

Mysterious Visages Light Tribeca Night

by Barry Owens

There is an almost perfectly reasonable explanation as to why pigs appeared to fly in Tribeca one night last month. But the woman who conjured them, 36-year-old video artist and light designer Christine Sciuilli, was reluctant to share it.



Christine Sciuilli checks the beam from her projector set up on Franklin Street in front of Socrates Restaurant.

As one bemused passerby after another caught sight of the pigs, ghost-like apparitions beamed onto the exterior of 105 Hudson Street by a digital projector in front of Socrates Restaurant, nearly all responded with the only sensible question: "Why?"

To which Sciuilli invariably offered the coy, but sensible answer: "Why not?" The other fail-safe answer was: "It's art."

Sciuilli's street installation, which included a second series of projections across the street and directly opposite the pigs, was part of the annual Fête de La Lumière Festival, recognized worldwide as a night for light shows. There may have been other outdoor light installations in the city on the night of June 18, but Sciuilli had the corner of Franklin and Hudson Streets covered.

Socrates, strange bits of found correspondence shone on the facade-projected from a second machine in Sciuilli's studio across the street. "Soon Love Worried Mom," read one line of a telegram.

Pigs flew in the eaves and windows of 105 Hudson, not far above the heads of diners at Nobu. And above the facade-projected from a second machine in Sciuilli's studio across the street. "Soon Love Worried Mom," read one line of a telegram.



A found telegram projected onto 103 Hudson Street.



Richard Ramsey watches Sciuilli's projections. "I think anything that gets people to look up is terrific," he said.



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On a monitor in the window of the closed diner, the author of the telegram appeared every 15 minutes or so on a videotape loop singing a tune-"The Wildest Girl in Town."

The singer, whom Sciulli would identify only as Rose, is a former tenant of 105 Hudson, where Sciulli lives and has her studio. Sciulli said that Rose and her husband, Dino, were longtime tenants of the building whose flagging health led them to move to Brooklyn.

As she was searching for a theme for her festival project the couple came to mind, Sciulli said. She had captured Rose singing on videotape one night when Rose wandered into her studio unannounced. The telegrams, letters, and pages torn from a diary that were the sources for the excerpts used in the video installation had been found on the floor of the couple's apartment after they moved out.

And the flying pigs?

"They have a dreamy, elegant quality," Sciulli said, comparing them to her former neighbors. "No matter how they were living, they were always so elegant."

Still, she preferred not to explain this to the people left scratching their heads on Hudson Street.

"It's like a Rorschach test," said Darcy Dowd, a Battery Park City resident who happened by. "Are those fat men, or pigs?" she wondered aloud.

Tribeca artist Robert Janz was taken with the project, no matter its meaning. "It's very sensuous, like graffiti is not," he said.

And one couple beamed as they read a glowing telegram signed "Love, Mom."

"I love it," the woman said. "I could wrap my whole arms around the city."



In the window of Socrates, "Rose" sings "The Wildest Girl in Town."



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