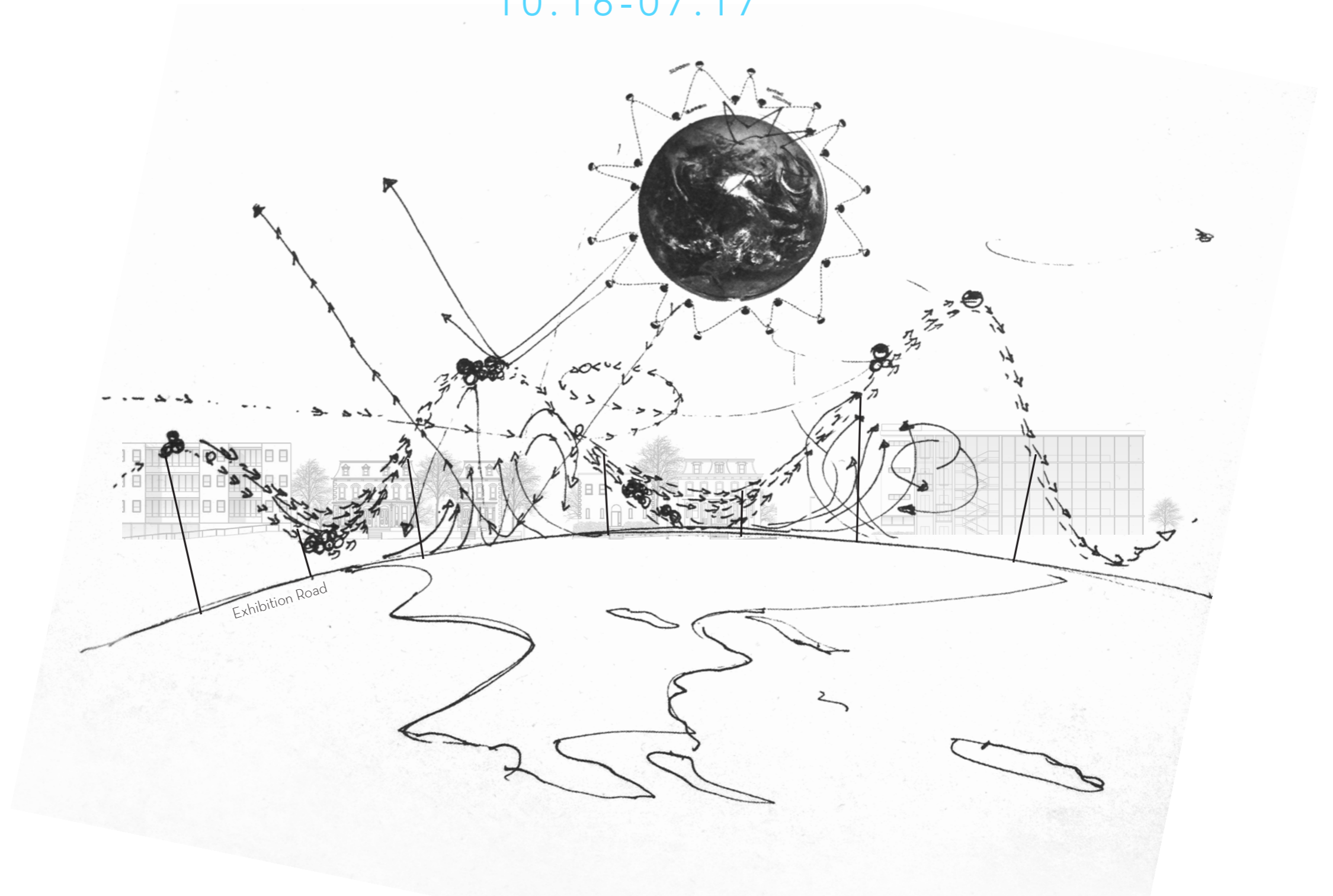


# AEROCENE

TOMÁS SARACENO ON EXHIBITION ROAD

10.16-07.17



*'Inflated only by air, lifted only by the sun, carried only by the wind, towards clean and sustainable futures'*

TOMÁS SARACENO

The Exhibition Road Commission is an experimental artistic project co-produced by members of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group: a partnership of the leading cultural and educational organisations in London, among them Serpentine Galleries, Imperial College London, The Natural History Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum. It aims to develop new modes of collaboration across disciplines and offer a creative platform for artists; a chance to engage audiences in London with new ideas and works; as well as creating positive and enriching experience for students, researchers and young people from our local community.

