

EXPLORING THE
COLLECTIVE
SELF-
PUBLICATION
AND BOOK
ARTS UNIT
FOR THIRD-
YEAR FINE ART
STUDENTS
AT WITS
UNIVERSITY

Dr. Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose Lundon and Nokukhanya Sibanda

*Department of Fine Arts, Wits School of the Arts (WSoA), University
of the Witwatersrand*

EXPLORING
EXPLORING THE
COLLECTIVE
COLLECTIVE
SELF-
SELF-
PUBLICATION
PUBLICATION
AND
AND
BOOK
BOOK
ARTS
ARTS
UNIT
UNIT
FOR
FOR
THIRD-
THIRD-
YEAR
YEAR
FINE
FINE
ART
ART
STUDENTS
STUDENTS
AT
AT
WITS
WITS
UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY

Biographies

RANGOATO HLASANE

Since 2017 I've been leading the process of what we call collective self-publication and book arts, a fascinating, beautiful journey that essentially also emerges out of the generative nature of zine-making or creating publications by artists, activists, etc. It has been an incredible journey in which I keep learning from the students year after year and also use the growing archive to make each cohort learn from the previous cohort which has been amazing in terms of how this creates an environment of recognising the knowledge that one creates, and build on that. This also creates an environment where the work of each year keeps getting better and better. But much of this is also informed by the work I have been doing as a co-founder and co-director of Keleketla! Library where notions of knowledge production are complicated and expanded in many ways. Also, through other experiences such as the Artist Proof Studio where I met Minenkulu Ngoyi and others. So, it has been a very long journey of zine-making that I will speak about.

NOKUKHANYA SIBANDA

I've been working with zines and publications since I was nine and then when I was 18, I founded Moyo Magazine where I made my little weird black girl zines. But then it expanded, and I have staff now and it's open to anyone who feels messy, vulnerable and indigent. And then through the Fine Arts's DCP [Drawing and Contemporary Practice] course I expanded my world as I thought we were in this isolated land.

The course not only put us within the ecosystem of others' zines and other zine makers, but it also opened up different ways to make zines that aren't just online or a traditional 8-page foldable, but we could do crazy, weird stuff with zines and that really cracked my mind open.

by Dr. Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose Lundon and Nokukhanya Sibanda

EVA-ROSE LUNDON

As a fourth-year student at Wits, I encountered zine-making through the Drawing and Contemporary Practice course in my third year. I'm an artist and a writer and I think the process of working through zine making was very informative in terms of looking at alternative ways of knowledge production and where inspiration for creation comes from and looking at different ways to incorporate creativity into writing and conveying forms of knowledge.

WHAT FOLLOWS IS AN EDITED TRANSCRIPTION OF HLASANE, LUNDON AND SIBANDA'S PRESENTATIONS AT THE LO-FI STREET CRED ROUNDTABLE ON 10 AUGUST 2024 IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER SUPPLIED MATERIAL.

RANGOATO HLASANE

So as Eva and Noku have stated, the third-year course within the Fine Arts Department is called Drawing and Contemporary Practice (DCP). It existed as an elective parallel with the Fine Arts main course. Its aim is to get the students to think about drawing in the expanded sense as something

that is central to thinking and as a result, in the third-year program, I have been thinking a lot about archival practices in South Africa and thinking about the historical in relation to 'the now'. But there's also something that I've always been grappling with which is how to create an environment where you teach collectively/collectivity. So, from the onset, the cohort is divided into 'ephemeral collectives' and then we explore what are the ways in which one can actually teach collectivity. I started thinking about the Medu Art Ensemble, a collective of artists who lived and worked in Botswana between 1977 and 1985: mostly exiled South African artists.¹ They had multiple units: theatre, performance, music and then the print studio where posters were made largely to challenge the Apartheid government of South Africa. These were smuggled into the country because Botswana is just next door and for those borders, it was just families moving. One of the key things that was important within Medu was their publication and editorial unit where they created their influential publications. The importance of these newsletters in a sense was to consolidate and think together and archive that which is perhaps more ephemeral, such as their music and

performances. But the unit was also a platform to invite solidarities from around the world: letters from South Africa, poems from Vietnam. So it was quite an important unit to consolidate everything that was happening. This was just one of many units.

