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The nature of  
the beast

**SANTA  
PERPETUA**

The Memphis 3:

**DAMIEN  
ECHOLS**

Talks about love,  
art and death row



**HORIYOSHI III**

On the art of  
Namakubi

Brighton  
rocks:

**DEAD  
SLOW**

A legend  
rebranded

Holy Ink  
(Batman)

**ROB  
POPEJOY**

Tattooed vicar  
in the house

**DAVID  
GIERSCH**

An icon in  
the making

# A CABINET OF CURIOSITIES



ISSUE 248 · APRIL 2015 · £3.95  
MODEL: MIMI PHOTOGRAPH: SCOTT COLE

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Nicky Connor

## IF I PUT MY HAND IN THE FIRE...

At some point in the haze of putting this issue together, I realised that issue 250 is not so far away. That's a big deal.

That's a lot of issues. It will mean 21 years of putting *Skin Deep* out into the world. Over that time—of which not all are 'mine'—I would imagine we have collectively said a lot of things and inspired more than the occasional tattoo along the way.

For some, however, contributing to the world in the way I do is nothing less than corrupting society, with every issue we put out being the next step on *The Road To The Decline Of Western Civilisation*.

Talking of 21 years of tattooing—which I wasn't really, but am now—I'd been tattooed twice by the time I was 21 and that was definitely twice more than any of my close friends... and still is. It was a big deal back then and as you will all have noticed already, today, it's a very small deal.

My first tattoo was not a mistake but in time, it became one because it was not how I wanted others to see me and was soon devoured by a cover-up which is also now under the beady eye of the laser. I guess we could say it was a statement to the world rather than being for myself. My second tattoo—which is very much still with me—is a little faded but more than stands up to close scrutiny as being solid as a rock. That one still talks to me.

It took me that first mistake to realise what tattooing was about—and then it took me getting it covered up with

another mistake to realise I was right the first time. I'm one of those people that needs to put their hand in the fire twice to make sure it really was as hot as I thought it was.

My lovely friend at the back of the mag here, prefers the other train of thought. Paula's tattoos tend to catalogue her life because that's what's important to her. She is a collector of all kinds of things past, present and future. I, however, became an un-collector a long time ago. I have almost given away

### EVERYTHING BURNS WHEN IT'S HOT ENOUGH

all of my possessions and my bigger plan, once my kids have figured out their shit, is to liberate myself into the big wide world like a literary cosmic wanderer in a suit with a dog and a pen. I prefer to see my ink as symbolic of the insides of my head and not of anything particular that I went through.

The important thing here is that neither of us are quantifiably correct or incorrect on the matter. The key is that each of us know who we are and our bodies have been touched up accordingly. That's an interesting debate that we should probably put into print one day actually. Remind me I said that.

Anyway, the first time I put my hand in the fire, I didn't know myself at all. I was pretending I did but I was lying like a rug. I simply wanted to set myself apart from everybody else. But now?

As a cultural phenomenon, tattooed humans are legion. And amongst ourselves, we are set apart from others by what we have tattooed rather than the act of being tattooed in itself.

We're set apart by good ink vs ill thought out ink. Private ink vs public ink. Old school vs abstract. The variants on the theme are endless, but to the outside world, we are all simply tattooed and I really like that. We can argue amongst ourselves all we like, but when it comes down to it, we're all in this together—that said, if you get your eyeballs tattooed, you're on your own.

It's my aim this year to encourage Further Decline In Western Society by encouraging those 'without' to come test how hot the fire is for themselves.

Everything burns when it's hot enough.

*Sen*



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**26 READER PROFILE: ROB POPEJOY**  
He has been hailed as the holy hipster, but as far as Rob Popejoy is concerned, he is just an ordinary guy on a mission to spread the preachings of Jesus.

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In this exclusive with Horiyoshi III, we look behind the story of one of the most iconic images in Japanese tattooing, the severed head—or to the better acquainted, the namakubi.

**60 SANTA PERPETUA**  
With a solid background in creativity courtesy of her mother, Santa Perpetua now finds herself working in Brighton and loving every minute. Working your way around the world looking for a place to call home is no walk in the park though, physically or spiritually.

**70 DAMIEN ECHOLS**  
Damien Echols is the subject of four critically acclaimed documentaries, including *West of Memphis*, a talented artist and one of the most genuine guys around. He's also had to overcome the impossible: A death sentence...

**76 DEAD SLOW**  
Originally opened as Temple Tatu, then Nine, new owners and resident artists Jack Applegate and Kirsty Simpson are inking its third chapter with a new name - Dead Slow.



## HORIYOSHI III

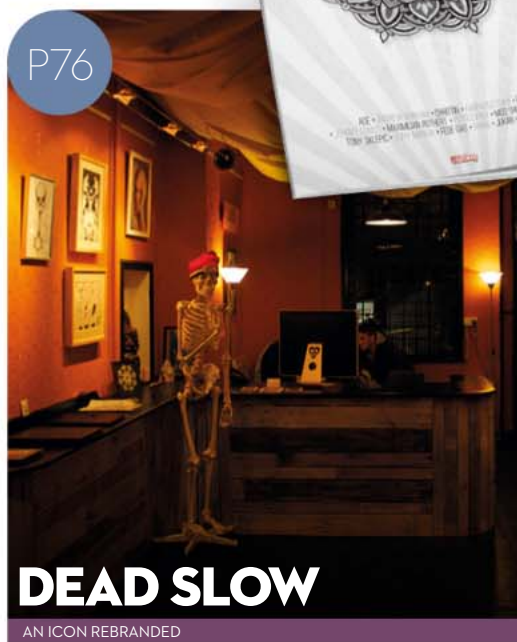
THE LEGEND OF THE NAMAKUBI

**82 DAVID GIERSCH**  
There are more than a few reasons to catch up with David Giersch. Primarily, there's his photo-realism work but he was also still on a buzz from winning 'Best of Show', at the Tattoo Festival Berlin.

**88 PULP FICTION**  
In 2005, Stieg Larsson's crime novel, 'Män som hatar kvinnor', was published in his native Sweden, but you'll know it better by its English language title, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

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16 MUST SEE PORTFOLIOS



## DEAD SLOW

AN ICON REBRANDED



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# Sleeve Notes

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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](mailto: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.

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## SHORT SLEEVES



## MONSTERS ART

Will Gee who previously worked Gypsy Rose, has just opened his new studio Monsters Art Emporium fitted with its very own pool table! Bonus! His new address is:

Monsters Art Emporium  
Part 1st Floor, Pearl Assurance House  
Elbow Lane, Tavistock PL19 0BN  
Tel: 01822610191



## THUNDERCITY

Thundercity have just re-opened their studio with new artist, Monkie, in place. They also have a custom Motorcycle shop under the studio which is a pretty cool combination. You can find them right here:

Thundercity Tattoo, Units 2/3,  
Haines Park, Grant Ave., Leeds,  
West Yorkshire LS7 1QQ  
Tel: 01132 406332  
Mobile: 07414 660269  
E-mail: [tattoo@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:tattoo@tiscali.co.uk)  
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WIN

## THE GREAT BRITISH TATTOO SHOW TICKET GIVEAWAY

In my (in)finite wisdom, I've decided to give away five pairs of tickets in every issue of Skin Deep between now and the end of May, which (logically) is when we arrive at The Great British Tattoo Show.

Who knows, maybe I'll up it next issue and then up it again as we go forwards, depends what I can get away with!

Suffice to say however, more talent gets added to the bill every day and we've

still got some surprises up our sleeves that haven't been announced yet.

Thus: as always, if you're coming, grab some tickets over at [greatbritishtattooshow.com](http://greatbritishtattooshow.com) but if you think The Gods Of Light and Tattoo may be tuned into your current vibration, hit me with a blank email to [editor@skindeep.co.uk](mailto:editor@skindeep.co.uk) with the subject: LONDON PLEASE. Let's get it on.

## SHORT SLEEVES

WHO'S NEXT?  
JUDI DENCH?

According to the Daily Telegraph, Judi Dench is the next celebrity to consider embracing her passing years by doing something that she has always wanted to and finally get 'that tattoo'. She's reported to have said "There's an Indian symbol that I like which supposedly represents life and love and everything. One of the cameramen who worked on The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel told me what it meant, but I'm a bit nervous in case I'm being set up. It might be unbelievably rude."

...and to be honest, that's good enough for us. One more of us. One less of them.



## FADE TO BLACK

Our good friend Fade FX has been a touch on the busy side lately, what with Ember Films just releasing a short film about her and everything. In case you've been living under a rock, Fade specialises in geometric dotwork and traditional Borneo hand tapped tattoos and this is the first in a strand of films from Ember 'focusing on fascinating characters with unique talents'.

You can watch the movie at: [vimeo.com/117275687](https://vimeo.com/117275687)

And if you like what you see can find out more about Ember at [emberfilms.co.uk](http://emberfilms.co.uk) or hook up with them at [twitter.com/EmberFilms](https://twitter.com/EmberFilms)

You can contact Fade at her new studio here: [fadefxtattoo.com](http://fadefxtattoo.com)

## SAME OLD SONG AND DANCE



The BBC recently ran a great story online about how every single headline you read about tattoos is always the same—and has been for at least the last one hundred years.

"Tattooing is on the increase: habit not confined to seamen only," proclaims one headline, while a second article declares: "Tattoos are no longer the trophies of rockers, sailors, bikers..."

Interestingly, the first appeared in the New York Times in 1908, the second appeared on the BBC website two years ago.

The story—that tattooing has "entered the mainstream"—is just one of a number of tattoo tropes recycled relentlessly over the decades, suggests Dr Matt Lodder, art historian and tattoo expert at the University of Essex.

Others stereotypes include:

- Everybody seems to be getting tattooed, should we not be concerned?
- Surprise at women, the young or the old getting a tattoo

- The pain during a tattoo
- The issue of regret at having a tattoo

In the late 19th Century, Princess Waldemar of Denmark's tattoo was big news. As was the inked skin of Queen Olga of Greece, King Oscar of Sweden and the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia. These were the celebrity figures of their day. Modern day equivalents might include David Beckham, Cheryl Cole or David Dimbleby. Although the names, faces and places might change, the stories remain largely the same.

We're handing a big bunch of flowers and a steaming mug of coffee to the BBC for running the story mostly because it's about time the mainstream press had figured this out don't you think?

Read the whole article here: [bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25330947](http://bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25330947)

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"I told the tattooist I wanted black eyebrows but I didn't think they would be this black. I don't know what I was thinking as I'm naturally blonde."*

There are so many things we could say right now, but we had best not. You can read it yourself here: [bathchronicle.co.uk/Student-Bath-afraid-getting-eyebrow-tattoos/story-26016591-detail/story.html](http://bathchronicle.co.uk/Student-Bath-afraid-getting-eyebrow-tattoos/story-26016591-detail/story.html)

# Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

## MONDIAL DU TATOUAGE

6–8 March 2015

LA GRANDE HALLE DE LA VILLETTE  
211 Avenue Jean Jaurès  
75019 Paris, France  
[mondialdutatouage.com](http://mondialdutatouage.com)

## EVERGREEN TATTOO INVITATIONAL

6–8 March 2015

Willamalane Center  
250 South 32nd Street  
Springfield, OR 97478,  
United States  
[evergreentattoo.com](http://evergreentattoo.com)

## 20TH TATTOO CONVENTION KARLSRUHE

6 March–8 March 2015

Festhalle Durlach  
Kanzlerstraße 13  
76227 Karlsruhe  
Germany  
[tattooconvention-karlsruhe.de](http://tattooconvention-karlsruhe.de)

## TATTOO CONVENTION LIECHTENSTEIN

7 March–8 March 2015

Spörryhalle  
Rüfestrasse 6  
9490 Vaduz, Liechtenstein  
[tattoo81.li](http://tattoo81.li)

## ROTTERDAM TATTOO CONVENTION

14–15 March 2015

Ahoy Rotterdam, Ahoyweg 10,  
3084 BA Rotterdam  
The Netherlands  
[unitedconventions.com](http://unitedconventions.com)

## TATTOO INK EXPLOSION

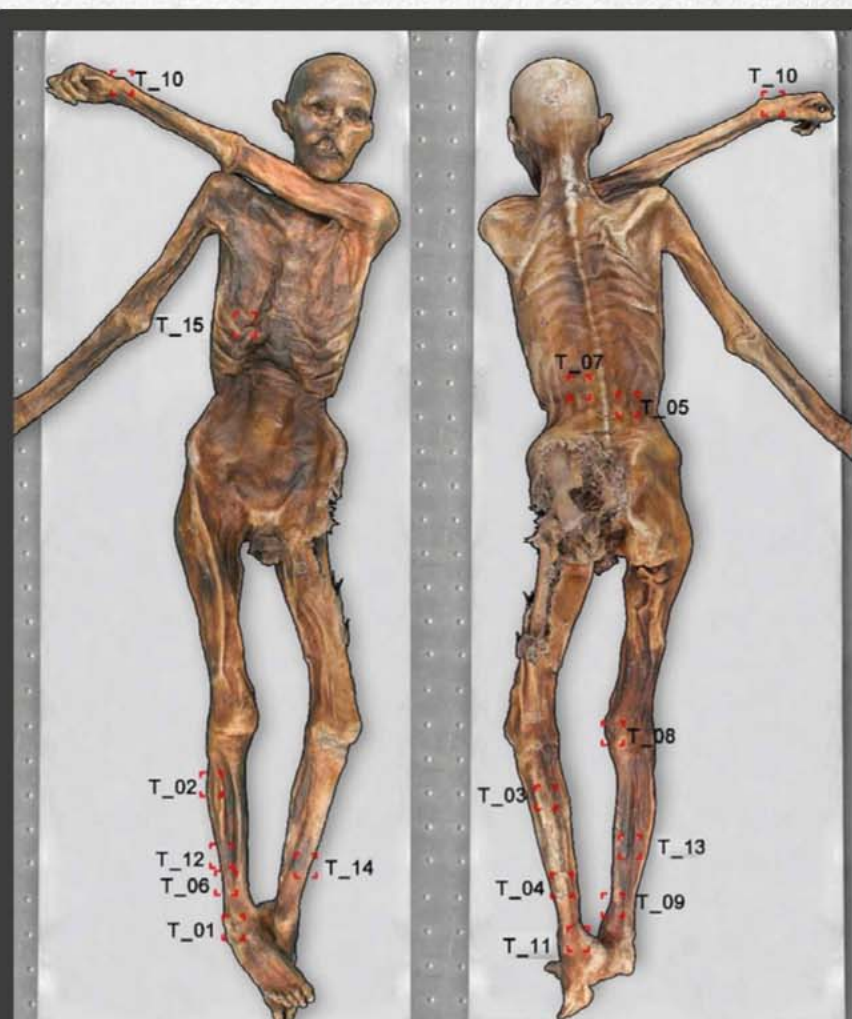
13 March–15 March 2015

Kaiser-Friedrich-Halle  
Hohenzollernstraße 15  
41061 Moenchengladbach  
Germany  
[tattooinkexplosion.com](http://tattooinkexplosion.com)

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE INK – FEMALE CONVENTION

14 March–15 March 2015

Hotel Sheraton Roma  
Viale del Pattinaggio, 100  
00144 Roma, Italy  
[theothersideoftheink.com](http://theothersideoftheink.com)



## ÖTZI: BACK IN THE NEWS

Wearing a surgical mask and gown over a thick winter jacket, Marcello Melis stood at a glass operating table in a tiny ice chamber and examination room in Italy's South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology.

His patient was a 5,300-year-old mummy nicknamed "Ötzi the Iceman." And though Melis wanted to look beneath Ötzi's caramel-colored skin, he held neither a scalpel nor forceps in his gloved hands. Rather, the tool for this procedure was a modified Nikon camera.

Ötzi is legendary in science and tattooing circles. Since finding the frozen mummy in the Italian Alps in 1991, researchers have conducted numerous tests to piece together his ancient tale.

The thing is: Researchers never knew how many tattoos Ötzi had, or why exactly he was inked in the first place. They'd previously counted somewhere between 47 and 55 black simple charcoal lines rubbed into the iceman's skin, mostly around his joints. Some scientists believe that the tattoos were made using a sharp

bone tool in an attempt to alleviate pain in these areas, perhaps an early form of acupuncture.

But what if Ötzi's tattoos were there for another reason—and what if there were more of them? The dozens of tattoos scientists could see might, they thought, be accompanied by more marks—ones obscured by dark patches from thousands of years of mummification.

Not only did Melis and his team get a more complete view of tattoos they already knew were there—they also uncovered new markings on parts of Ötzi's body they never knew were decorated.

You can read the full story and follow links here: [theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/02/mapping-61-ancient-tattoos-on-a-5300-year-old-mummy/385198/](http://theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/02/mapping-61-ancient-tattoos-on-a-5300-year-old-mummy/385198/)



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## CHICAGO TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION

20 March–22 March 2015

Hyatt Regency O'Hare  
9300 Bryn Mawr Ave,  
Rosemont, IL 60018,  
United States  
villainarts.com

## PRISON INK

27 March–29 March 2015

Fængslet, Fussingsvej 8  
8700 Horsens, Denmark  
prisonink.dk

## THE SCOTTISH TATTOO CONVENTION

28 March–29 March 2015

Edinburgh Corn Exchange  
10 Newmarket Road,  
Edinburgh EH14 1RJ,  
United Kingdom  
scottishtattooconvention.net

## THE GREAT BRITISH TATTOO SHOW

23 May–24 May 2015

Alexandra Palace  
Alexandra Palace Way  
London N22 7AY  
United Kingdom  
thegreatbritishtattooshow.com

## TATTOO JAM

07 August–09 August 2015

Doncaster Racecourse  
Leger Way  
Doncaster DN2 6BB,  
United Kingdom  
tattoojam.com

## ALEC AND THE MAGIC POTION

CBC News (Canada) recently played host to a guy called Alec Falkenham - a Dalhousie student - who claims to have developed a topical cream that he says will make tattoo ink eventually fade away.



"When comparing it to laser-based tattoo removal, in which you see the burns, the scarring, the blisters, in this case, we've designed a drug that doesn't really have much off-target effect," he said.

"We're not targeting any of the normal skin cells, so you won't see a lot of inflammation. In fact, based on the process that we're actually using, we don't think there will be any inflammation at all and it would actually be anti-inflammatory."

Falkenham's topical cream works by targeting the macrophages that have remained at the site of the tattoo. New macrophages move in to consume the previously pigment-filled macrophages and then migrate to the lymph nodes, eventually taking all the dye with them.

There's no injection and no inflammation, and Falkenham says the tattoo should fade away.

Falkenham is working with the university's Industry Liaison and Innovation office to patent his technology. He and the ILI office have secured funding through Springboard Atlantic and Innovacorp

Early Stage Commercialization Fund for his research.

"Alec is a trail blazer in tattoo removal. He came to ILI with an idea, tangentially related to his graduate research, that had real-life applicability," said Andrea McCormick, manager, health and life sciences at ILI in a news release.

"His initial research has shown great results and his next stage of research will build on those results, developing his technology into a product that can eventually be brought to market."

If there's any truth to the story and this latest magic potion does what he says it will, it could change the face of tattoo removal for the foreseeable future.

If you hold your breath to find out though, you might find that you will pass out.

