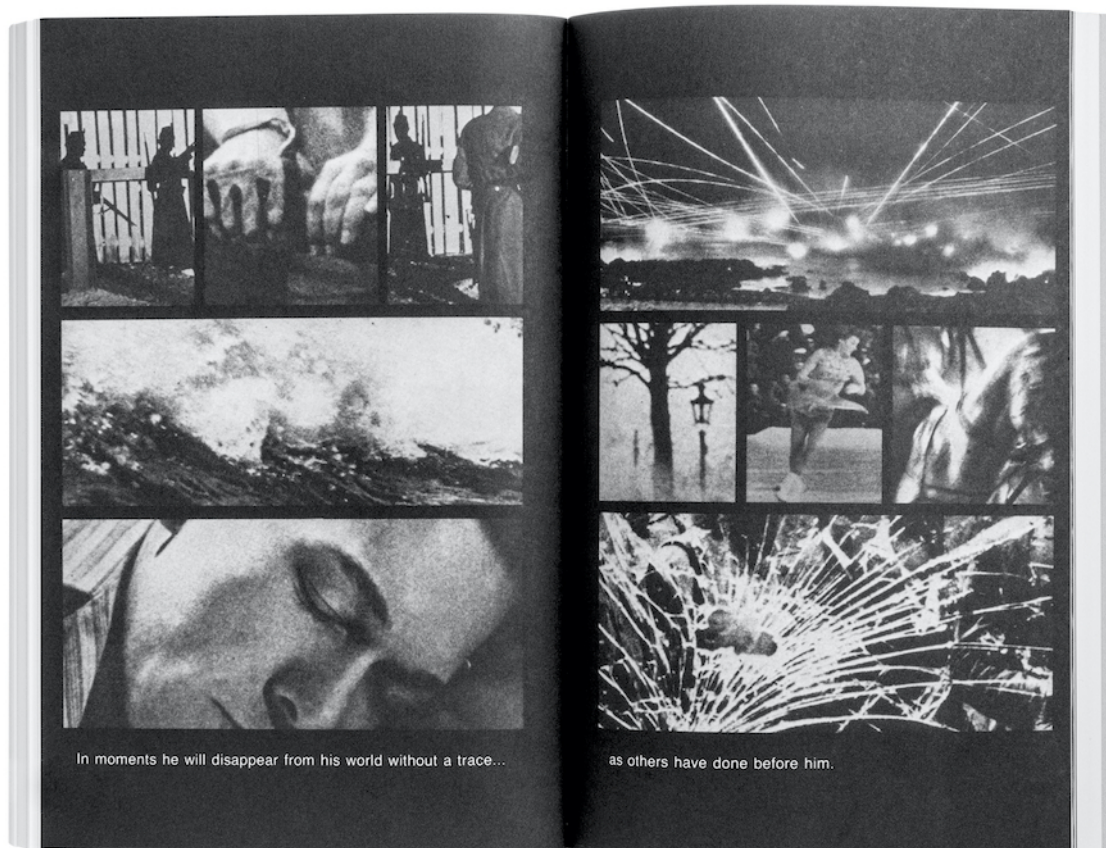


## Top Stories

Conor Williams :: 6/1/2022

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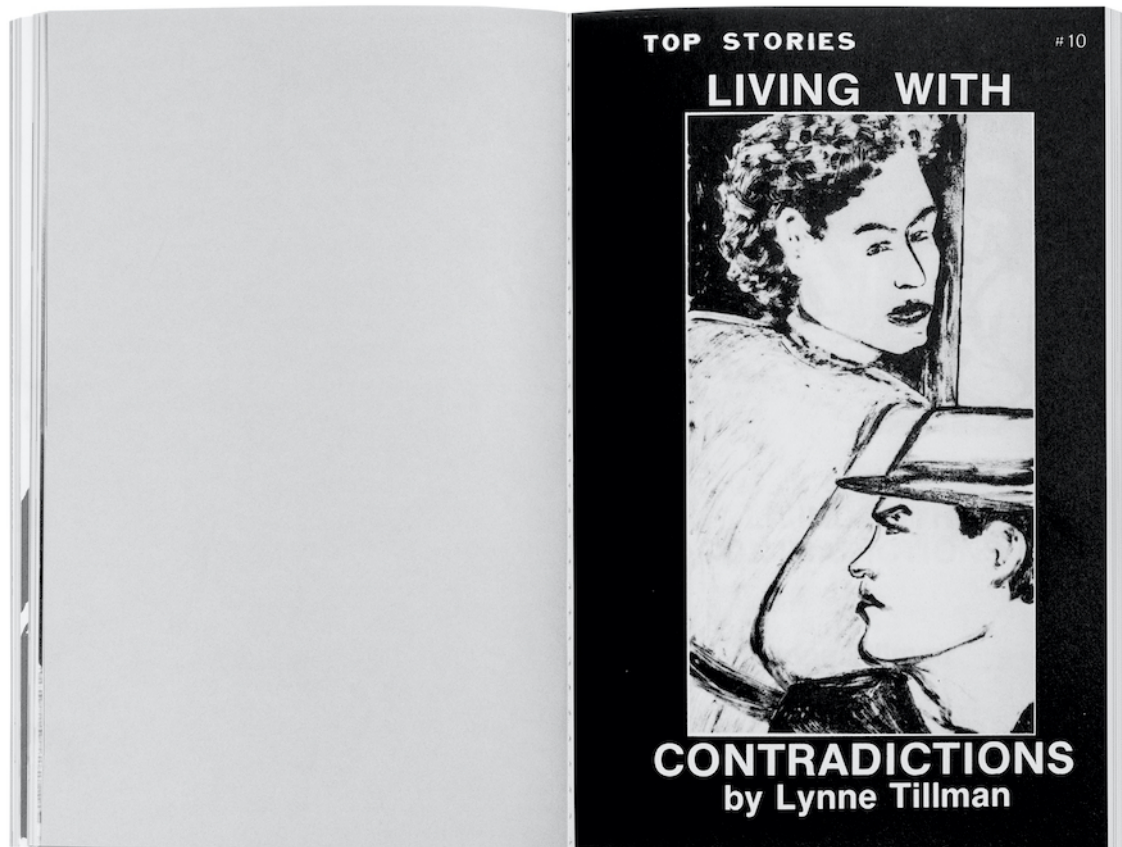
**Filmmaker and critic Conor Williams reflects on Anne Turyn's unique indie periodical with former contributor Lynne Tillman**



Excerpt from Top Stories #28, War Comics, by Lisa Bloomfield

In 1978, the photographer Anne Turyn began editing and publishing periodical books featuring writing by artists. This publication was called *Top Stories*. It included work by daring and thoughtful thinkers, artists who represented a particular milieu, that of the downtown New York art scene of the 1980s. The formidable punk energy and ethos of that scene and its scrappy DIY ingenuity has been consumed by...well, consumerism. Its radicalism has been softened by age. That said, the legacies of many of its contributors reverberate on, and many of the writers featured continue to blaze new creative trails today. The publication's spirit can still be felt in the work of storied arts magazines such as *BOMB*, and more independent endeavors like *LESTE* Magazine, particularly when it comes to the modest, handcrafted aesthetic of the original *Top Stories* issues.

