The background of the cover is a complex, abstract pattern. It consists of numerous overlapping, semi-transparent circles and thin, intersecting lines in a light beige or tan color. The circles vary in size and are scattered across the frame, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lines are thin and crisscross, some forming a grid-like structure while others are more chaotic. The overall effect is a dense, layered composition that changes as the viewer's perspective shifts.

Jacob Hashimoto

Superabundant Atmosphere



Jacob Hashimoto

Superabundant Atmosphere

17 March – 17 April 2005

Rice Gallery
HOUSTON, TEXAS



Thousands of bamboo and silk kites suspended on black cotton thread from the gallery ceiling formed Jacob Hashimoto's elegant installation *Superabundant Atmosphere*. Delicate yet sturdy, each oval-shaped kite reflected the overall nature of *Superabundant Atmosphere's* play of opposites. Viewed from outside the gallery, the installation looked like a billowing cumulous cloud, while from inside, the illusion of solid mass dissolved to reveal wide uniform spaces between the rows, and the kites' profiles as thin slivers. The biggest surprise, though, was at the back of the gallery where Jacob had left a wide passageway behind the piece. Here, one came face-to-face with a startling downpour of sharp black verticals, the threads from which the kites were suspended. This view revealed the structure of the otherwise-ethereal-looking installation, and visitors responded enthusiastically to its raw, immediate quality. Jacob summed up the paradoxical effect that he achieved in *Superabundant Atmosphere* by noting, "The front is like painting, which is about mass, while the back is like drawing, which is about line."

Jacob is one of only a few artists in Rice Gallery's ten-year history who did not come to campus for a site visit. Working in Italy, he sent the most extraordinary proposal I have ever received, an artist's book of delicate rice paper pages hand-bound with string. Inside were computer renderings that superimposed his idea for *Superabundant Atmosphere* over floor plans the gallery had provided. Although we didn't know it at the time, this beautiful book forecast the inherent tension of *Superabundant Atmosphere*. The tactile materials of paper and thread contrasted with the rigorous drawings and technical explanations. In the same way, the installation's graceful silk and bamboo kites were suspended in a tight and regular grid. The organic shape of *Superabundant Atmosphere* belied its underlying precision.

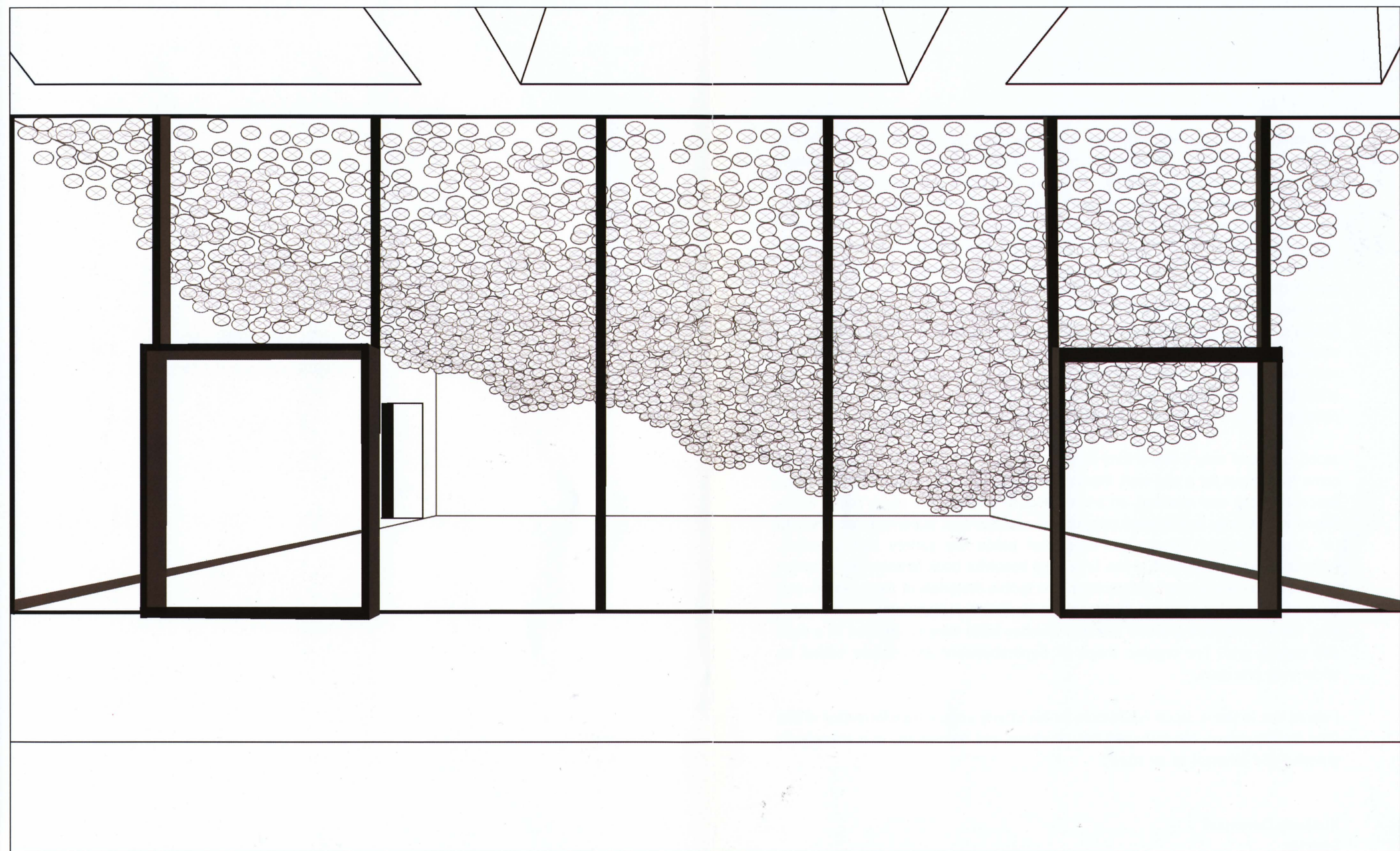
I would like to thank Jacob Hashimoto for his utterly unique transformation of the Rice Gallery space. He reshaped the air above and around us, in a manner as graceful and ethereal as air itself.

