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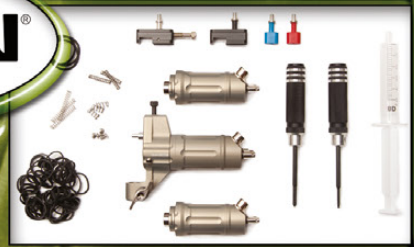
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THE REVENGE OF THE S(M)ITH

Dorothy was a waitress on the promenade. She worked the night shift. Sometimes when I haven't got a clue how to fire a magazine up, I start like this... by knocking out the first thing that comes into my head—in this case the first couple of lines from *The Ballad of Dorothy Parker*. By the time I get to the end, I've usually found my groove and I'll go back, delete the nonsense part and nobody is any the wiser. Sharpen it up a little, sleep on it overnight... that's how shit works when you tote a pen around the world for a living.

I know some tattoo artists who can play like this. Maybe not the 'sleep on it overnight' part but the spirit is there.

Others plan, plan, plan again and then plan some more knowing they have one shot at getting it right. That goes for both writers and tattooers. As an editor who has to work with a writer who plays like that or as an editor who has to make a judgement call on whether to make room for an artist here, this is also a great way to work. It's not my way, but it's absolutely valid because the end result is the same: good work.

Let's pause for a moment and start again:

Dorothy was a waitres on the pier. She workd nights. When I ain't got a clue how to start, I just throw whatever comes in my head on the paper...

There's every chance, some of you won't even notice a difference between those sentences and the others... but most will. They stick out like those spinning shears that come out of the hubcaps of Bond's Aston Martin. Would you accept a whole magazine that read like that? Again, I guess there are some who would be fine with it but those people are not me and if you got this far, not you either.

Sadly, some people (who aren't apprentices) tattoo like this and that's inexcusable. There's stylistically being able to make something different than it should be and then there's simply not having the skill to pull off what's being asked of you—and when it's a tattoo, I get queasy. Queasy like that time you drank too much Jack and found yourself



Mike Boyd

THEY STICK OUT LIKE THOSE SPINNING SHEARS THAT COME OUT OF THE HUBCAPS OF BOND'S ASTON MARTIN...



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in a stolen dinghy eighty miles off the coast of Norway with a woman twice your age, but that's a story for another time.

To recap: this editorial has been brought to you by a tattooer who sent me a picture of something I assume was meant to be Darth Maul with a message asking me to let them know which issue it was going to be in.

It had some black and red inks on board and even though I haven't seen all of the Star Wars pre/prologues—or whatever the hell they are—I'm pretty certain that Darth Maul never had pears growing out of the top of his head.

So there you go: it's in this issue but perhaps not as you intended.

The person who left your shop probably felt exactly the same.

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In a brand new series, Wayne Simmons introduces you to some of his favourite rebels within tattooing, artists doing something different with their inks.

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When D-Grrr decided to suspend his career in 2017, the French tattooer chose to go back and concentrate on his first love: illustration. We take a much closer look at the man and his work.

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This new show on the block was spread

over two days and attracted more than 12,000 visitors, which is no mean feat for a new show.

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Each of Demon Dance's tattoos pop against the skin, in a beautiful mashup of Victorianesque curiosity, macabre bizarreness and brazen detachment. It's blackwork as we love it most - original, fresh and exciting.

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"Back in the good old, reckless 80s, my buddy Moggy and I would grab his dad's membership card and hit our local video store..." A prelude from that Simmons-guy who is in his element with Alex Wright as they tour the 'top shelf of skin art'.

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Think you fully understand and appreciate the term "tattoo ART"? Well, think again. NR Studios are taking our art-form to a very exciting new level - brace yourself.

68 BEEP BEEP RICHIE

Hannya Jane made a drive-by the bosses desk and said she would like to write a piece about the joys of pop-culture in tattooing. Being as everybody else has gone IT crazy, we got down in the pit too.

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Sean Herman continues to bring us stories that mean something behind his tattooing. This issue, we talk cover ups... oh yeah.

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TWO FOR ONE AT THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS

The Circus of Horrors are back on tour!

You can find all of their dates across the Halloween period at circusofhorrors.co.uk where they are operating two units during the Halloween period... this includes the latest incarnation 'Voodoo':

Awoken by a Ouija board, a Voodoo curse causes devastation—while the city sleeps the night creatures rule the underworld with bizarre and amazing Circus acts from all over the world, some never before seen in the UK—all performed to devil driven Rock n Roll and interwoven with the darkest of magic—The biggest revolution of the Circus of Horrors for many years.

If you're in, you can grab a 2 for 1 deal by either booking online at ticketmaster.co.uk/promo/8ywr7b or by going old school and sending a stamped addressed envelope to Circus of Horrors, PO Box 4538, London, SW19 8XU and they will send them as vouchers to use at any venue.

Still, you could always have had a black cat cross your path sometime in the last few days in which case, get onto skindeep.co.uk/competitions, drop in 'Circus' as your competition answer and you'll be in with a chance of winning one of ten pairs of tickets. Get it on.

WIN 5 PAIRS OF TICKETS TO TATTOO FREEZE

It might say January 2018 on the poster but by the time you're holding this in your hands, we're probably looking at something like 15 weeks—we could work it out but it's more fun to guess. If you want to get next year off to a great start, this issue we're giving away five pairs of tickets to the first tattoo show of the year and as ever, it's just about as simple as can be. Point your cursor at skindeep.co.uk/competitions and enter FREEZE18 as your competition answer and the rest will be attended to by capable people wearing gloves for protection.

Don't forget, Tattoo Freeze 2018 is now a two day event and the winning tickets will be for the whole weekend.

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by
Reece Mortiboys



It was only a matter of time before it began. I thought we might get beyond the first week of release but I am a fool to have suggested such a thing to myself. Thus, in a tribute to the flood I can see coming even from here, this issue we pay homage to the immortal Pennywise the Clown and all he has brought to our lives.

This (soon to be) iconic image is from the hand of Reece Mortiboys—it landed in the inbox and I called everybody around my screen:

“It’s here!”

“Already?”

“Yep. No need to wait for a convention—it’s happening now.”

As I write this, we are 24 hours away from sending this issue to print and we’ve already seen another dozen or so, which suggests the movie is great and also that this is only the tip of a very large iceberg..

Somehow, this is strangely brilliant and I can’t wait to see the best of them. I mean, who doesn’t love a Stephen King themed tattoo?

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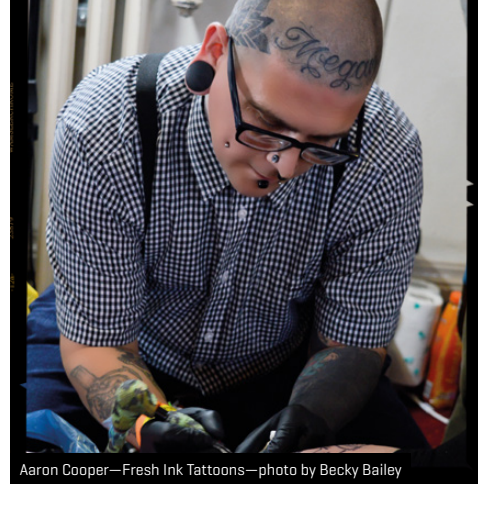
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Aaron Cooper—Fresh Ink Tattoos—photo by Becky Bailey



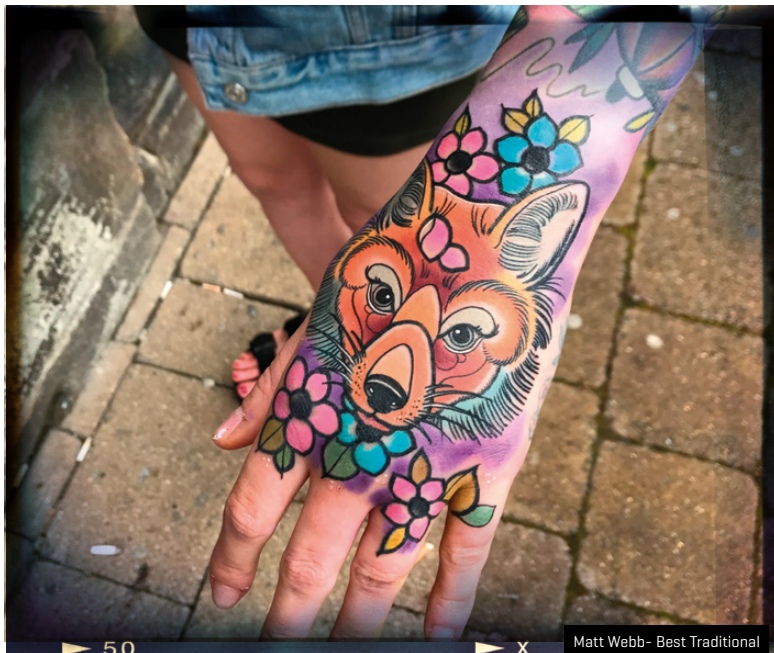
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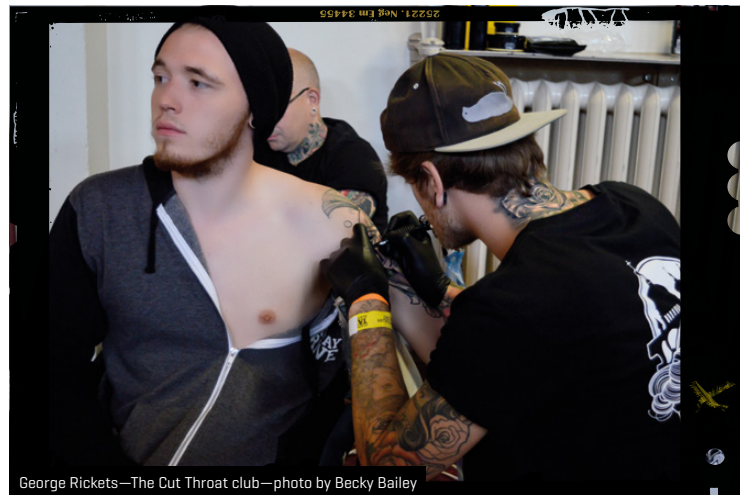
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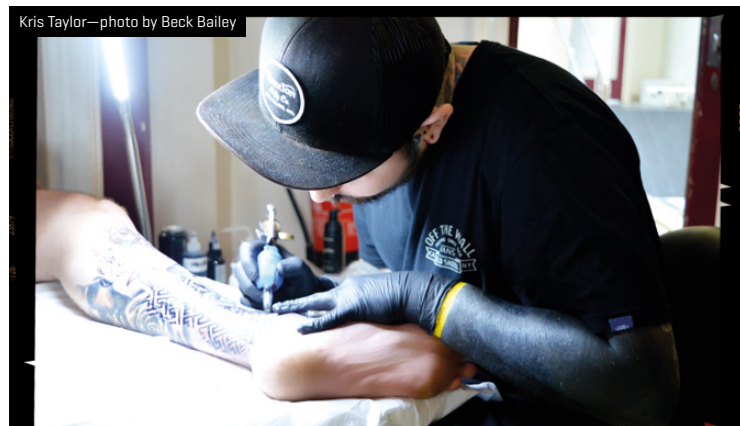
Matt Webb—photo by Becky Bailey



Matt Webb— Best Traditional



George Rickets—The Cut Throat club—photo by Becky Bailey



Kris Taylor—photo by Becky Bailey

Scenes from the **STAFFORDSHIRE TATTOO GATHERING**

The 1st Staffordshire Tattoo Gathering was a huge success. The show was hosted by Kirsty Sohl-Osborne and her husband Oz, of Tribal Images Tattoo Studio, Staffordshire and took place at the Kings Hall, an elegant Grade II listed building, in their home town of Stoke-on-Trent



Alex Bawn—Bishop Tattoo Company—photo by Becky Bailey

With nothing like it in the county of Staffordshire, the show went down a storm, with tickets completely selling out two weeks prior to the event and people still keen to grab tickets.