In 2015 we had the opportunity to have our fourth-year students do an internship at Keleketla! Library. A former member of the Medu Art Ensemble, Judy Seidman, had loaned the library six editions of Medu publications. So, those Wits students who were doing their internship scanned them and what they found as part of this scanning process was 'as fourth year students, how come we don't know about Medu Art Ensemble?' So that was the first trigger in developing the course that I had been teaching since 2014: towards teaching collectivity, teaching Southern African art history, and then creating an environment for that to happen in. Since 2015 I have been teaching students to think with texts, particularly Steve Biko's *I Write What I Like* (1987) and Ngũgĩ's *Thiong'o's, Two Enactments of Power* (1998) *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and*

Dreams (2011) and *The Quest for Relevance from Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986). So, in term one of 2015, the students had to engage with these texts and raise critical questions back at the text. And at the same time, we were dealing with the Miners Monument opposite the City of Johannesburg Municipal Building up the road from Wits in Braamfontein. We were thinking about this space in relation to these historical texts and getting students to raise questions: who made this monument and these texts? And the students, after raising these questions, again in collectives, decided to make a book. They called it *Unthinkable: A call to come together and this publication is full of questions.*

¹ Josh MacPhee states: "One of Medu's main goals was the production and distribution of anti-apartheid propaganda, particularly posters ... with the intention of sending them into South Africa, giving voice to the struggle. ... In 1985, South African army units crossed the border and murdered multiple Medu members; those remaining were forced underground, effectively destroying the group". (Judging Books by Their Covers. 38: Medu Art Ensemble Newsletter. 27 December 2010. Available at: <https://justseeds.org/jbbtc-38-medu-art-ensemble-newsletter/> accessed 6 March 2025).

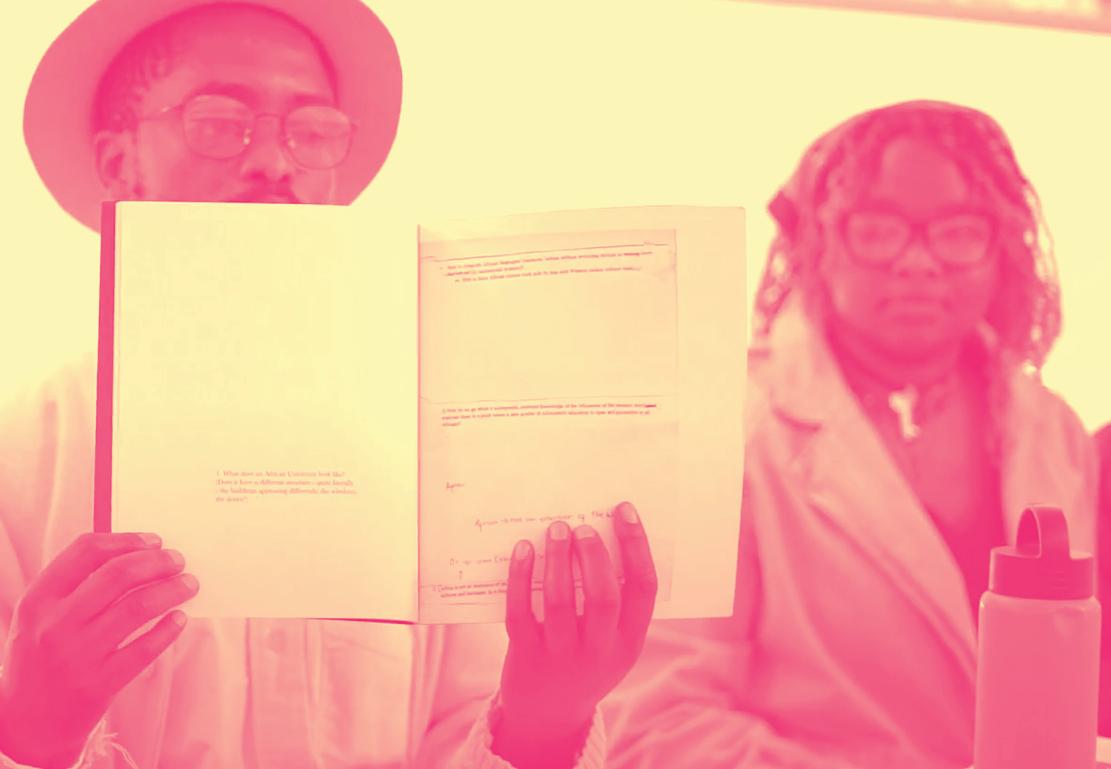


FIG. 1.

