

The American media artist Tony Oursler will show “Eclipse” for the first time in the German-speaking area at the light art festival “Lichtstadt Feldkirch” 2023.



Lichtstadt Feldkirch
The Light Art Festival
4-7 October 2023
6800 Feldkirch, Austria

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Press contact: Sarah Kirsch, sarah@lichtstadt.at, +43 660 5899735

Teaser “Lichtstadt Feldkirch” 2023

This year's edition of the light art festival “Lichtstadt Feldkirch” brings projects by international artists and a collective to the public space of Feldkirch's historic old town that deal with a visualisation of the complex relationship between man and his environment – in the holistic sense of the human environment. The illumination of this link has always been a fundamental drive of artistic production, but it always seems new and confronted with different challenges in the respective present state of the world. Thus the interplay between fiction and reality can be discerned in different variants in the contributions of Tony Oursler, Ruth Schnell and Martin Kusch, the group OchoReSotto, Thilo Frank and the historical position of François Morellet.

Teaser Tony Oursler: “Eclipse”

For the first time in the German-speaking area, the American media artist Tony Oursler is presenting his work “Eclipse” (2019/2023) as part of the light art festival “Lichtstadt Feldkirch” 2023. It projects oversized faces and entire bodies onto the trees of the urban space. We see various characters who seem moved, frightened, overwhelmed, petrified, doubting society and themselves. They discourse, alone or together, speak paranoically into walkie-talkies, are stroboscopically accelerated in their movements, lash out with an axe, fall into a singing unison close to madness.

For more than four decades, Oursler has been intensely concerned with the human capacity for appropriating the world and constructing reality through media information. In “Eclipse”, he spins out a disturbingly beautiful installation meant to question our own position and attitude towards the life-world and natural environment, and the influence of fiction and reality in the progressive development of technology.

Tony Oursler: CV

Tony Oursler, considered one of the pioneers of media art, was born in 1957 in New York, where he still lives and works. He attended the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, California. In 1977-83 he was a member of the punk band “Poetic”, along with Mike Kelly and John Miller. His oeuvre comprises many genres and styles: figurative-expressive drawings of the 1970s and 1980s stand alongside photographs, important video works, performances and various installations. Oursler was a participant in *documenta 8* (1987) and *documenta IX* (1992). His works can be found in numerous international museums and public collections, including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the MACBA Barcelona, the Museu Berardo in Lisbon, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in Antwerp, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the ZKM in Karlsruhe.

Press Release

For over four decades, the work of the American artist **Tony Oursler** (born in 1957) has shown his multifaceted exploration of the relationship between man and machine, or more precisely of media technology, its output and man's capacity for reception and adaptation. In a constantly ramifying media landscape whose mechanisms elude consumers, overrun by fake news and artificial intelligence, defined by algorithms and rapid growth, fiction and reality are difficult to separate. People cannot keep pace with this permanent, self-accelerating development, whose illusory cover lies in democratisation. The way in which Oursler takes up this dilemma, addresses it artistically and develops it in a variety of media was and is pioneering, operating constantly on the cutting-edge.

The video work **“Eclipse”** (2019/2023) was created for the exhibition “Trees” at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris. The impressive installation is composed of individual videos projected in oversized dimensions onto trees.

The various characters seem inwardly moved, frightened, overwhelmed, petrified, doubting society and themselves. Alone or in combination with others, they discourse, speak paranoidly into walkie-talkies, are stroboscopically accelerated in their movements, lash out with an axe, fall into a singing unison – separated and united. We meet reporters from disaster areas and psychologists, people who professionally deal with the extremes of the global community in its collective and individual states. A medieval-like “Wild Woman” and “Green Man” appear, figures whose paradoxical mythologisation, oscillating between the anthropomorphic, the violent, the primitive and a paradisiacal closeness to nature, continues to generate fantastic narratives. An unstable businessman lost in paranoid, seemingly existential uncertainty gives the New Ager, with his unconventional relationship to nature beyond the confines of contemporary science, a solid *raison d'être*.

The interplay of all these characters – their exclamations, dances, beliefs and conspiracy theory-fuelled fears – is choreographed in the performance by collaborators on the projectors. The devices can be swivelled and thus always search for new places in the treetops to become the projection surface for this absurd theatre. The branches with their foliage fragment the projections, keeping them in constant and unpredictable motion.

The tree not only serves as a “canvas”; Oursler also incorporates it into the fundamental conception of the work. In the history of art, the tree has been metaphorically represented in many ways, including numerous cross-cultural proverbs related to human nature. Mystical superpowers have been ascribed to the organism in the increasingly explored communicative abilities of plants with their environment. The tree organism is a habitat, a cooling system, a carbon binder and an air filter. At the same time, it is a symbol of human history, a symbol of life and its annual cycle, a link between earth and sky, something divinely exalted and deeply rooted.

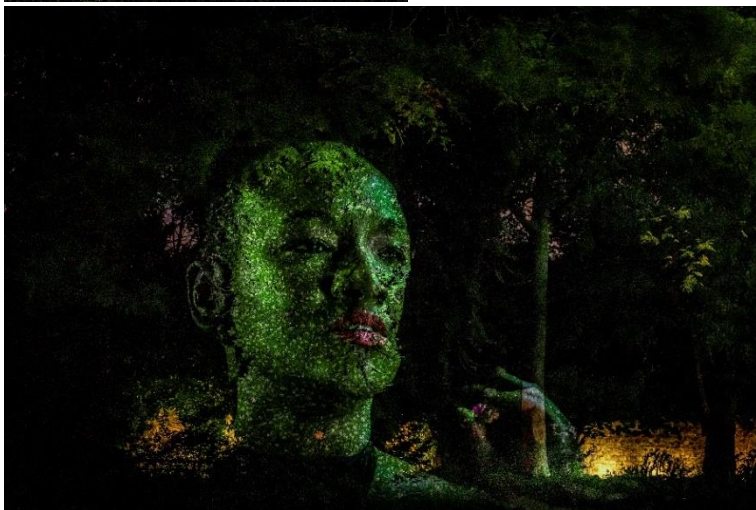
During a solar eclipse the sun shines through its foliage, casting a crescent on the ground, projecting itself innumerable in its total or partial obscuration through the filtering of the leaf canopy. Something that cannot be seen with the naked eye is made visible by the tree.

For Oursler, who is intensely concerned with the human capacity of world appropriation and reality construction through medial information, the mystique of the tree and the link between nature and magical thinking is central here. Out of this stuff, he spins a disturbingly beautiful installation that reflects on our own position between the natural environment and the life-world, our connection to technologies, our slowed understanding of their modes of operation, and human being's inherent capacity to encompass the otherworldly, the supernatural and the compulsive.

Press Photos



Tony Oursler, Eclipse, 2019,
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