

Gallery displays glass sculptures

Japanese modern artist Kazuo Kadonaga molds 'evocative' creatures



Eight of Kazuo Kadonaga's 19 glass sculptures are on display in the University Art Gallery through March 6. Aaron Pratts/Daily Aztec

SUCLPTURES: Glass rests, slowly cooling for 120 days

By A. Jaynelle St. Jean Contributor

From Japan to Mexico, in Australia and throughout Europe, Kazuo Kadonaga's glass sculptures have received international acclaim.

The exhibition now sits in the university's very own backyard, hosted by the University Art Gallery.

The translucent green mounds - evocative creatures in a science fiction novel - are the latest work of Japanese modern artist Kazuo Kadonaga, and will be on display through March 6.

"This is to bring to students international work," gallery director Tina Yapelli said. "Where else are our students going to see work from Japan?"

Eight of the 19-piece series are being shown, the heaviest weighing 1,900 pounds.

The production process entails time and patience, 48 hours to pour a continuous string of molten glass from a furnace located 10 feet above a preheated kiln, Ric Collier, director of the Salt Lake Art Center in Salt Lake City, said in an essay about Kadonaga.

The grass threads through a 12-inch opening in the top of the kiln onto a steel plate inside. Therein a closed, computer-controlled environment the random accumulation of liquid glass will rest, slowly cooling for 120 days to room temperature before it is removed, he said.

Because each sculpture takes so much time, Kadonaga can only produce a maximum of four pieces each year, his wife Yumiko said.

A portion of this process is shown on video as a part of the exhibit. The tape rolls for hours showing the seemingly endless stream of fiery glass pouring from above.

Each piece takes on its own shape.

With the help of his wife as a translator, Kadonaga said he does not consider himself a glass artist.

His main concern is choosing a common material and researching its properties to find the best way to exploit the material. For example, when he worked with wood, he used cutting or chopping.

He wants to let them express themselves as simply as possible, he said.

Kadonaga is known for his work with ordinary materials. In the past he's used paper, wood, bamboo and silkworm cocoons, which began to hatch while on display.

"The glass works assembled for this exhibit present the viewer with confirmation of the artist's successful collaboration with a common material, a simple process and an unpredictable environment," Collier said.

Books featuring this display and others are on sale in the University Art Gallery, located on the fourth floor of the Art building at the east end. It has been hosting the works of artists as renowned as Kadonaga since the late 1970s.

"The goal of all exhibitions at the University Art Gallery is to feature artworks that broaden your perception of art and expand the borders of what you encounter in your academic studies," Yapelli said. The exhibition is sponsored by the School of Art, Design and Art History; the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts; and the fund for instructionally related activities. Additional support was provided by the University Art Council."