

KARIMOKU  
CASE STUDY



CASE STUDY 04  
THE AZABU RESIDENCE PROJECT  
KEIJI ASHIZAWA & NORM ARCHITECTS

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## KARIMOKU CASE STUDY

*KARIMOKU CASE STUDY PRESENTS CASE 04:  
THE AZABU RESIDENCE PROJECT  
WITH BESPOKE INTERIOR AND FURNITURE  
ITEMS BY KEIJI ASHIZAWA AND  
NORM ARCHITECTS*

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With the Azabu Residence Project, Japanese lifestyle brand Karimoku Case Study presents its fourth case and the continued collaboration with architecture and design studios Norm Architects and Keiji Ashizawa Design. The private residence project in Tokyo has been completed with a custom-made interior by lead architect and Karimoku Case Study brand initiator Keiji Ashizawa and bespoke furniture items designed by his studio and the brand's creative directors Norm Architects. Following several successful case studies since its founding in 2019 in both the public and private realm in and outside of Japan, also the custom-made interior and furniture items of

the Azabu Residence Project have all been manufactured by the craftsmen at Karimoku Furniture. A project specific feature is its interior playing on inspiration taken from elements of American Modernism as well as a distinct homage to the celebration of shadows.

The Karimoku Case Study furniture collection will be extended with the new dining table A - DT02 and the new bench A - B01 by Keiji Ashizawa and the new modular sofa N - S02 by Norm Architects, pieces which have all been designed specifically for this case.



## CASE STUDY 04

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### THE AZABU RESIDENCE

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Commissioned with the renovation of the luxury apartment built in 1988, the Tokyo-based architecture studio Keiji Ashizawa Design worked with Norm Architects on the interior design and bespoke furnishing of the private residence in Azabu, a district in central Tokyo. Located on a hill, the Azabu Residence is tucked away in a more quiet, exclusive residential area.

Located on a spacious site rarely seen in the city of Tokyo with meticulously maintained greenery surrounding the entrance, the two design studios agreed for the rare exterior to be incorporated into the interior design.

A project specific feature is its interior playing on inspiration taken from elements of American modernism with an overall warm and welcoming touch and the use of stone, dark wood and textured textiles. Coinciding with these features were the designers' further will to celebrate the shadows, an inspiration taken from the well-known Japanese book, *In Praise of Shadows* by Jun'ichiro

Tanizaki. In contrast to the light-flooded Kinuta Terrace Project, their first joined interior design project and Karimoku Case Study's case 01, with the Azabu Residence, the designers realized a more dim and shadow-filled space.

The created interior is like a cozy, intimate and protective cave for human dwelling. The implementation of a darker material scheme for furniture, flooring, walls and curtains with the use of smoked oak, a dark brown and dark wood veneers underlines this impression and creates a calm and embracing interior for contemplation and private family life. Regardless of the dark tones used to unify the space, the beauty of this home stands out in the morning and early afternoon, when there is a visible contrast with the sunlight peeking into the space, and at night, when the space is filled with controlled light.

For the furnishing, the two design studios selected a mixture of existing pieces from the current collection as





well as created bespoke new furniture items that specifically fitted the new case.

Matching the overall dark wooden tones of the interior, the new dining table A - DT02 by Keiji Ashizawa convinces with its lightweight and elegant appearance. For the entrance area, Keiji Ashizawa designed the versatile bench A - B01, that impresses with the functionality of a bench and a form that invites to be used as a display stand. Norm Architects designed the new modular sofa N - S02, with soft, rounded cushions and a dark, timber frame, making use of traditional Japanese wooden joinery techniques, Karimoku is known for. This notable feature connects the furniture piece to many of the other Karimoku Case Study products, creating coherence across the furniture collection. Specifically designed for this project is also the elegant modular wall shelf N-WS01 by Norm Architects, which is inspired by the pattern of supporting columns in architecture.

Additionally to the manufacturing of the furniture, Karimoku Furniture is also responsible for all wooden installations in the Azabu Residence, such as the built-in cabinets, the fitted kitchen counter and the wooden doors.

With the completion of the Azabu Residence Project in Tokyo, Karimoku Case Study celebrates the successful launch of case study 04, following the brand's philosophy to create a coherent style and setting within the given architectural framework.



## ABOUT KARIMOKU CASE STUDY

Emerging from shared design values, Karimoku Case Study is a contemporary lifestyle brand based in Japan and born out of admiration and love for serene beauty, material richness and timeless appeal. The Case Study collections are brought to life by the world's leading architects through individual cases, and the story of each collection is told through its native setting. With Karimoku Case Study, Karimoku introduces its fourth high-end, contemporary furniture brand, following Karimoku New Standard, Karimoku Kunst and Ishinomaki Laboratory by Karimoku.

