Making as unmaking

Queer DIY (Do It Yourself) graphic practices in the digital age

Evolene Lacaze, 2025.

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Abstract

EN

"Queerness can be located in the scrappy, ad hoc, and homemade designs that were directly related to the urgency of protest, activism and survival."[1]

In my research, I examine DIY graphic practices and their relationship to digital technologies, focusing on the queer community as a case study. My goal is to analyze how these methods have shaped and continue to shape queer emancipation, while considering how digital environments challenge these practices. To do so, I focus on tool reappropriation through design, particularly within self-publishing practices reinventing print, as well as critical design approaches emerging from the creative tinkering of digital technologies. I also explore how fanzine culture and online visibility foster individual liberation, while highlighting the inherent limitations of both DIY and digital tools. By progressing from "Do It Yourself" to "Do It Together", I conclude with showing the potential of collective graphic design practices to strengthen community bonds, as well as the role of digital archives in sustaining forms of memory that become not only personal, but collectively shared.

FR

« La queerness se manifeste souvent dans des designs bricolés, artisanaux et improvisés, nés de l'urgence des luttes, de l'activisme et de la survie. »[1]

Dans ma recherche, j'étudie les pratiques graphiques DIY et leur relation avec les technologies numériques, en prenant comme étude de cas la communauté queer. Mon objectif est d'analyser comment ces méthodes ont façonné — et continuent de façonner — une émancipation queer, tout en considérant la manière dont les environnements numériques remettent en question ces pratiques. Pour ce faire, je m'intéresse à la réappropriation des outils par le design, notamment à travers des pratiques d'auto-édition réinventant l'imprimé, ainsi qu'aux approches de design critique émergeant du détournement créatif des technologies numériques. J'explore également comment la culture des fanzines et la visibilité en ligne favorisent une libération individuelle, tout en mettant en lumière les limites intrinsèques aux outils DIY et au numérique. Enfin, en passant du "Do It Yourself" au "Do It Together", je montre le potentiel des pratiques collectives de design pour renforcer les liens communautaires, ainsi que le rôle des archives numériques dans la préservation de formes de mémoire qui deviennent non seulement personnelles, mais collectivement partagées.

[1] Paul Soulellis, *What is queer typography ?*, « Type Electives : Provoking Type », March 19, 2024.

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For a long time, queer* existences were criminalized and then pathologized, subject to systemic institutional repression[1]. While struggles have led to legal progress, the rights of queer individuals remain precarious and unevenly guaranteed today[2].

It is within these contexts of exclusion that the term "queer" originally a pejorative meaning "strange" was reclaimed in the 1980s. According to activist bell hooks and her concept of "queer-pas-gay"[3] it designates a political stance rather than a sexual orientation or gender identity. Feminist philosopher Judith Butler defines it as a deconstruction of binary categories and a challenge to the systems of power that produce them[4].

Unable to fully represent themselves, queer individuals turned to alternative forms of expression, such as DIY* ("Do It Yourself") practices. Originating from the Anglo-Saxon punk culture of the 1970s, DIY is founded on "the rejection of the idea that problems are solved by paying someone else to provide a solution"[5]. It asserts itself as both a personal and collective practice, aiming to be free: creating one's own tools, narratives, and spaces without relying on institutions, corporations, or media.

Initially outside established networks, DIY practices expanded into the digital realm in the 2010s, with the internet becoming the new global network. This shift transformed them: the digital is not merely limited to computer tools[6] but constitutes a "total social and cultural fact"[7] encompassing practices, representations, and transformations induced by the use of the web and technologies. It directly influences DIY practices.

To what extent do digital challenges redefine the capacity of DIY graphic practices to serve as tools of emancipation*?

This study will first analyze how DIY practices enable the reappropriation of tools and how this reappropriation transforms the individual, then the collective, while questioning the role of the digital in these practices.

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* Appendices : Glossary.

[1] Human Dignity Trust, *A History of LGBT Criminalisation*, 2025. https://www.humandignitytrust.org/lgbt-the-law/a-history-of-criminalisation/

[2] ILGA World, Laws on Us : Global LGBTI Human Rights Report 2024, (Bruxelles : ILGA World, 2024). https://ilga.org/news/laws-on-us-2024-lgbti-human-rights

[3] bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman ? Black Women and Feminism* (Boston : South End Press, 1981).

[4] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York : Routledge, 1990).

[5] David Gauntlett, *Making is Connecting : The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0* (Cambridge : Polity Press, 2011), p. 27.

[6] Milad Doueihi, *Pour un humanisme numérique* (Paris : Seuil, 2011).

[7] Matthieu Serreau et Pascal Plantard, *Le numérique comme fait social total : évolution des pratiques numériques éducatives pendant les confinements*, Terminal, 2024.

