don't hate the media become the media!1

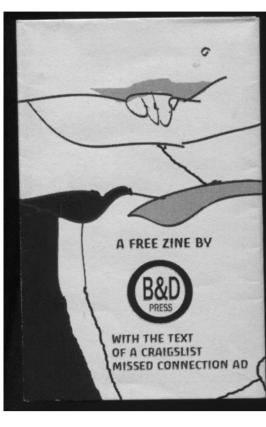
From Artists' books to Zines

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As **ARTZINES** has reached its cruising speed both on line and in print, it is now time to draw a blueprint of this research, to test its original assumptions, to make them public and open to discussion. As an artist researcher, it has always been important to me that my artistic practice and my theoretical experiences merge in the same dynamic. For **ARTZINES**, my goal is to make every step and action of the research process visible through the means of my publishing practice. The first step was the creation of a website [http://www.artzines.info] that functions as a database for all the raw material encountered in 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 a lot of scanned zines. Even if I try to be as open minded as I can and to keep the selection representative of the variety that can be found within zine culture, the selection is very subjective and personal, as I am doing everything myself. The next step in the research process was the creation of a meta-zine, a small DIY publication about artists' zines. Because of how zines are produced, I think it is important that this phenomenon is analyzed and theorized by people who also make their own zines, who are not only spectators, but participate in a community. The goal of this project is to eventually become a reference book on the subject, but there is still a lot







A lot of ideas and hypothesis underlay ARTZINES; they are the result of my personal experience making publications. During my doctoral research, I created La Bibliothèque Fantastique [2009-2013], a publishing structure for artists' books through which I produced more than a hundred publications by forty three different artists. As I had no money to pay a printer, I just put the PDF files on line [http://www. labibliothequefantastique.net] and invited my potential readers to print these artists' books themselves. When I came to theorize about this, I realize that the research on artist books had been more interested in the medium (Mæglin-Delcroix 1997; Drucker 1994,) in the nature of the object, rather than in the processes of publishing from which the object results. But there has been recently a shift of focus, "from the nedium, i.e. artifact, to practice; and from book to publishing" (Gilbert, 2016.) The "Do It Yourself" modes of creation of zines emphasize this "publishing practice" aspect. Indeed, a publication is not considered as a zine because of its nature, but because of how it has been produced.

I realized that for La Bibliothèque Fantastique I had adopted a DIY mode of production without paying to much attention to it, and that my publications could therefore be considered as zines, —because they were photocopied, self-published, and used a great deal of copy/paste and appropriation, which is a contemporary equivalent to the "scissor and glue" lay-out. Because the current terminology wasn't describing properly what I was doing, I wrote in my dissertation² a definition of artist's zines, or artzines, that suited the productions of LBF more properly. Even if these publications were made to be artists' books, as they were inscribed in the well-known history of artists' books, the Do It Yourself modes of multiplication that I used to produce them, also made them zines.

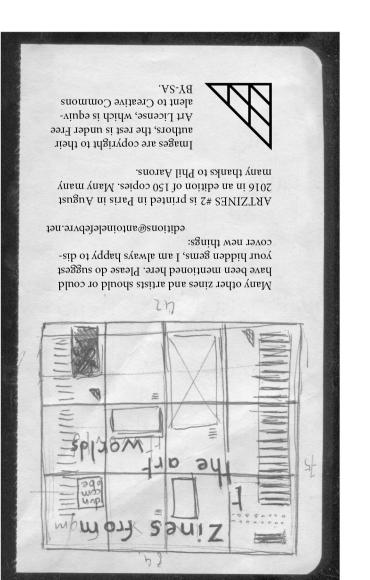
alternative for a very longtime (Linker, 1980; Moore & Hendricks, 1985; Schraenen, 1985; Cutts, 1986) it is not often that they are put on the same level as other types of alternative publications, such as pamphlets, broadsides or zines. One of the goals of **ARTZINES** is to inscribe artists' publications —should they be books, magazines, ephemera, zines or other types of printed and distributed material— in the broader history of alternative publishing, which goes back as far as the invention of movable types (Chartier, 1982). Artists' publications have always been independent and alternative, because the artists producing them were influenced by counter-cultural or rebellious ideologies. The democratic ideal expressed by artists through their publications has always been the expression of a political standpoint. Artists who do books were moved by a generous ideal, but often kept a horizontal functioning, having their publications produced by galleries or institutions, whereas in the zine culture, a horizontal functioning is the rule. Zines are non-hierarchical; people don't ask for any authorizations, and they don't need any skills to make them. In the historical punk zines, any type of skill is highly discouraged, except for the one to make a layout look scrappy. Zines tend to promote a horizontal way of functioning where no one is only a spectator, but where everyone is invited to take action, to be part of the movement. Zine culture is driven by an invitation, an incentive that some times looks like an order: Do It Yourself! This mantra which invites anyone to take action, to be part of a collective movement can be considered as an ethos, an ethical way of seeing and experiencing the world through

