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15
BEAUTIFUL
PORTFOLIOS

REALITY
BITES

Tattoo fix
vs
Tattoo regret

ALEXANDER
GRIM

The dark heart of
Russian tattoo

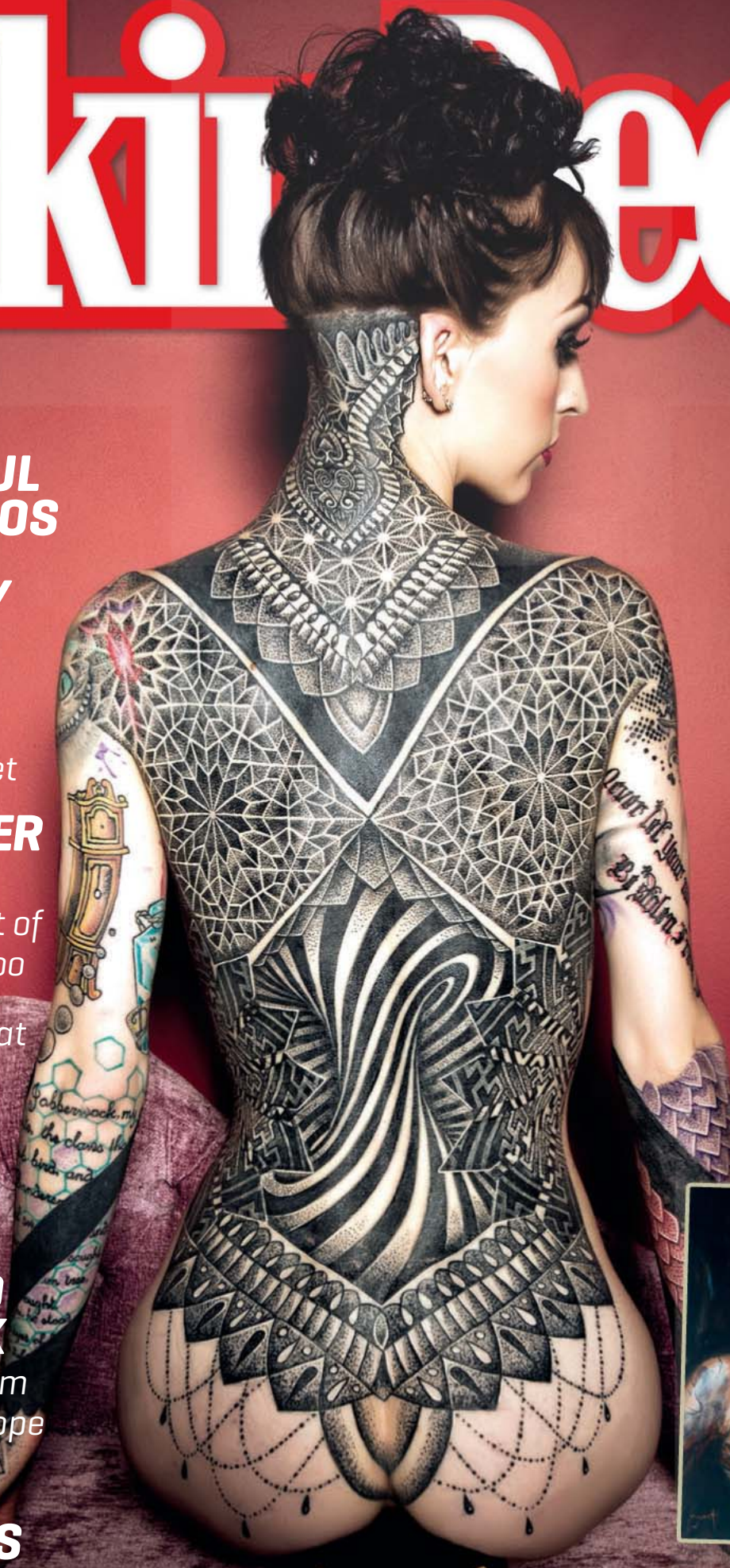
On the road at
EMPIRE
STATE
TATTOO
EXPO

BEHIND
THE INK

Colour realism
under the 'scope

RICK
WALTERS

An American
classic unleashed



MARC
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Making Waves:
the movie

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PLUS

THE ART
OF CHRIS
GUEST



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MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS

I dropped the small person off at skool early this morning for a trip to Thorpe Park. As I handed over two scruffy ten pound notes, she folded them in half, then in half again and absent mindedly fanned the loot across her lips while she pondered my 'have you got everything you need?' question.

"Don't put money in your mouth."

"I wasn't. I was just holding it by my lips."

Not being one to get drawn into a conversation I may once have had with my parents, I touched the two wires together in my head that make things come out differently and posed another question.

"What if the man that owned that money before you had an itch on his bum and stuck his hand down the back of his trousers to give it a good scratch before he bought himself some more Sardines?"

She hesitated and a look of horror appeared as the sun dawned in her head. I took it a bit further:

"What if the man who had that tenner before you snorted a big stack of cocaine with it?" I was going to add "off the back of a stripper" but figured that was a step too far - and admittedly, there are worse things to snort with a tenner, such as a line of marching fire ants but that would have gone over her head... not that the cocaine reference was exactly a bulls-eye but she got the picture.

"What if the woman who had it before you kept that tenner in her pocket where she also kept a stuffed frog for good luck?" Now that's a real first world thing for you to ponder over. I actually know this person.

Anyway, the message had already got through when she conjured up an image of the man with his hand stuck in his ass. She asked if she could swap them for some different notes but credit where it's due, she figured out it could be any money that had been put in this situation.

On the way back from the skool drop-off, I had the greatest idea. Instead of wasting our breath with educating the world about tattoo health, back-street inking and trying to make sure everybody Gets Good Ink safely, we should instead go down this road and knock



ARON COWLES



SION SMITH • EDITOR
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mrsionsmith

(If you're lost for something to do now, here's what life was like when I was a kid: tinyurl.com/na97234 or maybe this: tinyurl.com/ou6lsnt - they don't make 'em like they used to and perhaps they should.)

THERE ARE WORSE THINGS TO SNORT WITH A TENNER, SUCH AS A LINE OF MARCHING FIRE ANTS.

up some posters of this guy with his hand stuck down his pants and a catchy slogan that could become a 'thing' online:

"Do you know where your tattooists hands have been? Get Good Ink."

It's worth a shot right? Nothing else works. Back in the seventies when I was a kid, there used to be these short films on every day in which Death (yeah, that Death) would stalk an adventurous child through a field on a sunny afternoon and reap his soul if he was dumb enough to climb into an abandoned fridge and get stuck or felt like exploring a gravel pit.

I have the best ideas when I get up early in the morning. ▣

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18 OIL ON CANVAS

Chris Guest is really making some waves as a painter. What brings him to these pages should be pretty obvious as you'll set eyes on his work long before you read a single word.

24 REALITY BITES

This month has seen the launch of E4's new TV show *Tattoo Fixers*. In this brand new series, three artists meet with clients who are suffering from tattoo regrets, and make a solid attempt to rid them of their embarrassing "tattoo fails" through artistic cover-ups.

30 NEW YORK TATTOO EXPO

There's something about New York that simply makes things 'different'

and as far as this show goes, that would be quite an understatement.

38 ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Marc Quinn is a wonderful contradiction. An artist whose sculptures, paintings and drawings are bought by big-money collectors and big-name museums, but who remains refreshingly uninterested in the world of commercial art.

64 ALEXANDER GRIM

It's notoriously difficult to work up an interview with some of the great Russian artists working in the world today. Mostly, this is due to the language barrier, but we found a crack in the wall through which we spent some time with Alexander Grim.

70 AN AMERICAN CLASSIC

There's nothing quite like walking up to Rick Walters World Famous Tattoo Parlour to find him solemnly sitting on a rickety old bench, pitch-black sunglasses strapped to his face, and his feet casually crossed in front of him.

82 FLUFFY HELL

As the sixth season of *Ink Master* kicks off with a new twist, pinning masters against apprentices, we decided to catch up with one of the show's most intriguing contestants to date: Lydia Bruno.

88 SCENES FROM INK N IRON

If you love tattoos, art, music, Rock-a-Billy fashion and classic cars and bikes, the *Ink and Iron* is a can't-miss event - we sent a camera to bear witness.

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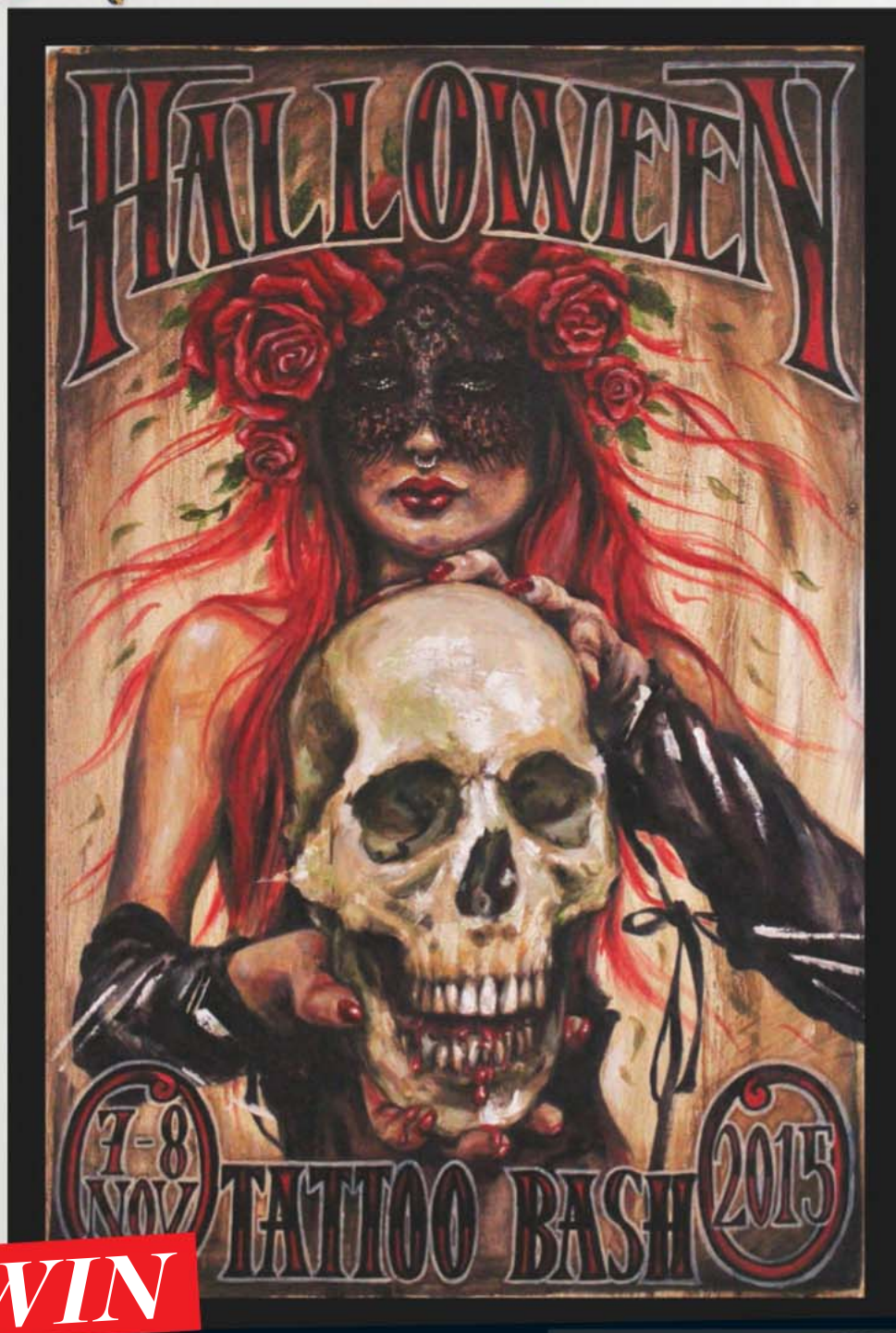
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WIN

TICKETS TO HALLOWEEN BASH!

This issue, we have five pairs of tickets to give away to the annual scare fair that is the Halloween Bash. Taking place at Wolverhampton Racecourse (Holiday Inn Garden Court, Dunstall Park, Wolverhampton, WV6 0PE) across the weekend of 7th and 8th November, this year, by popular demand, Tom & Chrisbee will be appearing across the weekend doing performances through the day and at the fancy dress after party. The artist list is also looking pretty damn good too (at the time of writing, there's still time to book a booth if you're interested—hit the site for more details).

All you have to do—as ever—is send a blank email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line SCARY and we'll do the rest. For everything else, simply go here: halloweentattoobash.co.uk



SHORT SLEEVES



PAINTED LADY CHARITY DAY

Over at Painted Lady in Northfields, Birmingham, the guys are hosting a charity day where they'll be doing walk up tattoos all day on a first come first served basis. There will also be hair stylist Ashleigh Bateman doing girls hair for donations, "cakes by net" will be donating cakes for sale and there's also the added bonus of a BBQ and a raffle. Tickets for the raffle are £5 or £10 for three and can be bought from the shop, on their big cartel page or by donating £5 on our just giving page and stating the donation is for the raffle. Prize includes a free tattoo from any PLT artist of your choice, original artwork, prints, a cake and more.

You can contribute right here: justgiving.com/pltprimrose and the Big Cartel site you can find here: paintedladytattoo parlour.bigcartel.com

DEK KENT

A couple of weeks back, Dek Kent came up with these two great oil paintings which are being auctioned as part of the 5 Towns Power Lifting Summer Squat fundraising event in Knottingley on Sunday for Forget Me Not Children's Hospice. Nice to see that precious spare time going to good use! electrickickstatoostudio.co.uk



CONVENTIONS

TATTOO CONVENTION BOURGAS

08-09 August 2015
Sport Hall PMG Burgas
Ulitsa "Tsar Simeon I" 97
8000 Burgas, Bulgaria
tattooconvention-bg.com

TATCON BLACKPOOL

14-16 August 2015
Norbreck Castle Hotel
Queen's Promenade
Blackpool, Lancashire FY2 9AA
tatconblackpool.co.uk

SEATTLE TATTOO EXPO

14-16 August 2015
Fisher Pavilion Seattle Center
305 Harrison Street,
Seattle, WA 98109 United States
seattletattooexpo.com

DUNDEE TATTOO CONVENTION

15-16 August 2015
Abertay University
Kydd Building, Bell Street
Dundee, Dundee City DD1 1HG
dundeetattooconvention.co.uk

7TH NORWICH BODY ART FESTIVAL

15-16 August 2015
The Open Youth Venue
20 Bank Plain, Norwich,
Norfolk NR2 4SF
norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk

18TH TATTOO CONVENTION

LUXEMBURG VIANDEN
22-23 August 2015
Centre Larei, rond-point Schuman
2525 Luxembourg
tattooofrenn.jimdo.com

19TH STOCKHOLM INK BASH

28-30 August 2015
Münchenbryggeriet Event & Konferens
Torkel Knutssonsgatan 2
118 25 Stockholm, Sweden
stockholminkbash.com

THESSALONINK TATTOO CONVENTION

04-06 September 2015
Port of Thessaloniki
Warehouse C, THPA
Thessaloniki 546 25, Greece
thessalonink.gr

LAKE HAVASU TATTOO SHOW

04-06 September 2015
Lake Havasu City Aquatic Center
100 Park Ave, Lake Havasu City
Arizona 86403 United States
havasutattooshow.com

BOURNEMOUTH INK 'N' ART TATTOO EXPO

05-06 September 2015
Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre and Ballroom
Westover Road, Bournemouth BH1 2BU
bournemouth.tattoo

KUSTOM KULTURE FESTIVAL

05-06 September 2015
Lincolnshire Show Ground
Lincoln LN2 2NA
kustomkultureblastoff.com

MONTREAL ART & TATTOO SHOW

11-13 September 2015
Place Bonaventure
Montreal, QC H3C 1A6
Canada
arttattoomontreal.com



ROCK N DOLL

Russian-based artist **Kristina Tselykovskaya**, from Moscow, specialises in creating beautifully unique tattooed dolls.

Taking inspiration from those around her, including celebrities, she hand makes every single doll and enjoys the challenges of working on fabric, rather than paper.

You can buy dolls direct from Kristina's site - there are pre-made dolls in stock, or you can order a custom made portrait doll to be created just for you, in the style of someone you know.

Find out more: [instagram.com/_rockanddoll_vk.com](https://www.instagram.com/_rockanddoll_vk.com)
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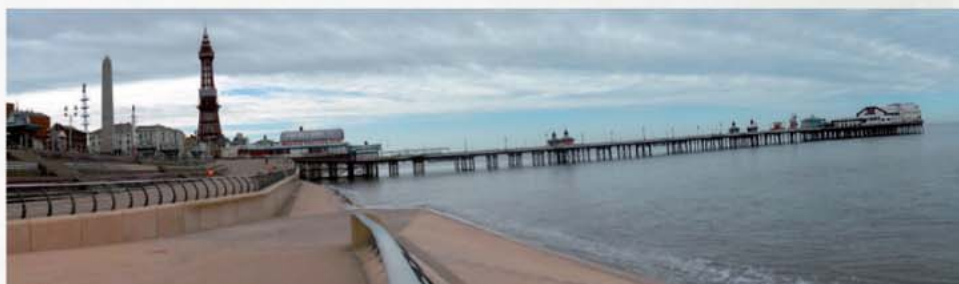


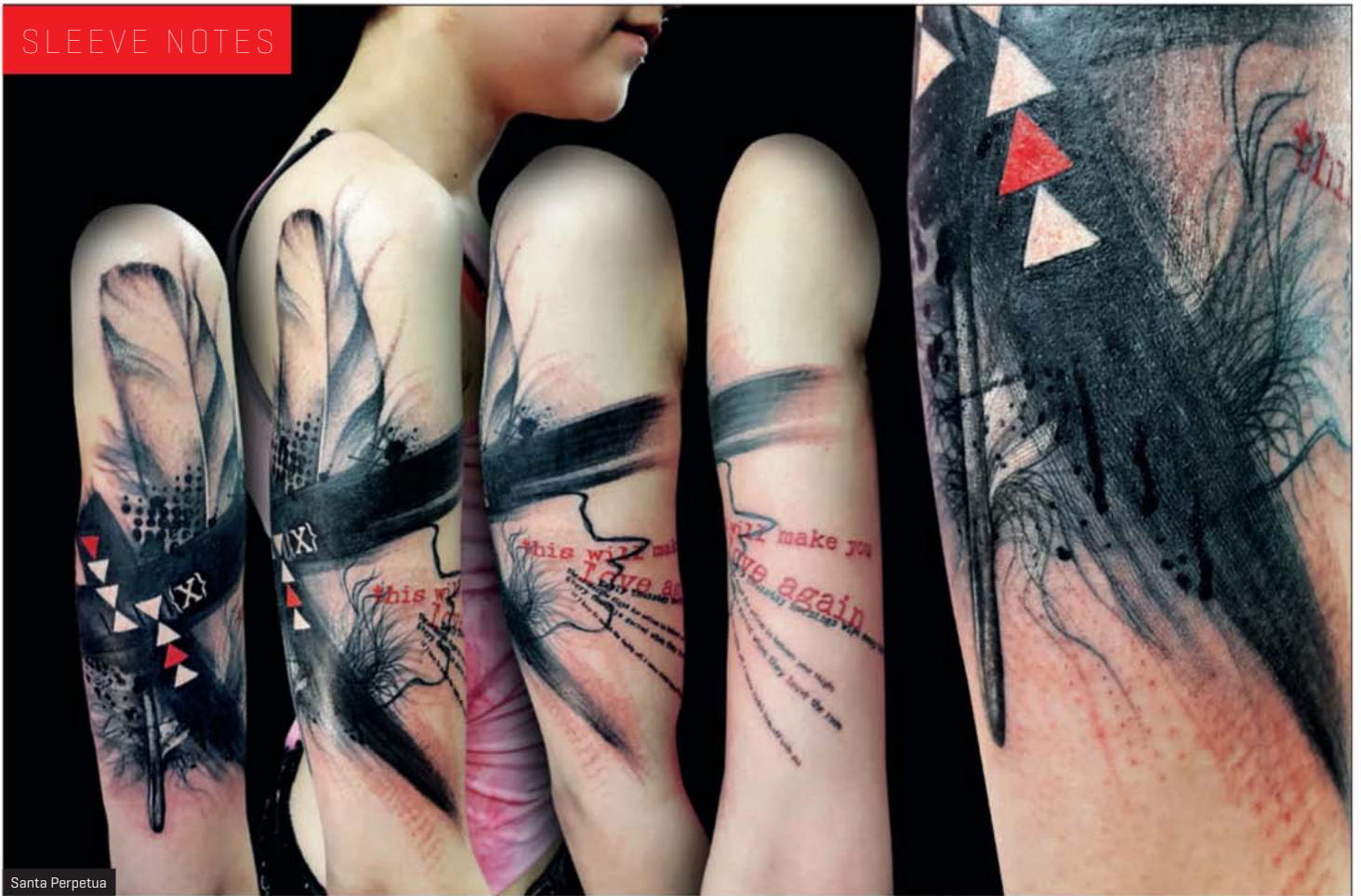
BLACKPOOL ROCK(S)

In the *Daily Mirror* this week, they ran a story that Blackpool has been revealed as the tattoo capital of England. Exclusive data [their words not ours] obtained by the Mirror reveals that there is one tattoo parlour for every 2,867 people.

