

MKS Kite Retreat 2012

We are just back from the MKS Kite Retreat 2012. It was once again a fabulous 3+ days of kite making, kite theory, kite techniques and kite friends. I've been to a number of kite making workshops and weekends. They are all terrific in their own right, but each one has its own flavor. MKS's retreats could easily be described as marginally organized kite chaos directed by the 2 Shepherds. We all sit in one room. The Kite Studio sets up store in one corner. The lecture is in the center front of the room. And hot-cutting tables are to one side. There are always a number of projects offered to the masses. There are always easier and more difficult projects, enough to satisfy every level of kite builder.

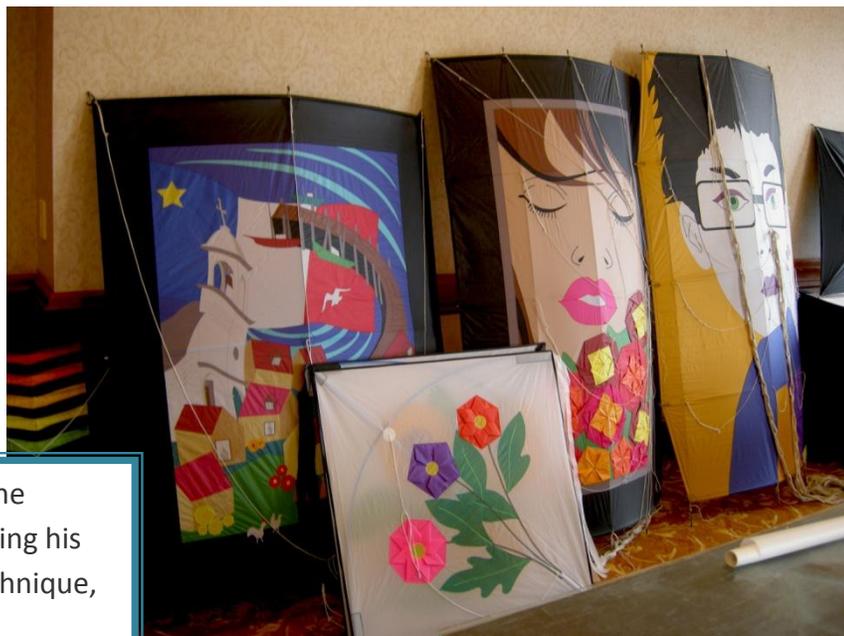
Now some Kite Retreats have you sign up in advance for a particular class from a list and you ostensibly finish that project then and there, no more and no less. Friends & presenters have stories of presenting at Fort Worden and staying up past midnight to help a less than adept would be builder finish their project. Or NYKE's 2 day workshops making a single project/kite. Some Workshops have a charge for project kits, all fabric cut and prepped for the kite. No such thing at MKS.

At MKS you can make as many or few of the projects as you wish. There were those kite builders like Andy Gelinas and Paul Keeler who would come with pre-appliquéd pieces to incorporate into whatever projects were being offered and then race each other to try and finish all MKS projects over the 3 days. That thought just gives Mark, my husband, a headache. Kite makers can choose to build only one project; or many projects; or just take in and practice the various techniques being taught either independently or as part of the kite projects. You can listen from afar (your sewing machine area) whilst working on your project; or you can move up to the lecture area and participate in lively framing and fitting discussions that always happens with some of our more engineering kite builder types.

At MKS, the shepherds guide us through the days calling for each new presentation every hour or so. Each presentation runs about 30-45 minutes, with time in between for bio breaks, to hot cut or buy supplies and get started before the next lecture begins. Scott Spencer's wise words to me, way back when, were to:

- Listen to everything.
- But make the invited guest's project while you have him in the room with you.
- Other projects, do the part you feel you may have questions about so you can ask them in person.
- Take it all in, but have fun.

Kites of featured guest Bas Vreeswijk from the Netherlands with his beautiful classic Edo using his novel 'origami' piecing, folding and tucks technique, the flower origami Hata and Della Portas.



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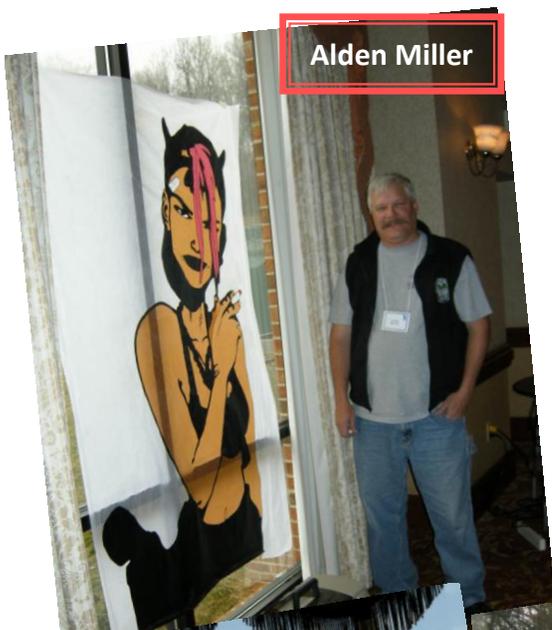
Usually the featured presenter is the 1st lecture of the day and will give you the initial steps for creating the sail of their project.

