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FRESHLY INKED, ISSN (2160-0988) Issue 19, is published bimonthly by Quadra Media, LLC 12 West 27th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10001.



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JESSE

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What year did you start tattooing? I started tattooing in August 2010.

How did you get into tattooing?

Art has always been a part of my life. I saw that lots of tattoo artists had incredibly defined and amazing original styles, and I realized that they were literally just selling their own art to people in their skin. The thought of this immediately intrigued me and I abandoned my pursuit of doing digital art for bands or video game concept art to become a tattoo artist.

You have had many award winning tattoos this year, including some at the Inked Empire State Tattoo Convention.

What have been some of your favorite wins? Yeah, I am totally shocked at how many awards I won this summer. I think the one I am the most proud of winning is best of show at the Inked Empire State Convention. There were so many great and extremely talented artists there, some of the best in the world, and I had never won an award before that so I was very honored to say the least.

What brought you to work in black and grey? I have always been a fan of black and grey artwork, especially when it comes to tattooing. I grew up drawing primarily with pencils so I was never really into using color in my artwork. When I got into tattooing I already had a large body of work that

was all black and grey so I kind of knew where things were going. When I work in black and grey I feel like I have more time to work on the detail and push the boundaries of what I am actually drawing, instead of worrying about color schemes and saturating the skin to the level that color work requires.

What sets you apart from other artists?

I think there are a lot of things that set me apart from other artists. The primary thing being that I like to tattoo only things that have come out of my head. My goal is to create a body of work where people can look at it and see for themselves that they don't really need to give me too much direction. All of my favorite tattoo artists have created a very unique world and style for themselves, which is exactly my goal. Not that I won't take someone's idea every once and a while and have fun with it, that keeps things interesting! However, I do prefer to work with only my own concepts and ideas 90% of the time.

What other media do you work in?

I like to work with charcoals a lot. I did go to school for computer art so I have done plenty of digital painting, but I kind of grew apart from that since I started tattooing. I do want to dive into oil painting eventually but I would like to build a good sized body of charcoal work, and possibly

do some art shows with them first, before I start putting all my free time into painting.

What tattoo artists do you admire most?

The work of Tommy Lee Wendtner and Victor Portugal are definitely what originally inspired me to start tattooing. Markus Lenhard's work is also a big inspiration for me. I think if I had the time and money I would probably let those three people cover most of my body.

Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give them?

When someone is about to get tattooed, the only advice I give usually is to sit for as long as they think they can! I am easily capable of finishing a huge tattoo in one sitting, and because of my layering process, my work looks way cooler when it is finished! Of course I have no problem doing more than one sitting to finish a piece, but I think it's the most economical for the client to finish things on the first shot, especially since I usually charge by the session.

Is there a tattoo that you haven't done yet that you are dying to do?

I would love to do more large-scale work, such as a full torso piece or back pieces. I really love doing single session work, but the more big projects I can land, the better I can get! ■











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What year did you start tattooing? 2003.

How did you get into tattooing? I have always aspired to be a tattoo artist; because of personal reasons I put that dream on pause until 2003. At that time in Colombia it was very hard to complete my work because of the poor quality of machines and ink. I first got into tattooing by practicing with my friends from my town.

What was your first shop experience like? My first experience was with a good, old friend who saw my interest and without a doubt let me borrow his own canvas. I was so nervous in the beginning and slowly I gained confidence. My work wasn't horrible for being my first time. It is an experience I will never forget.

What conventions have you done recently or are planning to do this year? Lately, I was at some conventions in the U.S., such as Texas and Los Angeles, where I was fortunate to work with so many artists that I admire. I am planning to do more conventions around Europe.

What led you to work mainly in realism and portraiture? My motivation is based on the idea that the work is so complete, that the work I do seems close to perfect. In reality I really like portraits.

Do you take your own photo references? I do take my own references in order to accomplish the essence of realism, but I take other references as well. I like to compose surrealistic work; it's something that really excites me.

You seem to work primarily in color. Do you ever find yourself using black and grey? I do a lot of work in black and grey—I love doing it—but I find that people are interested in my work because of the vivid colors. The only reasons I do not do black and grey more is because the people I tattoo have yet to really demand it.

What is more difficult, a portrait of a person or a portrait of an animal? I find the portrait of a person to be more difficult.

What inspires you as an artist? I am inspired by doing what I love, which is tattooing, painting and drawing. This is what truly makes me happy and relaxes my mind.

What sets you apart from other artists? I would say that the vivid colors I use combined with my realistic and surrealistic work defines me. I cannot really say what sets me apart from other artists; I think that would really depend on the people who see my work.

What tattoo artists do you admire most? Honestly, I admire so many tattoo artists and every day I learn something from them. If I had to drop a name it would be Dmitry Samohin.

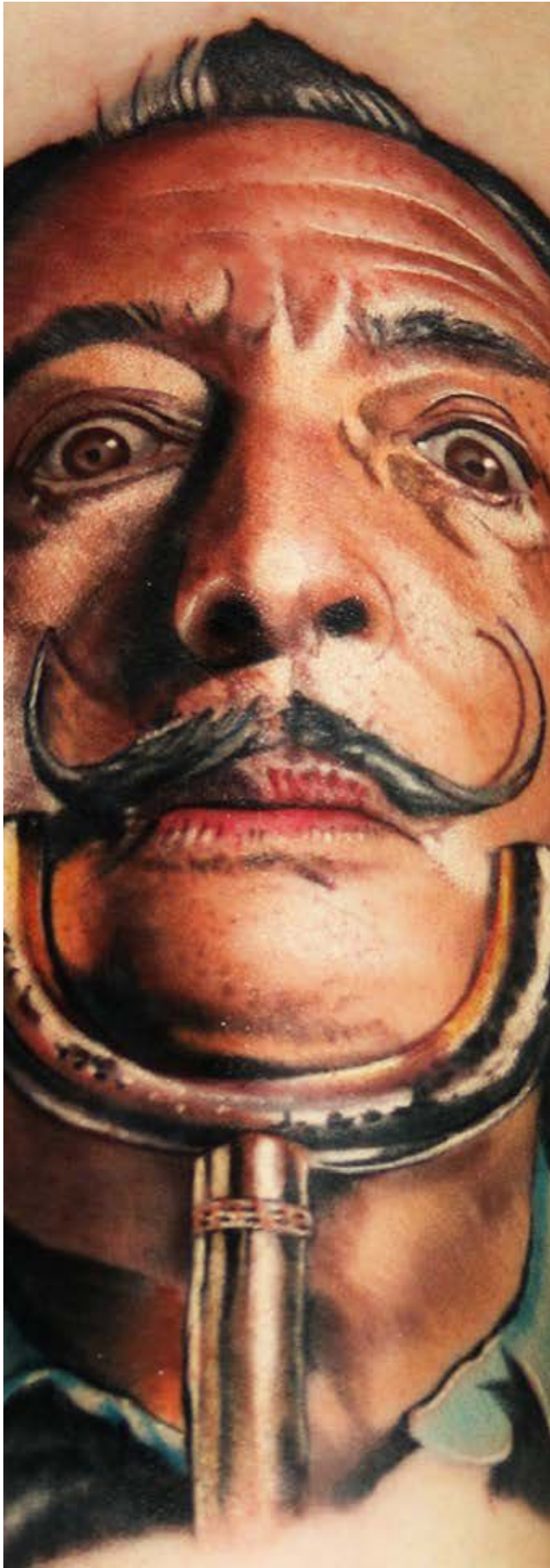
What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing? I get excited when I am dealing with realistic or surrealistic artwork, especially when the photo I am basing the work on has lots of black contrast.

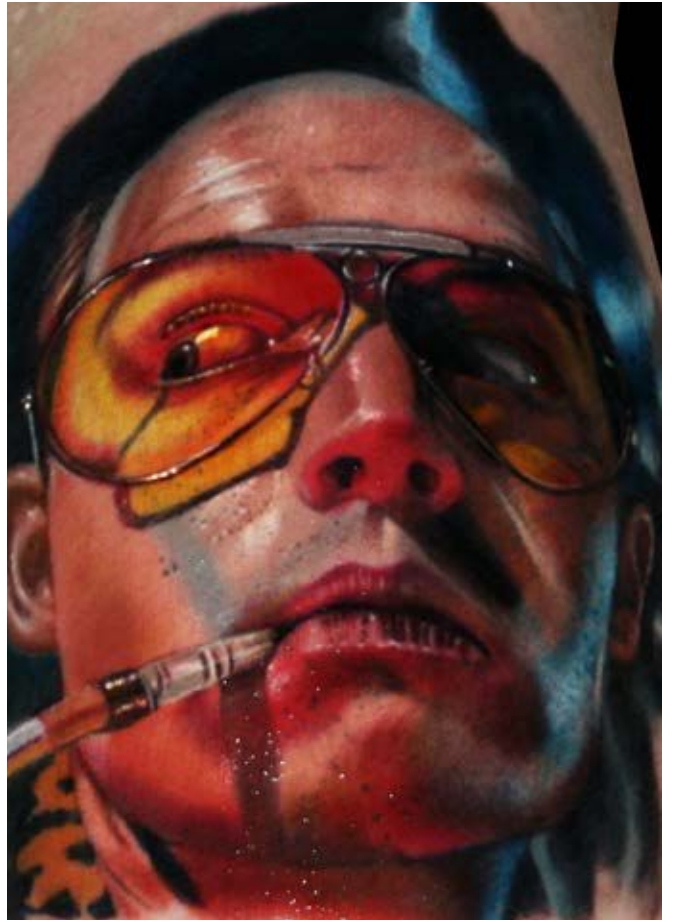
Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give them? First and foremost, I would advise them to think about what they want because they will have that their entire lives. Secondly, to find a great tattoo artist and not just someone who does tattoos.

Is there a tattoo that you haven't done yet that you are dying to do? I really would like to tattoo a rooster. [Laughs] It is an animal that I feel is so ignored, but if you really analyze them they are beautiful. Every time I express my opinion and pitch the idea of tattooing a rooster to someone, they all laugh.

What has been one of the strangest pieces you've tattooed? I think that in this line of work tons of strange things happen. I think one of the weirdest thing I tattooed on someone was a bag of chips. ■









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DREW

APICTURE

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What year did you start tattooing?
2011.

How did you get into tattooing?

I realized my passion for art in my late teens and started drawing in my last few years at school, so it was a natural progression for me to want to get into this industry. I came straight out of school and found my apprenticeship.

What was your first shop experience like? I've always worked for the same crew, between a few shops that my mentor Bob [Piggot] owns. I was working in really busy shops with a lot of artists and was taught everything the old school way from tattooists who have been around for a long time.

What conventions have you done recently or are planning to do? I haven't done any big conventions. Feeling so new to the industry I haven't really been sure that I was ready. In the future I'd really like to start travelling to do conventions and be able to draw inspiration from other artists there.

What brought you to work in black and grey? I started working with both color and black and grey. I guess every artist has their preference and black and grey is what I found myself really

wanting to do. It's what I'm passionate about and I can be confident in.

When do you ever find yourself using color? I really don't use color at all. I haven't done any color tattooing since the first year I started tattooing. I realized pretty quickly what I wanted to be doing.

Your work incorporates a lot of dark imagery. Is that one of your preferred subject matters? Definitely. I try to only work off things that I feel I have my heart in. I want to know I'm sending my client off with a piece of art that I am proud of. I feel really strongly about high contrast and dramatic lighting in pieces so that's the way I tattoo. I'm really drawn as an artist and as a person to this style.

What other media do you work in? I haven't really ventured too far out of using pencils at this time. I know in the future I'll probably try new things but I've been really happy sticking with the basics for now.

