

NonakaHill

6917 Melrose Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90038

Kazuo Kadonaga

February 11 - April 1, 2023

Nonaka-Hill is delighted to present sculptures by Kazuo Kadonaga, his second solo exhibition with the gallery. Spanning five decades, he has been singularly known for conjuring the otherwise invisible properties of wood, silk, glass, and paper. His meticulous approach limits the traces of his hand as much as possible, deferring to the material's inner-structure and outer dignity to guide his process. His work embodies shibui, an astringent and refined ion, an astringent and refined aesthetic belied by raw complexity. As such, Kadonaga does not aim for beauty, nor does he take his materials for granted, for it has been his life's work to reveal their essential nature. In this exhibition, Kadonaga and the gallery has focused on his small-scale cedar and cypress wood sculptures dating from the early 1980s. They reveal the multitude of ways a ubiquitous material can be renewed and estranged with minimal manipulation. To achieve this, Kadonaga crosscut tree trunks into segments, each one measuring one to two feet in length, and methodically removed their bark. He followed with a series of cutting procedures unique to each segment: Several of which took intersecting cuts forming a grid, while other works were sliced into thin sheets of various thickness, which were then glued or tied into their original shape. One segment took lengthwise cuts that resemble the pattern of cracked glass in its cross-section, while another took long cuts on its side at a shallow depth, allowing the man-made fissures to slowly bend apart over time. Kadonaga squared some of his trunks, but they did not lose their integrity on account of his skilled and ghostly hand: The rings on their cross-sections serve as formal and conceptual counterpoints, highlighting nature's propensity towards curves and spirals as measurements of time. Time's effects are essential components in this work, as his sculptures continue to change depending on their atmospheric conditions. Born in 1946 in Ishikawa, Japan, Kadonaga was raised in a family that owned and operated a sawmill. He once said that he chose wood, his first material, because it was the closest one at hand. Originally trained as a painter, he decided to work with trees firsthand instead of rendering their image. The works on view are thus manifestations of Kadonaga's need to interact with wood, or any material, as directly as possible, without agendas or imposed cultural implications; this is why he does not consider himself to be a Japanese artist, but simply an artist that seeks truth in materials in the most modest and direct methods possible. www.nonaka-hill.com 7