

Artist's gritty triumph

First visit to city has rough start, but friends help her rise

Haiti-born Anély Girondin, a novice French visual and performance artist, started her career-exploring visit to New York in August by getting ripped off – a predatory livery driver charged her \$400 to travel from JFK to Brooklyn.

But the 25-year-old student, visiting New York for the first time, quickly rebounded, and amazingly landed her first-ever art exhibition – hosted by a high-end Upper East Side gallery.

The secrets to Girondin attaining “The Movements of Our Roots” – her last-minute, unplanned art display and dance performance at the swank Kate Oh Gallery on E. 72nd St. – were her tenacity, combined with invaluable support from her Airbnb host, art maven Linda Sutton, and veteran New York-based artists Jean Dominique Volcy, Ava Tomlinson, and Otto Neals.

“Our common passions for art have brought us closer,” said Girondin of Sutton, Volcy, Tomlinson, and Neals. “I can say that I have met new friends, new allies,” said the student-artist, who returned to France last month to start her third year at Paris’ Sornas EDTA college.

The French-speaking Girondin selected Sutton’s studio accommodations for her 45-day stay because of the host’s love of art, which she professed in her



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Airbnb biography.

“My passion is fine art,” reads the bio of Sutton, who has operated art galleries and worked in the arts arena for decades. “I enjoy meeting people and enhancing their travel experience when they visit,” she wrote.

After bemoaning Girondin’s outrageous \$400 livery rip-off, Sutton reached out to members of Brooklyn’s Black arts community to help and bridge the French-English language barrier between them. Larry Weeks, president of Brooklyn’s 65-year-old Fulton Art Fair, recommended Haitian-born Volcy and Tomlinson, who has parents from Jamaica.

Meanwhile, Girondin visited the publicized Jean-Michel Basquiat exhibit in Manhattan, the Brooklyn’s My NYC Gallery in Crown Heights, the Brooklyn Tequila and Taco Bar in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Brooklyn Bridge, and other city sites.

She also made things happen, career-wise.

Alone, she ventured into Manhattan’s

Central Park for a bicycle ride one day and spotted the Kate Oh Gallery near the park.

“I looked at this very inspiring space where there were very beautiful works,” Girondin said. She later showed the gallery owner her portfolio.

Artist Kate Oh – an educator and former longtime docent at the Metropolitan Museum of Art – founded the gallery in 2016 to “raise awareness for emerging artists at the intersection of both Eastern and Western art.”

“During the discussion, Kate appreciated my work,” said Girondin, who was offered a week-long exhibition at the Manhattan space. The artist admitted, “it was the first time that I entered in a gallery to show my work.”

“The works, many of which are monochromatic minimalist pieces penned on paper with India ink, recall silhouettes and rivulets of the wondrous and wild,” said the gallery describing Girondin’s creations.



Anély Girondin’s debut exhibition – held at Manhattan’s Kate Oh Gallery – featured artworks and dance by the Haitian-born French artist. Below, the artist with newfound friend and gallery owner Oh.



Before the show, Volcy helped Girondin buy art supplies from two Blink Art Materials stores in Brooklyn, provided her with an easel to work on, and took her to and from the gallery.

“I felt obligated as an elder artist to guide Anély, a young artist, and show her the way,” said Volcy who recently showed his oil and acrylic artwork at a benefit show for the Haiti-based Foundation Henri Riquet Perpignan and that organizes children’s art programs and operates an afterschool program.

“Coming to New York was her dream

since she was a young child, she is not scared of the city. She is taking it by storm,” said Volcy.

Tomlinson – a seasoned painter, printmaker, textile artist who worked with the ACTTO initiative aiding young and upcoming artists – took Girondin shopping for clothes. And 90-year-old Neals – a revered award-winning painter and sculptor – provided the novice exhibitor with some sage advice and gave moral support by attending her art opening and performance at the gallery.

Most of the pieces in the exhibition were created by Girondin in Sutton’s Crown Heights Airbnb studio.

“The layout of the apartment encourages creation,” said Girondin. “As soon as I get home, I want to dance, draw, describe.

“Every light that enters the room is a renewable source, for creativity. I recommend to any artist dreamer poet writer, photographer, dancer, creator to meet Linda.”