

Inked

CULTURE. STYLE. ART.

THE Pin-Up ISSUE

THE MODERN DAY PIN-UP

ANNA LEE



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CONTENTS

romeo lacoste	20
anna lee	30
rick ross	50
saga	80
best insta tats	92

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INKWELL



Pin-up. Just the mention of this sometimes-hyphenated word evokes images of female beauty. But, the definition of a pin-up has evolved over the years. Interestingly enough though, the birth of the contemporary pin-up coincided with the invention of the safety bicycle. What? That's right! In the late 19th century the introduction of the safety bicycle into modern society, caused quite the stir amongst Western women. Physicians and men of the cloth were outraged. They claimed that the bouncing of the new-fangled contraption harmed a woman's fragile insides and that the friction of the seat was likely to get them aroused. However, to suffragists, the bicycle was the "freedom machine," allowing them to travel freely without depending on a man.

So, what does this have to do with pin-ups? Well, not long after bicycles became the choice mode of female transportation, so did the decision to stop wearing petticoats and layered skirts and switch to wearing bloomers and boots. This may have appeared to be a small change in women's fashion, but it had a big effect on their sexuality. The bloomers and boots revealed a woman's legs, and when she decided to wear pants so not to get grease on her dress, it revealed the shapely form of her body. Voila! The birth the modern-pin up had arrived.

Fast forward 120 years and we've seen the pin-up go through hundreds of permutations. They've been everywhere, from the Gibson Girl to Betty Grable to, dare we say, Jenna Jameson. We reached out to artists, writers, models, and organizations, who have their own unique connection to the world of pin-up, and asked them to be part of this issue... and we're sure you'll be very happy with the results. This issue features Frank DeBlase's Confessions of a Pin Up Photographer, the artwork of Chris Guest, a profile on Pin-ups for Pit Bulls, and plenty of lovely, inked up pin-ups. That's just what we've got in the pin up department. We've also got an interview with The Boss Man Rick Ross, a trip on the ice with Michael Grabner, a ride on the rails with Michael Thomas, our exclusive sit down with the Ink Mentors from Ink Master Season 10, viewers choice on the top tattoos of 2017, and tons more!

Enjoy the ride.

Paul Gambino
Editor-in-Chief
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LETTERS



THE ART ISSUE. It seems a bit odd to refer to a specific issue of Inked as the "ART ISSUE" since, as you may have noticed, each-and-every time you have picked up a copy of Inked page-after-page is brimming with art in the form of amazing tattoos, captivating photography and the finest examples of the male and female body adorned with ink.

We did theme our last issue as the ART ISSUE, however we weren't sure if our readers would notice the extra effort that went into sharpening the art theme "focus". Well, John Strait from the "Rough Rider" state of North Dakota sent us this email explaining how much he enjoyed the issue and we couldn't have said it any better ourselves. "I have been a subscriber to Inked for over 5 years and this last issue was like stepping into an art gallery." Well, John thanks for the kind words and keep that sub running!

facebook

LIZZIE RIZZO

Frank Rizzo Lizzie Rose is so #\$\$%# hot. That photo shoot in November was ridiculous

INK MASTER SHOP WARS

Maria Vasquez DJ was always my favorite Ink Master contestant. I'm glad he won this year.

Bill Perkins Steve Compton did my girlfriend's tattoo last weekend. It looks awesome!

GLORY

Francis Crusher I pride myself with being able to "mix it up" a bit, so I got to thank you for running that feature on Glory. Those guys can definitely stand-and-bang!

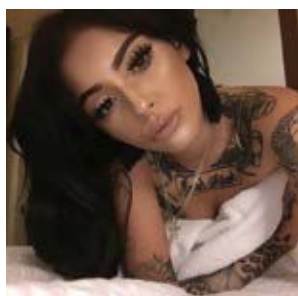
MICRO TATTOOS

Karl Ignatz A big "up" for the photos you ran on micro tattoos. Those little buggers don't get enough respect. Nice job!

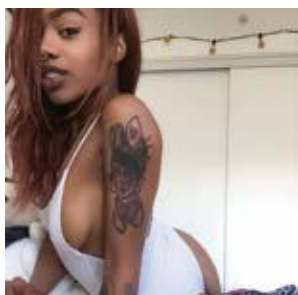
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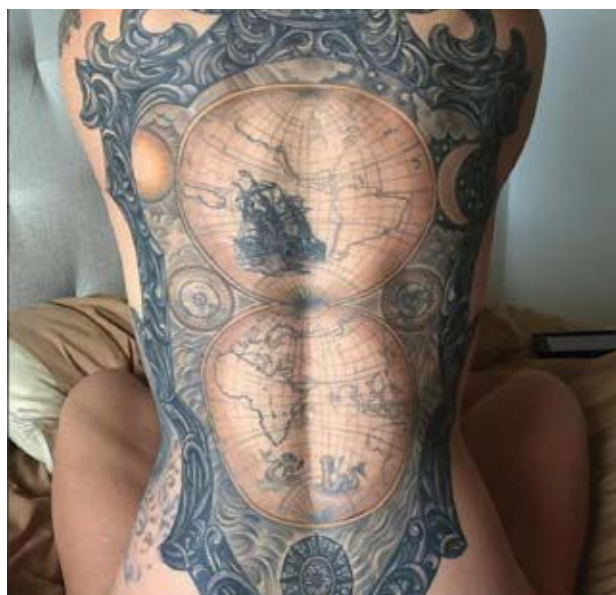


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TATTOO OF THE MONTH



BY: @NATEBEAVERS Want to be a Tattoo of the Month? E-mail your ink to editor@inkedmag.com

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BROAD STROKES

by Devon Preston

“A secret garden grows on Chrystie Street and it only comes out at night.”

To kick off 2018 issue, we were on the lookout for a fine artist whose work reflects both the past and the innovative future of pin-up art. When we stumbled upon London painter Chris Guest, we knew immediately that the search was over. With a technical understanding of art history and first-hand experience as a collector in the tattoo industry, Guest has a perspective that resonates in both the classic and contemporary disciplines. He's developed a style that expands our understanding of fine-art culture and reintroduces audiences to their favorite tattoo models in a revolutionary format. Much like the first pin-up prints that captivated, challenged and stimulated the people of the '40s and '50s, Guest's work straddles the line between sexy and sleazy but always manages to find a happy medium between the two.

How did you get into painting? I was always drawing and doing creative stuff as a kid, so I guess it's just an extension of that, really. I studied art at university but then drifted out of it. My skills really developed when I started attending London Fine Arts in Battersea, as they actually teach you how to draw and paint using classic techniques. It's a very inspiring place, to surround yourself with others who are obsessed with painting and drawing.

Then about 10 years ago, I bought a house with my girlfriend, and she asked me to paint something for the new living room. I copied this red abstract painting she found online somewhere and after making that painting I was hooked. I realized there was no turning back after that.

How has your work evolved over the years? If you check out my work from a few years ago, I used to paint very dark and moody, with lots of layers and glazes. I like the idea of trying something like that again at some point in the future.

How do you find a balance between abstract and realism in your work? I really enjoy painting a face fairly realistically, but being more abstract and brushy on the background and areas that don't require quite as much attention. I find this makes for quite an interesting piece of work, rather than the piece looking too polished.

Why did you choose tattoo models as your primary subject? I'm quite heavily tattooed myself, and just find them more interesting to paint than un-tattooed people. It always feels like there is something missing if I don't paint tattoos nowadays.

I started out wanting to paint burlesque performers but found they were quite flaky when it came to trying to get hold of them. I then ended up contacting Cervena Fox. We still keep in touch. She's actually a tattoo artist now and tattooed me this past year.

How have vintage pin-ups influenced your work? Directly, I would say not so much, but maybe subconsciously they do influence my work. I've always admired the art of Gil Elvgren and Olivia de Berardinis.

How do you find inspiration for your pieces? When you don't have a “real job” and you spend every waking hour thinking about painting, there's inspiration all around. A lot of my recent pieces with the blow-up animals came from searching on eBay one day for something else. Inspiration is all around us, you just need to be in the right place to see it.



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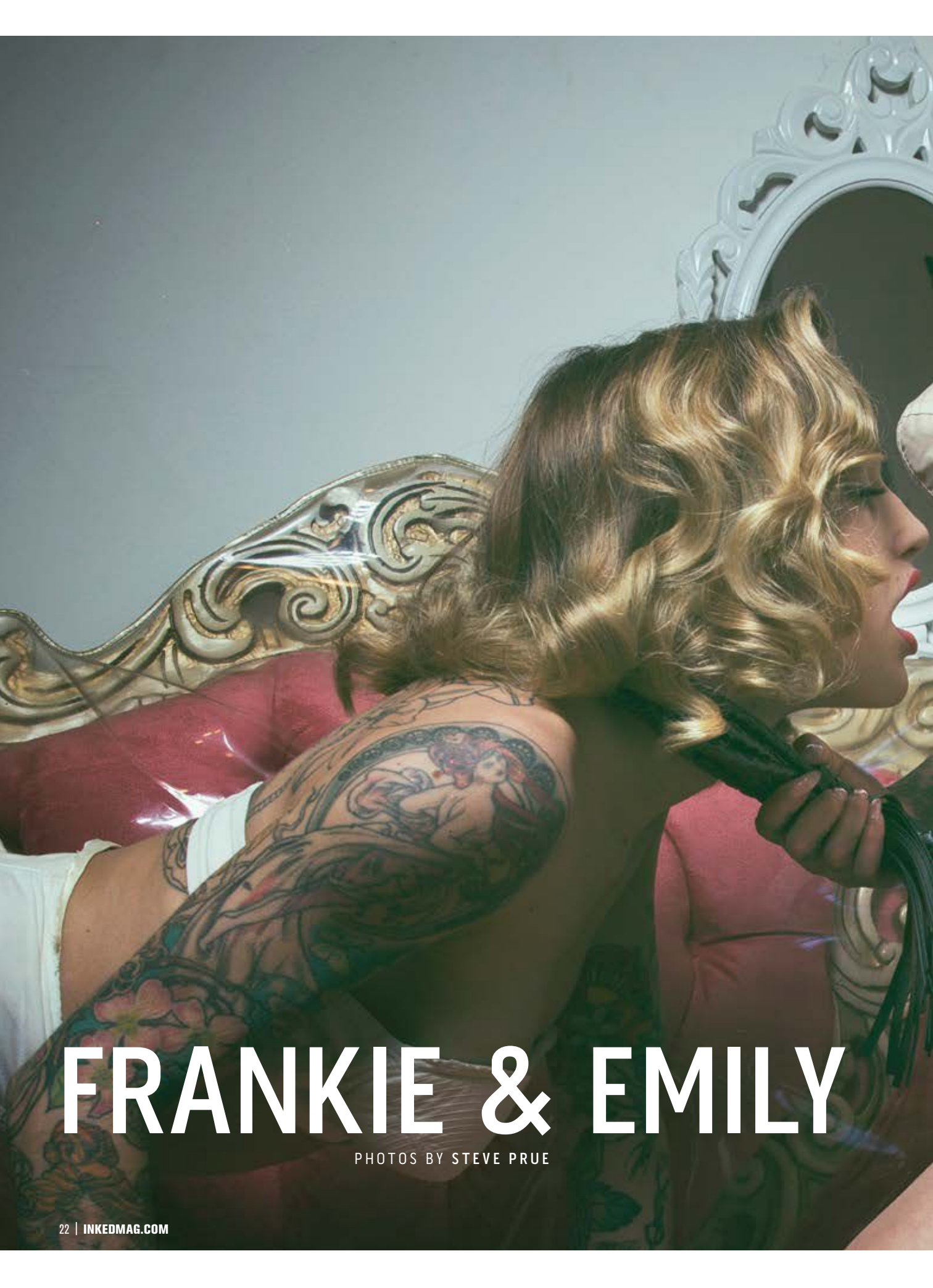
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IT'S COLD OUTSIDE!

