

A (**FICTION**) Zine  
A (**ACRYLIC**) Zine  
A (**MINIMAL**) Zine  
A (**RAPTURE**) Zine  
A (**ISSUE-FOUR**) Zine  
A (**LACHLAN**) Zine  
A (**MCKEE**) Zine  
A (**JONATHAN**) Zine  
A (**O'BRIEN**) Zine  
A (**BRISBANE**) Zine



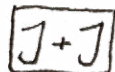
A () *Zine*, issue four, featuring art by Lachlan McKee and words by Jonathan O'Brien, put together by Jerath Head & Jonathan O'Brien, and published by pseudonaja.group.

**W**hen we first sat down with the idea to make a zine during quarantine, the whole country was in roughly the same boat. Quarantine meant staying home, and we figured staying home meant we'd all be missing each other, and we'd all be looking for things to do. And then we thought—just because we can't see people doesn't mean we can't make something together.

We reached out to some of our favourite Brisbane creatives, who are also some of our favourite people. We said—we don't have any money or particularly coherent ideas, but it'd sure be nice to work with you and put some of your work in front of the public during this time, and to maybe pair you up with someone else to make something that is each of you, and also its own thing, and also uniquely Brisbane.

As it turned out, the coronavirus lockdown meant different things to different people. In Queensland we were fortunate, many of the people involved in this zine particularly so—some found themselves busier than they thought they would, and others ended up busier than when lockdown began.

So this zine became a slow process. This was almost exclusively our fault. But everyone was patient, and didn't complain, and gave freely of their time and energy. Lachlan and Jonathan have known each other since Lachlan undertook a residency at House Conspiracy in 2017, and they became mutual fans of each other's work. Jonathan's microfictions press softly on a range of quarantine anxieties, tempering—ever so slightly—the boldness of Lachlan's paintings. Together their work is a considered turbulence—an apt homage to a strange time. In light of this strange time, we offer you this parenthetical zine, this quaranzine, this four-of-eight zine. We enjoyed making it.



## Inheritance

**The first time the** thought came to me I felt a great lake of bile fill my stomach and rise into my throat and I immediately swallowed. I pushed the sickly liquid feeling back down and kept talking to my sisters about Mum. We were in a group call, just audio thank god, and we were discussing what the lockdown meant. Sadie was the only one of us still living in Brisbane, so she was the one who usually looked after Mum when she needed it—but Sadie was also a nurse, and in the current circumstances that complicated things. I don't think I can see her without putting her at risk, she said, which is when—that was when the thought first flickered through me, through my whole body. It doesn't matter, I told myself. It's like that time you held James up above the fence so he could see off the side of the mountain. It's just like that. It's just one of those thoughts. I asked: Should I fly up for a while? I'm working from home anyway. Celine said she heard from her husband they might be closing state borders soon, and told me not to risk it. It's not dire enough yet, Katie, she said. Then there's a silence. One of us asks: What if she gets it? And then there's a second, longer silence. Well, for starters, says Celine, we'd probably never see her again. And then she says something else, I think, though I can't tell what it is because I'm leaned over the sterile kitchen sink, my stomach and chest turning like an ocean and my throat choked up on the threat of bile, and I'm locked in and hunched there for what feels like hours, and the whole time I'm praying for release, praying for my stomach to empty itself of this intense feeling, to feel grounded again. But the whole time I'm frozen there not a damned thing will come out, not even when I pray, and I'm so quiet about it that Michael doesn't find me till the sun's disappeared behind the neighbours' tree line and when he pulls me up from the sink with a gentle hand I look him in the eye and tell him I'd had the most horrible dream.

## Thief

Bikes, cars, lawnmowers, whipper snippers, trailers, pot plants, barbecues, hubcaps, and exercise equipment; perfectly good plastic crates and wooden boxes, window frames and old doors, and fridges full of drinks; clotheshorses, towels, underwear, pants, shirts, sheets; gumboots, thongs, bags of old rags, jigsaws, table saws, and one-handed saws; rulers, pencils, porno mags, old CRT TVs, and easels; fairy lights and the trees they're hung on, front gates, and mailboxes; weatherboards, bricks, corrugated tin sheeting, hinges, nails, and screws; grass, crickets, soil, soil with a good pH level and beneath it those root systems intermingled underground, wrapped round concrete foundations and wheedling their way through the cracks and inside, eating slowly away at the underside of every house in the neighbourhood; hills hoists, herb gardens, and plastic tricycles; the fruit and berries from branches, the dew on them before dawn, the wiring round the garden bed meant to keep the possums out but easy enough to pull to one side, to reach in, to take a small and newly bloomed flower home, just one of many, just one, so small that no one will notice.