This breaks down as 49 licensed premises catering to 140,000 people in Blackpool, which works out at one tattoo parlour per 2,867 - though it doesn't reveal if that includes the massive amounts of people that visit the town every year.

Anyway... interesting huh. Must be something in the air.





Santa Perpetua

HYGIENE RATINGS: GOOD FOR ALL?

South Kesteven District Council has introduced a tattoo hygiene rating scheme in the district to provide information on hygiene standards to help residents choose where to get a tattoo and think before they ink.

The scheme, the first by an authority in Lincolnshire and only the second within the East Midlands, was introduced earlier this year following a trade workshop for the 13 registered studios in the district.

It is voluntary and not linked to any other scheme.

Inspections took place earlier in 2015 and the council has now published ratings for each studio from four, very good down to one, needs improvement.

SKDC's portfolio holder for healthy environment Councillor Nick Craft said: "Tattoos are increasingly popular, prompting a number of businesses to take up trading in the district in recent years.

"We welcome these businesses and

know the majority run safe practices that residents can be confident of using safely without the health risks such as HIV and Hepatitis that can be associated with unsafe tattooing.

"This scheme is there to give added peace of mind as a safety net and customers an independent view on which studios take hygiene very seriously. We expect the scheme to grow in a similar fashion to the food hygiene ratings scheme."

All studios must by law be registered with the council and are currently inspected annually, but Darren Paddison of the Tattoo Shop said the scheme is misleading.

He said: "We have declined joining this scheme because it's not all based

on hygiene.

"To get all stars means you have to, as an artist, join the GMB union which has nothing to do with hygiene. As an employer I am not allowed to force my staff to join a union so I fail to qualify for the stars!

"At the Tattoo Shop Grantham we welcome any scheme that ensures the hygiene standards that we set are always kept and monitored, but feel powerless to join as legally we can't take part. Maggie Thatcher, I believe, would cringe at our district council forcing people to join a union to obtain hygiene stars.

Interesting don't you think... we'll keep you abreast of what happens as the scheme goes forwards. ▣

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Illustration by Ollie Tye

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XED LE HEAD

Here's a really shocking piece of news that you should all stop and read for one minute.

Recently Xed Le Head—the man who fathered dotwork tattooing—has been unwell with a spinal problem. Currently he can't walk and has been forced to retire from tattooing due to a severe medical condition that has left him unable to use his arms and legs. He needs a customised wheelchair, adapted car and minimum of 3 years private physiotherapy to start getting back on track.

With rehabilitation and procurement of specialist medical equipment and services exceeding both Xed and the NHS's budget's, an online appeal has been started with fundraising ongoing here: [gofundme.com/z8kvk4](https://www.gofundme.com/z8kvk4) where we encourage you to donate as much as you possibly can. At the time of writing, they are around a quarter of the way to their goal, but there's still a long way to go and you can help make it happen.

Let's make it happen.

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The cover story

We can hear what you're thinking from here. That tattoo on the cover is a game changer right? Here's a little backstory for you from Glenn Cuzen (behind the needle) and Jade (cover model and expert at sitting very still) if it's made you into a seething mass of jealousy...

JADE:

I initially came to Glenn with ideas for a neck piece, starting just below the hair line and onto the back. There had been some circulating and I knew with his skill set and his attention to detail, he could do far better than the ones I had seen already, but nothing quite prepared me for what was to come regarding time, size, shape or intricacy. Over the next few months we batted around a few different ideas and it eventually became a final design. When we got around to starting though, we found the design didn't fit and went to the drawing board—out came the sharpies and my back piece was born (again). Glenn's enthusiasm and passion for what he does is contagious and I became more confident to give him total free reign after seeing his vision to contour my body shape.

GLENN:

From my side of the tattoo, my big goal was for this piece to go on stage and give the 'wow' factor. I had a vision of a lady wearing nothing but my tattoo on a stage at a convention with the crowd looking in awe at the intricate art and the sexual style without her being hounded with wolf whistles... or whatever it is people do in 2015. With my ever growing drive and the need to achieve new concepts, the aim was to create a bold tattoo that took over the body completely whilst complementing it at the same time. I also wanted it to be such a huge piece that it could be appreciated from 50 foot away and with fine detail, to be appreciated up close too.

Mission accomplished!

*Glenn W Cuzen, Top Gun Tattoo, 22 Harris Arcade, RG1 1DN. Tel: 01189 968 667
glenncuzen@yahoo.co.uk topguntattoo.co.uk*





by
Paul Vander-Johnson



“I love doing this kind of stuff! What’s great about it is that I don’t really have any definite set idea of what the outcome will be when designing these. It’s more of a basic premise to start with and then I see where my thought process will take me. I find it much more fun that way. Too many restrictions can limit what the tattoo can be and with this style of design, you really don’t want any restrictions to get the best out of it.

“There wasn’t actually a brief for this piece. I did it while I was doing a guest spot at Cosmic Monsters on one of their artists, Lauren Hanson. We’d previously spoken about doing an abstract piece but she was pretty much up for simply seeing what I could come up with.

“There were a few options on the table but this was the one we ended up with. We call it ‘Squiggly Vortex Lady Face’, because that’s exactly what it is.”

Paul Vander-Johnson

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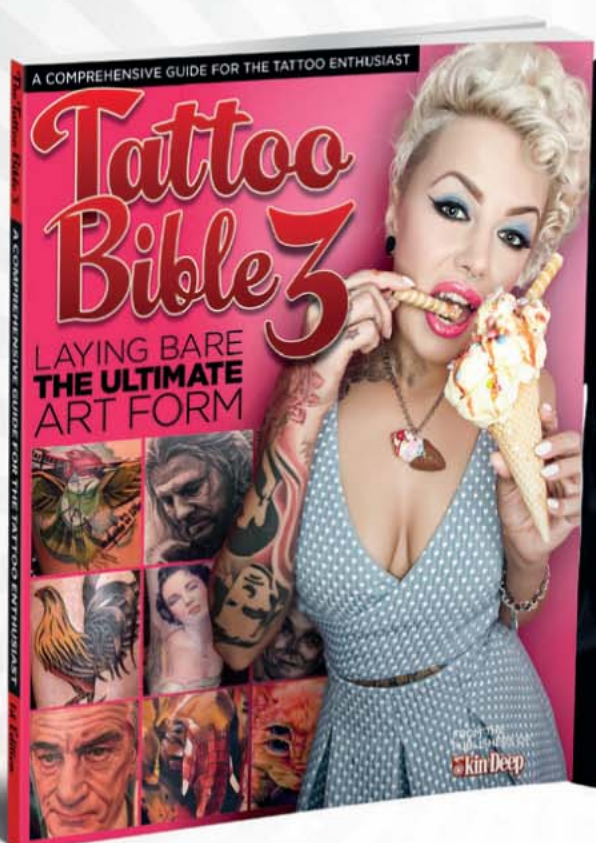
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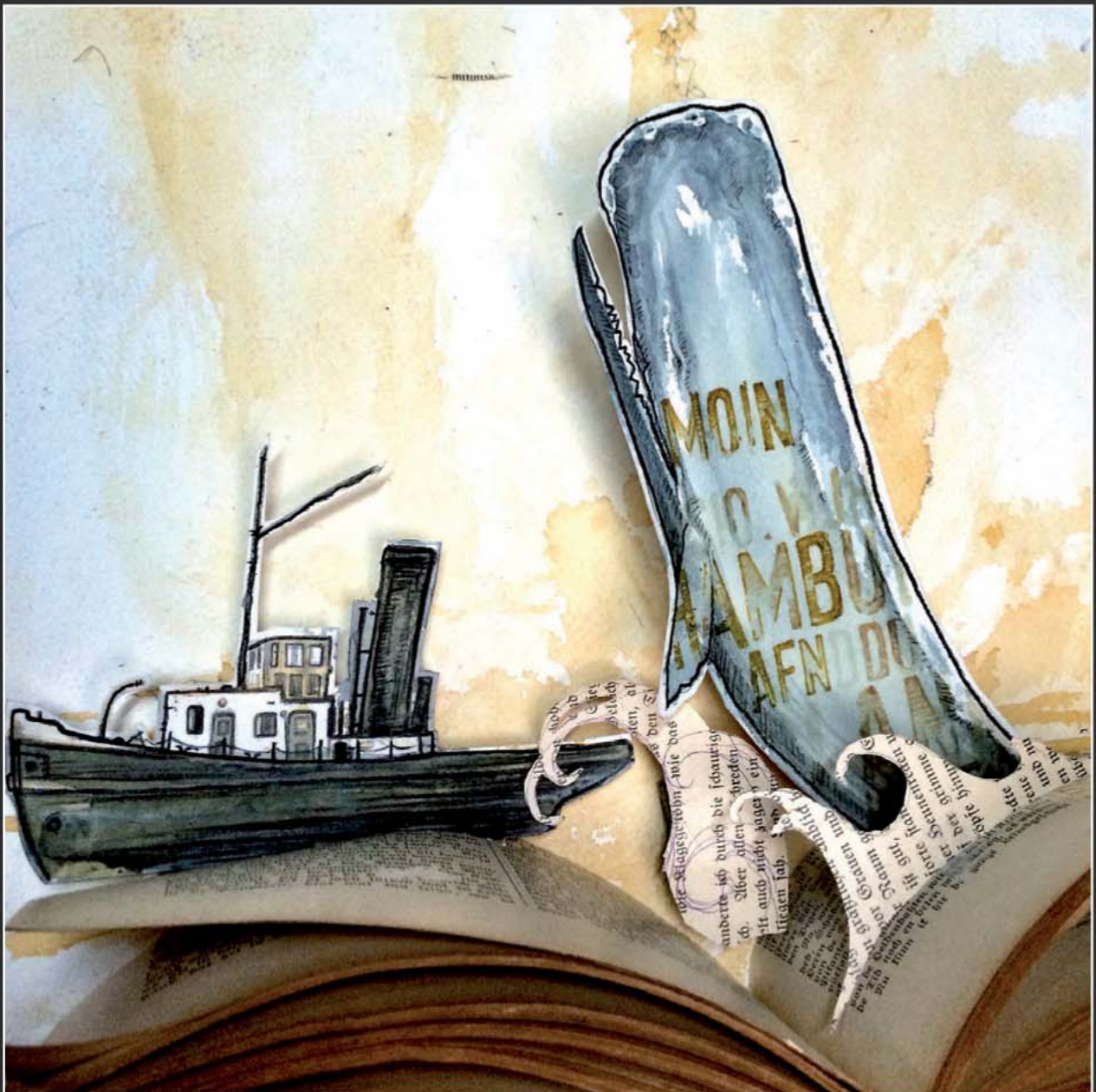
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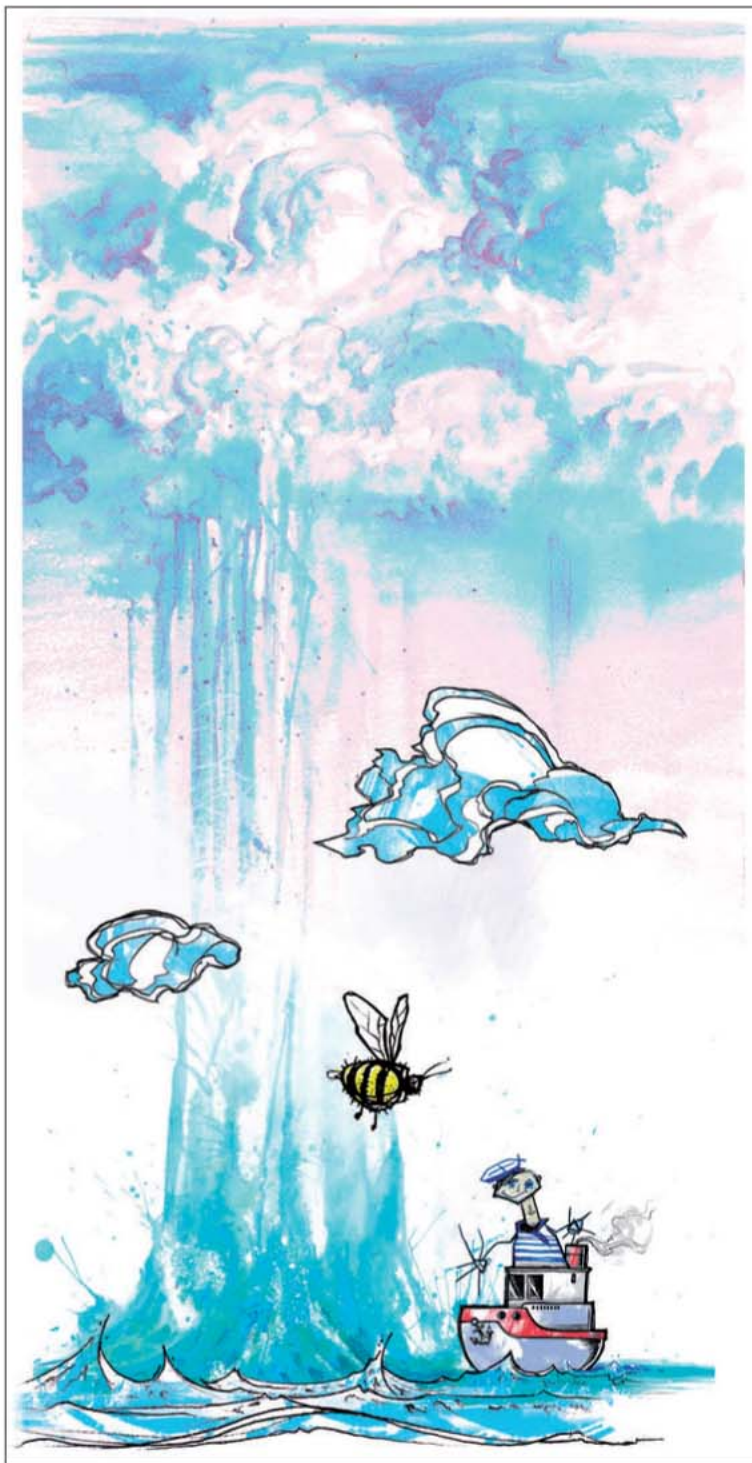
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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Having worked closely with Bernd Muss over the last few months, I've noticed that I never get tired of his creations. Never—but I did eventually run out of things to look at—until that is, I opened the door on what he's been working on with his daughter Ava...

berndmuss.net
info@berndmuss.de





YOU HAVE TO CONSTANTLY GROW AND DEVELOP YOUR CREATIVE MUSCLE OTHERWISE YOU JUST KEEP COPYING YOURSELF

Drawing, painting, doodling, inventing and telling stories—that's Ava & Bernd.

Ava is five years old and has no fear of the blank sheet of paper, just like her father. If you had to sum it up any more coherently than that, Ava & Bernd is childlike nonchalance meets the professional line.

The basis for the project revolves around the fantasy world of Ava. When she is done, Bernd plays around and supplements what appears on the paper in front of him. The bottom line had become a safe place for both to grow from.

When Bernd showed the first Ava & Bernd sketches around their friends and customers, it became immediately apparent that there was also a demand for transferring the work onto skin—by Bernd of course.

Meanwhile, some vivid canvases are already on the way, and it will be no surprise to learn that 'Ava & Bernd' was not destined to stay online forever. Posters, mobiles, collages and even a child-friendly book are planned, but the emphasis is always the same: the fun of two people drawing and painting together. ▣





OIL ON CANVAS

With an exhibition at the London Tattoo Convention this coming September, Chris Guest is really making some waves as a painter out there. What brings him to these pages should be pretty obvious as you'll set eyes on his work long before you read a single word.

www.chrisguest.co.uk @chrisguestfineart



WITH ART, THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH SOMEONE CAN TELL YOU—THE REST YOU LEARN FROM PRACTICING

Don't you love it when tattooing breaks out a little and has the ability to become something else altogether? Chris Guest was born in Bristol in 1979 and studied Illustration at Brunel College of Art and then at degree level at Bournemouth & Poole College of Art and Design, graduating in 2000.

He began painting and drawing from a very young age, and first started making money from art aged just 14, drawing portraits of music icons for other pupils when perhaps he should've spent more time studying—but isn't that every successful person's story?

At 18, Chris began showing his work in galleries in Cornwall, and has since exhibited



extensively throughout the UK, has work in many important collections, and has been chosen for many prestigious portrait exhibitions. So before he jets into the stratosphere (or A Slingshot to Jupiter as I prefer to call it), this seems an opportune time to dig around and see what makes him tick.

DO YOU THINK YOUR 'OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY EDUCATION' SERVED YOU WELL OR DID YOU GET BETTER AND LEARN MORE FROM SIMPLY GETTING THE HELL ON WITH IT?

Technique-wise, I learnt a lot from my tutors at college in Bristol when I was 16 rather than university, as they had a real passion for art and passing on knowledge. I believe with art, there's only so much someone can tell you, and the rest you learn from practicing as much as you can, and making mistakes and learning from it.

...AND A GOOD FOLLOW ON QUESTION IS—IN THE NAME OF EDUCATION FOR THOSE JUST STARTING OUT AND TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH THEIR LIVES—IF YOU COULD DO IT ALL AGAIN, WOULD YOU DO IT THE SAME OR SKIP THE 'SCHOOL' BIT IN THE NAME OF ACTUALLY DOING THE WORK?

Honestly, I think I'd probably skip it. University was a good life experience, but from



a 'learning how to paint' perspective, there are better ways to learn in my opinion. I was lucky enough that when I studied, I didn't have to pay for education, so having to find £40K or whatever it is nowadays would definitely make me think twice! With social media being available in the palm of your hand these days, there's a lot of ways to get your art out there and if your good at what you do, people will connect with it.

FOR THOSE WHO THINK THIS IS AN EASY THING TO DO, I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE AND IT TAKES A LOT LONGER THAN MOST SUSPECT. IS THERE AN AVERAGE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU SPEND ON A PIECE OF WORK FROM START TO FINISH?

I would say there's no set time, just whenever a piece feels complete—some take a few hours, some sit around my studio for months on end and I revisit them at a later date. I generally have about 5-10 paintings on the go at any one point.

WHEN IT COMES TO TATTOO ARTISTS WHO ALSO PAINT, AN AWFUL HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THEM THAT I KNOW HAVE TROUBLE PARTING WITH THEIR WORK AND TEND TO KEEP HOLD OF THEM. MAYBE THAT'S BECAUSE THEY SEE SO MUCH OF THEIR OTHER WORK WALK OUT OF THE DOOR NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN. IS

THAT SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH AT THE END OF A SALE?

Sometimes. Because I put so much into my paintings, it can be hard to part with them. There's a few pieces I wish I'd kept, but it's also such a great feeling to know my work is collected and lives around the world, so you have to look at both sides. I always paint what I want to paint, not what I think will make money or be popular, so I'd like to think someone buys one of my pictures because they love it and will treasure it rather

than because it will look good in their dining room and go with their cushions or whatever.

WITH SOCIAL MEDIA THESE DAYS, THERES LOTS OF WAYS TO GET YOUR ART OUT THERE



I ALWAYS PAINT WHAT I WANT TO PAINT, NOT WHAT I THINK WILL MAKE MONEY OR BE POPULAR



ONE OF THE OBVIOUS QUESTIONS HERE IS HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH PAINTING THE TATTOOS? IS THAT A WHOLE OTHER STUDY ASIDE FROM REPRESENTING THE HUMAN FORM ... OR IS IT SURPRISINGLY EASY? HAS IT GIVEN YOU AN INSIGHT INTO HOW DIFFERENT ARTISTS WORK OR DO YOU HAVE TO 'FLATTEN' IT IN YOUR HEAD FIRST?

I tend to block in the figure first, then when that layer is dry, paint the tattoos over the top, similar in a way to doing a real tattoo. I like to show step-by-step images on social media, where you can see this progress, as this is a great way to learn.

