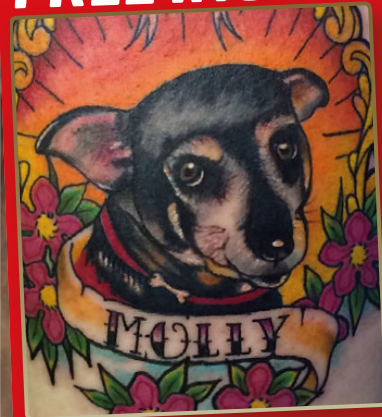


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# TATTOO MACHINES

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# IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT

So there I was, sitting in an airport departure lounge with my crime novel, minding my own business when a 'famous person' came to sit down next to me. I should point out this is because it was the only chair available and not because she thought I would be great company while we waited for the boarding gates to open.

I spotted her coming halfway across the room but kept my eyes more or less glued into the pages where Steve Carella was doing something very important for his deaf and mute wife, Teddy. Steve Carella works for the 87th Precinct and is the best detective on the squad. Once upon a time, I thought he was so damn cool, I wanted to be him but then, I was about 14 and we're all allowed such flights of fancy at that age.

So, there I sit with my eyes firmly planted inside of Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here because to raise them and say hello would mean to acknowledge I 'know' who she is, when actually, she is famous for No Reason At All. No respectful reason anyway... and if she was that damn famous, she sure wouldn't be flying with EasyJet and sitting in a fake comfortable chair next to me.

Anyway, she's hammering away at her phone with fingernails she bought from a shop and, from the corner of my eye, I see that she has booted up her camera app. I assume she is going to take a selfie, which she does - two or three of them - because nobody that gets their fingernails from a shop can go longer than five minutes without taking one.

Then, she tries to take a picture of the tattoos on my arms without me noticing. Well, I think that's what it was all about... either it was the tattoos or the fact that I had mysteriously grown my own fingernails or she quite fancied the look of my book.

She muscled all of these things into one shot and she pauses as she is about to share it with her Magical World Of Friends in which she is followed by 375,856 people, when I interrupt: "What are you going to do with that now?"

She jumps. Rumbled.

"I liked your tattoo. I was going to share it



Little Swastika

**FROM THE CORNER OF MY EYE, I SEE THAT SHE HAS BOOTED UP HER CAMERA APP. I ASSUME SHE IS GOING TO TAKE A SELFIE, WHICH SHE DOES...**



**SION SMITH • EDITOR**  
editor@skindeep.co.uk  
@mrsionsmith  
@skindeep\_uk  
skindeepmag

with my friends. Can I tag you in?"

"Sure. Why the hell not."

"What's your name?"

"Steve Carella. C-a-r-e-l-l-a."

"What do you do?"

"I'm a detective."

"Really? You don't look like one."

"I wouldn't be a very good detective if I looked like one, would I?"

"I guess. Wow. That's really cool."

"Don't blame me though if you get a visit from my boss after you've shared that."

Fingernail Spice hovers her nail above the 'post' button.

"How come?"

"I can't tell you. Undercover - but these aren't even real tattoos."

"Oh."

"This isn't even my real hair."

On which note, I find myself no longer a person of interest and my picture is deleted from appearing in The Timeline Of The Universe.

But for one fleeting moment there I really was Steve Carella.

Dreams still grow even when you forget to wish.



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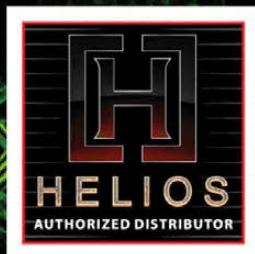
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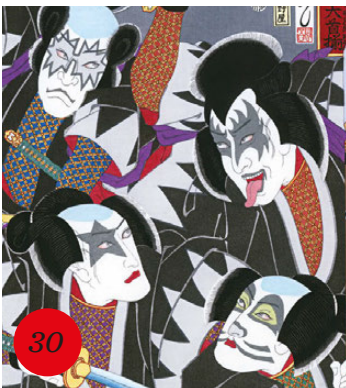
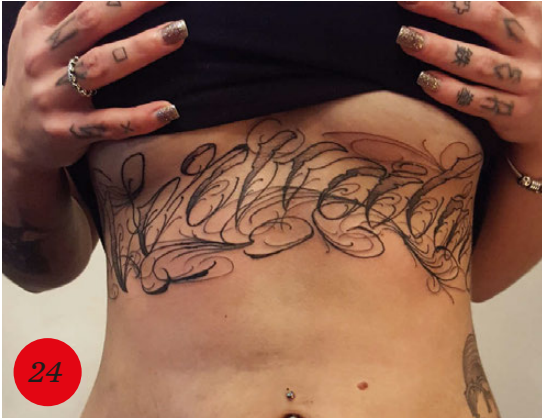
**SILVERBACK INK**



**KURO SUMI**

**PANTHERA**<sup>XP</sup>





**14 TORN**

Once fleshy vessels of living organs and intricate blood networks have since disappeared, these 'cut out' skins are now the fabric of one's past...

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In *After Hours*, Wayne Simmons talks to some of his favourite artists about the things they get up to when the studio lights go down. This month, he meets Kat Wilson, tattooist and waxwork sculptor

**24 WRITING ON THE WALL**

Beccy Rimmer meets an artist breaking boundaries in the lettering world.

**30 UKIYO-E PROJECT**

To take two globally known hard-rock

bands and put them into traditional Japanese culture is the crazy idea of *Ukiyo-e Project*. They show that even in the troubled world of *Ukiyo-e*, the craft is able to reinvent itself... and, maybe even able to find its own path in the future.

**36 SIX GUNNS LOADED**

Gunnar is an artist that needs no introduction at all. Out in the wilds of Virginia, he sits down to empty a coffee pot with Sion Smith.

**66 BLOOD MAGIC**

If you've never been to *Sacred Tattoo* in New York City, you're missing out. Take a look at *Sacred Gallery's* latest two-person solo show featuring new works from Nick Baxter and Jon Clue and you'll soon be forced to agree.

**74 THE TRANSFORMATIVE TATTOO**

Sean Herman continues to bring us stories that mean something behind his tattooing.

**82 ENTER THE DRAGON**

Crez grabbed his first machines when he was 17 and made his way through different styles before specialising in Japanese. At 40 years old, Crez is still the punk-rocker he used to be and more than ever as a tattooer, he is determined to perpetuate the dialogue between East and West.

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All you need to know about the show from the city nobody ever wants to go home from.

**THE USUAL SUSPECTS**

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**THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS**

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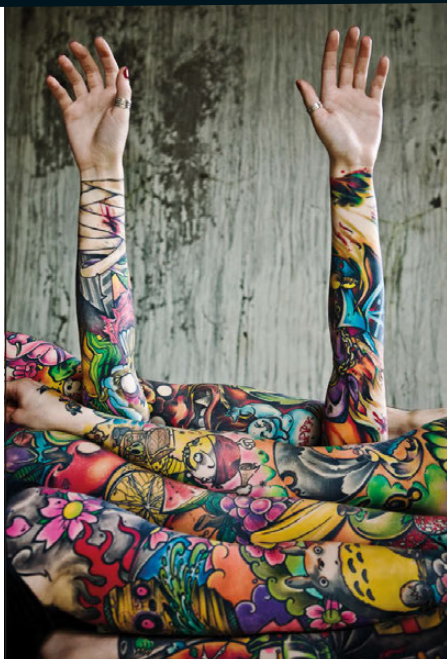
Then grab your kit and gear up for The National Tattoo Photography Awards taking place at Tattoo Freeze, 29th January 2017 at Telford International Centre.

Now in its 8th year, we'll be on the hunt for the very best tattoo themed photograph and giving the winner £250 CASH PRIZE!

This year, there are even more ways to enter:  
1) Enter on our website at [tattoofreeze.com/entertainment/photography-competition](http://tattoofreeze.com/entertainment/photography-competition)  
2) Enter via Instagram & Facebook by using the hashtag #TattooFreezePhotography

Don't forget to tag us in your shots! Simply snap and share your photo, tag @skindeep\_mag and #TattooFreezePhotography for your chance to win!

We welcome all levels of photography, from amateur to professional, old to young, so don't be shy and get involved. We can't wait to see your shots!



**INK MASTER CROWNS...**

**This week, Ryan Ashley was named winner of Ink Master Season 8**, earning her a cash prize of \$100,000, a feature article in Inked, the ultimate bragging rights title of 'Ink Master' and a guest spot at Oliver Peck's Elm Street Tattoo. In addition to these winnings, Ashley won a brand new Dodge Charger.

This season it was Peck vs. Núñez as the judges picked their own teams of tattoo artists to advise throughout the competition. Thirty of the top tattoo artists from around the country were whittled down to two teams of nine, who battled it out all season in permanent ink in various tattoo challenges that not only tested the artists' technical skills, but also their on-the-spot creativity, with competitors creating and executing original tattoos on "human canvases."

Each week's challenges focused on a different tattoo technique and style. After every challenge, the contestants faced a tough panel made up of musician, filmmaker and artist Dave Navarro (Jane's Addiction) as well as world-renowned tattoo artists Chris Núñez (Hand Crafted Tattoo) and Oliver Peck (Elm Street Tattoo).

The final three contestants—Kelly Doty, owner and artist at Helheim Gallery in Salem, MA; Gian Karle, traveling tattoo artist from Puerto Rico, and Ryan Ashley, owner and artist at The Strange & Unusual Oddities Parlor in Kingston, PA—were each assigned a master canvas and sent back to their home bases to complete a 24-hour chest-piece tattoo.

In addition, the three finalists also completed seven-hour tattoos leading into the live finale. During the finale, fans voted to determine who completed this challenge the best, with the most votes earning a spot in the top two. After thousands of tweets, it was determined that Ryan Ashley had the best live tattoo of the evening, which secured her spot in the final two. After the judges reviewed the artwork, Gian Karle earned the second spot in the final two.

As Ashley and Karle revealed their master canvases to the judges—and America—in the end, Ryan Ashley was named the season 8 winner of "Ink Master."



**THING GALLERY**

**Thing Gallery is looking for new works to exhibit and sell in their online gallery.** They are offering established tattooists a Thing hand or sheet and the opportunity to exhibit your piece on their website and throughout their social media. If you're not clued in on what they do, rush over here—[thinggallery.com](http://thinggallery.com)—and find out. A hand sure is a beautiful thing.





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**Adam White**  
 Alex Davies  
**Alex Trowell**  
 Alby Brown  
**Alistair Barnett**  
 Andy McDonald  
**Aneta Kwiecien**  
 Antonois Galinakis  
**Ash Wilkinson**  
 Ben Glasspool  
**Ben Labrum**  
 Bex Priest  
**Boz De Niro**  
 Brian Hepworth  
**Carly Jane Upson**  
 Cathy Sue  
**Charlee Darwin**  
 Cheryl Geary  
**Chris Bowater**  
 Chris Burwin  
**Chris Lee**  
 Chris Skinwalker  
**Clare Lambert**  
 Clarke Dudley  
**Connor Guise**  
 Craig Biggs  
**Craig James**  
 Damian Cooper  
**Dan Ball**  
 Dan Dyson  
**Dariusz Vidziunas**  
 Davide Marazzina  
**Daytona Williams**  
 Dean Kerr  
**Deebz Tattooor**  
 Dek Kent  
**Donatas Lasys**  
 Emjay  
**Esmé Loasby**  
 Fabian Gonzalez  
**Federico Amaterasu**  
 Gavin Dunbar  
**Gavin Guest**  
 Giles Twigg  
**Glenn Cuzen**  
 Graydon Abbott  
**Hannah Holden**  
 Hollie May  
**Hori Isra Takjo**  
 Ian Cartwright  
**Ian Moore**  
 Jake Simpson  
**Jakub Sarz**  
 James Deakin

**Jamie Watson**  
 Javi Del Valle  
**Jess Brown**  
 Jo Ann Middleton  
**John Bell**  
 John Tilt  
**Jordan Baker**  
 Josh Jeffery  
**Josh Wilson**  
 Josie Sexton  
**Junior Perez Carbajal**  
 Krystian Dranikowski  
**Laura Swift**  
 Lauren Hanson  
**Lee Compton**  
 Lee McMahon  
**Lewis Weatherley**  
 Lisa Elsom  
**Liz Cox**  
 Luigi Gala  
**Mac McCarthy**  
 Macca Simms  
**Manos Skaros**  
 Marek Haras  
**Mark Brown**  
 Marie Cox  
**Martin Rimmer**  
 Martin Smith  
**Mateusz Starczewski**  
 Melvin Luijckx  
**Melissa Howells**  
 Michael Cunliffe  
**Mihai Vasile**  
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**Tears Ink**  
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**Tony Cox**  
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 Vee Takaloo  
**Wayne Butler**  
 Wayne Goodwin  
**Will Gerber**  
 Wojciech Tek Taczala

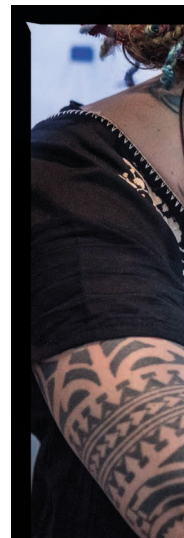
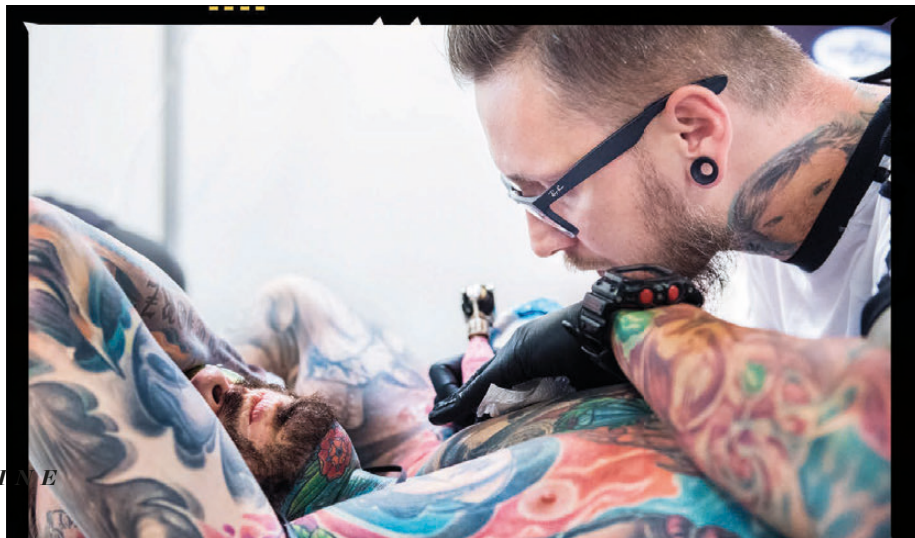
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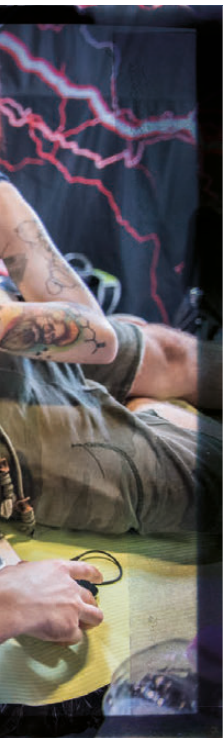




Alex Pancho





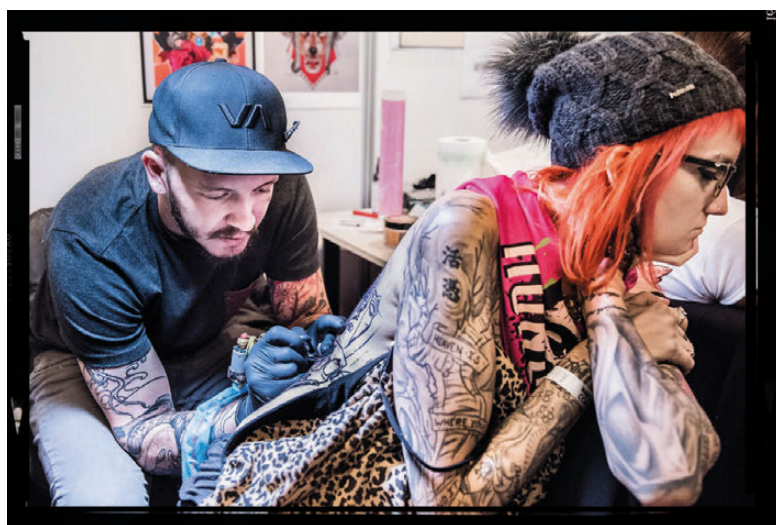


Róbert A Borbás



# Scenes from the **WARSAW TATTOO CONVENTION**

8-9 OCTOBER



**T**his was the 4th edition of the Warsaw Tattoo Convention and this year 280 tattoo artists from 25 countries gathered over two floors for what has become one of the most respected shows in the world.

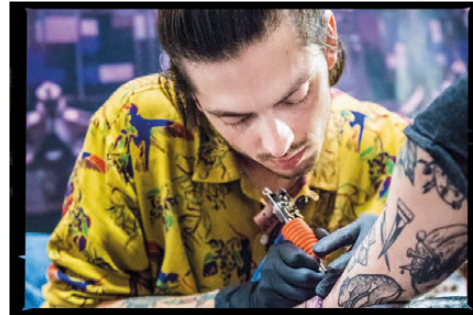
Some of the great artists in attendance were: Robert Borbas, Damian Gorski, Domantas Parvainis, Bartosz Panas, Levgen Knysh, Tin Machado, Todor Penev, Benjamin Laukis, Tomasz Tofi Torfinski, Karol Rybakowski, Steve Butcher, Evgeniy Goryachiy, Master Diau An, Davee Blows, Master Hori Shou, Robert Zyla, George Drone, G-bor Jelo Jelencsik, Ben Klishevskiy, Max Pniewski, Kostas Baronis, Tibor Szalai Tibi, Alex Pancho, Alex Mansuy, Siobhan Darch, Periklis Peros, Borislav Dementiev, Alex Morozov, Deni Aktemirov, Aleksandr O'kharin, Maya Sapiga, Andrey Lukovnikov, Master Diau Chi, Master Hori Tora, John Maharjan.

