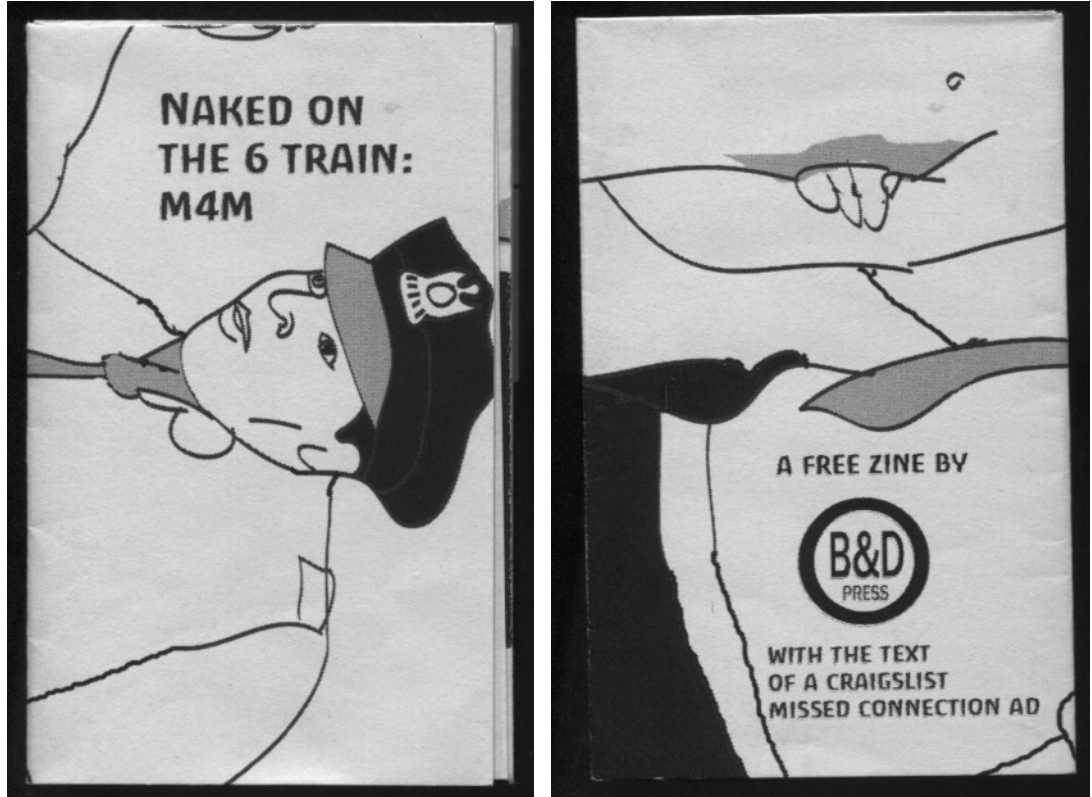


don't hate the media
become the media!¹

From Artists' books to Zines

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 for me to do!



A lot of ideas and hypothesis underlay **ARTZINES**, they are the result of my personal experience making publications. During my doctoral research, I created **Le 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.labbibliothequfantastique.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 (Moeglin-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 medium, 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 too 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" layout. Because the current terminology wasn't describing properly what I was doing, I wrote in my dissertation 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.

While commentators have considered artists' books as alternative for a very longtime (Linker, 1989; 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 emancipatory 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: saving 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 look 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 action.

The greatest help to demonstrate the possible links between contemporary art and zines came from Grell 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.

