



EUZINE 2.0

Zines are pumping a pulse into Eugene's art scene

Eugene's art scene is not dead. While the closing of the Jacobs Gallery dealt a blow to art's accessibility in the city, a group of ambitious volunteers is fighting back with Euzine Comics & Zine Fest 2017 on Nov. 18.

This is Euzine's second annual event and artists have jammed up at the door to get into the Broadway Commerce Center to show off their zines — self-published and printed material, from photographs to illustrations.

Euzine got its start in 2015 when Alida Bevirt and Aaron Sullivan attended a zine fest in Olympia and wondered why Eugene didn't have one of its own.

"This is the resurgence of the tactile," Sullivan says. "People are more interested now in holding something in their hands than reading it on the internet."

This certainly is true of Bevirt, who's bearing a bag of goodies and sitting up like a restless kid at show and tell.

"I loved comics and manga growing up, so I was transformed by the art when I started reading zines," she says, pulling out a multihued stack of papered books of various sizes.

They include stories drawn out on tiny, inch by inch squares and plots that unfold on big, fat rectangles. She

has hand-drawn anthologies of friends, wicker women as muses, and frightening, flesh-hungry teddy bears. And the zines use colored pages to symbolize emotion, like the pink page that follows the black-humored journey of a coping depressed man.

"Zines can be very raw," Euzine co-organizer and artist Jamie Walsh says. "Whether it's a comic story, memoir or something else, zines are about personal expression. They capture a time period and an intimate moment."

This distinct quality reflects the diverse points of view seen in zines.

"There are a lot of things that people don't know how to talk about, but you can take the subject of a zine and relate very intimately," Bevirt says.

Artist James Grey captures this intimacy in his zine "Just Another Fag Rag." Grey was labeled a female at birth, but identifies as a homosexual man. "This book serves as sort of bridge between two worlds for me. I always felt not quite trans enough and not quite queer enough to belong to one group or the other."

It's easy to see why Grey was one of the 55 artists chosen from more than 80 applicants for Euzine 2017. There's a calm to Grey that reveals a person wiser because he has born hard times. And Grey bears a perspective that belies his 20 years. An adolescent who couldn't help but stick out in a Catholic school, he overcame obvious distinction and a struggle with autism by studying the people who surrounded him.

"Social justice is my thing. It's how I understand the world," Grey says.

This is the soul of zines — the unfiltered heart that authors lay out on a page. For some it is the story that shaped who they are. And for some it is an apocalyptic space opera that threatens all that we know. Whatever story you want to tell, there is paper and pen waiting to record it.

If attendance for last year's show was any indication, people connect with the zines mode of personal expression. Other than a failed flash mob, says Sullivan, the only issue with last year's inaugural zine fest was that it went too well.

There are changes and updates to Euzine 2017. Euzine 2016 featured fun monster hands that waved and grabbed and snuck up on shoulders in photo booth portraits. This year's theme, "Fantastical Gardens," will offer participants the opportunity to vogue with fantastic flora. And following the vines upstairs, available paintings will adorn the walls of the second floor mezzanine snaking around and above the display floor.

Walsh, who also directs Oregon Supportive Living Program's Arts and Culture program, says that Euzine is about bringing more awareness to the city's zine scene. "This gives people a place to market their zines as well as a place where collectors can access a lot of authors in one place."

The world of zines is as much about relating to story as it is about appreciating sentimental acquisition. "There's a momentary quality to zines," Bevirt says. "There's just a short run of something and then it kind of disappears if someone doesn't save them."

Without Bevirt and fellow zine artist and aficionado Ryan Mishap, much of Eugene's contribution to the zine scene might have disappeared. When Bad Egg Books, one of the only shops in Eugene that sold zines, shut its doors, Bevirt and Mishap gathered together the store's rich collection of zines, assembled over three decades.

"Alida's a great example of someone who collects zines. I think you need white gloves before you're allowed to go through her collection," Walsh says.

Bervit and Mishap are currently searching for a space where they can house this zine library for public consumption. The University of Oregon's Knight Library offers some zines for view in its special collection, but their vision is a for a place committed solely to zines.

Sullivan is also doing his part to contribute to exposing zines to Eugene. He will manage a new stand offering a crop of six rotating zines at Wandering Goat where Sullivan is a coffee barista. And Euzine fest will publish their own digital zine from the gallery show and from the Oct. 27th workshop.

To access Eugene's burgeoning zine scene, all that art fans need to do is visit the free upcoming Euzine 2017. Art in Eugene is alive and well in the hands of this group of passionate artists devoted to personal expression on the page. ■

The 2017 Euzine Comics & Zine Fest runs 11 am to 6 pm Saturday, Nov. 18, at the Broadway Commerce Center, 44 W. Broadway.



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