The event showcased 27 tattoo artists from across the country, all of whom had been personally invited to work the show due to their high standard of work. The aim of this show was to be a small, friendly convention with quality work and no attitudes: back to the roots of tattoo conventions. It also gave like-minded people the chance to mix together and show off their tattoos.

Up for grabs on the day were 8 awards, in the tattoo

contest. Only work completed by the artists working the show could be entered and the pieces were scrutinised by a team of 4 judges, all of whom were experienced tattooists. The categories were Best Colour, Best Black and Grey, Best Realism, Best Blackwork, Best Avant Garde, Best Traditional, Best in Show and Best All Round Artist. Alongside trophies, the winners of the latter two categories won a custom hand-built machine by Kev Shercliff.

There was lots of entertainment throughout the day including a graffiti demo, a custom car show, live bands, and a bench press contest which was sponsored by Strength Asylum, the home to the World's Strongest Man Eddie Hall.

There was a host of trade stalls, including ones selling



Photo by Becky Bailey



photo by Becky Bailey 2



Clarke Dudley—Best Black and Grey, Best in Show



Simon Wainwright—Best Realism



Simon Wainwright—Best Colour

THE WINNERS

Best Black and Grey:

Clarke Dudley, Rendition Tattoo Studio

Best Colour:

Simon Wainwright, Creative Chaos Tattoo Parlour

Best Blackwork:

Kris Taylor, Vivid Ink

Best Traditional:

Matt Webb, Bishop Tattoo Company

Best Realism:

Simon Wainwright, Creative Chaos Tattoo Parlour

Best Avant Garde:

Will Gee, Monsters Art Emporium

Best in Show:

Clarke Dudley, Rendition Tattoo Studio

Best All Round Artist:

Clarke Dudley, Rendition Tattoo Studio



Photo by Becky Bailey

moonshine, handmade fudge, taxidermy, carved wooden plugs and other goodies such as ouija boards, and streetwear clothing.

Several of the tattooists working the show had painted up old, unwanted skateboard decks, which had been donated by the local indoor skatepark. The boards were then auctioned off at the convention with the money going to Douglas Macmillan Hospice, a char-

ity very close to the hearts of the show organisers. The charity have recently supported the couple through Oz's ongoing health concerns and across the show, the auction raised £420 for the charity.

The show has had lots of fantastic feedback from the tattoo artists and attendees, meaning that this will be an annual event. You can follow them on social media for announcements on the 2nd Annual Staffordshire Tattoo Gathering—it looks like you'll need grab tickets fast, once they're released: www.tattoogathering.co.uk ▣

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with clear gems



example



Buddha

DCBUD with clear gems



example



Hamsa

DCHMS

with white synthetic opal



example



Elephant

DCELP




example



REBEL INC.

In a brand new series, Wayne Simmons introduces you to some of his favourite rebels within tattooing, artists doing something different with their inks. This month he meets Josh Peacock of King Street Collective in Cambridge

 @joshpeacock_obe1

It's common within the more surreal forms of art in particular for one to take oneself too seriously. So common, in fact, that it has become something of a cliché. You see it parodied in movies, cartoons, TV—the cravat-sporting artiste with their twirly moustache or hat set at a jaunty angle. And while a character like that has been exaggerated for the sake of entertainment, they're not entirely divorced from reality.

Perhaps such posturing is born out of snobbery, an assumption that the critic or the viewer of one's art will never fully understand it. Or perhaps it's born out of a deep-rooted insecurity, a paranoia that their art is not real in the way that critics understand art to be, that they're a fraud, a shyster masquerading as an innovator. Either way, it's not something that surrealist Josh Peacock concerns himself with too much. Working out of King Street Collective in Cambridge, alongside regular guest spots in Germany, Josh is a guy who rejects posturing of any kind, who revels in the lowbrow of what he does, wearing his influences like a badge of honour.

"Skate culture, graffiti, music, comics," he shrugs. "Just like tattooing, they're seen as low-brow art forms and yet they're these perfect vessels for counter culture. For me and many other artists—in fact, it's inherent within a variety of creative types—that's of paramount importance: the urge to improve, adjust and invent. I'm proud to be part of this way of thinking and I like to think that pride is apparent in my work."

He talks of his earlier days within tattooing, working

**THAT'S OF PARAMOUNT
IMPORTANCE: THE URGE
TO IMPROVE, ADJUST
AND INVENT**







I HAD TO CHANGE THINGS, GET MYSELF BACK TO THE MORE WHIMSICAL WORLD OF BOLD COLOUR SCHEMES

mostly within black and grey portraiture, a style taken very seriously. And it was this very fact that put Josh off doing it anymore. “They were largely memorial pieces,” he tells me, “and the atmosphere in these situations is far from jovial as you can imagine. I hit a point when I realised that it was affecting me badly. I’m not made of stone, far from it, and I realised that I had to change things, get myself back to the more whimsical world of bold colour schemes and those terrible visual puns I loved.”

For Josh, art is something to enjoy. He revels in the

lightness of it, the fun, the humour. If he were to identify with a particular style or genre within tattooing, it would be the Northern European illustration-based style. “It’s such a light hearted and playful movement, and the artists within that movement mirror this,” he tells me. Basically, for Josh, art should be interactive, a talking piece, a conversation starter, and that connection, that punchline if you like, is something that illustrators and those, like Josh, who draw from a similar well, are always trying to invoke. “When the age-old drunken question comes up



I KNOW MANY ARTISTS DEMAND COMPLETE FREEDOM ON EXPRESSIVE AND ABSTRACT PIECES. I KNOW WHERE THEY'RE COMING FROM

'what's the craziest tattoo you've ever seen?'" he smiles, "I like to think that some of my customers can simply roll up a trouser leg and end the debate right there."

Outside of counter-culture, Josh has delightfully unpretentious influences, all of which continue to educate his own work. "I think Gary Larson is a great example of an illustrator who can make you gut laugh with a single cell cartoon without text. In a way, he's everything I'd like to bring to my own drawings. Another huge influence was my friend, Tony Coles. His endless sketchbooks

and enthusiasm were contagious. I'm still infected to this day." And then there's his mum. Not an artist herself, but rather something of a curator of art, hanging the art she loved on the walls of the family home. "I grew up with a continuously updated gallery. She went through phases, so it would vary from Russian constructivism to ancient Egypt. It's hard not to be inspired as a kid when surrounded by such works."

The more I chat with Josh, the more I think how refreshing it will be for clients when they meet him. Tattoo



IN SOCIAL MEDIA LAND IT IS QUITE HARD FOR A CUSTOMER TO FIND NEW STYLES. LUCKILY, PEOPLE AREN'T STUPID

art is not without its snobbery. Anyone who's been around the industry for any length of time will have met the rock-stars and the posers who are anything but light and fun to be around. For Josh, the rapport with his clients is vital to the enjoyment of the tattoo experience and he feels lucky to have built genuine friendships with the people he's tattooed over the years. And the freedom that affords him is vital, in his view, when working within a more abstract style. "After a while we realise where we want to be and the trust builds. I know many artists demand complete

freedom on expressive and abstract pieces. I know where they're coming from, it's quite a trust exercise sometimes. I prefer to take it more as a brief. It definitely helps to gauge the customer and understand what they want from the tattoo. Sure, I like to maintain my freedom as an artist, but in an informed rather than head-strong way."

Moving forward, Josh feels the future is bright for artists working within avant-garde, that the movement is enjoying its own renaissance—and he feels that's down to a variety of contributing factors. "Tattooing has become



a melting pot of all art forms, from the classically trained to graffiti, illustration and graphic design backgrounds. Because of this, as well as improvements to tattoo equipment and inks, suddenly more and more visual goals are achievable. There's been an explosion of techniques over the last few years, and now there are as many styles as there are artists. Germany, Poland and Eastern Europe have introduced new sensibilities and fresh approaches that have massively diversified our visual culture. Now, clients really can be as individual as they want, as long as

they find the right artists."

For Josh, part of the challenge is to give avant-garde a stronger identity, a hashtag-friendly moniker that can connect with people in the digital world. "In social media land," he explains, "it is actually quite hard for a customer to find new styles. Luckily, people aren't stupid, and clients are actively seeking newer and lesser-known styles. They're enthusiastic and up for a laugh."

Which suits Josh just fine, of course.

"Yeah, they're the kind of people I want to party with." ▣

EX-LIBRIS DE D. GERR



D. GERR MWII

POSSESSED BY THE LINE

When D-Grrr decided to suspend his career in 2017, the French tattooer chose to go back and concentrate on his first love: illustration. At 51 years old, after a recent exhibition about Death and with several projects still to come, the Parisian rediscovers the pleasure of drawing without any other pressure than the whims of inspiration

D-GRRR.com [f](#) BaronDenisGRRR [i](#) denis_grrr

Can we look back at the genesis of your exhibition about Death, which just closed last July at La Boucherie Moderne in Brussels?

The idea came out last December when we were talking with Guyom Butcher (boss of La Boucherie Moderne studio) who had an exhibition space available. I made a proposition to do an exhibition about Death. Because, as Salvador Dali said: 'Death fascinates me!'. It is an obsession for me, like sex. I think about it all the time. And it doesn't have to do with the fact that I'm getting older! With this exhibition, I already felt in some ways that I was getting back to my roots, as in 1994 I did a collaboration with the rock band La Muerte. The exhibition in itself, brought together about 20 artworks, with 15 unreleased among them.

These artworks were also an opportunity for you to work on other mediums, can you tell us about it?

