

29 JANUARY 2015

SHIRO KURAMATA
HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

WORKS FROM THE ABSENT PAST



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WRIGHT

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SHIRO KURAMATA
HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

WORKS FROM THE ABSENT PAST

Creative direction provided
by Tamotsu Yagi

IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS

Shiro Kuramata (1934–1991) and Hiroshi Sugimoto (b. 1948), two celebrated and influential creative individuals, have produced extensive bodies of work which explore a myriad of themes, among them the temporal nature of light and the consciousness of time's passage. Like many in creative fields, especially those within the influence of Japanese cultural history, they have found inspiration in a short but widely studied and much admired essay on Japanese aesthetics, *In Praise of Shadows*, published in 1933 by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, one of the most popular novelists in modern Japanese literature.

In Praise of Shadows is a discussion and celebration of the light, shadow and texture of traditional Japan. In a representative passage he expounds on 'the secret of shadows' found in the picture alcove in a Japanese room. Of the experience standing before it, he writes, **We are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquility holds sway.** He notes, **Such is our way of thinking—we find beauty not in the thing itself but in the patterns of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates.**

Tanizaki's essay is a lamentation about the passage of time in the face of modernization. He feels the impending loss of the meditative complexity, mystery and beauty in the culture around him: the 'world of shadows'. As the lights of the modern age advance, Tanizaki views shadows as the key that unlocks the forgotten past. He reflects on their effects on the consciousness of time. **A moment of mystery, it might almost be called, a moment of trance.** Speaking again of the dark alcove, **I need only pause before it and I forget the passage of time.**

The work of Shiro Kuramata and Hiroshi Sugimoto is inextricably linked to these themes. Both designer and artist embrace the effects of time within their processes, creating works of structured simplicity that belie that which is complex and intangible. Within a carefully designed contemporary structure, they deliver an immaterial expression of our perpetual gaze into the past.

If someone were to ask me to describe the process through which imagination and memory combine to produce a concrete form, I would find myself in difficulty. All I can say is that it is a sensuous perception. SHIRO KURAMATA

Can someone today view a scene just as primitive man might have?
HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

Beginning with a photograph of the Caribbean Sea from Jamaica in 1980, Hiroshi Sugimoto embarked on a 'voyage of seeing'. Using 19th century techniques and equipment, his *Seascapes* are a visual representation of time. The shutter is opened and time proceeds to pass. As it is closed it begins to stop. The rigorously composed long exposure images allow for the maximum subtlety, detail and nuance to be expressed. Half sea, half sky—they allow for a meditation on the flowing textures of the sea, the movement of light to dark and the horizon receding in the distance. To gaze at the sea is to see something in constant flux, yet perpetually unchanged. **The sea, I thought, is immutable,** he writes, **Thus began my travels back through time to the ancient seas of the world.**

Discussing his series, *In Praise of Shadows*, Sugimoto empathizes with Tanizaki, writing, **I, too, am an anachronist: rather than live at the 'cutting edge' of the contemporary, I feel more at ease in the absent past.** Absentia implies an expectation and lack of presence: a light which has gone out. Is this the description of Tanizaki's loss? Does the connection between the past and present fade away like a distant horizon? Or perhaps, as Kuramata might have professed, the past rests firmly in our experiences and memories, brought forward in what we produce today. Regardless, the question is retained and this is more the point. These compelling works of art and design allow for the meditation of light and shadow and the correlative themes of time and its passage. The works of Shiro Kuramata and Hiroshi Sugimoto do not deny time, but embrace it. As the light dims, the visible recedes into the alluring and mysterious shadows of the absent past.

— Brent Lewis

WORKS FROM THE ESPRIT HOUSE

Throughout his long lasting relationship with Esprit, Kuramata produced some of his most important work and substantial interiors. In 1983 he was asked to design the interior of the company's guesthouse located in a residential area of Tokyo. In the living room, floor to ceiling windows contrasted against Kuramata's terrazzo floors, where a custom table made of Star Piece terrazzo was flanked by two Sofas with Arms (single) and a unique Sofa with Arms (triple) designed exclusively for the interior.



