

JUNE 2021
OONAGH E. FITZGERALD

SPRING ZINE-ING - TO THE CURB AND BEYOND

Art Making, Sharing, Performing &
Completing in the Neighbourhood
as we Emerge from the Pandemic

A SOCIAL ENGAGED ART PROJECT

ZINES

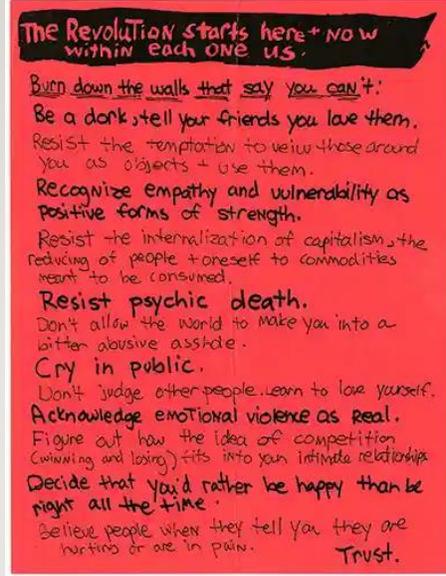
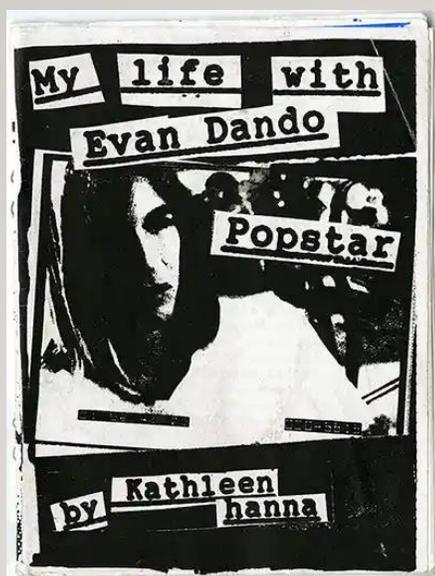
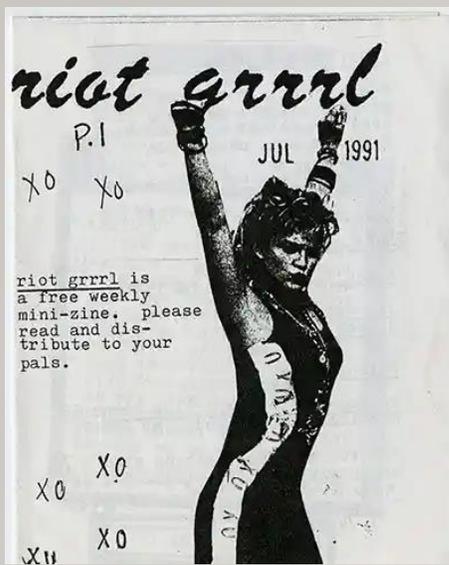
DIY self-published, independent, pamphlets, magazines, artbook, comics etc.

Recent examples: skater, graffiti, Black Lives Matter

Touchable, affordable, personal, raw



Artists: Walter Moodie, Emmanuel Okot, Ross Le Blanc, Mikaela Kautkzy, Venise 410B, Raphael Fitzgerald-Biernath

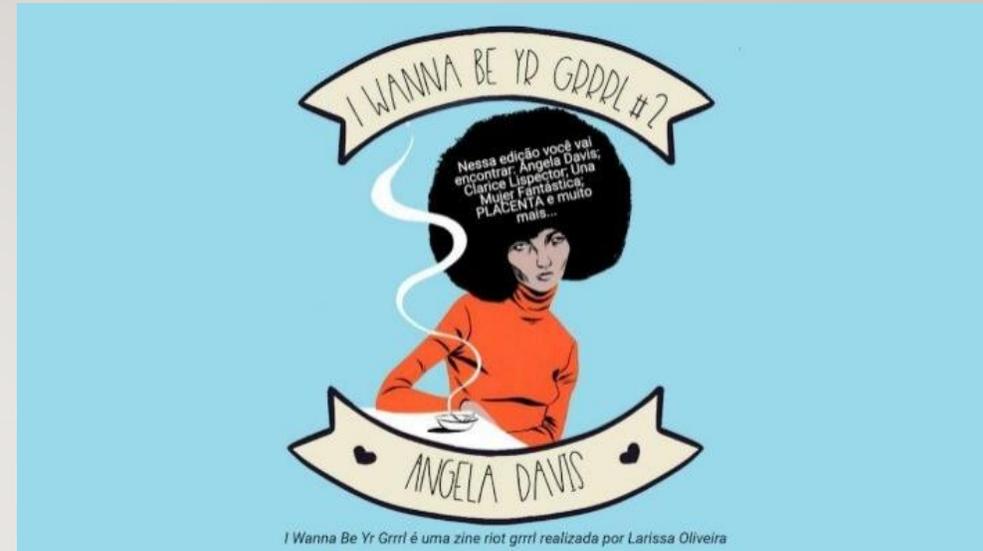
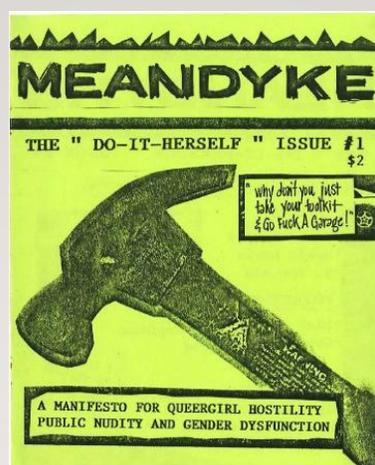
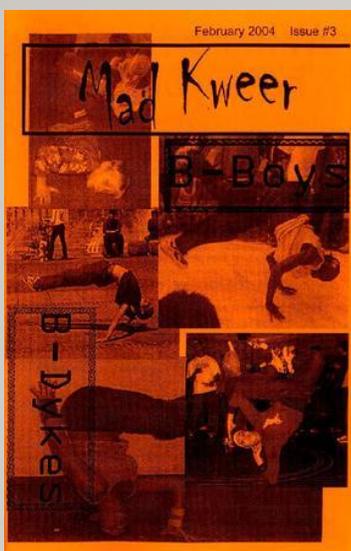


