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HOT HOT HEAT
AURORA GALORE GETS TATTOOED IN PUBLIC

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MIRROR, MIRROR

I don't have any full length mirrors in the house. Not because I'm afraid of them, it's just not something I ever really thought about. I know how I look—which is the same as I did this time last year with more grey hair.

Anyway, I happened to be in a store that sells them where there must have been thirty or so of them on display. You really get what you pay for. At the cheaper end of the spectrum, the glass must be backed with tin foil from the kitchen drawer because those mirrors make you look like The Gods were hunting for something to watch on Netflix while they were putting you together.

Moving on to the mid-range mirrors, I found a better reality. A reasonable representation of what I expect to see before me appeared. My boots needed a polish and there was dog hair on my jacket but so be it. That's as real as it gets.

What I didn't expect however, over in the '*Who the hell would pay that much for a mirror*' section, was to be handed a *Super-Reflection*. Wow—those mirrors really sing. Without a scrap of vanity or ego, hand on heart I can say, I didn't think I looked like that.

These mirrors are highly trained sentient beings. They point out the Christmas pounds you were oblivious to and pick out the lines around your eyes so well, it's like somebody has drawn arrows on your face with a Sharpie to point to them.

So there I was looking myself over and making some mental notes about how it was probably time I fixed some things in my life, when who should appear next to me but Robbie Williams. Well... it wasn't really him but it could have been. It was some guy who looked 'similar'. Looking at him in the Pricey-Mirror, he looked great, but when I turned around to inspect him in the flesh, it was all wrong. The hair, the face, the way he held himself... all wrong but the tattoos were bang on the money.

Not making it up, this guy had obviously sat down with an artist and gone through the Encyclopaedia of Robbie with a fine-tooth comb–and then he wandered off and I noticed he was wearing an Oasis t-shirt and I knew for sure it wasn't him.

Heidi Furey

LOOKING AT HIM IN THE BEAUTY MIRROR, HE LOOKED GREAT, BUT WHEN I TURNED AROUND TO LOOK AT HIM IN THE FLESH, IT WAS ALL WRONG

SION SMITH · EDITOR
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Later, while I was sitting in the car looking in the rear-view mirror—which is the cruellest mirror of all—I thought I might pull together an editorial wondering how can it ever be hard to choose your own set of tattoos in the world and why on earth you would want to copy a whole person–dot for dot? I would go off like a daisy-cutter if somebody put my skin through the Photocopier of Life.

A better man than I once told his audience to demand the right to be unique. It's a good demand to make. In fact, it's about the only right any of us do have. ▣

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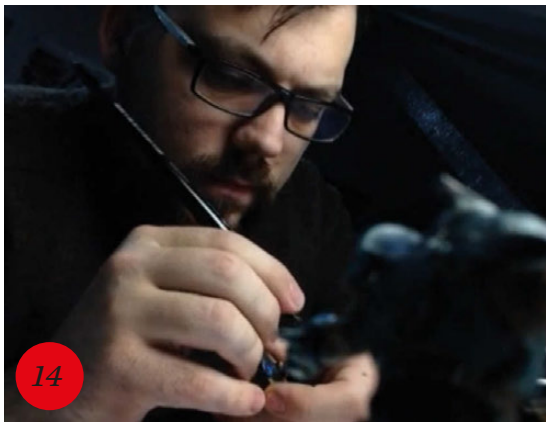
CONTENTS



14 AFTER HOURS
In After Hours, Wayne Simmons talks to some of his favourite artists about the things they get up to when the studio lights go down. This month, he meets Johny D. Matthews, tattooist and war gamer.

20 HOT HOT HEAT
A little while back, we threw down a gauntlet for chancers, slackers and gamblers to join the crew here and held the doors open to see what happened. After sitting on them for far too long, this piece from the wonderful Aurora Galore rose to the top of the pile and well... she kinda has a way with words.

26 DIFFERENT STROKES
Beccy Rimmer explores a controversial tattoo style growing in popularity. Four of the UK's best watercolour tattooists take us on a journey into through delicately painted worlds.

34 SOUL MUSIC
When you get an opportunity to interview a man knee deep in the history of tattooing, you should grab on to it with both hands. Matt Lodder is that very man and always has great things to say.

40 GIRL POWER
Arkansas, a southeastern conservative state, may not seem like an obvious first choice for a tattoo road trip, but we couldn't pass up the opportunity for an insider's look, so we recruited Ink Master Season 6 alum Katie McGowan to give us the lowdown on her home state, reality TV stint, favourite cocktails and much more.

62 I AM LEGEND
At 84 years old, Lyle Tuttle is not only a legend, he's a true living legend with vitality, an unquestionable thirst for life and tequila with grapefruit. Apart from being a great story-teller, Lyle is also a tireless traveler, always between two planes since he retired from tattooing. It's catch up time. Let the games begin...

68 WEIRD SCIENCE
Beccy Rimmer talks to four talented UK artists, in an attempt to unearth the hidden meaning behind geometric tattoos.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS
06 SLEEVE NOTES
96 AN EYE IS UPON YOU
98 WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

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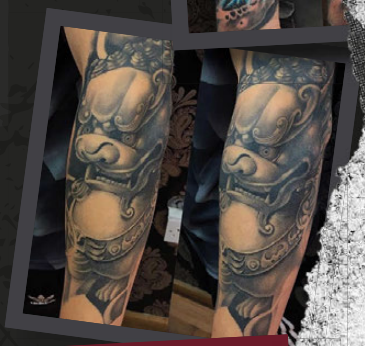

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A LETTER ABOUT MAC MCCARTHY

The following text are words from Hannya Jayne who has recently started... well... you'll see. Read on, it's important to all aspects of the community:

"For those of you in the Tattoo & Body Modification community I am sure you will be familiar and most likely be friendly with Mac 'Dr. Evil' McCarthy.

Today it has been been publicised that Mac - owner of Punctured Body Piercing & Modification in Wolverhampton - has appeared in court accused of 'three counts of causing serious injury relating to consensual piercing and body modifying'.

It must be made clear that the charges and case were NOT instigated by the customer who received the body modifications in question, as he is completely happy with the way the procedure was conducted and the outcome. None of Mac's customers have made a complaint. The charges were instigated by a third party, which can not be commented on at this stage of the case.

Alongside supporting Mac, there is another important issue to raise. There is a growing call for body modifications in the UK. Considering they have been an important part of culture all the over the world for thousands of years, don't let it die out or more worryingly go underground in the UK.

We need to stand together and show that both modified individuals & modification specialists wish to have legislation upheld in the UK so both customer and specialist can feel safe and supported.

I am so sad and angry that someone as professional, moral and caring as Mac is being pursued in this way. A large percentage of Mac's procedures are reconstructive, allowing people into military and emergency service careers. It also stops people seeking reconstructions from burdening the already stressed NHS.

Along with running his own studio, he also organises and runs the Halloween Tattoo Bash. Each year he organises a charity raffle at the convention, raising thousands of pounds for local charities such as Wolverhampton Homeless Outreach & The Haven, a charity and shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

It seems these days with studios and 'home studios' popping up everywhere, run by people with little knowledge or health registration, surely we can stand together to support professionals who conduct their specialisms on consenting individuals in a knowledgable, skilful & hygienic manner.

Please sign to show your support for Mac and for the right to express yourselves in whatever modified manner you wish in a safe environment.

Because Barbie & Ken aren't everyone's idea of beautiful.

Hannya Jayne

The link you'll need is this:
change.org/p/support-professional-body-modification-specialist-mac-maccarthy or... because, we're kind: *tinyurl.com/jp5b4bc*

CONVENTIONS

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10 New Market Rd
Edinburgh EH14 1RJ
scottishtattooconvention.net

NORTH LAKES TATTOO SHOW
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Wavell Dr, Rosehill Estate,
Carlisle CA1 2ST,
northlakestattooshow.co.uk

INK & IRON TATTOO CONVENTION
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The New Bingley Hall
1 Hockley Circus
Birmingham B18 5PP
inkandiron.co.uk

7TH TATTOO EXTRAVAGANZA PORTSMOUTH
14 – 16 April 2017
Pyramids Centre
Clarence Esplanade, Portsmouth PO5 3ST
tattooextravaganza.co.uk

MAIDSTONE TATTOO EXTRAVAGANZA
15 – 16 April 2017
Kent Showground
Detling, Maidstone ME14 3JF
maidstonetattooextravaganza.co.uk

TATTOO ART EXPO CORK
22 – 23 April 2017
Clayton Hotel Silver Springs
Tivoli, Cork, Ireland

LIVERPOOL TATTOO CONVENTION
05 – 07 May 2017
Britannia Adelphi Hotel
Ranelagh Place, Liverpool, L3 5UL
liverpooltattooconvention.com

BRIGHTON TATTOO CONVENTION
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by
Federico Amaterasu

This piece from Federico Amaterasu took first place at Tattoo Freeze in the blackwork category a few weeks back. I'm really liking this 'sketched out' approach to tattooing and I'm not the only one. I think what swings it for me is that it has 'life'—it never appears to be a static image and somewhere in this old head of mine, that's what makes it work.

It's not supposed to be super solid like a piece of traditional work—none of Federico's work is—and maybe it's just different enough to capture the imagination of others too. The possibilities in such a style are endless and while it's by no means new, it's starting to get real good and very interesting out there.

More like this please. I can take as much as you care to throw.

federicoamaterasu
federicoamaterasu@gmail.com

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CAMERA OBSCURA

The mailbox has been full of great photo-shoots recently—from men, which is a good thing. We have no idea where this might go but figured we'd unleash the hounds and see what you all made of it in ReaderLand. The pics seen here are of our Russian buddy, Serj—you can find him on instagram at @crow_of_spades and if you're interested in contacting him for commercial purposes, you can reach him at crowofspades.official@gmail.com

Enough said. This is one of those 'let the pics do the talking' moments. Nice shoot.

ALIKE
SUDOS
PHOTO

AFTER HOURS

What do tattoo artists do when they're not tattooing? In After Hours, Wayne Simmons talks to some of his favourite artists about the things they get up to when the studio lights go down. This month, he meets Johny D. Matthews, tattooist and war gamer

www.johnydmatthews.co.uk johny.d.matthews
@johny_d_matthewstattoo

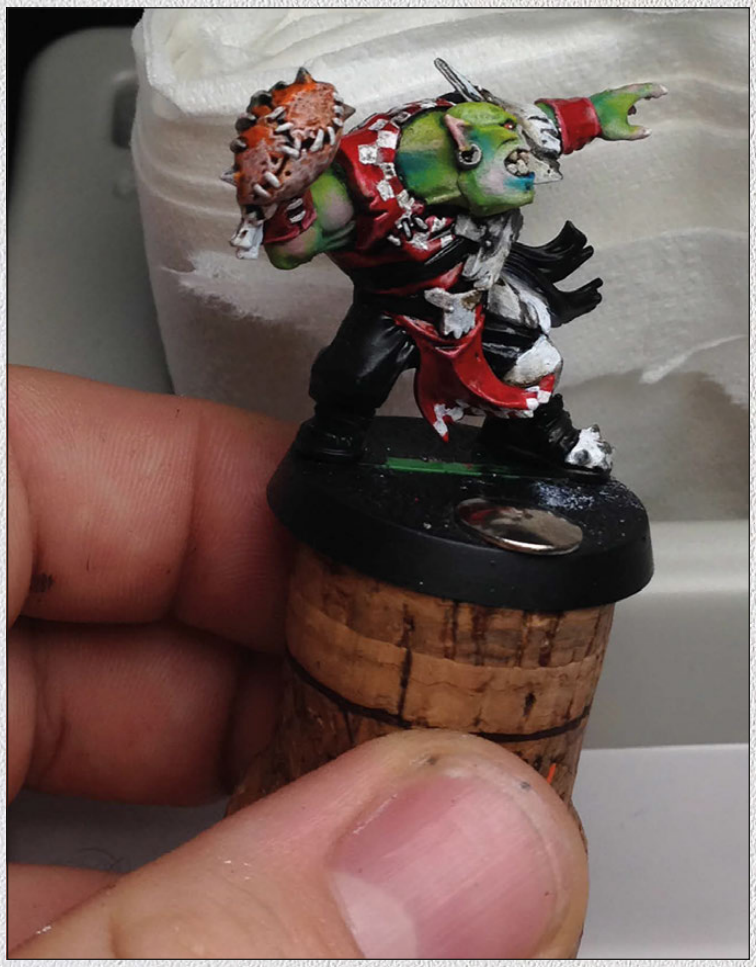
I remember, as a lad, being obsessed with Dungeons & Dragons. There was a cartoon I used to watch back in 80s about a group of kids who went to a fairground and ended up getting trapped within some sort of fantasy realm. It got me reading those Fighting Fantasy books, the 'choose your own adventure' sort, and it got me buying action figures. And then one day, I found myself in Games Workshop with a little miniature figure in my hands. I took it home, tried to paint it, made a big mess in the process, and that's where my obsession ended.

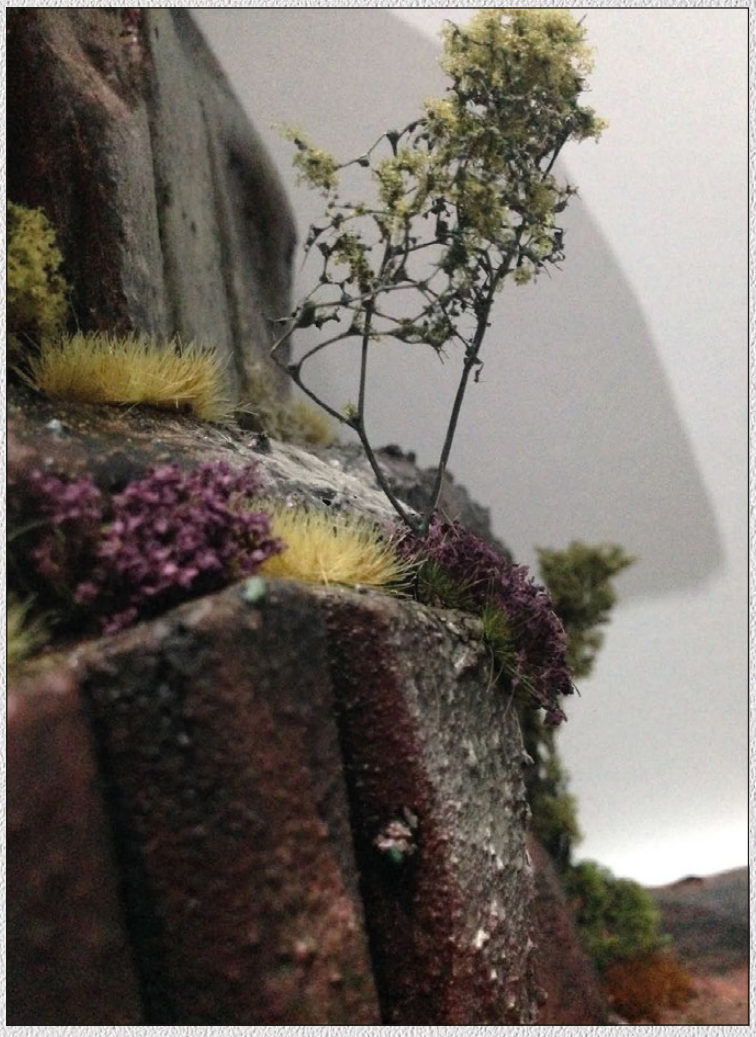
But for a while, it was all fantasy all the time. Growing up in Belfast during the Troubles, I guess a bit of escapism every now and then was appealing.

Johny D. Matthews can relate to that. We're chatting at this year's Tattoo Freeze and like most creative types I know, Johny's not enjoying the crowds so much. "I think a lot of people would absolutely love to be transported to an alien world for a day," he quips. "Maybe roaming one of the planets from a Frank Frazetta painting, or stood on the cliffs of some fantasy world like Middle Earth." He's only kidding, of course. In truth, Johny's a regular here and something of a player on the UK convention scene in general. He's scooped up numerous awards and accolades over the years with his clean, sharp take on realism—a skillset which meant that, unlike me, when he took home one of those miniatures from Games Workshop, it didn't end in disaster.

"I was first introduced to it all by my uncles," he tells me. "One of them used to paint these massive, big, model planes and the other was into fantasy miniatures and war gaming." For the uninitiated, war gaming is like a more advanced version of board-gaming, a lot more reliant on the player's own imagination and creativity. It's been going since 1953 with a sizeable community built up around both the games themselves and the miniatures used to play them.

For Johny, though,



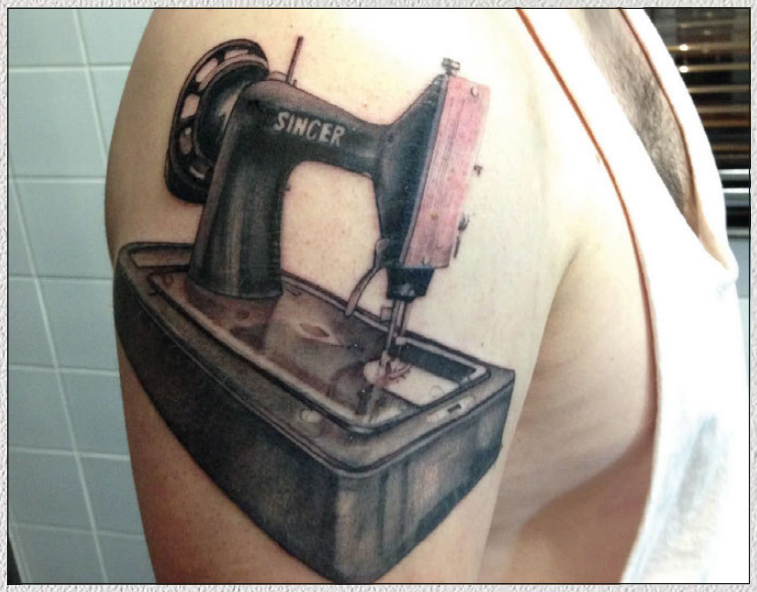


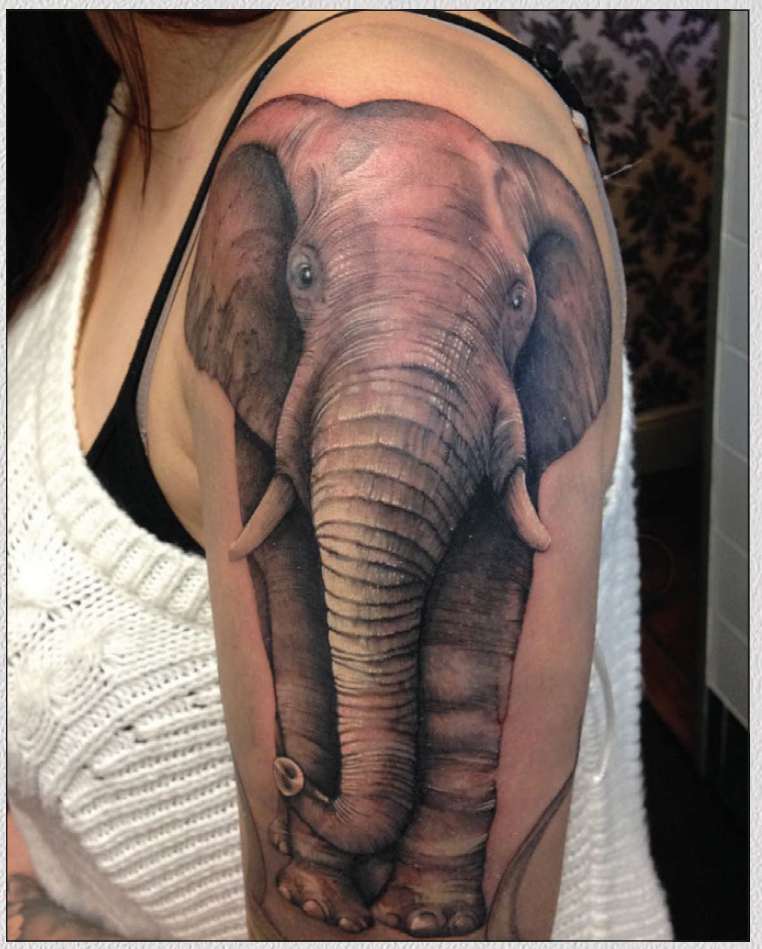
I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WOULD ABSOLUTELY LOVE TO BE TRANSPORTED TO AN ALIEN WORLD FOR A DAY

it wasn't really about the gaming per se, it was the artistic side of it all that appealed. "The gaming was just a bi-product. Don't get me wrong, I like gaming, just as I like reading comics and books, but working with the miniatures you use to play the games, painting them, it was always more about that for me. With a book you have to build upon a pre-determined script and I find that quite restricting. Whereas working with miniatures lets you create and visualise the world for yourself; it brings your imagination to reality."

It's not easy, as I found out the hard way. The size of these things, for one thing—28mm scale—doesn't leave much room for error. And if you do get it wrong, it's not an easy fix. "To be honest, it's just a massive case of practice makes perfect,' Johny says. 'A lot of people use magnifying glasses, but I'm lucky in that I can just use my naked eye. I also think the types of paints you use, the consistency and quality, greatly affect the finished product—similar to tattooing, I suppose, with machines and ink affecting the finish of a tattoo."

At school, Johny fell in with a crowd of war gaming fanatics and before long he was making regular trips to distant planets and Tolkien-esque fantasy realms.





IT'S NOT EASY, AS I FOUND OUT THE HARD WAY. THE SIZE OF THESE THINGS, FOR ONE THING—28MM SCALE—DOESN'T LEAVE MUCH ROOM FOR ERROR

To this day, he's still meeting up with the same guys, a shared enthusiasm for all things geeky having followed them into adulthood. But for Johny, being artistic meant he could take it to a whole other level. "I do feel very lucky that, in a sense, I can actually create these worlds," he admits, pointing out how it's gone way beyond miniature figures, now.

"Cliff faces, icy rocks, all kinds of things. I build these 3D diorama sets from raw materials. I carve them from slate or oasis foam, all kinds of stuff. Like, I've just started building a Grot riding a Squig, a Warhammer: Age of Sigmar piece. Normally it would just be on a flat stand but I'm going to have it leaping off a snow-covered rock. It'll involve drilling the slate to add supports so the miniature looks like it's just on the edge of the rock, standing on its tip toe."

Johny's taken the show on the road, gaming conventions now commonplace across the UK and beyond. One he's particularly drawn to is Games Day in Nottingham. Organised by Games Workshop, it's an event largely focused on the creativity side of war gaming with a huge emphasis on miniatures painting—which suits Johny down to the ground. They have competitions, much like at tattoo conventions, where artists can enter their own custom miniatures before a panel of judges. "I've not won any awards yet," he tells me, "but there is one award in particular I would love to win—the Golden Demon Slayer Sword. The trophy is an actual 5 foot long sword, which is awesome, but it's not just that, it's more because I spent my entire childhood looking at previous winners in White Dwarf Magazine, holding the sword above their heads, and imagining myself doing the same. For me it would be the pinnacle of realising my childhood dream. Definitely on the bucket list!"

In the immediate future, Johny's got plenty of jobs on the go. "I'm currently working on a couple of big pieces,

I CARVE THEM FROM SLATE OR OASIS FOAM, ALL KINDS OF STUFF. LIKE, I'VE JUST STARTED BUILDING A GROT RIDING A SQUIG, A WARHAMMER: AGE OF SIGMAR PIECE...

one of which is an environment model based on a computer game I love. This environment consists of blue grass contrasted against red coloured rocks with alien troops moving through it kind of like a scene from some Vietnam film. Only, instead of Vietnam, it's an alien world. It's going to be entered into a contest at the end of the year, but I can't really say too much on that one as I want to keep it a surprise."

