

MEAT MARKET

NEW YORK CITY MEATPACKING DISTRICT GUIDE

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THE STREET ARE HER CANVAS



I was immediately struck by Colette's style when she walked into the door for our interview. She was wearing a top hat and a billowing, draped black dress, which made her look half witch, half Charlie Chaplin impersonator. We met the morning after Halloween, which Colette claims is the only day of the year that she doesn't wear a costume. An artist famous for changing the character she impersonates frequently, she is a ubiquitous presence on the streets of the Meatpacking district. I have always been a big fan of her art, and I couldn't wait to learn more about Colette Maison Lumiere, the name of the guise that she adopted after September 11, 2001.

Colette is something of a neighborhood legend. Best known for using anonymous urban spaces in her pioneering work, she claims that the streets are her canvas. She's occupied her crowded basement atelier, which she refers to as her laboratory, in the Meatpacking District for more than 30 years. Her paintings, sculptures, photographs, mixed media works and installation pieces have been featured in most major exhibition spaces in New York, including the Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art. Although her success has allowed her to live and work around the world, she is grateful that she still has her space on Washington Street. In a city that has made her

famous, she still finds joy in the neighborhood where she first began to make her celebrated street paintings in the 1970s.

Colette's favorite part of the Meat Market is its proximity to the water. Being able to walk down to the Hudson River brings her a lot of peace. She thinks that the opening of the High Line, which adds an element of wilderness to the water views, will make a huge impact on the cultural importance of the neighborhood.

In 1978, Colette staged her own death in an installation performance at the Downtown Whitney, entitled "The Last Stitch". The opening of the Whitney Museum on Gansevoort Street therefore seems particularly relevant to her career. I think it's safe to say that I'm not the only one who hopes that they open with a retrospective of Colette on her home turf.
