

Fine Art: Studio, Site and Context

Year 2

Student number: 2003745

Student name: Branwen Jones

Changemakers: Creativity and Value Creation

ADAA5000

Tutors: Paul Duerinckx and Alex Duncan

Assessment Component 2: ZINE

Word count – 1527

Assignment Title:	Zine	Word count (or equivalent):	2,000-word equivalent
Submission deadline:	10/1/2023	Return date of provisional marks & written feedback:	7/2/2023

Zine: Illustrated research evaluation of journey of ideas and concepts

Background research: zine as form and practice

Zine-making stretches back to the homemade comics made by American and British science fiction fans in the 1930s (Duncombe 2008), but really flourished in the 1970s-80s punk scene in the UK and elsewhere (Guerra and Quintela 2014; Smith, Dines and Parkinson 2018). Zines embodied the 'DIY' ethos of punk. They were part of a youth counter-culture, creating an alternative space for communication which rejected the commercial music press (Subcultures Network 2018). Punk zines engaged with wide-ranging political questions of the time (Worley 2015). This was a radical, collaborative, youth practice, as shown in the documentary about the zine *Guttersnipe* produced in Telford (BBC 1980; fig 1).

Punk zines were hand-produced for quick and cheap reproduction. They made use of collage, tearing, cutting and glueing, with hand-written, typed and collaged lettering. Images and text collided on the page to transmit a sense of energy and urgency. Page and issue numbers were often inconsistent, and the text often contained spelling mistakes (Worley 2015; Subcultures Network 2018; fig 2).

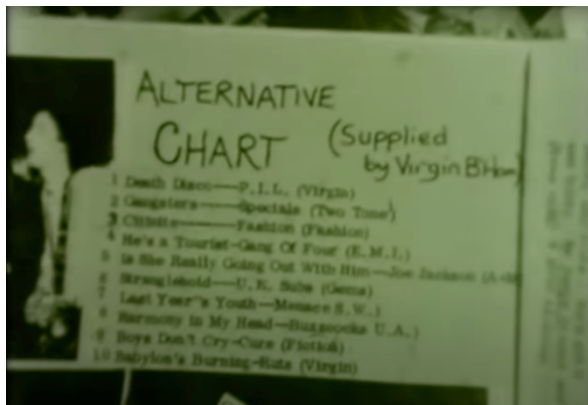
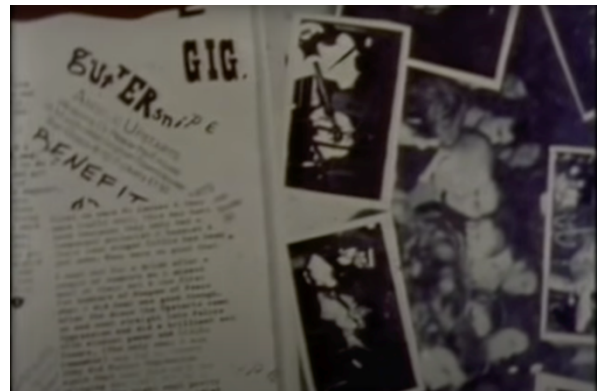
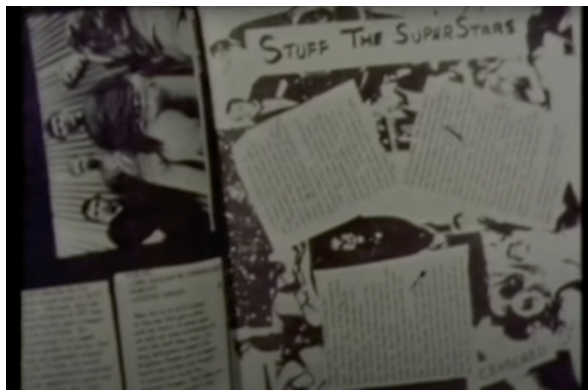
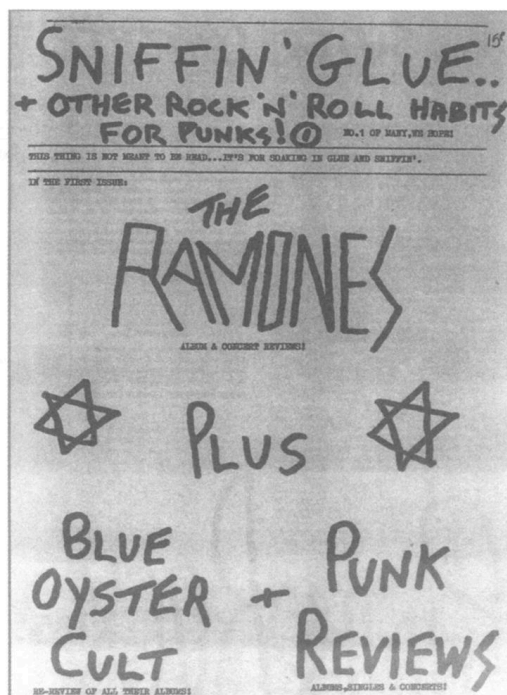
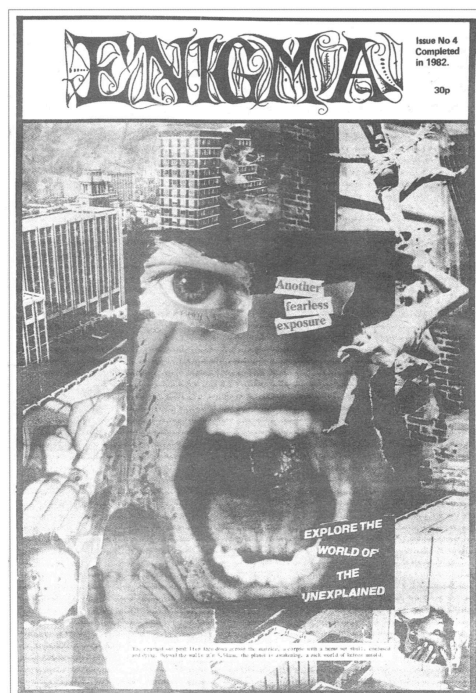


