

SIDE GALLERY

ISAMU KENMOCHI



Kabuto Chairs (Set of 4)

Manufactured by Tendo Mokko
Japan, c.1960s
Molded plywood, Steel

Measurements (each)

53 × 54 × 71h cm (Seat height: 44 - 46,5 cm)
20,9 × 21,3 × 28h in (Seat height: 17,3 - 18,3 in)

Provenance

Private collection, Japan

Literature

Japanese Modern : Isamu Kenmochi Retrospective', p.
191 e 98, Ed. Kokusho Kanko Kai, 2004
Japanese Design from 1945, Naomi Pollock, Editions de la
Martinière, 2020. Page 50
Tendo Mokko, Yanagi, pg. 110

About

The Kabuto chair is a synthesis of industrial precision and poetic form. Kenmochi's design reflects his belief that furniture should "serve both body and spirit," achieving a seamless balance between comfort, structure, and cultural meaning. The curved seat—shaped like a samurai's protective helmet—embraces the sitter in an ergonomic gesture, while the slender steel base lends the form a sense of lightness and grace.

Originally conceived as contract seating, the chair transcends its utilitarian origins, standing today as a timeless icon of Japanese modernism. Its fusion of traditional symbolism with modern production techniques exemplifies Kenmochi's role in defining the aesthetic language of postwar Japan.

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.