

AC [Institute Direct Chapel]

547 W. 27th St, 5th Floor, NYC, NY 10001



planeSPACE (2009), detail

Christine Sciulli

planeSPACE

May 14th – June 13th, 2009

Opening: Thursday, May 14th, 6 – 8pm



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gallery spaces. Her outdoor intervention, *Intercepting Planes X*, mapped planes of light onto a large scale tree canopy network high above Duane Park (New York City). In *planeSPACE*, a mishmash of vines, roots and bramble forms a dense, organic network. Points of light variously slink, careen and collide along twisted pathways, the result of the projected line mapped onto a tangled network.

Christine Sciulli is a New York based video installation and intervention artist. Recent exhibitions include: *Scatter* at The Arts Center in St. Petersburg, Florida and *Intercepting Planes B* at New York's Islip Art Museum, which Janet Goleas described as "a quiet riot of controlled chaos." In 2008, Sciulli exhibited a solo project with Frederieke Taylor Gallery, as well as her second solo show with Chi Contemporary Fine Art (both New York City). Her outdoor intervention, *Intercepting Planes X*, was funded by a Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Grant. A second public art installation, *Everything's Rosie*, was part of Hudson, New York's Plugged-In 2008.

Her collaborations with composers have been shown widely at European and American festivals. A collaboration featuring her video and light work for the Mabou Mines waterfront piece, *Song for New York: What Women Do While Men Sit Knitting*, was developed during her 2007 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab Residency at White Oak, Florida.

Christine Sciulli holds an Architectural Engineering degree from Penn State and an MFA from Hunter College. Sciulli's work is part of the New Museum of Contemporary Art's Rhizome ArtBase (Rhizome.org.) She is represented by Chi Contemporary Fine Art. Video documentation of Sciulli's work can be found at www.soundandvision.cc.

**For any additional information about
Christine Sciulli please contact**

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Christine Sciulli: An Artist of the Floating World

planeSPACE and Practical Geometry

The architect Mies Van Der Rohe once famously quipped “less is more.” It’s in that vein of observation—of scripted space and our intuitive response to it, that I like to think of Christine Sciulli’s work. Whenever you look up and see a grid—whether it’s in the artwork of Sarah Morris, or Fred Sanback—you’re confronted with a simple notion: how we organize space, and create spatial relationships go right to the core of what it means to be human. I’m drawn to Sciulli in the same way that I’m drawn to Pythagoras: she offers an elegant way to navigate some of the more complex issues facing our time and presents us with a geometry of lines and light to act as guideposts as we navigate the often hyper complex world of 21st century aesthetics. Think of her lines and abstracted intersections as a lyrical play on our modes of moving through space, and one could easily trace a relationship to music and geometry, much like Pythagoras.

According to legend, the way Pythagoras discovered that musical notes could be translated into mathematical equations was when one day he passed blacksmiths at work, and thought that the sounds emanating from their anvils being hit were beautiful and harmonious and decided that whatever scientific law caused this to happen must be mathematical and could be applied to music. He went to the blacksmiths to learn how this had happened by looking at their tools, he discovered that it was because the anvils were "simple ratios of each other, one was half the size of the first, another was $\frac{2}{3}$ the size, and so on." Think of Sciulli’s oeuvre as a meditation of music and spatial relationships and you can easily see some of the same links—ratio, proportion and above all, pattern recognition. These are her informing motifs.

Pythagoras believed in something called the "harmony of the spheres." He thought that the planets and stars moved according to mathematical equations, which corresponded to musical notes and thus produced a symphony—what would happen if we made Sciulli’s material into music?

It’s not every day that you see an artist like Christine Sciulli. Her work consists of intersections of the geometry and an intuitive sense of how to use everyday materials to give a sense of “spatialisation”—she plays with how we perceive the world around us in a way that leaves you with a kind of eerie sense of timelessness.

Some examples:

One day I walked outside of my place on Duane St Park and saw lights she had projected into the trees in front of my place. Another time, I saw a series of points and lines she created a subtle geometry of moving structure in the air that she had created at a gallery and was struck by the dynamic and beautiful structures she evoked as the light points and strings intersected, moved and evolved along different axes. It reminded me of some of the core issues composers like Iannis Xenakis (who reflected Pythagoras) or Pierre Boulez liked to think of when they wrote about music and geometry. Even Goethe came to mind with his infamous adage that “architecture is nothing but frozen music.”