Kimberly Davenport
Director

JACOB HASHIMOTO: PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR RICE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

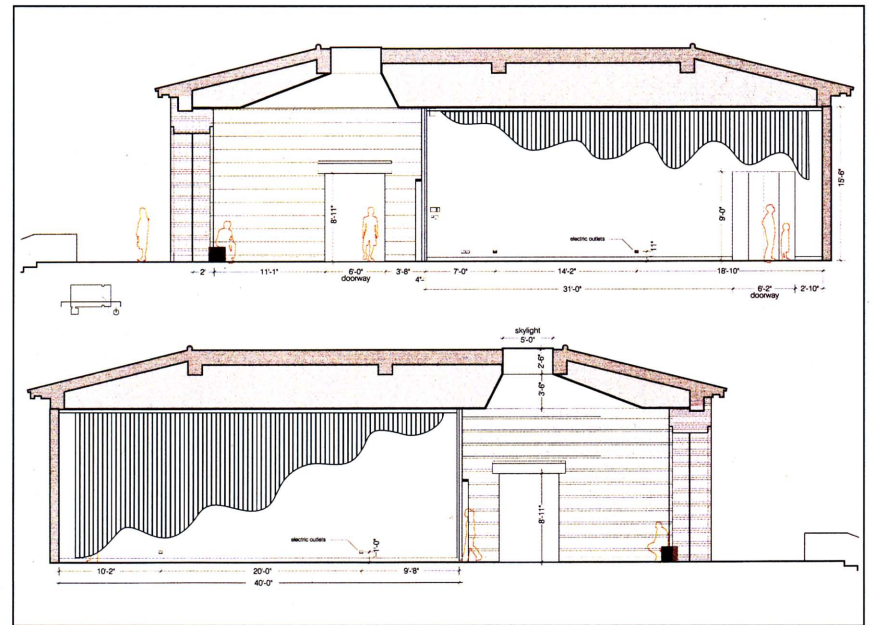
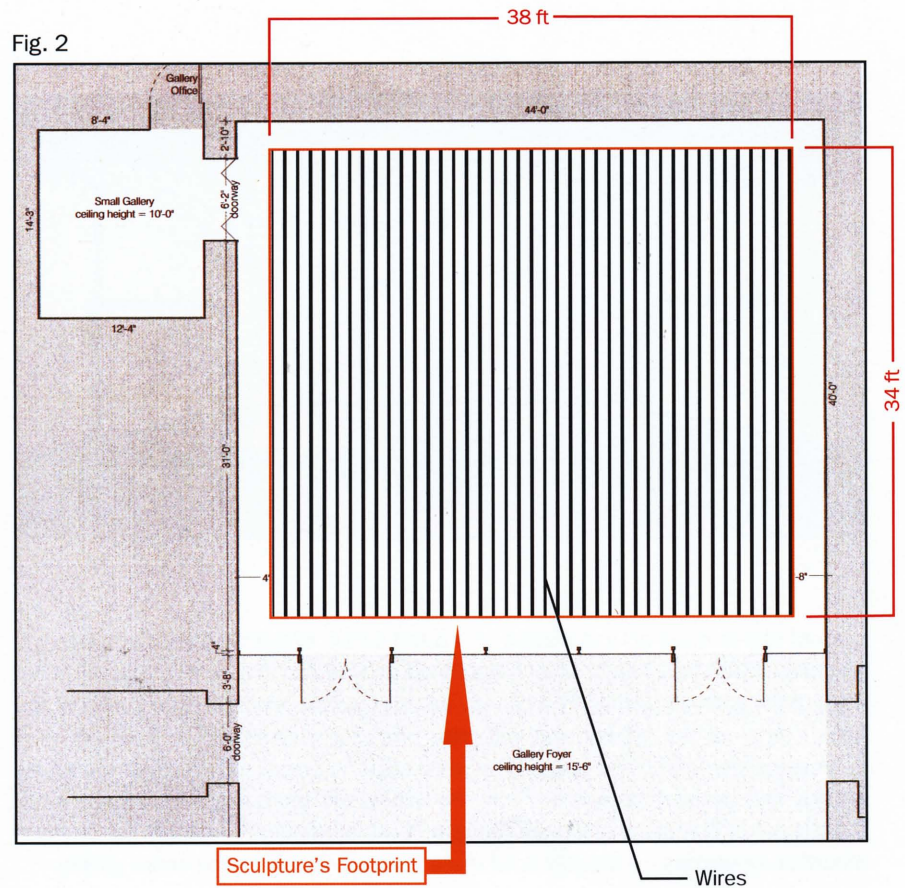


