

TEXTS BY ATIF AKIN, JOAN ANIM-ADDO, MAGALÍ ARRIOLA, RAKHEE BALARAM, ERIKA BALSOM, UTE META BAUER, BETTINA BRUNNER, D. GRAHAM BURNETT, PATRICK CHARPÉNEL, DAMIAN CHRISTINGER, SEBASTIAN CICHOCKI, CM LIVE (NEELOFAR, SURAJ RAI, AND SHAMSHER ALI), GABRIELLE CRAM, HEATHER DAVIS, ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI, GEORGES B.J. DREYFUS, EVA EBERSBERGER, CHARLES ESCHÉ, BEATRICE FORCHINI, ANSELM FRANKE, NATASHA GINWALA, DAVID GRUBER, CARLES GUERRA, SOLEDAD GUTIÉRREZ, NAV HAQ, EVA HAYWARD, STEFAN HELMREICH, STEFANIE HESSLER, VÁCLAV JANOŠČÍK, CAROLINE A. JONES, RUBA KATRIB, LUTZ KOEPNICK, CRESANTIA FRANCES KOYA VAKA'UTA, LUCA LO PINTO, SARAT MAHARAJ, CHUS MARTÍNEZ, MARGARIDA MENDES, SUZANA MILEVSKA, VANESSA JOAN MÜLLER, HEIKE MUNDER, SARA NADAL-MELSIÓ, HENNING NASS, ASTRIDA NEIMANIS, INGO NIERMANN, SANDRA NOETH, HANS ULRICH OBRIST, BORIS ONDREIČKA, ANNIE PAUL, NATAŠA PETREŠIN-BACHELEZ, IGNAS PETRONIS, ELIZABETH A. POVINELLI, FILIPA RAMOS, RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, MARKUS REYMANN, KATHRIN RHOMBERG, DAN RICHARDS, RIDYKEULOUS (NICOLE EISENMAN + A.L. STEINER), RALPH RUGOFF, THIBAUT DE RUYTER, NADIM SAMMAN, MIRJAM SCHAUB, ANDREAS SCHLAEGEL, CORY SCOZZARI, TSERING SHAKYA, CHRIS SHARP, JASPER SHARP, FREDERIKE SPERLING, ANDREAS SPIEGL, FRANCESCA THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA, EMILIANO VALDÉS, NICOLA VASSELL, FRANZISKA SOPHIE WILDFÖRSTER, EVA WILSON, SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, DANIELA ZYMAN, OONA ZYMAN

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary The Commissions Book

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BASEL ABBAS AND RUANNE ABOU-RAHME, DAVID ADJAYE, NABIL AHMED, DOUG AITKEN, ATIF AKIN, JOHN AKOMFRAH, NEVIN ALADAĞ, ALLORA & CALZADILLA, LAURA ANDERSON BARBATA, JONATHAS DE ANDRADE, KUTLUĞ ATAMAN, NEİL BELOUFA, CECILIA BENGOLEA, JOHN BOCK, MONICA BONVICINI, CANDICE BREITZ, JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BUREŠ MILLER, JULIAN CHARRIÈRE, ANETTA MONA CHIŠA AND LUCIA TKÁČOVÁ, TYLER COBURN, PHIL COLLINS, CLAUDIA COMTE, ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS, EMANUEL DANESCH AND DAVID RYCH, DARK MORPH, JEREMY DELLER, OLAFUR ELIASSON, NOA ESHKOL, OMER FAST, MARIO GARCÍA TORRES, GELITIN, ISA GENZKEN, LIAM GILICK, DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, DAN GRAHAM, ARIEL GUZIK, CARL MICHAEL VON HAUSSWOLFF AND THOMAS NORDANSTAD, FLORIAN HECKER, NIKOLAUS HIRSCH / MICHEL MÜLLER AND CYBERMOHALLA ENSEMBLE, CARSTEN HÖLLER, MARINE HUGONNIER, PIERRE HUYGHE, INHABITANTS, SANJA IVEKOVIĆ, RASHID JOHNSON, JOAN JONAS, BRAD KAHLHAMER, AMAR KANWAR, RAGNAR KJARTANSSON, ARMIN LINKE, SHARON LOCKHART, LOS CARPINTEROS, SARAH LUCAS, URSULA MAYER, JONATHAN MEESE, EDUARDO NAVARRO, ERNESTO NETO AND THE HUNI KUIN, RIVANE NEUENSCHWANDER, CARSTEN NICOLAI, OLAF NICOLAI, JORGE OTERO-PAILOS, MATHIAS POLEDNA, WALID RAAD, RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE, LISA RAVE, MATTHEW RITCHIE WITH ARANDA LASCH AND ARUP AGU, TOMÁS SARACENO, RITU SARIN AND TENZING SONAM, HANS SCHABUS, CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF, ALLAN SEKULA, CHARLES STANKIEVECH, SIMON STARLING, SUPERFLEX, TERRITORIAL AGENCY, RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA, SISSEL TOLAAS, SUZANNE TREISTER, JANAINA TSCHÄPE WITH DAVID GRUBER, JANA WINDEREN, SUSANNE M. WINTERLING, CERITH WYN EVANS, ŽELIMIR ŽILNIK

