



Knaves turn'd Honest

The “Knaves turn'd Honest” beehouse explores the crossovers and slippages of (im)perceptible communication between humans and solitary bees. It operates as a sign-post inscribed with layers of information that either favour or deny the sensory apparatus of both bees and humans.

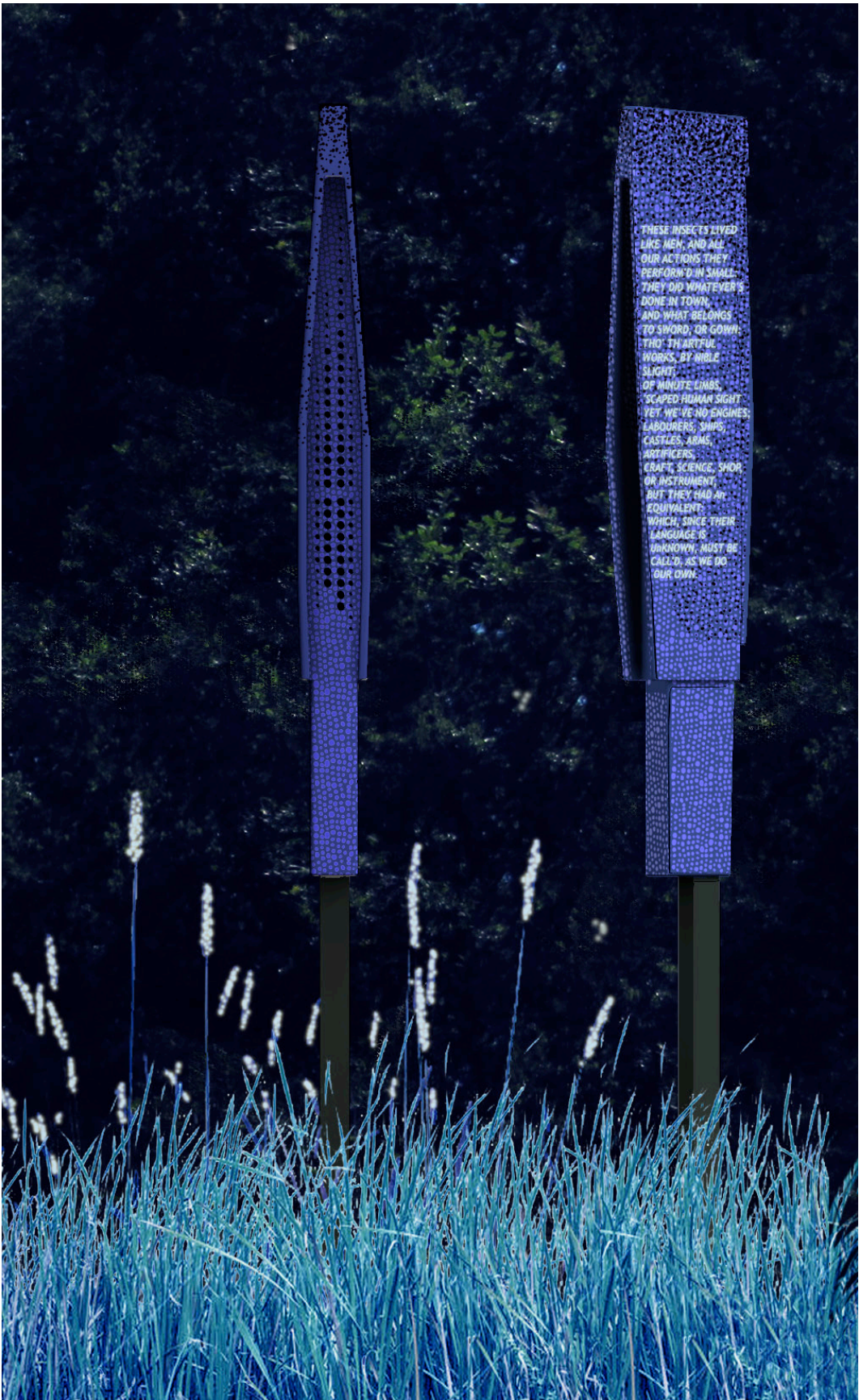
A broken pattern of indigo dominates the surface in order to titillate its future inhabitants. Invisible to the bees, a speckled red peak makes it easy to spot across the field by its human caretakers. To further appeal to pollinator communities, a layer of transparent ultra-violet reflective paint is stenciled onto the sides to simulate the glow of pollen dust.