I would like to build an installation of around 9,000 elliptical kites. Each kite will be covered with translucent white silk and will be installed in a canopy that will cover most of the gallery's ceiling. The canopy will drop all the way to the floor level in the back corner of the gallery and will rise, billowing outward, to the ceiling as it approaches the front of the space. The white elliptical pieces will create an extremely organic and dynamic sculpture. From the front it will seem like a sculptural cloud, floating out of the space and from the rear, it will dramatically change, becoming a mountain of ellipses—a visually solid mass that appears to fill the entire gallery.



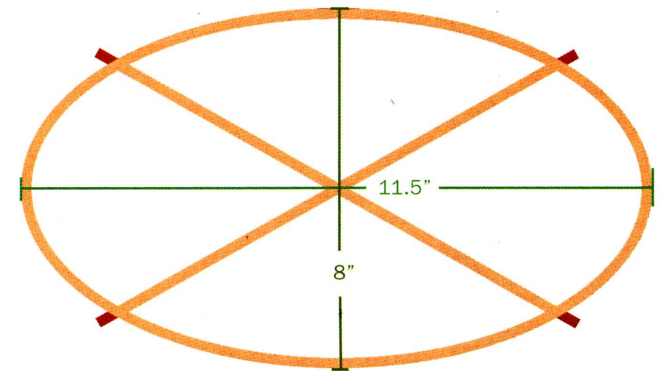
The footprint of the piece will be 38 x 34 feet. I used the floorplans that you sent me to make a little drawing. See Figure 2 below. Fully installed, the piece will float about 3 feet from the gallery walls.

