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FREE INSIDE



14 TOP PORTFOLIOS

JOVANKA VUCKOVIC PRESENTS

CLIVE BARKER, CHET ZAR, MIKE MIGNOLA AT THE TELL TALE HEART

TAKAHIRO KITAMURA EXHIBITS SAMOA AT ITS FINEST

RED HOT STUDIO TIP CULT XIII TATTOO

CURRENTLY IN BLOOM FLORAL TATTOOS

LIFE BEHIND A LENS WOMEN WITH TATTOOS

SCENES FROM WROCLAW TATTOO

IT'S OUR 22ND BIRTHDAY!

THE BLACK PARADE LEA NAHON

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SATURDAY NIGHT
& SUNDAY MORNING

MUSTARD GAS AND A FRIEND OF A FRIEND

Something happened this week. I bumped into a friend of a friend of somebody who is no longer a friend because the friend got too friendly with my friend. Something like that anyway.

She was showing me her new tattoo which was absolutely a tattoo of much value. Original design, well executed, nice placement—blah, blah, blah—it ticked so many boxes it was practically a questionnaire. When we met, she happened to be with her friend, who I knew because she is also a friend of my daughter’s friend. I saw that she was tattooed as well but with some rough looking text running across her shoulder.

It wasn’t fantastically delivered script but as is always my way with text tattoos, I need to know what they say. What is it that you must have written in words that a picture cannot say in a thousand like they promised us?

What it said was this: *“Your wings were ready but my heart was not”*.

It’s a tattoo I’ve seen a thousand times before and will probably see another thousand before the year is out, but never much thought about before. The key here is that I knew her history—a few years back, her mother died of a truly horrible wasting disease. Surely the worst death imaginable is the one in which Death comes for you like a creeping vine you can see.

She would have only been about fifteen and as she turned eighteen—which was this year—she went straight out and got this tattoo dropped onto her shoulder.

I don’t cry often. I cried at the end of *Marley and Me* but so did Rob Zombie so that makes it OK. I cried on the day I fell out of a tree into a thorny bush face first and I cried when The Doctor left Rose on the beach too, but over a tattoo? This was a first for me.

Why the fuck are my eyes leaking?

This tattoo meant the whole world to her. It was all that was left of the most important thing in the world to her—which morphed it into the most heartfelt tattoo I had ever come across. As much as it pains me to admit



Ed Zlotin

WHAT IS IT THAT YOU MUST HAVE WRITTEN IN WORDS THAT A PICTURE CANNOT SAY IN A THOUSAND LIKE THEY PROMISED US?



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it, occasionally the reasoning behind a tattoo is so important, you would be the Asshat of the Universe to even think about questioning its artistic merit.

As much as I will forever preach about how all of human life should Get Good Ink and promote that ethos until the sun falls from the sky and burns the hair from the back of your hand, sometimes, getting a tattoo itself can mean so much that it’s OK to get what’s possible and not what you should. ▣

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STUFF**



18 SECRET DIARY OF A TALL GIRL
 This month, Paula Castle steers herself North of the Wall towards Scotland to spend her guest spot wisely at Venus Ink.

22 THE TELL-TALE HEART
 A writer, director, horror aficionado and tattoo collector, Jovanka Vuckovic is about as talented and badass as they come. Her short film, *The Captured Bird*, was shown at over 50 international film festivals. She's since released two more shorts and found time to bring an Edgar Allen Poe-inspired tattoo studio/art gallery to life.

30 LEA NAHON
 Sailing with raw lines, Léa Nahon intertwines raw eroticism with

spontaneous instants in her universe, transposed all the way from her sketchbooks to her clients' skin. Over a passage on her rowboat, the 'blackworker' tells us about her Belgium, her experience and her future projects which are just like her: unique and authentic.

58 PERFECT STRANGERS
 The last few years, photographer Eleni Stefanou has been taking photos of tattooed women. Beccy Rimmer wanted to chat to her about her creative project, and why it's surfacing at an appropriate time in the tattoo industry.

64 TAKAHIRO KITAMURA
 Takahiro Kitamura has been sharing his passion for ink for many years.

After a successful show on Japanese tattooing, Takahiro recently curated his new exhibition 'Tatau: Marks of Polynesia' focusing this time, on Samoan tattooing which is set to open July 30, again in Los Angeles.

72 BEHIND THE INK
 Flowers: they've been a staple of tattooing for as long as anyone can remember, so what's the big attraction? Wayne Simmons digs deep in this month's Behind The Ink.

78 A CHANGE OF PERCEPTION
 This month Beccy Rimmer chats to a group of artists creating their own culture through their unique attitudes towards the industry and what they do. Welcome to Cult XIII.

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Artists so far...

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 Aaron Breeze
Aaron Clarke
 Abbie Morphew
Ad Van Thillo
 Adam Davey
Adam Thomas
 Adam Williams
Aitor Gazzoline
 Aga Mlotkowska
Agata Wnek
 Aleksandras Kuznecovas
Alex Hearn
 Akos Keller
Ale Final
 Alejandro Alba
Alessandro Cecco
 Alessandro Di Rosa
Alex Crook
 Alex Sacred
Alex Trowell
 Alex Underwood
Ali Burke
 Alvaro Pruneda
Amanda Ashby
 Amanda Greenidge
Amandio Silva
 Anastasis Karydas
Anatoli Todorov
 Andy MA
Andy McDonald
 Andrew Graham
Angelo Netz Netto
 Ania Jalouska
Anna Iafaca
 Arfon Horley - Davies
Armando Antonucci
 Arron Townsend
Arturas Dirma
 Ashley Goldfinch
Ash Lewis
 Audrey Selva
Bearfa Nemes
 Ben Mercer
Bernd Muss
 Billy Richards
Brendan Holliday
 Brian Hepworth
Bryony Holdsworth
 Butler
Callum Hollinshead
 Carlos Aguilar
Charlie Manger
 Charley McClelland
Chris Alcala
 Chris Burwin
Chris Sims
 Chris Vasileiadis
Chris Wright
 Christian Benzo
Christopher Slapsin
 Craig Biggs
Craig Cardwell
 Cris Baker
Damien Wickham
 Dane Burton
Daniel Cook
 Daniel Gram
Daniel McBride
 Daniel Park
Danilo Pitera
 Danny Cross

Danny Millberg
 Darius Niewczasz
Davey Sewell
 David Brace
David Caravantes
 David Chiefalo
David Muayayo
 David Robb
Daytona Williams
 Daz Darby
Divine Macabre
 Dariusz Vidziumas
Dominic Pirro
 Donatas Lasys
Ed Zlotin
 Edgaras Tkcenka
Edina Jaszberenyi
 Eddy Permanovis
Elena Mameri
 Emma Bundonis
Emma Mowbray
 Emma Willis
Emrah Gulen
 Eri Tanaka
Eric Borst
 Erikas Bulanovas
Esteban Arias Jimenez
 Federico Amaterasu
Fernando Galindo
 Flaco Cruz
Fuimix
 Gabbie Vasquez
Gabor Zsofingecz
 Gabriele Chiarini
Gabriele Lase
 Gareth Way
Gary Chase
 Gavin Clarke
Gavin Hackett
 Gavin Rodney
Gaz Rushton
 Gentle Jay Blondel
George Apostolopoulos
 Gergo Augusztiny
Gez Bradley
 Giangiacomo Radaelli
Giles Jenner
 Gina K
Giuseppe Orru
 Giuseppe Romanello
Glen Andreozzi
 Gonzalo Cuesta
Goorazz
 Griggy Smalls
Graham Ware
 Guy Anderson
Guy Fletcher
 Hannah Rose
Hannah Ruth
 Hayley Spear
Hiriam Casas
 Il Bue
Inky Joe
 Ionut Alexandru Botez
Ivan Yovkov
 Izzy Curran
Jacopo giff Menegazzo
 Jack Prince
Jake Docksey
 Jake Galleon
James Brown
 James Cook
James Taylor
 Jamie Blackburn
Jamie Braund
 Jamie Jones
Jan Sidirupoulos
 Jarek Slezak
Javi Del Valle

Jay Abbott
Jay Watson
 Jean Carcass
Jean Pierre Mottin
 Jeff Wharnsby
Jenny Clark
 Jenny Gasser
Jerry Burchill
 Jethro Bijlaart
Joe Mullan
 John Lewis
John Parker
 John Simkins
Jose Carlos
 Josefijn Jansson
Josh Dixon
 Josh Fisher
Joshua Young
 Josie Sexton
Juan Mellett
 Karena Lima
Karl Cooper
 Kat Bentley
Keith Samways
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Kevin Dony
 Kimi Duck
Koen Chamberlain
 Koit Tattoo
Konrad
 Kostas Kotsidis
Krzysztof Ozarowski
 Kyra Bak
Lauris Vinbergs
 Laura ' Larry Bee'
Lauren Roberts
 Lee Dobbs
Leeloo Deadmunch
 Lee Westwood
Leigh Coombs
 Leon Colley
Leseb Bing
 Lexx Black
Lindsay Williams
 Lorenz Odermatt
Lu Loram-Martin
 Lisa Elsom
Luca Fedato
 Luca Scuro
Lucasz ' Bam'
 Luke Cox
Luke Rushton
 Maciej Gulak
Mac McCarthy
 Marc Diamond
Marco ' Cif' Bezzi
 Marco Matarese
Marco Slo
 Marcus Stolz
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 Maria Fernandez
Marius Ciprian
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 Martin Marshall
Martin Pautsch
 Mateusz Starczewski
Matt Kaye
 Matt Pettis
Matina Marinou
 Maya Vavoom
Maz Arif
 Megan Louise
Melina Wendlandt
 Mick Tomo
Michael Gericke 'Haut'
 Michael Heal
Mike Wilkes
 Milly Macis

Mim Hennessy-Mann
 Miss Shiv
Miss Sucliffe
 Mitko
Mo Mori
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 Moska
Mowgli
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Nastia Zlotin
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 Nino Pasquarella
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Ruby Croak
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Ryan Lucas
 Ryan Scarpino
Salem
 Sam Butler
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 Sam Rowan
Samantha Stevenson
 Samma Charles
Sammy Inks
 Sanchez Santi
Sapo
 Sarah Aldridge
Sarah Loskill
 Sasha Wilkinson
Sean Lysaght
 Seb Kastor
Sini Manu
 Slav Salata
Sonny Mitchell
 Sonia Clarke
Sonya Trusty
 Sorin Cacio
Steve Andrews
 Steve Herring
Steve Toth
 Stewart Ferguson
Stewart Fish
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Sven Rayen
 Sourgrapes
Swan
 Sydney Mahy
Szilard Ritzl

Szymon Gdowicz
Szymon Garbacz
 Tasha-Leigh
Tim Childs
 Tom Opilka
Tomas Olsauskas
 Tommy Farrow
Tomasz
 Tommy Gunn Gray
Tommy Starfire
 Toni Gwilliam
Tony Covey
 Umberto Salvatori
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Vicky Lou
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Jungle Tattoo Supplies
 Kind Hearts & Coronets
Konjac Sponge
 Lost World Clothing
Lovesick London
 Loyalty & Devotion
Massage The Senses
 Mermaids Grave
Motorcyclegifts
 Norse
Nedz Micro Rotaries
 Phantom Tattoo Supply
Rock A Pinny
 Rock n Rose Baby
Sharon Mckinley Designs
 Sirens & Rose Millinery
Skulls & Orchids
 Slackjaw Apparel
Spot on Caricatures
 Starline Lingerie
Starr Tattoo Supplies Ltd
 Stay Close Clothing
The Custom Cupcake Co
 Tattoos
Tattoo Equipment UK
 TMS Custom
 Trimamuth



DIAMONDS & DUSTERS **GIVEAWAY**

As part of our ever increasing drive to get our readers looking ship-shape for the summer, this issue we've come by some swag from the ever cool Diamonds & Dusters—modelled here by the always lovely Miss Annalieza—there's a package of all three items up for grabs and only one winner... model not included. Sorry about that.

If you fancy your chances, head on over to skindeep.co.uk/competitions—and get your details in there with the competition answer DIAMONDS.



INKWELL WATCHES

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INKWELL is a new watch brand inspired by tattoo art, which was created and approved by professional tattoo artists - and they have a great Kickstarter out there you might want to check out:

kickstarter.com/projects/inkwellwatch/tattoo

Here's a few words from George Roberts on his company:

"The history of our humble watch company starts with my grandfather, Rupert Inkwell, who had a little watch workshop in his days. He served in the army during World War II as a sailor and began to tattoo his fellow soldiers in the process. After the war he restored his watch business, but he still was carried away with tattoo art his entire life. I'm a tattoo artist myself and one day I visited grandfather's old workshop where I found a lot of tattoo sketches and several old and rusty hand-made watch cases, which later served as a prototype of INKWELL watches. All of this inspired me to create the watch brand dedicated to my grandfather, his interests and passions.

"That's when I gathered a group of like-minded persons and we started the development of INKWELL project. Our main goal was to transfer physical properties of tattoo onto leather straps, not simply make a beautiful but ordinary print. We've tried dozens of material types and technologies before achieved satisfying result - today our straps are the absolute manifestation of our idea!

"There are three timepieces in our first series. Each made of 316L stainless steel with an option of PVD coating and Ronda 763 swiss movement on board. Watch cases designed after the original creation of Rupert Inkwell, assembled and welded with his own hands. Our signature sturdy leather straps are created with unique embossing imprints which provide authentic depth and physical qualities to the image and coloured by hand. The packaging is a leather roll decorated in tattoo stylistics." □



CONVENTIONS

4TH KERRY INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

03-05 June 2016

The Gleneagle Hotel, Muckcross Rd
Killarney, Co. Kerry, Ireland
kerrytattooconvention.ie

NORTHAMPTON INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

04-06 June 2016

Northampton Saints Rugby Football Club
Franklin's Gardens, Weedon Rd,
Northampton NN5 5BG
northamptoninternationaltattooconvention.com

LEEDS INTERNATIONAL TATTOO EXPO

04-05 June 2016

Royal Armouries Museum
Armouries Dr, Leeds LS10 1LT
leedstattoexpo.com

STARFIRE TATTOO WEEKEND KEHL

04-05 June 2016

Stadhalle Kehl
Großherzog-Friedrich-Straße 19
77694 Kehl
Germany

KRAKOW TATTOOFEST

11-12 June 2016

EXPO Kraków
Galicyjska 9, 31-586 Kraków
Poland
en.tattoofest.pl

YORK INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

18-19 June 2016

York Racecourse
Tadcaster Rd York
York YO23 1EX
yorkinternationaltattooconvention.co.uk

17TH MIDDLETON TATTOO SHOW

24-26 June 2016

Middleton Rugby Club
Town's Park, Middleton, Co.Cork,
Ireland

TATTOO ART EXPO DUBLIN

02-03 July 2016

The Helix, Collins Ave
Glasnevin, Dublin 9
Ireland

SOUTHAMPTON TATTOO FESTIVAL

09-10 July 2016

The Ageas Bowl, Botley Road
Southampton, Hampshire SO30 3XH
southamptontattoofestival.co.uk

NY EMPIRE STATE TATTOO EXPO

15-17 July 2016

New York Hilton Midtown
1335 Avenue of the Americas,
New York, NY 10019,
United States
empirestatetattooexpo.com

POWYS CHARITY TATTOO CONVENTION

16-17 July 2016

Community Centre, Mount Lane
Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6EZ
powystattooconvention.co.uk

CARDIFF TATTOO AND TOY CONVENTION

23-24 July 2016

The Motorpoint Arena Cardiff
Mary Ann Street, Cardiff CF10 2EQ
cardiffattooandtoycon.co.uk

LASERS VS CREAM

A little while back we ran a story about a student out in Canada who swore blind he had developed a cream that could remove a tattoo - in a little update on that, Alec Falkenham (the man in question) recently inked a deal with a big pharmaceutical company (Cipher Pharmaceuticals)

Falkenham says with his cream soon to be on the market, the days of laser tattoo removal are numbered.

"Even if it's not this cream, there's one that's going to be right around the corner," Falkenham says.

Falkenham's bisphosphonate liposomal tattoo removal goes after the cells that absorb the tattoo ink, kills them and the blood sends in new clean cells to replace them.

With the deal now being struck, it's up to Cipher to get the product through clinical trials, develop a patent and mass produce it.

Personally, we reckon it's going to need a snappier name than the one it has now though.



NATURE IN ACTION

On our never ending search of the nether regions of the web (otherwise known as "lunch"), we came across Rit Kit who has made quite a name for herself by using nature itself as a template for her work - which has found a nice hook for itself by being called "Live Leaf Tattoos".

"I'm a nature lover, so most of my sketches are related to flora," the Ukrainian tattooer explains. "But the more I drew, the more I wanted something fresh and native, to feel the plants without any steps in between."

Searching for a more organic design process, she started dipping live leaves in tattoo stencil ink, pressing them directly on her customers' bodies. "We don't know the definitive look when we start, just the colours, the mood and basic shape. It's my favourite way to make tattoos, and I think the most natural. They're like botanical fingerprints on the bodies of other brave nature lovers."

You can reach here here: rit.kit.tattoo@gmail.com and see more of her work over on her instagram page at [instagram.com/rit.kit/](https://www.instagram.com/rit.kit/)

TATTOO ART EXPO TICKETS UP FOR GRABS

This issue, we have five pairs of weekend tickets to give away to the Tattoo Art Expo in Dublin that takes place 2-3 July. If you're looking for more info on the show, head on over to [facebook.com/TattooArtExpoDublin/](https://www.facebook.com/TattooArtExpoDublin/) where you can rummage through the artist list to your heart's content.

To stuff yourself and a friend (presumably) into the Magic Hat, simply head here: [skindeep.co.uk/competitions](https://www.skindeep.co.uk/competitions)—and drop your details in with the competition answer DUBLIN and we'll do the rest.



