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skin Deep



WELCOME FRIENDS!
THIS ISSUE WE CHILLED
WITH THE KNOCKOUT
TALENT OF **CLAIRE
REID**, CRUISED
THE MEAN
STREETS OF
THE UK WITH
SCARY GUY
AND SHARED
A GOBLET
OF MEAD
WITH **ANNE
STOKES**.

**MEANWHILE BACK
IN THE JUNGLE**
**BEN HAMILL, ROBERT
WITCZUK, MARIO DESA
AND ZOLTAN KRIZSAN**
FLAUNTED THEIR
KICK-ASS PORTFOLIOS
IN FRONT OF US AND
SOMEWHERE AMONGST
ALL OF THAT, WE
DROPPED IN ON THE
BRILLIANT **INK FOR
HEROES SHOW**.

TATTOO FRENZY



ISSUE 202
SEPTEMBER 2011
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The needle has landed



Franny Lane at Ink For Heroes

THERE ARE SECRET TATTOO FANS EVERYWHERE

I went to a wedding this last weekend. A proper big formal affair with suits and ties. It wasn't until everybody was actually gathered in the grounds of the church that I realised just how bare everybody is!

You kind of get used to "everybody in the world being tattooed" very fast, but this was a real blank canvas. I (almost) got quite excited when I saw a rosary around a calf. No doubt there were more hidden beneath suits but to the naked eye, it was quite fascinating to be there. At first I figured that maybe it was because it was a proper church wedding (not just a wedding in a church, it was the whole nine yards of Jesus – that can be harsh on a pagan soul), but during the evening reception, I got talking to a guy outside. I say "a guy" but by way of explanation I should probably call him "another smoking guy".

Turns out he was a clergy associate of the happy couple

but also just about the coolest vicar I have ever met. We talked about soldiers and Help for Heroes (he was a forces chaplain), he showed me a picture he had in his pocket of a huge dragon he wanted tattooed down his back but couldn't for medical reasons

LONDON RADIO ALWAYS LIKE TO CALL ME UP WHEN SOMEBODY HAS DONE SOMETHING PUBLICLY STUPID AND THEY WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. I HAVE SINCE STOPPED TAKING THEIR CALLS...

and it was genuinely great to have a decent conversation with an educated person.

Which leads me on nicely to being randomly called up by Radio 2 for a five minute slot on the Simon Mayo show – with Liza Tarbuck standing in for him. I'm always wary of live radio because you never know what road it's going to go down. As previously mentioned in other editorials, London Radio always like to call me up when somebody has done something

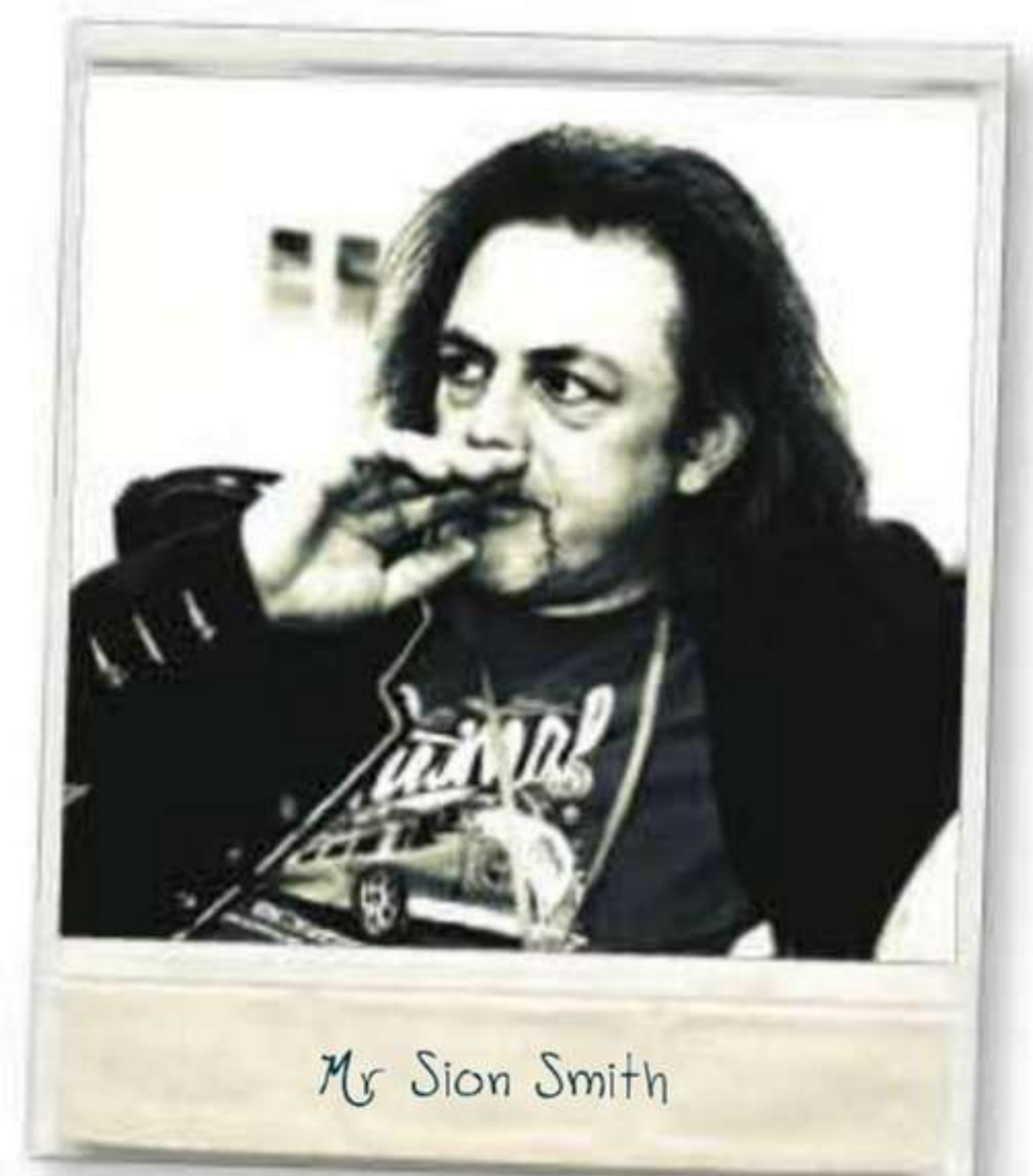
publicly stupid and they want to talk about it. I have since stopped taking their calls. Where do you possibly stand to defend tattoo when people do dumb-ass things? Anyway, Liza was genuinely interested and it was all good and positive stuff –

especially to the outside world. We'll put that in the win column.

Then this morning, the Independent called to do an interview around "are tattoos becoming more middle class these days?" A good question. I'm not even sure what middle class is anymore. Does it still exist? Perhaps it's a myth fueled by people who like to segregate because the boss is adamant about demographics. I don't know what they're going to write – it will be out in the world by

the time you read this. I sincerely hope it's positive because I was. Whether it turns out good or bad, I promise you this. With the assistance of some handy online artwork from Yann Black at yourmeatismine.com, one national newspaper journalist got an education about what was possible in this world, and that's never a bad thing.

If changing minds one person at a time is what it takes, that's good enough for me. *Sen*



Mr Sion Smith

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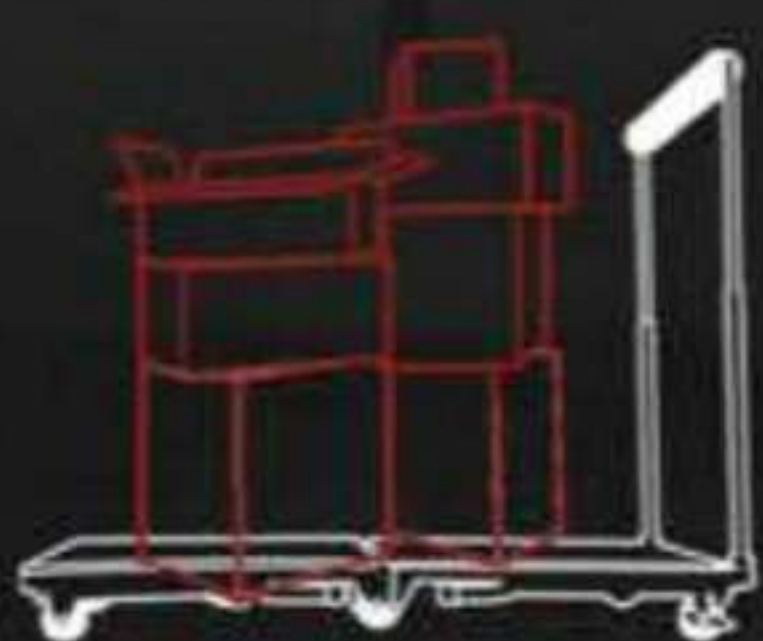
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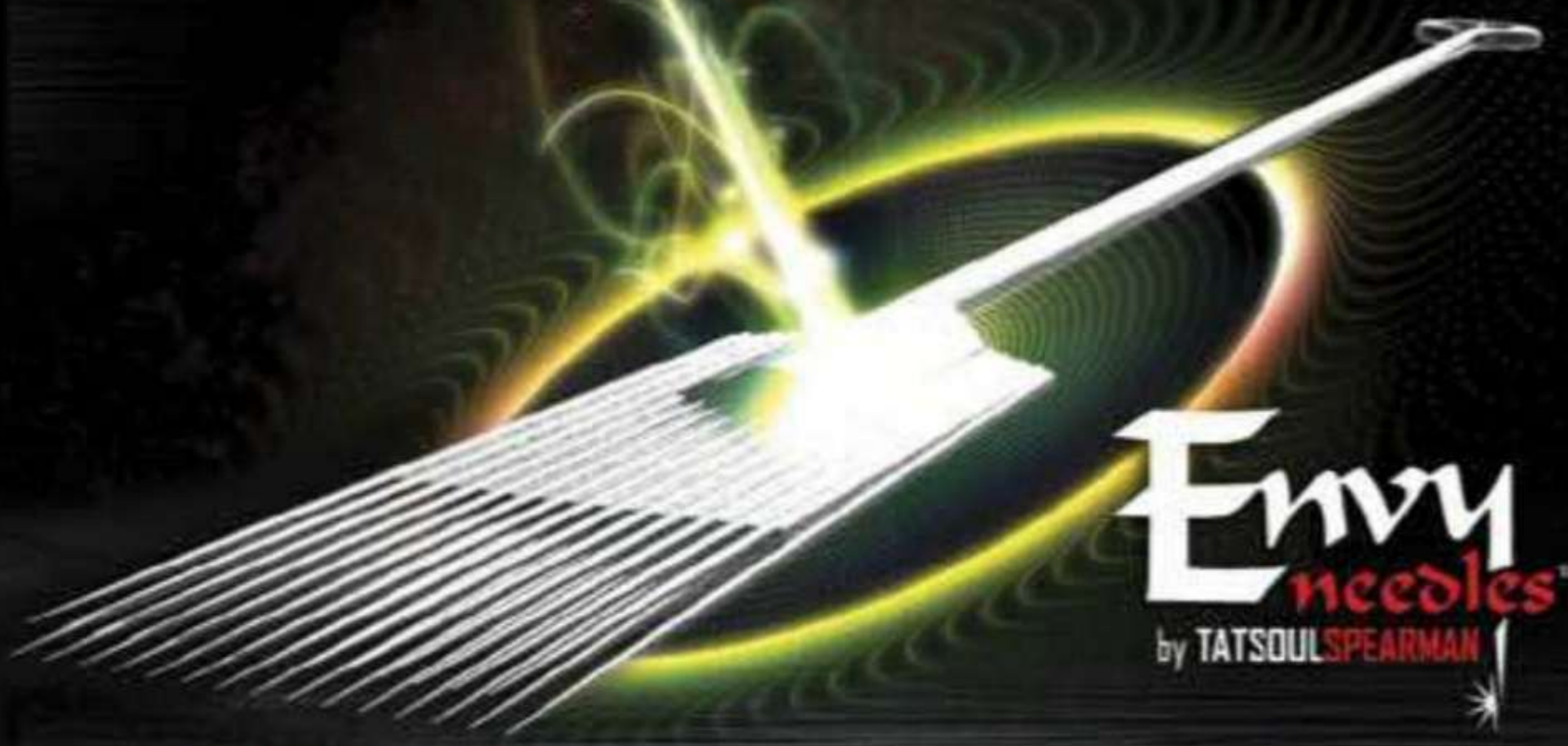
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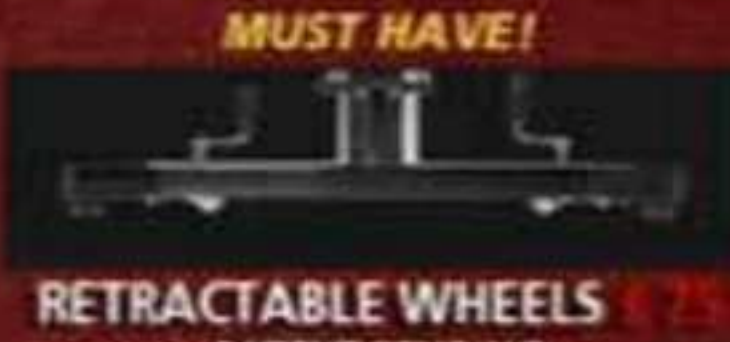
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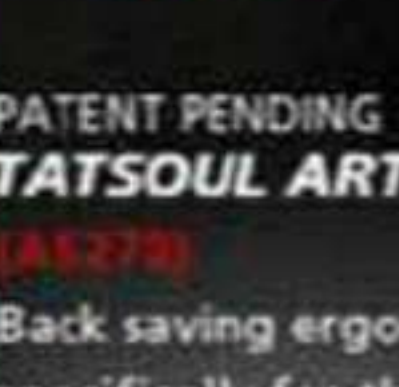
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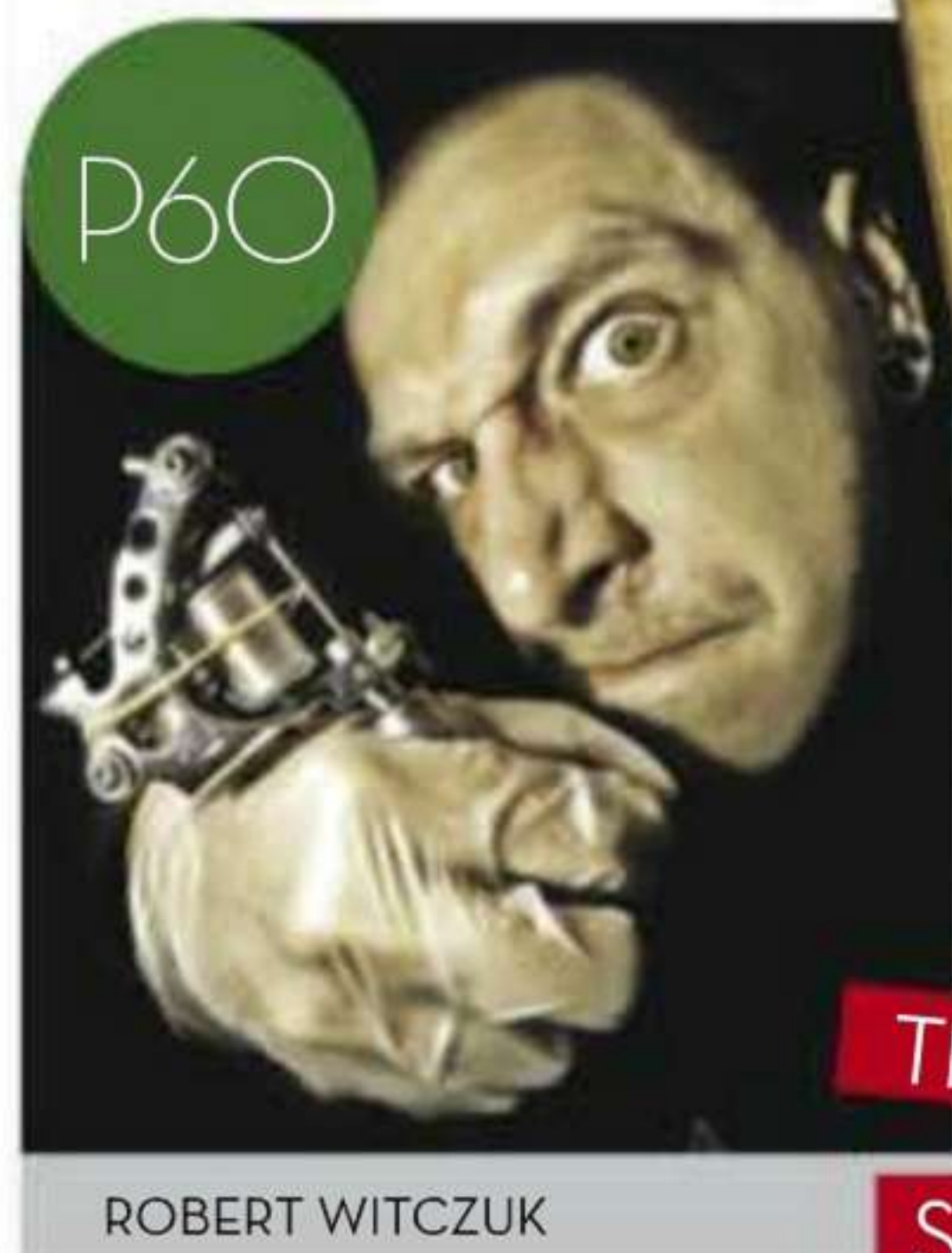
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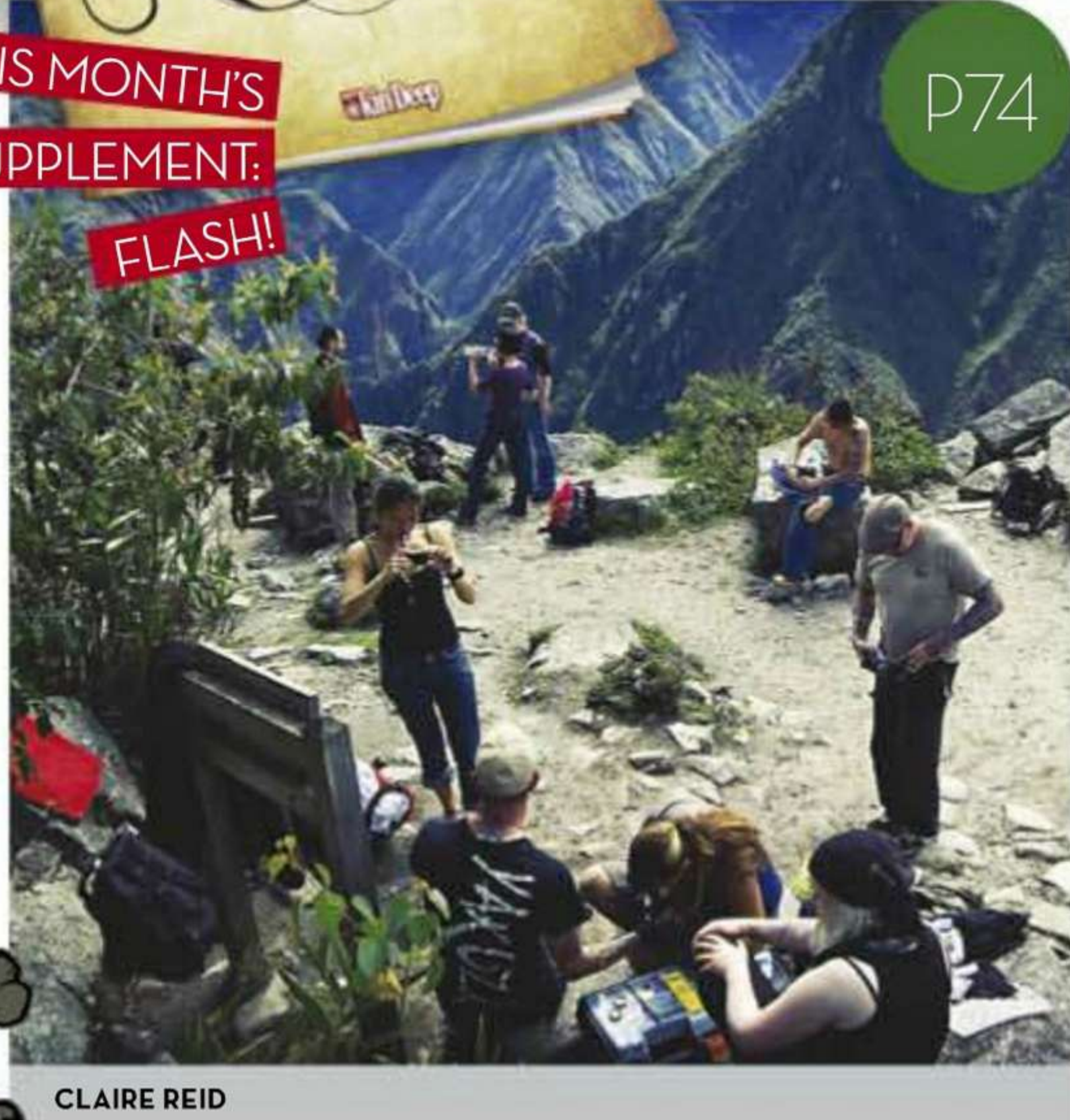


THIS MONTH'S SUPPLEMENT: FLASH!



THINK!

THIS ISSUE, WE TAKE A BROAD LOOK AT SOME OF THE ISSUES IN THE WORLD TODAY WHEN IT COMES TO BEING A TATTOOED WOMAN.



SPECIAL FEATURES

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The seminal fantasy artist has had more than her fair share of tattoo tributes – so she published a book. Like you do.
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Top artists get behind the most worthy convention in the country.

COVER CREDITS
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Jazz Publishing, The Old School, Higher Kinnerton, Chester, CH4 9AJ, UK. Tel: 01244 663400 Fax: 01244 660611 www.jazzpublishing.co.uk info@jazzpublishing.co.uk

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ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES Sarah Shawcross advertising@skindeep.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 301	ADMINISTRATION Jan Schofield jan@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 219	ADVERTISING & EVENTS MANAGER Shelley Bond shelley@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 303	WEB MANAGER David Arthur david.arthur@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 ext. 208	CIRCULATION & PROMOTIONS Katy Cuffin katy@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400 Ext. 237	MANAGING DIRECTOR Stuart Mears stuart@jazzpublishing.co.uk 01244 663400	Having trouble finding Skin Deep magazine in your newsagent? Please contact our distribution company for your nearest outlet 0207 429 4073.



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Sleeve Notes

twitter.com/skindeepmag www.facebook.com/tattoo magazine

ALL SUBMISSIONS TO SLEEVE NOTES GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. BE IT NEWS, AN EVENT, NEW MERCH, A STUDIO MOVE... WE'LL DO OUR VERY BEST TO LET EVERYBODY ELSE KNOW ABOUT IT TOO. EMAIL: EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK OR IF YOU WANT TO BE ARCHAIC ABOUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR: SKIN DEEP, THE OLD SCHOOL, HIGHER KINNERTON, CHESTER CH4 9AJ. BRING IT.

WorldMags

A VIXEN IN NEED...

THIS WEEK, THE LOVELY STEFFI ROX DROPPED US A MESSAGE TO SEE IF WE COULD HELP HER OUT WITH A LITTLE 'SOMETHING' SHE HAS GOING ON. STEFFI SAYS IT ALL FAR BETTER THAN WE EVER COULD

Dear Skin Deep,

In December 2010 my Dad (my hero) was diagnosed with Alzheimers disease. For my Mum, Dad and me this was the most heart-breaking day we have ever had to face together.

The man who taught me how to read and write, how to play chess and how to be a decent human being will one day not be able to remember how to do these things himself.

As each day goes by a little more of my Dad's memory escapes him. All of the memories I share with him will no longer be shared and knowing this is painful beyond words.

Due to government cuts Dad can't even get the medication he so desperately needs yet and is stuck on what seems to be another endless waiting list. My Mum is struggling to cope with balancing her job and caring for Dad as she can't afford to live off the pitiful £40 per week carers

allowance she is being offered.

So this year on Sunday, September 25 I'm taking part in The Memory Walk on behalf of The Alzheimers Society. This is to raise awareness and help support all of the people in a similar situation and all of the future generations who will be faced with this terrible terminal illness.

I've set up a Just Giving page and ask you all to please sponsor me and give generously to this fantastic cause that is so close to my heart.

www.justgiving.com/stefanie-curran
Peace. Steffi xo

LATE VACANCY

Tattooist full-time required for immediate start due to poaching. Applicant would be joining a small dedicated team in Hailsham. The owner is the piercer, his wife heads up retail and they have one apprentice - now looking for someone who will grow with the business and help it grow. Rate of pay will be commensurate with experience. Honesty and plain speaking is a must. We are the only tattoo studio in town that offer tattoos, piercing, tattoo removal, branding and body mods all in house. Please send your portfolio and any references to kammelryder@gmail.com. Or phone me on 07728 562 368.

NEWS IN BRIEF

SOUTHMEAD GUEST SPOT

The multi-award-winning international artist Tomasz 'TOFI' Torfinski will be doing regular guest spots at Southmead Tattoo Studio from January 2012. More info: www.southmead-tattoo.co.uk.

A LITTLE BIT SOUTH OF HEAVEN

South of Heaven in Melksham are planning to launch an event in aid of Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion for Remembrance Day this year. On November 11 they plan to get as many people as possible to come in and get either a Help for Heroes band or a

poppy tattooed. All four of their artists will be taking part so they would obviously like to get people from all over to come and get inked. All money taken that day will be donated to the two charities and help give brave soldiers the recognition they deserve.

If you're in the vicinity: South of Heaven Body Art, 16c Church Street, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 6LS. 01225 793111.

ALL SYSTEMS GO

Physical Graffiti is pleased to announce that they have a new, full-time, piercer. Dan Walters. Dan is friendly, polite, professional and works to high health and safety standards.

Pop into the shop anytime for a chat and to get pierced. Physical Graffiti, 124 City Road, Cardiff, CF24 3DQ. Tel: 02920 481428... and if you join their facebook group, you'll find a voucher for £5 off any piercing. Good times.

A PRINCE AMONG MEN

Crimson Canvas Tattooing and Body Piercing Studio, Bodmin, is now open for business and is believed to be the first tattoo and body piercing studio to be supported by The Prince's Trust. Owner, Mary-Jane Pantling says: "As far as I am aware, until now such businesses

NEWS IN BRIEF

would not have been accepted for help from the highly respected Prince's Trust, but now things are changing for the better. Without the support of The Prince's Trust, Outset Cornwall and Bryn Jones of Dreamland Tattoo Studio, I couldn't have dreamed of achieving what seemed so impossible." Check 'em out: www.crimsoncanvastattoo.co.uk.



LASER ERASERS...

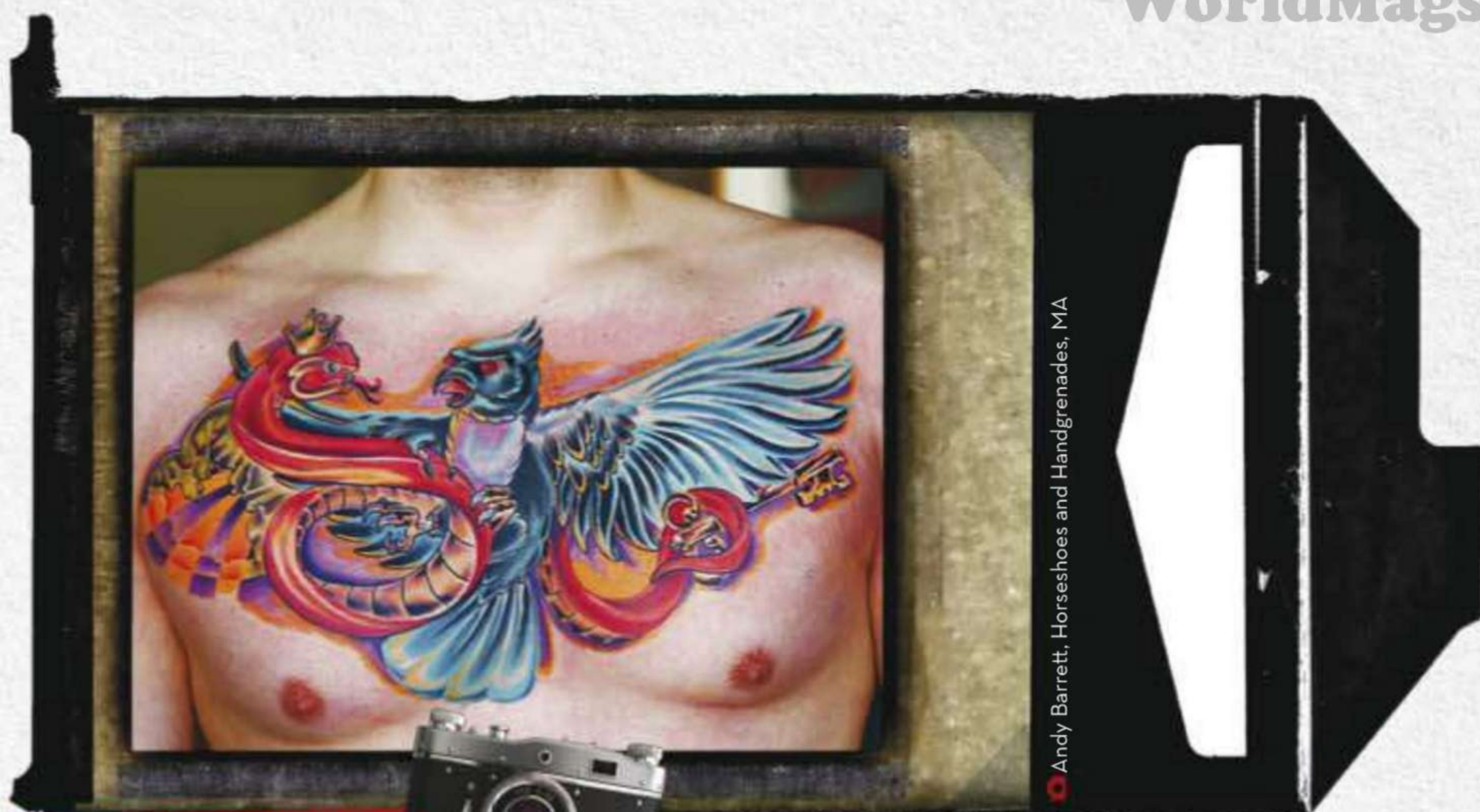
Disappearing Ink is a laser therapy clinic in Bournemouth specialising in laser tattoo removal for people who want to either completely remove a tattoo or fade it down ready for a cover up.