If you can be bothered to type in this weblink, you'll find the whole story and also some audio commentary: [cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/alec-falkenham-dalhousie-student-develops-tattoo-removal-cream-1.2955334](http://cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/alec-falkenham-dalhousie-student-develops-tattoo-removal-cream-1.2955334)

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FALKENHAM'S TOPICAL CREAM WORKS BY TARGETING THE MACROPHAGES THAT HAVE REMAINED AT THE SITE OF THE TATTOO. NEW MACROPHAGES MOVE IN TO CONSUME THE PREVIOUSLY PIGMENT-FILLED MACROPHAGES AND THEN MIGRATE TO THE LYMPH NODES, EVENTUALLY TAKING ALL THE DYE WITH THEM.

Model: Becky Holt | Tattoo Artist: Marcus Tippets | Photographer: Rama Knight



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# FROME TATTOO CONVENTION

Just a few weeks ago, Frome played host to its first tattoo show. Involved in the nitty gritty from the very start was Miss Jo Black (Black Inc)—so what better way to bring forth news from the front line than by extracting the following from her very head...

The Frome Tattoo Convention was the brainchild of tattoo enthusiast Tim Beale who runs the events at our only decent size venue here—the Cheese and Grain. Tim had already been tattooed at Black Inc, so he approached me to give him some pointers on how to organise a tattoo show. Having no experience in this area myself, I winged it. I spouted some tattoo jargon and tried to look like I knew what I was talking about and it seemed to work! Before I knew it, the show was under way and Tim was storming ahead with vendors, artists, bands, some incredible acts and a competition run by Lady Inked UK.

The weekend started on Saturday morning with a seamless set up, thanks to the seriously well organised staff at the Cheese and Grain. We arrived about half an hour before the show opened because—handily—our shop is less than a minute from the venue and obviously we wanted to look rock and roll. Closer to the truth perhaps is that we had a few too many drinks on the Friday and woke up late. You choose! Merry from the studio here, lost it a bit because it was his first ever tattoo convention and he was nervous as hell, but as soon as we were set up, he was in the swing of the show. We've all been there.



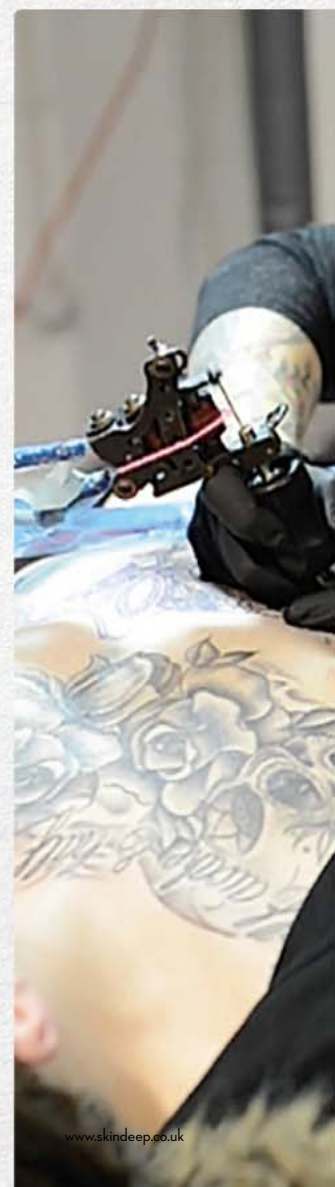
Aside from some incredible artists including Marc Nutley, Ryan Smith, Cherub Tattooer, Kiefer Lily, Paul Davies and Dani Mawby (amongst many others), there were some seriously good trade stands: Jungle Tattoo Supplies stepped in at the last minute which was perfect because they have such a great attitude, we had Sandyman's Chop Shop doing traditional barbering and cut throat shaves, Azbeau and the amazing "Oh Miss Scarlett" vintage inspired dresses. Later on, the evening kicked off with six bands, including a killer band called Empire. We hung out in the bar with a DJ until the wee small hours catching up on the usual stuff and probably drinking a little more than necessary, until we all turned back into pumpkins and slept off a busy day ready for round two.

Sunday was a much bigger deal.

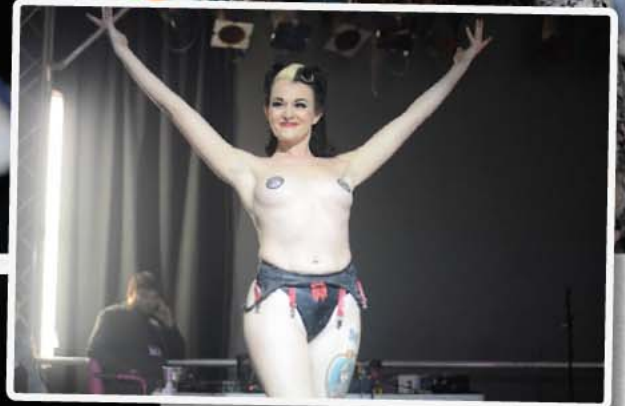
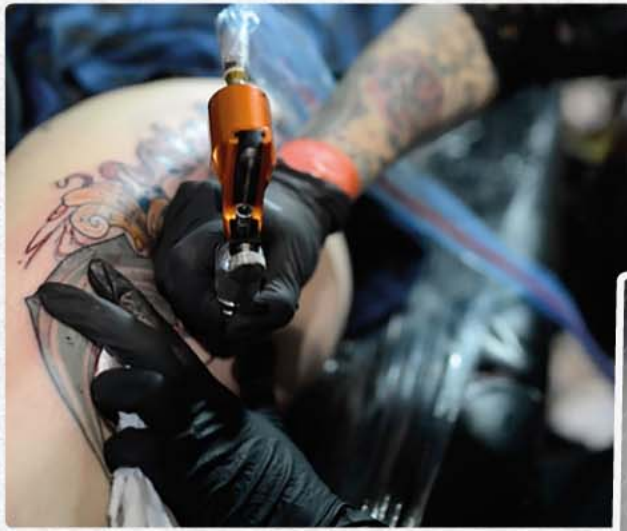
The Lady Inked UK competition ran on the stage while tattooing took place and we had the pleasure of watching some seriously sexy burlesque—along with some other slightly dubious talents—and a brilliant performance from the lovely Mz Bones and a cute furry Shitzu doing tricks for the audience.

There were only 3 categories this year for tattoo competitions: black and grey, colour and best of show. Ryan Smith won best of day with a phenomenal two day piece he did over the weekend. Very well deserved it was too.

The Sunday closed with a covers band I can't get enough of. They're called 'The Hammervilles' who smash every song they do from Thin Lizzy to Foo Fighters and kept the evening on an all time high. The night finished with some very hot performances by the Cyanide



Miss Jo Black - Photographs: Matthew Harris/Photo.com



RYAN SMITH WON BEST OF DAY WITH A PHENOMENAL TWO DAY PIECE HE DID OVER THE WEEKEND. VERY WELL DESERVED IT WAS TOO.

Girls and their flaming balls proving once again that when it comes to entertainment, you can't really go wrong with fire and nudity.

Next years plans are already underway. There is talk of combining the show with Frome's legendary Cider Festival and perhaps moving the show to the summer to make use of the outside space available at the venue.

The show may not have been huge but the footfall certainly surpassed Tim's expectations and I hear whispers the venue are considering putting a little more money into it next year based on this.

Which in my book, is a damn good start." 🍻

BACK IN

# THE DAY

PART II

In the concluding part of Marc Nutley's quest to find out what it was like to be a tattooer 'back in the day', Trent Aitken Smith finally lays down as the guinea pig.



Trent Aitken-Smith Marc Nutley

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Tattoo Freeze 2015—3pm to be exact—came around a lot sooner than I thought. Before we get there

however, let's skip back to the night before when I met Marc in the bar of the hotel we were all staying at.

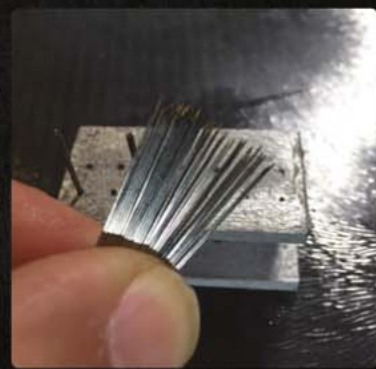
It was here Marc proudly showed me a wooden box. His huge smile told me this wasn't just an ordinary wooden box and it wouldn't be long before I started to realise that Marc was really getting into his True Traditional Project.

"I have completely hand made this box," he told me as he started unpacking it, revealing a full tattoo set including machines, ink, acetate powders, clip cords and a power unit. "It is based on what old time tattooists would use when they travelled. Jimmie helped me along the way so that

it was authentic as possible."

You have to take my word for it, the box is amazing, so much so, I have asked Marc if he would build me one...and I wasn't to be the last person to ask him that over the weekend. Everything he needed to do the tattoo the following day was safely stored in this box that sat on the table between us. I was quickly getting sucked into this project that Marc was so enthused about.

When three o'clock finally came round, finally I was sitting in Marc's booth waiting to be tattooed. I felt a little nervous, we had a bit of a crowd starting to form and I had been told that the old machines from the seventies (that Marc was using) didn't have as much as give as modern machines, which meant a little more pain. Great that's all I





needed. As Marc got ready to tattoo I asked him how he was feeling.

"I'm excited and nervous at the same time. Let's be honest here... I'm tattooing the editor of Tattoo Master magazine, in the style of one of the greatest tattooists from our history. And if that is not all... at a convention. And don't forget the dreaded acetate stencils."

The dreaded acetate. Pre modern stencil solution this was our biggest worry. You had to pour just the right amount of powder onto the acetate stencil to ensure the design transferred to skin, too much and all you would have was a mess of powder, too little and you had to do it again. We held our breaths and Marc placed the stencil on my chest. And it went on first time. I could see a certain weight lift from Marc's shoulders, the hardest part

## **IT WAS HERE MARC PROUDLY SHOWED ME A WOODEN BOX AND HIS HUGE SMILE TOLD ME THIS WASN'T JUST AN ORDINARY WOODEN BOX**

was out of the way, in one go.

Thirty five minutes later and it was done. "If I was an old school tattooer," Marc commented afterwards, "This should have been done in about ten or fifteen minutes. Those guys did the same stencils over and over again, they knew them backwards."

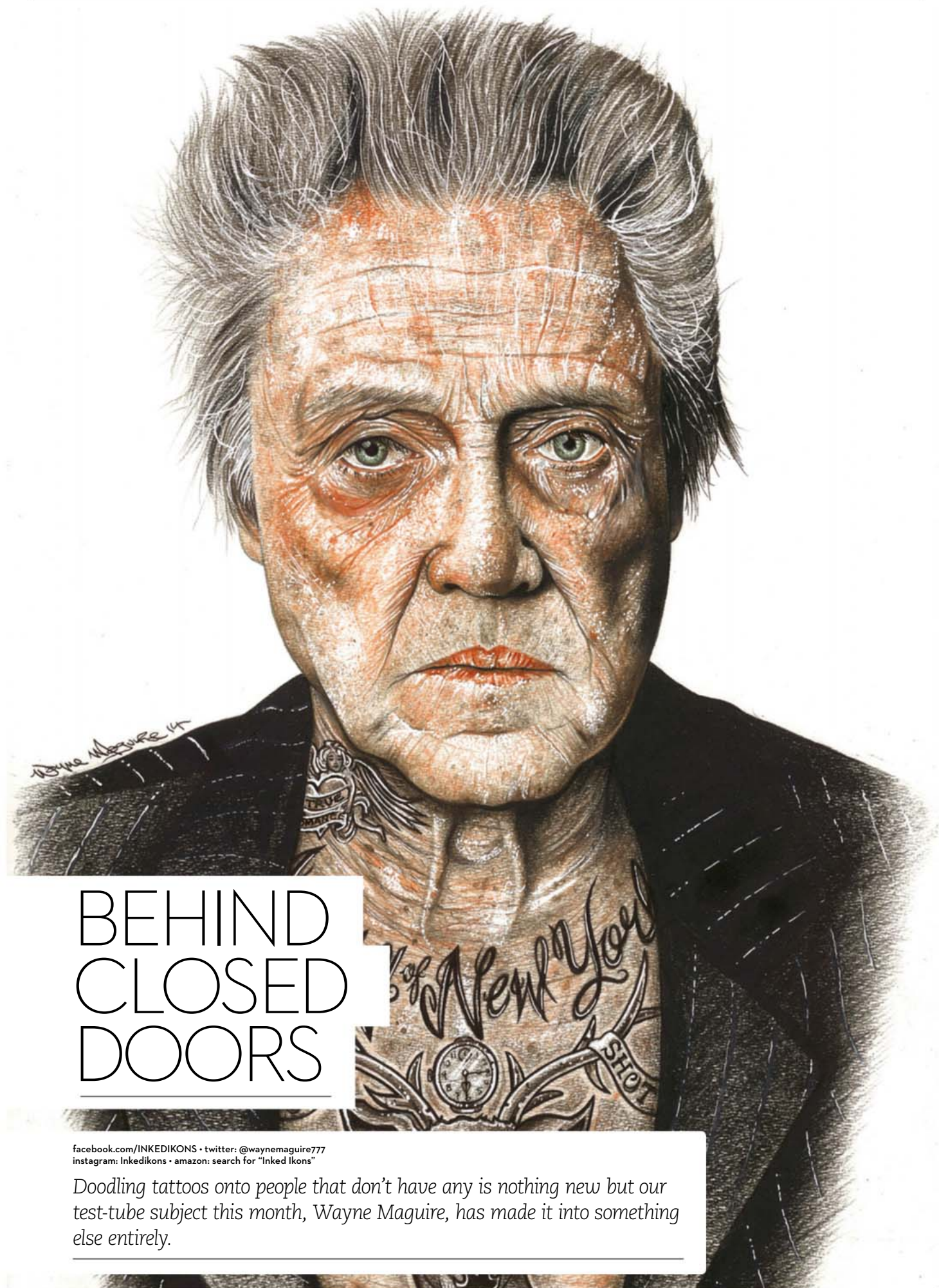
I think we were both at a loss for words in the end. We had been planning this for weeks and the finished tattoo looked amazing. I don't know whether it was the old machines (they didn't hurt much more than modern machines) or because Marc hand mixed the

ink, or because old school flash was perfectly designed for a minimalistic look, but the colours were bright and punchy.

I finally understood what the saying 'bold will hold' truly meant.

Later that night we sat down to take it all in and I could already see that Marc was itching to do more. There was a light in his eyes that told me he was planning something else. There was going to be a True Traditional Project Mark III. And sure enough, the email came.

"I've had another idea for True Traditional Mk3...bare with me, it's crazy." 🤖

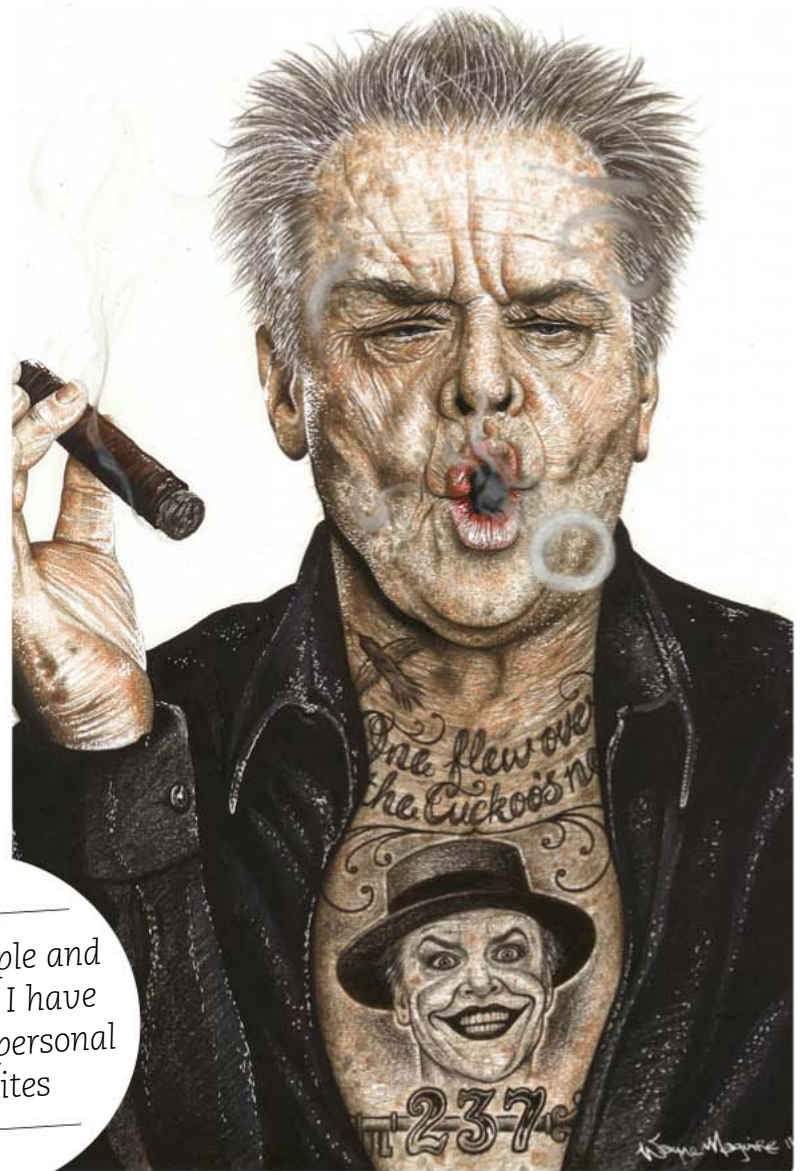


# BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

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*Doodling tattoos onto people that don't have any is nothing new but our test-tube subject this month, Wayne Maguire, has made it into something else entirely.*





All the people and characters I have drawn are personal favourites

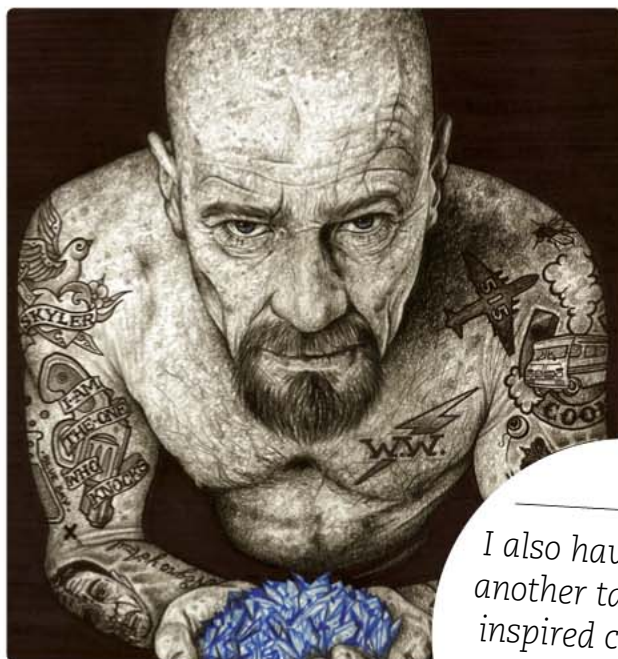


For the past couple of years, I have been lucky enough to be able to make a living off my artwork, so this is what I do full-time. Aaron Paul discovering my work and bringing attention to it definitely helped. He seemed to discover the Jesse Pinkman inked portrait somewhere on the web, eventually he got tipped off as to who the artist was and got in contact with me through twitter to see if he could get his hands on it and Heisenberg inked.

A month later he requested a commission of a Vince Gilligan inked and presented it to him as well as giving Bryan Cranston the Heisenberg original. This was obviously huge for me, not only being a big fan but it was great exposure for my work.

