



Russian Prison Tattoos: Codes of Authority, Domination, and Struggle

Alix Lambert, Mary Christ

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For centuries, Russian prison inmates forcibly initiated newcomers with tattoos. Gradually, prisoners developed a secret form of communication with their tattoos, allowing them to establish rank among the other inmates and maintain a clandestine hierarchy. This book explores the grisly reality of Russian prisons and the people who inhabit them. Over 190 black and white and color photographs expose the different tattoos and their meanings, ranging from churches, crosses, Christs, Madonnas, military symbols, cats, dolphins, bears, hawks, and other startling images. Documentary filmmaker Alix Lambert traveled around modern Russia to film these sinister environments, collected stories to identify the dying art of tattooing in Russian prisons, and detailed the lives of the heavily marked inmates, past and present. This fascinating, spine-tingling book provides an entirely new outlook on tattoos and what they can represent!

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