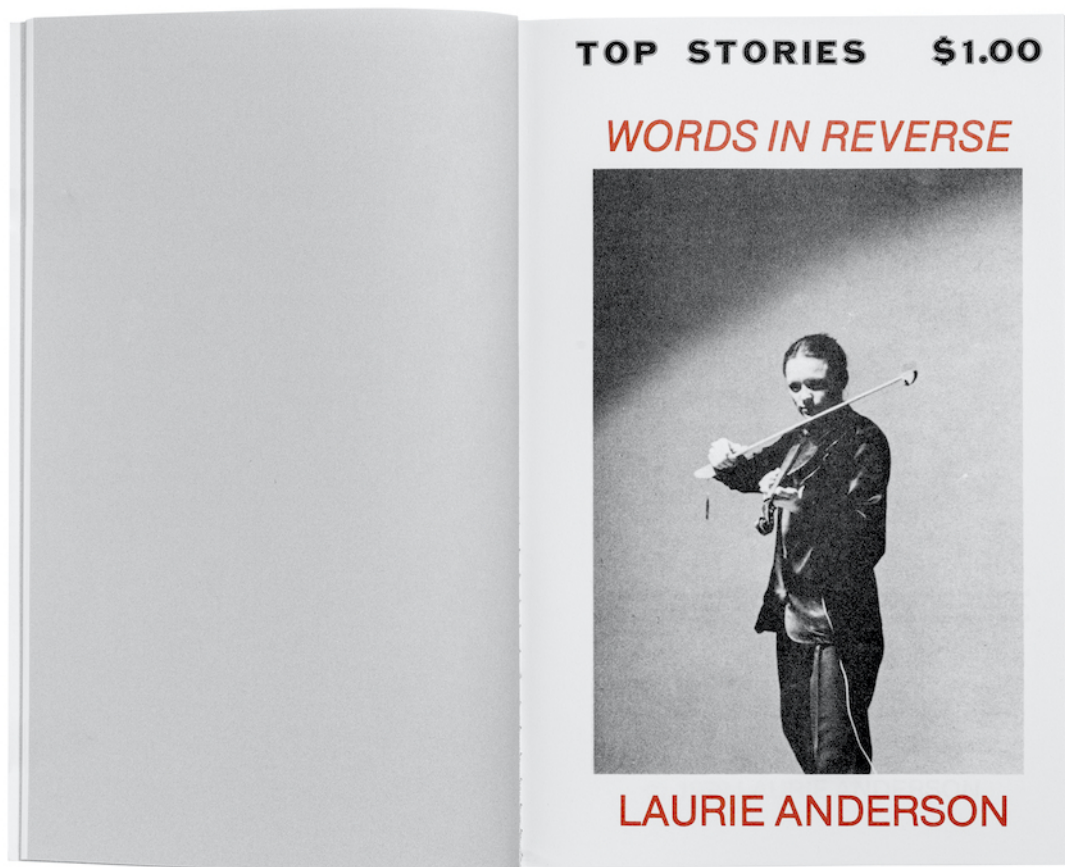
"I think indie publications are *very* important," *Top Stories* contributor Lynne Tillman told me. "They don't operate by consensus. There's more idiosyncrasy. There's less money to spend and lose. Also, consensus can dull what gets into print. Imagining there is a certain public for work — that can be folly. Think about big budget movies. Writers like myself don't write for a public. We don't have one."



Cover of *Top Stories* #10, Living with Contradictions, by Lynne Tillman with drawings by Jane Dickson

Most of the contributors to *Top Stories* were women. When I asked Anne if she had intended this, she replied, “No, but that happened. I was interested in language as well as writing that was formally innovative. I thought I was publishing literature, but *Top Stories* was often categorized as artists’ books.”

