

## **МУКТЕЇТВОЗНАВСТВО**

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### **FEMENOLOGICAL FEATURES OF CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN “ZINES” AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT IN THE UKRAINIAN ART SPACE**

*In recent years, «zine culture», as the most accessible way for an artist to communicate with the viewer, a universal form of self-expression of the author, is gaining more and more popularity in the Ukrainian art space. The purpose of the research is to distinguish the concept of «zine» as a creative published project of an artist, an art-historical analysis of their features and level of development on the territory of Ukraine. The work uses the methods of literary-analytical and systematic historiographical analysis. In order to classify Ukrainian zines by design and subject, the authors analyzed the compositional and stylistic features, external and internal form and content of samples, that were recognized in Ukrainian and partly in European art spaces. It is determined that Ukrainian zines follow European traditions in design and general concept, however, they are rarely presented in the form of a magazine. Ukrainian art zines can be conditionally classified into graphic ones, consisting of a small amount of text and illustrations, photographic ones, where the text is completely absent or is presented in the form of short captions with the information about place and date, and zines-collages, where the text and illustration are in most cases combined into a single image. Catalog zines have become an interesting phenomenon in the art space. A distinctive feature of such zines can be traced in a calmer and more refined design in comparison with individual projects. Despite of this fact, using of the «grunge» elements, a freer layout than in classic editions, and inexpensive production remains (soft cover, thin sheets). It was determined that Ukrainian zines raise the current problems of the country, rarely with introduction of the traditional aesthetics of Ukrainian folklore into the work. Ukrainian artists operate with the simplest and «fastest» means of conveying a message – thus, zines most often use simple «everyday», «amateur photos», collage, simple graphic drawings with minimal use of bright color spots, and at the same time, zines have an important social meaning, reflecting political or cultural problems.*

**Key words:** collage, zines, art books, artist book, fanzines,

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## ФЕМЕНОЛОГІЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ СУЧАСНИХ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ «ЗИНІВ» ТА ЇХ РОЗВИТОК В УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ МИСТЕЦЬКОМУ ПРОСТОРІ

Останнім часом в українському мистецькому просторі все більшої популярності набуває так звана «культура зінів», що надає митцю найдоступніший спосіб спілкування з глядачем, універсальну форму самовираження. Завданням дослідження є виокремлення поняття «зину» як творчого опублікованого проекту митця, мистецтвознавчий аналіз їх особливостей та рівня розвитку на території України. У роботі використано методи літературно-аналітичного та системного історіографічного аналізу. Щоб класифікувати українські журнали за дизайном та тематикою, автори проаналізували композиційно-стилістичні особливості, зовнішню та внутрішню форму та зміст зразків, які отримали визнання в українському та частково європейському мистецькому просторі. Встановлено, що українські «зіни» наслідують європейські традиції в дизайні та загальній концепції, однак вони рідко представлені у формі журналу. Українські мистецькі «зіни» можна умовно розділити на графічні, що складаються з невеликої кількості тексту та ілюстрацій, фотографічні, де текст повністю відсутній або поданий у вигляді коротких підписів із зазначенням місця та дати, та зіни-колажі, де текст і ілюстрація в більшості випадків поєднані в одне зображення. Зіни-каталоги стали новим явищем в арт-просторі. Відмінною рисою таких зінів є більш спокійний і вишуканий дизайн у порівнянні з іншими проектами. Незважаючи на це, зберігається використання елементів «гранжу», вільніша верстка, ніж у класичних виданнях, дороге виготовлення (м'яка обкладинка, тонкі аркуші). Визначено, що для українських «зінів» характерним є звернення до актуальних проблем країни, рідше із впровадженням у творчість традиційної естетики українського фольклору. Українські митці оперують найпростішим і «найшвидшим» засобом передачі меседжу – так, журнали найчастіше використовують прості «повсякденні», «аматорські фото», колажі, прості графічні малюнки з мінімальним використанням яскравих кольорових плям, і водночас «зіни» мають важливе соціальне значення, відображаючи політичні чи культурні проблеми.

**Ключові слова:** апропріація, колаж, фотомонтаж, зіни, арт-фемінізм, панк-зіни, готові фотографії та зображення, арт-буки, засоби масової інформації.

