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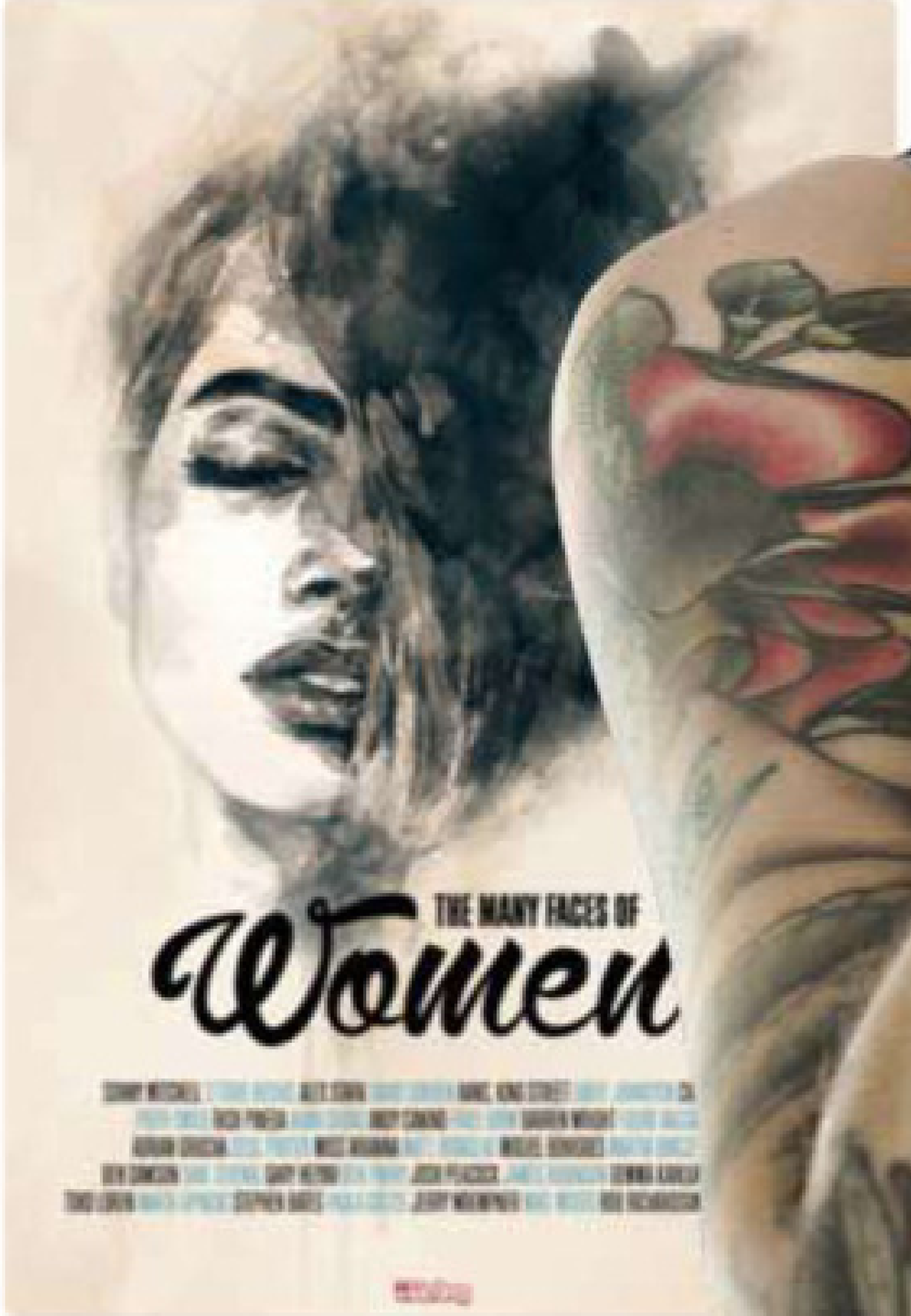
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New Orleans
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UK artists:
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MICHAEL GIBSON

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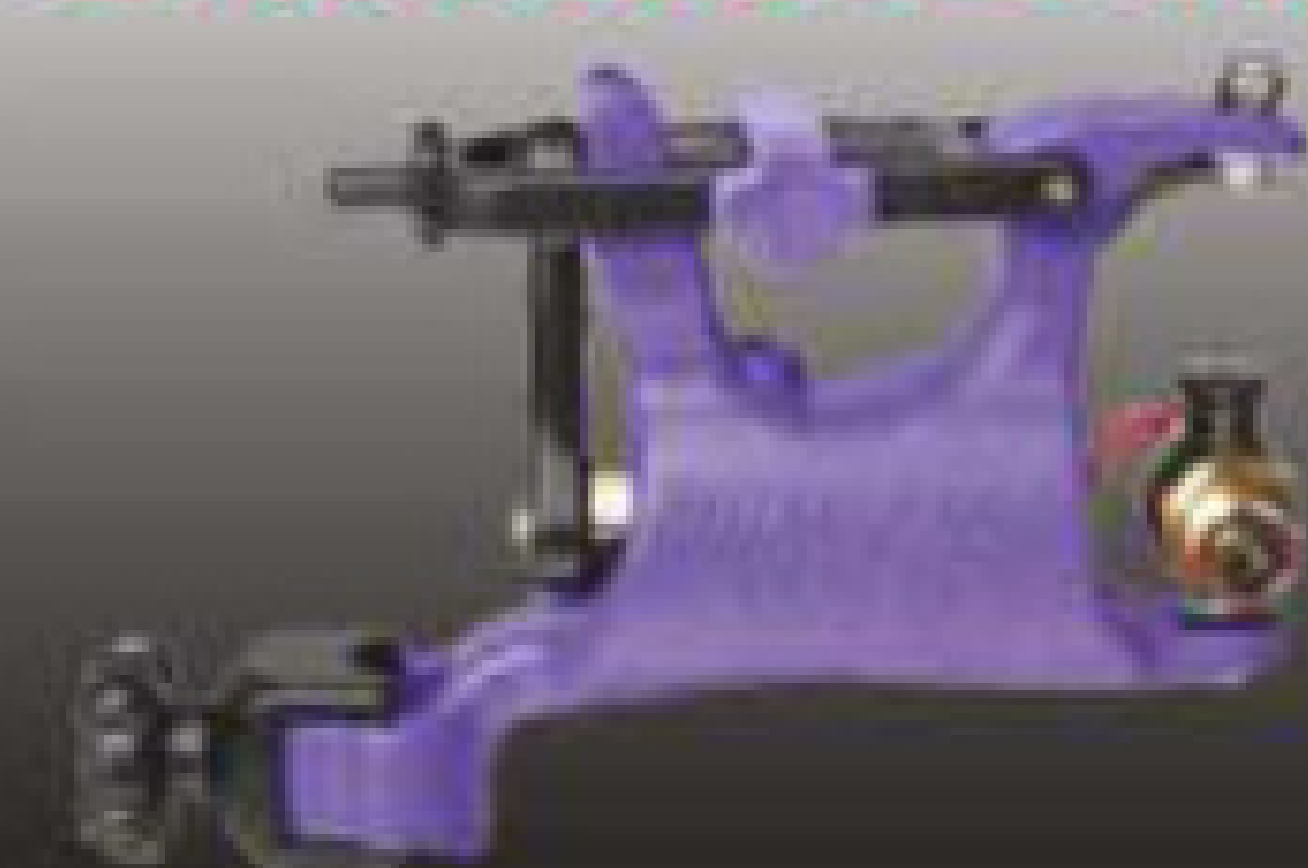
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has landed

AN ATTITUDE IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

Earlier this morning, I got a call from Radio Wales to be part of a phone in about teacher who had been sent home from her first day at work because she was tattooed. The story originated from the Daily Mirror - which by default means that everybody was 'fuming' or 'shattered'. I wish they would use words like 'thunderstruck' sometimes to spice up their delivery but that's beside the point.

I don't recall who the other guy on the phone-in was (sorry Sir) but he was pretty high up within the Welsh education system and actually had some solid, positive things to say. Somewhere along the way, between him, me and a decent radio presenter, for the first time ever I think we actually made sense.

Here's the thing: I am obviously pro-tattoo. The freedom that we have in this country to decide to be heavily tattooed (visibly or otherwise) is taken for granted but as tattooed people - I think I said this last issue too - we need to understand that the rest of the world might not see it the same way. That's what freedom is about. You can't have freedom for some people who want to do one thing and then take it away from others.

In an ideal world, it doesn't

matter. When it comes to teachers, their job is to teach and guide. Some of my kids teachers are tattooed - we've had them out at parents evening too - and nobody cares. It's not a problem. I am more concerned with them not actually knowing where Stockholm is and who Guy Fawkes was. The kids, not the teachers.

It's worth pointing out here (of all places) that when you make that commitment to

I AM MORE CONCERNED WITH THEM NOT ACTUALLY KNOWING WHERE STOCKHOLM IS AND WHO GUY FAWKES WAS

be publicly tattooed, you're committing yourself to a lifetime of being tattooed. That sounds dumb when you say it out loud, but the Yakuza are not wrong about their rules. Tattooed when you want to be, not tattooed when you don't. When you have things to do in life, if you can't fit in to get those things done, then you've played the game wrong. I know a whole bunch of people with public tattoos who get on just fine. A lot of them have decided to back out of the employment system and do their own thing - and that's beautiful, it's The Big Dream. Some however, fell over along the way and had to take the time to figure a different route.

Showing the middle finger to the world is the best thing ever - we can probably all agree on that because an attitude is a terrible thing to waste - but when you stick it out at heavy traffic, chances are, it's going to get clipped.

If you want to be a teacher or any other job that involves a operating in a world in which non-tattooed people are mostly in charge, just think about what you're doing. It may be prejudice and it may

not be. That word gets used a lot these days - but if you treat your tattoos with respect, they will respect you back. This isn't me saying 'don't get tattooed' - that would be dumb. This is me saying 'choose your battles' because the one that brings in the money that keeps a roof over your head - and maybe leaves you with enough money to get tattooed - is an important one to be part of.

Not so long ago you would have been turned away from a studio for wanting public ink when you still had room underneath your clothes. I wonder what changed. If anybody has some extra special thoughts on this, I'm all ears.

Having said all of that - from this huge vantage point, I have noticed that times and attitudes have been changing over the last year or so. Employers are starting to question whether that tattoo on an exceptional worker serving coffee is actually as big a deal as they once thought. Being tattooed no longer (necessarily) means you're a rebel, an outcast, a waste of space or a rock star. It's 2014 and being tattooed simply means you're tattooed - and that's the only difference between you and the next (blank) guy.

Mostly though, I'm pleased to have had a live on-air discussion - with two other people with no ink - that didn't piss all over being tattooed from a great height.

That, my friends, is a massive step forward.

Sen



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This issue, the irrepressible Jodi takes the stage - and she is most very definitely not crying in the rain...

22 TATTOO JAM

Full coverage from the behemoth that is Tattoo Jam as it takes over Doncaster Racecourse again for three days of tattooing and anything else you can imagine that is related to tattooing.

30 LITTLE SWASTIKA

If this isn't the biggest tattoo ever created, then we're not doing our job properly. Join us as we explore the madness of Little Swastika and his crazy idea to create a ten man tattoo...

88 THINK! (I)

The rising numbers of tattoo studios across the country is a topic on the lips of all. Have we peaked? Paddy Vipond gets out his research shovel and comes up with... nuclear weapons?

64 MICHAEL GIBSON

At this year's Manchester Tattoo Show, Mike 'Gibbo' Gibson walked away with Best of Saturday for an amazing piece in his signature style - two months later, we checked back in to see how the talent was cooking.

70 THINK! (II)

A few weeks back, the boss was invited to take part in a story being built up by BBC Wales on the rise of the tattoo studio in Wales. Being Welsh, he was only too pleased to contribute - the results provide rather a lot of food for thought.

74 HOLLIE MAY WALL

An award winner who only attended her first show last year, Hollie May Wall

P30



LITTLE SWASTIKA

THE CRAZIEST TATTOO IN THE WORLD?

is one of the busiest women we've ever come across - but she's holding it together fine style!

88 TANA

'Multifaceted' is the first thing that comes to mind when talking about Tana the Tattooed Lady. Aside from the tattoos, smoking hot body, pin-up girl prowess, and impeccable stage presence that is. This is lesson 101 in making your own way.

P86



DOWNTOWN

DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI TO NEW ORLEANS

88 DOWNTOWN TATTOO

Imagine the party vibe of Las Vegas with the food of the American South and the best jazz you've ever heard. Top it all

off with French flare, and you've got New Orleans in a nutshell. Right in the heart of it, just far enough from Bourbon Street's debauchery, you'll find Downtown Tattoo...



1 Marcher Court, Sealand Road, Chester CH1 6BS Tel: 01244 881888 Fax: 01244 646016 www.jazzpublishing.co.uk info@jazzpublishing.co.uk

EDITOR
Sion Smith
editor@skindeep.co.uk
07841 999334

ART EDITOR
Gareth Evans
gareth@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 204

PRODUCTION EDITOR
Fergus McShane
fergus@jazzpublishing.co.uk

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Justine Hart
production@skindeep.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 235

ACCOUNTS & ADMIN MANAGER
Emma McCrindle
accounts@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 207

ADMINISTRATION
Jan Schofield
jan@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 219
Asher Lloyd
asher.lloyd@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 275

CREDIT CONTROL
Pam Coleman
pam@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 215

MAGAZINE ADVERTISING MANAGER
Mark McCarthy
mark@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 304

SKIN DEEP SALES EXECUTIVE
Dee Lewis
advertising@skindeep.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 214

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES
Katy Cuffin
magazines@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 501

EVENTS MANAGER
Shelley Bond
shelley@jazzevents.co.uk
01244 881895 ext. 303

EVENTS CO-ORDINATORS
Wendy Marks
wendy@jazzevents.co.uk
01244 881895 ext. 305
Sarah Shawcross
sarah@jazzevents.co.uk
01244 881895 ext. 239

WEB MANAGER
David Arthur
david.arthur@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 208

DIGITAL CONTENT
Gareth Williams
gareth.williams@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888 ext. 302

PUBLISHER
David Gamble
david@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Stuart Mears
stuart@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888

DISTRIBUTION
Susan Saunders
susan.saunders@seymour.co.uk
0207 429 4073

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Sleeve Notes

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www.facebook.com/tattoo magazine

ALL SUBMISSIONS TO SLEEVE NOTES GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. BE IT NEWS, AN EVENT, NEW MERCH, A STUDIO MOVE... WE'LL DO OUR VERY BEST TO LET EVERYBODY ELSE KNOW ABOUT IT TOO. EMAIL: NEWS@SKINDEEP.CO.UK OR IF YOU WANT TO BE ARCHAIC ABOUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR: SKIN DEEP, 1 MARCHER COURT, SEALAND ROAD, CHESTER CH1 6BS. BRING IT.

SHORT SLEEVES



NEW STUDIO IN CAMBERLEY: SKULLIANZ

Artist Ian Morgan is bringing his 20 years of tattooing experience to Skullianz, a new studio in Blackwater, Camberley. The studio will specialise in custom work. "Whether it's your first time or you're an avid collector, we hope to be able to give you a pleasant tattoo experience," says Ian, who's "always happy to sit and discuss your tattoo requirements over a cuppa." Sounds good to us: call them on 01252 444410 or visit skullianzattooostudio.co.uk.

AURORA TATTOO OPENS IN LANCASTER

Artist duo Sam Wisniewski and fiancée Emma Kierzek have opened Aurora tattoo studio on Brock Street, Lancaster. Emma is a previous award winner at Tattoo Jam; the two are hoping to incorporate art, photography and lectures as well as their permanent and guest artists into the new space. Visit auroratattooostudio.co.uk for more.

ONE IN THE EYE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCE

When you're an apprentice artist practising your craft, you might use pig skin, synthetic skin or even a willing (and brave) volunteer. But what about when you're going to be tattooing an eyeball?

The apprentice in this case was Dr Emil Chynn, a US surgeon who was carrying out a procedure on a patient with a rare eye condition: an injury in childhood had left one iris a milky white colour. In order to get ready for tattooing the iris black, Dr Chynn used a grape to practise on. When he could ink it without the fruit bursting, he was ready. Yeesh.

A TRUE TATTOO FAMILY EVENT!

Tattoo FREEZE

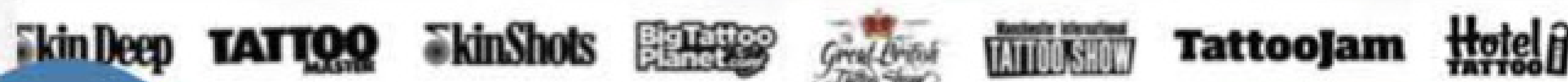
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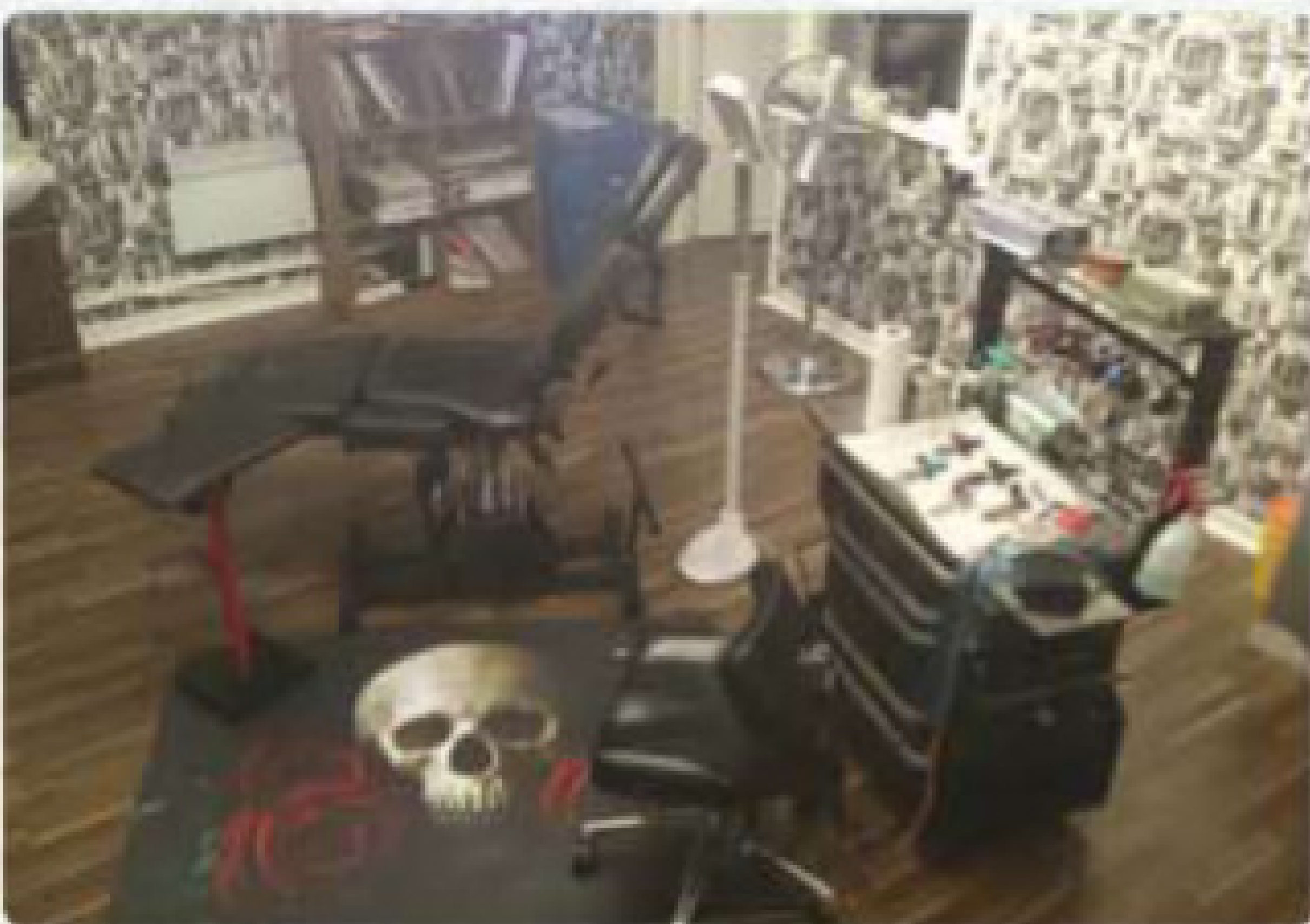
It's that time of year again - somebody has messed with the hands of the clocks and the summer is officially done and dusted - which can only mean Tattoo Freeze is around the corner! We've ten pairs of tickets to give away this issue - if you're lucky and we remember, we'll do it next issue too. We'd love to see you there, naturally - usual rules apply: if you never win anything head over to tattoofreeze.com to arm yourself with paid for tickets but if you feel lucky punks, you can send an email with subject line of **FREEZE** to editor@skindeep.co.uk and we'll fish some winners out before the end of the month.

SHORT SLEEVES

With some technical support and ink mixing from CJ Pento of Brooklyn's Red Legged Devils studio the surgery was a success, and the patient - who was awake throughout and described the procedure as "nice" - now has a black-pigmented iris to match his other, fully-functioning, eye. Bet you won't look at grapes, or eyes, in the same way for a while...

WISHFUL INKIN STUDIO MOVE

Artist Paul Egan has moved, along with the Wishful Inkin studio, to 98 Park Road, Hartlepool. The studio will still be offering art, piercing and laser removal: call 01429 283755 or visit wishfulinkin.co.uk for more.



MEMORIAL ASH

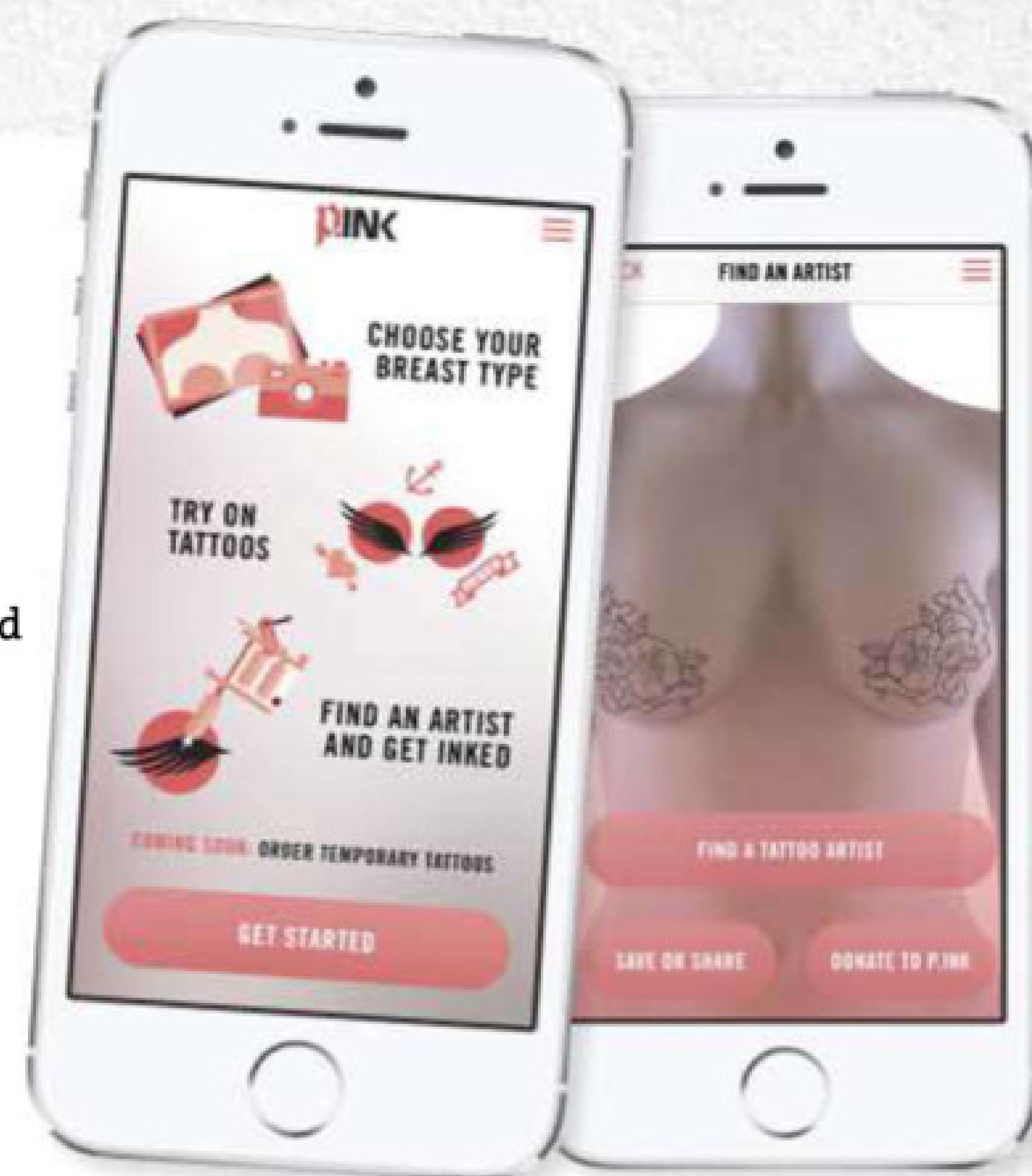
You may have heard of the idea of putting ash from a cremated loved one into tattoo ink before. However, one enterprising undertaker has now added memorial tattooing to their list of services: Walsall's Co-operative Memorials have teamed up with local artists to offer the enhanced inking to bereaved clients. It's certainly one way of making sure the dearly departed are always with you.

P.INK DAY: THE APP

A new iPhone app has been launched by charity P.Ink, with the aim of helping breast cancer patients and survivors move on and transform - not necessarily hide - their scars by getting tattooed.

The message is that reconstruction isn't the only aesthetic option available: instead, the Inkspiration app allows users to take pics of their post-mastectomy torsos and overlay tattoo images (designed by artists), to see what the final result might look like. They can even share the image with friends.

Once they're happy, the app can put users in touch with artists all over the world (although there's a huge US bias at the moment - Mr Smith is working hard on it) who have experience



of tattooing mastectomy scars.

According to the charity it's a way of helping women to heal after their treatment, allowing them to reclaim their bodies and feel confident again. Download the app from the App Store (an Android version is in the works) or head to p-ink.org for more info.



DON'T SQUEAL, HEAL

Here's the latest tattoo healing product for your consideration: the slightly ickily-named Pig Fat Pomades Tattoo Cream. It's an all-natural water-based cream that's designed to help heal your new ink without a load of chemical assistance.

"When a friend of mine had a gorgeous tattoo done, he spent a lot of money on a cream which was full of chemicals, yet was little more than a moisturiser with some grape seed oil," says Pig Fat Pomades founder Paul Johnson. "I knew it would be possible to make something more effective, more natural and more affordable - so we got to work." The end result uses anti oxidising borage seed oil, arnica montana flower extract to reduce bruising and moisturising jojoba oil. It hasn't been tested on animals and should also be kind to your clothes and your ink colour, according to the makers.

We've had the opportunity to try the product on some new ink here, and can report that initial results are good: it's very light, soaks in pretty quickly and has a fresh, crisp scent - it also felt quite soothing on the bruised areas. The big plus is the consistency - a little goes a long way and as it's not too claggy.

You can get hold of some from thegroomingclinic.com and menareuseless.com, RRP £10.95. And no, it doesn't contain any pig fat.

Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

SHEFFIELD TATTOO SHOW

15 – 16 November 2014

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

TRIESTE INTERNATIONAL TATTOO EXPO

14 November - 16 November 2014

Stazione Marittima Trieste
Molo Bersaglieri, 3
34133 Trieste (TS), Italy
triestetattooexpo.com

TATTOO CONVENTION ALKMAAR

15 November - 16 November 2014

Grote Sint Laurenskerk
Koorstraat 2, 1811 Alkmaar
The Netherlands
alkmaartattooconvention.com

EXPO TATTOO SAN JUAN

15 November - 16 November 2014

Grand Hotel Provincial San Juan
Av José Ignacio de la Roza Oeste 132,
5400 San Juan, San Juan Province,
Argentina
facebook.com/ExpoTattooSanJuan

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

AUSTRALIAN TATTOO & BODY ART EXPO – MELBOURNE

05 December - 07 December 2014

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre
1 Convention Centre Place,
South Wharf Victoria 3006, Australia
tattooexpo.com.au

SANREMO TATTOO FEST

12 December - 14 December 2014

Palafiori Sanremo
Corso Giuseppe Garibaldi 34,
Sanremo, 18038 IM, Italy
tattoofest.it

FADE FX

This just in from Fade FX and her new venture: "As of mid November, we will be joining Rodhus Art Studios in Brighton, a creative hub for artists. There are established businesses in the high end art studios ranging from fashion design to recording studios and we are excited to join this network of Brighton's finest creative businesses. This kind of set up is where I would expect to see more contemporary tattoo studios in the future. The studio is going to be appointment only but we welcome consultations arranged at short notice. Our first day of opening will be 12th November and we will have an 'open day' with art exhibition and free drinks on Sunday 23rd November 12noon-7pm. This is free



and open to all public with no appointment/ticket necessary. This event is wide open for people to stop by, be nosy, meet our crew and even purchase prints of our exhibited artwork." You can find Fade right here: Rodhus, 16-30 Hollingdean Road, Brighton, BN2 4AA
fadefxtattoo@gmail.com • facebook.com/fadefxtattoo • Instagram @fadefxtattoo • 07951090595 • fadefxtattoo.com

SELF PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Any collector will have faced the 'what's going to happen to them when you're old?' question about their tattoos from time to time. We should probably have some 'they'll look old, and awesome, just like me' cards printed out. Anyway, now there's a new response to try out: 'they'll be put on display in a case, so look me up and come see for yourself.'

That's right, your tattoos can now carry on without you, once the reaper has had his way. A new service offered by Peter van der Helm's Walls and Skin (wallsandskin.com) tattoo supplies shop, the Foundation for the Art and Science of Tattooing, will preserve inked skin and put it on display.

Those who sign up to the service will have their skin removed by pathologists, packed in formaldehyde and treated to remove water and fat, which will be replaced with silicone. The finished product will then star in gallery shows or be 'loaned' to friends and family. The idea is to create a visual record of tattoo art, preserving both an individual's tastes and collection, but also the work of notable artists themselves. It's not a new idea - museums around the world already have preserved examples of tattooed skin on display. However, this will be the first time that donors can choose to have their bodies turned into artefacts before their deaths. So now your ink choices can be with you for life, and then a little longer...

UNFINISHED MONKEY BUSINESS

In a recent issue we mentioned the Chapman brothers, those artist chaps who were planning on creating their own tattoos (and doubtless their trademark controversy) as part of a new exhibition in Hastings. The show is going ahead and they've teamed up - probably sensibly - with a professional artist to ink members of the public. Michelle Taylor, owner of new studio The Monkey Paw

Tattoo Parlour is doing the honours - check out monkeypawtattoo parlour.com and watch this space for images from the day in the near future.



