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COMIC BOOK TATTOOS
The rise of the collector

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Nicky Connor

EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY'S HERO

I have been very rude to somebody and I didn't mean to be.

This is an official apology. Sort of - because I was only rude about them in my head.

A company sent me an email asking if I could feature their client in the magazine. I confess, I had never heard of their client which means they were not really doing their job correctly. I have heard of Brian The Whack Job and he lives something like ten miles away from me. I don't know what Brian does or why they call him that but I have definitely heard of him.

So I respond:

"Hi. Thanks for your email. Does she actually do anything?"

I didn't hear anything for hours and figured that either a) they were busy or b) there was a meeting around a large round table in which six or seven people had a crisis management meeting about whether their client actually did do anything. Or maybe they had a crisis meeting about why they all got up that morning. I like the sound of the last two of those options best.

I hit the web to find out who she was to discover some nice tattoos, a pretty face and vacuous social media feed that was so jaw achingly vacant and aimed at other

members of the walking dead, I threw up on my keyboard then stabbed myself in the hand with a fork to make sure I was still part of this world.

I put the matter to one side and went about my day but as my own sand trickled away, I started to overthink it. She's probably a lovely person. She is somebody's daughter. I would raise all of the demons in hell if somebody was mean about my daughter - and have. She may be somebody's mother. Maybe, just maybe,

WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING TO THE TABLE?
IT'S ACTUALLY MY JOB TO ASK THAT I'M WHILE
STUDYING YOUR INK

I should give it a whirl and see what happens. I might be surprised. Maybe the readers of Skin Deep like that sort of thing. Maybe I'll find myself standing out in the cold in days of future past because she became the next Kat Von D and won't ever speak to me. Seriously, these things need to go through the filter in my head.

Being famous for being famous is a tough call. Fifteen years ago, she would be working in a bank or a cafe - and there's nothing wrong with that at all. It's something. Being famous for being famous in your own social media world is a nothing - and yet, everywhere

I look, somebody thinks they rock like a motherfucker.

It's 2014 and everybody is somebody's hero. How lame.

So my question to the world this week is: "What are you bringing to the table?" It's actually my job to ask that I'm while studying your ink.

Maybe I'm getting old. Hell, I am getting old, but I only achieved that by not dying. It's not hard. It's not even an achievement. If you're reading this, you have 'achieved' it too. Congratulations. Let's

throw a party and post it on our social feeds but there's a big difference between being alive and living. One is a biological process that we're all (more or less) geared up for, the other involves making positive decisions about what road to drive along and what you're going to do when you get there. I like the sound of hitting an open road, buying some people a coffee along the way - even though they never asked me to - and leaving a trail of raised eyebrows that somebody so damn sexy would do something like that. I don't however much like the sound of driving down the road throwing flyers out of the car window branded with

the message "Everybody Look At Me Because I Am Here."

If you didn't exist, would somebody really invent you?

Are you somebody worth being?

Anyway, I wrote this - on my phone - sitting in the car park of a motorway service station on the M1. I thought I had it wrapped but as I was about to leave, a black BMW convertible with new plates parked about ten feet away from me. Who should jump out of it, but Nobody and Nobody's Friend. Laughing, with the wind in their hair and a Versace wardrobe, I watched them skip like lambs across the tarmac. All eyes were upon them. Then I scowled at my own face in the rearview mirror but neither I nor my reflection could decide who was playing this game correctly.

Get good ink. That's all I got.

Sen



@mrsionsmith

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David Corden - Ritual Art (UK)



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WorldMag

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come along, BANG! It smacks you up on the left side of your face. Ladies, Gents: Davinia Catarina

54 JF BIRON
A Bachelor of Fine Arts, a family tragedy and a decade-long stint as a 911 dispatcher culminated in JF Biron deciding to devote himself to tattooing.

60 COMIC BOOK TATTOOS
Thanks to a slew of blockbuster Marvel and DC movies, the world has suddenly switched onto to comics and the artists who create it. But if you're looking for inky inspiration, there's a lot more out there than simply Lycra-clad heroes... tho they're fun too...

72 MANCHESTER INT' SHOW
Our midsummer show in Manchester was a real blast. This year, there was a swathe of new artists working, a mass of new faces in the crowd and of course, the weather turned up.

16 READER PROFILE
How much love can one woman throw at a dead playwright? You would be surprised. Seriously.

22 THINK
In a world in which almost everything is built to be replaced within a year, are tattoos the last bastion of permanence we're ever likely to see? Discuss!

28 THE COVER GIRL: DAVINIA
In the quest for perfection, you get to look at a lot of frogs - and right at the moment you figure it's never going to



COMIC BOOK CAPERS
HARDCORE COLLECTORS

THIS MONTH'S PULL OUT:



72 THE NOIR ALLEY
Situated in the quaint town of Chippenham, Picture House doesn't look like your average UK tattoo studio. From the outside, it might put you in mind of some European art house theatre; one of those indie joints that play French noir films...



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FREAK SHOWS



PHOTO SHOTS



BATTLE OF THE BANDS



LIP-SYNC CHAMPIONSHIP

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 Adam Thomas
Adem Senturk
 Akos Strenner
Alan Turner
 Alex Rattray
Alex Rowntree
 Alex Williamson
Alexe Fanel
 Andy Bowler
Andy McDonald
 Andy Walker
Angel Totchev
 Anna Garvey
Anna Plummer
 Anrijs Straume
Antonio Lucarelli
 Arran Knott
Ash Higham
 Ash Lewis
Ashley Bell
 Bart Janus
Bartosz Panas
 Beau Redman
Ben Gadsby
 Ben Parry
Ben Rollz
 Beth Cust
Beynur Kaptan
 Bez
Billy Sleight
 Boris Bianchi
Brownie
 Burnie
Callam Godley
 Carlie B
Casper Redmer
 Cathy Sue
Ceri Williams
 Cesar De Cesaro
Chad Newsom
 Chantale Coady
Charlotte Dodd
 Charlotte Hughes
Cheryl Gouldthorpe
 Chris Byrne
Chris Collins
 Chris Harrison
Chris Jones
 Cido
Claire Hamill
 Clarke Dudley
Craig Cardwell
 Craig McGee
Craig Measures
 Crip
Dale Hearson

Dan Arietti
Dan Barren
 Dan Hartley
Dan Henk
 Dan Mihalache
Dan Robson
 Dan Stewart
Dane Burton
 Dane Grannon
Daniel Hartley
 Daniel Lake
Danny Birch
 Danny Eddy
Darryl Mullen
 Daniel Nowak
Dave Brace
 David Corden
David Pattinson
 David Robb
Dean Cowley
 Dean Gleeson
Dean Kerr
 Dean Moore
Dean Taylor
 Deathpop
Dek Kent
 Derek Bauwens
Dizz
 Dom Wiley
Dome Fleming
 Donatas Lasys
Drewski Elish
 Edgar Ivanov
Ell Torres
 Ellie Dutton
Elliott Wells
 Emil Tattoo
Emil Peptersson
 Emilio Winter
Emily Dawson
 Emma Wroe
Enrico Garau
 Euan Thomson
George Torrington
 Gary Helyar
Gator
 Gavin Clarke
Gavin Skelton
Giada Knox
 Giles Twigg
Glen Pollit
 Graham Longton
Gypy (Jean Pierre)
 Guy Tinsley
Gzy Ex Silesia
 Hao
Hannah Von Farren
 Hannah Willison

Hannya Jane
 Harry Hillyer
Henry Pykko (Mr Dist)
 Holly Dixon
Hollie-May Wall
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Keng Timsuwan
 Kevin Brodie
Kevin Hughes
 Keety
Kiefer Lilley
 Kieran Palmer
Koen Chamberlain
 Kris Boyd
Kris Taylor
 Krzstof Berent
Kurt Marlow
 Kyle 'Egg' Williams
Laura Jones
 Lawrence Canham
Leah Moule
 Leanne Fate

Lee Armstrong
 Lee Denham
Lee Jones
 Lee Pickles
Lee Pound
 Liam Jackson
Liam 'Canvas' Freeman
 Liam Monahan
Lisa Walker
 Liz Buckland
Louis Molloy
 Loz Phillips
Lucian Broughton
 Luke Foley
Lukasz Miskacz
 Lukasz 'Bam' Kazmrek
Luke Williamson
 Mac 'Doctor Evil'
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Marcello Cestra
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Marcin Sonski
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SHORT SLEEVES

CONTROVERSY OVER DESIGN YOUR OWN TATTOO COURSE

A free scheme run by the Welsh government's anti-poverty programme intended to 'develop your artistic skills to be able to design tattoos for yourself and others' has got some people in the Welsh Assembly worked up, according to reports on Wales Online.

"It seems that in Bridgend taxpayers' money is being used to fund tattoo design courses through Communities First," said South Wales West Lib Dem AM Peter Black. "These funds are being allocated to create sustainable communities and to get people into work. It is difficult to see how this venture can be justified in those terms."

However, a spokesman for Communities and Tackling Poverty Minister Jeff Cuthbert took a different view. "Peter Black's comments are ill-informed, snobbish and grossly misleading. The Work Programme, supported by Lib Dem Ministers in Westminster, publicises the fact that it has found work for young people in this growing industry - is Mr Black complaining about these jobs? The truth is he has seen one advert about one small project in one Communities First area and run to the press without first making proper enquiries about the facts of the matter."

Meanwhile, a spokesman for Bridgend council said: "The 'Design your own tattoo' session should not be taken at face value as it is carefully structured to help people develop confidence and important skills in areas such as communication, creative thinking and working with others."

Make of that what you will. If you've attended the session (or one like it) we'd love to hear from you - email news@skindeep.co.uk.

ILLEGAL TATTOOISTS

A local council in Wales is launching a new campaign to raise awareness of the risks involved in visiting an unlicensed artist. Blaenau Gwent council's environmental health team are also concerned by cases of children under the age of 18 being tattooed.



FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION AT www.tattoojam.com

TICKETS TO TATTOO JAM

It's that time of year again - Tattoo Jam is almost upon us. If you've been before, you'll be spinning your wheels to go again - if not, you don't know what you're missing, but we can fix that. We're here to ease your pain with five pairs of weekend tickets up for grabs. The rules are as simple as ever. Send an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line: GET ME TO THE JAM and we'll pull the winners at random from the proverbial hat. This year, we have an amazing talent list and more than ever to have fun with while you're not getting tattooed. You know what to do.

SHORT SLEEVES

Commenting on the risks driving the 'Think before you ink' campaign, a council spokeswoman said "There could be serious long term health effects, or poor artwork and poor tattooing techniques, which could result in a poor tattoo people could regret."

The council is encouraging local people thinking of having a tattoo to visit their website to make sure an artist is registered – see blaenau-gwent.gov.uk for more.

TATTOO REMOVAL TOP TEN

As our learned Ed has pointed out in the past, there's no excuse these days for getting anything other than a great tattoo. But when mistakes and regrets do occur (and hey, we've all been there), increasingly people are going under the laser. Now, Dr Maryam Zamani of the Cadogan Cosmetics clinic in London has been speaking about the top reasons clients give for re-thinking their inking. Here's her top ten, as reported by the Mail Online:

1. Removing a lower back tattoo (referred to as 'tramp stamp' by the Mail, inevitably)
2. Losing that tribal band on your arm
3. Erasing the name of a former partner
4. Fixing a drunken mistake (don't drink and ink, people!)
5. A changing body shape, meaning the tattoo doesn't look like it used to
6. Fixing poor quality work
7. Making 'jobstopper' tattoos (on hands, wrists and so on) vanish
8. Wiping away band tattoos when your heroes split up
9. Re-jigging permanent makeup
10. Changing tastes

Don't forget to check out our back issues for an in-depth look at tattoo removal – our writers talk about wiping the slate clean in issue 238.

CRIMINAL INK

A man in Dallas County, USA, has been jailed for 20 years after stalking a teenage girl and shooting her father (who survived the attack). The court heard that Gabriel Ramirez had the 13 year-old girl's name, birthday and address tattooed on himself some 11 times, a practice the Assistant DA described as "scary". Way to represent tattooing, bro. Please advance to jail, collecting 10 'creepy as all hell' points as you go.



ART HOUSE TATTOO CHARITY DAY

Ormskirk studio Art House Tattoo are holding a charity fundraising event on October 4, 2014. The team are raising money for Derian House Children's Hospice and will be tattooing designs from a special set of flash created just for the day; they'll also be selling paintings. All proceeds will go straight to the hospice.

"We had a successful day last year and cant wait to do another!" says Hannah, from the studio. The day begins at 10am so line up early to get inked – you can see an example of their work above, created by Old Man Brierley, and more info on designs will be available on Facebook (www.facebook.com/arthouseormskirk) in the near future. Visit arthousetattoo.co.uk or call 01695 227442 for more info.

POKEMANIA

This rather fine collection of pocket monsters comes courtesy of Ashley Newton and the rest of the team at Between the Lines studio in Lincoln. Ashley, 28, has been tattooing full time for two years and is part owner of the studio; he explains that the Pokémon theme isn't just a fan thing. "We're doing a charity event at the moment to raise money for Cancer Research," he says. "We're trying to Tattoo all 150 Pokémon."

They're halfway through already and the fundraising is going well. If you'd like to help Ashley and his fellow artists catch 'em all, drop in to see them at The Terrace on Grantham Street, Lincoln, call 07944604222, email Wago6605@aol.com or visit betweenthelinesstudio.com.



Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL DEAF TATTOO CONVENTION

05 – 07 September 2014

St. John's Deaf Community Centre
258 Greens Lanes
Manor House
London N4 2HE
deaf-tattoo.com

BOURNEMOUTH INK 'N' ART TATTOO EXPO

12 – 14 September 2014

Pavilion Theatre
Bournemouth
BH1 2BU
[Facebook.com/ink-n-art-tattoo-fest](https://www.facebook.com/ink-n-art-tattoo-fest)

FEMALE TATTOO SHOW

14 September 2014

Leamington Assembly
Spencer Street
Warwickshire
CV31 3NF
femaletattooshow.co.uk

TATTOO JAM

10 – 12 October 2014

Doncaster Racecourse
Leger Way
Doncaster
DN2 6BB
tattoojam.com

EVIAN TATTOO SHOW

24 – 26 October 2014

Palais des Congrès d'Évian-les-Bains
Place Peintre Charles Cottet
74500 Évian-Les-Bains
France
eviantattoo.com

JURASSIC COAST TATTOO CONVENTION

7 – 9 November 2014

Premier Inn Hotel
Bournemouth Central
Westover Rd
Bournemouth BH1 2BZ
www.jurassiccoasttattooconvention.co.uk

BRUSSELS TATTOO CONVENTION

07 – 09 November 2014

Tour & Taxis, Avenue du Port 86,
1000 Brussels, Belgium
brusselstattooconvention.be

TRAVELLER BEWARE

In the last issue we reported on a story from Myanmar (sometimes called Burma), in which an official warned people not to tattoo a map of the country below their waists. Now another cautionary tale has come from the country, after a Canadian university teacher claims he was forced to abandon a trip on account of his leg tattoos.



The Canadian Press (and other outlets) explained that the trouble started when Jason Polley's leg tattoos of the Buddha were snapped by a local and posted on Facebook. The lower parts of the body are considered unclean by some religions in the region, so inking images of the Buddha there is seen by some as profoundly disrespectful.

Polley, himself a Mahayana Buddhist, claims that the tattoos are a pillar of support and a sign of his beliefs. However, officials detained him and his partner at their hotel, eventually driving them for 15 hours to the airport. There they were given conflicting information by officials, some explaining they were being deported, others suggesting they were

being asked to leave for their own safety in case of reprisals from religious groups.

Eventually Polley and partner left the country safely to continue their holiday in Thailand. "The officials, who included the district chief of tourism in Myanmar, were so kind as to invite us back once cooler heads prevail and the situation improves," he said.

It's an extreme example, but stories like this do highlight the importance for tattoo collectors (especially those with religious or spiritual art) of doing a little research before going overseas. Local customs and laws – and law enforcement practices – vary hugely, so knowing when it's wise to cover up can make for a much happier trip.



NEW STUDIO FOR HINCKLEY

Custom artist Wojtek recently set up shop in Hinckley, specialising in custom-only work. The studio is gaining in popularity and will be expanding soon – check out [facebook.com/wojtektattoo](https://www.facebook.com/wojtektattoo) for more info.

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150129 Florence,
Italy
florencetattooconvention.com

HALLOWEEN TATTOO BASH 8-9 November

Wolverhampton Racecourse
info@halloweentattoobash.co.uk
[facebook.com/halloweenTattooBash](https://www.facebook.com/halloweenTattooBash)

SHEFFIELD TATTOO SHOW 15 – 16 November 2014

Magna science centre
Sheffield Road,
Rotherham
sheffieldtattooshow.co.uk

EAST COAST TATTOO EXPO 15 – 16 November

Highfield Holiday Park
London Road,
Clacton
www.eastcoastexpo.co.uk

CARIAD INK FESTIVAL 29 – 30 November 2014

Venue Cymru,
The Promenade
Llandudno LL30 1BB
[facebook.com/cariadink](https://www.facebook.com/cariadink)

TATTOO FREEZE 11 January 2015

The International Centre
Saint Quentin Gate
Telford TF3 4JH
www.tattoofreeze.com

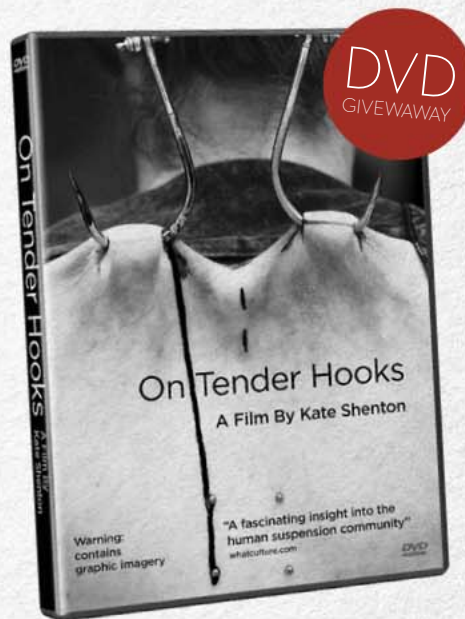
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ON TENDER HOOKS

We happen to have come by five copies of the documentary *On Tender Hooks* - and we'd like to give them away. This first feature film from accomplished short filmmaker Kate Shenton is a documentary that delves into the world of human suspension and the people involved.

Kate spends a year following a group of suspenders. Every Sunday they pierce themselves with hooks and hang in mid-air from rigs in a display that challenges the perceptions and squeamishness of even the most hardened. The documentary shows how the ordinary human body can achieve extraordinary things. Beginning with groups in London, and then following events in Rico, Croatia and Oslo, Norway, the film depicts a wide variety of experience and opinions, and delves thoughtfully into a deeply misunderstood practice. *On Tender Hooks* was a self-funded project filmed and edited by director Kate Shenton.

If swinging from a hook is your bag, just ship an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line of HANGING AROUND and we'll choose some winners. If you never win anything and can't



face the rejection, you can check out more about the movie here: [facebook.com/101FilmsUK](https://www.facebook.com/101FilmsUK), twitter.com/101_Films, 101-films.com

SOARING SUCCESS FOR POWYS TATTOO CONVENTION

In a recent issue we reported on the Powys Tattoo Convention, which was being held to raise money for the Air Ambulance and Help for Heroes charities.