What tattoo artists do you admire most? The tattooists I admire most would be the ones that I've worked closely with: Bob Piggot (The Boss Man), Janene Feasey, and Shaun Carr.

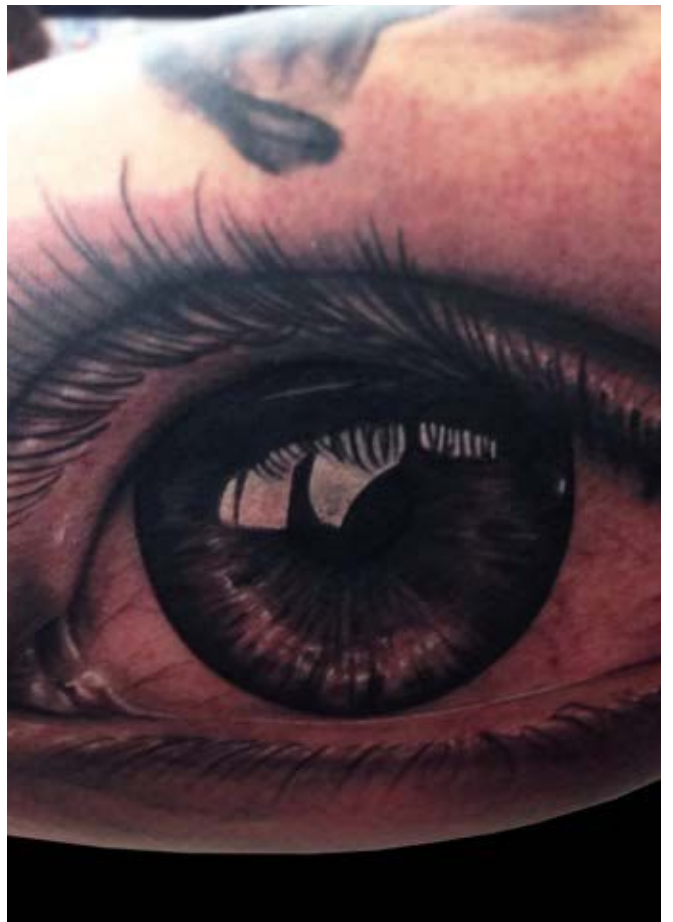
What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing? I always look forward to pieces that I think will challenge me, something a little out of my comfort zone but still making it in my style. I really like doing unique pieces and try my hardest not to follow trends; so anything within those lines is something I wake up and look forward to going to work for.

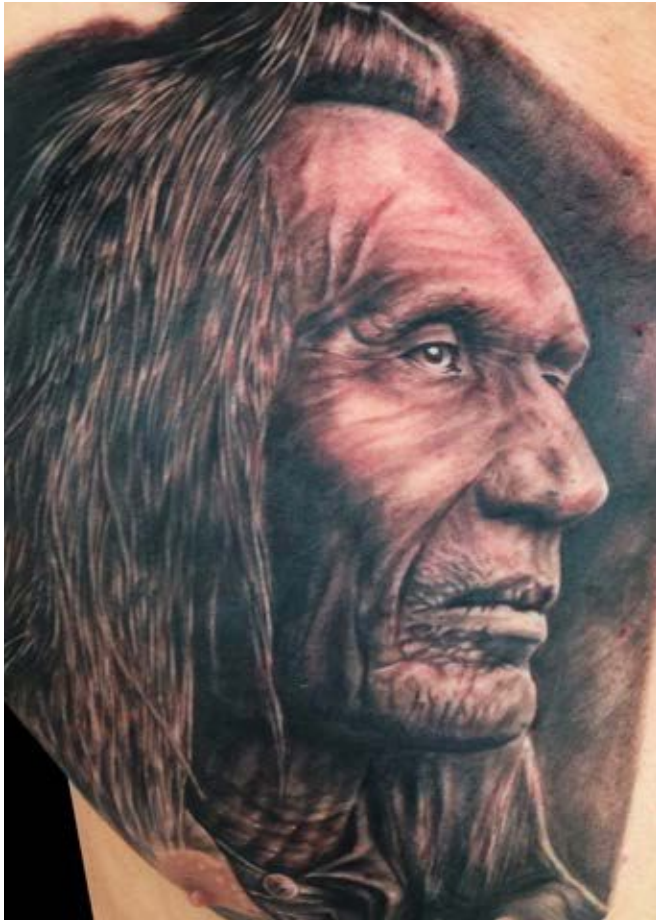
Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give them? I always make sure with any client's first really visible tattoo that it's not going to hinder any job possibilities for them and that they're truly sure that's the way they want to go. It's unfortunate that society treats people differently for being tattooed but it's still something that happens.

Is there a tattoo that you haven't done yet that you are dying to do? I've always wanted to do a full *Transformers* themed back piece. I'd be pretty down to do that on someone in the near future.

How do you see the black and grey scene evolving? Seeing how much it has already evolved in the few short years that I've been around, it's hard to imagine where it'll go in the years to come, I just hope to be around for it. 🇺🇸









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What year did you start tattooing? 2006.

How did you get into tattooing? I don't really remember how my fascination for tattoos started. Like many young people, I saw them in movies and on people I met as a kid, although, there were far less people with visible tattoos when I was a kid. I do remember using markers to draw on all of my friends and decorating them with henna designs. After all, I had been drawing since I was little and I had always loved it. When I realized a way existed of making permanent art works on people and actually getting paid for it I started pursuing that dream!

Do you have any special training? Not really. I was a nurse before I started this job. I have been drawing since I can remember though, and I was stimulated in that by my parents and grandfather.

What conventions have you done recently or are planning to do this year?

I have done a few: the Scottish one, The Great British Tattoo convention in May, and there are a few still to come. I'm very much looking forward to the Tox Cit' Ink in Liege. All art and no strippers! And Evian, which will be the first time I'm there.

How do you describe your style? I would say it's graphic... and sketchy.

What led you to work in a more abstract form of tattooing? I kind of evolved into it; I love the style and it keeps me chal-

lenged. There are so many ways to go graphic. It is a great style to put on skin, to make it more than just a tattoo; it becomes part of the person. I wouldn't say I work entirely in abstract; I like keeping it figurative and sketchy. The sketchy part just comes from what I did on paper. I love sketches even more than finished art; it's raw and has a lot of character. It says so much about the emotion that is felt while the sketch was made, and that translates very nicely into tattooing.

What kind of subject matters do you look for? Anything that's challenging, new and that I can learn from.

What kind of imagery are you looking at with abstract tattooing? Contrast and strong imagery, something that fits the client really well.

A lot of your pieces are a combination of a red and black color scheme. What led you in this direction? I think it's a strong color combination, especially on skin; it just works!

What inspires you as an artist? Everything!

What other media do you work in?

I have a web comic called *Frank'n Me* (www.franknme.com) that I update weekly. It's a funny reflection on life, and so a lot of the times it's about tattoos. Painting is something I like doing as well, but I don't do it very often; I should work on it more!

What tattoo artists do you admire most?

All those who are honest about their job, those that work with a passion for tattooing and with respect for their clients, those are the ones that deserve all the best and get my admiration. I'm not a big fan of egos; you may be the best artist there is, but if you act like a douche, you're a douche.

What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing? I'm looking forward to every one, as they all have their own character. I would like to keep evolving in what I do, continue and grow in the style I love.

Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give them? I guess first you should find out what sort of style you want for your tattoo, and with that style in mind, you can go look for the perfect artist, either at conventions, in magazines or on the Internet. It is so easy to find all artists nowadays; there is no excuse for getting a badly done piece anymore! Don't try to get it cheap and fast, that never works. If you want it good, then save up for it, talk to the artist you want so you can get all the info you need on how they work and take your time about it.

What has been one of the most fun pieces you've tattooed? The ones I did on the funnest clients.

What has been one of your favorite pieces to tattoo? It should be the next one! 🎨









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CECIL

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What year did you start tattooing? I was trying to get my art career off the ground, submitting samples and such to all the major companies. I got a corporate job to pay the bills, as usually happens, and I was offered a higher position in the company which meant more money, and more hours. I cut back on art until I wasn't doing art. I hated life. Art isn't a hobby to me, it is me, it's my whole identity, and man, without it I was miserable. But what do you do? I had bills and had to plan for the future. Well, they made the decision for me. When the economy went to shit they took away all the reasons I worked there. So I started trying to tattoo in 2005, about a year later, in 2006, I started trying out at 252 Tattoo. Eventually they hired me and the rest is history.

Do you have any special training? Nope, which isn't a good thing. If you've seen some of my early stuff, yikes! The problem with ignorance is that you have to walk a road someone else has already travelled. There were a lot of times I messed up and almost gave up. Keep in mind however that I had been doing art since I was twelve and studying it for just as long, so to me I just approached it as a new medium.

Why did you choose to open your studio in Portland, Oregon? We, my fiancé Ashley and I, started coming here a year before we moved. She was getting a back piece done by Ryan Mason at Scapegoat Tattoo and every time we came we liked it more than the last.

Your studio has a steampunk vibe, what drew you to this? I love alternate histories and for as long as I can remember I have been fascinated by steampunk stories. As a kid, if I wasn't drawing or reading comics I would usually be reading a book by Lovecraft, Wells, or Verne, stories that were steampunk before I knew that's what it was called. Now, as an adult, my artwork and graphic novels are steampunk influenced most of the time.

What conventions do you have planned for 2015? None, I prefer not to do them nowadays. The one or two I do are always overseas and usually thrown by friends of mine. I prefer to concentrate on guest spots; they are more relaxed, fun and have none of the drama and egos that you have to deal with at shows.

What led you to work in realism? I was told I couldn't do it. All I wanted to do when I started tattooing was New School. I had been an illustrator for a while and worked on some indie books so New School seemed to be the closest thing to my comic illustration. My old boss and

mentor, Rodney Rose, and I had become friends. We were talking downstairs in his part of the shop about how long he had been tattooing and how he was a little burnt out on it. He said something along the lines of, 'I wish someone else in the shop could do portraits so I could send some of my clients that way.' I said, 'well, why don't you teach me and I'll do the ones you don't want to?' He laughed and said, 'No you're not good enough to do that, I think with portraits you either have it or you don't and you don't.' Now he wasn't being mean or anything, that's just how we talk. But still I thought man screw that I can learn to do anything. So I bought the Josh Carlton DVD and book, watched the DVD probably 40 times, read the book and took notes on both. I made tests, even had the DVD on during my first portrait to make sure I was on track. I knew it was either decent or I was in trouble because the best tattooist at the shop kept coming in the room, then eventually he came with my boss with him and they never did that. At the end, Rodney called me downstairs and asked what I thought about the piece. I said something like I was ok with it and felt like portraits are something I could do. He said, 'You should be. That's the best tattoo you've done here.' I was so fixated on trying, poorly I might add, to do New School that I never tried any other style. In some ways I feel I wasted a lot of time, but it is what it is.

How would you describe the difference between hyperrealism and realism?

Maybe hyperrealism drinks a lot of Red-bull.

What tattoos do you look forward to doing?

I guess funny faces or very detailed faces are the most enjoyable. I like to exaggerate my pieces, both in features and colors. I try to do them how I see them in my head, not necessarily what's on the paper. Sometimes that means deeper wrinkles or fatter lips, maybe skinnier lips with sharper edges, smaller eyes, whatever, I just do what my head says using the photo as a template to keep the likeness intact.

What has been one of your favorite places to tattoo? Scotland, without a doubt. My best friends live there. I love everything about it. I feel more at home in Scotland than any place on earth.