Disappearing Ink's team of experienced, fully qualified and extremely caring therapists welcome anyone seriously considering removing a tattoo to come to the clinic for a free consultation. Prices start at as little as little as £35 per session. Disappearing Ink, 371 Charminster Rd, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH8 9QS – www.disappearingink.co.uk – 01202 547525.



WE HAVE MOVED

Timeless Tattoo Glasgow has moved to 46 Dundas street, Glasgow city centre G1 2AQ. 0141 353 0510, www.timelesstattoos.co.uk.



RANDOM ARTIST

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH

In the mag trade, this is what we call a show-stopper. Andy mailed this in as part of his portfolio and man, did we ever get on the phone lightning fast to pull a feature together. Stay tuned for some seriously good times ahead!



YOUR OWN GUARDIAN ANGEL

Lou Molloy has launched a fantastic new menswear collection – the entire contents of which you can see at loumolloy.com. John Smedley has also collaborated on fine knitwear pieces in the collection that include cardigans, polos and jumpers.

We've got a fantastic exclusive giveaway

going on here with five T-shirts to give away from the collection – and in keeping with all our competitions of late, all you have to do is send an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line GUARDIAN ANGEL and we'll draw them at random.

Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

August 12-14

SEATTLE TATTOO EXPO

Seattle Center Northwest Rooms,
Seattle, WA 98105, USA
www.seattletattooexpo.com
info@seattletattooexpo.com

August 12-14

TRANSILVANIA TATTOO EXPO

Sibiu, Romania
www.tattooexpo.ro
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0040 746 162 633
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0040 722 400 406

August 13-14

NORWICH BODY ART FESTIVAL

St Andrews Hall, Norwich, Norfolk, England
www.norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk

August 19-21

4TH STYRIAN TATTOO & HOTROD-SHOW

forumKloster Gleisdorf, Austria
info@styriantattooshow.com
www.styriantattooshow.com

August 25-28

RICK'S 14TH INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

KI Convention Center/Hotel Sierra
1-800-236-3330 - For Discount Room Rate
(book under Rick's Tattoo Convention) Green
Bay, WI U.S.A. www.tattoosbyrick.com
rick@tattoosbyrick.com

September 10-11

COVENTRY INK TATTOO CONVENTION

AT7 Centre, Bell green, Coventry, England
01604 949958

September 15-18

PARADISE TATTOO GATHERING

Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort, 37 Corey Road,
Hancock, MA 01237, USA
www.tattoogathering.com
gabe@tattoonow.com

September 23-25

THE LONDON TATTOO CONVENTION

Tobacco Dock, Porters Walk,
London, E1W 2SF
www.thelondontattooconvention.com

September 23-25

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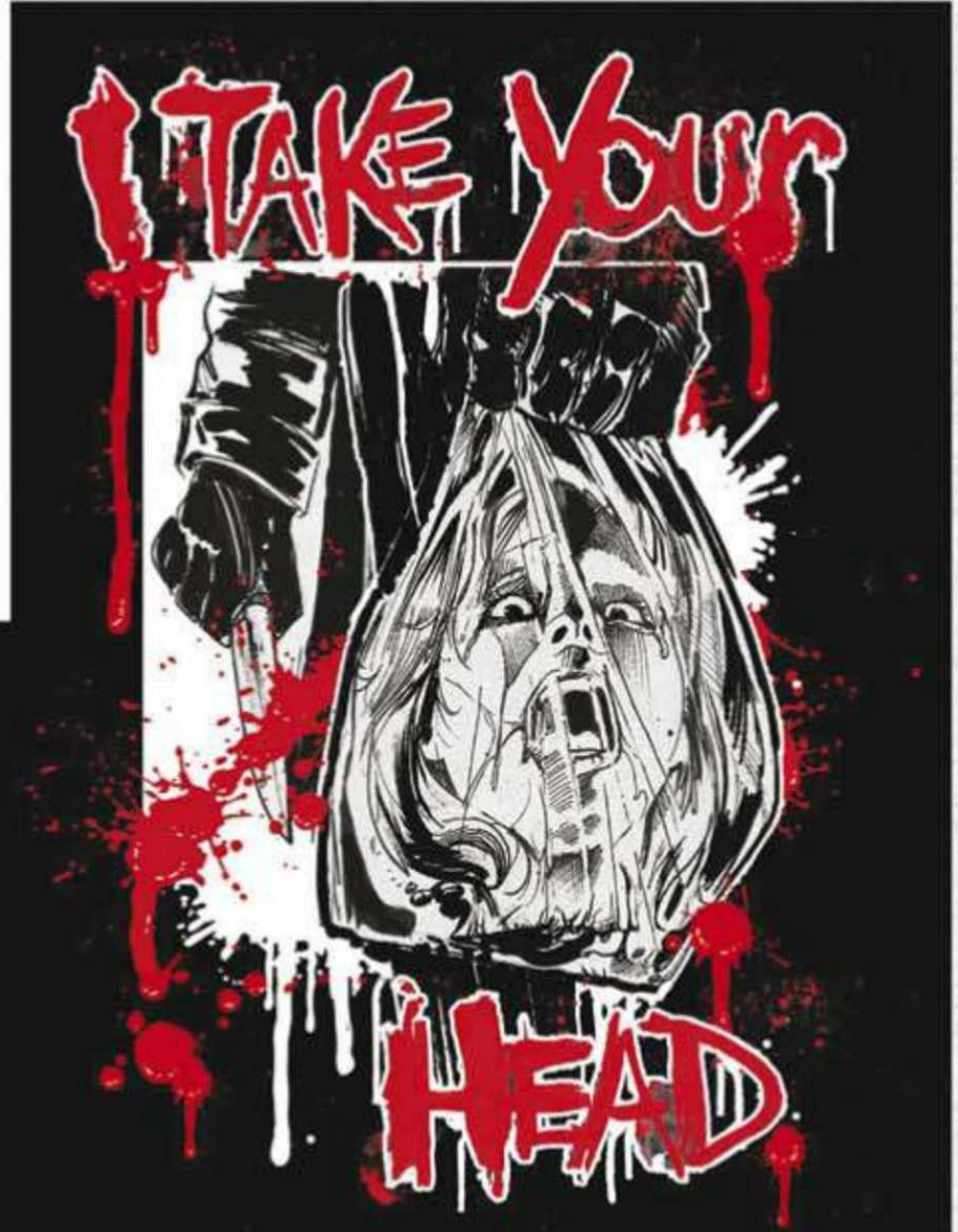
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I TAKE YOUR HEAD...

Paul Acker is certainly a lot more well known for his tattooing than movie making, but that was then. This is now...



EyeSore Films started out as a small film project by Philadelphia-based tattoo artist, Paul Acker. The film was originally going to be a ten minute short used as an intro to a tattooing workshop/documentary on horror tattooing, but has since grown into a full-length film with a full production company behind it. The other partners of this film company also include tattoo artists Buz Hassen, creator of the comic series 'The Living Corpse' and Shlak, front-man for the band, Call The Paramedics. Shlak also works at Paul Acker's shop "Deep Six" in Philadelphia. One of the most exciting aspects of this project is their approach on the film entitled *I Take Your Head*, an homage and tribute to 1980s slasher films. The films centres around a homicidal/schizophrenic who has escaped a mental facility and goes on a killing spree in the neighbouring town. They plan on using all practical effects and

photography for the film and even some old fashioned techniques including stop motion animation. This old school approach will appeal to die hard fans of the genre as well as fans of the tattoo industry, as the project will be including some creatures and effects by world-renowned tattoo artists including, Tommy Lee Wendtner, Dan Henk, Sean Zee and Adrian Dominic.

They will also be giving fans the opportunity to contribute to the film themselves and chances to own props, posters, and concept art from the film. This will hopefully give fans incentive to donate money to the project to help them get the funding they need to produce the film. They will be able to donate through funding sites like kickstarter.com, a site that helps artists get funding for their independent projects. For more information on this exciting project and to get involved, go to www.eyesorefilms.com.



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Conventions

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October 1-2

ST GALLEN TATTOO CONVENTION

Fürstenlandsaal, 9200 Gossau, Switzerland
www.tattoo-convention.sg.ch

October 9

1ST ANNUAL FEMALE TATTOO ARTIST SHOW

The Assembly, Spencer St, Leamington Spa, England. 50 of the UK's best female tattoo artists come together for the very 1st time.

www.facebook.com/pages/Uks-1st-Annual-Female-Tattoo-Artist-Show/212251892134100
Tickets are on sale at leamingtonassembly.com

October 14-16

BRUSSELS TATTOO CONVENTION

Tours & Taxis, Brussels, Belgium
www.brusselstattooconvention.be

October 15-16

SZOLNOK TATTOO EXPO

Szolnok City, Tiszaliget Sport Center Of University, Hungary
szolnoktattooexpo@gmail.com
www.szolnoktattooexpo.com

October 21-23

OTTAWA-GATINEAU TATTOO EXPO 3

Hilton "Casino" Lac Leamy, 3blvd du Casino, Gatineau, QC, Canada
ottawatattooexpo@hotmail.ca
www.ottawatattooexpo.com

October 29-30

HALLOWEEN TATTOO BASH

The Racecourse, Newton Abbot, Devon, England
www.myspace.com/halloweentattoobash

November 12-13

EAST COAST TATTOO EXPO

Highfield Holiday Park, London Road, Clacton, Essex, CO16 9QY, England
Info: Sudbury Ink, 01787 464946 or Red's Tattoo Parlour, 01206 395262
eastcoastexpo@hotmail.co.uk
www.myspace.com/eastcoasttattooexpo

2012

January 15-16

TATTOO FREEZE

Telford International Centre
www.tattoofreeze.com

February 25-26

INTERNATIONAL TATTOO & ART

Expo Claudelands Event Centre, Hamilton, New Zealand Website:
www.tattooart.co.nz

September 13-16

PARADISE TATTOO GATHERING KEYSTONE RESORT

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gabe@tattoonow.com

SMALLMAN SYNDROME

It's Edinburgh Fringe time and Mr Smallman is stacked to the nines (where on earth does that saying come from?) with back to back shows. Normal service will resume next issue, in the meantime

As I write this, Tattoo Jam finished yesterday evening. Fact of the matter is, I'm putting this together as the rest of the magazine has gone to the printers. Jim, God love him, is out battling the forces of evil hecklers. So what can I tell you?

Not 24 hours ago, in the greatest of Smallman traditions, Paul Sweeney who had valiantly/stupidly stood in for Jim this year, got himself two classy lightning bolts on his middle fingers. We didn't so much stand around laughing at him as the needles came up to the bottom of his finger nails but... sorry, that's exactly what we did. I'll leave it to Jim and Paul to compare notes on that one, but man it looked rough!

Meanwhile, not so far away, the very "handsome" James (staff bloke/works on Skin Shots with me. I use the word handsome loosely because you never know when you might need a favour in the future) was loving every minute of his time with Xoil. A simple design had been turned into a work of art by the man and as one would expect, he put in some serious blue 'brush strokes' through it to complete the effect – I gotta say, I've seen James sit for hours and hours at a time but he turned into a squirmer when it got down to the tendons by his wrist that afternoon.

Most insanely though – and this wasn't done at the show, but was in one of the portfolio's – I came across a snap of somebody who had gotten an eyeball

put onto their testicle. Not a bare testicle obviously. Jim, mate – I got his number! If you can top that, I'll buy you a Big Mac, large fries and might even throw in a McFlurry for your trouble.

Talking of testicles, without doubt, the funniest thing any of us saw all weekend was Cookie from the Ink Spot blasting out a killer rendition of Wuthering Heights in full on falsetto mode at the Tattoo Masters Ball.

I guess the beer helped but the man is a genius – of a sort. I reckon we should get him on X-Factor next year, so we'll kindly download some application forms and fill them in for him. He'll be pleased with that. Honest he will.

Totally off subject, back in January at Tattoo Freeze, I seem to recall Jim mentioning that he had always

wanted to learn how to wrestle so had taken a buddy up on the offer of some free lessons. Stupidly, I said it was a great idea and maybe me and him could do an exhibition match somewhere along the line. I had forgotten all about that and must resurrect the idea. File under "total humiliation" for a future date.

That's your lot from me. Jim sends his apologies for his absence but did promise to buy every single reader that was disappointed a nice cake to make up for it. Don't forget to send your stories of pain and funny ink to Jim at the addresses just to the side of this... just over there in the small print. See it? Good. Later...



Mr Smith and Mr Smallman look into the eye of a Dalek



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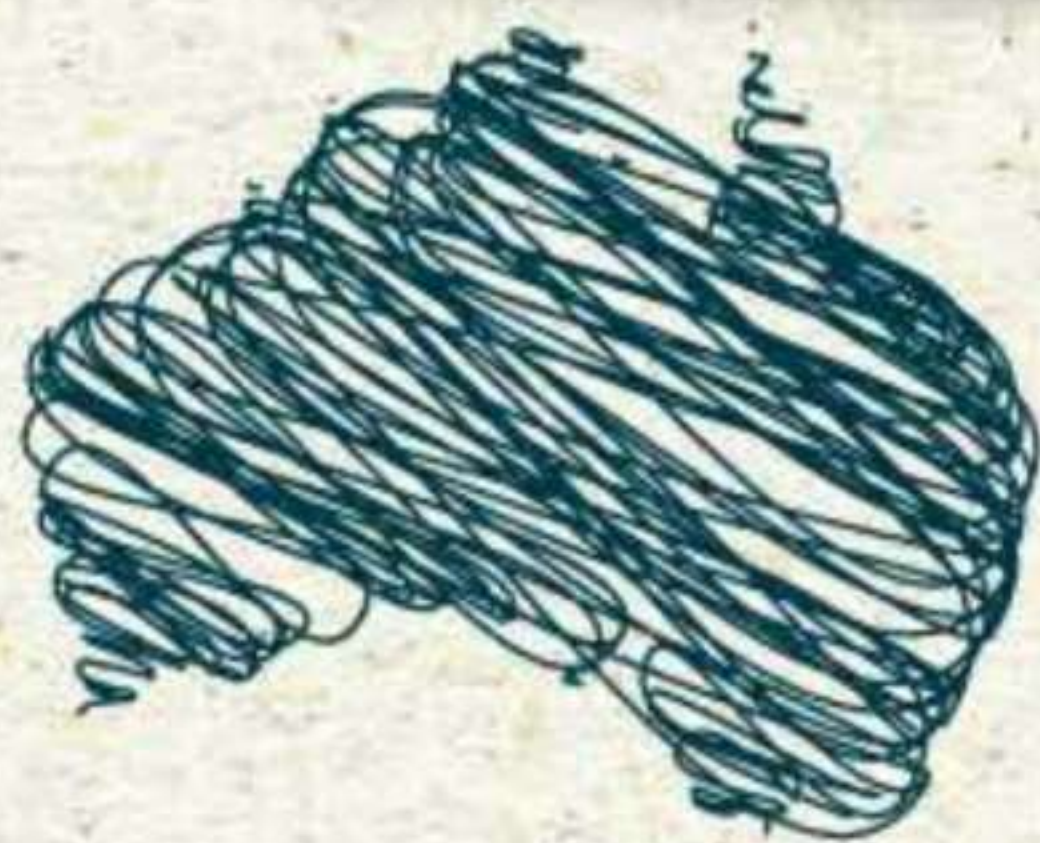
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PART NINE

PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK

This month, I've been delving into Australia's tattoo history by meeting up with two colourful characters that have helped put Australian tattooing on the map...



Bev Robinson is a name you might not be familiar with, however, Cindy Ray, the alias she used in her younger years should certainly ring a bell with almost every tattoo artist reading this magazine. The original painted lady and tattooed pin up girl from the '60s has been seen in many tattoo books and magazines across the world over the past 50 years. I was extremely excited to meet Bev, a living legend of Australia's tattoo past and I wasn't sure what to expect. Now having met with her and gotten to know her, I face the extremely daunting task of trying



Me with Bev

every weekend at Moving Pictures. For the past five years the shop has been run by Kenny after a spate of unreliable staff – Bev wanted to take a step back and even considered closing the shop. Luckily Kenny, having initially come in to buy some of the studio equipment, ended up taking the shop on and continuing the name.

Bev tattooing today



to write down, represent and do this remarkable lady justice.

Bev is approaching 70 and still tattoos

many artists. She admits there has been such a boom in recent years that there are many good artists she is seeing work by and hasn't even heard of, though I'm sure she would happily meet them all if she had the chance. In an age where everyone seems to be chasing the limelight to become a 'celebrity', Bev shrugs it off. Even though she still receives fan mail from across the world she is more concerned with just being a part of the industry she loves. In 2005, Bev was flown to St Louis, U.S.A and was inducted into the tattoo hall of

Bev opened the shop 42 years ago, making it the oldest shop in Melbourne "except maybe for Johnny Dollar, he's been around as long as me", she tells me.

Bev is an extremely lovely lady, down to earth and still very much involved in the tattoo industry across the world, writing and corresponding with

Craig Lee

The infamous Cindy Ray



Bev Robinson aka Cindy Ray

THERE WERE ONLY A HANDFUL OF PHOTOS AND TO THIS DAY I DON'T EVEN HAVE A SET, BUT IT'S THOSE PHOTOS THAT MADE ME KNOWN ACROSS THE WORLD AS CINDY RAY BEV ROBINSON/CINDY RAY

fame by Lyle Tuttle. This is the kind of recognition she is proud of.

And while her images have been published across the globe, Bev is very much Melbourne born and bred. She went to school here, grew up and still works and lives here today. She is extremely modest about all the attention she has received over the years. Originally having replied to an advert looking for models "willing to shave their eyebrows," the photographer told her if she got tattooed she could make a lot of money. So he paid for her tattoos and took a set of pictures which appeared in a book and the whole thing just escalated. "There were only a handful of photos and to this day I don't even have a set, but it's those photos that made me known across the world as Cindy Ray", she tells me. Soon afterwards she started tattooing and married a tattooist who did the rest of the work on her arms and legs.

I can't help but think that Bev could easily make a 'quick buck' at tattoo conventions worldwide tattooing Cindy Ray flash and charging over-inflated prices to eager tattoo

collectors. After meeting the woman behind the picture it's easy to see why that would never happen. Bev is very much your 'salt of the earth' kind of person, happy working an honest day for an honest days pay. It's old school tattooers like Bev that have moved our industry forward. Working because they love it, not taking advantage or trying to become a superstar. They have created the industry that the younger generation of artists like myself are a part of today. Giving back what they take, still as enthusiastic as ever about tattooing and happy to meet and talk with tattoo artists and enthusiasts alike.

From old school tattoo history to modern history in the making, Lucky Diamond Rich will most certainly be a name you have heard. He is the Guinness World Record holder for being the most tattooed person in the world and among other appearances, he also makes the trip to London every September to perform at the London Tattoo Convention.

He has a background I could fill an entire article with and his stories are free flowing and full of character, in short - very short - he started his life in the circus on the road and has finally made his way into the tattoo industry. His performing has now

taken a backseat and his enthusiasm is now channelled into his painting and tattooing. While I'm not sure you could ever really keep him in one place, for now he is settled full-time at A Splash of Color Tattoo in Melbourne.

Starting out 12 years ago in New Zealand, he would perform his show at tattoo conventions and after a while started asking organisers for a booth as part of his payment so he could tattoo Mr Lucky skulls: "I did some bad tattoos back then," he reflects, "when I look back I'd like to shake those peoples hands." His turning point came when some friends told him to knuckle down and concentrate on getting good or quit! So he worked in a street shop for two years doing small tattoos and building

Getting tattooed
by Lucky

up his skills until he decided to do less performing and concentrate on tattooing 100 percent. "I know I'm not going to be the best tattoo artist in the world, but my goal is to make every tattoo a good clean tattoo."

When he travels to perform you will now find him working guest spots; one of his favourite shops to work in is Soho's Diamond Jacks. "I love working in street shops, I love the characters that come in to me. It's not studios in the industry that attract me but the characters that work there." One of his favourite characters is Australian tattooist Karl Koffman from Sydney – as well as seeing different cultures, which he loves, Lucky is now happy to have a place to call home where



Splash Of Color Tattoo

I LOVE WORKING IN STREET SHOPS, I LOVE THE CHARACTERS THAT COME IN TO ME. IT'S NOT STUDIOS IN THE INDUSTRY THAT ATTRACT ME BUT THE CHARACTERS THAT WORK THERE LUCKY DIAMOND RICH

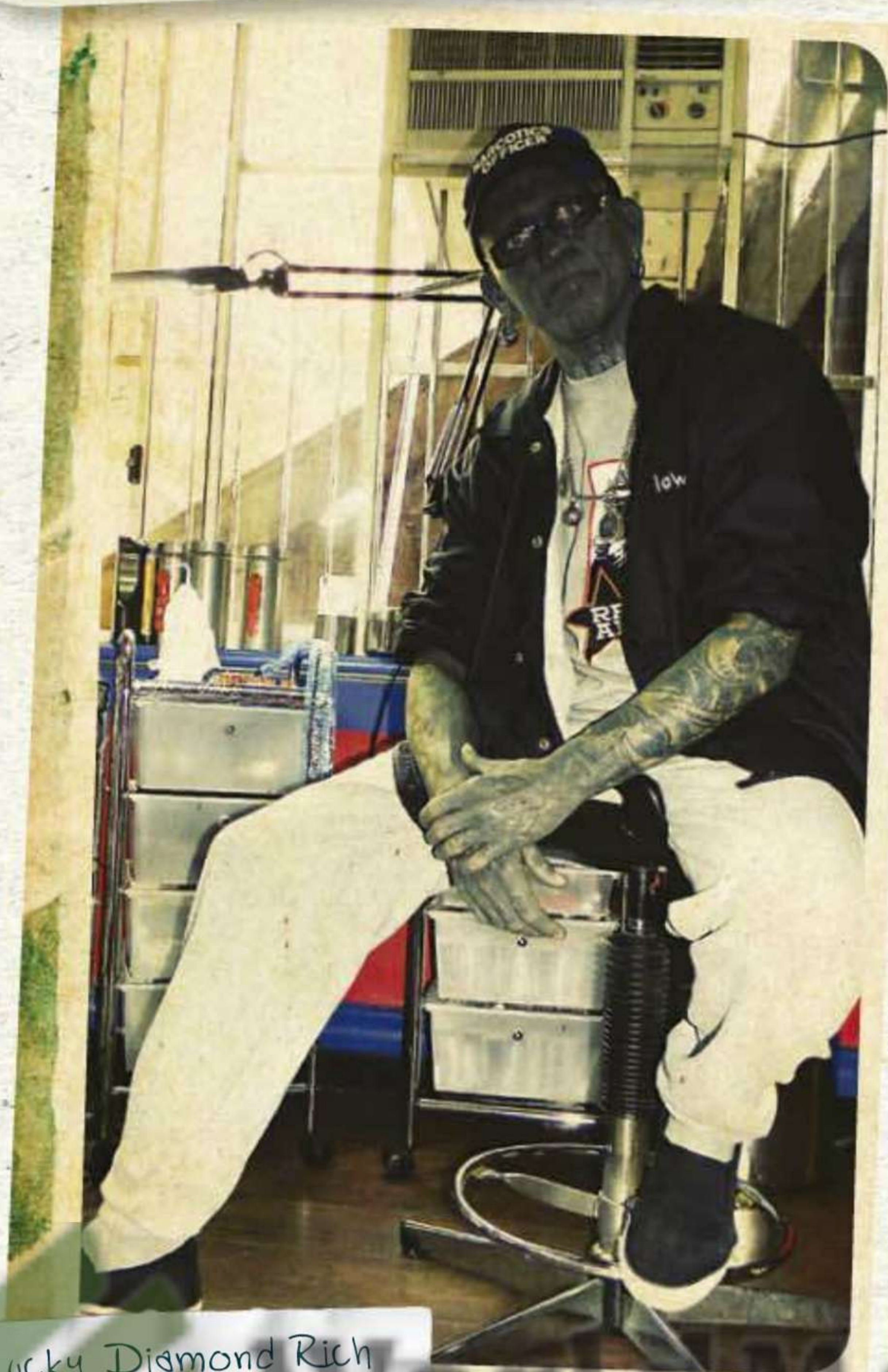
he can start getting regular clients. Rick gave him a full-time spot at Splash of Colour, which is a very creative environment and encourages all the artists to not just tattoo, but also paint.



Me with Lucky

"There's a good art vibe here rather than just making money" – in fact rather than let me pay him for the tattoo he insisted on giving me, he would rather I paint him a Craigy Lee version of a Mr Lucky skull to add to his collection. Most times when you see and read about Lucky in magazines, it is based around why he got so many tattoos and how he got to be the 'Worlds' most tattooed man, what most people don't know is he is actually a serious artist with

some seriously awesome stories to boot. Lucky has one of the most positive attitudes towards life I have ever encountered and while he will freely admit that it took him a while to get to where he is, he is certainly a character you need to meet, and before he gets too busy tattooing see him perform! 🐾



Lucky Diamond Rich



Moving Pictures

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second skin

Continuing our series of reader profiles, this month, we hooked up with Rich Smith - better known to us all as Dickie - who made the jump from being a forklift truck driver to resident body piercer at Cosmic Tattoo. Good move Sir...

I always knew I wanted to get tattooed, even from a young age. I'd grown up watching my sister getting tattooed and I'd had my eye on a dragon design I'd seen on the wall at Cosmic Tattoo since I was 16 so I knew it was going to be the right choice!

As soon as I was 18 I got it done! I've always enjoyed art, drawing, being creative, so getting tattooed was another way for me to express myself. I started off getting small pieces done, a few months apart and having piercings done in between, I then

moved to Australia for a year, but whilst out there I only had one done. I have a tradition of getting tattooed on my birthday, so I had to have one on my 21st. It was a small Chinese symbol meaning Richard, and it still means a lot to me today.

After coming back to the UK, I'd changed a lot in myself, was more confident in what I liked, namely tattoos and piercings and set to work on my sleeve. I'd always been tattooed by Leigh Oldcorn at Cosmic Tattoo, except for the Chinese symbol, so I

I mentioned to Leigh that I loved piercings and I'd really love to get into body piercing. He then told me he was actually in the process of moving to a new studio and would have space for a piercer, and if I was interested he could point me in the right direction to get trained up.

I jumped at the chance, and he gave me the phone number of a lady called Nettie who owned Mettle Nettle in Chelmsford; I left my job as a forklift driver and started my training within a matter of days. Once I was fully

I THEN STARTED WORK DOWN THE RIGHT SIDE AND IT WAS WHILST HAVING THIS WORK DONE I MENTIONED TO LEIGH THAT I LOVED PIERCINGS AND I'D REALLY LOVE TO GET INTO BODY PIERCING

visited the studio to get booked in. I started work on my right sleeve, which is a black and grey dragon & snake, Japanese design. I had one session a month and whilst I was getting tattooed by Leigh I started to chat more and Leigh invited me along to a couple of conventions with the Cosmic team.

The first convention I ever went to was The London Tattoo Convention and what an eye opener that was - I saw people with full body coverage, head tattoos and I knew that day I wanted to be covered. It was an amazing convention, I talked to people from all walks of life, and had a terrific time. After the convention, and once the sleeve was finished, I decided to start on my chest and right side of my body.

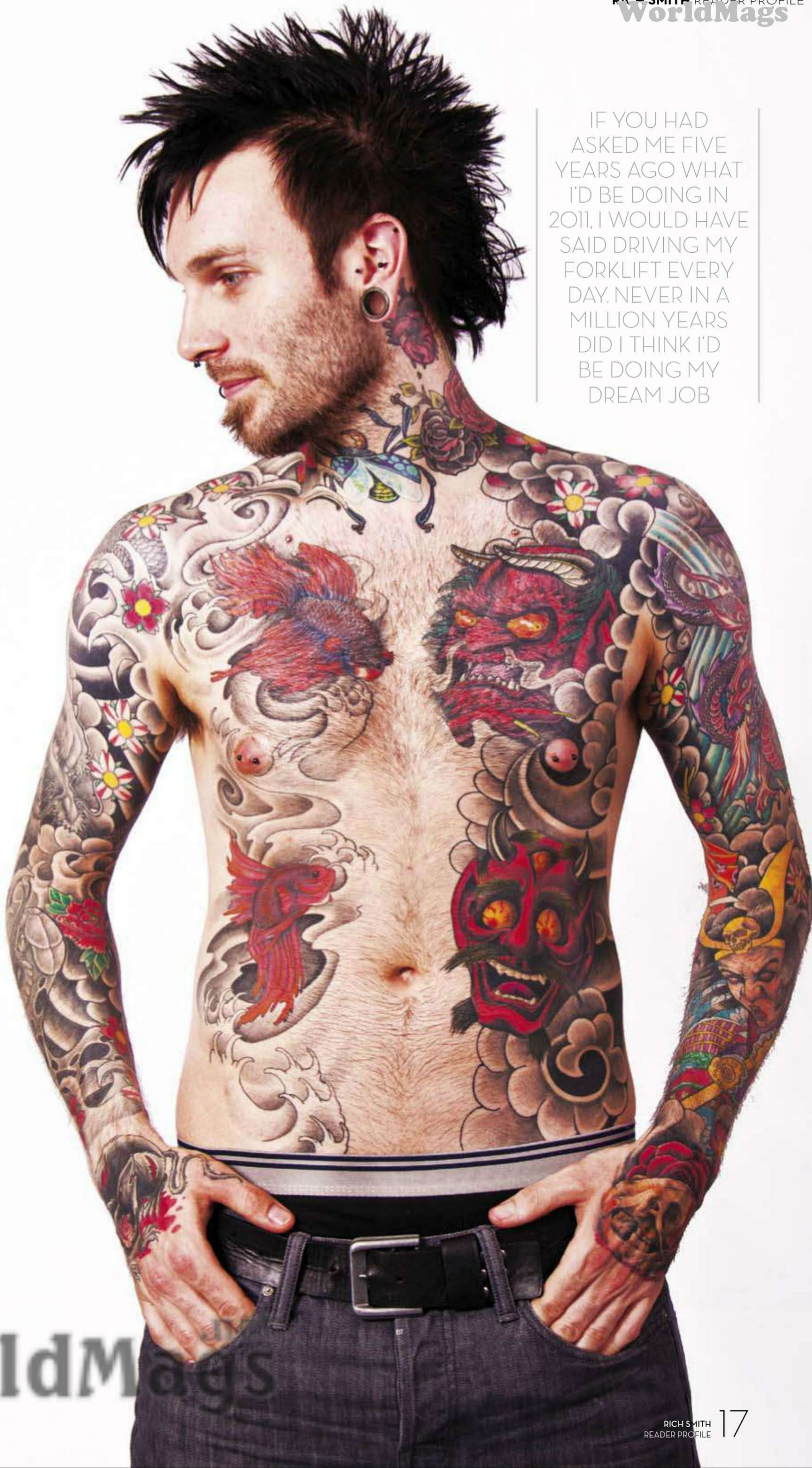
I've always loved Siamese Fighting fish, so decided to have one on my chest which made a bit of a change from the traditional koi. I then started work down the right side and it was whilst having this work done

trained I started working for Leigh in the new studio, and I've never looked back. I love doing what I do, seeing people come in nervous and shy about a piercing, and leaving with a big grin on their face makes my day.