It's been about 2 years that I have been concentrating on working with the Bic pen, whether black or red. It's laborious and it takes time, but paradoxically, I like its immediacy. Before, I used to do illustration with acrylic on A4 format and I felt less free. Now, I don't give a shit, I don't plan anything in advance. Bam! Once I have the idea, I do it straight. It is spontaneous, I need to spit it out. Like a tattoo, the Bic is something that doesn't allow you to correct it. I like the simplicity of the medium, which is almost working-class in its proximity. If some prefer the



way I used to work before, I want to say that if the world changes the spirit is still the same. My name is still GRRR and I'm still very angRRRy !

Your work with the Bic pen reminds me of the etching aesthetic. Is that something that you like specifically?

When I used to collaborate with fanzines, I used to work with a very specific brush line which would give some thickness to the shapes of the bodies. The Bic pen is



somehow an extension of this technique. And you can get a deadly line, more instinctive, something that you don't have with a pencil. I specifically like the German, Flemish and even French etching from the 14th to the 17th century, this period is the golden age to me. The medieval period is very interesting; the work done at that time is very simple and refined, very raw, almost childish and tattoo-able. My favourite engravers are Goltzius, Holbein, Schongauer and Baldung Grien.

Do you try new topics besides these new techniques?

Yes. With the red Bic pen I work on a little series in the spirit of François Rabelais (famous French writer of the 16th century) and of François Desprez who did illustrations about Rabelais's character, Pantagruel. I feel close to Rabelais. He comes, like me, from the same part of France (Touraine), he's anti-clerical, bon vivant, excessive in the pleasure of food and drink. By using the red Bic pen, I get closer to these red inks that artists use for doing sketches and studies. I look also at the topic of the Cours des Miracles and I was specifically inspired by the work of Jacques Callot, a 17th century artist. I've always been attracted by the rough areas of the world like prostitution, the small societies and outsiders. It's a little bit of the underground before its creation.



This year you chose to suspend your work as a tattooer, why?

I felt very frustrated that I had absolutely no time to concentrate on personal projects, to think about exhibitions, etc. I had for example this project about the Great War—World War I- that I proposed to the French editor of Timeless Editions. I have already worked a lot on it, did about half of the illustrations to be done, but I still have to finish it. So, I decided to finish the tattooed pieces I started already and to take this year off. The book about WWI must come out in 2018 for the armistice of November 11th and the end of this terrible thing.

You are mostly known for being inspired by fantastic, demonology, anti-clericalism, pornography... how did you come to this historical topic of the Great War?

It's a curious thing. My grandfather was in one of the flying squadron of the Cigognes (famous French aeronautic unit of the french army), the same as the French pilot Roland Garros. I did some research at my mom's place and



found an old photo book of him - you can see him posing with his plane, his friends...

Then everything started coming together like the pieces of a puzzle. In 2014 there were the commemorations of the century of the WWI (1914-1918), I liked Otto Dix's work and Georges Grosz, the veterans of WWI with bad facial injuries which have been photographed a lot... With this photo book, everything was converging and I thought, 'Let's do it!'. Along with my research, I found other historical figures on which to concentrate like the intrepid and unstoppable Charles Nungesser, one of the best plane pilots in the history of the French army.

What will this work will look like?

Timeless planned to do an A3 format album, with a thick paper, 24 illustrations. Half of it is already done. Next, I'll concentrate on a more erotic and pornographic atmosphere, an exploration of the whorehouses with these disfigured veterans, including the fetishism of the prosthesis, etc... with black humour.

You were an illustrator before working as a tattooer, how important was this period for you?

I cannot leave it! It is important for me to leave a trace, some sort of posterity. Even today, we still admire the

work of the great artists—even though I don't compare to them. Before 'leaving' I will be able to tell myself that, maybe, one day, someone will see my work and like it.

You started your career as an illustrator in the music industry by drawing record sleeves, first for the french hardcore band MST in 1987 and then for metal bands like Impaled Nazarene. Are you still involved in this?

Yes, I just finished an artwork for a French band from Lyon. They play metal music - Anksunamon. There is a big scene in Lyon, so when I'm not doing record sleeves, I'm tattooing the band members! Recently I did an artwork for a tribute to Slayer (Powerfuel). Drawing record sleeves is not something obsolete. It doesn't have anything to do with the photoshopped pictures that we see everywhere. For example, do you see the records of bands like High on Fire or Doomriders—I find it very cool that these guys have this approach to ask illustrators for something different. Along with punk and psycho, metal has always been a fertile environment for the production of images.

How did you switch to tattooing?

In the 80's, we had an outsider vision of it and I thought it would be impossible to make something out of it for myself in this part of world. I talked a little bit about it



with Christian (tattooer from Paris, in the Belleville area where he still has his studio, the Arche de Morphée), where I would get tattooed. He told me that it would be difficult, I had to apprentice first, without being paid... it scared me! How would I eat? So I decided to keep on doing illustrations, it was much simpler.

Then, in 1999 and 2000, the Mondial du Tatouage tattoo conventions had been organised by Tin-Tin in Paris and I had the opportunity to see a lot of foreign tattooers. There, I realised there could actually be a future for me in this profession.

Would people get a lot of tattoos around you? Sometimes, depending on their money. Personally I got a few. The first I did myself with a needle and Indian ink. It has been covered since by Christian in 1987. At that time, I also tried to build myself a machine with a pen and a walkman. Tattooing was a small world back then. At the end of the 80's there were

not a lot of people in Paris getting tattooed, rockers, punks, skinheads... everybody knew each other. And the process was not the same as today either. Among my friends, it had a value, a meaning. Punks would get tattooed on the arms, the chest, the back, but very rarely hands and neck—when now it is the opposite. The machines were also more difficult to have access to.

10 years ago you were telling me that tattooing was a fascinating adventure, how about today?

I feel like it's a little bit stagnating, even though there are new talented artists emerging. New trends are coming up, very graphic. Paradoxically, the good old topics last. I don't do conventions anymore, it's a little bit tiring, especially for someone who likes to party like me. I just want to be quieter and with the minimum of pressure! But I'm still getting tattooed, by the French tattooers—Anthony from Quimper, Just, Mister Biz and Sylvain Leborgne.

Exhibition at the International Brussels Tattoo Convention (Belgium) from the 10th-12th of November 2017
Next exhibition: at Santa Sangre in Clermont Ferrand (France), from 09/27th to 12/22th.

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Scenes from **DEAUVILLE TATTOO FESTIVAL**

19/20 August, 2017



This new kid on the block was spread over two days and attracted more than 12,000 visitors, which is no mean feat for a new show.

On point throughout the show, you could have found Sarah Miller, Ryan Smith, Aaron IS, Rudy Hetzer and another 250 tattoo artists from all over the world. The program of events was enriched by numerous exhibitors, concerts, entertainment and exhibitions all of which contributed to the success of this convention.

Winners of the competitions are captioned here... nice job all round guys. Looks great!

Images: Kamila Burzynowska

Deauville is a commune in the Calvados département in the Normandy region in northwestern France.

With its race course, harbour, international film festival, marinas, conference centre, villas, Grand Casino and sumptuous hotels, Deauville is regarded as the "queen of the Norman beaches" and one of the most prestigious seaside resorts in all of France. As the closest seaside resort to Paris, the city and its region of the Côte Fleurie (Flowerly Coast) has long been home to French high society's seaside houses and is often referred to as the Parisian riviera. Since the 19th century, the town of Deauville has been a fashionable holiday resort for the international upper class. Deauville is also a desirable family resort for the wealthy. In France, it is known perhaps above all for its role in Proust's In Search of Lost Time.





Off the strength of this first show, the organisation is pleased to announce the dates of the second edition of the Deauville Tattoo Festival, which will take place in 2018 again at the CID (International Center of Deauville) across the 3 days, of 17th, 18th and 19th August 2018.

SCENES FROM DEAUVILLE TATTOO FESTIVAL



Best of Saturday - 1st - Calvin Moktar



Best of Show - 1st - Sandra Daukshita



Black and Grey - 3rd - Stef Proton



Black and Grey - 2nd - David Redoulez



Color - 1st - Vladimir Shatsky



Color - 2nd - Yaiza Rubio Castillejos



Old School - New School - 1st - Leo Barrachina



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Ornamental - 3rd - BSV



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DEMON DANCE

It is refreshing to see tattooing being taken back to the bare bones of the practice, where deceptively simple bold lines are treated with the same artistry and intricate care as a multi-shaded design. Each of Demon Dance's tattoos pop against the skin, in a beautiful mashup of Victorianaesque curiosity, macabre bizarreness and brazen detachedness

@demondance



In the tattoos of conjoined skulls, death eerily staring back at a woman in a mirror, and nuclear detonation being liked on mobile a phone i.e. our now contemporary mirror, Demon Dance plays with a bleak not-too-distant dystopian future, imaged back to us in the permanence of a tattoo. One that will age with its owner into the fucked up void we are blindly walking into. One tattoo reads 'Let's die at the same time', a motto that reads loud and clear in an age whereby red buttons seem evermore enticing to the powers above controlling our little world of celebrity gods and virtually monitored interactions.

How did you get into tattooing? Have you always had a passion for drawing illustrations?

I was quite lucky to fall into tattooing, I'd been doodling and doing small bits of illustration for years but never to

...LESS IS MORE. I'VE ALWAYS LOVED MINIMALISM AND NEVER BEEN ABLE TO GET MY HEAD AROUND COLOUR THEORY

the extent where I thought I'd be able to tattoo for a living. I'd always been interested in tattoos and collecting them but I was offered my apprenticeship based on my work effort rather than my actual art, which was something I had to refine as I went along.

How did you learn to tattoo? Was this an easy process?

I had a traditional apprenticeship so I began working for free, doing all the usual jobs around the studio (cleaning, handling my mentor's bookings etc.) and then slowly started learning my way around machines and setup. It was a few months before I started tattooing practice skin and

Words: Steven Kenny



SOMETIMES THE NEGATIVE SPACE IN A TATTOO IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE BLACK PART

then almost a year after my apprenticeship began I started tattooing my friends for free. It was a hard process for me because I hate being patient and I find I learn better by just jumping straight in and doing things over and over until I get it right, but in hindsight it probably did me a favour.

What was it like tattooing your first client? Was this a daunting experience?

I was terrified, I remember not being able to pull a line for the first few minutes because my hands were shaking so much, and having to have breaks every 2 minutes to compose myself. It was quite a big piece too.