The most fun part of the whole thing is adding the tattoos at the end, and coming up with tattoo ideas to fit each character—so far, I've never abandoned a piece because the tattoos didn't look right either. I have a Harry Potter inked in the works so that should be interesting to see how it turns out. 🍀



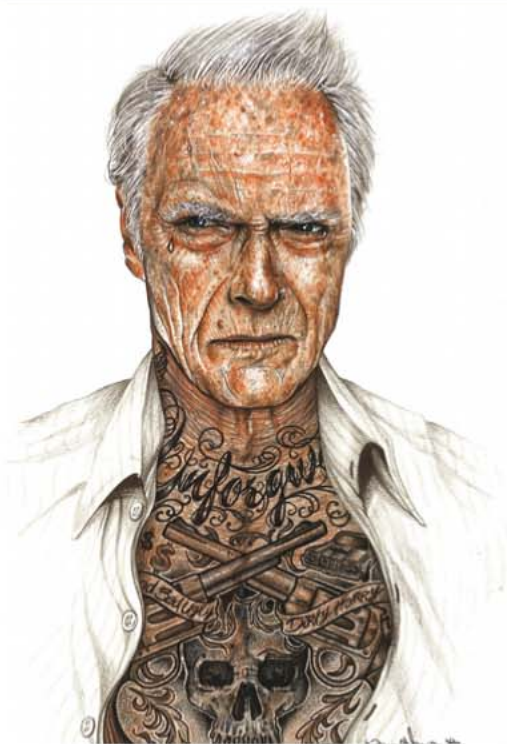


*I also have plans for another tattoo/movie inspired collection of work that I will be starting very soon*



The plan is to keep creating these INKED IKONS designs, as I started up a T-shirt label a few months ago and sell through amazon, so I need to keep it fresh by adding new designs whenever possible. I also have plans for another tattoo/movie inspired collection of work that I will be starting very soon.

I'm so busy right now with all of this, I can't really respond to personal requests at the moment, but I love hearing what people think and have them show interest in my work. 🐶



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# Mimi

■ Mr Smith ■ Scott Cole **Model:** Mimi **Makeup:** Eve-Marie Parry **Hair:** Nathan Pithers

So, there we are looking the contact sheets of Mimi and Mr Cole says: “She’s lovely. I think you might find her quite interesting if you dig around a little...” Understatement of the week.

**LET’S START AT THE HIGHLY LOGICAL PLACE OF WHY YOU’RE WORKING ON PROSTHETICS FOR TURNING HUMANS INTO PIGS. IS THIS SOME KIND OF UNDER-HAND PLOT TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. IF IT IS, I HAVE TO TELL YOU, THE DALEKS ALREADY TRIED THAT OUT IN DALEKS IN MANHATTAN AND IT DIDN’T WORK OUT FOR THE BEST. IF THIS IS NOT YOUR INTENTION, WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU DOING?**

I’m actually a makeup student at the moment and we have to turn a human into an animal for one assignment. I feel I may have taken it a little far now as

I’m trying to turn humans into realistic pig headed, human hybrids. I mean they’re pretty jolly guys though and live above ground still as opposed to the sewer dwelling, pig like creatures. Great question by the way and nice Doctor Who knowledge. Matt Smith is my favourite doctor for sure. Just putting that out there.

**I ALSO HEAR THAT YOU’RE HEADED FOR BARBERING - BUT I HAVE TO SAY, ALONG THE SAME LINES AS THE PIG/DALEK THING, IF YOU’RE REALLY GOING TO ADVERTISE YOURSELF AS A FEMALE SWEENEY**

**TODD, YOU’RE REALLY GOING ABOUT YOUR MARKETING THE HARD WAY! FOR THE BRAVE, WHERE WILL WE BE ABLE TO FIND YOU. I SAY ‘WE’ BUT AS YOU’LL HAVE NOTICED, I HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE WITH SCISSORS ONCE.**

OK, so perhaps female Sweeney Todd isn’t the best way to market such skills. I’m actually a qualified hairdresser though and learning cut throat shaving very soon. I’ll probably need some willing humans for this... any takers? I don’t have any solid references yet, but my friend who makes a cracking meat pie can totally vouch for me. To answer your question though I haven’t decided where in the world I’d like to do this yet. I live on the south coast for the moment but I can feel a change of scenery is long overdue.

**YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK THAT PIE IS ACTUALLY MEAT YOU MIGHT WANT TO EAT. ANYWAY, LET’S MOVE ONTO SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE ‘NORMAL’. YOU LIVE IN A HAUNTED HOUSE. (DEAR READERS: THIS REALLY IS ALL THE COMMON GROUND I CAN FIND THAT AT LEAST TWO OF YOU MIGHT HAVE IN COMMON). MY FIRST QUESTION IS, DID YOU KNOW IT WAS HAUNTED 🏠**

*‘I feel I may have taken it a little far now as I’m trying to turn humans into realistic pig headed, human hybrids*





**I didn't really believe all that stuff until my chum stayed over and woke me up in the night screaming about the old lady sat at my feet**

**BEFORE YOU MOVED IN? IF YOU DID, HAS IT MATCHED YOUR EXPECTATIONS? IF YOU DIDN'T - HOW MUCH OF A SURPRISE WAS IT TO FIND IT ALREADY OCCUPIED. I KNOW THAT'S THREE QUESTIONS BUT ROLL WITH IT.**

I had no clue it was haunted! To be honest I didn't really believe all that stuff until my chum stayed over and woke me up in the night screaming about the old lady sat at my feet. I'd seen her before and never said anything. I kinda thought I was just sleep deprived or something and just imagining all the spooky things. After someone else saw it and I acknowledged it, then everything got a whole lot weirder. It does make home life a lot more interesting though.

**IF I MAY QUOTE YOURSELF BACK AT YOU HERE, YOU TOLD ME "ONE TIME I SAW A MAN IN THE DINING ROOM MIRROR, HE TURNED AROUND AND ALL THE LIGHTS WENT OUT. ANOTHER TIME, THE MIRROR ABOVE MY BED FELL DOWN AND I MANAGED TO CATCH IT SOMEHOW BEFORE IT SMASHED ON MY FACE BUT WHEN I WENT TO MOVE IT, THE SAME GUY WAS IN THE REFLECTION STOOD IN MY ROOM." MOST OF YOUR TROUBLES SEEM TO COME FROM MIRRORS. HAVE YOU NOT SEEN CANDYMAN? YOU CAN GET THIS SHIT SORTED OUT PRETTY EASILY. HOW WRONG CAN IT GO!**

I've not seen Candyman! I mean, maybe I should watch it for a simple solution to this! If the creepy mirror guy gets worse after me watching it then I'm sending him your way though.

**THAT'S A FAIR TRADE! I ALSO HEARD THAT YOU WOULD DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS "QUITE BENDY" BUT HAVE BROKEN OR DISLOCATED DIFFERENT PARTS**

**OF YOURSELF AT LEAST FORTY TIMES. I HATE TO BE THE BEARER OF BAD TIDINGS, BUT ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE SUPER BENDY? MAYBE SOMEBODY WAS LYING TO YOU. SERIOUSLY, IF I ANNOUNCED MYSELF AS 'QUITE BENDY', I THINK I WOULD STRUGGLE TO BUST MYSELF UP THAT BADLY. WHAT HAVE BEEN DOING?**

Well although bendy, I may possibly be a tiny little bit clumsy. I once dislocated both knee caps playing hide and seek by somehow bending my way behind the boiler in the airing cupboard. I won that game. Six weeks on crutches though. After reading this, just try to remember I can put my legs behind my head!

**DID YOU EVER CONSIDER JOINING THE CIRCUS? I THINK JIM ROSE IS STILL OUT THERE DOING HIS THING. MAYBE WE SHOULD GIVE HIM A CALL.**

I really think I should have joined the circus! As a child though, the adults were not particularly fond of 'circus freak' as a career move. Plus, 🍌



**I once dislocated both knee caps playing hide and seek by somehow bending my way behind the boiler in the airing cupboard**



if I joined the circus I'd have nothing on them! I much prefer being the weird one in a normal bunch than the normal one in a weird bunch.

**WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF WHAT I WOULD TERM "HIGH MAINTENANCE". ON YOUR LIST OF SINS HERE, I ALSO HAVE SLEEP-WALKING AND EVER WORSE, SLEEP-TALKING. WITH ALL THE OTHER SHIT GOING ON IN YOUR HOUSE, I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT YOU'D BE TOO TIRED TO BE WAKING UP AT ALL! YOU MIGHT NOT DEMAND TO HAVE SHOES BOUGHT FOR YOU EVERY TEN MINUTES BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT, THIS SOUNDS LIKE HARD WORK. I'M GUESSING YOU MIGHT BE SINGLE?**

Yeah sleep walking/talking is rather annoying for any potential partner to deal with I suppose. Waking up to someone you were originally cuddled up to just standing over the bed perhaps isn't

**I much prefer being the weird one in a normal bunch than the normal one in a weird bunch**

everyone's idea of fun. I wouldn't say high maintenance though! I like to think it adds to the overall experience of my spooky house. So er, yes, I'm still very much single.

**I THINK WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND AT LEAST A LITTLE SOLID GROUND HERE WITH YOUR TATTOOS. I ASSUME YOU'VE BEEN WORKED ON BY 'NORMAL' PEOPLE AND NOT THE GHOSTS AND SPIRITS OF TATTOOISTS WHO HAVE LONG**

**SINCE 'SHUT-UP SHOP' IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. CARE TO NAME YOUR CHOSEN ONES HERE AND THOSE ON YOUR FUTURE HIT-LIST?**

I've got to say Akira at White Smoke in Totton and Davey at Needlework in Surrey. They've both done most of my recent tattoos and they're such nice humans too! I'd quite like to be tattooed by Grace Neutral and @caljenx (Instagram). I love their work and would like to get something by them this year. 🐾



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# PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED?

He has been hailed as the holy hipster, the coolest clergyman in Britain and the tattoo loving vicar, but as far as Rob Popejoy is concerned, he is just an ordinary guy on a mission to spread the preachings of Jesus.



Rob has had a lot of media coverage over the last year or so, most of it stating he is a Reverend or Vicar, which actually isn't true. Rob is a multi-faith chaplain working for the Church of England and has no 'formal qualifications' other than his extensive experience working alongside young people and teenagers. In this capacity, Rob's work varies on a day-to-day basis, covering aspects that range from student advisor, to teacher, sports coach and leader.

"This puts me in an interesting position to promote all faiths and none," explains Rob. "Ultimately my job is to promote religion, faith and spirituality as a force of good, despite its often negative rap in the press. Without wanting to get all preachy, my end goal is to

get students and staff to engage in the idea that having faith could actually be a really good decision to make despite all the preconceived ideas of what religion looks like. To quote Yoda, "We must unlearn what we have learned!"

With a natural openness and statements like this, it is hard not to like Rob. He is down to earth, easy to approach and into things that most conventional religious folk would shun as 'evil'. The two most obvious interests that mark Rob out amongst his religious peers are his passion for tattoos and metal. And it is these very qualities that make Rob perfect for his work. How much easier must it be for a youngster to approach some one about religion and life when the guy who is in the know appears on the same level as you,

rather than the rather scary fire and brimstone lot?

Though Rob's upbringing was very church based, and therefore the music he listened to was "churchy stuff, mainly hymns" it was his love of things a little different that pushed his musical tastes further afield.

"As a kid, I guess you have to tow the line a bit and so when I was given the chance to make my own decisions, naturally, I did the opposite of what anyone said I should do! As I got a little older my parents, specifically my Dad, moved away from just religious music and got back into rock music; the likes of Skunk Anansie, Rage Against the Machine, Cream and the Chillis. There was also a whole bunch of other bands which I started to

Since deciding at eighteen that I wanted to devote my life to knowing and following Jesus, I have really just had the desire to do whatever will echo His life and teachings. Since I believe He wanted to bring a fullness of life for people, I try to do the same in whatever I'm up to. I've only been a chaplain for two years, before that I did a whole bunch of different jobs. The way I figure it, as long as I get to work with people, then I can be a positive influence you know... hopefully!

HAVING THE EYES TO SEE  
PAST YOUR OWN BELIEFS  
IS A WONDERFUL THING TO  
HAVE, HEARING PEOPLE  
BEYOND YOUR OWN  
IDEALS IS A POWERFUL  
ATTRIBUTE TO LIVE WITH



A multi faith chaplain is tasked with promoting all faiths and none, within an educational setting... well at least that's what it is for me). The idea being, to put a variety of faiths/religions in the shop window of students lives, showing their basic workings and teachings and allowing for engagement in those beliefs. A bit of taste and see going on. I often take students to places of worship to aid the process, which are great times of factual understanding or spiritual awakening... which really just means, minds are changed with a bit of breaking down old preconceptions.

listen to. I guess it began with the Beastie Boys mainly, their earlier stuff was pretty punk rock and that got me up for some slightly harder stuff. Over the years I've gone out looking for more and more metal stuff. In skateboarding and tattooing you tend to get subjected to heavy music, so it came naturally."

The tattooing side of Rob came about from a combination of his father and brother being great artists, and therefore an early inspiration for him, as well as having difficulties communicating his feelings as a youngster. "Tattooing was a great way for me to do this. I use tattoos to mark significant parts of life, to explain bits I feel I can't... and, of course, occasionally to make a statement!"

By his own admission Rob's collection started off with "some pretty dodgy small town tattooers having a go on me" and though he admits he made some mistakes with who he went too early on, as he learnt and studied more about tattooing he soon realized there



were some really amazing artists out there.

"Now I have just one or two different people I go to, depending on the piece I'm getting and its style. As I said earlier, it's not so much about collecting from a whole host of different people; it's just about having a few good relationships and doing life together a bit through the whole process. I really rate the guys I go to so why would I go elsewhere, you know? Both my artists are in

Bath. One of the studios I go too is River City Tattoo Collective. Ben (Bear) Doran is the tattooer. Since there's a lot of competition in Bath he turns his hand to whatever is requested, which I really value... as a lot of artists can turn their nose up at certain ideas. He is a talented guy and is more than capable to hone all the styles he has. He did my hands, one on my chin and a few on my legs and arms. He's a decent guy and tattoos the way I probably would

I USE TATTOOS TO MARK SIGNIFICANT PARTS OF LIFE, TO EXPLAIN BITS I FEEL I CAN'T...AND, OF COURSE, OCCASIONALLY TO MAKE A STATEMENT!



I BELIEVE THAT MY GOD IS ONE OF DIVERSITY AND WHO KNOWS, PERHAPS HE IS INTO THE SAME STUFF AS I AM. YOU JUST DON'T KNOW; THAT'S THE GLORY OF BELIEVING IN SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOURSELF



if I was doing it. The shop has a nice atmosphere and they play some decent music too. When I had more time on my hands I used to hang there between shifts or during lunch breaks.

"The second shop I frequent is called Broad Street Studio, another fantastic shop with great artists, a good sense of humour and some ridiculous talent. The two guys I use are James (Jimmie) Matthews and Marcos Attwood. Both have a very traditional outlook on tattoos and therefore style, but I've brought friends in to do other stuff and they killed that too. So I'm happy to go back time and time again. Both guys have done a lot of work on me now; Marcos did my chest piece and Jimmie is slowly filling my left arm. He just did a little Star Wars blaster on my wrist (on Christmas Eve) which is super detailed and I flipping love it. This

feels like a school report card or something but in truth, I think the way you can tell a good artist is if you are willing to go back and if you're willing to take your friends. And I'm happy to do both!"

Because of Rob's faith, his tattoos are more than just a statement of interest. A lot of religious groups and their followers are against any form of body modification, so to come across some one like Rob is refreshing. And for all the resistance to tattooing, the funny thing is, tattoos are only mentioned once in the Bible (I have to admit here that I did not know this off the top of my head, Rob pointed me in the right direction) and even then, the word 'tattoo' is open to question. In Leviticus 19:28 it states, according to the New International Version, "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on

yourselves." Surely the word tattoo wasn't even around when this was written, a fact that is highlighted by the substitution of the word 'tattoo' with 'marks' in other versions of the Bible. But as with all these things, this is an eternally arguable point and, as the ever wise Rob points out, it is up to the individual to find their individual truth in what they read... to interpret things according to their own personal faith.

"All I would suggest to anyone interested is to have a look, study it for half an hour and perhaps have a discussion with yourself 🙌"



A LOT OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS ARE AGAINST ANY FORM OF BODY MODIFICATION, SO TO COME ACROSS SOME ONE LIKE ROB IS REFRESHING.

about that particular passage. If you're a Christian reading this, why not pray about it? That's what I did. The rest of the Bible verses that are quoted at me (without having had a conversation with me) refer to our bodies being a temple. My reply is, yeah I love my body and that's why I try to look after it. Tattooing is a wonderful way to adorn it! I have loads to say on this but we'll leave it at that! I'll finish on this, having the eyes to see past your own beliefs is a wonderful thing to have, hearing people beyond your own ideals is a powerful attribute to live with. Let's try to do that a bit more often, yeah?"

And that's about as sound advice as you can get. As Rob

states, not everyone is into tattoos or rock music and that is ok. Everyone has a right to their own beliefs. As a multi faith chaplain, this is a cornerstone of his teachings...everyone is entitled to their own beliefs and opinions. Or as he puts it, "If you're not into the same stuff that I am, then that's cool. You don't have to talk to me or look at my tattoos, or take my headphones and listen! I believe that my God is one of diversity and who knows, perhaps He is into the same stuff as I am. You just don't know; that's the glory of believing in something bigger than yourself.

However, one thing I do know is this, if the tattoo I get or the music I listen to isn't particularly pro-life, then I'm not about to subject my ears or eyes to it. I firmly believe that whatever goes in has an impact on your whole being. I deal everyday with people who are subjected to messages from the

media or music that aren't always uplifting, or promote well being. I think that should change, all we ever see or hear is negative and that's not right!"

And that is probably the truth of all truths. If what you love does no harm to yourself or others, while at the same time makes you happy, then that can only be a positive thing. After all, what makes us is not the way we choose to adorn our bodies or the music we listen to... it is how we treat ourselves and our fellow travellers on this journey.

And I kind of have the feeling, if Jesus or Buddha or Allah were about the earth today, they would say the same thing. 🙏

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# NAMAKUBI

In this exclusive with Horiyoshi III, we look behind the story of one of the most iconic images in Japanese tattooing, the severed head—or to the better acquainted, the namakubi. Let's do this...



Among the different motifs in Japanese iconography used for tattoo, the namakubi—or severed head—has become a classic chosen for its strong visual impact. Tattoo artists nowadays overdo it with blood in order to emphasise the atrocity and its badass strength, but how many really catch the feeling and the meaning behind it?

It may be hard to determine the exact origin of the design, but it runs throughout Japanese history, as master Horiyoshi III explains, after becoming the origin of the revival of this motif when compiling a book ten years ago:

## JAPANESE ICONOGRAPHY?

In the past, the namakubi was a quite common design and often tattooed. It was a motif worn by a certain type of person—ones working at a height, on roofs or scaffolding for example, and also by the yakuza because it was hated in the general scheme.

These people were doing dangerous jobs or wanted to show their strength, they would choose the motif because of the belief attached to the superstition that says it protects the wearer against evil, accidents and injuries. I don't know where this information come from, but these are things that have been said in the tattoo world for a long time.

