

Annotated Bibliography, Projections

DAZED MENA Magazine

Dazed MENA is an extension of the magazine into the Middle East and North African regions. Officially launched in 2024, it has rapidly gained influence by championing emerging creatives and celebrating the region's diverse cultures in the spaces of music, fashion, and pop culture. This is crucial to my work because it shows how a platform can operate from within a community rather than simply speaking about it, as evidenced by the ways it fosters engagement and creates space for those communities. In particular, the inaugural issues gave proof that subcultures can appear organically from within a community, blending heritage and contemporary expression in ways that co-exist. The Ethiopian skate scene featured in the article demonstrates how young creatives forge their own space, not by rejecting their cultural background, but by remaining grounded in their heritage. This approach has directly influenced my editorial voice for DUNYA, to provide a platform for diasporic voices to be seen and heard authentically without filtering or translating their experiences for an external audience. It informs a tone that is confident and self-assured because it is rooted in community perspectives, guiding how I frame stories, select contributors, and structure content to prioritize authenticity in all its forms. Through open calls and future community engagements, the magazine can contribute to world-building by creating spaces where culture can be lived, practiced, and meaningful on its own terms.

(230 Words)

AZEEMA Magazine

AZEEMA is both a print magazine and creative agency that explores the voices of women and non-binary and how they cultivate strength and creativity. In Arabic, the word Azeema translates to determination and resoluteness that is reflected in the magazine's values. Culturally affirming whilst being brave and courageous, showcasing the talent of West Asia, North Africa and South Asia and their diasporas. Most importantly, the voice of AZEEMA comes directly from the communities it represents, allowing contributors to speak for themselves and build their own narratives, resulting in work that is authentic, culturally grounded, and reflects lived experience. The publication covers a wide range of topics, including traditional arts such as henna, as well as current diasporic movements, queer identities, mental health, activism, and sports. Notable features include essays on undocumented women in the United Kingdom, profiles of up-incoming DJs and collectives, and a photo series honoring intergenerational practices and history of the region. Observing AZEEMA has shown me how to balance cultural specificity with contemporary practice. For my practice, the magazine demonstrates that publishing can be more than a platform for content, it can function as a tool for world-building and create meaningful participatory spaces where culture is reinvented through different artistic lenses.

(209 Words)

Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Maree Brown

“Do you already know that your existence—who and how you are—is in and of itself a contribution to the people and place around you?” (Brown, 2017, p. 58)

Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Brown influenced the framework when working within a group with the intentions of community building. The book displays the idea that change happens within systems and nature, and how we, as creatives, can manage these complex goals with adaptation, building relationships, and small interactions. Brown’s significance on decentralised structures and sharing leadership reshaped how we can create this platform, moving away from fixed hierarchies. It acts as both a guide for personal inner work and social action. Using the approach in Brown's book was instrumental in understanding how growth in collaborative work is a gradual process, molded through ongoing contributions and exchanges. The ideas of interdependence and decentralisation heavily influenced our ethos, where power is shared and collectively created, and community is built through care and trust. This was a vital consideration in the development of our mission statement, allowing us to integrate these values into the practice of the platform and its community engagement through future open calls.

(166 Words)

Claire Barrow Website

The website of Claire Barrow is used as an example of how to use digital spaces and how it can act as an immersive environment in contrast to a flat, conventional UI interface. Entering her portfolio feels like visiting a digital gallery realm, where 3D-rendered objects reflect real-life items beside her artwork, creating the impression of stepping into a personal world built around personable experiences. This approach sparked my interest in building a digital world for DUNYA, drawing from the meaning of Dunya, as it translates to “world” in English. My initial idea was to create experiences where audiences can enter spaces, either manifested as a shared space, like a room, shaped by creatives from the diaspora. This relates to their identities and lived experiences. My intention in designing DUNYA as an immersive and participatory digital space is that users can explore and experience the stories and things that shaped us. Through this digital form, I attempt to mirror how we all come from many manifestations of life even under similar cultural identities, a true depiction of diasporic creative expression, making the platform a space for world-building.