This year it was Bas Vreeswijk from the Netherlands. Bas taught 2 of his Origami Techniques for sail appliqué and/or piecing for a large Hata, Della Porta or Edo. And then he covered the sticking and bridling of Edo's. In this case attendees were told to bring pre appliquéd/pieced Edo sails to finish over the weekend.

Most attendees intending to make an Edo came with nearly done sails. But Alden Miller was back cutting his Tank Girl and

Ben was finishing up his bargello sail.

Adrienne Balmer finished piecing her 2007 John Pollack workshop painted ripstop into her Mondrian style Edo sail. and Arnold Simon both made their Edo Sails over the weekend.



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Drake Smith taught his variation of Martin Lester's hawk kite (with Martin's permission). Drake gave us several sail options 1 piece, 2 piece or 4 piece. He brought masonite templates we all used to hot cut our sails.

Drake also taught a simple tyvek genki great for school and scout workshops.

And there was the Blossom Festival (the new Smithsonian Kite Festival as the Smithsonian could not afford to run it anymore.) Jon Burkhardt presented and asked for help with a Hundred Blossom Arch that will be flown at it this year. Yes, those are preprinted cherry blossoms. Jon, Harold and Glenn cut

the pink sails out for us and hundreds of pink and white tails. The volunteers only have to sew the sail, appliqué the flower on it, and back cut the appliqué. Jon will sew them together and put the spines on with the tails. I have 6 sails to finish next week.



Jon Burkhardt & Harold Ames

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At this retreat, I choose to build one of Drake's Lester Hawks with my brother, Ted. Ted, with his limited motor coordination from CP, can kind of hold a Sharpie and colors the white ripstop. And Glenn Haynes took time to color with him (Ted loved it). I did make use of Drake's template and cut sails for 2 more hawks, Christmas presents next year.

I also made a sample piece of Bas's 5-petal 'Cherry Blossom' flower origami appliqué and cut a bunch more in the various sizes to now make the 6, 8 and 12 sided flowers. Bas was so right, sewing down the base shape along the fold lines after creasing the origami ripstop does make it easier to tame the beast and get it on the sail. I also made a 'sample' inset piece of Bas's pieced, pintucked and tacked technique, so



Glen Haynes & Ted Hayden

that I can now incorporate it into any kite I want to build. I sat in on all the bridling and framing discussions. I'm not sure I'll ever make an Edo, the Della Porta bridal is more my speed. But, some of Bas's Edo framing and tensioning techniques were very elegant and have now made it into my arsenal of kite building techniques for use whenever.

In between all this, I had time to chat with kite friends I haven't seen in a while, this year we drew kite builders from Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Montana, Minnesota, and I can't remember where else. And they keep coming back for a special time of sharing, learning, creative stimulation and contentment.

I have 3 main people to thank for getting me to my first MKS. First, Val Govig for publishing articles in Kitelines about MKS and Junction kite making retreats. They whetted my appetite, laying the ground work so handily so that by the time Betty Hirschman was going and encouraged me to try it. I was ready. That first year, Mark & I drove there through a horrific snow storm. I mean the 30 MPH Speed Limit on the NJ Turnpike was more of a goal than a limit. After what became a 10 hour drive, we arrived and Betty and Scott Spencer had saved us room at tables by their stations. It was 1996 and Martin Lester was the guest presenter. And the rest is history. I feel I am truly privileged to have taken MKS workshops with the likes of Adam Grow, Andy Selzer, Bob & Charmayne Umbowers, Brooks Leffler, Charlie Dunton, Charlie Sotich, Drake Smith, Joe Tricarico, JoAnn Weber, Joel Schultz, John Pollock, Jon Burkhardt, Kevin Shannon, Lam Hoac, Marie Charest, Martin Lester, Mel Govig, Mike Mosman, Normand Girard, Pete Rondeau, Pierre Fabre, Ray Bordelon, Richard Gareau, Sam Huston, Scott Spencer, Steve Brockett, Steve Ferrel, and Tanna Haynes. And I know I've left people out, but my head is spinning with all the possibilities.