Fig 1: Stills from BBC Open Door documentary *Guttersnipe* (1980).



Sniffin' Glue, No. 1, 1976.



Enigma, no. 4, 1982



Nihilistic Vices, no. 1, 1979



Kill Your Pet Puppy, no. 1, 1980

Fig 2: examples of the visual form of punk zines of the 1970s and 80s. Images from Worley 2015.

Zines also form an important strand of art practice. Many artists make zines and other books, pamphlets and folded paper as part of an artist practice and to promote exhibitions and venues. I went to the WARP library at G39 in Cardiff to research their collection of zines and other ephemeral material (figs 3-9). Artist zines range from basic and easily reproducible to complex and one-off, and from folded paper to independently-produced artist books and compilations. Zines sit in a fascinating spectrum from leaflet to newspaper to booklet. The intent of communication ranges from direct political engagement to the presentation of artists' work linked to an exhibition.



Fig 3: A one-page folded zine by a Czech artist at Venice Biennale. WARP library, G39. Author's photos.

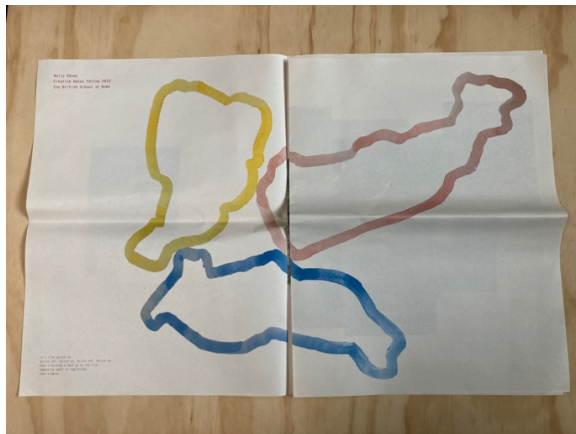
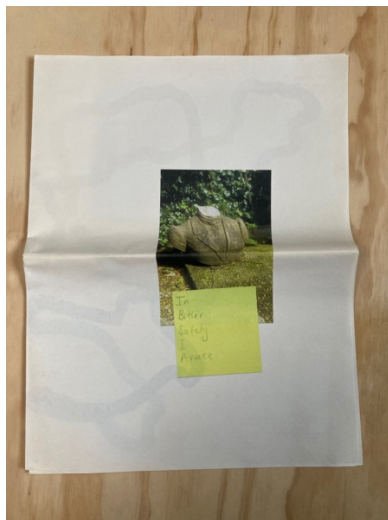


Fig 4: An A4 newspaper-style artist zine. WARP library, G39. Author's photos.

