

# sculpture

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## SEATTLE Kazuo Kadonaga

Solomon Fine Art

Kazuo Kadonaga is a 59-year-old sculptor who has exhibited in the U.S. since 1981 and has studios in Los Angeles and Tsurugi-machi, Japan. His third solo show in Seattle since 2003, featuring a half-dozen works in wood, paper, and glass, provided a focused view of this remarkable artist's approach to materials, process, and form. While North American artists currently flirting with traditional materials like wood, paper, metals, and glass often feel constrained or divided by spurious art/craft divisions, Kadonaga and other Japanese artists (beginning with Noguchi) feel no such hang-ups. As a result, Kadonaga also emphasizes process and reveals new qualities within his materials.

*Glass No. 3 T, W, and Z (all 2004)* play off the liquidity of glass in its molten state. Thin streams of clear or green-tinted molten glass were coiled into flat-topped piles. In previous installations at Suyama Space in Seattle, Kadonaga took this approach to breathtaking extremes in terms of scale- some piles were over four feet high. Here, the sculptures (no higher than 20 inches) were set on pedestals. More intimate and delicate in character, they have a commanding power all their own.

Setting Kadonaga within a context of Japanese pottery, one could note how the glass coils resemble coil-built pots constructed of strands of clay. In *Glass No. 3T*, however (and in the other glassworks), there is no central void as in a pot. Put another way, the allusion to a ceramic pot allows the viewer to look into an imaginary inner void that is completely filled by glass. With bases wider than their tops, the glass pieces further reinforce the reference to traditional vessels. The bubbly nature of the glass also creates an illusion of flowing water, setting up a perpetually sparkling quality on the surface.

Such incremental layering may have begun with Kadonaga's explorations of handmade paper in the early 1980s, as in *Paper #1 (1983)*. Sheets are loosely stacked and then affixed together at one side as in a book binding. Mounted on a wall with the "binding" at the top, they subverted conventional

expectations of book art as well as of sculpture using paper.

Equally interesting, the carved and sawn wood logs are redolent of comparable intervention and control. After removing the outer bark and smoothing the cylindrical surface, Kadonaga meticulously lays down saw marks that crisscross the log's end in a modified tic-tac-toe pattern. The regularity of the cut grid may symbolize manmade intrusions into nature such as logging (in the context of Pacific Northwest).

*Wood No. 5 B1 (1982)* emphasizes the natural yellow color of cut cedar. Its end-grain grid pattern is evidenced along the log's side by deep splits that serve as dividing lines. Compared to the poured-glass pieces, the wood sculptures suggest a reductive rather than an additive process. *Wood No. 11 BM (1982)* contains the greater imperfections of cypress wood, making it appear more rustic than its companion.

Whether or not Kadonaga's sculptures are indeed "meditations on life and death," as one Seattle critic put it, the viewer is free to appreciate and interpret the implications of the artist's actions. Kadonaga is among a number of sculptors who seek the essence of a given material by pushing any inherent tensile strength it may have to its limits.

— Matthew Kongos,