

 **MAS**



ABOUT



MAS is a contemporary Japanese furniture brand focused on pushing the boundaries of woodworking. Founded in 2021 by Karimoku Furniture Inc., the brand is now making its international debut.

Highlighting the natural beauty of Hinoki (Japanese Cypress) is a signature feature of MAS. By exploring the natural beauty of its grain, MAS achieves a simple yet refined linear form that blends seamlessly into a variety of interior styles, from traditional to contemporary. In an effort to develop new and innovative ways of using Japan's native softwoods, the brand incorporates traditional Japanese woodworking skills into furniture structures, focusing on the material's characteristics to explore design expressions that only softwoods can achieve.

Under the design direction of recognized Japanese designer Wataru Kumano and with international designers Ville Kokkonen and Daniel Rybakken, MAS embraces the inherent charm of its chosen material. Each piece enhances the living environment and creates a subtle yet profound connection between people and their surroundings.

The name MAS derives from 'Masu' - a traditional Japanese drinking and measuring vessel - combined with the ambition to overcome the hurdle of using domestic materials and achieving mass production.

ABOUT



MATERIAL

Japan is largely covered by forests, with two-thirds of its land being wooded. Among these, artificial softwood forests cultivated with care by human hands make up about 40%. Since the 1960s, active afforestation efforts have led to the rich growth of these forests over more than half a century, making now the ideal time for their effective utilization. As wooden architecture has declined in modern times, MAS is taking on the challenge of increasing the domestic self-sufficiency of softwood furniture production.

Compared to hardwoods, softwoods grow faster and are easier to process due to their softer nature. However, additional steps are required to ensure their durability. Hardwood is partially used as core material in areas that bear significant weight, such as chair legs, to reinforce the strength of MAS furniture. This combination of different wood types is made possible by Karimoku Furniture's advanced woodworking expertise.

ABOUT



DESIGN

MAS uses a design language that emphasises the unique charm of the materials used. The brand's furniture is characterised by understated, functional, and inclusive elegance, with designs by Wataru Kumano, Ville Kokkonen, and Daniel Rybakken that fit seamlessly into a variety of environments.

By carefully balancing material texture and form to achieve a modern aesthetic while preserving the inherent beauty of wood, Kumano has developed designs that harmonise with modern living spaces, reflecting both contemporary utility and timeless beauty.

ABOUT

MAS - PROJECT HINOKI -

During Milan Design Week 2024, the brand introduced MAS - Project Hinoki -, a research project dedicated to the material which constitutes MAS's main source material and brand DNA.

From architecture to agricultural tools, Hinoki wood has been present in Japanese material culture across time in a various ways. An evergreen tree of the Japanese cypress family, hinoki wood has straight, pale, and pinkish grains. Over the years, it has been rigorously planted for timber, and these forest formations constitute the largest cover after the faster-growing cedar.

Hinoki has been considered a sacred tree species in Japanese culture since ancient times. Traditionally, it has been used as a building material for wooden temples, sanctuaries, and various sacred sites. Due to its high moisture and rot resistance, it has been used in building construction as flooring, posts, columns, and wall paneling. Lightweight and with a soft surface, its use has not been widespread within the furniture industry. Through the combination of Karimoku Furniture's expertise in craftsmanship and a careful design approach, MAS found ways to utilise this valuable material.





DESIGNERS



WATARU KUMANO

Product designer Wataru Kumano studied in Finland from 2001 to 2008 and worked for Jasper Morrison after returning to Japan. He established the design office “kumano” in 2011, and collaborates on projects with domestic and foreign furniture makers such as Nikari, Karimoku and Tendo Mokko. His work is based on the theme of design with a focus on environment, functionality, and regional characteristics. In 2021, he was invited to the Lausanne Cantonal School of Art (ECAL) in Switzerland, and in the autumn of the same year he became an associate professor at Musashino Art University.

VILLE KOKKONEN

Ville Kokkonen is a Finnish industrial designer. His Swiss based office centers on a project portfolio that is driven by technological and scientific discoveries. Kokkonen’s work, which integrates multiple disciplines, spans product design, material and cultural research, crafts, applied sciences and engineering. His works are often results of examined projections towards healthier living conditions and sustainable approaches to problem solving. Kokkonen has lectured in numerous institutions and 2017-2021 held a professorship in furniture design at Aalto university, School of Arts Design and Architecture.



DANIEL RYBAKKEN

Norwegian designer Daniel Rybakken has a Master of Fine Arts in Design. In 2008 he started Studio Daniel Rybakken in Gothenburg, Sweden, and has since then attained international recognition and become one of Scandinavia’s most highly acclaimed designers. He has worked with leading furniture companies such as Luceplan, Artek, Vitra and HAY and on product design with companies like Panasonic, Givenchy and as ‘Illumination Art Director’ for Volvo and Polestar. In 2014 and 2016 Rybakken was awarded the Compasso d’Oro; Italy’s oldest and most prestigious design award, and became the first Scandinavian designer to receive this award.

DESIGN DIRECTOR INTERVIEW WATARU KUMANO

“I want to stir the world of European furniture through the unique technology and sensibility.”



_Could you tell us about the main concept of MAS?

The project's starting point was when Karimoku Furniture asked me what the “standard” of Japanese furniture could be. The standard means neutral products that can fit any environment and embody the brand identity of Karimoku Furniture. After many discussions on issues regarding Japanese forests and wooden furniture, we decided to utilize domestic conifers, particularly cypress, which suffer from low demand even though there is a sufficient amount. Although conifer wood is unsuitable for furniture creation, I thought Karimoku Furniture's technology could make it happen. MAS refers to Japanese “Masu,” a traditional Japanese drinking or measuring vessel made of solid wood with a strong bond with Japanese tradition. MAS also stands for “mass” to indicate mass production realization regardless of the difficulties.

_What are the strengths of coniferous wood?

Broad-leaved wood is hard enough to make elaborate and carefully modeled furniture, but softwoods, such as cedar and cypress, are more suitable for a concise form. I want to make MAS in the image of a well-crafted mallet-like piece. We require mallets to have a firm grip, a comfortable feel, and a solid function rather than a beautiful appearance. It is one of the ideal designs I am seeking, emphasising coniferous wood's inherent qualities.

_Which role does Karimoku Furniture play in the manufacturing of MAS?

Compared to international wooden furniture manufacturers, Karimoku Furniture has great expertise when it comes to technical knowledge of working with different woods. Thanks to their "high-tech and high-touch" concept, Karimoku Furniture can utilise those coniferous wood. Talking of wood, people are sensitive enough to understand the quality. I think I don't need to emphasize it. I want MAS to stir the world of furniture through its Japanese technology and sensibility.

_What is the charm of wooden furniture to you?

In the present situation, designers should avoid using non-reproducible materials to make products. In this sense, wood has great potential as a material that returns to nature. Because it is a living material, we can make unique furniture from it. Until recently, when making furniture, it was important to focus on how the grain and colour of the wood were uniform, but now the difference and unique expressions are valued as individuality. This is another area where I feel there is great potential in relation to trees.

SELECTED COLLECTION OVERVIEW



WK Armchair 01



DR Chair 01



VK Divider



SELECTED COLLECTION OVERVIEW



DR Dining Table 01



WK Stool 01



WK Shelf Bench

CONTACT

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