What do 3 kilos, 1 royal crown and an 18 year-old bottle of rye have in common? They're all a great way to warm up on a cold winter night.

photo by peter roessler



ALCHEMY



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Model is wearing:

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P818 Kraken Necklace

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Model : **Honey Hulala**

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Photo : **Travis Lilley**



P818
Kraken
Necklace
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R221
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E398
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ROMEO LACOSTE

Celebrity Tattoo Artist and Social Media Stud Romeo LaCoste Sets Sights on Reality TV

By Jon Chattman photo by Devin Mitchell





When first starting out, many tattoo artists turn the needle on themselves as a means of testing their skills. For better or worse, they live with the results. Not Romeo Lacoste. He lasers them right off. "I know a lot of artists who don't mind their early or bad tattoos, [but] I'm very OCD when it comes to perfection. Any tattoo I have that isn't to my standards I just laser off."

It's those high standards that have turned Lacoste into one of the most sought-after celebrity tattoo artists working today. He's the owner of the renowned tattoo studio The California Dream in Los Angeles, and his client list includes Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande. With off-the-charts social media numbers (over 3 million collectively across various platforms) and a new reality TV series, one might be tempted to call his rise meteoric, but it's been a gradual process.

"It's crazy how many people see the fame and success on Instagram and YouTube and not realize how hard it was for me," he says. Inked recently caught up with the Montreal native and discussed his rise in the industry, the evolution of his own skin art, and everything in-between.

Were you drawn to art as a kid? How'd you get from here to there?

I'm pretty much a self-taught artist. I used to draw cartoons and video game stuff when I was 11 years old. I decided tattooing would be the best career choice for me at the age of 17. I then got an apprenticeship. Getting my start in the tattoo industry, I would say, was harder than most. I actually didn't get my first apprenticeship until going back to the same 30 to 40 tattoo shops in my town. Finally one gave me a shot. After that, they had internal drama one year in and they let me and a few other artists go. I wasn't far enough to start tattooing so I spent another one-and-a-half years looking for a second apprenticeship to finish. I [eventually] did another year and it was about three years for me to finish my apprenticeship...

You appeared on Season 3 of Oxygen Network's Best Ink. It definitely got your name out there. How'd you manage to stay in the spotlight after your time on the show ended?

Best Ink was really weird. I remember thinking before I got on that this was going to be my big break. It never really came. My success came from just a bunch of small accomplishments consistently over and over again. Best Ink was a great experience and great credibility [but] they didn't promote any of the artists on the show. It's not like Ink Master where they post your Instagram or Twitter.

People got off the show and had barely any increase in followers or business. It kind of shocked all of us, really. The winner kind of disappeared. You never hear about her. I got off the show and saw it only as the first step, not my last, which is what set me apart.

Let's talk about your social media presence a bit. It's lead to a new reality show you're currently filming...

We have celebrities coming into our shop literally all the time. I had five huge Internet celebrities last night and a couple a few nights before. The shop definitely has a life of its own. You never know what to expect. My whole team is great and we're all fun, exciting people. I've had a vision for a new tattoo reality show for a long time. I think the world needs one. The tattoo shows out there now seem stale to me and are getting old. It's time for something new and exciting.

You're completely covered in tats. Was that your intention or is it that old story of "bet you can't just get one?"

I didn't know, but I knew I kind of wanted to have the full body sleeve look. I remember going to rock shows and seeing bands like Good Charlotte or As I Lay Dying, and just seeing guys covered with tattoos and thought I wanted to be like that someday. I still look at myself and feel like I'm not tattooed enough.

What's your most personal tattoo and what's your most embarrassing one - if you haven't lasered it off yet?!

I have a full Harry Potter sleeve, which means a lot to me. I actually had a whole black-and-grey sleeve before [that] I got lasered off. I got a full-color Harry Potter sleeve over it. It's almost done, but basically when I was a kid, Harry Potter was what got me through the hard times. When you're a teen and your parents are hard on you and you're dealing with kids messing with you and having no friends...I remember checking out the books from the library and thinking that the art on the books was just so magical. This sleeve reminds me of where I came from.

Lastly, do you have a philosophy as an artist or an approach that's all your own?

I don't follow many other tattooers. I have a few I'm friends with. I want to keep my inspirations and influence as organic as possible. I always try to push the boundaries with my micro tattoos and other tattoo projects. My approach is to always be ahead of the curve, to give the best quality tattoo and customer service, and to provide every customer with an experience that they will remember forever.





FACE TIME

**Anna Lee knows a girl's gotta
look good, even if it's just a
phone call.**

photos by Shannon Brooke









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DEATH FROM ABOVE

photo by Peter Roessler
words by Jon Chattman

"It's like a bar mitzvah gone incredibly wrong or perhaps incredibly right."

To say Death From Above's Sebastien Grainger and Jesse F. Keeler couldn't wait to get their third album out would be quite the understatement. It'd be like saying Donald Trump likes to dabble in tweeting, Snow's lyrics for "Informer" are a bit hard to comprehend, or Grey's Anatomy borderlines on melodrama. After all, the duo took 10 years between their first and second records. "We had hoped to get this done even faster," Keeler said of recent release *Outrage! Is Now* - the follow-up to 2014's hit *The Physical World*. But, he continued, "as we were writing the songs, we figured out that to do it right was going to take longer than we expected." Still, the album wrapped in spring and released tracks in the summer. "Once we started really working on this record, the ideas came together pretty quickly," Grainger added.

The new album was recorded in Keeler's farm, a few hours east of Toronto. The scenery allowed the duo to explore areas of themselves musically which they couldn't before. The end result is a non-compromising, loud genre-bending album with elements of funk, rock, dance and, dare I say it, disco (hey, the press release even points it out). *Outrage!* features standouts like "Never Swim Alone" and "Freeze Me," the latter of which is accompanied by a campy, killer video of bodybuilders eating corn dogs, among other things. It's like a bar mitzvah gone incredibly wrong or perhaps incredibly right.

Of the new stuff, Grainger said, "Lyrically most of the words came within a relatively short amount of time, so conceptually it is fresh. It is a topical album in a way, and I wanted it to be in the world, while the world still resembled the one I was describing in the lyrics. At the rate that the world seems to be changing, it felt like time was breathing down our necks."

The Toronto act is currently touring in support of their new record. In separate interviews, which I've combined together to appear like a joint one (as if they were sitting on a couch together with me having a spot of tea or something), the pair talked about their sound, their style and their ink.

Your music video for "Freeze Me" just fits the Trump era so well.

JK: There's no wrong interpretation for that video! We gave control to the director and let him see his vision through. I don't think I even asked him what the video was about, but I knew I liked the absurdity. To me it feels like one of the commercials in the movie *Putney Swope*, which if there was a movie that really has influenced us since the beginning, that's the one.

SG: In my perspective, Trump is a symptom of culture and society. I don't perceive this as "the Trump era." That gives one person entirely too much mental space. That being said, the video much like the lyrics is highly interpretable. When the director Corey Adams told us his idea, it seemed absurd enough to either make no sense or make perfect sense to the viewer. Basically we just wanted it to be weird. Mission accomplished?

How would you best classify your sound on this record? It's definitely evolved record to record.

JK: That's good to hear. I don't think we have anything guiding us but a feeling that we both chase after. We have never fit in easily with any genre, but it's been funny to see how people have decided to describe our music. The only thing that truly defines our music is that it's the result of Sebastien and I working together. If we both like some idea, it's going to be on a record.

SG: Would you be disappointed if I said that we've never tried to classify our sound? We're just making music for each other primarily, and we're weirdos. So... "Weirdo Music?"

Let's talk tattoos. When was your first

one, what is it of, where is it, where'd you get it, and why?

JK: Swallows. I started on the sides of my neck. My wife had the same thing on one side of her neck, and one day I just decided I wanted one, too. I had wanted to get tattooed since I was a little kid but never got around to it. When I was about 15, I actually had an envelope that I wrote "TATTOO \$" on and I used it like a piggy bank. Then one day a guy I knew was selling his turntables and that envelope got emptied. It was the right decision at the time, as DJing ended up financing everything else in my life. [Laughs]

SG: My first tattoo was "1979" tattooed in block letters on my left forearm when I was 22. It stems from conversations I used to have with friends in high school about genetic engineering. We were worried that our DNA would need some kind of legal protection, so I thought that I would copyright myself. I was gonna get a copyright symbol with 1979 beside it. Years later when I was gonna get tattooed I thought the 1979 was still a cool idea. The copyright symbol, not so much. It was done by Kyle Hollingdrake in Toronto. We went to high school together in the suburbs. He was a real punker. Still is!

How many do you currently have?

SG: Sixteen I think? I am not in a rush, so 16 in 16 years seems like a pretty steady and reasonable pace!

How well thought out are the tats?

JK: Pretty much all of them take me ages to decide on, and I start talking through them with my artist's even while he's working on something else for me. It's probably distracting but I like to get a sense of

how feasible an idea is before I get too obsessed with it. Some of them are things I've been imagining for decades, but I try to defer to my artists realization of the idea. I spend more time thinking about the concept than I do what it will look like.

SG: All my tattoos are pretty small and all in black ink. At first, I didn't want shading, but eventually started letting my friend Glennie (Pearl Harbour Gift Shop Toronto) shade a bit. She has done most of my tattoos. So, conceptually, I am fairly regimented. Some of them I've thought about for a while, and others were more impulsive. For example, the nine-legged octopus with the words "Fuck It" between his tentacles that Oliver Peck did at FYF Fest in L.A. was not meditated on for very long. I suppose the "Russian Prison" style really caught my eye. And I've inadvertently kinda ended up with that style. I am a little critical of people that just get super tattooed up in that random style quickly, because I feel like that style should tell a longer story.

What's the most badass tattoo you've ever seen on anyone?

SG: "Paul McCartney" in old English in a neck tattoo.

JF: I couldn't say specifically, but I think mastectomy tattoos are both badass and super inspiring.

What's the weakest one?

JF: I saw a guy getting a single line around his arm... just a straight line maybe about 1/8" wide. I have thought about it many times since, wondering what it mean and if he is happy with it.

SG: "Paul McCartney" in an old English neck tattoo.







