

vol. 1



a statement.

My mother always tells me, "Your bag is too heavy!" and I always respond, "but I need everything in it!" I'm fascinated by the way we decide the things we need and the things we don't, and the ways we express who we are are communicated through our material possessions.

As students and workers and commuters and consumers, our bags are often essential parts of our lives- places to carry our wallets and textbooks and water bottles and gum. But they're also places for things small and seemingly insignificant- scribbled notes and old receipts, beloved pins and clinking keychains. And bags are a lot of other things, too. Sometimes they're symbols of status, from a luxury or niche brand; sometimes they're symbols of love or passion, of certain colors or certain characters or certain themes; sometimes they're sentimental, matching with a friend, or a gift; sometimes they're practical, waterproof, or with plenty of pockets. Then there's the things we put within them and the way we organize them, the way that sometimes there are smaller bags within pouches within the larger bags, revealing themselves like a matryoshka doll; sometimes things are loose and crumpled and forgotten in the dark depths of the bag rarely reached. It's fascinating to think how much personality is within our possessions, like a detachable part of us.

When it comes to the "What's in my bag" trend, more layers are revealed as we consciously

decide how to present ourselves with what we own and what we carry, as well as how we present the things themselves. People participate in the trends in different forms and different ways- some people illustrate it; some take photos of it laid out like a puzzle; some people explain their reasoning in a video; some showcase it by taking the things out, while some do by putting them in. It's an introduction that can happen without a voice or a face. It humanizes idols and connects people within their communities; it's a dialogue and a recommendation; it's an advertisement of the products and of the self. I became interested in this project because I loved thinking about the kinds of lives people lived behind the screen, about the simultaneous personality and anonymity of faceless, voiceless posts, and because I was always looking for ideas to modify the contents of my own bag.

With this project, I ultimately aim to explore people as walking and living collections in a literal sense of the word, and begin an introspection of the ways we label, organize, and present ourselves. In particular, I am interested in contrasts between the explicit and the implied, between the pictorial and physical, and between impersonality and personality. This contrast is represented in my collection in two ways: in the presentation format, and the medium. The first, primary part is an index of the items in my school bag, presented on a website. At a glance it is clerical and sterile, like a ledger or classification chart, with items written as they are. There's a clear organizational structure by part, but little else. However, a visitor might find that they gain more information when they hover

