

A brush with... Tomás Saraceno

We ask the artist about his favourite book, film and cultural experience as well his thoughts on the most underrated—and overrated—cultural figures

Interview by **BEN LUKE**

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Tomás Saraceno

Which cultural experience changed the way you see the world?

The film *The Woman of the Dunes* (1964), directed by Hiroshi Teshigahara. Every time I watch it, I see something different. It is about Jumpei, an entomologist, who is in a village collecting specimens of sand insects. One day he misses his bus and the villagers ask him to stay with them. Little does he know they have a hidden agenda.

Which book most challenged your thinking?

Most recently *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2019) by Kathryn Yusoff—she rewrites the “origin stories” of the Anthropocene and looks at the extractive economies of life and the earth under colonialism and slavery. Her work has influenced how I look at the effects of the extractive economy of lithium mining on the indigenous communities of Salinas Grandes [in Argentina], for example.

A Terrible Thing to Waste: Environmental Racism and Its Assault on the American Mind by Harriet Washington has opened my mind to how, mostly poor, people of colour suffer disproportionately from environmental crises—I am very proud she wrote an essay in the catalogue for my forthcoming show at The Shed in New York [opens in May].

I am also constantly thinking about the ideas of Bruno Latour and his book *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*—he explores the political and philosophical challenges we face in a time defined by an environmental and socio-economic crisis. Also Timothy Morton’s book *Human Kind: Solidarity with Non-Human People*—he argues for solidarity with non-human beings in an entangled, interconnected world.

What are you watching, listening to or following that you would recommend?

Almodóvar’s latest film, *Pain and Glory*.

Who is the most overrated cultural figure, and who is the most underrated?

Humans are the most overrated. Spiders and their webs are the most underrated.

What is art for? The Unknown.

• *Tomás Saraceno’s Fly with Aerocene Pacha launched on 28 January as part of the worldwide Connect, BTS exhibition. Saraceno’s film of the project will be shown at Centro Culturale Kirchner, Buenos Aires, 31 January-14 March. For more information, visit aerocene.org and connect-bts.com*

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