Once I started at Cosmic, I started getting tattooed more regularly and the guys realised I'm not bothered by the pain. I soon became a convention 'bitch' as I could quite happily sit for nine hours getting tattooed one day, then more the next day. This is where my Japanese work started expanding quickly. Arran started doing my feet at a convention, and gradually worked his way up my left leg, which started with a frog on my foot, then a Kappa on my calf, Bakka on the inside calf, a skull with a centipede on front thigh and a demon geisha head on my back thigh with Japanese flowers in between.

Leigh also used me for conventions, doing a portrait of Bill the Butcher from the movie *Gangs of New York* 🐻





IF YOU HAD ASKED ME FIVE YEARS AGO WHAT I'D BE DOING IN 2011, I WOULD HAVE SAID DRIVING MY FORKLIFT EVERY DAY. NEVER IN A MILLION YEARS DID I THINK I'D BE DOING MY DREAM JOB

I ATTRACT A LOT OF INTEREST FROM PEOPLE, BUT I'M ALWAYS HAPPY TO STOP AND CHAT ABOUT MY TATTOOS. I'M ALSO A REGULAR ON THE CONVENTION SCENE

as all the guys here at Cosmic think I look like Daniel Day Lewis. I thought why not, he's a wicked character in the movie, it's a good talking point! Leigh's also done an Omni mask on my chest, which is now extended onto my side. He also did my left sleeve which includes a zombie geisha, a samurai warrior and a dragon which I had at the top of my arm from my younger days. In between conventions I've had my neck done, left side was old school roses and an anatomical heart done by Pinky Darling, as after working in the studio for some time I started to like the traditional style of tattooing as well as the Japanese artwork.

As time has gone by, I've now had my full back, throat and back of neck done by Arran, all in Japanese style, with my back being a rather large but beautiful octopus. Back of my neck is a foo dog and my throat is a scarab beetle. I've also had both hands done by Leigh, old school rat on my right hand and realistic rat skull and rose on my right hand, as I born in the year of the rat.

I've also just had my shop nickname tattooed on my fingers by Sim Abbott, so I'm almost covered, but not quite! As I'm so covered, I attract a lot of interest from people, but I'm always happy to stop and chat about my tattoos. I'm also a regular on the convention scene, really enjoy meeting people, so if you see me at a convention stop and say hi!

If you had asked me five years ago what I'd be doing in 2011, I would have said driving my forklift every day. Never in a million years did I think I'd be doing my dream job. I am so grateful to Leigh for giving me the opportunity to do this and want to thank him and Nettie for training me and the rest of the team here at Cosmic Tattoo for supporting me over the years. 🐾



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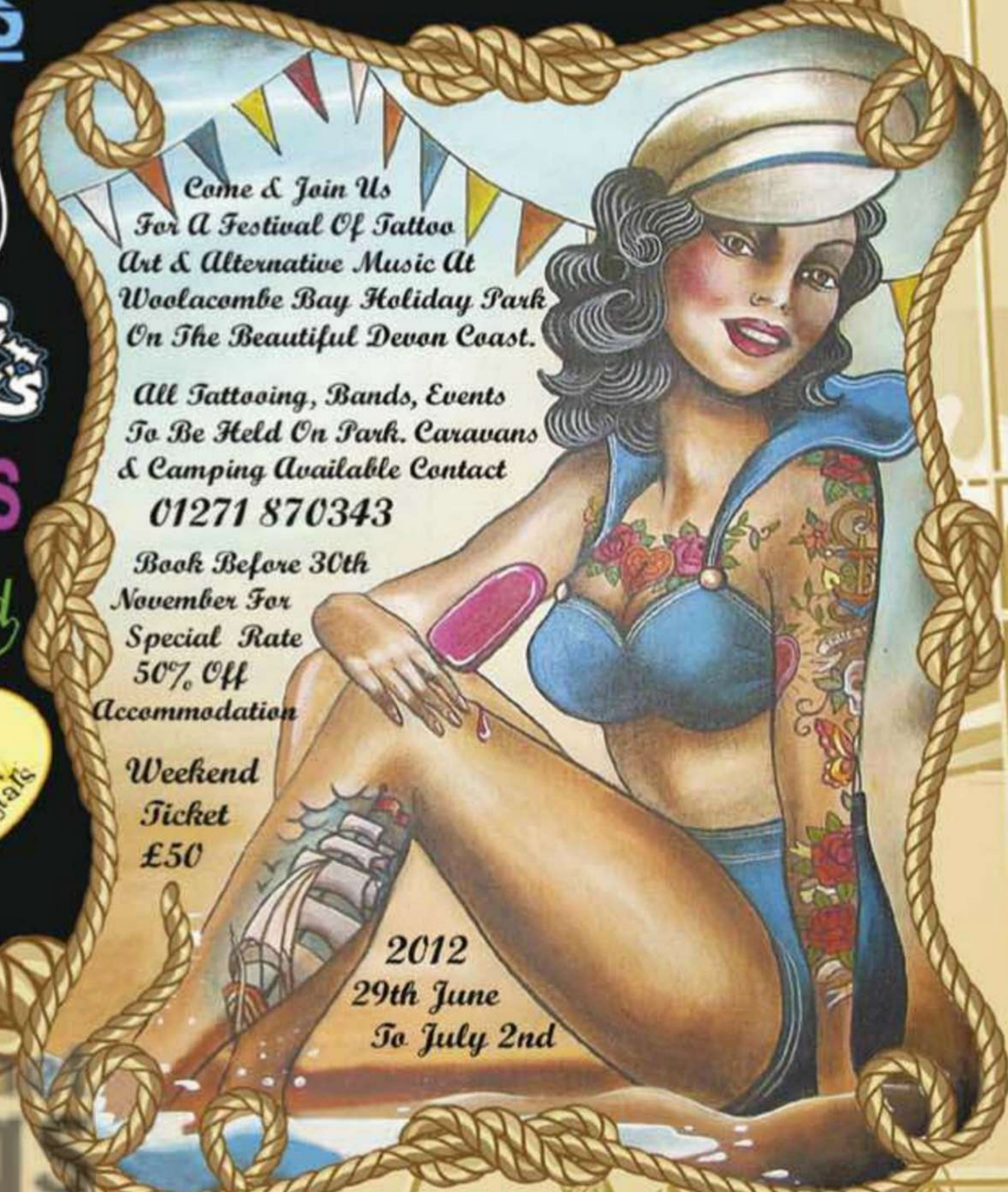
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ONLY WOMEN BLEED...

When 22-year-old Australia native Samantha Plant organised Inked Beauties, a beauty contest for tattooed women, her initial reasoning for doing so wasn't out of a long-seated desire to showcase the beauty of tattooed women. Rather, the impulse actually came from the fact that no matter how well she placed in traditional beauty competitions, ultimately Plant's tattoos led to her missing out on the winner's spotlight...

Explaining her situation to Australian newspaper WA Today in May of 2011, Plant said: "I was knocked from competitions after winning the heats only to be told at the grand finals that I couldn't win because of my tattoos."

While being denied the same level of consideration as your untattooed peers is completely unjust, tattooed women often have very little room to manoeuvre in a world that shows a different bias toward them than what their male counterparts face. Women have long played vital roles in the history of tattoo, yet today's popular culture persists in giving tattooed women very narrow margins to exist within.

The message is often crystal clear, yet tacitly implied: either go the cute route or the sexy route with your tattoos, but don't expect to be taken seriously either way.

Oddly enough, few modern societies offer a more accurate glimpse into this situation than Japan currently does. Japanese society has long associated tattoos with the organised crime of the Yakuza and even today, life in Japan is no picnic for the tattooed. Everything from access to gyms to housing can, and often will, be denied those who choose body art. However, in direct accordance with the contradictory nature of Japanese society, the tattoo art form is alive



and well, experiencing a rapidly growing mainstream following. Surprisingly, it's women who are largely responsible for this growth. The fashion industry has helped to bring tattoo to the pages of magazines and to the bodies of much-hyped MTV stars, reeling in masses of trend hungry, young Japanese girls. In a society where women's roles are meticulously outlined and followed, female tattooists are springing up everywhere, and female-only tattoo conventions are achieving much success, defying the ideals of previous generations as to what women are intended to be. At least that's how it appears on the surface.

Dig a little deeper and kawaii, 🍒

WOMEN HAVE LONG PLAYED VITAL ROLES IN THE HISTORY OF TATTOO, YET TODAY'S POPULAR CULTURE PERSISTS IN GIVING TATTOOED WOMEN VERY NARROW MARGINS TO EXIST WITHIN



Miss Mischief

EACH WOMAN ALSO HAD HER OWN STORY AS TO HOW SHE CAME TO BE TATTOOED AND ALL THESE STORIES DEALT WITH 'BEING KIDNAPPED BY NATIVE AMERICANS AND FORCIBLY TATTOOED'

the much worshipped and highly fashionable concept of cuteness, rears its syrupy-sweet head. Women tattooists are growing in Japan largely due to the demand – many timid Japanese girls are brave enough to face the tattoo machine, but not brave enough to bare their flesh to male tattooists. What's more, there is a confidence in female tattooists to better comprehend and deliver the kawaii ideal through tattoo. In other words, though Japanese society is experiencing a boom in the female appreciation of tattoo, there's little evidence to suggest that what is happening is anything more productive than a strengthening of the already firmly laid expectations of how women can be tattooed.

To suggest that this sort of trend is limited to the Japanese would be entirely off. The truth is, tattoo's warped fashion connection to women has existed ever since tattoo was first brought to American and European shores. At the turn of the 19th century, salon-going women were already being covertly tattooed in the name of beauty, though they themselves didn't know it. By heightening the degree to which

their female clientele's cheeks retained their rosy glow and by reassuring women that they were in the hands of professional doctors, male salon owners of the early 20th century were actually able to turn a very nice profit through methods that were essentially tattoo. The latest methods of beautification for cheeks, lips and eyebrows were actually an injection beneath the top layer of skin that consisted of vegetable dyes.

This process was never referred to as tattoo, leaving women to feel fully satisfied with their procedures long after they had left the salon. Because these salons were essentially giving women exactly what they wanted, not revealing to them the exact process involved can be viewed as slightly less than sinister. What remains however, is the basis for a mindset that would eventually become one of the unspoken guidelines for modern society's concept of female tattoo – that tattoo is unfeminine, unless the tattoo itself fits into the pre-defined spectrum of beautification.

The desire for the exotic led many wealthy men and women of the time to get small tattoos, but for a woman to go out and tattoo her body to a high degree was unheard of. This began to change in 1882 when small groups of women began getting tattooed in order to join travelling sideshows and carnivals. These women provided what was both a horrific and fascinating show for the crowds who would converge to see them, but simply being tattooed women and on display was not enough for the time. Each woman also had her own story as to how she came to be tattooed and all these stories dealt with 'being kidnapped by Native Americans and forcibly tattooed'.

The women were pitied for the ordeals they had undergone and this in turn, created even more intrigue in them as tattooed showpieces. Perhaps these concocted stories helped the women to cling to some form of perceived femininity, erasing the blame for being covered in ink. Or, perhaps it was the stories themselves that erased the women's femininity, keeping them

just ladylike enough to be displayed and pitied, but not feminine enough to be admired for their independence and confidence in voluntarily choosing to be tattooed. Whatever the case, these initial dalliances with the ancient art of tattoo marked the start of modern society's usurpation of the art form. The tattoo related roles that women had played in indigenous tribes for thousands of years had begun to be reduced to little more than the manufactured tales of savages kidnapping women and imprinting them with horrific markings only worthy of staged, public display.

The initial roles of women in tattoo came from cultures that valued women's purpose for being tattooed. It was not sexualised, nor was it frowned upon. The act of being tattooed did not limit or otherwise eliminate the options that women had within their society, but rather, women's tattoos further solidified their important and functioning roles within their societies. In fact, two Samoan women, Taema and Tilafaiga, introduced the tradition of tattoo that has now existed for over 2,000 years amongst Fijians. While Samoan women are not as heavily tattooed as their male counterparts, their tattoos – based on and around geometric patterns – still provide the same function as that of the men's, denoting rank and status amongst the tribe.

Going back even further and to yet another culture, tattoo made its earliest appearance in the excavated remains of ancient Egyptian mummies. Dating back to 2,000 BC, these remains were all tattooed and what's more, they were all female. Oddly enough, even here in an educated, professional context, the male archaeologists who excavated the remains couldn't help but be swayed by modern day, stereotypical notions of women with tattoos. After discovering that the mummies were female and tattooed, the archaeologists assumed that the women would have most likely been either prostitutes or dancing girls, neither of which would have held much validity in the society of the time.

With the passing of time, more tattooed female mummies were excavated, these in Deir el-Bahari, a burial ground for particularly affluent and respected members of ancient Egyptian society. The tattoos – located over the breasts, stomach and upper thighs, were a large pattern of dots grouped together in a net formation. As scientists eventually discovered, the tattoos were not the markings of prostitutes or dancing girls, but were used as protection for the women and their unborn children against evil spirits during pregnancy. The tattoos were also believed to keep unborn children healthy inside their mother's wombs.

From Egypt, onto South East Asia, where the Mentawai peoples of Indonesia are said to have the oldest tattoo tradition in the world – the Mentawai have always held fast to their belief that all people within the tribe were equal. The tattoos that women don begin in the girl's teens and continue throughout the years until the age of 40. When completed, these tattoos mark a woman's upper arms, backs of hands, upper thighs, neck and chest areas, shins, calves and forearms. The thin lined and dotted tattoos are representative of the sago palm, which is considered the tree of life by the Mentawai, and the tattoos that decorate the women's backs are intended to ward off evil from their bodies. The Mentawai believe that tattoos please the soul, allowing them to bring their material possessions with them into the next life. They also believe that tattoos will protect them from evil jungle spirits and that they enable their ancestors to recognise them in the afterlife.

When these ancient, yet refreshingly simple tattoo practices are juxtaposed with today's tattoo efforts, there are more obvious differences to just what place women have in it all. For this reason, any comparison between ancient indigenous traditions and today's may not be completely just. After all, the Mentawai people or the ancient Egyptians exist and existed in utterly different times and places, under completely different methods



Peggy Soo

of life. Women of indigenous tribes and ancient cultures had the sole responsibility of living amongst their people and playing a vital role as a part of that group. Their tattoos reflected their involvement in that group and were not symbols of their individuality as women.

Though the specifics may change from culture to culture and region to region, one thing that remains the same amongst the indigenous peoples from whom we gained the concept of tattoo is that they do

not view the tattooing of women as a negative. And while some may accuse indigenous tribes of following archaic beliefs or rituals, it is indeed arguable that even today, our own modern, fast-paced societies continue to remain entirely archaic on the issue of tattooed women. Modern women needn't be bound by their tattoos to some sort of noble social effort, but women's options as tattooed members of society should offer more than being cast as cute or 🍷



Sandy Peng

THE TRUTH THAT IS ALL TOO OFTEN IGNORED IS THAT AS SOON AS TATTOO WAS INTRODUCED TO THE WEST, TATTOOED WOMEN WERE UNDESIRABLE AS WOMEN BUT HIGHLY PROFITABLE AS A COMMODITY

sexy. No one can tell another person that their choice in tattoo is wrong, regardless of whether or not the tattoo is overly cutesy or entirely sex driven. That choice rests entirely with the individual. That being said, there should be a choice for women that does not compromise their femininity, integrity or self-respect.

The truth that is all too often ignored is that as soon as tattoo was introduced to the West, tattooed women were undesirable as women but highly profitable as a commodity. Packaged as an item of beauty or sex, the commodification is still the same. This reality is underscored by the fact that even more than the profitability of female tattoo, it is cast as a fetish, alive and well in numerous societies around the world. Even a successful American porn video series has found a method by which to profit from tattooed women – the Cum on My Tattoo series, currently in its fourth incarnation.

Oddly enough, this legacy of pigeonholing tattooed women by way of their tattoos has become so commonplace and tolerated that to buy into it, is now somehow considered a form of female liberation. SuicideGirls is a website filled with photos of tattooed women, viewable to paying subscribers. Begun in 2001, today it boasts over 300,000 subscribers and through films, a best-selling book and a clothing line, it has wholeheartedly embraced the sexuality of tattooed women. A declaration on the site leaves little

question as to its mandate: “In the same way Playboy Magazine became a beacon and guide to the swinging bachelor of the 1960s, SuicideGirls is at the forefront of a generation of young women and men whose ideals about sexuality do not conform with what mainstream media is reporting.”

But isn't SuicideGirls – as noble as it claims to be – still just selling sex and keeping tattooed women in the same old, tired role as a result? According to SuicideGirl's founder, Missy Suicide, nothing could be further from the truth.

“It is hard to show off the beauty of your art work when half of it is hidden beneath clothes. Most tattooed women are comfortable with their bodies and decorate them with pieces to create uniquely beautiful art. For the most part they aren't shy about showing this off, after all they put painful hours in to getting it that way. The nude female form is the most celebrated subject matter in all of art history, the body is beautiful. It seems a bit juvenile to put a sleazy slant on naked photos when art galleries are literally overflowing with sculptures, paintings and the like depicting boobies. To me it seems the next logical step in an evolution of art. Subjects really have an opportunity to participate more fully in the final work. In choosing to make their bodies the canvas to depict their personal idea of beauty and displaying their unique form the traditional female nude is a bit reinvented, no? That

being said most women who are comfortable and confident with their bodies and themselves tend not to have too many hang ups with sexuality, sex being an intrinsic and fun part of life. The world would be a much happier place if everyone appreciated their body and themselves a bit more.”

Despite this assessment of reinventing the traditional female nude, perhaps the better and far more liberating goal would be to reinvent the concept of tattooed women as a whole? An uphill battle, to say the least. Today the mainstream understanding of women's tattoo roles has even made its way into the very methods by which we speak about tattoo. For whatever discrimination that men may feel as a result of their tattoos, there is still no male equivalent to the term 'tramp stamp'.

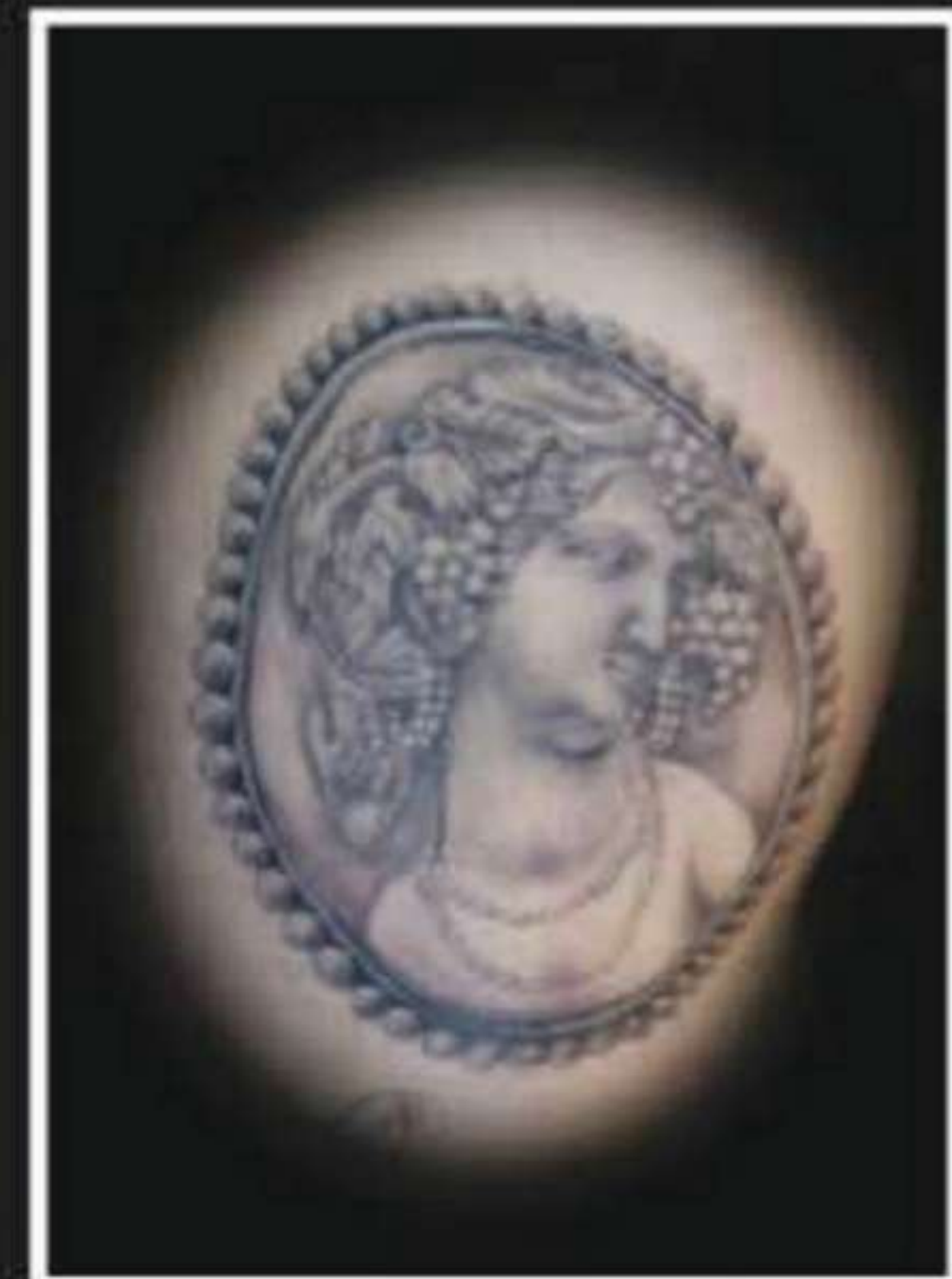
Located at the lower back, the tramp stamp is a tattoo term used to denote a tattoo that is ubiquitous, sleazy and an entirely female concept. While much has been done to frown on and disassociate tattoo from the outdated stereotype of being little more than a sailor's pastime, tattooed women will forever linger behind the pack as long as terms like tramp stamp continue to exist. Such a term's mere existence is further proof that women have specific guidelines in which they are to work should they choose to be tattooed.

One of the greatest and most inspiring things about tattoo is that tattoos themselves hold no biases or preconceived beliefs. Even when women are pushed into one role or another by the tattoos they choose to wear, it is not the tattoo itself that is responsible for this, but people's perceptions that have been dictated by far too many years of unchecked complacency. Tattoo roles can be altered or smashed altogether. This is no simple task given how steeply they persist within our cultures, but there truly is no time like the present to pay homage to the lineage of this incredible art form and strive to place all on the same level once again, regardless of sex or the tattoos that we may choose to wear. 🐼

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ZOLTAN KRIZSAN

What, another new feature? Yep - in these busy times, quite often all we (on both sides) have time for is rapid fire questions. This issue - Zoltan Krizsan picks up the baton...

HEY, ZOLTAN, TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND.

My name is Zoltán Krizsán. I am just a simple guy. I have got a little son so I am a proud father. His name is Levente. I am married. My beautiful wife's name is Anikó. I am a tattoo artist from Szolnok in Hungary. I own a little tattoo studio which is my second love.

WHEN, WHERE AND HOW DID YOU CUT YOUR TEETH?

Just like many other artists I started making tattoos at home. That was about 15 years ago. The beginning was hard, but I was persistent because my aim was to become better and better. Then, years later I opened my own studio in Szolnok. Today I am still not fully satisfied with my work, just like I was 14-15 years ago. Being always dissatisfied was important in my past and up to now because it always improves the quality of my art.

HOW DO YOU PICTURE YOURSELF IN THE TATTOO CIRCLES?

It's a difficult, but also a simple question. My first priority in life is my family's happiness. Next in line is my work which fulfils me because I can be creative. I am happiest when there is a lot of work because it encourages my search for new ideas in work and life. I think I have got two tasks. I have to work hard and live as a gentleman.

DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVOURITE ARTISTS?

My favourite artist is István Sándorfi. Unfortunately, he died a few years ago but he was incredible. I can't find the right words to express how much I admire his artwork. You must go and check his work at www.fosaw.com 🐣





IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT MAKES A GOOD TATTOO?

Drawing, drawing and drawing. And when you are finished with it, you can't be satisfied because only God can create perfect things. I think a good tattoo should include the client's and the artist's feelings, too. In my opinion, the tattoo artist is a modern shaman who changes the client's life a little bit. Some famous artists forget the roots and they work without humbleness. This way their tattoos are without soul. Talent is one thing, but soul and meaning in a work are important to me.

THERE'S BEEN A HUGE EMERGENCE OF GIFTED YOUNG TATTOO ARTISTS FROM EASTERN EUROPE IN THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS, HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT?

I think tattoo art needs something fresh and Eastern guys love working hard. They are humble and try to look at their works objectively. It's important not to lie to yourself about quality.

IN MY OPINION, THE TATTOO ARTIST IS A MODERN SHAMAN WHO CHANGES THE CLIENT'S LIFE A LITTLE BIT. SOME FAMOUS ARTISTS FORGET THE ROOTS AND THEY WORK WITHOUT HUMBLENESS.

**HOW ARE TATTOOS PERCEIVED IN EASTERN EUROPE BY SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY AS FAR AS BIG TATTOO PIECES ARE CONCERNED?**

People in Eastern Europe are a little bit different. They love big tattoos but generally, society is a bit more conservative than in the West. My clients are great. They love tattoos, huge and small - with one thing in common, top-quality. Life of eastern people is hard. They don't have much money so they have to work hard to make ends meet. But still they always stay hopeful. I love their mentality and their great ideas for tattoos.

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT LINED UP FOR THE FUTURE?

I'm working on a huge project in Hungary – organising a tattoo contest for professional artists. It's a crazy idea, but I imagine four elimination rounds and a final round with one winner of the €10,000 prize money. There can be only one, just like in the movie *Highlander*!

Another project of mine is called "Tattoo Holiday". During your stay in my hometown you don't only get a great tattoo, but I also show you some sights of Hungary – oh, and by the time you read this, I will just have come back from Tattoo Jam!



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When I think of realistic tattoos, I like to think of the artists who specialise in this style as the grand masters of tattooing. Like a modern day Leonardo or Rembrandt. It is a style that makes you think, 'shit, this artist could have painted the Mona Lisa'. One such artist, who evokes this kind of response, is Ben Hamill. His work is something you expect to see hanging in a gallery, not on someone's skin.

"At school I used to draw fake tattoos on all my mates with fine-liners and felt-tips. They used to show them to their parents just to check what their reactions would be if they got real ones. I remember one of my teachers telling me that I would never get anywhere in life if I kept drawing on everything!

"I tried art college, although I think I may have done it for the wrong reasons. I had no intention of bettering myself, it was just an excuse for me to doss around a bit longer. I think I would have paid a bit more attention in class if they had picked some better life models.

"I got my first tattoo when I was just 13 years old; it was a fighting Irish leprechaun that has been long since covered... don't even ask!

Trent Aitken-Smith  Ben Hamill





made a load of job cuts and it was last in/first out so I found myself back on my arse again.

“Due to being in the right place at the right time it wasn't long before I got the opportunity to take over a studio in Poole which gave me a rebirth of passion for tattooing which has grown ever since. I was inspired by some amazing tattoo artists who were doing the kind of art that I always wanted to be able to do; artists like Boris, Nikko, Robert Hernandez and Jeff Gogue. So I began to find out how they were doing these masterpieces on skin. I slowly, bit by bit, began to re-teach myself how to tattoo.

“That's how Ink Studios was born. It was tough at first. The studio needed to be refreshed in more ways than one and I decided that I only wanted to do custom tattoos or work that I would enjoy doing and I stopped doing the 'bread and butter' 🍞

I STARTED MY APPRENTICESHIP AT A STUDIO CALLED SKINTONE. MAINLY CLEANING, DRAWING UP FLASH SHEETS, MAKING NEEDLES AND CUPS OF TEA. IT WAS TWO YEARS BEFORE I WAS EVEN ALLOWED TO PICK UP A TATTOO MACHINE

I originally wanted to get some work by Ian of Reading, but armed with my older brothers driving license I wasn't prepared for Ian to catch me out being underage by asking me my star sign – clever fucker!

A little older and much more wise, Ben now admits to himself, there's a reason why there is an 18 age limit on getting a tattoo. “Most people don't really know what they want, or that a tattoo is for life, when they're 18, let alone when they're 13.

“I kind of fell into tattooing when I moved to sunny Bournemouth when I was 19. It seems like so long ago now. I was living in a run down bedsit in the centre of town which didn't even have its own toilet. I was getting sick to death of the string of mundane jobs that I sucked at so I decided to try my luck selling flash sheets to local tattoo studios, and within a

week I had been offered two apprentice positions.

“I started my apprenticeship at a studio called Skintone. Mainly cleaning, drawing up flash sheets, making needles and cups of tea. It was two years before I was even allowed to pick up a tattoo machine. The first ever tattoo I did was a small Japanese symbol on my own leg, I barely stopped shaking long enough to finish it. Skintone was where I met my wife Claire, she took over my apprenticeship and it was love at first sight.

“When I wasn't tattooing at the studio, I was sat on the computer messing around with Photoshop and Illustrator and started to enjoy digital art more than tattooing, so I decided to pursue the graphic design route and got a few different jobs in design. I even did a stint at the surf brand Animal, but, just when I got comfortable working for them, they



tattoos of tribal, stars and football badges. After I managed to Jedi mind-fuck a few people into letting me do what ever I wanted on them, they showed their friends and then their friends and so on. Now I just try to make each design better than the last. My Dad told me once, 'you are only ever as good as your last design', and I live by that!

"Since I have owned Ink, I have surrounded myself with people with a real strong passion for tattooing and passed my knowledge down to my new family, my wife Claire Hamill and my brothers from other mothers, Jak Connolly and Neil Bennett. Now they are keeping me on my toes, pushing me and each other to do better."

