



**ROYAL
DE LUXE** NANTES

Nantes
June 2014

The story of the creation of the Wall of Light

Autumn 1986

In those days, Royal de Luxe, although penniless, was living in a huge manor lent for free by a Canadian landlord who had just arrived in France.

The castle of Serrant situated 30km away from Toulouse allowed for the company to have a place to stay and to create, as the company at that time was living in community not by choice, but for economic reasons.

Impossible to heat due to the volume of the rooms, the main meeting spot was in the kitchen next to the fireplace. Hours of imagination were developed in this place.

Going to sleep at dawn to start working a few hours later, an infinite number of impossible stories took flight there.

The landlord, with his farming machines and his staff, would clean up regularly the immense parc full of tall trees and wild grass, to make it a clear and manicured place without ever talking about money.

The mansion was huge, built at the time by one of Napoleon's general. It was situated 5km away from Lavour, in the middle of the countryside.

The idea of the Wall of Light appeared right after the show of Roland de Roncevaux, performed in Blay near Bordeaux. A parade was to happen at night and I asked the team to put rows of car lights at the front of the vehicles. A few weeks later in that very kitchen the concept of a huge wall of car lights appeared to me : partly to keep Royal de Luxe busy, as we were in a quiet period, but also to build a sort of unique mythological lighting in the hope of using it for upcoming shows.

The suggestion raised enthusiasm.

And there we were suddenly transformed into lights harvester, contacting owners of car lights. Armed with screwdrivers, wire cutters and other small tools, we were spending our days under the rain, in the mud or climbing on the vehicles piled up like wedding cakes, taking apart those little treasures to put them, at the end of the day, in a big pile which the boss would sort out, and depending on the company, give us a third or half of the harvest that he considered useless for his business.

In the evening we would look hungrily at our growing stock, that little game kept going for three weeks, at the end of which we had in our possession about 150 car lights. Of course during this exercise we would collect here and there all of the lightbulbs we needed, and that could have been worse considering the time and energy we were putting.

Then the assembling work began.

Getting scrap metal from here and there in our warehouses, we started building portcullis, squares, rectangles that we would weld together in different shapes in the spirit of savings, and on which we stretched wires to hang our lights on.

The team was operating like a factory.

Once this was done I calculated the patchwork of the final assembly as a huge activity of wiring from which each light of each portcullis was being knitted.

The only expense came at that moment for the making of electric transformers to go from a 380 volts source to 12 volts on each light.

Once the wall was wired, as we did not have any other way we stretched a wire between two tall trees to suspend the whole sculpture.

Although considered as strong enough the trees were getting closer together because of the weight of the whole structure, some poles and other cables did manage to straighten up the wall and we were finally able to switch it on.

In order to do that, and as we did not have enough power, the electrician of the time connected directly to the electric cables from outside bringing power into the castle.

After several attempts, the wall, as if a miracle for us revealed the field, the grass, and the trees of the large parc.

Although it was not transportable for the moment, it was working. An important road was running 200m away from the castle and a few minutes later, drivers finding the entrance to the building were converging on the pathway, getting out of their vehicles, I shall say every 3 or 4 minutes, alone or with their family surprised by this yellow light from another world. Then they would go away. I then thought that they were simply attracted like butterflies to light.

Of course this wall was used a few times during shows of Royal de Luxe. I consider it with time, like a sculpture of modern art, hanging from the top. The portcullis being still independent from one another, it can sometimes, under the strength of the wind or the hand of men, behave like a sail or a wave. Back in those days, spectators were looking for the lights of their own cars just like children would do.

©Jean-Luc Courcoult, author, director, founder of the company Royal de Luxe