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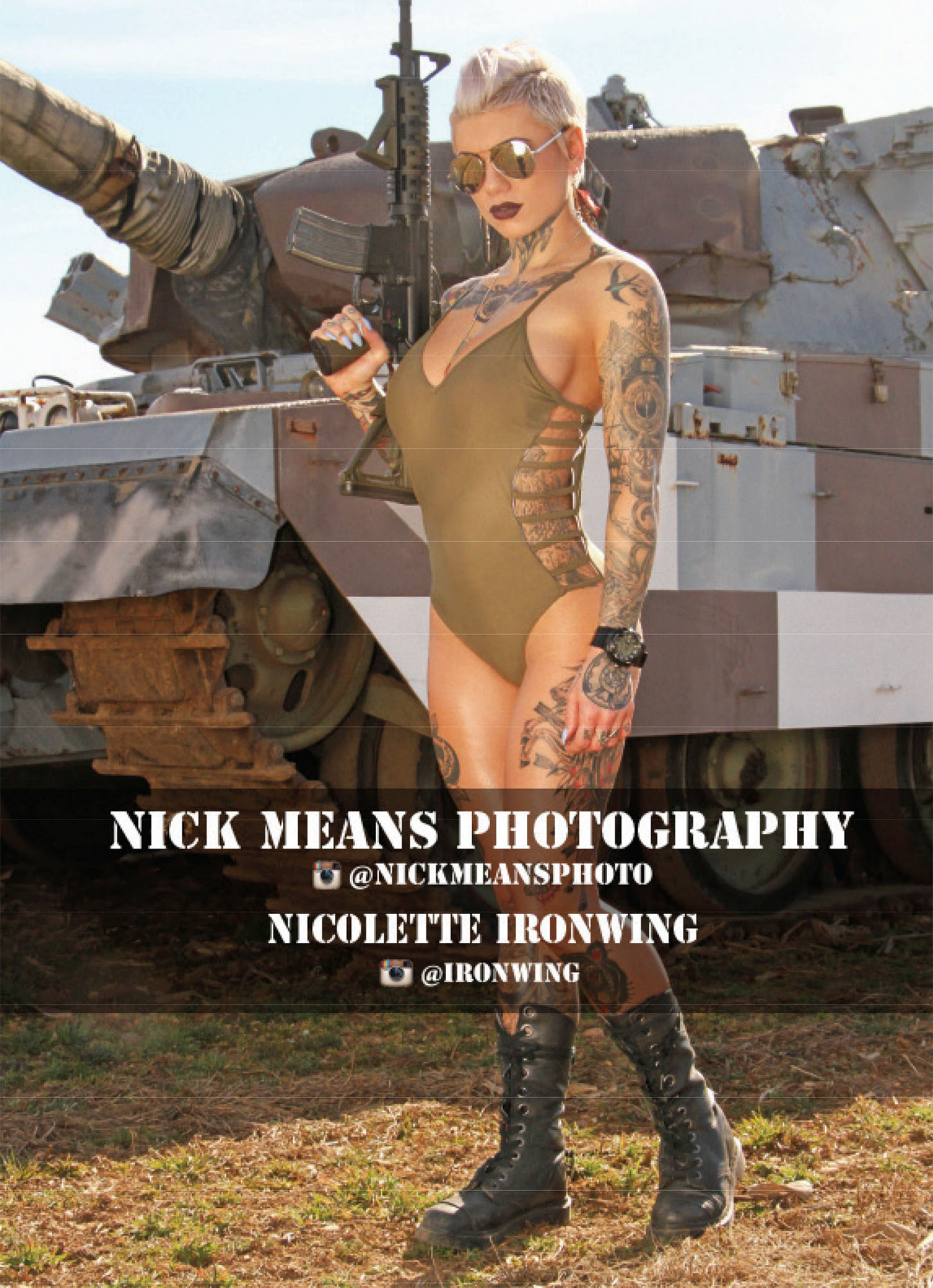
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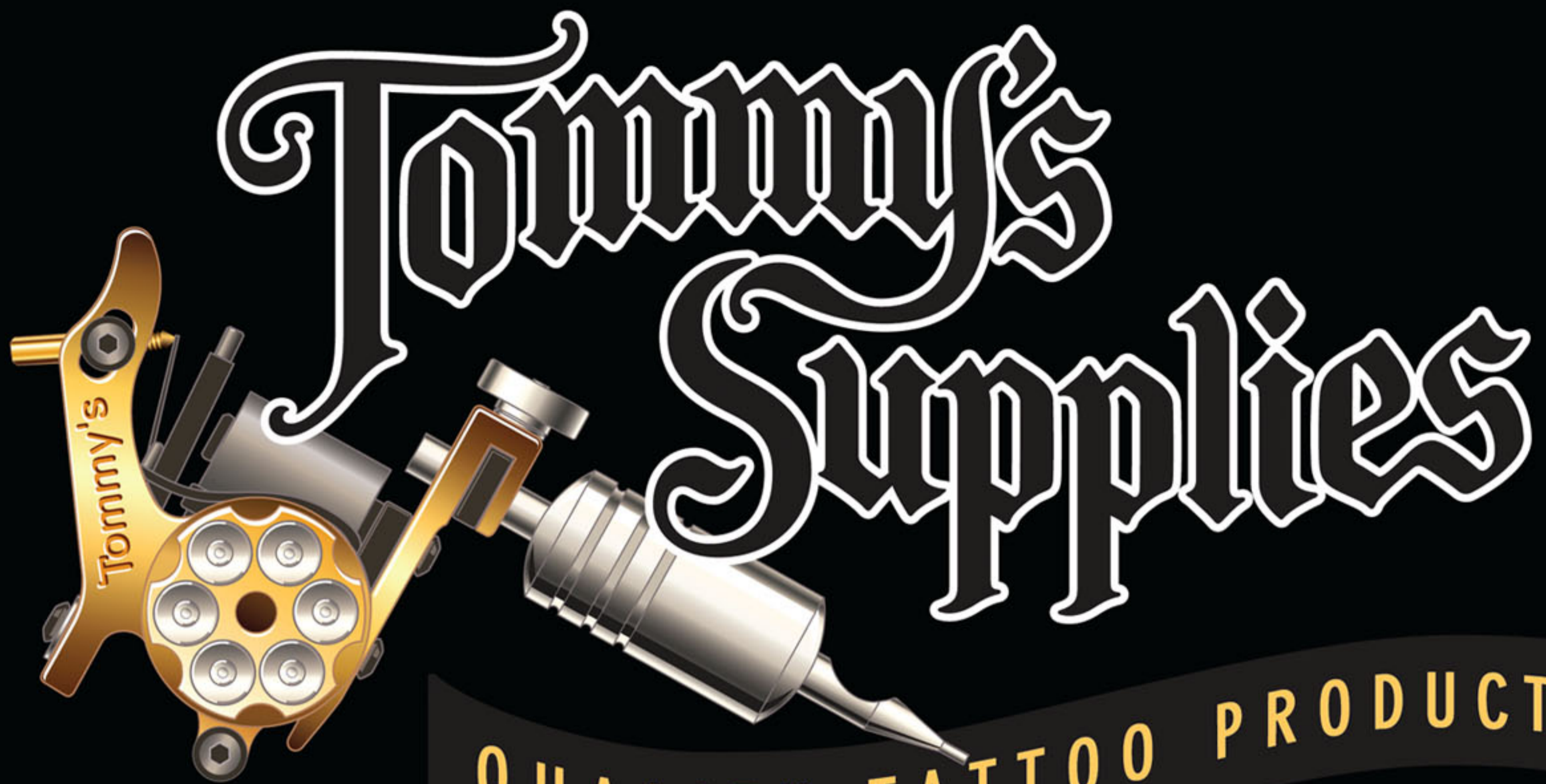
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@victor_chil

VICTOR CHIL

It's been a while since you first appeared in *Freshly Inked* and your work has become increasingly impressive. What's been going on with you and how is the muse? Hello! I'm really glad you say that about my work, Yallzee, since it comes from somebody as respected as you and with such an amazing collection of tattoos. Regarding my muse, I think I'll find it someday but the truth is I'm still surprised and motivated every day with such good artists we have in the tattoo panorama.

I've always said your technique and application of colors is almost untouchable. I can see that you know how to use colors very well and have extensive knowledge of how they work together. You can see that in the tattoo you did on me; the color palette you used was much wider than an ordinary person could recognize in the final product. How did you get to acquire these advanced techniques? Most of my knowledge about colors comes from graffiti. It facilitated me a lot in this aspect to much study of colors and chromatic circles and helped me learn complementary colors and their values when running any paint or tattoo. I think good color control comes from knowing all your options and how to execute good contrast. The way to do this mainly is to paint a lot and try many different ways in color as techniques.

In your work I see a good use of the shape of the body, and what appears

to be an influence from Japanese work. Am I right? Have you studied oriental art for its composition and techniques to incorporate elements to your style tattooing?

Well, I really didn't study Japanese art in particular, but more so its Illustration—all its weights and orders in a drawing's reading, its visual narrative which acquire controls and fluency in your designs and parallel vast anatomy study which helps me particularly with the body flow and its harmony in the body. Also, I have some guidelines for different parts of the body that help me to compose designs that connect different parts of the body. Anyway today I'm trying to renew with different approaches to target the body because it overturns my style so it won't be all the same.

Have you ever thought to work a full bodysuit in your own style? Any features you've always thought it would have if you did this work? How would it be in terms of composition? I never really thought about it, but now that you mention it I would really like to do it! I think that I would start by looking for which elements I would place on the body. Next I would give them an importance based only on size and location on the body placement. And finally find a reason or something special to get all those elements together as a background... something like fire, water or winds for example. And then I would start with designing sketches and ideas... and search for style and composition.

When you are in the creative process of any custom work what is it that you target at first? Contrast, readability, chosen color, or composition? First I register the style... more cartoon or more aggressive. I need to fit that style once I know the idea, then I need to know the body part to prepare a composition or to design a different one. It depends on the location of the design. Another step would be to seek for the fluidity and composition of the design marking me a block and go carving it with the pencil to achieve the goal, and finally I would look and think in an atmosphere to determine about the colors and execute different color stories.

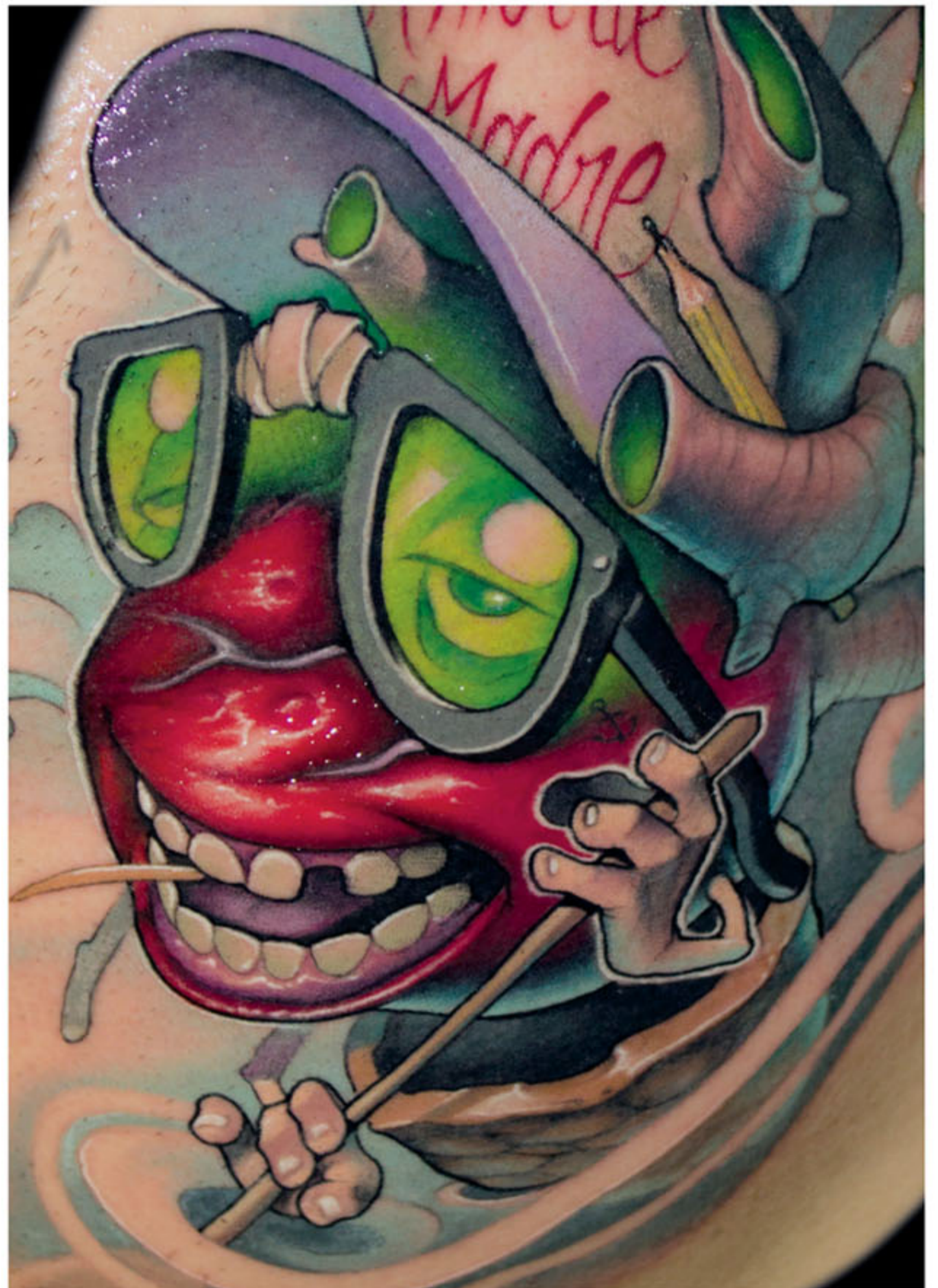
What inspires you on the daily and keeps you creative? I get inspired by a lot of artists that I get to see every day on social networks, as it is a very rich source of ideas and motivational. We are actually very lucky, years ago none of this existed.

Black and grey... I can definitely see that it's not your preference. Have you ever thought about creating a great piece with monochromatic tonal values or black and grey exclusively? Hahaha. That question is the one that has been missing on all of any interviews I've had previously in any other magazines... you caught me. The truth is that black and grey is not a field in which I move or think much. It isn't something I discard; actually, it would challenge me and help me improve myself. I would not discard trying it.

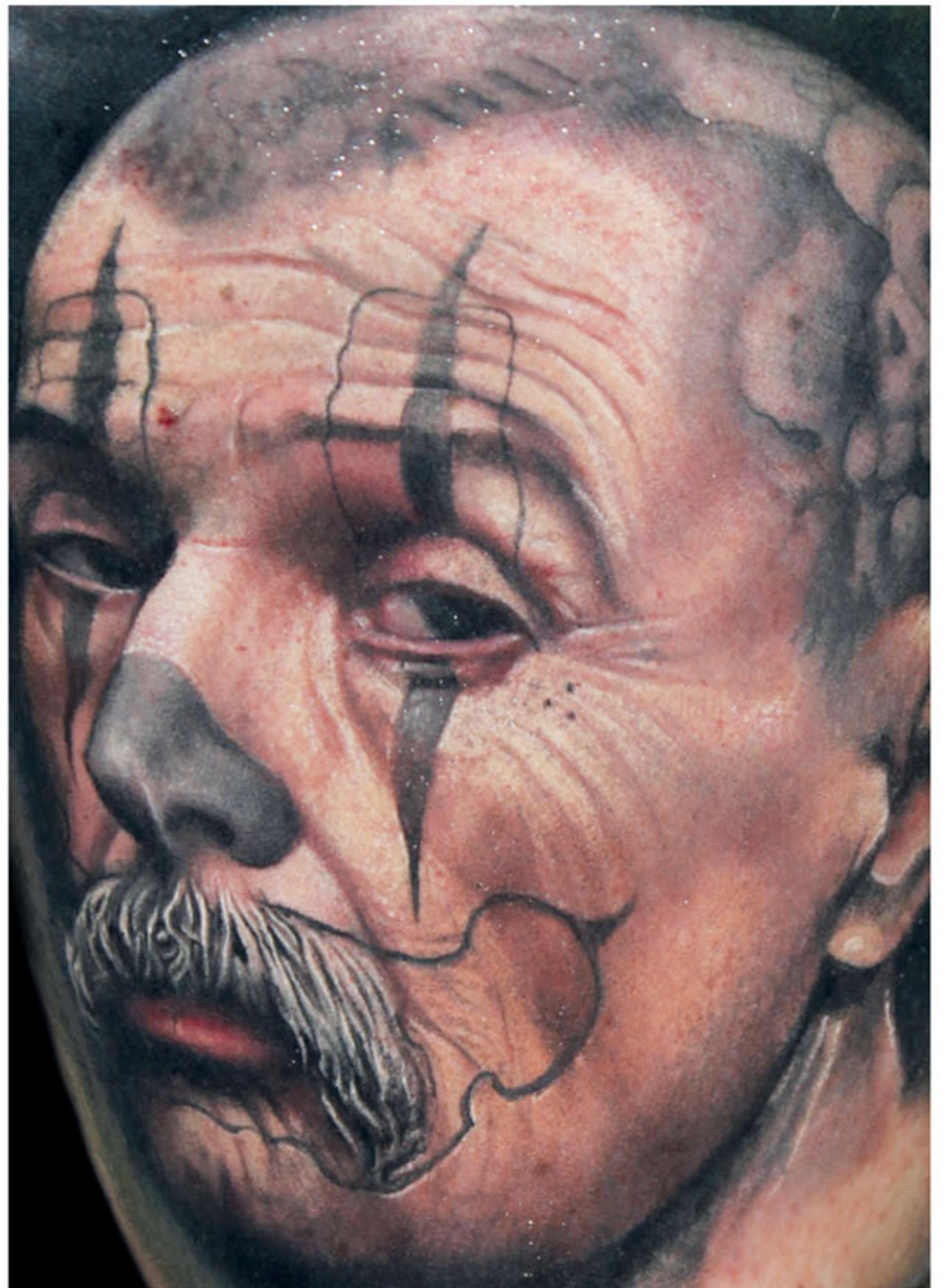
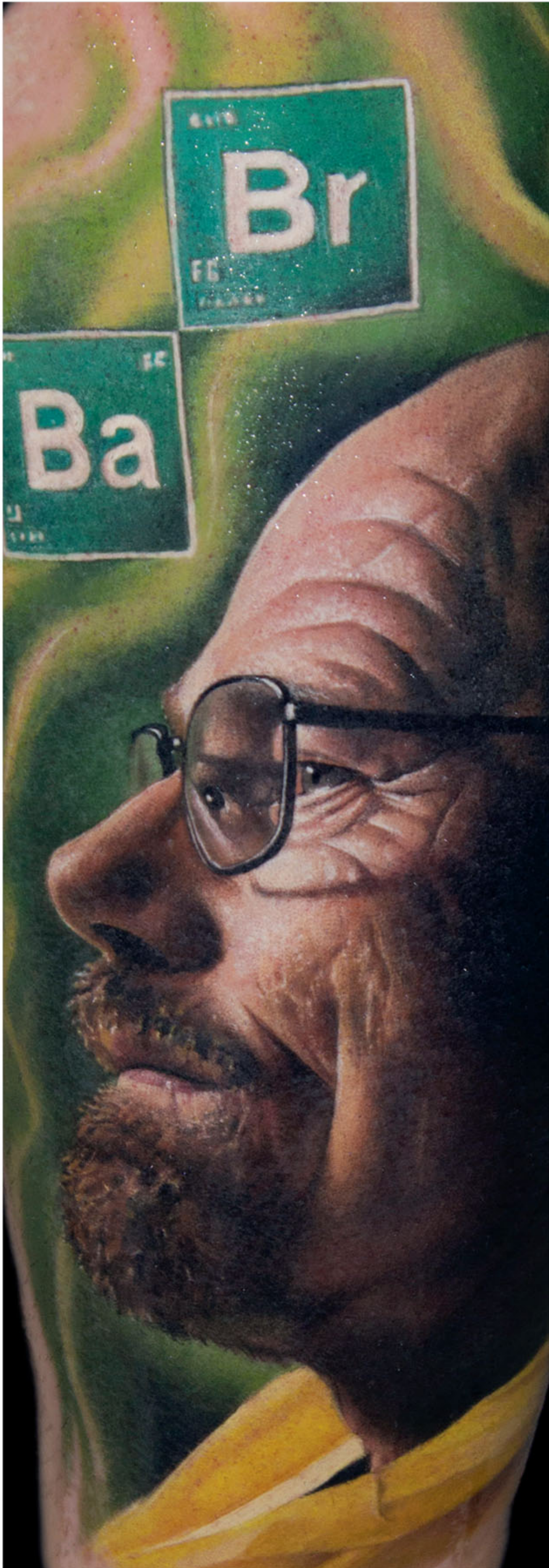




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@Toxycxlr

TOXYC

How did you start tattooing? I started tattooing in 2000, in France. I always drew since I was a kid and an old friend of mine told me I should try to put my drawings into a skin. This friend of mine kept going to tattoo studios showing my drawings until a shop took me as an apprentice. I first tattooed my sisters who keep begging for a cover up now!

You specialize in custom black and grey and roughly 99% of your work is pretty evil and dark in subject matter. What drew you to that style? I believe it's safe to say that. I grew up with comic books, video games and I've always been a fan of Sci-Fi movies. I was very interested in the shapes and textures of monsters and creatures. There are no rules when creating monsters; I can add any shape, depth and dimension I want. My father in law once asked me if I was sleeping well at night! (Laughs)

Most of the artists who specialize in black and grey have incorporated red (color) over the years, not only for bloody purposes. Why do you think this has happened? Have you ever attempted to do any color tattoo? Adding one color to a black and grey tattoo brings a good contrast to the piece. It doesn't need to be red. I like to use it because black and red has always been associated with dark imagery. I've seen Victor Portugal adding turquoise or yellow and it looks pretty cool. Yes, I've tried doing color tattoos but I feel more comfortable working on the gradients of black and grey.

You have that notable style of your own, and as I see it your technique is pretty different to how other artists approach skin. It is like if you sculpted the skin, you put the blacks, created contrast and make the image suddenly come out using the person's own skin to create that illusion of depth. Plus you do this with straight black. What can you say about your technique?

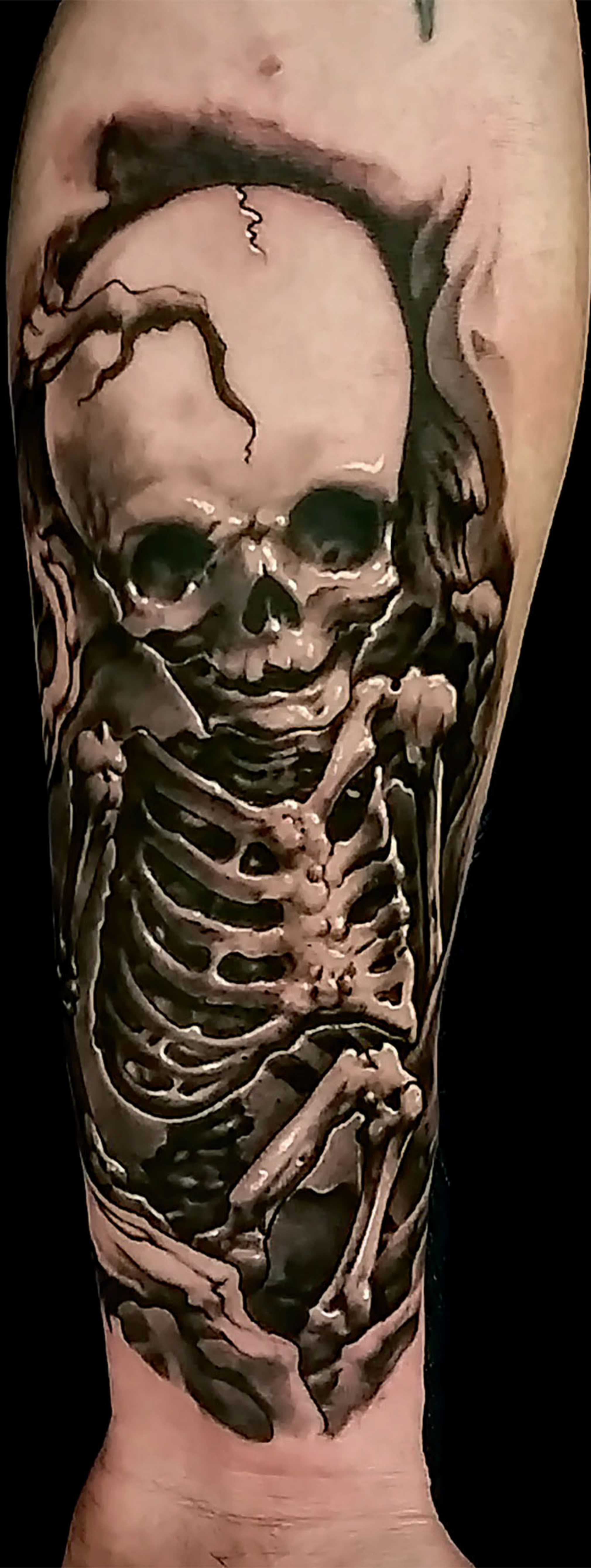
As you mentioned, I use straight black, no water or grey wash. I do the tattoos the same way I draw with a ballpoint pen. I realized a couple years ago that by using grey washes, my tattoos were getting very light after a year so. I was trying darker and darker grey washes until the point I realized I didn't need it. I'm not saying that the use of grey wash will make every tattoo too light in a year, just for me it worked out this way.

