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ZINE AS A POPULAR TREND IN GRAPHIC DESIGN

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This paper explores zines as a popular graphic design subgenre in the era of growing social media presence. Drawing from the technical and aesthetic characteristics of zines, this study investigates how these printed products facilitate the spread of ideas and information. The results of this research aim to provide creative solutions for zine elaboration and present a concept on the topic of design education.

Key words: zine, fanzine, graphic design, self-publishing, DIY.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing trend, especially among social media creators, towards the elaboration and use of zines. A zine (sometimes called a fanzine) is an independent, self-published work, usually in the form of a booklet or magazine, created to promote an idea through originality, freedom of thought, and detachment from the mainstream. They are intentionally produced in small runs, typically around 100–200 copies, and are less formal than most magazines, with a non-commercial purpose [1]. Thus, contemporary designers prefer using this medium as an accessible form of self-expression and the spread of ideas.

This subgenre emerged as a direct descendant of the fanzines of the late 1920s–1930s, which were created to connect fans of the science fiction genre. These fanzines also contained extensive "letters-to-readers" sections, allowing fans to communicate with each other on the pages of the publications or by exchanging mailing addresses. Over time, the name "fanzine" was shortened to "zine." These fanzines contained many elements of today's zines, such as stories, reviews, and letters, and eventually expanded beyond science fiction and fantasy to address other interests of authors and readers [1].

On the other hand, scholars argue that, from an aesthetic and philosophical point of view, zines originated in the Dada artistic movement. Artists in this movement often distinguished themselves by self-publishing their work, and Dadaism expanded through networks of friends and colleagues, often internationally. A similar spirit is embodied by today's zine communities.

Another defining aspect of zines, which makes them of great interest to contemporary designers, is the diversity of topics and styles they can address. Stephen Duncombe, a scholar specializing in zines, lists 15 broad categories, including fanzines, political zines, personal zines, health zines, comics, and literary zines (11–13) [1]. There are at least two approaches to the study of this medium: resistance zines, which openly express the author's views on a particular



phenomenon or event and are often used as a form of activism, and personal zines, which are intended for self-expression and the telling of one's own life story [4]. Another defining trait is the disorder embraced by many such authors, an aesthetic that humanizes both the creator and the zine. One example is the collection of zine covers in a poster published by Nieves (fig. 1). The "disorder" functions, in part, to create a connection between the author and the reader [5].



Fig. 1. Poster of zine covers, published by Nieves (2008) [3]

Among the editorial features of this literary subgenre are a lack of ISBN or ISSN, a limited number of editions, self-publishing or creation by an independent publisher without a recognized name in the market, direct availability from the creator, low price, a handmade appearance—sometimes including a signature or stamp—unconventional dimensions, and more [3].

CREATION PROCESS

While zines can take any form, they are typically A5 or A6 booklets, photocopied in black and white and hand-bound with staples, string, or stitching [6]. The materials used are often modest in quality, such as printer paper, and the prevalence of monochrome printing is due to the need to keep costs low, accommodate small print runs, and maintain independence from publishers or printing houses. Zines often include personalized elements that make each copy unique, such as hand-coloring or painting, ribbons and fabrics, stickers, handwriting, original photographs, or images cut from magazines and books. They typically range in length from two to fifty pages and can be created by either an individual or a group [6].

One example is *„Past My Bedtime”*, a personal zine created by Elizabeth O'Brien. This 21×14 cm publication was issued between 1999 and 2001 by a single person who took on the roles of editor, proofreader, printer, and distributor. Each edition consisted of approximately one hundred copies, printed in batches of twenty or thirty. Each zine contained around twenty pages, and a total of six volumes were produced [7].



As a result of the analysis of the constructive and aesthetic approaches of zines, a personal contribution has been created (fig. 2), presenting the daily challenges of a design student, with the goal of raising awareness about this field of study.



Fig. 2. Contributions in the creation of a zine concept

A key focus in the concept development process was ensuring the zine's accessibility to a wide audience by finding cost-effective and simple printing solutions that would allow for home or office production. Some of these accessible features include monochrome illustrations, a one-sided A4 spread (printed on white or colored paper) designed to be folded and cut to specific dimensions, and no need for additional materials such as glue, thread, or staples. Simple assembly instructions (fig. 3) further streamline the process while providing an interactive experience for the reader, preserving the signature 'DIY feeling' associated with zines.

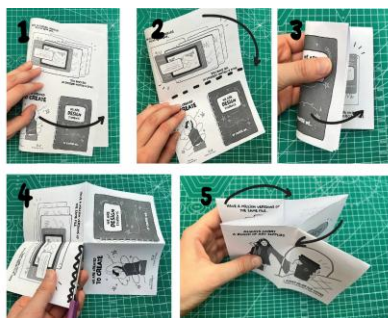


Fig. 3. The steps of zine assembly

Another key aspect of this creation process has been presenting a design student's perspective in a creative way. With the rise of advanced graphic design software and the increasing influence of social media, zines have gradually shifted toward digitalization. Consequently, this concept has been illustrated digitally while maintaining a friendly and imperfect style to encourage openness and engage the reader.

Since the zine aims to raise awareness about design education, it will be distributed both physically—within the university to inform students from other faculties—and online, with a printable spread available in PDF format (fig. 4).

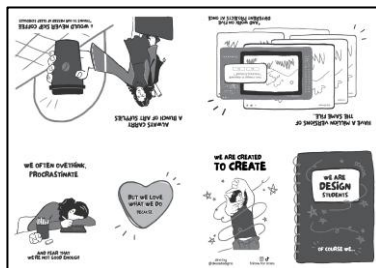


Fig. 4. Printable zine spread

CONCLUSIONS

Due to their ease of production and independent distribution, zines have great potential as a form of artistic expression and have become increasingly popular in contemporary graphic design. They serve as a creative outlet for both beginners—who may have little experience in book editing or illustration—and more seasoned artists with editorial expertise.

Zines also have significant educational value, making them an excellent tool for raising awareness on various topics, such as design education, as demonstrated by the zine presented in this paper. With a focus on cost-efficiency, minimalism, and creativity, this concept remains accessible to a broad and diverse audience, staying true to the mission of this artistic subgenre.

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ZINE ЯК ПОПУЛЯРНИЙ НАПРЯМ У ГРАФІЧНОМУ ДИЗАЙНІ

У цій роботі досліджуються журнали як популярний піджанр графічного дизайну в епоху зростання присутності в соціальних мережах. Спираючись на технічні та естетичні характеристики журналів, це дослідження вивчає, як ці друковані вироби сприяють поширенню ідей та інформації. Результати цього дослідження мають на меті надати креативні рішення щодо розробки журналу та представити концепцію на тему дизайн-освіти.

Ключові слова: зин, фанзин, графічний дизайн, самвидав, DIY.