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3-liner 0,25 Art.No. E-MC03-L25L	•• 0,25 mm	7-magnum-se Art.No. E-MC07-R30L	••••• 0,30 mm	13-magnum-se Art.No. E-MC13-R35L	••••• 0,35 mm
3-liner Art.No. E-MC03-L30L	•• 0,30 mm	7-bp-magnum-se Art.No. E-MC07-R30LB	••••• 0,30 mm	13-magnum-se-bp Art.No. E-MC13-R35LB	••••• 0,35 mm
3-liner-bp Art.No. E-MC03-L30LB	•• 0,30 mm	7-shader 0,25 Art.No. E-MC07-S25L	••••• 0,25 mm	13-shader Art.No. E-MC13-S30L	••••• 0,30 mm
3-shader 0,25 Art.No. E-MC03-S25L	•• 0,25 mm	7-shader Art.No. E-MC07-S30L	••••• 0,30 mm	15-liner Art.No. E-MC15-L30L	••••• 0,30 mm
5-flat Art.No. E-MC05-F35L	••••• 0,35 mm	9-flat Art.No. E-MC09-F35L	•••••• 0,35 mm	15-magnum Art.No. E-MC15-M35L	•••••• 0,35 mm
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5-liner-bp Art.No. E-MC05-L30LB	••••• 0,30 mm	9-liner-mt Art.No. E-MC09-L30M	••••• 0,30 mm	15-shader Art.No. E-MC15-S30L	••••• 0,30 mm
5-liner-mt Art.No. E-MC05-L30M	••••• 0,30 mm	9-power Art.No. E-MC09-L40L	••••• 0,40 mm	17-magnum Art.No. E-MC17-M35L	•••••• 0,35 mm
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5-shader 0,25 Art.No. E-MC05-S25L	••••• 0,25 mm	9-magnum-se-bp Art.No. E-MC09-R35LB	•••••• 0,35 mm	23-magnum Art.No. E-MC23-M30L	•••••• 0,30 mm
5-shader Art.No. E-MC05-S30L	••••• 0,30 mm	9-shader Art.No. E-MC09-S30L	••••• 0,30 mm	23-magnum-se Art.No. E-MC23-R30L	•••••• 0,30 mm
7-liner 0,25 Art.No. E-MC07-L25L	••••• 0,25 mm	11-liner Art.No. E-MC11-L35L	••••• 0,35 mm	23-magnum-se-bp Art.No. E-MC23-R30LB	•••••• 0,30 mm
7-liner Art.No. E-MC07-L30L	••••• 0,30 mm	11-liner-mt Art.No. E-MC11-L35M	••••• 0,35 mm	27-magnum Art.No. E-MC27-M30L	•••••• 0,30 mm
7-liner-bp Art.No. E-MC07-L30LB	••••• 0,30 mm	11-shader Art.No. E-MC11-S35L	••••• 0,35 mm	27-magnum-se Art.No. E-MC27-R30L	•••••• 0,30 mm
7-liner-mt Art.No. E-MC07-L30M	••••• 0,30 mm	13-flat Art.No. E-MC13-F35L	•••••• 0,35 mm	27-magnum-se-bp Art.No. E-MC27-R30LB	•••••• 0,30 mm
7-power Art.No. E-MC07-L40L	••••• 0,40 mm	13-liner Art.No. E-MC13-L30L	••••• 0,30 mm		

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WAITING FOR THE SUN

Though being one of the most beautiful forms in the world, tattooing in Japan is facing what could be a decisive page of its history. Recently, several arrests and condemnations of tattooers in 2015 alarmed the tattoo community. To legitimise this 'authority', the police refer to an interpretation of an unadapted legislation with sentences of up to 20 days of jail and a fine of 300,000 Yen [around £1800] for the tattooer involved



After being sentenced last September, Taiki Masuda decided to fight for the recognition of the freedom to work as a tattooer, against the absurdity of the situation and for the necessity to set up an appropriate regulation for the practice of tattooing. Manuel Chillagano, spokesperson for foreign countries of the team of Taiki Masada, explains:

“The current situation in the Japanese tattoo scene forces many artists (even famous ones) to endure a lot of hardships. Core of the problem is a legal definition concerning the Japanese ‘Medical Practitioners’ Law’. Only licensed doctors are allowed to perform permanent cosmetic treatments; originally this law was a means to prevent beauty salons performing permanent make-up under questionable hygiene standards, but now the police are targeting tattoo artists as well. Obviously, no tattoo artist ever went to medical school and no doctor tried to obtain the skill set of a tattoo artist. The first artists affected by the police crackdown were members of Chopstick Tattoo in Osaka, who got arrested last year in August. Overall the police arrested 12 artists including Taiki.

“As far as Taiki’s trial is concerned, the second part of the pretrial conference procedure was held last March 4th. The trial itself will start at the end of the year - in October. This is only going to be the procedure of first instance: Whatever the outcome may be, there will be a second instance procedure, which will certainly take the

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whole next year. No matter if we win or lose this one, the case is probably gonna be taken to Supreme Court. Depending on whether we lose or win the trial, our plans for a tattoo legislation will be made harder or easier to realise, but we will move forward with them either way.

“Our goal is to have decision-makers review these interpretations and set up an official license system for tattooing to provide a high standard of hygiene and secure the development of tattoo culture. We are currently speaking with a member of the Parliament, Mr. Akihiro Hatsushika, with whom we are working on a Japanese version for official hygiene guidelines (based on a Dutch version). This is of course, only a small step in the right direction and unfortunately doesn't mean the guidelines are going to be made the base of new legal interpretation immediately.

“Considering the worrisome development in the Japanese Media in recent days – I mean the recent cases where top-notch journalist (e.g. Hiroko Kuniya) lost their jobs under the influence of Abe's political censorship - it's indeed rather astounding, how well the problematic situation is covered. There have been recently published articles prominently giving air to the voices of Japanese doctors who paint a cruel picture of tattoo hygiene and how the ink results in various forms of skin cancer.

“Mr. Hatsushika positively agreed to raise questions in the ordinary session concerning the tattoo problem within a meeting of the committee of Health, Welfare and Labor last March 9th. Essentially, he was talking about how regulating the practice of tattooing with the Medical Practitioners' law is unreasonable as it would violate the right to freedom of expression, which is protected by the Constitution of Japan. Tattoo artists would have to do their work in the underground and people who want to get tattooed in a safe environment would not be able to do so anymore. This is why he voiced his opinion about the need of a reasonable legal system for the practice of tattooing.

“In response, the Minister in charge of the Medical Practitioners' Law stated that while tattooing itself is a practice that violates a person's physical integrity and possibly has to be seen at least related to



medical practices, Japanese tattooing also has to be seen as a part of Japanese culture. He also agreed that it is important to further consult the public opinion, which means in other words; for our project, that he is going to consider the possibility of a license system for tattooing by investigating the matter of a legal system for tattooing.”

Can we help?

We're backed 100% by tattoo enthusiasts from all over the world, I haven't received a single piece of negative feedback. Everybody tries to help and reaches out for their Japanese brothers. We're currently working on crowdfunding campaigns, organising music events in Japan and an ongoing side charity campaign with interesting little perks (like t-shirts and wristbands) to choose from. We really need everyone to set in motion the Social Media train to reach our goal for the petition at change.org, so the best thing would be to reach out to very famous and prominent tattoo artists who could share our project on their social media pages and tag them with the hashtag #savetattooinginjapan. Especially sharing the petition and other information would help a great deal but unfortunately, our growing project will consume a not insignificant amount of money in the future, so taking part in our charity campaigns and ordering our charity goods would be really awesome. Tattoo artist or collector—there's plenty of food for thought in here for you. Give it whirl—you won't be disappointed. ▣

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by
Michael Villalobos



This month, we came across this uber-small tribute to Norman Collins. The human canvas is Ashley Marsh, a Sailor Jerry Brand Ambassador, who wanted to pay her respects to the late, great Norman Collins.

June 12th will be the day we honour the tattoo icon who passed away forty three years ago. The tattoo was created by Michael Villalobos (@Princess_LLamabutt) from Chapter One Tattoo in Ocean Beach, CA. He is currently an apprentice but totally rocked this black and grey mini portrait.

Do we need any more reasons than that? I don't think so.

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SECRET DIARY OF A TALL GIRL

Scotland. North of the Wall. We all know that's where it comes from. I try and guest in Scotland at least twice a year, I'm a firm believer that people should be willing to travel for a tattoo from someone they admire, it baffles me that people are happy to take a seven hour flight for a weeks holiday, but a two hour drive for a piece of art on you for the rest of your life is apparently too much work. Mental

That said, Scotland is big, and vast, dark and full of terrors, (no wait, sorry, wrong book) and getting a little closer for clients a couple of times a year is always appreciated.

This week I am working at Venus Ink in Dundee, a gorgeous appointment only studio with a fabulous team and a great reputation. There are some real gems hidden in Scotland. Incredible artists who don't get south of the border often and are booked up for months back home. Venus Ink is lucky enough to have three of those gems all in the same studio.

When I arrive at Venus Ink, I have my own room to tattoo in, with a speaker system and perfectly stocked cupboards. It's like my own little slice of paradise, beautifully decorated and modern. The receptionist Jude is on hand to grab coffee and help me settle in and Mike the apprentice is there to set me up and clean down after every tattoo which is a massive time saver. It might seem like an unimportant part of an apprenticeship, but it's actually one of the most important things to learn about properly. It's how we keep everyone safe and healthy.

Working alongside me here at Venus Ink, we have Cam

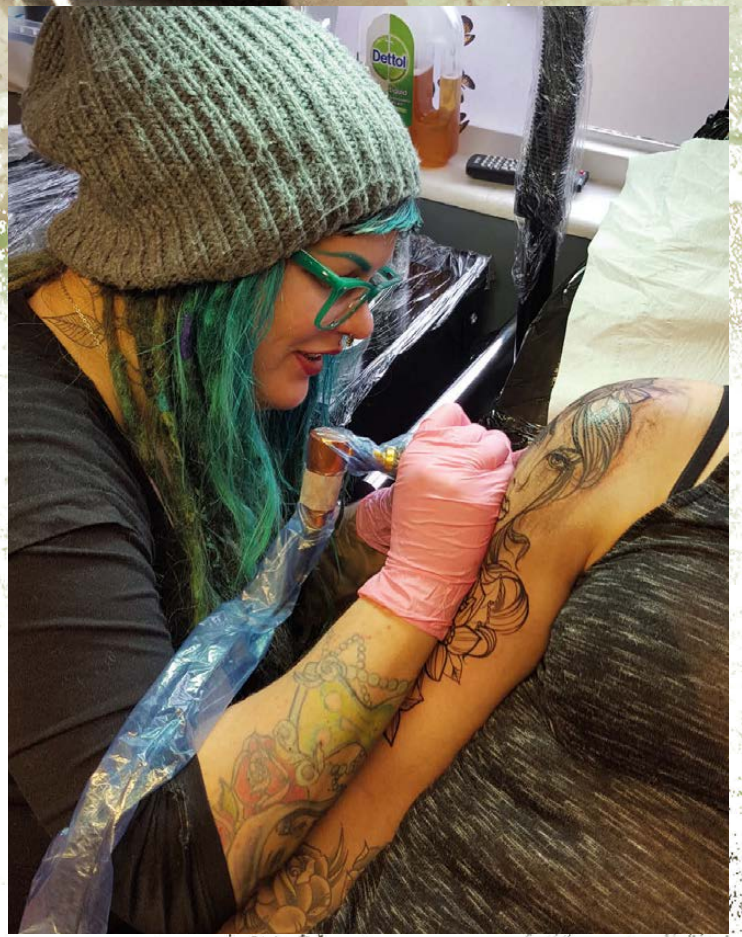


Lamley (@camlamleytattoo) a multi award winning black and grey realism artist who is probably the fastest tattooer I have ever met and the most Gangster Scotsman alive.

We also have the fabulous Leigh (@jaggyleightattoos) who has an incredible colour style all of her own, she is also a mind blowing oil painter. Last, but not least is Andy Joss (@andytat2) a brilliant all round tattooer who particularly loves to do abstract watercolour work. There's genuinely a huge amount of talent in this studio and sometimes that can feel a little over-

whelming or intimidating, but I always try to take the opportunity to learn as much as I can from every single person I get to work alongside.

Not having a base to work out of can be a little difficult at times and ordering new supplies is definitely a challenge all of its own but I've found that being able to order from Barber DTS and them adjusting my shipping address to wherever I'm next going to be has been something I can't live without. I arrived in Dundee to a big box filled with everything I was running low on and also a few new inks for me to try out, I used to spend my money on shoes and handbags. Now it's colours and tattoo machines.



One thing I have certainly noted on my visits to Scotland is that the clients are funny, kind and have incredible skin to tattoo

I get asked to do a lot of Disney tattoos, and I love them. I'm a huge Disney fan and have been since I was a little girl dreaming of Princesses, talking animals and huge castles. So when I'm asked to do slightly more unusual characters I tend to get very excited. I always want to do them justice, but also enjoy getting to post them on my social media (@paul-acastletattoos) and hear people remember them with fondness.

So when I got an email from Kirsty wanting a tattoo of Fidget and Basil, from Basil the Great Mouse Detective, I was over the moon. First time doing one, and I knew I could have a lot of fun with it. I'm really happy with how it turned out.

On this trip, I also got to meet and tattoo an amazing couple: Sophie and Vicky. I've tattooed a few unicorn girls now on people, and they are something I really enjoy so when I was asked to tattoo a gay pride unicorn girl with rainbow hair, piercings and lots of sass, I jumped at the chance. I think she's got some serious attitude about her and it was a hugely enjoyable tattoo to do.

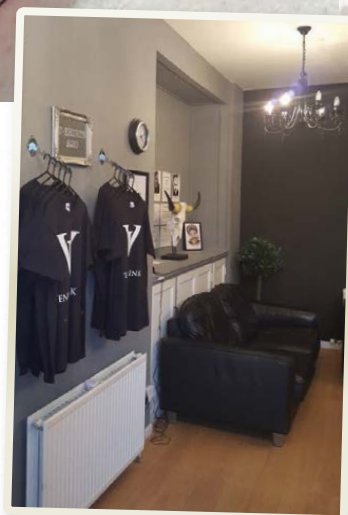
One thing I have certainly noted on my vis-

its to Scotland is that the clients are funny, kind and have incredible skin to tattoo, be that lack of sunlight, great Celtic genes or just an ability to withstand pain better than us Wildilings, it always makes for a brilliant result and a lovely experience.

One of the best parts about being at Venus Ink was the time I got to spend with Leigh. She is such an incredibly compassionate, driven and beautiful human being. I would probably say I am a feminist, although that term does conjure up images of some horrendous stereotypes and I suppose in a way that means I am not, in fact, one of them. However, getting to discuss some very pressing issues facing women in the modern world, and more specifically women in the modern world of dating and also tattooing was really insightful and valuable to me. I am very much about women empowering other women, and the ability to help with body confidence by tattooing people over scars, or body parts they wish looked different gives me such incredible joy and satisfaction I cannot even begin to put it into words. Every time I'm tagged in



Getting to discuss some very pressing issues facing women in the modern world, and more specifically women in the modern world of dating and tattooing was really insightful and valuable to me



a selfie with their tattoo, or the inevitable legs in the bath picture which shows their confidence and pride in that body, just leaves me beaming.

I absolutely despise body shaming. Hate it. In any form. I'm tall, I'm curvy, and I love my body, but it has taken me over 30 years to get there and I want to do everything I can to help others get there well before I did. Getting tattooed really does help so many learn to love the body they have, and the right imagery, placed in the perfect position can enhance and really accentuate the human form, which is a huge part of what makes a tattoo great... or not.

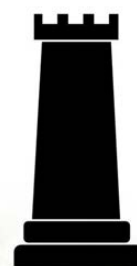
Placement is absolutely 50% of a good tattoo. So next time your artist advises you on moving something from one area to another, or which way up to have the design (huge eye rolling here) please, please do listen. This is what we're trained to do and our end goal is only ever to achieve the absolute best tattoo

we have ever done each and every single time we do one—and if that isn't the end goal of your artist, then you should find a different one.

If I was able to take away anything at all from this guest spot in Bonny Scotland, I would say it was the belief that we, as humans, be it artists, or clients, or anyone at all, really do need to go out into the world and be kind to one another.

Although so many of the things you see on the internet as inspirational quotes are a bit twee and cheesy, they tend to all shout roughly the same message.

Be kind to one another, you have no idea what the other person's struggle really is, and ultimately that scar they are having covered, or that tattoo they are having to remind them of something that they have overcome, is a huge milestone in that person's life, and should be treated as such by all involved. ▣





"Tell Tale Heart"
Travis Louie
acrylic on board
8"x10"
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The TELL TALE HEART



*A writer, director, horror aficionado and tattoo collector, Jovanka Vuckovic is about as talented and badass as they come. Her first short film, 2013's **The Captured Bird**, was executive produced by Guillermo del Toro and shown at over 50 international film festivals. She's since released two more shorts, screened at the Toronto International Film Festival and found time to bring an Edgar Allen Poe-inspired tattoo studio/art gallery to life*

Opened this past March, The Tell Tale Heart Tattoo & Gallery is the dream child of Jovanka Vuckovic and her husband, veteran tattoo artist Shane Faulkner. Taking its name from Edgar Allan Poe's famed short story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, the space pays tribute to all things horror and shines a light on the couple's deep-rooted appreciation for tattooing, film and literature.

We caught up with Vuckovic amidst the madness of opening month to learn more about the exciting new space, Clive Barker's impressive involvement in the gal-

lery's inaugural art show and what it's like working in the heart of historic Burlington, Ontario, Canada.

THE POWER OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

"I've always wanted to own my own dark art gallery," starts Vuckovic. "Shane has owned tattoo shops in downtown Toronto for more than two decades, so we started talking about combining the two when we moved to Burlington three years ago."

"Though it hosts the largest music festival in the nation and is situated right next to picturesque Lake Ontario and



a multimillion-dollar pier and boardwalk, Burlington is a bit conservative and snoozy. It needed more culture and was begging for something out of the ordinary on the historic main strip, so here we are.”

Before The Tell Tale Heart Tattoo & Gallery could open its doors, however, there were several hurdles that needed to be overcome, including “painfully quotidian stories that involved the City and permits.” But rather than going into detail about any of those, Vuckovic decides to share “the most entertaining story, which happened one night when Shane and I were alone in the shop. Amanda Marie, our friend and tattoo artist who has come to work with us, is a witchy kind of gal, so she wanted to smudge the place of bad spirits before we opened. I don’t really believe in ghosts anymore, but

I’m a fan of rituals, so I said ‘Sure.’”

“If there were spirits here, they didn’t like being asked to leave because suddenly, the electrical in the place went kablooeey,” she continues. “Shane’s power supply started showing a bunch of zeros, which it had never done in 26 years of tattooing; the printer began shooting out random pages, Maximum Overdrive-style, before crashing completely; Shane electrocuted himself on one of the outlets; our website went down; my laptop was saving everything I was doing in Photoshop as these weird colourised gestalts that made no sense. The energy in here was, for lack of a better word, electric, and not in a good way.”

Luckily, “when we came back the next day, everything was back to normal. Whatever Amanda may have driven out of here that night, it didn’t leave without having its say.”



It sounds like something straight out of an Edgar Allan Poe tale, which couldn't be more fitting, given the influence the author has had on The Tell Tale Heart Tattoo & Gallery.

"I've been a horror fan my entire life—it was my constant companion during my loneliest times," admits Vuckovic. "I used to be a horror magazine editor—also named after an Edgar Allan Poe story, incidentally—and I now write and direct horror films, so horror is in my DNA. I can't create anything, save for my kid maybe, that isn't borne of my lifelong love affair with horror. And since Shane also

has great admiration for horror films and literature, there was never a question that the shop would be horror-themed."

"What better fount of inspiration is there than the great Edgar Allan Poe?" she adds. "We chose The Tell-Tale Heart specifically because it evokes mystery, murder and madness. It's one of our favourite tales and a great starting point when it came to the design of our shop, which features maple wainscoting throughout, black-on-black flocked wallpaper, Victorian era picture rails, taxidermy, dead things in jars and, of course, human remains under the floorboards."

