

Counterculture, Craftsmanship, and Cyberspace Connectivity: Considerations of Contemporary Feminist Zines in/as/of Art Education

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ABSTRACT: This paper will examine the digital interplays of contemporary feminist zines in the contexts of art and art education. While the peak of paper zines may be traced to the 1990s, this form of feminist counterculture has persisted and evolved into cyberspace forums and expressions. Zines often include not only email addresses alongside “snail mail” addresses, but also links to pdfs and related web resources. Connecting the handmade craftsmanship and hand-drawn and written techniques of zines with the grassroots connectivity enabled by the web; blogs and other online forums relating to zines or containing zines constitute interesting liminal spaces. At other times, zines may be a sort of feminist protest to male-dominated cyberspace forums. This paper explores the potential and problems of zines as extensions of hypertext, the dimensionality of the screen and the page, and the expression of personal identities via individual craftsmanship. The educational contexts of zines considered in this paper include college classrooms, K-12 teaching, as well as library collections. Recent zines addressing gender, sexuality, and motherhood will be emphasized.

"Girl zines provide a glimpse of the future of feminism."

- Sarah Hentges in *Pictures of Girlhood: Modern Female Adolescence on Film* (21).

Unlikely Introductions: My Zine Nature

I have a confession to make: I am an assistant professor, an artist, a feminist, a former K-12 educator, *and a zine writer* (or zinester). While I devote much of my life to teaching formal university courses about studio art, art history, and art education theory; I also delight in the ever evocative, sometimes despairing, and often hilarious subcultural

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world of zines as a part of art education. I relish the hand-bound and taped pages, scrawled and personalized fonts, and generally intimate quality of these small books. I am inspired by their rawness and honesty as autobiographical scraps of musings and global questions pasted into the xeroxed pages. I also enjoy submitting essays, articles, bits of art, and poetry to a hand-made, communal, and youth-oriented format.

It can be tempting to contrast the slick nature of the computer with its anesthetic, manufactured quality with the very old-fashioned, crafty techniques and appearances of handmade zines. Although I would classify zines as wonderfully rugged, jagged and sticky; they can also be very digital in their font, formatting, and xeroxed qualities. The zine framework occupies the space between objects that are manufactured or mass-produced, and also things that are crafted and one-of-a-kind (often abbreviated online as: OOAK). Zines can model, embody, and question that digital/manual balance. For young people, "artistic, media, and technological connections form the basis for a complex set of contemporary practices, expanding what it means to be truly fluent in today's multimedia landscape well beyond traditional forms of print literacy" (Pepler & Kafai, 49). This chapter investigates zine processes online and on paper as artistic and literary practices of feminist inquiry. Zines explore the greater political scene of gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights, *and* the realms of personal testimonials and individual experiences. With the persistence of zines alongside blogs and other digital media in mind, the following sections will examine both cyberculture and craft cultures of feminist zines and their creators.

Zines on the Screen and on the Page: Examining Digital Impacts and Connections

Although many young people are blogging on Facebook, Livejournal, (or to a lesser extent) Myspace; others continue to document, draw, and collage their art and writing onto zines composed upon old-fashioned copy paper. Physically, most print zines I have encountered are comprised of standard printer paper, folded in half and stapled. Their content often overlaps with material found in blogs, including such items as photographs, diary-like entries, poetry, art, and cut-and-pasted content from other sources. Zine researcher Alison Piepmeier has noted that while “blogs and zines are often conflated, zine creators know that the material matters, and they repeatedly identify zines as a paper medium” (63). She also emphasizes, “blogs have not replaced zines” (33). In my experience, zines encompass politics and the public sphere in their PSAs (public service announcements), community-related information, and other political content, in ways that are typically more radical and politically-engaged than many blogs may be. Comparing blogs and zines, zine historian Jennifer Bleyer has similarly observed that webpages “are pretty closely related to zines - rants, raves, diary entries, some photographs, perhaps some poetry, yet often nothing politicized” (58). In contrast, Bleyer described zines as “the intersection of art, protest, confession, and theory” (49).