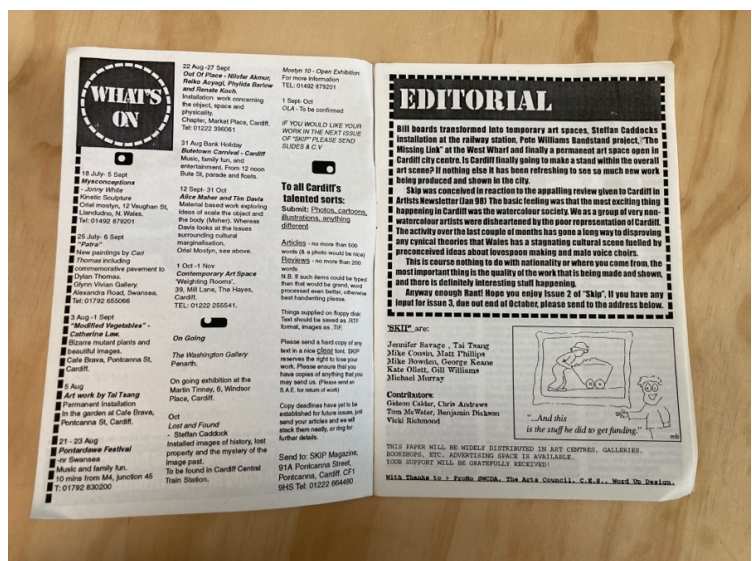


Fig 5: An A5 photocopied art magazine to be freely copied and distributed. WARP library, G39. Author's photos.



Fig 6: An A5 zine with hand-sewn binding, printed in colour on newsprint-type paper with a collage style. WARP library, G39. Author's photos.

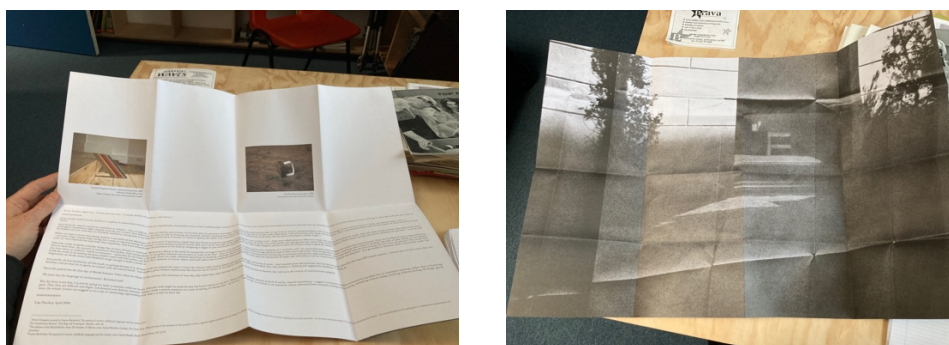
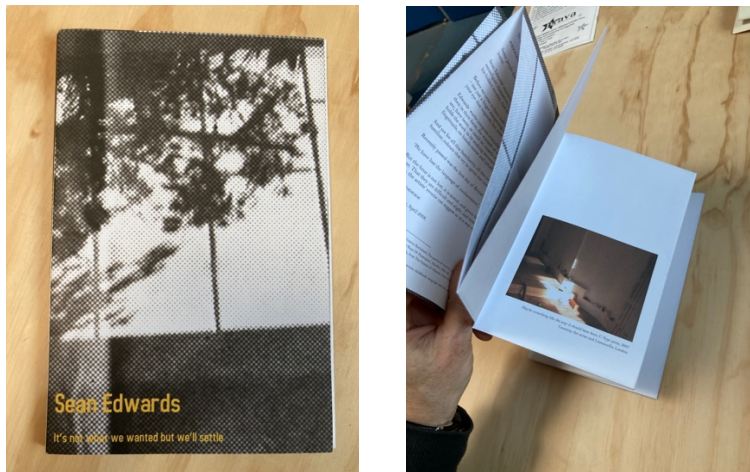


Fig 7: A leaflet/zine/poster, one piece of paper folding out, with images and text to be viewed in different directions and scales, presumably to accompany Sean Edwards' solo exhibition. WARP library, G39. Author's photos.