What other media do you work in outside of tattooing? I've been illustrating much longer than tattooing. I walked away from it when I started tattooing but got very lucky and worked on a guy who worked for Marvel. He convinced me to start again and I got to work on some books there. I do a ton of freelance illustration and am currently working on two books now as well

as other paintings and commissions. A lot of hush hush stuff for late 2015/2016.

Where do you find inspiration?

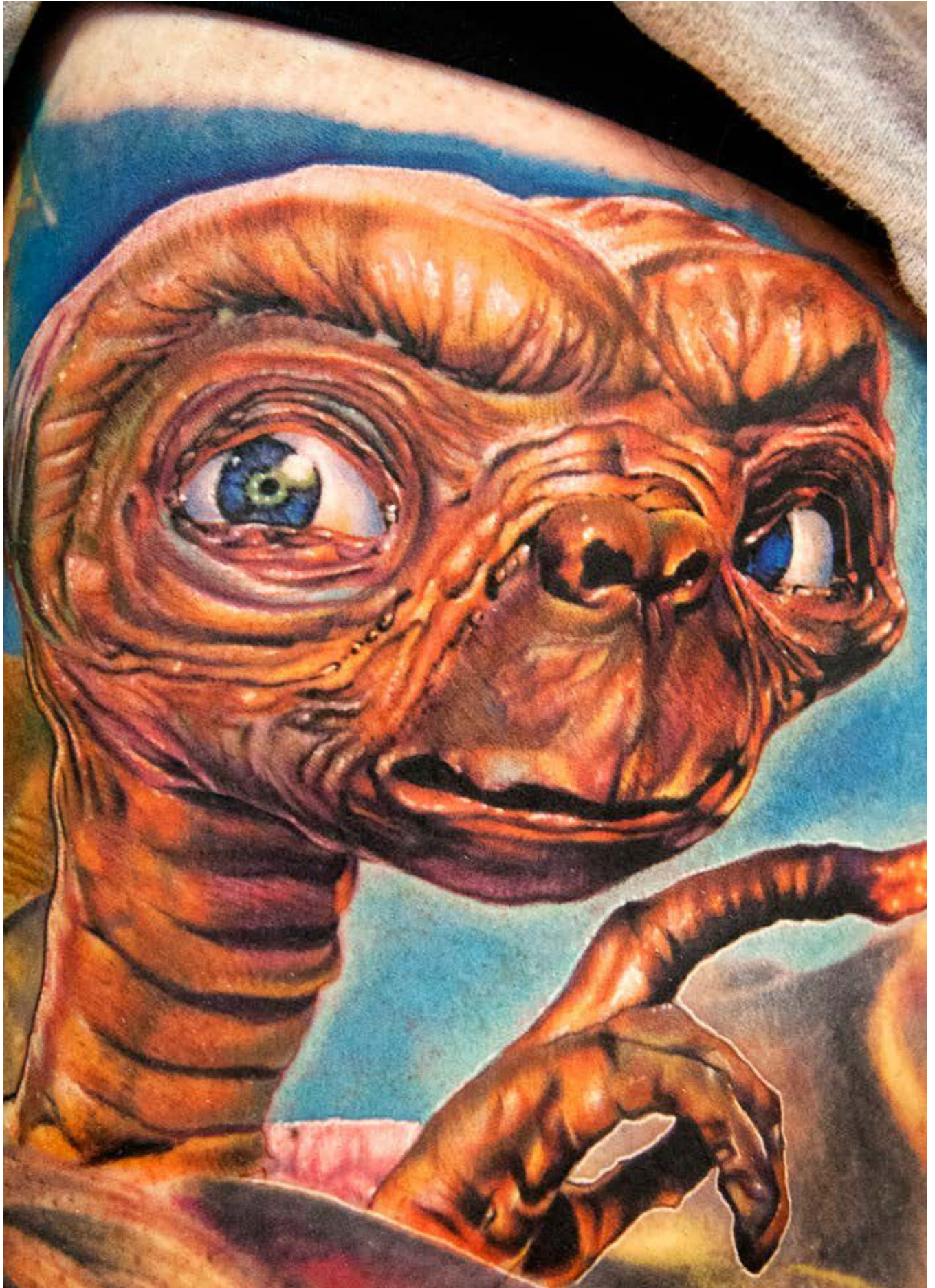
In everything. I know how cliché that sounds, but it's true, especially since I do realism for the majority of my artwork. You need a mental library; you can only find that by observing. It took me years to learn that. I used to do a study of a skull because people would say you need to do a study of a skull. But I never observed what I was doing. The likeness would be fine and I'd say that was a job well done, but I would learn nothing other than how to duplicate what I was seeing. Then I learned why you do a study of a skull, it's not to duplicate it and pat yourself on the back or to see if you can do it faster than last time. It's to observe the skull, memorize the shapes, "feel" the volume and forms, etc. Now when I look at something I dissect it, figure out how it ticks, slowly build that library so that when I'm faced with needing to fill in the gaps I have that knowledge to do it as best I can. In learning this I realized how far off I am as an artist and how much more I have to learn before I can get good at it.

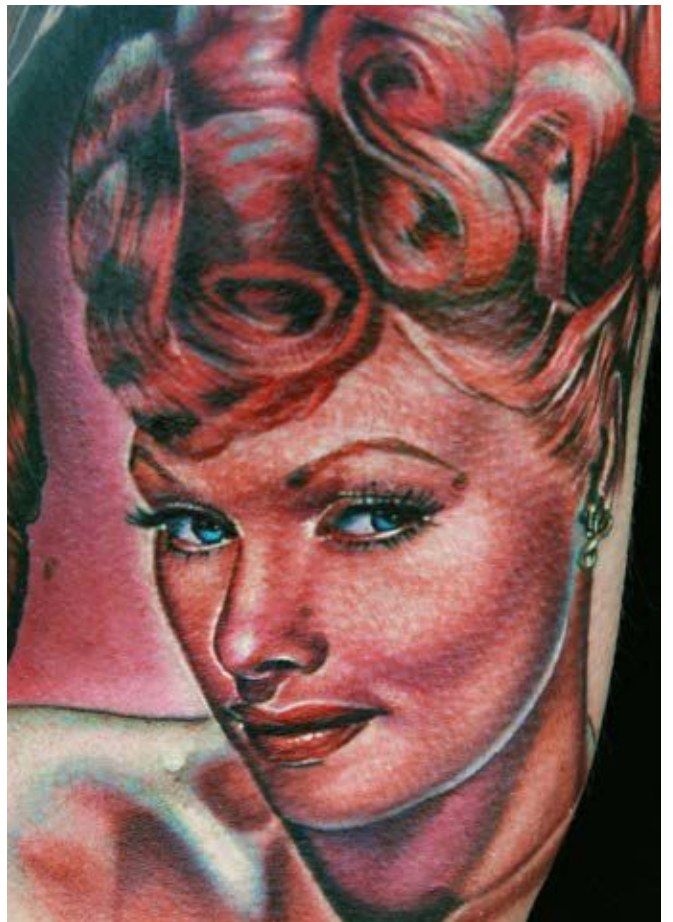
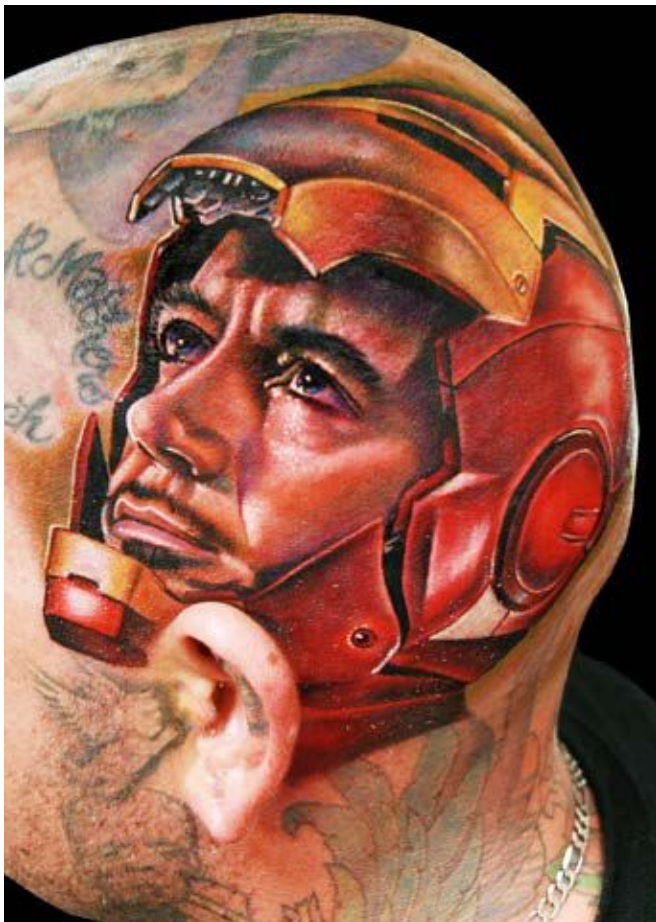
What advice would you give to aspiring tattooists? One thing I notice when critiquing people is that there just isn't enough mileage, not a large enough body of work for a good assessment of the person's strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, if you haven't done enough work, you just haven't done enough work. But I'll ask them to show me their sketch tablets and usually they won't have one or they have one with six pictures in it. I strive to fill one page a day, everyday. I don't always do it, of course, but more often than not I do. So I guess do as much art as you can and take as much influence from as many different sources as you can.

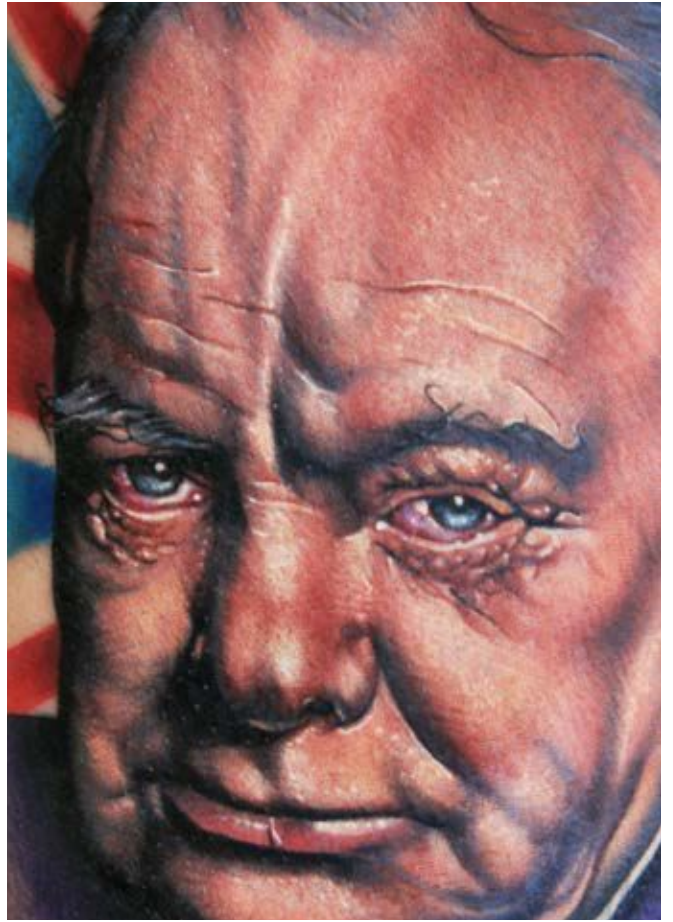
Is there anyone you'd like to tattoo? Anyone who brings me sugar free Redbull, or anyone who wants to hang out, watch movies, shoot the shit and get a decent tattoo from a comic book nerd.

