

Zine Verschenken

#1 | June 2022 | zu verschenken



Editorial

Have you ever gotten something for free? Maybe you had no choice because you were in between jobs and so broke that you needed to find an activity to liven up the day. Perhaps it was luck that took you on a journey. Whichever way it came about, I can be sure it was always a welcome surprise. Whether it be that time you were delayed in Leipzig Hauptbahnhof and were caught up in an international Gothic arts festival, receiving free beers and chocolates whilst admiring the fantastical, raven-clad guests pouring out of the trains. Watching with wonder as apocalyptic steampunk goths followed by Elizabethan Gothics complete with parasols and all kinds of other whimsical creations passed by on their way to the festival. Or when you were on your way home from work and discovered a gathering outside an atelier and found yourself drawn inside by the crowd and were offered wine and snacks to complete the viewing experience. Upon leaving finding the entire street to be full of several other places doing the same thing. As it turned out this was a monthly event and next time you were able to bring friends and spent most of the month looking forward to this date again and again. Or maybe it was something more simple, spotting the perfect sofa a few blocks away from home and rushing to tell your housemates to come and help you drag it home. This infamous red sofa would become the one staple of your life here. It has accompanied you from flat shares, to hosting newcomers who crashed at your place for several months at a time, to sitting across from you now as you think about how priceless it really has become to you.

These are some of my memories that help me realise what the most enjoyable parts of life are. Everyone has a story and the ones about something for free are sometimes the most interesting.

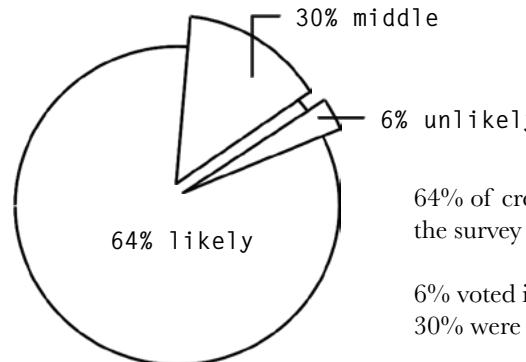
So here we are, bringing something to you, for free. A monthly zine from a local female collective. Women who have found their way to Berlin with stories to tell. Each month will bring a new theme to be expressed through our various art forms.

We could only start from the beginning with the theme zu verschenken. For those unfamiliar with the phrase, it means to give away. In Berlin, it is common practice to leave this phrase written on a box of things, a sofa, a fridge, a coffee table, roller skates – the list could go on! The items would then be placed on the street for passers-by to look through and if they find something they like, take it with them. So, join our creators on the journey through what this phrase means to each of us....

We asked you your thoughts on zu verschenken.

Here are the results:

How likely are you to take something you liked from a box marked 'zu verschenken'?

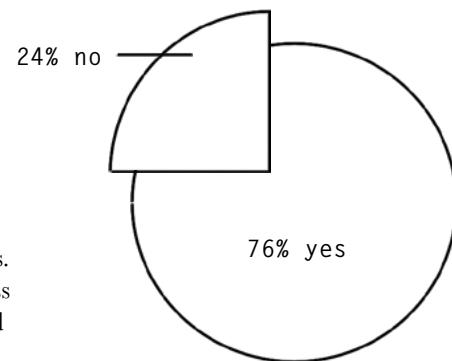


64% of creative women who participated in the survey voted in the very likely category.

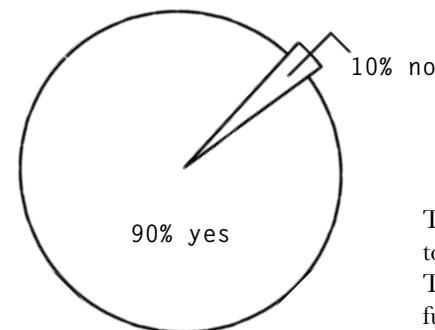
6% voted in the very unlikely category and 30% were somewhere in the middle.

