



# Wider than the Sky

a film by  
**Valerio Jalongo**

A.I. is many things, all larger than life: an amazing opportunity, a huge risk, even a big lie. But if we find the courage to go beyond the algorithms and the robots, beyond the corporations that are growing them and the socio-political dystopias that loom before us, we come face to face not just with an *artificial* technology, but with a very *human* mystery.

*“Wider than the Sky”* delves into the territory of this mystery using the weapons of science, poetry and art. It is an investigation that spans the entire world, in search of an answer that can save us from a destructive path and shed light on what makes us human.

***“Wider than the Sky” 2025 documentary film - 83 min.***

In collaboration with the scientific communities of the *Human Brain Project*, *Robotics and Perception Group UZH* and *Robotic Systems Lab ETH* in Zürich, *Brain and Creativity Institute USC* in Los Angeles, *Engineered Arts* in Falmouth UK and with the dance company *Sasha Waltz & Guests*, “Wider than the Sky” features world-renowned scientists Antonio Damasio, Andrea Moro, Rob Reich, Katrin Amunts, Rainer Goebel, Hany Farid and artists Sasha Waltz, Refik Anadol, Memo Akten, David Young, Sofia Crespo, Sougwen Chung, with the participation of Anymal and Ameca robots. Shot in Berlin, New York, Zürich, Rome, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Cornwall, Jülich, Tokyo, Anagni...

## SYNOPSIS

What does Sasha Waltz's contemporary dance company have in common with robots controlled by A.I. at *ETH* in Zürich? Apparently, nothing.

Looking more closely though, we discover how scientists “train” their algorithms with thousands of virtual robots who learn and improve by trial and error, like the dancers. Or just like scientists at the *Human Brain Project*, trying to create the first complete map of the human brain with the help of a powerful A.I. which is inspired... by the human brain itself.

The film unveils surprising facets of artificial intelligence: “*black-box*” that are obscure even to the corporations that are building the A.I., artists creating in collaboration with generative A.I., world champions racing against A.I.-driven drones, human-like robots that claim to have feelings: how close are we to a time when a non-human brain will be *wider than the sky*?

Fighting these disturbing scenarios, artists and scientists share their dream of growing a truly shared A.I., to build a better future for humanity.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

We have maps of the Earth detailed to the centimetre. Maps of the universe a billionth of a second after the Big Bang. We have precise maps of everything... except our own brains.

Now, for the first time, we are getting closer to creating a 3D map of what is said to be the most complex object in the universe: the human brain. For years, a large international community of neuroscientists, the Human Brain Project (HBP) has been cooperating on this gigantic task.

Charting unknown territories though, can be risky: maps can also be used for starting wars of conquest, establishing possession and exploitations. The development of A.I. owes a lot to what we are discovering about the human brain. But what if AI perfected tools of political and social control, offering a privileged few a sort of divine vision of everything? What if it concentrated wealth so that one man could be richer than a billion people? What if it made war even more lethal?

Artificial Intelligence is already being used to build up a knowledge and power divide which has no precedent in history. Its indiscriminate use could create a dehumanized world of mice and men, where humans who oppose the prevailing power are forced to live underground, deprived of almost everything to avoid being detected. This is not some distant sci-fi prophecy, it's the recent past: in Gaza, A.I. systems were used for cross-referencing billions of data to locate Hamas fighters and estimating “allowed” civilians' casualties, in order to kill them without the need for human evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

H.G. Wells wrote that our civilization is engaged in a race between knowledge and catastrophe. A *black box society*, where obscure algorithms and technologies govern our lives, could tip the balance towards disaster. “*Wider than the Sky*” made me aware of the real nature of A.I.: presenting it just as a technological miracle is part of the lie that justifies its privatisation. The truth is instead where no one is looking, in a completely opposite dimension. A.I. belongs to all of humanity because of its deep spiritual origin. It would be nothing, without all the knowledge, the beauty and the art humans created in our history. We should stop using the adjective “*artificial*” and call it perhaps “*collective intelligence*” instead.

We already have a great model for this: scientists and artists collaborate in international teams by exchanging experiences and knowledge openly, without any other affiliation than that of the human race, without any other purpose than the good of humanity.

As this collective mind blossoms, Emily Dickinson's poem “*Wider Than the Sky*” reveals to us the unfathomable dimension of what we are creating. We see A.I.'s hallucinate, dream, write poetry... surprising us on increasingly human territories. Just like in a mirror.

## BIO

Graduate in Philosophy, Valerio Jalongo attends the “Gaumont” school of Cinema and the University of Southern California. Winner of the *De Sica Prize* for his Los Angeles docu-drama “*DREAMCITY*”, he shoots in Ireland his first feature film “*SPAGHETTI SLOW*”, starring Brendan Gleeson and Ivano Marescotti, *Best Film* at the *International Festival Scrittura e Immagine* and screened in competition at the *Montreal, Moscow, Dublin Film Festivals*.

From 2001, he leads a writing group in Rebibbia Prison and in 2005 helms “*ON MY SKIN*”, starring Ivan Franek and Donatella Finocchiaro. In competition at TIFF and at the *Bangkok International Film Festival*, the film tours many festivals winning numerous awards.