The Commissions Book

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Tomás Saraceno

SOLITARY SEMI-SOCIAL MAPPING OF HS 1700+6416 BY A SOLO NEPHILA SENEGALENSIS-ONE WEEK AND A SOLO CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA-THREE WEEKS, 2016

SPIDER SILK, ARCHIVAL PAPER, FIXATIVE, INK
93 × 93 CM

SOLITARY SEMI-SOCIAL MAPPING OF CEGINUS BY A DUET OF NEPHILA SENEGALENSIS- FOUR WEEKS, A TRIPLET OF CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA-THREE WEEKS, 2018

SPIDER SILK, ARCHIVAL PAPER ON DIBOND, FIXATIVE, INK
153.5 × 403.4 CM

HOW TO ENTANGLE THE UNIVERSE IN A SPIDER WEB? (GRAVITATIONAL SEMI-SOCIAL SOLITARY CHOREOGRAPHY ζ CET BUILT BY: AN ENSEMBLE OF CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA-FOUR WEEKS, A DUET OF CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA JUVENILE-ONE WEEK AND A SOLO NEPHILA EDULIS-ONE WEEK), 2018

SPIDER SILK, CARBON FIBER, LASER
90 × 90 × 90 CM (SPIDER WEB SUSPENDED IN CARBON FRAME)
OVERALL DIMENSIONS VARIABLE

LIVING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN OF AIR (UNDERWATER SPIDER), 2018

SINGLE-CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION, B/W, SOUND
9:11 MIN.

HYBRID SEMI-SOCIAL SOLITARY INSTRUMENT HD 74874 BUILT BY: A TRIPLET OF CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA-FOUR WEEKS AND A SOLO AGELENA LABYRINTHICA-ONE WEEK, 2019

SPIDER SILK, CARBON FIBER, GLASS, METAL
153.5 × 403.4 CM

BORN IN SAN MIGUEL DE TUCUMÁN, ARGENTINA, IN 1973.
LIVES IN BERLIN, GERMANY.

SENSORY SCORES: DEPARTING FROM THE WORK OF TOMÁS SARACENO
SOLEDAD GUTIÉRREZ

In 1987, Donna Haraway produced a television program entitled “Donna Haraway Reads ‘The National Geographic’ on Primates” for Paper Tiger Television, a collectively founded, independent television station that broadcasted on a weekly basis, where she questioned modern scientific research by analyzing various studies on gorillas and their appearance in widely circulated magazines such as *National Geographic*. More specifically, she focused on the covers and how they repeatedly showed comparisons between human and animal behavior, using humans as a reference for understanding and assessing the gorillas’ abilities, a critique of Western scientific knowledge that is still relevant today. Keeping in mind the image of Haraway untangling a skein of wool while unfolding the multiple layers that shape her critique of the dialectical and antagonistic construction that organizes “knowledge” about animals, I would like to focus on Tomás Saraceno’s long-term research on spiders, which has taken place in collaboration with many scientific institutions over the past years. This research explores the role arachnids could play within the context of the current ecological crisis, taking spiders as a reference for building a synanthropic knowledge that may have at its core the radical interconnectedness of all things, both living and nonliving.