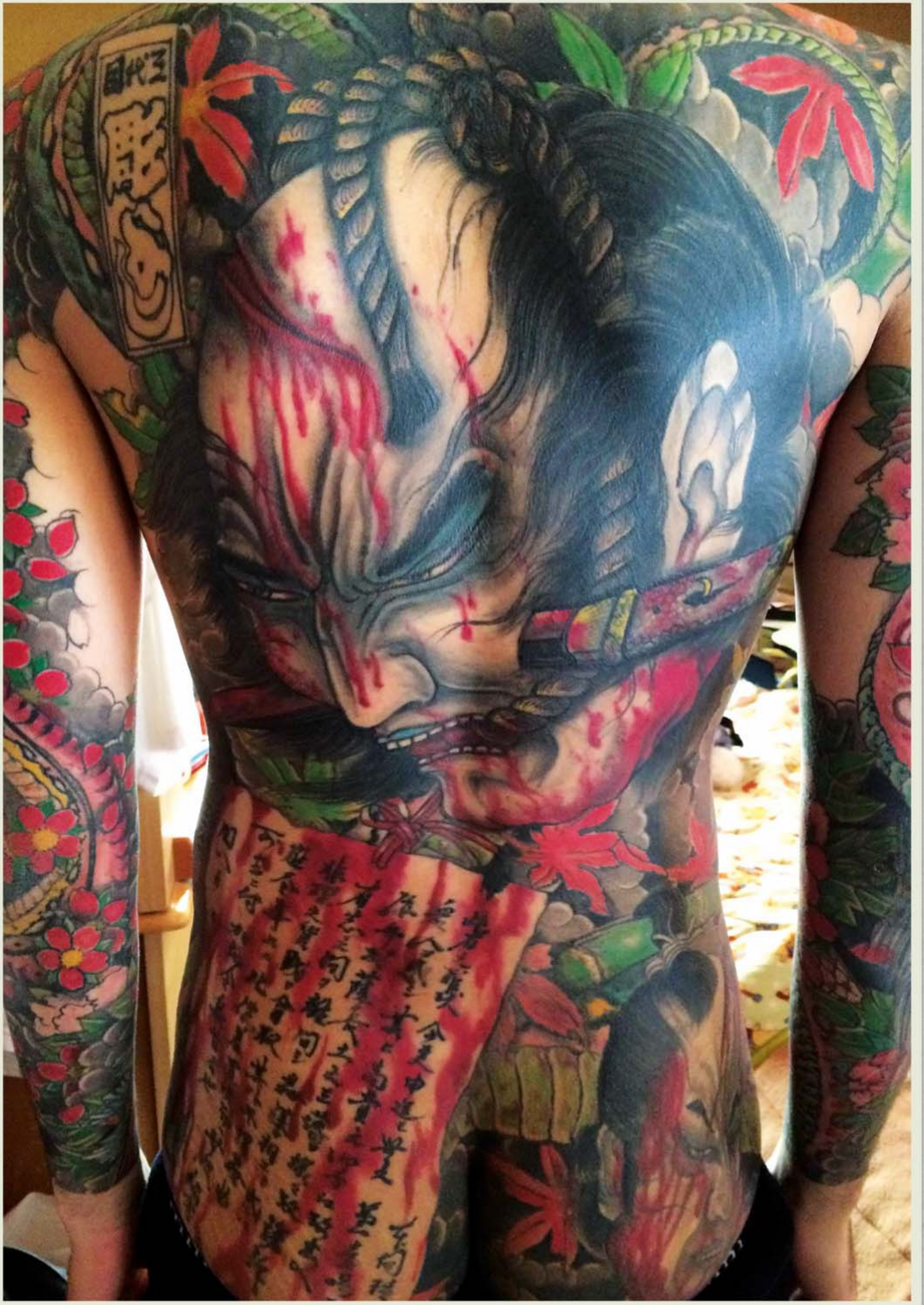


**DOES THE NAMAKUBI HAVE A PARTICULAR STATUS IN THE**

**NOWADAYS, THIS MOTIF HAS GONE 🌻**

Pascal Bagot / Pascal Bagot/As credited







THE TERM 'NAMAKUBI' IS WRITTEN WITH THE CHARACTERS 'NAMA', WHICH MEANS 'FRESH'—BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH—WHILE 'KUBI' REFERS TO THE HEAD, THE NECK

**ON TO BECOME A CLASSIC...**

Since I published a set of drawings in the collection *Namakubi zushū* in 2004, it has become very popular again. The word 'namakubi' has now entered the mainstream language. I am very happy about that. It confirms the popularity of the traditional Japanese tattoo—irezumi. Nowadays, anybody can choose the motif, but nonetheless, people in general usually don't know the correct meaning.

Tattooists also don't know how to draw it and send a proper message to the viewer. Personally, I have never seen any that really impressed me. Technically, it is a difficult design to work on.

**WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?**

A head can be cut from a couple of hours or a number of days, but when you talk about the namakubi, it has to be related to a freshly cut head. A dead head is simple to do, you only have to make it very pale and white as a sheet. The term



'namakubi' is written with the characters 'nama', which means 'fresh'—between life and death—while 'kubi' refers to the head, the neck. It doesn't have anything to do with the head of a cadaver. It should represent a living life, without being alive itself and without light in the eyes. They should be vague, empty and not in focus. In the meantime, these eyes should also be able to catch the viewer's attention. Working on this motif is a bit of a challenge. I have a respect for it. The most difficult design after the namakubi is the 'yūrei' ghost which represents the soul of a human being that cannot go to heaven and then takes a shape. It is at the same time, alive and dead.

**SOMETIMES THE HEAD HAS A**

**SWORD ACROSS THE CHEEKS...**

It represents war. It is also used in order to give more realism to the drawing or also to signify that the one represented is really hated and so killing him is not enough... you have to hammer a knife through its head as well.

**HAS THIS MOTIF BEEN A PRIVILEGED SUBJECT FOR JAPANESE ARTISTS IN THE PAST?**

As I said, for illustration, it was a common design. The namakubi can be traced back in the Japanese culture from the Edo period (1603–1867). Many Japanese artists, except the ones that were close to the Imperial Palace—the Kanō and Maruyama schools—have worked on it. Katsushika Hokusai, Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, Utagawa Kuniyoshi,



even Kitagawa Utamaro, and then later, Ito Seiu—in the Showa era, 1926–1989—he was a student of Toyohara Kunichika.

In one of the prints done by Yoshitoshi—whose title is ‘The Battle of Sannō Shrine’ (see box copy)—he represented a warrior with a severed head designed on the back of his jacket (jimbaori). It stands for his determination and the philosophy that says: “When you are at war without fear of losing your life, the way opens automatically”. But the theme of the severed head can also be found in the western art world—I’m thinking of the Salomé’s story or in Christianity. In Japan however, it evokes something mysterious. Hokusai really dug the subject and his severed heads are

## UNTIL ITS ABOLITION IN 1869, DECAPITATION AS A PUNISHMENT HAS OCCURRED IN JAPAN FOR MORE THAN 1,000 YEARS

amazing. Nobody has ever done something better since.

### **REALITY INSPIRES ARTISTS. IS DECAPITATION ACTUALLY PART OF JAPANESE HISTORY?**

Yes... punishment, war, jealousy, personal resentment. In the past, during the civil war period of the 14th and 15th centuries, you would get a promotion if you could cut off the head of the enemy’s chief. In this way, there was some kind of competition between the warriors to be the first to do it. Until its abolition in 1869, decapitation as a punishment has occurred in Japan

for more than 1,000 years.

During the difficult times at the end of the Edo period, there was a lot of murder and violence. The severed heads from which blood was flowing were visible in the daily life of the commoner. Heads were exposed to scare the population but also to shame the condemned, even after their deaths. The respected were buried and the other ones were left to rot.

### **YOUR 2004 BOOK WAS BASED ON DESIGNS OF SEVERED HEADS, WHY?**

A lot of artists have worked the namakubi, but nobody ever did a 🍌

RIGHT AFTER THE DECAPITATION, THE HEAD IS CLEANED AND THE BLOOD IS NOT FLOWING VERY MUCH

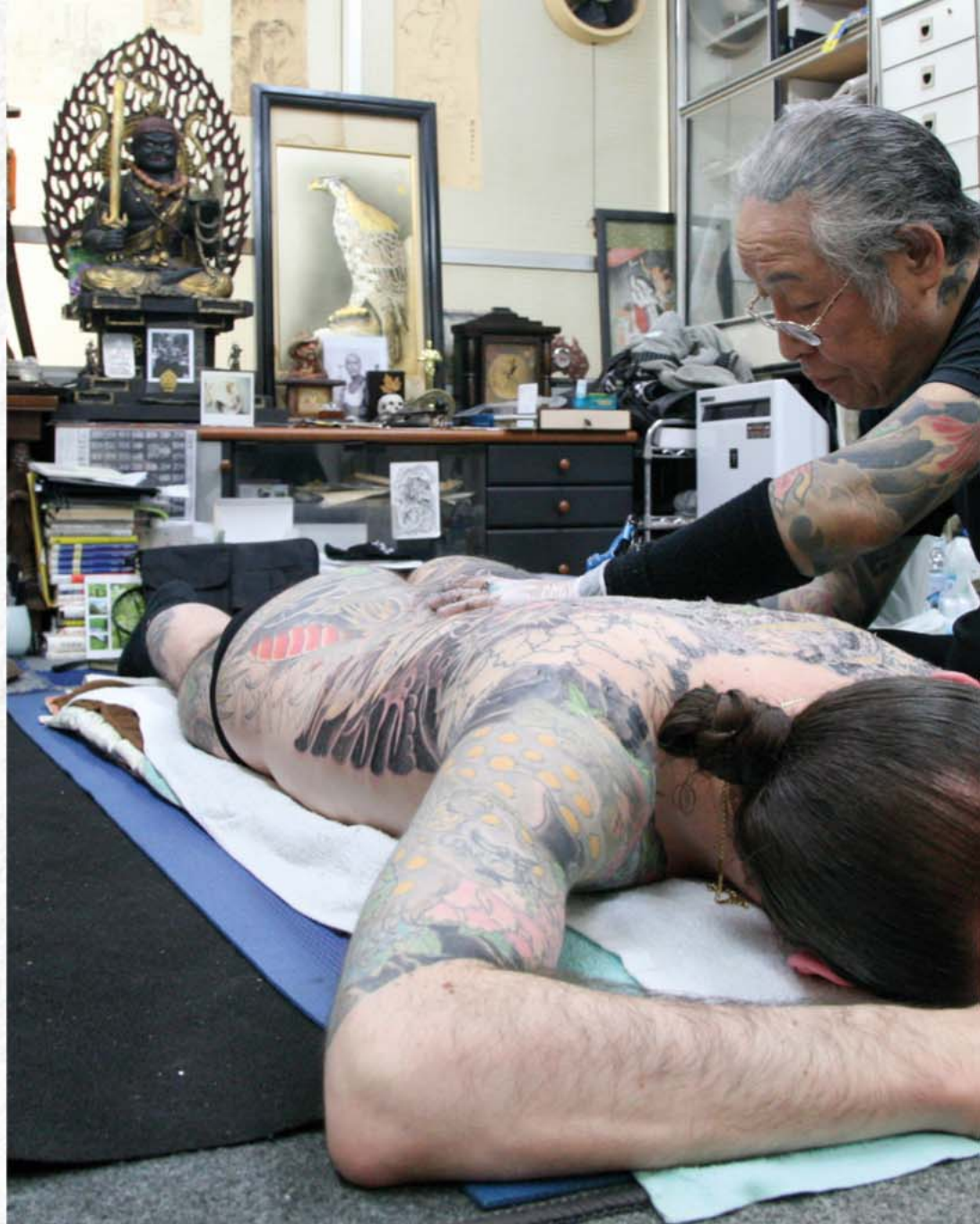
book about it. I want to do what other people don't, otherwise it's a little bit like a copy. In that way, the work of Hokusai inspired me. It is the artist for whom I have the most respect, he is beyond the sky. Philosophically, according to me, death and life exist together. It is something not to be forgotten.

**HOW DID YOU WORK ON ITS REPRESENTATION?**

When I chose one, I thought of the history the head had or may not have had. It can be the one of someone that robbed another guy's wife or that was punished by 'god' (tenchû), the sky. I try to create a story, otherwise it stays superficial. The ones that I have chosen are related to jealousy and vengeance.

**WHY DID YOU USE REAL BLOOD IN YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS?**

For the drawings to be real. That is a feeling you cannot achieve with paint on its own. It is my blood that I used. I didn't want the blood of an animal or another person. When I go to the hospital and do a dialysis, I pick up a little bit of it. Its colour changes when it ages and then becomes black. It stays



alive. In a certain way, it's alive and dead at the same time. Blood is beautiful and also grotesque.

Right after the decapitation, the head is cleaned and the blood is not flowing very much. Using my blood gives it this grotesque feeling to the severed head, but also serves to extend the atrocity of the picture. While creating his set of drawings called '28 Murders With Verse' (1866-1867), the artist Yoshitoshi would have asked the printer to add some gelatin (made from skins, bones and animal intestines) into the red colour paint in order for the blood to be real.

**YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT THE POWER OF THE NAMAKUBI, THAT WOULD WORK LIKE A TALISMAN...**

Yes. The design was used as a talisman to prevent injuries, for



instance. See the Yoshitoshi's print 'Battle of the Sannō shrine' I was talking about earlier—it is quite representative in the sense that having it painted in the back would prevent the warrior against any calamity. It is hard to believe that this kind of character would hold with them any bad-luck item. Very few motifs hold that talismanic power or may be related to superstitions, otherwise you cannot combine a lot of motifs in your composition. Among these superstitions, we say that tattooing the name of someone—which is called kirezumi—separates two people in love. Also, if you get tattooed with the design of a woman, she will get jealous and the wearer will not have any more success among other women. 🐼



**"TODAI SANNOZAN SENSO NO ZU"**  
- Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (Japan, 1839- 1892)

In the area of Minami-Senju in Tokyo, the sculpture of Kubikiri Jizō —"Jizō of the Cut Necks"—is a buddhist deity of mercy supposed to comfort the poor souls of the condemned to death. The cemetery where he stands is supposed to be the old execution grounds of Kozukappara where about 200,000 criminals of political rebels were killed and decapitated.

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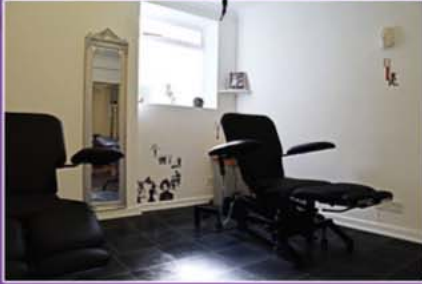
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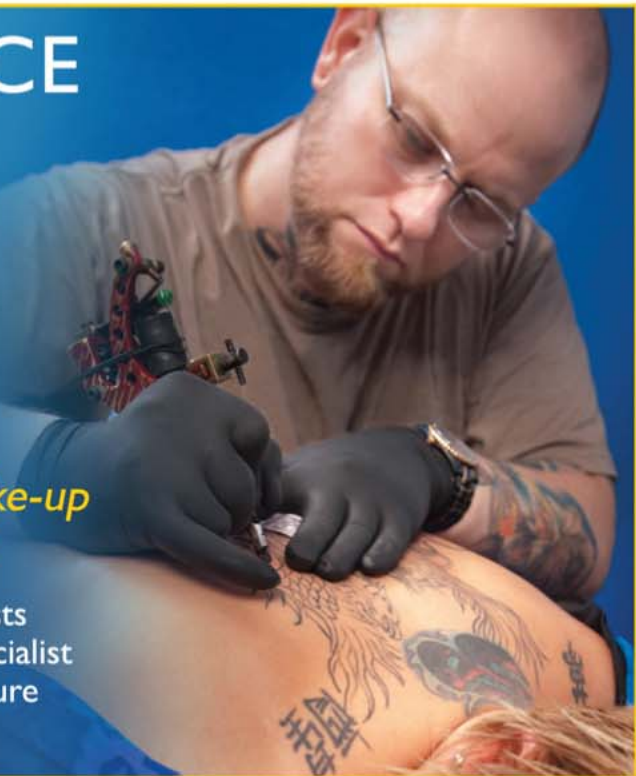
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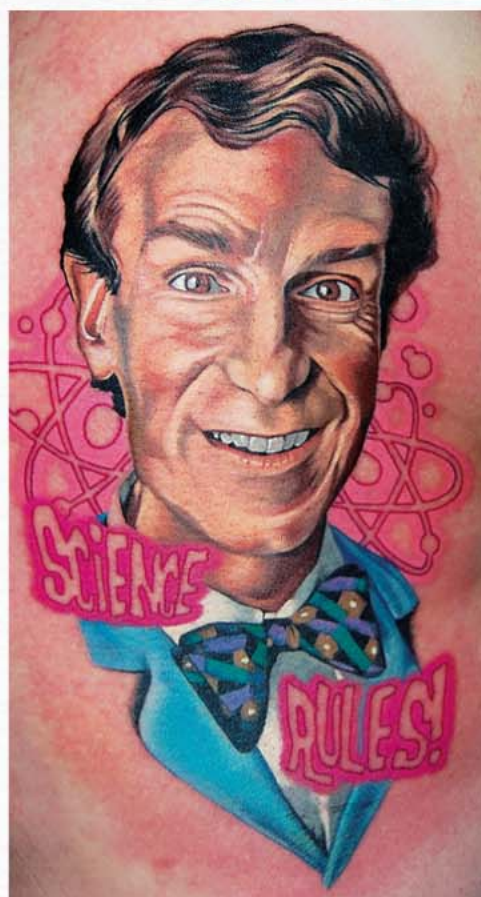