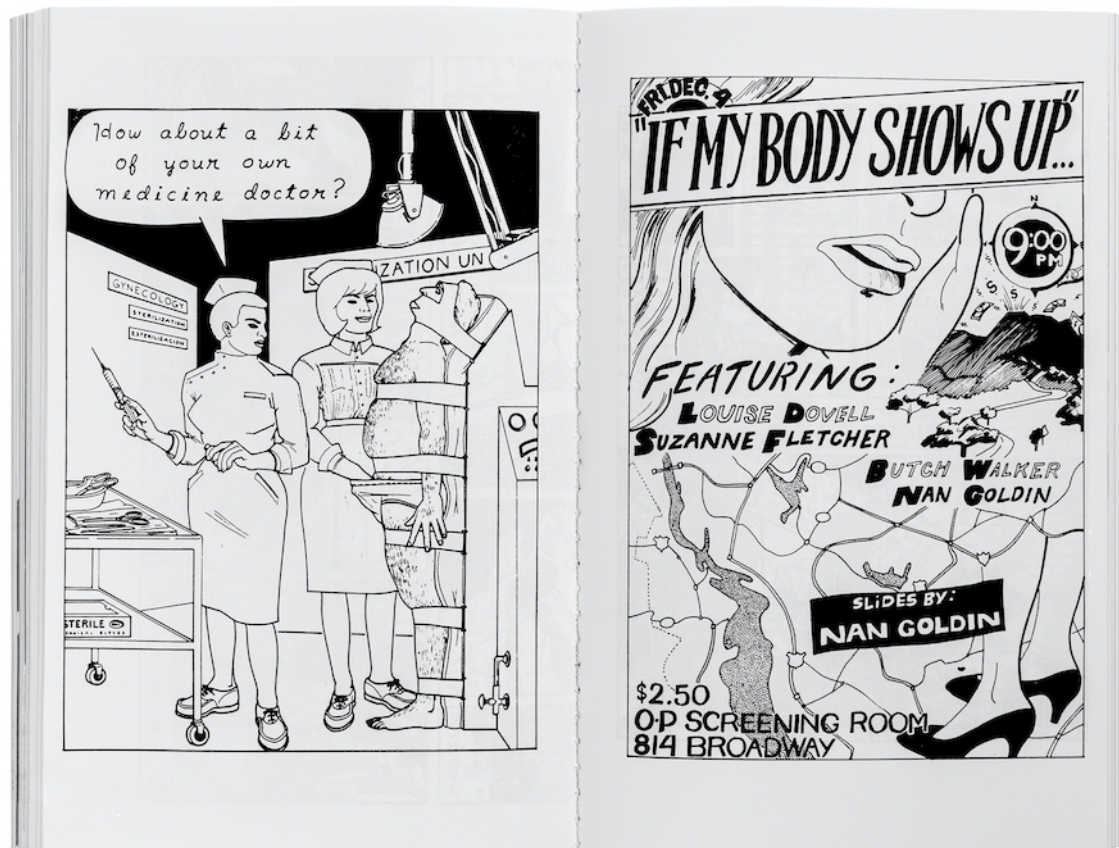
While those original individual issues are now rare and expensive, Primary Information has done the exceptional work of republishing Turyn’s complete prose periodical, furnishing it in a slender and simple black box set of two volumes. Inside, readers can examine excerpts from Laurie Anderson’s avant-garde musical pieces or consider Lynne Tillman’s short story “Living With Contradictions,” about the varying philosophies of a modern romantic partnership. The artwork of *Top Stories* includes illustrations by Jane Dickson, photographs by Anne Turyn herself, and my personal favorite – accompanying Cookie Mueller’s piece “How to Get Rid of Pimples,” photographs by Peter Hujar, Nan Goldin, and David Armstrong, cleverly graffitied, pimped over.