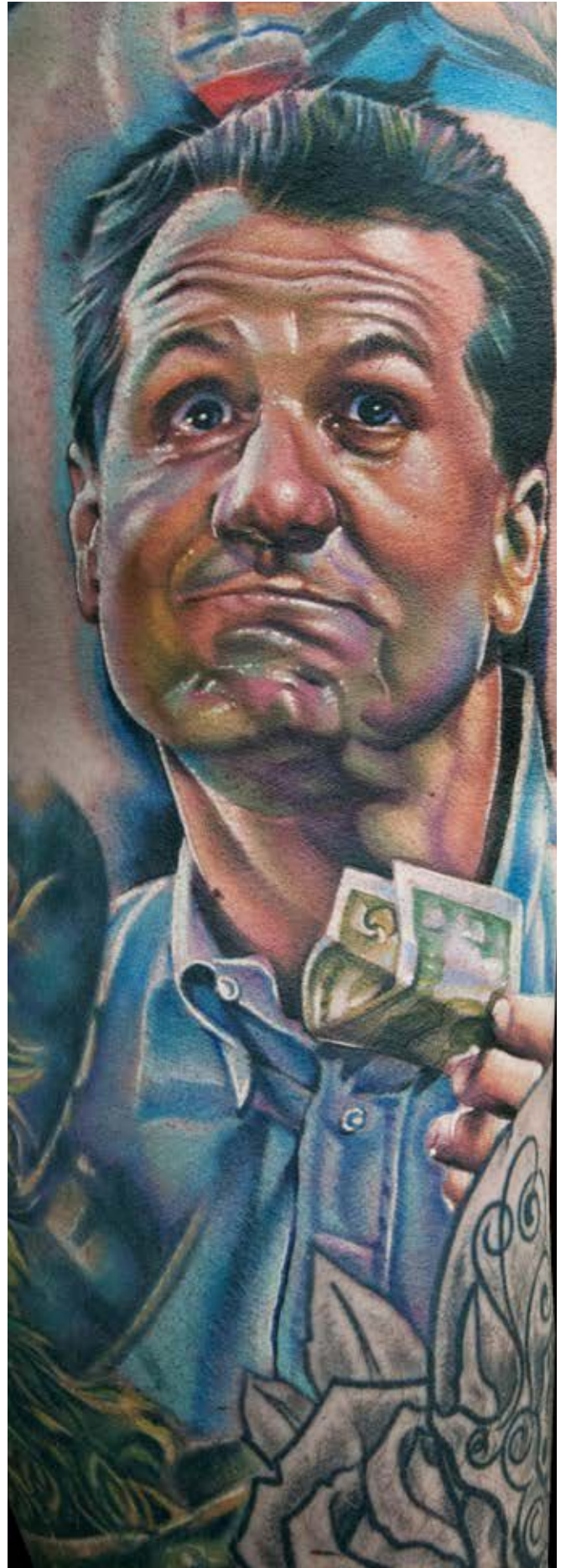
If you could do any tattoo you want, what would it be? Hellboy, I would do Hellboy everyday. Seriously though, I'm not sure how to answer that. I already do every tattoo I want to do. I'm not here to pick a person's piece. I'm here to take the piece they want and do what I do in the hopes that they like it.

About how long would a customer have to wait to get an appointment with you? I book out six to eight months in advance. And return clients get priority so usually not much longer than that.■











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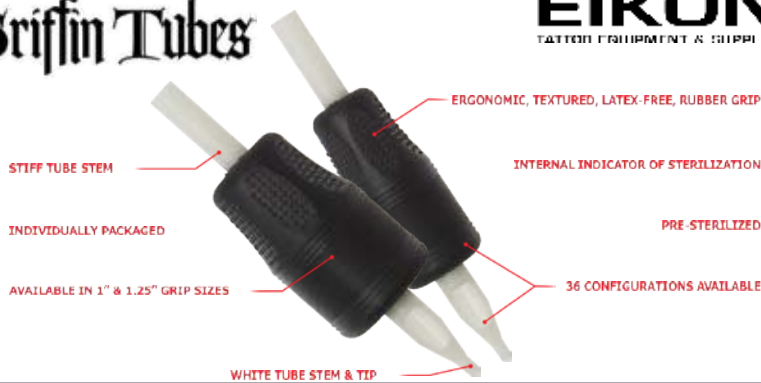
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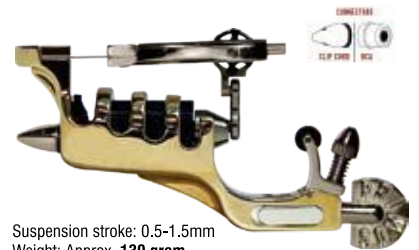


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What year did you start tattooing? 2002.

How did you get into tattooing?

My friends forced me to buy my first pieces of tattoo equipment. I had no tattoos at this time and I was not a fan of tattooing, but my friends knew that I was very talented in drawing and they thought it was a good idea to make me a tattoo artist. So I started my first tattoo, a dream catcher in black and grey on the upper arm of one of these friends. It took six hours to finish and it was hard to fill the skin with ink. I was not able to make straight lines or nice shades; it was horrible! But my friends were impressed. Nobody could imagine that this tattoo would look terrible in some years and so they forced me to go on.

What is the tattoo scene like in Austria?

The tattoo scene in Austria is very well organized. We have very strict guidelines. This is the reason why tattooing is very popular in Austria. There aren't really any bad artists and so you don't have to be afraid of getting infections and so on. I think Austria is one of the most tattooed countries.

What led you to work in realism? I started tattooing small black tribal tattoos since it was modern 12 years ago, followed by tramp stamps and thousands of stars. It was great; I earned good money and I became a local star. Then I got my first real big article in a very famous Ger-

man magazine. I was very proud. But when I bought the magazine and had a look, I was disappointed. What I saw were perfect lines and perfect shades, really solid, good tattoos, but nothing special. Then, when I turned the page, I saw realism tattoos done by Randy Engelhard and Nikko Hurtado. I was shocked by their fantastic styles and quality. So I visited a convention where Randy was tattooing. I watched every move of his hands and suddenly he asked me what he could do for me. I asked him how it was possible to create something like this. He asked me how long I thought he would be working on a tattoo like this. I said three to four hours maybe. Randy was laughing and said, "For this tattoo I will need about nine to ten hours." This was the moment when I realized why I was not able to do this quality. I decided to stop my main job as a graphic designer. I resigned and wrote on Facebook and my homepage that I had stopped tattooing small stuff.

Do you approach portraits in the same way you approach other subjects?

Yes, that's the reason why my portraits look a little bit like fantasy. One difference is that I never make portraits freehand. That's too dangerous for me. One millimeter and you get a different person. When I do a portrait I have much more respect and I am a little bit more concentrated.

What sets you apart from other artists?

I know there are thousands of good tattoo artists in this world, but only hundreds with outstanding talent. I think I can be one of them; I am working very hard for this goal. I think there are only a few tattoo artists who work 20 hours per day. In Austria and Germany I am known as the only tattoo artist who starts working at 7am. This is one thing that makes me different from other artists.

What other media do you work in?

My clothes I design by myself. I combine traditional leather pants with tattoo designs and sometimes I draw some pictures on my Wacom tablet. I don't like to draw on real paper. For me, that is boring. As a modern graphic designer I like to use modern tools like computers, Apple of course!

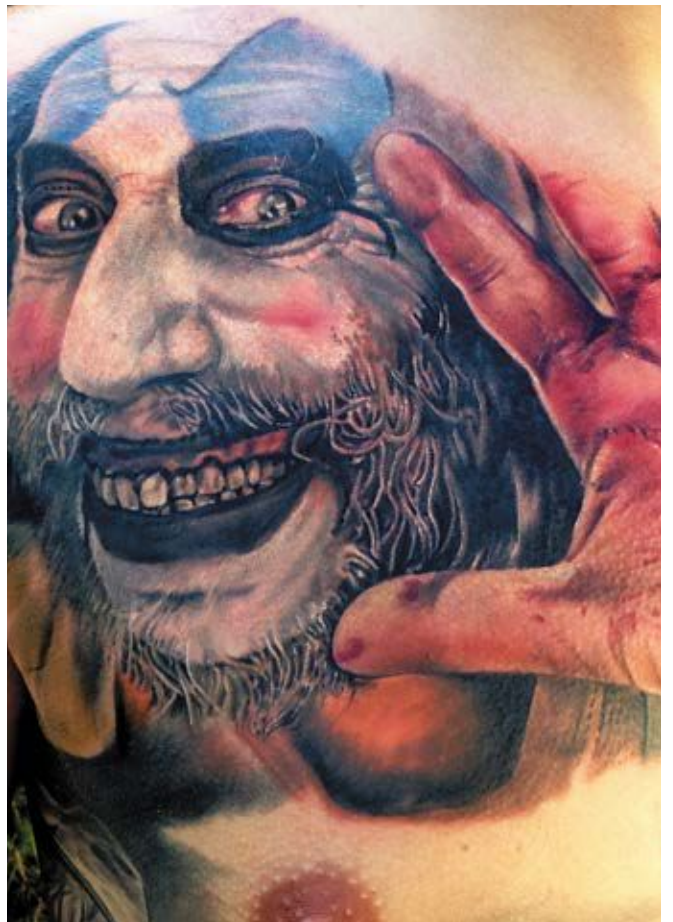
What tattoo artists do you admire most?

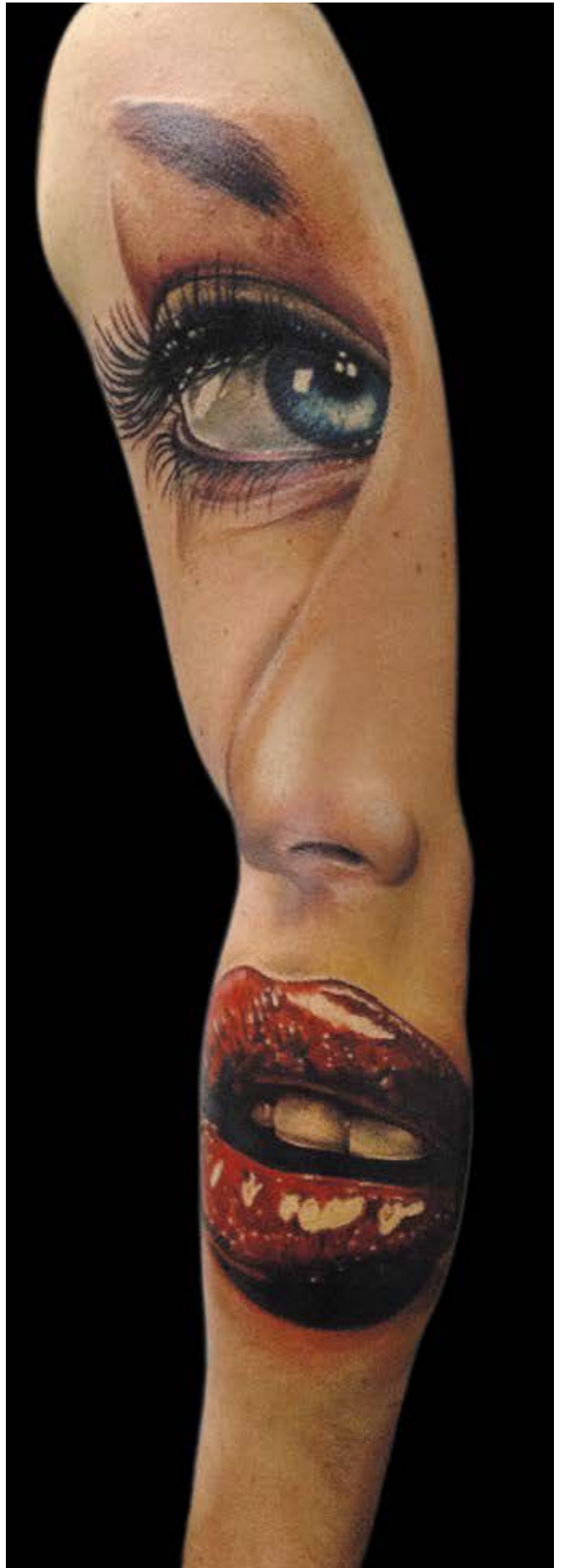
For me there is one god: Dmitry Samohin. Then there are some like Randy Engelhard, Nikko Hurtado, and Mike DeVries who started to impress me years ago. There are also amazing artists of today who impress me like Rich Pineda, Paul Acker, and so on.

