STORIES ON THE SKIN
Tattoo Culture at FAU
Documentary
It makes perfect sense that *Stories on the Skin: Tattoo Culture at FAU* originated in the Jaffe Center for Book Arts at Florida Atlantic University Libraries. The Center’s founder, Arthur Jaffe, had been contemplating the inked students on the Boca Raton campus of FAU, and arrived at the metaphor of tattooed bodies as walking books. As we developed the project, it was visualized by designer and photographer Patricia “Z” Koppisch. Hundreds of FAU students, faculty and staff have collaborated on several phases including a survey, photo exhibition with catalogue, interviews, workshops, art and writing projects, videos and live performances — some of which are featured in this documentary by filmmaker Susan Rosenkranz.

The most experimental part of the project, and one that continues, is the attempt to stretch this notion of tattoo culture as the performance of self. When a book is read a journey is taken; one
feels like a different person at the end. So it is too with tattoos, both for the wearer and the viewer. Each time the story is told it is more deeply embodied, more part of the fabric of a life, an illustrated history, an adventure story.

We didn’t begin with any hypothesis or opinion about tattoos. We started a conversation and have found that as the project proceeds, the conversation is changing and becoming richer. As an art historian collaborating with a center committed to books as aesthetic objects, our focus is on both the visual medium, the tattoo, and the narrative component, the story. Through all its stages, we have offered a deeper understanding of the artful presentation of the self to the world, on the pages of the body.

Karen J. Leader, Ph.D.
Executive Producer
Executive Producers

Arthur Jaffe
Professor Emeritus and Founder,
Jaffe Center for Book Arts

Karen J. Leader, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Art History,
Department of Visual Arts & Art History

Co-Executive Producer

Mrs. Marleen Forkas

Writer/Producer

Susan Rosenkranz

Assistant Producer/Photographer

Patricia “Z” Koppisch

Produced at Rush Hour Films, Hollywood, FL

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For more information on this project, visit www.storiesontheskin.org.

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