



# Chiasmus

Sono Kuwayama

## Artist Bio:

Sono Kuwayama, who lives and works in New York City, is a visual artist working with installation through painting, sculpture and video. She finds fluidity in working between various disciplines so she can achieve the freedom to create without limitation. For Kuwayama, an intimate connection to her materials is essential: “nearly everything she creates is sourced by hand. She forages berries and crushes charcoal to add pigment to milk compound paints while spinning her own yarn and going so far as to identify the sheep that it came from.” (Rebecca Kim, Hypebeast, 2020). The works and installations born of these materials exist in the paradigm of spatial relationships and are often site specific.

The daughter of artists, Tadaaki Kuwayama and Rakuko Naito, Kuwayama grew up immersed in the art world. After attending Yale University’s summer painting program, she continued to receive her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1990, where she studied with Jackie Windsor and Judy Pfaff amongst others. Her works on film about artists include *A Night at the Poet’s Cafe*, an interview with Agnes Martin and *Forrest Bess: Key to the Riddle*. Her public art initiative *Bringing Back Bowery* was celebrated by The Brooklyn Rail, artnet News, Reuters, and NBC. Kuwayama shows with Ki Smith Gallery and her work is featured in several prominent private and corporate collections.



## *Shifting Perceptions*

by Elle Tyra

Phenomenological encounters with Minimalist sculpture have a way of leaving the viewer far keener of their surroundings and the world around them than prior to arriving in their presence. Indeed, the looming monolithic works we traditionally think of when Minimalism comes to mind do have a presence. Be it the sublime or objecthood, if you've come across a minimalist sculpture and felt small, vulnerable, awestruck, or suspected that the work was silently resting and daring you to approach then chances are that this was the artist's intended effect. Chiasmus demonstrates that Sono Kuwayama is fully aware of the dialogue surrounding physically intimidating art objects and her latest body of work turns this tradition on its head.

Rather than working on a monumental scale, Kuwayama's take on Minimalism employs intimate cubes that can often fit in the palm of your hand. Some of these small untitled objects can also be manipulated to function as paintings, or hover between painting and cube as undefined objects. Changing the artwork from one state to the next requires the viewer to interact with the work and carefully arrange the piece as desired. Several pieces such as *Untitled (safflower)*, 2021 have a warm exterior that is hand painted with the artist's own milk paint that she makes from scratch. The interior of *Untitled (safflower)* rewards viewer curiosity by revealing seed pods when the cube is opened.

Kuwayama's handcrafted pieces acknowledge their own fragility in both their scale and function. As opposed to confronting the viewer's frailty and lack of power as Minimalist sculpture often does, these cubes submit to being arranged according to the viewer's whims asserting that they be handled with care, and rousing the viewer's awareness of their own physical strength and agency while handling the objects. This reversal of viewer experience is Kuwayama's nod to phenomenological psychology as described in the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

In *The Primacy of Perception* Merleau-Ponty explains a psychological phenomenon that naturally occurs as our eyes and mind work together to navigate our bodies through space as we encounter objects. It is our encounter with monumental objects such as tall buildings, ships, or large minimalist sculptures that speak to our temporality and powerlessness as humans. It is our encounter with delicate, flaccid, non-imposing objects that engage our agency. In contrast to encountering tons of machine torqued steel, or a ten feet of vertically installed iron units that force us to weigh of our diminutive stature in comparison, Kuwayama's pieces showcase the viewer's potential to impact the object and invite us to dispense with our expectations of what Minimalism should be. The varying nature of Kuwayama's artwork also challenges the notion of painting or sculpture as fixed within one established category. These cubes are more than meets the eye and require that we not be standoffish, but bring a willingness to engage and explore their possibilities.

Chiasmus addresses the legacy of the "white cube" art gallery and the exclusivity that surrounds the art market. The esoteric nature of the art world often causes the public to stand at a distance and approach with caution. Kuwayama wants viewers to look inside the gallery with delight at what they may find. Our willingness to engage with the cube is a metaphor for how we should explore an ever-changing world. The artist invites the viewer to dispense with their notions of what artwork, a gallery, or a phenomenal experience should be. A sculpture can become a painting that then becomes an object. We can leave an art gallery or institution feeling energized and curious about the world beyond its walls. In ever changing environments that defy permanence Kuwayama's pieces reflect the reality that things are not fixed regardless of how much we would like them to be. The only constant is change. Artwork that can invert its relationship to itself while also inverting the viewer's relationship to the work and their surroundings cleverly pushes the limits of art and, I was delighted to find, also explores the meaning of chiasmus.







SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Copper)*, 2021

Copper leaf, milk paint with earth pigments, sand from Wadi Rum, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400





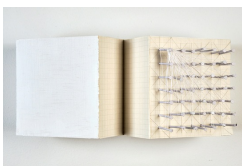
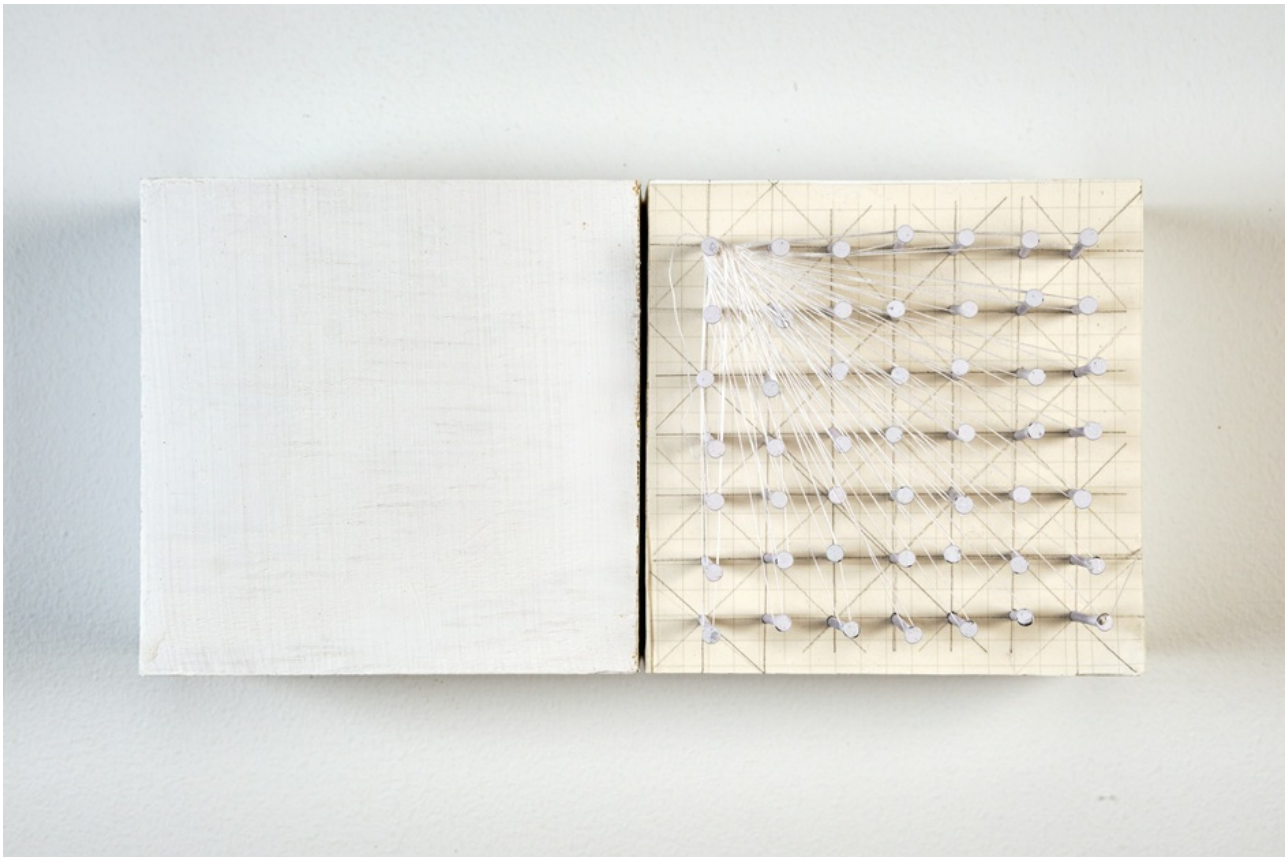
SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Silver)*, 2021

Silver leaf, milk paint with brazil wood, brazil wood, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Graph Paper/ Nails)*, 2021

graph paper, nails, cotton thread, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Safflower)*, 2021

Japanese paper, safflower, milk paint, seed pods, safflower, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400





