



## **CALIFORNIA SCENARIO**

*Designed by Isamu Noguchi*

# Site Plan



## Historical Context

Originally born in Los Angeles but known for being a world traveler, Isamu Noguchi pulled inspiration from many different sources. I feel that this garden has roots in early Japanese Landscape Design as well as Modern Design.

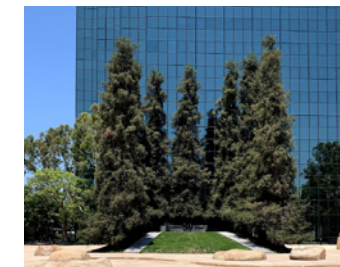
## Early Japanese Landscape

“Visualize the famous landscapes of our country and come to understand their most interesting points. Re-create the essence of those scenes in the garden, but do so interpretatively, not strictly.” Sakuteiki - The Basics (p.152)

The California Scenario Sculpture Garden by Isamu Noguchi was constructed on a 1.6 acre lot in Costa Mesa, CA and was designed as metaphorical abstractions of California's natural resources or “scenarios of nature”. Nestled in between two corporate office buildings and a parking structure, Noguchi called the garden a satirical commentary on the perpetuation of green grass that he repeatedly experienced in designed landscapes. He believed that California possessed an endless amount of beautiful natural elements and that people should reconnect with those elements in this space. I do not know of Noguchi's particular religious denomination but his concept is in line with a core principle of the Shinto religion where the natural world was seen as a manifestation of the divine.

Throughout the landscape you can see clear references to the eleventh century writings of the Sakuteiki. The opening line of the Sakuteiki is “The art of setting stones” which immediately conveys use of stones as the most central act of gardening. They were considered sacred, living objects which should only be placed as they were found in nature whether horizontal or upright. In an article with the LA Times, Henry Segerstrom - the financier of the project - states “Isamu spoke of his conviction that stone is the most important element in nature” and it would be used wherever possible. Noguchi's boulders are some of the centrally located features of this landscape. Placed in both vertical and horizontal positionings, even a set of fifteen stacked together to form one sculpture, you can feel the balance that they lend to the open plaza both in plan view and at human scale.

The area “Desert Land” is a circular mound covered in sandstone while the benches, lighting covers and even trash receptacles are also made of Granite. The 30 foot high triangular “Water Source” leads water gently down to a murmuring stream or Yarimizu heading East to the Granite pyramid “Water Use”. Within this Yarimizu we again see a highly considered use of stones to direct water delicately through to its final destination.



1 Forest Walk



2 Spirit of the Lima Bean



3 Water Use



4 Desert Land



5 Water Source



6 Land Use



7 Energy Fountain

# Enlargement Plan

## Early Japanese Landscape (con't)

When considering the influence of Zen Gardens, I would say there is definitely an emphasis on framing views from designed seating areas and reducing the landscape to its most basic elements while relying heavily on symbolism and allegorical naming conventions.

## Modernism

"Architects, sculptors, painters, we all must return to the crafts! For art is not a 'profession.' There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman" - Walter Gropius

It is hard not to see the Bauhaus influence on Noguchi's design being that he was consistently merging the worlds of art, industry and nature into a single creative expression. Within this space you see Architectural forms like "Water Use" made from machine cut stone plates, sculptural forms such as "The Spirit of the Lima Bean" which was fit together sanding boulders down by hand and natural vegetation areas like the "Forest Walk" all complimenting each other within the same space. While viewing the garden overhead you notice the complex, non-axial spatial arrangement, another staple of the Bauhaus which was part of their rebellion against classical forms.

The table and benches seen at right are perfect encapsulations of both a modern design where form meets function and the spirit of old world Japan where stones are a sacred material used in the garden.