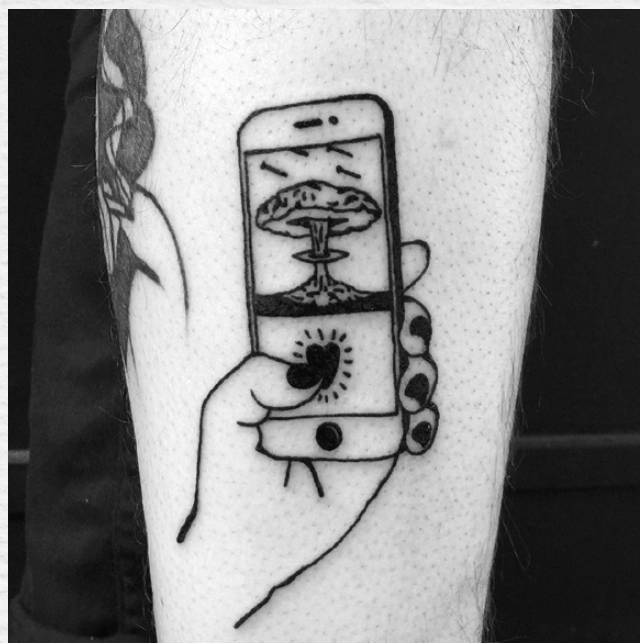
Are you tattooed yourself? If so, who do you let tattoo you? And what sort of work do you like to get tattooed on your body?

I have lots of tattoos, I've collected them from artists all over the world and I've been lucky to get some amazing pieces from friends I've made whilst I've been travelling. I love most styles of tattooing so I have all sorts going on, I'm starting to run out of room now though.

What is it about black work that fascinates you?

For me it's all about the idea that less is more. I've always loved minimalism and never been able to get my head around colour theory so it was logical to stick to black. Occasionally I'll offset something with a splash of pink to make certain parts stand out but I've always just loved solid black tattoos and illustration.

How do you transpose an illustrative style of drawing to the skin effectively?



The way I draw translates to tattooing really well, I'll stencil the finished illustration onto the skin and then just stick to my stencil, making sure it's all there. In my earlier days I was always tempted to shade parts that I'd usually leave out because I worked in a shop with a more traditional attitude to tattooing and I'd always be getting told that things needed shading, but I slowly learnt to just do my own thing and trust my own judgement.

You have become known for tattooing crisp, black silhouette roses, how did this come about?

I'd always drawn my roses in a realistic shape, but with a solid black stem and leaves, then added the detail in the flower to create a bit of contrast. But very soon after I started tattooing them I had a lot of people asking for the whole rose to be silhouetted and noticed other artists were doing the same thing, so I can't take full credit. I still



THE ARTWORK SIDE OF TATTOOING IS HUGEY IMPORTANT NOW, ESPECIALLY IN THE 'EVOLVE OR DIE' AGE OF INSTAGRAM WHERE PEOPLE CAN EFFECTIVELY SEE YOUR ENTIRE TATTOOING CAREER BEFORE BOOKING IN WITH YOU

do a lot of silhouette roses now, but I'd like to think the natural shape of mine gives them something unique!

Your aesthetic seems to be particularly minimalist, why do you work in this style? Why is it effective?

I just stick to the idea that less is more. Sometimes the negative space in a tattoo is just as important as the black part. I think it's easy to get lost in the detail of things sometimes and lose face of what you're looking at; I'd prefer to create something that really stands out.

Flash work is an important part of your practice, what are the positives and negatives of working with flash?

For me it's extremely flattering that I can sit and draw things exactly how I want with no boundaries, and people will choose them and have them tattooed. It's better for the customer too because they're getting something I've put my heart and soul into, and I've not had to compromise anything. It's amazing when people give you that level of trust.

Why is flash important for the tattooing industry?

In this day and age tattooists shouldn't be just choosing designs from a wall of flash that they haven't even drawn. The artwork side of tattooing is hugely important now,



especially in the 'evolve or die' age of Instagram where people can effectively see your entire tattooing career before booking in with you. It's more about being an artist than a tattooist now, and I think clients are more forgiving of the human element of a tattoo if the artwork itself is something unique and honest. You can't just be a jack-of-all-trades these days, especially if you've not been tattooing for very long like myself. Flash helps you show the customer exactly what it is you do, and even if they want something custom they're more aware of the style of art they'll be getting from someone whose work they're already familiar with.

Your subject matter is often concerned with the weird and otherworldly, but what tattoo have you done that has been the strangest yet?

I've done a lot of weird and surreal pieces but the strang-

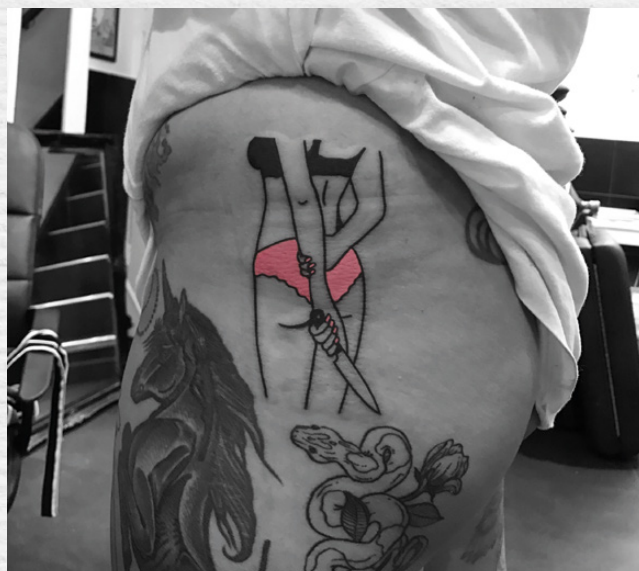


IT'S EXCITING TO THINK WHAT MY ARTWORK AND MY TATTOOS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN A YEAR OR 10 YEARS FROM NOW

est thing was when someone asked me to tattoo a toe tag onto them, and then told me the old 'my body is my diary and my tattoos are my story' line. I cringed so hard I almost ruined the tattoo.

What influences and develops your practice as a tattooist? Are there any specific artists, either tattooists or art practitioners, which you personally admire?

I'm extremely lucky to work in a studio with 4 other experienced artists who all do something totally different to each other, so I can ask their opinions and always get honest feedback and they've always got tips and ideas that I can take advantage of. I try not to let other tattooists influence me but the tattooists I admire most are friends and peers who inspire me and push me in the right direction. Patrick Bates (@european.son.420), Curt Montgomery (@curtmontgomerytattoos), James Butler (@jamesbutlertattoos), Pauly (@paulytattooing) and Mark Jelliman (@marktattooist). My artistic influence stems mostly from old school illustrators such as Mike Giant, Raymond Pettibon, Eric Gill, and a bunch of other modern artists too.



Do you draw in your own time? What sort of stuff do you like to make?

I go through phases of drawing. I'll sit down some days and draw 20 flash pieces straight off the bat, then I'll go a couple of weeks without even picking up a pen. I try to draw as often as I can but I mostly just draw for my appointments or my flash bookings. But I recently started a new project called South Of Hell where I've been making t-shirts and prints and things so I've been drawing a lot for that lately! (www.southofhell.co)

What has been your favourite tattoo you have ever done? Why do you like it so much?

My favourite piece I ever did was a tattoo based on the film Drive, with Ryan Gosling walking towards his car and a pink sunset. I'd only been tattooing a few months at that point so the execution could maybe have been a little better but it was definitely the most fun I've ever had tattooing and at the time I was absolutely over the moon with how it came out.

What do you hope to tattoo in the future?

I'm just excited to see my style slowly evolve over time. I've started hand poking recently and I'm always trying new things—whether it is bolder lines, new colours or just different techniques—so it's exciting to think what my artwork and my tattoos might look like in a year or 10 years from now.

What do you hope to achieve in your career as a tattooist?

I just want to travel around, visit some cool new places, meet some more amazing people and put a roof over my family's head. It'd be nice to have my own little studio or something one day but I'm not really thinking that far ahead.

What does tattooing mean to you?

Tattooing is the 3rd most important thing in my life, behind my family and my art. I'm extremely grateful and lucky to have the job I do, but for me it's more of an art medium than a lifestyle choice.

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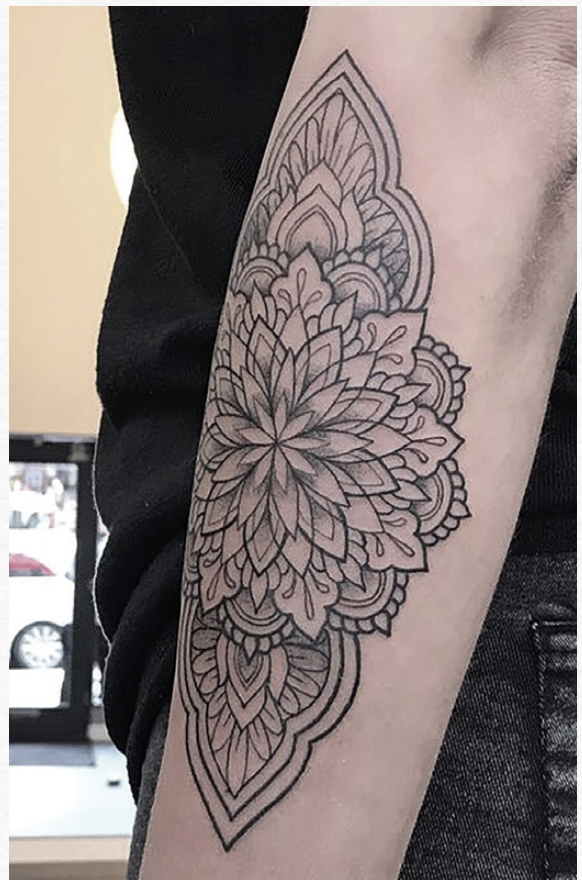
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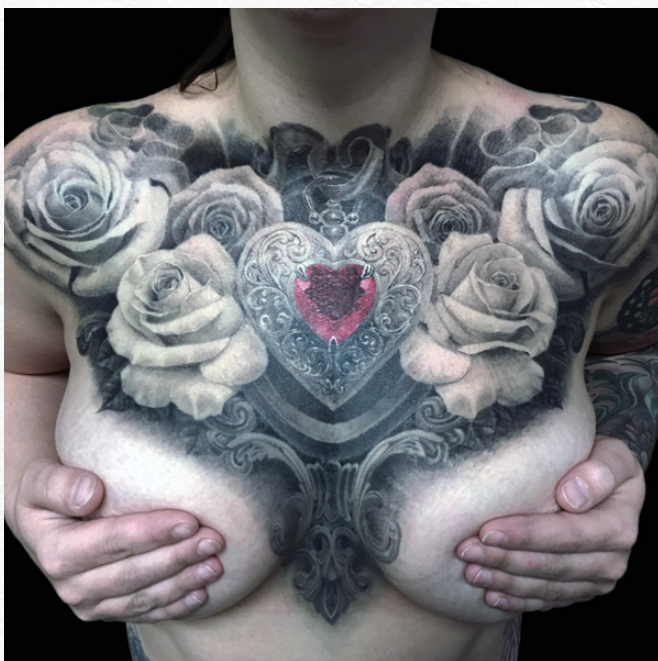
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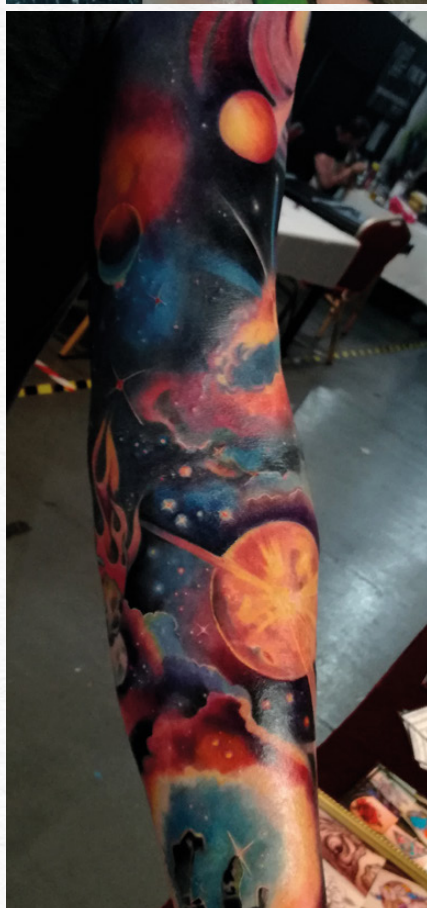


