

WONDERBOX

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Wonderbox is a children's toy that inspires imaginative play. In the spirit of stories like *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in which an old wardrobe opens into a fantastic land called Narnia, and *The Phantom Tollbooth*, the tale of a boy who rides a toy car through a magic tollbooth into the world of Dictionopolis, Wonderbox allows for infinite creativity within a finite space.

Wonderbox is a portable cardboard case that can be reconfigured into a variety of shapes and spaces. A latched cabinet opens to reveal a secret storage area. Mail delivered through a slot on the outside of the box can be retrieved by opening the rear wall of the storage compartment; and once pulled down, the rear wall acts as a proscenium. There is a second storage area with a shelf and a drawer below. When the back of the box is opened, the shelf becomes a puppet stage and the drawer can be removed from the inside or outside of the box.

Wonderbox can be used for individual and group play. The toy is a module that can be latched together to make imaginary houses, cities and fanciful machines. Groups of children can use their Wonderboxes as mailboxes to exchange letters. Parents may use the mail slot in the Wonderbox to communicate with their children.

Wonderbox was created in collaboration with children, aged five to ten, from The Community Art Center in Cambridge Massachusetts. During two design workshops, children played with Wonderbox prototypes and offered invaluable suggestions for improving the design. It was the children's input that led to the handles, latch and closet door. Lacking cubbies or lockers of their own, the Wonderbox answered the children's need for a private space, allowed them to create a sense of order and encouraged inventiveness and imaginative play.

