

**HOW CAN I MISS YOU
IF I DON'T KNOW YOU'RE THERE?**

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ABSTRACT

How Can I Miss You if I Don't Know You're There? is an MFA thesis project that addresses the inevitable contradictions and tensions inherent in human/animal relationships. This work is a series of sculptural pieces installed using the tropes of museological methods of display and classification. Concentrating on invertebrates, I engage concepts like empathy, care and mothering in the context of these vilified subjects, contrary to the dominant dualisms characterized by Western, Christian, capitalist culture that hierarchize species. As I explore my entanglement with nonhuman others, attempts to convey affection blur with acts of unintentional subjugation as I implicate myself in the precarious balance between care and harm with respect to the use of living and dead organisms.

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INTRODUCTION

I am afraid to start writing, because my selfishness might get in the way, my self-centred thinking nurtured through the notion that humans are superior to other life forms. I worry about anthropocentrism seeping in, because I am a human, viewing subject. This is a genuine attempt at writing about the precious lives that I've come to depend on during these past two years. I want to emphasize their role, the invertebrates that have always been a part of my life, though undetected because of my selective viewing. I might get this wrong, emotionally, intellectually, morally. I want to do this correctly.

The title of this thesis alludes to a quote by Daniel Janzen; "if you don't know it, you can't love it, if you don't love it, you won't save it."¹ Janzen's work as an evolutionary ecologist, biologist and conservationist addresses ways in which policy makers can overcome impediments to invertebrate conservation.² Taxonomic biases inform the knowledge gaps between vertebrates and invertebrates addressed by Donaldson et al, where conservation research lends partiality to vertebrates.³ Similarly, Cardoso et al., describes a number of barriers in invertebrate conservation, the most prominent being that most invertebrate species remain undescribed. Invertebrates are susceptible to the same extinction processes as larger, conspicuous and familiar organisms, but their demise is occurring at a startlingly more rapid pace, with 3000 species lost every year (a rate of 8 species per day).⁴ Despite accelerated losses,

¹ Cardoso, Pedro, et al. "The Seven Impediments in Invertebrate Conservation and How to Overcome Them." *Biological Conservation*, vol.144, no. 11, 2011, 2650, <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/science/article/pii/S0006320711002874>. Accessed 25 May 2017.

² Cardoso 2649- 2650.

³ Donaldson et al. "Taxonomic bias and international biodiversity conservation research." *Facets*, vol.1, 2016, 105-113, *Wiley Online Library*, DOI:10.1139/facets-2016-0011.

invertebrate neglect is reflected within the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List,⁵ where the proportions of endangered vertebrates listed overwhelms that of invertebrates.^{6 7} Initiatives for renaming invertebrates have been proposed to change public perception of the organisms of which we paint such unflattering descriptions (ooze, wriggly, slithering, creepy things).⁸ Some of these initiatives even go so far as to suggest naming invertebrates after celebrities in efforts to solicit attention towards otherwise unfrequented species.⁹ Robyn J. Crook's research paper discussing the welfare of invertebrates in animal research establishes a rank in a range of behavioral and neural 'complexity,' implying that animals with 'complex' sensory abilities and larger nervous systems require, and "deserve, extensive consideration."¹⁰ The authors of publications that are used to address invertebrate welfare consign organisms with simpler neural networks to reduced ranks, implicating themselves in proposing policies that reify hierarchy.^{11 12 13 14}

⁴ Cardoso 2648.

⁵ *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. 2017, www.iucnredlist.org. Accessed 25 May 2017.

⁶ Cardoso 2648.

⁷ Régnier, Claire. "Extinction in a hyperdiverse endemic Hawaiian land snail family and implications for the underestimation of invertebrate extinction." *Conservation Biology*, vol. 29, no. 6, 2015, pp 1715-1723. *Wiley Online Library* DOI: 10.1111/cobi.12565.

⁸ Miller, William Ian. *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, 9.

⁹ Cardoso 2650.

¹⁰ Crook, Robyn J. "The Welfare of Invertebrate Animals in Research: Can Science's next Generation Improve Their Lot?" *Postdoc Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2013, p. 10, *ResearchGate*, DOI: 10.14304/SURYA.JPR.V1N2.2.

¹¹ Crook 10.

¹² Mather, Jennifer A. "Animal Suffering: An Invertebrate Perspective." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, vol. 4, no.2, pp. 151-156, 2010, DOI: 10.1207/S15327604JAWS0402_9.

¹³ Elwood, Robert W. "Pain and Suffering in Invertebrates?" *ILAR Journal*, vol.52, no. 2, 2011, pp. 175-184, DOI:<https://doi-org.ezproxy.uleth.ca/10.1093/ilar.52.2.175>.

¹⁴ Herzog, Hal. *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat*. New York: Harper Perennial Press, 2010.

Since the 1980's, biologists have concluded that planet earth is currently experiencing a global mass extinction event unparalleled in biodiversity loss. Charismatic megafauna; large, conspicuous and charismatic terrestrial vertebrates that are often the main attention of conservation efforts, overshadow poorly known taxa (mostly invertebrates) in the estimated loss of species, contributing to the underestimation of invertebrate extinction. Invertebrates represent the bulk of biodiversity (80% to 99% depending on the source consulted), and their demise must be more thoroughly assessed if we are to realize the scope and implications for this 6th mass extinction event.¹⁵

Taryn Simon's visual archives prompted my investigation of inaccessible worlds. In *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar*, the image of a decomposing human corpse situated in a place unanimously referred to as the Body Farm, attracted my attention. It wasn't until I participated in dissecting and measuring the reproductive organs of terrestrial land snails (that had been deliberately killed through submersion in ethanol), that I understood the human capacity that the photo attests to: to force bodies into service after mortality. At that moment, I realized that the snails had no protection. I had intruded on their territory, and employed them, unwillingly, for research.

I've only started to recognize, and with greater frequency, the other soft-bodied inhabitants with whom I share my domestic spaces, studio spaces, and other places. These animals have always been a part of my life, though have remained largely undetected; crawling on walls, hanging from ceilings, sleeping in drawers, fluttering through dust "storms," munching on my cereal, scurrying across my toes. Commercials

¹⁵ Régnier, Claire, et al. "Mass extinction in poorly known taxa." *PNAS*, vol. 112, no. 25, 2015, pp. 7761-7766. www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1502350112. 7761

and ads tell me that these animals are invasive pests that must be exterminated, but humans are a relatively recent evolution. It has been said that if all of time were compared to a 12-month calendar, the recorded history of the human species appears on the last day of the last month, one second to midnight. Maybe I'm the one intruding.

In 1990 Damien Hirst introduced the killing of insects within the gallery with his installation *A Thousand Years*. Exhibiting his self-proclaimed, self-contained life cycle in a glass vitrine, maggots hatch from a box, metamorphosing into adult flies that feed on a severed cow's head. From the ceiling of the vitrine hangs an insect electrocutor that serves to abruptly end the lives of thousands of flies caught in the contraption. The work solicited media frenzy. Controversy and objections dominated with regard to the use of a real cow's head, and it was soon replaced by a taxidermied one, but what of the sixty generations of flies and their subsequent obliteration? The main feature of the piece, the fly incinerator, was never scrutinized. It permeates the senses, visual, olfactory, auditory, and yet, remains effectively excluded. Killing insects is acceptable in a way that killing mammals is not. This occurrence has become the most commonplace act of violence that one could commit; unproblematized killing becomes normalized.¹⁶

Raid, the insecticide brand reputed for the slogan 'Raid kills bugs dead', produced, and still continues to produce, commercials in which anthropomorphized insects are recklessly killed. In these advertisements, the insects are given human-like faces, and they talk. Some of the initial commercials for the brand made explicit analogies between the killing of insects, the 'pest' and 'villain', and the use of chemical weapons in war. In 1956, Raid employed pervasive military allusions; a Raid spray-can

¹⁶ Aloï 116.

anthropomorphized to uncannily resemble a soldier. Invertebrates fly through the air in the quintessential ‘V’ formation that recalls warplanes, and are subsequently expunged from the air. The spray “hunts them down like radar” as a swarm of insects attempting to escape a poisonous cloud is “attacked”. Once the cloud dissipates, rows of tombstones are unveiled. The conflation of insects, ‘pests’ with the enemy, seems troubling. “Their killing is not only encouraged frequently, but institutionalized.”¹⁷ These invertebrates are regarded as ‘pests’ such as it invades and breaches boundaries. Infiltrating boundaries, they carry with them the anxieties of contamination.¹⁸

Since before WWII, the development of pesticides and nerve gas for chemical warfare were closely linked. In some cases, insecticides serve as intermediate products in the development of toxic agents. Zyklon-B, a commercial disinfectant and insecticide, was deliberately modified and used in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and other killing chambers.¹⁹ An approach to animals prefigures an approach to humans.²⁰

Two groups of insect “pests” persisted before and during the war, but the conditions of war amplified their presence. Moths damaged facilities and resources such as mills, and stored corn provisions.²¹ The moth was resilient against the known methods of extermination at that time. Concurrently, soldiers, civilians and prisoners were suffering from head lice.²² The outbreak of lice was blamed on the German soldiers and civil servants intimate and social intermingling with the lice infested population of the

¹⁷ Alois 99.

¹⁸ Alois 93, 99.

¹⁹ “Zyklon-B.” *The History Place Holocaust Timeline*, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-zyklon.htm>.

²⁰ Berger 11.

²¹ Szöllösi-Janze, Margit. “Pesticides and War: the Case of Fritz Haber.” *European Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2001, p. 98, *CambridgeCore*, doi:10.1017/S1062798701000096.

²² Szöllösi-Janze 99.

East. Medical reports regarding this outbreak contain racist undertones, relating the Eastern, “Jewish population to the plague of lice.”²³ Language of this sort explicitly hierarchizes and dehumanizes by way of juxtaposition. The racialized human blends with the nonhuman animal. The nonhuman animal is under the threat of extermination.

Silent Spring, Rachel Carson’s clarion call to attention concerning the indiscriminate effects of synthetic pesticides on the environment, was published following the development and dissemination of these chemicals in the United States through military funding for science after World War II. Attesting to the negative impact humans have on the natural world, Carson publicly voiced the devastating effects of human engineered pesticides— a chemical assault on the environment and animals for the purpose of extermination and eradication of targeted pests.²⁴

²³ Szöllösi-Janze 100.

²⁴ Paull, John. “The Rachel Carson Letters and the Making of *Silent Spring*.” *SAGE Open*, 2013, pp. 1-12, DOI: 10.1177/2158244013494861.

CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review

1.1 Laboratory Practices

“Big or small, we save them all,” reads the poster in the lab where research requires violence against snails. Here, I experience the horror of realizing that snails have no protection; killing them is an unproblematized matter. It’s rather convenient when the species being studied bypasses any code of ethics, and lives are made killable. The snail is the scapegoat, the substitute for studies of phylogeography where using a larger model animal would be more difficult to track. A snail can be killed, because it is “... only something, not somebody.”²⁵ “We murder to dissect,” recalls the rare and endangered species that were once captured, killed and stuffed in taxidermic displays in an effort to draw attention to the ephemeral state of rare and endangered species, yet this meddling further contributed to their plummeting numbers.²⁶ Snail mail conjures up “archaic” modes of tangible communication that implicate a slow rate of exchange, anything other than instant messaging and email, slower than a snail’s pace. It describes an inefficient process, at best. ‘Biological machinery’ and ‘non-sentient’ are words ascribed to these beings that are currently used in phylogenetic, neuroscience and other studies, and for these reasons, their sacrificial use in dissections and exploitation goes unquestioned.

From the research laboratory, wildlife conservation efforts, to homes and cooking, our ambivalent view of the relative status of invertebrates and vertebrates becomes evident. ‘Spineless’ and ‘lacking a backbone’ are used pejoratively, equating the invertebrate with cowardice and weakness in a hierarchy that clearly elevates humans.

²⁵ Haraway, Donna J. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 79.

²⁶ Gould, Stephen Jay. *Crossing Over: Where Art and Science Meet*. New York: Three Rivers, 2000. 80.

