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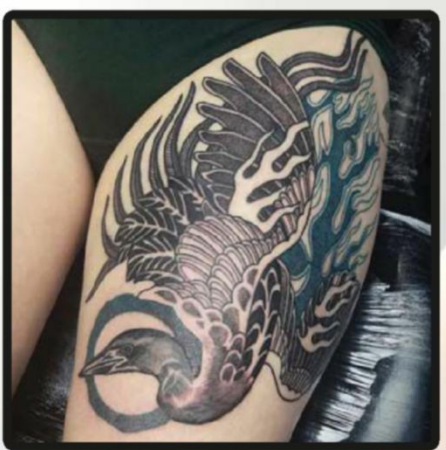
12 PAGES OF PORTFOLIOS

HAS TONY EVANS FIGURED OUT REALITY TATTOO TV?

JO BLACK
BLACK MOON
RISING

DANIEL TEIXEIRA:
BLACKWORK TO DIE FOR

HANNAH WILLISON
IN A LEAGUE OF HER OWN



JEAN-LUC NAVETTE
THE BEST THERE WAS, THE BEST THERE IS...



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SURF N TURF

SHOWS:
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MORE HUMAN THAN HUMAN

I have maybe five people in my life who have always drifted around in my psyche as an influence. They're mostly people who did something with their life that rang a bell with my soul and I simply never stopped believing in them. I think they used to call it loyalty, but Cersei Lannister taught us all we need to know about that kind of behaviour.

One of those people is Lester Bangs. You can go look him up but he was a writer who pretty much did nothing but write album reviews for rock magazines through the 1970s until he overdosed on cough medicine in '82. His way with things was *'Hey, you put it out there. It's public domain. I can say what I like about it.'*

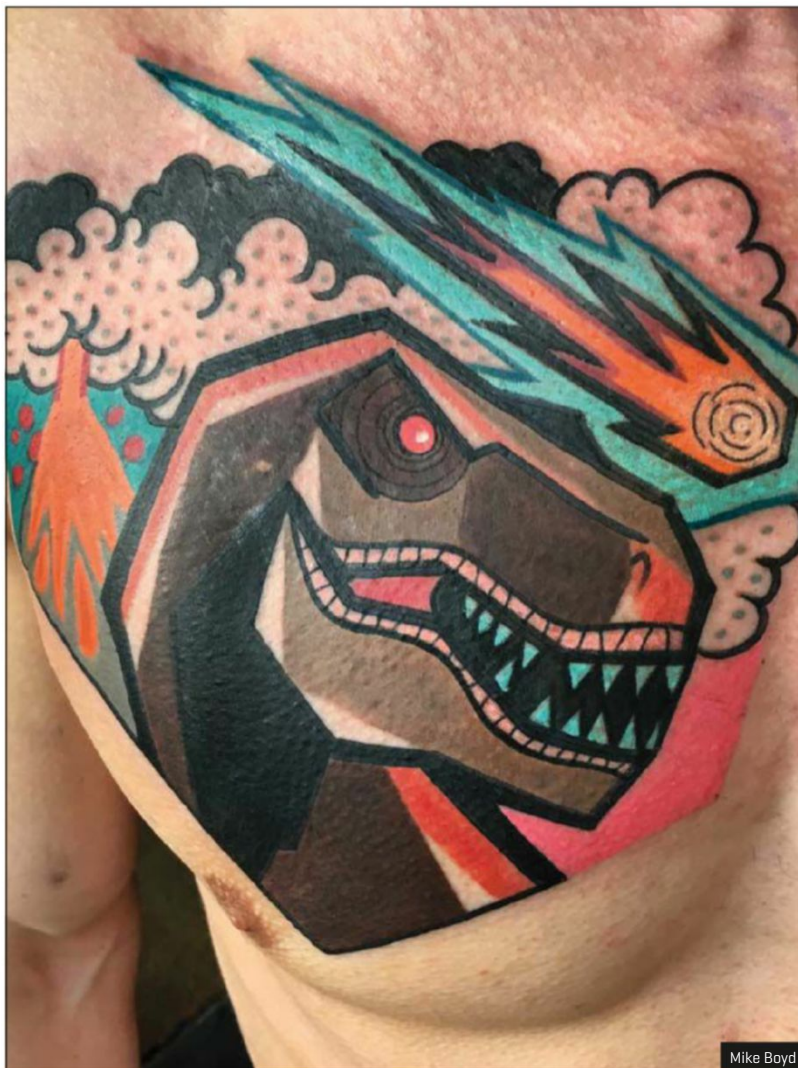
And he did—if your new album sucked diesel through a straw, he would take your work apart with such honesty, it was hard to argue with it.

What if we all operated along the same lines? Not just us here, but the whole world of tattoo magazines and hell, why not throw in the internet too because that usually has a lot of things to say for itself.

You open the mag, you work through it, you find an image of a tattoo and you stop to see what's been said about it: *"This line here is not the same thickness as the line on the other side, these fingers look like bananas that got trapped in a car door. This 'traditional' monkey looks like it has just weeks left to live..."*

While it might be entertaining, I don't think it would be altogether fair to take a tattoo apart that lives on somebody who in all likelihood will never see the tattooer that made it ever again. It's a real person with feelings at the other end of the design and that's what makes great tattooing and those who choose to write about such things so different from anything else you will find in the world.

Somebody once told me I had no right to be commenting on tattoos because I wasn't a tattooer, which is a little like saying you shouldn't report on war if you're not a soldier. The very nature of the business means you have to be on the outside looking in to even operate in



Mike Boyd

THEY USED TO CALL IT LOYALTY, BUT CERSEI LANNISTER TAUGHT US ALL WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THAT



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this particular game of thrones, otherwise your friends will become your downfall.

Anyway, I ventured that being as he was not a writer, he should not use the keyboard that came with his phone to create sentences, other than to ask what was for dinner... and then I set the dogs free to let him know I thought the last portrait he tattooed looked like the right hand side of its face had been clipped with the wing mirror of a bus.

The truth will set you free, but first, it will really piss you off. ☐

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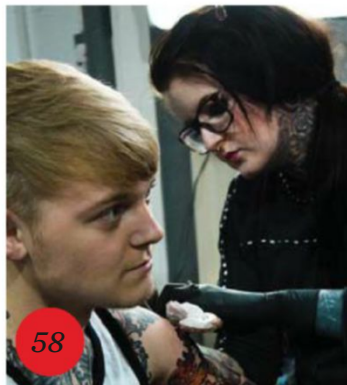
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A little tour of one of the premier shows in Europe.

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Daniel Teixeira's illustrative tattoos blur the distinction between the normal and the fantastic; moths spread their wings to reveal enigmatic otherworldly beings glaring out...

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As the popularity of tattoo television

shows continues to grow, Wayne Simmons meets Tony Evans to talk about his new project, Reality Tattoo TV, which seeks to bring something different to the table.

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and artists that go against the grain, who can't be pigeonholed into a genre like traditional or new school or realism. Wayne Simmons talks to Hannah Willison.

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Sean Herman continues to bring us stories that mean something behind his tattooing. This issue, we talk PTSD...

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Originally from Tel Aviv, Koit moved to Berlin just over a year ago, like many he was drawn by the cities diverse population and the artistic attitude and creativity of the people who live there.

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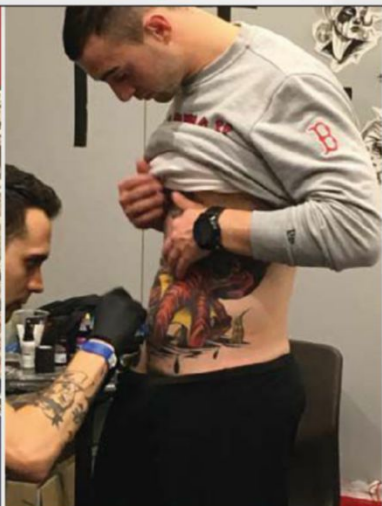
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CITY TO CITY GIVEAWAY

This issue we're giving away three pairs of weekend tickets to a couple of fantastic European shows.

We have three pairs of weekend tickets to dish out to the eighth Bucharest Tattoo Convention (13-15 October) and also three pairs of tickets to the tenth Florence Tattoo Convention (3-5 November). We are heading out to both shows, so don't forget to stop and say hello if we should happen to meet.

This is two different competitions—if you fancy your chances at both, you'll need to enter twice. Head your fingers and face over to skindeep.co.uk/competitions and enter BUCHAREST and/or FLORENCE as your answer and we will do the rest in good time for you to fix things up at home. Good luck... see you out there!



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THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS

Following Taiki Masuda's arrest in April 2015, charged with violating the Medical Practitioner's Act—which prohibits any medical practices without a license—for tattooing in Japan, the journalists and producers Hyoe Yamamoto and Deborah Barillas have been following his story. They're still shooting for their upcoming documentary "Criminal Engraving" which will record his fight for his rights to be a free tattooer in the birthplace of irezumi, the traditional Japanese tattoo.

 criminalengraving





What were your motivations when you started the film?

What attracted us in the beginning was the absurdity of the charges and situation. In our modern world, who would think that tattooing requires medical training and has to be done by a certified doctor? It sounded like a typically Japanese situation where true motivations and agendas are hidden under the pretence of legal technicality. And we were inspired that someone, a Japanese youth, is actually fighting against this bogus charge and taking a stand. What's really going on is a complex mixture of lack of tolerance and diversity, political power mongering, and the younger generation challenging the old establishment. So what we want to show is that it goes far beyond the issues surrounding tattoo and tattoo artists.

What did you know about the Japanese tattoo scene and what did you discover?

We didn't know a whole lot before we get into the production. First thing we discovered is the rich history and tradition of Japanese tattoo as well as the historical relationship between the state and tattoo in general. One of the first things people imagine when they hear tattoo is obviously yakuza, but that's just a tip of the iceberg.

Did you try to sell the film to Japanese media?

We didn't expect there to be still so much resistance to tattoo in Japanese media. They self-censor everything that might raise yellow flags and tattooing is one of them. Some of the Japanese broadcasters that we pitched the project to expressed annoyance and even anger for spotlighting this topic as a potential violation of human rights and freedom of expression issue. For them, tattoo equals anti-social activities and nothing more. We were quite disappointed with their reactions though they were expected to some degree.

Where are you in the process of making the film?

We have been shooting for a year and a half and hope to





shoot more at least until the verdict comes out in September or October. We're negotiating a deal with non-Japanese media outlet and hope to finish a short version in early 2018. We want to continue to work on it and make it as a feature length film.

Can you tell us about what did you shoot and what will be in the film?

We covered various activities of Save Tattooing, including interactions with the policy makers and media, the discussions and meetings with Taiki and his lawyers, and various one on one interviews. We're still collecting materials and haven't started editing yet, so we don't know what will end up in the film.

According to you, what were the motivations of the police when they proceeded to these arrests?

The state seemed to be targeting subculture scenes to flex their muscle and exercise authority to regulate people and our culture. As you may know, dance clubs were targeted before tattoo and until recently, it was illegal to dance at a club in Japan. I think the state is so out of touch with what's going on in the world and that's a dangerous sign that the state is functioning in a way to protect the interests of the privileged few. So again, it comes back to the issue of tolerance and diversity. Is Japan ready to open up to the new set of values and cultures?

What is the atmosphere around Taiki Masuda and in what state of mind is he in?

Though he gets nervous around the court dates, he is rela-

tively optimistic. He says if he had known what it's like to go through the process, he wouldn't have decided to fight, but he doesn't regret his decision.

How is this trial perceived in Japan?

Surprisingly, the trial was covered by some of the major media outlets, but the coverage was relatively minimum. I think people are waiting for the verdict and depending on how that turns out, the media will be more keen to cover it.. or not, perhaps.

How did the Japanese tattoo community react to this case?

Some parts of the community are reluctant to support the movement to legalise tattooing because they feel that the true nature of tattoo culture doesn't call for open discussions and debate on legality since it always operated in the grey zone historically. But now with this case, it will have to be black or white, so everyone in the community is holding their breath.

Where are we in the process of the trial?

The verdict will be delivered in late September or early October. But the defence team is expecting an appeal to a higher court, so this could go on for another few years.

What kind of a verdict should we expect?

I think they will deliver not guilty verdict on the first trial, but it's likely that the verdict will be overturned at the higher court when the media gets quiet after a few years... but that's when we will be there with our camera to tell you what happens. ▣

THERE IS SOMETHING GOING ON

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THE WANDERERS

I read an article in a guitar magazine recently about how the Musicians' Union was "imploring musicians to take action to ensure free movement in the EU post-Brexit..."

...but I had not seen so much as one social media post about such a thing for tattooers who travel a similar path. Admittedly, me not seeing something on social media is not that unusual but I scouted around some more and as I write this, still believe I am correct: there is zero action being taken on this front in tattooing. Maybe this is the wrong place to bring it up, but alongside of tattooers liking to get around Europe—coming and going both ways—there are plenty of collectors and fans who like to get around too. I meet people all from all around the UK in the strangest of places—so, in a nutshell, this stuff is important.

The basic concept of the article in that magazine was about how the Musicians Union had been consulting with the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the music industry umbrella body, UK Music, as well as with MP's and the House of Lords on how they could protect musicians' careers post-Brexit.

Like I say, I am no expert in such things, but I think the tattoo industry—as a collective of people working together—needs to look long and hard at this because when it comes knocking on the door, it will knock very loud indeed. Somebody needs to grab hold of the reins and steer the horses.

That person is not me but it could be you and if you need some pointers on where to begin, you could always try these places to see what's happening:

There's more information from the MU here that's a good grounding:

<http://themu.org/brexit>

If you're unsure about how to get involved with your MP, you can find and email them by jumping onto this site, where it will do all the hard work for you: writetothem.com

There's also a hashtag going around—*#WorkingInTheEU*—which could be quite handy as you go forwards.

If anybody does pick up on this and needs a hand either from *Skin Deep* or *Tattoo Master* or needs to use any of our online portals for support, you know where we are. ▣

Words: Mr. Smith



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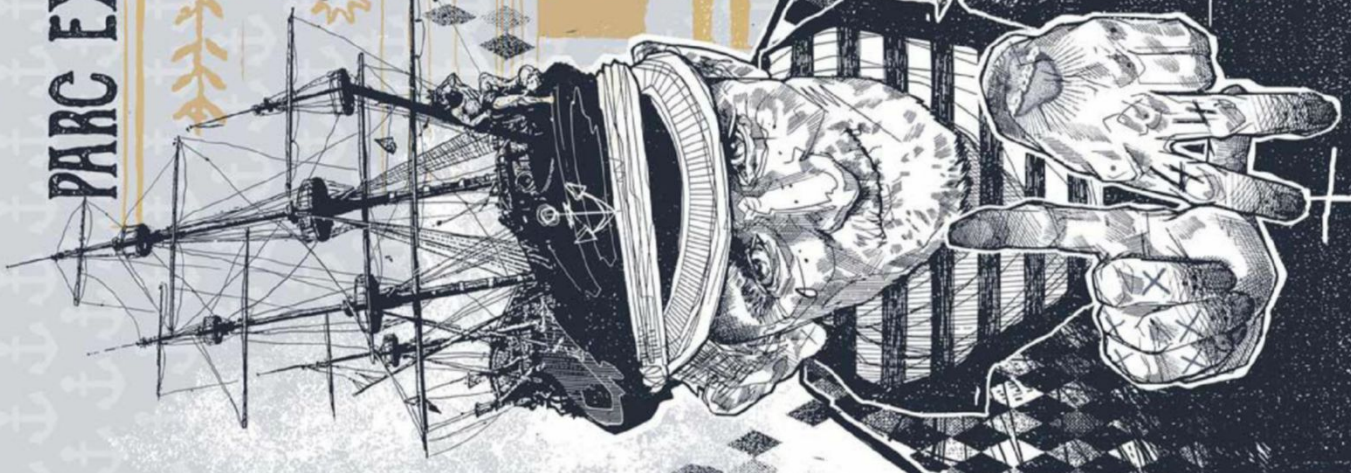
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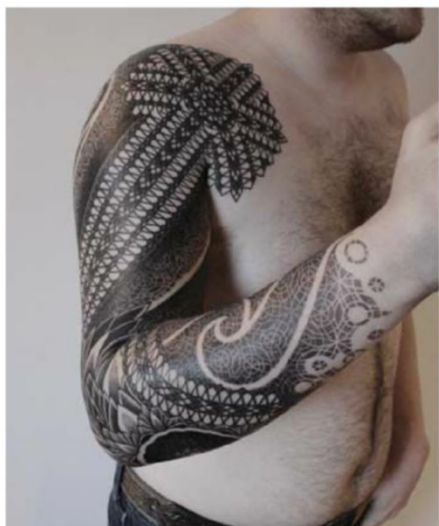
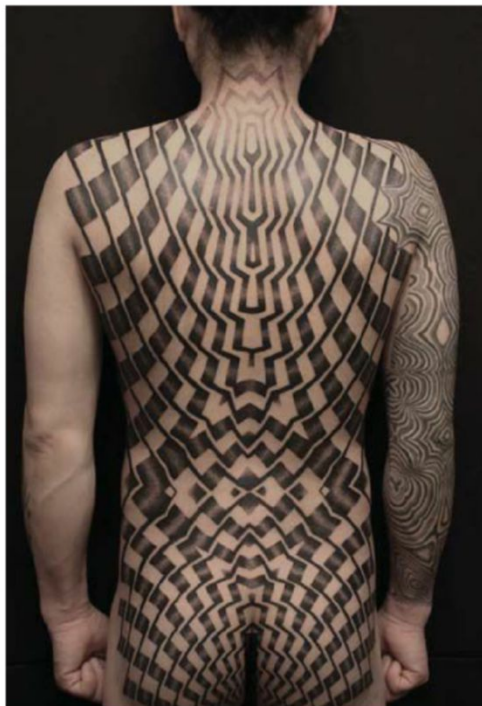
KENJI ALUCKY



In keeping with last issue's concept of showering you with great work from tattoo artists out on the edge just because we can, this issue, we bring you the work of Kenji who works out of his private studio—Black Ink Power—in Amsterdam.

