

BIG QUESTIONS
INNOVATIVE INVESTIGATIONS
PUBLIC DISCOURSE
NEW INSIGHTS



YHouse is a new non-profit research institute based in Manhattan and designed to foster the transdisciplinary study of awareness and consciousness—from biological origins to neuroscience, societies to computers. With its unique and vigorous in-house research programs, academic visitors, public events, and competitions, YHouse aims to build a culture and community that nurtures great ideas and great thinkers.

YHouse asks: what is awareness? Why does physical processing in our brain give rise to rich conscious experiences? When did awareness—the ability to consciously feel sensory events, objects, thoughts and emotion—first appear on Earth?

The origin and nature of awareness is one of the great puzzles of the universe, right alongside the origin and nature of matter, and of life itself. It is also a challenge with some urgency. Today a host of unprecedented scientific and technological breakthroughs are altering our world, and the way we think about the primacy of our own minds. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is bringing us self-driving cars, deep learning, and champion Go players. Interactive robots are finally getting out of labs and factories. And the Internet of Things (IoT) connects sensors, gadgets, and machines everywhere, creating a vast and intelligent infrastructure. Where is this all going? What can we learn from it? What are the ethical implications of creating artificial consciousness?

At YHouse we want to make space for the world's most inspiring and creative thinkers, young and old, to come together to create a new type of research community to address all of these challenges and opportunities. YHouse is an environment that celebrates innovation, public discourse, and unfettered creative exchange between science, humanities, art, design, and technology. We want to be nimble, open-minded, nurturing, and above all different—to uniquely position ourselves and our community to make breakthrough discoveries, facilitate important dialogues, and launch unprecedented investigations into the nature and origin of awareness and consciousness.

Basing itself in New York, YHouse has a special opportunity to fill a niche in a city with vast intellectual capital, yet less recognition for its scientific and research institutions than many smaller university towns. Our inaugural program is centered on Synthetic Awareness and Humanity, with investigations ranging from the biological origins of awareness and proto-cognition, to the quantitative and qualitative role of awareness in Big Data analysis. And from the implications of AI for human society to the emergence of collective awareness in society and culture, before and after our augmentation by the internet.

In the Fall of 2016, YHouse held a wildly popular ten-part series of exploratory public events on 'Chasing Consciousness' at the Rubin Museum in NYC. Speakers ranged from philosophers to neuroscientists, physicists to roboticists, artists to astronomers. On weekday evenings at cafes and bars around the city, our 'Consciousness Club', drew a broad crowd, from scientists to tech-workers, and more. In 2017 YHouse will continue to build on these successes with events that include an evening on 'AIs and Avatars', new science dialogs, film presentations, and music matched with scientific debate.

Blending science and thought with public discourse is centrally important to us. Ultimately YHouse plans to develop a special public space—a café or salon— designed to attract the New York research and technology community, as well as the broader metropolitan population. Our ambition is to be a premier hub for activities addressing the fundamental phenomenon of awareness, the implications for human consciousness, human intelligence, and the human future.

Email: info@yhousesnyc.org
Website: <https://yhousesnyc.org/>