Pervasive in academic texts, terminology implies a sort of ranking for vertebrate and invertebrate subphyla. For example, fish are regarded as basal vertebrates, while some cephalopods are considered to be ‘advanced’ or derived invertebrates. Bioethics legislation, only recently passed in some countries, now extends consideration to few ‘higher functioning’ invertebrates, primarily cephalopods, while dismissing the majority. For the ‘lower’ invertebrates, ethical considerations are frequently bypassed.²⁷

A general collection permit is the single document required for the collection of non-threatened snails in a designated wildlife park. The result of their captivity is death. It’s a relatively simple document, especially when compared to the required paperwork for approaching and banding migratory birds (this banding doesn’t result in any obviously harmful outcome). Is there any way to escalate the snail’s ascent to dignity? To clamour for their rights? Seek justice? After all, the rights of things, of inanimate objects, are better established than those of plants and animals as we prescribe worth to things that are valuable or important to us.²⁸

1.2 Looking Beyond the Human

The body is permeable, as demonstrated by Elizabeth Grosz, a professor of Women’s Studies and Literature at Duke University. Grosz reconfigures the body;

²⁷ Andrews, Paul, L.R. “Laboratory Invertebrates: Only Spineless, or Spineless and Painless?” *ILAR Journal* vol. 52, no. 2, 2011, p. 121, *Oxford Academic* <https://academic-oup-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/ilarjournal/article-lookup/doi/10.1093/ilar.52.2.121>.

²⁸ Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003, xi.

rethinks the body, in an attempt to displace the supremacy of the mind in Western thought.²⁹

I hope to show that the body, or rather, bodies, cannot be adequately understood as ahistorical, precultural, or natural objects in any simple way; they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself. It is not simply that the body is represented in a variety of ways according to historical, social, and cultural exigencies while it remains basically the same; these factors actively produce the body as a body of determinate type.³⁰

Bodies are continually produced through relations of power. They are amenable and incomplete, constantly subject to social completion, ordering and organization.

Depending on the scientific models used to analyse bodies; chemical, biological, medical, and those disciplines' guiding assumptions, influences and imperatives, tangibly alter the bodies studied. Bodies are uncontainable in that they extend beyond the framework used to contain them.³¹ Grosz criticizes the dichotomy of mind and body, and examines linguistic hierarchies that reinforce dualistic thinking. Opposition is a key concept in structuralist thought. Dualisms are used to perpetuate oppressive power structures, introducing irresolvable privileging where the first half of the dualism is positively charged and privileged, and the second half is negatively charged and subordinated. The mind/body binary opposition perpetuated by Cartesian dualism is responsible for glorifying consciousness, the mind, and trivializing the body.

I'm interested in liminal space, this thing called perception that occupies the space between two oppositional terms. I think back to the snails, not quite pest, not quite pet.

²⁹ Grosz, E. A. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, vii.

³⁰ Grosz x.

³¹ Grosz xi.

They do not occupy a position that is clearly defined within the coordinates of human control, nor are they entirely outside the sphere of the human. During sampling and in the lab, they are bound through formal contracts, but in their preferred lodgings specific to species, they are not dependant on humans.³² Louise Barrett describes animal perception and James Gibson's ecological approach to psychology by discussing his ideas of perceptual systems and non-human animals. Gibson describes how psychological phenomena are found in the coupling of active organisms; animals and their environment.³³ Perception is based on detecting information and active exploration and attention to environment. Animals do not passively receive inputs and stimuli that come their way, they are active, they can search for the information that they need. The perceptual system of an organism does not merely consist of a sensory receptor and nerve, but of the entire nervous system, the whole body. Animals are explorers in their environments; active seekers rather than passive receivers.³⁴ I'm inclined to think of the nonhuman subject with which I share this new reality, or as Cary Wolfe might say of living in a world so newly and differently inhabited, to coexist with "vigilance, responsibility and humility."³⁵

1.3 Empathy

Using challenging prose, Donna Haraway pursues the animal as companion in her recent works that have transformed the fields of feminist studies, cyber culture and science. Starting with microorganisms and bacteria, the invisible majority that reside in

³² Reinert, Hugo. "Entanglements-Intimacy and Nonhuman Ethics." *Society & animals*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2014, p. 51, *EBSCOhost*, DOI: 10.1163/15685306-12341318.

³³ Barrett, Louise. *Beyond the Brain: How Body and Environment Shape Animal and Human Minds*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, 95.

³⁴ Barrett 96-97.

³⁵ Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 47.

her (and our) bodies, to dogs and walking sticks, species of all kinds are companions. She addresses our co habitation and encounters with unpredictable forms of “we,” and acknowledges our ties to our more than human kin through a shared capacity for perception and sensual pleasure.³⁶ The animal’s caretaker feels obligated to reform conditions and ameliorate suffering among the living, as well as experience the conditions of those in the position of suffering. Caring and sharing are of equal importance.³⁷

An anthropomorphic stance requires asking and answering questions that reflect our own concerns. In the case of nonhuman animals, we strive to make our preoccupations their preoccupations, our attributes their attributes, and then scrutinize how the other measures up. We interpret animals, plants, and other organisms in human terms, despite the purposelessness of those skills for the animal. A BBC article³⁸ reported that plants think and remember, and that the information transmitted through their bodies is similar to the way in which nerve impulses travel through our own nervous system. The problem with this is that “the analogy is far from exact... it does them a disservice to endow them with humanlike cognitive capacities that they don’t possess and don’t need. Indeed, it promotes the idea that other organisms are interesting only to the degree that their capacities and abilities match our own.”³⁹ But the assumption that these traits we search for in other organisms can only be attributed to humans, that they are unique to our species, is likewise problematic; we might deny these traits in other animals simply

³⁶ Haraway 6.

³⁷ Haraway 70.

³⁸ Gill, Victoria. “Plants ‘can think and remember.’” *BBC News*, 14 July 2010, <http://www.bbc.com/news/10598926>. Accessed 19 May 2017.

³⁹ Barrett 4.

because we identify them selfishly as belonging to us. If we are not searching for ways in which we see ourselves reflected in the organism in question, then we are searching for those qualities that make us special, we elevate ourselves above all other members of the animal kingdom, and they inevitably fall short of our exalted abilities.⁴⁰

Cary Wolfe expresses the need for bioethics to address the living. After all, who or what counts as a subject of ethical address? If more conspicuous and charismatic animals count as contenders for ethical concern, what about snails, or those animals that are invisible to the human eye? Wolfe explains that contemporary bioethics is largely concerned with policy studies, policies in healthcare and medicine. Type “bioethics” into an online search engine and you are likely to find sources on “biomedical research and health care decision-making procedures” or medical ethics and humane aspects of health care. When the animal ethics sub-discipline of bioethics is addressed, the argument revolves around moral equivalents in the context of rampant species prejudice that contaminates centuries-old humanism. Millions of animals are used in biomedical research every year, and those that find this acceptable might justify this in terms of moral status; the familiar litany that human and non-human animals differ in their abilities and mental capacities.⁴¹ However, Wolfe summarizes a key point argued by Peter Singer:

...[the issue isn't whether human and animals are the same morally] or, of equal worth or that all interests of humans and other animals are to be given equal weight, no matter what those interests may be. It is saying that where animals and humans have similar interests—we might take the interest in avoiding physical pain for example, for this is an interest that humans clearly share with other animals—those interests are to be counted equally, with no automatic discount just because one of the beings is not human.⁴²

⁴⁰ Barrett 5-6.

⁴¹ Wolfe 56.

⁴² Wolfe 57-58.

Wolfe later abridges Cora Diamond:

... what generates our moral response to animals and their treatment is our sense of the mortality and vulnerability that we share with them, of which the brute subjection of the body—in the treatment of animals as mere research tools, say, or in the torture of political prisoners of war—is perhaps the most poignant testament. For Diamond, the “horror at the conceptualizing of animals as putting nothing in the way of their use as mere stuff” depends on “a comparable horror at human relentlessness and pitilessness in the exercise of power” towards other humans.⁴³

Plastic bags filled with dead snails and ethanol, the laboratory where those snails are dissected and their reproductive organs disseminated, the animal’s body exposed to “brute subjection.” It’s a complete rejection of vulnerability and compassion. We share our vulnerability and mortality as fellow creatures. Lori Gruen, a scholar of animal liberation, uses entangled empathy to reflect on her encounters with nonhuman animals and ambitions for empathy. This stance suggests that we are accountable to others, that we are receptive to the needs of others, both human and animal, and that we strive to understand the other’s situation.⁴⁴ Art critic and author John Berger examines our evolving relationship with animals in his essay, “Why Look at Animals?” He traces this lineage from animals serving as creative inspiration for the first iterations of human art to their captivity for purposes of human entertainment. Berger describes the eyes of the animal gaze, and their act of looking at humans in an attentive and wary manner. The animal scrutinizes the human “across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension.”⁴⁵ When we intercept the animal’s gaze, what does that look mean? The animal has secrets. Derrida

⁴³ Wolfe 74.

⁴⁴ Calarco, Matthew. "Animal Studies." *Year's Work in Critical & Cultural Theory*, vol. 24, no. 1, Jan. 2016, pp. 24-42. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1093/ywcct/mbw002, 25.

⁴⁵ Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: Pantheon, 1980, 3.

understood that animals look back at humans, and that when he was in the presence of his cat, he was in the presence of someone, and not just a machine.⁴⁶

With their parallel lives, animals offer man [sic] a companionship which is different from any offered by human exchange. Different because it is a companionship offered to the loneliness of man as a species. Such an unspeaking companionship was felt to be so equal that often one finds the conviction that it was man who lacked the capacity to speak with animals — hence the stories and legends of exceptional beings, like Orpheus, who could talk with animals in their own language.⁴⁷

I search for and enjoy the companionship of snails, beetles, butterflies, mantids and pill bugs. Their scale is measured by my hand, and our encounters are always intimate. In some small way, I would like to show my little friends that I do not take their companionship for granted, and that I have the capacity to extend love to creatures with a different face.

1.4 Animals and Art

Caitlin Gill observes that in distinct yet linked institutions such as zoos and natural history museums, pet culture and the escalating anxiety surrounding the impact of humans on the natural world, human-animal relationships are contentious sites under unprecedented scrutiny.⁴⁸ To assume “that animals first entered the human imagination as meat or leather” or trophy is to regress to a projection of “19th century attitudes backwards across millennia. Animals first entered the imagination as messengers and promises.”⁴⁹ They are born, are sentient and mortal. They are both like and unlike in their

⁴⁶ Haraway 19.

⁴⁷ Berger 4.

⁴⁸ Gill, Caitlin. “Proximity to Animals.” Thesis, OCAD University, <http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/192/1/Caitlin%20Gill%20Proximity%20to%20Animals%20Thesis%20Document%20May%209th%20final.pdf>. 1.

⁴⁹ Berger 2.

habits, time, and physical capabilities.⁵⁰ We are surrounded by animals throughout our lives. They're the first things we reach for as they hover over our cribs and litter our floors in the shape of colourful toys. As neotonized teddy bears they snuggle us to sleep. As growing children, animals proliferate photographs, documentaries, and our bound illustrated tales and deliver moral instruction. They're discovered in cartoons, films, as domesticated pets, as pests, at the zoo, as entertainers, in all places, serving in many capacities.⁵¹ Perhaps it is because of their ubiquitous nature that we often take them for granted, and they become accessories to the human condition.

Animals have been a pillar to classical art. From paintings to sculptures, their forms have proliferated studios and galleries. Recently, animals literally occupy the gallery space rather than existing as 2-dimensional representations. Taxidermied, bobbing in vessels of formaldehyde, or alive, "encounters with animals are consistently different from those in the past."⁵² The animal body, voice, gaze, trace and mark are now new and questioning entities. Shifts in philosophical and cultural perspectives foster the possibility for a radical and critical re-evaluation of the binaries and hierarchies that inform our notions of value and worth. Non-human animals assume the role of questioning and challenging entities. The radical shift we see with animals in art is that of the human contrived depiction of animals and the actual animal body in the space of the gallery. In 1938, Salvador Dali included snails and plants watered through a pipe installed through the roof of a cab and extending upward through the ceiling of the gallery space in *Rainy Taxi (Mannequin Rotting in a Taxi-Cab)*. Following his exploits, Jannis Kounellis

⁵⁰ Berger 2.

⁵¹ Aloï, Giovanni. *Art and Animals*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012, xv.

