

SIDE GALLERY

TENDO MOKKO



Plywood Coffee Table

Manufactured by Tendo Mokko
Japan, c.1970s
Molded plywood frame

Measurements

75 × 50,5 × 42h cm
29,5 × 19,9 × 16,5h in

Provenance

Private Collection, Japan

Details

This rare vintage coffee table embodies the refined Japanese modern style associated with mid-century masters such as Isamu Kenmochi and Sori Yanagi. Its versatile, lightweight plywood construction allows it to serve as a coffee table, side table, nightstand, or even a small bench. The tabletop is finished in woodgrain-patterned melamine, preserved in excellent condition without dents or scratches, while the legs show no cracks — a common issue in vintage molded plywood furniture.

About Tendo Mokko

In northwest Japan, in Yamagata Prefecture, a group of carpenters and joiners created a cooperative that primarily produced wooden objects, ammunition and supply crates for the army. Incorporated in 1942, the cooperative worked with the Sendai Institute of Industrial Arts and used the new molded plywood technology to make decoy aircraft. After the war, Tendo opened an office in Tokyo (1947). It produced furniture for the occupying troops, then turned, in the early 1950s, to furniture for the domestic market. One of his first commissions came from the architect Kenzo Tange, who designed plywood seats for the Ehime Prefecture, built in 1953. Plywood was then a new material for designers, and Tendo was one of the first manufacturers to use it for its furniture, notably for the Butterfly stool, created in 1956 by Sori Yanagi. Tendo's policy of paying royalties for design projects attracted many other designers, so much so that, in the sixties, Tendo could boast among its ranks the leading furniture designers Isamu Kenmochi, Daisaku Choh, Riki Watanabe, whose creations are still produced. In addition, Tendo encouraged young designers by funding an annual competition from 1960 to 1967 and by manufacturing some of the winning designs itself, such as Reiko Tanabe's plywood chair. In 1964, Tendo received the Mainichi Prize for Industrial Design for its pivotal role in furniture manufacturing.