On which note, I ask Ben what it is like working the same studio as his wife; does the close proximity have a positive influence on their work or is their closeness, a hindrance?

"It's great to finally be working with Claire again. When I left tattooing for graphic design, Claire also left her apprenticeship to get a full-time steady income. It has only been a couple of years since we started working in the same studio again. Claire has only been tattooing now for two years, but she is already a fantastic tattooist, with her own distinct style. Her work is



SOME PEOPLE SAY IT'S A RECIPE FOR DISASTER, WORKING WITH YOUR PARTNER, BUT TO BE HONEST WE DON'T REALLY SEE EACH OTHER THAT MUCH AS WE WORK IN DIFFERENT ROOMS

inspired from more traditional art like mehndi and tibetan imagery, with influences from tattoo artists such as Xed Le Head, Patrick Huettlinger and Buena Vista.

"Some people say it's a recipe for disaster, working with your partner, but to be honest we don't really see each other that much as we work in different rooms. Sometimes I don't even see the tattoos Claire has done until she shows me on the camera at the end of the day. I think we are definitely each other's biggest critics but it's good to have someone around that is going to be 100% honest with you. If Claire thinks one of my design ideas is shit, she'll tell me it's shit and vice versa!

"I think there is always a little competition between artists, but our styles are so different there



MASAMUNE SHIROW

Masanori Ota (Masamune Shirow is a pen name based on a famous swordsmith, Masamune) is best known for the manga, Ghost in the Shell, which has been turned into two theatrical anime movies, two anime TV series, an anime TV movie, and several video games. Shirow is also known for creating erotic art. Though Shirow is now a world-famous illustrator, for a time, he was more popular outside of Japan than inside. He was chosen as an early author to bring to the West because of many stylistic similarities between his work and traditional American comics. Born in the Hyōgo Prefecture capital city of Kobe, Shirow studied oil painting at Osaka University of Arts. While in college, he developed an interest in manga, which led him to create his own complete work, Black Magic, which was published in the manga fanzine Atlas. His work caught the eye of Seishinsha President Harumichi Aoki, who offered to publish him. The result was Applesseed, a full volume of densely-plotted drama taking place in an ambiguous future. The story was a sensation, and won the 1986 Seiun Award for Best Manga. After a professional reprint of Black Magic and a second volume of Applesseed, he released Dominion in 1986. Two more volumes of Applesseed followed before he began work on Ghost in the Shell. Ghost in the Shell is a famous anime in the West based on his work, hence his popularity. Many people mistake him for the creator of the original anime movie, but he had no major role in its production. Mamoru Oshii directed both movies, which were adaptations of several chapters of the original manga put to film. However, he did play a role in the development of the TV anime series Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex.



isn't really anything to compare. If I have a piece that needs some dot work in it, then I will get her to do it as I know she can do it better than I can. I love doing joint pieces as I think you really get the best out of each artist when they are both working on the same piece. The only problem is when I spend hours and hours on a tattoo and Claire does a bit of dot work in the background, you can guarantee that when the photos come out, they are all of her doing it and she loves it!"

Who said a little healthy competition between husband and wife doesn't make all the difference? It seems that Mr Hamill is a very determined man when he sets his mind on something and it certainly shows in his drive and passion for his work, but, even with a successful studio and a steadily growing following, Ben is not content to sit around and let things just happen.

"Even though I have been tattooing for about ten years now, I only feel like I have been really tattooing for two of them. It's taken a long time for me to develop my



I DECIDED THAT I ONLY WANTED TO DO CUSTOM TATTOOS OR WORK THAT I WOULD ENJOY DOING AND I STOPPED DOING THE 'BREAD AND BUTTER' TATTOOS OF TRIBAL, STARS AND FOOTBALL BADGES

style and I'm still not sure I'm there yet. I have been influenced by so many different artists from the likes of Da Vinci and Rossetti to modern fantasy artists like

Louis Royo and Boris Vallejo – plus Japanese manga artists like Masamune Shirow. I have recently started to paint in oils and I have only completed a handful of 🍷



**LUIS ROYO**

Luis Royo is a Spanish artist, known for his sensual, dark paintings, apocalyptic imagery, his fantasy worlds and mechanical life forms. Royo has produced paintings for both his own books and exhibitions and other media; such as video games, music CD and novel covers and tarot cards. Royo started out his career studying Technical Drawing for construction but he soon discovered that geometric forms did not satisfy him fully. Later, he began to study painting, decoration and interior design and during this time, he also combined his work with paint. The discovery of adult comics with the work of artists such as Enki Bilal and Moebius, inspired him to start drawing comics for different fanzines and comics exhibiting at the Angoulême Comic Fair in 1980. American magazines like National Lampoon and Heavy Metal often resort to Royo for their cover illustrations, as well as European magazines Cimoc, Comic Art, Ere Comprime, Total Metal and others. Since 1990, his work has been collected in books and some are collector's products today. In 2002, Luis Royo revealed some of his technical secrets in *Conceptions*, a book describing the creative process and presents a collection of artist's sketches and pencil drawings that allows us to enjoy his studies, the design of numerous illustrations and numerous alternatives Royo considers before making the final work.



paintings so far but I'm hooked already and can't wait to do more.

"I also feel that I am now ready to work the convention circuit and grow outside of the studio. I have just done Bournemouth Tattoo Convention, where I got the chance to have an 'Ink Off' with Kamil, who deservedly won, but I was privileged to be picked to go against him in the first place and my piece went on to win Best of Day, so that was cool. I'm looking forward to Tattoo Jam as it's the first convention I have worked outside of Bournemouth and I'll be working alongside some of the artists who inspired me."

Modestly, Ben also 'forgets' to mention, that all the merchandise from 2010's Bournemouth Tattoo Convention was based on his artwork, a small but at the same time, massive nod to his talent. Personally, I think this is just the tip of the iceberg for Ben. His work is powerful, clean and is loaded with passion. Add to that the drive, that got him from a bedsit in Bournemouth to his own studio in under ten years, and you have a great artist in the making... or as Ben puts it, "I learn something new every day tattooing and I think I always will. Looking back, I think without realising it I was always destined to be a tattoo artist. Every path I took and every decision I made led to where I am now." 🐾

EVEN THOUGH I HAVE BEEN TATTOOING FOR ABOUT TEN YEARS NOW, I ONLY FEEL LIKE I HAVE BEEN REALLY TATTOOING FOR TWO OF THEM. IT'S TAKEN A LONG TIME FOR ME TO DEVELOP MY STYLE AND I'M STILL NOT SURE I'M THERE YET



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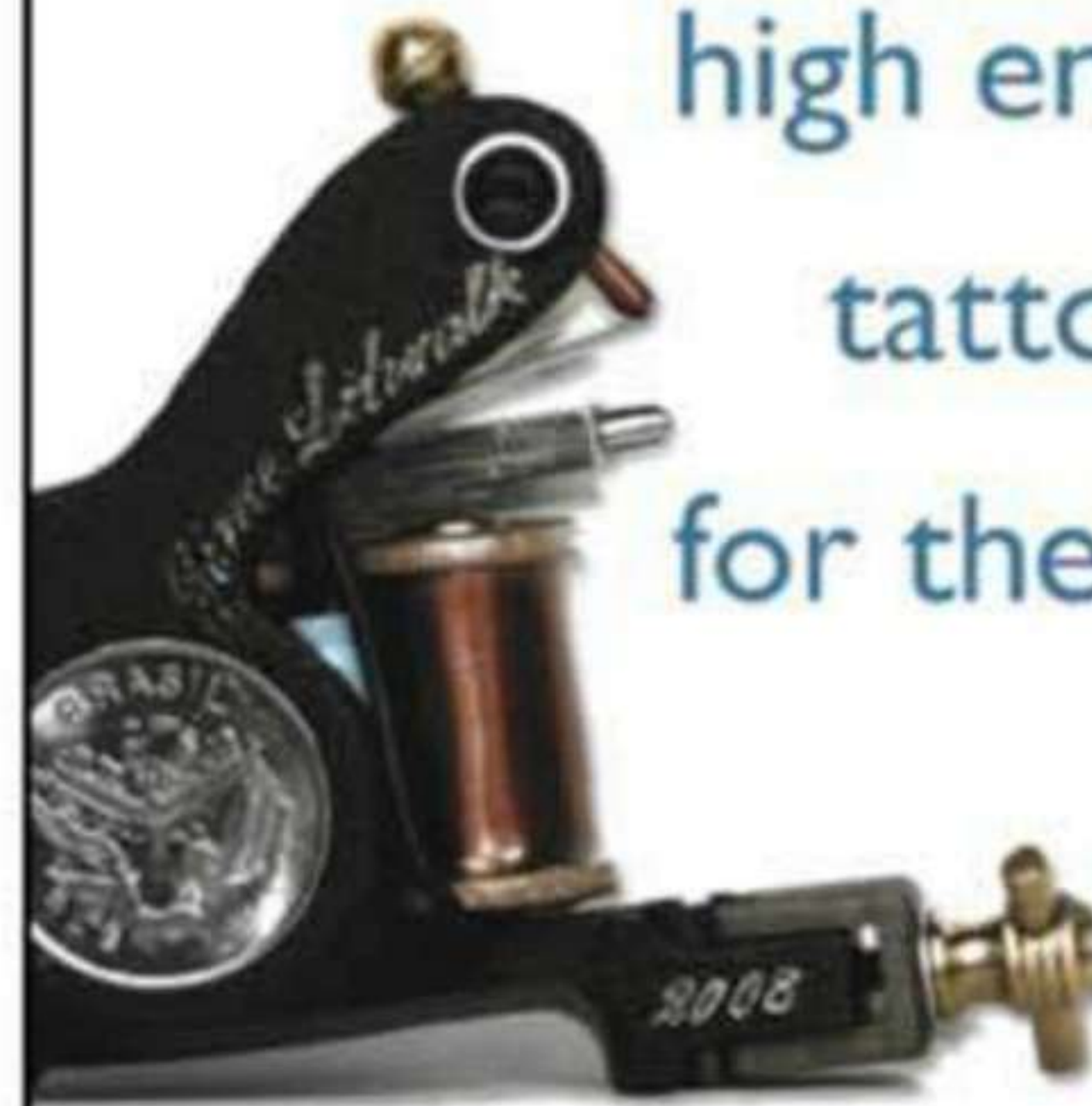


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For many interested in pursuing art as a career, it's nothing but a pipe-dream. For others, the stars align just fine and they are able to embrace their ambition – and for some... well, for some whom the Sun chooses to shine upon, they even get to work on the very thing that inspired them in the first place. Ladies and gentlemen, Anne Stokes

Sion Smith | Anne Stokes

Personally speaking, I find that any game that has a dice with more than six sides to it, is not a game, it's more like trickery from another dimension – and don't be getting all up in arms about the singular of 'dice' being 'die' either. That went out with mobile phones that had pull-up aerials. To some though, the multi-faceted

dice of Dungeons and Dragons is embedded deep in the psyche. So imagine if you would, how a young girl in love with the game could grow up to illustrate more work for the game than said dice had sides.

Anne Stokes happens to be that young girl – so influential has her art been amongst her fans, that many of them have gone the whole hog and committed her designs to tattooed permanence. With a new book available – 'Stoked' – celebrating this relationship between artist and fan, today seemed like a fine day to sit in the woods with Ms Stokes with a bottle of ye olde mead.

"A lot of people don't understand the game, but that's OK. As a child I loved to play Dungeons and Dragons and many of the fantasy artists that illustrated the rule books were my inspiration. As a teenager, I discovered heavy metal and there is a strong tie-in with fantasy art and imagery there also.

"I actually started my art career

as a jewellery designer and sculptor and as a result of this, my art often has quite a strong design element to the compositions. I was fortunate enough to get to work on the Dungeons and Dragons rule books a few years ago. I wish I could go back in time and tell the kid I was once that I would end up doing this. I think she would have been amazed!

"I now produce my own ideas and concepts for license. It's a really great way of working and allows me the freedom to paint pretty much what I want. This is not just about the rendering of the art but the design and choice of what to paint, and I enjoy this challenge and opportunity to share what's in my head with others."

Like I said, not many get that sort of opportunity - working as a full-time artist is a dream to even the most talented. I know many who have fallen by the wayside, sometimes I can even honestly sit here and say "this person who is struggling is actually much better than this person 🍀"

A FEW YEARS AGO SOMEONE EMAILED ME A PHOTO OF A TATTOO THEY HAD GOT DONE FROM ONE OF MY ARTWORKS. I THOUGHT IT WAS GREAT THAT THEY HAD LIKED MY ART ENOUGH TO GET IT TATTOOED ON AND I PUT THE PHOTO UP ON MY WEB SITE. MORE PEOPLE STARTED SENDING ME TATTOO PHOTOS AND I PUT A GALLERY ON MY SITE FOR TATTOOS DONE FROM MY ART.



who seems to be doing OK". Was the road long and hard?

"It was not an entirely 'easy ride'! Being a professional artist is not just about the art itself. You need to be determined, consistent and take criticism on the chin. I am a kind of 'never give up, never surrender' type of person and kept battering away at it. The only way in life to fail for sure is never to try, and I am grateful that I followed my dream and it all worked out in the end."

Stoked is a lovely book – it's obviously been put together with a lot of love, care and respect on all sides, and this is something that shines through every aspect of Anne's work.

"A few years ago someone emailed me a photo of a tattoo they had done from one of my artworks. I thought it was great that they had liked my art enough to get it tattooed and I put the photo up on my website. More people started sending me tattoo photos and I put a gallery on my site for tattoos done from my art. I guess since then word has got round and it has snowballed. The photos I've been emailed are just the tip of a very large iceberg.

"I have seen many tattoos on people at shows, and just randomly

PENCIL OR GRAPHICS TABLET?

I do both, but mainly now it is digital. This is still essentially the same technique as painting on canvas but I have a graphics table and pen and I choose colours on the screen and paint with a virtual brush. As my art is used on many different products this allows for easy resizing or tweaking the background or composition to fit the format. I think the key thing with any art medium is to use what is right for you and not be controlled by it. It's a means to an end and the end point is always what is important.



"AS WITH MANY OF MY BETTER IDEAS THE BOOK CAME FOR ME IN A FLASH. EARLIER THIS YEAR I WAS DRIVING BACK HOME LATE AT NIGHT AND JUST THOUGHT I MUST DO A BOOK WITH ALL THESE TATTOOS AND I MUST CALL IT STOKED."



when I'm out, that have been done from my designs. When I decided to do the book, I put a message on my website and my Facebook page for submissions and we were overwhelmed by the response. It was amazing. I was also really touched to learn some of the stories behind why people chose my design for their tattoo and to see their faces – mostly before I just got sent photos of a bit of arm or leg, and never saw the person behind them.

"As for the book itself, as with many of my better ideas the book came to me in a flash. Earlier this year I was driving back home late at night and just thought I must do

a book with all these tattoos and I must call it **Stoked**. Once I get an idea in my head there's no stopping me. From initial concept to printed copy in my hands was about four months.

"I knew it was a big task but it did turn out to be more epic than even I expected. We got so many submissions and wanted to make the book look interesting, so a lot of work went into the layout. I worked with an excellent graphic designer called Richard, who did a great job and kept a calm head despite so much work and chaos."

And with Anne being a genuinely lovely person, in the production of **Stoked**, she made sure that all parties



were well taken care of for their time and effort, striking up respectful relationships with fans and tattooists alike. I point out that you can't buy that sort of loyalty with anything but action and ask her if that's something she likes to cultivate wherever she can.

"I have great respect for tattoo artists and their work. No room to make an error and something that will be there for the rest of a person's life. It means a lot to me when they have in turn complimented my work. Art is a wonderful thing that can unite many people in their common interest of it. It's really a way of communicating a concept and idea without words.

To expand on that a little, my art is fantasy in subject and contains a lot of symbolism that can relate to people's everyday emotions and lives. I think this is perhaps why it has been favoured for tattoos. I love what I do, but it does involve painting on my own quite a lot. I am really quite a people person, so it's great to get out and

meet other artists and fans at shows.

"The tattoos on the book are a mixture of styles, which in itself I think is really interesting. Tattoos are a very personal thing and personal taste is involved. I am amazed by some of the effects, vibrant colours and subtle shading that can be achieved in tattoos. Not to mention 🌸

"I HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR TATTOO ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK. NO ROOM TO MAKE AN ERROR AND SOMETHING THAT WILL BE ON FOR THE REST OF A PERSON'S LIFE. IT MEANS A LOT TO ME WHEN THEY HAVE IN TURN COMPLIMENTED MY WORK. ART IS A WONDERFUL THING THAT CAN UNITE MANY PEOPLE IN THEIR COMMON INTEREST OF IT. IT'S REALLY A WAY OF COMMUNICATING A CONCEPT AND IDEA WITHOUT WORDS"

**WIN!**

Anne has kindly handed over not only a signed copy of her book but also this killer sculpture of her Hellrider! A simple email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line STOKED will ensure good n proper entry into the draw.

the conviction and bravery of the people having them done.”

To the casual reader, it might seem like an easy project, but not all artists are willing to set their work free and find a home in various guises around the world - not that it's something any artist can control whether they like it or not:

“True - this would be hard to control, however if someone likes

FOR ME THAT IS THE BEST WAY TO TOUCH PEOPLE WITH AN IMAGE, NO NEED FOR WORDS OR LANGUAGE TRANSLATION, JUST TAKE IT AS YOU SEE IT

my art enough to want to get it permanently tattooed, I see this as a great compliment and I am happy for them to do so. I do like to see photos of the end results and it's always nice when people send them in. The internet is a great thing and spreads my art instantly all over the world.

“The people who have liked my art, told their friends, bought products featuring it, got a tattoo, etc. are the people who have made my art career possible. It is my pleasure to give a little something back, and tattoo permission seems the least I could do.”

Personally speaking, I never get tired of words and what I can do with them. Occasionally, I will go out and buy sketchbooks thinking that maybe I'll try my hand at sketching. Inevitably, not much later, they will find their way into my kids' hands - a man's got to know his limitations I guess, but I'm always curious as to



whether artists feel inclined to walk the way of the alphabet and put the things in their head into words.

“My interest is always with pictures. Many of my images have a story or concept behind them that I like to try and convey in the art. For me that is the best way to touch people with an image, no need for words or language translation, just take it as you see it and read what you like into the meaning. Before I ever put pen to paper to make a new artwork, a good deal of thought goes into the idea for the picture and the design so the desired effect can hopefully be achieved.

“I live in Yorkshire which is a lovely

part of the UK. Before this I spent my life in London, which also has many great qualities and some fantastic architecture. I draw inspiration and stories from all around me. Sometimes from the most random things, like the way rocks line up to form a shape, or a person looks over their shoulder to suggest a mood. The world is a brilliant place and there is wonder in the smallest things all around us.”

And that, in a nutshell, is Anne Stokes. Buy her book. Love her book. Knock yourselves out with tattoos of creatures from slightly behind the curtain. The address is tattoo@annestokes.com when you're done. 🐍

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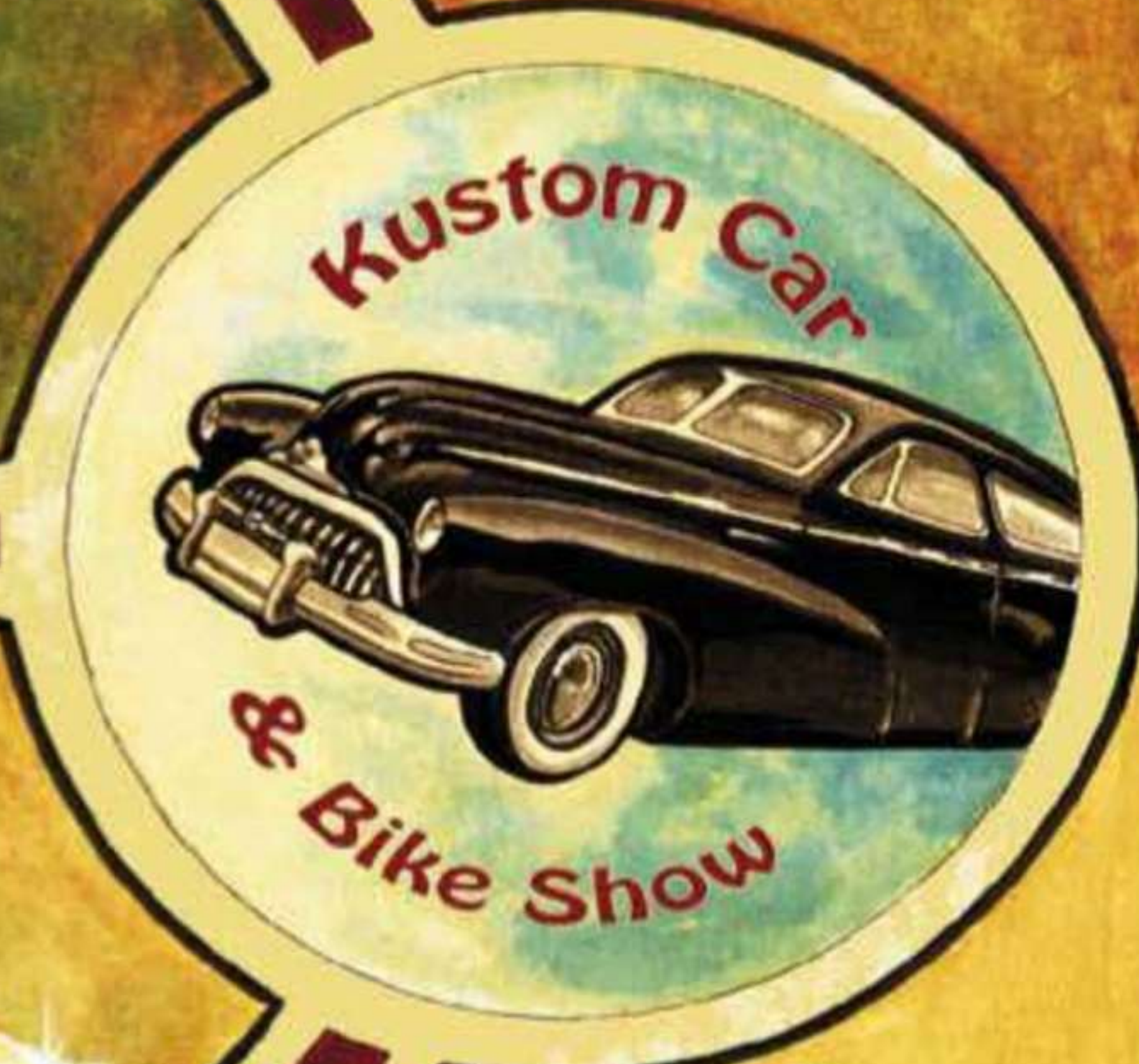


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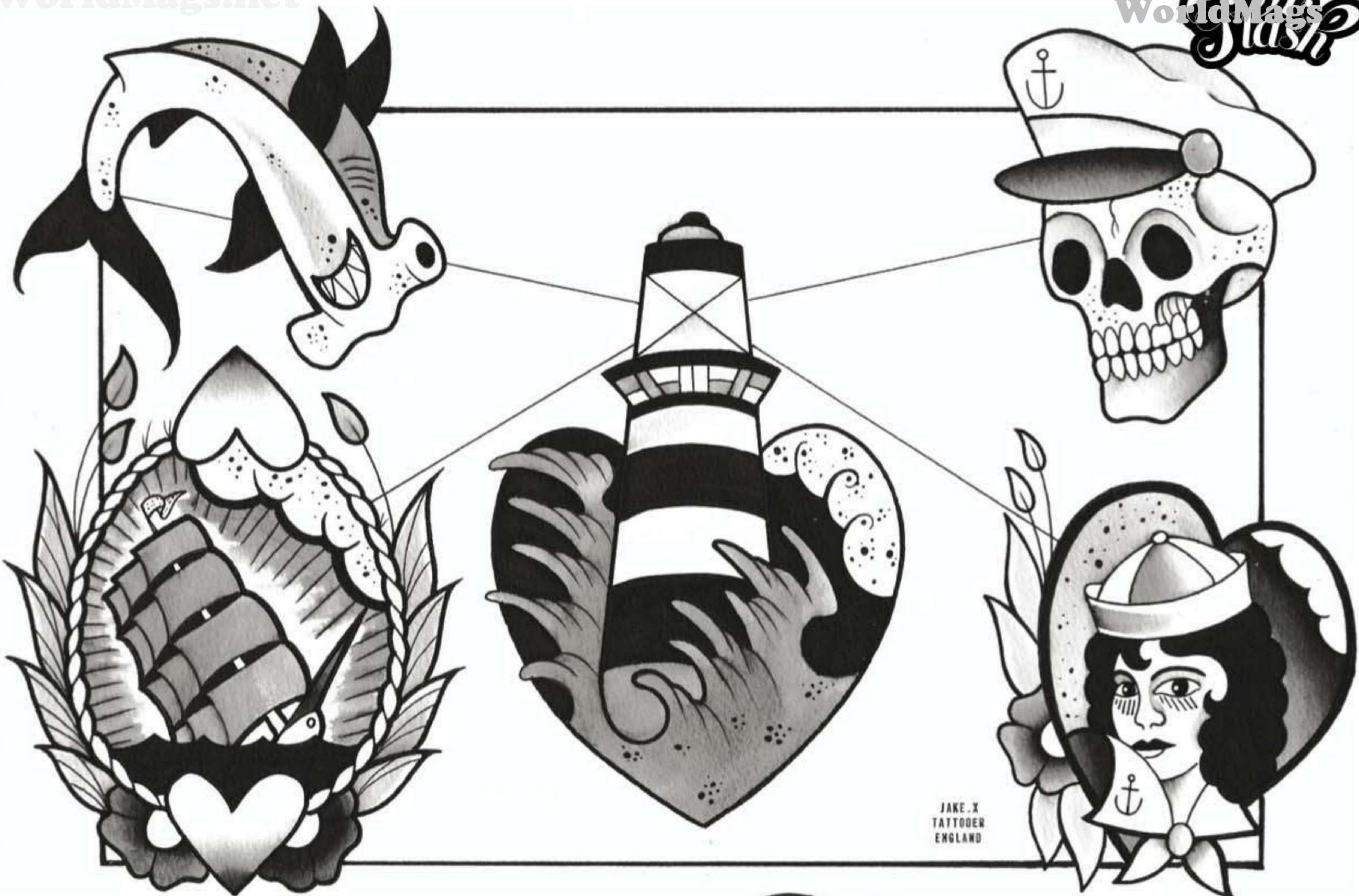
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ROBERT WITCZUK
ARTIST PROFILE



SNAKE-EYES!

Sometimes the postman brings you something that makes you sit up and pay attention. Usually it takes a certain amount of chocolate / alcohol / alcoholic chocolate to do the trick in the Skin Deep camp, but then there are the happy moments when a portfolio hits the mat and we think 'ooh, you're a bit special'



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That's certainly what happened when Mr Robert Witczuk got in touch. One quick look through his eclectic back catalogue of pastel-like portraits, biomech and black & grey – with splashes of colourful surrealism thrown in for good measure – was enough to convince us that here was someone worth putting the liqueur caramels down for. And a few tales of toy tanks, self-discovery and tattoo geekery later, we were very glad we did.

Originally from Poland, Robert is now based in Dublin, where he's been tattooing at Snakebite Tattoo in the city centre for the past three years. The shop's been there for 15 years, he tells us, and the location is great for the mind – “loads of people from all over the world pass through so there's always something to keep you occupied.”

One thing that doesn't occupy his mind, however, is trying to dictate the mood and feel of the studio,

THAT'S JUST THE NATURAL FLOW OF THE LEARNING CURVE. GOOD THING IT WAS ON MY OWN ANKLE, I REALISED IT WASN'T AS EASY AS I THOUGHT!



as he's too busy being himself and cracking on with the job at hand. “Whatever impression a client gets of the shop is a reflection on themselves,” he says, explaining that every client is different – some talkative, too nervous for chat. “I'm not there to make an impression or be an actor, I'm there to do my thing as well as I can. I just do my job and the rest comes out naturally. Ask my clients what they think!” he laughs.

Tattooing didn't always come naturally for Robert, though; there were a few learning experiences first. The journey of discovery started over a decade ago when he – along with a lot of us – got his first tribal dragon tattoo (a wry laugh accompanies this admission). “That sparked my

interest in the world of tattoos," he says, "so I dug into it a bit more and in 2000 I did my own second tattoo on my ankle." As you might expect from an unskilled hand, it didn't go all that well, healing but "falling off" and needing three touch-up jobs before it stayed put. "But that's just the natural flow of the learning curve. Good thing it was on my own ankle, I realised it wasn't as easy as I thought!"

Undeterred, he says these early failures made him even more motivated, and further experiments followed, also on his own skin. "It taught me a lot about how hard I need to push on the skin without causing too much trauma," he says. Trauma? Ouch. "I wouldn't say it was the smartest way of learning," he concedes. "I needed a few cover ups later."

It's not all that surprising that Robert ended up taking this route. Poland's tattoo industry wasn't exactly booming back in the day, he says, and finding an apprenticeship

in his home city was "impossible", which really only left him with the self-teaching method. He'd also fallen in love with the process and practice of tattooing, "and the tattoo gun became my preferred way of expressing myself." He had to wait a little before dedicating himself to his art, finishing a Master's in Visual Arts and then sharpening his skills under the tutelage of Marcin Sonski, who was the first industry pro he worked with. "Working with him for a few months took my art to a much higher level than the previous years of working on my own. And the other person with a huge influence on my career was Pavel Lewicki," he says, "his different style and approach helped me develop my own technique and way of working."

Now that he's a few years further down the line, how would he describe that technique, and style? "I wouldn't see myself as having one particular style," he says, "I like to

TOY STORY

You never forget your first tattoo machine. Especially one like Robert's...
 "I actually made it out of a motor from an old Walkman. It sucked but the second one was a beauty - made out of a Russian toy tank! The third one was bought from one of not-too-many tattoo suppliers in Poland at the time, Piotr Żurawski. I was so lost since I had no one to show me how to set the gun up, and with my only previous experience being with a motor from a Walkman and a toy tank, the first few times using the gun were really rocky. "But before long I had it set up and I was on my way. The first tattoo I did on somebody else was a cobra snake on my cousin; I used my first gun made out of the Walkman motor, so the tattoo fell off, just like the one I did on myself..."



I TRY TO GET AN IDEA OF WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR BY TALKING TO THEM AND ASKING QUESTIONS. MY PREFERRED WAY OF WORKING IS TO TAKE THE IDEAS THEY PROVIDE AND BUILD SOMETHING ON THE SKIN



experiment.” Rather than pigeon-holing himself into one school he prefers to be flexible and takes a genre-mashing approach, messing around with different styles and sometimes even mixing them. “I don’t want to shut myself out to new techniques, it’s more fun to work like that, in my opinion!”