Beautiful, glorious black ink, flooding the world just like it should...

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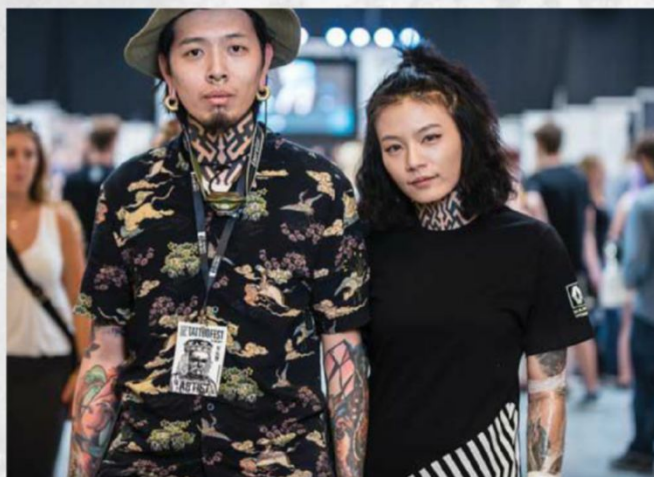


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Tattoofest Krakow

3-4 JUNE 2017

A couple of months back, one of the most fun conventions in Europe - TattooFest - opened it's doors for the 12th time and that's no mean feat! We invited Aleksandra Halatek to tell us the story of 2017 from an organisers point of view and sent Kamila out with her camera to document... damn, there's some talent out there:



The 12th Tattoofest is already a part of tattooing history: a history of the Polish tattoo scene and the tattooers that took part in this event who, using their skills, talent and most amazing works were appreciated by jury members and rewarded by traditional skateboard decks.

I'm starting from this element because after all those years, for me personally, it's still one of the most important parts. I don't mean from the aspect of giving out awards and listing the most influential or most promising artists but as an educational aspect of a tattoo convention where outstanding works - both artistic and technical -

can be shown to a bigger audience and praised.

I feel really proud to hear from artists that the award from Tattoofest is the most precious among all they have earned. Not only because Tattoofest is one of the most prestigious tattoo events in Eastern Europe, but also because our competitions are judged by the most significant Polish tattoo artists that laid the foundations for the development of this phenomenon like Slawek Fraczek or Sebastian "Junior" Jaryszek and that are still an inspiration for A-listed and well-known artists like for example Tofi, who first gained recognition at Tattoofest a few years back.

As I mentioned, together we're building a Polish tattoo

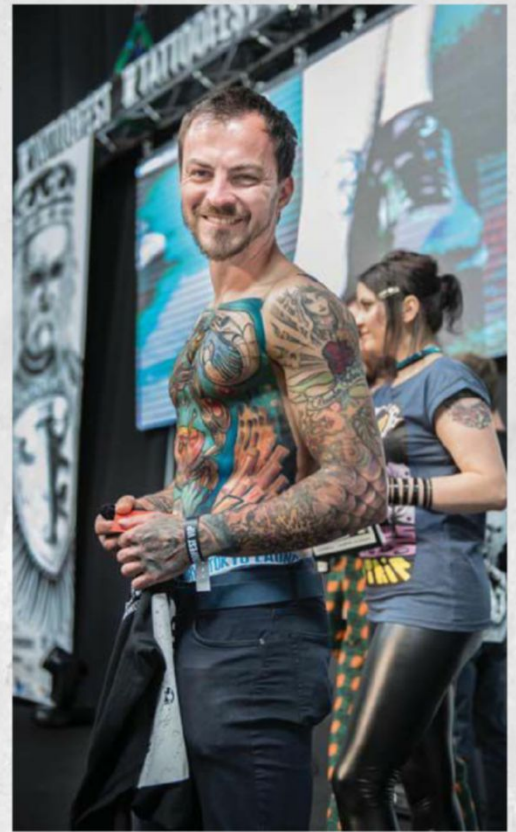


history, but it's also a part of a bigger story, because from the very beginnings of Tattoofest, we were aiming to invite and introduce our audience to international tattoo artists. A single tattoo convention is an opportunity to meet different people with a common interest and passion, so why not broaden our horizons and showcase how the tattoo is developing in other countries? Tattoofest gained its reputation thanks to tattoo artists attending the event, not only presenting varying styles and working with different techniques (including traditional hand techniques) but what's most important is that they are working on a very high artistic level.

Choosing and inviting artists' is still the most important aspect of organising a convention. From the first edition in 2006 when we started with just 27 artists until now, when

we hosted a record number of artists – more than 300! I think anybody willing to get tattooed during the convention wasn't disappointed and could find an artist and style suiting their needs. For those just interested in looking for an artist or check what's going on at such events or wanted to have some fun, there is always something going on.

When it comes to highlights and attractions, I can list a thrilling sword swallowing show by the amazing Lucky Hell, a meet and greet with gorgeous Monami Frost - model and YouTube vlogger that really doesn't need to be an introduction, an exhibition of paintings by Lukasz Bam Kaczmarek, the awesome Polish tattoo artists who is also well known from working with different media, art fusion of tattoo artists showing their painting/graphic skills and last but not least, contests for the audience with



some special and valuable prizes.

Tattooofest is over 2000 sq. meters of a busy, buzzing tattoo studio. It also boasts 1000 sq meters outside, filled with street food trucks, chill zone with DJ's, a massive graffiti zone, custom bikes or stands offering visitors the opportunity to try different urban sports. Not to mention the kids zone, including bouncy castle, where you can leave your kids under the supervisor of a professional caregivers.

All these things mentioned above make Tattooofest a perfect option not only for tattoo lovers seeking for top notch artists but also for visitors seeking a good urban event in beautiful Krakow.

Come join us at the 13th edition of Tatoofest on 2-3 June 2018. More info can be found at convention.tattooofest.pl and on our Facebook profile. Hope to see you there! ☐





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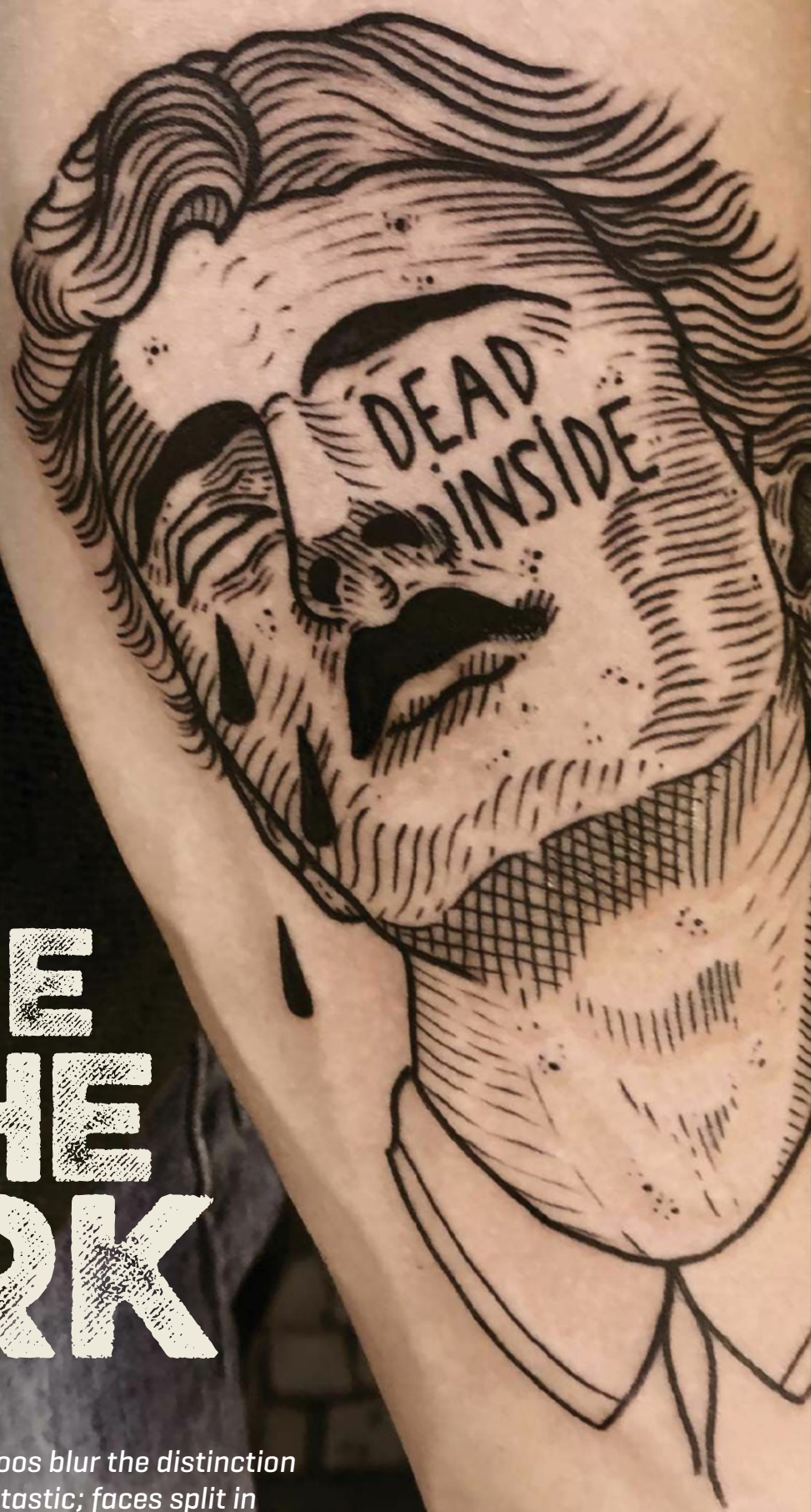


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ALONE IN THE DARK

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Daniel Teixeira's illustrative tattoos blur the distinction between the normal and the fantastic; faces split in two, moths spread their wings to reveal enigmatic otherworldly beings glaring out, and bodies contort in bizarre acts of self-destructive consumption

Words: Steven Kenny



The surreal nature of the tattooist's designs bare witness to an imagination both wild and fascinated by the macabre. Some of Teixeira's tattooed faces disappear entirely to reveal unearthly figures in acts of self-absorption, or present dark voids that are all encompassing and haunting in their brazen emptiness. The tattooist's linework is confident and descriptive; shadows sweep across faces and frown lines raise and fall to draw the supernatural from the mind to the skin. The inclusion of text in some of Teixeira's portraits is both haunting and illusory; anatomical features are swapped for short moments of contemplation. These tattoos are unlike anything else; they are lingering nightmares carried over from the depths of the subconscious to the reality of the flesh.

What led you to be coming a tattooist? Have you always been interested in tattooing?

I've been drawing ever since I can remem-

ber, maybe since I was 5. Drawing has always been my passion, I was experimenting with oil painting, charcoal, etc., and then I moved on to graffiti. Also, I was into punk/rock culture and it was entirely natural for those worlds to combine; I think I was about 15 when I realised that tattooing was what I wanted to do.

Some of my own first tattoos are New School in design; I have a whole New School sleeve. I got them when I first started as a tattoo artist, and I was still really bound to the graffiti and hardcore scene. Although, I do also have some realistic work too! Throughout the years, my taste in tattoos went through a variety of styles, and nowadays I'm into solid, blackwork and traditional. That's what I do and that's what I like getting on me.

Where did you learn to tattoo? What was it like tattooing your first client?

I learnt to tattoo in a mate's shop, they were tattooing for some time and that's how I

I'M INSPIRED BY SURREALISM, ALCHEMY, AND MEDIEVAL AESTHETICS



learnt the basics. I was drawing a lot, practicing on myself and tattooing small things on my friends. Then the opportunity came for me to work in a local shop, and actually my first client was a friend of mine. It was great because I had no pressure and I charged him a symbolic price of 5€. He signed the bill and I have kept it ever since; that was ten years ago.

What influences and develops your work?

Theme wise I'm inspired by surrealism, alchemy, and medieval aesthetics. I really love the engraving style, with a lot of line work. Overall, dark themes, spiritual, transcendental and, sometimes, sexually related.

Do you think it is important that tattooists constantly look to other artists working in the field to develop their working practices?

Maybe on a technical level, I think it's good to look at other tattooists' work. In terms of composition and theme wise, sometimes you can get inspired and get new ideas, but I think for me, I always count on my creativity and methods to develop new designs. Of course I have lots of artists I look up to and admire, and I love how the tattoo scene is so diverse.





I THINK WE HAVE ALL HAD CLIENTS THAT WANT 500 ELEMENTS ON HALF A SLEEVE...

You tattoo in a very specific illustrative style; what led you to work in this manner?

When I first started tattooing 10 years ago, I was really into realism, and a couple of years later I started to focus on my line work, solid shading and colour packing. I started creating dark Neo Traditional tattoos and with time my love for black, solid pieces grew along with my passion for the medieval aesthetic, and all the line work that comes with it. I created a style that even though is illustrative, it's still mystical, dark and inspired by pop-culture.

What artists do you like yourself?

I like a different range of artists and from different spectrums of the arts: Dali, Basquiat, Klimt, Bosch, Dürer, etc. As far as tattooists, some names that pop into my head are Alexander Grim, Robert Borbas, Kelly Violet, Adrian Edek, Scott Move, and I could name a hundred more if we had the time!

Do you continue to make artwork in your own time?

Sure, I'm always drawing, even if it's not for a client. It's my therapy and my hobby. I sometimes get artist's block from time to time, like everyone, but it's impossible for me not to create, not to draw.



What's the strangest tattoo you have done? Have you had many strange requests?

Well, I think we have all had clients that want 500 elements on half a sleeve but that's a classic. I don't think I have ever done something really strange, but I've done some funny ones, like smiley faces on bottoms and stuff like that. I have had some weird requests, like someone that wanted a full orange tribal sleeve, although that never happened. Also, one guy asked me for a puzzle piece on his penis, he said it was the missing piece to be found!

What is the most memorable tattoo you have done?

I think there was a specific tattoo that marks the turning point for my present style. I was still looking for the aes-

**I WAS STILL
LOOKING FOR THE
AESTHETIC THAT
MAKES PEOPLE
RECOGNISE MY
WORK ON SIGHT**



thetic that makes people recognise my work on sight, and I tattooed a head with two faces, with lots of line work on someone and that was it. From then on, my whole drawing and tattoo approach was based towards that.

What is the biggest tattoo you have done?

I've done some full backs and front pieces. I have some regular clients that have pretty much their whole bodies tattooed by me.

What do you enjoy tattooing the most?

Obviously, my original work, my themes, mostly my faces that always have a twist to them.

What do you dislike about tattooing?

I'm really not fond of stubborn clients, that makes my job difficult; thinking they know better when it comes to placement, size, ideas, etc. I'm really annoyed by the fact that people don't think this is a serious job and that everybody can do it. It's disrespectful! I hate biters, copycats and tattoo related TV shows.

What do you feel about people applying deep meanings to their tattoos? Does a tattoo need a meaning? Or can it just function on its aesthetic qualities alone?

I think it has the same value either way. A tattoo is what it is, but only as long as it is a beautiful, well made piece of art. I don't think it should be that serious, art is art but hey, if people want to make it meaningful, that's with them. Even in my work, I sometimes draw with a purpose, other times I just think it will look good and I do it!

What does tattooing mean to you?

It's kind of hard for me to answer that, mainly because I think of myself as an artist in general, not just a tattooist. Of course it's a job and it's how I make money, but it's really overwhelming to live doing what I love, to wake up every morning not being stressed or depressed for having to work on some job I hate. Also, it's great that I get to create my own art and have people wanting them on their skin permanently, and to see my hard work being recognised and appreciated. □

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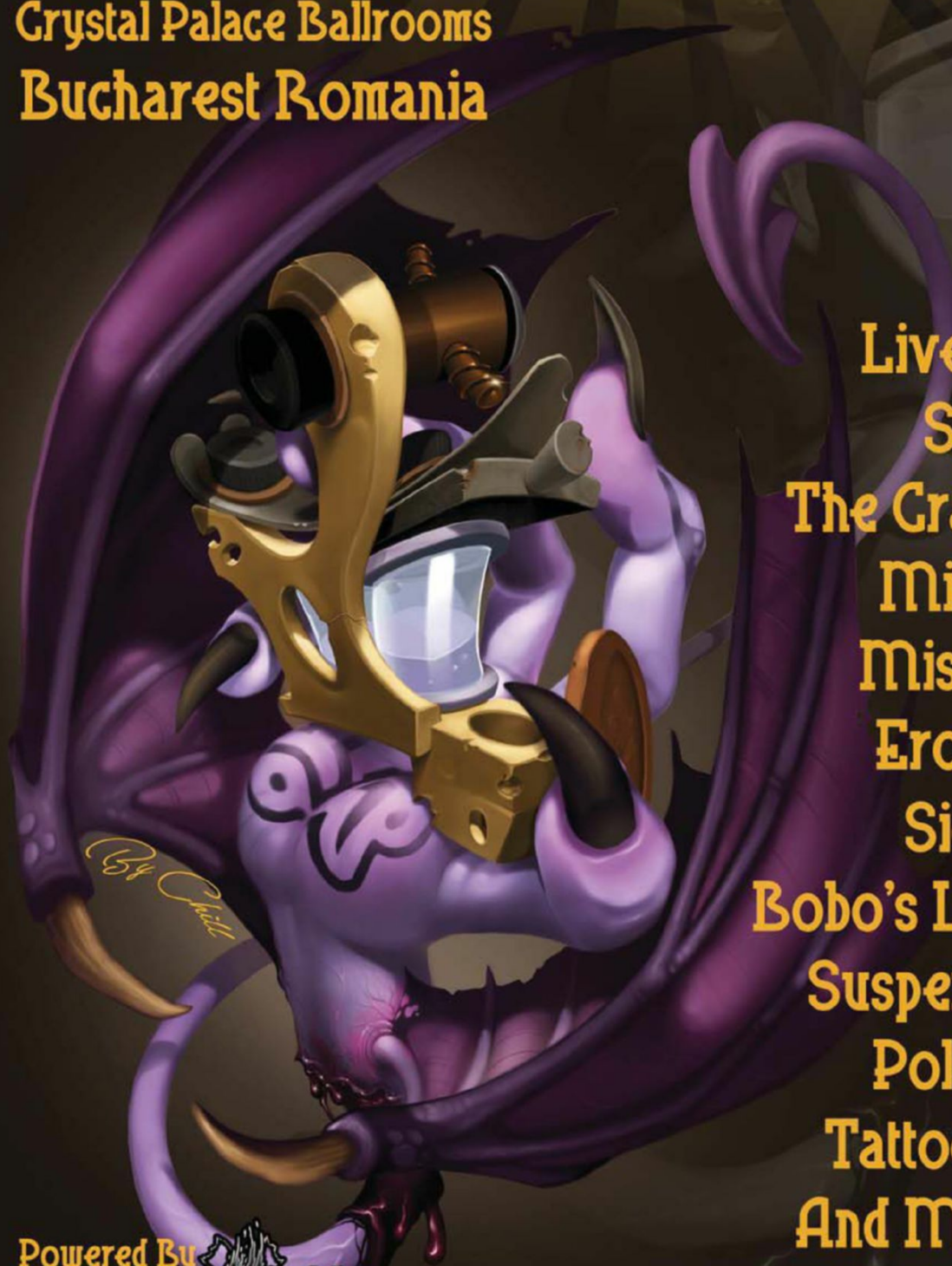
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With over two decades of tattoo experience, Mark Longenecker has certainly earned his stripes. The owner of Endless Summer Tattoo in Cocoa Beach, Florida, Longenecker brought his signature 'tropistyle' to television when he competed on Ink Master's fifth season [the show's first foray into the Rivals format], then returned for Ink Master: Redemption in 2016. These days, he's away from the cameras, tattooing and pursuing his second love, surfing. Following his visit to the Great British Tattoo Show back in May, a proper chat seemed in order

Originally from New Jersey, Mark Longenecker, a self-professed "righteous dude," kicked off his art career with a degree in graphic design from the Savannah College of Art and Design. His schooling complete, he moved down to Florida where he landed a gig creating logos and artwork for local businesses, including Jimmy Buffett's recording studio, and it wasn't long before his two roommates (who just so happened to be tattoo artists) convinced him to take on an apprenticeship at their shop, Goldie's Tattoo.

