



☆ **On the Cover**

Wood, paper, bamboo and glass

- the sculptural explorations of Kazuo Kadonaga

By **Vickie Aldous**

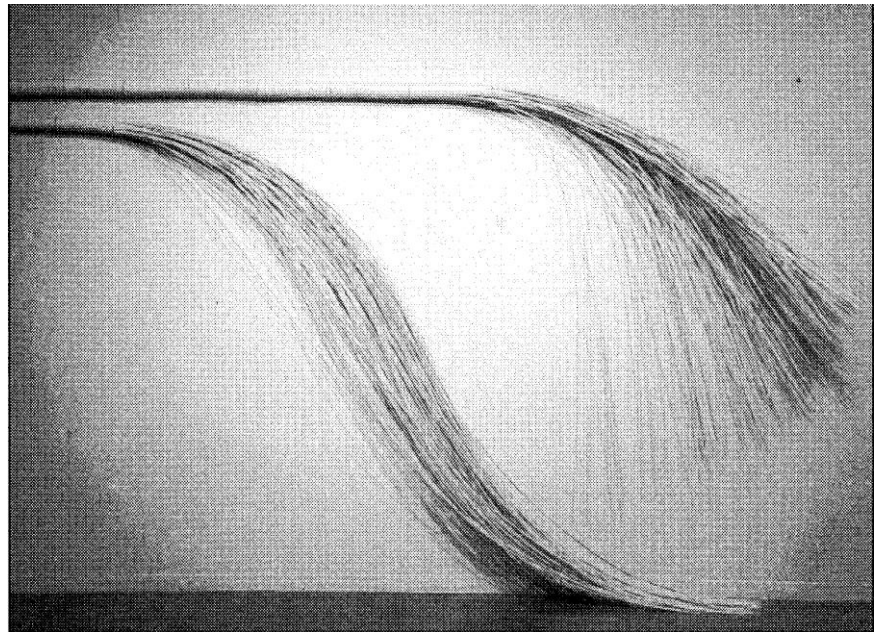
Ashland Daily Tidings

Japanese artist Kazuo Kadonaga began learning about the unique properties of wood even as a child.

His parents owned a lumber mill, and like his older brother, Kadonaga was expected to grow up and help run the family business.

"I went to a university to study architecture. I was going to help the family lumber business in the future," Kadonaga, now 56, said through his wife and interpreter, Yumiko Kadonaga. "To study architecture, I needed to study art. I became very interested in drawings and paintings. They were supposed to be one of my studies in architecture."

Kadonaga began visiting museums and galleries to study different forms of art, and became familiar with the Mono-ha art movement, whose adherents closely examined materials.



Bamboo No.2c, bamboo, 1984, 169"x dia 5" x 90"

He began creating artwork himself - a development which his parents, especially his father, opposed.

For five years, Kadonaga dutifully helped with the family's business, but at the same time worked on his art. An opportunity came to show his sculptures in Europe, and he made his break.

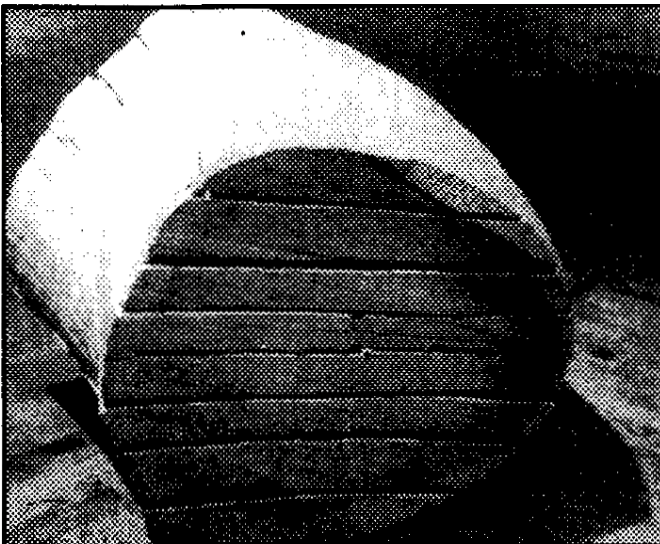
Kadonaga said the order of his birth had much to do with his switch to an artistic career.

"I was the second son. My parents' expectations were not as high as for the first son. If I was an only son, I probably couldn't become an artist," he said.