⁵² Aloï xiv.

hitched twelve horses side by side in 1969 inside Rome's Galleria l'Attico. Distanced from the idealized capacity of marble and paint mediums, the horses are true to life, gritty, pungent, powerful and imposing. Here, the artist was content with bringing the animals into the gallery space. Conversely, the artist/animal engage in a more active role. Oscillating between both observer and participant, the role blurs between artist and animal, just as the label of artist and animal becomes ambiguous. In Joseph Beuys's 1974 performance, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, the artist shared the René Block Gallery in New York with a live coyote. The drama of precarious negotiations unfolded over three days, resolving with Beuys's exit. Damien Hirst appropriated the trophy-like vitrine displays of natural history museums, submerging sharks, sheep and cows in tanks of formaldehyde, while stencilling macabre displays of dead insect bodies in various Entomology themed works. In 1991, Hirst exhibited *A Thousand Years* and *In and Out of Love*; a severed cow's head accompanied by flies, a bug zapper and feasting maggots, and butterflies throughout their life cycle, respectively. Maria Fernanda Cardoso employs fleas in *Cardoso Flea Circus* (1994-2000). Cardoso, dressed in circus attire, exploits the flea's sensitivity to heat, light and carbon dioxide when she leads her performers through a series of daunting tasks. The fleas dance, walk the tightrope, high dive and weightlift, along with other compelling acrobatic tricks. Pierre Huyghe transforms galleries and exhibition sites into uncanny non-places, or interspecies worlds. Human, Huyghe's four-legged collaborator, is a hound with a popsicle pink foreleg. She appears with dogs,

turtles, and beehive encased reclining nude statues, insects, algae, and other iterations of non-human life in the eco-worlds.⁵³

Engagement with live animals illustrates an ecological awareness that attempts to decentre the human as the sole propagator of narrative.⁵⁴ Neither party can replicate the other's role; the final product is impossible without the two. There are no differences in value between these organisms, human and non-human animals.⁵⁵ Through a mutualistic symbiotic relationship and balanced partnership, the production of the completed artwork depends on the symmetrical contribution on behalf of both species. As actors in an interconnected environment, humans, vertebrates and invertebrates share complementary knowledges, skills and access to specific communities, social and ecological.⁵⁶

⁵³ Kerr, Dylan. "My Cat Could Do That: A Brief History of Animals in Contemporary Art." *Artspace*, 15 Jan. 2015, http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/art_market/history-of-animals-in-art-52574.

⁵⁴ Leedahl, Taylor. "Aganetha Dyck and the Honeybees: The Evolution of an Interspecies Creative Collaboration." Thesis. Concordia University, 2013. Sept. 2013. 20.

⁵⁵ Leedahl 21.

⁵⁶ Leedahl iii.

CHAPTER TWO: A Cabinet Of Wonders/Worlds In Miniature

2.1 Origins of Museums

The Medici Palace of fifteenth-century Florence, Italy is often cited as the birthplace for museums and collecting practices in Europe.⁵⁷ The new political organization occupied by the prince relying on support from merchants replaced the feudal system. Rapid growth in mercantile activities, banking and improved navigation preceding trade, nurtured ostentatious displays of wealth (conspicuous consumption) as markers of power and influence.⁵⁸ The Medici family extensively collected expensive goods and erected elaborate spaces (mostly decorated interiors) that would attest to their acquired status as the most successful merchant family in Italy.⁵⁹ Shifts in patronage from older, religious forms that established specifications for all sorts of commissioned constructions to private, singular, secular forms of patronage established the higher social position of the Medici family as more wealthy, powerful and knowledgeable than other merchants.⁶⁰ The contents of these princely collections literally represented the fortune of the owner.⁶¹

The Cabinet of Curiosity, or Wunderkammer,⁶² represented an attempt for the collector to catalogue the world. The encyclopaedic aspirations of the collections at the time of the Renaissance emulated the philosophical imperative of Humanism to create,

⁵⁷ Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge, 1992, 23.

⁵⁸ Hooper-Greenhill 30.

⁵⁹ Hooper-Greenhill 24.

⁶⁰ Hooper-Greenhill 47.

⁶¹ MacGregor, Arthur. *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, 9.

⁶² Putnam, James. *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001. 8.

“...a model of universal nature made private.’ The universe distilled within the confines of a chamber was clearly a concept that could be realized only in token form.”⁶³ The position of the collector in this iteration of the cabinet illustrates a subject struggling to find a way to represent the world as their own creation. These collections generally known as cabinets, curiosity cabinets or cabinets of curiosity, quelled an overarching desire to accurately locate humankind in the grand scheme of nature and the divine as the practice of their formation became widespread in educated society.⁶⁴

The implied order that these collections held is often contested, as the collections were disdainfully explained as a disordered jumble of unconnected objects. To corroborate this account, it has been pointed out that many of the objects were fraudulent, “...in 1685, for example, a wolf was killed, stuffed, clothed, bearded, and masked to resemble a burgomaster whose reincarnation the wolf was supposed to be. This was then placed in a local cabinet of curiosity as a memorial and as visual proof of the existence of werewolves.”⁶⁵ Conflating the natural and artificial within the thematic space of the display, this blend defied the conventional modern categories of past and present, art and science, of nature and culture.

Museums express the prerogatives and values of imperialist Europe through displays of “booty,” the material evidence of pillaging and plundering Western colonized civilizations. Early colonizing practices involved trading and dishonest acquisition of indigenous cultural artifacts. Object acquisition motivated by political and intellectual

⁶³ MacGregor 11.

⁶⁴ “History of the wunderkammern (cabinet of curiosities)” *Tate*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/mark-dion-tate-thames-dig/wunderkammen>.

⁶⁵ Hooper-Greenhill 79.

factors reveals the museum as a place that constructs cultural meaning. Ruth B. Phillips, in *Modes of Inclusion*, analyzes the narrative of the display of Canadian and Aboriginal art. She argues that the inclusion and integration of Aboriginal art in the National Gallery's displays, which was notably absent before, cannot effectively be resolved. The objects introduced into the Canadian galleries are presented in such a way as to conform to Western conceptions of aesthetic interest, with the result that the ceremonial character of many of the works is erased. Although the curators allegedly claimed to have recognized the importance of the use value of these objects, the works themselves on display in the gallery remain overdetermined by the discourse of the art museum, which privileges modes of seeing over alternative methods of perception that include the other senses. The high modernist "white cube" installation is one example of one of the radical ways in which these Aboriginal works were radically decontextualized and rigorously isolated to promote unimpeded viewing and visual experience of a Euro-Western high modern formalism.⁶⁶

2.2 Snails and Shells

The shell was ubiquitous to the curiosity cabinets, often as a representative of the marine world. These items were some of the most convenient for individuals to acquire. They were carefully arranged in coquilliers, special drawers lined with white or blue cloth, arranged to resemble festoons, geometrical patterns, or anatomical forms. Specimens of spectacular size, colour or quality would occupy a place within the cabinet that would draw special attention to them. In these cases, collectors eschewed the

⁶⁶ Phillips, Ruth B. "Modes of Inclusion: Indigenous Art at the National Gallery of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario." *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums*, McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 2011, pp. 252- 258.

scientific method for visual impact.⁶⁷ Seashells have gained a reputation as clichéd emblems of the beach; disposable nautical tokens. When these shells are sculpted into truly horrible ornaments, and fastened into displays, it's difficult to discern where these things came from. Or stranger still, that they were made by living animals.⁶⁸ These were once homes. Around the world, wild architects build shelters for a myriad of living things. In the Bay of Kiel, oyster beds serve an assemblage of species. Living and dead oysters mingle in the oyster bed with fish, crabs, worms and starfish in this thriving community.⁶⁹ French philosopher Gaston Bachelard applauds nature as clever and imaginative while reflecting on the transcendental geometry of mollusc shells. The shell, in its perceptible order stands out like crystals and flowers against disorder. The form is clear and distinct, while the formation remains mysterious.

For here too, as with nests, enduring interest should begin with the original amazement of a naïve observer. Is it possible for a creature to remain alive inside stone, inside this piece of stone? Amazement of this kind is rarely felt twice. Life quickly wears it down. And besides, for one “living shell, how many dead ones there are! For one inhabited shell, how many are empty! But an empty shell, like an empty nest, invites daydreams of refuge. No doubt we over-refine our daydreams when we follow such simple images as these. But it is my belief that a phenomenologist should go in the direction of maximum simplicity. And therefore, I believe that it is worthwhile proposing a phenomenology of the inhabited shell.”⁷⁰

The phenomenology to which Bachelard alludes is the private recesses of the shell.

Beyond the intelligible surface and perceptible form of the shell, one discovers the valves

⁶⁷ MacGregor 139.

⁶⁸ Scales, Helen. *Spirals in Time: The Secret Life and Curious Afterlife of Seashells*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015, 11.

⁶⁹ Scales 123.

⁷⁰ Bachelard 127.

and inner whirls. The imperceptible corridors of the shell, and the hidden niches within the viewer's mind of those who might inhabit imagined space.

2.3 Systems of Classification

In his preface to *The Order of Things*, French philosopher Michel Foucault articulates an example of the especially palpable effects of systems of classification;

This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.⁷¹

Foucault is dealing with the complexities of establishing and defying categorization. In the passage, recognizing categories in some sense determines what we see. Applying the above method of categorization would fracture enduring distinctions between the same old, and the new. This system of classification, ordering, and framing on which the above list is based seems challenging to a Euro-western way of thinking. A bit radical, perhaps inconceivable, but this list that appears irrational from one perspective was regarded as a valid way of knowing.⁷² To understand and make sense of this list would provide opportunities to classify the world in broadening ways; the separation between art, science, and natural history would collapse. The self-imposed categories that we use to discuss objects and species would afford extensive revision. Museum Studies professor Eilean Hooper-Greenhill applies the classification that Foucault describes to the role of

⁷¹ Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Pantheon, 1971, xv.

⁷² Hooper-Greenhill 4.

curators, implicating that "... collections would need to be reordered; paintings, artefacts, and specimens would need to be placed differently within display cases, their records and documentation would need to be re-examined and amended; their positions in storage drawers, cabinets, and racks would need to be changed."⁷³

Museums act as white containers for exhibits. Presentation relies on isolating objects from their original context and reframing them. Plinths, vitrines and labels are deployed as chosen modes of display, potentially transforming anything that the museum exhibits into works of art.⁷⁴ American conceptual artist Mark Dion uses the imaginative display aesthetic of the Wunderkammer to express his fondness for curiosity cabinets and the resemblance that these spaces share with the backrooms of museum galleries, rather than the exhibition galleries.⁷⁵ Interrogating the legitimacy of current classificatory schemes, Dion investigates museological display, suggesting that the way that objects are presented in museums informs our perception of the world. By installing his alternative museums within museums, he challenges the institutions choices in classification and display. Through his presentation of wonders of nature within sites of knowledge production and meaning making, he focuses on the collection, organization, and display of objects, as well as "research" and "science" as fundamental practices in producing constituents of knowledge. Excavating collections of specimens, his installations convey notions of nature as an anthropocentric narrative and constructed fiction.⁷⁶ Traversing art

⁷³ Hooper-Greenhill 5.

⁷⁴ Putnam 36.

⁷⁵ Putnam 74.

⁷⁶ Endt, Marion. "Beyond Institutional Critique: Mark Dion's Surrealist Wunderkammer at the Manchester Museum." *Museum and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2007, 2, <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/endt.pdf>. Accessed 19 May 2017.

and science, his interests relate to the Enlightenment era split, that moment when the wonders of nature cabinet (Wunderkammer) and the art cabinet (kunstkammer) divide into two separate collections.⁷⁷

2.4 Miniature Worlds

The microscope detects a world that the human eye is blind to. In *Micrographia; or, Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses, with Observations and Inquiries There Upon* (1665), journal entries written by Robert Hooke reveal encounters with the previously invisible, to describe a world previously imperceptible through the senses or lived experience;

April 22 1663, Leeches in Vinegar. Bluish Mold on Leather; April 29th. A Mine of Diamonds in Flint. Spider with Six Eyes; May 6th, Female and Male Gnats; May 20th, Head of Ant. Fly like a Gnat; June 10th, Sage-Leaves appearing not to have cavities; July 8th, Edge of a Razor. Five Taffeta Ribbons. Millipede; July 16h, Fine Lawn. Gilt edge of Venice Paper; August 5th, Honeycomb Se-weed. Teeth of Snail. Plant growing on Rose-Leaves.⁷⁸

Encounters with invertebrates echo the small scale of the miniature. Susan Stewart eloquently and tenderly discusses scale in her analysis of narratives and objects. “A reduction in dimensions does not produce a corresponding reduction in significance.”⁷⁹ Here, the transcendent nature of scale is made all the more palpable. The gem like qualities attributed to small things makes these forms especially precious. Stewart indicates that shifts in scale are established through a correspondence to the familiar.⁸⁰ Mushroom caps become umbrellas, acorn caps become cradles, a leaf becomes

⁷⁷ Hargrave 7.

⁷⁸ Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 40.

⁷⁹ Stewart 43.

