

# Calendar

## Avant Avant Avant Garde

Comics and Zines from Special Collections

Since the SDSU library began asking for donations of zines ("zeens") nearly a year ago, Cristina Favretto has accepted hundreds of them. And they continue to arrive. Just days ago, Favretto, head of Special Collections, opened an e-mail from a woman who had seen the request on the university website and wanted to contribute her collection. "She's a local graduate, class of '91, who has published five personal zines," said Favretto. "One is an interview with a Ramona street woman who wears only red. Another

### LOCAL EVENTS

is about trying to get into [monologist] Spaulding Gray's storytelling workshop at the Esalen Institute."

Zines and other independent-press materials from the 1960s to the present, West Coast varieties in particular, are the subject of a current exhibit at the library.

For those who need a definition of zines, Favretto provided this one: "They're black-and-white, photocopied pages, stapled together, independently and often very erratically published little journals. Individuals frequently produce them, but groups do too. Some will make 20 copies for distribution to friends and family; others make 200 and try to sell them at record stores."

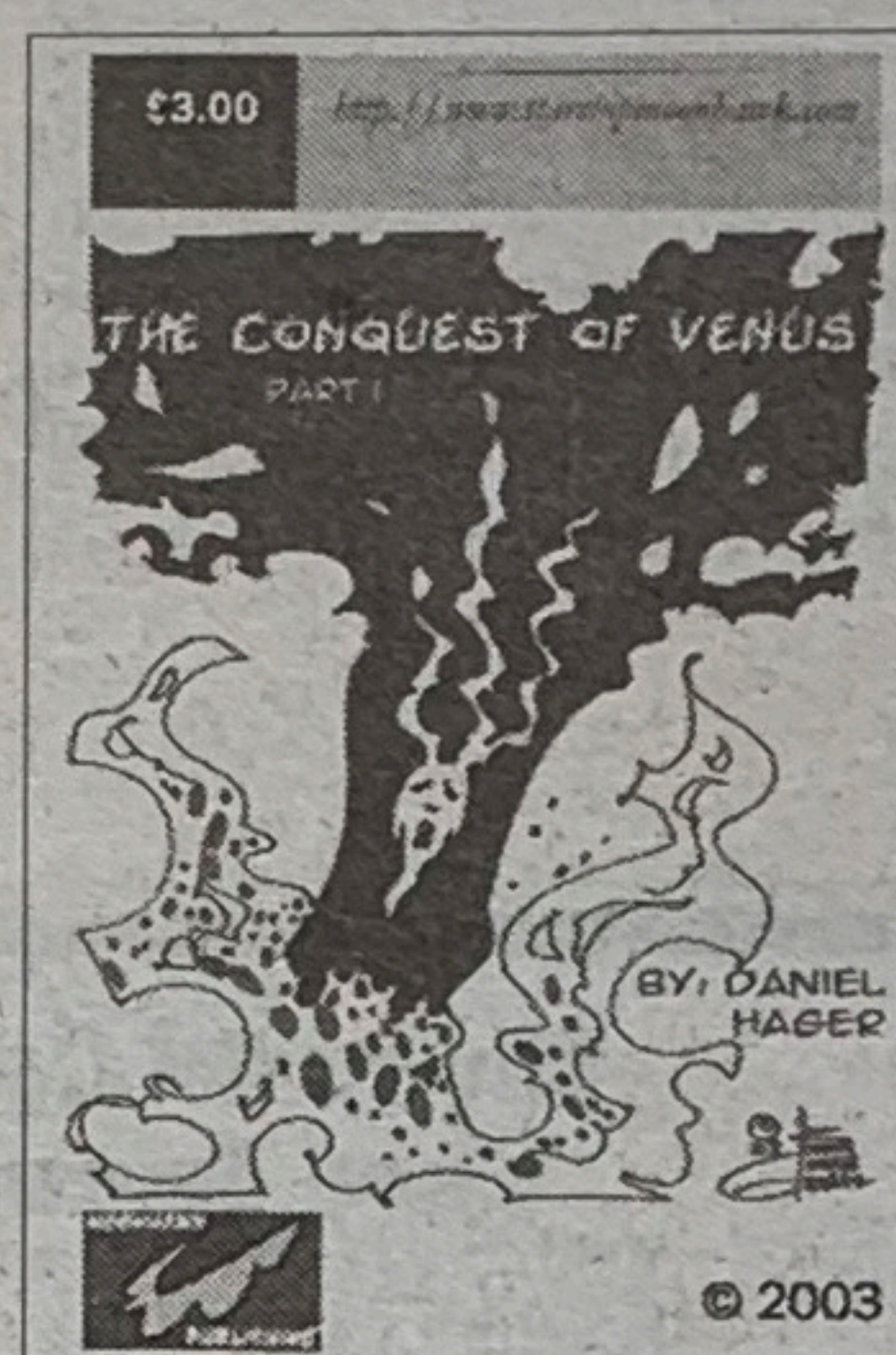
Their rarity is why libraries like SDSU must depend on donors to increase their holdings; they certainly can't order them from the textbook distributors.

