

**Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)**

*Octetra (five–element pyramid)*, 1968 (2021)

Fiberglass reinforced plastic and paint

88 3/16 × 107 1/16 × 99 5/8 inches

Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube, London.

**Website:**

A pioneering artist and designer of the mid to late 20th century, Noguchi experimented with a wide range of materials, including stone, metal, wood, clay, fiberglass, and paper, producing sculptures that bridge the gap between art and functionality. Though not attached to any one art movement, his vast body of work spans ideas of minimalism, pop art, and modernism, with works ranging from monumental public sculpture to everyday household furniture. Today, contemporary artists, including those in Sculpture Milwaukee, build upon and reference the experimentation in form and materiality that Noguchi championed. Some of his most notable designs include a glass-top coffee table with interlocking legs, and paper light fixtures, both of which can still be found in department and designer stores today.

Noguchi's *Octera (five–element pyramid)* is part of the artist's *Playscapes*, a series of sculptures that demonstrate his fascination with geometry and the interplay between positive and negative space. The series incorporates organic forms, curves, and smooth surfaces to provide a tactile stimulating environment for children to explore and play. Much like architectural spaces, Noguchi's *Octera* sculptures celebrate the tension between solidity & openness, foster social interaction & activity, and seamlessly integrate art into everyday life.

**Social Choreography Score:**

While standing, raise one knee, or imagine doing so. Notice how your weight shifts to your standing leg. Hold this position as long as you feel comfortable. Lower your foot to stand on both legs. Now lift the other knee, and notice the shift in weight again. Can you also extend your arms, while standing on one leg? Make small circles with your arms, or imagine it. Try to catch someone's eye and smile at them, or imagine it. Observe cause and effect.

**Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)**

*Octetra (two-element column)*, 1968 (2021)

Fiberglass reinforced plastic and paint

88 1/4 x 53 7/16 x 53 7/16 inches

Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube, London.

**Website:**

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**Erika Verzutti (Brazilian, b. 1971)**

*Venus Yogini*, 2019

Bronze with pigmented wax

123  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 57  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches

Courtesy the Artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery

**Website:**

Erika Verzutti is a Brazilian artist known for her sculpture, installation, and painting. Through these, she blends modernist, contemporary, and paleolithic forms using 'known' or found objects—namely fruits and plants. Her compositions reference the origins and materiality of sculpture and its inherent role in culture, particularly when displayed in public spaces.

In *Venus Yogini*, a momentous arrangement of stacked graviola and pumpkins references the upside-down profile of the earliest known sculpture—*Venus of Willendorf*, a figurine created roughly 30,000 years ago representing fertility. Imbued with expressive textures and painterly patches of color, Verzutti's sculptures subvert and recontextualize classical motifs while constructing new perspectives on femininity and fertility.

By manipulating the scale of known fruits and organic forms, Verzutti evokes the enormity of the ecological destruction taking place in Brazil in the wake of the increasing global need for natural resources. *Venus Yogini* standing proudly recalls our history as cultivators of the earth and reminds us to consider the price of our material attachments.

**Social Choreography Score:**

Without moving your body, imagine if your feet pointed to the sky and your head was on the ground. Now move your arms to extend above your head, reaching up. Clasp your hands while extended, if you're able. Point your toes or stand on tiptoe, trying to reach higher. With arms still extended, spread feet shoulder-width apart. Swing arms down in front of you, hands still clasped. Release hands and twist from the waist, swinging arms side to side as you twist. Now add a knee bend – bend at the knees when you swing left and straighten legs as you swing right. Continue the bobbing and twisting motion with arms for what feels like 30 seconds. Then come to rest.

Repeat the twist at the waist, swinging arms, now while walking in a small square. Stop, and see if anyone noticed you.

**Pao Houa Her (Hmong, b. 1982)**

*Untitled*, 2022-23

Electric sign, vinyl text

52 x 69 x 8 inches

Courtesy Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis and © Pao Houa Her

**Website & Object Label:**

Pao Houa Her is a Hmong-American artist who is immersed in the rich heritage of landscapes, portraiture, and documentary photography. Her creates provocative photographs of the indigenous Hmong people of Laos, who immigrated to the US after the Vietnam War, including of her own family's flight from Laos when she was three. As a form of preservation, she also documents the ethnic Hmong culture that took root across the US in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Her draws on a long history of artists exploring the people and places around them to uncover something deeper about themselves or society. Her landscapes, including those on display for Sculpture Milwaukee, recall scenes in Laos of her family's native lands and homes. By incorporating elements from everyday family life, past and present, Pao Her illuminates the diverse experiences of Hmong Americans and captures the complexities of tradition and assimilation while inviting us to celebrate diversity, embrace the richness of different cultures, and forge meaningful connections that transcend borders.

**Social Choreography Score for MIAD:**

What offers protection for you in your life? What is safety for you? What does safety feel like? Move your body into a position that feels safe. How long are you comfortable holding that position?

**Social Choreography Score for Broadway + Wisconsin:**

Who or what is an unexpected guest or visitor in your life? How can you make room for them? Imagine doing so now – what would have to change? Can you make a gesture that would open a space for someone or something? Now make this gesture on a scale that someone else recognizes.

**Social Choreography Score for The Avenue:**

Who or what is an unexpected guest or visitor in your life? How can you make room for them? Imagine doing so now – what would have to change? Can you make a gesture that would open a space for someone or something? Now make this gesture on a scale that someone else recognizes.

