

Fiber ART NOW

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JACOB HASHIMOTO STUDIO

CREATING COMPLEX WORLDS

I am interested in how I can design artwork that is a pleasure to discover as you travel through it visually.
— Jacob Hashimoto

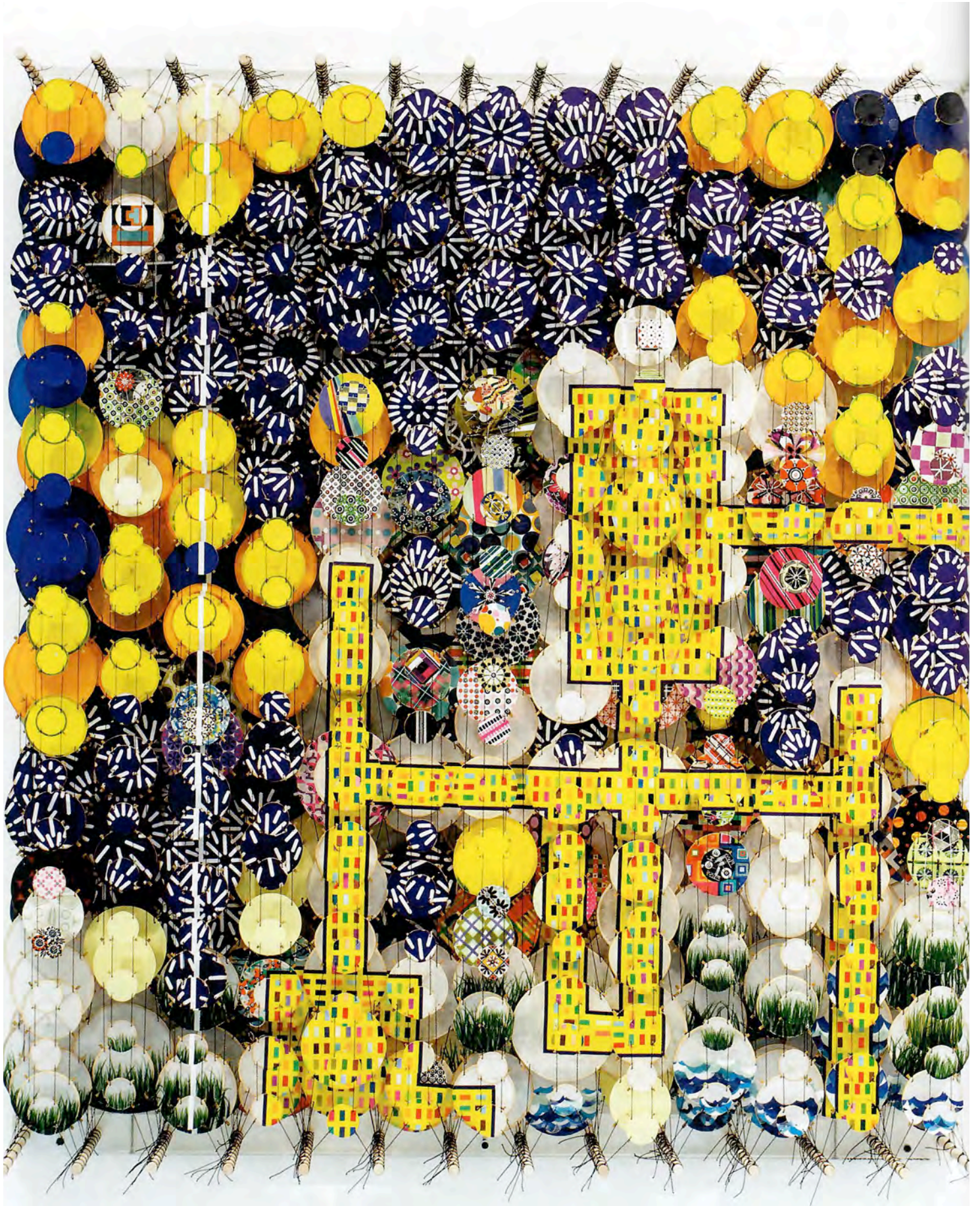


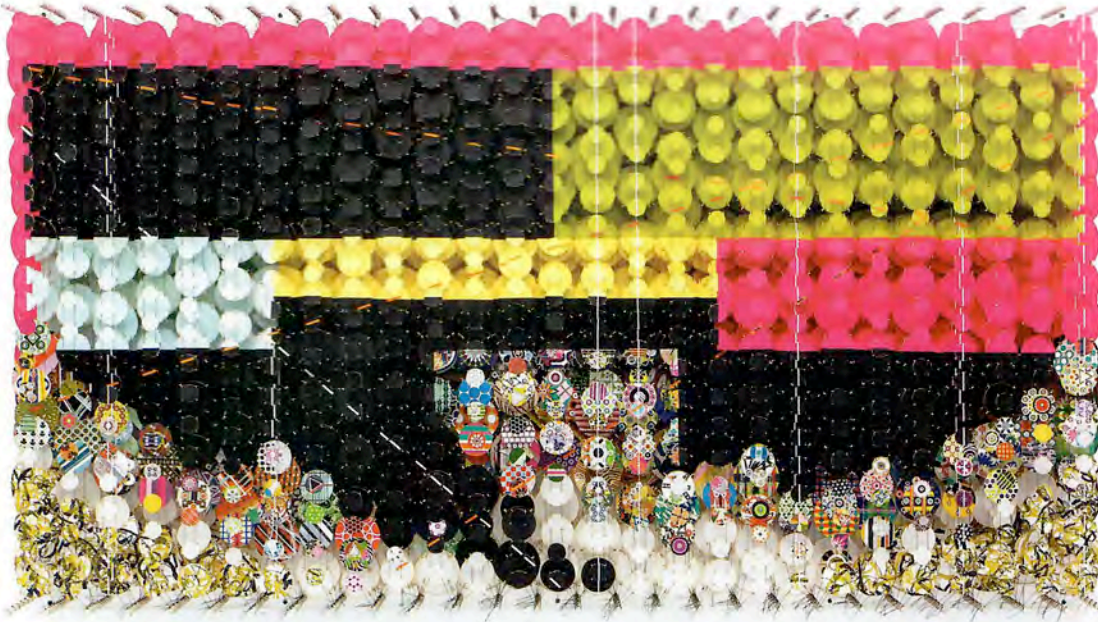
New York contemporary artist Jacob Hashimoto builds complex worlds from a range of handmade modular components. These modular components, referred to as “kites,” came about when he was trying to find his artistic voice. At the time, he was painting field landscapes, and things were not progressing the way he had hoped. During one of their conversations, his father suggested that Hashimoto needed to find a “practice of doing”—that he needed to go into the studio every day and create something, anything. It didn’t matter if he made something as simple as a paper airplane or a kite, as long as he kept working. The idea of kites intrigued Hashimoto, and making kites became almost a meditation for him.

Hashimoto said there was comfort in constructing the kites. It set him on a path to work through what he was thinking—what possible solutions there were to get him moving forward in his art making.

BY BARBARA DELANEY

TOP: **They Were Already Superstars**; 2022; acrylic, paper, wood, Dacron; 56.5 x 81.75 x 8.25 in. Studio la Città, *The Burn Out Sun* Exhibition





He started making lots and lots of kites. Soon, he realized he could *do* something with them, which led him to the idea of taking his field paintings into 3D. “The kite is a universal object, opening the work to everyone,” he said.

In his early works, the kites were made of bamboo sticks and rice paper that was untreated and very fragile. Because of that, some of the papers in these pieces deteriorated over time. One of his initial solutions was to dip the rice papers in acrylic to make them stronger, but fading colors were also a concern. These issues resulted in Hashimoto searching for better paper. It took a while to get exactly what he wanted, but after several tries, his supplier, Hiromi Paper in Los Angeles, connected him with Hiroya Yamashita in Japan, who developed a paper that Hashimoto now uses exclusively. This special paper, made to Hashimoto’s exact specifications, is twice as thick as washi paper, pH-neutral, and color stable.

Hashimoto uses painting, sculpture, and installation to create his complex worlds. Though his art sometimes references video games or virtual environments, his work is deeply rooted in landscape-based abstraction. The kites are like pixels and serve as the building blocks of his landscapes. Individually, the components are abstract, but together, they create a scene. He said sometimes a 3D model is created before an installation is built, but installations are often created on-site.