Thinking back, I'm not sure if the kids in that Dungeons & Dragons cartoon I watched ever got back to the real world. I remember one episode where they almost made it but then realised they'd left someone behind and went back to get them. (Foolish children. Ed.)

Perhaps they're still there now: older, wiser and more canny, better adapted to their surroundings. And, you know what, after chatting with Johny, I'm starting to think that maybe they aren't so bothered about getting back anymore—maybe they've had a glimpse somehow of the world they could have grown up within, how grey and monochrome it's become, how terribly pedestrian, and decided that being trapped in some distant fantasy realm full of strange and exotic creatures and brightly coloured foliage ain't such a bad thing after all. ▣

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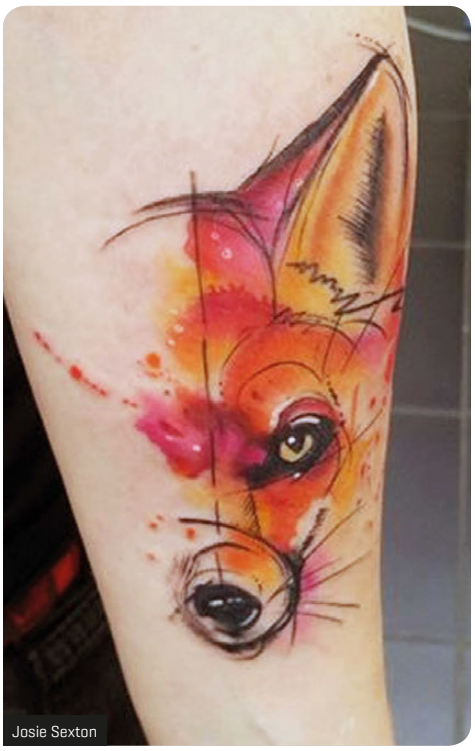
Joanne Baker

DIFFERENT STROKES

Beccy Rimmer explores a controversial tattoo style growing in popularity. Four watercolour tattooists working in the UK take us on a journey through their delicately painted worlds...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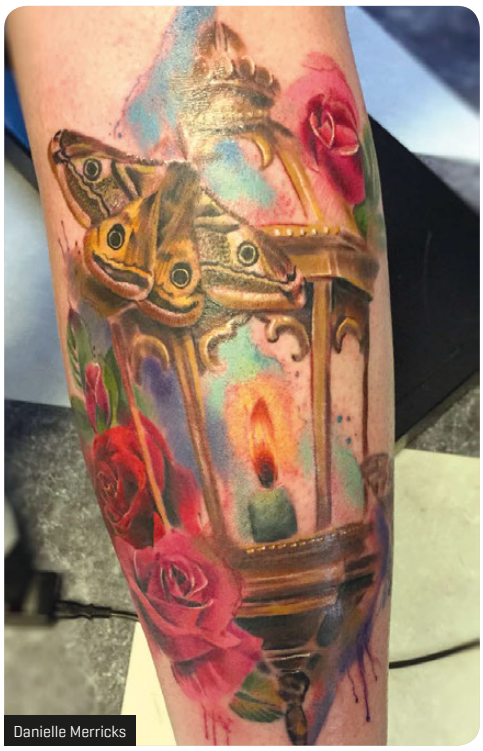
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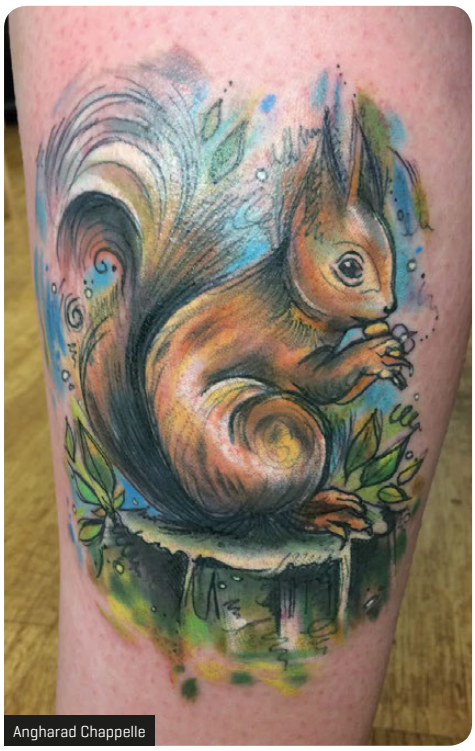

Angharad Chappelle

For me, watercolour is one of the most interesting tattoo styles to discuss, debate and ultimately appreciate. It seems to follow no rules yet remains an increasingly favoured and consistent genre amongst today's tattoo clientele.

When we use the word "watercolour" we are more often than not referring to the tattoo's ability to create the illusion of 'paint flicks'—splashes, streaks or spots of colour that mimic drips seen when working with paint on canvas or paper. This splash detail means that watercolour tattoos are full of movement, texture and depth. They test an artist's ability to use colour in the best way possible.

Interestingly, for these four talented female artists, the importance lies just as heavily in the line-work as it does in the aforementioned attention to colour. "I would definitely use the term watercolour to describe an aspect of my tattooing," says Josie, "but the lines are just as important."

For both Josie and Angharad, their specialism style is a result of favouring qualities born in in the sketch-process. "I used to create all of my neo-traditional designs using crayons and pens," reflects Angharad. "Often a large design would take one full day to do, so once I decided to use paints just to give my client just a quick idea of what the design would look like in colour. I instantly fell in love with the fluidity of painting with watercolours. The rest was history."

Similarly for Josie, she started to prefer those 'quicker' client sketches and this encouraged her linework to evolve into a unique form. "I subsequently felt that block colour felt unnatural," she continues, "and too uniform alongside the sketchy style of linework—this naturally led me to use a watercolour effect."

The term 'watercolour' can encompass so much—tattoos with solid, little or even no linework. Josie, Angharad and Joanne successfully juxtapose sketchy lines with drizzles of colour, whereas Danielle's art often edges towards combining watercolour effects with realistic imagery. Yet, that's not to say that the former three's work isn't separately distinguishable. For me, any successful and interesting colour artist finds a way to create their own style, and all of these ladies do just that. The work on these pages has clearly been born in four very different brains.

Perhaps the answers lie less in investigating what defines the watercolour style specifically, and more so in examining why someone would choose to get a tattoo that looks like this. Often used to portray themes of nature, I was keen to know if watercolour tattoos were limited to conveying particular types of images.

"Yes, nature is a very common theme," agrees Joanne. "The bleeding-out of colours and washy backgrounds can compliment botanical illustrations so well, or the movement of scenery." But she admits that the form can also be extremely diverse: "I do think any image can lend itself to this style."

"Almost any subject matter can be executed," confirms Angharad. "Living things are just more believable than inanimate objects because watercolour is all about movement and expression—it can really capture that." It's true that often the most eye-catching watercolour tattoos are those in which the subject matter is not something motionless. This made me wonder... with static imagery, do coloured splash additions give the tattoo something extra, or do they appear as an afterthought? For the artists on these pages, watercolour techniques are central to the designs and integral to the creative processes of the images themselves, never just an accompaniment without consideration.

I suppose these reflections can act as advice for our readers seeking a 'good' watercolour tattoo artist for new work. With a style that's increasingly on the rise, sadly for every great artist working, there is also another that is perhaps, shall we say, less exceptional. You can spot a skilled watercolour artist in how dedicated they are to their custom style—a representation that the tattooist

WHO? Josie Sexton
WHERE? Gothika Tattoo Studio, Redcar
WHEN? Tattooing since 2013
IG @JosieSexton

truly believes that their tattoo could only exist with these painting-like textures.

The best watercolour artists are often as creative and experimental as possible, in order to make their work stand out amongst a crowded marketplace. Successful tattoo artists will have a reasoning behind each decision they make and create full painted artworks in advance of the tattoo session. “I create a painting for each tattoo that I do,” says Joanne, “it helps both me and the client visualise the tattoo and I can sometimes give the client a painting to keep.”

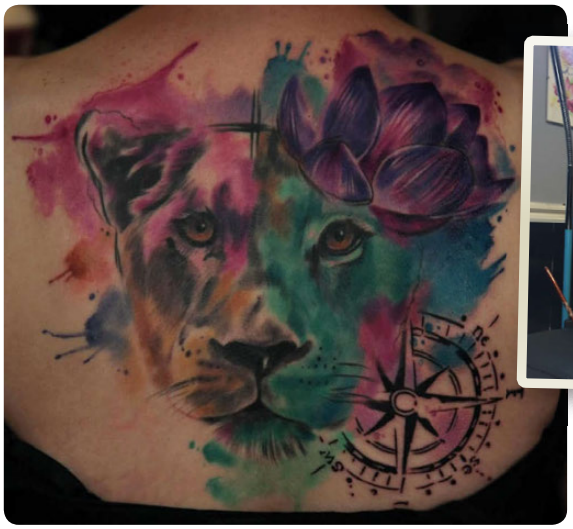
The other girls would agree and do follow the same pre-tattooing ritual. Many confident tattooers creating a mandala, script or traditional tattoo, say, might just map out the linework for the stencil. In my own experience, only select non-watercolour artists would create a full-colour custom artwork off-skin for reference beforehand. With most watercolour creations however, prep work can become a lengthy process. For some artists, constructing the tattoo in its entirety on paper beforehand is essential. Admittedly this way of working is not always limited to this style, however. I was tattooed by new-school artist Ryan Ousley last year and he also worked in this way—painting the entire piece on paper the night before our appointment so he could experiment with potential colour usage in advance.

For the creative talents here, painting with watercolours with no client involved is also imperative for their work. “I love to paint,” says Danielle. “It’s really important to keep improving your skills as an artist on paper as in turn this benefits your tattooing too.”

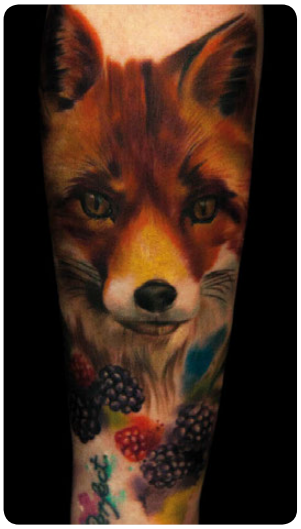
I had greatly underestimated the importance of the drawing process with this unique tattoo style. Many of these artists would admit that the painting prep can take just as long as the tattoo itself. So, the question I was itching to ask—which was more enjoyable for them as artists, paper or skin? “Skin is the easier and my preferred medium to work,” tells Josie. “With paper there’s a lot less control it can be frustrating. Working on skin gives me a lot more control but still allows me to explore the watercolour aesthetic.”

Joanne confirms these challenges—even though paper does gives you the element of control, in that you can erase your mistakes and start over, it is in fact more difficult to command the direction of paint off-skin: “on paper, you can’t control which colours will mix together. This can be a blessing and a curse, you can create something serendipitous, not what you had in mind, or ruin a perfectly good painting by smudging black ink everywhere.”

“The fluidity and effect of watercolour is easier to do on paper because the paper doesn’t move,” says Angharad, “but it is only when I transfer it to skin that a design re-



WHO? Danielle Merricks
WHERE? Inkden Tattoo and Piercing Studio, Blackpool
WHEN? Tattooing since 2012
IG @PaintingIsntDead



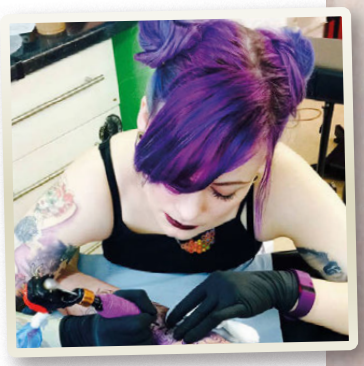
ally comes to life and I feel it looks more effective." One of the most important questions remains—does watercolour give a tattoo a certain something that other styles can not? What is the true difference between artworks of this kind and the same images created with traditional or realistic techniques?

"I can appreciate every style of tattooing," says Danielle. "I think any tattoo, executed well, brings that extra something to the skin. One style does not achieve that more than other." For Josie however, a watercolour style "adds something extra" and "brings life to the tattoo." She describes the spontaneity of creating a tattoo of this sort: "some of the lines and paint splashes are very uncontrolled, and there's something beautiful in imperfection. You can create the most beautiful accidents that bring so much energy and movement to a tattoo. I enjoy putting life and energy into a static image—it comes naturally to me which is why I found other styles too restrictive and static." Birmingham-based Angharad agrees that the feeling of movement is key, she believes that "it gives a sense of belonging to the person that wears the tattoo."

We're beginning to discover that with this tattoo style, these final effects are only achieved through the drawing process—the artistic devising of the concept is crucial. "Translating the ideas into my own visual language is a meeting of minds," tells Joanne. "Because watercolour painting is a very fast and instant way of getting an idea down on paper, you don't lose any ideas in another train of thought." This approach to creating art is natural and organic, it gives rise to completely unique tattoos that are systematic and unpremeditated at the same time.

Allowing elements of your art to take shape spontaneously is a completely different process compared to a true traditional or realistic tattoo—styles that follow strict guidelines. I think this is where my own fascination with watercolour tattoos was born—the desire to re-write the guidelines in an industry built on routines and heritage. Joanne confirms my views when she describes watercolour as "colouring outside the lines." "It feels a bit like we're breaking the rules," she says. This statement is where I myself find wonder in the watercolour form. I believe that art should ask questions, evolve and be as dynamic and original as it wishes to—arguably not many tattoo styles achieve this more than watercolour does.

Many tattoo genres look to the past rather than the future. So, where did watercolour's outlook lie? Does it attempt to follow any rules? To what extent do watercolour tattoos rely on improvisation? Danielle acknowledges that rule-following is often easier said than done, as her tattoos often stray from the original plan: "the design might look too rigid on the body and it's important for it to flow—a bit of freedom with that is a necessity." Making last-minute



WHO? Joanne Baker
WHERE? Grizzlys Art Collective, Coventry
WHEN? Tattooing since 2012
IG @Milky_Tattoodles

changes on the day is vital, and often these are client-led. Having the customer's input into the design allows it to "take on a more personal element" as Joanne describes.

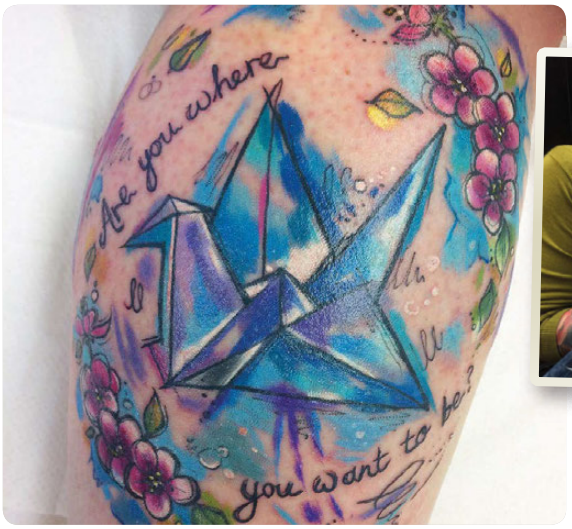
For these creative minds, the priority is to create a tattoo that doesn't look too "staged or contrived", as Josie describes. "Never try to force it too much. It should be free and fun. Sometimes it's a case of just seeing what happens." For Angharad, the level of 'rule-breaking' that can occur depends on the part of the tattoo you're working on. "An animal's facial features require a high level of detail, accuracy and attention", she explains, "but for other parts of a watercolour tattoo, the focus is never perfection and it's OK to paint outside of the lines. The tattoo should have a life of its own."

Both Danielle and Josie describe watercolour as a style that "pushes the boundaries." Evidently the style's unique creative approach to tattooing makes way for thousands of artworks that are each completely bespoke. In truth, many of today's younger tattoo clients are more concerned with their own personal relationship to the tattoo and admittedly less focused on how well it respects the rules.

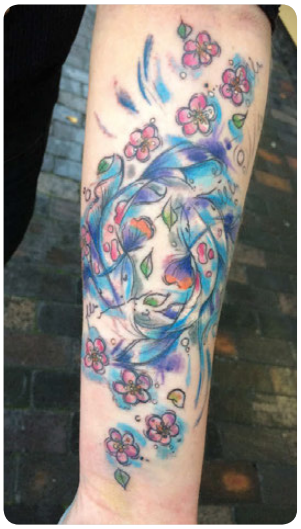
Like all tattoo styles, personal taste will prevail and we must never forget that a customer lies at the centre of this entire process. Many of the girls agree that the idea of what the client desires is one of the most important aspects of a watercolour tattoo. Joanne says she prioritises "making people happy".

Each tattooer attracts a client-base that is drawn to their particular skill-set. Danielle accepts that customers visit her "for her specialism" and Josie confirms that she now "exclusively tattoo[s] in this style". She doesn't see watercolour as a fad, but "an art form". This considered viewpoint is filtered down and results in the well-placed passions of her clients. For all of these artists, customers often leave with not just a new-found enthusiasm for the art-form, but something else common in the tattoo-client relationship... friendship. Every tattooist I've had the pleasure of interviewing over the years has shared this appreciation, this infinite gratitude towards clients whom inevitably leave the studio as more than just that. "It's difficult to imagine life without them," says Joanne.

But an artform of infinite appreciation, diversity and experimentation can also often be tarred with question, debate and criticism. There's much more for me to explore at a later date perhaps, such as, does this form exclusively attract women, or are there any watercolour artists who are also breaking down gender boundaries? How is this popular tattoo style placed in the world of tattoo conventions and competitions, and can it be fairly judged alongside



WHO? Angharad Chappelle
WHERE? Steele and Ink Tattoos, Birmingham
WHEN? Tattooing since 2015
IG @AngharadChappelle



other coloured styles? To what extent can we continue to pigeonhole it?

I will end with one of the most recurring questions, one that no doubt every watercolour tattooist will have been challenged with at least once in their lifetime... what is the longevity of a watercolour tattoo? This subject has been the victim of bad press in recent years, with many traditional tattooists claiming that these free-flowing designs will not last over time due to the designs' often lack of solid lines and structures. I believe that, as with realism, we are yet to reach a point in history where we can document how these tattoos look when we are much older. Despite this, I had to ask—for watercolour tattooists, were concerns for the future less important?

For Joanne, creating a tattoo that stands the test of time is always a main consideration. "If you bear in mind all the elements of traditional tattooing," she explains "longevity shouldn't be a problem. I use a lot of black lines to hold the image, and also contrast is important—just like any other style of tattooing." These were evidently challenges that every single artist here had faced, addressed, and consequently found solutions for. Josie talks me through her journey, how she learnt to add elements to a tattoo, such a black lines, to minimise fade damage. "If the tattoo is well applied and well considered during the design process, then it should be built to last," confirms Danielle.

Earlier I asked—was watercolour a tattoo style that looked to the past, or the future? For me, the beauty of any tattoo is that it actually aims to focus on the present. As a tattoo collector that very much lives in the moment, I take each day at a time rather than worrying about how faded my ink will look "when I am older". Aren't we all really just in the same boat, no matter the size and style of our tattoos, no mater how long we will all ultimately live for? "In reality, all tattoos over time will fade or change, as the body changes through life," agrees Angharad.

My exploration of watercolour tattooing has only confirmed one thing—the tattoo industry is always changing, so are the artists, styles and clients within it. Even the individuals in this interview when my asking them to label their work, were reluctant to primarily class themselves as "watercolour" artists. They are all ultimately dedicated to developing as artists, committed to trying out new ways of working, and breaking their own personal boundaries, as well as the industry's. As Joanne beautifully summarises... "tattooing has always taken influence from the art of its time. As long as we continue to experience art around us, we'll see more styles and more variation emerge. It makes me thankful to work in such a creative and diverse industry." ▣

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hot, hot heat

AURORA GALORE
@auroragalore
Youtube: www.youtube.com/theauroragalore
Tattoo Artist's Instagram: @ojxreign

A little while back, we threw down a gauntlet for chancers, slackers and gamblers to join the crew here and held the doors wide open to see what happened. After sitting on them for far too long, this piece from the wonderful Aurora Galore rose to the top of the pile and well... she kinda has a way with words:

Getting a new tattoo is always an exciting experience. Getting a tattoo done by a new artist is however slightly unnerving. You don't know if they will be patient with you. You don't know if they will be understanding if there is a large part of their sketch that you do not like. But without a doubt the hardest part about showing up to meet a new tattoo artist is discovering that they are really attractive. This becomes ever more problematic if the place that you are getting your tattoo is a rather intimate one.

Let me elaborate. Whilst this may seem like a very nice idea, the experience of it is quite different. After your consultation where you were nervous and probably said something truly embarrassing, you need to make some serious decisions for the day of the tattoo. Do I show up looking nice? I don't want to overdo it in case they think I am dressing up for them, but at the same time I need to look effortlessly cool and chic. Do

TATTOO
IAM

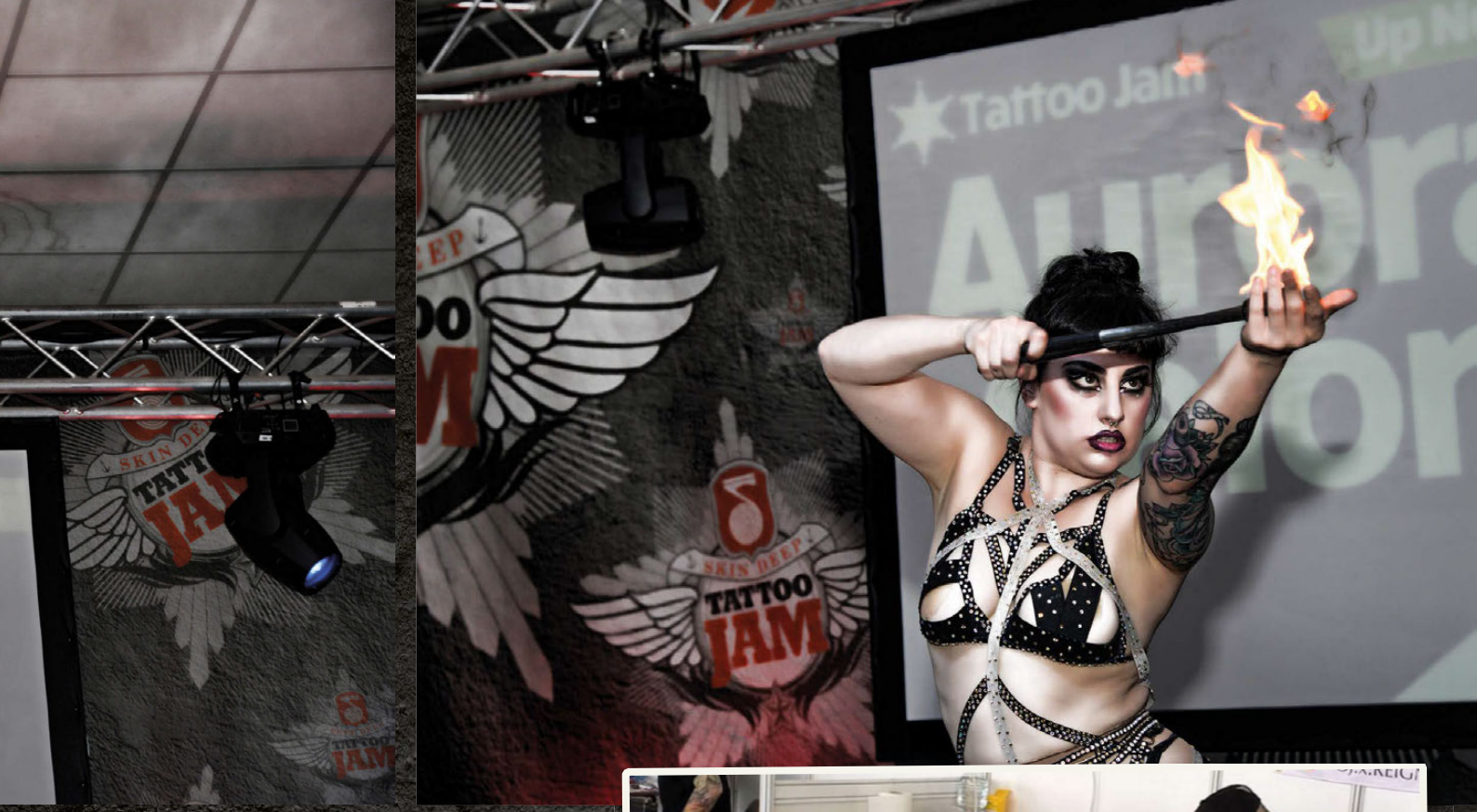
without a doubt the hardest part about showing up to meet a new tattoo artist is discovering that they are really attractive

I wear a messy bun that took me 3 hours but looks like I just fell out of bed with it? Do I wear the no-makeup but secretly I've done a full face of makeup look? What type of underwear do I wear? I learnt the hard way that wearing nice underwear can be somewhat confusing to a tattoo artist *insert monkey covering eyes emoji here!* You don't want them to think that you have dressed up for them, but you also don't want them to think that you are some kind of scruff that wears unattractive underwear!