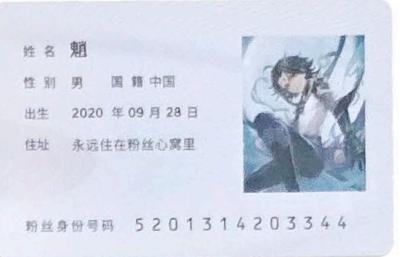
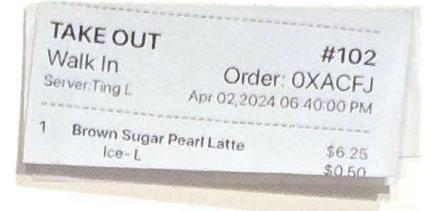
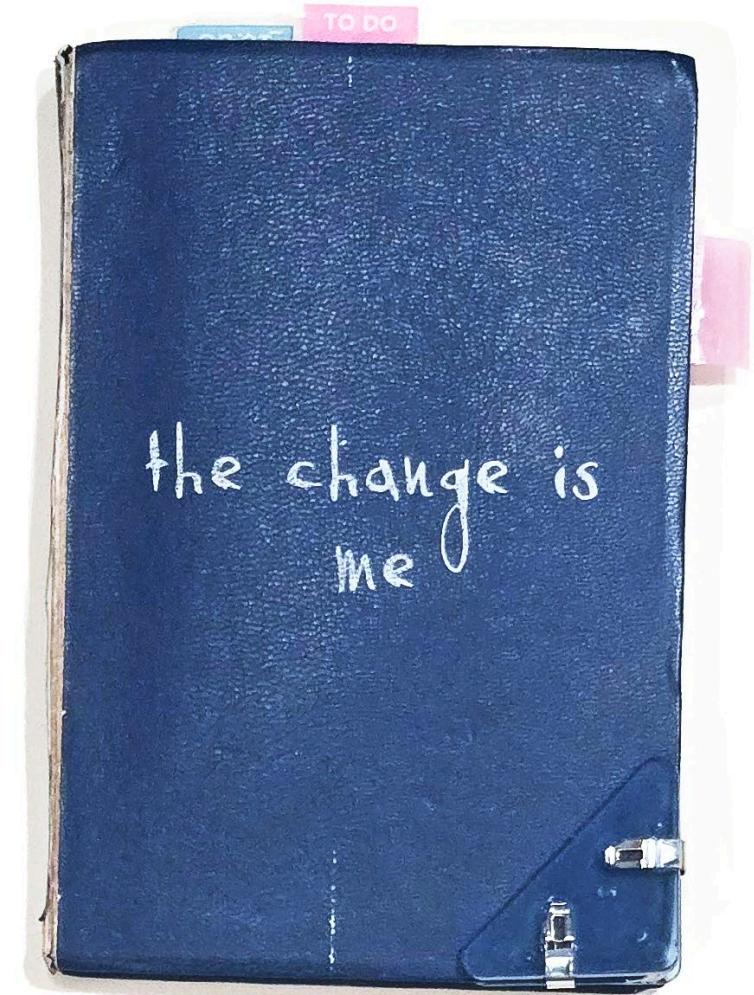
over an item, where I offer a description of the item and its origins or personal meanings. I use this to represent the initially perceived impersonality of a photograph of belongings, but also an acknowledgement of personal modes of organization. The tooltips that appear offer more detail, but do not complete the picture of a person. The second part is this book in which you may be reading this, which is comprised of captionless photos. The items within the index are pictured here, and you may notice, or realize, that the tooltips are indeed the captions. Both the index and the photos within this book essentially show the same thing, an incomplete yet detailed "picture" of a person, contained within the possessions- contained with the photographs and the index. If you are reading this, you likely know me to a certain extent, but I wonder how much more you may gain by viewing these two parts of the collection. The mix of physical and digital in this collection also speak to how different parts make a whole, an increasingly complete picture of me. But never a truly complete one, because I, too, have curated this collection. It is genuine, but also a picture of me that I have chosen to construct by arranging and showing and labeling my collection of items.

The third part, also presented in a book, is a collection of contributions from peers, colleagues, and friends who have kindly shared their bags and parts of themselves. I have made minimal edits, if any, to their submissions. I invite you to ponder who they might be and the lives they might live.

What is in your bag right now? How would its contents introduce you?







The water was higher than it had ever been before, and was quickly rising by the hour and by the hour. It had never rained so heavily for so long in all the years I had been here and it felt strange.

We have now spent classes reviewing instrumental variables, and a specific subset of these called

VISIT JAPAN

理解を通じて

I was woken the next morning by a knock at the door. It was short and disrupted quickly into the patter of the rain shower. Judging by the wetness of speeding rivulets on the foggy windows and the humidity in the air. Didn't mind it didn't make much difference to him. Anyhow, filling these basins would be useful as extra stocks of the cistern in the lighthouse down were to run out. Still done back later though.

STRUCTURAL MODELS (cont)

2/29

No policy change actually happened

Counterfactuals: Results

modeled change in policy to estimate what would come out of it

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS & WELFARE NONPROFIT GROWTH IN U.S. CITIES (Chris Bruno)

④ Motivation

research usually society → corp; not corp → society
nonprofits support comm. health on issues gov & corp do not

Ming-yan Maggie Song

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3/19/2024

Quant. marketing dept.

Wharton
Mostly Useless History
The Potential for Targeting Interventions
Anya Shchekina
Ron Berman

2

Discussion

- Why do you think it is important to have an argument addressing counterfactuals?
- For you as a customer, vs from the other customer.
- Which information about the intervention would you not care about?

3

Motivation

A/B tests are a common way to evaluate user features.