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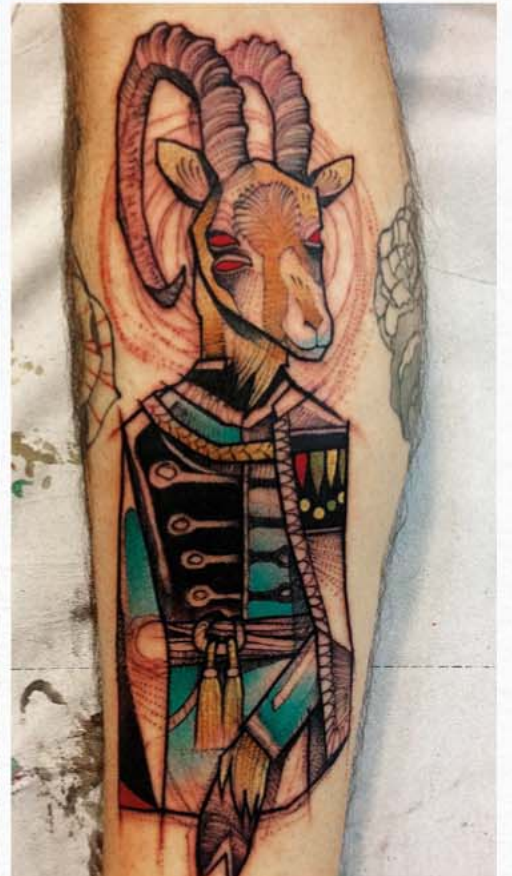
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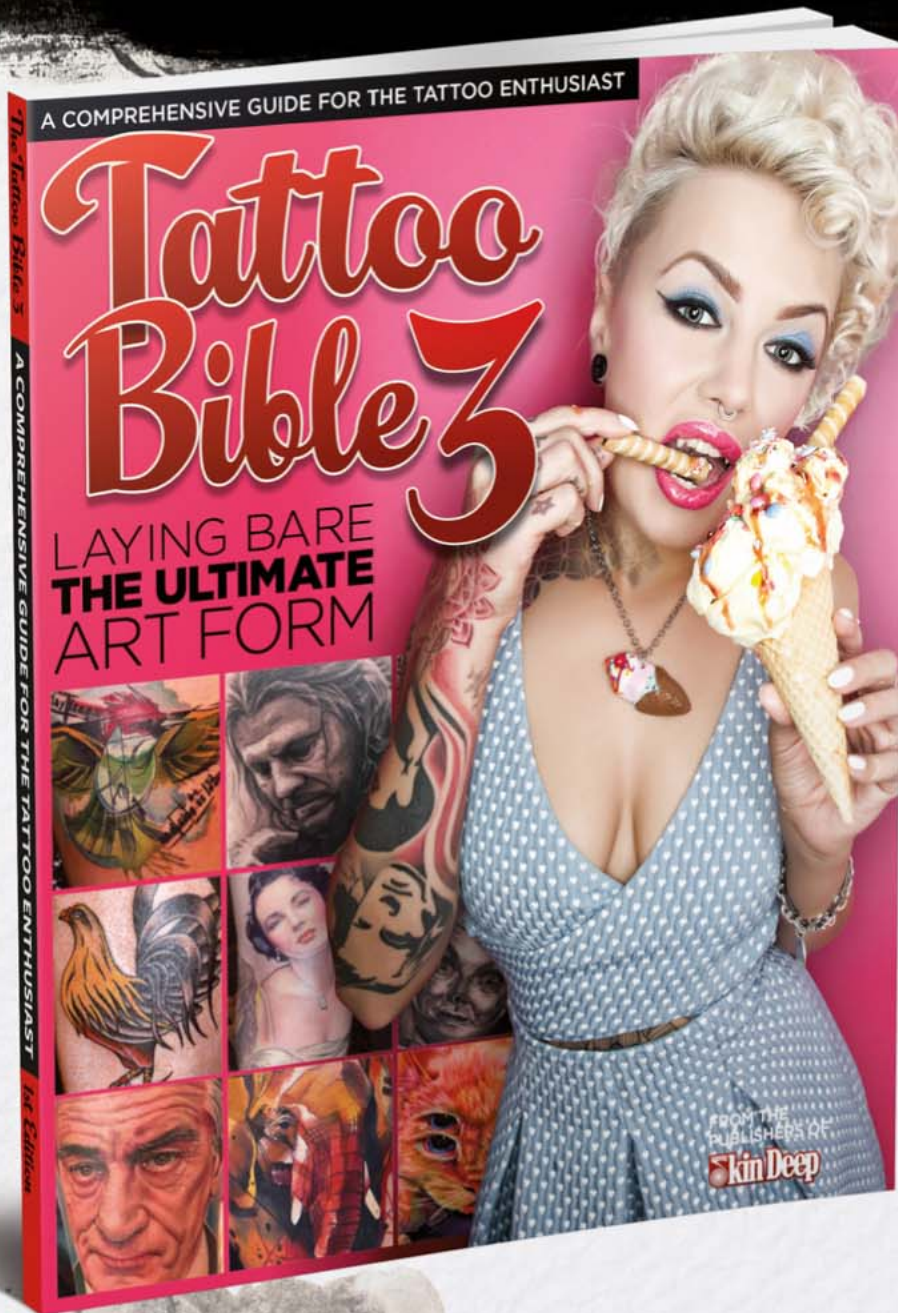


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# HEART

Mr. Smith SANTA PERPETUA

With a solid background in creativity courtesy of her mother, Santa Perpetua now finds herself working in Brighton and loving every minute. Working your way around the world looking for a place to call home is no walk in the park though, physically or spiritually



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When you're born into an environment in which art is everywhere you look, chances are you're going to be influenced a little. If the wind is blowing in the right direction, maybe you'll be influenced rather a lot. The point however is that you grow up finding it normal to live and work in this way—and that counts for a lot.

“My mother was the first person in my life who introduced me into this world, so I can't say exactly when I started being artistic because this is probably the most important part in my whole life. There is not a single defining moment, and at the

same time, there are many! I have very early memories of watching my mother working on her loom and painting—and myself trying to imitate her doing the same with my crayons and coloured papers. She also taught me about different techniques and encouraged me during my life to find my own way in art. So she—along with my natural passion for art and art books (mainly of styles and history), made me the way I am now. Seriously I owe her a lot in that aspect. I feel very lucky to have been guided so young.”

As hopefully all of us have figured out for ourselves though, you can't be strapped up to the apron strings forever. At some

point, the call of the wild will hopefully have enough momentum behind you to give you a good push out of the nest.

“True. There came a point when I had to choose to study something in the world and as I was totally passionate about computing and advertising, I decided to head towards communication sciences. It seemed like a perfect career for me because I could use all of my artistic and creative achievements and also go deeper into another subject that amazed me. So studying that while also working as a photographer and graphic designer made another essential addition to the way I



work now as a tattooist.

“My time in tattooing is actually relatively short. My intentions to start lasted for several years, but I had to postpone it in order to survive. During the '90s, I was growing up in a poor home in Uruguay and for too long, my priority in life was basically making ends meet and trying to cope with the massive shift work for very little money. After work, drawing and designing even more was both a way to give relief to my soul and improve my CV.

“I don't complain at all about that though. Those needs made me stronger and being raised in South America and living my early childhood in Madrid gave me strong moral values about family, friendship, life and love. In fact, if I had to choose were to be born again, I'd pick Uruguay!

**WHY NOT RELEASE THE BEAST AND BE IN PEACE WITH MYSELF?**



“All that aside, my life in general wasn't as simple as I wanted it to be. As soon as I could, I sorted out some issues and managed to save some money to buy my first tattoo kit. The first time I held a tattoo machine was in 2007 and I started formally with tattooing in 2008—quite late in comparison age-wise to everybody else.

“Eduardo Sasia—a fellow tattooist friend of mine for ages—

introduced me into tattooing. I couldn't spend the time I wanted with him because by then my life was settled in Barcelona, quite far away from my home country, but he was always supporting me and replying to all my enquiries.

“He was a real friendly face and guiding hand for me in this new world, but at the same time, I am basically self-taught. I spent so many hours finding out all sorts of information



**THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, I'VE EXPERIMENTED WITH MANY DIFFERENT MEDIA, BUT TATTOOING IS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT TECHNIQUES I'VE EVER TRIED**

twice as hard as they need to be. Which is pretty much how Santa started to feel as the months rolled by.

"I was working basically on my own for several years in Barcelona, but like you say, at some point, I just felt stuck. I needed more and somebody else to learn from. I went to some tattoo conventions to look at the work of the masters and the idea of moving to England to improve my language skills and developing myself as a tattoo artist there started to grow in my mind—and here I am!"

It sounds so easy on paper but very few are able to work in the style they want to from day one—but that's not to say it's impossible if you have the talent and ambition to short circuit the system.

"The period in which I was doing walk-in work was relatively short I guess. It started here 🍷"

related to tattooing and it was incredibly tough at the beginning. Everything was so confusing, but I consider myself a very stubborn person, so I didn't give up, even when the technique was such a difficult thing to grasp properly. Technique was one of the biggest challenges for me. Throughout my life I've experimented with many different media, but tattooing is one of the most difficult techniques I've ever tried—which left me with nothing, but frustration when

things didn't go in the way I wanted, but at the same time, I had the willpower to make it and an intense love for it."

Sometimes, you have to take a leap of faith into the dark in order to jump start something important to you. There's not necessarily always what you need close to hand—this is key for a lot of tattoo artists. You can get pretty close to what you want to be doing for the rest of your life, but if you're in the wrong place... well, it can make things



**DURING THE YEARS I WAS PRACTICING, I TRIED TO COPY AND FIT MYSELF INTO ONE OF THE MANY AMAZING TATTOO STYLES, BUT I HAD TO QUIT THAT. I WASN'T COMFORTABLE IN ANY OF THEM**

in England, mainly at Brothers In Ink in Middlesbrough. I had such a great time there. The atmosphere was great and I owe them a lot. They gave me the chance to start in this country and to be honest, thanks to the 'walk-in time', I had the chance to develop my own style. Reaching perfection on the many scripts I did—and still do from time to time—was, and is, one of my main technique obsessions and pleasures.

"But I suppose my road to doing my own stuff was quite fast and I think that's because when I started in this world, I had a solid drawing portfolio and a clear idea in mind about what I wanted to do. During the years I was practising, I tried to copy and fit myself into one of the many amazing tattoo styles, but I had to quit that. I wasn't comfortable in any of them.

"At some point I became very stressed about it and realised that my way of drawing is so powerful that it dominates me completely. So I simply gave up and thought, why not? Why not

release the beast and be in peace with myself?

Anyway, during this time of walk in work, I was drawing like crazy and promoting my artwork more than my tattoos. The rest just came on its own. Customers loved my style of drawing and they allowed me to do my own designs with more and more freedom each time.

"I am so grateful to them for that because it was exactly what I was looking for in this world. Just being myself."

When it comes to being yourself, there are few better places for an artist to put down roots than Brighton—the spiritual home of the wild at heart. If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere (wrong city/song, but you get the picture). The demand for quality tattoos is probably the highest we have in the country and the number of studios to cater for it, is not excessive down there.

"I love Brighton! It certainly is the best place in which I can be at this moment. In 2013, I was learning English in a language school in Lewes and I fell in love







with the south of England—so after the Brothers In Ink term, I decided to find a place here. The starting point was in a small studio in which I worked for six months, but I didn't fit in there. Then I met Dan and Lisa Arietti which changed everything because, in their shop, I can spread my wings and expand my imagination in my work. I couldn't be happier. The atmosphere is great and Dan's artwork and tattoos are amazing—he has managed to put his own personality to the oriental style and his technique is perfect. Without doubt, he is one of the best here in the style, so working in his shop was a great chance for me to learn and develop my own style. For such a young studio, it has a solid reputation in every respect."

As something of a fan of

Santa's style, I think it's safe to say that her best work is totally dominated by images that are pulled from the natural world. She has a way of letting a piece speak for itself without having to try too hard and that's not an easy thing to master.

"That's exactly what I want when I design a tattoo piece. Sometimes the message is quite simply to understand, as in the Darwin chest piece for example, but sometimes the coded meaning is only between me and the customer—and that's amazing because I love making a beautiful piece with a kind of hidden meaning. It makes it even more special and interesting.

"This creates strong bonds between my artwork and the thoughts of my clients and is actually also a great challenge for my mind because at some

**I AM SO GRATEFUL TO THEM FOR THAT BECAUSE IT WAS EXACTLY WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR IN THIS WORLD. JUST BEING MYSELF**

point, I have to interpret their feelings into my own. That's one of the things that makes me love tattooing so much. Sometimes it is like working directly with the memory of the customer and represent them as being alive in a more effective way.

"It is almost a mystical experience and I try to recreate that on the skin with my own language, which in general, is related to the natural world. I do love abstraction as well, but my aim as an artist, is quite ambitious: To represent through my artwork, power, life, passion and energy, and I found that the natural world is the key to that. 🌻



**MODERN ART FAILED. TRUE ART IS DEAD NOW. TATTOOING IS THE WAY TO BRING TRUE ART BACK TO THE PEOPLE**



“I like to ‘disturb’ people in some way. I find that animals have a specific kind of strength and an incredible sad beauty that is difficult to ignore or explain with words. I try to reflect that in my tattoos and the tattooing experience is not just adding symbols, colours or shapes to a piece to make it beautiful.

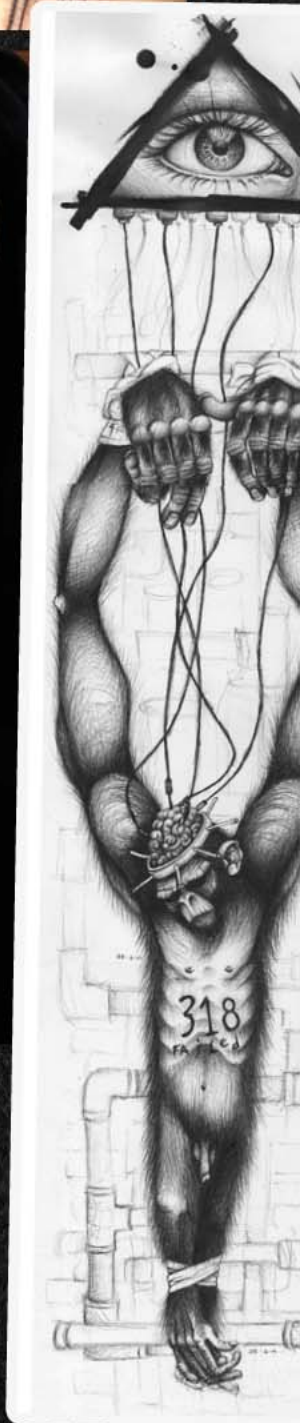
“I am absolutely committed to tattooing. I think it has been treated unfairly over time. We know that it is a kind of art, but the system still tries to undervalue it. From my point of view, contemporary art sucks. Common people can’t understand those puzzling ‘art’ pieces of nowadays. Cold, dull, crazily expensive, sleeping in a frozen modern museum and completely empty of meaning from themselves. I think if you have to go to an exhibition and you have to have an explanation about a visual art piece that is in front of your eyes, the artist has failed.

“The task for them is creating beauty and communicating with people even when they don’t have any cultural art training. Modern art failed on that. True art is dead now I reckon. To find those kind of emotions, you have to go back in time, but I think

tattooing is the way to bring true art back to the people. Art belongs to us! You don’t have to knock on the door of a gallery to have your artwork exposed and you can create honest art to be understood by everyone. You can express yourself as an artist and also help people to move their souls in some aspect and express themselves as well.”

On which note, Santa has an art project called SAINTS that she’s working on right now. It’s good stuff too—you can see the beginnings of it over at her site.

“When I do my artwork, I tend to do it as a series. This is the way in which I reflect my personal changes through my artwork. However, none of them are finished yet. They are open projects that I like to refresh from time to time with a new piece or sketch. I made an ‘erotic’ one, based on massive size indian ink drawings of sexual topics. And before that I worked on ‘Beings’ in which I explore the shapes of the natural world. I am reducing the size of my drawings at the moment and changing the indian ink for pens. The ‘Saints’ series is my intention of showing in a raw way how animals (and also us) are being treated by society.



“As I told you, I enjoy disturbing people’s emotions a bit. It’s a complex idea and also is the way in which I try to explain how distorted reality is nowadays. We live in a world which hides suffering because basically, it’s not nice to see. We are not prepared to deal with sickness, pain, death and poverty, and that makes us unable to deal with life because life is not just entertainment and joy. To be happy or at peace with yourself, your duty as a human is knowing a kind of ‘contrast’ in order to appreciate what you have and stop craving for what you don’t have. You can’t realise that you are healthy until you become ill. You can’t be happy if you weren’t sad before. A continuous ‘joy’ leads to a never ending and deep dissatisfaction as a human being—true life itself is contrast. Life itself is also pain. Life has no meaning if death doesn’t exist.

“So from my point of view, that’s the main aspect of the real life that ‘they’ steal from us in order to make us insensitive and numb to everything. I strongly believe in duality (life/death, pain/joy, sadness/happiness) as part of existence and consciousness so I am working

on this series to reflect that thought and to try to make aware people about the sadness and unfairness of hidden reality.

“I try using my art to face people with the things we don’t want to see. Sometimes you are insensitive if you see a picture—you maybe are too numb, but you can’t look to another place if the same thing is reflected through art. I’ve started with monkeys because they are so physically similar to us you can easily identify with them in every aspect but I have more animals planned. I don’t have as much time as I want to develop this series deeply. My sketchbook is full of plenty of projects with not enough time for doing them, but I’m very excited to be doing it. This series is the one which has the strongest meaning for me of all my work.”

As you’ll have noticed, I could sit here and talk for the rest of the year with Santa about life, the universe and anything else you can lay your hands on, but I’ll quit while I’m ahead and leave you with this from her: “I am truly happy at the moment. I am not sure if one day I’ll move to another genre, but I do think on the possibility of developing

my ideas beyond my limits. I like challenges and at the moment, tattooing presents them every day in every respect. This subject is huge, and alongside of drawing, they feed me enough to share my life with them until the end because I am always learning from them.

“Maybe I can change my way of tattooing or drawing, or find new topics to express on skin or paper, but as long as I feel myself learning, I’ll still be with them.” 🐼

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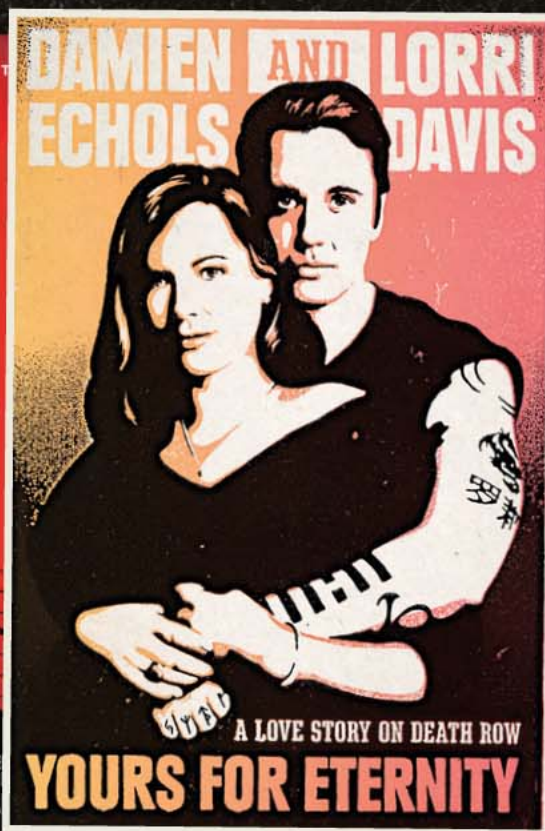
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# THE WHOLE OF THE LAW

Damien Echols is a New York Times bestselling author whose 2012 memoir, *Life After Death*, is an absolute must-read. In addition to that, he's the subject of four critically acclaimed documentaries—including *West of Memphis* produced by Peter Jackson—a talented artist and one of the most genuine people I've ever met. He's also had to overcome the impossible... a death sentence

Barbara Pavone Kevin Wilson



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It was 1994 when 19-year-old Damien Echols and teens, Jessie Misskelley and Jason Baldwin, dubbed the West Memphis Three, were found guilty of the 1993 murders of three eight-year-old boys in West Memphis, Arkansas. While the latter were sentenced to life in prison, Echols found himself on death row.

In 1996, they became the subjects of *Paradise Lost*, a trilogy of documentaries that called into question the legitimacy of their trial. The world took notice and following nearly two decades in prison, on August 19, 2011, Echols,

Baldwin and Misskelley were released, but only after agreeing to enter Alford pleas, i.e. asserting their innocence while acknowledging that the evidence on hand could be used to convict them.

I had the pleasure of meeting Echols at New York's Sacred Gallery a few days before the unveiling of his *Do As Thou Will* exhibit, a collection of talismans aimed at providing good luck and protection.

Following a quick Starbucks run and a warm introductory hug, we were ready to get down to business, starting with a chat about his latest book, *Yours for Eternity: A Love*

*Story on Death Row*, which features letters he and Lorri Davis—whom he met, fell in love with, and married while in prison—began exchanging after she first learned about him through *Paradise Lost*.

