



# Creating Zines

## in Preservice Art Teacher Education

Preservice art teachers often reflect about their classroom observations and art teaching experiences through papers, journaling, and blogging. Zines, or "Do It Yourself" (DIY)<sup>1</sup> magazines offer preservice teachers a unique and unconventional format to reflect on issues relevant to teaching art. This article discusses the definition of zines, their history and relevance for art education, and the process and outcomes of a zine assignment in a sophomore-level university art education course. Zine pages created within this semester-long course will be discussed in terms of content, images, and themes relative to levels of reflective thinking. Using LaBoskey's (1994) conceptual framework, and Danielson's (1996) four domains of teaching (instruction, assessment, classroom environment and professional responsibilities) I will examine the students' projects. In addition, I will briefly discuss how zine production can support an Integral [art] Education (Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007).

### Definitions

Zines are self-published magazines that combine images, text, writing, photography, and/or poetry. Many zine makers create works that include hand-drawn and/or printed images with handwritten text, collages, photographs, and/or hand-printed covers and pages. Stylistically, zine drawings range from manga-style and action figures to simple black line drawings.

Zines have been described as "cut-and-paste, sorry this is late, self-published magazines reproduced at Kinko's or on the sly at work and distributed through mail order and word of mouth" (Rowe, n.d). Subjects of zines may include: (1) art zines that utilize special papers or prints, such as woodcuts; (2) compilation zines (themed or collaborative zines); (3) personal zines about relationships or reactions to everyday life; and (4) political zines that explore subjects of labor, politics, gender, race, and class (Freedman, 2008; Richardson, 1996; Williamson, 2002). Zines are often acquired cheaply, and may be viewed/distributed through posts to blogs, social networking, and/or photography sites.

### History

Zines have been around since the 1970s, with the self-publication of punk zines about the music scene. The zine culture evolved through the 1990s, and continues with both paper and electronic, or e-zines. Although zines typically are created by teenagers and young adults in their 20s, adults ages 30 and over are creating zines on a variety of subjects in a variety of formats. Many adolescents are discovering the production of zines as a way to author texts that allow them to confront issues relevant to their lives. Furthermore, the range of zine readership is broad, far reaching, and eclectic, including: "college students, teachers, cartoonists, comedians, activists, organic farmers...award winning writers, and many others" (Brent & Biel, 2008, pp.1-2).

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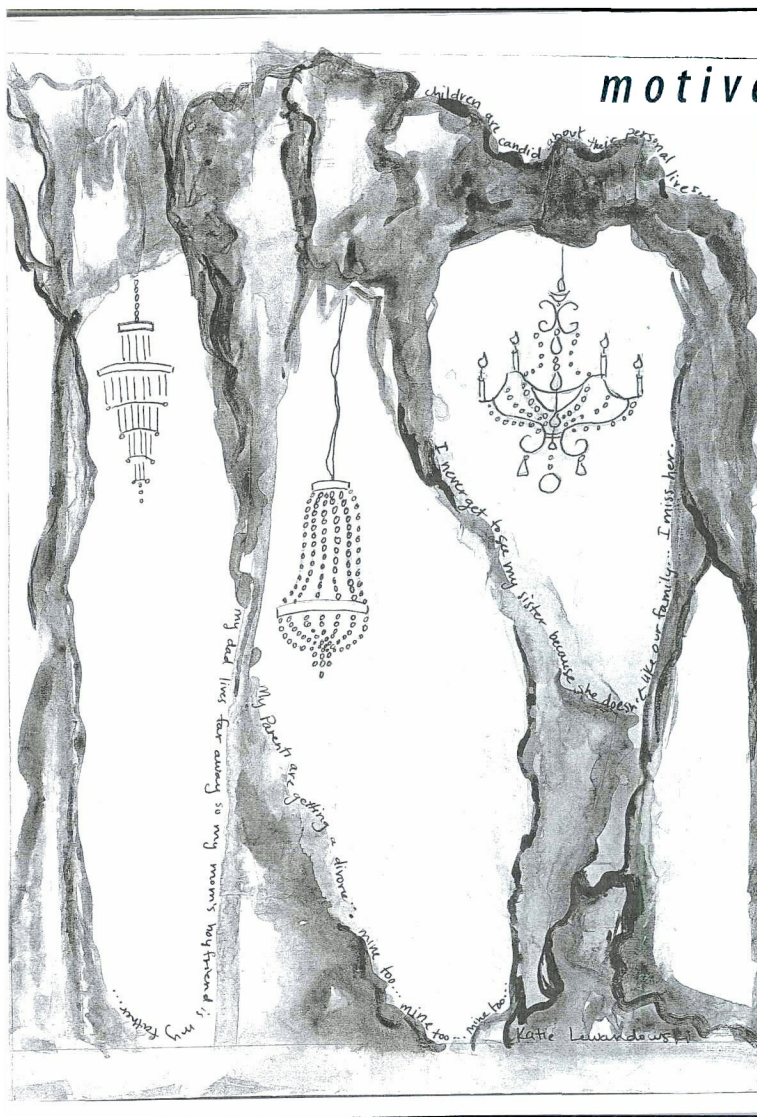


Figure 1.  
Katie Lewandowski.  
Zine page, 8.5 x 11 in.  
Ink on paper.

