

In Conversation with Alida Jekabson

Sophie Foley, Darius Barnes, and Sadia Zaman are Teen Thinkers at the Bard Graduate Center. They spoke with Alida Jekabson, Assistant Curator at The Museum of Art and Design (MAD) on July 23, 2019. Below is an excerpt from their interview.

Location: Museum of Art and Design, New York City

Sophie Foley: You mentioned that you had done some research on zines and I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about that, and how zines are a unique staple of the DIY movement/why they were so important.

Alida Jekabson: Well, one of my favorite resources from working on the show was this thing called ZineWiki, which is basically Wikipedia but for zines. So, because these are unofficial publications, there's no like, you know-- Vogue.com has their whole archive of every single issue that they've ever published, but how do you make a history of an unofficial media? And so I think having something like ZineWiki, having the zines upstairs in the show, is like validating this DIY movement that I'm sure we've all seen take off in a ton of different directions, right? There are artists' zines, there are zines for collectives and other bands, and I think it's really about taking control of the content that you want to see. A lot of the people who started these zines didn't like the way that punk music was being reported on, or it wasn't being reported on at all, or there was no way to share information about tours or auditions, or anything-- there was no internet. How do you communicate these things? Well, you start an underground publication. And those underground publications come way before zines-- I think some of it stems from the protest movements of the 1960s-- it's like, how do you communicate with a large body of people that don't see themselves in the mainstream or don't want to use mainstream methods of communication? I think some of the visual qualities of the zines kind of-- you can tell that it's a little bit underground.