

弄埴

陶艺家

通讯季刊

Chinese Potters

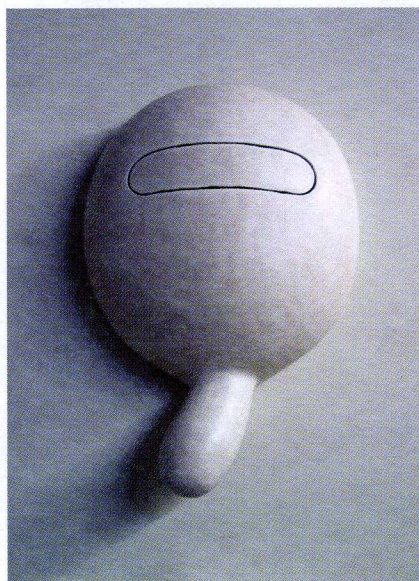
Newsletter Quarterly

26





SHIDA KUO Solo Exhibition at Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York City, 2004



SHIDA KUO "Tito", 2004 Fired White Clay 30L X 18.5W X 8D inch

Enlightened Clay:

---The Abstractions of Shida Kuo

There is something pure about Shida Kuo's ceramic sculptures. By pure, I do not mean virtuous or innocent, but pure as in intuitive and honest. Kuo's forms are pared to essences. There is no pretension. They are about form - human form with its organic possibilities and about surface, which he integrates seamlessly.

Perhaps it is Kuo's early painting background (BFA from National Taiwan Normal University) and his Eastern heritage that create this understanding and appreciation of materials and technique. His simple, Zen-like concerns are antithetical to much of the ceramic art of the West - where more often than not, form is articulated with strong imagery, pattern or strident color. Kuo's message is subtle by comparison, so pared to essentials that the viewer must spend time with the art to fully appreciate and discover what the work is about.

Texture and nuance of color are literally integrated into the surface of the clay using a laborious process of stone rubbing oxides and stains for hours into the surface of the work. The result is a soft, elegant, non-decorative appearance. Such subtlety of surface exudes an emotional sensitivity within the walls of the form that goes beyond the narrative and is typically found in the work of Noguchi and Brancusi, who, like Kuo, understood truth of material, purity of thought, tranquility of mind and an enlightened state.

To understand the understated in Kuo's recent body of ceramic sculptures, it might be best to look at Eastern calligraphy, where line to paper is considered "high art" only when the artist is enlightened. When the ink-laden brush on the page informs the hand, heart and mind of the artist, a true spirit is evoked. Tanshcu Terayama, in his book *Zen Calligraphy* notes, that art is achieved when the hand is not guided by a conscious effort but when the artist is willing to expose himself. A person shallow in experience or cultivation cannot draw a line that reveals depth. A person lacking vitality will not draw a line that resonates with energy. Even a single straight line can be a mirror of the spirit, it is only then that the line shines with purity.

Kuo's ceramic sculptures resonate with Terayama's concepts as well. One feels that the work is not a product of a conscious effort, but rises, instead, out of a state of "true thought," a state beyond emotion, calculation and expectation. He knows, for example that the porosity of the clay, like that of

Artist

陶艺家 郭旭达 KUO Shida

paper, will absorb color into the thickness of the surface so that the surface appears to breathe. He knows that what is not said can often be more revealing to the viewer, fully involving them in the interpretive exchange.

His work is primal, mystical, and just plain beautiful. While elements of sexual innuendo abound, sexual implication is blended with beauty to attain deeper levels of sensual understanding. There are mysterious orifices, slits, holes and cavities, which reveal darkness within, yet there is a playfulness and an exuberance in fanciful protuberances that belie brooding or melancholia. In fact, there is a wonderful level of mischievousness and secrecy especially when he plays with smaller forms set within larger forms that look suspended in air.

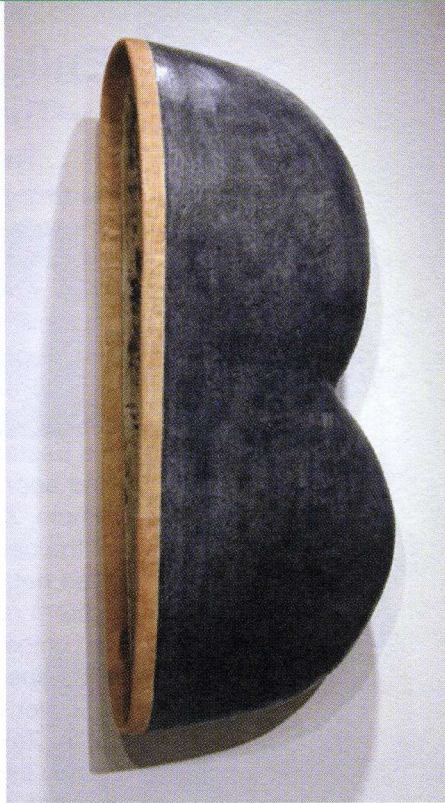
Kuo brings a fresh inventiveness to the art form by often adding the element of wood. Mixing media, particularly wood, is a difficult and complex technique seldom successfully conceived or executed. Coaxing wood to behave in as malleable a manner as clay takes special skill and we are again reminded of his mastery of materials and willingness to spend hours getting it right. But the wood lends a special softness and human element to the ceramic edges while also adding content and meaning. The wood is warm, soft, alluring and strategically positioned for maximum effect. We marvel at how well wood and clay blend; again, seamlessly.