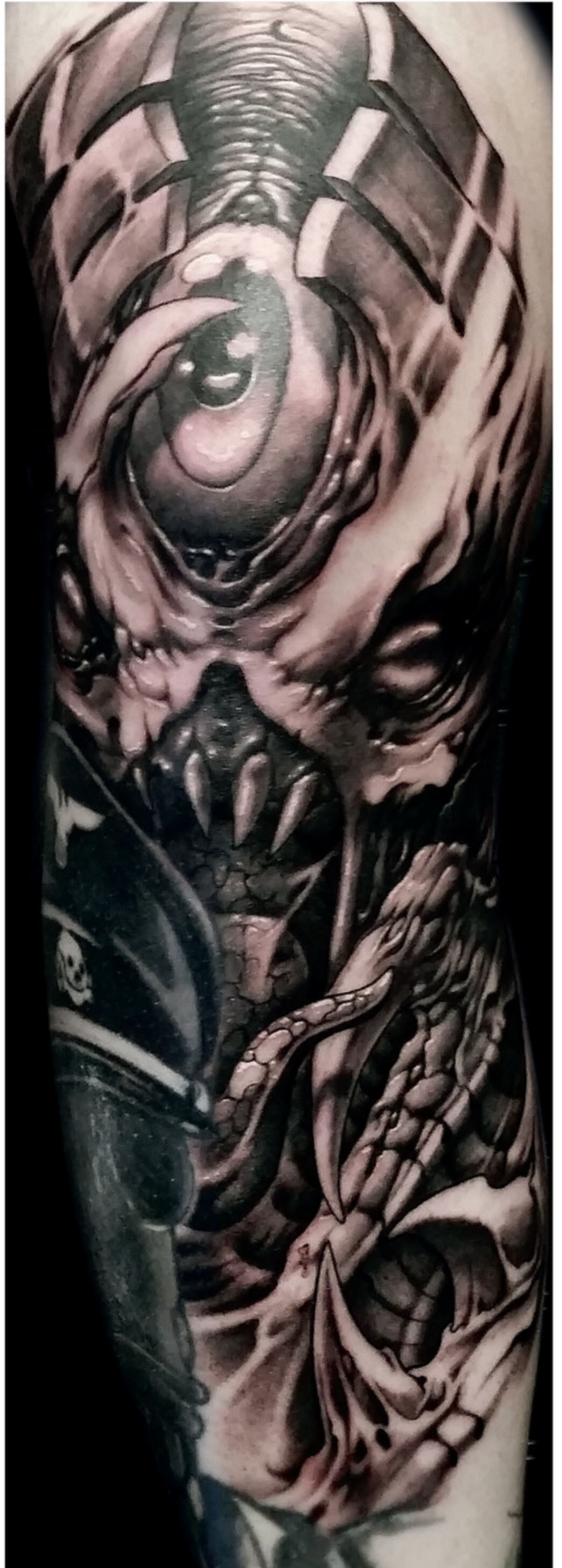
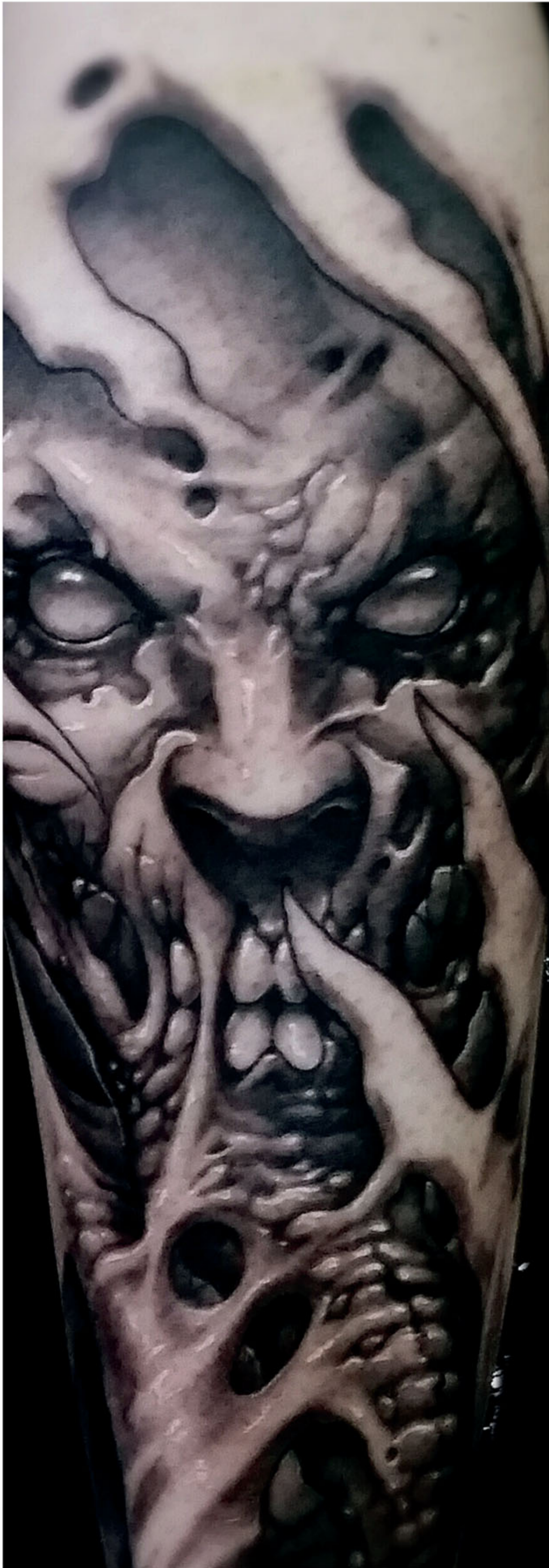
I have seen all of these amazing evil sketches along the years, but from what I know and have seen I don't think you've ever used a stencil. Or have you? You are known for your fully custom freehanded work, and honestly it is amazing to see those few sharpie lines come to life, full of textures and depth. What is your creative process like? What goes through your mind to come up with the ideas you come up with? I used stencils when I first started when people used to ask me for tribals (yes, I've done it), then I started doing stencils of my own drawings until I felt comfortable enough to do free-hand. Since then I enjoy it so much more because I have more freedom to work with people's shape and skin. I usually don't know what the client will have until

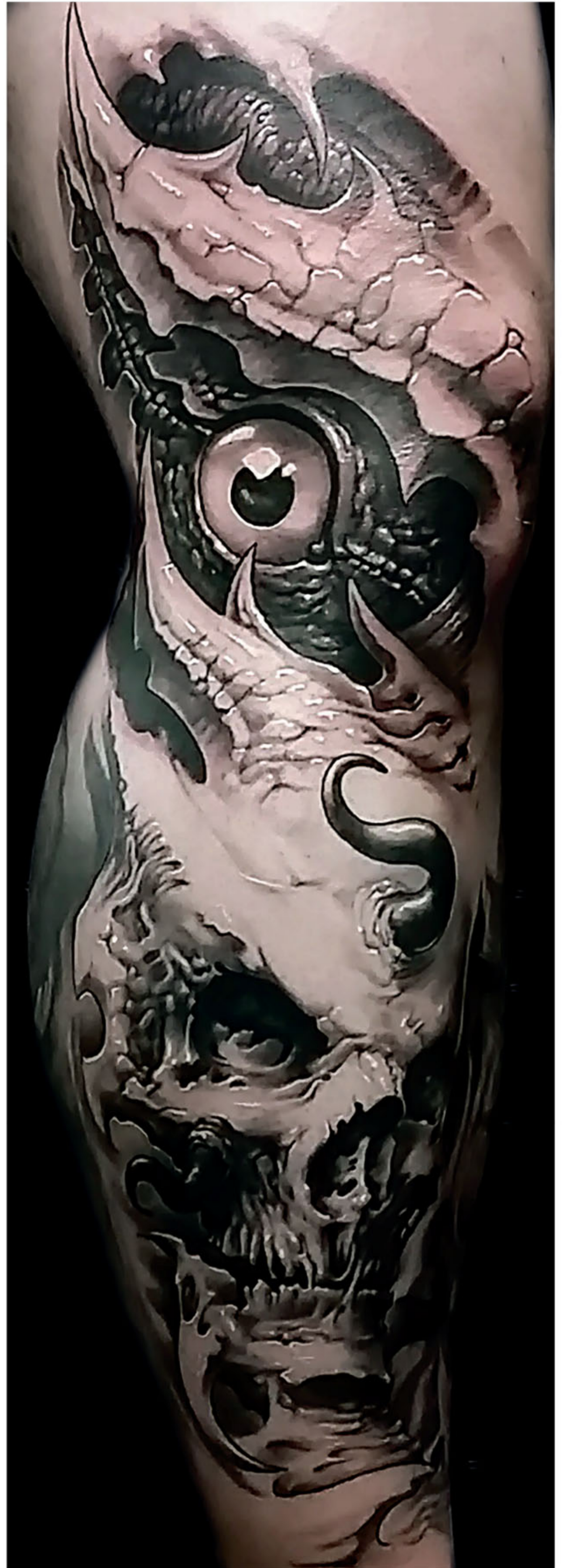
they sit in my chair. I honestly can't explain what goes into my mind. I never know what the piece will actually look like until the last minute. I listen to their ideas and just go with the flow, I guess. I am lucky to be able to bond with my clients so they feel comfortable enough to let me be creative and do the best piece for them.

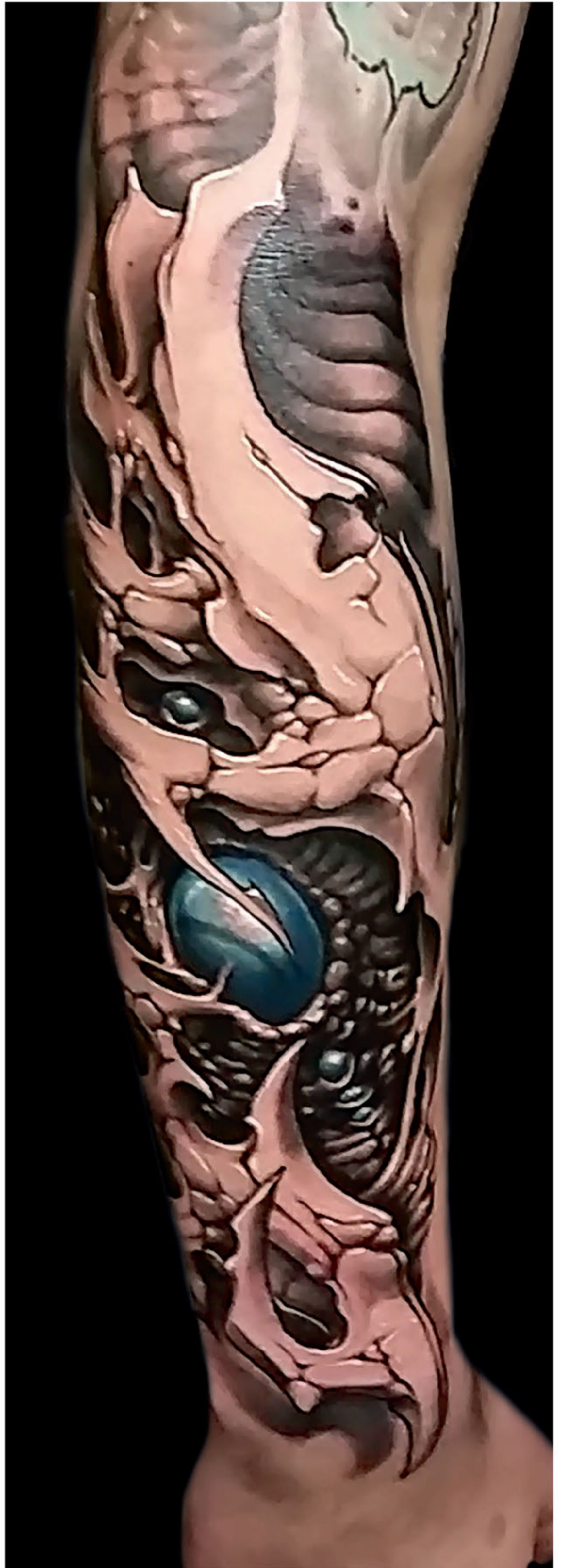
About two years ago I saw that you did your first portrait ever. My first thought was, did he use a stencil? How did you feel about making that step? Have you continued doing it? Yes, it was a Tom Waits portrait I did for a tattoo artist in Cannes, France. He gave me a picture of a sculpture of Tom Waits, not an actual picture of him. Even though I told him I wasn't sure about it, he insisted for me to do it, so yes, I used the stencil. Portraits are really hard because as I explained before, with monsters I can make them look the way I want, there are no rules, but a portrait you have to be very true to the image. Not sure I would do it again but if there is someone else crazy enough to ask me for a portrait I can think about it!

I know you have always been a Spawn and comic fan, where do you usually find inspiration? What or who inspired you in and out of the tattoo world back when you started tattooing? What or who inspires you today? Oh man...haha. Well, Paul Booth inspired me when I first started, no doubt about that. Although I take most of my inspiration from stuff that is not related to tattoos like movies, comic books, video games and even nature; the shape of trees, insects and sea creatures.











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MIKE RUBENDALL

You are known for your colorful Japanese work, but your B&G tattoos are as good as those artists who specialize in that style. How did you become so well rounded?

I was in many ways fortunate enough to grow up tattooing in a street shop in the 90s where you basically did anything that walked through the door. In those days you didn't know when the next tattoo was going to walk in so you needed to be willing to take on any style and more or less any subject that was thrown at you. When a tattoo came in, no matter what tattoo it was, I tried to research and reference as much material as I could get my hands on just to make that particular piece as good as I possibly could. Back then I didn't have a style yet. I wasn't sure what I liked or what direction I wanted to take my art in. People came to me with ideas, "Oh you want a Paul Booth styled demon? Sure, no problem." I referenced a bunch of Paul Booth demons and drew my own version. My style developed over the years and eventually became my own but that's how I really learned how to draw tattoos. Over time I slowly learned how to communicate with clients in a way where I could improve on their ideas so that the tattoo would meet both of our expectations and everyone was happy. I enjoyed and still do, the challenge of being diverse. Trying the things that I don't do regularly and being comfortable knowing if I had to I'm fully capable of doing almost anything. I think it's so important for an artist to be versatile, especially in this

field. I suppose being a tattooer in the mid 90s, working in a street shop and being an ambitious 17 old, forced me to be a well-rounded tattoo artist.

One example of this would be the first tattoo you did on me, you freehanded perfect dark imagery around some work by Toxyc, Robert Hernandez and Victor Portugal. Overall, how was it for you as an artist going that far from your preferred style?

Well, let's face it man, you have an incredible collection of tattoos on your body. I think it's safe to say that anybody that you decide to get tattooed by immediately wants to step their game up and give you a piece that holds up against the rest. I love tattooing guys like you and tattooing next to great tattoos because it pushes me to stretch myself and work towards creating a piece that shines along with the others. It's not always easy but it's always challenging.

I've been impressed by the amount of large-scale pieces I have seen from you lately. Are you currently working or looking to work on any full body suit?

Large scale tattooing is something I've been drawn to and I'm very fortunate to have practiced most of my career. It's not a recent focus, it's something I've always worked hard at and tried to figure out what makes it all work. Bodysuits and large scale tattooing have always been so fascinating for me because it's a tremendously difficult task to achieve a readable, well-executed tattoo. There are so many

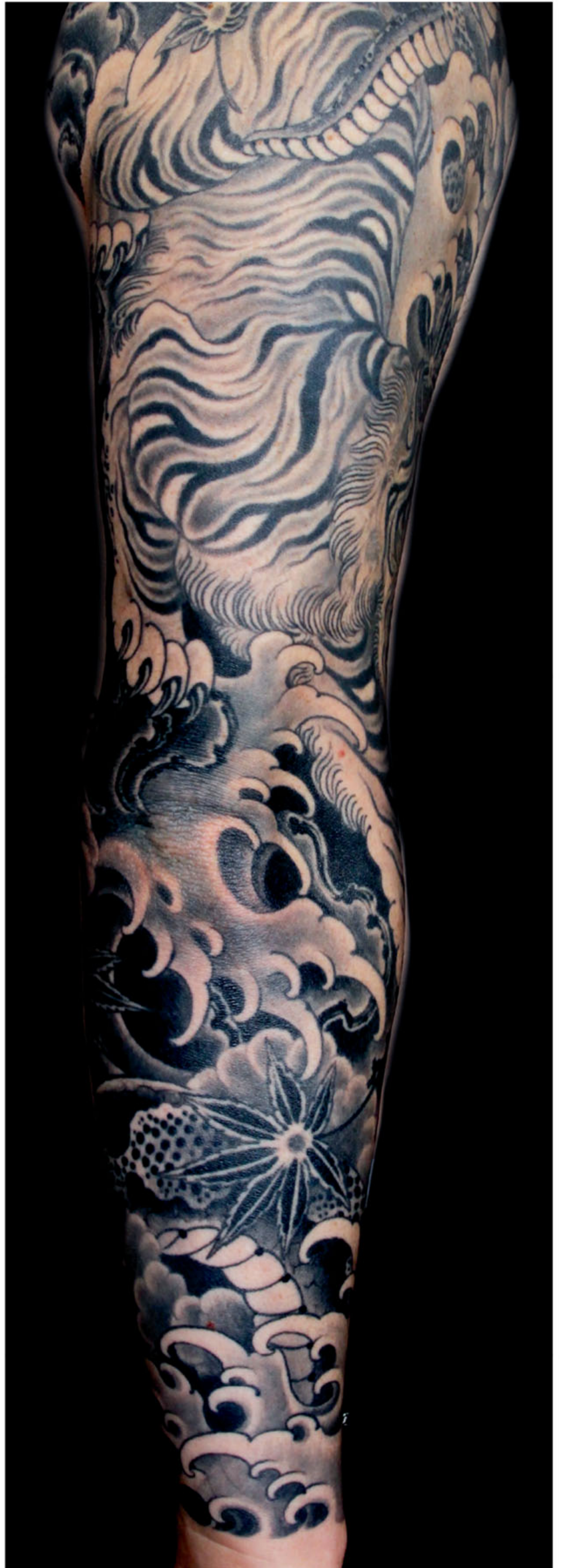
variables to take into consideration. There are technical aspects, artistic aspects, design, layout, composition, color theory, proportion, etc. Now consider all of this is going to be applied on a living/breathing person. That person's skin; it could be "good skin" or "bad skin," they could be moving around during the session, there are so many variables when dealing with a moving/living canvas. Once all is complete you then hope that tattoo will stand the test of time, it's a lot to juggle—it's fucking insane.

What are your thoughts on tattoo shows?

This is a question I hear a lot, however, I don't often voice my opinion. At the end of the day, no matter how you slice it, there are a lot of very busy tattooers out there today because of tattoo shows. Despite what people like to believe, the exposure of tattooing on TV has helped increase tattoo popularity and make them more "accepted" to the general public. As a result, more people are getting tattooed. I hear artists constantly complain about it, not realizing they would be sitting around waiting for tattoos to walk through the door like the old days if tattooing wasn't so popular. Tattooing is bigger than it's ever been. It's now being recognized in the high art world as a legitimate art form. There have been major tattoo exhibits in fine art galleries and museums through out the world. It's amazing how far this art form has come. Finally, its potential is being realized.









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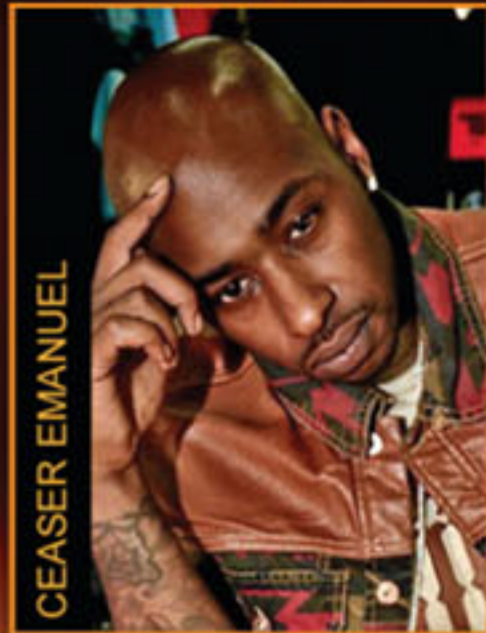
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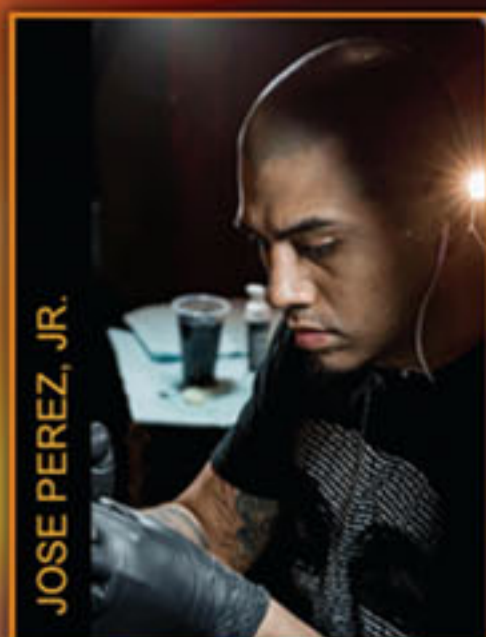
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JOE CAPOBIANCO

@joecapobiancotattoos

Let's start off with asking about the tattoo that you did for Yallzee. Your style is so much different than pretty much everything he has, we're curious as to what you did. Actually, like a lot of the other artists tattooing him, I re-did a tattoo on his leg. It was kinda funny because I got to re-do a Jime Litwalk tattoo he'd gotten a couple years prior. Jime's a really good friend, so now I get to bust Jime's balls, and say I had to touch up one of his tattoos.

As an artist, how do you feel about being sought out by renowned collectors? Is it an honor to be part of such an extensive collection? It really is, and it's also a lot of stress. So many collectors today have amazing work on them. No one wants to be the tattooer who blew that collection, and dropped a bomb on this poor person.

Is there a term you use to describe your signature style of tattooing? How did you come to mix the pinup icons of the 1940s and 50s with a new school style of tattooing? I think it was a client that first used the term "Capo Gal" for the tattoo he wanted, and that stuck. When I started doing more fun, but darker gals, I started calling them "Blood Puddin' Gals." Kind of a play on the classic "Cheesecake" style pin up.

How important is it to hang on to the roots of the pinup style when creating your tattoos? For me pinup is really more about the attitude of the gal, than any one theme. It's that personality and look that really makes a piece a pinup, and not just another pretty picture. It can be a bit of a fine line. Something I really do struggle with daily.

How did you first get into pinups? Do you remember a particular image that

spawned your love? My love for pinup was really started in the early 80s with the discovery of contemporary pinup artist Olivia's work. I was starting a career as an airbrush artist, and gravitated to her work.

What one feature is most important when creating a pinup tattoo? We've noticed that the eyes tend to be what brings us in... Yes, agreed. It's all about attitude, and so much of that can be delivered in the eyes. Next would be both facial and body expression. A pose, or facial expression can make a huge statement. It's certainly not all about big T&A.

Damn, your tattoos are bright! Is there a secret to creating such vibrant images? Are you worried about them fading over time? Why are you so enamored with color? Thanks. Most of that is a play on color scheme. Which colors play best off of one another. I don't always go for the typical color theory, or pull out my color wheel, to see what's correct. A lot of times it's just a feel I have for the particular drawing. Then, and this is probably most important, it's all about just doing a good, solid tattoo.

You were one of the judges on *Best Ink*, can you give us some insight into how you think reality television has changed the tattoo industry? I think it has certainly opened it up to a ton of folks that may not have had a great interest in tattooing in the first place. Then there are the folks that genuinely have a love for the art. These are the ones I think who suffer through (watching) tons of BS, and drama, just to see a nice tattoo. As for how it has changed things, I think it has created, and boosted, a lot of people's careers that probably would have otherwise gone nowhere. It has also helped convention promoters

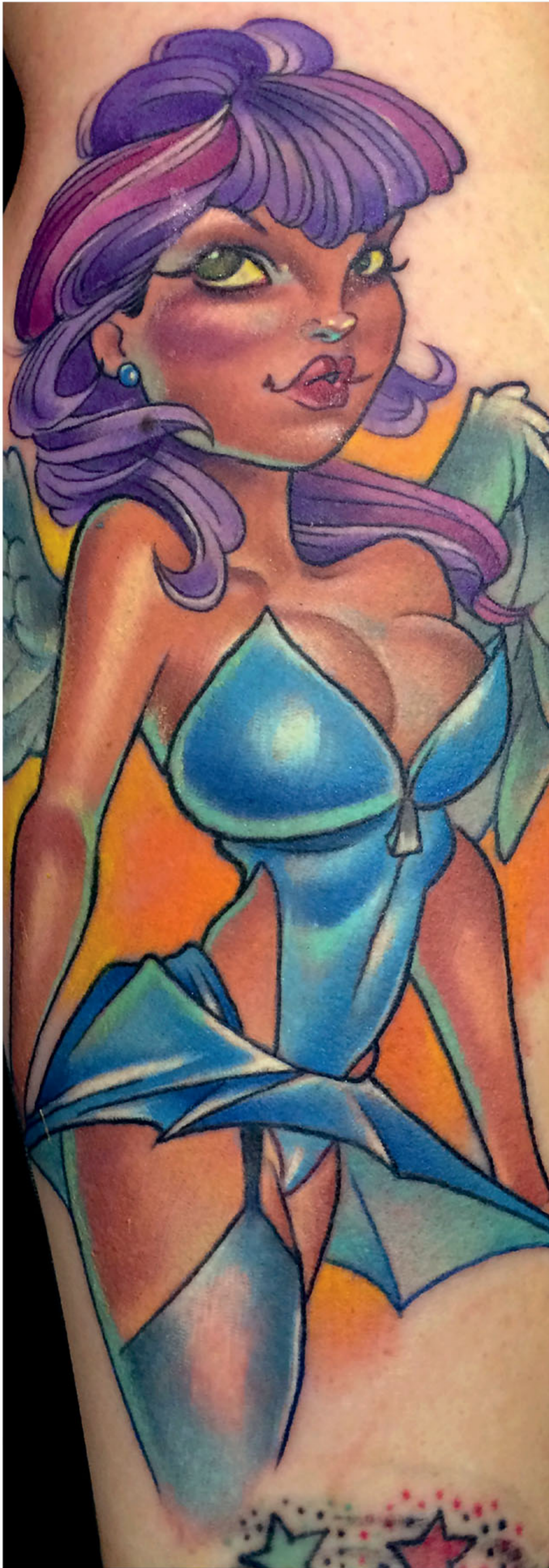
create a kind of circus buzz. But that seems to have died down a bit, as more and more of these "personalities" ask for more and more.

