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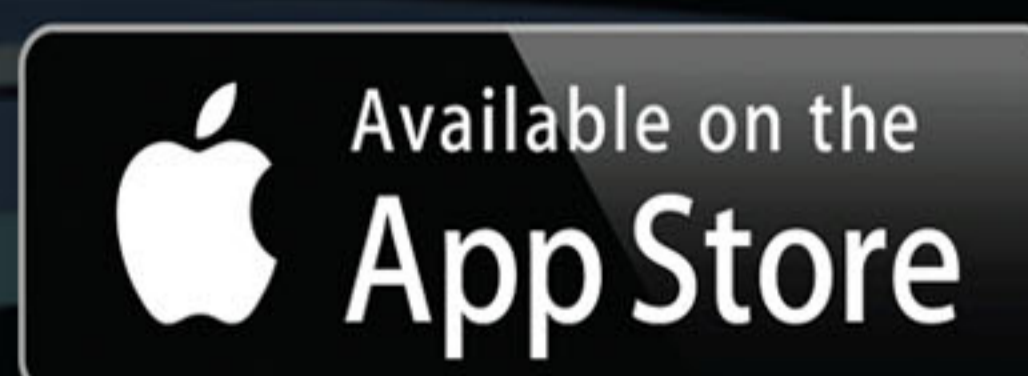
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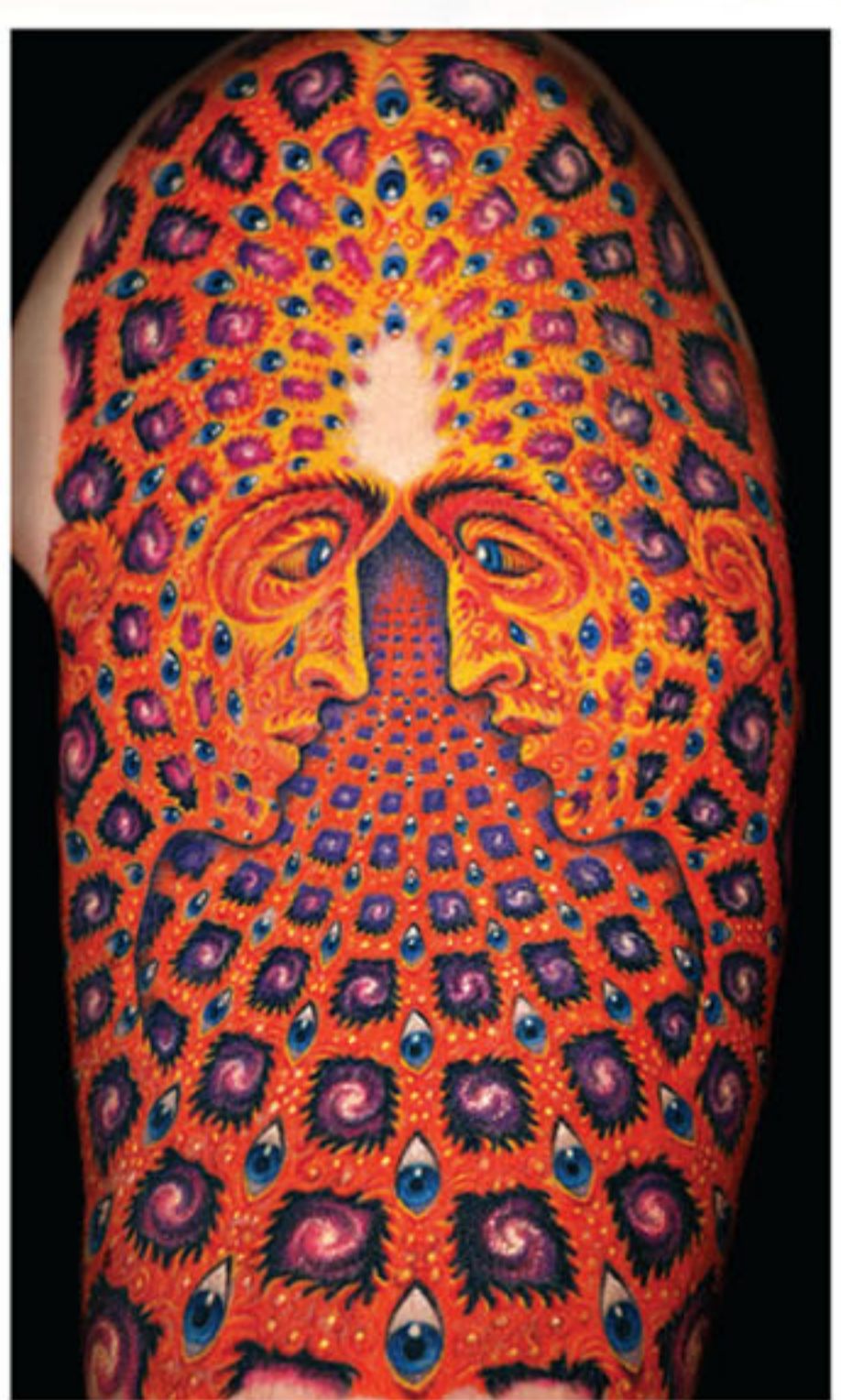
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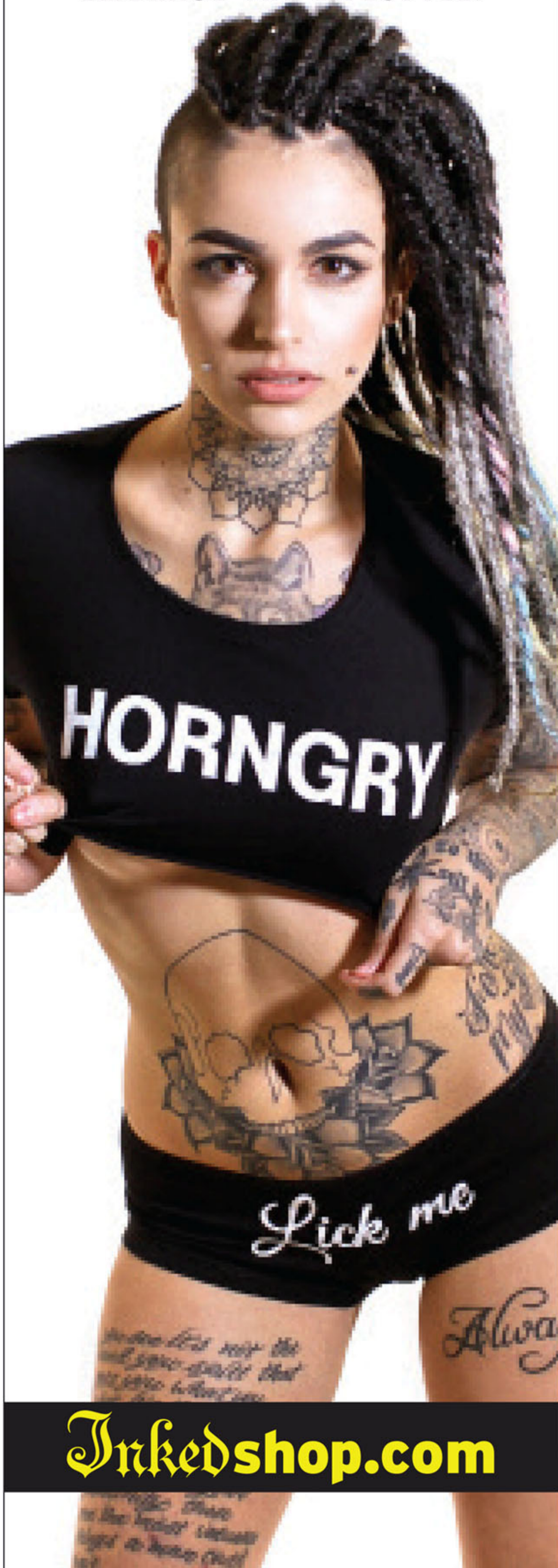
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How did you become interested in tattooing? Besides developing an interest as a small child through *National Geographic* books, as a teenager I had been creating designs for friends to get tattooed. I would sometimes go with them to the shop to watch it go down, talk with the tattooers and hang out a bit. Kind of testing the waters to see how this whole tattoo world worked. So, when there was finally an opening at that shop for a helper, I jumped at the chance and got the job, which turned into an apprenticeship to tattoo.

Tell us about the first time you ever went to a tattoo shop. I think my very first shop experience may have been at a shop in Hollywood a few years before I started tattooing. I went with a girl who was getting a butterfly I drew up. She had been referred to Baby Ray. He laughed at my horrible design and drew his own for her instead. It was a super intimidating and hilarious experience. Baby Ray has a wonderfully authoritative way of getting things done. Real tattooing at its finest. Good lesson. Good memory.

In 2014 you released a Mushroom Lamp series, and you recently released the Continue to Live Remember the Dead light fixture, what drove you to work in this medium? I have been sculpting my whole life and work three dimensionally whenever possible. I always aim to combine the appropriate amount of complementary and contrasting textures possible in my works and found that introducing unnatural lighting would help push the surreal aspect of the works in the direction I wanted. Unlit, the sculptures opacity and translucency read as natural and realistic but when they are lit, the feeling is more

supernatural. Almost bringing them more to life than before. The way in which light plays with any surface is an important aspect of viewing any works, so controlling that viewing in natural and unnatural ways can help create the proper viewing experience.

What inspired you to write *The Ulysses Guide to the Los Angeles River*? My good friends and partners in our art group UGLARworks, Mr. Evan Skrederstu, Mr. Steve Martinez and myself had been traversing the depths of the Los Angeles River quite a bit in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The more we explored, the more surprising and interesting the place became, so after realizing that there was no proper documentation of anything close to how we were experiencing the River, we decided to do our best to document it. Our goal was to bring the reader into the River the way we had experienced it—surreal, beautiful, disgusting warts and all. The book was released in 2008 and in 2010 we created an installation at the Pasadena Museum of California Art that further aided in experiencing the River's odd glory with broken concrete walls, graffiti, projected water running below and even a soundscape recorded from trips to the river. The only thing missing was the smell.

Did you get to make your mark on the "concrete canvas?" Yes, of course. The River's vast expanses of concrete were much too inviting.

You seem to draw influence from so many different styles of tattooing, how would you describe your signature style? I suppose, if I have any sort of recognizable style, it might be my series "108 Heroes of Los Angeles." A retelling of

the story of *The Water Margin* or *The 108 Heroes of the Suikoden*. My version combines the aesthetics and traditions of both Japanese tattooing and storytelling with late 70's/early 80's Chicano tattooing in Los Angeles. Other than that particular project, I tend to focus mostly on traditional Japanese style work and traditional single needle black and grey Chicano style work. But, as a tattooer, I am open to executing any genre of work that my clients request.

When you sit down to do a more traditionally inspired tattoo how does your mind set change from when you are doing your own thing? Doing nearly any sort of tattooing, especially traditional style tattooing, I suppose the most important mindset or intention, above all, is to consider the permanence of the tattoo. Will the image hold up over the course of this person's lifetime? Whether in its design, or more importantly, in its concept. The beauty of traditional tattooing, in most any form, is the timeless quality and importance that generations of people before have given these designs. Tried and true.

What are some of the major subject matters you like to tattoo? Natural elements, like water and wind. Plants and animals. Mythological creatures. Heroes and villains from traditional stories and stories I create myself. Positive imagery to help empower the person wearing the work.

How have you branched out of tattooing? Artistically, I branched into tattooing. I started from drawing, to sculpting and painting. Culturally, tattooing has allowed and encouraged me to branch out by traveling the world and learn more about different cultures.



photo by kip fulbeck



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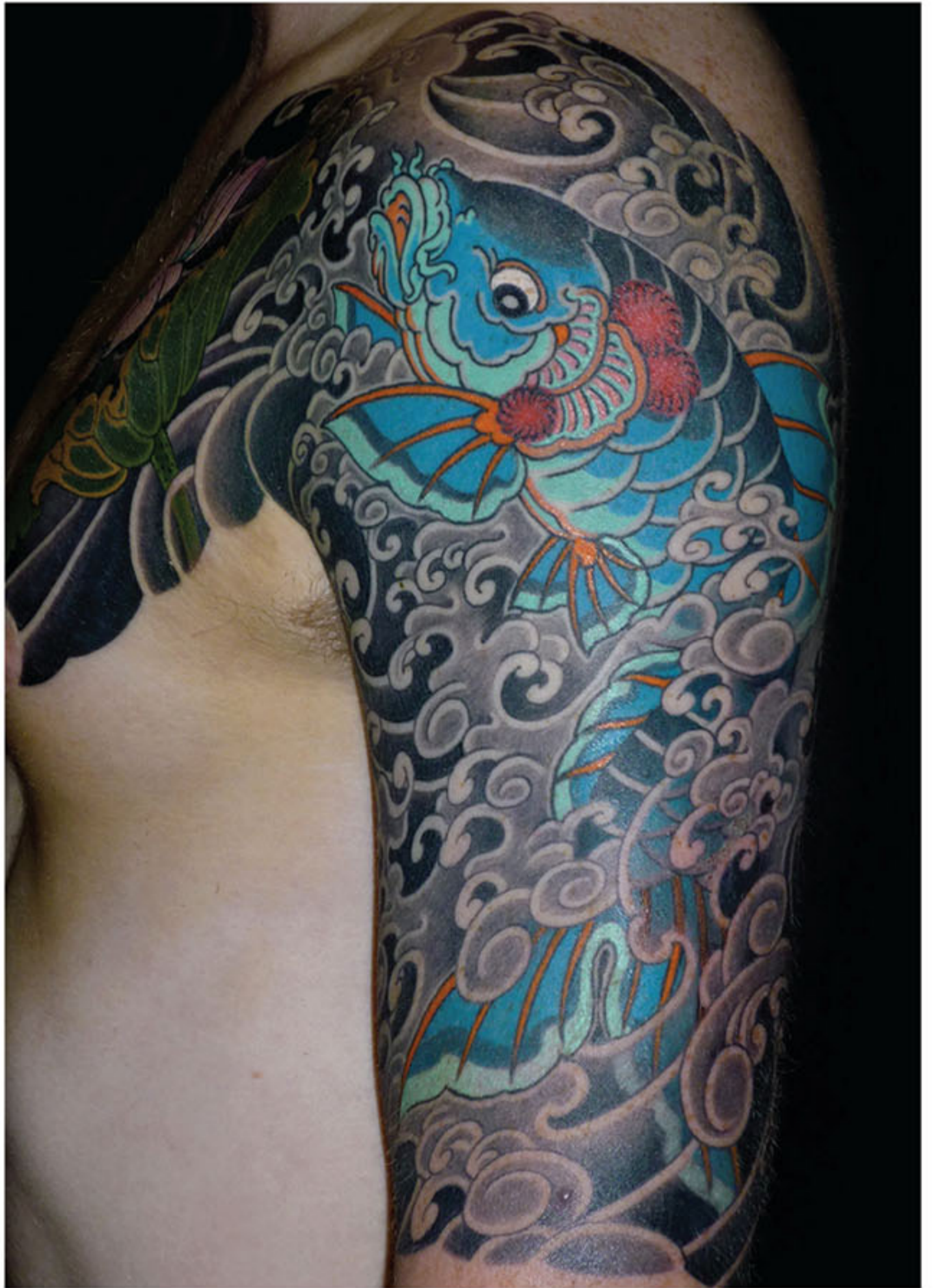




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Captured Tattoo @dansmithism

You've made a bit of a name for yourself by tattooing tiny little sneakers. Why sneakers? Why so small? And what's your favorite? I have always liked exploring tattooing and trying to push my abilities. I didn't go to art school and don't have a natural artistic talent so most of this hasn't come easy to me. I feel like every tattoo you see should make you ask yourself a few questions about your own work and then try to apply a different train of thought to the next, with the intent to progress. The small tattoos are just as hard as the big ones but I've always loved shoes of all sorts so its enjoyable tattooing something that people can really get excited about. My favourite so far, is probably the combat boot. It had a lot of different textures and sections to try to recreate.

Let's talk about the idea of micro tattoos in general. What made you start doing them? Do you prefer working on small pieces or larger pieces? Ben Grillo gave me the confidence to do them. If I do anything that looks half as good as his tattooing then I am happy. One time I drove with BJ Betts to visit Ben and watched him get a tiny Air Max 95. I left so inspired and wanting to try something so small and detailed as soon as I could. I've done a lot of small stuff but I guess the shoes just resonated louder with people. I am used to mostly doing smaller scale tattoos but since opening Captured have been lucky to work on many bigger projects. As long as I am tattooing, I am ok.

How did you get started tattooing? I started in 2000 tattooing friends in the punk/hardcore scene. I was also traveling with the band I was in, tattooing on the road. I was always a fan of tattoos through music. They both went

hand-in-hand to me and they gave me purpose and direction in my own life. I got my first tattoo from Dean Sacred and I have spent the last 18 years trying to make it up to him. Him and Dan Andersen have been the biggest influences to me in the early days, but Shep from Adelaide is who I really have to thank for getting me in. If I didn't meet him I'm not sure how it would have turned out. I am eternally grateful to him for everything.

What was your first shop experience like? Amazing. Shep helped me get a start at The Body Art Shop and I will always look back on those days with great memories. The owner Gomer was the greatest and taught me a whole lot more than he might think. They basically showed me how to be a tattooer and the ropes of all aspects of tattooing. I am honestly so proud that I got to start there and get the support from them early on.

What was the tattoo scene like growing up in New Zealand? What made you make the move to California? For me and my friends it was a very exciting time. No one was tattooed back then and in the scene we were in it was all positive and exciting. I felt like we had a secret that no one knew about. We skipped all the bad elements that can come along with tattooing because were so consumed in our own world of music, skateboarding and art in such a small city. We always pushed each other to do as much as possible and I think moving countries was a natural progression of that same ideal. The band I was in toured America a few times and after meeting countless artists I always looked up to and the obvious other attractions to California,

I moved in 2004. I have been here ever since.

What other mediums do you work in? I find painting gives me a freedom that I don't have with tattooing so sometimes a painting can have a lot of weird stuff going on. I often use paint pens, pencils, markers and spray paint. I love painting flash too. A more strict method, but such an honest and therapeutic process.

Tell us a little bit about the skate decks that you have painted. Is that just a hobby or a branch of your art that you would like to pursue further? Like many tattooers my age, I love skateboarding and grew up on skateboard graphics of the 80s and 90s. Those designs were pure power and left lasting impressions on all of us. I feel like a skateboard is a mini billboard for art and makes any cool painting a little bit cooler.

You seem to do a fair amount of tattoos in subjects that you love (skateboards, shoes, bands etc.), do you attack pieces like this with extra relish? Do you get excited about getting to tattoo things that you are passionate about? It's probably obvious but yes, I do. If someone told me when I was 16 that I would make a living from doing everything I get to do I would have laughed or at least been highly cynical. Tattooing an ideal, song lyric or design related to something that made a difference in someone's life like it did mine is a special thing, whatever way you look at it. It is the essence of tattooing just like getting the heart and name on your arm. How could you ever take that for granted?









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Your lettering work is simply beautiful. What are the important elements that go into a script tattoo? What is the balance between beauty and legibility? Thanks. I think you have to have balance, alignment and flow. How it flows on the body is crucial. All the flourishes should accent the letters and add to the piece. You don't want to have so much going on that it gets hard to read or takes away from it.

Since you do so much lettering and script work, what is your process for spell checking/grammar checking? I always try to double check the spelling before I start. As far as punctuation goes it depends on the piece. Sometimes lettering might look better on the body without a comma or whatever, if it were an article or book then I think it may be a different story.