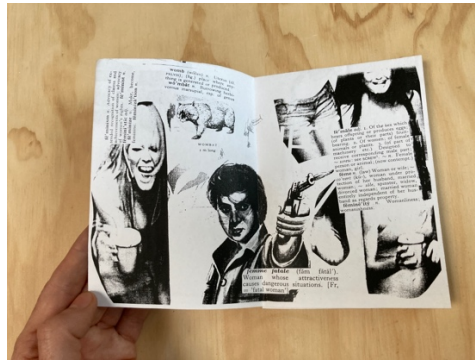
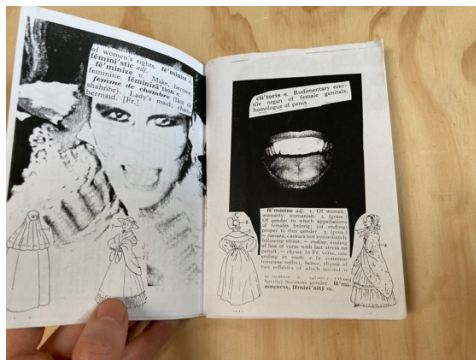
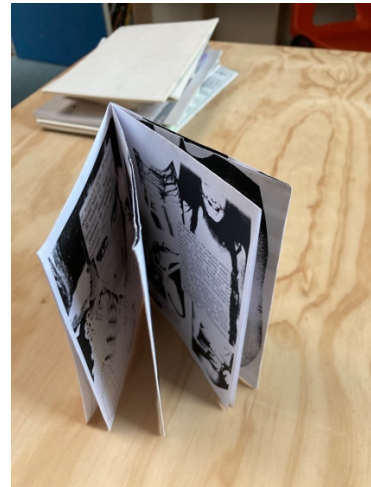
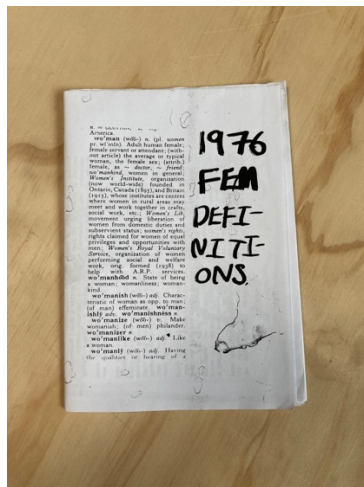
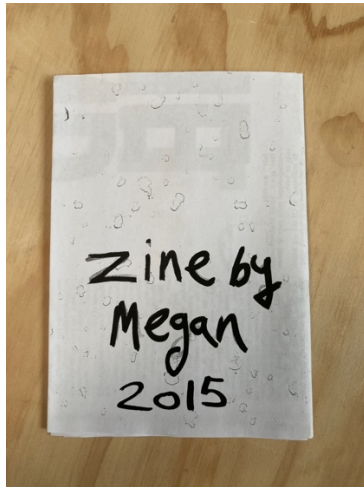


Fig 8: A feminist zine, made from an A3 sheet of paper folded and cut to make an A6 booklet. WARP library, G39. Author's photos.

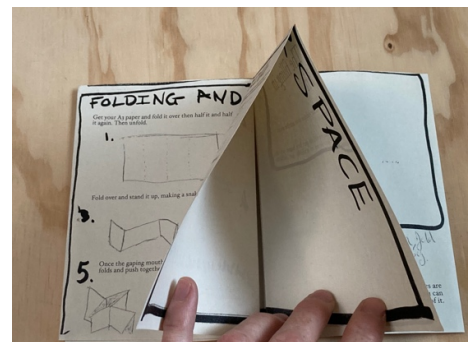
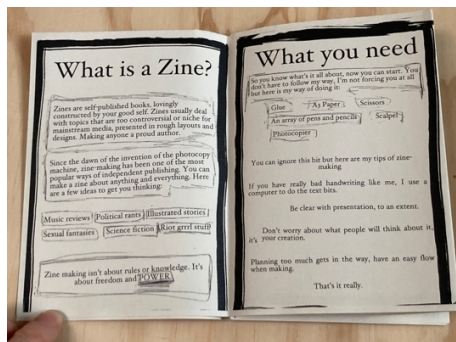


Fig 9: A zine about making zines, by the same artist, Megan. WARP library, G39. Author's photos.

Idea for my zine

This research gave me a set of starting points for thinking about my own zine project. I am not a youth and I am doing this as an individual rather than as part of a group, still less a subculture. Nevertheless I wanted mine to embody some of the original zine elements, including a collage and DIY ethos, and a sense of political engagement and purpose. I used photoshop and riso-printing to plan and produce my zine.

My zine is based on my recent project on *waste colonialism* which resulted in a book of cyanotype prints of items of single-use plastic. The project engaged with the question of form. It was a response to Anna Atkins' seminal cyanotype book made in the 1840s, *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*. Atkins' work was embedded in the visual imagination of colonial science, with its quest to itemise, classify, define and order all natural and social beings (Foucault 1970; Ramaswamy 2014; Garascia 2019). In my collection of cyanotype prints I organised the items of plastic using a method of categorisation mimicking that in Atkins' book, and I based the appearance of the title page, contents page and each individual page on the form of Atkins' book.

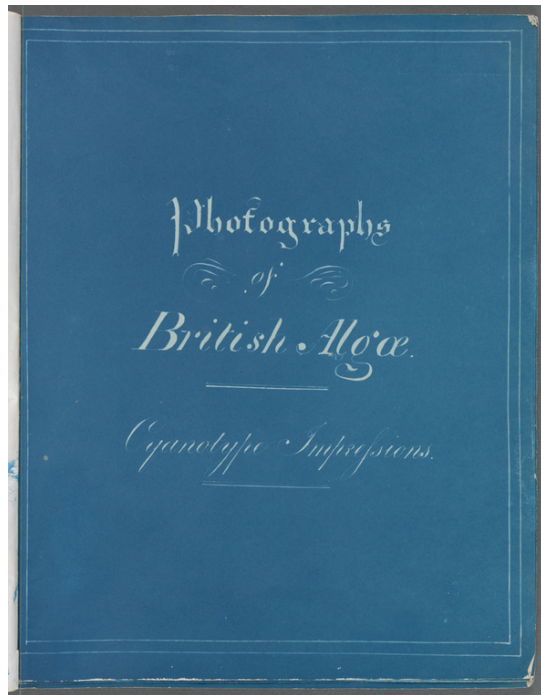


Fig 10: Images of Anna Atkins' cyanotype book, *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, 1843-10. Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/photographs-of-british-algae-cyanotype-impressions#/?tab=navigation>