HOW IS THE DIGITAL AGE TREATING YOU? I SEE YOU HAVE SOME NEAT ART CARDS FOR SALE IN YOUR STORE AND THAT'S IMPORTANT WHEN IT COMES TO TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS BUT

I'M SEEING A LOT OF PEOPLE BEING HAPPY WITH SEEING THINGS ONLINE RATHER THAN TAKING THE TIME TO EXPERIENCE THINGS IN THE FLESH. IS THAT SOMETHING THAT CONCERNS YOU AS AN ARTIST?

To be honest, I think the digital age is great, as you get to be able to share your art around the world. I love the fact that someone in Australia for example, can go on my store and order a print from me, which is something that wouldn't have happened years ago. I think it's nice that people can deal with an artist direct, rather than having to go through a gallery or shop. Having said that, it's so much better experiencing art in a gallery, where you can see all the brush strokes, and the way the artist may have framed and presented their work rather than a picture on a computer screen.

The world will always change so you have to change and adapt with it, that's my opinion!
WHAT NEXT? ARE YOU CONTINUING WITH THE 'TATTOOED ROCK SCENE' THEME OR IS YOUR HEAD FINDING NEW PLACES TO BE?

New places for sure. I live in London now, and I'm constantly inspired by all the scen-



THERE'S A FEW PIECES I WISH I'D KEPT, BUT IT'S ALSO SUCH A GREAT FEELING TO KNOW MY WORK IS COLLECTED AND LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

ery, history and general vibe that London brings. I want to capture a bit of this in my next body of work. Then I think I'll look to paint scenes in New York and Los Angeles.

FINALLY, YOU ALSO RUN WORKSHOPS—AND YOU GET AROUND TOO! IT'S GOOD TO SEE SOMEBODY GIVING BACK, HOW DID THEY START OFF AND WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT IF YOU ATTEND?

I was originally approached by some really cool tattoo shops who asked me if I could come run a workshop in their shop. Obvi-

ously the answer is gonna be yes! Generally we go through some basic skills to get good results, and seeing as I've probably made every mistake there is to make, I can point people in the right direction and save you a lot of time if you're just starting out! On my workshops, it doesn't matter if you've never painted in your life or you're the next Leonardo da Vinci, it's more about making your own painting on the day and having fun.

I love getting to travel around and see the country, so I'm always up for doing this.

You know where I am if you're interested in talking about it. ☐





REALITY BITES

*This month has seen the launch of E4's new TV show **Tattoo Fixers**. In this brand new series, three artists meet with clients who are suffering from tattoo regrets, and make a solid attempt to rid them of their embarrassing "tattoo fails" through artistic cover-ups. Beccy Rimmer explores.*

As the show aired on its first night, my Facebook and Twitter feeds were jam packed with tattoo artists and clients expressing their upset and anger at the release of another tattoo "horror story" television show.

Straight away I knew this was something we had to debate. Something had been created for the general public, about a particular interest, much to the dismay of a huge portion of the people who are running that industry from the inside.

How could someone not be writing about this prevalent opinion? Or was I wrong, was there a balanced viewpoint? It was time to talk to some UK tattoo artists and find out.

Putting questions out to tattooed clients, rather than artists, it seemed

that opinion was divided. Some are of the view that tattoo regret shows are a good idea, as they enforce that, even after bad decisions, beautiful artwork can be created, and you can move forward with your life. Some believe that cover-ups also spread that important message: "think before you ink".

A small group agree that cover-up shows send out the message that it's too easy to just paint over your mistakes. My friend and tattoo artist Kat Winifred confirms this: "a friend of

mine wanted a joke tattoo, and when I asked him what would happen if he didn't find it as funny one day, he replied that he would just get it covered up." Do shows like **Tattoo Fixers** send out the message that your drunken holiday tattoos are easily fixable?

For tattoo artist Shaun Von Sleaze, programmes like **BodyShockers** and **Tattoo Fixers** are extremely successful in using "shock value" to represent the massive negative stigma associated with tattoos and tattoo work.

In **BodyShockers**, clients are dissuaded from their tattoo decisions by being introduced to other people for whom tattoos have ruined their lives. "Sometimes it can look like the show's moral standing is that tattoos are a regret for those who are dumb enough to make



an adult decision," says Shaun.

It was clear quickly that there is large community of people crying out for a TV show that can "do the industry some justice".

The underlying appeal of everything shown to us on television is within its entertainment value—drama, suspense and the extreme all make a good show that members of the general public want to watch.

Yet America appears to be slightly better at it than we are. Whilst the likes of **Ink Master**,



DO SHOWS LIKE TATTOO FIXERS SEND OUT THE MESSAGE THAT YOUR DRUNKEN HOLIDAY TATTOOS ARE EASILY FIXABLE?

Miami Ink and LA Ink are dramatised to a certain extent, they have the concept of showcasing tattoo art in all its glory at the heart of the episodes. Within the episodes there might be drama, arguments, emotional stories, but behind all that is the creation of epic tattoos, with commentary focusing on the artist's process and the relationship between client and artist... aspects that reflect the general and realistic day-to-day life of a working tattoo artist.

UK tattoo artist Jory Campion was in agreement with me. "Miami Ink, despite the drama and studio politics, is about PEOPLE. It focuses on clients with real and valid motivations for seeking out reputable artists to help deliver that killer piece of ink they craved."

Most of our British TV shows however,

seem to be less successful in portraying how a real UK tattoo studio would function. BodyShockers, Tattoo Nightmares, My Tattoo Addiction, Tattoo Fixers—are less focused on the art and more so on the regret, the mistakes, the obsessions and the extreme.

As a country, our fascination with tattoos also goes hand-in-hand with our obsession with celebrities. "We seem especially eager to report on tattoo news when celebrities are concerned," agrees Jory.

Indeed, if you search for "tattoo" in the news section of Google and do a quick scan down you get a good overview of how tattoos are being talked about in today's current media. Go on—do it now.

You'll see: David Beckham, Zayn from One Direction, Tattoo Regret Story, Kim Kardashian, David Beckham, Tattoo Horror Story + one more Zayn in there for good luck. (Ed's Note: and today as I read check this over for Beccy, you can also add Brad Pitt).

For anyone new to tattoos and using the



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internet and television as sources of information (because that's where people go to find things out now, right?), they are being presented with an industry perception that's totally inaccurate.

The tattoo industry we've got in this country is absolutely bursting at the seams with talent, colour, creativity, stories and passion. It's why I started my blog and wanted to write for this magazine.

The sheer wealth of content on offer is unbelievable. In small corners of towns, villages and cities all over this country there are communities of people creating original art in infinitely different ways, and sending that art out into the world on walking human canvases. It's an exceptional enough thing to portray in itself isn't it?

I think we all agree that media portrayals are extreme because that's the purpose of the media—to entertain. Or is it? What about the media's responsibility to educate, inspire and accurately represent and report?

SOMETIMES IT CAN LOOK LIKE THE SHOW'S MORAL STANDING IS THAT TATTOOS ARE A REGRET FOR THOSE WHO ARE DUMB ENOUGH TO MAKE AN ADULT DECISION
SHAUN VON SLEAZE

Kat believes that there's a responsibility to make people aware of the dangers, too. "Some of the stories depicted on programmes like *Tattoo Fixers* tell tales of people who have let their friends tattoo them, with no explanation of the fact that it is in fact illegal and dangerous. We need to be sending out that message rather than laughing at it."

Fundamentally, most artists I speak to agree that many TV programmes "represent tattooing in a bad light." By choosing extreme characters on the extreme end of the tattoo spectrum, they can portray the industry as "a joke".

The abundance of stories that begin with people "wasted in Malia or Magaluf" send



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WHILST THE LIKES OF INK MASTER, MIAMI INK AND LA INK ARE DRAMATISED TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, THEY HAVE THE CONCEPT OF SHOWCASING TATTOO ART IN ALL ITS GLORY AT THE HEART OF THE EPISODES



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[facebook.com/monstersartemporiumtavistock](https://www.facebook.com/monstersartemporiumtavistock)

out a strong message that artists all over the world are allowing these tattoos to happen. It portrays the industry as “irresponsible”, claims Jory. “These tattooists abroad are putting profit before morals and customer experience, and it’s reflecting poorly upon us tattoo artists that don’t operate in that way.”

Another conversation I had this week makes me come to a solid conclusion that the problem isn’t with portraying cover-ups. Any television programme that showcases exceptional artists and their ability to create beautiful art can’t be a bad thing, rather it’s the types of stories being told that mis-rep-

resent our tattoo decisions today.

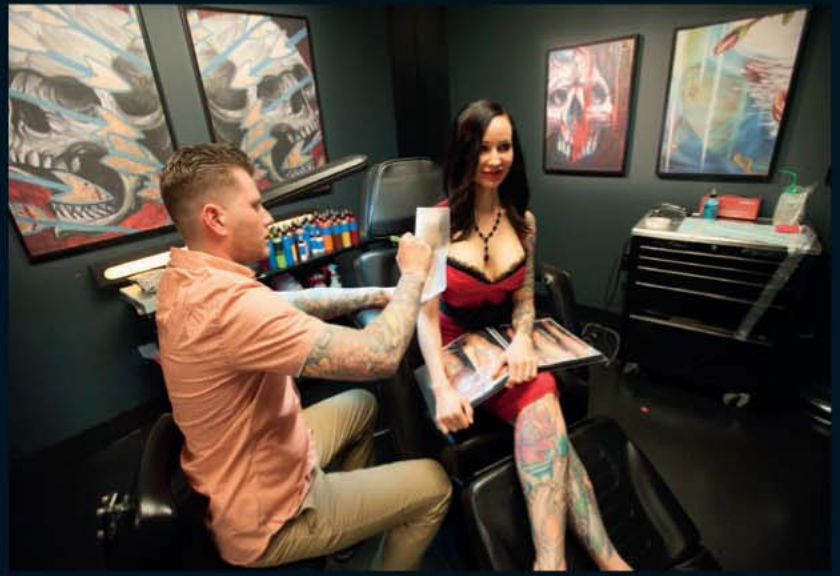
My friend has just had a cover-up tattoo. For him, it’s a permanent reminder of his strength through a difficult period of his life. The original tattoo symbolised something hugely positive, and covering it up wasn’t to hide or regret anything, but to represent the turmoil that he had experienced since the original tattoo.

His cover-up represents a transition from dark to light and reminds him that he can always be reborn again and always endeavour to reach for the light, no matter how bad things get. It’s poignant stories like his that I wish we were seeing more on our screens.

So if we didn’t use television to portray funny regret stories and nasty mistakes, how else could we tell the tales of our industry? “It would be refreshing to see some of the artistic talent in the UK showcased to the wider public,” says Jory.

“A good tattoo done properly in a professional studio to a high standard can be a highly positive and in some cases life altering process for a client,” he continues. “More emphasis needs to be put on the entire process from consultation with a client to drawing and re-drawing several times right through to the finished tattoo and beyond.”

Jory agrees that there’s a multitude of art-



ists in the UK, all with different methods of working, all with different backgrounds and unique processes. “This would be a really cool thing to see on TV.”

For artist Shaun Von Sleaze, we’re always being told that tattoos are bad and regretful, when really “they are steeped in history, in culture and in a great form of art.”

Artist Will Gee agrees: “sometimes these programmes can have amazing opportunities to gain an insight into the world of some really great artists, but they don’t.”

Obviously as a magazine aimed at the tattoo community, here at Skin Deep we try to offer this coverage that isn’t found elsewhere. But not every man and his dog reads a specialist tattoo magazine, and so many people will find out about the tattoo industry through other mainstream media channels.

In Tattoo Fixers, the art being created by three very talented artists is often overshadowed by the drunken stories. As a tattoo enthusiast, I wanted to see more of those beautiful tear-away moments where we see humble and skilled artists at work, head down, doing their thing.

I wanted to hear more of them finding out what the client wanted as their cover up and how they were going to work with those ideas to create something wonderful. There

FOR ANYONE NEW TO TATTOOS USING THE INTERNET AND TELEVISION AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION, THEY ARE BEING PRESENTED WITH AN INDUSTRY PERCEPTION THAT’S TOTALLY INACCURATE

is a feeling of passion, dedication and enthusiasm bubbling within the artist community, within those three artists, and it’s something we need to share.

If we could instil this enthusiasm in other members of the public, maybe they’ll want to see more of this, and less of the horror stories. I guess we’ll just keep doing what we’re doing, sharing our tattoo passions and maybe one day we’ll get there. Shaun’s final line with me says a lot. “Tattoo culture, history and finesse is a beautiful thing, especially in the UK. We’re only a little island, but we’ve got a lot of heart.” □

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NEW YORK DAYS NEW YORK NIGHTS

Empire State Tattoo Expo

There's something about New York that simply makes things 'different'. I think the same goes for London when you're actually from New York—or any other metropolis for that matter—but so far as this show goes, there's a real special vibe going on...

Outside it's a sweltering hot New York City and it's a real kick to be here at the Midtown Hilton during Stefano Alcantara's Empire State show. It's one thing to flip through the who's who of artists on the website list but another entirely to move from one booth to the next and find them all here—getting down to the work at hand the minute the doors are open for business. It's going to be an intense three days that's for sure—if I can do it justice in a few pages, I'll gladly drop that in the 'win' column:

NEW YORK DAYS

I haven't seen Nikko Hurtado for a couple of years. Sometimes I think his situation at the moment must be like that of Kat Von D a little while back. Everybody wants a piece—even for just a few moments but it's good to see he hasn't let his work slide an inch. He's pumping the cream out of the can better than ever. I heard a few weeks back on the grapevine that he had retired but when I looked online, could find nothing to suggest such a thing might be true... so if you heard the same, for the record, Nikko is far



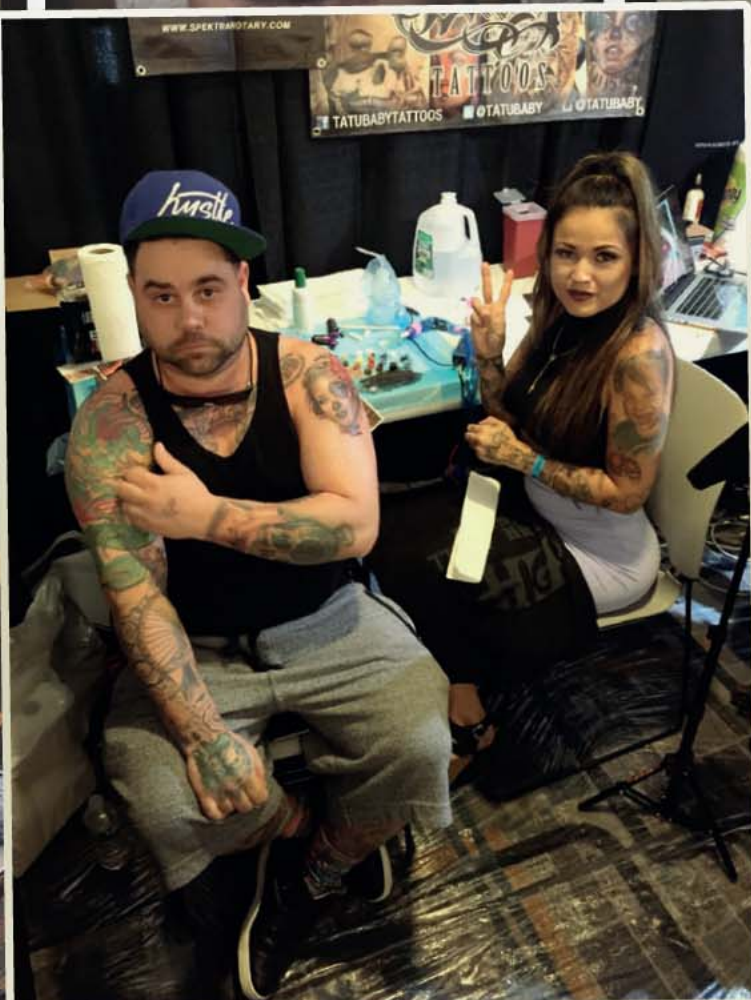
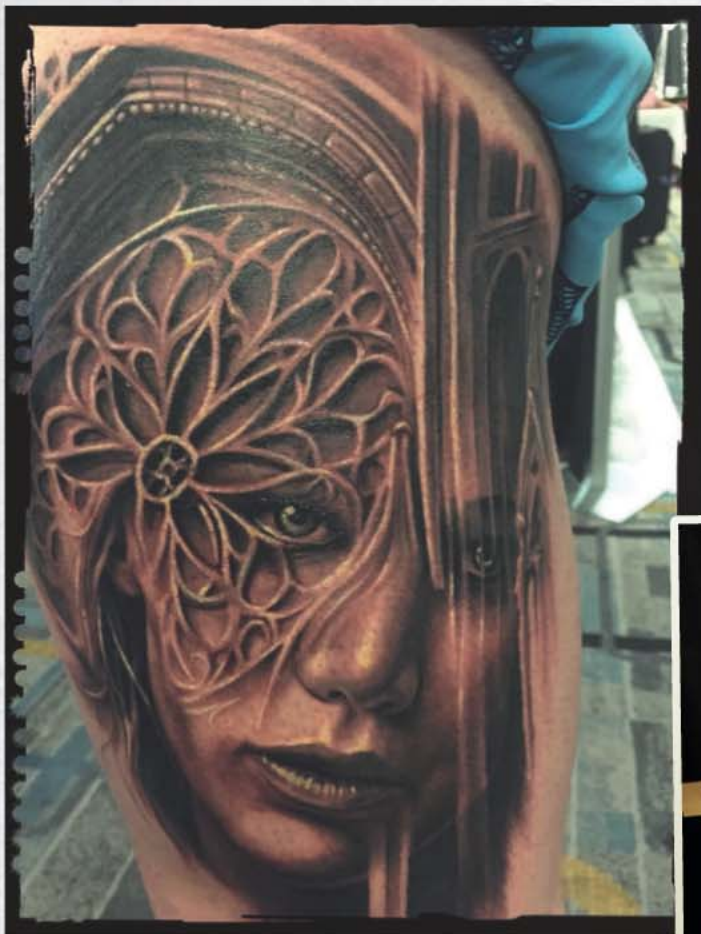
THE CONTRIBUTION OF LAST RITES IS AS VIBRANT AND CRUCIAL TO THE TATTOO WORLD AS IT EVER WAS

from retired or even thinking about it. And that's a good thing. The world would miss him very much right now.

Being as I've happened into the show here pretty much during the first hour of opening and there's plenty of set-up still going on (aside from Dan Henk who is ready to roll and looks like he's been here for days already), it seems like the best time to check out the art gallery curated by Last Rites before it gets flooded with people. I find the room empty apart from two girls going through some paperwork at a table in there... and Paul Booth. Bonus.

Paul Booth is all of the reason why I do this job. He was the first artist that made me look closely at what artists were capable of on a grand scale and also the first kind enough to give me enough time and attention to figure out why. Whenever I see him I'm never sure if he remembers this but it's so long ago now, it doesn't even matter but I'll never forget it.

Anyway, there's some great work in this room including a big piece from Booth himself and a host of others including Megan Jean Morris, Yomico Moreno and Chet



THE WORLD IS INDEED A POOL OF TALENT IF YOU STOP WHIPPING THROUGH IT AT A MILLION MILES AN HOUR AND STOP TO LOOK

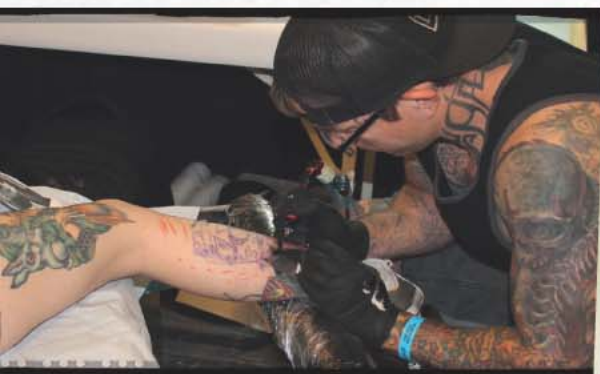
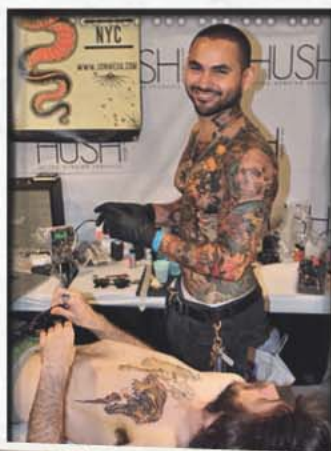
Zar who (if you follow such things) we are still to see the best of—these guys are really hitting their stride out there.

The contribution of Last Rites is as vibrant and crucial to the tattoo world as it ever was, everything that goes on there is Of Value—and you can't say that about every studio you walk into that's for sure.