Both the politicized content and the materiality of zines raise comparisons with the continuum of printed news media. Zinester and zine collector Seth Friedman has classified zines as containing “writing that's unlike anything else in the mainstream: more opinionated than newspaper editorials, more personal than magazine articles, more

topical than books" (1). While zines focus upon materiality and political messages, they may often retreat from declarations of authorship and identity in various ways, much like the feminist theorist bell hooks. We may note that zines are often associated with authorial contact information including only pseudonyms, defunct websites, or college email addresses. The zinester who created *What's Her Deal?* notes that her zine took 6-7 years to create, and yet it was priced for merely \$1 and without any form of internet contact: "I'm not on the internet or anything." Like many other zinesters I know, she ultimately contributed this zine to a library collection where it persists in a different archival context, as a sort of epherma-turned-artifact. Some zines only list a physical address at a college as contact information, suggesting an authorial and artistic choice to focus upon a particular and often transitional moment in time, instead of emphasizing the identity of the artist, one's presence in cyberspace, or any lasting artistic mark on the world. In this way, I believe zines uniquely speak to tensions and dualities surrounding female authorship and artistic presence. For instance, *aberration*, a zine (by a Wisconsin pre-med student named Monica) laments the writer's experience of loss and transition. Juxtaposing medical processes of digestion with fragments of a tale of urban unrequited love, she observes:

he has left me behind in this city, but no: he left me as soon as he arrived. i am beginning to get used to this, now. i wonder what i will leave behind in this city: traces of rubber soles off my shoes, sloughed off on rough pavement, dollars and cents for records and cds and food and coffee and tees and zines and transportation: i am always going somewhere, never keeping still (np).

Zines themselves do not typically keep still, passing from reader to reader and representing the passing thoughts of transitional students and young people.

Paradoxically, zine culture may outlast other print media that has gone mostly digital

(materially-speaking), as zines continue to provide texture, color, and formatting that can only be experienced as part of an interaction with the hand-made object. For instance, CHiNesE SwEAAtSHoP is a digital and print zine that was conceived as a sort of newsletter for friends of the creator. Interestingly, creator Elsie Sampson collects ephemera at hand in order to record various musings and news items and later collages them into a print edition. Sampson also notes, problematically, some overlap of mass production of zines by hand with processes of sweatshop labor. For me, this somewhat startling point calls attention to the significant personal physical time and effort that zines inevitably entail. One cannot create a zine without substantial labor (of love) that is non-negotiable, even if the content itself can later be scanned, advertized, and navigated through the Internet. It is difficult to document the amount of labor and profit actually gleaned from zines. Typically, this is not a focus on discussion, and their creators frequently call zines a “labor of love.” However, zines are some of the only independently (or self) published works found in university libraries. These considerations are particularly relevant aspects of zines as hybrid, digital artforms.

Zine Angst: Functions, Artifacts, and Archives of Zines

If making a zine by hand entails much more effort than typing a few entries into a blog, why do young women persist in creating them? Writing about teenagers and subtle sexism, Susan Douglas has observed “adolescents in America are expected to be restless, rebellious, defiant of adult society . . . but girls are supposed to conform to pre-existing (mostly male) standards of beauty and behavior, to comply, to obey . . . How is that for

an impossible place to stand?" (53). Zines can pose a self-made space of possibility and inquiry, exhibiting alternatives to narrow concepts of fandom, teenage angst, and commercially-condoned expressions of creativity and resistance for young women. For example, *girl swirl fanzine* includes empowering calls to the reader: "Protect Yourself! Do not be another victim. Fuck shit up" (np). *Girl swirl fanzine* also counters the "conventional wisdom" of avoiding unwanted sexual advances by shunning provocative clothing, and instead gives young women fashion tips to wear sunglasses to avoid eye contact with a predator, to wear shoes that allow for running or slipping off easily, and to forget feminine modesty that might slow oneself down in a fight. Rather than emphasize safety over personal expression, the zine questions conceptions of femininity that marginalize young women and their bodies, offering alternatives.

