



Discourse

from the end of the line

November 2012



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ON THE COVER:

Flying kites purchased from the Kite Collective's kite vending machine at Rockaway Beach, New York.

NOVEMBER 2012

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Discourse is published on the Drachen Foundation website several times a year and can be downloaded free at www.drachen.org by clicking "browse" then "articles."

In this issue of *Discourse*, the contributors are all women (with a whisper here and there from me). Ali Fujino writes about Tom Van Sant and his visionary kites of the early 1970s and how they returned to the sky on the Santa Monica beach. She contributes to the lore of the AKA's Star Farker as it starts a new chapter of life with new AKA President, Jon Barresi.

Join in the fun of the Kite Collective as they roll out their kite machine to introduce kites to an inner city audience ready for the thrill. Then travel across the world to Beijing, China, and join Xiaowei Wang and Sibel Deren Guler as they sample air quality in their FLOAT Beijing project. Here are two very different projects that use the positive power of kites to change people's lives.

From two vastly different places come academic studies of the kite: Professor Maria Elena Garcia Autino's study of kites in Argentine literature, and Katrien van Riet's absorbing study of kites in Victorian literature. Wonderful kites, stories, and images grace both studies.

Finally, artist Helen Heibert describes her fascination with all things paper and gives us a preview of her new book, "Playing with Paper". You'll see that Helen is a kindred spirit, fascinated by the magic of manipulating paper into flying creations.

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Lee was born in Toronto, Canada. She modeled internationally for seven years before moving to New York City. She does cultural projects for the Kite Collective and attends the Fashion Institute of Technology. In her free time, she practices yoga and plays the fiddle.



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Sibel Deren Guler is a master's candidate in tangible interaction design at the Computational Design Laboratory at Carnegie Mellon University. She has a degree in physics and in addition to working on the FLOAT Beijing project she is also the founder of ReplayMyPlay, an organization that creates playgrounds that generate electricity as children play with the equipment.



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Helen Hiebert is a Colorado artist who constructs installations and creates sculptures, films and artist books using handmade paper as her primary medium. She teaches and exhibits her work internationally. Her next book, "Playing with Paper," will be published by Rockport Publishers in January, 2013.



Stephen Funk

SCOTT SKINNER *Monument, Colorado*

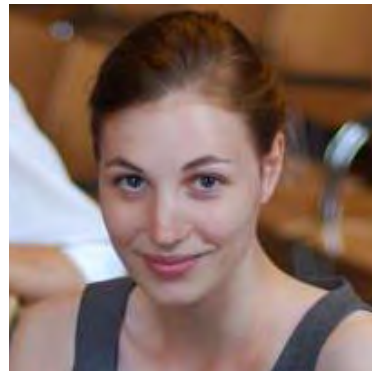
A former Air Force instructor pilot, Drachen's board president has flown and designed kites for three decades. Today, Skinner is known as a world class, visionary kite artist.



Jose Sainz

KATRIEN VAN RIET *Utrecht, The Netherlands*

Katrien van Riet has a master's in art in comparative literature. Her focus was the kite as a symbol in nineteenth-century literature. She currently works as an English teacher at a language institute in Utrecht. In her spare time, she designs and builds kites, as well as researching their presence in Romantic and Victorian literature.



Joris Hiemstra

XIAOWEI R. WANG *Boston, Massachusetts*

Xiaowei Wang is currently studying at Harvard Graduate School of Design and hopes to graduate with a master's degree in landscape architecture in 2013. She collaborated with Sibel Deren Guler on the FLOAT Beijing project. Learn more at xiaoweiwang.com.



Xiaowei R. Wang

THE ART TO FLOAT IN BEIJING

An Interview with Xiaowei Wang and Sibel Deren Guler

INTRODUCTION BY ALI FUJINO

Throughout time, there has been, what I refer to, as “the force of great ideas...” They can be big or small in nature, but to qualify, they must evolve from the unique vision of an individual who has the ability to put them into action. FLOAT Beijing is one of these great ideas, a participatory design, mapping and open source data visualization project using air quality sensing kites.

I came across this project in one of my weekly passes reviewing stories of kites on the internet.

TEXT FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF DESIGN, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Xiaowei Wang (MLA '13, communications/space design, a master's candidate in landscape architecture at the Harvard School of Graduate Design) has created a public art event that is also a pollution monitoring project for notoriously smog-ridden Beijing. Wang and her collaborator, Deren Guler, a master's candidate in tangible interaction design, the Computational Design Laboratory at Carnegie Mellon University, took advantage of the tradition and beauty of kite flying in China to enlist kite enthusiasts in Beijing in mapping air quality measures. Their FLOAT Beijing project also created a constellation of twinkling indicator lights in the city's night sky.

Part of the project was a series of community workshops to teach local residents how to assemble tiny air quality sensors to attach to the kites. There were group kite flights after the workshops with the sensor modules attached. The modules logged data and had visible LED lights which indicated the air quality levels: pink for poor, green for healthy.

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED WITH XIAOWEI WANG AND SIBEL DEREN GULER.

WHAT IS FLOAT BEIJING?

FLOAT Beijing is an interactive, community driven art project that uses kitemaking and kite flying to activate dialogue, map and record air quality in Beijing, China. FLOAT Beijing uses local knowledge sharing, public kite flying and creativity to address an urgent ecological, environmental and social urban issue.

WHY KITES AND WHY AIR QUALITY?

Urban air quality is a serious issue that affects rapidly industrializing cities globally, and within Beijing as the capital of China, it is an issue kept quiet by the government under fear of criticism and protest from the public. At the same time, there is ample opportunity to use cheap, easily accessible microcontroller technology for grassroots air quality mapping. We see the pairing of microcontroller technology and the traditional art of kite flying as an immense opportunity to give local residents the ability to understand urban air quality.

Our project has two components: a workshop and a group kite flight that uses a special module developed to detect carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds (VOC's) and particulate matter. The modules are attached to homemade kites and flown into the air. Detection levels are displayed through LED lights that change in color, creating a constellation of air quality indicating lights in the night sky.



f-l-o-a-t.com

TOP: The delta kite used to lift the sensors.
BOTTOM: Flying an air-quality monitoring kite.



f-l-o-a-t.com

A computer-generated collage of a kite in flight in the Beijing night sky.

Through a series of workshops, FLOAT Beijing empowers and enables local residents to take air quality monitoring into their own hands, as well as establish new relationships and networks within the community through the act of group kitemaking and flying.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

A series of three workshops and group kite flights will be held in Beijing, with outreach to Beijing neighborhood groups and organizations. Together, the community will be able to design and make kites in which the sensing modules are attached and learn more about air quality monitoring and the technology behind it. After the workshops, a group night-time kite flight will take place. Due to light and air pollution, it is extremely difficult to see stars in the Beijing night sky. These kites will appear not only as indicators of urban air pollution, but also a strong visual and sensory experience. As our project is public art, it also brings together people from all walks of life — from old kite masters in Beijing, to young environmentalists, to participate and make the final public art piece together.

HOW DID YOU AND XIAOWEI WANG COME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR FLOAT BEIJING? WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO HOLD THIS ACTIVITY? WHY NAME THE PROJECT “FLOAT BEIJING”?

There’s currently a large DIY (do it yourself) air quality monitoring movement — with organizations such as the Public Laboratory or the folks who made Air Quality Egg. What really interested us was taking the issue of air quality and tying it in with a traditional craft, as well as adding a poetic aspect to it. We’ve both loved kites since we were kids, and it made sense to use them as a vehicle for air quality monitoring. The project is called FLOAT Beijing because it plays off of how the kites float in the air, but pollution also floats in the air.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE BEIJING? WHY CHOOSE

TO FLY KITES?

Xiaowei lived in Beijing, and always talked about how the spring dust storms would come in and change the whole sky of Beijing into an orange gray color. It made sense to do this project in Beijing, as we wanted to reach out to local residents and help them learn how to monitor air quality, in addition to the air quality stations that China already has. Kites have a long tradition and history in Chinese culture, so flying kites is not only a way to test air quality, but also a way to engage a population of people in Beijing who might not normally be concerned about environmental pollution. Also, flying kites is fun!

WOULD YOU MIND EXPLAINING TO US HOW TO MAKE SUCH A KITE? AND HOW TO DETECT THE VARIOUS POLLUTANTS IN THE AIR WITH THE KITES?

The kites are equipped with small modules that contain a sensor, batteries, lights and small microcontroller chips. The data from the sensor's output is proportional to the concentration of a certain gas in the air (we are measuring CO, Methane, Propane, and VOCs). A few kites have data logging SD cards on them so we can read the data from the card when it comes back down from a flight.

I HEAR THAT FLOAT BEIJING WILL CONTINUE FOR THREE WEEKS. WILL THERE BE ANY DIFFERENCE IN FLOAT BEIJING FROM WEEK TO WEEK?