⁸⁰ Stewart 46.

a boat, a sneeze becomes a hurricane, a stomach grumbling becomes an earthquake. A world of reduced scale provokes the imaginary, and reducing the size of objects creates a world of its own, a daydream.⁸¹ The dollhouse is the ultimate example of this. As a container for small people with its rooms and furniture, material being in our everyday life, people and pets, are transformed in small and immobile form.⁸² When I turn my back, I fantasize that the miniature lives of toy animals come to life. Workable things at a small scale are mysterious and astonishing. Miniatures compel us to renounce our sense of omniscience and transcend spatial norms to join their realm. Bachelard notes, in *The Poetics of Space*, that "when descriptions tell things in tiny detail, they are automatically verbose."⁸³ In a miniature, everything is significant. Everything counts. Miniaturizing enriches and encourages attention in the way whispering requires a listener to quiet down and incline toward the speaker. Sometimes we need binoculars and microscopes to mediate our entry into new worlds. Paying attention is having a magnifying glass.⁸⁴ They suggest there is much to miss if we don't look hard at spaces, crevices, crannies. The miniature is not merely a small, brief or shortened version of something larger. "Miniatures transcend their size, like dense chunks of fudge, espresso, and parasite."⁸⁵ Miniatures are self-sufficient. Like the little things that comprise our ecosystems, they run the world, and will continue to go on living in the absence of human life. They're distant and go about with sovereignty, the spiders and insect larvae that nestle like little jewels in their satin pouches don't need us, and yet we are drawn to them.

⁸¹ Stewart 54.

⁸² Stewart 60-62.

⁸³ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. New York: Penguin, 1958, 178.

⁸⁴ Bachelard 174-176.

⁸⁵ Purpura, Lia. "On Miniatures." *Brevity: The Craft Essays*, https://www.creativenonfiction.org/brevity/craft/craft_minis.htm. Accessed 10 May 2017.

Through the chance and shuffle of the wondrous hoard in the space of the wonder-cabinet, and the deliciously strange space of the miniature, people are reintegrated with wonder. Miniatures give viewers an opportunity to wonder at marvellously strange adaptations, and discover parallels that occur between the living and non-living.

CHAPTER THREE: Interspecies Collaboration

3.1 Snail Saunter

Sampling sites in Cypress Hills Interprovincial park (a sort of sky-island or elevated plateau straddling the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan), are generously scattered with terrestrial land snails, or perhaps more accurately, their shells. While there were plenty of occupied shells, there were equally as many unoccupied. From dimes to quarters in size, the snails exist on a spectrum of activity. If the snails weren't fully extended from the shell during our pillaging efforts, we held them up to the sun, and allowed the lights penetration to briefly illuminate a form, or the absence of a form. In the case that a form was identified within the shell, it was assumed that the occupant in question was indeed the canonical resident. This was not always the case, as we would not always find the expected or typical tenant inside. On three occasions, spiders had adopted the shell temporarily, and, as though perturbed by the tumultuous rocking and clatter that follows when your home is uprooted and carelessly tossed into a plastic sandwich bag, they'd scurry out of the shell, defeated. There were instances of ants and tiny pebbles seeking shelter too. Under a microscope and scalpel, a more startling boarder occupies the shell's innermost chambers; the grubs of sciomyzidae flies, often referred to as marsh flies, or snail-killing flies. The larvae of the fly consume the snail while it is in its shell, scraping and gouging the gelatinous membrane of the snail body with its hooked teeth, and eventually taking its place as the host of home. The life cycle of this parasitoid is not well known, but it is well speculated that they emerge from the snail that they develop in, and devour it from the inside out.⁸⁶ Parasites live invisibly. The inhabitants of

⁸⁶ "British Insects: the Families of Diptera." *Delta-intkey*, <http://delta-intkey.com/britin/dip/www/sciomyzi.htm>

the shell amaze us, and the unexpected animals that come out recall to mind the wonder of the magician's hat.⁸⁷ What will come out next? What is inside?

In *Snail Saunter*, *Oreohelix subrudis* snails are left to meander on potato dextrose agar filled petri dishes. Exploring and probing the foreign landscape with feeling and smelling apparatuses, delineating a path with their slime secretions, the trace (or trail) of the saunter remains in their absence. Once the snail makes an effort to leave the petri dish, its drawing is transferred to an incubator where the culmination of snail, environment and bacteria fester and erupt. The resulting piece is the mark of the snail, its path traced in bacteria, attesting to those moments of collaboration between the snail's body, the snail's environment, and bacteria. I aid the process of transferring, and translate the actual object into a photograph illuminated in the end with a light box, but it is the snail's labor that should be recognized and celebrated.

Winnipeg artist Aganetha Dyck employs honeybees in her interspecies collaborative sculptural works. Through a symbiotic relationship and balanced partnership, the production of the completed artwork depends on the symmetrical contribution on behalf of Dyck and the honeybees. As actors in an interconnected environment, they share complementary knowledges, skills and access to specific communities, social and ecological.⁸⁸ The honeybees initially provided their sculptural service, wrapping and weaving honey comb around and inside the lacerated bits of porcelain sculpture. Her engagement with live animals illustrates an ecological and empathic awareness that attempts to decentre the human as the sole propagator of

⁸⁷ Bachelard 127.

⁸⁸ Leedahl iii.

narrative.⁸⁹ Neither party can replicate the other's role; the final product is impossible without the two. There are no differences in value between these organisms.⁹⁰

3.2 Miner Meander

In “*A*” as in “*Animal*”, Claire Parnet interviews Gilles Deleuze who admits to a fascination with invertebrates; “spiders, ticks and fleas. Their environment is limited in terms of affects yet it constitutes *a world*,”⁹¹ a fascinating one confined to a small number of stimuli. Another preoccupation for Deleuze is animal territories. Claiming a territory is where art began, for the philosopher. Staking out a territory is not confined to merely marking its boundaries, but to “defining a series of postures, colors and songs that Deleuze associates with the characteristics of the arts.”⁹² In marking a territory, one creates “art in its pure state”. He implies that animals, who are “idiots by human standard, intuitively have the capacity to express an impersonal life with its network of affects.”⁹³ In this matter, Deleuze extends concession towards nonhuman animals as privileged over humans, as other animals can teach humans how to enter into a relationship with inorganic life, to become-other.⁹⁴

In *Miner Meander*, leaf mining insects live invisibly, but leave behind an astonishing trail— a feeding tunnel of doodles and squiggles. The selective feast on leaf tissues is caressed inside delicate circular wooden dishes, and a convex glass dome protects this fragile canvas. Shelves installed well above a conventional viewing height

⁸⁹ Leedahl 20.

⁹⁰ Leedahl 21.

⁹¹ Beaulieu 70.

⁹² Beaulieu 70.

⁹³ Beaulieu 71.

⁹⁴ Beaulieu, Alain. “The Status of Animality in Deleuze’s Thought.” *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, vol. 9, issue 1, 2011, pp. 69-71, https://academicpublishingplatforms.com/downloads/pdfs/jcas/volume2/201112281121_JSAC_vol1,2_2011_4.pdf. Accessed 10 Oct. 2016.

make for a difficult, if not treacherous, experience, as the viewer must ascend two feet stair steps to aid perception. The viewer discovers the drawing while looking up at the “pests” “aesthetic damage”, rather than down.

3.3 To Have and to Hold

Yi-Fu Tuan, a Chinese-American geographer, employs a Foucauldian discourse analysis in *Dominance and Affection: The making of pets* that exploits our contested relationship with nature, our utilization of power within society and how this is expressed in the world. He describes the ways in which people dominate and control each other and the environments in which they live, while still remaining partial and affectionate towards them. Tuan illustrates the apparently inexhaustible capacity for humans to manipulate and modify the natural realm, reappropriating it in displays of power and status. From fountains and the artifice of making water jump, run and flow, to sculpting vegetation to resemble animal-like representations, Tuan meditates on the ugliness of dominance; affection is regarded as the softer side of dominance, its euphemism. For Tuan, domestication means domination.⁹⁵

A tension developed after I had received my painted lady butterfly larvae. Tenderly placing the furry little invertebrates in the cups provided by the distributor, with food pressed to the floor, and holes perforating the lid, I left them to their shenanigans. It wasn't until a visitor mused over their impending fate that I realized that I had, inadvertently, ordered them in late November, a season in which they would normally have migrated to warmer climates for the winter, and that they were trapped in my studio space. To let them out during our Southern Alberta winter would inevitably translate to a

⁹⁵ Tuan, Yi-fu. *Dominance & Affection: The Making of Pets*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984, 98.

rapid death. But to keep them confined to a cage in my studio, seemed rather cruel, perhaps equally so. I opted for the latter. I watched the larvae grow and metamorphose, the butterflies that emerged overwhelmed by the inadequate enclosure supplied. The curled, contorted wings on a few of the darlings were attributed to those that had neglected to spread their wings after emerging from their pupa envelopes. Unable to fly, they were often tossed and pummeled by the tumultuous, lively siblings. I'd find them writhing on the floor, legs kicking and flailing wildly, though some gave up completely, submitting to more bumps and crashes; a precarious life. The diet of these enchanting beings seemed to me, the stuff of fairy tales. Dainty and quaint; sugar water soaked cotton balls, darling. Their spindly tongues, straws with curlicue tips, would occasionally penetrate the mesh walls of their inhospitable enclosure. As though cognizant of their mortality and compelled to perpetuate, the butterflies pursued one another relentlessly in orgies, depositing eggs by the hundreds on the net walls, and eventually, they reached the inevitable. Sometimes, the bodies remain erect, even after death. Others are splayed, some exhibit contortions, and consistently those beady eyes glaze over, frosty. I was particularly fond of Sherman, my lovely friend with the especially dilapidated wings. He was unable to fly, and often had tumultuous bouts on the floor. I'd remove him from the cage, on occasion, and, while marking papers, or attending to some item on my desk, allow him to scamper about. Not that he could really escape, he couldn't fly. Who was to blame? From the proximity of his humble glass blown prison, Sherman clutched himself, doomed to be mine for as long as I desire. I want some assurance, from his frail body, that he could forgive me; forgive my human longing that drives me to love his state of suspended animation.

Mr. Kickbush was the personification of cranky fitness. Bamboozling us with glorified indoor recess, movement dominates my memories of elementary school gym class. Warm ups consisted of running laps around the perimeter of the acrid gymnasium, no surprise there (in both regards). With an imperative to run while keeping our fists cupped, “as though you are holding a butterfly cupped within your palms” (you wouldn’t want to deliberately crush a butterfly in your palms, would you?) Mr. Kickbush would send us off in his brusquely imperious way. I progressed reluctantly, with tremulous and cautious steps that transcended my age, a tremendous thoughtfulness that would make Nabokov so proud.

To Have and to Hold addresses the contradictions and tensions of working with live and dead animals, oscillating between care and harm. Thick mesh evocative of butterfly nets, caress hand blown glass bubbles that fondle and coddle delicate butterfly bodies. Employing the architecture of entrapment, curtains of tulle waft between and beside the mesh cocoons, suspended by wooden doweling. Categories blur. Am I the colonizer and the butterflies the colonized? They never consented to my rule, a devouring mother that smothers and stunts the growth of those in her care. I’m caught in the trap of trivializing and anthropomorphizing the butterfly. Is it the softer side of dominance; affection? I just wanted to be a friend. My attempts to be critically intimate are failing.

3.4 Meconium Accumulation

Insect collecting, the miniature and microcosms intersect with the appearance in 1665 of Robert Hooke’s *Micrographia: or some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies made by Magnifying Glasses*. Within the pages of this volume, Hooke enlarged the microscopic with unprecedented detail. Organisms as common and tiny as the flea

were rendered in excruciating detail. Indeed, organisms small enough to elude accurate description were now the subjects of the collector's and/or viewer's gaze.⁹⁶ In the 1680s, William Courten, an owner of an eclectic collection of curiosities, offered advice concerning preserving collections of insect specimens. Butterflies could be fastened with pins to the box, while more robust insects such as beetles could be placed with cotton in a small box for safe keeping. In the following decade, James Petiver advised that spiders, flies, butterflies and beetles should be preserved by thrusting a pin through the centre of the body and through to a board. Regarding "... Beetles, Spiders, Grasshopper, Bees, Wasps, Flies, &c.": these may be Drowned altogether, as soon as Caught in a little wide Mouth'd Glass, or Vial, half full of Spirits, which you may carry in your Pocket. But all Butterflies and Moths, as have mealy Wings, whose Colours may be rub'd off, with the Fingers, these must be put into any small Printed Book, as soon as caught, after the same manner as you do ye plants."⁹⁷ Once these specimens reached their destination of the cabinets, they were pinned into drawers or enclosed and mounted into albums.

Food psychologist Paul Rozin believes that animals and death are inextricably linked. Humans and animals have fallible body envelopes that hold viscera and blood, a commonality that is revealed when this frail envelope is breached.⁹⁸ Disgust is a very profound and powerful emotion often coupled with fear in response to invertebrates.⁹⁹ The perception of invertebrates as spreading disease, dirt and germs, results in avoidance

⁹⁶ MacGregor 139.

⁹⁷ MacGregor 140.

⁹⁸ Herzog 189-190.

