

Artist's Statement...

To follow in very large footsteps is always a difficult task, particularly in an artistic tradition. In the modern Western artistic world, expression of ego has been the necessary requirement, and respect is earned by breaking, rather than following, tradition. In the Eastern cultures, tradition is as revered as ancestors, for they are the product of many centuries of wisdom and experience, and provide grounding for the current generation.

When my father died in 1990, a Japanese architect explained to me that there are basically three ways of passing on a tradition:

1. To study and memorize thoroughly the teachings of the Master, and strive to imitate the forms as true to the original as possible, as in the Tea Ceremony traditions.
2. To study with the Master and memorize as much as possible, but be creative enough to "branch out" from the main trunk of information, as in the various schools of flower arrangement.
3. To completely assume the name and status of the Master, but to have a different persona, as in the Kabuki tradition.

My friend suggested that I probably fall into a category similar to the flower arrangement traditions, striving to keep the forms and structure as pure and as close as to the original as possible, yet daring to branch out on my own when inspiration strikes, without breaking the mold in the process.



George Nakashima, *Asa-no-ha Cabinet*, 1974

Our ultimate inspiration is still taken from the masterful George Nakashima tradition, the idiosyncracies of trees and wood, as well as from the requests of clients and designers. To maintain our viability for the future, we also are training a new generation of woodworkers not only in the values of good craftsmanship, but the "variety of sameness," patience, humility, honesty and a reverence for the material itself.

-Mira Nakashima, 2007

"The best Nakashima work embodies a subtle relationship, a tension, if you will, between natural and man-made forms, between curves and straight lines, between discipline and freedom."

-Mira Nakashima

Acknowledgment...

We are deeply grateful to **Mira Nakashima-Yarnall** and **Patricia Le Helmick** for agreeing to exhibit their work at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art in Ligonier Valley. We are honored to have two internationally known artists of such high caliber in our gallery. It is a great opportunity for us and for the people in the community to see such great and unique talent on display. We would like to thank the artists for their help in underwriting the cost of this exhibit, along with our very generous museum patrons, **Dr. and Mrs. Joseph F. Novak** and **Mr. Jeffrey Williamson**, for being our main exhibition sponsors. Thanks, too, to **Mr. David Barowich**, who very generously lent his furniture to the exhibit. It was a great pleasure to arrange this exhibition, collaborate with Mira and Patricia and bring it to the Ligonier Valley.

-Janet M. Bucciarelli, Museum Coordinator



George Nakashima, *Conoid End Table*, 1978

Mira Nakashima-Yarnall

Kevin Nakashima

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Altoona

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Nature, Form and Spirit

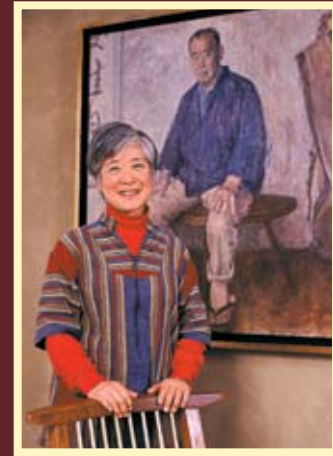
The Unique Furniture of George Nakashima and Mira Nakashima-Yarnall



Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art
Ligonier Valley

August 4 - November 11

George Nakashima and Mira Nakashima-Yarnall



Mira Nakashima-Yarnall with a portrait of her father

In 1983, Japanese Emperor Hirohito declared master woodworker and world-renowned furniture designer, **George Nakashima (1905-1990)**, “A National Treasure.” Born of Samurai lineage to Japanese parents in Spokane, Wash., he developed a deep love and understanding of trees and the natural environment. Trained as an architect at the University of Washington (BA) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MA), he began his professional career as an architect in Tokyo in 1937, where he quickly established himself as a unique talent among the leading architects of the time, notably Antonin Raymond, Frank Lloyd Wright’s collaborator.

Nakashima returned to the United States when WWII broke out, and in 1942, he, his wife, and daughter Mira were sent to an internment camp in Mindoka, Idaho. While there, he learned the art of traditional Japanese carpentry, using salvaged wood. Nakashima soon discovered a passion for furniture making, which was fueled by his love for nature and the reverence he felt for the soul of a tree. Nakashima stated: *“We work this material to fulfill the yearning of nature to find destiny, to give this absolute inanimate object a second life, to release its richness, its beauty, to read its history in life.”*

Upon his release, he was invited by his friend and associate, Antonin Raymond, to New Hope, Pa. where Raymond had a farm. George accepted the invitation, and for the next fifty years, he worked in his studio there almost daily until his death. It was there that he created the beautiful, innovative furniture he is famous for today, crafting furniture that was not only functional, but reflected and revealed the natural rhythms of the trees’ lines and grain. By focusing on the wood’s inherent, natural beauty, yet without sacrificing practicality, he felt the destiny of the wood had been fulfilled.