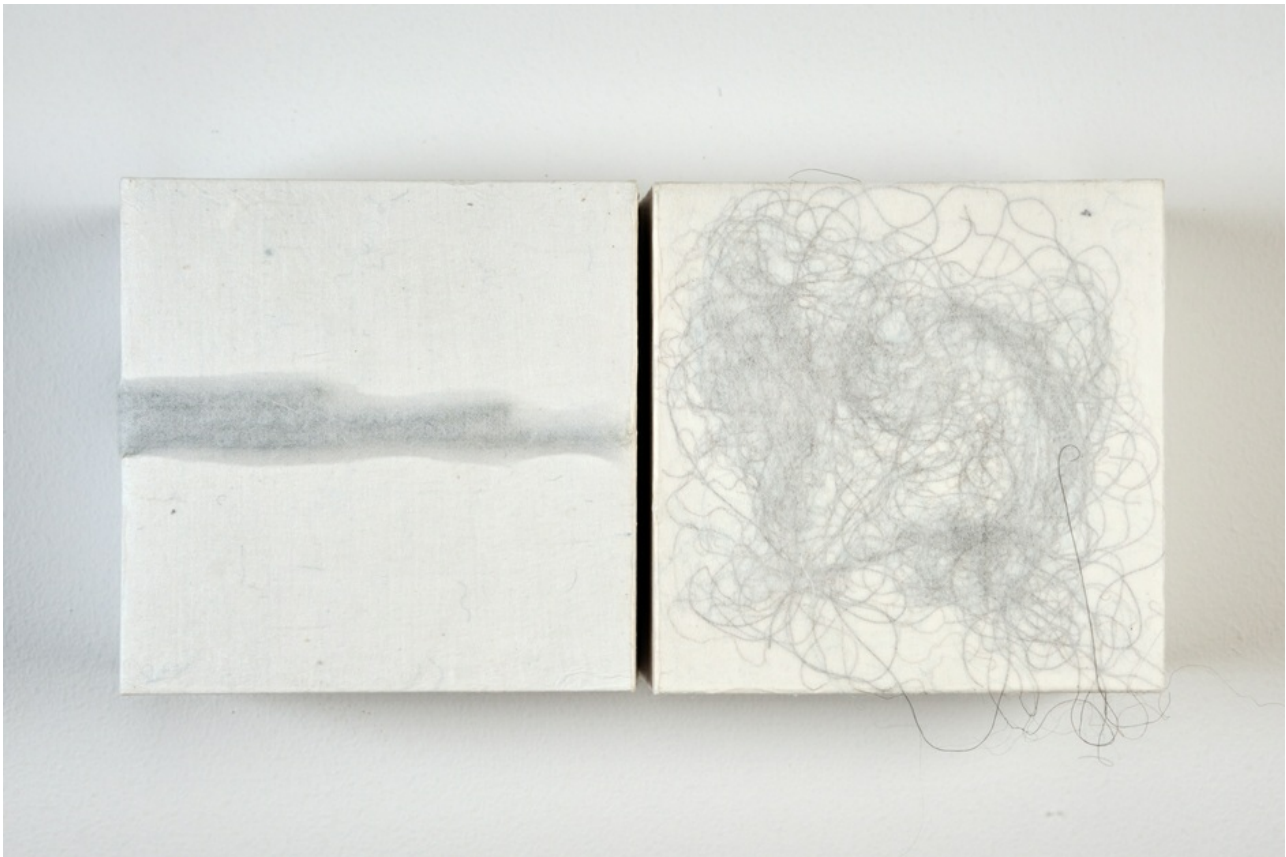
SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Line)*, 2021

Japanese paper, hands-on yarn, sheep's wool, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Mohair)*, 2021

Hand spun indigo dyed mohair, indigo dyed mohair, Japanese paper, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Aracuna)*, 2021

Aracuna egg shells, handspun indigo dyed wool, Japanese paper, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Brown Eggs)*, 2021

brown eggshells, plant dyed Japanese paper, handspun osage orange dyed wool, milk paint with earth pigments, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Hanji)*, 2021

Korean paper dyed in yellow cosmos, Japanese paper, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



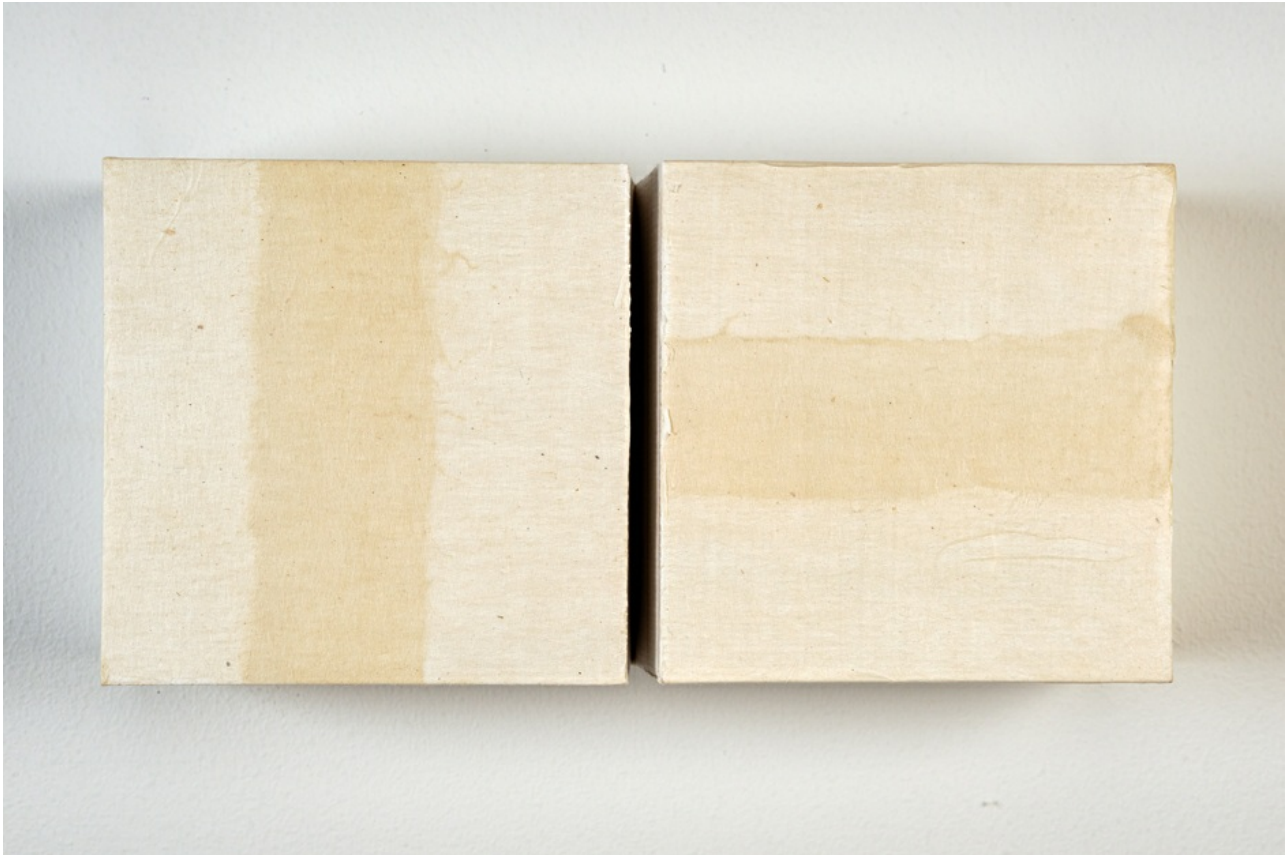
SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Cotton)*, 2021

