



## Limited Edition Noguchi Bamboo Basket Chair, 1950

Designed by Isamu Noguchi  
27 3/8 x 34 1/4 x 29 3/4 in.

**Price: \$9,500**

- Limited Edition of 50
- Handmade by Japanese Craftsman
- Fabricated in conjunction with Kenmochi Design Associates

# The Basket Chair: A Brief History

For a brief two years, from 1950 to 1952, the careers of the American artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-88) and the Japanese industrial designer Isamu Kenmochi (1912-71) intersected, resulting in a collaboration that would not only enrich the individual production of the two men but also expand the concepts of both Western and Japanese modernism. Together and individually, they created a group of universally exceptional functional objects, using designs that incorporated a basic beauty of simplicity grounded in a knowledge of natural materials as well as in a shared vision that embraced experimental techniques and resources.

Noguchi was already a well-established sculptor and modernist designer when he met Kenmochi, who was one of Japan's premier postwar industrial designers, known for creating modern objects suffused with a traditional Japanese sensibility. International in outlook, Kenmochi would become a founding member of several of Japan's principal design organizations, including the Japan Design Committee (1953) and the Japan Interior Designers Association (1956), and his efforts were influential in shaping the Japanese Good Design movement.

Soon after he arrived in Japan on his first trip to the country after World War II, Noguchi was introduced to Kenmochi, in June 1950, at the Tokyo University offices of the architect Kenzo Tange. At Kenmochi's suggestion, Noguchi visited Kenmochi at the Industrial Arts Research Institute (IARI) in Tokyo, where Kenmochi was serving as a technical officer, and Noguchi would establish a short-term studio there.

The direct working relationship between Noguchi and Kenmochi was actually very brief, occurring during two weeks in August 1950 when Noguchi was beginning his fabrication of furniture and sculpture for a recent commission for Keio University in Tokyo. While working at the IARI, Noguchi took an interest in Kenmochi's experimental furniture designs. One idea Kenmochi was exploring was that of using the structure and techniques of Japanese bamboo basket weaving as the basis of a design for the seat of a chair. Noguchi was intrigued by this chair and offered to collaborate with Kenmochi on it, immediately drafting plans.

Kenmochi engaged an expert bamboo craftsman, Harumitsu Inoue, to weave the chair that he and Noguchi were devising together. Inoue wove strips of bamboo into the shapes Noguchi had determined. Kenmochi originally envisioned the frame for this chair to be of wood, but Noguchi's idea was to use a single continuous bent iron rod that would form the legs as well as the full supporting armature for the bamboo elements. Unlike the one-of-a kind furniture pieces Noguchi was making for the Keio University project at the same time, the Bamboo Basket Chair was designed as a prototype for mass production although ultimately it was not issued.

While Noguchi was not specifically looking to incorporate the Western design idiom into a postwar Japanese aesthetic, Kenmochi was deeply interested in remaking the chair for daily use in Japan. Chairs were first used in Japan in public and private spaces by way of established Western institutions and commercial quarters during the 1920s, where they replaced the traditional mode of seating—*tatami* mats placed on the floor—and symbolized the Westernization of daily life.

For both designers, the process of creating the experimental bamboo chair was dedicated to the purpose of advancing the modernization of Japanese forms in tandem with the use of traditional Japanese techniques and materials that could be brought together for a Japanese and foreign market.

The Noguchi Museum and Kenmochi Design Associates collaborated on the production of this limited edition Noguchi Bamboo Basket Chair. Tetsuo Matsumoto, President of Kenmochi Design Associates, painstakingly researched and developed the reproduction of the Bamboo Basket Chair for 2 years using archival materials and vintage photography. This is the first time it is available for purchase. It is composed of Shioji wood, bamboo, and iron. The Bamboo Basket Chair is handmade by Japanese craftsman in Japan. There is a limited edition of 50 and they are made to order.