Considering that you are from Southern California it is not surprising to see so many black and grey influences within your work, but I would not describe your work as strictly black and grey. How do you describe your own style? Since I was a kid I would practice lettering a lot and was heavy into drawing things realistically. When I started tattooing I wasn't really able to be picky. I was very attracted to fine line black and grey tattoos and was using fine line needles from the beginning, but I learned from an old school traditional tattooer who taught me to tattoo whatever came through the door. So I just tried to tattoo everything. I enjoy

tattooing different styles. Most people request fine line and realistic stuff but I try to be well rounded.

Tell us a little bit about the importance of capturing every part of the subject you are inking. I've always been drawn to super detailed artwork. My grandpa was a realistic oil painter. He would free hand portraits and the most detailed cityscapes from photos he took traveling, which heavily inspired me from a very young age. I was really shy growing up and didn't have a ton of friends so I just drew stuff all the time. When it comes to drawing/tattooing things realistically I've always just tried to push myself to make the next one better than the last. It's kinda fun and challenging for me, you can't really ever stop learning.

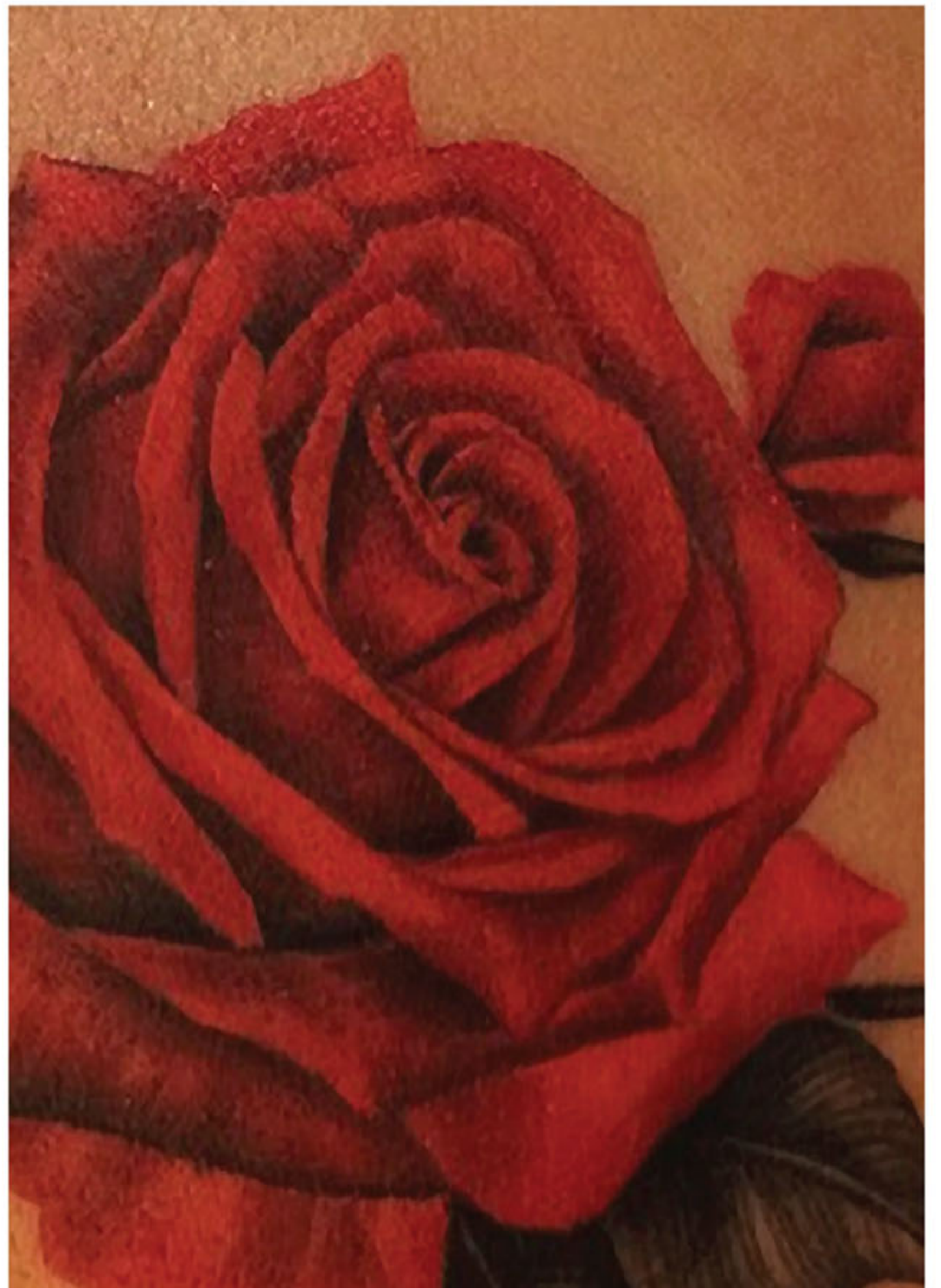
You seem to do a wide variety of different types of tattoos, do you feel that being able to jump back and forth makes you a better tattooer? I don't mind switching it up. It's the way I've tattooed since the beginning. These days my clients request a lot of roses, lettering and super detailed work (don't get me wrong I fuckin' love that shit all day) but I don't turn stuff down because it isn't my style or whatever. My mentor taught that you have to be versatile. I have high respect for many different styles of tattooing so I like to try to learn as much as I can about tattooing all around.

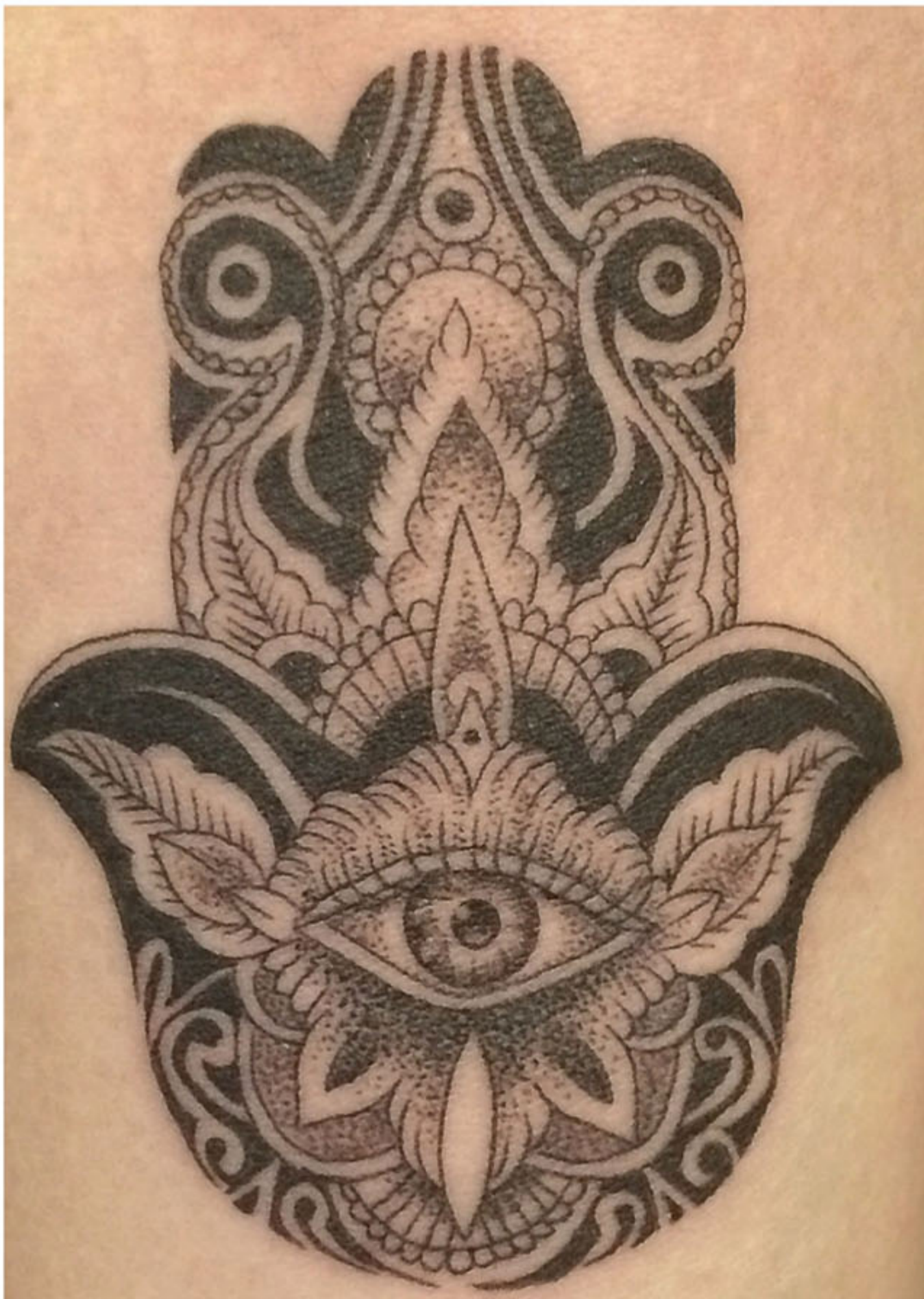
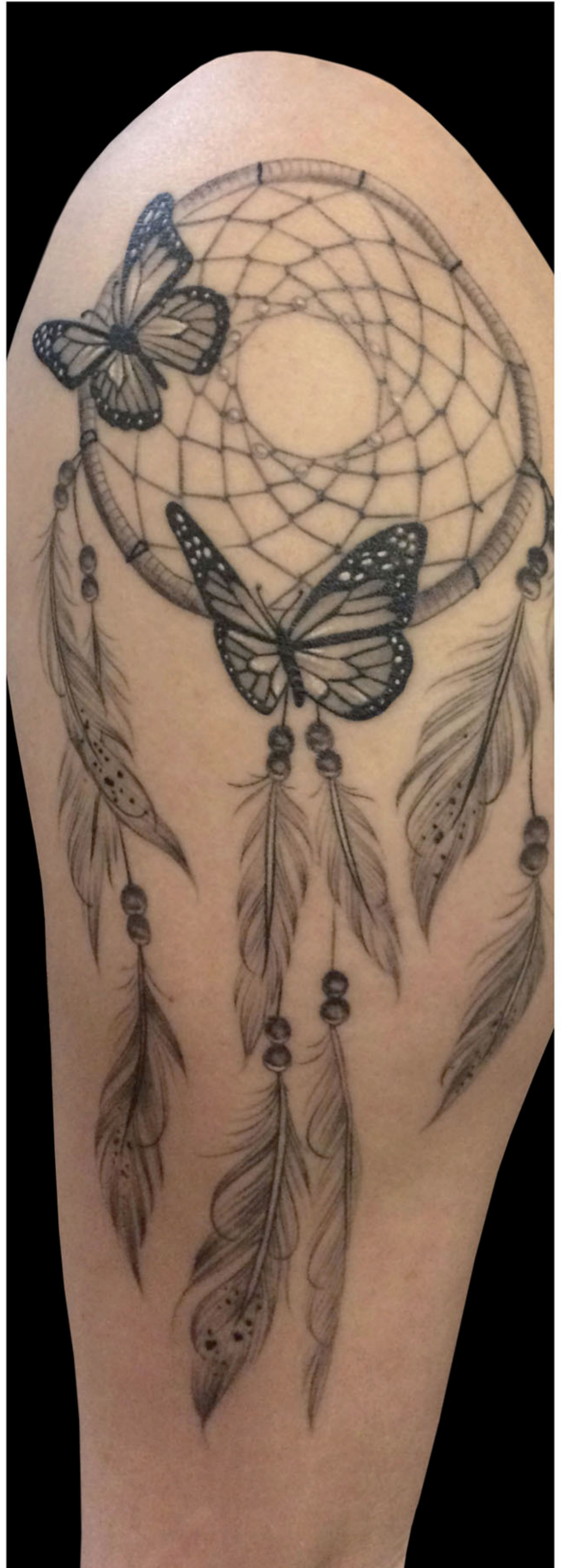
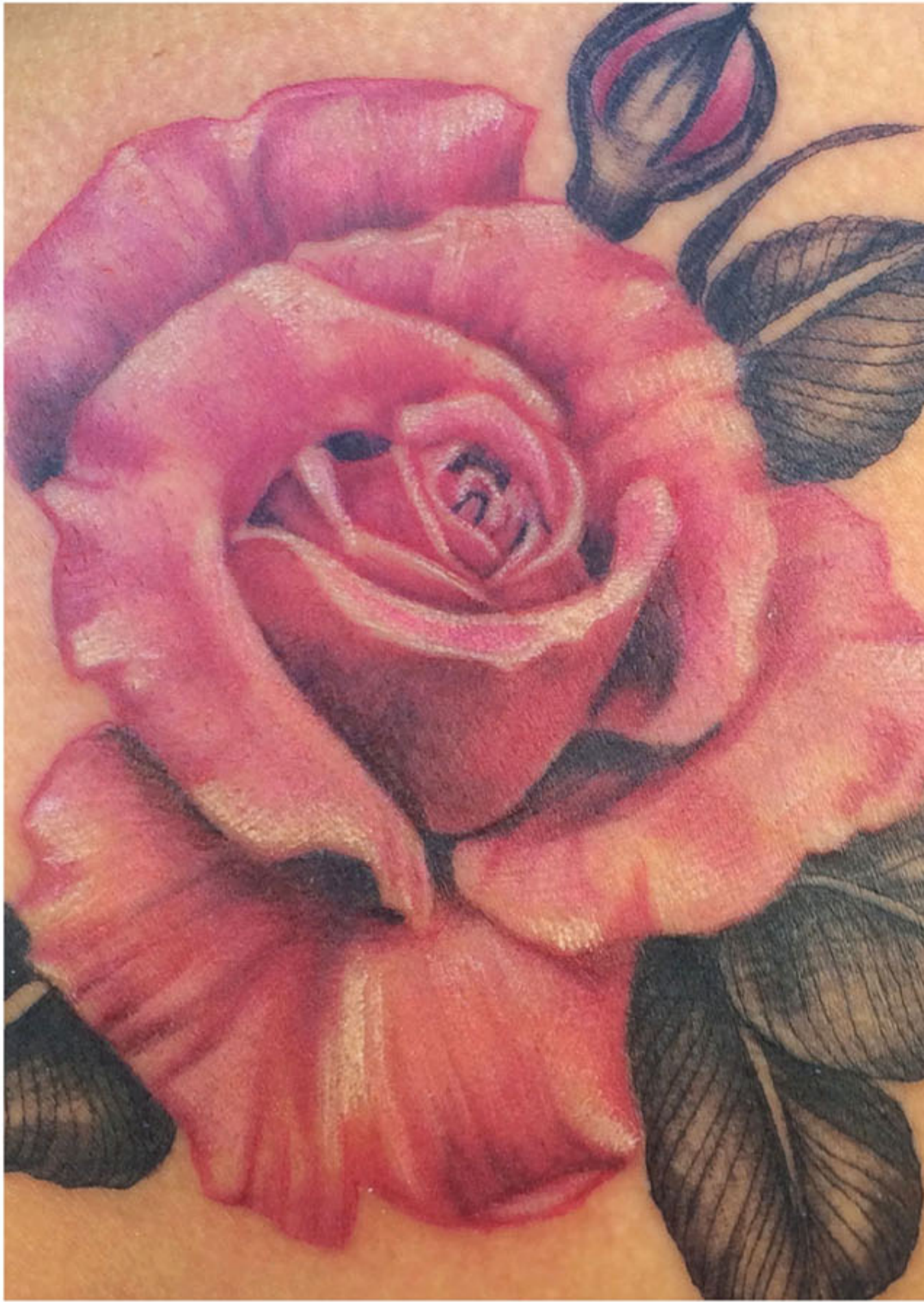
How did you get into tattooing? I've

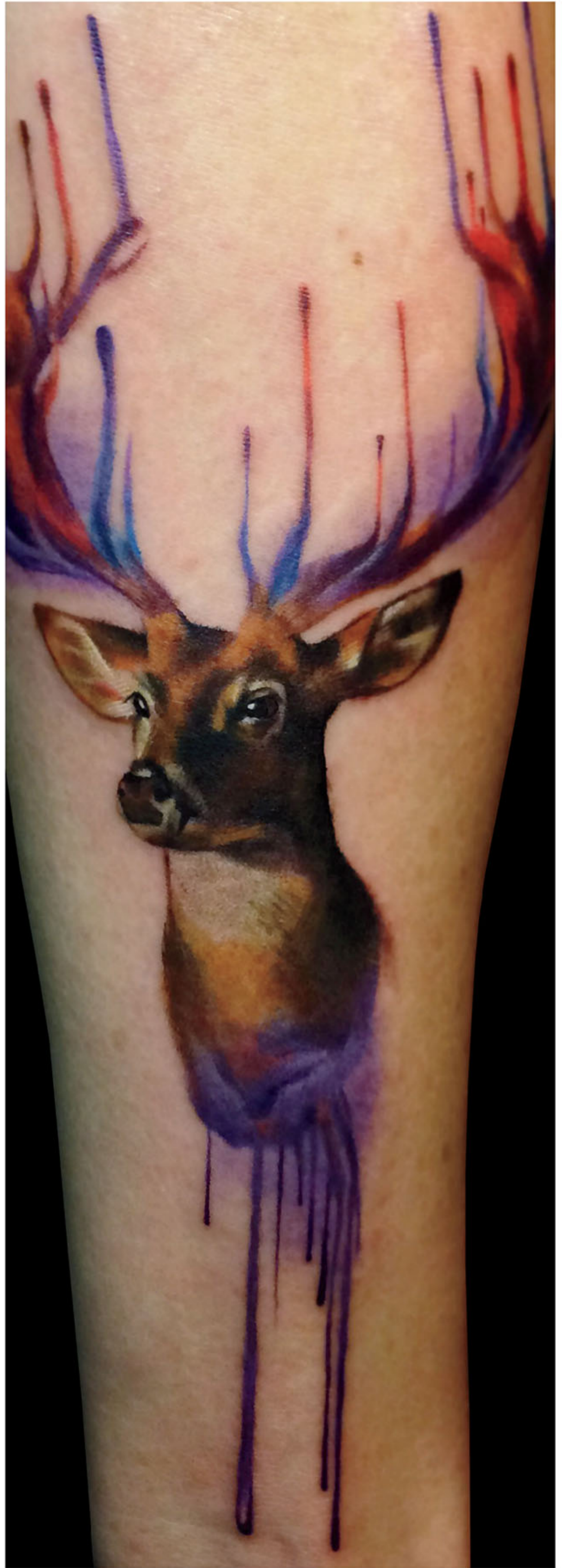
always been into tattoos, especially growing up in LA around a bunch of bikers and gangsters I was exposed to them all the time from a super young age. I loved the way they looked and I knew I wanted a bunch from the beginning. In school I would always draw tattoos on myself, most of the time getting in trouble for it. When I was 16 my dad took me to get my first tattoo. I didn't know that I was going to do tattoos until a few years later when I met Kevin Hinton in Venice. I had gotten a few tattoos from him and we became friends. He was about to open up a bigger shop and he offered to take me on as his apprentice. I took him up on the offer & I'm forever grateful to him for giving me the opportunity and trusting me enough to give me that foot in the door.

What was your first shop experience like? I didn't really have a traditional apprenticeship making needles and all that. Straight away I did a few tattoos on myself and then about 20 on some homeboys from the neighborhood. My boss thought my lines and shading were looking good enough to start taking walk ins so I just dove in and tried to just tattoo everything I could. It was scary, I really felt like I had no idea what the hell I was doing. I spent a lot of time there alone trying to figure it out, basically taking on tattoos I had no clue how to do, and trying to figure it out along the way. But that's just how it was and I just had to go for it. Gotta fake it till ya make it I guess (laughs).