Cotton, Japanese paper, cotton seeds, handspun cotton, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Perpendicular Lines)*, 2021

Japanese paper, handspun wool, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Wicks)*, 2021

Japanese paper, cotton Diwali wicks, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Oil Paint Smooth)*, 2021

Organic walnut oil with earth pigments, milk paint with earth and plant pigments, corn flowers, wood  
4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



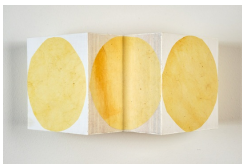
SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Oil Paint Texture)*, 2021

Organic walnut oil with earth pigments, milk paint with earth and plant pigments, calendula and buttercup petals, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

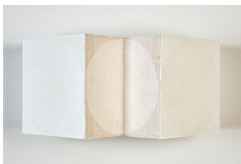
*Untitled (Sun)*, 2021

plant dyed Japanese paper, gold leaf, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Moon)*, 2021

Japanese paper, silver leaf, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Drilled Through)*, 2021

Gold leaf, Japanese paper, handspun wool dyed in osage orange, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Rounded Corners)*, 2021

plant dyed Japanese paper, plaster, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA  
*Untitled (Pages)*, 2021  
Japanese paper, wood  
4 x 4 x 4"  
USD 2,400





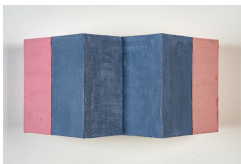
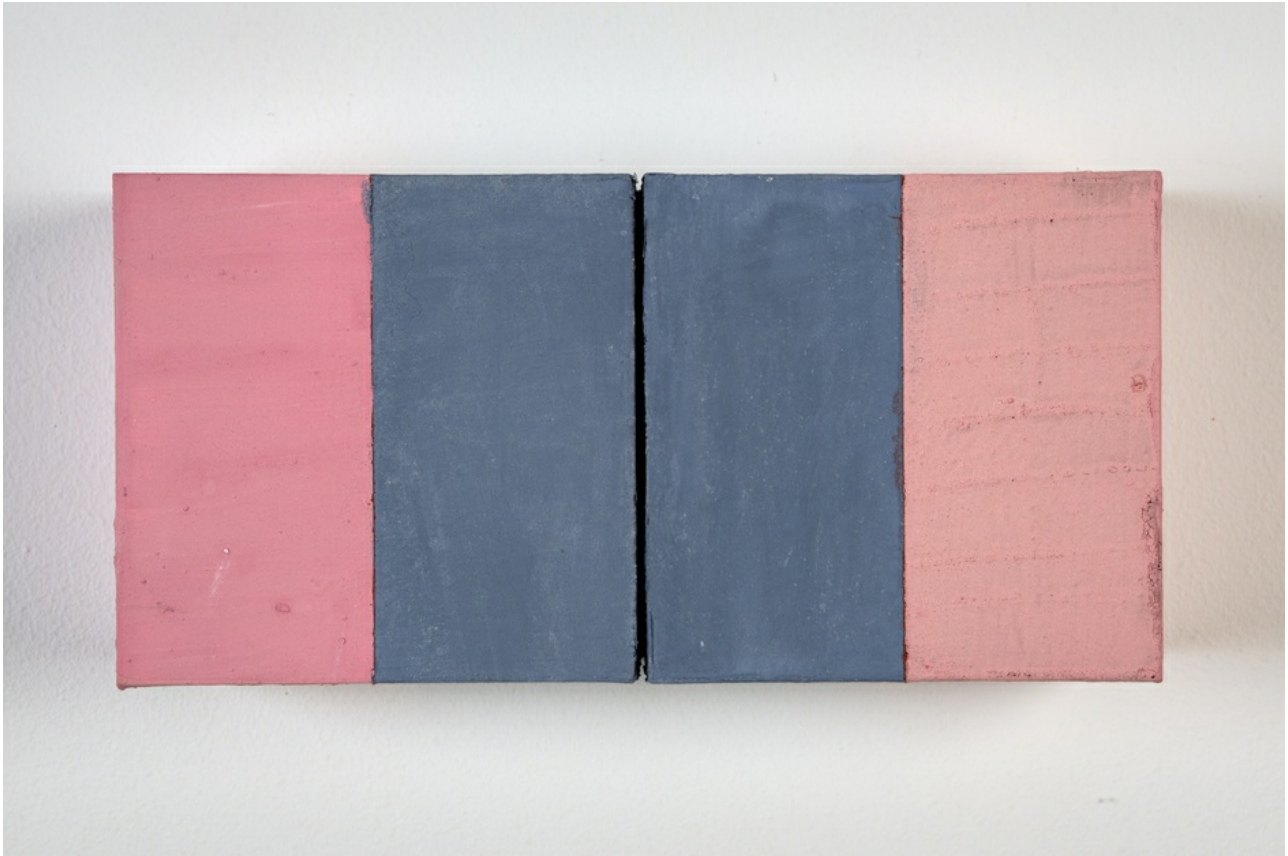
SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Beeswax)*, 2021

