

ARTFORUM

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Tal Streeter

A.M. SACHS GALLERY

Tal Streeter, like Kenneth Snelson, is a recent convert to the gentle tensility and grace of bamboo for his sculptural material, and to the refinement of Japanese construction techniques. But unlike Snelson who explores the complex dynamics of tension and compression in deceptively simple bamboo sculptures, Streeter's kites are frankly nonassertive. They are only secondarily involved with formal considerations.

The art of kite-making traditionally receives great respect in the Orient, but has only recently begun to be appreciated in the West. Streeter's kites are made of barely opaque rice paper stitched to split bamboo and braced by round bamboo poles. Long, cherry red rectangles cut across the surface of each kite floating between narrow translucent borders. They are meant to be seen as red lines in the sky when the kites are airborne. In the small space of a gallery there is no way to discern whether or not distance would function optically to eradicate the white areas of the kite so that this would occur. The idea of the red lines' verticality against the blue sky is also lost in the exhibition since many of the kites were too tall for the space and were shown on their sides.

Only one of the Streeter kites was shown suspended from the ceiling and at the end of its proper regalia of lightweight cords—ready for flight. The others operated as flat geometric constructions of evenly spaced linear units rhythmically punctuated by thicker units, dotted by strings and red cord ends, and, in some cases, crossed by heavy bracing bars. The problem, though, in regarding them as sculpture is that Streeter is working in an ancient medium based on rigid aerodynamic requirements. This leaves him little room to exercise purely sculptural ideas. It is as though you asked an artist to design an automobile engine. Esthetic concerns cannot be his central preoccupation.

—April Kingsley