<https://www.theguardian.com/music/gallery/2013/jun/30/punk-music>

riot grrrl 1980'S - 90'S

“riot grrrl no. 1, Molly Neuman and Allison Wolfe, July 1991. All you need to start a counter-culture revolution is a few sheets of A4 paper, a typewriter, a photocopier, a Sharpie and some old magazines. Zines were fast to produce and easy to distribute.

My Life with Evan Dando, Popstar, Kathleen Hanna. In 1993, Bikini Kill's Kathleen Hanna created a visually raw mock-psychotic fanzine ... to explore violence, objectification, misogyny and the politics of creative success... inspired in part by rage and horror at the anti-feminist [Montreal] mass ... [murder]”.



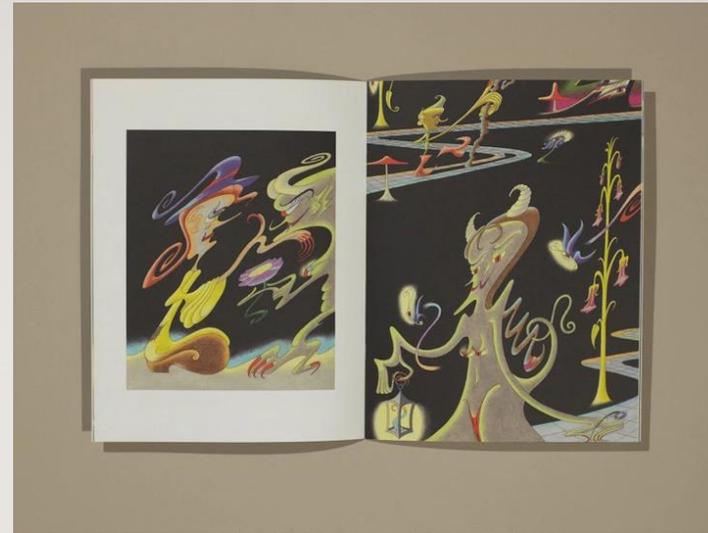
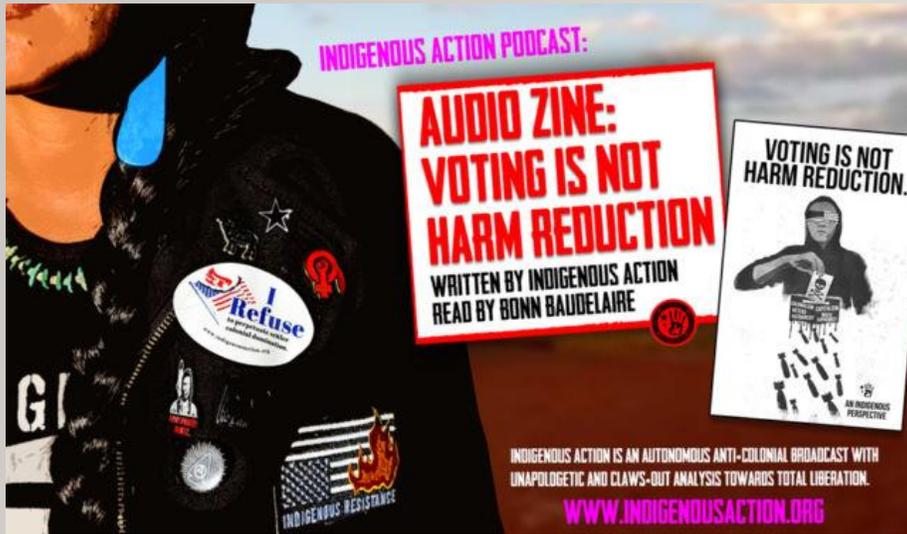
A VOICE FOR ANYONE & EVERYONE

“Slant no. 5, Mimi Thi Ngyuen, 1996.

riot grrrl was criticised for failing to be truly inclusive, or transcending its status as a predominantly white, middle-class movement. But there were riot grrrls of colour, who in classic punk style seized back the conversation on race. Zines such as Slant, Bamboo Girl, Evolution of a Race Riot and Chop Suey Spex refused the identity, as Ngyuen puts it, of ‘voiceless victims or objects-to-be-rescued of white punk anti-racist discourses’.”