Dr. Rangoato Hlasane demonstrating the student publication *Unthinkable: A call to come together* (2015) at the *What value do printed zines and DIY publications offer in a digital age?* roundtable (JGCBA, 10 August 2024).

Photograph: Leela Stein.

InDesign was used but largely it was done by hand in writing. The students laid the pages out and scanned them and put them into InDesign simply for it to be a good, printed University publication. It was an incredible book that, for the students, after spending a semester raising questions, was the most appropriate thing to do. That was their collective exam work; also challenging the examination committee. There

were performances alongside the publication, but the highest mark, in terms of weighting, was this book that they made; and they were victorious! So this experience, and the scanning of the Medu Art Ensemble newsletters, was really the genesis of developing this course outside of my experience with Keleketla! and other practices. In 2017, I was part of a research and praxis collective called *Another Road Map: Africa Cluster*

EXPLORING THE COLLECTIVE SELF-PUBLICATION AND BOOK ARTS UNIT FOR THIRD-YEAR FINE ART STUDENTS AT WITS UNIVERSITY

and we had the opportunity to get money from Europe as part of advancing our research projects, from which we bought the Risograph printer. Since then, we have developed the course by inviting students to think about Medu Art Ensemble newsletters and posters in their time off, and every year the collectives have to answer the call to identify 'what time is it?'

So, it's pretty much about publication-making, first and foremost based on having something to say, but also making a space to breathe. So, the idea is that we have the historical material, the course is saying that publication-making is inherently collective in nature, and then you have this space to say something.

Then here are the facilities, we have the Riso; it comes closest to the processes that Medu were using, but at a more advanced level and prints fast. Yet at the same time it consolidates what is happening in printmaking, because a Riso looks like a photocopier, uses environmentally friendly inks from vegetable oil, is a Japanese machine which is largely used in high schools and primary schools in this country, and it works like silkscreen in terms of printing by

layers. For Medu, they often had three colors (for example, yellow, green and black) using three plates, so it's a combination of litho printing that is used in newspapers, books etc. as well as silkscreen.

by Dr. Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose Lundon and Nokukhanya Sibanda



FIG. 2.

Dr. Rangoato Hlasane demonstrating the Medu Art Ensemble newsletter Vol. 6. Nos. 1&2 (c1984) at the What value do printed zines and DIY publications offer in a digital age? Roundtable (JGCBA, 10 August 2024). Photograph: Leela Stein.

In the consolidation of what is happening in printmaking, along with environment work in this course, students can then bring other experiences such as those who are studying African literature and also those who are interested in art history. The artist collectivities bring all these things into the present, but with the key question that, every year, the students have something to say: they have questions to ask, they have editorial frameworks, provocations, positions that they are invited to explore. I have said that in this course, every year, I keep learning from

the previous years. For example, in 2017 there was one collective who started what they called pop-up zine jams. In thinking about musicians jamming as a place to make zines, they raise editorial questions with an invited public. The Riso was there, and together, they created zines. The editorial questions that they asked in 2017 were: 'WTF are you doing?'; 'Are you on the right side of history in the now?'; and 'gender?'. This happened on 23 March 2017 at the Point of Order, our project space. In 2023, I wrote the following editorial question: "By learning from the knowledge-making and

EXPLORING THE COLLECTIVE SELF-PUBLICATION AND BOOK ARTS UNIT FOR THIRD-YEAR FINE ART STUDENTS AT WITS UNIVERSITY

knowledge-sharing methods of the 2017 cohort, I encourage the 2023 cohort to revisit the idea of the zine jam." The tireless mixed methods, planned in stages in the jam at the WSoA courtyard just outside their classroom, was attended by students and staff beyond the Department of Fine Arts, the School of Arts, and the general public beyond the University.

