

SIDE GALLERY

SABURO INUI



Chair model "Ply" (Acrylic Edition)

Manufactured by Tendo Mokko
Japan, 1970
Acrylic, Steel

Measurements

74 x 63 x 68h cm
29,1 x 24,8 x 26,8h in
Seat height: 35,5 cm | 14 in

Provenance

Private collection, Japan

Details

This rare acrylic edition of the Ply Chair was produced only for one year, in 1970.

About

The "Ply" Chair, designed by Saburo Inui, is a rare and experimental example of postwar Japanese design innovation. Initially conceived in 1959, the model was typically manufactured in molded plywood—a material closely associated with Tendo Mokko's legacy. However, this particular version is a highly unusual acrylic edition, manufactured for just one year in 1970. Its transparency highlights the organic lines and elegant structural geometry of the chair, turning what is usually a functional object into a striking visual composition.

Formed by two curved acrylic planes joined by exposed bolts, the chair features an enveloping seat and backrest that combine comfort with sculptural refinement. The steel legs add an industrial counterpoint to the fluidity of the shell, making it a notable work of high-concept design.

Biography

Saburō Inui (1911–1991) was a pioneering figure in postwar Japanese design, recognized for his refined approach to form, material, and function. Trained at the Industrial Arts Institute in Tokyo, Inui became one of the leading forces in the development of molded plywood furniture in Japan during the 1950s and 1960s.

Working closely with manufacturers such as Tendo Mokko, he explored the expressive and structural potential of wood, seeking a balance between traditional craftsmanship and modern industrial techniques. His designs reveal a quiet discipline—precise, functional, and human in scale—embodying the restrained elegance that came to define Japanese modernism.

Through his thoughtful use of natural materials and his attention to proportion, Inui helped establish a distinctly Japanese interpretation of modern design, one rooted in simplicity, honesty, and the everyday. His work continues to resonate as a model of timeless clarity and sensitivity to both maker and material.