We received a lot of very encouraging and helpful feedback from the first workshop and are hoping for even more next time. The first workshop was an introductory workshop to teach citizens how to assemble the modules and the basic idea. We did not have everything ready as I just arrived from the US the day before! The feedback from the participants and initial test flight was very fun and gave us a lot of tips for next time. In the next workshop we will introduce the data logging modules and a few new sensors.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF FLOAT BEIJING? WILL YOU COME OUT WITH SOMETHING SUCH AS AIR QUALITY

REPORTS? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THE REPORT OR ANYTHING LEARNED DURING THE ACTIVITY?

Our goal for FLOAT Beijing is actually quite humble; we are doing this project so that Beijing residents can start to monitor air quality for themselves. We are not planning on coming out with an air quality report, as there are plenty of NGOs who do work like that; instead, we're smaller scale and utilize citizen science as a way of spreading environmental awareness.

WOULD YOU MIND INTRODUCING US TO THE TEAM RESPONSIBLE FOR FLOAT BEIJING? HOW DO YOU KNOW EACH OTHER? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO PREPARE FOR FLOAT BEIJING?

Xiaowei and I have been friends since high school and she met Josh Frank when she lived in Beijing in 2009. We've always wanted to collaborate on a project together and FLOAT Beijing seemed like the perfect balance of our skills and goals. Xiaowei is a master's candidate in Landscape Architecture at Harvard and I am a master's student in Tangible Interaction Design at Carnegie Mellon University. Josh has a master's in documentary film-making and has produced films for The New York Times. He will be creating a film about the project.

HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN ANY PROJECTS LIKE FLOAT BEIJING BEFORE?

We both share a passion for sustainable design. Xiaowei is very much interested in mapping (weather, data, census), and how it can be used to imagine new kinds of urbanism and more sustainable cities. I am interested in DIY "low-tech" solutions to computing. The modules used on the kites are very simple to assemble, making them accessible to a large and diverse audience.

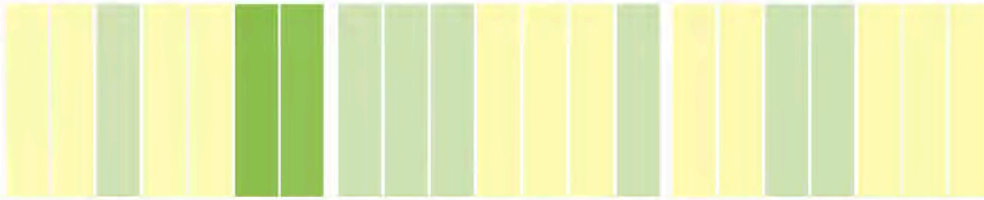
WHAT IS YOUR EXPECTATION ABOUT THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES OF FLOAT BEIJING? ARE YOU GOING TO DO MORE THINGS TO EXPAND THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT?

We hope that more people will attend the workshop next time. We are also excited to try differ-

3 WEEKS 2 HEALTHY DAYS

FLOAT_Beijing July 27-August 16, 2012

REPORTED



China measures days with good or healthy air quality as "blue sky days".

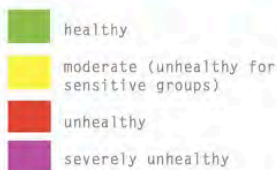
Many of the "blue sky days" are called "crazy bad" air days by the U.S. Embassy.

ACTUAL



According to our measurements taken using air quality sensing kites in Beijing over 3 weeks this summer there were only 2 real, healthy, "blue" days.

For more information, check out the rest of the project at www.f-i-o-a-t.com



f-i-o-a-t.com

ent types of LED lights that were recommended to us by the kite experts. We are also planning on designing a more permanent installation, hopefully at XP, that will visualize the data once the workshops are over.

ON YOUR FUNDRAISING PAGE, YOU ALSO REGARDED FLOAT BEIJING AS A PUBLIC ART PROJECT. WHY DID YOU POSITION FLOAT BEIJING IN THAT WAY? HOW DOES FLOAT BEIJING SHOW THE SPIRIT OF PUBLIC ART?

We believe that FLOAT Beijing is a public art project as it engages and interacts with people directly. The workshops require local residents to come and work together, and the kite flying is both a night time spectacle for other residents, but is also choreographed by the workshop participants and kitefliers. We feel that the spirit of public art resides in the ability for something

visual to inspire new dialogue and relationships between local residents, and that is what FLOAT Beijing seeks to do.

AFTER THIS PROJECT, DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES LIKE FLOAT BEIJING? DOES THE PROJECT RELATE TO YOUR PERSONAL CAREER PLANS?

We're going to see where the project goes, and will most likely hold workshops and kite flights in other cities as well. Xiaowei is interested in seeing the different levels of air pollution in the city as a function of urban design decisions, as sustainable urban design is one of her main interests. I am interested in exploring different venues for spreading knowledge about environmental and educational issues.

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE FLOAT BEIJING? HOW DID YOU GET THE FUNDING BESIDES KICKSTARTER?



f-l-o-a-t.com

Assembling an LED sensor for one of the kites.

We received a grant from the Black Rock Arts Foundation in March which gave us the initial funding for plane tickets and a small materials budget. We also received a small grant from the Awesome Foundation Boston Chapter and the Asia Society for Josh's documentary about the project. Once the project began to grow we decided to expand to multiple workshops and started our Kickstarter campaign to help cover additional costs. We are so grateful to have received so much support and interest!

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FLOAT BEIJING:

<http://f-l-o-a-t.com/ask>

<http://www.good.is/posts/glowing-pollution-sensor-equipped-kites-replace-beijing-s-stars>

Purchase a FLOAT Beijing Kite: <http://f-l-o-a-t.com/post/33366791391/want-to-buy-a-beautiful-kite>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19355949>

TOM VAN SANT, RENAISSANCE KITE MAN

By Ali Fujino

Studying art for decades has schooled me to appreciate the best in the field. Throughout history, the art world has had sterling examples of artists who are larger than life. We think of Da Vinci, Picasso, Warhol, individuals who do something memorable.

Tom Van Sant is that type of artist. Professionally trained he has been on the cutting edge of art and design for decades. Like the masters, he works in a way that incorporates everything in his life into his art — his personal life, his professional and technical skills and his passion to know about the world in which he lives.

Wikipedia describes Van Sant as a sculptor, painter, and conceptual artist. In his professional work he has executed over sixty major sculpture and mural commissions for public spaces around the world. These include the international airports of Honolulu, Taipei and Los Angeles, the civic centers of Los Angeles, Newport Beach and Inglewood, and corporate centers in Taiwan, Manila, Salt Lake City, Dallas, Honolulu and San Francisco. He had a long association with architect William Pereira and his work has adorned over a dozen Pereira buildings. Van Sant has had more than a dozen one-man exhibits in the United States, Europe and Australia. His art is represented in public and private collections throughout the world.

Van Sant's professional skills and intellectual interests span architectural design, city planning, art education and advanced technical invention. His large scale conceptual art projects of the 1980s led to the creation of The GeoSphere Project, an ambitious environmental display system designed to illustrate the issues of earth resource management.

The GeoSphere Image marks a milestone in cartographic history. It is the first satellite map of the earth, showing the real world as it appears from space. The work required one year of effort on the world's most powerful graphics computers by Van Sant and technical director Van Warren of Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and was assisted by Jim Knighton and Leo Blume. The image was first published as the title page of the National Geographic World Atlas.

In 1992, Van Sant created an installation called "the Earth Situation Room," an interactive project which features visualizations of earth systems and changes. This project was first shown at ECO-92, the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro.

Former vice president, Al Gore, cited Van Sant for this beautiful and useful 3D image of the earth in the film *An Inconvenient Truth*. The list of honors, commissions, and accomplishments goes on and on.

The Drachen Foundation's introduction to Van Sant was about 10 years ago, but last spring, on the most perfect of Santa Monica days, Jose Sainz and I visited Tom at his home and studio, across the street from the Santa Monica beach. The studio is what every artist dreams of — expansive and reasonably priced, it rambles with enough space for living and work. There are rooms for gathering, rooms for an office, rooms for crafting sculpture (welding large structural models for 40 plus foot commissions), rooms for drawing and drafting, and rooms for photographic projection. Leading off these many rooms are living quarters and a gigantic kitchen, (the space was once a roadside restaurant). It has the flavor of being a bit spartan with leaks in the ceiling that let in



TomVanSant.com

Tom Van Sant launching one of his kite designs.



TomVanSant.com
Ali Fujino

TOP: "Dolphin's Wall" by Van Sant, created in 2001 in sculptured concrete in Newport Beach, California.

BOTTOM: Van Sant's Santa Monica studio.



Ali Fujino

Tom Van Sant assembles one of his 40-year-old kites on the beach in Santa Monica.

wind and water, but all in all, it is the artist studio that we all wish we had. It was clear to me upon visiting that this space represents the foundation of his work and vision over 30 years of his life. Now in his early 70s, Van Sant is working on major sculptural commissions and has time to revisit his kiting.