It may be noted that while zines are often products of adolescents, there are many zines in circulation that are written by and about adults that also interrogate gender. For instance, *leeking INK* is a Baltimore zine about topics ranging from adult pregnancy, menstruation, work, travel, and many other aspects of adult life. Perhaps the most prominent current resource addressing the vast range of feminist zines is digital: *The Global Grrrl Zine Network*, a web directory of zines (much like a *distro*, or zine distribution service). Echoing the *Riot Girl Newsletter* and *Action Girl Newsletter* of the 1990s, the website features self-made and published zines spanning categories of grrl, lady, queer, trans, and folk zine cultures. *The Global Grrrl Zine Network* also subtly reconfigures language and status online, with references to *webmistresses* of online zines and distros (instead of webmasters). Sherry Turkle, Director of MIT's Initiative on Community and the Self has observed that traditionally, some women "identified being a

woman with all that a computer is not, and computers with all that a woman is not” (56). In digital craft communities, the assertion of female identity is often prominent in declarations of digital space such as “riot grrl,” “craft grrl,” or “grrl zine” online communities.

Further, Malcolm McCullough (a writer on craft and urban computing) has examined how “networks make artifacts more transmissible, and provide more settings for comparisons and discussions of practice, than do their grassroots traditional craft counterparts” (270). In the case of zines, online networks allow readers to connect with the zinester, to explore webpages related to references in the zine, and/or to locate related zines. Many zines function as a sort of directory, containing reference or detailed information to other zines and zinesters. Bleyer has similarly observed that the ways in which we subscribe to and collect zines is artistic, noting that the zines she has acquired over time are like “artifacts in my own personal museum” (49). In this way, the *Global Grrrl Zine Network* and other online directories provide a context as well as an archive for zines and bring them into conversation with one another. Further, this website exhibits the overlap and dialogue of many of the feminist zines currently in circulation and collections. Additional information defining zines and zine makers may be found in a specialized wiki, zinewiki.com, which is the Wikipedia of independent media. This site is collaborative and editable by users, which is perhaps uniquely appropriate in the context of a strong contributing zine community. Unlike Wikipedia, these sites challenge expectations of hypertext, often referring the reader not to another link or webpage on the computer screen, but rather to physical zines.

Zine Roles: Collectors and Crafters

As an educator and artist who has worked in both schools and museums, physical elements of collage and collection intrigue me within my recent readings and interpretations of zines. We may find zines contain personal handwriting, traces of the tape the author used in cutting and pasting, and other visible connections of language and visual art between the zine's creator and the reader. Craft researcher Bruce Metcalf has observed a "crucial opposition stance [in that] the hand-made object is widely understood as the antithesis of mass-produced anonymity" (21). In this way, zines are distinctly personal among a range of manufactured objects that occupy the physical space of our lives. Scanning in original zines and converting them to pdfs is one compromise of the computer with the hand-crafted object. Other zinesters transitioned naturally from typing and photocopying to typing and uploading. Personal voice, artworks, and confessional writing persist in both formats.

Physical zines may be hand-bound with yarn or thread, showing the zinester's interest in crafting materials over traditional hardware of staples or paperclips. Specifically, *aberration* # 13 is hand-bound, decorated with yarn, and enclosed in a red paper cover. Zines may be linked with hand-made artists' books in this regard, which are also characterized by artistic binding, hand-made paper, and hand-written typography. In some cases, zines even use simple printmaking processes, as hand-made books often do. Within both artists' books and zine formats there is a conscious artistic choice to create within a structure that is perhaps archaic, yet aesthetically and symbolically meaningful. Additionally, from an archival perspective, we find that handbound books and zines

frequently outlast those that are merely stapled, showing a certain concern for temporality and readership.

However, zines on the whole are not as carefully nor prescriptively created as many hand-made artists' books, and this is an important distinction that relates to their immediacy and freshness. As the Radical Art Girls stated in their 2001 zine of the same title, "art is not based in a system of competition and comparison. Some of the most stunning artwork, layout and writing I have experienced has been in zines that were copied on cheap photocopy machines and haphazardly stapled together" (np). Zines take on a certain accidental quality, where media and message are not always clearly linked. In other words, making a zine does not require training, initiation, or education - a zinester is a simply person who creates a zine. In this way, the accidental and immediate quality of digital media is well-suited to zines. A valuing of democracy and artistic accessibility may be liberatory as well as problematic in terms of issues of artistic expression and quality. (As a sidenote, we may also note the etymological kinship of "zinester" with other feminized terms like "spinster.")