PRECIOUS CARGO

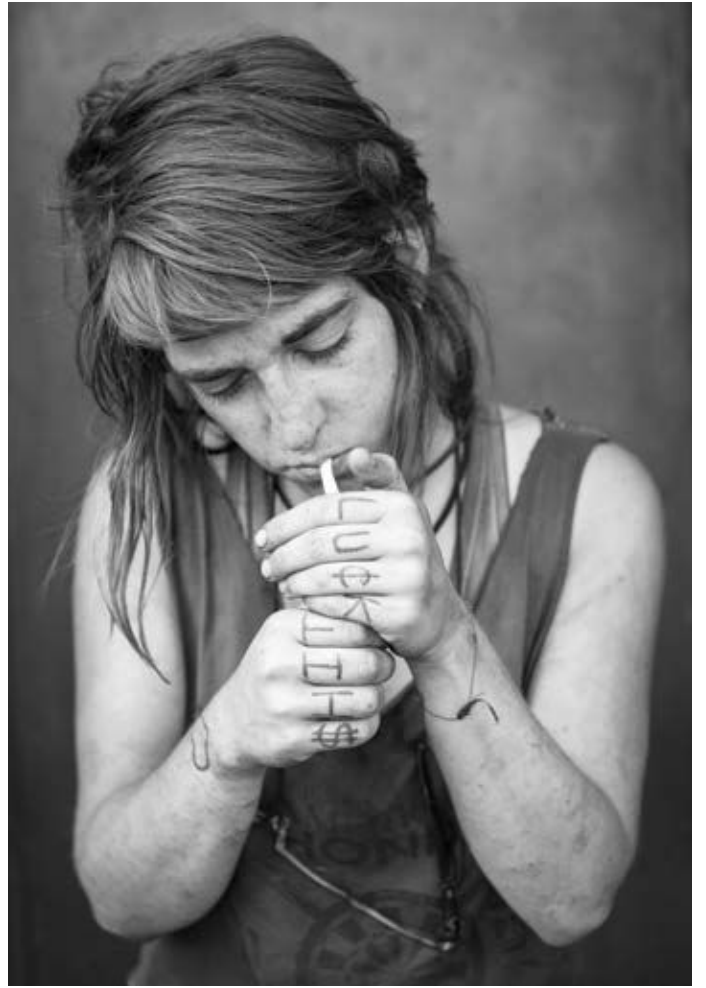
photos courtesy of Michael Joseph and Daniel Cooney Fine Art words by Dove Clark

For seven years, a photographer rode the rails with America's young "travelers." His portraits tell their story.

Michael Joseph's voyage began with a single friendship, but it's led to him creating relationships with wayward strangers all over the country. The stunning portraits in his *Lost and Found* series are a window through which the uninitiated can catch a glimpse of traveler culture. Joseph's use of natural light on stark yet real backgrounds, and his deep understanding of his subjects' emotional and cultural landscape, make this collection extremely stirring. We talked with Michael Joseph about his quest to deliver an honest portrayal of an often-misunderstood way of life and the way this journey has affected him personally.

Read Dove Clark's in-depth interview with Michael Joseph on line at inkedmag.com













INK MENTORS

Three past winners come back to coach their crews in the hopes of becoming the winners of *Ink Master* Season 10, "Return of the Masters"

photos by peter roessler words by devon preston

Every season of the hit tattoo reality competition *Ink Master* introduces a new and innovative challenge for its contenders. Season 6 centered on former masters and apprentices, Season 7 brought back favorite veteran artists, and in Season 9 the series hosted its first shop wars competition. Season 10 "Return of the Masters" is, of course, no different, and in late 2017 fans learned that a few of the past winners would be returning for the first time to the series. *Ink Master* is proud to reintroduce Season 2 winner Steve Tefft, a master of black-and-grey horror; season 7 winner Anthony Michaels, a champion of black-and-gray realism; and Season 9 winner DJ Tambe, a legendary "exagger-realism" tattooer. But this time, instead of competing for the title of master, the three victors are acting as coaches to 18 brand-new tattooers from around the country. They will be mentoring their crew in the hopes of bringing as many artists to the finale as possible, in the end going head-to-head for the master title and a cool 100 Gs. Hear the inside scoop from the master trio about what's to come during Season 10 of *Ink Master* "Return of the Masters", premiering January 9th at 10/9C on Spike.



Tell us a bit about why you're back for Season 10.

Tambe: This season, we're here as coaches. We're trying to lead our team to the finale and for each one we get, we get advantages. We're going to be battling it out in the end, no matter what. If our whole team loses, we're still battling it out.

Tefft: For \$100,000 and the master title.

What's the talent like from the competing artists?

Tambe: There's some strong talent. But you've always got those middle riders that surprise you. They could do horrible one week and then the next week win Tattoo of the Day. It's a good strong season with a few big names on it.

Michaels: Talent is one thing and hard work is another. In this setting, the stress that comes with this competition, and how it's designed—it doesn't matter what your talent level is. It's really going to boil down to your humbleness, how open, receptive and adaptive you are above all.

Tefft: You have to adapt fast—on time, on stress—and think on your feet really fast. I believe that every season had a lot of good artists, but some people can perform here and some people can't. You see on TV who can and who can't. It's hard.

How do you use your experience as a former competitor now as a coach?

Tefft: I think the biggest thing is getting the artists to understand what the judges are really looking for. They can be confusing sometimes but since we've already been through it, we know exactly what direction to steer the artists in. To help them out with 18 artists coming at you, trying to drag you down and mess you up—it's a little bit of everything.

Michaels: I think that being said, keeping your composure while you're handling all the elements is going to keep you focused on the task at hand. That's the biggest thing I took from my experience here, being that every single challenge I faced was something new that I hadn't experienced in my career. If I showed any signs of being flustered I would lose my composure and train of thought—and that wasn't an option for me. This time around, I feel like that's what I'm bringing to my team as a coach.

Tambe: We're trying to get our teams to cut down the ego, and as much as you've got to do your best tattooing, you have to keep yourself composed. Like Ant said, you've got to be humble. The things you do at home get completely cut out here. Whether it be putting too much into stuff and you've got to reel yourself in for the judges. That's a big thing because we know what they want here and things you do at home don't fly here.

How do you coach the big-name artists?

Tambe: The big-name artists are the hardest ones for us to coach. They've got their own ink line and they're here with kids who are two years in. But most of the time the kids that are two years in have egos over the big names.

Tefft: It's hard to tell a guy who has been successful for 20 years, "Bro, you're doing something wrong. Here that shit don't fly." It's hard to translate to them that they're successful but the things they've learned don't work here and they have to listen to us.

Michaels: Like you said, you've got people with 15 to 20 years of experience and here I am a coach, a little over eight years in telling someone with his own ink line what to do. It's hard to convince someone to trust you that you've never met before that you're going to take them in the right direction. They don't know the right way to go and we have to convince them that we know.

Out of the three of you, which of you is Peck, Nunez and Navarro?

Tambe: I think that me and Anthony are a fight between Chris Nunez.

Tefft: You're probably new Nunez, I'm probably old Nunez.

Tambe: I'd say you're more of an Oliver. You say what's on your mind and the way you coach is completely different than the way we coach. And you'll be the first one to say it. You tell your team how it is.

Tefft: It's tough love, man. I'm not here to make friends, I'm here to bring someone to the finale. If I've got to do it kicking, screaming and dragging them, I will do it.

Tambe: Anthony and I kind of ease into them, whereas Steve is just like "You do that, I'll break your machine and kick your station over." To Michaels: I think that you could be a little bit of Dave.

Michaels: I was just going to say that. I think that personality-wise, style-wise, then if you really think about it, the experience that these guys hold and looking up to both of these guys, I think that there is a little bit of Dave there.

Tefft: Dave's just a smooth cat. I like to think there's a little bit of them in all of us.

What was the craziest moment from your original season?

Michaels: The first thing that comes to mind for me was going to the bottom. I knew why I chose to vote myself to the bottom and I really felt in my gut that I was going to get another chance. I wasn't certain about that second chance, but my gut told me to do what I had to do, own up to my mistake, and pray for a better outcome. Sure enough, I had a little head-to-head with Jesse Smith and it all worked out for me. For me, that was the first thing that came to mind because it was super stressful, took me out of my element, and then all of a sudden I had to jump back into work mode because the competition doesn't care how you're doing, they just want to see what you can produce.

Tambe: I think I'm kind of in the same boat. First episode we came in last season, I pulled out a trick and the house didn't like that so they threw us in the bottom. Then once we got down to the bottom the judges told them that they were out of their mind for throwing us in the bottom. It was a horrible feeling going down to the bottom but when the judges said they would all wear this tattoo, it was memorable for me.

Tefft: I would say the first episode of my season, they took us to a morgue. Watching people get out of the van—there are little people, tall people, people with dreads, girls wearing leopard spots, and we're at a morgue tattooing latex skin. There was a girl who stabbed a bottle and got ink all over her face. Then the next day, the same girl spells her tattoo wrong and goes home. First episode! What the fuck kind of circus did I get myself into?

What strategies do you guys have as coaches?





Tambe: We're all a little bit in the same boat in that we've never coached before so we don't have too much of a strategy. It still takes a little bit of time for us to feel out our artists, but I think we're getting there with strategy. We're not used to this and it's a crazy situation to be in because we're learning as we go.

Michaels: I can definitely agree with DJ, this something we agreed to do but knowing how this was going to unfold we had no idea. You have an idea about how you're going to do things going into it, but then you have people with all different personalities, techniques, belief systems and habits that mix up your whole strategy. I think first and foremost, respect for yourself, your surrounds, and the situation at hand is important. You can be more receptive to information and there's a lot of power and humility that a lot of people disregard. For me, the biggest thing is to get these guys to open up to be more receptive and get sent home on a badass tattoo, not a mistake because you were flustered. Be true to yourself, that's the biggest thing.

Tefft: For me, it's adaptability. It's waking up one day feeling good, then they have a tough challenge and feel all down. Some people I can yell at whereas some people I have to coddle and figure out from someone I've only known for a few days how I'm going to get them to the finale. They're adapting to me, I'm adapting to them, that's the hardest thing. To figure out where they're at in their mind and to put out a good tattoo.

How do you feel about *Ink Master* being on its tenth season?

Michaels: There's definitely been a lot of progression. I feel like this competition is gaining some respect. I think that at first they were trying to feel it out, it was a good idea, and the caliber of artists has stepped up. This means the flash challenges are getting harder, the elimination tattoos are getting better, better tattoos are being sent home, and we're starting to see bigger names getting involved.

Tambe: I think that for me and Steve, 20 in, it's hard nowadays to know that you have a future in tattooing because there's no retirement. A lot of these young kids that are coming out now and people that are schooled artists are going to knock us old guys down. So for us to stay with the times, it's good for us and it's tough. But there a lot of bigger named artists who know that they have to do this or they will fall behind. Because there are hundreds of artists a day who are coming out killing it. We've got to stay relevant or we might as well pick another career.

Tefft: I truly believe that because of *Ink Master*, unless you're in the tattoo industry, there would be names you would never know. Now *Ink Master* puts it on TV and middle America goes "Wow, who is this guy?" On Season 2, you got a little backlash and now you see major artists wondering how they can get on. They want to be a household name like everybody else. They put in the work and they want to get recognition for it.

If you had to use one word to describe this upcoming season, what would it be?

Tambe: Dramatic.

Tefft: Chaos.

Michaels: Fucked-up.

