



PHIL,





In 2012, I met with someone...

..., Phil Aarons not to name him, who asked me to write a book about zines made by artists. As I had no idea where to start in order to write such a book, I decided to make an open research by showing my preparatory work both to him and to everyone.

The first step was the creation in 2015 of a website www.artzines.info that functions as a database for all the raw material encountered during my research. On this website, you will find a page for each artist I met, with a short video interview, audio recordings of conversations and digitized zines.

The next step in the open research process was the creation of a meta-zine, a small DIY publication about artists' zines. I self-published 12 issues in the ARTZINES series between 2015 and 2018, each dedicated either to an artist or a place, until I decided to end the series in order to focus on the primary goal of this project: writing a book.

This is the 13th and very last issue of ARTZINES and it is composed of the book proposal that I sent Phil in order to reach the final stage of our collaboration. In the end, the book may not look at all like what is described here, but while we begin to work on it, that's where we start from.

The code name or working title for the book is *ARTZINES 1977-2017*. The idea of the date range is to show in the title that the subject we are dealing with finds its origin in the late 1970s. For a lot of people, 1977 stands as the great year of Punk, in this context, the date range by itself shows how this book aims to provide a historical survey of art zines while showing the influence of the punk subculture on today's self-publishing boom.

Phil,

I want to start by thanking you for all the support during this research. When you commissioned me to write a book on zines made by artists, I decided to make it an open research, so that you and everyone else can follow the developments of my thinking.

All the things I produced during those two years of research were steps towards the production of a bigger research result. The website, the interviews and the numerous issues of ARTZINES might feel like they are the whole research, but there is a lot more behind it. I took the time to get a general view of the subject, for ideas to sink in, and to find the right angle to treat such a complex topic.

The following book project is the result of our discussions, and will take a step back from those two years of research in order to explain the dynamic of artist self-publishing, by showing the underlying connections between the artists who invented zines, and what is happening today.

The main concept of the book is to be an encyclopaedia of artists who make zines, featuring a lot of them in order to show the diversity of the phenomenon. I think there are a lot people expecting such a reference book, and that it is much needed.

I am looking forward to see our project materialize in a beautiful printed object.

I worked on many ideas to make it a great book on art zines, and I look forward to discussing them with you in order to make together the best possible book.

I am very grateful for this opportunity and look forward to the next step.

Yours truly
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FORMAT

20 x 25 cm

If we choose to keep some aspects of the ARTZINES branding, I think that the format should be the same as ARTZINES: 20 x 25 cm or 8" by 10". It is a really good format and would work even better on a thick book.

500 pages

In order to show the diversity of zines and their generosity, I think the book should be between 400 and 600 pages.

Light paper

Because of the inherent cheapness of zines, I think we should use a light paper, like the one used in *Queer Zines*.

Printing

If we want to keep the fabrication simple like in zines, maybe it should be printed only with spot colours.

Bodoni binding

If we use a light paper, it would be great to have a Bodoni binding to make it less fragile (open spine or perfect binding with cardboard plates glued on the cover). It also gives a book a great style!

Sticker

To show the continuity of the project, it would make sense to have an actual ARTZINES sticker glued on the cover, especially if the design is different from my zines but with the same format and grid.

Artist cover

Ever since we started talking about this book years ago, I always imagined that an artist would make specific artworks for the covers. I don't why I always thought of Tom Sachs for this.

Designer

If we want to stick with the ARTZINES branding, it would be coherent to use the same grid as in the zines I produced. I can do the design, but if you prefer to work with your designer, it is fine by me. I would be extremely interested in seeing what a professional designer could do using the grid and format I used in my zine series.

2 OPTIONS

I thought of two different ways to make this book:

— OPTION 1 is more written.

It is a thick reader gathering lengthy contributions by zine specialists, along with portfolios designed by artists especially for the book, and very important zines that are fully reproduced on a 1:1 scale. The aim of this option is to produce a hybrid scholarly book filled with both artistic and theoretical content. It might also take more time to produce.

— OPTION 2 is more visual.

It stems from your "Zine Masters of the Universe" and extends it to 100 zine makers. By showing them chronologically, this option stretches a continuous line between the limits of the date range.

In both options, there are in-depth analytic texts written by scholars, shorter texts written by artists on other zine makers, and interviews.

The target is slightly different for each book, as the first option is more scholarly, maybe it would be more interesting in an educational setting, when the second option might give us access to a wider audience.

