SIDE GALLERY

SORI YANAGI

Oval Wall Mirror (Medium Size)
Manufactured by Akita Mokko
Japan, 1977
Bent beech wood, Lauan plywood, Glass

Measurements
40 × 3 × 50h cm
15,8 × 1,2 × 19,7h in

Provenance
Private Collection, Japan

Details
Stamped with manufacturer's label

Notes
Designed by Sōri Yanagi in 1977, the Oval Wall Mirror embodies the designer's lifelong pursuit of harmony between form, material, and function. Produced by Akita Mokko, a workshop renowned for its technical excellence in bentwood craftsmanship, the mirror's frame demonstrates a level of precision that merges structural integrity with visual continuity.
By cutting both ends of the bent beech wood at precise angles and seamlessly joining them, Yanagi achieved a continuous, flowing grain — a gesture of refined simplicity that renders the joint nearly invisible. The polyurethane-coated surface enhances the tactile warmth of the wood while protecting its natural texture, reflecting Yanagi's philosophy of functional beauty (yo no bi).
This mirror stands as an understated yet perfect example of Japanese modern design, where craft tradition and industrial precision coexist in quiet equilibrium.

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.

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