Talking of Last Rites, I don't even blink twice before I bump into Tim Boor. It's good to see him again and I find him working in a section of the show that, within close proximity to him, includes Big Gus, Carlos Torres, Vic-

tor Portugal and Jose Perez Jr—it's a veritable who's who wishlist affair that's for sure.

A little further down—six feet or so—Michael Hussar is preparing to draw two models splayed out before him on the bench. There's no special measures here—it's all happening within his booth space. Hussar also has his very impressive recently released book—"White" with him. It's an impressive piece of work that's for sure—at \$50 it's a good price too that you should hunt down if you are so inclined. Sarah who travelled with me bought one



ONE SERIOUSLY WONDERFUL SHOW FROM START TO FINISH

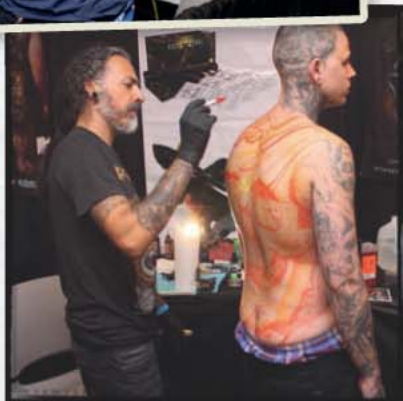
and she spends money on nothing half cocked. Ever.

I could rattle off names one after the other here and never run out of talent—from Kamil across to Tatu Baby, Randy Englehard to Jess Yen, Alvin Chong, Ivana... help yourself to the artist list on the site at empirestatetattooexpo.com.

Aside from this huge drag of talent—which across the weekend also saw Nikko team up with Paul Booth to collaborate on a tattoo for a competition winner, our own Glenn Cuzen walk away with three awards (see the cover story earlier on) and the Coney Island Circus Sideshow (coney-

island.com) providing ample entertainment that wasn't in your face if you didn't want it to be—I made some new discoveries and found much to be positive about in the world.

The world is indeed a pool of talent if you stop whipping through it at a million miles an hour and stop to look. I discovered the work of Legion Avegno who I was really impressed with (I believe he won an award at the show but I can't be certain), I also fell for Joshua Heckert's work because who can resist a geek at large in the world pumping out Doctor Who and Marvel characters with a



IT'S THE MILLIONS OF LITTLE THINGS THAT GO TO MAKE UP A CITY LIKE THIS

real difference to the usual thinking, but this an iceberg tip. Some of the meets along the way will certainly find their way into the pages of Skin Deep as the months go by but I can't let the weekend pass in writing without mentioning the wonderful Scarlett Sinclair and Dorothy Lyczek (twogypsiestatattoo.com) who, as well as being stand-up artists in their own right, sure know their way around a hotel bar in this town.

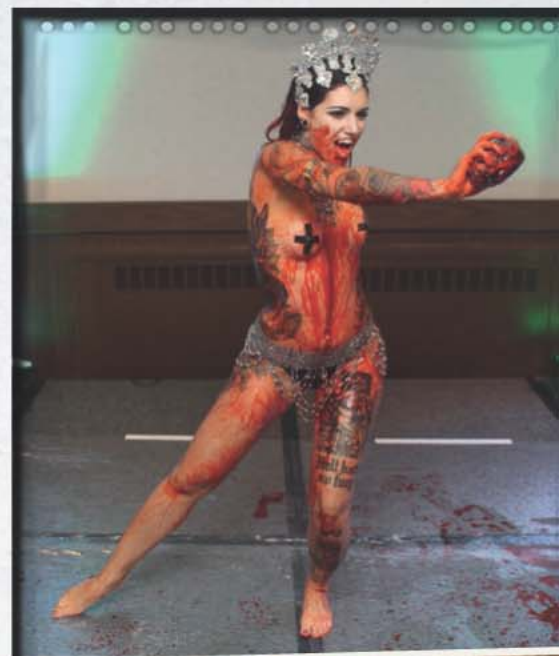
So, for what amounted to a two and half day show, it sure flashed by in the blink of an eye even though it feels like I've been here forever. I take my hat off to Stefano for pulling it off with such apparent ease, or at least he made it look effortless which is more important than whether or not it actually was. This has been one seriously won-

derful show from start to finish. I can't even attempt to do it justice in a couple of thousand words (which is why God invented pictures so that each one can crank out another thousand on my behalf).

And yet there was more to come. An after-show bash at Last Rites? It would be rude not to attend...

NEW YORK NIGHTS

Walking to Last Rites through the streets of New York at night is not so much a pilgrimage, it's more like being in a movie of your own making. It doesn't feel as dangerous as it did, say, twenty years ago but it's still got a fair share of action. It's the millions of little things that go to make up a city like this—the guy that looks twice up and



MY FIRST IMPRESSION IS THAT THERE IS ART AND THEN THERE IS ART

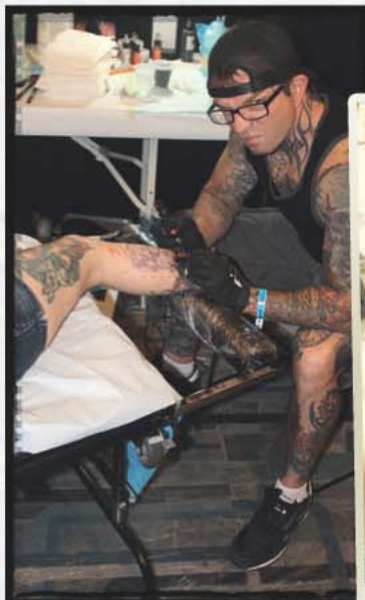
down the street before heading into the massage parlour, the homeless guy in the semi-motorised wheelchair that needs a hand getting down a kerb—in fact everywhere I turn on the forty minute walk, I can pick at all of humanity. All you need to do is not pay attention to the screaming illuminated billboards of Times Square that are designed to keep your eyes in the sky instead of on the streets.

Last Rites is not so far from the Garment District where there appears to be a never ending run of warehouses that make spandex, but eventually I see the shop from about 100 yards away—from the outside, it doesn't look how I expected it to but neither does it not look how I expected.

It simply *is*—and inside, it's so much more than I ever thought it would be.

The ground level floor is currently playing host to an unholy shit-ton of art. Right now, it's also playing host to all of those people I mentioned earlier who have arrived here long before me but there's still plenty of room to wander among the art and savour the offerings. My first impression is that there is art and then there is Art—and this is Art. One would expect nothing less here. The ground floor is incredibly bright too, brilliantly so. In fact it's beautiful but this is in stark, stark contrast to the basement and the first floor which are about the darkest rooms I've ever been in outside of a castle.

Downstairs, live art is happening but upstairs is where I need to be. More Art presents itself—not the same kind of Art at all but dark Art of the finest calibre. As luck would



© Sion Smith

MUCH LIKE BEING IN LED ZEPPELIN, YOU CAN NEVER OUTRUN THE SHADOW OF LAST RITES

have it, Paul Booth invites me behind the cemetery gate that guards his inner sanctum and it's not unlike like walking into his head. However it is you imagine this vortex to be, just stop—you'll never get there. It's one of those things you have to experience first hand. I also think some things should remain sacred, so if you want the full experience, you're just going to have to jump a plane and check it out for yourself for I have nothing left to offer you on this front.

Nikko comes over and we three discuss their earlier collaboration for a while but the studio itself is too overpowering to dig deep and make any real sense of it. There's too much to look at and fawn over until eventually, I see Stefano with Tim Boor. These two guys pretty much made

their name here and although both have moved on, I don't think you ever leave Last Rites. Not really.

You can go travel the world, create magic and mystery on hundreds of skins, erect wonderful shows that do exactly what they're supposed to, take all the things you ever learned and push the art of tattoo into places it has never been but much like being in Led Zepelin, you can never outrun the shadow of Last Rites.

Which kind of brings me full circle to where it started for me in the first place. I feel born into it again at a totally different level. There's not much I can do when I leave but stop and give that guy in the wheelchair, still stranded on the kerb, a hand into the traffic... ▣



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Art for art's sake

Marc Quinn is a wonderful contradiction. An artist whose sculptures, paintings and drawings are bought by big-money collectors and big-name museums, but who remains refreshingly uninterested in the world of commercial art...

“I don’t make things to put on walls... I make things I like. Sometimes that’s terrible. Sometimes that’s beautiful. If that makes it hard to predict me, so be it. It’s my choice to be part of the history of art, not the history of the art market.”

Quinn first grabbed public imagination in the 1990s as part of the Young British Art scene. Back then, these ambitious and alternative artists were producing work that was mocked and ignored in equal portions. Or at least that was the story until one of Britain’s most influential collectors—Charles Saatchi—stood up and took notice. Suddenly YBA’s such as Damien Hurst, Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin were being fêted like rock stars and Marc Quinn was one of those who made himself a name amid the notoriety.

MAKING WAVES

Quinn’s work has always been surprising: cheeky and challenging, playful and perturbing. “Self”, for instance, is an ongoing series of visceral head sculptures made



from his own frozen blood. These incarnadine slushies make a stark statement about the fragility of existence and must remain constantly refrigerated. “Alison Lapper Pregnant” (2005) features the disabled Alison fashioned from fifteen-tons of marble. Exhibited on the fourth plinth in London’s Trafalgar Square, the 3.5 metre tall expectant mother towered over the generals, whose grand statues fill the other three plinths. What could be a more striking comment on the nature of heroism and human achievement? “Siren” (2008) is a solid gold statue of Kate Moss—her

body twisted into an absurd yoga-esque Mobius strip. The piece is irony-heavy. The sculpture is the largest man made gold statue since Ancient Egyptian times, yet its subject is not a god-king but a pop icon. Marc Quinn may be approaching middle age, but his work still harks back to the YBAs at their most confrontational.

This month Marc, and long-time collaborator Gerry Fox, release “Making Waves”, an art documentary that takes a plume ride into a year in the life of a modern



I don't think that art is about providing answers. It's about asking questions in a different way

artist. With a handheld camera and a balls-to-the-walls approach, Gerry follows Marc from New York to Central London, where he's filmed encouraging passersby to walk over his art. Gerry, who acts as cameraman, sound man, editor and occasional inquisitor, inserts himself into the action just often enough to give the film a fly-on-the-wall intimacy. Throughout the whole crazy ride, Marc treats the arts circus with zen-like aplomb, regardless of whether he's hanging with Kayne West or wrestling with an overwrought fabricator. "Making Waves", he's says, "is not really a film about my art. It's a film about being an artist. A lot of films about art are very poncy ... but this isn't. It's not pretentious. It's more democratic. Accessible

in the best possible way."

What makes this film so fascinating, though, isn't just its subject matter. It's the chance to see art in the making. "What's interesting", Marc comments, "is that in the film we capture this spontaneity. You literally see a piece from the moment of inspiration to the finished sculpture. It's something that you would never be able to stage ... I don't think that there's any other artist's film where you actually see that." And it happens not once but twice during the making of the film. The first time, at Chelsea Flower Show, when a chance encounter with a 250-year-old bonsai evolves into "Held by Desire"—a gigantic fabricated tree, formed using 3D scanning technology. The second time is at a tattoo convention.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Marc Quinn's inspirations and obsessions are many. His works are often transformative, involving changes of scale, materials and context. Images of flame-licked rioters are turned into delicately woven tapestries. Naked, limbless models are sculpted in mar-



If that makes it hard to predict me, so be it

ble, in an overt challenge to the ‘classic’ art of Greece and Rome. Pregnant women lie on couches of raw, dead flesh, in a series of grimly fascinating memento mori. Hoodies cast in bronze, become modern day Buddhas. Skeletons lie limbs entwined, in the throws of undead passion.

Marc’s materials and working practices are similarly eclectic. Bread, DNA, ice, faeces and found objects have all formed the basis for works. In some instances his approach is traditional, but he also uses fabricators and the latest 3D printers. When working on his series of gigantic sea worn shells, taking something created by nature, scanning it, manipulating it and turning it into art “untouched by human hands” added another layer to the creative process. “That,” he says, “was the point ... They have beauty, symmetry, everything you’d expect from art, but they were made by something mindless...”

If Marc’s work is difficult to categorise, then that’s how he likes it. Although his pieces are often darkly humorous, sometimes narrative, and even political, he says that he doesn’t really have a message. “I don’t think that art is about providing answers”, he says. “It’s about asking questions in a different way and also, in a way, about making objects which are letters to the future. So that we can look back and see how people lived in our time.”

If there’s any ‘ism’ that Marc subscribes it’s “a kind of Marc Quinnism” he says with a wry smile.

However, body modification, perceptions of beauty, and how difference can be both inspiring and beautiful lie at the heart of much of what he does.





These full body and face tattoos are so compelling. Anyone who does this to themselves is an artist

MODELLING MANKIND

Marc has worked with models who have undergone radical cosmetic surgery, hormone treatment, tattooing and piercing. His subjects include transgender models, such as Thomas Beatie who underwent a gender reassignment in order to become a man but kept his female reproductive organs and subsequently became pregnant. "Buck and Allannah" (2010) features two transgender porn stars who have chosen to retain their primary sex organs, doing it doggy style, with Allannah's penis penetrating Buck's vagina. Model Chelsea Charms, who at 164XXX boasts the world's largest breasts, is another of his subjects. But is this art or voyeurism?

Critics have been quick to accuse Marc of sensationalism, claiming that his is the art equivalent of the freak show, but it's his models' very otherness that Marc finds so fascinating. "I'm interested" he says, in people who transform themselves."

When it comes to body modification, full body and facial tattoos





Making Waves is not really a film about my art. It's a film about being an artist

clearly hold a deep fascination. He's worked with Rick Genest (Zombie Boy) and Stalking Cat (Dennis Avner), who chose to follow the traditions of his Native American ancestors and alter his physical appearance to match that of his totem animal—the tiger. The results are works reflect the rich variety of modern culture and experience.

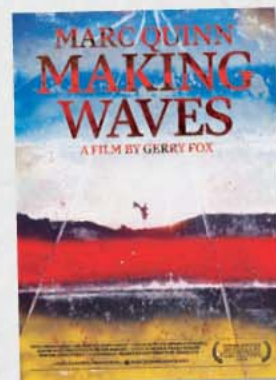
Marc: "These full body and face tattoos are so compelling... anyone who does this to themselves is an artist ...It's an artistic production ... outside of the mainstream ... documenting how people live now. In a way, these people are making themselves into living sculptures or living art works."

His latest piece, called "The Beauty of Healing" (2014), was inspired by a spur-of-the moment visit a tattoo show, which is captured in the film. The result of that visit was a collaboration with therapist and model Laurence Sessou (aka Moniasse) whose incredible tattoos and scarification pay homage to her West African roots. The scarification process was started by Iestyn Fly in London and involved

considerable pain, which Laurence herself saw as a rite of passage. The finished, cold concrete sculpture, made in the grey utilitarian materials of the urban landscape, contrasts strikingly with Sessou's living pain-flesh-art. The result is beautiful and provoking.

Marc has even produced temporary tattoos based on his praying skeleton ("Angel"), retinal images ("Eye of History") and beauty-death orchids ("Under the Volcano"). It's a process that, he comments with some satisfaction, takes his art "full circle, back out into the world".

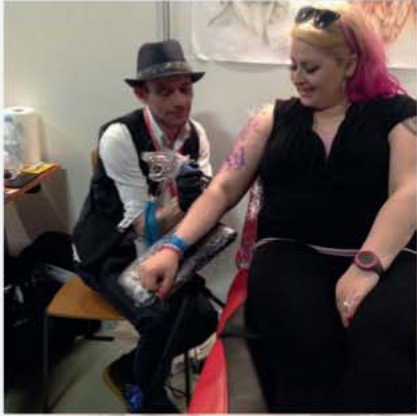
However, what's clear from both talking to Marc, and watching "Making Waves" is that he that doesn't overly care if you like his work. He's doesn't care if you buy it. What he does care about is the art itself. But, then, isn't that exactly how it should be. ▣



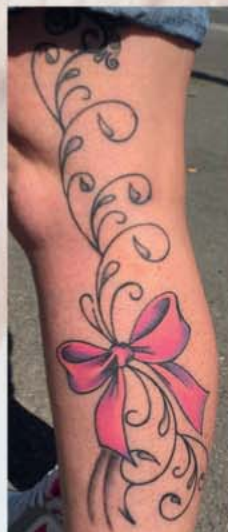
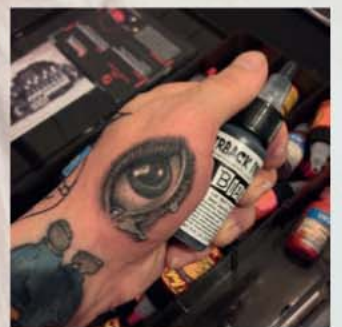
MAKING WAVES

"Marc Quinn—Making Waves" was shot by the BAFTA and Grierson Documentary Award winning director Gerry Fox, who also made the critically acclaimed South Bank Show about Marc in 2000. Following its selection in the 2014 London Film Festival, "Making Waves" celebrates its 2015 theatrical release with screenings and Q&As in Cambridge, Liverpool, London and Manchester. "Marc Quinn - Making Waves" is distributed worldwide by Starline Entertainment.

The release of the documentary also coincides with Marc's major new show, "Toxic Sublime" at the White Cube, Bermondsey, July 15th-September 15th. The exhibition includes a number of art works which we see Marc in the process of actually creating in "Making Waves."



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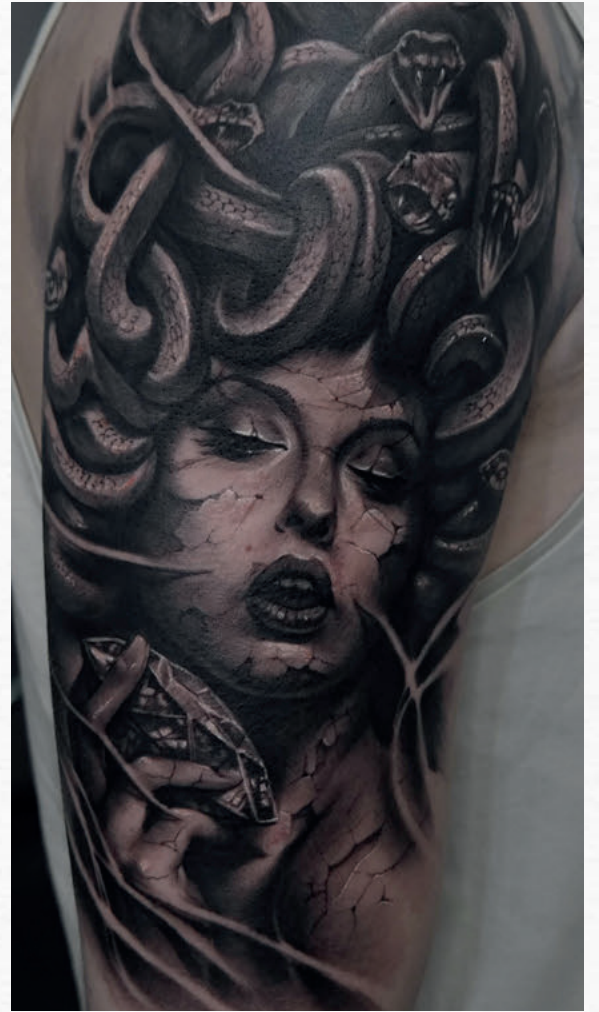


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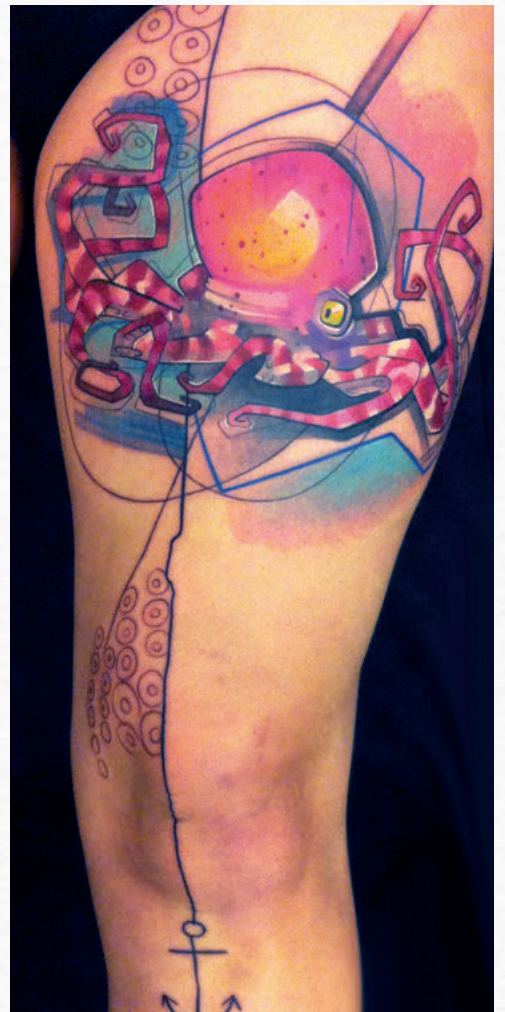