Two decades of tattooing and traveling followed and, in 2014, reality TV became his reality. Having auditioned for both the second and third seasons of Ink Master, Longenecker felt confident about his chances of landing a spot on Spike's hit TV show — "I was doing Skype interviews almost every day after the audition" — but things didn't exactly go as expected. Producers "finally told me that I wasn't a good fit for that season," he remembers. "I just figured that was their nice way of telling me to get lost."

"In the meantime, I did a painting of the show's host called 'Only Dave Navarro Can



Judge Me,' portraying Dave Navarro as a god-like figure. I posted it and Dave saw it and shot me a message. I thought he was going to be pissed, but he said he heard I was going to make shirts of the painting and he was interested in a shirt. I thought that really showed how cool he was — he was part of the joke and able to laugh at it as well."

"When I sent him some shirts, I also sent him the original painting. I figure that helped put me on the radar a bit more" and come



**Mark Longenecker on...
the Ink Master family**

I [continue to] join the Ink Master family for tattoo conventions all over the world. I would be interested in going back on the show under the right circumstances. I always tell them to give me a call when they do a season in Hawaii!



Season 5, producers were knocking at his door. “They wanted to change the vibe of the show and came up with the Rivals format,” he continues. “They were already sold on Ryan Eternal with his tough looks and attitude and when they asked him who he would like to go against, he said Mark Longenecker. I’m sure they were like ‘We know that guy!’ and they hit me up again.”

While competing on the inaugural season of *Ink Master: Rivals*, Longenecker unapologetically battled it out against Eternal, but now, three years later, their relationship is drastically different. “Fuck that punk!” he says, unable to contain a laugh. “Jokes! We’re cool now. He doesn’t do too many tattoo conventions, but I see him from time to time. We squashed the beef a long time ago and the last time I saw him, we got our swell on at the gym. That dude is pretty jacked up!”

The Realities Of Reality TV

No matter how religiously you watch *Ink Master*, as with most reality shows, what you see is never the full picture. “We were tattooing with no music and dealing with crazy canvases that had completely unrealistic expectations of what kind of tattoo they could get in six hours,” says Longenecker, thinking

back to his time in front of the cameras.

“It was really crazy being on the show, then watching it all,” he adds. “I was always worrying how it was going to be edited, but I think I was represented as who I really am. Just maybe a way more stressed out version. I did the best tattoos I could under the circumstances I was in. None of those tattoos are in my portfolio, though,” he admits.

Still, Longenecker (who was eliminated right before the live finale, finishing in fourth place) says he’s “proud of where I ended up since I made it all the way to the end, but I would have been a lot more stoked if I had made it in the finale. I was so close, but I felt like they already had Clean Rock One picked to win from the beginning and I was never going to win anyway. When Jason Clay Dunn won I was like, ‘Daaaamn, maybe I really could have won!’”

Despite everything, Longenecker wasn’t turned off by the process of shooting a reality show and actually returned to *Ink Master: Redemption* in 2016. “I kinda knew what I getting myself into, but the Redemption concept is pretty nuts. On one hand, I want everyone who I tattooed to be happy with their tattoos, but that concept gets terribly abused,” he explains.

“In the real world, you can’t walk into a

Mark Longenecker on... schooling and tattooing

If you’re in college, want to be a tattoo artist and don’t know what to major in, I suggest graphic design. That’s what we as tattoo artists do every day: We design amazing custom imagery for people. It’s not much different from designing a logo for a business or a T-shirt. I believe it helped give me the graphic style I have in tattooing today.



tattoo studio acting like you want to fight the artist and they will suddenly just give you another free tattoo. There is a fine line between ‘The customer is always right’ and being completely disrespected by a crazy person.” That being said, “I would love to get on another tattoo show, maybe one in Europe.”

Asked about being one of the most outspoken artists in Ink Master history, Longenecker fires back: “Most outspoken out of everyone? You sure about that? I had to put up a good fight to stay in the competition. I found myself in trouble for not hitting the challenge because I was caught up with trying to make the canvases happy.”

“I never wanted to give up, freak out or cry on TV, like many contestants do, so I tried to stand my ground and stick up for myself,” he says. “I always thought they had a professional psychiatrist in the control room speaking into the judges’ earpieces!”

Gone Surfin’

Long before he appeared on Ink Master and even before he picked up a tattoo machine, Longenecker was in school, studying graphic design and, believe it or not, creating art for iconic musician Jimmy Buffett.

“When I got out of college, my first job

was working at the silkscreen company that printed most of Jimmy Buffett’s T-shirt designs,” he recalls. “I always thought I was just one T-shirt design away from becoming a millionaire! Not all of my designs got used, but the design I did for his recording studio is called ‘Shrimp Boat Sound’ and I designed the nets of the shrimp boat to turn into headphones. I hear it’s still being used today!”

Eventually, tattooing entered his life and, after a decade of working at a handful of different shops, Longenecker decided he was ready to make a major move. “The last shop I was at, I worked there for five years and left on good terms to travel around and tattoo with the idea of either finding a shop full of amazing and inspiring artists I could work with or creating it myself.”

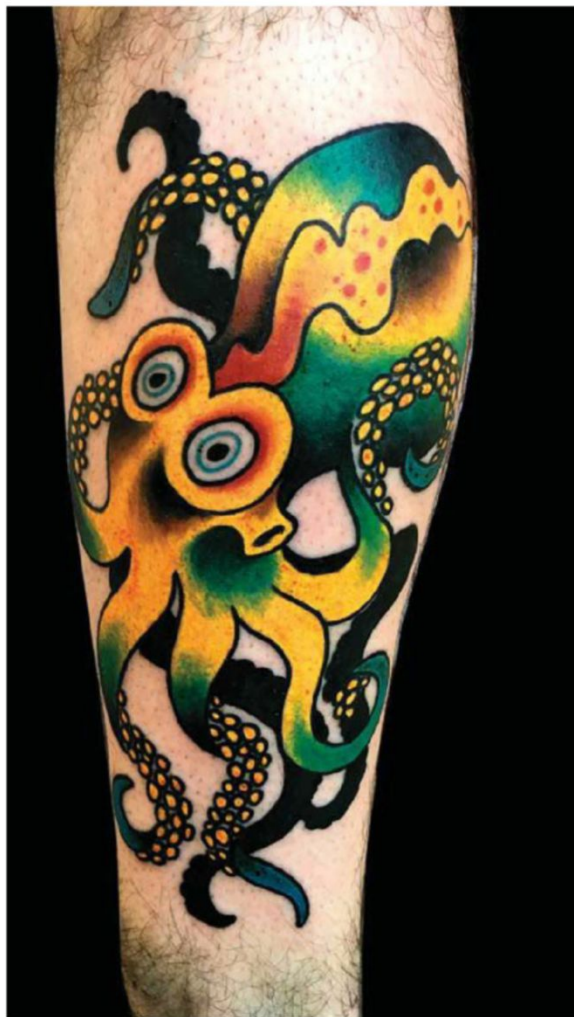
“When I passed through Cocoa Beach, Florida there were surfers everywhere,” which fed right into Longenecker’s love of surf and made his decision an easy one. “I kept thinking it would be the perfect place to open the first surf-themed tattoo studio. I had never seen one before and I figured I could get my own vibe going there. People loved it and Endless Summer Tattoo has been going strong for 14 years straight.”

What’s so special about Cocoa Beach? “I



Mark Longenecker on... tattooing vs. surfing

Going without surfing for a while can make any surfer pretty cranky, but when that becomes the case, I do my best to use other activities to fill that void. Yoga, the gym, hiking, mountain biking, snowboarding, skateboarding and martial arts have all gotten me through surfing dry spells. I haven’t gone more than a week without tattooing since I started, so if I had to take a break from one, it would have to be surfing. I am a tattoo artist first and foremost.



believe the ocean has healing powers and I love being in it,” says Longenecker. “Riding a wave created by the powerful Mother Ocean is one of the best feelings in the world.”

Working alongside Longenecker at Endless Summer Tattoo, which he says is “almost like the dream shop I was looking for when I was traveling around,” are Phil Coupet, Vanessa Harper and Mike Bush.

Coupet holds the honour of being Longenecker’s “longest employee who is going on eight years now. He does great realism and painterly style tattoos and is my surfing, camping, fishing and mountain biking bro.”

“Right next to me, I have Vanessa who I call my lil’ bro because of her short hair,” he laughs. “She trains in jiu-jitsu with me and has an awesome new school style. Then I have my boy Mike who does realism, black and grey and really specialises in doing flowers on hot chicks’ hips,” he laughs.

Waves Of Change

Throughout his two decade-long love affair with ink, Longenecker has witnessed a lot of changes and, luckily, they haven’t all been for the worst. “When I started tattooing, it was

a well guarded secret that was mainly in the biker community. If you were a graffiti artist, it gave you a good advantage,” he remembers.

“There was no social media, no checking out tattoos on Instagram, so if you wanted a reference for a tattoo design, you had to have a huge book collection or you’d have to go to this place called the library. Now, I can design a tattoo on my iPad and send it through Bluetooth to my little handheld printer and print it straight to stencil paper — it’s all mind-blowing when I really think about it.”

When he’s not tattooing or surfing, Longenecker can be found combining the two by creating unique art on surfboards. “The connection between the surfer and the ocean is the board, so when I paint on a board, it’s really one of my favourite mediums to put my art on besides tattooing,” he says. Plus, “the board doesn’t move or complain or need breaks — that’s a bonus!” he laughs.

Moving forward, it’s not surprising that Longenecker plans “on staying in Cocoa Beach for as long as possible,” although he’s quick to admit that “my last trip to Switzerland and London really got me excited to do more trips to Europe.” Fingers crossed! ▣



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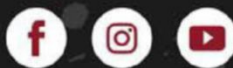
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As the popularity of tattoo television shows continues to grow, Wayne Simmons meets Tony Evans to talk about his new project, Reality Tattoo TV, which seeks to bring something different to the table



It seems like tattoo reality shows have been around forever, such is their popularity right now. And yet it's been just over a decade since the very first one hit the mainstream. It all started with a little show called *Miami Ink* that ran on TLC in the US with zero budget and a lot of heart. What first began as a pretty honest docu-drama about a street shop in a busy tourist district in Miami had turned into the first tattoo soap opera by the end of its run in 2008. It gave birth to a slew of tattoo reality shows across the world, more within the 'Ink' brand to start with and then the inevitable copycats. We're still seeing that basic format today with the emergence of a new round of TV shows focusing on tattoo regrets and cover-ups—much to the derision of many within the tattoo community. And yet, among the wider public,

the tattoo show remains one of the most popular forms of reality entertainment out there.

For Tony Evans, it isn't all bad. In fact it was a love for those early episodes of *Miami Ink* that inspired him to create his very own show, *Reality Tattoo TV*, debuting around the time you're reading this piece. "The amount of time spent talking with customers about their piece and showing the tattoos being done is what I loved about *Miami Ink*. Many of the more recent shows seem to lack those values, forsaking them for mass-audience entertainment. That isn't always a bad thing, but, personally, I'd rather watch a show that focuses more on the tattoo



Aneta Kwiecień



Maciej Glika



than drama or the shock factor of Magaluf tattoos. Having said that, tattoos are now a prime-time subject and production values are high. We can look to these shows for inspiration to make as good a quality content as we possibly can, whilst concentrating on the story of the tattoo itself, and the recipient of that tattoo.”

Reality Tattoo TV is aimed at the whole tattoo community, from the first time customers looking to get a feel for what it's like to get tattooed, right through to the serious

collectors. Tony spent months conducting market research, asking many of his own customers what they liked and didn't like about the tattoo shows they had seen to date, all of which helped him determine the direction of his own show. Alongside the main reality 'show' there'll be videos aimed at tattoo artists and apprentices to help them improve their craft. “So, for the customer,” Tony explains, “we're talking videos on looking after your new tattoo, what does and doesn't work as a cover-up, preparing for a tattoo consultation, or even something as simple as walking into a shop to enquire about your first tattoo—that last one can be a scary moment for some people. For the artist, there'll be instruction videos on mixing black and grey washes, laying down rich colours as well as general drawing and painting tips. We'll have a Q&A section and yes,” he laughs, “unboxing videos.”

It's been a huge project that has taken Tony and the team at Opulent Ink in Wolverhampton, where the new show is set, quite a while to get up and running. The whole thing has been produced in-house, from setting up and filming, to editing and even recording some of the music for the videos themselves—the latter with a little help from one



Tony Evans



Maciej Glica



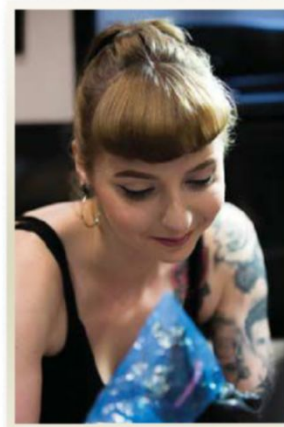
Tony Evans



Name: Amelia Williams
 [apprentice]
Favoured style: It's all amazing!
Length of time with Opulent Ink: 1 month
What they bring to the show: Smiles, laughter, cups of tea and a very critical eye



Aneta Kwiecień



Name: Aneta Kwiecień
Favoured style: Traditional
Length of time with Opulent Ink: 3 years
 [licensed for 9 months]
What they bring to the show: Old-school tattoos, bright colours and red lipstick

of Tony's old bandmates from days gone by. "We were straight in at the deep end," Tony admits. "It's been a very steep learning curve and we are still learning as we go. One of the biggest challenges we have is space. It's amazing how tight a space can become when you introduce cameras and lighting."

Another challenge, of course, is being able to act natural while there's a camera rolling. It was one of the most endearing things I remember about those earlier Miami Ink episodes, Ami & co a lot less polished and

scripted in front of the lens back then than they were by the time the show wrapped in 2008. For Tony, this part of the process remains a work-in-progress. "None of us are very comfortable in front of the camera," he laughs, "although we get more confident the more we do it. At times the customers seem much more at ease than some of us. It can be difficult but it's all great fun too."

The world of media's ever changing as well as how we access it. For Tony, it was important to make Reality Tattoo TV accessible



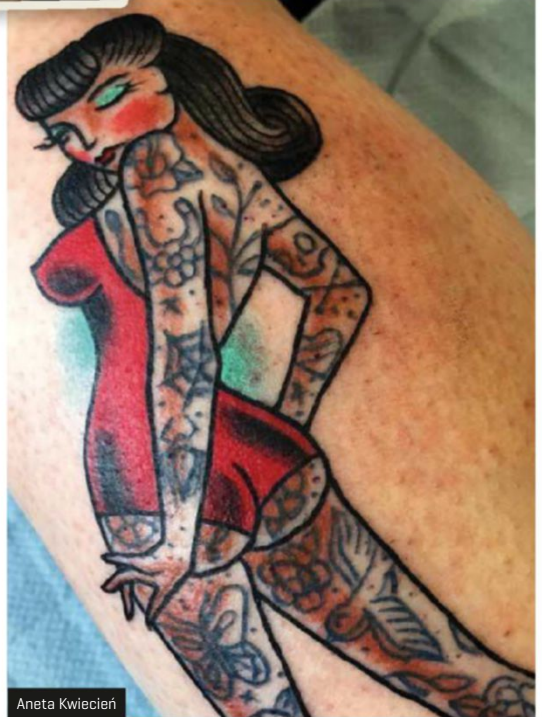
Maciej Glica



Name: Maciej [Magic] Glica
Favoured style: Abstract, watercolour and geometric
Length of time with Opulent Ink: A veteran of 24 years (2 years at Opulent Ink)
What they bring to the show: Art, laughs and positive energy



Tony Evans



Aneta Kwiecień



Name: Tony Evans
Favoured style: Realistic, portraits and Japanese
Length of time with Opulent Ink: 7 years
What they bring to the show: Professionalism, hard work and a bit of art

to as many people as possible, hence choosing Youtube as the way to get the show out there. It also meant he could retain full editorial control over the show and its content, something that is vitally important to him. "I've been investing large amounts of money and time and a fair bit of sweat into this for well over a year now and I've a very definite idea of what I want this show to be. We've talked about the basic idea, to bring something to the viewer that cuts out the bullshit of artists arguing, tantrums, and the general drama that is reality TV—something along the lines of those earlier episodes of Miami Ink. But there is the new wave of video doing the rounds, which I also find appealing: sul- len and ethereal, with dreamy shots and yet, on the downside, no actual content to speak of. We aim to hit right in the middle of these two. Well shot videos made as professionally as we can but with a story. Something about the tattoo, the customer and why they are

getting the new tattoo."