beeswax, safflower, japanese paper, bee pollen, calendula

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Pink/ Blue)*, 2021

milk paint made with brazil wood and earth pigments, osage orange, mohair dyed with osage orange,  
wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Dream)*, 2021

Sand from Wadi Rum, Korean paper dyed in brazil wood, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Straight Wicks)*, 2021

cotton wicks, Japanese paper, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400





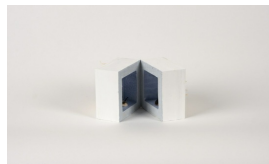
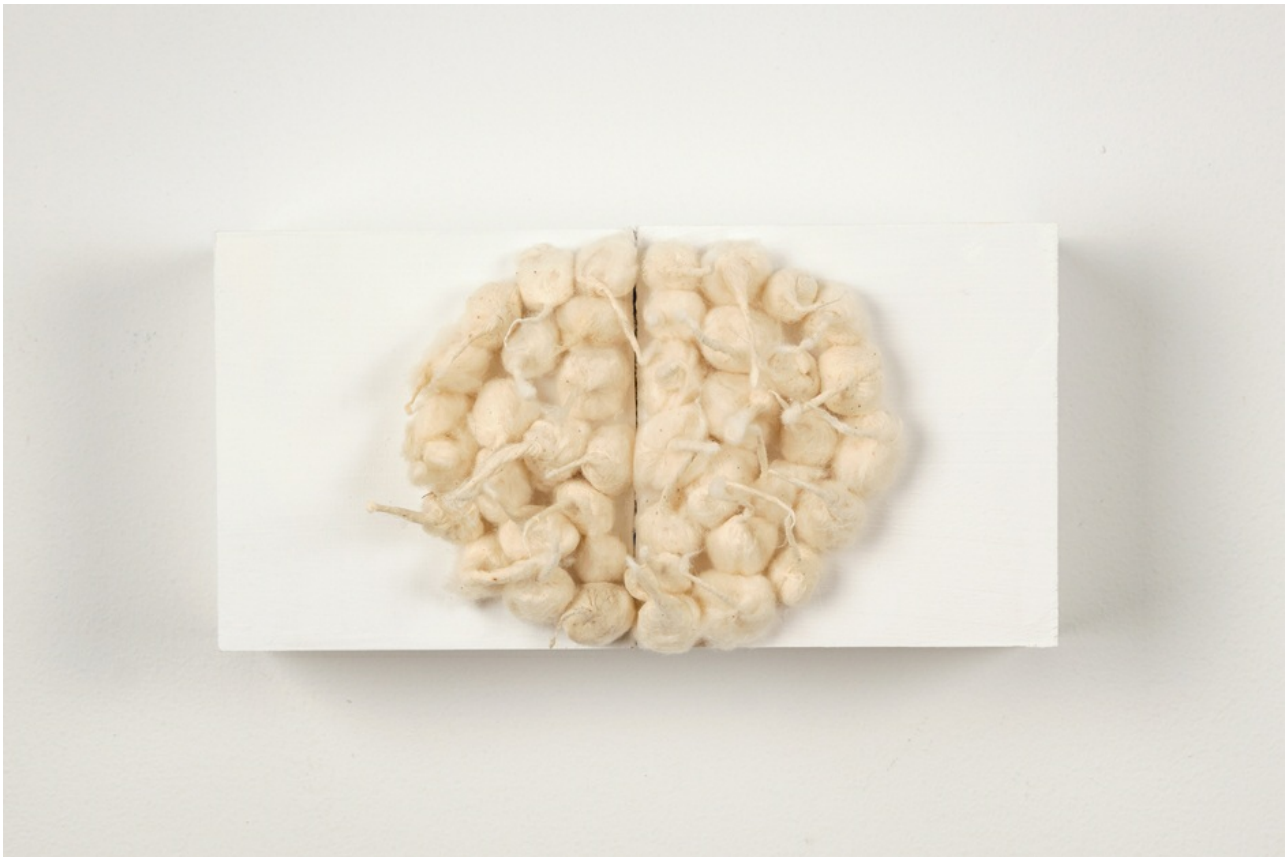
SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (One Line Early)*, 2021

