

# GRAFFITI TATTOO

KINGS ON SKIN





# JASON KUNDELL

## PORTLAND, OREGON, USA

*“ Tattoos have become so widespread, I have clients these days from all walks of life, and all ages. I have fifty-year-old-plus government workers to eighteen-year-old college students and everything in between. ”* JASON KUNDELL

**WHEN** I was about thirteen I started writing graffiti. Back then, at least in my group of friends, most of us got into it. It was just sort of what you did at the time in Southern California. You skateboarded or surfed, listened to punk and some Hip Hop, and you did graffiti. Or you were a jock and you didn't do any of those things. For me there was something really fucking cool about going to a blank wall and making it into something so much more so quickly. It's hard to say exactly what got me into it but once I was exposed I couldn't stop thinking about it.

My very first tag was Sync. But it turned out there was already someone who wrote Sync from the TCF crew in the valley not too far from me. After a year or two I just sort of got the name Bles. Not exactly sure how it found me or me it but we have been together ever since.

*left page: Dragon with blossoms back piece / 2009*



I'd say my style is kind of between older traditional graffiti and the really good, crazy stuff that other guys are doing. People like Revok, Krush, Saber, Zes, and Aloy—to me these guys look like they have the future of graff. I think everyone in AWR would describe my style as meat and potatoes, in a good way though. Good meat and potatoes.

I got into tattoos really early on. When I was a teenager I couldn't wait to get tattooed, so as soon as I turned eighteen I started getting tattoos. Vision from Venice gave me some good people in the Bay Area to get tattooed by so that's what I did. I had such a great time and right from the start I knew that's what I needed to be doing.

I began tattooing towards the end of 1996. I had a good friend who had recently started working with AWR (Paco Excel), and he and his partner at the time (Adrian Lee) offered to teach me. One of the really big challenges was that most of

what I drew was just lettering; in tattooing you have to learn how to draw everything. Also no matter how good you are at graffiti you have to start from scratch in tattooing all over again. No matter what, that's it. You suck all over again.

For me there are a few similarities between graffiti and tattooing but I think my background as a writer helps me best with things like lettering and fonts. That type of stuff, along with coloring and putting together color schemes, comes very naturally from all the graffiti. Aside from that I don't think there are too many similarities between them.

These days there are a lot of people who inspire my tattoos. Some of the main ones are the people I have become friends with or worked with over the years. I have had the good fortune of working with some amazing people all over the world and they have all helped my tattooing a lot. In the beginning, when I first started tattooing or even before I started, it was mostly all the people in the



*both pages: European interpretations of Asian styles / 2007-09*





Various back pieces / 2000-02





A selection of letter-based tattoos / 2000



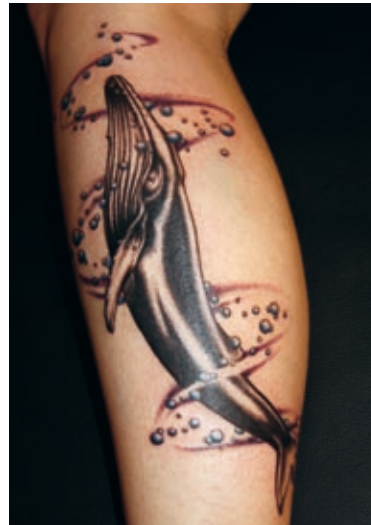
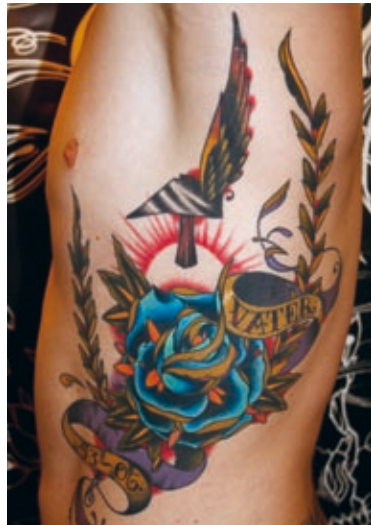


“ I think we as writers do things differently when we start the whole tattoo trip. Colors, outlines, shading, and the whole way we see tattoos. ” S A B E

left: Vaughn Bodé character sleeve / 2003  
right page: Detail of a S A B E and W E N wall / Copenhagen / 2009







both pages: A selection of tattoos done in 2009







*Keepers of the light / 2009*

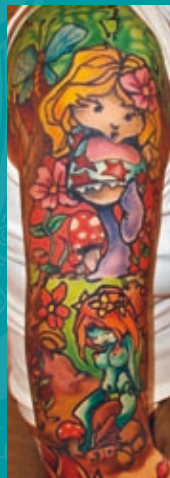
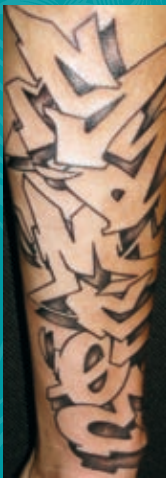


*Clown brain / 2007*



*War in the streets / 2006*





**ON THE RUN BOOKS** together form an encyclopedia that catalogs graffiti and urban art from around the world. Since 1990, the OTR team has built an ever-growing archive, eventually to be donated to the Museum of Urban Art, a project presently under development as part of the Campus of Urban Culture, which focuses on Hip Hop and graffiti culture. With every title, we digitize and preserve original material from various key artists, and bring their story to the public. All this, and in keeping with our motto: **KNOW YOUR HISTORY.**



In their quest to improve their artistic talent and earn honest livings, many graffiti writers have naturally gravitated towards other artistic endeavors. Since the 1970s, these artists have been making the leap to become muralists, fashion designers, art directors, and, as of late, tattoo artists. In the graffiti movement, artists battle in the public eye to be the best and most respected, and the same goes within the tattoo world. These spray paint technicians are making a splash worldwide with their color mastery and wild styles, changing the face of the tattoo world by adding their letters and boldness. They are thus creating a new visual language for the skin, a language filled with burners and characters that depart from the standard tribal design and sailor styles. Join us in celebrating the artwork of the best artists that have transitioned from the streets to the tattoo shops around the world including Jason Kundell, Mr. Went, Ces, Sabe, Timmi Mensah, Circle and many others.

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