



Salt Lake Art Center Autumn

November 25, 2001

KAZUO KADONAGA

Wood Paper Bamboo Glass

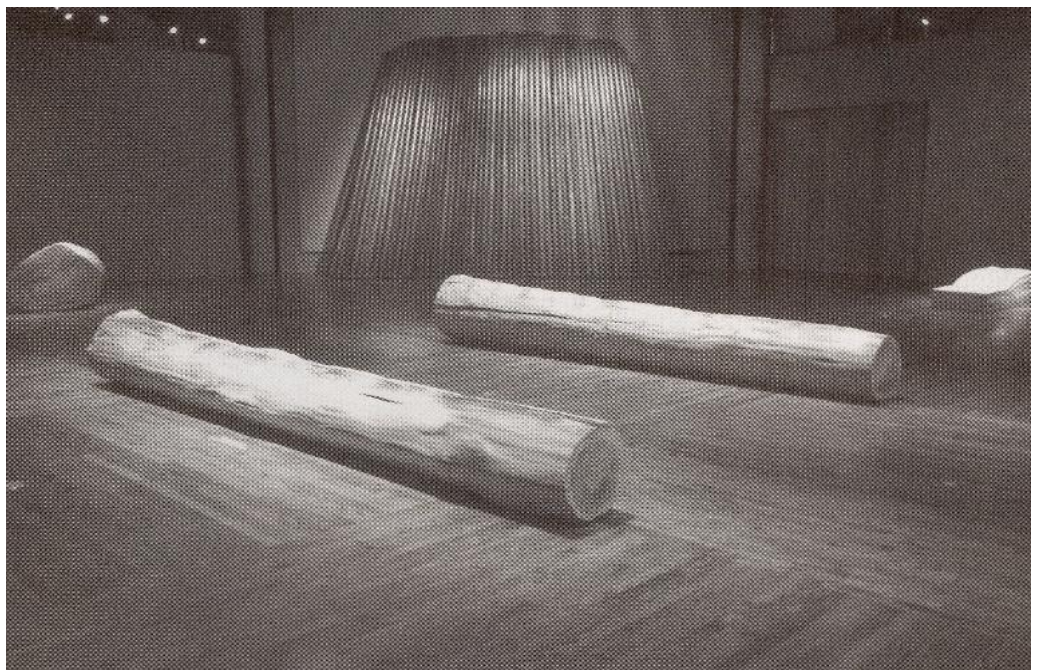
This exhibit made possible by grants from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and The George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation

Japanese artist Kazuo Kadonaga eliminates all arbitrary elements from his art, seeking to demonstrate the inherent composition and qualities of natural materials. His work is distinguished by a direct engagement with the physical properties of materials—wood, bamboo, paper or glass—and a system that makes visible the hidden activity of seemingly static matter. Utah audiences have an unprecedented opportunity to view the work of this important international artist currently on display in the Main Gallery of the Salt Lake Art Center.

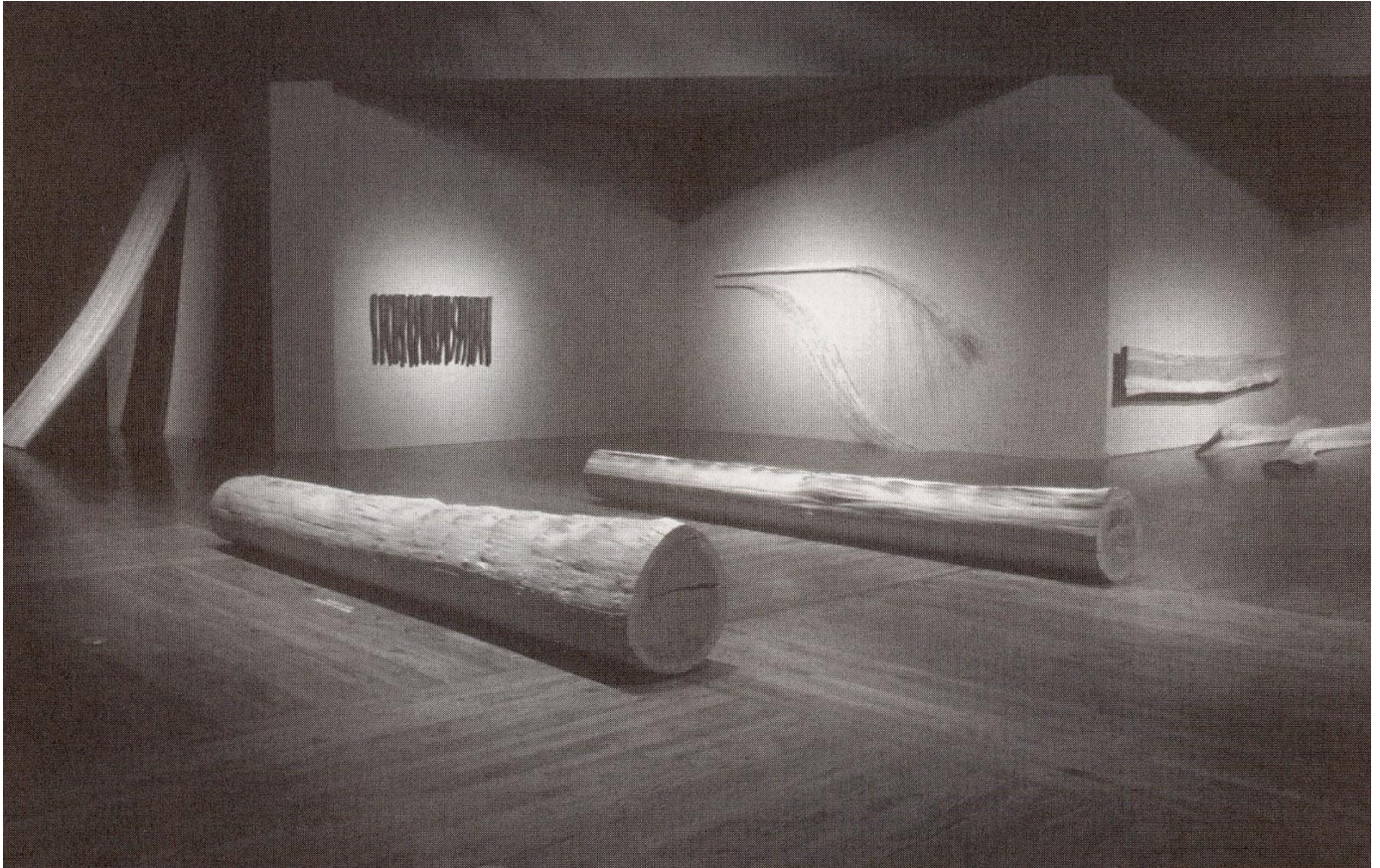
The gallery has been transformed by monumental pieces of wood and glass, arrangements of bamboo and handmade paper. Each object has been manipulated by the artist to allow it to react to the environment in which it is placed, thus allowing the material to determine form by itself. For instance, a barkless log is laid supine on the floor. It has been cut lengthwise, in paper-thin sheets and reassembled. As the wood responds to changes in temperature and humidity, the paper-thin sheets react and change the surface and appearance of the log. Viewers meet the character and essence of the material head-on as the sheets buckle and curl in random patterns. In an

