

# SIDE GALLERY

ISAMU KENMOCHI



## Reception Desk

Manufactured by Tendo Mokko  
Japan, 1966  
Rosewood, Leather, Steel

## Measurements

160 × 54 × 76h cm  
63 × 21,3 × 29,9h in

## Details

From International Conference Center Kyoto, Japan  
Manufacturer's Label

## About

This unique large reception desk was designed by Isamu Kenmochi for the International Conference Center Kyoto, inaugurated in 1966 and architecturally conceived by Sachio Otani. Kenmochi and his studio, the Isamu Kenmochi Design Laboratory, were commissioned to oversee the interior furnishing and decorative program of the building, collaborating with leading Japanese manufacturers including Tendo Mokko and Yamakawa Rattan.

Produced by Tendo Mokko in 1966, the desk exemplifies the synthesis of architectural rigor and material refinement that defined Kenmochi's mature work. The structure consists of a wooden base clad in grey leather, grounded by a stainless steel plinth that introduces a precise horizontal accent. The substantial rosewood top, finely profiled along its edges, provides visual weight and tactile richness, balancing monumentality with disciplined restraint. Conceived specifically for a major international institutional setting, the desk reflects Kenmochi's ability to translate modernist principles into culturally grounded design. Its clarity of structure, careful proportion, and restrained material palette align with the architectural language of the Kyoto Conference Center itself—an important landmark of postwar Japanese modernism. As a bespoke institutional commission, this piece represents a rare and significant example of Kenmochi's large-scale interior work.

## 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.