped all the chapters on Central Asia, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, most of Latin America, and (various) islands except the UK, Taiwan, and Japan.
- Only after 9/11, I picked up, at the airport, for the first time, *A History of the Middle East*, by Peter Mansfield. For me, this was the first introduction to the general history of the Middle East.
- I did not question the term "African dance," which I learned at Williams College between 1999-2000.



CG:

- A symbol I associated with in youth, a case of mistaken identity—
how one would grow up, being used to erasures in systemic, willful ignorance, not understanding a thing about the violence behind this image.
- In the meantime, my second grade teacher I adored was proudly Sioux.
- The first time I learned Native American history was when I had to for my job, at age 21. It was a mandatory part of the curriculum I taught as a public school Social Studies teacher—on the local geography and tribal histories of New York State.
- "Indian Giver" was a slur I was called. Do they still use it now?



SHK:

- Between my arrival to the US in 1996 and the year 2016, I had never met anyone in the US who shared a knowledge of the long history of the ban against Asian immigration, which finally was repealed in 1965.
- I did not know that most Asians in the US before 1965, except for special cases, remained undocumented and/or lived with undocumented parents most of their lives, without rights to either vote or purchase/lease property.
- I first found out in 2016 that during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, out of the one billion dollars worth of property damage, Korean-owned property damage was estimated at 400 million dollars.

CG:

- In Alpesh Patel's book *Productive Failure*, she notes:
- How Greenberg goes out of his way to deny Asian influence in his 1955 essay "American-Type" Painting.
- It was common for West Coast-based artists to earn money as sailors and spend lots of time in Asia while East Coast artists earned money as commercial sign painters, dressing department store windows.
- When I was looking for this paragraph in the essay, I kept looking for the word "Asia."
- Greenberg does not refer to any places specifically.
- It's all "Oriental."

If Natvar Bhavsar is one of a number of artists of Asian descent whose works have been largely ignored as part of post-Second World War art history, then this was at least partly due to the fact that critics such as American Clement Greenberg downplayed the influence of Zen and Asian philosophy on Western art. Greenberg, for instance, wrote:

Actually, not one of the original 'abstract expressionists' ... has felt more than a cursory interest in Oriental art. The sources of their art lie entirely in the West; what resemblances to Oriental modes may be found in it are an effect of convergence at the most, and of accident at the least.¹²⁵

The title of the famous essay in which this was written, 'American-Type Painting', suggests what was at stake here. Greenberg was outlining characteristics of a national category and this meant ensuring that the country's output could not be confused with that of any other country or region. Art historian

SHK:

- As a child in Korea, we used to stretch the edges of our eyes upward to make them slanted, and then say this is Japanese;
- lower them to say this is Chinese.

WHITENESS AND CULTURAL PRIVILEGE IN POSTWAR AMERICA

Only some artists—typically white, heterosexual men—were credited with successfully integrating “the primitive” into an art that seemed “universal” because it crossed racial, ethnic, and linguistic lines to communicate a liberal, even progressive, cultural viewpoint. As the art historian Ann Gibson explains, women, artists of color, and homosexuals could not do this “because their audiences would not accept their work as universal. Even if they wanted to be universal and said so[,] . . . the dominant society did not read the work that way.”² Thus if a woman made art and presented it as an exploration of issues of universal significance, it might well be read as deriving from her “feminine” identity rather than the broadly *human* identity she aspired to represent. Identity drove the analysis and meaning of Noguchi’s work too. As much as he tried to make it address broadly shared humanistic concerns, its meaning was limited by the same assumptions about his Japaneseness that had inflected the reception of his

SHK:

CG:

Basic knowledge that I had on Noguchi before 2017:

• And what you told me about Noguchi’s work

- He made beautiful furniture and zen gardens.
- He was Japanese.
- He made smooth surfaces.

being described as "too clean and smooth" as if his Asian masculinity itself was being evaluated and dismissed; while his engagement with farmland, industrialization, and socialism is omitted and depoliticized.

