



# NESTING WITH THE OTHER

An Exploration of Symbiotic Relationships With Termite Others

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*“I chose to deal with animals because, for me, they represent options. Options for fulfillment, escape, and change. Multifaceted and unpredictable, animals aid us in understanding the world. They can be used to explain various natural phenomena. We can attribute them picturesque, eccentric qualities that we humans would not dare to associate with ourselves. And unlike real animals, which are also the heroes of many fables, imaginary animals and their abilities will never become extinct.”*

*Inbar Avneri<sup>1</sup>*

*“The weed is the Nemesis of human endeavour. Of all the imaginary existences we attribute to plant, beast and star the weed leads the most satisfactory life of all. True, the weed produces no lilies, no battleships, no Sermons on the Mount. The weed exists only to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. It grows between, among other things.”*

*Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Inbar Avneri, Klimt02.net. Inbar Avneri. Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art. Selected Graduate 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Athlone Press. 1988.

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the mutualistic symbiosis between animals and insects to their nests in their local environment through an artistic research project within which jewellery is produced and explored in the text. I focused on the imagery and methods of nest building of multiple animals and insects. Organic symbiosis is explored through notions of materiality, cocreation, locale, biomimicry and evolution. The research is supported by multiple crucial texts by the climate activist and world renown theorist Rosi Braidotti. I examine these texts alongside my own methods and practice.

*Keywords: Anthropocene, symbiosis, humanimal, rhizomatic thinking, posthumanism, social behaviour*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Anthropocene is a proposed geological time period on Earth showcasing the immense human impact on Earth's ecosystems and geology, as well as the rapid increase of biological extinction rates. Species assemblages have been permanently changed worldwide by geologically unprecedented species invasions and changes correlated with fishing and farming, which constantly reconfigures the biological trajectory of Earth (Waters et al., 2016:2). It is crucial to understand, realize, and face the extent of human destruction to Earth, and to create a meaningful human-Nature connection. The aim of this project is to use the nest as a framework for my creative process where deeper human, creature, and biological assemblages are created (Bakke, 2017:43).

The historical need for human domination over inorganic and organic matter will be examined and utilized to further my understanding of the destructive impact we continually have on the environment. The need to destroy and remove insect nests such as that of the termite colony from human spaces points to the normalization of everyday Anthropocentric practices. Striving to understand the symbiotic life of animals and insects through my jewellery making process will stimulate an understanding that non-human connections are powerful and contain a vital force (Braidotti, 2019:33). The Italian philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2013:81-89) explains that the Nature-vital force is a not-human-centred life force which decentralizes the human from our ways of thinking and focuses on practices that encourage the consideration of all forms of life.

Braidotti specified posthumanism as a “...*critique of the humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the allegedly universal measure of all things...*” (2019:32). Posthumanist theories explain that the organic world outside of our manmade cities can act as spaces for enchantment and as a stimulant for activism towards a common goal – fighting for a more sustainable future. However, we must accept that

activism towards understanding our actions in the Anthropocene period will demand challenging, relentless work; but also demands “...*joy, play, and response-ability to engage with unexpected others...*” (Haraway, 2016:208).

I believe engaging with birds, insects, and organisms is crucial in the creation and personal evolution of myself as a person. Gilles Deleuze stated that “...*the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities...*” (1980:275). Thus, I reinterpret the methodical creation of jewellery pieces, while utilizing the animals and insects in my environment as my inspiration, as a sculpting of myself, or a becoming ‘more’ of my-‘self’. Through creating a deeper connection with Nature during my creative practice, I become infinitely more connected with myself.

A posthuman experience in my jewellery-making practice will take into consideration biological and geological perspectives surrounding the nest as a space to cultivate an “...*understanding and ... [to communicate] ... the complexity of the biological and mineral entanglements linking ... species through ... pathways and networks...*” (Bakke, 2017:41). Van Dooren in *Flight Ways: Life & Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (2016) explains that biology has evolved within the context of material processes of integrational life in the company of others. While many animals’ social lives are immediately recognizable to us, plants, microorganisms, and various others are also deeply social beings in their own ways, exchanging signs and meanings, communicating in ways that we often underestimate.