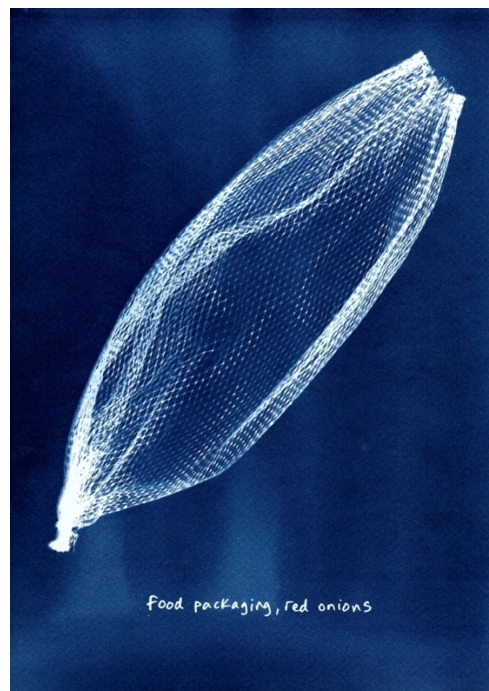
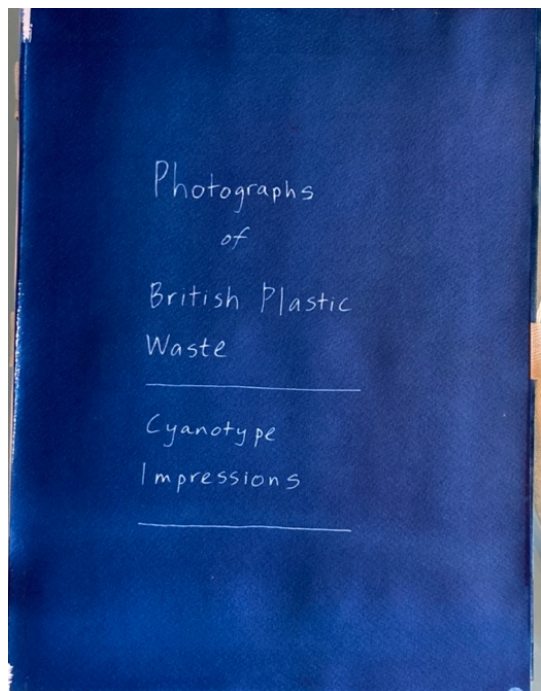


Fig 11: Images of my cyanotype book, *Photographs of British Plastic Waste: Cyanotype Impressions*, 2022. Author's photos.

For the zine I have used some of the cyanotype images, but now to make a work which explores the question of waste colonialism more directly. Engagement with form continues. The work is based in part on the form of the zine as a home-made, DIY political intervention which has something to say and which can be cheaply reproduced. I am also drawing on the form of artist zines, including those I found at the WARP library, those we saw in class, and a zine accompanying Lara Fluxà's exhibition *Llim (silt)* at the Catalan pavilion at the 2022 Venice Biennale.