**Introduction.** At the initial stage of development, printing as a mean of global communication, was not accessible to a major portion of the world population and broadcasted only messages that were controlled by the state and a privileged circle of people. However, over time, due to the progress in digital technologies, such mode of visual self-expression and communication has acquired a mass character and a variety of forms. Among them it is necessary to single out a phenomenon of «zines». Firstly, zines

were amateur small-circulation publications appeared within the underground culture as a form of protest against censorship, official sources of information (newspapers, non-fiction magazines, the official press), commercial magazines. And eventually they consistently have become one of the type of creative publication (photo albums, illustrated books, etc.). A finished project traditionally imitates hand-crafted albums, but its form may vary from case to case depending on the creative idea of an artist.

Nowadays, «zine» remains the most effective and affordable way of expression for both a beginners and established artists. Zine culture continues to function and develop not only in a narrow community of admirers and representatives of marginized art, but also it is beginning to take part in the exhibition spaces of numerous festivals in European countries and US, on Internet resources worldwide.

The key characteristics of zines includes exclusivity (small or single edition); lack of market orientation (predominance of self-publishing); complete freedom in stylistic and design decisions, provocative and ambiguous deliberately sloppy or distracting layouts that ignore basic standards of grids and traditional combination of elements of graphic and textual parts. In the Ukrainian art space, «zines» have emerged relatively recently. Today they are represented at the «IZONE», «Mystetsky Arsenal», on independent meetings in galleries where artists show their projects (in «BURSA», «IZONE», «Plivka spaces») on events organized by «IST Publishing»); in Pinchuk art center library, «Library 665», as well as in the specific art publishing houses sites or directly on the artist's page. In addition, the lectures and workshops conducted by various artist provide a comprehensive analysis of subject and foster the spread of art practices of zine-making (a series of workshops by Boris Filonenko on «Book Champions Weekend», a workshops within the framework of «Kyiv Book Fest Izone», artist talks and lectures on «Book Arsenal», lectures from School of visual communications).

**Analysis of previous research.** In recent decades, the study of zine culture has received widespread coverage among the international scientific and mass Internet space. Enough attention has been paid to the formation and various trends of zine in foreign art criticism and, in particular, in sociology. Zine phenomenon is distinguished by genre diversity and technical versatility which led to different directions and issues in reseaches. Special attention is given to such aspects as: possible ways of storing and displaying zines within libraries and other spaces (DeVoe, Duff, 2022: 73–83); an analysis of the approaches and techniques can then be used to create a zine (Kiersten, 2022: 313–316); the significance and historical evolution of zines as a mean of communication and opposition to official media (Baker, Cantillon, 2022: 539–561); zines as «proletarian» and «accessible» art and a means of communication on digital platforms and in real spaces (Blake, 2020).

At the same time, the issues of zine design, its analysis in terms of its value as art object have not been given due attention. In the works devoted to the

artist's books or artbooks, a «zine» is classified in one of possible types of printed products that can be made by artist.

This systematic review has also highlighted that there is a lack of scientific data regarding the phenomena of zines in Ukrainian art history. Among the scientific works closely related to zine publications, it is worth highlighting an article (Milchevych, Zhuk, 2020: 533–538), where a ground analysis of the artist's book and artbook is given. However, the phenomenon of Zin-culture and zines as a separate category of artist's book has not yet been isolated and described.

**Statement of the problem.** A fragmentation of consideration and selectivity of the approaches to the problem, confusion in the definitions of «art book» and «zine» and their actual mixing resulted in different sorts of issues, which does not contribute to the creation of a holistic view of the development of zine design and its regional specificity.

The major challenge in the elaboration of definition of artbook and zines are piecemeal and fragmented character of the issue and approaches, the diversity of opinions are covered. It becomes relevant to carry out a comprehensive art history study of the genesis of development and the principles of the formation of «zine culture» and «zines» as a vehicle for free expression, self-discovery and critical thinking. A thorough comprehensive study of Ukrainian zines with their inherent worldview contributes to a deep understanding of this phenomenon and its place in latest artistic processes. The task of the research is to distinguish the place of zines in the contemporary art spaces and to provide an art-historical analysis of its features and the level of its development in the territory of Ukraine. In order to classify Ukrainian zines by design and theme, the authors analyzed the works that received recognition in the Ukrainian and European art spaces.