What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing?

I love the realism style; I especially like to do freehand realism. I think this is the most difficult thing I can do and that's very exciting! 🎨









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What year did you start tattooing? 1999

How did you get into tattooing? My mum is sort of a semi-professional painter. I was watching her create different acrylic landscapes and drawing people's portraits all the time. It was very fascinating. Also, I'm into heavy metal music, so combining drawing and heavy music could lead only into tattooing.

Do you have any special training? Not really. I've been surrounded by art since I was little because of my mother. I've been drawing since I can remember. The last couple of years I spent a lot of time cooperating with the amazing artist Tofi. He really showed me the way to improve my artistic skills and I'm still working on it every day.

You have a mix of styles, including working with Lego characters. How did that come about? I specialize in realism mainly and, yes, I'm the inventor of Legolism, where I'm trying to combine the Lego brick world with realism. I saw a picture of the Lego Stormtrooper on one of the Lego sets where the main mini figure was in a nice perspective with a blurred background. I thought it would make a very cool tattoo. Then going further down this path, I was thinking of how cool it would be to do a sleeve of Lego pirates fighting realistic pirates with ships and islands blurred in the background.

What has been your favorite Lego character to tattoo? It's hard to say which one is my favorite. I like the rugby one because it was my first. I like the first Superman I did and the Iron Man one because they were the most popular for a long time and took Legolism out there. But one of my favorites is the "Electrician," which I did at the International Brussels Convention of 2014. It's different and shows the way I want to go with Legolism next.

Apart from tattooing Lego characters, do you like to work with Legos when you're not tattooing? Of course! It's great fun and dead handy. I have two kids who like to play with Legos as well. [Laughs] It's a perfect opportunity to buy new sets every now and again to play with and to collect more reference figures and blocks.

How would you describe your style overall? It's based on realism. Sometimes it looks painterly; sometimes it looks like a pure realistic image. I like to work this way and it's the genre I feel the most comfortable with. Of course, I can't forget about Legolism, which is based on the styles I mentioned above and now is living it's own life.

You work mainly in color. When do you find yourself working in black and grey? I do prefer color work; I think it gives me more opportunities and options. You can

make tattoos look more interesting and it lasts longer. Since Piotr Cwiek joined the team at Southmead Tattoo Studio I have given all my black and grey stuff to him. He specializes in this sort of style, has a passion for it and is giving more to it than I do. It works perfectly for everybody, for our customers and the studio.

Do you take your own photo references? I'm trying as much as I can to make sure I have reference pictures like nobody else. There are so many of the same pictures used by different artists taken from Google, Deviant, etc. My goal is to give my customers as original a piece as possible.

What sets you apart from other artists? I think Legolism is what makes me recognized in the industry. Everybody knows it's mine when they see a piece done at conventions or on social media. I'm very happy about it; I have found my niche and it works perfectly.

What tattoo artists do you admire most? There are so many to mention, but I have to say Tofi has been my biggest influence through my whole career so far. Also, I have to mention Nikko Hurtado and Den Yakovlev for their perfect portraits, Pancho for his amazing contrast work, Dmitriy Samohin in general, and, of course, Kosa for his creativity and speed. ■









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How did you get into tattooing? Believe it or not, my dad took me to a tattoo party in a garage when I was 14. That's where I got my first tattoo, and a taste of a culture I had no idea existed. After getting my first tattoo, a friend offered me a machine for \$20, which I took without thinking twice. I had a rough start. A lot of what I learned for the first couple of years was through magazines.

What led you to open Mayday! Tattoo Co.? I guess my whole career has been leading up to this. It has been a long-term goal of mine to open my own studio. Now that I've achieved that goal, I continue to set bigger goals. This is just a small stepping-stone in my journey.

Do you have any special training? No, I am self-taught all around, but I do learn from everyone I work with. Originally, a lot of what I learned I found in magazines. Before any tattoo shows existed you had to rifle through those magazines and advertisements to find the secrets, anything giving information on the 'correct' way to do things. Tattoo artists wouldn't show you any tips or tricks back then, that's just how it was. If I wanted to learn anything, I had to find it in a magazine.

How do you describe your style? If I had to label my style, I guess I would call it painterly realistic. I like

experimenting—sometimes using bold lines, sometimes I like soft pastel images, sometimes I like to do super intricate designs and sometimes I like to keep it really minimalistic. It depends on the weather.

What led you to work in realism? What led me to work in realism was seeing Bob Tyrrell's and Tom Renshaw's work in tattoo magazines some ten odd years ago. That stuff was amazing to me because I was so used to only seeing cherry creek on the walls. So that was a nice change, something fresh.

What subject matters do you prefer to work with? I prefer subject matters that are large, dramatic and make a statement. A lot of portraits—celebrities, superheroes, rock stars, moms and dads.

Do you take your own photo references? On occasion, I sometimes take my own photo references. Depending on what it is, I like to as much as possible.

Apart from tattooing you also work on custom skate decks. What led you to that medium? I enjoy skateboarding, and I had seen painted skateboards in the past. I was intrigued, so I decided to try it myself. I started with girls because they look good; you can put them on anything. From

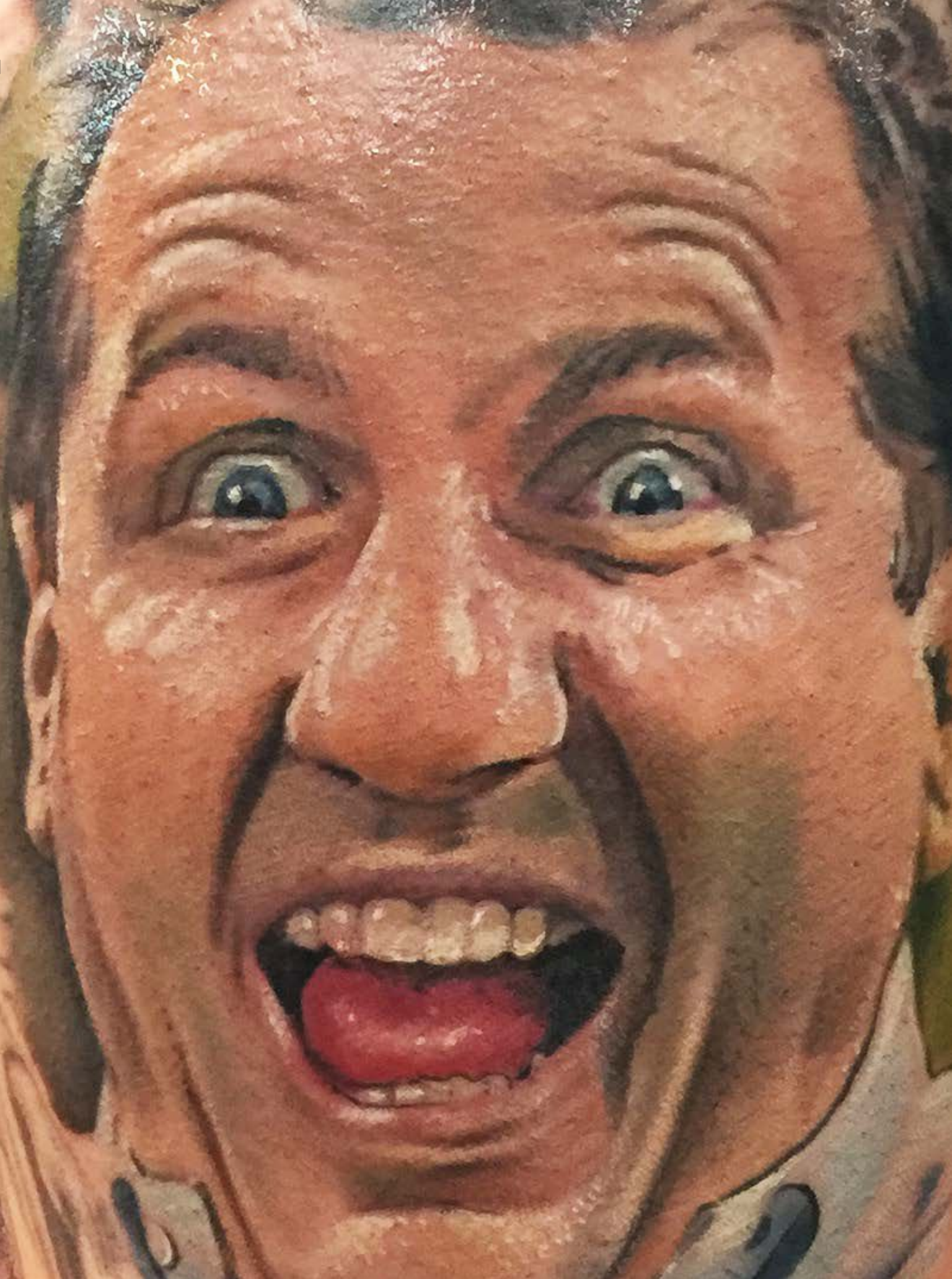
there, I started doing celebrities and it seemed to catch on, so I stuck with that. I like to paint more recognizable characters and nostalgic images; people seem to relate more with them.

How do you see the skate and tattoo scenes going together? Skateboarding and tattooing go hand-in-hand. Growing up, being tattooed and skateboarding were two things that showed you lived free and didn't care what people thought. Art on the bottom of skateboards had an influence on certain crowds of '90s tattooers, which showed in their flash.

