SIDE GALLERY

ISAMU KENMOCHI

Executive Desk
Manufactured by Kokuyo
Japan, 1960s
Brazilian rosewood, metal frame

Measurements
200 × 85 × 71h cm
78,7 × 33,5 × 28h in

Provenance
Private collection

Details
Manufacturer's label

About Kokuyo
Founded in 1905 in Osaka, Kokuyo began as a manufacturer of accounting ledgers and paper products before evolving into one of Japan's leading office furniture and workplace solution companies. Throughout the postwar period, particularly during the rapid economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s, Kokuyo played a significant role in shaping modern Japanese office environments.
The company became known for combining industrial efficiency with thoughtful design, often collaborating with designers and engineers to develop furniture that balanced ergonomics, durability, and refined aesthetics. Kokuyo's executive furnishings from the mid-century period reflect this philosophy—pairing high-quality materials with clean, modern lines suited to contemporary corporate spaces.

Biography
Born in Tokyo, Japan, Isamu Kenmochi (1912–1971) was a pivotal figure in the development of modern Japanese design. He is renowned for his ability to blend traditional craftsmanship with the clean, functional lines of modernism, creating a design language that bridged Japan's rich cultural heritage and contemporary sensibilities. After graduating from the Tokyo Fine Arts School (now Tokyo University of the Arts) in 1932, Kenmochi joined the Industrial Arts Research Institute, where he explored the integration of traditional Japanese materials and techniques into modern design. This formative experience shaped his philosophy of creating functional, accessible, and elegant designs rooted in everyday life. In the postwar period, Kenmochi became a key advocate for the modernization of Japanese design. As a co-founder of the Japan Industrial Designers Association (JIDA) in 1952, he worked alongside luminaries like Sori Yanagi to elevate industrial design as a profession in Japan. His work during this era often reflected collaborations with international designers, most notably Charlotte Perriand, with whom he explored innovative uses of traditional materials such as rattan and wood. One of Kenmochi's most iconic creations is the Rattan Chair (1952), produced by Yamakawa Rattan, which exemplifies his mastery of natural materials and his commitment to simplicity and comfort. His designs, often crafted from rattan, wood, and metal, embodied a balance of tradition and innovation that has become a hallmark of Japanese modernism. Kenmochi's contributions extended beyond furniture; he designed interiors and products for major corporations, influencing both domestic and industrial aesthetics in Japan. His work remains highly regarded for its timeless appeal and enduring functionality. Isamu Kenmochi passed away in 1971, but his legacy continues to inspire designers worldwide, celebrated as a pioneer who harmonized Japan's past and future in his visionary creations.

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