

San Francisco Chronicle

Sculptor brings new twist to glass

By Kenneth Baker, San Francisco Chronicle - Galleries

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Sculptors who work with glass risk having what they make belittled as "glass art," a decorator's idea of sculpture.

Japanese artist Kazuo Kadonaga may not have known that his glass pieces showing at Limn would face this critical handicap. He need not have worried in any case: His pieces evoke interests and references beyond the context of glass art.

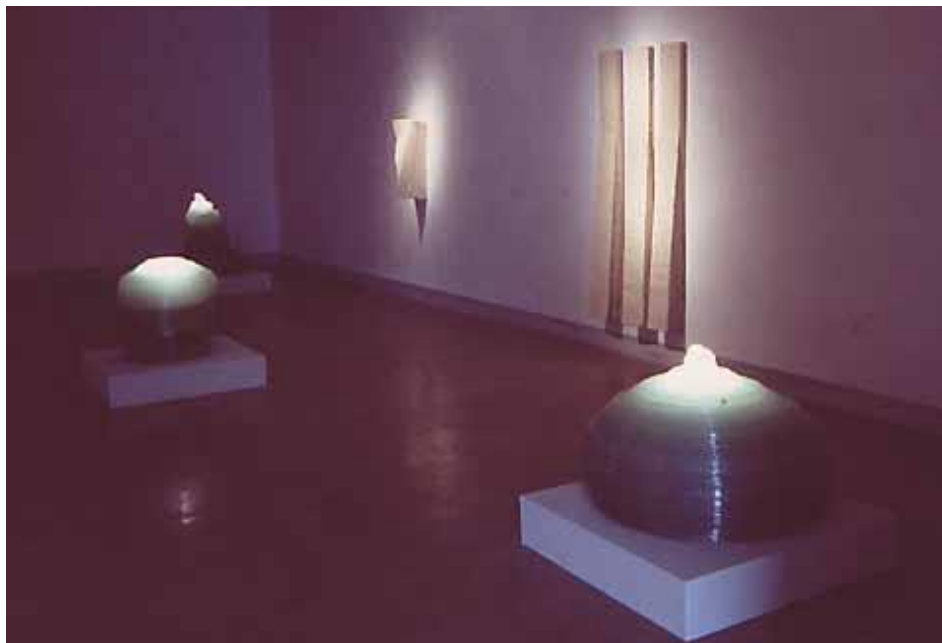
Kadonaga's sculptures are squat mounds of glass whose slumping, tapered forms suggest heaps of coiled rope. In fact, each work resulted from the spiral flow of a single stream of molten glass, sustained for 48 hours.

After years of studying the material, Kadonaga devised a process for pouring molten glass through an opening in the top of a custom-built, computer-controlled kiln.

The process is monitored to ensure that the glass continues to pile up. A computer keeps the kiln temperature optimal. Otherwise, gravity and the material's own nature dictate a piece's final form. Once the pouring ends, each piece must cool for a full three months before being moved.

Kadonaga likes to show his glass pieces under intense vertical spotlights. This presentation imposes a lamplike quality on the objects, a preciousness that detracts from their significance as feats of process art.

Some might associate Kadonaga with the "Mono-ha" movement of the late 1960s because of his interest in process as a generator of form. The paper and wood pieces on view at Limn seem to support this connection.



Kazuo Kadonaga's sculptures—squat mounds resembling heaps of coiled rope, formed by streams of molten glass—are on view at Limn.

Like the Mono-ha artists, with whom he was not directly involved, Kadonaga responded to the influences of minimal and post-minimal art from America, the sculpture of Joseph Beuys and Arte Povera in Europe.

The minimalists and practitioners of Arte Povera looked at art-making with a

new detachment, as behavior that meaningfully connects people and things. Art, then, might introduce a new mindfulness—critical, poetic or both—into society's unself-conscious material life.

Viewers may find it easier to connect Kadonaga's work to Western than to other Japanese sources. His glass pieces bring to mind Robert Smithson's early sculptures of stacked sheets of window glass.

Kadonaga's wood pieces involve slicing or splitting logs, drying the sections separately and reassembling them. They recall Robert Grosvenor splitting and rejoining long wood beams and Giuseppe Penone carving sapling trunks from milled lumber.

The most Asian aspect of Kadonaga's glass pieces may be unintended: their reminiscence of stupas, the ancient burial mounds for Buddhist relics that gave rise to distinctively Asian architectural forms.

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GALLERY SHOW

KAZUO KADONAGA : GLASS AND PAPER:

Sculpture in paper, glass and wood. Through July 3. Limn Gallery, 292 Townsend St., San Francisco. (415) 977-1300