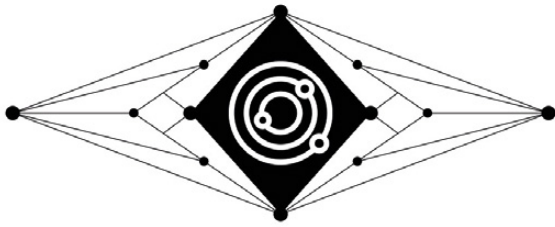
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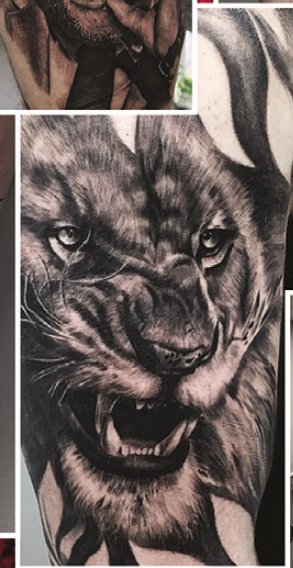
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This was heyday of the video nasties, films considered so lewd and depraved that they were put onto a list and banned. Tabloids were packed with stories of police raids, zealous cops seizing VHS tapes from the very shelves of video stores like ours, based simply on the title or the premise or the cover of the movie. And it was those very covers that drew rebellious little shits like us in with their sex and their gore and their violence just daring you to rent that damn movie.

Alex Wright has a similar story to tell. Co-owner of Grindhouse Tattoo Productions in Macclesfield, he was groomed early into the seedy underworld of the video nasty. "I was maybe four years old. I remember my babysitter picking me up and driving us down to the local

video store. They had all the classics there: Child's Play, Killer Klowns from Outta Space, Evil Dead 2, Creepshow, Just Before Dawn and Friday the 13th are some of the first horrors I saw. Nothing too outlandish but enough for a young child to know that Care Bears wouldn't be his vibe."

Those covers worked their seedy magic on Alex, just as they did on me, hooking him right in as soon as he was old enough to take himself down to that video store. "They were so unique. So shit, yet so effective. You had the shoddy photocopy with crappy text overlaid, but that was the beauty of it all, wasn't it? Gave you a real uneasy feeling just looking at them."

It sure did. I mean, we've all heard the expression 'Don't judge a book by its cover' and never has that been more true than with the video nasty. Alex reckons the reason

**YOU HAD THE SHODDY PHOTOCOPY WITH CRAPPY TEXT OVERLAI-
LAI, BUT THAT WAS THE BEAUTY OF IT ALL, WASN'T IT?**

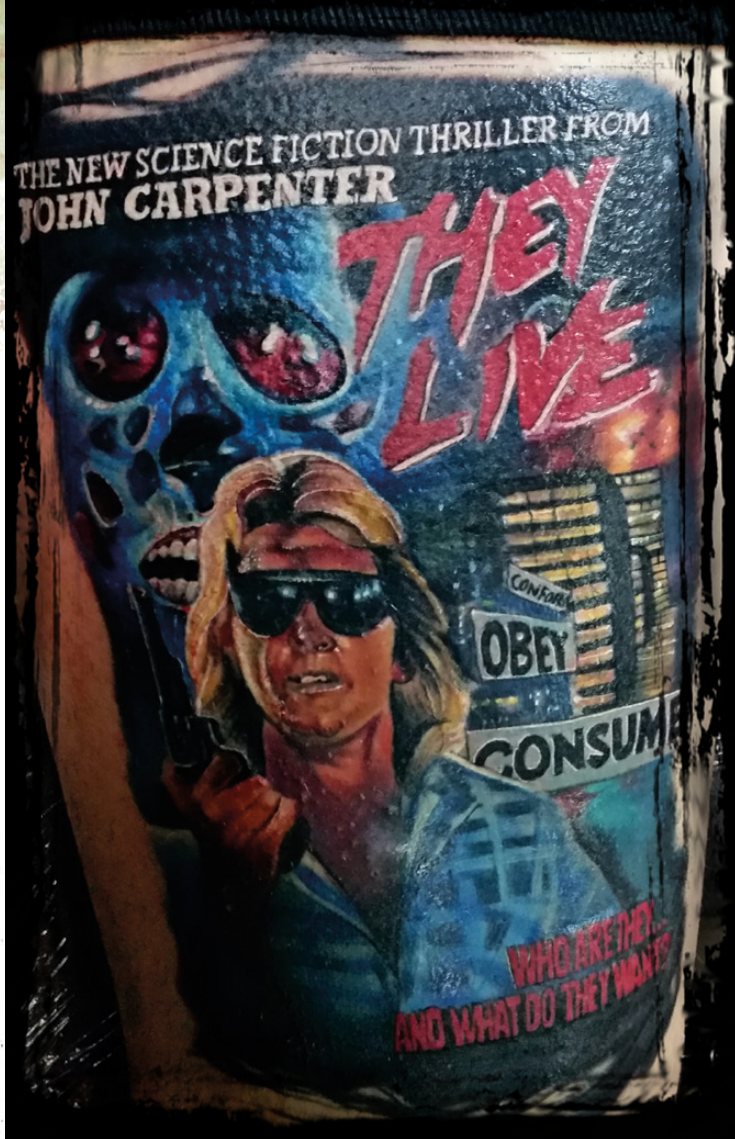


WHEN YOU'RE A KID, YOU DON'T CARE HOW BAD THE MOVIE IS BECAUSE THE ARTWORK HAS ALREADY DONE ITS JOB

the damn things sold at all, never mind in such large numbers, was because of how effective those covers were. And it didn't seem to matter that the movie rarely lived up to its expectations. "When you're a kid, you don't care how bad the movie is because the artwork has already done its job. You felt badass just looking at those videos when they were on the shelf and even more badass watching them."

I remember, a few years back, taking something of a nostalgic tour through the official list of video nasties, the legislation banning them having been repealed in 2010 making them much more readily available. With a few notable exceptions—one of Alex's favs, *The Evil Dead*, being one—I found the vast majority of them frankly unwatchable. Poorly shot, badly acted and often bereft of anything





YOU FELT BADASS JUST
LOOKING AT THOSE VIDEOS
WHEN THEY WERE ON THE
SHELF AND EVEN MORE
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even close to a cohesive storyline. And yet, just like Alex said, back in the good ol' days, none of that seemed to matter much. In fact, for a lot of us, those movies were probably the catalyst in cultivating an appreciation for the sub-genre loosely defined as 'so bad it's good.' "Yeah, I'm of the breed that loves cheese," Alex laughs. "The kind of shit that is so bad you can only love it. Now, don't get me wrong, I do love these movies, they're some good chilling-in-bed kind of flicks." He rhymes off some more of his faves; Driller Killer, Werewolves On Wheels, Drive-in Massacre, but it isn't long until we're back talking about the cover art. "They suited the movie. Didn't matter whether it was good or bad, the covers still worked."

It was a never-dying fascination with these covers that helped Alex breathe new life into his own art. He's been tattooing since 2001, when he scored an apprenticeship at the tender age of sixteen (don't try that at home, kids) in his hometown of Blackpool. There, he worked mostly with flash for his first eight years or so before moving to another studio in Preston where Alex felt he really started to come into his own. "I was allowed my own independence as an artist, there, and could learn the craft I want-



THEY'RE ALL ON SHOW AT THE STUDIO FOR LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE WHO REMEMBER OR FOR THE YOUNGER GENERATION TO ADMIRE SO THEIR BEAUTY LIVES ON

ed,” which was photo realism. Opening Grindhouse with his buddy Kyle Williams was another big step forward, but about three years ago, Alex found himself in something of a creative lull. “I was stuck and feeling down and wanted something new from tattooing,” he tells me. Then he remembered his first love when it came to art, those old VHS covers, and a cunning plan formed in his mind. He created his first VHS tattoo, a photo realistic rendition of the Driller Killer sleeve, and before he knew it, there was a horde of horror-hungry punters clawing at his door.

“Yeah, most of the people I tattoo now are big horror fans,” he tells me. “Comes with the territory, I guess. I mean, it’s not like you can be some hipster looking to be cool by getting a VHS cover tattoo about something you really don’t know anything about.” Nope, these are real die-hard fans and Alex and the team at Grindhouse go the





extra mile to make sure their tattoo experience is as authentic as possible. "Part of my VHS collection is at the shop. Pre-certs, foreign copies and rarities. Betamax and V2000 tapes. They're all on show at the studio for like-minded people who remember or for the younger generation to admire so their beauty lives on."

And they're always playing movies, a constant stream showcasing the best in grindhouse cinema from right across the board. "Some clients don't get it," Alex shrugs. "Can't even connect the name of the studio with the type of work we do, for that matter."

But for the right client, the ubergeek like me who recalls all too well those early years of discovery at the video store, Grindhouse will be a tattoo mecca. "We're offering a little slice of nostalgic geek heaven," Alex says, smiling, and you'll know exactly what he's talking about.

(Editor's note: There's a free year long subscription to anybody out there with a Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers tattoo. Linneah Quigley is one of my favourites!)