Jovanka Vuckovic's Tattoos—Part 1

Most of my own tattoos are inspired by films. I don't tattoo, but I'm lucky to have a lot of friends who are world-renowned tattooers, so I've been collecting them for a long time. I have a Blade Runner sleeve, which was done by Shane many, many years ago. It's my favourite film of all time.



**Jovanka Vuckovic's
Tattoos—Part 2**

I have a collection of classic horror portraits by Bob Tyrrell, including Lon Chaney, Boris Karloff, Elsa Lanchester, H.P. Lovecraft, Santi from *The Devil's Backbone*, the Pale Man from *Pan's Labyrinth*. Paul Booth did a venus flytrap on my hand as a Halloween present; I got a hanya on my other hand from Shige when I visited him in Japan; I have several pieces from Robert Hernandez, including a *Nosferatu*. Naturally, I have a Poe portrait, also from Shane.

THE UNION OF CANVAS AND SKIN

Fusing a tattoo studio with an art gallery may not be a new concept, but it is something The Tell Tale Heart Tattoo & Gallery does exceptionally well. Plus, it goes way beyond that. "We always envisioned opening not just a tattoo shop, but a creative space that celebrates our combined lifelong passions for art, literature and film," explains Vuckovic. "It's part art gallery, part custom tattoo studio, part museum of horror history. One feeds the other organically because the gallery and the tattoo studio are two iterations of the same impulse: To create art."

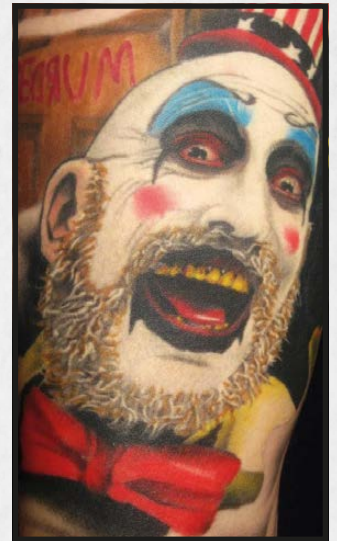
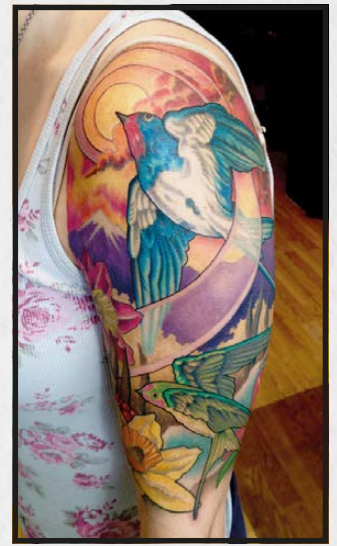
In addition to said art, there's another unifying factor; an undeniable parallel between the worlds of horror and tattoos.

"Horror has always been the red-headed stepchild of the film world and tattooing has held a similar position in the art world—both don't get the respect they deserve," points out Vuckovic. "We believe that fine art is

whatever the fuck you want it to be."

"When I was a kid, I never believed in God, but *The Exorcist* made me believe in the Devil—that's the power that horror films have. Like all horror fans, I became addicted to that first high of having the shit scared out of me and I've been chasing the dragon ever since. Guillermo del Toro once said that since we started huddling around fires, we have been telling stories about the dark and what lives inside it. Horror provides a safe place to exorcise those fears. From this perspective, watching horror films and reading horror stories is actually a perfectly normal and natural thing to do."

Which brings us to impressive Tell Tale Heart Inaugural Group Art Show. In addition to exclusive The Tell-Tale Heart-inspired works from Chet Zar, Travis Louie, Mike Mignola, Nat Jones and Daniele Serra, the gallery managed to snag five original paintings from Clive Barker.



“I did a cover story on him at the magazine and commissioned him to paint the cover for us,” remembers Vuckovic of her first encounter with the famed horror writer/director responsible for classics like *Hellraiser* and *Nightbreed*. “I told him how much I loved his singular feminist horror story *Jacqueline Ess* from the *Books of Blood* and that I’d love to adapt it into a film some day. Years later, I was staying at his house in Beverly Hills, collaborating with him on the script. A bit of a dream realised right there!”

“We are still in development on that project, it’s very ambitious, but it’s been so incredible to have his creative input on my adaptation of his story. When I was at his house, I felt dwarfed by the staggering amount of creativity all around me. He has stacks and stacks of massive paintings all over the place and all of these volumes of writing. He rarely parts with his art, and there is so much of it at his house, which is why I was so honoured he

said ‘Yes’ to sending up five pieces from *The Midnight Meat Train* series for our opening. It’s the first time a series of Clive’s originals have shown up here. A real treat for horror fans and art collectors!”

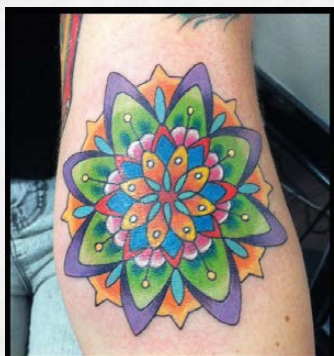
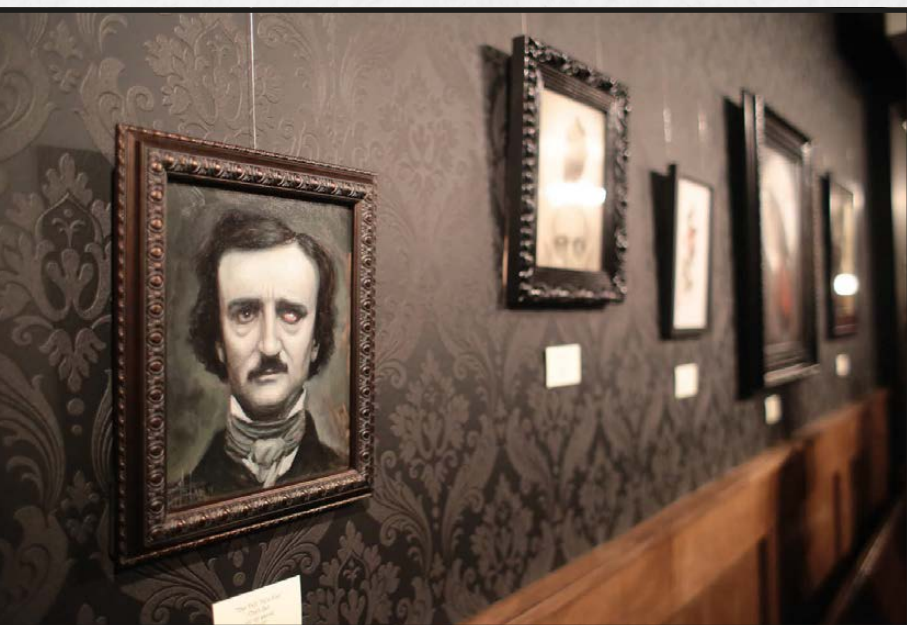
THE (INKED) ROAD AHEAD

On the tattoo side of *The Tell Tale Heart Tattoo & Gallery*, you’ll find veteran artist Shane Faulkner and local talent Amanda Marie who joined the team after the most prominent shop in town, *Anchors*, closed.

“In a beautiful bit of kismet, Amanda actually apprenticed under Shane 15 years ago at his shop, *King of Fools*, in Toronto, so we could not have been happier to have her come back to work with him,” says Vuckovic. “Timothy Leary said, and I’m heavily truncating here, ‘Nobody comes into your life by mere coincidence. Trust your instincts. Do the unexpected. Find the others.’ Amanda is most certainly one of the others.”

Jovanka Vuckovic’s Tattoos—Part 3

What else? A flaming pumpkin for Washington Irving, a character from a little-known Canadian horror film called *Deathdream*. There are all sorts of memento tattoos from conventions and travelling: Tim Kern, Jeremiah Barba, Kurt Wiscombe, Kat Von D, Sean Herman, Craig Helmich—there are too many to remember!



When it comes to blurring the lines between their personal and professional lives, Vuckovic admits that “doing something ambitious with your spouse is always going to be a strain, but for some reason we did okay. Just busted our asses until it was done. I even went to Berlin for the Berlinale International Film Festival for a professional development program in the middle of building. It could not have been worse timing, but I went and he stayed back and was a single dad while building the shop.”

“One of the things I love about him is his relationship with his ego,” continues Vuckovic. “He’s a superlative artist, but he doesn’t let his ego drive him to seek attention, admiration or confirmation from outside of himself. He’s his own man, an outsider even in the tattoo world. I deeply admire and respect his level of self-confidence and I think that’s what collaborating with your spouse comes down to: Mutual respect.”

In addition to everything that’s happening with The Tell Tale Heart Tattoo & Gallery, Vuckovic also has “a full-time job as a writer/director”, which means she’s “not around all the time and that probably helps!” she laughs.

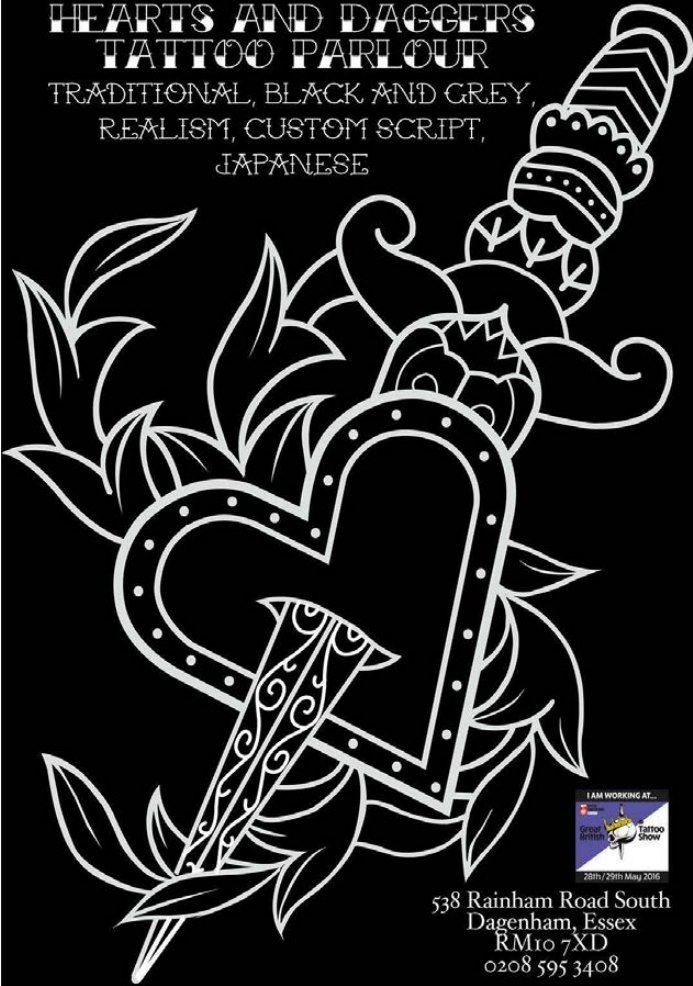
The ability to regularly consult each other

on creative decisions is also imperative to their success. “He has amazing instinct for casting and makes bang-on suggestions all the time,” says Vuckovic. “Likewise, he runs tattoo design ideas by me and we’ll tell each other honestly how we feel, which can sometimes be difficult. But no one’s doing anyone any favours by lying and we won’t progress as artists with deception.”

Later this year, Vuckovic’s anthology film, XX—“the first ever all-female horror anthology”—will be hitting the festival circuit and she’s “just received funding to write a feature film screenplay based on one of my own stories, All My Heroes Are Dead. I’ve been coming into the shop early when it’s empty and writing by candlelight. I must be channeling the murderer in The Tell Tale Heart because it’s the most violent thing I have ever written.” Edgar Allen Poe strikes again. □

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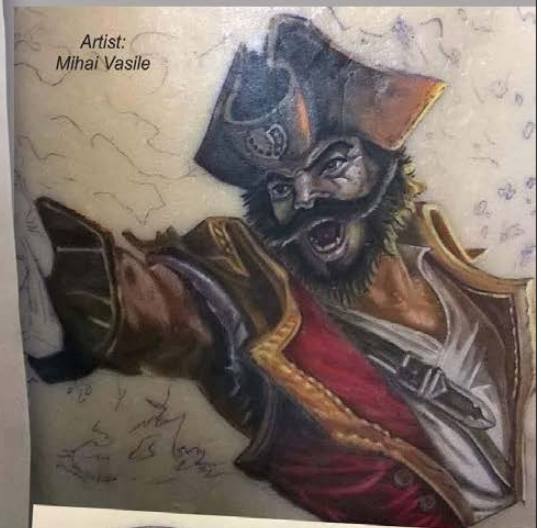


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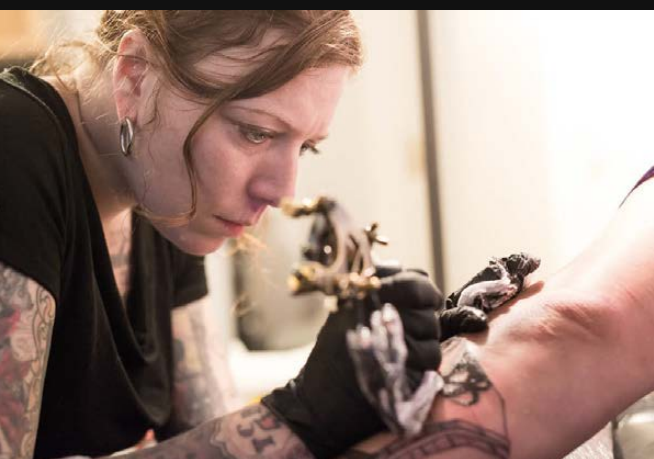


Artist: Jason Keene at Rawhide Tattoo Studio

www.reelskin.co.uk

YOU HAVE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE

Léa Nahon has been at the helm of her ship for fifteen years. Sailing with raw lines, she intertwines raw eroticism with spontaneous instants in her universe, transposed all the way from her sketchbooks to her clients' skin. Over a passage on her rowboat, the 'blackworker' tells us about her Belgium, her experience and her future projects which are just like her: unique and authentic:



YOU SEEM TO HAVE WITHDRAWN FOR A WHILE BEFORE YOU CAME BACK FULL POWER, IS THERE A PARTICULAR REASON FOR THIS?

Withdrawn may not be the right word for it, but I had to slow down indeed. I had been on the road for years, in trains, planes and cars, sleeping in hotels and on friends' sofas, never really taking it easy at home. I was tired. Tattooing demands constant work and being on the road is great but

I didn't have much time for friends and family. My mother had to book appointments with me to have lunch and my brothers and sisters were getting birthday presents via the Los Angeles post. It did not replace physical presence. So I decided to slow down. I stopped going to conventions for a year or two. I had to make a clear cut or else I would have made an exception out of every event. I re-discovered the pleasures of reading a book, watching a movie without drawing at the same time or going for walks. I also slowed down on appointments. I did not need to work that much, I was just scared of disappointing my clients. Tattoos and clients took priority over my relationships and even my health. One has to get out of the spiral to realise how mistaken they are. Since then I have started conventions again, I work less but better, and I have learned to take time for myself and my family and friends.

IT'S THE ROAD THAT TOOK YOU TO THE SKETCHBOOK AS YOUR INITIAL WORKING MEDIUM?

No, that's the heritage of the Boulle school





TATTOOING DEMANDS CONSTANT WORK AND BEING ON THE ROAD IS GREAT BUT I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY. MY MOTHER HAD TO BOOK APPOINTMENTS WITH ME TO HAVE LUNCH



(NDLR: The “Ecole Boulle” where Léa obtained her A levels in Applied Arts). The teachers made it compulsory to keep a sketchbook daily, we were given marks for it at the end of the month, so we better had to be assiduous. I got into the habit of doing it and since then I have never stopped. It started when I was fifteen, I have quite a collection at home! And it is indeed practical when you travel. Easier to grab on a train than an easel and oil paint!

THROUGHOUT YOUR SKETCHBOOKS AND TATTOOS, YOU GRASP INSTANTS THAT COULD BE FOUND IN NAN GOLDIN’S PHOTOGRAPHY OR IN EGON SCHIELE’S SELF PORTRAITS FOR INSTANCE, WHAT TOUCHES YOU IN THE WORKS OF THESE ARTISTS?

Their spontaneous aspect, precisely.



Goldon’s pictures freeze a moment that has not been chosen by the model, a bit like Schiele’s portraits, as if no one was posing, or as if the models were not aware that they were being pictured or drawn. I work from photos, and apart from pictures by Thomas Krauss and a few others, I use my own pictures as a basis. Which means my friends and family. I take pictures all the time, and some, which could look like bad pictures, give me a great working basis. It is the absence of pose that I liked in those two artists and that I reproduced without really realising.

I also like mistakes that lead to great things. But I have to admit that this technique is convenient, for tattoos in any case. If my client moves, no problem, we draw a line aside and here it is, it looks great! There is at least 50% of laziness, but I like the result better than if I were making it all polished, and my clients seem to appreciate it, so everybody wins!

YOU HAVE BEEN COLLABORATING WITH THOMAS KRAUSS FOR A WHILE, COULD YOU TELL US WHAT TOUCHES YOU IN HIS PHOTOGRAPHS AND WHAT NOURISHED YOUR COLLABORATION?

I met Thomas posing for him and seeing the result of his pictures with other tattooists. It’s weird, even though he asks people to pose, he still manages to obtain a spontaneous feeling, as if the model was about to say or do something. It is never frozen. I like it even more when he takes pictures on the spot, when he hangs out for hours until we don’t see him in the room and he comes back with fragments of life of which we were not aware. These pictures are hard to draw, but they are gold to me!



DO YOUR CLIENTS GENERALLY SEE THE INTENTION YOU HAVE PUT IN YOUR SKETCHES WHEN THEY CHOOSE A TATTOO?

No, that's precisely what I like. I never put a lot of intention in my drawings, there is nothing thought out, it all depends on the picture I find. That's why it's hard for me to follow a guideline for my drawings, because the theme does not really depend on me... If I see a picture pass by, whether it's in a book or online, and I like it (the angle, the person's expression, the position, etc...), I put it aside and I draw it. My clients sometimes find very deep things in my drawings because they remind them of something, someone, whatever it is. I prefer to let them come up with their own interpretation, their story will certainly be more interesting than mine!

WHAT'S YOUR OUTLOOK ON THE TATTOO WORLD AND ITS EVOLUTION SINCE YOU STARTED 15 YEARS AGO?

I come from the old school where you have to know how to do everything to survive in this job. A good tattooist should be able to answer all types of requests. We did not come to tattoos because it was cool and made money. It was rather the opposite. Years of cleaning without getting a cent, hours welding needles, inhaling acid fumes, doing the dishes, sterilising tubes, and after all that, hours of drawing, in all styles. No time to work on one's own style or draw one's desires. It was hard as hell, nothing to do with the glamorous side associated to it today!