Zine Histories: Creative Lineages of Zine Writing

Part of the hybridism of zines that is of interest in feminist teaching is found not only in their innovation digitally and their historical link to other artists' books, but also located in histories and traditions of feminism and open publishing. Despite zine conventions of "text-speak" and creative spelling, the importance of zine writing as an artistic and literary form lends it credibility in the classroom. Seth Friedman observed,

"it was artists and writers who took up the call of self-publishing in the early part of the twentieth century. Classic letterpress printers and A. B. Dick's mimeograph duplicators churned out Dadaist manifestos, surrealist journals, anarchic broadsheets, and 'little magazines'" (4). Zines may be seen as an extension of genres like artist sketchbooks, chapbooks, and manifestos of art history.

I have become similarly intrigued by how writer Anais Nin's printing press and diaries could be viewed along a continuum of hand-made, self-published works, alongside zines. We might ask students to consider activist zine writings in dialogue with Valerie Solanas' SCUM manifesto. Or we might examine zines about sexuality and PSAs in comparison with Margaret Sanger's health pamphlets and/or Hildegard von Bingen's writings about the female orgasm. I have invited students within courses on women and imagery of Western civilization to consider major female figures through various forms of documentation: comparing and contrasting voice, histories, and artistic formats. Countering the "Great Women" approach to women's studies, zines often give voice to lesser known female activists and artists. Zines, like other forms of marginalized or non-mainstream writing, can introduce students to neglected issues or unexplored aspects of mainstream topics. For example, *boiling point* is a 2002 zine that represents both the benefit concerts for the Rape, Abuse + Incest National Network (RAINN), and also addresses the topic of rape differently through various literary forms. As the author writes, the zine is "by no means comprehensive. But I wanted to represent a few different types of materials on rape - essays, poems, lyrics, etc" (np).

Within a comparison of various zines, it should also be stressed that my search for connections is not intended to conclude with a homogenized or canonical approach to

zines as art and/or literature. Instead, a major strength of zines lies in their capacity to directly exhibit otherness and alternative visions. As Joshua Breitbart and Ana Noguiera have argued “open publishing works best when many people are posting their versions of the same event . . . users can build their own understanding of an event or issue. . . flatten[ing] the hierarchy that exists whenever specialized news producers are separated from their passive audience" (35). Specifically, *mothra* is one zine that critiqued, for example, Charlie’s Angels films, along with the Powerpuff Girls cartoons, and activist movements of the Combahee River Collective. The idea of talking back to (and re-envisioning) an array of images and ideas selected from consumer culture and contemporary life is evident among many zines as feminist practice. This too may be enhanced by digital presence, for zinesters are better able to network with one another and create dialogue.

(Re)Mixing Notions of Crafts Through Digital Dialogue of Zines

Just as zines have educational potential as a part of historical inquiry into publishing and art-making, they simultaneously look forward into digital realms and contemporary practices of zine writing and distribution. With contemporary technologies and digital practices in mind, educators might characterize the zine as a cross between hand-made books and YouTube in some regards. Namely, the creation of zines often involves techniques of mixing, sampling, and re-arranging other source content into a new composition, just as YouTube creations may alter content from existing movies and other media. Many zines include re-prints of essays, manifestos, poems, and other works

by various authors (with and without permission from the original creators). Notably, jt bunnell and irit reinheimer make the following acknowledgements in their coloring book on gender: “We would like to thank all the artists who created work that we gracefully appropriated, changed, and used as inspiration for this project. May we all appreciate, make, and share anti-copyright work” (np).

