

## **Sole-Zine Exhibit Report**

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### **Abstract:**

*Sneakers, trainers, kicks, webs, strides, soles, creps, beaters, trabs, or trainees, whatever you call your footwear, there is a particular tribe who are obsessive about theirs...* Sports shoe enthusiasts are attached to their possessions unlike any other conscious community.

Sole-Zine is a poster zine project created by Paul Owen and Kayla Owen, dedicated to researching, documenting, and archiving British Trainer Culture. A sub-culture originally created by the Terrace Casuals movement of the late 70's and early 80's. Today, the sports shoe is a huge part of fashion's multi-million-pound industry, with high end brands moving in on the action. Sole-Zine is an ongoing project that digitally archives artefacts, historical photography, magazine references, interviews, and other ephemera associated with British Trainer Culture. It is intended to demonstrate the impact and significance of trainers. From the craftspeople to the unique seekers and the under-represented sectors born out of this culture. Emphasising this much-loved fashion area gives rise to the tribes and cohesive socio-groups who define and are defined by values and tensions around status, belonging, and the need for individuality.

Sole-Zine provides an openly accessible archive of specific cultural and material significance and acts as a living resource and reference point. By initially interviewing craftspeople within the restoration, customisation, and conversion processes and recording the materials, and techniques of the profession, the aim is to preserve the innovation, skill, artisanship, and tradition. This shared dialogue opens new fashion theory and critical debate, on creative practice surrounding fashion and textiles in the light of this ethical and sustainable development naturally evolving within this sub-culture. It also shines a light on a specific under-represented socio-group and a conscious community existing on the periphery of fashion.

**Keywords:** British, Trainers, Sub-culture, Conscious, Community

This exhibit provided opportunity to view rare, original, and vintage trainers and showcase the prevailing innovation via interviews with Lee Brannigan ('Refreshed Kicks' - trainer restorer and customiser), David Charlesworth ('Vintage Trainer Repairs' - conversion expert) and Kris Boyle ('Dundee Sole' - trainer restorer and customiser), experts embedded in this movement. The zine also reveals records from personal and private collections, as well as a focus on the materials, techniques and processes adopted by subscribers seeking the unique '1-of-1', in addition to the quality achieved by the innovators providing the service.

Restore (vol 02): For Lee @refreshed.kicks restoring an item to its former glory, is far superior to any re-issue. Preserving fashion items, we already own, vintage, in this sense, is a sustainable signifier. You are buying into a story and wearing pieces that were made to last. Re-loving pieces within our wardrobe offers nostalgia, personal connections, and narrative.



Convert (vol 03): One way to claim status and gain respect from their peers was to find a way to own limited edition '1 of 1' trainers. David @vintage\_trainer\_repairs68 has made a name for himself by pioneering the art of sole transplants or 'converting' one style of trainer into another. He never recreates his designs, choosing originality and invention, over mass produced generic copies.



Custom (vol 04): Customisers are often craftspeople who began by restoring items. As their interest, knowledge and skills develop, curiosity is peaked, inspiration is taken, and progress is made. However, not all customisers are created equal, Kris @dundeesole is a key figure in the world of customisation creating works of art on trainers, depicting bespoke imagery for customers from the world of music, sport, fashion and beyond.



By subscribing to restoring their trainers, customising them to gain uniqueness and even converting them to create a '1 of 1' hybrid version of a beloved, grail (favourite or most wanted trainer), subscribers are adding value to their fashion items and developing a new way of seeing their sports shoes. One which encourages them to cherish and nurture, and by doing so, this sub-culture breeds a sustainable, conscious attitude to their footwear. Not satisfied with being seen in the latest garbs, but rather driven by the desire to be part of another fashion sector who strive for exclusivity and innovation. Their satisfaction comes from others not being able to acquire the fashion items that are intrinsic to their style, or owning, or restoring a rare 'deadstock' trainer. Giving new meaning to 'standing out' from the crowd, achieving a rare and unattainable aesthetic, existing ethically at the vanguard of fashion.

Sole-Zine seeks to document and highlight this conscious community, and in doing so, ascertain whether this tribe define a new genre of fashion, a sector where social norms are set by the individual rather than fashion designers, commercial trends, or

marketing. Luxury and desire are symbolised not by owning the most expensive, most hyped designer fashion item, but rather by collecting, hunting, or creating one's own exclusive fashion items. One which no-one else can own. Setting aspiration at such a niche level that these items become even more covetable.

Ultimately Sole-Zine recognises that trainers are deep, they are much more than mere footwear. Trainers share the owner's emotions, sentiments, and experiences and that is why it is important to interrogate the ethos surrounding this sub-culture and consider the potentiality this approach may have within other fashion contexts.