

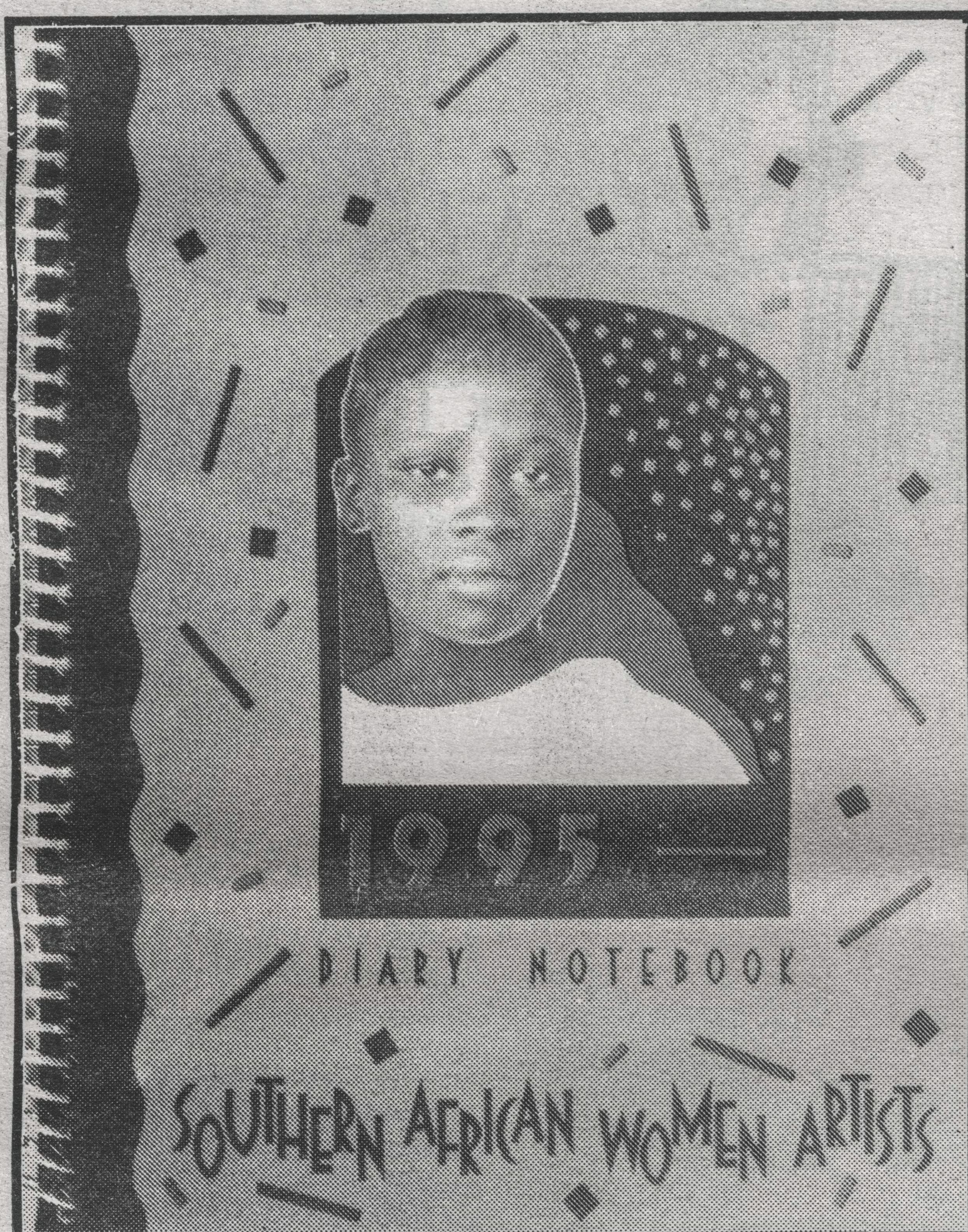
Review: ZWICCT Diary:

Women in cultural work

by Laiwan

1991 was the eleventh anniversary of Zimbabwe's independence from colonial rule and Rhodesian apartheid. The nurturing of the imaginations of young women and children had become important in relation to the development of the status of women in particular and of the nation as a whole, especially in the context of the struggles of the post-colonial imperialism most countries and people in the South face.

With this in mind, four women and I came together to start a task-based trust called Zimbabwean Women in Contemporary Culture Trust (ZWICCT) in Harare, Zimbabwe.