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Kansas City, MO @oldsouls

You do an extensive amount of lettering work, both in your tattoos and in other art. Tell us a little bit about how you maintain balance between a stylish font and a legible one. Which is more important? This all depends on the client. I get all sorts of people asking for lettering, most of them letter-heads themselves, from type designers to graffiti writers and even sign makers. Depending on what they're asking for and where they're wanting it, typically, the more letters involved the less pizzazz and the more simplified it becomes. If it's one word and fits a good location on the body, I might add some bells and whistles. In some cases less is more. All in all, I try to draw something I believe fits the client's personality after we meet and go from there.

Do you find that different types of phrases/words lend themselves to different types of lettering? Oh for sure! I believe this pertains to everything that requires lettering. Dripping horror lettering caters to Halloween and maybe a Dracula type of theme. Bubble letters are more on the happy side of things. I'd never take a phrase like "live laugh love" and make it bold old English or push that horror typeface on those particular words. Each word in this case could take on its own personality and probably should reflect the entire phrase. I would try to create its own font without mixing and matching styles, but if it's requested by the client to switch up the style for each word, I'd still try to make them all reflect each other well and appear as if they're from the same family.

Where do you find your inspiration when coming up with different fonts? Well that's easy and tough all at the same time. We live in a world of fonts and

you could barely escape if you tried—I take it all in. I literally can and will find inspiration in any and all things. This could be anything from a flat tire to a crappy punchline from a crummy joke. Initially, I was blown away by what graffiti writers were creating in the night and that was my first source of inspiration when it came to lettering. I find that the older I've become, the more influenced and inspired I've been by older, turn of the century signage and have really gravitated towards this style of lettering and ornamentation.

How did you get into tattooing? When I was in my late teens I did a lot of mural work. It was my own little self-employed thing I had going on. I ended up being contacted by a guy opening up a new tattoo shop in town and they wanted the place jazzed up with some graffiti styled stuff. I gave a bid on the job and made it happen. The guy that ran the shop and hired me for the job was really impressed by the work I was doing. He came outside between all the little walk-in tattoos he'd do throughout the day and ask all sorts of questions about the process. I'd answer his questions and in return I'd ask my own about tattoos. It was very obvious I was interested in the biz because I made it obvious. Nearing the end of the job and wrapping things up he laid the offer on the table. He would pay me half the bid in cash and offer up an apprenticeship for the remainder. I gladly took it. I remember my mom cried when I told her the good news.

You are an incredibly well rounded tattooer—we've seen awesome work from you in Japanese, traditional, new school, lettering and I'm sure I'm leaving something out. Do you think there is any one thing that connects all of your tattoos

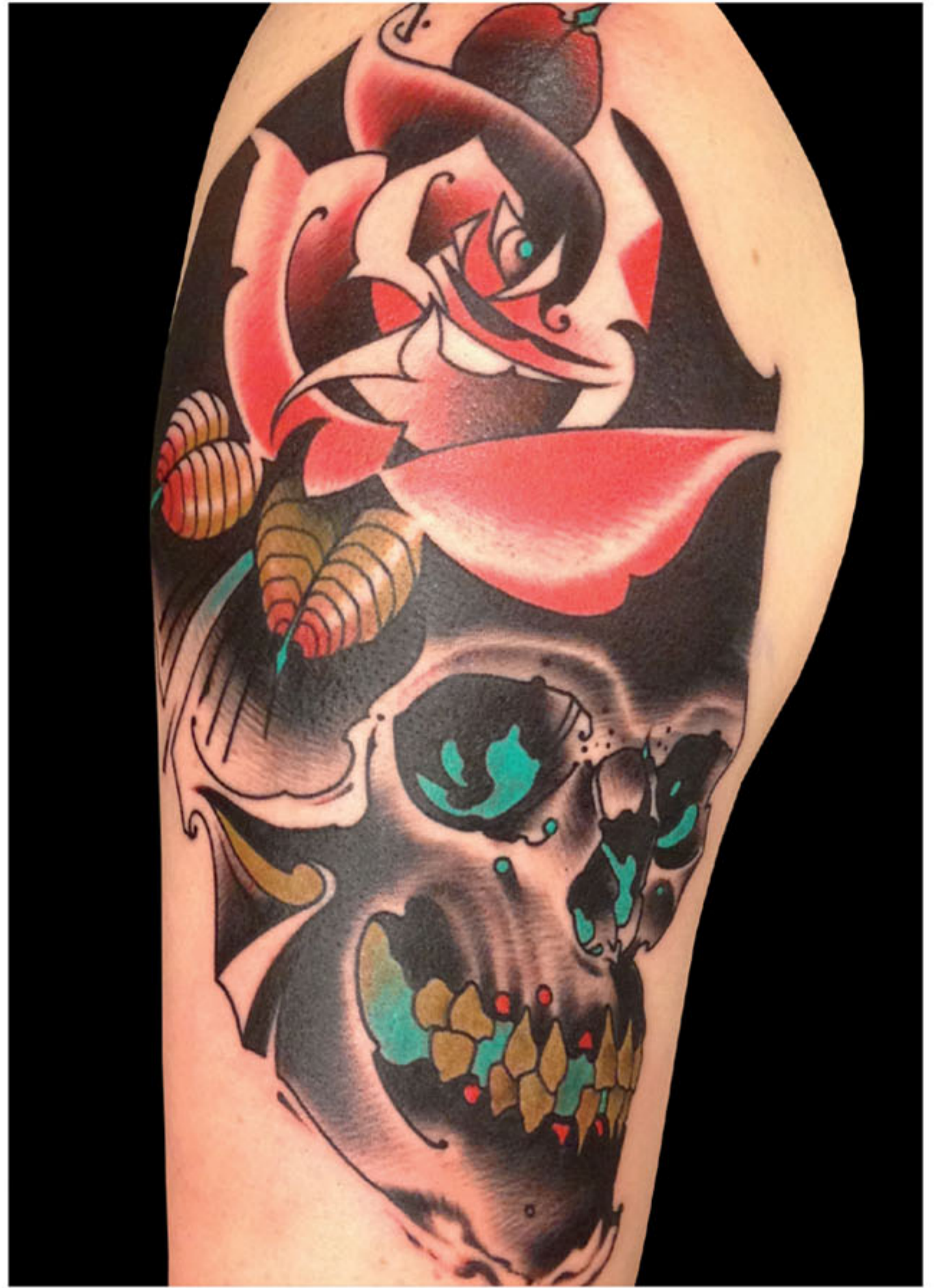
stylistically? And why do you think it is important to be well rounded? Well thank you! I really appreciate you saying so. As far as being well rounded, I definitely feel it's important. I'm not sure if I ever thought to myself or even outwardly suggested, "I must do anything and everything." I just find that I'm genuinely interested in every avenue of tattooing. I always think about the phrase "one trick pony." While having one polished trick seems to draw a lot more attention to an artist, I think it's feeding an audience that feels safe knowing exactly what they're going to get and that's just MOST people in general. They need repetition with everything, the number they pick off that drive-thru menu, or the same drink because they know they like it. They could be one sip away from their next favorite beverage if they'd just break free of their own routine. I think having only one trick means your trick can, and more than likely will, get stale and fade away or someone else will start to use your trick and crush you at it. And I guess if I had to tell you what I think connects all my work stylistically, I'd probably have to refer back to my beginnings in graffiti; it's what moves my hand the way it does. For real though, I don't have a clue. I'd be better off asking you what it is that make the styles connect. It's easier to describe being an observer vs. being the creator.

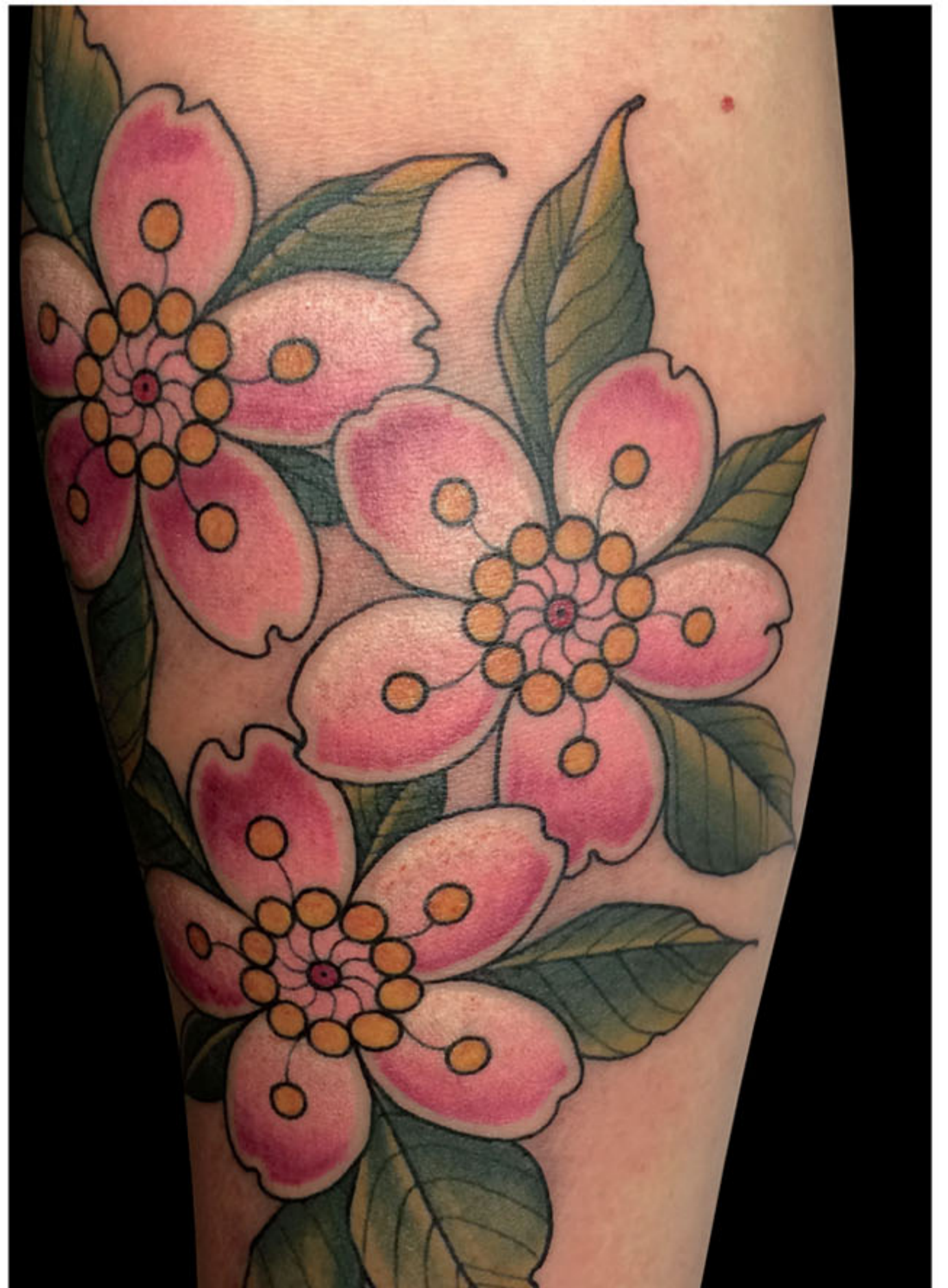
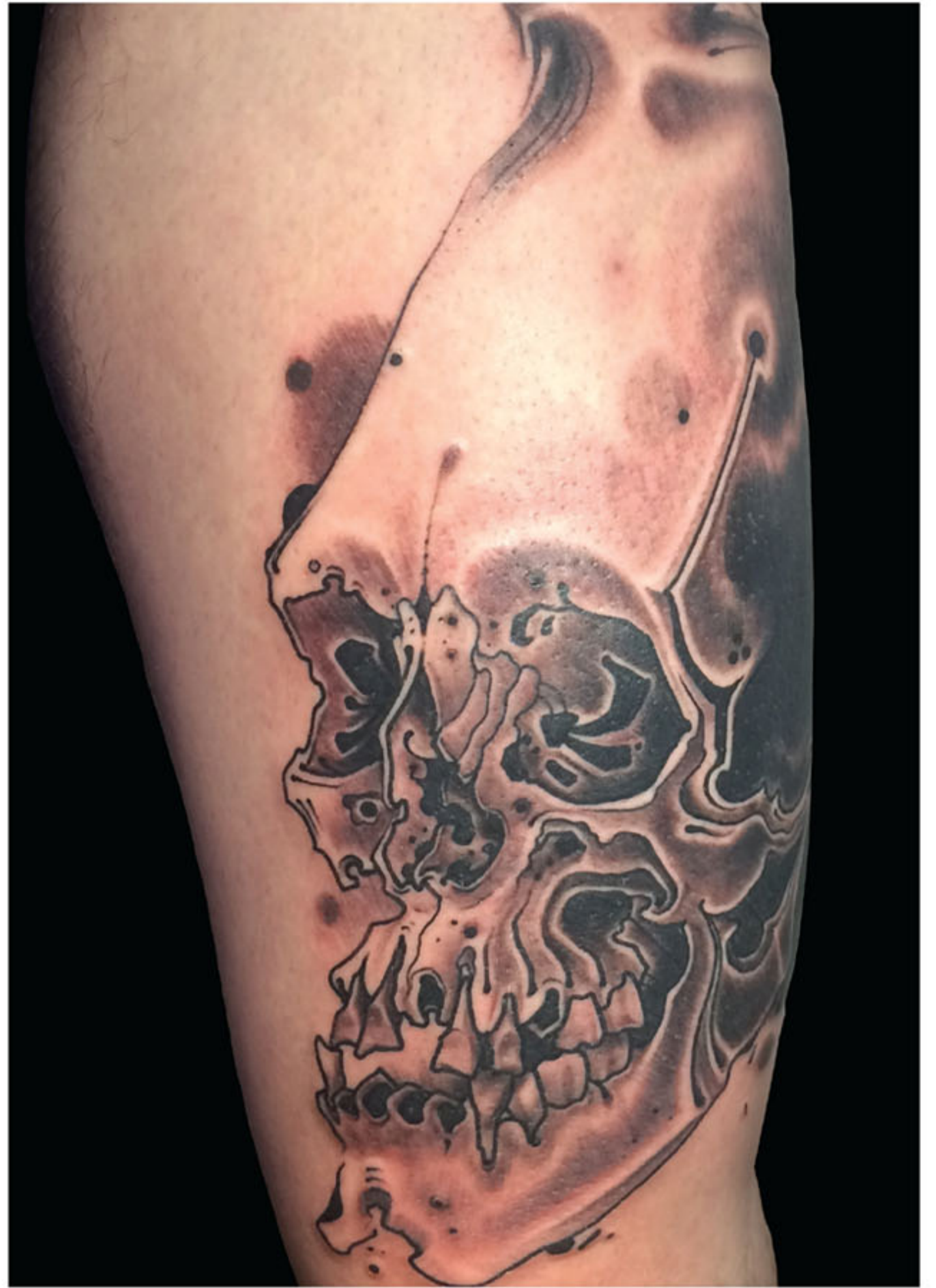
What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing? Generally I am happy to do very large-scale work now. But I often think about trying new styles. I would love to do straight tribal or old school. But I also love fine line work...

Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give to them? Chose the tattooist, not the tattoo.









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As our guest editor you hand selected every artist in the issue. How did you assemble this amazing crew?

A lot of the people that I have picked for the issue are good friends of mine and people who have been my peers for a lot of years. I really wanted to make it a pretty eclectic mix and have all the bases covered between lettering, black and grey, traditional, Japanese and guys that have made their own thing. Like Grimey, for example, who has managed to do one of the hardest things to do in any kind of business, which is stay relevant for over twenty years. I wanted to give the reader of the magazine some insight. It's unfortunate but a lot of people who have been tattooing for under ten years or so, with the social media the way it is, you don't have to do a lot of homework because it's all in your face. It's very unfortunate that people don't really know who is who, or who some of the right people are in the tattoo industry.

Why do you think it is important for our readers to know about every different style?

Because that's what tattooing is. It's not just the specialization that it has started to turn into. I've been tattooing for over twenty years and when I first learned how to tattoo you needed to be proficient in every style. You learned everything. Now everyone wants to specialize in specializing and it's ridiculous. It's when somebody walked into a shop they didn't say who's the best at lettering, who's the best at this. It was just, I want to get a tattoo... everybody that worked in that shop where I first started tattooing knew how to do everything. Now, I don't want to stand here on a soapbox and preach like some old school dude, but I think that more attention should be paid to what tattooing is. And it's not just a wet looking, Johnny Depp portrait. Where did that image come from? What about the eagles? I'll speak for lettering

because that's what I've been known for for quite a while now. But there is a lot more to it than just picking up one of my lettering books and picking a font. Why is a letter that way? Know the structure, know the basics. And until you get back to that and knowing what you are doing, you can't twist it and make it all funky and go crazy with it. And that applies to all forms of tattooing.

How did you end up finding your specialty of lettering? Was it something that you always liked or possibly just something that you found you were very good at doing?

I've always been attracted to lettering. It's always been one of those things that the simplicity of it is the beauty of it. When I was younger I would see old handwritten notes in my grandmother's house. This is back when penmanship was still top of the line for everybody, it was still such an important part of life. And my grandmother, thankfully, saved everything. She had all of these old letters from my great-great-grandmother to various members of my family. You could just see the care in the penmanship. You could tell where the pen was starting to run out of ink, you could see where it's thicker in some parts, just the overall quality of it all. I remember looking at that stuff when I was younger and just trying to emulate that letter A or that letter G. Those letters that didn't really look like what I thought the letter looked like. I would just study all of those different fonts and characters. I think it's the simplicity of it that gets me. The way that the font and the style of the word dictates the feel that you have for the lettering. There is no picture to tell the story, it's the lettering. The word should dictate the feel of the whole entire piece. If you are writing a word like "rage," something that is more aggressive, you should probably pick a

font that is a little more specific and tells that story.