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RICK ROSS

“IN THIS, I WILL BE CONFIDENT...”

by dove clark photos by yan freire

As we enter Carousel Studios on a rather cool Miami afternoon, Rick Ross is in the midst of his Inked Magazine photo shoot, as his longtime tattoo artist Lordgyn “Gino” Belizaire touches up some work, including a custom Jesus piece on Ross’s left forearm. The room is quieter than you’d expect. Music is playing, but very little conversation is happening as the photographer snaps away. The calm energy is not surprising, given that just two days earlier Ross’s dear friend and manager Black Bo passed away suddenly. The fact that the Maybach Music mogul even agreed to move forward with his appearances at Art Basel and this interview was commendable... silently understood that it’s all done in tribute, because this is what Black would have wanted him to do.



From his recently-announced Rich Hair Care luxury beard grooming line for men and sneaker collaboration with Ewing Athletics, to his successful Wingstop restaurants and growing Belaire liquor line, Rick Ross has proven time and time again that he's got a knack for winning. He even made the move to reality television, something he never thought he'd do, with the VH1 competition Signed. It appears that he's got the TV bug now, as he tells us about a new tattoo show he's developing with Gino.

The sorrow is palpable as we start off discussing the aforementioned Jesus piece, but Ross doesn't convey any sadness in his words. Instead, we discuss loyalty, growth and commitment -- all qualities that have made Ross the true industry leader and entrepreneur he is today.

Inked: What's the significance of the Jesus artwork? Rick Ross: Right above it is "Against All Odds" and right beneath it is one of my favorite scriptures of the Bible which was Psalm 27 "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Whom shall I be afraid? When [the wicked, even] mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise [against me,] in this will I be confident." I felt that was appropriate for my life.

When you look at where you've been and where you're going, what do you foresee changing about you as a man and as an artist? As far as my career, my future's extremely bright. I think it's fair for me to say that. As far as on a personal side, I feel we get better with time, with experiences. I feel that's the position I'm in.

It's been said by many people around you that your loyalty is incomparable. Why is it so important to have your team moving with you as you grow? Just because I felt, coming up, there was a lack in that where I'm from and my community. I felt like where I'm from, a dude would get a tattoo from a guy on the block, and then once he became a superstar and all the resources that come with stardom, he has a new tattoo artist. Versus "this is Gino". This is the same artist that gave me my first ugly tats, to him now being the most sought after in the city. To me that's a great reflection of what life is.

This year you made the move into reality television. How do you feel about being a part of the VH1 Signed show? [Smiles] I never was excited about reality shows until I was on house arrest and couldn't go anywhere. What made it cool is my current and new manager Juan Madrid brought the concept to the table for me and we made it happen. I felt that reality shows may be entertaining to a lot of people, but they don't have any longevity. I felt that was something different about Signed. By me having plugs, that's what I'm gonna do with all my people. When I heard the opportunity, I called him [gestures to Gino] and plugged him in with the people.

Some reality television can be a bit exploitive, but your show gave a spotlight to new talent, and gave a window into how you got to the position

you're in now. I think we did that. At the end of the show, even when the show no longer supported the artists, I took it upon myself to support a few of them for however long it took. It was my way of showing them that I was standing behind them. Backing up my talk.

How do you care for your skin, beard, and hair with tattoo work? Honestly I don't think I have any real secrets other than showering up every day and lotioning up. As far as my beard, I traveled all around the world and I would seek out Moroccan oil whenever I could. I needed something that would give my beard a sheen without it being thick. So, I needed something that would last, but be thin. I tried a hundred different things, natural and non-natural, whatever it was. When I came across Rich, I reached out to them, and we made something real special come together and here we are.

Was it important for you to keep your line affordable to your fans? It's just something I wanted to be realistic about. If I wanted to make sure my homies get it, I know where the ballpark is. I know what being realistic is. I know if I was in their shoes and I wanted to care for my beard, I know how far I'd go in and what it's worth.

What's special about your new sneaker collaboration with Ewing Athletics? I was always a huge fan of Patrick Ewing. He's the first athlete to own his own shoe company on some self-made boss shit. I had a few opportunities to do it after parting with Reebok. However, when I sat down with Ewing I immediately felt like I was a part of a self-made team — a small company with big plans. I say that's where I fit best.

Have you ever thought of getting into a vape line, tobacco line, or marijuana if it gets legalized properly? Maybe the cigars that I love... I love to smoke my good cigars when I relax on the balcony doing what I do. That's something that I love. There's a lot of money to be made. You never know. Do you have any room to get more tattoos? I actually have my legs and little piece of my hip. I want to do my hips. I haven't decided if I'm getting a little bit on my ass. That's sexy.

What is it that keeps you motivated? I think its knowing we could do it. Sometimes we need somebody to tell us that. There was a point in my life that I needed a big homie to tell me, "Homie you could do this. Stay focused" A lot of times people are really running on fumes, and they are right around the corner from making one play that will change the game forever. When certain people accomplish certain things your level of confidence can spill over and do good for everybody else around you.

What do you want people to know most about you at the stage of your life and career? At this point, I'm the biggest boss in the game. I have nothing to prove. Right now it's just all about continuing to motivate each other. That's what I want my success to do. That's what I want your success to do. I was just talking to Gino about the Rolex on his wrist. It's motivation. That's inspiration you know what I mean? That's just what it's all about. That becomes a piece of real estate. That becomes your own tattoo store. That becomes whatever it is that you love to do.



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MR.K

By Devon Preston

The East Asian nation of South Korea is known worldwide for countless cultural exports—from the traditional pickled vegetable dish kimchi to *RuPaul's Drag Race* star Kim Chi. However, when it comes to the art of tattooing, the nation's greatest contribution to the industry thus far has been micromaster Mr. K.

A legend in the growing genre of tiny tattoos, Mr. K has made a big impact on a small scale. He's reached a level of success and artistic mastery after just two years in the business that most tattooers can only dream of achieving. Thanks to an alliance with celebrity tattooer Bang Bang and a couple hundred thousand Instagram followers, Mr. K has ridden the high of the growing mini-ink obsession. And although many tattooers would sit back while the customers come flooding in, Mr. K continues to push forward as an artist by creating clean work time after time. His primary clientele may be comprised of newcomers to the tattoo world, from social media influencers to trend-savvy New York natives, but he makes sure his fine lines will hold up long after the tattoo has been published to Instagram. Because while there are many ink slingers who have taken on micro tattooing as a get-rich-quick scheme, Mr. K is as dedicated to producing quality designs as any diehard traditional old timer.

How did you get into tattooing? In 2015 I decided to close my streetwear brand K47 and was searching for a new creative outlet. I've always been into drawing and underground cultures like graffiti and skateboarding, so tattooing was a natural fit.

What was your first shop experience like? My first shop was a pretty typical New York tattoo shop experience. However, I apprenticed under a friend who was also the manager of the shop, so that made things easier, but I always worked extra hard.

Do you have any special training? Not really. I found a great exercise for me was tattooing oranges and grapefruit. The peels offer human skin-like curves, textures and temperatures.

What conventions have you done recently or are planning to do this year? I have never attended a tattoo convention, but want to try one day.

How do you describe your style? I call it fine-line black-and-gray. What I'm trying to do is incorporate the detail commonly associated with big, realistic tattoos at a micro-sized scale.

What led you to work in realism? Realism, or realistic tattoos, live so beautifully on human skin. I enjoy the challenge they present each time.

Do you prefer color or black-and-gray? I prefer black-and-gray, though I truly enjoy working with minimal color, when appropriate.

What subject matters do you prefer? I enjoy realistic artwork and technology, and I'm always into anatomy reference material and cross-hatching technique

Do you treat portraits the same way you approach other subjects? Yes, every object is a portrait to me.

What inspires you as an artist? Graphic art and fashion inspire me every day. I still get excited when I consider how many of my inspirations have never attempted as a tattoo.

What sets you apart from other artists? If I had to guess, I would say my graphic design background offers me a fairly unique point of view.

What other mediums do you work in? In the future I hope to work with others in the fashion, art and music industries.

What tattoo artists do you admire most? Ben Grillo is the artist I admire the most. We have yet to meet, but I love his work and style. I've been a big fan since I first saw his healed work on my friend's hand, it was just sick.

Is there a tattoo you haven't done yet that you are dying to do? It may sound silly, but I love tattooing fashion brand logos.

What advice would you give to artists doing micro tattoos? There are so many awesome micro tattoo photos on Instagram, yet very few photos of them healed, which is what really matters. Single-needle, fine-line tattoos require precise contrast and depth within the skin. So, keep in good contact with your clients, provide touch-ups, and keep track of your healed tattoo. I'm always learning so many things from my healed tattoos.

How did growing up in South Korea influence your art? I have been creating art since I can remember. One of my favorite things to do growing up was hanging out at my mom's art studio. She was always supportive and taught me to paint and draw. I love pencil drawing and enjoyed teaching, so after high school I taught pencil drawing classes. In fact, I never even thought about working as anything other than an artist.

What is tattooing like in South Korea? Tattooing in South Korea differs greatly from here in New York City. While magazines and television shows have increased demand, tattooing remains illegal. Older generations still won't recognize tattoo as an art, which gives it a troubling, bad reputation. On the bright side, I saw mother-daughter matching tattoos last year in Korea. That was a major step up for my home country.

Why do you primarily work with a single needle? Single needle is the finest art medium by human hand. Skin holds super fine detail for a pretty long time and even after 10 or 15 years, it will look like a vintage drawing or photograph — I really love that look.

How does New York City influence your art? New York City is hometown to the best artists in the world. They inspire and challenge me every day. I enjoy that tension.

Which celebrities have you tattooed? So far, I've tattooed Tyson Chandler, Ashley Greene, Stefanie Giesinger, Giulio Berruti, Jordan Fisher, Javale McGee and Maryna Linchuck.

How has social media impacted your career? Ninety-nine percent of my clients are from social media, specifically Instagram.

What would you be doing if you weren't a tattoo artist? I would definitely keep working as a graphic designer in the fashion industry. But I'm glad I chose tattooing.

How has working with+ Bang Bang impacted your career? Bang Bang has deeply impacted my career. You could even say he made my career. Being able to work with the best artists in the world does not happen easily and the competition with them teaches me the best lessons.