*For a full list and more details on the show: [tattooconvention.waw.pl](http://tattooconvention.waw.pl)*

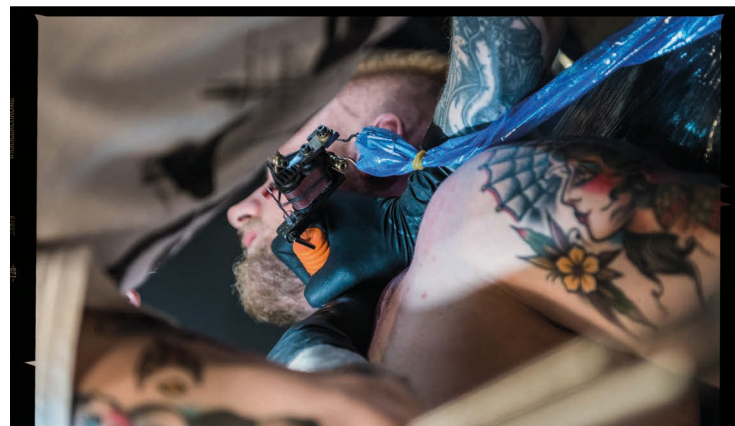




Kostas Baronis Proki



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# TORN



*These torn pieces of flesh are remnants of the once lived. People who suffered this mortal coil, now only exist in abstract form. Once fleshy vessels of living organs and intricate blood networks have since disappeared, these 'cut out' skins are now the fabric of one's past existence*

**W**e adorn our skin with clothing, jewellery, piercing, and ink to construct a social identity, turning heads in attraction or perhaps stirring repulsion in others. In my role of medical photographer I capture the body by framing and dismembering the body with my lens. Selecting areas of anatomy to record pathology; locations of the body are captured whilst typically concealing the identity of the patient.

Picturing the face is starkly different; we find it second instinct to liken a face to a name, to a status, and to a per-

son's constructed identity. These images are obviously less ambiguous, the face draws recollection; we can easily visualise a loved one by his or her face. But to single out an elbow, a knee or finger, could we do the same? Yet the marking of a tattoo is strongly linked to a carrier's identity, they in essence can be as strong, if not stronger than the face, as an indicator of one's individuality.

I take my cue here from criminal identifiers; yes his eyes are blue, he has a Roman nose, and a heavy brow, but so do many others. Yet his love heart tattoo with the incorrect spelling of Tiffany, is a far better link to the man in

**THESE IMAGES ARE OBVIOUSLY LESS AMBIGUOUS, THE FACE DRAWS RECOLLECTION; WE CAN EASILY VISUALISE A LOVED ONE BY HIS OR HER FACE...**





**... BUT TO SINGLE OUT AN ELBOW, A KNEE OR FINGER,  
COULD WE DO THE SAME?**

question than a face in a crowd of gormless faces.

In response, when we examine these skins, from their somewhat ambiguous presentation, can we really be sure an identity cannot be linked? Which in consequence draws in controversial debates surrounding the ethics and moral standing of the proprietor's (Wellcome Images) mode of exhibition. Should we be allowed to see them at all?

After considerable thought I believe we should. If we are not a product of our identity, why can't our bodies, and

specifically our skin, be a leftover of our existence? These skins date to the late nineteenth-century, and if carefully preserved can live on, long into the future in both the real world (museum) and the digital (image library).

These crude markings are a stark reminder of the permanence of tattooing. They have outlived the wearer, and continue to be gazed upon long after the body has departed. They are priceless anatomical artefacts; forming what could be likened to a history book, but instead of typed pages, sheets of skin and ink. ▣



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 [Test] Aromatic amines and carcinogens according to ResAP(2008)1: Part 1a, Part 1b



**Part 1a**  
 Investigation of aromatic amines with carcinogenic, mutagenic, sensitising properties according to COE Resolution ResAP(2008)1  
 Detection limit: 1 ppm; Limit: as low as technically avoidable

EN 14362, § 64 LFGB 82.02-2,3,4,9  
 MS Analysis  
 C Analysis

Amount (ppm)	Amine	EC-No.	CAS-No.
---	Biphenyl-4-ylamine	202-177-1	119-90-4
---	Benzidine	202-199-1	119-93-7
---	4-Chloro-o-toluidine	202-411-6	838-88-0
---	2-Naphthylamine	202-080-4	120-71-8
---	o-Aminoazotoluene	202-591-2	101-14-4
---	5-Nitro-o-toluidine	202-765-8	95-80-7
---	4-Chloroaniline	203-401-0	90-04-0
---	4-Methoxy-m-phenylenediamine	210-406-1	60-09-3
---	4,4'-Methylenedianiline	202-974-4	293733-21-8
---	3,3'-Dichlorobenzidine	202-109-0	399-95-1



**Part 1b**  
 Investigation of carcinogens classified in Categories 1, 2 and Commission and mentioned in the Council Directive 1967/54 according to COE Resolution ResAP(2008)1  
 Detection limit: 1 ppm

EN 14362, § 64 LFGB 82.02-2,3,4,9  
 MS Analysis  
 C Analysis

Amount (ppm)	Amine	EC-No.	CAS-No.
---	4,4'-Oxydianiline	202-977-0	106-50-3
---	4,4'-Thiodianiline	205-370-9	95-68-1

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# AFTER HOURS

*What do tattoo artists do when they're not tattooing? In After Hours, Wayne Simmons talks to some of his favourite artists about the things they get up to when the studio lights go down. This month, he meets Kat Wilson, tattooist and waxwork sculptor*

**W**ith most artists I interview for the mag, becoming a tattooist was the Holy Grail. They've been immersed within the industry from an early age, at first getting tattooed themselves before seeking out an apprenticeship so they can work at the other end of the needle. Not so much for Kat Wilson of Hello Sailor in Blackpool. For Kat, tattooing was Plan B after she'd indulged her first passion.

'I landed my dream job right out of college,' she tells me. 'I heard there was a vacancy for a sculptor at the local waxworks and thought I'd chance it, never thinking in a million years I'd actually get it.' Formal qualifications weren't important. The application, so to speak, was to take a bag of clay, go make a head and the best one wins. But like a lot of great artists before her, Kat didn't play by the rules. 'The head was supposed to be Johnny Wilkinson, that's what we'd all been asked to do, but mine accidentally started looking like Gollum so



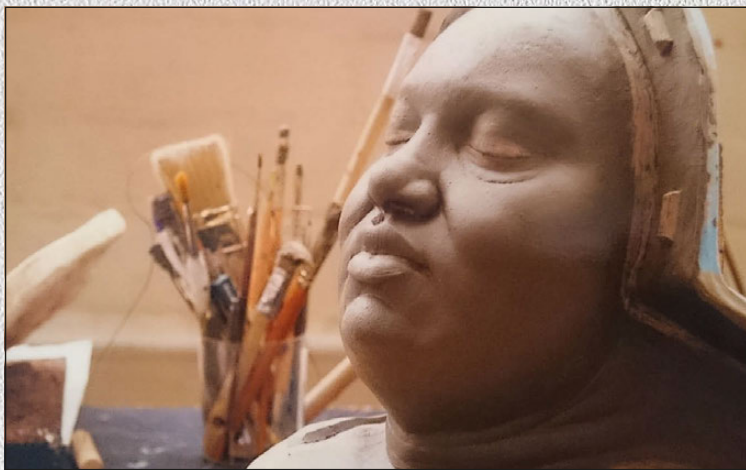
I just went with that,' she laughs. Unknown to Kat, her soon-to-be boss, Mike Conroy, was a bit of Tolkien nerd and that might have played a sizeable part in her getting the job. 'They never actually told me what had impressed them, but, looking back, the head I made must have been cringe-worthy basic.'

As part of her new job, Kat ended up working on some models for Louis Tussauds. Awesome

though that all sounds, this new career of Kat's wasn't without its challenges. 'The tricky thing is, sculpting isn't really the sort of job you can do Monday to Friday 9-5 so it became quite difficult to keep up enthusiasm. Also they were pretty tight with budget and the time you were allowed to spend on each model, which really took the shine off the whole thing. But I learned so much there from the head sculptor, Mike. I'll always be thankful to him for that.'

A lifelong horror fan, Kat's first dalliances into model making were born out of a desire to recreate the special effects





**chamber horrors**  
IT'S YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE!

Deep in the basement of Louis Tussaud's lurks a gruesome collection of the world's scariest movie monsters and the most horrific real-life murderers, in a recently refurbished wax museum that's now spookier than ever before.

Cold-blooded characters and spine-chilling scenes from some of Hollywood's scariest horror movies, including *Dracula*, *The Exorcist*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Scream*, help to create a frighteningly intense atmosphere in the cavernous depths of the Chamber.

New models from the cult British horror flick, *Hellraiser*, will curdle even the bravest visitors' blood, with figures of "Pinhead" (played by actor Doug Bradley in the movie), "Butterball" and others peering out monastically from the eerie darkness.

Fantasy turns to grim reality as you pass the cells of some of the world's most notorious serial killers and murderers. If you've got the stomach for it, you can read about their horrendous deeds and learn how they paid for these terrible crimes.

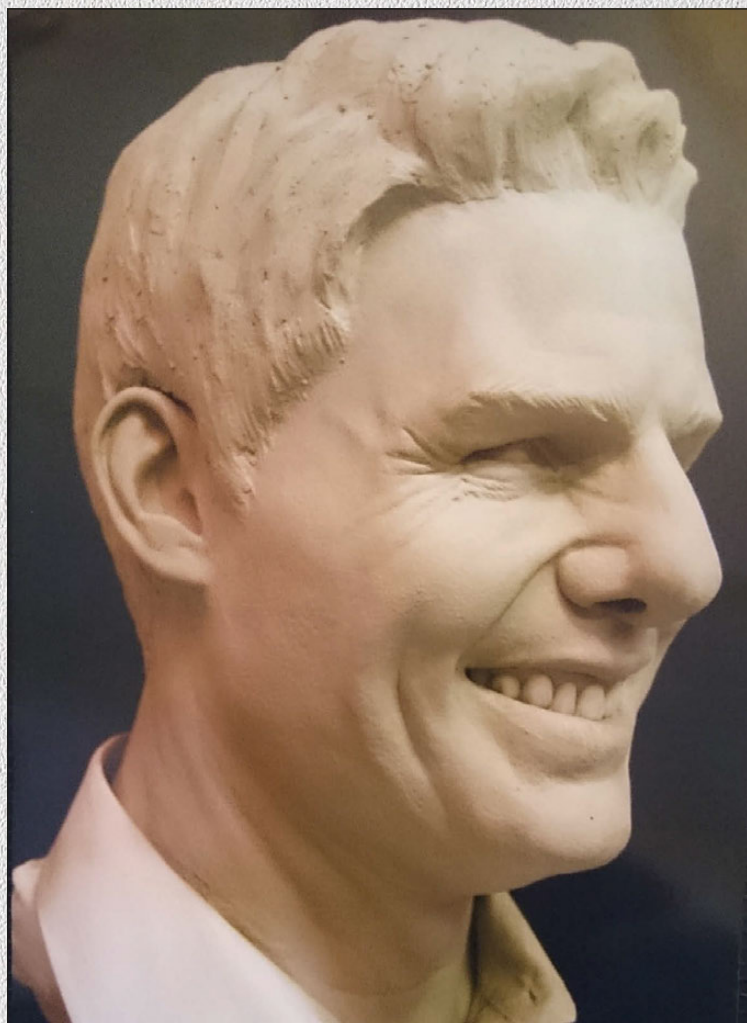
Charles Manson, Fred & Rosemary West, Peter Sutcliffe - it's a haunting jail cell of the most evil people ever to walk this Earth, none more depraved than one of Britain's worst mass-murders, Dennis Nilsen.

**DARE YOU BRAVE THE 'ROBBERIES'?**  
This nightmare interactive experience will test even the coolest of nerves. As you make your way through the 'bodies', try not to panic - or you could be the next one hanging from a chair!

**THE LANCASTHIRE WITCHES**  
Nearly 400 years ago John was a great big witchcraft. You can Lancashire families tortured and hung 20th August 1612.

There are some well graves used today originate from the hangings, such as 'Y bucket' - used when hangman kicked the from under the victim falling your leg - did not break the relative paid small to pull the legs of to quicken their death. Money for old rope a hanging the hand dropped the rope it to the crowd. Hence the saying.

**WAX FACE**  
Wax is an organic material, becoming more brittle and fragile with time. All wax models are kept to show replacement heads to be made in case of accidents or just old eyes!



I HEARD THERE WAS A VACANCY FOR A SCULPTOR AT THE LOCAL WAXWORKS AND THOUGHT I'D CHANCE IT, NEVER THINKING IN A MILLION YEARS I'D ACTUALLY GET IT

she was seeing in movies. 'Liquid latex and those crappy little Halloween make-up pallets were probably the starting point,' she laughs. 'Then I discovered the world of garage kit models and was instantly hooked. From there I had a go at making my own models out of Super Sculpey.'

Back then, there was a world of influences to draw upon. SFX was enjoying its heyday with several artists becoming household names. But Kat dug deeper to find her inspiration. 'I think when you love certain horror films you want to find out who's behind all that awesome gore.

So you scroll through the credits to find the names of the SFX crew and it goes from there.' Tom Savini is one of the most prolific from that time, of course, but there are others such as Rick Baker, Rob Bottin and Stan Winston who Kat also connected with. One of her absolute favourites is Dick Smith who worked on horror classic, *The Exorcist*. Kat describes his work as revolutionary and she took a course to learn more about his techniques. 'Then I came across Mike Hill's work at the waxworks,' she says. 'Some of his pieces are still there and they are brilliant. He lives in LA now and his work is just phenomenal.'

Of course, the industry has changed, CGI replacing





I DISCOVERED THE WORLD OF GARAGE KIT MODELS AND WAS INSTANTLY HOOKED. FROM THERE I HAD A GO AT MAKING MY OWN MODELS OUT OF SUPER SCULPEY

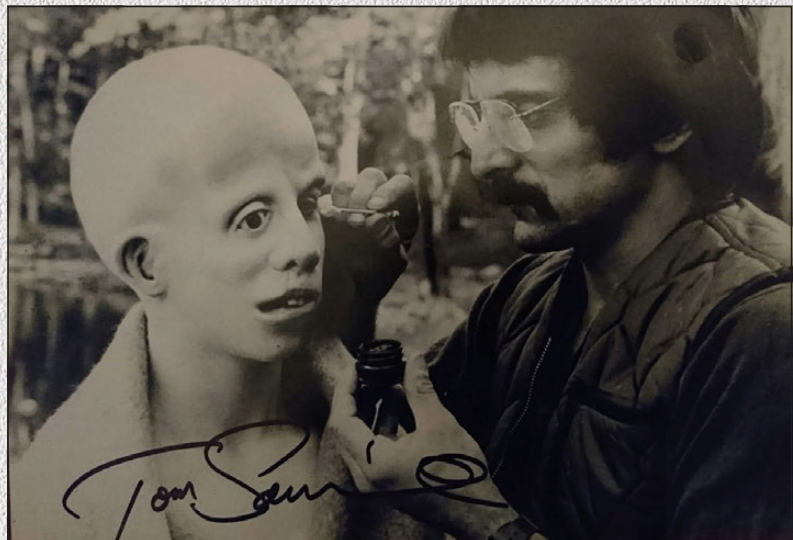
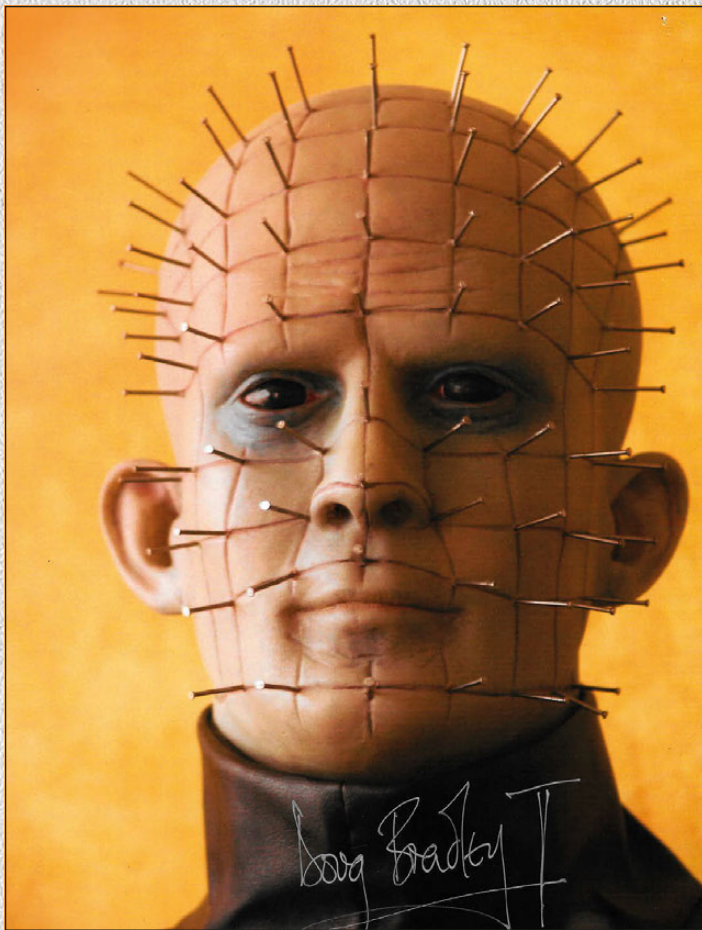
many of the practical effects that artists such as Savini and Smith would have worked so hard to create. It's a particular bugbear of mine, CGI and the dreaded blue screen fostering a lazy and, dare I say, less credible approach to SFX.

'It's definitely way over used,' Kat agrees. 'And I always feel sorry for the actors who have to deal with the lack of visual input. That must be really hard and something that's rarely remembered when you're watching the finished article.' But she isn't just as scathing of CGI as I am, pointing out that while it may not have been created by physical hands, it doesn't mean it's not art—or indeed credible. 'How they do it is actually mind blow-

ing,' she says, highlighting how it could just be a generational thing. 'I think kids would struggle to watch something without CGI. They've been kind of spoilt. We have trained our son to appreciate the old classics too, though.'

While her sculpting background certainly had a part in Kat taking up tattooing, the two art forms remain quite distinct in her eyes. Portraiture was a natural fit for her as she's so used to working with faces but for Kat that's where the two paths diverge. 'They're really quite different. With sculpting, you work quite slowly over the course of weeks, maybe even months. If something's not working, you just shave it off and build it up again.' Not





## I THINK KIDS WOULD STRUGGLE TO WATCH SOMETHING WITHOUT CGI. THEY'VE BEEN KIND OF SPOILT

so with tattooing, of course, when you're charging by the hour and nobody's too keen on having any appendages filed down. 'Yeah,' Kat laughs, 'it was a bit of an adjustment suddenly having one shot to get it right.'