As for zine content, it ranges from blogs to political statements. "Their editorial agenda is the agenda of whomever is putting out the zine," said Favretto, "so whatever they want to espouse they can. What I've found is that zines by young people really tell you what the zeitgeist is right now."

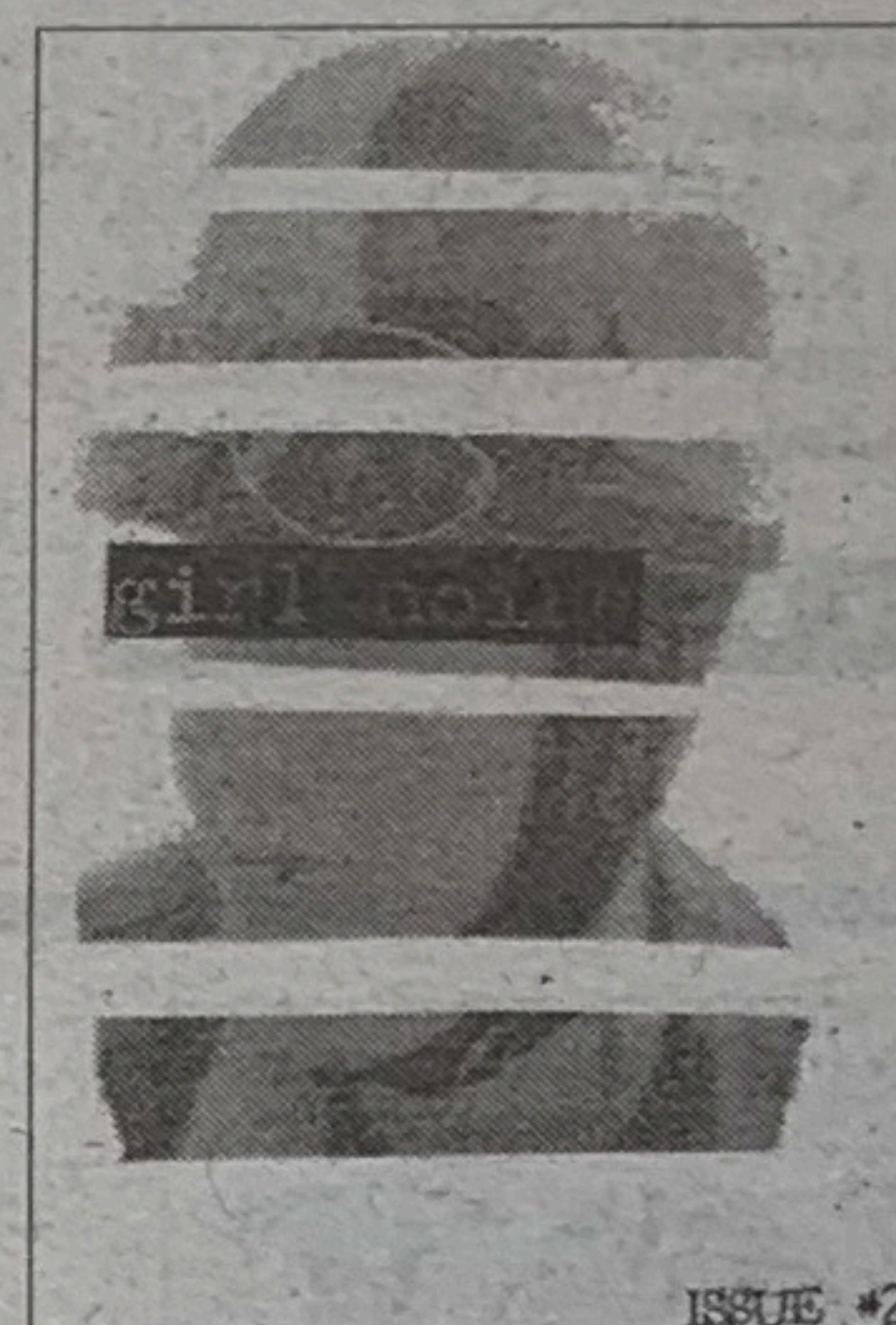
So far, the largest donor in all categories of both the collection and the exhibit is 27-year-old Dan Hager, another SDSU alum (B.A., English, '00), who lives in Bay Park. When he learned that the call was out, Hager offered Favretto dozens of zines, comic books, and graphic novels, as well as boxes of original artwork by Donna Barr, creator of *The Desert Peach*, *Hader and the Colonel*, and *Stinz*. "I jumped on the opportunity to have them," Favretto said. Graphic novels and the like are "a huge reading trend for young people, and