© Mitsumasa Fujitsuka

101

Sofa with Arms (triple) for the Esprit House, Tokyo

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1983 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd | upholstery, chrome-plated steel | 74.25 w x 36 d x 25.75 h inches

This work is unique. \$30,000 – 50,000

Literature *Shiro Kuramata 1934–1991*, Hara et al, pg. 167 illustrates commission and sofa in situ *Shiro Kuramata*, Sudjic, pg. 327 illustrates commission and sofa in situ

Provenance Esprit House, Tokyo
Private Japanese collection



102
pair of Sofa with Arms (single) for the Esprit House

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1982/1983 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd | upholstery, chrome-plated steel | 25.5 w x 36 d x 25.5 h inches

\$30,000 - 50,000

Literature *Shiro Kuramata 1934-1991*, Hara et al, pg.167 illustrates commission and sofas in situ *Shiro Kuramata*, Sudjic, ppg.319, 327 illustrate commission and sofas in situ

Provenance Esprit House, Tokyo
Private Japanese collection



103
table for the Esprit House

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1983 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd | Star Piece terrazzo | 39.25 w x 39.25 d x 15 h inches

This work is unique. \$10,000–15,000

Literature *Shiro Kuramata 1934–1991*, Hara et al, pg.167 illustrates commission and table in situ *Shiro Kuramata*, Sudjic, pg.327 illustrates commission and table in situ

Provenance Esprit House, Tokyo
Private Japanese collection



104
bottle for Laputa restaurant

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1991 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd | acrylic, anodized aluminum | 3 dia x 12 h inches

\$3,000–5,000

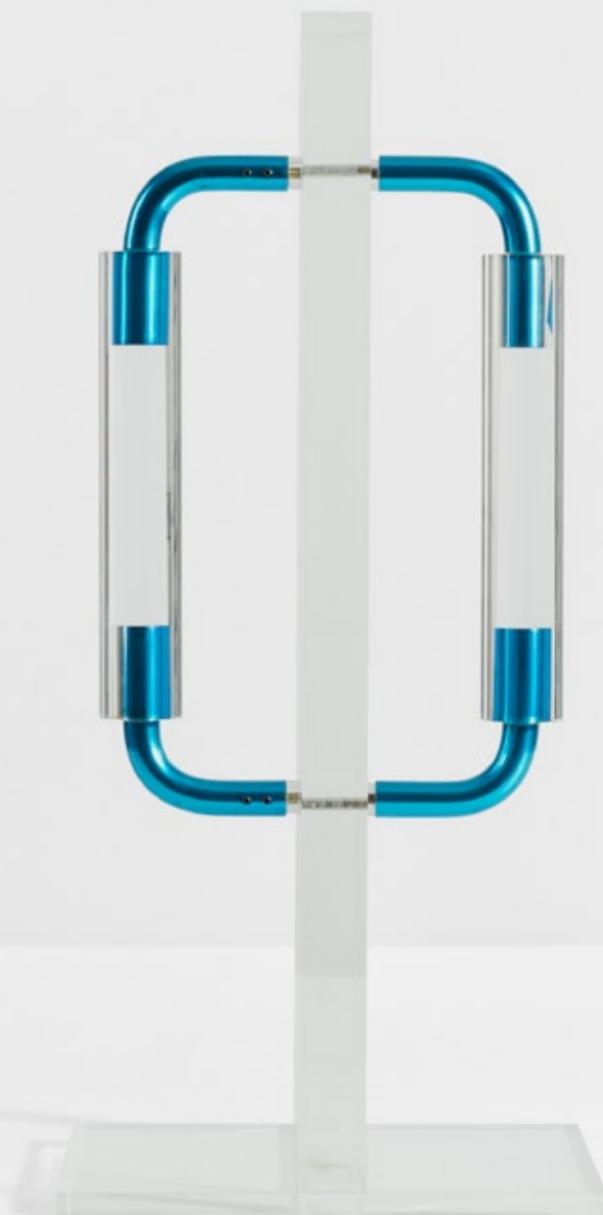
One of Kuramata's last commissions, Laputa restaurant, was completed after his death in 1991. Every aspect of the restaurant was artfully designed and curated by Kuramata and executed by a team of close friends, artisans and family. The restaurant was comprised of three distinct spaces; a lounge, dining area and sushi counter and featured acrylic forms and bold colors. Laputa also marked one of Kuramata's first and only interiors that included works by fellow designers.

