

SIDE GALLERY

SORI YANAGI



Butterfly Stool

Manufactured by Tendo Mokko
Japan, designed 1956 / produced circa 1960
Thermoformed plywood, brass stretcher

Measurements

42 × 31 × 39,5h cm
16,5 × 12,2 × 15,6h in

Provenance

Private collection, Japan

Details

Manufacturer's stamped

Literature

Sembach, K.-J. (1997). *Modern Furniture Design 1950–1980s*. Atglen: Schiffer, p. 33.
Yanagi, S. (1983). *Sori Yanagi's Works and Philosophy*. Tokyo: Yobisha, p. 91.
Centre Pompidou. (1996). *Design Japonais 1950–1995*. Paris, p. 65.

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.