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Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and World (Paperback)

By Claudia Benthien

Columbia University Press, United States, 2004. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. Only skin deep, getting under one's skin, the naked truth: metaphors about the skin pervade the language even as physical embellishments and alterations—tattoos, piercings, skin-lifts, liposuction, tanning, and more—proliferate in Western culture. Yet outside dermatology textbooks, the topic of skin has been largely ignored. This important cultural study shows how our perception of skin has changed from the eighteenth century to the present. Claudia Benthien argues that despite medicine's having penetrated the bodily surface and exposed the interior of the body as never before, skin, paradoxically, has become a more and more unyielding symbol. She examines the changing significance of skin through brilliant analyses of literature, art, philosophy, and anatomical drawings and writings. Benthien discusses the semantic and psychic aspects of touching, feeling, and intellectual perception; the motifs of perforated, armored, or transparent skin; the phantasma of flaying; and much more through close readings of such authors as Kleist, Hawthorne, Balzac, Rilke, Kafka, Plath, Morrison, Wideman, and Ondaatje. Myriad images from the Renaissance, anatomy books, and contemporary visual and performance art enhance the text.



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