Educators might make connections as obvious as "cut and paste" that could be reclaimed, experienced, learned, and revised in various ways. Which images are we allowed to appropriate as men, as women, as people from particular cultures and within various communities? What constitutes borrowing and what may be considered theft? When (if ever) is it acceptable to break copyright law as an activist action? Simple choices of crafting a zine become highly personal and political. Along this vein, we may wish to classify zines within the category of guerilla art, art that is often found in unconventional spaces and serves to question the structure of the art world itself.

I have noted that we may also view the zinester as collector and cataloguer/archivist, for as the author of *Mister Fujiyama Loves You* notes, “we are all collectors of humorous and completely true stories” (np). So too, the creator of *Black and Blue* often creates word collages of different artists from across time discursively, including, for example: Edward Gorey, Tim Burton, Betye Saar, Eva Hesse, Frida Kahlo, Guerilla Girls, and Hieronymus Bosch. This sort of grouping feels much like an exercise in googling or web searching, for no one art history book would contain all these art world characters. Additionally, the expectation of the popular icon is subverted to include feminist figures as artistic influences. A classification of *found* art is also applicable here, for the zinester is creating and/or reconfiguring photographic, material,

and/or text-based artifacts of their lives and influences. Within both of these zines' collections of artists and/or narratives lies a personalization of the concept of anthology. Meanwhile, zine websites like smilandactnice.com features web design that appears rather like collaged images, showing the nostalgic aesthetic influence of the handmade upon webpage design.

Zine Currencies: Craft and Consumption

Zines not only differ from manufactured and hand-made artists' books in terms of appearance, but also in commercial contexts. While the cost of formally published books through a distributor typically separates the author from the financial arrangements of its sale, zinesters are more directly involved in pricing and profit from their zines. An unconventional approach to consumption among zinesters and their aficionados is enhanced by a common practice of not only selling zines for a low cost, but also generating a system of barter or trade that most zines offer. Many zines are priced with both a dollar amount and the suggestion of a trade, underscoring the importance of their circulation over capital gains. Zines can be found at independent bookstores, record shops, youth centers, and library collections. Access to zines is integrally linked to sites of youth culture, for they are sold where their creators are likely to spend time. Many zine artists sell both their zines and other artistic products. For instance, a zine author named Samantha has a zine and craft company, both entitled *What's her deal?*, which reference a range of personal experiences, including racial stereotyping, social isolation, and

experiences with psychiatric medication. Zine culture uniquely contributes to the creation of art by supporting its own market.

Similarly, Craftzine.com is a digital DIY (Do-It-Yourself) community that features events, community conversations, craft marketplaces, and spaces for teaching and learning. Craftzine's "community" page reads like a digital bulletin board of announcements and questions, replete with links to etsy.com where crafters can sell their work. Craftzine's "101" section of the website mirrors the naming of introductory courses, and features tutorials in silkscreening, dying, Adobe Illustrator, and several practical cooking-related topics. Offering education and folk information free of charge is an additional possibility of the Internet, depending upon site hosting and advertizing instead of funding from the reader. If zine content is read online or in a pdf file, print cost is no longer an issue (no pun intended). I have found that most digital zines are available on back-order, sold in a manner very similar to early editions of traditional periodicals.

Despite increased accessibility created by the growth of cybercommunities, one of the major concerns voiced by craft artists and fine artists with whom I have worked addresses their artistic ambivalence toward the consumer-driven focus that sites like etsy.com ascribe to DIY culture. We may phrase these concerns as questions: In what ways is crafting about consumption? What is a zine really worth? Some artists, designers, and zinesters may wish to remove themselves from such conversations, which can detract from the content of their work. Still other web resources like Folkvine.com playfully acknowledge the tourist aspect of folk art consumption with a gift-shop-like virtual space for zines and other artworks. The site is literally set up as if one is traveling

to a home or home-like gallery, in which the motions of the mouse causes bobbleheads to bobble, lazy susans to turn, and zines that appear to shuffle and turn pages. In this way, consumer culture and local culture may overlap consciously and with a sense of criticality that we may explore and question as educators.