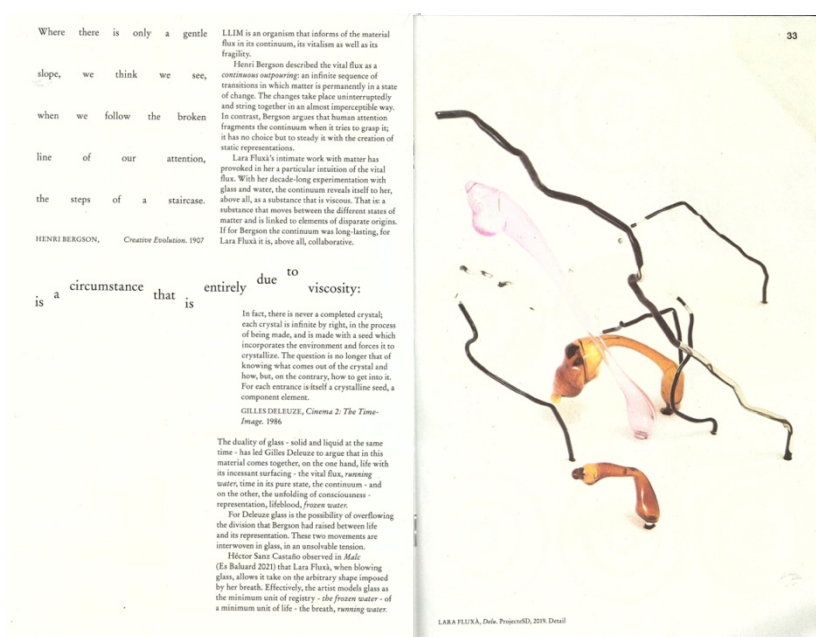


Fig 11: Images of the zine accompanying Lara Fluxà's exhibition *Llim* for the Catalonia pavilion, Venice 2022. Author's photos.

From the form of the artist zine I am borrowing a non-linear mode of constructing threads of suggestive narrative, with multiple images, quotations and sources of information. These combine with the more political punk zine ethos. With this combination I hope to avoid a purely informational style.

I have used the method of creating an eight-page A6 zine out of one A3 sheet folded and cut. This is a standard method used for radical self-publications and artist zines, and is easy to produce using the riso-print machine. This form of 'political origami'¹ seems a suitable combination of the punk and artist zine. It enables a relatively complex design with layers of image and text in two colours, but with a final result which is easily reproducible at relatively low economic and environmental cost.

Production of the zine

Step 1 was to scan the cyanotype prints and import them into photoshop. I created an A3 file and inserted a grid and guidelines to divide up the page according to the folding of the zine. I imported the scanned images into separate layers, adjusting the size and layout.

¹ This phrase was coined by a friend, Dot Kwek.

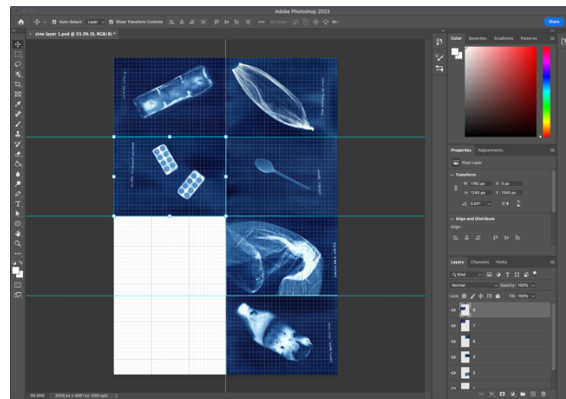
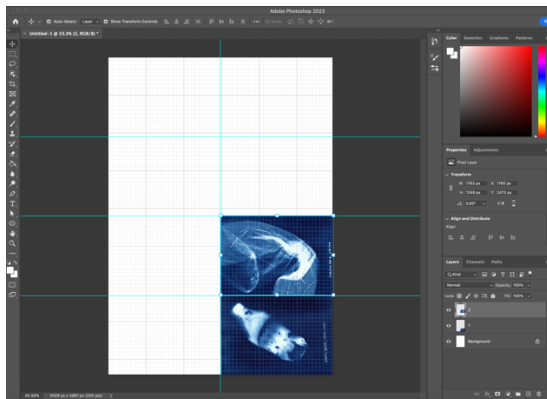


Fig 13: Screenshots of creating guidelines and importing scans. Author's images.

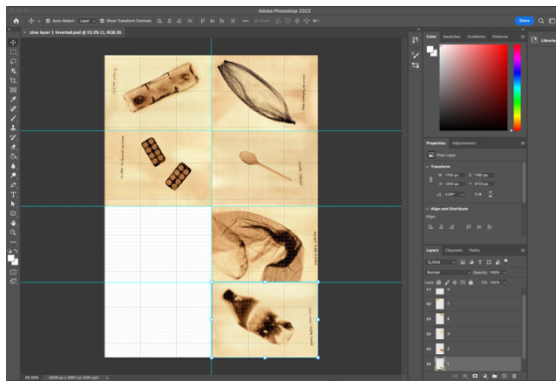


Fig 14: Screenshot of inverted scans. Author's image.

Step 2 was to invert the images so that the white in the original cyanotype print would appear dark and the background pale. These images form one of the layers on the riso-print, using a colour

like green or turquoise, which is pale and resonant of the material of single-use plastic. The inverted images look eerily like scanned items in a suitcase on an airport security screen.

Step 3 was to plan and assemble additional text, images, information, and quotations about single-use plastics and waste colonialism. These form the second layer to be printed in a darker colour, overlaying the cyanotype scans. I wanted to combine a diversity of facts and figures, elements of the history of plastics, and more reflective quotations. The

objective is to create a polyvocal exploration, a suggested set of narratives and reflections deriving from diverse authors, sources of information and modes of enquiry, with an overall political sensibility but avoiding a singular linear analysis. The use of collage, layering, cut and paste (physical and digital) and diverse types of text enables this construction, mirroring the form of both punk and artist zines.