4

INDUSTRIALIZATION: URBAN REFORM
2/27/24

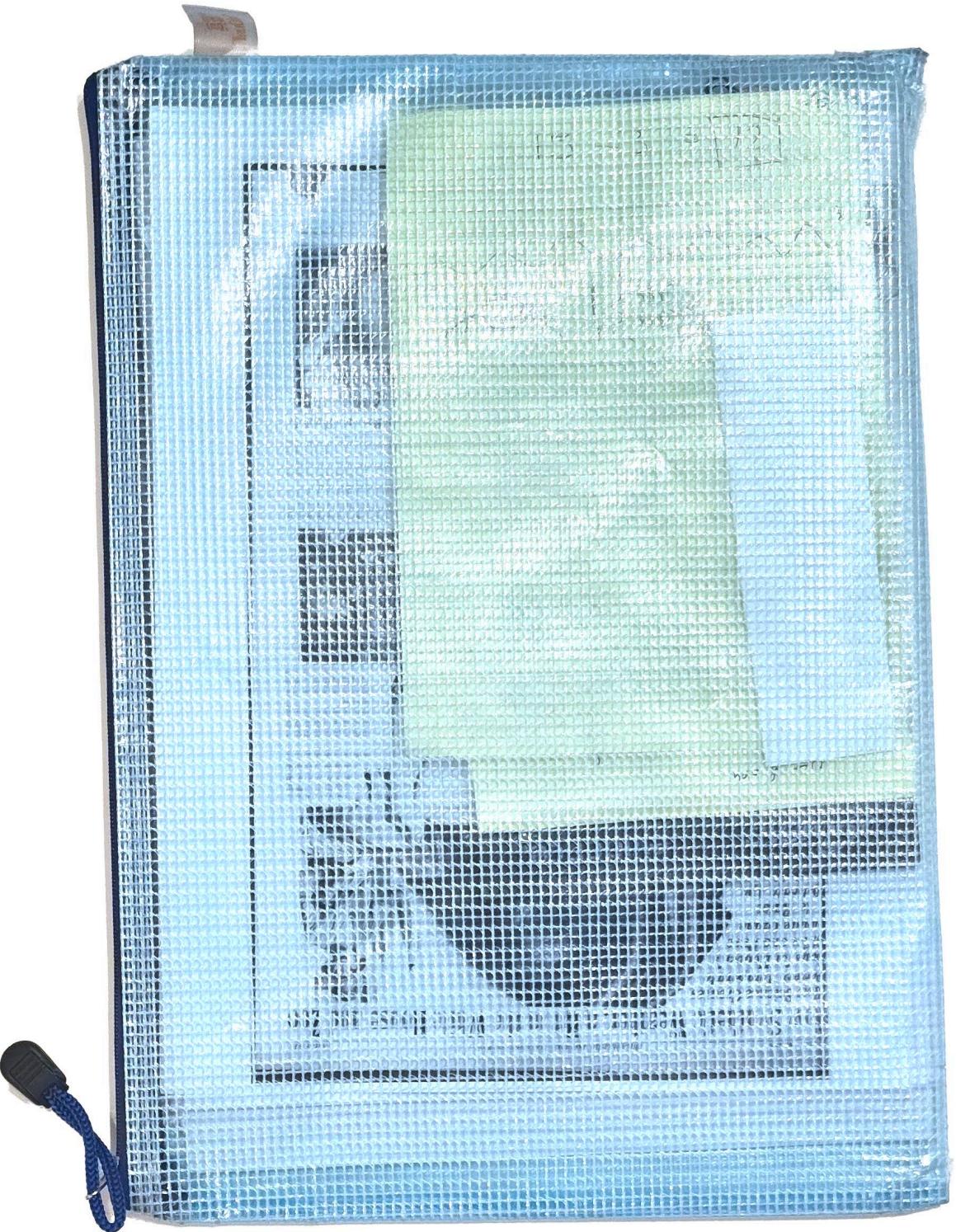
- Triangle Shirtwaist factory (URGAN)
- death while being obedient to the system - not in protest
- Lithgow Miners (RURAC)
- Entire group (global) of miners go on strike → tent colony
- tent colony burnt to the ground
- mistreatment of industrial workers.
- 10 days war - killed Chinese strikebreaking miners not part of the union
- immigration & Migration
- Jacob Riis - Danish immigrant photographer in NY
- "How the Other Half Lives"

