

*Design by  
Julian*

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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MODEL FOR PLAYGROUND DESIGNED BY ISAMU NOGUCHI

AND JULIAN WHITTLESEY TO BE EXHIBITED

The model for a children's playground designed by the well-known Japanese-American sculptor and designer Isamu Noguchi and the New York architect Julian Whittlesey will be on view in the Young People's Gallery at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from March 24 through April 22. This sculptural model was the center of a recent controversy between Robert Moses, the United Nations and a group of private citizens.

The model and plans were submitted, with an offer of \$75,000 for construction, by a group of New Yorkers after conferences with UN officials who had previously decided on the desirability of such a playground. It was originally planned for the northeastern corner of the UN site, for the use of small children who might accompany visitors to the United Nations as well as for children from the neighborhood. Robert Moses, New York's Park Commissioner and liaison agent between the city and the world organization, rejected the plans, however, and the UN agreed to build in its stead the kind of playground he urged.

The Museum is exhibiting the model executed by Noguchi as a "particularly striking illustration of the possibilities of stimulating the child's sense of space and form through a playground designed as architectural sculpture."

Many innovations in play forms for children are illustrated in the model, including a multiple length swing, spiral slide, adjustable seesaw, climbing areas of curved shapes and of brightly colored triangles. Each play form is a piece of sculpture, and all are related to each other and to the site to achieve an esthetically pleasing piece of landscape architecture.

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A large drawing of a playground by Julian Whittlesey will be exhibited with Noguchi's model. The drawing translates some of the elements in the model into particular playground equipment and also presents some of the forms developed by Mr. Whittlesey and other architects for experimental playground designs for the New York City Housing Authority. These include the "dodger" or maze for climbing and hide-and-seek, the turret for king-of-the-castle, a tunnel for playing house, a boat and airplane for voyages, and steps and walls suggesting a miniature stage.

In both the model and the drawing the forms are closely grouped so that the attention of younger children, generally of short duration, is drawn successively from one object to another. Forms, equipment, and open space for active games of special interest to older children are carefully avoided so that the appeal will be entirely to young children for whom the playground was designed.

In presenting the model to the public, Philip C. Johnson, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design, states:

This model is intended as a collection of ideas rather than a specific solution. The playgrounds authorized by our park and recreation authorities are characterized by skilful engineering and landscaping, careful planning, and well-conceived commercial equipment. Although such playgrounds meet the requirements of safety and supervision while withstanding hard use, there have been few efforts to go beyond solving mechanical and functional problems. Isamu Noguchi's studies of play forms set in sculptured landscapes (recalling the ancient sand and stone gardens of Japan) are designed to do this by stimulating the child's sense of color, space and form. It is hoped that the new and growing vocabulary of shapes at the disposal of playground designers will be used to enhance the child's play hours with esthetically stimulating color and form.