

Future Fantasteek!

ARTISTS' BOOKS Jackie Batey is celebrating the tenth issue of her artist's zine series with a touring show in Europe and the USA writes Sarah Bodman

Future Fantasteek!, Jackie Batey's artist's zine, is held in the collections of over 60 national and international institutions and libraries including the British Library; Tate Britain; and the V&A (all London); the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts, Florida; Aboveground Zine Library, Mississippi; and the Toronto Zine Library, Ontario, Canada. All ten issues of the artist's zine can be seen in an exhibition now touring Europe and the USA, alongside Batey's meticulously drawn sketchbooks, which are filled with the ideas that lie behind the magazine.

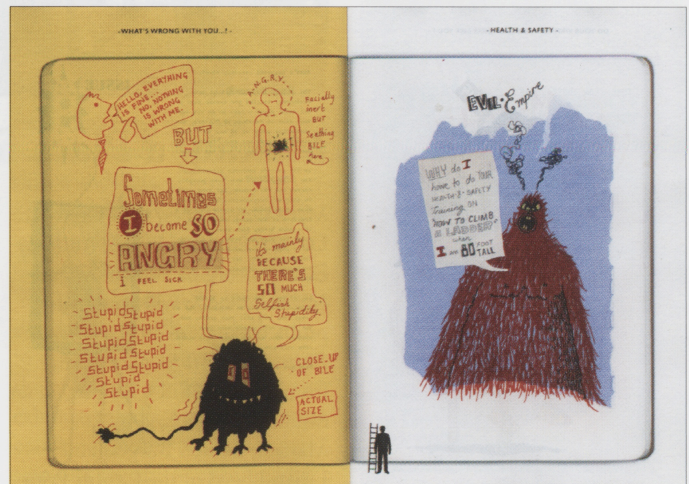
Batey set up her Damp Flat Books imprint in Brighton, UK, in 1999, to produce her own limited edition handmade books and multiples. She uses her own photography, illustration and hand-drawn type in her books and prints and binds them all by hand. Drawing by hand is a crucial element of Batey's work, not just because of her particular quirky style and its immediacy, which enables her to produce work whilst travelling, but also the fact that pencils are not machines or computers that break down. The low-fi print aesthetic adds to the overall beauty of these snappy little zines, following in a tradition from the 1960s and '70s where zines were born out of a wish to step out of galleries and get a message across to a wider audience in the streets.

After producing books for seven years, Batey published the first issue of *Future Fantasteek!* in 2006, taking inspiration from her commute, three times a week by train, between Brighton and Portsmouth, UK. The three-hour round trip is put to good use as she fills her sketchbook with intricate drawings and notes of her observations that day or week. Batey refers to her train sketchbooks as 'visual rants' about today's society: rude people, ridiculous claims in advertising and so on. And it isn't limited to travel, spam emails, terrible TV shows, materialism and advertising for products we don't need... When I asked about her sources of inspiration, she replied:

'Many of the themes I enjoy working with are anxiety, humour and modern living. Everywhere you go there are "out of order" signs. I've got a number of European ones in a variety of languages now. It's more that I find it amusing that humans try to automate everything without considering that what we make will break down. But on a positive note, there will also be jobs fixing the machines. This builds on the ridiculous amount of time I waste sitting in front of spinning colour balls looking at the screen on a computer that is about to crash – if I could use a pencil and paper at work, everything would be done in half the time. But that's for another book maybe.'

I was also curious about her use of such lurid colours, reminiscent of promotional sales signs in supermarkets perhaps?

'Certainly in the *Future Fantasteek!* zines I am looking for that 1950s' advertising aesthetic. I researched American print advertisements (mainly focusing on US magazine cigarette ads 1945-1964) for part of my PhD back in 2003 and I enjoy the humour and enforced joviality that snazzy fonts with overly intense colours bring to rather banal products. I am a fan of hyperbole and day-glo is a great way of over-doing it. Sometimes I do this gently and sometimes I use day-glo as a slap-in-the-face.'



Batey is a very generous artist, as she herself enjoys seeing how other artists work. She offers up her own website as a tool for visitors to access her research and ideas for preparing and creating her zines and books. Every book she has published has an online section of initial ideas, working visuals and sketchbook pages. Batey also makes her new works available for free online; visit www.issuu.com/futurefantasteek and you can flip through each issue of *Future Fantasteek!* page-by-page.

This artist's social commentary through her books is one that applies to us all, marking and pointing out the absurdity of the things that annoy us so much. Next time you encounter an out-of-order machine, or an inbox full of spam email, just remember – there is someone out there who is taking care of it for you. Jackie Batey is our very own social commentator.

'I enjoy books that are about how people view the world. Mine are very much about how I fit into society and how I interpret that. I enjoy reading about how other people fit in, through artists' books and zines or fiction.'

Future Fantasteek! is on show at the Sallie Bingham Center, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA, from 27 Jun-7 Oct, and at the Library, Hereford College of Arts, Hereford, UK, from 5 Sep-28 Oct

For the complete list of tour dates and venues see:

www.dampflat.com/DAMPFLAT/books/zines/future10/tour/index.htm

The 78-page catalogue celebrating ten issues of *Future Fantasteek!*, including images from the sketchbooks, is available in hardback or softback at: www.blurb.com/books/1943328

Images, from top

Double page spread from *Future Fantasteek!* No. 10, *Royal Wedding Souvenir Issue* by Jackie Batey, February 2011. 16 pp, silver cover, edition of 50

Double page spread from *Future Fantasteek!*, No.9, *Deepwater Horizon Issue* by Jackie Batey, July 2010. 16 pp, red translucent cover with small gold 'get-out-of-jail-free' card insert, edition of 50