The gathering that particular weekend was an impromptu invitation from the Otis College of Art and Design (Los Angeles's first independent,

professional school of art and design). Tom has taught at Otis on and off for decades, but was invited back this past spring to lecture about his kites. These are the kites that should be a primer for all kitemakers, and after 40 years, they still hold their place in kiting design and construction.

This gathering of the best kites in the world were all there to pay homage to Van Sant. The word went out over the telephone by Tom, "I just lectured about kites to a design group at Otis, and

they are keen to have a kite festival on the beach. Come!" Melanie Walker, Jose Sainz, Ken Conrad, George Peters and Suzanne Sadow were among those who came to pay tribute to him. That weekend, he opened up everything to us, and our focus was his kites.

His wonderful visions of tethered flight were translated into his own creation, and the stacks of meticulous drawings showed us how much time and work he put into each kite. Although aged and torn, his kite creations illustrated stability of flight and perfection of original design. They showed his knowledge of kiting cultures, the use of modern materials (he was one of the first to use fiberglass tubes and nylon fabric in contemporary kite construction), and the energy of one person who had vision and was not afraid to pursue that vision. They showed his intense focus on the period of his life where kiting made total sense in his work, from his sketches, to his engineering and documenting their flight through film.

We were all inspired in his presence, and after an evening of visiting, could not wait until the next day to take one of the most famous of his kites, Jacob's Ladder (ca. 1976), for a fly. It is fashioned after a centipede kite and consists of 200 segments; 11 inches (280mm) across, each disk has three line attachments, and a stabilizing rod 42 inches (1,070mm), lifts up to 2,000 pounds, measuring ¼ of a mile in length and is promoted as being able to be "climbed by a person into the sky". Tom designed and engineered a launching mechanism to help keep the 200 segments free of tangles as the kite rises into the sky.

The night before the launch had given us the opportunity to survey the condition of Jacob's Ladder. Many of the nylon sails had come away from their circular frames, so it was decided the launch would only be of a portion of the kite, perhaps 35 of the segments. Even 35 would create pull. The winds that day were tremendously strong, gusting up to 30 mph. This was not the prime conditions for launch, but none of us wanted to be disappointed by having a no-launch day. George Peters took charge and the rest of us were satis-

fied to be a part of the volunteer crew. The segments were carefully laid out with consideration to the direction of the wind, and the public spectators. George was careful to note there would be much pull from even 35 segments, so we took precautions to tie the flying line to the lifeguard stand. No matter how long we waited, the wind conditions were not perfect. The command from Tom was given, and we watched Jacob's Ladder rise and then take that rolling turn and twist. It did rise, as it had 40 years before, but the sails and framework were not holding, and as the segments began to separate, the winds continued to gust. We quickly lowered the kite and grounded the segments by placing handfuls of sand on each one.

I looked back to see Tom standing with George, with that handsome smile and a look of sheer excitement, "He went up, but time has not done him well...back to the studio for repairs." Perhaps Jacob's Ladder would fly another day.

If you are in the Santa Monica area on March 17th, 2013, Otis College of Art and Design will hold the second annual kite festival, and you can be sure that Van Sant will be leading the launches.

REFERENCES:

Tom Van Sant's website: www.Tomvansant.com

Van Sant's website for the GeoSphere Project: www.geosphere.com

Jacob's Ladder in Flight, 15 minutes, 18 seconds: <http://vimeo.com/26766993>

Van Sant Interview, Distinguished Otis Alumni: <http://youtu.be/k2CuCMaHlKY>

New Scientist article from 1990. *Science: Vision of a Cloudless Planet Earth*. 12 May 1990, Magazine issue 1716.

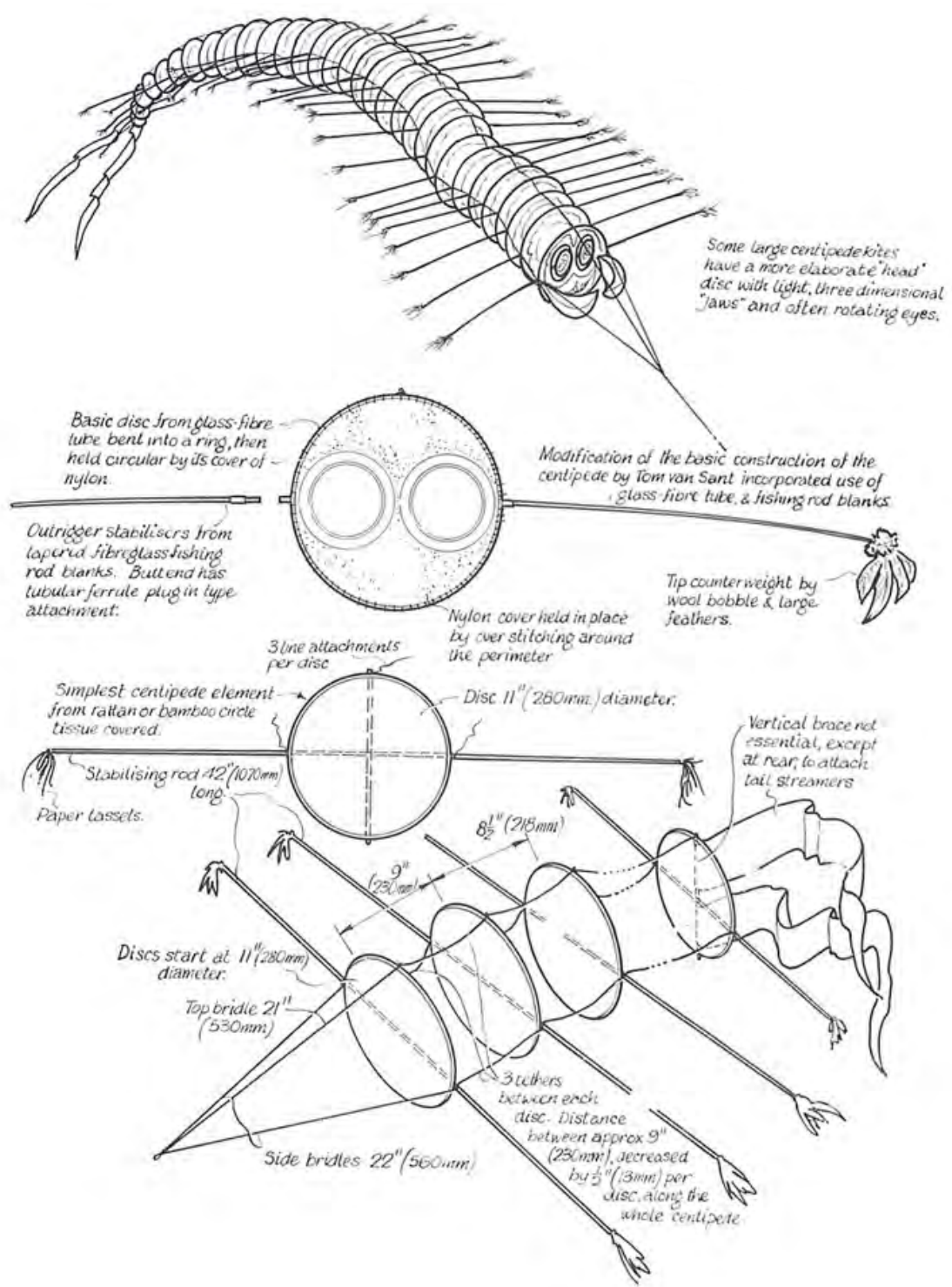
Radford, Georgia and Radford, Warren; *Sculpture in the Sun, Hawaii's Art for Open Spaces*, University of Hawaii Press, 1978, 18-20, 97.



Ali Fujino

TOP: The group gathers on the Santa Monica Beach for the flight of the centipede kite. Tom Van Sant (right) prepares the group for the launch with detailed instructions.

BOTTOM: Laying out the disks.



TOP: Drawing by Van Sant with annotations by Ron Moulton.

NEXT PAGE: Van Sant's kite, Jacob's Ladder, adorns the sky.



EXPLORING THE VICTORIAN KITE

By Katrien van Riet

When you combine a love for nineteenth-century literature with a love for kites, some interesting things happen. As I began researching nineteenth-century kite literature, I realized that there was precious little material on the subject, even though nineteenth-century stories involving kites abounded. It soon became clear that the nineteenth-century kite had been largely glossed over in favour of the earlier electric kite hype (building on Franklin's 1752 kite experiment), and the later developments in cellular kites starting roughly around the 1880s, which were a crucial part in the invention of the airplane. This period dating from the electric to the cellular kite is perhaps just seen as the long pause that separates one big invention from the next, but as I will show, the kite nevertheless underwent a fascinating development in nineteenth-century literature. In order to explore this statement, I am mainly interested in the moral aspect of the kite in children's stories. I will look at a few poems and stories intended for a youthful audience, and describe how exactly the kite is a shaping presence in these texts.