Japanese paper, Diwali wicks, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Round Wick)*, 2021

Milk paint made with earth pigments, cotton Diwali wicks, Japanese paper, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Double Line Ki)*, 2021

Japanese paper, handspun yarn, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA  
*Untitled (Cast Glass)*, 2021  
handcast dichroic glass  
4 x 4 x 4"  
USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Color Sound)*, 2021

Milk paints made with earth and plant pigments, glass, wood

4 x 4 x 4"

USD 2,400



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Wrapped Sound)*, 2021

Japanese paper, handspun wool, glass, wood

USD 2,400





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Wood/Paper/Line)*, 2021

Handspun wool, Japanese paper, sheep wool, wood

6 x 6 x 6"

USD 3,600



SONO KUWAYAMA

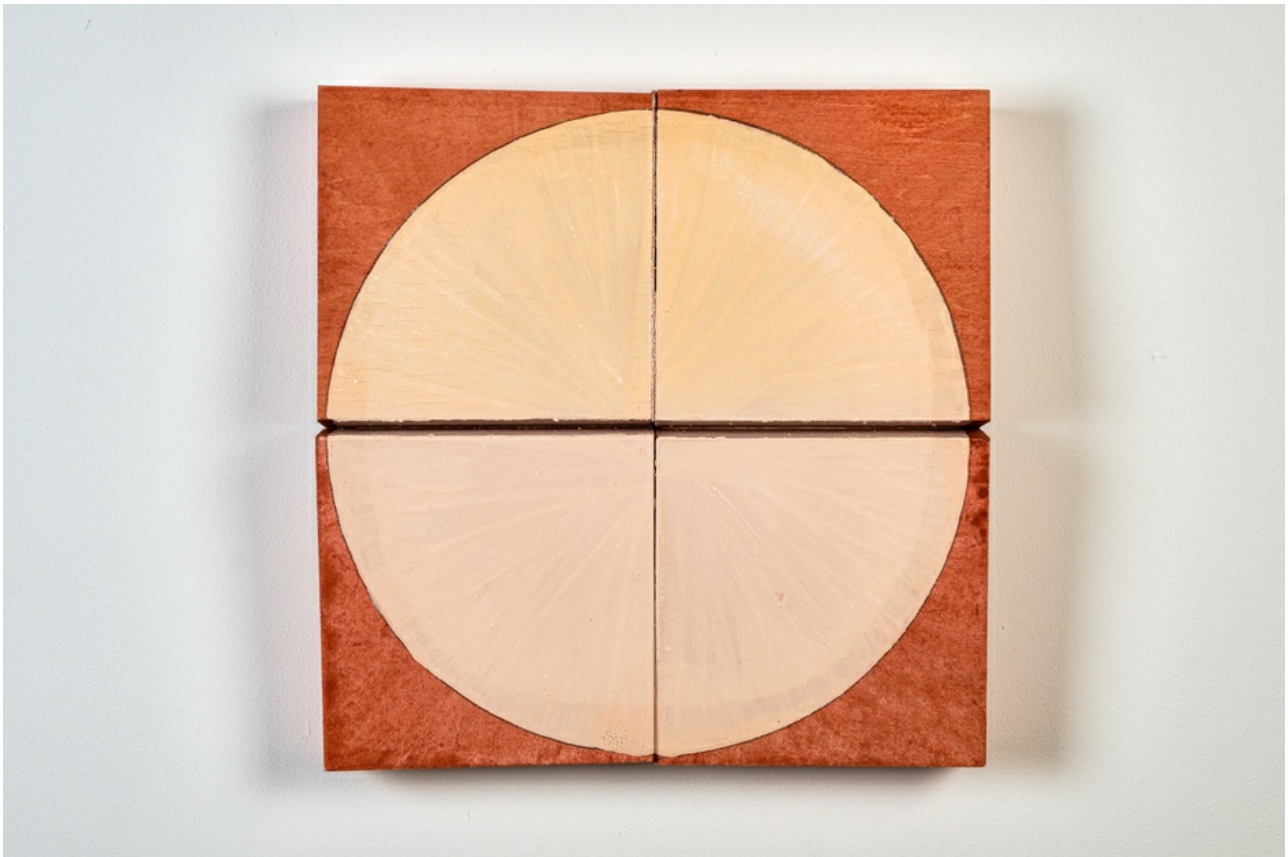
*Untitled (4 Colors)*, 2021

Milk paint made with earth and plant piglets, Japanese paper, wood

6 x 6 x 6"