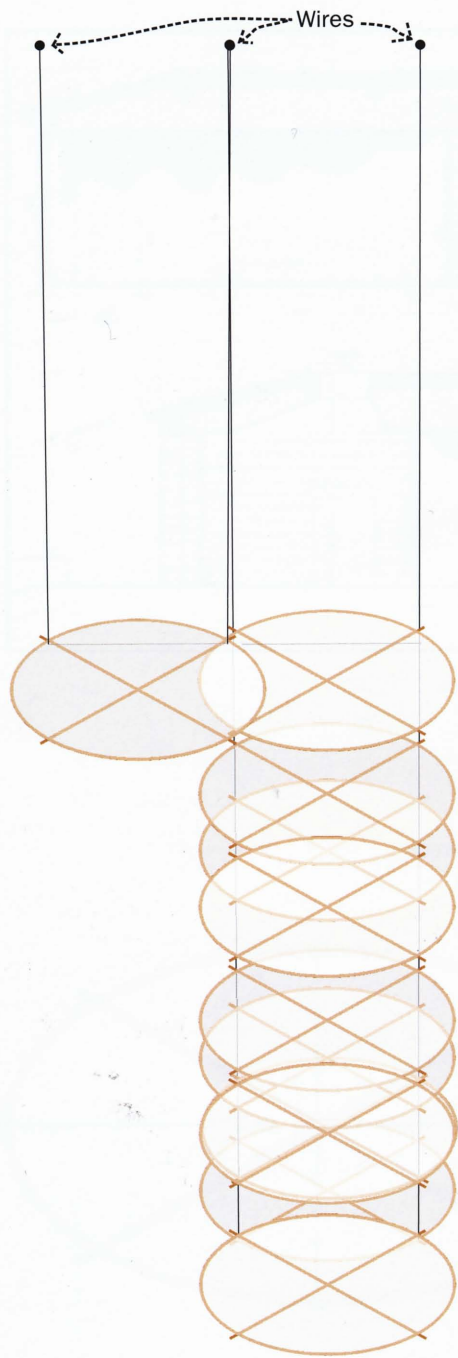
The kite-canopy will hang from a series of taut wires that will run perpendicular to the glass wall at the front of the gallery. The wires will be parallel to each other and will be mounted into the ceiling using eye-hooks and turnbuckles. The orientation of the stripes in the diagram below matches the orientation of the wires. There are a number of easy ways of mounting the wires and we'll discuss the exact logistics of this operation later.



The image above represents the profiles of the piece.

As mentioned earlier, the installation is composed of about 9,000 little silk-covered kites. Each kite will be elliptical and will measure 8 x 11.5 inches.





The kites are hung individually with each kite hanging from a piece of black nylon string that is threaded through the kite frame and tied to two adjacent wires.

(The left column represents one kite hung by itself and the right, a number of kites hung one in front of the other.)

Installation of the sculpture will take about a week with assistants, or about three weeks without. Unfortunately, it just takes a lot of time to tie 18,000 knots. The sculpture will arrive in pieces — boxes of kites, nylon string, wire, etc. We will install the entire sculpture on site and I will make a lot of the formal decisions when I am actually in the space. Problems with lighting and fire codes (or sprinklers) can be dealt with on site. I have a bunch of tricks for bending the sculpture around pretty much anything that you have in the ceiling. The only outside equipment that I'll need is a scaffold or scissor-lift and a couple of ladders so that I can work at the ceiling level.

The title of the piece is *Superabundant Atmosphere*, and it hopes to convey the sense of wonder and playfulness that people will (hopefully) experience when they first encounter this work.













Jacob Hashimoto on *Superabundant Atmosphere*

How many kites are there?

Well, we really don't know. We made more than we needed. I was thinking about 9,000, but really, I have no idea how many we put up. When I got here I was asked, "How many are we going to do?" and I said, "We're going to do as many as we need." So that's how many there are!

Where did the kites come from?

People always ask, "Did you make all these kites?" No, I didn't. I had them manufactured by a kite-making company in China that specializes in dragon kites. Ellipses and circles are really hard to make; you have to soak the bamboo and bend it around a form. It takes me about an hour to make one. My other kites, diamond-shaped or hexagonal, I can make in about two minutes by hand. When I wanted to make a cloud I wondered, "Wow, how would I do that, if I spend an hour making one kite?" I thought, "There's obviously somebody who knows how to make these better than I do," so I found one of the largest kite-making companies in China and sent them drawings of what I wanted.

However, I *have* made this many kites before. When I was just out of school, my first installation was for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. All my friends, my parents, me, everyone that I knew in the world, *everybody*, sat around and built 14,000 pieces,¹ and that was a killer. So I am happy that I found these nice people in China. Normally, they make circles so I was like, "God, I hope they can make ellipses for me." They came back and said, "Sure, that's no problem."

Why the elliptical form?

I chose the ellipse because in a lot of my favorite paintings, Japanese screen paintings, the ellipse is used to make a cloud form that breaks through the surface. Screen paintings often use a series of gold ellipses stacked to make a cloud, that moves from scene to scene to mark the passage of time.

Where did you start?

I hung the first back couple of rows, just to dictate the form. Then five assistants and I went up on the scaffolds and worked from back to front. At the end I went back in and shaped certain sections. It looked inconsistent, but inconsistent in a way that I liked.

Why the black thread?