Ultimately, my approach to writing and my creative process aims to pull readers into a deeper understanding of the significance of extinction during the Anthropocene epoch, while also realizing our responsibility to help keep a place open in the world for the many disappearing others. I gain an ever-evolving understanding of Nature within which organisms, the human, and our materialistic environment is blended to highlight the symbiotic and rhizomatic interconnectedness of everything around us. Rosi Braidotti (2013:81-89) explains this mode of activism as an artistically projected assemblage, or future, of multispecies alliances that accepts humans as being one with Nature.

This human/animal blend is what Karen Barad explains as the 'humanimal'. This assemblage indicates an infinitely enfolding material biological reality — an agential reality — in which we are always creatively becoming (Barad, 2006). Rosi Braidotti (2013) further explains that a post-anthropocentric model that places the preservation of *Zoe* – the life force of Nature - at the centre is crucial. To do this, Braidotti outlines a three-phase process, which she labels “...*becoming-animal, becoming-earth, and becoming-machine...*” (2013:66).

Embodiment, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962), is the belief that the human's perceptual subjects are their bodies. He wrote that humans mainly interact with their environment and the world through their bodies and view the world through the effect that their bodies have on their environment. Embodied knowledges again links to innate ways that insects and animals navigate and interact with their environment; or as this is often called, their *instincts*. These embedded knowledges and behaviours inside animals in relation to the specific acts of nest building can teach me how to consume less materials in my creative process, and many more lessons.

Jewellery will play a key role in my practice as a gentle but stern reminder of the destruction of the nonhuman others' habitat, humans' social behaviours, and how posthumanist theory plays a large role in the activation of the hidden, but organized chaos that governs our environment (Gordon, 2017). Jewellery has a relationship with Nature that is fraught with destruction to the environment through mining minerals, gemstones, and metals from Earth. The minerals mined are then modified into wearable jewellery pieces that communicate social ideals and structures.

The main focus of my research will be on the social behaviours that are stimulated throughout the process of nest building that can be found in Nature. My research will yield a creative series that challenges humanist concepts and our exclusion and control over Nature. My creation of jewellery pieces that activate a two-way mirror through which to observe, notice, and realize that we are part of the animal world.

Therefore, the main objective of my research is to utilise theories of new materialism, and methods of co-creation in relation to the figure of the nest to further our understanding and activism for the Anthropocene. I want to create a noisy space that places the viewer within the symbiotic lives of multiple animals and creatures. Through the expansion of our view of the microscopic beings of earth, the Anthropocene is made bolder, and its' importance is highlighted. Jewellery then acts as the medium that communicates multiple sensations, which create alternative ways of understanding and experiencing Nature.





## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research article will look at the inner workings of different nests to explore the symbiotic relationships between creatures that build, share, and inhabit them to formulate a better understanding of my immediate environment. I focus on materials, building methods, and the miniscule members of our shared ecosystem to attempt to deepen my understanding of Nature. Jewellery will act as my chosen lens which will be utilized that reviews the chaotic and beautiful structures that organizes nests and their connection to our urban spaces. My body of work alongside my theoretical research will promote a deeper connection between the human and Nature. Concepts of entanglement between humans and non-human others will be incorporated in my theory to argue for the importance of biodiversity and how jewellery can act as a prolific tool for becoming more enmeshed with Nature, and the creatures therein. Thus, I aim to ask a few questions regarding this topic:

*How can cocreation with nonhuman others through the production of jewellery stimulate a deeper understanding of our connection on Earth?*

*How can we become more connected with ourselves through an enmeshment of nature, which is prompted through creative explorations such as jewellery production?*

“Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty,” Braidotti (2013:1) stated, “that we have always been human, or that we are only that.” The objectives of this research paper are divided into three chapters to discuss my own

explorations into looking at my own constantly changing and shifting humanity alongside that of the termite body

### *Noticing / Becoming Earth*

Jewellery has the ability to draw attention to and give value to the smallest pieces on Earth. I aim to investigate jewellery as a lens through which that which is microscopic and unnoticed becomes unravelled and clear. I investigate how jewellery can be used as a portal through which we can make the micro-macro in the form of enchanting and playful interactions between my creations and the viewer.

