

THE UNFOLDING

STRATEGIES FOR THE PRODUCTION AND RELEASE OF A ZINE

STAGES OF

- PRODUCTION:**
- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Content creation | 4. Zine launch + marketing |
| 2. Build a mock-up | 5. Who should carry it? |
| 3. Mass production | 6. Long-term needs, prospects |

1. CONTENT CREATION

Good ideas take time. Strong concepts cannot be forced, wish as we may. Let's cover some practices that are integral to concept generation.

PRACTICE: CONSUMING CONTENT, DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING YOUR EYE AS WELL AS YOUR CAPACITY FOR CRITIQUE

This means reading, listening, watching, making, and experimenting in a myriad of ways. Consider everything and after a while, notice what you are repeatedly drawn to.

Establishing longstanding habits and rituals around your individual work and art is absolutely essential to producing on a somewhat regular basis.

PRACTICE: KEEPING A NOTEBOOK AND/OR JOURNAL

I recommend keeping a notebook, physically or digitally, where you can track anything that resonates with you. For example, I have a notebook for work projects and a journal for analysis and goal-making. One is a bit more left-brained and heavy with 'big concepts' while the other is a space to probe my emotions and explore intuitive threads of thought/memory.

PRACTICE: A MONTHLY REVIEW OF YOUR LIFE

Another practice that has served me well is a monthly review. I note any successes, big or small (submitting to a call for submissions counts as a success!). I also note "projects brewing", which is any idea that is still just an inkling, maybe someone mentions working on something with you or you get an idea that needs to sit for a while before you move on it.

read me

- [The Woman Warrior](#)
- [Girl, Woman, Other](#)
- [Flights](#)
- [A Manual for Cleaning Women](#)
- [No Country for Old Men](#)
- [Desert Solitaire](#)
- [Art as Therapy](#)
- [How to Write an Autobiographical Novel](#)

**it is something that
develops inside.
you have an idea in
your head that you
want to develop.
you will get there
eventually, but it
might take a week,
it could take two
years, five years.
you do whatever it
takes.**

-nicola cruz

**the greatest art is
created by those
following their own
instincts, without
compromise.**

-mark kermode

**thinking, researching,
contemplating,
outlining, composing
in your head,
revisions, deletions,
emendations,
additions, reflections,
setting aside and
returning afresh...**

-rebecca solnit

**the attitude of the
knife- chopping off
what's incomplete
and saying 'now it's
complete because
it's ended here.'**

-dune

PRACTICE: FAITH, THE MOMENT WILL COME WHEN IT COMES

Our intentions are powerful and while you may not know when exactly your project will come together, it will if you nurture it with your thoughts and actions. It can look like nothing is happening if you're not writing, drafting, or printing the zine. Yet the creative process consists of yearning, preparation, and an eventual realization of the concept in some form. Let yourself trust in the foundational environment you've built for yourself with the help of others, a foundation laid in part by the practices I've mentioned here.

...

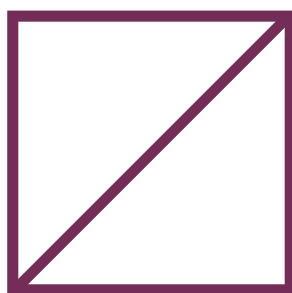
I've talked a lot about the creative process in general and now I'd like to be more specific about the process in regards to zine-making. There are an abundance of zine varieties, both in terms of physical structure and genre. Photo, comic, perzine, poetry, fanzine, anthology, eight panel, xeroxed, hand-printed, screen-printed, stapled, handsewn, and more.

There are many narrative traditions and styles of printing/ publishing for you to pursue. Are you a staple-happy xeroxer or a handbound spine sewer? Hero's journey or a non-linear narrative-free trajectory, conclusions or no, work with the form and materials that you are inherently attracted to at that point in time.

This comes back to the DIY ethos at its core. Play around, test it out, find out what you want with what you got. Imbue your work with your values- beauty? truth? intensity? There is no wrong, there is doing your best and making your own way, being generous with your time and energy.