**Results of the research.** The history of the formation of zines has different versions in scientific sources. Some authors trace their origin to political cartoons and pamphlets of the 19th and 20th centuries in France. However, the majority of researchers connect the penetration of zines into mass culture with the spread of a large number of small newspapers and magazines, which became widespread in the 1930s. Dissatisfaction with the official press and lack of diversity, the desire to express own opinion, to tell their story, led to the fact that American fans of science fiction, often through social club, began to publish «magazines for fans» or «fan-zines» to share science fiction stories and communicate with public (Brown, Hurley, 2021).

Thus, the zine was created as an oppositional and marginal publication within a certain community and became a great way to establish new relationships with like-minded individuals. This view is supported by other researchers. For example, Sarah Baker and Zelmarie Cantillon have suggested that zineing is not only about writing and reading but also about community formation and social intervention (Baker, Cantillon, 2022: 539–561). In addition, Janice Radway in her study consider a zine as a tool for radical social justice, analyzing its role centralizing decentralized communities (Radway, 2011: 140–150).

On the example of feminist wave in zine culture, Vong.S. says, that Zines became a tool for women in particular to critique and reimagine popular stories from a feminine point of view, or to feature leading female characters (Vong, 2016: 62–80).

Janet Zweig focuses on the influence of magazines on the formation of modern artbooks. About her opinion, zines have broadened the scope of publication and have made the entire enterprise more lively and current and they've created a venue for all kinds of eccentric expression (Zweig, 1998: 4–5).

Due to the spread of social networks, since 2000 all kinds of online communities and online diaries, Internet communication and the consumption of visual information via the Internet have been actively developing. Online programs are emerging that provides an easy method of creating zines and other printed publications.

Note that there are a large number of classifications of zines, often formed by the fans of the genre, who collect them. In article of Susan Thomas zines are treated as objects of art – «art zines», if they were created by an artist or their group (Thomas, 2009: 27–38). Such zines may include artistic illustrations, text (often handwritten), photographs, and decorative elements. A distinctive feature of such magazines is the complete absence of advertising messages.

Summarizing the views of many authors on the modern zine, as well as the experience of their presentation at various exhibitions and thematic forums, we can conclude that modern zines should be classified as non-commercial fiction books with their own stylistic and thematic features, as the most unfiltered personal expression.

Small publishing houses with such artistic books are constantly emerging in Ukraine. Their responsibilities include supporting young people and their projects, organizing events for the dissemination of knowledge about zines, art books and artist's books as festivals, book fairs, lectures, etc. They provide freedom of self-expression, and as

result, offer a highly creative and personalized way to explore, critique and reflect on a particular topic through a variety of graphic design media.

However, it should be emphasized that almost all of them, as a rule, do not exist for a long time as they are unable to compete in the art markets with relatively large publishing houses. Hence, the majority of Ukrainian zines are published at the expense of the authors. However, a number of publishing houses that emerged in 2017–2020 have expanded the collections of libraries with new works and discovered talented artists who continue to promote themselves with the help of independent works. Among the art-oriented major publishing houses in Ukraine that actively print art-books of already well-known photographers and artists, «Red Zett», «IST Publishing», «BOOKSHA» should be singled out.

The zine itself can be published as a mini-magazine on the initiative of a small team of interested groups (designer, editor, illustrator, photographer), or it can be a completely original project once created by one author independently. In the latter case, it often consists of illustrations, accompanied by own texts of an artist. In this case, the author can publish under the pseudonym, for example, «Alyoshenka», «Kokoshka», etc.

As a mini-magazines, devoted to art and made by group of artists, zines often include the works of different artists and sometimes contain interviews and personal statements. In a New York Times article describing independent art magazines, claims that they are an «update of the fanzine» and have an «irreverent, sometimes loopy voice sustained by attitude rather than subject matter» (Pressler, 2006). Deliberately carelessness design, «random» color spots and active graphic elements are the features of such editions.

In general, according to their design decision, contemporary art zines can be conditionally divided into photographic (consisting exclusively of photographs), graphic (including various graphic images), zine-collages (combining photographic images, graphics and texts).