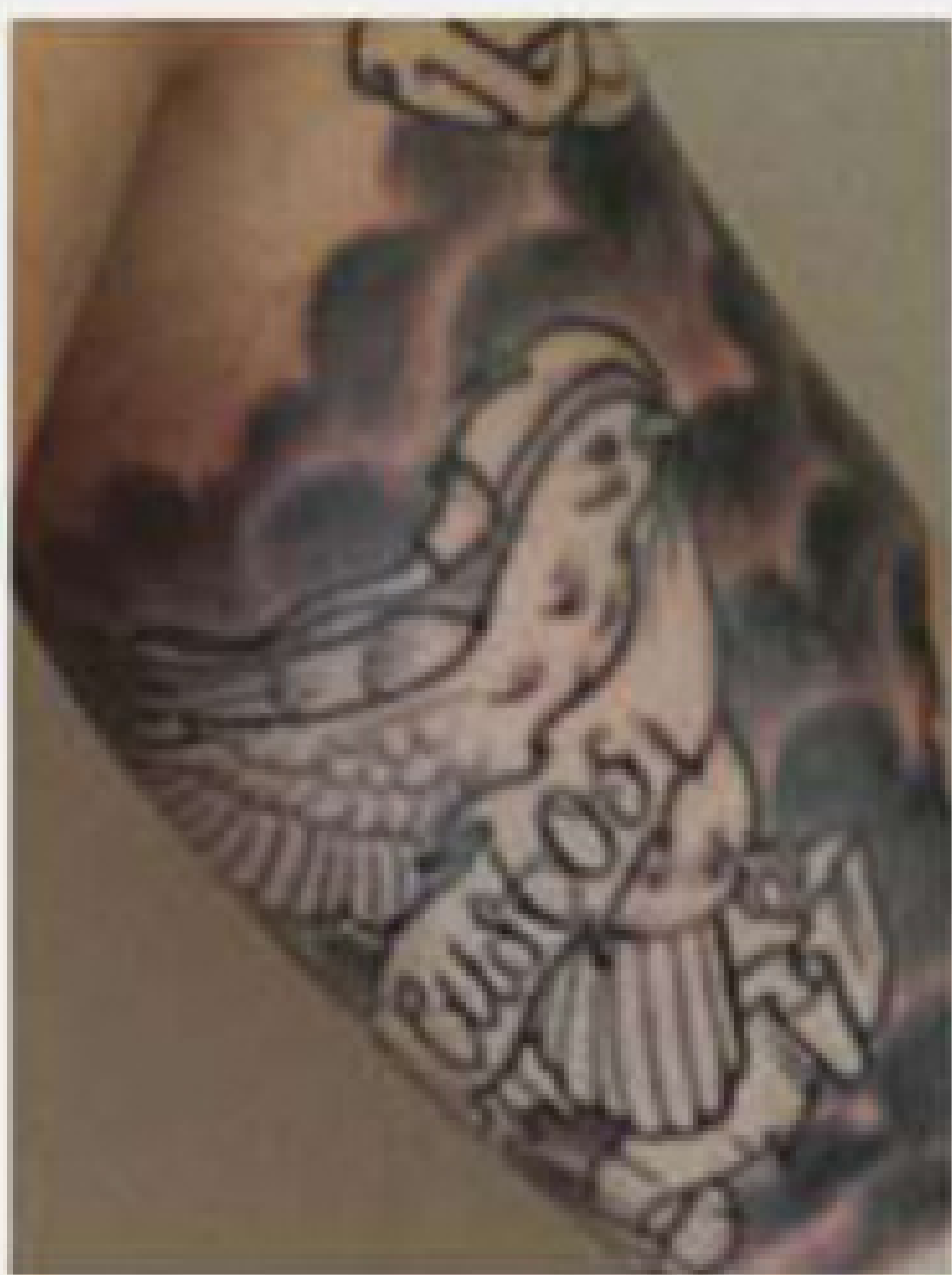
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Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

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13 December - 14 December 2014

Huxleys Neue Welt
Hasenheide 107-113
10967 Berlin, Germany
tattoofestivalberlin.de

TATTOO FREEZE

11 January 2015

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

SCOTTISH TATTOO CONVENTION

28 - 29 March 2015

Edinburgh Corn Exchange
10 Newmarket Road,, Edinburgh EH14 1RJ
www.scottishtattooconvention.net/

5TH TATTOO EXTRAVAGANZA PORTSMOUTH

11 - 12 April 2015

Portsmouth Pyramids Centre
Clarence Esplanade, Portsmouth
Hampshire PO5 3ST
www.tattooextravaganza.co.uk

WATERFORD CITY TATTOO CONVENTION

05 - 07 June 2015

Crystal Sports & Leisure Centre
Cork Road, Waterford
Waterford, 00353, Ireland
www.facebook.com/Waterfordcitytattoo

LEEDS INTERNATIONAL TATTOO EXPO

06 - 07 June 2015

New Dock Hall - Royal Armouries
Museum, Armouries Dr
Leeds LS10 1LT
http://leedstattoexpo.com/

WIN COPIES OF PEN & INK

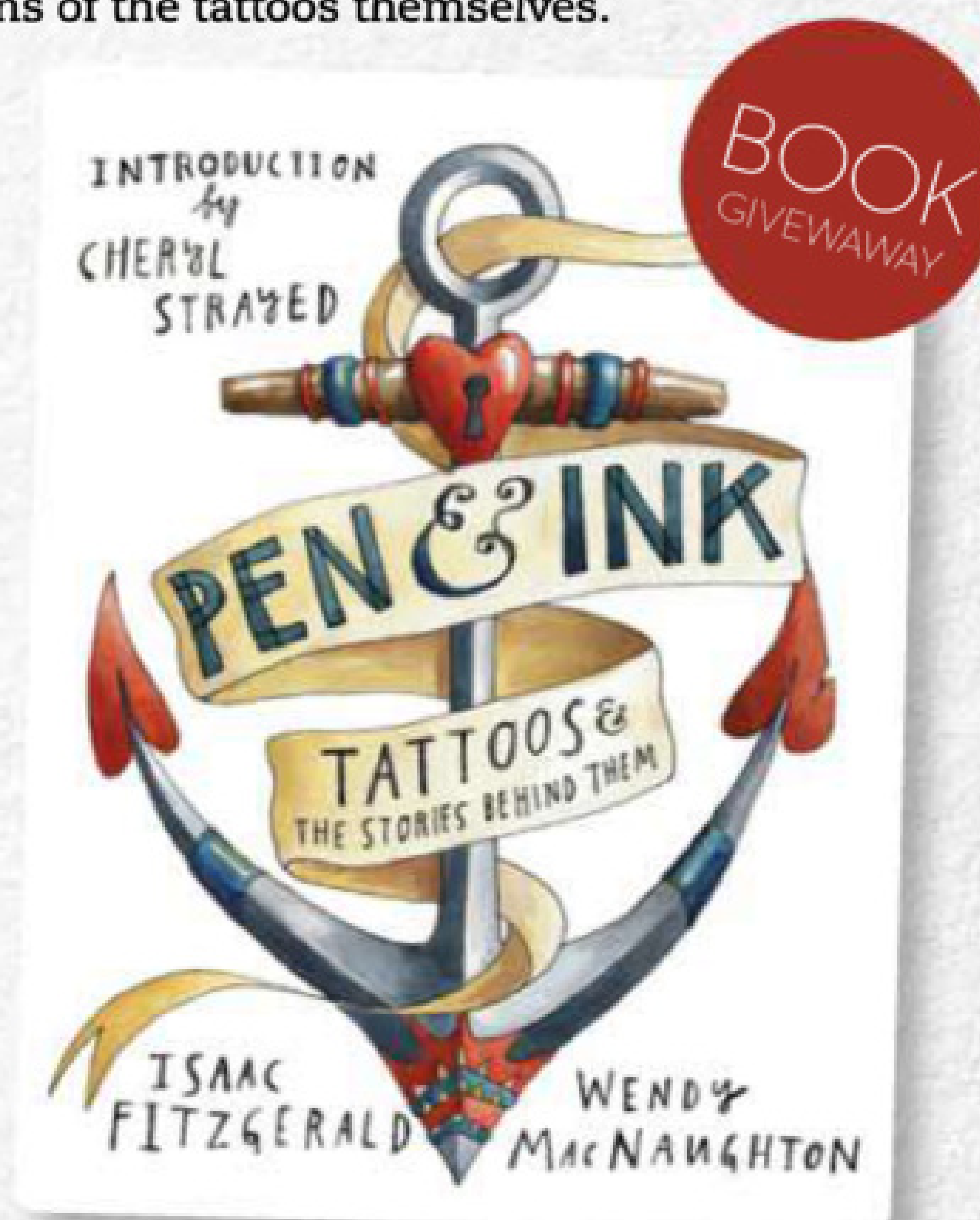
Every tattoo tells a story, whether the ink is meaningful or the result of a misguided decision made at the age of fourteen, representative of the wearer's true self or the accidental consequence of a 'good idea at the time'. Bloomsbury Publishing are extremely excited to be publishing a collection of these stories, set alongside gorgeously rendered full-colour illustrations of the tattoos themselves.

There are stories from writers, Cheryl Strayed and Roxane Gay; rockers from Korn, Otep, and Five Finger Death Punch; and even a porn star. But there are also stories from ordinary people living in our midst—from professors to thrift store salespeople, cafe owners to librarians, union organisers to administrators—and their extraordinary lives.

To celebrate the launch of Pen & Ink, Bloomsbury Publishing have 20 copies of the book to giveaway for free, one month ahead of publication. All you need to do is tweet @BloomsburyBooks with the story of your tattoo using #penandink. The first 20 to tweet win a free copy!

Head here for an extract: http://issuu.com/bloomsburypublishing/docs/pen_and_ink

There's also a great little video



here: <http://penandink.tumblr.com/post/98229664382/director-dave-adams-of-run-riot-films-has-made-a>

ONE TO WATCH: DARREN LUKE

With art that looks like the cast of the greatest children's book ever has wandered off the page and onto skin, Darren Luke really caught our eye at **Tattoo Jam**. At first he was afraid that his illustrative style wouldn't appeal to collectors but as his number of fans grows, looks like those fears were unfounded. See more fox-dinosaur-fairytale beasts on Instagram (@magicmutant) or facebook.com/magicmutant.



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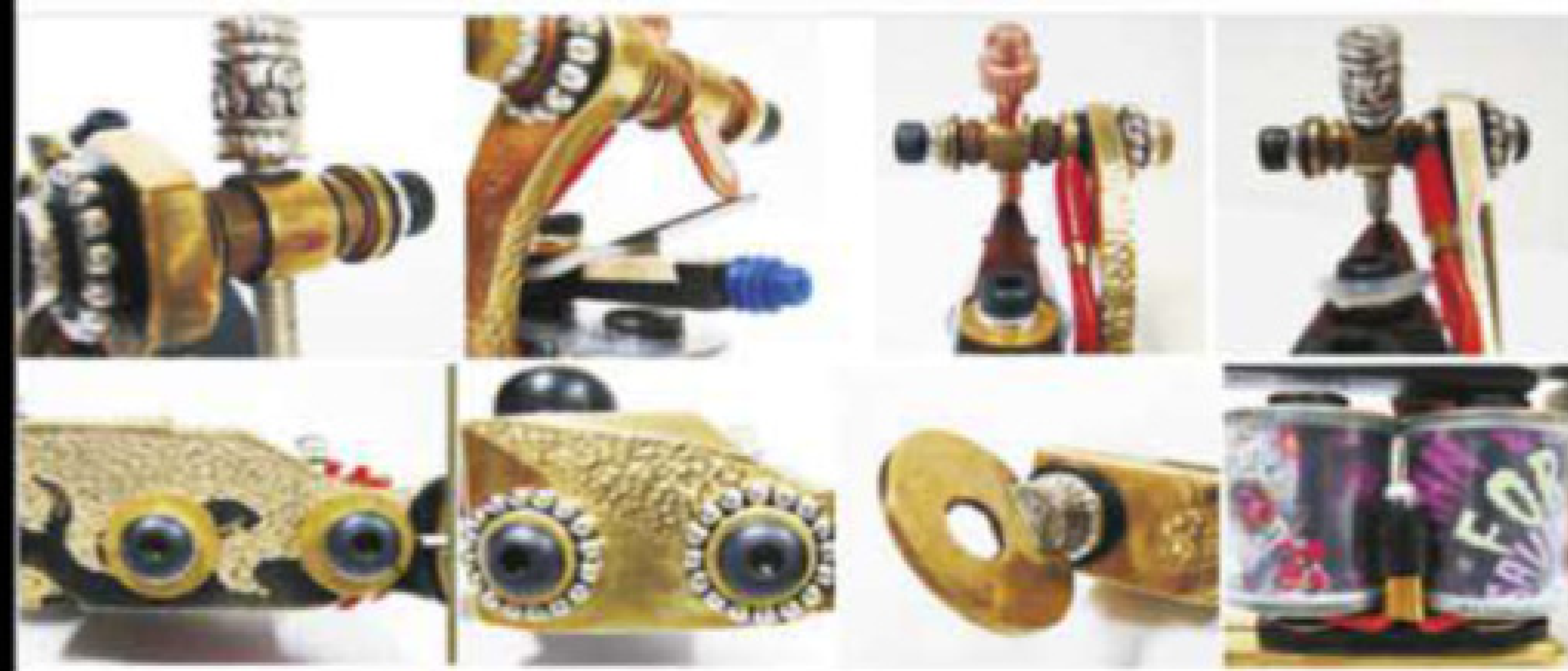
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UNLOCKING THE FUTURE

First Nokia patented vibrating tattoo technology that could be linked to a smart phone to let you know of incoming calls now telecommunications company Motorola has branched out into cybernetic tattoo technology with the development of 'digital tattoos'. Does this cutting edge piece of technology and the term 'digital tattoo' live up to its impressive title?

The digital tattoo is the brain child of Motorola, Google's Advanced Technology and Projects group and VivaLnk Inc.

The most striking, and disappointing, aspect of the digital tattoo is that it isn't actually a tattoo. It's more like a sticking plaster with an ultra-thin microchip implanted in it and is worn on the skin rather than being implanted in it. Google spokeswoman Iska Saric explained how the 'digital tattoo' works.

"Digital Tattoos have embedded NFC tags that can be read by Moto X and that contain unique numbers used to verify pairing of your phone with a particular tattoo to unlock the phone. Digital Tattoos do not store your PIN or pattern."

The sticking plaster design of the 'digital tattoos' has many advantages. Apparently a big chunk of phone users find the seconds spent unlocking their phone an infuriating waste of time and long for more time to spend updating Facebook, playing Flappy Birds or watching porn. But what if your 'digital tattoo' was to come unstuck wouldn't you then be locked out of your phone? Iska insists this is not an issue

"If you don't have your Digital Tattoo with you, you can always access your phone with a master PIN, pattern, or password that you select when you set up your Digital Tattoo."

Gaining those valuable seconds that would be wasted unlocking your phone manually of course comes at a price.

"Digital Tattoos cost \$9.99 + shipping for a pack of 10."

Despite the whole 'digital tattoo' idea having more than a whiff of

marketing stunt about it, Iska sees a bright future for the device and insists the companies involved do not regard it as a gimmick.

"This project was started in collaboration with our partners when ATAP was part of Motorola Mobility. We'd like to expand this to other devices and future versions of Android."

The elephant in the room is the rather creative marketing of the chip/sticking plaster combo as a 'digital tattoo'. While Motorola's innovation isn't a tattoo it does open the door for real tattoos that could communicate with computers. It seems like a wasted opportunity not to develop the principle of 'digital tattoos' further. As each tattoo is unique they would act as a perfect security device to prevent stolen phones being used or traded on the black market. In the vain hope to salvage some body art credibility from a product titled 'digital tattoo' I ask if Motorola has any plans to utilise real ink tattoos as security protection.

"At the moment there are no plans to expand the technology to interact with real skin tattoos."

So what does the future hold for 'digital tattoos'? Whatever plans the companies involved have they are not willing to divulge them.

"We don't have anything to share right now in terms of our future plans for Digital Tattoos."

While the practical advantages of the 'digital tattoo' are obvious maybe calling them tattoos is a little misleading but it clearly highlights how big companies are jumping on the cool wave that tattooing is currently riding.



AT THE MOMENT THERE ARE NO PLANS
TO EXPAND THE TECHNOLOGY TO
INTERACT WITH REAL SKIN TATTOOS

HISTORY 101

Motorola's 'digital tattoo' may not live up to the hype but there are real world examples of cyber-ink. In 2011 Parisian based tattooist K.A.R.L became the first artist to create an 'animated tattoo'. By combining a matrix code tattoo, smart phone and code scanner app K.A.R.L achieved the illusion of a moving, singing tattoo. This boundary pushing tattoo opens up whole new possibilities for how tattoos can be brought to life by digital technology. In 2012 Nokia patented haptic tattoo technology. The theory is that magnetic ink could be tattooed into a person's skin and when their phone rings it excites the magnetic particles in the ink causing them to vibrate. This tactile feedback would allow people to be aware of incoming calls without the need for annoying ring tones. While the technology is a real possibility it has yet to catch on and so far no tattooists have been stationed in Nokia shops ready to apply the magnetic tattoos.

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Adam McDermott
Adam Thomas
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Aiden Baker
Aidan O'Brien
Alex Candela
Alex Edwards
Alex Hennerley
Alice Perrin
Amy Edwards
Andy Joss
Andy McDonald
Anna Garvey
Antonio Sav
Ash Lewis
Ashley Newman
Baran
Ben Carter
Bez
Biffa
Brian Hepworth
Bryn Gray
Cathy - Sue
Cesar De Cesaro
Chay Brown
Chris Byrne
Chris Cross
Chris Moss
Claire Brazier
Clarke Dudley
Craig Bartlett
Dale Hearson
Danni Bee
Danny 'Kubrick' Edwards
Darren Burton
Dave Brace
Dek Kent
Del May
Dinky
Dionne Langton
Don Richards
Donnie
Gari Henderson
Gavin Dunbar
Gavin Skelton
Giles Twigg
Greg Bishop
Hannah Von Farren
Hollie May
Ian Cartwright
Imi Csikos
Jake Giles
James Bronson
James Creighton
Jamie Davies
Jamie Hawkes
Jane Mosley
Jase Jones
Jay Watson
Jerry Burchill
John Gardner
Jolene Sherrard
Josh Taylor
Josie Morris
Juan Carlos
Jules
Justyna Kurzelowska
Kat Worrall
Katan Costello
Katie Henly
Keir Alsop
Kevin 'Muff' Mountford
Kerry Stone
Kevin Lea
Kyle Walker
Laura Sandell
Lauren Hanson
Lawrence Canham
Lee Dee

Lee Harris
Lee McMahon
Lee Smith
Liam Jackson
Libby Piechowicz
Lisa Priestley
Lisa Walker
Lou Bragg
Loz Carroll
Lucy Roadhouse
Marc Osborne
Marcin Kolancinski
Marek
Marie Cox
Mark Brown
Mark Hardy
Mark Reed
Martin Jackson
Martyna Kadzida
Martyna Pichalska
Matt Faulkner
Matt Kaye
Mike Smith
Neil Murray
Nick Carroll
Nick Gill
Nick Jones
Ollie Tye
Pam Green
Patryk Mazur
Paul Davies
Paul Hanford
Paul Terry
Paul Vaughan
Peter Nelson
Phil Hardman
Rachel Flood
Rafael Potempa
Rich Knight
Richard Peel
Richard Reynolds
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Jodi

When the irrepressible Jodi turned up with Whitesnake on her earbuds loud enough for us to hear it, we knew this was going to end in tears...

THERE ARE WORSE WAYS TO MEET SOMEBODY FOR THE FIRST TIME AND FIND THEM LISTENING TO WHITESNAKE. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME ANYBODY COULD FIND YOU CRYING IN THE RAIN? THINK YOURSELF LUCKY THAT I CHOSE THAT WHITESNAKE SONG TO ASK ABOUT. IT COULD HAVE GOTTEN PRETTY BAD!

Ha! Oh I do, considering the other stuff shuffle was throwing

at me during our conversation, it could have been a lot worse! I don't think I have ever been caught crying in the rain. That sounds awfully depressing. I was pissed in the rain a few nights ago however – damn you Coverdale. That would have been a much cooler song title. If you're going to do anything in the rain, it should probably be the latter – at least before crying anyway!

I KNOW IT HAPPENS A LOT TO PEOPLE, BUT AFTER YOU STUDIED MUSIC INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT & LIVE PRODUCTION, HOW COME YOU NEVER WENT INTO IT AS A CAREER? WERE THERE SIMPLY NO JOBS AROUND OR DID YOU SWITCH TO SOCIAL MEDIA ON PURPOSE? YOU MUST HAVE AN URGE TO STILL DO IT - NOBODY WALKS OUT ON MUSIC THAT EASILY.

I definitely still have an urge to work in the music industry – music is my passion. I'd love to get back into it and have always planned to. It's the only thing I've ever been sure of that I want to do. After university, I moved back home, unsure of my next movements and sort of fell into a job in social media. Thankfully, I really enjoy it. Everyone I work with is bat shit crazy and I love my job, so I feel quite lucky to be able to say that – I know some people who feel quite the opposite!

ANYWAY - THAT'S A CLASSY LIST OF TATTOOERS WORK YOU'VE GOT UNDER YOUR BELT THERE. THAT'S WELL THOUGHT OUT AND PICKED OFF PRETTY DAMN CLINICALLY - NO BELOW THE RADAR WORK THAT'S FOR SURE. IS EACH ONE REALLY THOUGHT OUT THAT WELL OR IS THERE A CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT LINK THEM ALL TOGETHER... AND WHERE DO YOU GO NEXT?

Thank you! I guess they're all kind of linked together. I suppose they tell a bit of the story of my life so far, each one marking a memory or chapter. Mostly they're thought out, I usually have an 🌸



Mr Smith 🟡 Scott Cole Model: Jodi Makeup: Eve-Marie Parry Collar: Allie Brock



After a lengthy phone interview, I made it to a group audition in front of the producers, which basically consists of making an arse out of yourself



idea of what I want, then let the tattooer go wild with it. I think that's the best way but I do have a few spontaneous tattoos, mainly party tats - they're the best kind! I recently got my left hand tattooed by Jondix at Sevendoors, so I will be paying him another visit sooner rather than later to do my right hand. I can't bare to look at my non tattooed hand, it makes me feel a little bit sick! I'm also hoping to revisit Oliver Macintosh at Frith Street, I've got five or six from him so far and I've had my heart set on one of his epic snakes for a long while. I think it's about time I went in big!

I have a bit of a 'wish list' of tattooers I'd love to get work from to add to the collection. A couple of those guys would be Thomas Hooper and Anderson Luna, I'm wanting to get those ticked off my list in the not too distant future.

AS MUCH AS I RESPECT YOUR LIST OF TATTOO ARTISTS, YOU SLIPPED A RUNG OR TWO DOWN THE LADDER WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT YOU

AUDITIONED FOR BIG BROTHER THIS YEAR. WHAT WOULD YOU GO AND DO THAT FOR? WHY NOT PUT YOUR HAND IN A BLENDER, VIDEO IT AND PUT IT ON YOUTUBE IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME LAUGHS? WHY NOT SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE HI-BROW? BRITISH BAKE-OFF PERHAPS? I'M THINKING YOU MIGHT BE A DOMESTIC GODDESS ON THE SLY.

Ha! I don't like to take life too seriously. I always try to have as much fun as possible. Getting into mischief and out of my comfort zone keeps me on my toes and definitely makes life more exciting. You only live once. I believe you should grab life by the bollocks and take every opportunity that comes your way. Big Brother is one of the most extreme situations you can put yourself in. You don't know what's going to happen, who you're going to meet, how you're going to react: it's full of surprises and I love that! I think I'll give the British Bake Off a miss though. I'd eat Mary Berry alive and I can't bake to save my life. Sorry to disappoint!

WHILE WE'RE AT IT, I'M CURIOUS - AND I AM GOING TO ASSUME THE READERS ARE TOO - WHAT EXACTLY DOES AN AUDITION FOR BIG BROTHER CONSIST OF? I ONLY EVER SAW IT ONCE AND IT LOOKED LIKE THE KIND OF SHOW WHERE THEY RANDOMLY PICK UP PEOPLE WHO WERE CAUGHT LAUGHING AT THAT NEW PETER ANDRE ADVERT FOR ICELAND. SORRY PETE...

Probably just how you'd imagine. A room containing eight show offs, all fighting to get the most attention from the producers! Firstly, I sent in an audition video which consisted of me standing on the roof of a car in the middle of the countryside surrounded by dog walkers - who looked on in sheer horror - whilst wearing a fur coat and not much else, ranting about why I'd be a great housemate. Then after a lengthy phone interview, I made it to a group audition in front of the producers, which basically consists of making an arse out of yourself - which came quite easily to me funnily enough. 🌻



BACK TO REALITY... YOU'RE A NETFLIX GIRL. WHAT'S YOUR LATEST ADDICTION? YOU CAN GET THROUGH A SHOCKING AMOUNT OF TV WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MOOD CAN'T YOU. WHAT'S THE SHOW YOU KEEP GOING BACK TO AND WOULD REALLY MISS IF THEY TOOK IT AWAY? FOR THE RECORD, MINE IS LIFE ON MARS, BUT THAT PROBABLY SAYS MORE ABOUT ME THAN I INTENDED!

I just started The Killing, I'm on episode one and already gripped! I've also been doing Sons Of Anarchy. I still haven't made it past season five yet but that's one I dip in and out of. My favourite show of all time would have to be Dexter, closely followed by Breaking Bad, Prison Break and Luther – anything crime related, i'm all over it! I find once I've watched a TV series, I don't really like to go back to it, it's just not the same! So I'm forever looking for new shows to watch –suggestions welcome!

DID YOU NOT EVER FANCY DECKING YOURSELF WITH A CLASSIC PRISON BREAK TATTOO TO SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION FOR THE SHOW... HIS LASER REMOVAL LOOKED A LOT LESS FREAKING PAINFUL AND FASTER THAN MINE THAT'S FOR SURE.

Michael Scofield is hard as nails! I don't think it would work quite the same for me, seeing as his tattoos are actually a map of the prison... clever idea mind!

WHEN I ASKED YOU TO TELL ME SOME THING ABOUT YOURSELF. YOU SAID YOU LIKE TO 'EXPLORE' FASHION. HOW DOES THAT WORK? DOES IT REALLY INVOLVE GOING PLACES WITH CLOTHING LINES THAT NOBODY HAS EVER BEEN BEFORE? I WOULD TAKE A RANDOM GUESS BUT THERE'S NOT MUCH CLOTHING LEFT FROM THIS SHOOT. WHAT HAPPENED?

I've always tried to be creative in the way I look. I like to put my own spin on things and make something my own, so I'll customise my clothes and try to put together outfits that might



I'll customise my clothes and try to put together outfits that might make me stand out from the norm. I don't wanna look like everyone else!

make me stand out from the norm. I don't wanna look like everyone else! I have a some what unhealthy shoe obsession (like most women), so I'm on a constant hunt for the perfect high heels. I don't know what to say about your other comment. When you're tattooed, clothes are over rated!

YOU TOLD ME EARLIER THAT YOUR FAMILY WAS NOT UNLIKE THE OSBOURNE'S BUT YOUR DAD WAS UNLIKELY TO BE SEEN SNORTING A LINE OF ANTS ANYTIME SOON. HOW ABOUT IF I OFFERED YOU A LIFETIME SUBSCRIPTION TO SKIN DEEP FOR YOU TO TALK HIM INTO IT AND SEND PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE? I'LL ALSO THROW IN A BOTTLE OF KRAKEN RUM. HALF EMPTY (OR HALF FULL IF YOU'RE FEELING OPTIMISTIC) BUT I THINK IT'S A NICE GESTURE

ON MY BEHALF, DON'T YOU?

What an offer! Sadly, I don't think he's quite rock and roll enough (or maybe he just values his nose) but make it a bottle of vodka, preferably full and I'll consider stepping up to the plate...

LET'S WRAP THIS UP THE BEST WAY I KNOW HOW TO WHEN I'M FACED WITH A GOOD CLOSING QUESTION. TELL ME YOU LOVE SIXX AM. GO ON. TELL ME THEY'RE THE BEST BAND THIS SIDE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM AND MAKE MY DAY.

Funnily enough, I got introduced to Sixx AM by the lovely Mr Cole during my photo shoot for Skin Deep, a few days later I was gifted with all their albums, so I guess that's your day made! 🍷

(Footnote: we know how to look after our cover models, that's for sure.)

TATTOOED BY:
Dan Smith (High Voltage/Captured Tattoo), Sway (Sacred Electric), Steve Vinall, Oliver Macintosh (Frith St), Tutti Serra (Black Garden) & Jondix (Sevendours)



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TATTOO JAM 2014

Tattoo Jam is always some of the best fun any tattoo fan can find. Across three days, everything you could possibly want to find at a tattoo show is all here, under one very convenient roof. Here's what you missed - even if you were there:



There are worse ways to start a show than a plan to travel from one side of the country to the other with one of your special guests. In this case, Stefano Alcantara. The pesky thing about plans is that sometimes they don't pan out but how he left before me and arrived after me, neither of us can explain.

No matter. The important thing is that we made it in good time to find good Old English pub food

MAC BROUGHT EVERYTHING HE HAD TO THE TABLE THIS YEAR AND TURNED A TALK ABOUT A SUBJECT EVERYBODY THINKS THEY KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT INTO AN EVENT WORTH ATTENDING

with the rest of the crew, Timothy Boor and Dan Henk. This alone is a good way to start a show that hasn't even opened its doors.

The traditional Artist Friday this year was kind of open to

the public. If you turned up, you could come in. It wasn't public knowledge but it sure made for a Friday that kicked it up a gear on the floor. There were some top end tattoos but I must confess a 🍷

TATTOO INDUSTRY AWARDS

BEST NEWCOMER

Sam Barber

BEST UK MALE

Chris Jones

BEST UK FEMALE

Miss Jo Black

MOST INNOVATIVE STYLE

Lukasz 'Bam'

Kaczmarek

BEST

INTERNATIONAL

ARTIST

Moni Marino



BEST BLACK & GREY

Jak Connolly

BEST COLOUR

Craig Measures at Golden Dragon



BEST ORIENTAL

Alan Turner at Big Al's Tattoo Studio



BEST PORTRAIT

Sonny Mitchell at Black Lotus Tattoo

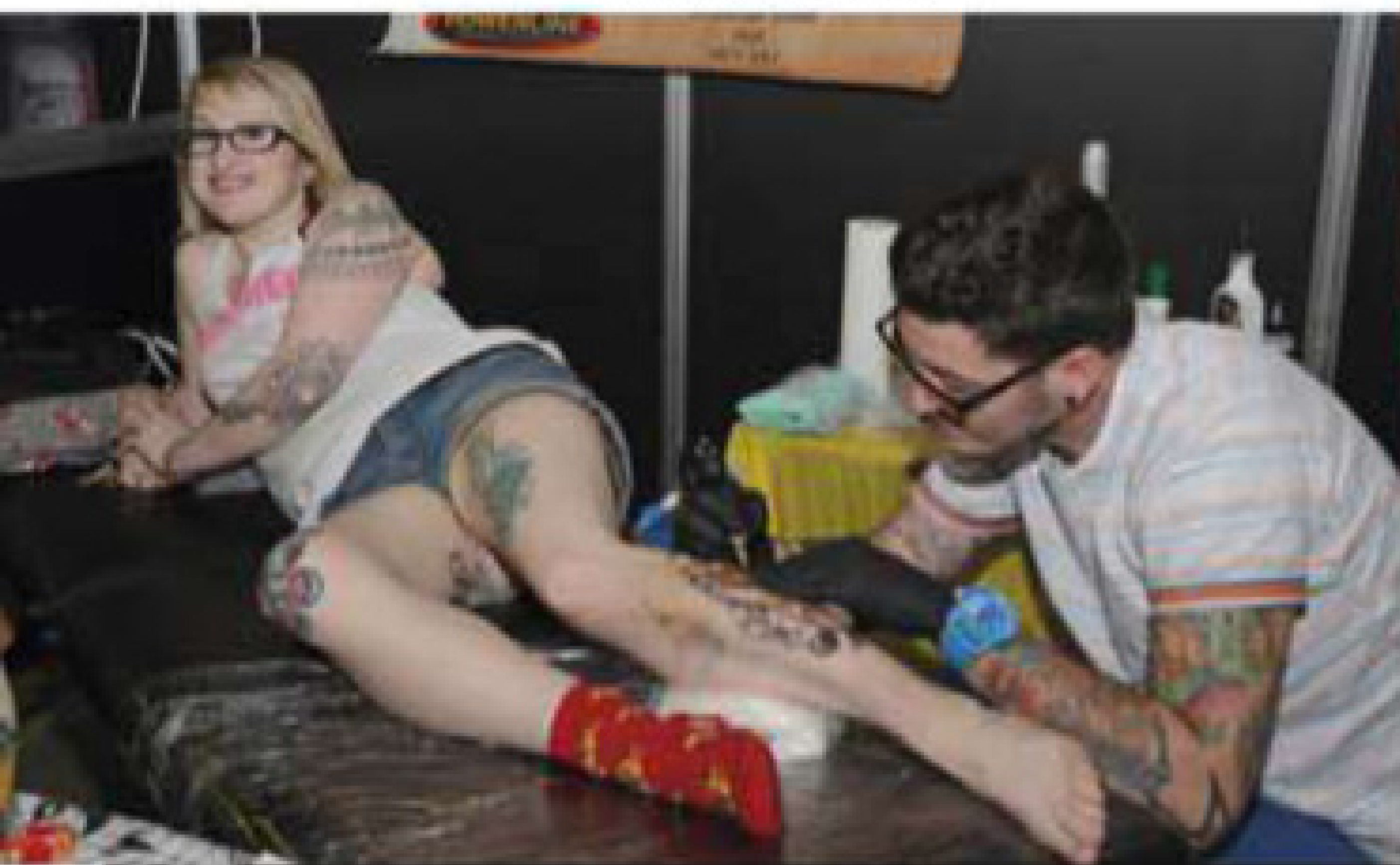




BEST HERO/VILLAIN
David Corden



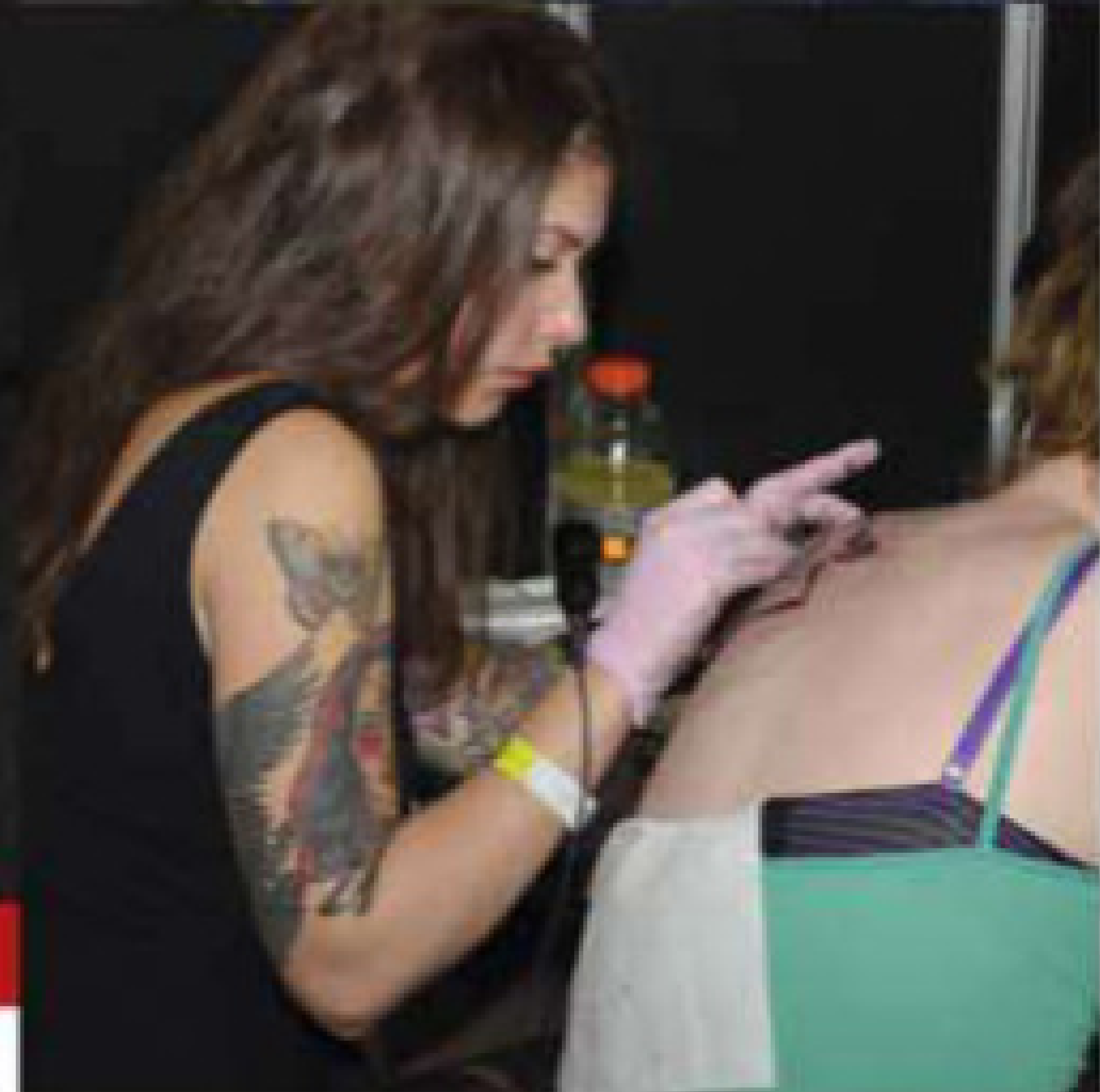
BEST OF SUNDAY
Mike Philp



BEST REALISM
Jordan Oterski



BEST AVANT GARDE
Paul Talbot





highlight of the day for myself - and I'm pretty sure Trent would agree with me as he was there too - was spending a couple of hours with Stefano and Timothy talking about machines, the state of tattooing, how things were changing all over the world and rather oddly, how True Detective had been the best show on TV in the last ten years. My bonus contribution to the education of a couple of the world's finest was to turn them on to Life On Mars - which I feel kind of good about.