Despite my earlier rant about CGI, Kat assures me that practical effects work is not dead in the water just yet and opportunities still exist. 'I've just started season 2 of Ash versus the Evil dead. If good old traditional SFX was ever more celebrated, it's that.' Kat herself hasn't left the SFX world completely. In fact, she's recently taken up a new gig courtesy of her friend, Kurt, who now works at the Horror Crypt, one of Blackpool's Golden Mile attractions. 'I've been asked to sculpt some monsters and help

with a revamp. It's exciting stuff and I can't wait to get my teeth back into it. I think he wants me to start with Frankenstein!' She's also embarked on something of a pet project, a labour of love, if you like, with her husband, Rat, reworking the entire set of original Aurora monsters. 'They were a bit shoddily made. I think the company realised how much money they could make and literally threw them together as fast as they could. The sculpture and detail are amazing but they are terrible casts. So he's building them and I'm fixing the seams. It's more fun that I'm making it sound.'

For those budding artists interested in following Kat's footsteps, she has plenty of advice to offer. 'Do your research and don't be afraid to directly ask someone for a job. Mail a few examples of your best work and you'll be kept in mind for future projects. Lots of times, they have very tight deadlines or a large project requires many hands on board. When the job ends, if you did it well you're likely to be asked back.'

Oh and if you're planning on working in horror, a strong stomach might also be advisable... ▣





# CIRQUE DU TATTOO FESTIVAL



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# The Writing on the Wall

Beccy Rimmer meets an artist breaking boundaries in the lettering world

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Some artists follow traditions—they have a rulebook, and they live by it. Some play around a little, attempt to re-write the rules. But some, very few actually... throw the rulebook out the fucking window.

One of those people, is lettering tattooist Jimmy Scribble.

Over the years, this Leeds-based artist has built a completely original style of script tattooing—a method through which the words themselves are completely unreadable.

When we first met, hearing Jimmy's motives, his processes, was completely inspiring. I was dying to share his work with you. People like him make the industry so forward-thinking, so interesting, so daring—for me, everything tattooing today (not should be, but) can be.

Let's get this show on the road...

## DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE.

A mash-up of calligraphy, graffiti and West Coast American-inspired letters. I try to keep it unique and 'in-your-face', more of a design than a piece of writing.

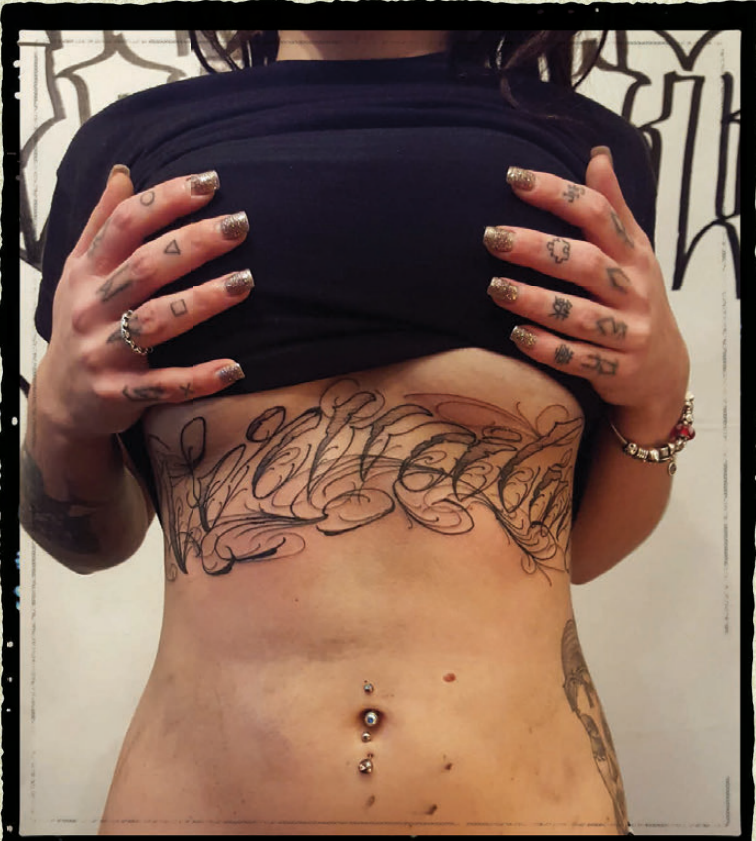
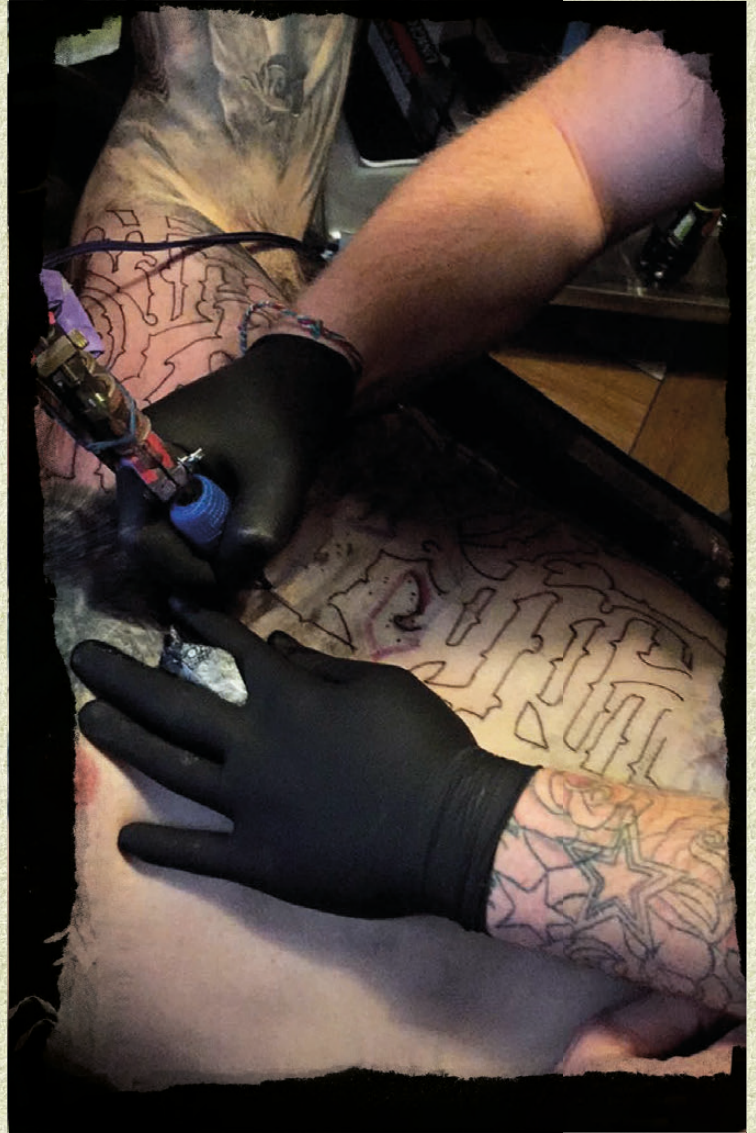
The more unreadable the better. I get the same question all the time... "but what does it say?" Why would people put it on their body permanently just to be readable to others? It's for the person wearing it, and it makes the piece that bit more interesting to the wearer, and those looking at it.

Each letter is a piece of art. I love how you can take one letter and change it a hundred different ways. You can't really do that with much else without changing what it is.

## WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN FOR YOU?

I've always loved art—in school, my art teacher was a graf-









fit artist, and it kind of went from there really. When I first started creating art, I never thought about having a specialty, but as time went on I knew I wanted to make my mark somehow. For me, lettering was something I could draw for hours on end and never get bored.

**WOULD YOU EVER TATTOO SOMETHING OTHER THAN SCRIPT?**

Probably not. Lettering is the only thing I'm interested in. Why go to somebody that specialises in lettering for

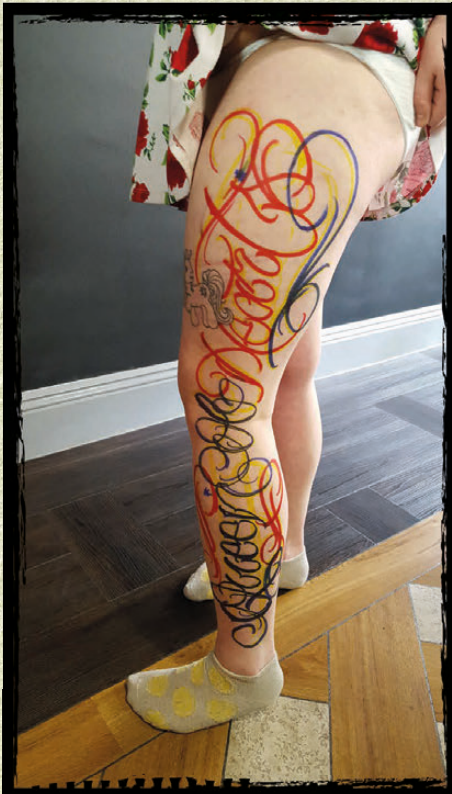
something else, when there are so many amazing artists in every corner of the country?

**WHY DO YOUR CUSTOMERS COME TO YOU?**

A lot of the time I tattoo quotes that mean something personally to the client. It might be a line from a poem their grandma used to read, or lyrics from their favourite song or film. But I also get clients that see one of my pre-drawn designs and they relate to the wording for whatever reason.

People get these tattoos as they are unique, you don't





see them often and to me, that speaks for itself. I'd rather my work stand out for it being different... that way I've done what I set out to do.

**WHAT ARE YOUR OWN PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, AND WHERE DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF SCRIPT?**

I haven't really thought too far ahead. I just know I want to continue making a name for myself, making friends within the industry and creating unique custom lettering and see where that road takes me. What more could I ask for?

I feel that script will always be around no matter what. Most people who have tattoos, have at least one script piece...

But I'd like to change how people look at lettering. The public often glance past it and don't truly consider it great artwork. They see it as just a bunch of letters with fancy swirls. That's something I'd like to alter in the future... really show people how unique it can be.

*From January 2017, Jimmy will be working at Artist Crew Tattoo Studios, Leeds.*



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[Red Seal]

接吻四人衆大首揃

彫師 渡辺和夫

摺師 吉田秀男


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# the battle for ukiyo-e

*To take two globally known hard-rock bands and put them into traditional Japanese culture is the crazy idea of Ukiyo-e Project. Beyond the great and totally unprecedented artworks created by the skilled Japanese craftsmen involved, they show that even in the troubled world of Ukiyo-e, the craft is able to reinvent itself... and, maybe even able to find its own path in the future*

ukiyoeproject.com  ukiyoeproject

**F**or Japanese tattoo addicts, great masters of the Japanese prints hold no secrets for them. Hokusai, Kuniyoshi, Yoshitoshi, Kunichika... it is among the works of these now familiar artists that collectors choose nowadays the motifs of their next tattoos. For tattooers, searching in the massive amount of artworks produced by artists in the 19th century provides an endless source of inspiration for the creation of new compositions, when they do not replicate faithfully popular characters of the Japanese folklore, as such as the ones from the Suikoden, historical figures as Taira no Tomomori, buddhist deities as Fudô Myô-ô.

Along the course of its history, Japanese print not only illustrated the past and the abstract, it also illustrated the present and the reality. In this way, the term ukiyo-e—used generally to designate prints produced in the 19th century—is explicit: ukiyo can be translated by ‘present’ and e by ‘drawing’. At that time, portraits of kabuki actors—true stars of the time you can compare to modern movie stars—were bought frenetically by the numerous kabuki fans among the urban population of the old Tokyo.

Ukiyo-e Project very clearly claims this integration of Japanese print in the contemporary world by taking from the entertainment industry, two of the most popular hard-rock bands of all time: Kiss and Iron Maiden. Two bands with a strong and rich environment able to provide enough creative inspiration to the artists involved in the project. These bands are also well known for being supported by a strong fan-base involving serious collectors; fans which Ukiyo-e Project targets directly with these images produced in a limited edition and sold at a quite



high price—the starting price is \$1250 dollars.

Whilst these images are no longer the popular and cheap images they were in the 19th century (at that time the price of a print was considered to be the price of a bowl of noodles), the reality is that the craft is striving to survive and look out for new solutions to preserve the knowledge which still exists. The process of producing a





CLASSIC UKIYO-E IS DYING. PARTLY BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T PROTECT THIS FIELD ANYMORE AND DOESN'T FINANCE ANY PROJECTS AS IT USED TO

print is a relatively complex and costly issue.

In Japan, it is the result of the association of several skills: an editor -(hamoto), an artist (e-shi), a wood-carver (horishi) and a printer (surishi) and Ukiyo-e Project chose to diligently work the same way. Concerned by the decline of the profession, Ms.Yuka Mitsui started the project. As a professional involved in the music business, she naturally made it grow from there and built up a team of experts.

We figured it would be a good idea to meet these highly skilled artists and the craftsmen involved in this project to understand the process of making a print and the interactions between them. Here, they share with us some of the vivid passions they have to perpetuate Japanese print culture, an art deeply involved in the Japanese tradition which of course, also belongs Japanese tattooing.

**THE CRAFTSMAN**

A craftsman from the 3rd generation, Yusuke Sekioka,



chose to follow the path of his predecessors. Not as a printer but as a woodcarver, work he has done for almost 39 years. At almost 60 years old, he's not only keeping up the good work but he's also keeping it at his home in Tokyo.

**WHAT IS THE REALITY OF THE ECONOMY OF THE JAPANESE PRINT TODAY?**

The classic ukiyo-e is dying. Partly because the government doesn't protect this field anymore and doesn't finance any projects as it used to. However, if the business is not doing very well, it is not something new. My father's generation was already complaining about it and was talking in favour of a 'new' ukiyo-e.

**DO WE HAVE AN IDEA ABOUT THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF WOODCARVERS STILL ACTIVE IN JAPAN?**

There are actually less than 10 working in Tokyo. 5 less than when I started this work 40 years ago. In Kyoto and even if we consider it as another culture—we usually associate the word ukiyo-e to the prints produced in the city of Edo, the name of the old Tokyo—only about 10 woodcarvers are still active. In Osaka it is hard to say, there is no identified group.

**ON WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS ARE YOU WORKING?**

Apart from the Ukiyo-e Project we are collaborating with the manga world and, more traditionally, Senjafuda's world. Senjafuda are kind of business cards that collectors trade for business purposes. They can also be done for a special occasion and given as a gift. In Japan for example, celebrating someone's 60th anniversary—kanreki—is an important event which you can celebrate by





editing a Senjafuda, but initially they were stuck on temples in order to connect the owner to the divinity and be assured of its protection.

#### **WHAT ARE THE MAIN DIFFICULTIES A WOODCARVER FACE WHEN ENGRAVING A PRINT?**

The hair and the eyes... and especially the hair of the women. Its realisation requires the finest level of delicacy possible, unlike men for which the processing can be harsher. It is a technical issue specific to woodcarving. To make curves, you have to give a proper strength to the tool and being at the same time careful not to push the wood too much otherwise it will break but it is not a work of strength. The face is also something difficult to do. In the case of kabuki prints and especially for actor's portraits (yakusha-e), the viewer should be able to recognise the actor depicted. For that reason, the Kiss prints have been particularly complicated because there are 4 faces to reproduce and almost as many pair of eyes.

#### **DOES THE INTERVENTION OF THE WOODCARVER HAS AN INFLUENCE ON THE ORIGINAL DESIGN?**

It is important for the woodcarver to preserve the line and the taste of the work of the illustrator, who steps in at the very beginning of the process of production of the print. At the same time, we reserve the right to adjust this line, in the case for example when lines are not straight or not the same size, in order to make it match the style of the ukiyo-e. Also, if there are too many nuances of colours, they will be reduced according to the way it is done

**YOU HAVE TO GIVE A PROPER STRENGTH TO THE TOOL AND BEING AT THE SAME TIME CAREFUL NOT TO PUSH THE WOOD TOO MUCH OTHERWISE IT WILL BREAK BUT IT IS NOT A WORK OF STRENGTH**

traditionally. This adjustment of the drawing is part of our work. The woodcarver has, in that sense, the right to judge the artwork and do some modifications, even very light, without asking for authorisation. It is not a surprise for the illustrator. He knows the final artwork will be a little bit different from the one he delivered.



#### **THE ARTIST**

Masumi Ishikawa is, at 38 years old, a Tokyo-ite illustrator whose classic style close to the ukiyo-e is solicited for projects as varied as Star Wars or Ukiyo-e Project.

#### **CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE ROLE YOU PLAYED IN THIS PROJECT?**

Traditionally, the illustrator delivers a drawing done with black ink from which the woodcarver carves the outlines of the drawings in a wooden board. Then, it is sent to the printer who makes a first print. Usually and after this step, the illustrator chooses the colours and where they should be

placed. I worked almost exclusively the same way on the images of Kiss and Iron Maiden, with the exception of the choice of the colours that I did first.

#### **HOW DOES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ARTIST (E-SHI) AND THE EDITOR (HAMOTO) WORK?**

Once the artist has agreed to participate to the project, we determine the number of images to do before discussing their content. This comes at a very early stage. Then, the artist produces a sketch which will be used as a base for the discussion and proceeds to do the modifications required until an agreement is found. It is a whole work in itself to try to reach a point which satisfies the artist and the producer. The artist is then hands off up until the realisation of the final drawing. Only the colours can be modified at the last moment. In total, these talks run through a period of two months to start the process of carving and printing.

#### **HOW DID THE CREATION OF THE DRAWINGS WORK?**

I knew these two bands and I already had in mind strong images. The made-up faces and the character of Eddie from Iron Maiden. When the project happened it was very simple to transfer these images into the world of





ONLY THE COLOURS CAN BE MODIFIED AT THE LAST MOMENT. IN TOTAL, THESE TALKS RUN THROUGH A PERIOD OF TWO MONTHS TO START THE PROCESS OF CARVING AND PRINTING

the ukiyo-e that I knew very well and in which I took a lot of references. In this way, for the representation of the actor who looks at his face in the mirror, I got inspired by the work of Kuniyoshi that I like very much. The one with the four faces has also been inspired by an old ukiyo-e.

**LOOKING TO OLD PRINTS FOR THE CREATION OF NEW ONES, IS IT SOMETHING COMMON IN THE WORLD OF THE UKIYO-E?**

Copying in the ukiyo-e world was authorised, because in the city of Edo it was impossible to hide anything. Also, ukiyo-e was kind of a subculture and the craftsmen were very close. Therefore it was very flexible, the artists had the right to mix their creation with elements outside of their original family. In the case of the Utagawa school (a very famous school of ukiyo-e from which grew some of the greatest ukiyo-e artists like Kuniyoshi and Kunisada) it had very good relations with the others. Its art-



ists could take elements from Hokusai's artworks for example, the only obligation was to keep the 'manner' (yoshiki) of the school, it should still be personal.

