

Jhumpa Lahiri and Lee Ufan to Receive 2024 Isamu Noguchi Award

The 11th annual Isamu Noguchi Award will be presented at The Noguchi Museum's fall benefit on October 29, 2024



Jhumpa Lahiri. Photo: Laura Sciacovelli



Lee Ufan. © Studio Lee Ufan. Photo: Claire Dorn

New York (July 1, 2024) — **The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum** —the first museum in the United States to be established, designed, and installed by a living artist to show their own work—announces the recipients of the 11th annual **Isamu Noguchi Award**. The Award will be presented at The Noguchi Museum's fall benefit on **Tuesday, October 29, 2024**, at The Noguchi Museum in Long Island City, New York. The 2024 Isamu Noguchi Award will recognize Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, translator, and short story writer **Jhumpa Lahiri** and artist, philosopher, writer, and poet **Lee Ufan**.

The Isamu Noguchi Award honors highly accomplished individuals who embody Noguchi's innovative spirit, limitless imagination, and unwavering dedication to creativity. Presented annually, the Award highlights how Noguchi's principles continue to influence contemporary culture, as demonstrated by the work of the honorees.

The Noguchi Museum's annual benefit raises essential funds to support its exhibitions, research, and programming, and the care of its renowned collection. Tickets are available at [noguchi.org/benefit](https://www.noguchi.org/benefit).

"We are delighted to honor Jhumpa Lahiri and Lee Ufan with the 2024 Isamu Noguchi Award," says Director of The Noguchi Museum **Amy Hau**. "Both recipients exemplify the innovative spirit and commitment to cross-cultural dialogue that Noguchi championed throughout his life. Lahiri's

poignant literary explorations and translations of identity and belonging, alongside Ufan's profound contributions to contemporary art and philosophy, resonate deeply with Noguchi's vision of art as a bridge between diverse cultural and temporal landscapes. Their work not only enriches the arts, but also reinforces Noguchi's belief in the power of creativity to transform and unify our world."

The quintessential sculptor in an expanded field, **Isamu Noguchi** (1904–1988) was a future-focused idealist whose timeless work blended the ancient and the modern; formalism and conceptualism; and art, architecture, and design. His multidisciplinary approach and ability to bridge many of the supposedly irreconcilable contradictions at the center of contemporary life—such as the one between traditional cultures and technological innovation—remain an inspiration for a wide range of creative people. Using all that he learned designing playgrounds, dance sets and gardens, he remade sculpture into a discipline for understanding our place in the universe and a technique for integrating the best habits and effects of craft into daily life.

The Award celebrates individuals from around the world, across various disciplines, whose works exemplify the highest level of artistic integrity, characterized by fearless experimentation and a commitment to cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. Honoring those whose work embodies the artistic excellence shared with Noguchi, the Award also recognizes contributions that carry significant social consciousness and functionality.

HONOREES

Jhumpa Lahiri, British-American, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Interpreter of Maladies*, is renowned for her exploration of immigrant experiences and identity struggles through elegant prose. Her acclaimed works, including *The Namesake*, *Unaccustomed Earth*, *The Lowland*, *In Other Words*, and *Whereabouts*, showcase her storytelling in both English and Italian. In addition to numerous literary awards, Lahiri has translated notable Italian works and currently serves as the Millicent C. McIntosh Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Barnard College. Both Lahiri and Noguchi navigate the complexities of identity and belonging across cultures. Lahiri's stories delve into the immigrant experience and the search for identity and home, and as with Noguchi's life and art, blend Eastern and Western influences. Lahiri's fearless experimentation with language and narrative forms mirrors Noguchi's innovative ability to transcend boundaries and mediums through art and design.

Lee Ufan, currently based in Japan and France, was born in Korea in 1936. He graduated from Nihon University, Department of Philosophy, in Tokyo in 1961 and served as Professor Emeritus at Tama Art University. He is one of the leading figures of Mono-ha (School of Things), a contemporary art movement emerging in the late 1960s. Lee Ufan and Isamu Noguchi share a deep connection through their minimalist aesthetics, use of natural materials, and philosophical depth. Both artists explore the interaction between their work and the surrounding space, emphasizing simplicity and natural harmony. Their works reflect a profound respect for nature and cultural hybridity, contributing to a deeper understanding of art's relationship with the natural world and human experience.