Meanwhile, upstairs in the seminar room, Mac McCarthy ran over his slot on piercing by something like an hour and a half. This is worth mentioning because one of the big complaints I have about most things in the twenty first century is that nothing is ever given enough time and attention. Mac brought everything he had to the table this year and turned a talk about a subject everybody

UP AT THE TOP END THERE ARE SOME SERIOUS CONTENDERS OUT THERE WHO DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW GOOD THEY ARE

thinks they know something about into an event worth attending.

It was certainly good to see everybody all together again. I forget how much I genuinely miss these people from one show to the next. Bonus end of the day at the Tattoo Masters Ball was being able to hand out lovely things to Chris Jones, Jo Black, Sam Barber, Bam and Moni Marino - one year of genuine hard work, raising the game against yourself and bringing whatever you have in big sacks needs to be recognised and duly was.

Talking of Moni, on the Saturday, she worked on one of the most beautiful tigers I have seen in a long time and joined me on my Sunday judging panel (along with Jo Black) for a good two hours of

WINNERS LIST

BEST COLOUR

Craig Measures at Golden Dragon

BEST ORIENTAL

Alan Turner at Big Al's Tattoo Studio

BEST BLACK & DOTWORK

Paul Davies at Loki Ink

BEST AVANT GARDE

Paul Talbot

BEST OF SATURDAY

Andy Walker at Creative Vandals

BEST BLACK & GREY

Jak Connolly

BEST PORTRAIT

Sonny Mitchell

BEST REALISM

Jordan Oterski

BEST HERO/VILLAIN

David Corden

BEST OF SUNDAY

Mike Philp

BEST OF CONVENTION

Andy Walker at Creative Vandals

one of the best shows I've ever had the pleasure to judge. This year, we split the days of judging up to really expand the panel - I've never not judged a day before which was weird - Trent and his team of Leanne Fate, Stefano and Dan Henk took the Saturday and we took the Sunday. Up at the top end - at least as far as I am concerned, there are some serious contenders out there who don't even know how good they are. Craig Measures is shaping up to be a serious class act. Andy Walker continues to bring his A game wherever he goes. On the international circuit, Veronica (who works alongside Henrik Gallon, who I can never speak highly enough of because he is 'my man' and it's awkward for both of us) 🌻



BEST OF SATURDAY & BEST OF CONVENTION

Andy Walker at Creative Vandals



BEST BLACK & DOTWORK

Paul Davies at Loki Ink



SOME NON-TATTOOED FRIENDS I HAD INVITED WERE FLOORED BY THE GREAT ATMOSPHERE, SHOCKED NOT TO BE TREATED AS OUTSIDERS FOR NOT BEING TATTOOED (WE SOON FIXED THAT) AND KNOCKED OUT BY THE QUALITY OF ART BEING CREATED

is going to be one to watch. She has a wonderful style that's only just beginning to shine through.

Also worth noting is exactly how pretty at the top of the tree David Corden and Bez sit. Neither of these guys goes out of their way for attention simply because they don't need it but right here and now, I feel the need to validate them, appreciate them and tell you readers that the world would be a poorer place without them. Fact.

The days kind of blur together at Tattoo Jam - to the point that I'm not quite sure what happened on what day by the end of it. It's certainly not good practice to hit the sack at 4am and get up a 8am for three days on the run. That kind of thing takes its toll on a man when he gets home but there's

so many people to catch up with, that's what it takes.

Every single year I've been at Tattoo Jam (this is my sixth I think), the one thing I have failed to catch time after time is any of the Battle of the Bands competition. This year, I was determined to go out of my way to at least some of it - and while I wasn't present to see the winners perform, I did catch a great band called Fear Lies. They sound a lot like The Almighty and have some great songs too - brought to life by some seriously good vocals. If they were of a mind to break out of the local circuit, they could be a happening thing. Note to self: try and check out more of this next year.

The entertainment got a bit of a kick in the pants for 2014

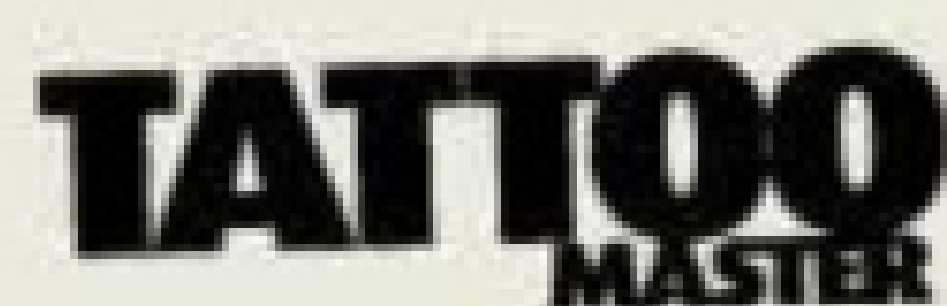
too. Welcome with open arms for those who were not being tattooed, waiting to be tattooed or just passing by; Scarlett Daggers caused a ruckus worth waiting for, there was also Carnival of the Bizarre from Circus of Horrors and my personal favourites (not least because of their great choice of soundtrack to work to) Daniella D'Ville and Johnny Strange.

If you've never happened upon Tattoo Jam before, you're really missing a treat. This year I invited some non-tattooed friends along, who with some trepidation, agreed to come and tell me what they honestly thought of it. Turns out that they had a mighty good time. In no particular order, they were floored by the great atmosphere, shocked that they weren't treated as outsiders for not being tattooed (we soon fixed that), knocked out by the quality of art being created when mostly they are subjected to what the daily papers choose to show and promised they would be returning next year with more friends in tow.

When you get to a stage that you are able to change the hearts and minds of those who never really cared before, you know you're doing something right.

Tattoo Jam? It still rocks. It always will. 🐼

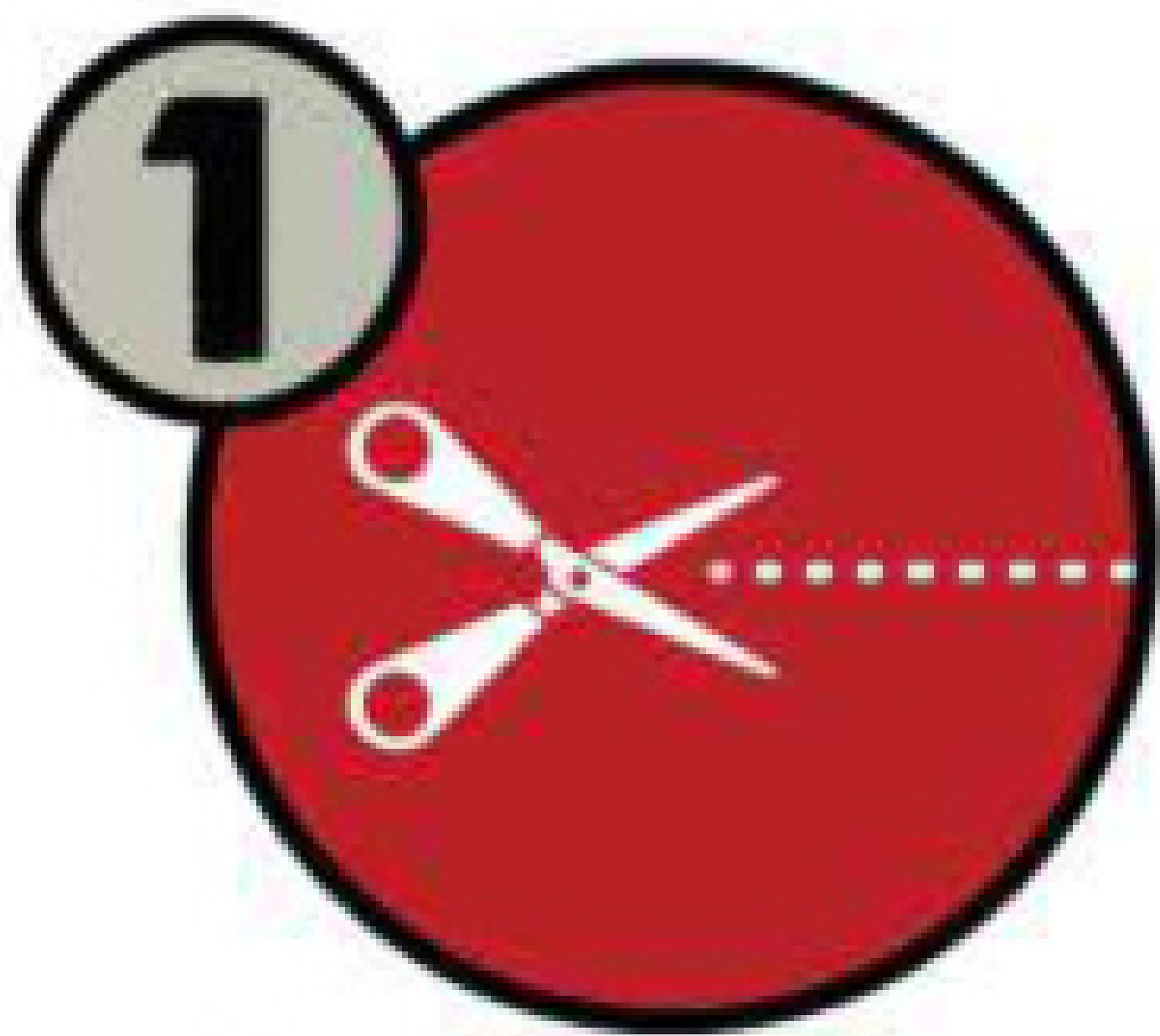
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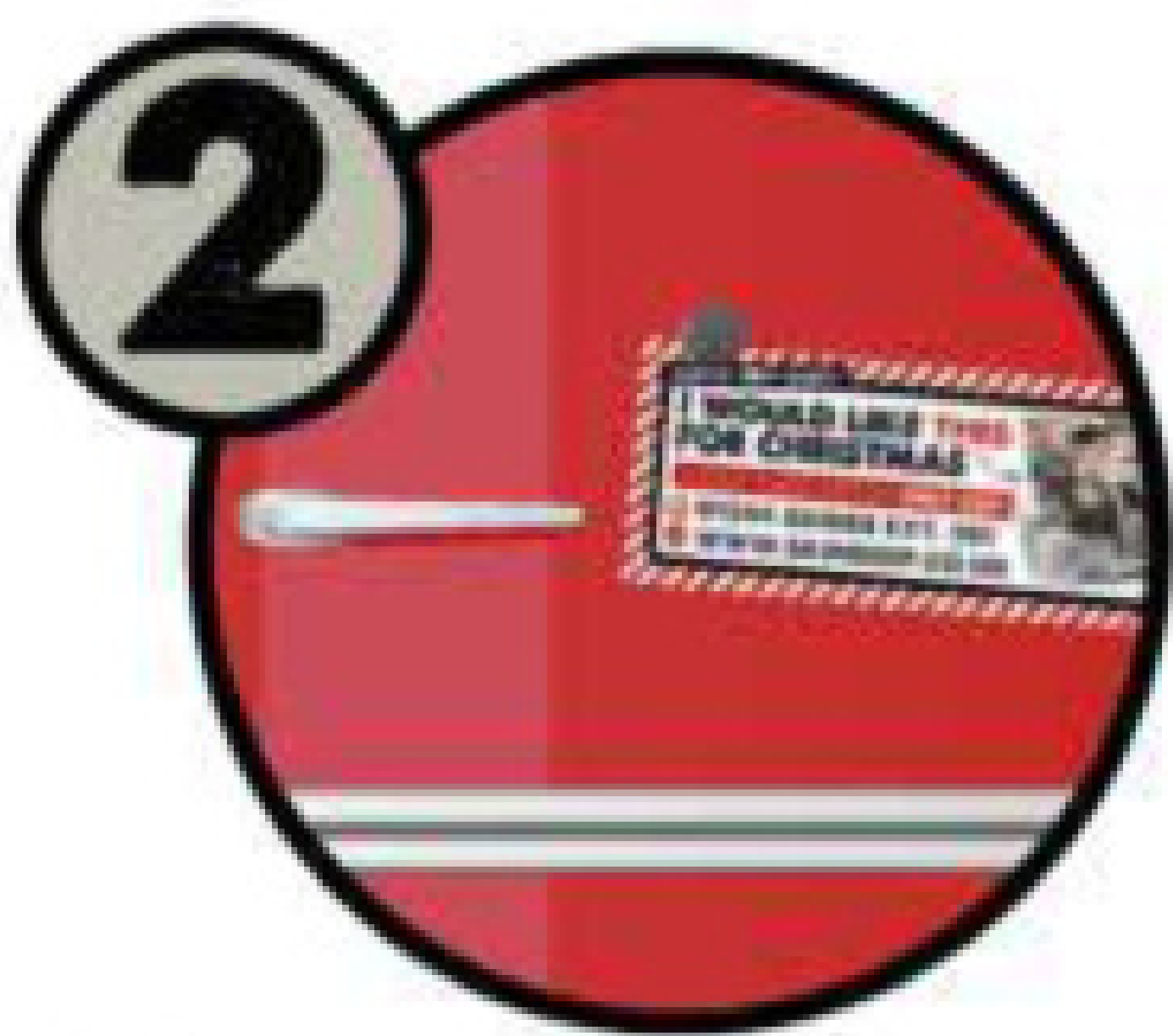
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THE FAR SIDE

Little Swastika is one artist who never fails to push you back in your chair to look on with respect at his depth of vision. Thus, when the opportunity came up to bring in the story on his latest idea, who was I to refuse. As it happened, there was so much information to bring in from the days in which this story takes place, that the simplest and most logical way forward was to remove any questions from the final piece and simply let Swastika tell his own story. Let's do this:

Mr Smith/Little Swastika Little Swastika

LITTLE SWASTIKA
www.little-swastika.com

It's been more than three years since I started to expand a single tattoo over more than one human body. It had already taken me a few years from the time I had this vision, and a dream of making a tattoo bigger than I have ever seen, to getting it started. After I finished my first double back, I started a few other projects with two people involved and tried out some different things when putting them together, playing with the human body to see what it was capable of as a canvas in itself.

The entire tattoo sessions are so much different than when you're tattooing a single person. The bonding, the spirit, fun, pain, chaos... it's hard to

explain. Normally, I make pieces like this with couples or good friends which makes the logistics behind it not too complicated.

In 2013, I expanded this to work on a project that included three people and out of that experience, was able to start planning to go even bigger. In April 2013, I began work on the 'love' project, which was composed of four entire back-pieces combined to make one single tattoo. It was also the first time people who didn't know each other came together for something like this. It was a crazy experience for all of us and it opened my mind as to what was actually possible with projects like this. That one took me four days and 32 hours 🌻





of work by myself. When it was finished, I believed that was the pinnacle of what was possible. I thought that would be the biggest tattoo I would ever make...

A CRAZY IDEA

For creating big pieces like this, it is important to have all the people together at the same time because some things need to be continually adjusted. With everything I had previously learnt I knew that when I wanted to go bigger I would need some friends to help me with the actual tattooing, so the time frame for the full piece would not get too long and I could keep all of the people together. It then took me a few months to figure out exactly how I could put more

people together in such a way as I could put my design on them.

Once my friends Mike and Basti (who learned tattooing from me) confirmed that they would help me to fill out all of the black, I started to get more detailed with my plans. I created a rough sketch and a design which allowed me to put the design on the people without bringing them in while I was tattooing somebody else – you have to consider the risk of cross contamination and there are some long waiting times too.

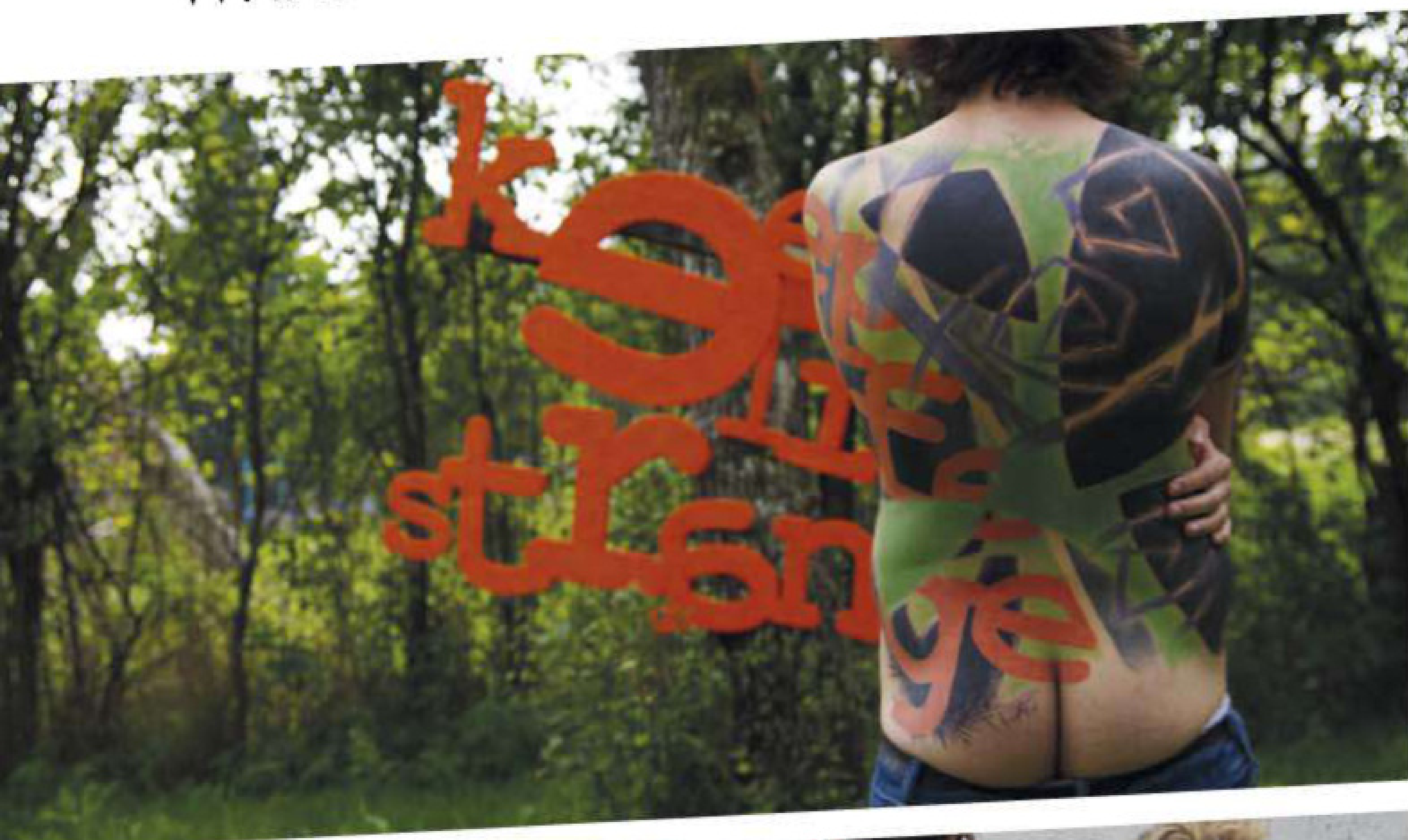
I had to get the right balance of what I was able to do by myself and what I could get filled in by the others. I also needed to get as primitive and as big as I could with my design, so that

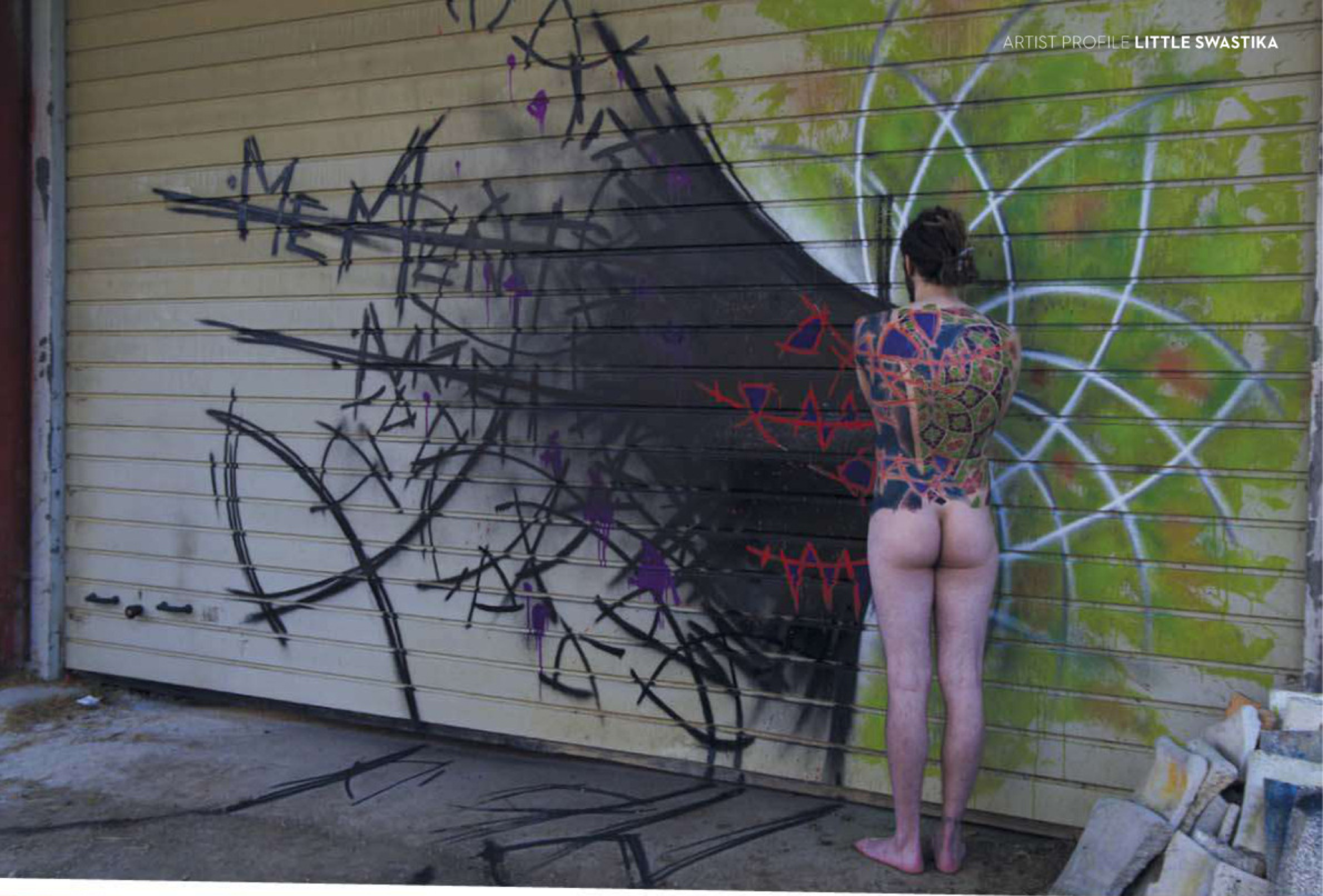
it really worked as one piece.

I tried to work as much as I could, focusing on the end product - it sounds complex but I couldn't take care of just a single back as that would only be ten percent of the tattoo and with this idea, the end result was the thing what really mattered. Therefore every single back had to take on board some compromises and little deformations for the sake of the finished piece. I think I created a design that still made each of them a nice back-piece, even when they were alone.

Once I had published a sketch for a piece that spanned over eight people and began to search for the people to be in it, I got such a huge response that I had to change some plans. I called my friend Gerhard Wiesbeck from Time Travelling Tattoo and asked him if he wanted to join the project, because I figured I could certainly add another two people to the project.

AFTER I FINISHED MY FIRST DOUBLE BACK, I TRIED OUT SOME DIFFERENT THINGS AND PLAYED WITH THE HUMAN BODY TO SEE WHAT IT WAS CAPABLE OF AS A CANVAS





I COULDN'T TAKE CARE OF JUST A SINGLE BACK AS THAT WOULD ONLY BE TEN PERCENT OF THE TATTOO - THE END RESULT WAS WHAT REALLY MATTERED

Now with ten people, four tattooists and two helpers, it was tough to then find a date when we could get everybody together. We set up everything a few months beforehand and made sure there was time for the final plan and also to give myself enough time to build up everything that I needed to make it happen.

I planned around 80-100 hours of tattooing time - and there was a little pressure off now I knew I had a crew experienced enough in blackwork to fill out the solid black parts quickly. With people from different countrys and everyone coming from far away I knew we had to keep to a schedule, so I planned four days of tattooing, one day for painting and one day for designing the picture. Then we planned an extra day just in case. With everyone needing to come for a entire week for this,

I figured that was probably the maximum time frame I could expect for everyone to take holiday, come here and stay in a hotel...

In the weeks before we had everybody lying down and then we constructed a device that allowed me to move over them when they were on the ground...a system that allowed me to have a camera set up from a steady point over all - so that I could see the dimensions and proportions as I was working. We set up seven working spots for tattooing and also various other spots that allowed us to manage the amount of people coming together at any one time. This was done to limit the risk of contamination. When you tattoo ten people over a few days together, sometimes they need to swap between me and someone else which meant a lot of changes and 🌻

sometimes long waiting times in between with fresh, bloody backs.

Figuring all of this out took me about 11 months - and I still wasn't 100% sure if it would work, but as there is only one way to find it out, we had at least prepared for almost everything.

THE WORK BEGINS

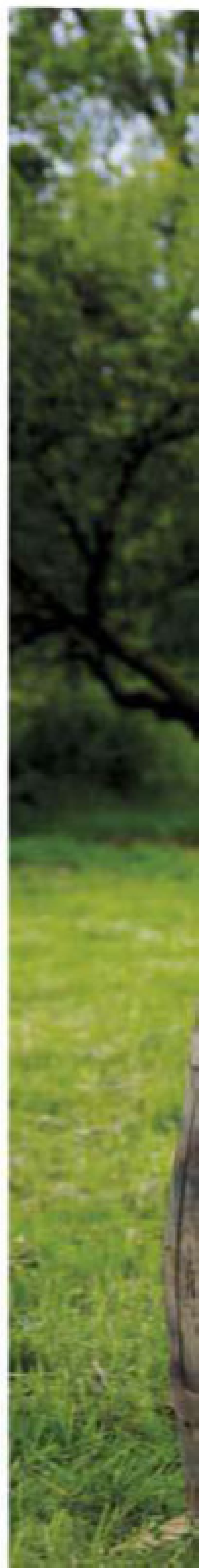
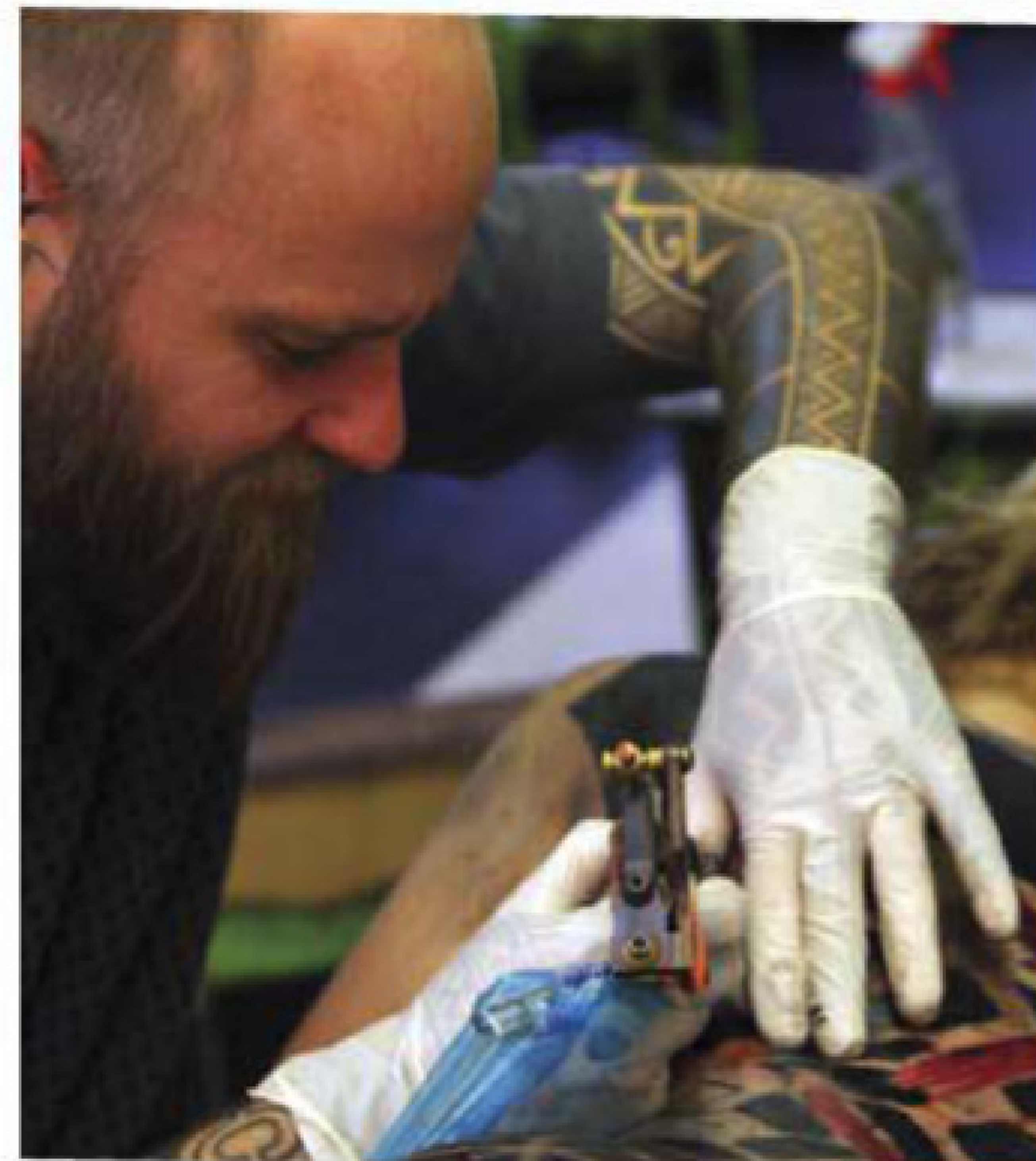
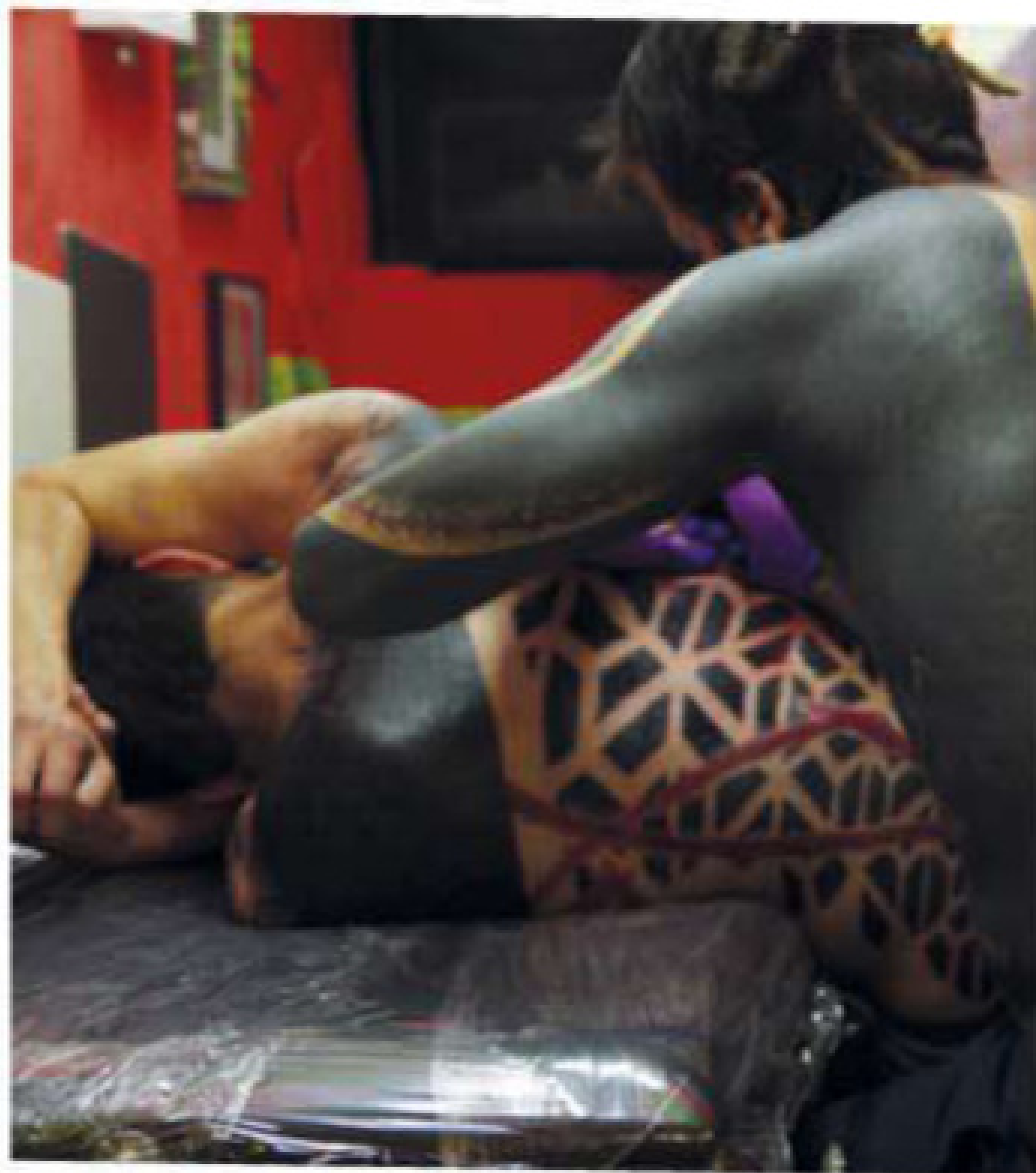
On the first day - 18th May - after everyone arrived, we started to figure out how to put the people together. I moved them around a lot and it took a long time to place them together nicely and in a perfect order.