### *Chaos / Becoming Animal*

The organised chaos of most animal and insect nests will be explored to deepen my understanding of how multifaceted the structures of Nature are. Many animals utilize intricate ways to communicate, organise, and consume, which challenge our ideas of coexistence and symbiosis. Nests can be viewed as cores of knowledge and learning, of spaces within which we can relearn how to coexist and cocreate alongside nonhuman and human others.

### *Symbiosis / Becoming Machine*

This part will follow in Deleuze and Guattari's footsteps and take a more philosophical narrative as I examine and speak about my own work and processes. I aim to examine parallels between animal/insect and human social behaviours through consumption of organic and nonorganic matter found in our environment. I want to explore the manner that many animals interact with their materials as well as the methods behind the creation of their nest. I am interested in the cohabitation and symbiotic relationships that often result after the nest has been completed and sometimes abandoned by the original creator.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Debora Gordon in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts & Monsters of the Anthropocene* (2017) explains the human perception of 'orderly chaos' in the insect colonies and formulates hypotheses that broaden the boundaries on the collective 'mind' of insects and how they operate together. The manner by which insects move is not detached from their natural environment, nor is the environment separate from them. The inclusive mindset of insects is crucial in our understanding and immersion in the everyday social lives of insects. Gordon's interest in ants, the environment, and ecology thus furthers a unique viewpoint and vocabulary that places us deep in the tunnels of the microscopic underworld.

Eugène Marais's book, *Soul of the White Ant* (1970), will be utilised because he was a noteworthy South African writer who studied many animals local to South Africa. His analysis methods and creative commentary relates to a new materialistic manner of describing the inner mechanisms of animal and insect behaviours. His research on the animals relative to the human also adds deeper meaning where the scientist is directly influent on non-human life and their area of exploration. The scientist thus showcased how the behaviours of humans and animals are comparable and similar. His writing places the reader directly at the level of creatures and invites us to view them in a manner in which we can locate ourselves within our local environment.

Rosi Braidotti (2013) is a prolific voice I will use to explain rhizomatic thinking and the formation of the humanimal, which is linked to that of my practical investigation of cultivating the animal-human bond. The enmeshing and evolution into the humanimal will act as a keyhole through which we can observe the resemblances between the social dynamics of animals and humans. Entanglement of nonhumans and humans will also bring to attention the key role that nonhuman others play in our ecosystem.

Pravu Mazumdar's *Understanding Surfaces on Jewellery and Identity* (2014a), *Jewellery and Life: An Uncanny Connection* (2014b), and *Jewellery and value: Some observations around Peter Bauhuis' fly-brooches* (2021) will be used to place jewellery in a new materialistic and contemporary landscape. Mazumdar (2016) explains the history of jewellery as being one with the human body the second the two surfaces touch. His theories on biomimicry in jewellery adds complexity to the conversations surrounding objects and our unending need to consume it, and what role jewellery plays in this cycle. Mazumdar further questions the monetary value, as well as status linked historically to jewellery and aims to dislocate contemporary jewellery in the humancentric value chain in relation to unending consumption of matter.

My research methodology follows Karen Barad's concept of re-turning, re-working, and re-membering the humanimal, the more than human. I interpret this concept in my paper as an impactful link created between the creature or animal I am looking at, and then reinterpreting that creature into jewellery pieces. A deeper connection is thus then created between me and the creature, and I become closer to them, or I become 'humanimal'. I interpret becoming 'humanimal' as a celebration of understanding the animal I interact with.

Jewellery as an object has both aesthetically and narratively changed drastically over time<sup>3</sup>. The traditional notion of jewellery as a marker of status and affiliation have evolved into contemporary jewellery which surpasses only being wearable objects. Therefore, my creative practical process will be intertwined with my theoretical investigation and research to formulate a thorough collection of theoretical and illustrative exploration in this research article. Theory, conceptual explorations, and a creative process will inform my practice-based research.

