

**Tony Oursler** was born in 1957. He received a B.F.A. from the California Institute for the Arts, Valencia, where he studied under John Baldessari. Oursler's video and installations have been widely exhibited internationally, including one-person shows at Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva; Musée D'Orsay, Paris; Kunstverein, Hannover, Germany; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE); Jeu de Paume, Paris; Metro Pictures, New York; Lisson Gallery, London; Nyehaus, New York; Lehmann Maupin, New York; Museum Fur Gegenwartskunst, Basel; and the Museo D'Arte Contemporanea, Rome; among others. In 1999, a mid-career retrospective of Oursler's work was exhibited at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and toured to The Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston and Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. His work has also been seen in group shows at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Documentas IIX and X, Kassel, Germany; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial, New York; the Tate Gallery, London; and DuMont Kunsthalle, Cologne.

Oursler lives and works in New York.

#### About EAI

Founded in 1971, Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) is one of the world's leading nonprofit resources for video art. A pioneering advocate for media art and artists, EAI fosters the creation, exhibition, distribution, and preservation of video art and digital art. EAI's core program is the distribution and preservation of a major collection of over 3,500 new and historical media works by artists. EAI's activities include viewing access, educational services, extensive online resources, and public programs such as artists' talks, exhibitions and panels. The Online Catalogue is a comprehensive resource on the artists and works in the EAI collection, and also features extensive materials on exhibiting, collecting and preserving media art: [www.eai.org](http://www.eai.org)

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# TONY OURSLER

## Screening + Conversation



**February 8, 2012**  
ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX



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### Screening + Conversation

EAI is pleased to present a screening of the single-channel video work of **Tony Oursler**, who forged a singular form of low-tech, expressionistic video theater. The screening program will trace Oursler's ingenious deployment of objects, narrative, sound and moving image over thirty years, beginning with the almost unknown black-and-white videos that he produced as a student at Cal Arts in the late 1970s. In these first, low-tech forays into video, Oursler casts disposable inanimate objects, body parts, and even household pests as protagonists—their lines voiced by the artist—in short, darkly comic episodes that evoke the madness and psychosexual delirium of life in a media-saturated culture.

Oursler's earliest videos already show his distinctive use of found objects with lo-fi, hand-crafted and painted sets. This strategy came into vivid, color-soaked maturity in the idiosyncratic fictions Oursler made in the 1980s, which prefigure the video sculptures and installations that have become his signature works. Taking the form of bizarre narrative odysseys, these post-punk horror-comedies evoke *Caligari* by way of *Eraserhead*. *The Weak Bullet* (1980, 12:41 min) is a grotesquely humorous psychodrama in which the trajectory of the eponymous bullet propels a narrative of social rupture and sexual paranoia. In *Son of Oil* (1982, 16:08 min), a cautionary tale about the decline of Western civilization as only Oursler could envision it, he employs actors alongside his puppet-like props and objects in a critique of the cults of money and power.

Oursler's exploration of sound has led from stream-of-consciousness narration and voiceover of inanimate objects to collaborations with acclaimed musicians and sound artists. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he experimented with sound and collaborated with Mike Kelley and John Miller as part of *The Poetics*, an "art band" that united the artists' interest in music and performance. *Tunic (Song for Karen)* (1990, 6:30 min), a music video made in collaboration with and starring Sonic Youth, merges Oursler's distinctive visual strategies with Sonic Youth's rock critique of the relation of celebrity, gender and body image. Oursler will also screen two recent works for the first time in New York: *Pop* (1999, 3:28), a video portrait of musician Beck, and *Empty* (2000, 4:22 min), featuring David Bowie voicing text by Oursler. *AWGTHGTWTA (Are We Going to Have to Go Through with This Again?)* (2008, 6:22 min), is part of a recent body of work involving choruses.

After the screening program, Oursler will appear in conversation with EAI Executive Director Lori Zippay.

## PROGRAM

### **He's Crazy (Crazyhead)**

1978, 3:36 min, b&w

### **Spider Fight**

1978, 2:35 min, b&w

### **Feet Fuck Up**

1978, 2:36 min

### **Life (excerpt - Modern Couple)**

1979, 0:36 min

### **The Weak Bullet**

1980, 12:41 min

### **Son of Oil**

1982, 16:08 min

### **Tunic (Song for Karen)**

1990, 6:30 min

### **Pop**

1999, 3:28 min

### **Empty**

2000, 4:22 min

### **AWGTHGTWTA**

2008, 6:22 min

Playing before the screening:

### **Sound Digressions in Seven Colors**

2006, 12:38 min, loop