You may be fully aware that the tattoo artist in question has a partner or doesn't even share the same sexuality as you, but there still burns something inside of you that needs to present yourself in a way that you wouldn't ordinarily do in any other normal circumstance.

I arrived at Tattoo Jam on the opening day after one of the most beautiful walks past the Doncaster Lakeside. It put my mind at a slight ease as the calming sights subdued my apprehension moderately. I had already made a lot of these hard decisions but I was fully aware that my biggest obstacles were yet to come. I was getting a tattoo in a place that I had yet to experience the pain of, but had been told that it was pretty horrific. Under my bum cheek all the way down to the back of my knee. I definitely had not been upping my squat reps for this occasion. Nope. That definitely did not happen! I opted for some non-matching gym attire and a casual day makeup face. This would prove to be a bad idea as the session ended in the lesser desired "panda eyes" look!

I had found this incredible tattoo artist on Instagram where there were very few images of his personal appearance! He was a very talented artist and I was very excited to be adding to my leg artwork. It was a different style than what I had anywhere else on my body which made it that much more of a thrilling occurrence for me. The sketch of the tattoo that he had drawn up was truly beautiful. I tried to let these thoughts wash over me as I prepared for what was to come. I am not the best client to have when you are tattooing. Let's rephrase: I am the worst client to have when you are tattooing! I have almost no tolerance for pain and I let out sad little weeps throughout my sessions! I may attempt to

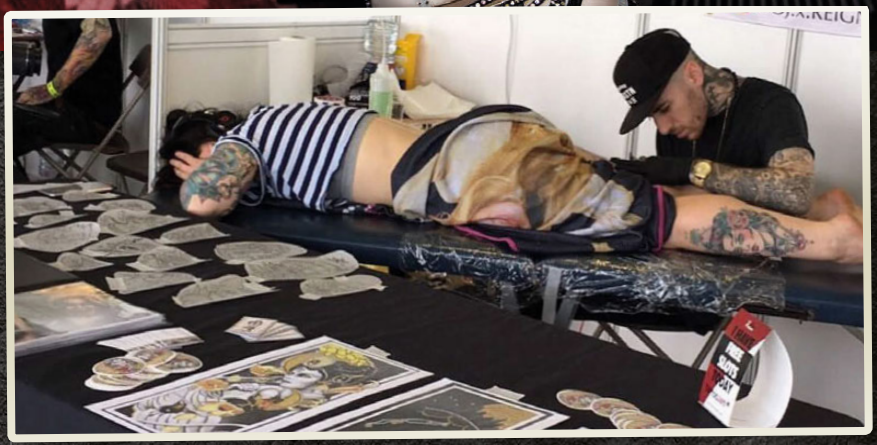


keep calm and tell a hilarious anecdote but this is usually interrupted by some form of unbearable pain resulting in me biting down on some paper towels!

The session starts out with me having to present my blank canvas to the tattoo artist. I have appropriate underwear on and I am keeping my cool. The stencil is on and the placement is approved by the both of us. I say approved by both of us—we had a long discussion about how my bum looked in conjunction with the tattoo. Not even in jest or irony, but in all seriousness. What a thrilling and ridiculous life we both lead! I settled in with my blanket, my headphones and my pre-packaged lunch and prepared for the one thought that has been giving me nightmares and anxiety for the last couple of days: Please do not fart in this pretty boy's face!

When trying to relax for a very painful and intimately placed tattoo, your muscles loosen and your anxiety level needs to be lowered. You want to clench your bum to hold anything in, but it will disrupt the placement of the tattoo. But what will happen if I release? It's also hot and I'm a pretty sweaty. How sweaty is too sweaty before I must attempt to fan or god forbid wipe away the sweat from my nether regions?! Now I am not saying that these thoughts do not occur when one's tattoo artist is not to their personal taste, however the pressure of the situation is increasingly heightened when the sexy man with the latex gloves is!

The actual tattooing process was not as bad



i definitely had not been upping my squat reps for this occasion. nope. that definitely did not happen

as my friends had made out to me. Sure, there were moments when I wanted to kill myself when he started stabbing the back of my knee, but as a whole; it wasn't the worst tattoo that I had ever gotten. Fortunately however, the pain of being poked at with needles for four hours transferred my fears about my bodily functions over to my fears of how loud my weeps would be so I suppose that was one positive!

I decided at the beginning of the year that I wanted my legs completely covered. They have always been the least favourite part of my body so what better way to make them beautiful than with incredible artwork from tattooists all over the world? This particular piece was the start of a pair on the backs of my thighs. I have always preferred colour tattoos

a tattoo convention is truly like being a child in a candy store, especially when they have all of these beautiful designs laid out on their tables just awaiting your skin

but I wanted to get some black and grey pieces for variety. This particular tattoo artist does amazing things with black/grey with washes and punches of colour. I fell in love with his work and thought that it really suited what I had in my mind for these pieces. We are going for a Spanish Catholic/ royally bejewelled pairing which as always will look less complicated when it is on the body compared to when you are trying to explain it to someone!

The piece that we started was inspired by the jewel encrusted relics found in the catacombs. The juxtaposition between the dark morbid skulls and the preserved jewels were a wonderful start to explore a unique tattoo. We decided to go with a macabre skull with the pops of colours coming from the jewels. The opposite side will be of a similar style but exploring a design closer to my heritage. The beauty of tattoos is that we can take our own personal experiences, concepts and styles and make them become the story that we want them to.

Did that sound smart and informed? I hope so. I might use that line to try and counteract something stupid that will probably come out of my mouth during the next session!

The tattoo convention itself was really entertaining. I particularly liked the live music; it is always nice to see local acoustic bands perform at events like this one. The range of artists was really broad also. I was tempted to get a few more tattoos by several of the artists, but fortunately my bank balance did not allow such an instance. This was probably for the best or I may have ended up with a pizza slice tattooed on my face! A tattoo convention is truly like being a child in a candy store, especially when they have all of these beautiful designs laid out on their tables just awaiting your skin. I opted for grabbing most of their cards so I could salivate over them afterwards. It's lovely to go through all of their work online and if you are still completely in love with them, you can contact them to get a piece later on! That's my thought process anyways as I have very little self-control when it comes to tattoos.

My tattoo artist truly has magic hands (as if he needed anything else) as I wasn't in much pain after the tattoo. I was walking around the tattoo convention with complete ease and I even went for a run the next morning and felt completely fine. The healing process has also been nice. A bit itchy and I am waiting for my leg to just fall off one day because it seems too good to be true, but for the most part; it has been wonderfully pleasant! I cannot wait to finish this tattoo and start the next one as I think that they will be really beautiful and because you know, it gives me an actual excuse to get my bum out on a daily basis!

So overall, a great experience at Tattoo Jam. I got to discover loads of amazing new artists, got to listen to some wonderful local music and see some great performers and even had a pretty boy grab at my leg for several hours. An all-round successful day! ▣

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When you get an opportunity to interview a man knee deep in the history of tattooing, you should grab on to it with both hands. Matt Lodder is that very man and always has great things to say...

How did you come to combine your doctorate with the art and history of tattooing?

I hadn't really studied art history. I did my undergraduate degree in languages, because when I was a kid my dad told me that "no one would pay me to read books for a living"! So I thought: okay, I will go and get a real job. I went and trained as a translator, but at the same time I was starting to get tattooed and was starting to get pierced. I have been into tattooing my whole life, really. I have a secret origin story of sorts; my great grandma had a tattoo, which her brothers did on her in about 1900. Apparently, they came home with a tattoo machine, and asked if they could tattoo her, and she asked "will it come off?" Unfortunately, they told her it would! Obviously it didn't! I had never met her, but this was the sort of cautionary tale that was told to me as a kid. She had her initials E.D. tattooed on her arm, and really hated it. Also my granddad used to tell me that he woke up—in a tattooist's chair in Jakarta. He was a submariner in the Dutch navy in World War II. He was drunk on his rum rations and woke up just in time, as they were about to tattoo a fly on the end of his nose. My granddad was a very serious, austere sort of man, so this would have not gone down well. When I was a kid these were the cautionary tales about never getting tattooed: "You will regret it when you're older"; that kind of thing. So from an early age tattooing became the one thing I wasn't meant to do. It was like telling a child not to jump in puddles.

I WENT TO A TATTOO CONVENTION IN BELFORT, AND REALLY WANTED A TATTOO BY AN AMERICAN BECAUSE I THOUGHT THEY WERE THE BEST AT TATTOOING

I was really into wrestling and heavy metal when I was about ten, so from an early age I thought tattooing was cool and exciting. I was so interested in it, I was buying tattoo magazines all of the time. When I was about fourteen, I was going up to London and going to gigs, and I would go to Tower Records and buy loads of records. But I would also buy imported tattoo magazines. I got really obsessed with American tattooing, and was thinking that the stuff going on in those magazines was so much better than what was going on in England.

This was in the mid '90s, maybe '94 or '95, so I already knew that I didn't want to get tattooed by any old awful tattooist. During my degree, I did a year abroad in France and got tattooed for the first time by an American. It was really stupid really; I went to a tattoo convention in Belfort, and really wanted a tattoo by an American because I thought they were the best at tattooing. It was the most ridiculous thing: in hindsight anyone could have done the

Words: Steven Kenny · **Images:** Matt Lodder

GOD BLESS EVERY TATTOOIST AND COLLECTOR WHO HAS KEPT HOLD OF HISTORICAL MATERIAL, CARED FOR IT, AND RECORDED IT FOR POSTERITY

tattoo I got, two black stars on my wrist.

I ended up coming back to England thinking I don't want to be a translator; it's really boring, I thought I would see the world but actually it turns out you just see a lot of hotel rooms and airport departure lounges! In my final year of university in my language degree I took a module on European cinema and started reading loads of French philosophy about the body. I just found it all so fascinating, and I found that it really related to how I was thinking about my own body. I realised that academia was a possible career path, and tattooing could be my subject of study.

So my thesis was this methodological thing; what happens when you try and take body art seriously as art. What are the possibilities? What are the limits? I had a massive epiphany when I walked into the Wellcome Trust in London, and I saw preserved tattooed skins that had been removed from the body on display. There was a load of bullshit writing about tattooing, written by people that didn't know anything about it, saying that tattoos cannot be separated from the body. But, there it was, a tattoo, removed from the body, sitting there as an object waiting to be studied.

Has the history and culture of tattooing been typically ignored and incorrectly described by art historians?

Well, what happens when you try to marry art historical theory to this thing that everyone says is art, but which art historians have never really taken seriously? And at the same time, how does that help form a corrective to some of the naïve academic writing that many people have produced about tattooing? The more I read about tattooing's history by academics and non-academics, the more I realised just how many errors and falsehoods there were in these books. It turned out that there really hasn't been any great academic work on Western tattooing, maybe ever if I'm honest.

So that's what I have been doing ever since really, trying to correct some of this. Start from square one and start again. Academics who write about tattooing generally don't have access to any of the primary material, so they write about tattooing but don't do any primary research. Really, they are not interested in tattooing, but in things like body politics, identity, skin, gender etc. Because they don't do their primary work, get out there and do research, there has been decades of myth and misconception surrounding tattooing in mainstream literature. But not all is lost: there has always been some great stuff coming out of the tattoo community i.e. self-published books, which I am really excited to see. God bless every tattooist and collector who has kept hold of historical material, cared for it, and recorded it for posterity.

What fascinates you the most about tattooing?

I am really interested in European and American tattooing as a professional practice. The era of commercial tattooing. Tattoo artists earning money from their trade. Tattooing is perhaps best looked at as a commercial art. It's important to understand the linage, how tattooing has moved from one time to another, instead of people in the news just saying it's a new trend that will fade out. It's so much more than that. Western tattooing never goes away and reappears, even though that's what the standard narrative would have you believe.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE LINAGE, HOW TATTOOING HAS MOVED FROM ONE TIME TO ANOTHER, INSTEAD OF PEOPLE IN THE NEWS JUST SAYING IT'S A NEW TREND THAT WILL FADE OUT

In your studies you have examined the history of naval tattooing. What are your thoughts about it?

The standard account of eighteenth century naval tattooing is that these guys were getting heart tattoos because they are deeply in love with their wives, and were getting a Britannia because they are deeply patriotic, and because it's on their skin it's meaningful to them. But in reality they are also scratching the same designs onto their mess tins and love tokens. Yes, all of those things are true, but actually there isn't anything particularly special about tattooing in that context, really. Tattooing is art of the broader visual culture aboard. They were using the same needle to scratch their mess tin, or their love token, as they were for tattooing themselves. Literally the same technology, the same designs and in some cases, the same people doing it.

It is understandable that tattooing should be considered within the various discourses surrounding art history, as they are fundamentally about making and looking at images.

Yes, as you get older I realised that tattoos are part of a bigger circuit of images. The tattooed body is caught up in this wider realm of images which are important to you and which resonate with you.

Art history is fundamentally the study of pictures: who made them, why they were made, what people thought of them at the time, and people have thought of them in the intervening period. I think that's what it comes down to. You can apply that board methodology set to anything made by human beings, whether it's a building, or a plate, or a tattoo. If you apply it to tattooing you realise it's not this weird outsider practice, it's actually a deeply embedded mode of image making. I am interested in what happens when we think about tattoos and the profession and practice of tattooing using the same tools my colleagues would use to study a watercolour, or a sculpture, or a photograph.

It goes without saying; some people will merely look at tattoos and dismiss them as irrelevant. But as you said, by looking at tattoos from an academic perspective, someone can be provided with a bigger social history and how people at any given time respond to self-modification. Yet the tattooist's identity always seems to be lost in such a reading.

Yes, with tattoos and meaning there are whole books about tattooing that have no mention of the tattooist. Plenty of writers forget that there has been a third-party involved in the production of tattoos. So, trying to think of them as completely reducible ciphers of selfhood, which tends to be from either a positive or negative perspective, leads to problems.

You hear people saying, "This tattoo is me, I am communicating what I am, it's a symbol of who I am in the world, it's an anchor of selfhood in a crazy mixed up world!" But actually there is a tattooist out there that has got your tattoo in their portfolio, and in this format has nothing to do about you at all, it's just a picture of the work that they did. So what about them, and their skilled practice?

Do you think it's almost trendy for people to imbue a large metaphor onto a tattoo?

Yes, it's definitely a learned behaviour. Certainly the case after tattoo television such as Miami Ink. When people

THERE'S A TATTOOIST OUT THERE THAT HAS YOUR TATTOO IN THEIR PORTFOLIO, AND IN THIS FORMAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU, IT'S JUST A PICTURE OF THE WORK THEY DID

get asked what their tattoo means they feel they have to give an answer. It's not that they are lying, it's more complicated than that. They feel they have to justify their aesthetic decisions with a narrative, because that's what they think is the done thing. You hear tattooists say that people come in and want to give a life story, and they just don't care. It's things like, "I want three skulls on fire because I have three puppies and one of them died, and the other two got run over". In reality tattooists don't give a toss, they're more likely to say, "You just wanted three skulls, mate. You don't have to explain it to me!".

I agree with that. I have a tattoo of Poseidon and it hasn't got any metaphorical meaning to me, I just have it because I fucking love the design of the tattoo.

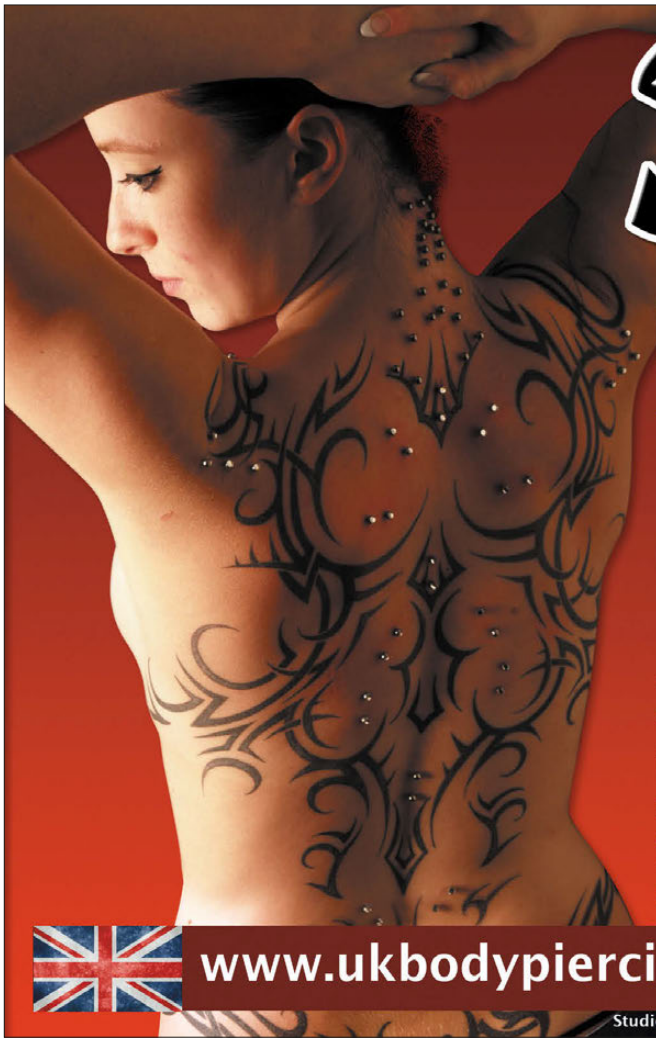
Right! And maybe the artist who did it, would have something to say about the influences of it. It's not meaningless, per se, but its meaning is way more complicated than a simple narrative. I have been sent some emails in the past about prisoner tattoos, like one from a criminal prosecutor saying that they wanted to know what a particular tattoo means. I told them I had no idea, because there's no such thing as a single meaning for a single image.

There was this guy I know who was tattooed in Britain. He went to Disneyland on holiday in America on his honeymoon, and he is heavily tattooed, and he has a teardrop tattooed under his eye. When he got to immigration at the airport, the security guy accused him of failing to declare his incarceration on his entry visa. "I know what that tattoo means", he said: "You have either been inside or you have killed somebody!" My friend had no idea what he was talking about; he was just an ordinary bloke from the Midlands. This sense that you can read inextricably a meaning from an image is just not true.

I don't want to say tattooing is good therefore it is art. I'm not actually really interested in the question of whether or not tattooing, or anything else, is or isn't art. I am just interested in what happens when we treat tattooing in the same way as other kind of art objects. I'm not interesting in bestowing the status of art of tattooing; that's not my mission.

I have a show that opens in March at the National Maritime Museum in Falmouth, it's called 'British Tattoo Art Revealed'. We have worked with private collectors, we have worked with Rambo—Paul Ramsbottom in Manchester, we have worked with Willy Robinson from Southport, with Jimmy Skuse, with the family of Jessie Knight who was the first important female tattoo artist in Britain, as well the tattoo artists Lal Hardy, Alex Binnie, and over a hundred artists around the country who are sending us tattooed silicon hands. The show is doing a couple of things; it's a historical survey of British tattooing, so it covers a lot of ground. We start of with the seventeenth century and pilgrim tattooing; we have 3D printed a pilgrim stamp so you can touch it. Then we try to dispel this idea that Captain Cook discovered tattooing, so we have a whole section on British tattooing before the eighteenth century, including some reproductions of some record books. And then we go all the way through. We have got some Victorian tattoo machines, Victorian cabinet cards, some really early flash from the '20s. We feature artists—George Burchett, some bits on Kes Skuse and the Bristol Tattoo Club. And there's over 400 objects, plus reproduced things as well, flash, machines and other kinds of artefacts and objects.

One of the defining threads that runs throughout the exhibition is repeated headlines reporting that 'tattooing is not just for sailors anymore'. The media have been saying that since the 1870s! I am really proud of the exhibition. It's really the first academic led show of its kind in Britain, and it includes things which people would never have seen before because they've come from private collections. As well as the exhibition, we are trying to create a permanent snapshot of British tattooing at this moment in time: the hands are becoming a part of the permanent collection at the museum. ▣



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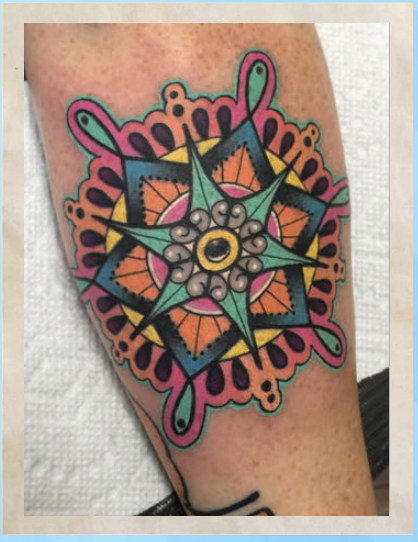
*Arkansas, a southeastern conservative state, may not seem like an obvious first choice for a tattoo road trip, but Matt O'Baugh's Black Cobra Tattoos makes it just that. Our interest piqued, we simply couldn't pass up the opportunity for an insider's look, so we recruited Ink Master Season 6 alum and Black Cobra artist **Katie McGowan** to give us the lowdown on her home state, reality TV stint, favourite cocktails and much more*

KatieTattoos
Black Cobra Tattoos, 6505 Warden Rd, Sherwood, AR 72120

It took eight seasons, but Ink Master finally crowned its first female winner last December. Just as Ryan Ashley Malarkey, co-owner of The Strange and Unusual oddities parlours in Pennsylvania, defeated traveling Puerto Rican artist Gian Karle Cruz to take home top honours, yours truly was in the middle of connecting with Ink Master Season 6 alum Katie McGowan. Given the big news from the world of tattooed TV, there seemed to be no better jumping off point than the topic of gender and tattooing.

"Because the tattoo industry is predominantly male, it can very easily feel like a boys' club," admits McGowan. "I think it's hard for many females to feel like equals or to feel understood and accepted fully. That being said, many amazing lady tattooers have been emerging over the past handful of years and have been killing it!"

