

"Our feelings will lead us to our theory, our theory to our action, our feelings about that action to new theory and then to new action."

-Kathie Sarachild, 1st National Women's Liberation Conference, Chicago, 1968

Everybody! presents work by artists and activists representing historical and visual exchanges around feminist health movements: From poetic visualizations, like Faith Wilding's "Flesh Petals" (1971) to organizing tools for health care reform like the Los Angeles-based web project curethis.org; from the exclamation of joy over seeing one's cervix in a 1970's self-help group; to the expressions of trepidation and hope in the online journal of a young trans-man as he goes through breast removal surgery. *Everybody!* explores how feelings, theories, and actions are shaped into the creation of a place where all bodies are celebrated and health care is a human right. An ongoing conversation taken up and shared over many years is present in the works and projects included in this exhibition.

The Women's Health Movement (WHM) of the 1960s and 70s, which critiqued a medical establishment based around occularcentric ways of knowing and paternalistic service, informs the exhibit. Championing self-education as part of this critique, the movement saw women producing independent research, artistic projects, and publishing to share information. The cervical self-examination was a way to research one's own body. Popularized by activists Lorraine Rothman and Carol Downer on their 23 city "self-help" tour in 1973, it is at once a teaching tool and a radical form of visual culture. "Men have the advantage of looking at their genital area a couple of times a day, maybe more," Jennifer Burgess tells her college age audience as nervous laughter erupts in the educational film *Taking Our Bodies Back* (1974) produced by the Boston Women's Book Collective. Burgess clicks the speculum into place as the room full of women stream past to looking at her cervix while she explains "self-help." Suzann Gage described her first experience with cervical examination as "life-changing" giving her a part of her body that she "never knew [she] had." The film and the Gage's "self-help" illustrations, from the book (cont.)

New View of a Woman's Body (1981) are in the exhibition. Women active in the WHM sought knowledge about their bodies grounded in first-person sight and touch, "designed to lift the veil of medical mystery," typified by the blue paper courtesy drape thrown over the legs during a gynecological exam. They also sought access to basic services that were usually regulated by morality rather than need, such as birth control prescriptions or abortion services.

Resistance to a paternalistic medical gaze requires visual activism. By creating and sharing visions of different possibilities surrounding bodies we co-create different ways to understand, touch, and relate, and different versions of normal. Historically feminist health movements have advocated for transparency in methods and procedures; and shift from of pathologizing to empowerment. Christa Donner approaches this historical ethic of self-education and transparency, somewhat literally, by imagining a playful future where sex education is taught to young girls who are able to see their insides through clear flaps. "This [artistic inquiry] allows me to transform misunderstanding and anxiety into a personal, magical, powerful re-visioning of alternative anatomies," says Donner.

Powerful re-visioning can be made in support of larger activist projects. Estelle Carol of the Chicago Women's Graphics Collective (1970-1983), like Suzann Gage, sees her art as being a corollary to larger political processes. Carol saw the posters she made with the collective as both tools to communicate desires for another world and demands for political change, such as "Health Care for All" and "Abortion on Demand." These and other posters helped to galvanize the activist initiatives of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (1970-1977). Their posters still hang on the walls of the Chicago Women's Health Center, started in 1975 by members of the CWLU. Gage used her illustrations in support of a movement when she became a collective member with the Federation of Feminist Health Centers at their Los Angeles clinic. To participate in improving what she perceived as widespread human rights abuses around LGBT and health issues, Gage first abandoned art to work in the feminist health center environment but soon found herself using her skills as an artist in the (cont.)

production of *A New View of a Woman's Body*. The collectively researched and written book aimed to provide readers with the skills to perform their own pelvic exams, start a feminist health center, and see bodies formerly thought to be abnormal as normal. Gage's illustrations show representations of women of all shapes, sizes, and ethnicities performing "well-woman" gynecological care in the handbook.

A New View of a Woman's Body (NVWB), like many works in the exhibition, is most successful at creating a new definition of normal. Visuals of sex positivity exhibited in *NVWB*, strike a nerve with emerging feminist artists like Laura Szumowski, Heather Ault, and Favianna Rodriguez. Sex positivity emerges in the color rich designs of Rodriguez's political posters. Szumowski updates *NVWB* with her artist book *Tip of the Iceberg* that focuses on the hidden potential of the clitoris in broad cartoon inspired strokes entering into a dialog with Gage's mannered medical illustrations. Ault plays with power in domesticity when she designs boutique wall paper patterns based on Gage's mechanical illustration of the "Del-em" short for "dirty little machine," a tool used by "self-helpers" to perform menstrual extraction. These projects and others share information as they provide empowering visualizations of what feminist health looks like.