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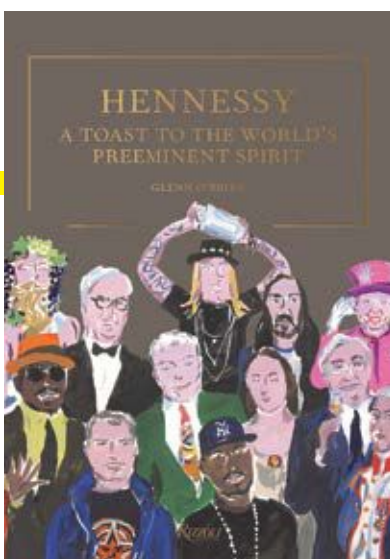
BLACK PANTHER

Marvel continues to reign supreme in the superhero film genre. November brought us the highly entertaining *Thor: Ragnarok*, and now we shift from Asgard to Wakanda, the advanced African nation and home of Prince T'Challa, aka Black Panther. Following the events of *Captain America: Civil War* and the death of his father, the King of Wakanda, T'Challa returns

home to rightfully claim the throne, only to find he has his own civil war to deal with as opposing factions are challenging his right to be king. The Black Panther soon emerges and teams up with Wakandan Special Forces and C.I.A. agent Everett K. Ross (Martin Freeman) to take on the threat. Ryan Coogler (*Creed*) directs. — Gil Macias

HENNESSY: A Toast to the World's Preeminent Spirit

From rappers to high-powered executives to everyone in between, people equate the name Hennessy with elegance and wealth. From humble beginnings in southwest France, the 250-year-old company now sells more than 40 percent of the world's cognac. In his new book, *Hennessy: A Toast to the World's Preeminent Spirit*, Glenn O'Brien details the drink's meteoric rise, starting all the way back in 1765. — PG



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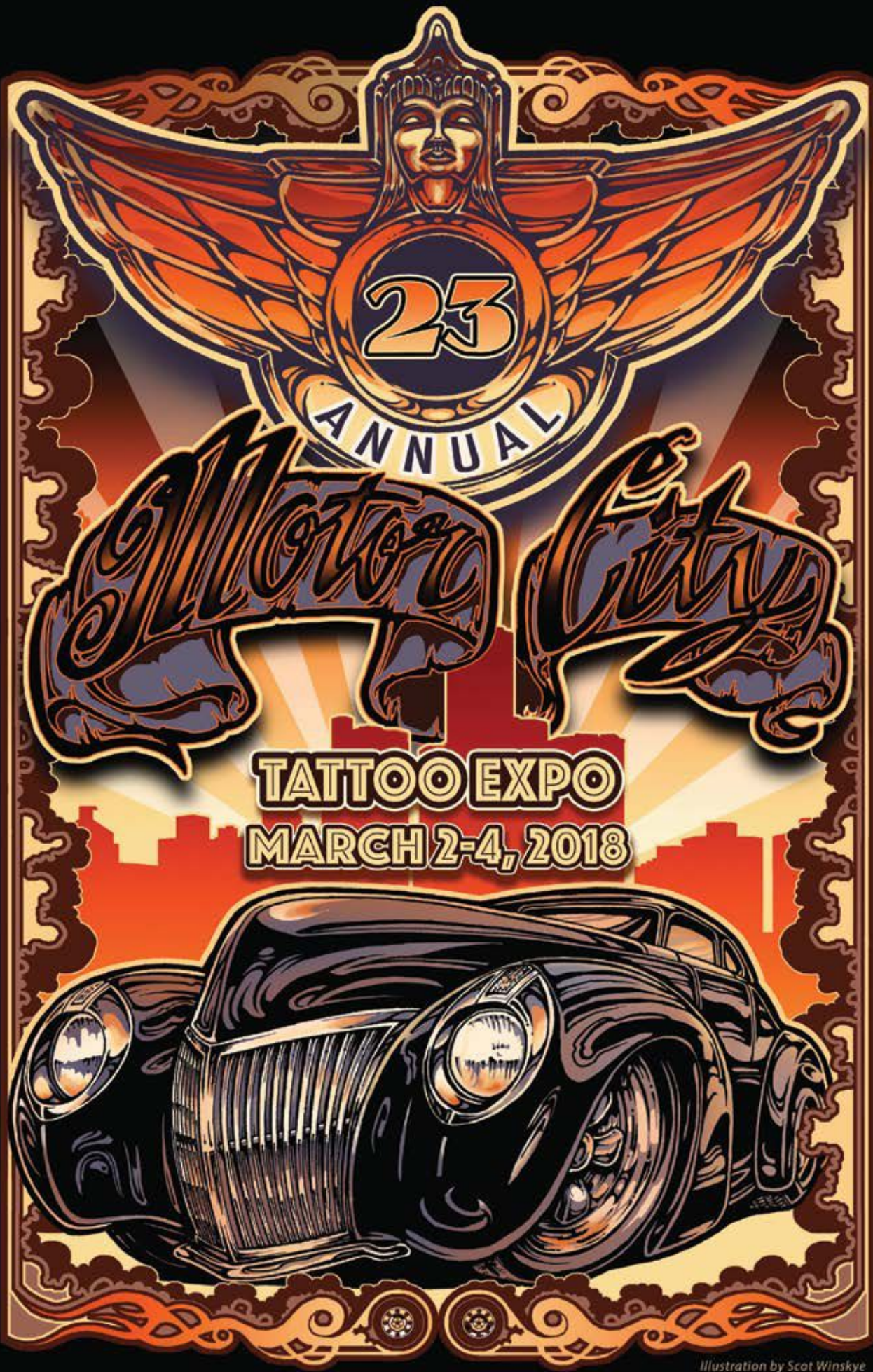
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PACIFIC RIM UPRISING

Pacific Rim didn't exactly set the box-office on fire here in the States, but fans will be pleased that the high-budget spectacle about giant robots (known as Jaegers) duking it out with "Kaiju" monsters seems to have made enough money worldwide to warrant a sequel. John Boyega (*Star Wars: The Last Jedi*) plays Jake Pentecost, son of legendary Jaeger pilot Stacker Pentecost who died during the events of the first film. Jake was once a promising Jaeger pilot, but turned to a life of crime. When another global Kaiju threat arises, Jake has a shot at redemption and rejoins the Pan Pacific Defense Corps, where he is reunited with his estranged sister Mako (Rinko Kikuchi, reprising her role). The two team up with other gifted pilots to have help save mankind from possible extinction. — GM

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TOMB RAIDER

Forget those two mediocre Angelina Jolie Tomb Raider movies. The popular video game franchise once again returns to the big screen and this time it seems to visually resemble Square Enix's excellent 2013 reboot Tomb Raider and its breathtaking follow-up, Rise of the Tomb Raider. Alicia Vikander (Ex Machina, Jason Bourne) plays the iconic explorer Lara Croft, who goes in search of a fabled tomb on an island somewhere off the coast of Japan which was also the last-known expedition of her father, who mysteriously died trying to find it. Dominic West (300), Walton Goggins (The Hateful Eight), Daniel Wu (Into the Badlands) and Kristin Scott Thomas (The English Patient) co-star in this highly-anticipated adventure. — GM



The Force of Taylor Swift

Courtney Force is taking over as driver of the Advance Auto Parts Funny Car in the NHRA season finale. This year, the car will be sponsored by Big Machine Records and will feature album art from Taylor Swift's highly anticipated sixth record, reputation. Force had a hand in designing her car and apparently uses Swift's music as a way to pump herself up for races. — MC



HAPPY DEATH DAY

Remember Groundhog Day, the movie with Bill Murray as a weatherman who had to relive the same day over and over? Well, someone took that gimmick and turned it into a delightful slasher flick that's like a mashup of Groundhog Day meets Mean Girls and Scream. In Happy Death Day, a college student (Jessica Rothe) relives her birthday, the same day she is brutally murdered by a masked psycho. No matter what she does to change things, the day always ends with her being killed in some gruesome new way. Armed with memories and clues from each murder she experiences, she sets out to find her killer's identity in hopes of stopping the endless death loop. Happy Death Day stood out as one of the most entertaining horror flicks of 2017 and it's now available on Blu-ray. — GM



MEAN STREETS NYC 1970-1985

Taking its name from the iconic 1973 Martin Scorsese film, Mean Streets: NYC 1970–1985, is a book by Edward Gruzda that captures the city in all its manic energy. In 1970 Mr. Gruzda moved to New York City, “wanting to be a photographer, but with no idea how.” He would use his A.I.R. (Artist in Residence) loft as a “World Headquarters” for the next 40 years. He would travel the world but “always returned to the streets of New York.” — PG



Infamous Room 100

We all know what allegedly went down in Room 100 at NYC's Chelsea Hotel (which has now fallen victim to Big Apple gentrification). Well, the original key goes for a fortune, but you can pick up a replica for a “song” on Etsy. Makes a cool gift for any aspiring Sids or Nancys out there. — PG

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WILDE ABOUT SEX

Jessica Wilde (@JessicaWilde) is here to answer your burning sex questions—though if it burns consult an actual doctor right now! She's not a doctor, but she once role-played as a nurse so she's beyond qualified. Send your questions to press@inkedmag.com.

When my girl and I are in bed what's the first thing a guy should do to get things started and turn her on? - anonymous A kiss can go a long way, my friend. A woman will know with the first kiss whether she will want to sleep with you. A fiery passionate kiss is almost guaranteed to get the engines revved up.

How do I approach women? I've become shy and less confident over the years. How do I kick this? - ollixababwa The worst thing that's going to happen is rejection, right? Is rejection really that bad? Yes. But what's even worse is regret! I also believe women only leave the house looking good on a Friday night to get hit on. So, you're really doing them a favor with their confidence levels even if they say "no".

How can I stop from going off early? - gazza_owen Have you heard the saying practice makes perfect? Try "practicing" before you're meeting up with you partner. There are also products that can dull down sensitivity. Perhaps a combination of the two will keep you from firing off early.

I haven't had much of a sex drive for the past two years, I'm only 27! How do I get it back? - natstrongevans The more you have, the more you tend to want it, they say! Try making it a part of your daily routine, whether you're on your own or with a partner. Your body will soon start to expect and crave the release. Also, up your exercise! Working out can increase your libido

Jess, What is the number one thing a woman wants from her man? - raiderrey A woman only wants two things from her man. Loyalty and attention. If you can be all about her, and give her attention 24/7 I can assure you she will be content. For now. We are fickle creatures.



Wbco Tattoo Sponge

Wbco has just released an all-natural aftercare sponge made out of konjac vegetable root. Designed to clear off leftover ink and other post-tattoo gunk, this sponge moisturizes and soothes the skin and, due to its unique pH balance, does so without stripping the skin of its natural oils. On top of all this, the sponge is also 100percent biodegradable and can be easily disposed of without harming the environment. — MC

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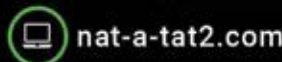
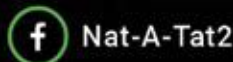
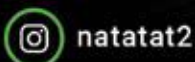