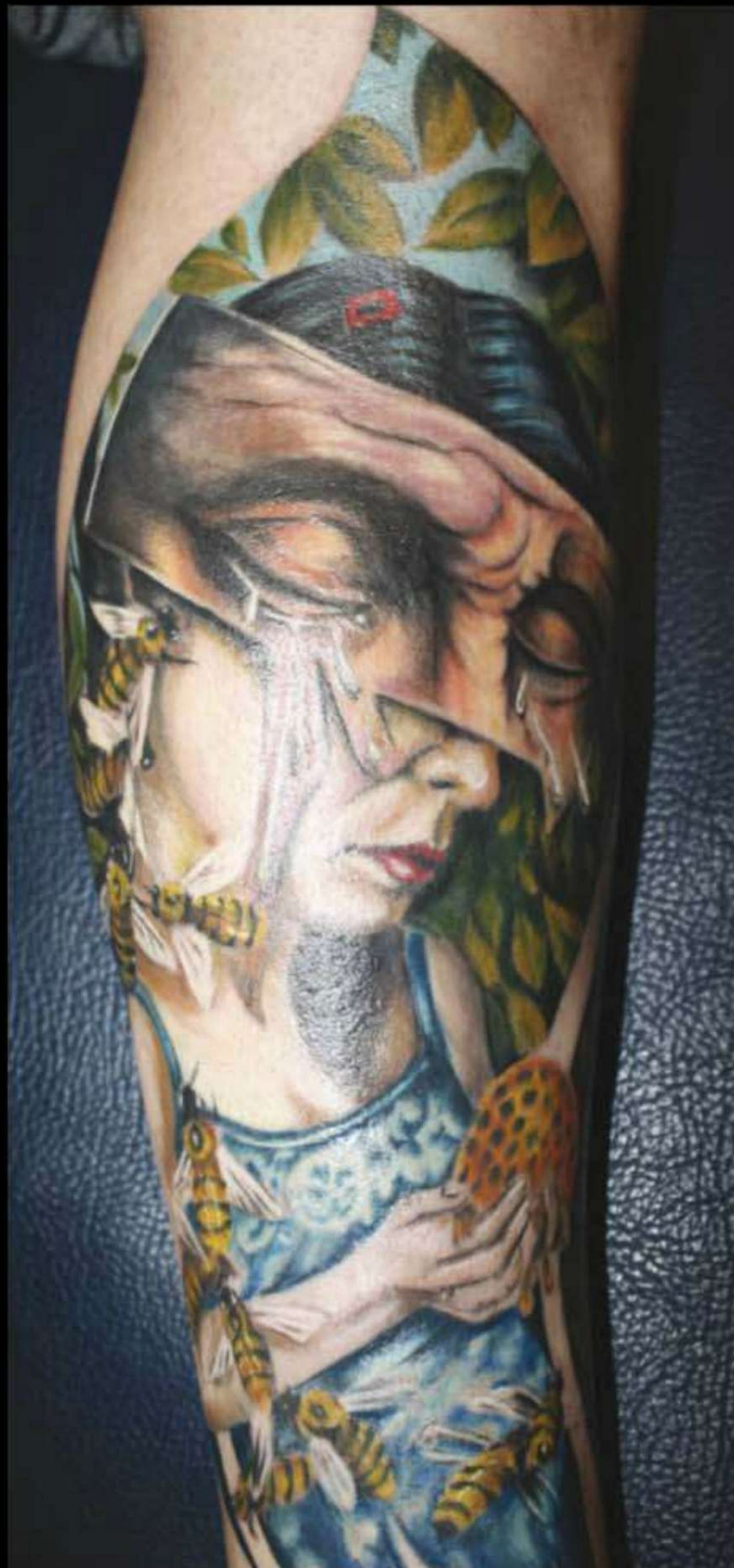
That said, he’s noticed that his diverse portfolio does throw up certain patterns. “Although I work in many different styles, I love realism and for inspiration I pull a lot from photography. And if I have to draw something [freehand], usually it comes out more cartoon-y.” He doesn’t mind this seeming contradiction, though – “a big fat power line hasn’t killed anyone yet!”

Neither – as far as we know – has music (at least not directly), which is handy for anyone going under Robert’s needle, because “even though it’s annoying sometimes, it must be playing; and I sing to my clients even when they aren’t asking!” He says he likes to work fast, but still paying attention to every detail; and some days you might find him noisier than on others – “sometimes you can’t shut me up, but on the odd day I keep to myself.”

Even on the quiet days, for Robert the tattooing process is a collaborative one. “Most clients have an idea of what they want but then at the same time can’t – or don’t – want to make a final decision on the image, and they need my opinion.

“I try to get an idea of what they’re looking for by talking to them and asking questions. My preferred way of working is to take the ideas they provide and build something on the skin,” he says, “I’ve noticed that there’s more impact on a client when the tattoo design is drawn on the skin, rather than a piece of paper. I can also use the geometrics of the body to my advantage, which is something you can’t get from a flat piece of paper, and I can customise the design with the client, letting it take shape, going through colour options to produce the final tattoo.”

It’s a delicate balance, Robert thinks, between giving people the inkwork they want while sometimes giving them the steer they need to end up with a great piece of art.



“Some people don’t know what the possibilities are for a tattoo,” he says, “and I like to show them what’s actually possible. But you also have to keep in mind that tattooing is a customer service industry and every so often you have to feel out a client to see if they want to hear what you have to say. Some clients are just stubborn!”

Does he take inspiration from other studios and artists to help educate his own clients? “I don’t actually read or look into other tattoo artists or studios too much,” he says, and explains that while there’s “a lot of great work out there” and he likes to keep an eye on the tattoo world, he doesn’t want to follow things so

much that others’ work starts directly influencing his own. Plus, there’s the tattoo boom to contend with – “the industry has grown so fast, especially in the last few years, that it’s actually hard to keep up with.”

That said, he’s definitely got his favourites when it comes to his own collection, both in terms of their artwork and the way in which they practice their craft, and his recent tattoos weren’t self-inked – “I’ve learned my lesson!” Instead, he turned to Denise Conroy and Marcin Sonski, who he describes as “great artists as well as great friends.

“I think that the relation between the artist and the client is important,” he goes on, “and with those two the 🍌



atmosphere is pure pleasure and it shows in the artwork. Not only is their work fantastic, but the time spent with them in the studio, the three or four hours of pain can – believe it or not – be quite enjoyable.”

Add to that his plan to head back to his native Poland to get some neck work from Victor Portugal, and it seems like he's definitely moved on from that tribal dragon. Where's it all going ultimately? “It's a work in progress, ask me when the journey has ended!” he laughs.

For the moment, that journey is passing through Dublin, but catch him while you can – the plan is to move to Canada next year with his Canadian wife to see what the industry there has to offer. He also likes to play around with photography to “keep those creative

IN MY OPINION IT STARTS WITH THE IDEA AND HOW WELL YOU EXECUTE IT. SOMETIMES THE DETAILS ARE THE KEY INGREDIENT, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, FOR EXAMPLE, THE COMEDY AND HUMOUR BEHIND THE TATTOO COULD MAKE IT GREAT AS WELL

juices flowing”, but it's something he has to fit in between tattooing and being a husband and father, and in the end it's the day job that really holds his creative interest.

“I could give you a big elaborate answer about what I like best about tattooing and drag it out for days,” he says, “but to make it simple: I love my job. I love the variety, love the technique, and I love that you never know what the day will bring.” He's certainly in a good place at the moment, working with a team who are “kind of like new age tattoo nerds. We get excited even after so many years of tattooing, we're like ‘I got to use a three tight liner [used for tiny details and thin outlines]’, or ‘just look at this avocado green!’”

Not that it's perfect, mind – we all have things that vex us about our work, and for Robert it's attention seeking behaviour, like the couple who came into the studio so the girl could be inked. “I'm working away and the girl is sounding like she is getting murdered while holding her boyfriend's hand, but the minute the boyfriend leaves the tattoo room to get a drink all the moaning

and groaning goes right out the window,” he says. See where this is going? “And the minute he comes back, it's like the flick of a switch and it all goes downhill again!”

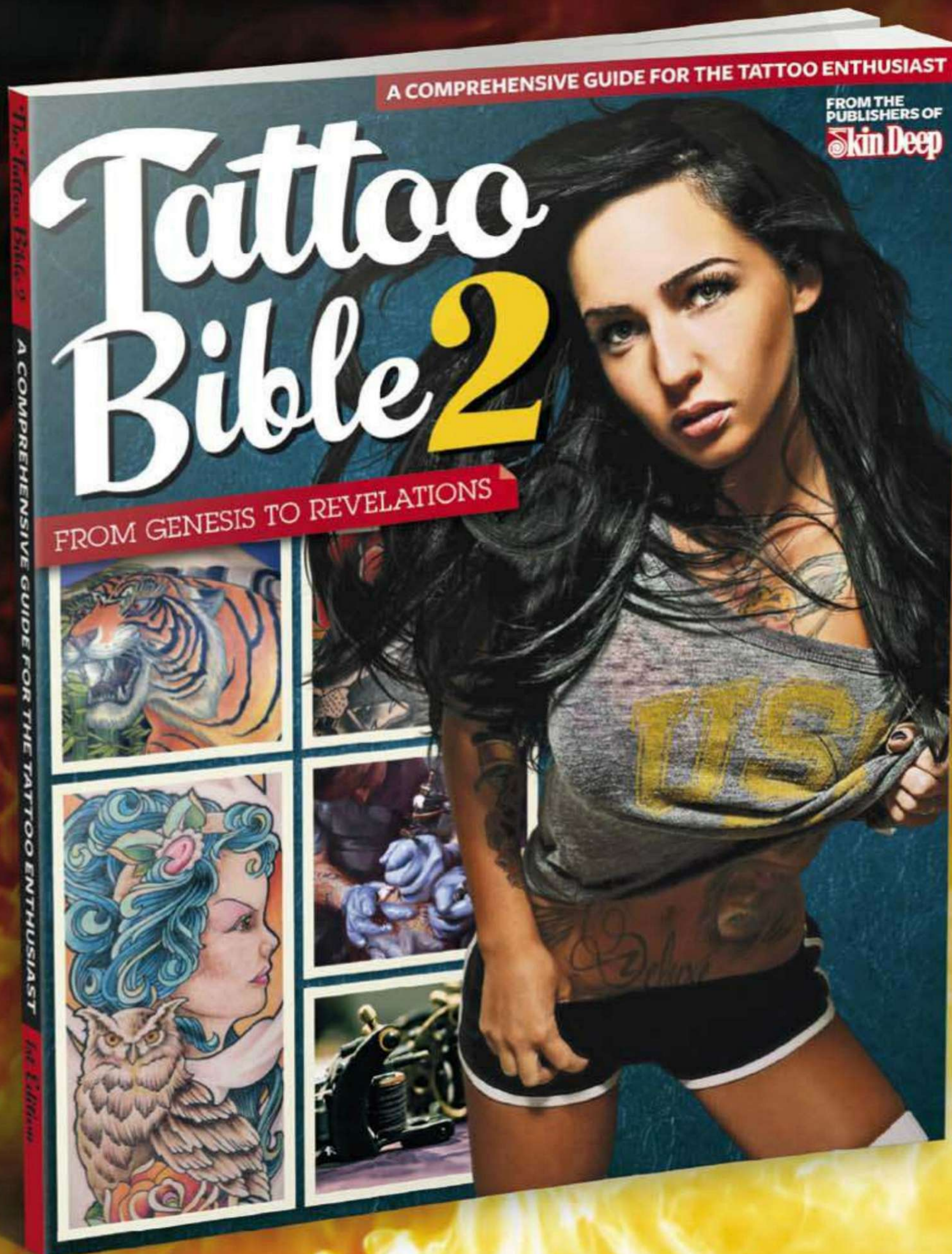
It's a small niggle, of course, as is his only other gripe, which is about repetitive ideas. “Of course not all tattoos are fun to do, but I don't have any designs that I don't like doing,” he says, “but repetitive ideas sometimes get on your nerves. Too much of one thing is never good.”

So how does a good or great tattoo get created? “In my opinion it starts with the idea and how well you execute it. Sometimes the details are the key ingredient, but at the same time, for example, the comedy and humour behind the tattoo could make it great as well.” There's that potential contradiction again, but according to Robert, well... that's art, isn't it? “The definition of art itself is 'producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power',” he concludes, “so at the end of the day it's all in the eye of the beholder.” 🤖



THE NEW TESTAMENT

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When we published Volume One of *The Tattoo Bible*, tattooing was at a point of immense popularity. Who would have thought twelve months on that its popularity would grow into an even bigger global phenomenon? It is as much a part of popular culture today as our favourite TV shows, films and musicians. Along with that popularity comes a thirst for knowledge and a need for a respected source to answer those questions.

In this – *The Tattoo Bible 2* – we once again bring you the essential information you need to make good decisions when it comes to getting your first tattoo. You'll also find great advice from respected writers and tattoo artists. We look at everything you need to know if you're a tattoo virgin thinking about your first time, right across the board to how to get on the road to becoming a tattoo artist yourself and the right way to go about it.

We talk to respected international tattoo artists, look at the role the media has played in the sudden growth in popularity, arm you with a history of the art and discuss the different schools of tattooing. We look at the best in aftercare advice, give an overview of the international convention scene and how you can use it to your advantage and lift the lid on cover-ups. Of course - it wouldn't be a Skin Deep spin-off if we didn't lavish it with some outstanding photography and drop in a few of our best ever features to make this volume an even more collectible edition than the first.

Ultimately, *The Tattoo Bible 2* presents you with a fantastic worldview on the industry as it stands today. Just because we're having fun doesn't mean we're not taking it seriously!

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THE FRIGHTENERS

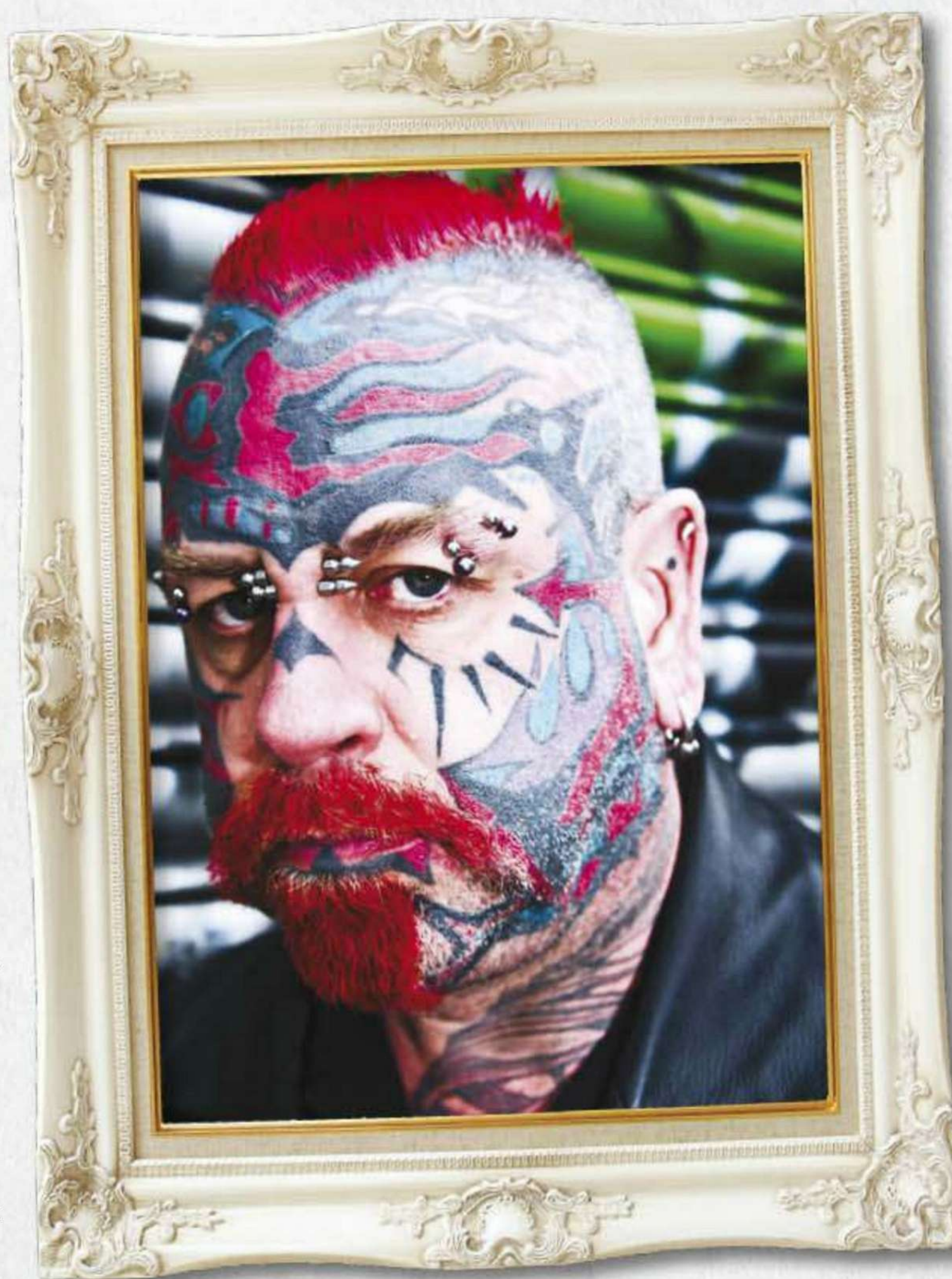
On paper, the concept is sheer folly. “Hey, what if we sent a guy who was tattooed to the extreme into primary and secondary schools to teach them what life was really about?” Ironically, in practice, it’s sheer genius and the most fun I’ve had in months. Join me as we cruise the mean streets of the UK with The Scary Guy...

As is always the way with great material, my run-in with the modern day philosopher, The Scary Guy, came about completely by chance. It was such a random chain of events that had nothing to do with tattooing that it’s not even worth mentioning. The important thing in all of this was that the pennies dropped fast and hard as to what he was all about – and I’ll say right up front here, I take off my hat to you Sir. Not only for being a man of conviction, but for taking those convictions to the streets in a totally unique fashion.

I’ve thought long and hard about whether or not to explain exactly what it is that Scary Guy does and I’ve decided not to. Better that you check out the boxed copy that runs through the article and watch some clips instead. They will have more impact than a few hundred well chosen words ever could.

I guess if you’re not used to tattoos, or your experience is fleeting, it is a shocker to have this big guy come into your environment, but even to those of us who dive in and out of it all day long, when you come across facial tattoos, it still gives you pause for thought, but let’s start the story at the beginning:

“I was 30 when I got my first tattoo, which probably seems crazy these days. Way back, I was a vocal performance major and I always thought I’d end up being a singer, but somehow I ended up as a baby portrait photographer and then I became a computer salesman. It was a good life. I got on at the right time and managed to make some really decent money and that was when I



started collecting tattoos. Actually, when I look back on it now, it was quite a magical time.


“My first one was a dragon on my left bicep, maybe about three inches tall. I stopped by at this studio in Tucson, Arizona and was amazed by all the flashwork they had going on in there, totally fell in love with it. So the dragon got done, and the guy says to

me, ‘I got good news and bad news for you. That won’t be the last...’

“So I get home and I’m checking myself out in the mirror and I figured it looked a little unbalanced, so the next day I went back and I got a tiger on my other bicep. Get home and I do the same again, only this time, I figure my chest is looking a little bare. So I went back the next day and got a

Siobhán Smith
Photos by Dirk Behlau, dirkbehlau.de © VisionHeart 2011 All Rights Reserved



* *
 So I get home and I'm checking
 myself out in the mirror and I figured
 it looked a little unbalanced, so the
 next day I went back and I got a
 tiger on my other bicep.
 Get home and I do the same again,
 only this time, I figure my chest is
 looking a little bare...
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panther put on it. I thought that was unbalanced as well, so the very next day, I went back again and got a bigger dragon put on my back – this one was maybe 12 inches tall. That's how it started. Four tattoos in four days."

Now here's where the curveballs start to come in. We can all understand the need for more ink after the first one, maybe we can even comprehend the need for balance, bigger and better, but as to what happened next, well...

"I decided that this was definitely the 'thing' for me and after a lot of searching, I struck up a relationship with Suzanne Fauser who was out in Michigan at the time. Now, at the time I was still a computer salesman, so two things were going on here. The first was that she did a total custom job on me, no flash. That was a new thing for me. I was collecting tattoos at a really fast rate. I would work my job in the week and as soon as I was done for the week, I would jump on a jet and get out there to have more work done and what I didn't realise at the time was how much I was soaking up and learning from her.

"The second thing that happened around this time was that I had to go to this company picnic one day. Now, it's one thing to know or suspect that somebody has tattoos, but it's another thing to see them in the flesh. We're talking mid-1980's here, so tattoos are still in the domain of 'outsiders' if you like. I turned up in shorts and a tee with them all on display – also bear in mind here, these were people I loved and had trusted for a long time, I thought they'd get a real kick out of it - but their attitude about me changed right there and then on the spot. Every single one of them. I didn't get it at the time, but it was never about me, it was about them.

"I figured if this was what was going on inside people's heads, it was time to get out of corporate America. I didn't want anything else to do with it, so I went out and got myself a tattoo on my neck so that I couldn't go back to work. I figured I'd find something to do. A little while later, a friend calls me up and says he has this awesome job for me – all I had to

CHECK THIS OUT (II)

Your first port of call for all things Scary, should be here: www.thescaryguy.com/tv.php First, check in at the Teacher's TV - Scary Does Parents tab. We've all been kids, I wouldn't even like to guess at how many of us are parents these days, but an educated guess allows me to confidently say 'a lot of us'. Anyway, capturing this tiny microcosm of the world of parents and kids is fascinating. After all, parents are most often little more than the same people they were at 10 years old, now in bigger bodies, ill equipped to deal with most things like this, we (yeah, self included) kind of learn to deal with life's little mysteries as they crop up.

What's interesting about that clip in particular is that the parents aren't seeing the tattoos at all, and haven't been for quite some time. As Scary himself would probably tell you, as he was walking out of the door and saying goodbye, the tattoos probably came back, but that, for me, is a priceless snippet of TV that should have a wider audience than being squirreled away on Teachers TV (whatever that is!)



I figured if this was what was going on inside *
 * peoples heads, it was time to get out of corporate America. *
 I didnt want anything else to do with it, so I went out *
 and got myself a tattoo on my neck so that I couldnt go back to work *



do was say the word. So I told him I had got my neck tattooed and he lost it. Man, he lost it. 'You stupid son of a bitch... what's gotten into you...'. That kind of thing."

...and right here, for all intents and purposes, is where a reasonably regular life begins to morph itself into something else entirely.

"I had my own studio open by now and I was making a decent living out of tattooing. It was a good life you know. Along the way, I got a little bar tattooed on the side of my face just by my ear. It was nothing pre-meditated. To me it was just a mark, but this one time, I was out at

some convention and the guy who was hosting it pulls me to one side and says 'Hey, you know the rules. No tattoos on the hands, neck or face'.

"OK, so we're going back a few years here and the guy is a real old-timer, but my reaction at the time was that I had just left that environment. I had come to this one where a man could express himself however he wanted and here's this guy telling me what I can and can't do? That was the last straw for me. That realisation that this seemingly cool world I had joined was just the same as corporate America, was a shocker."

When you distill a whole life into 🍷



The way things work in life is that you've usually got *
 * to be on your deathbed before realisations like this kick in
 * but I was on an emotional deathbed. If you're lucky in life,
 * you'll experience this as well. I was so low.

half an hour, you really get the sense of the gravity of certain situations as you skip through the years. At this point though, I'm still looking for the moment of impact – the one where the skies come crashing in and a man sees himself in the reality mirror for the first time – and here it comes...

"The way things work in life is that you've usually got to be on your deathbed before realisations like this kick in, but I was on an emotional deathbed. If you're lucky in life, you'll experience this as well. I was so low. You know, I thought I was a nice guy, I had three tattoo shops, ten artists working for me, a Harley, a mountain view out of the window... life was good but then one day, another

tattooer from town ran an advert that said 'Are you tired of getting tattooed by scary guys with warpaint facial tattoos...'

"I knew he was talking about me. I ran my mouth and thought about running down his dog over it, but I didn't, truly believing I was this really good guy and that my shit didn't stink. The next thing I know, it dawns on me like lightning that I've just been lying to myself. There was all this hate and anger at the world inside of me and basically, I decided I didn't want it anymore. First I had to fix myself. Your problems with me are not my problems – that's the first thing to learn. I don't need to carry your baggage around as well

CHECK THIS OUT (II)

Next, roll over to the Teachers TV - Inspirations tab. This one's a clip of a talk at a Secondary School. There are way too many stories of bullying going too far that end in suicide for kids on the sharp end of the stick. What you've got here, at the bottom line, is a guy who used to be a tattooist who knows how people work and isn't afraid to tell these kids exactly how he used to be. For my money, Scary should be a compulsory course for all teachers coming into the game. Why? Because every single one of those kids is actually listening and hearing... Priceless.

as my own. You get the picture... so I went into my shop and told the guys I was leaving. I sold my shops and everything I own and figured I'd just do whatever I had to do to get by.

"That was 13 years ago."

I've hung out here long enough to know that none of this has to do with religion. Not a scrap of it. That's not how it works, but I'm inclined to think that if these lightning bolt revelations happened to me, that would probably be my first port of call. You would at least have to question it in passing, wouldn't you?

"I have never used the word 'religion' or 'God' in any of my shows – and I have talked in front of Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus – nor will I, but there was a moment or two when I thought to myself 'is something working through me here?' Yeah, it crossed my mind for sure but that's all it did. Too many of the things that are wrong with the world stem from that place. Again, their problems are not my problems or yours. Each man, woman and child on this planet must look within. If we could all set about fixing ourselves from the inside, learn how to process what we put inside of ourselves that's served up by other people... well, that's where it starts.

"A few times, after I've done a show for a religious group, I've been asked 'when did you accept Jesus Christ as your saviour?' My standard reply is: 'Would you still love me if I told you I haven't?' – then people start to see the tattoos on my face again. Again, the problem is theirs, not mine. It's going to be a big learning curve for people.

"Actually, that reminds me of a letter I got from a guy who I had spoken in front of ten years ago, so he's now 28. I was doing my thing at a high school in Colorado. Liberty High School to be exact. I was maybe doing this two or three days a week back then. Anyway, ten years later I get a letter from this kid who was in the gymnasium at the school listening to me saying '... that day, I really blew you off. Today, I'm in a little town in Wyoming and the hate, the bitching, the gossip in this town has gone way out of control. I remember everything you said, so I'm going to stick around and do something about it.' How cool is that?" 🌻





CHECK THIS OUT (III)

Finally, get into the Teachers TV - Scary Does Primary tab. I know for a fact that there's more than a fair few readers out there who are hiding their tats under their teacher-garb, and I'm thinking to myself, even if just a few of you watch it and take the message into school, my part in this extraordinary project is done. Hell, you don't even have to be a teacher, the rules are the same whatever/whoever you are...

* The Forces have the same problems as everybody else outside of work. Hate, bullying, people putting you down. The bigger issue of war isn't the problem we've been killing each other since day one. The root problems all stem from the inside. Outside your house is a war too *

Scary Guy tends to have this effect. Some of the boxed copy in this article will link you to some of the talks he's done at schools in the UK and, regardless of your opinion on it, you can see the truth cut through the kids listening. He's good at this. People listen. People listen so well that the tattoos disappear. Fast. They come back later for sure, but for those moments when he's in the groove, they are looking at a man with a decent message not a tattoo. For some of those kids, that will be the only decent message they have ever gotten or are likely to. It doesn't stop at kids either. The plan is to get to as many people as fast as possible"

"I speak at military academy's too. 2,000 Air Force Cadets at the US Air Force Academy. Done that. Some

people have asked how I can justify it when these people are sent out to kill people, but I can't stop a war. What I can do is help people understand how to make changes for themselves one person at a time. What they do has nothing to do with their personal lives. They have the same problems as everybody else outside of work. Hate, bullying, violence, people putting you down. The bigger issue of war isn't the problem - we've been killing each other since day one. The root problems all stem from inside. Outside your house is a war too. People need to figure this stuff out and get a grip on how we're all busy hurting each other and it doesn't need to be that way."

And so the quest continues. Like I said earlier, go watch the video clips



and then come back and read the article again. That's all. As this man used to sign off his editorial's a long time ago... "Be Cool To Each Other." 🐼

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THE EXISTENTIALIST

Claire Reid is one of those artists who is not content to be just a tattooist. Throw into the mix an accomplished painter as well as organiser of the Rites of Passage Tattoo & Music Festival (Melbourne, Australia) and you start to get an idea of how driven Claire really is.

CONTACT
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www.myspace.com/fleurink
www.ritesofpassagefestival.com

Remarkably, this drive and determination has been there from the beginning, something that can be seen by the list of renowned artists she has apprenticed and studied under.

