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Suspended Paper Kite Installations Explore Artist's East Asian and Western Identities in the Digital Age

December 6, 2023
By Margherita Cole



Japanese-American artist **Jacob Hashimoto** unveiled an immersive installation at the Miles McEnery Gallery in New York City. Titled *The Disappointment Engine*, it featured numerous paper and bamboo kites, arranged in layers, and suspended from the wall and ceilings. Ranging in color and design, these hand-crafted pieces reference the digital age and our place in it, while also exploring the artist's East Asian identity.

RHONA HOFFMAN GALLERY

The exhibition consisted of 11 works, 10 of which were displayed on the walls of the gallery, while the largest piece, all in white, cascaded in front of the entrance. Since each work was made up of numerous pieces, the sculptures shifted slightly, like they were alive. It was also easy for viewers to see the handmade aspect of these artworks. “I’m half Japanese and half European-American, and having grown up Asian-American—or at least, half Asian-American—in a rural part of the United States definitely helped shape who I am as a person in ways that I think can’t help affect the way that I make my artwork,” he explains. “So my relationship with traditional materials and traditional Japanese handicraft, you know, a lot of that stuff is a product of my relationship to Asian culture through the lens of being an American.

Although these works are made with a traditional approach, they reference the current age we are living in. Many of the circular kites possess a pixelated appearance, like computer screens glitching out. This inspiration is merged with other influences, including stained-glass windows and circuit-board patterns. “It’s about creating spaces for questions and thought and, when successful, it also reminds us of some fundamental things—the size and power of nature, smallness, Sisyphean efforts, the kind [of] cumulative experience of a lifetime,” Hashimoto

expounds. “All of those things are built into the work and I think that we experience those things as a community, oftentimes through artwork, and through the discussion of those artworks. So, if [at] any point my work happens to do that, I think it’s been very successful.”



Titled *The Disappointment Engine*, it consisted of numerous paper and bamboo kites that were suspended from the wall.