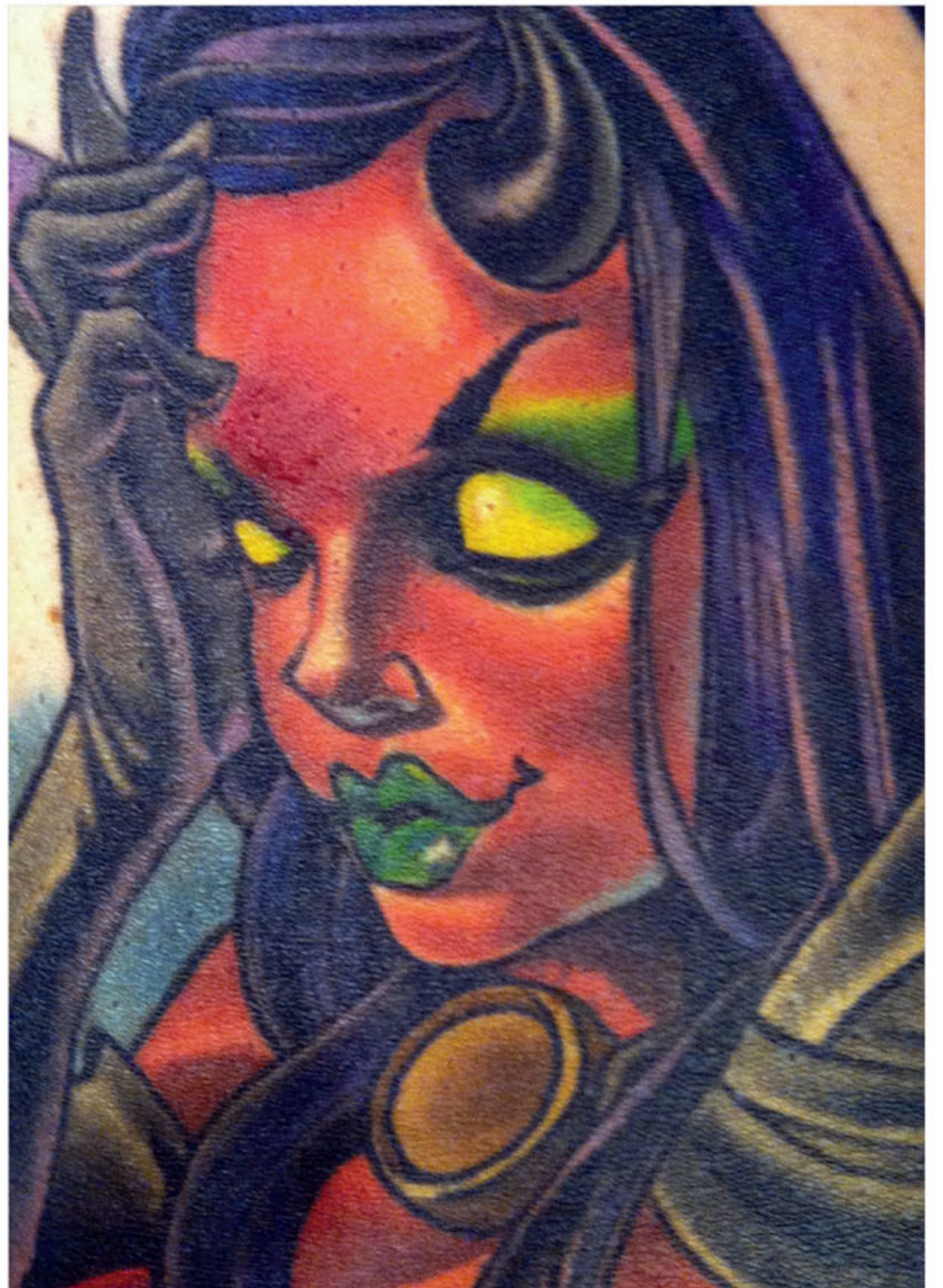
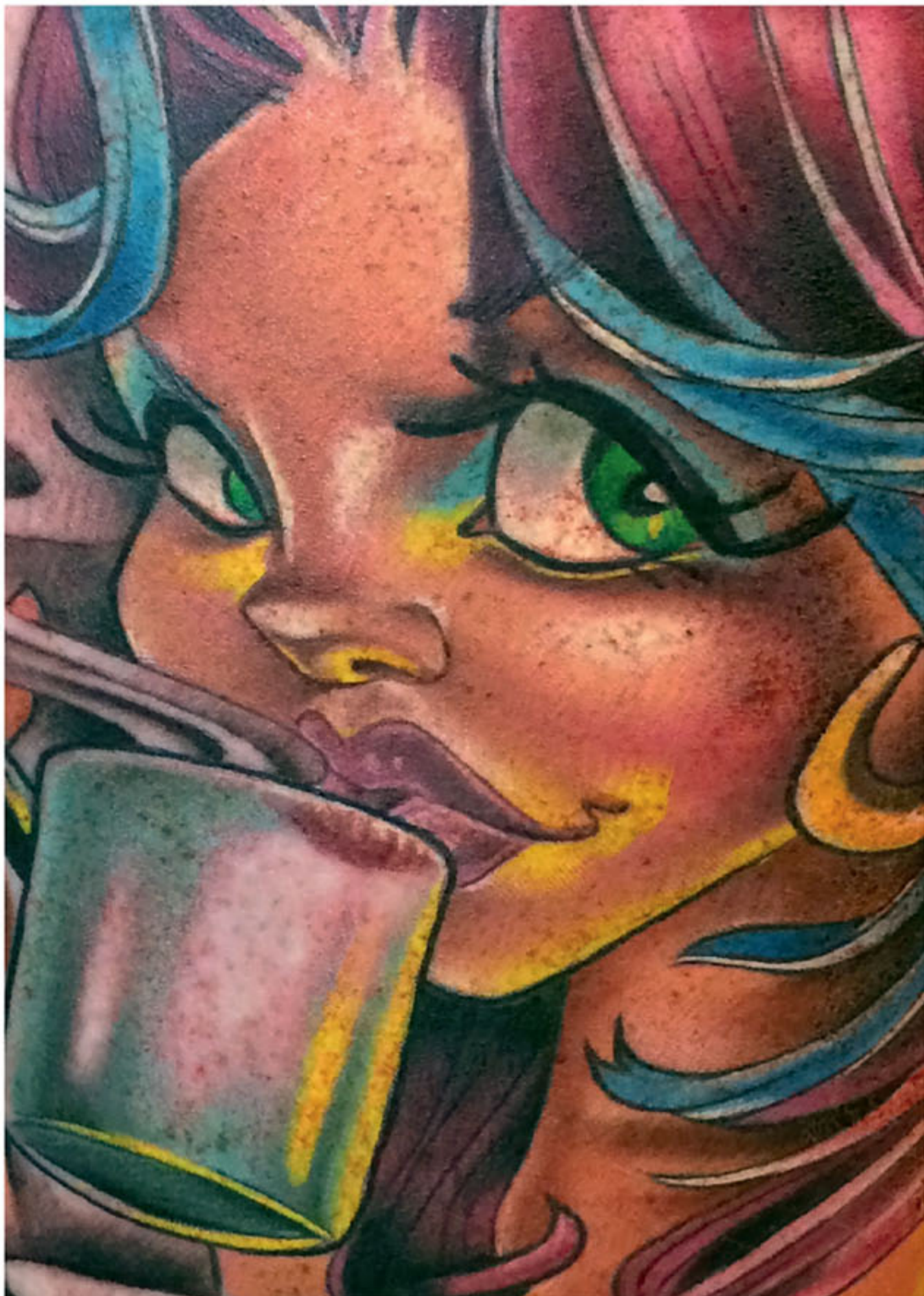
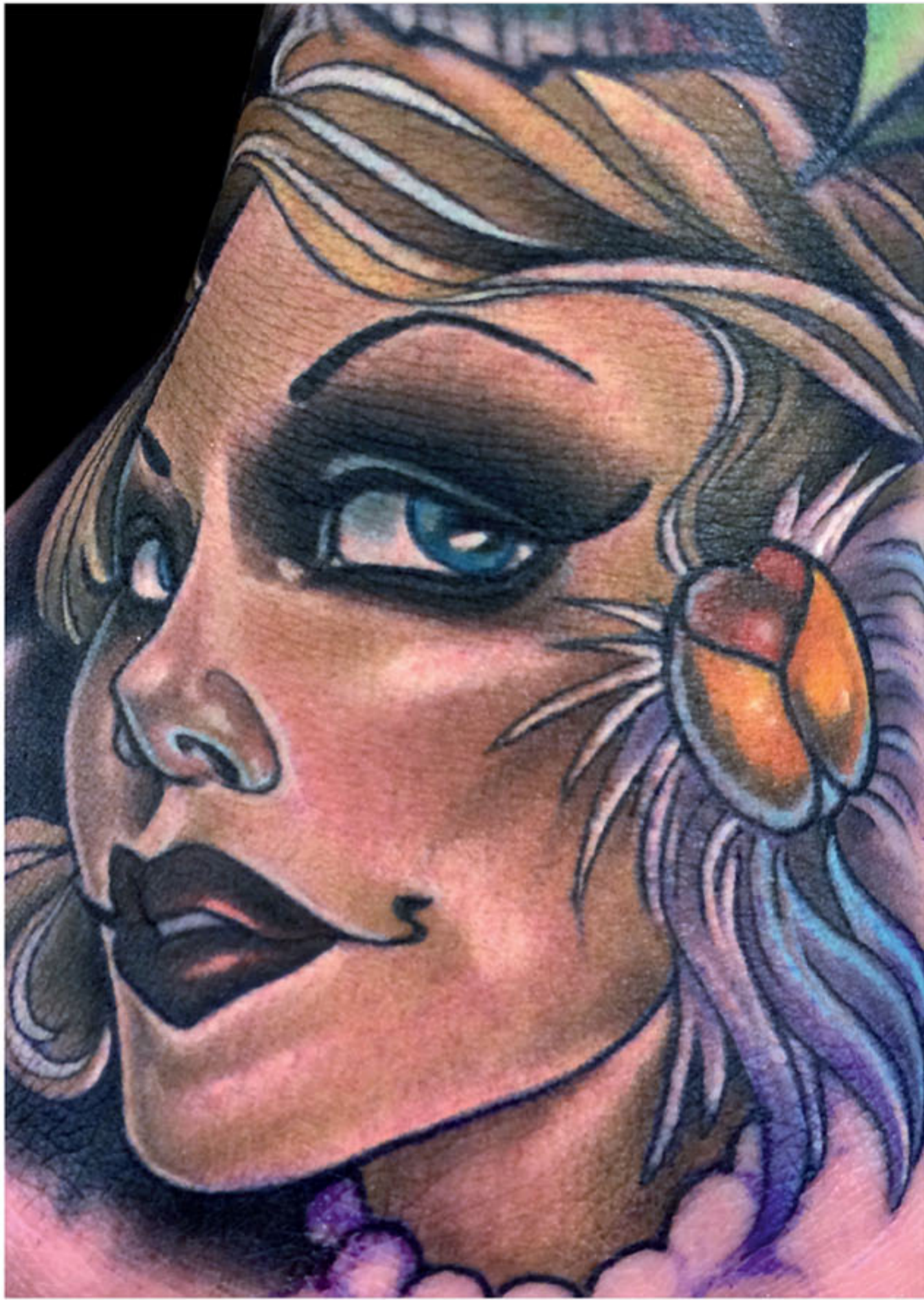
What are some of the positives and negatives to come out of the explosion of tattoo related TV shows? I think it's all relative. As much good as it brings, I think there is probably an equal amount of bad. More tattoo clients, yes. But these clients are folks who've been educated by television. We all know what that has done to the youth of our world. More exposure to the masses leads to more unrealistic expectations on price, abilities, and what tattooing is kind of about. I think it waters shit down, just like all television. The biggest issue I've personally got with it, is the fact that the shows are created, produced, and pretty much guided by individuals who know literally next to nothing about our trade. All for what they think is what makes good TV. Whatever... I know I'm not the demographic, but man, for the most part these shows kinda suck. And that goes for the one that I had a stint on.

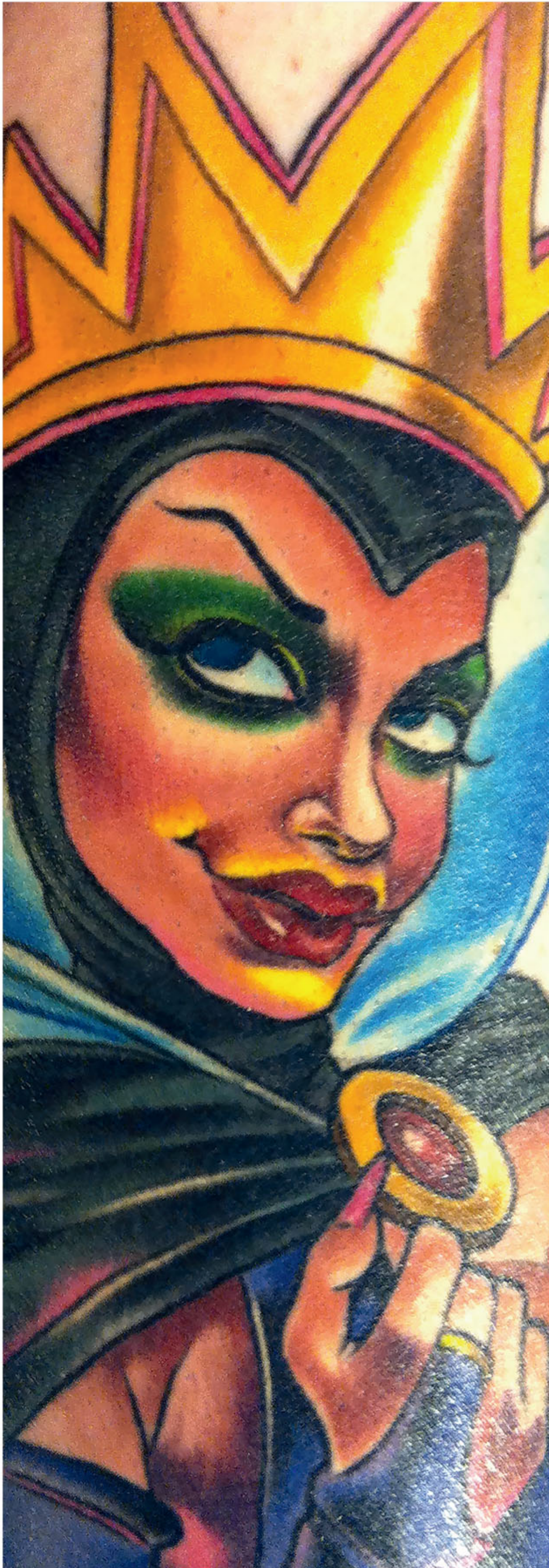
You recently announced that you were going to be mostly abandoning Instagram as a means for promoting your work. Why have you decided to abandon the social media site?

Yeah, I'm not gonna completely abandon the whole social media thing. But like the TV thing, social media has numbed the populace to that little 2"x2" box. They claim to really dig what it is we do. And want to support the artists that they most admire, and respect. Well here's a news flash. Double tapping the screen and liking a picture ain't supporting shit. People have lost touch with what it is to be a human fucking being.









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Do you remember your first tattoo? What was it? How old were you? Who did it? Does it still exist in some form? Yes, it is the Yallzee (graffiti tag) on my back tattooed by Juan R Lopez. I got it touched up a few years ago but it still exists. I was about 23 years old but hey, I am 41 now so that was 18-19 years ago.

What drew you to tattoo art in the first place? At first I didn't like them. Back then there weren't many good tattoos on people here in Puerto Rico. So it wasn't since I saw good tattoos being done by artists like Juan R Lopez, Hari Seda, Juan Torres, Eddie Senzala, Robert Torres, Daniel Cotte and others that I became interested in getting what I said was going to be the only one. Haha.

Do you remember the point that you went from being "a guy with tattoos" to a serious tattoo collector? In other words, when did it become your mission to be inked by the most renowned artists of the world? I'd be lying if I told you there was a point I realized it because once I noticed it was when artists and people in the industry started referring to me as a collector. Most of the work I was getting was from artists I liked, that I was looking at their work for a long time before social media. Social media wasn't actually in the equation so instead of looking for artists that had a name I was looking for artists that were appealing to me. I used to research a lot, I still do. Not many people know but I took art and painting classes when I was younger, so I kinda had a good idea of what I wanted or a better idea of what I did NOT want.

What drives you to continue adding to your collection? At first I just wanted a tattoo,

then I wanted some artists I liked. But the more I looked up and researched back you start to find there is more than what I was looking for... there is history and there is a beauty in it and also in those other styles that were laying between the styles that at first appealed to me and those others couldn't understand. I also learned how even in one style different artists had a trip or their own approach. I do music and like music, let's say tattoo art is a band. You can like the guitar but you can't just overlook the drums, bass or any other instruments if you are a music lover. Well, it's the same with art if you genuinely love art. That passion will make you crave for knowledge and will take you to appreciate everything as a whole.

How many tattoos do you think you have? And yes, this includes any time that a different artist adds little things to an existing tattoo. (Laughs) Impossible to even guess. I have over a hundred artists to this date, some worked large scale pieces, others have done more than three or four tattoos so imagine the countless hours that I have really lost track.

You picked all of the artists in this issue, tell us a little about the methodology that you used in doing so. Well first I tried to choose artists that weren't in *Freshly Inked* before, only 1 or 2 were already in the mag. Then I tried to create a good balance of styles, and artists that I believe are not only good artists but also artists that are an important asset to their style. I also chose artists that I respect on a personal level and that I know are devoted to tattooing and the wellbeing of the industry.

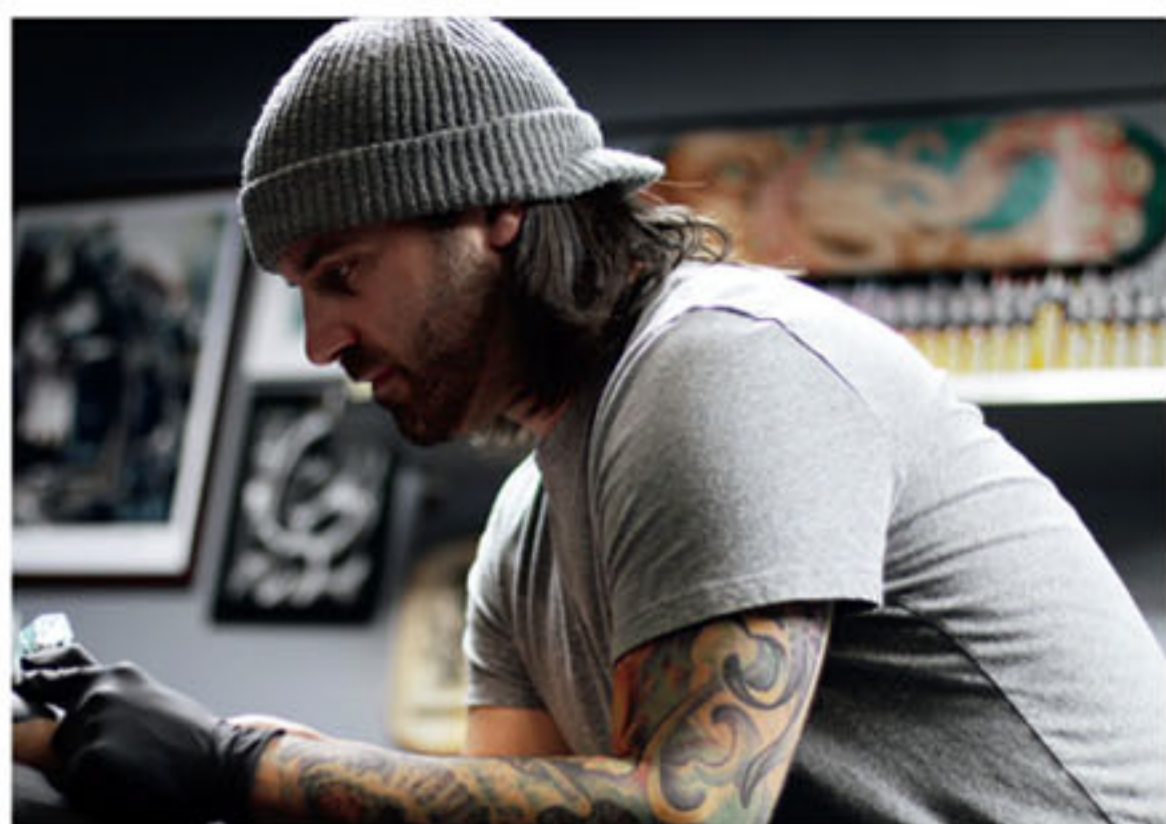
Who is your tattoo white whale? In other words, the artist that you would dream to be tattooed by but so far haven't been able to set it up. (Yes, it could be a dead artist.) Huck Spaulding, Paul Rogers, Horiyoshi III, Ed Hardy. Yes, I couldn't really think of only one.

Let's be honest, you have a favorite tattoo, right? Which one is it? Why? (Laughs) Not really, I honestly love all from large, to small to filler. Many bring memories with them. Moments that are carried on each trip or experience. I am not self-made—I've had many friends, artists, and other collectors that have helped me fulfill my dreams in different ways.

If you did it all over again, what would you do differently with your collection? I don't regret anything. Even the reworks are not because I didn't like the tattoos but because I like to see how the vision of one artist takes a turn through the vision of a different artist.

What makes you want to get tattooed? Adding to the collection? Getting a piece of art from an artist you admire? Commemorating a time in your life? What's the one thing that you feel drives you? I'm passion driven. In the beginning I looked for a great technical tattoo, close to perfection. Now I look for an experience, anything I can look to and just put a smile on my face because it brought back memories. I never thought that getting tattooed was going to get me to meet most of my best friends...

Which tattoo hurt the most? My head! Maybe too much.



@brandonschultheis

BRANDON SCHULTHEIS

First off, tell us about the tattoo that you did for Yallzee. When Yallzee approached me about tattooing him, my first thought was, "Really, me?" Then I immediately wondered, "Where does this guy have any room left?" He asked me to do some sort of biomech piece for him and pretty much gave me free reign. He had a few small open spaces at the time and let me pick the spot. So I wanted to do something that could accomplish a few things—find enough room for a small biomech piece to flow and have movement, as well as incorporate the existing pieces around it without taking away from them, all while showcasing my personal style. It was a little stressful to be honest, but we were both really happy with the final product and I'm really honored to have been able to add to his collection.

As an artist, how does it feel to be approached by a renowned collector? Obviously, I was flattered when he asked me to tattoo him. Yallzee has an incredible collection of tattoos from some of the best artists around the world. It's an honor to tattoo anyone. To put our art permanently on someone is a privilege that many of us might get desensitized to since we do it every day. But it's extra special when someone who has such a vast knowledge of the industry, its history and love for this art form asks you to work on him. It was really exciting and humbling.

Biomech is a very specific and unique tattoo style. What attracted you to the style and made you want to specialize in it? Biomech is definitely a unique style. I feel like you either love it or don't really care about it. It's gaining more recognition lately and I'm getting a lot more requests for it these days. But I think what attracts me the most to this genre is how you can transform someone's body into a three-dimensional landscape and convince a viewer that this imagi-

nary realm is tangible and real. There are so many unique sub-styles within this genre that the possibilities are endless. From strictly mechanical parts to the most organic flowing forms, there is such a variety of surface textures and lighting effects that you can really create anything you want.

Where do you find your inspiration when creating a biomech piece? First and foremost, from the body. My designs always start with where the tattoo will be going. The muscle structure and shape and size of the area will dictate the overall movement and flow of the piece. From there I can focus on shape language, color palette and surface textures. My work tends to fall more into the bio-organic category rather than mechanical, so I draw a lot of my inspiration from nature. I like to explore the outdoors and discover my own references, so you'll see a lot of tree bark, coral, and leaflike influences in my tattoos.

Tell us a little about the importance of both placement and size when working in biomech? The placement and size are the two most important aspects in my opinion. Fancy lighting effects and rendering don't look good if the proportions aren't correct and the piece isn't flattering to the body. So when I start designing a piece, I always try to have a few reference photos of the body part that I'll be tattooing. I can do a rough sketch overlaid on that to get a general idea of the layout and movement. From there I can refer to that drawing and freehand the piece directly on the skin in order to really take advantage of the muscles and geometry of the body.

One of the cool things about your work is that you go from creepy monsters to gorgeous flowers. Do you like to alternate between all types of subject matter as a way to keep things fresh? If you had your druthers, what sorts of subjects would

you tattoo? It's absolutely a way to keep a fresh perspective and keep pushing myself to explore new avenues and techniques. Also, obviously, the client's preference comes into play. Not everyone is going to want strictly biomech from me and not every client is going to want a glowing flower. I also think I'd get bored if I did the same thing every day. Overall, I want to take the client's idea and somehow fit that into a style that I'm really excited about and make it a piece that I'd be proud to wear on myself. If I had my choice to do whatever I wanted, it would be a large scale fusion piece incorporating some illustrative elements, or those glowing flowers incorporated into a bio-organic landscape.