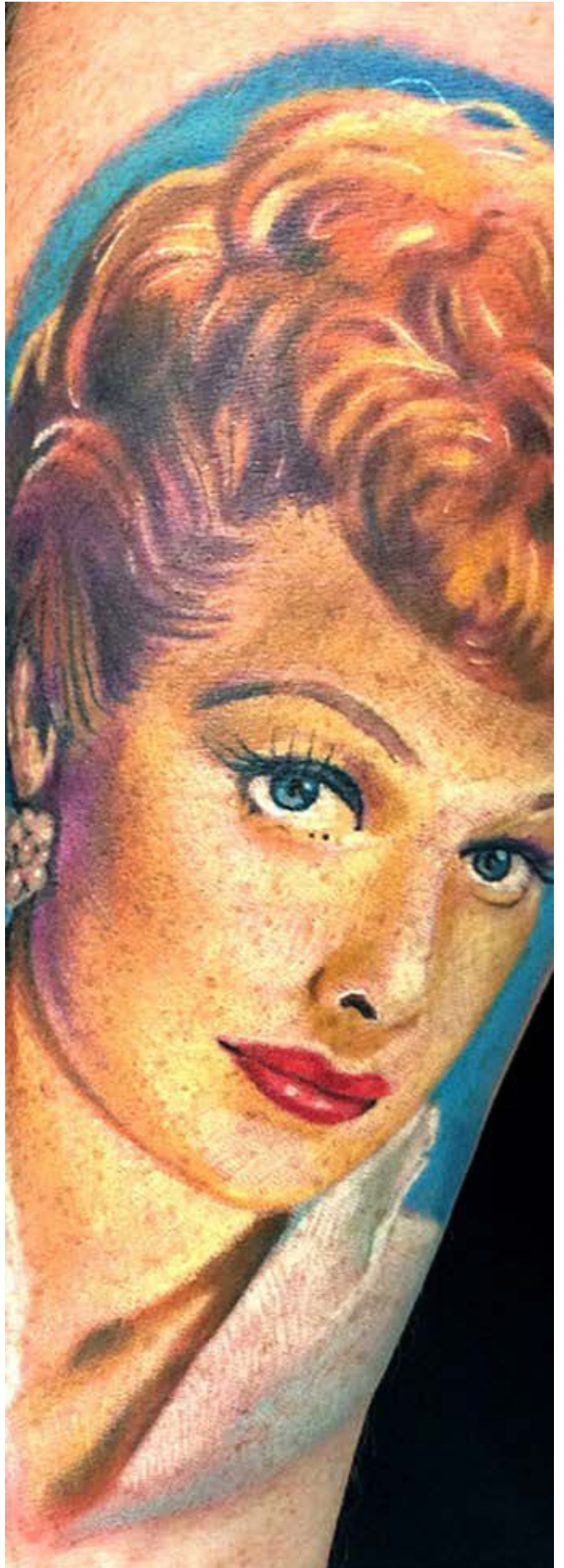
What tattoo artists do you admire most? I've always looked up to Nikko Hurtado and Roman Abrego as far as realism artists go. Bob Tyrrell was a heavy influence, especially in the beginning of my career. Tom Renshaw, Kyle Cotterman, and Timmy B, just to name a few.

What kinds of tattoos do you look forward to doing? The kinds of tattoos I look forward to doing are anything color realism, especially famous portraits. I enjoy doing movie characters from the '80s, stuff I grew up with. Anything fun; creative tattoos.

Is there a tattoo that you haven't done yet that you are dying to do? A full *Breaking Bad* sleeve would be Gucci. 🇺🇸

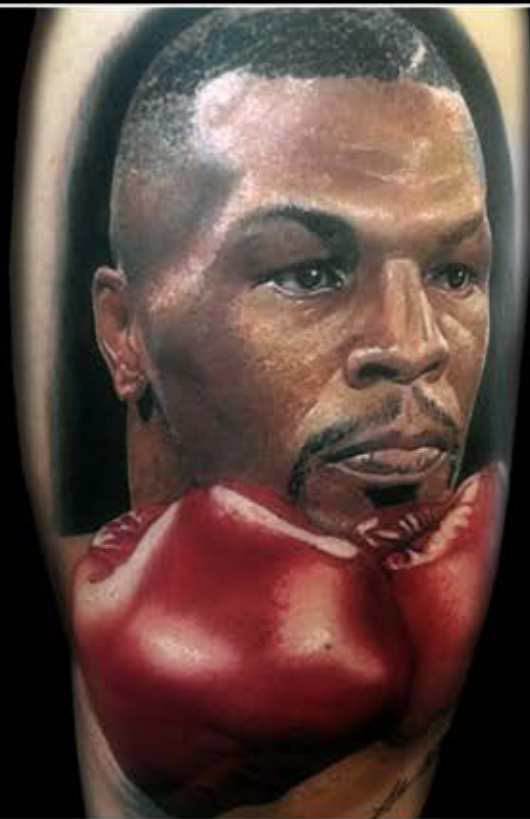








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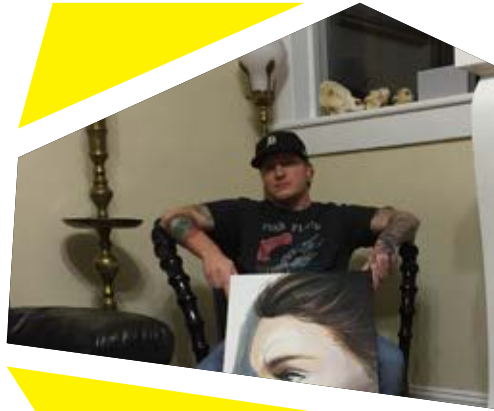
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What year did you start tattooing? I started my apprenticeship in January of 2008, and luckily my mentor allowed me to do a tattoo every couple weeks or so on my buddies right from the start. I began tattooing full-time on April 20, 2009.

Your work is very well rounded. You do great color, black and grey, realism, etc. Is there a preferred style you like to do? Right now I'm mostly into black and grey realism. I don't want to get burnt out on it, so I still try to mix in other things. I love doing girly "water-color" type tattoos and large illustrative pieces, but black and grey realism will always be my favorite.

What type of tattoos were you doing back when you started? Shitty tattoos. [Laughs] I was terrible for my first year or two. I could shade well, but I really struggled with line work. I also used to be really nervous and would get shaky hands. No idea why, adrenaline just does that to me. Luckily, one day it just stopped and I haven't had a problem since.

You are good with portraits and realism. But lately there's been more custom work coming from you. Is that the direction you are moving in? Yeah, I really love large, illustrative custom pieces. I've been doing a lot more lately. It's very rewarding to do a piece entirely out of your own head. And nobody can tell you it's wrong. [Laughs] I still want my main focus to be realism so I don't take on a ton of custom work, but it is nice to mix things up.

Do feel you've gotten where you wanted in your tattoo work or is there more you'd like to learn and apply? Oh man, from day one I've always said when I stop learning new things, I'll quit tattooing. That maybe in five years, it may be 20, but if I'm not learning and trying new things it just wouldn't be fun. Right now, I absolutely love what those Eastern European and Russian guys and gals are doing—artists like Domantas Parvainis, Dmitriy Samohin, etc. It's such a high-contrast, painterly style that just does it for me. Super smooth still looks great, but I've seen so much of it over the last 10 years.

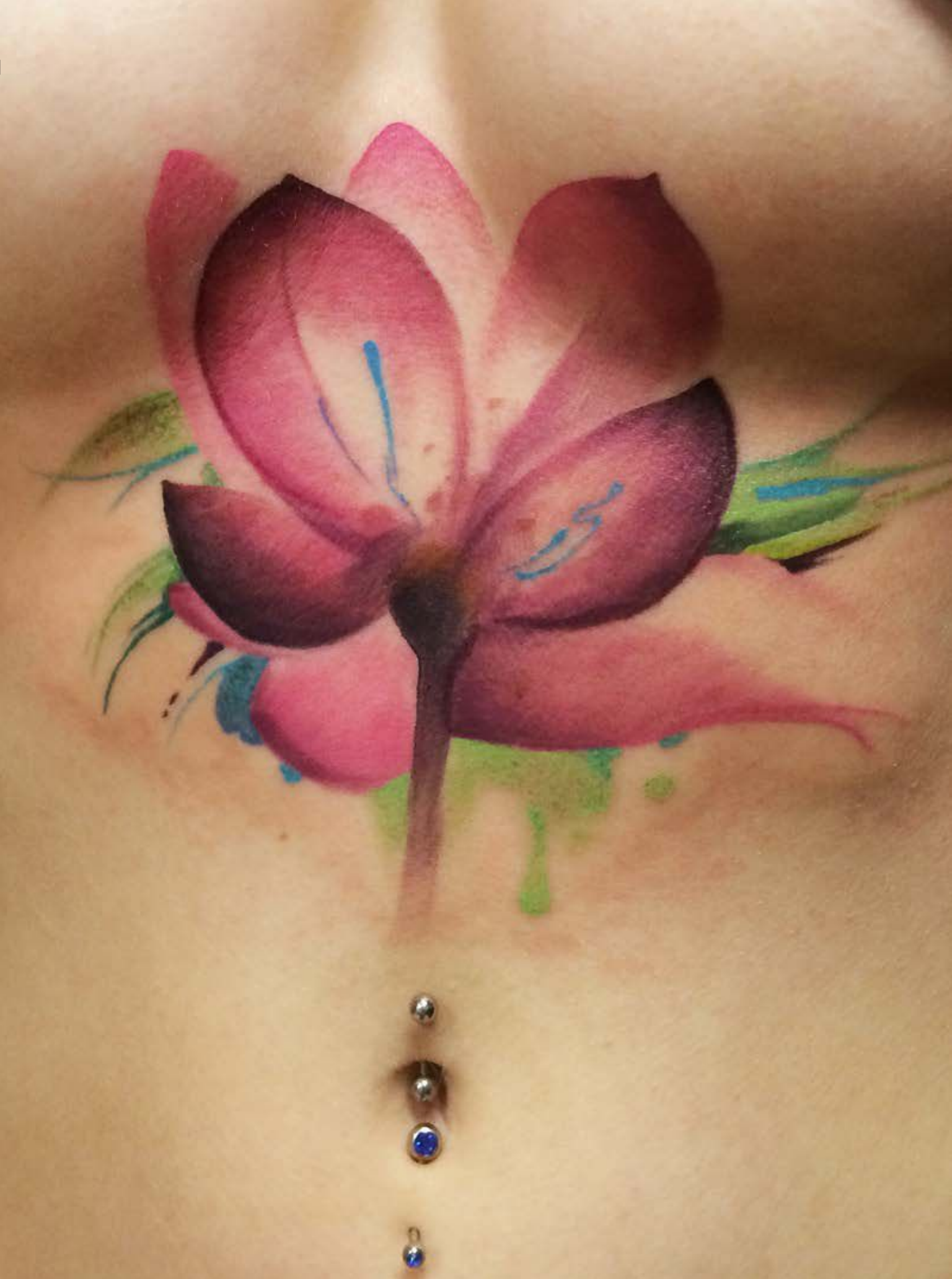
Who inspired you back when you started tattooing? I started tattooing because of the black and grey master, Bob Tyrrell. I had tattoos but used to live in the sticks in Michigan, and tattoos were horrible there. It never occurred to me that they could truly be that artful until I flipped past an episode of *LA Ink* in 2007. Bob was guest spotting and I watched him do a portrait of Vincent Price. I immediately knew that I had to learn how to do that. He will always be a huge inspiration to me, and a great role model for the industry. Today, I'm really inspired by the European guys, as well as the amazing illustrative guys over here like Jeff Gogue and Steve Moore. I really love that mix of realism with illustration. It's very easy to read and it'll still look amazing in 20 years. It's crazy how talented and hard working those guys are.

Are there any conventions that you regularly attend? I'm not a big traveler.

I usually do conventions around North Carolina, but I don't think I'm going to do many next year. If I do, it will just be as a spectator. I love meeting and hanging out with other artists and collectors, but the noisy convention scene just isn't a good atmosphere for me. I wish I could work in chaos but the noise stresses me out. I have a nice, quiet studio here in Greensboro where my clients watch TV or listen to music, but I'm in my own room so there aren't 15 people yelling around me. I'd love to go out west and tattoo one of these years though.

Do you practice any other art media? I love to draw and oil paint. Painting is a great way to practice color theory because if you mess up nobody cares. [Laughs] It's a great way to zone out and be creative. I've also started messing with wood burning, which is a lot more fun than I would have guessed.

Are there any projects that you are involved with these days? I'm currently about to open a huge new studio here in town, and hopefully by the time this is printed I will have already made that public. [Laughs] I really want to stand apart from the usual street shop. There's nothing wrong with those—that's where I got started and wouldn't have gotten where I'm at without them—but tattooing doesn't have to be a square room with artists piled on top of each other. Nowadays, more people are getting larger pieces and spending long periods of time there and I think comfort is very important. ■











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JAMES

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What year did you start tattooing?