We're happy to update you with news that the event raised an impressive £4500 over the weekend of 26-27 July, with organisers X-Angelus Studios understandably delighted and grateful to all the visitors and artists who made it a success. "We're so proud of how much our small convention raised," says studio manager Bex. "It was absolutely overwhelming, especially being held in such a small town." Who says small can't be mighty? Congrats to all involved!

LINGERIE LOVE

If you're in the market for some posh pants - and let's face it, who isn't - you might want to consider a little something from Tallulah Love.

The retro-styled lingerie range is the brainchild of Michelle Taylor, a lady with a pretty good pedigree in this area: she was previously design director for Playboy Intimates UK and has been working in the luxury lingerie industry for more than a decade.

With designs based on 1940s and 50s pin-up style, there's something playful to suit every kind of traditional tattoo collector, from bras and briefs to something even more upmarket, like the Hummingbird Knickers box set pictured here. Check out the full range at tallulahlove.com to see what's been getting Vogue so excited, and to pop a couple of things onto the Christmas wish list...



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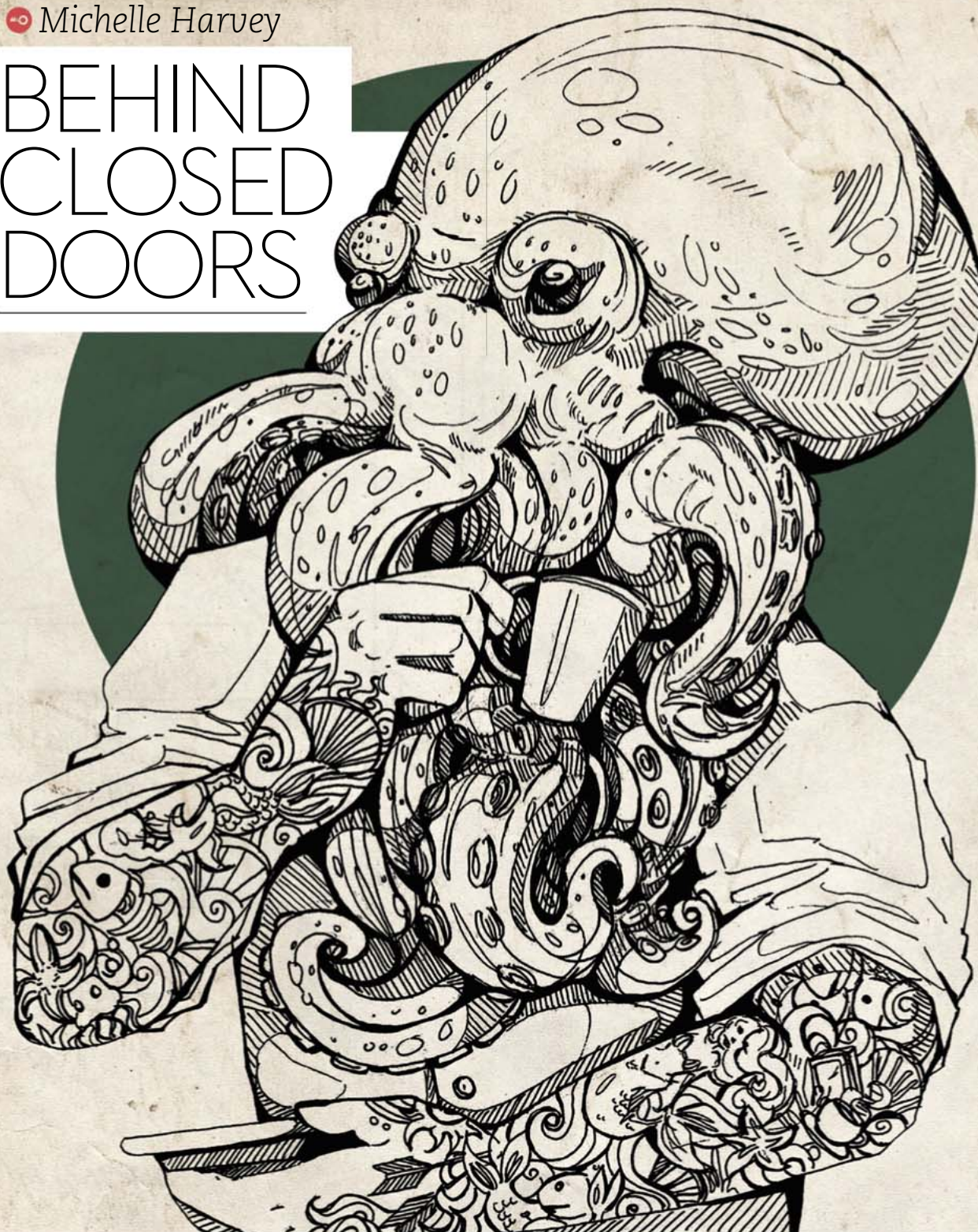
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Michelle Harvey

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By a stroke of good fortune, I met Michelle Harvey - aka: wolfskulljack - at the Manchester Tattoo Show where she was exhibiting her work. She's not a tattoo artist but being as I wasn't the only one who relieved her of some original artwork, there's a fair chance you will fall in love too. This is your last call to get in at the bottom floor...



I had them build and print a giant bloody werewolf head which went down a storm



I am a full time freelance artist living and working in Cheltenham England. My artwork is driven by my curiosity for the dark and macabre, especially that of skulls, monsters and animals.

Art isn't just a hobby or job, but an unconditional must in my day to day. I find inking with fine liners extremely therapeutic and will often work for hours without stopping on a single piece. This is great for productivity but not so good for my developing mutant-like posture and future carpal tunnel syndrome. Inking on a large scale safely is challenging, especially when you dislike working at a desk!

Exhibiting at the Manchester Tattoo Show was an absolute blast and I was pleasantly surprised

at the amount of positive feedback from viewers. I had a huge A1 canvas printed from the National Star College in Gloucestershire who are a college for young people with disabilities. They have fantastic printing services and the money goes towards the charity. I had them build and print a giant bloody werewolf head - which aside from one little girl being frightened by it (not surprising as it was the same height as her) the wolf went down a storm. I also got to meet and hang out with a lot of other artists during the day who were absolutely lovely. I enjoyed the exhibition so much I am quite seriously looking to exhibit at other events around the country and to expand my client base - let's do something! 🐾

FREE T-SHIRTS

Michelle has designed this killer t-shirt which will only be available to those who subscribe to Skin Deep at Tattoo Jam. There will be one missing...

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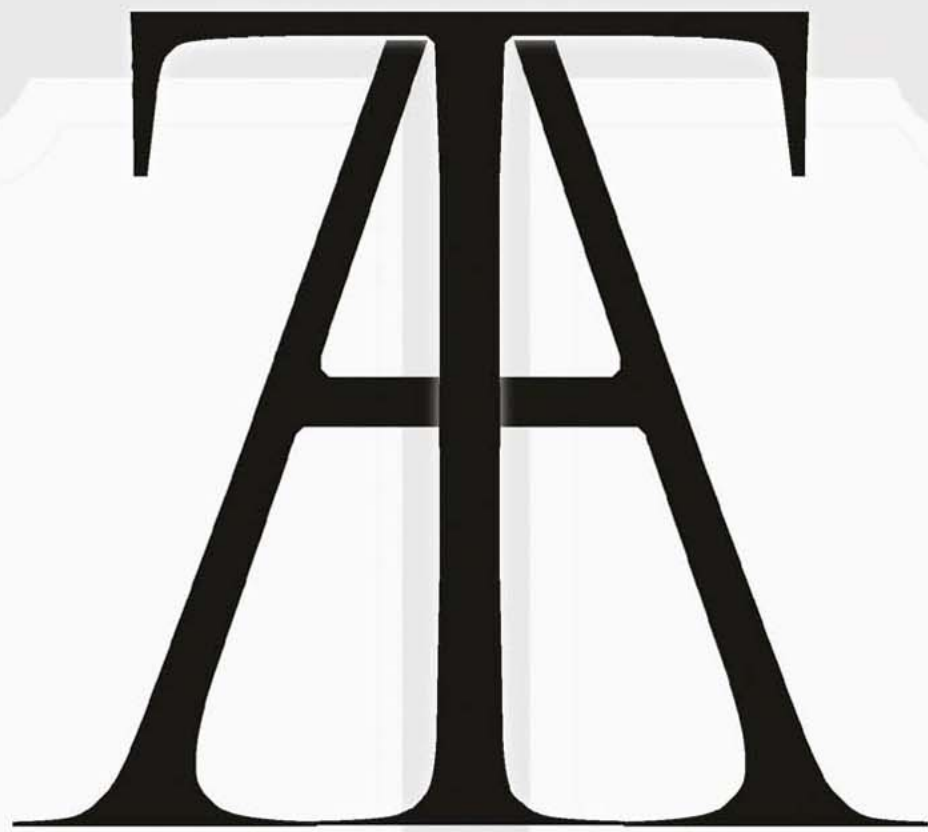
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THE COFFEE HOUSE SCENES FROM

This month, on a very slow trek north, I happened by way of the ancient city of Oxford - and who better to refresh the mouth with than the skeleton man himself, er... Skeleton Man.

SKELETON MAN TATTOO, Suit 3, Waterloo, House, 58-60 High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6EU skeletonmantattoo.com

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YOU'RE PRETTY TUCKED OUT OF THE WAY HERE AREN'T YOU. WAS THAT SOMETHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED FOR YOURSELF? A QUIET PLACE IN WHICH TO PRACTICE YOUR ART?

Yes definitely, I like to be tucked away in my own little world. There are no signs or shop front so it can be a little difficult for people to find, but this works in my favour. I can often tattoo all day long with little or no interruption. It's a mega chilled out studio.

WOULD YOU SAY YOU HAD QUITE A 'JAPANESE' FRAME OF MIND WHEN IT COMES TO TATTOOING? IS THAT WHERE YOUR ROOTS ARE? REGARDLESS OF THE SUBJECT MATTER YOU TATTOO, THERE'S A LOT OF EASTERN INFLUENCE IN THEIR COMPOSITION - WHICH IS NO BAD THING! JUST AN OBSERVATION.

Yeah, somehow my Japanese influences manage to creep into all of my work. I'm a big fan of Manga, Japanese style tattoo and Japanese culture. I've spent





I'M HAPPY TO TATTOO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING TO BE HONEST. I'M NOT STYLE SPECIFIC, I ENJOY ALL TYPES OF TATTOO. ALL I ASK OF THE CLIENTS IS 100% TRUST IN MY JUDGEMENT

a fair bit of time in Japan too over the last few years and each time I leave, I fill my suitcase with a lot of cool things to bring back and surround myself in.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE KIND OF TATTOO TO WORK ON? IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WON'T TOUCH SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU DON'T LIKE DOING IT?

I'm happy to tattoo pretty much anything to be honest. I'm not style specific, I enjoy all types of tattoo. All I ask of the clients is 100% trust in my judgement. I like for my customer to tell me what they want and then leave

the rest to me. The only thing I really avoid is colour realism and colour portraits - I don't really dig them. I appreciate the skill of what people are doing with colour realism, it's mind blowing but I'm not really into seeing it on skin, For me, I like it better on a canvas.

DO YOU SELL YOUR ART FROM THE STUDIO OR ARE YOU ONE OF THOSE ARTISTS WHO CAN'T BEAR TO PART WITH THEM? IT HAPPENS - THOUGH IT'S NO A GREAT WAY TO MAKE A LIVING OUT OF ART, I do sell my art from my studio - and funny you should say that





IT'S ONLY RECENTLY I'VE LEARNT TO STOP BEING SO ATTACHED TO MY ART AND LET IT GO

because it's only recently I've learnt to stop being so attached to my art and let it go. I'm always working on so many projects at any one time, that it needs selling before I run out of room for it all.

LET ME ASK A QUESTION YOU'VE HEAD A HUNDRED TIMES TODAY ALREADY - HOW DID YOU COME BY THE NAME SKELETON MAN ANYWAY? A PERSONAL THING? NICKNAME FROM SCHOOL? IS IT EVEN WORTH TALKING ABOUT?

Ha. I get asked this a lot and have used so many different answers cause I don't even know myself anymore. For the purposes of actually answering the question, I legally changed my name when I was 16 and

added 'Skeleton' as my middle name. I find it strange when people I haven't met before, come into my studio and use my first name, it's nice to be able to introduce myself and say "Hi I'm, nice to meet you."

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE ANYWAY? FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, YOU'VE GOT A GOOD CLIENT LIST ON THE BOIL. DO YOU HAVE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE OR ARE YOU HAPPY TO KEEP ON KEEPING ON AT WHAT YOU'RE DOING?

Skeleton Man Tattoo has been open since 2007. Originally, it was downstairs to where I am now but moved up after a year from wanting more space and privacy. I want to keep

this studio for ever. I love it, it's like a second home. In the future though, I would like to guest at other studios, mostly to meet other artists in hopes of picking up a something new every where I go. 🐾

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OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE

How much love can one woman throw at a dead playwright? You would be surprised. Seriously.



“Hello, Sweetie” is a pretty good way to get my attention amongst thousands of other people. However, I don’t normally turn around to find the living embodiment of River Song smiling back at me.

Some background first however. Over the last six months, every newspaper, radio show and magazine you can think of has called me up to dig inside of my head as why it is that “women of a certain age are suddenly getting tattooed”. Bursting bubbles is my business. Just because you’ve decided to look, dear writer, doesn’t mean it’s a new thing. Far from it - so much so that the question is not even valid. This has little to do with my point, but I choose to mention it because it ties in comfortably

with something that is important - and that would be getting the tattoo you want, exactly how you want it and not letting silly obstacles get in your way.

Event compère and Poetrix, Muriel Lavender - for it is she who demanded my attention - reveals that she is about to get a tattoo that I might be interested in, and not solely because it will be on her arse. It is to be a multi-functional tattoo, designed by an artist she adores, tattooed by an artist she respects, is attached to a fundraiser for her favourite charities and will stand the test of time for her personally. Who wouldn’t be interested...

Cut to the Manchester International Show. The tattoo is complete - now all I need is the story behind it. We meet in the hotel lobby and she addresses 🍷



blog: <http://muriel-lavender.blogspot.com/>
 face: www.facebook.com/MurielLavenderPoetrix
 twit: @MurielLavender
 ig: @muriellavender
 pin: <http://www.pinterest.com/muriellavender/>
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WHEN ONE REACHES THE POINT IN ONE'S LIFE WHEN ALL OTHER CHOICES ARE TAKEN AWAY, ONE SHOULD NOT BE MADE TO SUFFER FURTHER THROUGH THE LACK OF TIME, MONEY OR HUMANITY.

BEARDS

I'm co-hosting the British Beard and Moustache Championships - so when the committee got in touch with a shortlist of the charities they were considering for the event, I was in total agreement with their choices.

I support a lot of 'People' charities, and I tend to go for the ones which actually provide real assistance to individuals (rather than 'raising awareness', which means more donations go on publicity and less to those who need help). Dorothy House Hospice Care and Depression Alliance do exactly that, and one of the many benefits they offer to those in need is Dignity. I acknowledge that talking about Dignity when I spend so much time scampering around showing off my arse is somewhat of a contradiction; but I have a choice. When one reaches the point in one's life when all other choices are taken away, one should not be made to suffer further through the lack of time, money or humanity. Both these charities have personal significance for me. Indeed, I do not believe there is a person in the country who will not have a need for the work of one or other or both of them at some point, or have a loved one who will.

World

THE CHARITIES:

**Dorothy House
Hospice Care**

I recommend a look at the website, because it'll make you weep. DH provide care and support for people who are terminally ill, and for their families and loved ones: this may be at one of their Hospices, day-care centres, or in the home of the patient. The stories of transformation - from feeling lost, frightened and alone, to being relieved of the multiple burdens of grief, guilt, worry or pain - there is no way to put a value on the care provided by the DH nurses and staff. (www.dorothyhouse.co.uk/stories)

Depression Alliance:

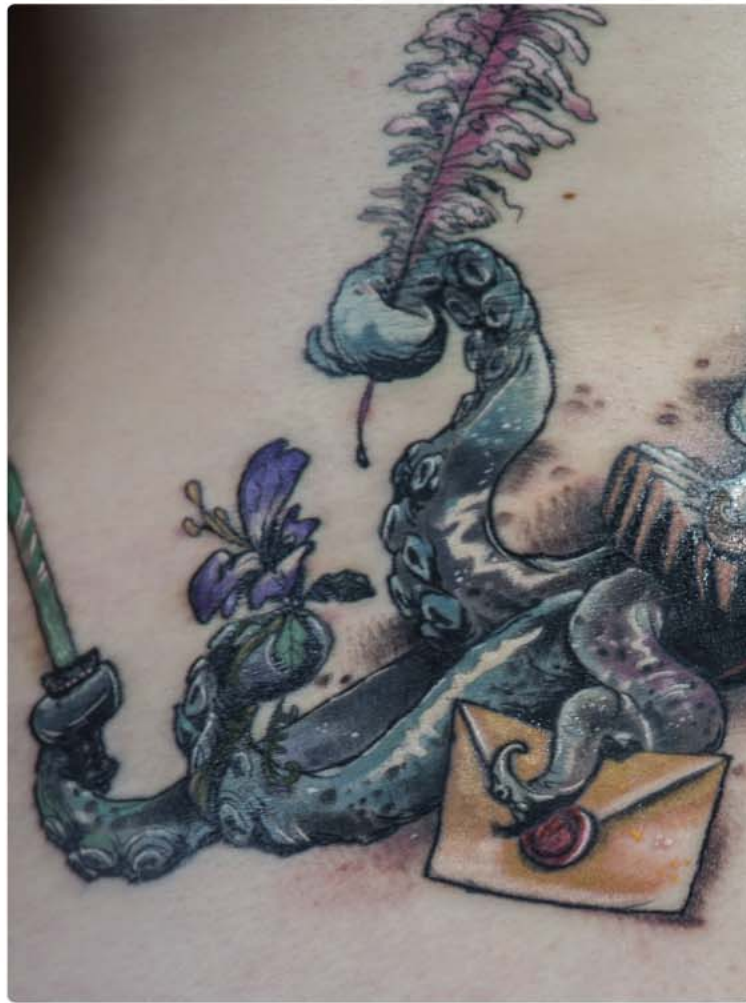
Depression, Anxiety, Mental Illness: in the UK, it's a time bomb - but that's another story (the statistics say one in five people are affected: I'd be willing to hazard a guess that the real figure is far higher than that). The sufferer feels desperate; their loved ones, helpless. And no-one who hasn't been through it can really understand. With a broken leg, everyone will say, 'yes, I can see why you can't carry your own shopping - let me help'. With depression, nothing shows, so you're told to cheer up and carry your baggage by yourself. DA puts sufferers in touch with others who know what it's like. And that support could mean the difference between being able to carry on, and - well, just not. (www.depressionalliance.org)

WHEN I FIRST STARTED THINKING ABOUT THE TATTOO, I MADE CONTACT AGAIN TO SEE IF HE COULD DESIGN A SHAKESPEAREAN OCTOPUS FOR ME, NOT THINKING FOR A MOMENT THAT HE WOULD!

me as "Sweetie" again, which I find hilariously endearing. I am not in control of this situation at all and I need to be. The devil on my shoulder says I need to take Miss Lavender out of her comfort zone. I press the button for the lift and take her up to the top floor of the hotel where, with a little help from a passing janitor (who is easily appeased with a free ticket to the show), we find ourselves on the roof of the hotel - in the rain. Health and Safety be damned. Now, dear lady - speak to me:

"I fell in love with Brian (Kesinger - Steampunk King and Disney animator - bkartonline.com) a couple of years ago when I started getting interested in Steampunk and I happened upon his images of Tea Girls, which he paints with actual tea and they're beautiful - but he also has two characters called Otto and Victoria. Victoria is this sweet little Steampunk girl with a pet octopus. "I first made contact with him





HELL YEAH, I'LL TATTOO YOUR ASS

MISS JO BLACK

to say a simple thank-you for Otto and Victoria, because you can, on social media, it's easy. Then, when I first started thinking about the tattoo, I made contact again to see if he could design a Shakespearean Octopus for me, not thinking for a moment that he would! But I sent him a terrible sketch of what I had in mind anyway, and made a Pinterest board which featured all of the items that I wanted the octopus to be holding and exactly what they all looked like."