This bottle, intended for display, is made of solid acrylic. Incised signature to bottle: [Shiro Kuramata Presented by Ishimaru Co., Ltd].

Literature *Shiro Kuramata*,
Sudjic, ppg. 173, 385–386
illustrate commission
Shiro Kuramata 1934–1991,
Hara et al., ppg. 197–198
illustrate commission

Provenance Laputa, Tokyo
Private collection





105
door pulls for Laputa restaurant

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1991 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd | acrylic, anodized aluminum | 9 w × 1.5 d × 12.5 h inches

\$5,000–7,000

Literature *Shiro Kuramata*,
Sudjic, ppg. 173, 385–386
illustrate commission
Shiro Kuramata 1934–1991,
Hara et al., ppg. 197–198
illustrate commission

Provenance Laputa, Tokyo
Private collection

106

Furniture in Irregular Forms, Side 1

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan/Italy, 1970 | Cappellini | lacquered oak, lacquered wood, aluminum, chrome-plated steel, plastic
23 w x 20.5 d x 67 h inches

\$9,000–12,000

Literature *The Work of Shiro Kuramata: 1967–1974*, Kuramata, ppg. 45–47 *Shiro Kuramata: 1967–1987*, Isozaki, ppg. 17–18 *Shiro Kuramata 1934–1991*, Hara et al., ppg. 45, 48, 130 *Shiro Kuramata and Ettore Sottsass*, 21_21 Design Sight exhibition catalog, ppg. 30, 169 *Shiro Kuramata*, Sudjic, ppg. 154, 255



107

dining table for Tamotsu Yagi

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1987 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd and Mihoya Glass | laminated whole and broken glass, enameled steel, silicon
93.5 w x 43.25 d x 29 h inches

