

# BOOK SEMIOTICS: A BOOK OF BOXES NOVEMBER 18, 2016 SANTA FE ART INSTITUTE

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architects

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Joerael Elliot

Toni Gentilli

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When I met my fellow artists at the Santa Fe Art Institute, I was exhilarated by their creative capacity and the varied dynamics in their works. Early exchanges inspired a collective book project. As a premise we forged towards challenging the traditional format of bookmaking.

As a working parameter, a 16” square box conceptually serves as a page for a book and each artist was given a box to make a contribution to the project with. The artists were encouraged to develop their own narratives with their box considering this context.

How will we read this new sequence? How does the reading of this collective body of work change when offered the challenges of sculptural form and installation space? How does this extend or consider the historical format of books? What is my role as curator in defining these new relationships that will be produced?

Examining and challenging the established structure of what a box or book currently is incites liberation from functional or conventional expectation. The outcomes produced are considered, experimental and open:

“Devilman” by Andrew functions as a light box and encourages the viewer to consider pictorial still in a monumental way; Dara’s “How to drag a play by bicycle” vividly embodies the physicality of biking which is an essential part of her artistic practice – traces of dirt and moisture on the dragged box unexpectedly embed a desert landscape which reveal inherent values in her process; relating to this, Ruth’s “Sensitive Waters” acknowledges the current drought and highlights waters ability to heal the suffering cracked surface of our land. Lisa’s “legal, tender; currency” transforms the box by exposing it to the elements - water washed words haunt untold stories; Asha’s “Signs of the Times” visualize a journey in text; Lobsang’s “Offering” delivers his environmental and political concern for the sacred Himalaya mountains; Dilara’s “Medusa” exercises the spirit of cultural waters, the snake-like figures beacon opportunity to consider powers of the unseen. “**WATER** Game” by Glynis and Hideaki pack their water research and demands into an inviting interactive play station.

Elise reconstructed the box as a geological model that engages complex performative ethnographic methodologies. My own box has been inspired by the jam jars which I applied at my apple tasting. I used a set of small jam jars to build a cabinet of curiosities.

A group of works created by Franco, Christine and Sean questions the form of the box itself: Sean’s “90 Minute Foray in Gather and Fill” presents deconstructural approaches as the straws, which constitute the sculpture echoes the volume or memory of the box. On the contrary, the soil contained in Franco’s “Unfolding the Fill” reinforces the mass and shape of the box yet shape is transformed in the process of experimenting with matter in making. There is interplay between these works: The straws used in Sean’s work and the dirt from Franco’s box comprise the two key material elements of soil and straw in Christine’s adobe sculpture.

Toni’s “Thicket” offers consideration to mass and space as it sensitively opts to question resources in relationships to what is or is not available to us. Joereal’s “A Cup Holds Water, What Do You Hold?” tells us the story about waters.

Using chromatically charged and at times restrained gesture, Jason’s “Future Flights” propositions interactive optimism. Painting marks consider the structural form of the altered folded box. This work takes on unexpected new dynamic when photographed.

If the boxes are considered book pages, my curatorial role engages actions of the editor. My role is to arrange the page order, to consider optimal layout, it binding, audience impact and how best to present this new work. During the photo documentation of the work, some complex characteristics in the boxes were revealed, which informed the installation direction. In this current exhibition scenario, the installing is site-specific. The concrete row of lights in front of SFAI echo the shape of the 16” box thus serves as the perfect pedestals for the art. The structure of the building contains the exhibition in the same way a binding protects the contents of a book. We have collectively reconsidered the format.

I am very grateful to be a SFAI artist in resident, which has afforded the opportunity to work on a book project with this creatively radical group of artists. Their contribution for the exhibition provides extended considerations to the book format vocabulary, and extends the possibilities in bookmaking. It inspires me to continue to rethink what a book can be and how reading can be experienced. Thank you to my fellow artist for engaging with me in this process and contributing so generously. I also hope all of our readers enjoy engaging with this work as much as I do.

Yung-shan Tsou  
Edited by Jason Baerg  
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