Shaft Of Light Photo By Nadia Nardelli

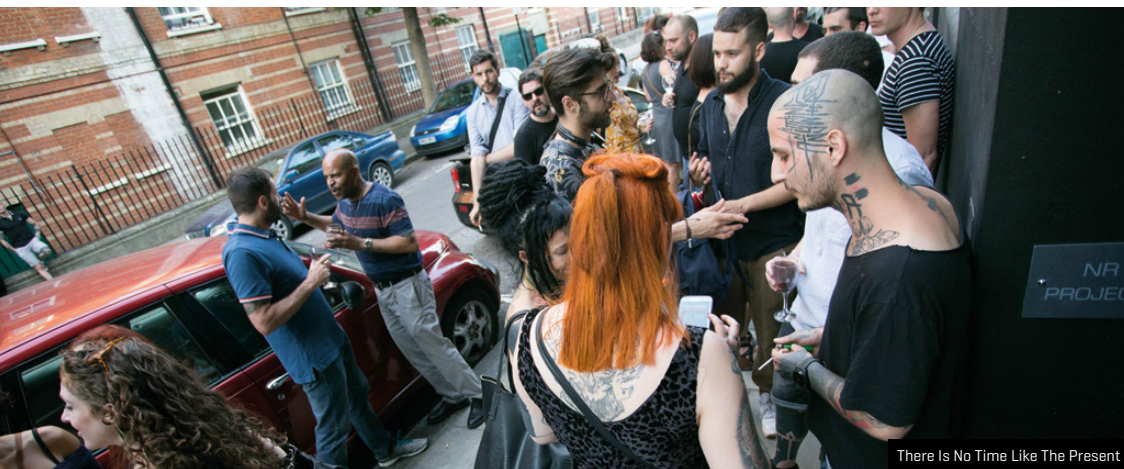


BREAKING GROUND

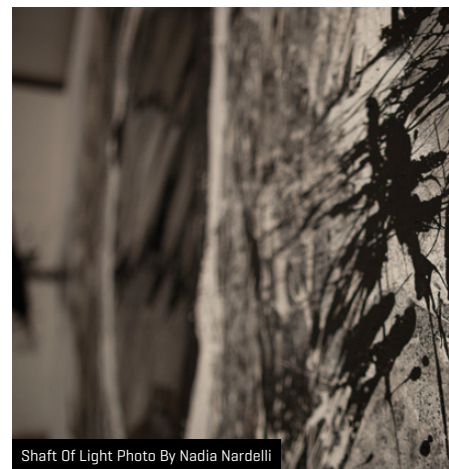
nrproject.co.uk · survivorsink.org · inesvalle.com

Think you fully understand and appreciate the term 'tattoo ART'? Well, think again. NR Studios, a tattoo shop located in Bethnal Green (but with sister studios in Exeter and Cheltenham), are taking our art-form to a very exciting new level

Words: Beeky Rimmer



There Is No Time Like The Present



Shaft Of Light Photo By Nadia Nardelli

Under the title—and independent arts organisation—‘NR Project’, creative mind Inês Valle and company director Ben Lakin curate art performances and exhibits that have a mission of bringing viewers closer to the world of tattoos. Their aim is to “bridge the gap” between the visual art and tattoo art forms, by “providing an experimental art platform that aims to push the current boundaries of tattooing.”

At this year’s Tobacco Dock convention, they’re hosting two ‘experiences’, at which visitors will be invited to ‘travel to’ their art space in East London, via virtual reality, to attend two of their recent exhibits “as if they were physically there.”

The first exhibit, *There Is No Present Like Time*, aims

to highlight the personal nature of tattoos, as tattoo artists share their own personal stories that have influenced their work. Artists showcased include Hanumantra and Paul Goodwin, who have both designed unique bodysuits that will be on display. If you’re imagining a static drawing or painting on a canvas, you’ll be surprised by what’s actually on offer. The bodysuits will be exhibited as immersive visual experiences—3D animations projected onto the bodies of contemporary dancers. The second exhibit is a virtual tour of a solo photography exhibition, *Haris Nukem: Humans*. The artist’s work aims to explore our powerful inner emotions and “documents the intense relationship we have with ourselves.”

As well as attendees being invited to re-living these two



Shaft Of Light Photo By Nadia Nardelli



Humans Photo by Kris Askey



Shaft Of Light Photo By Nadia Nardelli

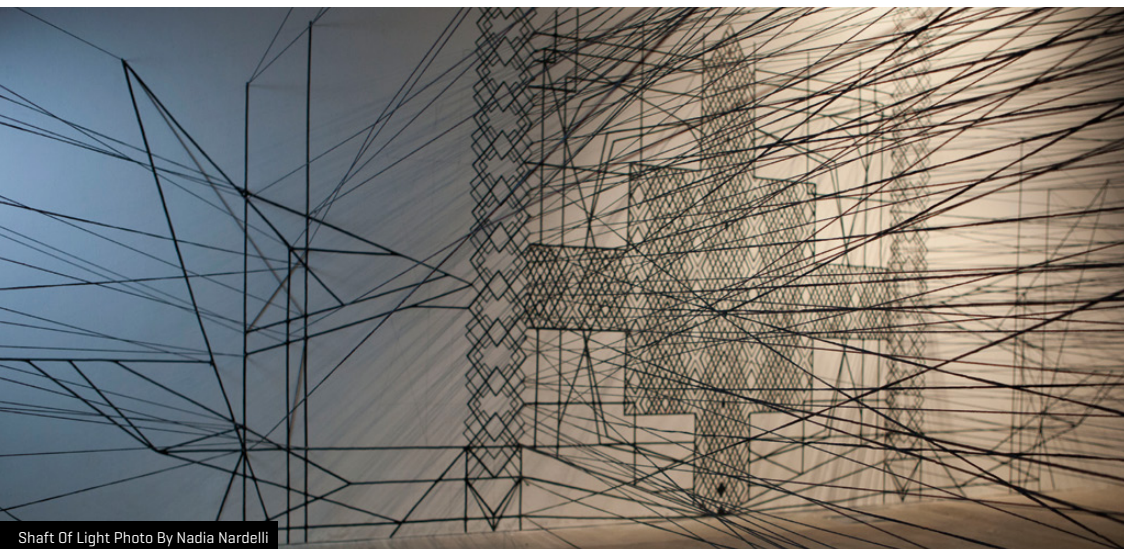
art exhibitions, a brand new showcase will ask participants to consider how tattooing can impact our lives. Every hour, visitors will take part in *Unforgettable (You!)*, a curatorial project that explores this very concept. It will present a unique, 3D video-mapped art piece, created by tattoo artist DotsToLines and performed by Kaja Gwincińska, inside a glass box. It will be accompanied by a film which depicts how tattoo art can find huge purpose on someone's skin, through powerful stories of human trafficking survivors and their relationship to their tattoos.

These stories come via Survivor's Ink—a company founded by the late Jennifer Kempton, a survivor of human trafficking who used her experience to promote awareness and social change. During a horrific time on

the streets, Jennifer was branded and sold by her abusers. After obtaining her freedom, these marks became constant reminders of her abuse until she was given the gift of a cover-up tattoo. The sense of liberation she experienced through covering her brands inspired her to start Survivor's Ink, an organisation that exists to empower human trafficking survivors by breaking the psychological chains of enslavement through beautifying, removing, or covering their physical scars, markings, and brandings, which are constant reminders of a violent past. It also strives to be a reliable resource connection to direct services for victims and survivors to help them rebuild their lives. Visitors to these exhibits are invited to consider so much—the relationship between the tattoo and the body,



Humans Photo by Kris Askey



Shaft Of Light Photo By Nadia Nardelli



Shaft Of Light Photo By Nadia Nardelli

the personal importance of a tattoo, and much more. The work NR Project is doing strives to show tattoos for what they really are—life-changing.

Ahead of the convention this Saturday, I spoke to Inês Valle—researcher, arts writer, artist, photographer, and curator of one of the first art spaces in the UK focusing on tattooing. I wanted to hear the motivations behind all of this thrilling, creative working coming out of NR Project—why are they doing this for the industry?

Inês believes that it's important today, to make our mark on tattooing's rich history. "Tattooing takes us back to the Neolithic period," she says, "but [they] are

not simple objects that we can put in a museum plinth or inside a frame. They are not only connected with the old perceptions and symbolisms of the past—they must be re-written." Indeed, many modern-day celebrations of tattoos and tattoo history find themselves in traditional museums and institutions. For Inês and the NR team, visual, interactive, live performance is just as an important tool in communicating how we feel about tattoos in 2017. For her, accepting the body as the canvas is also an important part of their exploration, which is why in many of these projects we find the human skin telling stories in innovative ways, through 3D, VR and projection. It's an



There Is No Time Like The Present



There Is No Time Like The Present



Shaft Of Light Photo By Nadia Nardelli

understatement to say that there's nothing traditional about these art exhibits.

As well as the events taking place at Tobacco Dock this week, NR have a regular programme of work taking place within their walls. Earlier this year, *The Chaos Theory Project* saw six world-class tattoo artists come together to collaborate together on skin. Benjamin Laukis, Jenna Kerr, Ryan Smith (the project's creator), Julian Siebert, Jay Freestyle and Jorge Becerra worked together at NR Studios for 1 week. The result—perfectly collaborative tattoos inked on human skin forever. The project aimed to create a new “understanding” of tattooing and to challenge popular beliefs.

Another event, *Shaft of Light*, aimed to re-approach a blank gallery space as a human body about to be

tattooed. The outcome of the exploration was an art installation that filled the NR Studios' walls—it mimicked tattoos and merged styles. It also utilised materials outside of a tattooist's normal toolbox—something that's been a key objective for the organisation from day one.

Five events so far this year, and I don't think the minds of the NR team will be stopping there. “All of the events have been extremely successful,” says Curator Inês Valle, “every day we have people visiting our spaces, some flying over here just to visit our exhibitions.” People from all of the world coming to the UK to explore tattooing in a new and exciting light, for the first time—if that's not a ground-breaking move that we should be shouting about, I don't know what is. □

THE NR TEAM

Founder & Director: Ben Lakin

Curator: Inês Valle

Manager: Nadia Nardelli

PROJECTS

Unforgettable [You!]

There is No Present Like Time

Haris Nukem: Humans

Shaft of Light

The Chaos Theory Project



TATTOO ARTISTS

Alex Moro, A++Void, Chaim Machlev aka DotsToLines, Hanumantra, Haris Nukem, Kaja Gwincińska, Paul Goodwin, Survivor's Ink, T Dan.



BEEP BEEP RICHIE

Listen up, boys and girls. My name is Hannya Jayne. I'm a tattooist, and I'm here to tell you a little story...