Unconventional Conventions: Zines Containing Gifts and Comics

Zines may offer readers literal collections of objects as well as conceptual ones. Many zines feature add-ons, including pins: prizes, “cootie catchers,” and other objects that offer additional materiality, connection, publicity, and presence. These additions and inclusions not only extend the nostalgic idea of the prize in children’s cereals or bubble gum machines, but also perhaps relate to the idea of gift-giving from a friend. The consumer’s attention is drawn to the fact that they are being given more than the product of the zine itself. The artist might, for example, include a pill or tablet as a decoration and free gift. *The Radical Art Girls 2001* includes a pouch sewn into the back cover to hold actual medicine. Such an inclusion can also act symbolically, as zines provide information, commiseration, and commentary (all metaphorical “medicine” for readers). As many zines contain information on alternative medicines and lifestyles, these objects may be seen as an anti-pharmaceutical statement. However, as an artist and educator, I am mostly concerned with their potential as shared artifacts. One of my favorite art education professors, Dr. Jessica Hoffmann Davis, invited students to create gift tributes in the form of artworks for artist educators whom they admire. This practice, modeled

beautifully by zines, is one I enjoy passing along to my own students. Further, we may practice both digital and hand-held exchanges and observe the potentialities of each.

The gift aspect of a zine does not detract from its worth as a work of writing. In their great versatility as a literary form, zines may cross formatting boundaries into other areas of creative production, such as comics and graphica. For instance, *The Sex Ed Comic Project* is both a zine and a blog. Further, creators jt bunnell and irit reinheimer generated a physical zine that is a coloring book (entitled *Girls will be boys will be girls will be...*) in the tradition of old-fashioned primers that have been artistically altered, explaining:

So, one summer day. . . irit and jt decided to take action against all the rigid gender roles that had been unwillingly placed upon them and their friends. They got out all the markers, crayons, pens, pencils, and scissors they could find and created a coloring book that would change the world as they knew it (np).

The particular materials used by the artists serve to emphasize nostalgic, child-friendly, or “arts and crafts” sensibilities of making. These formats also demonstrate humor, irony, and a resistance to standardized literary or artistic forms. As mentioned previously, zines might be included in art histories pertaining to guerrilla or street art. Specifically, we may consider such zines in relation to the work of the Guerilla Girls, anonymous feminist artists who have created a similar art museum activity book that interrogates sexism in museums from practical examples of wall text, floor plans, and curatorial choices. Notably, the Guerilla Girls activity book is sold at *Printed Matter*, a New York independent, non-profit art space for artists’ books. Similarly, physical zines are often found in independent book stores, galleries, and other artist-centered spaces.

The physical concepts of artistic materials and consumer space also define zines and the diverse culture of their readership.

Zines and the Creation of Communal Cyberspaces

Like readers of blogs, zine readers may interact with zines not only as consumers and receivers of gifts, but also as fellow creators. Royce Carlson, creator of *Black and Blue* zine, routinely invites readers to take and submit pictures of activist activities in their towns for upcoming issues. This sort of participatory content among zines predates, and persists alongside community-based blogs. Jennifer Bleyer has observed how the engendering of other zinesters is an impulse of many zines: "integral to reading zines was the implicit challenge to turn around and write them. Zines made clear that they were not another product to be consumed but were unique contributions to a vast conversation" (48). This also relates well to the formerly mentioned issue of trading or bartering zines as a method of encouraging zine practice. Barbara J. Guzzetti and Margaret Gamboa conducted research on collaborative teen zines and issues of development and education. They found that zinesters strengthened their personal relationships with collaborators, a social and intrinsic motivator in the creative process of zines.

Further, the zinesters were able to broaden "personal worlds by exchanging ideas and 'meeting' (through cyberspace or snail mail) new people" (431). Within creative processes, collaborations are grassroots and face-to-face, but the zine itself can be disseminated and discussed digitally. I do not mean to suggest that all zines envision the

feminist community as an uncomplicated ideal. One zine, *her side of the sidewalk* carefully articulates anxiety and ambivalence around models of feminist sisterhood in contrast with her lived life:

women are generally not encouraged to be supportive of one another. In order to understand the implications of this, I feel like we need to go back and look at how we, as well as other groups, have been set up to pitted against each other historically. . . How do we undo this training? . . I struggle with the contradictions in my own relationships with women. They unravel in an astoundingly similar pattern before my eyes. What makes these close friendships so much more fragile than I had thought? We go to these meetings, sit in a circle and talk about our bonds with each other as we cut and sew the patterns of homemade menstrual pads - then we all leave and go home to our boyfriends. . . How do I balance the dynamic of being mostly intimate with boys while wanting to work on and acknowledge my clashes and closeness with girls. I have come to rationalize it this way: I am uncomfortable with my heterosexual tendencies (np).

