



#### CHARLES GAINES

**Duke Riley, *Fly by Night* (Brooklyn Navy Yard, May 7–June 19)** Duke Riley’s spectacular *Fly by Night* featured the twilight release of thousands of pigeons from specially designed coops installed on a naval vessel docked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. For this series of performances, organized by Creative Time, the birds were fitted with specially designed leg bands equipped with LED lights. Ascending, the clustered avians became sweeping clouds that spread above the spectators. As the sky darkened, their forms disappeared, leaving visible only swarming constellations of light. Riley’s performance merged aesthetic and political concerns, evoking with a single dance two contrasting historical uses of pigeons. One is their strategic employ by the military to send messages to otherwise inaccessible war regions. (The navy yard was once home to the largest fleet of pigeon carriers in the world.) The other is recreational: Pigeon keepers once populated the five boroughs of New York in far greater numbers than exist today.



Duke Riley, *Fly by Night*, 2016. Performance view, Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York, May 7, 2016. Photo: Tod Seelie.