While commentators have considered artists' books as

The greatest help to demonstrate the possible links between contemporary art and zines came from Greil Marcus and his masterpiece **Lipstick Traces**. In his book, Marcus works to replace Punk in a broader historical framework, positing it as a trans-media avant-garde —maybe the last—, rather than just a music trend. To him, Punk is part of a Secret **History of the 20th century**, a parallel history of rebel artists going from Dada to the situationists and continuing with the punks. To prove his theory, Marcus shows the influence Punk had in the fields of fashion, graphic design, art and of course music. If we take his assumption and consider Punk as one of the last avant-garde, then zines should be considered as artists' publications, as the rightful heirs of Dada magazines, mail art or artists' books.

The most recent common ancestor between zines and artists' books is the Mimeograph Revolution, the first technological breakthrough to make printing readily available to the masses: "This is not to criticize the artists' book "movement," nor to castigate the relaxed standards of most of its participants; technically, they were preceded by the "mimeograph revolution" of the late 1950's and 1960's, a widespread exploitation of cheap, flexible, and readily available printing formats that powered the little-magazine phenomenon in literature. "3 But it was hard to make clean prints with this technique and artists, such as Dick Higgins for example, upgraded to offset printing as soon as they had a chance. When Haloid created a new machine, the **Xerox** 914 in 1959, it was very expensive, much more than offset printing, and when photocopy became affordable ten years later, avant-garde artists were already used to offset printing.

When zine culture and contemporary art may seem incompatible, they actually have a lot in common, especially a counter-cultural spirit (Heath & Potter, 2004.) Contemporary art is not one indivisible whole; today's art is scattered, it is composed of an infinity of artworlds, which are radically different from one another and permeable. As the artist collective Basekamp⁴ defines them (after Danto, 1964; and Becker, 1988,) there are as many artworlds as artists. They each have their owns heroes, their own references, and some of them share these references with the counter-culture and subcultures. Some artists or artworlds are infused by counter-cultural ideals and want their art to be a counter-power and to carry their political views. Other artists are been so influenced by the subcultures they belong to that these subcultures become more important in their art than the **Great History of art**.



speech for the US Green Party.

Artzines are zines from the artworlds. Because they share a common history with zines and artists' publications they are both at the same time. But there is no need for a new terminology if it just a designation of a new form, Artzines are not only a different type of artists' publications, they are artworks published and made by artists who find sense in producing them in a Do It Yourself ethos. They are not just a new type of publication, but a publishing practice, a way of making art and choosing this kind of mode of production is a political stand on today's world.

Because the artists' producing them were influenced by the great ideologies of the 20th century, the artists' books aimed to become a "kind of possible 'mass market literature': a popular book, something one could pick up in the train station to pass the time on a long journey somewhere, perhaps even on holiday."⁵ Whereas the zines of the 21st century mark a paradigm shift, to the hand-made, self-distributed "glocal" —both global and local— publications which are both confidential, possibly handmade, and distributed worldwide. For Duncombe, "Zines put a slight twist on the idea that the personal is political." Especially with perzine —contraction of personal zines— who are "the voice of a democracy: testimony to the unrepresented everyday, the unheard-from everyperson." When the so-called "democratic ideal" of artists' books still remained paternalist, pretending to bring "High" culture to the ignorant masses who in the end never cared for these pretentious publications that had nothing to do with them, zines try to avoid that by inviting every one to be part of a movement, to share a common energy and to have a say in how

1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 2014. 3 Peter Frank, Something Else Press, An Annotated Bibliography, New York, McPherson and co., 1983, p. 85. 4 Basekamp, *Plausible Artworlds*, ebook published on www.plausibleartworlds.org, 2013.