At which point, it becomes obvious to me that this was not only a serious undertaking for Muriel, it was actually thought out from the ground up - and that's not something we see everyday around here. Completed illustration in place, the next stage was what's known in the trade as a 'no-brainer'. There was only ever one tattoo artist in the running to take this on and that was Miss Jo Black. Local, world-class but

also totally into what Brian had created and more than eager to take on the task of sizing it up and getting it in the right place:

"What do you mean, 'why Jo'?" is the response I get to what is apparently the most ridiculous question in the world. "Because I love her. We've known each other about three years. There's a wonderful sense of community where we both live and I ended up doing a crazy photo shoot in her studio back in 2011. Then I took a show to the Edinburgh Festival that same year, and I needed some flyers so I asked her to 'Manga-ise' one of the shots into a Manga Muriel! That was when I fell in love with her but we've been friends ever since. I simply would never have gone anywhere else, it wasn't even an option. Why would I - as far as I'm concerned, Jo has everything I could ever want."

Jo had her own thoughts on this too - which you can 🍷

MISS JO BLACK

"When I first saw Muriel perform in the Garden Cafe in our quaint little town of Frome, I knew we would cross paths again in the future. She has a way with words that can only be appreciated fully upon hearing her poems.

I was surprised to see that Mu had no visible tattoos, considering her elaborate visual appearance, and later when we became friends I asked her why she didn't have any. I believe Mu's response was something to do with the fear of disappointing her mother (something I can relate to) but she then went on to semi-convince herself that being of the age she is she really should have no fear about that! It barely took any persuading from me from there to get her to agree to jump into the chair! As we spent more time together we discovered a mutual adoration for the male face blanket we call a beard, and a pendant for the weird and wonderful things in life. I suppose it was only natural that it was me who put the tattoo on her skin. Mu's decision to do this tattoo as a way to raise money for Dorothy House and for Depression Alliance made it even easier to say 'Hell yeah, I'll tattoo your ass' when she asked me to be part of the project. Dorothy House is a charity that I have done a fair amount of fundraising for through my studio and I have a lot of respect for what they do as an organisation, a wonderful charity to support. As for tattooing another artist's work, I could not be more excited! I spend a lot of my time designing custom tattoos for clients but it will be a pleasure and a challenge to do justice to such an amazing piece of art by such a fantastic artist!"



EVERYBODY WAS SO GOOD ABOUT SPREADING THE WORD - IT WAS HARD WORK BECAUSE NOBODY REALLY KNOWS WHO I AM, BUT I MUST SAY A LOT OF THIS CAME FROM THE BEARDING COMMUNITY

FUNDRAISING

The tattoo fundraiser was all about the chosen charities of TBBMC2014, which is September 13. I'm very grateful to the organisers and the Wessex Beardsmen (my home "Thatch") for making me part of it. They are a fantastic group, very committed to the cause, and to maintaining strong links with other Bearding organisations all over the world. In fact, I've been invited back as a judge for their second annual Beard Competition, which will be held in Yeovil next April. Entrants from anywhere are warmly welcomed. I do love my bearding family!

find in the box copy on these pages. Meanwhile, ticking away quietly in the background was the charity fundraiser Muriel had set up. The goal was to raise enough money to throw a noticeable chunk of cash at her two pet charities, with 'rewards' including poetry and prints of the tattoo - now rethought and relocated to just above her arse - it may sound peculiar, but I have it on good authority that said item has its own fan club out there on the internet.

With a final total of £1,830, the generosity of the people who got behind her idea appears to have rekindled Muriel's faith in human nature.

"Everybody was so good about spreading the word - it was hard work because nobody really knows who I am, but I must say a lot of this came from the bearding



community. I have met some truly wonderful people within it."

I take it for granted that people know the right way to go about getting custom tattoo work done properly but I shouldn't. There is no absolutely correct way of doing it at all, but this comes very close: because, when all of the cool things about your journey are said and done, you - the collector - are left standing alone with your tattoo. It has to matter for the rest of your life.

When pressed on how Muriel felt about her Octopus, post-fundraising, post-healing and

post-banned-from-Facebook-for-posting-pictures-of-her-behind, I shouldn't really have been surprised at the answer I got handed:

"I love him, Sweetie."

Which is just about the best response you could ever hope for. On many levels.

This roof thing was a good idea half an hour ago but right now, as the heavens open again, I'm not sure who's going to have the worse hair problem if we don't go back inside.

"What we need around here is a time machine," I tell her. She takes me by the arm... 🐙

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PERMANENT?

In a world in which almost everything is built to be replaced within a year, are tattoos the last bastion of permanence we're ever likely to see? Discuss:

We live in an environment whereby we are encouraged to be constantly updating our own lives. Standing still is falling behind in the fast paced world of the twenty-first century. It is uncommon to wear a football top from more than a few seasons ago, it is unusual to drive the same car for ten years, and it is unheard of to have the same mobile phone for a decade. I wonder whether these attitudes in part have a role to play on the issue and perception of tattoos.

Advances in laser treatment aside, a tattoo is by and large a permanent fixture upon the skin of the person who gets it. Though it may fade, it may morph with the changing of your skin, and it may become damaged, the tattoo is likely to be the longest lasting item you will have ever purchased.

We live in a throw away society, and this mentality may be a factor in why tattoos are still so frowned upon by certain people.

Almost everywhere we look, we are encouraged to spend and encouraged to update, replace and refresh. The latest fashion

trends, the newest music hits, and the appearance of the next "must have item" show us that nothing can last forever.

Our friends have been reduced to numbers on a social media profile, they can be dismissed at the click of a button. Celebrities achieve their five minutes of fame and then fade back into obscurity. Football boots are bought at

the start of each and every new season. Permanence is a quality that is lacking in the majority of things in our lives.

Marriage, for example, the great tradition that we are all expected to partake in, appears to be a tradition in crisis. Previous generations would have seen marriage as one of the cornerstones of a good life. It brings stability, it shows



Dek Kent



Revai Bali

dedication and commitment, and it is permanent. Yet now "in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part" seems to mean simply "till we get a divorce". According to The Office for National Statistics (ONS), divorce rates have crept up 0.5% since 2011, and the figure we stand at now, is double that what it was in 1970. The ONS also report that 42% of marriages in England and Wales will lead to divorce.

If sacred vows of love are not going to be permanent, then what is?

It is this absence of permanence, and this mentality that everything can be replaced, that they do not need to last forever, that makes tattoos so interesting - and such a hot topic of debate. It is not just the fact that they are on show to the world - depending on their location - but it is also the fact that they will always be on show to the world. A wedding ring symbolises eternal love between two people, but a ring can be removed, and a marriage can be ended.

We live in a society whereby love is not expected to last forever, where we have to be persuaded to invest in a bag for life, and where the most popular BBQ sets are disposable. Such is the extent of the throwaway nature of our lives that we have to be reminded of a dog's continued existence beyond a period of a seasonally festive 24 hours. If anything typifies our attitude towards objects, items and creatures, it must surely be the phrase "A Dog Is For Life, Not Just For Christmas".

To fit in, and to be part of such a society, you must follow the norm and 'buy in' to this throw away mentality. Those who do not, immediately set themselves out as different.

This buying in is essentially the following of conventional norms. It is these norms which then create an identity and a culture for a society. In a wonderfully insightful journal entry in Disability Studies Quarterly, William J Peace PHD looks at the similarities between disability stigma and tattoo stigma. Within that article, 🍌

WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY WHEREBY LOVE IS NOT EXPECTED TO LAST FOREVER, WHERE WE HAVE TO BE PERSUADED TO INVEST IN A BAG FOR LIFE



Jake X



Andy, Painted Lady

THEY FLY IN THE FACE OF, AND THEY GO AGAINST, ALMOST EVERY OTHER ASPECT OF OUR LIVES AND OF OUR EXISTENCE



Mr Greg

Peace states that to be disabled, and to have a tattoo, represent the same challenge to conventional norms. They are violations of what is right, and how society should behave. Peace goes on to quote Ted Polhemus who states:

"... because of the fashion-conscious, pro change nature of the West since the Renaissance, ours is a world where to have permanent body decoration such as a tattoo ... is, ipso facto, to be different from the norm."

So this means that not only do people who have tattoos break away from the crowd because of their physical appearance, but they also stand out because of what that appearance represents. One blogger who goes by the name of Fips, sums it up perfectly when they say: "Unlike most of the changes that undergo society, tattoos represent something that is essentially permanent and

irrefutable. Whilst hairstyles and clothing fashions can be changed and forgotten, tattoos are, for the vast majority of people, permanent adornments that will be just as visible in a few decades as the day they were made."

To look at tattoos on such a level, and in such context, allows you an insight into why they are considered to be so controversial by so many. They fly in the face of, and they go against, almost every other aspect of our lives and of our existence, and yet now, more and more, they are coming to play much more prominent roles within them.

Brandtrust, an American research and strategy firm, produced a short PDF on the topic of tattoos entitled Indelible, and within that they focus on a number of issues surrounding tattoos, just one of which was the issue of permanence. I believe that



Kris Olsen



Pinky Darling



Brenden Jones



Jorell Elie

TWEETS ROLL IN AND OUT OF OUR PSYCHES AS INSTAGRAM PHOTOS PASS BEFORE OUR EYES, NOTICED AND FORGOTTEN IN A BREATH

they perfectly summarised the conflicting role of tattoos within our society by stating that a tattoo's "permanence seems a burden in a society that prizes personal reinvention".

New York's Binghamton University host a student newspaper by the name of Pipe Dream, and in late 2013 they ran a piece which also looked at the role that tattoos play in an ever-changing environment. They correctly state that: "We express ourselves in increasingly ephemeral and fluid ways. A status update from last week is irrelevant, ancient history. Tweets roll in and out of our psyches as Instagram photos pass before our eyes, noticed and forgotten in a breath". The perfect example of this short-

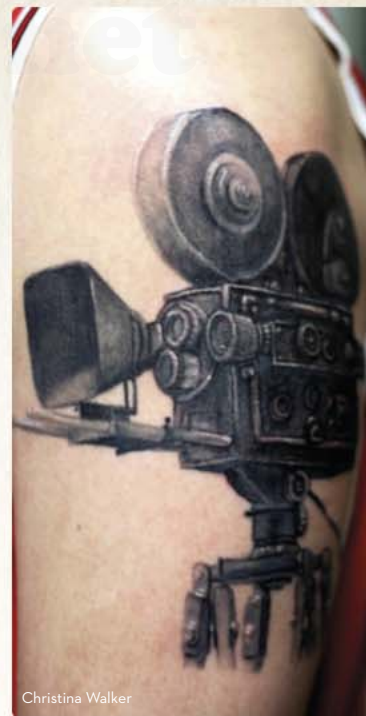
term reality is the presence of applications such as Snapchat, it is the epitome of a disposable, and short lived existence.

The popularity of tattoos within society appears to be a paradox. Our society is built on the ideals of refresh, renew and update, and yet one of the most rapidly growing, and popular, pastimes is tattooing, which convey the message of staying put, of security, and of permanence.

Perhaps the relationship between society and tattoos has multiple levels, and multiple lines of connection. Perhaps not only is the controversy surrounding tattoos due to the society in which we live, but the tattoos themselves are a reaction to that society. In



Melissa Fusco



Christina Walker



Mat Bone



Jared Preslar

PERHAPS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIETY AND TATTOOS HAS MULTIPLE LEVELS, AND MULTIPLE LINES OF CONNECTION.

a world that is constantly changing, and where everything is disposable, perhaps tattoos are the stability and the permanence that people need in their lives. The world may change significantly, and rapidly, around us, but the tattoos never will.

Tattoos exist in our society, in fact they are even beginning to flourish, but when you look at the society in which they are

a part of, it is clear that they do not quite fit. The problem though is not with the tattoos, it is with the society itself. If couples did in fact remain together forever, if trainers did not fall apart after a few years, and if we weren't constantly bombarded by advertising telling us to 'upgrade to the latest', would we really see permanent art on people's skin as such a controversial topic?

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GLENN CUZEN

Manchester Tattoo Show 2014 and Glenn Cuzen walked away with Best Black & Dotwork, setting himself up to take the tattoo world by storm.



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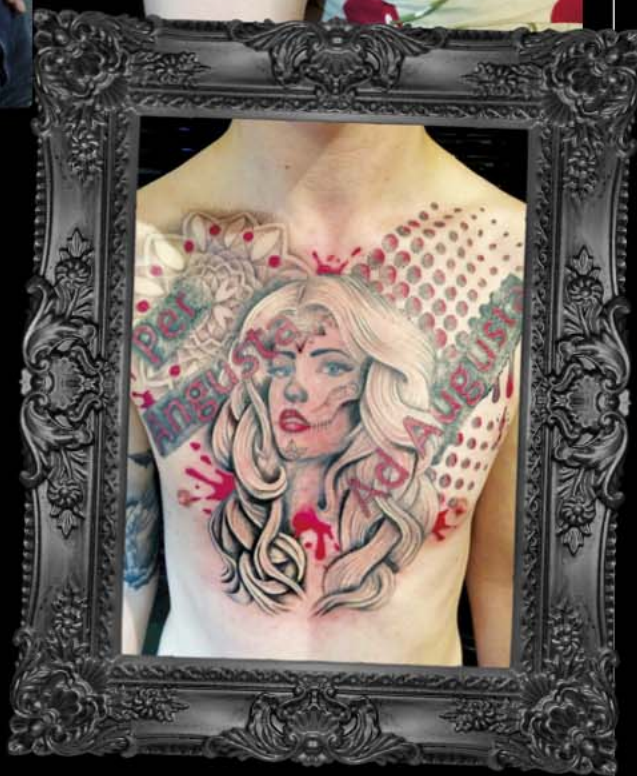
Using the ever traditional geometric dotwork style with the typical 'Tony & Guy' eye for precision and perfection, that he learnt in his younger years hairdressing, Glenn is bringing a new and innovative approach to tattooing that is helping his business and artistic work go from strength to strength.

Coming from what was classed as one of the most middle class towns in England (primarily known for rowing and rugby) Glenn grew up with no knowledge or inspiration in tattooing. During his early hairdressing career he spent most of his days shaving intricate patterns onto boy's heads, never realising that they were Polynesian art and dotwork shapes. Many years later, now tattooing, a client came in with a brief that reminded Glenn

of those days and he found he naturally fell back into the style. What he had learnt using sharp blades, he now perfected using needles and ink.

Glenn's move into dotwork was solidified when he attended a convention in the hopes of picking up a new tattoo machine. World famous, Paolo Cruz, was there and he quickly opened the world of dotwork to Glenn. The pattern from the chest piece that he won with in Manchester was inspired by a sticker that came with Paolo's machine. Like Glenn and his outlook on life, his style of dotwork is not as straightforward as other artists out there today. Combining his love and enjoyment of pop art and portraits, Glenn fused these styles seamlessly to create a unique style of dotwork, which has





I WORK AT A TRADE WITH ACQUIRED SKILLS. I USE THE GENRES AND STYLES AS A MEDIUM ONLY. WHEN GIVEN FREE REIGN; DOTWORK, REALISM AND TRASH POLKA ARE MY FAVOURITE STYLES TO USE

helped him break away from the sacred form of dotwork, making it an accessible style for his clients.
 "I work at a trade with acquired skills. I use the genres and styles as a medium only. When given free reign; dotwork, realism and trash polka are my favourite styles to use, though within Reading I am well known for my cover-ups. I think it is my god given right to give back to the people who

have been bullied into bad ideas and tattoo trends that did not stand the test of time. My style is placement, fitting the contours of the body perfectly, cover-ups and, second to none, execution of the genre that best fits my client's brief. My favourite part of my day is converting someone's embarrassing tattoo into one which is then their proudest part of their body!" 🖤



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ALL ABOUT Davinia

In the quest for perfection, you get to look at a lot of frogs - and right at the moment you figure it's never going to come along, BANG! It smacks you up on the left side of your face. Ladies, Gents: Davinia Catarina.

PART OF YOUR BACKSTORY IS THAT YOU MANAGED TO ESCAPE (OF A KIND) FROM BRISTOL WHEN YOU WERE PRETTY YOUNG - ONLY TO FIND YOURSELF STRANDED IN SALT LAKE CITY. I CAN THINK OF FEW FATES WORSE THAN GETTING TRAPPED ON THE MORMON CIRCUIT OUT THERE, ACTUALLY. WHEN WE WERE TALKING EARLIER, YOU SAID YOU THREW YOURSELF INTO THE ALTERNATIVE SCENE TO AVOID IT BUT DID IT EVER LOOK LIKE YOU WERE GOING TO HAVE TO JOIN IN THE MORMON FUN SOMEHOW? THERE MUST HAVE BEEN

AT LEAST SOME PRESSURE FROM SCHOOL TO DO SO?

My parents were Mormons; they tried very hard to raise myself and my four siblings as good Mormon children. I think I'm still rebelling. I went to church most Sundays until the age of fourteen and it never made me feel anything but guilt and pressure to conform, it just didn't work for me. I grew up in a household in which you were not allowed to buy anything on a Sunday, watch TV on a Sunday, drink tea, coffee or alcohol ever and even having a can of Coke was considered a sin! 🙄

Mr. Smith: Scott Cole | Model: Davinia Catarina | Hair: Nathan Pithers | Makeup: Eye-Marie Parry



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This backfired on my parents as I'm the kind of person that if told something is bad or not to do it, it makes me want to do it even more. So after a move to Utah, which I think my parents thought would support their beliefs and encourage their children to follow suit, I stopped going to Church and started doing all the things they didn't want me to.

In high school, I had an amazing tight knit group of friends who did not fit the Utah social norm. I hung out with skater kids, the punk kids, the gay kids and loved them all. I don't want to be negative about anyone's religion though and I obviously know loads of Mormons - I believe that you should do whatever makes you happy in life so long as you are not hurting anyone else and do the things that you really have passion for. I have a great

I have a great passion for music, it moves me in a way that religion never has.



passion for music, it moves me in a way that religion never has.