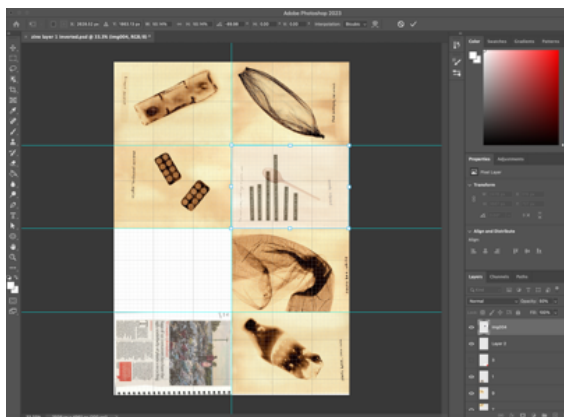


Fig 15: Screenshot of starting to create content for second colour. Author's image.

For some of the text I used a Dymo machine which punches letters onto a strip of plastic tape. This was an everyday item that we had around the house in my childhood; it has a sense of the pre-digital era. The idea to use this came from images of zines of the 1970s. The Dymo also directly engages in the project: it is a mechanism to create *plastic text*. Numbering the zine as no. 2 reflects the inconsistent numbering of some punk zines (Worley 2015).

Designing the second layer was complex and at times demoralising. I kept thinking 'this is turning into an informational activist manual instead of a zine relating to an art work'. The challenge was to work with the contextual research, facts, and images to assemble something faithful both to art and the zine form.

Step 4 After assembling the base layer and part of the upper layer I tried it out on the riso machine, which helped in designing the remaining pages.

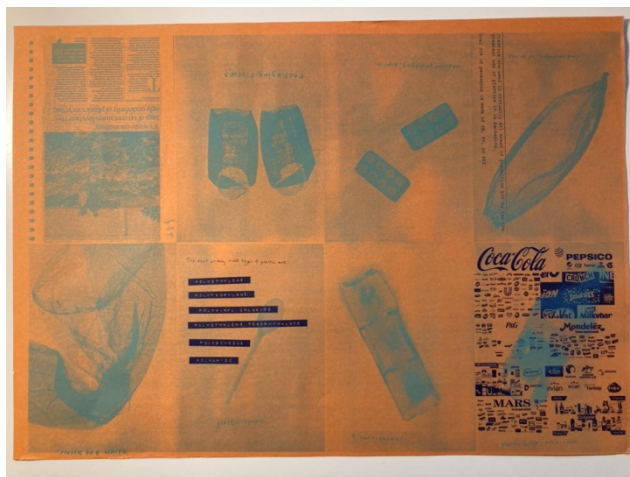


Fig 16: Mock up printed on the riso machine on different colour papers. Author's photos.

Step 5 was completing the design of the remaining pages. After the first riso mock-ups I changed the layout and combination of various pages. I worked in one photoshop file, adjusting the opacity of the upper layer to check its alignment with the lower layer, and then exported two separate pages for printing, by changing which layers were visible.

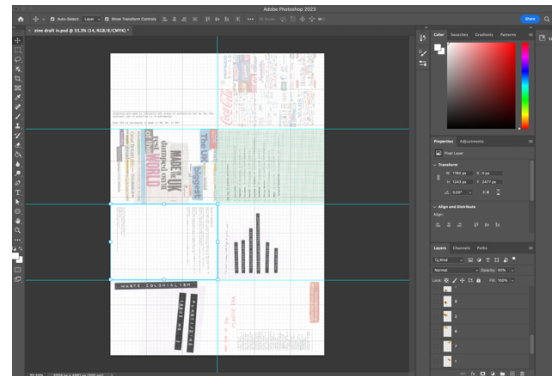
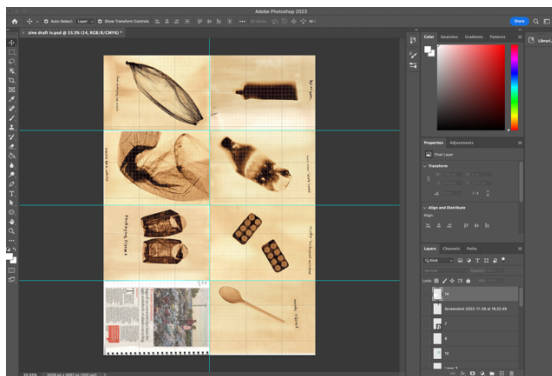
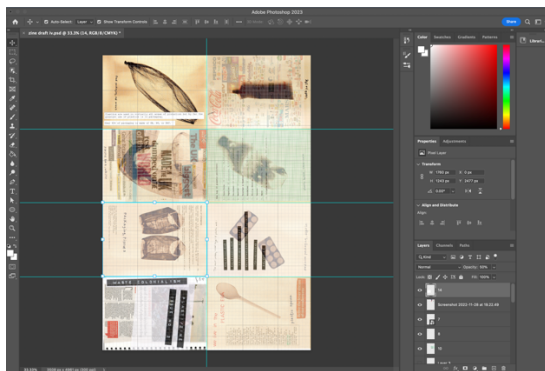


Fig 17: Screenshots of the two layers in the same photoshop file. Author's images.