⁹⁹ Çavuşoğlu, Merve and Gülay Dirik. "Fear or disgust? The role of Emotions in Spider Phobia and Blood-Injection-Injury Phobia." *Turkish Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2011, pp. 115-122, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51188619_Fear_or_disgust_The_role_of_Emotions_in_Spider_Phobia_and_Blood-Injection-Injury_Phobia. Accessed 20 May 2017.

of those organisms that arouse disgust, as they are thought to carry pathogens. It has been observed that when the physical presence of particular insects is removed, and in the context of photography, video, or other visual stimuli, the effect of fear is not as prominent, because the anticipation of the approaching insect or harm caused by the insect are absent, whereas disgust is more palpable.¹⁰⁰ The ugly stalks the subject, it is there even when you close your eyes. It threatens distance, it is always too close. A surface lacking containment is ugly; it breaches boundaries and threatens to leak raw matter and formless stuff into the world. The ugly, slimy and gloppy elicit disgust.¹⁰¹ The ugly subject is thoughtlessly exposed to being squished and gratuitously disembowelled in a scene of uncontained bodily ooze, a violence rarely enacted against the clean, hollow surface of the cute.¹⁰² The disgusting subject is reassigned to a lower status in the social and moral ordering. Disgust and its neighbor, contempt, confirm others as occupying a lower status, while those performing the evaluating define themselves as higher. “You give me the creeps.”¹⁰³ Disgust involves the senses, and through these reaffirming stimuli, it ranks people and things. Disgust conveys aversion towards something perceived as dangerous and leaky with contagion.¹⁰⁴ The domain of disgust is structured in generalized oppositions; inorganic vs. organic, plant vs animal, human vs. animal.¹⁰⁵ Disgust operates unevenly in range in the organic world, but plants disgust only when they descend far enough down the plant phyla to merge with

¹⁰⁰ Çavuşoğlu and Gülay 121.

¹⁰¹ Hutchinson, Mark. “Nausea: Encounters with Ugliness// 2002.” *Beauty: Documents of Contemporary Art*, edited by Dave Beech, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009, pp. 153-154.

¹⁰² Harris 20.

¹⁰³ Miller x.

¹⁰⁴ Miller 2.

¹⁰⁵ Miller 38.

“primitive” animals into “slime, ooze and murky quagmire.”¹⁰⁶ Rotting vegetation produces the soft, sticky bodies we associate with it, like worms, leeches, and slugs that secrete thick gobs of lubrication. I want to repudiate this trap with the moral sensitivity of a person affected by a shared mortality with “disgusting” things.

When red liquid flows and spills, it potentially carries associations of heart-stopping gore. When the butterflies first emerged in numbers overwhelming the inadequate confines of ‘home’, I noticed red puddles accumulating on the fabric lined floor of the habitat, and deep red splatters bleeding across the fibres of the mesh walls. This discharge is the butterfly’s meconium, the metabolic waste that accumulates inside the casing as the chrysalis pupates. As the butterfly emerges from its cocoon, this excrement spills over. In *Meconium Accumulation*, the butterfly residue exists as a digital projection, and as small paintings nestled inside homespun shadowboxes. Referring to, and deviating from pinned specimens, twenty-four butterfly paintings are fastened inside shadow boxes. The scale is intimate, the residue is real. Positioned in rows of six on a table, the viewer peers over, looks down on, observes the residue in boxes against the backdrop of a larger projection. The simulation of the residue, the representation of the real, is large, experiential and engulfing as red globules flicker in succession.

¹⁰⁶ Miller 40.

CHAPTER FOUR: Artificial Kingdom

4.1 Be Good to Them, Always

Wildlife documentaries are constantly recontextualized through editing, often resulting in a departure from originally filmed footage. BBC's Planet Earth and Life series are the golden standard of wildlife shows, but even they are primarily concerned with telling exciting stories. Wildlife documentaries are charged with portraying animals as true to life as possible, but this is all a fallacy. There are elements of truth, but these are peppered and sparsely distributed in a bombardment of cropping, obnoxious sound effects, framing and imposed narrative structures. The credible components of the documentary are omitted, resulting in the reinvention of animals through anthropomorphism. Steven Watts admits that, "reactions to the films suggest that nature did not really appear on its own terms. Instead, it was a kind of cultural canvas upon which Disney and the American audience painted an array of Cold War concerns and values."¹⁰⁷ The film footage from these wildlife documentaries only depicts those moments and snippets in the entirety of an animal's life that are considered relevant to the preoccupations of the viewer. For the hundreds of hours shot on camera, we only see the key moments succinctly compiled, delivering a narrative that is relatable to the human viewer. What we find in these films are those familiar tropes and characters; the rogues, cheats, heroes and murderers. These animals are portrayed in their most active moments; mating, fighting, feeding, and searching. Regardless, action is always key.¹⁰⁸ Baudrillard accuses Disneyland of epitomising all orders of simulation.¹⁰⁹ The films produced by

¹⁰⁷ Watts, Steven. *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997, 305.

¹⁰⁸ Aloï 13.

¹⁰⁹ Baudrillard 12.

Disney are no exception, as decontextualized populations succumb to pure simulation through photos and videos that document the tumultuous moments in an otherwise normal life. These active moments prime the viewer and suggest that the lives of these animals are quite different from what they may actually be.

I want to forget that they are dead. Some of my invertebrates stand upright and erect, some flail around their limbs, while others look back at me with beady eyes, reinforcing my utopian aspiration of life beyond death. They fulfill my wish, while remaining leftovers. I am a participant in culture that does not accept death. In an ongoing series of casting, *Be Good to Them Always*, I translate the bodies of animals that have passed away, at a 1:1 scale. From the abandoned shells of snails that have succumbed to either age, predators or parasites, dead crickets to crayfish, with particular interest in invertebrates, these soft, spineless bodies are replaced and reinforced with metal; silver, bronze, bismuth, pewter. The lost wax casting method retains the incredible detail of the morphologically spineless animals, while fortifying their once fragile and fallible bodies. Pets and pests are treated equally through this transformative process, memorialized and remembered after death. These are the bronze residues of former lives, resilient exoskeletons sempiternally frozen in their shock of their last mortal moments. They live in our mind's stage, despite the inanimate carcasses, where narratives are reconstructed loosely based on preconceived notions of invertebrate life.¹¹⁰ Cockroaches, the most prolific villains in our domestic setting, peer out of peep holes drilled out of wooden plinths. Occupying various heights, their face point out towards the open space beyond the display, occasionally intersecting a viewer's glance or directed light beam.

¹¹⁰ Olalquiaga 68.

Nearby, small lobsters stand inside and outside vitrines and plinths, observing one another, and noticing you. With clickbait names like pill bug, roly poly, and armadillo bug, the terrestrial isopod crustaceans cast in bronze that scatter across the gallery floor are perpetually scared/ tormented/ cautious. Completely solid, hefty, and transcending it's maximum size in Southern Alberta, these organisms are permanently frozen in their iconic ball shape.

4.2 Snugglesome Misfits in The Breathless Zoo

The ubiquitous paperweight, or what are affectionately referred to as dream spheres since the 19th century, ethereally suspended entrapments in glass globes that held down paper. Ranging from abstract millefiori paperweights to souvenir types containing photographic inserts of scenic and sentimental geography, to glass globes containing the names of loved ones inscribed within, and the beautiful and singular flower weights, the serial nature of millefiori globes diverged from the souvenir weights loaded with personal references. Similar, yet distinct from the underwater atmosphere of aquariums, the crystallized atmosphere of the souvenir paperweight replicates the amorphous state of memories and dreams. Freezing the fleeting, paperweights reproduced the artificial portrayal of an instant.¹¹¹ Receding in prominence, paperweights re-emerged in popularity at the Paris Exposition of 1878, this time with the peculiar trappings of reptiles and other animals that constantly undergo metamorphosis. These trappings of transience made all the more palpable the seizing of fleeting life moments.

With eight black gout-stricken, unjointed legs, unvaried in diameter, splayed out and reaching all the way to a sassy synthetic tiger stripe plump rump (a tush tag attached,

¹¹¹ Olalquiaga 60.

the poor thing has been branded), and a pair of eyes (no more than this), two tiny red stitched orbs lodged into a distinct anterior lump. This is TY's astonishingly imprecise and botched anatomically incorrect display, meet Spinner, the Spider. I hold out my hand and coax the beanie into my palms. Spinner's lanky limbs melt into the contours of my hand, groping for hugs. I'm thinking of teddy bears frozen in mid embrace with their short, stubby, paw less arms outstretched, droopy eyed puppies in hammocks and kittens in raincoats, these cute and neotonized subjects, this familiar iconography of anatomical distortions that solicit a maternal feeling. Spinner's abnormalities make this representation highly inaccurate in an era that boasts uncanny realism, "a decline rather than an advance in the representation of (spiders)."¹¹² Harris describes cuteness as the antithesis of what we would expect from such a term. Cuteness is not physically appealing, nor attractive, but grotesque and malformed; pictorially inexact and disfigured. "The grotesque is cute because (it) is pitiable."¹¹³ Soliciting feels and arousing sympathy, cuteness's formal qualities produce a caste of outcasts, loveable anomalies and deviants. Meet our snugglesome motley misfits in *The Breathless Zoo*, anthropomorphised representations of invertebrates encapsulated in oversized paperweights in resins and rubber. I felt compelled to adopt Spinner, and all of those squat, potbellied invertebrates "creepy critters" in TY terms, in their defenseless state of useless and absurd appendages, they emit an undisputable aura of motherlessness; I want to care for these comatose, semi-conscious beings. In those moments of power snuggles, my bears, turtles and kittens

¹¹² Harris, Daniel. *Cute, Quaint, Hungry, and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism*. Boston: DaCapo Press, 2000, 3.

¹¹³ Harris 4.

are slouching invertebrates. No jutting, sinewy limbs, lanky sharp snouts or claws, no abrasive material, just soft sculpture that succumbs to non-consensual snuggles.¹¹⁴

The still life theme of arrested life multiplies through the inanimate toy. I initiate play in the land of the dead when I reanimate the inanimate stuffed plush with a tush tag.¹¹⁵ Foma, a peculiar subject for Czar Peter the Great, was once a living museum specimen. Labeled as a “monster” because of blended digits that resembled lobster claws, Foma was stuffed after death for permanent display at Peter’s museum.¹¹⁶ He remains a spectacle in that expectations are eroded when one encounters the odd momentary break with the familiar. You expect to see five fingers, but instead, you see two.¹¹⁷ In *The Breathless Zooresin* casts, you expect to see a snail’s ocular and olfactory appendages consisting of a pair of upper and lower tentacles, and instead find two eye sockets, iridescent horns and threads that resemble “Fu Manchu”-esque facial hair. We’ve encountered an entirely new category of creature based neither on existing biology nor scientific classification, but rather on the animal’s accessibility and proximity to humans. Stuffed spiders, snails and starfish of the TY variety carry design attributes associated with baby mammals; short, plump limbs that teeter, large beady eyes, disproportionally large head. Their harmlessness and vulnerability stimulates my pity and solicits tenderness.¹¹⁸

In a comprehensive history of kitsch, Venezuelan scholar Celeste Olalquiaga implicates herself in the process of capturing life regardless of the cost, and the paradox

¹¹⁴ Harris 8.

¹¹⁵ Stewart 57.

¹¹⁶ Asma, Stephen T. *Stuffed Animals & Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 4.

¹¹⁷ Asma 36.

¹¹⁸ Poliquin 185-186.

of “sacrificing real life for the sake of a fleeting imaginary perception”¹¹⁹ *Snugglesome Misfits* address our taxonomic biases towards cute, charismatic terrestrial mammals reproduced in our selection of stuffed toys. Fun fur covered plinths emulate the fabrics and patterns used to produce the simulated organism engulfed in a thick crust of lab grown crystals. TY’s choices in fabric, anatomy, and names sacrifice the real for the artificial and contrived.

Olaquiaga describes items that were first collected, treasured, and reproduced in glass. Initially describing her obsession with her hermit crab, Rodney, suspended in his artificial kingdom of glass, she eventually ascribes a similar fate to plants and animals. Dried and pressed under glass or hung, flowers, emblems of beauty, were exhibited as sculptural objects. Trade made it possible to ship exotic plants abroad.

¹¹⁹ Olalquiaga, Celeste. *The Artificial Kingdom: On the Kitsch Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, 68.