The Burn Out Sun exhibition was comprised of a series of wall works that present a kaleidoscope of color and print and invite viewers into another world, another galaxy. Interestingly, Hashimoto sent the title for the show to the gallery as *The Burnt Out Sun*, and they misspelled it on all of the press—and he just went with the misspelling. Ultimately, he said, the title is a lens through which the viewer can view the work if they have no other point of reference. Many of the artworks in this show had graphic references to radio telescope arrays and

TOP: **The Endless Field**; 2024; acrylic, paper, wood, Dacron; 54 x 96 x 8.25 in. Rhona Hoffman Gallery, *Fables Exhibition* BOTTOM: **The Promise of Rain**; 2024; acrylic, bamboo, paper, wood, Dacron; 42 x 36 x 8.25 in. Rhona Hoffman Gallery, *Fables Exhibition* OPPOSITE: **The Standard Situation of Mutual Perceptions**; 2022; acrylic, bamboo, paper, wood, Dacron; 54 x 48 x 8.25 in. Studio la Città, *The Burn Out Sun Exhibition*





construction. They were made around the time that the Arecibo telescope in Puerto Rico was collapsing, and Hashimoto was interested in these telescopes as reflections of our past optimism and potential . . . and its decay. These wall works have six layers of kites that are connected with braided Dacron strings, tied to half-inch maple dowels. Why six layers? "It's important that you have enough density to block the wall and not so much that it doesn't allow the viewer to see through to some of the back layers. It's a balance," he said.

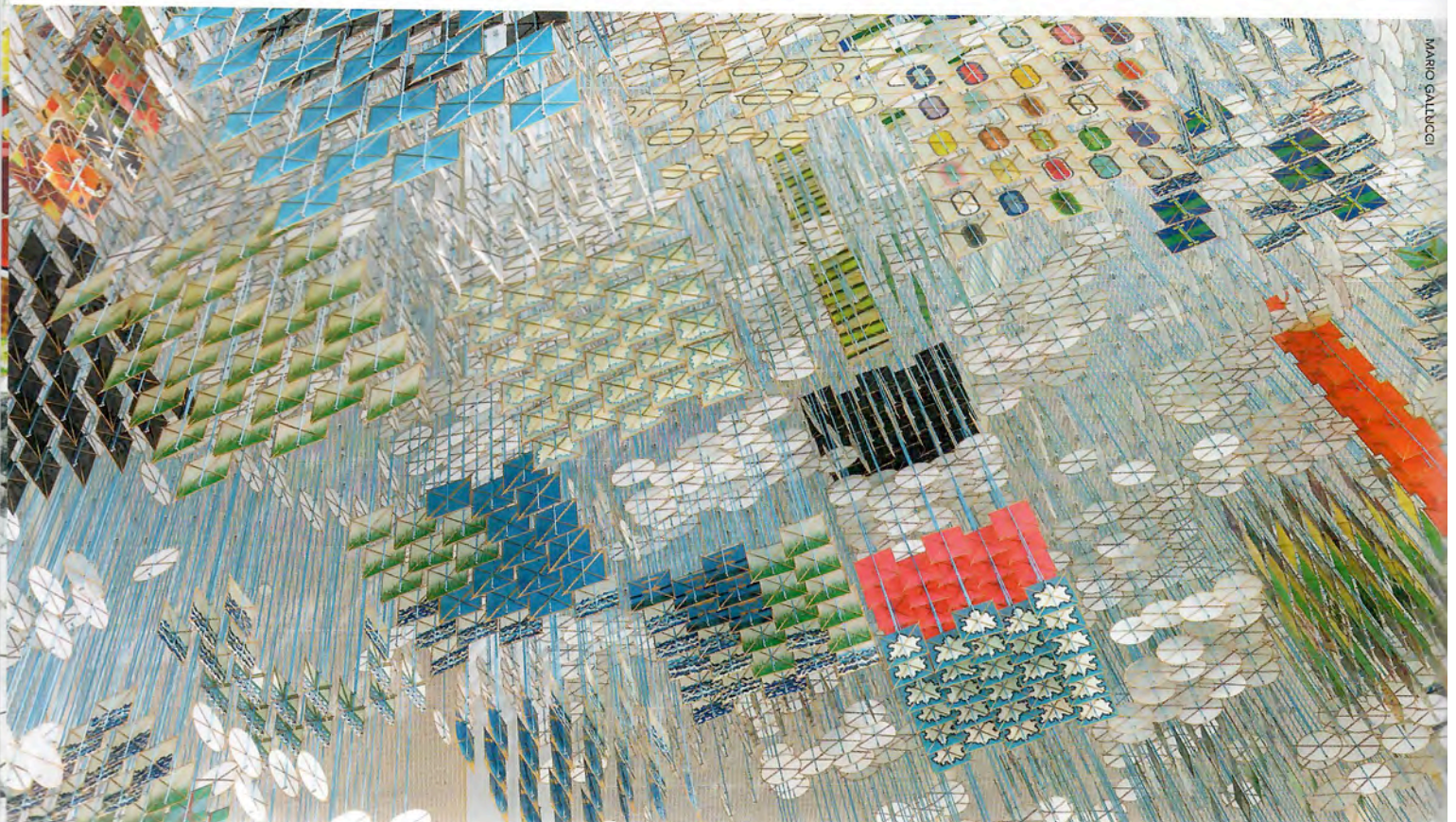
The *Fables* exhibition uses hard-edged painting and post-war abstraction as a starting point and spins its own story from there. "Each work or series of work essentially retells the story of hard-edge painting or even Neo-geo, and through my retelling, these works are mutated by my own language, twisted, and represented as new, if not wholly new tales," he said. They are fables in the sense that they are visual stories that change through telling and time, "old ideas, new again through the telling, but no less impactful as seen from our vantage point today," Hashimoto said.