From 2007, Jalongo works on “*WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME*”, an inquiry on the crisis of Italian Cinema and the cultural mutation which followed the rise of private televisions, selected for the *Venice Film Festival* in 2009. The following year he writes and directs “*THE SCHOOL IS OVER*”, starring Valeria Golino and Vincenzo Amato, in competition at the *Rome Film Festival* and *Montreal International Film Festival* in 2010.

“*THE SENSE OF BEAUTY*”, a documentary about Art and Science made at CERN in Geneva, in competition at *Visions du Réel* and *Visioni dal Mondo 2017*, was selected as one of the best European documentaries at *Prix Europa* in Berlin and in many international festivals. It ran for 8 months in Swiss and Italian theaters, accompanied by presentations of over 150 scientists.

Valerio Jalongo worked on a project spanning 15 years, following some teenage students and their teacher from 2004, and again for two more years from 2018, filming those who were then in their thirties, looking for their own path in life. In competition at *Visions du Réel 2020*, *Cinemed* in Montpellier, *Guangzhou Documentary Film Festival*, *Best Film nomination* at the *56th Solothurner Filmtage*, “*A CLASS STORY*” was awarded *Best Film* at *Visioni dal Mondo*, *Best Film* and *Best Screenplay* at *Inventa un Film*, and *Nastro d’Argento nomination* as best documentary.

He writes and directs “*WIDER THAN THE SKY*” a poetic investigation on A.I., in competition at *Visions du Réel* and *Visioni dal Mondo 2025*.

Valerio Jalongo lives between Ticino, in the south of Switzerland, and Rome.

## MAIN FILMOGRAPHY:

**WIDER THAN THE SKY** (documentary 2025, 83 min.)

**A CLASS STORY** (documentary 2021, 76 min.)

**THE SENSE OF BEAUTY** (documentary 2017, 75 min)

**THE SCHOOL IS OVER** (feature film 2010, 101 min) starring Valeria Golino and Vincenzo Amato

**WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME** (documentary 2009, 78 min)

**ON MY SKIN** (feature film 2003, 101 min) starring Donatella Finocchiaro and Ivan Franek

**SPAGHETTI SLOW** (feature film 1997, 103 min) starring Brendan Gleeson and Ivano Marescotti

## FEATURING:

### **Sasha Waltz**

Choreographer, dancer and director, she founded the dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests in 1993. She has created internationally renowned and influential dance pieces. In her present work, Sasha Waltz is focusing on the intensification of collaborative processes, such as the synchronic development of choreography and music. In March 2022, SYM-PHONIE MMXX, a piece for dance, light and orchestra by Sasha Waltz and Georg Friedrich Haas received its world premiere at Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin: the long rehearsal phase of this piece was filmed and has become an essential part of "Wider than the Sky".

### **Antonio Damasio**

Probably the neuroscientist who has helped shed more light on the centrality of emotions and the mechanisms of consciousness. Damasio's work on the role of emotions and feelings in decision-making has made a major impact in neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy. He has described his discoveries in several books which are translated all over the world and have won numerous awards. Together with his wife Hanna Damasio, he co-directs the *Brain and Creativity Institute* at the *University of Southern California* Los Angeles.

### **Refik Anadol**

is an internationally renowned media artist and pioneer in the aesthetics of data and machine intelligence. Anadol's body of work addresses the challenges that ubiquitous computing has imposed on humanity, and what it means to be a human in the age of AI. Taking the neural network of a computerized mind as a collaborator, Anadol offers us radical visualizations of our digitized memories and expands the possibilities of interdisciplinary arts. Anadol's work has been exhibited at venues including MoMA, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Art Basel, National Gallery of Victoria, Venice Architecture Biennale, etc.

### **Katrin Amunts**

is the Scientific Research Director of the Human Brain Project, a European Flagship Project. Amunts' work focuses on developing a multi-level atlas of the human brain, using high-performance computing to generate ultra-high resolution human brain models. This atlas aims to improve our understanding of the brain's organizational principles and advance our abilities to combat diseases.

### **Adam Russell**

in the film, Adam Russell engages in a philosophical dialogue with the robot "Ameca". Russell is known for his significant contributions to the field of robotics as an engineer, entrepreneur, consultant and educator spanning interactive art, healthcare and creative applications of Artificial Intelligence.

### **Will Jackson**

is the founder and CEO of Engineered Arts, a humanoid robotics company based in the UK. Engineered Arts launched a humanoid platform for AI and human interaction, the robot "Ameca", who in the film engages in a surprising dialogue with Will Jackson and the engineer Adam Russell.

### **Rob Reich**

is Professor of Social Ethics of Science and Technology at Stanford University and Senior Advisor to the United States Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute. He is associate director at the Stanford Institute for HAI, Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence. His latest work is on governance of frontier science and technology.