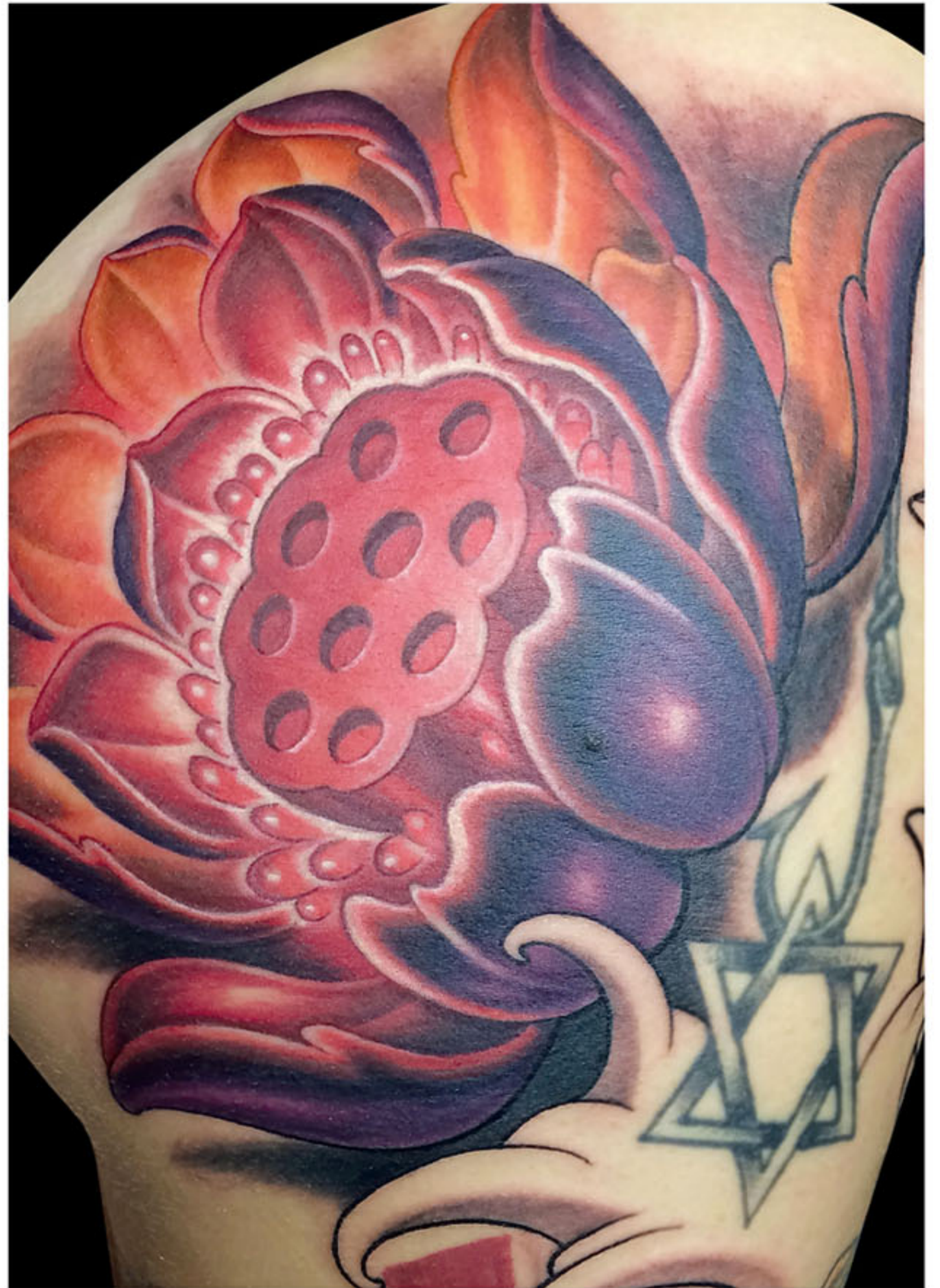
Speaking of those flowers, tell us a bit about all of those flowers that you do? They look almost supernatural...

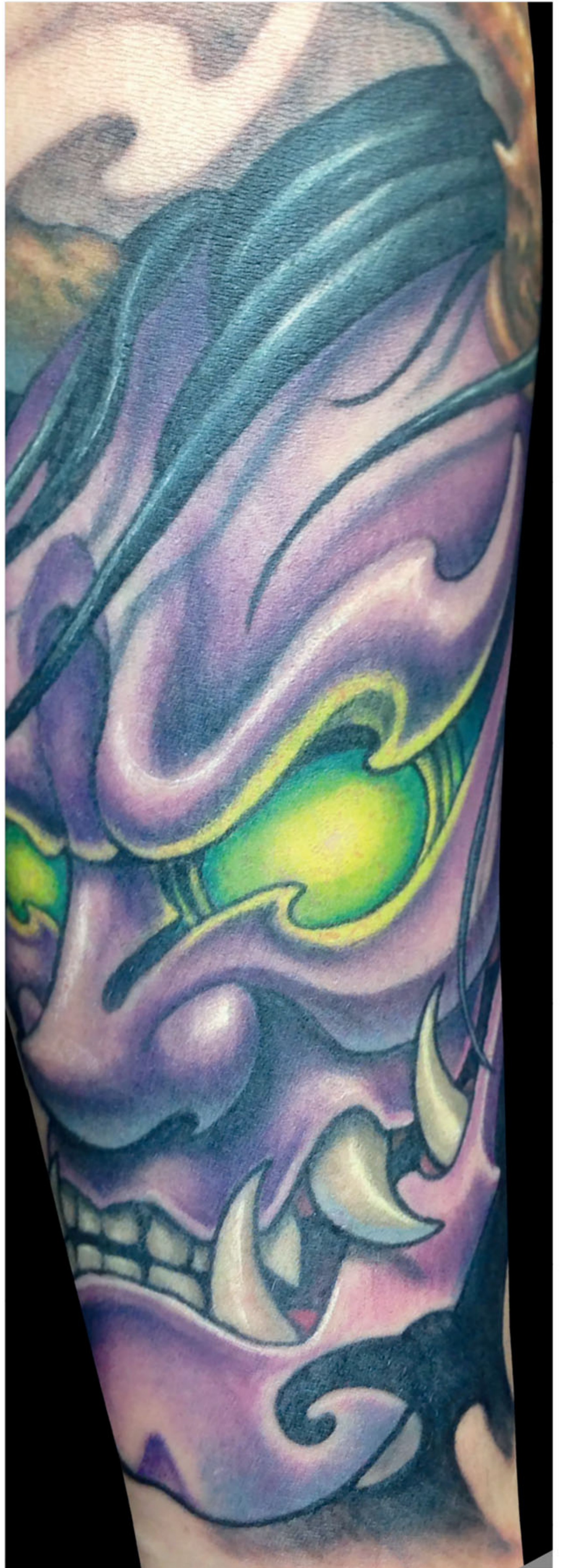
Those glowing flowers are a tremendous amount of fun to do and have become really popular for my clients. I'm definitely not the first one to do fancy lighting effects in flowers, but I love doing them and putting my own twist on them. What I really enjoy about those is that they transcend into different genres of tattooing. I've done those within a full Japanese leg sleeve, and also worked them into bio-mech sleeves where they're the light source for that environment.

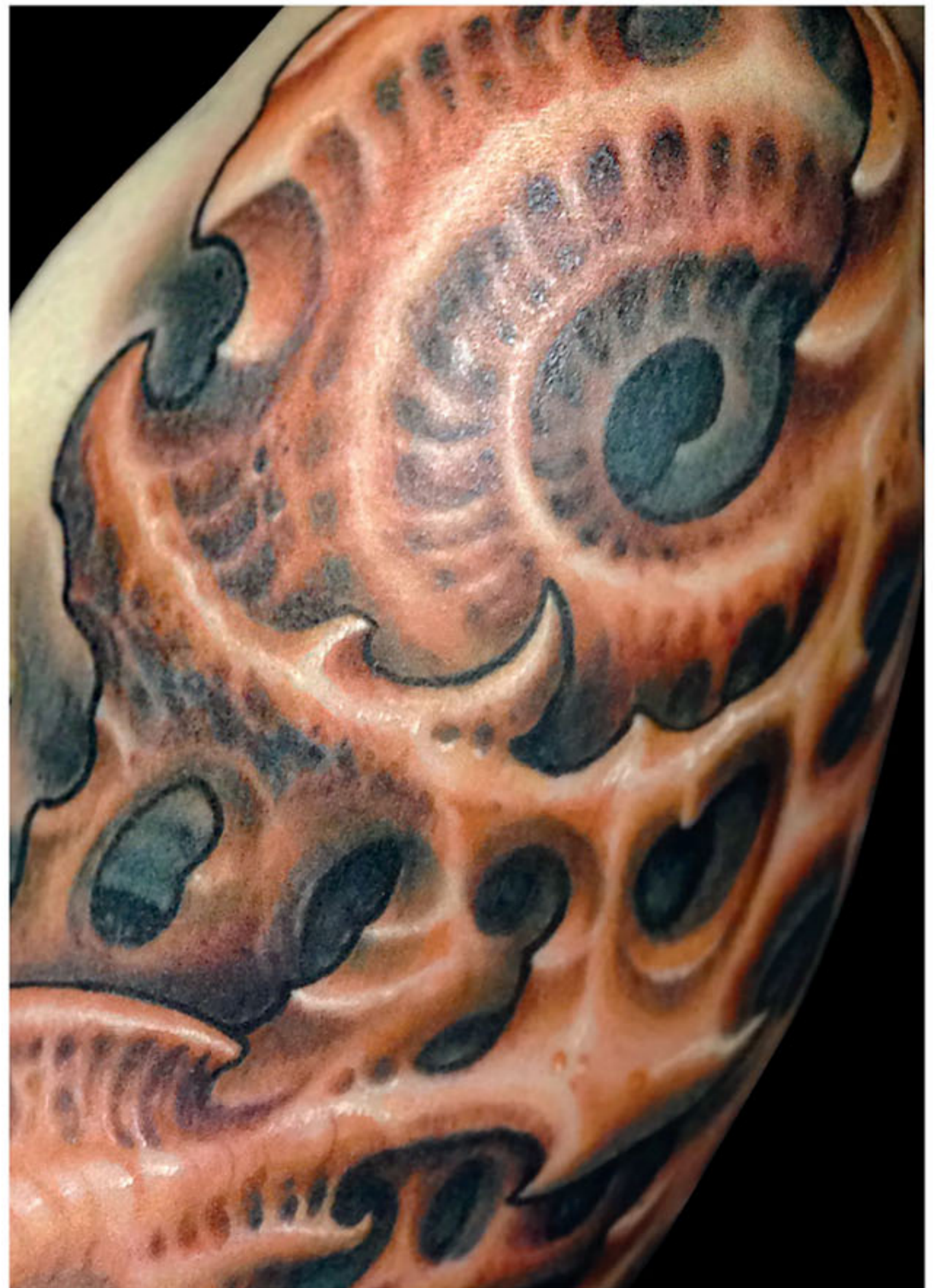
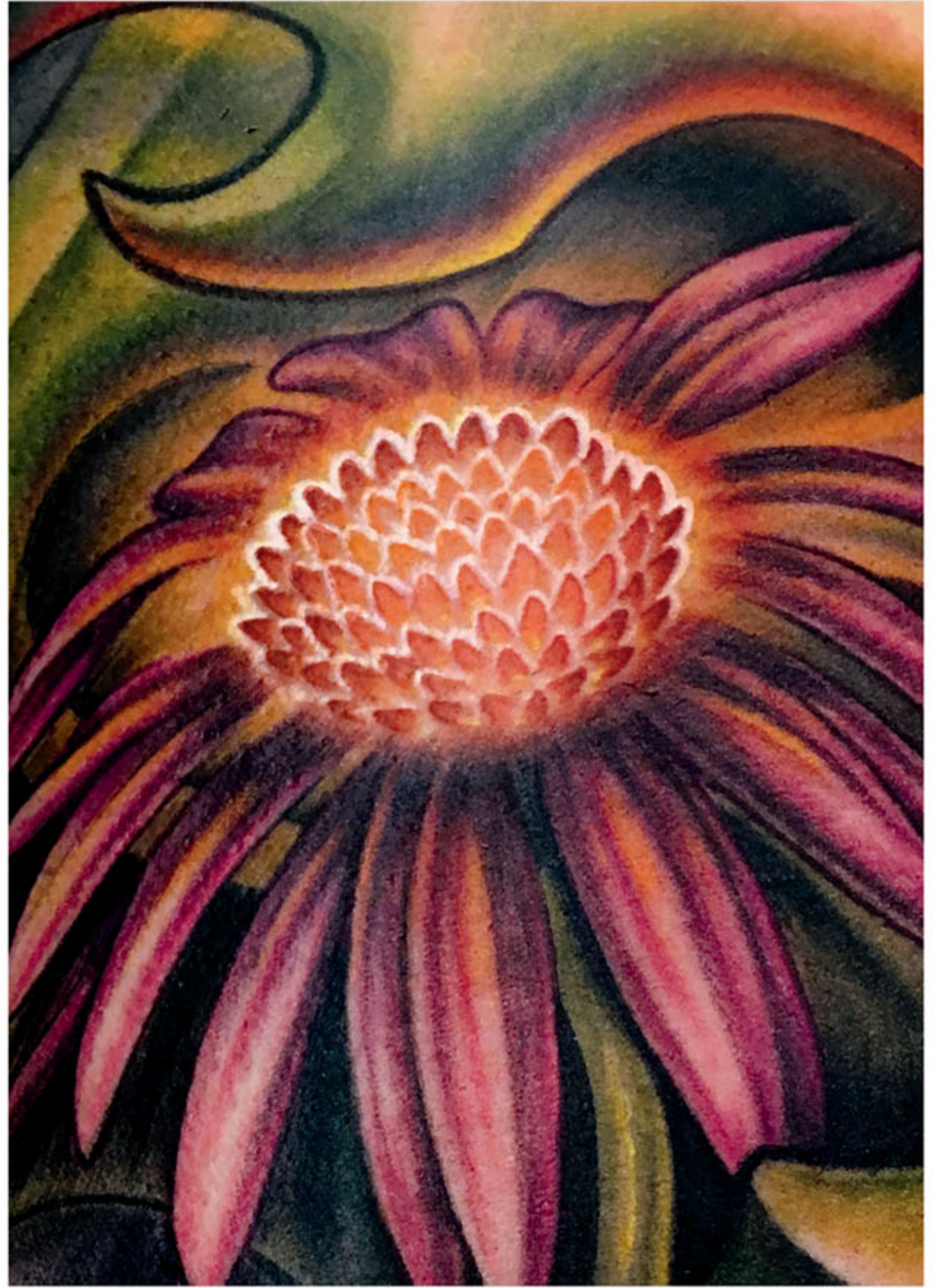
Your use of color is absolutely tremendous. Tell us a little bit about why you prefer to work in color. What sort of things can you do with color that you couldn't accomplish in black and grey?

I'd say the thing that attracts me the most about doing color work is that there's an immediate emotional response. I also feel like there's more opportunity to explore subtle textures and lighting effects which have become a cornerstone of my work lately. Plus, you can really pull someone's eye to your focal point right away with a pop of color or dramatic lighting effect.







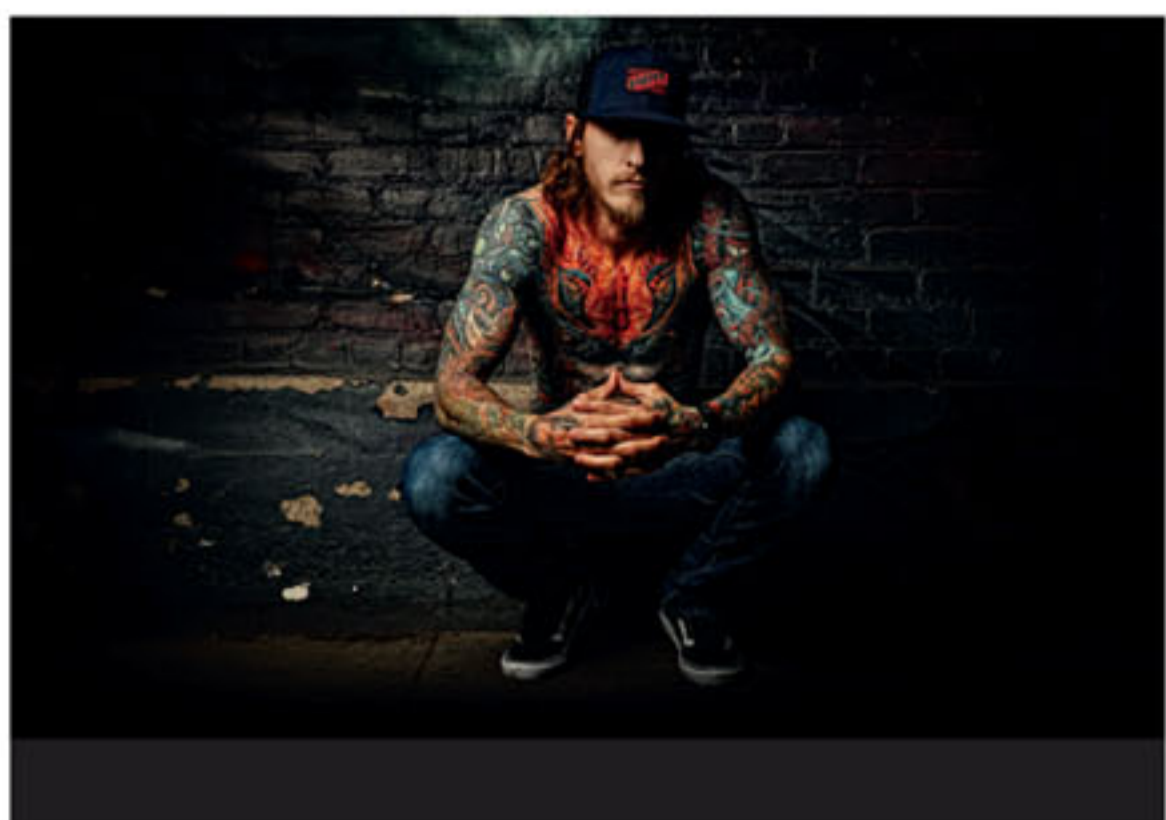


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MIKE DEVRIES

@mikedeuries

Do you remember the first tattoo that you did for Yallzee?

Yes, I remember when, where, and what it was. Actually, what I remember most was how cool he is! He was very open to design ideas and had an awesome tattoo collection so when people are that passionate about this art form they tend to get picky on whom they decide to get tattooed by so that's why it was such an honor to tattoo him and the tattoo I did on him was right between some other great tattoos by some great tattoo artists!

Can you tell us a little bit about it? Well, I don't remember exactly if he gave me the ideas to run with or if he said do whatever I wanted. Seeing the pieces he had it gave me a good sense of what he is into. I did a girl skull morph type of piece, if I recall correctly he had splashes of red throughout some of his other pieces so I put some red in and around the eyes so as a whole look at his body it wouldn't look out of place and there would be consistency and continuity on him when he was done with his journey to collecting and finishing his body suit. I also don't recall if at that time he told me he was on a mission to get a body suit but it looked and felt very apparent that's where he was headed.

How do you feel being sought out by a collector? Is it an experience that is any different from tattooing other clients?

It's definitely a good feeling especially nowadays there are so many damn good tattoo artists out there now, that to be picked out by a collector that is so passionate and the work he collects is SO important that it feels really good to be sought out by a collector, it really does! It's definitely a different experience tattooing serious collectors, you almost have to go into it with a different mind set, or at least that's what I do. I like to

take everything into consideration, his existing pieces, future plans, goals, etc. Although I try my best on all my work I do but sometimes nerves could kick in because you're working in between amazing pieces that other artists have done, so it kind of feels like you have to step it up, or at least be on your A game.

Some of your work that really stands out is your animal portraiture. Not only are they realistic looking but also you seem to capture the animal's soul. How do you go about doing this?

The right reference is always important, for sure. A lot of it for me is in the eyes—if there's a connection there then I can bring out that emotion in the tattoo. I try and catch the essence of the animal or person rather than just trying to replicate it exactly on skin. There are a lot of tattoo artists out there that do realism and just pull the same tiger or lion off of Google, so I make special attempts to photograph animals at zoos or flowers, etc. No matter what though I always play with images in Photoshop and change it up at least a little bit. Then when I tattoo it, I don't resort to the reference as much, I kind of do my own thing and that's something that helps set you apart from other artists doing the same piece. Like I've always said, if a bunch of realism artists did the same tiger tattoo and nailed it, what's the point? You will just be lost in the bunch.

Your Instagram is covered with pictures of your dogs. Do you have any tattoos of them? Going back to the above question, does being an animal lover influence the way you tattoo animals? I do! I have a portrait of one of my dogs that passed away. Her name was Daisy so I had Mike De Masi (a really good friend and great tattooer) do it and asked for some daisies to put around her portrait. I think being an animal lover is definitely part

of why I take so much care in tattooing them. I really try to capture their souls.

You're known to be an enormous Dodgers fan. Have you gotten a chance to do any cool Dodgers related tattoos? And how would you react to a client requesting a Giants tattoo? I have done a Vin Scully portrait and a Tommy Lasorda! If someone asked for a Giants tattoo I would kick them out of my shop... just kidding. I'm a fan of a lot of different teams and sports in general.

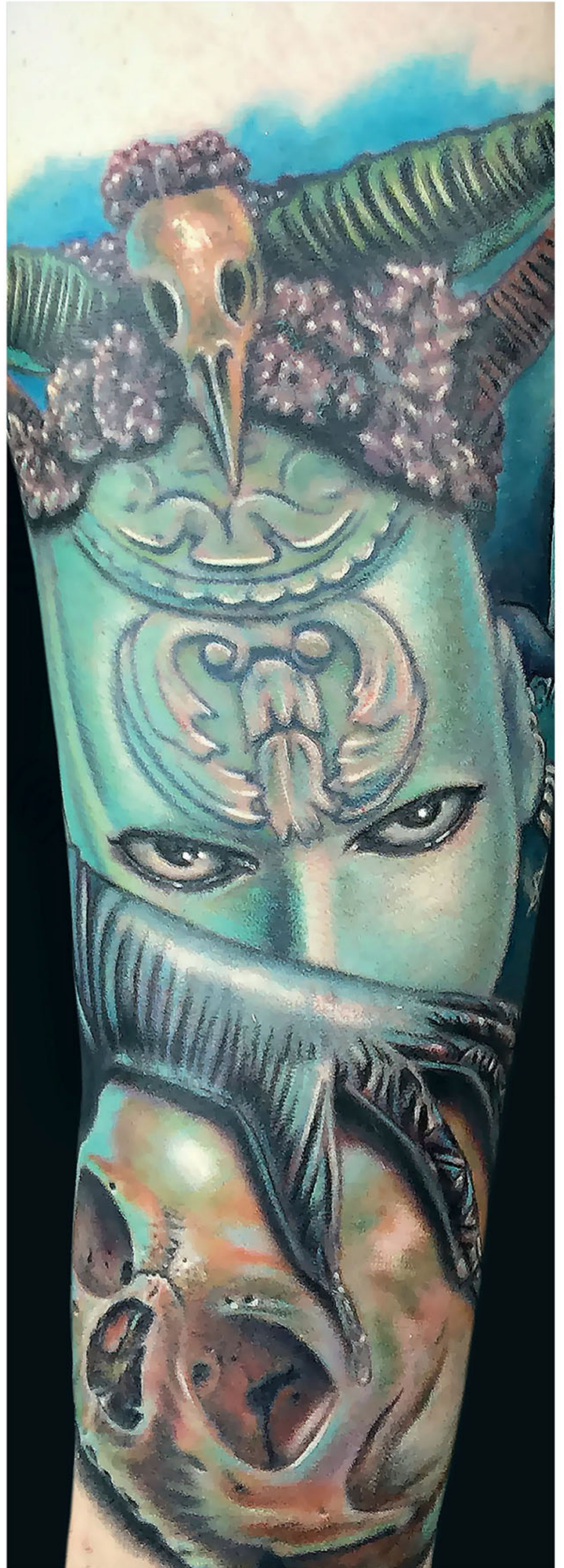
As the owner of Memento Publishing can you tell us a little bit about what you do there? Why do you think it is important to have books that treat tattooing as an art medium on par with painting, sculpture, etc? What is the next big project coming up? I started Memento Publishing in 2009 and just started getting excited about the process and bringing something to the industry by showcasing some great tattoo art. It was also a way that stamps a period of time for the history books. We've published about 12 books now, our newest ones include "Tattoo Prodigies 2" which is a huge coffee table style book featuring some of the best artists in the world. The newest addition to Memento's library is "The Body Sketch Book" I actually got in touch with the paper company Canson and got them on board to print this book on their sketch paper. It's filled with a variety of body parts for artists to get ideas and show clients flow and movement; it's just an awesome sketchbook that we thought would be really helpful to the tattoo industry. If you're an artist definitely check it out!

Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give him or her? Don't do it! You'll never get a job!



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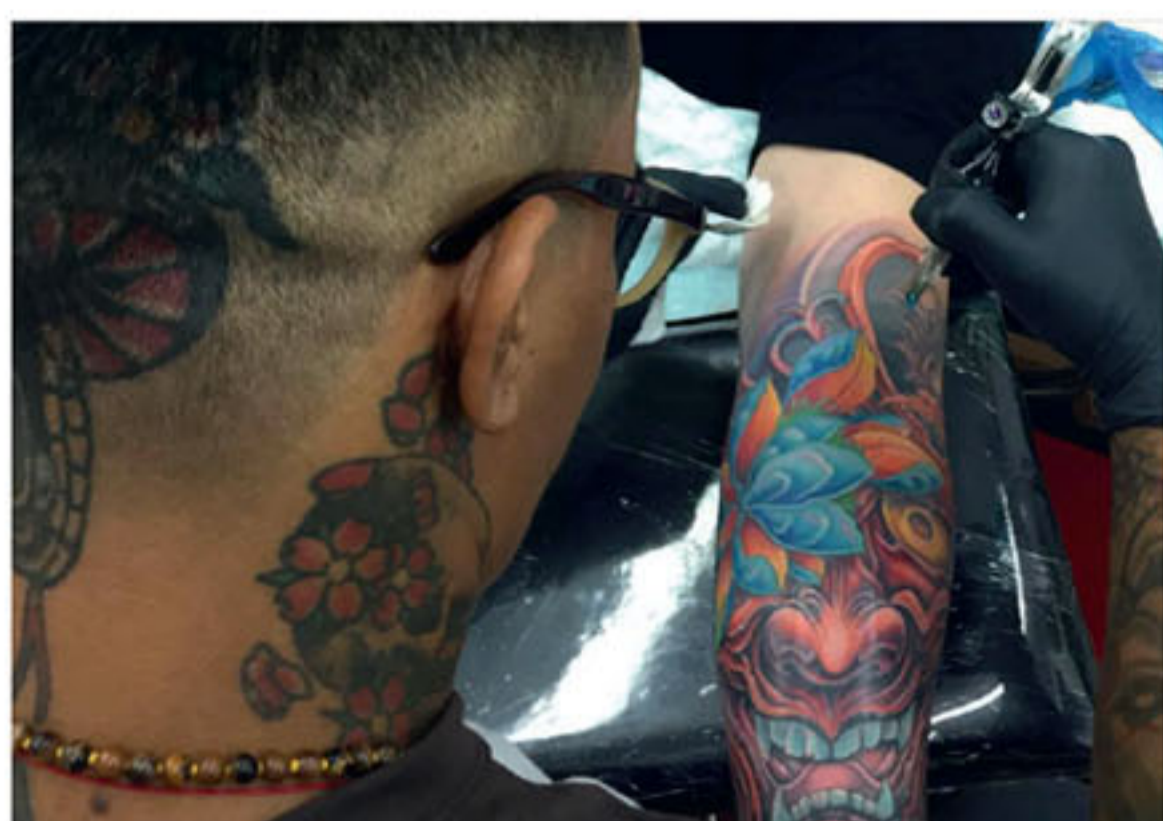
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JUAN LOPEZ

When did you start tattooing? I started in 1995. I grew up in the projects, my mom was in church and I saw one person with many tattoos. I started seeing him often so when my mother wasn't around I went up to him and asked him how they were done. Then I went back to the projects and asked an ex-con how to build a machine. The first ones didn't work but eventually I was successful and started tattooing friends out of my apartment. I was also getting tattoos by professional artists so I finally got my hands on some real equipment to get me started. Then I started working for "El Indio" who owned the very first tattoo shop in Puerto Rico.