I took a picture from the final position and started making a sketch of how I would place my design on them. At this point, no-one had any part in the decision of what place he got or what part of the tattoo he would get. Everyone was already aware beforehand that all that mattered was the end result - and as it was already hard enough to place ten people nicely together and fit a design on them, they knew it wasn't possible to cater for individual wishes.

Everybody got a number and we split into groups for the inside circle and the outside circle to co-ordinate it. From when the first one sat down, up to having the last in a perfect position took a long time to get right. So I always had small time-frames to plan my design and every break meant they had to be put back together again, which also took a long time.

With my sketch and my ipad showing me a continual picture from above, I started to paint the design by sliding over everybody as they were lying on the ground. At this point, I think everybody began to realise what this was actually about. How far this really goes away from tattooing and how absurd it could get. One group, one trip, one tattoo. Even though most of them had never meet before, this was already feeling like an experience that would bond all of us.

A few weeks before we began this, I also decided to use this project for something else - to find another boundary and cross





EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THEM HAD NEVER MET BEFORE, THIS WAS ALREADY FEELING LIKE AN EXPERIENCE THAT WOULD BOND ALL OF US

it. When I made the 'love' tattoo, I tattooed on the first day for around 11 hours split over two working spaces without any real break. Working like that took me almost into a trance state of mind, so I really wanted to know what the maximum time of constantly tattooing could really be. After I told the crew, they decided to do the same. The 'ten' thought I was crazy when I told them I needed some of them to come in the night but after a few hours of huddling naked together they became motivated to just go for it.

I started by putting the red lines on the first one and also the outlines of the heavy black parts. Slowly the crew came over and for the few first hours, I saved all the lines on the first few and let them sit next to one of the others for filling. By around 11 am, all four of us were tattooing. Most of them got tattooed with the red lines, the

big black parts and the outlines of the pattern in the first session. I started saving all the lines and the red and started tattooing the last one at around midnight. That was also the time when the first one from the morning was coming for his second session.

After 23 hours, I finished the last outlines of the designs. After a full day and night of putting the stencil of the pattern, which ran over forty sheets of stencil paper, the hard part was done and in that time, the team was already filling in a lot of the black and even some of the patterns. The first back-piece was finished after 24 hours and then, over the next day one after another was completed. It was exhausting for all of us. Pain, a lot of pain! Fun, laughs, loud music, the night session, people dancing, people crying.

It's almost impossible to explain everything that happened in that 🌪️



session. It was tough for all of us. Everyone had just a few hours sleep in between his sessions and everyone was giving all he could to make this possible. Peter, who was sleeping in his truck in the garden, was our 'jumper' who we woke up twice in the night to jump in for a session so we didn't need to take a break from the actual tattooing. Max, who

fell asleep – a long, deep sleep! The work was done but everybody was still super excited to see how it had worked. Some of my crew and some of the ten started cleaning up the place for the final picture, so all my markings and sketches on the ground were gone and we would have a nice background.

On day four, we got together for



33 HOURS FROM WHEN I STARTED WITH THE FIRST LINE, WE FINISHED THE PIECE IN A SINGLE SESSION JUST AS WE HAD PLANNED

started at midnight and with some breaks and some switches between me and Gerd, finished his back-piece only 12 hours later.

LE FIN

On the afternoon of the third day, everything came together as one by one, my crew finished their jobs and everyone was meeting to celebrate the last point of ink. 33 hours from when I started with the first line, we finished the piece in a single session just as we had planned.

It's hard to record something like this. In between the sessions, there were a lot of different sessions and a lot of switches between me and the others, but for those 33 hours, there was at least one machine running and for most of the time. All four of us were working without breaks.

When we were done, we all just

the picture. Everybody got naked and one by one, took their place for the final picture. Throughout all of this, we didn't want other people involved. We wanted to keep it special and the final tattoo was seen only by our crew in position. It was unreal to watch. Ten people lying on the ground with one piece running over all of them. It came together just as I planned and I will never forget the reaction when I put the first picture in the middle of everybody. They were still sitting naked on the ground and stared at it speechless for a very long time.

I think, for all of us, this was an amazing experience. Maybe the most painful and toughest ever but we all survived and had beautiful memories. I already have some plans for a bigger piece in my mind, but right now, I have no idea if it's possible to achieve something bigger.

We will see... 🐼





THANKS

Many thanks to everyone who was involved and helped make this dream come true: Freak Mike and Basti from Psyland-Tengen, Gerhard Wiesbeck from Time Travelling Tattoo, my two helpers Manu and Dorsch - and all you ten survivors!



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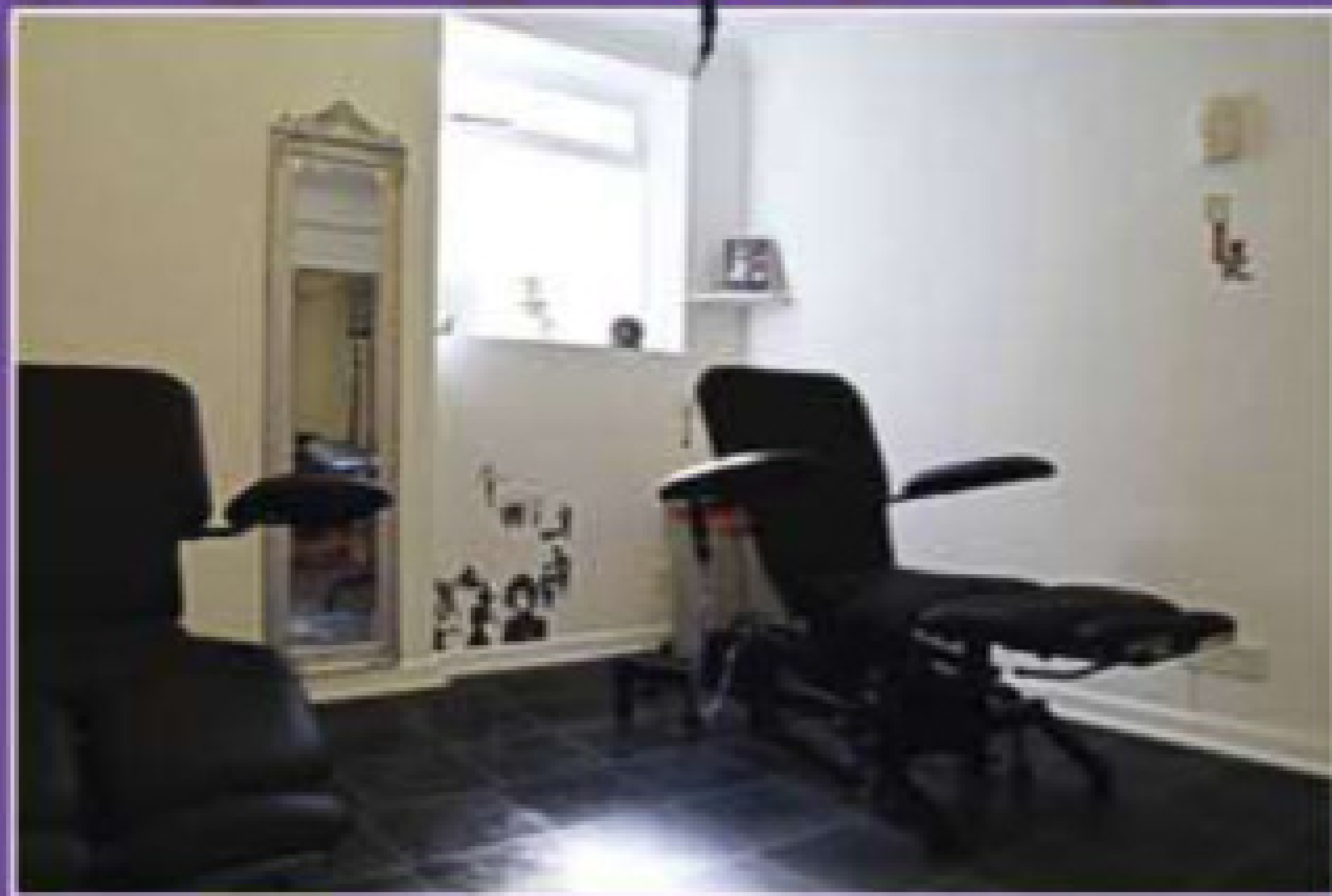
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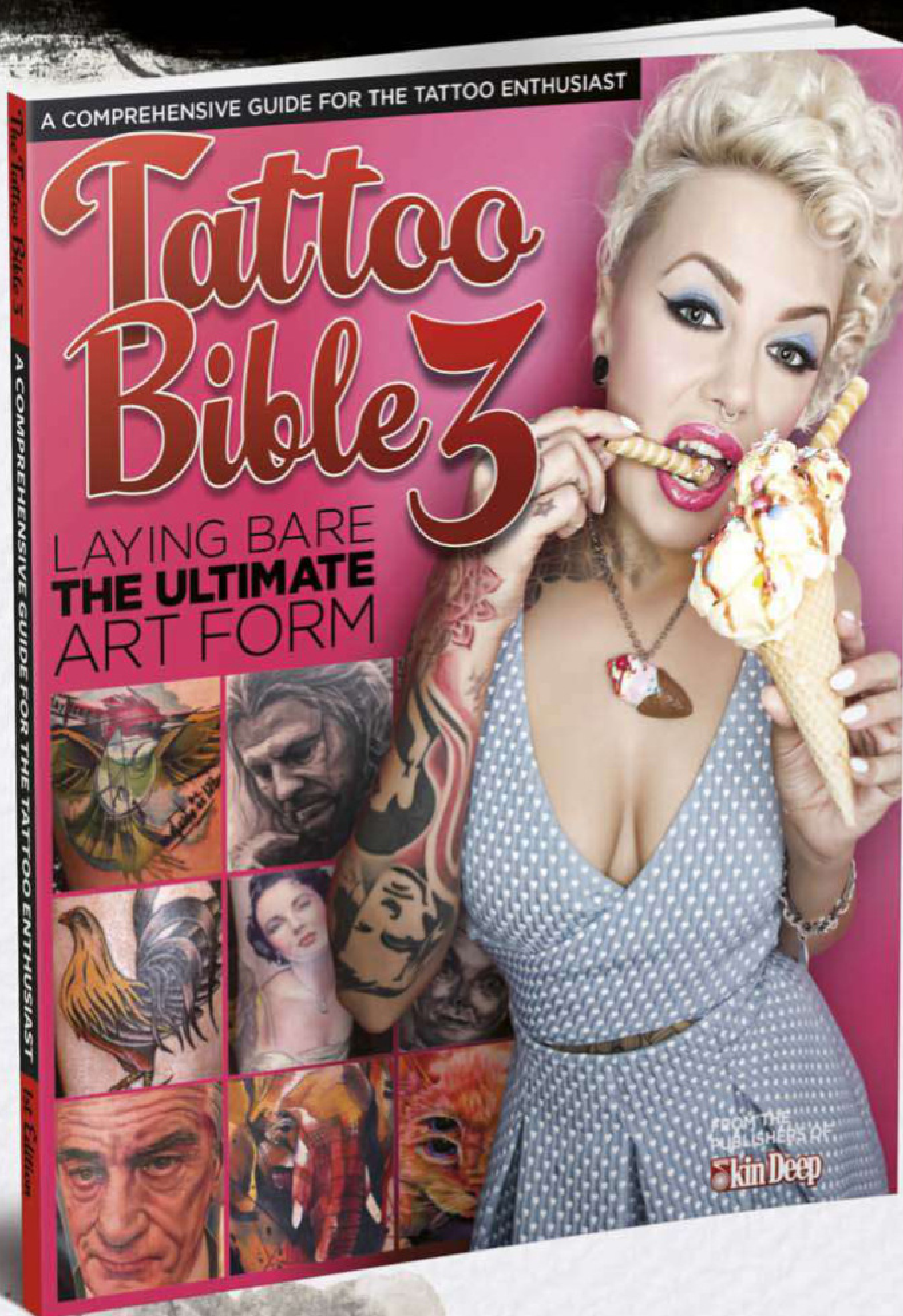
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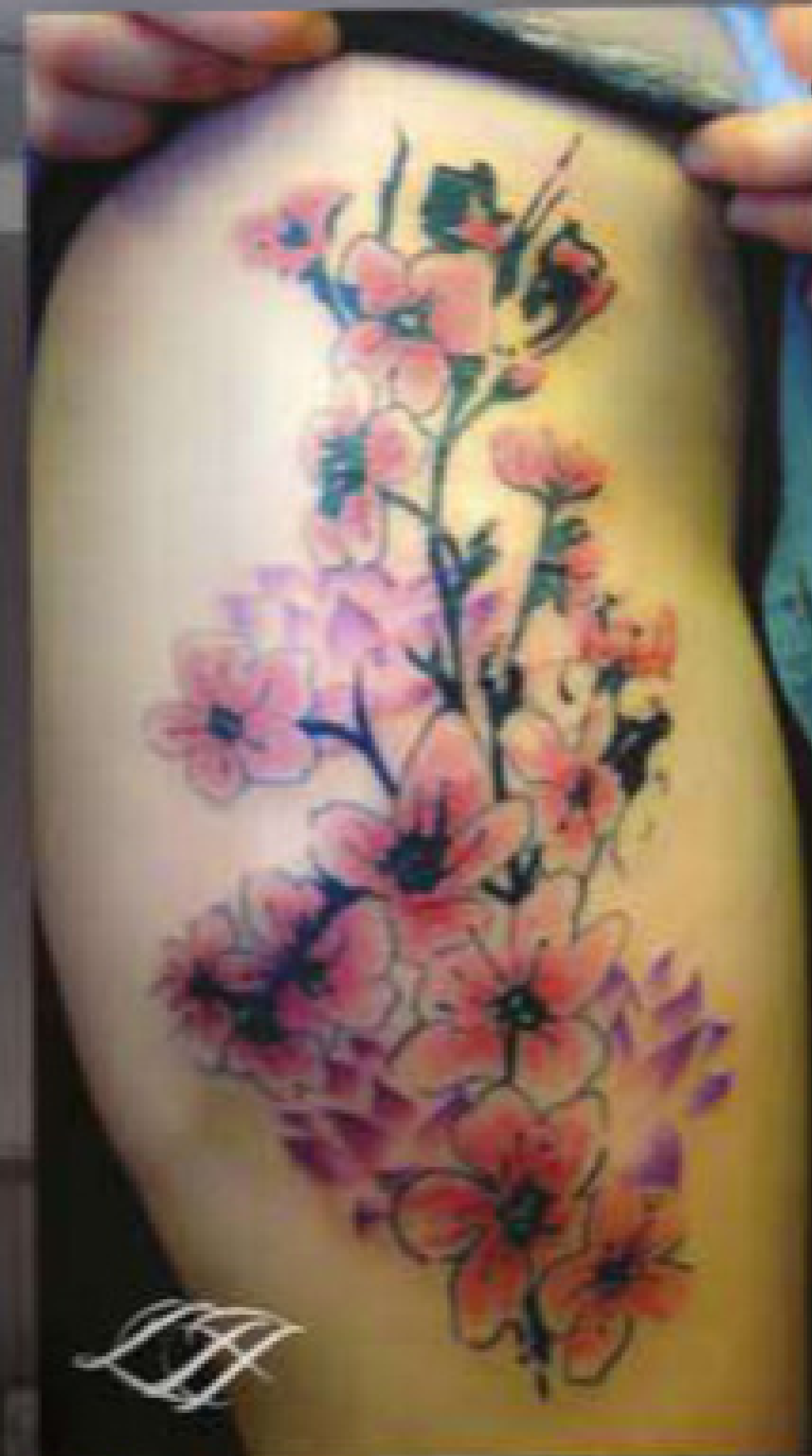
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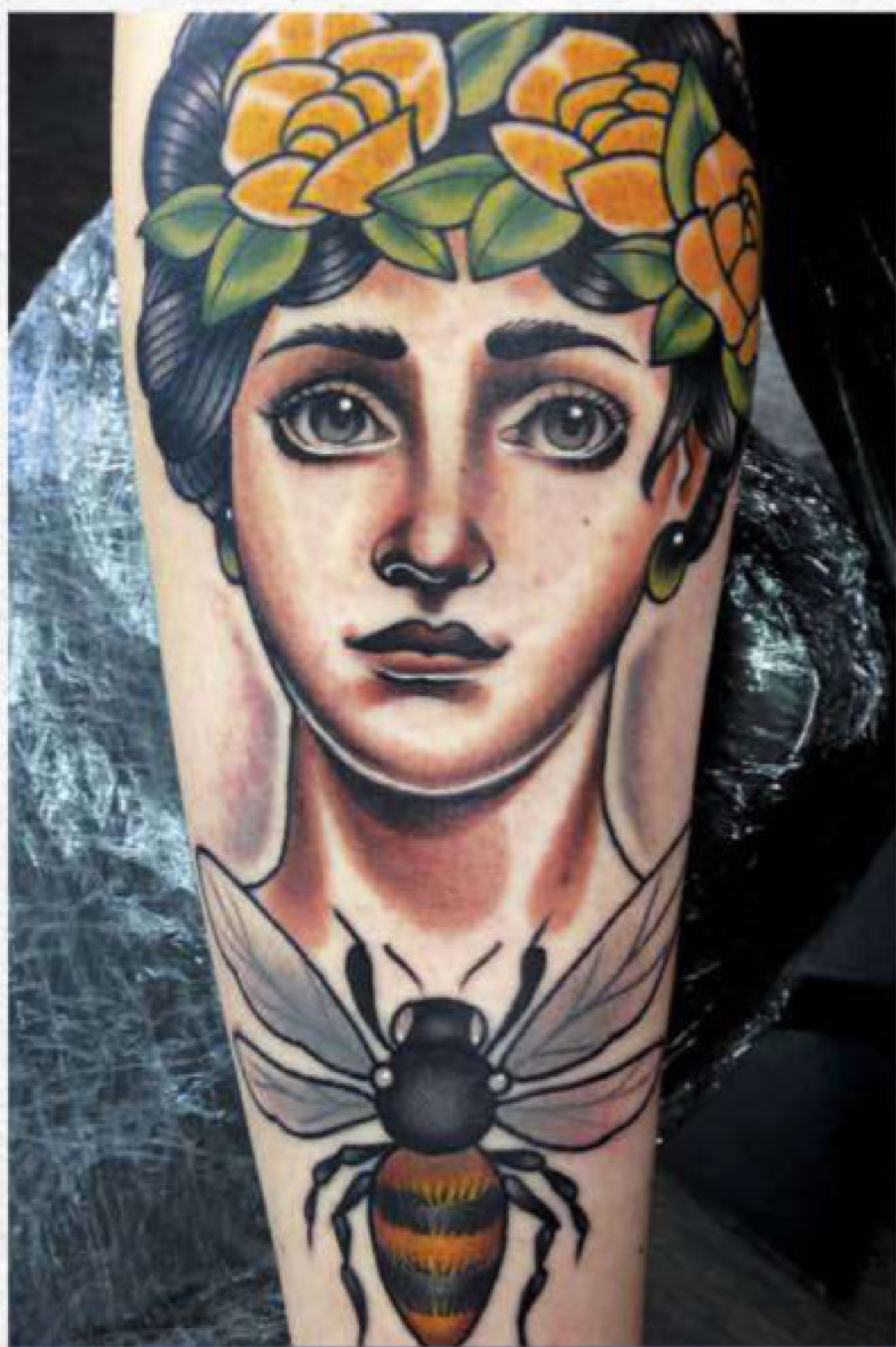
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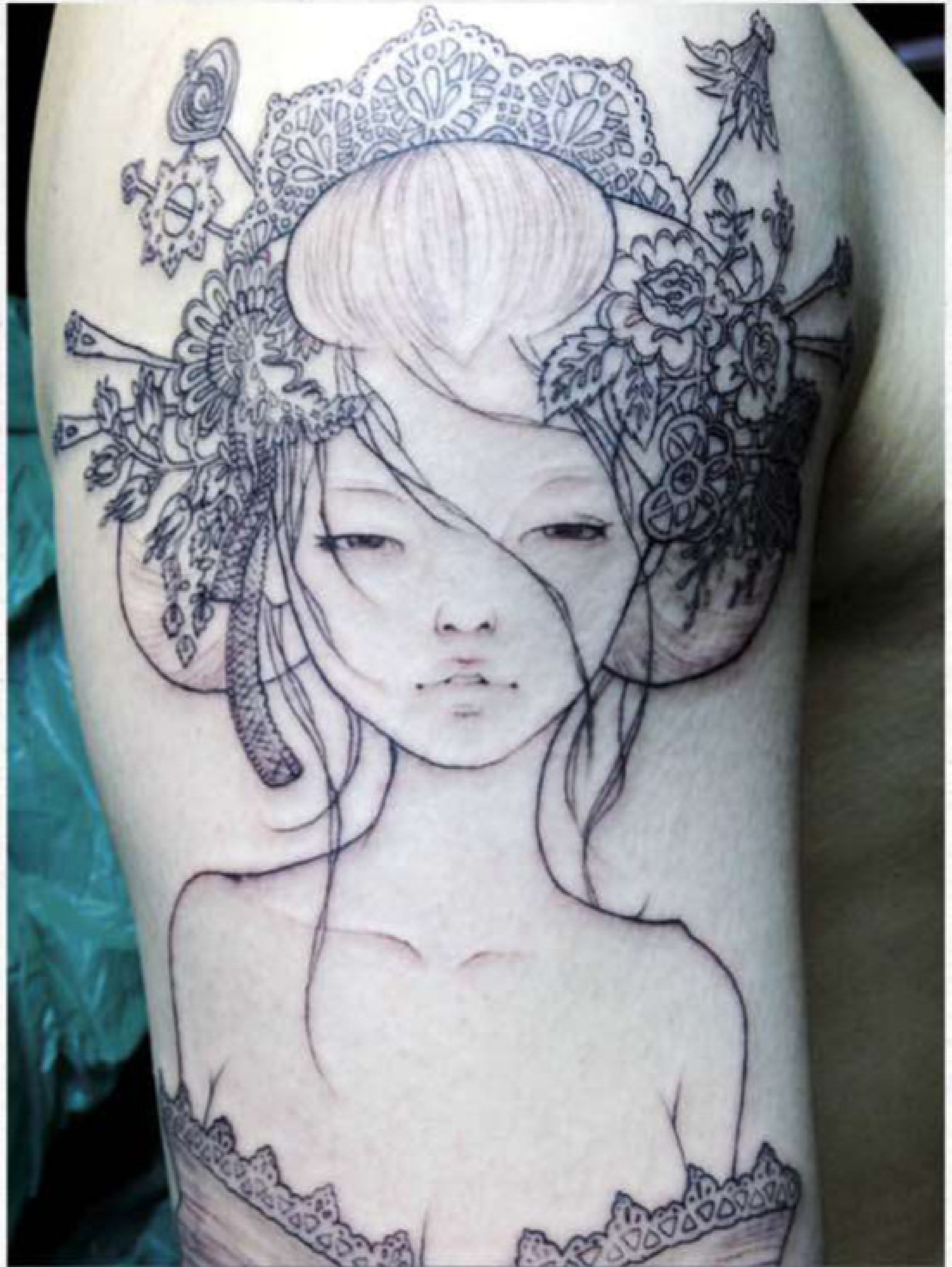
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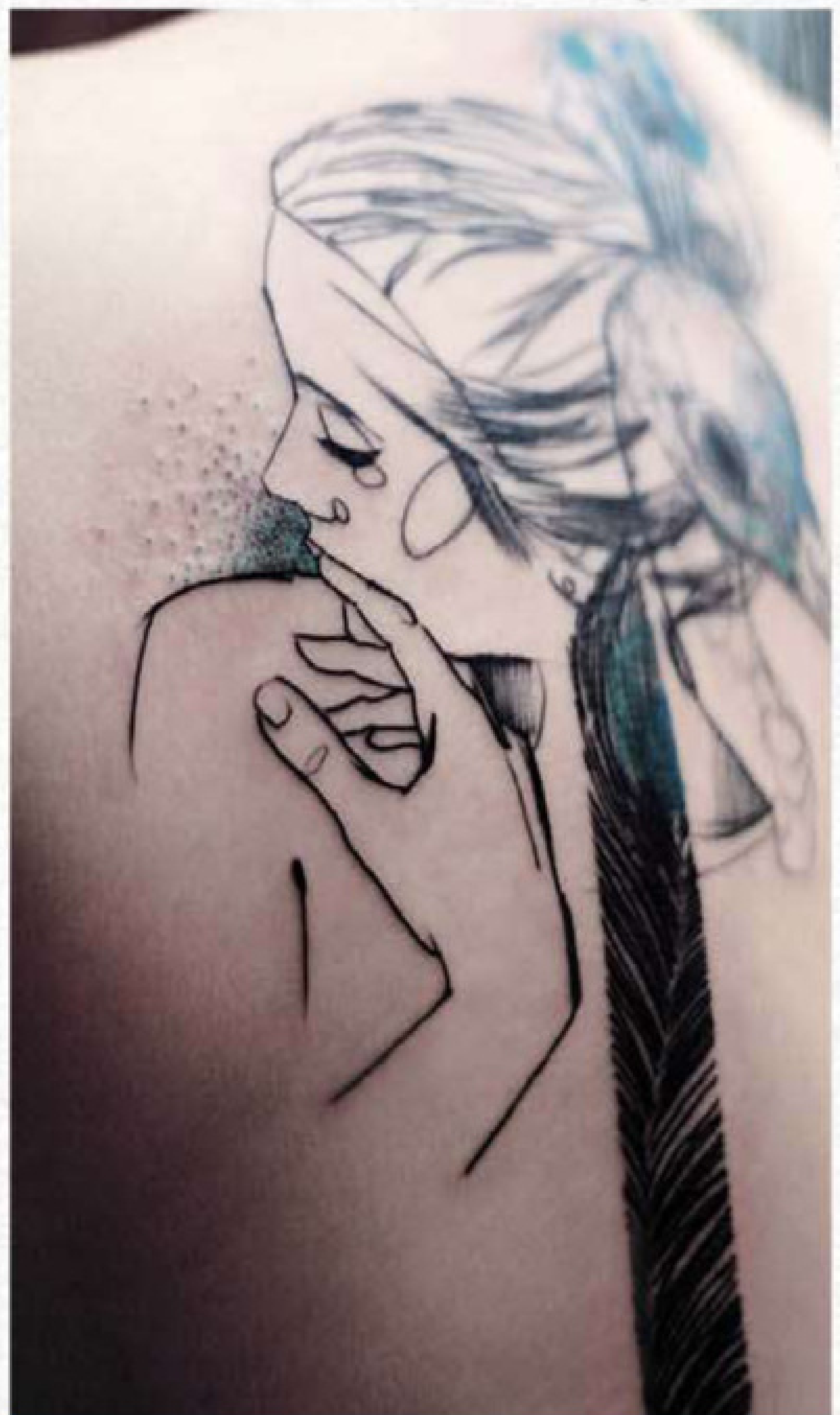
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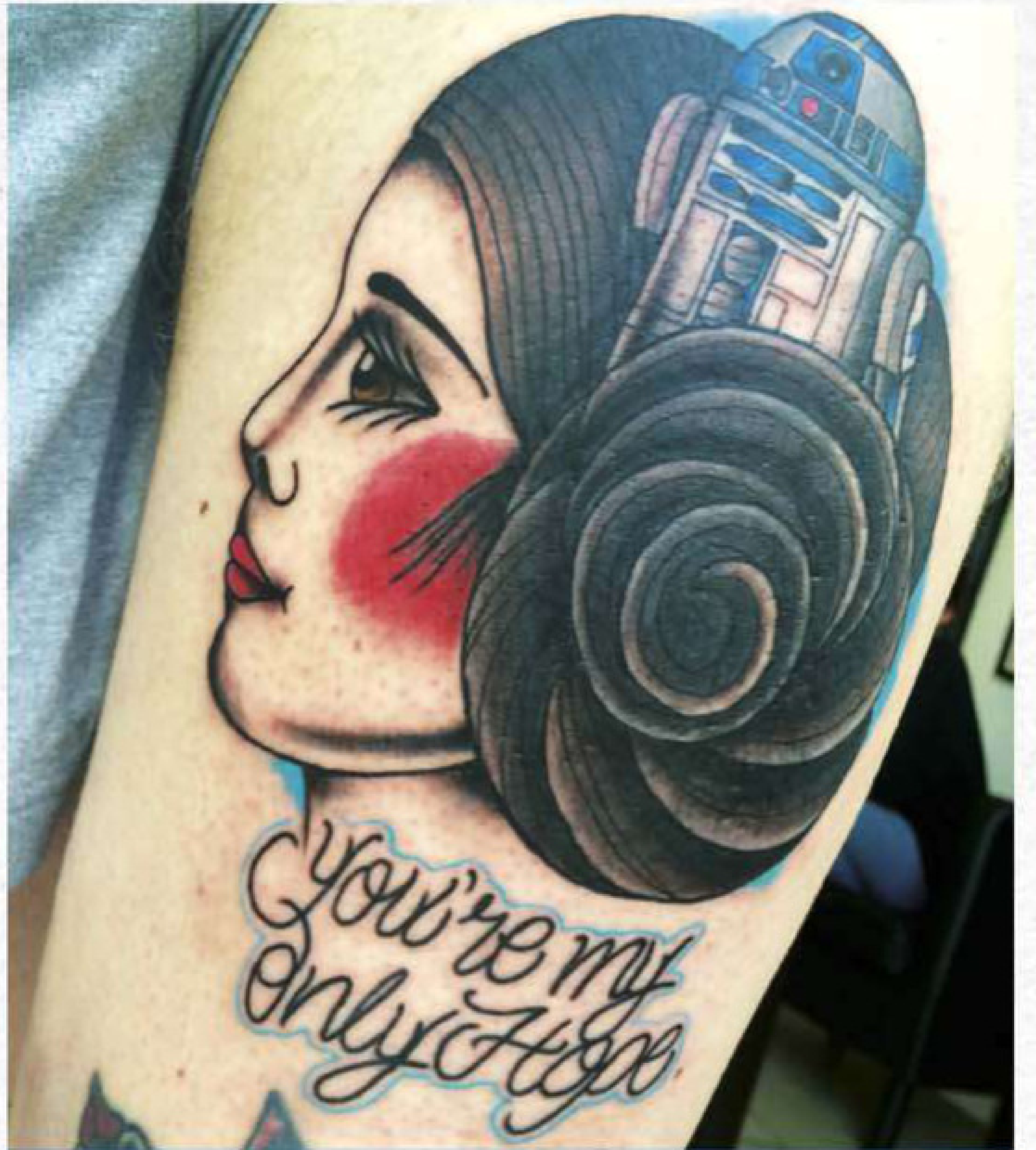
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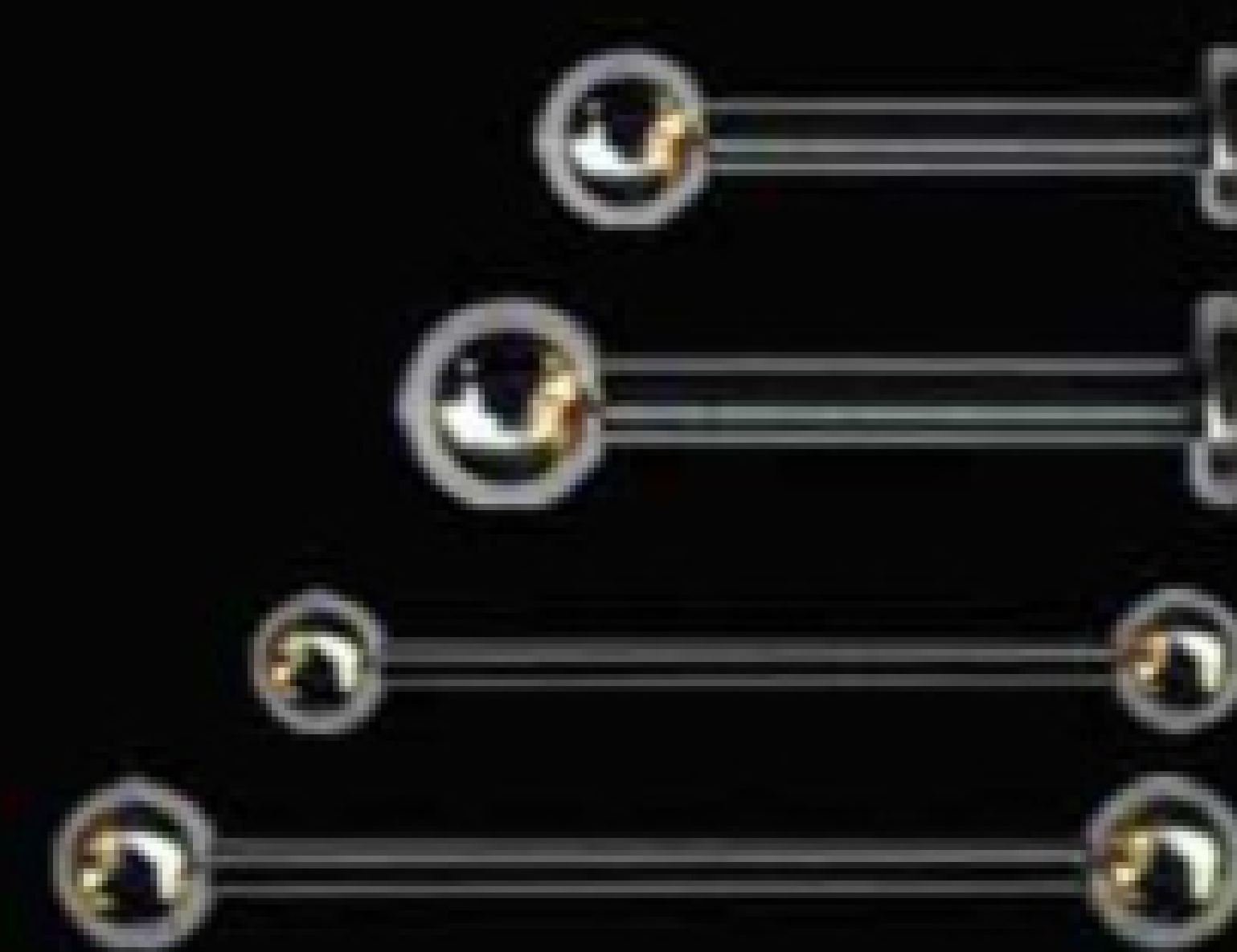
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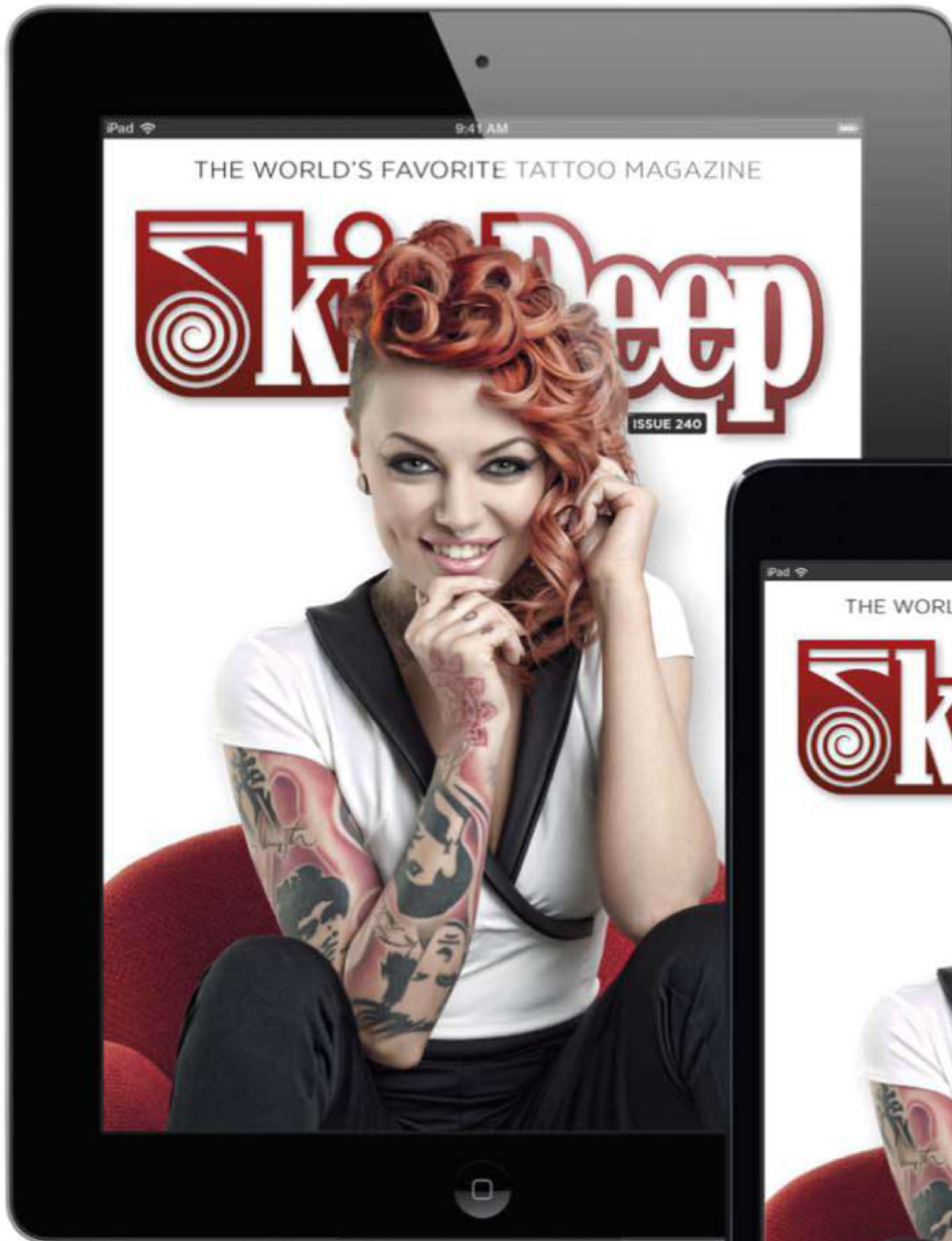
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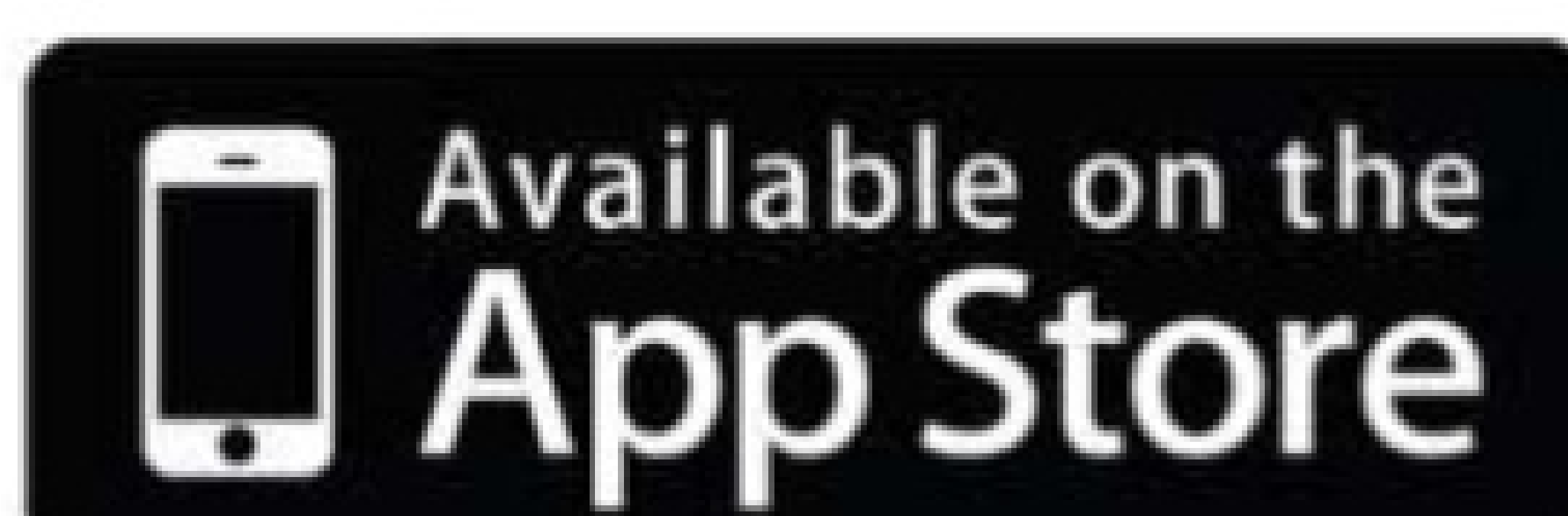


