

How to Make a Hand-Crafted Zine

February 6th, 2010

Dear self-publisher / zine maker,

While I have been fascinated by the zen of zine-making, and have discovered that the key in the ending “e” in “zine,” just like independence is represented by its shortening from the full term of “magazine,” creating a whole genre and new definition in and of itself, this “e” at the end must similarly stand for something, perhaps experimentation, perhaps eccentricity, perhaps the whole enigma of self-publishing. Whatever the ends you get from zine-making, don’t forget to enjoy the process while it lasts, lest it become just another mediocre chore from not paying enough interest in it, to make the process creative and the product one of love.

In making things by hand, one incorporates any of many possible crafts. These need not be experimental in and of themselves, the fun could come from adapting the method to your own content. Glue, tape, staples, string, and many other methods of making additive art from it are a possibility. Others include subtractive art where a portion of the piece opens up or has a hole in it to show something underneath, or simply manipulating things with the copier or scanner or computer like the cover of this issue. I now present to you a fellow zine-maker’s input on the craft of zine-making, please welcome Andrew Coltrin on the facing page, and be sure to check out the other zines in this “How to Self-Publish” zine series...

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DO SOMETHING BY HAND

by Andrew Coltrin

When you make a zine you are making your own declaration of independence from the internet. It's an old fashioned notion, this collating of thoughts and ideas into an easily folded and stapled document, collection of documents and images. A creature of paper and ink in this age of pixels and pdf's.

I say celebrate your decision to go about things the old fashioned way. Anyone can make a blog these days. And, truly, blogs can be wonderful and entertaining. They can be everything that a zine can be, but when you've finished your rant about the people at the grocery store who can't manage the self-check stand, where does it go?

The internet is, by its nature, ephemeral. Paper can last a couple centuries if you give it a change. Celebrate and glorify the tangible nature of your zine creation: do something by hand.

Personally, I get a thrill out of using a manual typewriter. I also like to collage images and patterns, sometimes cutting and pasting my text over a background of old maps and insurance ads. I experiment and, sometimes, make an absolute mess of things. But that's part of the fun.

People make a mess of things on the internet all the time. The most embarrassing and glaring misspellings and misuses of basic grammar slide through all the time. Don't let the fear of typos stop you. Make something by hand.

Hand wrought words and images grab the reader's attention in a way that same old Times New Roman just might not.

There's no need to do everything by hand, but something, a little taste that lets the world know that this thing was made by flesh and blood human beings and not by robots, can be just the seasoning that makes your everyday thoughts and observations so much more compelling.

Do something by hand.

A collection of hand-crafted items is displayed on a dark, reflective surface. The items include a woven hat with a green band, a bracelet, and a necklace. A pair of glasses with a wooden frame and a keychain are also visible. The background is dark and textured, with some light reflecting off the surface.

How to Self-Publish, the zine series

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