I started tattooing while I was in art school in Chicago in 1994. I never served an apprenticeship. When I was getting my second tattoo, by a friend of mine from art school, I got the idea that I should try tattooing. If my friend could do it, why couldn't I? A few months later I ordered some equipment from a catalog with my student loan money. Best decision I ever made. Even though it was bad equipment, it started me on my path to where I am today.

When tattooing a cover up, what do you look for in the existing work that clicks to make you come up with the ideal perfect fit? When I was first starting out, I looked at a lot of Guy Aitchison's tattoos. He was tattooing in Chicago, too, and I got to look at many tattoos that he had done in person. The thing that I always was impressed by was how the tattoos worked in harmony with the other tattoos around them and fit naturally with the form of the body. I made a conscious effort to try to make my work integrate as well as I thought his did. I always wanted the tattoos that I do to enhance the other ones around it, not overshadow them. I want the client's collection as a whole to benefit.

You can definitely do both color and black and grey, but how do you feel about working with a color tattoo versus the values needed to create all the details, depth, and textures in black and grey? The core of a design is its value range. Both need convincing lighting and a full range of light and dark value. I

try to imagine how the value will look in a color piece if it were black and white. When I design a tattoo, I almost always draw a fully shaded version, but rarely do a color study. The value and lighting in the piece is what makes the piece look convincing. The color can be done a lot of different ways, but the shadows need to be convincing.

Do you prefer to start your custom work as a sketch, freehand or both? It depends on my experience with the style of the piece. I can freehand a lot of things but there's a lot of pressure. I don't want to have to keep starting over to try different compositions when I am drawing directly on the client. There is more freedom to experiment on paper because you don't have the pressure of the client waiting. I can start fifty times on paper if I'm not satisfied.

So if you have the freedom to do a certain tattoo, what would it be? I like doing so many things. I have always liked drawing and tattooing skulls. I think it comes more from my love for science and anatomy than it does from being a popular tattoo subject. Also, the skull has been a powerful symbol in art for thousands of years. I like lots of styles. I like portraits and art reproductions because they really push my skills to be as good as they can be.

Do feel you've gotten where you wanted in your tattoo work or is there more you'd like to learn and apply in your work? I think that there will always be ways to improve. I am constantly taking

classes or watching videos or reading books about art, painting or tattooing techniques. I want to get to the point where I can represent anything that I can do in a medium outside of tattooing as a tattoo. I want to have the skill to make whatever I can visualize happen as a tattoo. I'm not quite there yet.

Where do you usually find inspiration? Inspiration is tough. With tattoos, I like to see how the clients' rough ideas spark my imagination. It's for them, so I like them to bring a starting point. I also look at a lot of art and tattoos, and that helps keep the creative juices flowing.

What or who inspires you today? Instagram has opened up a whole new world of art to me. There are so many amazing artists out there. I find new ones every day that are unbelievable. Every day. Boris in Vienna, Paul Acker, Steve Butcher, Nick Baxter... There are so many that I want to absorb their knowledge and be able to do what they can do. I want to get tattooed by those guys.

Are there any upcoming projects that you are involved with these days? Well, I got married this past June to the lovely Ashley Kern! She helps me make things happen. Turns dreams into reality. And my twin brother, Tim, and I will be working in the same shop again soon! At least until he opens his own again. He is moving out to Portland. I am very excited. I am trying to get serious about painting. I am going to figure it out. And hopefully this coming year there will be books and a DVD in the works, as well. ■









FUSION

A detailed illustration of a woman with long brown hair, looking upwards and to the left. She has several tattoos: a small blue tattoo on her cheek, a large blue anchor tattoo on her upper arm, and a blue dragon tattoo on her shoulder. A large pink flower is tucked into her hair. In the bottom left corner, there are tattooing supplies including a blue bottle of ink, a red bottle, and a tattoo machine. The background is a dark brown with intricate gold and silver floral patterns. The word 'FUSION' is written in a large, stylized, blue, 3D font in the top left corner.

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STEFANO'S TATTOO STUDIO

C.C. La Rotonda II Tda. #1064,
La Molina. (Costado USIL)
Lima, Peru

Shop Artists: Stefano Alcantara (owner), Luis "El Nene" Tirado, Dirseu "Ed" Davila, Gian Villena, Tania Maia and Marco Morriberon (piercer)

What sets Stefano's Tattoo Studio apart from the average tattoo shop?

Stefano Alcantara: I believe this studio is unique in South America because I am always trying to bring the best from what I was able to learn from my trips to the U.S. Since I opened in 1997, I approach tattooing as an art form, not as a business. With this mentality, my shop is a place I am proud of and my artists can feel comfortable to create good art! Because we are so passionate and dedicated to this art form, our clients feel like part of the process and their skin is the canvas; so they help make us who we are as artists.

What inspired you to open your own studio?

Alcantara: The decision was simple. When I started Stefano's Tattoo Studio, it was the only shop open in the whole country. I opened in La Molina, Lima, the town where I grew up. The original shop is still at the same plaza where it was established. Almost a year ago I opened Stefano's Tattoo Private Studio in a more residential space a couple miles away. The concept for the private studio is totally different. On the first floor we have two waiting areas, one with a movie theater with a full bar inside and the other is an outdoor waiting lounge. We sell merchandise like H2Ocean aftercare and Fk Irons tattoo machines, including my Signature Series. The tattoo areas are on the first floor, connected to a permanent exhibition space dedicated to the work of my great grand-

father Jose Alcantara La Torre. The second floor has extra bedrooms for guest artists that travel from all around the world.

What qualities should an artist have to be a part of Stefano's Tattoo Studio?

Alcantara: Well besides being one of the best in the country in their own style (no pressure) [Laughs], they should get along with the rest of the staff and be just good people. Drug free and drama free is totally required.

What styles of tattooing can be found at Stefano's Tattoo Studio?

Alcantara: We love to support individuality at the shop, so we have people who specialize in traditional Japanese, realism in color and black and grey, New School, fine line, dot work and tribal.

The artists of this tattoo studio also dabble in fine art outside of the tattoo medium. What have been some of the top art events or upcoming events you guys have had?

Alcantara: Yes, they do. We are doing live drawing sessions at night and host seminars that are open to other artists and tattoo artists from other tattoo shops in Lima. The entire shop was invited to show their art in a gallery called Galeria del Barrio for the show *Harto Tattoo*. It was a great event and we were really happy and honored to be showing in a well-known gallery in Lima.

What is it like having a tattoo studio in Lima, Peru? What makes that location special?

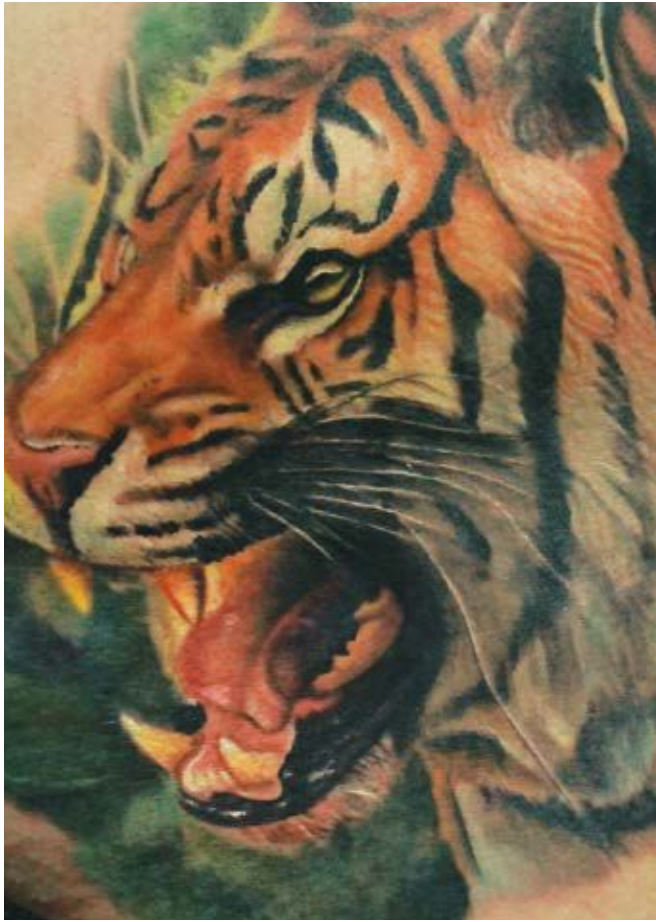
Alcantara: When I was living in Peru, my studio was my second home. Now that I am in the States, I am happy to keep a studio in my name open and running, because I am still involved in how the shop is run and continue to upgrade and keep my brand moving in the right direction. Now, it's a place where I can bring back all the knowledge I acquired during all my years away. It's a place to host my tattoo artist friends, to have a good time and to feel like home outside of home. Lima is special because now Peru is in the center of South America and easy to travel to. Also, we are a 45-minute flight to Cusco where you can visit one of the wonders of the world: Machu Picchu. Also, if you are a foodie, this year Peru won the title of the Gastronomic Capital of the World!

Apart from being a tattoo studio, there is also body piercing offered at Stefano's Tattoo Studio. What made you want to incorporate body piercing into the studio?

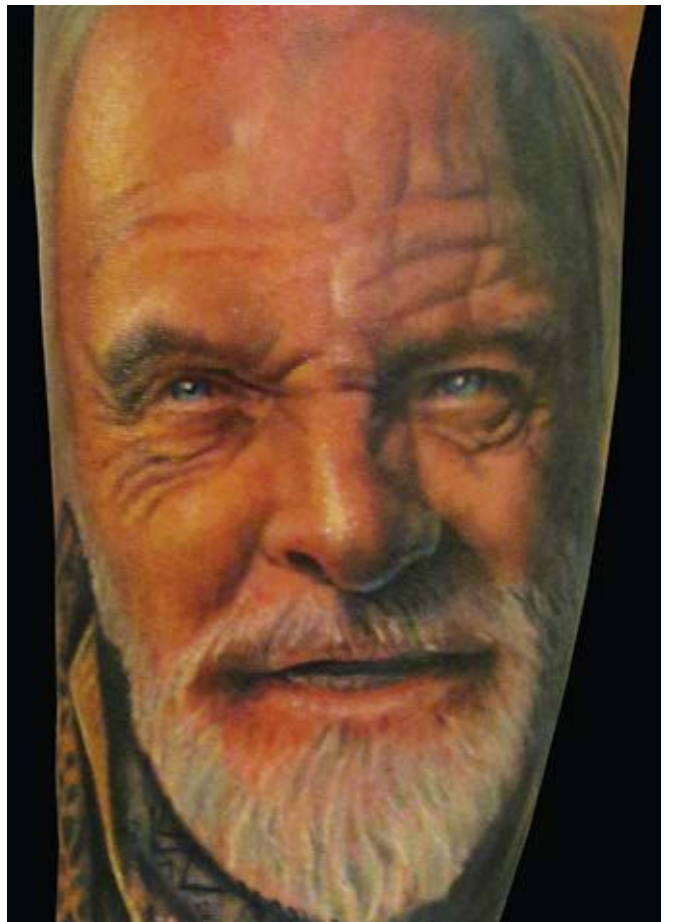
Alcantara: Yes, we've had body piercing by Marco Morriberon since the opening of my first tattoo shop. We have a steady amount of people who look for quality body piercing and jewelry. Marco is a trusted friend who helped manage the shop when I moved to the states.


What have been some of the best overall shop experiences you all have had working together?

Alcantara: There are so many experiences to just mention one, but I can say that being open and successful for 18 years, along with maintaining a solid reputation and recognition for excellence, is an honor. 🇵🇪









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What year did you start tattooing? 2002.