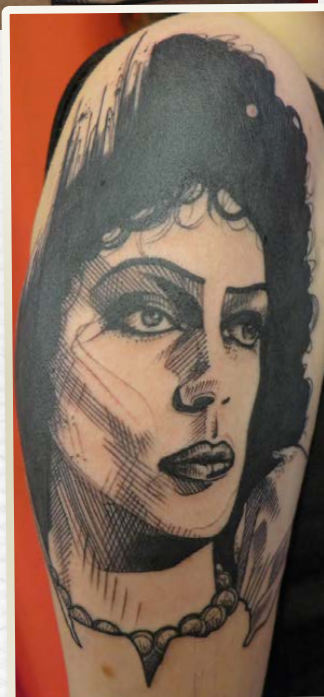
I'd like to think that I contributed to the fact that tattoo artists dare to get out of imposed codes and try new things on people's skin. I managed to develop this sketch "style"



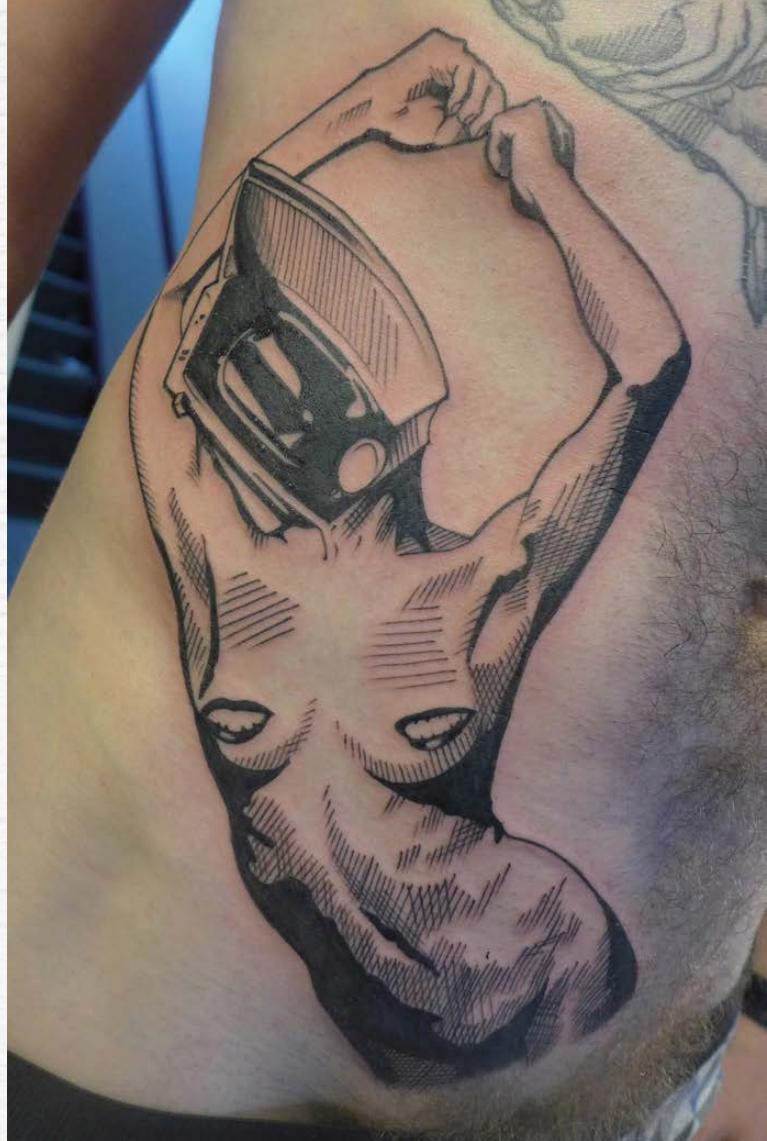
after having drawn a lot, after having studied various objects, animals and human bodies, in all styles.

I have only been tattooing my own drawings for two years. Colleagues like Yann Black and Joe Moo (to name but a few) are great designers, and they decided to come back to this clean style that we are familiar with. I think that a lot of young tattooists do what they know how to do and call that their style, out of disappointment rather than choice. But paradoxically, crazier and crazier styles come out of these new tattoo artists' work, ideas that nobody had before because they were too stuck in a "tattoo" set of mind, and I think this is great. I am surprised everyday by new things I see online and I ask myself what they will come up with next, how far it will go?

Tattoo has completely changed these past



THE TEACHERS MADE IT COMPULSORY TO KEEP A SKETCHBOOK DAILY, WE WERE GIVEN MARKS FOR IT AT THE END OF THE MONTH-I GOT INTO THE HABIT OF DOING IT AND SINCE THEN I HAVE NEVER STOPPED



I ALSO LIKE MISTAKES THAT LEAD TO GREAT THINGS-IF MY CLIENT MOVES, NO PROBLEM, WE DRAW A LINE ASIDE AND HERE IT IS, IT LOOKS GREAT!



ten years, but in a good way. And people get more and more tattoos because they were waiting to be offered such things, not just because tattoo is on TV.

WHAT ASPECTS OF YOUR EXPERIENCE HAVE COMFORTED YOU IN YOUR CHOICES, AND WHAT THINGS WON'T YOU DO AGAIN?

I am comforted by the idea that hard work pays off. I am not talking about money but about standard of living. All these years on the road not knowing where I was going, meeting a maximum number of people and attempting to gain recognition in a quite peculiar universe, have shaped me. I can afford to work a little less (I went down from 4 to 2 tattoos a day, yesss!) I can (almost) only tattoo my drawings, I work with people I admire a lot, all of this would not have been possible without all these years of continuous work. And I have a lifetime of memories!

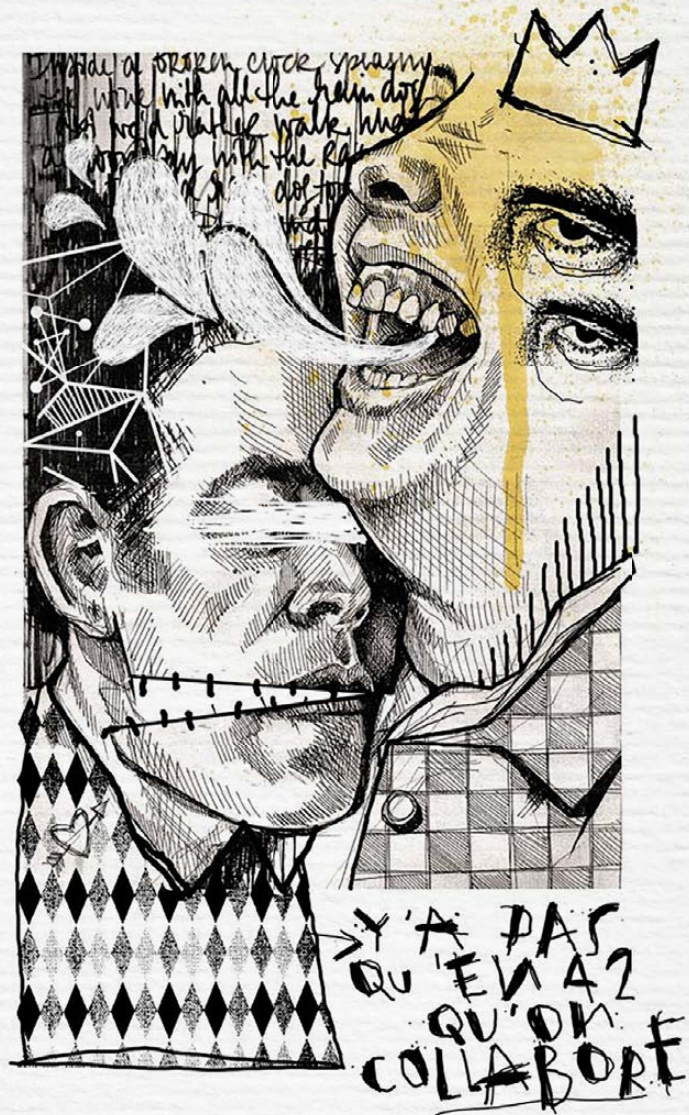
There is nothing I would not do again, let's say that in some cases I am happy that ridicule never did anyone harm!

COULD YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR LINKS WITH BELGIUM?

It is a strong link I entertain with Belgium! During years of travelling, every time I came back to Paris, I was telling myself it was still the most beautiful city in the world and I had never found anywhere where I felt better. Until I went to Brussels.

I grew up in Belleville, a very popular neighbourhood. But cities change. And I found in the Marolles (the old Brussels where the Boucherie Moderne is), the atmosphere of the Belleville of my childhood, with the old market and the grandpas' drinking white wine at 8 am. Through going there back and forth, I ended up settling there.

And then the city also changed, and I followed my bloke to Liège where I found this outdated atmosphere, with cobblestones, old factories and an incorrigible punk atmosphere that make Liège the city of all dangers if you have a tendency for alcohol and drugs. It's not called ToxCity for nothing!



BETWEEN YOUR BOAT, THE FACTORY AND ENGLAND, YOU HAVE LOTS OF NEW PROJECTS IN STORE, COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT THEM?

Yes, a lot of projects indeed! Let's take them in order. First the boat: I have bought a superb "small" 18.5 yard tug last may. The initial project was to have a tattoo shop in it, since I didn't have a shop to work in, in Liège. But the works may last at least another year hence the next project of the Factory. We worked on it all summer, having barbecues on the docks (bathing in the canal to freshen up), so I can't wait for warm weather to start again.

I haven't abandoned the project of tattooing in there. I really want to do some mobile tattooing with it as soon as it will be in water, but first around Amsterdam and this area.

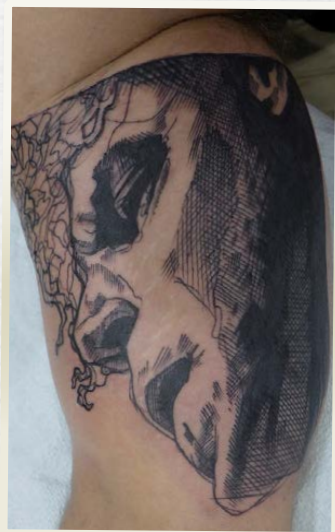
And then the Factory will open its doors in June 2016. When I saw the place for rent with my friend Sabina [editor's note : Sabina Patiperra—Psychodermo, Namur] who tattoos in Liège, we had a crush on it. If it were an umpteenth tattoo shop in Liège we wouldn't have done it, but this place comprises a gallery separate from the tattoo space and that is what we really liked about it. So from June onwards, exhibitions every two months, tat-

toos, and finally a bit of stability!

And as soon as stability won't be a novelty any more, I intend to cross the channel to settle in Brighton for a while, where I regularly work. There, the boat will become a home. But we are not there yet...

SO, A NEW CHALLENGE WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF A GALLERY. WHAT ARE YOUR OBJECTIVES WITH THIS OPENING? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DEFEND?

I think we are going to take things as they come. Logistic problems will come soon—communication, repainting the walls after the artists have ruined them, etc. But indeed



I COME FROM THE OLD SCHOOL WHERE YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO DO EVERYTHING TO SURVIVE IN THIS JOB. A GOOD TATTOOIST SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER ALL TYPES OF REQUESTS. WE DID NOT COME TO TATTOOS BECAUSE IT WAS COOL AND MADE MONEY. IT WAS RATHER THE OPPOSITE.



WE HAVE WALLS, AND THEREFORE A SPACE OPEN TO FREE SPEECH, WHICH IS ALREADY A POWERFUL WEAPON, IF WE CAN ALSO LIFT PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY WHILE PARTYING, EVERYBODY WINS



there are things that are important to us. We will put on an exhibition every two months (our agenda of conventions does not allow us to have them more often). A small percentage will be taken on the sale of artworks, and it will be entirely donated to a different charity each time.

This side of things is very important to us. I find that the world of tattoo makes enough money so that we can make things change, even at our small scale. We have walls, and therefore a space open to free speech, which is already a powerful weapon, if we can also lift people out of poverty while partying, everybody wins.

YOU ARE SIGNING THE OPENING EXHIBITION WITH KÖFI, WHO ARE YOU PLANNING ON INVITING NEXT? ARTISTS FROM THE NEW GENERATION?

After this exhibition, there will be another

one in August with lots of artists from Liège, tattooists or not. A big melting pot of all that is made here, in all styles. And from the beginning of the school year, Piet du Congo, Franky Baloney from the Requins Marteaux, and Elzo Durt. It takes us to 2017, so after that we'll see. So everybody is welcome, new and old generation. And if we can make people discover new talents, even better!

WITH ALL THESE PROJECTS, ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP ON EXHIBITING IN EUROPE IN AN INTENSIVE WAY, AS YOU HAVE DONE OVER THE PAST YEARS?

Yes, sure! The fact I'm based in Liège will allow me to draw more, so I intend on continuing with exhibitions and guest tattoos a bit everywhere. It's the perk of being a couple to open the Factory—we can take turns. The next exhibitions will arrive quite quickly after the opening, I will be in Nantes at Turbo Zero in October, and then in Toulouse at the Dispensary (probably in collaboration with Thomas Krauss) in December, and in Portsmouth, England, at Play Dead in January. After, we'll see!

WHAT CAN WE WISH YOU FOR THE FUTURE?

Let's talk about it when the shop is open? At the moment, nothing more, please! ☐



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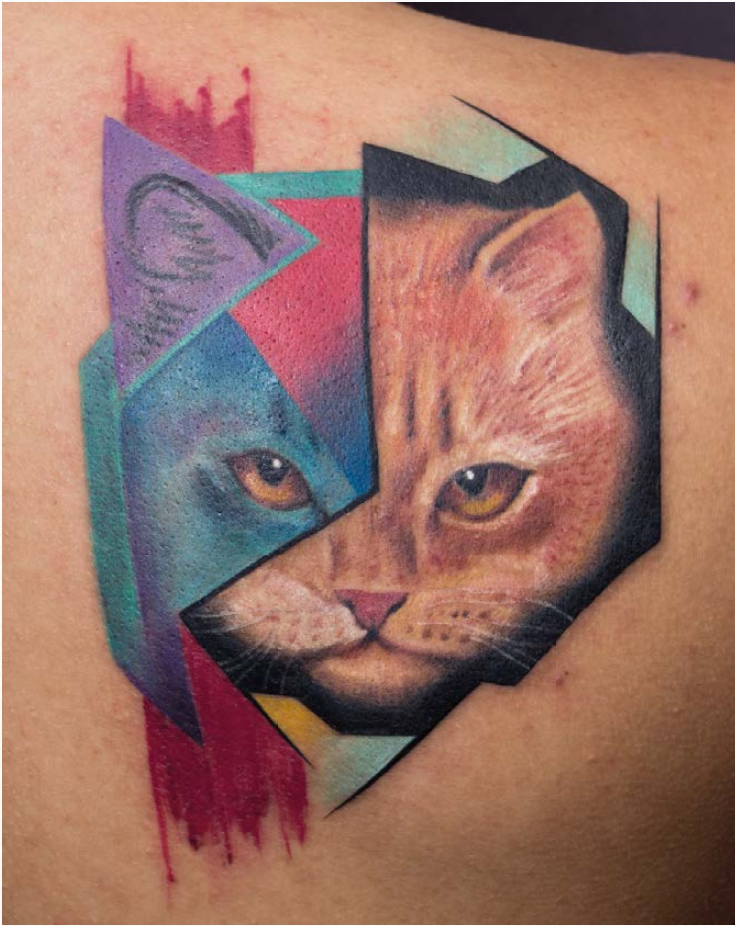
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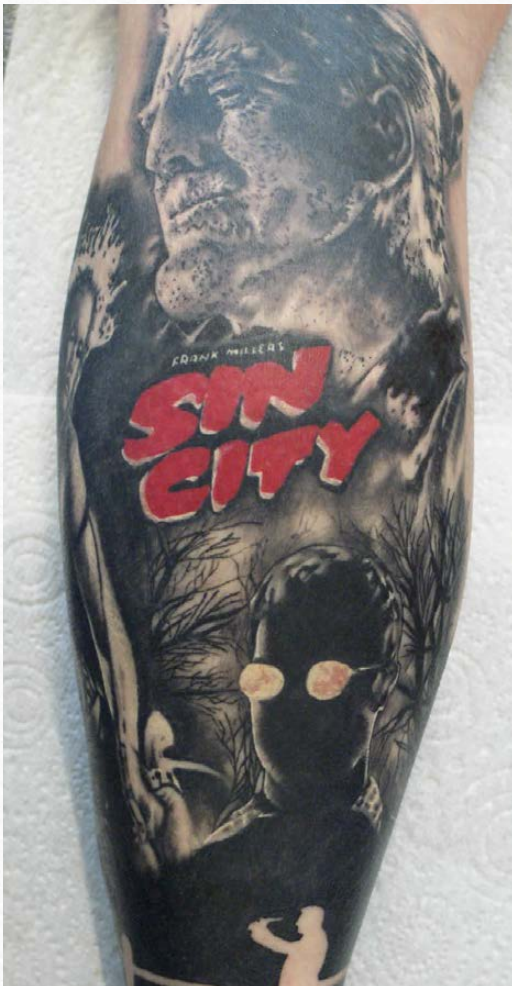




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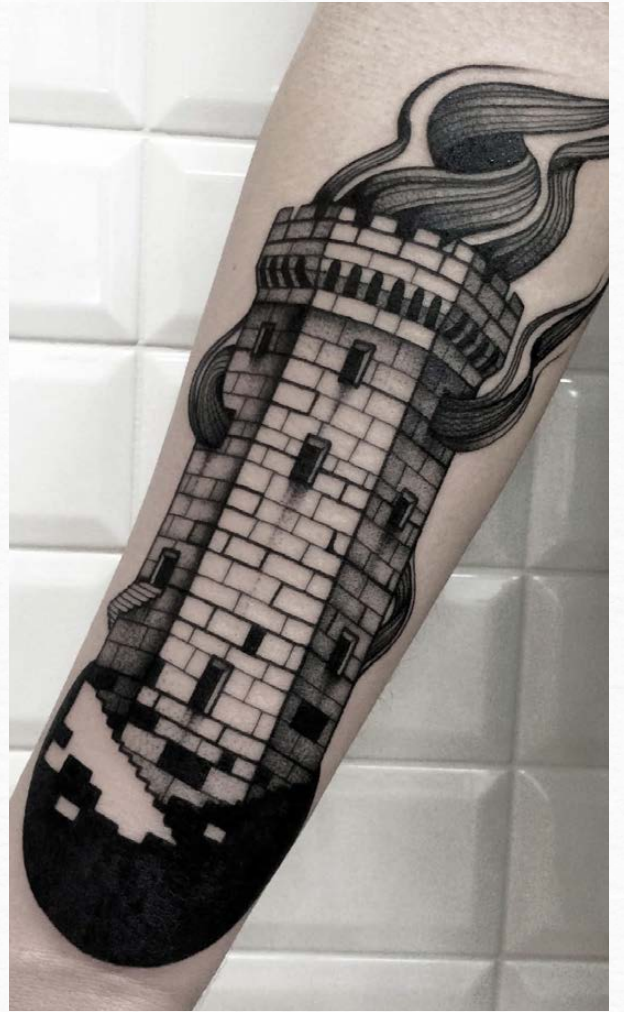