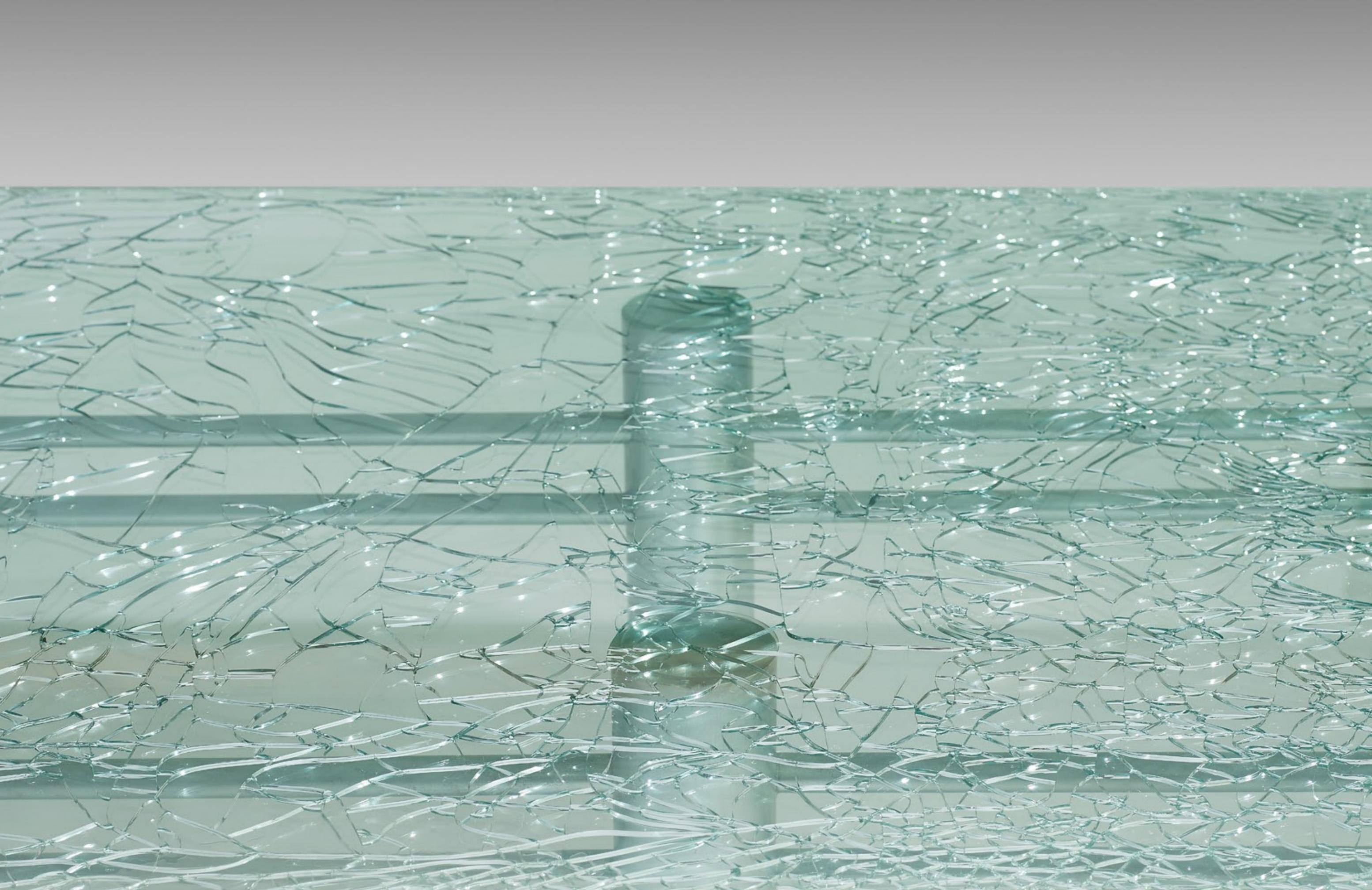
This work is unique. \$50,000 – 70,000

Among Shiro Kuramata's friends in the tight-knit design community in Tokyo was Tamotsu Yagi, who in 1983 would relocate to San Francisco, CA to become art director for Esprit. Kuramata would go on to collaborate on numerous projects with Yagi, and Esprit would become one of his most important clients. When Yagi moved into his new California home, Kuramata designed and presented as a gift a dining table of glass and steel, the present lot.

The dining table for Tamotsu Yagi utilizes Kuramata's 'broken glass' technique. As recounted by Deyan Sudjic, it was conceived after Kuramata asked his trusted glass manufacturer Mihoya, "When is glass most beautiful?" Mihoya answered, "When it breaks." Like much of Kuramata's work, this table illustrates his superlative pairing of poetic expression with precise design rigor. The top, supported by a simple cluster of steel legs, is composed of three layers of glass: the center layer partially shattered by hand, using hammer and chisel, is held secure by two flawless layers of strengthened glass, perhaps a further metaphoric nod in itself. Here the humble nature of the flawed core is crystalized and held in perpetuity, a constant remind of our material fragility, as well as our strength.

Provenance Tamotsu Yagi,
San Francisco and Venice, CA





108
Cabinet de Curiosité

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1989 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd | acrylic | 18.25 w x 18.25 d x 75 h inches

\$70,000 – 90,000

Originally designed for a 1988 exhibition at Galerie Yves Gastou, Paris. This work is number thirteen from the edition of forty. Sold with certificate of authenticity from the Kuramata Design Office signed by Mieko Kuramata.

Literature *Shiro Kuramata 1934–1991*, Hara et al., fig. 23, pg. 192 *Shiro Kuramata and Ettore Sottsass*, 21_21 Design Sight exhibition catalog, ppg. 201, 211 *Shiro Kuramata*, Sudjic, pg. 369

Provenance Clear Gallery, Tokyo Private collection, Tokyo | Wright, *Modern Design*, 7 October 2008, Lot 264 | Private collection





109
vitrine for Bub Yoshino

Literature *Shiro Kuramata*, Sudjic, pg. 296 discusses commission *Shiro Kuramata 1934-1991*, Hara et al., pg. 148 lists commission

Provenance Bub Yoshino, Tokyo
Private collection

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1976 | lacquered wood, glass | 48 w x 12.75 d x 68.75 h inches

This work is unique. \$20,000-30,000

In 1976 Kuramata designed the interior of Bub Yoshino beauty salon which occupied the third and fourth floors of a building in the popular Tokyo neighborhood, Minami-Aoyama. The third floor housed several salon stations and a spiral staircase leading to a private room on the fourth floor.