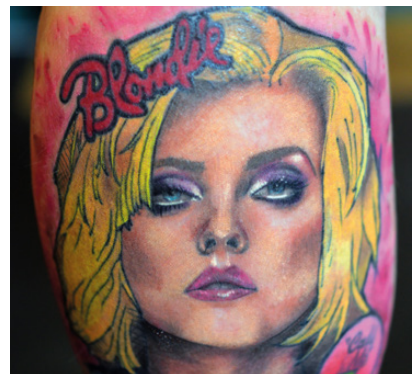
hannyajaynetattooing.co.uk  [hannyajayne](#)  [hannyajaynetattooing](#)

Once upon a time, there was a girl. She was riding in her mother's Reliant Scimitar, she had one sleeve rolled up of her over-sized leather jacket, and her arm positioned out of the open window—for no other reason than hoping passers by would glance at the eagle tattoo emblazoned on her forearm and the large nose ring she was wearing. Both, were in fact, fake. She was, after all only 17 years old. That girl was me.

I'm Hannya, and I specialise in avant-garde tattooing, with a passion for pop-culture. As far back as I can remember, I either wanted to be an archaeologist (largely due to Indiana Jones) or a tattooist. Where this unrelenting Drive to be tattooed—and further more to tattoo others—began, I have no recollection. But even as a child I was strongly drawn to circus and side-show imagery, oh—and motorbikes. It excited me and was what I imagined freedom to be like. I wanted to tattoo by day, perform in a circus in the evening, and at night ride around on big-ass motorbikes and party. Ironically, since I started tattooing full-time in 2010 I'm much more of a mild one than Wild One. Tattooing isn't so much Sex, Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll as it is SEO, Drawing 'n' Replying To Emails.

I knew from a very early age that I wanted to be a tattooist. As soon as I was able to, I got tattooed and continued to do so as much as possible. At that time, I was probably considered to be fairly 'covered' for a 19 year old (back then). I would draw up flash and make little trinkets and oddities I knew that my tattooists would like. I started badgering them to buy their old equipment. I took machines apart and learned to re-build and tune them. Fast forward to to-





IT WAS WHAT I IMAGINED FREEDOM TO BE LIKE. I WANTED TO TATTOO BY DAY, PERFORM IN A CIRCUS IN THE EVENING, AND AT NIGHT, RIDE AROUND ON BIG-ASS MOTORBIKES AND PARTY

day and I am trying to keep up with the technological advances, but find myself longing for the ideals of yesteryear where tattooists were heavily tattooed themselves, and emails, social media and drawing didn't take up what would be pub time.

I spent five years working at Woody's Tattoo Studio in High Wycombe. Woody's is a very busy custom and walk-in studio. Working walk-ins challenges you to work quickly and efficiently, getting thro

all different styles. It was a baptism by fire. A very different introduction to tattooing than most these days, there was no specialising in a style at the beginning and being able to only do only those style tattoos. You had to take on every piece that came through the door that day. The days of flash sheets were coming to an end. No more red devils, dolphins or daisies.

Some tattooists suit walk-ins—they thrive on them. Print, trace, bish, bash, bosh. For better for worse, that isn't me. It was a long and at times seemingly pointless

struggle to break away from walk-in tattoos and make the progression to custom tattooing. I was struggling to find a style that just felt natural and I could look and think 'hell yeah—I did that!' It wasn't until I was having a clear-out at home, going through my old art folder from school/college, when I find some life drawing pieces I'd done. The structural, illustrative lines and flow of these drawings made a light bulb go off—this was then the direction I started to push my tattooing into. The first piece I did in this style was on my friend Natalie. A heart in a skeleton hand—it's still one of my favourite pieces.

I found the progression into doing pop-culture tattoos a rather slow one. After doing a few, I thought to myself, why the bloody hell haven't you pushed to do more of these? I always have music playing or a film on whilst I'm working as I find it really does help influence my mind set when I'm creating designs. I often lament that I wished I'd seen more horror films as a child as it would have made me aware that I wasn't alone in being dissatisfied with watching happy endings of Disney films. I wanted ghosts, werewolves and vampires. I doubt this would have been a surprise to my mother who often had to tolerate



TATTOOING ISN'T SO MUCH SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK 'N' ROLL AS IT IS SEO, DRAWING 'N' REPLYING TO EMAILS

hearing Bobby 'Boris' Pickett's Monster Mash on repeat whilst I crept about the house wearing a man's velvet jacket and plastic fangs pretending to be Dracula.

For many of us, we have our favourite go-to film, because of sentimental memories. They comfort us. They bring about happy emotions, and who doesn't love a feel good film when you're feeling down? Or often these films excite, scare or inspire. The first memory of seeing something that scared and excited me was the book on my nan's bedside table, *IT* by Stephen King. The sinister grin worn by the illustrated clown looking out from the dilapidated house with the water flowing down into the sewer... at the time, I couldn't wait to be old enough so I could read the book.

The well-known line from the novel "we all float down here" has got me drawing comparisons to tattooing. Even in the short time I've been practicing *The Craft* I

have seen a huge change and I often feel like George's little paper boat caught in the Torrent of rainwater heading towards a storm drain. It wasn't that long ago that tattooists like Lyle Tuttle were fighting hard to push tattooing into the mainstream, believing it would bring a new respect for tattooing. It's a bizarre thought that now, many tattooists are fighting for tattooing to be brought back out of the mainstream. With studios popping-up all over the place, the quality and integrity of some tattooists is rather varied. To me, there seems to be two types of tattooists lately, each making their mark. The 'old-school' types, either self taught or served challenging apprenticeships, with a no apologies or surrender attitude. And, in contrast, the university educated, social media savvy types, who have helped raise the artistry within tattooing. I believe I'm somewhere between



FAST FORWARD TO TODAY AND I AM TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH THE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES, BUT FIND MYSELF LONGING FOR THE IDEALS OF YESTERYEAR WHERE TWATTOOISTS WERE HEAVILY TATTOOED THEMSELVES, AND EMAILS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND DRAWING DIDN'T TAKE UP WHAT WOULD BE PUB TIME

the two. The first tattoo I created was done 14 years ago, Se7en of those years tattooing full-time in studios. I can hardly be considered as old-school but I was self taught, no university or apprenticeship.

The first colour portrait I did was a stylised Mia Wallace piece. It was fairly buttock clenching, but I wouldn't take on a piece I didn't feel I could do justice to. The second colour portrait was a stylised Bowie piece, on the same customer, Aimee. Her trust in me, along with my style already becoming more refined after just those two

pieces, made my confidence increase. But it wasn't until an unexpected change of heart when my customer decided he wanted his Cristina Scabbia portrait in colour rather than black and grey, was when I really discovered together we had unlocked the potential within myself for colour portraits. It was after this that I eagerly started mocking up more colour pop-culture portraits. I already had plenty of similar designs ready to tattoo, but they lacked mass appeal. Not every 18 to 35 year old was an avid fan of The Prisoner. More recent and popular designs were Bourne.

Popular culture is such a great way to bond. You can discover more about what makes a person tick by discovering what films they like. How they perceive the storyline and characters says a lot about a person. I think it is the



same as seeing someone wearing a patch or t-shirt of your favourite band—it's an instant connection. It's the same with pop-culture tattoos. They can create a social ice-breaker. As anyone who has been tattooed by myself will know, I tend to chat during the session. Sometimes the conversation doesn't always flow naturally for whatever reason, then a song will start to play or a film is mentioned and the conversation will erupt. The whole studio ends up discussing the film, and it's great.

I especially love the more obscure references to music, films or books—it's almost like belonging to a secret club. I must admit I do largely prefer films as the inspiration or theme for a tattoo design, because they're visually more recognisable, but I love music-related pieces too, not only because it means we can blast out good tunes during the

MY VERY FIRST TATTOO WAS A THIN LIZZY INSPIRED PIECE, I REMEMBER WOODY PLAYED NON-STOP LIZZY DURING THE SESSION, AND IT MADE THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE THAT MUCH MORE SPECIAL

tattoo session. Funnily enough my very first tattoo was a Thin Lizzy inspired piece, I remember Woody played non-stop Lizzy during the session, and it made the whole experience that much more special. It is something I try to pass on the same gesture to my customers.

For me, music, books but in particular, films, enable us a drink and drug free break from reality. It's a Transporter to another plane of existence mentally, emotionally and spiritually. What other possible reason could you need to put a permanent visual representation of that Journey on your body? ▣

FINDING YOUR TRIBE

Martin Poole has all the tattoos. He wears a glorious head-to-toe ink suit that draws the eye and takes the breath away. But, like all guys who know, love, and wear their art on their sleeves, Martin's passion for ink is more than just skin deep

Martin has been on the tattoo scene “for a good, long time” and hand-poking for “8 to 9 years”. This September he was one of the guests at Tribal Art London where, as well as demonstrating hand-poking, he gave a talk on tribal tattooing.

The words themselves are probably enough to generate audible groans and images of slabs of black, yawning geometric shapes, and the sort of safe, tribal ink offered up by cheap, seaside tattoo shops. Martin:

“I’ve been having a mild-mannered rant about how tattooing in the world—while brilliant in its execution—has become a kind of homogenised thing. What I really want is for us to go back, and return to some of our design roots and try to get more interested in British tattooing. I don’t mean Saint George’s flag and all that but the early Celtic stuff. The stuff that was around when the Romans were here, rather than the whole world being Polynesian-ised.”

Mind The Gap

“There’s a 700 year tattooing gap in Britain”, Martin says. “There are no references to tattooing in this country at all between around 1000 and 1700-odd. When tattooing made a come-back under the influence of Captan Cook and the sailors coming back from the South Seas, although the initial spur was tribal in influence, almost instantly the practice itself was not.”

Tattoos are as old as mankind itself but the word came into English from the Polynesian word tatau. At the time, tattoo was a term used to describe the rhythmic drumbeats that took place during the ‘closing of the taps’ at local



Martin Poole at work

taverns to call solders back to quarters. The Polynesians are believed to have beaten drums while ink was being applied so Cook made a connection and a tatau was turned into a tattoo.

Those sailors who travelled with Cook came back inspired and adorned. But their very British ‘tataus’ were part of a long tradition here in the UK: where you were inked by a friend or tribal elder, with images that were imbued with meaning and ‘power’. Even as late as the 1900s, sailors still wore totemic tattoos: a rooster and a pig, tattooed on the feet to save them from drowning.

WHAT I REALLY WANT IS FOR US TO GO BACK, AND RETURN TO SOME OF OUR DESIGN ROOTS AND TRY TO GET MORE INTERESTED IN BRITISH TATTOOING



LisaTao-Maori Chief with Moko tattoo. Photographer- Iles, Auckland. c1890.