Task-based mean that we were primarily to bring to the forefront the works of women and to facilitate networking between women working within the spheres of cultural production. It also meant each trustee had a specific task — such as editing, photography, researching, desktop design, distribution— without hierarchy.

This trust was conceived to focus solely on the work women were doing in contemporary cultural/artistic production. The reason for this was we realised how young women and children had very few visible role models for alternative careers or occu-

pations other than the traditional or stereotypical—as secretaries, nannies, clerks, bank tellers, wives, childbearers etc.

The tasks that ZWICCT prioritized were:

- locate women in Zimbabwe who work in traditional and contemporary cultural forms—from basketweavers to radio DJs to bottle-top painters to club singers—and to collate a database by which to link these artists. This database can be accessed at the Zimbabwean Women's Resource Centre and Network in Harare (ZWRNC, Box 2192, Harare, Zimbabwe).

- To produce user-friendly publications that highlight the lives and realities of these artists. Since 1992, ZWICCT has produced a Diary-Notebook that profiles individuals and groups of women and their work through photographs and excerpts of interviews. The first diary was sponsored financially by Sida (a Swedish non-governmental organization) and WomanKind (a feminist organization in the UK), and CODE (Canadian Organisation for Development through Education) supplied the paper. Because paper is scarce in Southern Africa, books are expensive. This has meant that many women were unable to purchase our publications. ZWICCT thus published 4,000 Diaries in 1992 and gave half of these to women's organizations, women artists and schools for free. This practice still continues. The newest Diary is hot off the press.

- To research and network with women cultural workers in the Southern African region. This was done through the 1994 Diary, which includes women from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The 1995 Diary also features women from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. This is a remarkable achievement because of the difficulties of telecommunications within the Southern African region, as well as because of the economic and civil destabilization caused by foreign agendas in a few of these countries.

With each year, the Diaries have increasingly become a day-to-day, practical

symbol of alliance and exchange-in-friendship between Southern African women.

In an excerpt from the preface to the ZWICCT 1994 Diary, the ZWICCT trustees

write: "The intention is not to speak with one voice, but to present and celebrate the diversity of our experiences, media and perspectives in the region.

"To spotlight women inevitably provokes the challenge: 'Do you want to put women, and women's art, in a ghetto?' In reply, we suggest that women are already in a ghetto. One day women will have the same encouragement, opportunity, training, financial reward, promotion and recognition for their creative work as men have. Until that day dawns, we need to meet each other, find strength in each other's resilience and vision, and organize ourselves.

"...We hope that our readers will be as inspired as we were by meeting our sisters around the region."

The trustees of ZWICCT today are Tisa Chifunyise, Ann Holmes, Lorraine Kaseke, Fiona Lloyd, Joyce Makwenda, and Margaret Waller.

ZWICCT invites your participation in its growing network. Books, magazines, resource guides to cultural production and work by women can be sent for library and networking use. Write to ZWICCT first before you send anything—postal customs levies can be expensive on books and you'll need guidelines on how to send things.