Whether sitting boldly on the floor or suspended like a painting, Kuo's forms are precisely controlled, powerful manipulations about the human spirit. He integrates thousands of practiced and cultivated strokes onto layer upon layer of clay coils, controlling shape, controlling form to end with profound philosophical, intrinsically felt sculptures.

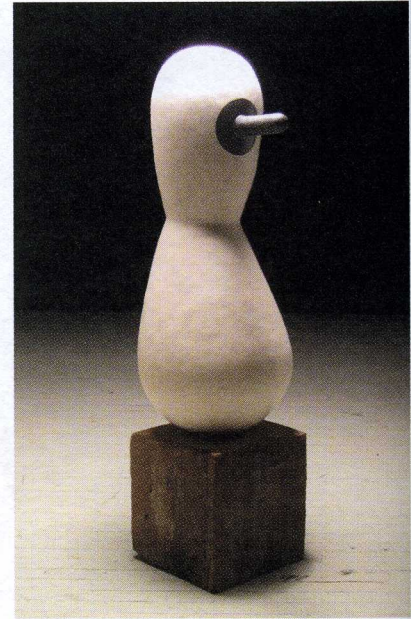
Currently, Kuo lives and works in New York City, teach at New York University. Department of Art & Art Professions.

Judith S. Schwartz, Ph.D

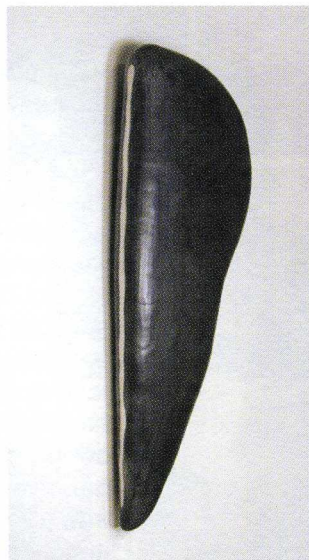
is a writer, critic, and Area Head of Sculpture in Craft Media at New York University Department of Art & Art Professions.



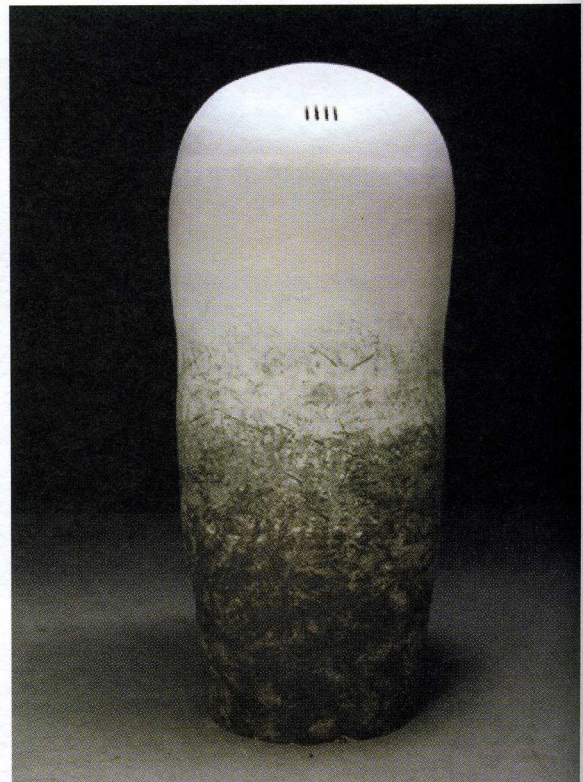
SHIDA KUO "Bessy", 2002. Fired Clay, Oxides and Wood 34H X 16W X 7.5D inch



IA KUO "Pichu", 2003. Fired Clay, Glaze, Wood 48H X 17L X 13W inch



SHIDA KUO "Avony", 2003. Fired Clay and Oxides 49H X 18W X 7D inch



SHIDA KUO "Mimi" 2003. Fired Clay and Oxides 47.5H X 19W X 16L inch