Victorian children's magazines abound with pictures of kites broken free, or of children being carried off by an over-sized kite (figs. 2 and 3). This notion of freedom returns powerfully in the fundamental paradox of the flight of a kite: the kite pulls on the line, as if wanting to break free from its captivity, but it cannot stay up without being tethered. Of course, this duality did not escape writers who used the kite as a metaphor in their texts. As a result, this paradox was often used in moral imagery featuring the kite. In these texts, the kite represents a boy or girl who is tired of being told what to do, and the curtail- ing character of the string represents the child's

necessary obedience to its parents. They all contain the lesson that without restraint, a child will plunge (as a kite literally plunges) into bad behavior and will come to harm.

The comparison between kite and wayward child as it is depicted in "The Kite; or, Pride must have a fall" (fig. 1) was a very popular one. The poem begins with an image of pride. Almost like a real person, the kite yearns for appreciation and wants to display its talents to the crowd of people beneath, but it feels restrained by the string that tethers it. The kite is not only proud of the great height at which it is able to fly, it feels it can also do better on its own, without the restraint of earthly fetters (string) that literally hold it down. The kite then breaks the string to gain its freedom, but this turns out to be a bittersweet liberty. Restraint is necessary, the poem seems to say, even though the arrogant think they can do without it. Towards the end of the poem, physical restraint is transformed into a religious one: the string becomes a metaphor for the individual's relationship with God, whose authority is portrayed as a good and much-needed part of life.

As it turns out, this poem brings across a moral message: do not be proud or conceited, as this will cost you dearly (in a physical as well as religious sense). Such messages return in many other children's tales and rhymes as well. Figure 2 and 3 both portray children who bit off more than they could chew when they tried to fly an enormous kite. Such a warning of "self-conceit" is also present in "Charlie's Kite." Charlie did not follow his older cousin's advice when flying his brand-new kite, and Charlie, being a novice to kite flying, soon had his kite caught on a tree that tore a large hole in its sail (fig. 4). Again,

The Kite; or, Pride must have a Fall.



Good John Newton of Olney, the genial and wise friend of the poet Cowper, himself also a poet, was ever on the watch to draw moral and spiritual lessons from common things. His Fable of "The Kite" is one which is pleasant and profitable for readers of all ages.

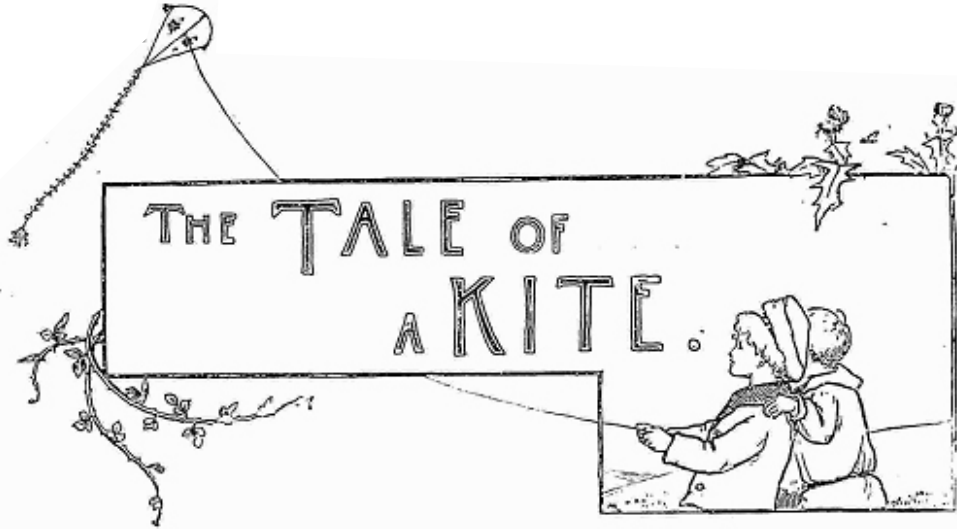
ONCE on a time a paper kite
Was mounted to a wondrous height,
Where, giddy with its elevation,
It thus express'd self-admiration:
"See how yon crowds of gazing people
Admire my flight above the steeple;
How would they wonder if they knew
All that a kite like me can do?
Were I but free, I'd take a flight,
And pierce the clouds beyond their sight;
But, ah! like a poor pris'ner bound,
My string confines me near the ground:
I'd brave the eagle's tow'ring wing,
Might I but fly without a string."

It tugg'd and pull'd, while thus it spoke,
To break the string—at last it broke.
Depriv'd at once of all its stay,
In vain it tried to soar away;

Unable its own weight to bear,
It flutter'd downward through the air;
Unable its own course to guide,
The winds soon plunged it in the tide.
Ah! foolish kite, thou hadst no wing,
How couldst thou fly without a string?

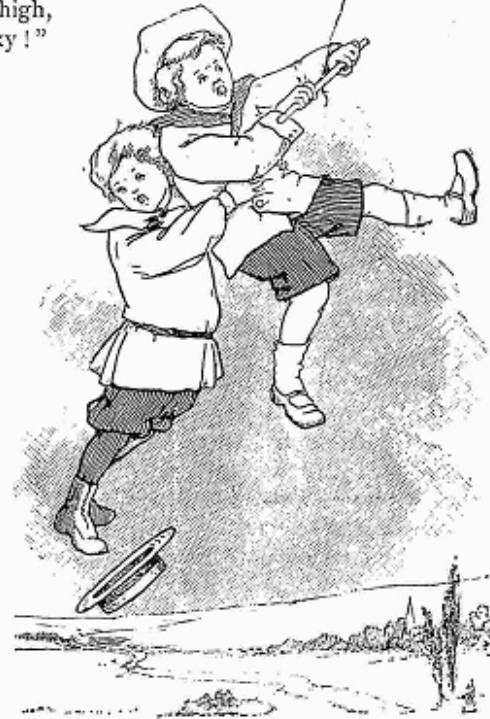
My heart replied, "O Lord, I see
How much this kite resembles me!
Forgetful that by thee I stand,
Impatient of thy ruling hand;
How oft I've wished to break the lines
Thy wisdom for my lot assigns!
How oft indulg'd a vain desire
For something more, or something higher!
And, but for grace and love divine,
A fall thus dreadful had been mine."

FIGURE 1: "The Kite; or, Pride must have a fall."



SAID Johnny to Joey, "Let's fly my new kite;
 We'll make it go up a most *terrible* height!
 The string is *so* long and the wind is *so* high,
 I believe it will nearly reach up to the sky!"

So, chattering gaily, they trotted along,
 Filling the air with their laughter and song,
 Till they came to the hill where the kite they
 would sail,
 With its beautiful tassels and wonderful tail.



But, alas! when they got to the end of the
 string,
 There suddenly happened a very sad thing;
 For the kite was *so* big and the wind was *so*
 high,
 It carried them both off right up to the sky!

E. A. C.

FIGURE 2: "The Tale of a Kite"

the message of the story is to avoid being conceited, which might cause children not to heed the advice of others more experienced (such as adults). The kite seems to come to harm so often that the image of the kite with a hole or tear in it becomes quite common, with writers coming up with new creative ways to harm their fictional kites. Figure 5 shows a picture from "Ups and Downs; Or, the Life of a Kite" in which the miserable life of a kite, including all its accidents, is portrayed. Of course, if the kite is harmed so often, just the image of a damaged kite can come to imply the punishment of wayward behavior, which leads to the kite becoming a symbol instead of just a toy.

Although the kite doubtlessly appealed to writers who wanted to use the rebellious image of the kite as a warning, the kite was also used to represent hope and reward. These other stories highlight the importance of good conduct and honesty. "The Lost Kite", for example, tells the story of three friends, one of which is jealous of the kitemaking abilities of the other. He tries to discredit his friend's good reputation but is found out and forgiven. The image on the title page of the book shows the three friends having made up and standing around the kite, which, in a possible act of patriotism on the part of the artist, features a portrait of Queen Victoria. In "Found at Last, The Story of a Kite's Tail," a young lad is fishing when a small boy loses his kite. When a young girl asks him to run after the kite to see if it can be saved, the youth grumpily consents. He finds the kite lying half in the river and considers it lost, but after some persuasion by the girl, he fishes it out of the water (fig 7). When he examines the kite, he notices that one of the paper strips attached to the tail is part of a five-pound note, and as a reward for this find, he is given the full five pounds. Here the reward has literally fallen from the sky! In these texts, the kite seems to represent hope and reward instead of restraint or even punishment. The kite, it seems, could be used as a symbol in a wide selection of texts.