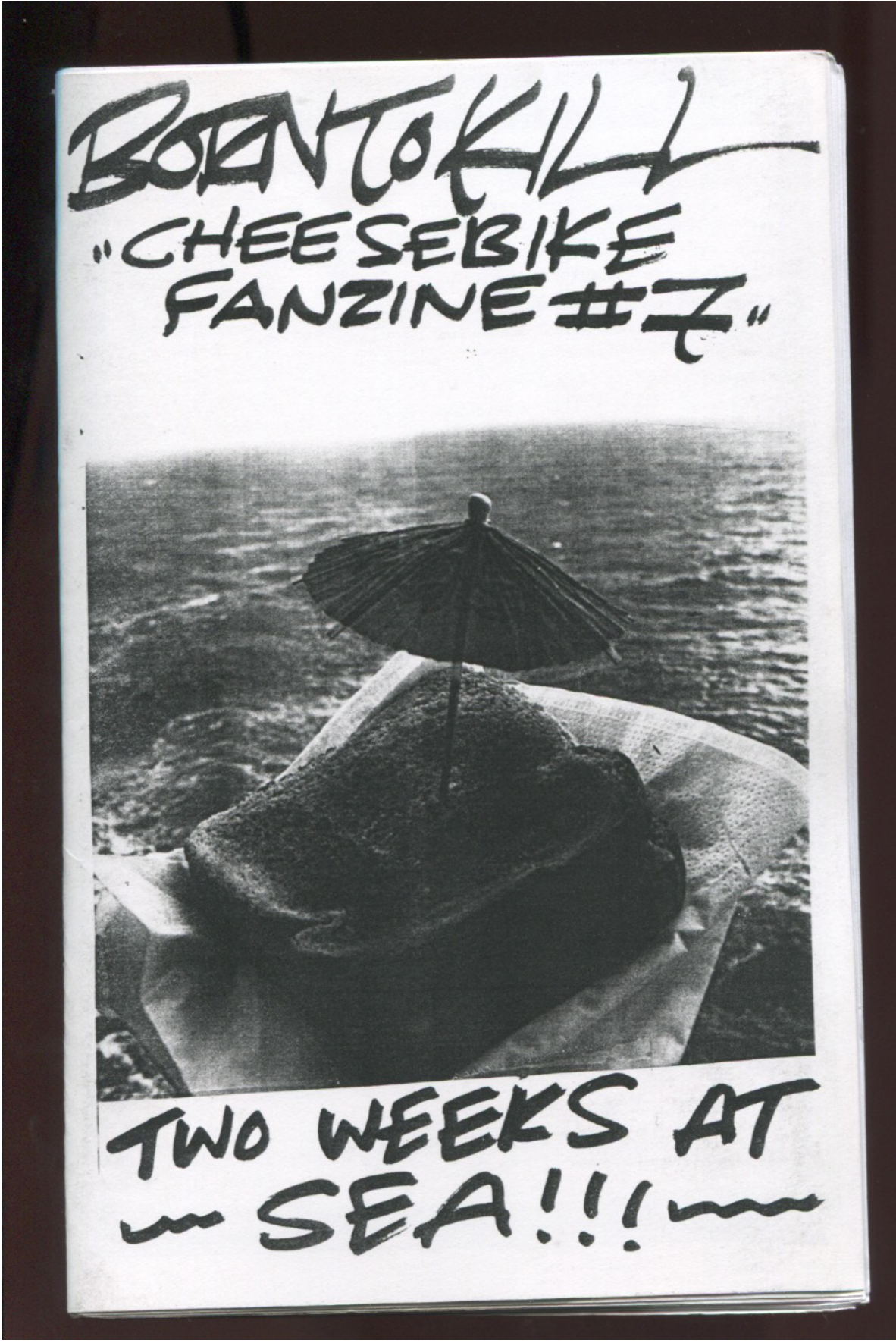
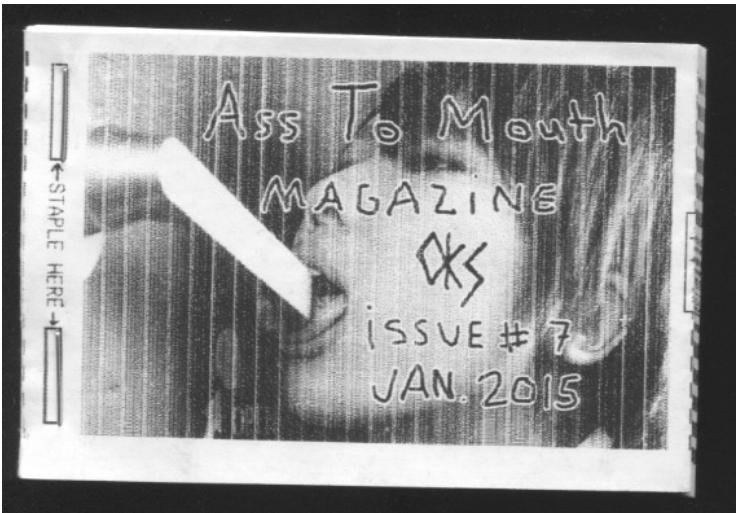
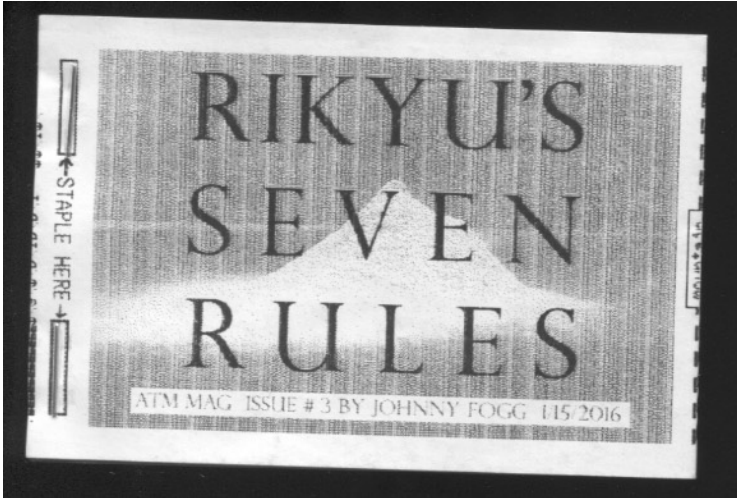
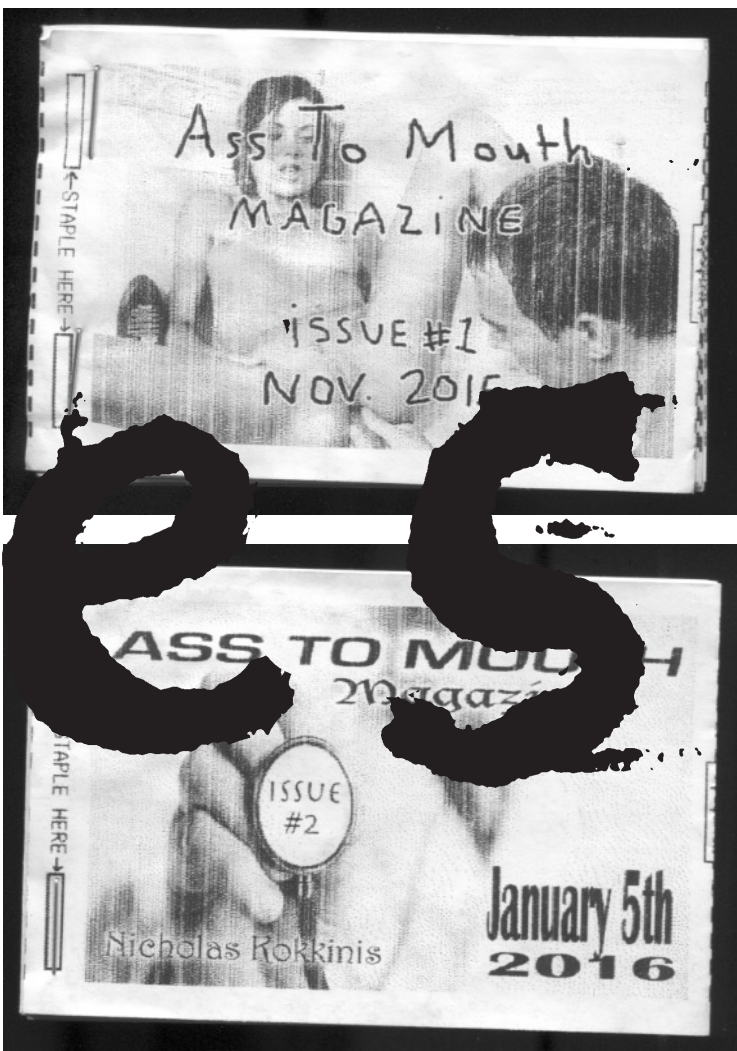
The most recent common ancestor between zines and artists' books is the **Minimagraph Revolution**, the first technological breakthrough to make printing readily available to the masses: "This is not to criticize the artists' book "movement," nor to castigate the relaxed standards of most of its participants; technically, they were preceded by the "minimagraph 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."² But it was hard to make offprints 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 difficult to print, 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 artworks, which are radically different from one another and permeable. As the artist collective Basecamp³ defines them (after Danto, 1964; and Becker, 1988) there are as many artworks as artists. They each have their own heroes, their own references, and some of them share these references with the counter-culture and subcultures. Some artists or artworks 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**.

