SWARM TRAP

Detail of Swarm Trap designed by Nic Dowse with floorboards from his Robin Boyd-designed house. Image by Janelle Low.

Swarming is the natural reproductive process of the European honey bee (Apis mellifera) super-organism.

The goal of a swarm of bees is to establish a new colony in a new home. The queen bee leaves the hive with about half of the worker bees, her daughters, swarming around her. Meanwhile, in the hive they left behind, a newly hatched queen is born and the cycle of life continues.

The goal of a swarm trap is to catch swarms before the bees set up shop in an inappropriate place and the pest exterminator is called in. Catching a swarm encourages sustainable, backyard beekeeping – and the more bees under loving management in backyards the better these precious pollinators will be positioned to handle the looming threat of the varroa mite (Varroa destructor) and Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD).

Australia is currently varroa and CCD free. Here, we are experiencing a golden age of beekeeping. The 12 objects exhibited are tributes to this good fortune, to honey bees and to sustainable, small-scale beekeeping.

After this exhibition, these swarm traps will be installed in the city, suburbs and bush between Canberra and Melbourne in the Spring of 2016. This process will be documented and a booklet launched at a second exhibition at Melbourne's Loose Leaf at the end of the next beekeeping season (Autumn 2017).

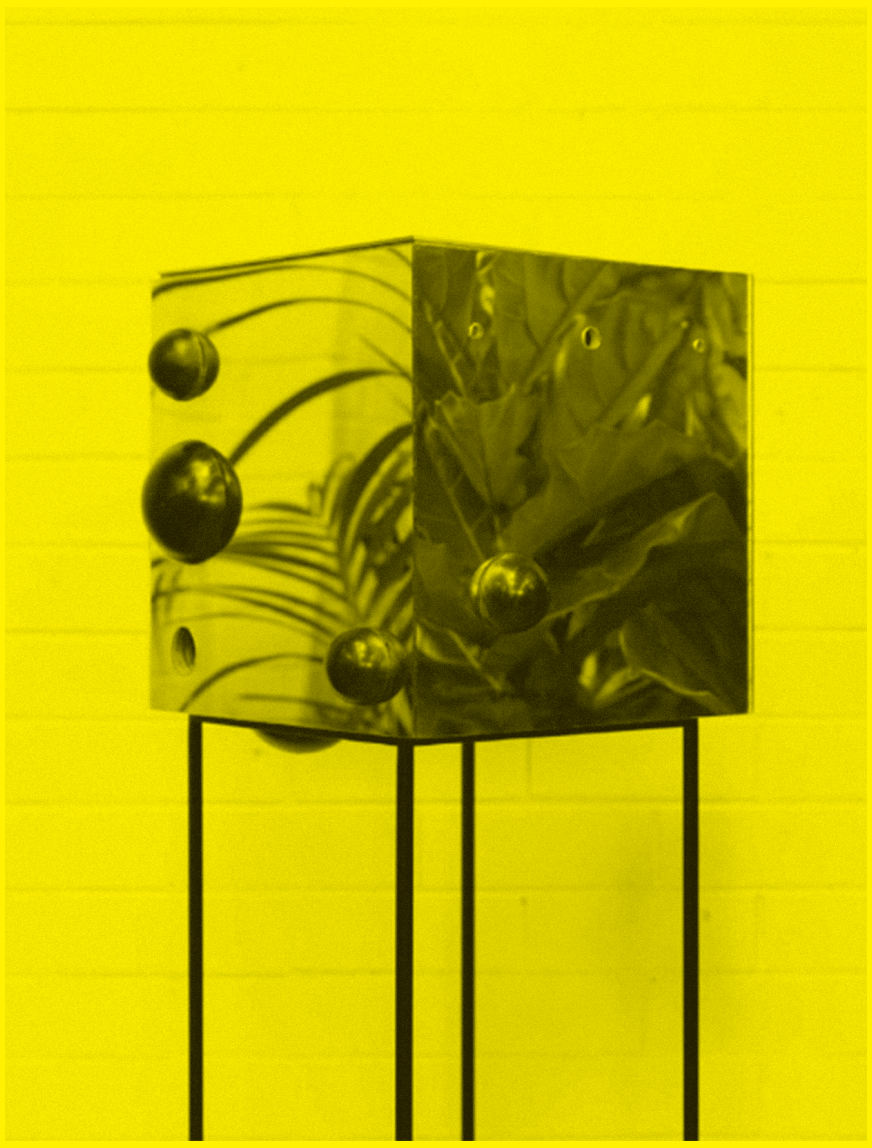
Swarm Trap is curated by MANY MANY and Honey Fingers. This exhibition is presented in collaboration with Hotel Hotel.