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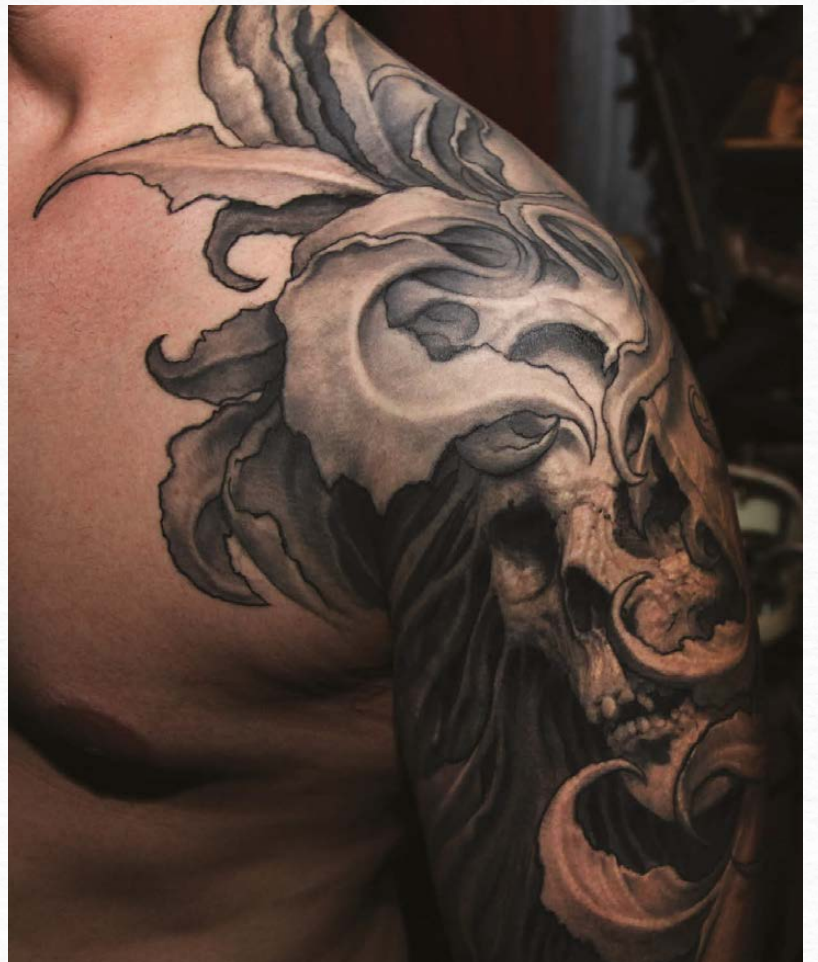
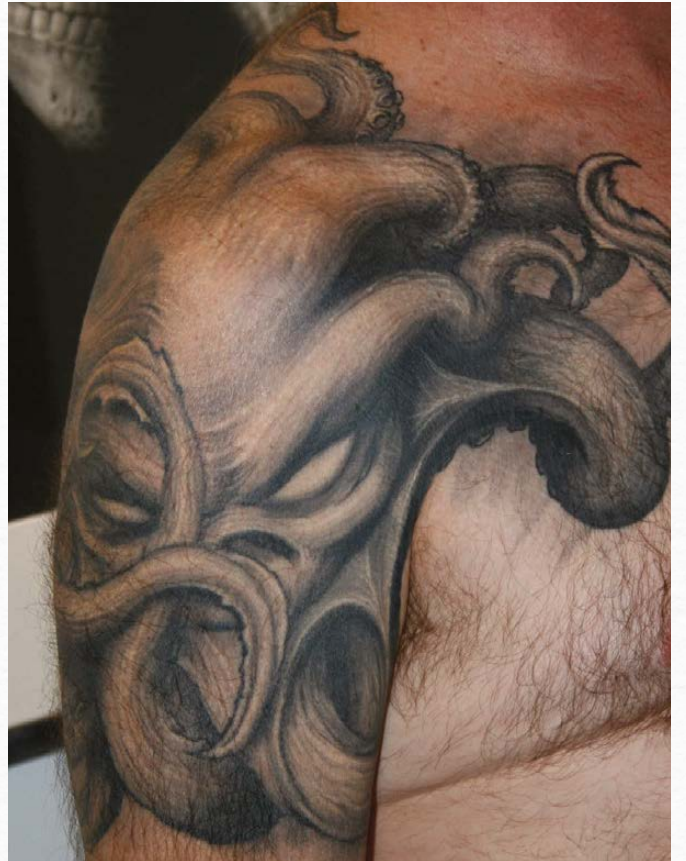


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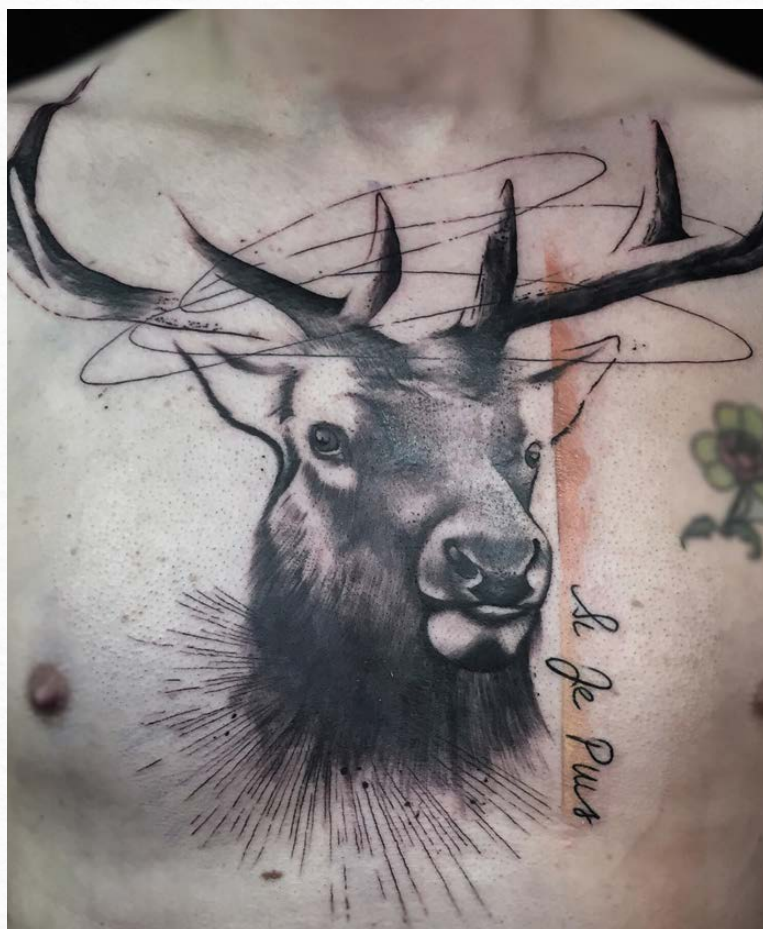
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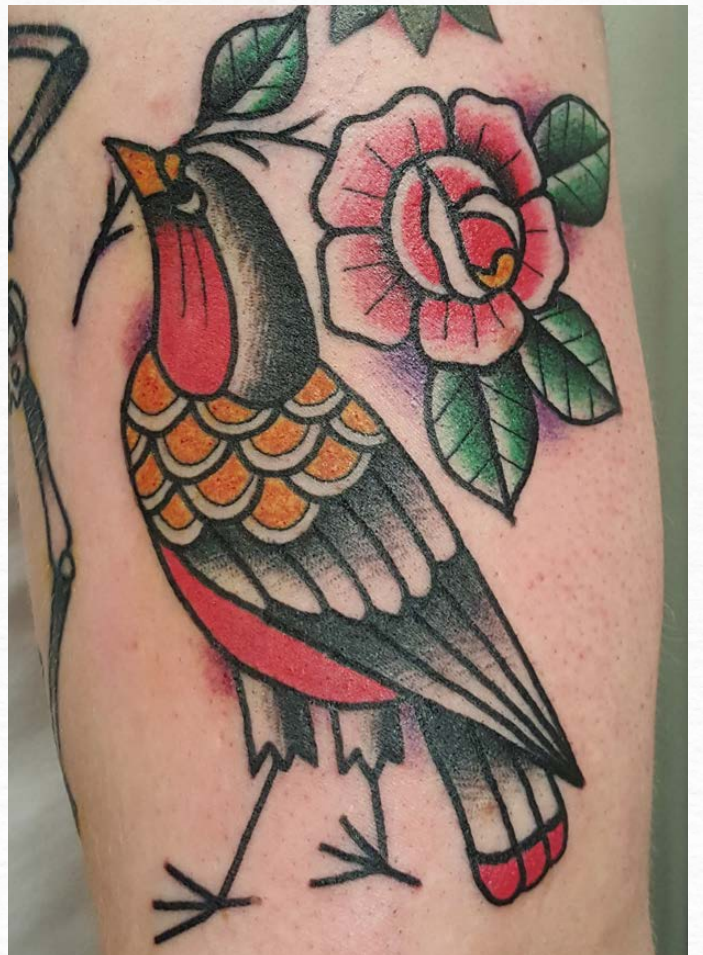


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PERFECT STRANGERS

The last few years, photographer Eleni Stefanou has been taking photos of tattooed women. Beccy Rimmer wanted to chat to her about her creative project, and why it's surfacing at an appropriate time in the tattoo industry...

Years ago, a 14 year old girl in Athens spent all summer working to earn enough to buy her first camera. She'd take long walks to try and capture any fleeting moments, or ask strangers if she could take their photo. This girl has been hooked ever since.

All grown up, her love for photography still flourishes, and Eleni has dedicated herself to one project in particular. "I grew up taking photos of strangers, but a few years ago started feeling guilty about taking people's photos without spending time getting to know them."

Her approach moved towards portraiture and documentary photography, dedicating more time to explore topics in-depth. *Women with Tattoos* was born.

"*Women With Tattoos* is a photography project that my friend Christina Theisen and I started back in 2013." The pair originally approached it as a one-off photo series with the intention of dispelling some of the preconceptions people have about tattooed women.

"By presenting women in their natural environments and showing how much diversity there is amongst tattooed women (different ages, ethnic backgrounds and body shapes), people might begin to realise that they can't just jumble everyone together into one sexist stereotype."

The girls published some of the photos on *The Guardian* online, and the response was overwhelming, "both in a positive and negative way", Eleni says.



YOU CAN'T JUST JUMBLE EVERYONE TOGETHER INTO ONE SEXIST STEREOTYPE



“As you can imagine, all of the tattoo-haters came out of the woodworks, comments including: ‘nothing really uglifies a woman quite like a tattoo’”.

But amongst a sea of sexist and hateful opinions, was the emergence of a community of women – women who appreciated the project and expressed their gratitude towards it.

Fast forward to 2016 and Eleni has just relaunched the project as a blog. “The website is a format that feels much more suitable to the subject,” says Eleni. “It allows for more photos, close-ups of the tattoos, and more importantly, interviews with the women.”

I was keen to hear what Eleni felt the project had achieved so far. “I know anecdotally that the project has had a positive impact on women,” she replies. “Women who, up until recently, didn’t really feel like their passion for tattoos was reflected and celebrated in a way that they could identify with.”

The appreciation from those who engage with Women With Tattoos is what keeps Eleni going. “Every week I’ll receive an email or comment on Facebook from someone who wants to express how grateful they are that the blog exists. These are the messages that keep the project in existence.”

Above all else, the blog aims to make women feel empowered through photography. “I think that photography has the ability to help us reach self-acceptance,” believes Eleni.

For her, being photographed is the process of being cared for, experiencing someone “who has taken the time to represent us.” As a tattoo enthusiast, Eleni’s genuine interest in the people she photographs is conveyed in her images.

Her other key aim for the blog is to explore the different roles tattoos play in our lives. “They help us shape our image and identity, they help us express ourselves creatively, but I’m also discovering that they can play a big part in how we use our bodies to process experiences like trauma, spirituality, body confidence and so much more.”



TATTOOS CAN GIVE VISIBILITY TO MARGINALISED PEOPLE WHO OFTEN DON'T HAVE A VOICE

“I think in the western world we really undervalue and underestimate the fact that expressing ourselves through our bodies can allow us to transcend situations in a way that other forms of expression can't. I'm interested in all these themes within the context of gender and think that other women are too.”

Do we still live in a world where tattooed men and tattooed women are treated differently? Mainstream culture has become more comfortable with tattoos, but do we react to Cheryl Cole's lower back tattoo in a contracting way how we'd react to it on David Beckham's back? I agree with Eleni that often society's reactions to women's bodies can be shocking.

“Why do we freak out so much? Why do we feel Cheryl's crossed a line, when we wouldn't feel that way about a man?” asks Eleni. “I think that by sharing their stories, women reclaim ownership of their bodies and make it a little harder for society to project its stereotypes and fantasies onto them.”

I was dying to hear some of their stories. I quiz Eleni about some of the interesting

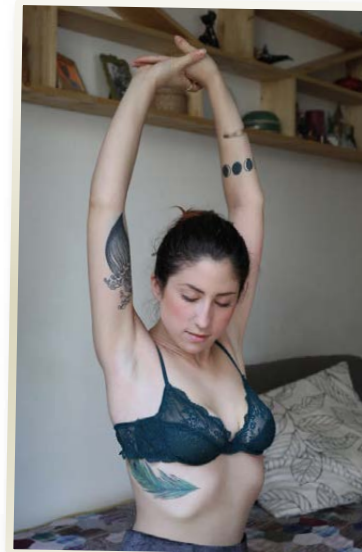
women she has photographed.

“I met a woman who was in her 80s and first got tattooed when she was working in the merchant navy back in the 1950s. She wanted to get a large fish across her stomach, but the tattoo artist refused, saying that she should get something smaller first. So instead she got a spider on the sole of her foot.”

“I met an amazing Muslim woman who said that God has bigger fish to fry than to worry about her tattoos. I photographed a woman called Jane who is a massive David Bowie fan and was pictured all over the newspapers when he died. She was snapped in front of the Bowie mural in Brixton with her Bowie tattoo.”

“Coming up on the blog soon is a woman who only has cat tattoos. I also met a sex worker who made a really good point about how tattoos can give visibility to marginalised people who often don't have a voice.”

So, why now? Does the project have a par-





WHAT DO WE REALLY GAIN BY NOT LETTING ANYONE ELSE IN?

tical prominence in the current state of the tattoo industry. "I think it's a really interesting time for tattoos," confirms Eleni.

"A tattoo artist recently published an anonymous letter in which he complained that tattoos have lost their outsider status. It's funny, because I consider myself an outsider within the tattoo scene, so I would argue that the tribal aspect is still very much there, and there's nothing wrong with that."

In the letter, the tattoo artist expresses a frustration that a lot of people have with, what Eleni refers to as "the 'mainstreamification' of tattoos".

"You do lose something special when your passion gets exposed to a wider audience. But what do we really gain by not letting anyone else in?"

I personally agree with her, and I know many readers and writers of this magazine will too. "By being more open, tattoo artists can find their niche because a wider audience

can lead to a larger variety of tastes. There are some incredible tattoo artists emerging at the moment, many of whom may have struggled to break through beforehand because they didn't fit into 'the scene'. For Eleni, female artists have really benefited from this as well.

So, what can we expect from WWT in the future? "I really want to travel to different countries and explore tattoos within different cultures. I'd also really like to focus more on the artwork and the creative process of tattooing, so am planning to photograph female tattoo artists too and utilise video as well as photography."


Discovering an individual like Eleni, in our industry, is a rare and pleasing find. Her passion, enthusiasm and vision to create something revolutionary, unique and rewarding, is what makes the tattooed world so thriving and exciting.

At the end of our chat, we talk tattoos. What else, right? Eleni has a tattoo on the right side of her rib cage. It's a shaded prism with a dotted circle around the top. I ask her what it means.


"It symbolises the idea of living – taking an active, rather than a passive role in your own life."

It would seem that the process of getting tattooed, and the project itself, remain true to the philosophies of her own ink. ▣





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TAKAHIRO KITAMURA

Marks of Polynesia

Takahiro Kitamura has been sharing his passion for ink for many years. Not only in his studio State of Grace [San Jose, California] where he specialised in Japanese style, but through different mediums including books, conventions and exhibitions. After a successful show on Japanese tattooing, Takahiro recently curated his new exhibition 'Tatau: Marks of Polynesia' focusing this time, on Samoan tattooing which is set to open July 30, again in Los Angeles

YOUR LAST EXHIBITION 'PERSEVERANCE: JAPANESE TATTOO TRADITION IN A MODERN WORLD' (AT THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM FROM MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2014) WAS A SUCCESS AND IS NOW TRAVELLING IN THE US, CAN WE REVISIT IT?

The JANM in Los Angeles wanted to present Japanese tattooing as a cultural art, a fine art, and we had a successful presentation. From there the exhibition has travelled to different museums including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. It is a legitimate museum, they have Rembrandt and Picasso's and of course, we are aware of the power and the prestige of seeing this art form in that setting. Tattooing has always been looked down upon and I think that once you hit a Museum of Fine Arts, it's kind

of hard to look down on that. You don't have to like it but you have to recognise it as an art. Greg Kimura—Director of JANM—approached me after the exhibition left and said “What's next?”

SO, HOW DID THIS PROJECT BASED AROUND SAMOAN TATTOOING COME NEXT?

Tattooing is an amazing connector between cultures. Because of tattoo, I know people in Paris, in Japan, and I always felt there was a bond with the Samoans. After the 'Perseverance' exhibition, my friend Sulu'ape Steve Looney asked me, “Can you do that for our people?”

I remember an interview with a Samoan high-ranking chief and he was saying he really liked this idea because



TATTOOING HAS ALWAYS BEEN LOOKED DOWN UPON AND I THINK THAT ONCE YOU HIT A MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, IT'S KIND OF HARD TO LOOK DOWN ON THAT

they are small islands in the Pacific but they wanted more people to know about their culture. Finally, I decided I'd like to curate this, to organise and bring people together, but I wanted the Samoan to be the voice, especially regarding the history of colonisation. There have been enough non-Samoans speaking for the Samoans. Sulu'ape Steve Looney, Sulu'ape Si'i Liufau and Sean Mallon helped me as cultural advisors.

WHAT DO YOU THINK PEOPLE MIGHT LEARN FROM THIS EXHIBITION?