CONCLUSION:

Snail killer. Those are the words that came to mind. That was my accusation, a label that followed my scientist. Then, I was invited to the crab bath. Zachariah has two hermit crabs, feisty and rambunctious tyrants that are quite poor housekeepers. It was bath time for the rascals, and as requested, I followed Zachariah's lead as closely as possible, and discovered something quite lovely in the process. The way he went about bathing his companions was ever so thoughtful and gentle. There were specifications and staunch regulations to follow; they were carefully placed in dishes of distilled water that were submerged in shallow warm water baths to ensure that the dish containing the filtered water reached a comfortable temperature. The crabs were gently held a distance above the water with just their appendages shallowly submerged, and at timed intervals completely submerged or lightly rinsed, claws, antennae and all. They were rewarded with gobs of honey, and replaced in their terrarium of fresh substrate. Every step was carried out with supreme caution through to the end when the crabs exit the bath. Zachariah immediately covered the terrarium with a heavy flannel blanket after carefully releasing the crabs into their home. The bathing process potentially stresses them out, and he hoped that the physical change that comes with this separation will calm the little crustaceans. He listened for their whimpers, audible barks that inform the owner of extreme distress. He fed them fresh vegetables, assorted nuts, and dried fruits, a diet more varied and nutritious than his own. The individual who kills snails gently caressed hermit crabs and searched for physical signs of malnutrition in their cloaked parts. I asked him about empathy in the papers he has encountered for his research on invertebrates. "I suspect that it's because researchers are beholden to funding agencies that are always

geared towards utilitarian stuff. You can see that many scientists care for their species empathically, but that doesn't show in their writing because it has no place there. Try visiting the web pages of various scientists and you will see they care. Dr. Wayne Maddison for example, who studies jumping spiders, is obviously infatuated with them, but his writing is very professional.”

The modernist white cube of the museum, and the isolation of artifacts using display devices such as vitrines and plinths, transform objects into works of art. While I engage strategically with these devices in my installation, I do not wish to entirely decontextualize and isolate the invertebrates and their remains (bodily, contrived, and others), in a way that fetishizes. The vitrine has a strong sculptural presence and serves the purpose of a container that protects the contents from damage and theft, while also providing artists with the potential to use more fallible, ephemeral materials. Placing an object inside a vitrine ‘museumizes’ it. Glass creates a physical barrier that reinforces the unique, special and untouchable façade of the work and simultaneously establishes distance like that of the passer-by ogling the contents of a shop window; just out of reach.¹²⁰

Clusters of wooden plinths with glass vitrines pepper the gallery space ‘infested’ with the organisms in alternating states of escape. The expectation of a solid stand is interrupted by holes that reveal the internal structure of the plinth and the bronze representations of organisms that observe us from inside this modernist architecture/prison. Brazen cockroaches and lobsters venture out on top and beside their wood bases. Flashlights embodying the explorer are placed for use in searches and discovery— holes

¹²⁰ Putnam 36.

that reveal and conceal our vilified domestic inhabitants. Plinths constructed in materials containing both hard and soft elements; plywood coated in fun fur and flannel, encroach and travel through this plywood dispersal. The fabric coated shapes carry indiscernible objects encased in a thick shell of lab grown crystals. Kitsch feeds into Kitsch encapsulated in resins and rubbers, eternally suspended and illuminated underneath. The plinths vary in height and width, challenging a visitor's expectations of a uniform and organized viewing experience. Themes of searching and discovering, revealing, concealing, hiding and finding, proliferate.

The conflation of glass vessels that hold a dazzling array of sleeping butterflies metamorphose into traces on paper and engulfing projections. As if an attempt to transcend frailty and impermanence in a culture that refuses to accept death, this entrapment offers a temporary solution to balance the oscillation between eternal beauty and feebleness,¹²¹ my contrived evidence of a proclivity for 'natural' history.

¹²¹ Olalquiaga 56.

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FIGURES



Fig. 1: Exhibition Title Wall



Fig. 2: Exhibition Installation



Fig. 3: *Snail Saunter*

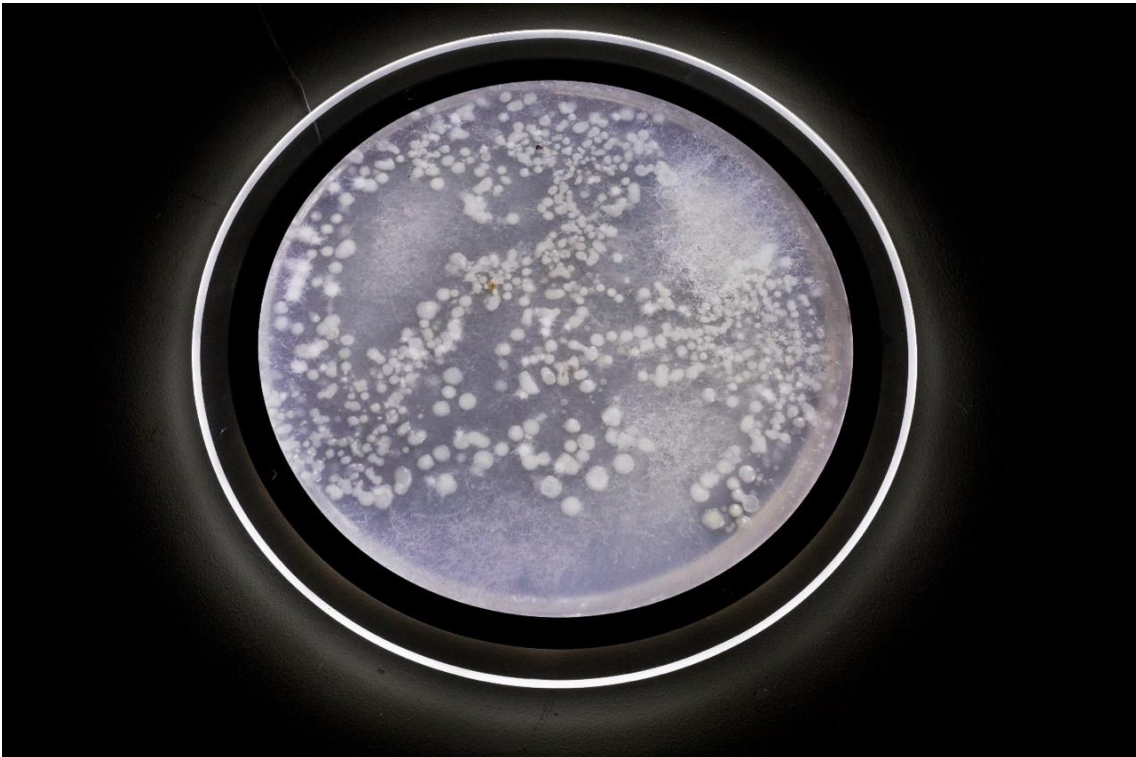


Fig. 4: *Snail Saunter* detail #1



Fig. 5: *Snail Saunter* detail #2

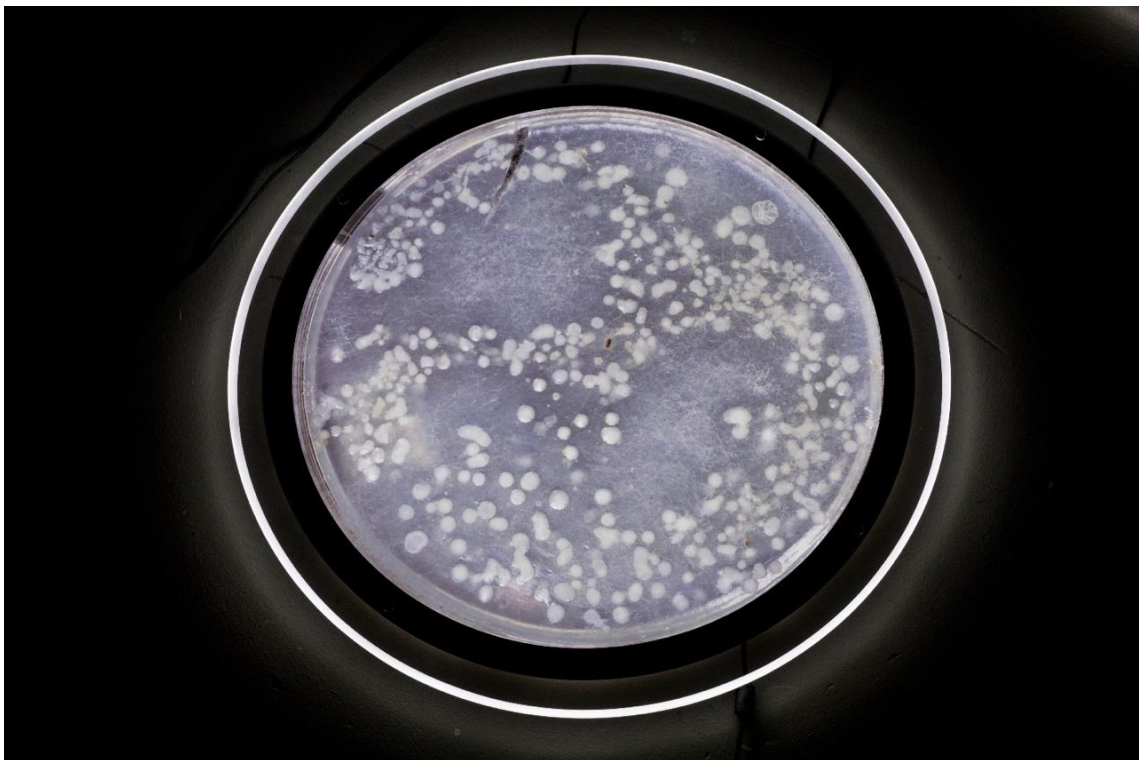


Fig. 6: *Snail Saunter* detail #3



Fig. 7: *Miner Meander*



Fig. 8: *Miner Meander* detail #1



Fig. 9: *Miner Meander* detail #2

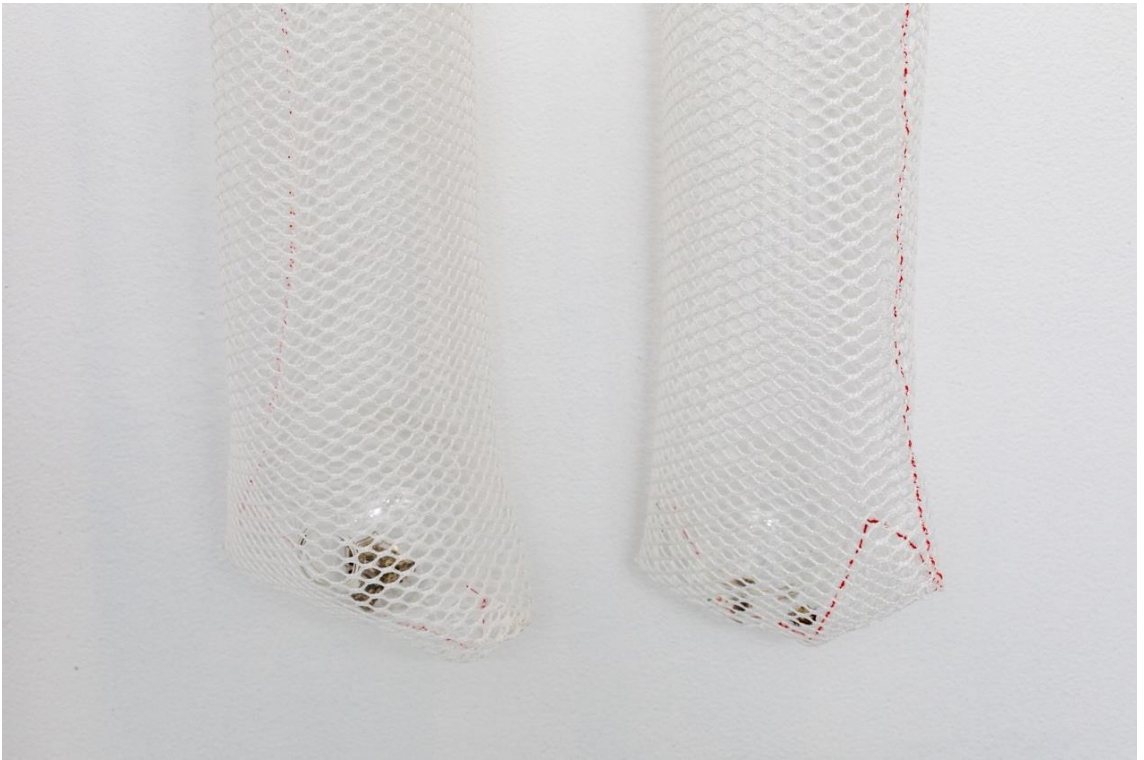


Fig. 10: *To Have and To Hold* detail #1



Fig. 11: *To Have and To Hold* detail #2



Fig. 12: *To Have and To Hold*



Fig. 13: *To Have and To Hold* detail (Sherman)

