The Application Guidelines for the Sixth Annual
“Kengo Kuma & Higashikawa” KAGU Design Competition

● Introduction:

We are entering an era in which the value and potential of rural communities are being rediscovered. Higashikawa, the "Town of Photography" and the "Cultural Capital of Photography," is a small town in Hokkaido, surrounded by the Daisetsuzan Mountains and blessed with abundant pure groundwater. With the aim of enriching everyday life through architecture and furniture, the town has launched a new initiative in collaboration with architect Kengo Kuma, who has long been interested in the role of design and architecture in rural communities.

Despite its small size, Higashikawa is home to a thriving furniture industry and has developed initiatives that could only emerge from such a community. One example is the “Your Chair” project, an initiative through which the entire town supports its children from the moment they are born, giving them a sense of belonging as they grow up surrounded by wooden furniture from early childhood through their school years. Upon graduating from junior high school, they take home the chairs they have used and cared for over the previous three years. Through experiences like these, children grow to appreciate craftsmanship.

Building on this tradition, we are now launching a new project to nurture the next generation of creators and leaders. Architect Kengo Kuma, an advocate for the use of local resources and architecture as a means of strengthening regional communities, has joined us in this effort. Together, Kengo Kuma and the town of Higashikawa seek to explore new ways of living through architecture and furniture.

● Purpose:

The town of Higashikawa is a major producer of Asahikawa furniture. In Japanese, the word for furniture is KAGU. However, KAGU represents values that extend beyond the conventional notion of furniture. Rather than serving only a practical function, KAGU connects people with the world around them and encourages a more mindful way of living. We hope you will propose designs that help deepen this sensibility.

Today, we use countless objects in our daily lives, yet we rarely consider where they come from, how they are made, or how they are meant to be used. In pursuing convenience and efficiency, we often consume and discard things without forming lasting relationships with them. This has created a significant strain on the way we live.

Through the KAGU Design Competition, we hope to give shape to ideas that can be cherished and used for many years to come. We believe that such designs can help foster a more mindful way of living.

● Contest Details:

Theme: Quiet Furniture

- The work must be designed by the applicant in strict accordance with these guidelines, the law and competition rules.
- The work must be the applicant's original work and be previously unpublished except for class work or graduation displays.

A Message from Kengo Kuma, Head Judge

When you wake up in Higashikawa, the stillness that greets you feels unlike anything else.

In that stillness, deep sleep restores harmony between mind and body, allowing us to reconnect with the world.

Surrounded by the gentle, understated sounds of nature, such as the murmur of flowing water and the subtle chorus of insects, we are reminded that human beings, too, belong to the natural world.

Furniture that resonates with such tranquility. Furniture that embodies the quietness found in nature.

We invite you to bring your creativity and imagination to “Quiet Furniture” that inspires us to see the world with fresh eyes and reconnect with it.

Kengo Kuma

Head Judge of the “Kengo Kuma & Higashikawa”

KAGU Design Competition

● Eligibility:

Students who are 30 years old or younger and enrolled in an educational institution at the time of application are eligible to participate.

Group entries are also accepted, provided that all members meet these requirements.

● Number of Entries:

One entry per applicant or per group.

Each individual may participate in only one submission, whether as an individual or as a member of a group.

Submitting multiple entries—such as entering both individually and as part of a group, or joining more than one group—is not permitted.

● Application Fee: none

● Submission:

The submitted work must satisfy the following requirements. Entries must be submitted in PDF format.

Materials: Natural materials, with wood as the primary material.

Dimensions: The submitted model must be at a scale ranging from 1:5 to 1:1. At full scale (1:1), the sum of the width, depth, and height must not exceed 5 meters

● Inquiries:

To make an inquiry, please send your name and contact information to the following email address. The Secretariat will respond as soon as possible.

Email address to contact: official@kagu-higashikawa.jp

●Application Period and How to Apply:

Submission period: Wednesday, July 1, 2026 – Wednesday, September 30, 2026, at 12:00 PM (JST)

Please submit the following items during the application period using the application form on our website. Entries not submitted through the form, that contain inappropriate or false information, or that do not meet the requirements may be invalidated.

① Submission【File Format: PDF】:

- The title, concept, and description of the design, together with sketches, drawings, CG renderings, or photographs of the model, should fit on a single A3 sheet (landscape orientation, single-sided).The minimum font size is 10 points.
- Only English or Japanese may be used.
- The work should not include any expressions, symbols, or characters that may identify the entrant.
- The submission should be an A3 PDF file.
- The file size must be 3MB or less.

② A document certifying that you are a student enrolled in an educational institution. In the case of a group entry, please submit one for all members. 【File Format: PDF, jpeg or GIF】:

- This document can be an enrollment certificate or student ID card, etc. showing that you are a student enrolled in an educational institution. It should be PDF, jpeg, or GIF format.
- The file size must be 1MB or less per file.

● Important Notes:

- Please use an e-mail address that can receive e-mails from the organizer.
  The Secretariat is unable to send emails to the following domains: @mail.ru, @bk.ru, @list.ru, @inbox.ru
- A confirmation email will be sent after completing your application. If you do not receive it, check your spam folder or verify your registration information.
- After the deadline, entries cannot be modified or cancelled.
- The applicant is responsible for all costs associated with the production of the work.
- If your work uses images or illustrations that may infringe on third-party rights, you must obtain the necessary permission beforehand.
- Entries found to infringe on others' rights, including copyright, may be canceled. Applicants are solely responsible for resolving any third-party claims or lawsuits at their own risk and expense; the organizer and sponsors are not liable.
- Entries identical or similar to previously published designs, or judged to infringe on others' rights, may also be canceled. The organizer is not responsible for any resulting disputes.

