

Artists'
lo-fi, DIY

and

Alternative
Publications

in

South

Africa



© Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts
Wits Art Museum
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,
South Africa

<https://theartistsbook.org.za>

April 2025

Project coordinator & curator: David Paton

Artists' lo-fi, DIY and Alternative Publications in South Africa is published by the JGCBA and TAF, Johannesburg, in collaboration with FADA, University of Johannesburg, Alphabet Zoo and Open Window, Centurion. It is published as part of the zines and alternative publications roundtable titled What value do printed zines and DIY publications offer in a digital age? which took place at the JGCBA on 10 August 2024 in conjunction with the exhibition lo-fi street cred: artists' zines, DIY and alternative publications, JGCBA, 4 June - 30 August 2024.

Design & Layout: Daniella Rodrigues and Talitha Lewis (Open Window)

Creative Direction: Nina Torr and Maaike Bakker (Soft Serve)

Printing & Production: Philisiwe Memela, Callum Sutherland and Anni Kapp (Open Window)

Typefaces: Montserrat, Avenir Next, Utopia, Calisga, Alimentary, Index, Garbata, Against

Papers: Maestro Color 160gsm in : Bermuda Blue, Forest Green, Coral Pink and Desert Yellow

Process: Risograph

Risograph Inks: Red, Fluorescent Pink, Blue, Black, Yellow



OPEN WINDOW

Soft Serve.



CONTENTS

FOREWORD: **David Paton**

PART I: **The lo-fi street cred The Exhibition & its Afterlife**

01 Curating artist's zines, DIY and alternative publications.
David Paton

PART II: **Zine Teaching & Learning**

02 'Zineing' the curriculum: A finding of words, a learning to see
Maaiké Bakker and contributors Philisiwe Memela and Callum Sutherland

03 Exploring the collective self-publication and book arts unit for 3rd year Fine Art students at Wits University
Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose London and Nokukhanya Sibanda

04 Why zines?
Neil Badenhorst and contributors Musa Malobola and Ditshegofatso Maoto

PART III: **Collective Production & Publication**

05 Alphabet Zoo: A platform for creativity, collaboration, and zine culture in Johannesburg
Minenkulu Ngoyi

06 Off-centre / nothingness / newsprint
Jonah Sack

07 "Stay small!": Notes on the micro-publishing internship at Pulp Paperworks
Victoria Wigzell

FOREWORD

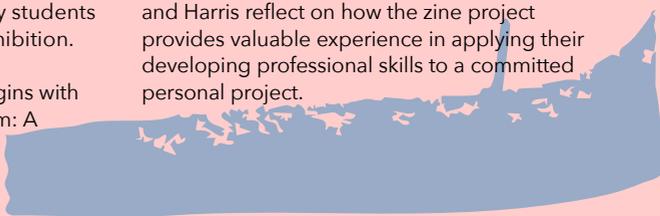


This publication is a tangible outcome of the public roundtable discussions that accompanied the exhibition lo-fi street cred: artist's zines, DIY and alternative publications held on 10 August 2024 at the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts (JGCBA), Wits Art Museum (WAM), University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). The theme of the roundtable was What value do printed zines and DIY publications offer in a digital age? The discussants were Minenkulu Ngoyi from Alphabet Zoo; Dr. Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose London and Nokukhanya Sibanda from the Department of Fine Arts, Wits University; Neil Badenhorst, Musa Malobola and Ditshegofatso Maoto from the Department of Graphic Design at the University of Johannesburg; Nina Torr, Maaïke Bakker, Philisiwe Memela and Callum Sutherland from Open Window, Centurion, and I moderated the event. Each discussant has contributed to the texts that are included in this publication to which Cape Town-based artist Jonah Sack (whose works were included on the exhibition and the cover of its posterzine catalogue) as well as Victoria Wigzell (director of Johannesburg-based Pulp Paperworks) have contributed reflective writings on their communal practices.