**CONGRATULATIONS ON YOURS FOR ETERNITY—IT'S BRILLIANT. WHAT WAS IT LIKE PUTTING THIS BOOK TOGETHER?**

It was something that we had initially said we would never do because it's entirely too personal. When we got all those letters out of storage, there were somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000. We're



talking about years and years of correspondence every single day, sometimes more than one letter a day. We had to go through all of those and narrow it down to 150 letters, so that in itself was tough.

The interesting thing about it was when we started reading them, a lot of times it was almost like we had written prophecy. For example, in the very first letters that I was writing to Lorri, I said things like, 'As soon as I get out, I'll come to New York'—I'd never been here before in my life. So we would read all these things and realise we did everything we said we were gonna do.

**ONE OF YOUR FIRST POSTSCRIPTS IN THE BOOK READS: 'I'VE TRIED TO LIVE MY LIFE WITH THE MOTTO, "DON'T LOOK BACK"'. WHAT WAS IT LIKE LOOKING BACK?**

Weird and unpleasant. Incredibly unpleasant. Imagine finding a journal that you kept when you were 14 years old, then going back and reading it and having to look at how stupid you were, what a

WHEN WE GOT ALL THOSE LETTERS OUT OF STORAGE, THERE WERE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 5,000 AND 10,000. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT YEARS AND YEARS OF CORRESPONDENCE EVERY SINGLE DAY

dumbass you were. We all know on some sort of instinctual level that we've grown in certain ways, but [most people] aren't slapped in the face with the concreteness of it.

**HAVE YOU READ THE FINISHED BOOK?**

As we got very, very close to that draft, I was still living in Salem, Massachusetts, so [me and Lorri] came to New York. Sitting in the little lobby of our hotel, my editor came over and we read through all the letters in loose-leaf form and she was saying, 'This is the final cut. We have to go through and nail the very last things out'. So we read through it like that, but once it came out in book form, I never picked it up and hopefully never will.

**BEFORE YOU CAME IN, I WAS**

**ADMIRING THIS AMAZING ART AROUND US AND IT'S UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN. WHAT INSPIRED IT?**

It started off when I was young. When I was younger, all the way up to prison I practiced the Golden Dawn tradition of ceremonial magick. I have these talismans tattooed all over my body; I've got like five or six of 'em in various places. These things are a huge part of my life. I have my own versions of them hanging all over my house.

Think of them as a prayer given concrete form. A lot of times, when we're doing visualisation techniques, when we're doing imagery work, it's hard to visualise a particular concept. For example: Protection. If you try to picture protection, you usually don't picture that thing, you picture its opposite. You'll picture, 'I wanna be 🍌



safe from somebody trying to rob me’—that’s not protection. When you’re practicing visualisation, you try to focus on what you want, not on what you don’t want. So you would design one of these for protection, then do the same energy work on it that you would do on visualisation.

**A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE MISINTERPRETING THE SHOW’S TITLE, DO AS THOU WILL. WHAT IS ITS ACTUAL MEANING?**

Probably the most famous student of the Golden Dawn tradition was Aleister Crowley. He went on to form his own traditions later down the road, but his rule, his law, was ‘Do as thou will shall be the whole of the law’. People misinterpreted that to mean ‘Do as you will. There’s no rules, there’s no anything, you just do whatever the fuck you want. Who cares if it’s moral or immoral?’

What he actually meant is, in ceremonial magick, the word ‘will’ means very much what the word ‘dharma’ means in Buddhism. Everybody knows ‘karma’, but most people don’t know ‘dharma’, which is what you’re supposed to be doing; the reason you’re here; the reason you’re incarnated in this earthly realm.

My will, what I’m content doing, what fulfils me, is ceremonial magick. It’s what allowed me to

I HAVE THESE TALISMANS TATTOOED ALL OVER MY BODY; I’VE GOT LIKE FIVE OR SIX OF ‘EM IN VARIOUS PLACES. THESE THINGS ARE A HUGE PART OF MY LIFE

survive for so long in prison and that’s what this show is about. This is sort of the fruit of my life, the fruit of what I love doing. For me, the artwork is secondary.

The pieces featuring skulls are definitely my favorites...

When we were doing the Life After Death book tour in Paris, I was there for close to a month, and you go around and you see all the old architecture and gargoyles everywhere. Gargoyles are these things that look scary, but their purpose is to protect you from even scarier things. I started thinking about the concept behind that and I love shadow boxes, so basically that’s what the ones with skulls on ‘em are: A cross between a gargoyle and a shadow box. They’re going to be for protection, to keep the home safe, to provide sanctuary.

**WHEN PEOPLE SEE THIS COLLECTION OF WORK, WHAT DO YOU HOPE THEY’LL TAKE AWAY FROM IT?**

Just the fact that it’s possible to make art out of the thing you love. That you can take things that are very abstract and apply them in a way that will allow you

to hopefully pay the bills while doing what you love and finding others that are interested in it.

Also the meaning behind certain things, like ‘Do As Thou Will’ and what Crowley taught. His writings have had a huge and profound effect on all of Western spirituality, so hopefully it will encourage people to learn more about that.

Almost everything that Crowley did got twisted into something he didn’t mean. I despise Facebook, I hate it, I think it’s the trailer park of the Internet. I thought people on Twitter were goofy until I discovered Facebook and then I realized people on Twitter are fucking geniuses.

People post things like, ‘Aleister Crowley was in favour of human sacrifice’. They don’t comprehend that, for all intents and purposes, he practiced tantric sex magic. It was illegal to write about that in England, but it wasn’t illegal to write about human sacrifice, which makes no fucking sense, but that’s that puritanical mindset. So he wrote all these passages about how during certain magical acts he sacrificed 10,000 unborn children - he’s talking about





semen. Who in the fuck has time to commit 10,000 human sacrifices? But most people will never, ever look that deeply into anything. They'll see something like that and twist it and make it sensational.

**THIS BEING YOUR SECOND SOLO SHOW AT SACRED AND SEEING AS YOU'VE BEEN TATTOOED HERE A BUNCH OF TIMES, I'M CURIOUS, HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER IT?**

I walked in completely at random. I lived about three blocks from here when I first got out of prison and I was walking down the street and I saw the sign outside and I thought, 'I'll go up and see what it is'. I came here expecting some nasty little hellhole, but when you see this, you're like, 'Oh wow, this is not what I thought it was at all. There's a fucking art gallery and people who actually know what they're doing!' You don't come in for a tattoo and leave with herpes.

**IMAGINE FINDING A JOURNAL THAT YOU KEPT WHEN YOU WERE 14 YEARS OLD, THEN GOING BACK AND READING IT AND HAVING TO LOOK AT HOW STUPID YOU WERE**

**DID YOU GET TATTOOED THAT DAY?**

I did. Kevin was behind the front desk and I handed him my ID and he said, 'Are you that guy who was in prison? One of those other guys was in here a few weeks ago'. If you've seen the documentaries, Jessie Misskelley has that clock tattooed on top of his head, but he didn't have hands on it. He always said he was going to have the hands tattooed once he got out and that they would point to the time he was released. He came in here and got that done. I have no idea why, but I found my way into the exact same tattoo parlour that Jessie Misskelley had just weeks before.

**WHAT DID YOU GET?**

What did I get? To be honest,

everything runs together. I lost count of how many tattoos I had somewhere around 40. People who don't have tattoos always say, 'How many do you have?' and I'm like, 'One'.

**WERE MOST OF THEM DONE RECENTLY OR DID YOU START AS A TEEN?**

I started when I was 16, so a lot of the process of getting out was covering up crappy tattoos that I did myself. I got probably 10, maybe 15 here. For me, it's all about meaning. I don't understand why people get shit that doesn't mean anything.

**THAT BEING SAID, THIS MIGHT BE DIFFICULT, BUT CAN YOU SINGLE OUT A FEW OF THE MOST SPECIAL ONES? 🍌**



"To Know  
To Dare  
To Will  
And to remain silent"



IF I DO ANYTHING OUTSIDE OF VISUAL ART, IT WOULD BE SOME SORT OF PERFORMANCE ART, BUT FIRST OFF, IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT MAGICK

There's all these different talismans I get with people that mean something to me in some sort of way, like Peter Jackson and Johnny Depp.

This spider [on my collarbone], the reason I got it was because I would go see this shaman in Upstate New York when I first got out and I was still so, so deep in shock and trauma that I was barely functioning. One of the things she said to me was, 'Your spirit animal is the spider. The reason for that is the spider is the only predator in nature that doesn't hunt. The spider builds its web and it sits there and trusts in the universe.' And that's kinda what I had to start doing. I had to start building my web, building my life and putting myself back together and just hoping and trusting and having faith that the universe was gonna bring me whatever I needed.

This one here, [the bird on top of my right hand], was another one I got with Johnny. We did this off of the headdress he wore in *The Lone Ranger*. When we went to Toronto to the film festival up there, we decided to get something to mark the occasion. We were in his hotel room and we started calling around tattoo studios in Toronto and saying, 'We need you to come to this hotel at a certain time, but we can't tell you who you're going to be tattooing'. Most people were like, 'Hell no, I'm not

coming to something shady like that'. We finally found one guy and his exact words were: 'Who is it, Obama? The Pope? Fuck it, I'll go.'

**DEFINITELY OBAMA!**

[laughs] Yeah! So this guy shows up and this is the quality of work we got. We took that crow from his headdress and put it on the Xerox and tried to make a copy of it and tried to use that as a stencil. It ended up looking more like a seagull. Johnny's looked more like a hummingbird because it had this long, pointy nose.

**BECAUSE OF WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE AND THE BOOKS AND DOCUMENTARIES, YOU'VE SORT OF BECOME A CELEBRITY OVER THE YEARS - IS THAT STRANGE?**

I hear a lot of shit on the Internet about how I'm hanging out with celebrities and when am I gonna do something with normal people and I'm like, 'What the fuck are you talking about, man?' Normally, I'm shopping at fucking Uniqlo and eating out of the goddamn Euro cart. I don't know what the fuck they think my life is. Like I'm in a limousine that's got a crystal chandelier hanging in the back.

**IS IT TRUE YOU STARTED TATTOOING AT ONE POINT?**

I did for a while and I had to deal with so many weird-ass people that I retired quickly. It started when the

guy here that was doing most of my tattoos said, 'I put all these marks on you, I want you to do something on me'. I was like, 'Anything I give you is going to be horrible' and he said, 'Just do an X'. So I did, then everybody else at the shop wanted one and, of course, they posted pictures on Instagram and next thing I knew, we had a waiting list of 500 people wanting to get an X.

**SEEING AS TATTOOING IS DEFINITELY OUT OF THE PICTURE, WHAT'S NEXT?**

Right now, it's visual art. I think if I do anything outside of visual art, it would be some sort of performance art, but first off, going back full circle, for me, it's always about magick. It's the driving force behind my life, so wherever that takes me next, that's what I want to be doing.

**NOW, FOR THE TOUGHEST QUESTION OF ALL! PLEASE FINISH THIS SENTENCE:**

**'DAMIEN ECHOLS IS...'**

About to go get a haircut. 🐼

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Julian Paszkiewicz  
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# DEAD SLOW

Despite its reputation as being a laid back city, a Saturday afternoon stroll along Brighton's main strip between the station and the seafront can be anything but tranquil



Weaving through maddening crowds of football fans, shoppers and hen parties can easily lead you darting to the nearest quiet side street and inadvertently discovering one of Brighton's hidden gems.

Tucked neatly off the Lanes, number 9 Boyces Street has been home to two of the country's most innovative, loved and internationally respected studios for 17 years. Originally opened as Temple Tatu, then Nine, new owners and resident artists Jack Applegate, 27, and Kirsty Simpson, 31, are inking its third chapter with a new name—Dead Slow: “The name just clicked and resonated with us as something that wasn't part of the old shop. Rather, our thing. And it'll look great on T-Shirts,” says Jack with a reserved

but deeply infectious mirth.

Named after the iconic signs on the harbour walls of Brighton marina, it's fitting for an artist who lives on a boat he lovingly restored from mechanical ruin with his dog, Maisie. But what made him and co-owner and artist, Kirsty, take on the shop on the first place?

“I've been working here for seven years and when our old owner suddenly wanted to pass the business on and get out of tattooing it was offered to us first.”

Just as Jack is about finish this sentence, the energetically bright and friendly Kirsty authoritatively chimes in: “We didn't want anyone else to get it.”

For a second they stare at each other before turning to me: “We couldn't let this place fall into anyone else's hands because we cared too much about it,” says Jack

as if he and Kirsty are on the same telepathic wavelength.

And care they should. In 1999, a guidebook to Brighton described Temple as somewhere which invites you to explore every possibility of your ideas in a space that makes you feel at home. By artists with a deep knowledge and understanding of tattooing's history and their abilities to make each piece unique.

“We found an old plaque setting out Temple's aims: to welcome everyone, even if they haven't been tattooed before, and immerse them in the art rather than making them feel like an outsider coming in. And also to make the work the most important thing, with everything else coming after that. That's the Temple I remember,” explains Jack.

Resembling a gallery more 🍷

# JACK APPLGATE

INSTAGRAM:  
@offshoretattooing



*We couldn't let this place fall into anyone else's hands because we cared too much about it*

than the stereotypical spit-and-sawdust parlours often associated with seaside resorts, Dead Slow is everything you'd hope a studio could be, but the last thing you'd expect. Something that is evident in the work of their fellow artists. Sergi Sanchez is a seasoned master of classic styles whilst Jonny Breeze specialises in black and dotwork with a subatomic attention to detail. "As soon as Jonny made himself available he offered to jump on board there was

no one else we could think better. He fits into it really well, he's super humble. Everyone is super humble," says Jack.

"That's one of the most important things aside from the tattooing, that we all get along. We don't work with anyone who's not a nice person," adds Kirsty, displaying the same curious synchronicity as before.

"But also quality of work. Knowing the people we've asked would not sacrifice it for anything.

And to be pushing forward, always pushing rather than resting," Jack emphasises with profound, careful little pauses.

Dead Slow is also the UK base for guests like Lea Nahon whose style is better compared to Austrian figurative painter Egon Schiele than any tattooist past, present and perhaps future. Alongside the quality of work, the bonds forged at Dead Slow go deeper than the fusion of skin and ink. Something that is personified by apprentice, illustrator and shop manager, Troy Beard.

"Jack's a bit of a hero for me. He looked after me when I was



in some pretty shit situations, he housed me for a little while and I lived with him on the boat so we became good friends. When he told me they'd taken over the shop and wanted me to work here, I was super happy. I ditched my job managing a bar that day—which was fun, but definitely not as fun as working in a really nice tattoo shop with lovely people.”

But what about Jack and Kirsty as artists—how does taking on the entire running of a studio affect one's own creative journey? Jack's work is a smorgasbord of magical realism. Hatching and chiaroscuro and painterly techniques dance with

one another in a waltz of perfect unison yet his response is surprising: “I feel my work up until this point was exploring every way and every influence to see what grabbed me. It's only now with taking the shop over I feel I can start forging a direction with it.”

Jack's interest in art and tattoos started young: “I remember drawing excavators as a kid. I was obsessed with drawing caterpillar tracks on anything, so whatever I could think of I'd do that and kept drawing throughout. My dad was a lorry driver so all of his mates—and all my uncles had them. They were the shittiest, but also the

*We found an old plaque setting out Temple's aims: to welcome everyone, even if they haven't been tattooed before*

best. The most blown out, blurred drawings of '80s girls. I liked '80s girls anyway, so any time they got them out, which wasn't often, it was a day made.”

These experiences inspired Jack to study art at GCSE which led to studying painting at university. Around that time he started getting tattooed himself 🍷



## TROY BEARD

INSTAGRAM:  
@bakubiousvondoom



when I got a job here it was like 'Fuck! I've got a job at Temple!'"

Re-establishing a union of top notch quality control, constant inspiration and a warm welcome is clearly paramount to the team. But Kirsty is determined and thrilled to use the shop to branch out into lino and screen printing. Looking back over the rapid transition, Jack and Kirsty consider it serendipitous and claim to have no regrets. But what have been the biggest challenges so far?

"Taking responsibility of everyone else earning a living has been a big thing. But everything

*Taking responsibility of everyone else earning a living has been a big thing — but it's given us a kick up the arse*

else seemed kind of natural. It's given both of us a kick up the arse," Jack says with a serious but contented zeal.

"The biggest thing was spending Christmas painting it orange and not falling out with each other. Which we did really well at," enthuses Kirsty.

When something that is loved dies, it's natural to be sad and fear

that it will never be replaced. But with Jack and Kirsty, at the helm and with the support of Jonny, Sergi and Troy, one thing is already clear... Dead Slow is a rightful reincarnation of a unique part of Brighton's tattoo culture. One which is as every bit as wonderful and strange as its predecessors and looks set to carve its own unique niche for a long while to come. 🐼



# TRUE COLOURS

There are more than a few reasons to catch up with David Giersch. Primarily, there's his photo-realism work, but he was also still on a buzz from winning Best of Show at the Tattoo Festival Berlin back in December



Nicky Connor David Giersch

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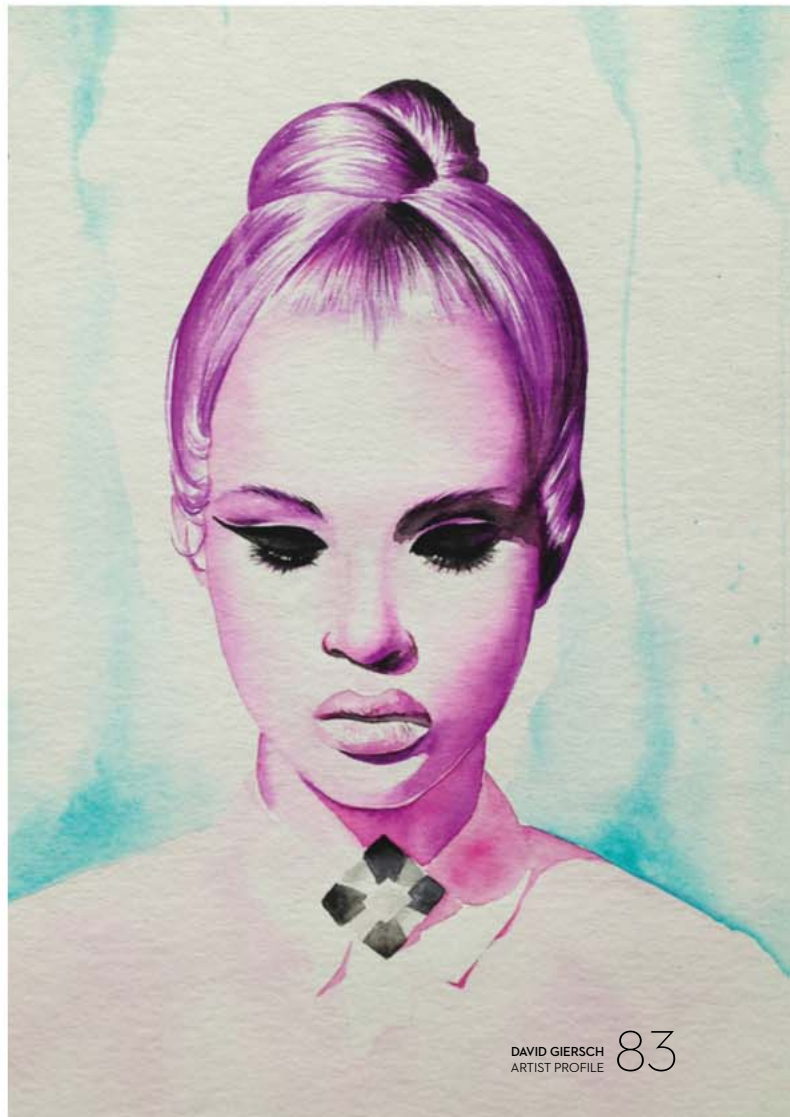
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@david\_nordel  
\_giersch

David Giersch is relatively new to the tattoo scene, as he started tattooing in 2012. But in that short space of time he has come a long way, winning awards, acclaim and producing amazing realism and watercolour tattoo style work. Before tattooing he worked in a creative multi-media background as a professional graffiti artist—an aftershock of working with graffiti in the mid-1990s when he was 15 before he progressed to painting

large scale murals on Berlin walls. With the spray can, paint brush and airbrush long being his weapons of choice, he started applying his art using a different canvas and new method in the form of tattoo and tattoo machine. For David, tattooing began as he was looking for a new challenge and wanted something a little more sociable—it's incredibly lonely being a graffiti artist. So when a friend suggested he explore tattooing

there was no looking back. David didn't really have a traditional apprenticeship, as he explains: "When I started with tattooing I never really began as an apprentice. The man that I learned from, he showed me the right needle position and said 'Good luck my friend; if you have any questions, ask me...' and that was it!" Prior to opening his own shop, David worked at Cool Run Inks (also based in Berlin). True Color 🍌



**DAVID'S PREVIOUS WORK:**

In his previous career as a professional street and Graffiti Artist also working under the name True Color Arts, David painted large scale art works and murals on the walls of Berlin. Berlin's policy on graffiti differs from the UK, and is a little more understanding of graffiti as an art form. The city has many colourful and decorative pieces from very large to small that adorn the sides and walls of buildings all over Berlin.