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ABOUT THE ISAMU NOGUCHI AWARD

Established in 2014 and presented annually, The Isamu Noguchi Award acknowledges highly accomplished individuals who share Noguchi's spirit of innovation, unbounded imagination, and uncompromising commitment to creativity. The Award celebrates individuals from around the world, across various disciplines, whose works demonstrate the highest level of artistic integrity marked by fearless experimentation and a preoccupation with cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. Honoring creatives whose work exhibits qualities of artistic excellence that are shared with Noguchi, the Award also recognizes work that carries significant social consciousness and function.

The two inaugural recipients were architect **Lord Norman Foster** and artist **Hiroshi Sugimoto**. Following this, in 2015, the Museum honored industrial designer **Jasper Morrison** and architect **Yoshio Taniguchi**; in 2016, architect **Tadao Ando** and sculptor **Elyn Zimmerman**; in 2017, architect **John Pawson** and artist **Hiroshi Senju**; in 2018, industrial designer **Naoto Fukasawa** and landscape designer **Edwina von Gal**; in 2019, fashion designer **Rei Kawakubo**; in 2020, architect **Sir David Adjaye OBE** and artist **Cai Guo-Qiang**; in 2021, artist **Shio Kusaka** and architect **Toshiko Mori**; in 2022, artist **Daniel Brush** and sculptor **Thaddeus Mosley**; and in 2023, artist and writer **Edmund de Waal**, artist **Theaster Gates**, and novelist and editor **Hanya Yanagihara**.

ABOUT THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM

Founded in 1985 by category-defying Japanese American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), The Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum (now known as The Noguchi Museum) in Queens, New York, was the first museum in the United States to be established, designed, and installed by a living artist to show their own work. Itself widely viewed as among the artist's greatest achievements and holding the world's largest collection of his works, the Museum features open air and indoor galleries in a repurposed industrial building and a serene outdoor sculpture garden. Accompanying the permanent installations placed by Noguchi, the Museum presents temporary exhibitions exploring themes in Noguchi's work, his milieu and collaborators, and his enduring influence today among contemporary practitioners across disciplines. It exhibits a comprehensive selection of Noguchi's material culture, from sculpture, models, and drawings to his personal possessions, and manages the artist's archives and catalogue raisonné. Through its rich collection, exhibitions, and programming, the Museum facilitates scholarship and learning for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. **noguchi.org**
| **@noguchimuseum**

ABOUT JHUMPA LAHIRI

Jhumpa Lahiri received the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for *Interpreter of Maladies*, her debut story collection that explores issues of love and identity among immigrants and cultural transplants. With a compelling, universal fluency, Lahiri portrays the practical and emotional adversities of her diverse characters in elegant and direct prose. Whether describing hardships of a lonely Indian wife adapting to life in the United States or illuminating the secret pain of a young couple as they discuss their betrayals during a series of electrical blackouts, Lahiri's bittersweet stories avoid sentimentality without abandoning compassion.

Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* was published in the fall of 2003 to great acclaim. *The Namesake* expands on the perplexities of the immigrant experience and the search for identity. A film version of *The Namesake* (directed by Mira Nair) was released in 2007. Lahiri's book of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, received the 2008 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award (the world's largest prize for a short story collection) and was a finalist for the Story Prize. She contributed the essay on Rhode Island in the 2008 book *State by State: A Panoramic Portrait of America*. Her book, *The Lowland*, won the DSC award for South Asian fiction, and was a finalist for both the Man Booker prize and the National Book Award in fiction.

