

# [my|your|our suitcase]

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## ABSTRACT

This work is a collaborative platform which involves visitors/viewers in active relationships and co-authorship engagements. Participants are invited to enter the space delimited by two suitcases where to explore, modify, play, touch, smell, listen, keep, place, make, create and read on multimodal levels a range of ‘texts’.

## Keywords

Co-creation, installation, participation, multisensoriality, multimodality, art-based inquiry, boundaries, artefact.

## BACKGROUND

This installation builds on theory and practice derived from a range of fields, including notions of multimodality [1], multisensoriality [2], collaborative practices [3,4], and arts-based inquiry [5,6,7]. Moreover, the concepts behind [my|your|our suitcase] has been informed by a number of experimentations conducted over the past few years, notably the *Pea Project* [8,9]; the *Surrealist Encounter* [10]; and a *suitcase-as-PhD* [11,12,13].

## WONDER, PLAY AND LEARNING

Wonder, play and learning have a key role in the development of collaborative workspaces [12] and have been used as crucial keys in this work, which was designed to trigger playfulness, wonderment and learning in participants. This is achieved using non-textual elements which are playful, wondrous, metaphorical, ironic, ambiguous and rich in material qualities. The installation has been designed as an intimate space where readers can play, wonder and learn by touching, adding, reading, modifying, expanding, choosing, making, reflecting, changing...

Schwandt [14] observes that “knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind”. Learning occurs in the making of things and in this work learning is an active experience through which meaning is shared and created by participants. The making of things and the learning that flourishes from the act of making create knowledge-by-encounter that is intuitive and holistic. In the installation to

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make is to learn and requires playfulness, and to play is to learn. This work links the notions of making and playing to that of wondering. People are facilitated to make (and learn) via playing with artefacts that make them wonder [11,12].

## VISITORS/VIEWERS/PARTICIPANTS

This work was designed and should be experienced as a multisensorial place – “not so much in the sense of being simply rich in stimuli but having different sensory values so that each individual can tune in to his or her own personal reception characteristics”, implying that “standard univocal solutions cannot be conceived for everyone” [2]. The installation embodies the notion of a *multisensorial place* where the designer intends to engender in the participant a *receptive engagement* with the work. Instead of being verbal, analytical, sequential, and logical, a receptive mode is nonverbal, holistic, nonlinear, and intuitive – emphasizing the sensory and perceptual [15].

Active	Receptive
Focal attention	Diffuse attention
Object-based logic	Paralogical thought processes
Intensified perception of boundaries	Decreased boundary perception
Dominance of form over colour and texture	Dominance of sensory over formal attributes
Goal-oriented state	

Table 1 – Receptive and active modes [16]

## [MY|YOUR|OUR SUITCASE]

The installation is twofold. The first part [my|your suitcase], a custom-designed and custom-made cardboard suitcase including 7 smaller suitcases containing over 100 pieces, is offered to visitors for browsing, interpretation and partial modification. Each section includes a range of written pieces (in the form of postcards, letters, A5 and A6 sized booklets, French-folded pamphlets, cards, etc.) and artefacts (illustration-objects; trigger-objects; CDs; found objects; game-like elements; sculptural elements; gifts to the visitors/viewers; enabling-items; and ambiguous objects). The second part [my|our suitcase] is an almost-empty custom-designed and custom-made cardboard suitcase (identical in size, look and articulation to the previous) where visitors/viewers are asked to respond to a number of prompts by making and/or adding material,

artefacts, writings, items, observations, and gifts that articulate the conference theme of *boundaries*.



**Figure 1. myyour suitcase**

While the first part of this installation has been exhibited in several occasions and shared with a number of diverse communities; the second part is new and custom-designed for the 9th Biennial Participatory Design Conference, with the idea of offering a space where to co-construct, over the period of the exhibition/conference, a new community of practice. While the first part of the installation was developed by the author [11] and is open to visitors/viewers for browsing and potential implementation, the second part is co-developed – in real-time – by visitors/viewers and represents the diversity of the boundaries which belong to and can be identified with the PDC community and, more broadly, the surrounding context of this conference's edition (Trento and Rovereto, Italy). For this reason the prompts part of the second part of the installation are bilingual (English and Italian).

This work is a platform for collaborative and participative practices to emerge through the active involvement to visitors/viewers. Participants are enabled to express ideas and reflections within a space where meaning can be co-created and co-experienced in the act of unfolding/unpacking and making/designing. Within the suitcases visitors/viewers can physically, emotionally, and conceptually experience ideas in an active manner rather than reading about them.

## CONCLUSIONS

Previous work involving the suitcases central to this installation [11] aimed at expanding the boundaries of PhD research and thesis, challenging the roles of academia, readers and authors. This installation aims at expanding the boundaries of what an art/design artefact can be and how it can be developed, challenging the roles of designers, artists, viewers, participants and of museums as places for co-creation.

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