Your work is very well rounded. You do great color, black & grey, realism, and Japanese. Is there a preferred style you like to do? I like all styles but I've always been more passionate about Japanese art.

What type of tattoos were you doing back when you started? How did you

go to work in other styles? In Puerto Rico you had to be able to do anything. There was not much you could see on the internet so usually you had to be versatile and learn to do everything. I also draw constantly so that helps.

If you have the freedom to do any type of tattoo, what would it be? Any subject, body placement, style? Definitely large scale work... backpack/ bodysuit... Japanese... possibly dragon, or something that involves finger waves...

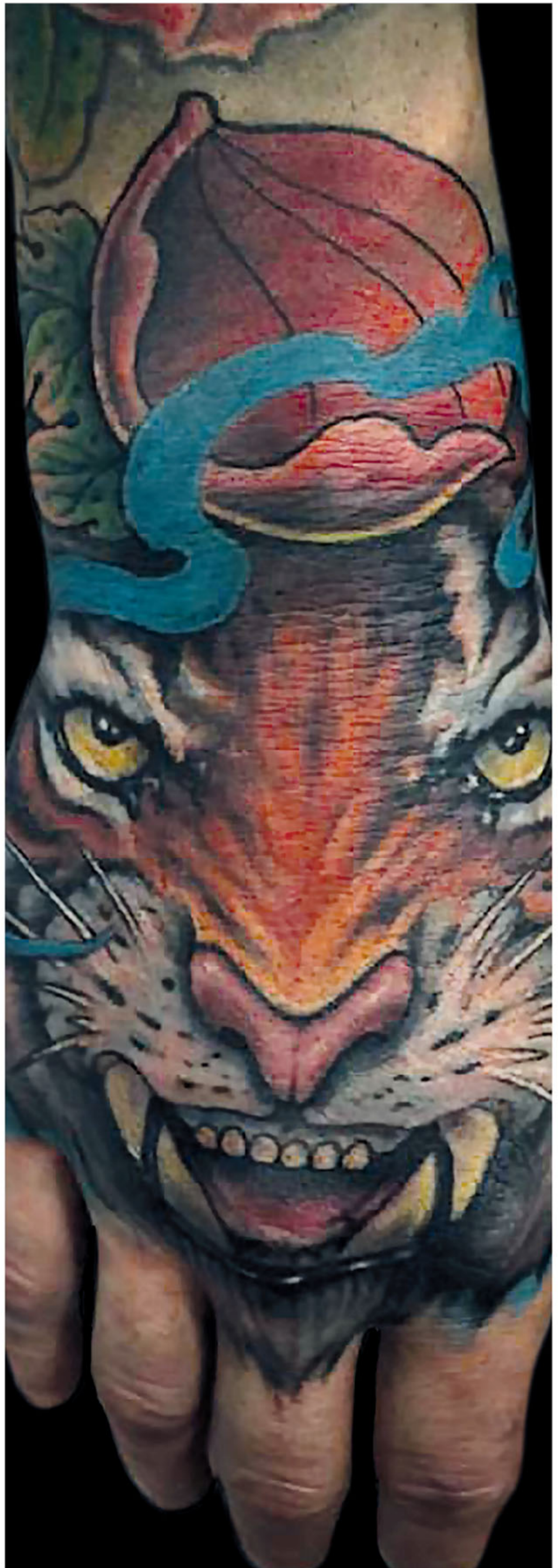
I have seen you work from a stencil and have also seen you freehand a tattoo from scratch. What would be the difference between the two? When do you decide to freehand or sketch on paper? I love the freedom of doing freehand, but I do stencil most of my drawing's subject. The backgrounds and other elements I freehand so they flow better with the body part. So the difference is based on what and where (location on body).

What do you think is the most difficult part when creating a large-scale tattoo? Everything has to be taken into consideration and well planned to have a good final result. You can't take for granted a background, or how you put together one subject with another or with the elements. It is a very responsible decision we artists need to think about.

Where do you usually find inspiration? What or who inspired you in and out of the tattoo world back when you started tattooing? What or who inspires you today? Life, family, nature. When I started my biggest inspiration was Filip Leu... and he still is today (laughs). But then, of course, there are now more ways to see other artists' work that I can't just name a few without leaving out many.

Do you practice any other art medium? Drawing, painting, oils? I mostly work on watercolors and try to practice whenever I have time. Oils and pencil drawing too.

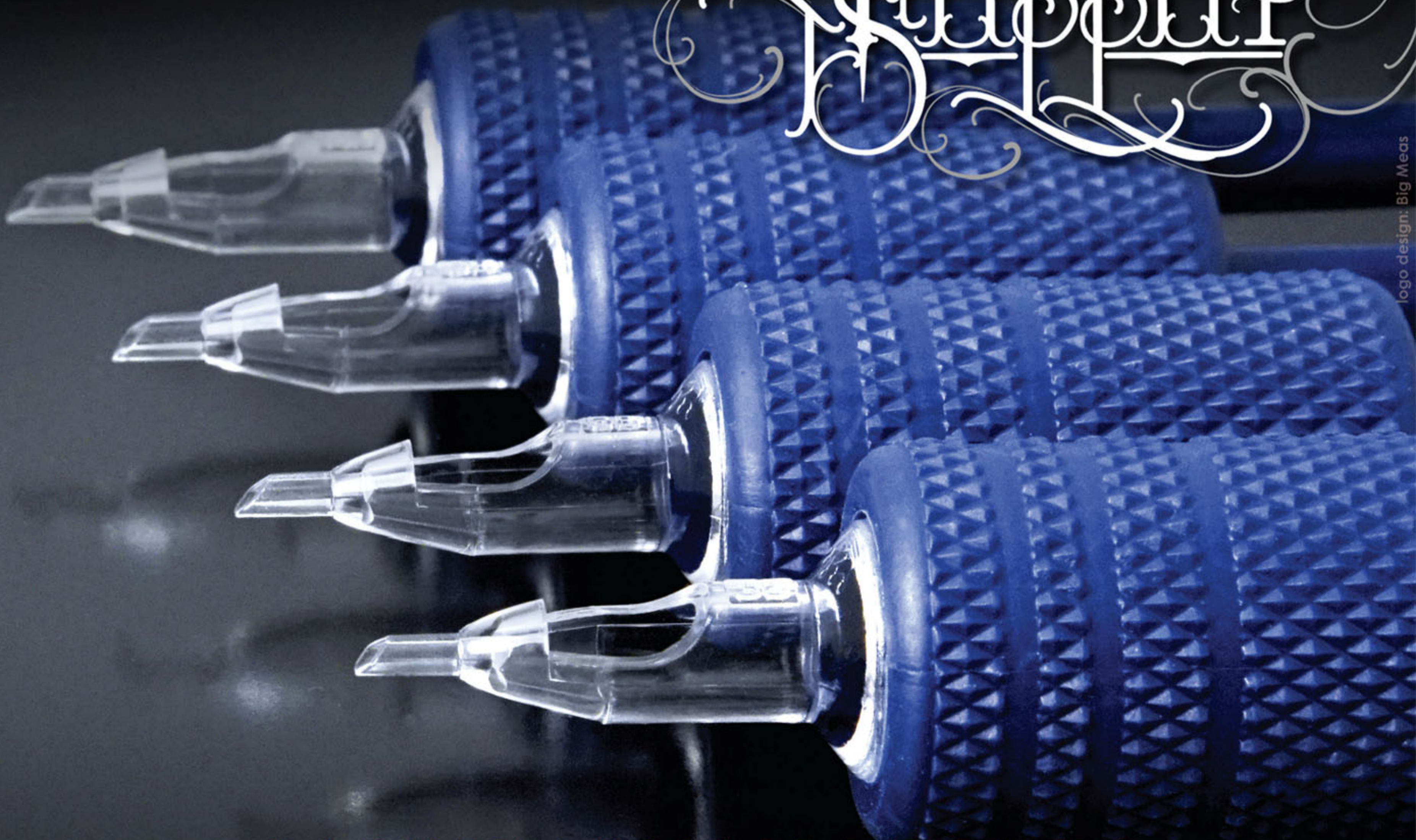




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JESS YEN

@jessyentattoo

When did you start tattooing? I started tattooing at the early age of 13 in Taiwan, using a needle that was tied to a bamboo stick to do a Kanji character on my classmate's arm. This method is known as Tebori or hand-poked tattooing. Although tattooing back in those years in Taiwan was a taboo and my family didn't believe in a career as a tattoo artist, I still wanted to learn and even went under an apprenticeship for a short period of six months. I was doing it more like a hobby or underground art. After graduating from college, I worked for a Japanese interior designer in Taipei for a few years, and then I decided to come to America for a master's degree in fine art. Unfortunately, my mom had financial difficulty supporting me so I was not able to complete the education. In a fortuitous way, I visited a tattoo parlor in Venice Beach, CA and encountered electrical machines for the first time. I was amazed by its "speed" comparing to my hand-poked method that I learned back in Taiwan. By combining my hand-poked tattoo skill with the advantages of an electrical machine, I began my tattoo journey in America. The establishment of my tattoo career was not so glorious and I started up my tattoo career at my garage until I was invited by a local tattoo parlor owner, Ken, to work at his shop in Alhambra, California.

What is your creative process when designing a large-scale custom tattoo? What do you feel is the hardest, challenging and more satisfactory part of the process? I always start my tattoo appointments with an initial consultation. In our meeting, my client and I will discuss ideas and storyline together, and then decide the object and subject of his/her tattoo design. The next step is one of the most important stages of my creative process called

sizing. I use a special rice paper directly on my client's body and mark the shape where the new tattoo is going to be and key points like shoulder bones, arm pits, birth marks or existing tattoos. Then, I take the sizing paper home to study all references, storylines and description in details. Using my imagination and the shape of sizing, I will put together a sketch to design the object and subject, flowing nicely with his/her body. Sometimes I will need to work around existing birthmark or tattoos, or even covering an existing tattoo when my project is in full body suit and the client does not want the old tattoo any more. I think the hardest or most challenging part is not drawing, designing, or a technical skill issue that I need to overcome, but is when the client is indecisive and reaching a compromised point where I could bring out the best beauty of the work and my client is happy. Once my work is near completed, the tattoo turns out great and exceeds my client's expectation, and then I will be satisfied.

Was this the style you've always wanted to do? What type of tattoos were you doing back when you started? I started out as a Tebor (hand-poked) artist who did traditional Japanese style tattoos. Similar to Americana style, traditional Japanese style emphasizes "line" work. After learning how to use an electric machine in the US, I did all kinds of styles that a client was asking for, but mainly Oriental tattoos. Today, people know me as Oriental Realism style or illustrative Oriental as I called my style. How I found this style comes from a few reasons. First, it's because of my background in fine arts and past experiences in the interior design industry. With an electric machine that I learned to use, I was able to add

elements of realism and materialism into my work, elements which cannot be achieved by a Tebori method. Secondly, I think time has changed and people like different things, realism style became very popular in America and all over the world. Oriental style has a lot of creatures that never existed, and by adding elements of realism I could bring life out of them. People could visually feel the sharpness of a dragon's claws, the texture of its snaky skin, the furriness of its horsehair back and its vivid eyes that tell you the storyline behind this work. Despite the above, I do not think less of traditional style. It is where we all started from and many people today, like me, still love and appreciate traditional Japanese style tattoos. Although my illustrative Oriental style tattoo derives from time changes, needs of my work and influence from Western culture, I still preserve the original story and spirit of Eastern history and myth.

Where do you usually find inspiration?

Horiyoshi III Sensei has been my inspiration since I was 16 getting a tattoo in Taiwan. I am very grateful that Sensei became my mentor about nine years ago. I visit Sensei and attend his art exhibition every year in Japan. He is a great tattoo artist, and also a very talented artist whom I could learn so much from. Traveling is very inspirational; I have traveled to about 30 countries. When I wake up every morning, taking my first breath at different parts of the world, I would have different ideas. A famous artist once said that ideas are God's whisper and he would only say it once. Therefore, I always carry a small notebook to write them down. Attending tattoo conventions and learning from other tattoo artists are great way to exchange different cultures, thoughts, and techniques.



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JED LEIKNES

@leiknesoils

Let's start by asking about the tattoo that you did for Yallzee, do you remember it?

It was the last day of the 2nd Annual Evergreen Tattoo Invitational. Yallzee and I had chatted a bit previously that day, and I had just finished up my last booked piece for the weekend.

How do you feel about being approached by a renowned tattoo collector like Yallzee? Is it an honor to have your work alongside so many other fine artists?

It's always a bit of a big deal to get to contribute to a canvas populated with such great work from artists you respect and admire. I found myself rather excited and nervous to try to fit my piece dangerously close to one done by Paul Booth.

Now it appears as if your primary focus is oil painting as opposed to tattooing. Which was your first love? How did you get into each form of art?

I've been tattooing since 2004 and began oil painting around 2009. I began tattooing after being offered an apprenticeship while getting my first piece, a memorial for my grandma who had recently passed. Painting came along later on as I was introduced to acrylics, only to learn that I hated and was terrible at acrylic painting. I read a few books, watched a few DVDs and YouTube videos and began plinking away with oils.

Is there a reason that you have turned your focus away from tattooing? Painting represents the ultimate freedom of artistic expression that I was never quite able to attain with tattooing. I enjoy tattooing, and try to put my best into each piece, but it's easier to get swept up in a lot more negativity within the industry. That's certainly true of painting and that whole scene, I'm sure, which I suppose is lucky for me that I'm relatively unknown to galleries. There's a certain isolation and autonomy to the craft that I find appealing these days.

Do you have any special training in art?

I have no formal training or education, beyond my initial apprenticeship for tattooing. I'm a high school dropout who has failed virtually every art class I've taken.

Your paintings of owls are truly breathtaking, what is it that inspires you about the creatures? How do you capture them so well?

I think what they do for me visually makes it easier to make progress when rendering them; what they represent to me is a lot of things, none of them particularly mind-bending. They're mysterious, beautiful, and otherworldly.

Does the subject matter you work with crossover between painting and tattooing, or do you find that certain things fit one medium more so than the other?

I've long since stopped trying to merge the two mediums insofar as my approach. They both offer significant advantages with the subject material I favor. That said, while my tattooing has become more uniform in approach, I've had fun employing several varying techniques with painting—from the ultra-detailed to the impasto-heavy and suggestive.

A while ago you mentioned on Instagram that you were going to be finishing up a couple of color projects before giving it up for good. Can you tell us about your choice to do this?

It took a lot of time and effort to get to a point where people were asking me to do color realism—for years it was all I wanted to do, and when I got there, I was the happiest I'd been yet as a tattooer. But it got to a point where every single piece became more of a math problem, and I'd suddenly have thirty ink caps out, having to remember specific color recipes and was always adjusting for complexion, healing and time. A noble, essential exercise within the milieu, but one that was burning me out and not getting the results I wanted. I found

myself doing more black and grey pieces more out of serendipity than any conscious effort on my part; I'd ask clients if they preferred color or black & grey and more and more, people were opting for the latter. With each new satisfying piece, my resolve to focus on that exclusively became less a question and more an answer.

Your art often comes from a very, very dark place. Does working with such heavy subject matter ever take a toll on you? Where do you find your inspiration for your horror themed work?

Focusing on darker work was as natural to me as breathing, once I made the decision to do so. I don't necessarily consider a psychic cost in painting darker imagery; if there's a catharsis to be had in the act, I receive it, but it's not mandatory and doesn't always drive the art itself. That said, it's difficult to say where that inspiration comes from as I absolutely loathe the horror film genre. It feels more satisfying to build something up and find a way to smash it to pieces, as a purely creative act, rather than actually doing that and merely being destructive.

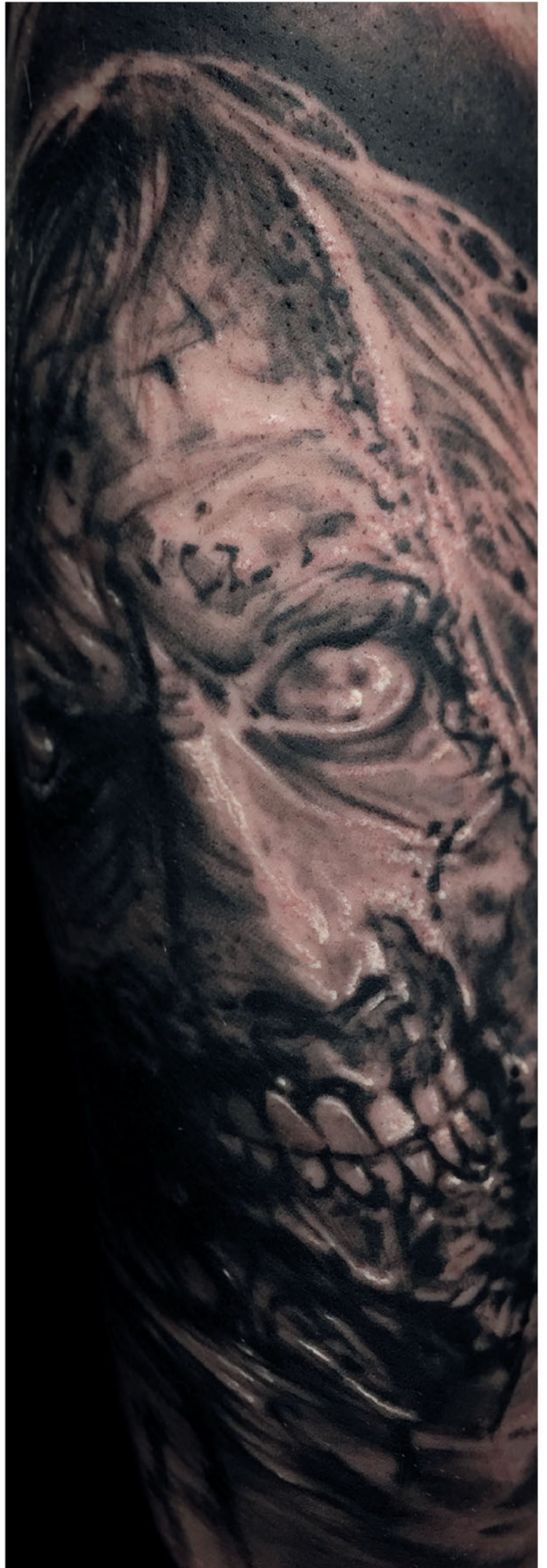
What artists do you admire most? The ones who don't need a second job to be able to make art.

What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing? I've been fortunate to have quite a bit of autonomy over the projects I've taken on the last few years, and hope to rebuild a portfolio gearing more towards larger bodies of work: sleeves, back pieces, et al.

Is there a tattoo that you haven't done yet that you are dying to do? The closest thing to a "unicorn" as far as my wish list tattoos are concerned already occurred by way of taking the "lady head" concept of a woman wearing an animal's head, and flipping the idea around. That was immensely satisfying.









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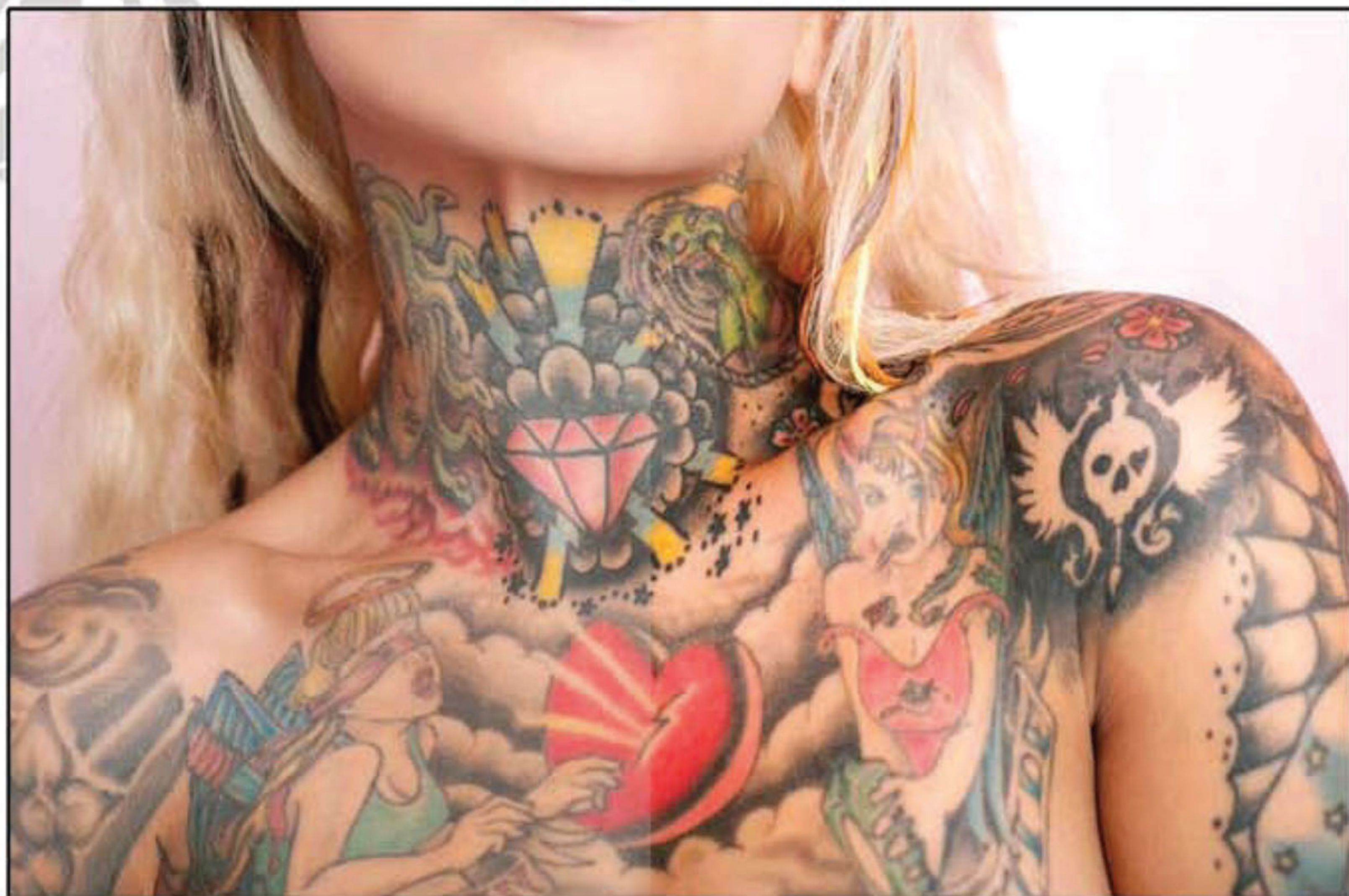
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BEFORE | AFTER





@glenncuzen

GLENN CUZEN

Your work is all done with black ink and a liner, no shading at all and it is still rich in depth. The complexity of this work requires planning, good transitions between every different pattern, symmetrical balance and perfect proportions. And, of course, a steady hand. What is your creative process when designing a tattoo? What do you feel is the hardest, most challenging and more satisfactory parts of the process? When working in my style I use just one color and make the fades using different liners pulling the dots closer together or further apart. This allows me to get an effect of gradient instead of using different ink tones, as some ink may not hold in the skin as well as others. So if I just use one ink I know that it will evenly settle into the skin. One month, two or three months after the tattoo has been done. The hardest part is working with the mathematical patterns and one an un-symmetrical body part and making it flow and transition into the next portion seamlessly. When this is accomplished and I watch the client standing in front of the mirror watching their tattoo move with the body from different angles with a big smile on their face makes it all worthwhile.

