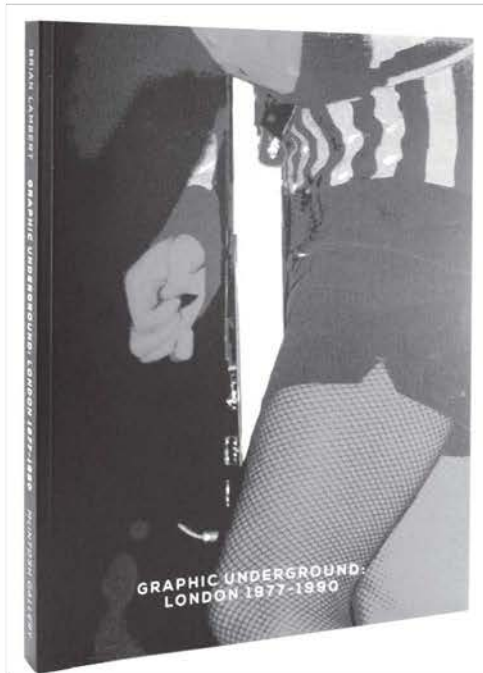


New Arrivals

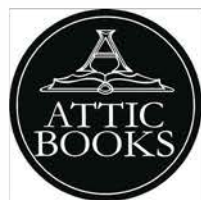
January 16th, 2013

NEWEST Local History on the Scene



Lambert, Brian; Niederman, Mike; Forest City Gallery; McIntosh Gallery. **Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990.** London, Ontario: McIntosh Gallery, 2013. First Edition. ISBN: 9780771429774. vii, 228 pp. *Excellent illustrations - photographs, posters and zines. Documents graphic works, primarily in the form of gig posters and zines, by the artists whose output was the public face of a vital and prolific art and music community which spans the efforts of several generations of London's underground culture.* New. Paperback. \$40.00

Includes chapters chronicling zines such as Rude (Mike Bidner), Heartwar (Mike Neiderman), Mind Theatre and City Lights Comix.



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London Punk in Print

Jason Dickson

The exhibition, *Graphic Underground*, organized by the McIntosh Gallery and exhibited at the Forest City Gallery in 2012, corrected a horrible oversight in London art history - the complete dismissal, and perhaps active ignorance of, the punk movement's existence in our crummy little town. The show, curated by McIntosh Gallery's Brian Lambert, exhibited over 300 examples of that era's local punk ephemera - band posters, zines etc. - partly to celebrate the awesomeness of really cool band posters. But it also aimed to draw attention to the larger movement of music, art production, and punk lifestyle that they represented. Bob Pegg wrote about the show in an earlier Yodeller. That exhibition also did wonders in throwing a brilliant light onto another overlooked facet of the punk scene. It revealed, overwhelmingly - the FCG just looked amazing with all of those posters up there - how fascinating, and in some cases completely unique, the printed productions of that time actually were when held up against the larger punk culture.

The recently published companion book, *Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990*, is the final part in this three-part project and is an arrow, so to speak, to this larger quality. Essays by Thomas Carmichael, Ben Portis, Anna Hudson, and Mike Niederman, as well as short pieces from the punks and zinesters themselves, go far to explain the era. It is simply one of the best cultural books to come from this town in a very, very long time. A whopping 125+ pages of posters - reproduced in beautiful, bloody colour - as well as 40+ pages of zines, anchor the publication. They are ugly, amateur, lewd, possessed, beautiful, dumb and cheap (well the posters at least). And they look so good all collected together like this. Familiar names such as The Embassy pop up, but places such as the Blue Boot, appear - and fascinate this local history-adoring Londoner. Moody photos of the bands in action - always a good idea - create the atmosphere and, well, odour, I imagine, of that Time and Place. It is not hard to imagine the kids performing in shabby clubs downtown and getting completely wasted afterward in some art loft on Talbot Street.

The situation was classic - kids starting bands, playing music in each other's lofts, annoying town-folk, destroying bars, and building a community of like-minded trouble-makers. And they needed promotion. As posters and zines were essential to Punk Music, many of these musicians and artists (a number of them graduates of BealArt and Fanshawe) were either active printmakers or hooked up with active printmakers living nearby to help promote their shows. As the glut of awesome posters in this book exhibits, the artists involved were incredibly excited to create the promotional material of punk fandom, of DIY culture, of riotous, aggressive music and anarchy. As Michael Hannay says in the book, "Over fifty studios were occupied in a twenty block area of the downtown." That's pretty amazing. These artists may have stolen their aesthetic from England (Ben Portis' essay contextualizes their aesthetic within the larger punk movement, specifically Jamie Reid), but they make up for lack of originality by being mighty prolific. Not to mention funny.

graphic UNderGROUND: LONDON 1977 - 1990

The book also draws attention to - and finally puts into print - work by artists from that era who transcended the typical work of promotional posters and made bonafide original artwork. The zines of Michael Niederman for example are just freaking amazing. And Michael Bidner, although on the sidelines of the movement (he produced some of the band posters), printed work that completely shot past the ordinary productions of serial-killer-letter punk poster one-offs to be bonafide (and in many cases entirely unique and awesome) productions of art in his time. I've seen tons and tons of zines in my day - zines from Toronto, from New York, from wherever - and few are as good as Niederman and Bidner's. Lambert's placing of zines into the culture of fandom is very appropriate. But the better productions of the era from London are way more than that. Zines like Adz, Heart-War, and RUDE are some of the best material of their kind ever printed in Canada. Hands down. Bidner is practically a xerographic prophet.

Also, honestly, I am deeply pleased to see Mike Niederman's work FINALLY featured in a book. Mike is included in the book's bibliographical record as one of the authors, which is very appropriate as he is essentially one of the major authors of the scene this book covers. He is an extraordinary printer.

Not to mention the always exceptional What Wave zine (with its classic free mix-tape included with each issue, as well as vinyl records sometimes). What Wave, man. Here is the fanzine at its best. The essay, by What Wave co-producer Rena O'Halloran, affectingly expresses this very well. From staying up all night drinking home-made beer and paginating 100 copies with tired, dedicated friends, to elaborate, McGivering methods of reproducing mix-tapes en masse (involving numerous tape decks and prodigious timing), O'Halloran explains the deep love and devotion - not to mention extraordinary efforts - that she and her husband (Dave O'Halloran) brought to the project. What Wave is the sort of thing that is essential to a great alternative music town. But it doesn't have to be so incredible. It doesn't have to be so exhaustive, so dedicated, so appropriate, so . . . well . . . incredibly deep. But it was. And *Graphic Underground* finally gives it its due. Mind Theatre also makes an appearance, easily the best comic zine ever made in town.

Graphic Underground has done it right. It is exactly what I'd want a book like this to be. And I slot it into my bookshelf (after lying on my stomach slowly eating each page, of course) thinking that sometimes good things like this do happen after all. Sometimes people just get it right. This whole thing is awesome. To Brian, Mike, the FCG and McIntosh, as well as everyone else who contributed and worked hard to make this amazing book happen, congratulations. And thank you.