One of the beautiful things about the Riso is that it is robust so it can move. It was purchased by the research collective and is housed at the WSoA as well as Keleketla! Library. It's a mobile press that went to the Aardklop Arts Festival in Potchefstroom in the back of the van and to the Javett Art Center (University of Pretoria) where this 2024 cohort presented their work as part of the reenactments of Medu Art Ensemble methodologies. There are all these elements which together ask: 'what does it mean for this machine to exist within the WSoA but also invite participation beyond the School of Art and beyond the gates of the University?' So the notion of smuggling or 'jump ama-fence' in the making of knowledge is critical to how we can learn from Medu Art Ensemble and learn collectivities along the way, and then create this

incredible work that the students have been doing over the years. One last thing I want to point out is that the beauty of zine-making is also thinking about form. One of the biggest inspirations for me has been Chimurenga magazine. When I first encountered it in 2002 it was in A5 format, and that, in terms of graphic design, it was handmade: the pages were scanned so that they could be printed in Litho. But the process of designing Chimurenga, you can see, was really a tactic. For me, I was a Fine Art student at UJ and had just been introduced to basic Photoshop, so seeing Chimurenga and having basic Photoshop skills made me realise that I can make a publication, because I had something to say, and I had the basic tools. But I also think that, around 2009, Chimurenga started binding and packaging and making the final object speak to the thematic of the editorial. Every issue comes with a particular binding that speaks to the thematic, and that has been inspiring. So that's one of the things that has been brought into the course: every collective is challenged to think about binding and presentation as part of the editorial concerns of the issue. For example, in 2019, one of the

by Dr. Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose Lundon and Nokukhanya Sibanda

collectives, responding to the festival edition of the Medu Art Ensemble, chose to 'bind' it in the form of a tote bag. As the bringing of other knowledges is critical to the course, someone knew how to use a sewing machine and used that as a binding solution of loose sheets and a user manual. The tote bag contained inserts that together constituted 'the Festival': the exhibition, the reading session, etc. The manual is there to help you if you get lost in the Festival, to know how to find your way back was the editorial framework. So that is just one brilliant example, but in 2023 (and found on the lo-fi exhibition) Paper Jam have repurposed the Bible; you will see how Move! have repurposed the vinyl record. The ways of binding that have emerged, over and above what the Riso offers in terms of speed has been nothing but inspiring and very beautiful.

NOKUKHANYA SIBANDA

From my perspective I'll start timeline-wise with collectivity because I feel like that's a lot of what we took away from the course. We weren't initially assigned to our groups. What happened was there was a Google form containing a selection of

Medu posters. We had to select a poster and based on what poster you selected that was your group. Personally, with my group Paper Jam - they call us a cult because we are that close - I made my choice because it was the first jazz one that popped up and I was like, cool. These choices translated into an all-female humor publication. Some others like T.S.C (The Struggle Continues) chose more somber posters, and their response was to FeesMustFall and Medu, so they created a publication that was a physical file of documents and the capitalist response to Apartheid and FeesMustFall. Then there was T's & C's (Terms & Conditions) who chose posters based on care, so their publication was all about care.

But with that I think what Rangoato has actually created is more a social study because we had never really worked with each other in that way. We were a university student body that came out of COVID. Lecturers tried to make us work together: we were even put in groups to work together in our independent work, and we were like, oh, OK, that's enough. But I think that in this course, collective work stuck for most of us. Paper Jam, Move! and Hoops are still in conversation, and are still together. But outside of that there were also

groups that did not agree. I've never seen arguing or fighting like that! But within that, they still came out with new skills such as mediation. I think at the beginning of the year they looked like something else but then when we were doing the Javett talks, they were really united and they spoke together, so I think collectively or working as a collective is something that we really took to heart. For example, we in Paper Jam are six women who work with humour. A lot of our Bible publication was actually spoken about or done during sleepovers.



FIG. 3 A&B.

Nokukhanya Sibanda, Zinhle Khumalo, Courteney Bentley, Boitumelo Phashe, Alexandra Geen & Alexandra Greenberg, Paper Jam Collective, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (2023).
Photograph: David Paton

In it, for example, we have the Seven Layers of Hell and one of them is the Home Affairs office line. There is stuff like me having a threesome with Che Guevara and Steve Biko and just crazy stuff like that. Our Messiah is Trevor Noah but it's not just cool tweets, it's like an ironic take on how the media 'phenomenises' people, but meanwhile they're not 'it'. Then there's stuff on horoscopes, a lot of vaginas, and our response was to process things through levity and that levity doesn't have to be a secondary response: you can just find things funny, and humor is needed in this day and age. Our approach to this was making a Bible for our twenties, through a very Gen-Z humor-risk approach. We did this before Kendrick Lamar, where there's also a page of Shawn Mendes making out with Drake. I think for us it was really something to come into a space and be lighthearted and also, I think physically, this was something because the Riso is a very physical process: you pull stuff out, you put in pages, and I physically cut all 300 pages in this book. Every single page we did ourselves, handwritten, and we only opened the laptop for a few images: everything else we physically wrote and copied.