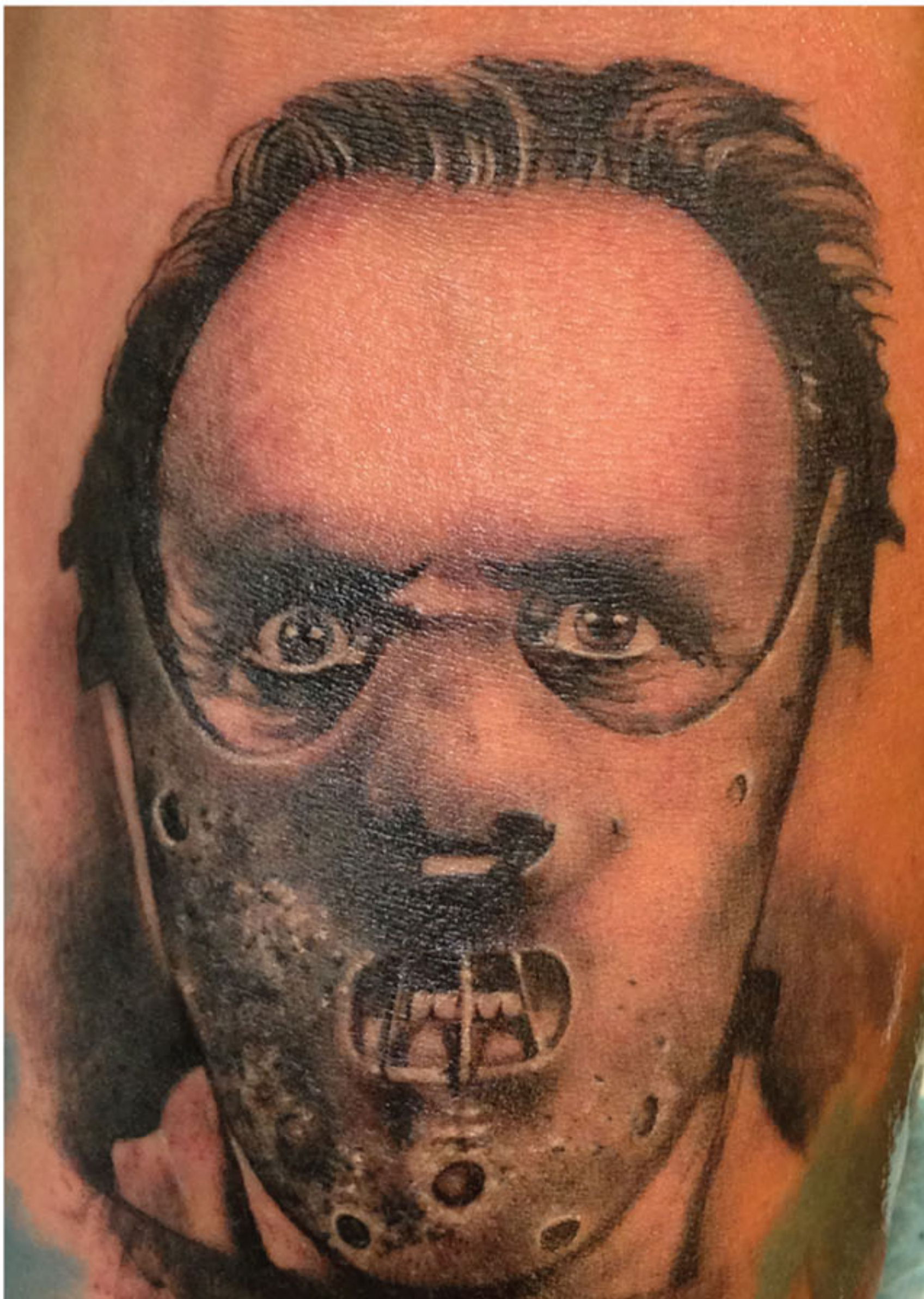
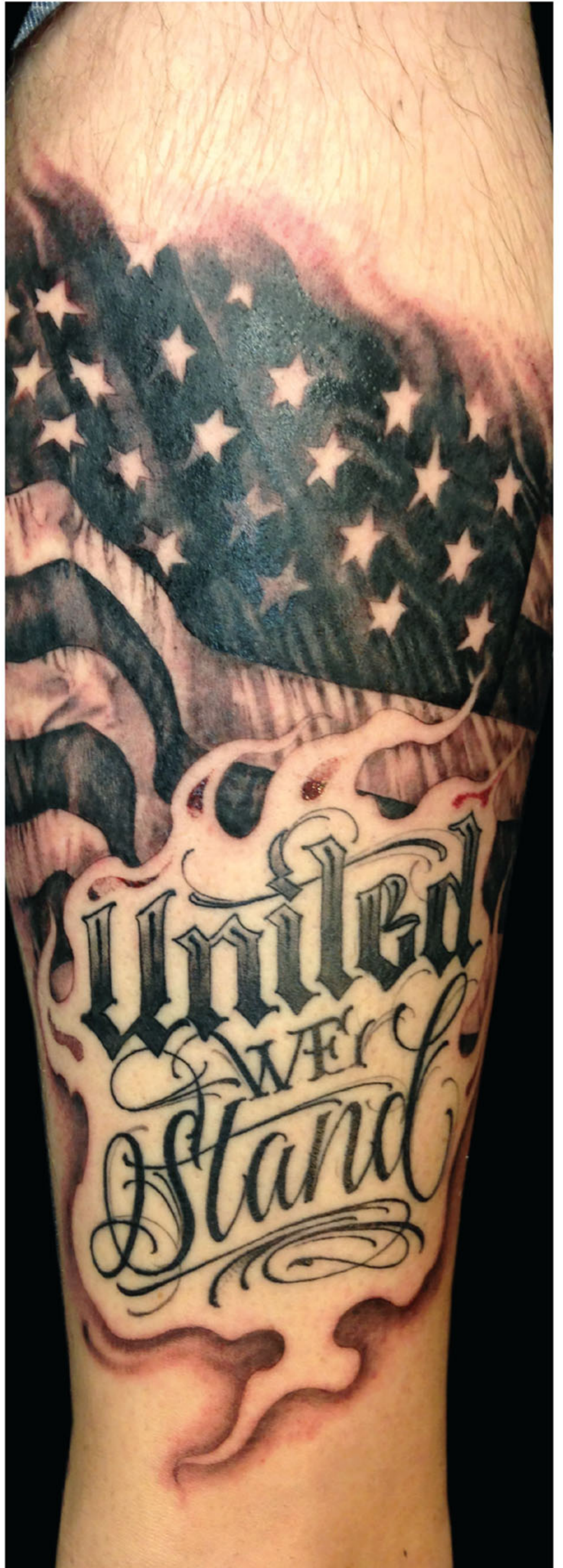
So you certainly aren't going to use the same font for "rage" and "flower," for example. Exactly. Or if you are doing a portrait of somebody's grandmother and you are writing her name underneath. A hard old English or LA gangbanger style might not be the right font to choose for her portrait. Unless grandma was some thugged out lady...

We've heard that other tattooers ask you for help with lettering from time to time.

There's this story I always tell about my buddy Bob Tyrrell. I've known Bob for almost as long as I've been tattooing. I used to see him at conventions and he would come up to me and say, "I've got this portrait to do, would you mind coming over and doing this name really quick?" After this had happened 20, 30, 40 fucking times I was thinking, come on Bob. How can you do that beautiful, amazing portrait and you can't do this lettering? So one year before a convention, I think that it was 2003 or so, I made this sketchbook. I took it to the convention, gave it to Bob and was like, here's how I do it, stop bugging me already (laughs). I was just doing it as a joke.

It's pretty great that you created your first sketchbook as a way to get Bob Tyrrell to leave you alone. (Laughs) It was more than just Bob, but he's the one that I like to use as the example. I have no problem stopping what I'm doing to draw out a quick name; I can do them relatively quickly. As much as I joke around about it, I'm absolutely honored that these guys not only want this from me, it's an honor to tattoo other tattooers. I get the important names of the kids or wife.







Los Angeles, CA @shawndbarber

For a period of time you were a part time instructor at a few colleges, but you seem to have stopped doing so. What made you decide to stop teaching? I've been teaching since 1999. I started in the institutional environment, but made the conscious decision to take a break from my career in education in 2006, around the time I started a tattoo apprenticeship. I've taught workshops actively since then around the world a few times a year and currently teach two days a week in Los Angeles at the Safehouse Atelier, for serious full and part time students interested in observational drawing and painting.

How did you make the transition from educator to tattooer? It was a very difficult transition for me at that specific time for many reasons. I think for my age, at 35, to switch careers was a bit of a challenge mentally and financially. I've always been an efficient multitasker, but the overwhelming density of learning to tattoo at that age was, at times, overwhelming, yet very humbling and inspiring. I was fortunate to meet, befriend and learn from many knowledgeable, passionate, dedicated tattooists who love the craft and appreciate its history and cherish the traditions of the past.

How did you get into tattooing? I started getting tattooed at 16 years old in Cortland, NY. I would draw flash and tattoos for the local tattooist in trade for tattoos. At the time, I was consumed with being a comic book inker and tattooing wasn't my focus. As time went on, I abandoned the dream to work in comics and fell in love with painting. I continued to get larger scale tattoos and appreciated the impact of new school tattooing throughout the 90's. My hometown friend, Bryan Bancroft had an enor-

mous impact on me and my work and encouraged me to consider tattooing as a craft. In early 2000, I painted a few portraits of tattooed friends and artists whose work I admired, and inevitably fell into tattooing as a professional pursuit. I shared a studio with an artist and tattooist, Henry Lewis, in San Francisco, above a gallery space that had a constant flow of tattooed artists visiting for exhibitions and fun. Henry had worked for a painter/tattooist, Mike Davis, who he suggested might be willing to help me learn the craft.

It is uncommon for a tattooer to have a degree in the arts, do you feel your education has helped you in tattooing?

I think by having an understanding of drawing, composition, color theory, anatomy and art business—there's a jumping off point that allowed my progress as a tattooist to excel in many ways, but was also a hurdle in many aspects. Tattooing is it's own craft. You make a mark in the skin, whatever type of mark you're trying to make, the second you break the skin, something is there. Whether it's a purposeful mark or a remnant of a timid scribble, it's a permanent reminder of that action. After being a professional artist for 15 years, to switch mediums and attempt to tattoo professionally, on a regular basis, was a very obvious reality check that tattooing is it's own art. It takes time to learn the craft—the mechanics of tattooing, the variables of human flesh as a surface, drawing something to compliment the body and consider the tattoo's lifetime on the individual—there is a lot to consider.

You have a number of commercial clients, including American Airlines, Converse, Target, and Scholastic Books, how did you become affiliated with these brands? I've

been a professional commercial illustrator since 1999. I started as an editorial illustrator, and the work grew into unexpected places with projects that have been interesting and life changing. I still do a little bit of commercial work a few times a year, mostly portraiture for college textbooks. Having this experience had definitely prepared me for the variables in requests in tattooing. I don't have any problems separating what is being made for someone else's needs and how to be efficient and content enough in doing my best with each assignment. I produce so much work, much of it for my own needs, that I've found a decent balance.

Many artists feel it's hard to find time to paint and tend to focus all of their time on making art for their tattoos. You on the other hand seem to have found time for both. How do you balance time for tattooing, art, and family? I've definitely found a balance through experience and having a life partner that gives me the space to do what's best for me. As artists, we are selfish in our need and desire to create. I've embraced this reality and don't apologize for my need to make pictures. It makes me happy and people seem to like the work enough at times that it affords me the flexibility to make work for commerce and also make a lot of work that never considers its own financial stability. I also have the freedom to keep unusual hours and have a working schedule that allows me to travel and experience more than I could have ever imagined. I love tattooing. I practice the craft; I make paintings about it's practitioners, pioneers and places; I give back to the community as much as I can through teaching and being an example of someone who genuinely loves everything about tattooing.









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Brooklyn, NY @tamarasantibanez

Your tattoo style gives us that West coast black and grey feel, are you influenced by Chicano art?

I am hugely influenced by Chicano art. Even though it wasn't very present in the region I grew up in, the more I saw of it the more it resonated with me culturally. Buying work from Chicano artists, following Chicano tattooers, collecting *Lowrider* and *Teen Angels* magazines, and reading about Chicano history and politics are all very important ways for me to connect with my Chicana identity.

You recently took part in Javier Betancourt's "This Is Meant To Hurt You" exhibition in Miami, can you tell us a little bit about the exhibition and what made you want to take part?

Javier is a good friend and the show he organized was such a cool concept—taking over a seedy Miami motel and turning each room into a mini gallery space for artists to show work. I was excited to participate especially as my longtime friend Daniel Albrigo was one of the other artists showing. Javier is so thoughtful in the way he plans things and every aspect of the event was carefully put together to compliment the magazine he published. He even had custom scents created so that each section of the book and corresponding room of the motel had a fragrance to help set the mood.

Your contribution to the show was a series of ballpoint tees, why did you choose this medium?

I first made the ballpoint t-shirts a few years ago when I was just beginning to try to combine punk art with Chicano art. The decision to use ballpoint on white tees was both in reference to inmates making paño arte and disenfranchised teenagers drawing with pens on their notebooks in class. I was trying to

combine multiple aspects of who I am by redrawing shirts I own now or owned when I was young, especially as the process is very time consuming. I saw it as paying homage and showing dedication to both cultures I was looking towards.

How did you get into tattooing?

I was very much a crust punk and in a DIY scene then, and the first few tattoos I both gave and got were stick-and-poke and homemade tattoos. I was living in punk houses and seeing homemade tattoos done all the time, and also had friends who were apprenticing to tattoo. I was doing amateur tattoos but once I was old enough to legally get professionally tattooed, seeing things done that way made me want to learn how to really tattoo properly.

What was your first shop experience like?

The first shop I worked at was Three Kings Tattoo, which happened in a surreal way. I knew some of the guys there from doing some screenprinting for them, and they happened to see a tattoo I did on a friend. They called me and asked if I wanted to come work at the shop, starting by appointment and charging the shop minimum for everything. I did that for about six months before starting to take walk-ins. It was an intimidating experience to say the least. The shop had such reputable and experienced artists and a very high volume of walk-ins so it was a lot to jump into. Looking back now I'm so grateful it happened that way.

How have you branched out from tattooing?

I've been doing more non-tattoo related artwork over the last couple of years. I've also begun publishing zines and artist books, including a compilation of work from New York punk

artists, a collection of interviews I conducted with artists whose work deals with the body in various ways, and a zine I compiled of every reference to kink throughout the entire *Law & Order SVU* TV series.

Your artwork, both on canvas and skin, seems to be heavily influenced by BDSM, what inspires you about this subculture?

It's a subculture I am a part of and I didn't feel like I was seeing it represented in tattooing. That's changed now, but initially most of the tattoos I was seeing either were from or looked like they were done in the 80s. In my work I am interested in exploring how materials change the way we respond to a subject. Particularly in tattooing as there are a lot of themes we see over and over, there was a lot of places I could do that. A hand wearing a leather glove holding a rose reads very differently than a bare hand holding a rose. I was interested in what story that would tell and who would want to wear one tattoo versus the other. There has also been a shift in who feels comfortable getting that type of imagery tattooed and labeling themselves in that way. I tattoo a lot of punks and fetishists and people in the sex industry and it feels good to give people tattoos that represent who they are.

You have one of the sickest door knocker earring collections we have ever seen, have you considered branching out and making your own jewelry line?

I started going to school for fashion in the beginning so I'm definitely interested in style and design, but it's not where I'm interested in dedicating my time right now. I'd be open to collaborating with a jewelry brand but right now I'm more focused on tattooing, making artwork and publishing zines and books.



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Cambridge, MA @noble1

A subject matter that you clearly excel at is traditionally inspired portraiture, mostly of women. Tell us a little bit about what it takes to make one of these portraits perfectly. What elements do you focus on, where do you draw inspiration from, etc. I approach my Girlheads, as well as all my pieces, with the philosophy of less is more. Simplified designs that will hold up over time and age well. I focus on the features as well as the hair. Many tattooers often blow the design by not making the hair an integral part of the design. I try to pull a lot of reference from older starlet mags from the early 20's-30's.

Going off of that, can you tell us a bit about the *Look of Love* book that you created? I created the *Look of Love* book to be a simple guide to making Girlhead tattoos easier to approach. All the info is there for artists to create a good tattoo. The line work is ready to go. Shading and color are clearly demonstrated in the color version but can be changed if desired.

You still create your own flash, a tradition that seems to be falling by the wayside as the years go by. Tell us why you think it is important to keep up this tradition? How does painting flash help you as a tattooer? I like painting flash basically as an exercise to keep me sharp at what I do. It's almost therapeutic. You can work out ideas on paper before going

into the skin. Try new options and color schemes.

When did you start tattooing and what was your first shop experience like? I started tattooing in 1996. I had two mutual friends from high school who were tattooing and they brought me in. My first shop experience was tough. Summer months were incredibly busy then fall, winter and spring were super slow. Very hard to grow and learn from mistakes in an environment like that.

Do you have any special training? As far as special training I went to college for graphic design and computer art, some of that transfers over to tattooing.

Do you plan on doing any conventions this year? I'm dialing back my convention schedule this year quite a bit. I have done so many in my career and need to stay in one place and concentrate on some projects that I need to get out of my head. I love conventions but the travel and time away from home have gotten to me.

What led you to work in Traditional? I gravitated to traditional style out of necessity. When I was traveling in Europe I had to simplify my designs to fit more clients in my travel schedule and traditional style lends for faster, more efficient time management.

How do you think Traditional tattooing

has evolved since it first started? Where do you see it going? It has evolved to a degree but true traditional needs to maintain a certain amount of its original look to really be traditional. Ha ha, honestly I have no idea where it's going. I try not to think about the future of tattooing.

In your eyes, what makes a good tattoo? So much goes into a good tattoo. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder. What I like might not be universally adopted as a good tattoo.

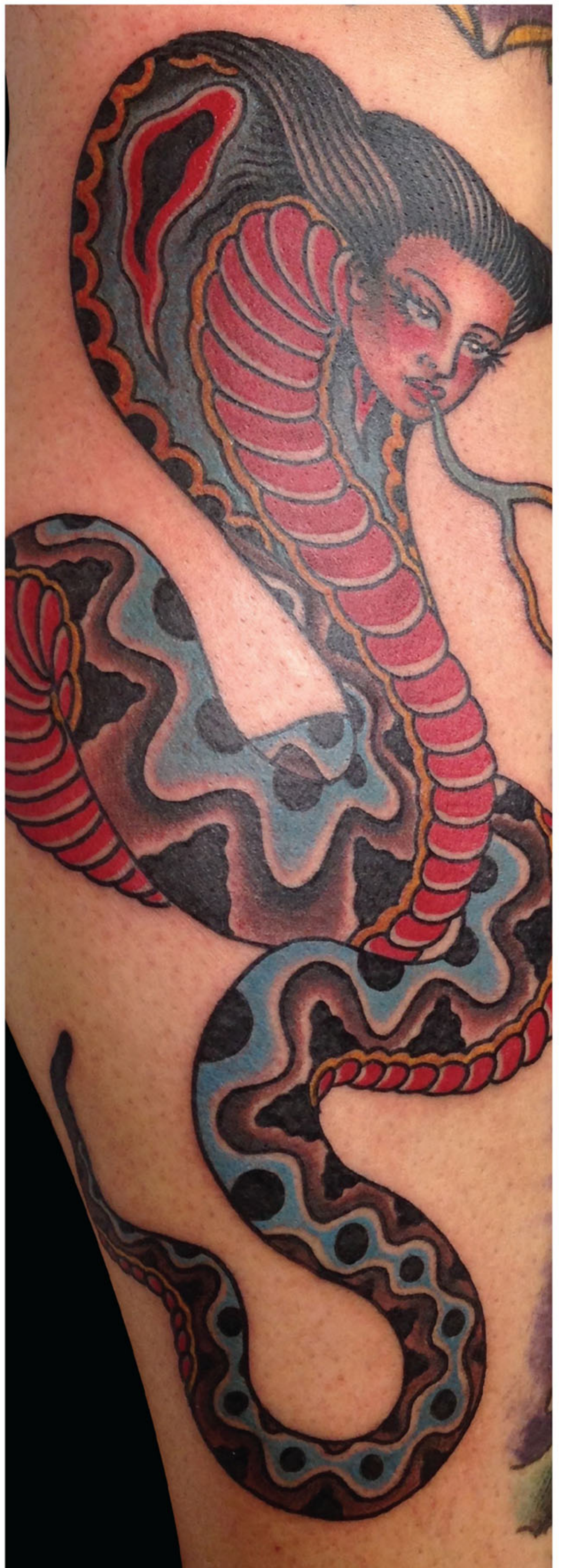
What sets you apart from other artists? My work has its own look, I think. Unique to me. I think that's important for any art form. To set your work apart from others.

What artists do you admire most? Mike Wilson, Grime, Yutaro, Henry Lewis, BJ Betts, Regino Gonzales, Ed Hardy, Steve Boltz and Steve Byrne

What advice do you give people before they get their first tattoo? Do your research. Don't follow the herd. Get what you want and find the artist who can make what you want.

Is there a tattoo that you have been dying to do but haven't had the chance? Funny I've been dying to do a Girlhead back piece. I see them being done all the time but I've never been asked to do one.





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Norco, CA @vetoe

While you tattoo primarily black and grey pieces, you also can bust out some traditional or lettering. Tell us a bit about why you think it's important to be well rounded as a tattooer? At heart I'm a street shop tattooer, it's important in a street shop when you are coming up to know all styles. By knowing all styles you don't have to pass anything to anyone else, or have a client leave the shop to go to another shop to get tattooed. I pride myself on being well rounded, what's the fun in a one trick pony? If you're gonna do Japanese, do it as a hori would. If you're gonna do traditional, make it look like it just came out of Smith St. If you're gonna do black and gray, treat it as it was touched by a black and gray master... so on and so on. Doing it is one thing, doing it right is a whole other story. I'm still learning and trying my best, you never master this, you only open up to what new things you accept to learn.