### **David Young**

is an artist exploring how emerging technologies shape and limit human perception. Working with AI and quantum computing, he reveals the hidden assumptions embedded in technological innovation. Young's work has been exhibited internationally and is held in collections including Kunstmuseum Bonn, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, and the GENAP Collection in Zürich. He lives and works in New York.

***Rainer Goebel***

is the founding director of the Maastricht Brain Imaging Centre (M-BIC), using ultra-high magnetic field (7 and 9.4 Tesla) fMRI scanners. His research on the neural basis of visual perception had a profound impact on the field of neuroscience. As a leading collaborator of the Human Brain Project he has made significant contributions to building the first complete map of the human brain.

***Andrea Moro***

Andrea Moro is an Italian linguist, neuroscientist, and novelist whose scientific contributions span the fields of theoretical syntax and neurolinguistics. He is currently a full professor of general linguistics at the Institute for Advanced Study IUSS Pavia and the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, Italy.

***Hany Farid***

professor at the University of California Berkeley, Farid is also a member of the Berkeley Artificial Intelligence Lab, and primarily focuses on the analysis of digitally manipulated images, such as deepfakes. He also addresses the impacts of AI on communities, noting that predictive AI in hiring, banking, legal and health systems risks to perpetuate human biases and escape our control.

***Sougwen Chung***

Sougwen Chung is an internationally renowned artist and researcher who explores the boundaries of collaboration between humans and machines. She has developed a series of robots which generate sketches based on neural networks trained on Chung's drawing gestures and biometrics, creating art in collaboration with her.

***Hanna Damasio***

is a prominent cognitive neuroscientist, professor of neuroscience at the University of Southern California and the director of the Dornsife Neuroimaging Center. She investigates the human brain functions such as language, memory and emotion using computerized tomography and magnetic resonance imaging.

***Marvin Schäpper***

known as "Marv\_FPV," is the Swiss champion of drone racing. He was part of the Swiss national team at the World Drone Racing Championship in Korea in 2023.

***Thomas Bitmatta***

is a world champion in drone racing. He clinched the MultiGP World Cup title in both 2017 and 2019. Bitmatta is a five-time Australian Drone Nationals Champion.

***Alex Vanover***

He has won the World Championship of drone racing and many other competitions. His achievements, combined with his innovative flying style, have cemented his reputation as one of the top drone racing pilots globally.

***Jonas T. Kaplan***

In his research at the Brain and Creativity Institute (USC) Jonas T. Kaplan focuses on understanding neural mechanisms, using advanced neuroimaging techniques to study how the brain processes information and how it is affected by various cognitive and emotional states.

***Kingson Man***

During his research at the Brain and Creativity Institute (USC) Kingson Man studied the possibility of creating artificial empathy and feelings in robots, as a way to avoid harmful developments for humans.

WORKS OF ART FEATURED IN THE FILM:

DAVID YOUNG  
'DTC-1'

in collaboration with Michael Reisch  
Darktaxa project: nopublication

GREG DUNN – BRIAN EDWARDS  
'Self Reflected'

MARTIN LIEBSCHER  
'USC Brain and Creativity Institute Auditorium'

REFIK ANADOL  
'Living Paintings'  
Jeffrey Deitch Gallery Los Angeles

ANNE SPALTER  
'The Wonder of it All'

TEGA BRAIN  
'Deep Swamp'  
Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome  
(now in the Collection of Centre Pompidou, Paris)

DAVID YOUNG  
'Dandelions'

MARIO KLINGEMANN  
'Face Feedback III' 2017  
GAN animation. Single-channel.

REFIK ANADOL  
'Unsupervised'  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
© 2022 The Museum of Modern Art

MEMO AKTEN  
'Boundaries'  
in collaboration with Katie Peyton Hofstadter  
commissioned by Vanhaerents Collection

ENTANGLED OTHERS  
'Critically Extant'

SOUGWEN CHUNG  
Mutek, Tokyo 2022

ENTANGLED OTHERS  
'Hybrid Ecosystems'

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A PRODUCTION **AURA FILM** IN COPRODUCTION WITH **RSI RADIOTELEVISIONE SVIZZERA** AND **AMEUROPÀ INTERNATIONAL** WITH **RAI CINEMA**  
WITH **SASHA WALTZ, ANTONIO DAMASIO, REFIK ANADOL, KATRIN AMUNTS, ADAM RUSSELL, RAINER GOEBEL, ROB REICH, DAVID YOUNG,**  
**HANNA DAMASIO, JONAS T. KAPLAN, KINGSON MAN, HANY FARID, ANDREA MORO, MARVIN SCHÄPPER, THOMAS BITMATTÀ, ALEX**  
**VANOVER, NIKITA RUDIN, WILL JACKSON, e AMECA**  
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SOUND DESIGNER **LILIO ROSATO** ASSISTANT DIRECTOR **ATTILIO DI TURI** GRADING **ROGER SOMMER** SOUND DESIGNER **SANDRO ROSSI**  
TITLES AND GRAPHICS **ELISA MACCELLI** DIALOGUE EDITOR **OMAR ABOUZAIID** PRODUCTION DELEGATE FOR **RSI RADIOTELEVISIONE**  
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