



Vintage Tattoo Flash: 100 Years of Traditional Tattoos from the Collection of Jonathan Shaw

By Jonathan Shaw

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Vintage Tattoo Flash is a one-of-a-kind visual exploration of the history and evolution of tattooing in America. A luscious, offset-printed, hardcover tome—a beautiful and serious addition to the understanding of one of the world’s oldest and most popular art forms.

Electric tattooing as we know it today was invented in New York City at the turn of the 19th century. In the first days of American tattooing, tattoos were primarily worn by sailors and soldiers, outlaws and outsiders. The visual language of what came to be known as “traditional tattooing” was developed in those early days on the Bowery and catered to the interests of the clientele. Common imagery that soon became canon included sailing ships, women, hearts, roses, daggers, eagles, dragons, wolves, panthers, skulls, crosses, and popular cartoon characters of the era. The first tattooists also figured out that using bold outlines, complimented by solid color and smooth shading, was the proper technique for creating art on a body that would stand the test of time. In the over 100 years since then, techniques and styles have evolved, and the customer base has expanded, but the core subject matter and philosophy developed at the dawn of electric tattooing has persisted as perennial favorites through the modern era.

While most tattoos are inherently ephemeral, transported on skin until the death of the collector, a visual record exists in the form of tattoo flash: the hand-painted sheets of designs posted in tattoo shops for customers to select from. Painted and repainted, stolen, traded, bought and sold, these sheets are passed between artists through one channel or another, often having multiple useful lives in a variety of shops scattered across time and geography. The utility of these original pieces of painted art has made it so that original examples can still be found in use or up for grabs if you know where to look.

Vintage Tattoo Flash draws from the personal collection of Jonathan Shaw—renowned outlaw tattooist and author—and represents a selection of over 300 pieces of flash from one of the largest private collections in

existence. *Vintage Tattoo Flash* spans the first roughly 75 years of American tattooing from the 1900s Bowery, to 50s Texas, through the Pike in the 60s and the development of the first black and grey, single-needle tattooing in LA in the 70s. The book lovingly reproduces entirely unpublished sheets of original flash from the likes of Bob Shaw, Zeke Owen, Tex Rowe, Ted Inman, Ace Harlyn, Ed Smith, Paul Rogers, the Moskowitz brothers, and many, many others relatively known and unknown.

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Vintage Tattoo Flash: 100 Years of Traditional Tattoos from the Collection of Jonathan Shaw By Jonathan Shaw Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #78479 in Books
- Brand: POWERHOUSE
- Published on: 2016-04-12
- Released on: 2016-04-12

- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.80" h x 1.30" w x 12.40" l, 1.25 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 256 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Few have dipped so deeply or functioned so extensively in the cultural underbelly of our world than the notorious artist and adventurer, Jonathan Shaw." **-Robert Williams**

"Ranks with the best." **-Johnny Depp**

"A living example of human indestructibility that is hard to surpass." **-Eugene Hutz (Gogol Bordello)**

"Bold and striking images." **-Kat Von D.**

"An American classic, a traditionalist discarding history." **-JUXTAPOZ**

"Jonathan Shaw is an acknowledged master craftsman of the present era." **-SECONDS**

"Jonathan Shaw (is) a subversive and criminal inhabitant of the world of human expression." **-Jim Jarmusch**

"Jonathan Shaw is a shameless evildoer." **-Marilyn Manson**

"Jonathan Shaw is the great nightmare anti-hero of the new age." **-Iggy Pop**

"The images in the book, much like the bodies of those whose skin they adorned, read like a history of the cultural concerns of the time—from early nautical and military themes of patriotism and seafaring to the popular cartoon characters of a given era and our ever-shifting views on death, birth, and sex." —**Esquire**

"The pieces in Vintage Tattoo Flash come from the last century, but the highest concentration of work is from the 1900s to the 1960s. They represent much of the familiar iconography of American tattooing: ships, half-dressed women, birds of prey, panthers, daggers, roses, and, yes, hearts emblazoned with mom. What's fascinating to see, by leafing through Shaw's collection, is how the art form has evolved in the last hundred years. By the 1950s and '60s, the Sailor Jerry-esque American traditional designs begin to shift into different territory, influenced by other styles of tattooing: a touch of traditional Japanese here, a hint of realism there." —**Men's Journal**

As seen on:

The Guardian
Graphics
LA Weekly
Ponyboy Magazine

About the Author

Jonathan Shaw is a world traveling outlaw artist, novelist, blogger, head doctor, anti-folk hero, whorehouse philosopher, legendary tattoo master, and notorious innovator and creator of underground art. Shaw was born in NY to big band legend Artie Shaw and movie star Doris Dowling, and was raised in LA where he learned

to tattoo on the legendary Pike boardwalk from old-school California masters. After running with the likes of Jim Morrison, the Manson Family, and Charles Bukowski, he fell prey to heroin addiction and a life of crime. He finally left 1970s Hollywood to travel the world and founded Fun City, the first street tattoo shop in NYC since tattooing was decriminalized in the 1960s.

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