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE 'MANNER' OF THE UTAGAWA FAMILY?**

It is hard to say, the details are almost invisible to a non-informed eye. The most important is the balance, between the face and the eyes, between the bodies. Each element can be drawn in a similar way, from one family to another, but the way they are put altogether is different. I love Utagawa Kuniyoshi's manner and I want it to stay alive. I'm infused by ukiyo-e, in a very natural way. What I think, what I draw... everything is connected to the ukiyo-e. When I'm on the phone and I draw for example, it is ukiyo-e. For me, it is life.

**IS THE JAPANESE PRINT STILL A MODERN ART?**

Yes, totally. During the Edo period, the ukiyo-e was aiming to describe the era the craftsmen were living in. It was a modern art. Today, whether we may be in Edo or Tokyo, it is the same thing. More than a subject matter, modernity is a matter of technique.



浮世  
粹男  
接吻  
四人衆之内

宝疏須丹礼

ひとげんぢぢらう

ちぢんちぢらう

したつんだ

そら

毎日

えんからた

おもしろいはさげん  
続ける



上野屋

版師 關岡裕介

摺師 伊藤達也









# SIX GUNS LOADED

## PART ONE

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120 East Main Street, Lancaster, Ohio 43130

*Not one to let the grass get a foothold under his boots, as the Presidential election gathered serious pace and nobody was talking about anything else, Sion Smith met up with Gunnar out in Virginia. Over a giant pot of coffee, they found themselves digging up the road less travelled to the point that this not so much provides an insight into his life, but perhaps all tattooers lives out in the USA right now. If you were looking for your standard interview, you came to the wrong place...*

**T**here are very few artists who tattoo as good as they paint—or indeed paint as well as they tattoo if you prefer it that way. I never tire of either train of thought when it comes to Gunnar. If you're not familiar with his work, you should

fix that in the next twenty four hours because his influence floods through more artists work than I care to mention... and perhaps more than he would even care to mention too.

With a pot of coffee on the table between us, I figure this could turn into a long one because I've brought a big spade to dig with. The entire population of the USA is gripped by a pre-election fever, in fact you can hardly avoid talking about anything else—it's everywhere you look—and that's pretty much the case at this table too. Bearing that in mind, the political smalltalk we get to

grips with at the beginning here, soon turns into something very relevant. Hopefully, you'll all enjoy this as much as I did pulling it together. Over to you Sir:

“What's weird to me now—and you'll get this coming from the UK—the UK used to be great colonisers and now America is the big coloniser, especially corporate America. It moves in to a place that used to have a really cool culture and it eradicates it, puts in a Starbucks and a Wal-Mart and they tell the world ‘You're really gonna like it because it has all the comforts of home.’ But what happens when you want to go somewhere to experience something new that you have yet to experience. Do we really need no more culture and all want to be the same? It's crazy to me that people might actually think like that.”

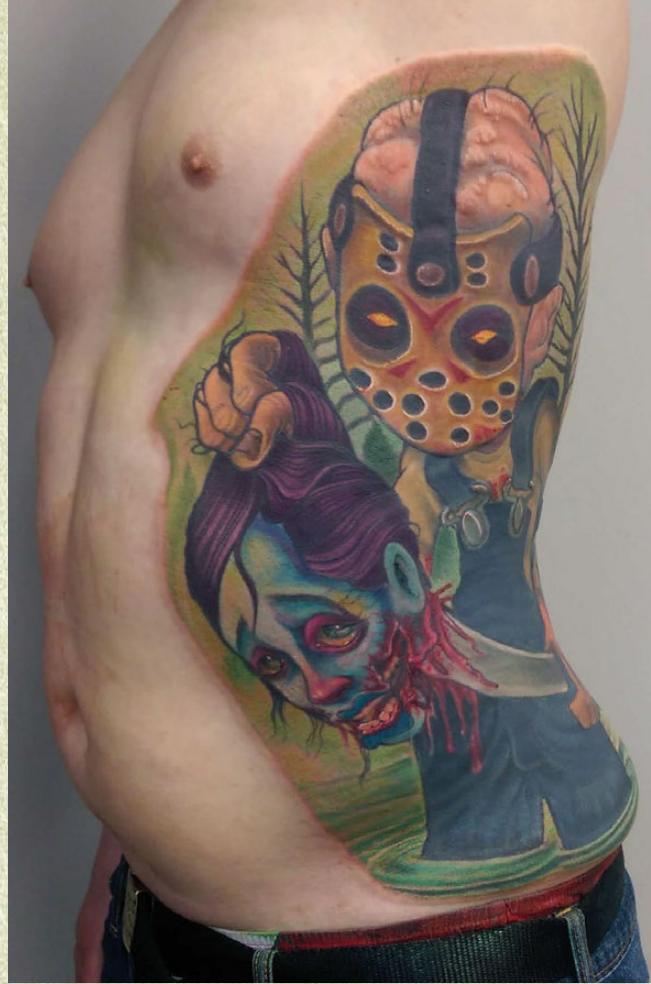
“America is in a real state of change right

now. Somewhere along the way, we went from ‘Mom and Pop’ to ‘Giant Corporate’ and I feel like people are so sick of it that they're trying to swing the thing back. I heard there's something like forty five million small business owners in the United States. It's become a service industry. You own a clothing company or a tattoo



Words: Sion Smith • Images: Gunnar





**What happens when you want to go somewhere to experience something new that you have yet to experience. Do we really need no more culture and all want to be the same?**

studio but it seems like now, the towns that are becoming the cool places to live are the places with micro-breweries and not TGI Friday's... and corporate America will combat that by implementing tax rules that benefit big corporations and crush the little guy who's just starting up. Look at ObamaCare—these companies can't afford to give health insurance to their employees anymore. It's ridiculous but they do things to ensure the big companies keep thriving and the little guy can't get a foothold."

In the name of education, I confess here that I don't know exactly what ObamaCare consists of. I assume it's a scheme in which people who can't afford health insurance can get help when they need it?

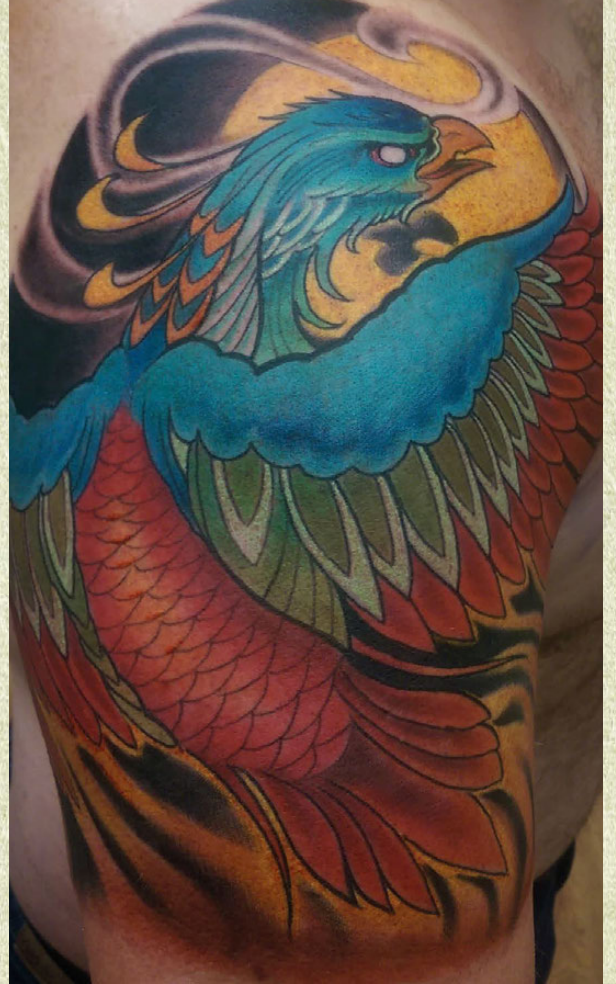
"Pretty much.. and what they do is they pass the bill down the line. It gets higher, the healthier you are. So the less you need insurance, the more you pay. So for me, I used to have really good health insurance before ObamaCare came in and then my premiums went up, my deductible went up and I could



only get healthcare in Ohio—it just made it worse. I had to spend more because it doubled my rate on top of it and then they take the doubling of the rate and use that to help pay for other peoples insurance."

"I'm all for trying to help some people but we live in a world where the State has done such a good job at implementing these systems that some people have become slaves to the State without realising it. They can make a better living by not working but they're owned by the government, they be-





come their property almost. So if you have a job, you're effectively paying for that service for those people but they can never escape from it... and it's tough because if you're a single mother, trying to raise a couple of kids, it's almost better to rely on the system because if you have a job, you still can't afford the health-care.

"Actually, there was thing I was reading a little while ago where they were talking about the pay of tattoo artists. We have so many tattoo artists now, they're all stuck charging the same rate that I was charging twenty years ago and it's driven the pricing of tattoos down so much, that you're making less now than you did twenty years ago on a flat rate... and that's before you even factor in inflation and the cost of living which has doubled in that time.

"It's become a flooded market now, so... you get some guys that will charge \$700 an hour but they're a rarity compared to the kids who will tell you they'll tattoo you all day for \$25."

What I find intriguing about this scenario is how fast those 'kids' want that \$700 an hour to happen (worth noting here, that I think both of these figures are a slight exaggeration in the name of perspective). I point out that those at the top end of the scale—and I deem Gunnar to be one of them—have put in twenty years to get to



**When I was a kid, you were like 'man, I need to cut my chops... I need to earn my place in the magazine or at the convention'...**



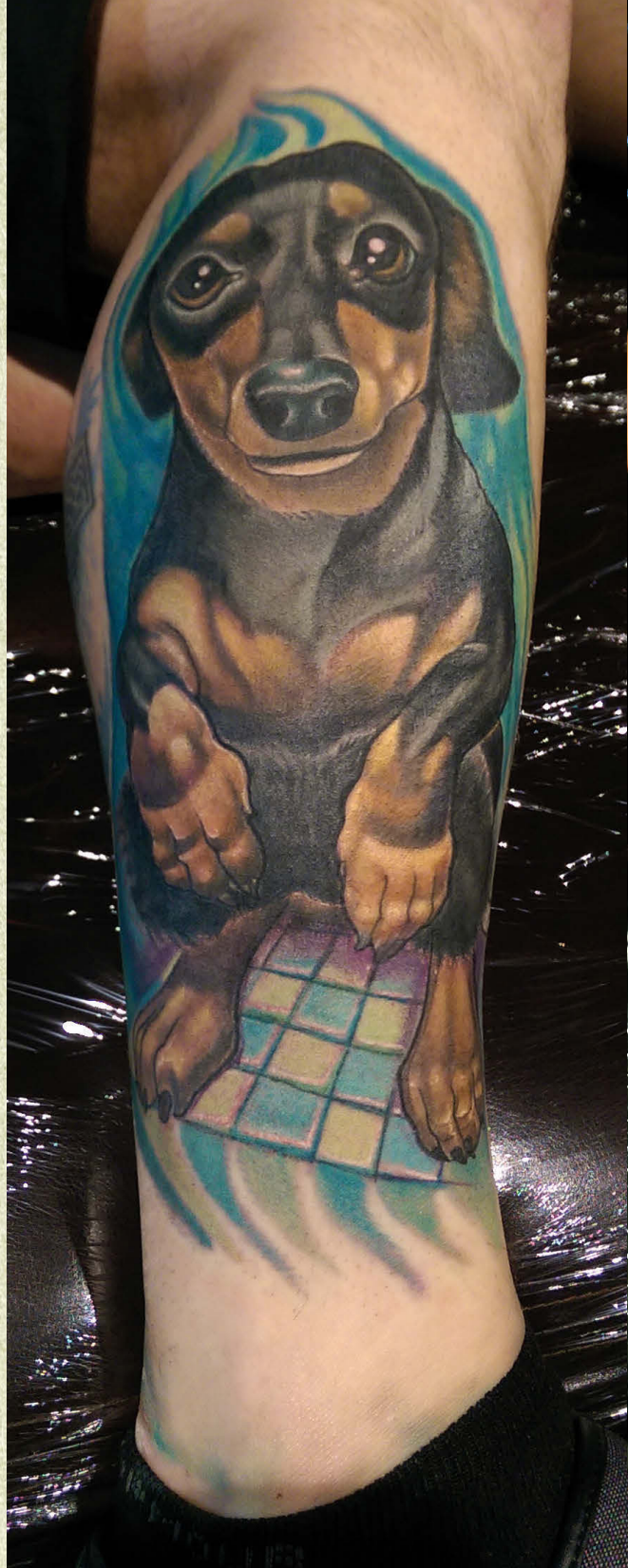


**Nobody has to work to get into a convention anymore. There's no pride in that way of 'wow, I can't believe I've been brought into this'. You spend your money and you get your booth...**

the point that they are able to command good money. Nobody chokes when it's a rock band or an actor...

"That's true even more so now than ever. When I was a kid, you were like 'man, I need to cut my chops... I need to earn my place in the magazine or at the convention' and now... well, there was no such thing as a sponsorship back then. Now everybody is sponsored by somebody, it doesn't mean a thing—at least not in the way that it used to. Nobody has to work to get into a convention anymore. There's no pride in that way of 'wow, I can't believe I've been brought into this'. You spend your money and you get your booth... it's very interesting, things have changed a lot."

I have a great idea about this, though I'm not sure if it would work in the real world. It



involves everybody at a tattoo show not being allowed to book anything in advance—which would obviously need everybody on board from the start—and also, every artist arriving with their own flash and all tattoos being available at the same flat rate. With a show with those rules and a great artist list, you would (surely) have people sleeping out all night like they were about to get the new Harry Potter book. It would be affordable, it would be exciting but most importantly, I think it might reset the machine because





right now, your odds on grabbing a slot at a show with a great artist are really slim. It might be a dumb idea or it might be genius... perhaps it would take a brave man to figure that out!

“That’s a good idea. Show up with twenty designs, no waiting and you’re right because if you do show up at a convention—like I just have—and somebody wants something special, I then have to put in two hours that I’m not getting paid for, it’s pressure because they might not like it.. people come over and talk to you and you can’t just ignore them. It might just work you know if you could get it right from the very beginning.”

So to put it in perspective for people, let’s take a look at how things used to be, say 15 to 20 years ago—which for a lot of readers is absolutely within living memory.

“I started doing conventions heavily in around 2000—that’s when I really got into it. The biggest change between then and now is the damn frequency of them. It seems like... well, you used to hear about people who drove from ‘this area’ to come all the way out ‘that show’. A conversation would take place: ‘I’m gonna drive to Detroit because that’s the show to go to’—and you went with the expectation that you could pick up a tattoo when you got there. I don’t know if people were already pre-booking back then, but you would just show up with that in mind... but then, there were only six good shows in the country and you knew you had to travel. Now... well, I’ve got four in my town this month alone! People will just say to themselves ‘I’ll make it to the next one’ so there’s no excitability to be had—and the other





**I've worked shows recently where I haven't even travelled with a portfolio because people were so familiar with what I was doing**

thing that happened is back then, you didn't have the internet like it is now, we barely even had websites, so you got the magazines and saw people at work, by that time, three months had passed and by the time you got to a show, six months had passed, so you would then have the 'look at all the work I've never seen from this artist!' and that was your instagram. You went to a show and soaked it up!

"I've worked shows recently where I haven't even travelled with a portfolio because people were so familiar with what I was doing, there was hardly any point—



they've seen it all! It's hard to keep it fresh and you know what, if I'm not producing and posting a new things every day, people assume I'm not working. I don't know anymore what people look forward to when they come to conventions..."

It's a good point. I'm not sure either. Maybe its the opportunity to simply get 'tribal' about tattoos and hang out with like minded people who love the same things you do.

"I think with that show idea, you'd also get—particularly if you had top calibre names—people saying 'I didn't know you could do things like that' and it would reinvigorate the scene a little. Cap the time at two to three hours per piece so that you would be free several times a day... it could prove to be really interesting. If you just showed up with drawings ready it would be great."

For me, it would be even better if you could take it offline and make it something really special but I rather suspect people would freakout about that.