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 is 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."⁴ Whereas the zines of the 21st century mark a paradigm shift, to the hand-made, self-distributed "global" —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 zine— who are "the voice of a democracy: testimony to the unrepresented everyday, the unheard-from everyperson."⁵ 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 culture is made.

Tom Sachs, *Ass To Mouth* #1-7, 2015-2016, 16 pp., 3,5"x 2,5", ATM Print on demand.

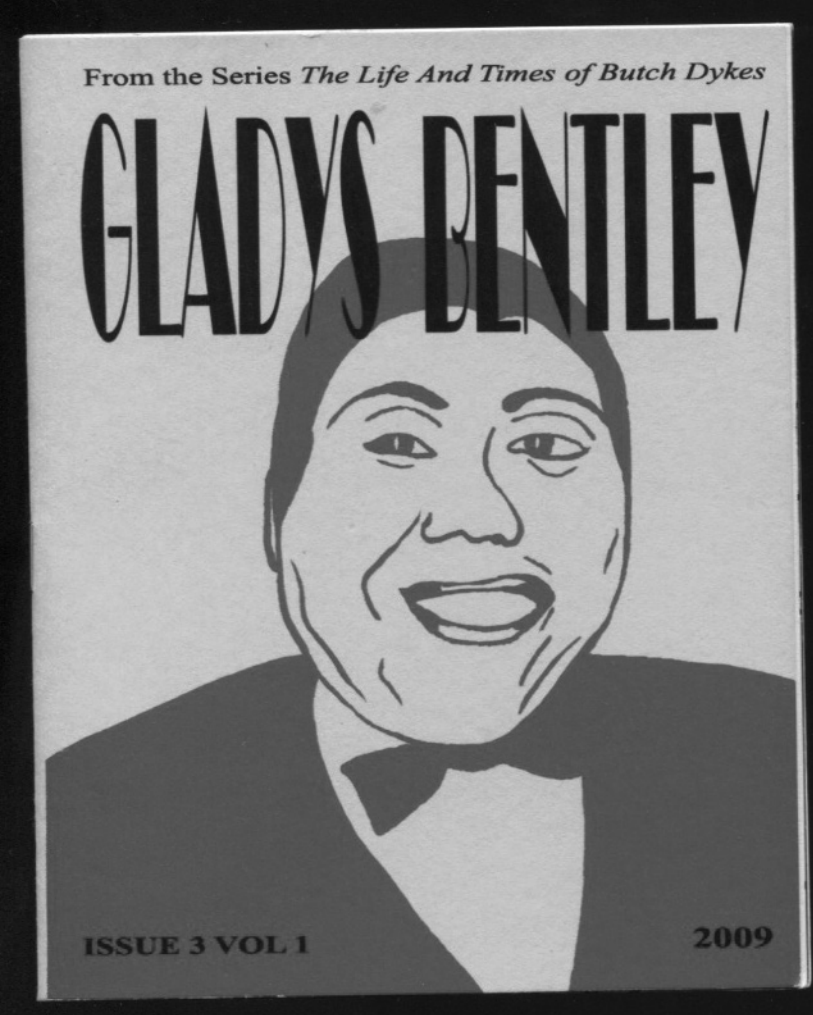
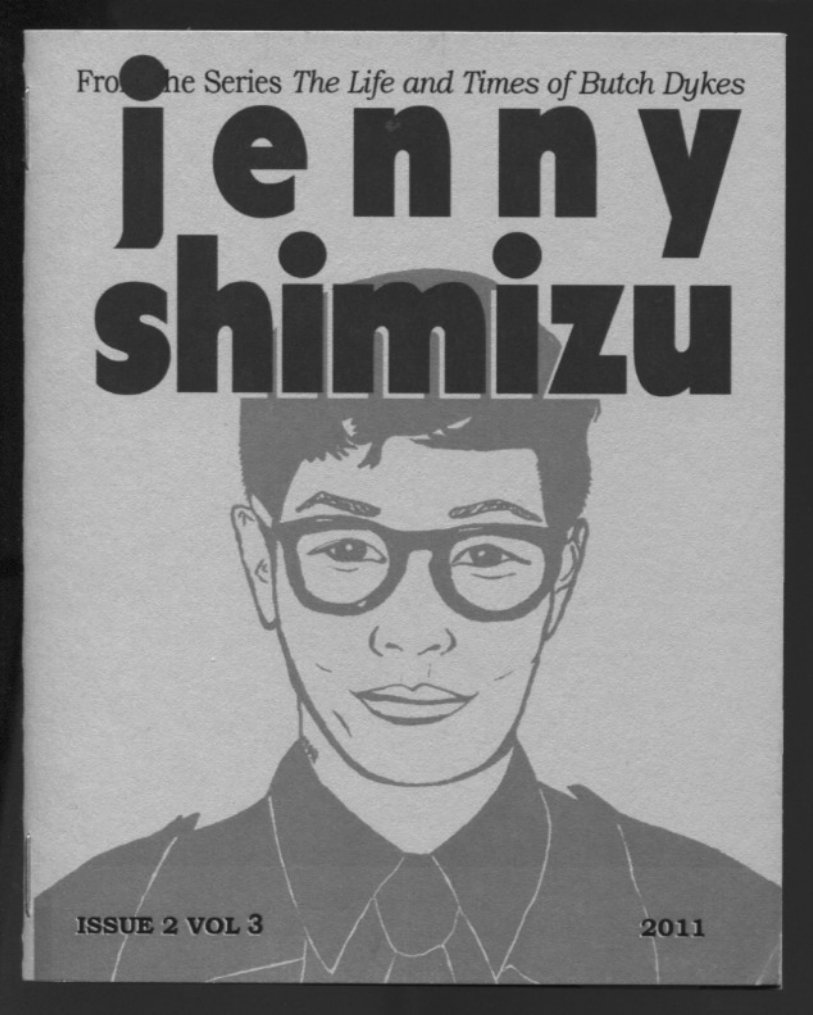
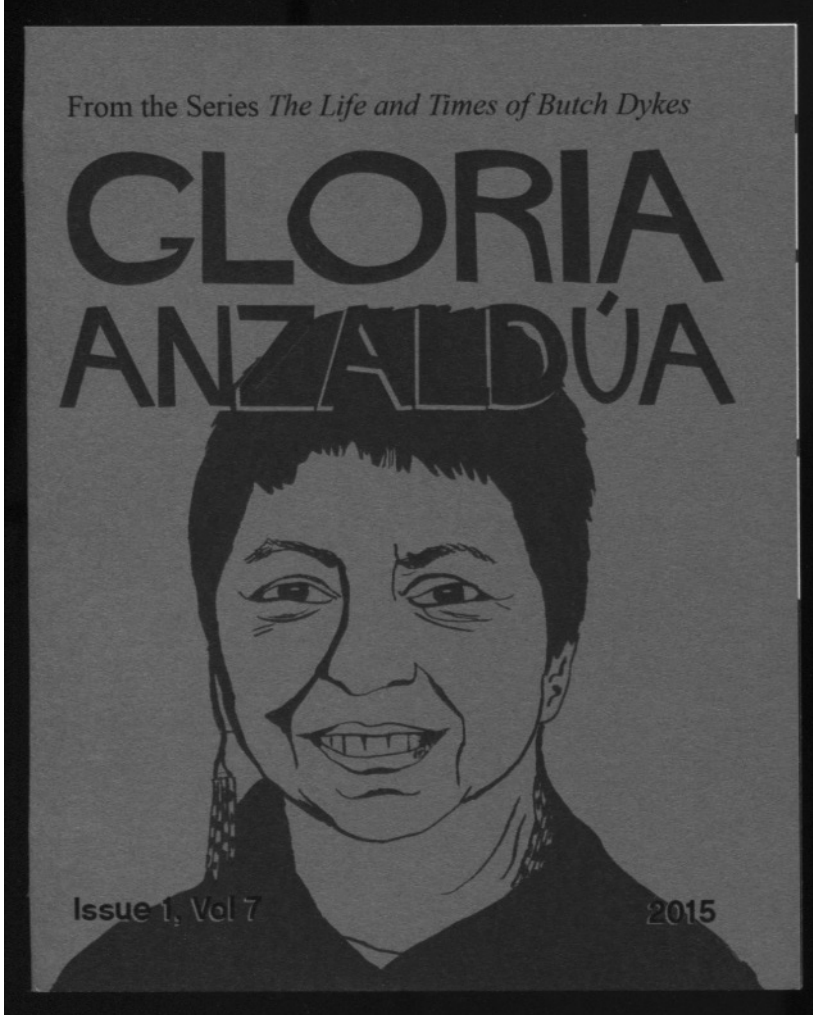