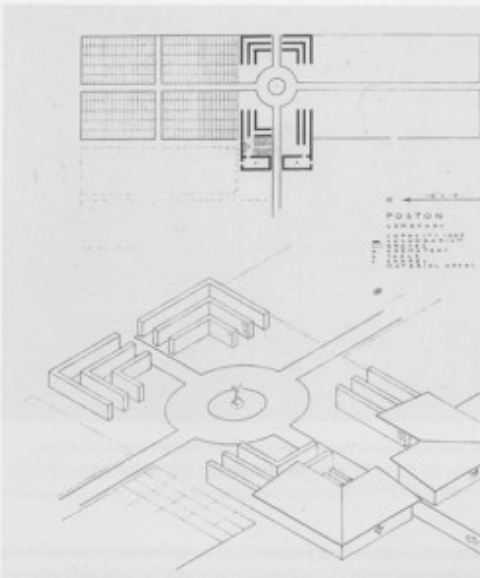


FIGURE 48. Isamu Noguchi, Cemetery Project for Poston Camp, 1942. © 2013 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

In designing the architectural environment for the Poston park and recreation facilities (Figure 49), Noguchi followed through on several ideas in the NWAMD proposal about collective labor and community building among the camp's population. A recreation center, set at an angle to the characteristic "harsh symmetry" of Poston's barracks, would feel like a welcome "retreat." Programming at the center would foster "self-expression" in a range of arts "departments," including ceramics, music, painting, and sculpture; there was to be even a small museum. The buildings housing these arts departments would encourage art as a self-generated process—one that Noguchi

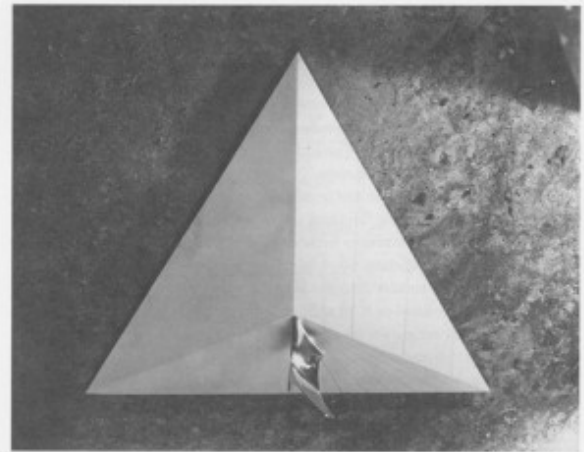


FIGURE 11. Isamu Noguchi, model for Monument to the Plow, c. 1933-1934. Plaster model. Photographer: Berenice Abbott. © 2013 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo © Berenice Abbott/Commerce Graphics, NYC.

and to new scientific approaches to controlling erosion and rotating crops championed by the administrator of the Agricultural Adjustment Act to ensure fertile, and thus more productive, farmland.

The slopes of the pyramid would have to be plowed by a horse-drawn plow, with a human guiding both, to create the patterned furrows Noguchi wanted for the monument. Mechanical tractors could not have done the exacting work. The iconic plow set into the monument's concrete cap was thus integral to a structure that emphasized the need to mitigate the erosion caused by cultivating the earth. The cap to which the plow was affixed would prevent erosion of the monument from above, and the planted and furrowed sides of the work would sustain the monument's form, the plants holding the work together and their roots preventing erosion of the soil.

Erosion was recognized as a major impediment to agricultural production as the effects of overplanting and droughts, which had begun in the midwestern prairies in the early 1930s, started to spread eastward by 1934. In the spring of 1934, the Soil Erosion Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior was established to protect agricultural

You may wonder why Land Art did not thrive already in the 1930s. Noguchi's proposal might seem neither timely nor even inappropriate before recognizing the following:

- 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act.
- Its contradiction to then-conventional ethics of the American farmers (To the average farmers, crop "control" seems sinful...To him this is a crime against fertility, for he is schooled to think in terms of famine and plenty, not in terms of supply and demand... Bernard Ostrolenk, *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, July 16, 1933, 3).
- The prior inhabitants of the proposed site, the Middle West of the United States of America, were suggested by Noguchi to be Mayans.
- National Origins Act or Asian Exclusion Act of 1924.
- The reasonable assumption that, living in such a nativistic period, every action of Noguchi, a half-Japanese American

every action of Noguchi, a half-Japanese American, inevitably would be either associated or disassociated with his identity.

- Noguchi's repeated endeavor to map artisanry onto industry.



FIGURE 35.

AP press kit photo 12: Noguchi resting his hand and a grinder on the stainless steel mural, c. 1939–1940. © 2013 Rockefeller Group, Inc./Rockefeller Center Archives. © 2013 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

