

## ***ANT LIFE ART WORK (2007)***

**Matt Rogalsky**

### **Site-specific work for six amplified thatching ant nests on Hornby Island, BC**

A site-specific outdoor/indoor sound/video installation on Hornby Island, British Columbia, July 2007. Six large thatching ant mounds (each approximately 1 metre high, located deep in the woods) had contact microphones placed on top. The ants eventually incorporated the microphones into the mounds, and the sounds of their activity were transmitted over a three-week period to six listening stations - speakers mounted on stakes located along a half-kilometre stretch of road. In addition a video camera focused on the mound transmitted live images and sound of ant activity to a projection room in the gallery of the Hornby Island Arts Centre.

Thatching Ants are found throughout the Pacific Northwest. They farm aphids, which live on nearby trees. Their nests extend below ground at least as deep as the mounds seen above ground. Many nests may make up a colony with a single Queen - the largest I have read about covers 40 hectares in Oregon.

This piece was a "collaboration" with indigenous fauna, revealing a complex world of activity which usually goes unnoticed. Hornby Island's thatching ants are unknown even to many locals, because they are found only in specific parts of the island and are typically not seen from the roads.

The title of the piece is modular. The words can be arranged in any order. Invitations to the opening were produced using all permutations of the words.

### **About the accompanying audio documentation**

Ant activity, recorded with contact microphones embedded in thatching ant nest.



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Example of thatching ant nest, Hornby Island 2007





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Thatching ants slowly burying contact microphone inside mound





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One of six listening stations connected to thatching ant mound in the woods





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Listener at one of six roadside listening stations