Building off of that last question, ultimately why do you think you chose black and grey as your go to style? That's where my heart was always at. As a kid growing up in Southern Cali, seeing cholo prison tats, and being influenced by the lifestyle. My nickname as a kid was Lil' Casper. I carried that handle proud, later moving into graffiti and really being in the streets heavy as a young teen and early 20's. The streets is what I knew. Everyone I knew had black and gray work. Being ignorant to tattooing I wanted to be the white MR. CARTOON without realizing there was a whole world of white black and gray tattooers. I enjoy that black and gray is not one thing, with portrait, realism, hyper realism, the more dark/evil style, European style, fine line, traditional

based black and gray, etc. The possibilities are so open, and I feel if it's done right it can last.

One thing I noticed when going through your work was that you do a lot of hand and head tattoos, an area of the body that some tattooers shy away from doing. Given the visibility of such pieces do you feel any added pressure when tattooing those locations? Do you have a code as to who you will tattoo in those locales? Of course, and I think everyone should have rules regarding this. I was taught if someone is heavily tattooed then you can do it. If they are 18 strongly advise them not to do it, we are not into ruining lives at our shop. If it's a tattooer, then OK. If they are covered, then OK. But take what you are doing seriously, be responsible in your craft and be responsible with your client and advise and prepare the tattoo the right way. DON'T USE A 9 LINER ON SOME KID'S FACE. We all know what that will turn into in 10 years. If the person is established and has a career and is heavily tattooed then I see no harm. Make it last. Make it clean. And for the record, I didn't always feel this way. I messed up a lot, but I learned the hard way and I'm man enough to say it.

What was your first shop experience like? I got a call at like 1am from a tattooer named Sailor Mike, asking me to meet him right then at a shop in Corona. I thought it was a setup, but I went and got the job. It was a shitty street shop owned by a non-tattooer, and I honestly owe everything to that shop. All the guys were drunks, and there was a bar next door, so I was always alone, getting stuck there doing

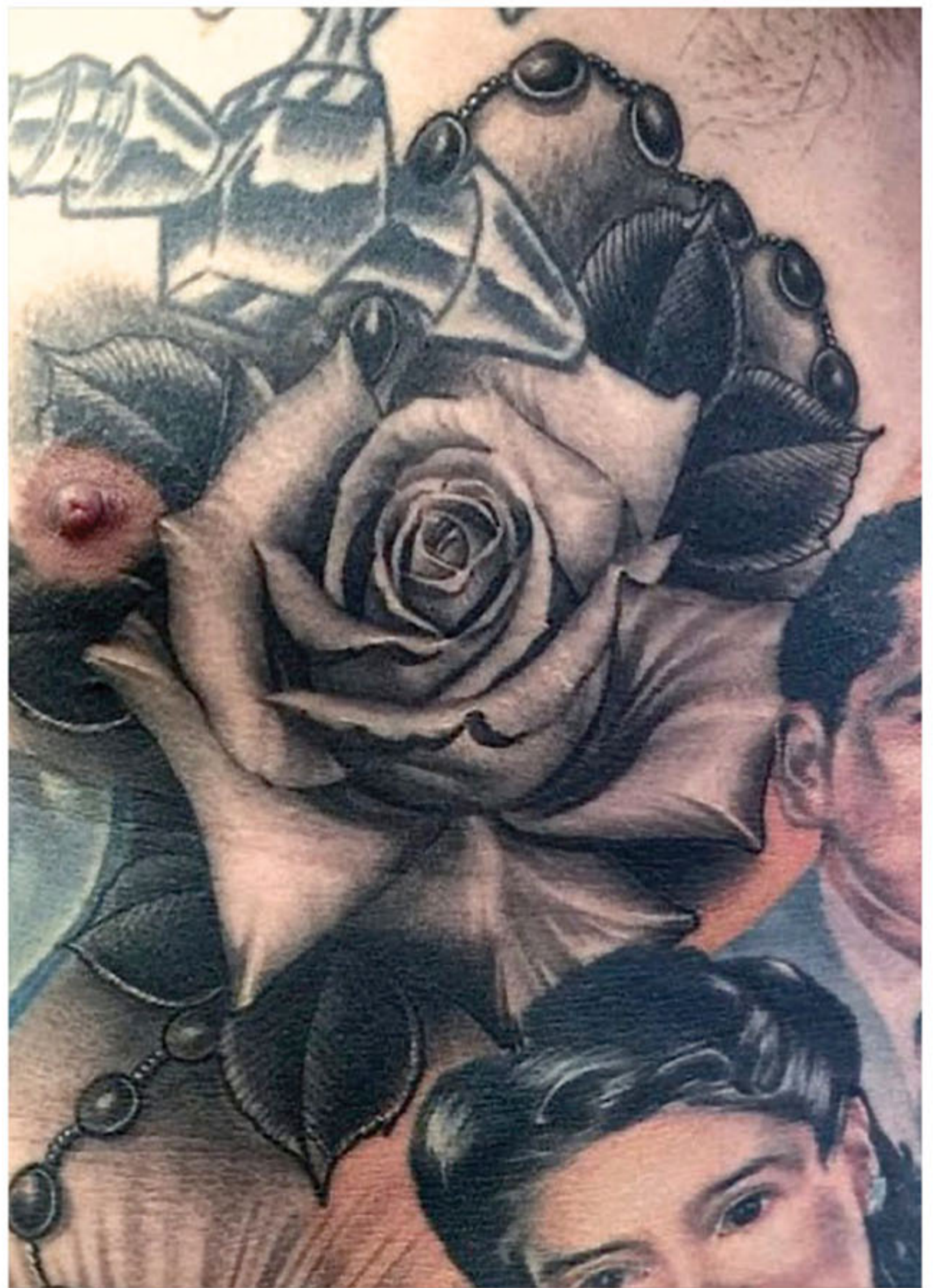
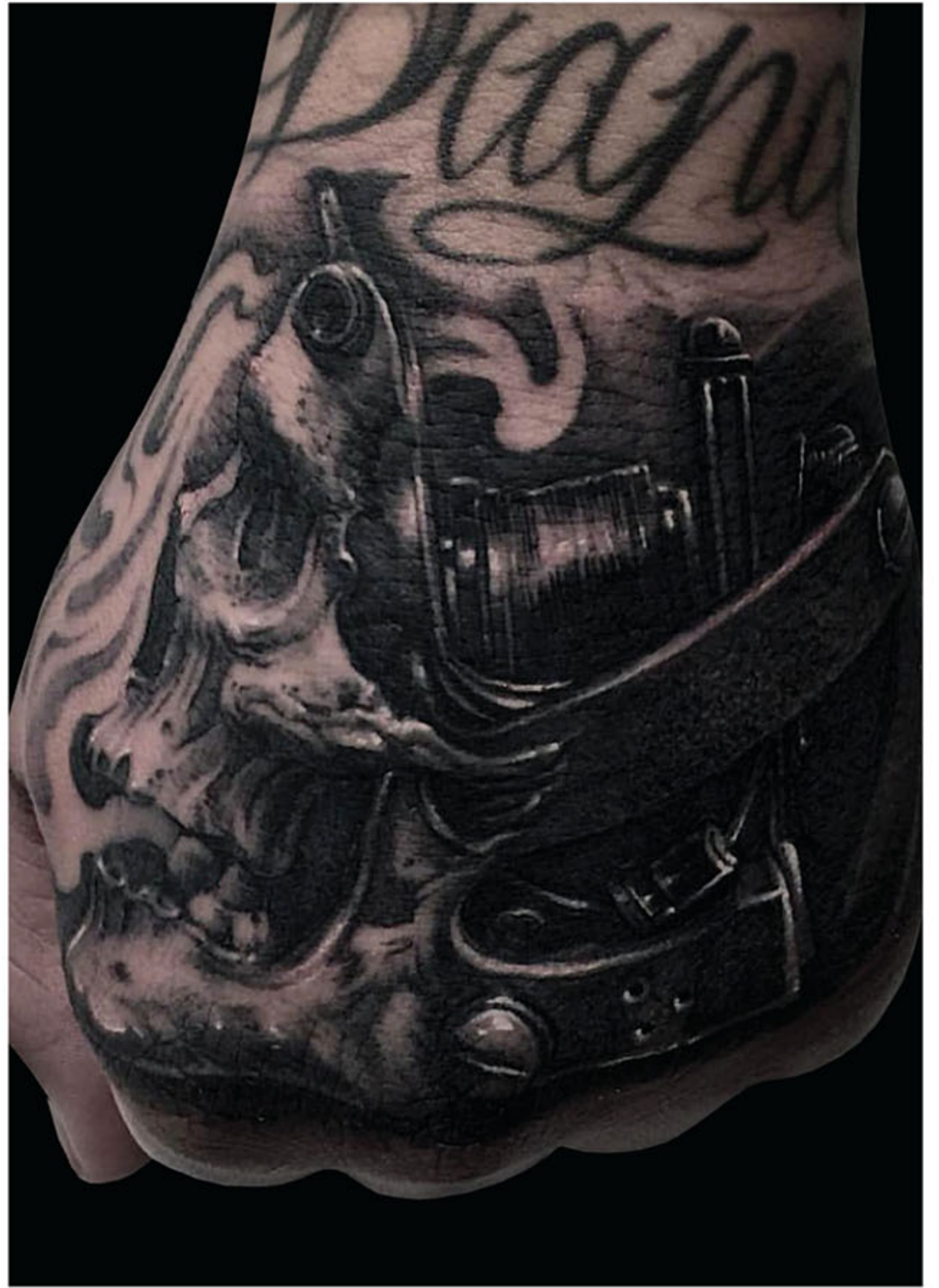
like 7 tattoos a day of all sizes, not knowing what the fuck I was doing. Some good times, good fights, good people... and some shitty ones.

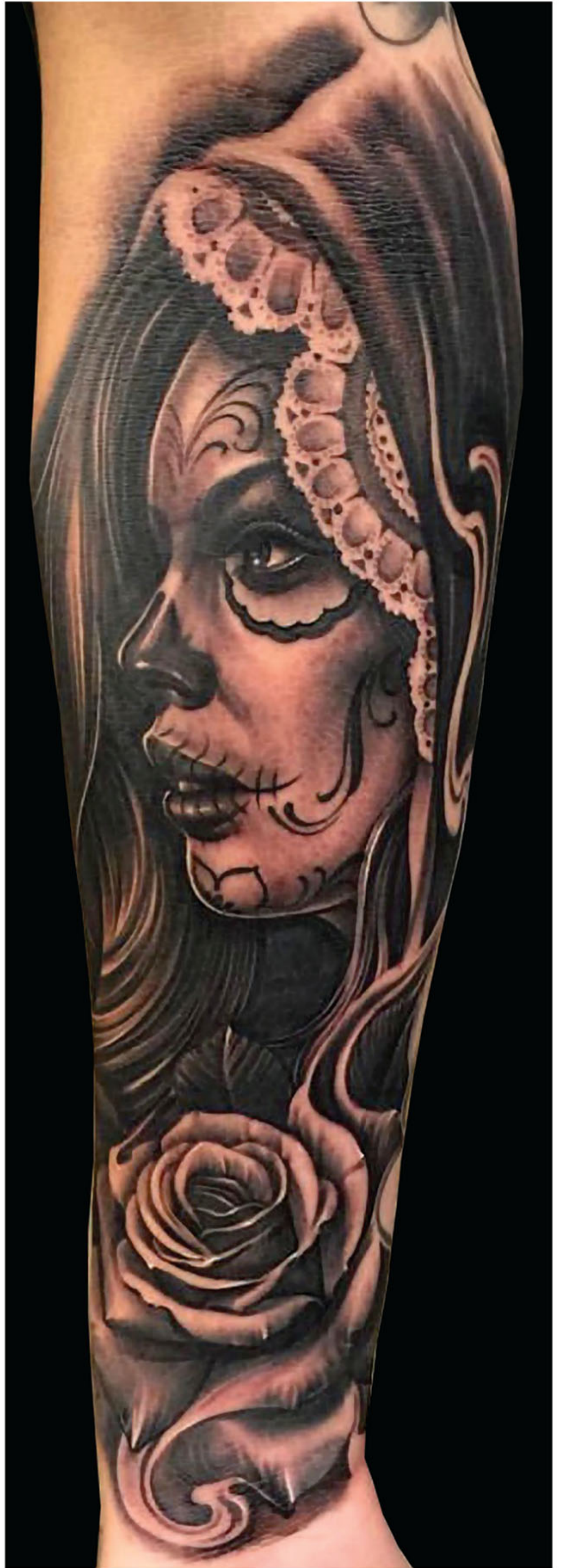
What are the major differences between color and b/g pieces? Good question. I think your overall approach. There is a way to make color last, I don't like color realism much, I like the way it looks when it's done well, but not for me. I like a tattoo in color to be a tattoo—bold, powerful, strong. I think color is harder, you have a few tones in black and gray, and with color you have that many tones per color, and having to know color theory and contrast colors. I'll do Japanese or traditional color but doing 30 colors in a 4-3inch piece ain't for me.

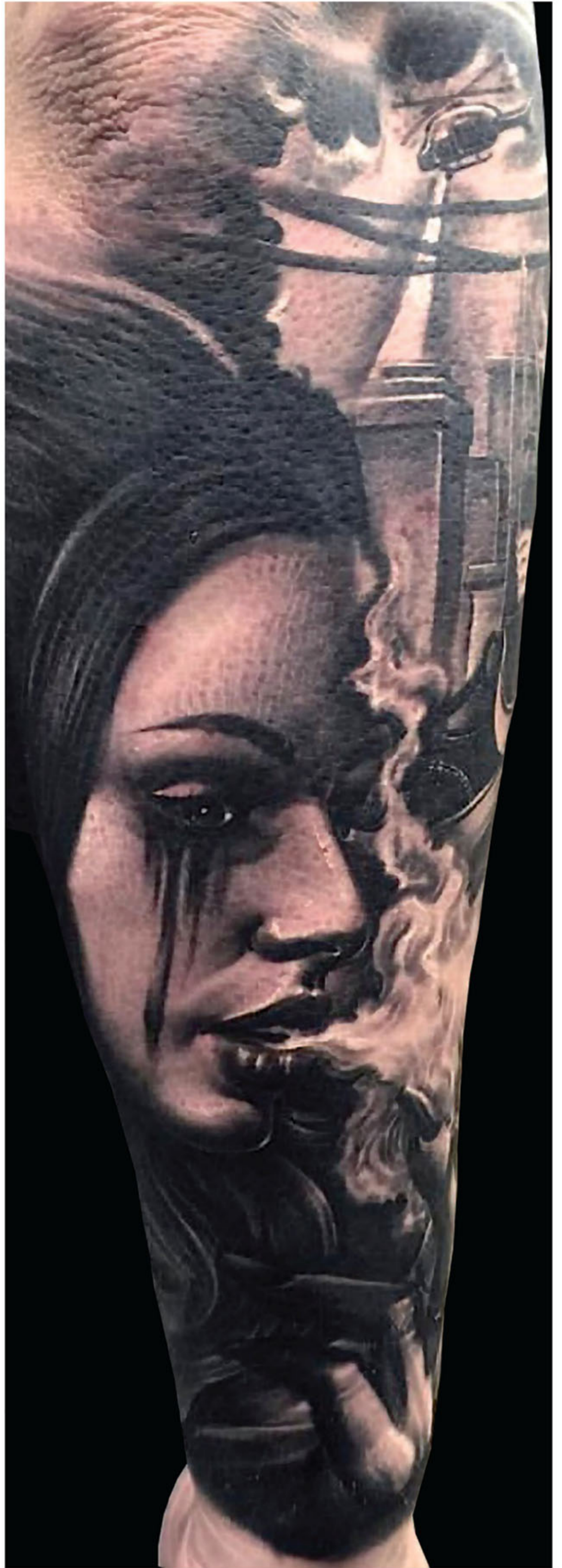
What inspires you as an artist? I could be corny and say what everyone else probably will, but instead I'm gonna say my depression. I'm a complicated person, I'm learning that over the years, but it fuels me to get better. My insecurities force me to keep progressing, to matter, to truly matter. Not for ego or fame, but just for the sake of telling everyone who didn't believe in me "fuck you." I just wanna matter... it's a dumb reason but it's the truth.

Just a silly sports question, but I've noticed that you have done a few Dodgers tattoos and appear to be quite the fan. Would you ever give a client a Giants tattoo? First of all, GO DODGERS!! But yeah, I don't care either way. I got a boy Ronnie Lopez from El Monte of all places who's a huge Giants fan, go figure... I'll talk some shit but do the tattoo for sure (laughs).











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Brooklyn, NY @bertkrak

Tell us a bit about your shop, Smith Street Tattoo Parlor, and how you came to open it. Steve Boltz and I opened the shop in 2008. He was living in Carroll Gardens at the time. We saw an ad for the space in a deli, went and checked it out and we decided it was a good look. Eli Quinters was there from the beginning and helped us build the shop. Dan Santoro started a year later.

How did you develop your style and do you ever stray from it? Good teachers and good reference—that's where

my style came from. I'm only trying to keep it classic.

Do you have any advice for new artists? Get tattooed by your favorite tattooers. Don't spend all your money on drugs. Tell the truth. Be respectful.

What year did you start tattooing? September 2000.

How did you get into tattooing? I did a two year apprenticeship with Dave Poole at Rockabilly Tattoo in Lauderhill, Florida.

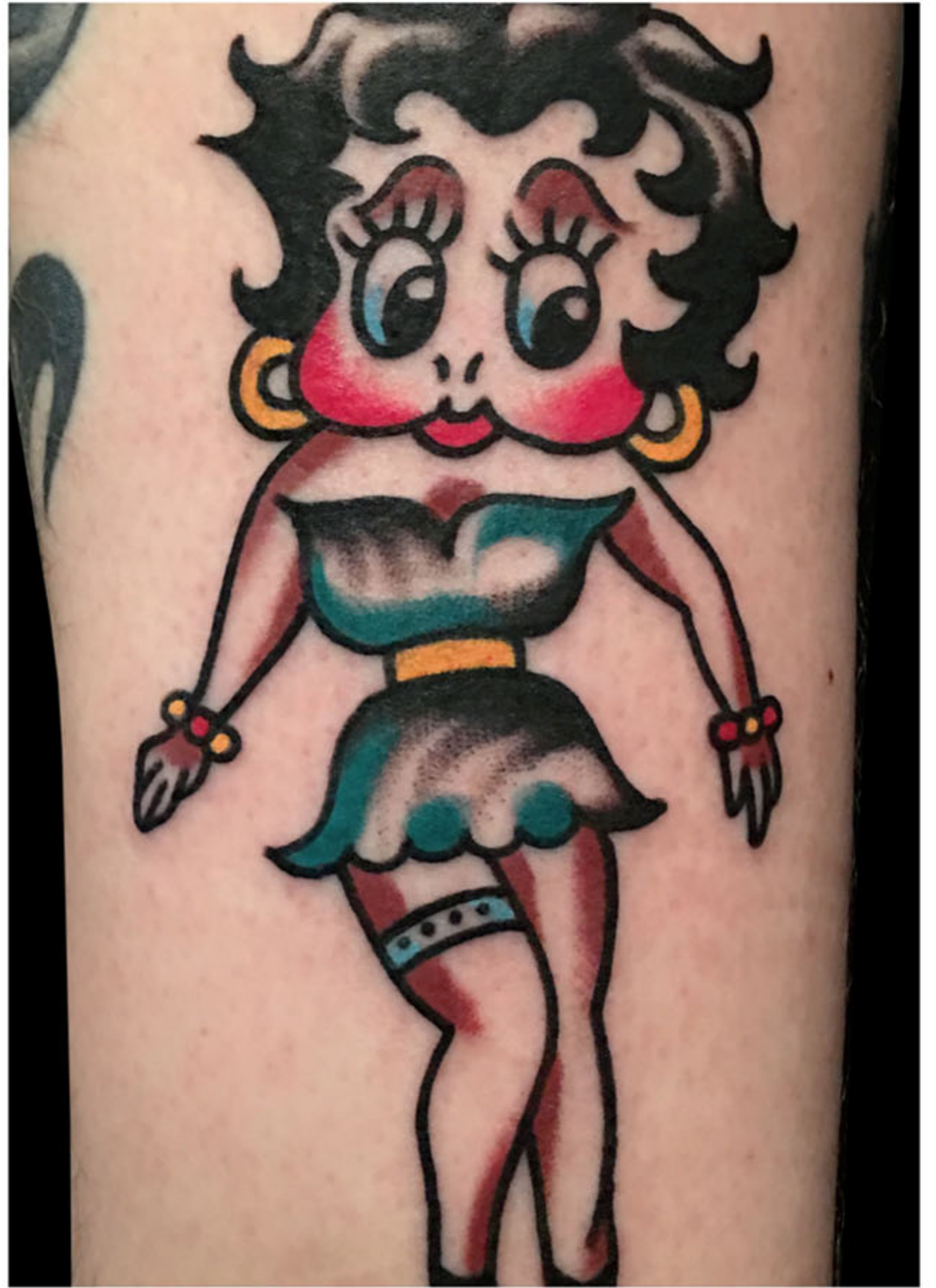
What was your first shop experience like? It was a busy street shop in South Florida.