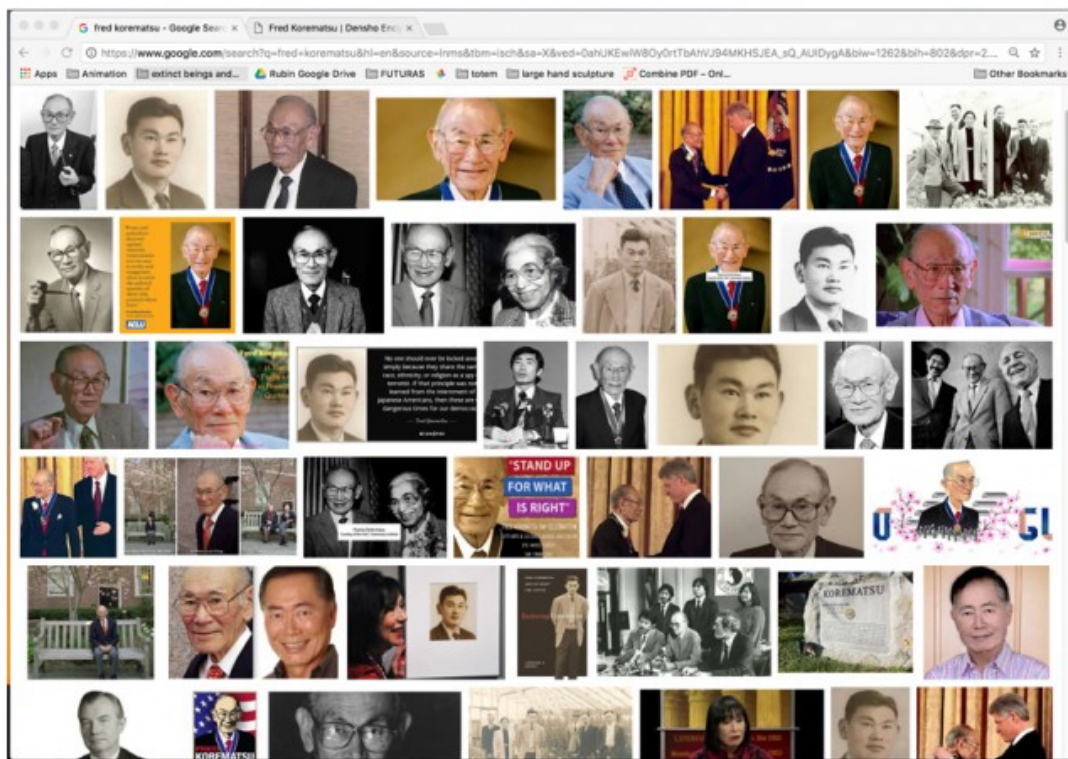
SHK:

Some knowledge not known to me before 2017:

- *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism: Negotiating Race, Labor, and Nation, 1930-1950*, Amy Lyford, first published in 2013.
- This picture was taken c. 1939-1940.
- Before President Roosevelt relocated and incarcerated 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry, the majority being Japanese-American;
- Before Noguchi, in 1942, volunteered himself to the Colorado River Relocation Center in order to "help preserve self-respect and belief in America;"
- Before two nuclear attacks on Japan.
- Noguchi was born in the US and was raised by his American mother, Léoni Gilmour.
- He initially declined the invitation to represent the US at the US Pavilion in the Venice Biennale in 1986.

CG:

- Ironical that Noguchi was a volunteer to serve and protect the US.
- It reminds me of Fred Korematsu, known for his legal challenge against Japanese internment.
- He lost the case; the Supreme Court upheld the practice of internment.
- He rarely spoke about this case until the end of his life.
- I got to know him only a few years ago—when I realized it was often the most ordinary people, like Richard and Mildred Loving, who fought against state-sanctioned segregation.
- I was lucky enough to have an 8th grade history teacher who taught us about Japanese internment.



3 JAPANESE DEFY CURBS

Army Says One Tried to Become
'Spaniard' by Plastic Surgery

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

SAN FRANCISCO, June 12—

Complaints charging violations of restrictive regulations imposed by the Army were filed today against three Japanese in this area, one of whom was accused of undergoing a plastic surgical operation to turn himself into a "Spaniard."

Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation told A. J. Zirpoli, assistant Federal attorney, that Fred Toyosaburo Korematsu, 23, of San Leandro, had been operated on since the outbreak of the war. He notified his draft board, agents said, that his name was Clyde Sarah and tried to persuade an unidentified Italian girl to marry him. She learned he was Japanese, it was related, but he spurned her advice that he surrender to Federal authorities, and his arrest followed.

The other defendants are John Ra, 19, of Centerville, who fled the State after his family had been removed to a Japanese assembly center, and Koji Kurokawa of this city, who was found hiding in the basement of his former employer's home.

Chitra Ganesh was a presenting artist at the Kenneth Rainin Foundation's "Exploring Public Art Practices" Symposium at the Oakland Museum of California on March 10, 2018. To watch the presentation, visit <https://vimeo.com/264215616>.