It is precisely this development of the kite into a symbol that is so interesting. As many kite fliers



FIGURE 3: "Boys Who Have Risen"

will know, it is hard to escape the prejudice that the kite is a child's toy. That Benjamin Franklin was able to study the nature of lightning with it, or that it helped the Wright brothers develop their airplane seems to make little difference. A Victorian reading of the kite, on the other hand, does not overthrow the assumption that kites are for children. On the contrary, it suggests that this 'childish' nature of the kite helped establish the kite as a symbol of waywardness, recklessness, unpredictability, but hope and reward as well. In the texts discussed here, the kite says something about Victorian culture: the importance it adhered to obedience, its focus on virtues (such as modesty instead of pride), and its praise of

restraint. Especially this last quality is one that is seen in quite a different light today. Indeed, the thought that the kite can represent restraint instead of freedom might be surprising to some. When studying something as mundane and ordinary as the kite, such pre-formed twentieth-century notions are defeated, and new insights into the nineteenth-century are revealed. And you get to find pictures of kites that feature Queen Victoria.

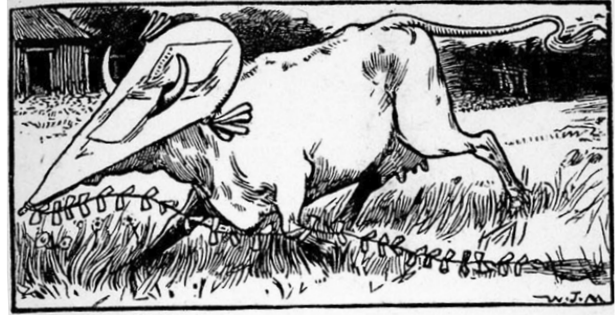


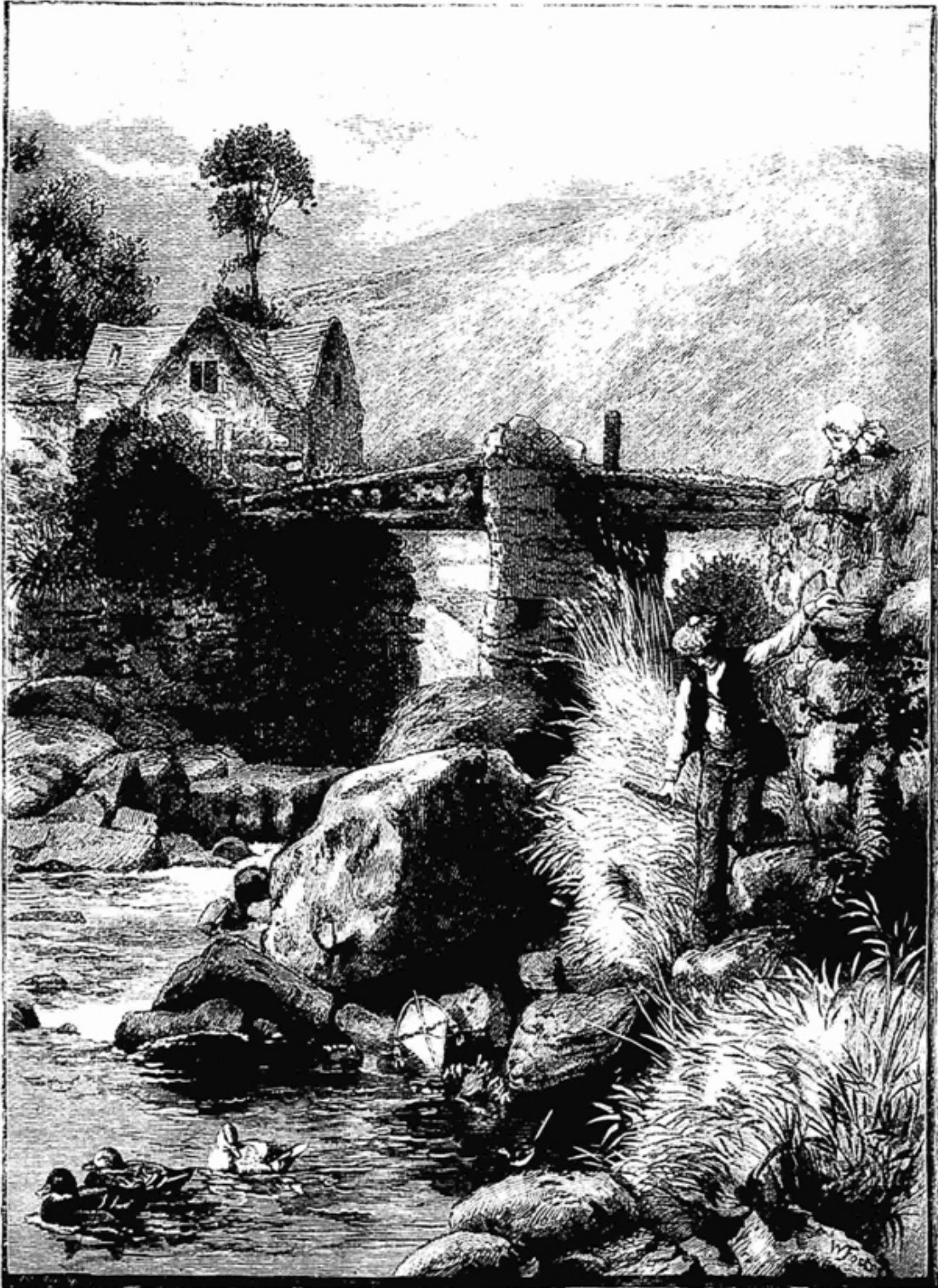
FIGURE 5: "The Kite and the Cow"



FIGURE 4: "Charlie's Kite"



FIGURE 6: "The Lost Kite"



"I MANAGED WITH DIFFICULTY TO RESCUE HIS KITE."

p. 135.

FIGURE 7: "Found at Last: The Story of a Kite's Tale."

THE STAR FARKER IS DEAD! LONG LIVE THE STAR FARKER!

By Scott Skinner

INTRODUCTION BY ALI FUJINO

One of the great things about the world of kites is the diverse ways in which individuals can be involved. Over many years, kiting has had influences in cultures, (Asia and beyond), science (Ben Franklin), and history (kites to Kitty Hawk). One of the less frequently described aspects of kiting, and one of the most charming and entertaining is that of the “hobbyist.” These individuals are involved in kiting for the sheer fun of designing, building, and flying kites, which are designed from the heart, and created of self-learned skills and time honed craftsmanship.

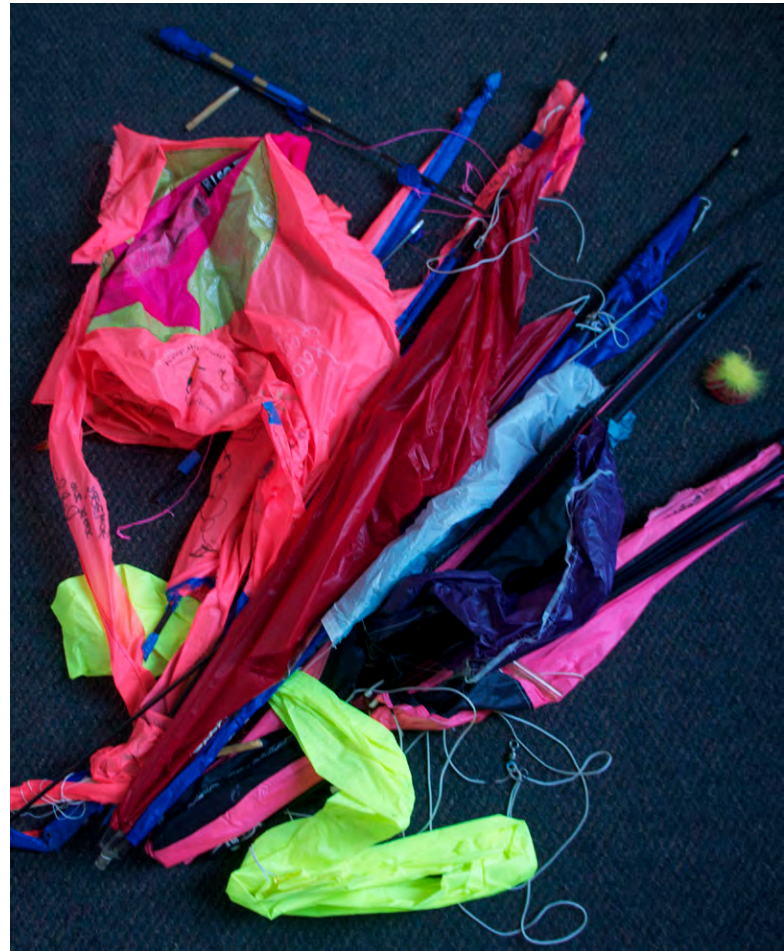
This is something that is not often written about, or shared in literature, as it is sometimes thought of as too frivolous, but because we are the Drachen Foundation and our jobs are to track everything in kiting, this is to be tracked. I will let you be the judge as to whether the Star Farker has a place in kite history.