Sold with a photograph of the vitrine in situ and original logo decal.

110
cabinet for Bub Yoshino

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1976 | stainless steel, mirrored glass | 19.75 w x 23 d x 55 h inches

This work is unique. \$10,000–15,000

This cabinet was utilized on the top floor of Bub Yoshino which housed a small, private room reserved for important clients. The cabinet features a mirrored glass side, one door concealing shelf, two drawers and a separate rolling cabinet that pulls away from the large cabinet featuring two drawers and removable box. Sold with a photograph and negative of the cabinet in situ.

Literature *Shiro Kuramata*,
Sudjic, pg. 296 discusses
commission *Shiro Kuramata*
1934–1991, Hara et al.,
pg. 148 lists commission

Provenance Bub Yoshino, Tokyo
Private collection





Feather Stool

SHIRO KURAMATA

Japan, 1990 | Ishimaru Co., Ltd | acrylic, aluminum, feathers | 13 w x 16 d x 21 h inches

This work is number thirty-one from the edition of forty.

Private Sale

Literature *Shiro Kuramata 1934-1991*, Hara et al., ppg. 74, 79, 196 *Shiro Kuramata and Ettore Sottsass*, 21_21 Design Sight exhibition catalog, ppg. 75-76, 211 *Shiro Kuramata*, Sudjic, ppg. 107, 380

Provenance Barry Friedman, New York | Distinguished private collection



The quality that we call beauty, however, must always grow from the realities of life, and our ancestors, forced to live in dark rooms, presently came to discover beauty in shadows, ultimately to guide shadows towards beauty's ends.

JUN'ICHIRO TANIZAKI

Have you never felt a sort of fear in the face of the ageless, a fear that in that room you might lose all consciousness of the passage of time, that untold years might pass and upon emerging you should find you had grown old and gray?



111

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

b. 1948

Lake Superior, Cascade River
Japan, 2003 | gelatin silver print
16.5 h x 21.25 w inches

Signed to mount 'H Sugimoto'.
This work is from the edition of 25.

\$20,000 - 30,000

Literature *Hiroshi Sugimoto*,
Brougher, ppg. 136-137
Sugimoto, Contemporary
Arts Museum Houston and
Hara Museum Tokyo, ppg. 73, 85



112

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

b. 1948

Lake Superior, Cascade River
Japan, 1995 | gelatin silver print
16.25 h x 21.25 w inches

Signed to mount 'H Sugimoto'.
This work is from the edition of 25.

\$20,000 - 30,000

Literature *Hiroshi Sugimoto*,
Brougher, ppg. 136-137
Sugimoto, Contemporary
Arts Museum Houston and
Hara Museum Tokyo, ppg. 73, 85



113

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

b. 1948

Yellow Sea, Cheju

Japan, 1992 | gelatin silver print

16.5 h x 21.25 w inches

Signed to mount 'H Sugimoto'.

This work is from the edition of 25.

\$20,000 – 30,000

Literature *Sugimoto*, Ferguson,

unpaginated *Hiroshi Sugimoto:*

Time Exposed, Kellein, pg. 72

114

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

b. 1948

Yellow Sea, Cheju

Japan, 1992 | gelatin silver print

16.5 h x 21.25 w inches

Signed to mount 'H Sugimoto'.

This work is from the edition of 25.

\$20,000 – 30,000

Literature *Sugimoto*, Ferguson,

unpaginated *Hiroshi Sugimoto:*

Time Exposed, Kellein, pg. 72



115

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

b. 1948

Arctic Ocean, Nord Kapp

Japan, 1991 | gelatin silver print

16.5 h x 21.25 w inches

Signed to mount 'H Sugimoto'.

This work is from the edition of 25.

\$25,000 – 30,000

Literature Sugimoto, Ferguson,

unpaginated *Hiroshi Sugimoto:*

Time Exposed, Kellein, pg. 79

Sugimoto, Contemporary Arts

Museum Houston and Hara

Museum Tokyo, pg. 79



116

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

b. 1948

South Pacific Ocean, Tearai

Japan, 1991 | gelatin silver print

16.5 h x 21.25 w inches

Signed to mount 'H Sugimoto'.

