

||| CCS BARD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (CCS Bard) Presents Tony Oursler: The Imponderable Archive

On View June 25 – October 30, 2016
CCS Bard Galleries

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY, May 11, 2016 – *Imponderable* is an extensive research project, exhibition, film, and publication that investigates the personal collection of American artist Tony Oursler, a remarkable trove of more than 2,500 photographs, documents, publications, and unique objects, tracking a social, spiritual, and intellectual history of the paranormal dating back to the early eighteenth century. The actual objects within the archive will be shown in a comprehensive exhibition for the first time at the **Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (CCS Bard)** extending the previous iterations of *Imponderable* commissioned by the LUMA Foundation in Arles and Zurich, where the 4D film and publication were originally presented in 2015. Concurrent with the presentation at CCS Bard, the **Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)** in New York will exhibit a full-scale theater screening of Oursler's *Imponderable* film (June 18, 2016 - January 2, 2017).



"Ectoplasm" under an ultraviolet light, early 20th century. Photo by Aaron Fedor. Image courtesy of Tony Oursler's personal archive.

The project's title, *Imponderable*, suggests the idea of something that cannot be determined with accuracy. Eighteenth-century scientists used the word to describe magnetism, electricity, and other unquantifiable energies, many of which are represented in Oursler's archive. The 'imponderable' also suggests an area of open speculation populated by numerous conflicting belief systems. Additionally, Oursler is interested in how even the most incredible ideas can be presented in such a way that they convince the audience of their veracity.

The landscape of the archive covers numerous categories such as: stage magic, thought photography, demonology, cryptozoology, optics, Mesmerism, automatic writing, hypnotism, fairies, cults, pareidolia, the occult, color theory, and UFOs. Oursler's initial research into these fringe practices of media histories and occult phenomenon led the artist further into ideas of speculative thought, the boundaries of science, and the use of the spectacular, all of which resonate with contemporary pop culture. For Oursler, nested and mirrored within this archive is also an intriguing family history that includes his grandfather, the writer Fulton Oursler, Houdini, and the author Arthur Conan Doyle.

Originally commissioned by the LUMA Foundation for LUMA Arles in France, this project investigates new possibilities for archives and artistic production, which is one of its primary concerns. *Imponderable* translates the original archival materials into the form of a film, an installation, and a publication, providing new insight into both the material gathered by the artist over many years, and the trajectory of his own work.

The 4D film-based experience to be shown at MoMA explores the conflicting and overlapping belief systems implicit within his grandfather's engagement with the debunking of paranormal activity. In addition to the exhibition of more than two thousand objects at CCS Bard, the broader reach of the archival material is presented in a six-hundred page, fully illustrated, publication that makes the archive available to the public for the first time. Alongside a substantial visual catalogue of Oursler's archive, organized by the artist, this publication gathers a large number of newly-commissioned texts by scholars, historians, and fellow enthusiasts for material that certainly lies outside the mainstream.

Imponderable: The Archives of Tony Oursler was commissioned and produced by the LUMA Foundation for the Parc des Ateliers in Arles, France. Curated by Tom Eccles and Beatrix Ruf.

The exhibition *Tony Oursler: The Imponderable Archive*, curated by Tom Eccles and Beatrix Ruf is on view at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, from June 25 to October 30, 2016.

Tony Oursler: Imponderable, curated by Stuart Comer and Erica Papernik-Shimizu, is on view at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, from June 18, 2016 to January 2, 2017.

Also on view: *Structured Expansion*, 2015, by Liam Gillick and *Reading Context*, curated by Ann Butler, in the newly expanded CCS Bard Archive, Special Collections, and Collection Teaching Gallery.

About the Center for Curatorial Studies

The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (CCS Bard) was founded in 1990 as an exhibition and research center for the study of late twentieth-century and contemporary art and culture and to explore experimental approaches to the presentation of these topics and their impact on our world. Since 1994, the Center for Curatorial Studies and its graduate program have provided one of the world's most forward thinking teaching and learning environments for the research and practice of contemporary art and curatorship. Broadly interdisciplinary, CCS Bard encourages students, faculty and researchers to question the critical and political dimension of art, its mediation and its social significance. CCS Bard cultivates innovative thinking, radical research and new ways to challenge our understanding of the social and civic values of the visual arts. CCS Bard provides an intensive educational program alongside its public events, exhibitions, and publications, which collectively explore the critical potential of the institutions and practices of exhibition-making. It is uniquely positioned within the larger Center's tripartite resources, which include the internationally renowned CCS Bard Library and Archives and the Hessel Museum of Art, with its rich permanent collection.

About LUMA Foundation and LUMA Arles

The LUMA Foundation was established in 2004 to support the activities of independent artists and pioneers, as well as institutions working in the fields of art and photography, publishing, documentary, and multimedia. The foundation specializes in challenging artistic projects combining a particular interest in environmental issues, human rights, education, and culture in the broadest sense.

The LUMA Foundation, founded in 2004, and LUMA Arles, founded in 2014 in support of the project in Arles, are currently developing an experimental cultural center in the Parc des Ateliers in the city of Arles, France, working with the architects Frank Gehry and Annabelle Selldorf. This ambitious project envisions an interdisciplinary center dedicated to the production of exhibitions and ideas, research, education, and archives and is supported by a growing number of public and private partnerships.

General information on the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College can be found on its website at: www.bard.edu/ccs.

#

MEDIA CONTACTS:

For further information, images or to arrange interviews, please contact:

Andy Cushman

Blue Medium

Tel: +1 (212) 675-1800

Email: acushman@bluemedium.com

BARD COLLEGE CONTACT:

Mark Primoff

Director of Communications

Tel: +1 845.758.7412

Email: primoff@bard.edu

CCS BARD CONTACT:

Ramona Rosenberg

Director of External Affairs

Tel: +1 (845) 758-7574

Email: rosenberg@bard.edu