The first commission in 2016 was awarded to Tomás Saraceno. Saraceno's visionary project, 'Aerocene', was selected by an international jury chaired by Hans Ulrich Obrist. Studio Saraceno was in residence at the Goethe Institut-London from October to December 2016, and the commission culminated in a public event in Exhibition Road the summer of 2017.

Aerocene in Exhibition Road opened up new ways of approaching and combining different disciplines, sharing across artistic and scientific practices, debating the meaning of geographical exploration today and the developing the intellectual frame for independence from fossil fuels. It offered inspiration to school children and PhD students alike and brought this debate on a fossil-free travel to a wider audience.

This commission has shown how a common language can be built across disciplines, without hierarchies. That these new bridges can advance knowledge further and in new directions. And that art has the power to initiate that process like nothing else.



## THE RESIDENCY

Through the residency, Studio Saraceno activated a collaborative research platform between Exhibition Road partners and the Aerocene Foundation with a programme of public and research events and multi-disciplinary exploration. Developers, designers, artists, data scientists, creative technologists, atmospheric scientists, musicians, engineers, social scientists and geographers gathered to develop the conceptual and practical framework of Aerocene's methods and support research on several key areas:

*Diversity of life in the air*

*The collection of cosmic material*

*Sensory and sonic explorations of the atmosphere*





# REACH

The Commission's programme included artist talks at the Serpentine Gallery and Natural History Museum, a presentation at Imperial Fringe Festival, a day-long conference at the Royal College of Art (RCA) with over a dozen panellist coming from UK and US universities and organisations, two 'hackathons' hosted by Imperial College Advanced Hackspace with students and researchers from Imperial College London, RCA and Cambridge University, a community programme in collaboration with EPIC CIC during the V&A Reveal Festival and a 'floating' performance of Aerocene seen by thousands of people on a pedestrianised Exhibition Road on 1st July 2017

- 6 cultural and educational organisations actively involved in delivering programme events (EPIC CIC, Imperial College Advanced Hackspace, Natural History Museum, Royal College of Art, The Serpentine Galleries, Victoria & Albert Museum)
- 6 public events and 4 dedicated events for students and young people
- Over 30 staff (from Exhibition Road institutions and partners) supporting the delivery of the programme
- Over 250 active participants to our workshops and hackathons, primarily students and young people
- Over 24,000 people reached in person and online throughout the programme



# PROGRAMME



**9 October 2016**

Tomás Saraceno in conversation with Jan Beccaloni (Curator, Arachnida and Myriapoda, Invertebrates Division, Life Sciences Department, National History Museum) as part of the annual Serpentine Galleries Marathon programme in October 2016, presented a wide ranging discussion covering social and ballooning spiders, migratory patterns and cosmic webs.



**28 October 2016**

Saraceno in conversation with Paul Eggleton (Merit researcher, Entomology, Natural History Museum) discussing the potential for using Aerocene Explorer to support air sampling in entomological research. The artist also launched an Open Call to our student community in partnership with the Dyson School of Engineering to help advance Aerocene technology.



## 29-30 October 2016

Hosted by Imperial College Advanced Hackspace, a multidisciplinary group of students and researchers came together to develop ideas and solutions to enhance the Aerocene flight predictor (a new software originally developed by Saraceno and the MIT Media Lab), and to enhance the capabilities of Aerocene Explorer as a vehicle for scientific research through new sensors and hardware applications.



