



PRESENTS

THE HISTORY OF ZINES

ZINE

WHAT ARE ZINES?

Zines (short for magazines) are short, often self-published and low-cost, pamphlet style works that combine text and image. Zines have existed in some form since humans have been able to read and write, but, in particular, they are the product of the printing press and the beginning of mass communication and the circulation of ideas and beliefs. While the publishing industry has historically limited people's self expression, especially BIPOC and LGBTQIA people, zines have created a platform for the underrepresented voices in mainstream media. Zines, and self-publication in general, has created representation of diverse peoples and diverse thought. Independent from commercial worries, they form a safe space for experiences and ideas, which has led to them becoming a symbol of the counterculture movement. Zines are present in our politics, art, and music, and everything in between.

ADDRESSED TO THE
THE
INHABITANTS Pennsylvania *GAZETTE*.
OF
A M E R I C A,

POLITICAL PUBLICATIONS

Self-publication has always been prominent in political action. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine used zine-like political pamphlets (“Join, or Die,” 1754 and “Common Sense,” 1776) to spread their moral and political agenda throughout communities and were at the root of the American Revolution. In the abolitionist movement, anti-slavery pamphlets were the main mode of communication until they were gradually suppressed and censored by the postal system. Political pamphlets held key roles in the labor rights and civil rights movements and various other political uprisings around the world.



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The Dada art movement (and the Surrealists, Fluxus, and Eastern Bloc samizdat) were pioneers of the art zine tradition. Their work consisted of a distinct typographic style that went beyond what typeset text was traditionally capable of, combined with collaged imagery and cut-up writing, blurring the line between art forms, and rejecting logic and reason in favor of irrationality and nonsense. Dada epitomized work that challenged traditional definitions of art, and Dadaist publications were among them. To this day, artists have continued showing their work through self-published platforms to remain independent from the gallery system.



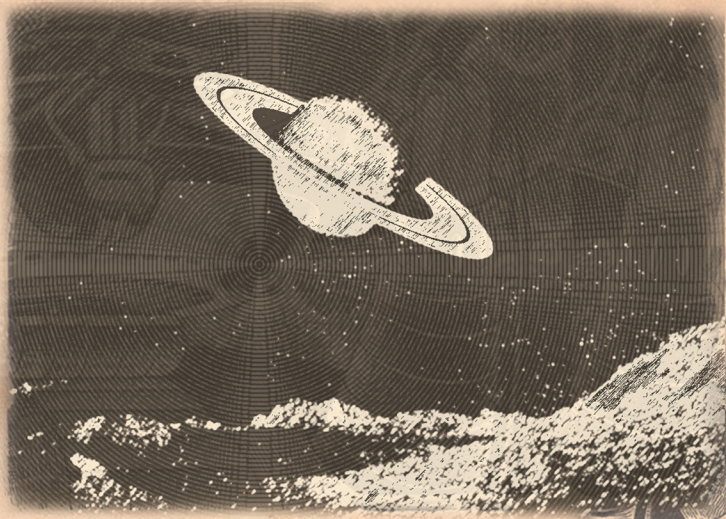
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SCIENCE FICTION FANZINES

Zines owe their name to the science fiction fan magazines which were quickly abbreviated to fanzines and then, simply, to zines. Admirers of the sci-fi genre started creating their own amateur publications for their spin-off stories and soon created a fandom community where readers would write back and forth and produce still more versions. Some fanzines were created based off of popular media franchises (such as Spockanalia created by Star Trek fans), but others were entirely original and focused on subject matter not touched on by their mainstream counterparts.



riot grrrl movement

Riot grrrl is a counterculture movement that both encompassed and combined the punk music genre, feminism, and politics. Bands like Bikini Kill and Bratmobile shunned major record labels and chose to remain in the underground scene. Their popularity gave rise to an increase in homemade Xeroxed zines known for their rough aesthetic. These publications tackled subjects like gender identity, sexism, and rape that were often looked over in mainstream media. However, in recent years, media historians have been critical of the fact that the publications were mostly focused at white, middleclass feminists. Nonetheless, they have become a symbol of female empowerment.

BIKINI KILL



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Further Reading:

POC Zine Project

<https://poczineproject.tumblr.com/about>

“Why Diverse Zines Matter: A Case Study of the People of Color Zines Project” by Malanie Ramdarshan Bold

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12109-017-9533-4>

“Abolitionist Pamphlet Campaign” by Robert McNamara

<https://www.thoughtco.com/abolitionist-pamphlet-campaign-1773556>