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NUCLEAR INK

Tattoos, or rather tattoo studios, are like nuclear weapons. And before you think I have gone completely bat-shit crazy and joined the likes of Katie Hopkins in vilifying ink, allow me to explain.

Tattoo studios being like nuclear weapons is of course an analogy, just to make that clear to any conservative grandparents in case they were preparing to come rushing in to say: "I told you so". It is not because tattoos are expensive, unnecessary, and once used their effects ruin your life, though this may be completely true for nuclear weapons, it is not for tattoos.

Neither is the comparison because of the concern parents would show if their kid were to come home with one. Though some mums and dads are shocked by Callum's first piece of permanent artwork, this would be nothing compared to the heart attack they would suffer if Callum were to walk through the door cradling a ballistic missile with a two-ton nuclear warhead.

What I mean by the analogy is that like nuclear weapons, as tattoos and tattoo studios become more widely accessible, the quality of the product decreases, and the danger to the average citizen increases.

With any popular trend, item, or fashion accessory - as tattoos have seemingly now become - there comes imitation,



wannabes, and decreases in quality. As in any economy, supply and demand are intrinsically linked, so as more people look to get tattooed, so more tattoo studios open to satisfy their desires. This is not necessarily a bad thing as there are hundreds, if not thousands of highly-skilled artists based in the UK that need somewhere to work from. However, with

little to no regulation, tattoo studios have sprung up at a rapid rate, and not all those who open them should be given the title of 'artist'.

When I first came to Brighton in order to study at University, I noticed that there was a large number of tattoo studios in comparison to what is really, quite a small city. For the 300,000+ inhabitants of the



Leigh Oldcorn



Rachel Flood

ACROSS THE GLOBE NUMBERS OF TATTOOED INDIVIDUALS IS ON THE RISE, AND SO TOO IS THE NUMBER OF STUDIOS SUPPLYING THE ARTWORK

area there were a number of places to visit and I thought that the demand for ink was being satisfied. Fast forward to the present day, and it seems I must have been wrong, as I have since spotted a number of new studios that had not been present a year or so before.

At my most recent count there were 13 studios in Brighton city centre alone that are open for tattooing (there may even be more), and though it is possible that every one of these produces artwork only of the highest quality, it is more likely that some of them do not. With waiting lists at some studios in the area set at around 18 months it makes sense for other businesses to open in attempt to cash in on demand.

Back over the border in Wales there has been a huge rise in the number of tattoo studios, with the BBC recently reporting¹ that there is now one for every 10,000 residents. The report, that was carried out by Experian, showed that "the number of

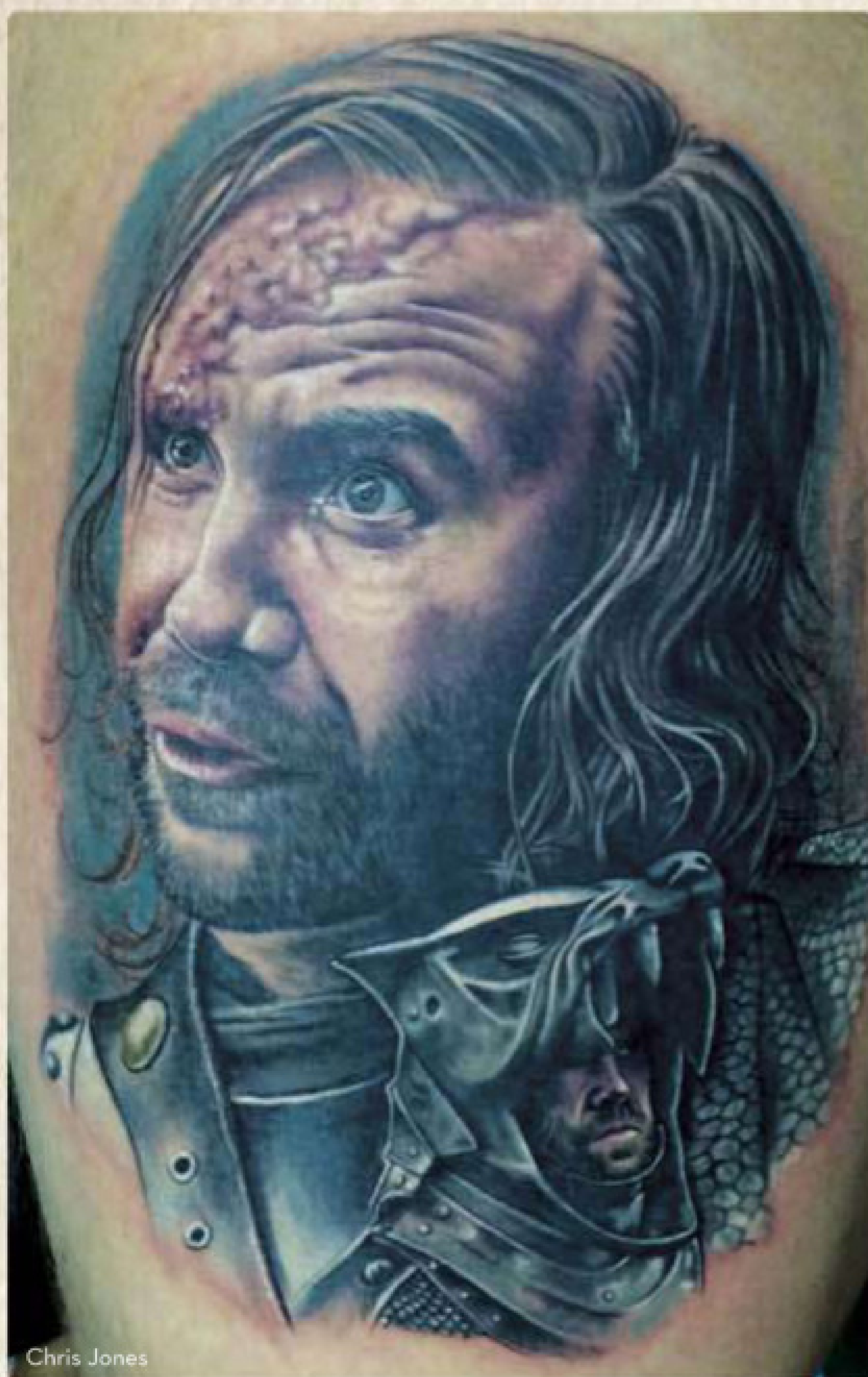
parlours across the UK leapt by 173% in the past decade." Twenty years ago, Cardiff had only three studios, but today's figures show that there are 48. As is the case with Brighton, it is possible that all these studios provide the highest quality service, but the likelihood is that not all of them do.

Quite obviously tattoo studio proliferation is not an event that is happening in the UK alone. Across the globe numbers of tattooed individuals is on the rise, and so too is the number of studios supplying the artwork. I was fortunate enough to be able to talk to Sara Blades recently, who is the manager of World Famous Tattoo Supply, and she agrees that an increased number of tattoo studios is not necessarily a good thing.

Having been in the industry for a number of years Sara says that the last decade in particular has seen tremendous growth. She admits that "the industry is over-saturated" but unfortunately there are "so 🍷"



Tony, Brightside



Chris Jones



Pavel Krim



Marie, Folklore

THOUGH POSSIBLE THAT EVERY ONE PRODUCES ARTWORK ONLY OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY, IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT SOME OF THEM DO NOT

many people being tattooed... there is enough business to keep everyone busy", whether you are highly skilled or not. She says: "the problem is everyone wants to be a tattoo artist and only a handful have the skills needed."

I also had the honour of speaking with the legendary Vyvyn Lazonga about the changes she has seen throughout her time in the industry. As an artist who began her career in the early seventies, there is perhaps no better person to speak to on the topic. Through the wonders of modern technology we were able to correspond over the internet and Vyvyn provided me with a wealth of informed opinion and experience.

Vyvyn holds a similar view to that of Sara, saying that a 173% growth in the industry within a decade is not a good thing. She says "it definitely dilutes the quality" and the popularisation of tattoos has led it to "become

something totally different from what it once was". An honorary graduate of the old school, Vyvyn seems frustrated at what has become common practice, and the state the industry is in today. In terms of the learning process for new tattooists, she believes that "what is happening today is an abomination". The problem is that people are "getting equipment and then just going at it, opening shops, and then teaching others with no skill, or respect".

As is the case with any occupation, in order to reach the top you have to put the hours in, and you have to work for it. Many, if not all, of the greatest tattoo artists have spent years learning the trade, perfecting techniques and gaining knowledge through apprenticeships and guest spots. In the rush to meet the demand of the ink-hungry public, it seems that crucial parts of the development process are being skipped completely as wannabe



WITH ANY POPULAR TREND, ITEM, OR FASHION ACCESSORY THERE COMES IMITATION, WANNABES, AND DECREASES IN QUALITY

artists ignore apprenticeships and set out on their own.

The danger of having "tattoo kits" and tattoo machines on websites such as Gumtree or eBay is that any Tom, Dick or Harry with internet access, a healthy bank balance, and a love for tattoos can purchase them and almost immediately make their mark on the public. This decision to take matters into their own hands is one that the BBC labelled² "a dangerous trend". Professional tattoo artists are increasingly having to cover over botched, badly-done amateur inkings, as the trend to Do It Yourself ropes in more victims.

Matthew Turner - a man that has been kind enough to answer my questions in the past - is an apprentice based in Swansea who started at the bottom two years ago and is slowly progressing up the career ladder. He believes that in order to be a tattoo artist "you need to find a good [mentor] who is

willing to take you on and will teach you how to do it". He says that an apprenticeship may be "a year or two of unpaid bottom of the barrel work, cleaning and doing everything you are told", but it is necessary if you want to make it as a legitimate artist.

Matthew echoes the thoughts of the BBC when he tells me that inexperienced tattooists purchasing equipment online and offering their services is "dangerous". He says that using cheap inks increases the likelihood of infection and cheap needles "are just going to create bad quality tattoos". If it is true that a workman is only as good as his tools, then even the most brilliant artist would struggle to produce high-quality pieces using internet knock-offs, let alone an inexperienced amateur.

Though the sight of more of my inked brothers and sisters on the streets is a welcome one, it does make it difficult to see the forest for the trees. Such



Mr Dist

is the rise in popularity and the abundance of new studios on the high street, we would be forgiven for thinking all is well in the world of tattooing. We must not allow ourselves to fall into that trap however, as with wider access comes increased risk. Just because it is available, does not mean we should use it, and just because it exists, does not mean it belongs. This is true for both nuclear weapons, and for certain with tattoo studios.

1: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-29536871

2: www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-10713587

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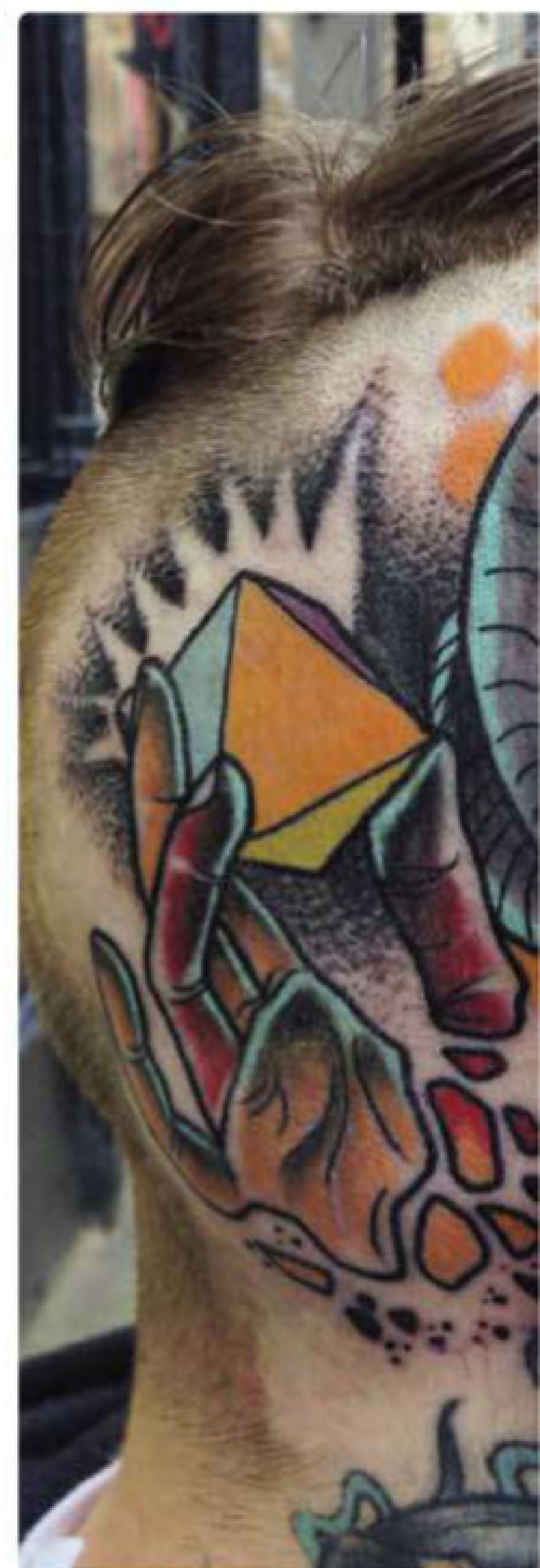
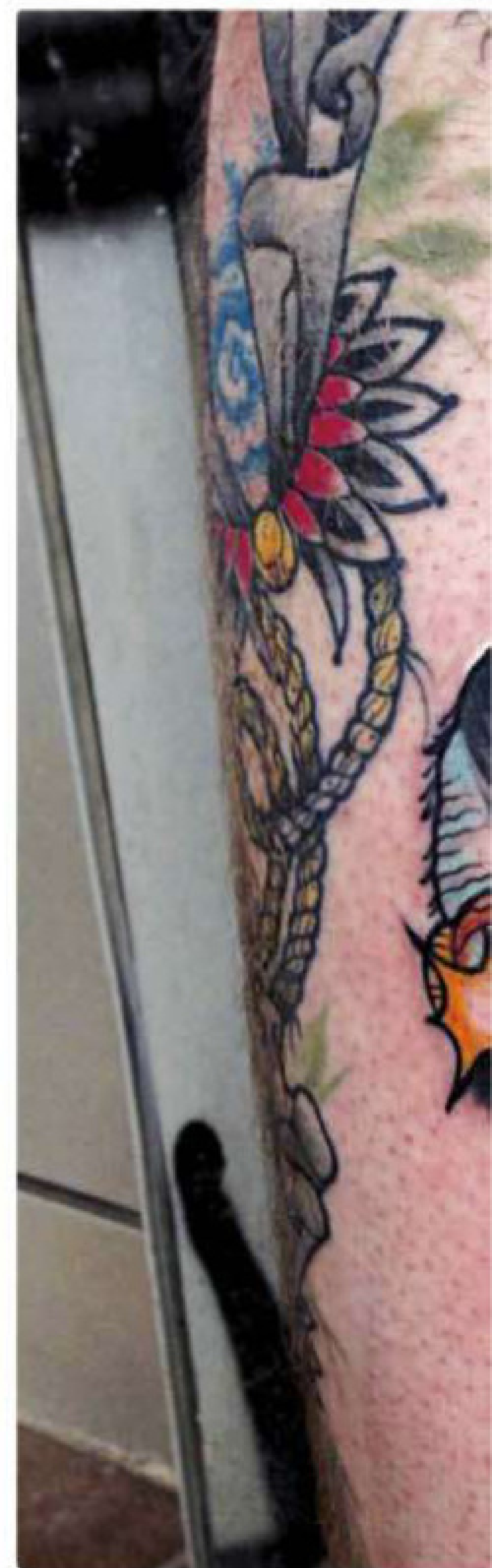
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A RUDE AWAKENING

At this year's Manchester Tattoo Convention, Mike 'Gibbo' Gibson walked away with Best of Saturday for an amazing piece in his signature style.

Rude Studios 13b North Lane, Headingley
Tel: 0113 3180451 Email: mgibsonattoo@gmail.com Instagram: @gibbo0 Facebook: /Mike Gibson



Gibbo is one of the UK's new young guns, a breed of artist that seems to be coming out of nowhere and making a mark fast. But like most overnight successes, the truth is, he has been working hard at his craft for a number of years. Three to be precise, well four if you count his first year apprenticing under Lee 'Rude Boy' Reynolds at Rude Studios in Leeds. Though, as he points out, "The first year I didn't do any tattooing. So ink into skin, three years!"

Gibbo got into tattooing by going and watching bands as soon as he was the age he could

actually blag his way into the venues. Growing up listening to bands introduced him to actually seeing tattoos on people for the first time! Pre live music, he had seen tattoos about and was aware of the art of tattooing but nearly all the bands he saw were covered, or at least had a lot more coverage than your average Mr Joe Ordinary Ink Lover walking down the street.

"At first it wasn't the actual tattoos that caught my interest, it was more wanting to know how you kept an image underneath someone's skin that fascinated me."

Before moving into the world of tattooing Gibbo studied art,

following a creative background which started at school where his main interests were art and music. So whilst a lot of his friends were outside kicking a football round a field, no doubt trying to become the next Ronaldo, Gibbo was inside either drawing, painting or playing music.

"I studied art in school and then went on to do a foundation course at college, which enabled me to put together a portfolio of my drawings to take round studios in the hopes of getting myself an apprenticeship. I wouldn't like to see the stuff I had back then, I think it would make me cringe!" Finally his love of all things art

Trent Aitken-Smith Mike 'Gibbo' Gibson



and studies paid off and he got taken on by Rude Studios as the studio apprentice. A couple of staff changes at the studio and things settled down and Gibbo found himself under the wing of Lee Reynolds, who took up his training and guided him through his apprenticeship.

"It was good. I wouldn't say it was the hardest one in the world but I paid my dues and did what I needed to get to a level that Lee was happy with. He was a great mentor. He was never a dick, he always treated me with respect and had my best interests at heart. Don't get me wrong, he made me graft, but then again I wasn't in it for an easy ride! I wanted to earn this skill he was passing on to me and didn't want to have it handed to me - I wouldn't think that was right!

"I did the usual things; cleaned the floors, made the brews and I also did a lot of the reception duties for some time. A few months in Lee taught me set

I WANTED TO EARN THIS SKILL HE WAS PASSING ON TO ME AND DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE IT HANDED TO ME - I WOULDN'T THINK THAT WAS RIGHT

ups and breakdowns and from then on out I was specifically his apprentice and not just the studio monkey! It was all new and very exciting for me, even if I was cleaning up stations after tattoos. From the off he'd let me watch him tattoo and at the time I didn't know what to look for, or what I was supposed to be paying a great deal of attention to, but looking back now, watching all those times, it's amazing how many things you pick up without even realising it. Lee's a great guy, if you know him he's got this confident ballsy online persona but at heart, and in reality, he's a great guy and a pleasure to tattoo alongside every day. Let's just say he keeps the days interesting."

Since his interest in tattoos was first sparked, Gibbo has always been taken by the traditional 🌻

NEO TRADITIONAL

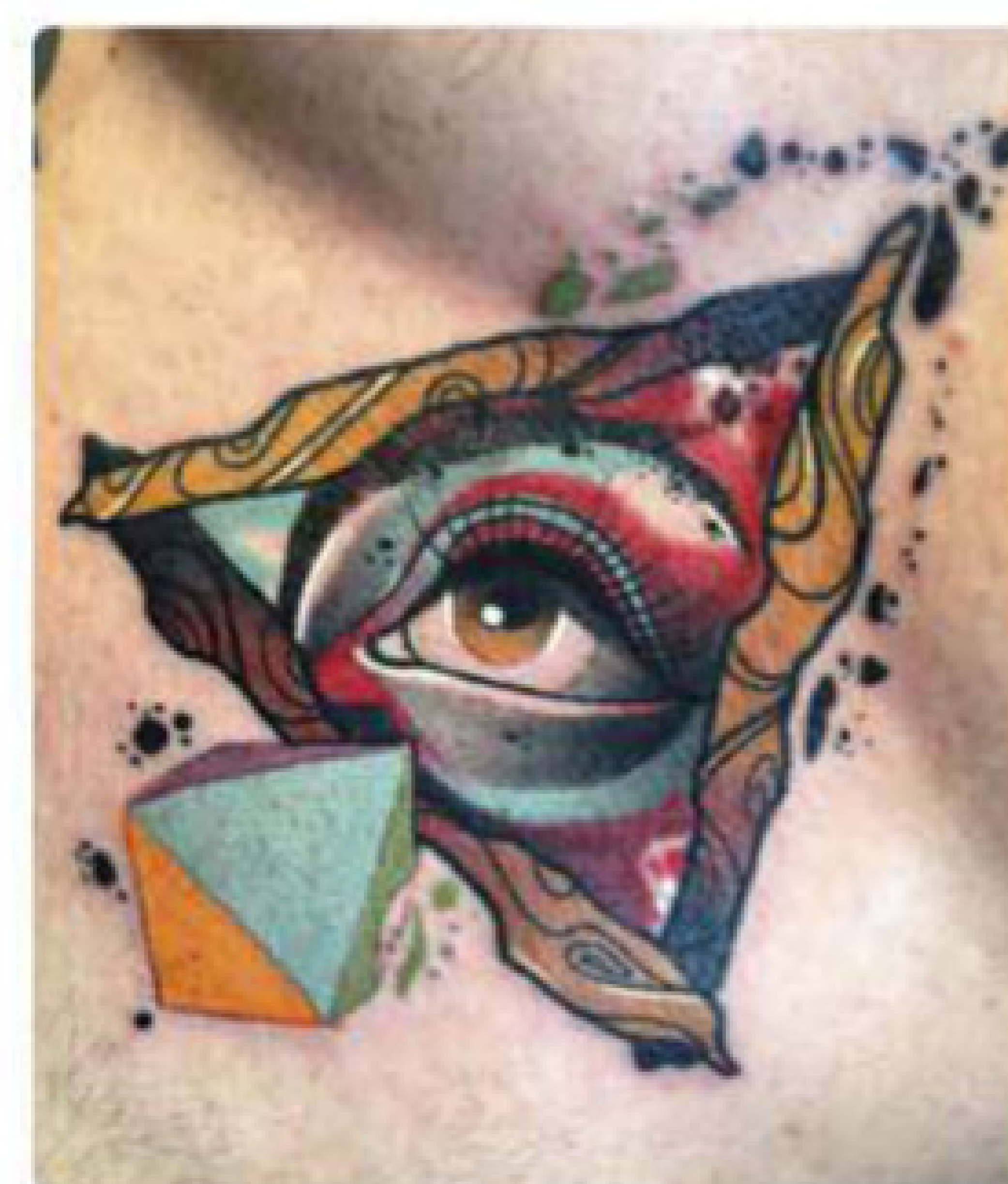
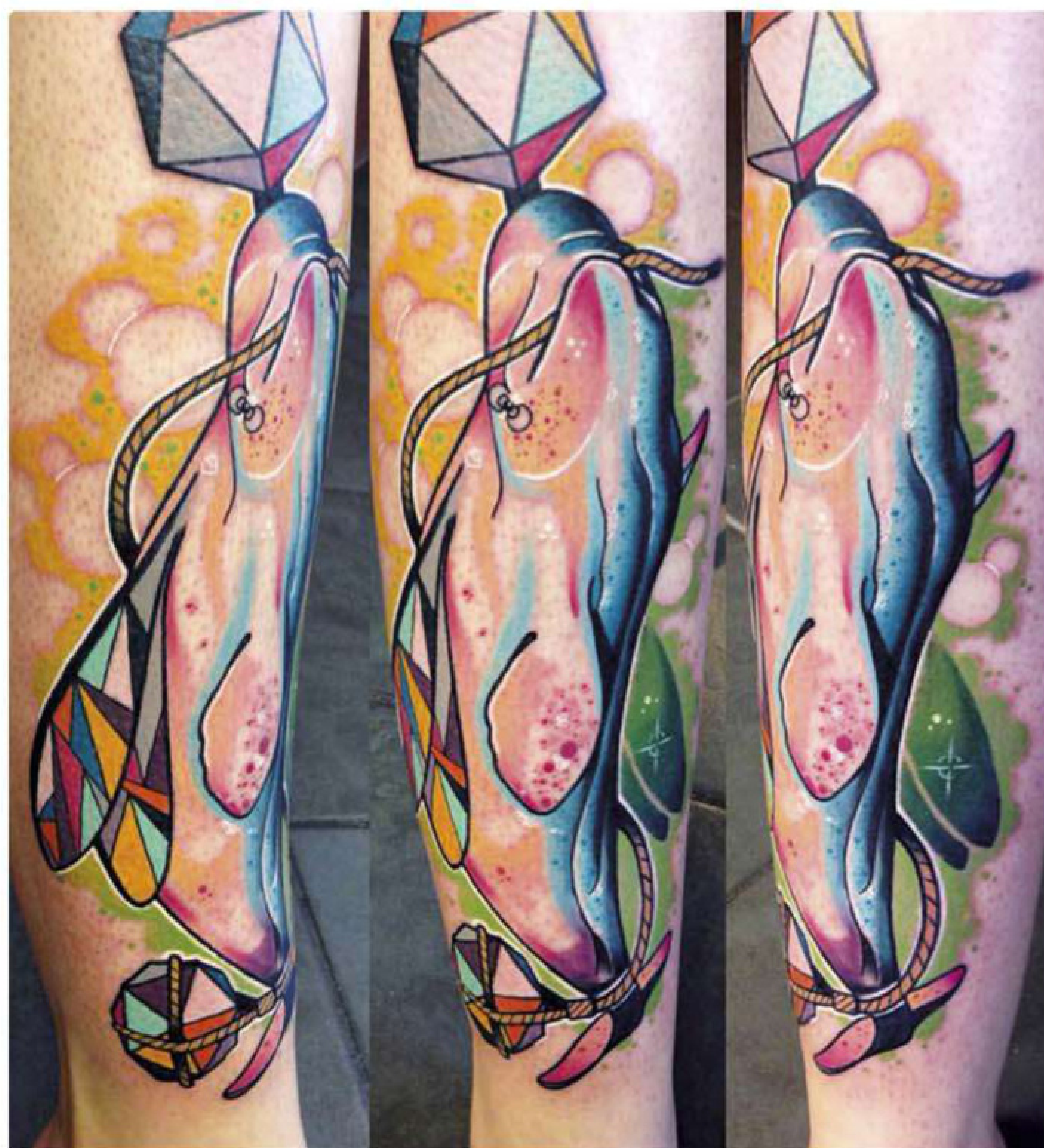
Harking back to the days of the likes of Sailor Jerry, neo traditional is a style that was born out of the American traditional style of tattooing. Steeped in history, traditional was where it all started. Back then when colours were few and far between and tattoos needed to be done fast, traditional was about big bold lines and minimal colour usage. As the years passed and tattooing evolved, a new ilk of tattooers took a love of traditional work and turned it up, creating neo traditional. They stuck to the rule, bold will hold, but added a mix of modern pop culture, using an array of improved brighter inks.

aspects of tattooing; bold lines, bright colours and crazy compositions. But with Lee as his mentor, a lot of his training was guided by Lee's passion, realism. Though Lee is a dab hand at most styles, realism is where his true interest lies, so Gibbo found he had to take on board what he was being shown and then adapt it to a style he wanted to tattoo in.