His major commissions include furniture for the late Gov. Nelson Rockefeller; interiors for Columbia University; Mt. Holyoke College; International Paper Corp.; the Monastery of Christ in the Desert in Abiquiu, New Mexico; the Altar of Peace in the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City; and the Church of Christ the King in Katsura, Kyoto, Japan. The Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Fine Art in Boston, the Smithsonian Institution and the Renwick Gallery are a few of the many institutions that have hosted exhibitions of his work.

Mira Nakashima-Yarnall, the only daughter of George and Marion Nakashima, was born in Seattle in 1942. After a year-long stay in a Japanese detention camp, her family traveled to New Hope, where her father founded Nakashima Woodworking Studios. For twelve years, Mira was an only child (until the birth of her brother, Kevin), and was a frequent visitor to her father’s studios. Deeply steeped in the Japanese spiritual traditions of Zen Buddhism, and “the way of the warrior” (bushido), she learned not only the art of furniture making, but a philosophy and way of life. She also inherited her father’s strength of character, affinity for hard work, and moral idealism along with his great talent.

When her father passed away in 1990, Mira assumed the role of sole designer for Nakashima Studios. Although she was a cum laude graduate of Harvard University with a degree in Architectural Science and had a successful career of her own, she knew it was time to follow the path that her father had forged and fulfill her destiny. She now lovingly crafts furniture in the design tradition that he started and has added innovative new lines of her own design. She has exhibited work in fine museums around the world and has won numerous awards, and is considered one of the world’s best furniture designers. As the head of Nakashima Woodworking Studios, she lives in New Hope with her husband John Yarnall and various members of her family.

-Janet M. Bucciarelli, Museum Coordinator

CATALOGUE

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Mira Chair, 1953
Walnut, 27”h x 19”w x 17”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Sliding Door Cabinet with Grilled Doors, 1954
English walnut, pandanus cloth
32½”h x 84”w x 20”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Set of Three Amoeba Tables, 1954
Walnut, 17½”h x 18½”w x 18”d
18½”h x 18½”w x 20½”d
20½”h x 17”w x 21½”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Walnut “New” Chairs, 1955
Walnut, 37”h x 18”w x 18”d each
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak



Mira Nakashima, *Concordia Chair*, 2007

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Turned-leg Dining Table, 1955
English walnut, 28½”h x 42”w x 42”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Grass-seated stool, 1956
English walnut, woven grass, 17”h x 18”w x 16”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Bench with Shelf Underneath, 1956
English walnut, 12½”h x 68½”w x 18”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Mirror with Frame, 1956
English walnut, mirrored glass,
34”h x 36”w x 4”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak



George Nakashima, *Conoid Room Divider*, 1990

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Chest of Drawers, 1956
Walnut, 36”h x 34”w x 20”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Desk Lamp, 1957
English walnut and rice paper
19”h x 9”w x 7”d
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Novak

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Conoid Bench with Back and Spindles, 1962
Walnut, 29”h x 96”w x 27”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
East Indian Rosewood Coffee Table, 1963
Rosewood, 11¾”h x 48”w x 48”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich



Mira Nakashima, *Conoid Chair*, 2007

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Asa-no-ha Floor Lamp, 1971
Hinoki and black walnut, 60”h x 24”w x 24”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Kornblut Case, 1974
Walnut, 30”h x 30”w x 21½”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Odakyu Cabinet, 1974
Walnut, white cedar, grass cloth
26”h x 57½”w x 18”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Special Size Desk Lamp, 1978
Walnut and rice paper
28½”h x 11½”w x 19½”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Conoid Cross-legged End Table, 1978
English walnut root, English walnut
26”h x 35”w x 21”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Claro End Table, Minguren I Base, 1983
Walnut burl, 21”h x 26½”w x 30”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

George Nakashima (American, 1905-1990)
Conoid Room Divider, 1990
Persian walnut, grass cloth, 24”h x 84”w x 22”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich

Mira Nakashima-Yarnall (American, b. 1942)
Maya Coffee Table, 2002
Redwood burl and walnut
15”h x 25”w x 35”d
Collection of Mr. David Barowich



George Nakashima, *Mira Chairs*, 1953

Mira Nakashima-Yarnall (American, b. 1942)
Conoid Host Chair, 2007
Walnut, 37”h x 18”w x 22”d
Courtesy of the Artist

Mira Nakashima-Yarnall (American, b. 1942)
Conoid Coffee Table, 2007
English walnut, 14”h x 32”w x 35”d
Courtesy of the Artist

Mira Nakashima-Yarnall (American, b. 1942)
Conoid Chair, 2007
Walnut, 36”h x 16”w x 20”d
Courtesy of the Artist