June 13 – September 7, 2014

COSMIC JIVE: TOMÁS SARACENO
THE SPIDER SESSIONS
curated by Ilaria Bonacossa and Luca Cerizza

Opening: June 13th, 17.30–19.30
Press Preview: June 13th, 11.30–13.30

Press Office Villa Croce
Luisa Mazier Tel. +39 3476618080
luisa.mazier@gmail.com  www.villacroce.org
Press Office – Genova Palazzo Ducale Fondazione per la Cultura
Tel. 010.5574012–4047–4826 – ufficiostampa@palazzoducale.genova.it

Tomás Saraceno’s work structures a utopic-scientific research for alternative models of social co-existence. His work seems to feed off itself of a pressing urge to explore specific structural patterns present in physical and biological environments, from cosmic macrostructures to biological microsystems. For his exhibition at Villa Croce, Tomás Saraceno continues to explore the complex world of spider webs, which he has extensively investigated for some years. Featured as the central theme of major environmental installations (Galaxy Forming along Filaments, like Droplets along the Strands of a Spider’s Web at the Venice Biennial in 2009 or 14 Billions (Working Title) at the Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm in 2010), the spider web and its architectural, engineering, social, cosmological and symbolic values are the focus of further investigation for the artist’s project in Genova. **Cosmic Jive: Tomás Saraceno. The Spider Sessions** is a project specifically designed for Villa Croce by Tomás Saraceno and the Saraceno Studio in collaboration with biologists, musicians, architects, and electronic engineers to develop the artist’s research on spider webs from the perspective of sound and vibration.

The exhibition weaves together the different spaces of the 19th century villa. The first floor features an interactive sound installation: the visitors’ movement activates a series of acoustic responses thanks to passive motion sensors installed in the rooms. Depending on their location in the museum, visitors will hear different compositions. The left speakers emit the sounds of the semi-social spiders playing on pre-existing solitary webs. The right speakers play the solitary spiders on the web that was built by social spiders. Depending on where they are in the room, the public will hear more either the right or the left speaker. Will they become active political listeners? The sounds consist of the vibrations emitted by different species of spiders as they weave their cosmic webs, mate, or capture their prey and were recorded using laser Doppler vibrometers and other transducers. They are combined with extraterrestrial sounds/vibrations captured by several space agencies.

*Enrico Fermi is famous for exclaiming ‘Where is everybody?’ inquiring on the whereabouts of everyone in the universe. Perhaps we have never managed to have any contact with anyone because we never succeeded in playing in unison a single musical instrument. Maybe these hybrid web instruments are the first huge collective instruments! Spiders play together at the same time a complex symphony, and when they play one string it reverberates in all the other strings... When we are able to tune as a species, then the earth will reverberate... and even the space probe Voyager will pick up our acoustic oscillation from outside the heliosphere! ... Big Bang!*
The public will therefore create an ever-changing and unstable soundscape where the unpredictable relationship between movement and sound will create an invisible acoustic spider web interwoven through the museum’s rooms. As spiders interpret reality through air pressure and vibration, rather than through sight or images, in the same way visitors will move through a semi-dark space learning to communicate and orient themselves through the movement of their bodies and their sense of hearing. In this undefined environment, visitors will establish temporary relationships with other visitors and they will play with their bodies this invisible spider web. Within this sensitive and vibrant context, visitors will discover, sense and experience, new forms of collaboration. As in other installations by Tomás Saraceno, a new temporary community will take shape, raising a series of considerations on the social models of our present and future.

The first floor also features two hybrid web-instruments woven by three different species, Cyrtophora citricola, Nephila keniensis, and Cyrtophora moluccensis. These layered constructions are built collaboratively by the spiders although each species has a different degree of sociability: solitary (living alone on a web), social, and semi-social (living together in big communities on a single web). Each hybrid web is a three-dimensional arachnid collaboration where the webs interlink, morph, and shift orientation resulting in webs that do not exist in nature. For Tomáš Saraceno, the hybrid webs are instruments for communication, cooperation, and seduction.

The first artwork “Work in Progress: Hybrid—web Instrument Centaurus A, constructed by the solitary Nephila keniensis for three weeks, with Live performance by the quintet of semi social Cyrtophora citricola” is synonymous with the title. It is left open, suspended in mid-air, and illuminated by spotlights to reveal the fragility and complexity of the instrument and its players, but also a breathable cosmic dust. Since the Cyrtophoras will continue its weaving performance for the duration of the show, this web—instrument will continually change and evolve.