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<sup>3</sup> Mazumdar explains that contemporary jewellery has transformed jewellery from decorative and powerful signifiers to a hybrid world that mixes philosophy and different materials to question the world we live in (2016).

I want us to be re-enchanting, reminded, and return to animals and insects to better understand all organic matter both microscopic and ginormous in nature. The dire state of Nature under human destruction will be expressed through a creative method that rhizomatically tries to transverse between artistic and scientific research. The fluid links created between science and art prompts my nomadic thinking through my theory and rhizomatic creative exploration of the life of non-human others (Tsing, 2011).

As a contemporary jeweller and activist of the Anthropocene, I utilise mixed mediums and found objects to showcase and amplify my message of cocreation with nonhuman others. My body of work will include visual replications and reinterpretations of animal and insect nests and their creation methods through repetitive patterns and materials that reflect the minuscule or enormous nature of their habitat. My jewellery pieces will be developed alongside my theoretical practice in a nomadic manner where laborious creative practices will be utilized. A thorough process of creating through the eyes of the nonhuman other will be matured through time spent researching different nests of that I find on my nearby surroundings, and the symbiotic relationships that are often connected to these spaces.

## PART 1: *NOTICING* or *BECOMING-EARTH*

Anna Tsing (2010) in *How to Love a Mushroom* explains that the practice of noticing is a crucial part of understanding the intertwined organisms in a time period of extinction. “*Noticing*”, Tsing writes, “*inspires artists as well as naturalists . . .*”, which can further be explained as a complete love, passion, and immersion in the complex intertwined networks all around us (2010:191-203).

“*Such an encountering look . . .*”, Zertuche explains, “. . . *simultaneously brings forth an awareness of one’s own being such that the abyssal requisites for self and other, subject and object, human and animal are compromised . . .*” (2016:ii). Through looking, deeply investing ourselves, and noticing the microscopic lives around us, we take the first risky step into realizing the primitive side within us and an immersion into the humanimal bond.

Merleau-Porty (1962:79) explains that through this process, we have to transcend the need to view objects outside of our body, and view it from the outside, from a third person perspective. Only then can we not only step into



the body of the animal/creature but become one. Through this act, we become more of ourselves, we act like termites, they teach us how to live more sustainably, be more critical with what we consume and what materials we use during our daily life and be more closely linked to Earth and Nature.

Likewise, jewellery has the ability to draw attention to and give value to the smallest actors on Earth. Jewellery can be used as a lens through which we notice the microscopic and hidden becomes unravelled and clear. Jewellery making as a practice or methodology can be used as a portal through which we can make the microscopic seem enormous. This methodology attempts to blend the arts and humanities boundary into a complete enrapturement of Nature and into the sciences. This intense love and immersion into nests and all biological and geological actions linked to it is again connected to Barad's view of returning to and becoming the 'humanimal'. Enchantment and playful interactions form part of human nature – our desires and needs to look and touch.



Figure 3: Willemien Bruwer, *Reorganized*. 2023. Brooch. PU resin, apricot tree wood. 11 x 5 cm.



Mazumdar (2021) describes these human actions as:

*“[something that] . . . triggers desire and mobilises not only the gaze of the observer, but also the motoric systems associated with shoulders, elbows, hands, and fingers. Anything valuable attracts us. We reach out for it and wish at least to touch it. Anything that is not valuable, fails to attract us. We stretch out our hands and want to at least push it away. Value and non-value unfold a field of forces, in which the neuromotoric being of the observer is triggered into motion. Can jewellery trigger such effects? Can jewellery acquire a form that can communicate value or non-value and generate motion?”*

In my brooch (figure 3), I deliberately chose to utilize the object and connecting a brooch mechanism to it to mimic how as we walk through Nature, often insects fly or jump onto us, creating a moment of togetherness, or a moment of enjoying or wandering through our environment at the exact same pace. With this piece I was to create that moment while also noting on the human and Nature boundaries that we often create. My layered, glued together, and re-layered, and then re-sanding method calls on human methods of changing our geography and landscapes as we see fit. This piece speaks about our reorganizing of Nature, and I attempted this through using woodworking machinery and tools while keeping the termite nest making methods as a state of ‘being’.