For Tony, Reality Tattoo TV is about getting back to what's important within tattooing, and trying to be a good ambassador for the scene within a mainstream that still often derides the artform. "I think tattoo shows initially helped with increasing awareness and acceptance of tattoos, back when the tattoos themselves were the main focus. Today, with all the 'reality' shows and 'cover-up' shows, we are seeing some poor tattooing. This hurts the industry as many customers come to accept bad tattoos as the norm, and, in the long term, this results in more cover-ups and more fixes. Customers should expect a tattoo to be right first time; well drawn, well placed and well executed. We need to show the larger community a better quality of tattoo. With Reality Tattoo TV we can help people understand what is a good tattoo and what is not. That understanding can only help the industry as a whole." ▣



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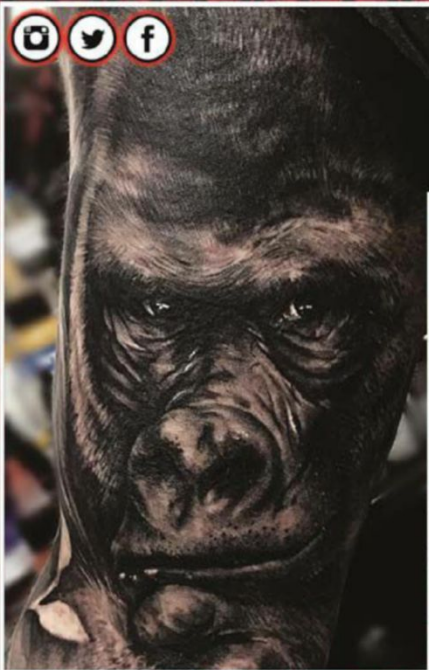
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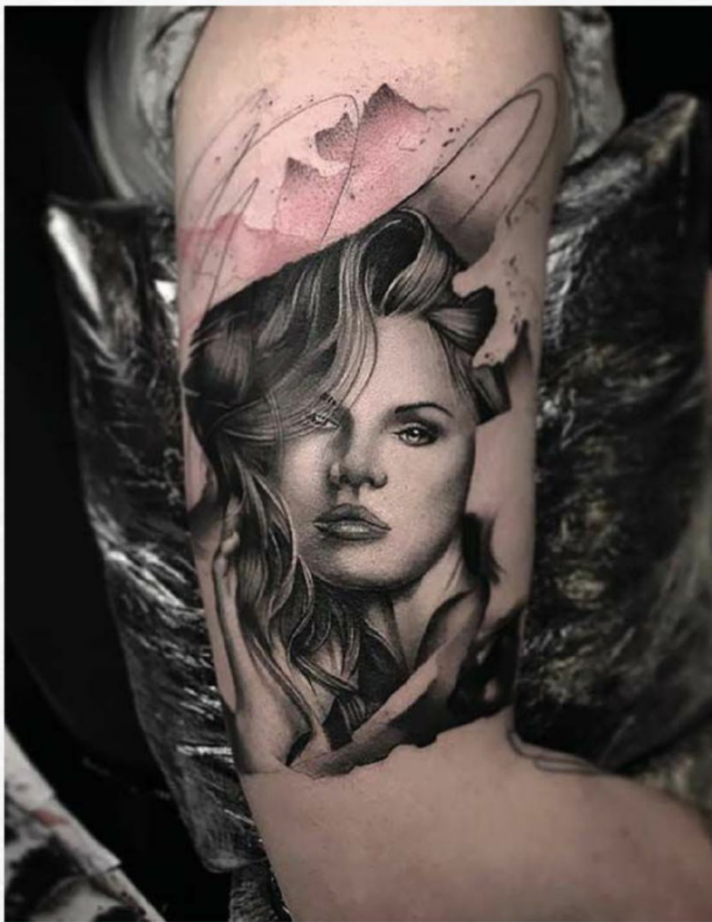
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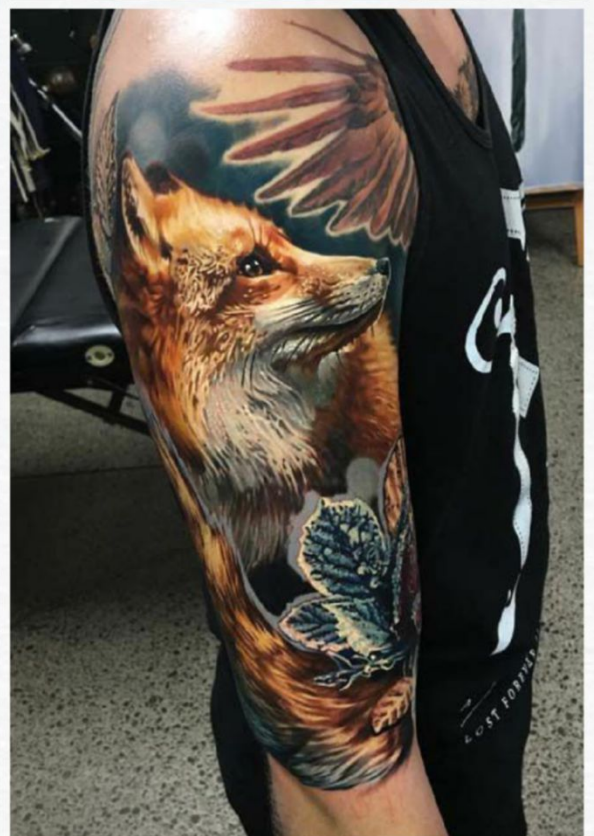


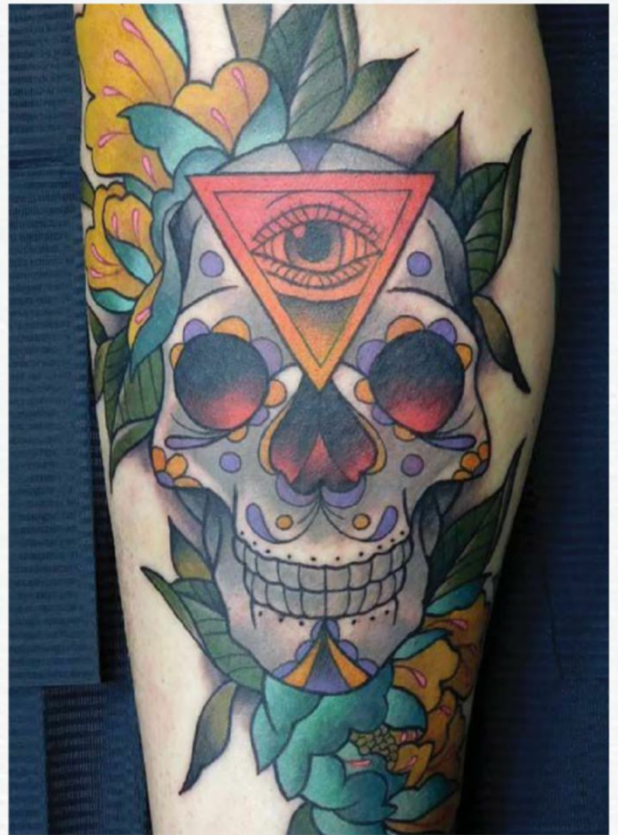
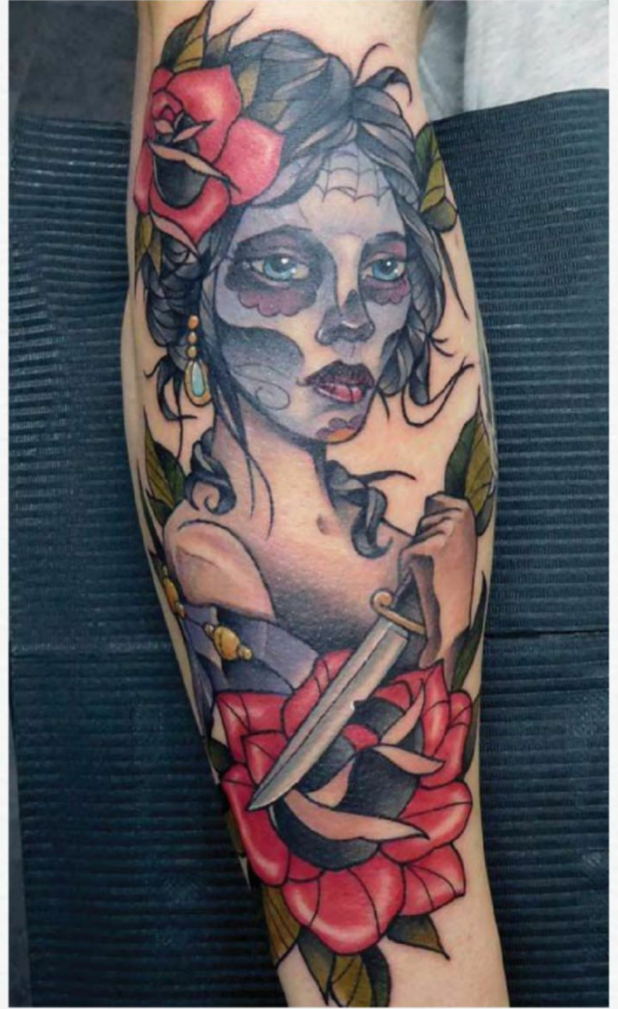
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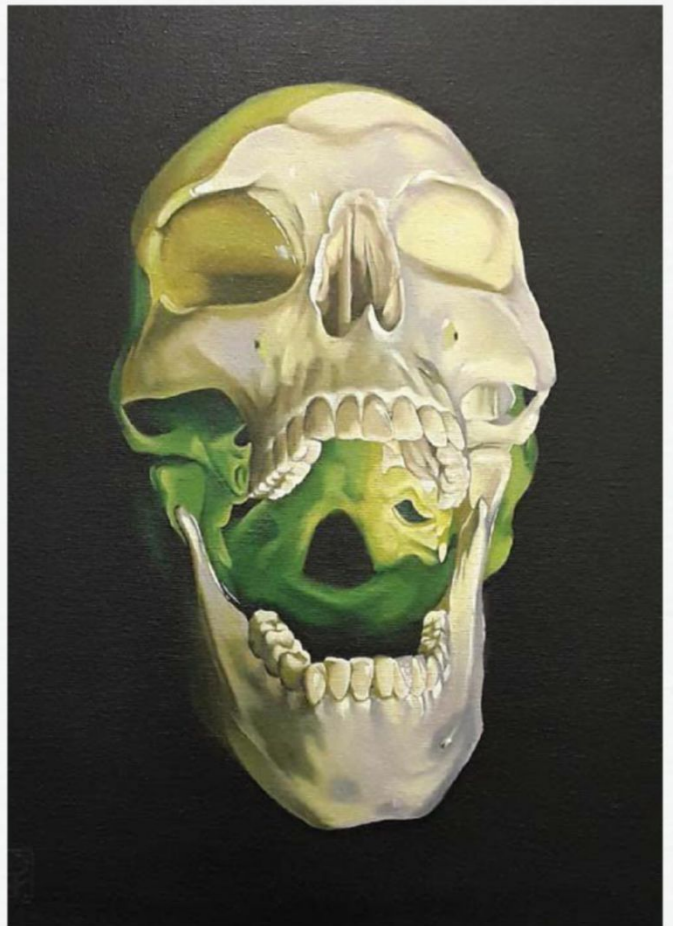
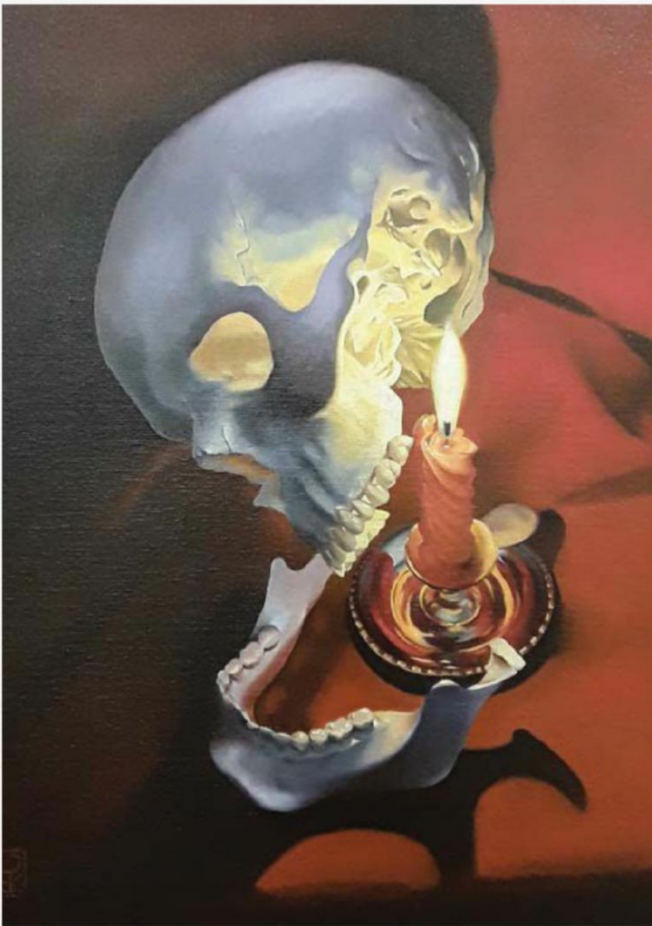


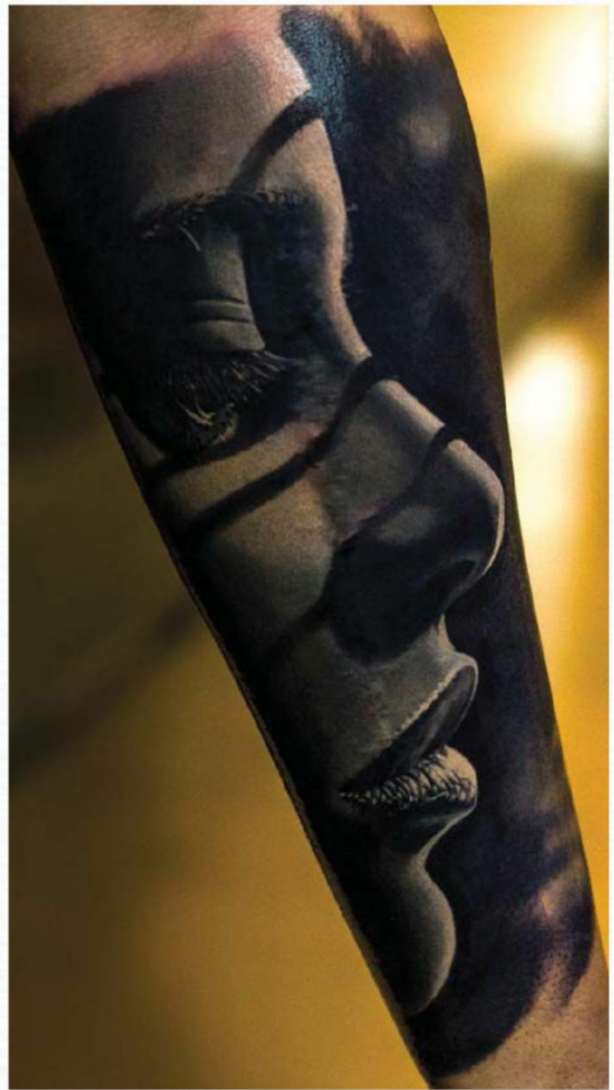
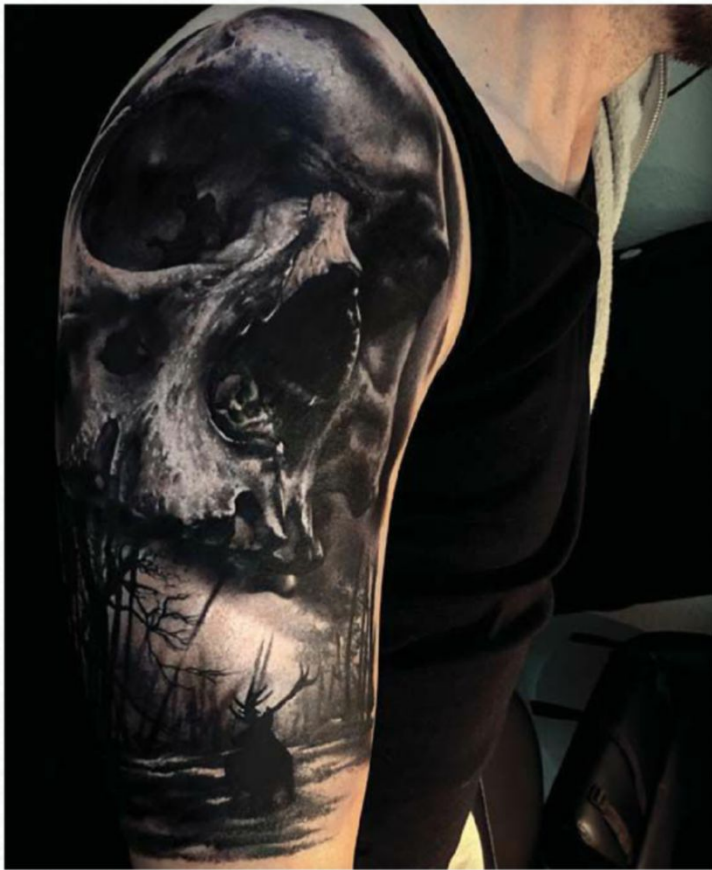
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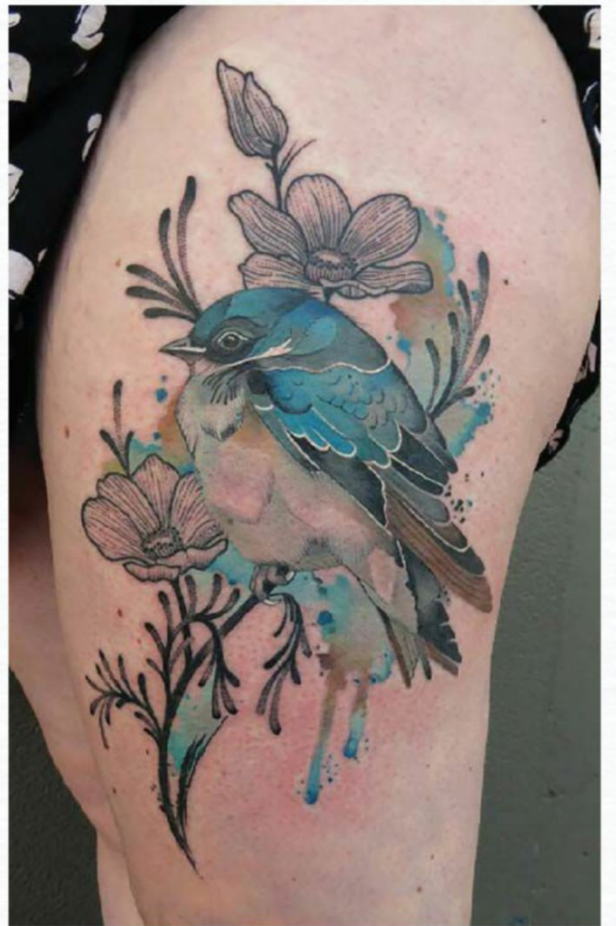
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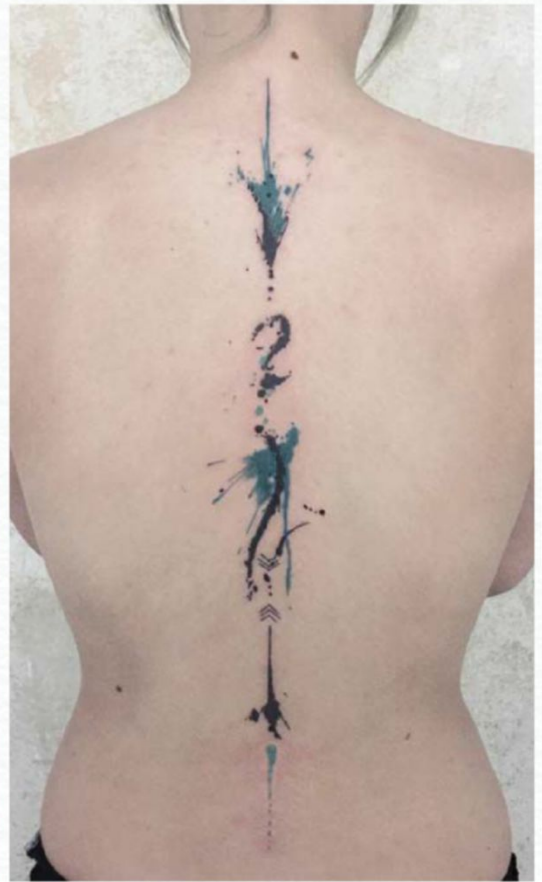