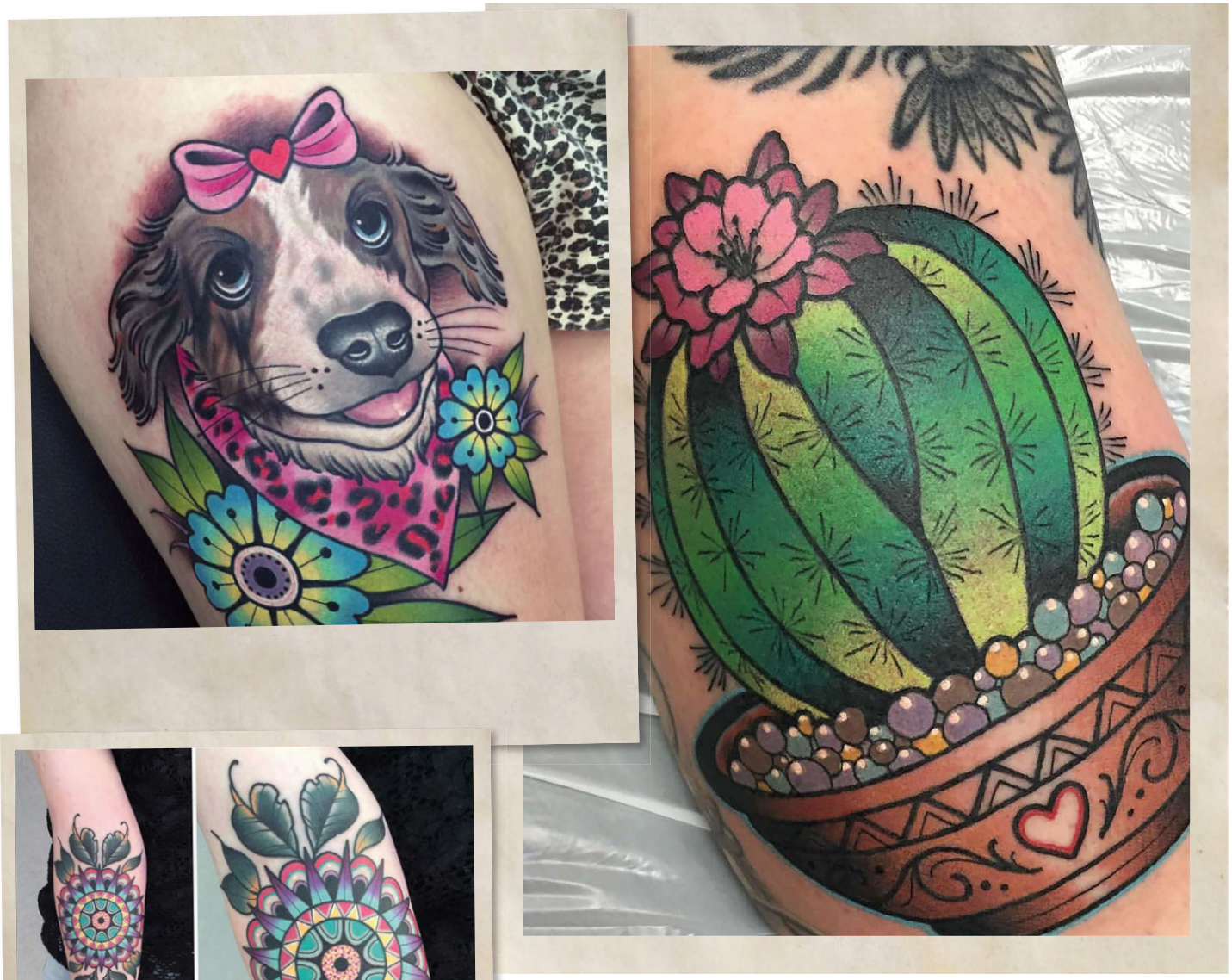
All while being totally in tune with and proud of their femininity. "I especially love that there are several ladies who almost exclusively tattoo colourful 'girly' pieces," says McGowan. "There is more of a market now for 'hi-femme' tattoos and I love it because I really enjoy tattooing feminine, colourful and fun pieces that appeal to women!"



In 2015, McGowan had the opportunity to show off her preferred style, as well as her versatility, on national TV while competing on Ink Master's sixth season. But unlike past contestants, she not only had to face off against her peers and try to impress the judges, she also had another huge element to think about: going head-to-head with her mentor, Matt O'Baugh. All because their season was being marketed as Ink Master: Mas-

Katie McGowan on... being someone else for a day
No lie, I'd love to be in Kat Von D's shoes for a day. I'm a make-up junkie and I'd love to be the owner of her cosmetic empire for 24 hours!

Words: Barbara Pavone | **Images:** Katie McGowan



Katie McGowan on... industry downsides
The tattoo industry can feel very clique-ish at times. Sometimes I feel that egos can get in the way of getting to know and befriending other artists.

ter vs. Apprentice. As it turns out, however, the experience wasn't as stressful as one might initially assume.

"Matt's wife, Jessica, was really encouraging and supportive of us trying out for the show," she remembers. "We decided on a Saturday night to go to a casting call on Sunday. It was pretty much on a whim. The audition went really well and they called us back immediately for a follow-up interview."

"I figured that if Matt and I went on the show as partners, we would also have to compete against each other at some point, as there can only be one winner. We were both really supportive of each other and when we had challenges where we went head-to-head, we were happy for whoever won it that week!"

"What surprised me the most about being on Ink Master was how long the work days are," she adds, looking back at her experience on the show. "Some days we had to be 'hair and makeup ready' at six or seven in the morning and we'd be working until nighttime. And you don't really get days off while you're there."

"That being said, I'd be down to do another season. Now that I've got a couple more years of tattooing under my belt, I feel like I've learned a lot since I was there the first time and I'd love to go back on and compete again."

Journey To Ink

"The first tattoo I saw was a David Bollt butterfly that my friend got on her lower back many years ago," remembers McGowan when asked about the very beginnings of her fascination with ink. "I thought it was so cool being able to go to a tattoo shop and pick anything you wanted off the wall. The concept of deciding how you'd like to personally alter or decorate your body seemed very empowering to me. Once I turned 18, I started hanging out at the tattoo shop in my hometown and eventually asked for an apprenticeship."

"Before I worked at the tattoo shop, I was in college full-time and I worked at a few different restaurants to get the bills paid," she

Katie McGowan on... Katie McGowan
Katie McGowan is "sassy, kind, down-to-earth, passionate and oftentimes hungry! She's in love with her job and believes life is a party."

continues. "After going to college for three years, I decided to drop out to pursue my tattoo apprenticeship. I tried staying in school while apprenticing, but it was really difficult dividing my time between school and the shop. I made the decision to leave school so I could put 100% into tattooing."

Meeting Matt O'Baugh, owner of Black Cobra Tattoos, at a tattoo convention in Little Rock, Arkansas was a life-changing moment. "I had known of him before that because his work is so good and when I met him, he was literally the nicest dude!" she recalls.

Taking on her apprenticeship wholeheartedly, McGowan devoted all of her time to it, but even so admits that "during my first couple of years, I was second-guessing myself lots! I knew that I loved tattooing, but I would definitely get frustrated when I had difficulties with technical application of the tattoo or figuring out how to draw something completely out of my comfort zone."

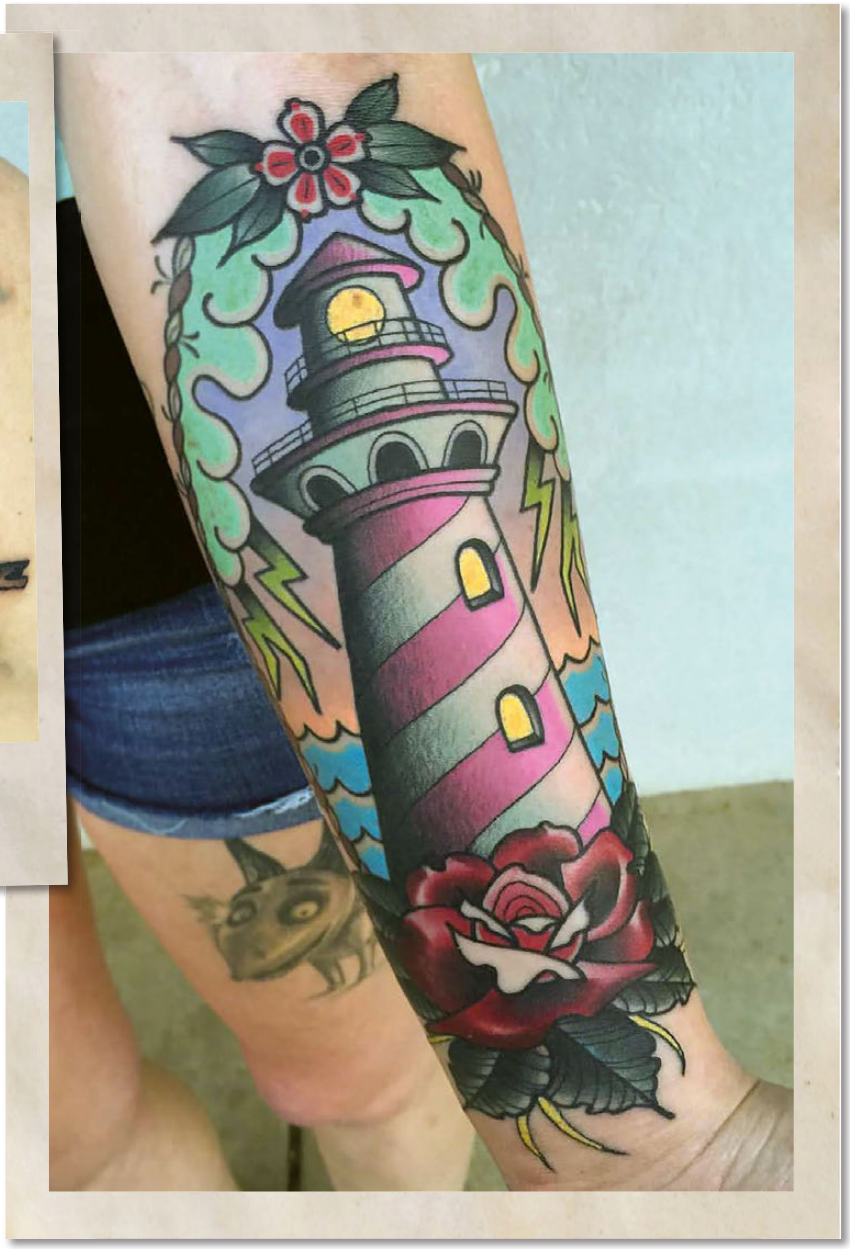
Today, the reality TV alum and seasoned artist can be found working alongside Matt at Black Cobra Tattoos in Sherwood, Arkansas. "It's a custom shop that takes appointments and walk-ins. I work with a really versatile and talented crew—we basically want to be able to accommodate anyone that walks through the door, no matter what their tattoo idea is," she says.

"Whenever someone hits me up for a tattoo that I feel would be better suited for one of my coworkers, I always pass it along because it's important to me that the client get the best tattoo possible. I enjoy being able to do that because it means I can be a little pickier about what I tattoo!"

And although "the tattoo scene isn't huge in Arkansas, it's definitely gotten bigger over the past 10 years. We are known for being a conservative state," says McGowan, but "Little Rock is a bit more progressive than other parts and pretty much everywhere you go, you'll probably see someone with a visible tattoo."

Road Tripping

In addition to the great work coming out of Black Cobra Tattoos, Arkansas has a lot



to offer curious travellers, including hot springs, political landmarks, like the Clinton Presidential Center, and, perhaps best of all, a great food scene. "I like to eat my way through a city, so I'd take you to my fave spots to eat," says McGowan, momentarily taking on the role of tour guide. "Plus, there's not too much to do around here besides eat and explore the outdoors! I'd suggest going to The Root Cafe in the SoMa neighbourhood and having a Southern Comfortable cocktail at the Capital Hotel downtown."

Unable to resist learning more about said beverage, a little digging reveals its ingredients—Hangar One Spiced Pear vodka, Chartreuse, lemon juice and housemade pecan soda—and a promise from the Capital Hotel that "after one sip of our signature cocktail, you will feel like a true Southerner."

Back to the interview, McGowan reveals that when in Little Rock she's "quite the homebody! I work a lot, so I don't go out super frequently, but there's a fun gay club in walking distance from where I live! I enjoy going there from time to time and getting my 'drunk white girl dance' on!" she laughs.

When not at the shop or at home, McGowan can be found on the road. "I like to travel a lot and lately, I feel like I've been on a plane every few weeks. I just got back from Europe and I was lucky to get to purchase and bring home some amazing things. My favourite pieces of art, which I bought while I was there, may just be the original watercolour paintings an artist had for sale near the colosseum in Rome."

Looking at her collection of art on skin, McGowan singles out a work from 2009 as one of her timeless favourites. "I got a portrait of Dolly Parton from when she was on the cover of Playboy in the '70s. I had Bob Tyrrell do it and it's still one of my favourite tattoos," she gushes. "It's fairly large, on the top of my thigh and took 10 hours to tattoo."

"I think what makes a great piece of art is the same thing it takes to make a great tattoo: passion," she concludes, sharing the greatest lesson she's learned to date. "You can tell when the artist is passionate about what they're doing. That's why it's important to know what style your artist enjoys tattooing. When you're on the same page with your artist about the style of your tattoo, you can just give them an idea and let them do their thing—that's how you get the best tattoo!" ▣

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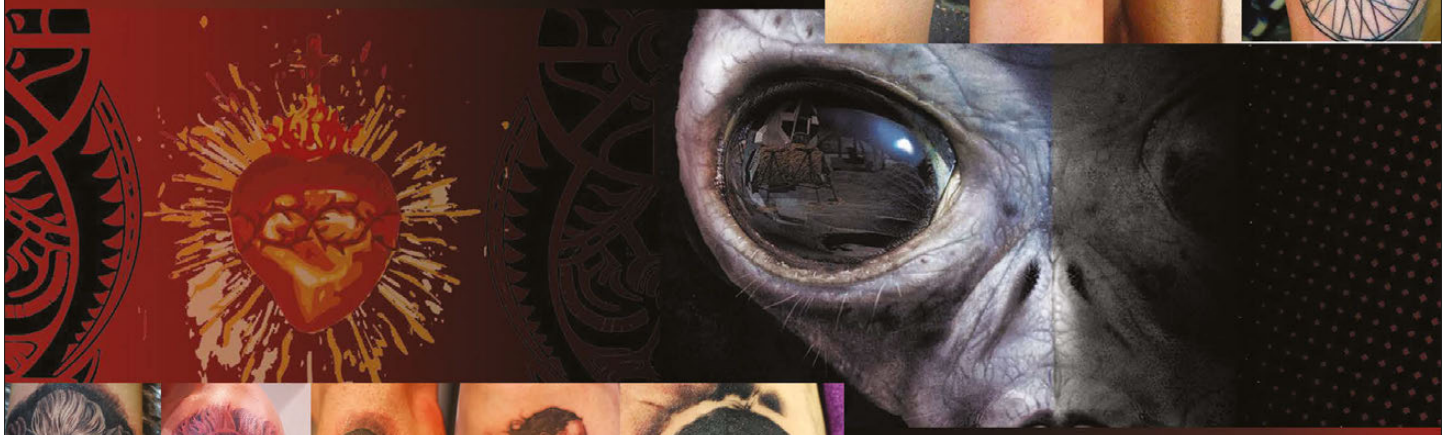

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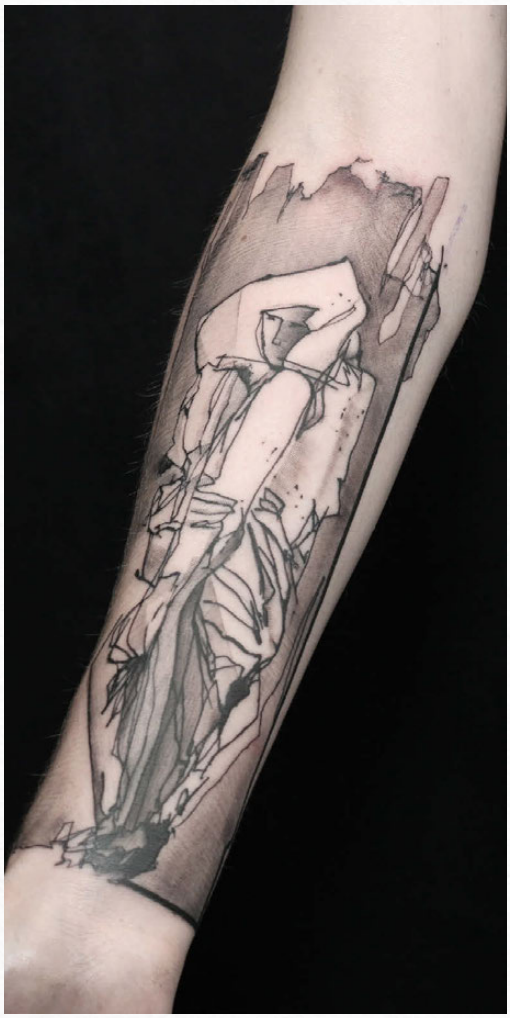

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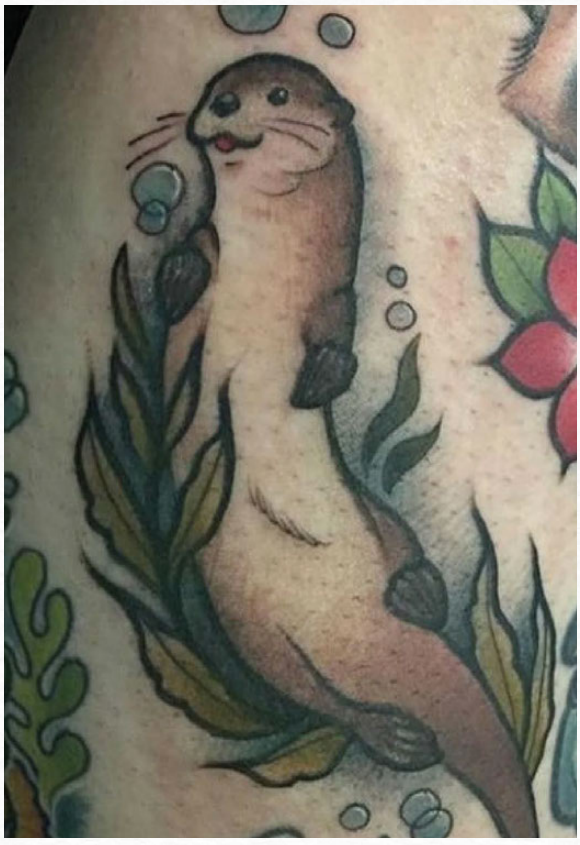

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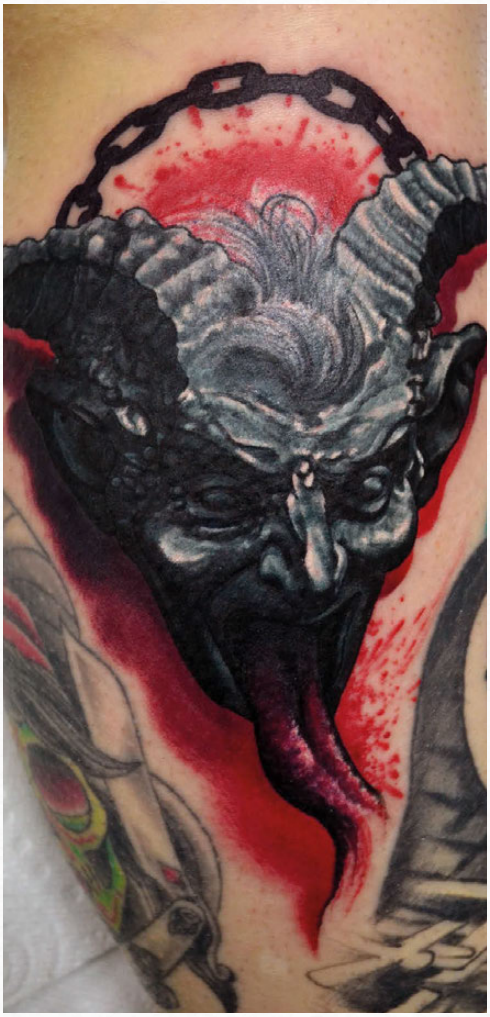

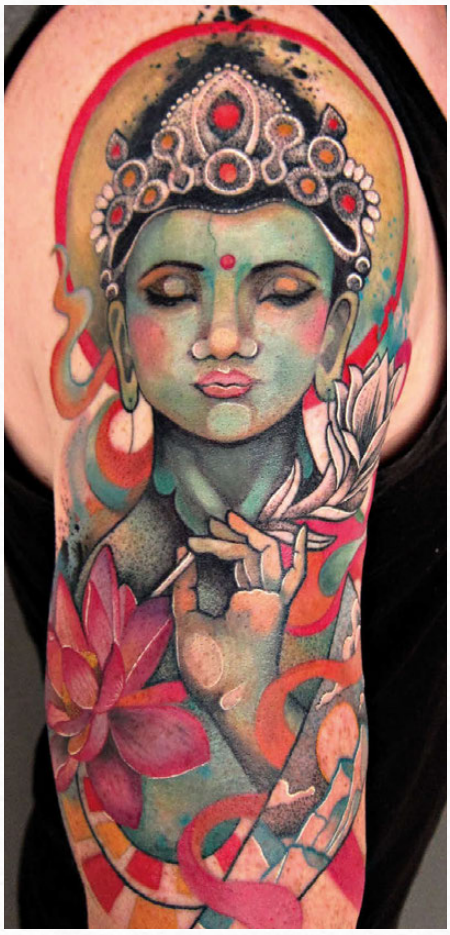

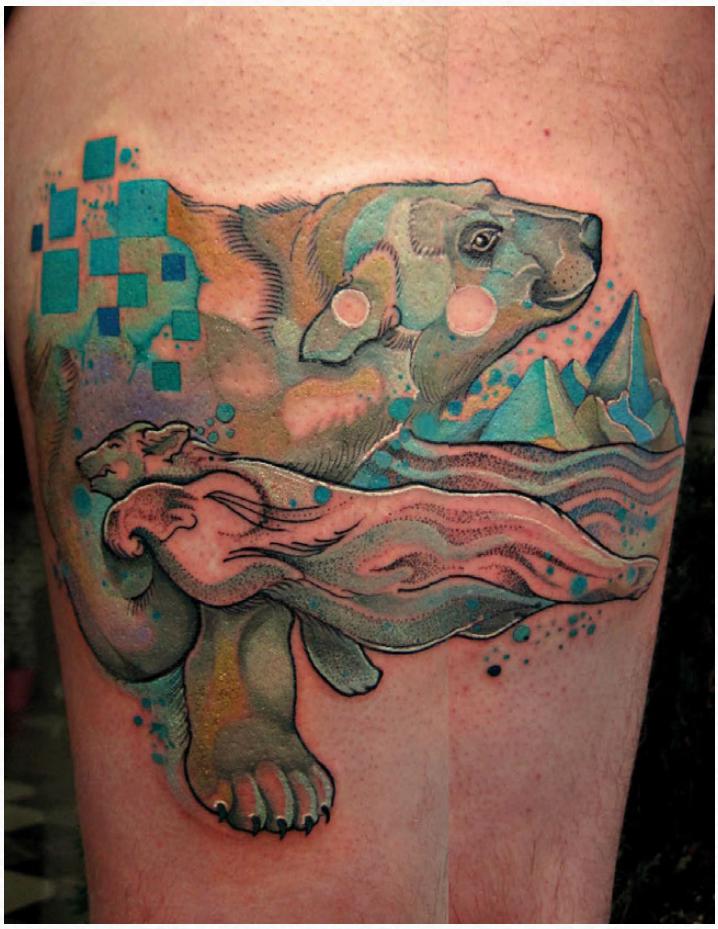

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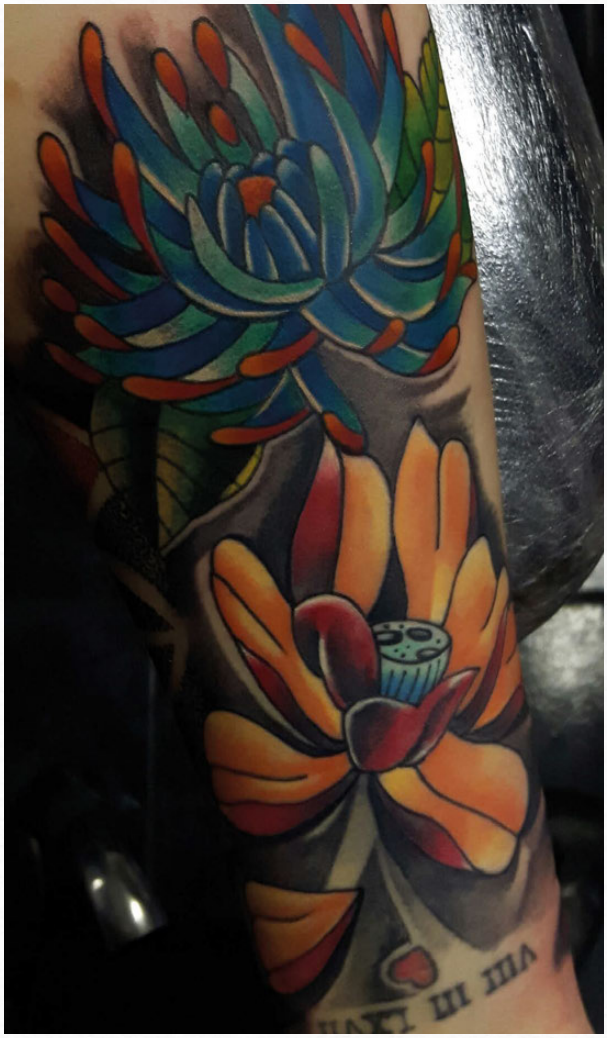

