

Video Librarian

April 20, 2004

The Odds of Recovery

(2002) 65 min. VHS: \$89; public libraries: \$275; colleges & universities
Women Make Movies (tel: 212-925-0606, web: www.wmm.com).
PPR. Color cover.

Experimental filmmaker Su Friedrich chronicles two decades of nightmarish surgeries and medical treatments in this offbeat film that serves as both a personal coming-to-terms with one's physical and emotional well-being and a gleeful jab at the American healthcare system. Friedrich's frequently discomfiting self-inventory--including the removal of a 13-pound cyst from her spleen, two knee surgeries, nipple surgery, and numerous treatments to battle a mysterious hormone imbalance--is told through a creative blend of footage, voiceover, and superimposed titles, that is starkly honest but also mordantly funny. For each new surgical procedure or treatment, Friedrich includes an exasperating video "diary" visit to the medical practitioner (apparently shot surreptitiously in the doctor's office) that occasionally reveals alarming medical misinformation. Alternatively, she may punctuate the episode with superimposed titles detailing her emotional reaction at the moment; recite, in a dry voiceover, from a preparatory guide to surgery; or indulge in a small rant when the doctor briefly steps out of the office. But there are quieter, more serious moments, too, as Friedrich explores alternative medicine and therapies (tai chi, acupuncture, gardening, and cooking) or reflects on the ups and downs of her relationship with her partner.

A creative approach to a generally depressing subject, this is recommended for most health and women's collections. Aud: C, P. (A. Cantú)