### KARIMOKU

The origins of Karimoku date back to 1940, when Shohei Kato took over a longstanding timber company and established a small woodworking shop in the town of Kariya, Aichi. The company produced various wooden parts in the ensuing decades, developing a range of techniques before launching its own line of wooden furniture in the 1960s. Building upon the concept of manufacturing high-tech and high-touch products, the company established bases in timber production areas and soon developed into one of Japan's leading manufacturers of wooden furniture.

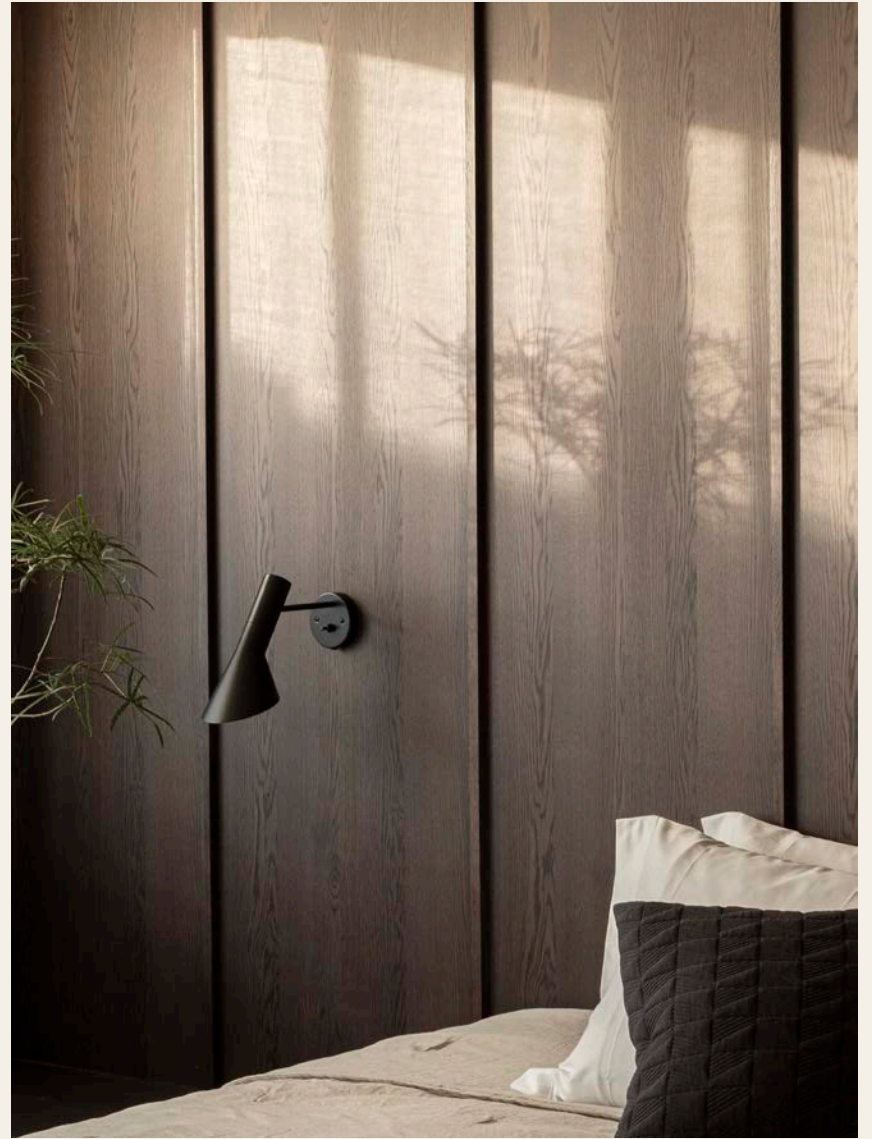
## NORM ARCHITECTS

Norm Architects was founded in 2008. The multidisciplinary design studio works within the fields of industrial design, residential architecture, commercial interiors, photography and art direction. Much like human well-being, the essence of Norm Architects' work is found in balance—between richness and restraint, between order and complexity.

### KEIJI ASHIZAWA DESIGN

Keiji Ashizawa Design is an architectural and product design studio based in Tokyo, Japan. Formed in 2005 by Keiji Ashizawa, following 10 years' working experience in both architecture and steel fabrication, the studio is comprised of both architects and designers, each bringing unique skills to the team. Through logical thinking and open-mindedness, the studio presents works of "honest" design: simple yet refined, thoughtful and of a light manner—and derived naturally through the process of maximising the potential of each material and its functions.