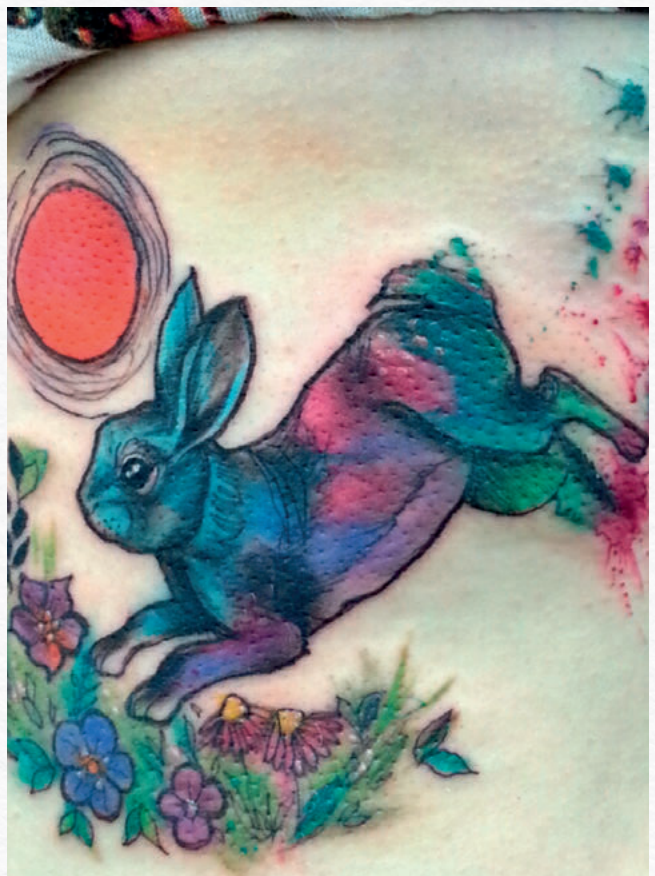
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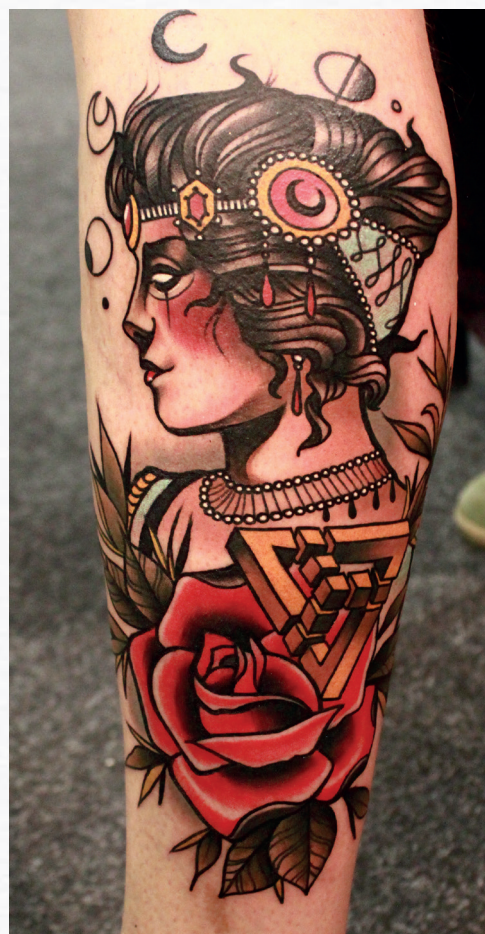


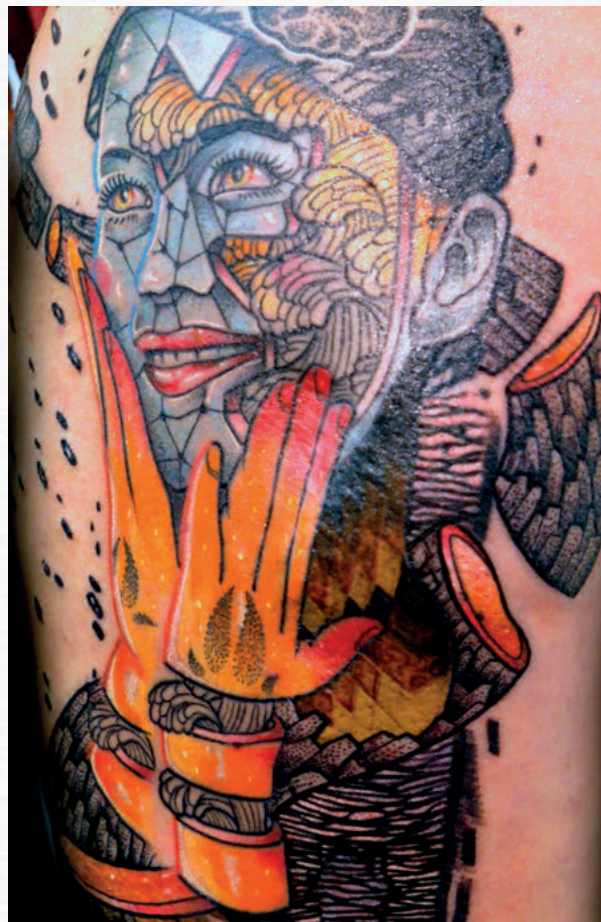
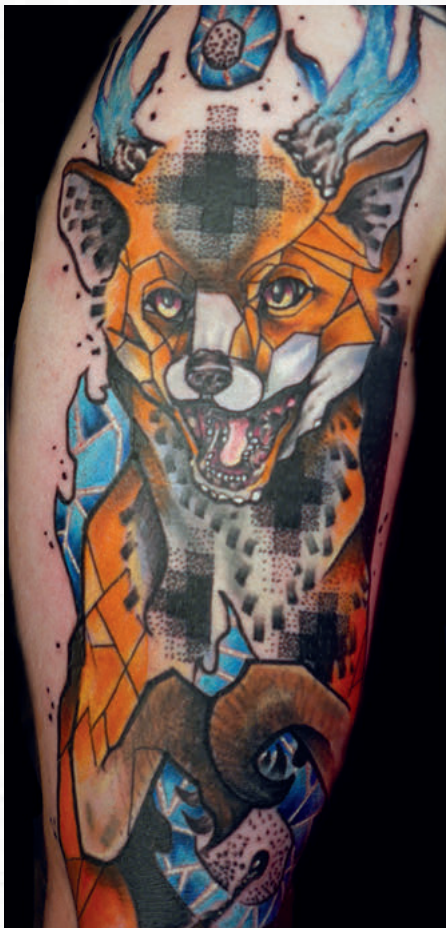
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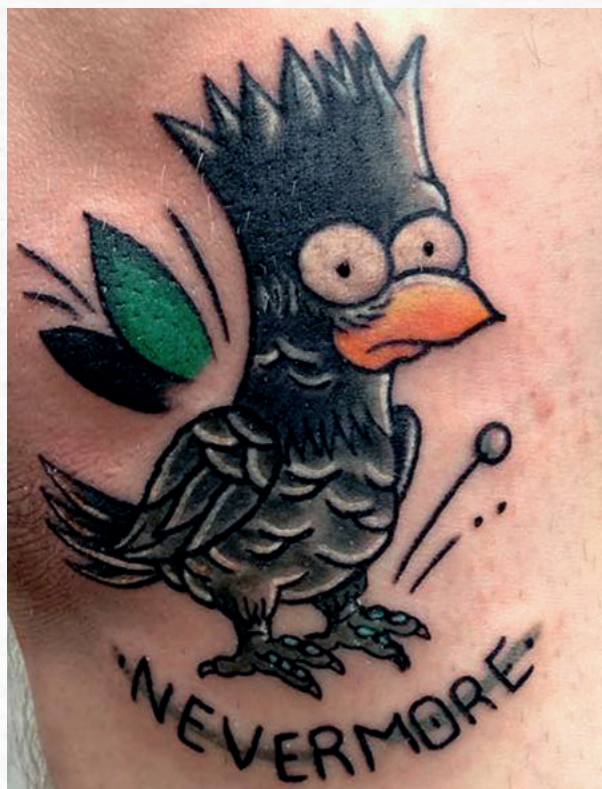
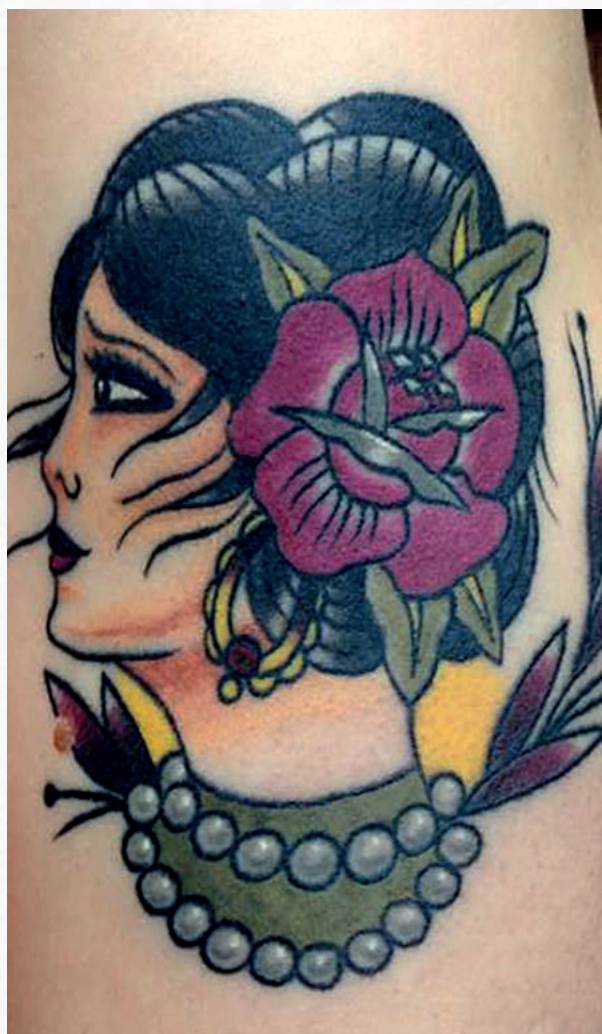
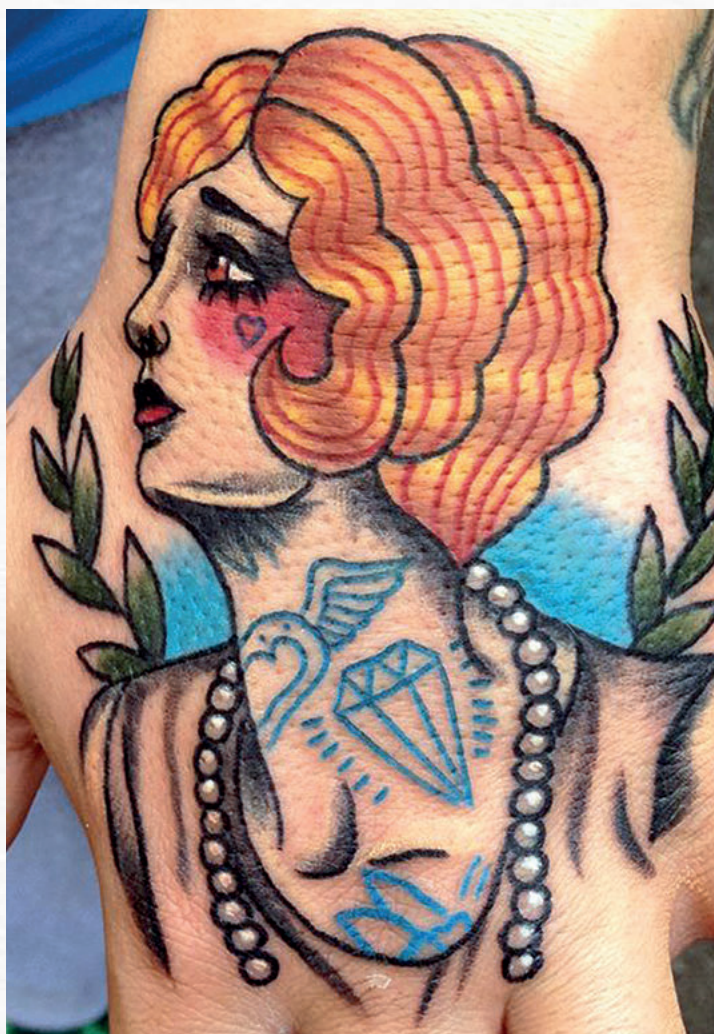


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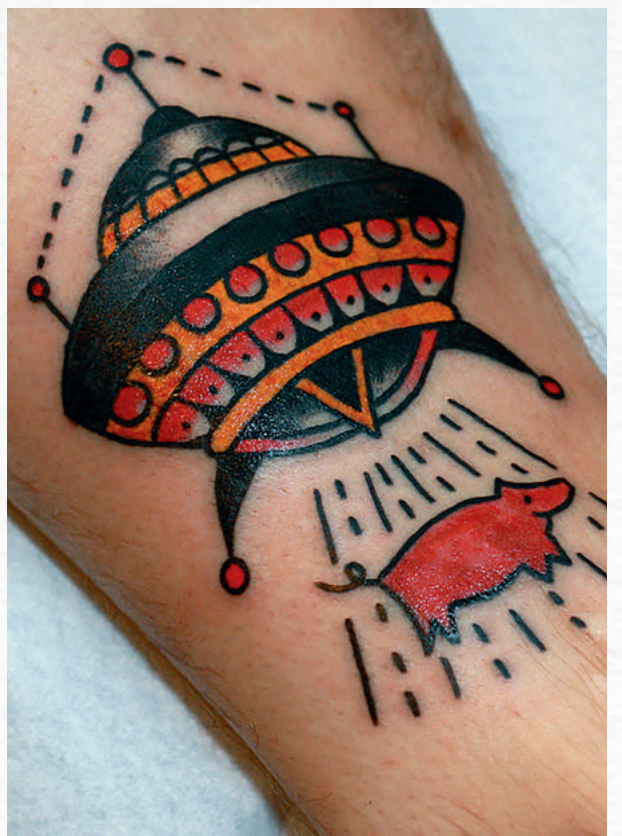
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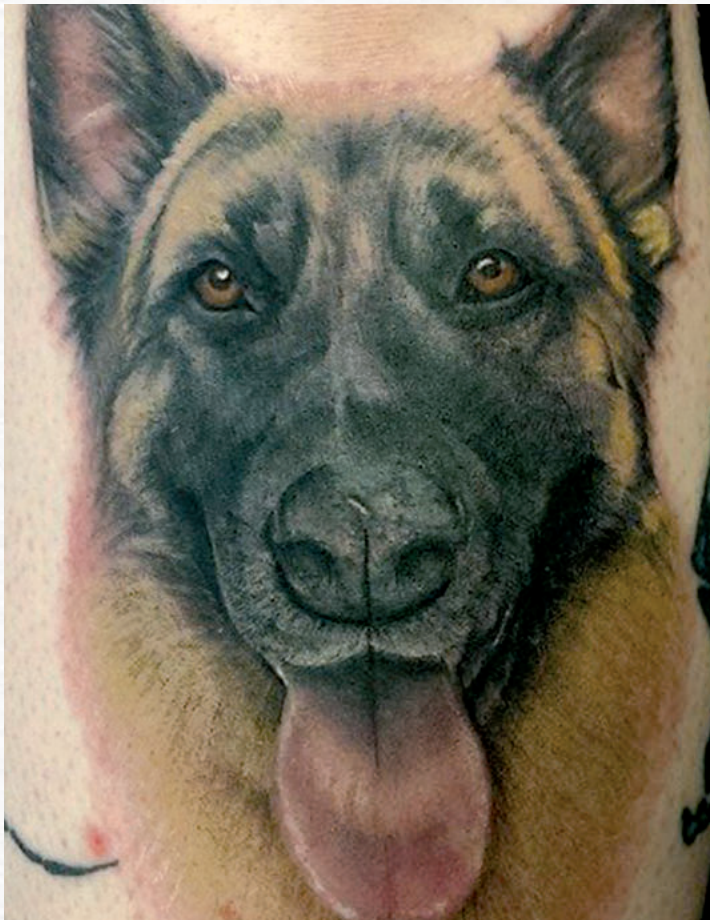
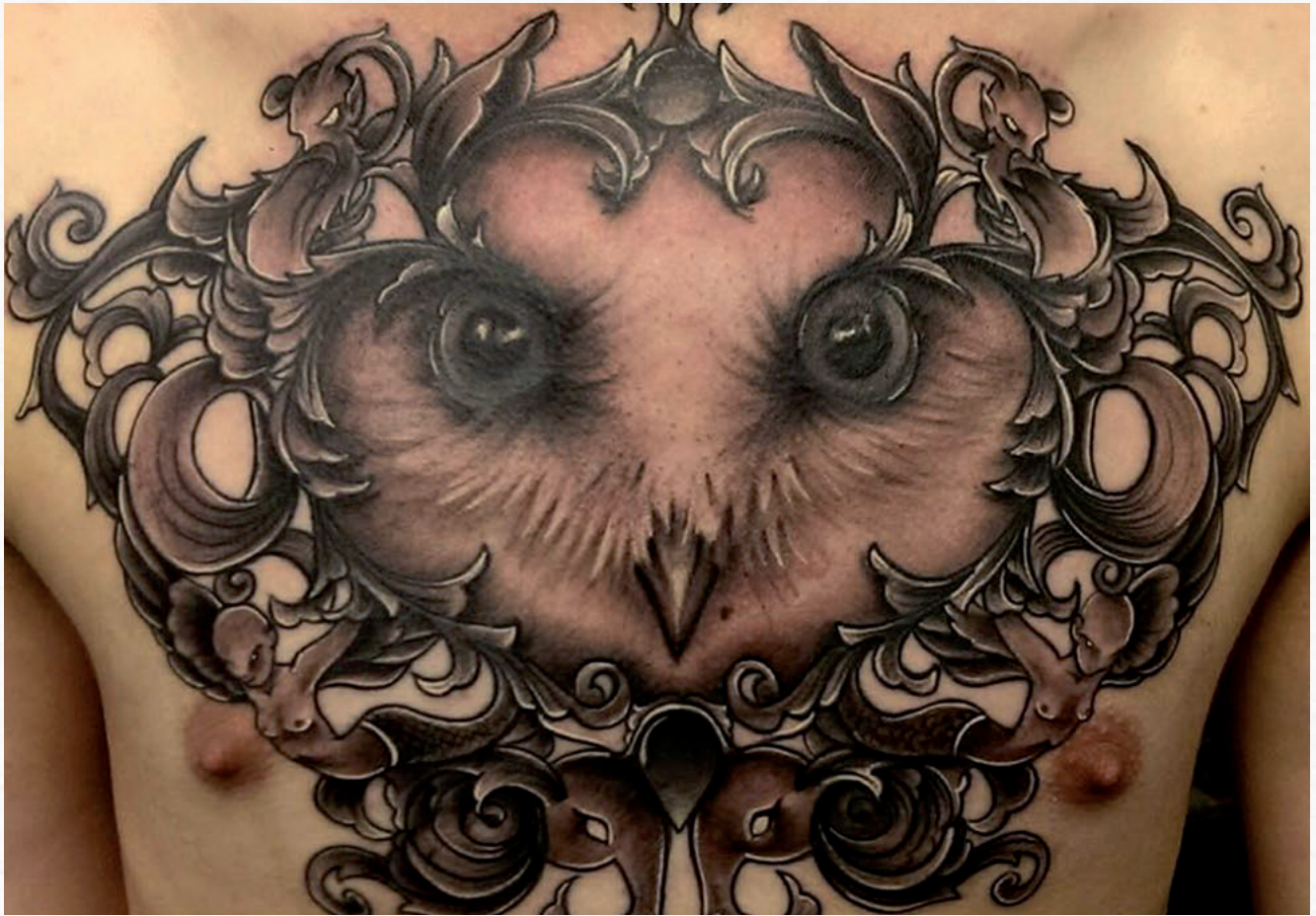
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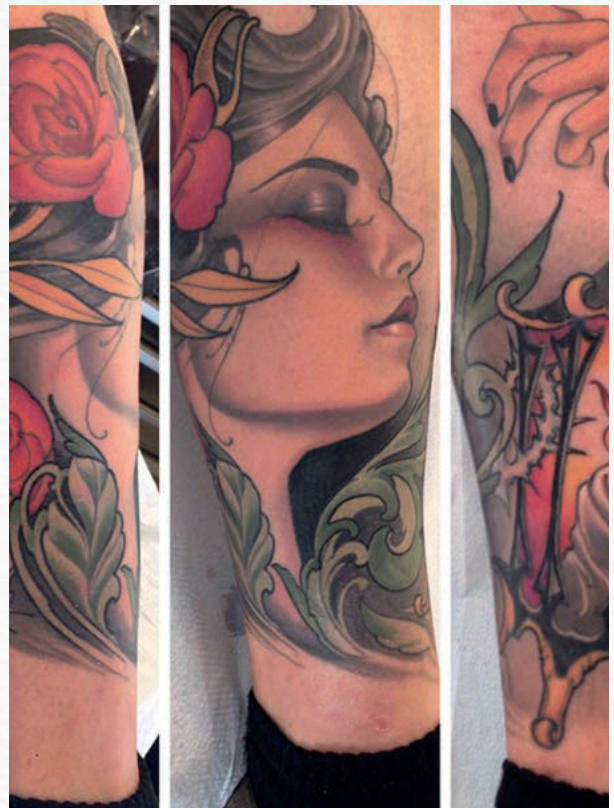
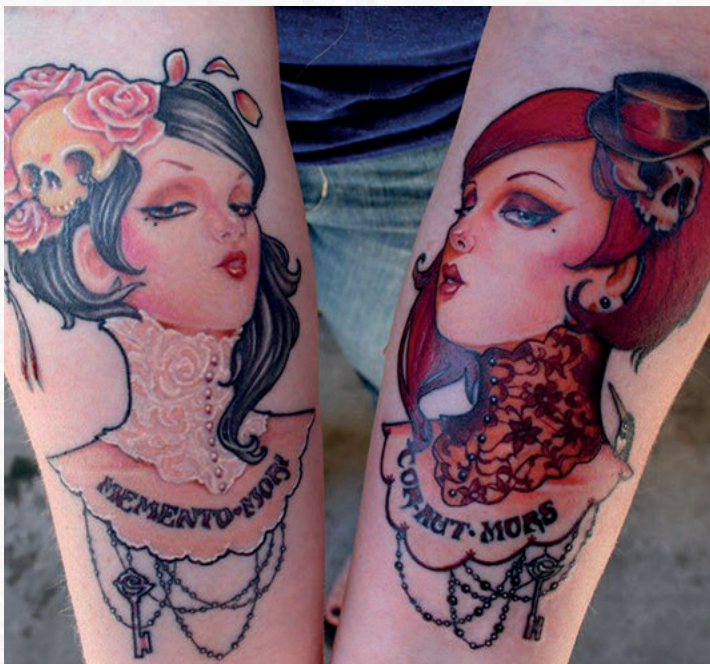
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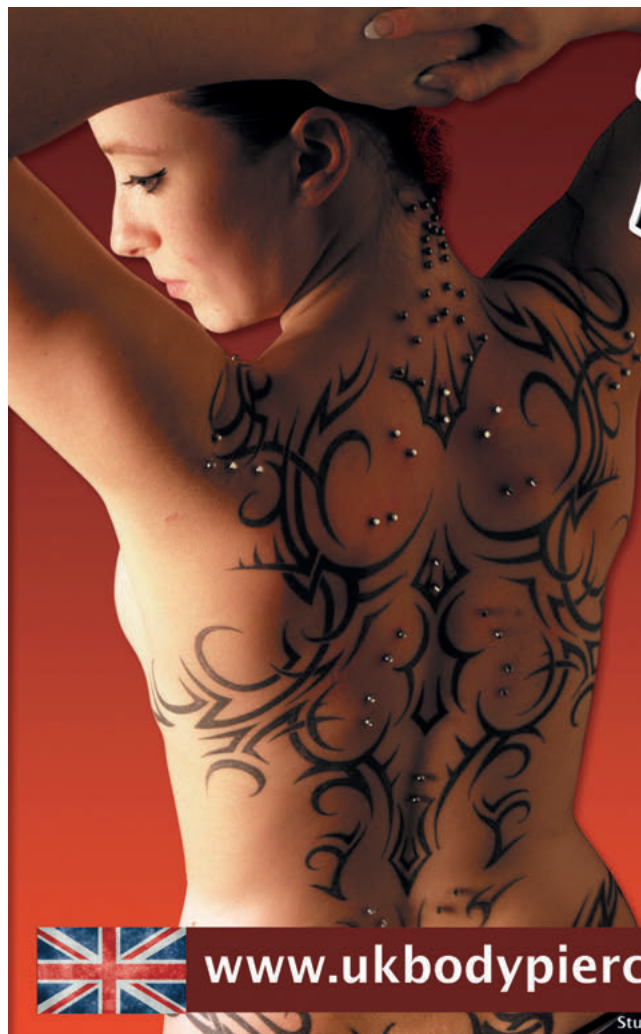
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AN AMERICAN Classic