The seven, extremely different, texts included in this publication provide a snapshot of various aspects of the teaching, making, exhibition and reception of zines, DIY and alternative publications in South Africa today and are divided into three parts. In Part One: The lo-fi street cred Exhibition & its Afterlife, I provide an overview of the lo-fi street cred exhibition and its remit. In my essay Curating artist's zines, DIY and alternative publications, I tie together the diverse publications that were included (ranging from those produced in the 1960s and '70s to works produced just in time for the exhibition's opening) by means of a brief historical analysis of the milieu that gave rise to alternative publications in South Africa and reflect on the fruitful work of university students whose publications populated the exhibition.

Part Two: Zine Teaching & Learning begins with Maaïke Bakker's 'Zineing' the curriculum: A

finding of words, a learning to see, in which she explores her decision to include zine-making in the curriculum at Open Window. In conversation with Philisiwe Memela and Callum Sutherland, Bakker aligns her teaching and project briefs with Courtney Lee Weida's (2020:267) view that zines "...create distinctly personal and communal spaces for art education reflection" and that the zine format could serve as a foundation for many empowering learning outcomes for illustrators. Bakker argues that the zine-making process offers her students the opportunity to consider what messages matter and how these messages can be communicated with a sense of urgency through a 'sense-making process'. The second text is a transcription of the roundtable contributions by Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose London and Nokukhanya Sibanda in relation to the teaching of, and responses to, the collective self-publication and book arts unit that forms part of the Drawing and Contemporary Practice (DCP) course in the third-year for Fine Arts students at Wits University. By using the Medu Art Ensemble's influential publications (produced by a collective of artists who lived and worked in Botswana between 1977 and 1985) as a starting point, Hlasane, London and Sibanda reflect on the prompts this unit provides to the students and the Risograph processes utilised in realising their publications. These prompts explore publication-making as inherently collective in nature, speaking back to the unit's original texts, and having something to say whilst making a space to breathe. The third text, Why zines? by Neil Badenhorst in conversation with Graphic Design students at the University of Johannesburg, Musa Malobola and Ditshegofatso Maoto and Khaalid Harris, explores how the Panga Zine project is the only unit in third-year that has no real commercial purpose. This allows for more personal themes and concerns to guide the zine's creative processes and content but with the same rigour demanded by any other brief. Malobola, Maoto and Harris reflect on how the zine project provides valuable experience in applying their developing professional skills to a committed personal project.



FOREWORD



Part Three: Collective Production & Publication contains three texts in which the authors explore their creative production through the generative lens of collectivity. In the first, Alphabet Zoo: A platform for creativity, collaboration, and zine culture in Johannesburg, Minenkulu Ngoyi discusses five zine publications through which Alphabet Zoo has been able to foster creative collaborations with a diverse array of artists, illustrators, photographers, publishers, and designers. These partnerships, argues Ngoyi, have allowed Alphabet Zoo to interact with various public spaces, contribute to both the production and exhibition of innovative works and be a vital force in Johannesburg's street culture and zine scene. In the second text, Off-centre / nothingness / newsprint Jonah Sack investigates various works in which he has collaborated: Strange Camera I, Trophy, Leonard Shapiro's untitled ['Purple Rain Protest'] work, the research and exhibition strategies of The Independent Publishing Project (IPP), his earlier collaborative publications 24hrs, I'm Going to JHB and Inside Out, and lastly, Sophie Cope's How to Order the Dictionary (2021). Through these diverse projects and publications, Sack draws our attention to the making processes inherent in these kinds of outputs as well as the social contexts that give rise to them. Sack argues that independent publications don't come out of nowhere, and aren't really independent, but emerge from groups of inter-connected makers, readers, and collectors, which, in their turn, nurture the growth of these connections. The final text in this publication "Stay small!": Notes on the micro-publishing internship at Pulp Paperworks is provided by Victoria Wiggzell, who describes her founding of Pulp Paperworks in 2019 as a small bookbinding located at Victoria Yards in Johannesburg. Wiggzell explores its growth through productive collaborations with Oteng Kopiso and Stephan Erasmus and the birthing of the internship program with Griffen Alexander, Odette Graskie and Alexandra Greenberg. Wiggzell describes how the concept of 'staying small' means that the most critical moments around a publication's success lie in the conversations had with strangers in the studio while facilitating the

freedom to do things on one's own terms by embracing a diversity of practices rather than following curated lines of messaging to which one's output must conform.