“ALIEN SHE”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mp-VI9KUvBw>



VIRTUAL ZINES

Especially since COVID-19 there have been more internet enabled podcasts and visual zines e.g., <https://creativecloud.adobe.com/discover/article/read-these-10-unmissable-zines-to-get-through-2021>

<https://www.indigenousaction.org/podcast/audio-zine-voting-is-not-harm-reduction/>

WASTEPAPER

Cleaning out the basement of our house 'we' found hundreds of rolled up large wall calendars from 2009.

With much difficulty and the help of a large heavy carpet I unrolled and flattened some of them.

I folded them into zines, cutting a slit in the middle of the page and then reopening and flattening them to paint.

Themes emerged about recycling, reusing and repurposing paper, creating less waste and being imaginative with what we have.



FOLDING PAPER

- Origami

Senbazuru: 1000

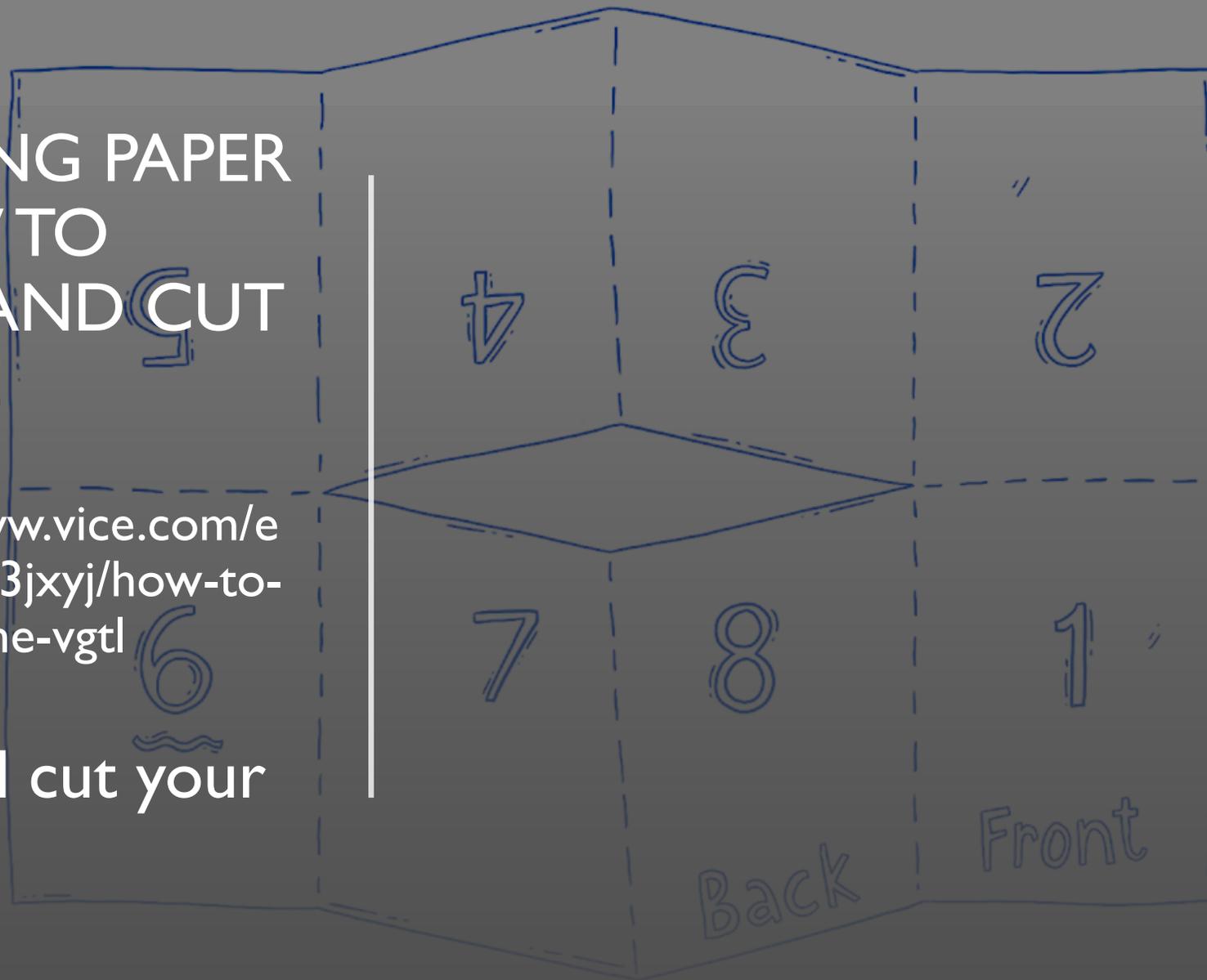
Cranes

<https://www.kyuhoshi.com/origami/>

FOLDING PAPER - HOW TO FOLD AND CUT A ZINE

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/d3jxyj/how-to-make-a-zine-vgtl>

fold and cut your
zine ...



A person with long blonde hair is lying on their side on a patterned rug. They are wearing a grey hoodie and dark pants. Their head is resting on the rug, and they appear to be looking down. The rug has a floral pattern with blue, green, and red flowers on a light background. The overall scene is dimly lit, with a dark overlay on the right side where the text is located.

MY COMMUNITY

My physical community since COVID has been mostly limited to my neighbourhood.

With a Bridgehead Coffee at one end of our block and a locally famous ice cream shop Merry Dairy at the other end, we see many strolling families, couples and groups of friends passing by our house on sunny days.

Putting out free objects and books that might be of interest to passersby has become a pandemic family hobby.

