

Brandon Ballengée: Love Motel for Insects
Collection CAE1506

Introduction/Abstract

Love Motel for Insects, a project by Brandon Ballengée, is an ongoing series of outdoor installations intended to construct situations between humans and arthropods. Materials include signage, exhibition ephemera, UV light and fixtures, drawings & sketches, music sound track, digital images, press, and documents, as well as miscellaneous ephemera from other projects.

Biographical Note: Brandon Ballengée

Brandon Ballengée (American, born 1974) is a visual artist, biologist and environmental activist based in New York. Ballengée creates transdisciplinary artworks inspired from his ecological field and laboratory research. Since 1996, a central investigation focus has been the occurrence of developmental deformities and population declines among amphibians. In 2001, he was nominated for membership into Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society. In 2009, Ballengée and SK Sessions published “Explanation for Missing Limbs in Deformed Amphibians” in the *Journal of Experimental Zoology* and received international media attention from the BBC and others. This scientific study was the inspiration for the book *Malamp: The Occurrence of Deformities in Amphibians* (published by Arts Catalyst & Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK) and a solo exhibition at the Royal Institution of Great Britain (London, England: 2010). Since 2009 he has continued his amphibian research as a visiting scientist at McGill University (Montréal, Canada). In 2011 he was awarded a conservation leadership fellowship from the National Audubon Society’s TogetherGreen Program (USA).

In the summer of 2013 the first career survey of Ballengée’s work debuted at the Château de Chamarande in Essonne (France), and will travel to the Museum Het Domein in Sittard (Netherlands) in 2014. Also in 2014, 34 of his prints, including some from the Malamp and Early Life series, were exhibited in a major solo exhibition at the Midland Center for the Arts in Midland (Michigan). His work has previously been exhibited throughout the USA and internationally in 17 countries, including Canada, Argentina, England, Germany, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Russia, India, China, South Korea and Australia.

His art has been featured in several major US publications, including ARTnews, Art in America, The New York Times, New Yorker, The New York Times Magazine, Orion, Audubon Magazine and Sculpture. Internationally, it was also featured in Beaux Arts (France), Liberation (France), L’Oeil (France), The Observer (England), The Guardian (England), Financial Times (England), BBC News (England), D’Ars (Italy), Domenica (Italy), Il Venerdì (Italy), The Sunday Guardian: New Dehli (India) and others.

In 2011 the book *Praeter Naturam: Brandon Ballengée* was published about his works by Parco Arte Vivente, Centro d’Arte Contemporanea and Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali in Turin (Italy). Another book *From Scales to Feathers*, will debut this year published by the Williams Center for the Arts (USA) and the Shrewsbury Museum (UK). He earned his Ph.D. through a collaborative program between the University of Plymouth (UK) and Hochschule für Gestaltung Zürich (Switzerland). Since 2011 he has been a professor at the School of Visual Arts in New York City teaching in both the Fine Arts Department and the Humanities and Sciences Department.

Scope and Content

Love Motel for Insects is an ongoing series of outdoor installations intended to construct situations between humans and arthropods. The works use ultra-violet lights on enormous sculpted canvases to attract insects

and create an opportunity for public interactions with nocturnal arthropods, which are not often seen. At each location, the Love Motels become the backdrop for community events such as; picnics, biodiversity festivals, graffiti jams, political rallies, scientific investigations, musical events and even insect film screenings.

The *Love Motels for Insects* sculptures began in 2001 in Central America. At this time the initial structures were made from battery powered black lights and bed-sheets placed in the Costa Rican forest floor. Within hours numerous species of flying moths, beetles, caddisflies, ants, lacewings and other arthropods descended on the installation. Female moths released chemical pheromones to attract mates and consequently “painted” the impromptu piece. Fascinated and inspired by this initial experience, further Love Motels for Insects have been fabricated along with public nocturnal field trips around the world. To date versions of the project have debuted on boats in Venice (Italy), peat bogs in Lough Boora (Ireland), isolated moors overlooking Loch Ness (Scotland), bustling shopping malls in Delhi (India), outside Aztec ruins (Mexico), New Haven (USA) inner-city bus stops, roof tops in London (England), temperate forest mountain-sides (South Korea), Louisiana Bayous (USA) and others.

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This archive is currently in process.