

Info request



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Our on-line newsletter

Students

Greeting

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Student Events

Student Reviews

Student Work

Meet Our Students

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Professional English Academy

Professional English Academy classes for Spring 1, 2006 will start on Monday, January 30th. Registration for these classes is now open. [You can register on-line by clicking here.](#)

On-line Registration is Here!

It is now possible to register for IELI courses on-line. [If you would like to register using a credit card, just click here.](#)

July in the Big Apple

Come spend July in the Big Apple at the IELI! Improve your English while enjoying all that New York has to offer. Housing is available for the month of July at the Hunter College Dormitory. [For more information on the July in the Big Apple program, click here.](#)

Fall II, 2005

One Way Ticket To New York

Meet a french artist who calls New York home.



ONE-WAY TICKET TO NEW YORK

She was bored in Paris. Seven years ago, she decided to go to New York to study Fine Arts at Hunter College. She never came back. Virginie and The Big Apple, it's a real love story.

[View more pictures](#)

Everyday, Virginie Sommet uses her bicycle to cross Chinatown, where she lives with two other French women and a black cat in a huge loft. With her eccentric look, she doesn't pass unnoticed but in New York it's not a problem. "In Paris, when I wore some unique or strange looking clothes, it was like a crime! People weren't really open-minded when I lived there. In New York, people are more funny and open. You can do what you want." Born in Normandy to a middle class family, she spent a large part of her life in the French capital where she had a lot of jobs: seller, shop assistant, dance teacher, physiognomist in a club. She says she was really born twice: once in Normandy and once when she arrived in Paris at 19 years old. Even though Paris was a great city with a lot of things to do, Virginie needed something more.

In 1998, she took advantage of her art studies to enter a student exchange program with Hunter College in New York, a city where she had gone many times over the last few summers. The love story started. Why come back to France? Virginie enjoyed her new life, met a lot of people, got a job in an art gallery... Nothing was easy, but she never gave up despite some housing problems. "In New York, you're always in survival mode. Anything is possible. If you think the opposite, the city gives you a big slap! You must arrive here with a lot of humility because you can lose a lot". Virginie began to work for an art gallery, then in movie as an artistic director. "I love New York for that too. I didn't have any experience, but the film director, who I met in a party, liked one of my idea. He hired me on the spot. In France, it would have been impossible. If you studied economics, you have to work in a bank all your life even though you have a talent for another job! In New York, people don't care about your background. If you are good, you stay. If you're bad, you're fired but you can get another chance!" Today, Virginie is a complete artist: she produces modern art sculptures, which she exhibits in an Art Salon "at home" every month. Action Against Hunger asked her to produce a spot featuring Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. She does what she wants and can live with her art. Check out her website: <http://www.virginiesommet.com>

Also, she just finished writing a book about her life in New York. "I started to do it just after 9/11. Maybe I was hurt like other New Yorkers and needed to explain why this city is so great!". Now, she's looking for an editor in France. A difficult new challenge. However, she's used to fighting and recognizes she likes when it's difficult. "New York destroys you in order to build you better!" Her next project ... a music disc maybe. In New York, anything is possible if you got your way of life.

Thomas Adamski

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IELI Quiz:
what is the IELI quiz?

New York City's nickname is...

Select an answer

submit your answer

The IELI is a member of the following organizations:



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