Before he assembles a piece of artwork, he has an idea of how the modules will go together, but the architecture of a space becomes the "limiting factor," the variable that may necessitate changes.

The Fractured Giant is a site-specific installation that was created in Boise Art Museum's Sculpture Court. It is a portion of *The Gas Giant*, an earlier installation. With *The Fractured Giant*, everything was much looser and more expressive: pieces were moved and mixed, gaps were introduced, and there were a few instances where several leveled sections were built. In this immersive installation, Hashimoto combines his kite and pattern-making techniques with printmaking and collage. Thousands of kites were hand-tied for this installation, creating an arresting environment that filled the space with color and movement. He said these room-size sculptures don't have a center point, so everyone who enters the room will have a different experience. It took three weeks to install *The Fractured Giant*.

Hashimoto said a team is essential to his work because so much hand labor is involved. Folding the papers and assembling the kites is very time consuming. Team members create the designs on the kites as well, and those will vary according to their individual interests. Hashimoto said the team is made up of people from different backgrounds who have different strengths, which creates a "variety of voices" and keeps things interesting.

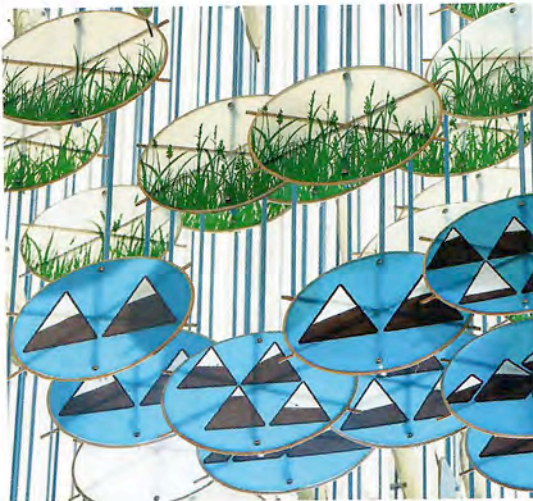
ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: **The Fractured Giant**; 2022; acrylic, bamboo, paper, wood, stainless steel, cotton; dimensions variable. Boise Art Museum



MARIO GALLUCCI



MARIO GALLUCCI



The mass of visual information in his art is much more than one person could create, he said. Working with assistants opens up possibilities; his job is to be “the conductor.”

The City and *The Sky*, Hashimoto’s permanent sculptural installations at Portland International Airport in Oregon, are a nod to the nature that surrounds the city, as well as the adjacent neighborhoods. Some of the kites feature the flags and seals of the city and the airport’s carpet pattern, while others trace the paths of the surrounding rivers. His goal was to remind travelers of the nature around them and the adventures that await them. The airport was special to Hashimoto as a child, so creating this installation had significance beyond the build.

According to Hashimoto, art only has meaning when people view it; people are part of the narrative. “If you go and see art, and it compels you to give it some thought, I think it’s successful,” he said.

Hashimoto’s work can be found in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Art in Embassies, U.S. Department of State; Capital One in Virginia; Fondation Carmignac, Porquerolles in France; Cornell Tech Art Collection in New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art in California; Microsoft Corporation in Washington; Saastamoinen Foundation, EMMA - Espoo Museum of Modern Art in Finland; the Tokiwabashi Tower Art Collection in Japan; and in many other locations.

jacobhashimoto.com | [@jacobhashimotostudio](https://www.instagram.com/jacobhashimotostudio)

BARBARA DELANEY is a wordsmith, avid sewer, and quilter who makes her home in Massachusetts.

THIS PAGE: **The Sky**; 2020; resin-coated bamboo, paper kites on fiberglass rods; 480 x 360 x 216 in. Portland International Airport OPPOSITE PAGE: **The City**; 2020; resin-coated bamboo, paper kites on fiberglass rods; 480 x 360 x 216 in. Portland International Airport