Have you ever gone to collect something 'zu verschenken' from someone's home via a site such as ebay kleinanzeigen or a group e.g Free your stuff Berlin?

The items that were collected were quite varied from vintage wardrobes, to bunny supplies, a sewing machine, the majority of an entire flat as they had recently moved to Berlin, sofas, tables, and glasses. When asked if anyone would like to guess the value of these items – most suggested they were between 20 – 60 €



Have you ever given anything away zu verschenken? What was the item and why did you feel you should give it away for free?



The majority of people also said yes to this question – only 10% voted no. The items given were also varied – from furniture to clothing, electronics, and

even glass jars. People decided that it was nice to pass it on so that others could use them, or that the items were not valued at more than 20 € so it was more of a hassle to sell them, or that they had no use for the items anymore and would rather someone collected them so that they would not have to move them out themselves – this was mostly when they were talking about larger items. And of course, when they were moving apartments, several people gave away what they did not want to take with them.

How do you feel about the culture of 'zu verschenken' in Berlin? Do you feel that it is a useful and respectful part of the culture, or are people making a mess of the city and taking advantage of being able to dump useless items without paying for disposal?

The answers I received from this question really made me smile – I will share a few of them with you to see what people said;

"I really like it. Because in my country people will never give away something that costs more than a certain amount of money for free. But here in Berlin, you can get a really good new microwave for free! But on the other hand, I don't approve when people leave their stuff on the streets."

"Hah, this is a very leading question! Honestly, I never thought that people are using it as a way to dump useless items. Most items can be useful for someone, maybe someone who needs it very short term or a homeless person. I think this is a really positive thing. It helps people get furniture etc cheaply and without harming the environment or giving money to evil corporations."

"I think it's fun and it's nice for people to get free stuff. But when people leave broken or gross things in boxes on the street/in building doorways it's gross. Too lazy to throw away."

"It's a sustainable option to reduce waste"

"Berlin is a filthy place and putting anything additional on the street is exacerbating the problem. That being said, if people leave things on the street with a mindset of how this impacts others, and do it respectfully, it actually brings a level of charm and sense of community to this otherwise very cold place."

"I love it, it's part of the Berlin soul. The idea of sharing things is so easy in this way... And sometimes you can really find the perfect furniture you are looking for without buying it. It's quite magic."

"Amazing! I think a lot of people benefit from this "no-trash" culture!"