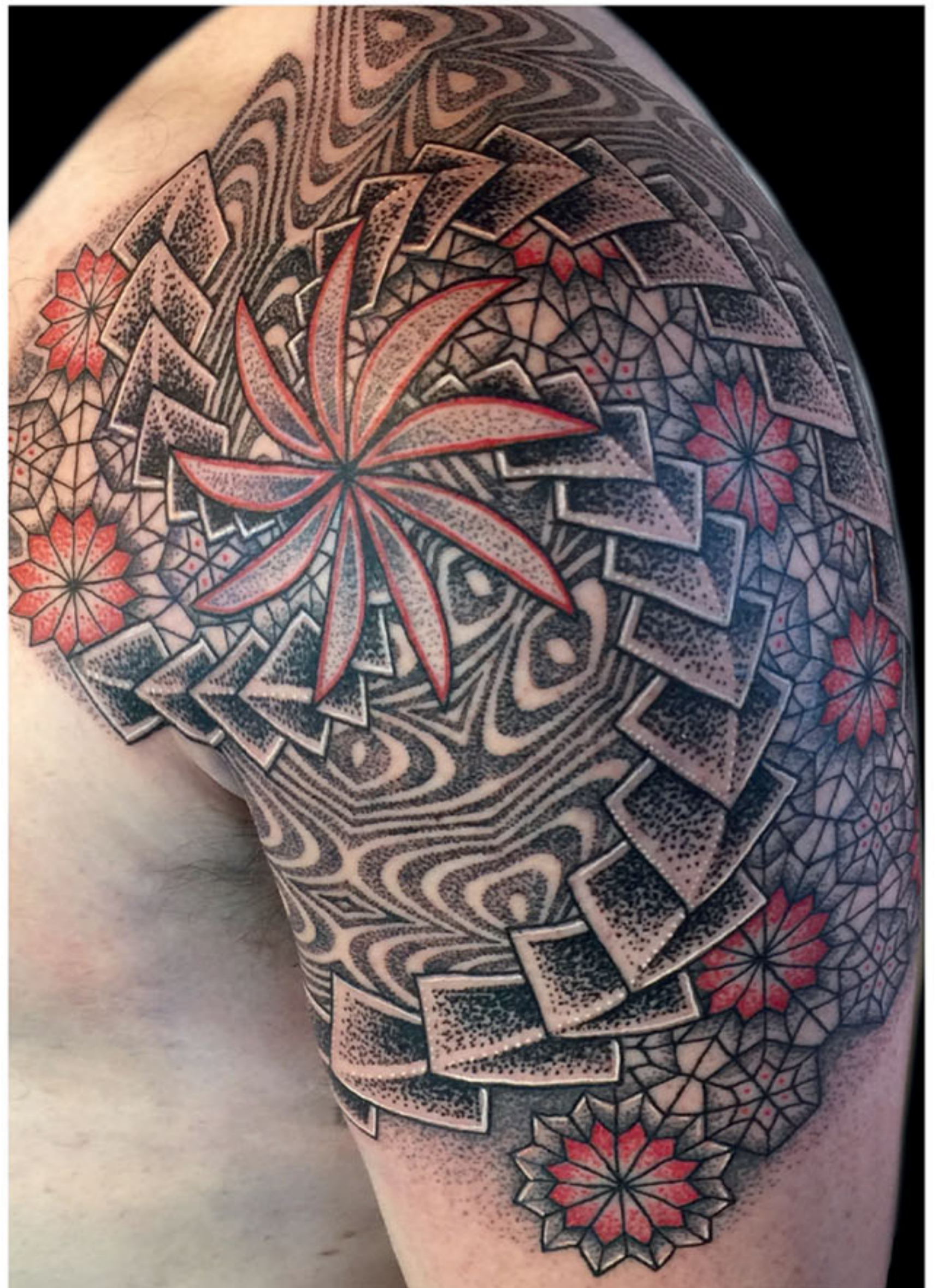
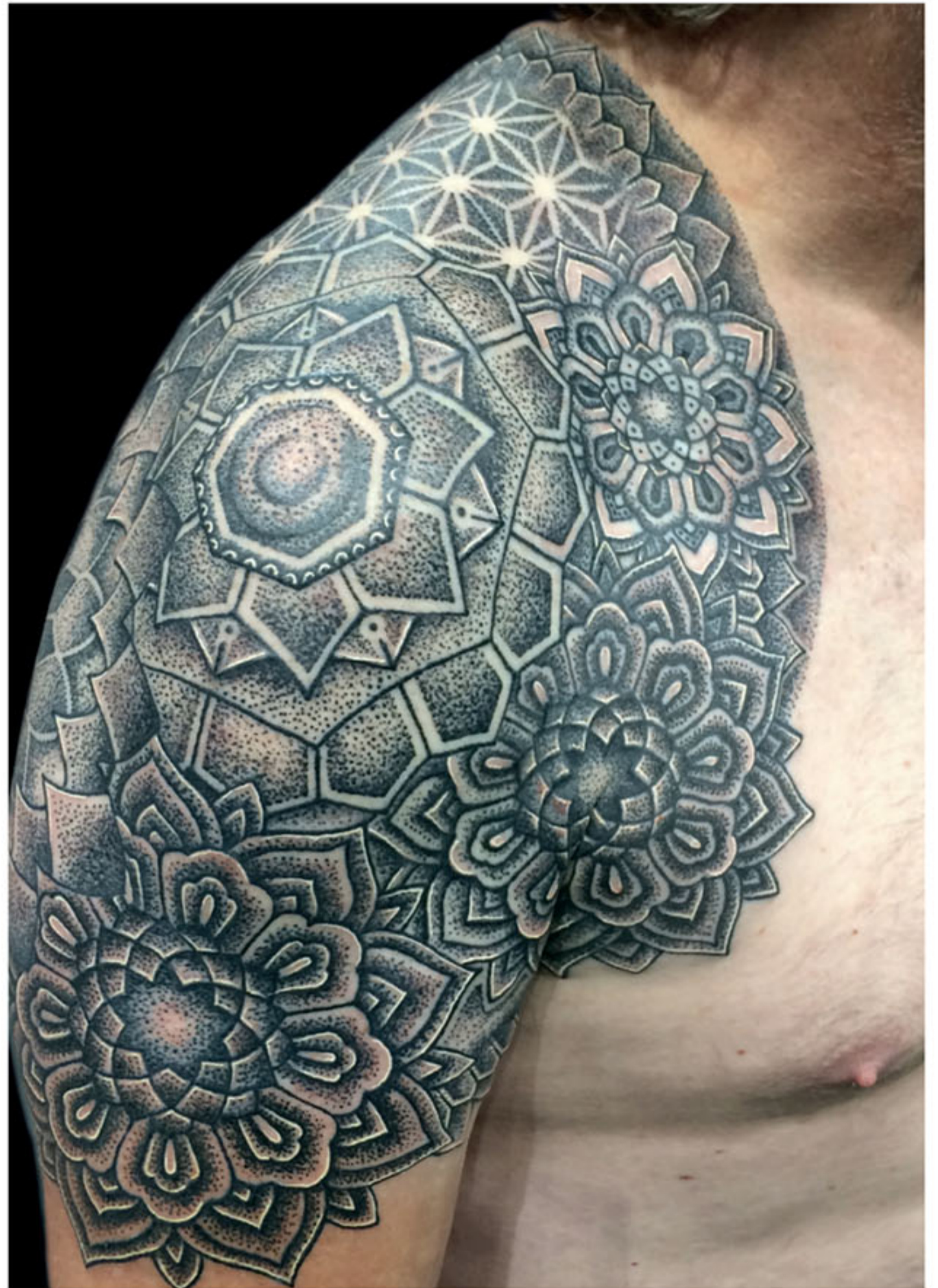
Was this the style you've always wanted to do? What type of tattoos were you doing back when you started? Yes, I always wanted to do large black work tattoos, with a powerful feel to them. More along the lines of big Polynesian work that should be on warrior men. As time moved on and I kept putting more detail into my work and it became more technical and beautiful. Less aggressive and masculine is now starting to form into a natural style of my own year by year.

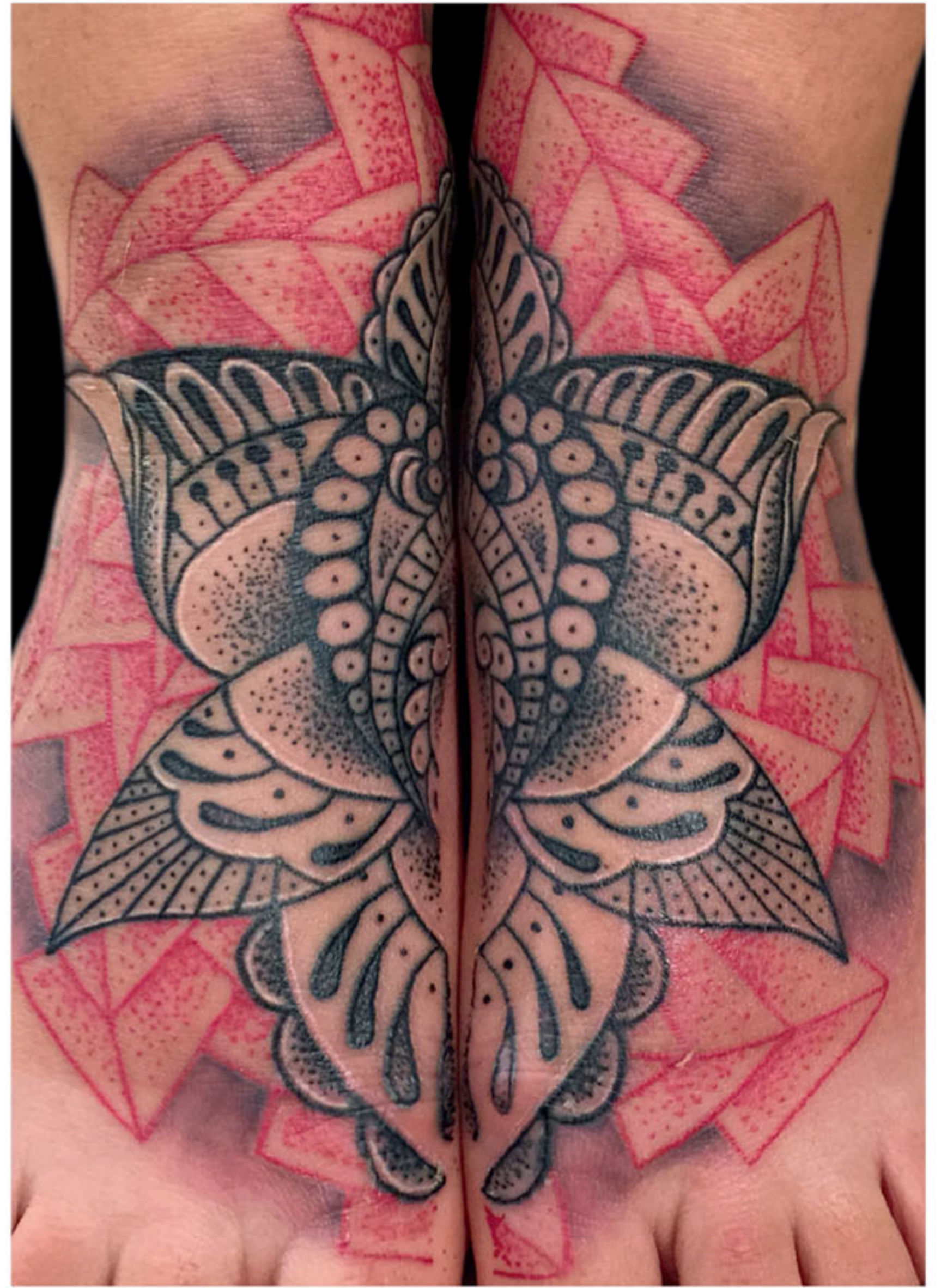
If you have the freedom to do a certain tattoo, what would it be? Any subject, body placement, style? If I were to do whatever I want on a body I would select the back of a man. Working on a large tattoo, making the back look wider. Keeping that Samoan, masculine, timeless feel to it; whilst adding technical patterns within large shapes, and some modern colorful sections of symmetry. This would give the tattoo a pop art futuristic feel. Evolving the traditional base tones of a design, but from a distance of say 20 feet still maintaining a traditional timeless feel to the tattoo.

What is your creative process like as you design a tattoo? After working with the geometric patterns for most of my career, they are a part of me now. When designing a tattoo I wait for the body to be in front of me and choose what sort of pattern compliments the client's personality. Is it softer or a more floral feel to the pattern? Or more mandalas? A modern cutting edge pattern like the Y-Tumbling block? I then start sizing and placing the patterns to compliment the body part we are working on. We let the body take over and work with it, the tattoo having a life of its own. It's a very organic and raw process.

Where do you usually find inspiration? What or who inspired you in and out of the tattoo world back when you started tattooing? What or who inspires you today? I find inspiration in everything from wallpaper to window frames. From sacred buildings in Nepal to a new pair of Nike Air trainers. I was brought up by my father in the teachings of Buddhism and the Buddhist way of life; so a lot of the style is more sacred geometry. Yet optical illusions from people like Alex Grey and MC Escher excite me.









@johanavila_art

JOHAN AVILA

When did you start tattooing? How?

I started at 14 years of age when I got my first tattoo. I started to tattoo with a homemade machine I put together myself.

What drew you to realism? Was this the style you've always wanted to do? What type of tattoos were you doing back when you started? When I began I practically did everything. I was looking for a style that would fulfill me and I wanted it to be my style. That is how I came to realism. This is the style that is close to my heart since in my family, my grandfather was a painter in oils and always painted sceneries in realism.

You are equally proficient in color and black & grey, how did you get to the point where you dominate both? Do you prefer one over the other? Which is more challenging in terms of values? I love to work in black & grey because of the differences in the contrasts and the values and textures that can be reached. In color also as it allows me the immense possibilities to do amazing and brilliant pieces to the max and quite honestly, I love both styles but definitely the color, for me, is the hardest of the two due to the theme of the changes in tones and

colors. But, at the same time, it is also one of my strengths.

Do you feel you've met your artistic goals? Is there any direction you'd like to take in your tattoo work? What are you still pursuing in your technical approach? I still have not reached my artistic goals. Every day is a new day of learning for me. I try to learn new things and new techniques where I can take my work to the whole world and to be viewed eventually as a great work of art as those of Michelangelo, Salvador Dali, Picasso, Van Gogh, etc. I am looking to perfect myself each and every day and each day continue to get better in all I do.

So if you have the freedom to do a certain tattoo, what would it be? Any subject, body placement, style? It would definitely be in realism but also a bit of surrealism. I imagine something as a mix of a cityscape with portraits and animals all fused together and allowing the imagination of the viewer to soar once they see the final touches done. It would be a full back piece.

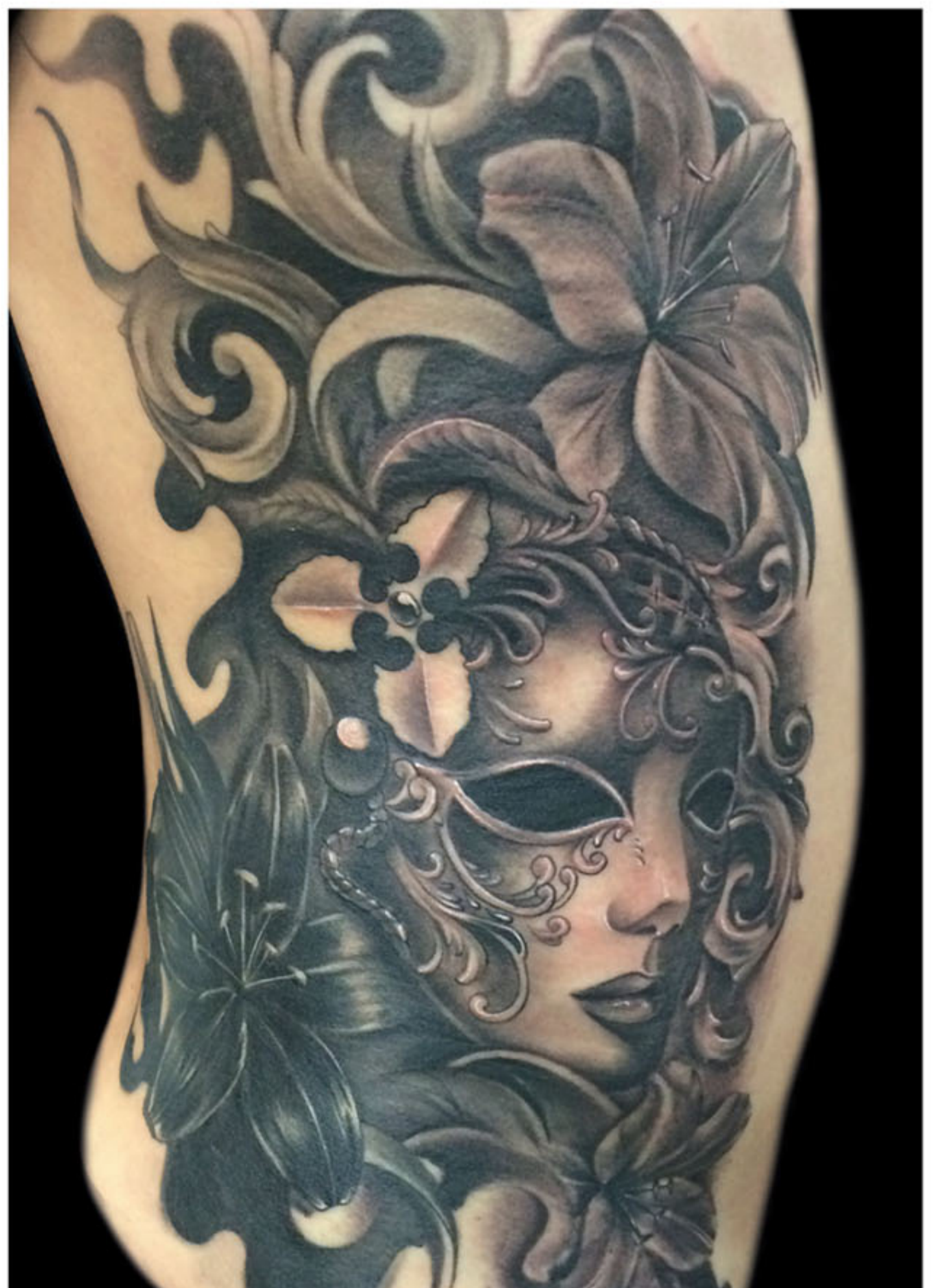
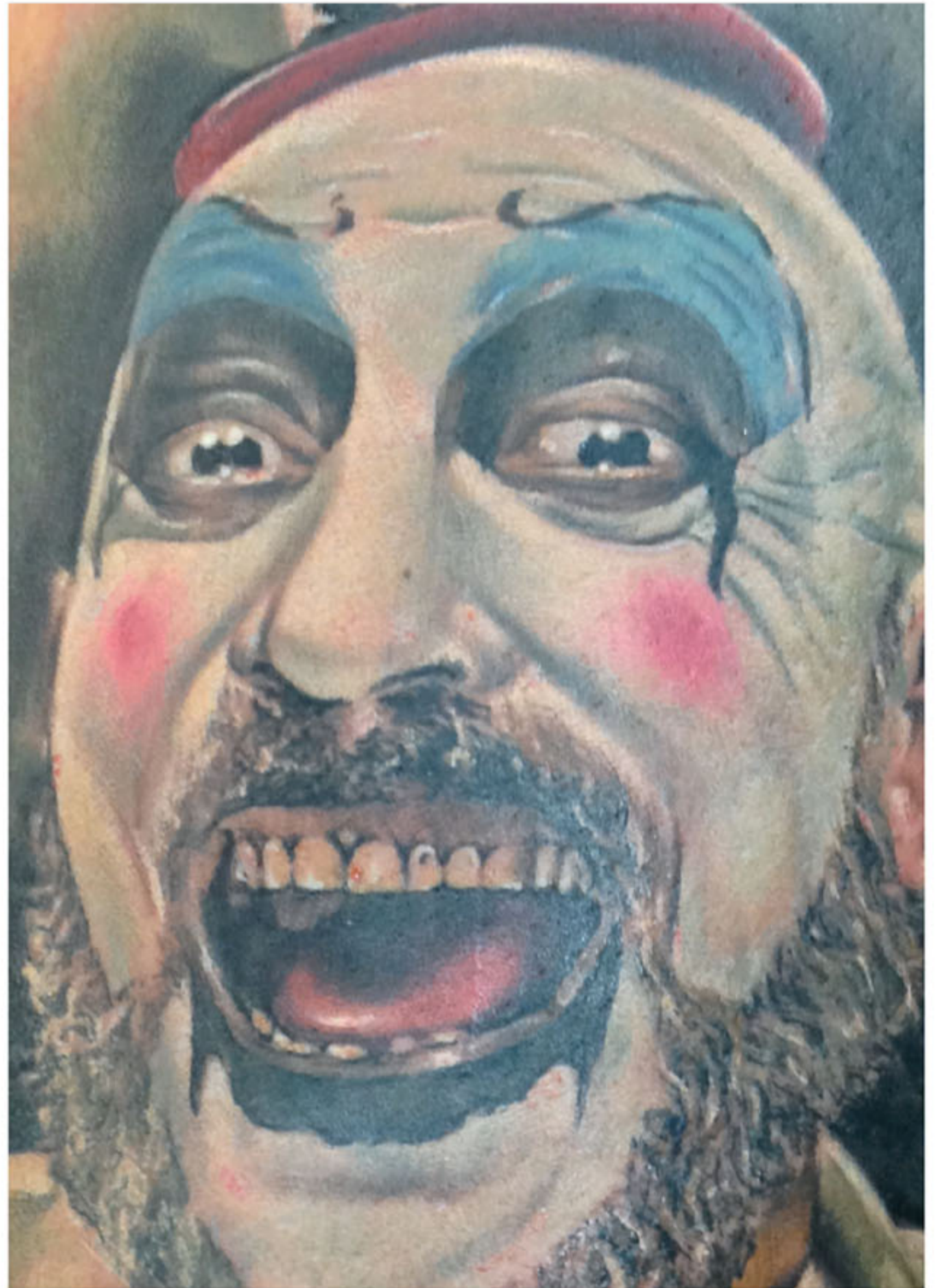
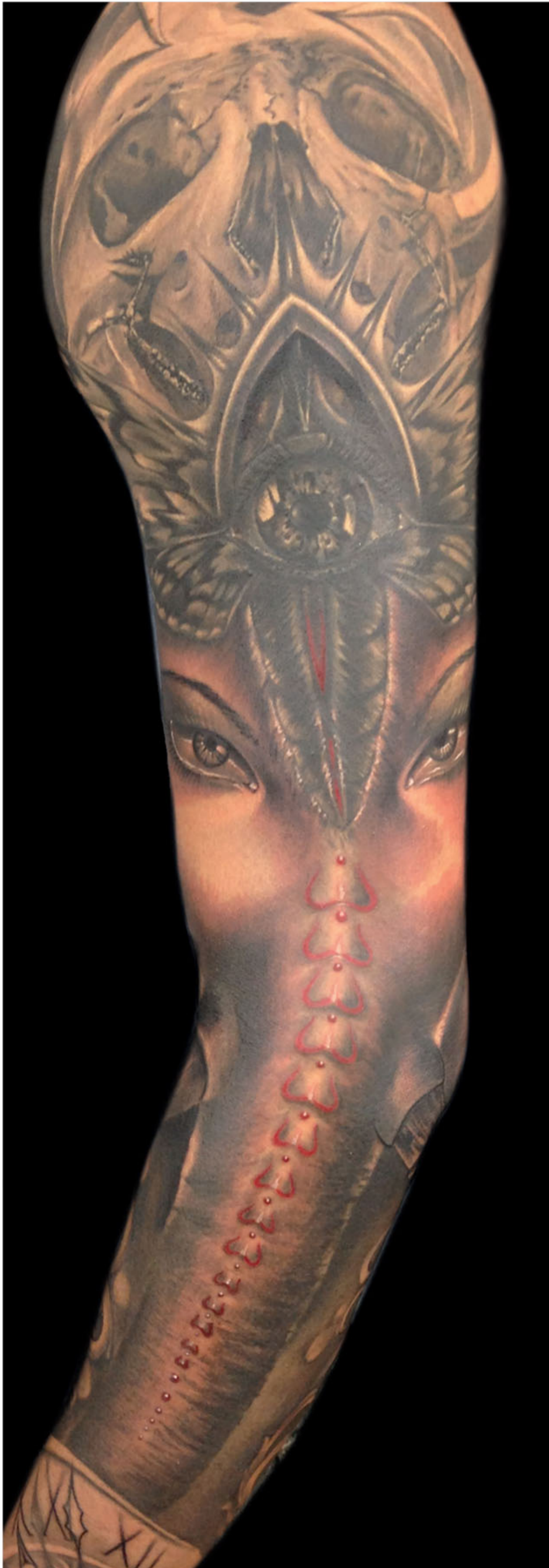
What is your creative process when you are about to design a tattoo? First I would look at several references focusing on what my client is giving

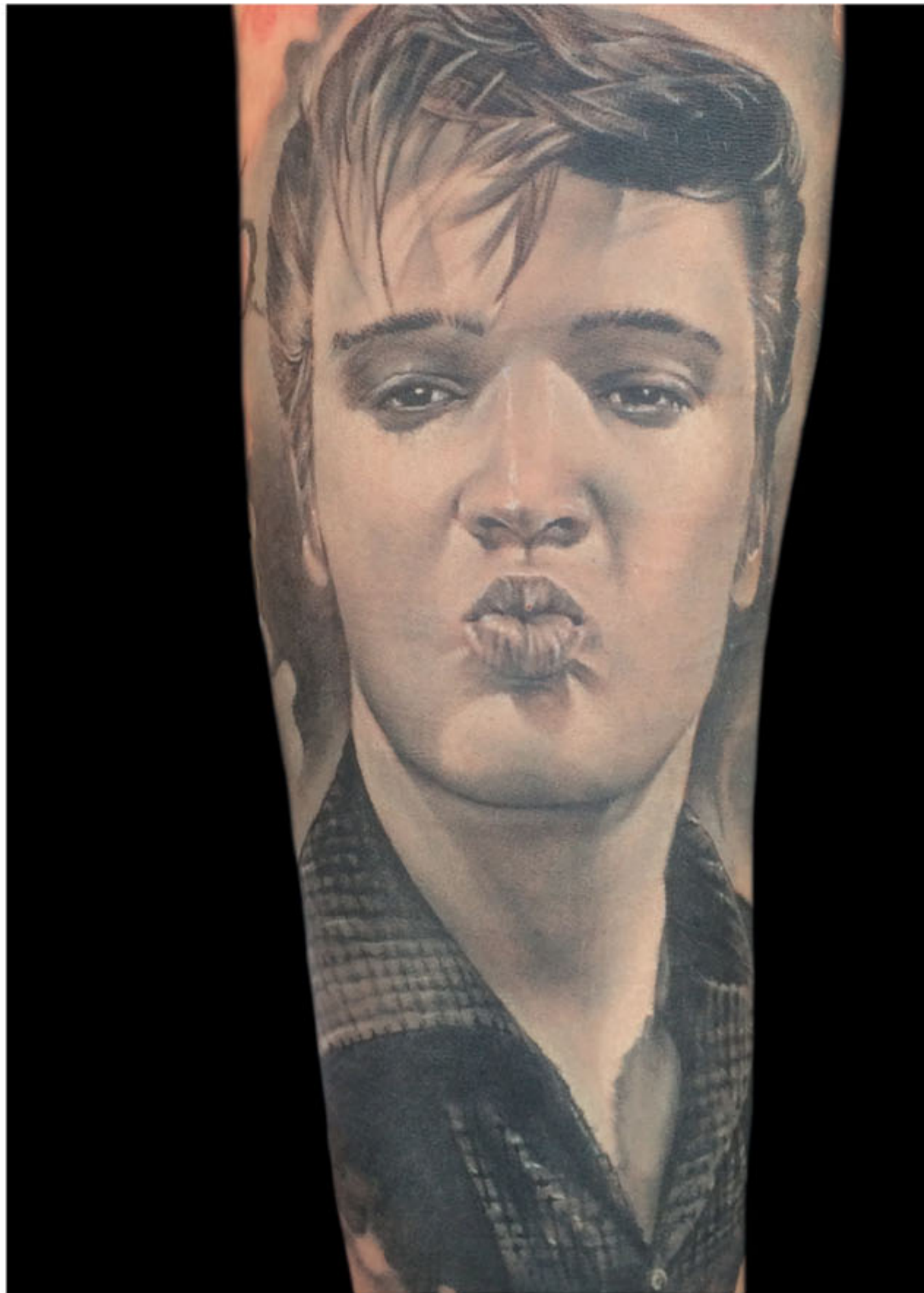
me to be able to create their new work of art.