swarmtrap.com.au

28TH APRIL
to 8TH MAY
2016

WORKS BY

BECI ORPIN
BEN BLAKEBROUGH
FIELD EXPERIMENTS
HONEY FINGERS
LOOSE LEAF
MADELEINE MILLS
MANY MANY
NICHOLAS ASHBY
PAM STUDIO X HONEY FINGERS
SIBLING
SOFT BAROQUE



Swarm trap designed by SIBLING architects. Image by Janelle Low.

Hotel
hello@hotel-hotel.com.au

Hotel
hotel-hotel.com.au

Follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly.

– Franz Kafka

MANY MANY
MANY MANY is the creative practice of Rachel Elliot-Jones (AUS) and Stephanie Poole (CH) – an itinerant curatorial and publishing platform concerned with rituals of making and interdisciplinary design. MANY MANY publishes HOUSE WEAR, an occasional publication about nomadic culture, across art, design, architecture and writing (to which Honey Fingers has contributed a story or two).

HONEY FINGERS
Honey Fingers loves 'bee cultures'. Bee culture is a term used to describe the special culture that exists between bees and humans. Promoting, exploring and experimenting with this idea – the intersection between bees and humanity; a celebration of our symbiosis – is what Honey Fingers is all about. It is more than an urban beekeeping network. Honey Fingers is a creative and dynamic project that explores the connections between farming, food, art, history, design and education; and it always revolves its work around bees.

HOTEL HOTEL
Hotel is a hotel. A place of collaborative craftsmanship made by artists, makers, designers and fantasists. Physically Hotel Hotel is a place made by and informed by art and culture. It is a vessel for ongoing cultural and artistic creation.

Whiskey provided by Starward.

LIST OF WORKS

BECI ORPIN
Hexagonal Flower
Plywood, glue, acrylic paint, varnish, metal
430mm x 395mm x 300mm

Beci Orpin's swarm trap is based on the naturally occurring shape of honeycomb – hexagon. She used lots of blue and yellow paint as these are the colours bees are most attracted to in nature. Beci' hopes bees will think it's a weird flower and fly right in. The swarm trap was designed and painted by Beci and constructed by James Reynolds.

BEN BLAKEBROUGH
Leather suitcase (1930) with gold lettering
660mm x 370mm x 140mm

For the on-the-move trapper. Ben Blakebrough's mother used to have a swarm trap just like this one! Marcel Duchamp had one too, so did Albert Camus and Alan Ginsberg – he would read poetry to the swarm before attempting capture.

CHARLIE LAWLER & WONA BAE OF LOOSE LEAF
Name TBC
Cork branches, steel wire, coconut husk
500mm x 450mm

Charlie and Wona used natural materials to create both permanent and temporary artworks. The swarm trap is inspired by the German 'Sun Hive' design. The suspended structure is created using tatami weaving techniques with cork branches. The hive is created in two sections and is designed to hang from a tree. The upper level contains a large chamber for the colony to gather in. At the base of the chamber is a round opening for bees to enter and exit. The lower level of the hive partially plugs the opening, giving the hive more protection, and provides a comfortable landing strip for the bees to enter the hive from any direction.

HONEY FINGERS WITH CARPENTER JOHN ARVANITIS
Big Roof
Salvaged timber floorboards, hardwood offcuts, reclaimed brass hinges
1120mm x 340mm x 320mm

Constructed from the original bathroom floorboards salvaged from works on architect Robin Boyd's 'Lawrence House' (1966-68) in Kew, Melbourne – and installed on that building's garden wall for two years – 'Big Roof' is a play on taking the inside out and is a stab at creating a haughty, small-scale architectural monument, for bees. The trap itself is a box built to Prof. Thomas D. Seeley's specifications with a big, hinged roof (the bees cannot access the roof's void). It has caught one swarm that now lives in Carlton.