**Katy Cowan (American, b. 1982)**

*suns fall*, 2021

Oil and enamel paint, graphite on cast aluminum

76 x 55 x 23 inches

Courtesy the artist and Phillip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles

**Website:**

Katy Cowan, a Wisconsin-born artist based in Berlin, earned her BFA and MFA in Studio Art in Washington and California, respectively. After her studies, she returned to Wisconsin to teach at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design and Mount Mary University. During her time in the West Coast, Cowan adopted an openness to her art practice, embracing accidents, blurring the boundaries of painting and sculpture, utilizing everyday objects, and responding to the constantly changing environments around her. Recently, Cowan brought her practice into the public realm, with an outdoor exhibition at the Lynden Sculpture Garden in 2017, in which she described her work as a “gentle intrusion” onto the already existing landscape.

Cowan’s work on view for Sculpture Milwaukee, *suns fall*, transforms common studio objects of 2’ x 4’ planks and rope into cast metal that are painted with oil and enamel, and drawn upon with graphite. The objects stand in an upright position that is reminiscent of various associations – sundials used by ancient civilizations to keep track of time, the ebb and flow of ocean tides, and the everyday objects of the sculpture’s construction. Cowan often works to push common objects into new terrains of associations for her viewers. With *suns fall*, rather than having her objects cast a shadow to tell time or replicate one moment in a fluxing landscape, Cowan composes and builds marks and colors deliberately on the surface to demonstrate how the passage of time transforms our perspective of the natural landscape and the way one interacts with the world around them.

**Social Choreography Score:**

Imagine you use your knees to see. As you walk around the sculpture, imagine you are perceiving it with your knees. Look up and down, all around with your knees. Use your knees to discover what is behind you. Be sure to stay aware of your surroundings as you do so.

Start a beat that repeats on four – 1, 2, 3, 4. For each beat, create a gesture that relates to extending your body or mind into space. Now perform those 4 gestures in sequence. For instance, on 1 extend your left arm. On 2 open your right hand. On 3 raise your right arm. On 4 orient both hands towards the lake. Repeat the sequence until you have it memorized and can do it quickly. Once you have it memorized, try to perform it in reverse – gesture 4, gesture 3, gesture 2, gesture 1. Then perform them out of sequence: gesture 2, gesture 1, gesture 4, gesture 2, gesture 3, gesture 3...

**Nicole Miller (American, b. 1982)**

*Michael in White*, 2022

White patinated bronze

42 x 15 1/2 x 22 inches

Courtesy the artist and Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles

**Website & Object Label:**

Nicole Miller is an artist who works primarily with video and installation to examine the intricate interplay of race, gender, culture, and personal history while challenging conventional binary notions of contemporary identity. She often uses portraiture as a device to focus on how storytelling frames identity. Her recent work has explored ideas of the celebrity as an image and embodiment as an artistic practice.

*Michael in White* is a bronze cast of Michael Jackson's kneeling figure painted in white, derived from a fragmented 1987 mold of the late musician's body. Reassembled by Miller, the fractured body and placement on top of a pedestal creates a tension between celebration and denigration. The resulting sculpture is a meditation on celebrity and image: the object-hood of the performer, the dehumanizing effects of the public gaze, the celebrity as a host for contemporary projections, and the implications that this kind of image-making has on all levels of society.

**Social Choreography Score:**

Think of a sound that brings you hope. Make a gesture that mimics or responds to the sound. What is a sound that brings you joy? Offer another gesture in response to that sound. Now make both the gestures together. Make a new gesture for courage, and add it to the gestures of hope and joy.

**Lars Fisk (American, b. 1970)**

*Tudor Ball*, 2019

Wood, stucco, ceramic, glass, plastic flowers

64 inch diameter

Courtesy the Artist and Broadway / New York

**Website:**

Lars Fisk is a contemporary artist known for his spherical sculptures, which he began making in 1996. Often taking on historical or pop-cultural references, Fisk's surreal sculptures are nonsensical yet immediately recognizable. He includes traditional materials in the forms he references to create a dialogue between past and present. Combining his interests in architecture, construction, signage, consumption, storage, and waste, Fisk turns familiar objects into surreal monuments, drawing attention to the details that make something distinguishable.

*Tudor Ball* appropriates the beloved 15th-century European architectural style characterized by half-timbered exteriors, steeply pitched terra cotta roofs, and stucco or brick finishes which provide ample protection from cold, wet climates. Like Tudor-style homes, the US Bank Tower features trusses that serve both structural and aesthetic purposes. Tudor-style homes were later repopularized in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s for their historical charm and character, and they were popular among wealthy residents who could afford the specialized materials. Fisk questions the boundaries of tradition and navigates the evolving nature of design. His aim is to "make clear the true essence of the subject by representing it for what it is not: a ball."

**Social Choreography Score:**

Imagine a bubble floating in front of you. Now imagine it growing bigger, until it is the same size as the sculpture, about 8 feet across. Use your body to guide the imaginary bubble around in space. Try to keep the bubble gently afloat. Notice how you are working with and against gravity. Draw the bubble close to you, giving it a gentle hug. Now release the imaginary bubble from gravity, and watch it float away.

After your imaginary bubble floats away, mimic the movement of a bubble with your arms. Allow your arms to be released from gravity's pull, rising up slowly away from the earth.