Lahiri's first book written in Italian, *In Altre Parole*, later published in English as *In Other Words*, explores the often emotionally fraught links between identity and language. Her nonfiction also includes *The Clothing of Books* which was originally published in Italy as *Il vestito dei libri*. She has translated three novels by Domenico Starnone: *Ties* (2017, named a New York Times Notable Book and Best Foreign Novel by the Times of London); *Trick* (2018, nominated for the National Book Award and winner of the John Florio Prize for translation from Italian to English); and *Trust*. She edited and partly translated *The Penguin Book of Italian Short Stories*. In 2021 she published her first collection of poems in Italian, *Il quaderno di Nerina [Nerina's Notebook]* (Guanda, 2021). Her first full-length self-translation is her New York Times bestselling novel, *Whereabouts*. Originally written in Italian it was published as *Dove Mi Trovo* in 2018. She has also written a collection of essays on translation, self-translation, and writing across languages titled *Translating Myself and Others*. Originally published in Italian as *Racconti Romani*, her latest book is *Roman Stories* (Knopf, 2023). Translated into English by Lahiri and Todd Portnowitz, the book was a New Yorker 2023 Best Book of the Year.

Born in London, Lahiri moved to Rhode Island as a young child with her Bengali parents. Although they have lived in the United States for more than thirty years, Lahiri observes that her parents retain "a sense of emotional exile" and Lahiri herself grew up with "conflicting expectations...to be Indian by Indians and American by Americans." Lahiri's abilities to convey the oldest cultural conflicts in the most immediate fashion and to achieve the voices of many different characters are among the unique qualities that have captured the attention of a wide audience. She is a graduate of Barnard College and has a PhD in Renaissance Studies from Boston University.

In 2014, Jhumpa Lahiri was awarded the prestigious National Humanities Medal. As well as the Pulitzer Prize, Lahiri has been awarded the PEN/Hemingway Award, an O. Henry Prize (for the short story "Interpreter of Maladies"), the Addison Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Vallombrosa Von Rezzori Prize, the Asian American Literary Award, and the

2017 PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in the Short Story. Lahiri was also granted a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2002 and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 2006. Previously she was the director of Princeton University's Program in Creative Writing. She is now the Millicent C. McIntosh Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Barnard College. She was also named Commander of the Italian Republic in 2019 by President Sergio Mattarella.

Jhumpa Lahiri divides her time between New York City and Rome.

ABOUT LEE UFAN

Currently based in Japan and France, Lee Ufan was born in Korea in 1936. He entered the National University of Seoul but interrupted his studies in 1956 to leave for Japan where he studied philosophy at Nihon University. Lee Ufan became one of the major figures of Mono-ha (School of Things), an artistic movement born in Japan at the end of the 1960s and influenced the Dansaekwha (Monochrome) movement which appeared in Korea in the early 1970s. Between 1973 and 2002 he taught at the University of Tama Art in Japan and in 1997 as a visiting professor at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

The art of Lee Ufan, painter, sculptor, philosopher, writer, and poet, can be described as a true "art of encounter." He criticizes the logocentrism and materialism of modern times and seeks to give importance to the relation with others, rejecting the idea of the omnipotent artist. For Lee Ufan, who maintains a process of dialogue with the outside world, the spatial and physical relationship between what he produces and what he does not produce or between what he paints and what he does not paint, constitutes his works. It is this field of resonance that allows us to call his art "the gate to infinity."

From the early 1970s until today, he has exhibited not only in Asia but also in Europe (Paris, Milan, Düsseldorf, etc.) and the United States. He has participated in numerous international exhibitions, including the Lyon Biennial (2017), the Venice Biennial (2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015), the Shanghai Biennial (2000), the Kassel Documenta (1977), the Sydney Biennial (1976), the Triennial of India (1975), the Paris Biennial (1971) and the São Paulo Biennial (1969, 1973). He also exhibited his work in major institutions, such as the current installation at the Rijksmuseum (through October 27, 2024), in addition to Hamburger Bahnhof (2023), Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, Kobe (2023), National Art Center, Tokyo (2022), Dia Beacon (2019), Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2019), Centre Pompidou-Metz (2019), Hirshhorn Museum (2019), Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré, Tours (2017), Couvent de la Tourette (2017), Château La Coste (2016), Château de Versailles (2014), Guggenheim Museum, New York (2011), the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (2008), Samsung Museum of Modern Art in Seoul (2003), Kunstmuseum Bonn (2001), Städel Museum in Frankfurt (1998), Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole (1996), Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume (1996), PAC in Milan (1988), Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf (1977), and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (1977).

Lee Ufan Arles opened in 2022 following the Lee Ufan Museum in Naoshima, Japan, in 2010, and Space Lee Ufan in Busan, Korea, in 2015.

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