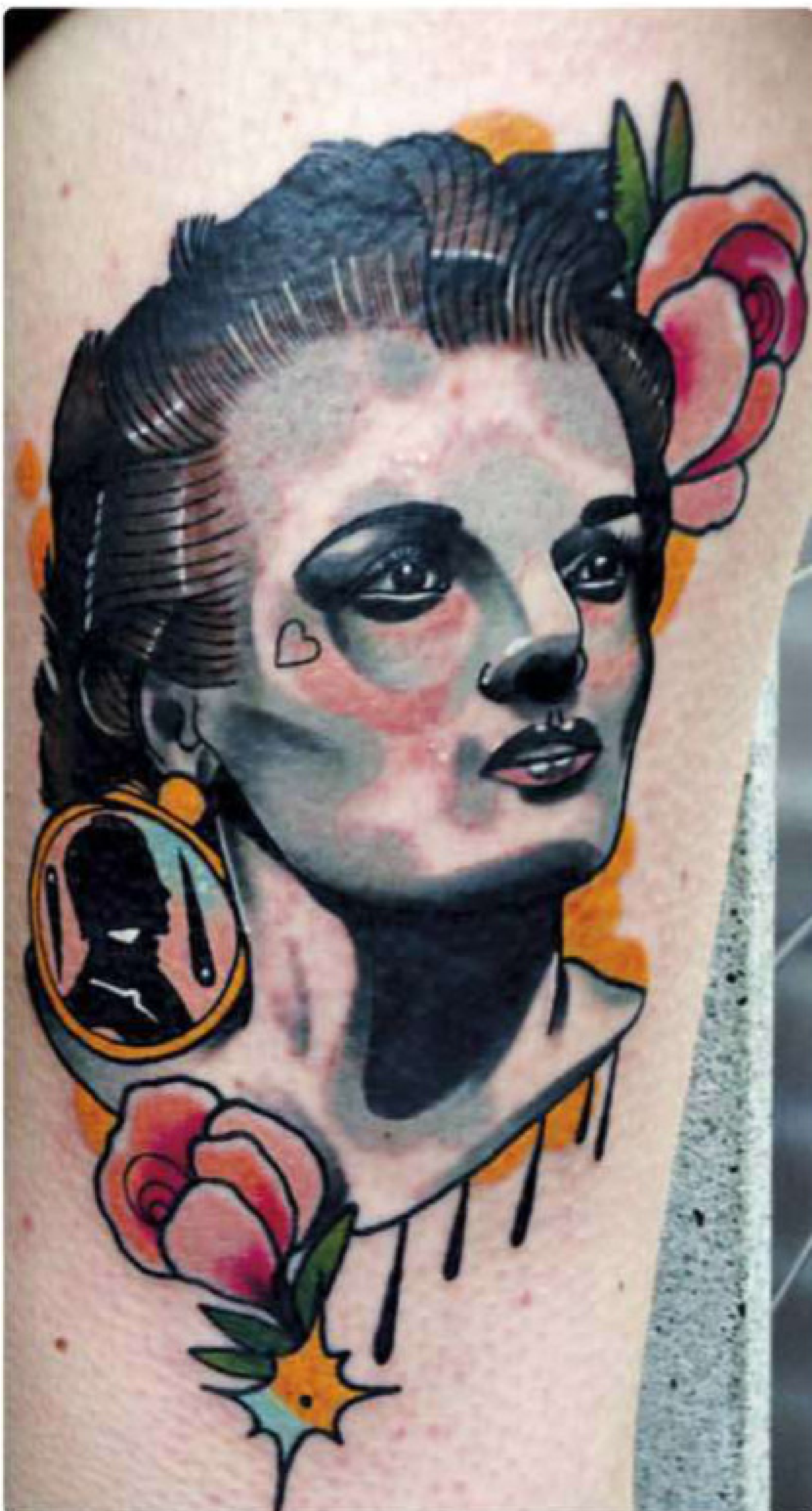
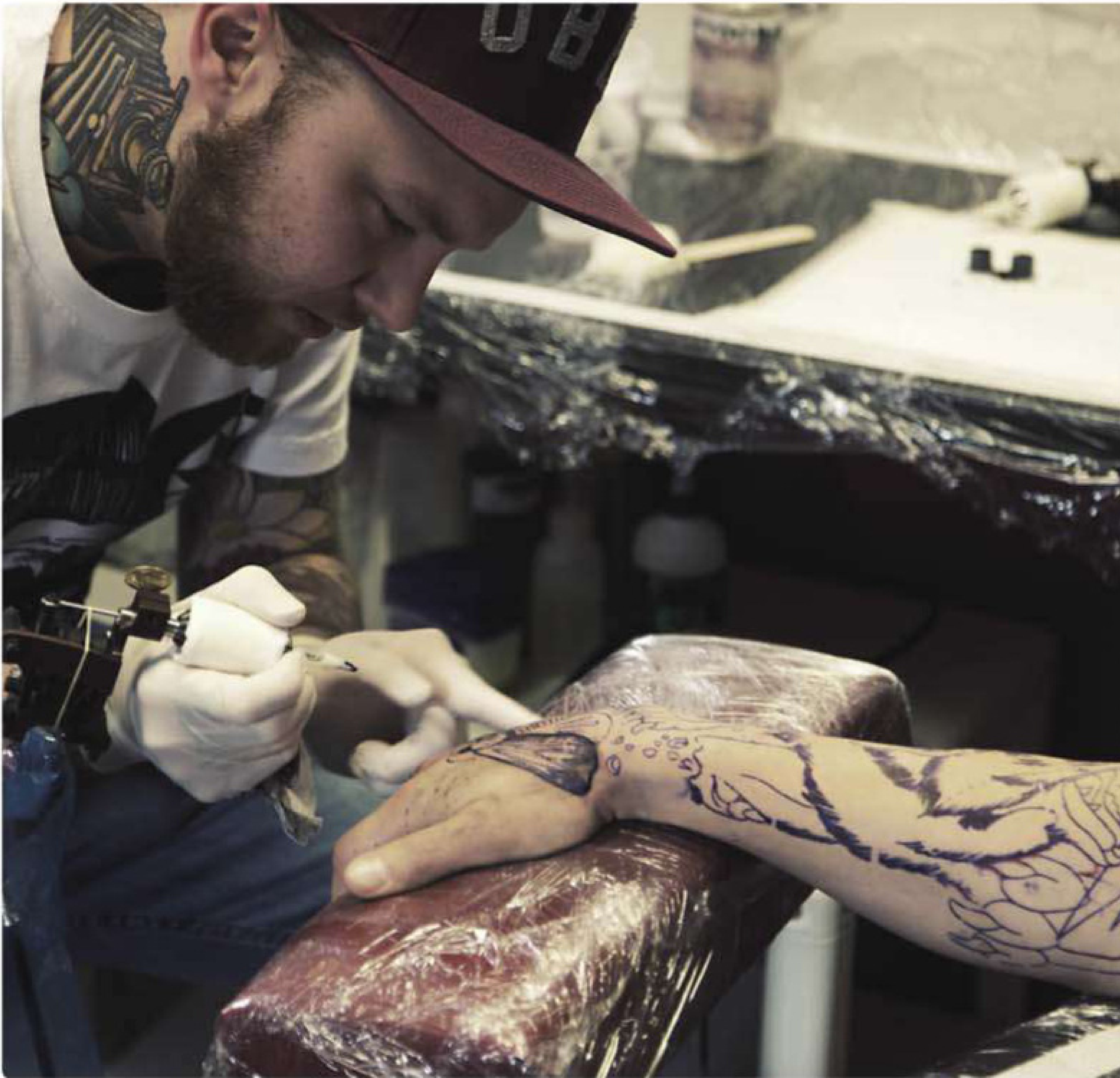
"From the start I used to look at the heavy hitters who did the whole traditional style, then I discovered what's known as 'neo traditional'. And it was this that interested me! It was a style that still used the elements of traditional but it was a bit more 'complex' (for lack of a better word) than just traditional.

"This was a great turning point

FROM THE START I USED TO LOOK AT THE HEAVY HITTERS WHO DID THE WHOLE TRADITIONAL STYLE, THEN I DISCOVERED WHAT'S KNOWN AS 'NEO TRADITIONAL'



for me because I didn't get shown how to whip shade like the guys who do traditional, I was shown how to smooth shade and colour blend. My actual style I would consider very European. Generally traditional and neo traditional are very westernised styles, but I actually discovered some great artists killing this style right on our doorstep in Europe, more specifically Poland. I got myself a t-shirt from a Polish tattoo company called 'Tattoo Fest Brand' and they sent me a Polish tattoo magazine. It absolutely blew my mind! It was like I was



looking through something from another planet. The designs, the concepts, the use of colour was all amazing and so unique and new. I fell in love straight away and started to research these artists. And that's how it all started. To this day I still look up to a lot of European artists and have been lucky enough to travel, meet and get work from a number of them.

A lot of my influence comes from Europe, it's' this whole new take on neo traditional that I want to explore and learn more about. Some of the guys who inspire

I GOT MYSELF A T-SHIRT FROM A POLISH TATTOO COMPANY AND THEY SENT ME A POLISH TATTOO MAGAZINE. IT ABSOLUTELY BLEW MY MIND

me are the likes of Edek, Panas and Lipa. All three of these guys have such a strong unique style it's hard not to like their work. Further afield I've found a lot of talented guys out in Australia; Sam Clark, Dan Malloy, Stu Pagdin and Jacob Gardner being a few of them. I've managed to become quite good friends with these guys online and I am hoping to travel out there next year to meet and grab some work from the. It would be an honour to watch how they create the things they do."

And the contacts started to pay off. One of Gibbo's good friends based out in California, Gary Dunn, was using machines built by a company called Blood Money Irons and before he knew it, emails were flying and Gibbo had found himself a sponsor.

"I had a good look at Gary's 🌟

RUDE STUDIOS

When I was taken on at Rude Studios it was all a bit up in the air. At the time Sam Myers was just the piercer, doing her own thing and doing it well. She soon clocked onto how the studio was running and decided off her own back to do something about it. One thing led to another and she managed to take it by the reigns and become owner and head piercer of Rude. Sam, Lee and I worked our asses off to get the studio to a standard we wanted it to be. It worked, so much so that Sam had the opportunity to open a sister studio in Leeds city centre. Our sister studio houses 3 artists, 2 piercers, a shop manager and a receptionist. The original Rude is in Headingley and is now four artists strong. Lee Reynolds who we all already know about, Pinyu who creates the most insane realism both in colour and black and grey, Steve who likes to concentrate on more of a new school approach and then finally me. As a team we all bounce off each other and really bring a harmony to the studio atmosphere. All this couldn't of happened without the hard work and passion from Sam to build up such a great studio to be apart of.

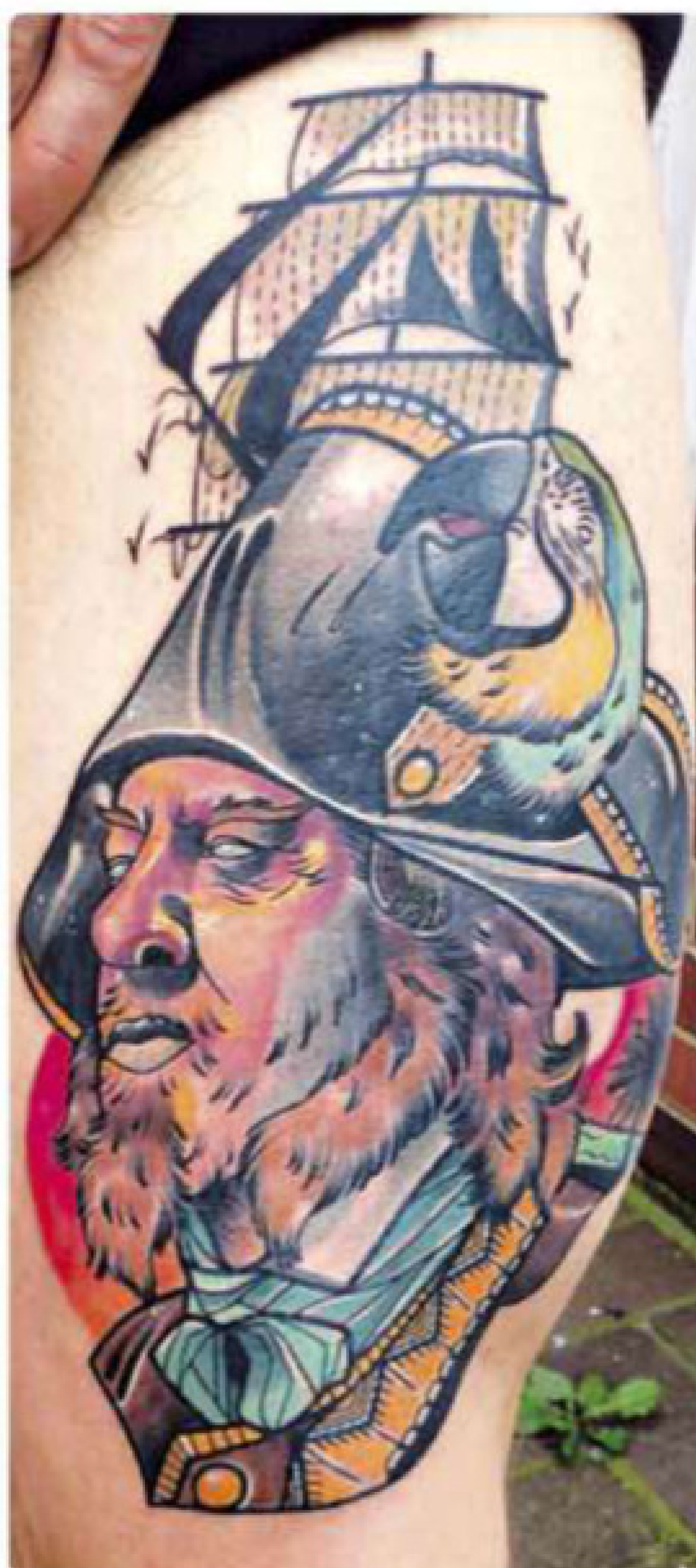
machines when I was able to meet him and I loved how they worked when he used them to tattoo. Straight off I knew that I wanted to own some so I contacted the builders to make an order. Brandon Smith was the guy I initially spoke with, he and his fellow builder, Rich Helton, run Blood Money. A few emails were passed back and forth about the machines and then one day I was shocked to receive an email from Brandon asking if I'd be happy to trade a machine for a painting. I was stoked to do this so I got straight on with the painting. Brandon and I started talking more about general tattooing and the industry as a whole and we got to know each other quite well. Then a few days passed and he sprung it on me that he wanted me to review his machines when I used them and if I liked them then he'd ask me to consider becoming apart of the Blood Money family. Obviously I was beyond happy about this and I guess the rest is history."

Only three years in and Gibbo has already started to carve out a space for himself in the tattoo world. Along with the machine sponsorship, he has done a few guest spots and has started working the convention scene, where he has picked up a few awards for a style he is making his own.

"Personally I prefer guest spots to conventions as it's a great chance to meet new tattooers and share interests and information

I PREFER GUEST SPOTS TO CONVENTIONS AS IT'S A GREAT CHANCE TO MEET NEW TATTOOERS AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT TATTOOING

about tattooing. And though I love conventions, I always feel pressured at them. You're in a booth and people walk by and watch what you do, it kind of feels like you're put on a stage like a performing act. And I don't like that attention. With guest spots I don't feel this pressure, so far they've all been so relaxing and



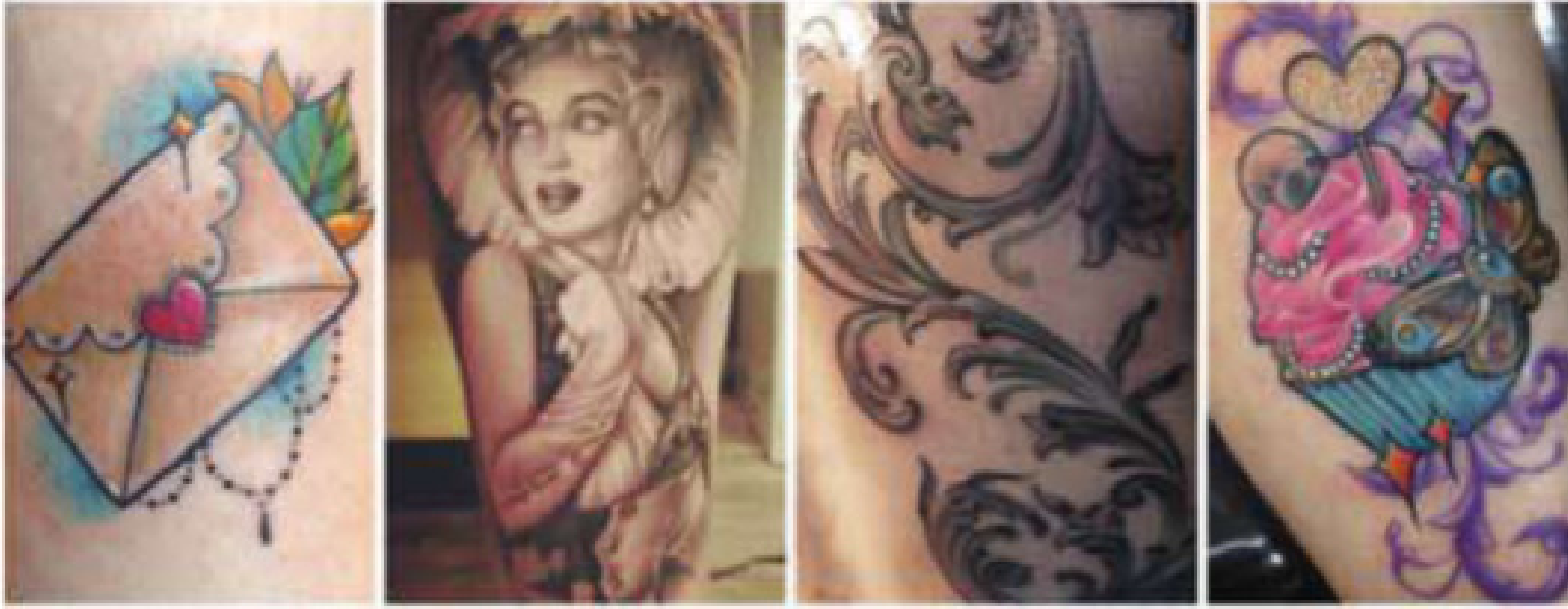
the studios who have taken me in for a few days have been super rad. Can't wait to do more and meet more like minded artists."

And the future, well there is no point in worrying too much about that when the present is unfolding as successfully as it is for Gibbo. He's 'super happy' working out of Rude Studios and

there is always more guest spots and conventions on the horizon. In the distant future we might see him open his own place, or go into a partnership, but he is still fresh out of an apprenticeship and learning more each day. But whatever Gibbo does, I am sure it will follow along the same path of success he is walking now. 🐾

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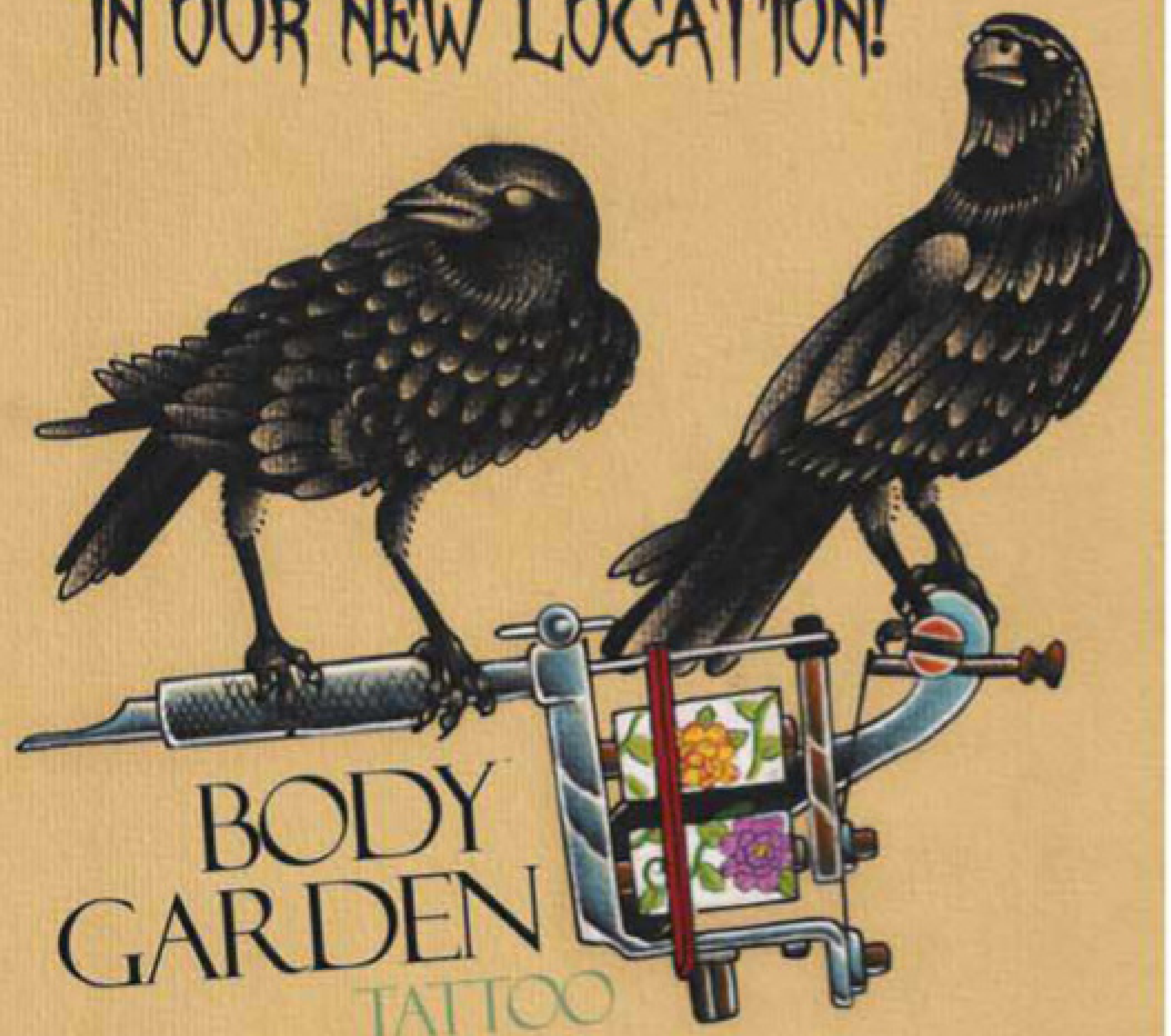
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THE STATE OF ANATION

A few weeks back, the boss was invited to take part in a story being built up by BBC Wales on the rise of the tattoo studio in Wales. Being Welsh, he was only too pleased to contribute. With kind permission, here is the original story along with some personal commentary along with some facts and figures to help you make up your own mind.

Some radio stations, I love getting involved with - some I really don't. This is 100% based on how much respect they are giving whatever they happen to be talking about. Over at BBC Wales, every experience has been great, so when they call me up to comment and discuss this story, I was only too pleased to throw the hammer over the wall and join in.

This particular story had a curveball. The research had already been done and that left the very simple question of 'why?' Why are there so many tattoo studios in Wales compared to twenty years ago? It's a good question and whilst I played the game and kept my commentary relevant to my homeland, it became obvious very quickly that this is nothing but a (big) microcosm of the United Kingdom as a whole.

To illustrate, here in its entirety, is the story that ran along with some facts and figures that didn't make it to the original as the research expanded into something of a very factual statement on what's happening out there. Make of it what you will. Are we at saturation point? I think we are. No 'one-man army' can stop it. It's not for us to stop - not like

that anyway. The only way to redress the balance is to continue our daily quest to educate and convince people to Get Good Ink.

It's gonna be a long night, but then again, aren't they all:

"There has been a huge rise in the number of tattoo parlours across Wales as the fashion for body art has spread, official figures show. There are now more than 330 licensed parlours across



Chris Jones



Cecil Porter

a nation of three million people - the equivalent of more than 1 for every 10,000 residents. Figures compiled by BBC Wales suggest that the total has increased 13-fold or more in the past 20 years.

But while the statistics confirm parlours' increasing presence on many high streets they also hint that the growth might now have peaked. Areas such as Cardiff had only three parlours in 1994, compared to 48 today - the highest in Wales. But there were 56 parlours in the capital

city a year ago, and the rise has stalled in many other districts.

While the tattoo business might have reached saturation point, the figures illustrate the scale of its growth in recent years. Research in 2012 released at the British Association of Dermatologists' Annual Conference suggested that one in five British adults now sport a tattoo - but almost one third regretted it. While 45% of people had their first tattoo done between the aged



Adam, Folklore



Fulvio Vaccarone

18-25, half of those surveyed were over the age of 40.

Such areas as Conwy, Pembrokeshire, Neath Port Talbot and Vale of Glamorgan, had no parlours two decades ago: today each has between 12 and 15. Figures for 20 years ago are available for 10 of Wales' 22 council areas. They show that in 1994 in those 10 districts there were only 13 parlours. In those same areas today there are 174 - a 13-fold jump.

As recently as 10 years ago, there were just 61 parlours in 13 Welsh districts where figures are available. Today, there are 218 in those 13 districts. However, there is an intriguing suggestion in the figures - obtained through Freedom of Information requests - that this rapid growth could now have stalled. Figures are available for last year for 18 of the 22 Welsh areas, and there

PROSECUTIONS IN WALES (PART 1)

(Not all councils keep information going back to 1994 but this is the info they have stored):

Anglesey - 1 had licence revoked since 2009

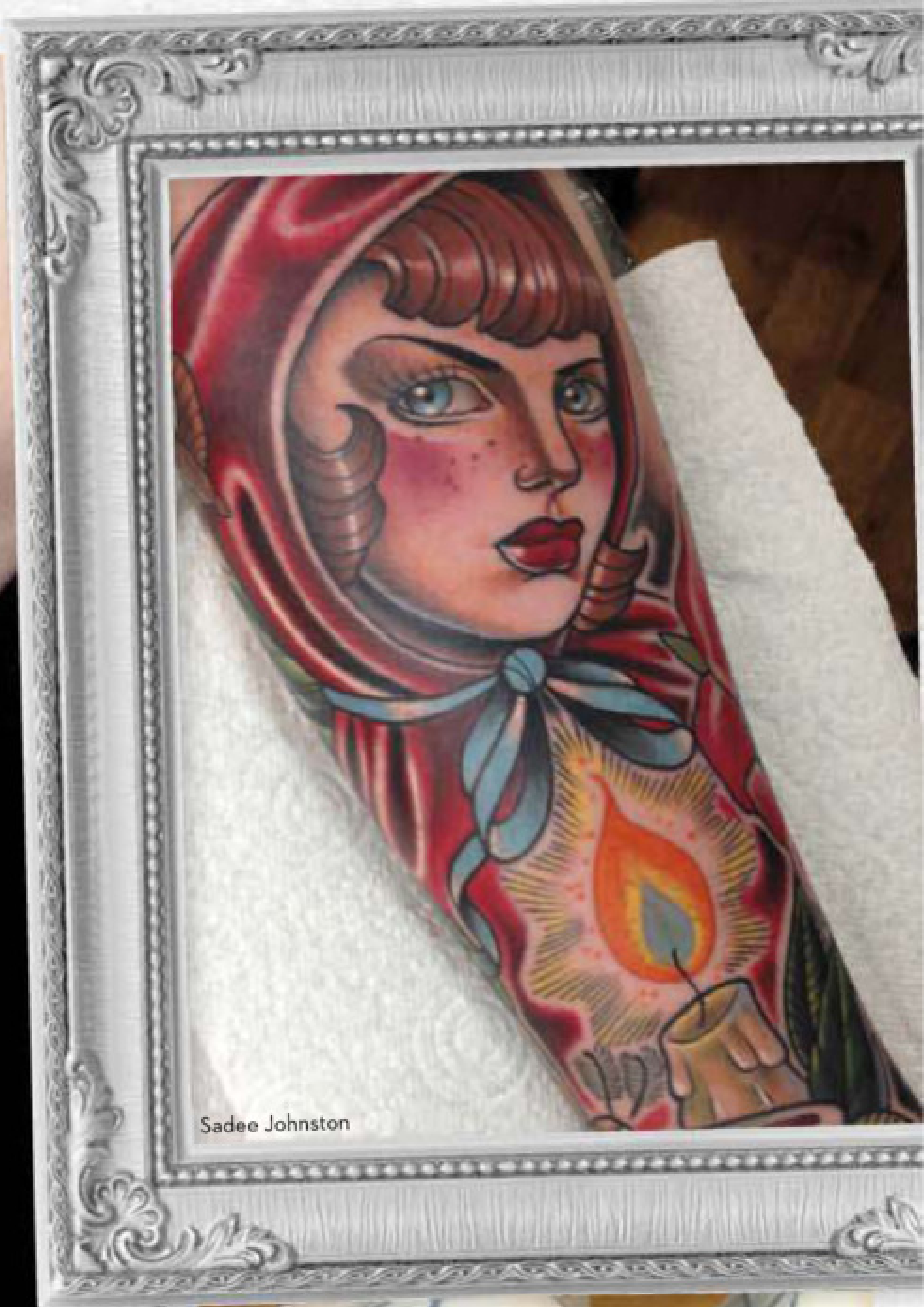
Blaenau Gwent - 1 prosecution since 2009 for underage tattooing under the Tattooing of Minors Act 1969 - £400 fine and costs. No licences revoked

Bridgend - no records of prosecutions (records go back 6 years). No licences revoked - 1 had a prohibition notice for health and safety improvements in 2011

Caerphilly - no prosecutions

Cardiff - 1 prosecution in 2013 - fined £110 and £75 costs

Carmarthenshire - no prosecutions



TATTOO STUDIO GROWTH IN WALES

- In 1994 there were 13 studios in 10 areas. By 2004 that figure has risen to 174 in the same 10 areas.
- In 1994, Conwy, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Vale of Glamorgan had no studios - today they all have between 12 - 15.
- In 2004, there were 61 studios in 13 areas. There are now 218 studios in those same 13 areas.
- In 2009, there were 149 studios in 17 areas. There are now 267 in those same 17 areas.
- In 2013, there were 271 studios in 18 areas. There are now 275 in those same 18 areas.

THERE IS A CEILING ON IT. ONCE YOU GET INTO THE MORE RURAL AREAS OF WALES, THAT POOL WOULD SHRINK VERY QUICKLY AND THE DEMAND WILL DIMINISH - AT WHICH POINT, ALL STUDIOS ARE SUBJECT TO THE RULES OF ANY BUSINESS

are slightly fewer parlours today than 12 months ago.

Sion Smith, editor of Skin Deep magazine, said tattooing had become both very attractive and popular in recent years, and parlours had thus sprung up to meet the demand.

"But there are only ever a certain number of people available who want to be tattooed," he said.

"There is a ceiling on it. Once you get into the more rural areas of Wales, that pool would shrink very quickly and the demand will diminish - at which point, all studios are subject to the rules of

any business. Namely, cashflow."

Predictably, the highest concentration of parlours is in the bigger cities and valley areas, with Rhondda Cynon Taf (28) and Swansea (20), behind Cardiff. They are fewer in rural areas, with only 2 in Anglesey, 5 in Ceredigion and 6 in Monmouthshire. Even Sion Smith admits he has been surprised by the growth of parlours in unlikely places. He went to school in north Wales and returned to the Flintshire village of Caergwrle, this summer, where he was



Mr Dist



Leigh Oldcorn

THE PEOPLE THAT SUFFER ARE THE CLIENTS AND LEGITIMATE TATTOO ARTISTS AS THEY TEND TO BE TARRED WITH THE SAME BRUSH

amazed to find a pharmacy had become a tattoo studio. "Nothing much shocks me these days but that did," he said.

(Note: I think it used to be a chemist - I guess it doesn't really matter for the context of this story. The 'shock' was not because of any perceived quality in the studio either - but more that when I left, the population of the village was a couple of thousand people at best.)

The figures also appear to show a low level of prosecutions against registered parlours. Although not all councils keep full records for the past 20 years, the 22 across Wales report just two prosecutions against registered premises, as well as 6 cautions and prohibition notices. The biggest fine as a result was £400 for underage tattooing.