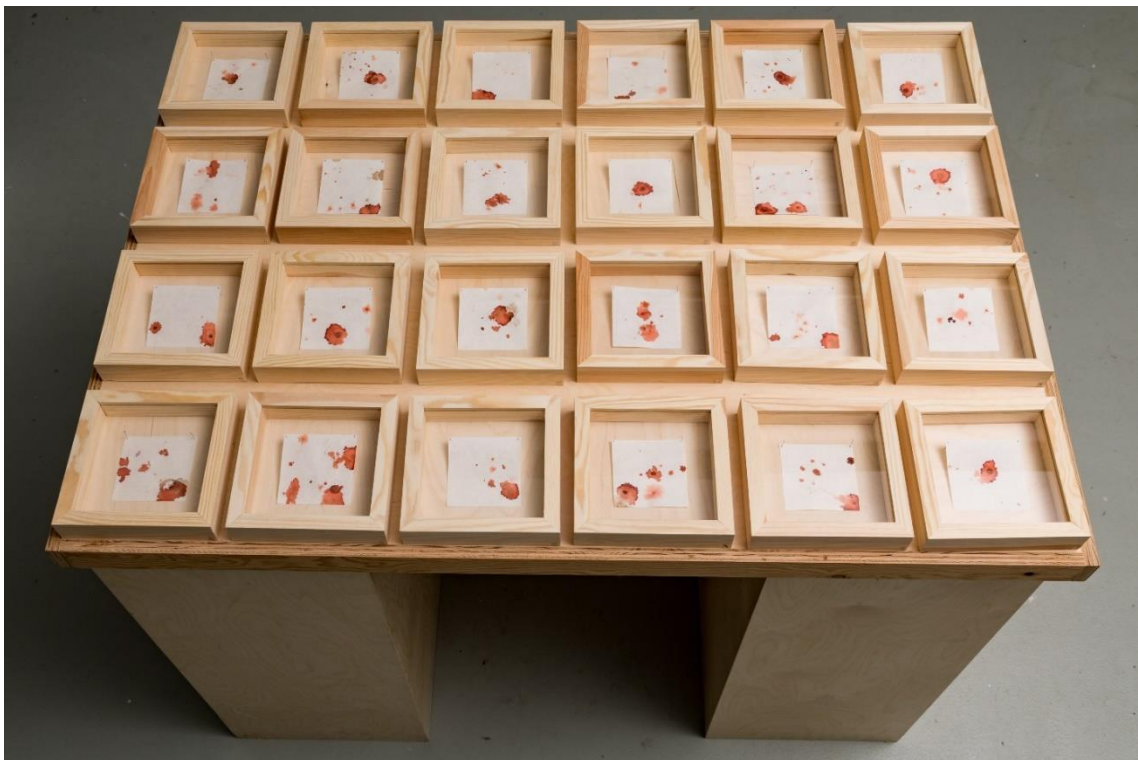


Fig. 14: *Meconium Accumulation* (shadow box detail #1)



Fig. 15: *Meconium Accumulation* (shadow box detail #2)



Fig. 16: *Meconium Accumulation* (shadow box detail #3)

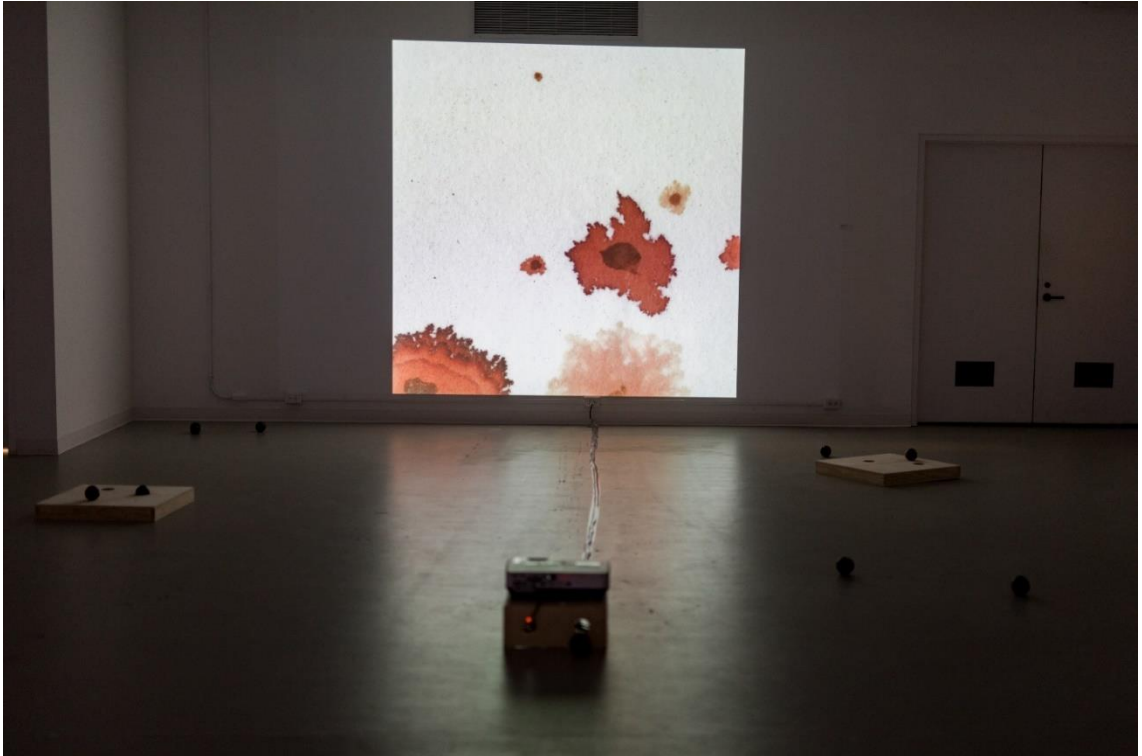


Fig. 17: *Meconium Accumulation* (projection detail #1)



Fig. 18: *Meconium Accumulation* (projection detail #2)



Fig. 19: *Be Good to Them, Always* (snail casts)



Fig. 20: *Be Good to Them, Always* (snail casts detail #1)



Fig. 21: *Be Good to Them, Always* (snail casts detail #2)



Fig. 22: *Be Good to Them, Always* (snail casts detail #3)



Fig. 23: *Be Good to Them, Always* (lobster cast detail #1)



Fig. 24: *Be Good to Them, Always* (cockroach cast detail #1)



Fig. 25: *Be Good to Them, Always* (lobster cast detail #2)



Fig. 26: *Be Good to Them, Always* (lobster cast detail #3)



Fig. 27: *Be Good to Them, Always* (cockroach cast detail #2)



Fig. 28: *Be Good to Them, Always* (cockroach cast detail #3)



Fig. 29: *Be Good to Them, Always* (lobster cast detail #4)

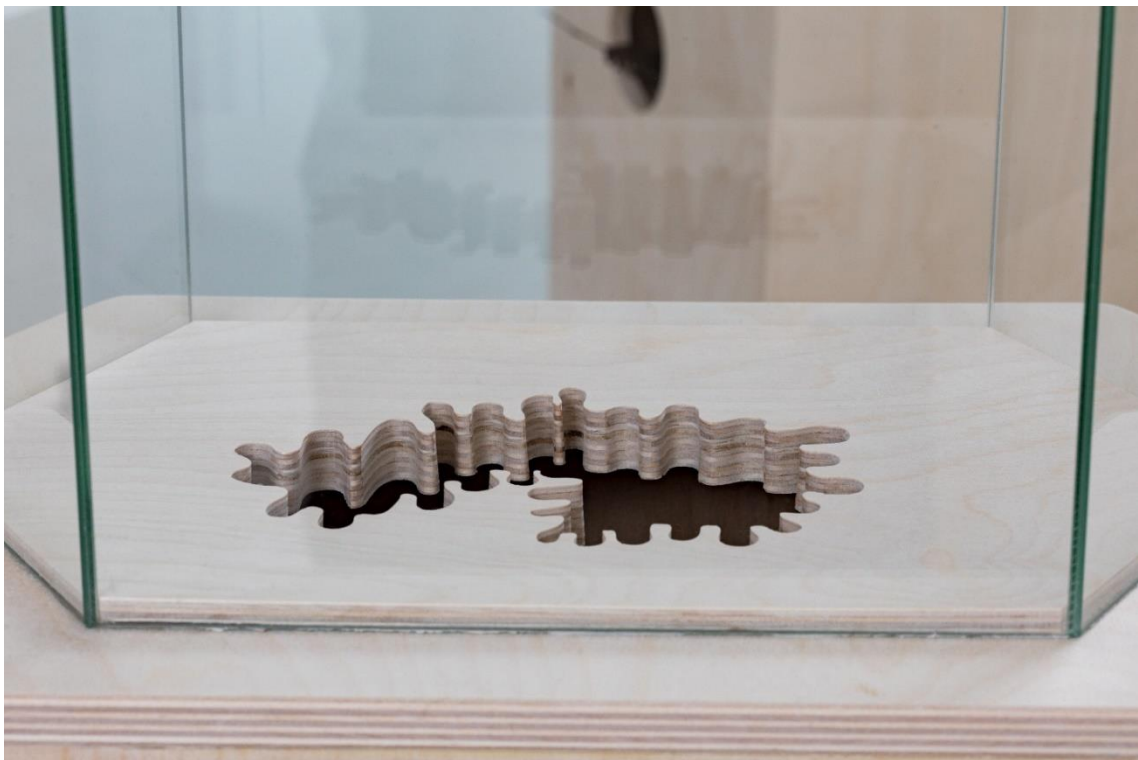


Fig. 30: *Be Good to Them, Always* (lobster cast detail #5)

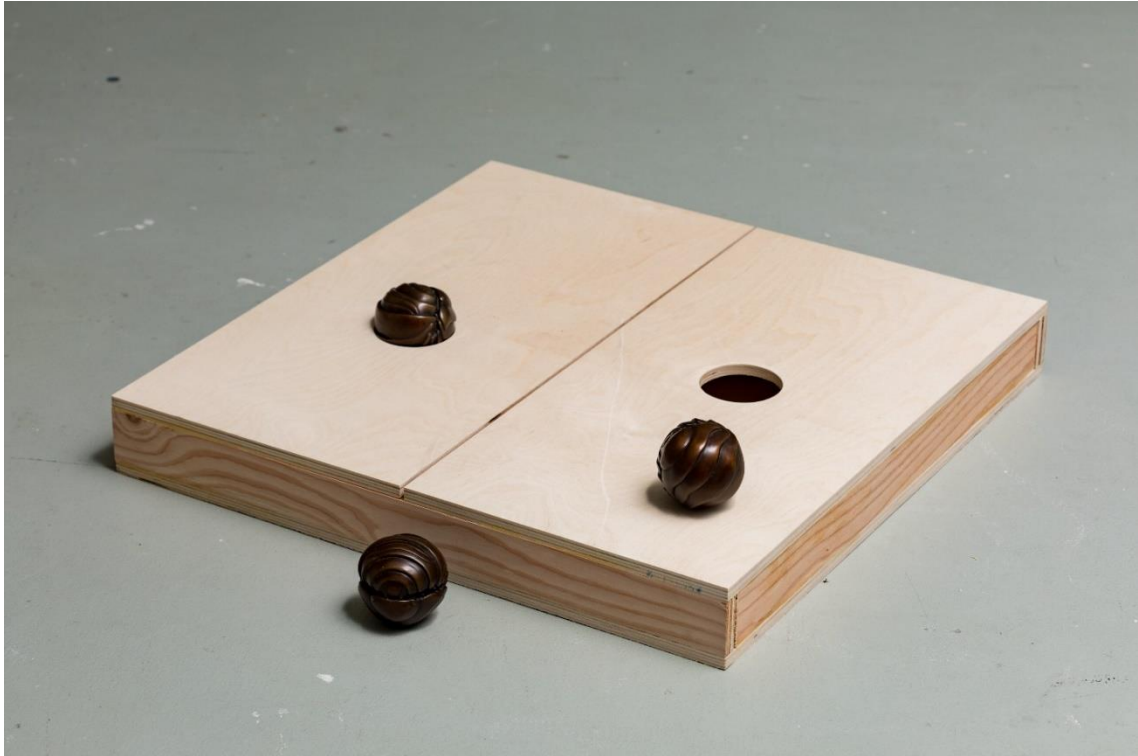


Fig. 31: *Be Good to Them, Always* (pill bug detail #1)



Fig. 32: *Be Good to Them, Always* (pill bug detail #2)



Fig. 33: *Be Good to Them, Always* (pill bug detail #3)



Fig. 34: *Be Good to Them, Always* (cricket detail)



Fig. 35: *Snugglesome Misfits* (Hairy the spider)



Fig. 36: *Snugglesome Misfits* (Swirly the snail)



Fig. 37: *Snugglesome Misfits* (Installation view)