The artist group subRosa encourages you to place the "clitoris" in the anatomically correct spot on their giant, fuzzy vulva sculpture. This performance always brings laughter because negotiating our well bodies by sight, touch or feel, is not regularly encouraged. By necessity those who are ignored by the dominant culture become experts on their medical issues, and find points of normalization when they can talk to others in casual conversations, organized groups, or through art. The politics of visual play in *Everybody!* offer potential physical and social support from others. I see and am seen in my body, as are you, and you. Our individual bodies can be normalized or objectified depending on who tells the story. Feminist health movements reclaim ownership of our bodies, and retell, revision, and re-educate the visual culture.

Bonnie Fortune, 2009

Multi-Media Events:

Weekly Video Titles

New work each week

09.11-09.17: Women's Lib Demonstration NYC. Videofreex. 00:23:30, 1970

09.18-09.27: Vulva De/ReConstructa. subRosa. 00:10:00, 2000 (courtesy of the artist)

09.29-10.04: (In)Visible Women. Ellen Spira. 00:26:00, 1991

10.06-10.10: Underexposed: The Temple of the Fetus. Kathy High. 00:58:00, 1993 (courtesy of the artist)

I space Gallery 230 West Superior St Chicago, IL

Wednesday, September 23, 2009 | 7:30pm

The Hysterical Alphabet: A multimedia history

A history of hysteria with humor and critical insight. Terri Kapsalis reports episodes from medical lore in a "hysterical" version of the alphabet with Danny Thompson's disquieting film collages and John Corbett's musical manipulations.

Knight Auditorium, Spurlock Museum 600 South Gregory St., Urbana, IL University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Sponsored by CAS/Millercomm, cas.illinois.edu

Feminist Health Political Graphics at the Women's Resource Center

September 9-October 1, 2009

Posters from the Chicago Women's Graphics Collective and the Docs Populi Poster Archive.

For more information: cwlherstory.org and doscpopuli.org

Women's Resource Center 703 South Wright St., Champaign, IL University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

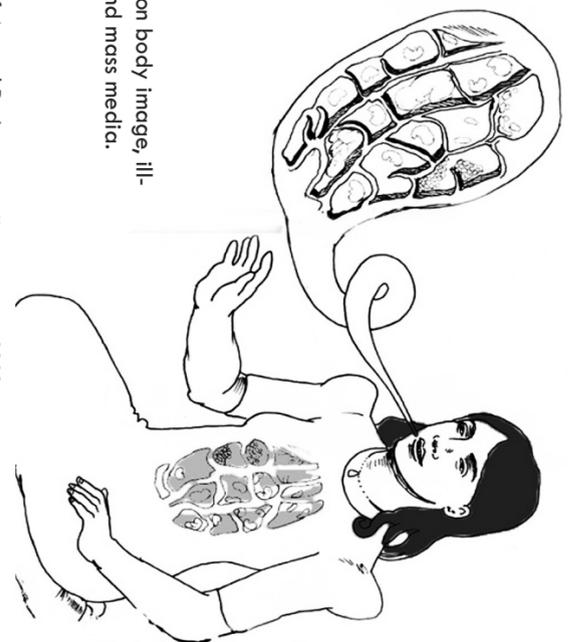
Sponsored by Sharon Irish, www.sharonirish.org

I space 230 West Superior Street | Chicago, IL 60654

Everybody!

Visual Resistance in Feminist Health Movements, 1969-2009

September 11 - October 10, 2009 | Reception: Friday, September 11, 2009 from 5-7pm



Christa Donner, 2009

Artist Talks:

Saturday, September 12, 2009 | 2pm

Artist Talk + Book Release w/ Suzann Gage

Gage discusses her influential medical illustrations from the book *New View of a Woman's Body* (Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1981).

Release of new Temporary Services: Temporary Conversations interview with Suzann Gage by Bonnie Fortune.

I space Gallery

230 West Superior St, Chicago, IL

Monday, October 5, 2009 | 5:30pm

Christa Donner Artist Talk

Donner discusses her work and visual research on body image, illness and injury, reproductive systems, power, and mass media.

Kramert Art Museum, Rm. 62

500 East Peabody Dr, Champaign, IL

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Sponsored by the Visitor's Committee of the School of Art and Design

Every Body! Visual Resistance in Feminist Health Movements, 1969 - 2009

September 11, 2009 - October 10, 2009

Heather Ault

CureThis!

