Tetsumi Kudo
Andrea Rosen Gallery
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Kudo also created caged portraits—harrowing, solemn, contemplative—in which pieces of men's faces and hands are copped up alongside artificial flowers, birds, and other nods to the natural world. Without bodies, blood, or guts, these figures are mere husks of selves long gone. They largely go unnamed in Your Portrait (1974), made in the likeness of the playwright Eugene Ionesco, and some others in which the figure is identified as 'artist.' Although these faces bear no likeness to Kudo, they might at least be read as portraits of a spinning yet unraveling mind. The weary man in Portrait of Artist in the Crisis (1978) knits a rainbow-hued rope—a lifeline—that snakes in and out of his cage, while a spider hangs from the third eye of the mossy character in Portrait de Portraits (1976), whose fingers are tethered by thin multicolored strings to the bars of his cage.

In the second room of the exhibition are sculptures Kudo made from 1982 to 1987. The string that once tied the artist down (metaphorically, anyhow) are now the swirling material from which he fabricates new cosmic terrains, more beautiful, perhaps, but no less menacing than before. Valses Avec le Trou Noir (Waltz With a Black Hole, 1982) is a kind of narrow stalagmite (or a 3-D map of a galactic hiccup) made of multicolored strings wound tightly around and around. On its shoulder, a flat black funnel-like object—the black hole, one presumes, a portal into which a thing is drawn and destroyed. The only way to know what the wreckage will bring is to move through the destruction, the unknown. From disorder and dissolution, Kudo seems to say, will come the new vision.