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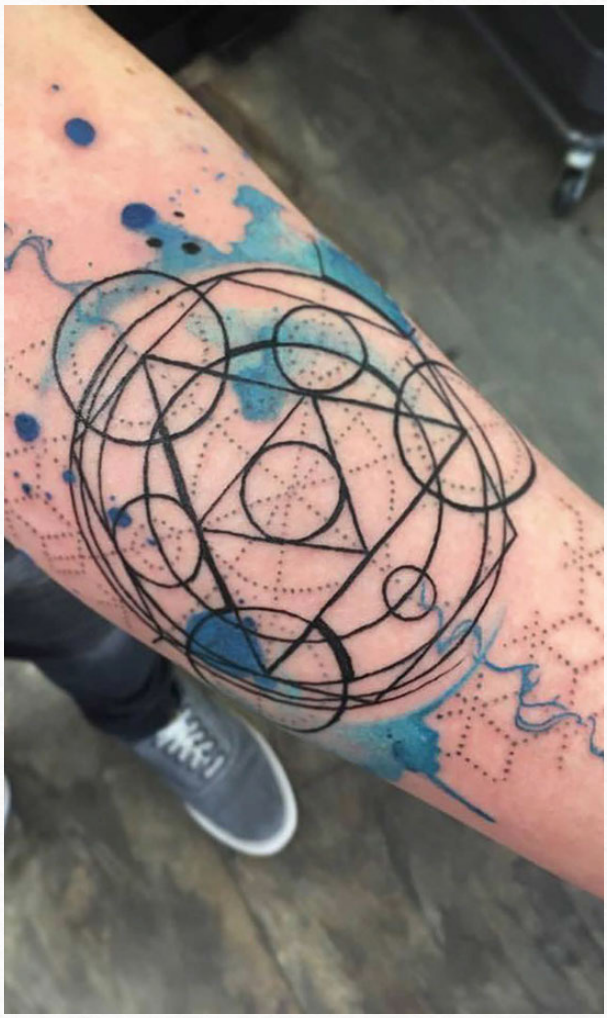

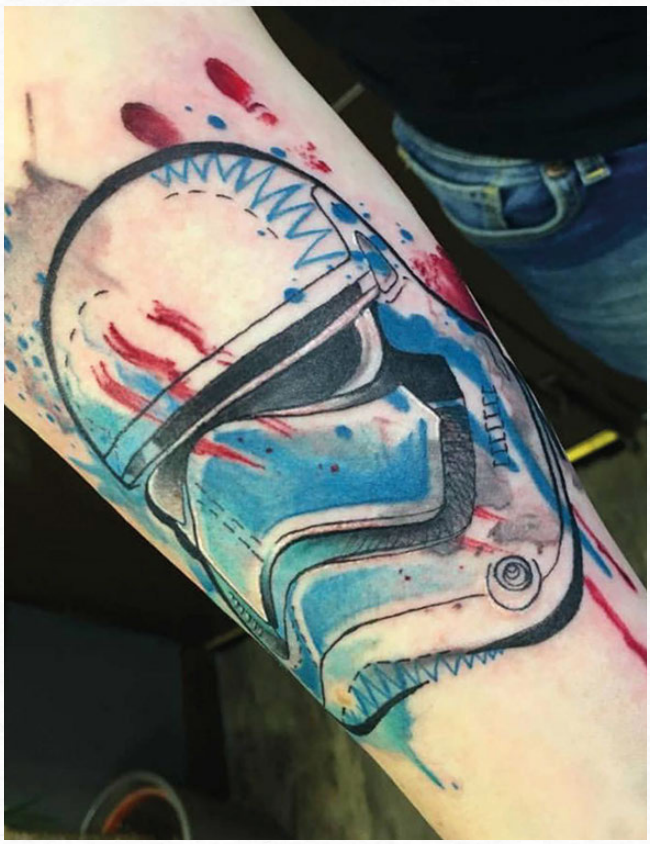

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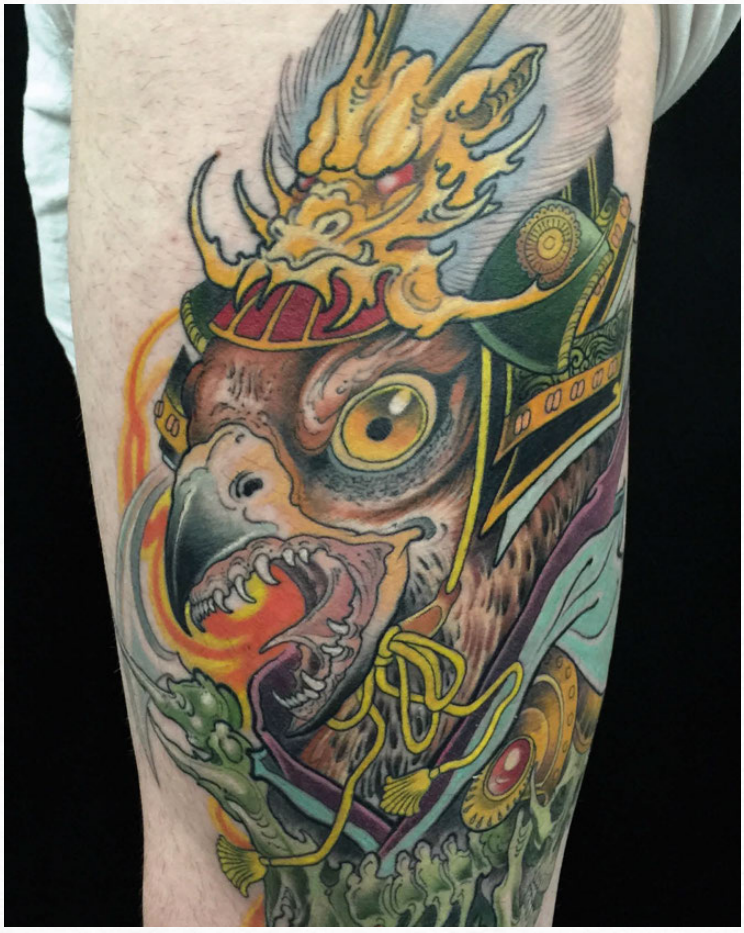

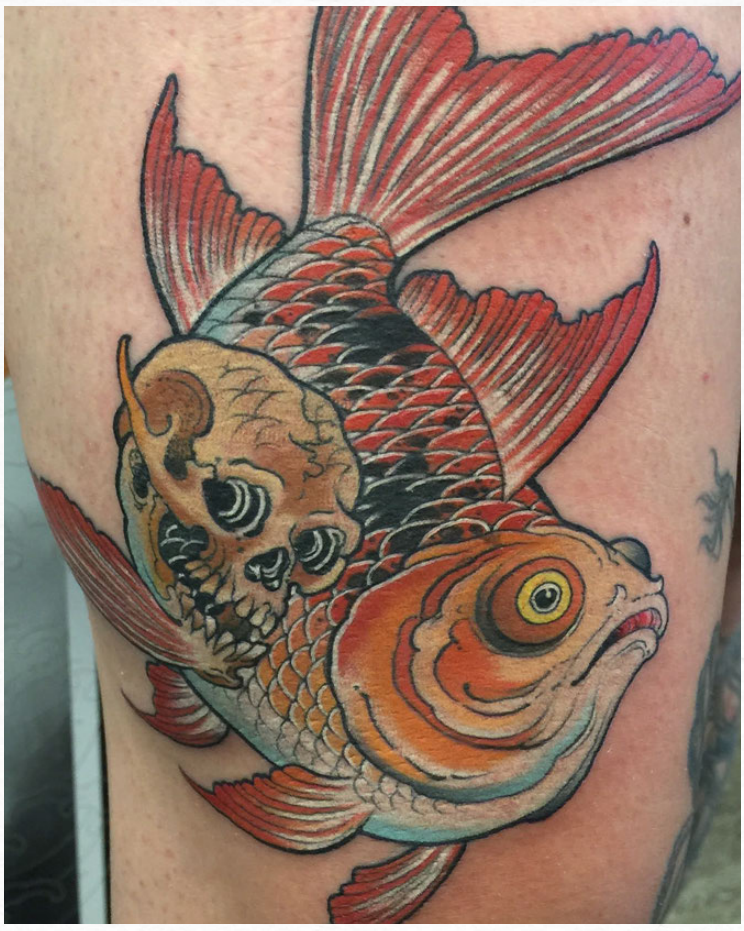

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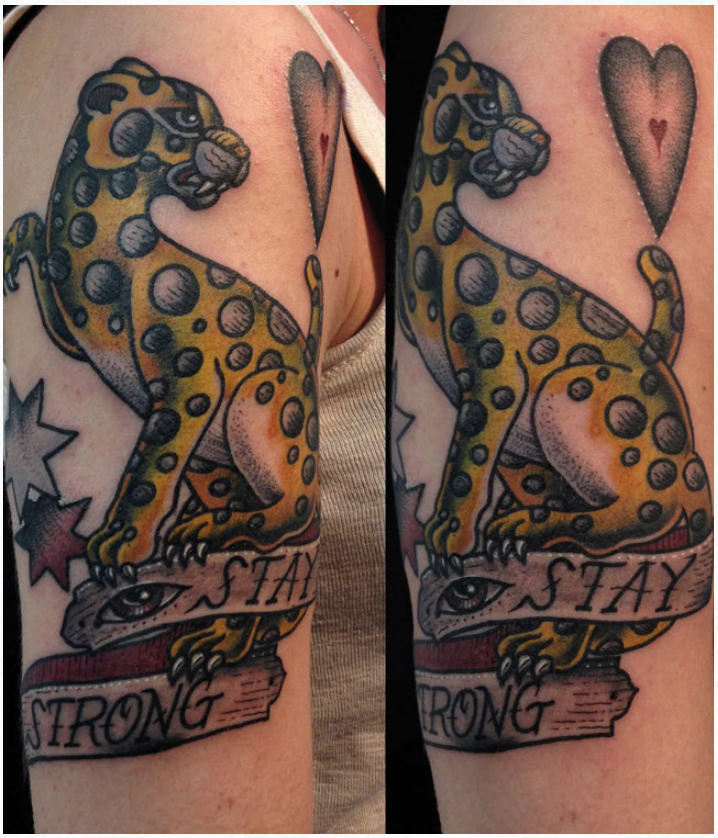

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I AM LEGEND

At 84 years old, Lyle Tuttle is not only a legend, he's a true living legend with vitality, an unquestionable thirst for life and tequila with grapefruit. Apart from being a great story-teller, Lyle is also a tireless traveler, always between two planes since he retired from tattooing. He is now solicited from the four corners of the US to give lessons or seminars at tattoo conventions, where he's always keen to talk about the roots of his unbelievable success

Lyle Tuttle was 'the right person at the right place, at the right time' as he himself likes to say. It's almost like he still can't believe the luck that fell into his lap during the period in the 60's when a lot of social changes happened in California.

San Francisco was the centre of the hippie counter-culture and where, in a puritan American society, sexual liberation happened. Women freed themselves up and tattooing became the symbol of an unconditional freedom people wanted to claim.

At that time, Lyle Tuttle was one of the few active tattooers in town and regardless of the fact that he was not the most skilled, or that he swore like a trooper, he was in big demand—especially by women. They not only came from all over the country to see him, they also brought it up in the media and propelled him to stardom. In the conservative world of tattooing at that time, this unprecedented exposure brought Lyle some hostility... not least from another legend of American tattooing, Sailor Jerry.

When did women started getting tattooed ?

Tattooing, up until the 'women's liberation' came in, around 1965-66 something like that, was a masculine thing. When they were starting to get their rights, they wanted it right now. Getting tattooed was making a statement. All of a sudden, the other half of the human race was opened up to our service. And there were so few tattoo artists... goddam!

Now, everybody's grandmother is a tattoo artist but I was the only shop here in town for 20 years and now there's over 50 or 75 in the phone book. I was in everybody's favourite city, I'm tattooed all over, I'm media friendly... what a fucking perfect combination for success!

Women started to get little tattoos, like butterflies and rosebuds. That's about all I tattooed for maybe 4-5 years. The joke was, I would tattoo a man but they had to be

WOMEN STARTED TO GET LITTLE TATTOOS, LIKE BUTTERFLIES AND ROSEBUDS. THAT'S ABOUT ALL I TATTOOED FOR MAYBE 4-5 YEARS

Words: Pascal Bagot

I'M NOT A SMART BUSINESSMAN AT ALL, BUT LOOK, MY ADVICE TO ANYBODY IS 'WORK HARD, DO THE BEST THAT YOU CAN, SAVE YOUR MONEY AND BUY REAL ESTATE'

vouched for by a woman. I like tattoos and I like women. Actually I love women, I think they're the greatest thing in the world. It all started with my first tattoo, this one right here (he shows his tattoo, a heart with a ruban and 'mother' written on it).

Who was getting tattooed before the 60's ?

It was the military, the best customers in the world. They get paid on the 1st and on the 15th through the month and then spend their money in about 5 days. After that, you would have several days off and then you would get paid again as they would come back to you. They were not like the criminal element, they all came from good stock. Then it winds up that you tattooed civilians, young guys that were full of piss and vinegar, red blooded American boys. Very rarely a woman. Because if a woman got tattooed she was generally talked into it by a man—'Get my name on you, honey'.

How comfortable was it for women to come and see you, to be tattooed by a man ?

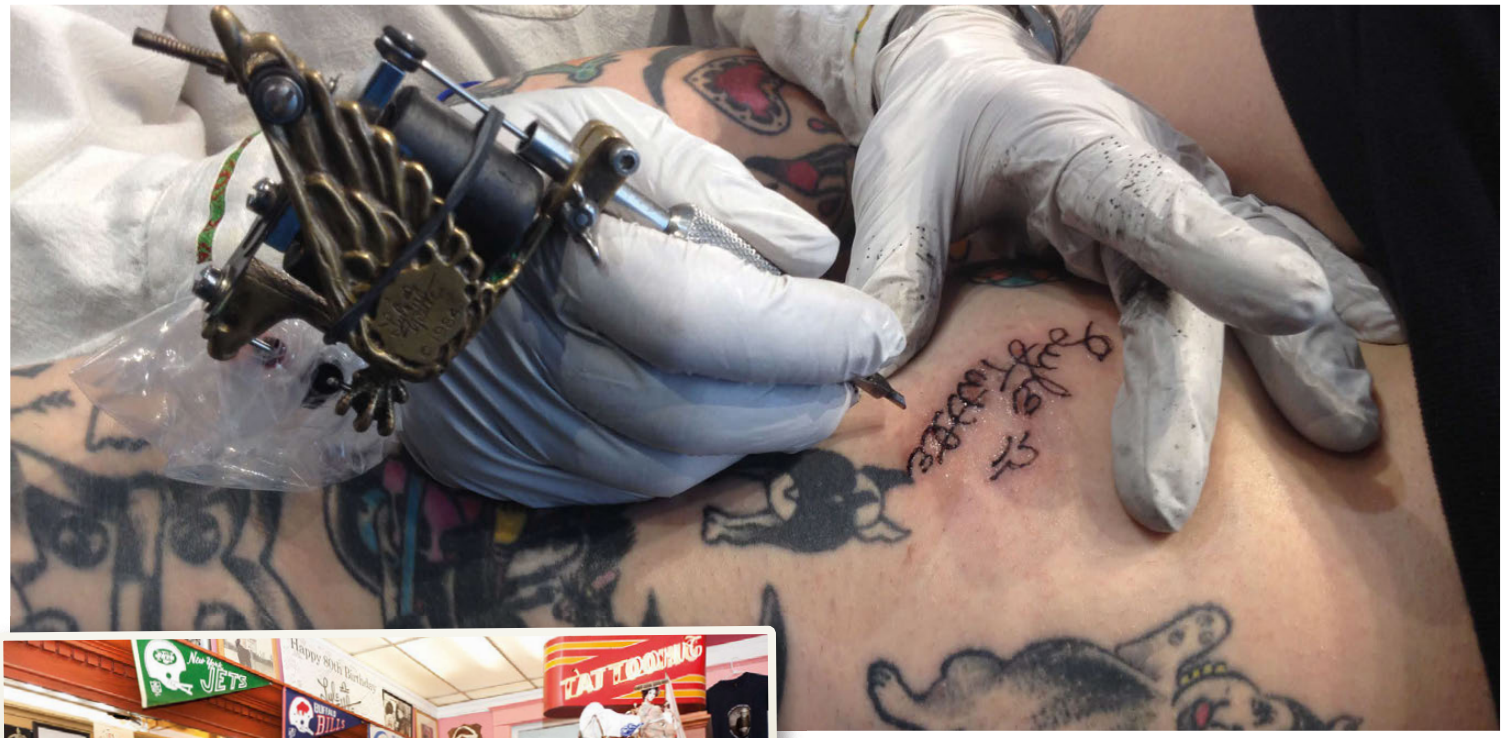
A woman can feel she's endangered by somebody. I guess they just picked up that there wasn't any danger! I was just picking a picture from the wall and I've never made a pass at them. I had women say: 'I bet you get a lot of passes made at you?' And my answer was 'Yes, thank you'. That's not dangerous.

Some people have told me I can tell the dirtiest fucking jokes in the world but they don't sound dirty when I tell them. But there are some guys who can tell an off-colour joke and make it sound filthy.

So, I got a fucking nice personality or a nice nature and they were entirely comfortable. I had women flying in from all over the United States to get tattooed by me.

How come?

Because of the press. Between 1965 and 1975 that was my 'time'. I'm not a smart businessman at all, but look, my advice to anybody is 'Work hard, do the best that you can, save your money and buy real estate'.



I'M UP IN MY TATTOO SHOP, ON THE SECOND FLOOR, HERE COME TWO BIG SAMOYED HAIRY DOGS TO THE DOOR AND HERE'S THIS GIRL BEHIND THEM...

In October 1970 you were on the cover of Rolling Stone magazine and from there you became a star. How did it happen ?

I call it the fucking Stairway To Heaven! There was a young lady, cute young lady, who came in one night. She wanted a ring tattooed around her finger. I fucking tried to talk her out of it but she really wanted it, so I did it for her. If you didn't like her tattoo, she would show it this way (Lyle shows me the finger). So then she's looking around in my tattoo shop and I was always interested in image. I had the place looking like a fucking doctor's office. And she's looking around and she says: 'You know this is the age of Aquarius. It's the coming of a new age and you should loosen this place up. The work area may look like a doctor's office but the rest of the decor don't have to look like it'. I reply: 'What do you think I should make it look like?' She thought for about a million minutes and answered: 'Jesus, how about a Victorian whorehouse?' She turned around and added: 'You know there's a story here?' And I go: 'A story huh? Are you a writer?'.She says 'Yes' 'Who are you writing for?' I ask. 'Rolling Stone magazine.' It was Amie Hill and she wrote a fucking article about me. When she went to school, her roommate was a woman who happened to become a journalist later and went on to write a fucking article about me in Life Magazine in 1972.

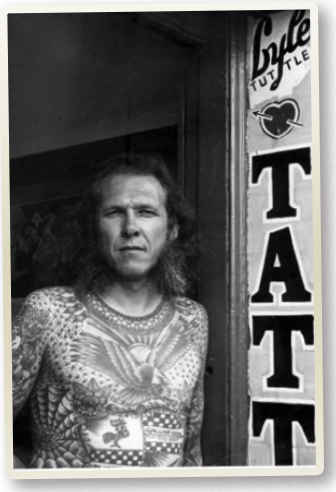
You got a lot of attention too for tattooing Janis Joplin, can you tell us about it?

When the Haight Hashbury—the general headquarter for the hippie movement in San Francisco—was going on, I was so busy with all the hippies downtown, that I was now in that fucking scene. I was a hippie too I guess. My kids took acid before I did, but I took a bunch after! I was watching television one night. I'm not a music fan, I don't like fucking music. In the fucking 60's and the 70's rock'n'roll was fucking decent music—the Eagles, the Beatles, but this cock-sucking stuff they play today...

So, I heard about Janis Joplin, even though I didn't care that much for her music. Janis was a nice person and she had just got back from South-America. This was in 1970. I just started getting my first big publicity. I'm up in my tattoo shop, on the second floor, here come two big fucking Samoyed hairy dogs to the door and here's this fucking girl behind them. She's got those bolos wrapped under her fucking neck. That was Janis. She'd read the article in the San Jose paper with pictures of me and she sort of fell in love with the fucking image or something, and thought: 'Well, I want to get a tattoo'.

I was the only game in town and she got two tattoos that night. A heart on the breast and a bracelet. She wanted

I DON'T TATTOO HANDS, FACE, FEET, NECK. I DON'T HAVE ANY. SO IF IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU



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to get the heart first, which is a little fucking thing. Now, being a wise tattoo artist you always put the big tattoo on first because when they get the little one, that motherfucker's gonna hurt and they won't get another one! I put the bracelet on first, then her and I became fast friends. She was in my house that afternoon of the day that she died. I lived over in Sausalito, up on the hill. She caught a helicopter, shuttle helicopter, went to Los Angeles and died there. People often ask me 'Did you fuck Janis Joplin?' No, I didn't. Because she was not fucking attractive. I go by pheromones.

What impact did she have on the popularisation of tattooing among women?

She did more for tattooing probably than anybody because she would announce to audiences that anybody who got tattooed liked to fuck a lot. So the village idiots went like: 'Blablablablabla... oh I like to fuck a lot. I need a tattoo!' I help Janis Joplin's fans out when they contact me though. When I went to my shop two days after Janis died, there was a young lady there waiting at the door for a little heart on her breast. We went upstairs and I put it on. I may have put a thousand on ever since. I'm sure Janis would love that because she liked the entourage, she loved the attention. She was a nice person. Keep her memory alive.

