

# Ms. Fix-It

By KAY HYMOWITZ

- 1 The home-improvement industry has always been a no-woman's land known for its drab shelves lined with nail bins and mysterious steel objects whose purpose was understood only by grunting guys in flannel shirts. Now it is going designer pink. Companies such as Tomboy Tools, Barbara K Enterprises and Girlgear Industries are offering the female do-it-yourselfer fabulous pink hammers and saws in stores and on the Web. There has been an explosion of woman-targeted self-help books, videos, radio shows, TV spots and home-improvement Web sites. Some are specifically for women, while others offer female-friendly links and columns. Even schoolgirls are joining the revolution. The Girl Scouts now offer a Ms. Fix-It badge for members eager to learn how to rewire a lamp or fix a leaky toilet.



- 2 It's not hard to see what's driving the fad: Women are home alone more and more and confident enough to take matters into their own hands. Perhaps the largest group eager to seize the pink hammer is single young women. The National Association of Realtors reports that in 2006 single women made up 22% of the U.S. real-estate market; the average age for first-time single female buyers was 32. It helps that having grown up with computers, cellphones and iPods, this you-go-girl! generation doesn't look at small machinery the way Barbie looked at math. These women are not only enthusiastic about buying a home on their own dime; they're ready to lay the tile and patch the drywall too. Other women learn the drill when they find themselves on their own after a divorce. Barbara Kavovit says that the insight that ultimately led her to launch her tool company, Barbara K!, came when her husband moved out of the house and took the family tool box with him. However, not every female tool-user is single or divorced. Sometimes she's a wife sick of pestering her husband to make time to hang a bookshelf.
- 3 When you think about it, while the pinking of home improvement is new, it's not all that radical. Women are not trying to join the construction trades in any great numbers. Women make up at least half of the country's medical and law students, yet they still constitute fewer than 3% of construction workers; blue-collar sexual discrimination can't fully explain these discrepancies. No, the pink-hammer brigade is less interested in expanding career opportunities for women than in enlarging the traditional art of homemaking. Not so long ago, custom limited women's activities in that area to cleaning, sewing, cooking and perhaps a few crafts projects for those with extra time on their hands. Installing smoke

alarms and reconfiguring a closet are simply an extension of the old domestic urge.

- 4 The only thing to give pause in the pinkhammer revolution is the feminist ideology that occasionally comes from its leaders. Hang around the movement's Web sites and before long you'll hear rhetoric that implies that learning to install a dimmer switch is not simply a practical means of increasing domestic pleasure; it's a Radical Statement for Women's Progress. "My true desire is to inspire women to become more self-reliant and confident in their abilities," Barbara K! writes on her Web site. "We all have 'it' within ourselves to do things we never imagined we could."
- 5 Well, maybe. But the truth is that while women may want a lovely home, most of them would also like a good man to share it with. You can be sure that, unlike their female counterparts, few single men are spending their weekends restoring the ornaments on their ceilings. Men's domesticity has always been a group affair; they fixed the faucets and built the shelves not for themselves but for their wives and children. Women ought to know that self-reliance isn't everything.

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## Tekst 9 Ms. Fix-It

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- 1p 31 What is the main point made in paragraph 1?
- A American women are being told they ought to do the odd job in the house themselves.
  - B Modern female marketeers have radically changed the designs of many building tools.
  - C Tool manufacturers and related companies are increasingly focusing on female customers.
  - D Young women tend to spend more money on tools and home-decoration than men do.

“... and confident enough” (begin alinea 2)

- 1p 32 In welke zin uit alinea 2 wordt een verklaring voor dit zelfvertrouwen van alleenstaande jonge vrouwen gegeven?  
Citeer de eerste twee woorden van deze zin.

In de tweede helft van alinea 2 (“Other ... bookshelf.”) worden twee verschillende groepen vrouwen genoemd die zelf klussen.

- 2p 33 Welke twee groepen zijn dat?

Wat is de relatie tussen de alinea’s 3 en 2?

- 1p 34 In alinea 3 wordt de inhoud van alinea 2
- A gerelativeerd.
  - B herhaald.
  - C verklaard.
  - D weerlegd.

“Women make ... construction workers” (paragraph 3)

- 1p 35 What is the purpose of this statement?  
To make clear that women
- A are mainly focussed on taking up well-paid jobs.
  - B are not attracted to certain traditionally male jobs.
  - C know builders and construction workers are not eager to accept females.
  - D tend to underestimate the importance of a technical education.

- 1p **36** Which of the following can be concluded from paragraph 4?  
The writer
- A** admires the strength of character of the women behind 'the pinkhammer revolution'.
  - B** disapproves of the way in which 'the pinkhammer revolution' is glorified in the media.
  - C** dislikes the socio-political message that sometimes accompanies 'the pinkhammer revolution'.
  - D** doubts whether the organisers of 'the pinkhammer revolution' are actually do-it-yourself experts.
- 1p **37** How does the writer round off the article in paragraph 5?
- A** With a critical remark.
  - B** With a personal example.
  - C** With a positive statement.
  - D** With a scientific fact.

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**Bronvermelding**

*Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.*