



PRESS RELEASE

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ATHEN, GREECE

**GO FLY A KITE!: ART DESIGNED TO FLY OPENS AT
CONTEMPORARY SPACE ATHENS MARCH 19**

(Earth Day Celebration April 22)

*Vintage and Contemporary Kite Designs from Bali, China, Japan, and the United States from
The Chicago Athenaeum's Permanent Collection*

In anticipation of this year's Earth Day (April 22), Contemporary Space Athens invites you to "Go Fly a Kite!"

For Earth Day, The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies presents a selection of vintage and contemporary kite designs from the countries of Bali, China, Japan, and the United States.

"Go Fly a Kite" opens at Contemporary Space Athens (74 Mitropoleos Street, Athens) March 19 and continues through April 22.

The exhibition consists of over sixty (60) kite designs from The Chicago Athenaeum's Permanent Collection, which spans from the early 20th-Century through the 1950s and 1960s to the present. The kites are in varying sizes and geometric forms made of silk, paper, and Nylon and most of them are handcrafted and hand-painted in the traditional Asian way of designing and fabricating a kite.

The kites range from birds, dragons, parrots, eagles, phoenixes, tigers, owls, fish, butterflies, swallows, bats, dragonflies, swans, frogs, seagulls, and cicada. Other kites take more contemporary forms: airplanes and comic book characters.

The origin of kites comes from China. Kites were invented in the Province of Shandong sometime between 770 BC and 221 BC.

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The first kites, large wooden objects called *muyuan*, were invented for military purposes. This period actually contained two separate periods of Chinese history, the Spring and Autumn Period (770 - 476 BC) and the following Warring States Period (475-221 BC).

Kites were seen as war technology. Besides spying on enemy positions, kites were sometimes used to deliver urgent messages.

The First Century AD contained the prosperous Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD). During that time, ordinary people discovered the simple enjoyment of kite flying. The traditional bamboo and paper or bamboo and silk-style kite were the most familiar material.

By the 9th-Century, kites evolved into beautifully detailed hand-painted silk designs. These kites carried many ornate accessories such as streamers and ribbons. So much work and craftsmanship went into these kites that they were affordable only to royalty and aristocracy.

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) superstitious ideas evolved around flying kites. For example, letting go of the kite string might get rid of bad luck or illness as the kite drifted away. On the other hand, picking up a kite lost by someone else would also bring bad luck.

By the late 1900s, the Chinese had organized large kite flying festivals where the whole range of kites were on show. The keenest kite makers would show off their best kites. Just like other kite festivals today around the world.

Today, kite-flying has become a wonderful sport and leisure time activity where design welcomes Spring and celebrates the earth, fresh air, and wondrous sunshine.

Contemporary Space Athens is open Wednesday-Sunday, Hours?

For more information, contact Konstadina Geladaki, Director of Communications, at +30/210 342 8511 or by email: konstadina@europeanarch.eu.

The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies

CONTEMPORARY SPACE ATHENS
74 Mitropoleos Str.
GR-105 63 Athens
GREECE

TEL: +30/210 342 8511
FAX: +30/210 342 8512