In my work vital materialism is represented as the lively energy found in the nest, and the ability of the creatures within the nest to use materials from their local environment to create intricate and beautiful shapes. These nest shapes and their interesting use of organic materials inspire me to not only follow their methods of nest creation, but to imagine and craft a new world or nests of my own. In my artistic and methodical body of work I practice what Tsing calls a “. . . *passionate immersion in the lives of nonhumans . . .*” (2010:9). Van Dooren explains that this methodology and way of looking “. . . *pays close attention to the ‘ways of life’ of nonhuman others and their consequential entanglements with larger worlds . . .*” (2017:59).



## PART 2: *THE CHAOS* or *BECOMING-ANIMAL*

*So, what are we looking at? What are we noticing in this moment?*

We are looking at the movement, the energy, the constant inward, and outward movements of the nest. Like an organ, or a human brain, the organised chaos found in most animal and insect nests is an unending space for inspiration and enchantment.



Figure 5: S. A. Vanin. *Parque Nacional das Emas, Goiás, Brazil, field with numerous termite nests, general view*. 2010. 600 x 419 cm.

I want to explore the organised chaos of most animal and insect nests to deepen my understanding of how multifaceted the structures of Nature are. Many animals utilize intricate ways to communicate, organise, and consume, which challenge our ideas of coexistence and symbiosis. Nests can be viewed as intricate spaces of knowledge and learning, of places within which we can relearn how to cocreate alongside nonhuman and human others.

Firstly, it became crucial for me to deeply notice the termite energy. I pulled back memories of me hiking in the mountains surrounding Stellenbosch, South Africa. I sat with my memories of the constant noise that termites make as they

burrow, gnaw at plant matter, and make their way through the undergrowth. Their movements are constant above ground, and sometimes idle as they rest underground in their mounds. I remember many mound of different sizes, some coming up to the knee and others only in their infant stage at a few centimetres high. The buzzing and chewing noise of the termites is all that you can think of as you stand near the mounds. The sound enters your ears and stays inside your mind. It is amazing to see how they constantly move like a breathing organism scourging for food.



Figure 6: Aniruddha Dhamorkiar, *Crematogaster* ants attacking a *Termite* colony. 2016. 800 × 450 cm.

### PART 3: SYMBIOSIS or BECOMING-MACHINE

In this part, I would like to take follow in Deleuze and Guattari's footsteps and take a more philosophical narrative voice while I write about my jewellery explorations.

To 'behave like an animal' is a term often linked to reckless or aggressive behaviour. But what if acting like an animal can help us not only understand Nature, but help us live more sustainably? Humans are animals, and we forgot most of our essential, sustainable habits. We can relearn these behaviours and methods of living through actions of noticing, of biomimicry, of not only looking but copying in a humanimal manner. Through the humanimal theory, I explored symbiosis as an action.

But what actions are we performing? What are we becoming?

*We are a termite, an ant, a wood-lice. We are slowly chewing at wood and shaping in a way that we see fit. We spend time on it, time that does not exist for us, and we sit with the material that we happen to stumble across and make it our own. We use only as much as we need. We spend a long period of time on this wood, but with our own human-machines, and we finish our nest, our house. And we are finished. We move on to the next thing. The wooden-plasticoid shape fits as it must, and we are content. We sit in the sun.*



Figure 7: Willemien Bruwer, *Pierced*. 2023. Ring. Wild olive tree wood. 11 x 4 cm.



Figure 8: Willemien Bruwer, *Two Termites Chatting about Lunch*. 2023. Set of two rings. Wild olive tree wood. 5 x 5 cm.

I began my process through being scared to start cutting into my beautiful offcuts of wood. Yes, they were all extra pieces from the woodworking industry that were mostly discarded because of their shape or size, but to me they were extremely beautiful. Pouring my recycled PU resin onto the wood stump that was previously inhabited by all types of burrowing insects felt like a sacrifice. I specifically wanted to use plastic and wood together to speak on the human/creative boundaries, and then eventually pushing this concept even further by completely transforming them through termite methods of nest making and burrowing, but through the help of heavy machinery.