Reclaiming tools through design

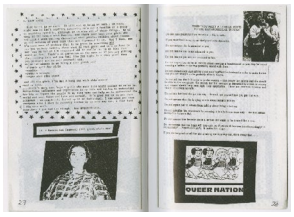
"The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house"[8]

[8] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider : Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY : Crossing Press, 1984), p. 110.

According to Gilbert Simondon, reclaiming technology allows us to reestablish an active and creative relationship with tools. Technical objects should no longer be seen as instruments we passively endure but as "technical beings"[9] imbued with meaning and inventive potential[10].

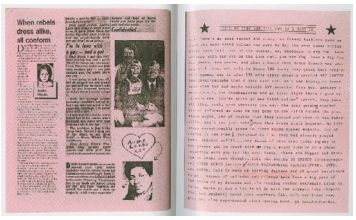
Reinventing print through self-publishing

Emerging in the United States in 1990 as a reaction to male dominance in punk and cultural circles, the feminist Riot Grrrl movement reclaimed printed media to advocate for more inclusive access to artistic production. By repurposing paper and ink to create zines*, flyers, and reclaiming the duplicator as a tool of expression, Riot Grrrls reintroduced creativity and invention into technical objects. Their self-published ephemera were no longer mere objects but cultural and relational devices, enabling communication outside institutions deemed ineffective and co-opted. By including both manifestos and personal narratives, Riot Grrrls made the personal political. They disseminated queer reflections as early as 1990[img1] and used a feminine graphic language to reclaim it[img2], marking a shift from a feminism focused on legal emancipation(second wave) to the liberation of speech and body(third wave).



[img1]

Molly Neuman & Allison Wolfe,
Girl Germs, no.3, 1992.



[img2]

Tammy Rae Carland,
I <3 Amy Carter, no.1, 1992.

Subverting the digital through critical design

Since the 1960s, hackers* have reclaimed digital tools to create networks of critical reflection. "Imbued with values of individual freedom, independent thought, sharing, and cooperation"[11], they shared program source codes, convinced that "information wants to be free"[12]. Today, this spirit is extended through "maktivism*" where creating objects, media, or code becomes a critical and transformative act.
For example, the Cyber-Sistas club[img3][img4], born at the Labo NRV of the ENSBA Lyon, questions gender, racial, and class discrimination in art schools through weekly digital art workshops. This informal collective offers technical sessions and collaborative projects "with a cyberfeminist approach to data sharing"[13], democratizing technologies while exposing their biases. Their approach, blending open-source pedagogy, critical data visualization, and language experimentation, aims to collectively rethink identity, representation, and power through an intersectional* lens. Subverting technologies also allows resistance to digital control mechanisms[14], which can be violent toward queer individuals[15].

[img3]

Labo NRV, Electronic support, 2018.

[img4]

Labo NRV, Openspace, 2018.

* Appendices: Glossary.

[9] Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris : Aubier, 1958), p. 17-19.

[10] Appendices: Reference text.

[11] Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 24, cité dans *DIY Citizenship : Critical Making and Social Media*, ed. Matt Ratto & Megan Boler (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2014), p. 54-55.

[12] Stewart Brand, *Hackers Conference*, 1984.

[13] *Cyber-Sistas*, Labo NRV de l'ENSBA Lyon, (2018-2023). https://labo-nrv.io/actu/cyber-sistas/

[14] Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression : How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*, (New York : NYU Press, 2018).

[15] Shaun Walker, Russia passes law banning 'LGBT propaganda' among adults, The Guardian, 24 novembre 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/24/russia-passes-law-banning-lgbt-propaganda-adults.

DIY (Do It Yourself) graphic practices: Individual Liberation

"You cannot use someone else's fire, you can only use your own"[16]

[16] Audre Lorde, I Am Your Sister : Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde (New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 1985).

Gaining autonomy through zine-making

By placing autonomy at the heart of creation, the zine functions as a tool for critique and experimentation. It allows the transmission of narratives and knowledge independently of conventional editorial structures. Wertham, an early theorist of zines, described them as "authentic human voices free from mass manipulation"[17]. This "autobio/graphic"[18] object positions the author as producer, designer, and maker, controlling the entire creative process. Moreover, the zine acts as both a tangible object and a virtual space, capable of creating communities and fostering collective strength, particularly for queer individuals to organize and represent themselves. It aligns with craftivism*, where craft serves as a form of resistance to dominant logics of production and consumption.

However, this freedom through autonomy remains relative. Claiming that anyone can "do it themselves" overlooks the structural inequalities that condition access to creative practices and necessary resources. The digital realm, more immediate and accessible, thus offers a liberating space for expression.