There have, however, been 7 prosecutions of unregistered

tattooists - also known as "home scratchers". These have resulted in much heavier penalties, with one told to pay almost £2,500 in fines, costs and a victim surcharge of £50. Only the courts can order registrations to be withdrawn, and there is only one recorded case of a parlour having its licence removed. That has been in Anglesey since 2009, although the council did not disclose why.

Sion Smith said prosecutions of registered parlours were always few and far between. But he added it was "really important" to take action against unregistered tattooists for the sake of the industry as a whole. "The people that suffer are the clients and legitimate tattoo artists as they tend to be tarred with the same brush," he added. 🦋

PROSECUTIONS IN WALES (PART 2)

Ceredigion - no recorded prosecutions

Conwy - no prosecutions

Denbighshire - 3 cautions and 2 prohibition notices. Two prosecutions for "home scratchers". 1 improvement notice related to piercing

Flintshire - no recorded prosecutions

Gwynedd - no recorded prosecutions

Merthyr - no prosecutions

Monmouthshire - no recorded prosecutions.

Asked if the council had a limit on the number of parlours, it said: "We have never needed to introduce such a policy as numbers of tattoo parlours in **Monmouthshire** are very low."

Neath Port Talbot - no prosecutions

Newport: 2 prosecutions of unregistered people on unregistered premises - both guilty - total fines of £1,000 each, plus costs of £1,606 and £1,434 plus victim surcharge in each case of £50.

Pembrokeshire: no prosecutions

Powys: no recorded prosecutions

Rhondda

Cynon Taf: No prosecutions against registered parlours - but 3 against unregistered tattooists from July 2013-2014. Fines and costs of £350, £500, and £1000, plus victim surcharge up to £80.

Swansea: no recorded prosecutions

Torfaen: no recorded prosecutions

Wrexham: no prosecutions

Vale of Glamorgan: no prosecutions



IT'S A
**NATURAL
 THING**

Fresh from winning 'Best Avant Garde' on Saturday at Manchester International Tattoo show, I caught up with Hollie May at The Old Smithy Tattoo parlour in Leek, Staffordshire. It's been a bit of a whirlwind for Hollie, she only attended her 1st show last year. Now a year on and with a number of big conventions under her belt she is winning prizes and recognition.

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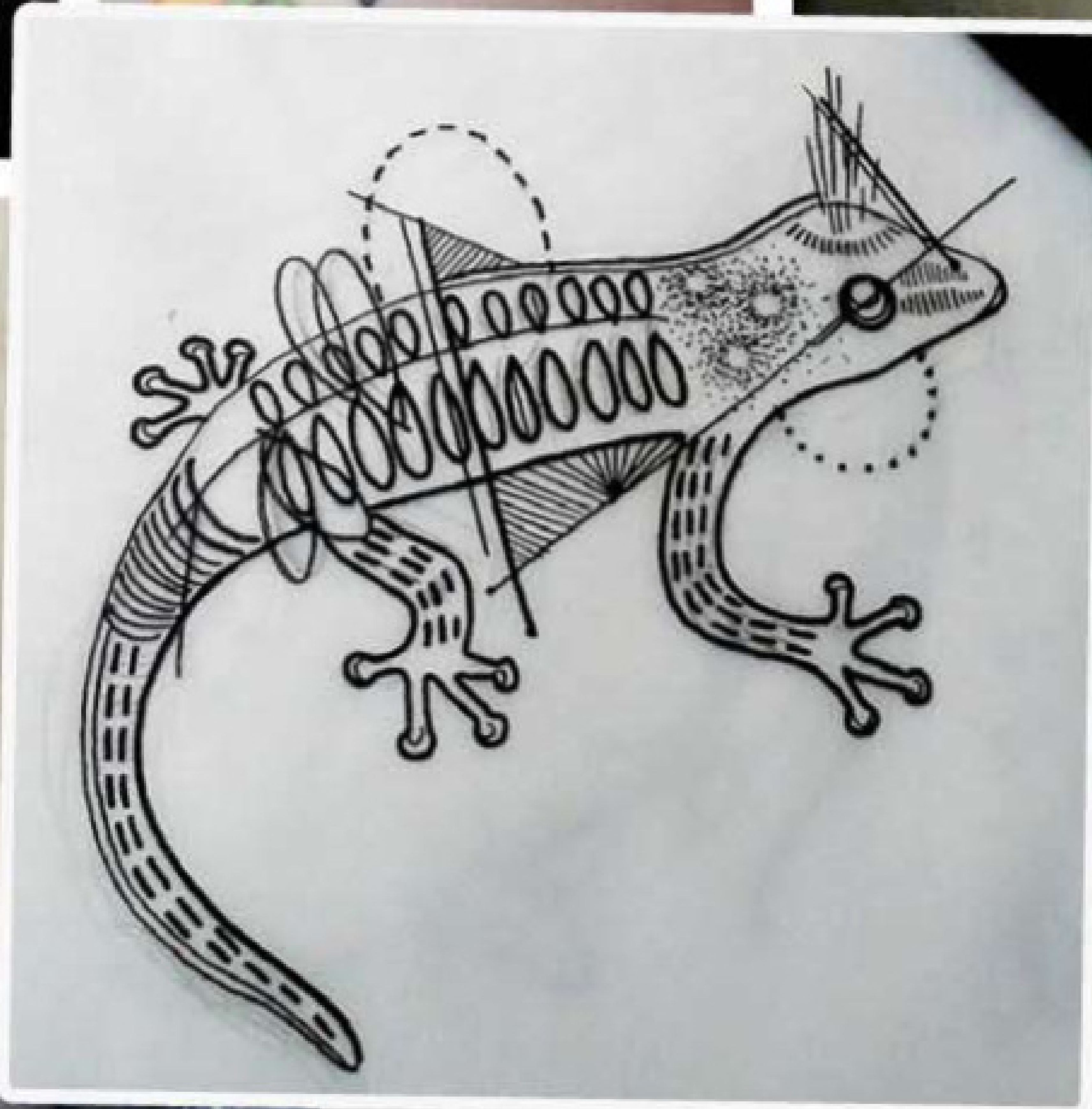
Nicky Connor
 Nicky Tattoo images: Hollie

Hollie opened her shop just over two years ago and was happy for me to drop in for a chat. As she is always busy, we talked while she worked inking a beautiful branch design on a lucky client's back. We first met just over a year ago at her first show in Manchester and for me it's great to see how her career has grown. Hollie had just heard the news she had been nominated for 'Best UK Female' at Tattoo Jam and she was both surprised and delighted. It was the icing on the cake after her Manchester win and she was still buzzing from the great feedback she received from the Manchester judges.

"I felt speechless about my

award, completely did not expect that and absolutely amazed at being nominated and so grateful to those who put my name forward!" Creative from a young age, she has always enjoyed drawing but like most of our generation was told she would not make a living from art. Being strong minded Hollie always wanted her own business and managed coffee shops, before becoming a tattooist. Then about five and a half years ago she decided to follow her passion and find a tattoo apprenticeship, however this meant moving 50 miles from Stoke-on-Trent to Marple and leaving her boyfriend behind - more on that later. Once her year long apprenticeship was done, Hollie moved back to





I WOULD DESCRIBE MY STYLE AS VERY SIMPLISTIC NATURE BASED DESIGNS OFTEN INCLUDING A LOT OF LINE WORK AND ABSTRACT PATTERNS

Stoke and started working in a studio. But in her heart Hollie knew that opening her own shop was the only way forward and her previous business background gave her a strong grounding. When an opportunity in a shared complex came up in Leek she took the plunge.

Never fazed by the move to independence, after having her own space for a while she naturally wanted to expand and

style a studio in a way that best suited her work. The Old Smithy Tattoo parlour (Smith is Hollie's maiden name) was opened two years ago and Hollie is the main tattoo artist. The shop has a retro, eclectic feel with chunky armchairs and framed artwork and designs covering the walls. Bex came on board shortly after opening and the shop has gone from strength to strength, with Hollie's hubby Matt even doing the odd receptionist shift. Having more space gives the flexibility to house more artists and offer guest spots and being located on the main high street gives the shop lots of passing trade. With Bex as studio manager, taking care of everything from managing the diary to arranging tattoo show appearances, Hollie 🌻

has time to focus on her designs and her clients. Customer service and professionalism are a big part of what The Old Smithy do; apart from appointments starting promptly and clients not being kept waiting, the studio offer lots of advice and products on tattoo aftercare.

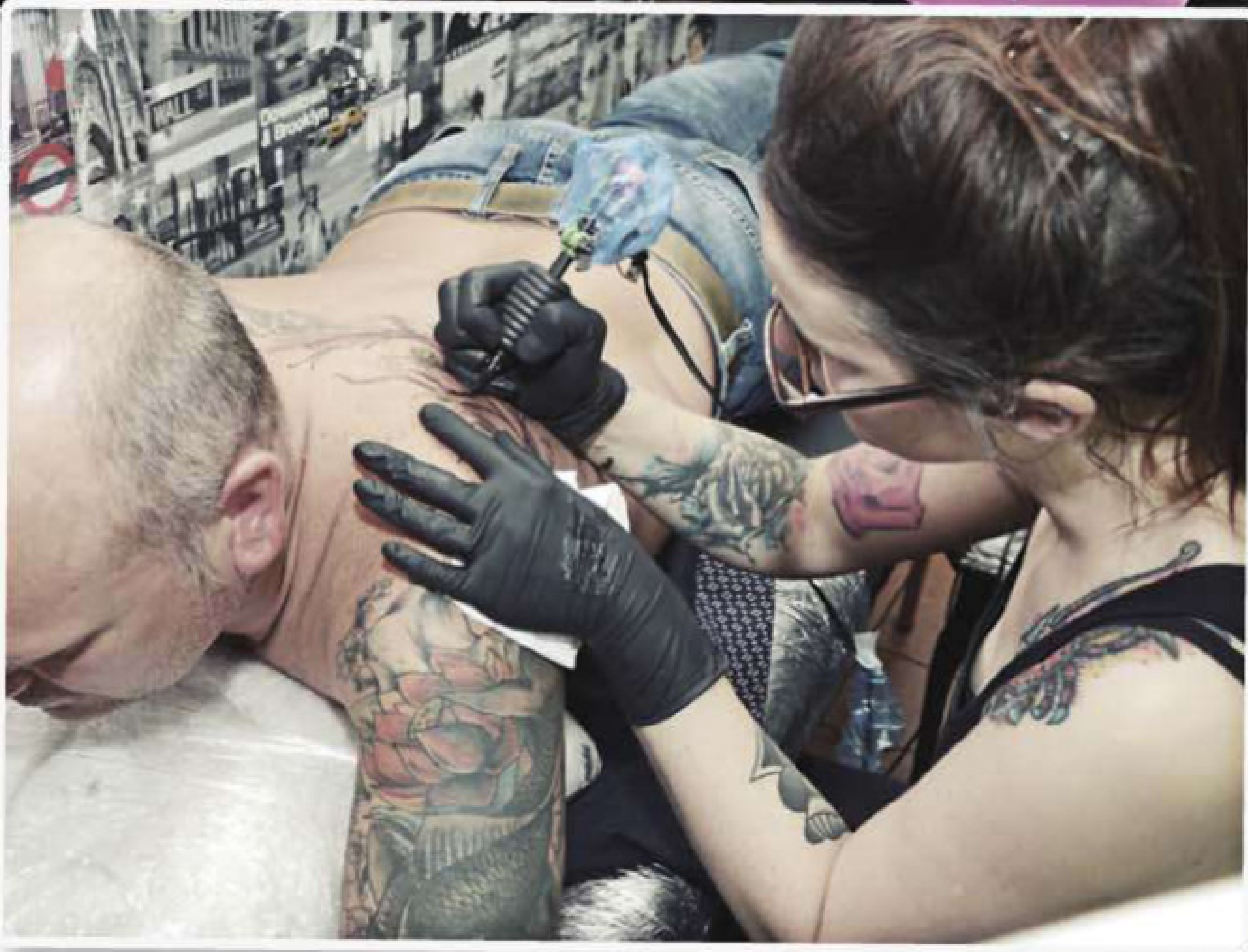
Aside from tattooing full time, opening and owning her own studio Hollie's personal life has also gone through a few changes in the last five years or so. Firstly splitting from her then boyfriend to pursue her tattoo apprenticeship - he won her back by rescuing her from a flat full of spiders and they are now happily married. She has

also moved house and has had two babies (although you would never know it - she is tiny!). Hollie is something of a superhero balancing a blossoming tattoo career with owning a studio and being a mum. When asked how family life impacts on her work Hollie can only see the positive effects, she uses the time she spends outdoors with the children in the woods and parks to gather inspiration and the family spend lots of time away camping with the dog in Matt's camper van. "My inspiration comes from my children, nature and children's illustrations." Nature has always been part of Hollie's inspiration for drawing,

JUGGLING PARENTHOOD WITH BEING AN ARTIST IS VERY HARD, BUT I'M A MORNING PERSON SO I'M UP EARLY AND TEND TO DO THE MAJORITY OF MY DESIGN WORK IN THE MORNINGS



she recalls drawing nature from a young age and painting a tree with eyes as part of a GCSE art exam. Which is funny, looking at her current Mother Nature design I can see influence from that early artwork. Hollie has seen a definite development in her own style over the past year – her work is now more stripped back from previously more elaborate colour work. Her designs have become more graphic and clean, using patterns and dots combined with the lines. Splashes of airbrush primary colours are added to breath life



MY INSPIRATION COMES FROM MY CHILDREN, NATURE AND CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATIONS

into the detailed outlines.

"I would describe my style as very simplistic nature based designs, often including a lot of linework and abstract patterns." Like most artists Hollie would love to tattoo purely her own designs and she feels that increasingly she is being sought out for her own style. She also loves working on realism pieces especially

when working with nature and enjoys the mixture of graphic and realism styles. Hollie admires the work of worldwide artists as well as local talent, from the black and grey work of Luca Bassi to the beautiful dreamy colours in Cody Eich's work. She also loves the patterns and lines of Amsterdam biased artist Susanne König.

But time is very precious to 🌻



MY FUTURE PLANS ARE TO DEVELOP MY STYLE FURTHER, DO SOME GUEST SPOTS AND HAVE ANOTHER ARTIST FULL TIME AT THE STUDIO

Hollie and her balancing act means that she has to be very organised. Walking to work to incorporate her daily exercise, she gets in early to draw and design. Time has also been a factor in developing her style working with fine liners - she can not only design pieces quickly and freely but also has a clear idea of how they will work on the skin.

"Juggling parenthood with being an artist is very hard, but I'm a morning person so I'm up early and at the studio early and tend to do the majority of my design work in the mornings." Looking forward, Hollie would love to keep building on the percentage of work she produces in her own style. The studio is also currently looking for another full-time artist and hoping to invite some guest artists to work with them. "My future plans are to develop my style further, do some guest spots and have another



artist full time at the studio." Hollie is rightly proud of her achievements to date and is delighted but a little overwhelmed at the recent awards and nominations she has been given, but she is proof that if you work hard at something,

good things will come.

Overall, I love the fact that she takes everything in her stride and is really down to earth, reflected in the fact that Hollie and Bex always finish the week off with a pint of real hand pulled ale down at the pub. 🍷



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...one stone

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THE EMPRESS

'Multifaceted' is the first thing that comes to mind when I think of Tana the Tattooed Lady—I mean, aside from the tattoos, smoking hot body, pin-up girl prowess, and impeccable stage presence. And how can you blame me? It's quite difficult to focus on just one asset; she's something like having a canon full of confetti popped right in your face.



Amanda Peukert **Red hair:** Paul O'Connell **Red, white, and blue pin-up costume:** Jake Kwong **Nude photos:** London A. Lunoux

It was a typical, rainy afternoon in Portland the first time I ever laid eyes on Tana. I was vacationing in Oregon, and found shelter from the afternoon showers in a small strip club called Mary's. I grabbed a drink and took my seat. Then, to my absolute surprise, out walked the tattooed version of Bettie Page—clicking her six-inch heels as her fully tattooed tush crossed my line of sight. Tana peeled away the lace from her nipples and a portion of the golden pole disappeared between her derriere. It wasn't until later that I found out two things: her lap

dances are worth every penny, and Tana the Tattooed Lady has a plate fuller than a fat boy at a buffet.

"I'm a stripper, sex worker, singer, model, writer, actress, director, producer, hair & makeup artist, striptease educator, and yoga instructor. I tour with El Vez, the Mexican Elvis, and I also front several of my own bands. I've got an old-school rhythm & blues group, a 1920s & '30s era swing trio with Django Reinhardt-style guitar, and a new rockabilly band called Tana & The Tyrantuals. I am the choreographer for the world famous Kit Kat Club in

Portland, and I created the first annual Oregon Burlesque Festival. Recently, I wrote and directed two full-length cirque shows that debuted in Finland, and I headlined Turrkusex—the largest erotic arts festival in Scandinavia."

As if that weren't enough, Tana holds a number of well-deserved titles, each one providing further confirmation that she is one badass broad. She's been named Pin-Up Girl of the Year, Tattooed Entertainer of the Year, Hardest Working Woman in Showbiz, Miss Tiki Oasis, and Hottest Body in Burlesque—just to name a few. 🌻



I'LL NEVER PLAY AN INGÉNUÉ
OR A LEADING LADY
AGAIN—AND I'M BUMMED
FOR LIKE FIVE MINUTES

Oh, and did I mention she attained her stage name from Mr. Greg Thompson, the largest producer of Las Vegas-style shows in the world. So, you might ask, when the hell does this lady find time to get tattooed? In all honesty, she probably asks herself the same exact thing. However, in the spirit of well-thought-out work, I thought it'd be fun to hear about each of her tattoos and the meanings behind them. Little did I know, she'd be able to recall them like the committed collector of a rare commodity; each one & its story as significant to the complete set as the next.

"In chronological order: I have a tiny kanji of my astrological sign on my right hip which is now worked into my back piece. The blue swirls on my legs were my own design inspired by the artist Brom and blue Celtic war paint. The lotus flower on my heart chakra is a reminder of how far I've come, growing

up out of the mud. My back piece is of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion in Buddhism. Then came several tiny tattoos: an owl on my left wrist to commemorate my grandmother's life and her affinity for kitsch owls, and the word 'integrity' inside my lip. Then, a traditional-style yellow rose, the symbol of friendship, which is a bro tat with my best friend, Laura. Next, a mass of swirling stars and cosmic dust on my left wrist and hand to remind me of Einstein's quote about us being made of the same material as the stars. I tattooed the peacock feathers on my chest because one of my band mates remarked, after our first gig, that I strutted around on stage like a peacock. On a trip to New Orleans, I ran into a friend from Portland doing a guest spot at Electric Ladyland. I popped in and got a small fleur-de-lis; I adore New Orleans' music and culture. For my birthday, I treated myself to the Last Unicorn tattoo on my left leg; it's one of my favorite movies. I committed the

IT'S A WAY OF LIFE,
A RITE OF PASSAGE,
AND PART OF MY
WHITE-TRASH, PUNK
ROCK ROOTS

cardinal sin of tattooing and got my husband's initials inside a Zia. During a troubled period, I had my tarot read and the card pulled to represent me was The Empress. The card is on my right forearm. And I just finished my left sleeve—Green Tara, the female Buddha of Wisdom and Compassion."

It's no secret that while tattoos are growing in popularity and highly praised in their respective industry, they are unfortunately looked down upon in some mores—(by people with tiny brains and even tinier genitals.) And, while Tana has always had big dreams of making it to the Silver Screen, she refuses to let that stand in the way of her inked expressions.

"My second tattoo was the large blue swirls around my thighs. Go big or go home, right? After that, my costume design teacher told me I'd ruined my chances of being a successful actor by

getting such large tattoos. There are times when I can't go out for more traditional roles—I'll never play an ingénue or a leading lady

again—and I'm bummed for like five minutes. Then I remember my body is a beautiful, intricate piece of art and I was always the supporting comedic role anyway. Plus, I've always wanted to cover my body in tattoos. My mother and uncle were really heavily tattooed, so—to me—it's a way of life, a rite of passage, and part of my white-trash, punk rock roots."

So, like earlier stated, Tana is—amongst a million other things—a self-proclaimed strip tease educator. To be more precise, she is a co-creator of the All That Glitters Burlesque Academy—along with her partner-in-crime, Holly Dai. After some less-than-fortunate letdowns, Tana's entrepreneurial propensities took over, and eventually, Tana and Holly stole the show.

"Holly founded the Rose City School of Burlesque in 2010. She briefly retired from the burlesque





I WAS ALWAYS TOLD I DANCED 'TOO SEXY' AND THAT REMOVING ARTICLES OF CLOTHING OR INCORPORATING A CHAIR WAS INAPPROPRIATE

community and let go of creative control of the school, staying on as the costume craft teacher; then, soon thereafter, she was abruptly 'let go'. The Rose City School veered away from my ideals and I was no longer encouraged to share my experience as a ten-year veteran in our scene, but was instead invited to teach one two-hour dance class and attend the students' graduation. After that, Holly approached me about forming our own classic striptease academy. We caught hell for the split in such a small community, but we are delighted with the curriculum, level of professionalism, and sheer joy we experience with our students."

The thought of burlesque dancing likely conjures images of nipple tassels spinning in hypnotic swirls and rib-crushing corsets glimmering under dimming lights. But what the thought may not conjure is how one actually becomes a burlesque dancer—and an extremely successful one at 🌸



MY GOAL IN THIS LIFE IS TO GRACE UNDER PRESSURE, BREATHE, LIVE TO MY UNIMAGINABLE POTENTIAL, BE KIND AND LOVING TO MYSELF FIRST AND FOREMOST, AND SIMPLY ENJOY THE RIDE



that. After dancing for a literal lifetime, it seems only befitting that Tana should be making a comfortable living strutting her stuff on stage—and she is.

“I started dance classes at the age of two, barely able to walk; I took dance, music, modelling and theatre classes throughout my youth. I attended a junior high for the Performing and Visual Arts with gifted kids from all over the greater Houston area. In high school dance production class, I was always told I danced ‘too sexy’ and that removing articles of clothing or incorporating a chair was inappropriate. My best friend in college and I started our own major at Chico State, fusing together the incredible dance, theatre, and music departments to create a Musical Theatre degree. I was later asked to choreograph a twelve-girl Moulin Rouge-era striptease; at that point, I’d never even heard of burlesque. Fast forward 10 years, and I’ve been a successful dancer, artist,

and pin-up model ever since.

With vanity running rampant these days, it might be hard to believe that a woman with such an eye-catching appearance could be focused on much else besides her own reflection. But you better believe it, bucko. She is grounded, full of solid character, and as ambitious as they come. Admit it, it’s hard not to be a fan of anyone with beauty, brains, and boobs.

“My goal in this life is to grace under pressure, breathe, live to my unimaginable potential, be kind & loving to myself first and foremost, and just simply enjoy the ride.”

As for what’s next for Tana the Tattooed Lady, she gave me a simple, two word response: “the moon.” And as much as it made me want to annoy her with 50 more pressing questions, I couldn’t. I had to accept her eccentricity as reality. This talented Wonder Woman very well may be on the moon the next time I see her, and I can only wish upon a star that there’s a well-lit stage in outer space. 🌙

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BIG EASY

Imagine the party vibe of Las Vegas with the unbelievable food of the American South and the best jazz you've ever heard, then top it all off with French flare, and you've got New Orleans in a nutshell. Right in the heart of it, just far enough from Bourbon Street's debauchery, you'll find Downtown Tattoo, home to two of my favorite people: Terry Brown and Hayley Waldner.



DOWNTOWN TATTOO
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Barbara Pavone

It was my first time visiting New Orleans and as much as nothing could have prepared me for the heat – sweating profusely at 9 in the morning is not OK – it was the city's history, charm and hospitality that took me by surprise. And the food, of course, because you can't go wrong with fried everything.

Six hours into my trip, I understood the reasoning behind the city's nickname, The Big Easy, and why famed authors like Ernest Hemingway,

Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote loved it so much. Truth be told, I was itching for an excuse to never leave.

"I made the decision to move here within the span of a month and a half and it just charmed me right off the bat," says Terry Brown who chose to swap his hometown of San Antonio, Texas for NOLA in 2006.

"I got the opportunity to work at a tattoo shop here and I took it. They needed somebody, someone I had worked with in



WE DON'T HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN, WE WEREN'T PLANNING ON OPENING A SHOP, BUT SOMEBODY'S GONNA RENT IT BECAUSE OF WHERE THIS PLACE IS

state of Louisiana, as the three of us get into interview mode in Downtown Tattoo's gallery space.

"The dating scene her is a little slim," laughs Hayley, "and I remember seeing him at a show and I told my girlfriend, 'That guy's not from here!' We found out he was moving here and I'm like, 'He's new?!' Sold. Done."

Teasing aside, we get back to praising New Orleans, as Hayley, a true local, says, "One of my favorite tattoos is the knuckle 'Sink or Swim' tattoo and that's the one thing I've always said about this city: It's a sink or swim town. You either come here and do really well or you don't - there's no good medium. I've seen people move here and have hung out with them and a year later I'm like, 'Wow, they're doing awesome' or 'God, your mom should come get you'. The temptations here are high. You can go to a bar 24 hours a day, you can walk around with your drinks, you can do all these things."

DOWNTOWN TATTOO 101

"I saw the building go up for rent and we called the lady that was running the building and she's like, 'Yeah, I'm showing it tomorrow to five people' and I told Terry, 'We don't have a business plan, we weren't planning on opening a shop, but somebody's gonna rent it because of where this place is,'" remembers Hayley when asked how the shop first came to be. "So we called her back and we're like, 'We're going out of town tomorrow' - totally not - 'we need to look at it today' and she said 'OK' and we rented it that day. She loves us, she's this sweet old lady who lives in the suburbs."

"She was just happy that we weren't a restaurant," adds Terry. "There are certain things about the building, its age and some of the stuff they've done to it over the years, that the owner really likes and a restaurant would wanna ruin all of those things and we don't. So we got a bunch 🍷"

San Antonio put in a good word, I sent in my portfolio, they gave me the job and I moved out here a year after Hurricane Katrina. Met her shortly after and she's a big reason why I didn't wanna leave," he says, referring to wife Hayley, who also happens to co-own the shop and is the Sailor Jerry Rum ambassador for the



of brown paper and covered up the windows and got to work.”

“And cried. Just kidding!” laughs Hayley. “I remember getting the keys and we came in here and we sat and we were just like, ‘What the fuck are we gonna do?’ It worked out, but it was definitely a sheer moment of panic. It’s a big spot, so it was really intimidating, too.”

“I also think it’s super challenging opening a business with your partner. We weren’t married at the time, we just got married last July, but that’s a huge challenge. We live together and work together. It was funny explaining what we were doing to family and they’re like, ‘Where’s your business plan? You need to write one!’”

“Do tattoos. Do as many tattoos as you possibly can every day,” laughs Terry and, if you ask me, that’s as solid a plan as it gets and it’s been working pretty spectacularly.

“We opened the shop proper on July 8, 2012 and the gallery

TERRY ON FRIDAY THE 13TH

One gimmicky thing we do is the Friday the 13th days. When you think about things you do to get people’s attention and get them in the door, that’s completely part of tattoo history. Flash is to get your attention. It’s a flash design - it’s flashy. That’s what flash means and that’s exactly what these things do.



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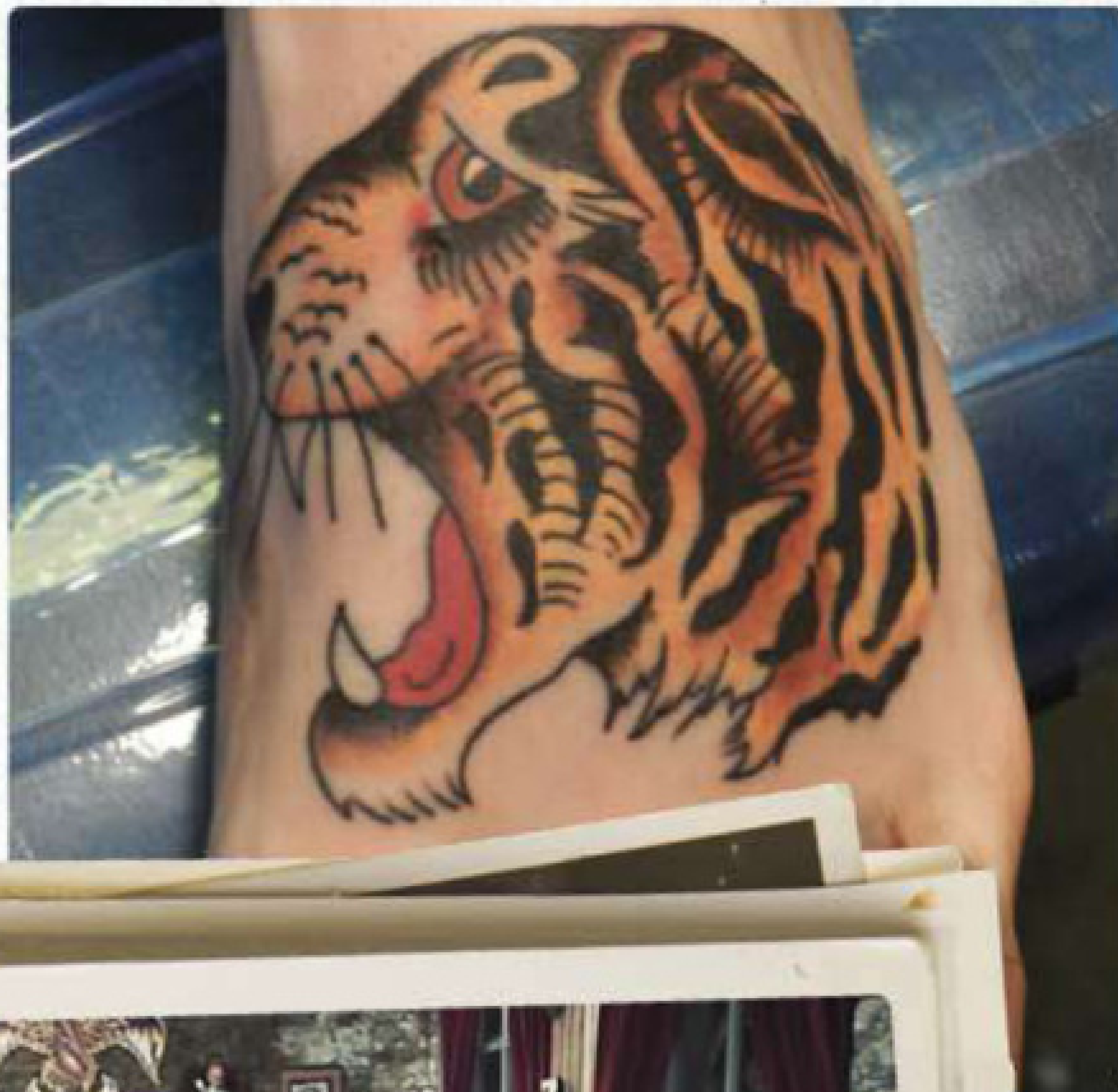
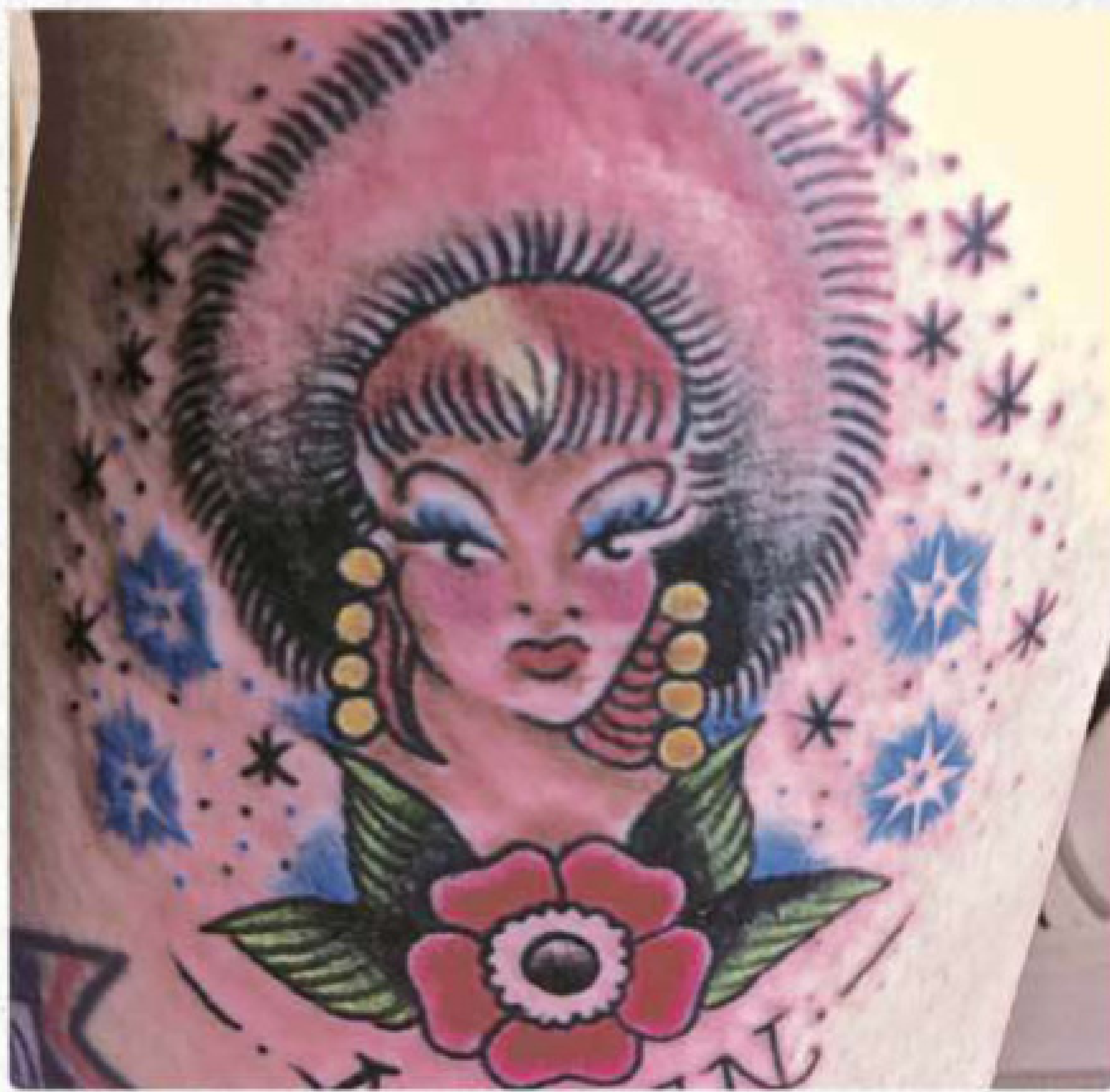


on October 5, 2012 and we’ve had the same crew for almost two years with few exceptions,” he continues, proving my point. “We’re a street shop with an incredibly high artistic standard, so people get a good tattoo when they walk in and also everybody has a different style. A couple guys are booked a while in advance, but we also have a couple guys that are almost always ready to go.”