Last summer we distributed many books, toys and stuffed animals in this way, and cleared many cupboards and bookshelves.



Lying Down

WALKING AMID NEW GROWTH

As I took my daily walks in spring rain, snow, wind and sunshine, I saw green appearing, buds blossoming, birds returning and insects awakening.

I took photographs of bushes, trees, flowers etc. that would make good subjects for the background wallpaper painting I do on each zine.

These photos are reproduced dimly (with filter) in this presentation before the relevant painting.

I sketched and painted loose spring images of tree blossom, dandelion fields, rock and garden plants in water-soluble crayon and paint.



**Sunbeam Through
Crabapple Blossom**

PURPOSE OF PROJECT

This research creation project offers free, hand painted zines to passers-by in an Ottawa neighbourhood to learn whether there is interest in taking and completing them, and how participants use the zines.

It involves social engagement in preparing a gift for strangers and offering it to them to complete as they wish.

It is intended as a gesture of kindness and solidarity and socially distanced community engagement at a time when social interaction is still somewhat limited by pandemic constraints.

It provides an opportunity to participate safely and creatively in a celebratory spring community art project as we start to emerge from pandemic restrictions.



**Magnolia on a
Cloudy Day**

CEGWS 2021

MULTIPLE LIVES FOR OLD PAPER

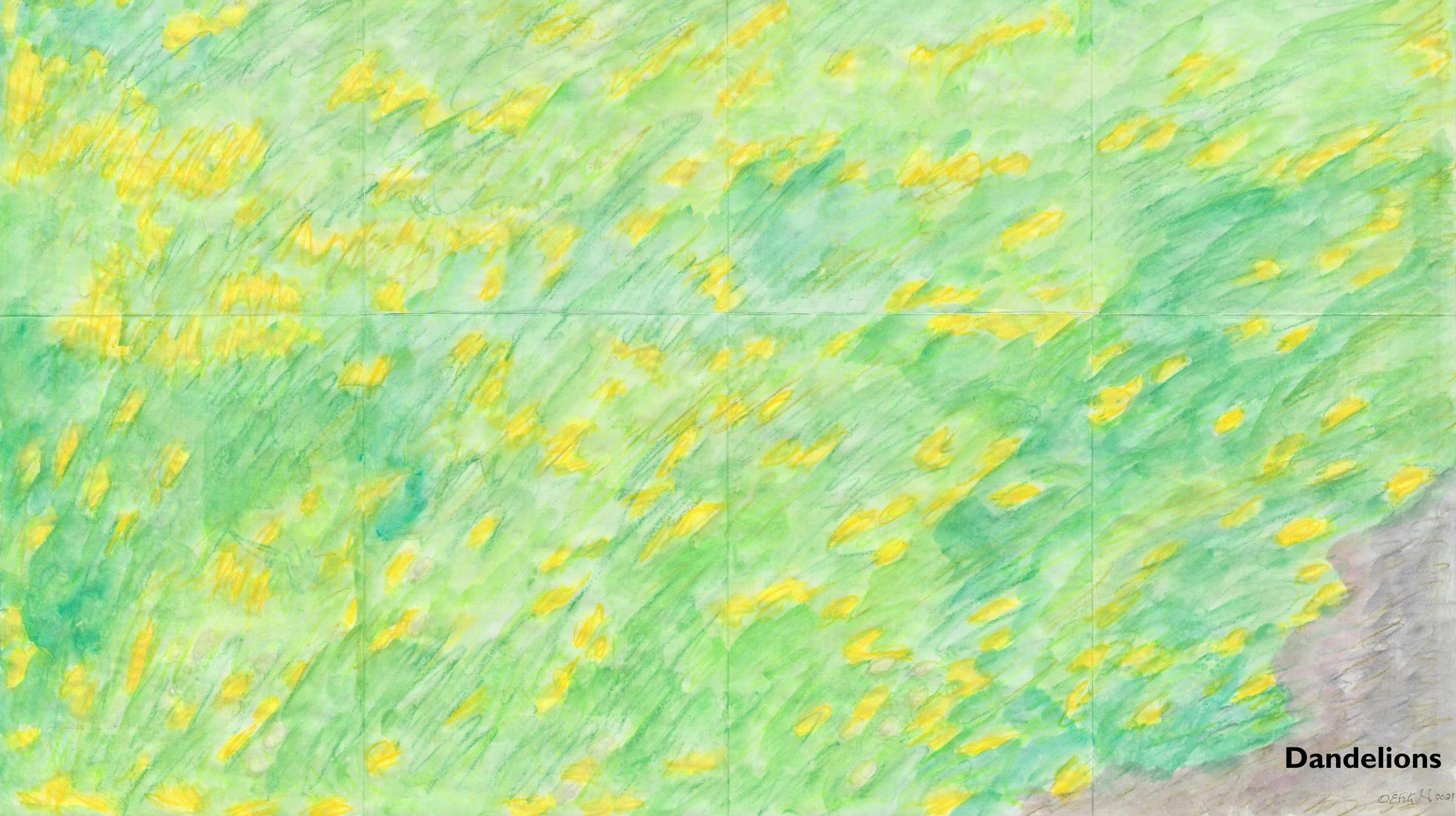
Transform the tightly rolled up wastepaper scroll into a flattened sheet.

Fold it meticulously into the format of a zine.