Achieving visibility through digital tools

The question of empowerment is central when it comes to technological tools and the digital realm in general. As early as 1984, the personal computer was presented as an "emancipatory individual technology," opposed to centralized and authoritarian computerization[19]. Cyberspace*, with its new networked culture, embodies a realm of endless possibilities. Citing cyberfeminist* theorists Judy Wajcman and Sadie Plant: "The growth of the Net has been continuous with its mode of operation. No central hub or command structure built it, and its emergence was more that of a parasite than an organizing host.[20] From this perspective, new technologies do not merely subvert masculine identity; [...] they offer the possibility of inventing an infinity of new identities, thereby undermining binary and heteronormative subjectivities"[21].
While this early form of cyberfeminism is considered essentialist by Wajcman[21], it can be understood through a queer lens. By literally considering cyberspace as a place where "our identities have no bodies"[22] it becomes a privileged space for queer individuals, whose bodies are often stigmatized.

However, by investing in online spaces, queer individuals gain visibility, yet this visibility also exposes them to dynamics of co-optation, such as pinkwashing*. Building community is a first step in resisting these forces.

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* Appendices: Glossary.

[17] Frederic Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York : Rinehart & Company, 1954), p. 50. cité dans Teal Triggs, *Fanzines: The DIY Revolution* (London : Thames & Hudson, 2010), p.9.
[18] Teal Triggs, *Fanzines: The DIY Revolution* (London : Thames & Hudson, 2010), p.9.
[19] Jonathan Bourguignon, *Internet, année zéro : de la Silicon Valley à la Chine, naissance et mutations du réseau* (Paris : Éditions Divergences, 2021), p.52.
[20] Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones : Digital Women + The New Technoculture* (New York : Doubleday, 1997), p.46.
[21] Judy Wajcman, *TechnoFeminism* (Cambridge : Polity Press, 2004).
[22] John Perry Barlow, *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberespace*, EFF, 1996, cité dans Jonathan Bourguignon, *Internet, année zéro : de la Silicon Valley à la Chine, naissance et mutations du réseau* (Paris : Éditions Divergences, 2021), p.52.

Collective design and DIT (Do It Together): Collective Liberation

"Without community, there is no liberation"[23]

[23] Audre Lorde, *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985).

Building community

The *Bye-Bye Binary* collective, founded in Brussels in 2018, is a type foundry composed of designers working on inclusive writing[img5] through a community-based approach. It exists as a site of resistance in a context where the French language is institutionally binary[24], and the use of inclusive writing is under threat[25]. The collective rethinks the type foundry as an open space, based not on ownership but on mutual aid, where the creation and distribution of typefaces is collective. It challenges typographic creation, asserting that it is first and foremost about "fueling the debate on the political charge of graphic design, language, representations of bodies, and identities"[26].
By creating for and with concerned individuals and organizing workshops, *Bye-Bye Binary* helps build community and nurtures networks of solidarity and collaborative DIY work.

[img5]
Camille Circlude & Christella Bibingo, 2021.

Creating memory through archiving

The archive allows a fragile queer memory to live on. Although some queer archives date back to the 1950s[27], they continue to face obstacles related to their classification and invisibility[28]. As Sam Bourcier puts it, it is about "rather than writing history, practicing the living archive"[29]. In one of his essays[img5], graphic designer Paul Soulellis discusses his use of AI to generate images of queer people from different eras, attempting to fill their absence in historical and contemporary archives. However, graphically, AI mostly produces white, able-bodied, and stereotypical bodies. Recognizing these limitations, Soulellis abandoned the project, calling the result an "archive that only refers to itself"[30]. This failure underscores the need for an archive collectively created by those concerned. This is the goal of *Queer.Archive.Work*, a physical and online space created in 2020 by Soulellis. Comprising a print workshop and a workspace, *Q.A.W* is not just a repository for works but a "living space for production and experimentation (by us, for us)"[31]. Currently developing a digital library of queer archives and already offering several downloadable zines on its website, *Q.A.W* uses the digital to continue nurturing queer memory.

[img6]
Paul Soulellis, Survival by Sharing, zine, 2023.

[img7]
Queer.Archive.Work, 2020.

[24] Alpheratz, *Le masculin l'emporte sur le féminin*, dans Mécréantes, épisode du 25 février 2021, https://www.mécréantes.com.
[25] Libération, « *À l'école de cinéma Kourtrajmé à Marseille, l'écriture inclusive dérange la région* », 1er mai 2025.
[26] Bye Bye Binary, « *À propos* », consulté en septembre 2025, https://typotheque.genderfluid.space/fr/a-propos
[27] ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, « History », ONE Archives at USC Libraries.
[28] Elliot Freeman, « Defying description: searching for queer history in institutional archives », Archival Science 23 no. 3 (2023), p. 447–470. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-023-09415-9
[29] Sam Bourcier, « L'incomplétude de l'archive nous appartient – Plutôt qu'écrire l'histoire, pratiquer l'archive vivante », *Issue*, 24 octobre 2024.
[30] Paul Soulellis, *Survival by Sharing*, « Scene 2, 2022, MidJourney Discord Server », 2023.
[31] Paul Soulellis, Interviews: Paul Soulellis, 2025.