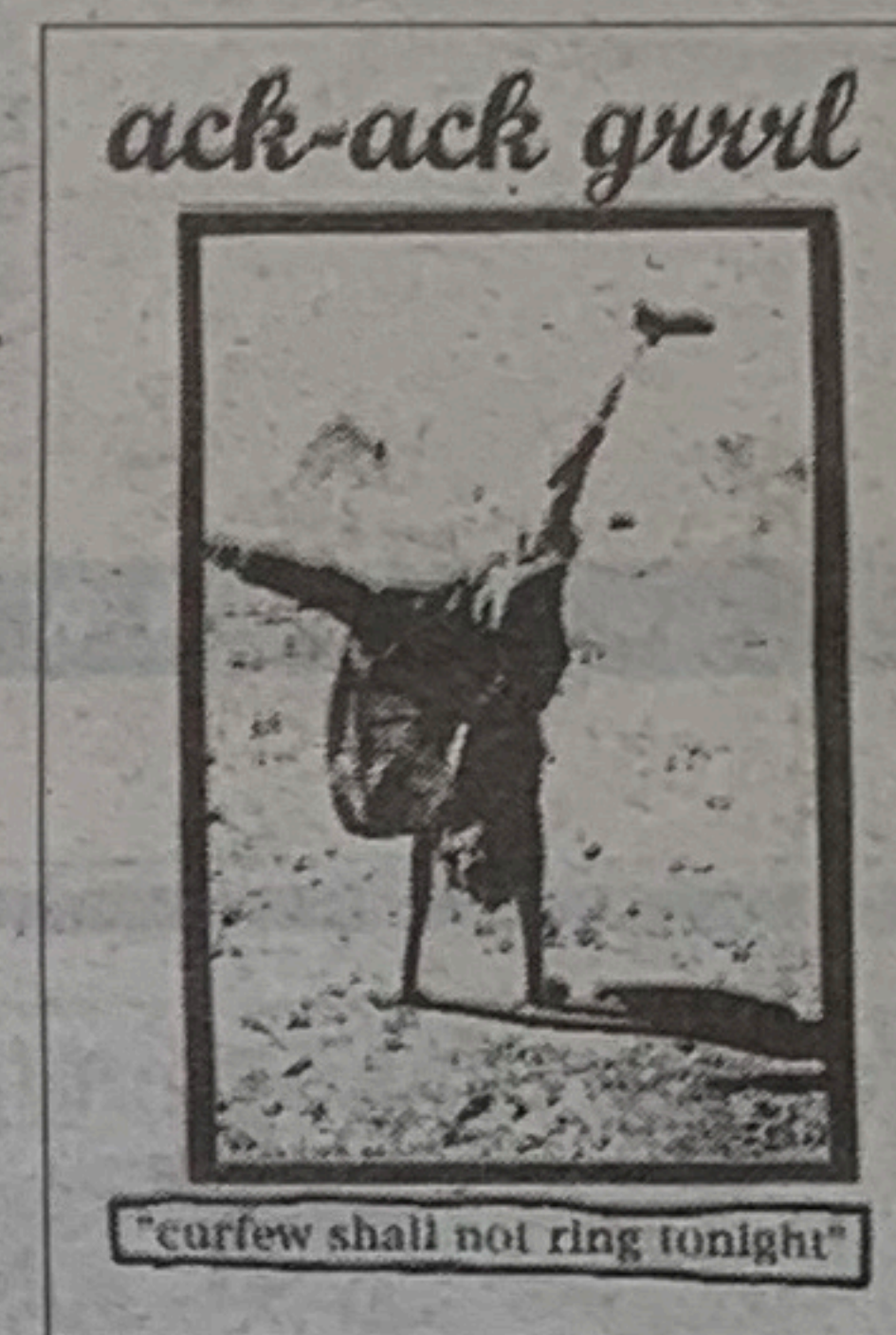
San Diego, May 2003



San Diego, 2003



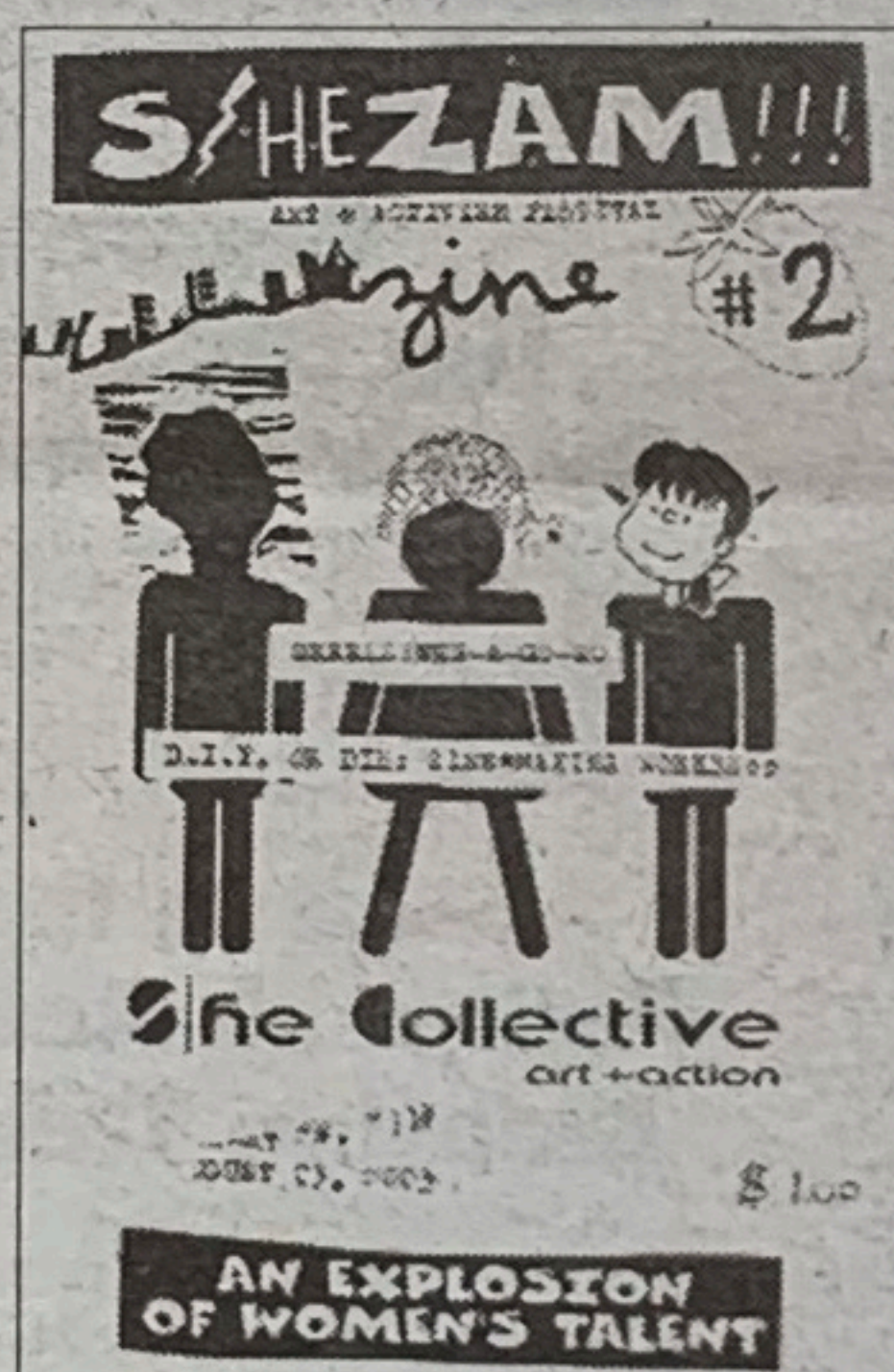
San Diego, 2003



San Diego, April 1999



San Diego, 2002



San Diego, August 2003



San Diego, Fall 1998



San Diego, 1996

they're not going to abandon it as they grow older."

Hager met Barr, who lives in Washington state (and calls her books "drawn novels"), at San Diego's annual Comic-Con International in 1994. "I picked up one of hers, and that was the beginning of my fandom," he said. Hager's other collecting interests are new artists and local artists, which for him includes all Californians. "I've got a lot of artists who have come out with a one-shot. One-shots are single-issue comic books that aren't part of a series. Generally, they're published by people just starting their careers."

In July, at the most recent Comic-Con, Hager bought a comic book/zine hybrid by a new artist named Yarden, who recently relocated from San Diego to San Francisco. "That was a real joy for me to get," he said. "Yarden sold it to me herself. She was walking around at the Con; she didn't have a table." (Now