## Relevance to the Field of Art Education

Zines have recently been the subject of scholarship that includes art education (Blandy & Congdon, 2003; Duncombe, 1997; Eisenhauer, 2006; Stoneman, 2001; Starr, 1999; Williamson, 2002). The interest in zines does not appear to be fading. There are websites devoted to the distribution of zines worldwide, libraries across the world have established zine collections and archives, and zine fests occur throughout the world each year.

In the context of preservice art education zines can have an important role. First, zines can provide a format for the production of images and text that embrace storytelling, self-expression, teacher identity construction, and collaboration. Second, there is a paucity of zines about teaching art from the perspective of the preservice art teacher, or a novice teacher. The zine "On Subbing: The First Four Years" by Dave Roche (2008) is a rare example that chronicles experiences of a substitute teacher in special education classes in a large urban school district. Finally, zine production embraces teacher reflection. Reflection is a strong component of art teacher education programs and it is accomplished in a variety of ways throughout a teacher candidate's coursework and practicum experiences (Crowe, 2003; Galbraith, 1995; Klein, 2003; Roland, 1995; Grauer & Sandell, 2000). Most art teacher candidates typically engage in written and oral reflection through writing, group discussion, and case study analysis. Some art educators advocate visual journaling as a method for reflection (Grauer & Sandell, 2000). Reflection in teacher education typically focuses on the analysis of teaching performance relative to state standards, program/course-objectives and/or measurement tools, and requires logical reasoning and analytical skills. Zines allow preservice teachers to think about understanding in new ways, and extend the notion of visual journaling as *contemplative inquiry*, an "epistemology based not on data, information, and the separation of subject and object, but on knowledge, wisdom, and insight about the interconnectedness of all things" (Haynes, n.d., p. 5). Zine formats allow preservice art teachers to examine and visualize assumptions, beliefs, and connections between theory and practice utilizing emotional, affective, aesthetic, and cognitive domains that are deemed important by many holistic educators (Miller, Karsten, Denton, Orr, & Kates, 2005).

## Assignment

During the fall of 2008, 15 students (13 females/2 males) in an undergraduate sophomore level preservice art education course engaged with a zine assignment for which they received a list of resources. The course combined off-campus observation of K-12 art classrooms and on-campus class sessions with a focus on reflection about those experiences. Students' zines served as a final reflection about their observation and learning experiences.

During the on-campus class sessions, I discussed the concept of zines with the class, and distributed examples from my collection of zines to provide examples of numerous formats, themes, and approaches. Issues regarding purpose, content, style, and formatting of zines were discussed. The assignment was to create a one-page (8.5 x 11 in.) zine page that would communicate one important, eye-opening, puzzling, disturbing, or humorous event/incident observed in K-12 art classrooms over the course of a semester.

The assignment's broad parameters intended to facilitate reflection through multiple ways of knowing and the multiple lenses identified by Ken Wilber's *Integral Theory* (Wilber, 2006). These lenses include experience, behaviors, and engagement with cultures and systems. Wilber's *Integral Theory* has been applied to a concept of Integral Education<sup>2</sup> (Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007) that recognizes the individual/subjective experience as important in understanding one's relationship to cultures and systems. The zine assignment allowed for reflection on personal experience, as well as the culture of art classrooms through methods of contemplative inquiry (Haynes, n.d.), perspective-taking, and critical examination as advocated by integral educators (Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007). The focus on identifying an "important," "eye-opening," "puzzling," "disturbing," or "humorous" classroom incident allowed for awareness of social, emotional/affective, ethical, moral dimensions of classroom life that are deemed critical in teaching and learning (Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007; Miller, 2000).

The Web-enhanced course included weekly online course discussions about issues relating to teaching art. From these discussions, students gathered ideas for their zine drawings. It was explained that all the pages would be combined into a collaborative zine to be compiled and distributed to each student at the end of the semester. Zine pages would also be shared and discussed when the students returned to campus for the final class of the semester.

## Issues and Themes

It was anticipated that students' responses might correlate with Danielson's (1996) framework and domains for teaching. The four domains for teaching are used in the school of education to guide preservice teacher reflection and assess teaching practices.