Conclusion

DIY graphic practices, through the reappropriation of tools and empowerment, foster personal and collective transformation. With the advent of the digital, they enable the creation of new spaces for representation while encouraging critical reflection. However, just as DIY can remain individual-centered, the digital, despite its potential, remains a space of tension. In this context, the shift from DIY to DIT (Do It Together) strengthens community bonds, explores the potential of shared memories, and nurtures forms of collective action.

Queer

Originally, the term "queer" emerged as a slur meaning "strange" or "abnormal." Reclaimed in the 1980s by individuals defining themselves outside of gender and sexuality norms, it became a symbol of resistance. While the term arises from a refusal of categorization, feminist philosopher Judith Butler defines it as a deconstruction of binary categories (man/woman, hetero/homo) and a challenge to the systems of power that produce them[1]. Beyond sexuality and gender, being queer interrogates "how race, ethnicity, and postcolonial nationality intersect with these discourses"[2]. Thus, being "queer" is not limited to an identity but functions as a critical way of life to rethink power dynamics and identity constructions.

Intersectionality

Conceptualized by American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, building on Black feminism, intersectionality refers to how multiple dimensions of identity (race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.) intersect to shape experiences of marginalization or power. Crenshaw explains: "Because of their intersectional identity as both women and people of color, in discourses (or policies) designed to address either women or people of color, the interests and experiences of women of color are often marginalized in both contexts"[3].

Pinkwashing

Modeled after "whitewashing," the term "pinkwashing" was coined in 2002 by the American organization *Breast Cancer Action* to describe corporate campaigns that exploit breast cancer for marketing purposes. It was later repurposed in queer contexts to denote the opportunistic use of LGBTQIA+ symbols for profit. For example, displaying the rainbow flag during Pride Month allows companies or states to present themselves as inclusive for financial gain, without changing internal practices or taking concrete action for the community. Pinkwashing is also used geopolitically, such as by the State of Israel, where the symbolic use of the rainbow flag helps project an inclusive image in a Middle East perceived as hostile to queer people, while diverting attention from its own discriminatory and criminal practices[4].

Emancipation

From the latin *emancipare* ("to free from paternal authority"), emancipation originally referred to the legal act of freeing a son from paternal power. In jurisprudence, it describes the state of someone who, freed from guardianship, can independently manage their affairs[5]. From a queer perspective, emancipation refers to liberation from economic, political, or legal domination that criminalizes and marginalizes certain groups. It is not merely a state of freedom but an active process of struggle against oppressive structures, aiming to create new ways of existing and relating to the world.

DIY ("Do It Yourself")

Emerging from the Anglo-Saxon punk culture of the 1970s, DIY is a practice and ethic of autonomous or collective creation, repair, and transformation, aiming to reclaim the power to create rather than consume or delegate. DIY values learning by doing, mutual aid, and independent cultural production, resisting capitalist and consumerist mechanisms. More broadly, DIY invites reflection on the tensions "between consumers and citizens, experts and novices, individuals and communities, and between institutional government politics and grassroots democracy"[6].

Fanzine

The term "fanzine" a contraction of "fan" and "magazine," was coined in 1940 by Louis Russel Chauvenet, a zine producer and science fiction enthusiast. It refers to a publication enabling the "transmission of a specific subject to a community of like-minded individuals"[7]. Fanzines come in various genres: musiczines (music zines), prozines (professional zines), perzines (personal zines), and queerzines. The abbreviation "zine" emerged in the 1970s to describe limited-run, A4-sized, photocopied, and stapled publications that are non-professional and non-commercial. Today, zines take diverse forms, but their DIY and "anti-establishment" dimensions remain foundational. As Wertham, an early theorist of zines, noted, fanzines "depend on their independence"[8].

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[1] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York : Routledge, 1990).
[2] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, « Queer and Now », p. 8, (Durham : Duke University Press, 1993).
[3] Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, 1991.
[4] GEO France, *« Drapeau LGBT+ brandi à Gaza : le résultat de plusieurs années de "pinkwashing" déployé par Israël »*, 20 novembre 2023, https://www.geo.fr/geopolitique/drapeau-lgbt-brandi-a-gaza-le-resultat-de-plusieurs-annees-de-pinkwashing-deploye-par-israel-217605

[5] Littré, *« Émancipation »*, https://www.littre.org/definition/%C3%A9mancipation
[6] Matt Ratto & Megan Boler, *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media*, « Introduction », (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2014), p. 05.
[7] Teal Triggs, *Fanzines : The DIY Revolution* (London : Thames & Hudson, 2010), p.9.
[8] Fredric Wertham, *The World of Fanzines : A special Form of Communication* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1973),
cité dans Teal Triggs, *Fanzines : The DIY Revolution* (London : Thames & Hudson, 2010), p.9.

Craftivism

A blend of "craft" and "activism" craftivism can be translated as "activist crafting." Rooted in third-wave feminism, it involves reclaiming domestic arts, once symbols of oppression, in the public sphere. With craftivism, "craft becomes both an expression of domestic nostalgia and 'austere chic' as well as a form of online entrepreneurship, resisting mass consumption and the homogeneity of capitalist production"[9]. By disrupting capitalist production through creativity, craftivism transforms craft practices into levers for political action, in an ecological, collective, and solidarity-driven approach.

