

HOME FURNISHINGS

## Roche Bobois infuses new collection with Japanese flavor thanks to Kenzo Takada

June 30, 2017



*The Mah Jong sofa redesigned by Kenzo Takada. Image credit: Roche Bobois*

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK French home furnishings brand Roche Bobois' latest iteration of its iconic Mah Jong sofa comes with an infusion of Japanese sensibility thanks to collaborator Kenzo Takada.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Mr. Takada, who launched the Kenzo fashion brand, now owned by LVMH, in 1970, and Roche Bobois creative director Nicolas Roche spoke on a panel discussion June 29 at the brand's store on Madison Avenue about the genesis of the collaboration and how Mr. Takada's experiences in Japan and France shaped his current sensibilities and the new collection. The Roche Bobois pieces Mr. Takada has designed follow a three-part theme relating to morning, mid-day and evening.

"I was still sketching mostly European trends, so when I first started in 1970 I had to look for an identity for my work," Mr. Takada said, through a translator. "I decided to go back to my roots, acquire Japanese textiles and incorporate a mixture of Japanese influences and European styles."

"I was one of the first to do that. It was very new at the time," he said.

### East and West

Roche Bobois' Mah Jong sofa is one of the brand's most iconic pieces, partly because it is versatile and simple.

Because of that simplicity, it is the perfect canvas for Roche Bobois to bring in outside designers to make their own mark on the sofa.

Mr. Takada, while primarily known for his fashions, was brought on due to his own desire to work more in furniture design as well as Mr. Roche' love for his work.

The designer spoke at length about the overlap between the two disciplines of fashion and home design, with fabric being the link between them.



*Kenzo Takada. Image credit: Wikimedia*

Mr. Takada was born in Japan, but went to France in the 1960s to work in design. Due to his international upbringing, he brings unique and eclectic combination of influences to all of his designs.

"When I traveled from Japan to France in 1964, I took a boat instead of a plane," Mr. Takada said. "It was a big culture shock.

"I went all around Asia, India, Africa to get to France," he said. "Everything I saw through my traveling is mixed in, but there's always a little touch of Japan in there."

This focus on textiles from Japan informed the design of the new Mah Jong sofa. Mr. Roche also expounded on the history of the sofa from its humble origins to its high-class standing today.

"It was designed in 1971, so in this period, the target of the Mah Jong sofa was not the same as today," Mr. Roche said. "The aim was to make a very affordable and economic product for everyone.

"[The design] was very basic and covered with a simple fabric but that's what makes it so versatile," he said.

#### Eclectic influences

Roche Bobois has made it a habit to recruit designers from outside the home decor world to come in and collaborate on a collection.

Before Mr. Takada, the brand had worked closely with Christian Lacroix for a collection last year.

In a series of 20 exclusive pieces, Christian Lacroix translates its signature over-the-top aesthetic into more accessible interior pieces, ranging from accessories to larger upholstered and wooden furniture. Representing Christian Lacroix's first foray into furniture, the capsule collection follows Roche Bobois' collaborations with other high-end fashion labels, including Missoni, Sonia Rykiel and Jean Paul Gaultier ([see story](#)).



*Nicolas Roche. Image credit: Roche Bobois*

These collaborations tend to arise naturally, with Mr. Roche and his team seeking out designers whose sensibilities they admire and communicating with them, rather than choosing someone arbitrarily without any initial conversations or meetings to judge whether it is a good fit or not.

"We don't really pick collaborators out of the blue," Mr. Roche said.

"For each season I have some trends in mind and I ask our designers in search of similar designers," he said. "We select people who will be right for this mood and this moment and we work with them to create something together."

---

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.