## 26 November 2016

The Campus event at the Royal College of Art invited students, experts and the general public to join a day of a cross-disciplinary discussions and collaboration around the Aerocene project and defined the editorial strategy for a new publication. The day also included a live launch of the Aerocene explorer sculpture on the grounds of Imperial College.





**9 December 2016**

Imperial Fringe is a series of public events exploring the unexpected side of science. The Aerocene Explorer was part of 'All around the world', the December Imperial Fringe which looked at discovery around the globe and introduced Imperial's researchers who work in varied and exotic locations. Together with members of Imperial's centre for transport study, we explored the potential for Aerocene to support pollution monitoring.



**June-July 2017**

A new programme of activities was developed in collaboration with the Victoria & Albert Museum as part of a week long celebration of the opening of the V&A Exhibition Road Quarter. In the lead up to the celebrations, a series of 4 workshops with EPIC CIC brought together young people from Kensington & Chelsea to build a new floating sculpture. Aerocene sculptures floated high above the road on 1st July as part of the V&A's Reveal Festival. Visitors to Exhibition Road also joined the Museo Aero Solar community by helping to create a new floating sculpture using recycled plastic bags.



## LEGACY

Aerocene and Studio Saraceno's collaborative approach sparked real interest amongst researchers and students across our partner organisation from a range of subject disciplines. The potential to bring research to a wider audience through collaboration with an artist, and for research to inform the artists practice, was demonstrated during the Residency programme and the outcome of the commission was not limited to the programme events. The project continues to live through several spin offs including:

- The **Aerocene on Exhibition Road publication**, including contributions from leading scientists and researchers and available online on [www.aerocene.org](http://www.aerocene.org)
- One **Aerocene Explorer backpack** now available to all Exhibition Road institutions, including students and researchers, for further experiments and testing
- New proposals from Natural History Museum researchers for **air biology sampling experiments** using the Aerocene Explorer which will be used for public engagement
- **A student internship at Studio Saraceno** currently undertaken by RCA student and hackathon participant Grace Pappas
- The **community programme with EPIC CIC** continued with two more Aerocene workshops in Youth Centres across Kensington & Chelsea in August 2017 and more workshops are currently being planned





## *Acknowledgments*

The Exhibition Road Commission is an initiative of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group, the 16 cultural and educational institutions based in South Kensington, London.

Our first thanks go to our funders, who have made the project possible through their generosity and support.

A heartfelt thank you also goes to Carlo Rizzo, who led this project from the start and brought such energy and passion to this collaborative endeavour, Anne Rawcliffe-King, the former director of the Royal British Society of Sculptors, for her advice and mentoring throughout the whole project. Jochen Volz, Melissa Hamnett and Yasmine Ostendorf for offering their invaluable experience and help in launching the initiative. The members of our dedicated steering group, who have given so much of their precious time and kept the ship steady throughout the journey.

The artist competition and selection would have been ten times harder without the invaluable help of Hans Ulrich Obrist and the selection panel he chaired. Also our thanks to Angela Kaya and the team at the Goethe-Institut London for hosting Studio Saraceno in residence from October 2016 to December 2016 and to all our partners who so generously hosted the programme's events.

Our final and most heartfelt thanks go to our patrons who are so much more than patrons, Francesca von Habsburg, Maja Hoffman and Nicoletta Fiorucci, for reminding us constantly of the immense power of art and for leading by example.

