

The Decorators

Introduction

For centuries people all over the world have been flying kites. A visit to any one of the many kiting festivals held world-wide presents a historical pageant spanning over 2000 years. Kites which maintain their ancient cultural identity fly alongside constructions which owe their design to developments in space age aerodynamics and materials like carbon fibre and kevlar.

In their long history kites have often had scientific, military and commercial applications, but it is with sport and pleasure that most people associate them. Many people have flown a kite at some time in their lives, usually on seaside holidays as a child. For some however this occasional pastime has developed into a fascinating and engrossing activity, providing an outlet for creativity within an international community of kite enthusiasts.

The element of competition is always present whether in attempts to produce new designs, better constructions, more beautiful sails or developing greater levels of flying skill. Indeed some of the earliest kites were designed for the most direct form of competition of all, kite fighting. The combatants in this extraordinary display attempt to cut each others flying lines and remain the last kite in the sky.

Stunt kites have developed considerably in the last ten years. The modern two line controllable kite weighs just a few ounces and will fly in the lightest breeze, performing loops, precision turns, power dives and wing-tip landings. The principle of using controlling lines has recently expanded to include kites with four flying lines, allowing the kite to fly backwards and sideways as well as cartwheeling and hovering. Competitions have been established to test the precision and artistic capabilities of flyers, both individually and in teams. Predetermined figures are chosen for the competitors to fly as accurately as they can. Flyers link these patterns together to form routines which can be performed to music. The individual or teams ability to use their kites to choreograph and interpret the music is judged in the Ballet competition.

Whether one is involved in competitive flying or just contemplating a kite floating in the sky, kiting is beneficial for the participant in many ways. The most obvious is the simple enjoyment of time spent outside in the sun and wind. There is also the benefit to be gained from involvement in a concentrated activity which in common with other sports requires some high level of physical control and dexterity and exercises the mind creatively. Kite flyers will invariably say quite simply that there is nothing like it!