Maktivism

Conceptualized by Steve Mann, maktivism merges activism, DIY, and hacking: creating objects, media, or code becomes a critical and transformative act. According to Mann, "Maktivism combines the spirit of DIY [...] with the spirit of DIT from the GNU/Linux and free software movement". By prioritizing "tinkering as a method of inquiry"[10] and spontaneous, participatory hacks, it moves away from expert-driven approaches to technology, reappropriating it as "an intervention by users, rather than a mysterious black box". This approach makes tools transparent and resists surveillance mechanisms.

Digital

The digital is distinct from computer science (the technical field of automated information processing) and refers to a set of practices, representations, and cultural and social transformations linked to the use of the internet and technologies[11]. Drawing on Marcel Mauss's concept of a "total social fact" Pascal Plantard considers the digital as a phenomenon that profoundly transforms communication, politics, sociability, identity, cultural creation, work, and the economy, while imposing new social norms and values[12]. In this vein, Jean-François Cerisier speaks of a "total cultural fact" and defines the digital as "a set of techniques, equipment, software, resources, but also uses, practices, behaviors, and values"[13].

Hackers

The figure of the hacker emerged in the late 1950s at MIT, within the *Tech Model Railroad Club*, a group of students who tinkered with computer systems. It refers to technicians who appropriate tools to repurpose technologies, adapt them to their needs, and experiment playfully. Stewart Brand, a central figure in the 1960s-70s hippie counterculture, helped popularize the term by associating hackers with an ethic based on freedom, autonomy, and sharing. He described them as both technological pioneers and heirs to counterculture. "Imbued with values of individual freedom, independent thought, sharing, and cooperation"[14] hackers view the computer as a space for play, freedom, and collective invention.

Cyberespace

The term first appeared in William Gibson's 1984 science fiction novel *Neuromancer*, a foundational work of the cyberpunk movement. Gibson described a virtual universe composed of digital data, navigated by hackers directly connected to machines, portraying cyberspace as a new territory of conflict and power, dominated not by states but by corporations. Gibson himself acknowledged the deliberately vague and suggestive nature of the concept, stating: "All I knew about the word when I coined it was that it could go viral. It evoked something while being empty of meaning"[15]. Today, cyberspace refers to an immaterial space of communication and interaction, born from the global interconnection of computers. It is a virtual environment where digital data, information, economic, social, and cultural exchanges circulate, and where internet users navigate.

Cyberfeminism

Invented in the early 1990s by Sadie Plant and the artistic collective *VNS Matrix*, cyberfeminism emerged in a context of critical reappropriation of digital technologies. Inspired by Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, cyberfeminism is an artistic, theoretical, and political movement that questions gender relations in cyberspace and explores new forms of power, subjectivity, and creativity. It is a plural, ever-evolving current, as researcher Cornelia Sollfrank notes: "Cyberfeminism is not a single theory or movement, but a multiplicity of approaches, positions, and practices"[16].

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[9] Kate Orton-Johnson, dans *DIY Citizenship : Critical Making and Social Media*, « DIY Citizenship, Critical Making, and Community », ed. Matt Ratto & Megan Boler, (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2014), p. 141.

[10] traduction personnelle de « tinquiry (tinkering as inquiry) », expression de Steve Mann, dans Maktivism : Authentic Making for Technology in the Service of Humanity, dans *DIY Citizenship : Critical Making and Social Media*, ed. Matt Ratto & Megan Boler (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2014), p. 29.

[11] Milad Doueihi, *Pour un humanisme numérique* (Paris : Seuil, 2011).

[12] Matthieu Serreau et Pascal Plantard, *Le numérique comme fait social total : évolution des pratiques numériques éducatives pendant les confinements*, Terminal, 2024.

[13] Jean-François Cerisier, *La culture numérique à l'École*, 2020.

[14] Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 24, cité dans *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media*, ed. Matt Ratto & Megan Boler (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2014), p. 54-55.

[15] William Gibson, cité dans Jonathan Bourguignon, *Internet, année zéro : de la Silicon Valley à la Chine, naissance et mutations du réseau* (Paris : Éditions Divergences, 2021), p.43.

[16] Cornelia Sollfrank, *The Truth About Cyberfeminism* (2000).

Reference text

In the introduction to *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, Gilbert Simondon highlights our misunderstanding of technical objects: when they are not reduced to mere functional tools, they are perceived as opaque and mysterious machines. In both cases, we distance ourselves from them, treating them as foreign. The challenge, then, is to move beyond this perspective and demonstrate that technical objects have their own existence and actively interact within our human context.

