

SIDE GALLERY

ISAMU KENMOCHI



Easy chair model “SM7051”

Manufactured by Tendo Mokko
Japan, 1969
Acrylic, iron

Measurements

80 cm diameter × 70h cm
31,5 in diameter × 27,6h in

Provenance

Private collection, Tokyo
Private collection, London

Literature

Japanese Modern. Retrospective Isamu Kenmochi, Asao Sato & Hitoshi Mori, Tokyo, 2005, pp. 23, 104–105, 198
Tendo in Japanese Modern. Eight Decades of Masterful Designs, Tendo Mokko, Tokyo, 2020, p. 264

Details

Spherical acrylic seat mounted on a steel frame; featured in Isamu Kenmochi’s most famous portrait

Notes

Created in 1969, the SM7051 chair captures the spirit of Japan’s late-1960s design revolution. Combining a vacuum-formed acrylic shell with a minimalist steel base, Kenmochi achieved a striking balance between futuristic form and refined simplicity. Influenced by both Western modernism and Japanese restraint, the piece embodies his vision of comfort through lightness and precision. Produced by Tendo Mokko, the SM7051 stands as an icon of Japanese modern design—innovative, elegant, and timeless.

Biography

Born in Tokyo, Japan, **Isamu Kenmochi** (1912–1971) was a pivotal figure in the development of modern Japanese design. He is renowned for his ability to blend traditional craftsmanship with the clean, functional lines of modernism, creating a design language that bridged Japan’s rich cultural heritage and contemporary sensibilities.

After graduating from the Tokyo Fine Arts School (now Tokyo University of the Arts) in 1932, Kenmochi joined the Industrial Arts Research Institute, where he explored the integration of traditional Japanese materials and techniques into modern design. This formative experience shaped his philosophy of creating functional, accessible, and elegant designs rooted in everyday life.

In the postwar period, Kenmochi became a key advocate for the modernization of Japanese design. As a co-founder of the Japan Industrial Designers Association (JIDA) in 1952, he worked alongside luminaries like Sori Yanagi to elevate industrial design as a profession in Japan. His work during this era often reflected collaborations with international designers, most notably Charlotte Perriand, with whom he explored innovative uses of traditional materials such as rattan and wood.

One of Kenmochi’s most iconic creations is the Rattan Chair (1952), produced by Yamakawa Rattan, which exemplifies his mastery of natural materials and his commitment to simplicity and comfort. His designs, often crafted from rattan, wood, and metal, embodied a balance of tradition and innovation that has become a hallmark of Japanese modernism.

Kenmochi’s contributions extended beyond furniture; he designed interiors and products for major corporations, influencing both domestic and industrial aesthetics in Japan. His work remains highly regarded for its timeless appeal and enduring functionality. Isamu Kenmochi passed away in 1971, but his legacy continues to inspire designers worldwide, celebrated as a pioneer who harmonized Japan’s past and future in his visionary creations.

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