Cover of Top Stories #2, Words in Reverse, by Laurie Anderson, cover photo by Marcia Resnick

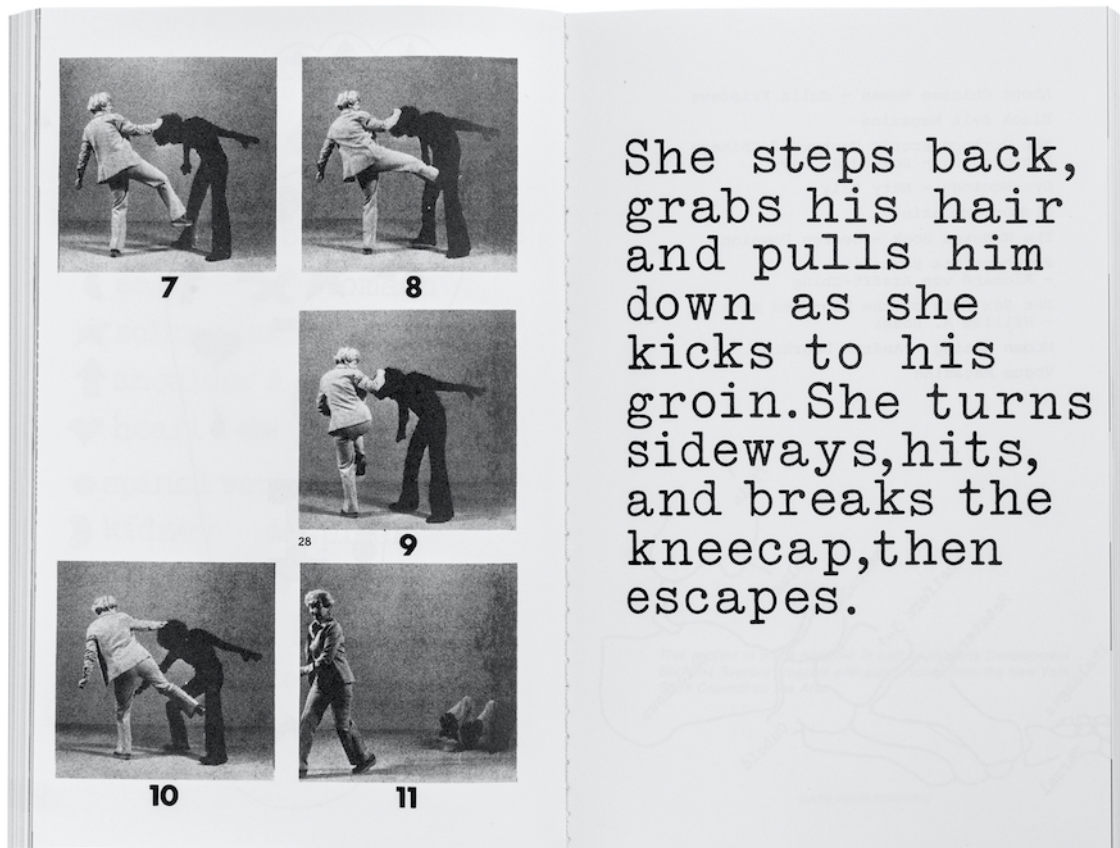
"For "How to Get Rid of Pimples," I spent time with Peter Hujar and also Nan Goldin, looking at their photographs and making selections," Turyn recalled. "Cookie's issue was the first with a spine, which was exciting, and there was an index that Cookie asked for. Gail Vachon made the index. Gail's issue, *Top Stories* #6, was the longest at that point in time, and that was satisfying. *Top Stories* #7, by Jenny Holzer and Peter Nadin, was printed in copper ink. Jane Dickson did two covers, but her issue with Lynne Tillman is unusual in that the drawings came first, and the layout, which Jane did, has the images and text separated on different spreads."