Central to Saraceno’s research are the spider webs, a unique structure that was possible to render thanks to the 3D tomographic scanner that the artist developed in collaboration with a team from the Technical University of Darmstadt, in Germany. Spider webs are constantly changing structures that escape humans’ static notion of time and space. Researching them has aided human understanding of certain aspects of biology, space engineering, architecture, industrial engineering, and biomechanics. The spider web as a refuge and an architectural model, as a source of knowledge for researching new materials. Also, as a gateway to the cosmic web, not only from a visual perspective but as a form of balance between density and emptiness. It can be understood as a musical instrument, for its ability to carry vibrations, and as a score, for its unique shape. Thus, the spider web becomes a composition that is “more sensory than human,” as described by artist and flamenco singer El Niño de Elche during a jam session between himself and a *Cyrtophora citricola* spider that took place on October 31, 2019, at the auditorium of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid as part of the public program of the exhibition “More-than- humans.”¹ Here, a spider web was made sonic, turning it into a musical instrument through the use of various devices created by Saraceno in order to amplify its sound. This “arachno-concert” is a half-spider, half-human musical performance born of Saraceno’s ambitious effort to develop interspecies dialogue.

The spider webs are not meant to be seen, but having

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the opportunity to study them in detail allows the viewer to think about them beyond the constraints of biology, delving into the field of political ecology. Taking the vibrations perceived by spiders as a reference, spider webs show us alternative patterns for socialization and community development that can be useful for many other species. They also teach us new ways of adapting to changing environments, once again becoming scores, potential roadmaps for an environmentally uncertain future that will force humans to seek solutions beyond the way we live now. In the drawings on paper *Solitary semi-social mapping of HS 1700+6416 by a solo Nephila senegalensis—one week and a solo Cyrtophora citricola—three weeks* (2016) and *Solitary semi-social mapping of Ceginus by a duet of Nephila senegalensis—four weeks, a triplet of Cyrtophora citricola—three weeks* (2018), the spider web becomes a topological map of movement and temporalities that reflect on the complexities of these silken structures. All these research lines developed by Saraceno may become a response to change based on humans observing and learning from other species, establishing collaborative relationships from an empathic standpoint within—and toward—the environment or *Umwelt* (following Jakob von Uexküll’s theory) and creating new paths that would lead to the survival of the planet. Saraceno’s series of “Hybrid Webs” are unique architectures that are the result of encounters between different spider species that weave in the same space. These experimental constructions entangle both the architectural and the social by challenging the connection of different densities and gravities of webs; they also link, via a collaborative and communicational realm, unrelated solitary, social, and semi-social spiders. Many attempts in art, architecture, and political thought have been made to define alternative societies. In *The Model—A Model for a Qualitative Society* (1968), artist Palle Nielsen explored the possibility of a self-organized society aimed to encourage personal freedom and collaboration by understanding children’s play as a trigger for change. Other social experiments derived from Oskar Hansen’s *Open Form* theory (1959), which proposed an adaptable architectural system that could generate a structured, river-based way of life and respond to human needs in a flexible manner. These experiments have been absorbed by the natural flow of society, becoming theoretical and utopian examples of humans’ search for alternatives. In this time of climate emergency, seeking nonhuman models is perhaps the only means of finding alternatives to the way we currently organize society, that is, rethinking how we interact and creating a new social structure, free from the dominant ideology that is driving us to disaster.