Sketch and paint rough nature scenes in unsaturated watery colours.

Put the scanned, printed, folded and cut wallpaper zines on the curb in a box with the invitation to take one and use it in some way.

Invite participants to let me know what they do with it.



Dandelions

OEFA H 2021

ETHICS APPROVAL

Time, resource and pandemic constraints make it difficult to get ethics approval or complete a more complex project, so the social engagement aspect of the project needed to be light.

The curbside offering is entirely voluntary with passers-by being free to ignore it or engage and take a zine.

If anyone writes to me, I will request their permission to use information they have shared, excluding any that would identify them, in my reporting on the project. My Concordia University Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form for this aspect of the project was approved.

I document the project with text, photographs and scans, taking notes of any interesting information and reflections gathered during the project.



**Apple Blossom
Over The Canal**

... BUT IS IT SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART?

<https://medium.com/kickstarter/ten-artists-on-what-social-practice-means-to-them-9cae0a0f1364>

<https://www.facebook.com/baronessvonsketchshow/videos/is-it-interactive/771264153747051/>

<https://www.on-curating.org/issue-25-reader/socially-engaged-art-in-the-1990s-and-beyond.html#.YFoylNKSmUk>



ON CURATION

Aesthetics: From social to fine art aesthetics. The initial image is aesthetically pleasing and invites unknown additions by unknown participants.

Role / function of the artist: From facilitator of co-creation to primary creative agent. I facilitate the project by setting it up and inviting passers-by to take and use\decorate a zine.

Origin of the artist: From the community or a stranger. I have lived here for many years and feel we share a common interest in our unpretentious, lovely, walkable neighbourhood.

Definition of the “work”: From process as “the work” to a final product as “the work.” My work is done when I release the painted zines into the neighbourhood and people take them. The work continues in whatever the recipients decide to do with the zines.

Direction of influence: From inward to serve the community or outward to reach others. The project is a gift from me to the community to encourage creativity and good feelings.



Woodpecker Tree

ON CURATION

...continued

Origination of the work: From generated within the community to generated by an outsider. This is generated by me in and helped by my physical and virtual communities and continues to evolve in the hands of any passer-by who takes a zine.

Place: From work that is inseparable from a place to work that is not geographically specific. The project is geographically specific to my street in Ottawa but could be conducted anywhere.

Issue: From single-issue to addressing multiple issues. The issues are simple and uncontroversial – recycling, solidarity, gratitude for community and creativity, nature and the delights of spring,

Duration: From a one-time project to a commitment over many years. This is a spring project to be set up on a sunny weekend but is repeatable.



Wisteria

OEK 2021



PHYSICAL CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The paper was very curly, difficult to flatten, fold and use for artmaking.

I needed a large work surface because the sheets of paper were so large. I enjoyed working quickly and boldly to cover such a large area.

The idea of making free art also meant I did not want to spend hours and hours on each work, but art sets its own pace. Each took 3-5 hours to complete.

The original water colour paintings were crunchy, textured, delicate and unstable from the crayon and paint used, making them less practical as a drawing or writing surface for the next artist to use, suggesting the idea of making copies.



Rhododendrons

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Presentation of photographic and painted images virtually in Powerpoint without compromising the work is tricky!

Taking photographs and scans was difficult because of variations in the light from dull and rainy to sunny days and the wrinkly state of the painted zines.

I learned a lot about light's effect on colour but ended up getting the scans done professionally.

This opened up the possibility of making multiple copies and repeating variations of the project.

To manage printing costs, I made 2 large copies (24 X 36 inches) and 10 smaller copies (11 X17 inches) of each of the 10 paintings.



**Creeping Flox
Over Rocks**

THE INVITATION

“Spring Zine-ing to the Curb and Beyond

*Art Making, Sharing and Completing in the
Neighbourhood as we emerge from the COVID-19
Pandemic*

Please take one of these free, hand painted zine booklets made with recycled paper, and make something with it e.g., make a greeting card, write your own zine, a private journal, a poem or a love letter, decorate with drawings, stickers or collage.