part of the SDSU exhibit, Yarden's work was described by Favretto as "wordless, very beautifully drawn, with pencils, and its subject is giving birth, which is also the name of it.")

Eric Shanower is one of San Diego's own graphic-novel talents. Twice, in 2001 and 2003, the 39-year-old has won the Will Eisner award for best writer/artist. (In the comics industry, an Eisner is the equivalent of an Oscar.) Shanower's series, *Age of Bronze*, a retelling of the Trojan War story, was published as a hardbound volume, *A Thousand Ships*, by the San Diego-based Hungry Tiger Books, and Hager's copy of it is in the exhibit.

Besides these newer forms, *The Cool Stuff* includes representatives of more standard alternative media, like *San Diego Troubadour*, *Underdog Magazine*, and *Zenger's News Magazine* — as well as political periodicals from decades past, such as *Sunrise: A Journal of Change*, circa 1970. Hager's suggestion that people donate to get a tax write-off does not apply to these materials, but it does to vintage comic books, whose prices got inflated when speculators were buying them in the 1990s. "Copies of *Superman* were going for \$50,000 at the time," Hager said. At a July sale held in San Diego by Heritage Comics Auctions, which drew nearly 1800 bidders, a *Superman* from 1939 went

for a relatively reasonable \$20,700.

Favretto named *mangas* as the latest thing in independently published comic books. "They're just making it across the pond, hitting big recently," she said. Drawn in an exaggerated style (big eyes, angular features) that originated in Japan, *mangas* are the aesthetic cousins of *anime* ("an-eh-may"), the Japanese animated cartoons. Their subject matter is "often dark and disturbing," she noted. "Environmental themes are prevalent. A lot of them are science fiction. They're utopian, dystopian. They can be erotic. As more and more American and European artists begin to work in the *manga* style, it's on its way to becoming a worldwide phenomenon."

— Jeanne Schinto

**"The Cool Stuff: Alternative Media, Comics, and Zines from Special Collections"**  
On exhibit through October 13 in two SDSU locations:  
Main Library and Special Collections  
Free  
Info: 619-594-6791

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