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Tattoo book: Ukiyo-e to Horimono, the History and Art of Japanese Prints and Tattooing

Jan van Doesburg

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Nowhere else in the world is the fascinating art of tattooing performed so intensely and in such artistic and colourful ways as in Japan. Through the ages many of its characteristics have been illustrated in Japanese woodblock prints and as such these prints are an important mirror of the history of Japanese tattooing. One of the three main sections of this publication is the author's comprehensive and well-documented essay based on his study of prints of this genre. In his treatise Jan van Doesburg is not only dealing with the artistic and historical aspects of Japanese tattooing, but he also pays attention to social, cultural and iconographic aspects, and discusses the technique of Japanese woodblock-printing as well. Thirty-five illustrations of Japanese prints, selected from collections of museums, dealers and individual collectors worldwide, accompany the text as evidence of certain discussed matters. In the second section of the book eighty Japanese woodblock prints selected from the Van der Velden Collection are illustrated. All of these are depicting tattooed characters. Not only does this selection reflect many highly fashionable aspects of urban life in nineteenth-century Japan, it also shows distinctly the gradually developed reciprocity between the phenomena of tattooing and printmaking in Japan. The third section of this publication is including illustrations of the date and censorship seals that are found on Japanese woodblock prints published between 1791 and 1876. Well over 800 (!) of such seals are brought together in an orderly survey that may serve as a guide to date Japanese prints.

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