*House*  
Acrylic & flashe on polycotton  
61 x 50.8cm



*Blocks*  
Acrylic & flashe on polycotton  
61 x 50.8cm

## Paralysis

I wake up one day during the quarantine and I can't move. Not an inch. Every part of me, every limb and muscle and joint and hair and finger and bone is stuck in the place it was when I first woke. It doesn't feel like a weight, really. It feels like each piece of my body is a piece of a plastic model that has been sealed in place by factory glue and I try to cry out but my jaw cannot open, and no sound comes out. All I can move is my eyes, and I figure this is because they're attached to my brain and my brain is definitely working because I'm able to think all these things about how my body no longer works due to God's glue. Then I realise I don't know how eyes move. I realise I don't really know how anything moves. I realise it doesn't matter. Nothing moves. Hours pass. Nothing moves. Except my eyes, which can not only move but cry, too. Involuntarily, even, they can cry. Problem is I sleep on my back, so the tears pool in the sockets and they flood over and make my eyes blur and sting. And even though this makes the tears come faster, I do not sob because whatever muscles I need to do that aren't working. Nothing's working. More hours pass spent half-blind. I begin to pray in my head, figuring that God wouldn't be too worried about things being said aloud given the circumstances. More hours pass. His glue does not give way to movement. The day cycles to night then back again. I cannot move but I cannot sleep either. My phone goes off a few times, but never frantically. Just emails, I think, or casual texts. After all, no one's expecting me anywhere, and so I am doing exactly what's expected of me: lying here alone in the dark, waiting for all of this to pass.

## Brisbane

**Brisbane in quarantine.** Not much changes. A slow city gone slower. Traffic's gone, and the trains are empty, and the buses are empty, and more of the stores are shuttered than before, and the cyclists out in the morning have finally learned to ride single-file, but mostly it's the same. This has never been a dense city, never one teeming with life. Most things about this city are modest. We always said: like a small country town we put in Photoshop and dragged by the corner till it was just big enough and not too pixelated. From up here, it sure looks that way. People still come to Mount Coot-tha in quarantine, still watch the sun rise and set, still watch the tiny model town below like it's an ant farm where all the ants are only visible when they're driving cars. Sometimes, though, they drive their cars, ride their bikes, or make their way up the side of the hill on a dirt trail, spread out from each other and giving generous berths to the other ants they pass. But also saying: Hello, how are you? But also saying: God, I love this mountain, this climb. But also saying: I am glad they didn't close the path. Us too, say the other ants. Us too. Very much. And at the top everyone stands apart, but we watch each other. It doesn't feel guilty. We're almost all of us in couples but we speak loudly to each other, as if to everyone. Look at the sun against the glass! Look at that eyesore of a state government building, stacked top to tail with bureaucrats. Look at the river, golden in the morning light. Look at the criss-cross bridges, the coloured exhaust chimneys for the tunnels, the churches reaching up to us from atop their smaller hills. And look at you, my love. Look at us all. At that I grab your hand. All of us: we all grab someone's hand. Look at this city, we say. And look at you. Take my hand, and weather this with me. It might be over soon.



( a p s e u d o n a j a p r o j e c t )

**L**achlan McKee is a Brisbane-born, Melbourne-based artist who works primarily in painting and collage to explore the logic of the pictorial plane. McKee plays with the conventions of composition, breaking down the traditional separation between figure and ground to create a more ambient and fluid image-worlds. This language is composed of synthetic colours, meandering contours, and abstract shapes that interact dynamically and dance on the precipice of becoming resolved figures.

**J**onathan O'Brien is a Brisbane-based writer, educator, and freelance creative, described as "a fresh and exciting voice" by *The Guardian Australia*. He has been awarded the Lord Mayor's Young and Emerging Artists Fellowship (2020), the State Library of Queensland Young Writers Award (2017), and the QUT Undergraduate Creative Writing Prize (2014). These stories are excerpted from a 55-story microfiction collection he wrote during quarantine.

**P**seudonaja is a small independent literary group based in Brisbane. A () Zine is their first project. More details, including financial breakdowns and digital versions of this publication, can be found online at [pseudonaja.group](http://pseudonaja.group). You can reach out to the collective at [pseudonaja.group@gmail.com](mailto:pseudonaja.group@gmail.com).

The traditional owners of the lands on which Brisbane sits—and where this zine was made—are the Yugara and Turrbal people, and their sovereignty was never ceded.



**SMALL AND  
NEWLY BLOOMED.**

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