Excerpt from *Top Stories* #12, *Shattered Romance*, by Janet Stein

Of her collaboration with Dickson, Tillman told me, "Jane Dickson was the first-ever visual artist to approach me to write something. She wanted a story in relation to the drawings she had made of her and film-maker Charlie Ahearn; the focus was on living together, being a couple. Jane and I were friendly, she thought I'd get it. So I wrote 'Living with Contradictions,' fragmented and full of doubts about the subject. At first, I felt Jane was disappointed in my very unconventional story, and if not for *Top Stories*, it might have bit the dust. But I'd heard about her interest in text and image works, and knew or felt this would be right for her. And it was. Jane and I were very fortunate, Anne made a beautiful little book."



She steps back,  
grabs his hair  
and pulls him  
down as she  
kicks to his  
groin. She turns  
sideways, hits,  
and breaks the  
kneecap, then  
escapes.

Excerpt from *Top Stories #5, Foot Facts*, by Linda Neaman

“What Anne did was unique,” Lynne continued. “The word is overused but in the case of *Top Stories* it is not. It was and remains one of a kind. Nothing has replaced it. Even if someone came along to do it, they wouldn’t have Anne’s particular savvy, view, about writing and art. Also, it was a simple idea, not simplistic: her approach was straightforward and smart.”

*Top Stories* was a project put together collaboratively by artistic peers. Turyn described the project to me as a “labor of love.” “I was working from intuition, not from a manifesto.” These days, it’s hard to find art writing being produced in such an organic way. Turyn’s project is a shining reminder of what solid, independent, creative minds can build when they speak to one another.

# TOP STORIES

## A PROSE PERIODICAL

- #1 Donna Wyszomierski
- #2 Laurie Anderson
- #3 Patti Hill
- #4 Suzanne Johnson
- #5 Linda Neaman
- #6 Gail Vachon
- #7 Jenny Holzer/Peter Nadin
- #8 Judith Doyle
- #9 Kathy Acker
- #10 Lynne Tillman/Jane Dickson
- #11 Kirsten Thorup
- #12 Janet Stein
- #13 Anne Turyn
- #14 Lee Elferman
- #15 Constance DeJong
- #16 Ursule Molinaro
- #17 Romaine Perin
- #18 Donna Wyszomierski
- #19-20 Cookie Mueller
- #21 Ascher/Straus
- #22 Susan Daltch
- #23-24 Five, An Anthology
- #25-26 Tourist Attractions, An Anthology
- #27 Lou Robinson
- #28 Lisa Bloomfield
- #29 Mary Kelly

*Top Stories (Various Artists)*, edited by Anne Turyn, is available at [Primary Information](#)