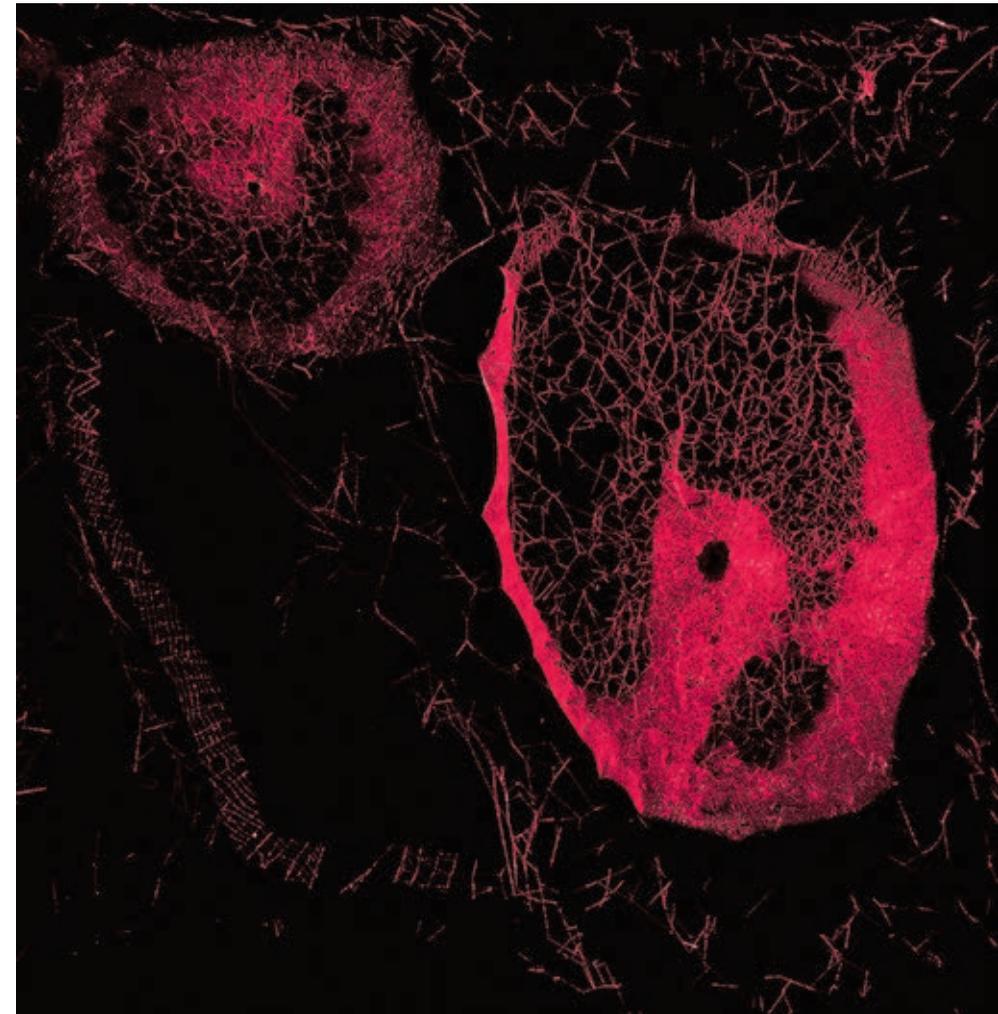
The feeling of stepping into the darkness that most of Saraceno’s installations involve, delving into the unknown and accepting that there is no turning back, is precisely the point of no return that Saraceno’s work takes us to. It does so by opening a unique field of research, guided by an artistic curiosity that focuses on an extraneous