How was it to work with a feminine clientele after tattooing so many men?

I liked to do small and colourful tattoos—big tattoos are not feminine. Guys like to get big motherfuckers and shit like that and they stink like a Harley wheel. Women smell nice, they have nice conversation, they're fucking human beings. Why wouldn't I gravitate towards them? I've been accused more than once by women, they thought I was gay because I liked women so much. I thought : 'You motherfuckers...'. It doesn't have anything to do with it. I just like them.

Women made tattooing a kinder and gentler art. One time, there was a woman coming in my studio and she had like a business suit on, I mean fucking class. She had a pair of panties on that probably cost a hundred dollars, they had lace and everything on them. I said: 'I don't want to take the responsibility I might get some ink on these panties'. She crossed the room—well it was a small room where I did my private appointments—and she came back across the fucking room and she stripped from the fucking waste down, panties in her hands and she flips them over her fucking shoulder!

God, those were great days you know.

Did you tattoo the photographer Annie Leibovitz?

No, she's Jewish. I'm honorary Jewish. The

last time I got married—I've been married three times—I got married by a Rabbi. Neither one of us was fucking Jewish. I'm not anti-semitic at all, I hate everybody equally.

That doesn't sounds really like a hippie message with love for every one...

I get along with everybody, I try to get along with everybody. You don't start conversations off with: 'Hey asshole!' If you don't have friends and fans, you're nothing. I like generally to get along with people. But I'm a fucking missing drop. You know what a missing drop is? It's a hater of the human race. I hate the human race, we're the worst fucking animal that ever walked the face of the earth. We're not dealing with individuals now, I'm summarising the whole fucking human race. We're lower than rats. And God made men in his own image. That boy fucked up! That's a fucked up boy!

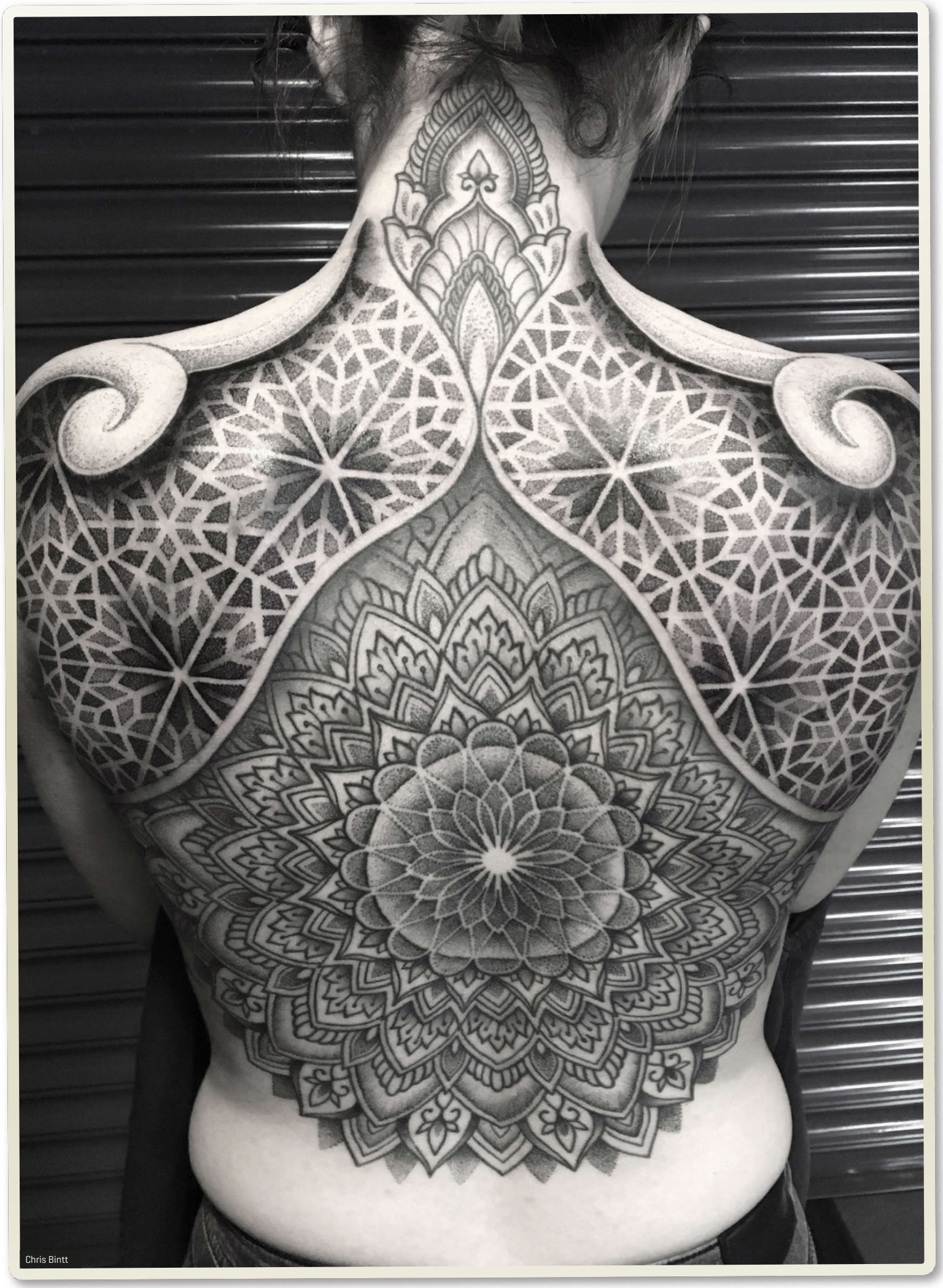
You said *'I only tattoo women if their mother were tattooed'*, what did you mean about that?

Well, we're all solo operators and we all have our own restrictions. I don't tattoo hands, face, feet, neck. I don't have any. So if it's not good enough for me it's not good enough for you. Plus, to be a tattooer you got to have a conscience. I'd fuck you up. I could write on your forehead: 'The flags are rag, the bibles are books, mothers are head and God's a crook'. You know, fuck you up for your whole life, but I'm not that hungry, to do that. I would say 'Go out in the fucking street and you'll find a champ that will do it to you, but I'm not having it on my conscience'.

I would just feel better with myself. You have to love yourself. My service, that I dispense, lasts you a lifetime. For the rest of your life, you're gonna have that son of a bitch on there. You have to have a conscience. Is the monetary gain worth what you are doing to the person? When I was hungry you might get fucking an American flag across your fucking forehead, but I haven't been that hungry.

You said also: *'Tattoos aren't meant for everybody, they are too fucking good for most people'*.

Getting a tattoo is the most personal, selfish thing that you can do for yourself. You can't hock it, taking it to a pawn shop and get money for it. You're buying it, it's strictly a personal gift. They're stickers on your luggage to me, but tattoos are good for you too. They let you know who you are. One day, you might wake up in the morning with a fucking note on the pillow telling you 'I'm leaving'. You put your foot out of the bed and your fucking dog bites you, then you go outside or you look out the window and your fucking car is gone. You sit down and you make a cup of coffee, you don't have any cream or sugar, then you pick up the newspaper and all your stock is down. 'Ok, I don't know who the fuck I am!' Tattoos are a good statement for identity. ▣

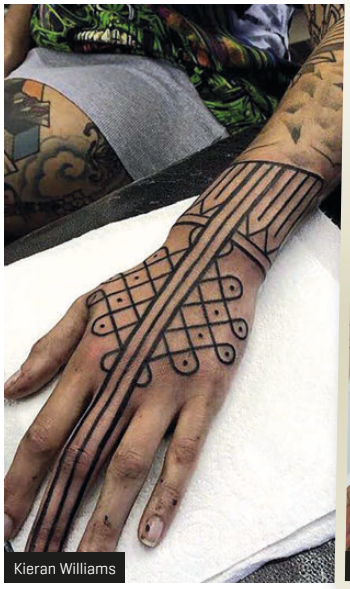


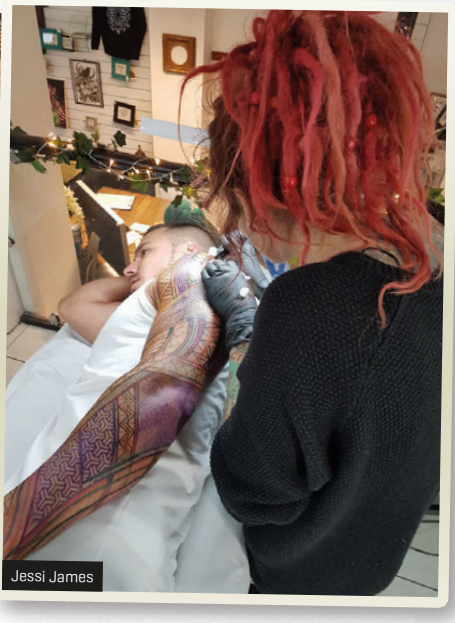
Chris Bintt

WEIRD SCIENCE

Beccy Rimmer talks to four talented UK artists, in an attempt to unearth the hidden meaning behind geometric tattoos

Alex Stark


Kieran Williams


Jessi James

I have a lot of intricate tattoo work on my own body—mandalas, patterns, swirls, spirals, symmetry, dotwork, geometry... but (here's the very public confession) I've never too delved deep into this particular form. I know what my tattoos mean to me personally, but always had an inkling that there was much more to explore when it came to their form and significance.

After speaking to these exceptional individuals, it seems I had completely underestimated the importance of this sacred tattoo style. Its meaning, in fact, spanned the entirety of our universe...

Firstly, introduce yourselves to our readers:

Chris Bintt: I am Chris, also know as 'Bintt' (an annoying childhood nickname I didn't grow out of!). I work at Parliament Tattoo in London and I've been tattooing for around 6 years.

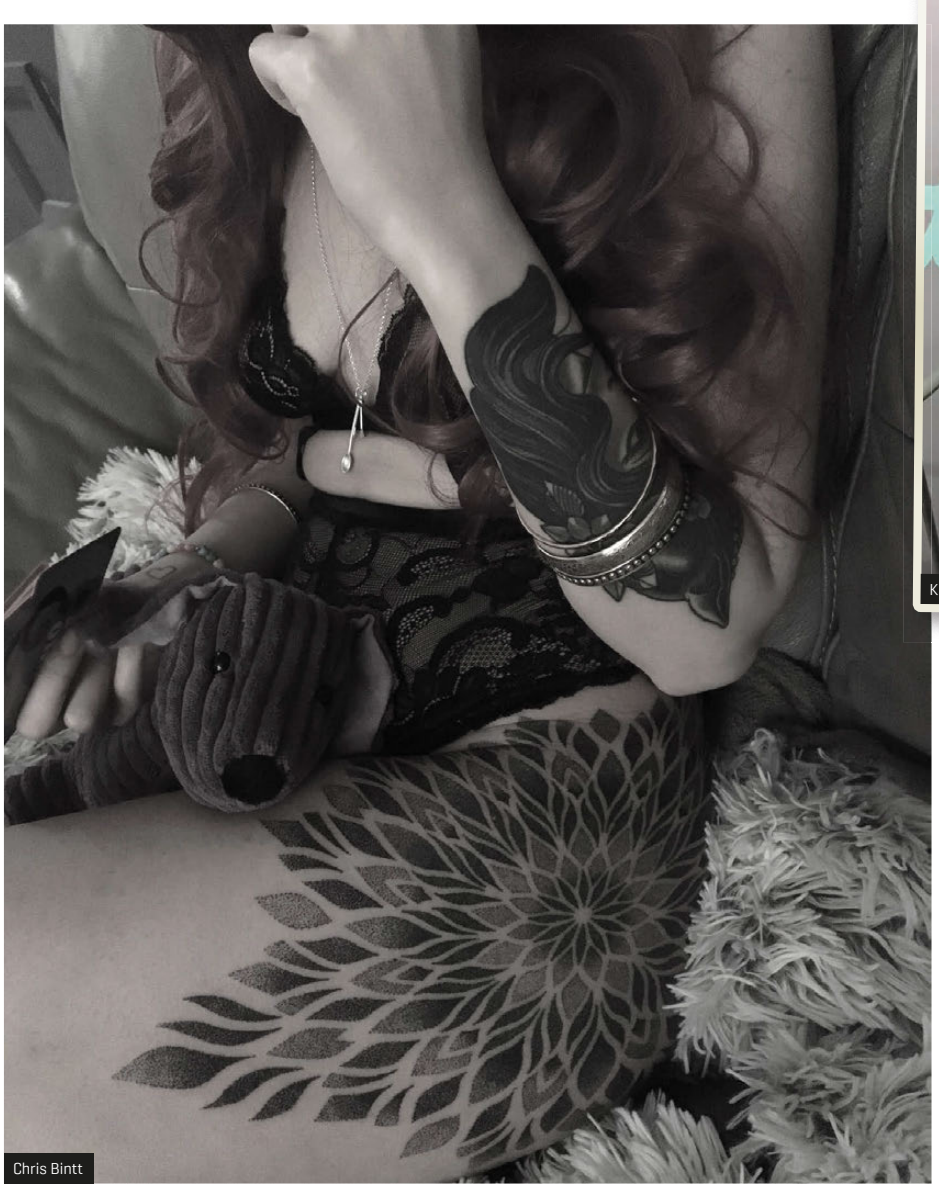
Jessi James: My name is Jessi and I work at the Crow Quill Tattoo Studio in Southampton. I have been tattooing for just over 5 years now.

Alex Stark: I'm Alex, based in Lincoln at my studio The Tattooed Arms. I have been tattooing just over 12 years now.

Kieran Williams: My name is Kieran Williams. I've been tattooing for almost 6 years. I work at Sixtysix Tattoo in Deal, South Kent, with my two great friends and tattooers Ped Simmons and Ben Hansen.

How would you describe your tattooing, and what drew you to this particular style?

Chris: I guess it's called ornamental. Anything of the dotwork/black-work/geometric variety really.


Chris Bintt

Kieran Williams

Jessi: I use traditional ornamental motifs from across the world, a lot of geometric forms and some natural imagery too. Everything I tattoo is created with solely black ink and generally consists of line-work and dotted shading.

Kieran: My tattoos mainly draw from different elements of the black-work style, so a lot of intricate and bold line-work, dot-work patterns and solid black. More recently I have been focused on larger work, as I feel like this type of tattooing lends itself to a bigger scale.

Alex: For me, this isn't something that I have always tattooed. I would say my interest in Asian culture drew me to it at first and it's ability to flow well with the shapes of the body. You can make an otherwise rigid looking tattoo flow well when you use it as background. This makes it a very useful tool!

Kieran: When I first started tattooing I was mainly interested in traditional tattooing, which is still one of my favourite styles. After a couple of years I discovered the work of people like Curly Moore, Alex Binnie and Tomas Tomas and was hooked straight away. I did more and more research into the black-work style and became obsessed, so for the last three years or so I've been more focused on tattooing this type of work. Its hard to describe the draw to it, I just knew when I first saw large scale black-work tattoos that I had to find out more.

Jessi: When I began my apprenticeship the only styles I was aware of at the time were traditional and Japanese. Neo-traditional was beginning to carve a path for itself so I began to develop this style further, surrounded by talented artists that were all focused solely on custom work. Being in this environment was a great start for me as guest artists would regularly come and visit and this is how I became aware of dot-work and, more specifically, sacred geometry. I hadn't seen anything like it before and was instantly mesmerised, like something clicked, slotted into place and I just fell in love with the magic and simplicity of it. I started collecting geometric pieces and before long began tattooing it myself. Now, 5 years later I'm more in love with the style than I have ever been.

Chris: I started out doing semi-colourful traditional work but my interest in colour slowly faded as I started noticing the more geometric side of tattooing. I just loved how striking they looked and how I could notice something I'd previously missed when looking at that same tattoo again. I think the level of detail and depth you can achieve is amazing.

Have geometric tattoos changed over time? Or do some tattoo styles stay true to their roots of origin?

Keiran: It definitely seems to be a lot more popular at the moment, and there are always so many artists raising the bar with amazing new ideas. I think that it all derives from the classic patterns and shapes, and that the best black-work tattoos use elements from the traditional roots.

Jessi: Black-work in general has definitely experienced a huge surge in popularity over the past few years, pieces inspired by sacred geometry also benefitting from the

Jessi James

Alex Stark

increased reach of social media platforms. I think people are more open-minded now than they ever have been. A piece that a few years ago may have been considered too 'out there' or abstract, is now being sought after to the point where artists can make a living from solely creating these types of pieces. A lot of contemporary tattooing is definitely shaped by current trends. With such a huge percentage of the population now getting tattooed you can definitely see the correlation between fashion, art, design and the pieces that people are choosing to put on their skin. However, a lot of the beauty of heavy black-work and sacred geometry is that visually they are reminiscent of ancient aesthetics that have existed for centuries. It has retained its popularity because people saw and understood the simplistic beauty of it in ancient times and that beauty is not altered by time or exposure.

Chris: I guess the recent introduction of technology, like the iPad Pro and various drawing apps have made it more accessible to a lot of artists with different backgrounds so it's cool to see them do their own thing with the art style. In a way it has become more popular but the fundamentals of the geometric style will always remain the same.

Alex: Geometric tattoos have definitely changed in the time I've been exposed to them. I first saw them being done by people like Xed Le Head, doing circular sayagata patterns among other pattern work. Now you see really intricate large-scale geometric pieces by people like Tomas Tomas, Thomas Hooper, more avant-garde geometric

Chris Bintt

pieces by Little Swastika, and others who have taken influence from these people. They are definitely more popular than ever now and it's one of the main styles we get asked for at The Tattooed Arms. Whether or not it holds true to its traditional roots is dependent on how well executed it is and whether both the artist and client know why they are getting it done, otherwise it loses meaning and value. Originally, it wasn't a tattoo style, it was used for religious

Alex Stark

Jessi James

Chris Bintt

architecture and decoration. In my opinion it doesn't really have a traditional tattoo background.

Can you tell our readers a bit more about the history of sacred geometry in that case?

Alex: These patterns are thousands of years old. A lot of the symbols stem from the very birth of civilisation or humanity. We don't know exactly where they all came from but if you look at the flower of life, it divides in the same way as an embryo. Many sacred geometries are seen in the structure of reality; in biology, cosmology, music, etc. So this makes them sacred. They build our reality around us.

Jessi: Sacred geometry is the title given to a variety of shapes and geometric forms that demonstrate the 'design' found in the creation of all natural forms. Within nature can be found structures and patterns both on an atomic level and a vast, cosmic scale that follow certain geometric models—these shapes and patterns are called 'sacred' as their presence in the building blocks of the natural world hint at a form of intelligent design, supposedly created by some greater power. This idea of a relationship to a higher being or divine method of creation thus lending itself to the idea that these shapes and archetypes are sacred.

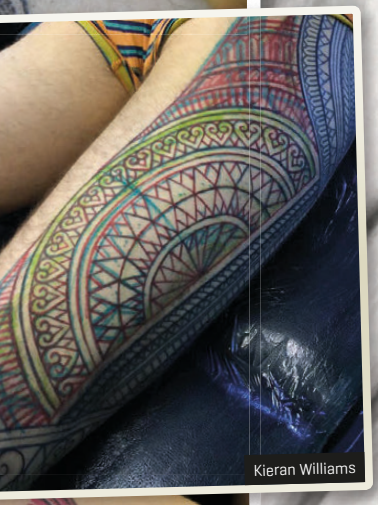
How vital is it that every single pattern is precise? Is there room for improvisation, or a list of rules that you stick to?

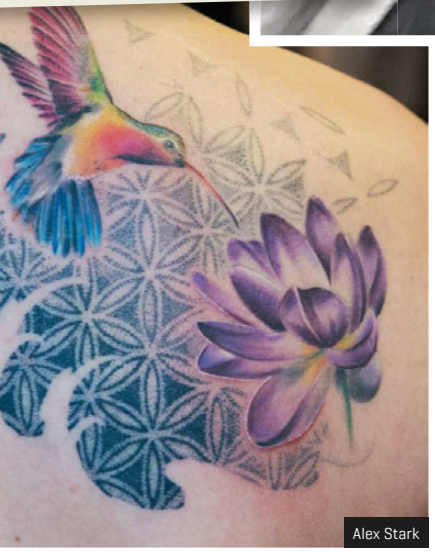
Kieran: Obviously the human body isn't a flat surface, so I think that there has to be a certain amount of improvisation for certain patterns to sit correctly on the body. With the right level of spontaneity the patterns can still look precise whilst having the correct flow on the person wearing the tattoo. I have my own preferences and rules when designing a tattoo for someone and I try and stick to them as close as I can for each customer.

Jessi: As with most styles of contemporary tattooing there is a visual starting point. Whether traditional of Japanese, for example, these styles can either be tattooed by recreating the basic, original imagery or by changing it and putting another modern spin on the design. Sacred geometry is no different. The shapes and patterns involved are some of the most basic shapes known to man, and the ways that they can be depicted on the skin are virtually infinite. The idea of divine geometry linking together the building blocks of life and the natural world can be represented in such a variety of ways. The nature of the subject is so vast in itself (being the geometric recipe for all of life) that there really are no rules as such. It is really down to the client's wishes and/or the artists discretion. I personally prefer the simplicity of using just black, creating gradients and various shades by working with the ink and the skin rather than diluting the ink, for example.

Alex: It is very important for it to be as precise as you can

Chris Bintt


Kieran Williams


Alex Stark

do it, as with any tattoo. Of course there is always room for improvisation as it is art. There is no set of rules that I stick to intentionally.

Chris: I'm a bit of a perfectionist. If a stencil isn't spot on, I have to re-do it. It's going to be on you forever so you should always take an extra 5 minutes to make sure it's right. I'll occasionally improvise and add finer detail as I go, but 99% of the time I'll stick to the design.

What are the challenges when creating tattoos that are so detailed, or challenges of tattooing in general?

Alex: The most challenging thing about tattooing is getting to a point where you are happy with what you're doing. Even then, you are still not happy!

Kieran: The main challenge for me was the clarity of the designs. When I first started pushing this kind of work I thought the key was to fill the tattoo with as many lines and dots as possible. Slowly, I realised that the bolder, simpler designs make the best tattoos. If the designs are readable and balanced then you can add elements of intricacy without ruining the piece.

Chris: Not over complicating them. It's easy to get carried away but you have to make sure that the tattoo suits the client. If the person is quite petite and feminine for example, I wouldn't use super heavy lines or a lot of dark areas. It has to compliment their body, not just look good as a stand-alone piece.

Jessi: With a lot of detailed tattoos the fact that you are working with a living, breathing, ageing canvas will always be a challenge. Something that is easy enough to create on paper will not necessarily translate well to skin. I try to find a happy balance. It should display the complexities of sacred geometry, whilst also being simple enough to not be too visually confusing, and be something that I'm confident will still have the same impact in years to come. Physically, I am often asked if my designs give me headaches, but actually I find tattooing these pieces quite the opposite—the repetition becoming almost like a meditation.

Alex: Depending on the body part, stencil application can

Alex Stark

Jessi James

Kieran Williams

Kieran Williams

be one of the biggest challenges. Application on an awkward area such as the ball of the shoulder can prove difficult... if it creases, it's hard to match the patterns.

How important is placement on the body?

Alex: Placement on the body is one of the most important things when tattooing any style.

Kieran: Its definitely very important. This kind of work should sit naturally on the person wearing it. The wrong design in the wrong place can really take away from the overall look of the tattoo.

Chris: I like to know where the tattoo is going before I design it. That way I can design it to match the flow of the selected area on the body.