LET'S CUT TO THE GOOD STUFF - TELL ME ABOUT YOUR TATTOO. I BELIEVE IN THE TRADE, WE CALL THAT 'A PEACH'. WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND IT AND WHOSE HAND IS IT FROM? IT'S EASILY ONE OF THE MOST COHERENT TATTOOS I'VE EVER SEEN. SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL - AND IT SUITS YOU LIKE YOU WERE BORN WITH IT. I SUSPECT THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN MEETS THE EYE.

Ben Boston at the Tattoo Studio in Bristol has done 99% of my ink. If you find an artist that you like, trust and has true talent, you tend to stick with them. Ben has all of these qualities, as well as being a down to Earth, genuinely nice guy.

I'd always wanted full sleeves but it took a few years to decide what to get. I was then very lucky to win some cash as a contestant on a TV game show (Deal or No Deal - I did ask! Ed.), so it was

the perfect time to get started! I wanted something very feminine and Japanese inspired. After chatting through some ideas with Ben, he drew up a sketch and it was exactly what I wanted; a tranquil place you could imagine in a dream. I loved it so much that I started on the other arm - this time with no sketch as I trusted Ben completely. We just kept going from there and all of the pieces naturally came together. My back piece is the most recent addition. Ben and I were chatting one day and he asked "What are we gonna do with your back, D?" We both agreed that it had to be a Phoenix, after my beautiful son's name. So the Phoenix was drawn on freehand as usual and I instantly knew that it was going to be stunning! I love my ink so much, it feels like it was always supposed to be there. I see photos of myself without them and it feels so strange and alien. They're a part of me that I feel connected to,

W
ags.net



I see photos of myself without them and it feels so strange and alien.

much like a birth mark or a freckle that you have had your whole life.

SO, THE TATTOOS YOU HAD WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER, HAVE YOU ERASED THEM OR ARE THEY STILL AROUND?

I had a few tattoos done in Utah. The first was an art nouveau style fairy. I then got two bluebirds on my shoulders, cherries on my tummy and a blue star on my foot that matches my best friend's, Ali. The fairy had to be covered to make way for my Phoenix back piece and Ben managed to incorporate my bluebirds, with a little rework. The cherries were also covered by my roses, but the star on my foot I will never cover up! Whatever people's opinions of cover-ups are, at least when people say "Don't get a tattoo, if you don't like it you can't change your mind," you can say, "Well yes I can, I can change the entire thing if I want to!" I've seen plenty of cover up work that Ben 🌻

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I dont get tattooed for the sake of getting tattooed and I dont have anything I feel that I need to get inked at the moment



has done which is fantastic; for me, the only reason that I covered my old ones was that I needed space for big quality ink!

ARE YOU DONE WITH IT? SURELY NOT?

Am I done with my ink? Well, yes, for now at least! I don't get tattooed for the sake of getting tattooed and I don't have anything I feel that I need to get inked at the moment. Plus, it would be only fair of me to let my partner have a go as he has a hell of a lot of catching up to do. I'm very lucky and excited to be moving to Sydney in the next week to start a new life adventure. It's very strange thinking about the prospect of getting tattooed by somebody else, so I would have to do some serious research and planning before considering any new work.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN ANSWER THIS, BUT I'LL ASK IT ANYWAY. IN A WORLD IN WHICH TATTOOING STILL GETS A BAD RAP AROUND THE PLACE, HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A SITUATION WHEREBY SHOWING OTHERS YOUR

WORK HAS ACTED LIKE A 'BOMB'? EVEN THE DUMBEST PERSON ON THE PLANET HAS TO STAND BACK AND MARVEL.. DON'T THEY?

I'm very lucky to mostly experience positivity about my tattoos. I had one bad experience in a bar that I wouldn't normally go into; I was waiting to order a drink and a man pushed me out of the way shouting "Move, you fucking tattooed bitch!" Not very pleasant! But like I said, most people are fine about them. I worked as a nursery nurse for over six years, looking after classes of cute two to three year olds. My manager never made me hide my sleeves and none of the parents ever complained about them. I often get little old ladies stopping me in the street, asking if they are painted on or if they are a tattoo! When I tell them it's a tattoo, their usual response is "Ooh! I don't like tattoos but yours are beautiful!"

LET'S LIGHTEN UP FOR THE LAST ONE: I'M ASSUMING FROM WHAT YOU'VE SAID, THAT YOU NEVER LEFT THE PUNK SCENE BEHIND AS YOU GREW UP/GOT OLDER - BUT DO YOU SEE ANY KIND OF SCENE

AT ALL LEFT FOR PHOENIX? IS THERE ANYTHING TO ACTUALLY 'BE INTO' FOR HIM THAT WILL FUEL HIM LIKE IT DID YOU? I ASK BECAUSE EVERYWHERE I LOOK, ALL I SEE IS NOSTALGIA - AND PROBABLY FOR GOOD REASON.

Ooh, this is a hard one! I get excited when I hear a punk gig is playing in my area and will often go to them on my own if no one else is able to join me. I agree that punk rock can be nostalgic and at the same time, some bands are still going strong; look at Rancid! Like they sing, 'Last one to die!' I don't know if it's fading in popularity with the younger generation, but I did see a fourteen year old dancing away at an Old Firm Casuals gig so this gives me hope. As with all music, punk will evolve and give way to a new kind of music. As for there being a scene for Phoenix, he takes more after his dad in his love for rock and metal! His favourite band is KISS and he often wakes in the morning singing 'Detroit Rock City'. I'm not sure what music scene he will be into when he grows up. I just hope that he loves music as much as I do. 🐦

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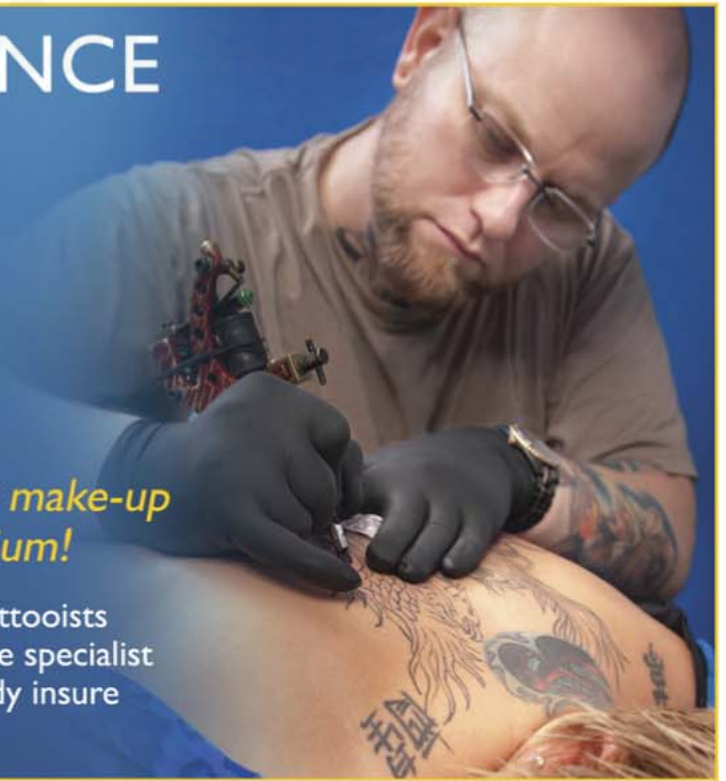


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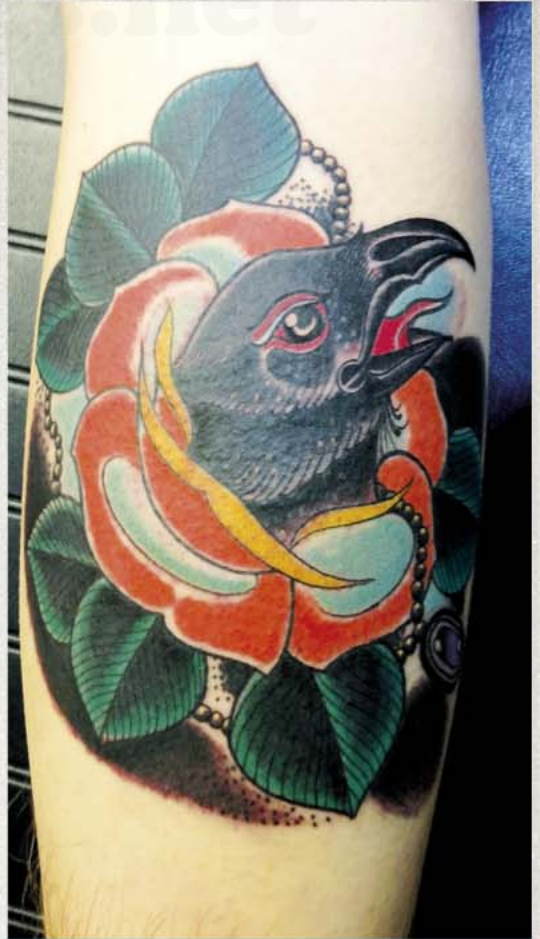
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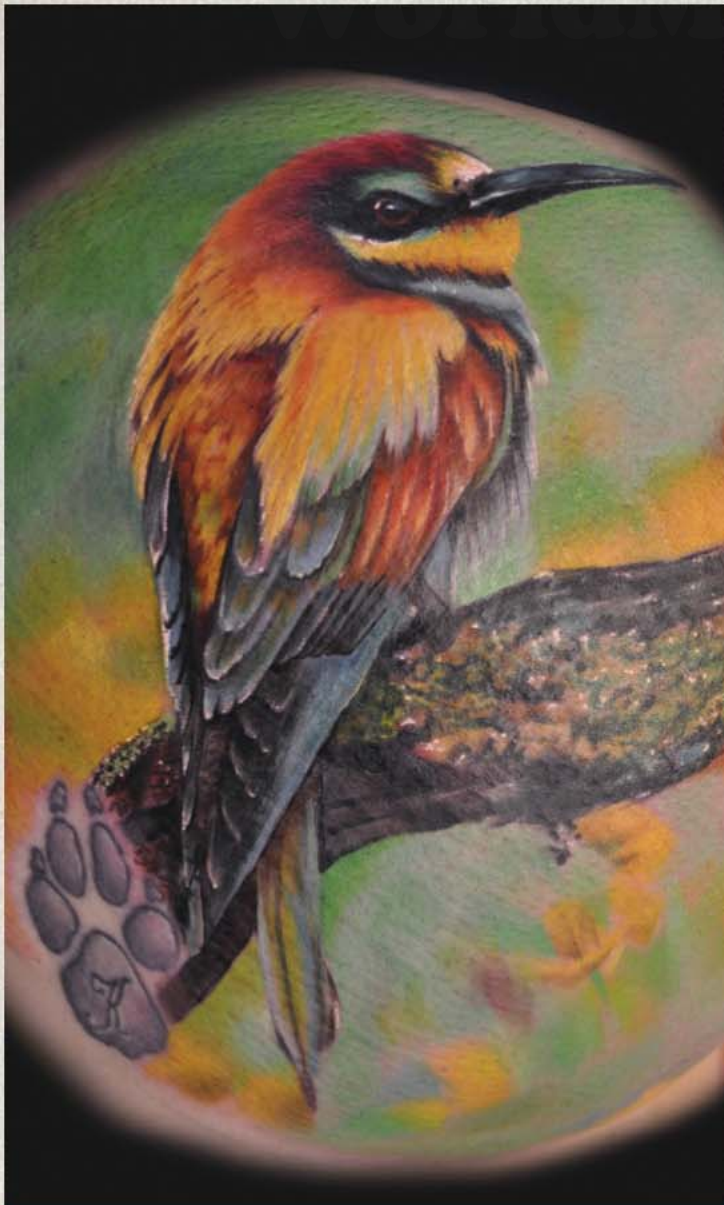
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A Bachelor of Fine Arts, a family tragedy and a decade-long stint as a 911 dispatcher culminated in JF Biron deciding to devote himself to tattooing. As of November, he's been transferring his gorgeous watercolor works to skin as a full-time artist. If you ask us, he couldn't have made a better choice.

Following a walkthrough of JF Biron's old university campus, where the smell of paint is truly something else, and a quick pit stop at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' outdoor sculpture exhibit, we take our tattoo-related banter to a nearby patio. Pints of Stella in hand, we're off to the races.

"This is about to get super sad, people are gonna be crying," says Biron, as I ask him about his start in the art world and I soon realize he's not joking in the slightest.

"My mother died of cancer. She got sick and it took three months between the moment she was diagnosed and the moment she passed away. She was the

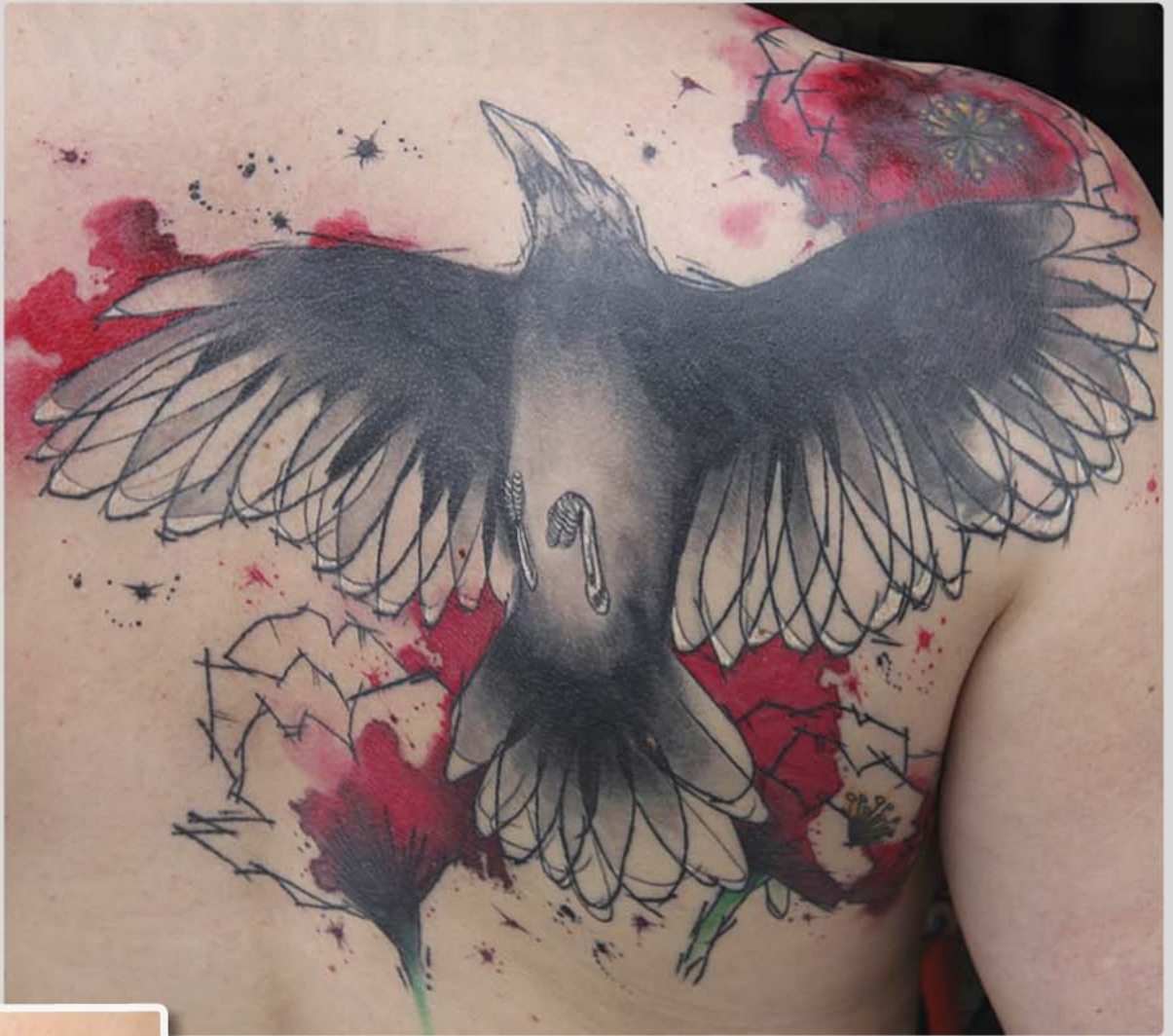
fittest, healthiest person I knew - didn't indulge in anything - she was leading the healthy life and then was dead at 49. If there's something I learned, it's to be happy cause you never know when your check out time is, so I decided to become an artist and live off my art."

Shortly after graduating with a BFA from Concordia University, Biron was picked up by a gallery - "They took everything I had, sold everything" - but success wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

"They were like, 'We'll do a joint show, so we want another eight paintings in three months'; my workflow was about one painting a month," remembers Biron. "I was



JF Biron
 Barbara Pavone



on canvas, so I did something, but it wasn't the same as me actually taking the time to choose everything perfectly."

Even so, the paintings were extremely well received and sparked pending deals with hotels, as well as a solo show offer from the gallery, all of which Biron was forced to refuse. "I burned out," he confesses.

HELLO, APPRENTICESHIP

Meanwhile, Biron had answered a job posting to work as a 911 dispatcher - a gig he landed and kept for 10 years. And once his tattoo apprenticeship began, he just kept on going.

"I was working 90 hours a week, working 911 full-time and whenever I wasn't there, I was at the shop," he says. "When I started my apprenticeship, my first shop wasn't ideal, so I moved away from that after eight months and re-started a new apprenticeship from scratch.

"I don't wanna name drop but,"

IF THERE'S SOMETHING I LEARNED, IT'S TO BE HAPPY CAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOUR CHECK OUT TIME IS

says Biron, leaning closer to the recorder and laughing, "AARON CAIN! I'm a fucking nobody and I emailed him, this great tattoo artist, and asked him, 'How was it when you started? I just had a bad day, did that happen to you?' and like a true old school gentleman, he did not answer my question, but he said, 'In tattooing, there's no place for self-doubt. If you are made for it, it will happen. If you're not, stop now and leave it to the pros. See you in three years.' Today I understand what he meant."

Before being granted the chance to start a proper apprenticeship, Biron was put to the test by his mentor Val McBain - "She's an amazing artist that didn't need to say a lot to get the point across" - and Julie Hamilton who tasked him with one fateful tattoo.

"I brought all my gear, I didn't 🙄"

JF ON... JIME LITWALK

Jime Litwalk is the one that really made me understand that there's a difference between being thick-skinned, in which case people just want to test you, and being open to constructive criticism, so people want to tell you things that will make you better and not just run into you like a bull.



doing abstract art, a lot of color play, and throughout my Bachelor's a lot of people's comments were 'A computer could do this'. I would always say 'No, I'm doing it and I'm using my brain to choose the perfect hues and placement' and beat my fist on tables," he laughs.

"But when they asked for this, I got greedy, like any fucking artist, and thought, 'If I do this, I'll have money to pay my rent'. I Photoshopped the placement and then reproduced the printouts

know what they were supplying me with, what was going on, but I was ready for anything," he remembers. "I did my tattoo, it was nowhere near where I am today and hopefully I'm nowhere near where I'll be in three years, and they were impressed with the fact that I was ready, had my shit together, and there you go."