Simondon emphasizes that technical objects are deeply connected to the culture that produces them. They are the result of complex processes of design and manufacture, which give them an internal coherence and a logic of their own. Far from being simple instruments, they are embedded in broader technical networks (machines, systems, infrastructures), where they play an active role, transforming our ways of acting, thinking, and inhabiting the world. In this sense, they can be seen as essential mediators between us and our environment.

Simondon also stresses the active role of human beings in organizing machines. Rather than being passively endured, machines should be understood and mastered. We must become their interpreters and coordinators. This perspective is based on the idea that the more technically advanced a machine is, the more open it becomes. Unlike closed and automated systems, which impose rigid logic, open machines incorporate margins of indeterminacy, spaces of freedom that allow for adjustments, repairs, or repurposing. The machine thus becomes a space for experimentation, fostering creativity rather than alienation.

This tension between alienation and reappropriation can be applied to DIY (Do It Yourself) graphic practices. While established structures tend to reduce objects to their mere function and encourage passive consumption, DIY practices reimagine them as vehicles for expression and creativity. For example, by repurposing the duplicator and enabling communication outside of institutions, the zine is no longer just an assembly of paper and ink but becomes a relational and cultural device. Similarly, "tinkering" with digital tools demystifies technology, often seen as a "mysterious black box"[1] and transforms it into a critical infrastructure capable of generating spaces of visibility.

In short, by reintegrating humanity into technology, DIY practices reconcile culture and technical objects. They embody a form of collective individuation, where reclaiming tools becomes an emancipatory act.

[1] Kate Milberry, (Re)making the Internet : Free Software and the Social Factory Hack, citée dans *DIY Citizenship : Critical Making and Social Media*, ed. Matt Ratto & Megan Boler (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), p. 55.

Paul Soulellis is a graphic designer, archivist, and educator, founder of *Queer.Archive.Work*.
Interview conducted on December 5, 2025, via email.

Interview
Paul Soulellis

Evo

Sam Bourcier, a french trans writer and archivist, said, 'rather than writing history, practice the living archive'[1] referring to the incompleteness of trans archives and the idea of creating an archive not based on history but on the present desires of trans people.
Does 'practicing the living archive' resonate with your own practice?

Paul S.

Yes, very much so! This has taken different forms in my practice. I didn't always have a goal or mission in collecting, but I've tried to follow my drive to gather evidence of life and ways of working. Earlier, in *Library of the Printed Web*, I gathered work around the idea that the changing conditions of network culture were creating new forms of artistic production between the screen and the page, and through my publications and events, I was able to grow a robust community of artists who were actively experimenting in this space. This drive transformed with *Queer.Archive.Work*, into something more grounded in local community. As a physical space, *Q.A.W* tries to provide access to resources for queer and trans people, and locating the archive in a print production studio , a work space, means that the work that is made there is an active part of how the archive functions. Not just as a storage space, but a living space of production and experimentation (by us, for us). It's an archive in relation to the living needs, desires, and agreements (as well as conflicts) that shape who we are as a community.

I will add that I also think of my own writing practice as an extension of that living archive. It's a different kind of collaboration that can extend across queer time and space, in my own wish to connect with queer ancestors and future queer kin. I try to locate my writing practice in archives of all kinds, to surface the multiplicity of queer time, in how I write, how I share, collaborate, and how I distribute these ideas. I'm endlessly inspired by Ben Power, founder and archivist of the *Sexual Minorities Archive* in Holyoke, Massachusetts for the past fifty years. Ben speaks about "queer materials in queer hands" when considering how evidence of queer life is best handled by those voices and bodies and hands who are most directly reflected in and by those materials.

Evo

In *Survival by Sharing*, you mentioned using AI to generate queer scenes during your convalescence.
Have you used other graphic digital tools (3D,...) for other queer care works, and do you see them as useful for creating imaginaries or supporting archival practices?

Paul S.

I think they could be very useful! I haven't really experimented with other graphic digital tools for queer care, but I'm interested in what's possible there. I'm thinking about how some kinds of virtual environments, gaming, chat rooms, and other network spaces have functioned this way. While it's not a graphic digital tool, I will say that Zoom was a crucial tool for *Q.A.W* which emerged during the early days of covid quarantine. Connecting with a queer and trans community on Zoom enabled us to share and make work together in ways that would have been impossible otherwise, and I know there was a general sense of gathering that was moving and powerful for many of us in our weekly *Q.A.W* Zoom workshops. We even made publications together this way. Today, Discord functions in a similar way for us, perhaps less creatively, but still crucial. Sometimes I speak about our Discord server as being the most "authentic" instance of *Q.A.W* because it's where most of our daily communication and decision-making happens, and it's also the place where collective logistics and agreements are most felt. We might lose our physical space someday, when our lease runs out, or if our funding expires, but the Discord server has the capacity to sustain us.