This is an important question. I've been using the black thread since the beginning. I've done two or three pieces with white thread, playing around, but the reason that I like the black thread is that it really dominates the backside in a way that any other color would not. When you view the piece from the front and at a distance, it is a flat plane, but as you get closer it slowly breaks down. When you enter the gallery space, the piece breaks down even more. When you go around to the backside, you have no chance of approaching it from a distance and seeing the mass; you find yourself in the middle of this "drawing space." The back is all about drawing, all about line and surfaces. Black string works really well for that.

As people walk through the space, the kites tend to move.

That is part of the piece. If the piece is completely still and one person walks up to look at it, the whole thing will react, and surge and move. I think it is nice that the piece acknowledges you physically in the space.

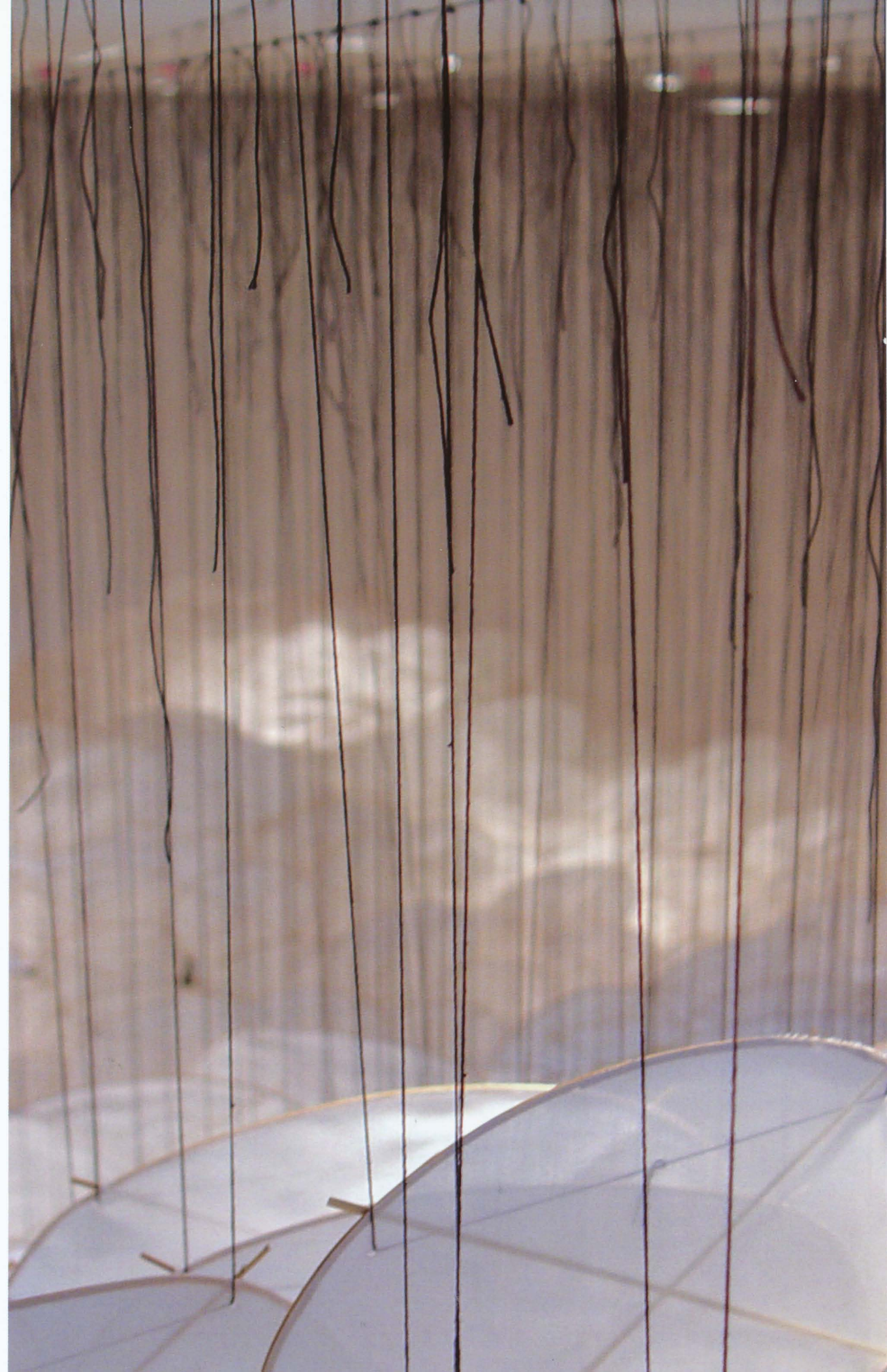
What about the lighting?

