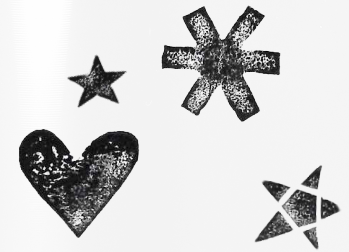


zines: a mini history



Hey there — it's Laura Klavon, Creative Director at M+R and Benchmarks designer, here to talk to you about zines.

If you're not familiar with zines, they are pronounced zeens, like magazines. And they've embodied an accessible, DIY, revolutionary, underground ethos since "Little Magazines" were popularized in the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s (strong rec for *FIRE!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*, crafted by Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, and others. You can read for free at the QR below!).

Those 1920s zines were the first to coin the term, but the excellent *Brief History of Zines* by Alanna Stapleton argues zine-like publications have been avenues for self-expression, politics, and sharing opinions since the invention of the printing press. Think Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517, *The Federalist Papers* in 1788, or 1840s *National Citizen* edited by women's suffrage writer and activist Matilda Joslyn Gage. All self-published works to share new, radical ideas without the interference and censorship of traditional publishers.

The 20th century gave rise to youth movements as well as cheaper photocopying technology. Zines gave these newly-empowered punks and riot grrrls a pre-social media space to express their thoughts, fears, or even concert logistics without asking anyone's permission. Hand-made, hyper local, unapologetic.

Zines have always operated on the fringes of culture, and they are still around! Poke around your local book or record store, and you just might find a collection.

You better believe I considered hand writing or using a typewriter for the entire study. But since that is wildly inefficient, we settled for touches — small scanned handwritten blurbs, letters cut from catalogs, even some stamps hand-carved by my colleague Kait Grable Gonzalez. The typefaces (Helvetica and Courier) were readily and easily available in the 90s, and the color palette is based on classic cheap paper offerings.

In my opinion, Times Like These™ desperately need more folks making things by hand, carefully and thoughtfully articulating their visions for a better, more connected future. We hope this year's study inspires you to find some paper and pens, write your manifesto, run it through the xerox, and snail mail it to your pals.

xoxo,
Laura

Further Reading:

[*FIRE!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*](#)

[*Brief History of Zines* by Alanna Stapleton](#)

[Library of Virginia: Zines & Self-Published Materials](#)