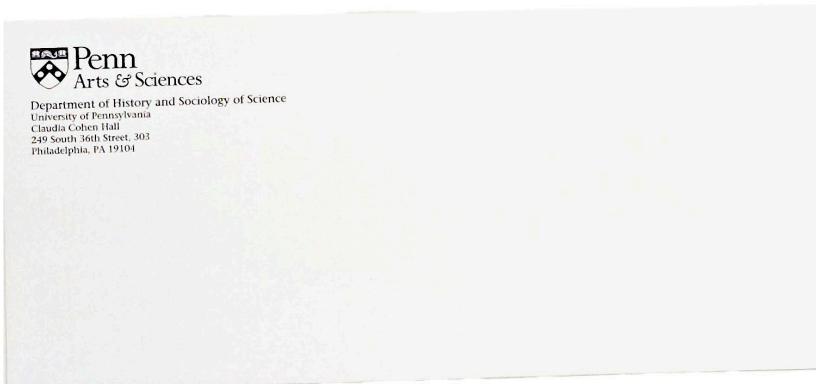
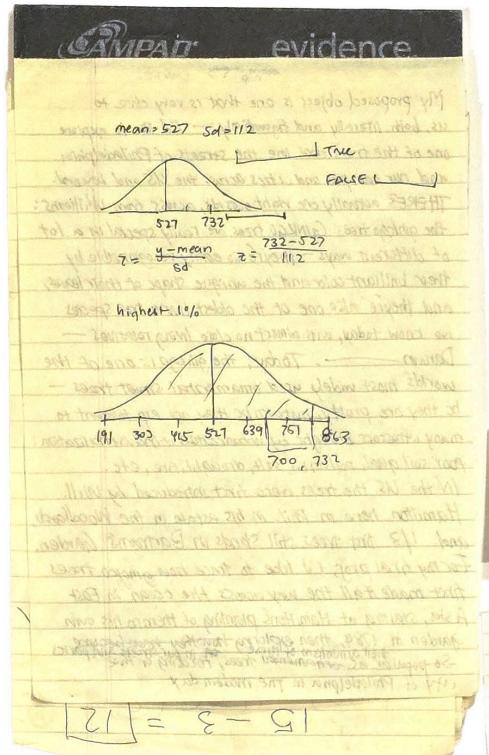
INDUSTRIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE & URBANIZATION IN US (FOOD AND FARMS: SCI, TECH, NAT)
3/12/24

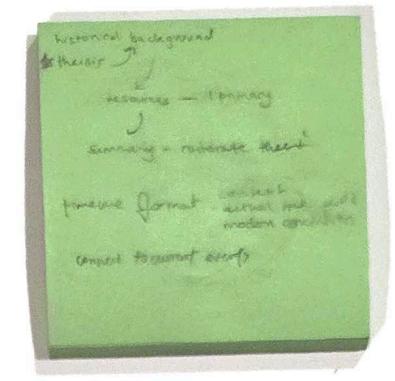
- KEY THEMES
- Nature → Knowledge
- Expertise → Technology
- Science
- Farm trends
 - fewer total farms w/ not necessarily less land - consolidation
 - mechanization
 - more money needed to run farm - capitalization
 - e.g. purchasing seeds, paying non-family laborers
 - sharp decrease in US population that lived on farms
 - 1920: turning point urban pop > rural pop
- Great Depression (1929) & Dust Bowl (1930s) & WWII (1930s-40s)
 - atomic bomb + nuclear weapons
- Farming and Expertise
 - farm products become abstract commodities
 - book farming (learning from reading rather than experience)
- Suburban Homes
 - fast development # good development
 - Rachel Carson - Silent Spring DDT, female sex hormones?

