



Portrait of Isamu Noguchi by Louise Dahl-Wolf. Image courtesy of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum.

Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) was born in Los Angeles but spent most of his youth living in Japan, returning to the U.S. as a teen and later studying medicine. Noguchi soon found that sculpture was his true calling and became one of the most important sculptors of the 20th century. In 2020, Noguchi's bronze sculpture, *Floor Frame*, was acquired for the White House Collection with the assistance of the White House Historical Association, making Isamu Noguchi the first Asian American artist represented in the White House Collection.

Floor Frame is a bronze sculpture from a series of six castings made between 1962 and 1985—the casting in the White House is edition number one of six. Of *Floor Frame*, Noguchi observed: "Thinking of the floor, I made Floor Frame. I made many other pieces in relation to floor space at that time, but this seemed to best define the essentiality of the floor, not as sculpture alone but as part of the concept of the floor."

How are we connected to the floor we walk upon? How do we balance upon it? In this activity, we'll explore this relationship with the floor in a unique and artistic way.

Activity: Create Connections to the Floor

You Will Need:

- Drawing paper
- Pencil
- You can use white paper and a graphite pencil or switch it up and try black paper and a white pencil as shown in the example.

Instructions:

1. Pair off with a classmate or friend and take turns modeling and creating drawings. If you are doing this activity by yourself, ask a parent or teacher to take some photos of you in different poses and use the photos as your reference when you draw.

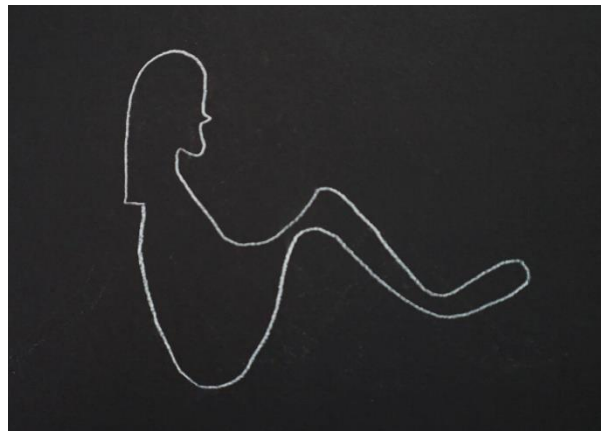


Floor Frame, photographed by Bill Jacobson. Image courtesy of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum.

Isamu Noguchi's *Floor Frame*

2. **Model's Role:** Strike and hold poses that create connections with the floor while balancing and using different parts of your body. Experiment with creating 1, 2, 3, or more connections to the floor with your body. Noguchi often made heavy sculptures look light, and light sculptures look heavy. Consider when you feel heavy and when you feel light in your pose.
3. **Artist's Role:** Create a **blind contour** drawing of the model. A blind contour drawing is made when the artist draws the outline of a subject in a continuous line while observing their subject and not looking down at their paper.
 - a. Create a **contour** drawing of the model. A contour drawing shows the outline of a subject.
 - b. Create a **cross-hatched** drawing of the model. A cross-hatched drawing is made from closely spaced parallel lines that shade a subject.
 - c. Create a **geometric** drawing of the model. A geometric drawing contours the subject in shapes and straight lines.

Blind contour drawing example:



Contour drawing example

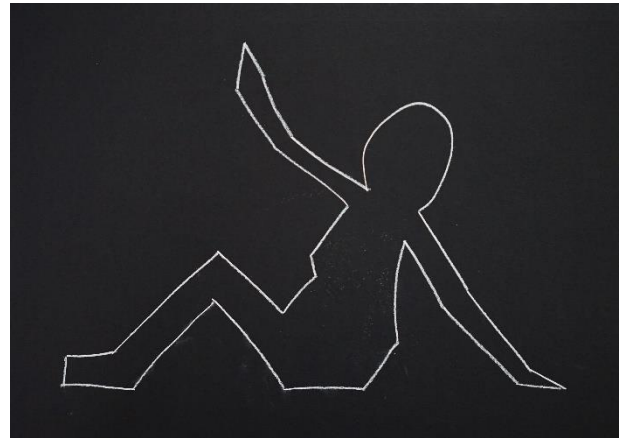


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Cross-hatched drawing example:



Geometric drawing example:



Extension Activity: We interact with floors all the time. Sometimes they're natural, such as ocean floors, mountains, and fields of grass. Sometimes they're constructed, such as paved roads, tiled floors, and shaggy carpets. Create a self-portrait of yourself on the floor you most prefer to interact with.

This activity was created with the courteous help of educators and staff at the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum. Interested in seeing more works by Isamu Noguchi? Visit the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum's [Collection](#). For more interesting art activities, check out the [Museum's educational programming](#), offering content for all ages and artists.

Anywhere Activity: Interpretive Art

Isamu Noguchi's *Floor Frame*

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Want to see more art in the White House Collection? Explore this [gallery of selected items from the Collection](#), or dig deeper with the White House Historical Association's [Digital Library](#).

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