USD 3,600





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Pink Circle)*, 2021

Milk paint made with earth and plant pigments, Japanese paper, glass, wood

6 x 6 x 6"

USD 3,600



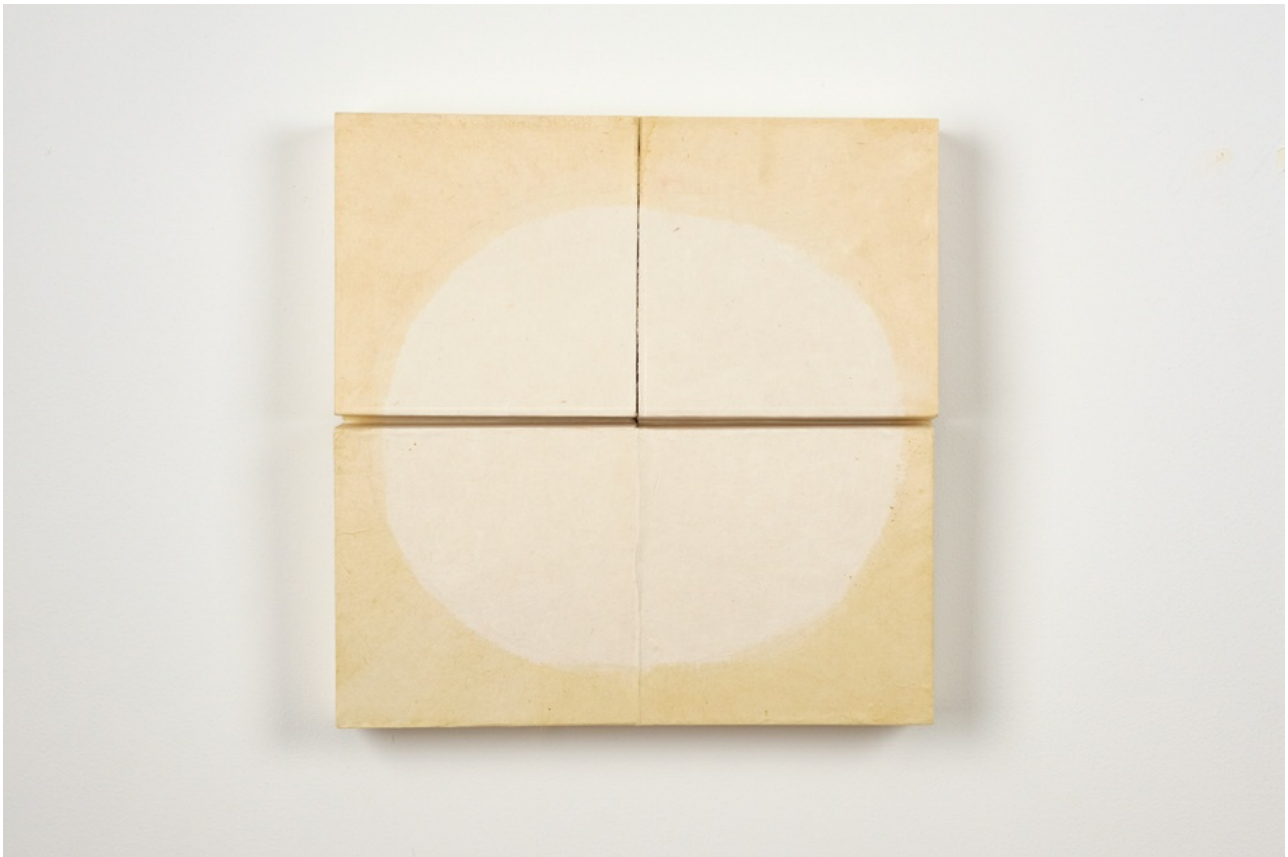
SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Silver Circle)*, 2021

Silver leaf, milk paint made with earth pigments, sand, desert rose

6 x 6 x 6"

USD 3,600



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Blue Bowl)*, 2021

Plant dyed Japanese paper, Japanese paper, milk paint made with earth pigments, porcelain, wood

6 x 6 x 6"

