

With the Help of Scientists, Artist Tomás Saraceno Makes Music Out of Spider Webs

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Despondent folk music has been written about the sound of silence, but the sound of spiders turns out to be much, much heavier. Scientists at [MIT](#) have collaborated with Berlin-based sound artist [Tomás Saraceno](#) to create a virtual experience that literally instrumentalizes spider webs. This project aligns with more than two decades on the artist's part to deepen our understanding of environmental justice and interspecies cohabitation. Saraceno, Roland Muehlethaler, and Ally Bisshop at Studio Saraceno all participate in the research and development carried out through projects, including "[Arachnophilia](#)."

"The Arachnophilia Research Laboratory's undertakings open up potential ways of reconnecting and recalibrating our attention and senses to our nonhuman kin, often unnoticed," reads a statement on the artist's studio website. "Through expanding its artistic networks, the Arachnophilia seeks to invent innovative, playful and engaging platforms for bringing research discourse into the public sphere."

Over at MIT, a team including Isabelle Su, Ian Hattwick, Christine Southworth, Eran Egozy, and Evan Ziporyn was led by [Markus J. Buehler](#), whose research interests include materials, molecular dynamics, and protein-based materials. Spiders naturally fall at the intersection of all these interests, creating silks that are among the toughest materials known — stronger and less brittle, pound for pound, than steel. Professor Buehler is interested in every mechanism that might help humans to identify more closely with our arachnid fellows. The project adapts 2-D laser scans of a spider web into an interactive 3-

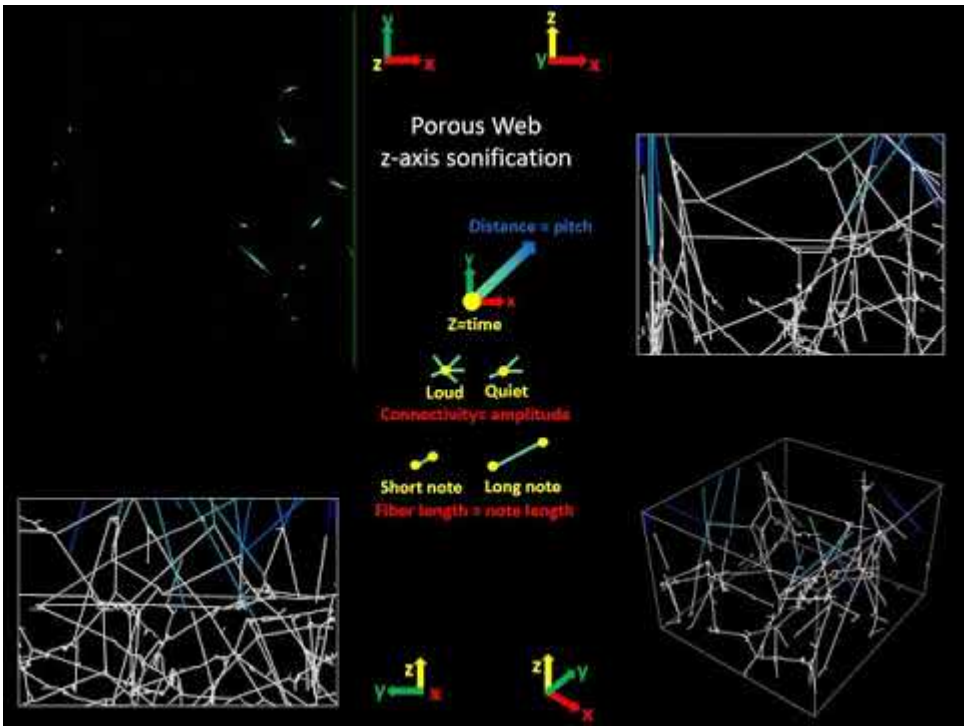
D virtual reality and then assigns different frequencies of sound to the web strands. Navigating the virtual web generates a spooky cacophony that sounds like if Danny Elfman wrote the next Tim Burton movie soundtrack from the inside of a K-hole. In Siberia.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/DWCUdwQEjx0>

“We like to explore the spider web in the way the spider would experience it,” said Beuhler in [a video](#) on CNN.com about the project.

While these spider sounds might not be the next Top 40 hit, they are definitely both an ambient treat and a fascinating audio-visualization into the way that vibrations actively inform the life of creatures besides humans. Maybe next, MIT can tackle what exactly is the deal with ravers.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/s4QtAQhdU2I>

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Sarah Rose Sharp is a Detroit-based writer, activist, and multimedia artist. She has shown work in New York, Seattle, Columbus and Toledo, OH, and Detroit — including at the Detroit Institute of Arts.... [More by Sarah Rose Sharp](#)