Jessi: Placement can depend hugely on the nature of the piece. If it's symmetrical then personally I prefer it to lie in the centre of the body or the centre of a limb. If asymmetrical then I take into consideration where the 'weight' in the piece lies and try to make sure this flows with the placement. The body is created of its own shapes and ratios so with geometric forms it is necessary to take into consideration the way they flow.

Why do people choose to adorn their entire bodies with large-scale pieces of this nature?

Jessi: Geometric black-work is incredibly striking and simple in its beauty. Rather than use the skin as a platform for the art, it turns the body into a design feature of its own—a sculpture rather than a mere canvas.

Kieran: I had a conversation with one of my regular customers about this recently. He is getting a full black-work bodysuit that we have been working on for the last year and a half. I think it becomes less about the adornment and more of a test of character to the person receiving it... the perseverance and determination to keep sit through long, painful sessions and keep coming back until its finished. I think that says a lot about a person. The end result is almost like an added bonus.

Alex: They are aesthetically pleasing. They can be really heavy-looking or quite light and delicate. It's an ornamental style so people can be creative with it without having such specific ideas of what they want initially. This gives the artist a lot more creative freedom.

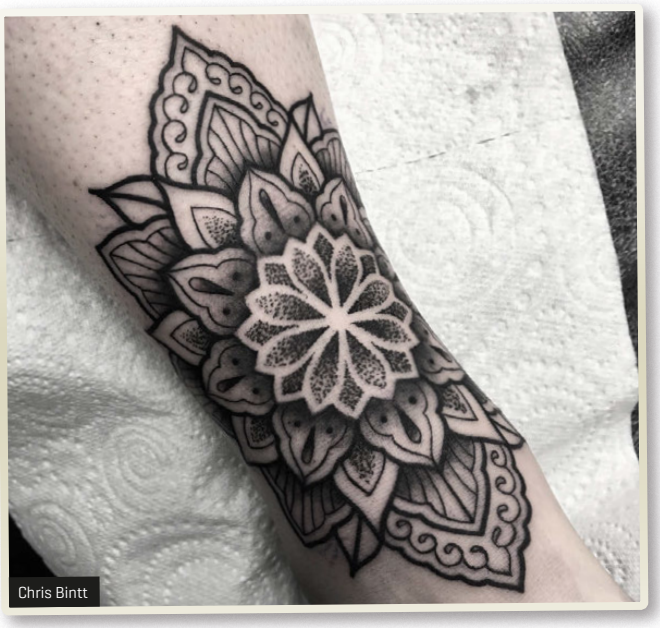
What is the most beautiful thing about tattooing, to you?

Chris: Seeing someone leave the shop with a beautiful new tattoo that they're really happy with. Knowing that a little bit of you and your work is going to be with them for the rest of their lives. It's really rewarding.

Kieran: I'm very lucky in that I get to do a job I love alongside two of my best friends, and get to meet some incredible and inspiring people as well. We have had very loyal clients since we opened the shop that have been with us since day one, so it is more like tattooing our friends now rather than customers.

Jessi: I really enjoy helping people become more connected to their bodies. A tattoo marks a change, even if it is purely aesthetic and has no deeper meaning. It's immensely humbling for someone to invite you to be involved in their personal evolution. I feel incredibly lucky to be able to surround myself with wonderful individuals and create art that people choose to wear on their skin.

Alex: Everything. That's why I do it. ▣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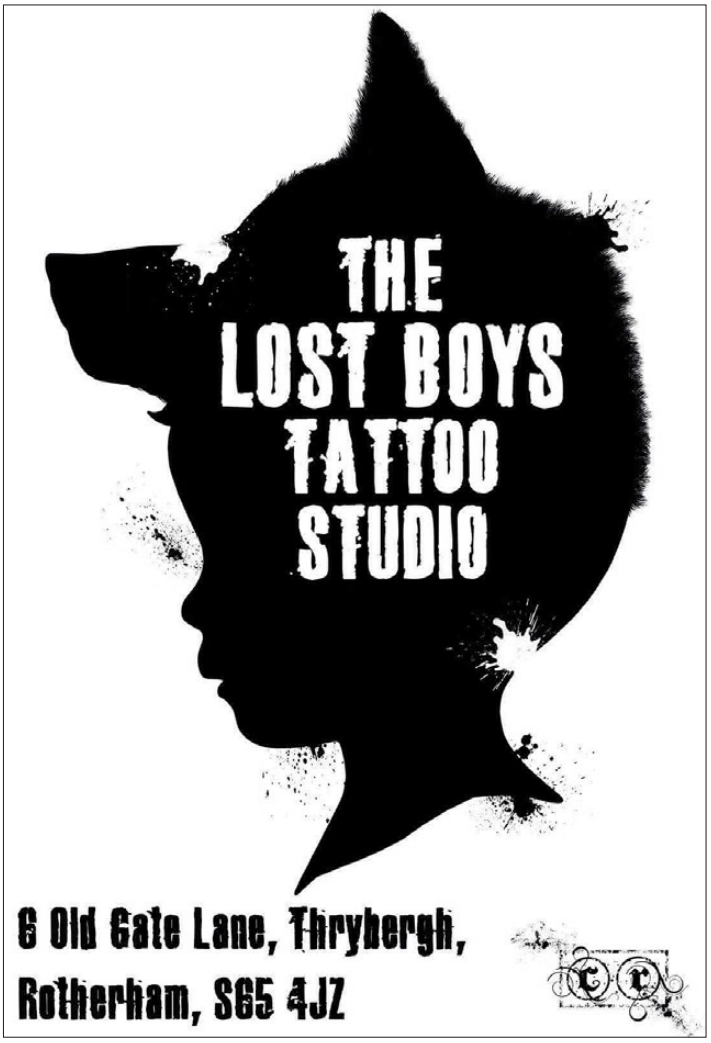
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"What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Words/Images: Sean Herman

> *"THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT DAYS IN YOUR LIFE ARE THE DAY YOU WERE BORN AND THE DAY YOU FIND OUT WHY."*
> MARK TWAIN

Sitting in a cubicle, overwhelmed by isolation, an individual is hunched over a glowing computer screen, sweat dripping down their brow. Staring blankly at a digital window, almost looking through it, with deadlines looming, their head hangs, counting down the minutes until the weekend. Stress builds, creating anxiety, a spinning brain thinks of needing to make enough money to be able to afford the stuff they need, to continue working to afford the stuff needed to continue working. A tape loop paradox nightmare. This endless cycle becomes a race to the grave.

At a young age, we are quickly thrust into the ideals of our forerunners. We are taught early to get a job, to responsibly prepare for our future. We are told to work hard in school in preparation for college at a big university. College will ready our young minds to secure a career that we will stick with for our entire lives, until that grand day of retirement. Even our relationships get put into these preparation maps, since we are expected to marry and begin having children once our career begins.

William Faux by Joycelynn Okezie

This preparation machine continues churning, leading up to retirement, a time we can finally have the freedom to do what we what, if we don't burnout and die before that. Those golden years are then viewed as a time to stop and do nothing, a time to "relax" and finally take up a hobby doing something that you always loved, because now you have the time. With all these years of preparation leading to an anti-climatic retirement, a time to do nothing! It's no wonder most people feel their lives have no direction, and they are just running through the automated motions, just trying to stay afloat.

"And this is ultimately why so many of us are so unhappy: because happiness is not doing nothing, happiness is acting creatively, doing things, working hard on things you care about. Happiness is becoming an excellent long-distance runner, falling in love, cooking an original

I WAS TRAINED TO ACCEPT AS FACT THAT YOU GOT A JOB AND KEPT THAT FOR LIFE. OF COURSE THIS WAS A MYTHICAL STORY, BUT BELIEVABLE, AS I VENTURED OUT INTO THE WORLD AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

recipe for people you care about, building a bookshelf, writing a song. There is no happiness to be found in merely lying on a couch—happiness is something that we must pursue. We are not unhappy because we have to do things, we are unhappy because all the things we do are things we don't care about. And because our jobs exhaust us and mislead us about what we want, they are the source of much of our unhappiness". (from crimethinc.com—How Ethical is the Work 'Ethic'?)

Antoine de Saint-Exupery said it best when he said,

"The time for action is now. It's never too late to do something."

Why do we feel the need to run through the mouse wheel for years, a never ending tape loop, like Sisyphus pushing the stone up the hill? Why not live the life we want, the life we dreamed? What do we fear, and why does it keep us so captive? Why not break free?

Grandma Moses was 76 when she painted her first canvas, and she lived another 25 years as a painter. In that time, she saw her paintings go from $3 to fetching prices of more than $10,000. Charles Bukowski wrote his first novel in 1971, when he was 51 years old. Enigmatic painter Paul Cezanne, now considered one of the fathers of modern art, spent most of his life grappling with his craft and enduring rejection. He didn't get his first solo exhibition until 1894, when he was 56, though public acclaim still eluded him until the early 1900s. By then, Cezanne had finally found a style all his own. He went on to produce such masterpieces as 'Pyramid of Skulls' and 'The Bathers' before his death in 1906 at the age of 67.

To me, my friend Bill Faux is an incredible example of living the life you dreamed, and making that choice later in life. When I first began to tattoo Bill Faux many years ago, he was still steadying his feet on the ground as a professor at a university, and starting to create the road he is now guiding so many down. The first few pieces he had done by me had to stay in the 'hide-able' range, which is common with clients his age and in his profession. As his confidence in his career grew, the placement of his tattoos grew. Now, two full arms, chest, armpits, and collar, Bill's tattoos reflect the confidence of a man who is living the life he has always wanted to, one without fear. Here's Bill's story, in his own words:

SOME STUDENTS THINK I'M 'COOL' AND SOME DON'T. A FEW COLLEAGUES HAVE EVEN TOLD ME I AM 'MENACING'

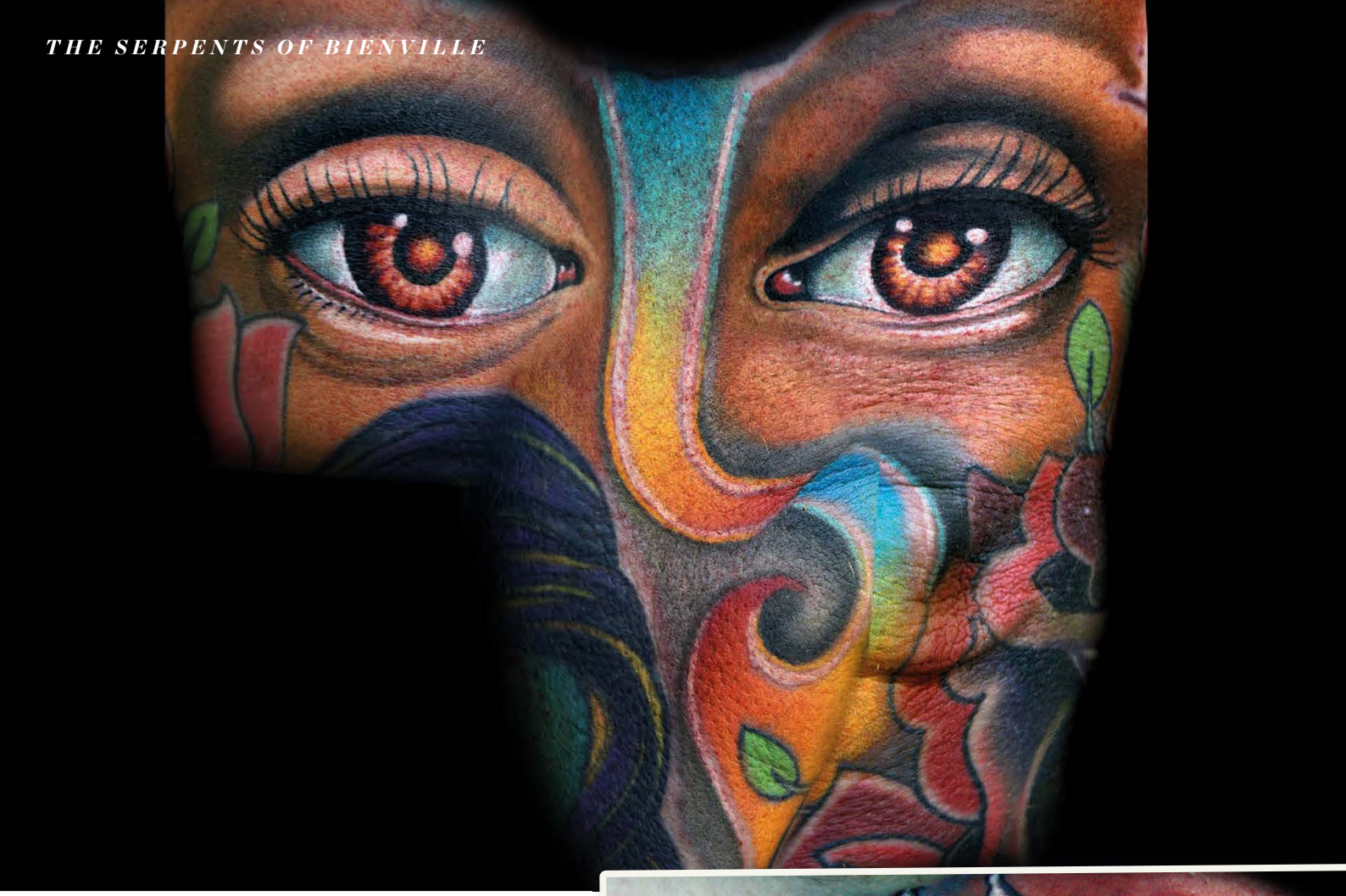
"Breaking away from traditional roles and paths is often seen as rebellious. Because we choose to live a different story than most, it is a challenge for others to see or comprehend. Set standards seep into every facet of our lives. These rules are so strong that it is hard to imagine other possibilities. In fact, it is simpler to treat life as a checklist—marking each category and milestone. Go to school. Go to college. Get a career. Retire.

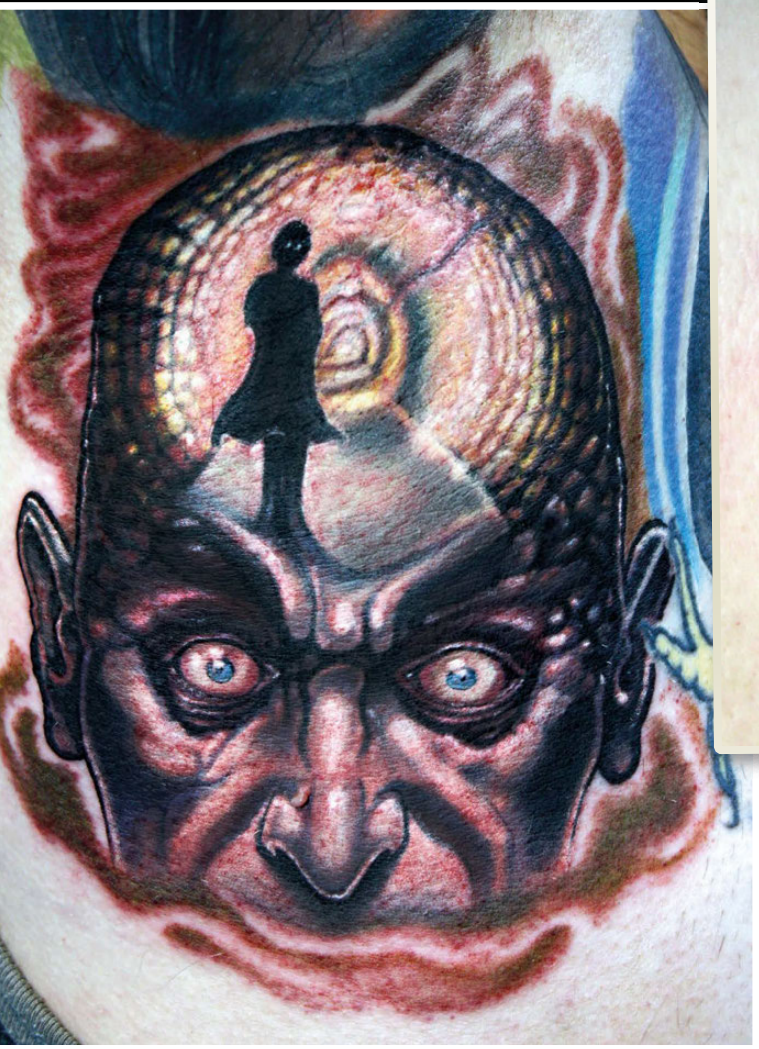
"I grew up in a rural Appalachian town. Going to college was one choice and factory work was the other. I chose the later. I was trained to accept as fact that you got a job and kept that for life. Of course this was a mythical story, but believable, as I ventured out into the world after high school.

"The stories we are told become gatekeepers that shape the decisions we make. We rely on neatly packaged categories to help us flow easily through life as we quickly make sense of the interactions and messages we encounter on a daily basis. Sometimes we need a radical change to break free of the grip that constrains the perceptions of others and ourselves. Moving to Europe provided that radical change smashing so many perspectives and beliefs.

"Often we are placed within categories that really don't fit who we are and we do the same to others. Sometimes we just get those neat boxes wrong. Encountering different culture, people, and languages showed me that alternatives exist. Being the outsider, excluded, and at times threatened was illuminating and humbling. You gain unique perspectives and can empathise with others through such experiences.

"I worked in warehouses for most of my early career in the US and abroad. A glance in the mirror always transports me back to a small isolated town that was home to coal mining, the steel industry, railroads, and agriculture. Our internet back then was NPR, Public Television, and the library. My earliest recollections include many tattooed family members though. My grandfather's WWII aged





Burma patch, Uncle Bill's sun kissed Navy Anchor, Uncle Chippy's poked Heart and Arrow, and cousin Glenn's Love and Hate straight eight hands were all part of my childhood. Tattoos were a normal part of my extended family. When one era of my life was ending and another was beginning, it just seemed natural to mark myself as a rite of passage. I got my first tattoo 27 years ago with a good friend at Peter's Tattoo in Mannheim. That shop is

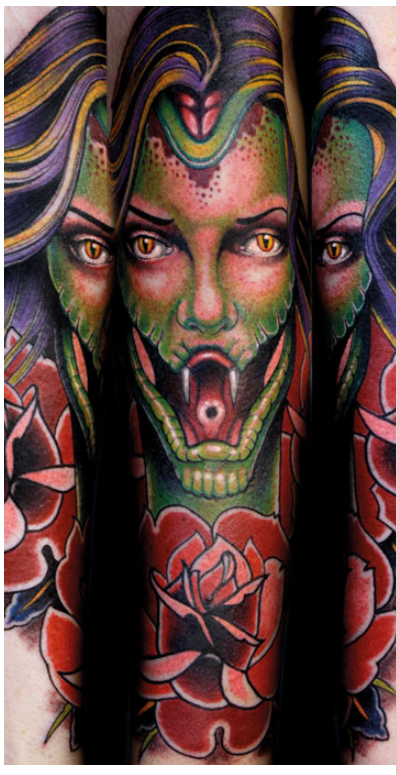
still around. My ink will always connect me to my blue-collar roots.

"Beginning a new career in higher education took time, goal setting, and sacrifice. I was in my 40s when I became a researcher, teacher, and mentor to young adults attending a regional university in southern Georgia. I am a 'late bloomer' and a 'non-traditional', 'first generation' student. Yet more boxes to be placed within. You can 'bloom' many times in your life. To hell with being traditional—you can get education at any time. And proudly, 'first generation' requires a DIY attitude. Being empowered and taking a stand requires us to take action. In a sense, we are taking control over ourselves and no longer sitting on the sidelines. On occasion, you will find yourself on the front lines.

THERE IS SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE AVAILABLE ONLINE NOW THAT SITTING IN A LECTURE HALL IS AN OUTDATED MODE OF GETTING INFORMATION

"As I hit age 50, I find myself struggling with the structural constraints of my career. I am not looking to change careers but I am working to evoke change within higher education. There is so much knowledge available online now that sitting in a lecture hall is an outdated mode of getting information. This unfettered access to knowledge begs the question, has the higher educational system run its course? As government funds run dry, there is a rush to get a shrinking pool of students. Many campuses have become competitive resorts boasting their amenities and courting corporate sponsors instead of showcasing their educational programs. Change is inevitable. Inspired by the Edupunk movement and the possibilities of mentoring, I am striving to take control by building relationships and collaborations with my students as we learn and explore ideas together.

IT IS SIMPLER TO TREAT LIFE AS A CHECKLIST–MARKING EACH CATEGORY AND MILESTONE. GO TO SCHOOL. GO TO COLLEGE. GET A CAREER. RETIRE...



"While I find myself clashing with classic notions of teaching higher education, so too do I contrast the corporate concept of professionalism. What should a 'professional' look like? The idea of what that entails is changing but constraints remain. I have fewer restrictions because I teach adults and universities in general are more liberal. Some students think I'm 'cool' and some don't. A few colleagues have even told me I am 'menacing'. I tend to find that the students can see me as a person rather than a talking head or an adversary that makes them read books and gives them tests. With that comes the ability to cultivate deeper relationships, establish connections, and invite conversations. In general, they view me as an approachable professional to include in their fledgling networks.

"I as I grew in my career so did my ink. I hit a point moving into becoming heavily tattooed. Reflecting on this transformation, Sean really helped me get comfortable becoming visibly tattooed. Getting my forearms was a turning point. I chose no longer to hide, to comply, to fit into a box. Sean's relationship with me also grew. He became a tattoo mentor on how to handle being heavily tattooed by sharing stories and experiences on what to expect socially and professionally. Together we found balance between professional constraints and artistic possibilities. Sean has now tattooed me through my early 40s and now into my 50s. He's going to be tattooing me as long as my skin can hold the ink, at that age.

"If anyone wants to see what I'm up to or possibly collaborate to make stuff happen follow me: wfaux @Instagram or William Faux @Facebook" ▣

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BEAUTY, CLASS AND THE TATTOOED ELITE

I'm tattooist Fade FX and in the autumn of 2015 I headed into the jungles of Borneo to make a film about the last head hunter tattooists. What I uncovered during my 2 week filming trip was an exotic tribal culture rich in tattoo heritage experiencing a tattoo renaissance that parallels our own

Words & Images: Fade FX and Matt Haddon-Reichardt

At the forefront of Borneo's tattoo renaissance are two skilled artists Boy Skrang and Jeremy Lo. It was thanks to these two tattooists that I was in Borneo filming. Boy Skrang, whose direct bloodline is Iban, is my link to the Iban tribes and Jeremy Lo is my hand tapped tattoo mentor. Both men have been instrumental in resurrecting the dying art of Iban hand tapped tattooing and bringing it to a new generation of tattoo enthusiasts.

On my first day filming in Borneo I sat down with Jeremy to plunder his extensive knowledge of Borneo's tattoo culture its traditions, myths and stories. The stereotype of tribal tattooing is macho, head hunter warriors but the truth is far more complex and convincing particularly in the role tattooing played in the gender identity of Iban culture.

While in many tribes tattooing was a predominantly male art form linked to hunting, warfare and machismo symbols of strength and fortitude for the hill tribes tattooing was far from macho.

"Back in the day for the highland tribes of Borneo only the women would get tattooed. When men had daughters they would get all their daughters tattooed. This was to show off to the other village that they had money, they had wealth they had strength and power."

I find it fascinating that in the remote highland com-

munities of northern Borneo hundreds of years ago tattooing was regarded as beautiful, feminine and a sign of status and attractiveness. Until relatively recently in the West tattooing was the badge of the outsider and this was never more so than in the case of tattooed women. Tattooed women were traditionally stereotyped as unstable and bad to know. Ink was a symbol of the criminal class, prostitutes and female hysteria not the kind of thing to be bestowed on a princess. Yet in Borneo the exact opposite was true as Jeremy explained.