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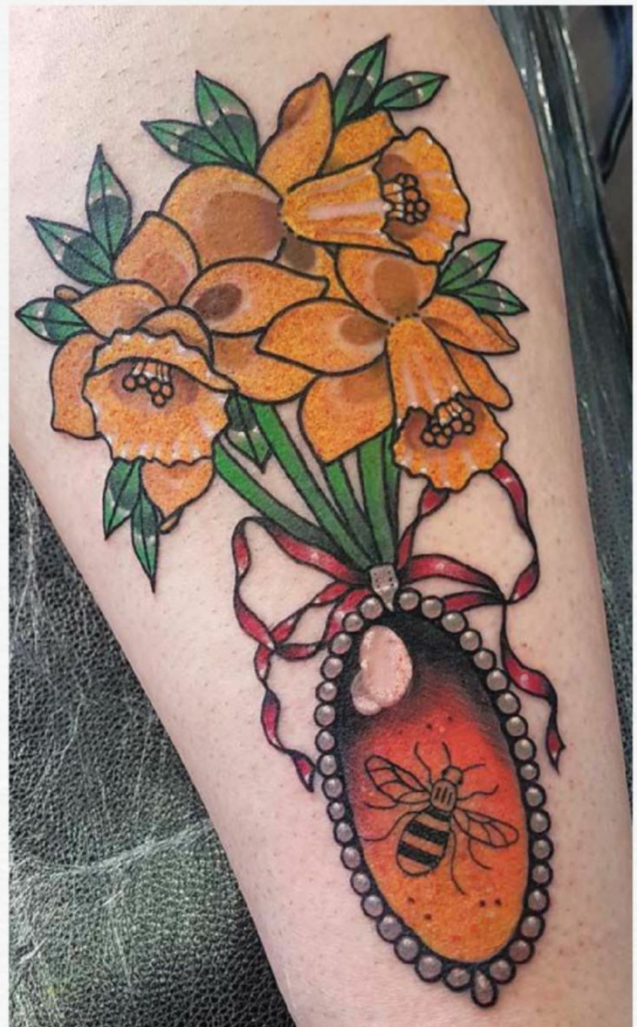
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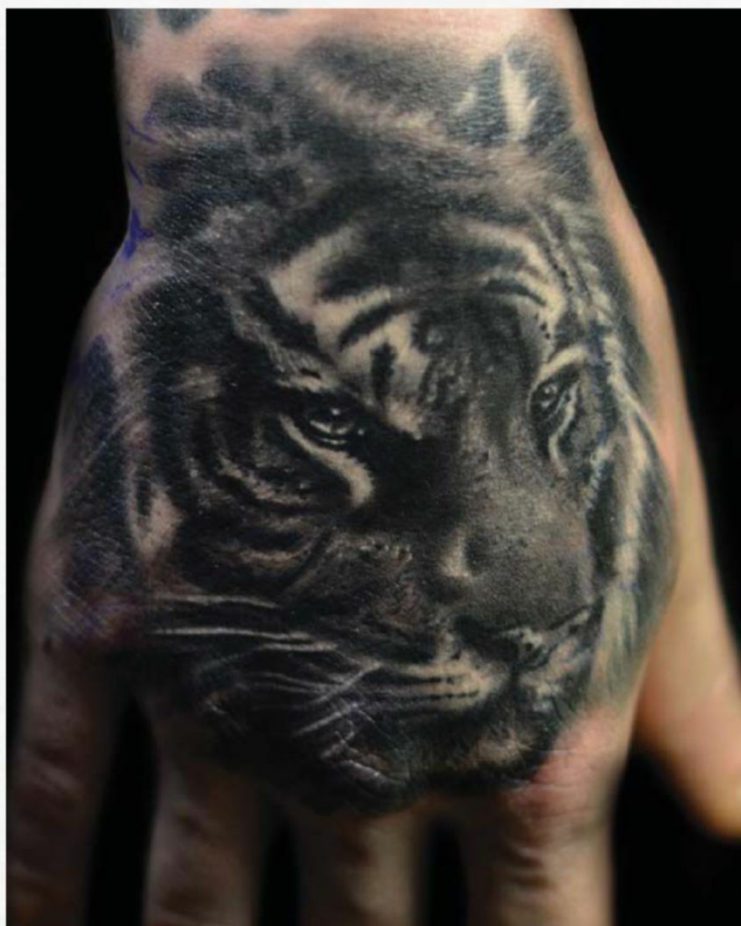


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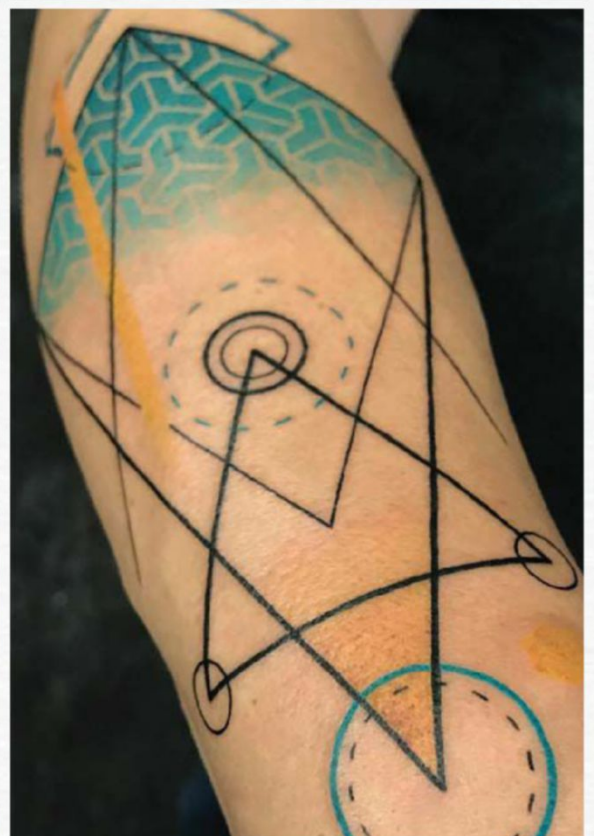
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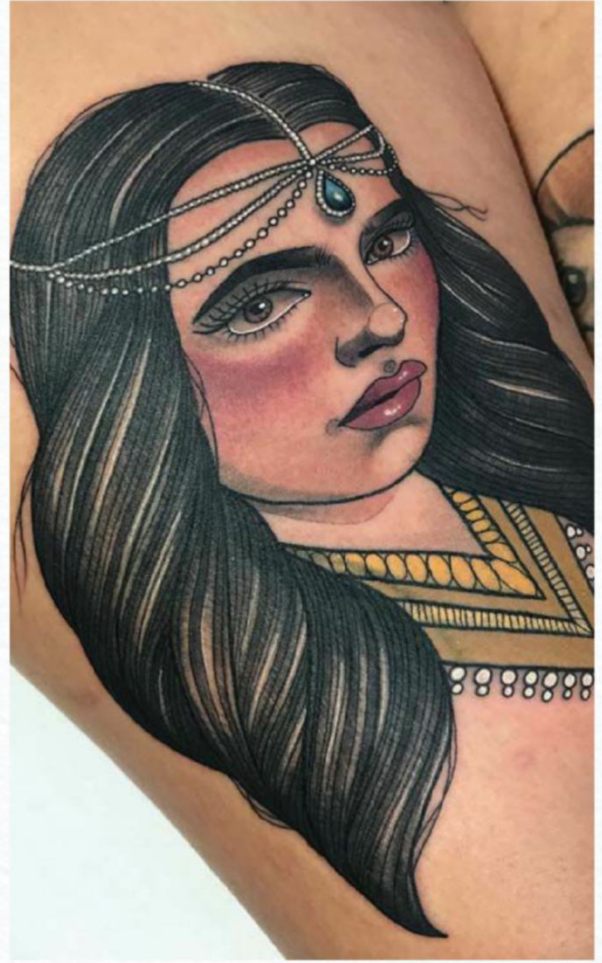




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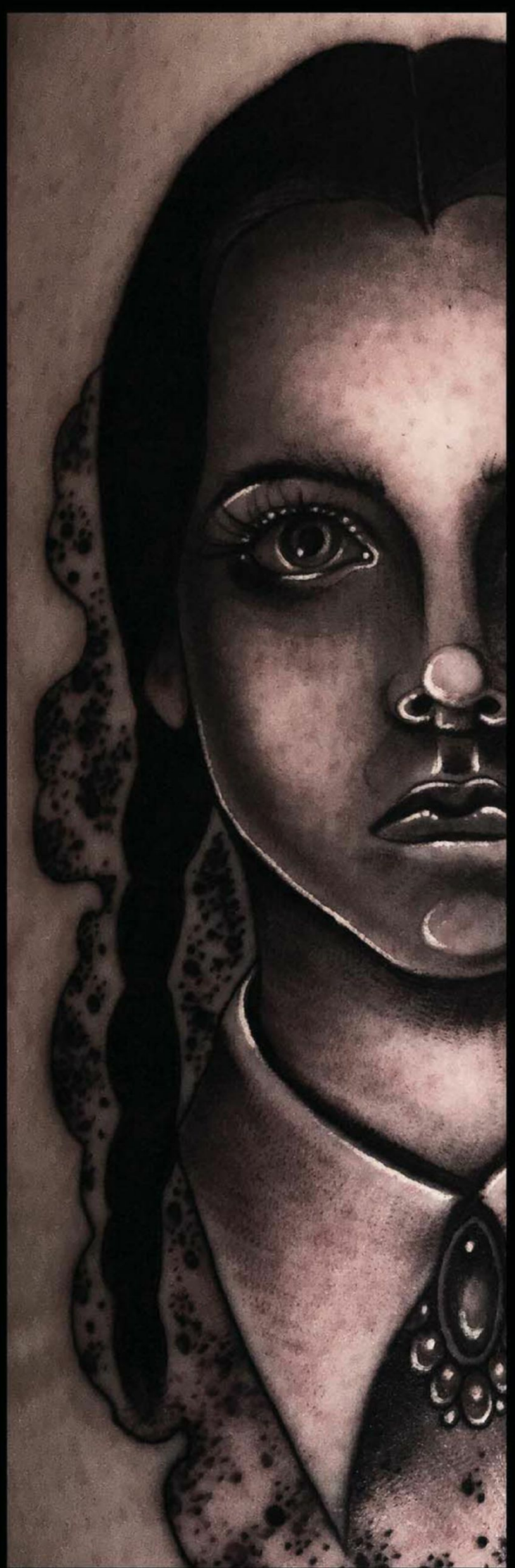
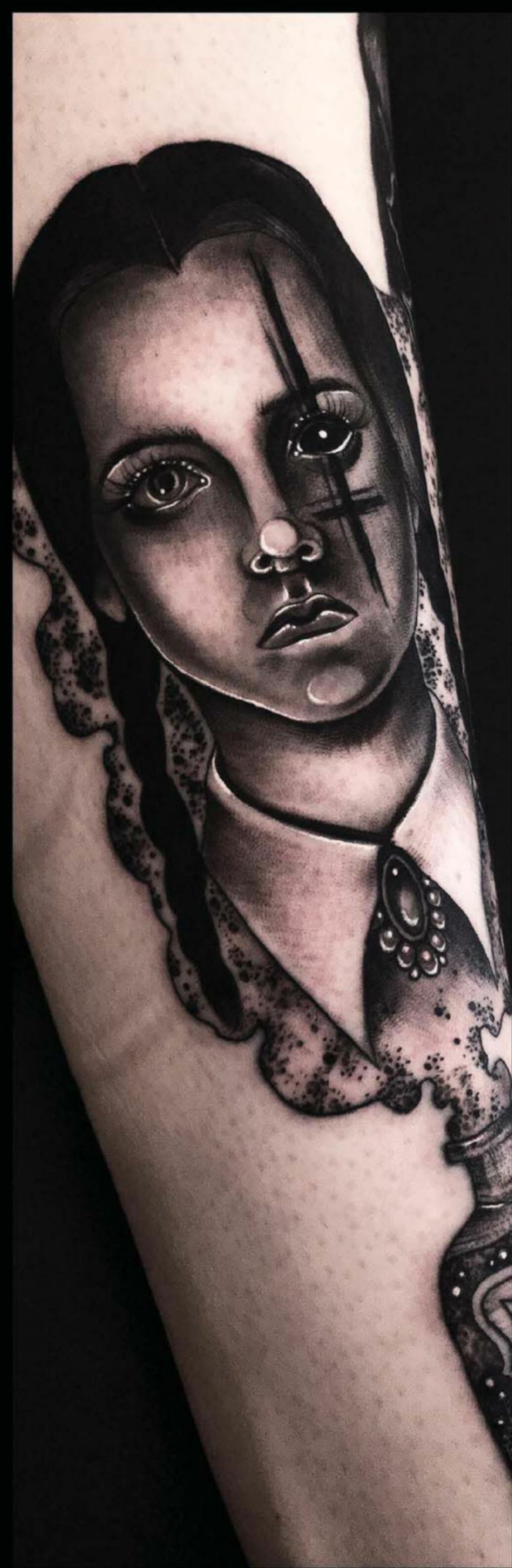
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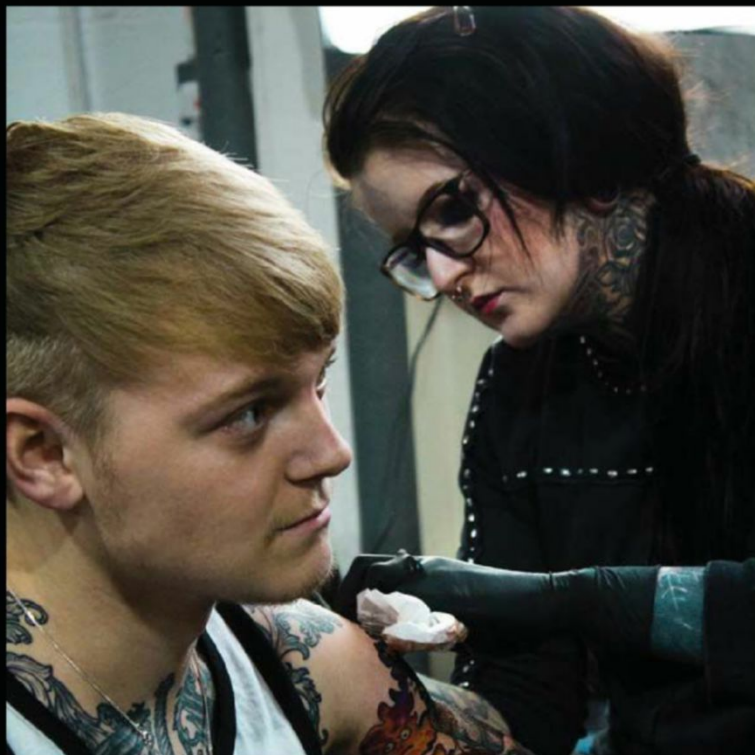


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the woman in black



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With her entire back going under the needles across the next year or so, Beccy Rimmer will be getting to know one particular UK tattoo studio pretty well...