As a playful but probing gesture, this layer – only perceptible to humans by way of specialized instruments – is actually inscribed with an excerpt of text from Bernard Mandeville's poem “The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves turn'd Honest.” It was part of Mandeville's “Fable of the Bees; or Private Vices, Publick Benefits”, a controversial theory of economics, first published anonymously in the early eighteenth century. It anticipates the “invisible hand” theory and builds an allegory of the hive in order to suggest that the satisfaction of private desires contributes to cultural growth that benefits society at large.

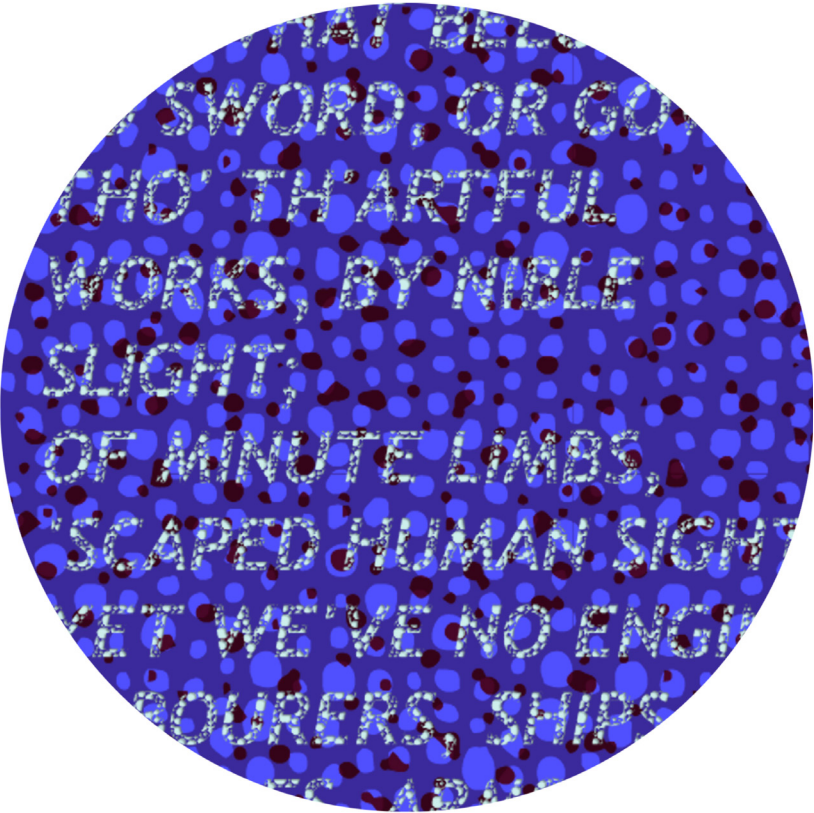
We find delight in this human propensity to draw allegories for ethical norms from social structures of other species. Perhaps in the absurdity of human language that is visually legible only to creatures for whom it is meaningless, there is a bitter-sweet slippage in communication between civilized humanity and wilderness. Perhaps it reflects the subtle interplay between the genuinely well-intentioned actions of one and the magnificent indifference of the other. We pass neither moral judgment nor opinion; We merely like to indulge the fickle questions of interspecies communication and revel in the ambivalence of its untidy answers.