When you start drafting work and putting together a piece, an eventual zine, you'll likely be jumping between addition and subtraction as described by Rebecca Solnit in the foot..er, sidenote on the left. Once you've got a solid idea, the pressure moves from the first phase into another, where you must consider the tack you will take. A macro or micro gaze, zoom in or out, trying out different connections, vantage points, and focuses as you tease out the concept and pursue the vision.

Serve yourself well by considering why you are making the choices you are, when have you succeeded or failed, what you feel ambivalent about, and if this is to your taste, your standard, your imagining. Mark Harris of Vulture credited as original source for questions in this paragraph.



expectations



mistakes



accomplishments

credit for graphs: charles duhigg

You will want to name your zine files according to their order in printing.

Example:
13 page zine,
excluding cover

zinetitle_redpg1.jpg

pg 1

FRONT

zinetitle_redpg2.jpg

notes pg 2

BACK

zinetitle_oral.jpg

thank yous pg 3

FRONT

zinetitle_ora2.jpg

pg 13 pg 4

BACK

zinetitle_yell.jpg

pg 12 pg 5

FRONT

zinetitle_yel2.jpg

pg 11 pg 6

BACK

zinetitle_gre1.jpg

pg 10 pg 7

FRONT

zinetitle_gre2.jpg

pg 9 pg 8

BACK

2. BUILD A MOCK-UP

A mock-up is a single copy of the zine that you are prototyping so you can know how to print it en masse. You want to account for each page of the work, including the cover. We do this because we want to know which segment belongs where, and what file will need to be printed on the front of a page and which file will need to be printed on the back of that same page.

I like to print by hand, manually feeding the printer each page so that I can ensure the print quality and sizing meets my expectations. Some people use Adobe Acrobat Reader's booklet printing function, and again, find what works best for you.

The display in the lefthand column shows how to construct a prototype of a 13 page zine (excluding the cover) using 8.5 x 11 inch paper that will be folded in half to form a zine that is 8.5 x 5.5 inches. To compile the zine correctly, fold each piece of paper in half crosswise. Place the blue page inside the green page, the green inside the yellow page, and so on until you have your prototype set up and the zine pages are in order.

You will want to name your zine content files according to their order in printing. Put the appropriate file name on its corresponding page in the prototype, this will be helpful when you begin printing en masse. Record voice notes and videos of what you are doing in case you need to run additional printings in the future.

If your cover is not going to be screen-printed or otherwise printed separately from the zine's content, then go ahead and include the cover in your prototype.

3. MASS PRODUCTION

When I am putting together a prototype, I'm starting to coordinate the printing process, but it's not until I begin mass-producing a zine that the process becomes solidified. When you are happy your prototype, you are ready to begin mass production. To start, you need to consider two things.

1. How many copies do I want to print?

50-75 copies is a good bet. You want enough copies to sell and distribute at your launch event, to put on your online store, to sell at local stores, and to take to zine fests! You can always do additional rounds of printing but I like to do as few printing rounds as possible.



also make:

- single prints**
- stickers**
- ephemera**
- business cards**

**"proficiency
and dexterity
are only as
good as what
you do with
them, but also
remember that
just because it's
your story that
doesn't mean
you're entitled
to an audience.
You have to
earn that. Don't
try to do it with
a big single
project. Take
baby steps, and
be happy with
baby steps."**

**"be
ambitious
for the work,
not the
reward"**

2. What supplies do I need?

- Paper type (standard or top-grade, your choice entirely)
- Printer (or risograph, or screenprint, etc.)
- Guillotine paper cutter or x-acto knife (optional)
- Long arm stapler or needle + thread/bookbinding supplies
- Photoshop, InDesign, or Word (free trials are your friend!)

The supplies you choose will be informed by your aesthetic and budget. If you are doing a photo zine, research what paper will work best. A good paper cutter is expensive so either buy one and return it within 30 days (my favorite modus operandi) or scout one out in an office space, library, or Kinko's near you.

Your zine printing process will be customized to your preferences and limitations. Staying organized and keeping an inventory of the zines you produce will save you a lot of Doh! moments. Play with it and see what works for you.