1 Famous DIY slogan was pronounced by Jello Biafra the singer of the Dead Kennedys in 2000 during his nomination

2 Antoine Lefebvre, Portrait of the Artist as a Publisher, Publishing as an Alternative Artistic Practice, PhD thesis, Paris

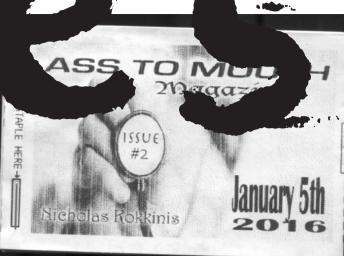
5 Jonathan Monk, « On book making & book collection, Telephone conversation between Jonathan Monk and Seth Siegelaub on Friday, 10 October 2003, additonal postscript added on Wednesday, 4 February 2004 », Cover Version, London, Bookworks, 2004, p. 57.

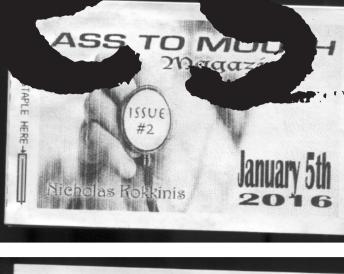
6 Stephen Duncombe, Notes from Underground, Portland, Microcosm Publishing, (1997) 2008, p. 33-36.

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Tom Sachs, Ass To Mouth #1-7, 2015-2016, 16

pp., 3,5"x 2,5", ATM Print on demand.

















The Endless Youth of Art

Every important step in the history of self-publishing have been the result of a technological breakthrough. Unauthorized independent publishing has existed as soon as the movable type printing press was invented, and each time a new printing technique was discovered, it lead to an new type of independent publishing. But for the artist Stephen Willats, the apparition of the photocopier was a true cultural revolution:

"Though the relationship between communication technologies and the creation of culture is so inextricably bound up that innovations such as Xerox, instant copying can be seen to actually shape and create new culture. Thus people's inherent need for self-expression, inhibited and repressed within norms and conventions of an authoritative and dominant culture quickly led to the appropriation of the Xerox technology in the creation of new expressions. (...) Thus the results of the encoding of original artwork through Xerox have become associated with expressions that are in alienation, even opposition, to the dominant culture of authoritative deter-

The apparition of the photocopier and the way it shaped culture can be helpful to understand how Internet transformed today's self-publishing world. It was rather unexpected to see a Renaissance of zines since the beginning of the 21st century, as commentators were eager to declare print dead. The comeback of zines was even more surprising as Internet had made the networking function of zines obsolete.

The explosion of zine culture at the end of the 1970's is the result of a particular situation, a technological breakthrough, the invention of the photocopier that becomes affordable and accessible to anyone in the 1970's, and an unprecedented situation: the apparition of a new sociological category: Youth. In the late 1960's and 1970's the introduction of baby boomers in the universities created a new social category, and the culture that goes with it, the most visible manifestation of this shift in culture where for example the Summer of Love in 1967 or the events of May 68 in France.

In French, when something is very simple, basic, we say that it is *l'enfance de l'art*, "a child's play", or literally "the childhood of art", the beginning, the most innocent state of any human endeavor. When it comes to zines, even if they could be considered as "a child's play", there is something much more profound that is at stake in the urge of making a publication with any means at your disposal, and to distribute it to any person you can reach. Even if there is a certain kind of innocence or naiveté to act spontaneously and to just make things instead of overthinking them, this innocence cannot be considered as a child's whim, but rather as the act of a rebellious teenager. When it comes to artists, l'enfance de l'art could also be considered as a state of innocence of art, before it has been corrupted by the normalization of a system, the market and its institutions. Following this idea, the recent Renaissance or comeback of zines could be considered as the teenage years of artist self-publishing. The self-publishing movement has lost some of its innocence, but only to replace it with a lot of youthful rebellion.