Upon review of the zine pages, the following themes emerged, correlating to the four domains. One student addressed special needs students. Two students addressed classroom management. Six students addressed student behaviors and interactions between students and teachers. Six students addressed pedagogical issues, such as grading, content, and student motivation. Not surprisingly, topics concerning Domain IV, or teacher professional responsibilities were not addressed, as students' attention was focused on classroom life.

A majority of responses focused on teacher/student interactions. There are several examples that exemplify contemplative inquiry and preservice teachers' abilities to observe, and engage in a "deep listening and pondering" (Haynes, n.d. p. 2) in ways that resulted in metaphorical thinking, insights, or revelations about teaching. One student's page addressed the importance of active listening and awareness of being present for students who have a story to tell. This is illustrated in the example in Figure 1 (see p. 41). Another student summarized his experience with a metaphor about teaching in that "teaching art is an opening...". This was combined with an image of a heart and suggests that teaching requires seeing and feeling.



Another observation of teacher/student interactions included that art teachers may assume a number of roles, such as teacher and counselor, with the assumption that a teacher should embody understanding and compassion. Surprising and/or humorous classroom events were also noted, such as a student losing a tooth or saying something unexpected. Recognition of these moments by preservice teachers suggests that their attention to the nuances of classroom life and the roles of teachers extends beyond the expectations noted in the domains and standards. Their awareness of these encounters can be known only through "a wandering attention back to the moment," and a "contemplative pedagogy [that] is about

waking up and being present" (Haynes, n.d., p.4). Six of the zine pages demonstrated evidence of a reflective way of knowing associated with contemplative pedagogy.

A majority of responses also focused on pedagogical issues such as content, grading/assessment, and student motivation. One student's zine page expressed her realization that if "a student is doing F work, it is OK to give them an F. If they don't care, you can't make them." Similarly, another student observed that students were uncomfortable with having to think critically. In her zine page (Figure 2), she portrays a student asking, "Why is she asking us this? Just tell me what to think! Will this be on the test?"

## pedagogy



Figure 2. Tracy Considine. Zine page. 8.5x11 in. Ink and collage on paper.

The creation of zines about teaching art is one valid and unique way for art education students/classes to reflect visually and imaginatively on current and future practice as art educators.

One art education student learned that while he was eager to teach, secondary level students were not always eager to learn, and lacked motivation. His computer-generated zine page (Figure 3) suggests that he realized not all students in art class want to be there. This realization was mirrored in three other art education students' zine pages with comments such as, students are "unfocused, distracted, and forced to be there," and in images of a teacher offering treats to her students for finishing the art project.

The issue of student motivation was discussed with students relative to future curriculum planning, and making curriculum relevant and connected to students' grade levels and interests. In addition, student diversity, varying levels of student interest and ability, and student resistance to art class were also discussed. In this sense, the zine pages became a mechanism to critically examine beliefs, assumptions, and concerns about art teaching.

## *student/teacher interactions*

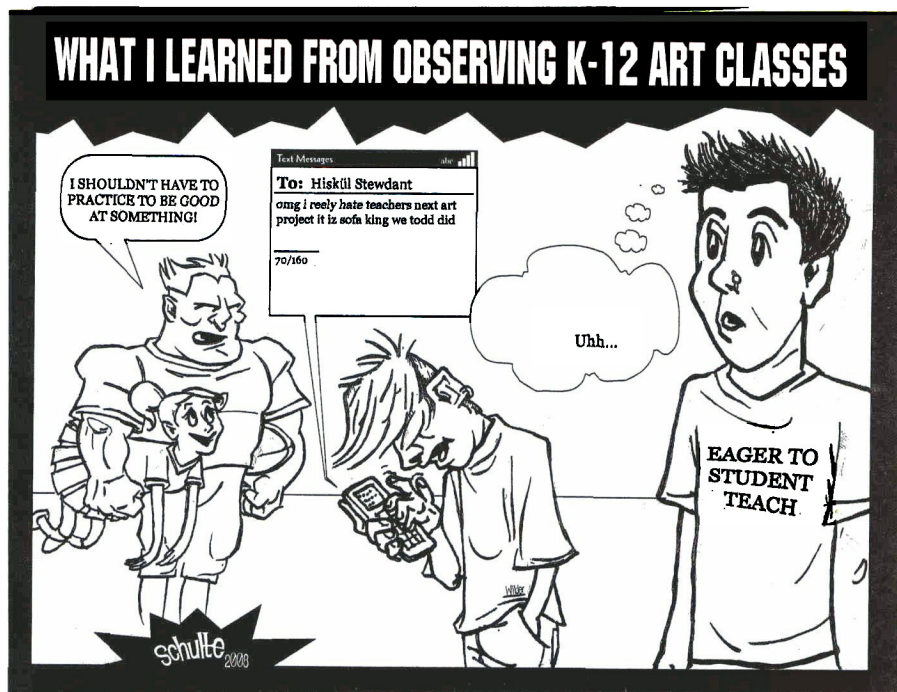


Figure 3. Joe Schulte. Zine Page. 8.5x11 in. Computer-generated image.