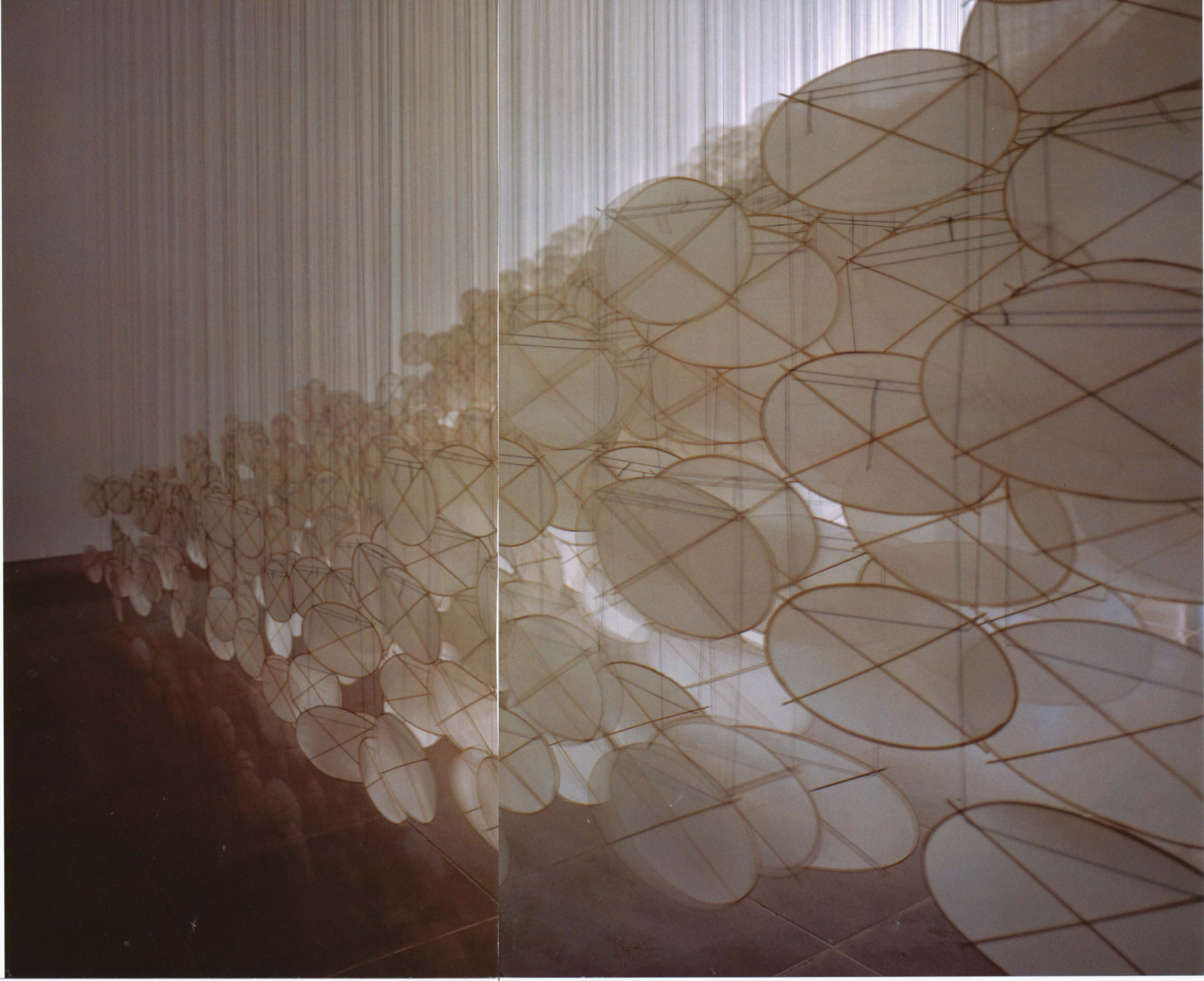
I find that these kite pieces are nearly impossible to light evenly. If they were lit evenly, it would be detrimental to them, because the unevenly lit, mottled surface creates different kinds of depths. For me, it's not really bothersome.

Do the kites fly?