*And that's all we have time for this issue. For part two of Six Gunns Loaded, you're gonna have to come back next month.* ▣



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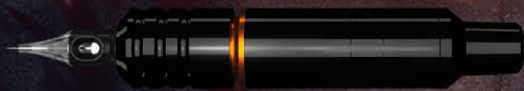
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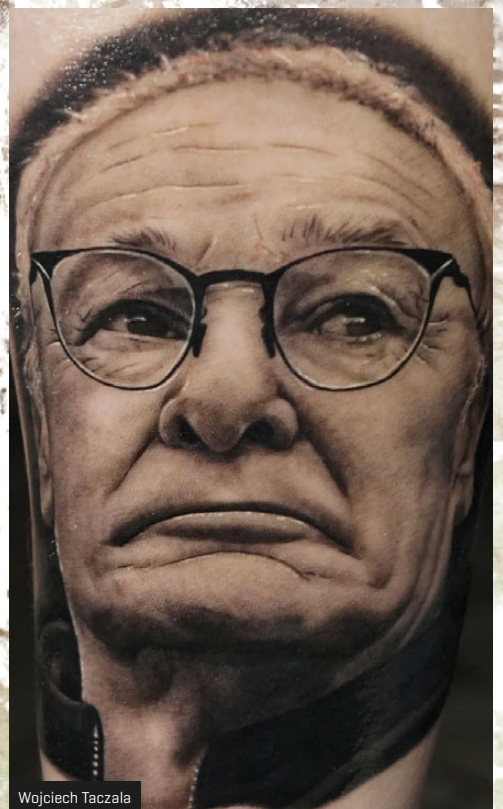
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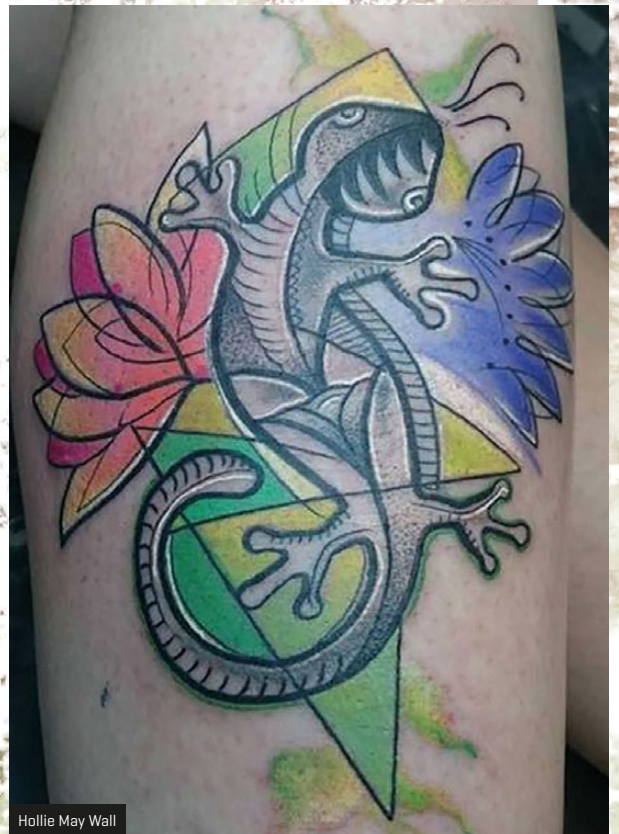
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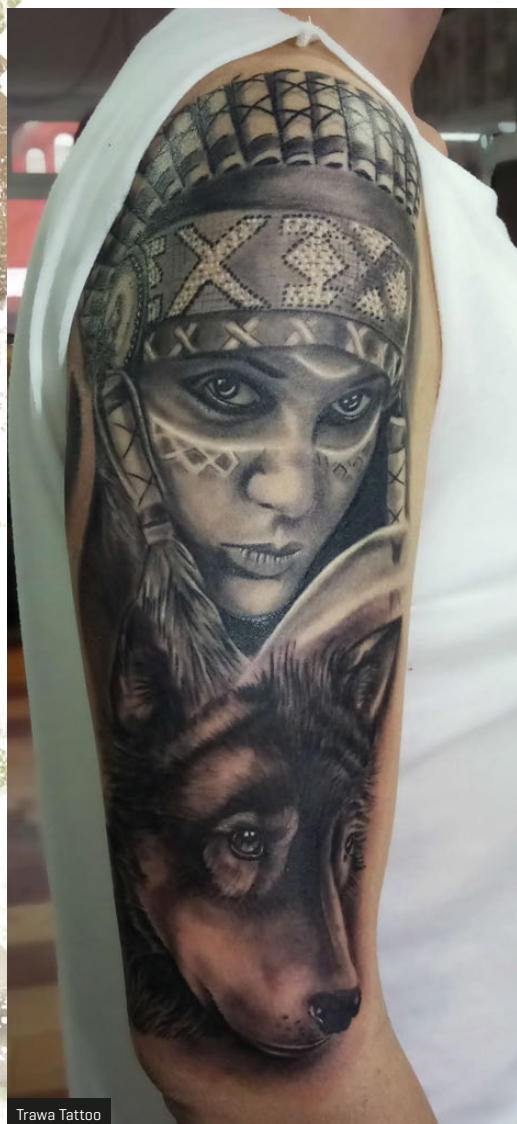


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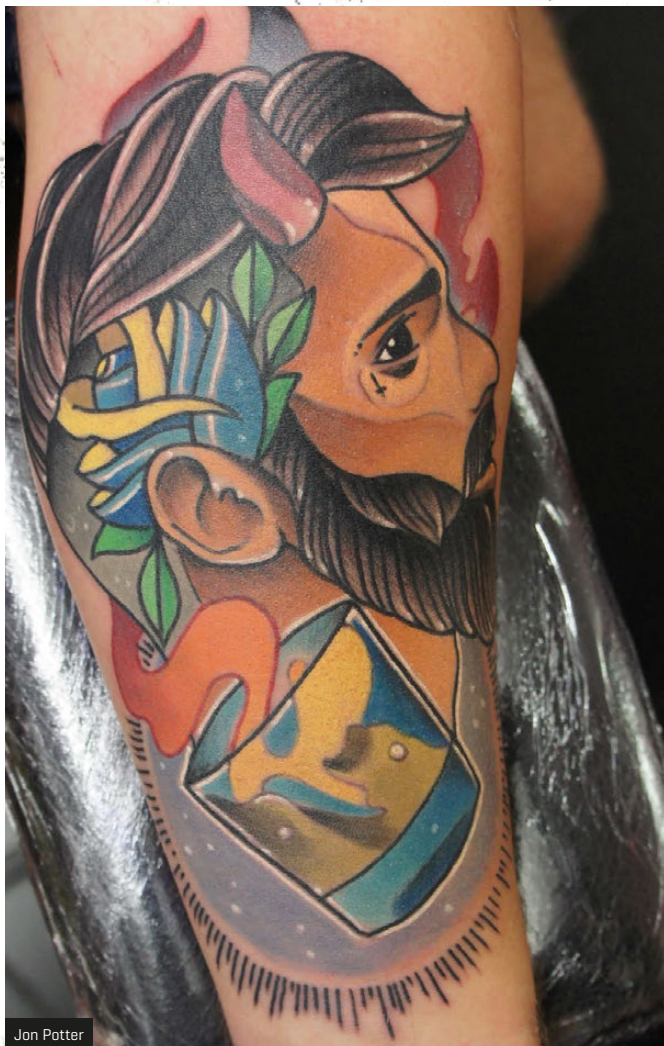
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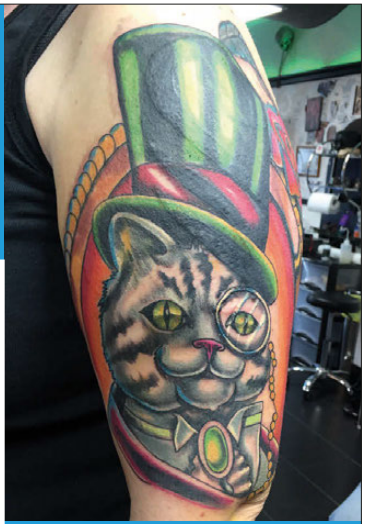
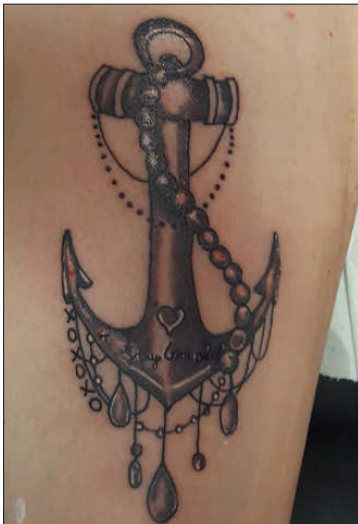


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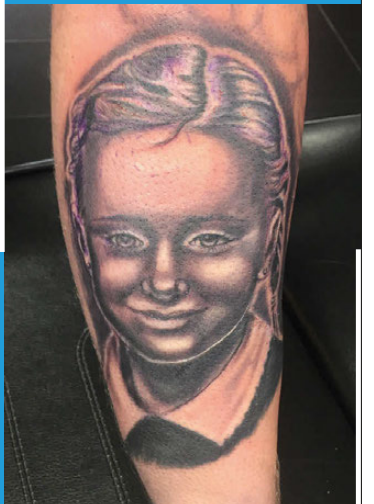
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WARNING: The Circus of Horrors contains some nudity and language of an adult nature, it is not suitable for children, sissies or chavs







# BLOOD MAGIC

If you've never been to Sacred Tattoo in New York City, you're missing out. Not just because it's an amazing shop, but because the gallery space it houses is one of the best in the country. Take a look at Sacred Gallery's latest two-person solo show featuring new works from Nick Baxter and Jon Clue and you'll soon be forced to agree

[www.nickbaxter.com](http://www.nickbaxter.com) · [jonclue](https://www.instagram.com/jonclue) · [www.sacredtattoo.com](http://www.sacredtattoo.com)

The moment news of this exhibit landed in my inbox, I had to know more. Two world-class artists, both talented tattooers and painters, joining forces for one epic installation was reason enough to get excited. Add to that the fact that Nick Baxter's *Blood Rituals MMXVI* and Jon Clue's *Ritual Magic* marked Baxter's return to New York after a four-year hiatus and a venture for Clue from Sacred Tattoo to Sacred Gallery and there was no keeping me away.

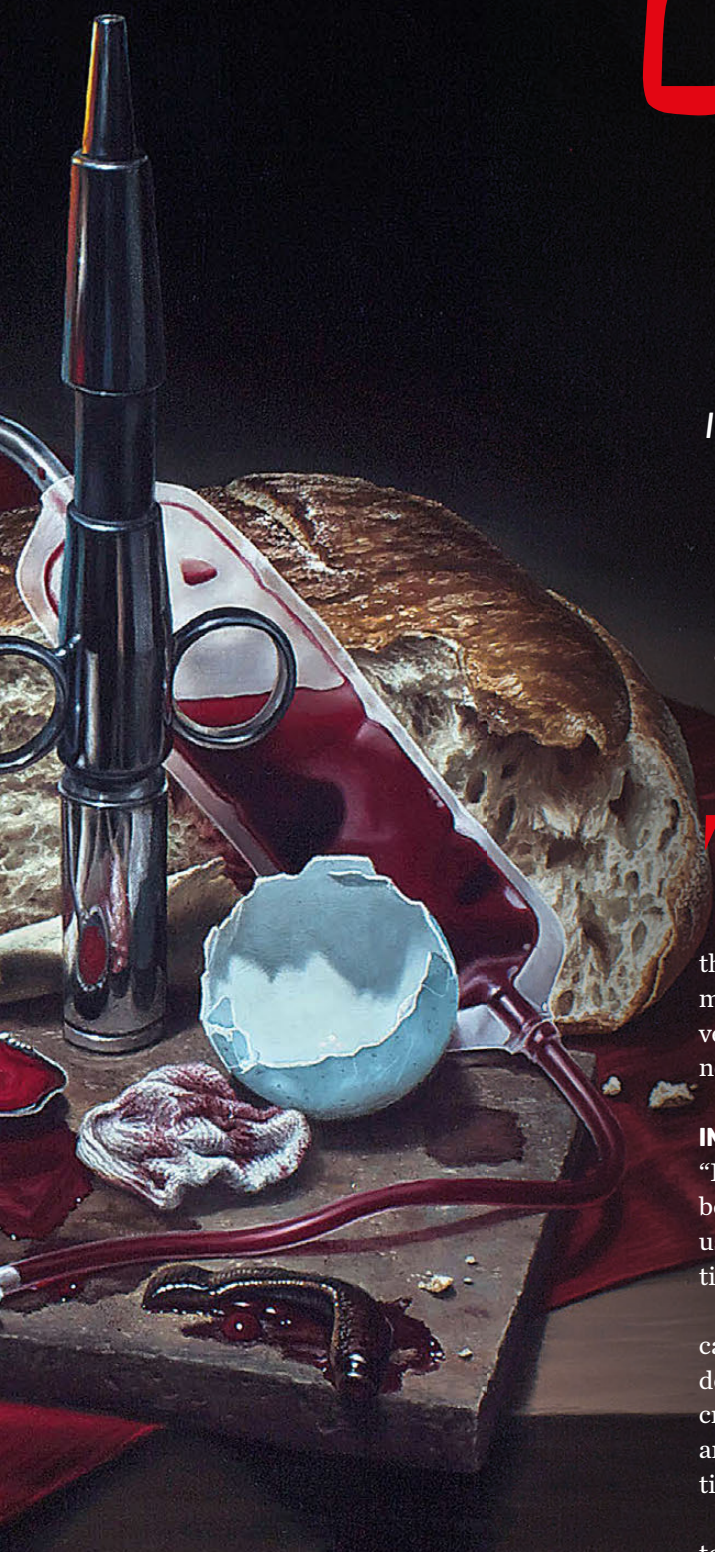
## INTRODUCING NICK BAXTER

"For as long as I can remember, I've been fascinated by the human body, the medical sciences and all that's hidden within us that makes us what we are," says Nick Baxter, trying to encapsulate the inspiration behind the 11 paintings making up *Blood Rituals MMXVI*.

"Blood is such a powerful and universal symbol of life and, ironically, death. It's also just fun to paint because it's a living liquid that does so many things," he continues. "It's visceral and shiny and incredibly vibrant in color, but it also separates, clots, coagulates, dries and cracks, forms bubbles, changes color—it presents many great artistic possibilities."

Baxter, who has undergone his fair share of bloodletting procedures to treat hemochromatosis, a disorder that causes the body to absorb too much iron, is no stranger to seeing blood first-hand. "Over the years, I've compiled quite a nice collection of reference material from these sessions," he reveals. "This set the creative gears in motion and eventually, the idea of the Blood Rituals series was sparked."

After speaking with Jon Clue "about the general themes and artistic







All work on this spread by Nick Baxter

I HOPE THESE IMAGES CUT THROUGH ANY IMMEDIATE REACTIONS OF FRIGHT OR REPULSION TO ACCESS THE VULNERABLE STATE OF EMOTIONAL FRESHNESS OR TENDERNESS THAT LIES AT THE CORE OF ALL OUR PSYCHES

**NICK BAXTER**

styles we wanted to work with to make sure our efforts would have some sort of synergy when paired in a gallery setting,” it was off to the races. Choosing to return to the trompe l’oeil (French for ‘deceive the eye’) style of still life painting he first mastered in college, Baxter set out to achieve one major goal: “use blood imagery and symbolism in a way that doesn’t evoke the shock value of gore or the campiness of the horror genre.

“I’m not trying to comment on a specific medical condition or treatment, either,” he adds. “So I wanted to surround it with unlikely juxtapositions and temper its visual power with an understated classical sensibility.”

“I relied heavily on photography in order to capture the fleeting effects of condensation, coagulation, separation of white and red cells and other subtle details that enhance the authentic sense of realism in the final painted image,” says Baxter, a true master of hyper-realism. “Stage blood simply doesn’t undergo these biological changes.”

“Completing the paintings one at a time over the span of nearly a year, the full viewing experience was very much delayed, even for me, the artist, but my excitement grew as each



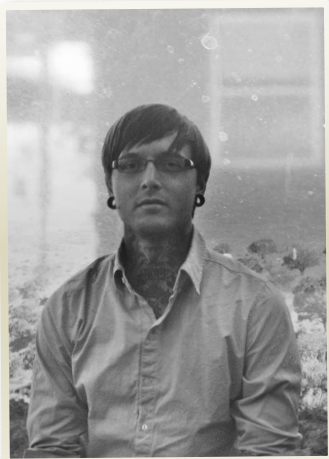
piece was finished and when I finally had them all framed, I was very satisfied,” he admits.

“When I see them together, I feel a quiet, somber darkness and the existential sadness of loss, which is something they all depict in one form or another. The blood is lost from the body, the weathered shelves and rusted metal have lost their former shine, the skulls and various bones, the wilted flowers, the tattered books, they all have lost. But all still remain.”

“My use of blood-related subject matter has several layers of symbolism, from personal struggle and loss to the brutality inherent in modern civilisation,” he elaborates. “I hope these images cut through any immediate reactions of fright or repulsion to access the vulnerable state of emotional freshness or tenderness that lies at the core of all our psyches.”

Changing gears to dig a little deeper in Baxter’s tattoo career, which began with an apprenticeship in 1999, we soon land on the topic of evolution and the “massive surge in media attention and popularity” surrounding tattooing.

“I’ve seen the shifts from word of mouth to business cards, to websites, to magazines, to TV, to social media,” he starts. “I’ve also ex-



**Nick Baxter On... Great Art**

To me, a great piece of art inspires something in the viewer, whether it be a feeling or an idea, which may lead to some kind of action or simply just a sense of meaningful appreciation, reverie and wonder. I think tattoos are much the same with the added conceptual layer of existing permanently in a person’s skin, transforming not only how they look but also, potentially, their very sense of self.





I ENJOY THE ARTISTIC SELF-EXPRESSION AND THE AUTONOMY IT GIVES ME TO LIVE A PASSIONATE, EXCITING LIFE OF CONTINUALLY STRIVING TO IMPROVE MYSELF AND SHARE WHAT I KNOW WITH OTHERS

**NICK BAXTER**



perienced the evolution of conventions from a bunch of tattooers meeting in a large hall a handful of times a year to entertainment and learning extravaganzas seemingly happening every weekend of the year. Basically, there's just a lot more of everything and everyone. It's an exciting and sometimes overwhelming time to be involved in tattooing."

That said, Baxter tries to "accept the tattoo world as it is since it's made up of so many different people with unique gifts to share. In my better moments, I'm able to find the wonder in things as they are and appreciate the amazing opportunities I'm given. More than ever before, the level of style innovation and artistic expression in tattooing is staggering and the tattoo world has a frenetic, free-flowing, communal artistic energy that seems lacking in the fine art world."

"When I got into it in the late '90s, I was a teenager fascinated by the craft and allured by the glamorous rebelliousness of the lifestyle. Not to mention the prospect of actually making good, reliable money in an artistic occupation," he recalls. "Now, I don't see it as very rebellious at all. I enjoy the artistic self-expression and the autonomy it gives me to

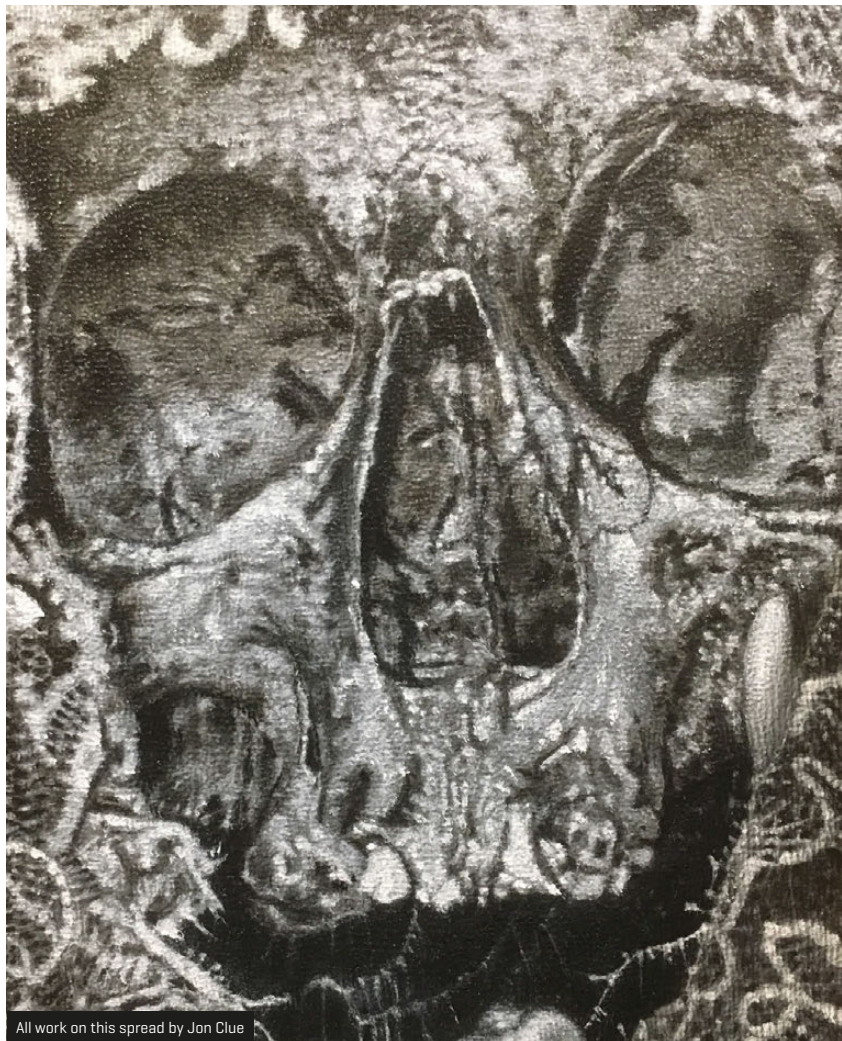
live a passionate, exciting life of continually striving to improve myself and share what I know with others."