## Reflective Thinking

Art education students' reflections offer a glimpse into their experiences observing in K-12 art classrooms, including what they noticed as important, and what kinds of challenges or impediments they believe they may face in the future. The issues that preservice teachers raised in their zine pages were analyzed in terms of the levels of reflectivity defined by LaBoskey (1994). The two levels include *common sense thinking* (unreflective thinking) and *alert novice* (reflective thinking). *Common sense thinking* according to LaBoskey includes: attention to self and/or subject matter, short-term views, reliance on personal experiences, the teacher as transmitter, lack of awareness of the need to learn, and making broad generalizations. Characteristics of alert novices, or *reflective thinkers* according to LaBoskey include: attention to the needs of students, long-term views, differentiation of teacher and learner roles, recognizing teachers as facilitators, an openness to learning, having tentative conclusions, strategic and imaginative thinking, and reasoning grounded in knowledge of self, children, and subject matter (LaBoskey, 1994, p. 29).

The zine pages represent both kinds of thinking (common sense and alert novice). *Common sense thinking* is represented by the students' attention to subject matter (art), pedagogy, and the role of teacher as a transmitter of information. For example, in the zine pages, the art teacher is represented in the roles of disciplinarian, evaluator, and transmitter of knowledge in 8 out of 15 zine pages. Examples of *alert novice thinking* in the zine pages are represented with attention paid to K-12 students' needs and concerns evidenced in the theme of student/teacher interactions and noted in 6 out of 15 zine pages. In 6 out of 15 zine pages, K-12 students are depicted as unmotivated.

It is apparent from these zine pages that at the sophomore level, art education students appear to be at various stages on the continuum between what is considered common sense (unreflective) and reflective (an alert novice). It is also possible that

preservice art teachers may exhibit both common sense and novice thinking at the same time; for example, they might demonstrate novice thinking in the domains of planning and preparation, while having common sense thinking in the domain of professional responsibilities. It is anticipated that as preservice art teachers advance through their program, they will have continued critical reading engagements with current art education literature, critically examine art education theoretical and pedagogical models, and have increased observation and teaching experiences. Combined theory and practical experiences that allow for critical reflection and contemplative inquiry are both important for developing holistic art teachers who can be responsive and relevant.

## Conclusion

Upon returning from their observation experiences, students shared and discussed their zine pages in class, and the issues they observed as important. They appreciated the opportunity to reflect in a visual format and enjoyed getting a zine that included their peers' zine pages.

Through zine production, preservice art teachers can explore issues, insights, and questions relative to teacher identity, roles and expectations, teaching and learning, students, and classroom and school culture. The creation of zines about teaching art is one valid and unique way for art education students/classes to reflect visually and imaginatively on current and future practice as art educators. Digital formats also present a plethora of opportunities for preservice art educators to collaborate on zines and share them electronically in ways that can enhance their understanding of self and their practices.

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- Zine wiki: <http://zinewiki.com>

## LIST OF E-ZINES

<http://www.e-zine-list.com/>

## COMPREHENSIVE SITE ON ZINES

[www.zinebook.com](http://www.zinebook.com)

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Do It Yourself" or DIY (ca. 1980s to present) refers to a movement/response to consumer culture that emphasizes making/creating/recycling vs. purchasing. The term also describes those who self-publish or produce zines, music, crafts, and other independent works.

<sup>2</sup> Integral Theory is a broad model developed by Ken Wilber for understanding and developing human consciousness. It is used as a model for personal growth and professional development and has been widely adopted by K-20 holistic educators/practitioners in many disciplines.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

All zine pages from art education students used with student permission.



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Nominations are requested for the *Art Education* Editorial Review Board to replace current members who will soon complete their terms of service. Nominees should be active art educators who are willing to review approximately 10-12 manuscripts per year. The Editorial Board and Review Panel should consist of "NAEA members representing each division and region of the association."

Following NAEA policy, each member would be willing to serve a 3-year term beginning at the 2010 NAEA convention in Baltimore. Nominees should be familiar with current trends and issues in art education and should be able to make positive, concrete suggestions the editor can use to help writers strengthen their submissions to the journal. Willingness to evaluate and return manuscripts in a timely manner is vital.

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A 300-word proposal, preliminary chapter title, short bio, and contact information should be submitted electronically to [olga@sc.edu](mailto:olga@sc.edu) or [mbae@illinois.edu](mailto:mbae@illinois.edu) by June 30, 2010. Proposal acceptance notification will be sent by August 31, 2010.

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