Postwar Science and Technology
Enthusiasm + ambivalence and concern
↳ consumerism (?)
↳ industrial ideal - what environment?
↳ why milk?
↳ what changes in environment does new tech induce
Final Project
↳ Change or Continuity over time
↳ need to have an argument
↳ contextual enough for general educated audience
↳ more argument than context
↳ Check in on 4/9 + opening (25 sec) on 4/10
HISTORICAL CONTINGENCY (+ COLLECTIVE MEMORY)
The way you tell a story insinuates a certain kind of memory + history
narrative of progress
Industrialization as dependent on labor/nature.
Collective memory
↳ social phenomenon of remembrance
↳ related but not the same as empirical history
↳ contestation
↳ patterns, narratives, tropes about the past shaped by ag. through sites of memory like statues + monuments
communication or memorial
KEY CONCEPTS
↳ collective memory
↳ narrative
↳ racism
↳ mainstream environmentalism
↳ white, middle-class problem, a "full-belly"
3 stones
① Preservation + Conservation
↳ worry about the loss of the frontier/wilderness
↳ preservationists concerned about the "wild" → strong physically strong population by race
↳ conservationists "efficient use of resources"
↳ don't want land set aside or unproductive
→ 1930s - New Deal → more cars, roads, access → after WWII - suburban dev. urban sprawl
↳ white urban response to urban sprawl
→ increasing concerns about pollution
→ esp. in rivers + waterways
→ 1964 Wilderness Act.
↳ wilderness as places where man is only one
② Industrial Hygiene
↳ really unsafe working conditions in US
→ Alva Hamilton - industrial pharmacologist
→ turning individual tragedies into a pattern
→ site of origin of working people in cities
③ Suburban Homes
↳ fast development # good development
↳ Rachel Carson - Silent Spring DDT, female sex hormones?













people without faces.

It is nothing new to acknowledge the value of personal possessions and the glimpse they give into a personal life. Museums may be filled with priceless pieces of art, but they're also filled with pens and documents and hats and pots. There are formal collections at museums, but many others have also acknowledged the various meanings of our bags, things once used, things left behind.

Backpacks are central in many curated collections, often to convey messages perhaps, in a sense, less superficial than mine. A project by Amanda Krugliak, Richard Barnes, and Jason De León showcases rows and rows of found backpacks from a desert migration trail through the deserts of Arizona from Mexico [1]. They're symbols of illegal migration, of desperation, of politics, and of death. But each backpack belonged to an individual person who carried it across the desert. They held pills and toothbrushes and pills and birth certificates and magazines. Like me, they were interested in how material culture exists in the ordinary and the ephemeral and in the ambiguity within these complex representations of people. On these migrant trails, bags left behind are both debris and traces of people no longer there. For others, backpacks are symbols of the struggles of youth, tied closely with their association with school [2]. They're unique, patterned, and personal. For the student they hold schoolbooks and pens and papers; for the homeless and the journeyer they hold the essentials; for the fashionista they may hold very

little at all- the bag itself is the statement (but the woman's fashionable handbag also often means more than just fashion [3]). Sometimes a person is all three.

In an essay called "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction," Ursula K. Le Guin proposes that the first cultural invention was a container, a receptacle, and that it is something so human to put something with meaning into a bag or basket or pouch or home or bundle (which she argues, is a different sort of container, for people) [4]. It's counter to the proposition that the first significant invention of man was a spear, a symbol of heroism and of violence. A novel- which is a container for words-, she writes, is not about violence and victory and heroes but of humans and things that mean things to and among us. A representation of the bag and container is a representation us and relationships within it; the container comes out of not only necessity but care and sentiment and also conflict, like a crumpled piece of paper or when the frame of your glasses catch on the corner of a book. It represents the complexities of being human veiled behind a mundane, layered pile.

Bags and containers are personal not only because they are so uniquely individual, but also because we have particular sentiments and attachments to the things we put within them. Relationships are often facilitated by transactions of giving, taking, holding, sharing, and so on. The container makes it possible to do so, by enacting a boundary that separates the inside from the outside and the attached from the detached. In an introduction to a forum on containers,

Shryock and Daniel Lord Smail propose that the significance of the container lies within two things: that it applies order to its contents, and that they are time machines, "meddl[ing] with natural forms of decay" [5]. It makes sense to me. Why do our bags have pockets of different shapes and sizes and different openings and closings, and why do we put bags within pouches within larger bags? Even one of my simplest imagination of a tote bag on a day when I carry nothing much at all demonstrates this: a wallet contains my bills and coins, which would otherwise spill loose; my bottle contains water; my glasses case contains my glasses and a lens wipe. The bag contains three items, but also so many more. They prevent my bills from getting ripped or crumpled; from the bending of my glasses frames; of the contamination of whatever I choose to drink for the day.