installation entitled *Conversation Between Wood and Bamboo*, Mr. Kadonaga dried a large number of wood pieces and bamboo until they were on the verge of cracking, and then placed them in the gallery. A chair was placed in the center of the gallery under a spotlight. Viewers were asked to sit on the chair, and if they kept perfectly still, they could eventually hear the sound of the wood and bamboo cracking, revealing the differences in the two materials aurally as well as visually.

Kazuo Kadonaga began making art in earnest in 1971. He was drawn first to wood because his family ran a lumber mill and he was familiar with the material. And, notes the artist, "It was cheap!" In the 1980s he adopted paper and glass as materials on which to focus. In both situations and in addressing subsequent materials, it was his practice to immerse himself in the



Kazuo Kadonaga. Wood Paper Bamboo Glass. Installation view. main Gallery, Salt Lake Art Center, 2001 Photo: tracy Longley-Cook



Kazuo Kadonaga. Wood Paper Bamboo Glass.
installation view main Gallery, Salt Lake Art Center, 2001 **Photo: tracy Longley-Cook**

process of their manufacture and the observation of their properties before beginning to create art objects.

As Josine Ianco-Starrels writes in the catalogue which accompanies the exhibition, "He (Kadonaga) literally and figuratively placed a spotlight on wood, paper, bamboo, silk and most recently, glass. In a serial manner, each element became the topic of his scrutiny; he analyzed their component parts, tested their attributes and examined their intrinsic characteristics, noting their responses to change in environmental factors such as fluctuations in humidity or reaction to forceful impact. Each in turn had its moment under the microscope of his curiosity, driven by an unrelenting desire to discover and reveal their unique qualities."

Of Mr. Kadonaga's work, Salt Lake Art Center Director Ric Collier says, "From my first encounter with Kazuo's work at the Space Gallery in Los Angeles in the early 80's, I have been intrigued, confused and heartened by its evolution. Kazuo has remained deliberate and patient in his investigations of natural materials, natural process and intentional alteration. His commitment of time and resources is remarkable in a world characterized by a short attention span, limited memory and desire for instant fame.

Kazuo challenges himself and his materials to find balance—an equilibrium—between the restrictions of

manual change, the uncertainty of discovery and the development of objects. While the resulting works are quite beautiful and mysterious, they are but by-products of the artist's consuming passion to pursue the unknown through untested investigation of the manipulation of natural materials in a controlling yet unpredictable environment. With this exhibition, Kazuo and I collaborate for the third time—a collaboration that involves our cultural differences, his objects and an entirely new space in a community not familiar with his art. Like our relationship, the work, while familiar, continues to inform, engage and change."

Mr. Kadonaga has had solo exhibitions at galleries throughout the United States, including the Alexandria Museum of Art, Louisiana; Blue Star Art Space and the Southwest Craft Center, both in San Antonio, Texas; Grand Rapids Art Museum, Michigan; Space Gallery, Los Angeles; Contemporary Arts Center, Honolulu and has been featured in solo and group exhibitions in Japan, Sweden, Germany, Australia and the Netherlands.

Wood Paper Bamboo Glass is co-curated by the Salt Lake Art Center Director Ric Collier and Hirokazu Kosaka, Director of Visual Arts, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center.

A catalog accompanies the exhibit