Fig. 38: *Snugglesome Misfits* (Spinner the Spider)

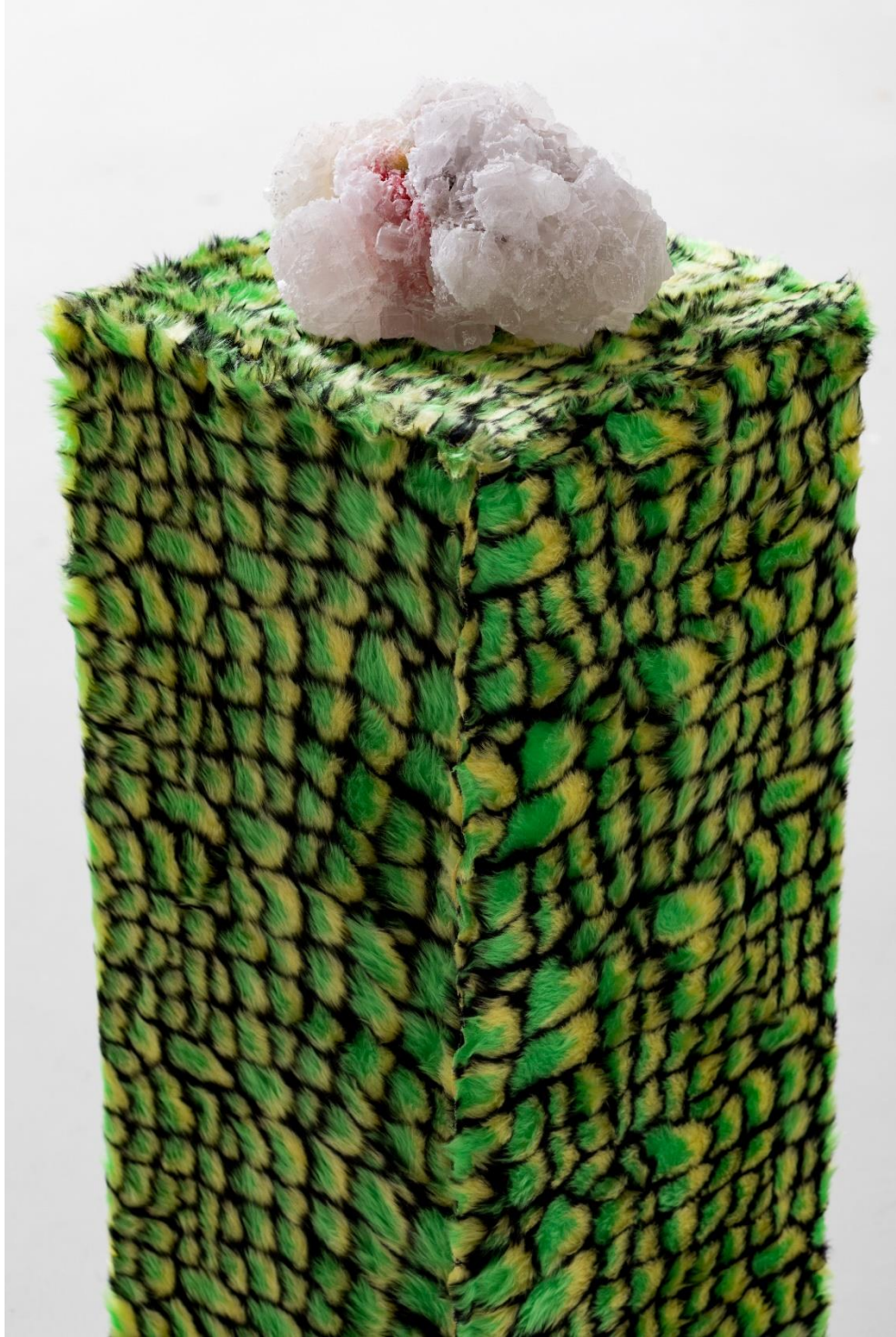


Fig. 39: *Snugglesome Misfits* (Scurry the beetle)



Fig. 40: *Snugglesome Misfits* (Installation view #2)



Fig. 41: *The Breathless Zoo* (Installation view)

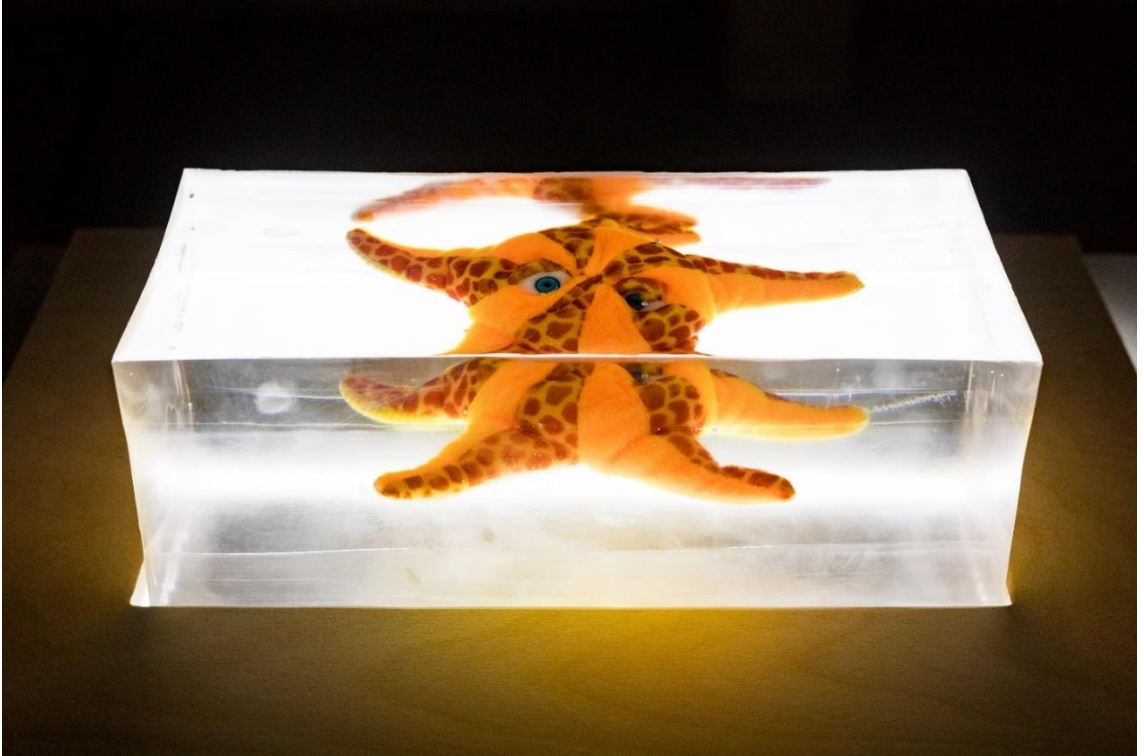


Fig. 42: *The Breathless Zoo* (Wish the starfish)

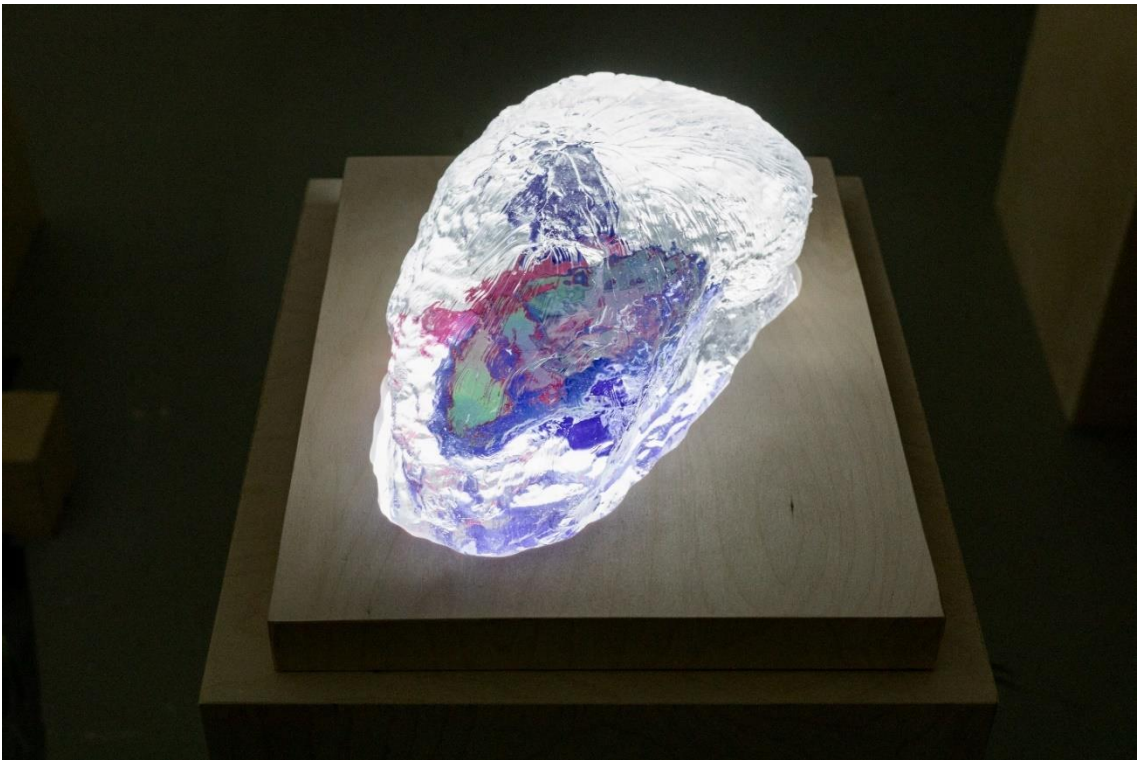


Fig. 43: *The Breathless Zoo* (Flitter the butterfly)



Fig. 44: *The Breathless Zoo* (Opie the octopus)



Fig. 45: *The Breathless Zoo* (Swirly the snail)

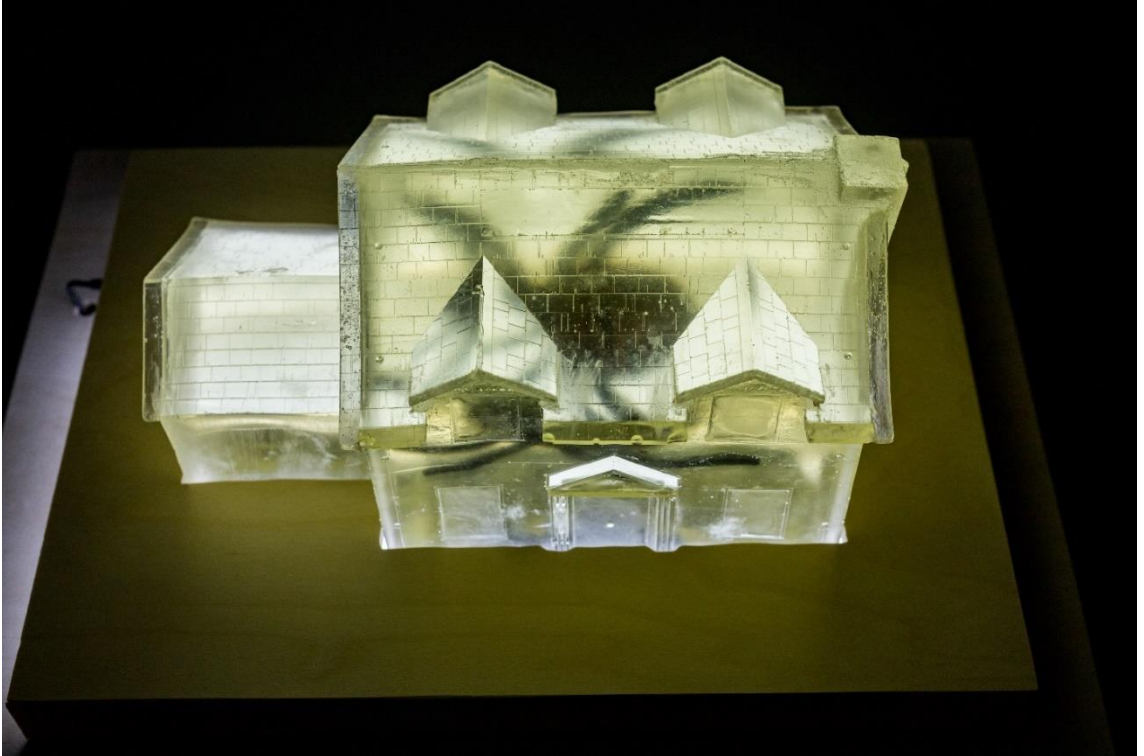


Fig. 46: *The Breathless Zoo* (Spinner the spider)