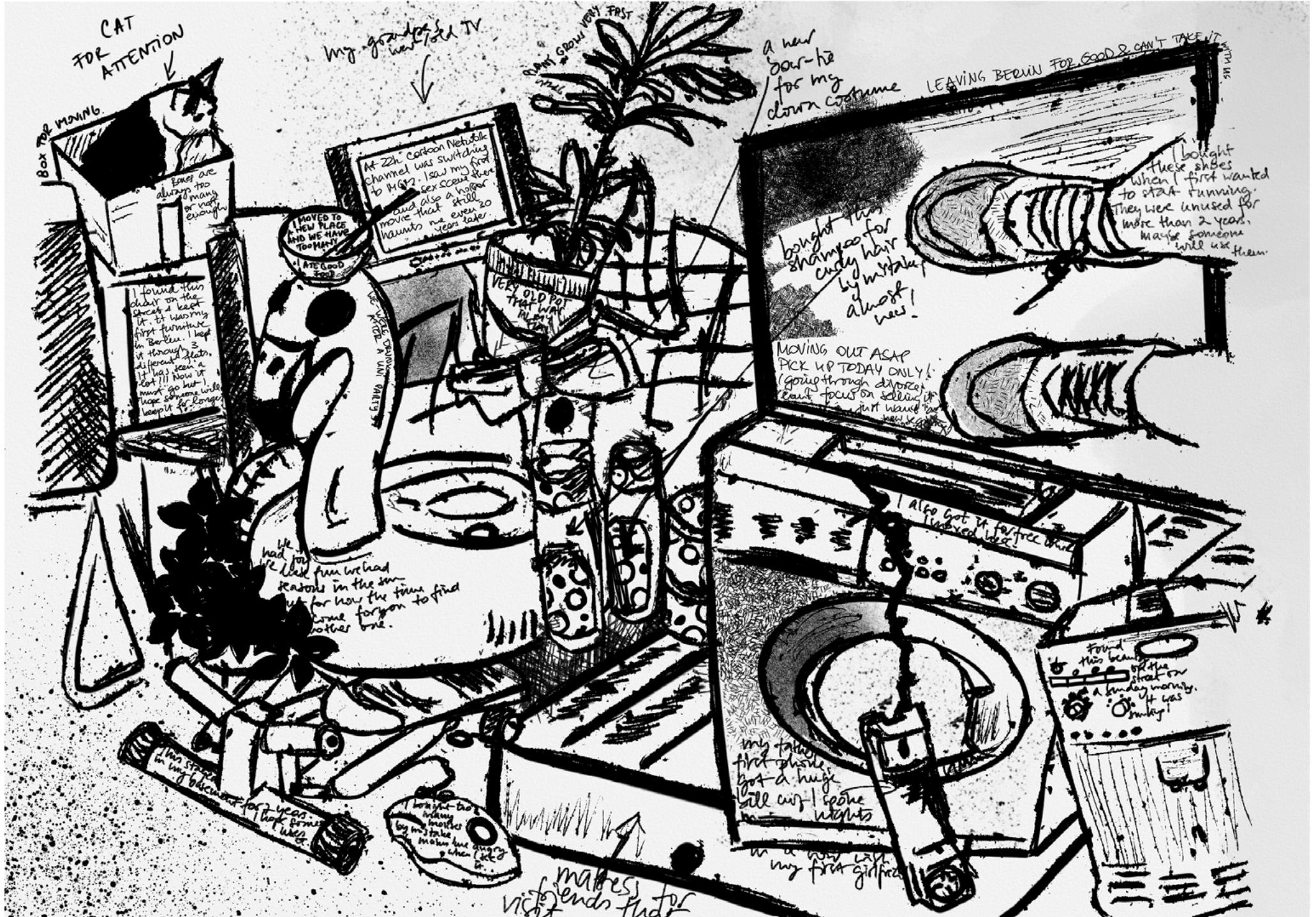
"I feel that setting large items and clothing and books outside, without shelter, is bad. Those are easily spoiled by rain and in the case of furniture, difficult to remove without an advance plan."

Finally, here are some final thoughts from the group:

"20% of my apartment decor and utilities I got zu verschenken. Even some more pricy things!"

"The only downside - sometimes stuff people leave on the street gets too wet or beaten up. Then it isn't usable anymore, which is sad. However, if you advertise something on eBay for free, I feel like lots of people will message you, but very few will actually come to collect the thing. You wait around all day and they don't turn up, which is quite annoying, especially considering you are giving them something for free and not being paid for this waiting time."

"I would love to see this sharing culture spread to other cultures, never seen anything like this."



Ten Do's and Don'ts of zu verschenken

New to Berlin? Or new in spirit and wanting to try something new? Here is all you need to know about how to zu....verschenken :)

Our first set of guidelines are for the street.

1. Leave it neatly

If you want to leave some of your things for others to collect, make sure to leave them in a box, folded and organized – this will look appealing and encourage people to take a look. Don't leave it directly on the ground, it is more likely to be stepped on or people will assume it is trash, and then it might be considered littering.

2. Don't leave it before bad weather

Prepared your box and seen outside is grey and ominous (a classic Berlin day!)? Hold off and wait until the weather is clear. A wet soggy box is just trash and no one will consider taking anything home with them

3. Leave it clean

Imagine zu verschenken is just another shopping experience. A nice clean box of things is going to be taken faster than a dirty piece of fabric lying on the floor. And for those of you looking for treasure, a little smell in the direction of the box is wise, you don't want any surprises once you are home or even worse, touching the item.