In both options there is:

— An introduction written by me, with a timeline showing the important historical steps in self-publishing from the 19th century until today. (20-25 pages)

And at the end:

— A bibliography of every book about self-publishing and artists' publications. (4-6 pages)

— An international bookshop archive directory of places that sell and collect zines. (4 pages)

— An International book and zine fair directory. (2-4 pages)

— An index of key words, in order to read the book transversally according to a specific, theme, genre of zine, etc. (2 pages)

— In option 1: An index of artists' names.

— In option 2: A chronological summary of featured artists (2 pages or on the back cover)

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INTRODUCTION

(20-25 pages)

No matter which option is chosen, I will write the introduction, to explain the choices made in the conception of the book.

I think it is important to insist on a few key aspects of the project that make it unique. The goals of the book are:

- To situate zines made by artists in the history of artists' publications.
- To show both older and more recent works in order to bridge generations.
- To show that the influence of the punk DIY ethos can only be explained through the place digital technologies took in our lives.
- To use the term "zines" to explain what publishing as an artistic practice means.
- To insist that zines are the voice of the under-represented, of the outcasts, the discriminated and the amateurs.
- To show how zines are an alternative to the art gallery and the art market, that they are a way to escape the dominant art world.
- To demonstrate that the phenomenon that Anglo-Saxons call zine is actually a recent global explosion of self-publishing.

As expressed in the incomplete draft of this introduction published as a poster in ARTZINES #2, one of the goal of this research is to replace zines in the broader history of artists' publications, or like Greil Marcus suggested in *Lipstick Traces* (1989) to place them in a 'secret' alternative history of art ranging from Dada to the situationists and punk considered as avant-garde.

The idea of the date frame in the title is to show the influence of the punk DIY subculture on today's self-publishing boom. By mirroring these two eras, the idea is also to draw attention to the mirror itself, the pivotal period of the turn of century and the apparition of Internet and digital technologies in almost everyone's life around the globe.

During the Internet boom, 1995-2005 zines almost disappeared, as everyone seemed to think that this new technology would replace all printed media. But it didn't take long until people realised that even if the World Wide Web was extremely useful for a lot of things, a lot of people stayed extremely committed to printed matter.

In the zine world, the apparition of Internet also marks a great transformation, as many zine-makers shifted to webzines in the late 1990s. Indeed, as zines primary function was to circulate information and to create connections in a network of like-minded individuals, Internet took over this function almost instantly and made the sharing that was part of zinesters' lives a part of everyone's life. Thanks to the idealism of the creators of the World Wide Web, the DIY voice expressed in zines was now accessible to everyone through emails, blogs and personal webpages. But Internet didn't stay this new anarchist frontier and it didn't take long until corporations took over this idealism for themselves and created the so-called social media to propose a great exchange of ideas within their controlled pens. That's when zines reappeared!

When people realised that social media would not necessarily offer the same liberty, as they would have on paper, they turned back to the good old printed page. Freed from the information and networking function that was now taken care of by digital technologies, the zines produced since then can focus on more visual aspects, and on creating beautiful printed objects. That's what we call art zines.

The recent paradigm shift in artists' publications is therefore the consequence of multiple technological breakthroughs: desktop publishing, Internet, social media, print on demand, digital photography, cell phones etc. A lot of zines made by people born in the new century propose a reflection on the place that technology took in our life, because that feeling is hard to express through technology itself. As Kenneth Goldsmith expresses it in his book *Wasting time on the Internet* (2016), 'the content of a device is always the device itself,' making it impossible for any user to escape it, or use it in a way that hasn't been thought of by the developers.

In this context the apparition of book fairs and zine fests reshaped what people usually expects from artists' publications. Basically, young people are fed up of staring at screens all day long and prefer to spend their weekends sharing over printed material rather than staying at home waiting for another like. The explosion of the number of book fairs shows the continuing interest that people —often really

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young— show for the book object and the sharing possibilities that it offers. It also shows the incredible empowerment that printed media offers to new generations as there are more new publishing projects created each day.

Zines are an adolescence of art, an unruly period of extreme freedom, an endless youth of art like Dorian Gray's portrait.

It was therefore extremely difficult to choose artists to feature in the more recent years, as zines have become very trendy, and the quantity of zines produced doesn't always show as quality. Even for young artists, it is important to see if zines are a default or trendy choice, or rather a way to participate in a DIY ethos. It is much easier to see it when artists move along with their careers, as one can easily spot the artists that were using the zine format because it was convenient, and the others that will continue to make zines even if they have the opportunity to make an "actual book."