Black Moon Tattoos (formerly Black Inc.) is home to talented tattoo artist Miss Jo Black. Anyone geeky about tattoos and aware of Britain's best will have Jo on their radar. I've been following her dark and mysterious work for years and was extremely excited to begin a long-term project with her, as she begins executing a huge cover-up across my back.

Before we get down to (the painful) business, I fired some quick questions at Jo so you can get to know the creative woman behind these epic artworks, and—if you've got any sense—ultimately get your own new piece born in the mind of Miss Black.



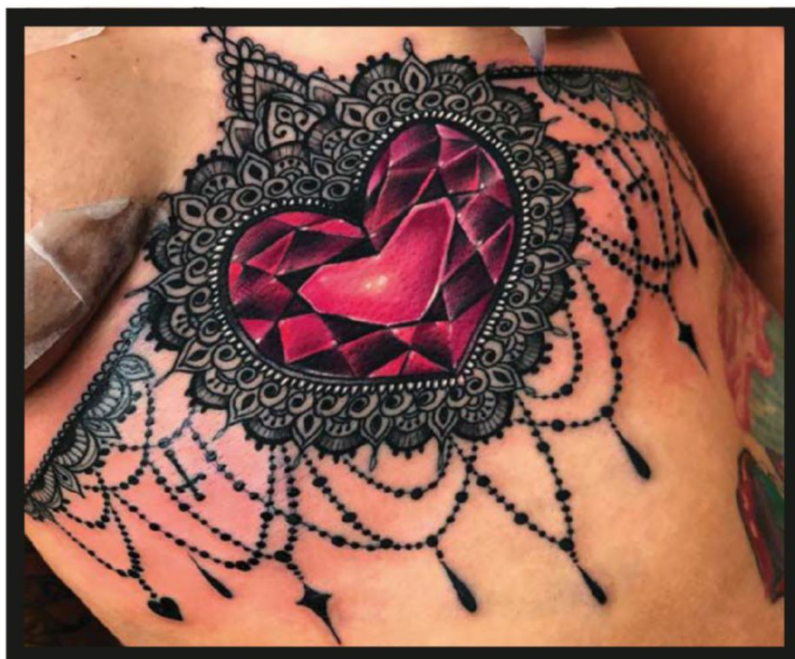
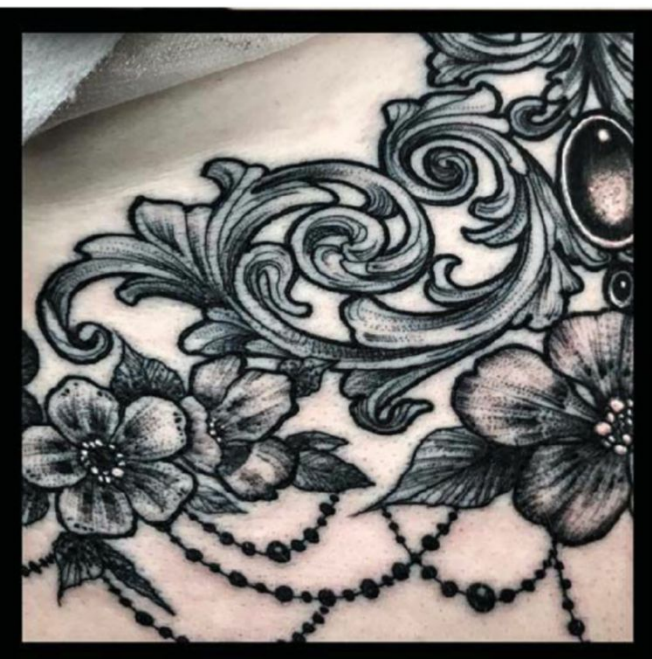
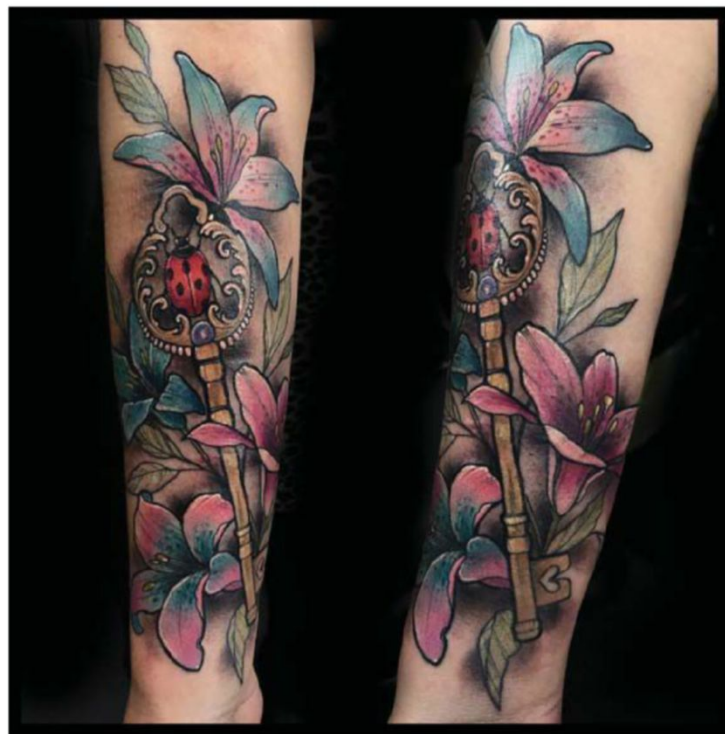
How long have you been tattooing?

I started tattooing about 10 years ago now. It feels like half that!

I did a BA Hons degree in art and design and it was actually a boyfriend at the time who suggested I look into tattooing as a career. I had wanted to do it but I hadn't even considered the fact that women DID do it, as I'd only been tattooed by men up until that point.

What are some of the biggest influences on your work?

I draw inspiration from everything! Sometimes ideas come to me in strange places—at Longleat with the kids, in



the bath... even just watching TV inspiration can strike me!

In terms of art, I've always been inspired by renaissance paintings, gothic art and the Victorian and Edwardian periods. I still use much of this inspiration in my work now.

The list is endless in terms of which tattoo artists inspire me—there are SO MANY amazing artists out there and I am inspired and driven by their talent all the time. I love looking at pages on Instagram like @thenewtraditionalisteurope and @darkartists because they share some of the best work out there.

Your tattoos have such a strong aesthetic—dark, gothic, deep, beautiful. Do you have an interest in these areas outside of tattooing?

Absolutely! I am mad about the imagery surrounds witchcraft, demons, the dark arts and all things creepy and weird! I incorporate these themes into my tattoo art as often as possible and in my day-to-day life as well. I read a

lot of fantasy books about witches and mythical creatures.

In the summer, me and my family visited Boscastle in Cornwall which has the most incredible collection of historical artefacts relating to witchcraft and wizardry—from voodoo dolls and cursed objects to magic books, human skin, skulls and hair used in magical rituals! I blame my parents—they are just as weird as me and always encouraged the creative and individual side of my personality.

Where do you start when creating a custom piece for someone?

I always start with a questionnaire that I email to each potential client—it details what they are expecting, any reference images they have and a good idea of size and placement. This gives me a good starting point to begin research.

My first port of call is then usually Pinterest. I can get lost in the links and related image searches for hours before I actually settle on anything. I tend to create a really



rough digital composition of the design that I can use as a drawing reference. This gives me scope to add and develop things as I go with a basic layout that drives the design.

I'm so excited to have this epic large piece from you. What is the difference between creating something of this nature as opposed to something much smaller?

It's always much harder doing large areas, mostly because creating a stencil for the space is tricky and fiddly! I sometimes draw straight onto the skin for really large pieces, but I do find scaling things up freehand tricky, so I try to stencil as much as possible and fill in the spaces by hand, to help the tattoo flow nicely with the body part.

For your design, because it is also a cover-up, we are working on it in one area at a time, building up a larger design from smaller parts. This for me is a good way to build up a piece over several sessions.

Finishing a large piece is a really amazing feeling—standing back for the full effect and impact of a huge tattoo

at the end of a long period of time is so incredible. You also end up pretty close to your client, build a friendship, and get to know one another—it's also kind of sad to finish up and know you won't be seeing them as regularly any more!

Let's talk about the new shop! It's beautiful in here, you've put so much effort in to make it such a great place to get tattooed.

The new shop is AMAZING! It is over twice the size of our old space and so much brighter and lighter.

There were two main reasons for us moving from Stony Street to Cheap Street in Frome. The first reason for a move in general was because the shop we had before had some really bad damp and mould issues that the landlady was unwilling to address. It wasn't worth us staying there after we had two floods which damaged a lot of our belongings.

At the time, I had also taken on two new artists after they lost their own shop due to their landlord raising the rent too high, and we were tight for space with all of us—so



the reason for taking a much bigger shop was to be able to accommodate them as well as some regular guest artists.

Ironically, after these two artists recently left with no notice, the shop currently just has myself, Jodie Young (Junior Artist) and Amy Whiting (Apprentice). Also, a piercer, Leigh Evans, and a cosmetic brow tattoo artist, Emmy Burbidge. We do have a couple of really exciting potential full-time artists in the pipeline so watch this space!

What is the one thing you love most about what you do?

Getting to be creative every day, and every day is different.

What are your focuses for the near future?

I have a couple of guest spots planned for myself this year, One at Folklore Tattoo in Tamworth with Marie Cox, and

at Devil In The Detail with Ben Carlisle and Luke Cooper.

We have tons of guests coming down to our shop including Megan Holland, Diana Jay, Gary Helyar and Owen Paulls all confirmed in the next few months.

We are also now offering piercings and cosmetic brow tattooing which is an exciting new avenue for us.

Right now I am focusing on getting Jodie Young busier and expanding her already awesome realism talents, and the apprentice Amy up to scratch so she can show off her incredible skills as a black-work illustrator.

We have plenty of space for guest artists and another full time tattoo artist with existing client base (not an apprentice), so, if you read this and you are interested, you can send portfolio info to enquiries@blackmoontattoos.com 📧



THE KINGDOM OF NIGHT

[noiremeduse.edition](https://www.noiremeduse.edition) [jeanlucnavette](https://www.instagram.com/jeanlucnavette) [noire-meduse.com](https://www.noire-meduse.com)

Is it still necessary to introduce Jean-Luc Navette? The French tattooer from Lyon quit the craft after 16 years to concentrate on illustration alone. Collecting together commissions and personal work, his second book 'Nocturnes' - published with Noire Meduse editions - is another demonstration of his ability to create powerful and fascinating images. Immersed in tragedy and death, with over-dubs of blues music, these snapshots operate like windows to the intolerable truth of the world. In the end, this masterpiece of 180 pages confirms the status of Navette as being one of the best living French illustrators...



After the great success of your first book 'Dernier été du vieux monde', how did it happen to switch to 'Nocturnes'?

I was very happy with the first one, the second had to be much better. When you work under your own name, you don't want to do any shitty job. I put myself under a little bit of pressure. I wanted from the beginning to have a global vision of what it would look like at the end. But it was unnecessary questions. Christophe (Escarmand, editor of Noire Méduse Editions) was smart enough to step back and let me work by myself. After several months we talked about it again and then he made me realise that I had already finished the book, two years ago.

It's very strange but I never felt I had to work on that

project. I was producing a lot of images and then I got some commissions. But people had let me work on these projects the way I wanted to so, in the end, they were not really works I was being paid for anymore but personal works. In that sense, we already had 150 pages. Once I realised that, everything went very easy, and in one month I did 36 illustrations (all the esoteric part dealing with death and the idea of the passage which happens after the procession). I was drawing almost 20 hours a day.

What period does this book cover?

Four years.



As an illustrator, how satisfying is it to have people following your work?

When you do tattoos, if you ask the proper questions to your customer and you don't mistake in the drawing, there is no reason for your customer not to like it, but when you create an image on your own and someone takes it for his/her own, the value is different. We are bombarded by a lot of images and when you realise that someone, among all of these chose one of yours it's really special. I always found fascinating the fact that people like my work and that they bring it in their intimacy, at home. I feel very lucky.

In 2016, you decided to stop tattooing, how come?

I felt I was loosing my freedom. I had to face more and more people coming to me for tattoos but I had less and less time to prepare them the way I thought it was necessary to. Spending three hours watching videos on You-

Tube with your customer is the only way to know him and to do an personalised tattoo. So, I had the choice of keeping on that way, taking the time, but that meant that I would only concentrate on 15 projects a year, or decide to stop.

Is it difficult to be an illustrator today?

I don't know much about that but I enjoy a total freedom. Thanks to Noire Meduse I'm a free illustrator. I'm not tied up to any single style, I'm not under any pressure to produce images for an editor. If tomorrow I decide to stop drawing and concentrate on music or painting, Christophe would be able to follow this artistic process, whatever would be the medium. If he considers that it is something valuable and viable as a project, he will always follow me, because I only work for pleasure. He knows that I will invest myself 300% if a project makes me happy and that, in the end, it will be great. I feel very fortunate.



I'M NOT TIED UP TO ANY SINGLE STYLE, I'M NOT UNDER ANY PRESSURE TO PRODUCE IMAGES FOR AN EDITOR

Jean-Michel Nicollet, a french illustrator who was also your teacher at the drawing school you attended in Lyon, compares in the introduction of the book your drawings to dreams and nightmares. What do you think about it?

The connection with the dream is interesting because you're never given all the keys, it is for the viewer to find his/her own conclusions in the world in which he/she is projected. The inspiration which comes to me when I draw is also a bit similar to the way you receive a dream. But when he compares me to a journalist making a point at the state of the world, it really flattered me. I don't tell my story, I'm here to tell stories. I send images about the sensations I feel from the world and from the people around. I'm feeling much closer to a reporter than an illustrator or an author.

During the process of creation, when do you tell to yourself: "It's a good story, I want to tell it"?

I need to tell the one that falls in my hand, without knowing if it's a good or a bad story. I work by association of ideas and also with a lot of documentation - because I need to understand what I'm drawing and 'how it works'. A portrait or a face will tell me something and I'll work through my idea around that, sometimes it is a theme. About inspiration... there is a text from Nick Cave who says that creation is a little bit like a small river which flows in front of you and in which thousands of stories pass by. They are always the same. And you just have to lay down on the side of the river, sometimes dig your hands in and then look at the water that you have between your fingers.



I DON'T TELL MY STORY, I'M HERE TO TELL STORIES

This process is only fed with images?

No, I also work with songs. I often have the beginning of an image or I know the theme I want to work on but the final pitch which will give its strength, is missing. I listen a lot to music when I work and sometimes coincidence is a good helper. Because when I need it, a song comes out. You may be listening to this song for 20 years but that day, precisely, there is this phrase in the text which tells you something, and words have a meaning to you: "This is it! This is exactly it! Thank you Neil Young! Thank you M.X!" As an artist you have to accept putting yourself in a position of well-being and neutrality to receive a story and hand it over. The artist never creates a story, he just shapes it, he puts it in his own words. It's a cover. It's always the same song but it's your own version.

You work on a large repertoire of images and you pay a lot of attention to the eyes. This time new motifs appeared, for example, blindfolded eyes. Can you tell us about it?

Several themes came out on their own during the process of 'Nocturnes'. I have a lot of eyes which burn, because



they have seen too many scorching things. The bandage goes along with this idea of eyes that have seen too much or that cannot see anymore. There is also this idea of: 'Close your eyes and you'll see much better'; seeing behind things, to light up the darkness. The bandage is also a symbol which carries a lot of images with it. There is the one that you put on the face of the convicted for him not to see the bullets coming, the rite of passage in specific socie-



ties and also the blind person who sees very well with his other senses, I also use codes. Often, there can be in the same scene, characters with pupils and others without. That means that these people are not in the same state. And there is always a character a bit on the outside, an observer, a witness, not necessarily human, he's the musical narrator of that song which plays in the image. These characters often have a small detail which extracts them

from the scene. They look somewhere else, they're a little bit behind... but I try not to tell too much or to give advice or keys on how to read my images, I want people to make their own, to find their own explanations, like a song.

There is something new which participates in the strength of your pictures, it is the nudity.

There is a problem with the image of the body. Nobody comes to me to talk about the nudity of the peacock woman (one of the images in the book), because we're used to seeing women naked in the history of art. Man's body is less used. So I was wondering if I could point out this weird question with my work. I'm not the defender of anti-puritanism, but this is something a little bit politic. I also needed my characters to be fully naked in my stories - it goes with the idea of the mask falling. Naked people are all equal, nudity is the link between birth and death.

The bluesmen portraits series is a little aside in your work, but the blues music is central to you. Can you tell us about it?

It's essential, I listen to it all the time. It's a goal for me because these guys are emblematic figures of a pantheon that I find interesting. I like stories in general, so I like artists whose paths resonate with their music. I've always been fascinated with blues characters, because there is a lot of courage in what happened. These guys were coming from a very low class, they couldn't write but they rebelled against a social situation and a system. In the beginning of the 20th century, in the south of the US, they



I LIKE STORIES IN GENERAL, SO I LIKE ARTISTS WHOSE PATHS RESONATE WITH THEIR MUSIC

decided to live on their own and create a musical culture from nothing which inspired all the modern music, all the modern American poetry. On Saturday night, they would go playing live in the bars, singing songs related to sex, fights, murders, while they were drinking, and on Sunday morning they were at the church singing gospel and celebrating Jesus. It was the same guys. I love it.