4. Don't just leave trash

Ask yourself, is this useful item to someone? Now, **really** ask yourself. It is easy to convince yourself that the old broken fridge you are dumping behind your building is going to get picked up by an electrician to rework. If you think that could be the case, advertise it in ebay kleinanzeigen, or call one to ask if they could use it. Leaving something that does not work is never going to be found by the people who could use it. Be responsible and dispose of it or find the right hands to work on it.

5. Think about donating

If you are getting rid of something that you think might be useful to someone less fortunate, don't forget you could bring your boxes of warm clothes, old furniture items, and books to a shelter where they will surely get used. Plenty of people rely on your thoughtfulness and will be very grateful for you to take the extra steps to drop your items at a registered centre.

These next few are for picking up from sites and groups such as Free Your Stuff Berlin and ebay kleinanzeigen.

1. If you are picking up – be prepared

Want to get yourself a free sofa? How about taking it to the next level and trying to get your whole apartment sorted for free? It can be done. Just have a vehicle organised for one day in the week. Write messages for the items you want, letting them know which day you will have a car and that you are prepared and reliable to come and get it. Some people may say that the first person who comes will get it, but most of the messages are from people who want it but have not set a time, or the means of transport to collect it.

2. Don't reserve

If you are giving something away, reward organisation. The ones who are ready to go, will come and make it easy on you. The ones who reserve, often change their minds, push back the dates and might not come. It also takes a lot of energy emailing back and forth with someone. There is nothing wrong with saying – if it is still there by then, you are welcome to come and take it.

3. Consider adding a false price

You can set your price at 5 € . This helps invite people who are more serious about coming to collect an item. Once they are there, you can surprise them and say it is for free.

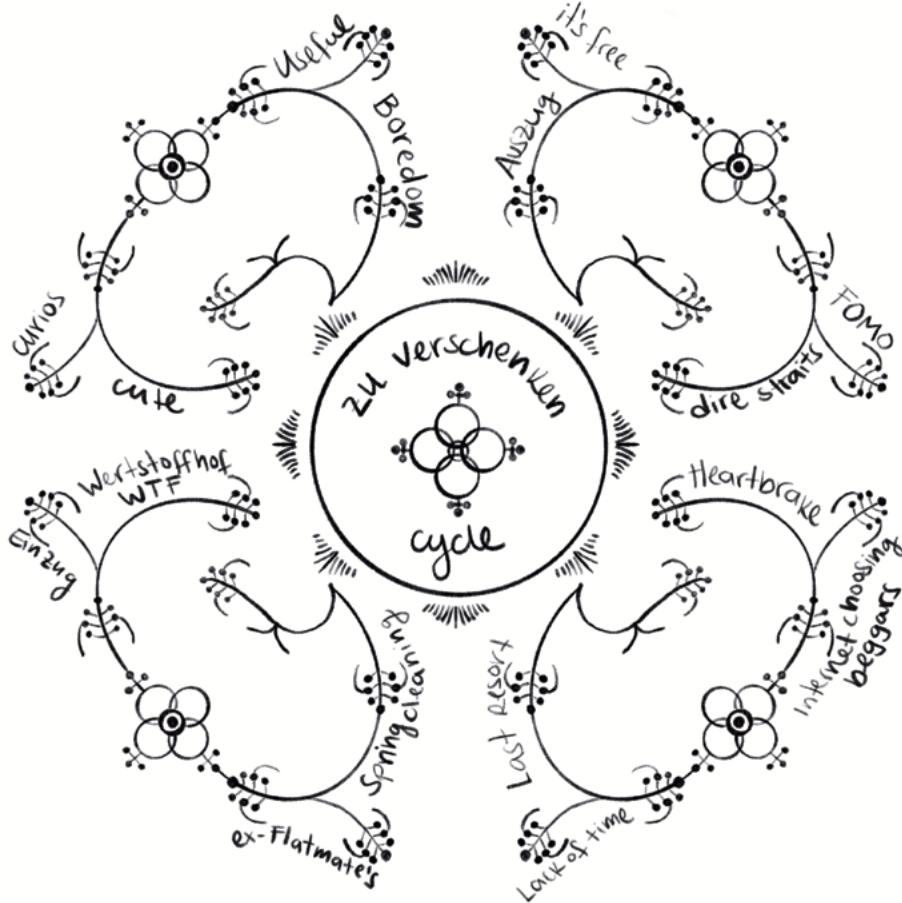
4. Don't waste anyone's time

If you want something – make a suggestion and stick to it. If you are still just in the dreaming phase of owning such an item – don't write to the person. Hold back until you are ready to go. If it's meant to be yours – it may still be there.