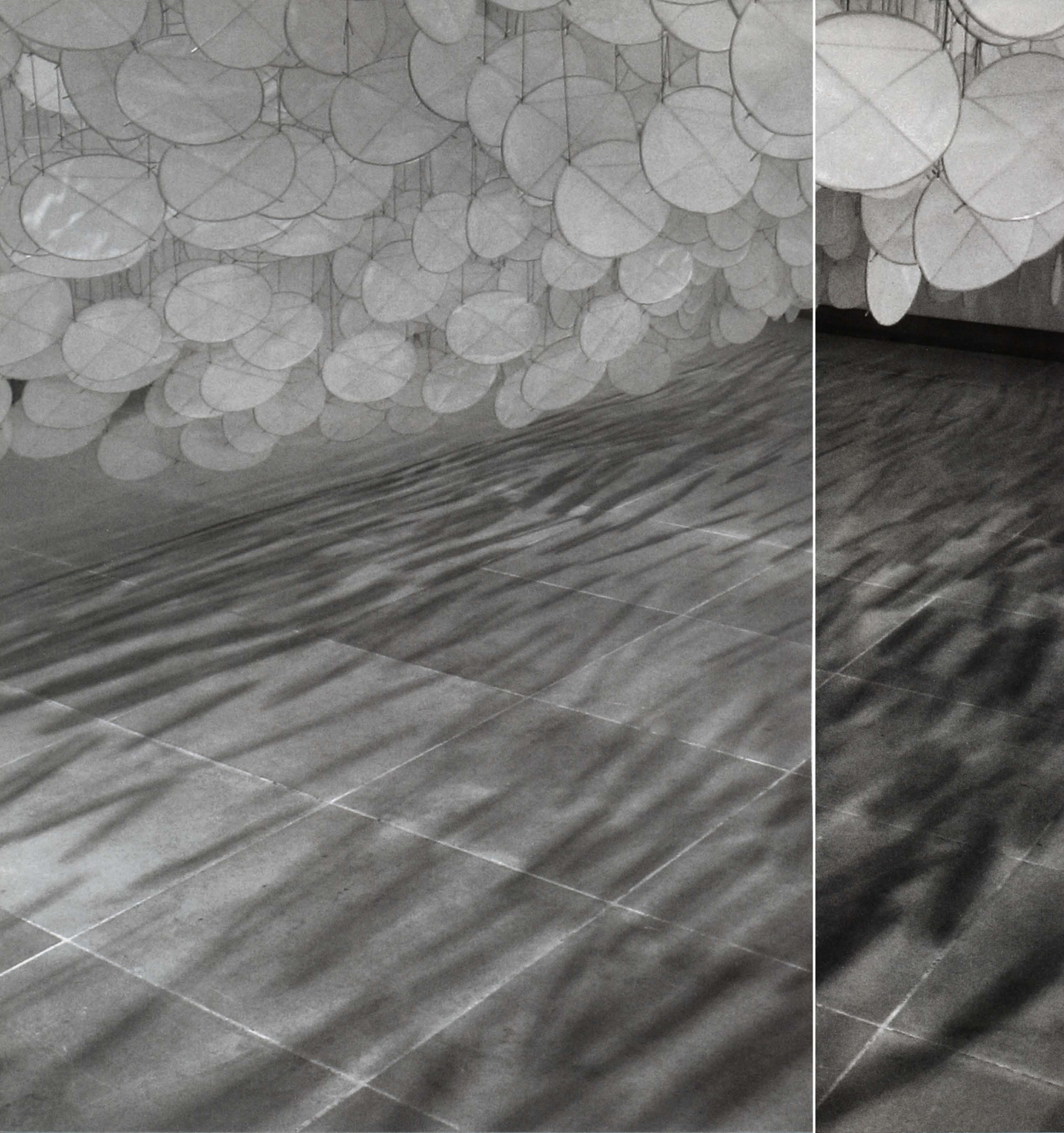
I would suspect that out of my order for 14,000 pieces, maybe, *maybe* 4,000 would fly. If you have ever built a bamboo kite, you know they have to be absolutely precise. If things aren't balanced perfectly, it's not going to fly. I would say with these, maybe 4,000 would balance perfectly while the rest would go straight into the ground. But for my purposes, they are all perfect.

1. *Infinite Expanse of Sky* (1998), Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois.









About the Artist

Jacob Hashimoto was born in 1973 in Greeley, Colorado, and was raised in Walla Walla, Washington. In 1996 he received a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Nature of Objects* (2003), Studio la Città, Verona, Italy; *Silent Rhythm* (2002), Galleria Traghetto, Venice, Italy, and *Big Mountain and Giant Yellow* (2001), Patricia Faure Gallery, Santa Monica. In 2001, Los Angeles County Museum of Art's LACMA Lab commissioned *Water-Table*, a large-scale installation for *Made in California NOW*. Jacob Hashimoto divides his time between Brooklyn, New York, and Verona, Italy.