A photographic zine is an independent project of a photographer and consists of a series of photographs dedicated to a specific topic. The zines of Ukrainian photographers resemble the classic photo books of the 1960–1970s with the simplest layout and design. Such zines contain a series snapshot photography, including home-made shots border on porn, as well as deliberately unartistic pictures with everyday objects. Such approach brings them closer to the tradition of phototypology, which was founded by Ed Ruscha in his famous Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations



in America 1963 and projects of German artists Bernd and Hilla Becher (link to yourself here). Ukrainian photographers often turn to the themes of physicality, self-discovery and the self-identification of own personality and inhabitancy. Most of the photographs are of documentary character reflecting the realities of the present, often directly or indirectly pertain to the social problems.

A number of publications by a young Kiev artist working in the direction of conceptual art Sasha Kurmaz, are devoted to the topic of corporality, including «Concrete and sex» (2013), «Poisonous Berries» and «Paradise», which consist of the photographs taken at a series of parties, «Scheme» (which for cutting parties) – in 2017.

One of the most renowned zine in this category is zine of Ukrainian photography artist Roman Pyatkovka. This category also includes a zine that received a number of nominations at international festivals, photobooks of the representative of the Kharkov school of photography, the «Meteoprognoz» (fig. 1).

Examples of zines based on phototypology are «Autopilot» by Pasha Open, «Abandoned Cars», «Out of time» (fig. 2) and «HelpMe» by Taras Bychko. The

latter consists of photographs of homeless people asking for help. The social subtext of these zines is very expressive.

The theme of self-identification is touched upon in the zine «Quiet days». The work is created by a group of authors – the layout is done by the designer and photographer Alexander Bychenko, the text is written by the curator and ex-photo editor of Esquire Ukraine Anton Ivanov, and the drawings on the pages belong to the two-year-old son of Yuriy. The series included in the zine was shot by Yuriy Salabay during 2008–2010 in Sweden and Ukraine and is filled with an atmosphere of nostalgia for the past (fig. 3).

To summarize, it should be added that the visual strategy of photography is simple and as unbiased as possible and its aesthetic is closed to the wave of «snapshot».

The other type of zines, conditionally called a graphic zine is fully written and uniquely designed project of an artist in most cases, but it can sometimes represent a finished illustrated work of other author, where the graphic part tends to a classic illustration or comics. Such zines represent visual energy and fluidity that the linear typescript of a standard book or

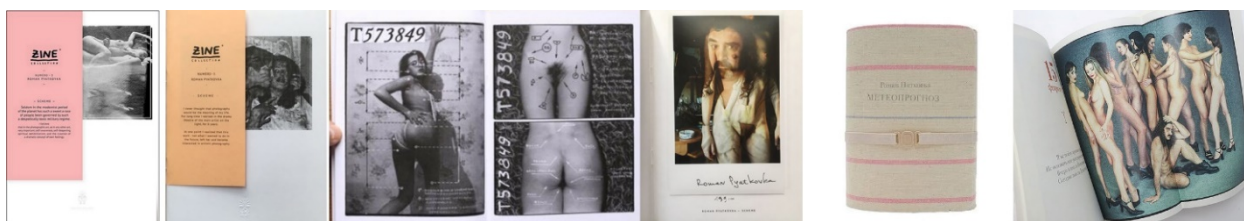


Fig. 1. «Meteoprognoz» («ForeCast», 2018) by Roman Pyatkovka.  
<https://fotoplenka.in.ua/ua/p1513515527-krnyga-meteoprognoz-roman.html>



Fig. 2. Taras Bychko. «Out of time» (2019).  
<https://donttakefake.com/lokalnyj-byt-10-krutyh-zinov-i-fotoknig-dlya-vashej-kollektsii/>



Fig. 3. «Quiet days» (2014) by Yuriy Salabay.  
<https://platfor.ma/magazine/text-sq/projects/smotrish-v-knigu/>

magazine cannot accommodate. A striking example of a graphic illustrative zine is the art book «The War of the Mushrooms», inspired by the work of the outstanding Ukrainian graphic artist Heorhiy Narbut. The plot of the Ukrainian folk tale is the confrontation between the boletus mushroom and berries. In terms of its structure, it is almost one-to-one repeats the book published previously by the famous Ukrainian graphic artist, illustrator, author of the first Ukrainian state signs, Heorhiy Narbut. But the aesthetics of the illustrations are radically different. Particular attention is given to corporeality of a human that can be easily read through forms of plants. A bright, emphatically simple color solution, based on the use of contrasting, mostly light colors, catches the eye. The author appeals to last design trends, introducing a lot of negative space into the composition of the page (fig. 4).