Arts was opened mid January 2014, just off Marktstrasse, in Friedrichsain, Berlin. Friedrichsain is one of the coolest parts of Berlin with lots of funky shops, bars and restaurants—including a wonderful Mexican bar with the best margaritas you'll find in the city. If you can see your way to surviving a Saturday night, there are some great flea markets where you can hunt for treasure on a Sunday afternoon.

True Color Arts is open Tuesday to Friday with a typical day starting first thing in the morning when David cleans the shop.

Next he builds up his work space and covers his machines, before making the stencils for the day and beginning to tattoo at around 11am. David works with just one client a day which means the atmosphere is very chilled and relaxed. They can break for lunch if needed and he can dedicate all his time to the client—he likes to see his tattoos as single day projects and finish them in that same day wherever possible.

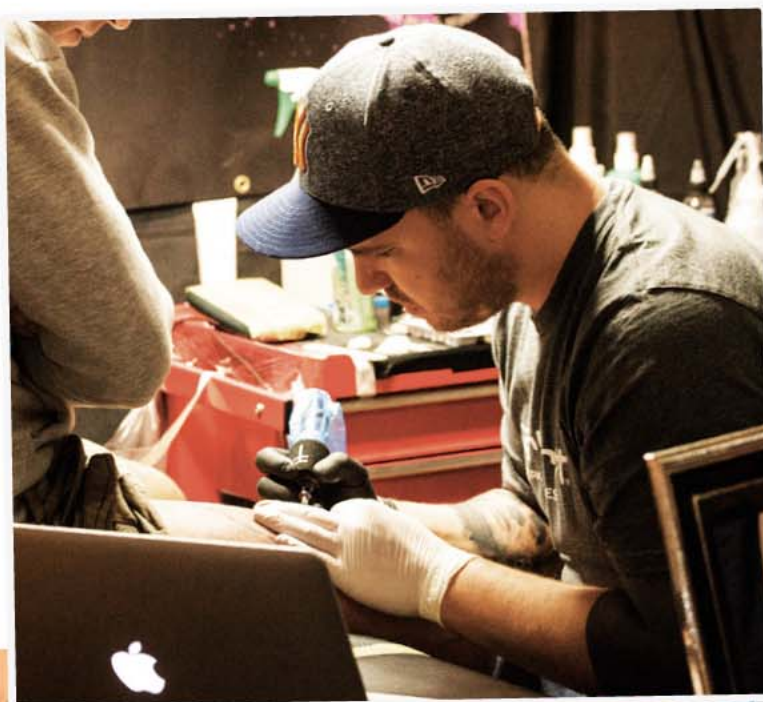
In addition to working at the studio, David likes to do guest spots and visit European shows. Recently, you could have found him working at Tattoo Rock Fest in Lisbon and Tattoo Festival Berlin, where he won both 'Best of Saturday' and 'Best of Show' with a beautiful realism piece. And he's also interested in pushing new techniques and tattoo equipment—most recently, the new Cheyenne 'Hawk Pen', released last year.

Describing his tattoo style as 'mainly realism but also with some watercolour style elements',

David likes to use lots of detail and soft shading to flow with the contours of the body. He finds his inspiration from both nature and the environment and in his tattoo designs he tries to combine different natural elements that appeal to him alongside other ideas.

David's background in graffiti underlines the development of his tattoo style—even with his large paintings he would more often than not work with realistic subjects. You can see how his passion for realism and watercolour styles have grown

**THE MAN THAT I LEARNED FROM, HE SHOWED ME THE RIGHT NEEDLE POSITION AND SAID 'GOOD LUCK MY FRIEND, IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ASK ME' AND THAT WAS IT**





## DAVID WORKS WITH JUST ONE CLIENT A DAY WHICH MEANS THE ATMOSPHERE IS VERY CHILLED AND RELAXED

style developed from my graffiti work because I only ever really worked with realistic graffiti. I try to create a new challenge every day for myself—to create more details and be better and better.”

With his style based in photo-realism, David finds inspiration in the work of other great realism and portrait artists from around the world, like Australian artists Benjamin Laukis and Mick Squires, American artists Nikko Hurtado and Rich Pineda, alongside of fellow Germans, Ralf Nonnweiler and Daniel Symansky, all of whom David looks on as great people and great artists. David holds a certain fondness for Benjamin Laukis especially—he has one of his portrait pieces on his right arm which he is planning to fill with colour portraits.

His other tattoos include a large Maori chest piece and the top section of his left arm is blacked 🙌

from his skill with a spray can, and this is clearly evident in his tattoo work today, where the shading, use of colour and small highlights add depth and tone to his designs.

Working across a broad range of subjects, from portraits to pop idols, he still enjoys graffiti and can be found producing work in his spare time, feeling that both mediums, tattoo and graffiti, enrich the other. “My



## MY STYLE DEVELOPED FROM MY GRAFFITI WORK BECAUSE I ONLY EVER REALLY WORKED WITH REALISTIC GRAFFITI

**THE PEN**  
David only works with German built Cheyenne machines. The company are based also in Berlin and David especially likes using the new 'Hawk Pen' released last year, which is quite different from a traditional tattoo machine as it is designed to feel like an actual pen. "I love the pen! It is much better than other tattoo machines, I love to do colour pieces with it as it is very easy to pack colour in the skin. It's also very intuitive for handling my style of work"

out to the elbow. Again, in time, this tattoo will be extended down to his hand with dot work. David also plans to cover his left leg in black and grey style work.

When he is not tattooing or painting David enjoys a more relaxed pace of life, he loves to walk with his girlfriend and dogs in the woods and enjoys the natural surroundings and peace and quiet. He needs this time to clear his head and replenish his creativity. Also when he has time, he goes skateboarding or wakeboarding in summer, and heading into the mountains to snowboard in the winter. Music is also a big part of David's life—he likes to listen to modern classical music like Ludovico Einaudi, or for something a bit more up tempo he would opt for a smooth deep house sound.

To book a tattoo in with David, Facebook or email him—his new website is on the way. Waiting times are usually around four–five months. He arranges his diary



quarterly with dates assigned in the first week of the previous month. Clients can choose from his collection of existing pieces or use their own portraits or ideas as a starting point.

Lastly, 2015 is looking to be an exciting year as he plans to travel doing guest spots across Europe, including Switzerland, Denmark, and some other parts of Germany. He is also aiming to visit some more international tattoo conventions, no doubt winning some more prizes enroute. 🍀



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# PULP FICTION

In 2005, Stieg Larsson's crime novel, *Män som hatar kvinnor*, was published in his native Sweden. The title translates directly as 'Men Who Hate Women' but you'll know it better by its English language title, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo...*

Follow Charles on Twitter @charlesardai or look him up at the Hard Case Crime website: [hardcasecrime.com](http://hardcasecrime.com)

Follow Gerard on Twitter @gerardbrennan or look him up at [gerardbrennan.co.uk](http://gerardbrennan.co.uk)

Wayne Simmons Courtesy of HARD CASE CRIME

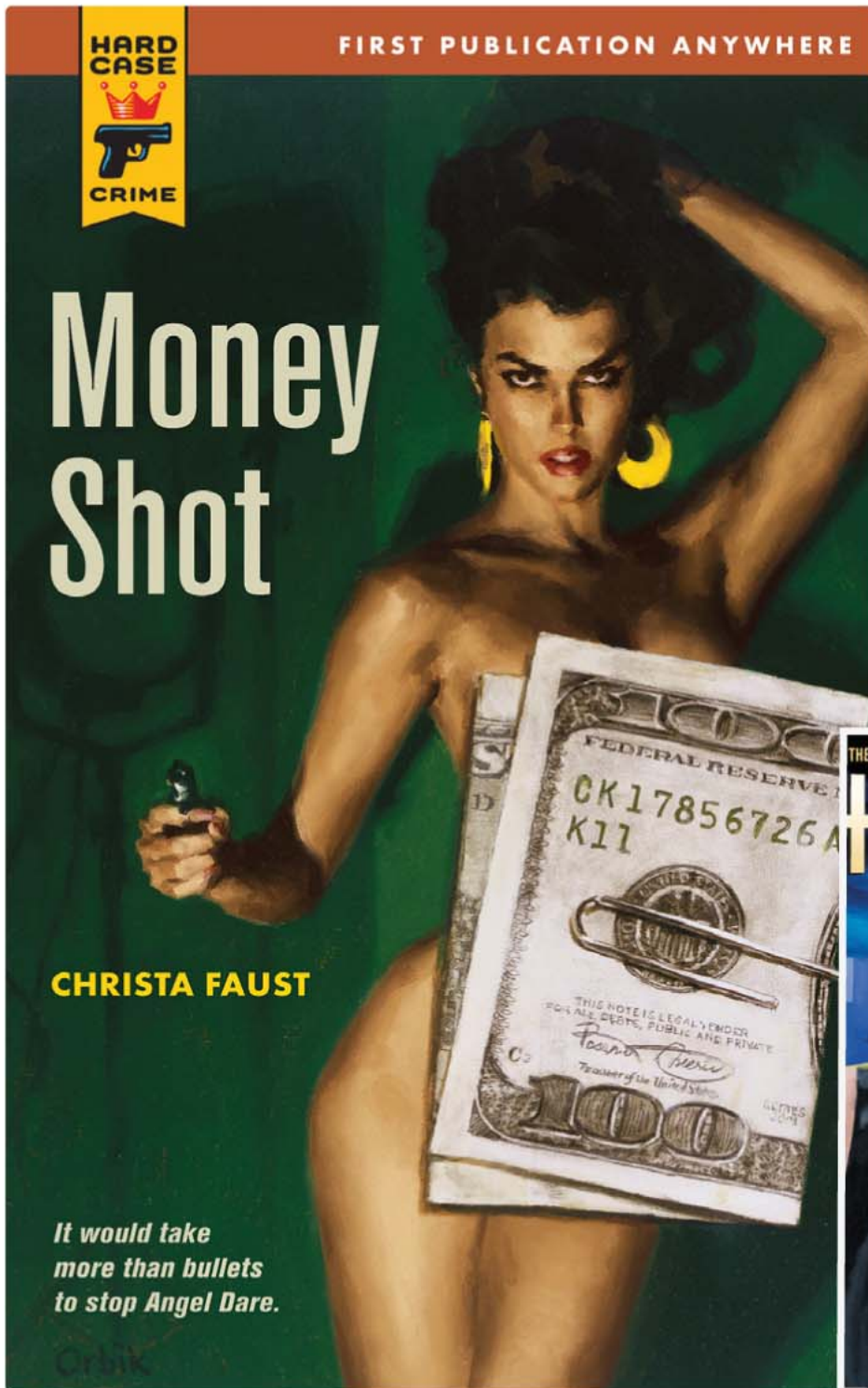
The book went on to be a global bestseller, the first of a trilogy that would be piled high in stores the world over. But, sadly, Larsson would not see any of that; he died in 2004 before his debut novel hit shelves. Larsson's series is notable for another reason, though; its chief heroine, cyber-goth Lisbeth Salander, was heavily tattooed.

It seems strange to make a big deal out of that in a tattoo

magazine. But, if we're honest, it is a big deal. Popular fiction, much like popular culture in general, isn't known for celebrating tattoo art. And crime fiction has been particularly hard on us. We're portrayed as "ruffians and exotics who live on the margins of society", according to Charles Ardai. He's an American crime writer with four books under his belt as well as a credit on the US TV series, *Haven*.



Steig Larsson



## HOODTOWN

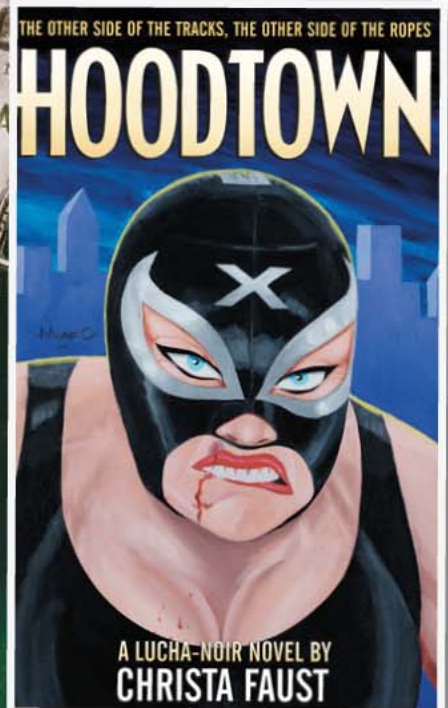
Christa Faust is the kind of author I dream of being friends with. Self-contained, answers to nobody, talented and recently wrote a killer of a book called Hoodtown. What's it about? Here's the synopsis:

### LIKE CASABLANCA, WITH MEXICAN WRESTLING MASKS...

Hoodtown, a lucha libre ghetto where the family 'gimmick' is sacred above all and the mask is the sole expression of one's identity. 'Hood' prostitutes are turning up murdered and worse, unmasked, and the 'Skin' establishment is as much help as a paid-off referee. Enter X, former luchadora with a bruised past, a bum knee and no time to play Santo. She's no hero, but there's no one else to tag-in, as her hunt for a killer uncovers a conspiracy that could take down all of maskedkind.

Sound like your kind of weekend fun? It's available now at all the usual haunts.

