

**AP: What do you hope visitors will take away from this show?**

**SA:** Kites offer an excellent platform for artists to experiment and play. The fact that kites interact with the sky and the wind, by default, places this work within the context of other forms of land and light art. We hope that this show helps visitors reconsider the kite, to think of it as more than a childhood toy, or the technology that led to the invention of the airplane. Ultimately, we hope that visitors will look beyond the kite and consider the sky itself. Sometimes the kite is just a point of reference. The most profound “kite moments” are not about the kite, but about the wind, the clouds, the atmosphere and beyond.

BRIDGE is a platform for creative collaboration operated by artists Stuart Allen and Cade Bradshaw. Based in San Antonio, Texas, they offer an engaging series of art-making workshops for all ages. Programming will expand in 2018 when they open a new facility at the west end of San Antonio’s Hays Street Bridge. The building will house studio, workshop and exhibition space.

## ABOUT BRIDGE

Artpace is a non-profit contemporary arts organization located in downtown San Antonio, TX with residencies, exhibitions, and educational and community programs. Artpace supports the creative process and engages audiences with the most innovative art and artists from around the world.

Since 1995, Artpace has welcomed more than 200 artists through its renowned International Artist-in-Residence program. Annually, Artpace hosts three residencies, which each feature one Texas-based artist, one national artist, and one international artist, who are selected by a notable guest curator. Each eight-week residency culminates in a two-month exhibition on site. The mission of this program is to provide artists with unparalleled resources that allow them to experiment with new ideas and take provocative risks.



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Stuart Allen Art Services, Cade Bradshaw, Drachen Foundation, & Scott Skinner

# LIFT: an exhibition of kites

SEPTEMBER 21 –  
DECEMBER 31, 2017

## CURATOR INTERVIEW

Stuart Allen & Cade Bradshaw of Bridge Projects  
Interviewed by Artpace

**Artpace: How did this all begin?**

**Stuart Allen:** I started building kites in art school, primarily as a diversion, an opportunity to get away from campus and do something outside. I’m a life-long sailor and kites provided some wind-related play in lieu of a boat. This quickly morphed into a sculptural exercise as I began to see parallels between kite flying and artists like Richard Long who were performing actions in the landscape. Curious to know if other artists had used kites, I turned to the campus library where I happened upon “The Art of the Japanese Kite” by Tal Streeter. Streeter was a New York sculptor of some acclaim who, in 1971, dropped everything and moved to Japan to study kites. He then turned away from the massive painted steel works that made his reputation and toward ephemeral gestures, the elements, and to the sky. In kites he found a medium that embodied these ideals.

“The Art of the Japanese Kite” opened a door for me, and for many other artists I’ve met who share an affinity for kites. That was in the early 90’s, and while I work in a wide array of media, kites keep popping up in my work. Now, working with Cade to design programs for Bridge Projects, I find myself re-discovering pieces in my studio, re-thinking old kite-based concepts and, most importantly, getting out to fly some of these wonderful objects with Cade and my kids.

**AP: Cade, how did you get started with kites? And how does kite-making fit within the overall mission of Bridge Projects?**

**Cade Bradshaw:** I’ve been interested in aviation since I was young. While working with Stuart and pouring over all of the kite books in the studio, I discovered the conceptual power and beauty of kites. Bridge is designed to empower the creativity of others, and we find kites are an accessible and diverse tool to achieve that mission. We often work with schools and institutions seeking a particular educational objective, and kites are natural vehicles for talking about history, science, art, collaboration, and more.

**AP: There are four components to LIFT. Tell us about each section of the show.**

**CB:** In the Main Space and conference room there is a selection of work by local San Antonio artists, many of whom are new to kite making.

On the second-floor landing outside the Hudson is an installation created by community participants, and designed by Stuart and myself. Kite related narratives were submitted by individuals from around the world, printed on paper sails, and transformed into kites during a workshop hosted at Artpace on September 13th.

The Hudson Showroom is home to an international survey of kites. One section is dedicated to cultural artifacts, highlighting traditional designs and exceptional craft from China, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia. The rest of the survey focuses on the contemporary use of kites in art, demonstrating sculptural and conceptual approaches.

[artpace.org](http://artpace.org)

**artpace**  
san antonio

**AP: What does the title LIFT reference?**

**SA:** The title refers to the aeronautical principle of lift, as in the lift generated by a kite's sail, while simultaneously referencing the idea that a kite can lift our gaze upward, or lift our spirits. I have found that people – regardless of age, gender, race, or economic status – cannot help but smile while flying a kite. It's uncanny.

**AP: What are some of the key pieces in the Hudson Showroom?**

**SA:** Tsutomu Hiroi's *Mylar Cellular Kite* is an important piece of the narrative. Hiroi is a Japanese artist with an impressive resume, including collaborations with the influential sculptor Isomu Noguchi. He is also one of the founders of the Japan Kite Association and has worked very hard to preserve the traditions of Japanese kite-making, despite the fact that his work is anything but traditional. Tal Streeter met Hiroi while in Japan in 1971-72. In "The Art of the Japanese Kite", Streeter recounts a delightful story of Hiroi, on his rooftop, flying a kite made from a raincoat. Hiroi's reflective box kite is a study in color and light.