As Annette Gilbert demonstrates in *Publishing as Artistic Practice* (2015), since the last century, the attention shifted from the medium towards the practice. Unlike in the 20th century artists' books, there are no masterpieces in zines, only 'Zine Masters' (Aarons, 2013.) They are artists who build a long term publishing practice and whose sensibility and personality is not necessarily accessible through one auratic masterpiece, but in the accumulation of numerous published works. The artists that are featured have built over the years a relentless publishing practice that doesn't show the influence of a possible success, keeping their publications low-key and humble. They use this format because it means something to them, because publishing, sometimes printing and always distributing themselves offers the most extreme type of freedom. This consistency is the main quality that an artist who makes zine can have. It shows the dedication to his work and the love of sharing it.

The origin of zine making goes as far as pamphleteering, which appeared as soon as the printing press was invented. Indeed, even when it was still mandatory to have the king or lord's permission to print anything, free minds used this new technology to print political and satirical broadsheets to challenge the established power.

As many other technological breakthroughs opened this technology to a wider

audience, the counter-cultural movements and sub-cultures took over the tradition of pamphleteering to a next level. Following the 1950s Mimeograph Revolution and the 1960s Underground press, the zine culture that appeared in the 1970s shows like Duncombe stresses, "the personal is political." Julia Lipscomb goes even further when she claims "zines, no matter what topic or subject matter, are political in nature." For artists who choose this way to distribute their art, it is indeed a very bold choice, as it will allow them to have direct access to their audience and to do not split the monetary and symbolic benefits of their work with anyone.

While an Anglo-Saxon influence is undeniable, what we call zines today is a global phenomenon (that still only exists in countries where a middle class exists and where there is freedom of expression).

The other thing that you need to have zines in a country is a middle class, people who have leisure money to print whatever they want. There are however local specificities...

The United States is an adolescent unruly country. This fertile soil born from an unrestrained freedom of speech is the perfect ground for zine culture to thrive. Indeed, looking at the history of zines and how they developed in the recent years, it seems quite obvious that kind of unsupervised type of self-publishing could only exist in countries where freedom of expression and democracy rule.

In Romania, for example, there was no such thing as the Russian Samizdat, a secret independent publishing during communism. Being caught with an unregistered printing device could cause you to disappear in the underground secret jails of the Ceausescu regime. The closest thing to self-publishing that Romanians had during this era were the hand written novels that people copied and exchanged, and even this kind of distraction could lead you to jail.

In France, for example, the emergence of zines didn't occur in the same way as in other countries. France has far too much respect for the printed thing to not make an actual book out of everything. The counterculture movements and subcultures weren't drawn toward low-key self-publishing and wanted to make something that looked serious. That is how the word "fanzine" wasn't used for a long time, as people preferred to talk about "brochures" or "livret," thus referring to the strong

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French pamphleteering tradition. The other reason why zine came later in France is that mainstream music media didn't ignore the early punk movement. As this new groundbreaking movement was being treated in the media, there was no need for French punks to create their own.

Coming from this rich tradition, the recent boom in self-publishing has very deep roots in the tradition of freedom of expression, and it is currently coupled with an unruly youth energy. Zines are here to stay.

OPTION 1:

20 Chapters
(20-25 pages each)

OPTION 1 is divided in 20 chapters of around 20 pages each, that should be printed either in black on different paper stocks, or in a different pantone colour each.

There are 4 types of chapters:

— Thematic or Historical chapters written by scholars on specific key subjects:
Eric de Chassey on Bazooka,
Rudiger Hoyer on Graphzines,
Johan Kugelberg on the Mimeograph Revolution,
Annette Gilbert on Publishing as an artistic practice,

Amir Brito Cadore on Brazilian Zines,
Max Schumann on Artists Books that are photocopied,

Stephen Perkins on the Mail Art Network, etc.

— Portfolios and/or entirely reproduced zines. They are not necessarily the most famous artists who make zines, but they are artists who have a long-term meaningful publishing practice, which is coherent with the view expressed in the book. I am thinking of Gee Vaucher, Marc Fischer, AA Bronson, Dash Snow, Fabio Zimbres, Destroy All Monsters, Bruno Richard, Marc Gonzales....

— Interviews or dialogues. The best solution would be to have artists from a younger generation interviewing their own personal heroes. We can also use some of the interviews that I did so far.

— Cities or countries that are relevant to zine culture. NYC, London, Brazilian California, Berlin. These places are dealt with in a whole chapter that will show the history and specificity of a local scene.





