

SIDE GALLERY

KAZUhide TAKAHAMA



Sofa model "Naeko"

Manufactured by Gavina
Italy, 1958
Cherry wood structure, Upholstered fabric

Measurements

225 × 77 × 73h cm
88,6 × 30,3 × 28,7h in

Provenance

Private collection, Italy

Details

Manufacturer's label

Literature

Accademia delle Belle Arti di Brera. (1998). Dino Gavina: Ultrarazionale Ultramobile. Milan: Editrice Compositori, p. 163.
Fondazione Scientifica Querini Stampalia. (1992). Dino Gavina: collezioni emblematiche del moderno dal 1950 al 1992. Milan: Jaca Book, p. 39.
Vercelloni, V. (1987). La avventura del design: Gavina. Milan: Jaca Book, p. 49.

About

The Naeko Sofa is one of the most historically significant works by Japanese architect and designer Kazuhide Takahama, created during the formative years of his collaboration with the Italian avant-garde manufacturer Gavina. Designed in 1958, the piece originates from Takahama's stay in Italy while overseeing the Japanese Pavilion for the XI Triennale di Milano (1956–57), a moment that marked the beginning of a lifelong professional and personal partnership with Dino Gavina.

The sofa was conceived as both an architectural and emotional object. Named after Naeko, who would later become Takahama's wife, the design reflects an intimate, human-centered approach to modernism. Its low, elongated profile and carefully proportioned cherrywood frame create a sense of calm horizontality, while the original upholstery softens the rigor of the structure, balancing rational form with tactile warmth.

Naeko belongs to the earliest phase of Gavina's production, when the company was redefining Italian design through collaborations with architects who approached furniture as an extension of spatial thinking. Takahama's work, informed by both Japanese spatial tradition and European modernism, introduced a unique synthesis: disciplined geometry, refined craftsmanship, and a deep sensitivity to the human body and domestic ritual.

Biography

Kazuhide Takahama (1930–2010) was a key figure in postwar design and an important cultural bridge between Japanese and Italian modernism. Trained as an architect in Japan, he approached furniture as an architectural system, emphasizing structure, proportion, and spatial clarity over decoration.

His career took a decisive turn in 1957, when he worked on the Japanese Pavilion for the XI Triennale di Milano and met Italian entrepreneur Dino Gavina. Through this collaboration, Takahama became deeply involved in Italian radical design, creating seminal works such as the Naeko sofa (1958), characterized by low profiles, restrained geometry, and material refinement.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he produced influential designs for Gavina and later Simon, combining European rationalism with Japanese spatial concepts such as modularity, interval (ma), and human scale. Today, Takahama is recognized as a major figure in international modern design, celebrated for his refined synthesis of Eastern and Western traditions and his enduring, architecturally driven furniture designs.