My thanks and gratitude go to everyone who supported the exhibition lo-fi street cred: artist's zines, DIY and alternative publications, participated in the roundtable What value do printed zines and DIY publications offer in a digital age? and graciously provided the texts and images for publication. It is clear, from both the experiences unpacked in these texts as well as the roundtable proceedings, that nothing meaningful can be achieved without collaboration and community. I acknowledge the generous video documentation of the roundtable by Leela Stein. Her edited documentation was central to establishing the transcriptions of proceedings found in two of the papers in this publication. Its Risographic form reflects its subject, and I am immensely grateful to Open Window's Daniella Rodrigues and Talitha Lewis who designed the publication, and Nina Torr and Maaik Bakker (Soft Serve), and the Open Window MakerSpace team Anni Kapp, Philisiwe Memela and Callum Sutherland who produced the publication. It has been rewarding to see how the exhibition and its roundtable have grown an afterlife. This will, hopefully, inform and encourage students, young artists and authors to engage with Janice Radway's (2012:43) challenge to focus less on the well-trodden question of "what zines are" and more upon what she calls "zine-ing" generated not solely by anger, rage or disappointment, but by "the profound hope that alternative ways of being in the world might be created".

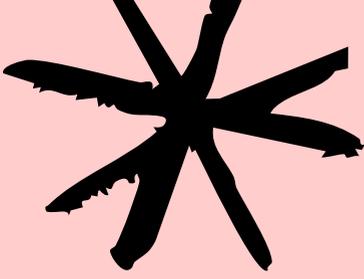
David Paton



Project coordinator and curator

Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts, Wits Art Museum, Johannesburg. April 2025





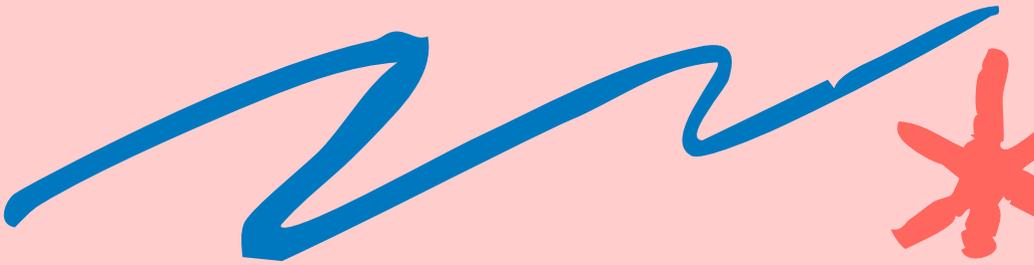
REFERENCES

Radway J. 2012. 'Zines then and now: what are they? What do you do with them? How do they work?' in Lang A, (editor) From codex to hypertext. Reading at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, pp 27-47.

Weida, C. L. 2020. Zine Objects and Orientations in/as Art Research: Documenting Art Teacher Practices and Identities Through Zine Creation, Collection and Criticism. Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research. National Art Education Association. 61(3), 267-281.



“ It is clear, from both the experiences unpacked in these texts as well as the roundtable proceedings, that nothing meaningful can be achieved without collaboration and community. ”



CONTRIBUTORS

Neil Badenhorst is a lecturer in the Graphic Design Department at the University of Johannesburg teaching across the undergraduate program including units in drawing, illustration, direct marketing, zine-making and more. Badenhorst has been recognised for his creative practice at the Loeries (2019), Design Indaba and Between10&5. He is currently studying towards a PhD in Art and Design where he is concerned with collaborative queer worldbuilding in illustration.

Maaiké Bakker is a visual artist and illustrator working with various drawing, sculpture and installation-based mediums as well as digitally. She obtained an MTech Fine Art degree (cum laude with Chancellor's Medal, 2014) from the University of Johannesburg. Bakker's style is formed through the creation of line-based patterns and investigates the limitations imposed by systems or structures, determining at what point such systems become irrelevant and futile. Bakker is a lecturer at Open Window and a co-owner of the artist-run art space, NO END Contemporary.