There is real risk of course, in committing ourselves to platforms that thrive on logics of surveillance, extraction, and profit, as these tools do. This goes for our use of social media as well; Instagram is an important way for *Q.A.W* to communicate to a larger, more extensive and geographically diverse community of friends and followers. We try to use these resources for what they are, tools that enable and extend capacity (to communicate, to connect, to provide care), while recognizing that we also participate in those ecosystems. There's no purity in this, that's for sure. Likewise, I don't believe that totally removing ourselves from these ecosystems is viable. At the same time, we recognize that safely gathering in person, in physical space, seems to be more challenging (for many reasons), and I'm always wondering how we might try to do more of it.

[1] Sam Bourcier, « L'incomplétude de l'archive nous appartient – Plutôt qu'écrire l'histoire, pratiquer l'archive vivante », *Issue*, 24 octobre 2024.

Evo

In each essay or talk, you create and print a zine.
What is your relationship to this DIY practice?
Do you also consider it a DIT (Do It Together) practice?

Paul S.

The line between DIY and DIT is fraught, for me. I really relish my alone-making-time. This goes for writing, making a zine, or even my ability to gather or curate or assemble collaborative publications, which in the past, I've done on my own. The boundaries between the collective and my own individual agency and decision-making excite me — the ability to shape and manifest a collective wish, for example (like with the *Urgency Readers*, or the *Q.A.W* issues 1 & 3), or even QUEER MATTERS, which we made together online but was really a DIY experimental publishing project after the Zoom was turned off. At *Binch/Q.A.W* we do a collective DIT assembling publication that we distribute quarterly to raise money for our rent. Each artist contributes a piece that they print in the studio, another member designs the envelope, and we all help to send them out to individuals and institutions that subscribe to the CSA (Community Supported Art). It's a good project. None of us can claim it; it exists as a communal effort with a common goal to support the studio. Perhaps the priorities are different here, with this DIT project — an activity that sustains our creative community in a more transactional way (to pay rent). For me, the personal DIY projects have different goals, which might be more about an editorial idea, a design idea, a curatorial investigation. When others see this and they want to participate, and experiment with different kinds of distribution (including snail mail), this is thrilling for me. I haven't done something like this in a while, as I'm more focused on my writing practice right now. But I'd like to return to it soon.

Léna Salabert-Triby is a graphic designer and typographer, member of the queer typographic experimentation collective *Bye-Bye Binary*.
Interview conducted on December 11, 2025, via video conference.

Interview
Léna Salabert-Triby

Evo
How did the *Bye-Bye Binary* collective come about?

Léna S.T.
Bye-Bye Binary was born in 2018 during a workshop organized in Brussels between ERG and La Cambre. Professors invited participants to explore new graphic and typographic forms to move beyond the use of the middle dot, which was heavily criticized in France at the time due to the Blanquer circular. For three days in November 2018, we worked together. From there, the desire to continue grew, first in a somewhat underground way, and then the collective work truly began in 2021.

Evo
You and other designers went on a residency at *La Fraternelle*, a cultural and artistic association, to experiment with inclusive typography. What was the point of moving from digital to wooden type?

Léna S.T.
As someone who works in typography within the collective, many of us are familiar with the history of the discipline: lead type, wooden type... It's a world we grew up with, and we know exactly where it comes from. When we work digitally today, we always keep that connection to older techniques in mind. These are skills that are being lost because almost no one practices or uses them anymore. So having the opportunity to engage with them at *La Fraternelle* was a real dream, it was the first time we'd done something like that.

Evo
You developed the *JURAge* typeface, how did that process unfold?

Léna S.T.
The typeface we started with was from the Jura socialiste newspaper, which isn't used at all anymore. Initially, we recovered six characters that we wanted to reactivate. We made one in a physical, wooden version as a display type, and we started two others in lead, which will be finished soon. And, as always when we "fork" a typeface (when we start from an existing font to add post-binary ligatures), we had to recreate the missing pieces. We redesigned the entire alphabet to add the post-binary ligatures and also included punctuation, which didn't exist at all. What also interested us was reactivating the entire history behind the *Jura socialiste*—preserving its memory. This experience really made us want to go further: we want to do more residencies, reactivate other typefaces, and maybe even develop a complete typeface from A to Z.

Evo
More broadly, what does "queer design" mean at *BBB*?

Léna S.T.
At *BBB*, we often work with a "queer-camp-kitsch" aesthetic. We're open to being approached by institutions for our work, but not for pinkwashing or by institutions that despise or co-opt our struggles. So we work with an aesthetic that escapes them, something that isn't polished, isn't standardized, far from the International Style and the "good taste" of design. The idea is to use forms that are disliked in the graphic design world, to reclaim them and turn them into a strength, just like the word "queer" which was originally an insult. It's a way to fight and resist co-optation.

Evo
What is your relationship with DIY practices? And with print?