HONEY FINGERS WITH CARPENTER RENÉ MANCUSO
Bees in Trees
Salvaged oregon, leftover paint, reusable ratchet straps
1420mm x 360mm

Built to the 5000 year-old dimensions of the (still in-use) clay, cylindrical beehives of Egypt, 'Bees in Trees' is a nod to the traditions of beekeeping on the African continent, where empty cylindrical hives are suspended in trees to catch swarms and left in-situ, or moved to ground level, for the beekeeper to rob during the season. This hive will have an internal divider board (much like a Kenyan top bar hive) that will create an initial volume of 40L for a swarm to inhabit, but can be moved to create a larger volume for a growing colony to occupy. It will also have removable circular frames. This hive will be moved to ground level once bees have moved in. Interestingly, the volume of this hive – developed 5000 years ago – is equal to the volume of three eight-frame Langstroth boxes used today (a typical hive set-up in spring being two brood chambers + one honey super = three boxes).

MADELEINE MILLS
Hello Spooky
Clay polymer, stoneware clay, organic matter, beeswax, propolis, tissue paper, plaster, wire
1700mm x 400mm x 400mm

Born out of a child-like playfulness through which Madeleine Mills like to engage with material, this trap is a fusion of form and duty of care. Designed as a space that is safe, satiating and alluring for the bees, the attention to detail is at once acute and, in effect, unselfconscious. The layers of material have been built upon slowly and often spontaneously – its stoicism and autonomy revealing itself through the process. The trap stares back through the canopy of both uncanny and natural substances, ornamenting and embodying a sense of composite corporeality in our own human fabric.

MANY MANY
Negative (bee) space
Plaster
760mm x 380mm x 380mm

A common DIY swarm trap is made out of pressed fibre moulded by conjoined plastic buckets. MANY MANY sought to emphasise this traditional form by casting its negative space in plaster. The two halves – a plaster tower when closed – each have a different internal texture, creating a special interior 'for the bees' eyes only'.
NICHOLAS ASHBY
A foreign object from an alien world, to tempt the curious bee
Aluminium, plastic, steel
410mm x 330mm x 310mm

It's not just that this perfectly refined design by the Swiss artist and designer Andreas Christen (1936-2006) is produced and finished to such beautiful exacting standards – the adoption of this classic by seemingly the entire Swiss population represents an acknowledgement that the question of how to receive mail is answered. Similarly, Nicholas Ashby believes our animal brothers and sisters are capable of a taste and appreciation for refined and utopian human-built technology. And that the question of artificially housing our bees should not be overthought with a muddle of archaic research from our own history.

Bees would be eager to move from the craft-driven nostalgic timber we usually build for them to a clean and reduced modern future. A system driven by rational standardisation and the total absence of individuality. An efficient and ever-expandable program for mass housing, leaving one free to create and dream beyond the immediate distraction of home and one's heritage.

Humans and animals live together in the one kingdom – we need to share our riches.

PAM STUDIO X HONEY FINGERS
Swarm Catcher
T-shirt, dowel, steel
2600mm x 600mm x 400mm

A catcher rather than a trap, this device is popular in Europe for catching and relocating swarms that are within – or just out of – reach. The swarm can be closed inside the material funnel, and then gently shaken into a hive through the bottom of the funnel.

SIBLING
Hand-cast and dyed resin, mirror acrylic, plywood substrate
350mm x 350mm x 350mm

Through their research, SIBLING became most interested in two things: that, in the wild, bees are most attracted to blue and purple followers; and that bees communicate to one another about their environment through dance. This led us to create a trap with a mirrored surface, with purple attractors. As the swarm trap hung outside the window of their fourth floor Melbourne CBD office, they watched as the box reflected both its environment and the bees themselves as they approached and danced across and around the surface.

SOFT BAROQUE
Ceramic artificial branch swarm trap
Ceramic
350mm x 300mm x 250mm

Bees naturally swarm to a hollow tree branch to create a new hive. This ceramic replica of a dead limb creates a reusable vessel that the bees will recognise instinctively as a new home.

FIELD EXPERIMENTS
60l drum
Plastic, rope, rusted-steel pulley, rock.
Size tbc

Field Experiments have made an ad hoc swarm trap from everyday found objects. The bung on a 60 litre plastic fermenter drum has been removed, providing the entry point for the bees. The drum hanging height is controlled by pulley system which can be adjusted to suit any environment. This trap is a reminder that we can work with items on hand to create new objects that fulfil a specific purpose.