In the middle of the gallery, there is a delicate paper kite made by Anke Sauer of Germany. I met Anke on the beach at a kite festival in Cervia, Italy. She had about 10 of these *Jack in the Box* kites, constructed entirely of paper and string, all folded neatly into custom made hexagonal boxes. In flight, each individual paper cell is supported by a single string, called a bridle line. All of the bridle lines converge at one point, where it is attached to the flying string. This kite is just a marvel of ingenuity and engineering – and oh so beautiful in flight.

Within the grouping of cultural kites there is a rectangular "Edo" kite by Teizo Hashimoto. Hashimoto was regarded as one of the finest kite-makers in Tokyo. The craftsmanship of Hashimoto's Edo is just superb – it sets the standard that many contemporary artists seek to emulate. The Edo kite bridle is also notable, with its long, graceful arcs, it functions as an alternative to a kite tail, creating drag and stability in flight.

**AP: Why did you feel it was important to invite a group of local artists into the exhibition?**

**SA:** Everyone loves kites, but very few think about them in the context of contemporary art. As a conceptual platform, there is so much to work with: light and space, interactions with nature, considerations of scale, technological innovation, cultural connections... Since we have such an incredible pool of talented artists in San Antonio, we felt that it would be exciting to draw some of them into this dialogue and see what they would do.

This isn't a completely novel idea. In the late 1980's, Paul Eubel, working with the Goethe Institute, invited 100 highly respected artists from around the world to send large works on paper to Japan, where they were transformed into kites for an international traveling exhibition. The resulting catalogue, "Pictures for the Sky", is stunning. I'm particularly fond of the photograph of Robert Rauschenberg gazing up at his flying kite with a childlike grin.

**AP: Tell us about the process you followed to incorporate the local artists work?**

**CB:** We asked the invited artists to make a kite or kite-related object. For artists making a kite, we asked that it be capable of flight - but left the circumstances of flight up to each artist. We didn't specify that the exhibited objects had to be flown, but we did ask that at some point during the process the artists go out and fly a kite.

Stuart and I hosted a preliminary meeting with the group in Stuart's studio, where we looked at kites and talked about the process. In July, all the artists met again at Artpace to make a paper and bamboo kite. Some of them worked with a traditional Japanese form, others went completely off-road.

**AP: The resulting work is wonderful and wildly diverse. Did their contributions surprise you?**

**CB:** It's true, we are so impressed with the exceptional creativity of this group. Being familiar with the artists' previous work, we had a general idea of what to expect. We received beautiful work all around – some that closely paralleled our expectations, and other examples outside the artist's typical medium.

**SA:** We offered the artists the Goethe Institute model, where they would deliver a work on paper to the studio and Cade and I would turn it into a kite. Nobody chose this route – everyone chose to build their own and the diversity of form is wonderful, from Megan Harrison's tetrahedral sculpture *Model Multiverse* to Holly Veselka's subtle diamond kite *to make the invisible visible*, made with holographic film.

**AP: Many of the kites in the Hudson Showroom are from Stuart's collection and many are from the collection of Scott Skinner. Who is Mr. Skinner?**

**SA:** I met Scott over 20 years ago while curating a show in Davis, California. Researching possible sources for kite loans, all roads led to Mr. Skinner. Five minutes into our first phone conversation I realized that I'd struck gold. Scott has assembled one of the world's best kite collections. He's traveled the globe building his collection and participating in kite festivals. In the process, he has become a true kite historian. In the early 90's he started the Drachen Foundation, a non-profit based in Seattle, Washington devoted to the increase and diffusion of knowledge about kites world wide. I served on the Drachen Board for about 20 years. Finally, Scott is a tremendously talented kite maker in his own right. His kites typically combine traditional American patchwork geometries with Japanese kite forms and techniques.

**AP: The Kite Stories project is so charming and personal. From a process standpoint, I just love the way the installation brings in the greater community. Have you ever done this before? Tell us a little about the process.**

**CB:** No, we have never done this particular project before, though we have conducted many kite making workshops for children and adults. *The Kite Stories Project* is unique in that the participant's personal experience is literally printed on the sail. The stories address both universal and individual experiences surrounding kite flying. Every person who flies a kite, no matter their geography, will have moments of failure, but there are also universal successes when a kite soars effortlessly. These stories highlight the unique, and sometimes intensely personal dialogue between the individual, unseen physical forces, and the kite.

**AP: Stuart, you are a contemporary, conceptual artist with an interest in kites. I'm guessing there isn't a huge population of peer artists in this group.**

**SA:** When I first met Tal Streeter we both expressed our surprise that more artists weren't looking at kites. It seemed such a rich vehicle, at least to us. But the reality is that kites can be very frustrating. New designs rarely fly on the first outing (if ever), they are constantly breaking, strings are easily tangled, and the wind has to be consistent and of moderate speed for the best results. But all of the factors that contribute to this frustration are what make it so interesting. The gallery is a controlled and contrived environment. We manage the lighting, temperature, traffic, security, etc... What if the terms of the art making process were dictated by forces completely beyond our control? And what if your artwork could easily be destroyed by these forces if you misinterpret them? For me, that's an interesting dialogue.