"I'm just trying to remain active, period," says the artist when asked what's kept him painting and tattooing for the past 18 years. "Stagnation and idleness is deadly to me. In tattooing, I get to interface with another person and work with a more collaborative and open-ended process. In painting, I get to go deep into my own mind to tap into powerful psychological constructs and archetypes with a very specific, predetermined process. One of them is always feeding into the other and I probably wouldn't be as good in either medium if not for the other."

These days, you'll find Baxter working in a private studio in Austin, Texas, which he describes as being "a strange city for tattooing. It's a notorious party and music festival town with a lot of transient young people and a very entrenched traditional tattooing scene and mentality. There's an artistic, crafty DIY vibe here and that makes it fun to be an artist."

His "all-time favourite Austin attraction", the Cathedral of Junk, certainly reflects that. "An Internet search should turn up the fun





All work on this spread by Jon Clue

## EVERYONE WANTS IN ON THE MAGIC AND, TO BE HONEST, I WOULDN'T CHANGE A THING

### JON CLUE

#### Jon Clue On... Great Art

A great piece of art is one that takes you into its space and lets you disconnect from your normal conscious stream. An image that really draws me in and takes me there is what does it for me. As far as how art translates into a tattoo, the most important aspect to me is composition on the body. Sadly, I see this aspect disappearing. Sometimes, I feel that the image itself doesn't matter so much as how it fits and flows on the body.

story behind this post-apocalyptic experimental playground," he says. "Sadly, it's been under siege by city officials in recent years as Austin becomes more crowded and old, quirky neighbourhoods become gentrified. It might soon be a disappearing treasure, so everyone should experience it while they can!"

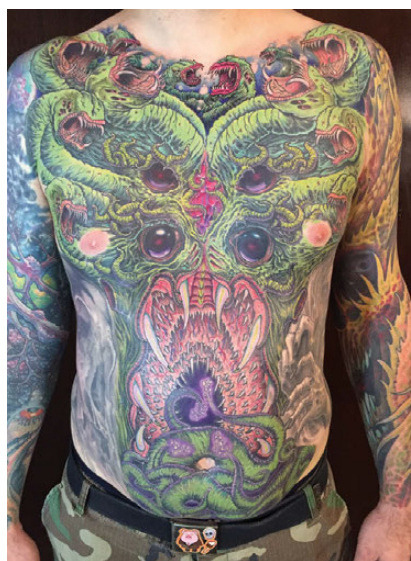
So, who is Nick Baxter? Just "the universe experiencing itself."

#### Introducing Jon Clue

Stepping in to exhibit alongside Nick Baxter with his own set of new works, Brooklyn native Jon Clue arrived at Ritual Magic, which he describes as "a culmination of my art to date."

"This series is the 'last' of the stripped down black and white paintings I've been doing for the last five years," he explains. "The visuals are the magic that comes from the rituals in making every attempt to fully realise a vision that I've been chasing since I can remember remembering."

"The initial inspiration is a difficult thing

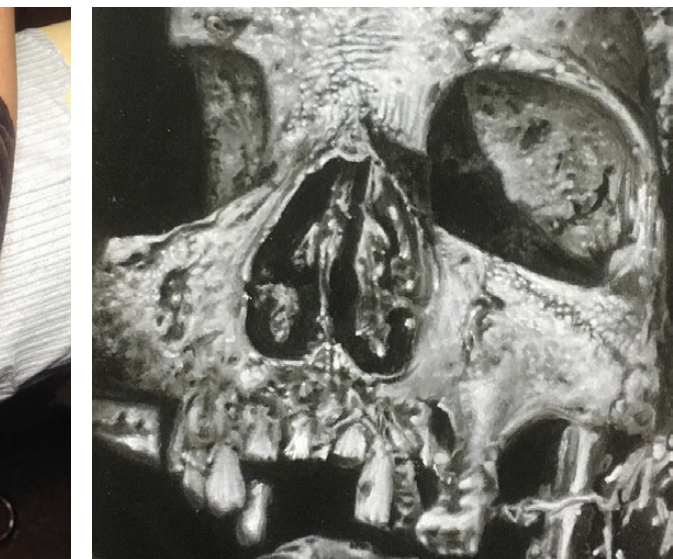


to really pinpoint, as it's all just a collection of the imagery that plays like a movie on a screen attached to the back of my eyelids. Every attempt I ever make at recreating this imagery is always a gross approximation of the original vision and each piece is a step closer to getting there."

"Some of the images are from photos that I've taken and some completely from my imagination—I did not want to limit myself at all by confining myself within any sort of set boundaries," he says. "The more photographic ones are still captures from my imagination, but fully realised with tangible items. This is another critical volley in my creative process: finding ways to learn from life and apply it to my imagination and vice versa to make images from life seem a bit more imaginative."

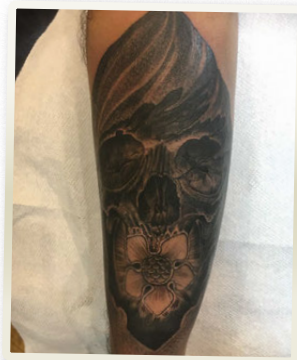
Unlike Baxter, Clue didn't see his entire series of works together in one place until opening night because they were painted in separate studios. "Although I see them all completed in my head, any time I show my





THIS IS ANOTHER CRITICAL VALLEY  
IN MY CREATIVE PROCESS: FINDING  
WAYS TO LEARN FROM LIFE AND  
APPLY IT TO MY IMAGINATION AND  
VICE VERSA

**JON CLUE**



**Nick Baxter On...  
Favorite Pastimes**

I enjoy being around art, looking at others' art, reading a book, listening to music or seeing a good film. Doing anything with my hands is satisfying, whether it be building something, cleaning something or cooking something. I love animals, being out in nature and exploring the world, especially the few wild places left.

paintings, the first view I get when walking into the gallery and seeing them in a different environment than I created them in is the closest I get to seeing them from the perspective of an outsider," he reveals. "I really look forward to that."

At this point, I can't help but ask Clue how a kid from Brooklyn ended up working as a tattoo artist in Long Island in the first place, especially at a time when tattooing was still illegal. Rewinding to 1993, he recalls: "I always had an attraction to imagery of the underground and as a young artist, tattooing seemed like a way to make the type of art I was interested in. The idea of it being a viable source of income was not even a thought, let alone the idea of attaining any sort of credibility from it. I just wanted to make pictures on people and do the best job that I possibly could."

"There were only five shops on Long Island and a lot of people wanting to be tattooed. I think it was around that time that tattooing really did begin its climb into the main-

stream of pop culture. I can't remember how many Red Hot Chili Peppers-inspired tattoos I did that first year!" he laughs.

Since then, Clue has experienced numerous changes in the tattoo world, all of which he dubs "inevitable", but does point out one particular shift—"People who thought I was a loser for being tattooed and tattooing in the early '90s now want to join the club"—before adding that "even that aspect of it completely has its place in the dynamics of what has become of the tattoo industry. Everyone wants in on the magic and, to be honest, I wouldn't change a thing. Each piece of it has its place in the bigger picture. This is simply the dynamics of every situation and fighting it would be a futile effort."

Just like the industry around him, Clue strives to continuously grow and evolve. "After 23 years of tattooing without any sort of substantial break, I find it's important to always remember the things that originally made me excited about tattooing and I be-





Nick Baxter



Nick Baxter



Jon Clue

I WAS A BROKE 19-YEAR-OLD METALHEAD GRAFFITI KID FROM BROOKLYN WITH NO IDEA THAT I'D END UP TRAVELING AROUND THE WORLD

**JON CLUE**



**Jon Clue On... Collecting Cool Shit**

I collect bones of all sorts. I have a bunch of human and animal bones scattered throughout the apartment, which I share with two friends. Between my one roommate and I, we have a pretty solid collection of metal records. Lots of rare underground stuff, new and old.

lieve that constantly finding ways to reinvent myself as an artist is a crucial aspect to continually make each project as exciting as the one before it or after it," he says.

This includes switching back and forth between mediums and showing equal love for tattooing and painting. "For me, one wouldn't exist as it does without the other. I began tattooing when I was 19 and had absolutely no formal training," he says. "Once I figured out how the tattoo tools worked, I needed to figure out how to make my art better. Once I got to a certain point where I was happier with how the art was going, I'd focus more on how to introduce that back into my tattooing. This very aspect of the process is one of the biggest driving forces behind my art career; each medium excites me to introduce it to the other. When I'm finished with a painting, all I can think about is hoping to tattoo stuff like it and vice versa."

Then there's music. "Sound has always been an influence on the art that I create and



Jon Clue

it was inevitable that I'd have the need to explore that interest," says Clue. "I taught myself how to play bass and played with a black metal band called Damnatum. At about the two-year mark, I was beginning to feel conflicted with how much time it took away from making art and tattooing."

"Shortly after that band broke up, I began playing in a similar but more thought-out project and with that, I knew I had to step my playing skills up a bit. Realising how much more time I'd have to separate from making my art, I decided that, at least for now, I'm putting music on hold and diving into my art further."

"Every day I wake up on this side of the grass is in some way credited to tattooing," he concludes. "I was a broke 19-year-old metalhead graffiti kid from Brooklyn with no idea that I'd end up traveling around the world, making pictures on people. I remember that every day."

So, who is Jon Clue? "Just another storm of chaos experiencing life."



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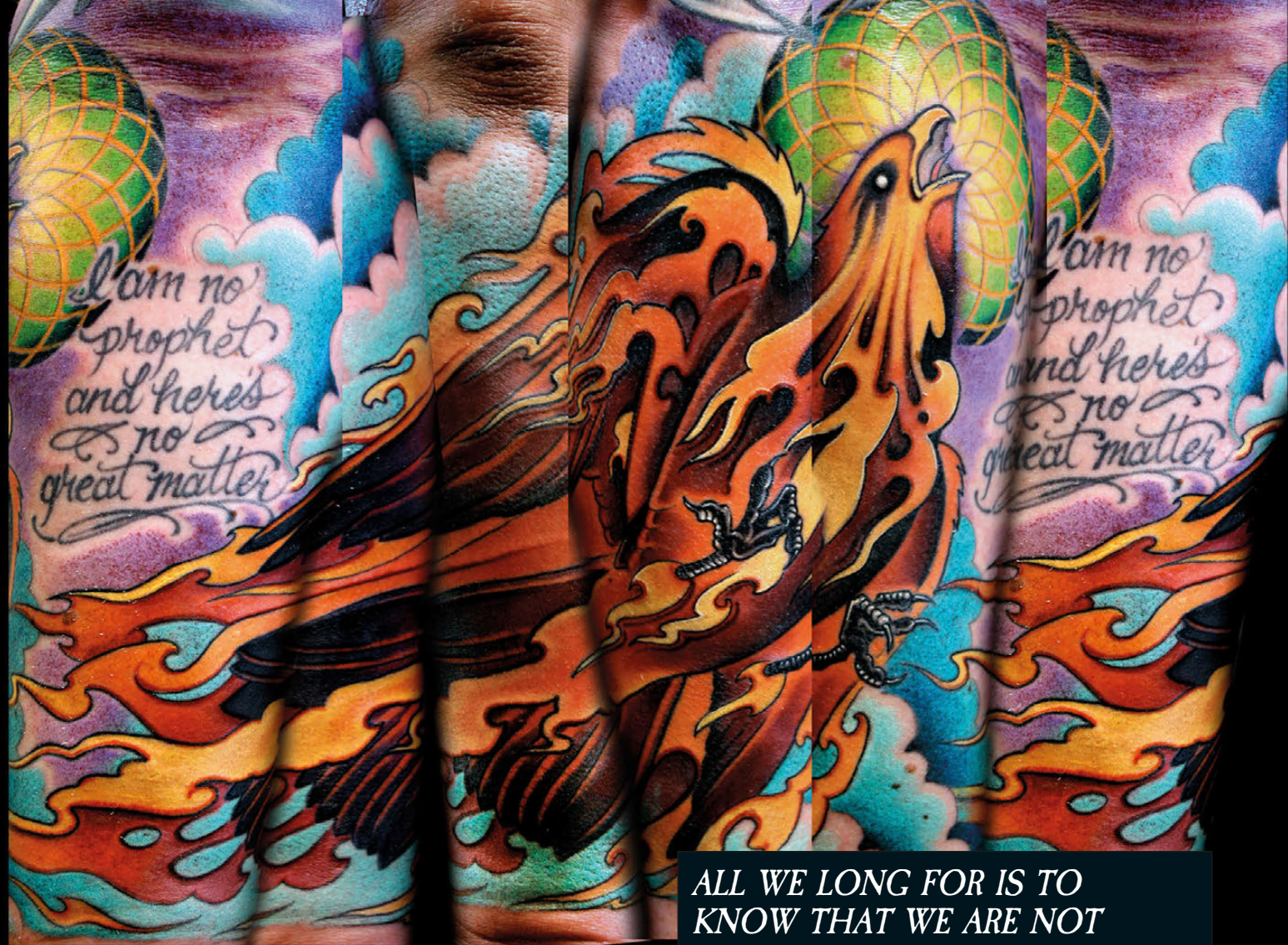
*"The worst cruelty that can be inflicted on a human being is isolation."*

Sukarno

*"The power of storytelling is to free us from isolation, shame, and whatever the situation."*

Patricia McCormick

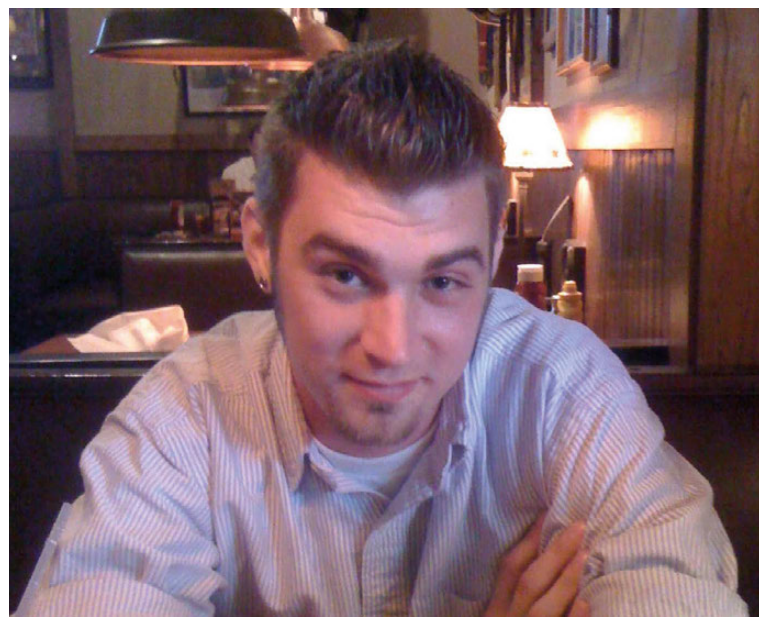




**ALL WE LONG FOR IS TO KNOW THAT WE ARE NOT COMPANIONLESS, THAT THERE IS SOMEONE OUT THERE FEELING LIKE WE DO**

**D**eath is really the oddest thing. It's inevitable, we all will experience it one day, yet it's the most common thing to be afraid of. Experiencing the death of a loved one changes us, sometimes causing us to go down dark corridors that we seldom experience. I found myself in that place over the last few years, having a string of deaths happening to the people closest to me. A father to a close friend of mine passed first, then my step father, and then my step brother to suicide. I found myself traveling down into the murky waters that can consume your thoughts, one that can be very difficult to see out of. I would look forward to the nights that I could talk to one close friend of mine, one who felt the same strain of isolation but both of us careening towards something only one of us would walk away from.

The morning after his passing I was numb. My comrade in this pain was gone, and where was I leading myself? This self imposed isolation I had created as a defence mechanism over the years led me to this junction and it was then that I realised what hell is; loneliness and isolation. All we long for is to know that we are not companionless, that there is someone out there feeling like we do, that comrade that we can see eye to eye with. The past years of shame and guilt build up to the present. Whatever those experiences are, we compound them through the years, like nailing a board to seal off a door, until no light



can come in, and we are surrounded by darkness.

My thoughts were focused on these ideas, and as I performed his funeral, I found myself taking down each board I had nailed up. It was a cool autumn day and a small group of us were gathered at his graveside. As I









***WITH EVERY BIT OF CONTACT, I FELT MYSELF TAKING DOWN A BOARD, AND THE LIGHT COMING THROUGH. HOPE WAS THERE THAT DAY.***

looked around, I saw eyes that were connecting. I told stories about how my life was forever changed by him, and those eyes, the grins and laughter reminded me that I am not alone, we are not alone, he was not alone. With every bit of contact, I felt myself taking down a board, and the light coming through. Hope was there that day.

Today I still tell stories for the same reason, to keep taking down boards and making sure that I don't put them back up. Isolation will creep back up, and my job now is to share that feeling with others, and make sure that loneliness can't win. The truth is, in everything we do, we want to know that someone is there, the door is open, and we can make a connection. My clients are

my daily reminder of this, especially with Ryan's story. After reading the email he sent me in regard to his tattoo experience we were going to write about, I found myself connecting in an unanticipated way, one that needs to be heard.

I first started tattooing Ryan almost a decade ago. Our interaction was nothing too deep, more on the surface, but definitely enjoyable. He was a nice guy, quiet, and I could tell he was going through something that was consuming more of his life than I could have imagined. It wasn't until later that I learned what Ryan had come out of, making me more proud of the man he is today. Ryan is one of the reasons I love being a tattooer, you get to watch people grow and become someone greater than they could have imagined. Ryan pulled himself out of a dark place, with the help of loved ones surrounding him, and has built a life





THE TRUTH IS, IN EVERYTHING WE DO, WE WANT TO KNOW THAT SOMEONE IS THERE, THE DOOR IS OPEN, AND WE CAN MAKE A CONNECTION. MY CLIENTS ARE MY DAILY REMINDER OF THIS





*IT'S FUNNY HOW A TATTOOS MEANING CAN CHANGE TO THE OWNER OVER TIME. WHEN I FIRST DECIDED I WANTED ALAN TURING TATTOOED ON ME, IT WAS JUST TO HONOUR/ REPRESENT HIS BRILLIANCE*

where he is changing the technology industry that he is a part of. He gives so much hope and inspiration for those that may be in a dark place right now.