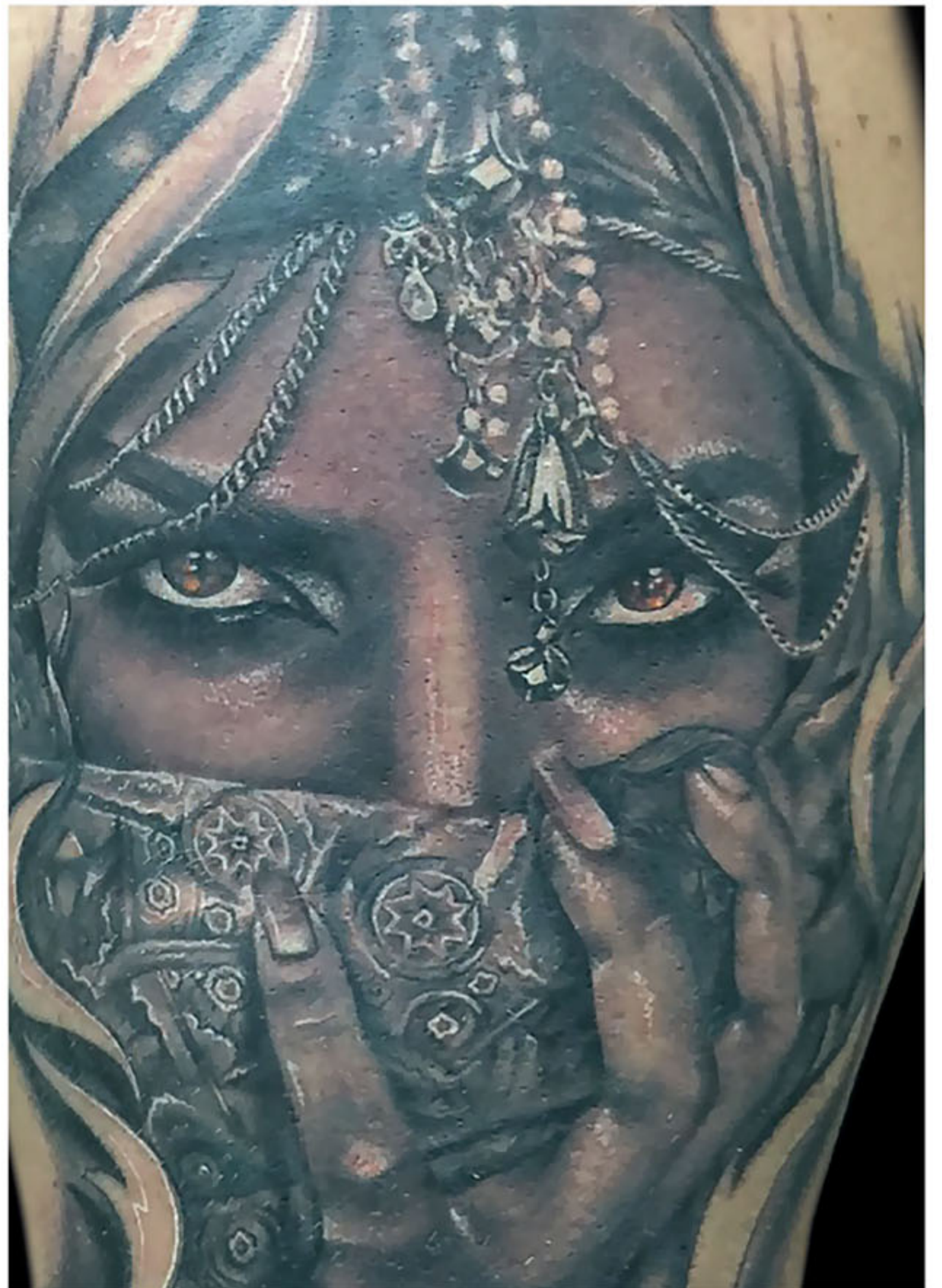
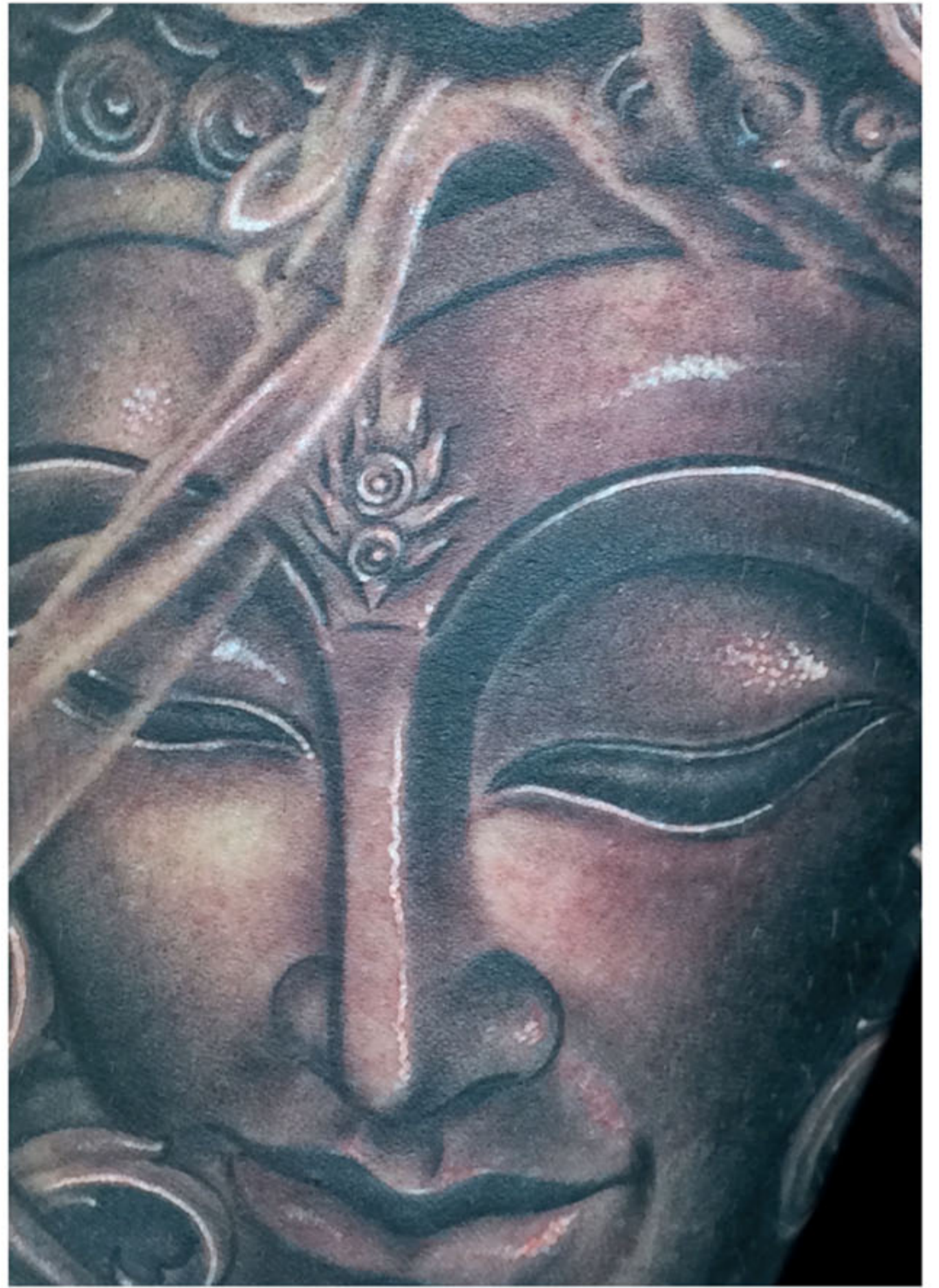
Where do you usually find inspiration? What or who inspired you in and out of the tattoo world back when you started tattooing? What or who inspires you today? I find my inspiration in all areas—each thing is more beautiful than the next. My sons, my family, nature, etc. I have been most inspired by my grandfather while he was alive, thanks to his continual work on his paintings. Other inspirations were those artists that I would see on the internet that were idols I could never reach. Today I am inspired by knowing that with hard work and dedication I am where I am and all I have accomplished thus far, always with the intention of continuing to master my skill.

Do you practice any other art medium? Drawing, painting, oils? Art related projects? Yes, I love painting. I don't practice it as much due to being so involved in tattooing, but the thing I love doing more than anything is to paint using charcoal over wood. It's a technique that is somewhat challenging, as both the charcoal and the wood are very dry. But I love the texture once the piece is completed.









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@samuel_tukabel

ANGELO MILLER

What year did you start tattooing? I started tattooing immediately after leaving high school in 2009.

How did you get into tattooing? When I was at elementary school I began to draw on my forearms with marker pens instead of learning. Basically, I wanted to do tattoo since I remember, but real tattoos came to my life during high school, when I started visiting one tattoo studio to sit there on a couch. It was enough for me to be happy. After leaving high school I started with true tattoos. I didn't earn much money for it, so I had to steal my first machine. But also bad things can help, huh.

What is the tattoo scene like in Bratislava? Here in Bratislava there is a big boom of establishing tattoo parlors these days, I think. Guys find out that this is a straight way to earn easy money, but they forgot that they should know how to do tattoos at least well. My only hope is that these things will not ruin the entire market. I know we have very gifted and skilled people here.

Do you have any special training? Maybe I have some kind of "special training" because I studied school to be a professional jeweler. And that means fine precise work, where you need tons of patience.

What conventions have you done recently or are planning to do last year? I love conventions. It is the only place, where I don't feel different from others, and the others probably see and feel the world the same way as me. I was in Milano this

year and I really love it there. High quality artists and a lot of people. I also visit Bucharest often, there is a great friend of mine John Maxx and we have a lot of fun each time...it is more relaxed. This year I also made it to London convention—one of my dreams came true. Just being there was like winning it. My next plans are Barcelona, Roma and Paris.

How do you go about preparing your designs before tattooing? I prepare pictures from primary photos, which I customize in photoshop. In fact, I prepare whole work, also the details, but also improvisation during work takes place. It is really individual. I try to make things like artist – it is about feeling and you can feel it only in that moment, so it is about it.

Tell us a little about your use of color—how did you develop your style of seamlessly melding multiple colors together? Are you ever afraid that the colors will bleed into each other over time, or is this something you take into account as you tattoo? It is hard to describe my own evolution. I remember that I started to think about how does color work under skin and how I should put layers onto them, that I can cover them. I think that I am in a phase of improving myself and I don't consider my style and way of tattooing finished. It never will be. If I should say something about technique, then it is that the basis of my work is the overlaying of colors. Some people do tattoos with one layer and they don't return to that area; for me the opposite is true. I splash colors throughout them.

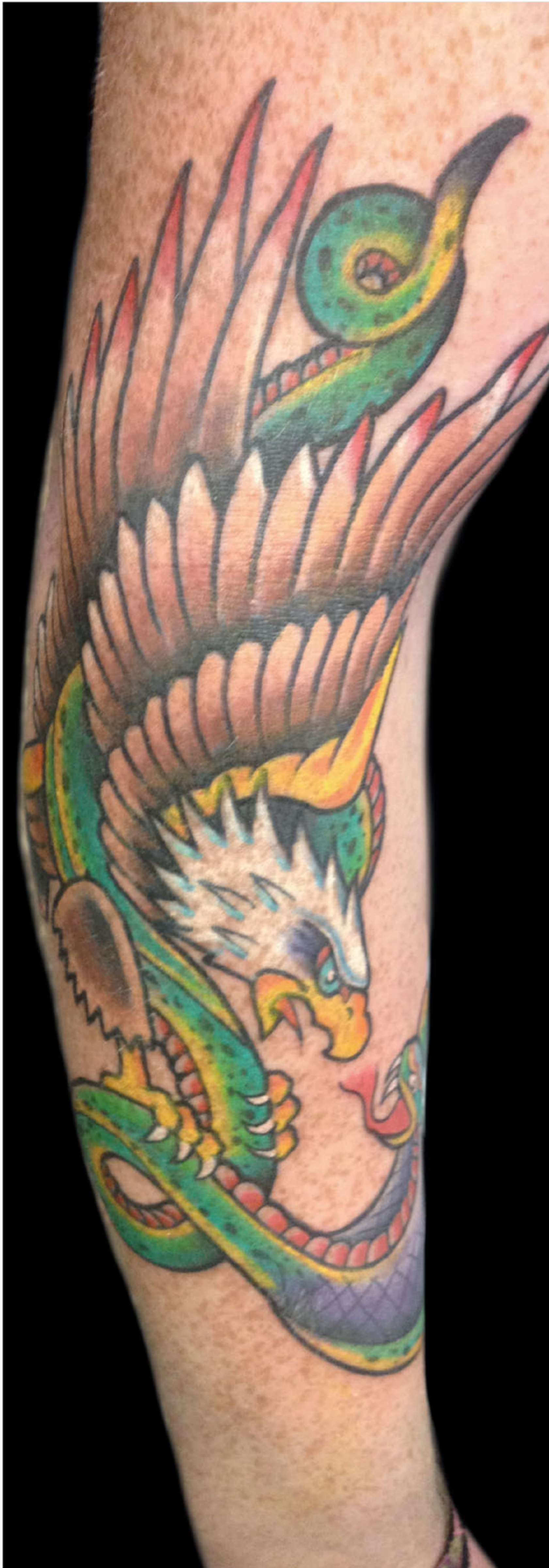
When do you find yourself working in black and grey? Going by your Instagram, which may or may not be in chronological order, it appears as if you binge on black and grey from time to time. I treat social networks like a presentation of my work. Or, better yet, of what I want to do. That is why I put out mostly full color tattoos, I want people to want them. But I do like black and gray and I actually do it more often than full color. What an irony. It is more relaxing for me because it is much more simple.

What are some of the major subject matters you like to tattoo? My favorite thing is portraiture. I am doing it whole life. I can leave feeling and human character in the picture. For many artists this is the hardest thing, for me it is the easiest and I really enjoy it. I need only to complicate it, for example hair, jewels, lights and shadows and so on—I see myself in details such as these. I like realism so much.

What inspires you as an artist? The greatest inspiration is to leave something that will last long after me in this world. The only way to do this is through art. With it I can be special and demonstrate my art. I appreciate this very much and I am thankful that I had this opportunity, because not everybody has it.

What sets you apart from other artists? My approach and way of thinking. I feel tattoo in the nature of art. Everyone is trying to be similar to Nikko Hurtado and others famous artists. For me, it is essential to not be similar to anybody. That is what makes me different from others.





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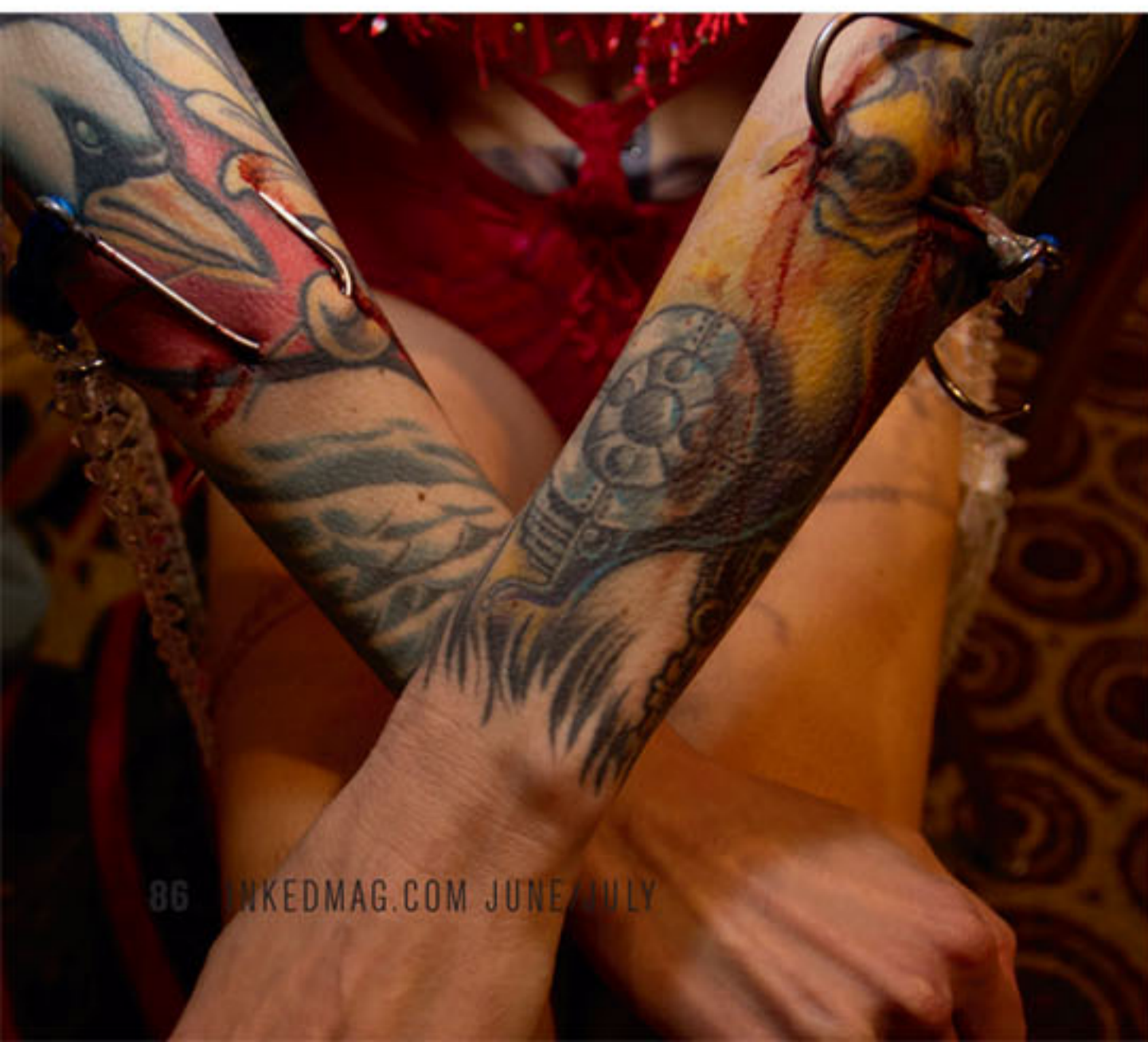
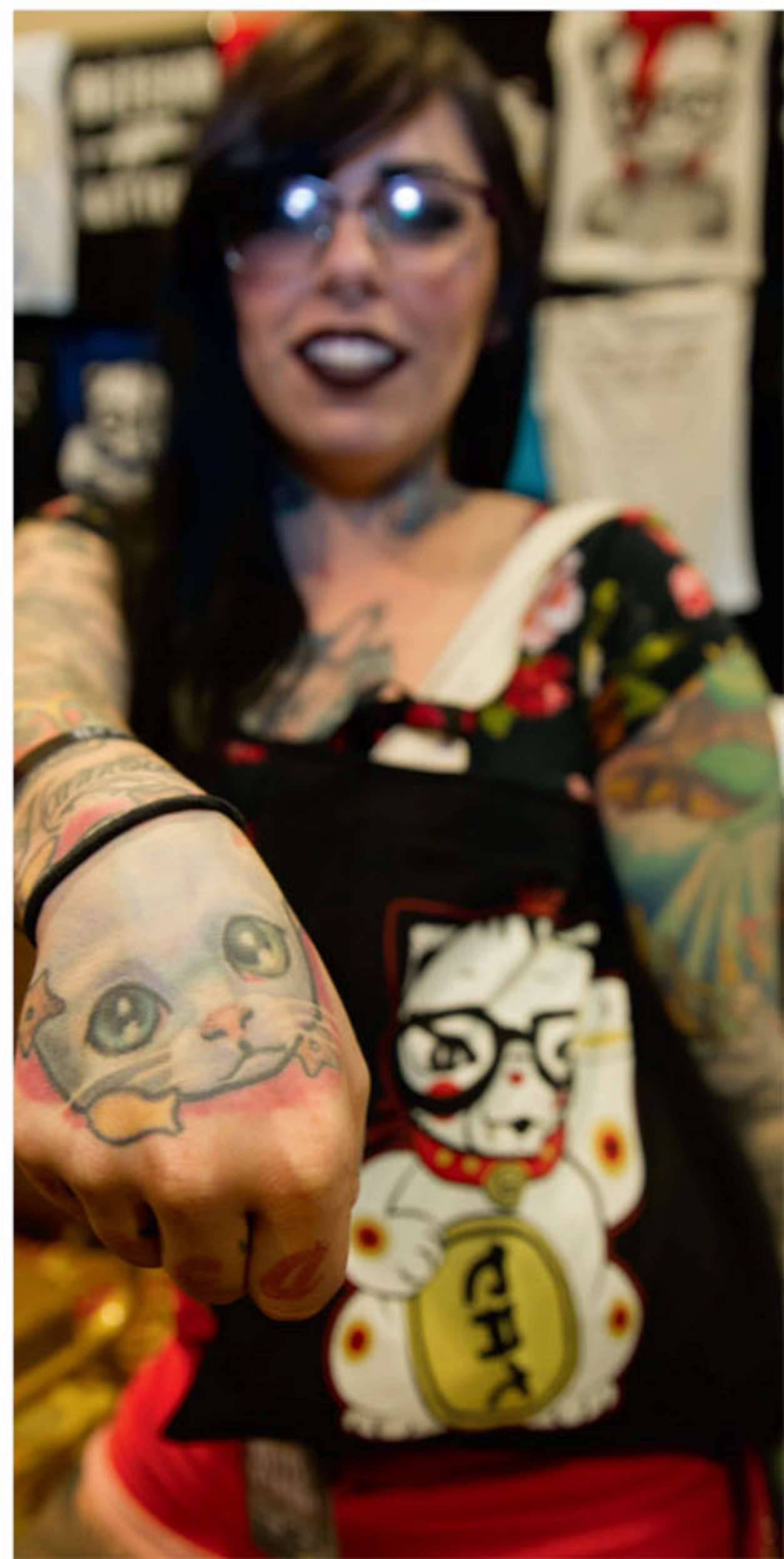
NO LIMITS TATTOO CONVENTION

photos by steve pru

Manhattan may get all the headlines and glory, while Brooklyn has all the cool hipster cred, but for one weekend in April Queens was the place to be as the United Ink No Limits Tattoo Convention took over the Resort World Casino.

Why even bother to take a gamble at the gaming tables when it was a sure bet that you would have a great time at this enormous convention filled with some of the world's most talented tattoo artists. The gigantic roster of talent included the likes of Stefano Alcantara, Oleg Shepelenko, Glenn Cuzen, Babiery Hernandez, Kris Busching, Sam Barber, Cleen Rock One, Danny Lepore and hundreds more.

Thanks to the United Ink No Limits Tattoo Show Queens was the only borough that mattered for three glorious days.



