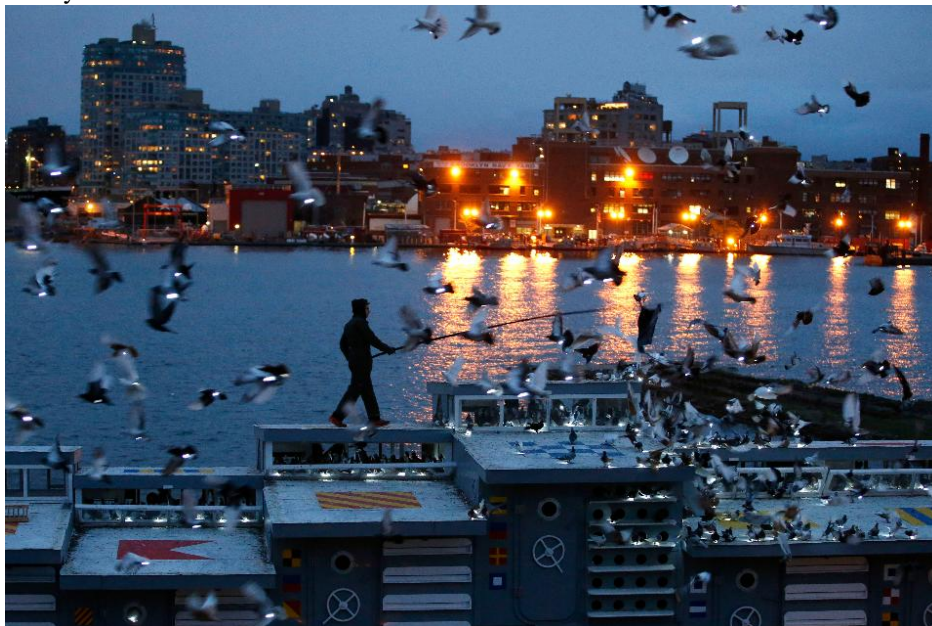


# Forbes

## **Artist Duke Riley Illuminates The New York Sky With 2,000 Pigeons**

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[Creative Time](#), a New York-based nonprofit that brings art to public places, has a knack for attracting visitors to its spectacular happenings. Four years ago, it allowed Tom Sachs to turn the Park Avenue Armory into Mars, complete with exploratory vehicles. In 2013, it brought artist Nick Cave's dancing horses to Grand Central Station. The following year, artist Kara Walker erected a giant mammy Sphinx made of sugar in the former Domino Sugar factory.



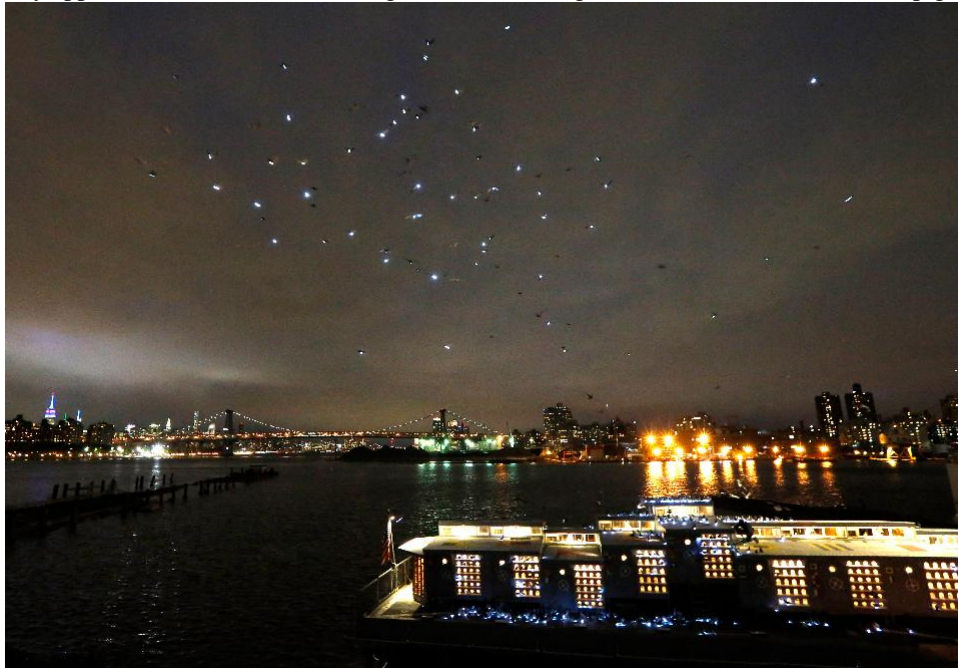
*Artist Duke Riley rouses some of the 2,000 pigeons wearing LED lights to fly above their coops on board the Baylander, a decommissioned naval ship docked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Thursday, May 5, 2016, in New York. The 30-minute performance was part of Riley's "Fly By Night" creation. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)*

This spring's big event, Fly by Night, is no different. Artist Duke Riley somehow trained hundreds of pigeons wearing LED lights to fly above the waterfront that lines the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When I arrived the Sunday

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before Memorial Day, a long line wined through the Sand Street entrance, full of children and adults eager to see Riley's piece. With all the buzz surrounding the affair, it wasn't a surprise that it's sold out through its monthlong run. New York Times art critic Roberta Smith [called the performance](#), "a revelation, a touching unity of human and animal behavior, with sky, water and the city," while Tony Perrottet [wrote in the Wall Street Journal](#) that the show is "unlikely to leave viewers unaffected."

Obviously, I had to see what it was all about with my own eyes. After ticket holders for that night collected their bracelets at the gatehouse that allowed them entry into the show, they walked through the Brooklyn Navy Yard until they approached the East River's edge. There, two large boats — one that houses the pigeons' coop are docked.



*Some of the 2,000 pigeons wearing LED lights fly in the night sky over the Manhattan's East River after they were released from their coops on board the Baylander, lower right, a decommissioned naval ship docked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Thursday, May 5, 2016, in New York. The 30-minute performance was part of artist Duke Riley's "Fly By Night" creation. The Manhattan skyline can be seen in the distance, left. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)*

I found a seat at the top of the bleachers that had been set up and waited. Finally, after a few hiccups, 2,000 pigeons took off, thanks to a few signals — waving flags and whistles — from Riley and his team. One of the most stunning parts of Fly by Night was the moment the pigeons took flight from the ship, one by one. As the sky darkened, they swirled around, like swarms of angry fireflies, floating constellations or throngs of shooting stars going around and around. Unfortunately, not all of the pigeons' LED anklets were lit up, but the spectacle was still something to marvel at. One of my neighbors mentioned, "There's just something so magical about this."

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The sight was magical indeed. Although the pigeons did fly around in unison — several rogue pigeons seemed to take off on their own away from their flock — the way the way they illuminated the balmy Sunday night sky was an unforgettable sight.

*Fly by Night takes place weekends through June 12. For more information, visit [creativetime.org](http://creativetime.org).*