Léna S.T.
For me, DIY is first and foremost a matter of necessity: when you don't have a choice, you do it yourself. Over time, it's become a practice I love. With BBB, I've developed a strong fanzine practice, especially because it's an accessible and adaptable format. I often use the long format, for example, because it's economical: a simple folded A4, no cutting, doable with whatever's on hand. It also breaks away from the standard A5 format. Politically, DIY also prevents people who aren't affected or don't understand us from speaking for us. Taking control of our own narratives, creating our own stories, is essential.
As for print, it's generally hard to make a living from it, but I believe the book will never die. Micro-publishing, on the other hand, is more fragile... but at the same time, it's often the last refuge for marginalized people. It's accessible, it's hand-to-hand, and it recalls the resistance networks of zines, flyers, and papers passed around in secret. It also allows us to gather outside of networks that are becoming too surveilled and could turn against us. I hope it doesn't come to that, but if repression worsens one day, these techniques will return, because they've always existed.

Evo
How did *Club de bridge* come about, and what were the motivations behind it?

Tom
I founded *Club de bridge* in 2020 with the idea of creating connections between activism and contemporary creation. Since my background is more in political science than in creative fields, my practice initially involved writing flyers for activist collectives focused on ecological and queer issues. During the first pension reform protests in 2019, *Club de bridge* produced its first flyer. Gradually, I started working continuously with activist friends and collectives. Later, I began adding drawings to make the flyers more appealing, and people really liked them.

Evo
Was approaching design in this way an effective means of communication?

Tom
Yes, because you realize that after a while, all the CGT (french labor union) flyers look the same. You go to a protest, end up with the same flyers in your pockets, and never read them because they all seem to say the same thing. So I tried to refresh these formats. Later, I studied art philosophy and kind of entered artistic circles—not as an artist, but as a writer. What interested me was finding links between the artistic world and activism. I've always been drawn to artists who work in that gray area between art and activism. I find it interesting to break down the barriers between these two worlds, and that's what I'm trying to do with *Club de bridge*.

Evo
What is your relationship with collective creation?

Tom
Every time, I involve other people in the work. There are people who are so skilled in certain areas that it's amazing to think about creation in shared, collective terms. I believe that thinking about creation and creative processes collectively is also a form of activism. Since I'm part of activist collectives, I know how to manage group dynamics and organize them. I think it's important to bring that into the creative and artistic world.
Also, I'll admit that sometimes queer narratives annoy me a bit because they're so focused on intimacy and forget to address the collective, communal dimensions of the queer movement, which can be incredibly radical politically. I think it's important to explore these dynamics rather than just introspective things. We need a more collective narrative.

Evo
What is your relationship with digital tools and your online presence?

Tom
Initially, I created the *Club de bridge* Instagram account as a way to mobilize people for political causes. Before that, I managed social media accounts for activist collectives, which was interesting but also limiting in terms of the language you can use. Collective accounts tend to be pragmatic and ideological, and it's hard to express emotions or sensitivity there.
After the Sainte-Soline protest, as someone who was there and deeply affected, I needed to share a message tied to my own emotions and sensitivity. With *Club de bridge*, I can infuse that sensitivity, and hopefully, it resonates with people who've had similar experiences and feel understood. So, using my online presence to express the emotional side is really important because other accounts can't do that for political reasons.

Evo
How do you handle the fact that fanzines have limited reach, even though their topics are of general interest?

Tom
I think it depends on the political moment we're in. For the past few years, my main goal has been to strengthen the queer and eco communities I'm part of, creating content that directly speaks to those people to continue supporting them and fostering a culture of resistance. I was happy just selling them at markets, on my online shop, and through Instagram, reaching people close to me. I wasn't looking for wider distribution. I love what fanzines allow in terms of graphics and literature.

But lately, I've been rethinking this because I really need to mobilize against the rise of fascism. So now, I'm thinking about how to produce content for people who vote for the Rassemblement National (far-right party in France). How can we reach them by creating collaborations that come from us but can still speak to them and convince them? I think this is important and complementary to building a community.
I'm also thinking about which distribution channels we can use to reach them. I was in Montreal recently and met activists who were doing something really interesting: they printed fanzines they found online and distributed them in book-sharing boxes in peripheral neighborhoods that tend to vote right-wing. It was a fascinating technique and got me thinking about how we can get our work to people who might oppose our political ideas.

Evo
That's really interesting. Finally, what is your relationship with queer archives?

Tom
I did an exhibition at the *Fanzinothèque* in Poitiers, which is the largest fanzine archive in the world, with 60,000 documents preserved there. It was so moving to find fanzines from the 1960s and 70s, many of them echo the same struggles we have today. It makes our fights feel legitimate and gives meaning to what we're doing now. It also traces important lineages, especially for queer people who've lost connections with our elders, like during the AIDS crisis.
And finally, places like *Mémoire des Sexualités* in Marseille are real community hubs. For example, they host "apéro cartons" (archive box socials), where people gather around unopened boxes that need to be archived. We drink, meet each other, and discover the documents inside together. It keeps the archives from being dead spaces, we're all there, bringing this memory to life, discussing what we find. Often, these spaces are intergenerational, and that's just wonderful.

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