Rhetoric becomes a process, a movement, and a biological becoming that emerges in nonlinear and discontinuous ways, illuminating the dark abyssal waters in which humanimals and animals are mutually and materially enfolded (Zertuche, 2016:2).

For me, the becoming-animal part only started recently in my practical work. I struggled, I forced materials, I pushed against what wanted to become. I was the brick wall, the human thinking they were superior and completely disconnected from Nature. I constantly fought this battle of trying to turn my materials into what I envisioned them in the future (figure 7 & 8). It was precisely as Braidotti (2013:2) put it: “The posthuman provokes elation but also anxiety ... about the possibility of a serious de-centering of ‘Man’, the former measure of all things.” The de-centering of myself created disability and the exact anxiety that Braidotti speaks of, but it is necessary as an artist to realize what the true focus of my research is, and it is not to create specifically beautiful pieces.

I used many man-made machines such as belt sanders, wood sawing machines, hand drills, in a way where I was completely removing the identity of true Nature from the objects. I stood fast, and refused to let the pieces *breathe*. I had so many discussions with my wonderful supervisor David Huycke, trying to pull answers out of him that I had to discover myself.

This struggle came to a breaking point when I sourced damaged bottles of PU resin, created an experiment where I poured it all over the previously termite-

riddled (but long vacated) wood. I ended up cutting this monstrosity of an experiment into thick, rough chunks with the wood-sawing machine. I was so aggressive and forceful during this whole ordeal.

Afterwards, I realized that it was enough, that the materials were enough. The materials were telling me all along that I could let it be. I did not have to use my jewelers' background as a cage that limited me from realizing what I had to do. I did not need to sand, saw, and shape these beautiful materials into oblivion. Yes, shaping and transforming these materials were important to my process, but not to the level that I had been pushing my pieces to become.

In new materialistic theories, matter is a vital organism that carries many stories and histories along with it. Braidotti (2013:81-89) speaks of an artistically projected assemblage of multispecies alliances that accepts humans as being one with Nature. Throughout my artistic research, I had to relinquish this innate need to be disconnected with Nature, and to treat it like mere objects. Rhizomatic thinking and creating, as Deleuze and Guattari (1988:25) explained, means "... to do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings ...".

This realization was difficult, and it felt like my world was being tipped upside down. Creatively, it felt like learning to walk again. The process of only selectively shaping my wooden chunks, only cutting the material in deliberate manners but leaving it completely raw in some places, made for a much more compelling and multi-layered narrative. Now, my pieces are showcasing the true methods behind the termite nest, of them eating, chewing through wood and organic matter, and shaping the world around them in intricate and beautiful ways. I can now showcase how I looked at the termites and tried to use man-machines to follow their method and their techniques (figure 9). I used my man-machines and created pieces where I feel like I truly became enmeshed with the humananimal.







Figure 9: Willemien Bruwer, *Holes*. 2023. Necklace. PU resin, apricot tree wood. 11 x 5 cm.

## CONCLUSION

In this research paper I used my history of growing up in South Africa to reflect on my ecological surroundings. I relate my self-growth and becoming-more of myself to the environment and ecological concerns to create a Nature-human enmeshed collection of jewellery pieces and objects.

My body of work can be viewed as autobiographical and my artistic evolution that consists of layers of organic matter, termite traces within the nest, and evolution. I have a deep connection with and appreciation for materials and their different forms; how they interact through different movements, processes, and spaces. Through the creative development the non-human and human objects and materials evolve and converge into each other – becoming an almost uncanny material assemblage. My body and my mimicking actions form part of the human/non-human collection; they become one.