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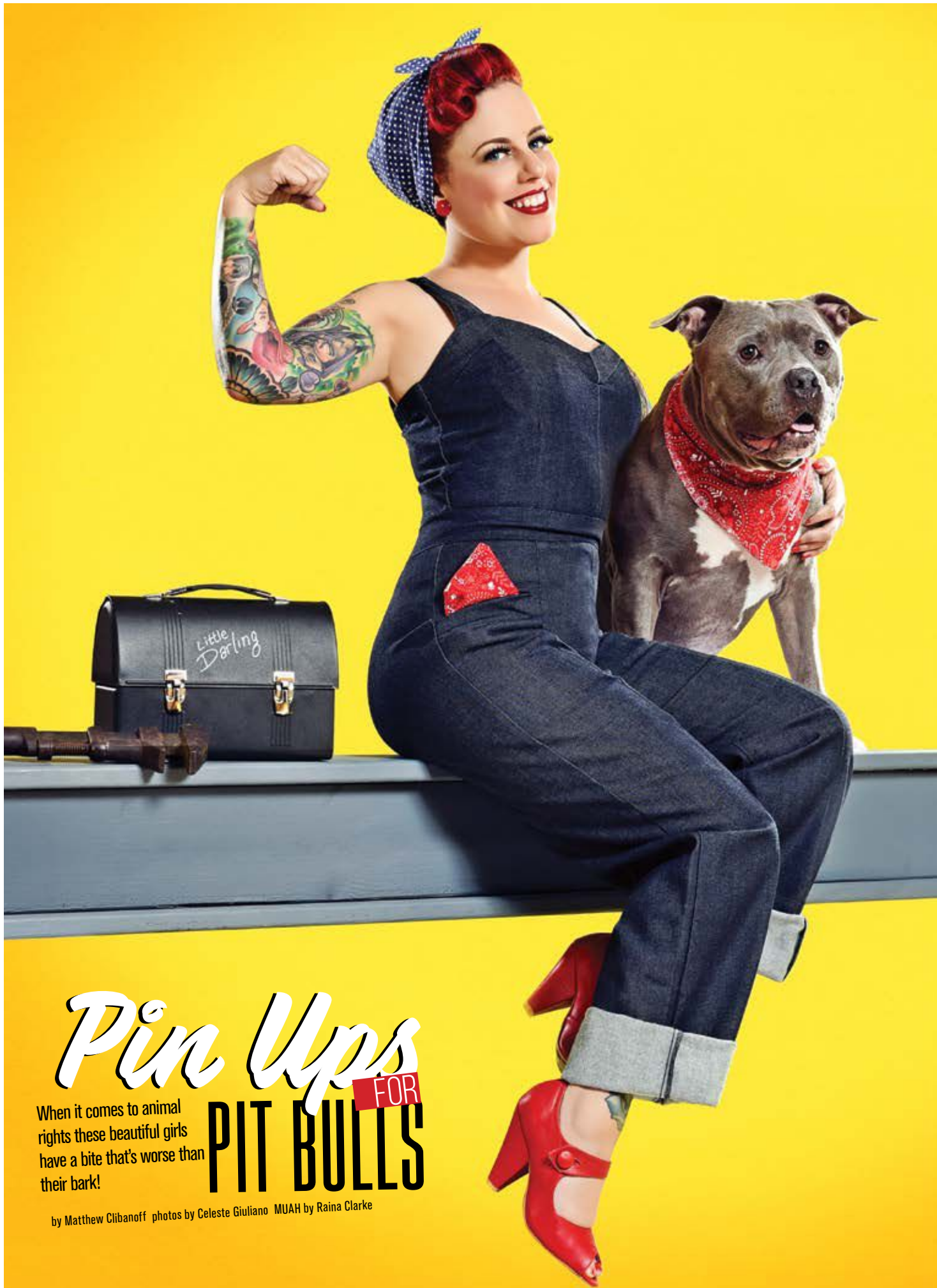
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Pin Ups FOR PIT BULLS

When it comes to animal rights these beautiful girls have a bite that's worse than their bark!

by Matthew Clibanoff photos by Celeste Giuliano MUAH by Raina Clarke

Founded in 2005 by Deidre "Little Darling" Franklin, Pinups for Pit Bulls is an animal rights advocacy group that works to dispel stereotypes about pit bull type dogs. Distressed by the way in which pit bulls were portrayed in the media, and the way they were typically ignored by shelters and other animal rights groups, Franklin came up with an idea for a calendar. The idea was simple: Pair adorable pit bull pups with beautiful pinup models and use the proceeds to help educate people about the abuse pit bulls suffer all across America.

From humble beginnings, Pinups for Pit Bulls has become hugely successful, garnering support all across social media and helping plenty of dogs get adopted in the process. Magnanimous isn't a strong enough word for Franklin as she's dedicated the past 12 years of her life to ensuring that these beautiful but misunderstood creatures are seen in a more positive light. We gave Franklin a call to talk to her about her organization and the tattoo community, and to help us separate pit bull fact from fiction.

How did the calendar come about?

My friend Mandy, who was a photographer in New Jersey, had already taken a bunch of pinup pictures of me. She was the first photographer I really did a lot with. She was open to helping me shoot a calendar. I just wanted to help the rescue I volunteered at to get more exposure for their dogs. I really thought it would be a one-time Kinkos calendar and in 2007, the one came out. I really thought it would be the end, but right after that the Michael Vick stuff happened and then the news kept calling me and wanting my opinion on things.

So, in a horrible, backwards way, the Michael Vick story helped you and your mission? Absolutely. It was the first time that people actually saw these dogs as victims. It was horrific and I wish that it never happened to any of these dogs but one good thing came out of it, which was: people [being] open to the idea that these dogs were abused [and] weren't asking to be drowned or electrocuted, or killed. It was an awesome opportunity to gather the troops and get more people educated at once.

Have any of your models with tattoos expressed any difficulties in finding work because they're tattooed? I'm sure at some point in their lives. Most of them are professionals. Some of them, with full sleeves, are nurses in hospitals and they just have to wear different types of sleeves [to cover up their tattoos]. One of our nurses is in a California hospital, and they're really casual about tattoos. But, I'd say probably all of them have had some kind of issue, including myself.

Do you have a preference for tattooed models? It seems like more of your models are tattooed than aren't. We don't have a preference, but a lot of people assume that we do, so a lot of people with tattoos apply for our calendar. Also, we do many tattoo conventions so a lot of tattooed people meet us there and get involved that way. But it's in no way a requirement for us, although I would say that most of the girls in our calendar have tattoos.

Why is the tattoo community such a natural partner for you guys? So many reasons. I think the glaringly obvious one is that people who have tattoos know what it's like to have a prejudice against them. A lot

of them understand that people have a bias about things like tattoos or dogs. Many of the people who go to conventions are really community-oriented people in general, and they support different non-profit causes that they care about. We've had tons of tattoo shops do fundraisers for us or donate prints or artwork for us to do silent auctions. They just get it.

Do you think organizations like PETA don't do enough, or do you see yourself as an ancillary to them? PETA is the reason I'm an animal advocate, first of all. Let's start there. When I was 12-years-old and wanted to get into animal welfare, they were all I had access to. They were the only pamphlets I saw and the only information I could find. I was stupefied to learn that they believe in killing off pit bull type dogs for good. To me, they're like the Westboro Baptist Church of animal welfare. They don't care at all about pit bull type dogs and they've joined forces with our nemeses to help them write breed-specific legislation [with the aim of] banning pit bull type dogs.

Who is your nemesis? They're called DogsBite.org and they're an illegitimate organization, but they're the only group out there that's actively trying to put together stuff to make pit bull type dogs look dangerous. They're run by a woman who is a former TV psychic who started a website and gathers data from newspapers. It's not science-based at all. She just makes it look like pit bulls are the worst dogs on earth. I actually have my master's degree in public policy and wrote my thesis on breed-specific legislation and proved, scientifically, that it doesn't work.

Since you have a master's in breed policy, let me pose you a more difficult question. There's a statistic I found about pit bulls. They make up six percent of the total dog population in the US but are responsible for 68 percent of dog attacks and 52 percent of dog-related deaths since 1982. Given that this information is out there, what would you say to pit bull skeptics? Where did you get that statistic?

This was compiled by Merritt Clifton at Animals 24-7. So that's an offset of DogsBite.org. If you google [Merritt Clifton]'s name, you will see that he presents himself

as if he's some kind of well-educated scientist, but he's a complete hack. This Merritt Clifton guy has a wholehearted agenda to eradicate pit bulls off the face of the earth. The lady who started DogsBite.org, Colleen Lynn, is another complete hack. She's a TV psychic who failed.

She started her organization because she was allegedly attacked by a pit bull while she was running. She has made it her agenda in life to get rid of these dogs. Here is my problem and why she's my nemesis: They're the only organization that compiles data and they make it look science-based. If you ask the Center for Disease Control about dog-bite statistics, they stopped collecting them in the late '80s and early '90s, because they realized they were taking them from eye-witness accounts, from hospital reports, and from newspapers, none of which are scientific because they're all people who are assuming they knew what the dog was. But the best part about it, and the reason they stopped collecting data, is that there's no such breed as a pit bull. Anybody saying it's a pit bull [that attacked them] is basically saying it was a blockheaded, medium-sized, short-haired dog. This [description fits] eight types of pure-bred dogs plus probably 50 mixed-breed dogs. These people are compiling data and making it seem like there's this one monster breed out there that's just trying to kill as many people as it can. It's completely unfounded and there's no science to it.

Last question. Your organization is huge. You have two books out. What's next? What's coming down the pike? One of the major things I didn't get to talk about is that we use our social media page to help dogs get adopted every year. Last year we got 1,003 dogs adopted. One of the things we realized, is that we have access to a market that's not just dog people but people who like tattoos and people who like music. I really want to start a foundation [named] after the dog that inspired Pinups for Pit Bulls, Carla-Lou, so that we can help with marketing or different ways to present people with information.

Visit www.pinupsforpitbulls.org to purchase the calendar.

Editor's note: Franklin has since gotten the first shelter she worked at to eliminate their kill pit bull policy.



A photograph of a pink 1960 Dodge car parked in a driveway. The car is the central focus, with its front end and license plate visible. The license plate reads "VICTORIA DODG 60". The car is parked between two houses. The house on the left has a light-colored shingled exterior and a green-trimmed roofline. The house on the right is a two-story building with a light-colored exterior and several windows. There are some plants and bushes in the background. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

ONE *HOT* RIDE

Louella has a passion for everything pink and this '60 Dodge slammed to the ground will do just fine.

photos by Shannon Brooke







HOW DID YOU GET INTO TATTOOING? I met my husband eight years ago, and he introduced me to tattooing. For two years, I was an apprentice but without touching a tattoo machine. I started tattooing five years ago. It was hard, but I had the best teacher I could ever imagine.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST SHOP EXPERIENCE LIKE? I started to work in a small tattoo shop in Madrid as an apprentice. I always remember my first tattoo there. It was a fairy. It was so difficult because there was a storm and the electricity wasn't functioning well. I thought my tattoo machine or the power supply was broken. I was so nervous!

WHAT LED YOU TO NEO-TRADITIONAL? When I started to tattoo I tried a lot of different styles, but in the past I always drew realistic drawings with pencil and charcoal so I tried to use that technique in my tattooing. At first it was good, but I got bored because I was only copying pictures. Then I discovered the work of Alix Ge, Justin Hartman and Emily Rose Murray and I thought, "I want to do something like this, draw my own designs and mix different styles. I want to put color into my life."

WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM OTHER ARTISTS? For me, it's really important talk with my customers. They tell me more than their idea. I try to get them to tell me the story their tattoo is meant to represent. With this, they give me the freedom to create an exclusive and original design. I put love into each tattoo.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO TATTOO CELEBRITIES? For me, all my customers are equal and normally I don't know if they are famous or not because I have no time to watch TV. Sometimes a "famous" person will ask me for a tattoo and I feel that they want special treatment for being "famous". I try to be fair and I respect all of my clients, that's why I don't like to give preferential treatment to anyone.

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HOW DID YOU GET INTO TATTOOING? I had my first tattoo done when I was 35 years old. While I watched the tattoo artist work, I thought to myself: I can do this. The next week I took a course on hygiene rules and the basics of tattooing. I bought the necessary material, and I started.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST SHOP EXPERIENCE LIKE? It was a nerve-racking experience, but it was essential. If I didn't work with other artists I wouldn't have been able to grow artistically.