*“I wanted to highlight the quality and unique features of the Azabu Residence Building and incorporate the stone sculptures from the garden and entry that were added during the renovation. I also wanted to embrace the obscurity that covers the whole space. I took inspiration from the Japanese book “In Praise of Shadows” by Jun’ichiro Tanizaki. I wanted to work with the shadows rather than against them, and hence focused on a darker material scheme.”*

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KEIJI ASHIZAWA



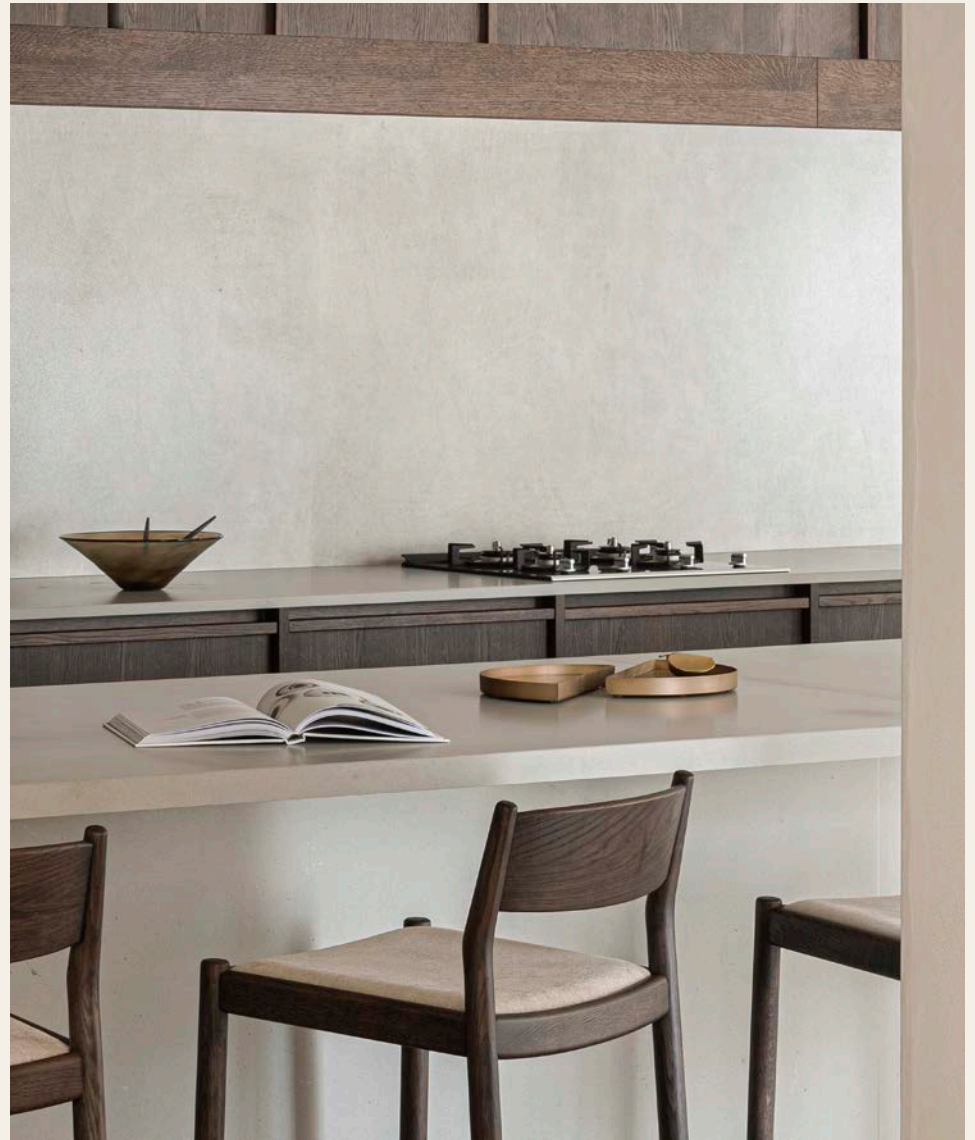




*“We value working with international designers,  
acquiring new approaches and enjoy testing the limits of what  
is possible in the field of woodworking.  
Karimoku Case Study merges and reflects these  
aspects very well.”*

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KARIMOKU FURNITURE INC.