TEXT BY SCOTT SKINNER

There is a single object that has continuously been a part of the American Kitefliers Association (AKA) annual auction for over twenty years and there is no doubt that it has raised more money for the organization than any other individual object. It is not a kite – at least it has never flown as a kite as far as we know – but it is a kite-like object unlike anything most of us have encountered. It is known as the Star Farker, and it has been with the organization for as long as most of us have been members. The history of the Star Farker is murky at best. Like many things in history, once the object is destroyed, its story becomes more colorful, recollections more fanciful, and its pedigree more uncertain. The history of the Star Farker is a

mix of fact and fiction, legend and tall tales, myth and reality. It is a history in which I have played a small but defining part, and which I will attempt to explain to you.

The Star Farker was made by Mike Simmons, an accomplished sport kiteflier and maker, as a playful parody of dean Jordan’s sport kite, the Star Watcher. It was intentionally made so that it wouldn’t fly or would be terribly difficult to fly and showed up at an AKA auction in 1991 or



Scott Skinner

The Star Farker, lying in a tangled mess before it was destroyed.

1992. It quickly became a beloved satirical symbol of a “non-kite” with great value as a humorous message and since then, many have bid and bought the rights to own the Star Farker for one year. The tradition and rules of ownership were quickly established; own the Star Farker for one year, modify it in any way, and bring it back to the auction the following year!

I’ve ended up with the Farker at least three times (well...four or five at the most) and I am still not clear as to who sets the “rules” for engagement. Sometimes I have bid for the privilege of ownership, other times “friends” have bid on it and “assigned” me ownership for the year. My most memorable moment with the Farker was the year after Bill Bigge had owned it, and had, indeed, modified it with a beautiful canard wing that created lift so that it performed perfectly as an indoor glider (maybe the only real air-time the kite had ever seen). Almost immediately, it was clear that the Farker wouldn’t fit into my kite bag without my “modification.” So “snap” went the beautiful canard and into the bag it went. It is assumed that “modification” adds value to the Farker and is the right of the yearful owner (unlike a masterpiece such as the Mona Lisa, for instance, where no one would ever think of modifying her in any way!)

In 2010 when I purchased the privilege of yearful ownership, I determined the Farker would spend the year mounted over the bed of Dave and Suzy Gomberg and I had a sinking feeling that it would



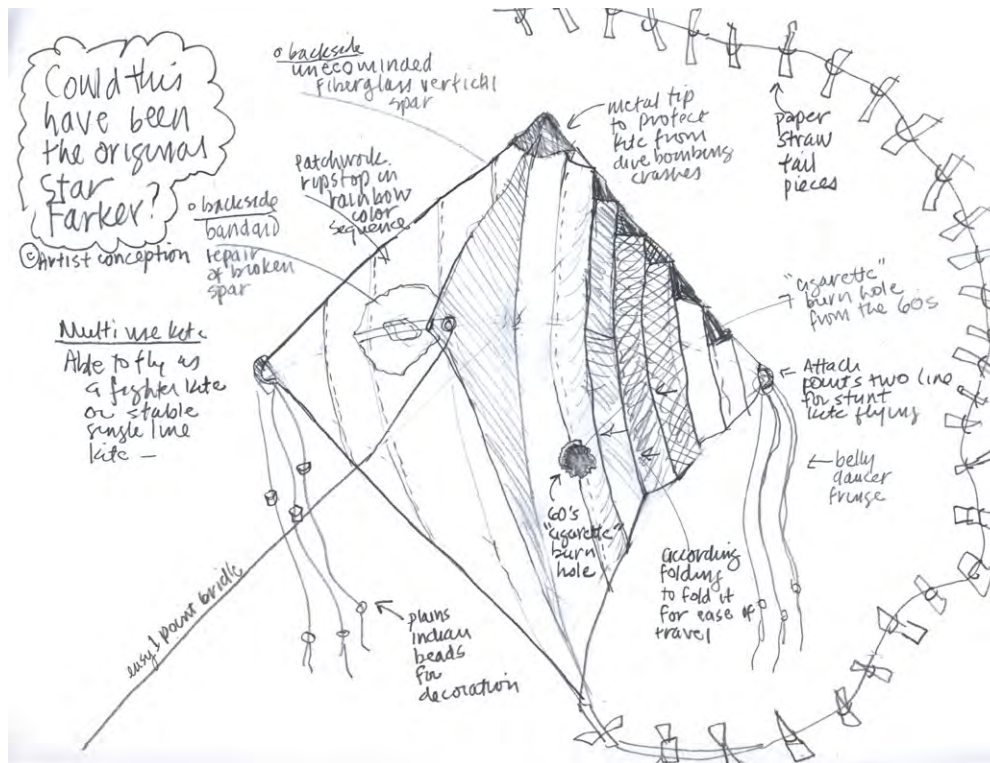
provided by Scott Skinner

Scott Skinner holding Son of Star Farker, currently in the possession of Jon Barressi.

come back to me the following year. It did, lovingly adorned with my face on the sail! Needless to say, this was the kiss of death for the Farker.

At the Antelope Island Kite Festival over Labor Day weekend, I decided that my “modification” for the year would be to allow all the attendees to help me finally destroy the Star Farker. It was done with great gusto by all in attendance — even AKA president-elect Jon Barressi. Also in attendance was none other than dean Jordan, indelibly linked to the Farker (whether he liked it or not). He quickly took stock of the situation and promised a new Star Farker for the annual AKA Convention, just four short weeks away. Remarkably, the “red-headed step-child of the Star Farker” arrived just hours before the convention’s annual auction and I quickly took advantage of





Ali Fujino

Artist's conception of the original Star Farker design.

the opportunity to address the assembled AKA members, "what is missing here?" I queried. They quickly and accurately responded, "the Star Farker!" Indeed, there was no Farker in the auction. When I announced my unprecedented action of destroying the Farker, gasps, groans, and grimaces greeted me. (Valerie Govig almost fell off her chair!)

Enter the Son of Star Farker! dean had provided a six-sided rokkaku sail with plenty of room for creative modification! As bidding began on the new Farker, what could have been more appropriate than to have newly elected president of the AKA, Jon Barressi, become the keeper of the new Farker for 2012-2013? Jon and his wife had just purchased a sewing machine and both vowed to learn to use it. Would they modify the Son of Farker into a high-flying rokkaku? Would Jon do what he knows best and somehow transform Son of Farker into a four line Revolution? Might he add wings to make it into a twisted clone of the original Star Farker?

EDITORS NOTE:

Amazingly, there is little documentation for the Star Farker (Ali Fujino kindly drafted an artists rendering of a possible original design). In particular, no known photos exist of any of the modifications described by the author of this article. We leave it to the reader to determine the merits of this story for themselves.

Plan on attending the American Kitefliers Association Annual Convention and Grand Nationals at the Convention Center in Seaside, Oregon October 7 – 13, 2013. You could become part of the Star Farker history!

Read David Gomberg's article about the Star Farker on his website: <http://www.gombergkites.com/update/584.html>

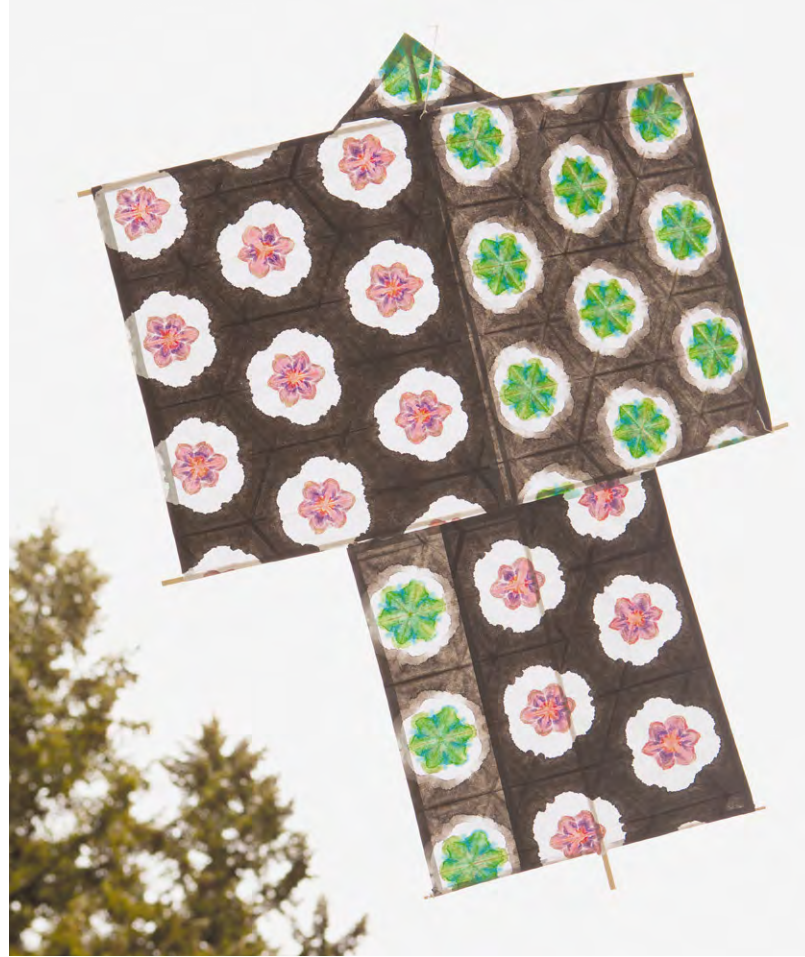
PLAYING WITH PAPER

By Helen Hiebert

My fascination with kites stems from the way they capture light as they move in the wind. My own work has developed primarily in handmade paper, and I have yet to design my own kite, but I recently found a book on my shelf that I'd had since childhood called "*Drachen Basteln*" (Craft Kites) which I must have purchased or been gifted when my family lived in Germany for a year when I was sixteen.