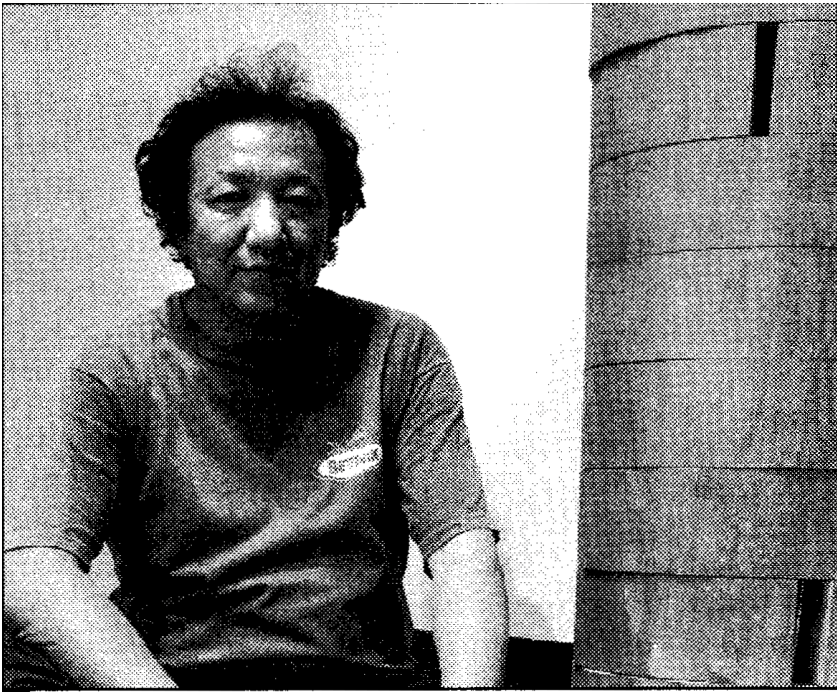
Although Kadonaga left the lumber business, his knowledge of wood infuses his work.

But rather than turning wood into products for human use, or even sculpting the material into new forms, he allows the characteristics of the media to shape his art.

His breakthrough pieces came in the mid-70s. Employing equipment used in making veneer,



Wood No.11DB, cedar, 28 3/4"x 39 1/4" 90"



Kazuo Kadonaga, sits near one of his wooden pieces during the installation of his show at the Schneider Museum of Art

Kadonaga shaved logs lengthwise into paper-thin strips. He then stacked the strips back together to recreate the logs.

Looking at one of these logs now on view at the Southern Oregon University Schneider Museum of Art, it appears to be a simple peeled log. But closer examination reveals the hundreds of layers of the meticulously reconstituted log.

Kadonaga's knowledge of wood shows through in another log sculpture at the museum. He made numerous perpendicular cuts halfway through the log. As each section dries out, it cracks and separates to reveal a gap.

The series of gaps running the length of the log create a mysterious pattern that -- to Western eyes used to left-to-right writing -- read like cryptic code. Kadonaga begins his wood sculptures with fresh trees cut from plantations, directing the natural drying process to subtly alter the wood.

"I want to let the log come out and not close the character inside," he said. "I want to let the different materials bring out their own characteristics and personality from inside."

Also on view at the Schneider Museum are Kadonaga's experiments with bamboo, paper and glass.

For one bamboo sculpture, he split numerous stalks into thin splinters lengthwise, then bound each stalk back together with copper wiring. The bound stalks stand in a row, leaning against a wall, the weight of the bamboo creating a gentle curve.

In contrast, a row of un-splintered bamboo given a rich, varnished appearance through kiln-firing -- lean rigid against a wall.

Kadonaga's innovative experiments in glass occupy a separate room, where a video shows the process by which the massive pieces are made.

To create each piece, molten glass drizzles from a second story furnace for two days onto a surface below. The liquefied glass can harden into a rippling orb or a lumpy stalagmite, depending on changes in temperature and other variables.

Before they can be moved, the sculptures must cool for three months for their inner cores to solidify.

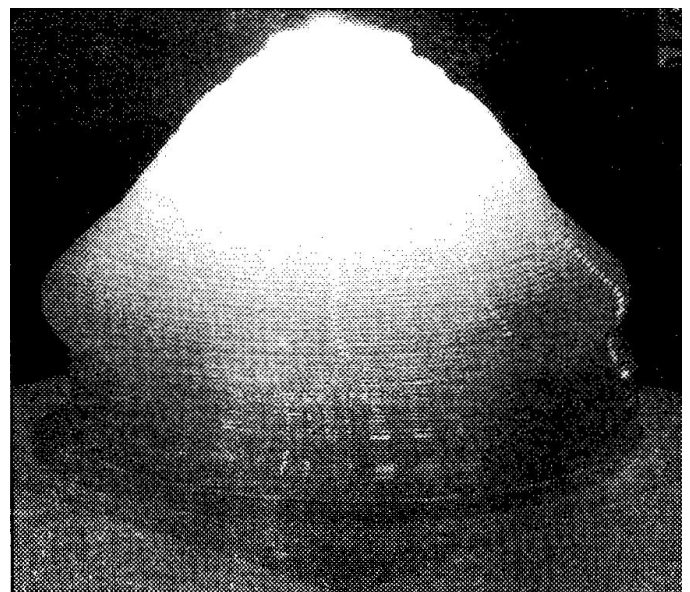
Kadonaga's sculptural explorations, dictated by the proper ties of materials, have won him international acclaim during his more than three decades of work.

In addition to dozens of group exhibitions, he has had solo shows in Japan, the Netherlands and Sweden, and from Louisiana to Hawaii in the United States.

But it wasn't until a 1988 exhibit that his father agreed his son had chosen the right path in life.

"I took my parents to Texas where I had a solo show," Kadonaga recalled. "It was the first time my father saw an exhibit of my work in a museum. That was the time he approved."

Kadonaga's sculptures are on display through December 7. Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with later hours on the first Friday of each month until 7 p.m. Entry is free, with a \$2 suggested donation.



Glass No.4 P, 23 1/4" dia. x 33 1/2" 1,100 lbs.