In this story, Ryan will mention a man named 'Brandon'. Without knowing their connection, I also tattooed 'Brandon' a decade ago. He too was a kind man, a man who was also working his way through the murky waters of isolation, to come out the other side as someone who would save lives. I won't give too much away at this point. Instead, here is Ryan's story.

**RYAN:**

"It's funny how a tattoos meaning can change to the owner over time. When I first decided I wanted Alan Turing tattooed on me, it was just to honour/represent his brilliance, that his mind and discoveries paved the way to make my career possible. I also found it pretty cool that he was responsible for cracking the German enigma cipher during WWII. I read an article on Turing and was fascinated that someone's mind could extrapolate concepts to the capacity that his could. The more I read about Turing, the more I identified with him. I was never talented at anything. Seriously, I sucked at everything I tried. I was always told growing up that my talent was my mind and that I didn't think like everyone else. Fair enough, early on in school I found that I did pick up concepts more quickly than my classmates and that something about me was different.

"I quickly discovered around 4th or 5th grade that I'm gay, and that rural Georgia frowns upon such a thing. So I spent the majority of my childhood and teen years feeling trapped and alone. I worried every day that someone was going to find out and expose me to my classmates or even worse, my parents. I spent most of my time trying to avoid people, I guess my thought process was 'they can't figure me out if I don't let them close enough to see who I really am'.

"When I first began reading about Turing, I only knew what he'd accomplished, I didn't know he was gay. When I read that he was gay, I finally felt a sense of connection to someone. At that point in my life, I had clearly met gay people, seen gay people on TV, etc. But I never identified with any of them because gay people were portrayed on TV as flamboyant, ignorant sissies. This was the first time I was being exposed to an intellectual gay man that made a life changing contribution to a field of study, who wasn't flamboyant and was highly respected. By the time I actu-



ally had the session with Sean to get the tattoo, the above is everything the piece represented to me. Someone who was intelligent, gay and knew the pain associated with both afflictions. Plus, he was kind of hot so that was a bonus.

"The tattoo's meaning didn't change much for me for the first year, it was really just a hat tip to someone I'd never met that I feel affected every living persons life in some capacity, whether anyone else appreciated that or not. After the war ended (due to Alan's ability to crack the cipher) it was discovered that Alan was gay in a time when it was unlawful. He stood trial for 'gross indecency' and was found guilty. He was given two options at his sentencing; jail or chemical castration. He couldn't imagine losing time working on expanding his research so he chose chemical castration. I knew this when Sean tattooed me, but I didn't relate it to my life directly at that time.

Alan committed suicide shortly after his castration by eating an apple laced with cyanide.

I attempted suicide many times in my teens, but I didn't really want to die. I just wanted the noise in my head to shut up, or to finally meet someone that would make the pain go away.





**WHEN I FIRST BEGAN READING ABOUT TURING, I ONLY KNEW WHAT HE'D ACCOMPLISHED, I DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS GAY. WHEN I READ THAT HE WAS GAY, I FINALLY FELT A SENSE OF CONNECTION TO SOMEONE**

"I met 'Brandon' (as we shall call him) in the spring of 2006. He was everything I expected him to be. Intelligent, gorgeous and by some fluke of nature he wanted me. While we were together, Brandon encouraged me to pursue a career in some variety of technology. I was only concerned with spending as much time with him as possible, but I took his advice and started my degree in January of 2007. I finished my Masters in 2012 in applied computer science, and even though Brandon and I didn't work out, I feel like he tied into my passion for technology and my drive to pursue it as my career even without being there to see it all happen. He encouraged me to do great things because he loved me, and I believed that I could accomplish those things because I loved him.

Brandon passed away a couple of weeks ago and in his passing I've found those old feelings of anguish and loss have resurfaced. Brandon was changing lives as an RN, much like Turing was changing lives with his technology. Turing's concepts evolved into what is the modern computer which spans all industries, and those concepts made

my relationship with Brandon possible.

"As I've worn this portrait of Alan for nearly two years, he's evolved from just representing a gay man that made my career possible to representing my lack of enthusiasm toward the way homosexuals are treated and represented in society, to representing every intellectual homosexual in the world that knows what it feels like to be different and alone. He represents the possibility of Brandon—and the loss of him. He represents Brandon's husband who has to piece his life back together. He represents my gay roommate's brother who lost his life to HIV in the early 90's. He represents the growing awareness of homosexuals that are victims of hate crimes and discrimination in any capacity. He represents my passion for writing code. He represents gay marriage being legalised. He represents my jaded perception that 'no good deed goes unpunished'. He represents defeat, isolation, suicide and sacrifice.

Most importantly, he represents change, progress and acceptance." ▣



# True Love TATTOO



Scott



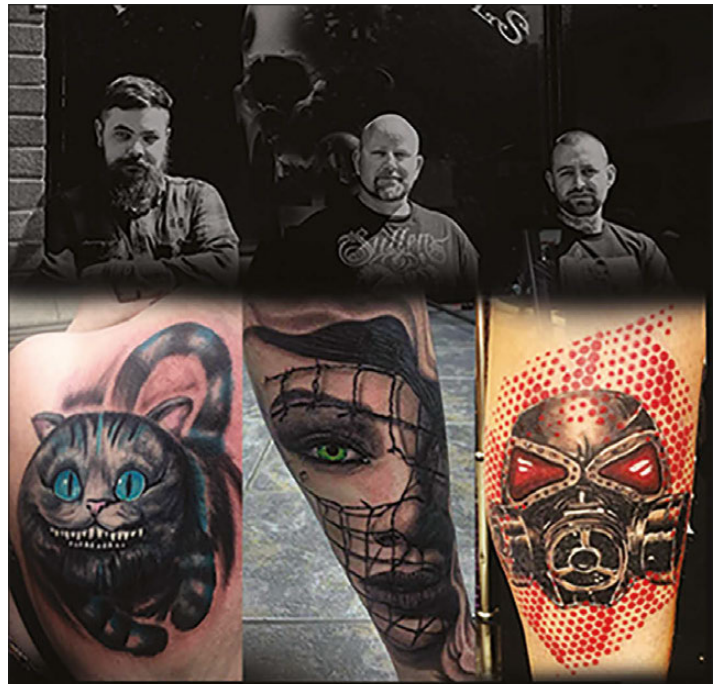
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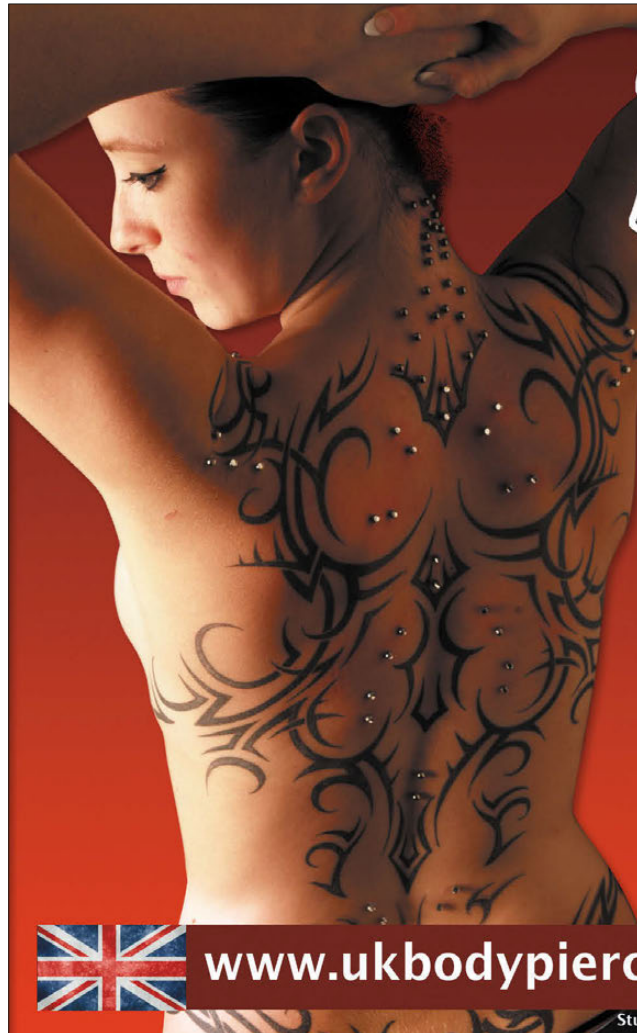
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# ENTER THE DRAGON

*Following in the wake of the great navigator Marco Polo who brought back wonders from China in the 13th century, Crez found his own source of wealth in the Asian culture of tattooing. After grabbing his first machines when he was 17 and making his way through different styles, he decided to specialise in Japanese. At 40 years old, Crez is still the punk-rocker he used to be and more than ever as a tattooer, he is determined to perpetuate—from his studio Adrenalink in the city of Marghera near Venice—the dialogue between East and West*



## **HOW POPULAR IS JAPANESE STYLE TODAY IN ITALY?**

Very popular. I was the only one doing Japanese tattooing only in 2003, now I think there are maybe 3 or 4 doing it. I was there as an avant-garde probably but I was sure it would explode one day. In the future and in my opinion, the next step will see some Japanese artists saying “This is our thing, it is not right that gaijin (Japanese for ‘foreigner’) do it!”.

## **AS AN ITALIAN TATTOOIST SPECIALISED IN JAPANESE TATTOOING, HOW WOULD YOU REACT TO THAT KIND OF STATEMENT?**

People can say whatever they want! Then we have to see if they have more right than me to talk about Japanese tat-

too. In this country, at least, I make the history of Japanese tattoo until now. Can you say the same thing about yourself in your country? You want to tell me I don’t exist? Because I’m giving a Japanese version filtered with a western culture? It’s all there, right down to the technique.

## **HOW DID YOU CONNECT TO JAPANESE CULTURE?**

We have a close relationship with Japan since the second world war. Then, all of my generation in Italy grew up with manga, anime on TV. I was then not only curious about trying what I saw as being part of the Japanese culture, but the art of Japan also made sense to me. The very first drawings I was obsessively looking at when I was a





**HE MADE 600 BODY-SUITS AND THIS IS AN EXPERIENCE THAT PEOPLE DON'T CARE ABOUT NOWADAYS—THEY CHECK ON INSTAGRAM THEIR NUMBER OF FOLLOWER AND THAT'S IT. BUT IT'S MUCH MORE IMPORTANT HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WEARING THIS HUGE STUFF FROM YOU**



kid were Japanese. That's why when they tell me 'that is not your culture' I usually reply 'Well, maybe it's not yours but it is mine!' I never played football in my life. I was doing Karate when I was 6.

**HOW WAS YOUR FIRST TRIP IN JAPAN?**

It was in 2003 and besides being my first trip outside of Europe, it was like getting off on Mars. I had the chance to go there and work—with my machines hidden in my suitcase because of course tattooing is still illegal in Japan—I had friends waiting for me there. I took tons of pictures, did lots of sketches of places depicted in the Ukiyo-e. You have to feel reality because otherwise your drawings will look fake and I don't want to be an imitator of anybody. I want to be myself when I draw.

**ALONG THE WAY IN JAPAN, IS THERE A SPECIFIC CHARACTER WHO REALLY STANDS OUT?**

Among all the Japanese tattooers that I've got the chance to see, Horihide from Yokosuka (a city in the south of Tokyo) was the best. This guy took Ukiyo-e designs and took it to another level, his own level, redrawing everything and made it a tattoo. He is the first, in my opinion, to build the bridge between Ukiyo-e and tattooing. The other old tattooers of Japan that we know, they all either do Japanese prints on the body, developed a different design forms—good or not—or they were painters who brought their techniques into tattooing. Horihide is a self-taught artist, he is the first who really decrypted the way Ukiyo-e are designed and made it specific to tattooing. I've really admired his work for a long time. He's, even now at 88 years old, a strong influence.





**MORE PRECISELY THEN, WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM HIS WORK?**

I love the balance his work has, the strength of his characters and their unity. It suits the customer's body so perfectly that it seems like he doesn't have tattoos, it looks like a natural body. When a tattoo is too much on top of the person, it is not good. He made 600 body-suits and this is an experience that people don't care about nowadays—they check on Instagram their number of follower and that's it, but it's much more important how many people are wearing this huge stuff from you. You feel responsible for that. In Japan they tell you : 'You have to feel responsible for your customers'. Yes, because you always have to be able to finish the tattoos you started. This is very professional. And I learnt that there, because I had



no teachers here, everybody is doing his own thing and some are good, some aren't. In Japan it is a school.

**DID HE HELP YOU THROUGH YOUR STUDY OF THE JAPANESE TATTOOING?**

Yokosuka Horihide took my drawings and corrected them, like a master would do. He gave me some tips to improve my dragons too, things that really changed my life. For example, he told me, 'Your dragon body is a snake body, and it's wrong'. The lines of the shape of the dragon should not be parallel and look like a tube, they should move. He also explained to me the choice of colours, things that are different in reality but we don't have to give a fuck about because it looks good on the body. He speaks a lot about the shape stuff should have, about how much portion of the chest the tattoos should cover, how many colours, how many details... it changed my work and made it grow, an adults work! He is my judgement.

**TALKING ABOUT DRAGONS, IT IS A DESIGN THAT YOU SPECIFICALLY LIKE, WHY?**

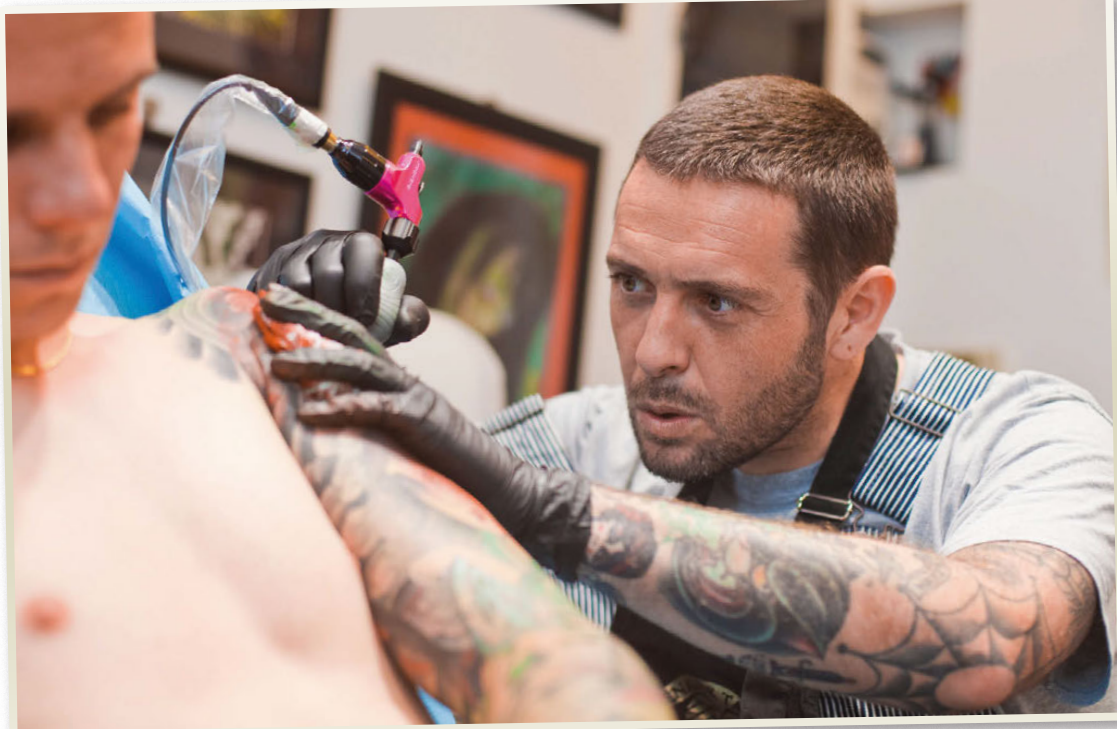
It's a mixture of many techniques you want to learn when you want to draw fluently. When I read the life of Hokusai, I read that he was drawing a karajishi (Chinese lions) every morning, so I do it with dragons. Almost every morning I do a sketch, a head, the claws, a part of the body. It's a design which gives good energy when you do it. The reason why my dragons have eyes crossing comes from the ukiyo-e tradition and for example when you want to show strength for Kabuki actors, you normally cross his eyes. Sometimes it also adds a little irony and a little craziness in the design of dragons you can see in the temple. A dragon is a crazy force, it's a strength of nature.



**ELEGANCE: IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN JAPANESE TATTOOING. IN JAPAN THEY CALL IT 'IKKI'. IT IS A MIXTURE BETWEEN ELEGANCE AND MANNER. I REALLY UNDERSTAND THAT.**







**FROM THE BEGINNING YOU WERE MORE INTERESTED IN THE CLASSIC LOOK OF TRADITIONAL JAPANESE TATTOOING THAN THE EUROPEAN MODERN VERSION THAT EVEN YOUNG JAPANESE TATTOOERS WERE LOOKING AT...**

All my friends in Japan were telling me, 'You're not doing Japanese tattoo, you're doing your style'. And I was wondering why they would tell me this. So when I went to Yokosuka Horihide and showed him my work, he said, 'This is real Japanese style!'. So you guys should learn from him. They were doing the Filip Leu style—they were more impressed by Mick (Zürich) and Filip than the traditional style of Japanese tattooers. Then I saw Ivan Szazi's work and I saw another guy doing old-school stuff... it meant that other people understood my taste. The difficulty was getting people to like the designs on paper, before putting it on skin when they didn't look as charming as the 3D dragons for example. It's less of a cartoonist kind of rework. This is more serious and elegant. This is a word that Horihide told me: 'Elegance'. It is the most important thing in Japanese tattooing. In Japan they call it 'ikki'. It is a mixture between elegance and manner. I really understand that.

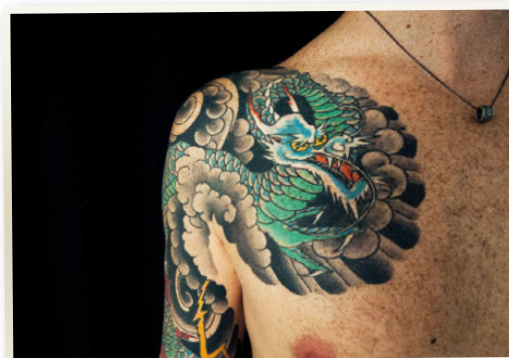
**YOU'RE PAINTING BESIDES TATTOOING, WHAT INFLUENCE DOES IT HAVE IN YOUR CREATION PROCESS?**

It's very important. I started painting as a tattooer like everybody else, by painting flash. I did it like tattooing, with concentration and physical contraction. Because you have to take care of a lot of parameters, there is a ten-

sion. The paintings—like the dragons—that I do on huge scenography paper are more free. This opposite energy counter-balances the energy for tattooing, for your body and your mind. I like to give the idea of a painting in my tattoos. For example, I put a lot of dots behind my tattoos, I like the effect of sumi painting. The body is the canvas.