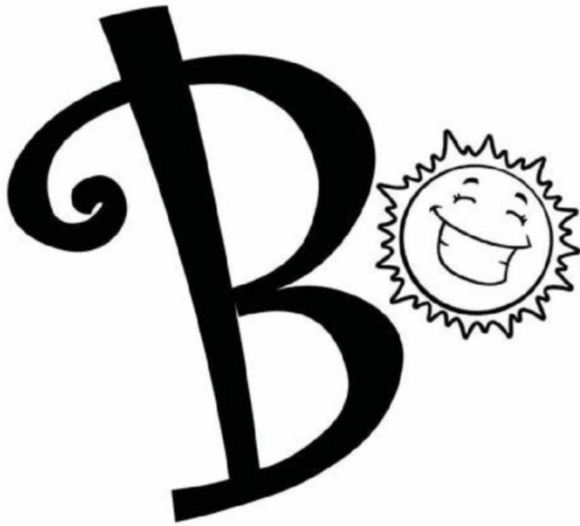
Among them Robert Johnson has a specific importance in this pantheon.

I have a total fascination for him. He found a specific way to tune his guitar, a tuning which, with the minimum of effort, gave him the ability to make a maximum number of people cry. But I think that if I had to meet him in another world, I would probably like to kill him with a knife because he was probably a little bastard. They were guys who had to take on the choices they made for their life: not working, playing music and fucking the girls of the nearest village while their men were at work, but it was something to live that way, you had to play with guns or knives to protect that. They were fucking bad boys! I'm not fascinated by violence, I'm fascinated by the courage they needed.

Last question: What will we read on your epitaph?

He told us beautiful stories, see you soon. ▣






Be bright, be happy, B Sharp...

Just back from the 10 year anniversary Tattoo Jam, and all we can say is - what a great time we had.

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LAIN

MINIMAL DISTINCT

We're seeing something of a spike in avant-garde tattooing, tattoo art and artists that go against the grain, who can't be pigeonholed into a genre like traditional or new school or realism. Now, some of those artists are forming a genre all their own but other artists, including some early pioneers of the movement such as Lionel or Noon, defy any kind of classification at all. Hannah Willison is another within that group, I feel...

I've followed Hannah's work since interviewing her as part of a feature I was doing on vegan-friendly tattooing a while back. Her tattoo art draws from a variety of styles, dotwork, realism and blackwork perhaps the most obvious, yet still remains definitive enough that you'll be able to tell a Hannah Willison tattoo just by looking at it. Hannah welcomes this growing trend in avant-garde ink we're talking about, attributing it to the fact that more fine artists and illustrators are getting into tattooing. Yet for Hannah herself, creating a signature style all her own is still a work in progress and perhaps always will be. "I aspire to be one of those artists," she tells me. "I've always tried to avoid fitting into anything. I think the secret is to actively try



and not fit in, to be true to yourself and your artwork, always striving to create your own style and unique vision. I'm forever trying to evolve and better myself as an artist. Each new design is a process of discovery."

For Hannah, a big part of that process involves fostering a special affinity with the natural world around her. Animals feature heavily within her art; birds, foxes, wolves and bears being particularly prolific. Yet she feels this aspect of her work could be overstated, her interest in animals

often for aesthetic reasons as opposed to something she's purposely trying to do or say through her art. "Some of the animals represent a meaning for the client," she explains. "But others have no specific meaning and have been chosen more because I like the image. I'll often look



I'M FOREVER TRYING TO EVOLVE AND BETTER MYSELF AS AN ARTIST. EACH NEW DESIGN IS A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

for an animal with a nice expression, texture or shape to draw from. I'm drawn to intricate detail, and enjoy creating fur textures on skin."

For Hannah, a connection with the client is very important. She strives to create a tattoo that represents the person who is going to be wearing it as much it represents her, the artist. I'm reminded of a conversation with a friend who approached another avant-garde artist a few

years back. The artist in question demanded complete freedom when designing his tattoo with no consultation on the design apart from where my friend wanted the tattoo to be placed. The actual design was to be revealed on the day, perhaps even freehanded on with no prior prep. For Hannah, there's much more of a dialogue than that, but her integrity as an artist must remain intact, too. "I think it's about creating a balance with the client and your artwork. Not to dismiss the client's ideas altogether, but not to compromise your art, either," she points out. "Clients who have seen and resonated with my artwork seem to be more open to the creative process and grant me freedom. Yet, it's still important for me to connect with them during the design process."

Personally, I think you can see this balance within Hannah's work. One thing I really like about her art is how it



flows with the body – it’s just not about finding somewhere to fit the tattoo, it seems crucial to Hannah that each tattoo she makes works with the part of the body it’s placed upon. Again, I feel this comes down to a thoughtful approach to design and the importance Hannah places upon forging a productive relationship with the client

I'M DRAWN TO INTRICATE DETAIL, AND ENJOY CREATING FUR TEXTURES ON SKIN

from their very first communication. “Before I start work on a design,” she explains, “I’ll take into consideration the body shape. I work from several photographs of the cli-



I THINK IT'S ABOUT CREATING A BALANCE WITH THE CLIENT AND YOUR ARTWORK. NOT TO DISMISS THE CLIENT'S IDEAS ALTOGETHER, BUT NOT TO COMPROMISE YOUR ART, EITHER

ent's body, working out the design based on how I feel it will compliment the body. It's hard for me to say how a design is going to look when finished until I've figured out the composition, to ensure it works well with the placement. I find it's very worthwhile to take the extra time to consider all of this because the result will be something special. When the tattoo fits and flows with the person, it looks like it has always been part of them. They wear it well, it suits them, which makes it even more special for them. It creates an even stronger connection between the person and the artwork."

Moving forward, Hannah is keen to evolve her work

further and challenge herself both within tattooing and the wider world of art. There are a lot of artists out there who inspire her, "Mowgli, Kel Tait, Victor Montaghini,

Robert Borbas, Carola Deutsh, Monika Malewska, Konstanze K, Dela, Alex Grey, Philip Harris, Amanda Sage", and she wants to add to that list. She has plans to travel, to soak up other cultures and learn from other art-

ists, particularly through collaboration work – she'll be in the US for a few months this year. Hannah dreams of opening her own studio down the line but ultimately she finds both herself and the tattoo community in general to be in a good place right now, particularly in terms of the quality and individuality of the art being put out. "Yes, I think we're in an interesting phase," she tells me. "The tattoo community has expanded and become more open to less generic styles. It's refreshing to see, and I admire these artists who are bringing something new into the industry, pushing the boundaries of tattooing. I'm excited to see how it will expand from here." ▣



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A lifetime ago and a world away, I was working with at risk kids in downtown Memphis, Tennessee. Some of the children fade in and out of my memory, but one is always clear. His name was Bam Bam, a name with he acquired due to the fact that when you would pick this three year old up, he would swiftly punch you in the face...



...MOTHERS ARE LITERALLY THROWING THEIR CHILDREN TO US, BEGGING US TO GET THEM OUT OF THIS WAR ZONE

Consistently, that little defiant genius was the thing I looked forward to everyday. He was the first kid I would pick up in the morning, and we would walk down the street having conversations like old men on a country road. Usually we would discuss lego, cartoons, or even what lunch we might be getting for the day. Unfortunately, many times our conversations turned to him describing experiences that no child should ever have to face.

With the vocabulary of an adult, this three year old would nonchalantly tell me about abuse he either saw or experienced himself. As my time in Memphis ended, he never left my mind. I always felt like there was more I could do, something that could have taken that little genius out of that hell and into the nourishing life he deserves. Years later I would hear through the grapevine that he had grown into the street life of his surroundings. One unconfirmed story was that he had passed away. I am haunted by the feeling that I had failed this child. Imagine feeling that way about thousands of children, each one overwhelming your

thoughts as you try to focus on moving forward with everyday life.

Tattooing has brought many amazing people into my life, one being my good friend James. I have been tattooing James for close to a decade now, learning more about his life, including his service in the military. My eyes have been opened to these experiences that I initially knew nothing about, things that I felt were so foreign to me, so far away. It wasn't until a conversation in the middle of



tattooing him that I finally felt like I could even begin to understand. The subject of PTSD came up, and James explained. "Imagine being somewhere on a mission to help the people around you. Our convoy drives through and mothers are literally throwing their children to us, begging us to get them out of this war zone, pleading to take them to safety, and we



PTSD IS A REAL THING, FOR MORE THAN JUST THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE MILITARY

can't. The look in that mother's eyes, the look in those children's eyes, that's what haunts me every time I close my eyes, feeling like I have failed them all." I immediately think of Bam Bam and my heart breaks because that pain I have is from only one child, James is forced to see that in thousands of children. This is PTSD.

Growing up in the 1980's, all I knew of what is now considered "PTSD" was the picture Hollywood portrayed of the Vietnam vet who was not quite right, or even the homeless vets that began to fill our cities because of inadequate care being given to a serious issue. It wasn't until 9/11 that America really began to address the crisis of returning vets.

James continues, "When we first went in after 9/11, my thoughts were 'Ok, I wasn't in the military during desert one (Desert Storm), but I know it only really lasted a day. Like everyone else I thought, 'It's about to get ugly and be quick'. After that first year I was like, 'I kinda thought we would be done with this,' and we kept sending troops, and the body counts were going up. I think in '04, '05, '06, we start to get those first waves back and they show these signs, and people start thinking, 'We can't have another Vietnam on our hands, we can't have another homeless crazy uncle on our hands.' So it sparked the post traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, which was good to have diagnosed, but it was only associated with direct combat. By all means I think that is true of direct combat,

but there is also indirect combat that can cause the same amount

of pain and suffering. When you are part of a team that's job is to go and try to help within these different villages, and you are an advisor to them, you see these people and you think, 'We are doing the right thing, this is good,' and then you see them get annihilated."

At this point I feel like it's important to address that this piece is not about a viewpoint on war, military, or politics. The focus of this article is the individual, and what their experience is, and how we can find common ground to try to grow in a positive direction. PTSD is a real thing, for more than just those who served in the military. Being a 'hero' can have lasting scars, even when that hero lives in the country that is at war.

James continues, "If you want to talk about a hero, it's heroic to unfortunately die on the battle field, but imagine being in a country where you wake up every day wondering where is the next bomb? Is it at the grocery, the post office, wherever. They tell you repeatedly through different outlets that if you talk to anyone, if you help, we are going to kill you, your family and everyone who knows your family. You would think you wouldn't say a thing, and then you have these people when you come into these villages that know they are going to die, but they know this oppression isn't right. That's the hero right there. When it does catch up to them, that's heart breaking, because there is nothing you can do."

In 2005, Marcus Luttrell was deployed to Afghanistan



with SEAL Team Ten as a part of SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One. While in Afghanistan, Luttrell was involved in Operation Red Wings. The men were discovered and subsequently ambushed. Three of the four team members were killed, and Luttrell, the only survivor, was left unconscious with a number of fractures, a broken back, and numerous shrapnel wounds. After regaining consciousness and evading those pursuing him, Luttrell was helped to safety from the aid of local Pashtun villagers. The Pashtun villagers eventually sent an emissary to the nearest U.S. base to secure Luttrell's safe rescue, and ultimately save his life.

In our conversations while James is getting tattooed, this story of Marcus Luttrell comes up, but again his viewpoint is eye opening for someone like myself.

James says, "“It [the story of Marcus Luttrell] showed a lot of things about the local people, because their religion requires them to help someone no matter what. Here is this hurt and wounded Navy SEAL, they know that the bad guys are coming, and instead of turning their back, the villagers, they don't have that choice, because their religion is based on compassion. So to say that all Muslims are evil is an untrue bias, like all white people are rich and evil. It's an easy way out, it's the easy road. To sit here and have think about, 'They wait a minute, maybe it's not all of these people', but unfortunately the few that are really bent on doing these things,





they cause a lot of damage. It's hard for the typical brain to see all these terror attacks and say 'I should really do my homework here'. That's work, it's easier to say 'It's all muslims, that's what they do, they wake up everyday they just want to kill everybody', which is not true.

I don't care if you buy the cliff notes version, if you could read the Quran as a whole, and you can tell me there is hate speech there, you are going to have to create it, cause it's not there. It's the same as other religious text. It's so depressing that we can't get over that fight. How are we totally programmed that way?"

In our conversations while tattooing, James has challenged many ideas I had about the American military, and about those who fight in combat. Growing up in Punk Rock, you have a left leaning stance, which can sometimes make it hard to see the whole picture. In doing that, we have created a separation between ourselves and those who are experiencing these traumatic events. It's no wonder these soldiers are coming home feeling isolated and alone. If we are to stand for those people that are in pain and oppressed, shouldn't we stand for them all? Shouldn't we care about the needs of those coming home to a country that has no clue what is really going on?

James talks about the experience of trying to open up and find solace in these terms. Not every soldier sees combat, but the struggles of PTSD are real and ever-present. Combat is not the only time for these experiences to imprint on our brains, and perhaps this goes to something

TO SAY THAT ALL MUSLIMS ARE EVIL IS AN UNTRUE BIAS, LIKE ALL WHITE PEOPLE ARE RICH AND EVIL. IT'S AN EASY WAY OUT, IT'S THE EASY ROAD

that is even outside of the military, something that people we know and love might have experienced. James says,

'You are trying to get yourself to explain how you feel, but you're really embarrassed to feel that way, because what did you do? We are just not there yet with that conversation. We have to open that door more. There are so many people that have a form of PTSD, or any mental illness, and maybe it came because they were in a bank when it got robbed. They think, 'Well it didn't happen to me, I didn't get hurt, why should I be feeling this?' which was my feeling after deployment. I'm going home, I'm fine, why am I feeling this way? What did I do that's better than this person? That's hard to overcome. It's not about what I did or what anyone did, it's about fate. This is what happened. I battle with it all the time, it's the feeling you can't walk away from. Survivor's remorse.'

On May 26th, 2013, a ship capsized in the Atlantic Ocean. All of the crew of 12 perished, except for Harrison Okene. Okene found an air bubble in the cabin and survived for three days. With only one bottle of Coke, he found himself alone in the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by the bodies of his friends who had passed away in the wreck. When divers



THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE THAT HAVE A FORM OF PTSD, OR ANY MENTAL ILLNESS, AND MAYBE IT CAME BECAUSE THEY WERE IN A BANK WHEN IT GOT ROBBED...

finally found Okene, they assumed he was a corpse, until he pulled on the divers hand. Okene described a surreal scene after the diver entered the air pocket. Okene states, "I knew when he gave me water, he was observing me (to see) if I'm really human, because he was afraid".

After his rescue Okene continually asked himself, why did he survive? His wife Akpovona Okene said he still suffers. "When he is sleeping, he has that shock, he will just wake up in the night saying 'Honey see, the bed is sinking, we are in the sea.'" With no combat in sight, Okene's PTSD is real. This "survivor's remorse" is haunting for those who come home from, or live through, trauma.

James continues, "You always think you're the only one, that you're crazy. You don't want to be the problem for your friends and family, when you freak out. You think 'I don't have the luxury to feel this way, why do I deserve to feel this?' You have to figure out how to solve your freak outs. I'm always working to try to not freak out, which means I'm always running around working. 'Why doesn't he just sit down and relax for a second?' I can't, it's how I deal so I don't sit and get overwhelmed by the thoughts in my head...the trauma memory is attached to something. Just like if you wake up one morning and every morning I'm going to make a cup of coffee and make breakfast, and then that one morning you lost a loved one and something bad happened, then you think, I don't want to do that, be-



cause the last time I did that, this happened. It keeps it fresh on your mind, and it's hard to get past that."

August 28th, 2014 was the last morning I ever slept in. The day before was a huge event with the shop I was working at, so my wife let me sleep in and get some rest. That morning is frozen in time, beginning with a phone call. I learned that morning that my best friend had ended his life, an event that will forever be burned into my heart. When James was talking about his experiences, the memories attached to actions, all I could think of was that I will never sleep in again, and how I felt so much like him.

Therapy, sobriety, and keeping myself moving forward have all helped with my own personal experiences associated with PTSD, which is something James and I work together on and have in common. I received the diagnosis of PTSD from childhood, and events that surrounded it. I always separated myself from those around me, thinking that my suffering was nothing like theirs, that I have had it easy compared to them. Talking to James I realise how similar we all are, and how much we all need each other. We all feel messed up, I make the joke that I feel like I am a robot in a skin suit trying to act human, and that's a feeling so many of us can identify with. No matter our thoughts on war, politics or the military, one thing is painfully simple, PTSD is real, it's serious, and those suffering with it are not alone. Through tattooing James I have found a brother, and a common bond that used to make me feel crazy. I am grateful to know that I am not alone.

We all have likely been affected by suicide, for myself it was not only my best friend, but also my step brother, who himself was a vet. If you are feeling alone, please know that this is never the case, and there is always someone there to talk. It's a long journey, but hopefully it's one we can all make it through together. ▣



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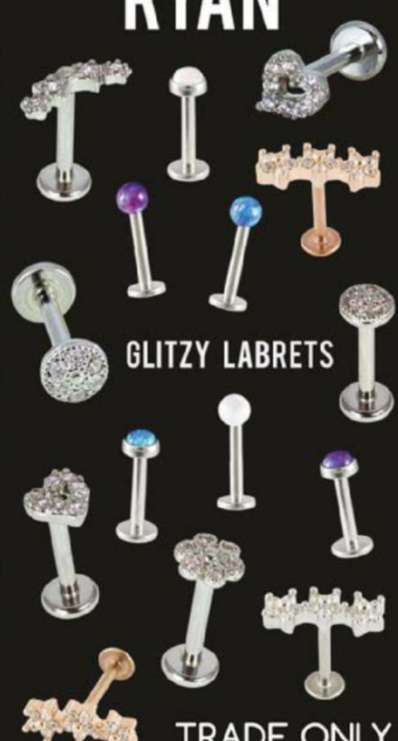
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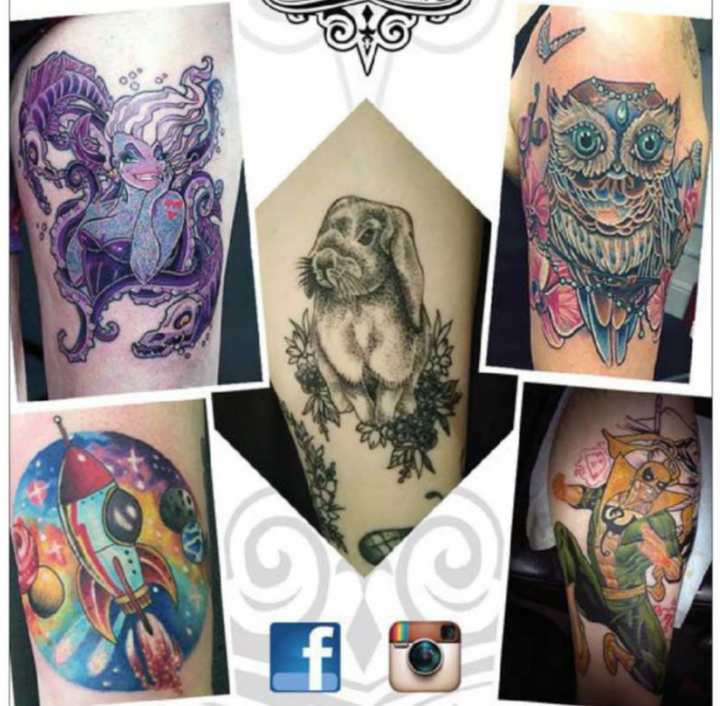
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EYE OF THE STORM



Originally from Tel Aviv, Koit moved to Berlin just over a year ago, like many he was drawn by the cities diverse population and the artistic attitude and creativity of the people who live there...

