

SIDE GALLERY

SORI YANAGI



Shell Chair "T-3036SP-ST"

Manufactured by Tendo Mokko
Japan, design date c.1950s
Molded plywood, Stainless steel, Upholstery

Measurements

44,4 × 49,5 × 71,4h cm (Seat height 42,8 cm)
17,5 × 19,5 × 28,1h in (Seat height 16,9 in)

Provenance

Private Collection, Japan

Details

A landmark of Japanese modern design, the Shell Chair "T-3036SP-ST" exemplifies Sori Yanagi's mastery in merging organic form with industrial precision. Conceived through Tendo Mokko's pioneering molded plywood technology, the chair's sculptural shell is crafted from a single continuous veneer that flows seamlessly from seat to backrest.

The chair's light yet resilient form demonstrates the Japanese principle of shibui — understated beauty born from harmony and function. The seat offers subtle flexibility, adapting to the sitter's body with gentle movement, while the polished stainless-steel frame provides both stability and visual balance. Compact and versatile, it serves equally well as a dining, side, or occasional chair.

Biography

Sori Yanagi (1915–2011) was one of Japan's most influential modern industrial designers. The son of Yanagi Soetsu, founder of the Mingei folk craft movement, he grew up surrounded by handcrafted objects that shaped his sensitivity to form and function. Although he initially studied oil painting, his interest in design emerged after working as an interpreter for Charlotte Perriand, which introduced him to European modernism.

Yanagi established his own design approach by sculpting full-scale models in clay or foam rather than relying on drawings, allowing him to create forms that were tactile, ergonomic, and deeply human. His work bridges traditional Japanese aesthetics with modern industrial production, resulting in timeless objects known for their simplicity and usability.

Winner of the 1952 Mainichi Industrial Design Competition, Yanagi went on to design furniture, tableware, cookware, and public objects, many of which remain in production. His philosophy—rooted in the beauty of utility, respect for materials, and honest manufacturing—continues to shape contemporary Japanese design. The Elephant Stool (1954), one of his most iconic pieces, reflects his mastery of sculptural form and innovative use of new materials such as FRP.