

Artful Volumes

BOOKFORUM CONTRIBUTORS ON THE SEASON'S OUTSTANDING ART BOOKS.



Xeroxed cover of *SISTER*, July 1973. From *The New Woman's Survival Catalog*.

In the cultural Sturm und Drang of the early 1970s, antiestablishment zeal met the old American myth of self-reliance to catalyze a groundswell of DIY countercultures. Back then, “self-help” smacked less of entrepreneurial individualism than of communes and mutual aid. One strain of this grassroots empowerment yielded Kirsten Grimstad and Susan Rennie’s **THE NEW WOMAN’S SURVIVAL CATALOG** (Primary Information, \$30), a directory of feminist resources, including women-run presses, radio shows, clinics, daycares, rape crisis centers, divorce co-ops, credit unions, and liberation schools. The book, just republished, testifies to the breadth of community initiatives spawned by the women’s movement, as well as its geographic dispersion, from Albuquerque to Kalamazoo to Tampa and many towns in between.

A pre-internet relic of content aggregation, the catalogue documents an “alternative woman’s culture” that proliferated in the ’70s to circumvent institutional sexism. Descriptive blurbs represent organizations with delightfully second-wave titles like Wollstonecraft Inc. (a publishing house) and *Dykes and Gorgons* (a lesbian-separatist mag), while other pages feature self-defense comic strips and toilet fixit diagrams. Vintage illustrations culled from posters and zines include a halftone cartoon of Wonder Woman wielding a speculum and an elegant line drawing of lissome nudes, the stylistic progeny of Matisse’s Arcadian dancers, flocking above the brassy headline “The Discovery of the Clitoris.” A spin-off of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, its environmentalist counterpart, *The New Woman’s Survival Catalog* purveys a homespun aesthetic hallmarked by paste-up layouts and folksy serified typefaces. Reflecting both frictions and coalitions within the women’s movement, its content insists that collaborative support networks are integral to the project of liberation. After all, as George Carlin once cracked, consulting the expertise of others isn’t really self-help—it’s just help. —KAEGAN SPARKS