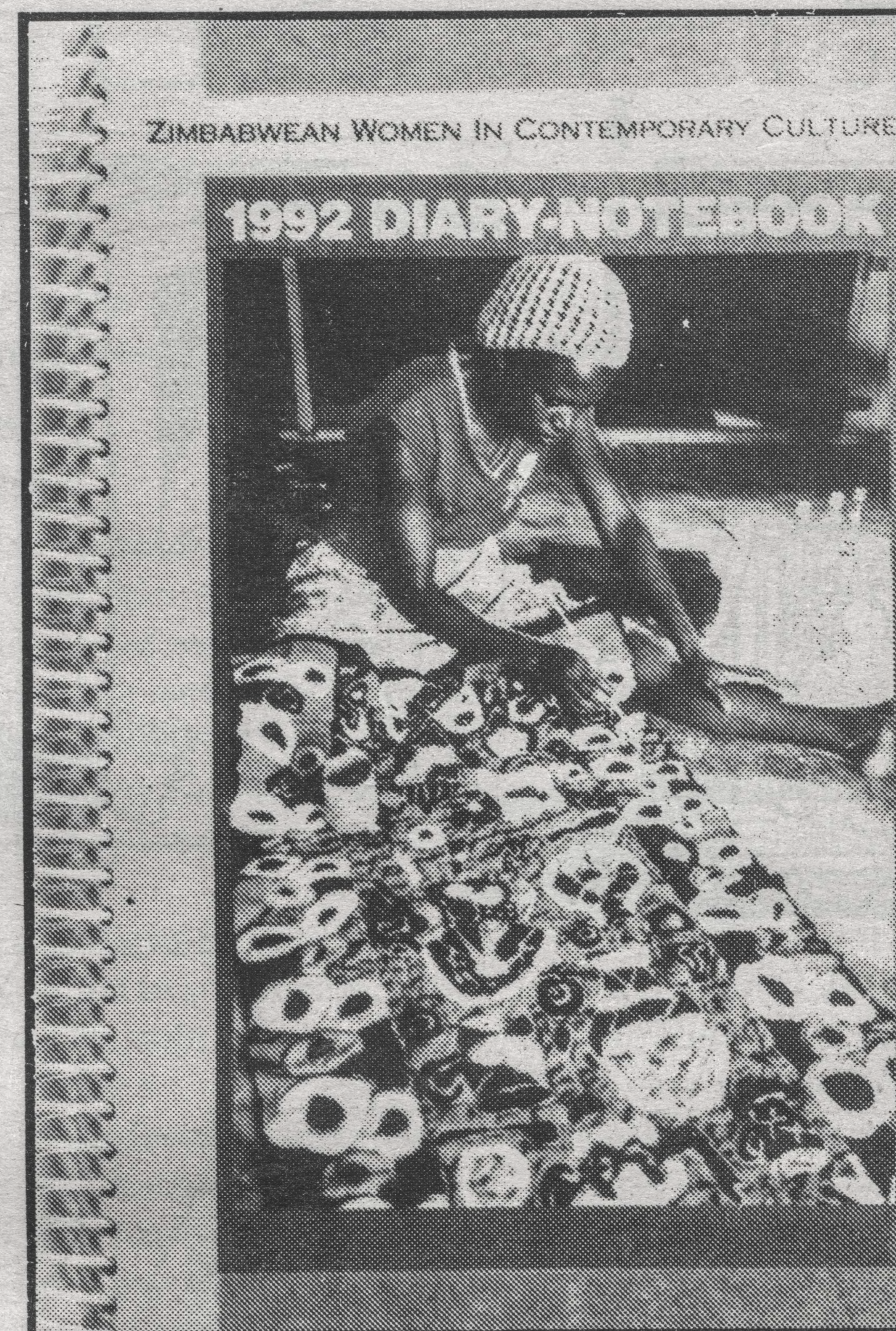
If you are from the Southern Africa region, ZWICCT welcomes your entries for their next publication and their database. Let them know about your work, your organizations, your ideas and your needs from ZWICCT.

If you are not from the region but from any other country of the South—South-South dialogue—or are an indig-

enous artist or indigenous organization in an industrialized nation, ZWICCT encourages and welcomes your letters.

You can also support ZWICCT by ordering 1995 Diaries. Write to ZWICCT, Box 2192, Harare, Zimbabwe; or call ZWICCT at (263) (4) 787608. In Canada, expect the Diaries to cost about US\$20 (to be sent in US funds), depending on postage and handling.

Laiwan is a Zimbabwe-born, Vancouver-based volunteer writer for Kinesis and an honorary ZWICCT trustee since leaving Harare in 1992.



"Lately I've been feelin'...you know... kinda like raisin' hell."