Chicago Women's Graphics Collective

Christa Donner

Suzann Gage

Kathy High

Terri Kapsalis

Suzanne Lacy

Madsen Minax

Pink Bloque

Favianna Rodriguez

Dewayne Sleightweight

Ellen Spiro

Meredith Stern

subRosa

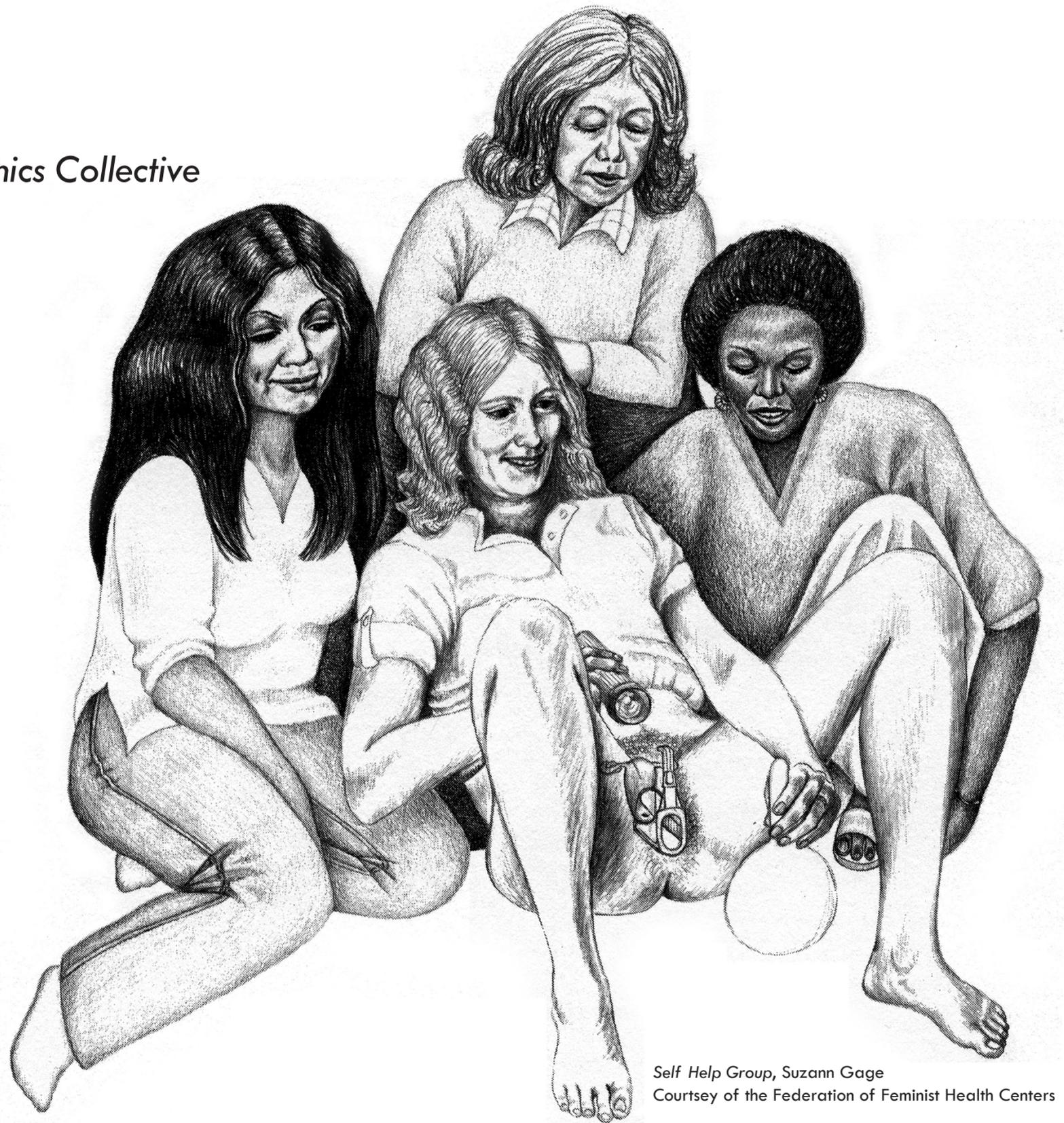
Laura Szumowski

VideoFreex

Sara Welch

Women on Waves

Faith Wilding



Self Help Group, Suzann Gage
Courtesy of the Federation of Feminist Health Centers

This exhibition was organized by Bonnie Fortune with thanks to Nan Goggin, Ryan Griffis, Terri Kapsalis, Sharon Irish, Leslie Reagan, Faith Wilding, and Hyla Willis. This program is partially sponsored by the School of Art and Design and the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Additional support provided by CAS/MillerComm.

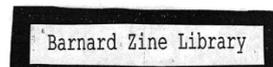
Printed matter is courtesy of the following collections and organization: Barnard Zine Library, Chicago Women's Health Center / Chicago Women's Graphics Collective Collection, Docs Populi Archive, Duke University Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, Just Seeds, Federation of Feminist Health Centers, Library of Radiant Optimism for Let's Re-make the World, and Microcosm Publishing.

Video work courtesy of the Video Data Bank, unless otherwise noted.

I space

230 West Superior Chicago, IL, 60654
www.ipspace.illinois.edu_312.587.9976

I space is the Chicago gallery of the College of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



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