

SIDE GALLERY

UBUNJI KIDOKORO



Side table

Made in the workshop of Ubunji Kidokoro
Japan, 1940s
Maple

Measurements

60,5 × 35,5 × 57h cm
23,8 × 14 × 22,4h in

Provenance

Private Collection, Japan

Literature

Japan Living Design, Exploring 20th-Century Modernism, Japan Interior Designers Association, Tokyo, 2004, pp. 76–77
Domus, n°269, April 1952, exhibition curated by Kenzo Tange, Takashimaya, Tokyo

Biography

Ubunji Kidokoro (c. 1910–1945) was a Japanese cabinetmaker and furniture designer active in the 1930s whose work contributed significantly to the development of a distinctly Japanese response to international modernism. Associated with Mitsukoshi, Japan's oldest department store, he worked within a progressive context that sought to introduce modern furniture for a society long accustomed to floor seating, fostering experimentation with new forms and structures. Kidokoro's designs combined indigenous materials and craft traditions—most notably bamboo and laminated plywood—with modern structural principles, resulting in furniture that was both formally innovative and materially rooted in Japanese culture. His most celebrated work, the cantilevered bamboo armchair produced circa 1937, exemplifies this approach through its use of bent plywood and vertical bamboo slats fastened with brass studs, exploiting the elasticity and tensile strength of bamboo to create a lightweight yet resilient and responsive seat. Often discussed in relation to contemporaneous Western experiments with cantilevered and bentwood furniture, Kidokoro's work is distinguished by its translation of modernist structural logic into a language informed by local materials and mingei values rather than direct formal imitation. Although his career and life were cut short by the Second World War, his surviving works are held in major international museum collections and are regarded as important examples of prewar Japanese modern furniture, occupying a key position at the intersection of craft, modernity, and material innovation.