



GEORGE NAKASHIMA

Cocktail Table

walnut

16 1/2 x 65 3/4 x 32 1/8 in.

29548

George Nakashima (1905 – 1990) was trained as an architect at the University of Washington and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Early in his career, Nakashima used this training to work on architectural projects overseas, studying design and spiritual traditions in places including Paris, India, and Japan. However, he soon became disillusioned with the inadequate workmanship and separation between design and construction in the high modernist architecture popular at the time. Instead, he decided to pursue woodworking. This decision was interrupted when Nakashima was interned in the Idaho desert by the United States government following the Pearl Harbor attacks. While interned, Nakashima learned the intricacies of Japanese woodworking from a fellow prisoner and, soon after his release in 1943, opened his furniture studio in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Nakashima oversaw every step of the production process and emphasized the use of hand tools to maintain a connection between the maker and the art object. Nakashima's furniture reflects his deeply held belief in the spirituality of trees and a desire to preserve the spirit of the tree in his finished pieces. To this end, he explored the organic expressiveness of wood by choosing boards with knots, burls, and figured grain and preserving these abnormalities in the finished product. In the past few decades, Nakashima's work has become extremely collectible and his style of woodworking, known as the "free-edge" aesthetic, has become influential for designers worldwide.

Nakashima's was awarded the Gold Craftsmanship Medal from the American Institute of Architects (1952), the Gold Medal and Title of "Japanese American of the Biennium in the Field of the Arts" from the Japanese American Citizens League (1980), and the Third Order of the Sacred Treasure from the Japanese government (1983). His work is represented in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Rockefeller family collection, and numerous other institutions worldwide. In 2014, his studio in New Hope, Pennsylvania was named a historic landmark.

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