

SIDE GALLERY

JUNZŌ SAKAKURA



Chair Model "Tou Za Isu"

Manufactured by Futaba Furniture Co.
Japan, 1960s
Bent plywood, woven rattan

Measurements

48 × 66,5 × 66h cm
18,9 × 26,2 × 26h in

Seat height: 15 cm (5,9 in)

Details

Model "Tou Za Isu". Originally conceived by Junzo Sakakura as a modern interpretation of the traditional Japanese floor chair (zaisu). This version with woven rattan seat and backrest was later redesigned by Daisaku Choh and reissued by IDÉE in 2001. Executed in bent plywood and natural rattan.

Literature

Junzo Sakakura Architectural Institute. Junzo Sakakura: Architecture and Design. Kajima Institute Publishing, Tokyo.

Stewart, David B. The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture. Kodansha International, Tokyo, 1987.

Mira Locher. Japanese Modern: The World of Shiro Kuramata, Isamu Kenmochi and Sori Yanagi. Tuttle Publishing, Tokyo, 2016.

Biography

Junzō Sakakura was born in 1901, in the small rural world of Gifu Prefecture, Japan. His early life was rooted in simplicity — tatami floors, wooden structures, the everyday intimacy of Japanese homes. That sensibility never left him, even as he grew into one of the great voices of modern architecture.

At first, he studied art history at Tokyo Imperial University, fascinated not so much by the structures themselves as by the stories and aesthetics behind them. But the pull of design was too strong. In 1929, he made the bold move to Paris, where fate — and a few connections — carried him to the atelier of Le Corbusier. In Paris, Sakakura entered a world of rigorous geometry, reinforced concrete, and radical visions for the future. He worked his way up in the studio until he became Le Corbusier's chief assistant. The experience changed him profoundly. Here was a Japanese man, steeped in the traditions of wood and tatami, immersed in the epicenter of European modernism. He didn't abandon one for the other; instead, he began to imagine how both could coexist.

He collaborated with fellow Japanese modernists like Kunio Maekawa and Junzō Yoshimura on the International House of Japan in Tokyo, and he was entrusted with executing Le Corbusier's design for the National Museum of Western Art (1959). He also shaped the public life of a rapidly urbanizing Tokyo with station plazas, department stores, and civic halls. Through it all, Sakakura held fast to a principle: design should serve people. Buildings, yes — but also the smaller things, the objects that people touched every day.

Sakakura's life was not only about monumental buildings or iconic pavilions. It was about balance — between East and West, tradition and modernity, architecture and furniture. He saw no hierarchy between a museum and a chair; both shaped human experience, both deserved thought and care. He died in Tokyo in 1969, but his legacy continues to ripple through Japanese design. His buildings remain landmarks of postwar modernism, and his furniture has gained new appreciation among collectors and design enthusiasts worldwide. When you sit in one of his chairs — low, simple, comfortable — you can feel the same principles that guided his architecture: clarity, restraint, and a deep respect for human life. Sakakura believed design should make living better, whether through the walls of a museum or the curve of a seat. In that belief, he built not just structures, but a philosophy that still resonates today.