**YOU OPENED YOUR FIRST SHOP IN 1997, YOU WERE 21 YEARS OLD. HOW DO YOU LOOK AT TATTOOING NOW IT HAS EVOLVED?**

Tattooing, in the beginning of the 90's, was an artistic revolution. We had the chance, and we still have that chance, to make it happen in society. People didn't like art anymore before tattooing—they were not looking at paintings anymore, not going to museums. Now it is changing, because drawing is cool, because you can be an artist. So people want to join this. This is good. When people have a heart for expression, humanity comes back out. We were ashamed of our sensibilities, now even tough guys buy a painting! 'Oh look, this is by Ichibay'. Can you imagine a huge biker with a painting? This the revolution we started but we have to continue on this path. ▣





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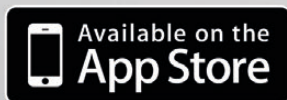


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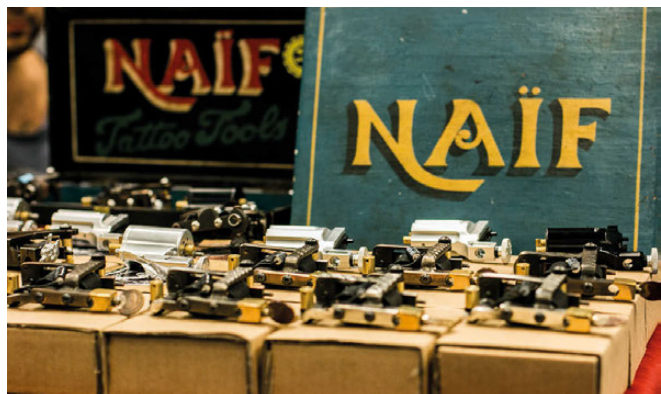
# FLORENCE TATTOO CONVENTION

18–20 November 2016

*The Florence Tattoo Convention just keeps getting more spectacular with every year that passes and 2016 has been no exception to that rule*

Words: Mr. Smith Images: Emily Darcy Adams





*City aside, this is one show that gets better with every turn of the screw*



**D**ear Lord, I love it here. ‘Florence’ tells you you’re in a good place before you even arrive and there’s not many places on the planet you can say that about. It’s Florence—how could you be not a pig in zen just to even be here.

City aside, this is one show that gets better with every turn of the screw. The people arrive more or less as soon as the doors open—and they arrive in their hundreds but the difference between this and most other shows I’ve checked out, is that it never stops. Hundreds arrive at lunch-time, early afternoon, late afternoon, early evening... even just before midnight there are still people showing up to get tattooed—all of which makes it a wonderful place to be. There’s nothing like thousands of enthusiastic people to make a show come to life.

This is one passionate city when it comes to tattooing that’s for sure. Even those not being tattooed, those who have come with people who are, are genuinely happy to be

here and hang out. It’s a crazy place. I guess people come from all around to make it this way and it’s a real pleasure to be a part of it.

On hand here are some artists you know well—Robert Hernandez, Stefano Alcantara, Randy Engelhard, Jak Connolly, Sam Barber, Joe Capobianco, Jo Harrison... notable if for no other reason than they all occupy the same row of artists.

The majority of tattooers here though—and damn there are a lot of them, this is no small venue to fill to capacity—are Italian artists you are likely never to have heard of unless you are an uber-hardcore fan/collector—and in the main, their work is every part as good as those names previously mentioned. I swear—the quality of tattooing at this show is off the scale and that makes me a happy man.

To name-check a few and enable you to hunt them down behind the scenes: Andrea Blackrose, Donna Mayla, Giulia Luconi, Fabio Gargiulo... this could turn into a long list but all the artists are still live over at flor-





*I was ready for anything, but I was not ready for tattoos entered into a category known as ‘Other Styles’...*

encetattooconvention.com for you to sift through. That said, you should all know my thoughts by now about giving an image a four second glance on a screen before moving onto the next one. There’s nothing like seeing people work in the flesh and watching the genesis of a piece of work come together.

As ever, there are little pockets of entertainment along the way. Hidden in corners and performing on mini-stages are people with acoustic instruments performing unplugged—hell, there’s even a crowd of people watching a guy play didgeridoo for half an hour. Up on the main stage, metal bands play at full throttle but such is the smartness of the venue, turn a corner to join the artists and you don’t have to hear it if you don’t want to. There’s good food, enough coffee to melt your face and if you need a break, the city is but a five minute walk away... even if it does mean crossing a road with so much traffic, it’s like you’re in a bizarre video game.

The Friday came and went in something of a haze for me as I spent the entire afternoon get-

ting tattooed by my buddy Fiumix, but it was a good chance to lie around and people watch.

I also had the honour to be invited here as a judge this year—a ‘responsibility’ I take really seriously even if my face might say otherwise. This makes it something like over 40 shows judged and on the first evening, I find myself sitting next to the legendary Hanky Panky—and I don’t use the term ‘legendary’ loosely either. I like Hank a lot, he knows his stuff inside out, but man... our opinions on tattooing are polar opposites and perhaps that’s exactly how it should be on a judging panel. Things I loved, he picked holes in. Things he loved, I thought belonged to another time and had no place at a show in 2016. That said, we did find some common ground along the way. The world would be a dull place if we all thought the same way and it’s these tiny details that keep the tattoo world turning in hundreds of different directions.

An interesting point on the competitions here this year: I was ready for anything, but I was not ready for tattoos entered into a

**WINNERS**  
**Saturday 19 November**

*Traditional*  
1st: Vince Pages · Nuit Noire Tattoo  
2nd: Alan Ferioli · Nuit Stay Gold Tattoo

*Other Style*  
1st: Marco Matarese · Nuit Puro Tattoo Studio  
2nd: Andrea Lanzi · Nuit Antikorpo Tattoo Studio

*Tribal*  
1st: Agnieszka Kulinska · Nuit Avalon Tattoo  
2nd: Marco Wallace · Nuit Wallace Tattoo

*Best of the Day*  
1st: Kostas · Nuit Prive Tattoo  
2nd: Maks Kornev · Nuit Artefact Tattoo





*Next year, it's the tenth anniversary show here and damn it, you can get your ass to Florence for about £50*



**WINNERS**  
**Sunday 20 November 2016**

**New Tribal**  
1st: Kostas · Nuit Prive tattoo  
2nd: Gabry Scriba · Nuit Scriba Tattoo Studio

**Oriental**  
1st: Lupo Horiokami · Nuit Mushin Studio  
2nd: Hori Smoku · Nuit Gangnam Ink

**Realistic**  
1st: Diego Lanzone · Nuit Diè Tattoo  
2nd: Lorenzo Di Bonaventura · Nuit Italian Style Tattoo

**Best in show**  
Sam Barber · Sam Barber Tattoo

category known as 'Other Styles'—which basically meant if your tattoo didn't fit into one of the official categories on the day, you could throw it into that hat... I thought it was a little weird until the work started to come up. It meant judging tattoos for being tattoos without having to lock them into their component parts. A warped kinda genius is what is was. I like it and shall be offering it up as something we should do back home.

Another discrepancy from the norm here is how many tribal artists are working. There are a lot—so many in fact, it has two categories when it comes to the awards but this is not 'gym-rat' tribal as we would know it in the UK. This is authentic and very, very good in the extreme.

On the Sunday, a different set of judges and three days in, I still don't have a clue what's actually going on behind the scenes. You'll forgive me if I don't speak as many languages as I would like... much of the inner-workings of the show gears went over my head despite being provided with a lovely translator to assist.

Still—a tattoo is a tattoo when it's put in front of you and there were some wonderful works on display. Oddly perhaps—for me at least—was seeing Sam Barber walk away with the Best of Show award. Odd because it doesn't seem like five minutes since nobody knew who she was. It was only back in 2014 that I handed her a Best Newcomer Award. You can say what you like about this business but hard work will only get you half way. You also need talent and a hyper-dedication to your craft.

As much as I never need vindication for anything (ever), this was kinda neat.

Next year, it's the tenth anniversary show here and damn it, you can get your ass to Florence for about £50. Despite an awful foreign exchange rate at the moment, hotels and food are cheap too but even if it was the most extortionate place on the planet to get to, you should still make the journey: take in the show and take in Florence. It's a place like no other where a man could spend the rest of his days quite happily.

Trust me. ☐



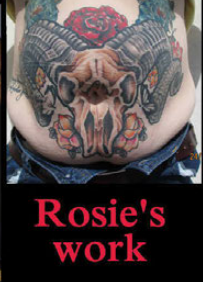
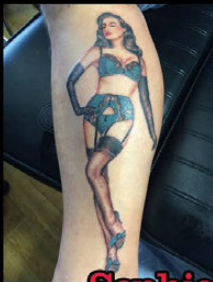
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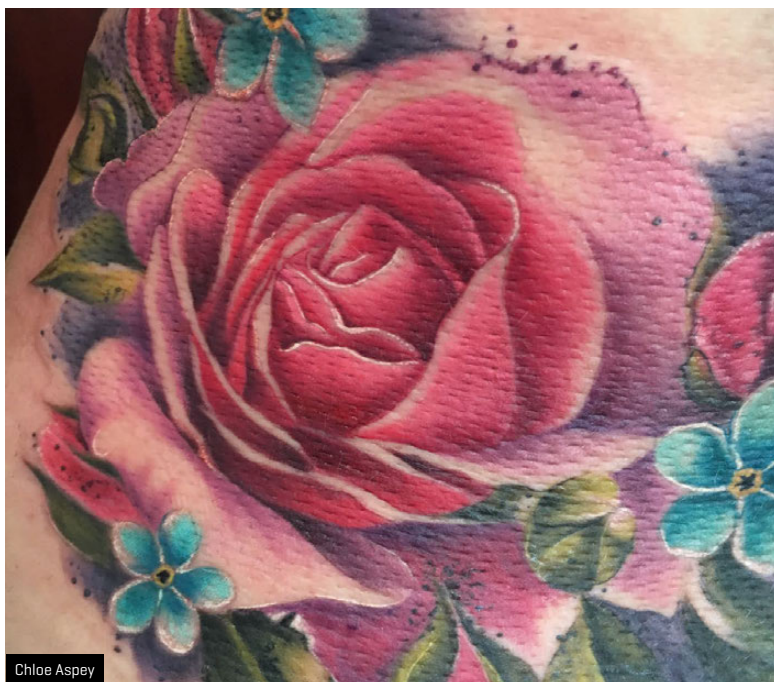
*This month, the general becomes the personal - following on from last issues thoughts on accidental body suits, here's a little of my own story.*

I had two tiny tattoos almost 20 years ago, then took a couple of years off. Not that I didn't have plans for more, I did, lots of little plans for lots of little tattoos, but I also had a baby boy and for a while, my body was his and not my own. When my good friend Zoe Binnie, started to learn to tattoo, I was ready and willing to be her doodle pad. At first, she realised some of the little ideas from inside my head, but later on, I sat for some of her earliest custom pieces, including most of my right lower leg. More significantly, in 2004, Zoe tattooed my chest piece and it was then that I began to feel like a tattooed person, not just a person with tattoos.

The practice of tattooing is an ancient one, a primal one, common to many disparate peoples across multiple continents. Personal, yet communal, unique in outcome and process, yet with a tradition of tribalism and repetition. Tattooing can feel sacred, yet can be just as easily equated to pop-culture as to anthropology. It certainly experiences the same ebb and flow of trends and fashions that we see in more disposable all around us.

My chest piece, while custom and unique to me, was very much influenced by fashion, being a particularly popular spot for women to have tattooed in a similar style and shape at the time. The chest piece was, in its own era, what the lower back tattoo had once been, what the front thigh would become, and what the 'underboob' tattoo is now. These trends change frequently, moving in seamless waves, and there is always something new on the rise.

Alongside the fads another, more poignant fashion has developed, the post breast cancer piece. These tattoos sit over mastectomy scars or reconstructions, filling voids and replacing the irretrievably lost with a new beginning. Notably documented as early as 1997 in the book, *Bodies of Subversion*, the post breast cancer tattoo is an intrinsically private artwork made for intrinsically per-



Chloe Aspey



PAULA HARDY KANGELOS

[DiamondBetty](#)

**THE CHEST PIECE WAS, IN ITS OWN ERA, WHAT THE LOWER BACK TATTOO HAD ONCE BEEN, WHAT THE FRONT THIGH WOULD BECOME, AND WHAT THE 'UNDERBOOB' TATTOO IS NOW**

sonal reasons, so we cannot truly know how common the phenomenon is. Nonetheless, tattoos of this type are easy to find online and feature in media stretching far beyond the confines of our immediate tattoo community. Yet very few non breast cancer survivors seem to choose similar coverage for their own bodies. We see momentous neck to navel tattoos on male bodies all the time, yet remarkably few women with equivalent work. In fact, as the numbers of extensively tattooed women continue to grow worldwide, more and more are finding themselves at the same point I did—with tattooed neck,





Lionel Fahy

throat & chest, and stomach, ribs & sternum, but a big empty gap between the two.

Much of this can be explained by shyness, sitting for a tattoo takes time, and a certain amount of personal exposure is inevitable. This is not too troubling when it comes to arms and legs, but becomes far more concerning in respect of more intimate areas. Breast cancer survivors have almost definitely stopped sweating such small stuff, having already overcome far greater challenges, but without this worldly perspective the prospect of a personal-place tattoo can feel excruciatingly awkward. Professional tattooers are undoubtedly able to view any skin as pure canvas, but it's much harder to take objective distance from the skin you actually inhabit.

In addition, the inspiration just isn't out there. We now inhabit a post-modern microcosm where, for good or bad, existing tattoos are the most significant influence on tattoos that are yet-to-be. Try a hashtag search for women's full chest or breast tattoos on Instagram and you'll be sadly disappointed, especially in comparison to the male equivalent or indeed, mastectomy tattoos.

So with only a handful of extensively tattooed female friends blazing the trail, I recently went ahead and disappeared down the rabbit hole, emerging with a fine set of traditional floral boobs courtesy of the wonderful Tallulah Belle.

Yet it's not a decision I made without trepidation. Yes, I had gaps to fill, an ad hoc body suit to complete but with a significant family history of women's cancers, it's entirely possible that one day, I too will need surgery, and if I do, I will lose both breast and current tattoo.

Still, if I have learned one thing from the inspirational women worldwide who've chosen to decorate their scars with art, it's this: to celebrate the moment we are in, and all we have.

All I need now is the courage to share the pictures. ▣



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## Beccy Rimmer has been wondering if there is a 'right' way to achieve your dreams in the tattoo industry today?

**F**or me, this month is very much about opinions. Without gassing on about the same old subjects, I've been thinking about tattoo TV shows again.

'Tattoos and the media' is frequently explored in my column. In this thriving industry, there are so many interesting stories that I wish we'd shout about a bit more on TV. It seems that the public just want to see our drunken mistakes.

Over the last few months I've been working closely with the company who make the TV programme Tattoo Fixers...

Yep, that's right. As industry insiders grow more resentful towards the way in which tattooing is depicted onscreen, I've decided to become involved with the decision-making process behind the screen.

After meeting regularly with a new producer, who is making a brand new show (separate to TF), I have to tell you I'm pretty damn excited about what's coming.

It's a televised competition that focuses on 'new talent'. I won't venture into telling all of the details now, as I only have one page here. For now, I'll just force you to listen to my personal challenges!

As expected, approaching artists to tell them about this project has been tough. Rightly so, many tattooists today have a strong opinion on what has gone before, and to put it bluntly and truthfully, some have a complete distrust in any potential media representation of what they do.

Talking to different people, I was asked many questions, and offered many viewpoints, but one thought in particular has stuck with me. Why should any tattoo artist be rightfully awarded quick success – appearing on television and being busy and popular as a result?

According to many, being in the eye of the public wasn't the 'right' way to showcase your artistic talents and gain the appreciation of your peers. In order to gain true respect from this sacred industry, you must first work extremely hard, for a set amount of years, under the radar (as opposed to in front

of millions of people), to learn the ropes, find your feet, and get to grips with tattooing the traditional way.

Why did so many hold this opinion towards the potential success of others? Should they just accept the life decisions of other tattooists, or was it completely understandable that they thought it wrong to see 'young talent' grow popular in a non-traditional, showbiz-induced way? I knew the answer to these questions already.

I've always preached that I want to exist as a writer to reflect the opinions of those working so hard in this industry. It truly is why I wanted to be involved with this media venture from the inside because that's the only way we can make our stamp, make things happen, and make change.

I've spent the last few months surrounded by conflicting views and for the first time in years, I've been challenged to dig deep and search for my own personal opinion. It's difficult to voice an opinion on a profession I don't carry out myself. I am not a tattooist. Am I even entitled to a view at all?

As I approached my two year anniversary as an 'official' tattoo writer this month, I did reach my own conclusion. As a 'newbie' to the tattoo scene, I had only made achievements because of the open arms I received from members of the tattoo community. Not once, had a tattoo artist told me that I needed to experience more, and that in time, my writing would then become valid, accurate and worthy of success.

### IT'S ALSO UNBELIEVABLY DIFFICULT TO VOICE AN OPINION ON A PROFESSION THAT I DON'T CARRY OUT MYSELF



BECCY RIMMER  
BeccyRimmer

From day one, that sense of encouragement, that feeling of support from others, who want nothing more than for you to triumph, in any way possible, is just pure gold, and I feel so lucky.

I want to pass this feeling of comfort and confidence on to any young tattooers who are trying to achieve their goals, in whatever way works for them. Whether that's being on television, or not, go conquer your dreams. Go, be victorious. ▣





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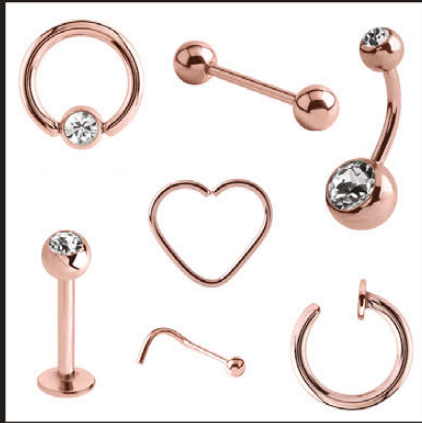
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