And so, the bag has so much potential as a personal introduction, as meaning, and as a medium. What about the way people choose to present their collections in a "What's in my Bag" post? It's a way for people to curate and share themselves behind a certain amount of anonymity, to connect with people who share their "vibes" or "aesthetic." For the younger generation, it's a way to connect with figures they admire, like Kpop idols [6], to establish a identity of being quirky and different and passionate and unique. For some, it's a nod to our understandings of a capitalistic lifestyle in which "we are what we consume," a way of getting to know each other across social media feeds [6].

In addition to a sometimes explicit expression of identity, it also appeals to the emotional satisfaction of seeing things, in a sense, "unboxed" from their containers and then organized in satisfying grids and right angles and spectrums of color. In recent years there has been popular fixation with unboxing videos and depictions of things arranged in an "oddly satisfying" manner. Critical scholarship of the unboxing videos attributes their popularity to a variety of factors, including not only their content but the way that the content is produced and received [7]. Sharif Mowlabocus traces their lineage to educational informative videos like reviews, here they explain functions and are often the first to have access to certain items and technologies. I find that I look at "What's in my bag" posts for the same reason, to gather intel on items that I think might be useful to carry around with me. One by one, the number of items in my bag grows. The authors also note the previously mundane and absolutely ordinary action of opening a box. The ordinariness of it was only unordinary, or extraordinary, when it was for a special event like a birthday or a holiday, where the item holds additional meaning because of who it came from and why, rather than what it was. The authors propose that unboxing videos have made what was simply ordinary into an extraordinary event, evoking emotions of happiness and anticipation and desire.

Similarly, we as viewers and doers both feel a strong sense of satisfaction when we organize things "perfectly" or arrange them in certain, "oddly satisfying" ways. There are blogs and

forums dedicated to such imagery [8]. As a viewer, we relish in the expanses and the work of the perhaps anonymous people who arranged them so. The Office of Collecting and Design, a self proclaimed “collection of collections,” posts on their Instagram “Guest Flatlays,” arrangements of items in their collection by those who visit the museum [9]. They’re organized often organized neatly, sometimes by item type, sometimes by shape, and sometimes by color. The form of “knolling,” or the practice of aligning objects in 90 degree angles, was popular by Tom Sachs, who expresses, “Always be knolling” [10]. Thus, we find that “What’s in my bag” posts are actually complex exchanges of identity and emotion, a dual-sided communication that happens behind a screen and an image and emotions of happiness and satisfaction.

Finally, I would like to speak a few words about the digital part of this project: the index. The index is another part of a whole that is often overlooked and deemed mundane and impersonal. Its utility is in its simplicity and apparently straightforward manner of communicating information. It should be self-explanatory, in that each entry presents precisely what an entry is and where one might find it. But they also have a complex history and are not as impersonal as they might seem, because they too are made by someone, following personally understood ways of categorization and organization. I was inspired by taxonomies and home inventories and ledgers and other lists of our possessions even for things like insurance claims. We

classify things according to our understandings of them and the relationships among them. I found the mediums of the photobook and the index and the qualities of the physical and digital interesting dialogues in representation and being.

referred and alluded to; the explicit,

[1]

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[2] “RYSE Press Release for Exhibit: ‘Not All Backpacks Carry the Same Weight.’” Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. Published May 25, 2023. <https://sfca.hawaii.gov/ryse-press-release-for-exhibit-not-all-backpacks-carry-the-same-weight/>

[3] Ridge, E. “Divisive fashions: The contending narratives of the handbag. Paper presented at the Fashion in Fiction: Style Stories and Transglobal Narratives,” June 2014, City University of Hong Kong, China.

[4] Le Guin, Ursula K. “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,” in *Dancing at the Edge of the World*. (New York: Grove Atlantic Press, 1989).

[5] Shryock, Andrew, and Daniel Lord Smail. “On containers: A forum. Introduction.” History and Anthropology 29, no. 1 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2017.1397650>.

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[9] Office of Collecting. Instagram account, @office.of.collecting. Accessed May 2, 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/office.of.collecting/?hl=en>.

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more reading; the implicit.

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