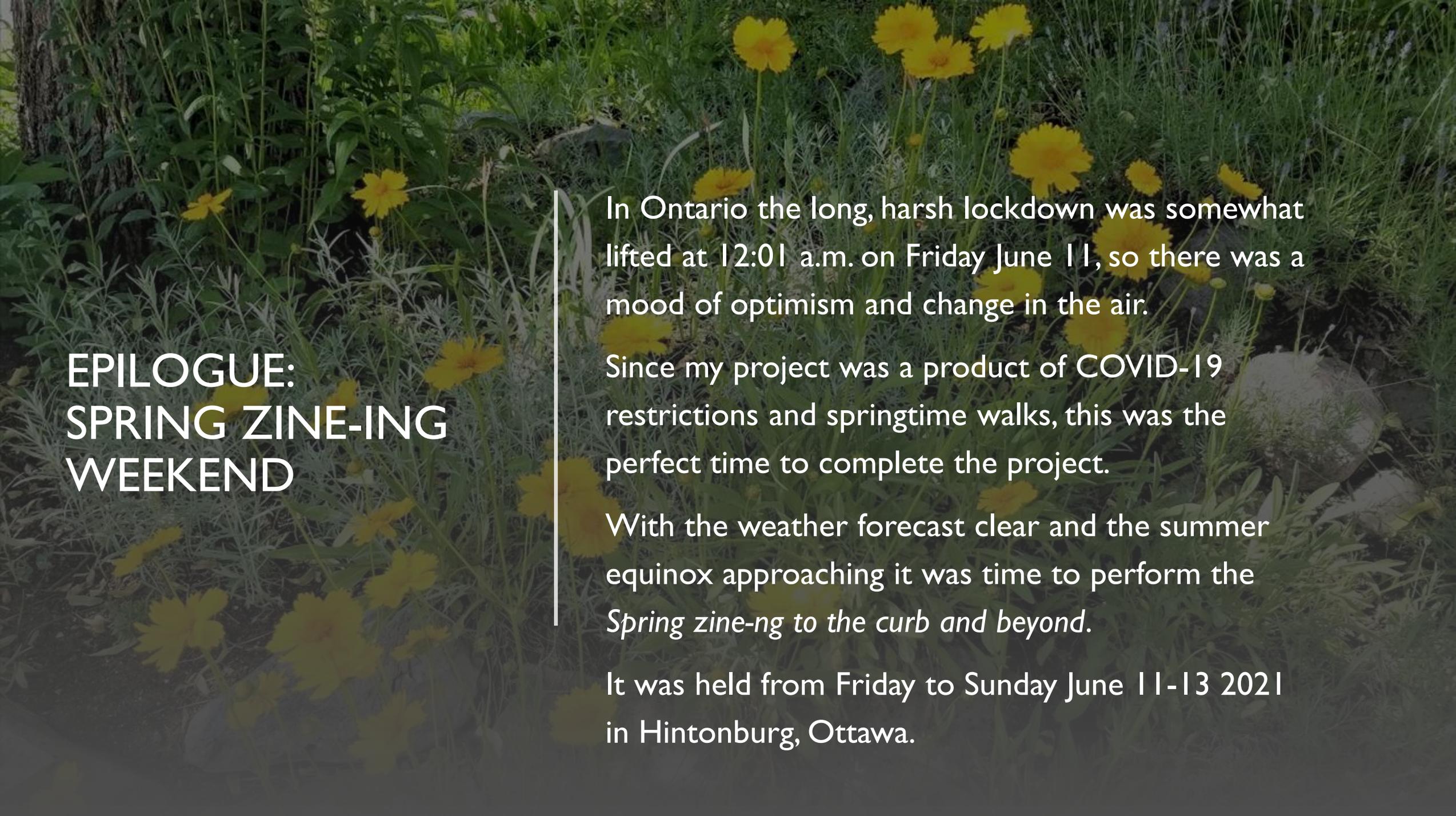
If you would like to tell me what you did with the zine, please write to me at ... with the heading **Finished Zine**.

Photographs of the finished zine are also welcome.”



Poppies

CECILE S 2021



EPILOGUE: SPRING ZINE-ING WEEKEND

In Ontario the long, harsh lockdown was somewhat lifted at 12:01 a.m. on Friday June 11, so there was a mood of optimism and change in the air.

Since my project was a product of COVID-19 restrictions and springtime walks, this was the perfect time to complete the project.

With the weather forecast clear and the summer equinox approaching it was time to perform the *Spring zine-ng to the curb and beyond*.

It was held from Friday to Sunday June 11-13 2021 in Hintonburg, Ottawa.

PREPARATIONS

2 sets of the large format (24 X 36 inches) printed copies arrived on Thursday and 10 sets of the smaller format (11 X 17 inches) copies arrived on Friday.

My husband and I went for our second COVID shots at 1:00 p.m. on Friday and when we returned home, I folded and cut one set of 10 large size zines and a set of the small size zines, taping inside each of them a slip with the words:

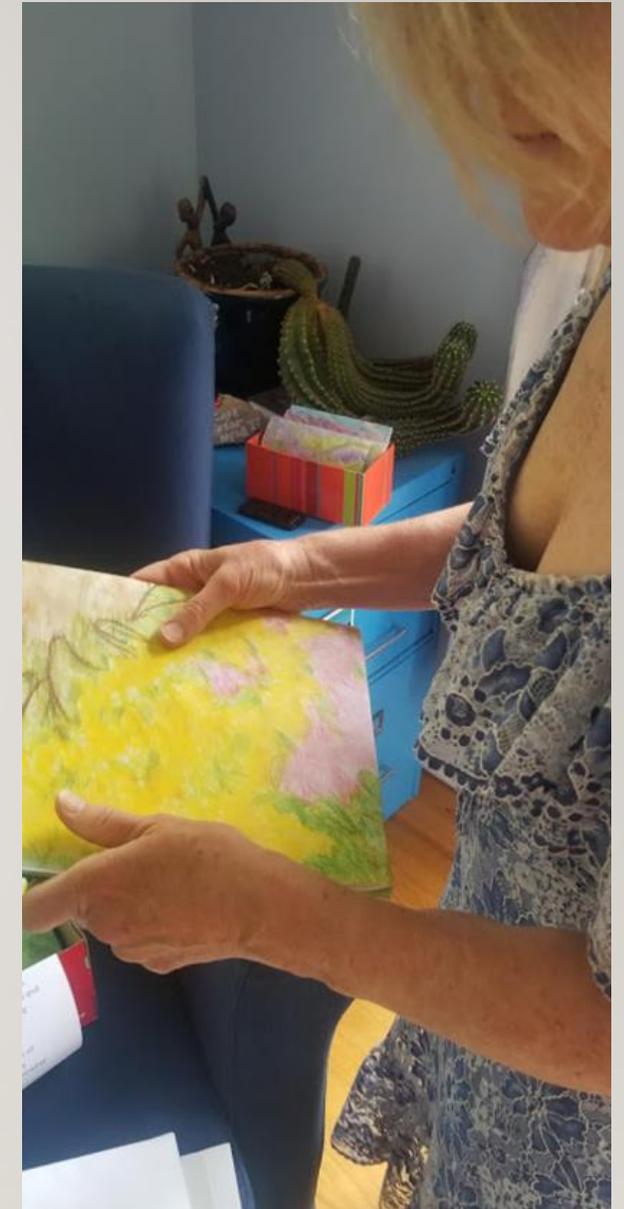
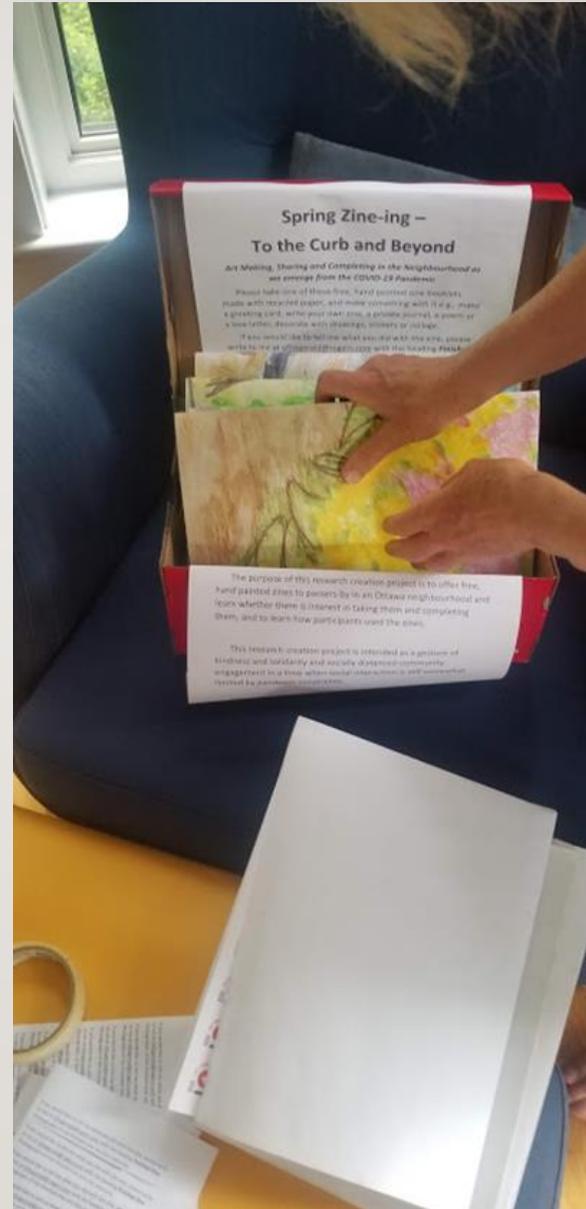
“If you would like to tell me what you did with the zine, please write to me at ... with the heading Finished Zine. Photographs of the finished zine are also welcome.”



SETTING UP

Our driveway and front garden slope down towards the road. The garden is entirely taken up by perennial flower beds dominated by a linden tree on one side and a blue spruce on the other side of a narrow central pathway which leads up to our painted wooden front porch.

My husband and older son helped me to set up the display at the bottom of the pathway, as well as a table closer to the house where I could continue folding and cutting the smaller zines and observe at a discrete distance.



ENGAGING WITH PASSERSBY

The Friday afternoon pedestrian traffic was steady. People noticed the display but seemed hesitant to break their stride to stop to read the display signs, so I tried to make it clear to them that the zines were free, greeting them as they passed and saying things like “please help yourself to a free hand-painted zine”.

Each day I added more obvious signage in bold letters to make it easier for passersby to grasp the idea quickly and feel comfortable engaging with the display (on Saturday, I added “HAND-PAINTED ZINES Please take one!” and on Sunday, “Last Day For the Spring-Zine Giveaway”).