EVENT TIME

In addition to putting out solid work, Terry and Hayley strive to keep Downtown Tattoo in locals’ minds by doing a lot with and for their community.

“I found it interesting over the years of working at shops that they’re there and people around them know they’re there, but they’re not really engaged with the community,” explains



Terry. "Why wouldn't you want a rock solid reputation in your community with the people and businesses around you?"

"My favorite event that we do is Autism Awareness Month," says Hayley, giving a great example. "We donate a portion of the proceeds from tattoos to autism awareness, which is super dear

to me cause my little nephew is autistic and he's awesome. And my other fave thing we do, which I kinda created around Sailor Jerry, is Toys for Tots for Tats. You bring in a toy valued at \$20 and you get a free Sailor Jerry tattoo - I'm kinda like the toy police - and we have the Marines come in dressed in

their blues who open the door all day and it's awesome." However, this being NOLA, you never know what any given day will bring through your front door. "You get your occasional drunks, that's any city, but I think here it's easier cause they can walk in with their drinks," says Hayley. "We had a good one last Friday the 13th. Everyone was getting done tattooing and these four guys come in, one of them had his shirt off, his eye's cut and they're like, 'We need to buy a shirt'. That guy was going to wake up with a black eye and a tattoo shirt and I wondered if he was going to search his body like, 'Oh my God!'"

PERFECT NOLA DAYS

Wanting to make the most of my time in New Orleans, I couldn't pass up the chance to wrap things up by asking the 🌸

TERRY ON NOLA HOTSPOTS

With few exceptions, New Orleans is one of those odd places where the spots tourists are told to go are usually pretty good. It's the oddest little thing, even where I'm from, what's super popular or super big is not where locals go, but here a local will eat at the same spot a tourist will.



MY OTHER FAVE THING WE DO, WHICH I KINDA CREATED AROUND SAILOR JERRY, IS TOYS FOR TOTS FOR TATS. YOU BRING IN A TOY VALUED AT \$20 AND YOU GET A FREE SAILOR JERRY TATTOO

HAYLEY ON VEGAS WEDDING MISHAPS

I remember driving up in a limo and I saw Terry and I was like, 'Ahh, this is OK,' then I looked at my dad and I remember looking down and I'm like, 'What the hell are you wearing?' He had a great suit on, black socks and brown sandals and he's like, 'I only brought one pair of shoes!' [laughs]

Browns where they thought any awesome tourist should go.

"Walk down Bourbon Street once at night, there's good people watching, but the smell will drive you away," starts Terry. "The Carousel Bar at Hotel Monteleone is a classic place, a bunch of great authors have drank there."

"My ideal day would start at Cake Café for breakfast, then you could come get tattooed at Downtown," offers Hayley. "For lunch you'd have to get a po' boy, then come back to Downtown and get your second tattoo!" she laughs.

"Go to Coop's for dinner and oh, you'd have to get a snowball - not a snow cone like the rest of the world thinks they are - at Pandora's in Mid-City. It's shaved ice, then they take concentrated syrup, which is pure sugar, and dump it all over. You can get condensed milk on top, too, which is more sugar, and make it even more awesome by mixing it with soft serve ice cream.

Unless you weigh 80 pounds, you can't order a stuffed snowball without being like, 'I need to rethink my life!'" she laughs.

"Then come back to Downtown!" 🐾



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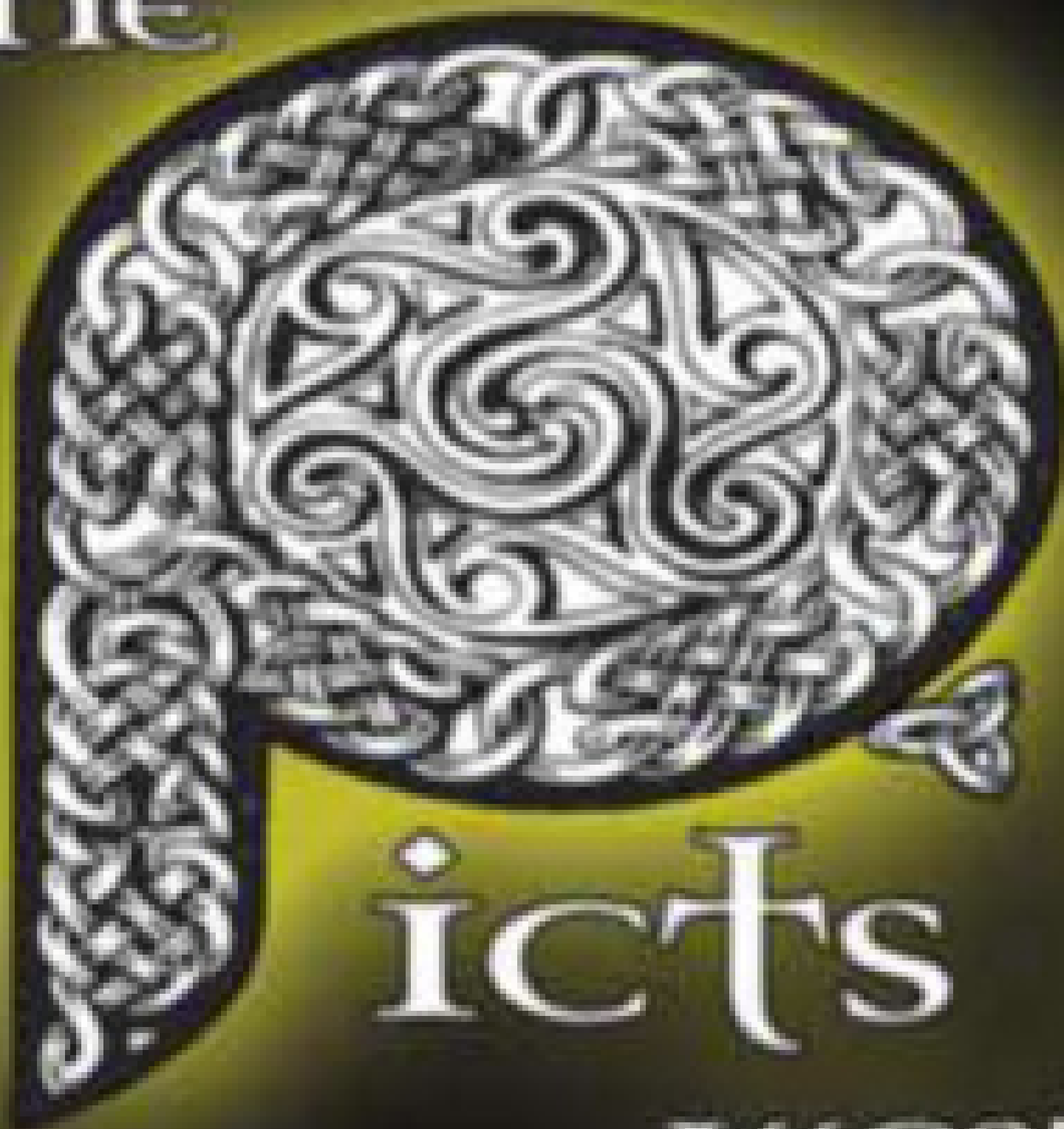
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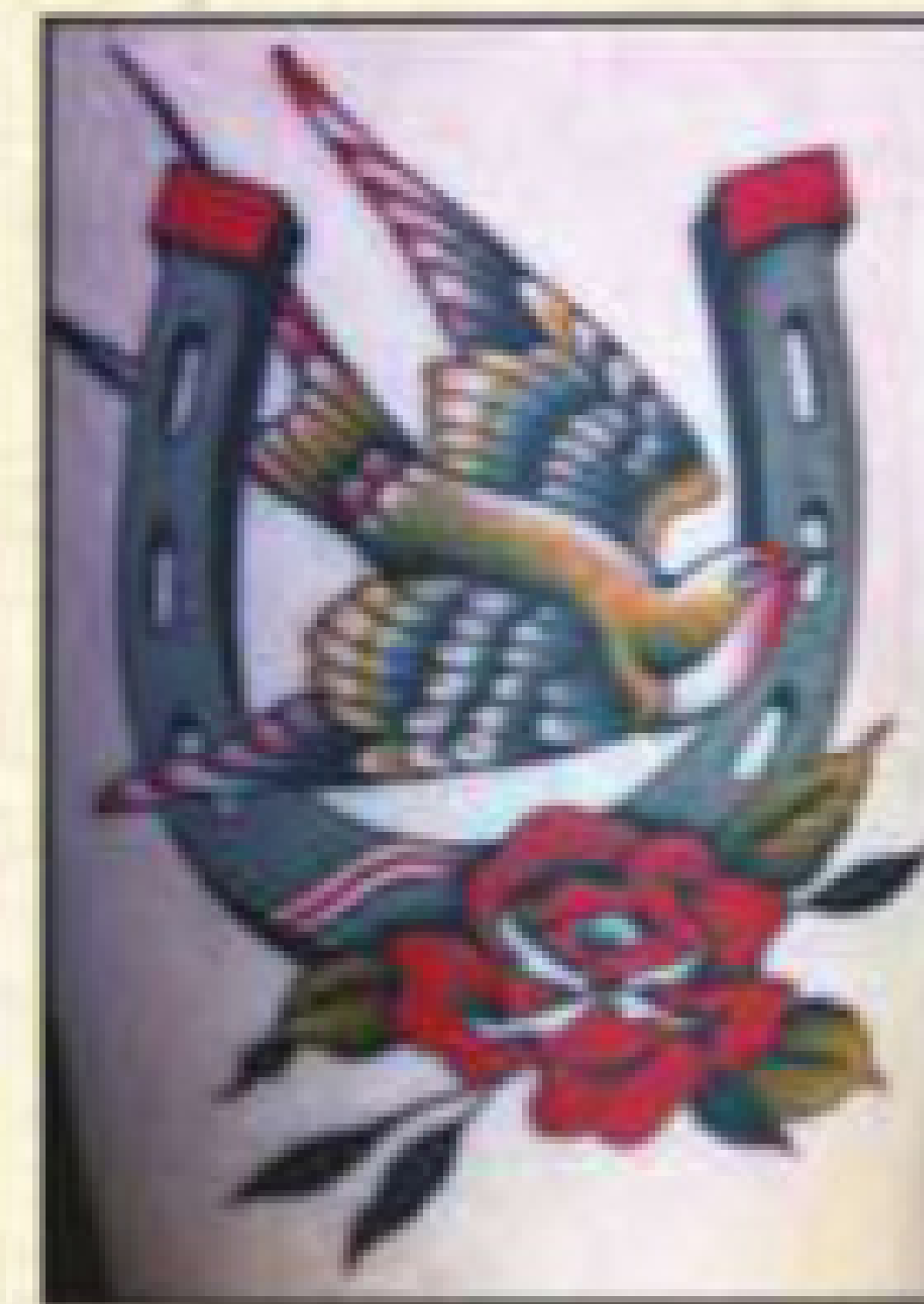
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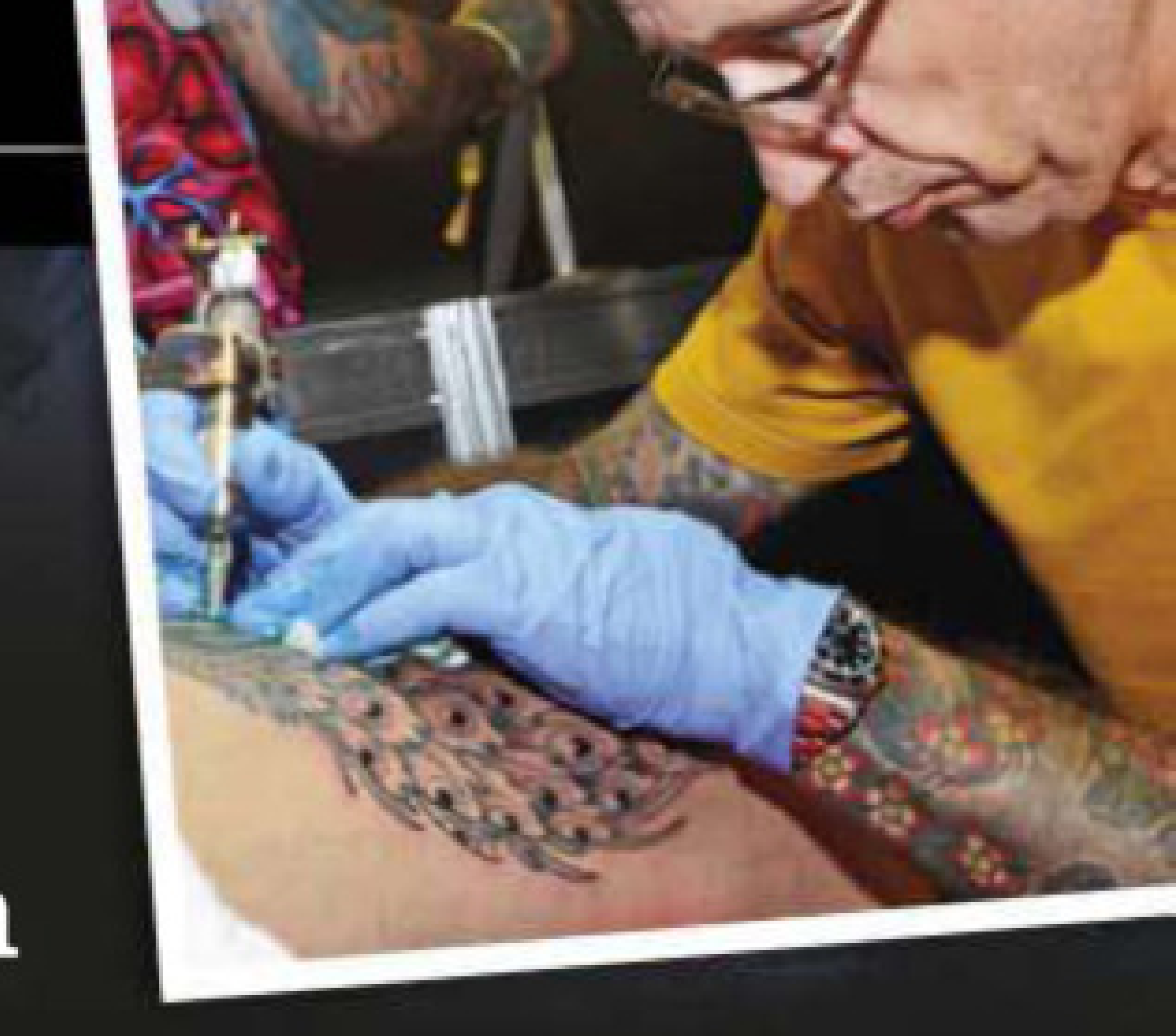
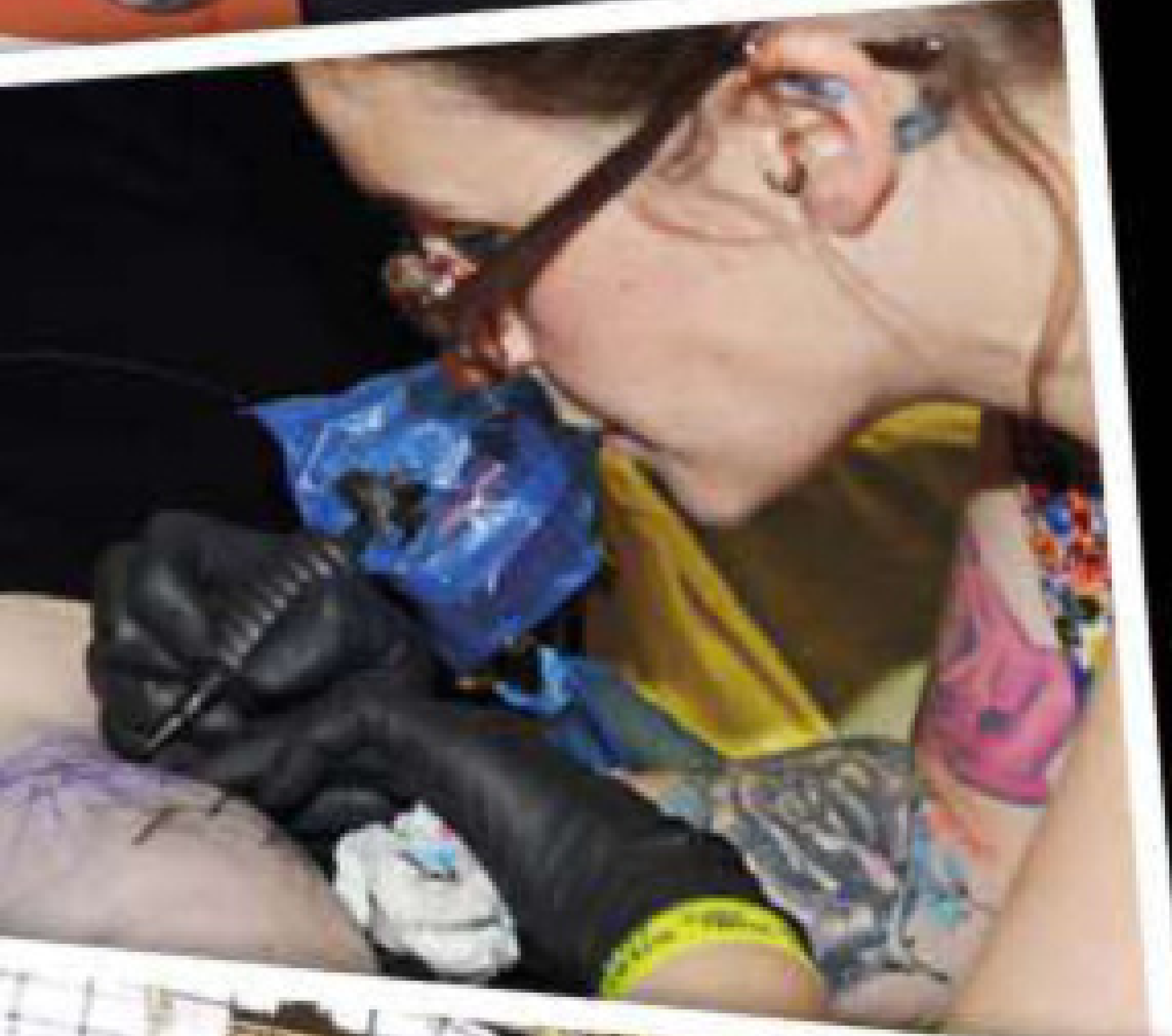
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The Time Machine

WAYNE JOYCE

This issue, I thought we would take a look at the other options available to you for tattoo removal.

Not because we are recommending any of them, but because sometimes other people do and you should really know what you're getting yourself into. I'm always interested in these 'au natural' options of tattoo removal. From acidic based creams to a \$200 booklet on how to magically rub them away, are they attention worthy or are they the modern day online equivalent of a travelling salesman with a suitcase full of snake-oil?

My experience with the creams have not been positive and the scarring I've seen would leave Edward Scissorhand's face looking like some kind of beauty contender. Essentially, these creams are acidic in nature and are indiscriminate as to what they affect on the skin. They obliterate the entire area removing skin, hair and in some severe cases, they will also eat into the subcutaneous fat level. Resulting in some aesthetically offensive scarring. If you happen to be the kind of person that looks on YouTube for your advice, you will find hundreds of home experimenters giving creams a try – and as far too many of the comments below repeat time after time, why is there no video footage of what it looked like later?

How about if we could simply rub our tattoos away with our fingers? Would our primitive ancestors not have figured this out a thousand years ago? So why pay a few hundred bucks for a booklet saying it is so? Any dermatologist worth his salt, would give this advice over any other option if it worked that's for sure. That said, these types of websites always have a few testimonials raving about the potential of these methods which makes me ponder if it is actually a viable option. If any readers have tried

this, any other variant or herbal rub-in remedies that have worked, I'd love to hear from you. At face value however, all it looks like is a good advertisement for Photoshop but I would love to be corrected.

On the other hand, some may say that lemon juice or plain old table salt rubbed into the area of the tattoo, after lightly opening the skin with a dry tattoo gun, can help reduce the tattoo. I'm not convinced by this either but again, if you've had good results, I'd be interested in seeing the evidence.

It's an odd industry to be in sometimes.

Misinformation is everywhere. There is one website

I found that promotes a cream by saying laser removal will cost you a minimum of

£1,800 and as much as £30,000. For the record, this is simply untrue in every way. Removal by laser will actually cost you about the same as a good tattoo - there certainly is no need to be thinking about a bank loan or a second mortgage to get it done that's for sure.

The reason I bring all of these alternatives up is simple. If there was a cheaper, easier, less painful way of removing unwanted tattoos, it would be those methods that you would find in the high street and not lasers. They're not cheap to buy that's for sure but time after time, it's the only method that's been

proven to do what you're asking for. My advice to you is to not rely on website testimonials, instead, just as you should when you're getting good ink: research, research and research some more and wherever possible, see first hand results of what you're looking for. A Harley Street address is not proof of anything other than a couple of numbers screwed to a door.

Research! 🐞

As always - if you have further questions or want to discuss something, you can email me here: wayne@resetroom.co.uk



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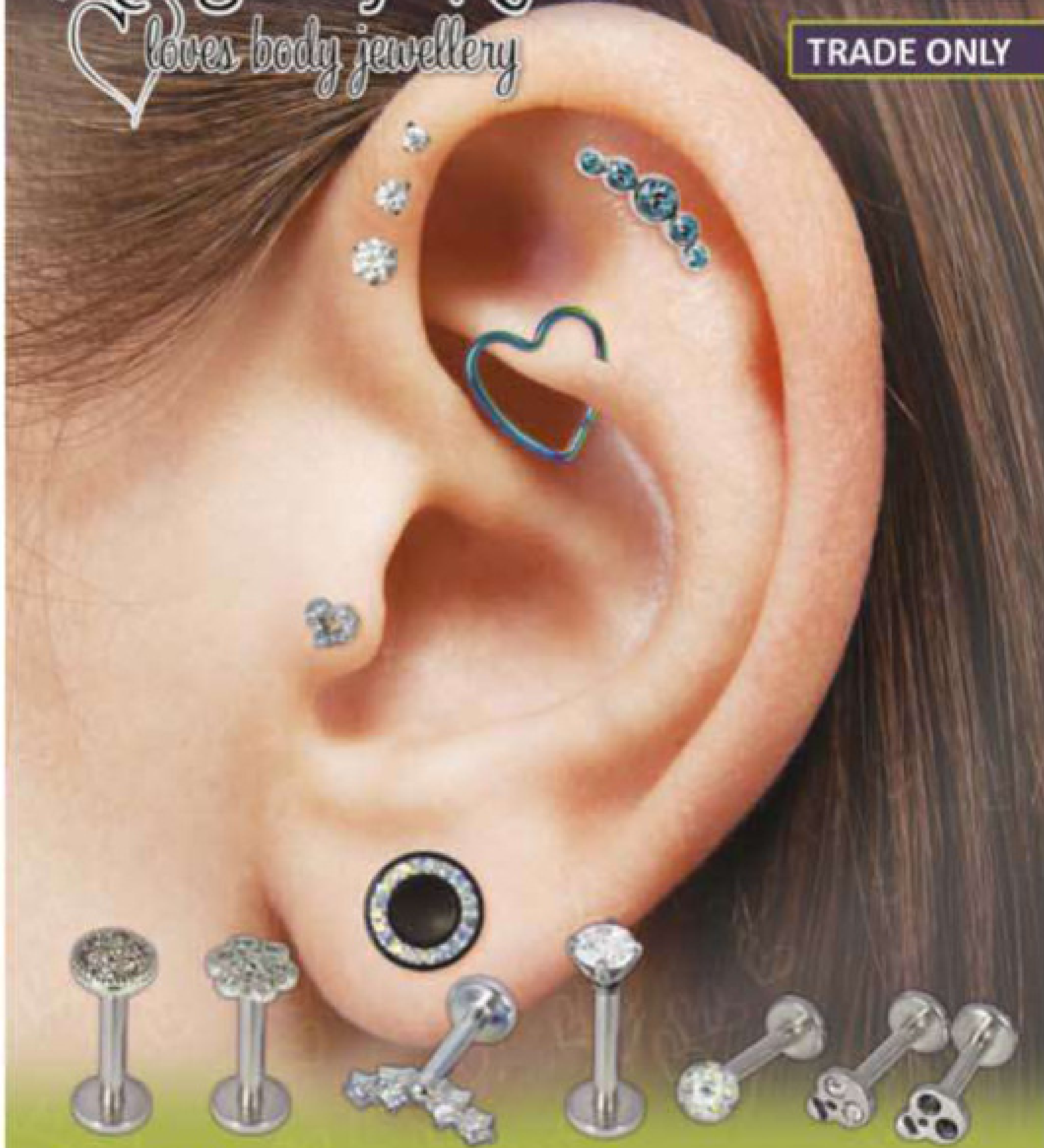
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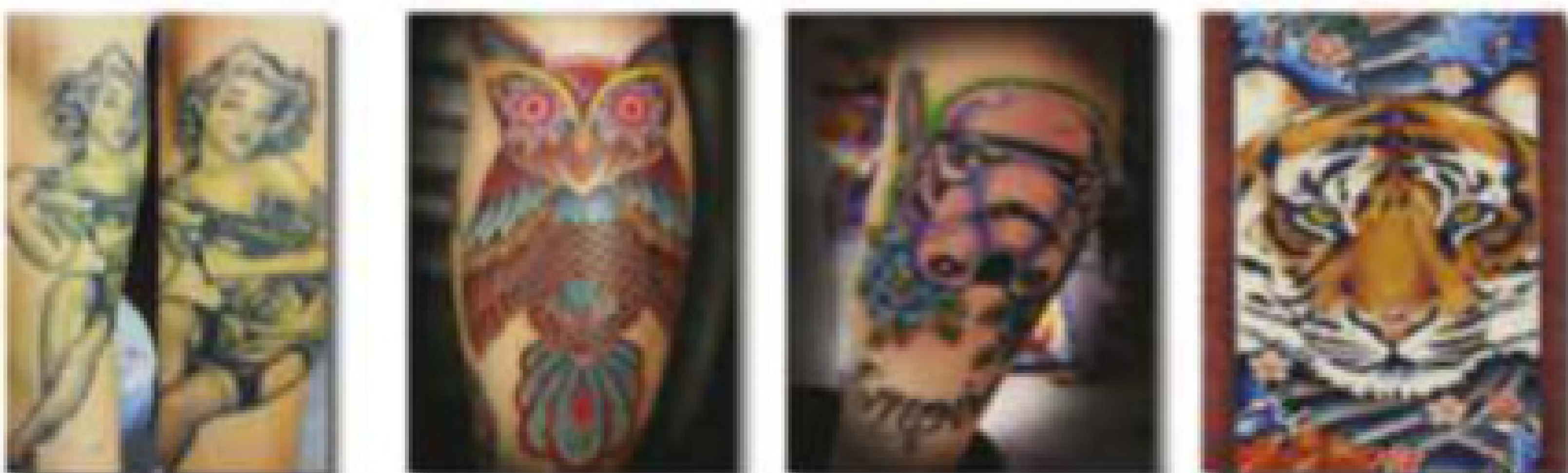
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Soapbox

CRAIGY LEE

📍 Craigy Lee 📍 Ash Springle

There have always been politics within the tattoo industry in the UK, which I am very happy to have escaped. Life is much simpler on my island of paradise at the end of the world here in New Zealand.

do however see the onslaught of posts on social media every year when the London convention rolls around, and this past week over the Manchester Tattoo Show and the Tattoo Tea Party. You may think my opinion will be biased, you're reading this in the confines of the magazine associated with one of the aforementioned conventions, but this is my page where I write my opinion from an artists perspective. (True fact! Ed.)

With the amount of tattoo conventions that have saturated the market in recent years, it was inevitable that at some point there would be two big shows on the same weekend. Now firstly, yes (again, in my opinion) it is a dumb move to have two shows in the same city on the same weekend, however there is a hell of a lot of planning that goes into these shows and when an organiser books dates for these events, it's well in advance - before they have even seen dates for other conventions that year. The problem is that big event centres and venues have bookings years and years in advance for other events - believe it or not their world does not evolve around tattooing.

To see everyone bitching about it on social media is a bit hypocritical. You guys don't mind opening a tattoo shop in the same city area as an already established tattoo shop, but you don't like two conventions in the same city? Tattoo shops opening up in the same area affects day to day business, their income and the industry as a whole. A convention does not, you're not forced to go to a convention, pick which one you want to work (if any) and go



to that one. The only person who is putting their money on the line here are the organisers.

I have written a couple of posts online about this before but with the two London conventions, drama is just silly. Two tattoo shows six months apart in a city of 10 million people is not going to affect anybody. In New Zealand, we have two tattoos shows and our whole countries population is only 4 million. In a city that size there is more than enough people who will attend both spend money and both events should be able to exist happily.

The bottom line is, neither of the organisers tattoo. One guy runs a tattoo magazine and organises a convention in London. The other guy runs a tattoo magazine and organises a convention in London, they are essentially the same, both running the events as a business with the same end goal: to make money - and believe it or not, that money also goes back into the 'system' to make the next show work even better. Choice is a good thing, a monopoly is not.

So why any artist feels the need to get involved in the drama and politics of the whole thing is beyond me, business is business let them get on with it, and you get on with yours.

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

WARRIOR SOUL

Tattoos have a fearsome reputation, from the Picts of the 4th century to the football hooligans of the 1970s, tattoos are often associated with those that seek to strike terror into the hearts of their opponents.



Pam Van-Damned

Worldwide, tribespeople have historically employed tattooing as a type of psychological warfare. The Mundurucú people of the Amazon jungle's feather-like tattoos were inspired by their spiritual beliefs, but utilised when ambushing those whose heads they hunted. Many Native American tribes practiced tattooing, mostly totemic amulets for spiritual purposes, but the Cherokee orator and renowned warrior Ostenaco's famous 1762 visit to England to meet King George III certainly helped cement the conceptual relationship between fearsome 'others' and tattoos in the collective Western mind (not least due to Ostenaco's preference for his alternative name 'Utsidihi', reported to mean 'Mankiller'). Japan's rich and complex tattoo art, echoing classic woodblock ukiyo-e prints both aesthetically and in their classic folk tale content, were seen as a badge of bravery and courage and became associated with criminality, especially gangsters.

The bloody tales told by the Victorian travelling showmen as they exhibited kidnapped primitive people for profit, (always embellished and sometimes entirely fabricated) further contributed to the legend, as did subcultural appropriation a century later, bikers, Russian prisoners, gang members, these negative connotations have been salaciously trumpeted by the press, without mention of

the spiritual and ornamental aspects of tattoo art.

Nowadays, the custom of the fearsome tattoo plays out mostly in contemporary sport, notably in New Zealand rugby union, where many of the players' tattoos, like the National team's ritual Haka speak directly of their countries Māori traditions, in boxing, where Mike Tyson's tribal tattoo is legendary and in football, where the decorative and the symbolic combine and the modern attacking forward is just as likely to be fiercely fashionable as he is fierce on the pitch.

Tattoos today are more likely to be an informed, aesthetic-based choice rather than a spiritual custom or display of bravery and are more often worn by vegan students and style conscious hairdressers than criminals, so why do tattoos still generate fear?

The majority of human fear comes from what is unknown, often represented in art and literature as darkness, the unknown is what we cannot see, what we cannot touch, and what we cannot explain. In day to day life, 'literary darkness' can be substituted for 'ignorance', and of course, much of the fear surrounding the tattooed is due to just that, a lack of experience, and a lack of understanding.

The fears of others are illustrated by the questions asked of and statements often heard by tattooed folk. 'You'll never get a proper job now', comes from a fear of the consequence of non-conformity (something not

remotely frightening for those of us that have never really been able to fit in anyway). 'I can't have a tattoo because I can't choose one', is the fear of making a mistake, the inability to be brave and take a leap of faith. 'What will you look like when you are old?' is a fear of what others think one's appearance, a fear of one's own ageing body (you don't hear this one from those that are younger than you), and a fear of one's own ultimate mortality. 'That must've hurt', is the understandable fear of pain, a biological gift designed to keep us safe. 'How much did you spend on all that?' Is another reasonable fear, the loss of financial security, either directly - by spending on tattoos, or indirectly - by becoming less economically viable due to workplace prejudice, which bring us full circle, back where we started, 'You'll never get a real job now'.

We all have a responsibility to try and walk in one another's shoes, to inhabit one another's skins. Those of us that are tattooed should take the time to consider why 'outsiders' can react with such disapproval and understand that the ancient history of tattooing will always be part of its present, that gut reactions come from something bigger and more primordial than any of us are likely to understand. In many ways, the ability to disregard the fear of the unknown and become a tattooed person, is to become a kind of modern-day warrior, to display our courage. 🐼



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