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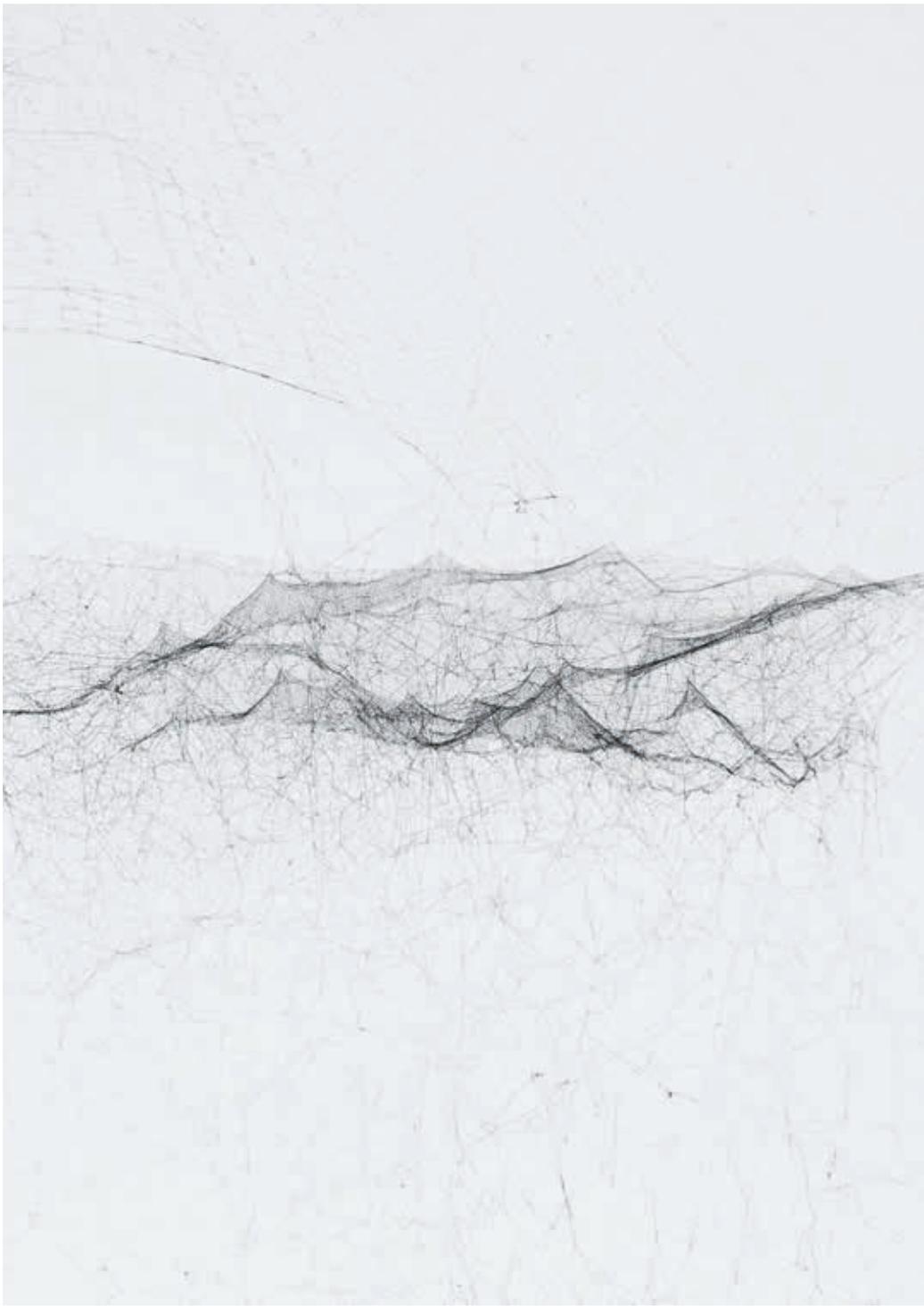
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but closely related life form, which becomes a model for our own enlightenment. Thus, unlike the study of gorillas’ behavior, where humans were always the reference point, Saraceno’s proposal requires the opposite exercise: spiders serve as a means to understand (or, at the very least, conceive) other potential social models that pave the way for a future that is both more habitable and more respectful to other species. This may well be the dawn of the Arachnocene.

1 “More-than-humans. Dominique González-Foerster and Tomás Saraceno,” Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, September 25–December 1, 2019, curated by Stefanie Hessler.



TOMÁS SARACENO, HOW TO ENTANGLE THE UNIVERSE IN A SPIDER WEB? (GRAVITATIONAL SEMI-SOCIAL SOLITARY CHOREOGRAPHY ζ CET BUILT BY: AN ENSEMBLE OF CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA—FOUR WEEKS, A DUET OF CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA JUVENILE—ONE WEEK AND A SOLO NEPHILA EDULIS—ONE WEEK), 2018



TOMÁS SARACENO, **SOLITARY SEMI-SOCIAL MAPPING OF HS 1700+6416 BY A SOLO NEPHILA SENEGALENSIS—ONE WEEK AND A SOLO CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA—THREE WEEKS**, 2016, DETAIL



TOMÁS SARACENO, **LIVING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN OF AIR (UNDERWATER SPIDER)**, 2018, STILL



TOMÁS SARACENO, **HYBRID SEMI-SOCIAL SOLITARY INSTRUMENT HD 74874 BUILT BY: A TRIPLET OF CYRTOPHORA CITRICOLA-FOUR WEEKS AND A SOLO AGELENA LABYRINTHICA-ONE WEEK**, 2019
INSTALLATION VIEW, MUSEO NACIONAL THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA, MADRID, 2019

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