**Isamu Noguchi**

Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) has a legacy that literally spans the city of Hiroshima. During the city’s early reconstruction efforts after World War II, Noguchi designed the handrails of two major bridges linking Peace Boulevard with Hiroshima Peace Park, the centerpiece of Hiroshima’s atomic bombing memorial.

At the time, Noguchi was internationally famous for his Japanese landscape gardens and abstract public sculptures, but the project was an important one for him. As the son of Japanese author Yone Noguchi (1875–1947) and American editor and journalist Léonie Gilmour (1873–1933), Isamu had a personal interest in helping to repair the relationship between the United States and Japan.

Named Peace Bridge and West Peace Bridge, the two crossings are far more than purely functional. Noguchi’s two works form a progression moving from east to west: the circular finials of the railings on Peace Bridge evoke sunrise and the act of building, while the thick crescent shapes at the edge of the West Peace Bridge evoke sunset and departure. When the bridges were built in 1952, Noguchi’s designs were controversial. People were concerned the railings were not high enough to prevent pedestrians from falling into the river. Today, the bridges stand as symbols of both Hiroshima’s past and its future.