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE? I like to call it "Realistic Pop Art." My style is mainly realism, but I like to combine graphic elements, like bold lines with solid and colorful backgrounds.

WHAT LED YOU TO WORK IN REALISM? Before tattooing I did a lot of painting. Acrylic, oil and airbrush. My main theme was always the human figure. I loved to explore the expression of the body or face. Caravaggio was particularly influential because of his dramatic use of light, but all renaissance art was in general. I'm also like more modern artists, such as Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Paula Rego, Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol.

DO YOU PREFER COLOR OR BLACK-AND-GRAY?

I prefer color, but I also like doing black-and-gray. Every color tattoo is a challenge. Black-and-gray is more relaxing. You don't have to think that much about color layering or color mixing or color packing.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU AS AN ARTIST? Like I said before, there are lots of artists and tattoo artists that inspire my style and my artistic choices, but what really inspires me is waking up every day and challenging myself to become a better artist.

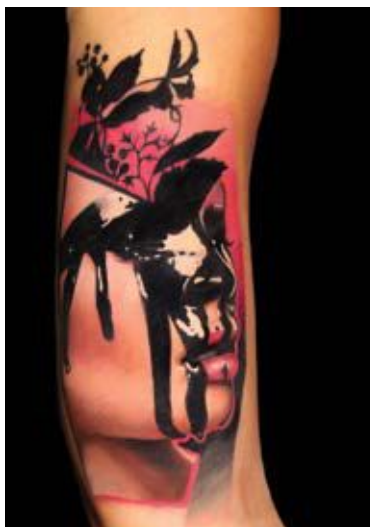
BEFORE SOMEONE GETS A TATTOO, WHAT ADVICE DO YOU GIVE HIM OR HER? Resting the day before is essential. Eat and drink a sugary drink before. If you are tired and hungry, you won't take the pain as well. Also, moisturizing the skin in the days leading up to the tattoo makes a difference.

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HOW DID YOU GET INTO TATTOOING? I had always wanted to. My grandfather had a black panther on his arm and as a very young child I would draw on it with markers. I was an angry kid drawn to like-minded people— gangsters, taggers, bikers, hustlers and lowriders with tattoos. I got arrested a handful of times, and my sister was having a kid and told me I would never be a part of the child's life if I didn't get my shit together. She and my brother Ryan asked me what I wanted out of life and I told them I wanted to tattoo. They had me move inTO their home and helped me become a tattooer by supporting my every move. Luckily, Lee Lewis and Ruger had my back and helped me, by guiding me with what equipment to get and how to start doing the basics.

VETOE

FOLLOW: @VETOE

DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL TRAINING? I know enough Spanish to not get stabbed in county jail and order at King Taco. I can make a killer Italian dinner from scratch. I've had seven years of training in how to deal with a Latina with an East L.A. attitude and how to raise two amazing sons. Other than that, I'm screwed.

WHAT LED YOU TO WORK IN REALISM? When I started tattooing I only knew who Mr. Cartoon was, and I wanted to be just like him. From doing my homework I learned who Jack Rudy was and Freddy Negrete, Jose Lopez, Chuey Quintinar, Johnny Quintana, so on and so on. I saw work that Ruger had on him by Abel Rocha and was fucking amazed. I think overall it was the natural progression, seeing that you can take it further, making it more detailed and more technical.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU AS AN ARTIST? It's cliché as fuck, but life inspires me. I'm inspired every day thinking about Veneno, Paco, Cluer, Spanky, Zack, Josh, Boke, Dash and Duck and how I owe it to them to keep pushing. I try to remind myself that I'm not special, I'm lucky to be here, and I need to take advantage of my position to be the best I can and be grateful for everything that comes my way.

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by Devon Preston

SAGA

Generally speaking, when it comes to realism in tattooing there are technical and artistic guidelines you have to follow as an artist. However, Canadian tattooer Saga Anderson believes that rules of realism are meant to be broken. Coming into the industry with an illustrative background, Anderson began his career as far from realism as you can imagine. Despite the odds, he was able to utilize his atypical artistic upbringing to his advantage in order to reinvent the realism genre we've come to understand over the last decade. Today, he's conquering the industry with his adaptive and innovative style of art, proving to the world that there's no right way to be a legendary tattooer.

What year did you start tattooing?

I wanted to be a tattoo artist from the time I was 12 years old but everyone around me said you couldn't make a living as an artist, so I forgot about that dream and tried to do the regular nine to five thing. Not for me. In my 20s I was lucky enough to be dating someone who started working at a shop, and after a year or two stopping in to hang out and see how it all worked I became even more convinced that this was the life for me. It wouldn't be until my early 30s that I fully committed to tattooing and joined a shop to begin my career. In late 2011, I started working as a shop artist in a busy street shop in Calgary after a short time trying to teach myself and working on my own. At the time, I had been attending university and training in psychology. I wasn't fully prepared to commit to an apprenticeship, a mistake that wasted a couple years of learning. Everything I did then was in an illustrative style with outlines. That was a couple years before I found my passion in realism. I wasn't drawing enough before then or focused enough to succeed, so it took a complete life change after I got into a shop to free my life up enough to commit to the tattoo artist lifestyle.

What was your first shop experience like?

My first shop was an interesting experience. Working in a street shop, I had to quickly learn the basics of every tattoo style to get work and stay busy, which is invaluable as a new artist. It eventually became apparent that I didn't fit into the street shop style of the trade and the autocratic nature of the owner. I was lucky when I found a spot in a high-end private shop with other artists trying to take their art to the next level.

Do you have any special training?

I've never had any art training, nor did I do an apprenticeship, although at this point I've managed to teach myself everything I've needed to learn on the way. Working as a tattoo artist, you need to be very self-directed, which I find fits my learning style well. For me, getting out there on the road and doing shows is my classroom. There is always someone better than you out there doing and innovating in a way you haven't thought before. You just need to get out there and out of your comfort bubble to go find them.

How do you describe your style?

In the broad sense, I'm a color realism artist, however I would describe my work as 'full-panel, full-saturation painterly realism.' Painterly realism is less focused on photo real detailed reproductions and more on a liberal artistic rendering of photographs

or digital image combinations in a realistic manner. In that sense, I don't ever feel bound to a certain image. My joy in life is applying my own unique take on realism and color to the usual realism subjects: nature, floral, landscape, portraiture. I'm a bit obsessed with color theory, creating three-dimensional illusions and varying contrasting elements, all of which finds their way into my work often. I also work almost exclusively large mag only, which also adds a certain style to my work.

What led you to work in realism?

Realism was honestly the last style of tattoo and art I tried after trying nearly all of them. I was always an illustrative style artist, so there was a steep learning curve for me after moving to the realistic method. I was blown away by both the classical beauty of realism as well as its scientific nature; there are clear ways to improve and measure your own progress as an artist, and a mathematical basis for approaching it. The foundation and artistic traditions relating to realistic art go back to the early Dutch masters in the 1500s and have continued into the tattoo age.

Do you prefer color or black and gray?

Color is definitely my preferred style, even my grey work is fully saturated opaque greys, which are technically still color tattoos. I personally find more challenge and dimension in creating color compositions. I enjoy the coloring process much more than using washes, so I think it's been a few years since I've used that technique. Don't get me wrong, I love looking at black-and-gray and have a great appreciation for it, but enjoying and creating are two different things. Color tattoos are messy, time intensive, and an optical illusion

What subject matters do you prefer?

I enjoy taking all the classical realism subject matter and adding my own unique twist on them. Landscape, floral, portraiture, nature, still life—these never get old for me, and I like to see where I can take them by adding cosmic, painterly, nautical or darker elements, for example. I limit my work to real subjects based on real images, however. Fantasy creatures and non-realistic images don't interest me much when creating art.

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

Yes, very much so. Portraiture requires a bit more precision, but to me, it isn't separate from general realism; the same rules apply when putting it in on the skin. I don't often do photo realism, however, as I find my passion lies in altering images to make them more painterly. I, in

a sense, free myself from the rigors and technicality of pure reproduction. There are so many amazing realism artists out there in the world, it's a bonus when you can find a unique niche that you can excel in and explore.

Do you take your own photo references?

As much as possible, I try to incorporate my own reference material, but this is usually limited to floral and landscape photos. Often my subject material includes impossible or fantastical colors and compositions, which can be hard to create photographically, so generally I create one image digitally from two to ten sources.

What inspires you as an artist?

I'm moved by the beauty of a photograph, the beauty of nature and the real world, both the light and the dark, space and the cosmos, plants and animals, as well as the human form. I find them endlessly captivating. It's hard for me to take a walk and not see something, a shadow falling across a field, the muted colors of clouds, and not have an idea for a tattoo. This is the beauty of realism for me, I have the whole universe as my inspiration, my only limitation is my imagination.

What sets you apart from other artists?

I think my work is different from other artists for a few reasons. The way in which I tattoo and the equipment I use is a bit unique. I use only the biggest mag to create my work so it imparts a certain look to my images. I'm also a firm believer in the importance of backgrounds in creating a solid tattoo. I try to make my backgrounds as captivating and unique as the foreground and midground. I think my lack of any official training also allowed me to keep my own quirky ideas fresh in my mind. I was never forced to take anyone else's ideas of what art should be.

What other mediums do you work in?

I'm most definitely an illustrator, so my medium of choice outside of tattooing is always marker art, using prisma color or copic to create both painterly realism and photorealism. I taught myself realism first on paper with markers then moved onto skin.

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

Star Wars, Star Wars, Star Wars! I'm a huge SW nerd and don't get to do them often enough, so there are many I'd like to do. Besides that, I'm spoiled and am allowed so much freedom from my clients to create things that interest me, so I usually get to do what I want!





MICHAEL GRABNER

An Islander by way of Austria is grabbing life by the puck! by matthew cilbanoff photos gavin thomas collaged/mixed media background created by Montross Zero



Last season, following a disappointing stint in Toronto, NHL journeyman Michael Grabner signed with the New York Rangers. In his first year, he was second on the team in scoring with 27 goals, tripling his production from the year before. A quarter of the way into his second season, he's got 13 and is the Rangers' premier goal scorer. Grabner is excited to be back in the New York area and considers it a sort of home away from home, saying, "I had a good time in New York, for five years. I know the area. My family likes it here. It's been great to be back."

This turn of fortune hasn't been without incident, however. While most of Grabner's NHL career has been spent in New York, the majority of it was spent playing for the Islanders. For the uninitiated, the Rangers and Islanders rivalry is one that stretches back nearly half a century, and Islanders fans were less than enthused when Grabner started donning Rangers' blue. They were sure to chirp at him on social media. "I got a lot of messages after I signed [with the Rangers] from Islanders fans, and most of them weren't very nice." He's taking it in stride, though, and now that he's in his second season, Islanders fans' loud complaints have quieted, transforming into a silent resentment. With his stock on the rise, we decided to sit down and talk to 'Grabs about the NHL, playoff hopes, and most importantly, his tattoos in this Inked exclusive interview.

The season is pretty young right now. What teams have impressed you so far?