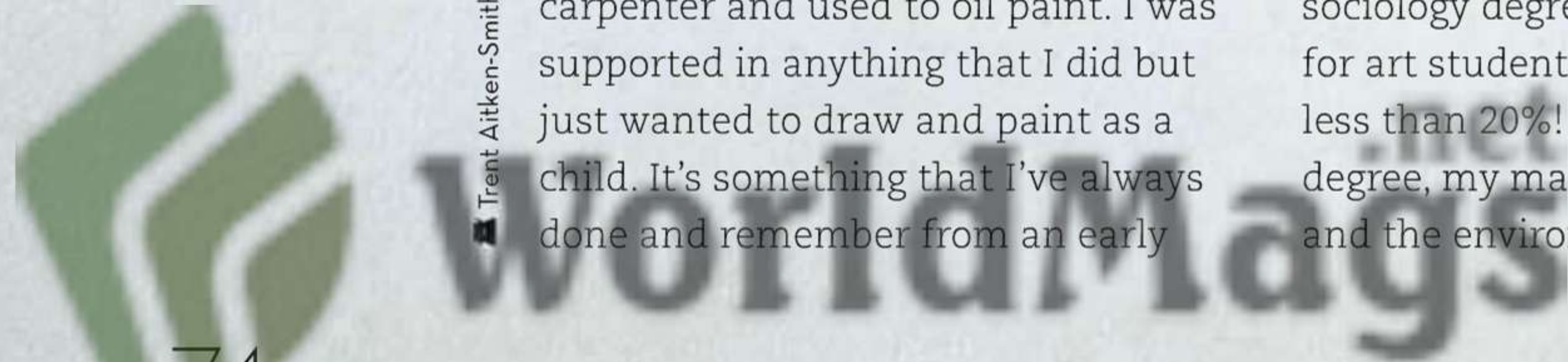
Born in 1982, in Wirral in the northwest of England, Claire was surrounded by creativity from a young age. "My family is very creative, always active and constantly making things. My Dad is amazing with wood, my Mum and my sister with fabric and my grandfather is also a master carpenter and used to oil paint. I was supported in anything that I did but just wanted to draw and paint as a child. It's something that I've always done and remember from an early

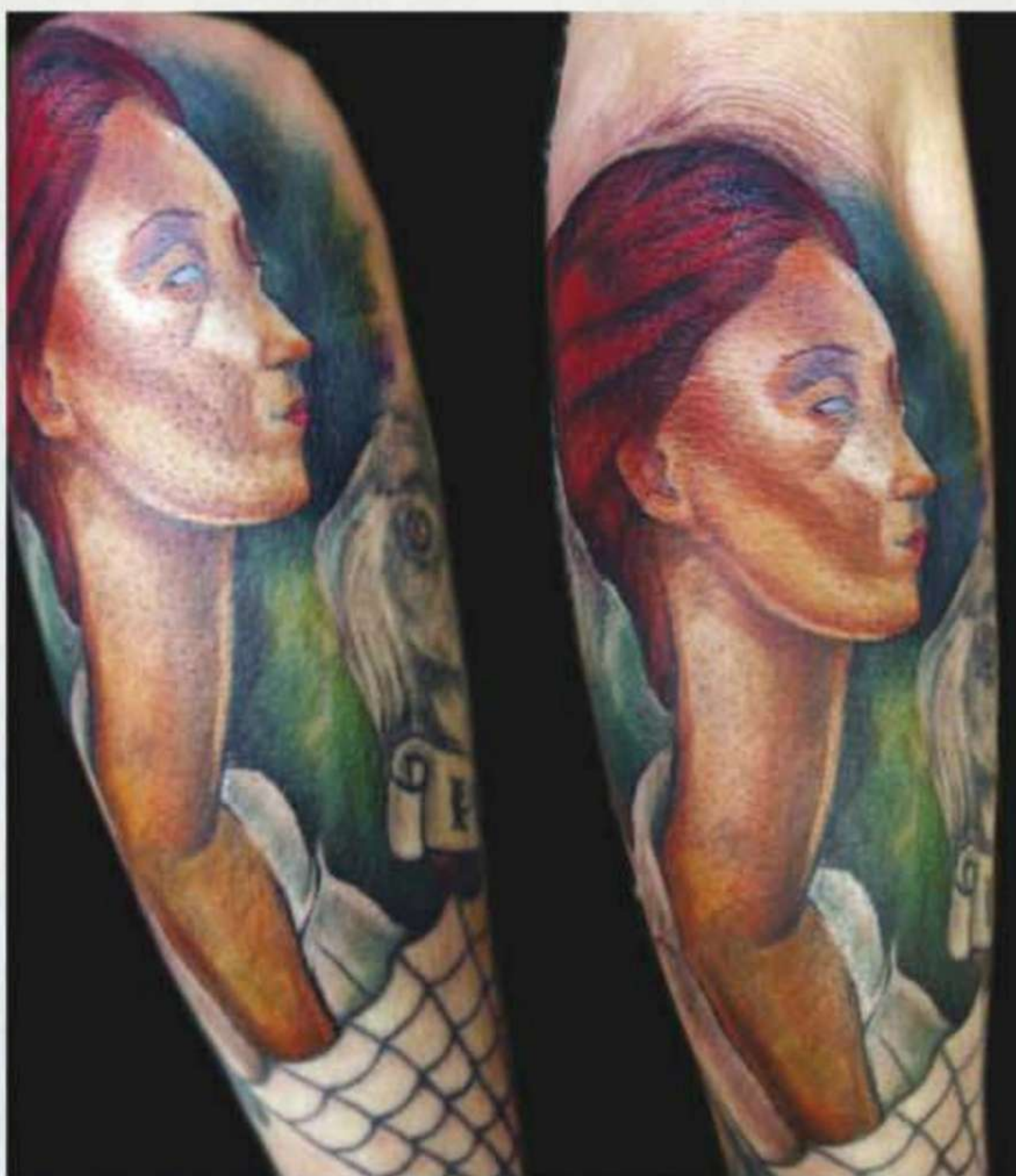
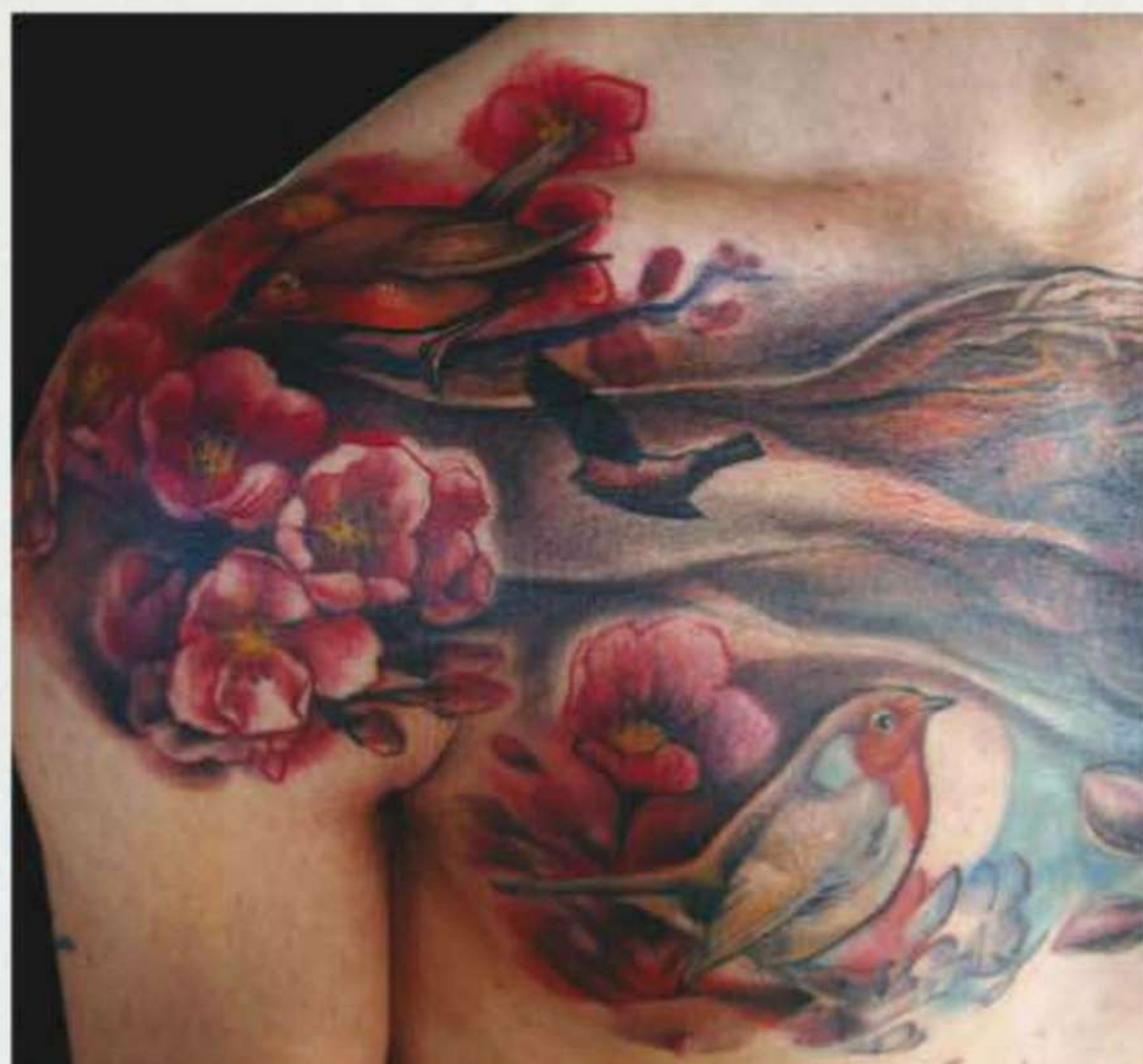
age - painting plants and animals."

"I spent most of my teenage years cooped up in my bedroom painting whilst my friends were out chasing boys - I hung with the smart crowd, not the in crowd. School was ok but I always had the need to get out of there and start doing what I was meant to be doing. I spent a lot of time day dreaming and just working and getting the grades because that's what I was meant to be doing there. I wanted to leave school and study art but was advised to do a sociology degree as the statistics for art students getting a job were less than 20%! After finishing the degree, my main passions were art and the environment and I couldn't



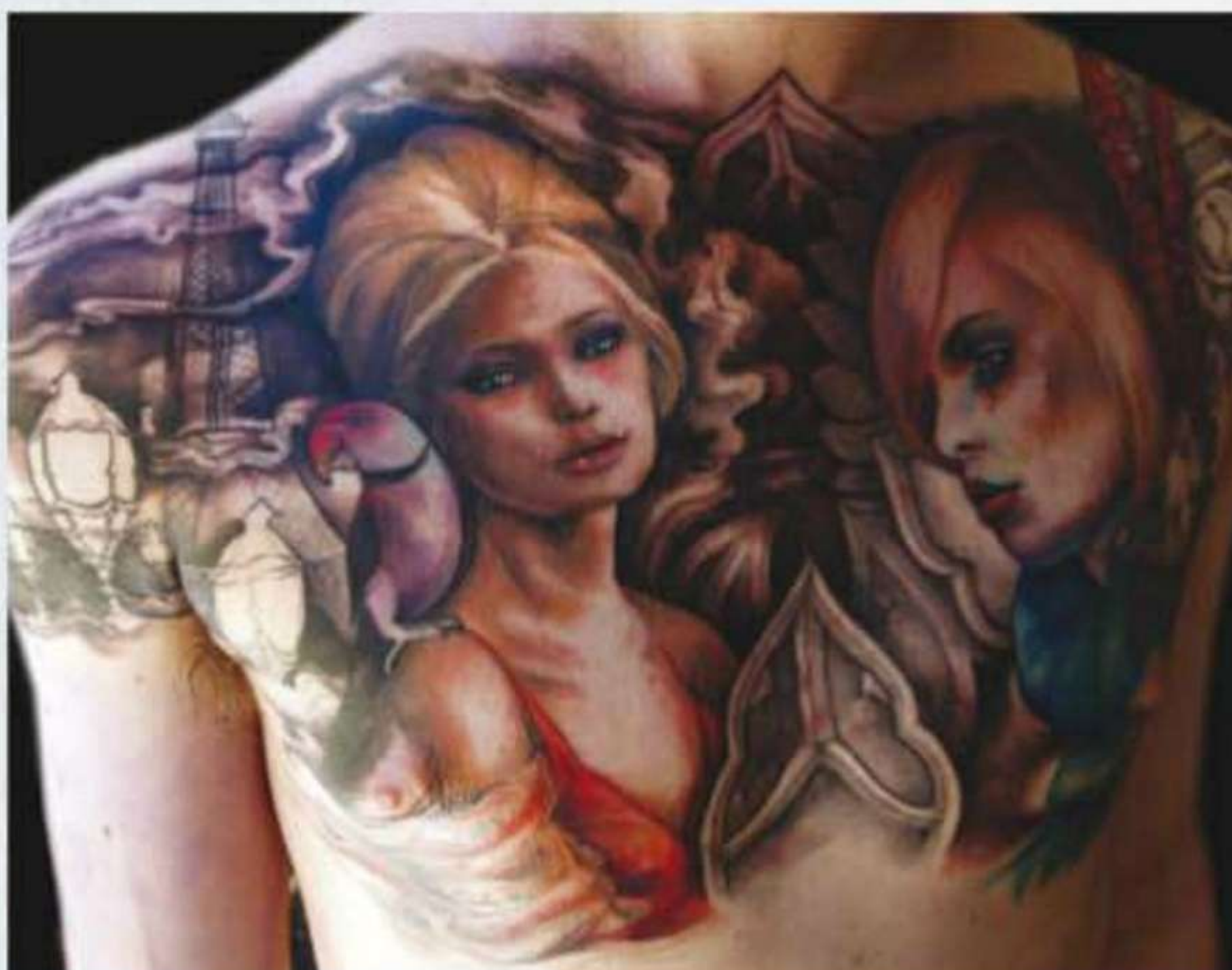
Trent Aitken-Smith © Claire Reid





**rites of passage
TATTOO & MUSIC
FESTIVAL**

“The idea to create the Rites of Passage Festival, was born from an inner desire to connect people with the deeper meanings behind getting tattooed. The art of tattooing is so multidimensional and complex that even we who practice the art forget about its intricacies. I feel that it is important to remember the ancient meaning behind getting a tattoo was all about going through a rite of passage. In modern times, we seem to have lost touch with our indigenous roots; living in cities and other man made societies is widening the gap between us and nature. At a time when the earth is so out of balance, I feel personally, a responsibility to look at my daily life and contemplate how I can live in a simpler more harmonic way that also reflects how those would have lived in a time when ceremonies such as tattoos were a central event, marking distinct growth in one’s personal life. Although, on the surface, Rites of Passage is a great tattoo convention and cultural event, it had many deeper meanings. One hundred percent of the profits from all of the shows will be donated to Australian old growth forests. It had a strong Aboriginal emphasis to pay respect to the indigenous as well as the land. We have also started up an eco-friendly tattoo supply, so that tattooists can operate in a harmonic way using all bio-degradable disposable equipment.”



PUTTING INK UNDER THE SKIN REALLY INTRIGUES ME. I FIND IT FASCINATING THAT EACH PERSON HAS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SKIN AND THE APPLICATION IS DIFFERENT FROM PERSON TO PERSON.

find a job in either so when I left university, I opened a contemporary art gallery selling glass, ceramics and paintings in order to study on the side as an artist. I ran the shop for a while and managed to break even with it but I still wasn’t painting as much as I’d hoped and neither was I advancing in my art.”

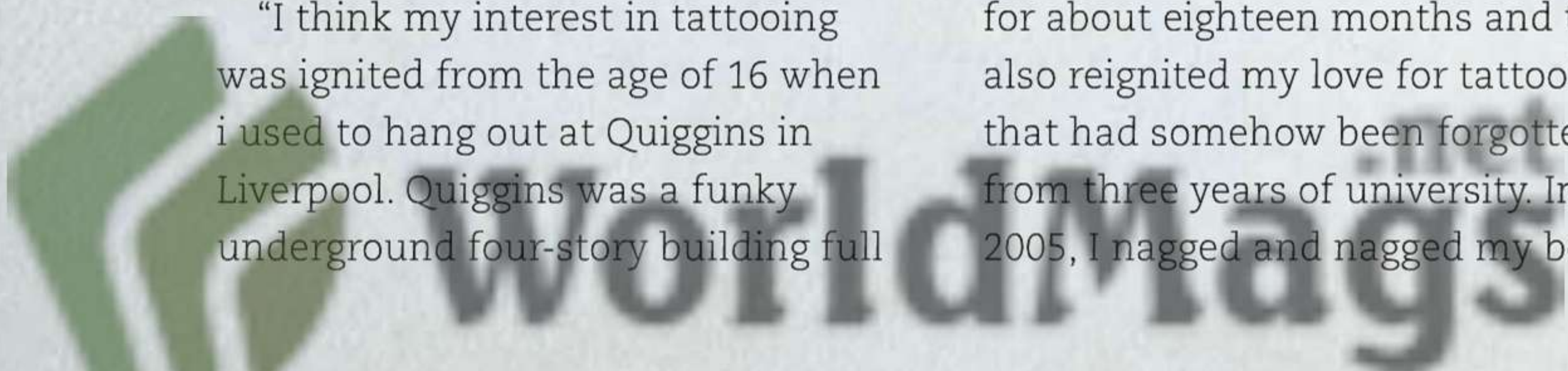
“I think my interest in tattooing was ignited from the age of 16 when i used to hang out at Quiggins in Liverpool. Quiggins was a funky underground four-story building full

of retro second hand moth eaten shops, with tattooing and piercing on the top floor. All the Goths used to hang out there. I was naturally drawn to the imagery used in tattooing from the first time i saw it.”

“I decided to close the gallery and a week later, I got a job that I loved – piercing in Luton market. I pierced for about eighteen months and this also reignited my love for tattooing that had somehow been forgotten from three years of university. In 2005, I nagged and nagged my boss

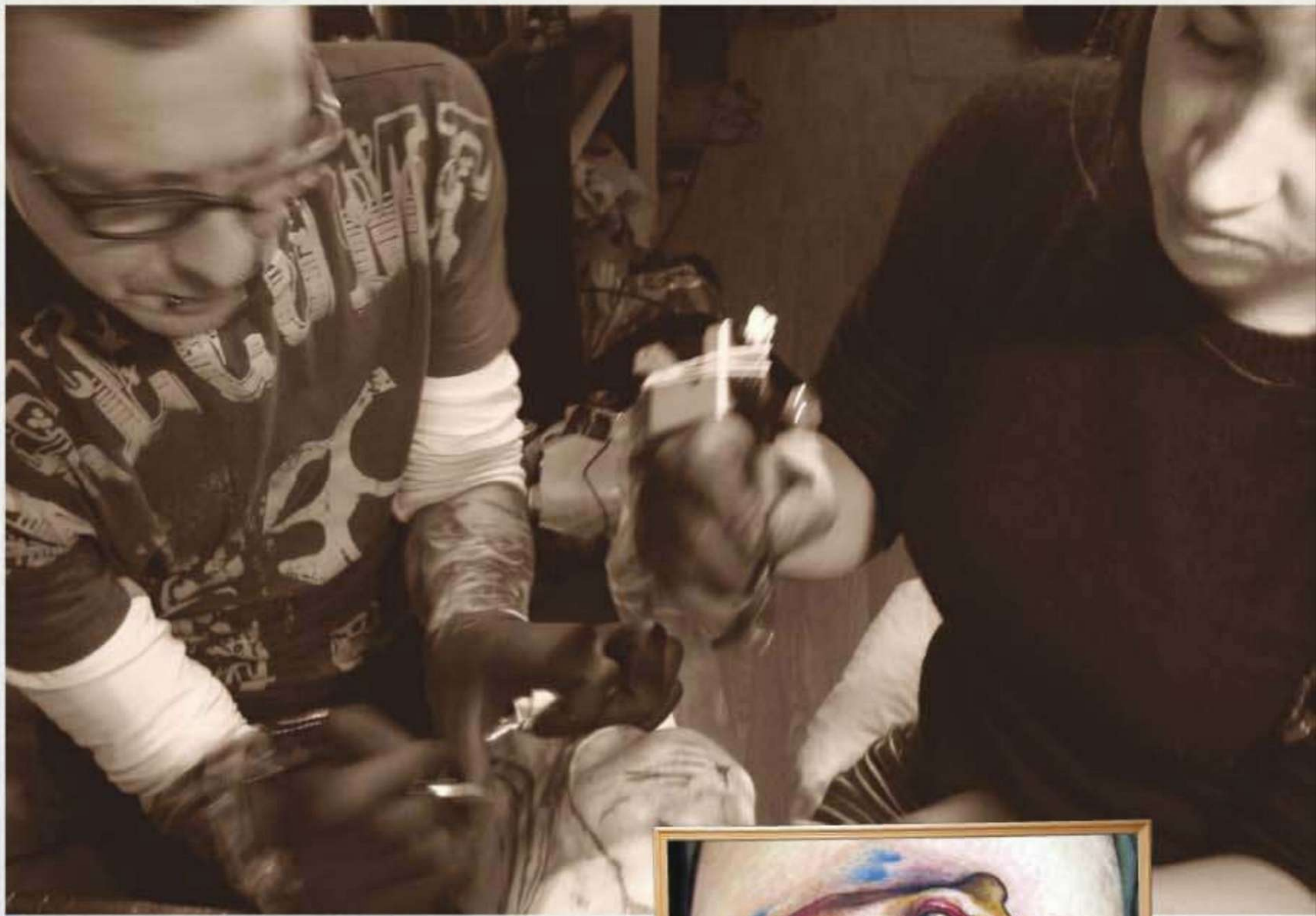
to let me learn tattooing but she didn't think that my drawings were good enough and only gave in after another employee got sacked. She gave me six weeks to learn to tattoo and said she would make me go back to piercing if I couldn't do it in that time. I worked my ass off. Tattooing and practicing as much as I could under the guidance of another tattoo artist. He then emigrated and I was full time in the studio from there on.”

“I have been obsessed ever since. I love this lifestyle and all that goes



with it. It's pretty full on and most people outside of the industry don't realise the hours involved when it comes to preparations, pre and post, tattoo. I love the permanence of art on skin that can live and grow with a person that constantly changes and adapts to the elements. I also love the technical side too. Putting ink under the skin really intrigues me. I find it fascinating that each person has completely different skin and the application is different from person to person."

"I had two tattoo apprenticeships but I consider the time I spent with Paolo Acuna (Divinity Tattoo in Phoenix, Arizona) to be the most influential. When I started my apprenticeship with Paolo, I had to start tattooing again from scratch. I stopped tattooing and began scrubbing tubes, making needles, answering the phone etc. This really helped me kick all the bad habits I'd picked up from my first eighteen



TECHNIQUE & ROAD KILL

"I think my other artistic practices affect my tattooing the most. I really notice a lot of my painting technique creeping into my tattoo technique, the way I blend colours or work an area to get a certain effect is similar to how I would paint the same thing. I've also recently started using clay again and am going to try bronze sculpture in the next few weeks. I have been practicing taxidermy for the last nine months too. I love doing taxidermy as you get to be so close to such amazing animals. My friend is a vet and all of the animals I get are road kill that he was unable to save. So far I've had hawks, 7ft pythons, owls, water dragons and massive fruit bats. I'm working on an exhibition that will feature the animals I've worked on that will hopefully raise awareness about road kill and what we can do to prevent it. All of these animals are sacred and I find it so sad that we can kill an animal on the road and then leave it to get mutilated to the extent where it repulses everyone else who drives past. I hope that the exhibition will remind us what an honour it is to live alongside such magnificent animals."

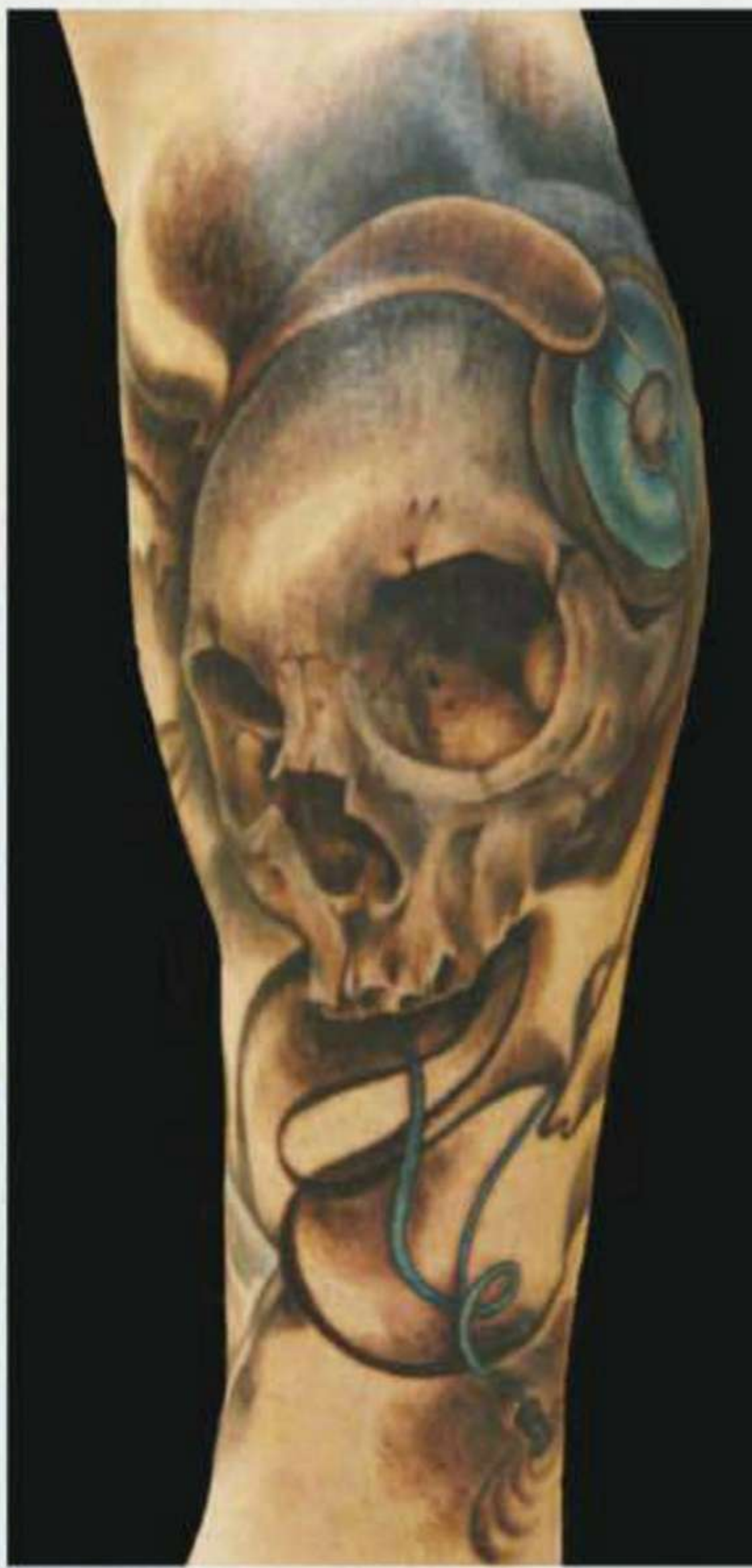


SINCE EARLY 2007, I'VE BEEN WORKING AND TRAVELING ALL OVER THE WORLD AND HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO MANY DIFFERENT CULTURES AND PRACTICES. IT'S BEEN AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE BOTH ARTISTICALLY AND ALSO BY BEING EXPOSED TO DIFFERENT WAYS OF LIFE.

months of tattooing. The best thing about working under Paolo was that he had very high expectations and pushed me extremely hard. I'm very grateful to have had the experience of studying with Paolo, not only because I was exposed to his technique as a tattoo artist but also his artistic vision as a fine artist and sculptor. I feel really lucky to have had that

opportunity and believe that an apprenticeship was, for me, the best way to learn. It made an easy short cut to practicing tattooing as a fine art as opposed to before, where I didn't know what I was doing."

In 2007, Claire was off again. This time she decided she needed to travel the globe to further enrich her tattoo skills:



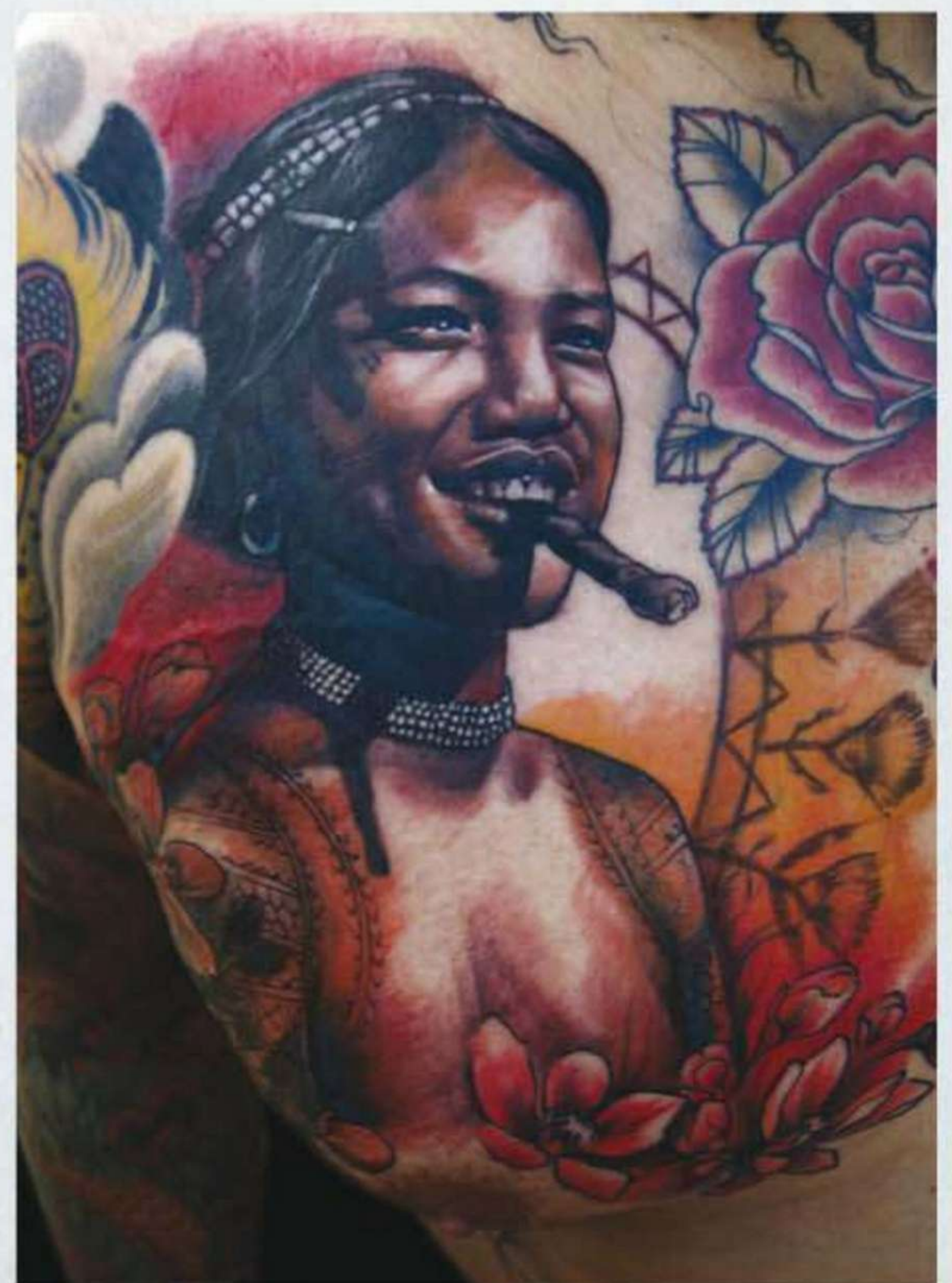
I FIND THAT FROM ALL OF THE TRAVEL, MY STYLES AND TECHNIQUE ARE GREATLY AFFECTED. IN HINDSIGHT, I'VE NOTICED THAT SUBCONSCIOUSLY I'VE PICKED UP IMAGERY FROM THE VARIOUS PLACES THAT I'VE TRAVELLED, WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF IT AT THE TIME.