In Sciulli’s mind, the creation of topology and differential geometry is at play—the play of lines, the play of intersections, the play of vanishing points of perspective. They foster a kind of Euclidean geometry of an art composition. In our era of videogames and of hyper dense Computer Aided Design (CAD) compositions for architects like Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas, one can only wonder how the 21st century will respond to the maps of Google Earth and GPS systems—they too follow the logic of the grid. I can think of so many intersections between Sciulli’s work and the way we live: the grids that organize the roads of any city, the fiberoptic networks holding our information economy together, the grids of solar panels... the examples are there, we just need to look for them.

Chiharu Shiota uses miles of string in her work to suspend objects in space and time, Richard Wentworth’s and Sol Lewitt’s use grid drawings and of course, some of the string compositions of Fred Sanback come to mind when I think of Sciulli’s compositions. All of which, on one level or another, Sciulli evokes and responds to.

Call and response—I guess you could say it’s the geometric equivalent of how music unfolds in space: points and lines, waveforms, volume, amplitude—they all come back to make the viewer, like Sciulli, question how they orient their perspective in a world made of lines, and circles, data coordinates, and satellite links. I have a feeling that Sciulli would know these artificial spaces as well as she knows her works relationship to the ancient of geometry. Seeing her material in play, Pythagoras would be happy and I think so would you.

Excerpt from a forthcoming essay by Kamy Wicoff

...Spend a moment focusing on a small area of the work—a particular tangle of vines, for instance, or a less dense quadrant of the network that contains more negative space—and the tiny points of light seem to travel in isolation, as though independent of one another and unconnected. Each bright point, moving at varying speeds, curving and leaping from vine to vine, follows a predestined path dictated by the computer-generated planes of light emanating from the cold unblinking eye of a projector. Their trajectories are, by definition, lifeless. But Sciulli's brilliant decision to use vines—organic, pliant, wild things—as the grid for her projections makes one forget for a moment that technology is involved and the suggestion of life is vivid and mesmerizing. This network's lines are nature's lines, not a machine's and no two installations of *planesSPACE* will ever be the same. The vines twist and gnarl, they soar and sag, they bend and branch, and their wild randomness gives each tiny point its eerie aura of lifelike animation. If you look long enough, it sometimes seems Sciulli has brought a teeming colony of creatures to life and we have been given the privilege of observing them in their habitat, moving.

Step back from the points, however, and view the planes, and *planesSPACE* jumps into view not as a teeming colony of independent agents but as an orderly scan of three-dimensional space, generated by a single, controlling source. The projected planes of light cut methodical cross-sections of the space they survey like sweeps of radar. Sometimes moving slowly from the ground up; sometimes surging and spinning quickly across the field, colliding with each other soundlessly; sometimes slicing through whatever network they encounter like an MRI; the planes give us the rare experience of comprehending the origins of seemingly random, inexplicable movement. On the one hand the network of vines translates the planes, making them visible; on the other it splinters them into tiny pieces, appearing to fracture them and disguising their relationship to one another. In stepping back, however, we see that this fractured, disconnected appearance is an illusion. With this installation and its predecessors, Sciulli has powerfully illustrated the interconnectedness of things, the light-planes serving as a visual analog for the laws of physics acting on the natural world; for the invisible, larger order that animates and dictates the trajectories of life itself. In all its iterations, these works have been striking both in their philosophical depth, for the rich and myriad metaphors brought to mind, so challenging and also compellingly simple, and also for their sheer beauty. Standing in *planesSPACE* is pleasurable, it is *fun*, it is wondrous to behold, and children and adults alike may ooh and aah as the light spins and plays along the vines, each sweep launching an army of sparklers, travelers, streamers and miniature comets loose amongst the vines.

Kamy Wicoff, 2009 / www.kamywicoff.com

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AC's mission is to advance the understanding of art through investigation, research and education. It is a lab and forum for experimentation and critical discussion.

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Gallery Hours:

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