

SIDE GALLERY

SHIRO KURAMATA



Vase model "Ephemera"

Manufactured by Ishimaru Co. Ltd
Japan, 1989
Acrylic and anodized aluminum

Measurements

18 x 45 x 139,5h cm
7,1 x 17,7 x 54,9h in

Provenance

Private collection, Japan

Literature

Shiro Kuramata 1934-1991, Hara et al, ppg.
28-29, 192

About

A sculptural vase designed by legendary Japanese designer Shiro Kuramata, Ephemera exemplifies his unique synthesis of lightness, transparency, and surreal form. The piece plays with perception and material boundaries—characteristics central to Kuramata's late work. Crafted from acrylic and anodized aluminum, it blurs the lines between functional object and conceptual art. Created just two years before his death, Ephemera reflects Kuramata's continual exploration of temporality and the intangible, making it a rare and poetic artifact of postmodern design.

Biography

Shiro Kuramata (b.1934 - d.1991) was one of Japan's most influential and visionary designers of the 20th century. Born in Tokyo in 1934, he studied architecture and design at the Tokyo Polytechnic and later at the Kuwasawa Design School. In 1965, he established the Kuramata Design Office, from which he developed an avant-garde body of work that challenged the conventions of material, form, and function.

Kuramata's designs, often situated at the intersection of art and design, are characterized by their use of industrial materials such as acrylic, aluminum, and steel mesh, combined with an ethereal, poetic sensibility. He had a deep interest in transparency, lightness, and the dissolution of structure, reflecting a uniquely Japanese minimalism tempered by Western postmodern experimentation.

Throughout his career, Kuramata collaborated with major figures such as Issey Miyake and Ettore Sottsass, joining the latter in the founding of the Memphis Group in 1981. His iconic works—including the How High the Moon armchair and the Miss Blanche chair—are held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the V&A Museum, and the Vitra Design Museum, among others.