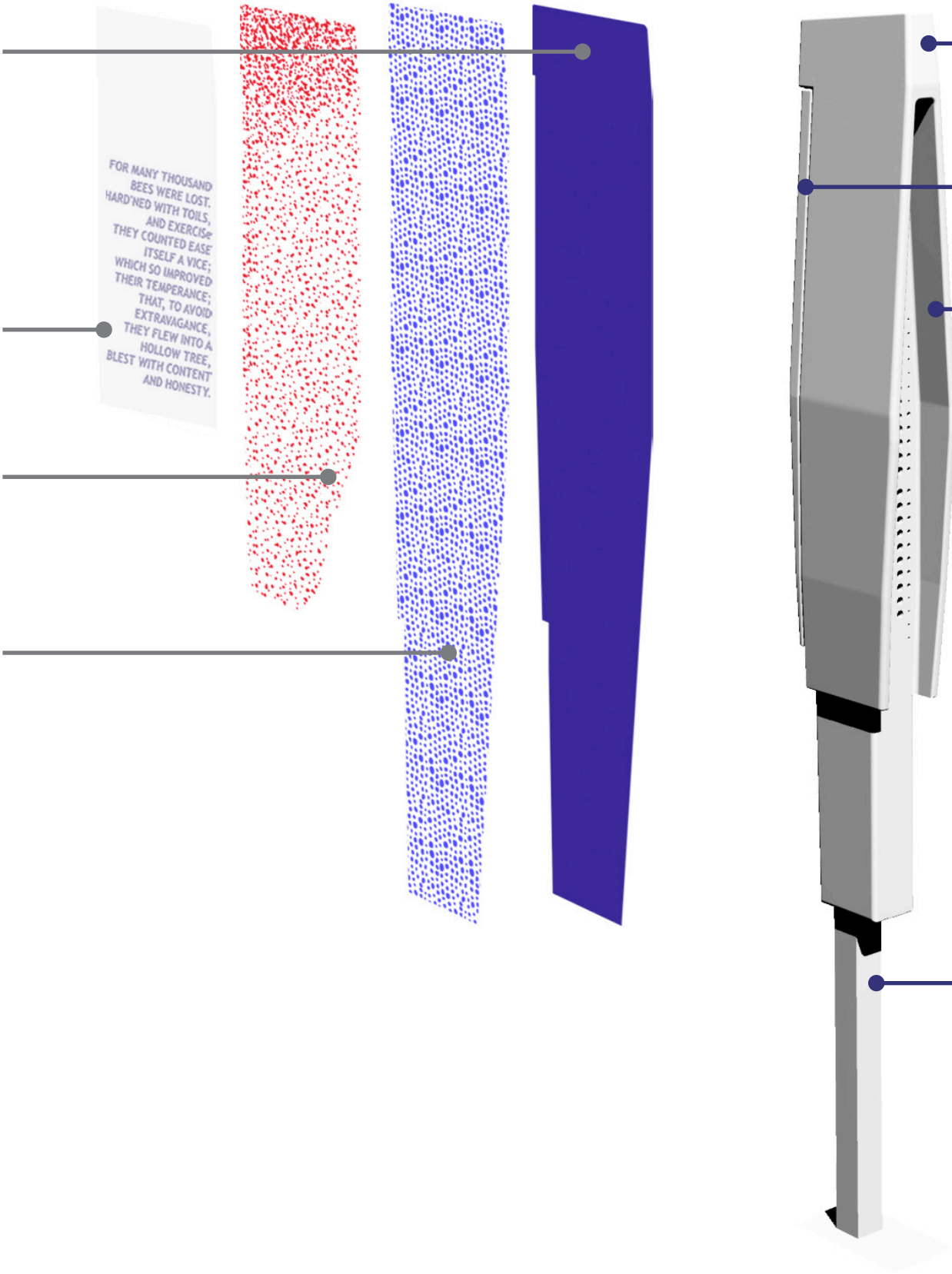
What the human sees



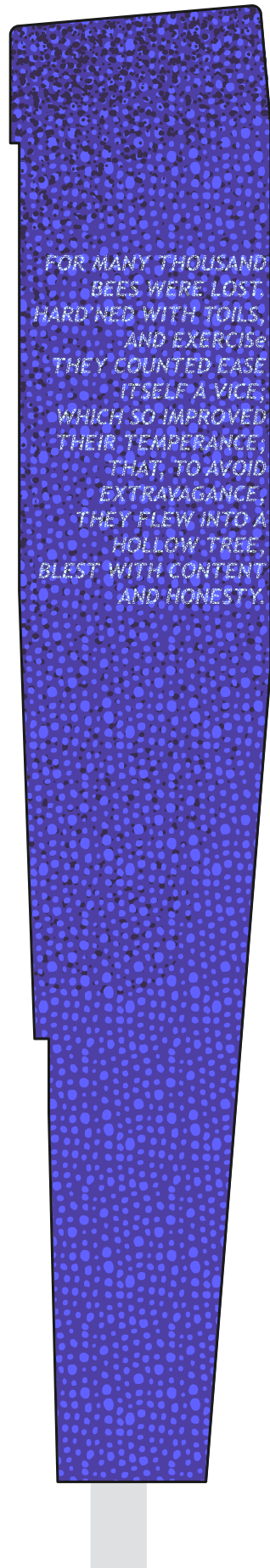
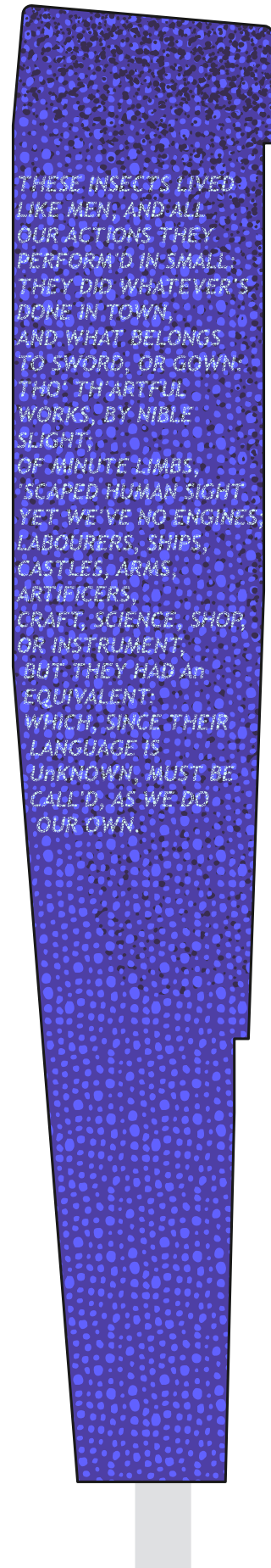
Our best approximation of what the bee sees



- Finish: First layer of indigo paint
- Digitally fabricated painting templates are cut from masking paper to provide additive layers:
- _ 3. Text in clear ultra-violet reflective paint visible to the bees and invisible to the naked human eye
 - _ 2. Layers of red pattern against foliage make the beehouse visible for the human caretaker but remain invisible to the bees
 - _ 1. Variant shade of indigo provides broken pattern to attract the bees



- BeeHouse is CNC milled from two blocks of domestic hard wood laminated together along its vertical length
- Removable back panel (for cleaning) fastened with stainless pan head machine screws with sleeves
- Integrated cowl helps protects bee entrances from water and wind
- 2x2 wood supporting member sleeves into machined slot of BeeHouse. Fastened with stainless pan head machine screws with sleeves



*These Insects lived like Men, and all
Our Actions they perform'd in small:
They did whatever's done in Town,
And what belongs to Sword, or Gown:
Tho' th'Artful Works, by nible Slight;
Of minute Limbs, 'scaped Human Sight
Yet we've no Engines; Labourers,
Ships, Castles, Arms, Artificers,
Craft, Science, Shop, or Instrument,
But they had an Equivalent:
Which, since their Language is unknown,
Must be call'd, as we do our own.*

*For many Thousand Bees were lost.
Hard'ned with Toils, and Exercise
They counted Ease it self a Vice;
Which so improved their Temperance;
That, to avoid Extravagance,
They flew into a hollow Tree,
Blest with Content and Honesty.*

***Selected extract from
"The Fable of the Bees"***