Rangoato Hlasane is a co-founder and co-director of Keleketla! Library and Deputy Head of Fine Art, Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand (2024). He graduated cum laude with a MA in Fine Arts from the University of Johannesburg (2008-2011) and obtained a PhD in African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand (2024). Hlasane is an active member of the ARAC (Another Roadmap for Arts Education Africa Cluster).

Eva-Rose Lunden graduated with an BAFA (Honours) from the University of the Witwatersrand (2025). Her work explores alternative methods for interacting with landscapes and the memory that lingers within the ground. Working with film photographs and found materials, her work is process based often alluding to a journeying through space. She is a member of MOVE! a four-member collective of artists and writers.

Musa Malobola graduated with a BA in Graphic Design at the University of Johannesburg (2025) during which time he was also an Intern at SimplyBlack Media assisting with designs from concept to execution in publication design, motion design and concept generation.

Ditshegofatso Maoto graduated with a BA in Graphic Design at the University of Johannesburg (2025) and is a graphic designer by profession. She also enjoys expressing herself through playing with different mediums such as air-drying clay and acrylic paint. Maoto has exhibited her work at the Bag Factory Artists' Studios, Newtown, Johannesburg (2023) and with Latitudes Online.





Philisiwe Memela graduated with a BA in Visual Communication from Open Window (2025) where she majored in Illustration. Memela won the Open Window Creative Journey Scholarship (2021).

Minenkulu Ngoyi lives and works in Johannesburg. He graduated from Artist Proof Studio (2011) and practices printmaking at DGI (Danger Gevaar Ingozi) studio at Arts on Main, Maboneng, Johannesburg. He has been on several group exhibitions both locally and internationally and was invited to be a seasonal lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand for the second year Fine Art division (2015) where he ran a printmaking, bookbinding and publication making program. With collective partner artist Issac Zavale, he co-founded Alphabet Zoo, a Johannesburg based street-culture zine that invites collaboration with artists from across all disciplines.

David Paton is an Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Art at the University of Johannesburg, and a Senior Researcher in the Jack Ginsberg Centre for Book Arts (JGCB), Wits Art Museum, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He received his Ph.D. by Existing Published or Creative from the University of Sunderland, UK (2019). Paton has curated numerous exhibitions and published widely on the book arts in South Africa. His artist's book titled Speaking in Tongues: Speaking Digitally / Digitally Speaking can be found in five international collections. Paton was awarded the University of Johannesburg Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Award for Teaching Excellence (2022) and is a National Research Foundation (NRF) C1-Rated Scholar.



Jonah Sack is an artist based in Cape Town. He studied at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and received his MFA from the Glasgow School of Art. He has been a fellow of the Skye Foundation and the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts at the University of Cape Town. He works across a range of mediums but considers all his work as a form of drawing. He is interested in the interplay between threat and solace: in our relations with each other, and in our connections to the spaces around us.

Nokukhanya Sibanda graduated with an BAFA (Honours) from the University of the Witwatersrand, (2025). She is also a writer and founding editor-in-chief of Moyé Magazine. Sibanda explores conditions of intersectional people, theories of adaptation, metalepsis, and conceptual cannibalisations as methods for creating heterocosms (alternative worlds). She teaches zine-making and conducts writing workshops with the Wits Writing Group and has hosted workshop, residency, open studio, and open mic sessions at The Point of Order with her team at Moyé Magazine titled Act II: Issue 2.

Callum Sutherland majored in Illustration and Communication Design for her BA in Visual Communication (2023). Sutherland is currently enrolled for her BA in Visual Communication (Hons) at Open Window, where she currently also works as Printmaking Technician. Sutherland was a Loerie Award Finalist in Visual Communication with a project titled Maverix Packaging (2024).

Victoria Wigzell founded Pulp Paperworks, a small bookbindery located at Victoria Yards in Johannesburg, in December of 2019. Pulp produces a range of branded notebooks and publications in collaboration with artists and writers in its community. Pulp also creates specialised custom-branded notebooks and publications for corporates, publishers, and self-publishers.