My body of works will consist of an assemblage of wearable and non-wearable jewellery objects, that all form a highly personal and multi-layered narrative about the constantly shifting environment. This experience draws the wearer into a space where we are all reminded that we are part of an unstable and fractured Earth. I explored the multi-layered nature of my research and discussed the significance of my personal evolution and growth in my work, and how through my creative process these 'meaning-making' instances moved me towards moments of becoming 'more' of myself and becoming deeply folded into Nature and my local ecosphere. This process had moved me through processes of doubt as well as liberation, through which I fluidly move to a point where I trust my decisions, and let my process and materials guide me towards the conclusion of my masters project.

My jewellery pieces offer highly textural and personal experiences wherein the wearer of the pieces has a direct connection with not only the material assemblage, but also can connect with the human-nonhuman through their

skin. Focusing and reflecting on key texts from Rosi Braidotti, Donna J. Haraway, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Eugene Marais, Thom van Dooren, and Pravu Mazumdar have illustrated how vastly similar theoretical and scientific texts can be explored. These texts have proved immensely invaluable to me, as precious tools through which to view the ecology and creative production as deeply interconnected. This thesis has bolstered and multiplied my abilities to form connections from which I pull inter-layered narratives that I then translate into jewellery objects. I find this theoretical style of research has been successful for me but could benefit from additional visual research into specific artists. In the future I would like to better balance research into other artists alongside theoretic research.

Termite nests provided insight into the chaotic, organized, and multi-layered systems often hidden in our environment. Coexistence and constant interactions are often overlooked by humans in the natural world. Therefore, I wanted to showcase how termites live, their methods of building their mounds, and their interconnected web of communication. I explored their materials and how they interacted with their environment to create beautiful and intricate home-spaces. New materialistic, anthropocentric, and theories of rhizomatic thinking informed my research. The humanimal as an assemblage of humans and animals guided my choices of materials, as well as my methods of co-creating assemblages.

It is still to be seen if my approach is successful, as I am currently in the process of creating many of my final jewellery pieces. My research process has given me a clear vision of my end product and the precise direction my work will move towards. Re-working and re-turning to my pieces over and over again have taught me patience as well as respect to the materials themselves. I have learned that enforcing my visions and hopes onto a jewellery piece can hide the true methods of creation, as well as the concept I am trying to portray. I now have the insight to let my materials breathe, and to cover some areas of my work. I believe this process of failures, acceptance, and evolution have created pieces that have interesting texture and details with which I am very happy. I see the beauty in the roughness in the wood and bark layered in between

pieces of PU resin. I can now appreciate and let 'happy accidents' in my resin pouring process cause a complete redesign and rethink of what the end product will become. Despite my failures in working with too many materials, such as fabric, wood, etc, I will still hold onto these skills I have learned and utilize them in the future.

Thus, I feel I did not fully become humanimal but did however move in that direction. This project has proven to me that trying to view the world through a nonhuman perspective means not only pushing boundaries, but completely letting go of my too controlled and precise nature. Throughout this process I learned to accept and embrace mistakes, but in the future I would like to see these 'mistakes' as successes. In my future research projects I would like to explore the termite nest further in the specific direction of looking at the method in which these creatures communicate. I find nonhuman methods of communication fascinating and would love to develop this research further alongside creative a project where I use jewellery as objects to question and develop alternative methods of communication.

In the end, I find at this point in time my research project has been an incredible learning experience about acceptance, the true beauty of Nature all around me, and the constant evolution of the artist throughout the process of creating. Letting go of fear, doubt, indecisions, and overthinking is letting go of the human-centric artist in me and stepping into the world of the termite.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Bauer, S. USDA photo: *Termites rush to a damaged area of the nest*. 2007. (Page 5). [O]. Available: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/92/Termites\\_rush\\_to\\_damaged\\_portion\\_of\\_mound.jpg/800px-Termites\\_rush\\_to\\_damaged\\_portion\\_of\\_mound.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/92/Termites_rush_to_damaged_portion_of_mound.jpg/800px-Termites_rush_to_damaged_portion_of_mound.jpg) [Accessed: 03/05/2023].

Figure 2: Bruwer, W. *Close-up of Termite Cubes*. 2023. (Page 10).

Figure 3: Bruwer, W. *Reorganized*. 2023. (Page 12).

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