"I was kind of the shop bitch after that - I scrubbed so many tubes, I could do it blindfolded - but I owe them where I am today. I am eternally grateful for their mentoring."

After McBain moved to Ontario, Biron joined Anam Qureshi and Randy Stewart at their shop, The Kustom Culture. "Anam is a ball of pure hilarious energy; she laughs all the time and people who know her can identify her laugh across a buzzing convention room. Randy,

who's been tattooing for over 20 years, is a real old school tattooer and has a quick retort for anything Anam throws at him - clients get a tattoo and a show," he laughs.

TALES FROM THE OTHER SIDE

A few more sips of ice-cold beer and I can't resist asking Biron about his most unbelievable 911 stories. Luckily, he obliges and soon, I'm rewarded with a treasure trove of anecdotes.

"I had a woman call to know how long she should cook her turkey because she had six people coming in four hours and needed it to be done," he says, completely serious. "Obviously, the first thought is, 'This is a prankster', so you have protocol and ask, 'Do you understand this is

an emergency line?' and she's like, 'This IS an emergency! How do I cook it so it's tender and juicy as fuck and these people are gonna be like, 'You must have cooked this at 50 degrees for three days! It's melting in front of us!' I referred her to the Internet, I think, and politely - POLITELY - said that I could not answer her question," he laughs.

JF ON... TATTOO REMOVAL

Laser is a lot more au jour, so the permanency of tattoos is now quite jeopardized. The idea of 'It's in your skin till death' is no longer true, which means, automatically, what you put into skin has to be that much better, so the client doesn't say 'Meh, I'm kinda sick of this, I'll remove it.'

I SCRUBBED SO MANY TUBES, I COULD DO IT BLINDFOLDED - BUT I OWE THEM WHERE I AM TODAY.





YOU KNOW IN THE MATRIX, THE GUY THAT WANTS TO GO BACK IN? I WAS THAT GUY



"You're backstage to society and it's really not pretty and I didn't – oh, I always say this and I'm so happy I'm gonna get to say it on tape – you know in the Matrix, the guy that wants to go back in? I was that guy. I did not want to be backstage anymore. You get to understand how unfortunately futile and infantile most of society is," he explains before sharing yet another print-worthy story.

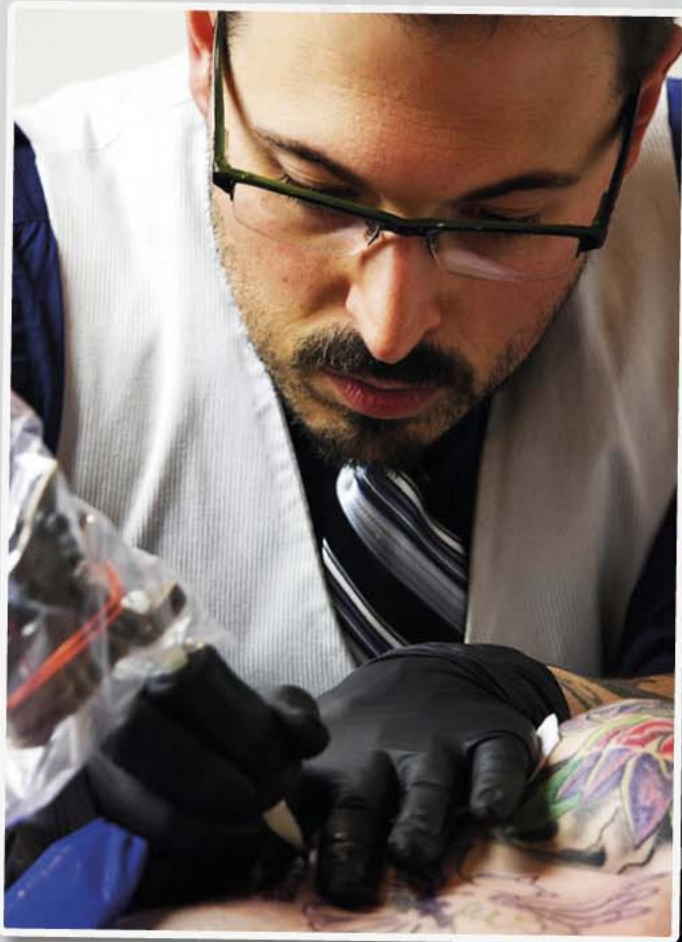
"A guy called in like, 'My drug dealer didn't give me back my \$20 change' and I'm there giving him a chance, I'm telling him, 'You want me to send you a police officer, an officer of the

law, to take a report because you bought illegal substances and your drug dealer didn't give you your change back?' I'm hoping it clicks and he's like, 'Yeah man, you fuckin' send those pigs over!'"

There was an upside to it all, though: "It taught me light years in customer service."

LOOKING PAST ART

In addition to painting and tattooing, Biron lists collecting vinyl records as one of his biggest passions, citing "Jimi Hendrix's Are You Experienced on Track Records, which was before Polydor," as his most prized find to date. 🎵



IT'S IMPORTANT TO ART WITH OTHER ARTISTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE TATTOO COMMUNITY BECAUSE THE IDEOLOGY OF COMPETITOR IS TOO HIGH

JF ON... SELF-CRITICISM

As soon as you think, 'What I'm doing is really great,' that's dangerous. You can say 'I'm proud of this tattoo,' but how could you have made it even better? Being able to self-critique has truly helped me advance and build on what I'm doing.

Cooking tops the list, too – "I make my own BBQ sauce and anyone that emails me, I will gladly give them my recipe. It's delicious. I'm gonna say it's the best!" – but art just keeps on sneaking its way back to the forefront and Biron's plans for the future include trying to start up "an art night party thing. Tattooers would get together and we'd just art. I think it's important to art with other artists, especially in the tattoo community because the ideology of competitor is too high."

"Let's make this whole beautiful industry unicorns and rainbows... Brotherhood of Man... John Lennon would ejaculate all over this," he laughs. "That's gold right there!"

We could easily end our interview on that fantastic note, but as the topic of James Lipton's famous Proust Questionnaire from Inside the Actors Studio comes up, we decide to give part of it a try.



FAVORITE WORD?

Indubitably.

LEAST FAVORITE?

No. Or I can't. Anything negative.

WHAT PROFESSION, OTHER THAN YOURS, WOULD YOU LOVE TO ATTEMPT?

Musician. I almost could have gotten into the Berklee College of Music.

WHAT PROFESSION WOULD YOU NEVER ATTEMPT?

Taxes guy! [laughs] One of my favorite movies, Stranger than Fiction, whatever it is Will Ferrell does, I would hate to be that guy.

IF HEAVEN EXISTS, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE GOD TO SAY WHEN YOU ARRIVE?

'High five.' [laughs] And 'Your mom's right over there.' 🐼

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COMIC BOOK

CAPERS

They're everywhere. On billboards, bags, trainers and - increasingly - on tattoos. In the last decade, comic book characters have leapt from the small page and into public consciousness. Thanks to a slew of blockbuster Marvel and DC movies, the world has suddenly switched onto to comics and the artists who create it. But if you're looking for inky inspiration, there's a lot more out there than simply Lycra-clad heroes ... tho they're fun too...

GEORGE HERRIMAN

It all started with a cat, a mouse, a dog, and a brick.

George Herriman was one of America's most influential cartoonists and his greatest work, *Krazy Kat*, ran from 1913 until his death in 1944. A whimsical creation, the strip combined intoxicating wordplay with a wild warmth of chromatic gravy. Picasso was a fan. So too was Jack Kerouac who claimed *Krazy* as the progenitor of the Beat Generation, capturing the glee and "wild self-believing individuality" of America.

Not everyone was so enthusiastic but newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst was such an admirer that he gave Herriman a lifetime contract, allowing the artist to pretty much amuse himself.

The result was a strip that ranged from pie-in-face slapstick to poignant tragedy. Playing the lead is *Krazy* - an androgynous Kat who is male or female as the fancy takes. His counterpart is *Ignatz*, a booze-fuelled mouse

whose greatest joy is to "Krease that Kat's bean with a brick". *Krazy* takes each whack with a brick as a declaration of love so, quite naturally, resents the efforts of bulldog *Offissa Pupp* to throw his "I'l darlink" in the clink. *Pupp*, to further muddy the waters, is secretly in love with *Krazy*.

But this is a mere pencil sketch. *Krazy*, in the tradition of Shakespearean fools, is both philosopher and satirist. *Ignatz* is alternately puckish knave and moustache-twirling villain. Herriman's characters shift seamlessly from poetic prose to street patois, his onomatopoeic word play generating a playful riff on the ear. But it's his art that steals the show. His vibrant and seemingly spontaneous landscapes steadfastly



Lee Owen's Beano tattoo by Steve Jarvis at Monki Do Tattoo Studio, Derbyshire, UK.



Eden Miller's Ignatz tattoo by Eric Brooks at Classic Electric Tattoo in Frederick, Maryland, USA.



Bolland Joker by James Woodford Tattoo.

refuse to conform to comic book convention, often morphing from frame to frame. And his pen-and-ink lines are to die for.

It's thanks to Fantagraphics' extraordinary reprints of Herriman's work that he's now back in the public eye and REM front man Michael Stipe, who has two Herriman tattoos, is just one of a growing inked fan-base.

Eden Miller is the Coordinator of the Herriman-inspired Ignatz small press comic awards, and she - obviously - has an Ignatz tattoo. "I love Ignatz as a character - he's trouble, after all! And beyond that, the idea of a drunken, brick-throwing mouse is just something I can relate to. But really, Herriman's art works wonderfully as tattoos. His lines are strong and unique and there's so many fun images to play with."

NEWSPAPER MOGUL WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST WAS SUCH AN ADMIRER THAT HE GAVE HERRIMAN A LIFETIME CONTRACT, ALLOWING THE ARTIST TO PRETTY MUCH AMUSE HIMSELF

LEO BAXENDALE

Leo Baxendale is the cartoonist every naughty school kid wants to be. He's the man who gave the world Minnie the Minx, Little Plum, the Bash Street Kids, the Three Bears, and Gru's older, cooler counterpart, Grimly Feendish. His characters are grotesque, irrepressibly silly and utterly, utterly British.

In addition to his work for "The Beano", for much of the '60s and 🍷

Bisley Dredd, courtesy of ZOOO AD.

'70s Baxendale produced around 75 percent of the output of comics such as WHAM!, SMASH!, Monster Fun and Buster. His strips were often published anonymously but fans quickly came to recognize and adore his work.

He is, he admits, "congenitally incapable" of drawing anything as simple as two characters having a conversation. Instead, each deliriously daft frame is filled to the brim with comic asides. Everywhere you look, ants are being poured into pants, paint-pots balanced on door-frames, chairs primed with tin tacks. And for every Teacher with a sore or impaled rear end, there's an arrow accompanied by the words "Ouch" or "Throbbing" as an additional, textual bada-boom.

Baxendale's world is a world of "the Unforeseen", where characters

bumble into surreal situations but, more often than not, come out smiling with a face full of steaming hot mash and a pie. There's an innocent charm to it all yet underlying everything, is pure, unfettered anarchy. This is the art that Punk and the Pythons grew up on. It's buttoned-down Britain with its pants off, mooning the world.

Sixty years on from his first Minnie the Minx strip, and while print may - arguably - be dead Hackney Hipsters and nostalgic rockers are wearing Baxendale-inspired ink. "I have noticed in recent years", he says, "that there seems to have been an upsurge in tattoo art on people's bodies. I think that it's great for people to put images of my creations in whatever places takes their fancy. It's all part of life's rich tapestry, isn't it?"

BRIAN BOLLAND

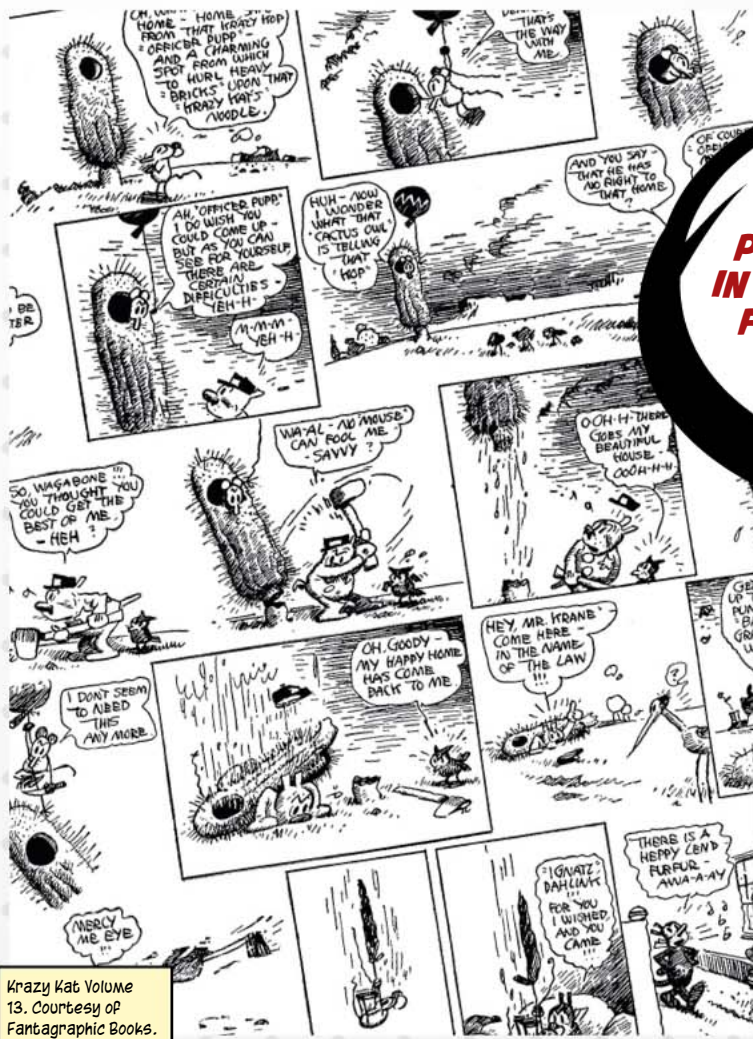
They call him the artists' artist but Brian Bolland's popularity isn't based on art bull, but pure, simple talent.

Like many illustrators, he became obsessed with drawing at an early age, copying the style of his favourite comic artists onto sheets of typing paper. By the time he was in his teens that childhood fascination had turned into a passion and Bolland enrolled in Art School. Turning that passion into a profession wasn't easy. It wasn't until 1975 - aged 24 - that he landed his first comics work. Two years later the Galaxy's Greatest Comic, 2000 AD, was born and Bolland quickly became one of its bone fide stars.

This early work showed Bolland at his most inventive, with figures careering across the page and frames overlapping and flowing into one another. But what made his art so distinctive were his



The 2000 AD panel that inspired the tattoo. Courtesy of 2000 AD.



Krazy Kat Volume 13. Courtesy of Fantagraphics Books.



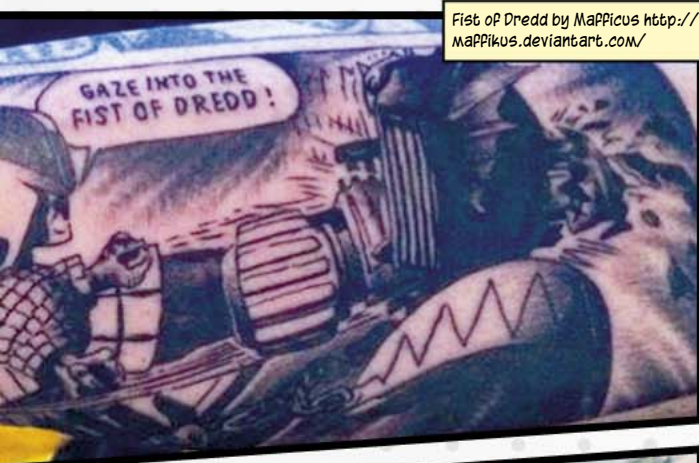
breathtakingly detailed inks and a level of command and control that left others shivering in the shade. Meticulous by his own admission, his work owes much to the likes of Silver Age DC artists like Dick Sprang (Batman) and Gil Kane (The Atom/Green Lantern). The overall impression is of solidity, of a recursive drawing style that is so defined and so carefully crafted that it's hard to believe he ever finished anything on time. He must surely worked at a loss on those early



Plug Life tattoo by Bob of Tattoons, Boston, UK. <http://www.tattoons.co.uk/gallery.htm>



Fist of Dredd by MaPpikus <http://MaPpikus.deviantart.com/>



Brian Bolland Joker by Håkan Åkerman at Carneval Tattoo in Stockholm, Sweden <http://carnevaltattoo.wordpress.com/>

strips to establish his reputation. And he certainly did that.

DC eventually came a-calling and Bolland became one of the first Brits. to hit the Big Time in the US, winning not one but five cover artist Eisner Awards - the American comic book equivalent of the Oscars.

Although 'Bollo' admits to knowing little about the world of tattoos and "not liking any image so much that I'd want it tattooed on me" his work continues to inspire tattoo artists. Two particular images, though, seem to have seeped into the tattoo community's consciousness.

The first comes from Judge Death Lives (Progs 224-228) which contains what's been described as "arguably the greatest panel in comics history". When passing Judgment, Judge Fear would typically open his helmet and invite the 'accused' to "Gaze into the face of Fear!" Bolland's response has Dredd smashing his fist through Fear's head accompanied by the one-liner "Gaze into the fist of Dredd."

The second is the 'insane Joker' from Bolland's award-winning collaboration with Alan Moore on Batman: Killing Joke. Although

he modestly attributes the popularity of the image to Alan Moore's writing, the art and the ink it's inspired speaks for itself.

Bolland says: "I've seen the same tattoo on the same part of the leg - the calf - on two separate guys. A picture of the Joker holding a laughing fish. It's quite moving for me to think that these people admire my work enough to have it printed on them for life."

SIMON BISLEY

"If I was a band, I'd be Motorhead with a hint of Triptykon. They're frantic and heavy but their stuff is well thought out." Simon Bisley speaks like his paints; all energy, passion and bursts of self-deprecating humour. "Frantic - yeah, that's the way I work. The way I speak. A great deal of energy all the time."

For those of us who grew up on the tightly-controlled dynamism of traditional comic book art, Bisley's first ABC Warrior strips for 2000 AD were a revelation. Instinctive, joyful, and insanely skilful, Biz's fully-painted epic canvasses turned comics into fine art and we bloody loved it.

"I was at that age - only 18, 19 - and in my head it was great. 🍌"

I knew it was gonna rock the world, shake it up, and it did. I think if anything, it was because it was painted and people hadn't seen that for a long time. Not since Frank Bellamy and Dan Dare.

Slaine, Dredd, Nemesis the Warlock, Batman, Lobo, and The Bible have all since received a benediction from Biz's eclectic paint palate. Although he sometimes wishes his work was "more O Negative" the raw, "honest emotion" behind each, blistering brushstroke has won him legions of fans and many choose to have his work permanently inked onto their skin. "People say 'do you mind if I get this as a tattoo?' Absolutely! But it's a bit overwhelming. There's really nothing you can say. I mean I'm not the greatest person in the world - I'm a bit of a wanker really!" here he pauses to laugh explosively, "but it's a huge complement that people love the work."