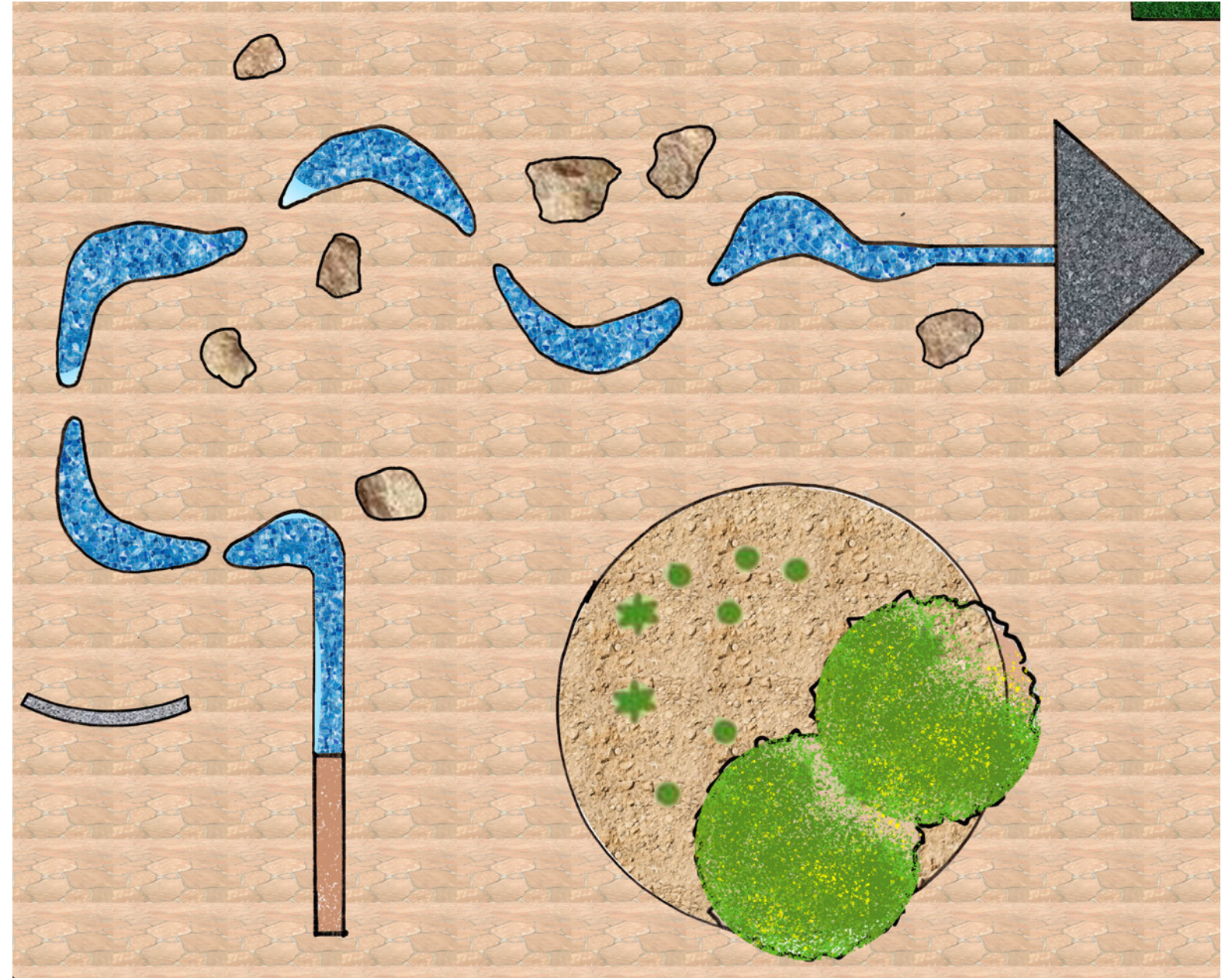
## References

Isamu Noguchi during the construction of California Scenario  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8IGzclH2xY&t=311s>

Sakuteiki: Visions of the Japanese Garden - Jiro Takei & Marc P Keane

Discover Isamu Noguchi's California Scenario  
<https://www.southcoastplaza.com/stories/2016/12/noguchi-garden/>

Sculptor's Spirit Lives in Garden: The Late Isamu Noguchi Brought Key Elements of State's Environment to 'California Scenario'  
<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-01-15-ca-1011-story.html>



- Sandstone Tile
- Natural Granite
- Brown Granite
- Polished Granite
- Sandstone Gravel
- Water