OPTION 2:

100 ARTISTS

(2 to 10 pages each)

The second option shows the work of 100 artists who make zines in chronological order. With a good introduction, the timeline presentation will make a lot of sense to the reader and reconnect the zine pioneers of the late 1970s and early 1980s to what is happening now in the self-publishing world. Even if there is a great deal of interest for zines and self-publishing today, no one has dare yet to mirror the punk zine era to what is happening today.

I think is a bold point of view that needs to be heard.

Each artist page will be composed as such:

- ARTIST NAME (dates)
- Zine title(s) (dates and number of issues)
- Name of the creator(s) (dates)
- City of Publication
- Name of the publisher
- Type of printing, number of copies
- Key Words or Tags (like on the website): type of zine (photo, queer, drawing, design, research, meta, comics, illustration, music, punk, graphzine, perzine...)

An index organised by key words will allow cross sectional navigation, and offer a different way of reading the book than the chronological line.

For each artist or zine, an article or an interview, written or conducted either by scholars (5 pages) or by fellow artists (1 page).

Depending on the artist, these record sheets should occupy from 2 to 10 pages, and should all be heavily illustrated with very good pictures of zines covers and spreads.

Here is the list I have so far:

- 01 — Crass
- 02 — Bazooka
- 03 — Destroy All Monsters
- 04 — Search and Destroy
- 05 — AA Bronson
- 06 — Raymond Pettibon
- 07 — Provo
- 08 — Elles sont de Sortie
- 09 — Neon de Suro
- 10 — Teen Angel's
- 11 — Homeboy Beautiful
- 12 — Daido Moriyama
- 13 — Fabio Zimbres
- 14 — Le Dernier Cri
- 15 — Caroline Sury
- 16 — Blanquet
- 17 — Cameron Jamie
- 18 — Bikini Kill
- 19 — Mark Gonzales
- 20 — Ari Marcopoulos
- 21 — Ed Templeton
- 22 — Stephen Willats
- 23 — Lisa Anne Auerbach
- 24 — Darin Klein
- 25 — Dash Snow
- 26 — Tom Sachs
- 27 — Himaa
- 28 — Ken Kagami
- 29 — Julie Doucet
- 30 — Stefan Marx
- 31 — Black Pages
- 32 — Eden Editions
- 33 — Temporary Services
- 34 — Gfeller + Hellsgard
- 35 — Public Collectors
- 36 — B and D Press
- 37 — Emma Kohlmann
- 38 — Innen Zine
- 39 — Nieves
- 40 — Heather Benjamin
- 41 — Discipline Press
- 42 — Fumiko Imano
- 43 — Arts and Sciences Projects
- 44 — Endless Edition
- 45 — Ryan Foerster
- 46 — Jiro Ishikawa
- 47 — Nick Sethi
- 48 — Lele Saveri
- 49 — 8Ball Zines
- 50 — Pink Mince
- 51 — Gloria Glitzer
- 52 — JJ Peet

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- 53 — Pegacorn Press
- 54 — Sara McKillop
- 55 — Erik Van der Weijde
- 56 — Sergej Vutuc
- 57 — Pascaline Knight
- 58 — Pat McCarthy
- 59 — Dale Wittig
- 60 — Luke You
- 61 — Peter Sutherland
- 62 — Research and Destroy NYC
- 63 — The Photocopy Club
- 64 — Zine Parasita
- 65 — Fist
- 66 — Pam Butler
- 67 — Fuck This life
- 68 — Gayhouse
- 69 — Le Nouvel Esprit du Vandalisme
- 70 — Nos books
- 71 — Stephanie Leinhos
- 72 — Hard Working Good Looking
- 73 — Aidan Koch
- 74 —
- 75 —
- 76 —
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- 100 —

BUDGET

I have never produced such a big book, and I have no idea how much it would cost, you have much more experience in this than me.

All I know is that as a zine maker, I like to keep things cheap and simple in everything I do. So I wouldn't like the book to be too expensive for the reader/buyer.

I am not sure how you financed the other books that you made, and which part the publisher played in it. The help of a publisher will be important for legal and copyright issues, and of course for distribution.

It is important that we can pay the writers. There will be a translation budget, as some of the pieces won't be written in English.

I would be extremely happy if we could work with Phaidon or Printed Matter like you did in the past.

Let's do this!

There is no guest artist in this issue, but the cover is an homage to the wonderful Austrian artist-zine series BLACK PAGES that published more than 80 zines since May 2009, with as many artists.

See <https://www.blackpages.at>

Published by *antoine lefebvre editions in the Journal de l'université d'été de la Bibliothèque Kandinsky in November 2018 - 500 copies. Many thanks to Phil

Aarons and the team of the Kandinsky Library.

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