MR SMITH

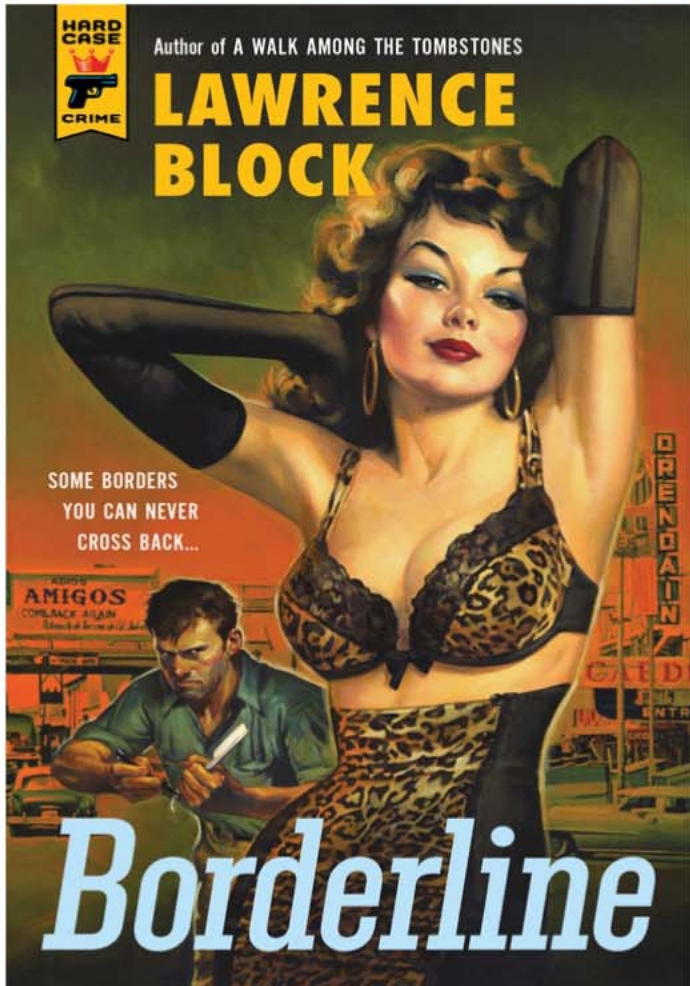
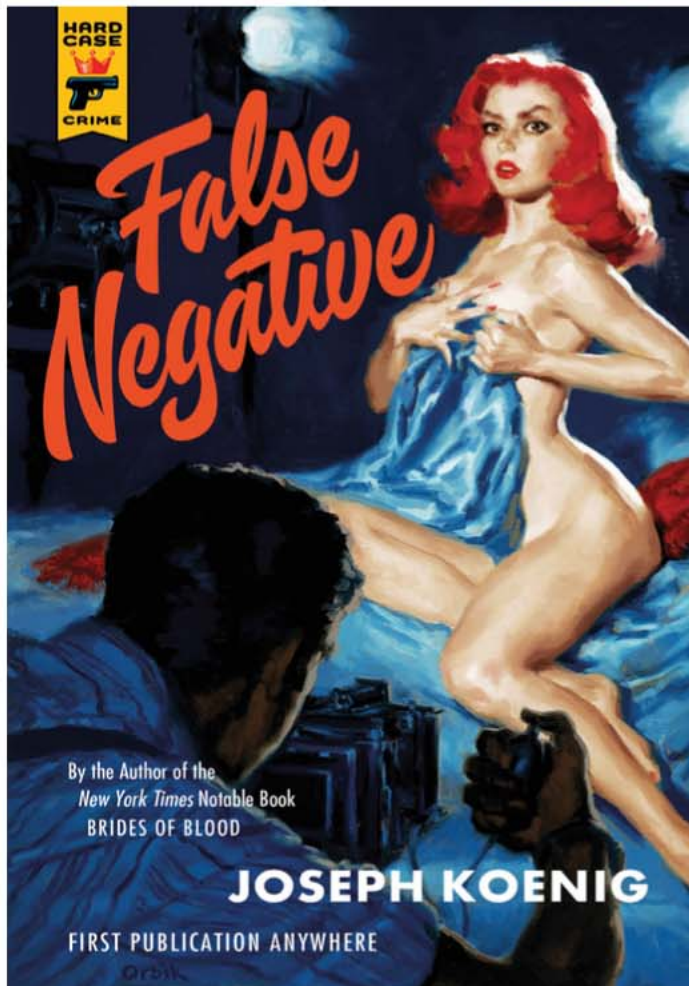
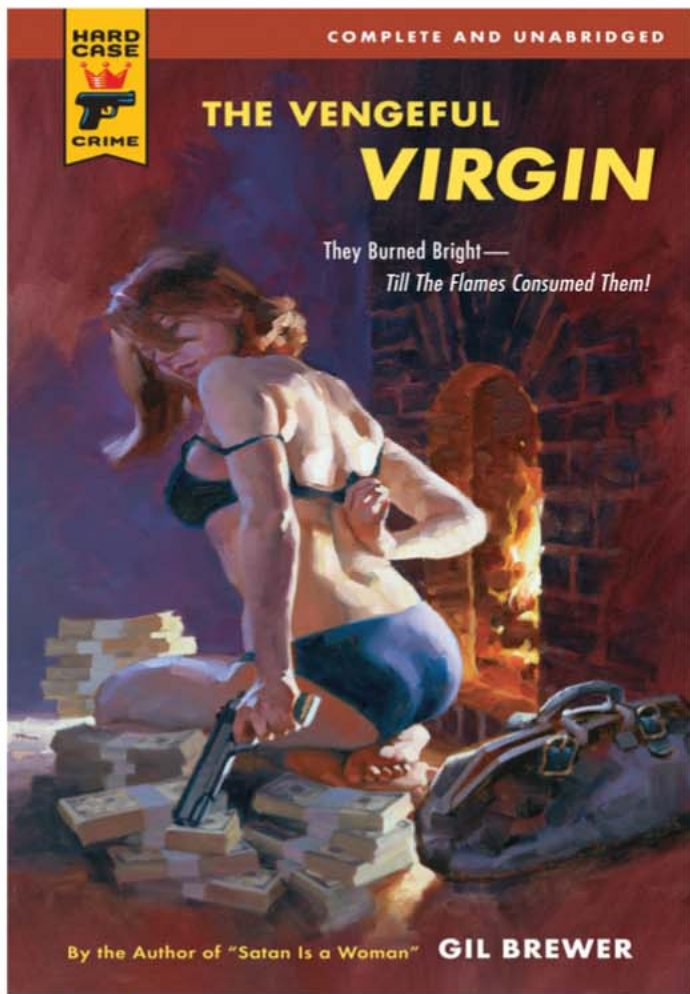
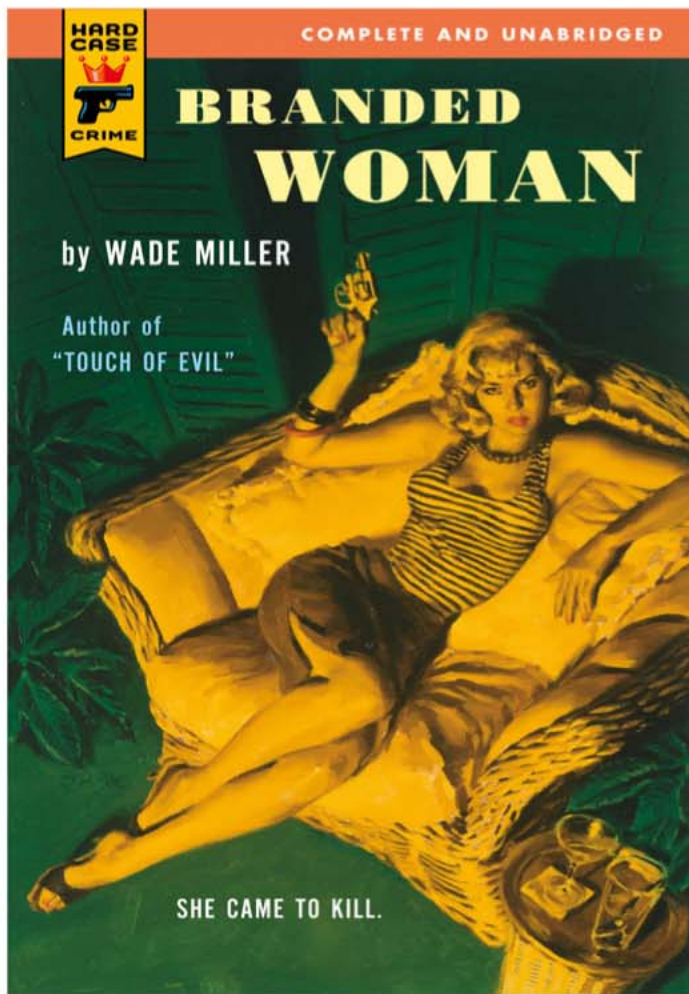


Charles is also the editor of Hard Case Crime, one of the most prestigious crime publishers around today. He continues: "Either the tattoo is a sign that someone was born or has travelled in a mysterious land (Sherlock Holmes: 'The fish you have tattooed immediately above your right wrist could only have been done in China... that trick of staining the fishes' scales a delicate pink is quite peculiar to

China...') or else they're circus performers, seamen on tramp steamers, or questionable types like the psychotic preacher in Night of the Hunter with 'LOVE' and 'HATE' tattooed on his knuckles. In later years you get Max Cady in Cape Fear and the titular serial killer in Thomas Harris' first Hannibal Lecter novel, Red Dragon. The tattoo is a mark to be feared, or at least steered clear of."

Gerard Brennan agrees. An emerging crime writer with appearances in several Mammoth Best of Crime anthologies, he's currently working on a PHD, the focus being "the masters of the genre, most notably Dashiell Hammett". Gerard's an avid tattoo collector with work from some of the most prolific artists within his native Northern Ireland: "Tommy Gunn, Jim Nimmons and George 🇮🇪"





Scharfenberg all working out of Belfast City Skinworks at the time” and more recently, Gigi and Brian McQueen at Timepiece. Yet, with his research, Gerard’s yet to find a positive reference to tattooing. “Crime fiction has always relied heavily on the idea of ‘the outsider’ much like in the classic Westerns,” he laments. And, unfortunately, folks with tattoos are often portrayed as outside of the social norm.

But what of contemporary crime fiction? Are things changing for the better? Are we seeing more Girls with Dragon Tattoos?

Gerard doesn’t think so, although he’s trying his damndest to shake things up from the inside: “I’m working on a crime novel that features a police detective who is quite heavily tattooed.”

For Charles, it would make sense that things would change: “Now that every barista at every Starbucks has a Gaelic knot on her nape, tattoos can’t be portrayed as a marker of depravity, any more than earrings on men can be used as code for homosexuality (or piracy, I guess). The world changes, and the meaning of certain bodily displays changes with it.” With the mainstreaming of tattoos, Charles has noticed a subtle shift in



Charles Arcia



Christa Faust

## THE PIN-UP, MUSE OF TRADITIONAL TATTOO ARTISTS THE WORLD OVER, HAS BEEN A STAPLE OF CRIME COVER ART FROM ITS VERY BEGINNINGS

attitude within crime fiction: “You get tattooed characters who are rebellious but not fearsome,” such as Larsson’s Lisbeth Salander, “or a tattoo serves merely as an element of the plot; the killer in Stephen King’s Joyland is observed to have a tattoo on his hand that mysteriously seems to change from time to time, but the fact that he’s tattooed isn’t itself a sign of anything sinister. In countless novels of the past decade,

random millennial characters are described in passing as having a tattoo, and other than a brief mention, the way you might say ‘She had blonde hair’, it’s unremarked-on. That’s progress from the pulp era to today.”

Of course, while tattoos themselves may have been sidelined—or worse—within crime fiction, tattoo imagery is entrenched within the genre. The pin-up, muse of traditional tattoo

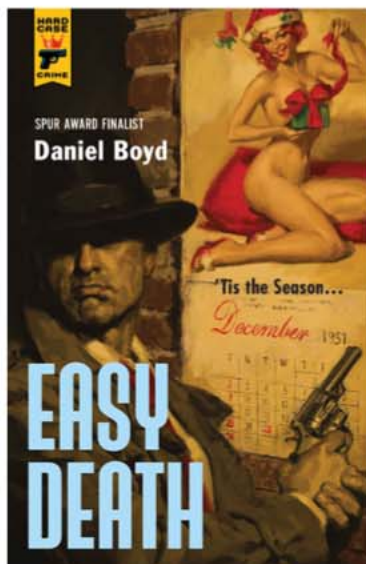
## SLEEPYHEAD

Meanwhile, over in TV land, things are changing equally slowly. Back in 2010, Sky made a slick little adaptation out of Mark Billingham’s Tom Thorne series.

Touching on only the first two books in the series, David Morrissey was brought on board as Thorne and Aidan Gillen as his best buddy (and police pathologist), Phil Hendricks. Thorne spends the occasional evening watching football on telly and drinking beer with Phil and everything is lovely. In fact, in the novels, Phil is portrayed as a Mancunian goth (if I remember correctly) but that wasn’t enough for Sky so they twisted him gay, pierced him up, dropped him into the seedy environment of the tattoo studio and set him up as a murderer. When in doubt, throw every stereotype in the book, huh. In spite of this, it’s still one of the better crime dramas of the last ten years to hit the TV—but it ain’t no patch on Billingham’s work on paper. Go see.

MR SMITH





artists the world over, has been a staple of crime cover art from its very beginnings. “It started in the days when pulp fiction magazines were vying for the attention of people heading past newsstands on the way into or home from work,” Charles explains. “You had to stand out from the pack in order to win the working man’s hard-earned dime, and publishers quickly discovered that sexy women in situations of suspense or menace was the formula that worked. They spent years trying to outdo each other with scenarios so lurid that you simply had to pick up the magazine to find out what was inside. When pulp made the leap from magazines to paperbacks, some of the sex and violence got toned down—but the pin-up look remained, done in a more sultry, moody style.” Vargas, Elvgren and Moran are some of the more popular pin-up artists out there, but Charles has his own favourites: “James Avati and James Bama, Robert Maguire and Robert McGinnis—they were all masters. And we’re so very lucky to have McGinnis painting new covers for us now, even as he approaches his 90th birthday.”

Charles is also lucky to have one Christa Faust on his roster. Described by Quentin Tarantino as “a Veronica in a world of Betties”, Christa is the author of numerous contemporary crime novels. She’s also a tattoo collector and her 2008 debut with *Hard Case Crime*, *Money Shot*, led to a very special



Gigi McQueen & Gerard Brennan

## WE ARE SO VERY LUCKY TO HAVE MCGINNIS PAINTING NEW COVERS FOR US NOW, EVEN AS HE APPROACHES HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY

piece in particular: “Shortly after we bought *Money Shot*, Christa went and got herself tattooed with the *Hard Case Crime* logo,” Charles recalls. “I honestly can’t think of a moment in our ten-year history that made me prouder.”

Not that any of this has convinced Charles to get inked himself. “Look: I love tattoos. I really do,” he protests. “Like our covers, they look deeply and passionately old school. But I can’t pick just one of our 100 cover images to hang on my wall, so how could I ever pick one image to permanently adorn my body?! I just love too many things. I’d constantly want to change it up, and that’s

not the way tattoos work.”

Unlike Gerard Brennan. Like many reading this fine publication, Gerard’s a lifer when it comes to tattoos. “When Gigi is finished with the Japanese-inspired sleeve, I’ll probably start thinking about a noir chest piece,” he smiles. “Maybe featuring a Maltese Falcon...” In fact, Gerard likes to imagine that many of the pulp cover artists were out-of-work tattoo artists. “After all,” he argues, “in the old pulp days, it would have been hard to keep up with all the books that were being churned out. Who’s quicker at coming up with iconic images than a tattoo artist? They’re the pulp writer of the visual art world.” 🦋



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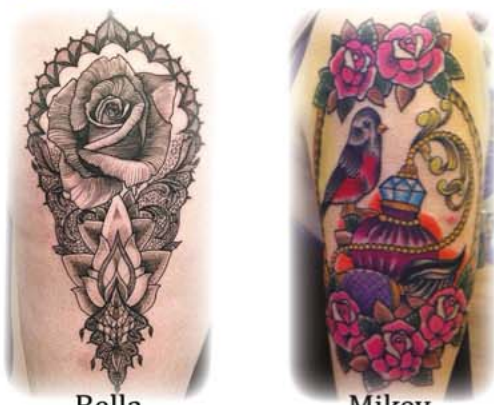



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# The Time Machine

WAYNE JOYCE

This time around, we thought it would be good to touch on where we are at with laser removal as a whole.

Here we sit in 2015 with laser technology at our fingertips. As previously discussed, it's not cheap, it's not guaranteed and more often than not, it's not too pleasant either.

What it is however, is an opportunity to fix a tattoo that didn't have as much thought put into it as may be it should. I read that news story in Sleeve Notes earlier and I have to admit, I smiled to myself over the 'black eyebrows' story but the more I considered it through the day, it stuck with me and it wasn't quite so funny.

For people of a certain generation, there is a myth that if you get 'mistakenly tattooed', it can be easily fixed with a laser.

"So I got black eyebrows tattooed on because I was bored of plucking them—it was a bad idea so now I'll get them lasered off".

The story is probably a lot deeper than that but for the purposes of this column, it's a useful example of far too many in the 'younger generation'—Christ, I'm not even that old myself!—believe the YouTube and BodyShockers hype that this kind of stuff is easy to fix. It's not.

See, for those of us over 25, there's a certain respect that comes with the tattoo. It might have been a bad idea or not as great as we had hoped but there's a commitment involved. We expected it to be 'for life' and it was.

For us, the laser is a godsend but we do not expect miracles from it. For some, it seems to be a magical tool that's taken for granted that can simply rub out your holiday romance as easily as deleting the photos of it on your phone.

As much as I love this job—and I really do, I get

a huge kick out of helping people put things right—sometimes, the expectation is simply too high of what happens in the real world. Those eyebrows are gonna be tasty to laser that's for sure.

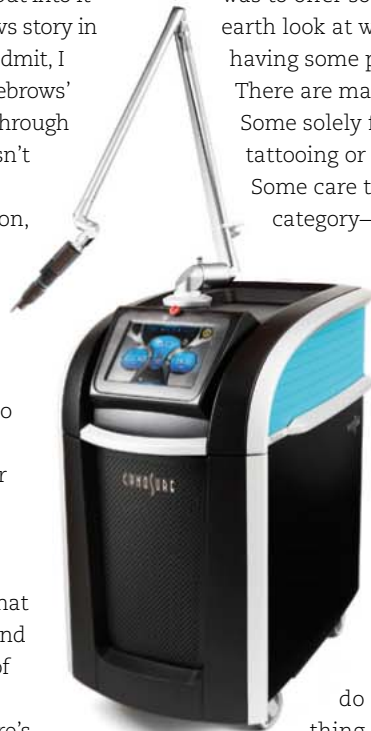
See, the whole point of this column in the first place was to offer some guidance. A real honest, down to earth look at what you're in for, but the messages are having some problems getting through the newswire. There are many laser clinics around the country. Some solely for the money with no interest in tattooing or the potential for tattooing afterwards. Some care too much—I probably fall into this category—and pay the price for their honesty in other ways. There are a lot of clinics that fall somewhere in between those two points as well... in exactly the same way as you can say the same about tattoo studios.

In an ideal world, every day would be full of people with old unhappy ink who wanted laser treatment to knock it back enough to have new and quality work in its place. Ink that they would proudly walk back into the world with and spread the message that all of us want to spread.

The world is far from ideal so let's do what we can to make our skin a better thing to live in than it is. Open season everybody—if you've got specific questions that you've always wanted answering, you can mail me at [wayne@resetroom.com](mailto:wayne@resetroom.com)—let's get some dialogue going and start sharing this knowledge that surely we must have accumulated by now.

Meantime—just watch those eyebrows OK. There's no need for that. 🐼

As always, if you have any questions or want to discuss something, you can email me at: [wayne@resetroom.com](mailto:wayne@resetroom.com)



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# An Eye is upon you

## PUSHING FORWARD BACK

Research, we are told, is the key to obtaining a great tattoo. 'Find an artist whose style suits your idea', 'save up, don't shop by price' and 'be prepared for a long wait, maybe even a whole year', but what happens next?



© Pam Van Dammed

The sad truth is that not even following those directions to the letter will guarantee your dream tattoo. When flash was king, it was not unreasonable to expect the tattoo design selected from the wall would result in a very similar tattoo on the skin. Not necessarily a perfect facsimile, tattooers are, after all, not human photocopiers, but a sufficiently close likeness nonetheless. When this didn't pan out, unhappy customers were left confused, how had they gotten a bad tattoo at a licensed studio, they asked? Casual observers are often surprised that a license relates only to cleanliness, that inspectors are concerned with prevention of the spread of hepatitis rather than the guarantee of good art, but tattooing has always shied away from intrusive legislation. A council employee is no better placed to judge the artistry of a tattoo than a teacher is able to deliver a tattoo-appropriate curriculum. Instead, we rely on our beloved art to be self policing, we spread the message of research and hope that those unexpectedly subjected to a bad tattoo once, learn fast.

The ability to accurately replicate flash barely seems relevant now that the mass produced has been largely superseded by the bespoke. 'Don' Ed Hardy offered custom designs as early as the 1970s, but one off pieces only became widespread when the manual labour of preparing to tattoo reduced. Tattooers were freed from hours of soldering and stencil making thanks to newly

available forms of technology, such as thermographic copiers, and the cheap manufacture of previously hand made tools, such as needles.

This emphasis on artistry, rather than craft, has enabled tattooers to take the art of tattooing to places previously unimagined, especially in regards to realism.

Other tattooers have obstinately refused progress and have instead sought to make a knowing return to a time when tattoos were less common. This crass, deliberately naive 'preservationist' art, is no less visionary and can be just as surprising as its 'innovative' counterpart. Of course, in tattoo art, neither artistic progression nor stubborn reversion are possible without a willing canvas. Luckily, some tattoo collectors revel in taking a leap of faith, and hope their trust will be rewarded, that the resultant tattoo be unique.

Most of us, however, do not put making a personal contribution to the innovation of tattoo art high on the agenda. Instead, we're in search of a tattoo that relates to ourselves, perhaps something we've seen in our minds eye, perhaps something based on imagery from outside of the tattoo canon.

Research is, of course, extremely important, tattooers abound, and the field must be narrowed somehow. We all agree that money/distance/waiting times should not be priorities picking a tattooer, but if the guidelines are the last manned stations on the train line, there is no guarantee that we'll get off at the right stop, no matter how many times we consult the timetable.

Imagine, after significant research you fall for a high colour, neotraditional portfolio, but after months languishing on a waiting list, you discover that the tattooer has now chosen to work entirely in a signature colour palette. Or perhaps you go along to your appointment, excited to see your soon-to-be-permanent artwork for the first time, but when you do it's nothing like the image you imagined?

How will you feel if the tattooer draws you the perfect design, but recommends it be three times bigger than you wanted, or in a different location? How will you feel if they simply say 'no'?

If the flash tattoo could not be guaranteed, the custom tattoo comes with even more uncertainty. Tattooers are artists and craftspeople, not psychics but they really do know better when it comes to what will work and what will be best in the long term.

Still, there is a taboo subject in today's tattooing - some of us have tattoos we didn't want.

At my friend's 6th birthday party, I bit into a sandwich, assuming it was marmite. It was chocolate spread. I still remember how I felt, disappointed and even the most beautiful, most innovative, perfectly crafted tattoo can be a disappointment if it's not right for us.

There has to be a more open dialogue and better communication, we need to find an acceptable way to let our chosen artist know which tattoo-sandwich we are imagining, and how to make sure we take that sandwich onto the right train. We all need a common destination. 🚂



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