Researching about single-use plastic waste I found that there is often a focus on the individual consumer. I did not want this to become a text of moral lecturing to the individual to change their habits, when the question of plastic waste is a

historical, structural and global problem rooted in the transnational structures of corporate capitalism. I came across an analysis of the top ten global polluters of plastic waste. This is powerful because all of the brands are instantly recognisable everyday consumer items, yet this emphasises transnational corporate power rather than the consuming individual.

I placed this list and the associated brand labels across the centre spread, inspired by the *Guttersnipe* zine collective who put a lot of work into the centre spread of their zines. They explained 'we usually have a middle page spread, we call it, which we work hard on, and we decide something that the youth in the area are bothered about' (BBC 1980).



Fig 18: Planning the contents for the second colour layer. Author's photo.

Taking inspiration from the cut and glue practice of punk zines I created one page presenting information about the UK's plastic waste production and export ('waste colonialism') using a collage of letters and words cut from newspapers.



Fig 19: Creating a newspaper collage about UK waste exports. Author's photos.

In the end, six pages plus front and back cover is not a lot and there are limits to what this could contain. I would have liked more diversity in sources and types of message conveyed. Nevertheless with the mix of text and modes of presentation, and with each set of information overlaid onto an image derived from the cyanotypes, I feel this reaches some way towards the intended outcome.

I made a second A5 version using the original photocopy method. This is basically the same zine in a different format, but the

layers in the riso zine had to appear as separate facing pages for the purpose of photocopying. I had to add two extra pages to reach the next multiple of four pages.

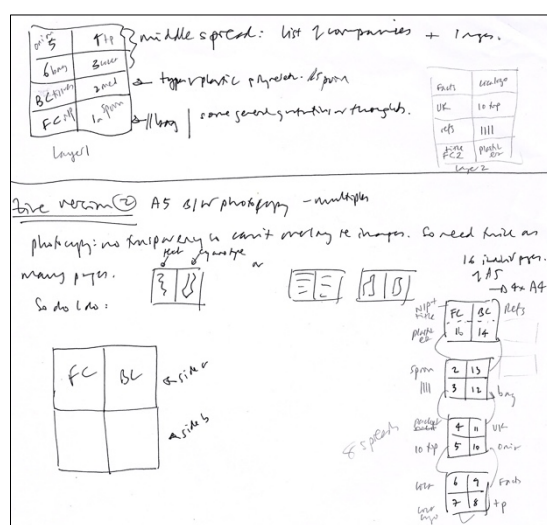
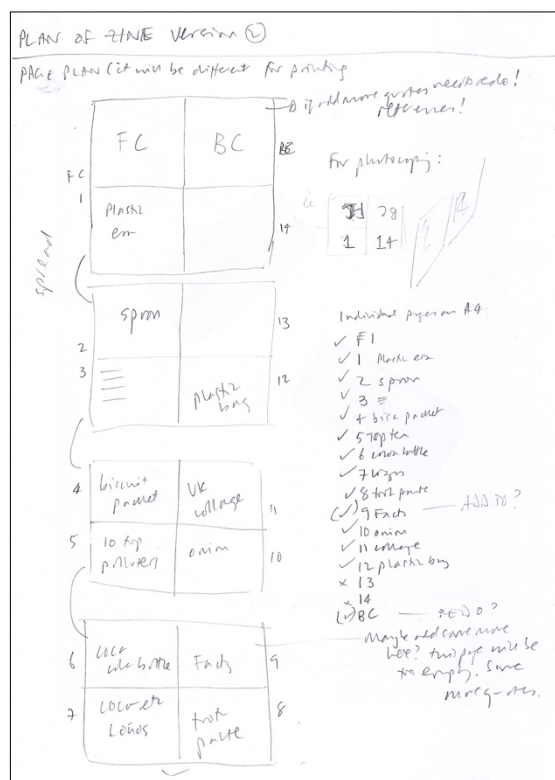


Fig 20: Planning version 2 for photocopying. Author's images.

I hope that the technical and broader skills and knowledge I gain will be helpful in future for making zines to publicise student-led exhibitions during my time at Swansea College of Art and beyond.

References

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History Workshop Journal, 79 (79): 76-106

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