Jacob Hashimoto, *Superabundant Atmosphere*, 2005
Commission, Rice University Art Gallery

Rice University Art Gallery is located in Sewall Hall on the campus of Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005, and on the web at ricegallery.org.

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Pages 4-11: Reproduction of project proposal by Jacob Hashimoto

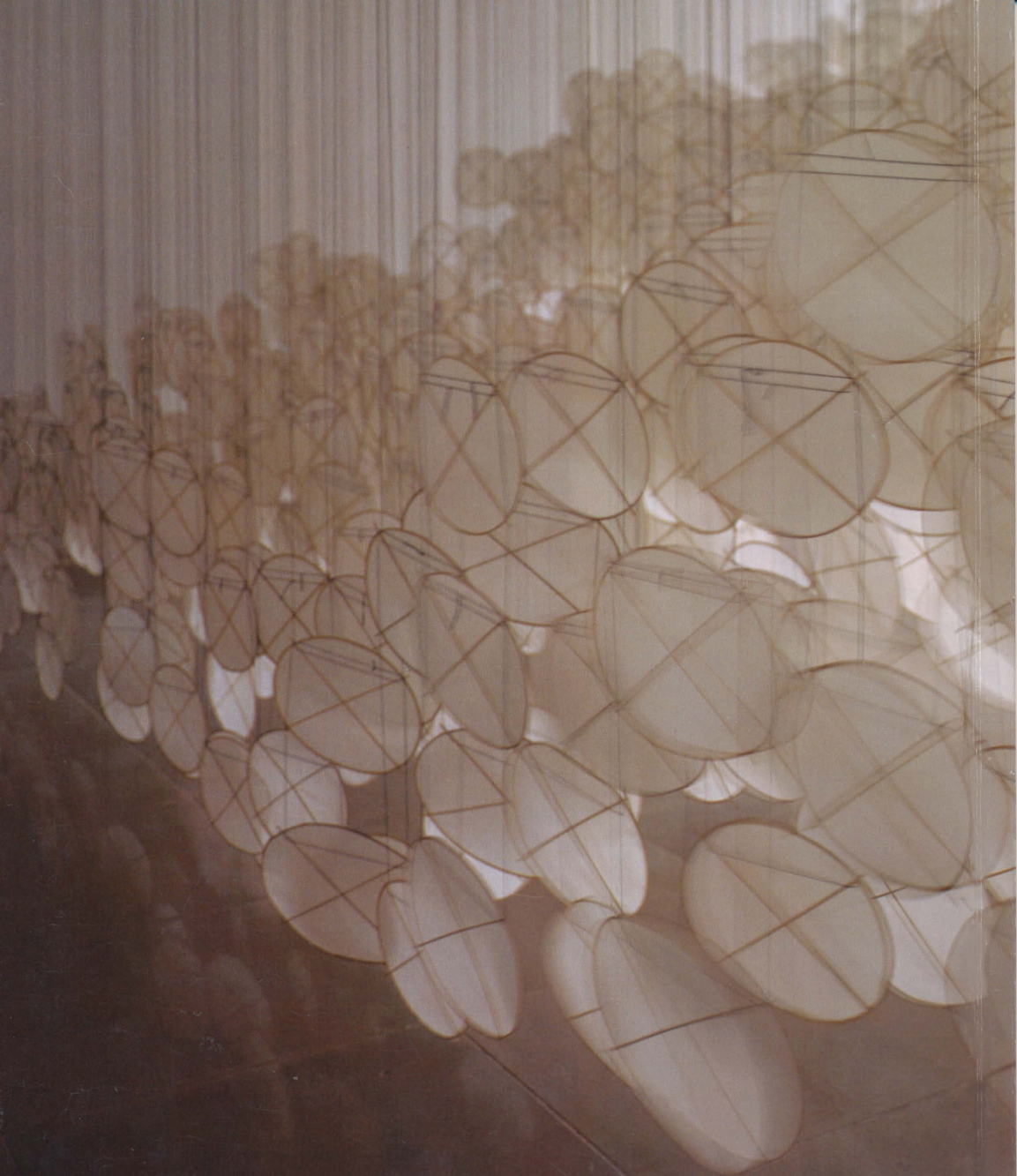
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