

THE WONDERS OF INSECT ARCHITECTURE

by Sara Bergman

We live in a world filled with these amazing creatures hidden in the forest, crawling under our feet, and flying over our heads. Even though they live among us we refuse to look at them, we fear them and call them disgusting. But there is something intriguing about them. Something unfamiliar yet beautiful. This project is a form study about discovering the wonders of insect aesthetic & architecture.

Just to clarify, spiders technically don't classify as insects, but I found that their aesthetic had similar qualities to insect's and therefore chose to include them in the term's insect aesthetic and insect architecture.



The Idea came from looking at images of biomimicry and realizing that none of the examples had drawn inspiration from insects or spiders. The fact that people are disgusted by insects and scared of spiders made me curious about the concept of insect architecture. There was something about the idea of an aesthetic feared by humans that sparked my interest. What was it about them and the way they lived that could cause such a strong reaction in people? I needed to figure out what insect aesthetics & architecture was and find out if there was beauty in it.

My main form of documentation was a black sketch book which throughout the process turned into a diary of sorts. This was where I put down any thought or idea I had. The goal of the diary was to capture insect aesthetics which in many cases was just me trying to make disgusting and uncomfortable images using as many senses as possible. It turned out to be a very good tool and a way for me to organize myself and my thoughts.





By trying out different styles in the diary I found that there were certain qualities which made people feel uncomfortable the same way insects and spiders do. I sorted these qualities into seven different categories. Bumps/Pits/Hives/Holes/Bubbles/Webs/Cocoons.

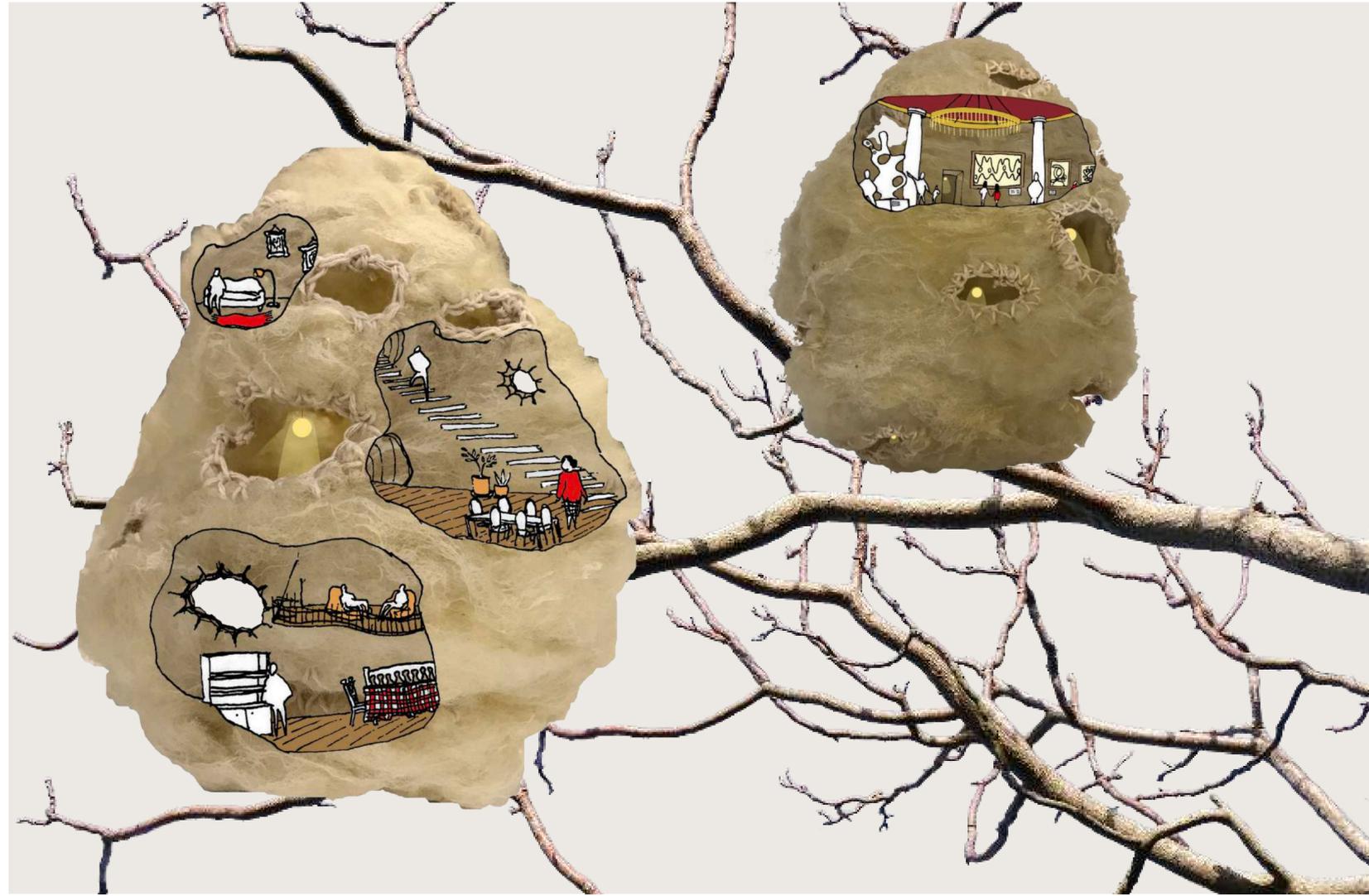
Physical models were then made, inspired by the sketches and the different qualities in the diary. Models inspired by insect eggs, hives, webs etc. I was also able to see how different materials affected the overall idea of insect aesthetics. I found that the different materials didn't take away from the insect aesthetic, but rather that different materials represented different qualities from different types of insects. The clay models gave off a dry earthy quality reminiscent of a ground wasp nest, while the plastic appeared almost wet and slimy like slug eggs or a spittlebug's cocoon.



The next step was to go from an insect aesthetic to insect architecture by adding life to the models. For this experiment I chose the wool hive. One thing that feels very human is adding light. It is very rare to see insects, or any other creature add light to their homes. I found that by adding light to a room you also add life to it. Therefore, lighting the wool hive up from the inside gave the illusion of life existing inside. By adding furniture and people to the model I was able to take the concept of life within a space even further and play around with the idea of humans living inside insect architecture.

Another thing that drew me to insects was how they often build their nests in empty or unused spaces. Spiders building their webs between two objects is a great example of this. Also, with context as a theme in this course I wanted to see what would happen if a giant insect's nest was placed next to man-made architecture. Therefore, with the intention of filling empty spaces, I chose to place my project in an opening between two buildings in Stenpiren, Gothenburg.





Finally, I needed to choose something to draw inspiration from for my final models. I needed to narrow it down a bit instead of viewing insects as a whole. With a newfound love for silk moths and cocoons, I was able to come up with two options to represent two ways of viewing insect architecture. One being a very literal interpretation, and the other one an abstract, simplified interpretation. The first model consists of glossy, wool filled cocoons, tangled in webs and the other one a model of a box with holes cut out representing the cocoons. In the latter example the play between light and shadow creates an additional layer of cocoons as well as the cut outs and drawn circles. The simple silhouette and the familiar shapes help add a human quality to an otherwise foreign design. The idea is that both models can be placed in between the buildings in Stenpiren. It was a deliberate choice to add people to the cocoons in the first model and leave the other model empty to see if adding people would change the overall atmosphere and make it appear more human.