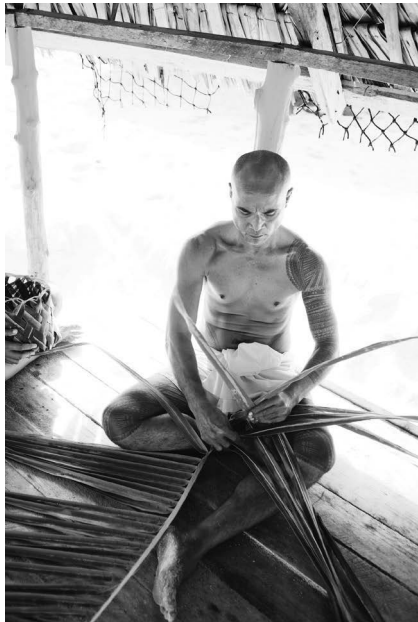
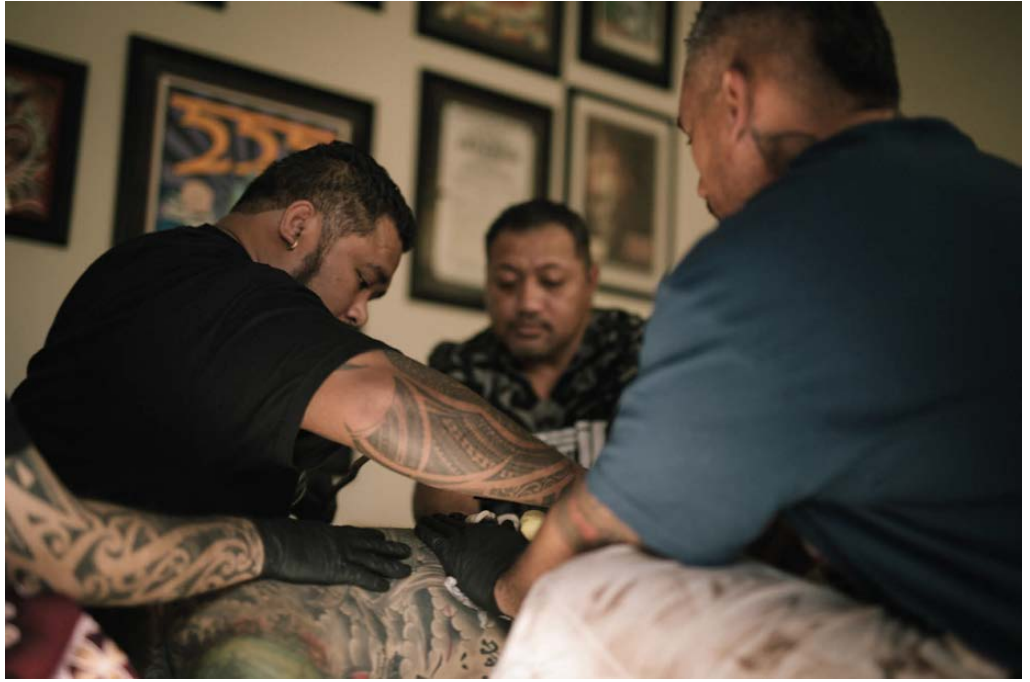
One thing that I'd like to present is that Samoan tattoo is not only an art form, it is a culture and a resistance to colonisation. If you look at the Maori, at the Tahitians, there was a lot of time when tattooing was outlawed, but the Samoans retained their native

tattooing. If you look at the population, half of it is in Samoa, half is in other places like Hawaii, New-Zealand with a total of a million people—and a lot of them identify through tattoos.

It's always been a marker of Samoan identity. Tattooing is practiced on both men and women, the tattoos are very specific though. The traditional male tattoo is called a tatau (also known as a pe'a or malofie. The tattoo spans from the waist to the knee, with intricate line and geometric motifs) the traditional female tattoo is called a malu (which is applied on the legs). There, men are supposed to get tattooed. Through the course of my studies, I know that for the ones that don't finish their tattoos, there's a lot of stigma, they get a lot of ridicule. There are stories of guys whose kids get beat up everyday...

WHAT WILL THERE BE IN THE EXHIBITION ?

We start the exhibition with traditionalists,



ONE THING THAT I'D LIKE TO PRESENT IS THAT SAMOAN TATTOO IS NOT ONLY AN ART FORM, IT IS A CULTURE AND A RESISTANCE TO COLONISATION

WHAT ROLE DOES TATTOO IN SAMOA HAVE IN THE COMMUNITY?

This is a difficult question as this changes over time, by region and according to who you ask. I would say that the Samoan tattoo plays an important part in the coming of age of Samoans and in recent years, it has played a prominent role in preserving and affirming Samoan identity in the face of Western influences.

WHAT'S THE SITUATION OF TATTOOING IN SAMOA NOW?

Even though tatau goes back to 2000 years ago, it still exists there as a rite of passage. The tradition is still very strong, vivid, but things are constantly changing. If you look at the Samoan tattoo over 2000 years, it changed based on body-shape and skin tones. Also the guys doing these are artists, so they're going to do their designs and take things from other cultures too because that is what is happening all over the world. At this point there is a movement called 'Contemporary Polynesian' and it's not just Samoan art but kind of a mixture of a bunch of Polynesian arts. Traditionally, the tatau can only be applied with hand tools, but many contemporary artists use machines to create more modern interpretations.

HOW MANY MASTERS ARE THERE STILL IN SAMOA?

The tatau has to be done by hand, it can't be done by machine, and in Samoa, only certain families are allowed the use of the tools. There are two major families: the Sa Su'a (the proper name for Sulu'ape) and the Sa Tulou'ena families. I stuck to the first one because they certainly earned that. Out of all the families, the Sulu'ape have definitely been the prominent ones and especially between Paulo and Petelo, they really made an impact on the Western world because they actually travelled out. The people are very proud of the mark the Sulu'ape family made, they are proud that the people come to Samoa to see this.

the Sulu'ape family and the hand tattooers, and then we go to the globalisation of machine tattooers. We've gone to Samoa, interviewed the Prime Minister, interviewed the Head of State, done extensive interviews with members of the Sulu'ape family, in New-Zealand and Hawaii. There will be photos, displays of tools, certain artefacts like a to'oto'o (chief staff), a va'a (hand-carved canoe by Su'a Sulu'ape Aisea Toetu'u), traditional tatau tools ('au and sausau). It will be similar to the 'Perseverance' exhibition with 90% photographs, and artefacts coming from the Sulu'ape family collection.

Originally we thought about building a hut but I wanted to retain a museum look. What is difficult in the US, is there is a fine line between presenting something as a culture and starting to look like Disneyland! I wanted to have a certain level of professionalism.



WHAT IS DIFFICULT IN THE US, IS THERE IS A FINE LINE BETWEEN PRESENTING SOMETHING AS A CULTURE AND STARTING TO LOOK LIKE DISNEYLAND

DURING THE PREPARATION OF THE EXHIBITION, YOU GOT TO BE TATTOOED WITH TRADITIONAL SAMOAN PE’A, HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

It wasn't something I expected, but something I appreciate very much. It was a huge honour. It's up to the master, the tufuga ta tatau, to decide who gets tattooed. When it was offered to me, it was initially a kind of a shock. I was very excited that Suluape Peter agreed to do it because when we first talked about getting tattooed, I needed him to understand that it would be 100% cover up as I have already a body-suit—this wasn't fresh skin. But it was fine with him, he wanted it to be part of a cultural gift on me. I really respect the process and I really wanted to go through it. The blessing ceremony after the tattoo was very emotional.

THE HAND TECHNIQUE HAS A REPUTATION FOR BEING ONE OF THE MOST PAINFUL PROCESS TO ENDURE, WHAT KIND OF EXPERIENCE WAS IT?

I'm not going to lie—it was a hell on earth experience. You go through so many emotions and there are times you want to quit.

There would be times when I wasn't getting tattooed and I got kind of depressed, like, "Oh my God, I'm only this far, I have to do this..." I felt it hurt more each day.

The most difficult thing was the first day, to find my breathing rhythm, but I can definitely tell you that on day four, which ended on my knee cap, I was like: "Oh my God, this is horrible!"

Like in all tattooing, you just have to surrender to the pain and let it happen. Anytime you do a tattoo, and you break it up into pieces, it's a lot easier take than if you're doing it each and every day in a row. When I got my back done in Japan by Horiyoshi III in 1998, I did 10 days in a row, with one or two hours a day. This time, it has been done over seven days, each day from three to six hours, totalling around 28 hours. I was very worried that if I wouldn't make it, but I



I WOULD SAY THAT THE SAMOAN TATTOO PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE COMING OF AGE OF SAMOANS AND IN RECENT YEARS, IT HAS PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE IN PRESERVING AND AFFIRMING SAMOAN IDENTITY IN THE FACE OF WESTERN INFLUENCES

something they have been going through their whole history. Japanese tattooing has gone through all of these ups and downs, legal, then illegal etc. Obviously it would be nice for the tattooers to be legal but at the same time, on a positive note, I think the Japanese tattoo has always endured. Look at the solo works that I think are the best—they were done at a time of illegality. No matter what, the Japanese will keep it alive.

THE JAPANESE TATTOO CULTURE IS VERY POPULAR OUTSIDE OF JAPAN, CAN FOREIGN COUNTRIES PLAY A ROLE IN THIS MATTER?

Out of all the Japanese arts, the Japanese tattoo has probably been the most exported and the most embraced. It is done everywhere. Japan is a nation that has chosen not to be proud of it but I'm proud of that. I know Horitomo (Japanese tattooer working at State of Grace) feels sometimes that the more accepted the Japanese tattooing is out here and the more museums we're in, that kind of reflects back to the Japanese. They are going to pay attention to that. They can't ignore that. You don't have to necessarily be in your own country to do something, and maybe in some ways that is more important. Over here, we might have a better chance of changing minds than over there.

DO YOU FEEL IT'S COURAGEOUS FOR TAKI MASUDA—ONE OF THE AFFECTED TATTOO ARTISTS—TO RAISE THE DEBATE LIKE THIS?

Of course, especially in that country, because that's a hard government to deal with. I'm not there but we definitely feel a sense of support over here. You can't deny that tattoos are a huge part of society now and

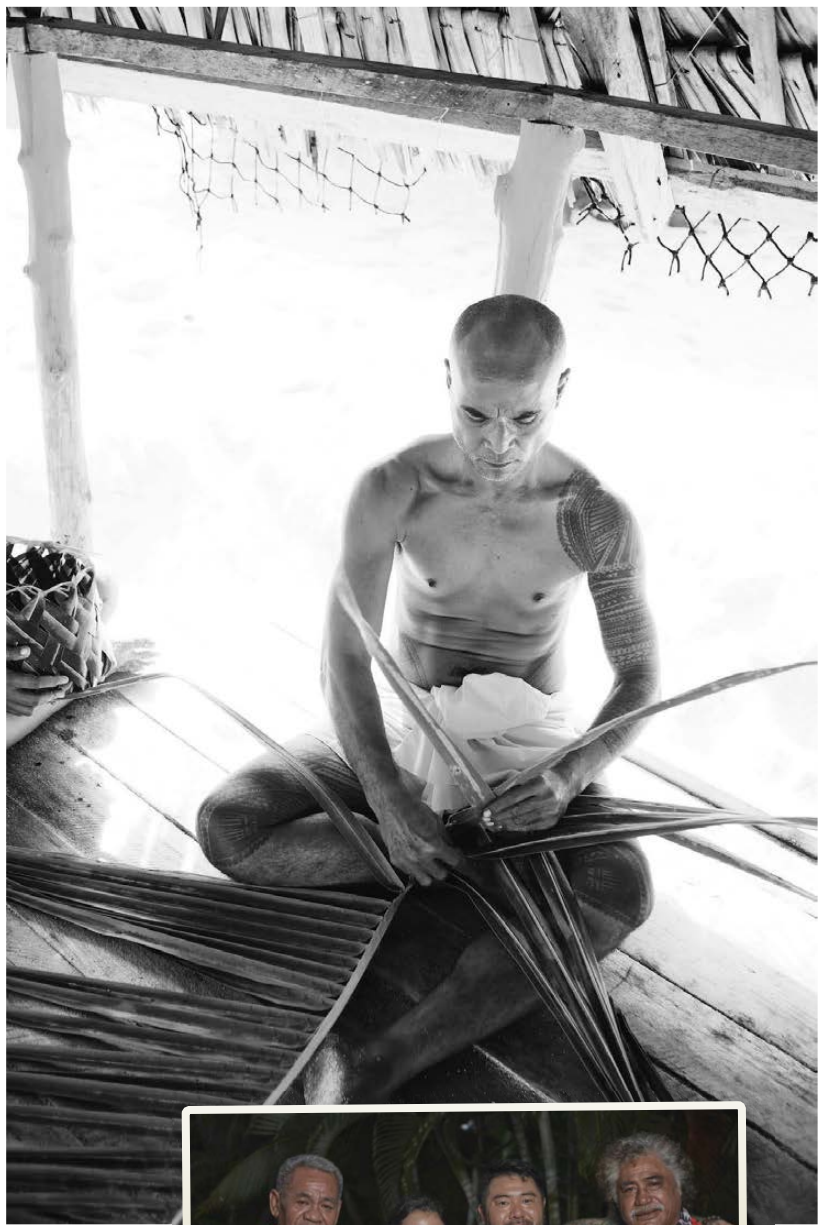
think that's what makes it so special. To actually be able to endure that, you test yourself.

THIS TATTOO IS FAR FROM YOUR JAPANESE USUAL BACKGROUND...

Getting my back piece in Japan was a defining moment in my life. At that time I was looking for a sense of guidance and belonging in Japanese tattooing and also a connection to my Japanese heritage (Takahiro was born in Japan before moving to America with his parents at the age of three), both of which I found there, and that started my 10 year relationship with my ex-master Horiyoshi III. There are a lot of reasons why I got this tatau: my connections with my friends, the experience that I had travelling there and also I needed to experience that pain and know what it felt like. I don't collect Rolexes, I'm not into things like that, but I do collect life experiences.

JAPAN IS HAVING A HARD TIME WITH ITS OWN TATTOO CULTURE RIGHT NOW. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT?

I think what they're living through right now is



YOU DON'T HAVE TO NECESSARILY BE IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY TO DO SOMETHING, AND MAYBE IN SOME WAYS THAT IS MORE IMPORTANT

maybe that's what the Japanese government is afraid of. At first I thought it was a way to attack the yakuza so, it seemed at the beginning that they were targeting specific people but actually it seems that they are targeting the new-school tattooers more than the traditional ones.

YOU RECENTLY CHANGED YOUR ARTIST NAME FROM HORITAKA TO RYUDAIBORI, WHY?

My name Horitaka was given to me by my ex-master and I didn't want to use it anymore. I thought that time in my life was past. I've always kind of had an affinity for the names with hori (from the verb horu, that means 'to carve') at the end, like tebori. Ryudai is just a different reading from my first name Takahiro.

YOU'VE ALSO WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED BOOKS ABOUT TATTOOING, NOW YOU'RE CURATING EXHIBITIONS ON THE SUBJECT, WHERE DOES THIS PASSION FOR SHARING COME FROM?

My father was a professor—he was a civil engineer—and I think that it had a profound



effect on me. Despite the fact that the field I went into is so different from civil engineering, I got from him the idea about education.

IS TATTOOING STILL YOUR PRIORITY TODAY?

Yes. The main thing is I work on the museum exhibitions, tattoos, and the shop. And I work also on the Monmon Cats clothing line with Horitomo and my wife—we're turning it into a larger brand right now, we've teamed up with some manufacturers—and the Convention, but I still consider tattooing as my first job. I'm certainly choosier about what I tattoo now and I want to do more large back pieces. □



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Jon Potter

BEHIND THE INK

FLOWER POWER

Flowers: they've been a staple of tattooing for as long as anyone can remember, so what's the big attraction? Wayne Simmons digs deep in this month's Behind The Ink.

Ask any naturalist and they'll tell you that the beauty of a flower has nothing at all to do with vanity: it's to do with survival. Everything that we find appealing about them—the scent, the colours, the shape—are all just a series of messages to say there is nectar to be had. The trade-off for the plant is to do with pollen and pollination, the birds, the bees and all that good stuff that you were probably told about in school. What you probably weren't told about, at least not in science class, was the spiritual connection we have with flowers, along with the rest of Mother Nature's handiwork—but it's something that you probably believe anyway.

"I'd be hard pressed to find anyone who didn't find nature inspiring in some form," Rakhee Shah, who owns Xotica tattoo Studio in London, tells me when asked why she thinks floral tattoos are so popular. "Whether or not you choose to appreciate it is another story, but we all have a close relationship to nature in some way—especially plants and flowers. So a floral tattoo is a safe option as it's very unlikely to offend anyone—your Gran's going to love it too." And then, of course, you've got all that symbolism going on: "the seed, the growth, the need for nurturing, its eventual beauty and inevitable death; a flower reflects the circle of any life. Couple that with their aesthetic nature and they're the perfect choice for anyone."

I met Rakhee at this year's Tattoo Freeze and found her to be one of

those refreshingly honest people: someone who says it like it is. Like when I try to pin her down to a certain genre of tattooing—that being realism—she's having none of it. "I love realism and thrive on the technical challenges it brings," she explains, "but I would say my work is more creative than traditional 'photocopy' realism. I prefer to combine images and elements in a conceptual manner, in a way that works composition-wise but also shows the technical side."

Rakhee would describe herself as an artist, first and foremost, someone who fell into tattooing rather than went seeking it. "Having a degree and calling myself a 'wannabe illustrator' wasn't going to pay off. I was met with the same struggles that every other 'Fresh Talent Out of Uni' experiences, only I was presented the rare opportunity—even more so ten years ago—to become a tattoo apprentice." Yet Rakhee struggled to reconcile her creativ-

ity with the rather stagnant way of doing things back then. As she saw it, namely "working from flash sheets and painting by numbers. Fast forward a couple of years, though, and boom—the level, diversity and magnitude of what can be done in a tattoo escalated beyond anyone's wildest dreams." And that was when she really came into her own.

Josie Sexton is another artist with a penchant for all things floral that caught my eye at this year's Freeze, but she came at tattooing from quite a different angle. Working out of The





All work this page Rakhee Shah

Festival Shop in Middlesbrough for the last three years, Josie has known for a long time that tattooing was what she wanted to do in life and actively courted an apprenticeship. “I managed to get a Saturday job helping out around the studio. I learned how the industry worked and got my foot in the door.” Like Rakhee, Jodie’s a graduate, attending Cleveland College of Art and Design, then Teesside University. But she kept the Saturday job at Festival going and eventually it turned into a full-blown apprenticeship, and then a career.