Since I started publishing and participated in a few book fairs, I have met and discussed with a lot of artist publishers. For ARTZINES, I interviewed a couple of dozens artists who make zines, and what struck me the most was that a lot of the qualities that zine-makers see in making these types of publications are very close to the feeling of a rebel teenager refusing authority: spontaneity, carelessness, freedom, thoughtlessness, rapidity, impatience, or even social awkwardness. A lot of zinesters are making zines because it is "fun", "to make friends" or to "get some girls" or just to meet people, zines are then used as an icebreaker, a way of showing that you belong. Zines are a way of empowerment and self-determination (Hein, 2012,) a way of creating your own culture instead of enduring mainstream culture (Duncombe, 1997.) Alternative publishing also allows minorities, such as sexual minorities for example (Aarons & Bronson, 2008,) to have control on how they want to be seen.

> best sense of the word. Etymologically an amateur is one that loves, from the latin amare (to love). But for Stiegler, the amateur is also a hero of the post-digital era. He calls today's way of functioning where everyone is invited to contribute, the "economy of contribution," and opposes this economy of love to consumer culture, as the amateur participates in what he desires. "To love is to contribute to the being and/or the becoming of that which is loved."

Zines are made by amateurs, in the

The way zinesters work, carefully crafting a couple of dozen of their latest publications echoes what Stiegler calls "The time of the amateur", which "resists the dissociation of the time of life into time of work (or production) and time of leisure (or of consumption). "8 That might be why people who make zines love them so much, and are willing to take part of it, because for a moment, just like Baldessari said about artists' books, "Art seems pure for a moment and disconnected from money."9

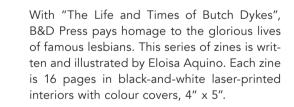
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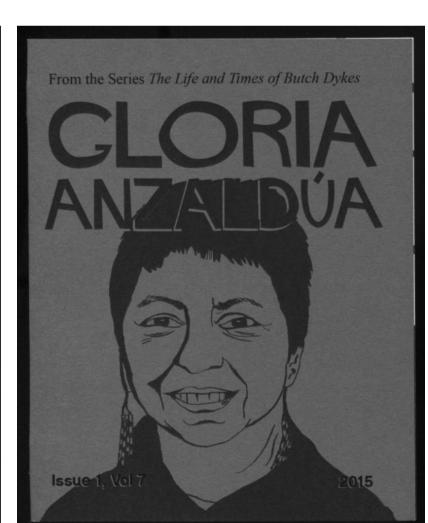
7 Stephen Willats « Xerox as an agent of social change », in Xerography, Michelle Cotton et Nicole Yip (ed.),

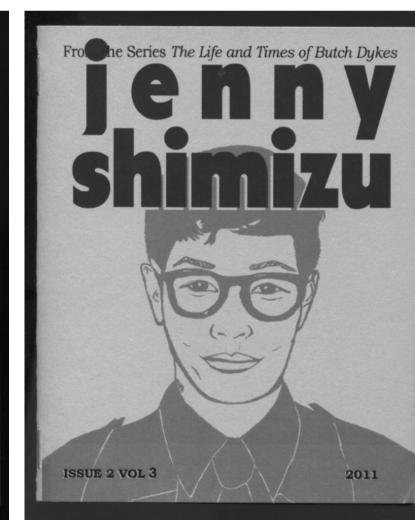
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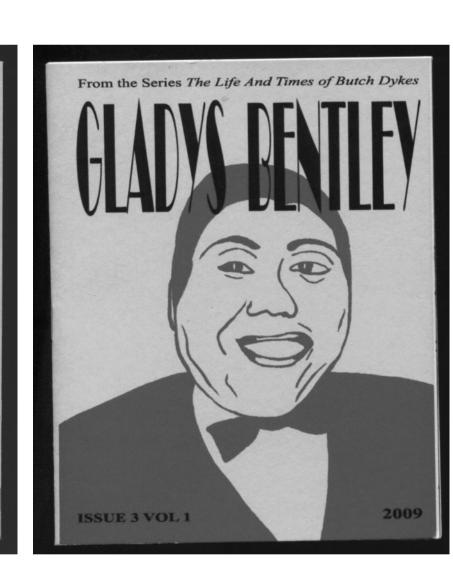
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