“Since early 2007, I've been working and traveling all over the world and have been exposed to many different cultures and practices. It's been an amazing experience both artistically and also by being exposed to different ways of life. I'm constantly enriched by the diverse imagery that changes from place to place. For any kind of art, I believe, travel and exposure to other cultures is essential to acquire a rich and varied source of inspiration. In December 2009, I travelled to Peru with a group of other tattoo artists. Originally it was for a convention but it was cancelled and instead, we ended up going on an incredible journey together up into the mountains at Machu Picchu. We all climbed Wyna Picchu, which took three hours, climbing tiny steep steps up the mountain. At the top, we all exchanged Inca tattoos using a nine volt battery on the summit. We were surrounded by dense jungle and could hear the crashing Amazon

River below. The whole trip was a life changing experience, made even better by having a solid group of like-minded friends around.”

“I find that from all of the travel, my styles and technique are greatly affected. In hindsight, I've noticed that subconsciously I've picked up imagery from the various places that I've travelled, without being aware of it at the time. Culture is very important to me. I love to learn from people, especially those living indigenously. I feel that they know the truth of raw existence and know how important it is to live in harmony with the earth. Living off the land is pure freedom, it provides us with all and when respected and understood, I feel we can live in abundance. Living in this way allows us to be in direct communication with all that is and the mind cannot be any quieter and more whole than when it is balanced and centred in this way.”

“I have found, through travel, an 🌻





TO BRING THE TATTOO TO LIFE, THE MAORI ARTIST, HAS A CEREMONY BEFORE AND AFTER THE TATTOO INTRODUCING THE FOUR ELEMENTS; AIR AND WATER WHILST TATTOOING AND THEN UPON COMPLETION, BURNING ALL OF THE DISPOSABLE EQUIPMENT AND BURYING IT IN THE EARTH.

immense wholeness in knowing that the foundations of human nature is love. This fills me with the need to create and reminds me why I am an artist. From travel I've learnt to create for the simple love of it. It's not about how good, how fast, how famous you are as in the present moment none of that matters. I find now if i focus on what the outcome of the piece will be, this detracts from the reasons I am doing the piece in the first place."

"I was recently in New Zealand, in a town called Touranga. This was one of the most profound experiences of my life as I learnt that taa moko are living breathing forms on the skin that represent your purpose and a multitude of other stories. To bring the tattoo to life, the Maori artist, has a ceremony before and after the tattoo introducing the four elements; air and water whilst tattooing and then upon completion, burning

all of the disposable equipment and burying it in the earth. I love the essence and the depth of this tradition, as the quote says, 'there is always more than meets the eye'. Even the wearer cannot fully explain the meaning behind the tattoo as these events unfold. Six months after a tattoo has been completed, people often notice that they received the tattoo at a pinnacle moment and then the tattoo can take on a symbology that reflects this. The poignancy that it emotes for me, would suggest the confirmation of one's self; tattoos are quite often a window to our soul, so if we have adorned ourself with an assertion of who we are, the tattoo will bring this into the present moment of everyday that the person sees it."

So with all these influences flying around Claire's life and more importantly, her head, how



does this affect her style?

“My style reflects my love for painting. I am mainly influence by Renaissance and Post-Impressionist styles and I would like to keep pursuing this angle in combining painting style and technique with tattooing. Light, light source and shadow are a huge influence on my work at the moment. I feel like there’s a whole new area opening up there and i need to learn a lot more about how to interpret the light source captured in paintings into tattooing. I want my tattoos to glow with light.”

“Van Gogh, Joe Sorren, Paul Gaugin, Rembrant, Rubens, Crayola. All of these artists inspire in me a desire to push the boundaries

of painting and tattooing to a point where the painting and the tattooing are as one medium; the paint brush being an extension of the tattoo machine and the brush leading on from the machine.”

“I love anything quirky and out there. Outside the box, left of centre, bent... anything that challenges my technique and my imagination. I really love ink, though I once tried tattooing with lemon juice. When I draw, I try to pencil from my subconscious, I never consciously think about a plan, so the end result can sometimes come out a bit abstract. I love drawing in this way as it comes from within and the elements around me that I may or may not know are affecting me.”

“I, personally, don’t think it’s that important to have your own style, unless you are striving for that, but I do believe that people should avoid copying other peoples tattoos 100% 🌸

I HAVE FOUND, THROUGH TRAVEL, AN IMMENSE WHOLENESS IN KNOWING THAT THE FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN NATURE IS LOVE. THIS FILLS ME WITH THE NEED TO CREATE AND REMINDS ME WHY I AM AN ARTIST. FROM TRAVEL I’VE LEARNT TO CREATE FOR THE SIMPLE LOVE OF IT.

INFLUENCE

“I try to be influenced by the all of the arts and the way art reflects life and life reflects art. People like Paolo Acuna and Jeff Gogue have taught me all that I know and I like to base a lot of my technique on what they have taught me and continue to teach me. Ultimately, I want my style to come from within. I feel like I can achieve this by immersing myself in the study of all the visual arts, literature, history and philosophy. In doing this, I can develop my own style and begin to follow a path of self-development that dives into the depths of my own subconscious. I strive to paint and tattoo from the unknown, from untapped and unfamiliar ground. This place can only be found within and therefore by appreciating other tattoo artist’s styles, without being influenced by them we can expand infinitely into multiple dimensions without replicating that which has already been achieved. There is so much to paint and so much to tattoo, when this is the case we can all teach and feed off each other without ever becoming stagnant, with a strong sense of self belief and purpose we can create anything.”

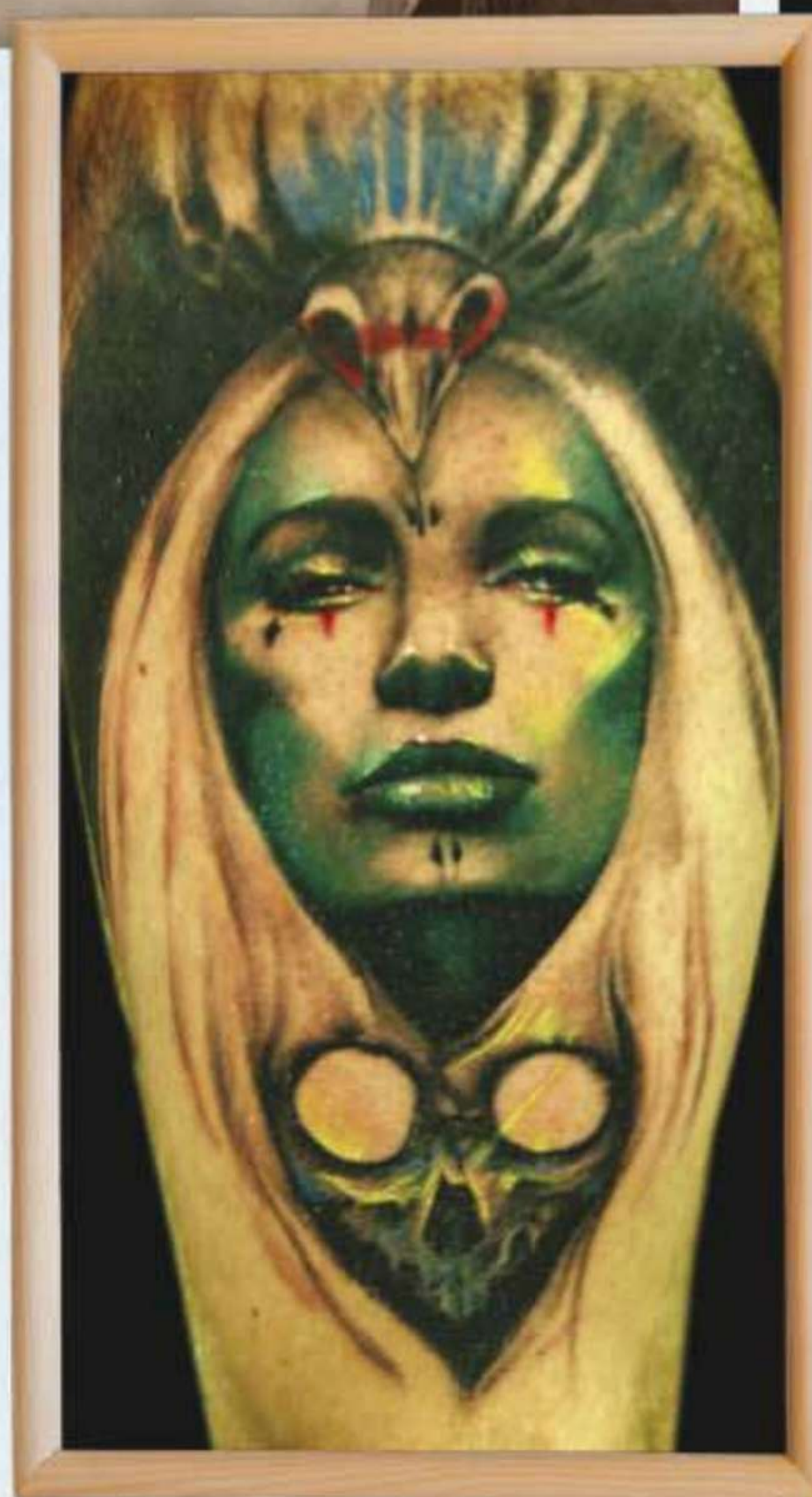


I TRY NOT TO LOOK TOO MUCH AT OTHER ARTISTS WORK AS I HAVE NOTICED HOW SENSITIVE THE SUBCONSCIOUS IS. SO TO ACHIEVE AN ORIGINAL STYLE, I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO STUDY ART, PAINTING, WHATEVER FLOATS YOUR BOAT REALLY

as they belong to someone else. It's fine to get inspiration but I don't agree with stealing other people's artwork. I try not to look too much at other artists work as I have noticed how sensitive the subconscious is. So to achieve an original style, I think it's important to study art, painting, whatever floats your boat really; anything that's going to give you true original expression."

And true original expression, Claire has in abundance. In less than seven years, Claire has pooled a reservoir of inspiration and experience, ranging from Shawn Barber and Jeff Gogue seminars to hanging out with Maori artists. Claire knows how to live a life immersed in art and all of it weaves its way into her work. It is scary to even imagine where the next seven years could lead her if she continues on her present course. The only sure thing is, we will be better off in the tattoo world for it.

"As an existentialist, I maintain that the individual is solely responsible for giving his or her own life meaning and for living that life passionately and sincerely. Therefore my art is



a reflection of my thoughts and processes, a keyhole looking through to the workings of my subconscious. I often don't acknowledge this until looking back years or months later upon artwork and realising that this is the case. In existence we all come up against obstacles and distractions such as despair, angst and absurdity as well as love, joy and happiness. I would like for my work to reflect the whole gamut of human existence and ultimately create work that invites people to consider for themselves the meaning of being alive." 🐾



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FUCK OFF and when you get there FUCK OFF A BIT MORE	I'M NOT SICK, I'M MORALLY FLEXIBLE	PRICK EVERYTHING AND BECOME A PIRATE	I'm not arguing, I'm explaining why I am right.	WHAT WOULD HAN SOLO DO?	

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FIT FOR THE BIG SCREEN

Picture this: the month was July, the year was 1997 and the tattoo kit was one of the best on the market, courtesy of Spaulding & Rogers. A talented artist tore through the book inside in a flash, absorbing every last detail he could from cover to cover and launched himself a career right there on the spot



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This may very well read like a screenplay for the perfect fictional tattoo film, but for Chicago-based artist Mario Desa, it is the exact story of how he got into the industry.

"I've always been a visual person and I've always been drawn to logos, icons and symbols, even as a child, and once I saw tattoos, I wanted to be covered in them," says Desa, slowly starting on the road to convincing yours truly that the behavior described above was quite logical and not all that erratic. "And once I stepped into a tattoo shop, it seemed like a sacred space, covered floor-to-ceiling in cryptic symbols," he continues. "It felt kind of dangerous too, like I maybe shouldn't be in there. I wanted to learn the visual language of it, and also wear it and put it on other people."

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Desa's first experience with getting tattooed is reflective of the scene he was involved with at the time, and also helps the previously described apartment scenario become all the more reasonable.

The year was 1995, the artist was Desa's friend's brother – okay, okay, I won't go through with this type of storytelling again. Suffice it to say, Desa was 20 years old and got tattooed at his friend's house, "which was a skinhead hangout. It was a band around my arm of the letter 'X'. I was into the straightedge scene in the '90s. I still have the tattoo and still don't drink or anything, but I don't



consider myself part of that scene."

With his overpowering pull towards tattoo culture discovered, Desa chose to veer away from the conventional apprenticeship method, partly by choice and partly because of the law.

"I didn't have a real apprenticeship, but I had guidance from a couple of friends who tattooed in a shop. I worked out of my apartment and a private studio the first year I tattooed, [which] was more out of necessity

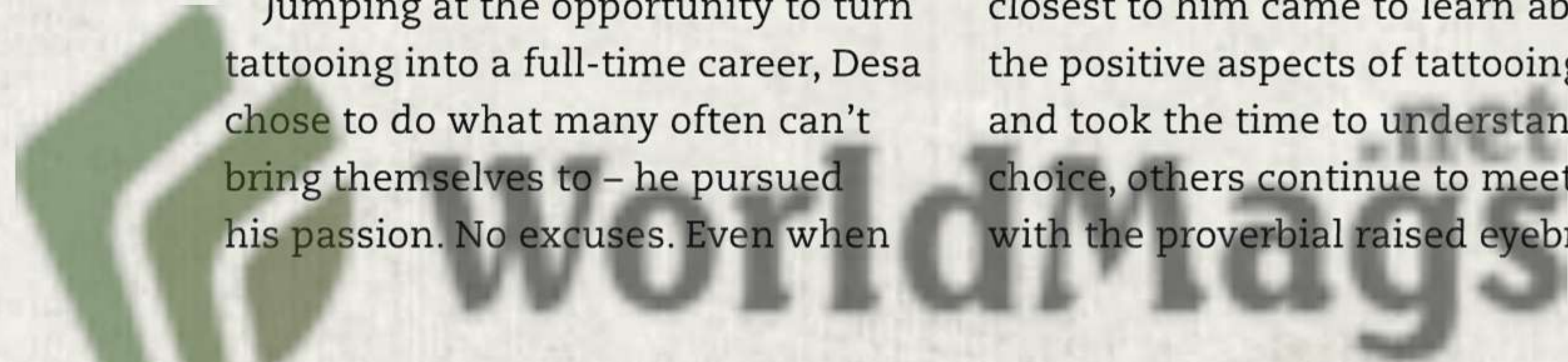
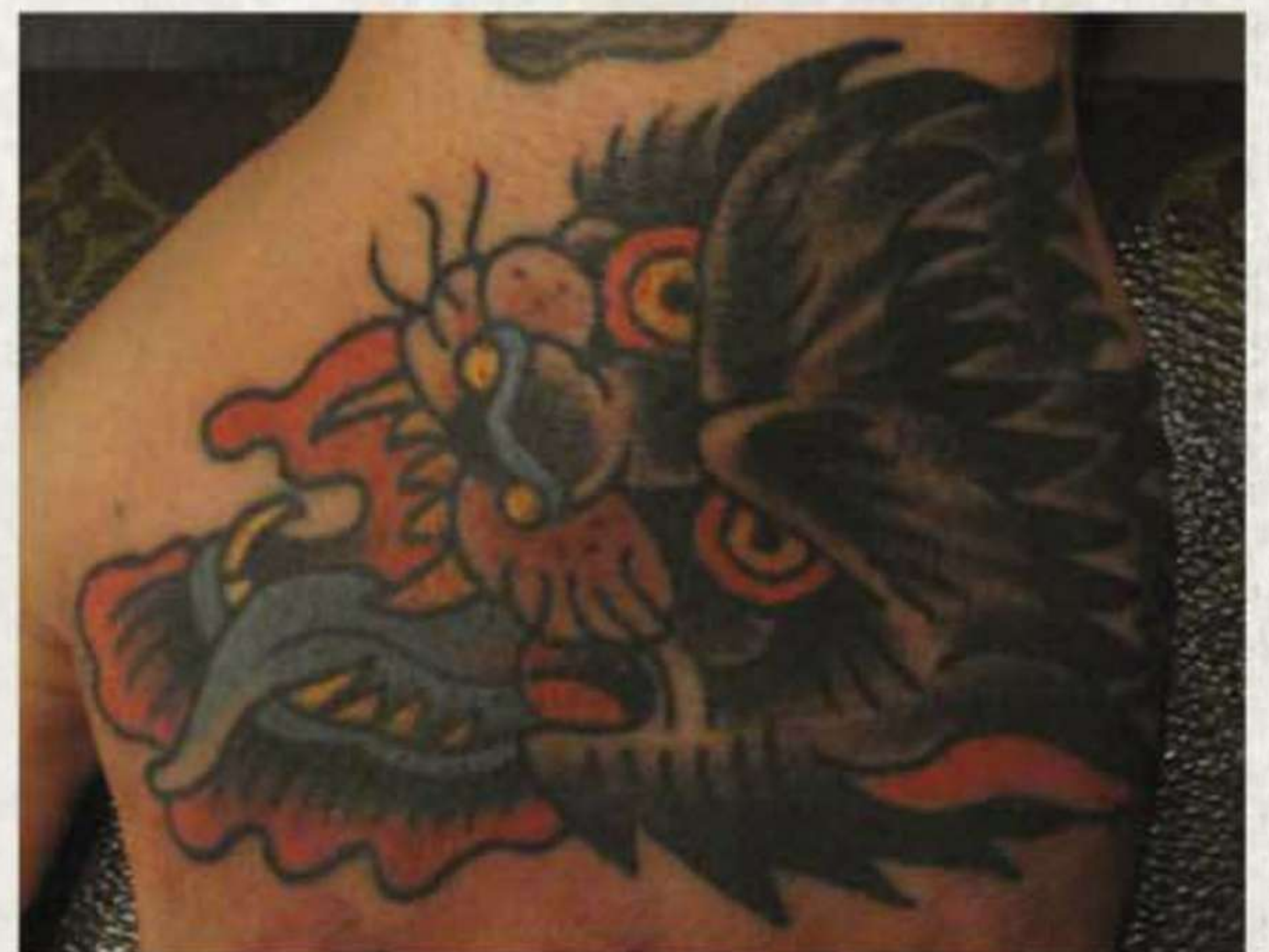


“ONCE I STEPPED INTO A TATTOO SHOP, IT SEEMED LIKE A SACRED SPACE, COVERED FLOOR-TO-CEILING IN CRYPTIC SYMBOLS,” HE CONTINUES. “IT FELT KIND OF DANGEROUS TOO, LIKE I MAYBE SHOULDN'T BE IN THERE”

since tattooing was outlawed in Milwaukee from the '60s until 1998, which is when I got a job in a shop.”

Jumping at the opportunity to turn tattooing into a full-time career, Desa chose to do what many often can't bring themselves to – he pursued his passion. No excuses. Even when

gaining support and understanding from family members was something that took time. As some of those closest to him came to learn about the positive aspects of tattooing and took the time to understand his choice, others continue to meet Desa with the proverbial raised eyebrow. 🙄



"My mom was always supportive of things I got into and she was glad I had set a course for a profession, but she wasn't happy at all about all the tattoos I was getting," says Desa. "She was born and raised in Mexico in the '50s and '60s, so the whole tattoo thing was very foreign to her. In her experience, only criminals and whores got tattooed. She's very proud of me now though! My extended family was used to me kind of doing odd things anyway, but they didn't – and still don't – believe I could actually earn a living tattooing. I have an uncle who still asks me what I'm going to do when the tattoo trend fades away," laughs Desa.

Now, if this were in fact the perfect fictional tattoo film, this would surely be the time to introduce a life-changing, career-altering moment. Luckily, Desa's story continues to unfold like the greatest of plots.

Just as the talented artist fell in love with tattooing at a young age, he also became enamored with the city he now calls home when he was just a kid.

"I love this city, and it's been good to me," says Desa when asked about his current home of Chicago, Illinois. Working as one of seven artists at Illinois' oldest tattoo studio, The Chicago Tattooing and Piercing Co., Desa admits the decision to move one state south wasn't all that difficult: "I knew if I wanted to become a world-class tattooer, I'd need to be in a world-class city and the Chicago Tattoo Co. is where Chicago's tattoo history is centred, so I always wanted to work here."

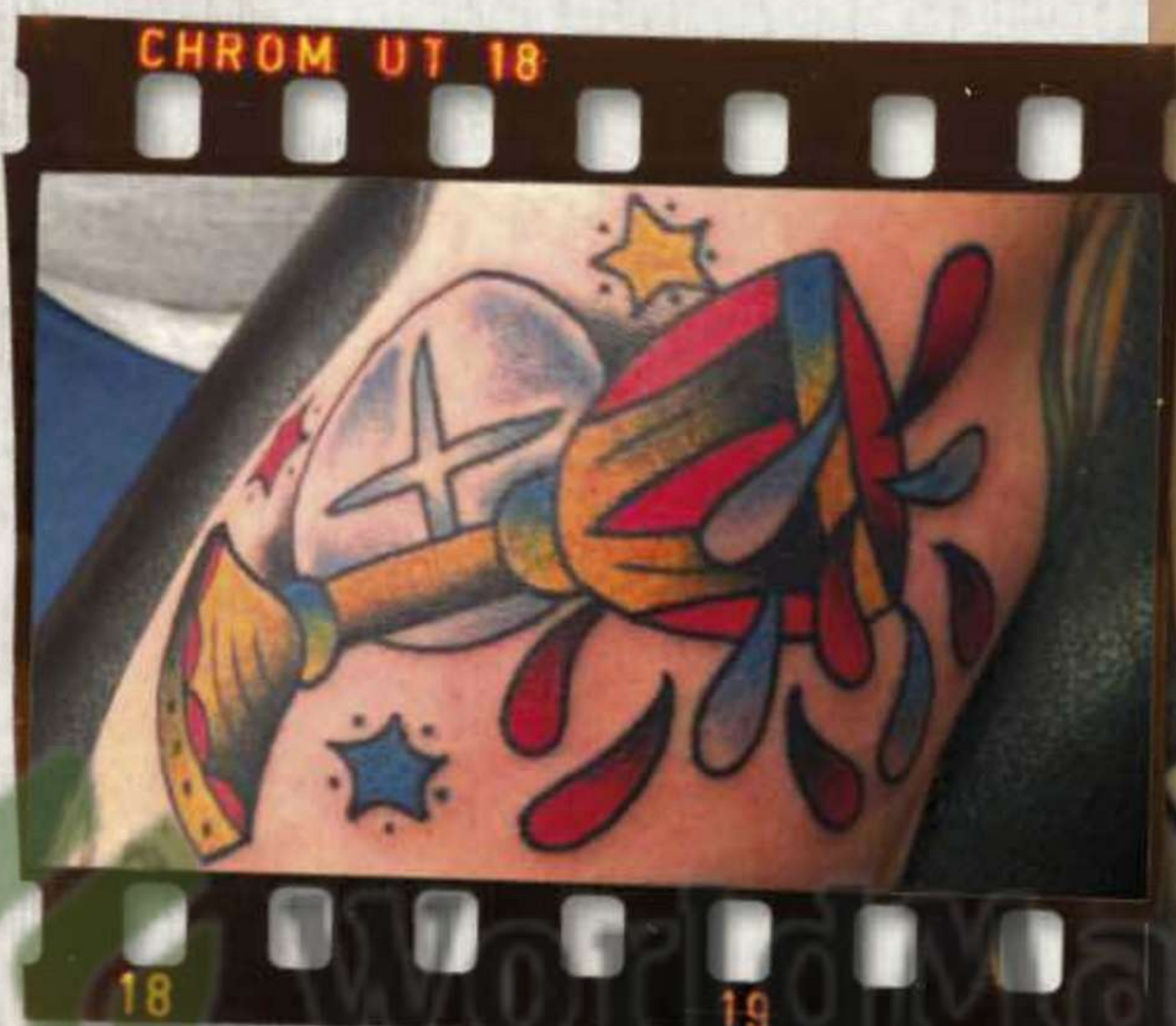


**MARIO DESA ON...
INSPIRING ARTISTS
AND TRUE FRIENDS**

"As cheesy as it sounds, the guys I work with, or else I wouldn't work with them! Nick Colella, Josh Howard, Matt Ziolkko, Mike Dalton, Dave Mcnair and Erik Gillespie. Also, Steve Byrne, Chad Koeplinger, Dan Smith, Jeff Zuck, and all the Good Gents."

"MY MOM WAS BORN AND RAISED IN MEXICO IN THE '50S AND '60S, SO THE WHOLE TATTOO THING WAS VERY FOREIGN TO HER. IN HER EXPERIENCE, ONLY CRIMINALS AND WHORES GOT TATTOOED. SHE'S VERY PROUD OF ME NOW THOUGH!"

World-class indeed. The shop has been around and going strong since the late '60s when it first opened as Cliff Raven Studios just one block east of its current location. In 1973 it incorporated as the Chicago Tattooing and Piercing Co. and Desa says the shop's rich heritage plays a big role in the undeniably great work that leaves through its doors. "We are definitely influenced by our history every day in our approach to every tattoo, the way the shop is run and the look and feel of the shop," explains Desa. "It's humbling when people come in who were tattooed at the shop 30 years ago and now their kids are getting tattooed there. Working at a shop like that helps you keep your perspective on tattooing." A real street shop by every definition of the term, the



artists working at Chicago's oldest tattoo institution are always ready to satisfy walk-ins. Although the concept may seem a bit off in a world where a mentality focused on exclusivity and appointment-only tattooing seems increasingly rampant, Desa is quick to point out there is no environment he would rather work in than a shop that's always welcoming to clients, new and old.

"I love street shops, I can't resist going in them, and could care less about some private, custom art gallery/tattoo studio. That's pretentious and boring," says Desa openly. "To me, it's how tattoo shops should be. Tattoos should be accessible, it shouldn't be difficult to get a tattoo, so I always have time open and even do a lot of my custom stuff as walk-ins. I couldn't do the custom, appointment-only routine. Obviously, in a lot of cases an appointment is necessary or just works better for me and/or the customer, so I do like a mix of appointments and walk-ins, but I even schedule my appointments throughout the week to allow time for walk-ins in between. Not just because I want to do them, but to support my co-workers when it gets hectic."

Delivering a style that I can only describe as being simultaneously old school and very modern, and very



A BIT OF HISTORY...

The Chicago Tattooing and Piercing Co. opened its doors in the mid '60s as Cliff Raven Tattooing. Following an outbreak of hepatitis in New York City in the late '60s, which caused the legal age for getting tattooed to jump from 18 to 21 in most states, Cliff Raven Tattooing was the only shop that stayed open in Chicago. In the early 1970s, tattoo-lover Dale Grande walked into the shop and, enamored with the artists and the studio, decided to put in the time and effort, hanging out at the shop as much as he could and offering to do gopher work, until he was officially recognized as part of the team. With Cliff moving to Hollywood and his business partner Mac retiring, Grande became the sole owner in 1977. Over the years, he has recruited some of the most talented artists in the industry and, after a couple of moves, the shop found its current home at 1017 W. Belmont Avenue in 2005.

"IT'S HUMBLING WHEN PEOPLE COME IN WHO WERE TATTOOED AT THE SHOP 30 YEARS AGO AND NOW THEIR KIDS ARE GETTING TATTOOED THERE. WORKING AT A SHOP LIKE THAT HELPS YOU KEEP YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON TATTOOING"

Mario Desa, the man himself opts to put things into a less restricting perspective, staying away from the task of pinpointing a single style or signature trait. "I just do things the way I see them in my mind and the way they look right to me, and I hope other people like them too," he says. "I try to make images that look cool and will maybe stand out against all the other stuff on Facebook!"

With his portfolio bursting at the seams with colorful, attention-grabbing pieces and the years since that very first apartment tattoo flying by, it's not unreasonable to assume that Desa has picked up his fair share of knowledge throughout his career to date, so what's the one thing he

would most recommend? "It took me a long time to learn this myself, but start a retirement and savings account. And please, please, stop tattooing your faces!"

Desa's passion and respect for the craft is not only evident in his journey to becoming an artist, but also in everything he does. It's no surprise then that the social media lover has recently been taking to Twitter to voice his views about TLC's new (questionable) show, Tattoo School, asking fellow tattoo enthusiast to band together in an effort to stop a show in which competing individuals strive to learn how to tattoo in just two weeks.

Looking at the tattoos on TV craze 🌟



OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS THE SHOWS HAVE OPENED UP MANY PEOPLE'S EYES TO WHAT'S POSSIBLE IN A TATTOO, AND THAT TATTOOED PEOPLE ARE APPROACHABLE, PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE. IT'S BROUGHT US A LOT OF BUSINESS

as a whole, Desa says, "well, it's a double-edged sword, isn't it? Over the last few years the shows have opened up many people's eyes to what's possible in a tattoo, and that tattooed people are approachable, professional people. It's brought us a lot of business. But, it's also created a lot of wannabe tattooers and way too many crappy tattoo shops."

So how much is too much, and where does one draw the line? "This new Tattoo School show will make it even worse," notes Desa. "I think it's gone too far – well, it went too far a few seasons back – and is just completely degrading and irresponsible. But maybe it just needs to get worse before it gets better?"

When away from the shop, Desa keeps his art going through painting,

but he also knows how to take a break from his work, devoting time to his family and enjoying some of the simpler things in life like "eating at restaurants and roaming the city". And although having a tattoo artist for a father may sound like a sweet deal that comes with free tattoos for life, Desa laughs when asked if his 12-year-old son shares in that thought. "I think he takes it for granted a little bit. He's used to it, you know? He does say he wants tattoos, but hasn't said he'd like to make them."

Currently working at the Chicago Tattooing and Piercing Co. five days a week, that's the surefire destination to head to in order to track down Mister Desa himself, although he can also be found taking part in various conventions and his next confirmed stop outside the shop is San Francisco in October for the State of Grace convention.

And as no good interview would be complete without a stellar, even if slightly unrelated, personal question, and no good film would be complete without a light moment at the end, I had to ask: What's the most



surprising thing you can reveal about yourself right now?

"I sometimes change my shoes three or four times before I leave the house. If you don't feel good about how you look, your whole day is off, right?"