There's nothing quite like walking up to Rick Walters World Famous Tattoo Parlour to find him solemnly sitting on a rickety old bench, pitch-black sunglasses strapped to his face, and his feet casually crossed in front of him.

A legendary name in the game, Walters never strays away from telling it like it is—what you call pessimism, Walters calls pragmatism. He's had his fair share of experience and plenty of stories to prove it. From hand-poking the neighbourhood at the age of ten, to fathering a family the size of a small football team, Rick Walters is the epitome of a done-it-all. I had the privilege of sitting down with the historical tattoo man one sunny Saturday afternoon to talk past, present, and future—and in the midst of it all, he finally revealed why he hates us so much.

So Rick, when and how did tattooing all begin for you?

Well, when I was really young I found out you could use India ink and a sewing needle to make simple designs. So, I did my first hand-poke tattoo on myself in 1955. Then, I started tattooing a bunch of my friends and all their mothers hated me. I was that guy in the neighbourhood—the one that made all the mothers say, “Don't hang out with that kid.”

And then what happened...?

Then in 1965, when I was 19, I opened a little shop in Lawndale, CA with a friend of mine. Later on, I moved to a shop in Gardena, CA—Uncle Flash's Tattoo Parlor—and

I worked with J.R. Grove. J.R. and I used to go to The Pike in Long Beach, CA to watch the guys at Bert Grimm's and try to pick up easier, better ways to do stuff. After a while, I got to be good friends with a few of the guys that worked there. I had been getting tattooed there since the '60s, so I kind of knew everyone there anyways. Eventually, they hired me to work in one of their shops out in East Los Angeles and I worked there for about three years. After that, I ran Bert Grimm's for 25 years, retired, and now I'm here.

Bert Grimm's closed relatively recently, right?

We shut it down in 2003. Actually, what really happened was the owner of the property passed away and their kids sold the property out from under us. Consequently, we couldn't stay there. Luckily, another tattooist bought the property so it still remains the oldest tattoo shop in the America. It's been nothing but a tattoo shop since 1927, so hopefully it stays that way.

Speaking of old-school, we all know back in the day tattooing wasn't really considered a fruitful profession the way it is today, so was there anything else you aspired to be?

I've done a number of different things over the years. When I was really young I was a paperboy. Then, I worked at a body shop when I was 14, sanding cars and learning how to paint. After high school, I went to work at a re-



search laboratory doing research on two and three-part materials and I became a lab technician. It was a really fun job, but it didn't pay very well, so I had to move on. I applied for an apprenticeship at North American Aviation and became a Class A toolmaker. During the war, I had been messed up in a bike wreck, so they wouldn't take me in the Army or Navy. I quit my job at the aircraft plant and went to work at the shipyard, so I could at least be doing something in relation to the military. I worked as a fitter at the shipyards and learned to weld, then later on got a chance to go to welding school. After that, I went back and forth between machine shops and eventually started tattooing full-time in the '70s. I did a little bit of everything and I did them all for a living. It wasn't like I was a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none—I was a master of them all.

Sounds like you've been busier than most. So, once you started tattooing full-time I'm sure you got a feel for which style of art appealed to you most. How would you classify your tattoo style?

I'd classify it as tattooing. I do everything. I don't like portraits, but I still do 'em. I do fine-line, black and grey, colour, traditional, Japanese, tribal; it doesn't make a difference to me. If you limit yourself to one style, it gets boring. I enjoy the challenge of someone coming in and saying they want tribal, and the next guy wanting a black and grey Virgin Mary, the next guy wanting Japanese writing, and so on.

You're definitely a well-known name in the industry, but who's your favorite artist?

Seeing as I had him tattoo my entire back, I'd probably have to say Robert Atkinson.

How long did that take?

Believe it or not it, it took like three years. We only worked on it for about an hour at a time. Robert and I worked together at the time so when he'd get a cancellation he'd work on my back. I kept track of the total time it took, and it was really only about 22 hours—for a complete back piece that extends all the way down to the ass, that's ridiculous. He's probably one of the fastest tattooers in the country.

What's your thought process when deciding which art to put on your own body? Do you go with aesthetics, meaning, a little bit of both, or none of the above?

Well, the back piece we obviously talked about, but most of the time it's just whatever I'm in the mood for at the time.

A little birdy told me you used to be involved in the trading business...the ink trading business to be exact. What's the story behind that?

Oh yeah, I witnessed Bob Shaw trading ink with Sailor Jerry a few times. Back in the '60s, Bob was the only one that had the blue ink and Sailor Jerry was the only one that had the purple. They had seen each other's tattoos

because Bob was tattooing out of Long Beach, CA and Sailor Jerry was in Hawaii, so the sailors would go through those areas a lot.

So, being that you've been in the game for so damn long, you've seen the industry change quite a bit. What's your favourite thing about what's happened to tattooing over the years? Least favourite?

My least favourite thing is probably the new guys calling themselves traditional artists when they're actually neo-traditional. They're doing their lines way too fat to be considered traditional. If you look at the Bob Shaw flash sheets, there aren't any fat lines. You don't use a seven on a pinup, that's ridiculous. The lines double every five years, so if you start out with a seven on a small, traditional piece, in 10 years it's going to look like shit. In terms of "liking" the changes I've seen in the industry, I guess I appreciate that tattoos are more popular. But then again, that means there are six million more tattooers.

In this day and age, tattoo artists are like celebrities—they have waiting lists and refuse to do certain tattoos,

etc. I get the feeling that's not your style. Why not?

Nope. My guys and I tattoo whatever comes through the door. We're tattoo artists, not art fags. If somebody walks in wanting a swastika in the middle of their forehead, I'm going to give it to them.

I have to ask, what's with the whole 'Rick Walters hates



I was that guy in the neighbourhood—the one that made all the mothers say, "Don't hang out with that kid."



If somebody walks in wanting a swastika in the middle of their forehead, I'm going to give it to them

you' thing? Do you really hate us?

Yes! [Laughs] No, not really. It actually all started out as a joke. Back in 1974, I was out on a bike ride up north by San Francisco, CA and there was a photo booth. I took one of the 25¢ photos and when I got home I gave one to my lady and one to my sister. About three years ago, my sister posted the damn picture on Facebook, so I showed it to my friend. He got a kick out of it. "That's an 'I hate you' picture if I ever saw one," he said. So, I texted it to him and thought nothing more of it. Three weeks later, I got a stack of stickers that read, "Rick Walters hates you." Now it's on t-shirts and all kinds of stuff.

Well, it's a relief to know that we're not all on your shit list. So, you opened up a shop of your own in Sunset Beach, CA recently. What was the reason behind the purchase?

It was available. It's been a tattoo shop for 30 years, and at one time it was very nice. It kind of went to shit over the years, but my daughter called me and told me it was available, so I went to the City and got the business license right away, then came to sign the lease. It's the oldest shop in Sunset.

Who are some of the artists that work with you at this new shop?

Tim Sauter, JD Rodriguez, and Clark North's son Cameron North.

What are your hopes for this shop?

To hopefully make a living and possibly one day my daughter will own it. She's the only one in the family that tattoos besides me.

Do you have other children?

Yeah. I have 13. Six of my own and seven step-kids. There are ten girls and three boys. A few Mother's Days ago, a whole gang of them showed up down here. I said, "It's Mother's Day, what the hell are you doing here?" and they said, "Yeah, but she's a bitch." So, I guess they kind of like me.

What's not to like? In terms of longevity, you've been tattooing for quite some time. Do you ever plan on giving it a rest?

Fuck that. I tried to do it and almost had a heart attack. Right now, I'm working seven days a week with no plans of stopping.



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Kat Wilson

BEHIND THE INK

COLOUR REALISM

Colour realism. It's taken something of a battering of late, not least within these very pages. Mr Dan Henk [issue 249] coined the phrase 'hyperrealism', attacking an approach that, in his words, 'defeats the purpose of what an artist sets out to do.' While it may look impressive, he argued, 'it's more of a skill as opposed to art.' Fighting talk? Wayne Simmons continues to chip away...

It's insane isn't it?! I've found myself literally staring at pieces just thinkinghow?!

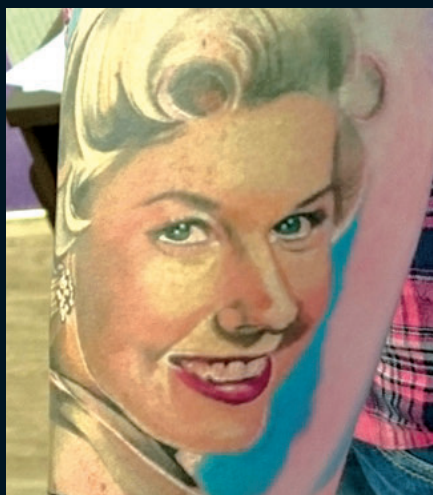
That's Kat Wilson speaking. She's a self-taught artist working out of her own studio, Hello Sailor, in Blackpool. Kat's been tattooing for around six years but first caught my eye when she submitted some pics to our sister mag, Skin Shots. Her work spoke to me because it was not hyperrealistic. There's a definite sense of the artist in there – like she's using oils, not ink. Still, Kat can appreciate all approaches to realism, not just her own. 'I think there's no less artistic merit in perfectly replicating an object or a



Kat Wilson

face,' she says, 'than those who design pieces from the heart.'

Kat credits the increased use of colour within realism, and its impact, to advancing technology as opposed to just better inks. 'Ink helps, yeah, but there are so many machines now, too, that are just perfect for this style. The Neuma was the first machine I can remember that had this airbrushed soft look that I'd never seen before. Now there's an abundance of them.' Kat also points to social networking and how an impressive tattoo can get shared hundreds, maybe thousands of times. 'With a lot more artists doing [colour realism],' she says, 'I guess it was bound to become a popular style.'



All work this page Kat Wilson

For Alex Rattray, working out of Red Hot and Blue in Edinburgh, hyperrealism does not appeal. He admits that realism, whatever way you cut it, 'is in a way, copying images.' However, to do it right, 'takes a lot of skill and technique' and for Alex, the success of the art is all down to the artist's approach. 'I work with an unusual palette and change contrast levels but that's just the way I choose to see my subject references,' he points out. For Alex, then, it's not about replicating a photograph or image exactly, but more a case of injecting 'a little bit of imagination' into each piece.

A self-confessed sci-fi fan, that imagina-

**INK HELPS, BUT
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MANY MACHINES
NOW, TOO, THAT
ARE JUST PERFECT
FOR THIS STYLE**

KAT

tion he talks of was stirred by the movies Alex grew up with and the artists who worked on their posters and cover art. Drew Struzan, for example, who worked on iconic 80s classics such as Blade Runner, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and the Star Wars series. Struzan's work is definitive. You can see the paintbrush in there, the vitality, and, when I first met Alex at last year's Tattoo & Toy convention, I got a similar vibe from his work. Alex remains modest, though. 'I guess Struzan did influence my style in a way,' he shrugs. 'The imagery he created has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember.'

Kat's been on a similar journey, inspira-



All work this page Alex Rattray

tion wise, but for her, it wasn't the posters that got her buzzing but rather the special effects. 'Mike Hill, Dick Smith, Tom Savini – those guys were the coolest people on the planet to me.' As a kid, she would try to recreate some of the work she saw on the screen, working with garage kit models in her bedroom, and even flirted with a career in SFX. 'After college, I went on to be a wax-work sculptor for a few years. At the time, I thought I'd hit the jackpot. It was such a cool job, especially as I worked a lot in the chamber of horrors. After that, I had a brief stint in the SFX industry, which was just as brilliant. Ultimately though, having a baby made it dif-

**I THINK YOU NEED
TO HAVE A STRONG
BACKGROUND IN
ART TO BE GOOD
AT THIS JOB**

ALEX

ficult to continue travelling and working such long hours, so I left.'

As Kat moved into tattooing, realism seemed a natural fit. 'Everything I've done before sort of revolves around faces so I think doing portraits was probably inevitable. I like trying to create

light and shadow too, but I could do portraits every single day and never get bored. I just love people's faces.'

A varied CV like Kat's is important creatively in Alex's view, too: 'I think you need to have a strong background in art to be good at this job,' he says, pointing out, when asked, that he sees himself as a tattoo artist as opposed to tattooist. 'I've spent my entire life



Alex Rattray



Alex Rattray



Alex Rattray



Alex Rattray



Kat Wilson



Kat Wilson

creating art in some form or another, from drawing and painting to sculpture.' His move into tattooing wasn't exactly smooth, though, Alex clocking up what he himself describes as two failed apprenticeships. 'In the end, I took as much as I could from both of them, started work in a busy street shop and picked up the rest as I went. It's amazing how much you can learn from doing loads of tribal, lettering and stars.'

And speaking of lettering and stars, how do our pair feel about other styles within tattooing? Can they take a bit of trad on the side or are they realism purists, solely interested in

WITH A LOT MORE ARTISTS DOING [COLOUR REALISM], SHE SAYS, 'I GUESS IT WAS BOUND TO BECOME A POPULAR STYLE

KAT

the style they specialise within?

'Not at all,' Kat says. 'Among tattooists, you always find yourself in awe of pretty much anything you can't do yourself. I've seen some mind blowing tattoos in dotwork, geometric, stunning watercolours and crazy perfect traditional.'

Alex agrees. 'Tattooing as a whole is an art form and it's too subjective to claim one style as better than another,' he says. 'That's part of what keeps the job so exciting'

...and keeps punters like us excited – about every style of tattooing. I mean, isn't that what this series, and this mag, is all about? ▣

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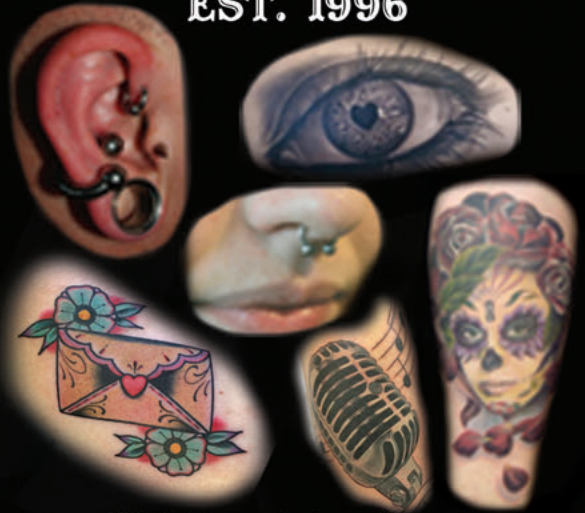
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BLACK RUSSIAN

It's notoriously difficult to work up an interview with some of the great Russian artists working in the world today. Mostly, this is due to the language barrier, but sometimes you can find a crack in the wall—and today, we found a crack in the wall through which we spent some time with Alexander Grim...

[alexander.grim.art](#) [@alexandergrim](#)

Establishing himself in Saint Petersburg, the old capital city of the Russian Empire, Alexander Grim provides one of the most serious and critical styles of artwork done today. With references to the middle ages, occultism and symbolism, his dark images—all executed in black & grey—are definitely not for the faint of heart even though they are always elegantly executed. When it comes to the use of the body as a canvas, Alexander Grim not only shows strong technical drawing skills but also a solid knowledge of the traditional styles of tattooing, but in terms of composition and placement, he focuses a lot on the impact. None of which is really a surprise for this man of extremes, a gifted artist living under a black sun:

What was your first contact with tattooing?

I made a small hand poked tattoo on my palm. I was something like 14 years old and many in my class said that I was crazy. Looking at their ordinary and boring way of life, I took it as the biggest compliment and got convinced that I was definitely on the right track.

How did it go next?