Biz himself has extensive tattoos. "My first was a Batman symbol on my right forearm and I thought I was such a tough guy, racing round on my Harley thinking 'Look at my fucking forearm!' But now it's been tattooed so many times it looks like a frog... Dare I say I've got some barbed wire round my left arm and a piece that goes up my right arm and round my neck... I did a genetic test and I'm 40 percent Neanderthal and I stand slouching forwards. So all the line does is make me look more ape. So I want an opposing line to balance it..." A Polish flag and eagle (his mum's Polish) and maybe a Spidey sleeve are still being planned.

Would he ever have any of his own work done as a tattoo? "NO! It's like making your own Chinese or your own curry!"

MIKE MIGNOLA

All Mike Mignola has ever really wanted to do "is draw monsters". Growing up on a diet of Victorian novels, dusty folklore and late night horror movies, he's never



Mignola inspired tattoo from the Dark Horse Pan tattoo album taken at Inksvilles, USA



By Roman Kuznetsov.



Bisley Torquemada by Yayzus at Voodoo, Boston, UK.

MY FIRST WAS A BATMAN SYMBOL ON MY RIGHT FORE-ARM AND I THOUGHT I WAS SUCH A TOUGH GUY, RACING ROUND ON MY HARLEY THINKING LOOK AT MY FUCKING FOREARM!

"quite recovered" from reading Bram Stoker's Dracula.

He made his foray into professional comics in 1982 for Marvel, working on titles such as the Hulk. From here he moved on to DC where his signature style - "thin lines, chunky shapes and lots and lots of black" - started to evolve. Titles such as Batman: Gotham by Gaslight and Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser already had that unmistakable Mignola spark but it wasn't till ten years later that he really started to shake the pillars of Heaven. Turning his back on a successful career to develop his own creator-owned character was a risk, but it turned out to be a life changing decision. That character was Hellboy.

Since Dark Horses' first Hellboy collection, Seed of Destruction, the big red ape has gone global with his own movies, merchandise, RPGs, and spin-offs. And it's no surprise to discover that fans and tattoo artists simply love his work.

There's an undeniable Jack Kirby inkiness to Mignola's art, yet his creations have none of the Alpha Male posturing and steel-jawed jingoism of typical superhero fare.

His characters are wry, down at heel guys, wearing dusty old overcoats, slouchy postures and bad attitudes. And if those same guys just happen to be demons, golems and fish men, then that's your problem. Deal with it.

There are artists who render - creating a soulless product masked by formulaic detail. But Mignola's work is deceptively simple and beautifully balanced. Every frame, every image, every Gothically insane gun-toting ape and demonic Nazi, simply screams to be etched onto skin. And that's fine by Mike. "This is a big one!" he says "I love to see [my] work on you guys!" Unfortunately he's never designed tattoo flash but is happy for fans go through his work and pick and images they like. Though with so many to choose from, that's no easy task. 🐼


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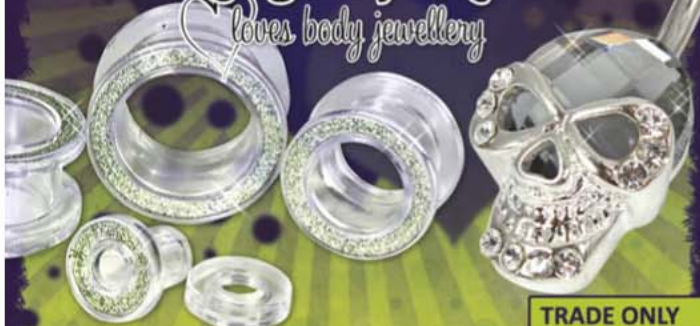



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THE NOIR VALLEY

Situated in the quaint town of Chippenham, Picture House doesn't look like your average UK tattoo studio. From the outside, it might put you in mind of some European art house theatre; one of those indie joints that play French noir films; where digital's a dirty word and they still use Super 8 projectors.



Steph Reed



Alex The Meat Bowron

Website:
www.picturehousetattooostudio.com

Wayne Simmons
 Picture House Tattoo Studio

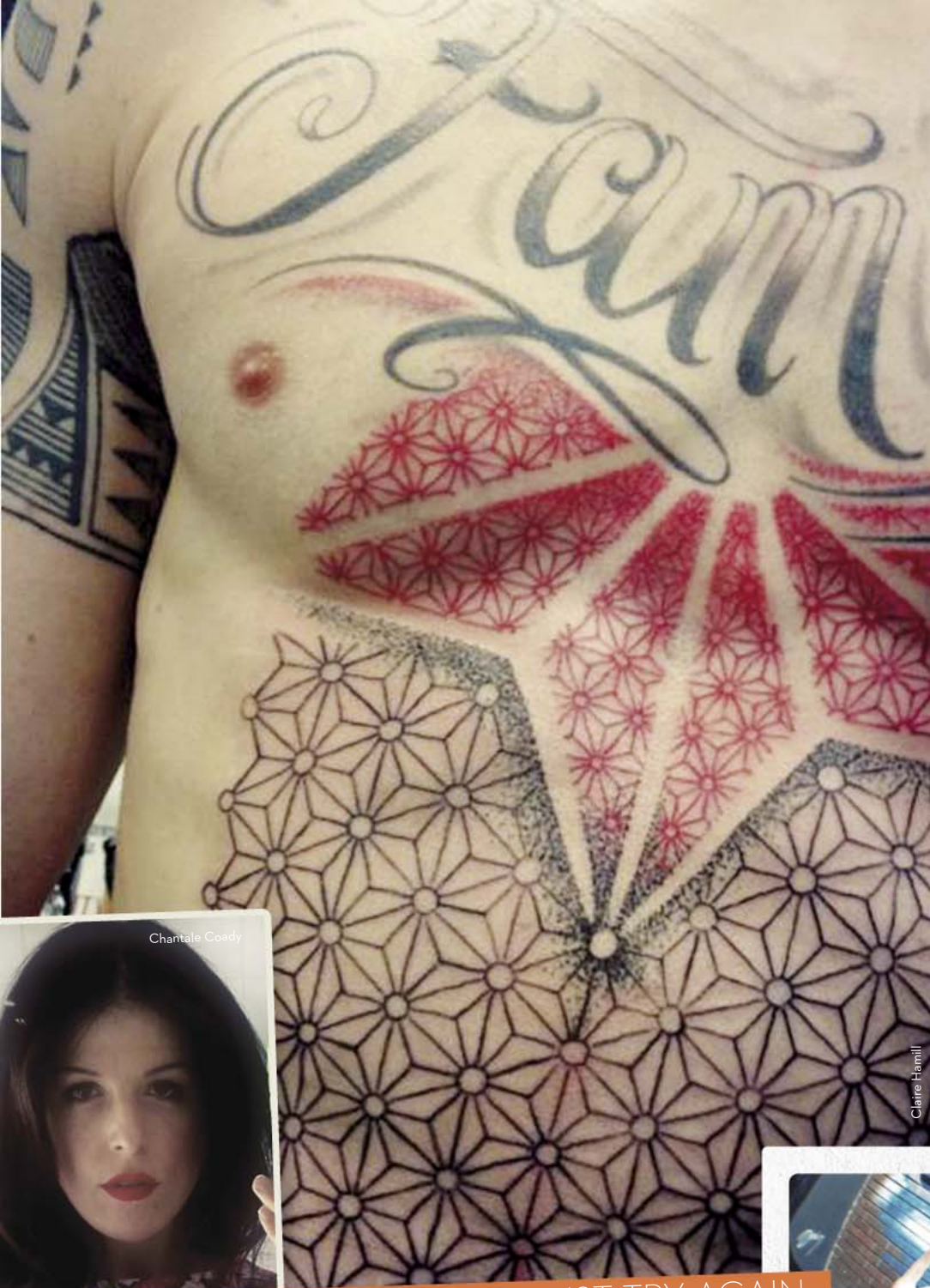
Step inside and you'll be met with even more of that vintage vibe; the velvet look cinema seating in the waiting area; the floral wallpaper; a few old lights and cameras on stands, and a huge Casablanca print running across the front of the reception desk.

'I like films,' studio owner and lead artist, Chantale Coady

explains. 'And then I started thinking: a tattoo studio is just a house full of pictures, so the name Picture House just popped into my head. It's a name I thought would go well with a really cool vintage theme for the decor. So I found some vintage cinema seats for the waiting area and the rest just spiralled from there.'

Open since October 2013,

Picture House is still quite a new fixture but Chantale herself has been a regular face on the UK convention circuit for quite some time, with a growing reputation in realism. It was in Australia where she got her break. 'I'd given up on becoming a tattoo artist because I couldn't find an apprenticeship in the UK. I moved to Australia, did my Diploma in Fine Arts and was



Alex The Meat Bowron



joe lumbard



Chantale Coody

Claire Hamill

MY HUSBAND WAS LIKE, JUST TRY AGAIN. TAKE YOUR PORTFOLIO TO SOME STUDIOS IN AUSTRALIA, SEE WHAT HAPPENS. THE FIRST PLACE I WENT TOOK ME ON

heading towards becoming an art teacher in Secondary school. But my husband was like, just try again. Take your portfolio to some studios in Australia, see what happens. The first place I went took me on.'

Chantale moved back to the UK where she continued tattooing, employed as lead artist and shop manager in her previous position. Going out on

her own was the next logical step but not one she had wanted to take just yet. 'It's stressful. I mean, I don't like dealing with bills. I'm an artist - and we've got a baby at home - but I was unhappy where I was and didn't want to find myself in a situation like that again so I thought the best thing would be to open my own studio. And, you know, I'm happier than I've ever been. I'm 🥰'



JOE

Joe Lumbard is carving out a reputation for solid traditional and neo-traditional work although he's not in a rush to specialise anytime soon. 'I don't want to pin down one style. I go through moods of stuff that I like doing. A specialism will come naturally,

I guess: you're going to put more time and effort into something you enjoy doing, and then people will start asking for that thing. But as an artist, you still need to broaden your horizons.' Of his experience in the industry so far, Joe thinks that an apprenticeship is the

best way to learn. 'I mean, it's led by the artist. If you had to go to a standard course at college, or something set up by the government, it would end up being a pretty sterile job. The art would be lost and you'd just be churning out tattoos for the sake of it.'



CLAIRE

For Claire Hamill, the art bug bit early on. 'I had a babysitter that had bright red hair and wore Doc Martens and I just idolised her. We used to draw and paint and I just wanted to be her.' Claire's known for her excellent pattern work, which she continues to put out, but her real passion right now is black and grey. 'I gave up colour when I came

to Picture House because I wanted to concentrate on my black and grey and make it the best it could be. And, to be fair, I'm surrounded by amazing colour artists here. It just wasn't something I was that good at, to be honest.' What she is good at is bringing something new and innovative to black and grey tattooing. It's an approach that's brought her a

sizable client base. 'I tattoo like how I draw. Anything that's small and requires a lot of detail, I'm really into it. I use a lot of cross hatch, do things that are more akin to regular artwork than tattooing. Even when I do realism, it's still quite liny. It's not like a photo; more a sketch than a pristine finished piece, I suppose. That's a side of it I'd really like to push.'



Joe Lumbard



Steph Reed



Joe Lumbard



Claire Hamill Tattoos



Steph Reed



Alex The Meat Bowron

NO MATTER WHAT YOU WANT, SOMEBODY HERE WILL BE ABLE TO DO A GREAT TATTOO FOR YOU AND MAKE YOU HAPPY.

surrounded by people who are crazy and fun and inspire me.'

Tattooing has boomed in the last ten to fifteen years with a lot of studios springing up. Chantale reckons there are maybe twenty five where she lives, in Swindon. It was important, then, to bring something unique to the table; to make Picture House stand out for more than just its beautiful décor. Thankfully, Chantale has a dynamic and versatile crew working alongside her. From the clean traditional work of Joe Lumbard right through to Claire Hamill's unique take on black and grey, there's plenty on offer. 'At Picture House, we've got an artist for every style. So, no matter what you want, somebody here will be able to do a great tattoo for you and make you happy.'

But it's not just the art that



Chantale Coady



Claire Hamill Tattoos



Chantale Coady



Alex The Meat Bowron



STEPH

Chantale wants to shine. It's everything about Picture House; from logging onto the website or meeting studio assistant, Letitia, right through to the initial consultation with the artist and getting the work done. 'We want our clients to leave having enjoyed themselves and keen to talk about their time with us. I tattooed the singer from The Heavy and afterwards, he said he wanted to come back just to hang out. And that's what we want.

We want people to leave having had an amazing experience, not just an amazing tattoo.'
 Tattooing rock stars has become something of a regular occurrence for Chantale and her crew. They recently had the chance to work on metal legends, Ugly Kid Joe.
 'Yeah, that was an experience!' Chantale laughs. 'I grew up listening to Ugly Kid Joe and went to see them in concert. We got backstage to meet the band and I said, "Let me tattoo you!" And 🍀

A qualified vet, Steph Reed's decision to enter tattooing could be seen as quite a dramatic career change. 'I knew it was going to take sacrifices but I wanted to be taken seriously in the industry. So I saved hard and kept my eyes peeled for an apprenticeship at a good studio.' That studio was

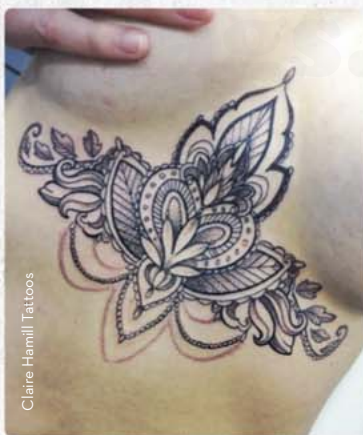
Picture House, Steph being one of Chantale's clients. 'I had booked in for a tattoo with Chantale just as she was preparing to open Picture House. Talk about being in the right place at the right time! It was so exciting to be involved in the birth of a new studio.' Like Joe, Steph feels unwilling

to commit to any specialism just yet. 'I love anything surreal and weird, and would like to do more etching style work. However, still being an infant tattooist I am trying to develop my colour work and while I'm naturally drawn to neo-trad, I am happy to challenge myself to a variety of styles.'



Joe Lumbard

Chantale Coady



Claire Hamill Tattoos



Joe Lumbard



Joe Lumbard



Claire Hamill Tattoos

Alex The Meat Bowron



ALEX THE MEAT

Alex 'The Meat' Bowron is the latest artist to join the Picture House crew. Realism's what he's known best for although he enjoys other styles. 'I like Japanese and I'm a big fan of abstract work, too, but don't get many clients asking for it,

which is a shame.' He's been into art in all its forms since he was a kid, but it was good old fashioned peer pressure that got Alex thinking about tattooing for a living. 'A few mates at school got tattoos. That kind of got me

into tattoo art and looking at my own drawing in a different way.' It's that passion for his work that still drives Alex today. 'I'd just like to keep doing what I love, and hopefully provide clients with art that they love, too.'

they were like, "Yeah, cool! Let's swap numbers." So, we go down to London to meet them and there's me and Claire sitting in the World's End pub in Camden, staring out the window at their tour bus parked up. Then I get a text saying, "Hi, we're home!" We get there and they show us around the bus, and then our professional heads kick in and we're, like, "Let's get this area cleared!" We set up a mini-tattoo studio in the back of the bus. It looked like Dexter's Killing Room! Everything was Cling filmed. And

we tattooed them right through until five in the morning.'

So, what does the future hold for Picture House? How does Chantale see the studio growing?

'I want the studio to have a really good name in the industry. I want it to be known and talked about. There are certain studios around that everyone knows the name of and I want this to be one of them. I want artists to want to come and work here; I want the best work to be coming out of Picture House and for it to be a busy studio for a long, long time.'



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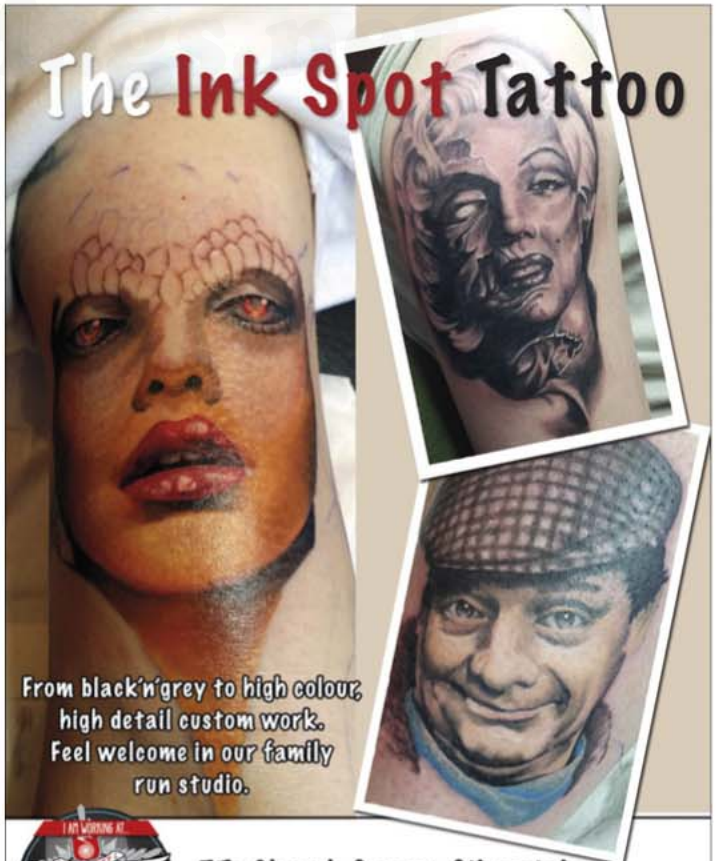
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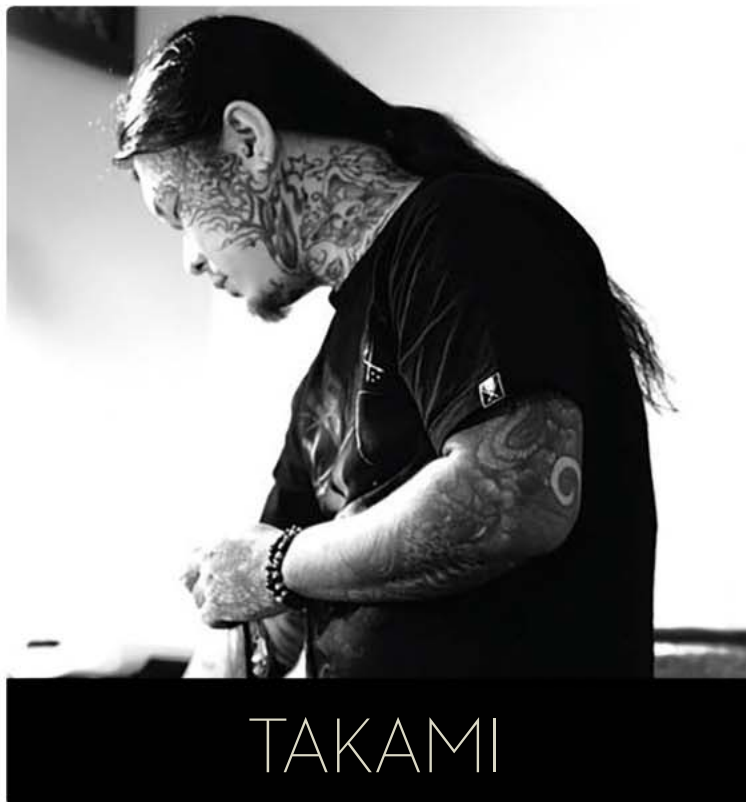


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Influences from his trips and visits to conventions has made Takami at Knockover Decorate Tattoo in Yonago mix in western features with his Japanese heritage. Even his body is a living proof of this, as he's let wildly different tattooists like Filip Leu and Joe Capobianco decorate it through the years.

