



roof, and is committed to passing on his knowledge to younger generations.

The materials that go into making a Japanese kite haven't changed much in the last 400 years: bamboo for the frame and mulberry *washi* for the canvas. The black ink used for the design outlines is *sumi*, which is the ink used in traditional Edo-style paintings. Toki's skillful brushstrokes add in colored gradations of bold hues that contrast pleasingly with the jet-black outlines. Toki paints several kites at once, inking all the outlines first before circling back to the first kite to add in colors. In this way, he can create a batch of kites with the same design in a relatively short amount of time, yet all meticulously hand-painted. Toki must then split bamboo to the right length and weight for the size of kite he is making, and then thread it through holes made in the *washi* canvas. Cotton string is used to tie the bamboo in place and, finally, Toki deftly gathers up the remaining lengths of string into a decorative braid.

Toki is somewhat of a luminary in the kiting world, being an honorary member of the American Kitefliers Association and the Edo Kite Preservation Society in Tokyo. Many months of the year see him visiting countries around the world to bring the joy of his profession to children who may not have had the experience of flying a kite. In addition to his regular trips to America and Europe to teach children's workshops, he has also visited orphanages and rural schools in Japan, to give children an introduction to Edo kite making. "At the end of the day, kites are toys," Toki says. "I hope I can give kids an appreciation of what we used to play with."



Toki paints kites in a kind of conveyor belt-style process: he will use black charcoal-based paint to do all of the outlines first, and then double back to add colors and gradients in a predetermined order. A final touch is the bright red mark of Toki's *inkan*, a marble stamp that denotes his creations as being Toki originals.