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"EVERYTHING IS ILLUSION"
by JOHANNA KEIMEYER



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By Alessandra Malito

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For a few days in November, Times Square won't be the focus of the most impressive light in New York City—Dumbo will.

The inaugural New York Festival of Light, which will be held for three nights from Nov. 6 to 8, is bringing the spotlight—and every other type of light—to Brooklyn.

“Nothing has been done in relation to light previously,” said Liam O’Braion, co-founder of the festival. “We felt New York was an open landscape with tremendous possibilities.”

The festival will showcase the work of almost 20 artists, who incorporate light, technology and other elements like music and viewers’ sensory perceptions.

The Manhattan Bridge will become a canvas for the event. John Ensor Parker and Leo Kuelbs are co-producing an installation, where the work they create in their Dumbo studio, along with the work of other artists, will be reflected onto the complex, three-dimensional facade of the bridge’s anchorage, a process called projection mapping.

Mr. Parker said he has been projecting onto the bridge for years, showing turning gears and images of city buildings, but there will be new visuals for the festival.

“The bridge is something I see every day and I have for quite a few years,” Mr. Parker said. “When you projection-map on something, you really transform it. You see it in a totally different way.”

Howard Ungerleider, a show-lighting designer in Canada who has done work for acts like Rush and Alicia Keys, is creating a three-dimensional laser show that will change to music.

“People can walk through it,” Mr. Ungerleider said. “Sometimes it will be static, sometimes it will be moving. A lot of the times there will be an aura over the audience.”

Mr. Ungerleider said they have been working on the show for the last month and called it “surreal.”

But light won't only be a form of visual entertainment. J.R. Rizzo, a doctor with a company called Tactile Navigation Tools that produces wearable technology for sensory expansion, is creating an exhibit for the visually impaired.

“Despite the fact that the light show will be very enjoyable for many, not everyone will be able to participate,” Mr. Rizzo said, alluding to those with visual impairments. So he and his team created an installation where visitors can wear a vest with sensors that will vibrate at different intensities as it experiences a variety of “obstacles.”

“We won't ever be able to re-create vision through different forms of sensation,” Mr. Rizzo said. But, he added, “every sense is so unique.”

And light, Mr. Parker said, is an incredible medium of art.

“No matter what you do with it, it's undeniable—there's a significant psychological influence that light has on a person,” Mr. Parker said. “It's pretty real. It's not like a steel sculpture that's always there.”

Tupac Martir, an artist who has created an installation involving four umbrellas above the audience that will react to anything from light to rain to human touch, said people are becoming more aware of the possibilities of light in their environment.

“People are starting to realize how important it is,” Mr. Martir said. “If people see a show and the lighting is crap, you can realize the lighting is crap. If the lighting is very good, chances are you're not going to realize it.”

And the festival may open viewers' eyes to the possibility that comes with using light.

“No one ever said, ‘I want to grow up to be a lighting designer’ unless you know a lighting designer,” Mr. Martir said. “You kind of expect and hope [that] out of this opportunity to see it, they can start thinking, ‘I want to be a light artist.’ ”