USD 3,600



SONO KUWAYAMA

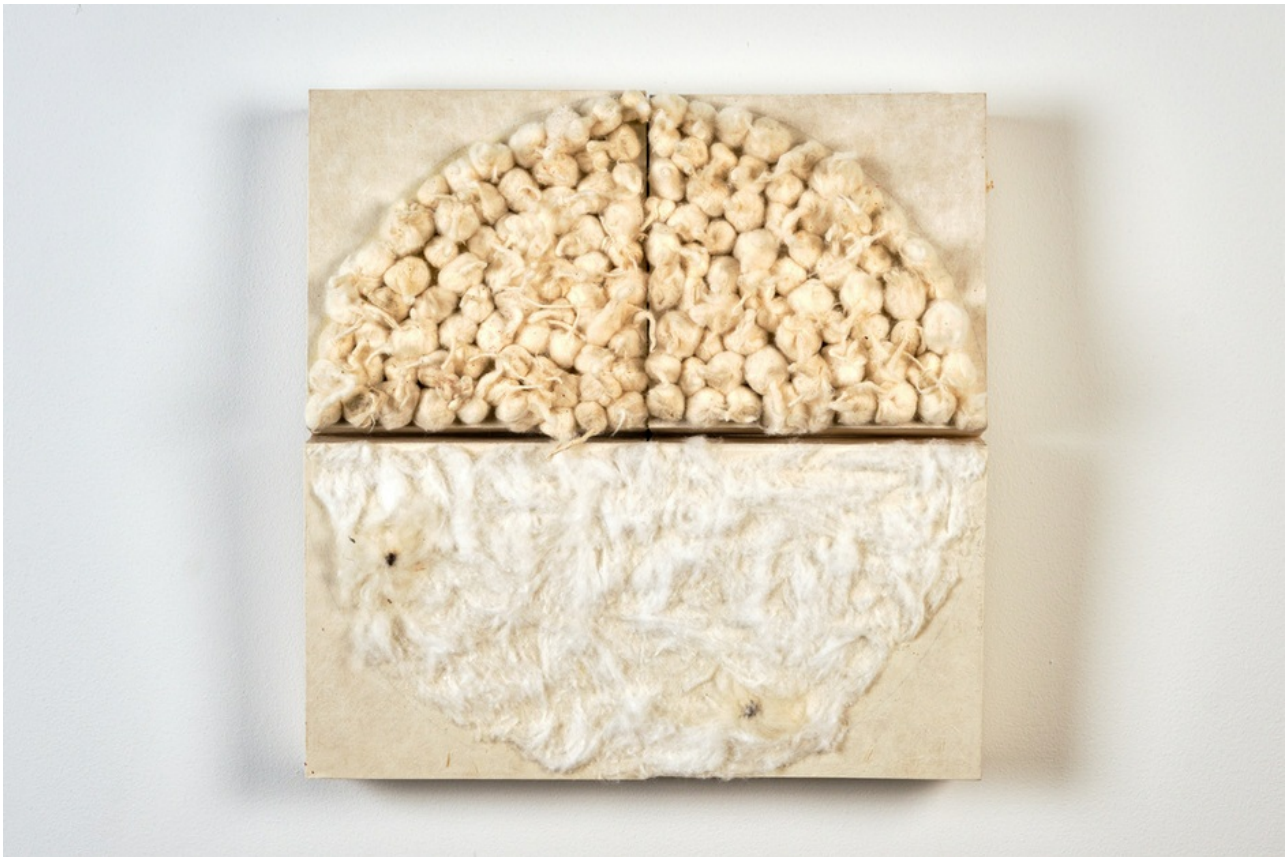
*Untitled (hanji and handspun)*, 2021

Handspun wool, Korean paper, wood

6 x 6 x 6"

USD 3,600





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Half Round Wicks)*, 2021

Cotton, cotton wicks, cotton seed, handspun cotton, Japanese paper, wood

6 x 6 x 6"

USD 3,600



SONO KUWAYAMA  
*Untitled (Burn Through 5)*, 2021  
Watercolor paper, wood  
9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"  
USD 2,600



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Burn Gold Leaf)*, 2021

Watercolor paper, gold leaf, wood

9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"

USD 2,600



SONO KUWAYAMA  
*Untitled (Burnt End)*, 2021  
Watercolor paper, wood  
9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"  
USD 2,600





SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Silver Burn 5)*, 2021

Watercolor paper, wood

9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"

USD 2,600



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Burnt Silver Spot)*, 2021

Watercolor paper, watercolor, wood

9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"

USD 2,600



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Silver burn 4)*, 2021

Watercolor paper, watercolor paint, wood

9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"

USD 2,600



SONO KUWAYAMA

*Untitled (Burnt Red)*, 2021

Watercolor, watercolor paper, wood

9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"

USD 2,600





SONO KUWAYAMA  
*Untitled (Burn 3)*, 2021  
Watercolor paper, wood  
9.25 x 9.25 x 10.75"  
USD 2,600