

Hundreds of years ago, when there were many unexplored regions of the world, mapmakers left these uncharted areas blank... but something sinister was out there. Sailors claimed that mysterious beasts and serpents inhabited these faraway places. To warn of the dangers lurking on land and under the sea, mapmakers wrote words that would chill the hearts of even the bravest explorers: *Here, There be Monsters*.

H.P. Newquist, *Here, There Be Monsters: The Legendary Kraken and Giant Squid*.

*Here, There Be Monsters* playfully illustrates the personal memories and realities of growing up between homes, as the child of divorced parents. The surreal drawings of suitcases — which appear to be part creature and part machine — are a metaphor for the mobile lifestyle that was a result of moving between the discreet households of my separated parents and two sets of grandparents.

While these are nonsensical renderings of luggage bags, by adding teeth, claws, wheels and gears they have the imagined potential to take on a life of their own. The life that I imagine for them is one that facilitates mobility. Humorously fulfilling my desire to adapt to a transient way of life the bags suggest that they can pack themselves and move on their own. The suitcases are childlike inventions that express naïve understandings of how things work as well as the anxieties and confusion that comes with living between places.

The routine of packing and unpacking is both a physical and mental endeavor. It is an act of mental preparation, an attempt at relocating oneself to a new location. The gears that appear throughout the exhibition are metaphors for the psychological switching of gears that is the result of transitioning from one place to another. The work considers the effect of relocation in respect to notions of the home and to what degree it is possible to feel at home in multiple places.

The work is created through screen printing and incorporates the specific colours and patterns from my remembered experiences. I use screen print as a way to celebrate the history of prints as visual communication and conveyers of information. There is a long-standing tradition of capturing and communicating tales of travel through printed material. Maps and books act as reminders of the places we have been, the places we will go to, and fantastical places we escape to in our mind.

The exhibition is a space to play, laugh and share. Please be warned that —like the mysterious beast and serpents created by early mapmakers— many creatures are waiting to be unpacked and discovered within the gallery... *Here, There Be Monsters*.

Amanda Damsma, 2011