

Attack of the Eight-Legged Oracle

Tomás Saraceno's sprawling exhibition *Aria* explores innovative methods of interrelation, posing radical ideas for a more collaborative future, and taking inspiration from the connections and mini architectures that can be found in the natural world. When the Argentinian artist's show had to close in spring, Florence's Palazzo Strozzi continued its inquiry, hosting video messages, letters and more from artists including Ai Weiwei, Marina Abramović and Jeff Koons on its digital platform.

Words by Emily Steer



© PHOTOGRAPHY BY STUDIO TOMÁS SARACENO. ALL IMAGES: COURTESY THE ARTIST; ANDERSEN'S, COPENHAGEN; RUTH BENZACAR, BUENOS AIRES; TANYA BONAKDAR GALLERY, NEW YORK/LOS ANGELES; PINKSUMMER CONTEMPORARY ART, GENOVA; ESTHER SCHIPPER, BERLIN



When Tomás Saraceno opened *Aria*—an exhibition at Florence’s Palazzo Strozzi calling for radical changes in the way we operate socially and environmentally—earlier this year, he probably didn’t imagine that such monumental global transformations would happen quite so quickly.

The exhibition, curated by Arturo Galansino, began in physical form in February, bringing together immersive and participatory works which explore human and non-human connections. As part of this, the artist delves into the powerful relationships that could potentially be formed between us, insects, plants and even dust particles: two installations investigate the relationship between the cosmic kind and “the dust that litters our lungs and planet”.

Saraceno puts forwards numerous future propositions in his works, which often have an architectural feel, including:

Connectome, “a set of suspended sculptures suggestive of the Weaire-Phelan geometries of soap bubbles, which borrows its name from the map of neural connections in the brain”; and *How to Entangle the Universe in a Spider Web?*, “a study into the relationship between dimensions, as communicated by a spider web”.

Of course, this complex insect’s web is a key focus of *Aria*, and is a structure that the artist has explored in depth in his practice before. He sees his work with spiders as being “collaborative”, and has long been fascinated by the web as an extension of the mind, sensitive to vibrations and subtle changes in its surroundings.

Even before lockdown started in Italy, Saraceno launched an enjoyably goofy digital element of his spider studies, the *Arachnomancy App*, through which visitors could photograph and map spider

webs in their own areas (“that might otherwise go unnoticed”), reveal spider “oracle” cards, and ultimately get a tarot-like reading. All of the spider web photographs are kept on record, “a collective endeavour of mapping against extinction”.

Once the show was required to close to the public in spring, Palazzo Strozzi launched *In Touch*, furthering Saraceno’s exhibition and inviting artists such as Ai Weiwei, Riccardo Lami and Irene Balzani to contribute video messages, texts and images to its digital platform, each focusing on ideas such as family, accessibility and the future need for human consciousness to change. It seems appropriate that Saraceno’s web continues to be woven in new and unexpected directions, and both show and site now exist in tandem, offering future solutions for a very different world, just a few months from initial realization.



Previous pages, left
Aerographies, 2020

Previous pages, right
From *Aria* at
Fondazione Palazzo
Strozzi, Firenze, Italy,
curated by Arturo
Galasino

This page, from top
From *Aria* at
Fondazione Palazzo
Strozzi, Firenze, Italy,
curated by Arturo
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Opposite page
Aria, 2020
Collage
For *Aria* at
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13 Attack of the Eight-Legged Oracle