

WOMEN'S WORKS

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Colette to the Classics, 'Women's Works' Is the Hub in the Slope

BY ROCHELLE GREEN

"What could you have on women's books, a shelf this big?" an old book dealer asked Sharon Vairamides and Sherry Huberman, holding his hands a foot apart from each other. But the two women, trained librarians, knew that the amount of material by and about women, particularly works issued from the vast number of small presses, was more than enough to fill an entire store.

In fact, in their newly-opened 'Women's Works Bookstore' in Park Slope, they've tried to concentrate on journals and magazines only from Brooklyn, New York, and the east coast.

"Everything is getting specialized," explained Huberman. "We want to provide the kinds of materials relating to women that a general bookstore can't." Doing just that often requires bypassing distributors and going directly to the publishers, but the result makes that process worthwhile.

COMPLETE WORKS, TRANSLATIONS

"Women's Works" offerings include the complete works of Colette, hard-to-find English translations of George Sand's novels, and poetry and literary magazines such as "Quest" and "13th Moon," as well as a satisfying and evenly-distributed selection of contemporary and classic novels, mysteries, science fiction, "women's studies" works, diaries and letters, lesbian works, and cooking and craft books.

The store also carries a complete stock of books and journals relating to women's art, a subject which is of particular interest to the owners. "The opening of the store coincided with the opening of the woman's show at the Brooklyn Museum," smiled Vairamides. "Women coming in were very excited to see that we were here and that we had women's art books."

The warm reception from community women hasn't diminished with the weeks, and even men—some men—have been enthusiastic. "Sometimes people stop outside the window, and assuming that we can't hear, the men say—'Why just women?'" related Huberman. "But women understand the need for a place to gather. They need to feel that there's a precedent for what they're doing, whether it relates to a creative activity or returning to work after many years."

AN 'INFORMATION-EXCHANGE'

The bookstore is already evolving as an "information-exchange" center where women stop by to find out



Photo by David Pergosini

Sharon Vairamides and Sherry Huberman, co-owners of the Slope's new Women's Works Bookstore.

"what's going on," and the owners hope to soon hold poetry readings and evening events. The atmosphere of the small store is well-suited to such gatherings, with brick walls and tall open bookcases imparting a cozy ambiance. And the t-shirts with portraits of Gertrude Stein, Amelia Earhart, and Jane Austin that hang on the walls (for sale), are warm reminders of a rich heritage.

"Our slant is women's roots," said Huberman. "People were once aware of women as strong and somehow it got lost." But Women's Works may fill in that gap with its small reference collection of out-of-print books, the likes of "Childlife and Girlhood of Remarkable Women" and "Eminent Women of the Age," both 19th-century tributes to women who were well known in their day but subsequently forgotten.

BOOKS, TOYS FOR KIDS

For parents who hope to change that state of affairs by avoiding stereotyped roles for their children, non-sexist children's books are available, with

titles such as "Peter Learns to Crochet," and "A Train for Jane."

There is more for children, too, in a room in back of the bookstore. "Toy-go-Round," featuring an enticing array of used skates, bicycles, dolls, games, and toys of all kinds, is a separate store, operated as a toy exchange by Jane Buchman and Iris Fearon. "We're an outlet for people whose children have outgrown their toys," said Fearon, explaining that items are taken on consignment and sold for about one-half the original price, with 40% of the selling price going to the owner upon resale. There are also "bargain bins" of small toys priced up to 50 cents, and an "adult toy section" of irresistible antique dolls and toys.

Both stores, which share an entrance at 181 Seventh Avenue, are a delight for kids and adults alike. Women's Works is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.; Toy-go-Round is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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