4. ZINE LAUNCH AND MARKETING

Once you've got a slew of zines, it's time for a launch event. I like to hold a launch for my work because it is good to celebrate after the long push and it also provides me with an opportunity to market the zine at large.

The non-Leos might be squirming at the thought of promoting their own work but I want to address that squeamishness off the bat. People want to support you and I urge you to extend them that opportunity. There is a generosity to sharing your work, and your utmost endeavoring will get noticed. How much and by whom is mostly out of your control, but don't hide it.

Launch events can be a lot of things- is it a reading? a panel? an album listening party? a normal party with zines on a table? released at a concert? an apartment-gallery? a gallery-gallery?

Put together an event according to your style and resources. If you can, serve some sort of food and drink. A flier should likely include the following:

- Title
- Location
- Date, start and end times
- Cost (event entry and/or zine)
- Will you accept sliding scale payment?
- Brief description of work
- If launch is part of a benefit, please note

Distribute launch details via your social media, website, and mailing list. Invite people on an individual basis to ensure turnout. If applicable, post flyers at the venue and around town.



Publishers:

Calamari Press

Cita Press

Co-Conspirator Press

Hey Day Press

Hell Sweet Hell Press

Hogarth Press

Microcosm

Navaja Press

Papeachu Press

P.E. Area

Silver Sprocket

Snake Hair Press

**nothing ends all
at once. every
project leaves
behind a
distinctive echo:
a rhythm of
energy, a way of
speaking, a
circle of
relationships.
-ellen ullman**

**"what happens in
the end is out of
your control. what
you can do, how
you do it, and what
values/motives
drive you are the
only things you can
worry about."**

Prior to the event, plan for:

- what equipment is needed
- a sound check
- staffing (door, security, cleaning)
- allotment of money (after venue costs, earned funds go where?)
- point of contact for day of event

I like to start marketing the event and/or zine two weeks before it goes live. I generally share 2-3 segments of the zine on social media periodically over those two weeks. It can be nice to share details about how and why you made the zine, what makes it special for you, and what the work offers. Share as little or much as you like, experiment with your comfort zone but not with your boundaries.

People who can't make your event will learn about it via your marketing and you may want to consider digital events in conjunction with any in-person events you organize. Practice describing the work in short and long bursts, something you can only describe it for 10 seconds and other times a person will want to learn the project's genesis in its entirety.

5. WHO SHOULD CARRY IT?

After the zine has launched, you'll want to see about putting it up online and lining up consignment spots at shops. For online shops, consider Etsy, Big Cartel, Storenvy, and Facebook groups (@fanzine). Put a PDF version of the zine together and leave it open access or downloadable with a fee.

For local zine consignment, check out bookstores, record stores, and independent small businesses. Ask if they would consider carrying your zine. Many esteemed bookstores accept zine submissions from around the world so consider submitting a zine if you think there's a chance they'd like to carry it. Look up zine fests in your area and beyond, consider tabling once you have a few different zines. If you don't want to table, try finding a distro who may help get your zine out there.

6. LONG-TERM NEEDS AND PROSPECTS

Once the zine has been written, printed, published, and distributed, you'll perhaps want to take a deep fucking breath, because buen hecho. You may want to think about the possibility of this zine needing a successor or being part of a series. Maybe you approach a publisher about picking up your zine? Maybe the copies flew fast and it's time to run another printing? The answer to all of these questions may be no, but still worth considering.

This resource guide was written to accompany the workshop I gave as part of Los Angeles Zine Fest (@lazinefest) entitled "The Unfolding: Strategies for the Production and Release of a Zine" on May 13th, 2020. The LA Zine Fest team of organizers Bianca, Daisy, Lawrence, Rhea, Roxy, Sondria & Vëma is an amazingly coordinated cohort of visionaries, I cannot thank you enough. Another thanks to you, reader, for reading and feel free to get in touch for zine strategizing, trades, or anything else. Blessings for your work.

- Elie Katzenson // @cinnamonblanket // eliekatzenson.com