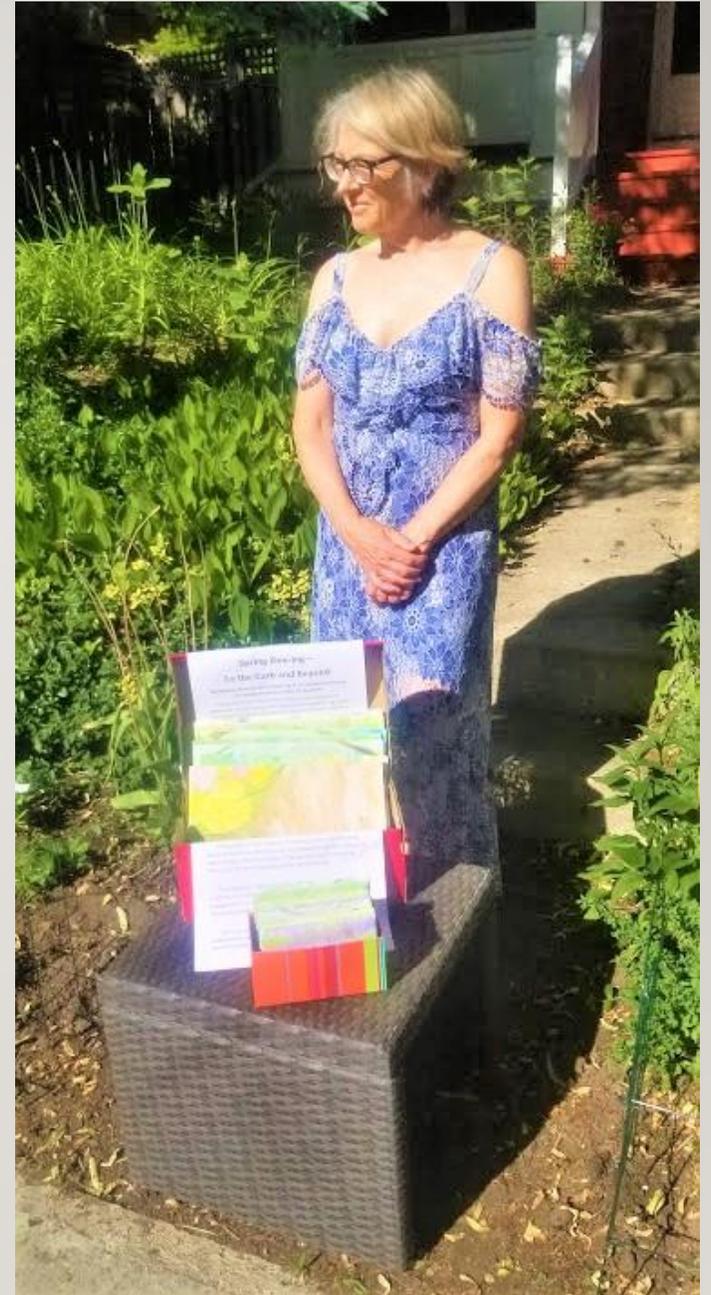
EXPLAINING THE PROJECT

When passersby stopped, I came down the steps to explain what a zine was, how I had made them from old calendars found in the basement, how I painted them with pale spring blossom scenes, and how they were cut and folded into zines with the idea that others could transform them into something else.

I suggested how they might decorate or use the zines and invited them to take either a large or small format one, depending on how ambitious they felt about finishing the zine with their own work.

I also explained it was a socially engaged art project designed to show gratitude and solidarity towards my neighbourhood and enable socially distanced creative collaboration as we emerge from the pandemic restrictions.

I mentioned that I had included my email on a slip of paper inside each zine and would like to know how they had completed the zines but emphasized there was no obligation to contact me. If they were unaccompanied minors, I asked them to discuss that with their parents.



UNEXPECTED LEVELS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Passersby were polite and friendly. Some declined to take a zine, some said they would pick one up on their return from shopping. Some were very enthusiastic, delighting in the images and the idea of a free unfinished zine giveaway, and eager to participate in a socially-engaged art project.

Each day, the display was left out for 4-5 hours from about 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. I had not expected to have so much actual social engagement (how ironic!) and found it exhausting to talk to so many people after the months of social isolation.

What with my reaction to the second vaccine and the sudden increase in social interaction, my mind was buzzing all night long with thoughts about the project. I concluded that the art giveaway was quite an emotionally challenging experience but that I should embrace my discomfort and ignore my increasing sleep deprivation.



VIRTUAL & REAL PARTICIPATION

The age range of participants was from 4 years old to about 74 years of age. Women and girls predominated but there were several notably enthusiastic men, mostly but not entirely younger men.

I posted on Twitter, which funnily led a neighbour to come over to explain how we were connected through my past employment.

One participant told me she is involved in neighbourhood initiatives and offered to post my project on Facebook, so I sent her a picture of the display by text since I am not on that platform.

Kids in the neighbourhood found out from each other and wanted zines. Parents came by to check out the project.



SPRING ZINE-ING WEEKEND ENDS

My husband who worked in sales all his life encouraged me to be more outgoing. After engaging with passersby for a few hours on Saturday, I abandoned my cheery but weary sales pitch to take a long late afternoon walk.

On my return I found him standing on the sidewalk having a jolly time greeting passersby, engaging them in conversation and inviting them to take away a zine. He drew me into these conversations to explain the project in more detail.

This was a good way to share both the pleasure and effort of social engagement, so we repeated this division of labour on Sunday evening.

Over the 3 days, I cut and folded 20 large format and 60 small format zines, and we gave away 19 large and 51 small zines, for a total of 70 giveaways.

Subsequently we decorated 3 zines for a close relative's birthday, and she was overwhelmed by the detailed messages of love and appreciation. I have sent zines by mail to some of my artistic friends for them to finish.

A painting of a tree with green leaves and a blue body of water at the bottom. The tree's branches are dark brown and extend across the top and right sides of the frame. The leaves are various shades of green, some appearing as soft, blended patches and others as more defined shapes. At the bottom, there is a horizontal band of blue, representing water, with some darker, textured strokes. The overall style is painterly and somewhat abstract.

If you would like to participate
in this socially-engaged art
project by finishing one of
these zines, please send your
mailing address to
principal@oonaghfitzgerald.ca

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2020 film Moxie, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf34qI1hjKU&ab_channel=Netflix

<https://creativecloud.adobe.com/discover/article/read-these-10-unmissable-zines-to-get-through-2021>