Fast forward fifteen years or so, and I had the pleasure of meeting Ali Fujino, director of the Drachen Foundation, on an airport shuttle bus in Chillicothe, Ohio, where we both attended the annual meeting of The Friends of Dard Hunter, a national papermaking organization. At that meeting I also had the good fortune of attending a kitemaking workshop with Scott Skinner, another Drachen Foundation luminary, and what sticks in my mind is this thought: "If I'd met this guy 15-20 years earlier, I'd have become a kitemaker." The way he conducted the workshop was so similar to my own style of teaching, and I could feel his cognitive gears churning as mine would.

A year or so after meeting the "kite people," I read Brian Queen's article in *Hand Papermaking* magazine about how to make hot air balloons. I've known Brian for many years, and we share an interest in illuminating paper. I was on my way to teach a 2-1/2 week workshop at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina and decided to subject my students to making an eight foot tall hot air balloon using tissue paper, following Queen's instructions. We spent several evenings assembling the gores (panels), connecting them and finally patching a few holes and flying the balloon.



Helen's version of Scott Skinner's Sode kite, in the air and in the studio.

Helen Hiebert Studio



Helen Hiebert Studio

A paper hot-air balloon

Flying it wasn't as easy as you might think. Our first attempt was in the morning on a hill in front of the dining hall at Penland, where we hoped our balloon would be a spectacle. We heated the balloon with a camping stove and the vibrant colors looked stunning as it inflated. But alas, it didn't take off because there wasn't a big enough difference in air temperature between the inside and outside of the balloon. A few of us did make another attempt a few mornings later, getting up earlier when the air was still cool. This time we used a couple of blow dryers to inflate the balloon, and lo and behold, it lifted and flew up over the papermaking studio and into the trees behind it. We immediately turned into a bunch of children, squealing with excitement.

Now back to kites (and children). I ran an after-school Paper Club at my children's school for a couple of years, and one of our 4-week sessions involved making things that fly. It was a delight to discover that the Drachen Foundation sells small

kitemaking kits, so I ordered a batch and the kids and I enjoyed decorating, assembling and flying our kites on the playground at the school.

I taught at Penland again in the summer of 2011; this time I co-instructed a course with Alyssa Salomon who specializes in alternative photography. We began the class by making cyanotype prints on Japanese paper. The blue of the cyanotypes looked incredible as we flew our kites (again assembled using Drachen kits) near the same hill where the balloon launch had failed five years prior. It was a fun way to begin the class: practicing the photo technique, building the simple kite structures, and then illuminating our images against the sky.

Shortly after that workshop at Penland, I noticed a call for artists books. I submitted images and got to thinking, "What about a book called '1,000 Sheets of Paper'?" My primary interest in paper has always been how one sheet can be manip-



Helen Hiebert Studio

Flying kites at Penland School of Crafts.

ulated, through the simplicity of cuts and folds or the complexity of twists and pop-ups, to turn the flat and mundane into incredible sculptural forms. I contacted the editor, who happened to be someone I'd spoken to about another project a couple of years earlier, but my pitch wasn't quite convincing enough (hopefully one day the idea will manifest itself) but the editor did have another book idea in mind.

In December 2011, I secured a contract to write "Playing With Paper: Illuminating, Engineering, and Reimagining Paper Art" for Rockport Publishers. As with all of the books I've written ("Papermaking with Garden Plants & Common Weeds", "The Papermaker's Companion", and "Paper Illuminated", all published by Storey Books) I had quite a bit of content control. I never in my life dreamt I would write a book (much less four books) but I've really enjoyed every one of them. They allow me to be creative (I get to come up with project ideas and design them); they enable

me to connect with experts in the field (whose work I get to curate and show off); and I get to collaborate with other artists, photographers and designers.

I immediately knew that I wanted to include a kite project (as well as a hot air balloon) in the book. I contacted Scott Skinner to see if he would be willing to contribute a project, and he agreed to make a *Sode* kite (traditional Japanese kite shaped like a kimono). I tried to incorporate a different paper for each project in the book in order to give the reader a glimpse into the world of fine paper. For Scott's project, I suggested he use a hand dyed paper created by Susan Kristoferson. Scott created a sample kite, wrote instructions and sent them to me. I fabricated another kite following his instructions and using Kristoferson's paper. Scott and I had a couple of phone conversations (one at the last minute from the photography studio) to make sure everything was accurate. The final stage was flying the kite for the photo shoot. Un-

fortunately, the day was not windy enough nor did my legs carry me fast enough to get a good action photo, but we did end getting a shot of the kite in the sky.

I remember the stimulating conversation Ali Fujino and I had in that airport shuttle, as I told her about my interest in watermarks and we dreamed about making kites with watermarked papers. Watermarking is a process done during the papermaking process, in which the watermarked ar-

eas in a sheet of paper are thinner, so they show up when illuminated. I would love to see a watermarked paper flying in the sky.

Helen's book, "Playing With Paper", ISBN #9781592538140, will be published by Quarry Press in January, 2013. To order an autographed copy, or to find out more about Helen's work, visit www.helenhiebertstudio.com.



Helen Hiebert

THE ROCKAWAY REPORT: THE KITE COLLECTIVE

By Lee Dares



The Kite Collective

Whitney Richardson and Lee Dares with the Kite Machine.

The Kite Machine was the first of a series of itinerant exhibitions of handmade, low-cost miniature kites available in refurbished vending machines in various communities, beginning with Far Rockaway, Queens, New York City. The goal of the project was to provide people with accessibility to kiteflying as an art, a pastime, or a way of life. We wanted to reach as many people as possible with our human resources and the results far surpassed our expectations. In this report, the process of conceptualizing, building, and fundraising the machine and our observations will be covered, along with future plans for the constantly evolving project.

Last spring, the initial members of the collective were in the experimental phase of kitemaking. Taking tips from their grandparents who made kites during the Great Depression out of whatever materials they had on hand, the Kite Collective began finding unique materials and designs that emphasized practicality. Then they began teaching workshops based on re-using household items, such as newsprint, barbecue skewers, food coloring, and for more advanced students, using windbreakers, needles and thread. This approach to kitemaking emphasized learning from our past and giving it new meaning in today's fast-paced, overly abundant society by making the most out of what we already have. The workshops gained popularity and it came to a point where we wanted to reach more people but with our other jobs and busy lives, we couldn't teach all the time. So we came up with a self-sufficient kite dispenser that would imbue our love of kites and kitemaking, and provide the community with access to kites.

The project momentum officially began upon finding a vending machine at a local flea mar-



LEFT: The vintage snack-turned-kite machine



The Kite Collective

RIGHT: A disclaimer added to the Kite Machine.

ket this past June. It took under a week to get it painted and ready to start selling kites. Up to this point, we had no idea how to make miniature kites, let alone package them, so the design process began. The height of each slot was only 10" so we were put under severe limitations for our designs. We had to find a flat kite, which could be scaled down to fit the slots. We started off with a Bermuda kite made of rip stop nylon material from a used windbreaker. We had to make the materials of the kites as light as possible to ensure they would have enough lift to go up, to compensate for the somewhat heavy lined fabric. For the flying line we tried everything from fishing line, which proved to be too coiled and difficult to wrap spools individually, to twisted nylon kite line, which made the kites spin out of control, until we settled on spools of plain old sewing

thread. It was light enough for the kite to lift it, and readily available at our local dollar store.

The next task was figuring out how to package the kites. We brainstormed one evening and some of our ideas were cardboard boxes, acrylic cases, zip lock bags, test tubes and even not having any packaging at all and just putting the kites straight into the machine. We decided some sort of tube was the way to go, and quickly found a distributor of acrylic tubes in the correct dimension. We rolled up the prototype kite leaving one of the three spars, a coffee stir stick, attached with the other spars joined by a small thread in the center, so that the user could see how to assemble it at a glance. Several adjustments to the design were needed over the course of the summer. Notable were adding a longer tail to stabilize the kite, ad-



The Kite Collective

Flying kites on the boardwalk at Rockaway Beach, New York City.



The Kite Collective

Members of the Kite Collective making kites with kids of all ages at Rockaway Beach.



The Kite Collective

LEFT: Kites sold in the Kite Machine come semi-assembled in a tube.