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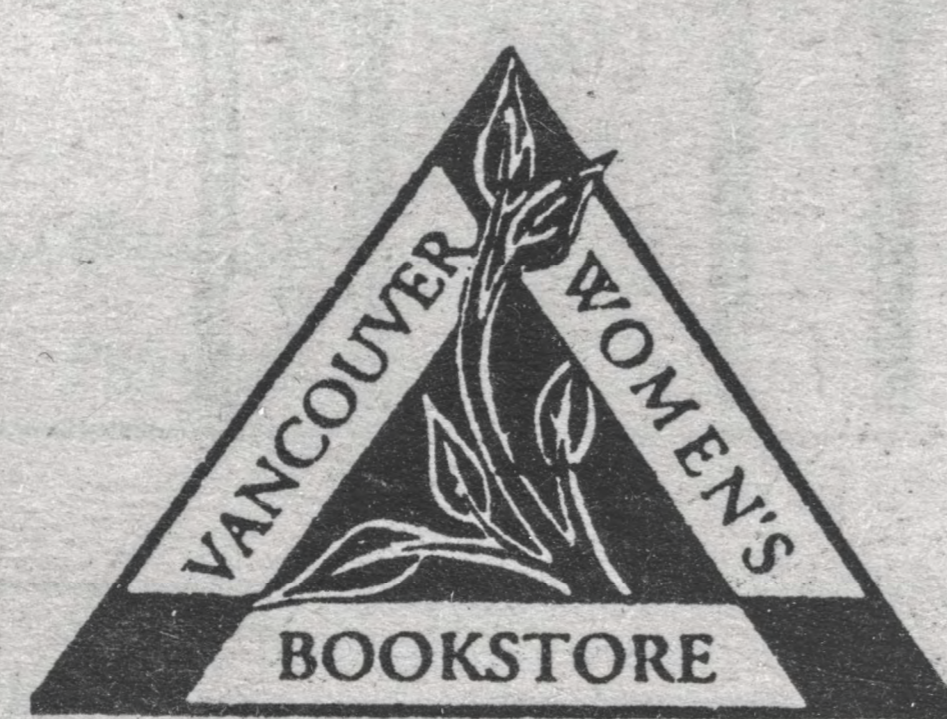
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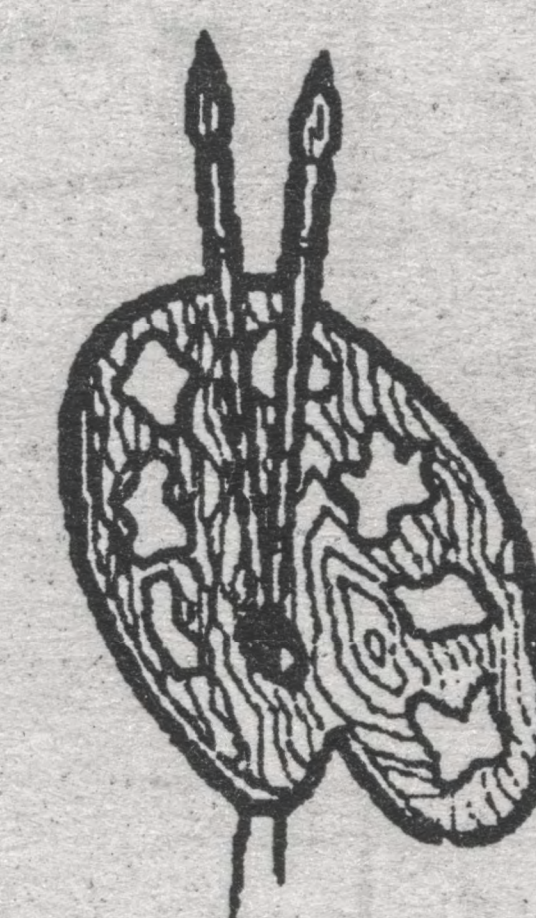
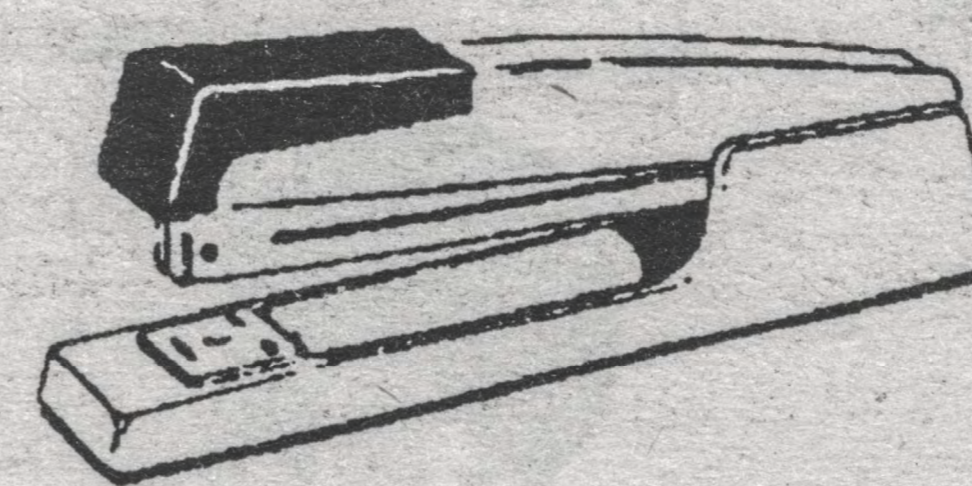
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