



Tony Oursler Unveils New Video Work in October in Riverside Park

September 20, 2018

by Pat Rogers

Tony Oursler debuts a larger-than-life video work in New York's Riverside Park on the Upper West Side of New York next month. Commissioned by Public Art Fund, *Tear of the Cloud*, 2018, will be projected onto the historic West 69th Street Transfer Bridge gantry, the Hudson River, and the surrounding landscape. The cumulative effective will be a dramatic visual and auditory experience inspired by what Oursler describes as the "the mnemonic effect of the river and the many intertwined tropes associated with the Hudson Valley region."

On view from October 10 to 31, 2018 from 7 to 10 p.m. daily (except Mondays) in [Riverside Park South](#), located between 68th and 70th streets near Pier I, *Tear of the Cloud* is an orchestrated, immersive work that will illuminate the park with a roving cast of characters and iconography, referencing the Hudson River School (the country's first regional artistic movement which gave birth to the initial land preservation movement).

The artwork also references social media bots, inventor Samuel Morse's final painting, *The Muse*, The Headless Horseman, IBM's chess-playing computer Deep Blue, Mary Rogers' infamous murder at Sibyl's Cave in New Jersey, the 19th century utopian society of Oneida, and experimental music developed in the South Bronx and Lower Manhattan, and more, according to Public Art Fund.

Tear of the Cloud is Oursler's most extensive installation to date and is designed to encourage audiences to move through the installation and to consider the relationship between past and present. The artwork explores the transitory space between the river and the city using spectral projected superimpositions focusing on the cultural, social, ecological, and technological data with origins in the region, connecting history with contemporary times and encouraging an examination of the landscape and our relationship to it.

.



Tony Oursler, *Tear of the Cloud* (in-process projection of Pearl White), 2018. Multi-channel installation, courtesy of the artist, Photo by Tony Oursler Studio. Courtesy Public Art Fund.

.

Tony Oursler described the work as a "visual palimpsest, depicting the layering of information associated with unforeseen legacies of the waterway."

Technological developments in the region provided significant source material for the artist. The structure of the Internet, which blurs the boundary between culture and technology, is evident in the production of millions of bricks in Haverstraw, New York and the long-distance communication of the talking drum as a precursor to the invention of Morse code. The artist explores the composition of Samuel Morse's last painting, *The Muse*, depicting his daughter Susan Walker Morse, uncannily foreshadowing the prototype of his first telegraph.

"The Headless Horseman and his horse are important references in *Tear of the Cloud*, as they gallop towards artificial intelligence, the chess-playing computer Deep Blue's famous knight sacrifice, facial recognition technologies, and bots which have provoked significant questions about our future," according to Oursler.

He suggests connections between the recent DNA CRISPR-Cas encoding of Muybridge's *Horse in Motion*, the birth of the film industry at the Black Maria studio, the actress and proto-feminist Pearl White's early silent films created on the Palisades, and the first transistor invented a few miles away at IBM's Bell Labs.

Mining progressive social movements, the work touches on the mid-19th century Oneida community, their attempts at free love and highly successful manufacturing of silverware and animal traps; the Seneca Falls Convention; counterculture musical and psychedelic experimentation at Woodstock; and the remixing of nascent hip-hop culture in the South Bronx.

The river is also characterized by darker connotations including pesticides, PCBs, Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant, and Sybil's Cave, where the infamous Mary Rogers murder occurred. Oursler will bring these images – and more – to life, through the meticulously produced digital projections that evoke the scenarios with kaleidoscopic wonder.

The focal point for the exhibition is the landmarked 69th Street Transfer Bridge (Gantry) – an industrial relic that formerly facilitated the movement of trains from railyards to river barges — a salient reminder of the river's important industrial past.

The artist's large-scale videos will be projected on the gantry's surfaces, river, and surrounding area, and will be accompanied by an eerie soundscape along the park, creating a phantasmal and ambient experience which will invite visitors along the waterfront to engage with different aspects of the multimedia work. It will encourage a new creative relationship to this storied body of water, while providing the artist with an entirely new "canvas" for his innovative and groundbreaking work.

The exhibition derives its title from the highest water source for the Hudson River in the Adirondack Mountains called Lake Tear of the Clouds, named in 1872 by conservationist Verplanck Colvin. Oursler's title sets the tone for his new site-specific commission, evoking the flow of the river and natural phenomena; suggesting both the tragedy and success of the stories of the valley; and offering a nod to new technological advancements, such as today's ever ubiquitous digital "cloud."

Oursler's practice has long included a combination of projections, video screens, sculptures, and optical devices, used in innovative and experimental ways. His films are conceptually based, oftentimes employing unconventional dramaturgy, stop motion, live action, and draw inspiration

from mystic and spiritual phenomena, science, and technological advancements, creating a dialogue between perception, communication, and language.

Oursler's first artwork with outdoor projections was co-commissioned by Public Art Fund and Artangel, London at Madison Square Park in 2000. Titled *The Influence Machine*, it featured ghostly projections of historic and contemporary large-scale faces onto smoke, trees, and buildings with corresponding narratives. *Tear of the Cloud*, is the artist's second exhibition with Public Art Fund and furthers Oursler's exploration of the use of video projections in the public realm and on natural elements.

Tony Oursler (b. 1957, New York, NY) is based in New York City and The Hamptons. His work was the subject of a solo show at the The [Museum of Modern Art in 2017](#).

Museum shows include those held at Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art, Stockholm, Sweden (2016); Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, NY (2016); LUMA Westbau, Zurich, Switzerland (2015); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2014); Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2014); Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev, Ukraine (2013); ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark (2012); Helsinki City Art Museum, Finland; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2005); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria (2001); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2000) and others.

In The Hamptons, Oursler's art has been exhibited at [Guild Hall](#) (2012), the [Parrish Art Museum](#) (2016) and at Hamptons art fairs.

Oursler's work is included in public collections including Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, DC); Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris); Museum of Modern Art (New York); National Museum of Osaka (Japan); Tate Collection (London); Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (The Netherlands) and ZMK/Center for Art & Media (Karlsruhe, Germany).

BASIC FACTS: *Tear of the Cloud* will be on view October 10 to 31, 2018 from 7 to 10 p.m. daily (except Mondays) in Riverside Park South, located between 68th and 70th streets near Pier I, along the Hudson River. www.nycgovparks.org.

Copyright 2018 Hamptons Art Hub LLC. All rights reserved.