“I have lived in Berlin for a year and a half. I moved here because I loved this city from the first day I visited. It’s different, versatile and full of people from all around the world that are not afraid to show their true colours, which is very inspiring to me personally.”

“It all started in Tel Aviv, so this city has a special place in my heart. It’s not a huge city but it has a very diverse tattoo scene. From the beginning I already knew some great tattoo artists, some of them are good friends of mine too. For a while, as a tattoo artist there, I really enjoyed my cozy and comfy bubble, but being part of the Berlin tattoo scene is different. The scale is much bigger, the options are extended, the clients are very open minded and I was exposed to many new styles that I didn’t even know before.

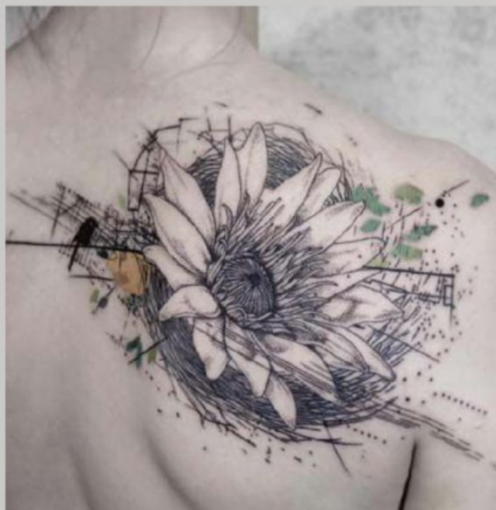
“Another good thing is that Berlin is very accessible within Europe, so it’s very easy to travel around and easier for the people who come to get tattooed. They like to combine a tattoo session with a short vacation.”

On the creative journey:

“When I finished school, I started to work as a set painter for TV shows, movies, theatres and different productions in Israel and a bit abroad. I did this for nine years and this work gave me a lot of new experiences with textures, painting objects, graffiti artworks and so on. Tattooing is something I always wanted to do. I bought my first tattoo machine and learned how to do it by myself.

“When I felt ready, I started to do small pieces at home, although it’s not something I would recommend doing. My wife, family and friends were my first ‘customers’. At the same time a friend of mine, who was a tattoo artist, helped me with the first steps and some tips. A few months later I started to work in a studio. Even today, four years later, I’m still learning something new every day.”

“When I started tattooing, I was always looking for new challenges, by combining different objects, colours, backgrounds and ideas. I spent quite some



time trying to make my work look more unusual and unique, by researching references and styles and this is something that I still do.

“My first inspiration came from the graphic design and illustration book collection that I had in Tel Aviv. Whenever I travelled to Europe I would buy a book or two so I had a nice selection. Unfortunately, I left most of them there when I moved to Berlin, but now I have a bunch of great new books here of course.

MY FAVOURITE ARTISTS ARE THOSE LIKE GUSTAV KLIMT, SALVADOR DALI AND HIERONYMUS BOSCH



I LIKE TO CREATE COMPLEXITY AND COMPOSITION THAT EVERY TIME YOU LOOK AT THE DESIGN YOU CAN FIND SOMETHING NEW INSIDE OF IT

Along with the good and old media, there's also the internet—that huge and always available information source.”

On pushing forwards:

“I still use the books and the internet, but I also find a lot of inspiration from the museums, exhibitions and different art events, street arts, artists and a lot of random things in everyday life. As it changes all the time so there's always something new and fresh that catches my attention.

“Everything influences me. Nothing in particular, just everyday life,—it's always full of surprises, from people in the streets, paintings, drawings, sculptures, nature. It could be a cool poster on the wall, a beautiful carving on an old door or just a squirrel picking nuts in the park.

“Inspiration also comes from travel— there are always all kinds of encounters. Meeting different people, be it the new clients from all walks of life, some amazing and talented tattoo artists and good friends that is always nice to see again. The old or new places I'm visiting also have a big influence. Sometimes, certain situations can uncon-

sciously build new ideas in my head too. There is something refreshing and unusual about travelling but I also enjoy my everyday routine at home, when I just enjoy working peacefully and comfortably. I think finding the right balance of

both is the optimal working environment for me.

“I call my style a ‘graphic style collage’. With every design, I do a lot of work and it takes time and patience until I'm completely satisfied with it. I believe there is always something to improve. Every piece I design has something a bit different and I would love to keep experimenting and discovering more possibilities for each and every tattoo I'm doing.

“I like to create complexity and composition that every time you look at the design you can find something new inside of it. I always knew that I probably wasn't going to do traditional style, I like it but it's not my thing. I think in tattooing, like in any other art, you can express yourself and try to break down your own limits, which for me is what makes it interesting.

“I try to incorporate my point of view with client ideas and create something symbolic for them that I related to it as well. I guess at the end, it's all about the different points of view and I respect everyone for their own opinion and perspective. I think some of the other tat-



too artists who see what I see, are Leon Lam, Noon, Expended Eye, Peter Aurisch, Nico Inko, Mowgli and Klaim”.

THE BEST WAY TO CLICK WITH MY CLIENTS IS TO KEEP FOCUSING ON WHAT I DO BEST AND NATURALLY. THAT IS BETTER AND EASIER FOR EVERYBODY

Booking in—or out:

“In my experience, the best way to click with my clients is to keep focusing on what I do best and naturally. That is better and easier for everybody. If everybody followed that rule, when they look for a certain style, they would know which tattoo artist to contact and what to expect. Sometimes I can get completely different requests (from my style), in which case, I’ll always recommend talking to other tattoo artists who do something similar.

“I am very lucky to be able to do what I truly love though. This kind of work is always interesting and diverse. I like that every person I meet and every design I work on, is different and varies from one project to the next. I would be happy to keep doing what I do, continue developing new ideas and always enjoy the process and the results.

“If for any reason I feel unsatisfied with these, I will always try to find a way to make it more entertaining and exciting for me and for the clients.” □

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This year, Tattoo Jam turned 10 years old... ch, ch, ch changes and all that:

The years huh. They run away like wild horses across the hills. I came to the show (in the big scheme of things) a little late but still, this is my eighth Tattoo Jam and of all our shows across the year, it's still my favourite—more than likely due to the amount of time it's on for. You can hang out with a lot of people in three days when your dog and children are hundreds of miles away and don't require any attention.

Tattoo Jam has sure seen some big names coming through over the years. Jeff Gogue, Simone and Volko at Buena Vista, Jesse Smith, Nikko Hurtado... it's seen some artists go from the world's best kept secret to international road warrior—Sam Barber is springing to mind here and it's seen some people hang up their machines forever too. One thing that has always been a constant for me at this show is you can never predict what it's going to be like.

There have been years without huge international names that have resulted in work of an incredible standard showing its face and there have been years with so many names, you didn't know where to look.

This year was different again and as always, there were some pieces I really fell in love with across the weekend along with their artist creators who have put in the years to find themselves in a far different place than they were at a few years back. Name them? Sure: Will Gee has raised his game more than a few notches over the last year and will continue to do so in my opinion. Hollie May Wall is settling into a rare groove of being the only show in town if you like her style... I've not even seen it attempted to be copied yet. More people like Hollie are needed out there. It was great to see Ben Hamill again too, like I said, the days just run away like wild horses and it must be a few years since he and I sat down to chew up the pavement but you know what, it only seems like a few months.

I've also become quite a fan of Bex Priest over recent months. Sometimes, you can't beat a good old fashioned occult themed tattoo and she has the imagination in spades to keep even me amused towards the end of a long weekend.

I was even given a rare treat of my own this year when my oldest friend in the world decided he needed some decent work at long last. It was



Words: Mr. Smith - Images: Nicky Connor



a pleasure to ditch him in the safe hands of Johnny Mathews and watch a great Dark Knight tattoo take shape. Funny how some subjects you think you've seen way too much of can take on a whole new meaning when you have something of a vested interest... not only that, but the day after, Johnny pulled together a fantastic Harry Potter tattoo as well.

The weekend for me is full of such stories—as they are for everybody, only with different artists and different tattoos depending on where you choose to spend your time. You wouldn't believe how difficult it is to make the jump from the floor to the stage for a judging session.

You really have to be honest up there. You

mark 'em as you find 'em right in front of your face. All those things you thought were great? Sometimes, there will just be something better that surprises you in every way. It's kind of like the X-Factor... you can watch it for weeks and think you know where it might go but all it takes is for somebody to raise the bar and everything you thought you knew can be wrong.

Able assisted this year by Paula Castle and Steven Mostyn, we battled, argued in hushed tones, shook our heads at just how much we could disagree with each other until, eventually, some people rose to the top of the lists. The winners and runners-up can be found in some sexy boxes within this review somewhere but if I may—the tattoo that won Best of Convention blew me away. I don't think any photograph would ever be good enough to capture how good it is in the flesh. It just sang on the skin. It was worn confidently, proudly and didn't put a foot wrong. Beautiful. I raise a salute to you Jurgis Mikalauskas! Check out his instagram feed at [instagram.com/jurgismikalauskas](https://www.instagram.com/jurgismikalauskas) and you will see that he knocks it out of the ballpark every day of the week. Classy.

As the history of ten years of top quality tattooing was dismantled before my eyes (it's always weird seeing a venue being brought back to an empty shell), somebody at the office showed me some of the comments left on Facebook by people who had come out to the show. One said, they felt sorry for the tattooers because it was quiet... and yet six thousand people passed through the show. One said it was a sham-



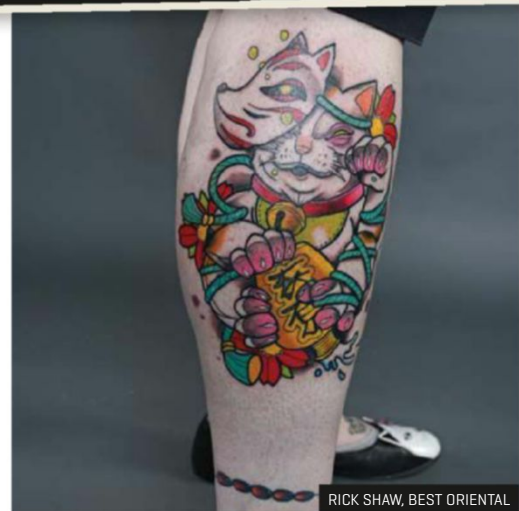




AARON FITCHETT, BEST TRADITIONAL



NICK BARRATT, BEST BLACK AND GREY



RICK SHAW, BEST ORIENTAL



RICKY WRIGHT, BEST AVANT GARDE



JAMIE LEE KNOTT, BEST NEO-TRADITIONAL



JAMIE LEE KNOTT, BEST COLOUR



JURGIS MIKALAUŠKAS, BEST REALISM, BEST OF SUNDAY, BEST OF SHOW



SASHA NICOLE, BEST BLACKWORK

THE RUNNERS-UP

- Will Gee**, Runner Up of Best Colour
- Federico Amaterasu**, Runner Up of Best Blackwork
- Craig Needham**, Runner Up Of Best Oriental
- Richie Guy**, Runner Up of Best Black and Grey
- Andrew Burns**, Runner Up of Best Neo Traditional
- Dan Dyson**, Runner Up of Best Realism
- Luigi Gala**, Runner Up of Best Avant Garde
- Matty Friend**, Runner Up of Best Traditional

THE WINNERS

- Jurgis Mikalauskas**, Best Realism, Best of Sunday & Best of Convention
- Sasha Nicole**, Best Blackwork & Best Of Saturday
- Nick Barratt**, Best Black and Grey
- Jamie Lee Knott**, Best Neo Traditional
- Rick Shaw**, Best Oriental
- Ricky Wright**, Best Avant Garde
- Jamie Lee Knott**, Best Colour
- Aaron Fitchett**, Best Traditional

bles because the video screen was too far away to be of any use... when it's only thirty feet from the back of the room to the video screen anyway.

There will always be a handful of folk like this who like to piss on the hard work of a good couple of hundred artists and 6,000 odd people who turned up for the weekend and had a good time. I would guess that these are the same people that like to leave one star reviews on amazon about a perfectly good product because the postman was wearing a blue hat instead of a red one... in which case, we are pleased to be of assistance in helping you through the night.

Next year? It will be here soon enough. We kick off with Tattoo Freeze at the end

of January, a few months later (in May) we have the Great British Tattoo Show and then around about the same time in August again, we're back for Tattoo Jam. I'm not sure if the Manchester show will rear it's head in 2018. It's early days to be thinking about that just now.

Whatever it is you do across the year, between now and whenever we should meet again, be good to yourselves, have a good time at whatever show it is you find yourself at... home or away. Get Good Ink. Hell, Get Great Ink. Have adventures to last a lifetime and don't let the small things get you down.

On a personal note, this seems as good a time as any to say a heartfelt thanks to all of those who have passed through the booths of Tattoo Jam across the years, the people who build stuff, tear stuff down, clean up after us, feed us, get electricity running to the right place... you all know who you are. No tattoo show is an island.

See you on the road... ▣



Are some tattoo styles more popular than others, depending on where in the world you are?

I've just got back from The Netherlands. I took the teeny tiny flight over to Rotterdam (and nearby Amsterdam) for just under a week to see what the tattoo world had to offer.

In the interesting and vibrant city of Rotterdam, one of the—if not THE—most well-known tattoo shops is probably a cosy place called 25 To Life—owned by Nico 'Slick Nick' Mensinga—tattooist of 19 years—and home to both Nico and his apprentice Moira Ramone. Both of these individuals create *bloody good* tattoos. They specialise in work on skin that is built for life (hence the shop's name). Like many other artists today, Nico utilises traditional techniques and pays homage to the rules from which modern tattooing was born.

Let me start at the beginning...

I travelled over to this part of the world, not just to un-earth tattoos, but to also to delve into Rotterdam's vital part in the sea trade, something I am also interested in. Home to the largest port in Europe, the city is filled with museums, galleries and architecture that nods towards its past and present nautical status.

Prior to my visit, I was sure that my exploration of Rotterdam's shipping and tattoo history would go hand-in-hand, as sailors played such a prominent part in the arrival of tattooing into the modern day. I thought that my travel blogs would concentrate on themes of tradition, as there were interesting parallels to be drawn: between the way a shop like 25 To Life honours traditional tattoo styles, and the way cities like Rotterdam and Amsterdam still today look back and remember their nautical pasts. I had this prescribed narrative in my writer's brain but within 24 hours, I had completely thrown it out of the window.

As I began to meet and discover the tattoo artists working in both of these close but contrasting cities, my reporting found itself reflecting on a variety of tattoo styles, not just traditional. To name just a few of those I discovered a craftsman called Spaceman who adorns his clients with intricate tribal pieces, and Horikichi keeping the sacred art of Japa-



Nico Mensinga

EVERY TATTOOIST I ENCOUNTERED HAD A DIFFERENT CREATIVE STYLE...



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I started to realise that all of these artists were about so much more than just looking back. They each ventured into the future with their own stamp on traditions, their own goals and artistic visions. Every tattooist I encountered had a different creative style. No two tattoos looked the same.

My trip to the Netherlands made me reflect on the real diversity present in the tattoo scene in 2017. Styles that look back don't dominate the market, and neither do those that break the rules. There's room for every experimental approach, every inventive mind, no matter its intention.

Obviously I brought my own piece of ink home with me. I just couldn't resist—NOW is proving to be such an exciting time to get tattooed. ▣



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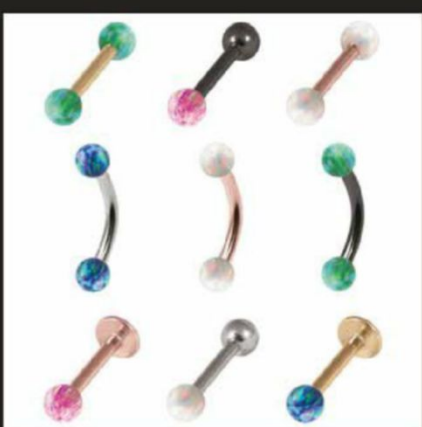
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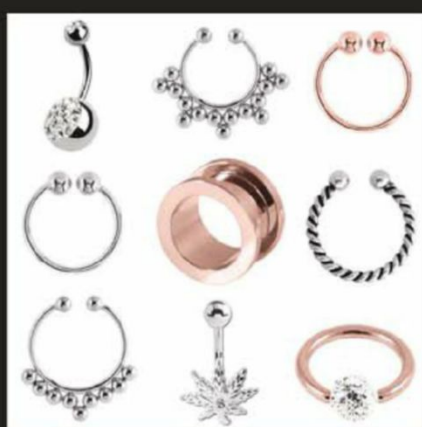
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