EVA-ROSE LUNDON

A lot of the publications started out as a joke, a song, or a childhood game. There was the Phetoho? collective who worked with fire, the connotations and notions of fire and what fire means. But what I found beautiful was how one can look at a song as a point in a map of knowledge-creation, as guidance towards a broader archive. What we were doing was working with archival publications such as Medu and thinking through 'what does this mean for us now, and how do we want to project ourselves into the future?' So some of the prompts that were given to us in the beginning of the year where 'for whom?', 'why now?', and one of the editorial frameworks was 'why now, if not now, then when?' and 'anyone who is called to move, this is a movement, a listening, a reading, a gathering, a celebration, a projection and a prayer,' and I think that, for me, definitely sums up the broader editorial concerns of the group as a whole. We were eight collectives, working under the name of Mshini. So, we were thinking of the machine gun and Jacob Zuma's famous song, but also the actual rise of the machine as a tool for creating knowledge and, also very

importantly, for sharing knowledge. So how do we distribute, how do we encode, how do we create means for gathering, how do we create community, how do we create movement? In my collective called Move! we particularly worked with sonic archives, looking at the sonic archive of Medu itself and the songs that were used during the period of the Medu Arts Ensemble. When we had one of our zine project launches at The Forge in Braamfontein, Judy Seidman came up to us and described so many of the moments within Medu and what songs - created as a form of gathering - they heard during that time, and what that meant as a collective.



FIG. 4. Eva-Rose Lundon, Rotondwa Manavhela, Mabontle Phetla & Sakhwiwo Tshabalala, Move! Collective, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (2023). Photograph: David Paton

We spent the year working with music archives at the Library of Things We Forgot to Remember,² we collected vinyls and we created about 50 publications, each with their own unique single track. For us, each publication formed a map towards something broader, and we thought a lot about how during times of protests or unrest, songs and music become a way to encode messages, asking ourselves 'how do we communicate through the sonic?' But it was also very much a moment of thinking about 'how do we listen, when do we keep quiet, how do we listen to the past, what do we want to hear in the future?' As an example, in one of the publications that I made, I was looking at Chimurenga's 'Chronic Books'. But instead of calling it 'Chronic Books' it was called Chronic Love: Sonic Love Letters where we we're looking at song lyrics and how, for example, when you encode a song you either remove or add lyrics to create an alternative letter. So, I was thinking

of love letters and letter-writing as a means of communication and gathering. But for other collectives like Hoops, which is also still operating as a strong collective, they thought about childhood games as a means of gathering and knowledge formation, looking at hair and hair salons, moments of collective understanding and collective knowledge and what comes from those spaces; what knowledge comes from a hair salon and what knowledge comes from the childhood game?

² Kudzanai Chiurai's *The Library of Things We Forgot to Remember*, is an archive of materials including vinyls, posters, and paintings, drawn from private African collections. Each time this archive is exhibited, Chiurai invites a different librarian to interrogate the archive and curate an exhibition. Chiurai states (available at: <https://kudzanaichiurai.com/> accessed 6 March 2025):

The Library of Things We Forgot to Remember is a work that I consider to be itself a form of liberated zone. It functions independently - I work with different librarians every time there's an iteration of it, and every guest librarian sees the process of cataloguing differently. Some approach it visually, and others aurally - and so bring to our attention dialogues and ideas forgotten but still very much a part of our present.

EXPLORING THE COLLECTIVE SELF- PUBLICATION AND BOOK ARTS UNIT FOR THIRD- YEAR FINE ART STUDENTS AT WITS UNIVERSITY

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 Lundon 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.

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.

EXPLORING THE COLLECTIVE SELF-PUBLICATION AND BOOK ARTS UNIT
FOR THIRD-YEAR FINE ART STUDENTS AT WITS UNIVERSITY

by Dr. Rangoato Hlasane, Eva-Rose Lundon and Nokukhanya Sibanda