«What do you have at home?» is a joint self-published work of Ukrainian musician, poet, actor Oleg Kadanov and illustrator, artist, poet Mitya Fenechkin. The «Kyiv is Kyiv» zine, created by Karolina Gulshana in co-authorship with unknown representatives of other art industries (writer, designer) contains 9 stories

about Kyiv, made with simple primitive graphic and large bright color shading (fig. 5).

The author's zines with a small amount of handwritten text are the works of Sonya Umanskaya «People and Their Problems» (fig. 6), the zine collection of poetry by Darya Kuznetsova, the zine «Green place over the Dnipro» (2019) by art group «DE NE DE», a self-published zine anemna prints Ann Manankina «SIN», a zine «Strokes» (2018) by Koshka.

Today zines in the form of comics are quite personal and explore untensevely personal reaction of artists on some events or facts and reflect his own emotional experiences. Characteristic features of the graphic zine are primitive «quick» illustration and frequent use of bright spot colors.

Collage-zine is characterized by bold combination of photography, graphic and texts that represents an autor's style and his opinion on subject. It ultimately forms the images of completely new surreal reality extracted from mass media sources and dissolved with the fantasies of the artist. It includes «Nothing good will happen in life» which is an original and extremely emotional poetic zin (fig. 7). The romance



Fig. 4. «The War of the Mushrooms» (2022) by Nikita Kravtsov and writer Andriy Kurkov.  
<https://rodovid.net/en/product/288/the-war-of-the-mushrooms/>

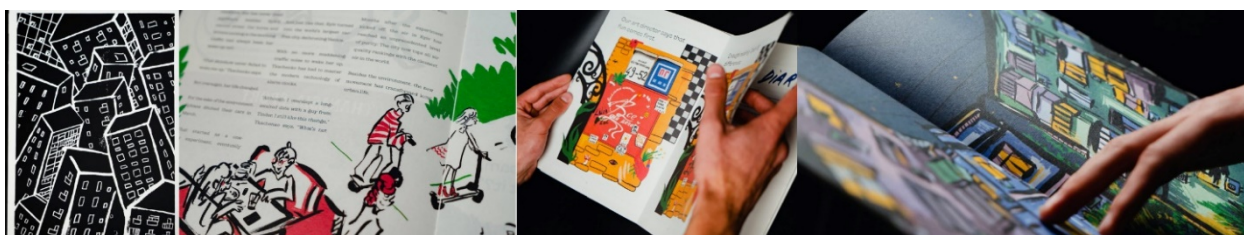


Fig. 5. «Kyiv is Kyiv» (2021) by Karolina Gulshana.  
<https://bzh.life/mesta-i-veshi/kiyiv-cze-kiyiv-ilyustratorka-z-berlina-stvorila-zhurnal-pro-ukrayinsku-stoliczyu/>



Fig. 6. «People and Their Problems» (2019) by Sonya Umanskaya.  
<https://www.facebook.com/etozinukraine/shop/>



of the outskirts, blood, ladies and religious fanaticism are at the basis of poetry by Andriy Nesmiy. The visual component of collages from photos by Bogdan Serpokryl designed by Oleksii Kravchenko create a specific and original atmosphere of radical pessimism.

It can be also mentioned a «Strachovart» periodical zine by Andrey with dark images of operations, witches and other fantastic creatures (fig. 8).

Other example is a zine of Danya Nestirevich (fig. 9) that includes 2 sel-made fonts and interesting combination of a matte paper and calque.

An interesting phenomenon that has appeared quite recently is the zine-catalog, which includes not only a set of authors' works (collection), but also interviews and a significant descriptive part. A feature of such

zines is a calmer and more refined design with grunge elements. There are also zine-catalogues, which are characterized by a looser layout than in classic editions and inexpensive production (paperback, thin sheets).

One of the long-lasting Ukrainian zine catalog was «Gon» published in period from 2017 to 2020. (fig. 10).