*“We have strived to create a minimalist product that has a sculptural, warm and architectural expression — it should be functional and beautiful, whether few or many items are on display.”*

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NORM ARCHITECTS

## BESPOKE FURNITURE FOR THE AZABU RESIDENCE



A - DT 0 2

DESIGN: KEIJI ASHIZAWA

With A-DT02 Karimoku Case Study introduces a new table by Keiji Ashizawa. Designed specifically for the case study 04, the Azabu Project, the new table was designed to contrast the stone kitchen. The new table, perched on four lightweight legs has a simple design, with a leg attached to each corner. The angle at which the cross-section of each leg is attached however gives the table its structural elegance with the

tabletop supported without aprons. The legs and edge of the tabletop follow the flow of the dining chairs N - DC01 designed by Norm Architects, creating a soft and light feeling. When placed in the space, the wooden table seems to float. Despite its size, its presence does not overwhelm the space. Rather, it allows the organic form of the chairs placed around it to stand out.



A - B 0 1

DESIGN: KEIJI ASHIZAWA

The bench A-B01 by Keiji Ashizawa is a light and harmonious piece of furniture. In search for a piece to place in the Azabu Residence entrance space that had the functionality of a bench and a form that could also be used as a display stand, Keiji Ashizawa designed the A-B01. The lightness created by the thin edges of the seat and legs, and the strength of the crosspiece material—almost as though squared timber was

used — are connected by a delicate stool rod to create a sense of overall harmony.



## BESPOKE FURNITURE FOR THE AZABU RESIDENCE



N - S 0 2

DESIGN: NORM ARCHITECTS

The new modular sofa N-S02 by Norm Architects is built of a solid wooden base and soft upholstery. Rounded cushions invite the user into its universe, whilst a dark, timber frame complements the design and underlines the production heritage so unique to Karimoku.

Small spline joints in each corner of the base tell a story of the traditional, wooden-joinery techniques evident in

Japanese culture. This notable feature connects the furniture piece to many of the other Karimoku Case Study products, creating coherence across the collection.



N - W S 0 1

DESIGN: NORM ARCHITECTS

The new N-WS01 wall shelves, designed by Norm Architects, have a calming and relaxing effect due to their inherent repetitions and created patterns. A simple, yet elegant modular system with the possibility to extend the shelves infinitely. Inspired by how columns act as the carrying elements in architecture, the vertical detailing of the shelves is what creates strength and rigidity, carrying the shelf all whilst hiding the

brackets. The wall shelf was designed specifically for this project and still is a prototype in the Karimoku Case Study furniture collection.

FURNITURE FROM THE  
KARIMOKU CASE STUDY COLLECTION



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A - C T 0 1

DESIGN: KEIJI ASHIZAWA

Matching the height of the sofa A - S01 while referencing the traditional Japanese, short legged chabudai dining table, the coffee table A - CT01 by Keiji Ashizawa can be utilized while seated on the floor. The transparent glass top highlights the structure of the legs in an honest way, celebrating the material.



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A - S 0 1

DESIGN: KEIJI ASHIZAWA

With the sofa A - S01, Keiji Ashizawa played with the same structure used for the coffee table A - CT01 , arriving at a sofa that embodies sculptural, yet laid-back elements. The low height enhances the size of the space has specifically been designed for. Simple, yet multi-functional, the armrest can be

used as a pillow, making it a daybed.



FURNITURE FROM THE  
KARIMOKU CASE STUDY COLLECTION



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N - SC 0 1

DESIGN: NORM ARCHITECTS

With clean lines, a crisp design language and a soft and comfortable inner, the Side Chair N - SC01 by Norm Architects mimics the architecture of the Blue Bottle Coffee Minatomirai Cafe, it was initially designed for. With its low backrest and small footprint, the N - SC01 is not really a dining chair,

neither a stool - but combines the best of the two and therefore serves the real needs of the cafe.



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N - BS 0 1

DESIGN: NORM ARCHITECTS

The Bar Stool N - BS01 by Norm Architects is, as the N - DC03 (Cafe Chair), a line extension to the dining chair from an earlier project. The size of the backrest makes the chair more comfortable, while the natural lines in the design underline the craftsmanship and production skills that have gone

into a piece like this.

FURNITURE FROM THE  
KARIMOKU CASE STUDY COLLECTION



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N - DC01

DESIGN: NORM ARCHITECTS

The dining chair N - DC01 was born out of the exploration around Karimoku's many factories, workshoping on sight with the craftsmen, using existing parts and updating others, until a hybrid between the Japanese and Scandinavian design aesthetic emerged. The result is a classic chair, simple in its design and

composition, but with a warm and welcoming feel to it.



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N - DT01

DESIGN: NORM ARCHITECTS

Playing with the balance between light and heavy elements, the dining table N - DT01 by Norm Architects is dimensioned like the branches of a tree — thus making it appear paper-thin from some angles and more robust where it needs to be. Like with the architectural works of the studio, Norm Architects have explored

the negative space within the furniture pieces, emphasizing the materials and details by highlighting the places where the light can shine through.



PHOTOGRAPHY

KARIMOKU CASE STUDY

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