Pictures for the Sky

空舞う絵画

The full Art Kites exhibition is at Victor Hugo Hall, Luxembourg between the 4th August and 25th September this year, and elsewhere next year.

There is also an Art Kite Festival over the weekend of the 5/6th September with Japanese Art Kite Flyers and drumming.

On April 1st 1989, before the ground Hamaji Castle, Japan, a remarkable and unique—Sakura event occurred. Billowing up from the ground one hundred or so kites took to the air. This was not unique in itself: making and flying paper birds is a national pastime across Japan and they are often flown in large quantities; these kites, although of similar construction, were Art Kites, and Art Kites, although of similar construction, were different however. The event was a celebration, the culmination of Osaka Goethe Institute's Art Kites Project, organised by director Paul Eubel. In the previous eighteen months Eubel had approached painters from around the planet to work on the kites. These artists, delighted at the novelty of the idea, contributed eagerly, often painting their designs on Japanese Washi paper or bamboo, and operating within a limit of seven Japanese kite construction types chosen from the three hundred possible types.

Kites are believed to be of Chinese origin—though their appearance in Japan is traced to the seventh century; they had reached countryside popularity by the twelfth. Seven hundred years later—towards the end of the nineteenth—the Japanese had developed into masters of the form, so much so that huge (twenty metres in diameter) Warriors kites lifted off from the earth. This century, though, the skill has been in decline. Eubel found only one professional kitemaker in Tokyo, compared to one hundred a few generations back. In spite of this the crafts remain very popular—engaging whole communities in kite activities such as pantomime, dancing and flying of kites. Many of their creators were present, including Robert Rauschenberg, Emil Schumacher and Frank Stella. There was a peer by Britain's David Hockney, and many kites from the host country. The kites and the moment are documented in a translated into other contexts and other continents, with Art kites maybe beginning to be seen away from Asian skies.

Art kites are often flown in large quantities; these kites, although of similar construction, have never been seen in such numbers. The event was a celebration, the culmination of Osaka Goethe Institute's Art Kites Project, organised by director Paul Eubel. In the previous eighteen months Eubel had approached a well-established band of Japanese kite makers, and Art Kites, although before been flown in such numbers. These artists, delighted at the novelty of the idea, contributed eagerly, often painting their designs on Japanese Washi paper or bamboo, and operating within a limit of seven Japanese kite construction types chosen from the three hundred possible types.

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During these first two April days the Art Kites Project continues. In the meantime, the Art kites rose. Many of their creators were present, including Robert Rauschenberg, Emil Schumacher and Frank Stella. There was a peer by Britain's David Hockney, and many kites from the host country. The kites and the moment are documented in a translated into other contexts and other continents, with Art kites maybe beginning to be seen away from Asian skies.

In time, since we live on a small planet, one can imagine the skills and knowhow

photos Paul Eubel/Art Kites Foundation