

SIDE GALLERY

ISAMU KENMOCHI



Rattan Settee

Manufactured by Yamakawa Rattan
Japan, 1960–1967
Rattan over bamboo frame, upholstered cushion

Measurements

140 × 89 × 70h cm
55 × 35 × 27,5h in

Provenance

Private Collection, Japan

Literature

Design: Isamu Noguchi and Isamu Kenmochi, Rychlak et al., ppg. 20, 116–119
Japanese Wooden Chairs, published by Shotenkenchiku-Sha, Tokyo, 1995. Page 68
Japanese Modern. Retrospective Isamu Kenmochi. Published by Asao Sato. Hitoshi Mori (Matsudo City Board of Education), Tokyo 2005. Cover and pages 85, 186, 93, 92, 91, Design Japonais 1950–1995. Editions Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1996. Page 69
Bonnie Rychlak, Dakin Hart, Mutsuko Mori, Masayo Murayama and Kengo Matsumoto, Design: Isamu Noguchi and Isamu Kenmochi, The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York, 2022, pp. 20, 116–119.

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.