In 1998/1999, my friends and I were inspired by the ideas of black metal and this whole un-



derground outlaw atmosphere—we just could not pass up such a topic like tattoo. To us, it was kind of a proof of faithfulness to these ideas and initiation in a sense. The thought of doing something ‘for life’ was very appealing. At the time, getting any information on tattooing was almost impossible and I had to study many things by myself. After a short time, I left other activities behind to focus solely on the tattoo. Then, after being already trained technically, I worked for several years in some tattoo studios in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Now, I work privately and do just what I like. It gives me the sense of freedom I need without which, I could not manage anymore.



ONCE I WAS IN THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM AND SAW IN THE HALL OF THE ANCIENT WORLD THE TATTOOED SKIN FROM THE HAND OF A SCYTHIAN WARRIOR WHO LIVED ABOUT 2000 YEARS AGO

Favourite landscape?

Forest and foggy mountains.

A beautiful place to die?

Somewhere in the northern wilderness where no man was before.

What scares you?

The modern world and the consumer society that watches TV, is not interested in his own roots, forgetting how to think and which does not understand what the word "to be" actually means.

A book that you may consider to be your bible?

Les Chants de Maldoror.

Favourite dish that you cook for your lady?

Freshly caught trout baked on a bonfire under the stars in the midst of the wilderness.

Favorite fashion designer?

Tatsuro Horikawa.

Did you have art education and how did it influence your work?

I attended classes in art schools as a child and then for a while, I took lessons in sculpture, drawing and composition from a famous sculptor. Some time later, I studied in a good art school in St. Petersburg. Actually, my mother is an art teacher and from an early age she would take me to the painting lessons in the institute where she studied. It might sound strange, but at that time I was not really attracted by the idea of being an artist, but the moment I faced a tattoo, it was love at first sight.

Why did you choose to concentrate on the black works?

I really like the real traditional ethnic tattoos, these generic signs and traditional ornaments. I remember once I was in the Hermitage Museum and saw in the hall of the ancient world the tattooed skin from the hand of a Scythian warrior who lived about 2000 years ago. It was a very complex ornament in terms of composi-

tion, consisting of black silhouettes of different animals—deer, tigers and so on. I remember being struck by the thought: "Damn, 2,000 years have passed, but this thing still looks incredibly well!" And then I thought: "It looks absolutely serious, and many modern tattoos just five years later look like cheap, contrived, outdated shit."

It was simple and at the same time very complex in terms of composition. Each element was at the right place and at the right size. I felt like a caveman in comparison with these people who lived 2000 years ago! It still feels like you are looking at something ancient and pure in this modern world of simulacrum and counterfeits.

Black colour also holds in time...

As a colour, black is the most contrasted and easy to comprehend, but at the same time, the black looks calm, neutral and more natural for the skin. It focuses on shapes and silhouettes. We can say that this is a return to the original roots in a sense. It is simple and



just perfect for what I want to do. Ideally, tattoos should be full of meaning and memorable character. As a coat of arms, if you wish.

Besides—black tattoos are much more suited to the style of clothing that I love.

You have a particular taste for medieval times (regarding the iconography you use, with knights, swords, heraldic, engraving...), could you tell us about it?

I draw a lot of inspiration from medieval chivalry, especially the Templars; weapons and armour for me are the symbols of pride, dignity and honour, an elitism.

I'm a big fan of chivalry aesthetics and always happy to do something like that. I also feel a lot of inspiration from the legends of the Grail, alchemy, Hermeticism, secret societies and ancient music.

Do you have other sources of inspiration?

The harsh northern nature is of great importance for me, I draw a lot of strength and

IDEALLY, TATTOOS SHOULD BE FULL OF MEANING AND MEMORABLE CHARACTER. AS A COAT OF ARMS, IF YOU WISH

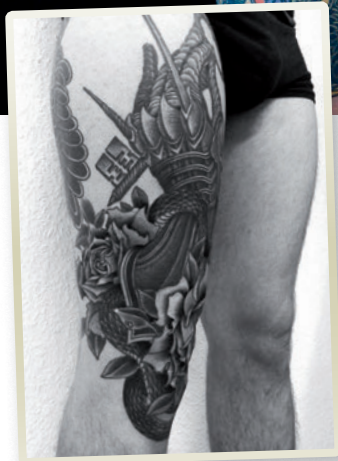
inspiration from my travels in the forests and mountains. Also, my study of mythology, poetry, my reading books, visiting museums, and of course the music means a lot.

You seem to have a particular taste for the extremes.

I like the extremes—from music to philosophy and appearance. I never liked the idea of being something in the middle—either fire or ice. As a good example, black metal or any extreme and aggressive music style might help nourish my work: contrast raw rhythm and



I REALLY LIKE THE FACT THAT THE JAPANESE WORKS DID NOT LOOK MODERN AT ALL. THE STYLE IS TIMELESS



speedy technique, full of rage and energy—all this tears the mind and sense out from the cage of the Sleep, Nothing and Non-being, focuses you and keeps your attention on the 'here and now', leading you to an ecstasy. Each stroke of the drum in the silence is just like an announcement of the 'I Am!'.

The realm of death is speechless and silent and to dwell in the silence is the destiny of dead. Therefore, it might sound paradoxical, but the genres such as black metal with all their "black" imagery and death inspired lyrics are much closer to the real meaning of life than, for instance, church music which dissolves and calms you.

From the way you put tattoos on skin, it feels that the tradition of tattoo in Japan had a strong influence on you...

Japanese tattoo has opened up so much to me and indeed, strongly influenced my perception of tattoos in general. First of all, I

am delighted to work with the body as a three-dimensional object—a good Japanese tattoo should be perceived as a part of the body and fits very harmoniously with its anatomy. Just as the tribal style when done properly. At the same time, the Japanese tattoo has a connection to the famous artists and engravers such as Yoshitoshi, Hokusai and others. I really liked the fact that the Japanese works did not look modern at all. The style is timeless. Japanese graphic art has affected the entire style of modern tattooing throughout the world.

Are there artists that inspire you?

Among contemporary artists, I could name



THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM

The State Hermitage is a museum of art and culture in Saint Petersburg, Russia. One of the largest and oldest museums in the world, it was founded in 1764 by Catherine the Great and has been open to the public since 1852. Its collections, of which only a small part is on permanent display, comprise over three million items, including the largest collection of paintings in the world. For more information [if you happen to be passing] hermitagemuseum.org



SIZE SHOULD DEPEND ON THE IDEA AND YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND VERY WELL WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT

Denis Forkas Kostromitin, Odd Nedrum—their pictures are just as they were from some another time and full of mysteries for me. Among tattooers—Taras ‘Inkerman’ Shevchenko, Guy Le Tatooer, Grime, Eckel, Lus Lips, Filip Leu, Thomas Hooper.

Do you have any preferences about the size of the tattoos you do?

I have no preference in size without consideration of the specific idea. I think that the size should depend on the idea and you should understand very well what you want to achieve as a result. Certainly large tattoos look very impressive and expressive, and they also allow you to make very complex details. I see many advantages in large tattoos. However, a small tattoo can also look very good if it is in its right place and if the size of it is justified by motif.

Does St Petersburg, being the capital of the Russian Empire in the past (from 18th century until early 20th) and an important cultural centre have any influence on you?

Until this fucking Bolshevik Revolution happened, Petersburg was quite an interesting place where the intellectual circles from different countries have crossed paths. There were active circles of holding special discussions on philosophical and esoteric topics consisting of noblemen, poets, philosophers, writers, architects, artists, etc. Petersburg has its own special history and atmosphere, and it indeed affected me at some point. Here you can



still find many esoteric symbols on the houses of Silver Age. Having said that, it is important to know what you are looking for. Several years ago, in the city archive, our friends discovered a document stating that the first tattoo studio was opened in St. Petersburg about 100 years ago by one Russian nobleman. It was quite unexpected and finding that surprised many people here. □

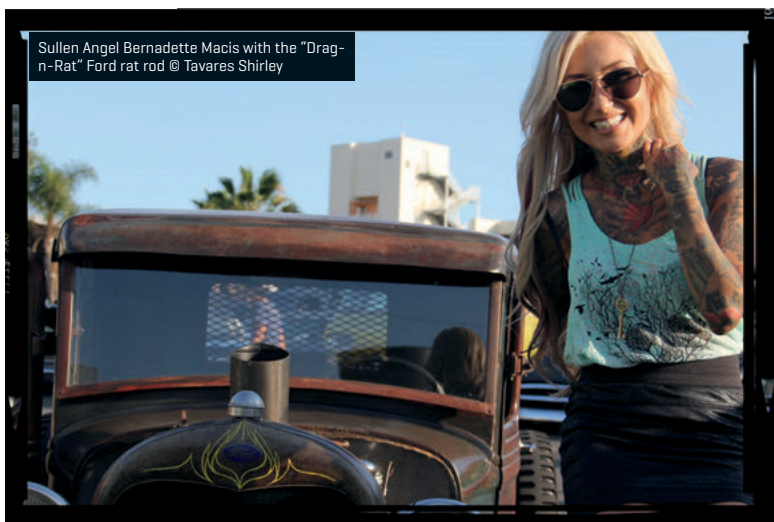


These two were having a heated discussion prior to walking up to them and asking for their picture. They stopped the stare down long enough for the photo, but the gentlemen to the right was eager to get back into his so-called friend's face. © Tavares Shirley



Scenes from **INK 'N' IRON**

If you love tattoos, art, music, Rock-a-Billy fashion and classic cars and bikes, the Ink and Iron show was a can't-miss event. Originally organised to pay homage to the great American tattoo art tradition, the Ink and Iron event has evolved to embody all facets of the tattoo and art worlds.



Sullen Angel Bernadette Macis with the "Dragon-Rat" Ford rat rod © Tavares Shirley

The organisers of the event utilised the WWII era Queen Mary cruise liner in Long Beach, CA, as the perfect backdrop to showcase the work of not just tattoo artists, but dance artists, music artists and car and motorcycle builders.

More than 50 music bands, including Pennywise and Killswitch Engage, performed on three stages during the course of three days within spitting distance of a plethora of custom, retro-style cars and bikes on display as eye candy. If music wasn't enough, the people-



This is how we roll on the west coast. The creators of the Ink and Iron show installed a 110 ft. hard wall along the wharf beside the Queen Mary and adjacent to the main music stage. The finishing touches to this tagged work of art were added by Bates from Copenhagen, Bmike from New Orleans, Marcel, Sonny Boy, Abel and Risk from LA were on Saturday afternoon. Once completed, it appeared though the Queen Mary's hull had been graffiti-d by LA's most elusive and notorious street artists. © Salvador Maltbie



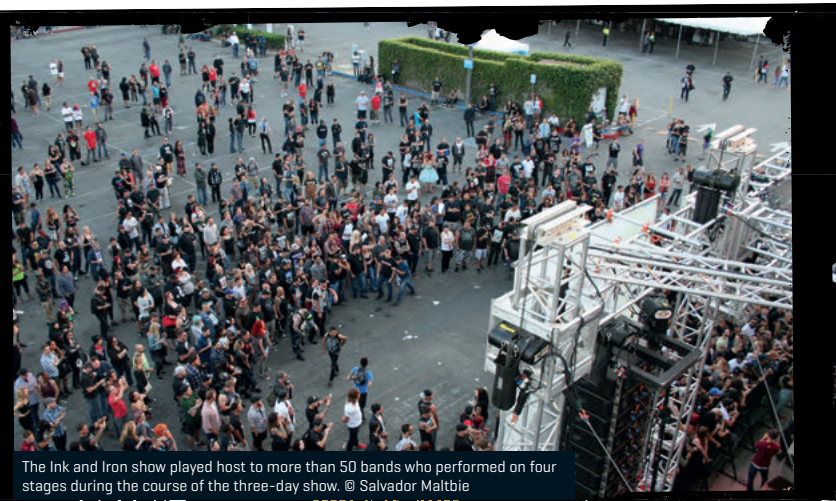
© Salvador Maltbie



Pin up dolls at the car show. © Tavares Shirley



Tattoo artist Fabian De Gaillande. © Salvador Maltbie



The Ink and Iron show played host to more than 50 bands who performed on four stages during the course of the three-day show. © Salvador Maltbie



Tattoo work by Josh Payne of Ascend Tattoo in New York, USA. This piece took roughly eight hours to complete. © Tavares Shirley

watching was worth the trip. Nowhere else could you find a more diverse, fully tattooed, pierced and coloured melting-pot of a crowd. Pinups paraded the wharf in Gucci sunglasses and camisoles while Sullen Angels solicited the crowd as they shopped at more than 90 vendors.

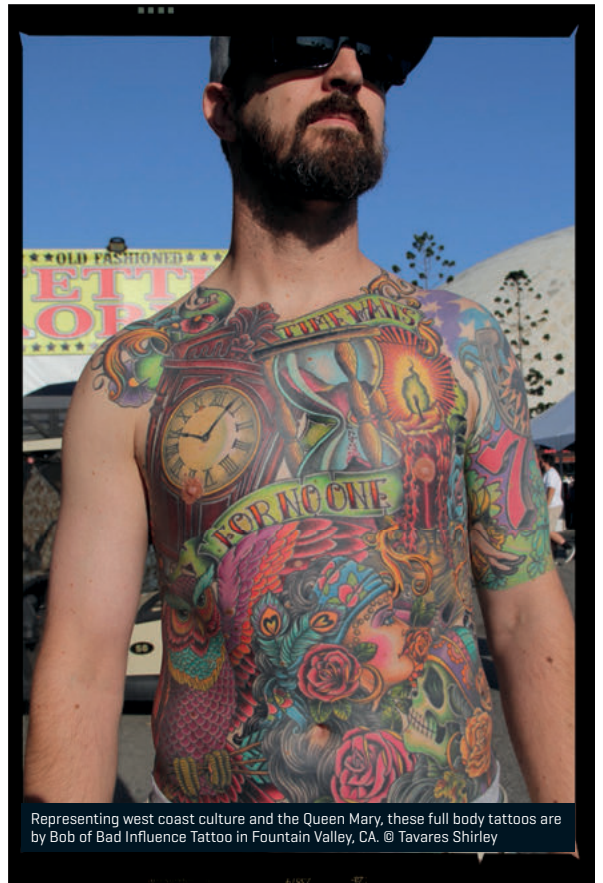
If you headed into the ship, you'd find pole dancing, cabaret and art galleries on nearly

every deck. The Kulture Klash Art Show, curated by the Sullen Art Collective, posted a shocking yet electric array of artwork by artists such as Carlos Torres and Wendy Ortiz in the Sin Alley ballroom.

But perhaps what was most impressive about the Ink and Iron show was the fact that three floors in the Atrium Exhibit Hall inside the Queen Mary housed more than 280 tattoo



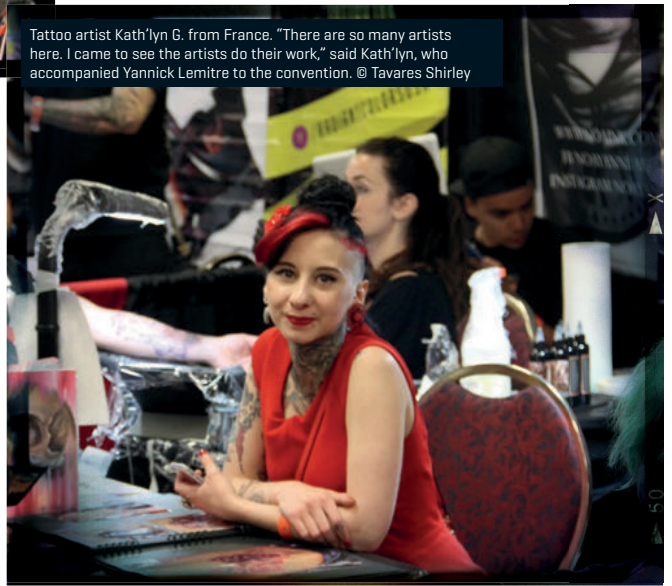
Tattoo artist Alonzo Villa. © Tavares Shirley



Representing west coast culture and the Queen Mary, these full body tattoos are by Bob of Bad Influence Tattoo in Fountain Valley, CA. © Tavares Shirley



This gentlemen as quite the ladies' man, as was apparent by the "lips" tattoo on his face. © Tavares Shirley



Tattoo artist Kath'lyn G. from France. "There are so many artists here. I came to see the artists do their work," said Kath'lyn, who accompanied Yannick Lemitre to their work. © Tavares Shirley



Event goer leg tattoo.

artists representing 30 states and 25 countries. High profile artists such as Nikko Hurtado and Roman from Artistic Element Tattoo were in attendance, tattooing alongside impressive up and comers such as Juan Teyer from Transitions Tattoo in Huntington Beach, CA, and Josh Payne from Ascend Gallery in Cortland, NY.

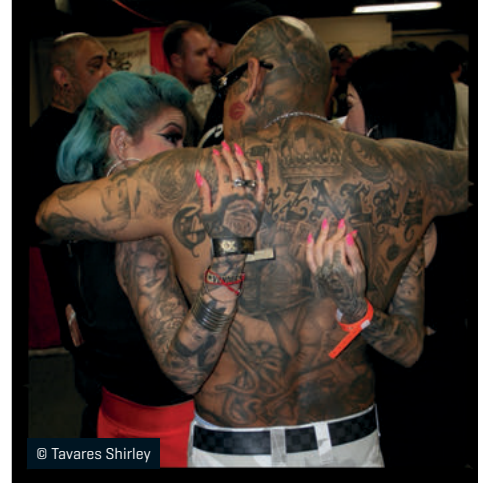
This year was the thirteenth and final year for the Ink and Iron show in Long Beach.



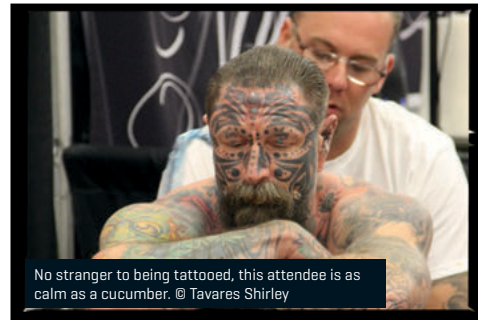
© Tavares Shirley



Pleasure Portal Cabaret dancer Trixie Minx as "Mata Hari." © Tavares Shirley



© Tavares Shirley



No stranger to being tattooed, this attendee is as calm as a cucumber. © Tavares Shirley



Pleasure Portal Cabaret dancer Perle Noire as "Nefertiti." © Tavares Shirley



"Monkey business" tattoo by Fabian De Gaillande from The Black Mark tattoo studio in Melbourne, Australia. © Tavares Shirley



Many builders brought their best whips to show at Motorama, the Kustom Kulture car show at Ink and Iron in Long Beach. © Salvador Maltbie



Many pinup beauties took their turns posing with various hot rods at the Motorama Kustom Kulture car show. © Salvador Maltbie



© Tavares Shirley

Next year, Ink and Iron will be switching gears to Art Gathering LA. With more art galleries, tattoo artists, cars and vendors, Art Gathering LA will be every bit as precedent-setting as Ink and Iron, only there won't be as much music. Meanwhile - here's what happened while the sun was out. ▣



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Fluffy Hell

As the sixth season of Ink Master kicks off with a new twist, pinning masters against apprentices, we decided to catch up with one of the show's most intriguing contestants to date: The Queen of Fluffy Hell herself, Lydia Bruno...

@LydiaBruno
www.blacklotustattoos.com

Describing herself as someone who is “never going to stop chasing her dreams, passions and vision”, Lydia Bruno is one of those tattooers who lives, breathes—and probably dreams—art.

“I am a slave to my ideals and art,” she declares. “And I am perfectly content chasing these hungry ghosts through any dimension they choose to pull me through. I am here to change the world through art and innovation and I will not stop pushing the limits and boundaries until I decimate every shackle and wall trying to hold me down. There are no limits to what we can do if we just step out of our comfort zone and take a giant leap of faith into the unknown!”

Bruno knows all too well about diving into the dark, something she did in front of millions of prying eyes



during the explosive fourth season of hit Spike TV show Ink Master.

“I did not ask to be on Ink Master”, she admits. “I was selected by a producer and asked to be on the season and the audition process began. It was a very compartmentalised and secret string of events and tasks that we had to perform over a month, without knowing if we would be on the season or not until the very last moment. It was gruelling and stressful, but a good way to weed out the irresponsible, weak and unmotivated.”

“Just getting through the screening process felt like a competition all on its own!” Then came the call to appear on the live show. “I knew when I received the contract that I would either do it or not,” says Bruno. “I did not read it at all—I jumped in head first and never looked back.”



There are no limits to what we can do if we just step out of our comfort zone and take a giant leap of faith into the unknown!

AND SO IT BEGINS

Tattooing herself with a needle thread at age 12—"I thought nothing of it, I was just making art"—it's safe to say that Bruno has had a lifelong love affair with tattooing, even if she didn't always think it would be her calling.

