

Sensory Suitcase 1

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Deep connections are formed when we physically entangle ourselves with someone or something. These past several months, the places and beings with whom we engage our senses have become limited. We wear masks and keep our distance. It is difficult to care about beings that we cannot touch, see, listen to. How can we create these intimate connections when there are boundaries to sensorial experiences?

For this long-term assignment you will be asked to create a **Sensory Suitcase** – a portable 3D artwork that introduces your organism and habitat. It can have things to read, 2D and 3D objects, actual specimens, drawings, paintings, photographs, documents, timelines, itinerary, maps. It can be a simulation of your organism or its world or its point of view. You will be creating an artwork about your organism that is both informational and a rich sensorial experience.

Why is this project a **suitcase**?

Suitcase Briefcase Luggage Trunk Handbag Pocketbook Baggage Purse Satchel Valise Backpack Carry-on Knapsack Bundle Basket Rucksack

Consider the relation of immigrant, settler and guest from your Positionality Bios. Most of us came from elsewhere and know little about the lands our ancestors settled on. Chances are that our ancestors immigrated and moved many times. The human history in this region is many thousands of years older than European white settler history, and the organisms and habitats that we are studying precede the human story. We are surely newcomers and guests. Consider these words, metaphors, for different relations to land and place:

Indigenous, aboriginal, native, habitat, home, local, domicile/domestic

Arrivant, captive, kidnapped, indentured, enslaved, appropriated

Colonist, settler, explorer, invasive, intruder, stranger, outsider, ethnographer, scientist

Tourist, visitor, voyager, guest, emigrant, exile, foreigner, ex-pat

Migrant, immigrant, refugee, undocumented, alien, naturalized, adopted, assimilated

Some of the organisms we are studying are also on the move. Some are migratory, moving with the change of weather and seasons. Or whole populations might be migrating because of habitat loss or climate change, attempting to adapt to sudden changes brought about by human impacts.

We have been talking about becoming at home, becoming indigenous to place. Learning about indigenous species and ecosystems is a way of doing this. But what about when our more-than-human companions are confronting change and disruption?

Project Parameters

You will use an actual suitcase to reconfigure and transform. A “suitcase” of 14” x 20” x 6” is the minimum size. Each project will be an opening and closing container on wheels. It will include wheels, handles, and hinges that allow it to open and close and move. The suitcase can be vertical or horizontal. You might want to consider how your organism moves. Other features to consider are compartments, pockets, extensions, tags, fasteners, locks, decorations, patterns, the exterior and interior surfaces, wheels.

Is the suitcase a kind of home or habitat for your organism? Is it a skin or shell or nest or interface with the world? Maybe it is a miniature museum or roving theatre, a giant storybook, a mobile aquarium or terrarium.

PHASE 1

PREPARATION: Find a cheap used suitcase (Value Village, Goodwill, etc.) by Week 6 that you will be willing to destroy and reconfigure. Continue studying your organism and habitat to get ideas for the project. Make drawings of ideas in your Commonplace Book. If possible, go to your habitat, take photos, make drawings, record sounds.

GET STARTED: In Week 6 you will bring your suitcases to campus to start exploring ways to reconfigure the forms of the suitcases themselves. You will learn tools and safety in the Sculpture Woodshop and begin to create the infrastructure for your project. As your ideas develop, gather materials and purchase supplies. You can work at home and/or in FI228 outside of class time by signup. Week 7 is all about Suitcase, working in the Woodshop and/or FI228. You will finish this phase by Monday, Nov. 9. That day the whole class will meet outside to parade our suitcases to Red Square/Miller Hall exterior for a critique and first performance/installation. This assignment is for Phase 1. There will be separate assignments with additional information for the second and third phases.

PHASE 2

INCORPORATING SOUND: Habitat Groups start coordinating on Slack as early as Week 5 and 6 about field recordings. Week 7 your Habitat Group will expand with cohorts from the Art 335 Intermedia class. You will collaborate with this larger Habitat Group to create a sound piece that evokes your habitat, organism, relationships, interactions, human impacts. You will use mini Bluetooth speakers (provided) to outfit your suitcases with sound. Friday Nov. 20 both classes will install and present their work at a downtown event.

PHASE 3

SENSORY SUITCASE ECO-ACTION: In several readings we have been learning about placed-based art that addresses communities, history, and ecologies. This is art with a social purpose, whether of education, activism, disruption, restoration, conservation, etc. The Week 7-8 reading is Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*. Helguera offers a theoretical basis for artwork that is primarily social, that may not even use physical objects. In Week 9 you will read some practical guides and begin brainstorming about a community eco-action using your suitcase project. In Week 10, before Thanksgiving, you will pitch your

ideas to our visiting scholar, Vanessa Andreotti. With her feedback, you will submit proposals that week, and perform your events during Week 11. Documenting your projects on Flipgrid. We will view and discuss each other's eco-actions at the Final Critique on Wed. Dec. 9.

Artist References

Check out the [Drawerful Project](https://wp.wvu.edu/art-and-ecology/student-projects/drawerful/) (https://wp.wvu.edu/art-and-ecology/student-projects/drawerful/) of the Art & Ecology in 2018. They are not suitcases, but you might get inspired... Also see the artists below who use suitcases or deal with mobility, migration, change.

<https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/suitcase-art> (https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/suitcase-art)

<https://www.instagram.com/kathleenvanceart/> (https://www.instagram.com/kathleenvanceart/)

<https://mymodernmet.com/mohamad-hafez-unpacked-interview/>

(https://mymodernmet.com/mohamad-hafez-unpacked-interview/)

https://www.robertflach.com/?page_id=26 (https://www.robertflach.com/?page_id=26)

<https://www.vaughnbell.net/older-work.html> (https://www.vaughnbell.net/older-work.html)

<https://publicdelivery.org/kimsooja-bottari-truck/> (https://publicdelivery.org/kimsooja-bottari-truck/)

Grading Rubric

A portable 3D artwork crafted from a suitcase that introduces your organism and habitat.

150 suitcase has been transformed in an interesting and creative way that relates to the organism and habitat; research into current conditions and problems is evident; the project looks finished and has good mobility and functionality

140 suitcase has been transformed in an interesting and creative way that relates to the organism and habitat; research into current conditions and problems is evident; the project looks over 80% finished and has good mobility and functionality

130 suitcase has been altered but not greatly changed; or the organism and habitat are not adequately represented; or there is no reference to current condition or problems; or the project is obviously not finished (one of the above).

120 suitcase has been altered but not greatly changed; or the organism and habitat are not adequately represented; or there is no reference to current condition or problems; or the project is obviously not finished (two of the above).

110 suitcase has been altered but not greatly changed; or the organism and habitat are not adequately represented; or there is no reference to current condition or problems; or the project is obviously not finished (three of the above).

100 suitcase has been altered but not greatly changed; or the organism and habitat are not adequately represented; or there is no reference to current condition or problems; or the project is obviously not finished (all of the above).