After all, what's a great movie without great shoes? 🐾

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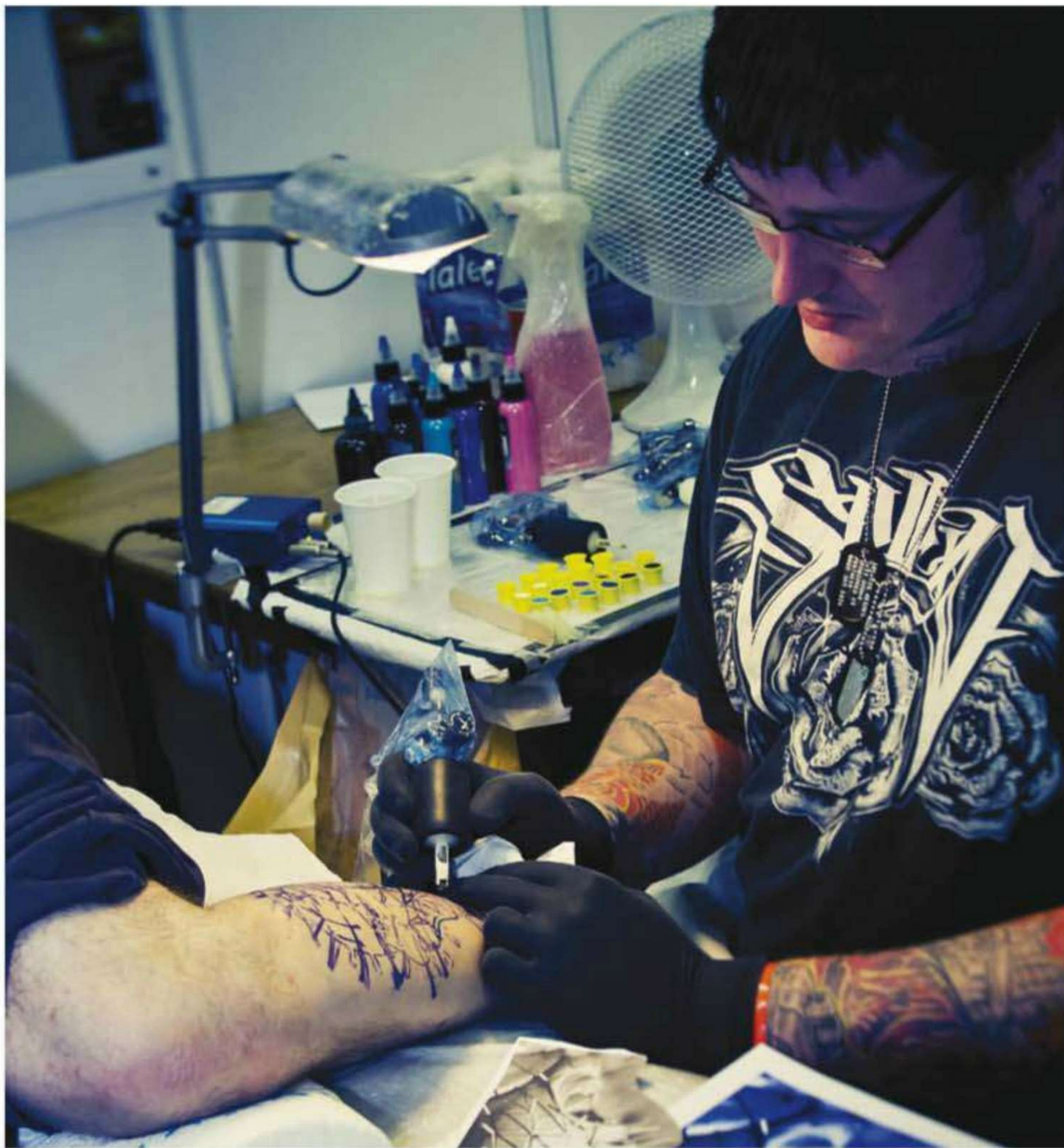
STAND BY YOUR BEDS!

Help for Heroes is a charity very close to the tattooed communities heart. For some, one that's a little too close for comfort, but when Ink For Heroes was announced, you just knew that the troops would rally for the occasion, and boy, did they ever...

This summer we saw a great gang of people come together to show their unrelenting support for a great event and even greater cause. Organised by few and enjoyed by many, the first Ink For Heroes tattoo convention opened its doors in the famous military town of Catterick on the June 18th and 19th 2011.

A show dedicated to raise much-needed funds for the military charity Help for Heroes and, of course, to raise awareness and to salute our brave men and women injured or killed in the service. As expected the big names rocked up to show their support and they don't come bigger than Mr Lal Hardy from New Wave alongside of Martin Clarke from Bluebird Tattoo Studio, who dedicated all their time over the weekend to tattooing injured service men and woman. The guys didn't seem to put their

OVER THE WEEKEND ALONE THE CUPCAKE CLUB RAISED £2,353 TAKING THE GRAND TOTAL TO OVER £10,000 SINCE THEY TOOK ON THE TASK. TIP OF THE HAT TO YOU LADIES!



machines down over the two days, showing great testament to their characters, while at the same time bringing home just how many of our guys have been wounded. I met an amazing man who had lost his left leg from the knee down during a tour in Afghanistan. I remember thinking that the back piece he was having done mustn't even register on his pain level after what he had been

through. So I asked him and to my surprise he didn't say a word, he just winked and bit down on his lip which in tattoo talk I believe means 'don't be soft, this it hurts like a mother..'

Of course the lovely Rose Elizabeth and Colleen Moss from the Cupcake Club stole the show. From the minute the doors opened until the final minutes of the Sunday, the ladies rolled like a well oiled

machine. They even got to a point where Dan Gold threw off his jacket, picked up his machine and got cup-caking. As well as lending a hand, Dan also contributed a good portion of his earnings to the cause, as did so many. Over the weekend alone the Cupcake Club raised £2,353 taking the grand total to over £10,000 since they took on the task. Tip of the hat to you ladies! 🌸



Leanne by Hazy at Global Tattoo, Wirral



Lal Hardy



Jamie by Andy at K2



Jo by Dan Gold at 13 Ink, Liverpool



Lee by Matt at Vegas Ink



Ed by Alex Williamson at Faithless Ink



Tony by James by JJ's Tattoo



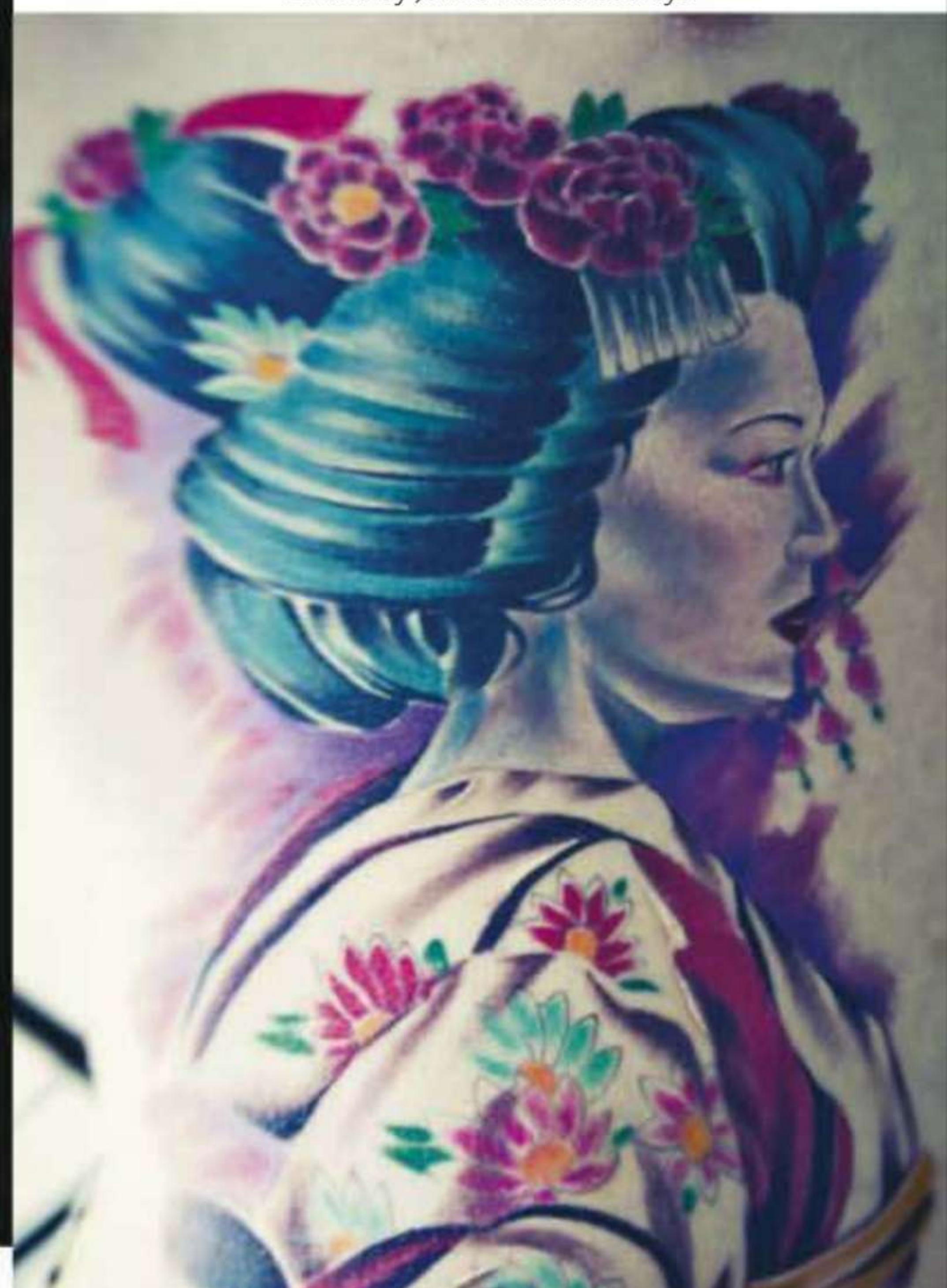
Vicki by Ian Stanfield at Mother of all Sins



Emma by Jamie Mac at Couleys



Craig by Ryan Davis at Royal Owl



THE WINNERS

Large Colour

Bez, Triple Six

Small Colour

Ryan Davies, Royal Owl

Large Black & Grey

Ronnie Godard, Blood Sweat & Pain

Small Black & Grey

Ronnie Godard, Blood Sweat & Pain

Back Piece

Mark Bester, Marked for Life

Best Oriental

Mark Bester, Marked for Life

Best Military

Mark Bester, Marked for Life

There was also a charity auction offering some superb and unique items. With framed drawings from Dawnii Fantana, Dan Gold, Phil Kyle and many more, to signed books and a signed football shirt from Lal himself. My favourite pieces up for auction were two prosthetic knee joints which had been painted by Kat Von D and the great Don Ed Hardy. I made sure to dig deep and luckily bagged myself the one produced by Don! Result! It is now sat on my desk looking ever so slightly weird, but brilliant all the same. Again the good people at the show made sure to snap everything up raising well over £2,000 for the cause. Nice!

The show also made sure to cater

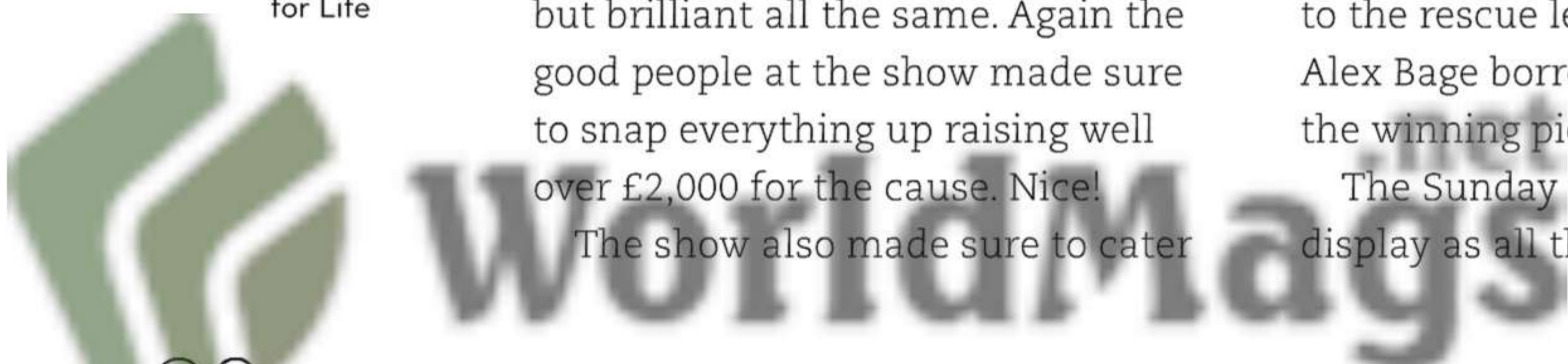
MY FAVOURITE PIECES UP FOR AUCTION WERE TWO PROSTHETIC KNEE JOINTS WHICH HAD BEEN PAINTED BY KAT VON D AND THE GREAT DON ED HARDY.

for the young ones, which was nice to see, with loads of activities for them to enjoy as well as a painting competition. Judging by some of the art they were coming up with, I'd say we are in safe hands in the future. The winning entry also got to have their design brought to life! This is where the Ink for Heroes web designer, Gordon Buttle, came to the rescue letting Fat Panda's Alex Bage borrow his body to tattoo the winning piece on. Brilliant!

The Sunday ended with a touching display as all the artists and attendees

dropped what they were doing to put their hands together and applaud the team behind the show. Pam and Wayne from ABH Tattooing, Chris Moss from K2 and of course, Rose and Colleen.

I take my hat off to the incredibly hard working team that made sure this first Ink For Heroes show was a success. With the word out and more and more people realising how important this cause is, I expect an even bigger turn out for next year! We'll be there... 🐼





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Letters

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT ANYTHING AT ALL... SO LONG AS IT'S VAGUELY TATTOO RELATED, BRING IT ON. WE'VE GOT FREE T-SHIRTS FOR THE LETTER OF THE MONTH BUT OCCASIONALLY, THE GODS SHINE DOWN ON US AND WE HAVE OTHER GOOD STUFF KICKING AROUND TO SEND OUT.

EMAIL: EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK OR
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Letter
of The
Month



Would that be a regular or large...

As quite a heavily tattooed beautiful woman with a full sleeve of British butterfly's, I feel I had to write and tell you about my awful experience. I have just been working for a franchise of a well known coffee shop (Starbucks) at Welcome Break on the M5. After employing me and saying it was fine to show my tattoos, given a short sleeved top to wear and working there for a week, I was then bought a fleece jacket and told to cover up!

After turning up to work in a smart black skirt, I was told to go home and change or buy tights to cover the tattoos on my legs. I felt very discriminated against as my beautiful tattoos have no effect on the way I work and the only comments I had from customers were how amazing my tattoos are.

Walking out after eight weeks, I took legal advice but as I hadn't been there long enough, there is nothing I can do! I would love to name and shame these people as all I wanted to do was earn a crust. They really need to get in the real world! Most of their customers walking through the door have tattoos!

Yours, a very disappointed

Cath Toms

Thanks for the mail Cath - you're not alone out there. From a sensible point of view, if they really knew it was a problem, they probably shouldn't have given you the job in the first place and been honest with you. Sadly, that's not the way of the world these days. Always happy to point a finger at a big corporation with ideas below its station. To be fair though, there are some out there (including a couple of big banks which surprised me) who do appear to have their heads screwed on right. I think a lot of the time, its just people throwing their weight around in a pointless power-play because they have nothing better to do. Sad, but true...

Teacher training

In summer 2010 I picked up my first issue of Skin Deep, Issue 187, and instantly became obsessed. Since then I've bought the magazine religiously; swapping The Times

Educational Supplement (I'm a trainee maths teacher) for the more colourful pages of Skin Deep to pass some time in between lectures and maths classes. The 'Think Before You Ink' supplement in that first issue really helped me understand what I should be looking for in studios and artists before letting them loose on my tattoo virgin skin. Within three months, I found Leigh Dale at Studio Odyssey Ormskirk who is friendly and professional and produced my first tattoo, my family crest on my shoulder blade, and since then I have been back to the studio for another piece on my back by Leigh and a gorgeous piece on my upper arm by Abbie France who also works at Studio Odyssey.

Until I started reading the magazine I was worried that being a teacher with tattoos would be a disadvantage when going for interviews, meeting employers, and having to constantly worry about keeping my skin completely covered up; but seeing the number of professionals and people from different walks of life that appear in your pages I'm no longer worried about what people will think of 'that young teacher with the tattoos' and I'm more focussed on my being a good teacher who happens to have tattoos, and not letting the



@ThePinkFamily
"Stunning pic of @Sabina_Kelley on the cover of @SkinDeepMag!!! <3 #pinkfamily <http://twitgoo.com/2kos5v>"

@AmiJohnston-
Art: "Just seen @OhSweetDelirium mentioned in @SkinDeepMag & checked out their website. Amazingly beautiful items! Love the real skull jewellery!"

@TheRealAndyMc: "I love the fact that Asda is now stocking @SkinDeepMag"

@brixtonguns:
"pretty happy that two of my most recent tattoos were in @SkinDeepMag alongside side xam's part in the fam business article."

@kevjacko:
"Reading subs copies of @SkinDeepMag+ skinshots only had em since tues! Another great article by @jimsmallman"

@Dollycool: "just got the latest edition of @SkinDeepMag through the post, yay! #lunch-timereadingsorted"

@valoniatattoos:
"In this months copy of Skindeep tattoo magazine @skindeepmag Valonia tattoos has a mention. Funny story page 12!"

profession stop me being myself.

It's safe to say I'm always thinking about new pieces and body parts to test my pain threshold with and just thought I would drop you guys an email to say thanx for the help settling my first timers nerves last summer and for being there in double statistics to bring some much needed escape time! The latest issue, Issue 200, has taken me almost all month to read cover to cover and had the 'Think Before You Ink' supplement in it again so I thought it was about time I wrote in to tell you guys how hooked I am and hopefully there will be a few more people like me after this issue! Cheers

Danni Brophy

P.S. As giveaways and promos go you guys are spot on, but I wouldn't complain if you auctioned off Jim Smallman in the next issue, I'd happily clean some room out of my wardrobe for him to live in it!

I'm afraid Mr Smallman is busy for the next few weeks, but give him a chance to have a cup of tea and plaster some more Bepanthen on himself and we'll shove him in a box and ship him out. Don't feed him after midnight and don't get him wet though. We've all seen the movie...

Does the man have a point?

I have recently read on a forum, a lot of negative comments regarding 'scratchers' and whilst I understand some comments are valid I also see the other side - especially since there is such a shortage of a) apprenticeships and b) help from established artists. Admittedly I have started 'scratching' at home on pigskin and myself - due to the difficulty of locating the all important apprenticeship. I have walked the length of my town and neighbouring towns and followed up with emails of my artwork, and whilst some reply with great enthusiasm (thanks 'Inkredibles' Bolton) and apologies for no current opportunities, many don't reply at all! Whilst I (loosely) use the word 'scratcher' to describe myself in this letter, I would also like to note that I believe I have followed all

@Mookey316 "**@DiamondBetty**
Just read your page in this issue of **@SkinDeepMag** congratulations on your wedding, wishing you many happy tattoo-filled years"

@Depeche_Mand
"Ey up **@SkinDeepMag!!!**
You're looking sexy!! Love the new look. :D x"

@tomparrish
"Though didn't get limited edition cover :(**@SkinDeepMag** a great cover this month with **@Sabina_Kelley**. Can't go wrong with her on your cover"

@xx_Hex_xx "**@Sabina_Kelley** **@SkinDeepMag** found a limited edition one in Glasgow, yayy!!! :-)

@debsOO1brown "**@RealTattooJam** I'm a **#TattooJam** virgin and am looking forward to my first time! **#TattooJam2011**"

@GaryCKM "**@SkinDeepMag** found it in Canary Wharf, what an awesome cover! It's a great edition people! **#SDcoverhunt**"

@KieronCrewe "No joy finding the Limited ed cover of **@skindeepmag** but no matter it's a cracking edition anyway **#SDCoverHunt**"

correct procedures: The first piece of equipment I ever bought was an autoclave and read up on all sterilization steps, I have read 'The Ultimate Tattoo Guide' numerous times, read all 7 issues of 'Machine Gun Magazine', upped my TV package to enable me to watch 'The Inks' religiously... it has taken me over 18 months to buy my equipment, I have struggled with the machine set up and still not thrown the towel in! Which leads me to my question: "Is it such a bad thing for someone dedicated and passionate about the profession to teach themselves after failing to first seek an apprenticeship?"

'Scratcher' or not I will succeed and be damn good at what I want to do. I would love nothing more than to work alongside a pro, clean, answer the phone, sweep floors etc, and after teaching myself all I can, I will continue to find that apprenticeship to not only gain more knowledge but for the respect of the industry. I cant help but feel that unless you know someone personally in this field (whether you're talented or not) that you don't stand a chance. So please give us a break - we don't all charge for work from our bedrooms! I feel as though I have been forced to 'scratch' as I refuse to give up on my dream.

Should anyone wish to offer me an apprenticeship, I would gladly hand over all of my equipment until you're ready to hand it back!

Mark, Lancashire.

We are beautiful, no matter what they say...

I got my first tattoo on turning 40 after my husband of twelve years put me in hospital (yawn, we all have drama to tell!). I've had therapy, abused alcohol, took meeds and cried for a long time trying to heal. I had my ankle and knee tattooed to block life out. Chris (Hughes of Baby Boy in Bishops Stortford, Herts) carried on up my thing and at 42, he did my arm and shoulder.

He is a legend and for all the preconceptions of who gets tattooed in my quaint funny little village, doing the school run has never been so



much fun thanks to him!

Above all, with tattoos suddenly becoming fashionable, chic or whatever, it doesn't matter if you can find a way to express what's going on inside you. Having my work has changed my life and Chris deserves a pat on the back for turning me around. I remembered I was beautiful when I stopped looking in a mirror

and started living again.

Thanks so much for taking the time to read this. I might sound like a kid, but I love the mag!

JoJo, Essex.

Thanks Jo - always cool to get letters in which tattoos have played a big part in turning a life around. Nice work too...



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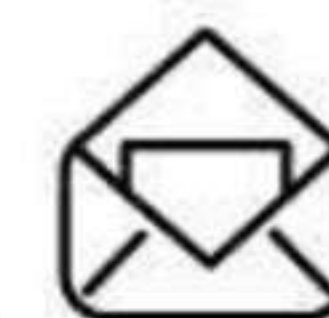


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An Eye is upon you

BACK TO SKOOL...

There are two trains of thought when it comes to the 'ink' shows on TV, but is the latest addition to the genre that fateful step too far?



Paula Hardy-Kangelos

Tattoo television has become a mainstream phenomenon, The Learning Channels' 'Ink' franchise has spread from Miami to London and these shows have undoubtedly provided a new accessibility, introducing new aspects of tattooing to a wider public and sated those curious about the interior of the tattoo shop and the process of obtaining a tattoo. But not all of the 'Miami Ink Effect' is positive – the need for a dramatic narrative overshadows the art, inviting criticism of the reality format in general.

The problem with 'reality' television is partly one of language, the 'realness' is constantly reinforced by the name of the genre, the close-up camera angles and the use of 'real people' rather than actors, but the actuality of tattooing is rather different to what is depicted on screen. Television collapses time and this makes large-scale tattoos seem a far less arduous task for both customers and artists, a task that doesn't involve waiting lists, multiple appointments and many hours spent under the needle. Also unacknowledged, the monetary commitment required and the time spent healing tattoos. On the other side of the tattoo machine we don't see the labour of drawing and re-drawing, the hours of concentration, the backaches, the endless waiting for late and cancelled appointments, nor any of the necessary health and safety and business protocols.

In short, tattoo television promotes lifestyle over life experience. It emphasises the 'why' over the 'what' and instead of art we are given narrative, or worse still, drama.

The short lived series *Ink Wars* took the narrative away from the customers and gave it to the artists by following a tattoo from conception to completion. *Ink Wars* featured some truly fantastic tattoo artists but placed them into an artificially competitive and time restricted environment – with each tattoo executed in a single sitting at a tattoo convention and subsequently entered into a public vote.

In TLC's latest offering, *Tattoo School*, the television imposed time restraints are not just inaccurate but also dangerous. Yet to be aired in the UK, the channels' official website describes *Tattoo School* as "where students from all walks of life learn how to tattoo in just two weeks. Rookie students,

SADLY, TATTOO SCHOOLS EXIST ALL OVER THE WORLD, NOT TO TEACH TATTOOING, BUT TO MAKE QUICK AND EASY MONEY FROM THE IMPATIENT, THE UNTALENTED AND THE UNINFORMED...

models risking their skin to first-time body artists, a rebellious instructor and unconventional training... who will bear the drama of competition and survive?"

Those with respect for tattooing are well aware that the knowledge required to become a tattoo artist cannot be obtained in a two-week period and that the required skill set takes years to develop. Still, sadly, tattoo schools exist all over the world, not to teach tattooing, but to make quick and easy money from the impatient, the untalented and the uninformed; creating 'students' who graduate with a dangerously small amount of information and even less health and safety experience. Television viewers whose experience of the tattoo world is limited to what they have witnessed on screen may believe that tattoo schools are a

legitimate path to becoming a tattoo artist, so for TLC to broadcast this unethical practice is unquestionably irresponsible.

A petition against the broadcast of *Tattoo School* can be found at: www.ipetitions.com/petition/boycotttattooschool/

Interestingly, web TV – cheaper to produce and easier to distribute – is also turning its attention to tattooing. Two new programmes, the Vice Magazine sponsored 'Tattoo Age', a documentary series featuring portraits and tattoo artists and their art, and tattooer Marcus Kuhn's tattoo travelogue *The Gypsy Gentleman* are now available online. Both of these fascinating projects are in their infancy, but hopefully, their focus on the 'what' rather than the 'why' will set new televisual standards and prove that tattoo 'reality' doesn't have to be dramatic.

Regretfully, this month I cannot go without mentioning the tragically

early death of Amy Winehouse.

A modern day Billie Holiday, as well known for her difficult

personal life as her rich contralto voice, Amy was one of Britain's best known tattooed women. Mainstream media commentators have assumed a correlation between Winehouse's bodily decorations and her self-destructive behaviour, but at this sad time, searching for negatives seems both overly simplistic and incredibly unkind.

Perhaps those of us with a personal understanding of being tattooed, Amy's brothers and sisters of ink, can make different connections. We can trace the lines between Winehouse's inner self and her outward appearance and find the signs of the artist on her skin, as colourful, as unpredictable and as fleeting as a butterfly.

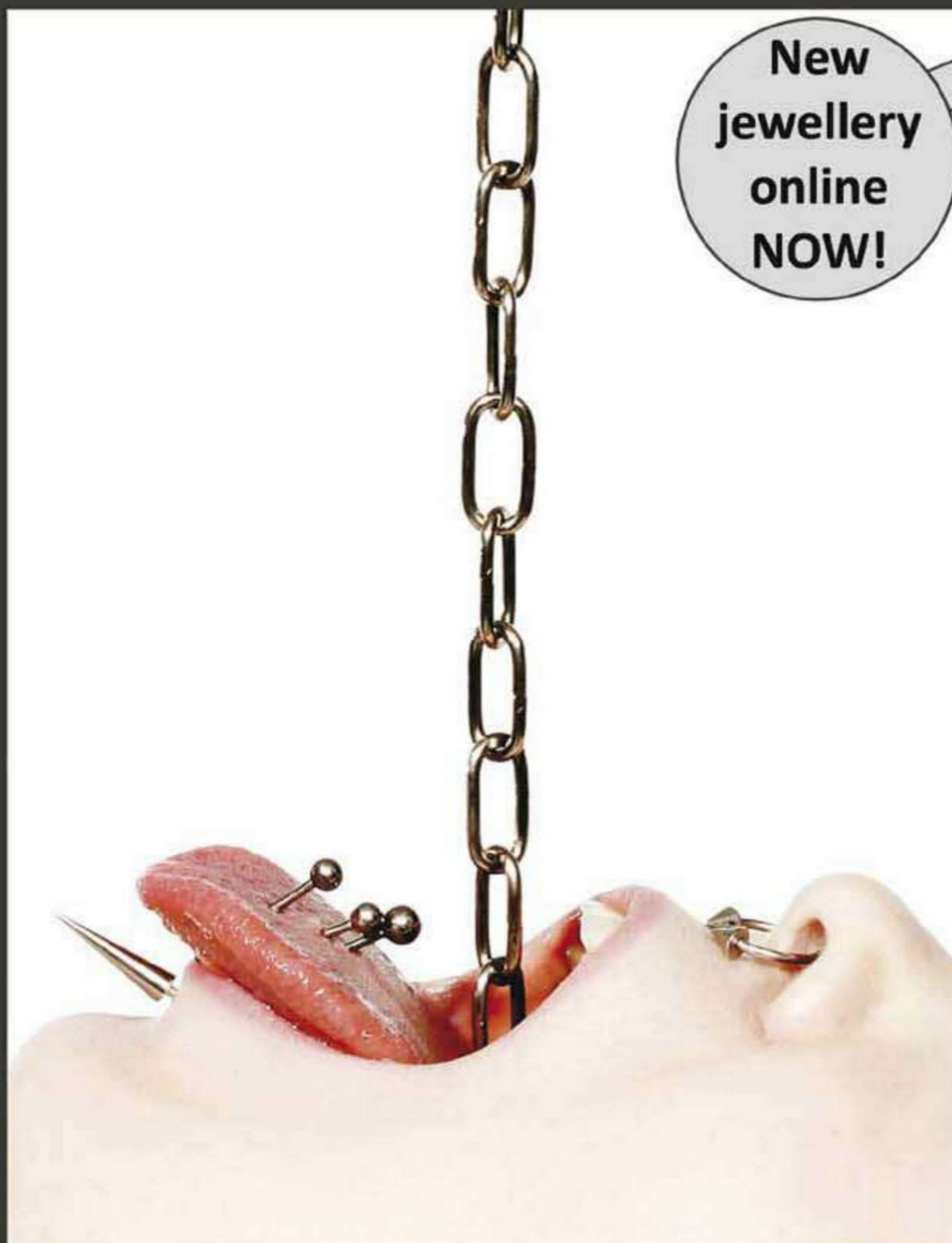
[Tattoos are] "A way of suffering for the things that mean a lot to you"

Amy Winehouse 🐦

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