RIGHT: Kites waiting to be rolled and stuffed into tubes.

justing the length of the bridle legs, and changing the material of the tail from biodegradable to plastic as our supplier ran out of stock, but overall the original design won the game as it outlasted the other kite designs, the della Porta and sled kites, in its simplicity of design and easy flying ability.

Over the course of the summer, around 200 kites were distributed per month, 650 in total. The clientele were young, old, newcomers to kites, and people that have done it all their lives. Some people offered to help us make them when they saw us kitemaking beside the machine. We welcomed their assistance with gratitude. The greatest experience of all was seeing children fly the kites and carefully look after them. Watching them bring the kites down ever so slowly, so as

not to make a knot in the flying line, and then rolling them up to take home and save for next time, was gratifying and heartwarming.

With all said and done, the Kite Machine has proven to be successful. Here at the Kite Collective, we all agree we have learned a way to communicate with people without speaking, to appreciate the differences that make us unique, and to find common ground between us all. We plan to extend the project to different communities, spreading the joy and peace we have shared with the community at Rockaway with many more people in years to come. We appreciate the abundant support given by numerous organizations, such as Patagonia, Let's Fly Kites, Kickstarter and the Drachen Foundation. They have helped make this project possible.

KITES AND PIRATES IN ARGENTINE LITERATURE

Prof. Maria Elena García Autino

"...And yet each evening, lazy flocks of weightless dragons rose high into the sky above the ships of the imperial fleet and hovered delicately above the water, above the enemy decks..."

- Jorge Luis Borges

The space that *Discourse* enables for the friends of kites all over the world is especially interesting because it allows us to also talk about our experiences in many different contexts. Trips, work with intercultural groups, workshops with children of isolated rural schools deep in Patagonia.... These topics have been covered — but this time I want to share a very special story about pirates, Argentine kites and literature.

I believe that kites offer a good opportunity to understand and to enjoy other cultures and other ways of seeing the world. Because of this, I would like to talk about the presence of the kite, a magical and wonderful object, in Argentine literature.

Although many references to kites exist in Latin American literature, I decided to select a beautiful example, of very significant authorship: Jorge Luis Borges¹.

Ching Shih, also known as Cheng I Sao, terrorized the China Sea in the early 19th century. A brilliant Cantonese female pirate, she is thought to have commanded 1,800 ships and more than 80,000 pirates — men, women, and even children. She challenged the world superpower empires of the time such as the British, Portuguese and the Qing dynasty. Undefeated, she would become one of China and Asia's strongest female pirates, and one of world history's most powerful female pirates. She was also one of the few pirate captains to retire from piracy.

In "A Universal History of Iniquity", a collection of short stories, first published in 1935, Jorge Luis Borges, wrote fictionalized accounts of real criminals, such as the widow Ching, also known as "The Luster of True Instruction."

The complete story can be found online (<http://ow.ly/fpVQx>) but I quote here the beautiful image of the kites of rice paper, floating on the water and the deck of the enemy sailboats, to the dusk and under the shining moon:

THE WIDOW CHING — PIRATE
by Jorge Luis Borges

"...And yet each evening, lazy flocks of weightless dragons rose high into the sky above the ships of the imperial fleet and hovered delicately above the water, above the enemy decks. These comet-like kites were airy constructions of rice paper and reed, and each silvery or red body² bore the identical characters. The widow anxiously studied the flight of meteors, and in it read the confused and slowly told fable of a dragon that had always watched over the vixen, in spite of the vixen's long ingratitude and constant crimes.

"The moon grew thin in the sky, and still the figures of rice paper and reed wrote the same story each evening, with almost imperceptible variations. The widow was troubled, and she brooded. When the moon grew fat in the sky and in the red-tinged water, the story seemed to be reaching its end. No one could predict whether infinite pardon or infinite punishment was to be let fall



Clarís Skoczdzopole

One of the artists of the BaToCo group, Clarís Skoczdzopole makes gorgeous kites in the Chinese tradition. BaToCo is an Argentine non-profit dedicated to flying and building kites, and interacting with other kite groups around the world. Imagine these kites floating over the China Sea...

upon the vixen, yet the inevitable end, whichever it might be, was surely approaching.

"The widow understood. She threw her two swords into the river, knelt in the bottom of a boat, and ordered that she be taken to the flagship of the emperor's fleet.

"It was evening; the sky was filled with dragons — this time, yellow ones. The widow murmured a single sentence, "The vixen seeks the dragon's wing," as she stepped aboard the ship."...

I hope you liked the story and the kites. There are many Argentine writers that told us about kites and kitemaking in Argentina. And I guess that all around the world there must be still more writers with beautiful kite stories. I hope we may share more of them soon.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Argentine poet, essayist, and short-story writer, whose tales of fantasy and dream worlds are classics of the 20th-century world literature. Borges was profoundly influenced by European culture, English literature, and such thinkers as George Berkeley, who argued that there is no material substance; the sensible world consists only of ideas, which exists for so long as they are perceived. Most of Borges' tales embrace universal themes — the often recurring circular labyrinth can be seen as a metaphor of life or a riddle of which the theme is time.

<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/jlborges.htm>

²The color red represents the sun and the bird Fenix in China. It symbolizes good luck, animation, progress and beauty, that is to say, all things good. Gold was the color of Imperial China. In the story, the emperor becomes obsessed with donating dressing gowns of gold embroidered with a gold dragoon — the Imperial emblem. The yellow indicates a sense of tolerance, patience and gained wisdom from past experiences. An old Chinese proverb says: With much tolerance, you will be able to obtain the best esteem (position).

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<http://www.facebook.com/clarisluis/photos>

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Jorge Luis Borges books:

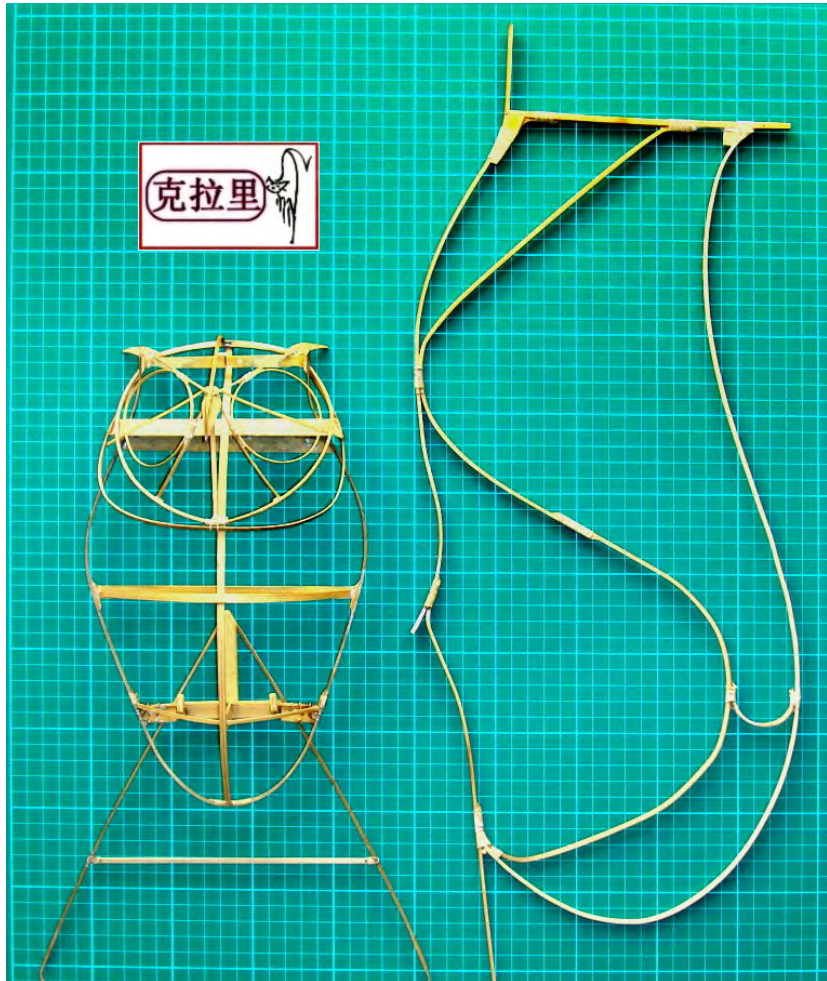
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jorge_Luis_Borges_bibliography

Ching Shih the Widow Ching, also known as Cheng I Sao:

http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_8iVo2Wsqn0/S5xNe8jXbMI/AAAAAAAAABfo/G-C3pq0IM8Y/s400/ching-shih.jpg

The complete story of The Widow Ching — Pirate by Jorge Luis Borges:

<http://ow.ly/fpVQx>



Photographs by Claris Skoczopole

NEXT PAGE: A sample of the techniques of Chinese inspiration in the use of bamboo by the extraordinary Argentine kitemaker Claris Skoczopole.



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