

"The Odds of Recovery" by Fred Camper,
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The Odds of Recovery

As a young woman, Su Friedrich thought her left side was naturally bigger than her right — until a 13-pound cyst was found on her spleen, requiring the first of six surgeries. She also had a serious hormonal imbalance, though her companion first thought the cause of her lowered libido was "emotional." In her pertinent and moving 2002 film Friedrich takes some deserved swipes at the health-care system and chronicles the difficulties her health problems caused with her lover — angry because Friedrich "didn't believe she cared." The film's central theme, Friedrich's struggle to become whole again, is articulated through contrasts. In examining rooms she's seen fragmented—one shot has her head framed by machines on the left and a technician on the right—while in "recovery" images a turtle released into the wild or her hands embroider fabric. And Friedrich's characteristically subtle but mordant humor leavens her chronicle: after panning an endless row of shelves in the "self-improvement" section of a bookstore, she swivels to reveal a whole new row. 65 min.

--- Fred Camper