WHEN, WHY AND HOW DID YOU START TATTOOING?

"Everything started when I was really young. I was 16 years old and I went with a friend of mine to a tattoo event in Japan. When I got there it was love at first sight. I was attracted by the thought of tattooing as a trade and I realized straight away that that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

DID YOU DO AN APPRENTICESHIP?

"No, I've never had a master because I wanted to develop my own style. I'm self taught and I'm still learning today, always trying to get better. It was hard to get somewhere in the tattoo world when I first started tattooing, but over the years

it's become too easy instead. It's not good for the trade since tattoos aren't that easy to do."

IT'S COMMON IN EUROPE, AUSTRALIA AND THE US WITH TATTOO ARTISTS THAT MIX JAPANESE WITH WESTERN STYLES. ARE YOU STRICTLY TRADITIONAL OR DO YOU MIX?

"Nowadays there are a lot of people who do Japanese, but you can only do traditional Japanese tattooing if you in fact are Japanese, since it's so deeply rooted in our culture. Foreign tattoo artists simply mix Japanese with their own style. However, extremely few pull it off."

IS IT CONTROVERSIAL TO MIX STYLES LIKE THAT IN JAPAN?

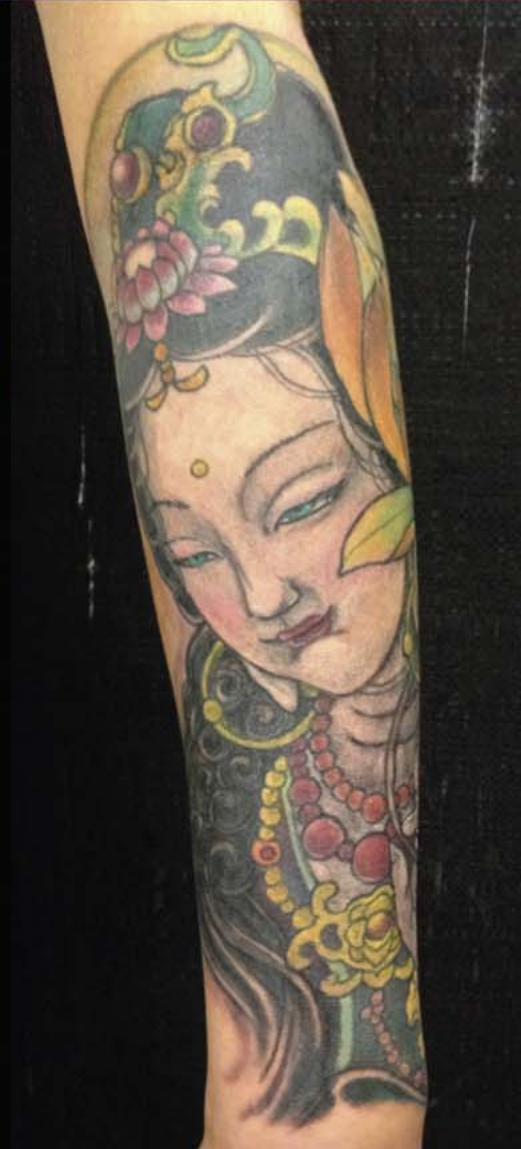
"No, not since it's actually

possible. My style isn't 100 percent traditional Japanese, for instance, since I mix in stuff that I've learned about European art."

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU DO JAPANESE TATTOOS?

"When customers come to me I try to make their ideas bigger and more detailed. I've studied the human anatomy and am therefore more careful about adapting the tattoo after each individual's shape. I like to give the sketches more power, strength and dynamics in order to give them more life. The Japanese style makes me feel freer in this way, since you have to think about the whole body of the client. It feels like I'm painting on a live canvas." 🌸







IT'S GOOD TO EXCHANGE IDEAS TO EVOLVE AND THAT EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN TAKE ON TATTOOING

YOU ALSO DO STRICT WESTERN MOTIFS. ARE THEY POPULAR IN JAPAN?

"I do whatever the client asks for and in Japan nowadays it's become more popular with a variety of styles since people are being exposed to more and more. Personally I like doing western designs sometimes since it's different and they can be interesting too."

YOU HAVE A "GIRL"-SECTION IN THE GALLERY ON YOUR WEBSITE. IS THERE A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHOICES OF DESIGNS GUYS AND GIRLS MAKE IN JAPAN?

"Girls normally want a more western style and I try to get more flow in their tattoos since I really don't like just printing and copying of a picture on the internet. It's too easy and I don't

like it. An artist must be able to draw to be able to call himself an artist. Guys mainly prefer more Japanese and Oriental designs."

HOW HAS TRAVELLING AND YOUR VISITS TO TATTOO CONVENTIONS CHANGED YOUR TATTOOING?

"I've been able to learn from good artists at the same time as they learn from me. I think it's good to exchange ideas to evolve and that everyone has their own take on tattooing. It's not easy to explain what separates European and American tattoo artists from the Japanese, but in my case there's no distinction between my tattooing and my private life. They're the same. Tattooing is my life and I'm very proud of that."

DO YOU PAINT LIKE YOU TATTOO OR IS IT DIFFERENT?

"When I'm painting and completely free. I don't think of anything else. My mind opens up and governs my hands. Tattooing is a bit different.

I still feel free but the art work is still based on the client's idea. Painting also helps me a lot since I use many paintings techniques in tattooing as well."

WHAT STYLE DO YOU HAVE ON YOUR OWN BODY AND WHO TATTOOS YOU?

"I have many different styles on my body since I have friends who are tattoo artists and they do various styles. If they have any ideas and I have some space on my body I let them do what they want. I have tattoos made by Filip Leu, Shige, Joe Capobianco, Cory Kruger, Benjamin Moss, Jon Clue and Lior Cifer, all the best ones."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

"2015 I will move to Como in Italy and work there. I will have some work space in my home and then I will travel around Europe and work in friends' shops, like Smiling Demon in Germany." 🐼

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MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL

TATTOO SHOW

Our midsummer show in Manchester was a real blast. This year, there was a swathe of new artists working, a mass of new faces in the crowd and of course, the weather turned up...



But weather has never got in the way of an Englishman and a damn good time and it was no different at the convention site either. Booths were up, artists were ready and it wasn't long before the doors were opened, revealing an army of ink lovers and blue skies overhead.

As the hall began to fill I found Mr Smith for our customary 'meet and greet' walk around, our way of seeing everyone is settled and happy and a chance to say hello to old friends and new faces. This is one

THE THING WITH JUDGING TATTOOS AT A SHOW (OR ANYWHERE FOR THAT MATTER) IS THAT IT IS HARDER THAN YOU THINK. MUCH, MUCH HARDER

of my favourite parts of any convention as it's a great way to get an overall feel for how the weekend will run out...and we weren't to be disappointed! While Paul Sweeney (our moustachioed compere) was firing out rapid fire one-liners and generally baiting a lively crowd, Mr Smith and I wandered the aisles taking in a visual overload of pure artistic brilliance. A few

hours in and already I was thinking forward to judging and how our work was going to be harder than ever.

The thing with judging tattoos at a show (or anywhere for that matter) is that it is harder than you think. Much, much harder. Gone are the days when the majority of tattoos crossing the stage were great and a handful were 'slap in the face' fantastic. 🍌

SATURDAY COLOUR

Jordan Baker -
The Skin Kitchen
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BLACK & DOTWORK

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BEST OF SATURDAY

Gibbo - Rude Studios
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BEST AVANT GARDE

Hollie-May Wall at The Old Smith Tattoo Parlour



BEST COLOUR

Jordan Baker at The Skin Kitchen



BEST BLACK & GREY

Dan Banas at Bananas Tattoo





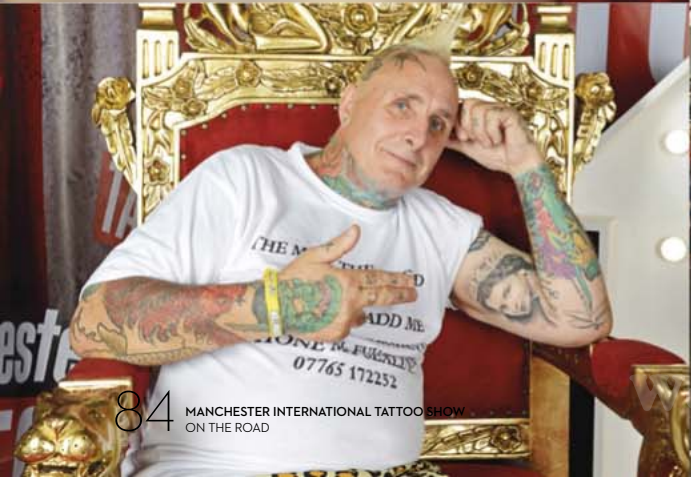
BEST BLACK & DOTWORK

Glenn Cuzen at Top Gun Tattoo



BEST PORTRAIT

Sonny Mitchell at Black Lotus Tattoo



Those days, picking a winner was usually straight forward. But every year that passes, tattoo artists are reaching new heights and we find ourselves in a situation where the boundaries of tattoo art are constantly being blown wide open. Now of course this is fantastic for our little ink stained world, but it also makes competitions like Best of Day a nightmare to pick one winner. There were many times over the weekend when Mr Smith, Paula and I found ourselves in a heated (but always friendly) debate over who was going to walk away with the award.

Take for instance the winner of Black & Dotwork, Glenn Cuzen. A convention regular, Glenn, has always produced quality art...but lately he has turned dotwork on its head by combining it with trash polka and his own take on pop culture. I see a new style emerging and a well deserved award presented to recognise it. And never mind Best of Saturday. The overall winner was Rude Studio's, Michael 'Gibbo' Gibson, who has also taken an established style (neo traditional) and tweaked it to the max. A relative new comer to tattooing (three years out of an apprenticeship) Gibbo is constantly putting out work that is giving long time artists a run for their money. And while we're here, I have to mention Hollie May whose watercolour interpretation of a traditional eighties eagle was mind blowing. To be honest, I could go on about every category in a similar vein but then this would just end up as a list of how damn cool tattooing in the UK is at the moment.

And we haven't even got to Sunday's entries or the artists who missed out on Saturday but were oh so close. Just a walk down the Skin



Deep row threw up artists like Craig Cardwell, Becki Ess and Andy Walker. If this level of output continues I might just hand over judging to someone else at the next convention.

As Saturday drew to a close there were a lot of exhausted artists, visitors and though I promised a lot of people a social drink (tea or coffee for me please) I found my hotel room was calling. I knew it was another long day ahead and with a tattoo lined up in the morning, I took the sensible option... until Mr Smith decided we were going to visit MacDonalds at midnight! But that is a story for another time.

Sunday morning and we were all up bright and early for round two. Slight hotel mishap out the way (I set off the hotel's fire alarm boiling an early morning coffee with out the kettle lid on) and it was machines at the ready. I must admit I missed most of the early morning entertainment as I thought I would get a stomach tattoo. Not one of my wisest decisions and I must apologise to Matt Henning for tapping out before it was

IF YOU DO GET A CHANCE TO SEE THIS MUCHA INSPIRED MASTERPIECE BY DREW, TAKE IT. IT IS ONE OF THE BEST TATTOOS I HAVE SEEN IN A LONG, LONG TIME

finished. As light handed and skilful as Matt is, the stomach is a bitch when it comes to getting inked. Though I did feel completely ashamed about my near passing out when I found out that Drew Le Fox's partner was on day two of a full chest and stomach tattoo and taking it like a pro. As an aside, if you do get a chance to see this Mucha inspired masterpiece by Drew, take it. It is one of the best tattoos I have seen in a long, long time (I concur. Ed) - and it wasn't even finished!

The rest of the day saw me walking around being dazzled by the art on show. Once again the hall was packed and everyone was high on the buzz of tattoo machines and the smell of Hustle Butter.

Every convention I attend I get the feeling that the next will take a feat of event team ingenuity to outdo the previous. It is a vicious cycle 🍷

**SUNDAY
BEST BLACK
& GREY**

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Tattoo
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BEST PORTRAIT

Sonny Mitchell -
Black Lotus Tattoo
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BEST REALISM

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BEST OF SUNDAY

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White Elephant
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**BEST OF
CONVENTION**

Otto D'ambra - The
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BEST OF SATURDAY
Gibbo at Rude Studios

I HAVE TO MENTION HOLLIE MAY WHOSE WATERCOLOUR INTERPRETATION OF A TRADITIONAL EIGHTIES EAGLE WAS MIND BLOWING

of, can we do it? Yup, we did it! And thirteen-year-old Manchester was no exception. Those guys and girls who spend the year organising these things have my utmost respect as, besides the usual on the day hiccups, the shows just get better and better.

The on stage entertainment was turned up to eleven this year with show regulars, acoustic genius Matt Hamer, and the twisted angle grinding burlesque of Chaos Dolls sharing the stage with new comers like the pyromaniac influenced, Scarlett Daggers, and the musical acts of Echo and The Darkest Light. But for my money the standout performers over the weekend had to be hypnotist James Anthony and three guys turning music on its head in the form of Bloxed Beats.

James' combination of mind reading and hypnotism had the audience eating out the palm of his hand...in more ways than one! The three lads from Bloxed Beats were another act that had the audience enthralled with their musical interpretations of chart favourites, getting even the die hard of 'I'm to cool to boogie' bopping along. To think they use no musical instruments at all and all the sounds they produce are their own voices, you wouldn't be hard pressed to think they were the work of some sort of esoteric wizardry.

But, entertainment aside, and it was back to judging once again. Best of Sunday saw Otto walk away with the award for his piece that ran across the upper arms and back of his client. And it was a close call between Otto and Gibbo as to who would take Best of Convention but Otto pulled

through for his second award of the day. How he constantly comes up with these pieces is beyond me but the man seems to do no wrong. More esoteric wizardry at play me thinks!

With the Sunday awards out the way it was time to break down and clear out. Another weekend had flown by and from the goofy smiles on everyone's faces, it was another great convention. It does scare me to think what Tattoo Jam will be like in October, as I have already seen the artist line-up and heard rumours of what's in store, all I know is that this time next year Manchester will be rocked by another wave of brilliant artists, new and old.

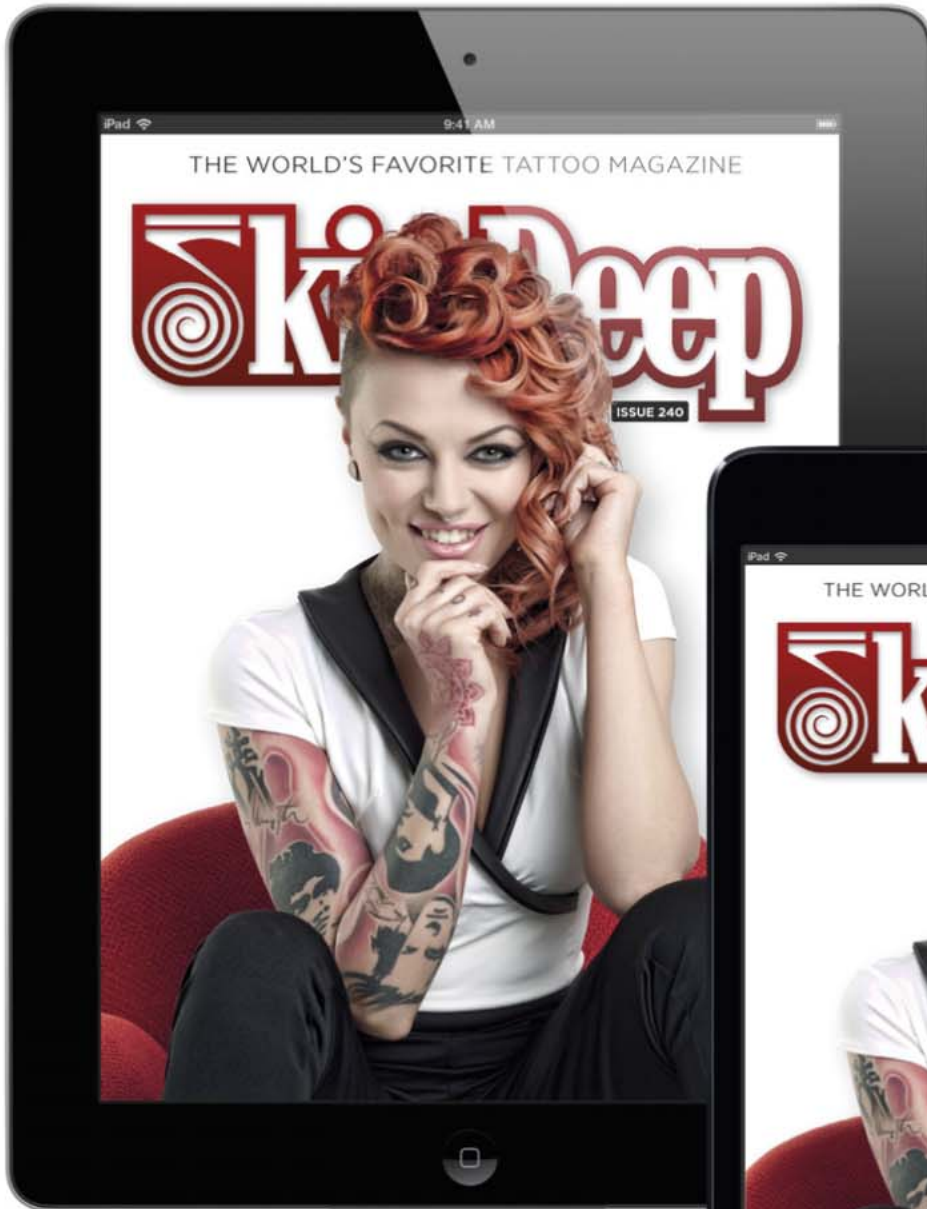
To everyone involved, rest easy, it was a show to be proud of. To the artists, carry on doing what you're doing, you maybe making our job harder, but I wouldn't change it for the world. 🐼

