



Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos: A Social History of the Tattoo With Gangs, Sailors, and Street-Corner Punks 1950-1965 (Haworth Series in Gay & Lesbian Studies)

John Dececco Phd, Michael Williams

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Explore the dark subculture of 1950s tattoos! In the early 1950s, when tattoos were the indelible mark of a lowlife, an erudite professor of English--a friend of Gertrude Stein, Thomas Mann, Andre Gide, and Thornton Wilder--abandoned his job to become a tattoo artist (and incidentally a researcher for Alfred Kinsey). *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos* tells the story of his years working in a squalid arcade on Chicago's tough State Street. During that time he left his mark on a hundred thousand people, from youthful sailors who flaunted their tattoos as a rite of manhood to executives who had to hide their passion for well-ornamented flesh. *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos* is anything but politically correct. The gritty, film-noir details of Skid Row life are rendered with unflinching honesty and furtive tenderness. His lascivious relish for the young sailors swaggering or staggering in for a new tattoo does not blind him to the sordidness of the world they inhabited. From studly nineteen-year-olds who traded blow jobs for tattoos to hard-bitten dykes who scared the sailors out of the shop, the clientele was seedy at best: sailors, con men, drunks, hustlers, and Hells Angels. These days, when tattoo art is sported by millionaires and the middle class as well as by gang members and punk rockers, the sheer squalor of *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos* is a revelation. However much tattoo culture has changed, the advice and information is still sound:

- how to select a good tattoo artist
 - what to expect during a tattooing session
 - how to ensure the artist uses sterile needles and other safety precautions
 - how to care for a new tattoo
 - why people get tattoos--25 sexual motivations for body art
- More than a history of the art or a roster of famous--and infamous--tattoo customers and artists, *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos* is a raunchy, provocative look at a forgotten subculture.

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