The second hybrid web—instrument, “Hybrid semi—social musical instrument NGC 2976” is exhibited in a glass vitrine. The web was first built by a Cyrtophora citricola for three weeks and afterwards reconstructed by a group of semi social Cyrtophora moluccensis that wove it for four weeks. The second species of spiders was only added after the entire carbon frame was turned 180 degrees on its Z axis towards the ISS, thereby reorienting the force of gravity on the web instrument and players. [LSRA, 3D Spider Web in Microgravity. Application to European Science Foundation to study the building and structure of 3D spider webs in microgravity. G. Clemente, T. Saraceno, P. Jäger, S. Zschokke, R. D. Düppe]. A team of researchers from PAVIS Department at the Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, in collaboration with Saraceno Studio, has elaborated the means for the construction of a three dimensional image of a real spider web. Illuminating the web in its height and depth with an emitter of sheets of laser light, they acquired a series of images in sequence using a digital camera. The photographs have then been elaborated and colour coded in a three-dimensional reconstruction of the web.

On the grand staircase of the museum, connecting the cosmic webs to earth and articulating the different levels of thought, Jol Thomson has created a new site specific installation inspired by extraterrestrial photography and current research into the concept of the Anthropocene. Curated by CHAN this project captures the creation of knowledge and images via various forms of ‘magic’, realigning a certain type of gaze from the depths of space, back towards Earth and human life.

The ground floor, next to the library, will feature the Cosmic Jive Reader in an area dedicated to the on-going research and open wikiBook, with specialised texts made available to visitors who are welcome to read them, to photocopy them and create their own Cosmic Jive Reader, depending on their personal interest. This open-source anthology, includes various texts collected and commissioned by Studio Saraceno – with Adrian Krell and Jol Thomson – long—time collaborators in the woven webs. The Reader, free to all museum visitors, sheds light on various aspects of Arachnology, music and other cosmic vibrations through the contributions of international experts like Dr. Frédérique Aït-Touati, Ivana Franke, Mouna Mekoura, Dr. Thomas Gorochowski, Dr. Peter Jäger, Leila Kinney and Dr. Markus Beuhler, PreDoc. Sandeep Patil, John Macdonald, Dr. Andrew C. Mason, Prof. (em.) Dr. Friedrich G. Barth, PhD. Prof. (em.) Yael Lubin, Prof. Dr. Hannelore Hoch and Dr. Roland Mühlethaler, David Toop, PD. Dr. Samuel Zschokke.

Finally, in collaboration PAVIS Institute of IIT (Italian Institute of Technology) in Genova, Villa Croce is also organizing a conference curated by Joseph Grima and Tomáš Saraceno for the closing of Cosmic Jive, where other ‘knowledge—producers’ from various fields will share and reflect on their own ‘Cosmic Backgrounds’.

The Cosmic Jive Book is produced thanks to the support of Hofima, Financial Holding Malactalza one of the museums’ main sponsors.

Cosmic Jive: Tomás Saraceno The Spider Sessions is created in collaboration with Prof. Dr. Hannelore Hoch and Dr. Roland Mühlethaler, Museum für Naturkunde AG Biosystematik, Hemiptera Research Group, Leibniz—Institut für Evolutions— und Biodiversitätsforschung an der Humboldt—Universität zu Berlin, with the support of Prof. Dr. Roberto Cingolani, Prof. Dr. Vittorio Murino, Dr. Alessio Del Bue, Dr. Carlos Beltran Gonzalez, Dr. Paolo Bianchini, Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia.
Tomás Saraceno (b. 1973) lives in the planet earth. He collaborates regularly with international researchers, scientists, musicians, architects and artists in an open-source space of collaborative research. Articulating research between art and science, through alternative visions that radically rethink ideas of geographical boundaries, social, and living habits, the Saraceno Studio researches alternative models of life on the planets, earth, and beyond.

After receiving a degree in architecture in Buenos Aires, Tomás Saraceno studies with Thomas Bayrle and Peter Cook (founder of Archigram) at Städelschule Frankfurt, where he starts developing the germinal ideas for his artistic practice. In the last decade, Tomás Saraceno established himself as one of the most relevant artists of his generation as the numerous exhibitions in international museums and his multiple participations to Biennials and shows testify. Saraceno presented his work at the Biennale Internazionale di Arti Visive di Venezia in 2001, 2003 and 2009, at the Biennale de São Paulo in 2006. Among his numerous international exhibitions, his work has been shown at Barbican Art Center, London (2006), Bonniers Konsthall Stockholm (2010), Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin (2011), Metropolitan Museum of Art New York (2012), HangarBicocca Milano (2012) and K21 Düsseldorf (2013). Parallel to his artistic research, Saraceno has collaborated with important scientific institutions: in 2009, he was artist in residence at International Space Studies Program NASA, in 2012 he developed a project during his residency at MIT Center for Art, Science Technology (CAST) Boston. In 2009, Saraceno was awarded the Calder Prize for the Arts.

Tomás Saraceno is represented by Andersen’s Contemporary, Copenhagen; Tanya Bonakdar, New York; Pinksummer, Genova; Esther Schipper, Berlin.

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On the occasion of his exhibition in Genova, Tomás Saraceno would like to remember with gratitude President Riccardo Garrone in his hometown.
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