(214 Words)

YUNG

YUNG magazine is designed to empower our future generation by platforming talent based from the Middle East and Africa region, launching independently in 2022. A quarterly publication and online

platform that celebrates art on a global scale, fashion, culture, and music. As they reflect the times, YUNG looks to deliver content that is forward thinking through the youth culture. Their focus on upcoming voices and experimentation gives visibility for creatives who are often unseen in the mainstream, especially those who are underrepresented in Western media. YUNG functions as a reference point within my work through its perspective to uplifting the youth on a global scale, while at the same time amplifying these voices from the Middle East and Africa. How they balance the international relevance and representation throughout the regions is proof that all cultural context does not need to be stripped away to appeal to Western lens. This specifically informed the way I position DUNYA as a platform that will engage with our heritage with no compromises cultural context.

(169 Words)

Daftar Asfar

Founded in the Middle East, the publication Daftar Asfar is a collaborative publishing platform that aims to continue creative collaboration with artistic development. Launching in 2017, this project connects artist from the Middle East, North Africa, and people across the diaspora. The project functions through a shared physical sketchbook (Daftar Asfar translates to yellow book) and is passed between different participants. This allows for each person to respond in the sketchbook through whatever artistic discipline they choose, writing, illustration, or collaging. By using the publication in this form, Daftar Asfar is emphasizing how process, exchanging, and communal authorship delivers meaningful participation over structured content. This model is focusing on the importance of artistic interactions and community-building as a form of resisting commercial publishing forms. Daftar Asfar as a source, has shown relevance to my project as it demonstrates how it is possible to build a publication by its functionality. Its reliance on collaboration and community outpour proves how the platform cannot exist without sustained community involvement.

(166 Words)

Locale

Locale is an independent publishing platform and zine that focuses on Sudanese culture, lived experience, and history, with participants from creatives both based locally or within the diaspora. Through the use of research-led and collaborative approach it allows for writing, photography, and archival pieces to be incorporated in the documentation of stories that are often left out of mainstream media. By prioritizing cultural memory and contextual storytelling, Locale positions itself as a platform for self-representation and communal reflection, in some cases in response to Sudan's socio-political landscape. This approach is further facilitated by the teams desire to create a space for collaboration, dialogue and responses led by artists. Often themes around the socio-political landscape in Sudan are mentioned throughout the publication. Locale has informed my practice by its importance of research-led processes being an integral process and collaborative work as a vital method for producing heritage and historically specific grounded work.

(151 Words)

3ASAL

3ASAL is a youth-led digital platform that delivers storytelling, interviews, and creative content celebrating women in Middle Eastern and North African regions and diasporic identities. Centering on stories of identity, community, and lived experience while giving women's voices space within a Western perception, underrepresented in that particular lens in media. Through contributor-led narrative and accessible digital platforms, 3ASAL places lived experience as a key source of cultural understanding rather than an object of external interpretation. The contents of the magazine frequently reflects the complexities of negotiating culture across geographic and social borders, allowing for nuanced and individualized forms of expression. 3ASAL is a relevant source for my research because it shows how Gen Z-led online platforms may preserve cultural individuality while establishing community-focused spaces for representation. It helped me better comprehend how community participation, tone, and how the narrative structure changes engagement. 3ASAL's focus on women-centered storytelling across its issues showed me how a clearly decided approach to content and community can guide a platforms positioning.

(166 Words)

POLYESTER

An independent feminist and Gen Z cultural zine, Polyester was founded in the UK by the traditional DIY publishing form. Known for their lighthearted yet critical tone, addressing themes of gender, sexuality, subcultural identity, body politics, comedy, and artistic experimentations. Polyester prioritizes the contributions from women and queer creatives, positioning lived experiences as authoritative and valuable form of cultural commentary, rather than it being mediated by institutional voices. By using an informal aesthetic, it challenges the refined standards of polished editorial fashion and lifestyle media often have. Polyester was a great example of the zine production system functions in a UK based platform using print and digital consistently, even though it operates outside the MENA/SWANA region themes. Polyester has influenced my research because it demonstrates how independent zines maintain a distinct identity even if extending across print, internet media, and live events. Its ongoing dedication to feminist values shows how expansion and visibility are possible without sacrificing.

(157 Words)

Citations

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