What makes a good tattoo? A good tattoo idea and some good skin.

What inspires you as an artist? Nature and television.

What tattoo artists do you admire most? Bob Roberts, Ed Hardy and Tony Polito









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San Francisco, CA @the_grime

What year did you start tattooing?

On October 11, 1993 I did my first full tattoo. I did a little coloring in on my buddy Chris Rupp's wrist, who taught me how to tattoo about a year after that.

How did you get into tattooing?

I was always a bit fascinated by tattooing and was a creative kid. When I was about 15 I had told friends that I wanted to become a tattooer.

You grew up in Colorado, learned to tattoo in Arizona while attending Arizona State University, then made the move to California. Why did you choose to make a life/career for yourself San Francisco?

For me, it was the mecca of tattooing at that time. Nearly every person whose work I had been inspired by to become a tattooer worked there. And when Marcus gave me a chance to work in SF with him at Primal Urge I jumped at it!

How has your style changed since you started tattooing?

Thankfully it has become a lot better. I have a much better understanding of tattoo history and its lexicon, and my own abilities have greatly improved.

What led you to work primarily in color?

I've always been drawn to color and its power to dazzle the eye, create mood and space.

When do you find yourself working in black and grey?

When the client requests that or when the project

seems to call for it.

Do you find one style more difficult than the other?

I would guess color work is a little more challenging for me.

What are some of the major subject matters you like to tattoo?

I would say I enjoy dragons, skulls, mythological figures/gods, skulls, etc. Typical child-like male imagery (laughs).

Can you tell us a little about Black Claw?

It's a company that Seth Ciferri and I own and operate. Us two and a single employee. That's it. We were tired of the mediocre to terrible quality of the pre-made needle offerings that we had been using and knew that it was possible to change that and bring real, high quality needles to market that mimicked the quality and styles we used to make ourselves.

How did you get into racing motorcycles? Would you consider making it a full time career?

It was an extension of my fascination and enjoyment of racing cars. But when I was very young, around 8 years old, I yearned for a YZ-80 so badly, but my family could not afford one. I never had a motorcycle when I was young but always enjoyed riding my friends' when I had the chance. I haven't actually raced my motorcycle, I just ride a ton of track days. I do it because it's a giant departure from the art side of my life and I really enjoy pushing myself and expanding my comfort level on them. Full time career? Well, I'm too

slow to earn a dime so, no (laughs). I'd be broke.

What inspires you as an artist?

Other artists, happenings, literature.

What sets you apart from other artists?

If there is something that does, I would say it's my point of view toward my art.

What other mediums do you work in?

Illustration, Paint, sculpture, writing.

How have you branched out from tattooing?

I am better understanding my desire to make art that isn't rooted in the tattoo language. I have studied intensely the past twenty plus years. Better understanding my goals with my art that isn't designed for tattoo consumption. I'm excited about it.

What tattoo artists do you admire most?

Those who have their own point of view, who push the tattoo boundaries and create work that is unexpected and inspired and inspiring.

What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing?

Bold, powerful, dynamic and unique work.

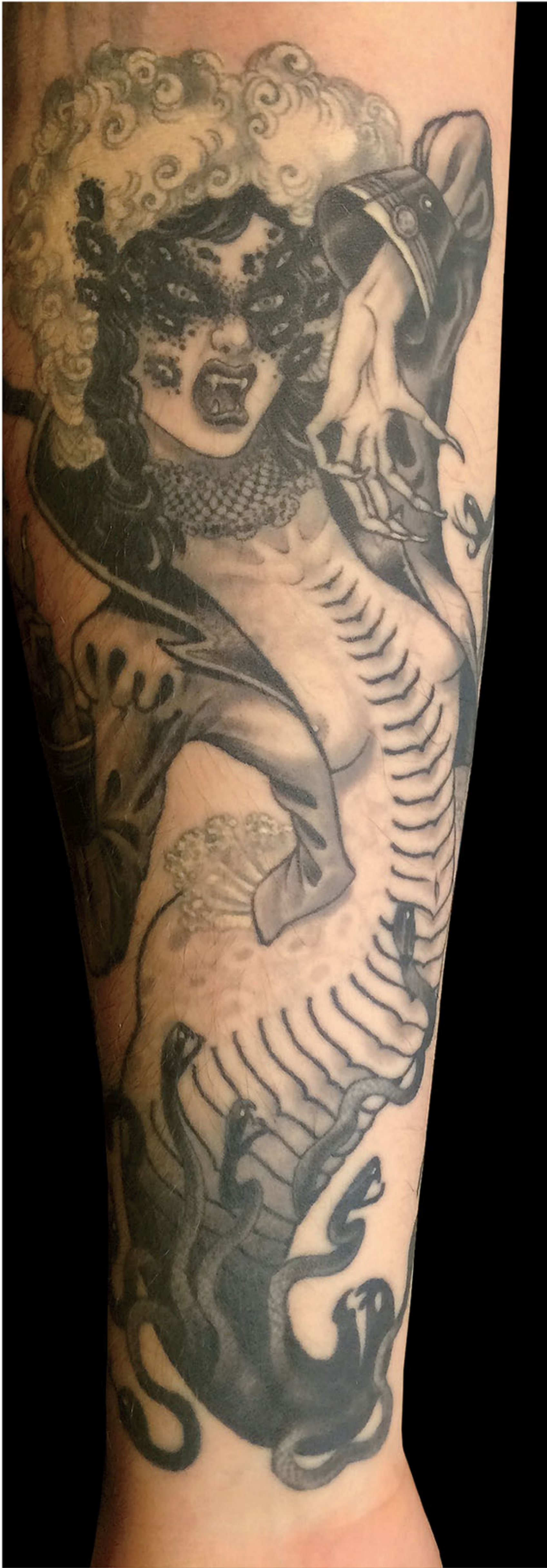
Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give them?

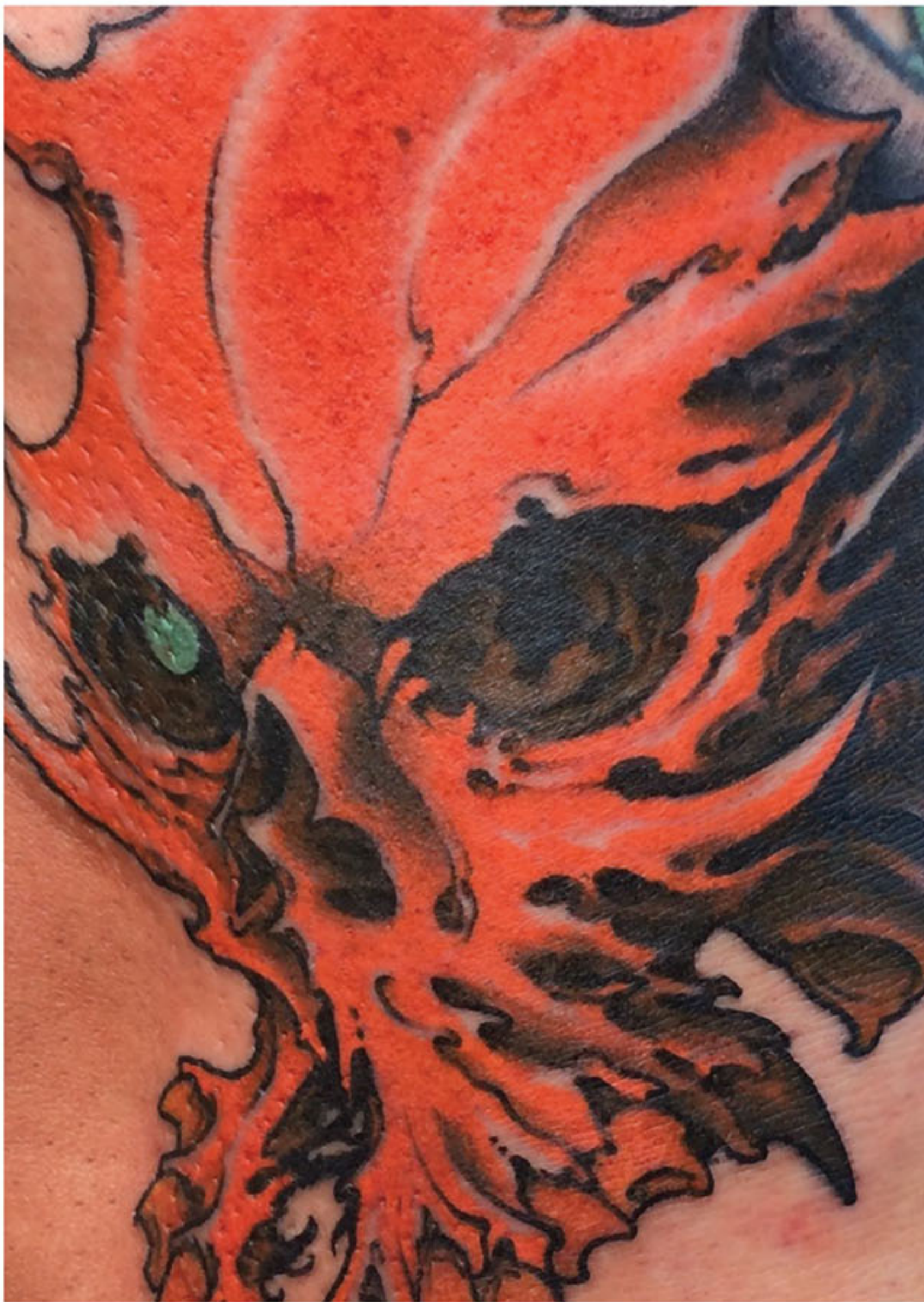
Hold still and keep a steady breath rate.

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

No, because my tattoo dreams are waiting on me... I am not waiting on them.









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Tattoo artist Rember Orellana has developed a style best described as surrealistic gothic. He worked with Eternal Ink to perfect this set of his signature ink hues. The 10 color set includes a four-step sepia group calibrated to create smooth transitions, a pair of rich wine hues, a trio of warm sun-soaked earth tones, and the unique Southwest Blue to complement the palette.



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HENRY Lewis

San Francisco, CA @henrylewis77

Your style is so eclectic with so many different elements visible within it. Is there any one term you would use to describe it? I think the best way to describe my style would be Illustrative heavily based in traditional Americana iconography laced with Japanese structure. My friends and I came up with a term for it... "Baroque as fuck."

Furthermore, why is it important to draw inspiration from so many different styles of tattooing? Is this a conscious effort you make? Most definitely it is a conscious decision to visually show what I've learned because I believe if you are drawing blind with little to no structure the design ultimately comes across weak in the long run. So the more research the better the whole project comes out in the end.

You are not just a tattooer but also a painter. What skills do you use in your painting that you learned from tattooing and vice versa? Do you attack paintings in a different way than you would a tattoo? Well, mostly painting lends itself to tattooing when I'm working on tattooing the human figure. Painting allows me to add more depth in portrait work to make the image more believable in my under base when I'm doing the illustrative style. And yes, I also love the release of painting as a form of expressionism to break away from the tedium and stress of tattooing perfection. I like to approach my paintings these days differently, in the past I was more of an illustrative painter and now I find that

slightly boring. I'm interested in how I'm evolving as a painter currently if that makes any sense.

Considering you tattoo in so many different styles, what are the sorts of pieces that you really look forward to doing? Is there a style that you prefer over the others, or one that you find to be especially challenging? I LOVE TATTOOING! I'm really excited to work on the bigger projects these days. I have a few body suits in the works that I've been working on and I'm pushing in that direction, however it is not the traditional idea of what you might think of a bodysuit. But that's to come, so stay tuned.

I love most themes. I like doing beautiful things as well as blood, guts and fire trucks—you know just a good challenge but I also share the same fondness for classic tattoo themes. The challenging part is to push on the client's idea to give them more than what they expected and then some!

What was your first shop experience like? It was amazing! Everything was new to me, it was dangerous taboo and the most punk rock thing I could do at the time. I was 17 and on my lunch breaks and all my free time I would save up my dimes and hang out at Incognito Tattoo in Pasadena

What are some of the major subject matters you like to tattoo? I don't know. People tend to like the female figures I do. I try not to push bad ideas on

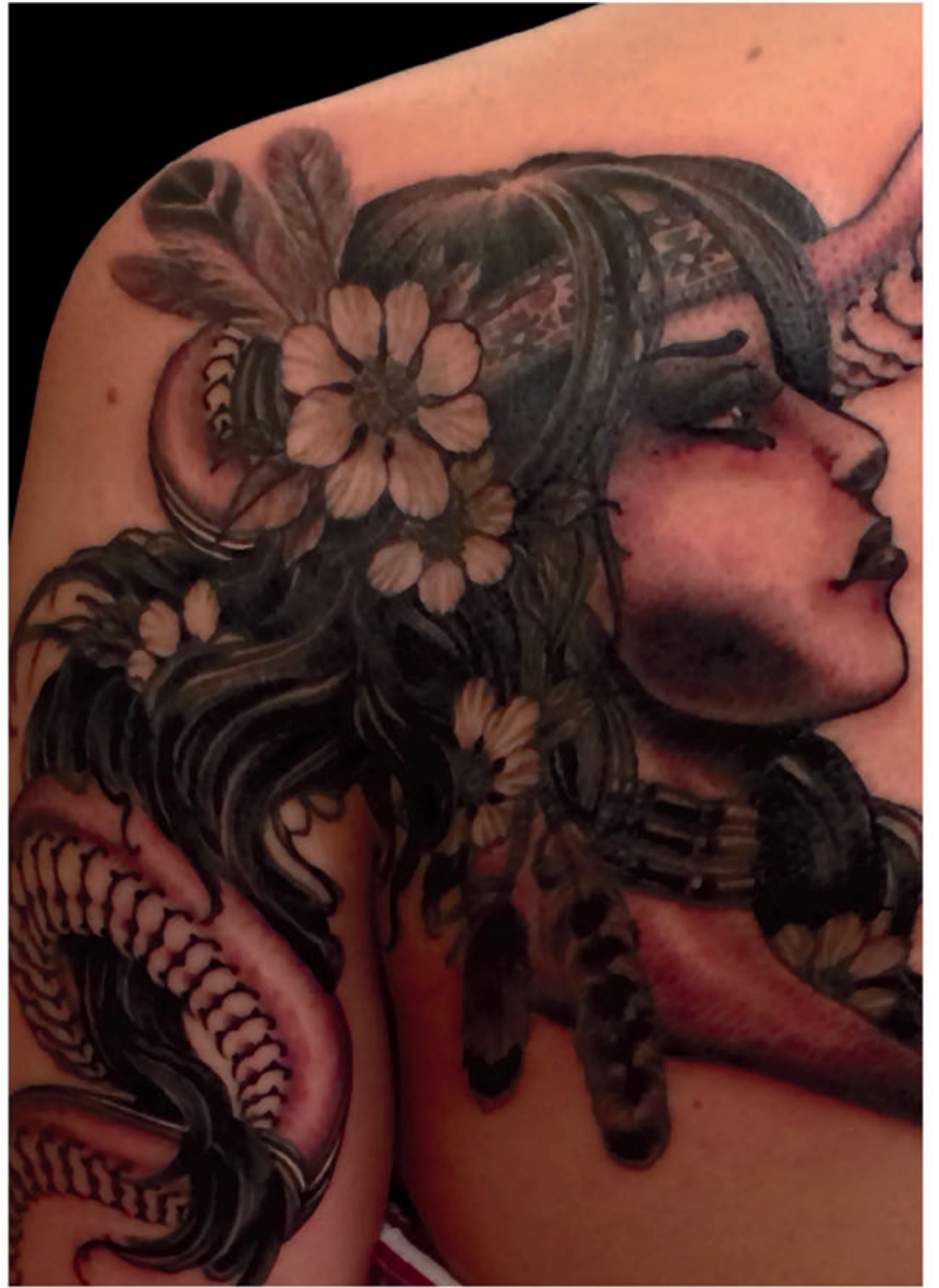
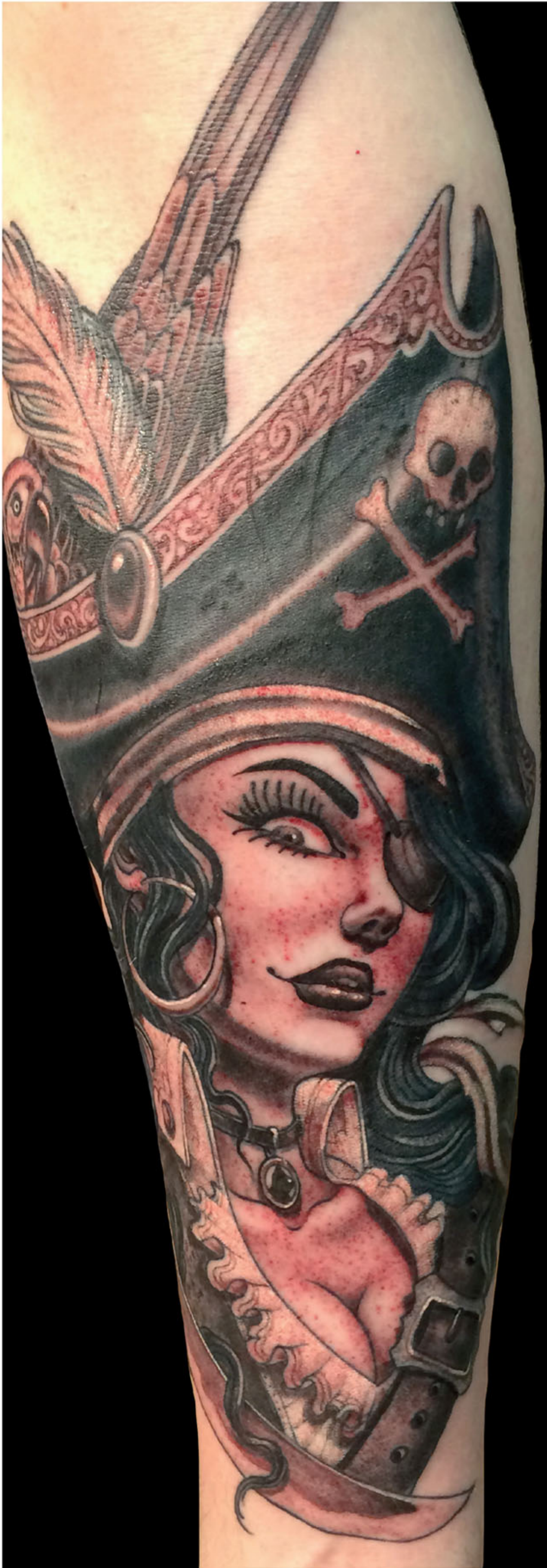
people. Give me all the daggers, script, visceral animals, dragons, and babes that you have!