In this way, zines can address tensions around sexuality (including heteronormative imperatives) and feminism within elegantly authentic personal examples.

Zines may also underscore tensions around craft and gender. In *Girlhood in America: An Encyclopedia*, Miriam Forman-Brunell has noted that colonial girls were restricted to domestic skills, decorative arts, and writing within dame schools. In contemporary times, a certain uncomfortable relationship persists between young women's choices and agency as artists and craftswomen, and those assumption and social mores relating to their interests. Even the zine, craft circle, or feminist group can be subject to the same contradictions, clichés, and other problems of feminisms and community. Zines have a very honest way of addressing this historical tension, even as they support and create contemporary feminist discourses.

Furthermore, while zines look forward to digital processes, they also seem to hearken back to traditions of writing and making. I have already addressed some craft

overlap in creating zines. Zinesters also often follow a traditional convention from old novels, to address the reader directly or dedicate the zine to him or her. Such is the case with *Black and Blue* and *mister Fujiyama loves you*. Both traditional handwriting and addressing one's readership are traditional, and yet these practices are reconceived in zines and zinester cyberculture as friendly, informal, and/or subversive literary gestures. This convention also highlights the practice of communication between author and reader inherent in zines, addressed throughout zines in calls for community participation and gifts to the reader mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Embodiment: Selves Embedded in the Zine

Zines are not only personalized to their readership, but also may reflect the individual personal and artistic goals of the author. The creator of digital zine *Galatea's Pants* included a passage about a New Year's resolution to read her weight in books, emphasizing the felt corporeal connection between books and bodies. We may also interpret the literary weight project as a reinterpretation of female body into a measure of intellect. This gesture is quite subversive in the face of societal associations of women's weight with shame and negative self-worth. Zines often unflinchingly reference the personality as well as the body of the zine creator, showing the ways in which representation is crafted and realized. For example, there are complex musings around appearance and identity from the zinester of *mister fujiyama loves you* in a 2004 summer issue, where she recalls a child asking "Mommy is that a boy or a girl?" The woman looked at me apologetically and I held up my hand to signal it was okay. I smiled at the

curious child” (15). Such anecdotes of sex and gender identity are common among confessional zines and express otherness in contrast with essentializing tendencies in teen magazines and other popular media.

The online presence of zines provides an interesting cross-section of digital platforms of expression available to zinesters. For instance, HipMama.com is a magazine website with distro/zine directories and links to its original zine dedicated to and written by progressive mothers. *Hip Mama* is not only a publication by Bee Lavender, but also a website with a Facebook presence, Twitter account, and Café Press store. These various sites possess both overlapping blog information and additional content from community members that depends upon individual contributions. For example, the Facebook page features a community wall that is typically updated with short announcements and resources several times a week, whereas the original website tends more towards less frequent, yet more polished pieces of writing in the form of blog posts. The expansion of motherhood-related print zines to hybrid cybercommunities reflects the various ways in which computerized experiences of writing, reading, and digital sharing is particularly appropriate and accessible for some mothers. Some zinesters-turned-bloggers, such as Rhon, midwife and author of *Zuzu and the Babycatcher*, also use their websites as makeshift bookstores to sell re-prints of zines (and interestingly express the wish to return to zine writing instead of the blogosphere when possible). The way in which a zine is digitally scanned and sent adds a layer to the original procedure of hand-photocopying a handmade object. However, one may argue women zinesters are crafting and personalizing artistic space online, much as they have done and continue to do on the physical page.