How did you get into tattooing? I was exposed to tattoos at a very early age. Some of my earliest memories are the weekends that I spent with my great grandfather, who was heavily covered in tattoos from his time in the navy. Toward the end of my time in school I had started getting to know some of the tattoo community there and scored some real equipment. I started taking it pretty seriously and asking around about getting into a shop. Once I was back home in Arkansas I was offered a shot by a girl who I knew through the local heavy metal scene. She had bought a shop she was working at from an older lady who was fleeing the business.

What was your first shop experience like? It was a street shop on Main Street in downtown Little Rock called Darkside Tattoos. I was apprenticed there by a chick who was in a local metal band, Brittany from the band Rwake. She was a good tattooer for the time and place, but what I learned from her was how to deal with people, all different kinds of people. She stayed preoccupied with the band and later on with starting a family, so what I really learned was how to run a shop pretty much on my own and deal with all of the day to day stuff

while juggling both tattoo and piercing customers.

Do you have any special training? I have fairly extensive experience with blacksmithing, knife making, bronze casting/foundry work, as well as a background in wood working, ceramics, and mold making.

What conventions have you done recently or are planning to do this year?

Last year I did my first show since opening the shop [Black Cobra Tattoos]. It was the Villain Arts Memphis tattoo convention. I brought all of the people from my shop and had a pretty strong presence at the show. We recently did the Philadelphia show as well, which was a total blast! I'm in the process of deciding what other shows I'll be able to do this year, but I'll definitely be showing up here and there.

What inspires you as an artist? I'm constantly inspired by things that I see in the world around me: flowers, birds, sunsets, architecture, old ironwork, antique objects and machines. My earliest and most constant inspiration throughout my life has been my grandmother, who is an incredible oil painter.

You won Best in Show at the Philly Tattoo Convention. How did you go about

creating your winning piece? The piece was a Philippine monkey-eating eagle attacking a monkey in a tree. The piece was on a really good client who was willing to give me full control over the entire process. He gave me the idea and told me he wanted it on his side. I drew it up using references from a few different monkeys and eagles, did a sketch of how I thought the fight would lay out, and then went on to do a finished illustration that showed all the action we were looking for, and then tattooed it using photographic references.

What other media do you work in? Hammer, fire, chainsaw, electricity, machete, internal combustion.

What tattoo artists do you admire most? The first tattooer that I really looked up to was James Kern; he was doing tattoos way back then that looked like where I thought tattooing ought to be headed.

What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing? I always look forward to anything bird related for sure! I've been working on lots of big ongoing projects over the past year or two, and I'm trying to work towards doing a bigger part of my tattoos as draw-ons to give myself more room to make decisions during the process. ■





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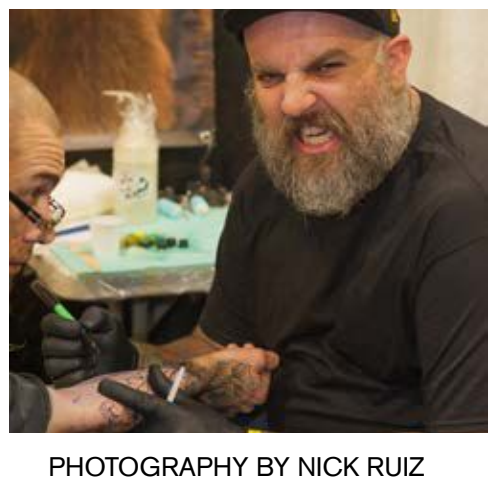
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PROVIDENCE TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION

Last October Villain Arts held their first annual tattoo convention in Providence, Rhode Island. *Ink Master* favorites Kyle Dunbar, James Vaughn, Aaron Is, Ty'Esha Reels, and season 2 winner Steve Tefft were all in attendance. For those who weren't getting tattooed at the convention, Ascension & Misguided Youth performed a human suspension show, Mike Skiver's provided an on site Tattoo Museum, and Takashi Matsuba was doing Tebori (Japanese hand poke tattooing). Bumped you missed out on all the action? Keep an eye out for 2015 dates!



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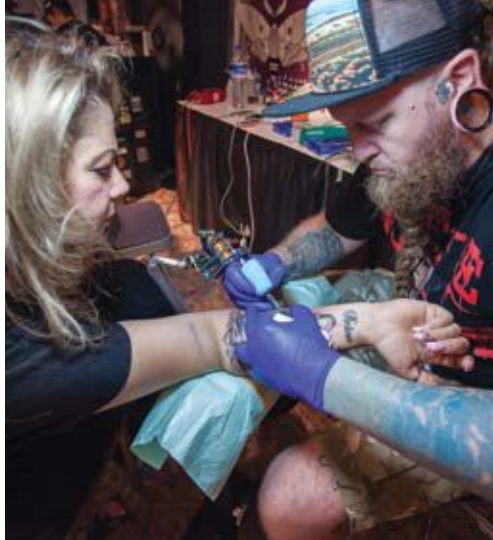
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ATLANTIC CITY TATTOO EXPO

When you think of Atlantic City, you probably imagine casinos, beautiful beaches, or even AC's annual international beard competition. All in all you are guaranteed to be thinking about a great time, which is why the shores of New Jersey make for the perfect spot for a weekend long tattoo show. This year, the Atlantic City Tattoo Expo couldn't have hit with a bigger bang. The talent we came across was enormous! Jersey's own Joey Tattoo was tattooing all weekend long aside *Ink Master* alumni, Halo and Sarah Miller, and even James Vaughn and Chris Torres came out. When people weren't tattooing or getting inked, they also had a chance to kick back and relax with some Jim Bean or Magic Hat, two of the delightfully delicious sponsors from this year. With all the jam packed fun from the 2014 show we guarantee you're going to want to come on by for the 2015 round!



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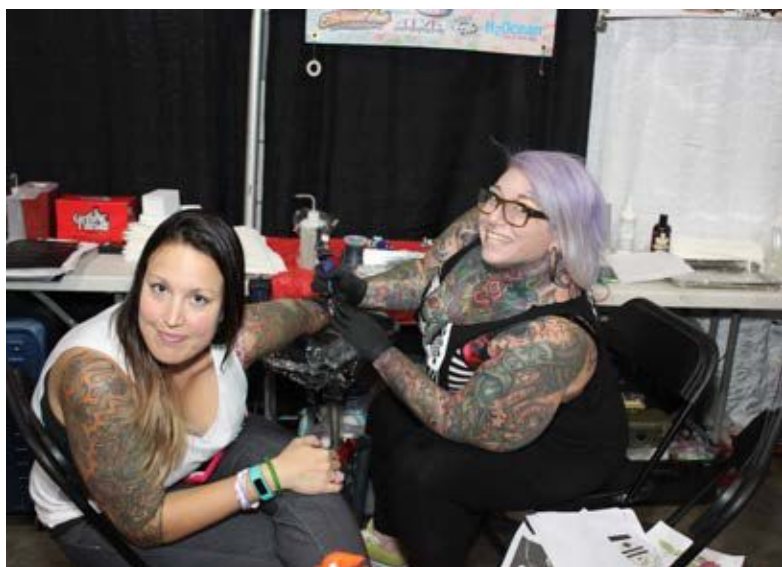
ATLANTIC CITY TATTOO EXPO





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STEEL CITY

We had lots of fun at Shane O'Neill's Steel City show this year. Pittsburgh is a beautiful town and the convention is held right on the river. Like all of Shane's shows, there were plenty of *Ink Master* stars at the event for everyone to meet, as well as some of our favorite tattoo legends like Freddy Negrete. Miss Inked Up Pittsburgh was crowned at the show (Congrats to Courtney); we love our Inked Up ladies. For more information on Shane's future shows visit shaneoneillproductions.com.



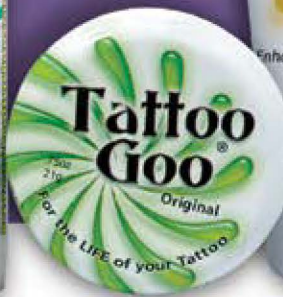
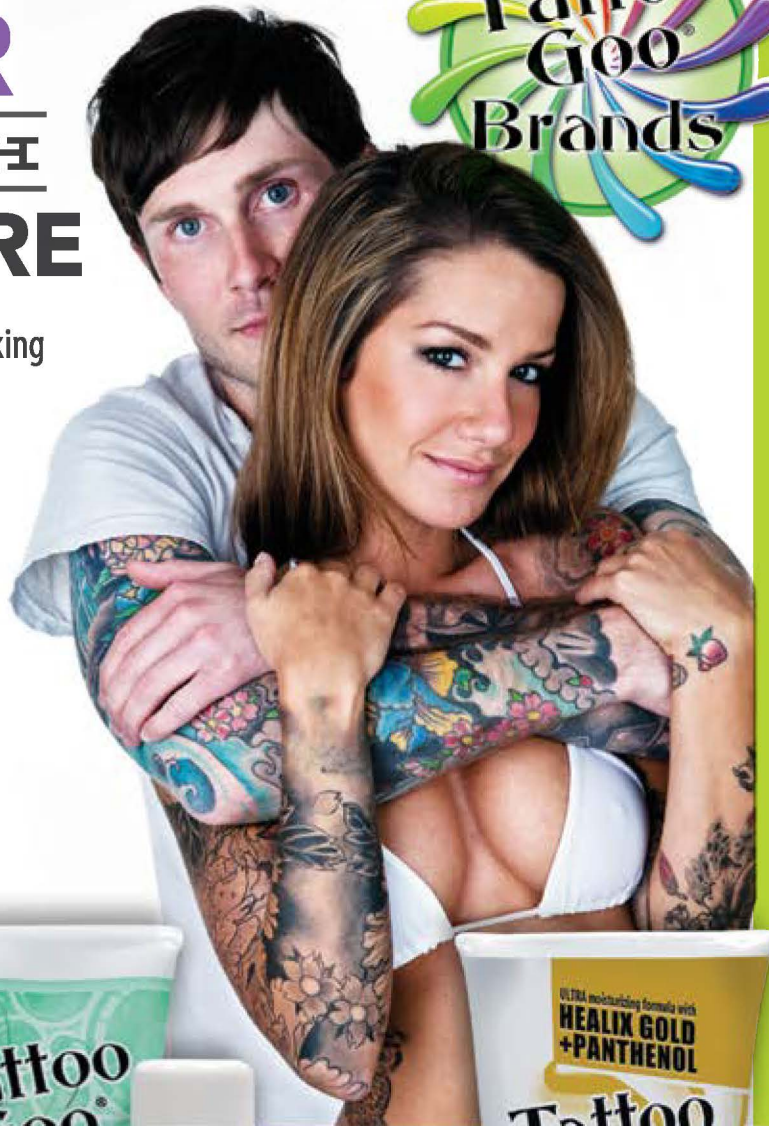
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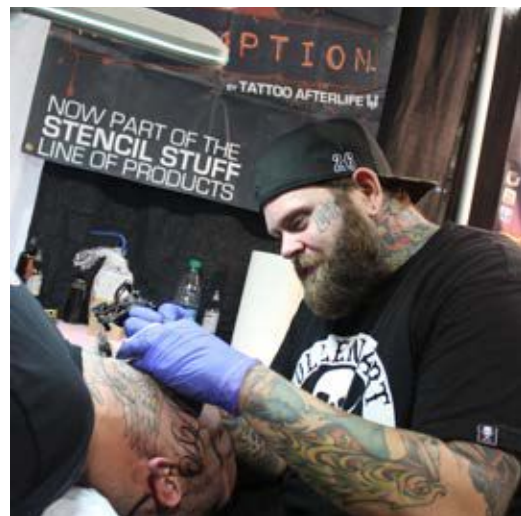


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