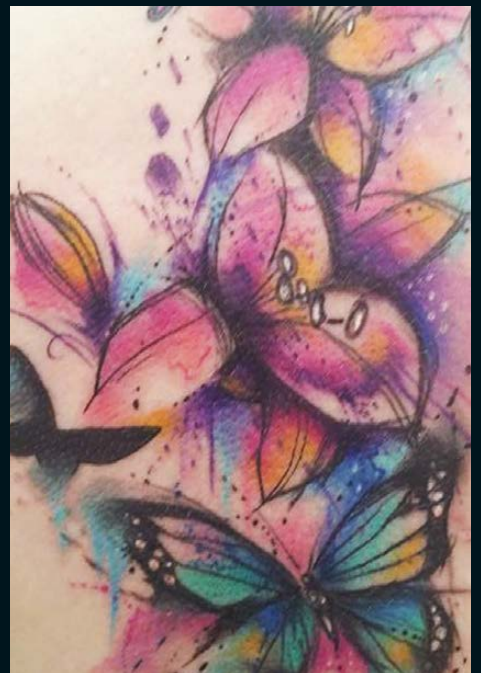
For Josie, there’s a definite spiritual as well as nostalgic connection with nature—

**WHETHER OR NOT
YOU CHOOSE TO
APPRECIATE IT IS
ANOTHER STORY, BUT
WE ALL HAVE A CLOSE
RELATIONSHIP TO
NATURE IN SOME WAY**

Rakhee Shah

she spent much of her childhood exploring the woods behind her house. She believes we place a lot of emotional value in flowers, referring to clients who have associated them with people who are, or were, in their lives. “A flower is something quite emotive and powerful,” she says, “which is why I keep using them in my work.” And then there’s the social and cultural side of it all. “As a society we celebrate a lot of different occasions and holidays with flowers, so it’s not surprising that they become so emotive. I think it’s this emotion and energy that makes them so popular.”

On the other hand, Jon Potter gets that en-



All work this page Josie Sexton

ergy from the clients he tattoos. “There is nothing more satisfying than doing a piece then telling your client to go check it out in the mirror,” he says, “then see them grin, turn to you and they’re over the bloody moon.” He’ll get a similar vibe from a nice comment on Facebook or Instagram, anything that lets him know he’s moving in the right direction as an artist, but he never lets it go to his head. “It makes me wanna up my game, keep pushing myself until I’m where I want to be. I’ll never be content and let myself slack, though.” The co-owner of Twisted Image in Hull, it’s important for Jon to do something unique with

AS A SOCIETY WE CELEBRATE A LOT OF DIFFERENT OCCASIONS AND HOLIDAYS WITH FLOWERS, SO IT’S NOT SURPRISING THAT THEY BECOME SO EMOTIVE

Josie Sexton

his art—which is where the flowers come in. “I like putting my own spin on a rose,” he says, explaining how he’ll use it to play up other parts of a tattoo. “The rose will always compliment the majority of colour used around it, so I get that contrast and bounce between the other colours with each piece. So in theory, everything compliments everything else.”

Perhaps it’s this versatility within a floral tattoo, and a rose in particular, that sees it being inked on the throat, neck or hands so often. As a mag, we’ve facilitated a lot of debate around public ink and I’m curious to see where our three BTI-ers this month sit on



All work on this page Jon Potter

the topic. “Roses are a lot more socially acceptable, I guess, than a pin-up with her bangers out on your neck,” Jon laughs. He can’t remember if he’s turned any down in the past but thinks, if he has, it would have been for the right reasons. “Anyone who is not heavily tattooed, I tell them to consider having more tattoos before committing to something so visible, especially younger folk.”

Josie has a similar rule. “You have to earn them, to experience having tattoos before jumping in at the deep end,” she tells me. But she admits to not having been asked to do very many, which is interesting in its own right: has the whole ‘rose

THE ROSE WILL ALWAYS COMPLIMENT THE MAJORITY OF COLOUR USED AROUND IT, SO I GET THAT CONTRAST AND BOUNCE BETWEEN THE OTHER COLOURS WITH EACH PIECE

Jon Potter

on the neck’ craze that we saw booming, say, eight or nine years ago slowed down?

Rakhee feels that flowers will always be popular as ‘public tattoos’, at least with the client. “Most parts of the body that I consider to be ‘public skin’ tend to be, from an artist’s point of view, quite awkward areas. Floral designs are very easy to manipulate and don’t lose perceptible or get warped easily. They very rarely look out of place or ill-fitted and therefore work well for doing necks, hand, throats.”

In other words, there’s a flower not just for every occasion, but for every nook and cranny under your skin. Best leave it at that, eh? □

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CHANGE OF PERCEPTION

This month Beccy Rimmer chats to a group of artists creating their own culture through their unique attitudes towards the industry and what they do

As tattoo writers, we're here to act as a sounding board for the tattoo artists of the UK and the world. This is very much the theme of my column this month (issue 253)—we represent an artistic community of strong, interesting, creative personalities, and above all else, are here to communicate their viewpoints to the world.

Completely coincidentally and serendipitously timed, my philosophical column is juxtaposed with my interviewing one UK studio that has such an original outlook, it's self-labeled a cult.

I spoke to the four artists working at Cult XIII Tattoo in Poole, Dorset—a studio that aims to counteract everything we know about tattooing as a modern, mainstream trend.

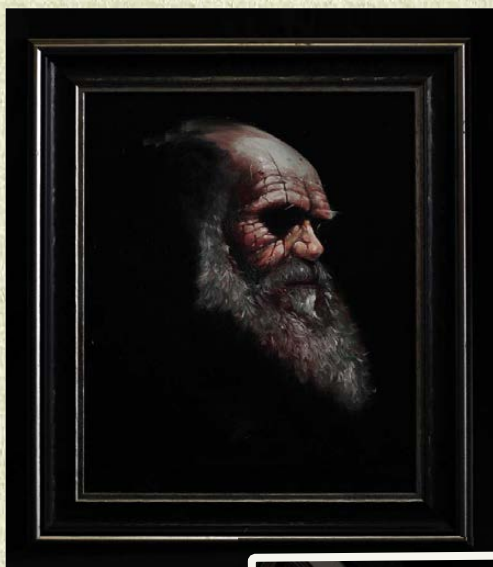
LET'S START BY INTRODUCING YOU TO SKIN DEEP READERS

DE: I am Danny Edwards—studio owner and cult leader. I opened Cult XIII last May.

RS: I'm Rob Spider—tattoo artist and father. I tattoo and draw and I prefer new school style tattoos. I have been tattooing for 9 years and started at Cult XIII in October last year.

ST: My name is Sarah Thirteen. I only finished my apprenticeship a year ago and since then have worked at Cult XIII.

CB: My name is Chris Byrne. I do a mixture of traditional and new school style tattoos (mostly colour work) and I've been tattooing for about 4 years. I started at Cult XIII when it opened in May 2015.



WE BELIEVE IN PUSHING OUR OWN STYLES AND SHARING IDEAS

TELL US ABOUT THE STUDIO

DE: When I opened the studio, it was because I had begun to notice a whole portion of the industry had moved to a place that I didn't recognise anymore. Tattoos, at least the ones I enjoyed, were always part of a sub-culture. Tattoos have now become mainstream, and in some ways this is great as it pushes art and technology forward, but some of the things I loved about tattoos have been lost in the rush.
CB: Cult XIII is an awesome place to work. The other artists inspire me every day and have the same passion for art and tattoos. That's what's important as we are constantly pushing each other to do better.

DE: At Cult XIII, we try and change perception by being ourselves and promoting professional values. We often do tattoos to raise money or awareness or charity events and our clients appreciate our honesty and integrity. This makes us stand out.

RS: Working here is awesome. We share ideas, we have drawing nights every Tuesday and the studio décor is like any other studio I have ever been in. From an outsider's view, you may think we worship Satan and have lunch-time sacrifices, but in reality we have families, partners



and hobbies like anyone else!

CB: The studio is dark—we have a human rib cage hanging from a coffin, skulls and taxidermy everywhere and we are usually playing metal music. Clients remember our studio!

DE: We are a fully custom studio. We don't copy other artists' work out of respect for them and because we love the opportunity to use the skills we have worked hard at mastering. I hope that we are able to keep pushing our own individual styles and pushing each other in our art and in our personal lives. I consider all the people I work with my friends and family and I'm proud of the things they've achieved.



WE WANT TO TAKE THINGS BACK TO A SUB-CULTURE AESTHETIC

YOU'VE GOT THE PHRASE A CHANGE OF PERCEPTION WRITTEN ON THE SHOP FRONT—TELL US ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR STUDIO.

ST: Our studio looks a bit scary from the outside so I think customers may come in with a different perception to how it really is... in reality, everyone is offered a hot drink within five minutes of walking through the door and made to feel welcome. This is why we have this written on the shop front—the initial perception of our studio is often not the truth and our welcome atmosphere is so prominent we think it separates us from other studios.

DE: CHANGE OF PERCEPTION is our motto. We chose it because we have all faced persecution in many ways for how we look, for the tattoos we wear. We've been stared at in public and turned down for jobs because of our tattoos.

DANNY, HOW HAS TATTOOING CHANGED IN THE TIME YOU'VE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH IT?

DE: As I mentioned before, tattoos used to be a sub-culture. 'Super studios' have been opened by people that have little or no interest in the art—they see it only as a way of making money. Cult XIII is the opposite. It's a place where we believe in pushing our own styles and sharing ideas. We aren't a high-street flash-studio and neither are we ego artists self-promoting a rock-star lifestyle.

We turn up everyday and work our butts off because we enjoy and appreciate what we do. So many times I have seen one of the guys turn up feeling like crap or tired because they've been up all night looking after their children, but they instantly switch it on and bust out amazing art. The passion is strong because we help each other.

We also have GOD HATES US ALL written in big letters above the door. This isn't because we believe in God (or that he hates us) but because we want to take things back to a sub-culture aesthetic. We skate, we BMX, we listen to metal in the studio everyday.

WHAT ARE YOUR AMBITIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

ST: My ambition is always just to improve my artwork—there is always something you can learn and more you can do to better yourself.

RS: To continue to provide for my family and make them proud of me. Having kids has totally changed the way I look at life in general They are one of the main reasons I am up drawing till 2am, then up again at 7am.

CB: I'm due to be a dad to my first child in April 2016, so my main ambitions are to be the best dad I can be, as well as keeping the same drive and passion to my art and tattoos. Priorities will always be to provide for my family... and to still do a job I absolutely love doing is something I



SOMETIMES IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO GIVE BOTH TATTOOING AND MY FAMILY THE ATTENTION THEY BOTH DESERVE

feel very blessed to be able to do.

RS: I also want to improve my art and tattoos and work more conventions to connect with more tattooists. I really get inspired seeing other guys working and creating art, I love learning new techniques and picking up any little tips I can. I strive for constant growth as an artist and I also want to contribute to the shop's growth—getting the Cult XIII name out there to show what an awesome shop we have and the talent that works here.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

RS: A big challenge for me was leaving my former shop to join Cult XIII, as I had been there from the beginning of my tattoo career. It was tough to make a move after many years but it got to the point where I just had to do it for myself. I wanted to improve my work and really push myself to become better, and so far it's definitely been a good move. It's also challenging juggling family and work. Sometimes it can be difficult to give both tattooing and my family the attention they both deserve. My mind is constantly thinking about work. That can be tough at times.



ST: I would say learning to manage myself is challenging, being self-employed can be stressful and it's difficult to keep everyone happy.

CB: I'd say my biggest challenge in the past was getting into the tattoo industry. Most studios I took my artwork portfolio to wouldn't even look at my work and it took a lot of time and patience to even talk to other tattooists about how to get an apprenticeship.

RS: A big accomplishment for me was getting two awards at the Jurassic Coast Convention last year. It's nice to have some recognition from my peers.

CB: My happiest moment was winning my first award, it was something I really didn't expect to happen, especially after only tattooing for 6 months.

ST: My biggest achievement would have to be the fact that I get to do my dream job every day. I don't know many people who can say they genuinely love their job, so becoming a tattoo artist and finishing my apprenticeship is the best thing I've ever done.

DE: Tattooing has been a real journey for me, initially getting turned down by every local studio I applied to for an apprenticeship. I finally took the opportunity to learn from friends I had made whilst getting tattooed myself. Sadly one of those friends, Jay Hotton, took his own life early in my career. I won my first award a month after his death at a convention that I was supposed to work next to him at. I dedicated that award to Jay.

That time in particular made me more determined than ever to become an accomplished tattoo artist. It gave me a unique perspective when it came to personal tattoos dedicated to lost loved ones. There is no greater reward than to be able to offer someone a tattoo that helps them keep the memory alive.

DO YOU ALL GET ALONG WELL? HOW IS THE DYNAMIC BETWEEN YOU AT THE STUDIO?

RS: Awesome. The guys were so welcoming when I joined



I DON'T THINK THE WORLD NEEDS TATTOOS, BUT THEY DO MAKE IT LOOK A BIT NICER

the studio. It's like coming to work with great mates every day—real good fun and lots of banter. Of course there are some disagreements at times, but with five creative minds in one place that's always going to happen.

CB: We all get on really well, we do team days out to places like art museums, and we are all extremely passionate about our work. It's nice to be able to come to work with your mates and not have any negativity. That really helps when it comes to concentrating on work.

ST: I know it sounds cliché but we really are a family. The boys are all like brothers to me. Every day we all have fun together and motivate each other. They always push me to do better, through giving helpful advice and by taking a real interest in each other's work.

DE: We all have very individual outlooks on life and the styles of art that we love. What we share is passion and determination. We encourage each other every day. It's the best studio because I get to work with my best friends everyday.

ST: I am so lucky to be apart of such a close nit team of amazing and caring people. I don't

know any other studio like us and what we have is something hard to come across.

I WAS SO KEEN TO INTERVIEW YOU ALL BECAUSE WHAT YOU HAVE CREATED IS REALLY SPECIAL—A CLOSE STUDIO WITH STRONG MORALS THAT I THINK IS A RARITY. YOU ALL HAVE PHILOSOPHICAL STANDPOINTS THAT BRING YOU TOGETHER. SO, LET'S FINISH WITH A BANG...WHY DOES THE WORLD NEED ART AND TATTOOS?

CB: I don't think the world NEEDS tattoos, but they do make it look a bit nicer.

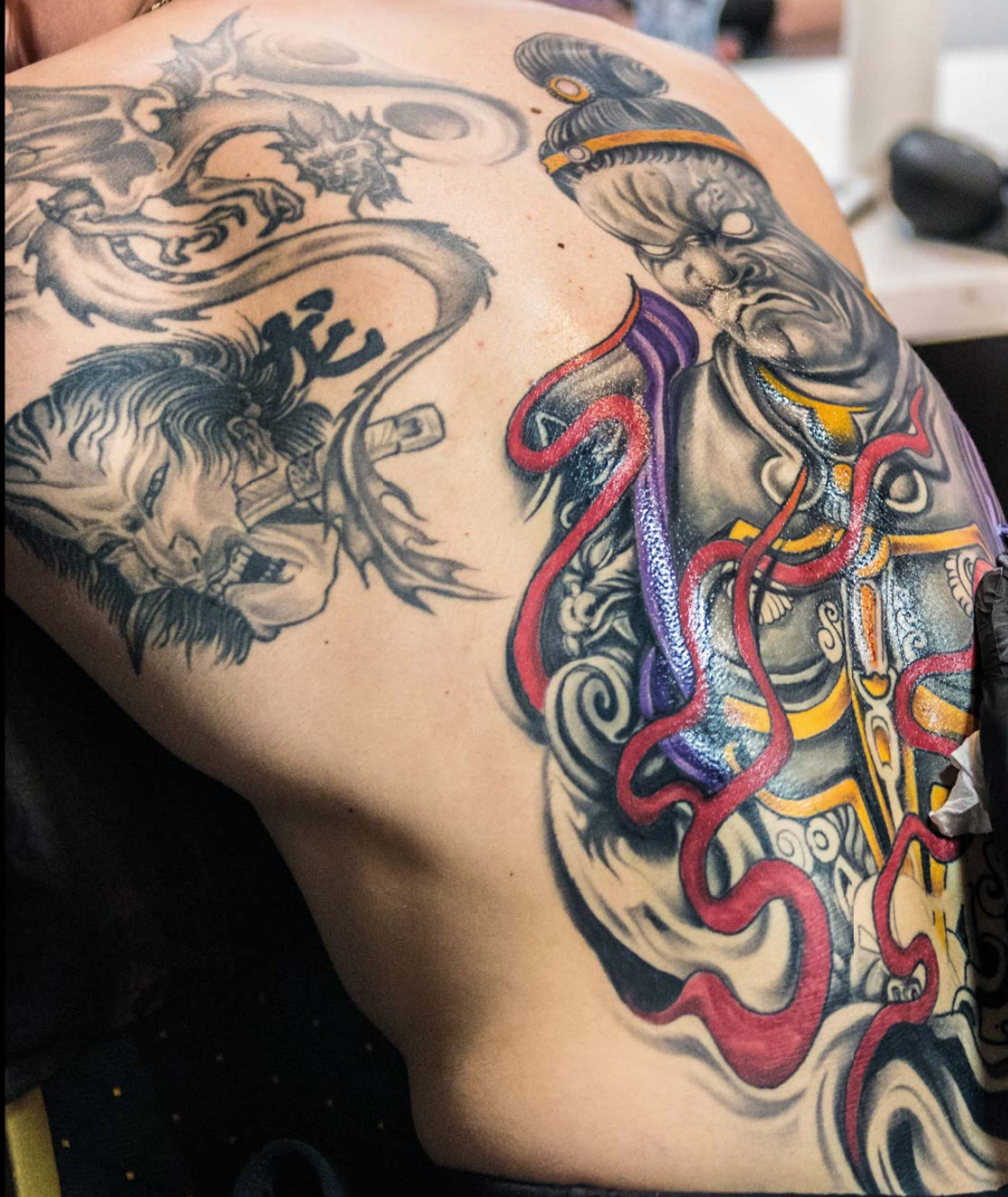
RS: It's a way to connect with people... tattoos can provide confidence, happiness, conversation.

ST: The world doesn't necessarily need tattoos but having them makes life more exciting. A tattoo is a unique and special thing.

DE: Every culture has art. It's how we share and connect to our ancestors. We listen to music, we dance. We adorn our walls, we adorn our bodies. We do what we can to express the whole range of human emotions and behaviours. Art is language, communication and the documentation of our journey. ▣



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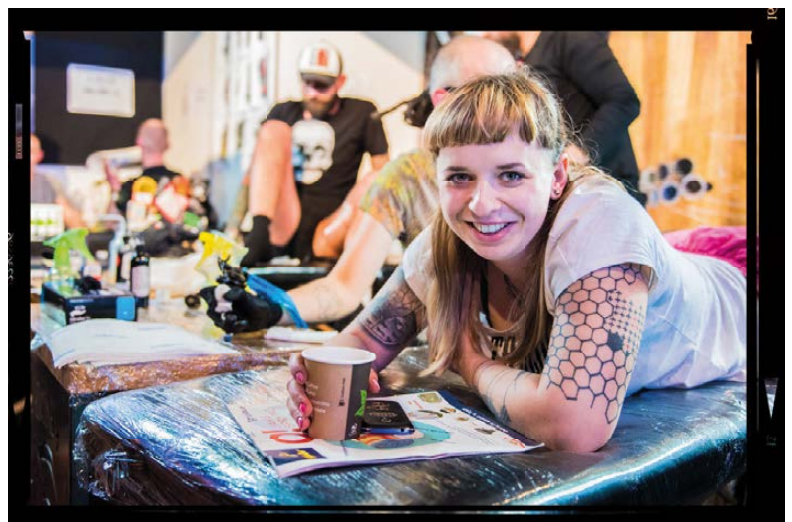


These two were having a heated discussion prior to walking up to them and asking for their picture. They stopped the stare down long enough for the photo, but the gentlemen to the right was eager to get back into his so-called friend's face. © Tavares Shirley



Scenes from **WROCLAW TATTOO KONWENT**

*Wrocław—a new destination for tattoo fans:
That's what we shall say about this show*



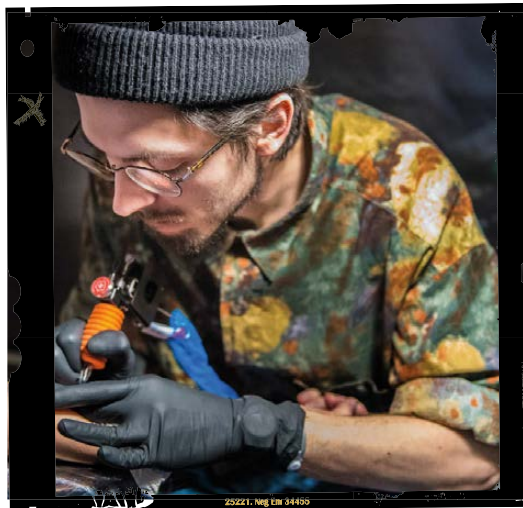
Almost 6000 people visited the 16th edition of Tattoo Konwent, which took place on the 23/24 April in Wrocław, one of the bigger Polish cities. In the post-industrial interiors of two popular clubs: Pralnia Club and Zakłète Rewiry, about 150 tattoo artists presented their talents and skills.

