

[Splitting bamboo]

Ye Eun Stevie Choi: Most of kite making is like, getting the bamboo to the right length and right tensility.

[Splitting bamboo]

Choi: I split my own bamboo, boom boom boom boom, to the size that's thin enough that I can then trim it.

[Splitting bamboo]

Choi: So I have a lot of different types of knives and shears

Jackson Roach: It has to be really light, right, so is that why people use bamboo?

Stevie: Yeah, its lightness and then its strength, yeah.

Jackson: Kind of like bird bones having to be like—

Choi: Ohhhh.

Jackson: —strong but also really, really really light.

Choi: Yeah, totally. I think there's a lot of parallels.

[Trimming bamboo]

Choi: My name is Ye Eun Stevie Choi. I am an artist and an educator living in Koreatown. We're sitting in my home studio. Right now I am working on a kite that is using natural dye and, um, fabric. You can use fabric, paper, um, nylon, plastic. I've used plastic bags. I want to make, like, a fried chicken kite, with, using like a fried chicken plastic bag that my fried chicken came in.

Roach: What's your favorite part of the process?

Choi: Hmm. When I stretch it and it gets really taut And then, like, it's really taut and, like, it's nice and tight. And then, I guess when you fly it?

[Wind]

Choi: It's kinda like a date. Like, you and me, don't turn me down. Let's go. Uh, why'd you do that? Are you okay? I'm not okay. Let's try it again. You know?

Festival Announcer One: There's no better way to celebrate the park and the people's park than by having a festival focused on kites. Every culture has some version of kites.

Choi: I've been part of the Clockshop Kite Festival for—three times, given the kite master role.

Festival Announcer Two: Clockshop that put on this event today, is an organization based in Elysian Valley, whose mission is to work with artists to deepen the connection between Angelenos and public land.

Choi: It's free to attend, and it happens every year. I am there to also help people repair their kites or help it fly better. Spreading sort of like, what I do know about kites, to other people.

Roach: What's your name?

Megan: My name is Megan.

Adrian: And I'm Adrian

Roach: And you are currently flying a kite.

Megan: I am currently flying a kite.

Roach: Can you describe what's happening?

Megan: I have this red, orange, and neon green kite, and it's really high up in the sky. I didn't realize it could even get this high. And the string is pretty taut, so I'm gonna give it more and hope it goes up and not down. It's really satisfying. I don't know, and a little bit, um, anxiety inducing? Because it feels like it could fall at any time, when the wind stops blowing.

Adrian: And I gather that it's a really good day to be doing a kite festival.

Roach: Yeah, it is perfect.

Megan: Oh oh oh oh oh!

Adrian: See, you have to run!

Megan: Wait, I have to run?

Adrian: You might have to run! See?

Felice: Right now there's not a cloud in the sky and you can still see all these wonderful kites flying in the air. There's squids and dogs and there's a huge octopus over there.

Nala: It's really fun to see it float with all the other kites, because usually you just fly it by yourself, but right now you get to fly it with like a lot of kites like yours. I like how there's little octopuses and like, Hello Kitty, and there's butterflies. I see a lot of birds, too. I think the birds have found their new friends.

Festival Attendee: There's an inverse sort of air is ocean thing happening kind of, I mean it's sort of like looking into water, when you're looking at the sky, you know what I mean?

Roach: What does it feel like to fly a kite?

Kid One: Like some, some snakes.

Roach: It feels like snakes?

Kid One: Yes!

Kid Two: Do you like my fish?

Roach: I love your fish. Can you tell me about your fish?

Kid Two: So, I, I, I wanted to do a rainbow fish. I did, um, like a lot of blue, purple, and pink.

Choi: I think time passes differently when you do it collectively. The festival is when I meet the most kite makers that, you know, flock to this park. Which I think is really special. People are making kites, and, with their own impetus and with their own messages and with their own materials.

Roach: What's it made of?

Leo: It's just, like, wooden dowels and, um, painter' tape, and, and electrical tape, and, like, the plastic, the, like, the sides, just, like, plastic, um, tarps for painters' stuff.

Roach: Wow, so it's literally made of like—

Leo: Yeah I Literally went to Home Depot this morning and got all this stuff.

Roach: That's so awesome.

Festival Attendee: It's windy enough so I think whatever you put together, it'll fly. It'll fly.

Choi: Kites are very cheap to make and pretty intuitive. And it's also one of the first things people made that goes into the sky. And in the past it actually was used to communicate signals, across the sea, or like measure the height of a fortress or something. So it had a very utilitarian usage. And then gradually a kite became more of, like, a playful thing.

Throughout history, simultaneously, I think there are many different forms of kites originating in different parts of the world. Like Malaysia, India, Brazil, Guatemala, Thailand.

The kite masters that I learned from, they, when they refer to kites in Korean, they actually use the unit they would use for, like, animals. Depending on the object or the thing or the person you use a different unit. So, like, to say like, "Two kites," you say the unit that you use for living things.

Roach: Huh.

Choi: They all have their own character, like, every kite is very different. Kind of like cats.

[Kite whipping in wind]

Background Guy: Mine's going rogue! Ah!

Jenna: You're definitely animating something. How much like, give you want to give the string or how much you want to let loose.

Festival Attendee: You feel that pressure, you're, like, feeling the atmosphere in your hand, right? And you're feeling the air and it's going through the clouds.

Florida: The wind changed direction a while ago. The wind was blowing that way. Now it's blowing this way.

Jenna: You're like fishing with the air, fishing with the sky. Like, you're just trying to like, catch some wind.

Florida: It's fun. It's fun. But I get dizzy.

Clifford: You can control it or not control it, as much as you like. Like, it just got twisted around—maybe two! It got twisted around two. But—and let's see. It is so tangled!

Other people: One more! One more!

Clifford: Oh yeah! I think you got it, ready? Yeah, yeah. Awesome.

Roach: That was amazing. You just totally worked that out with that total stranger.

Clifford: Yeah, yeah, that's what the nice thing is about it is like, you get tangled, you hit people, and it's like, it's forgiven.

Background Kid: Mine's tangled with yours!

Festival Attendee: It's just, it's good to be out together with like all of those different faces.

Festival Attendee: The world is chaos. There's wars happening, right? You come here, it's just, peaceful.

[Kite whipping in wind]

Choi: What is a kite? It flies, or it wants to fly. It lifts ideas and thoughts from our body into the sky. And then, you can kind of see it get really small in the sky.