The example of zine-catalogue is a «Last supper before the war» (fig. 11) by istpublishing 2022 influenced under the begginig of the War, as a form of protest against the invaders. It includes the works of Katya Libkind, Philipp Olenik, Stanislav Turina and Boris Filonenko. It touches the issues of double colonization of Ukraine-as-a-territory), and creates a new vision and ways of talking about civilian life within the war.



Fig. 7. Collage-zine «Nothing good will happen in life»  
<https://www.facebook.com/people/Дімкультуриномер2>



Fig. 8. «Strachovart», periodical zine by Andrey Nesmiy. Pages from 2019 to 2022.  
<https://www.facebook.com/Strachovart>



Fig. 9. A zine of Danya Nestirevich (2019).  
<https://www.facebook.com/etozinukraine/videos/2443763539229370>



Fig. 10. Periodical zine-catalogue «Gon» comics zine organized by kiev illustrator Kosko Kosko.  
<https://www.behance.net/gallery/62701367/GON-Comics-Zine>



Fig. 11. Zine-catalogue «Last supper before the war» (2022).

<https://eng.istpublishing.org/tproduct/162369978-639430458911-last-supper-before-the-war>

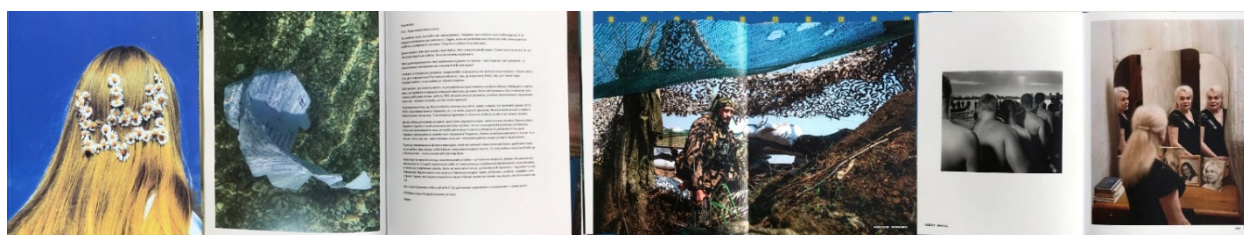


Fig. 12. Zine-catalog «I hope» (2022).

<https://donttakefake.com/amerykanske-indi-vydavnytstvo-vypustilo-zin-z-robotamy-ukrayinskyh-fotografiv/>

The other zine that raises pressing issues with a highly emotional content is zine «To Hope» by American publishing house Nighted «I hope» is a collection of texts, letters and photos that were created after February 24 by Both Ukrainian and foreign photographers. The zine presents the photographs of Alina Prisich, Alina Radomska, Anton Orekhov, Artem Nadyozhin, Christopher Nunn, Claudine Dury, Daniel Had, Daniel Weisberg and others (fig. 12).

**Conclusion.** Continuing the process of the development and distribution in the art space as a universal form of artistic self-expression, zines can be presented in both digital and material formats To date, these objects have become the most accessible way for the artist to communicate with the viewer. At the same time, unlike a traditional art book, a zine often has an oppositional and protest character, directed either against the traditional understanding of art or against certain social phenomena and reflects the mood of the time.

It is determined that Ukrainian zines do not differ in their concept from European ones, however, they are rarely presented in the form of a periodical magazine. According to the designer's decision, Ukrainian zines can be conditionally divided into graphic zines, that are based on a small amount of

text with a story and the the predominant number of illustrations, photographic zine consists of photograpgs made by author with short captions or without it and zine-collage, where the text and illustration are in most cases combined into a single image.

An interesting phenomenon in art culture has become zine-catalog, which can contain a textual part and an interviews with different artists and their works, or can be a simple collection of variety of artworks, where the descriptive textual part can be completely absent.

In Ukraine, the zine culture is very young and unformed, but it is actively developing – there are festivals and meetings in galleries where artists and photographers present their work. Ukrainian zines are characterized by an interest in national culture and current social issues, an active introduction of the traditional aesthetics of Ukrainian photography. Ukrainian artists operate with the simplest and «fastest» means to convey a message – thus, zines most often use «simple everyday», «amateur» photographs, collage, simple graphic drawings with minimal use of bright color spots. Thus, zines have become one of the tool of free and easy form of artysic expression and a socially important project, that displays a political or cultural concerns.

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