● Judging:

- 10 works will be selected as finalists by the judges in mid-January 2027.
- The selected applicants and their works will be announced on the competition official website, as well as by individual correspondence.

・Final judging will be conducted from the 10 selected works to determine the winners of each award.
・The applicants selected as finalists will be asked to submit the following by the date specified by the organizer prior to the final judging. ※The details will be notified separately to the selected applicants.
・a presentation script
・A 1:5 to 1:1 scale model of the design, made of natural materials with wood as the primary material (submitted models will not be returned).
・In the final judging, the judges will decide on each award based on the submitted works and the presentation.
・In principle, finalists are expected to attend the award ceremony to be held in Higashikawa, Hokkaido, Japan. (Scheduled to be March 19, 2027)
・In the event that there is any falsehood in the information entered on the application form, any violation of the application guidelines, or any other circumstances that are deemed inappropriate, the entry will not be judged and the prize may be withdrawn.
・We are unable to respond to enquiries about the judging process, criteria, results or other related matters.

● Final Judging and the Awards Ceremony Date:
Friday, March 19, 2027. The planned location is Higashikawa, Hokkaido, Japan.

● Awards (Prize Money and Additional Prizes)
- ➢ Grand Prize (Kengo Kuma Award, 1 entry): ¥500,000 cash prize/ rights for commercialization
- ➢ Second Prize (SOLIZE Award, 1 entry): ¥200,000 cash prize
- ➢ Excellence Award (1 entry): ¥100,000 cash prize (each)
- ➢ Honorable Mention (7 entries): No cash prize
- ➢【Special Award】Higashikawa Woodworking Association Award (1 entry from the above award winners): Opportunity for commercialization ※The winning design will be realized at full scale.

※ The prizewinners will be invited to attend the final judging and the awards ceremony.
※International prizewinners must have a valid passport. The time between selection and application is short, so please prepare your passport in advance.
※Prizewinners will be provided with accommodations in Higashikawa and round-trip transportation from the airport closest to their home to Higashikawa. For group entries, up to two members may be invited.
※For the Grand Prize (Kengo Kuma Award) and the Special Award (Higashikawa Woodworking Association Award), the organizer and relevant business partners will discuss commercialization. Final decisions will be based on technical and financial feasibility and consultations with the prizewinners.
※When visiting Higashikawa for meetings on product commercialization, prizewinners can meet local woodworking businesses and observe or participate in production sites. Travel expenses (round-trip from the airport closest to the prizewinner's residence) and accommodation costs in Higashikawa will be fully covered by the organizer for one visit only.

● Judges:（Lineup to Be Announced）

- ➢ Head judge: Kengo Kuma (Architect, Professor at the University of Tokyo)
- ➢ Judges:
  - ✧Eisuke Tachikawa (Design Strategist, Evolutionary Thinker, Representative of NOSIGNER)
  - ✧Asao Tokolo (Artist)
  - ✧Hiroshi Nakamura (Architect, NAP Architectural Design Office)
  - ✧Masahiro Harada (Architect, Professor at Shibaura Institute of Technology)
  - ✧Katsuhiko Hibino (Artist, President of Tokyo University of the Arts)
  - ✧Teppei Fujiwara (Architect, Associate Professor at Yokohama National University)
  - ✧Toshiko Mori (Professor Emerita at Harvard Graduate School of Design)
  - ✧Noritsugu Oda (Chair Researcher and Design Advisor to the town of Higashikawa)
- ➢ Judges for Special Award (Higashikawa Woodworking Association Award):
  - ✧Higashikawa Woodworking Association -think woods-
    (Association of wood-related businesses in Higashikawa)

● Legal Matters:

- ・All submitted works, including samples, remain the organizer's property and will not be returned.
- ・All copyright and design rights to the submitted works belong to the applicant(s).
- ・If your work is commercialized, we will discuss legal matters with you separately.
- ・The organizer reserves the right to display the work and use it in print, online, or other publicity.
- ・The organizer or its designee may use the submitted work freely for exhibition, publication, editing, reproduction, distribution, etc., without notice, and the entrant must not interfere.
- ・The organizer or sponsors may use the submitted works for promotion at no charge.
- ・The organizer will have the right of first refusal in the case of commercialization.

● Disclaimer:

- ・The organizer is not liable for any loss or damage incurred by entrants, except in cases of intentional misconduct or gross negligence.
- ・The schedule and contents of this competition are subject to change without prior notice.

● Organizer:

➢"Kengo Kuma & Higashikawa" KAGU Design Competition Executive Committee

✧Composed of: The Town of Higashikawa, Higashikawa Chamber of Commerce, Higashikawa Tourism Association, Higashikawa Agricultural Cooperative, Higashikawa Construction Association, Higashikawa Forestry Association, Higashikawa Promotion Corporation, Asahikawa Furniture Cooperative, The Higashikawa Town Council, The Higashikawa Board of Education, Higashikawa Woodworking Association -think woods-

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