

IN SEARCH OF SPIDER CONSCIOUSNESS



SCAN TO HEAR MORE FROM
DARIA ABOUT HER RESEARCH

We can easily forget that we are only a tiny part of a vast sentient world full of other conscious beings with lives of their own to lead.

Even those of us far away from centres of political power have immense influence over huge numbers of animal lives. **Daria Zakharova** invites us to consider the weight of our influence, especially on those beings far removed from our everyday considerations: the invertebrates.



INSTALLATION

Daria and an interdisciplinary team created an art installation "In search of spider consciousness" for Nowhere Festival in 2023, which invited people to enter the head of a giant Portia jumping spider to discover an artistic meditation on the mind of an arthropod. Visitors would enter the giant spider sculpture and be immersed in the spider's point of view on the world, as represented obliquely through the medium of light, sculpture and original music, inspired by scientific evidence.



VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIENCE

A 3D capture recreates virtually the experience of the original sculpture, which was 3.5 by 12m². As in the original, the installation invites the viewer into an immersive walk inside of the spider's head and into the spider's mind. The artistic interpretation of the imagined subjective states of the arachnid mind is presented through an original music piece paired in a beautiful choreography with light patterns in the two main eyes of the spider. This immersive encounter invites reflection on the complexity of consciousness that thrives in even the smallest of beings, urging us to reconsider the boundaries of our moral and ethical responsibilities towards them.



PORTIA'S EYES

Portia (a genus of jumping spider) has excellent vision, unique among spiders. With its two large primary eyes it can see detail almost as well as a human eye. Its field of vision however is extremely narrow, akin to looking through a looking glass. Therefore, Portia has to move the tubes of its primary eyes around in complex patterns to see anything, be it prey or just to "complete" a picture of its surroundings. We believe that any type of cognition and potential sentience present in Portia would be intricately connected to the mode of functioning of its perceptual system.

ARTISTIC TEAM

Daria Zakharova Creative lead
Ivan Isakov VR, engineering
Paulo Ricca Lights, creative coding
Andrey Novikov Original music
Stephen Allwright Build
Lucy Onischenko Design, logistics
Michael Haber Build, logistics
Maribeth Rauh Design, logistics

COLLABORATORS

Luke Hollis 3D capture
Sean Toole Photography

SUPPORTERS

Professor Jonathan Birch and the ASENT team
Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method at LSE

