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Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community

By Margo DeMello

Duke University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community, Margo DeMello, Since the 1980s, tattooing has emerged anew in the United States as a widely appealing cultural, artistic, and social form. In Bodies of Inscription Margo DeMello explains how elite tattooists, magazine editors, and leaders of tattoo organizations have downplayed the working-class roots of tattooing in order to make it more palatable for middle-class consumption. She shows how a completely new set of meanings derived primarily from non-Western cultures has been created to give tattoos an exotic, primitive flavour. Community publications, tattoo conventions, articles in popular magazines, and DeMello's numerous interviews illustrate the interplay between class, culture, and history that orchestrated a shift from traditional Americana and biker tattoos to new forms using Celtic, tribal, and Japanese images. DeMello's extensive interviews reveal the divergent yet overlapping communities formed by this class-based, American-style repackaging of the tattoo. After describing how the tattoo has moved from a mark of patriotism or rebellion to a symbol of exploration and status, the author returns to the predominantly middle-class movement that celebrates its skin art as spiritual, poetic, and self-empowering. Recognising that the term...

Reviews

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