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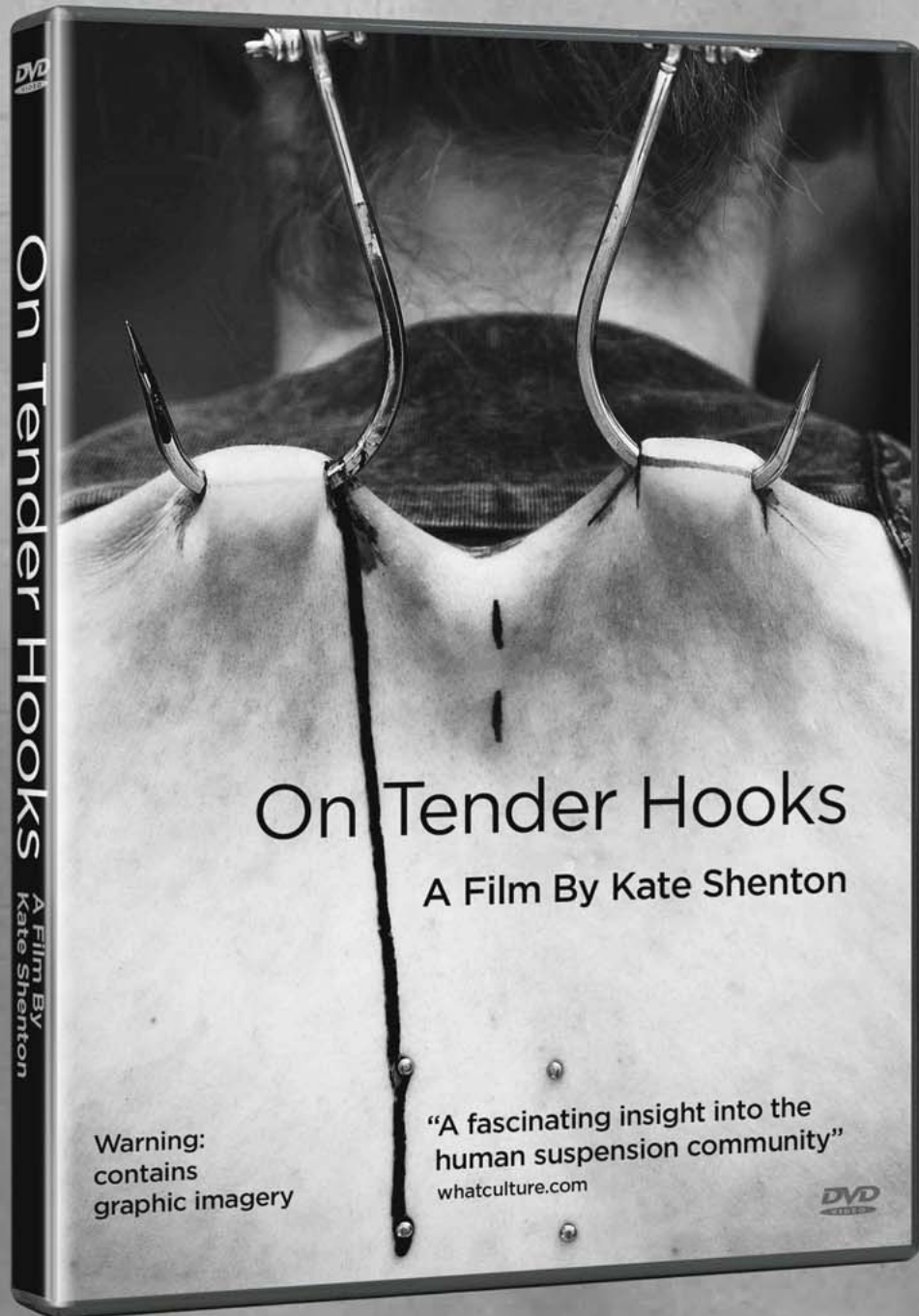
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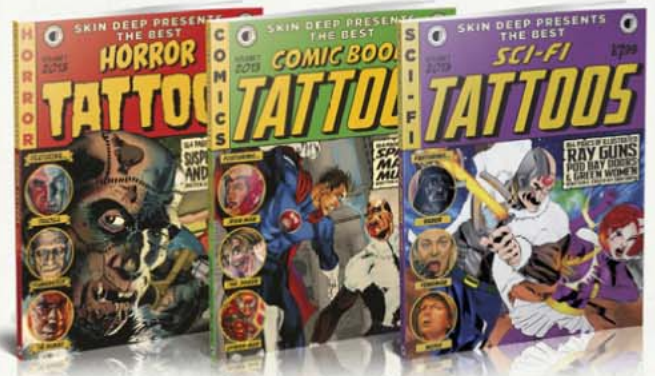
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THE POWER OF THREE

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In **The Best Horror Tattoos**, we've got Paul Booth, Liorcifer, Leigh Oldcorn and Mike Moses alongside features on Vincent Price, Clive Barker, Stephen King and other luminaries important enough for people to get tattooed. Also hosting great art features from the likes of Brian Ewing, it's a guaranteed 164 pages of blood, sweat and tears.

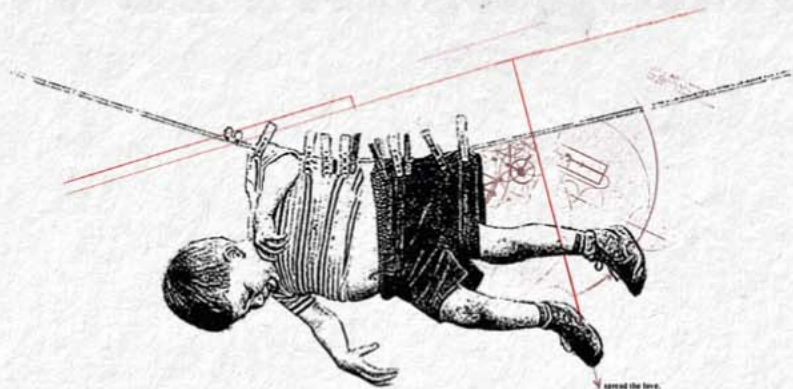
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Pages shown from *The Best Horror Tattoos* and *The Best Comic Book Tattoos*.

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PAUL TALBOT

The work of Slovakian born tattooist Ivana Belakova is hard to miss. Her style is a melting pot of ideas blending graphic and street art textures with 'funky colour' painterly effects into an exciting visual feast.

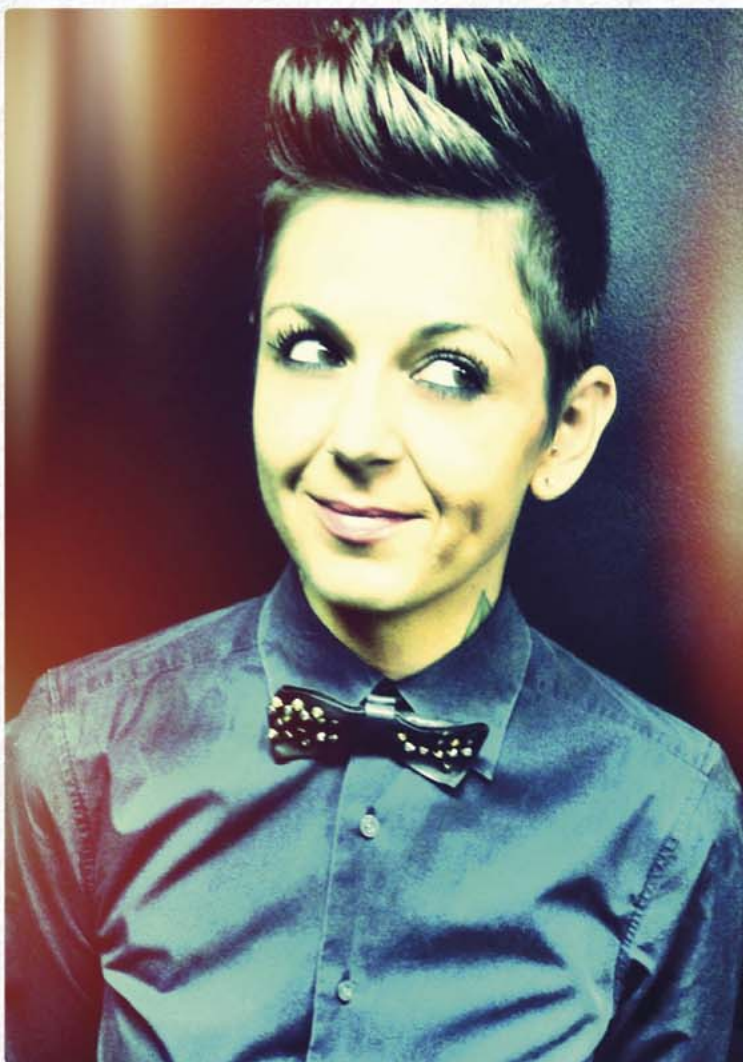
Self-taught, she did her first tattoo about 12 years ago and has since earned a reputation worldwide not only as a tattoo artist but also in fine art as well. I wanted to know more about her work. Ivana currently lives and works in Los Angeles, and is constantly on the road traveling so I was over-the-moon when she agreed to chat with me via email...

SOME OF OUR READERS MAY NOT BE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR ARTWORK. IF ASKED, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?

I would say I do funky colour! My work is mix of graphic elements, street art, illustration, realism. It's very colourful; yet it's 'tasty' - I think that's a good word to describe it. I'm really drawn to street art and the freedom that comes with it. Like most artists, my work is constantly evolving but it still contains the raw elements and colour combinations that I would call my 'style'.

I feel my artwork, is contemporary and modern too, but it's also important to be here alongside of all the other styles! With every tattoo I do, I'm learning something new and the level I'm at right now is not defined and never will be. My mind is constantly changing, so for me, it's a very natural process of evolving as an artist and as a person. I do what I feel is right at that particular moment.

THE MAIN THING THAT HITS ME - AND THAT I LOVE - ABOUT YOUR TATTOOS IS THE SENSE OF FREEDOM AND EXCITEMENT. THEY COME ACROSS AS LOOSE AND ALIVE WHILST REMAINING CONCEPTUALLY FOCUSED. 🍷







I DO WHAT I FIND AESTHETICALLY PRETTY - AND THAT'S WHERE MY GUT INSTINCT KICKS IN.

IS THIS NATURAL FOR YOU OR SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO STRIVE FOR?

I would say freedom describes my work so much, you nailed that! Every single tattoo I do, I let my mind take me where I want to go with it. It's all a process and whatever comes naturally - that's the way it's going to be. I don't like feeling limited when it comes to space and colour because I never know the outcome of my final product until I get there.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ARTISTIC TRAINING IN EITHER GRAPHIC DESIGN OR FINE ART? OR IS THIS AMAZINGNESS GUT INSTINCT?

I'm completely self-taught with no prior training. I have a real admiration for modern fine art and design though. I love the blend of simplicity and detail that you can find in modern art. Architecture being one of my favourites, I draw many ideas and concepts from it.

I do what I find aesthetically pretty - and that's where my gut instinct kicks in.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BOOK - ARE YOU A 'NARCISSISTIC ROCKSTAR'?

I don't think so! In fact I am pretty shy. I certainly don't live like a rockstar. I like to be aware and focused. I like to enjoy my life to the fullest everyday... Narcissistic Rockstar is just the title of a book about my work and my lifestyle - that's why I named it that way! I needed to vent a little as sometimes I feel crazy, creative, high energy and

sometimes I feel like I'm not busy enough.

I wanted to do something for my customers who like my work, so I decided to do a mix of my artwork. Overall, there are some pictures of my old work - tattoos which I liked at the time of making them. There are also tattoos close to my heart and some of my drawings.

There are some blurbs too which are my thoughts. There's also 'nothing'. Literally. And some disco. 🎵




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WAYNE JOYCE

Now that we've covered managing expectation and how to look after your skin during removal, let's take a look at something a lot more manageable and achievable: small tattoo removal.



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In the big scheme of things, there are more than a few of us that have had tattoos that were either ill thought out or just plain stupid. Sometimes, they can be simply and quickly covered up with quality work but sometimes, that tattoo simply needs to be gone. A few dots on your hand that you did yourself back in 1989?

A football badge on your forearm that you'd rather not have now that your life is different? This is a lasers bread and butter. This is what we're here for, so let's take a look at how fast you can be on the other side of a tattoo if that's what you're looking for.

First of all, it's worth noting that a quick online search for the solution to removing a small tattoo can hint at the use of some creams that are currently on the market. From the little information we know - because we've largely ignored them as being snake oil (if the creams worked, there would hardly be a call for lasers) we hear that they can leave your tattoo looking even darker than it was before with little or no removal and a lot of scarring - and frankly, some of the photoshop work on bodies to show complete removal, are really taking the last cookie in the jar.

Whether it be a small or large tattoo - because the rules are more or less the same - reducing the impact of the former design is an easy option and will require fewer sessions than complete removal. In the simplest sense, less sessions reduce the damage sustained to your skin, and helps promote the best surface and canvas

for any new work you've got planned. The best results are seen when the body is allowed to heal and adequate time is left for metabolisation of the ink. As we've said multiple time already, the best friend you have in this game is time itself.

On a good day with an exceptionally badly applied tattoo, you can achieve excellent results in just a single session. Taking our earlier example of three dots on the hand, that you probably did yourself if we know people how we think we know people - just one session will be enough to take those away. With this, you probably don't want to cover it up with anything else because of its location - you've lived with it this long. Get

the treatment and let time wash away the sins of your past for as long as possible. If you need another session a year later, you'll be in a damn good place to blast it out of your skin for good.

Getting the best results from the laser treatment will require a little patience but the pay off is in the final outcome. A nicely worked and well healed area will give your tattooist so much more in terms of artistic licence to give you what you want. There are of course many other considerations on this journey to the new you with your new tattoo, with all the determination and effort on your part to do the best by your skin don't fall short of the follow through, be realistic in your endeavour, do your research and pick the correct artist to complete your new tattoo.

As always, if you have any questions or want to pass by for a consultation, you can contact me at wayne@resetroom.com 🐼



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Soapbox

CRAIGY LEE

📧 Craigy Lee 📍 Ash Springle

I had planned to write about the scenes and groups within tattooing this month, however a few hours ago I learnt one of the people that got me started in tattooing had recently passed away and instead I thought I would talk about the relationship between a tattoo artist and their apprentice. I'm dedicating this month's column to my friend and mentor, Reno Price.

Sadly Reno passed on the 10th August, he lost his battle with depression, and took his own life in events eerily similar to those recently in the world news with the death of Robin Williams.

However unlike Robin Williams, Reno Price is probably a name you've never heard of. Like many tattoo artists around the world you haven't heard of, he wasn't interested in fame, magazine spreads or interviews. He just went to work, put his head down and did every tattoo the best he could, working hard to support his family. He was an awesome tattoo artist, a proper old schooler who was a decent all rounder - he could nail most styles and spent most of his career working in street shops. He was a free spirit who travelled and moved around the United States working in tattoo studios all over the country.

Reno instilled a lot of ethics into me that I still value highly today: passion, professionalism and pride being just a few. Being an artist of such experience, I was always excited to show him my tattoos to get some feedback to see what he thought. This usually resulted in him saying "it's good, but it's not how I would have done it", giving me a pat on the back, but still pushing me to work harder, which as an apprentice was exactly what I needed.

With the age of the internet and social media, too many apprentices put up crappy drawings and tattoos that get bombarded with comments from their friends and relatives telling them



they are amazing. Creating a bubble away from reality that only sets them up to crash and burn later on in the real world.

Reno was from an age before social media and when I started tattooing, the only critics of my artwork and tattoos were the people that mattered: the guys in the tattoo shop. Their critiques were sometimes harsh, but there was no sugar coated bullshit that gave me an ego or bad attitude. If the tattoo flash I painted one week got a harsh critique, I damn well worked harder the next week. I tattooed kanji symbols and small tribal tattoos for months, working from the bottom up and paying my dues. You don't run before you can walk.

Reno always said "If your apprentice is not going to be better than you, what's the point, nothing will move forward, and tattooing will stagnate". I've said it before and I'll say it again. Take the time to talk, sit and learn from the old timers while they're still here.

You never know how long they'll be around for.

R.I.P Reno Price

Got a burning issue or topic you want me to talk about? Want to get your voice heard? Well don't just sit there do something about it Drop me a line craigylee@skindeep.co.uk and find me on instagram @craigy_lee



An Eye is upon you

SOME SCENES HAVE BEEN CREATED FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES...

Miami Ink and its sibling tattoo television programmes are much maligned amongst tattoo fans for a number of reasons, but not because the tattoos depicted are entirely without merit, or the tattooers untalented.



▣ Pam Van-Damned

Rather, the umbrage is directed at how the final edit distorts, conceals and embroiders the tattoo process by shoehorning in superfluous narrative story lines.

From the execution of large scale tattoos in a single day, to walking in off the street and obtaining an immediate custom tattoo, to the seeming lack of any monetary recompense, the (insert US city here) Ink shows are littered with half truths and exaggerations. Even now, almost ten years on from the first airing of Miami Ink (and 3 years after it's spin off, LA Ink, was cancelled) the sickly sentiment shown - 'This panther tattoo symbolises my Nan's lost cat, whom we assumed had died, but was really locked in a neighbours shed, but then it did actually die of something entirely unrelated', is still, rightly, denigrated.

As any tattoo enthusiast can and will attest, there is really no need for any tattoo-justification beyond simply liking tattoos, and appreciating the artistry possible. We don't need a reason, and we don't need to hear the rationalisations of others because having tattoos isn't reasonable and it isn't rational, It's romantic, passionate, primal, and a little bit nuts. Still, just because tattoos don't need stories, it doesn't mean they can't have stories, and while the most visually arresting tattoos are often those that are simply art for arts sake, the ones that mean the most to us are more often

the ones with tales to tell and associations to make. The desire to keep those we love close is as strong as it is understandable, from Victorian jewellery made of the beloved's hair, to photos in lockets, to the home screens on our now ubiquitous smart phones, humans have always carried reminders of those that matter most, especially those that have passed away. Is there a better way to honour those that are no longer, as the saying goes, 'with us' than by ensuring they'll always be with us? Tattoos can create memorials that are both as portable as the locket or photograph, and as steadfast and enduring as the monument, lifelong reminders, permanent, yet passing.

I feel privileged that I am able to carry the names and totems of those I have loved and lost with me, as if passengers on a journey traversing the past, present and future all at once.

When my grandmother died, I was 4000 miles away across the Atlantic Ocean - that same day I had her name Gladys, tattooed, an obvious metaphorical closing of the enormous geographical, and gap between us. In contrast when my mother died just six weeks after my Nan, I was in the hospital room beside her, but the void she left, and the difficulty I faced in walking away and leaving her behind needed to be symbolically (if inadequately) filled too - I had her name, Denise, tattooed a few days later and ten years on, I smile whenever I see it.

Tattoo tributes to those I've loved and lost are not limited to my familials though, two of my friends are also permanently held as close to me as can be - Timo Baxter, my idiosyncratic skateboarding buddy, murdered by random strangers in 1999, is honoured on my thigh. The tattoo of his name and the puffin I chose to accompany it are, like the memories of those that loved him, longer-lasting than the sentences served by his attackers. Also taking a permanent space on my body to reflect his permanent space in my heart is a very recently lost friend, Jon Driscoll. Better known as 'Jon Fat Beast', this gig promoter, comedy writer and larger than life warm up man for indie band Carter USM changed my teenaged life - his caricature is now etched on my bottom, along with the words, 'Beastie, I love you, you fat bastard'.

I share these personal stories with pride, but also in empathy with and defence of everyone who has a tattoo with personal meaning, because skill, artistry and collecting tattoos as if they were Fine Art paintings is a wonderful way to become a tattooed person, but it's not the only way.

So while it's easy to scoff at the ridiculousness of tattoo TV, remember, 'some scenes have been created for entertainment purposes', and some tattoos are created for love, for memory, for closeness, and some for art.

For my lovely Beastie, 1962-2014. 🐼



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