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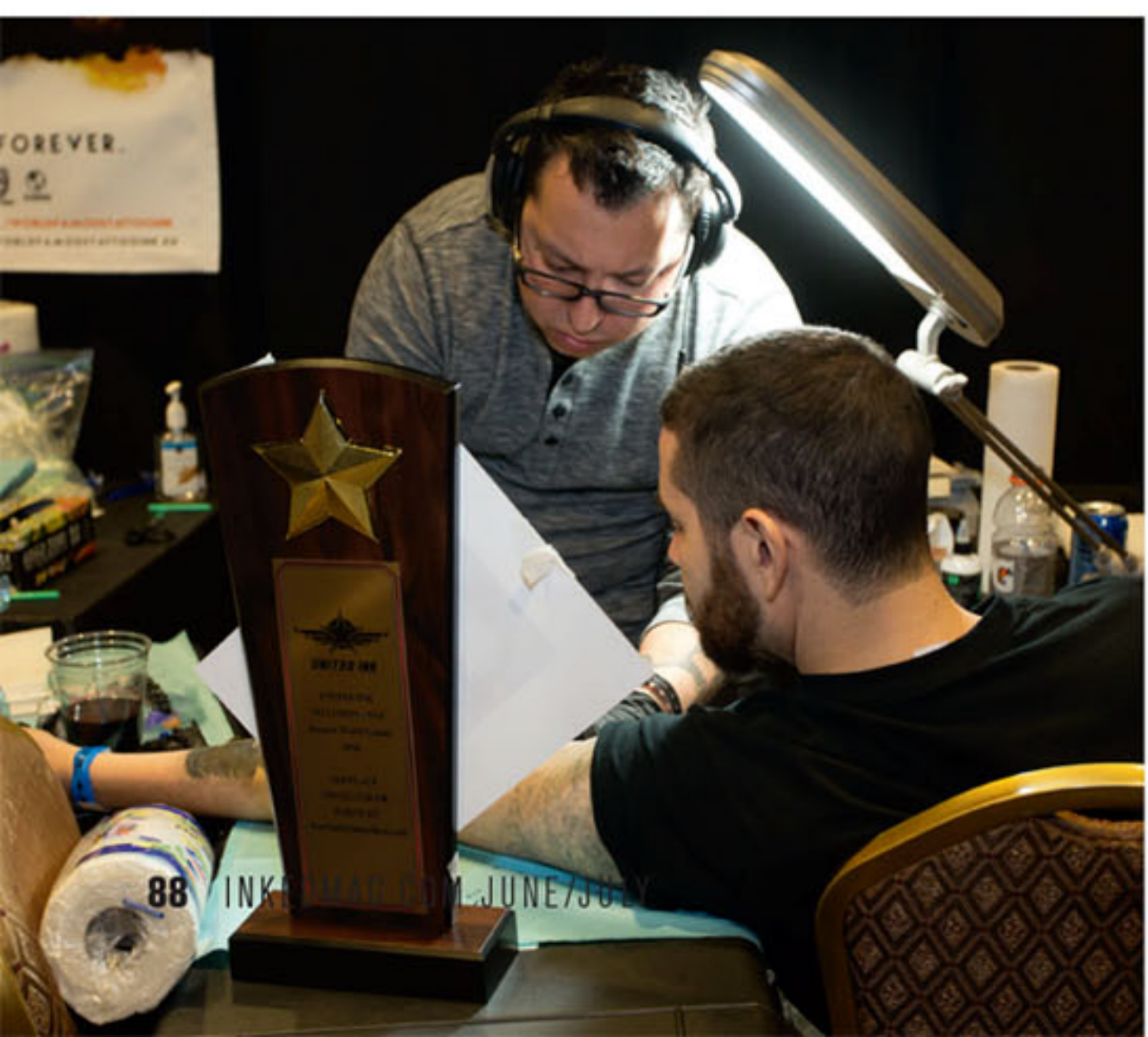
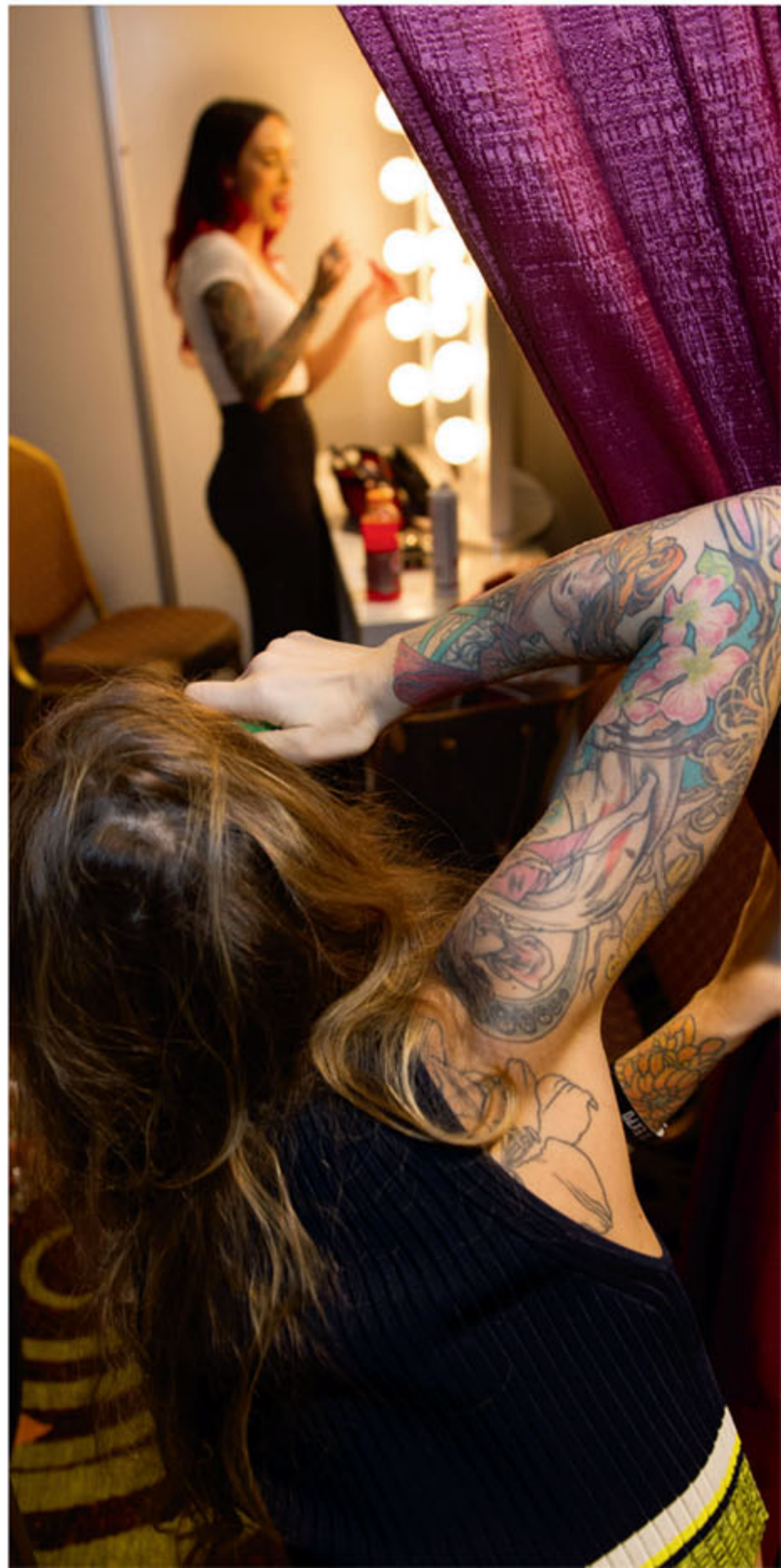
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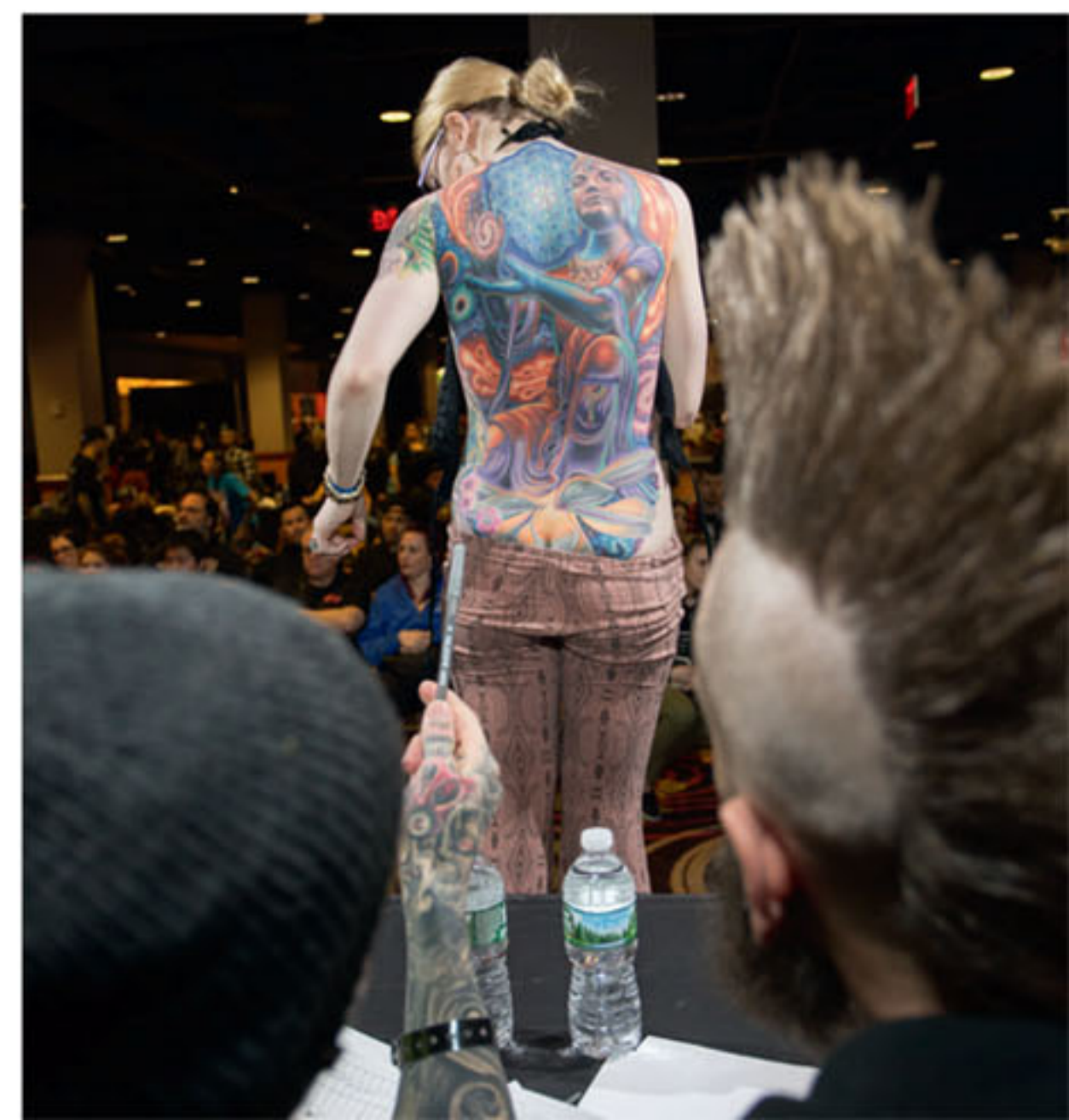
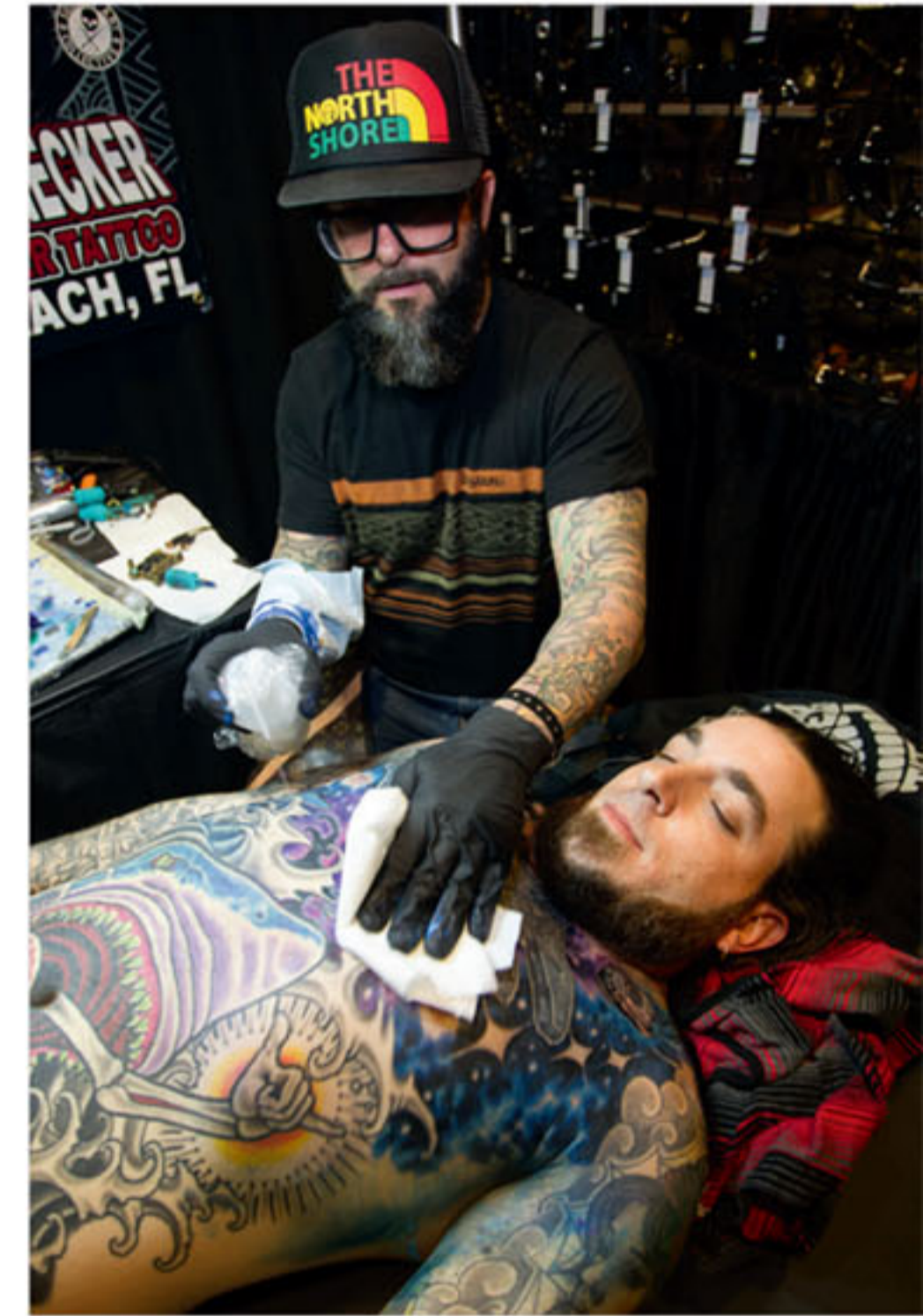
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GORDON PATTERSON
... AND MANY MORE !



JUNE
24, 25, 26
2016

HARVEY'S CASINO
SOUTH LAKE TAHOE
NEVADA

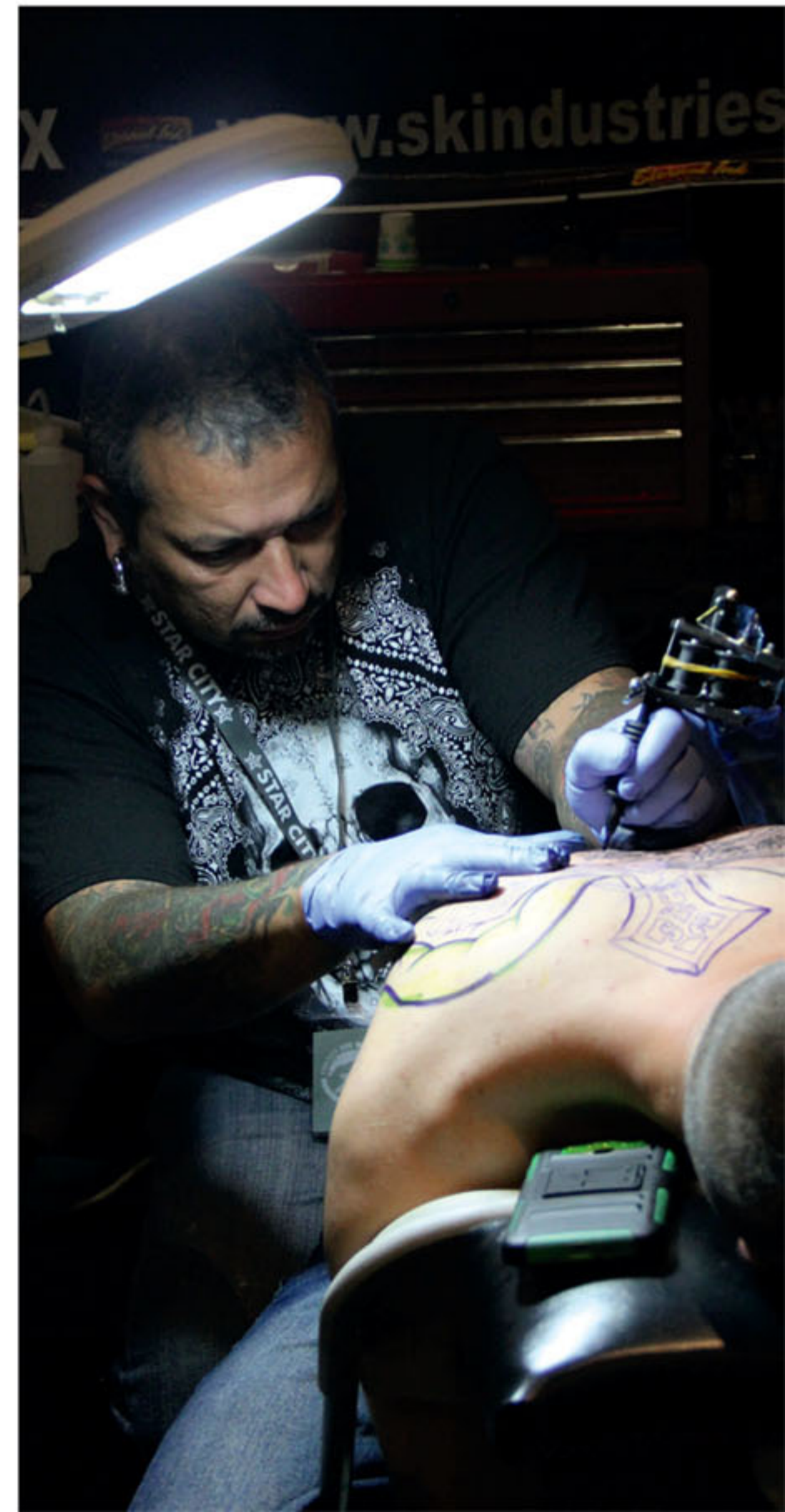


STAR CITY TATTOO CONVENTION

This past March Fort Bliss, Texas, was the home for a groundbreaking event the likes of which had never been seen before—a tattoo convention on an active military base!

The Star City Tattoo and Arts Expo took place over the span of three jam-packed days filled with tattoos from some of the country's top artists, live art exhibitions, piercing, games and live music. For those looking to chill out there was even an assortment of food trucks and a full pub.

Artists plying their trade at the convention included black and grey master Carl Grace, color realism superstar Teniele Napoli, Spike TV's Joey Tattoo and many, many more. Of course there was a lot going on, everything is bigger in Texas.



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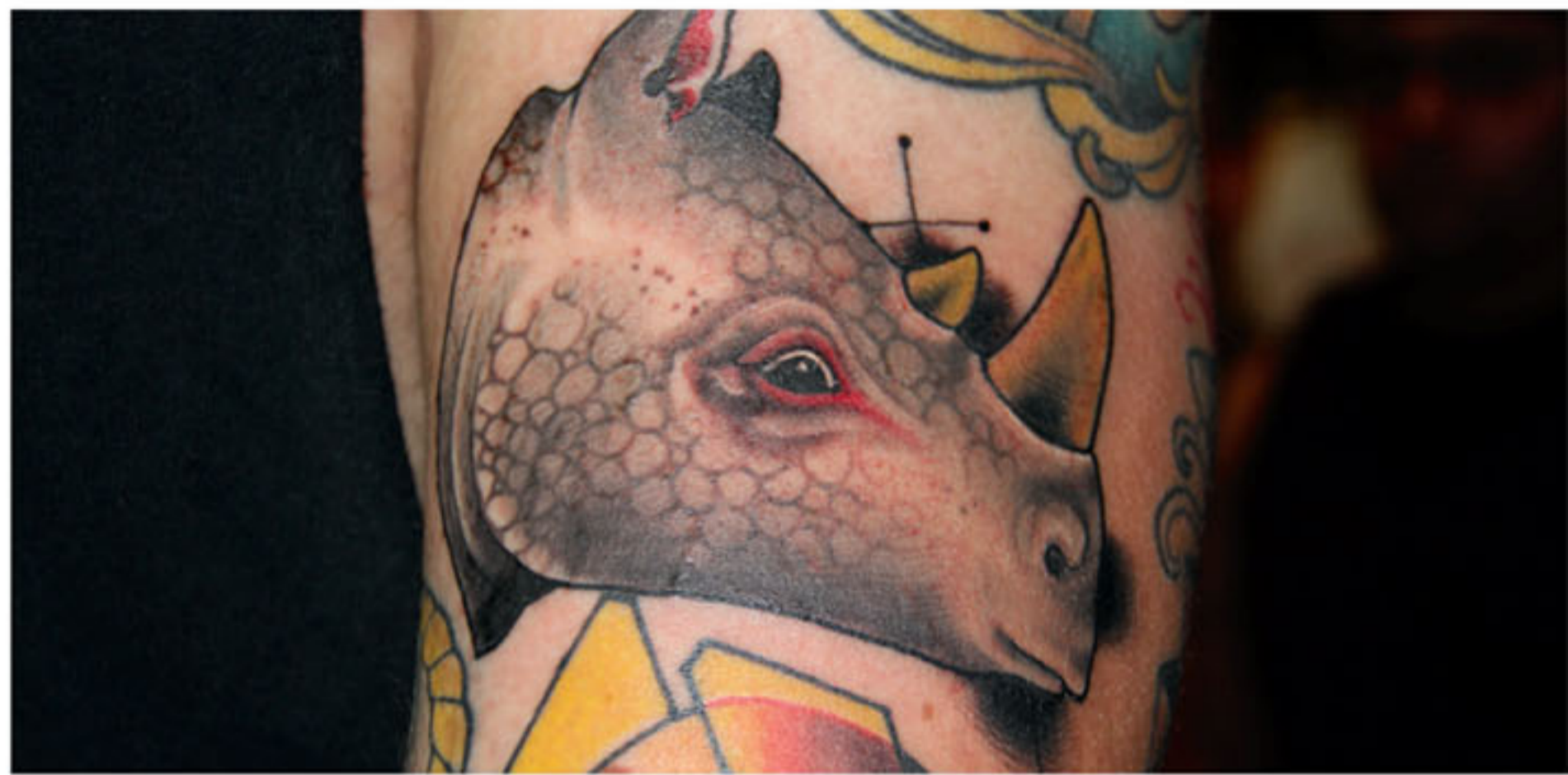
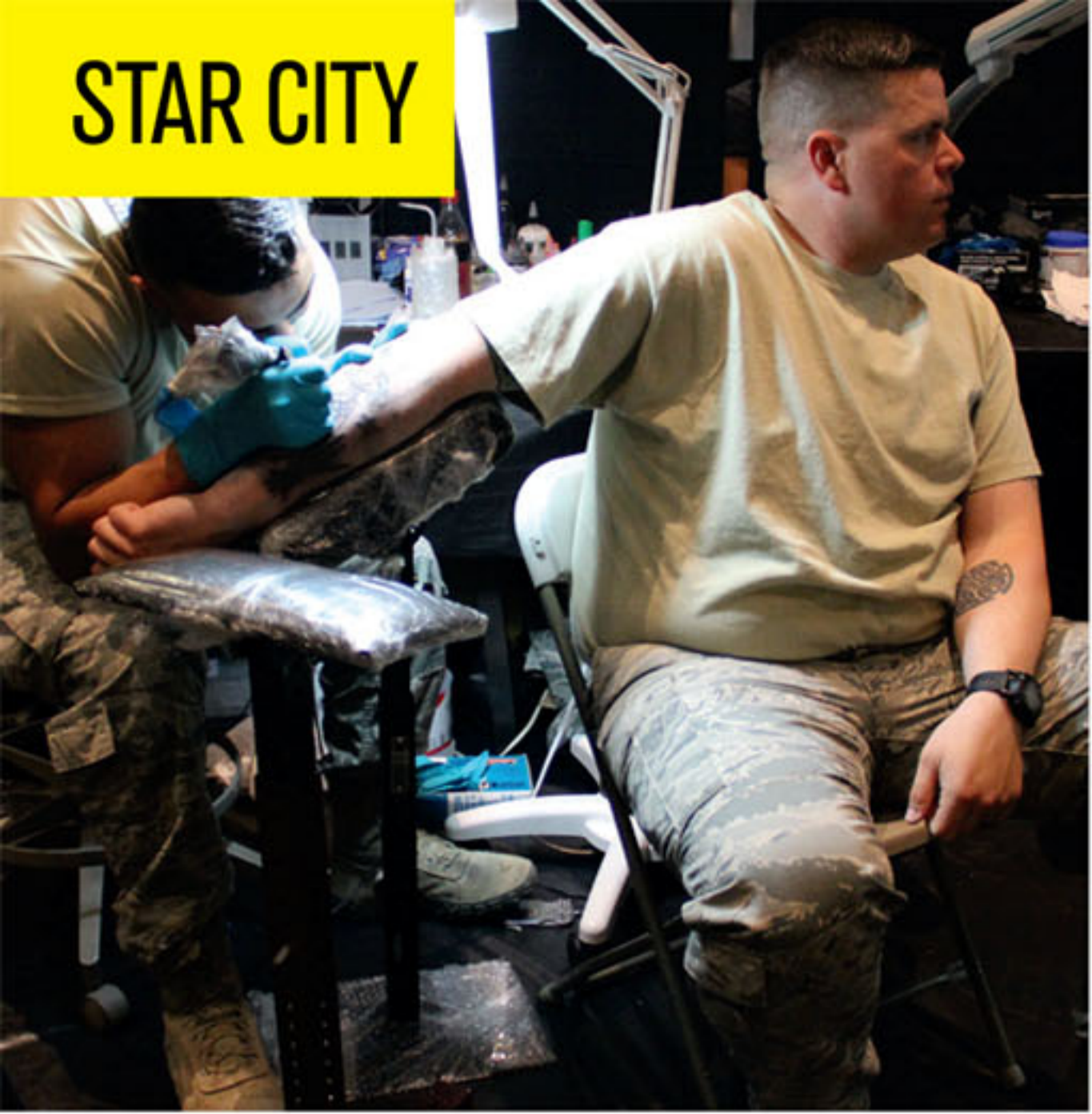


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 Original Tattoo Goo® Salve - all natural, exclusive Olive Oil, Wheat Germ Oil, Cocoa Butter and Vitamin enriched formula
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artwork by
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Tattoo

Conventions

Kansas City
May 13th - 15th 2016

Minneapolis
January 13th - 15th 2017

Wildwood
August 12th - 14th 2016

Philadelphia
February 10th - 12th 2017

Tampa
September 16th - 18th 2016

Cleveland
February 24th - 26th 2017

Louisville
April 28th - 30th 2017

PHOTO BY NICOLE CALDWELL

SULLEN FAMILY ARTIST
JACK RUDY

Sullen

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ARTIST **JEREMIAH BARBA** SPOTLIGHT



Under The Skin



TATTOO TOPIC
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MIKE DEVRIES



JAMIE LEE PARKER
FRESH PAINT



CERVENA FOX
TATTOO COLLECTOR



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