



# Do It Yourself: Home Improvement in 20th-Century America

*Carolyn Goldstein*

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*Do It Yourself* investigates the history behind the current do-it- yourself craze in home repair and remodeling. The origins of home improvement can be traced to the early part of the century, when government loan programs placed home ownership within the reach of growing numbers of families, mass-circulation magazines began providing their readers with information about home renovation, and increasing numbers of Americans turned to the manual arts and handicrafts as leisure-time pursuits. World War II provided many Americans with the skills and confidence to undertake home-improvement projects on their own, and after the war, changes in the manufacturing and retailing of tools and equipment created new possibilities for transforming one's home. As home remodeling became a central feature of domestic life and consumer culture, the "do-it-yourself" movement was born, coming of age in the baby-boomer 1950s and 1960s, when Americans created suburban paradises and reclaimed decaying urban centers.

The text of *Do It Yourself*, which investigates topics ranging from women's roles in home repair to historic preservation, is a lively mix of illustrations--including period photographs, magazine spreads, and advertisements--and clearly written analysis of the trends behind these images.



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