My portable sculpture project. A portable me isembroidered by the theme of Leaving Home. This project was very appropriately timed for me personally, due to Covid-19 I have been living at home since early 2020 in a very rural Ireland. I was unable to return to Uni until one month ago when I undertook the journey back here. The image of me lying down on my horse under a blanket reading is my initial response to the title Portable Sculpture. This clearly depicts home comforts and a daily routine, what I'd be saying goodbye to. My intention was to record my leaving, my transit and my adapting. Making me the object or portability, in a less portable world. The red suitcase is an important sculptural aspect to my work. Having a packed suitcase loaded and about to leave home was certainly that I was going and not just hanging on false hope. Each photo has a title such as: Morning routine. Hopefully I'll see you at Christmas. Room with a view and UK, I‘VE MISSED YOU. These were my thoughts when I took each photo. I created an installation to record and store my work. Here I pair images with text I've written, both fact and fiction. The fictional elements are fuelled by my desires over the past year to step out of reality and into a new realm of life, and this character is who I'd embody.

Considering the ways I could respond to this project’s theme, I became interested in how I could create sculpture that is portable not in the sense of moving from one place to another, but in its materiality. I began looking at creating initial sculptures to then move into the digital. In a similar manner to Gabriel Orozco’s Fielding Stone, I rolled three balls of clay on various surfaces to create a series of reliefs. I photographed each of these and began re-creating them within a 3D program. I used the photographs of the reliefs to create textures to be mapped onto each digital sculpture. With each one re-created within the digital, I created several clips moving around a virtual space, the three clay reliefs floating within it. After arranging the clips, I added some audio I made to accompany the video.

Through this process, the sculptures become portable not only in the sense that they were created through movement, marked by the surfaces on which they were rolled, but also in their materiality. Each relief was re-created within the digital, the sculptures shifting from their material physical form to immaterial digital form within a virtual world.

Using a combination of the idea of the art of the flatpack, leaving home and building a world, I came up with the concept of creating a miniature biome. I used my own houseplants as inspiration as I wanted to create a portable plant world that is reminiscent of the more comforting elements of my home life. I made them out of paper in order to allow them to fold into the metal tin when closing it to ensure that the entire structure is compact and pocket size. The plant pots are made of clay and I used real soil to add a sense of realism (and in turn, personal comfort) to the piece. As I suffer from anxiety, the idea of having a tiny pocket dimension that allows me to bring a small amount of tranquillity and innocence with me wherever I go, even if it is only a simple replica, is reassuring. I took images of the work in various places, the main one being in front of the bus timetable board as this shows that the piece can easily be transported anywhere.

Cardville City has been created using recycled and collected cardboard packaging and a glue gun has been used to hold the shapes together, offering a DIY approach to the project. The work has been created as part of a series of two sculptures; both small scale and fit the title of portable art as they can be carried easily. I find the idea of constructing something with materials that we would usually throw away quite interesting, as we are actively transforming and repurposing through the playful use of everyday materials.

Cardville City is a miniature world made from assembled geometric shaped components inspired by fictional, utopian cities and urban landscape design. I have also taken inspiration from landmarks and futuristic buildings. The journey of the material juxtaposed with the activity of taking the sculpture on a walk around Leeds and documenting the happening through photography offers a new way to look at the material and the work.

For the Portable Sculpture project, I decided to explore different objects in my day-to-day life that unfold and were easy to transport. I travel a lot from house to house here in Leeds as I don’t like to be in my house every day—this might come as a consequence of travelling every day from Gibraltar to Spain for school in the past years, staying in different houses. With this comes the habit of always bringing with me the same things that I think are going to be needed, such as pencils, clothes, sketchbooks, medicine, umbrella, books etc.

An umbrella that has been with me for several years came to an end after the wind tore it apart. I took this opportunity to experiment with a different material. I decided to create a documentation showing the journey of the object, taking pictures of every place I’ve been with the same object focus. The video has a specific transition, turning into a black screen every few seconds or every time the scene changes. This is aimed to mimic the action of blinking and the fast speed that the object travels. The umbrella is shown broken, as a result of being used for years. Instead of putting the focus on the person, I set it to the object to humanise it, as not only I travel from place to place, but everything in my possession does too.
We built upon the concept of Leaving Home by viewing said theme through the lens of our shared experience growing up in a small town appropriately named Idle. Together we revisited areas within the Bradford landscape that held childhood significance, for example during our upbringing the woods featured in Idle Door were a place of refuge.

The zine Good Grief! is a display of our anticipation moving to Leeds together which takes the theme to a more conceptual level; each double spread was influenced by the five stages of grief to process the change and loss of control or control over our previous surroundings. In response to the brief we used the notion of memories being a portable sculpture and explored this through use of drawing, photography and moving images.

This year I have isolated from my house in Scotland and in Leeds and mainly worked from my bedroom. Therefore, all my artwork has been made small and transportable. I wanted to make a miniature portable sculpture of Broadcasting Tower to symbolise my studio. This year it has been difficult getting into the studio and everything I have created has been made elsewhere. I have created a small, clay portable model and photographed it in places I have used as a studio or where my artwork has travelled this year.

Thinking about sculptures that have been on the move or in transit I decided to take a small piece of playdoh with me while taking my 3-year-old daughter to nursery. She held the playdoh the whole way there then placing it to be photographed. The piece of playdoh changed every time it was placed down to be photographed. Throughout the walk the playdoh changed shape, size, picked up pieces of dirt, fluff and fingerprints. It also became drier and started to crumble. By the end it had fallen apart, changed colour and turned hard.

By taking close-up photographs it captures the pieces of dirt, fluff and fingerprints and you can see the changes in detail without you truly knowing the size of the playdoh until you see it in my daughter’s hands.

While considering the exhibition theme; Building Worlds, I thought about something related to the actual world and also something portable. As my recent art practices were related to nature, I thought about creating something similar. I found a three-tier table that I am planning to convert into a portable sculpture. The three parts or the three levels of the table will be converted into three time periods or as past, present and future. The first floor of the table will be covered with soil and leaves, the second floor with plastic bottles and plastic bags, and on the third floor, I am planning to create drought using clay. Also, I want to make these levels that can be rearranged according to the audience’s choice. From rich soil to plastic and then to drought, this is the situation of earth or this will be. We might be able to change this. Let us rearrange our thoughts and build a new world.

These seats would make the show more interactive, be great for comfort and also fit in with the brief for portable sculptures. With different contemporary designs and artworks from creatives around the world I can see these chairs being sold worldwide, for taking to the park with your friends, easy carrying and moving easily with the strap at the front making these chairs practical and portable, even when sitting on them. As most art galleries are tailored to a certain demographic, the stigma surrounding galleries has people (non-creatives mostly) saying that galleries are too stuffy in a sense, with the quiet aura and ‘no photo’ signs in most, giving the impression of being elite and not open for the general public. I would want the gallery space to be inviting, with lots of these seats that mean the space would be transformed into a room to sit comfortably and look at all the art either on the wall or sculpture based. Easily wipeable from the material of the chair also, making them Covid-19 friendly.

 henry-moore.org/portable-sculpture

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Portable Sculpture is on display at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds until 29 August 2021. Free entry.

With thanks to:
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