This work is from the edition of 25.

\$30,000 – 35,000

Literature Hiroshi Sugimoto,

Brougher, pg. 117 *Hiroshi*

Sugimoto: Time Exposed, Kellein,

pg. 85 *Sugimoto*, Contemporary

Arts Museum Houston and

Hara Museum Tokyo, pg. 83

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

b. 1948

Lake Superior, Cascade River
Japan, 1995 | gelatin silver print
47 h × 58.75 w inches

Signed, titled, and dated to applied
studio label to reverse 'Hiroshi
Sugimoto, Lake Superior, 1995
Cascade River'. This work is from
the edition of 5.

Private Sale

Literature *Hiroshi Sugimoto*,
Brougher, ppg. 136–137
Sugimoto, Contemporary Arts
Museum Houston and Hara
Museum Tokyo, ppg. 73, 85



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The auctioneer has the right, in his absolute discretion, to determine the conduct of the sale, including, without limitation, to advance the bidding, to reject any bid offered, to withdraw any lot, to reoffer and resell any lot, and to resolve any dispute in connection with the sale. In any such case, the judgment of the auctioneer is final, and shall be binding upon all participants in the sale.

The sale will be conducted in the following increments:

to \$1,000	\$50 increment
\$1,000–2,000	\$100 increment
\$2,000–3,000	\$200 increment
\$3,000–5,000	\$250 increment
\$5,000–10,000	\$500 increment
\$10,000+	\$1,000 increment or auctioneer’s discretion

3 Payment & Collection of Purchases

In addition to the hammer price, the buyer of a lot agrees to pay us a buyer’s premium, together with any applicable sales tax due to the state of Illinois or New York, late payment charges and storage fees. The buyer’s premium on any lot is 25% of the hammer price up to and including \$100,000, 20% of any amount in excess of \$100,000 up to and including \$1,000,000, and 12% of any amount in excess of \$1,000,000. For internet bidding, an additional 2% is added to the buyer’s premium rates stated above. All purchases will be subject to state sales tax in Illinois or New York unless the buyer has provided us with a valid certificate of exemption from such tax or if interstate commerce tax laws apply coupled with valid certification of the interstate shipment.

Buyers are required to pay for purchases immediately following the auction unless other arrangements have been made in advance of the auction. All payments must be made in US Dollars, in any of the following acceptable forms of payment:

- Cash
- Check, with acceptable identification
- Visa, MasterCard or American Express, with a 2% surcharge for any such payment.

In the event that the buyer has not made satisfactory arrangements with us for the payment of all amounts owed within five (5) business days after the auction date or has otherwise defaulted in the performance of its obligations under these Terms and Conditions of Sale, we reserve the right to bill the buyer’s credit card in an amount equal to ten percent (10%) of the sum of the hammer price plus the Buyer’s Premium. Any charge made by us under this provision shall be credited against all amounts owed to us by the buyer under these Terms and Conditions of Sale, and shall in no way limit or restrict the exercise of any of our rights and remedies available at law or in equity with respect to

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In any case, as security for full payment to us of all amounts due from the buyer, we retain, and the buyer grants to us, a security interest in the property purchased by the buyer at auction, and in any other property or money of the buyer in our possession or coming into our possession subsequently. We may apply any such money or treat any such property in any manner permitted under the Uniform Commercial Code and/or any other applicable law.

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We may, as a courtesy to the buyer, provide or arrange packing, shipping or similar logistical services, or refer the buyer to third parties who specialize in these services. Any such services provided or arranged by us are at the buyer’s sole risk and expense, and we assume no responsibility for any act or omission of any party in connection with any such service or reference.

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- reselling the property, at public or private sale, with or without reserve;
- retention of any amounts already paid by the buyer as liquidated damages;
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- setting-off any amounts owed by us to the buyer in satisfaction of unpaid amounts
- taking any other action we deem necessary or appropriate under the circumstances.

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The buyer must provide written notice of any claim under the warranty to Wright not later than five (5) years following the date of sale, and must return the property to

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