"When visitors would come to a village or long house and they can see the tattooed women they would say 'Wow your daughter has a lot of tattoos she is very beautiful the men in my long house would want to marry the women in your long house'."

It is only now in the west that tattooed women are breaking through and being perceived for the beauty of their body art where before they were discriminated against. It's hard to imagine 50 or even 30 years ago successful women like Angelina Jolie, Rhianna, Kat Von D and models like the Suicide Girls being celebrated for their body art. For me, it feels that in the west we are finally catching

BACK IN THE DAY FOR THE HIGHLAND TRIBES OF BORNEO ONLY THE WOMEN WOULD GET TATTOOED

THE TATTOO SHOWED SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE THE MEN WERE AWAY

up with what the Iban of Borneo knew all along: that tattooed women are beautiful and tattoos are a sign of strength of character and inner beauty.

On my second day of filming, I met up with historian Leo Stanley from the Sarawak Cultural Village and he explained how, in Iban culture, a tattoo's meaning extended beyond a symbol of beauty.

"For the Iban ladies when you see them with the bracelet tattoo design on their arms or ankles, or the single line on the fingers or also three dots on their hand, this would represent that she is important within the tribe. This could mean she is skilled in a number of ways. She could be a master weaver; she could be very good in medicines like as a Shaman or whatever. Also, it could show she is good at house chores or taking care of the farm when the men go away working, hunting, travelling or engaged in war with a rival tribe. The tattoo showed she would be able to take care of the responsibilities while the men were away. It symbolised that she is special that she is not an ordinary woman. Tattoos to the Iban symbolised status. It was a language that spoke across geographical distance and across the generations."

Tattoos for the Iban were also linked the individual to their caste. In Iban culture a complex caste system with its own rules, nuances and etiquettes governed social interaction and behaviour. Tattoos were a clear means of indicating which caste a person belonged to.

"There were 3 main parts to the caste system an upper, middle and lower caste. Certain tattoos could only be applied to people within a certain caste. It was a very easy, visual way of communing a person's place in society and how they should behave and be treated."

In western culture much of the old class system and its dress codes have been eroded but there is still a stereotype around suits and ties, ripped jeans and leather jackets or crowns and gowns. In Iban culture, with the heat and humidity of the jungle rendering clothes impractical, tattoos acted much as the old class uniforms of the west operated and

CERTAIN TATTOOS COULD ONLY BE APPLIED TO PEOPLE WITHIN A CERTAIN CASTE. IT WAS A VERY EASY, VISUAL WAY OF COMMUNING A PERSON'S PLACE IN SOCIETY

once received a tattoo would mark you for life. Tattoos distinguished the shaman from the warrior, the princess from the house wife.

Iban culture parallels western culture in linking tattooing to class and status. In the west tattooing has ebbed and flowed in regards to its role as an indicator of social class. In the Victorian era many of the aristocracy were tattooed and a discreet tattoo was a sign of prestige. Fast forward history 50 years and the negative stereotypes of tattooing had become entrenched in society. Move forward another 50 years and the tattoo renaissance began pushing tattooing into the mainstream.

Tattooing in Borneo died out when many of the tribes converted to Christianity. Yet thanks to the brave few who kept the art form alive underground away from the church a whole new generation is bringing it into the light. The re-emergence of tribal tattooing in Borneo mirrors the rise in popularity of tattooing in the west. In both cultures something once beautiful and the mark of royalty became regarded as ugly and taboo before being reappraised and brought back into its rightful place as an art form.

After finishing interviews with Jeremy and Lo, it was time to meet up with Boy Skrang and plan our trip up river and into the jungle to film the last tribal elders of the Iban tribe who can remember a time before Christianity pushed tattooing into the underground. As we packed the canoe with filming equipment and supplies for our journey I asked Boy what he thought the future held for Iban tattooing.

"The future of tribal tattooing in Borneo is good. The new generations are doing newer designs that are a combination of traditional Iban and outside art influences. The technology is pushing Borneo tattooing forward so artists now have a choice of an electric machine or the traditional stick and needle set up. I don't think the traditional tattoo will be lost because the appreciation is there and the understanding is there. The knowledge is starting now, the future starts now." ▣

10 Years

A DECADE IN THE MAKING...

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Thank you for another

bbbbrrrrr-iiiillllllll freeze...

For us at B Sharp Tattoos 'the Freeze' is definitely one of the 'coolest' shows... So thank you once again Skindeep, all the wonderful people that attended and all the friends we've made, for another great show.

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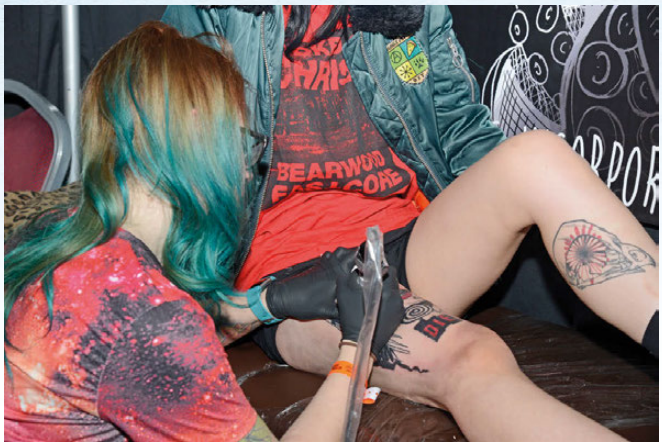
Tattoo Freeze

29 January 2017

Our one day family show in the middle of winter continues to throw up some surprises and this year was no exception. Let's take a look...



Another year flies by without any regard for all the things any of us wanted to achieve and here we are back in Telford again—I'm pretty certain the last Tattoo Freeze was only a few months ago but apparently not.

This year, I have the pleasure of judging the competition entires with my buddy and writing cohort, Mr Simmons. The idea of the competitions is to judge them blind i.e: not knowing who has done what but it's damn hard to spend an entire day at a show, be visible and not look at anything being created. Luckily, my memory is as poor as my maths skills and with a few exceptions of those who work in a highly stylised fashion even my mother would know who the work is by, I'm awfully good at forgetting what I've seen from one second to the next.

Last year, there were some new names here and this year is no exception. We decide to run the gauntlet of aisles for an hour to get an overview of what we can expect and there's good work going on here—and plenty of old friends to catch up with too.

Johny Mathews, who I haven't seen since Tattoo Jam, is running up some nuts architectural bridge as a first tattoo on his client. Next to him is Richie 'Half The Man I Used To Be' Guy (you need to hook into his instagam account for the inspiration behind that: instagram.com/richard-artistguy) looking fine and pumping out a real humdinger of a piece. Around the corner, Ollie and Lauren from Cosmic Monsters—likewise... it's always good to catch up but the odd thing about meeting old friends at any show is that they're working. Expecting to have any meaningful extended conversation is a waste of time—and the way it should be. It's a little like turning up to see your guitarist friend's band and expecting him to give you some kind of attention while up on the stage doing his/her thing. Respect is necessary because nobody is more important while the show is on than the clients.

Words: Sion Smith · **Images:** Nicky Connor

PROF. PANIC!

SCREEN CARS
95

COSMIC MONSTERS

My buddy Atom was also working the show and I never did get to the bottom of whether he had just tattooed Ed Sheeran or not. I'm sure that's what he did but like I said, trying to have a meaningful conversation here is like herding wasps. (Note to self: follow this up). The same can be said for others I consider friends... Dek Kent (super-solid every step of the way), Hollie-May (whose style is now really settling into its own groove) and Federico Amaterasu whose sketching style of tattooing has really got me excited at the moment.

...and I mention all of these people because there are new names I need to share coffee and pastries with as soon as possible. Ryan Lucas turned in an absolute beauty of a hand tattoo that really stood out for me on the day, Giles Twigg knocked out a Gremlin chest piece that was tons of fun and the other really stand out piece for me was Paul Terry's tattoo delivered to a nice slab of estate on the back of a calf.

Honestly, some of the competition categories were tough as hell to get to grips with. The standard of tattooing around here is fantastic—I've said it before and I'll say it again and again... there is no excuse to get

TATTOO FREEZE WINNERS

Best Avant Garde & Best of Convention
Paul Terry of Forever Ink

Best Traditional
Tom Maggot of Vivid Ink

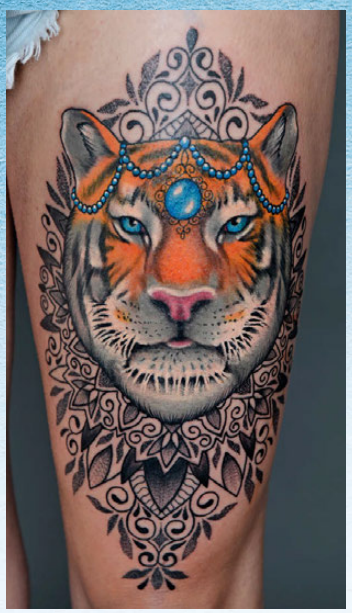
Best Realism Winner
Donatas Lasus of Inked Moose

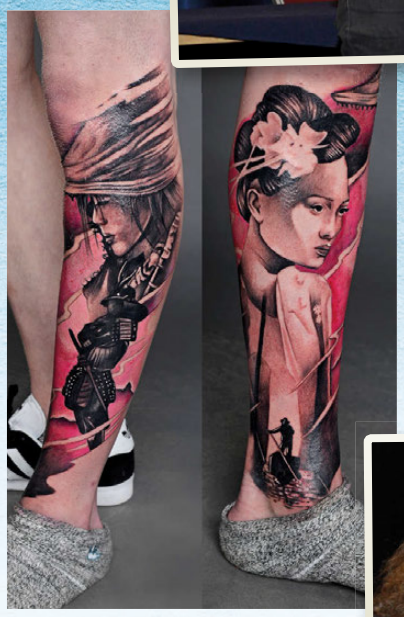
Best Colour
Alex Trowell of Pigments Backstreet Tattoo

Best Blackwork
Federico Amaterasu of London Tattoo

Best Oriental
Dek Kent of Electric Kicks

Best Black and Grey
Paul Hanford of Section 18 Tattoo





sub-standard tattoos anymore. Not one excuse left in the world because it ain't 1976 anymore Dorothy.

Meanwhile... out on the peripheries, a giant animatronic Polar Bear called Bjørn turned up from somewhere... straight out of The Golden Compass in fact. We all know what I think about bears around here but the amount of times I got to see Bjørn amounted to a big fat zero. Such is my luck with getting to where I want to be at tattoo shows and that's a shame. That was a selfie waiting to happen. Having said that, there was a lot of great entertainment for the kids this year—kids and those who never grew up anyway. Just around the corner from Bjørn was a great Punch and Judy show. This I did watch. If you don't love Punch and Judy, you've lost that spark of magic from when you were small. A lot of the kids watching down on the floor had never seen the show before. I grew up with Mr Punch (not literally) and rather like tattooing at one point in history, it's a real niche thing that very few understand properly. It was good to see it off a promenade and holding the flame up high for an art that I would be very sad to see die out.

This is what works about Tattoo Freeze—as much as you can ever be into tattooing, there's only so long you can stand and watch somebody tattoo in real time before you need to go do something else for a little while and come back, even ten minutes later, when the design has moved on. Too many people still have the impression that great pieces of work happen in the fifteen minutes before the ad break. Bolted on entertainment is also a bonus... at any show you care to go to. Any show that bolts on entertainment for all the family though wins at every level.

I like Tattoo Freeze—hell, I don't know anybody that doesn't like Freeze. A single day show works very differently from a multi-day one. There is no coming back later, there is no time for chewing over what you might or might not get. It's a genuine circus in everything is here today and very much gone tomorrow.

I could wrap up here with a nod to next year being 2018 and how I'm looking forward to another round of TF already but right now the idea of 2018 seems a whole world away... but in the real world, and by the time you read this, it will be just ten paydays away.

Now that's scary. ▣

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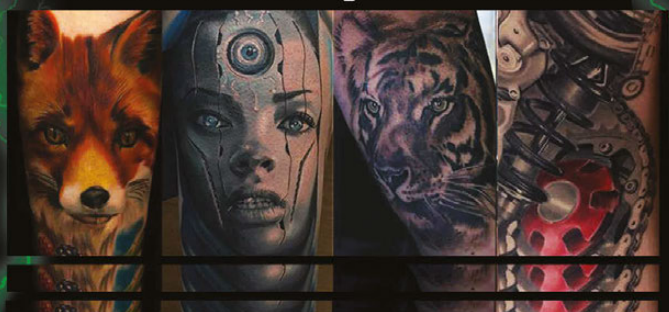

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A TATTOOED FAIRY TALE (PART 2)

Once upon a time, a particular tattooed woman received a letter from a tattooed man. Except it wasn't a really a letter, it was a Facebook message

The Tattooed-Man had seen a photo of a taxidermied weasel, fished from a skip by The Particular Tattooed Woman, and either compelled by fate or chancing his arm with an easy-opener, decided to write, instead of just 'Like'.

The Particular Tattooed Woman frequently received unsolicited missives, often from the Legion of Readers of the Real Magazine where her thoughts were displayed for public consumption and so she replied in her customary way, politely, and without any kisses. The Tattooed-Man asked if The Particular Tattooed Woman planned to attend an upcoming Assemblage of Tattoo-Admirers, but she had no such plans. There were now so many Admirer-Assemblies that The Particular Tattooed Woman could barely keep up with what-was-when-and-where and besides, The Monstrous Estate Agent had decreed that the Castle-Flat must shortly be vacated and The Particular Tattooed Woman was fully occupied with the horrors of the hunt for a new abode. There could be no time afforded to the fripperies of the average Assemblage of Tattoo-Admirers.

Yet it seems that miracles do happen, as the very next day, The Particular Tattooed Woman retraced her steps, returning to the magic-vessel from which the glassy-eyed weasel had been plucked, ostensibly in search of it's missing tail (without which she could never be stoatally sure if it were really a weasel at all). The tail was nowhere to be seen, but yonder, on the horizon (OK, really just a couple of doors down) was a shining beacon of the most glorious kind, a brand new 'To Let' sign.

And so the tail-less stuffed mammal became known as 'The Weasel of Good Fortune' and when the Particular Tattooed Woman moved into her new House of Lucky Chance, the weasel went too. And there he resides to this very day, as happy as a tail-less stuffed mammal could possibly be.

Moving to the House of Lucky Chance was an arduous quest, and The Particular Tattooed Woman welcomed the kind offer of assistance from another, not-very-tattooed-man. The Not-Very-Tattooed-Man was so dedicated to the arduous quest that The Particular Tattooed Woman felt very grateful indeed, and thus she acquiesced to The Not-Very-Tattooed-Man's request to make official their involvement on the Book of Many Faces.

Sara Rosenbaum

PAULA HARDY KANGELOS
DiamondBetty

THE TATTOOED-MAN DID NOT WRITE AGAIN. HE MET A DIFFERENT TATTOOED WOMAN AT THE ASSEMBLAGE OF TATTOO-ADMIRERS AND RETURNED TO PARTIAL OBSCUREMENT IN THE INSTA-FOREST

Sara Rosenbaum

Unsurprisingly, The Tattooed-Man did not write again. He met a different tattooed woman at the Assemblage of Tattoo-Admirers and returned to partial obscurement in the Insta-Forest, where he remained for six more months.

The Particular Tattooed Woman did not pay much heed to The Tattooed-Man, as she already had a not-very-tattooed beau, and only certain princesses are permitted to bogart more than one beau at a time. Besides, The Tattooed-Man looked a bit grumpy in his profile pictures, and The Particular Tattooed Woman had had quite enough of grumpy chaps, thank you very much.

Time went by, as it is wont to do, and both The Particular Tattooed-Woman and The Tattooed-Man were happy enough in their own, separate worlds. Then, one day, The Particular Tattooed-Woman found herself in The Very Big City, and after an afternoon of decadent alcoholic imbibement, unsurprisingly, in need of a WC. Leaving The Not-Very-Tattooed Man (and his brother) in the street, The Particular Tattooed Woman dashed into a nearby hostelry and crept down the stairs intending to stealthily make use of their conveniently located conveniences.

And there, at the neither halfway-up nor halfway-down point, she first met The Tattooed-Man, in person. And he was far less grumpy towards her than either of them could've anticipated. Neither can remember much of what was said in the few minutes they spent in the pub stairwell, only that a proposition was both made and accepted, a proposition that would thereafter become known as The Failed Relationship Pact.

It took another year and a half before circumstances aligned in a manner that allowed for the invocation of The Failed Relationship Pact, but The Tattooed-Man and The Particular Tattooed Woman have since had much to thank The Weasel of Good Fortune for. They've even made plans to attend an Assemblage of Tattoo-Admirers together. It's taken them three years to get to this point, and perhaps they'll never get as far as Happy-Ever-After, it will be stoatally awesome if they do.

If life gives you weasels, make weasel-ade. ▣

CLASSIFIEDS

Whether you're looking for an additional artist for your studio, a house manager or are selling an established business lock, stock and two smoking barrels, these free streamlined classifieds ought to get the ball rolling. Send your needs to Jazz Publishing, 1 Marcher Court, Sealand Road, Chester CH1 6BS, or email them into: editor@skindeep.co.uk

We are looking for a tattoo artist to join our team at East Ink Tattoo & Piercing, located in East London. Preferably an all-rounder. Artistic person with shop experience and professional attitude! Full time or part time position available. Drug and drama free! If interested please get in touch via email at getinked@eastinktattoo.com with links to your Fb or Instagram portfolio.

Electric Kicks Tattoo Studio. We are a busy tattoo studio in Pontefract, just on the outskirts of Leeds in West Yorkshire. We are looking for one or two tattoo artists to join our team. You must have a varied portfolio with 3 years plus studio experience. No apprentices, drama or egos. The studio has been in business for 6 years and we are looking to expand. Please send artwork and resume to Sam at electric.kicks@hotmail.com

Hughes Tattoos has expanded and we are looking for a permanent full time experienced tattoo artist. Preferably starting the beginning of February so please e-mail or call us for more info hughestattoos@hotmail.com We are based in Sawbridgeworth CM21 9JX (01279882330)

Studio Twenty Six in Maidstone Kent are looking for another artist to join a busy creative team in the heart of kent, artist must have a good portfolio, client base would be awesome but we have a regular flow of work coming through, we are not looking for a short term artist someone who wants to grow with the studio, can do part time hours if required. Please email info@studio-26.co.uk for more details.

Artist wanted Sacred Steel Tattoo. We are looking for a new tattoo artist to join our talented team. The right applicant must have a highly professional attitude, experience and a strong portfolio. If you are looking for a new studio get in touch on 0247 767 1150 or sacredsteeltattoo@gmail.com

The Tattooed Arms, Lincoln are looking for the right artist to join their busy team. Experienced artists only, to work 3/4 days a week (to be discussed). Guest artists would also be considered. Please contact us via www.TheTattooedArms.com or visit the shop to apply, must have a portfolio.

We are looking for an experienced tattooist to join us here at Infinite Ink in Coventry. You must be ambitious and hard working as we are a very busy custom studio. You must have a good portfolio of your most recent work, including photos and drawings. Please contact Donna at infinite.ink@hotmail.co.uk. Facebook- https://m.facebook.com/infiniteinkcoventry. Instagram- infiniteink_coventry

New studio in Dumfries, Scotland area. I'm looking for someone to join me in my studio on a permanent basis. You must be an experienced Tattoo Artist. Full time/Part Time hours are available. Must have a portfolio and be a good all-rounder with excellent customer service skills. Please email me on rejuvenation115@gmail.com or call 07495 808 366 or business number 01848 331313.

Artist Wanted: Black Lotus tattoo studio Liverpool are looking for an artist to work in our busy established studio. Applicants must have experience and a strong portfolio, able to handle appointments and walk in clientele, and no drink, drug or ego problems. For more information please send us an email with some examples of your work and some info about yourself to black.lotusta2@hotmail.co.uk

Tattoo Artist Wanted at Ritual Art Tattoo, Rainham, Kent. Applicants will be expected to have their own kit and a good tattoo portfolio with an individual style. You will be expected to begin tattooing immediately and work a 4 day week between 10:30-18:00 Tuesday—Saturday. TO APPLY: send an email titled "PICK ME!" to info@ritualarttattoo.com

TATTOO ARTIST WANTED, WOLVERHAMPTON AREA. Our busy, up and coming professional studio is looking for a full time tattoo artist to join the team! We are looking for committed and enthusiastic artists, ideally looking for a black and grey or realism specialist, but we will consider all applicants with strong portfolios. No Drink, Drug or attitude problems. Send your portfolio to chris@cultofthesphynx.com

Space to rent for an experienced Body Piercer at Inkerrmans Tattoo Studio in Crystal Palace. Must be willing to do all the piercings that come into the studio, & have own Client base. Good opportunity to build your own business. Contact Steve - inkerrmans@hotmail.com - 07851867578

All details correct at time of going to press. Adverts cannot be taken over the phone. Please include your full studio details even if they are not to accompany the wording.

This month Beccy Rimmer has been thinking about the lifespan of our tattoos...

On the previous pages in this magazine, you'll have (hopefully) read my article on watercolour tattoos. The final point raised was a debate on the longevity of this particular style, as it has undergone on-going criticism in the past from many traditional tattooers and those who aren't a fan of the experimental artform.

I decided to continue the discussion here as I think there is much more to talk about. Not specifically around this particular tattoo sub-genre, but an analysis of the general question that our ears hear too often—*"what will your tattoos look like when you're older?"*

I'm going to try exceptionally hard to write this column without slipping into lecturing our readers too much about life's transience, something that always forces its way into every single thing I write. In other words, I'll go easy on the whole 'you're all going to die' thing.

Promises aside, I do believe that questions from others about the lastingness of our tattoos, is nothing more than evidence of their own blindness. An avoidance to accept the inevitable—our bodies are temporary, and so are the relationships we have to our tattoos.

As ink collectors, how can we possibly make decisions now for a time so far ahead? And how are we defining the phrase "when we are older"? Why do we spend our whole lives distancing ourselves from this concept as if it sits far, far away, at the end of time itself?

For some bizarre reason we continually refer to this magical time period as if it exists in another lifetime. The reality is that we won't all reach point. There is no certainty of that cinematic moment—sitting in our rocking chair, gazing outside, reflecting nostalgically on our early tattoo decisions.

But OK, let's say we do all make it there. Will we be frowning down at our wrinkled skin with regret, thinking to ourselves, *"I just wish that memorable symbol was executed in a traditional style as the line-work may have held a little better"*...?

I'm not so sure.

Tattoos that are built to be beautiful in the short-term are becoming popular amongst a certain generation. A new wave of tattoo enthusiasts has emerged, and they want to experience the lives they lead now, not the ones they may in the future.

Rob Steele

QUESTIONS FROM OTHERS ABOUT THE LASTINGNESS OF OUR TATTOOS, IS NOTHING MORE THAN EVIDENCE OF THEIR OWN BLINDNESS

BECCY RIMMER
BeccyRimmer

We drink alcohol, we eat 'bad' foods, we expose our skin to sun. We drive too fast on the motorway, we say things we don't mean, we dye our hair with cheap colour. We smoke, we put chemicals in our bodies that we shouldn't, we have unprotected sex. We get tattooed without reading the non-existent guidebook titled *'The Possible Future Consequences Of Your Tattoo Decisions'*.

Why?

Because we live in the present moment, not always analysing the long-term repercussions of our actions. Because we are human and we want to feel life, now, before it slips away. ▣

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