5. Be fast

You might have realised by now, that there is a fine art to zu verschenken and quite a lot of people dedicate time to collecting via these sites. The best things will go fast. There are many people who check these categories regularly. Have what you want in mind and check the sites when you have the time and motivation to collect as soon as possible. Get ready, set, go!

No man's objects



Diogenes lived in a barrel. What he left behind:

A hulling flower tableware set like my grandma used to have,
old oak closets and tables and
that cushioned, green armchair, all worn-out by grandpa watching tv all day long.
Office chairs,
a desk and
a shiny wallet for the business you never had and the money you never earned. A
cribble,
a scrabble and
a pair of children's shoes that grew too old to play.
Matters of another space and days getting moldy in a deep dark basement.

Ebay is a bottomless pit of neglection, consumerism, embarrassment - insert useless old-fashion object. How many times I built my life up on remains: seven.

I crawl to make my way through:

half-empty cans and
rusty belts and
a canary that flew away (his name was Mark, contact owners at 12051) and 58
pieces of cobblestone (13x19x8cm). Pavement and dust.

A broken radio and
picture frames without pictures, to leave it free for anyone's face and anyone's
hands.

Dog leashes for the doggy that left and
the day is done and the list keeps growing.
A drug folder - if that even exists.

(Is the first time I've seen something like this. A folder to keep the medicines carefully separated by weekday. Xanax for Monday, Ritalin on Tuesday, Codeine for Wednesday, Phenobarbital on Tuesday, Pentobarbital on Friday, Rohypnol and Valium and Prozac, Norpramin and Silenor on Saturday and Sunday's the lord's day. Abzugeben in Lankwitz.)

Diogenes didn't wear sandals, he rather wore potato sacks.

I travel through:

insomnia and DDR egg cartons - Eggs not included.
 Half-made high beds - let's say a normal bed?- and
 the famous books that no one wanted to read - *No-curious George and the Hotel at the sea, God Bless this House* with a cover like a horror movie, pink spicy romantic-erotic novels and half naked bodies. Nur Abholung Nähe S-Treptow.
 Good car from Ukraine. User rated "ok" - moderately reliable?

To watch the long way to walk for a piece of something to fill the blank spaces.
 To see the backgrounds of the pictures, the hidden objects (not on sale) just reveal what we must keep.
 To count the kilometers apart to bring a broken mirror from the center to the suburbs is to assume the -lesser- evil.

But not everything is dump. Not everything is rotten - it's a luxury to rot.
 A 70s chaiselong for the dreams never came true rests on a layer of suspicious stains. Its backrest is an oz, an eye, a wizard.
 A blue papagayo with a smile on its peak - I'll call him Gilbert, came from Turkey in a hot air balloon that landed right on Ostbahnhof.
 The magic chair with the rainbow colors where my cat's taking a nap. Brought from Spandau to Pankow in a Rewe shopping chart.

Diogenes never lived in the digital era.

He never walked through the noise, nor through slot machines corridors (one coin after coin, a useless item after another). Never cycled one step after the other until the sweat swallowed the road. It's a long journey through the boredom of the world, through the same routines -consumer behaviors-, through what we had and couldn't keep. It's a double edged sword. Tension, production and stock and then relief by the ghost of whoever comes after, by the power of giving up. To never get what we were searching for - rather what's offered.

Suddenly, a pie on the windowsill. I'm hungry.



^{zine} **Verschenken**

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Artists: Bianca Cheung
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Do you want to contribute to the zine?
Have any questions?
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