"I have always been an artist, but never aspired to be a tattoo artist in particular," she reveals. "Through a strange series of random events and coincidences, I literally just fell into an apprenticeship, and fell in love with the medium."

That's when the sacrifices started and her commitment was truly tested. "I gave up my career in psychology, which I was pursuing at the time, I lost my apartment, friends, relationships, my savings and almost my sanity working for free for 13 to 15 hours a day with

little sleep. I ended up living in my car during the apprenticeship in order to be closer to the shop!"

"After a year of paying my dues, I was thrown into the chair and had to figure it out for myself," she continues. "I learned what I could from the artists around me, but knowledge is precious and not easily given to a new artist or apprentice. I had to fight and struggle for every bit of wisdom and cherished it, as I learned my craft from scratch and by trial and error."

Being a woman didn't make the task any easier. "When I first started, it was a major handicap to be female," says Bruno. "A lot of the men wouldn't even think of letting a girl tattoo them—that was 10 years ago when Kat Von D had just broken into television."

LONDON TO BALTIMORE

Growing up in London, Bruno moved to the United States with her family, then went on to travel back and forth between Europe and the U.S. throughout her youth. "I find the

Life Lessons

I have learned that the majority of people will do anything they can to take anything from you. I find solace in the few I know and trust who do not fall into that wretched category.



difference hard to put into words, but I find that across the pond, people are more tolerant, open-minded and free," she says, which brings us to her motto: Burn your own path.

"Since I can remember I always did things my way, took chances and risks and did it all for the love of whatever passion was driving me at the time and did not think twice about it. I would rather cut my own path through the unknown forest full of danger and mystery than follow the sheep to unknown, mindless slaughter."

It's this approach to life and tattooing that made her a fan favorite on *Ink Master*, despite the challenges.

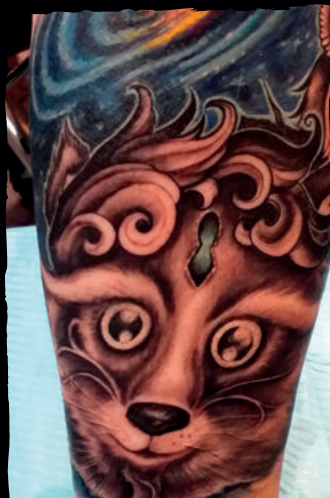
"It surprised me how gruelling the majority of it was," Bruno says candidly. "We faced sleep deprivation, time deprivation, food deprivation, and mental, emotional and physical stress like we never thought possible in this setting. You have to realize that on top of it being a competition, it was also a TV show and had to be filmed, so we would work

through the production part for hours upon hours before we even started our tattoo part of the competition."

Even harder was "being timed and judged on your art with little or no way to defend yourself. You are at the mercy of the producers and how they choose to edit and present you." Something Bruno experienced first-hand when she was eliminated during the black and grey challenge, which just so happens to be her specialty, during the eight episode.

"I absolutely did not deserve to go home that day," she says boldly. "I was not even supposed to be up for elimination, but I made Sausage upset and because he had won the previous challenge, he had the power to send someone down and he sent me out of spite. The others were sent down by the judges and

Just getting through the screening process felt like a competition all on its own!



I gave up my career in psychology, which I was pursuing at the time, I lost my apartment, friends, relationships, my savings and almost my sanity working for free for 13 to 15 hours a day with little sleep...

human canvas jury, but that's how the game is played, and I have no ill feelings about it."

"If given the opportunity to go back, I would not make the same mistakes and would 'play the game' with a bit more fire! I would be more confident and there is no doubt I would be in a better state of mind to do the best possible work I could."

FLUFFY HELL

Dubbed Fluffy Hell, Bruno's tattoo style is instantly recognisable and is something she's been perfecting throughout her career. "The name was born when I was a teenager," she explains. "It was just always a phrase I threw around, playing on the dichotomy be-

tween light and dark. How something can be cute and dangerous at the same time—good and evil—that whole idea always intrigued me. It's a play on 'heaven and hell' simplified."

Now that she's no longer showing off her talents on the small screen, Bruno has joined good friend and fellow Ink Master contestant Halo at his shop, Black Lotus Tattoo, in Baltimore where she's "been on a massive learning binge."

"My style is evolving, improving and changing. It is exciting to me—I see everything with new eyes!" she admits before breaking down what a typical 24 hours in the life of Lydia Bruno look like: "Work, work, work, work, more work, art, boxing, and sometimes sleep," she laughs. "Goodnight!" ▣

Kyle Dunbar vs. Chris Nunez
The moment when Kyle Dunbar was disqualified from Ink Master due to a physical altercation with judge Chris Nunez "was crazier than shown on TV. It started days before and a lot of the dialogue that wasn't shown would drop your jaw. It was an intense fight and definitely shook me out of the flow of competition."

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AN EYE IS UPON YOU

SPORTING CHANCES

The following is an extract from an email I recently sent to the Head of Leisure Management at Trafford Community Leisure Trust:

Hello! I'm one of your 'end users', a regular customer at one of the 8 leisure centres you oversee. In fact, I use the centre so often that the staff joke that I'm in more often than they are. Your local competitors, are cheaper, bigger, and have newer equipment but I'm not tempted to stray due to your excellent team and overall, I've been very content.

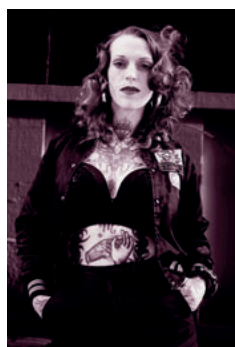
Lately though, I've been rather perturbed by what your staff are wearing. I'm not a huge fan of uniforms but I realise their usefulness in this environment. Uniforms help customers identify staff from different specialist areas and ensure everyone is complying to best health and safety practice.

What concerns me is the recent appearance of items that aren't standard issue, long sleeved t-shirts worn under uniform shirts, random neoprene sleeves and sports band-aids. It's obvious these items are intended to conceal staff member's tattoos, and I've been told they are compulsory despite being unconvincing, and not remotely smart.

I have a vested interest in this issue, of course, as well as being a loyal customer, both individually, and with my family, I also happen to be extensively tattooed. I don't spend much of my day-to-day drawing attention to my decorated skin, it's simply a fact of my life but I cannot conceal my tattoos easily, as I have them on my hands, my neck, even my ears and forehead. This has been a deliberate, conscious decision, and one that took many years to reach—almost two decades. Outside I am mostly covered but at the gym and in the pool my tattoos are clearly visible, and the staff and other users of the leisure centre probably see more of my skin than anyone. They take it in their stride and I pass largely unnoticed. Occasionally, other centre users ask for tattoo artist recommendations and my bright colours are a big hit in the baby pool, but mostly the surface of my body is allowed to just be, while I work on what's underneath it.



Kat Wilson



PAULA HARDY KANGELOS
DiamondBetty

OCCASIONALLY, OTHER CENTRE USERS ASK FOR TATTOO ARTIST RECOMMENDATIONS BUT MOSTLY THE SURFACE OF MY BODY IS ALLOWED TO JUST BE, WHILE I WORK ON WHAT'S UNDERNEATH IT

I've always felt completely welcome, exactly as I am, so it surprises me that your team's tattoos are not afforded similar acceptance. Don't get me wrong, I'm not campaigning for blanket tattoo-equality in the workplace, tattoos are a choice and thus (rightly) not a 'protected characteristic'. It's unlikely that visible tattoos will ever be welcomed in a number of professional roles but fortunately those roles usually demand formal dress sufficient to conceal most tattoos anyway, and



tattooed doctors, lawyers and bankers still most definitely exist so there is little need for protest. However, in your industry, sports and leisure, it's a very different picture.

The gym I use is nestled in the shadow of Manchester United's Old Trafford ground. I'm not a football fan but I live in one of the greatest footballing cities in the world, and I have learned to appreciate football culture as one of many facets that make our city sparkle. Here, MUFC (or indeed MCFC) players are inspirational role models for most sport-loving young people, the very people that make up much of your current and future workforce. United have even contributed equipment to the gym itself, they are everywhere.

I wonder then, if it surprises to you to hear that approximately 25% of regularly appearing Manchester United players in the 2014-15 season had tattoos that would show if they were wearing a Trafford Leisure uniform? Our National Rugby and Cricket teams also feature extensively tattooed players, and many of our 2012 Olympic medalists are tattooed too. Heck, we've even seen tattoos peaking out of the formal costumes of competitors on Strictly Come Dancing.

In the last month I have encountered a dental receptionist, a police officer and a bank teller with all with full tattoo-sleeves, and shopped in an Apple Store branch where a reported 35% of the staff have tattoos that can be seen throughout their working day. The competitors gyms I mentioned earlier? Yes, you've guessed it, they have visibly tattooed staff too.

When I walk into your centre, and see a tattooed staff member wearing a hot, sweaty, unnecessary accessory, it makes me, an extensively tattooed customer, feel less valued, less comfortable, less like I belong. I bet being told to cover up makes your team feel similarly. You have excellent staff, staff to be proud of, so be proud of all of them, even the tattooed bits. ▣



Dickie de Wit

Whether you're looking for an additional artist for your studio, a house manager or are selling an established business lock, stock and two smoking barrels, these free streamlined classifieds ought to get the ball rolling. Send your needs to Jazz Publishing, 1 Marcher Court, Sealand Road, Chester CH1 6BS, or email them into: editor@skindeep.co.uk

For Sale: Tattoo Business in Chestnut, Hertfordshire, established for 22 year. Long lease, and a great regular clientele. Owner wanting to retire so any sensible offer considered. Call 01992 630313 or Mobile 07775 671551 or email us at black.scorpion@btconnect.com

Experienced body piercer required at Bournemouth Ink, Dorset. A busy Tattoo and piercing studio based on the South Coast looking for a fully qualified, competent body piercer to join us full time. Must work well as part of a team, be reliable and have a good attitude. Will be working on a self employed basis in a modern town centre studio. For further enquiries please contact us on 01202 297290 or email info@bournemouth-ink.com

The Sharp Practice is a large studio in Salisbury, situated in a prime position in the city centre. We are a large family run studio, with a combined 80 years of tattooing experience. We have a fantastic opportunity for a talented experienced artist with dedication, flare and enthusiasm to join our team, either on a part time/full time basis or guest artists needed. We have six unique artists specialising in portraits, freehand and custom tattoos as well as tattoo removal & semi-permanent makeup. Check us out, www.sharppractice.com, facebook.com/thesharppractice, Instagram- THESHARPPRACTICE If interested contact us on 07806783854 or send us your portfolio on Facebook.

Experienced Tattoo Artist Wanted! Shakespeare Ink in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire are looking for an experienced tattoo artist. They are looking for an established, highly-skilled professional artist who is passionate about their career and has a minimum of 3-5 years studio experience. You must have a current and strong portfolio, have your own clientele, hold excellent customer service skills and have a friendly, positive attitude. You also must be able to self-promote and draw and tattoo in all styles If you think you have what it takes to join their successful team, please email teamb77@outlook.com Do include a link to your portfolio and a description of your experience and contact information. References may be requested to verify experience. Sorry, no apprentices.

New Artist Wanted - Folklore Tattoo Studio, Tamworth We

are looking for a new artist to join the Folklore family! If you are interested and want to arrange an interview or for more information please send your portfolio to folkloretattoos@live.com. Any questions or queries don't hesitate to contact us on the email or call us 01827 768446

Steel Beauty is looking for a tattooist to join our friendly team in Gants hill, Essex 3-5 days a week. Minimum 5 years experience with a considerable up to date portfolio. Should be proficient in custom work as well as walk-in flash work. Must be reliable with a good attitude. To arrange an interview contact the team @ steelbeauty@hotmail.com.

1-2 tattooist required for a very busy shop in essex with immediate start. Please contact us on 01268 772884 or narcissismtattooostudio@hotmail.com

Turnkey tattoo studio for sale south Leicestershire , the shop is regularly represented at tattoo conventions, has over 3000 Facebook followers ,magazine featured artwork and a strong existing client base. Serious enquiries only, leave contact details on 07849 489063.

Rites and Rituals tattoo studio are looking for an apprentice! We are looking for someone who is 18 years old or over, reliable, dedicated and mature. Strong, fundamental drawing skills are crucial! Must have good customer service skills, confidence and must be a quick learner. No alcohol or drug problems. Please e-mail your portfolio over to shop@randrtattoo.co.uk or call us on 07746 281 642 to arrange a date for you to come down to the shop.

Big Dog Tattoos is offering a fantastic opportunity for a talented tattoo artist to join our team at our studio based in harlow . This is a self-employed basis with a part-time or full-time position. Tattoo artist requirements: at least two years experience in a tattoo studio. Must have own clientele. Excellent communication skills and customer service . Motivated and creative. Please get in contact for more information, call us on 01279 420388 or email us at bigdogtattoos@mail.com

All details correct at time of going to press. Adverts cannot be taken over the phone. Please include your full studio details even if they are not to accompany the wording.



Craigy Lee: No longer 'man about town', but 'man just about as far away from town as you could ever be'. Is life really so different on the other side of the world?

Cleanliness is a huge part of tattooing, you've heard me bang on about it before, and this probably won't be the last time! In both Australia and the UK I have had to undertake an inspection to receive a license, I've always said that our studio is as clean as a doctor's surgery. I read some interesting facts online at nerdgraph.com this week that I thought I would share with you. In the United States since 1985 there has been no recorded cases of the transmission of HIV or Aids through tattooing. In that same time there have been seven recorded cases in dentist offices. Pretty mind blowing when you think that dentists train for years and have to go through university, while tattoo artists don't.

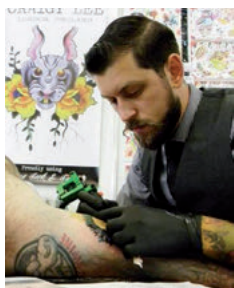
Hepatitis however is a far greater risk, (Pamela Anderson contracted the disease from apparently sharing a tattoo needle with an ex lover) with 43 cases recorded from dentists but only 12 cases recorded from tattoo studios. Maybe it's the fact that most artists use pre-sterilised needles these days and a large portion also use pre-sterilised tubes. One thing that's benefitted from the growth of the tattoo industry is how readily available and cheap pre-sterilised single use equipment is. China seem able to manufacture anything for pennies these days!

However it's still worth asking before you get tattooed. Even though you may feel slightly silly, it's *always* worth asking your artist to open the sterile needles and tubes in front of you.

Got a topic or issue you would like me to discuss? Well drop me a line: craigylee@skindeep.co.uk or find me on instagram @craigy_lee

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Whilst I was back in the UK last month, I did a short stint at Ink Pot Tattoo with Chris Hatch, an old friend of mine who I used to work with in London. Chris has a little shop in Aldershot, a town with a long history of tattooing. There are around five studios in the town, which is pretty small, yet I was amazed at how many people are actually doing their research online and finding the right artist for their style of tattoo. It was a refreshing



CRAIGY LEE
electric_gent

I WAS AMAZED AT HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY DOING THEIR RESEARCH ONLINE AND FINDING THE RIGHT ARTIST FOR THEIR STYLE OF TATTOO

change compared to the last time I worked in good old Blighty and I hope it continues as people get more switched on and educated about what a good tattoo is.

XED LE HEAD ILLNESS

Some of you may have read online this week that Xed Le Head has contracted a severe medical condition that has left him unable to move his arms or legs, and forcing him to retire from tattooing. Xed pretty much led the way for dotwork tattooing as we know it today. He has given a lot to the tattoo industry so maybe now it's time to help him in return. The NHS budgets are unable to provide the specialist equipment to help with his rehabilitation, so if you can donate something to help, it would be greatly appreciated.

Donate at - www.gofundme.com/z8kvk4

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OLLIE TYE | **LAUREN HANSON**



This month I've been wondering about whether you can give the gift of ink...

I'm currently working on a full sleeve of my mum. It's traditional in style, with a pagan witch face, various tarot cards, a raven and roses. She turned 60 this year and so I wanted to give her, as one of her birthday presents, a tattoo of her on my body.

She's been a pagan witch for 40 years and it's a central part of her life and identity. Many of the life lessons I have picked up from her over the last 27 years are associated with her love of all things magical.

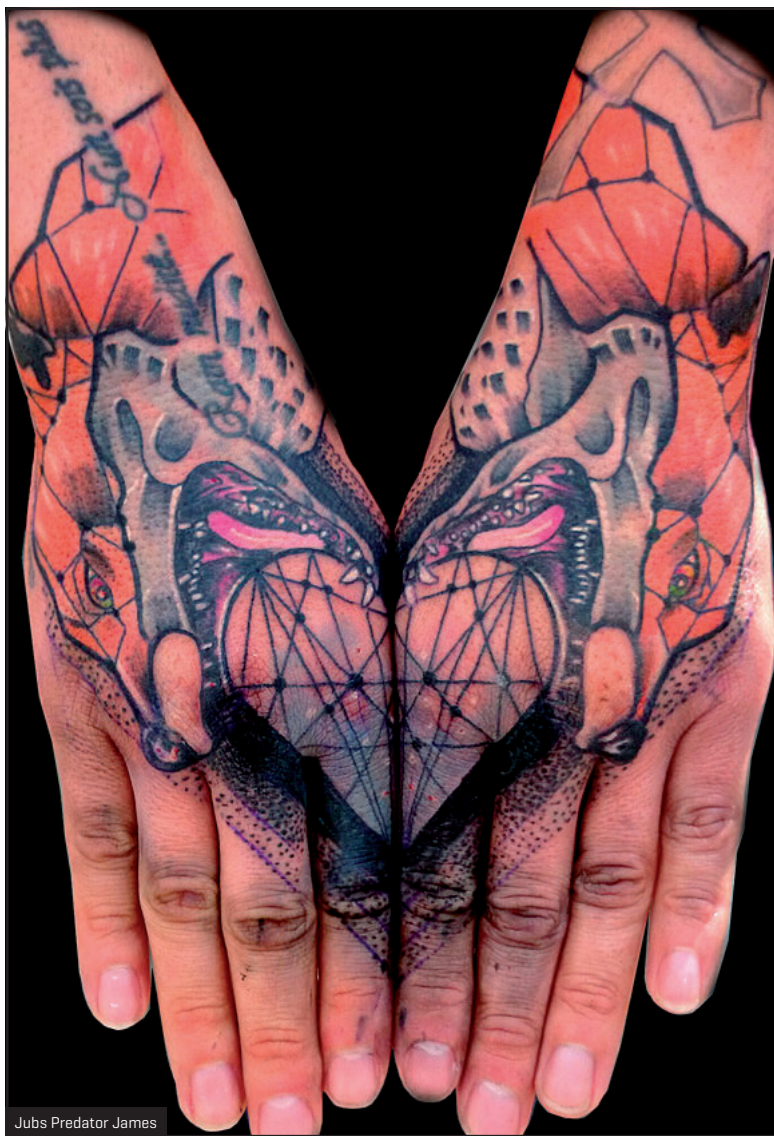
I was brought up to always believe in myself, believe in what I wanted to achieve, love my surroundings and those around me. The views of your parents definitely rub off on you and affect the rest of your life... they've got to be worth being the subject of a pretty awesome tattoo.

I'd mentioned to someone that as well as buying my mum lots of other birthday presents, the tattoo of her was her gift too. They just couldn't get their head around the fact that I'd called it a 'gift'. It's on my body, so surely it's for me? It got me thinking, can we tattoo ourselves as a present for loved ones, or is it just a lame excuse to justify spending money on new ink?

I considered this further by imagining how I would feel in her situation. How would I react if a friend decided to dedicate one of their limbs to things that reminded them about me? Actually, I think I'd be pretty stoked. But I'd also be quite gutted to not see it as much as I would if it was on my own skin. So it can't really be a present for me, can it?

When we're in the tattooed world and we get inked frequently we can forget what a big deal the whole thing is. The pain, the money, the time. But we still go through it all, because we're attracted to the whole process of what we're putting ourselves through physically, emotionally and mentally. I realised these were the "gifts" I was trying to communicate, rather than the final physical image.

I seem to have been all about gifts recently – in the magazine last month I expressed my gratitude after taking away something very special at the Great British Tattoo Show. It wasn't so much the physical present I was



Jubs Predator James



BECCY RIMMER
BeccyRimmer

MAYBE NOT ALL GIFTS NEED TO BE FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER

handed, but the feeling of strength and self-empowerment that had since aroused from my experience there.

The tattoo of my mum obviously wasn't just for her – it was just as much for me. I can look at that image of her forever and that gives me some sort of happiness. Maybe the gift can be for both of us. Maybe not all gifts need to be from one person to another. And maybe not all gifts are wrapped in a bow.



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