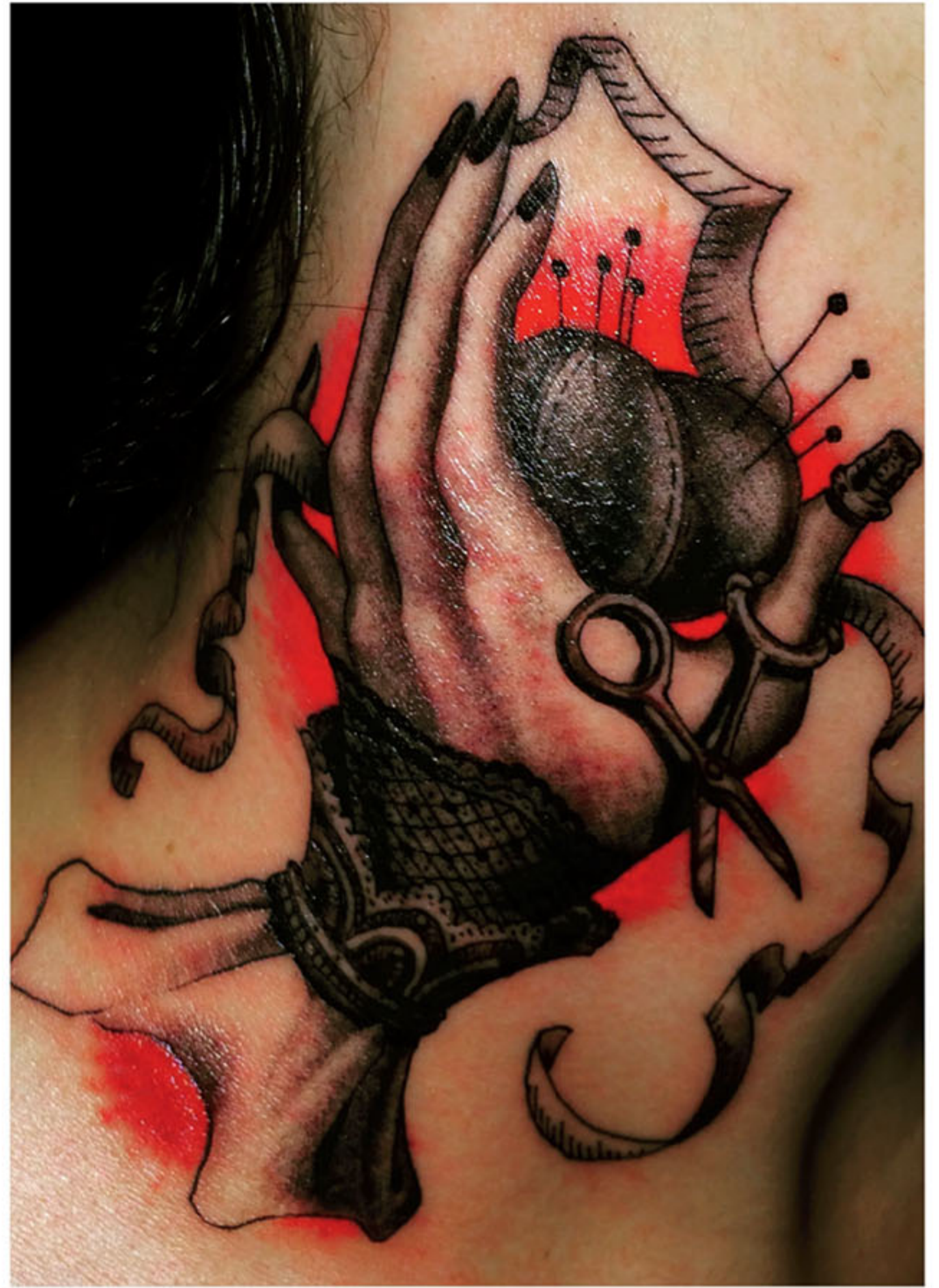
As someone who is deep into the tattooing and art scenes of San Francisco, can you tell us a bit about what the scene is like out there? A lot has been made about how unaffordable the city has become in recent years (even though it was never cheap), has this had an effect on artists? Well I can tell you that San Francisco is still Tattoo City. I feel most fortunate to know all of the amazing tattooers I've met over the years here in the city and in Oakland that continue to push me. I like to think we keep each other on our toes. One of my favorite things to see when a collector comes in is to see a new tattoo from another shop here in the city and the artist did a great job... it makes me wanna work harder.

As for the city, things happen in cycles and a lot of my painter illustrator artist friends moved on, or better yet, got pushed out of the city, after this tech boom. I think the sad part of this city tech stimulus is that they aren't participating in the arts. It's hard to watch a bohemian art city change practically overnight and maybe that's why artists are moving on to greener pastures.

What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing? All of them! Seriously. I have some new ideas I'd like to execute but they are all very specific. It might come across a little vague but I have beautiful big things to come.









Haverhill, UK @danmolloytattooer

You are most well known for your portraiture work, how did you come to specialize in that style? I took up portraiture originally as an exercise to learn to understand faces, I never intended to specialize in portraiture. You learn a lot of subtle techniques and tricks to drawing faces for tattoos from having to recreate recognizable faces and images. I had a really hard time drawing faces at one point, and I was always trying to challenge myself so I drilled everything that I thought was difficult until they became some of my stronger points. The portraits became popular quickly though, and now about half of all the tattoos I do are portraits.

What are the most difficult parts of creating a portrait tattoo? Are there special challenges that you do not find in other tattoos? I approach tattoos in all styles in different ways, in terms of machine set-ups, line weights, and the overall process. I won't get too technical, but the point that stands out to me is that portraiture is essentially recreation. It doesn't take a lot of creativity; it's more of a technical exercise. Subtle differences from the reference image can make a portrait look nothing like who it is meant to look like, so there is very little room for error.

You've done at least a few portraits on your wife. Is there an added amount of pressure tattooing a loved one? And did you demand the *Black Mass* Johnny Depp since he's at his least attractive in that movie? (Laughs) Lucy will likely end up with more Johnny Depp characters on her before long, she's obsessed! There

is always pressure tattooing anybody who is close to me, but once I get into the tattoo it's always essentially the same and I relax. Kinda the same thing when I tattoo other tattooers that I really respect. I'm usually nervous until I start tattooing, then it's all business.

What motivates your choice to do a portrait in black and grey instead of color? The source photo or something else about tone? Usually I leave the decision up to the client. When I was in Australia very few clients wanted black and grey tattoos from me, but since I got to the UK I've been doing a lot more. I occasionally, but very rarely, have a strong preference either way. It all depends on the image and the individual getting the tattoo.

When you aren't tattooing pop culture portraits your work tends to lean towards the traditional, tell us a bit about jumping between the two different styles. What skills from each style translate over to the other? It's always been important to me to be able to draw and tattoo whatever comes in the door, and do it technically and professionally. Regardless of what style I'm tattooing in, my first thought is always the longevity of the piece. That's why my work has a traditional feel to it. I believe the black lines and shading will keep a tattoo looking strong long after time has taken its toll on the white and the colors. We've all heard the same sentiment a million times from a million different tattooers, but that's because it's true

Facial tattoos are a subject of much

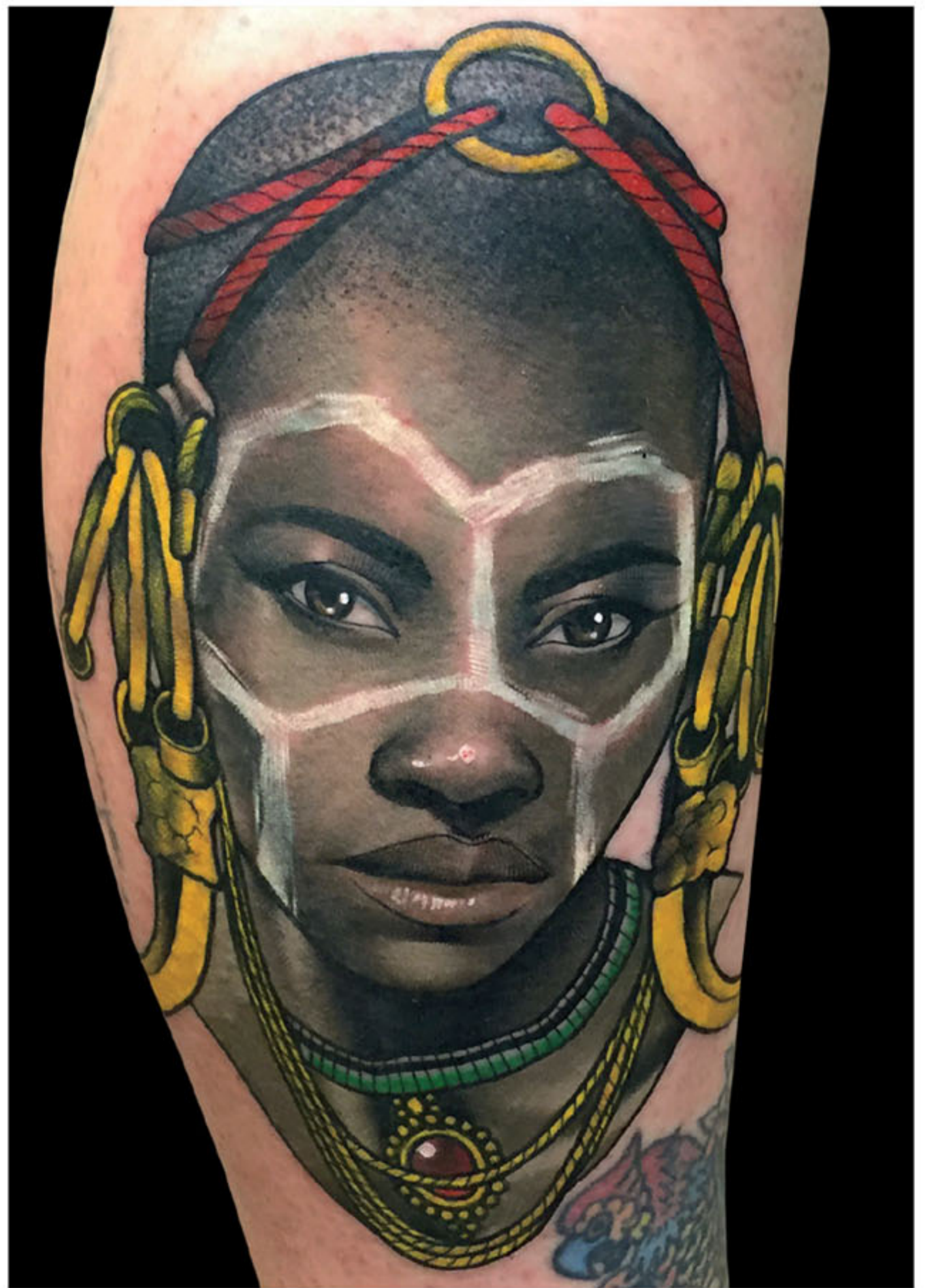
debate in the industry. As someone who has a few, what is your policy towards tattooing people's faces? Are you selective about who you will give facial tattoos to? I personally don't like to get involved in discussions about sweeping rules regarding other adults' personal decisions. I'm definitely not the right person to be looked to as a role model, but if you're over 18 and you want to tattoo your whole face, have at it. I personally take it on a case-by-case basis. I'm not gonna tattoo some kid's face if I think it'll ruin his life, but having my whole face tattooed definitely didn't ruin mine.

You're from Australia but working in England—how is the tattoo scene different in the two locales? One thing I like about this industry is that tattooers are essentially the same everywhere I go. Just with different accents. The internet and Instagram and Facebook brings us all closer together, so I feel like I belong more to a global tattoo community instead of an Australian-only faction and an English-only faction.

Is there a tattoo that you haven't done yet that you are dying to do? I have a lad booked in with me who wants me to do a portrait of myself. I never knew how much I wanted to do that until he asked me to do it.

Anyone who follows you on social media has seen a hell of a lot of your adorable dog. Would you ever get a tattoo of the pup? My dog is the best! I had a tattoo done of her on my thigh by my friend Stacey-Ann a few years ago.





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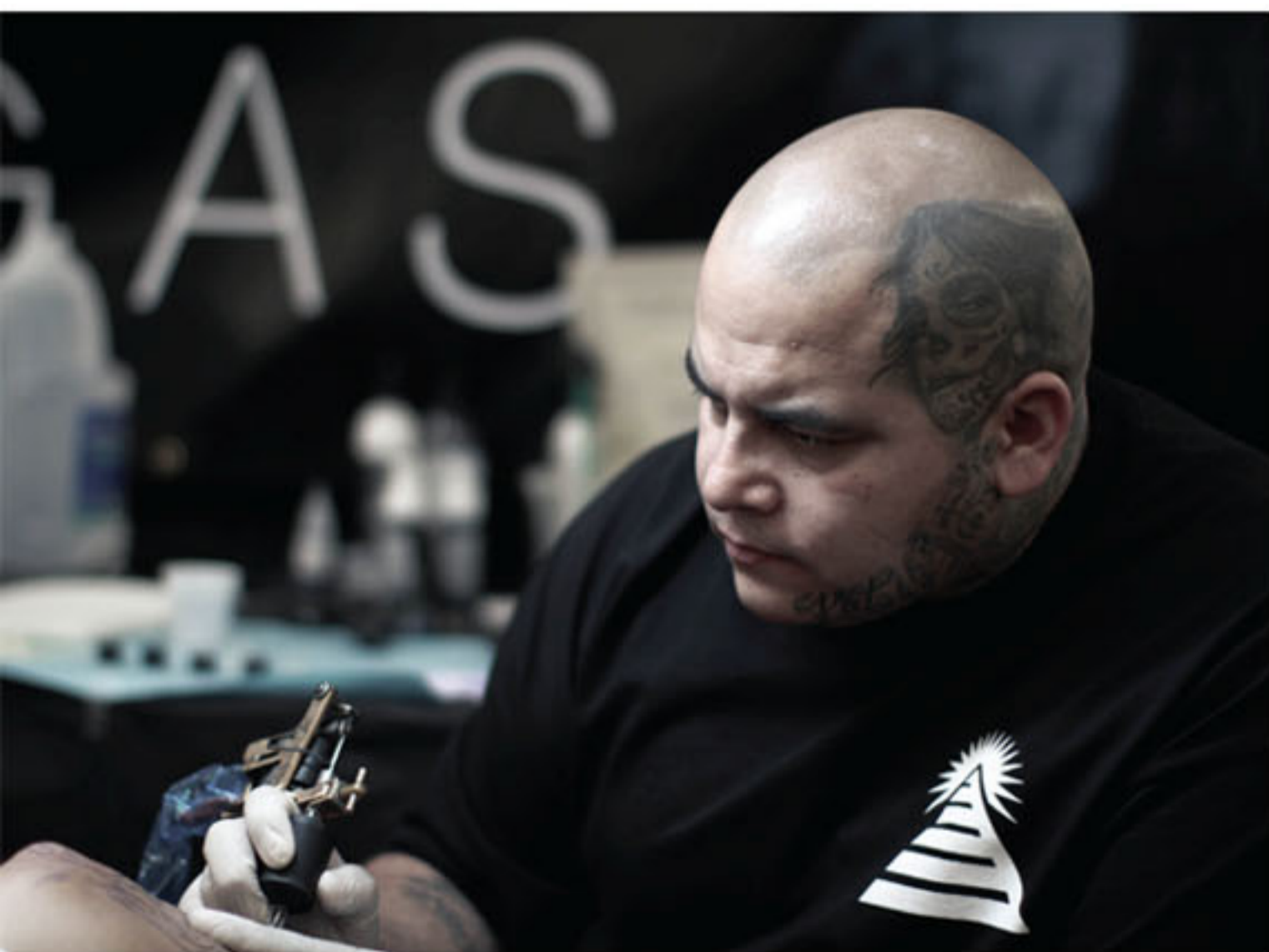


INKED PRESENTS GOLDEN STATE TATTOO EXPO

You don't even need to come with an excuse to visit Southern California in the end of January; the weather is more than enough of a draw. But Inked figured that they'd make it doubly enticing by presenting the Golden State Tattoo Expo hosted by the master of color realism, Nikko Hurtado.

The list of artists working at this expo will absolutely blow your mind. Paul Booth and Stefano Alcantara fled the cold of NYC to set up shop under the sun for a couple of days. Boris and Victor Portugal showed that the convention had international appeal as they made the trip from Austria and Uruguay respectively. Then there was all of the homegrown California talent—Rich Pineda, Big Gus, Carlos Torres, Roman Abrego, Freddy Negrete and we could go on all day.