## *Funders and supporters*

Seed Funders:

**Exhibition Road Cultural Group**  
**Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea**  
**Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851**  
**Arts Council England**  
**South Kensington Estates**

Founding Patrons:

**Nicoletta Fiorucci**  
**Francesca Von Habsburg and TBA21**  
**Maja Hoffman**

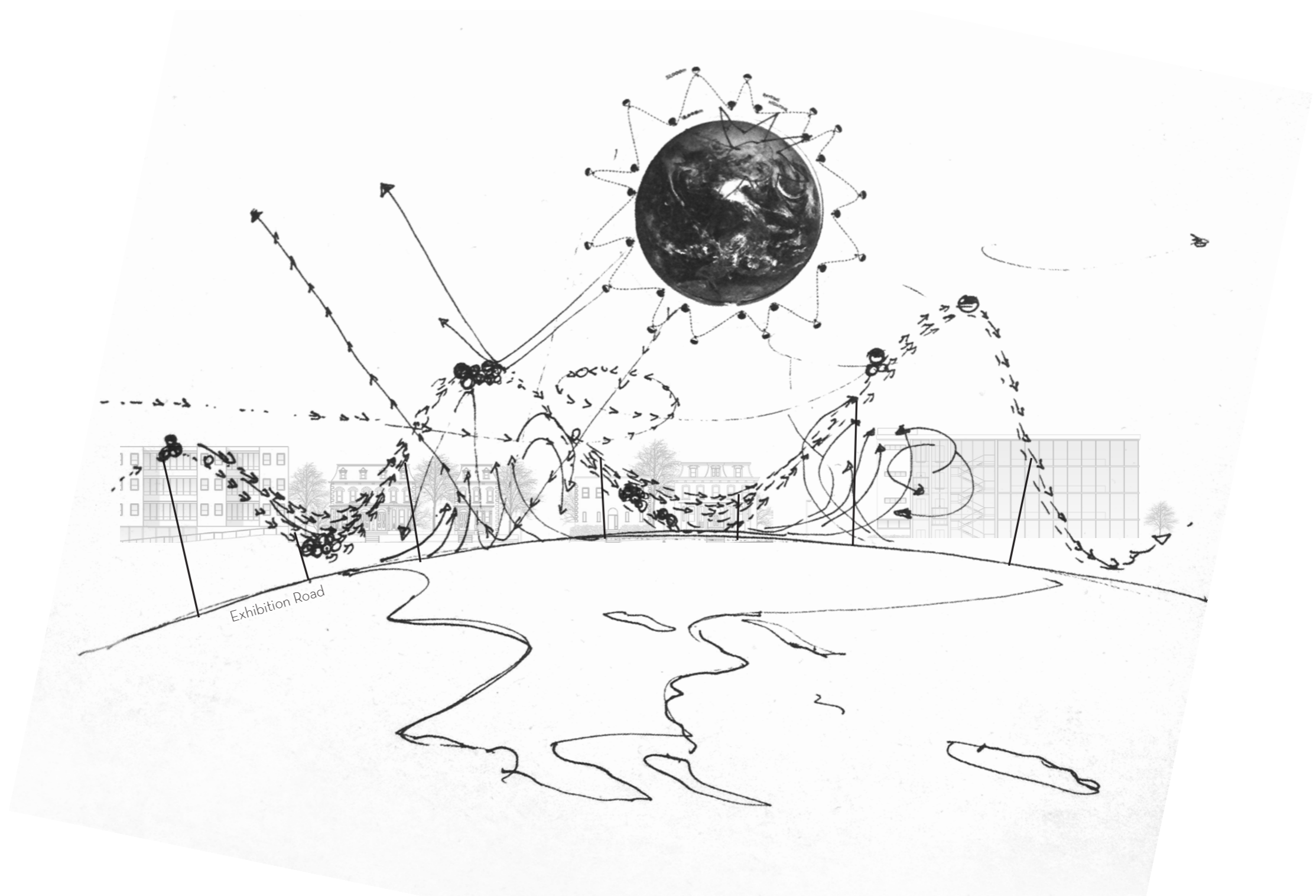
Event partners:

**Embassy of Argentina**  
**EPIC CIC**  
**Imperial College Advanced Hackspace**  
**Natural History Museum**  
**Royal College of Art**  
**The Serpentine Galleries**  
**Victoria & Albert Museum**

Engineering partner:

**WSP**





Exhibition Road