



Zines and Do-It-Yourself Democracy

Witness this Moment

-CultureWork-

Zines and Do-It-Yourself Democracy

Zines and Do-It-Yourself Democracy represents the explorations of the students and faculty associated with the *Zines and Do-It-Yourself Democracy* freshman seminar at the University of Oregon. This exhibit features examples of zines created by zinesters from around the United States as well as by students in the seminar. This exhibit is an online interpretation of a Spring 2005 University of Oregon Knight Library exhibit of the same title. (Read about the [Curatorial Method](#) here, this link opens in a new browser window.)

Zines are not about canonization, but about the possibility of universal participation. Our purpose is not to present an encyclopedic tour of the genre, but instead a response to questions such as:

- How do zines function in a corporate controlled media environment?
- What is the larger context in which zines are created and distributed?
- What is the history of zines?
- What is the effect of zines on people, culture, and society?
- We hope that this exhibit will motivate you to explore the large and diverse world of zines.



Left: Cometbus #26
Right: rrrl girlz v. 3 #1

Zines. There is no consensus on how to define a zine. To witness the evolving process of defining zines visit the Wikipedia definition of zines at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zines>. Generally, zines can be understood as independently produced, independently circulated, non-copyrighted, self-funded, limited edition pamphlet/magazine-like publications.

Do-It-Yourself (DIY). George McKay in *Party and Protest in Nineties Britain* sums up DIY best as "a combination of inspiring action, narcissism, youthful arrogance, principle, ahistoricism, idealism, indulgence, reactivity, plagiarism, as well as the rejection and embracing alike of technological innovation."

Democracy. Douglas Lummis, in his book *Radical Democracy*, argues that democracy is more than a set of institutions or a "system." Democracy is a state of being and doing. Democracy is a performance. Zines, as spaces for communicating about issues of public and private concern are doing democracy.

"Think! Think! It ain't illegal, yet!!" reads the first page of U Don't Stop, a zine I picked up the other day.

It's not an unusual request. Zines (short for fanzines, derived from magazines) are homemade pamphlets with a rebellious mission: to create an independent voice outside the mainstream. Though one could trace their roots back to the political pamphlets of the American Revolution, zines as a distinct medium were born in the 1930s. It was then that fans of science fiction, often through the clubs they formed, started producing fanzines as a way of sharing stories and ideas about a literary genre sniffed at by the cultural establishment. Forty years later, in the mid 1970s, fans of punk rock music, ignored by and critical of the commercial music press, also began publishing zines about their cultural scene. In the early 1980s these two tributaries converged with smaller streams of publications by fans of other cultural strains, as well as the remnants of printed political dissent from the 1960s, and a genuine media subculture came of age. Today, somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 different zines circulate throughout the United States and the world. What binds all these publications together is a common prime directive: DIY (Do-It-Yourself). Stop shopping for culture and go out and create your own. (Duncombe, 1999)

Best Viewed by listening to the "[Democracy Mix](#)"!

(this link opens in a new browser window)

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Portland zine symposium 2005

<http://www.pdxzines.com/>

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Curators

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