This year is crazy so far with who's up there and who isn't. When you look at what people were predicting early on, it's a whole different ball game right now. Teams like New Jersey are off to good starts. The Vegas team [too]. I don't think anyone expected them to be as good as they are. There have definitely been some surprising teams out there. We just have to try to keep up with them.

Does practicing on Henrik Lundqvist make you a better shot?

I played against him a lot when I was with the Islanders and he's one of the best goalies in the league. He definitely shows it in practice too. He works hard and is trying to get better himself. It helps you as a player when you can work with goalies like that. It keeps it game-like out there.

Let's talk about your tattoos for a little bit. Take me on a tour.

The one I got on my back is the oldest. I think it was when I was 18 in Spokane. I got that in some back room. I don't even remember. The second one is [this collection of] Chinese symbols on my forearm. Those were done in Spokane too.

What do they say? Respect. Hope. Belief. Strength. Perseverance. I had a couple people read it so I know that they're right because you never know. But yeah, it was kind of the thing back then. I still like it though.

Then this whole [sleeve] started. I don't know what I got next, to be honest. I think it was St. Michael here. It was a picture my aunt bought me. I had the guy make that. Then I got the dove with my son's name in it and the clock with my son's birth time and how much he weighed. Then I tried to make it a sleeve and I wanted to have a theme to it. I sort of made it into a hell to heaven kind of thing.

Next I have my son's feet with his initials. I also have a quote from Napoleon that says, "He who fears being conquered is sure of defeat." That one's a little tougher to read but I wanted it in cursive.

Then I have this saying for my kids: "They know me in a way no one else ever has. They open me to things I never knew existed. They drive me to insanity and push me to my depths. They are the beat of my heart, the pulse in my veins and the energy in my soul... They are my kids."

Who wrote that? I'm not sure. I just saw it right around the time I had my second child

and thought, "that's cool." Then I had this one done after the Sochi Olympics, for Austrian hockey. Who knows when we're going to be there again. It was special. I wanted to play there and represent the country.

What's the one on your neck? I just got this this summer. It was pretty painful. It's got my daughter's name and her birthdate in it. I tried to not make it stick out too much because it's going to be one of the first things people see and people might think it's a girlfriend or wife so I tried to blend [her name] in a bit. It's also darker because it's the newest one. I got it in August.

Do you have an artist you go to regularly? When I played in Long Island, I got a lot of them done by the same two people. We had a partnership with a tattoo shop and they told us to go there. I got to know a couple of them and then one guy opened his own shop after. He did this sleeve. [All the tattoos I got] in Long Island were by the same two guys.

Wanna give'em a shout? Yeah, Big Joel just opened up his own store on Long Island. The other guy is named Andres. He's from Argentina. He's a really nice guy and has been tattooing for close to 30 years or something.

Is it any different getting tattoos in Europe than it is in the States? I think it's the same thing. Obviously, every guy has his own niche though. I always try to have something behind my tattoos. A lot of the stuff I draw up by hand.

Are you good at drawing? I'm not bad. I just try to give them the idea I have. I'm not trying to make it perfect. I drew the eye, the map and the compass really quick and he knew, "oh that's what he wants." I think artists want to put their stamp on [the tattoos they make]. I think they want to make it a one-of-a-kind sort of thing instead of just doing pictures over and over.

You're pretty tatted up. Is this something you always wanted? My dad actually had two tattoos, but that was like 20 years ago. They didn't have any laser removal. [When he got his removed] he said it hurt him 200 times worse than getting it. He said, "Don't ever get one." He kept telling me, "No tattoos. No tattoos." But I do what I want. Once I got the one on my back, I took like a year off. Then I got most of them one year when I was with the Islanders. I hadn't gotten a new tattoo in a couple years until my sister

told me about a guy that was here. I remember thinking "Oh I might get something done." Once I make a decision to get a tattoo I get it within like, three days.

I'm fortunate enough to know people so I can get [my tattoos] done quick. Some people have to wait. In Austria there's two or three tattoo shops in my home town and some people wait six-seven months for their appointments because there's only two or three artists in my city.

Where are you from? Villach. It's an hour and a half south of Salzburg. We only have a couple shops. Over here, there are a lot more tattoo shops.

Let's go back to hockey. When you were growing up, who did you look up to?

Well in Austria there was no Internet when I was younger. You only heard about [really big guys] like Jagr or Lemieux or Gretzky. You mostly [saw] world championships because that's what they showed on TV. You occasionally got news about the NHL but you couldn't really see it. Now everyone knows everything that happens. Back then I was just a fan of the players that went to world championships.

Where is your favorite place to play when you're on a road trip?

I like Chicago. Chicago is a good place to play. It's always a good atmosphere. There's a lot of good places. In Philly, the fans are crazy, so it's a lot of fun going there. I've been really fortunate. When I was young I never dreamt of playing in those types of places.

Who is the team that requires the most preparation for? I think in this league, you have to get ready for everyone. In hockey, you can't underestimate anyone. The last place team can beat the first place team. You see it every year. In European soccer, the odds that [Bayern] Munich loses to the last place team are not very high. In hockey, anyone can beat anyone on any given day.

What's your goal for this season? Getting into playoffs. One of the hardest things in this league is getting into the top 16. Once you're in the playoffs, anything can happen. We've seen that over the last few years when LA came in as the 8th seed and won the Stanley Cup. I think it's a whole different ball game once the playoffs start and you're playing the same team maybe seven times in a row.



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So, there I was, in the jungle, minding my own affair, when there came a knock on my studio door. Sans machete, I waded my way out of the faux thicket and taxidermy to answer it. I had set up a studio shoot earlier in the evening to resemble a jungle with a nude jungle princess romping in it. That would explain all the plastic vegetation. Another knock, louder, a little more urgent. I twisted the lock on the door and opened it. He shoved past me before I could say anything.

"Where is she?" he bellowed. "Where is that tramp?" I dummied up until I could suss out the what's what with this agitated clown. As a glamour photographer for the last 20 years, I'd had my share of jealous husbands and boyfriends like this at my door.

"Look, pal," I said. "I don't know what you're on, about, or who you're looking for. And anyhow, we're closed." He looked the part of a lovelorn stage-door Johnny: wilted suit, wilted flowers, cheap after-shave. I knew the type. I saw an endless parade of them backstage at The Palace, a strip joint that was a block away from my studio. A quick two-minute sashay and it was through the large red leather upholstered doors to the lust and leer amidst the dust and beer. One of the gals down there had no doubt sunk their claws into my uninvited visitor, but good.

"If she's here, you're gonna be in a..." I cut him off.

"Take it easy with the threats, Jackson," I said. He wasn't all that big, but he was still running hot.

Veins were bulging in his neck and his eyes were roadmap red. He wound up and swung a wild punch toward my head and missed. He backed up and pulled out a revolver. I didn't wait for him to point it and charged him. In the scuffle he dropped the roscoe and we both scrambled for it. I won and pointed it at his head.

"Don't move," I said. "Or I'll drop you like a bag of hammers."

He plopped down, defeated, in one of the waiting room chairs. I sat on the edge of my desk. He cradled his head in his hands. It looked like he was going to cry.

"She's making me crazy, this broad," he said. "I should've known better."

"Don't beat yourself up, pal. I photograph women like this for a living and it's happened to me."

"You've never fallen in love like this," he said.

I pointed at the numerous pin-ups I had shot hanging on the walls: languid, long-legged lovelies and beautiful busty buxotics captured with a classic twist. "Fall in love? I do every night. So, who's the one got you all twitter-pated, pal?"

"Lilly de Lovely."

Lilly de Lovely? That explained everything.

I had popped into The Palace a few nights ago, before heading home and caught the tail end of her act. I went back to catch the front end of her act the next night. Lilly de Lovely was a voluminous voluptuary packed and stacked in a petite yet sturdy frame. Her legs went on for hours and her bust was like a balcony worthy of the opera. She was 5'5 of too much wrapped in just the right amount of not enough. She was built for comfort and built for trouble... the kind of trouble I liked.

This is what I always try to capture in my tenure as a pin-up/glamour photographer: lust and danger. I've shot editorial for women's fashion magazines and bathing beauty spreads for men's mags. A lot of my men's magazine models came from The Palace. I had slipped Miss de Lovely my card in the hopes of getting her in my portfolio. She agreed to gimme a jingle. But she also had agreed to give the sad sack currently taking up space in my vestibule a date. I had to clean his slate and set him straight. I poured it on thick as if I knew her — mob-tough guy for a boyfriend, sticky fingers, wandering eyes, the clap, the whole bit. I suggested he go back to The Palace and try for a gal a little more in his bailiwick. I emptied the slugs out of his heater, tossed them in the wastebasket, and handed it back to him. He took it and sheepishly shook my hand. Bomb defused.

I locked the door behind him. Now where was I?

I went back into the studio.

Is it safe to come out yet?" came a voice from within the jungle scene. Lilly de Lovely popped up in nothing but a silk robe.

"What am I gonna do with you?" I asked.

"Why, take my picture," she said as the robe slid off her shoulders and hit the floor.

Frank De Blase is a musician, pin-up photographer, beat poet, crime fiction novelist and award-winning music critic sporting somewhere around 100 tattoos. His photography and writing has appeared in Leg Show, Leg World, Temptress, Skin and Ink, Rebel Ink, Urban Ink, Downbeat, and V Magazine.

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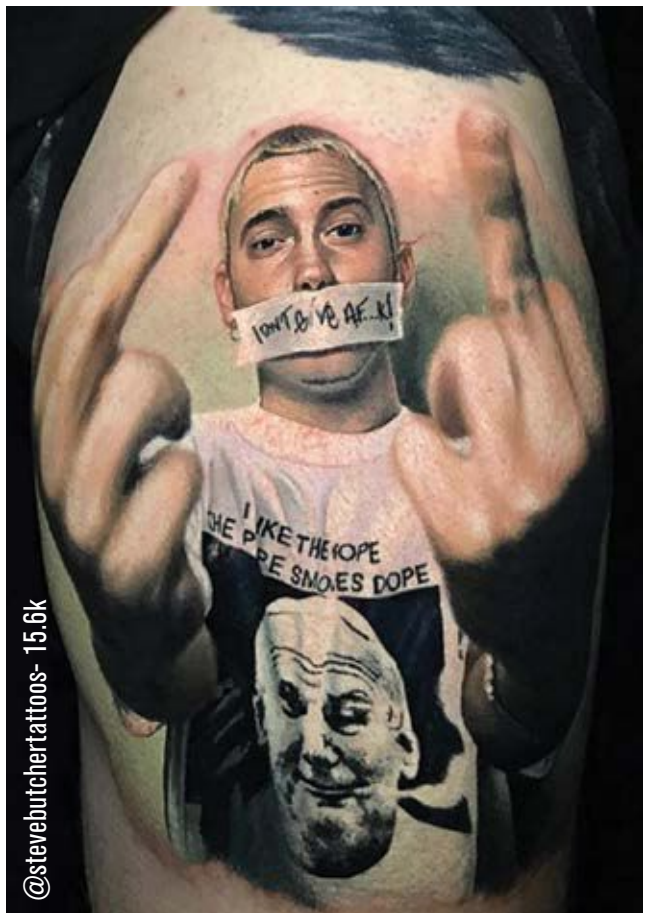
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