



AMERICAN  
*art*  
C O L L E C T O R

JUN KANEKO

# Innate forms

Jun Kaneko's ceramic art occupies a space between painting and sculpture. Physically it occupies and contains space consistent with the Japanese aesthetic concept of *Ma*.

In the sixth century BCE the philosopher Lao Tzu wrote:

*Thirty spokes meet in the hub,  
but the empty space between them  
is the essence of the wheel.*

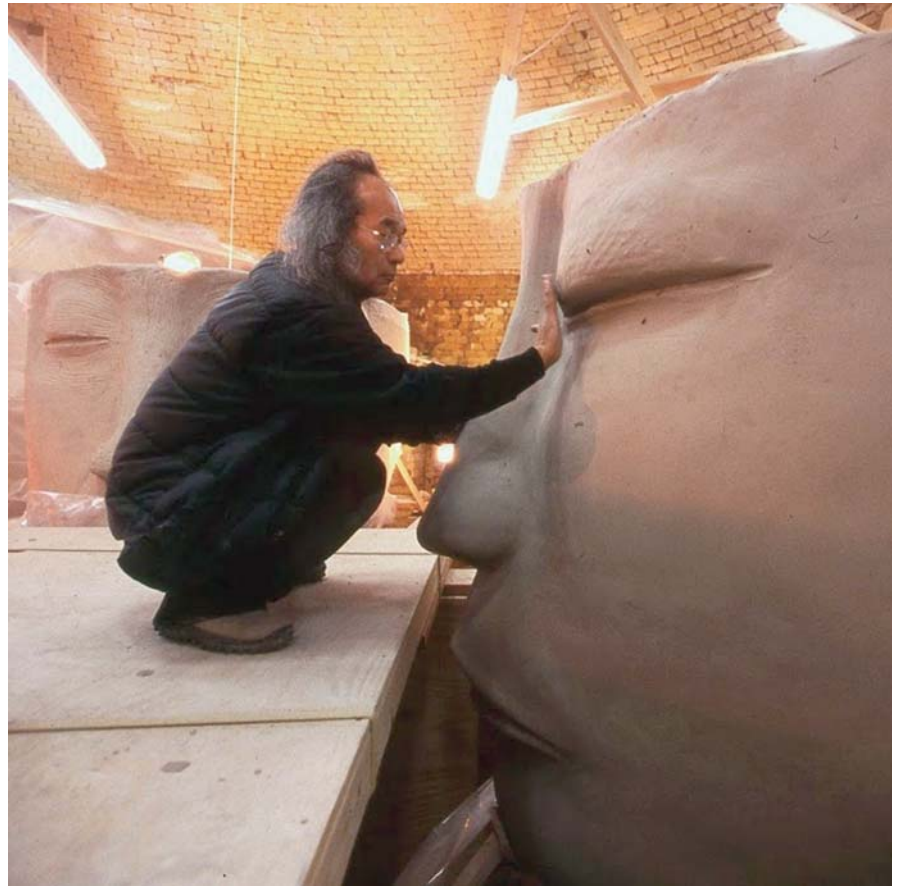
*Pots are formed from clay,  
but the empty space within it  
is the essence of the pot.*

*Walls with windows and doors  
form the house,  
but the empty space within it  
is the essence of the home.*

Kaneko comments, "I believe each form has one right scale. Whether I'm making a large or small object, in the end I hope it will make sense to have that particular scale and form together and that it will give off enough visual energy to shake the air around it."

His most recognized sculptures are the *Dango*, freestanding rounded forms painted with repetitive patterns reminiscent of minimalism. The larger *Dango* can be more than 7 feet high. With smaller pieces, Kaneko hopes people are drawn immediately into them, becoming one with them. At larger scale "the physical feeling of the shape changes," and the air shakes.

Clay has qualities that resist the artist's haste. It can easily dry and crack. The process of building the large *Dango*, which are built up of thick slabs of clay, takes many months. The lower parts of the form must dry before they can support the upper layers giving Kaneko time to become intimately familiar with the shape and its potential. He asserts that he doesn't sit trying to figure out a conceptual idea. "The piece grows out of me doing the work."



He pushes the boundaries of the medium with "intuitive decisions based on past experience."

Kaneko doesn't limit his expression and innovation to clay. He produces paintings as well as colorful work in kiln-formed glass. His organic shapes in clay give way to more geometric shapes in glass. His production designs for opera have taken him into a new arena where he pushes even more boundaries. It took him two years to design the costumes and backgrounds for a production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* for the San Francisco Opera. Rather than being painted, the sets are video projections on screens.

A broad selection of Kaneko's work in

many media can be seen in an exhibition at Gerald Peters Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 8 through September 28. ●

**1**  
Jun Kaneko works on a large-scale sculpture. Courtesy and ©Jun Kaneko Studios.

**2**  
*Untitled, Dango*, hand built and glazed ceramics, 27 x 13 x 8"

**3**  
*Untitled, Dango*, hand built and glazed ceramics, 24¾ x 23 x 9"

**4**  
*Untitled, Wall Slab*, hand glazed cast raku ceramics, 30½ x 24½ x 1½"

**5**  
*Untitled*, unique bronze with enamel paint and stainless steel, L: 74 x 21 x 18", R: 74 x 20 x 18".



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4



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