Concluding Reflections: Future Feminism and CyberZines

In closing, the educator part of me wishes to revisit and reframe the richness that exists within the hybridism of digital realms and grassroots zine communities. This is not an uncomplicated topic for me. I have felt personal unease about many issues surrounding zines. For example, as I was researching zines within the Barnard College collection and its comprehensive digital database, I was simultaneously impressed by the scope of their zines, yet perplexed by its affluent university setting. Somehow discussions of zines belong on the screen and in the library as much as in other spaces; and yet their particular presence there symbolically reminded me of my own uncertain attempts to reconcile the persistence of my teenage angst (extending well into my 20s, and commemorated within zines I created to cope with turning 30!) and the artistry and wisdom I hope to embrace and impart in the capacity of a university teacher educator. Some of the tensions and dichotomies surrounding zines prove productive avenues of inquiry for feminist teaching in my personal and professional experiences. These include sometimes opposing and sometimes collaborating forces such as academic discourse versus discourse that is outside of or anti-academia, youth cultures versus adult cultures, digitized and mass-produced zines versus those that are OOAK, timeless versus timely zines, and issues of the personal versus the political within zines.

If we are to take up zines in their dual roles of artifacts and practices of feminist pedagogy, we must do so within a framework that honors their histories, meanings, and potentialities (as I have begun to do here). Craft researcher Tami Katz-Friberg has

noted ways in which "strategies that in previous decades were identified with women artists attempting to liberate themselves of the male hegemony have been integrated into contemporary artmaking as . . . a celebration of manual production in a world that has wildly over-computerized itself" (696). In this manner, crafting zines by hand (and/or holding them in our hands and reading them) can both identify makers with a continuum of creative women in the past, and also function as a subversion of mass-production through contemporary, manual artistic processes. Today's DIY culture might be viewed as a renaissance of craft itself, a celebration of the reemergence of ideals about community, feminism, and social justice, often expressed and catalogued online.

Further, women documenting, sharing, exhibiting, and selling their artwork online through zines can be viewed as another re-working of the hegemony of gender divisions in art and in technology. As I began writing this chapter, a mainstream movie about the male founder of Facebook released by Columbia Pictures was being advertized on billboards nationally. Meanwhile, recent films focusing on women artists and zinesters like *Who Does She Think She Is?* and *The Grrrrly Show* remain underground, independent hits among moviegoers. I believe feminist educators should ask students to consider why and how this is our present situation. As Helen Sterk and Annelies Knoppers have stated, we may come to explore questions "somewhere in between hardware and software, those two reductive senses of how humans live out gender, in a space that honors both individual humans and communal living" (xiv). My sense of zines is that they are often immensely personal and yet relatable in compelling, gendered ways. Further, many zines offer rare political context, personal expression, and a view into localized folk vision, transcribing oral information into self-published print. As Kyle Bravo notes in his 2005

book on DIY cultures “there is an obvious hunger for DIY . . . people are dissatisfied with what our contemporary situation has to offer and . . . searching for practical, vital, and sustainable alternatives . . . yearning for some sort of blueprint for a better world”

(1). Zines provide a framework for future visions of art and feminism.

Similarly, Bill Brent has observed how self-publishing is a sort of antidote to the disaffection of zinesters (16). I also believe that many feminist artists and educators will locate and create much of their activist cues within reading and generating zines. One teaching strategy from Barbara Guzzetti and Margaret Gamboa emphasizes the importance of zine frameworks over actual zine-making assignments in school: “zinesters suggested that teachers can adopt a stance that promotes the ethic of zines (do it yourself) through journaling, and by allowing students to write about themselves and their experiences” (432). I would echo the impulse to encourage our students in their pursuits of personal sketchbooks, blogs, and (if they choose) zines as part of students’ explorations of feminism, cyberculture, and self. I look forward to teaching and learning about the persistence of paper in zines, aided and altered by digital databases and distros.

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Biography:

Courtney Lee Weida is an assistant professor of Art Education at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York. Her research centers on gender, craft, and ceramic art. She has a background in English Literature, Visual Art, and Education. She holds teaching licenses in Art, English, and Elementary teaching. Courtney has served as a teaching artist in schools, camps, museums, and afterschool programs. She has collected and created zines since high school.