photos by taadow69k



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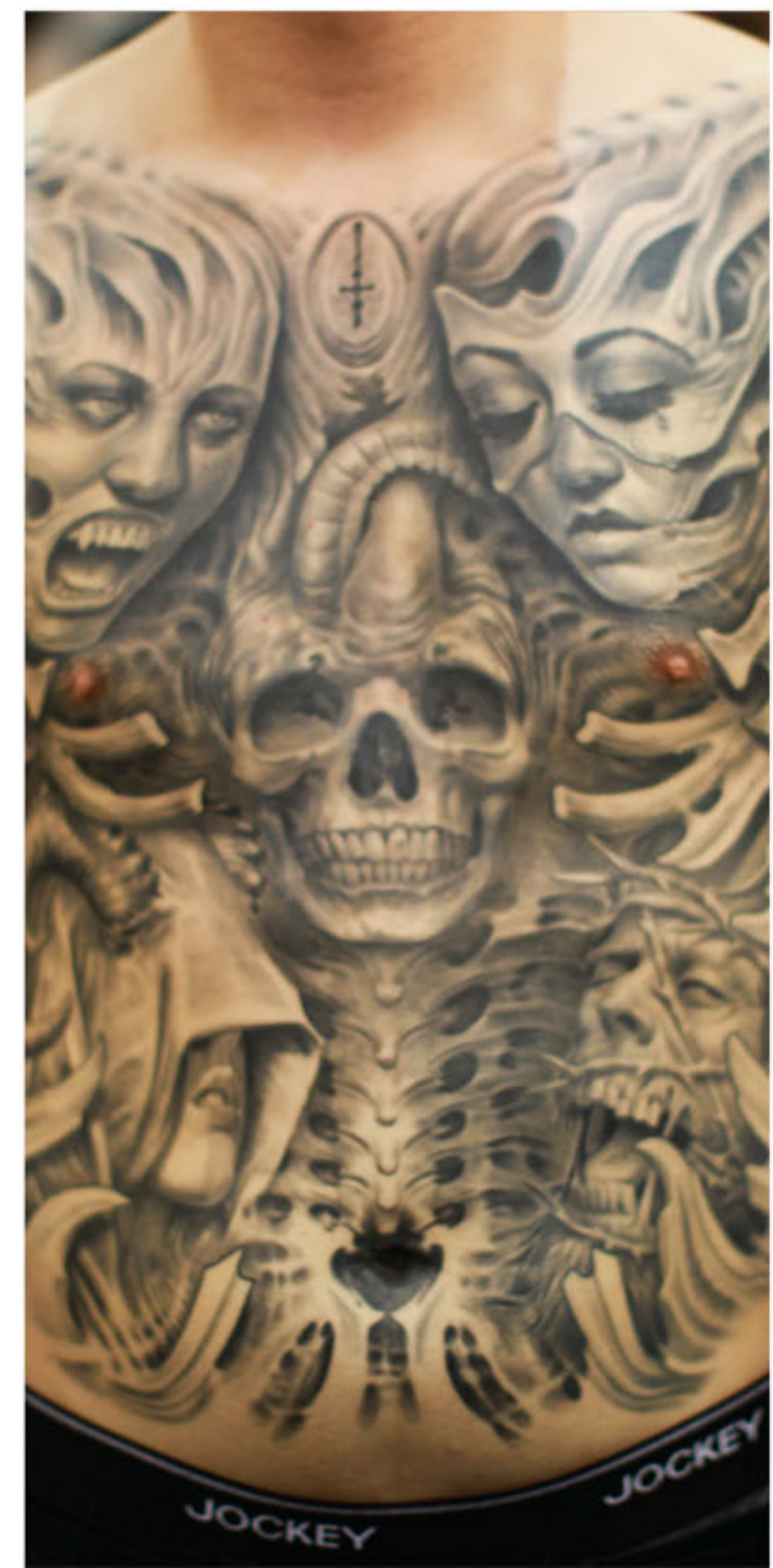
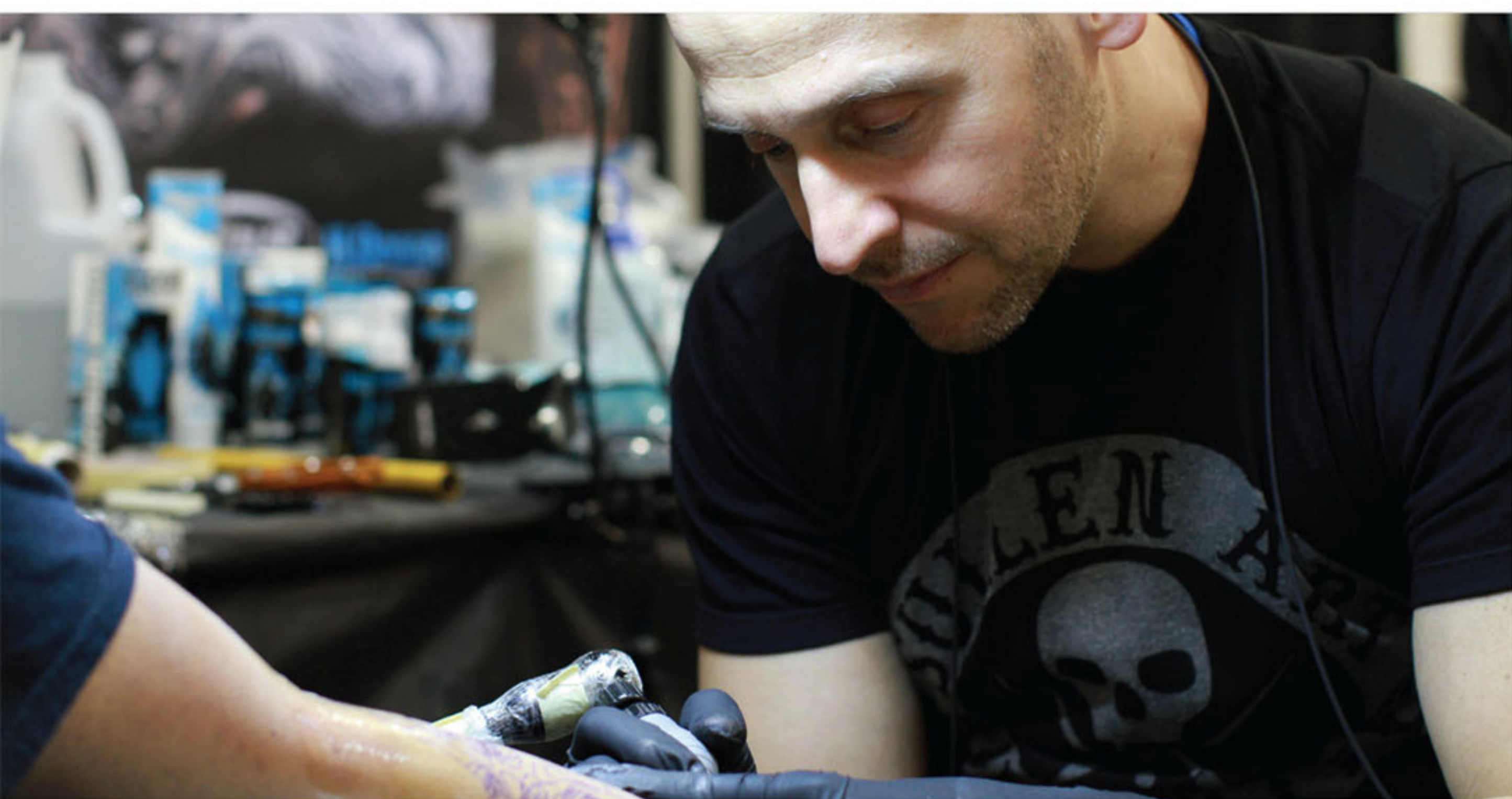
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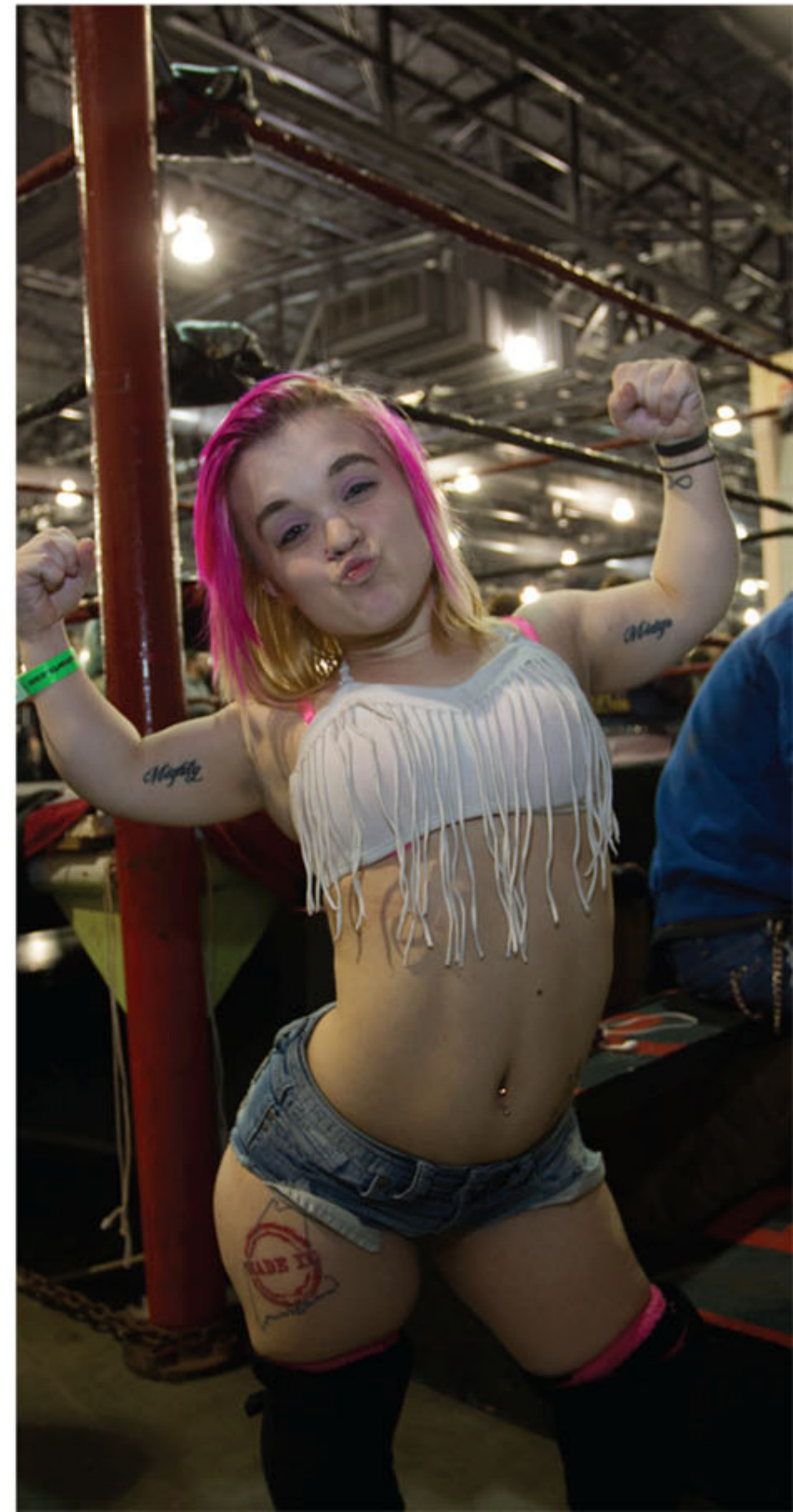
PHILADELPHIA TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION

We can't think of any more romantic way to spend Valentine's weekend than in the city of Brotherly Love at the Villain Arts Philadelphia Tattoo Arts Convention. Those lucky lovebirds who made the trip swooned at one of the best collections of tattooing talent on the east coast. The convention was absolutely massive with damn near 1,200 artists in attendance.

Artists came from every corner of the globe to be part of the extravaganza while others. The action didn't stop when the machines went silent; there were a ton of other attractions from live bands to displays of human suspension.

Next year make sure to grab your loved one and spend a romantic weekend in Philly at the wildest tattoo convention on the east coast!

photos by steve pru



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Alan Ramirez
Sir Twice
Dmitry Vision
Chauncey Kochel
Josh Grable
Marshall Bennett
Monte Agee
Rodney Eckenberger
Michael J. Davis
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Pony Lawson
Eddy Arg
Matt Stines
Jesse Goetschius

"By the pricking of my thumbs...
Something wicked this way comes..."

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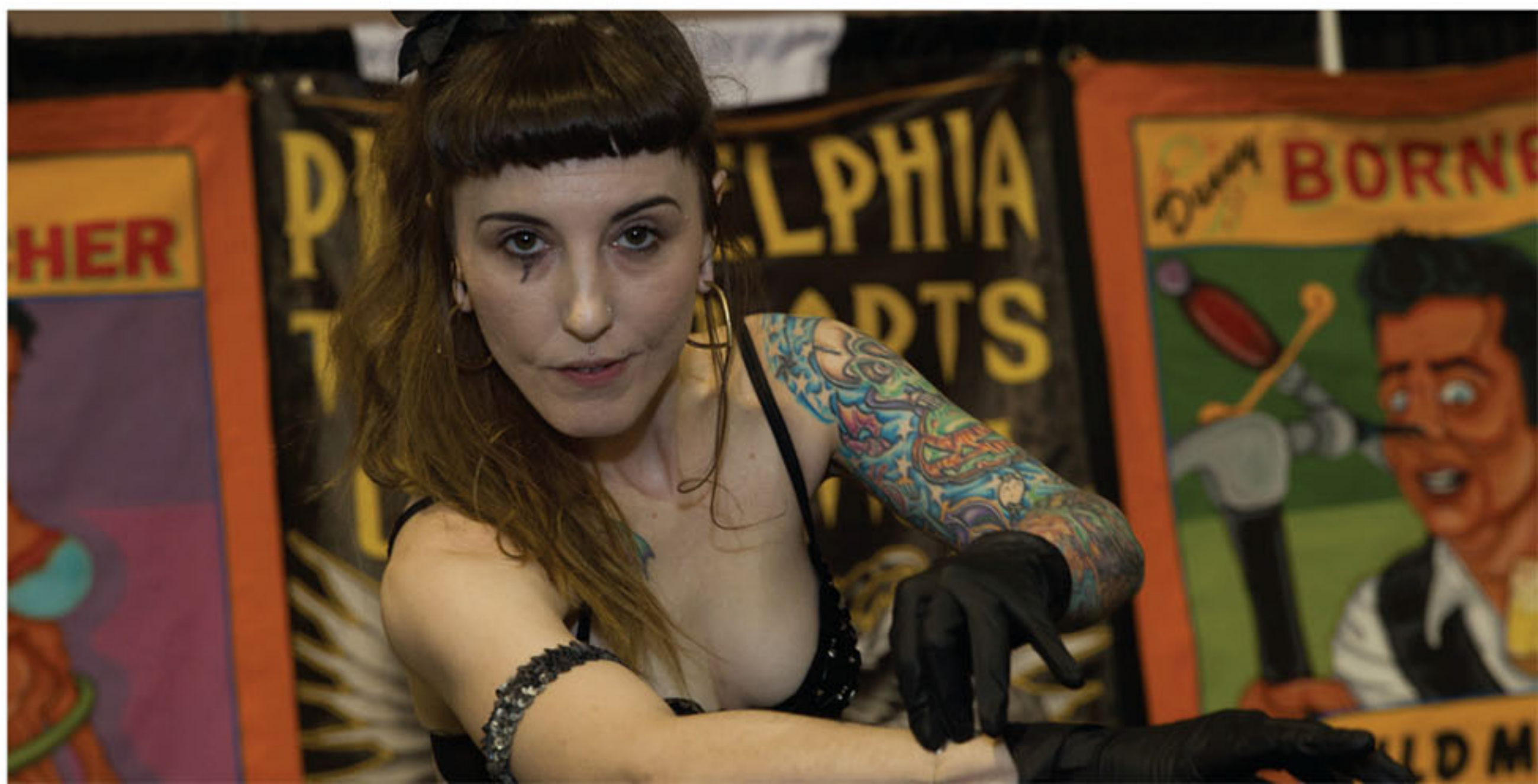
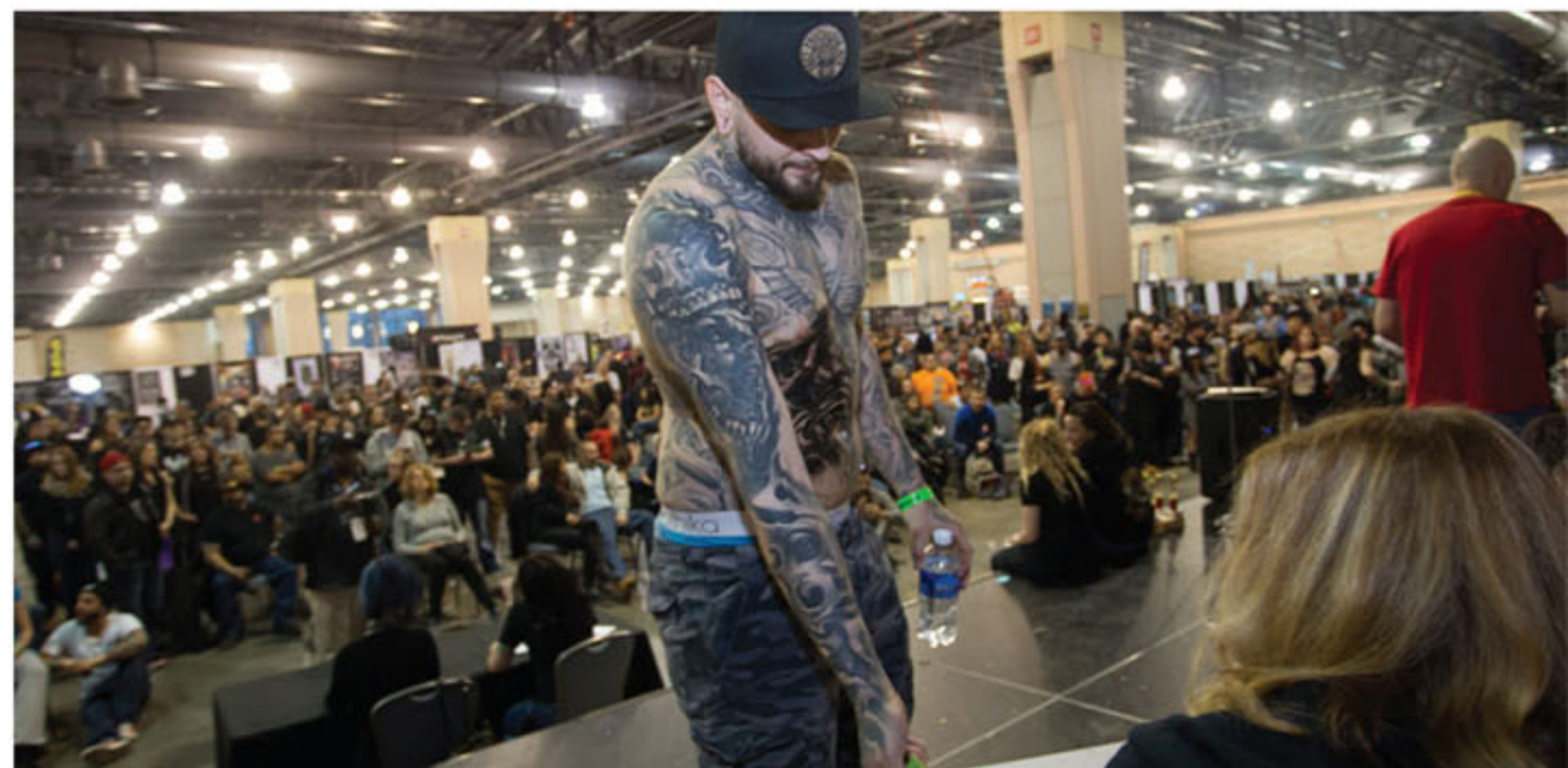
For more info on the Devil's Hollow Tattoo Festival, visit:

www.devilshollowfestival.com



art by Timmy Do Right

PHILADELPHIA TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION



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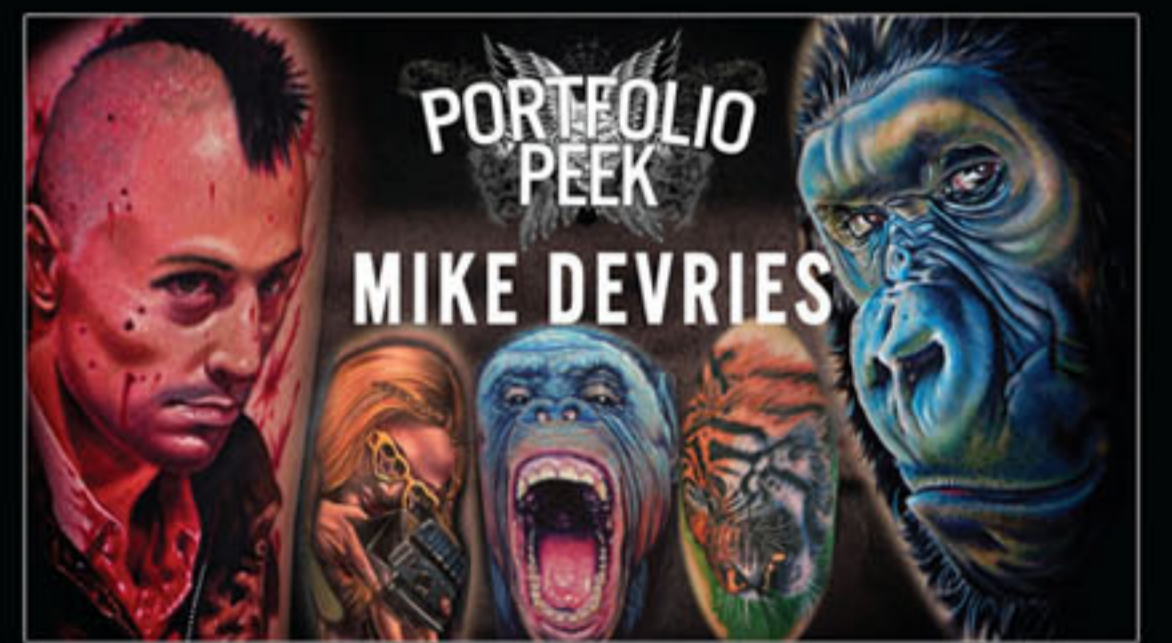
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