Pat McCarthy, *Born to kill Zine #57, "Cheesecake Fanzine #7"*, Two Weeks at the Sea, Brussel, Self-Published, 2014, 5,5"x 8,5", Photocopy and pasted Photo, 48 pp.

Pascaline J. Knight, [Untitled], Montreal, A Knight in Paper A-MOUR, 2015, 4,5"x 6", Resprint and silkscreen, 36 pp.



With "The Life and Times of Butch Dykes", B&D Press pays homage to the glorious lives of famous lesbians. This series of zines is written and illustrated by Eloisa Aquino. Each zine is 16 pages in black-and-white laser-printed interiors with colour covers, 4" x 5".



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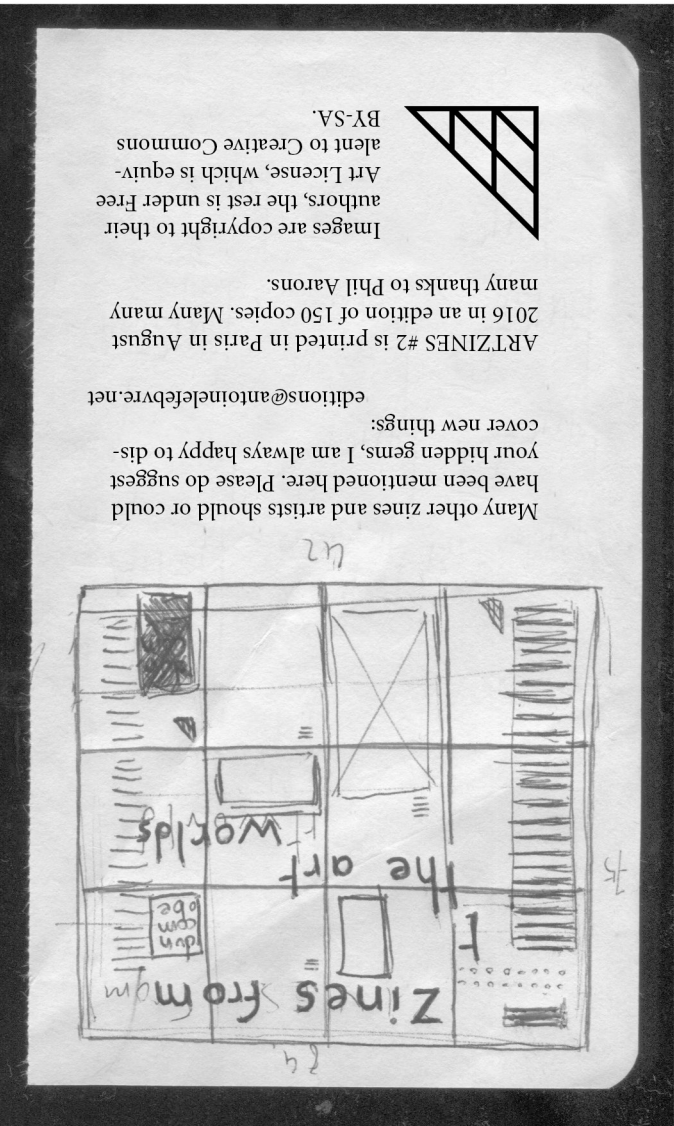
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