Wrocław Tattoo Konwent visitors could not only take part in activities connected with tattoo

art, but were also entertained during concerts or alternative performances. Tattoo Konwent is the biggest Polish series of tattoo conven-



Everyone loves Wrocław and it's easy to see why. Though in some ways it's a more manageable version of Kraków, with all the cultural attributes and entertainment of that popular destination, the capital of Lower Silesia also has an appealing character all its own. Having absorbed Bohemian, Austrian and Prussian influences, the city has a unique architectural and cultural make-up, symbolised by its magnificent market square [Rynek]. Wrocław's location on the Odra River, with its 12 islands, 130 bridges and riverside parks, is idyllic, and the beautifully preserved Cathedral Island is a treat for lovers of Gothic architecture. But Wrocław is not just a pretty face. It is Poland's fourth-largest city and the major industrial, commercial and educational centre for the region; virtually everything in southwestern Poland starts, finishes or is taking place in Wrocław. At the same time it's a lively cultural centre, with several theatres, major festivals, rampant nightlife and a large student community.

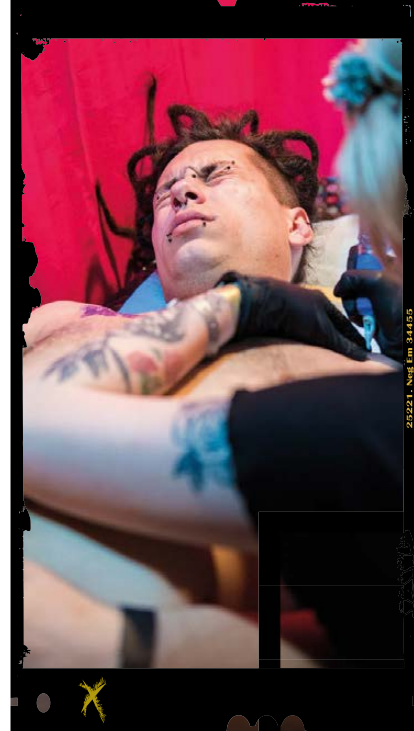
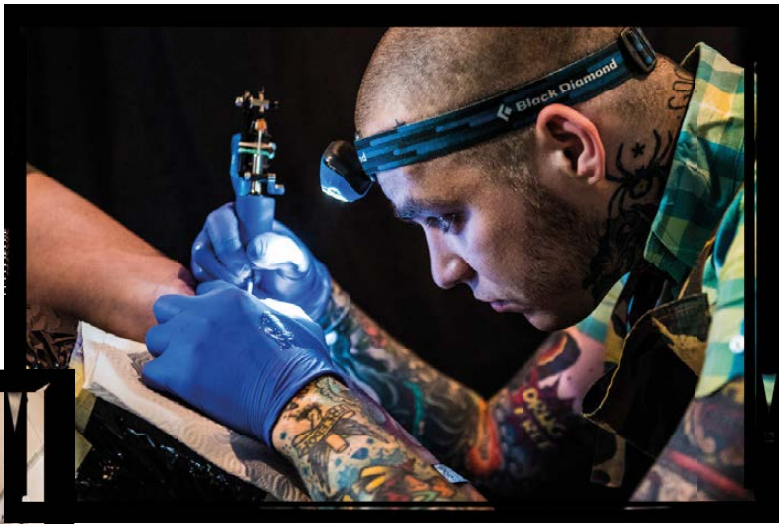


tions which take place several times a year in five locations in Poland, including this one in Wrocław. This place is certainly a city of tattoo fans. This year, Wrocław Tattoo Konwent broke last year's record attendance.

Tattoo Konwent's sideshows are very popular with tattoo fans too. This time the audience could admire a pole dance show by Berenika Nienadomska, who has gained pop-



ularity due to her success in Polish edition of Got Talent! Among artists who had their performance during convention you could find also the yoyo master Mateusz Mendyka and Wheelove, who specialises in acrobatics on the circus wheel. Tattoo fans could also admire old school vehicles, buy unique clothes, find out how to make dreadlocks and try craft beer. Sounds good right?



Tattoo Konwent is also a festival of music. During the event, seven very diverse bands appeared on stage—the lineup included such groups as: Maciej Szymczyk (electronic, ambient and ethnic music), Dj EPROM (electronic music), The Dog (hardcore), the legendary band Schizma (hardcore), The Fialky (punk rock), Pochwalone (modern folk), Syny (psy-



cho rap). DJ Ronin, Macbeat (Subwena) and DJ Novicky played for people resting in the chill zone on the roof.

The next steps for Tattoo Konwent are: Gdańsk (23rd and 24th of July), Katowice (24th and 25th of September) and Łódź (26th and 27th of November). Get your calendars out. ▣



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TEN MIGHTY FISTS

This image was shot at Wrocław Tattoo (Poland—23/24 April) by Kamila Burzymowska as part of her reportage on the event—and it gave us a great idea. Let's start a competition! We shall call the series Ten Mighty Fists. You can enter whether you're an amateur or a pro photographer throughout the whole of 2016 and we'll publish some of the best in Skin Deep as we go along. With enough entries, maybe we'll host an exhibition of the best early next year. Maybe we'll auction prints of them off in aid of a worthy tattoo charity... we have no idea but we'll figure it out as we go, so here's the plan:

You go take pictures and we'll think of how to best approach this from our side. It's open to all regardless of where you live, regardless of age, sex or musical preference too. Please ensure all images submitted are 300dpi and of a damn good original size—nobody wants to do great work only to find it's the size of a postage stamp in the real world.

Let's do this. With a couple of hundred images, that would be a great coffee table book, right?

You can find Kamila here: kamilaburzymowska.pl



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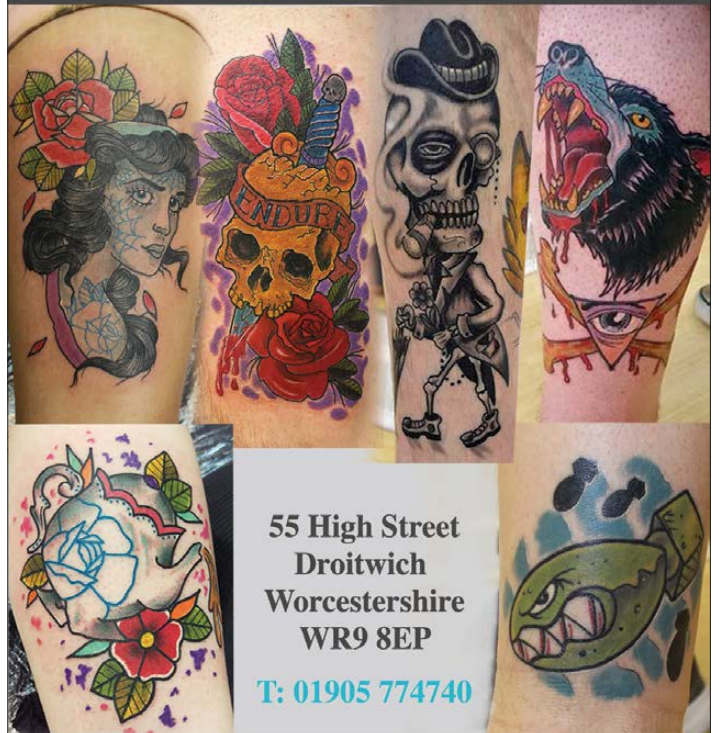
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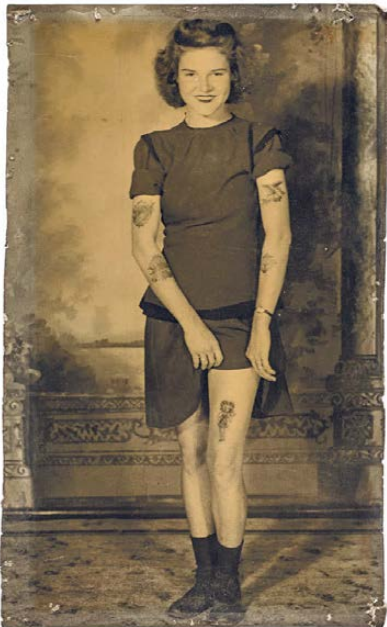
REVIEW

VINTAGE TATTOO FLASH

From the collection of Jonathan Shaw

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Jonathan Shaw should be well known around these parts. A traveller in the extreme, blogger, some-kind-of folk hero—you can probably insert your own pseudo title here and that would be correct too—but for the purposes of this review, we shall call him a curator of underground art.

Vintage Tattoo Flash encompasses (more or less) 75 years of tattoo art ranging from the 1900s Bowery through Texas in the fifties and right up to the single needle tattooing of seventies LA. It's all here too: flash sheets from Ed Smith, Colonel Todd, Bob Shaw, Holt & Rowe... if you're looking for a history book that tells a story like no other, look no further. It's interesting that tattooing was like this for so long and formed the incredibly strong roots of what we have today and yet, such practices are hardly anywhere to be found anymore. Even this way of thinking is practically non-existent.

In all likelihood, this personal collection is one of the largest in existence today and it should be noted that in Shaw's introduction, he refers to Vintage Tattoo Flash as 'this first volume'—which no doubt means at some point, there are more exciting offerings to come.

I think it's also worth mentioning here that in amongst this life which has been very much worth living, Shaw continues to work despite being retired for some 15 years. With luminaries such as Johnny Depp, Kate Moss, Orlando Bloom, Iggy Pop (this is a long list), Shaw has single handedly—even more so than Ed Hardy for me—proved that tattooing done right, transcends all criticism.

Anyway, if you're a fan of tattoos that look like tattoos, you'd be well advised to add this to your collection. 256 pages of magic is not something to be sniffed at or taken lightly.

One thing is for sure—in years to come, nobody will be treasuring any book called Vintage Instagram Tattoos.

Sion Smith

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P9

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AN EYE IS UPON YOU

A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

I've never been particularly interested in treading the usual pathways or reaching the expected milestones. The whole 'education, career, marriage, property, babies, bigger property [and then spending as many weeks as possible on a foreign beach, getting away from the life you've worked so hard to build]' thing has been more bemusing than motivating...

I'm not really sure why. My big sister has ticked all the boxes (and in the expected order) and her family, home and lifestyle are perfectly lovely just as they are. I've never made a conscious decision to reject the status quo, but I can more or less pinpoint when my disinterest began. It started pretty early.

It certainly predated the iconic 'Choose Life' monologue from the 1996 film *Trainspotting*. John Hodges' screenplay, adapted from Irvine Welsh's novel is, in hindsight, arguably one of Generation X's defining moments, at least in the UK. 'Choose Life' spoke to many of my peers in much the same way that Pink Floyd had spoken to our predecessors about how they didn't 'need no education'. We certainly didn't intend to 'choose fixed interest mortgage repayments' or 'electrical tin openers'

I'm sure a sociologist or modern historian could make a convincing argument here about the legacy of the 'Baby Boomers' and how they impacted those that were born immediately after, but back then it didn't feel like we were reacting to or rebelling against what had come before. We were in the moment, and you can't 'choose a big fucking television' if you can't afford to buy one. We weren't rallied or inspired or educated by the art, films and music of the time, rather, it pointed a finger at what we already knew. We looked into a slightly cracked cultural mirror and saw the woodchip wallpaper on the wall behind us. Now, when someone looks at my tattoos and tells me that I'll 'never get a job in a bank', I get a very similar feeling.

I'd known the typical domestic narrative wasn't for me as early as infant school, although I couldn't see it until much later. I didn't play with *Tiny Tears*, or queue up for a turn in the *Wendy House* and I didn't get why *Jennifer Yellow Hat* had to come in and help lay the dinner table while *Johnny Yellow*



Alice Totemica



PAULA HARDY KANGELOS

[DiamondBetty](#)

I'VE ACCIDENTALLY CULTIVATED A HABIT THAT HAS LEFT ME WITH VERY LITTLE TIME OR MONEY FOR ANYTHING ELSE

Hat was still outside, halfway up a tree. (Editors note: should you ever think about changing your name, *Johnny Yellow Hat* is a good choice). My toy tea sets were receptacles for making potions (and some months later, for freaking out my sister when we discovered the enormous amount of mould I had accidentally cultivated by leaving said potions on the window sill). The old pram I was given 'for my dollies' made an acceptable go-cart in the folded position. I shaved my Barbie doll's head and painted her entire body purple with a jumble sale bottle of lumpy nail polish. I stuck 'Save



Worzel Gummidge stickers all over my Sindy house.

I didn't exactly reject what I was given, but I didn't accept it either. I've always worked with what I have, made adaptations rather than choices, rolled with the punches and made lemonade. In Trainspotting terms, I chose neither 'leisure wear and matching luggage' nor a heroin addiction. Instead, I've accidentally cultivated a habit that has left me with very little time or money for anything else. I started a tattoo collection, and like the mould on the shed window sill, it grew and grew, and it freaked out my big sister.

I've never tried to tot up how much I've spent on tattoos, although I'm often asked. I generally respond with an honest answer about a single piece and leave the enquirer to do the mental arithmetic. I can usually tell when they've finished multiplying the figure I gave by the surface area of the human body due to the gaping mouth, so I explain that it's my thing, comparable to how other folk prioritise cars, or holidays, or football season tickets and in that context, they usually get it. Becoming tattooed is another adaptation—we don't get to choose our bodies, but decorating mine has given me contentment beyond any monetary price.

My tattoos are as unplanned as the rest of my life—I had one tattoo, two tattoos, five, ten, fifteen. I stopped counting, and began counting the gaps instead. Now, even the gaps are disappearing—if I wanted to, I could probably abandon my 20 year scenic route and finish the whole thing within a year. I could even use the extra time to truly contemplate the ultimate philosophical tattoo question, 'What will you do when you run out of space?'

But the universe, it seems, has made plans behind my tattooed back. The little girl who ignored baby dolls still somehow ended up with two marvellous children, and the nomad who carried her world on her body like a snail with a painted shell is now, inexplicably, about to tick another mainstream box. My landlord is selling so I am buying, I'm making an accidental property purchase. At least I'll never have to get a job in a bank. ▣

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Beccy Rimmer reflects upon her first year as a Skin Deep columnist...

This April marked my one year anniversary as a writer for this magazine -where has the time gone! 365 days, 14 issues—what have I learnt along the way?

I always thought my status as a ‘newbie’ would be a massive hindrance. How can someone who has only been getting tattooed for 8 years, and writing about it for 2, possibly be entitled to any viewpoint?

My comfort zone is the arts. I’ve worked in theatre and arts marketing and PR for 7 years. Within publicly-funded organisations, the art itself and the artist always comes first.

Marketing something, you may feel like a particular design, tagline or wording is going to sell a particular show, but the director or writer of the production may feel completely different.

In this situation, your main priority is to keep the artist happy. Working for non-profit companies there’s a constant awareness that, without the artists and their product, you wouldn’t have a job to do.

In stressful moments of negotiation, you have to remember that your role only exists because of their creations. The result of this is an attitude of appreciation and respect towards all those involved in the final product—be it stand-up comedy, ballet, opera, Shakespeare, mime, whatever.

A realisation that you are there to support really does make the industry a nicer place to be in. The artists are happy to have people encourage them, which in turn makes you proud to be part of what they’re doing.

I thought my transition from an arts marketer to a tattoo writer would be a huge change. Only upon reflection have I realised the extent to which those jobs are similar.

At the end of these columns I am often campaigning for industry change, in the form of positive attitudes and collaborations that can push everyone forward together.

If there’s one thing I have learned above all else, it’s that tattooing is art. It’s not a well-oiled, branded machine, with strict guidelines, long-term planning and shiny final products.

It’s dirty and bloody, it’s colourful, crazy, stressful, weird and wonderful. It’s a community, it’s bizarre, bonkers, and in the end,



WE CAN HELP SHAPE, COMMUNICATE AND APPRECIATE IT, BUT WE WILL NEVER CREATE IT



BECCY RIMMER
BeccyRimmer

completely rewarding. Just like any performance, painting or one-man show.

It’s created by the people working as artists within it, not in any way by those of us on the exterior. We can help shape, communicate and appreciate it, but we will never create it.

My entire career so far has been working for non-profit organisations, where my main aim is to make art completely accessible to as many people in the world as possible, and to communicate how amazing an artistic experience can be. Everyone should have equal access to, and the chance to respond to, art and creativity.

The past year, I had been subconsciously following these same rules in my tattoo writing, without even thinking about it.

When this is printed, I will tear out this page and pin it to my wall. For the next 12 months, I will try to never lose this mantra. □



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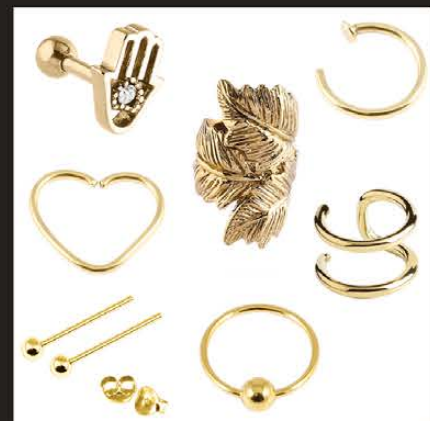
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Beneficial for healed tattoos, keeping your skin nourished and preserving tattoo vibrancy.



"I've had great results healing with it, as well as using it during the full process of tattooing"

Mark Bester, Marked For Life

TRY IT TODAY - 0800 0851 216

100% NATURAL
TATTOO
BUTTERLUXE
CARE
BEFORE DURING AFTER



INGREDIENTS

Calendula oil,
Hemp seed oil,
Vitamin E oil,
Shea butter,
Coconut oil,
Mango butter
and essential oils