Lisa Tao and Reuben Teubens—Dancing Mailu Warriors, c1930

THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY SORT OF SHAMANISTIC THING GOING ON. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TATTOOER AND THE PERSON BEING TATTOOED WASN'T THERE



Lisa Tao—Same young Boy showing the face Tattoo, Solomon Islands c1930

On dry land, though, the Captain Cook Effect quickly turned tattooing into a business. “There was no longer any sort of shamanistic thing going on”, Martin says. “The relationship between the tattooer and the person being tattooed wasn’t there.” Off-the-peg tattoos, even off-the-peg tribal, became and has largely remained a fashion accessory.

So is the British tribal tradition dead? “No there’s just a ghost. There’s the possibility that there could be the ghost come back to visit us of some tribal practices”, Martin comments. “I think tattooing is so high street, and commercial, and consumerist in Britain that it’ll never become very tribal in that interchange between tattooing and the person

getting tattooed. But there maybe a degree—a trend—for tattooists to get out of the high street once they’ve established a style and to work by appointment. That doesn’t necessarily make it tribal but it’s a small reversal of the commercialisation of tattooing.”

Rites of Passage

Karen Jacobs is a Lecturer in the Arts of the Pacific at UEA. She has recently returned from Fiji where she was working on a research project that started out exploring fibre skirts (called liku) but quickly spiralled into an exploration of an almost forgotten tribal tattooing tradition.

“In Fiji, tattoos for women start on the pubic area and go around the hips and were given when girls reached puberty”, Karen explains. “They were tattooed around the loins and then they were given these fibre skirts which showed off the tattoo above and below. Of course Western explorers and missionaries made very derogatorily comments about the skirts because they were so short but, actu-



Joe De Buck—Chokwe Mask

I THINK TATTOOING IS SO COMMERCIAL, AND CONSUMERIST IN BRITAIN THAT IT'LL NEVER BECOME VERY TRIBAL IN THAT INTERCHANGE BETWEEN TATTOOING AND THE PERSON GETTING TATTOOED



Lisa Tao—Northern Australian Aborigines, in Corroboree dress. Press photo.

ally, the whole point was to show the tattooing and to show how tattooing is an integral part of the body. They were only considered fully clothed with the tattoo.”

The belief that the art was a gift from the gods was integral to the practice and it was said that the Creator God Degei would punish untattooed women in the afterlife.

“There were regional variations in practic-



3. Mores et Savanna-here.



Lisa Tao & Reuben Reubens—Early Marquesas Islands Natives Showing Tattoos, c1830

es, of course” Karen says. “In some areas, the tattoos were all covered by the skirt. In other areas the tattoos were up to the belly and thighs, so they could be clearly seen.” In the Lau Islands of Fiji girls were inked on their buttocks, face, vulva, and fingers with an adze-like instrument tipped with a shark’s tooth and dipped into sooty pigment. On other islands lips, forearms, and legs were also tattooed. Karen:

“Your life as a woman continued after puberty and so did the tattooing. There were other tattoos—and different skirts—given after marriage or after childbirth. The images that were used are to do with the environment—there are stars, sea cucumbers, turtles, masts of boats—and they all look very geometric because they are very close together. Some women would also have marks on their arms and on the back, or above the breast, and some of those were scarifications carried out with a piece of bamboo with a lemon thorn inserted to stop the healing.”

Karen’s work has caused something of a stir in Fiji, uncovering a practice that had literally been hidden for almost a century. “A lot of people assumed that tattooing had died out in the 19th century—that the church stopped it—but we have found out that isn’t true. There are accounts from the 1980s of women going to the doc-

This year, Tribal Art London ran from 6th to 9th September at the Mall Galleries, with 2017 marking the event’s tenth anniversary. During this time, the show has become a vibrant, international fair offering not just tribal works for sale, but lectures and talks on all aspects of indigenous cultures. This year, the Fair included a day of lectures and events revolving around the history and development of tribal tattoos, including talks by Martin and Karen.

For further information, visit the fair website <http://tribalartlondon.com>



Adam Prout—Mask, Angola, Chokwe people, C1900



Lisa Tao and Reuben Reubens—photo of a Maori Girl with Moko tattoo

WHAT WE OFTEN FORGET IS THAT PACIFIC ISLANDERS WERE ALSO INSPIRED BY WESTERN IMAGES. SO YOU GET SOME REALLY NICE EXAMPLES OF SAMOAN MEN WHO HAVE ANCHORS OR HEARTS



Wayne Heathcote—Maori Figure, closeup

tors and showing their tattoos. So obviously tattooing did continue in secret. It's really interesting because now a group of women—artists and curators in Fiji—have done their own research, created their own archive of images and records, and have found a tattoo artist from Papua New Guinea who has started tattooing them.”

Just Connect

We live in a world where consumerism has already spend its tentacles into the wider alternative arts scene. The results haven't always been pretty—both metaphorically and artistically. But Martin and the women in Fiji are part of a small but growing movement of people looking to re-connect with something more meaningful and maybe return tribal art to its more primal roots.

For Martin that means moving away from the “shitty black” generic ink, and back to

something more personal and potent. For the ladies of the Veiqia (female tattooing) Movement, discovering that their grandmothers had tattoos has made them eager to claim their own piece of tribal tattoo history.

However we live in a shirking world, where people wear the trappings of other cultures without even thinking about it. How can tribal art really be ‘authentic’?

Karen:

“In Fiji some people are really angry about cultural appropriation. Others don't see it that way. They see it as something that gives him pride—that people admire and copy their art and theres actually been a lot of cross-cultural contact for centuries now. When Cooke famously went to the Pacific in the 18 Century and saw the first tattoos, what we often forget is that Pacific Islanders were also inspired by Western images. So you get some really nice examples of Samoan men who have anchors or hearts within their tattoo motifs. Throughout the Pacific there has traditionally been a lot of cultural borrowing from other islands too. But what is always interesting is when you find the indigenous voices—and you can if you look for them—they speak to you through the art.”

Maybe it doesn't matter if those indigenous voices are British or Fijian as long as those voices are strong and true?

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My introduction to covering up tattoos began with one small pebble. I have a rock collection. This statement sounds very 1950's Americana, but I do have a collection of rocks that signify major moments in my life. Every rock is a story that I can tell you about. Some stories, no matter the actual size of the rocks, are heavier than others. One small white pebble weighs the most because of the story contained within it



When I first started tattooing I was excited to learn about every form of tattooing and eager to try anything that was thrown my way. Sometimes that eagerness can cause you to bite off more than you can chew, but that's how we learn. That eagerness came out one day when a man walked into the shop asking about a coverup. He was small, wiry frame, with deep sunken eyes. He embodied the idea of 'having seen things'. He asked about covering up a small tattoo, which was something I had never done before. Before jumping in head first, I asked to see the existing piece. As he pulled up his sleeve he revealed one of the most polarising icons to humanity, a swastika. The history of the swastika goes further back than just the atrocities performed by the Nazis.

The polarising symbol that is the swastika has been traced back to 3000BC in the Indus Valley civilisation. From there the symbol was used throughout history in Hinduism, Buddhism, and other East Asian cultures. In Armenia the symbol was used as an ancient symbol of eternity and eternal light. The

symbol was used through Greco-Roman antiquity, with swastikas found on the floor of ruins in Pompeii. The Celts and Vikings too, both used the symbol for various purposes. In Medieval Europe a hooked version was used as a Christian Cross. The symbol has even been found on Ashanti gold in Africa. Though the history of the swastika is long, our modern day viewpoint of it was shaped by the atrocities that were committed by the Nazis in World War II.

After the man showed me his tattoo, I learned his reason's for receiving this tattoo could in no way be misunderstood, he was very open in revealing that it was for painful, negative ones. When he was young, he went to prison for theft and drug possession. He admits to having a horrible attitude towards others, specifically other

racess, before his incarceration. This attitude was only exacerbated further in his exposure to prison life culture. Immediately upon entering, it was clear that he was going to have to become part of one of the gangs that were housed in those walls. He went with the white power group and was given this swastika tattoo as a mark of passage. He did his time,





and did things he wasn't proud of, and eventually was released from prison.

Upon his release from prison, travelling became a passion for him. He wanted to see the world, but this viewpoint was through a tainted world vision of hate. One of the stops he planned on visiting was the concentration camp Dachau, his intent was malicious, his plan to spit in the face of those mourning this atrocity. "Arbeit macht frei" is the first thing seen on the sign into Dachau. Translated it means "work sets you free", which was meant to taunt the prisoners as the camp was started as a 'work' camp before later going into extermination mode.

Dachau was one of the largest of the many concentration camps set up by the Nazis. The excuse for setting up concentration camps, including the Dachau camp, was the panic following the burning of the Reichstag, which was the Congressional building in Berlin, on the night of February 27, 1933, only four weeks after Adolf Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor of Germany. Hermann Goering accused the Communists of starting the fire in protest of the appointment of Hitler as the Chancellor and the scheduled Congressional election to confirm his appointment, but the Communists claimed that the Nazis had set the fire themselves in order to begin a reign of terror. The

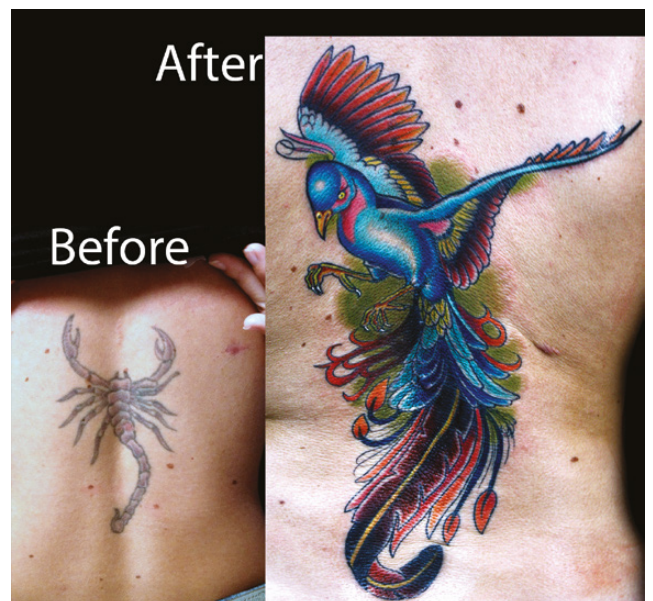
Before



After

arrests of Communists and Social Democrats began even before the fire was put out.

After President Paul von Hindenburg was asked by the Nazi-controlled German Cabinet that night to use his emergency powers under Article 48 of the German



Constitution to suspend certain civil rights, 2,000 leading Communists throughout Germany were imprisoned without formal charges being brought against them and without a trial. They were held in abandoned buildings such as the camp in an old brewery in Oranienburg; this camp was rebuilt in 1936 as the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. On March 21, 1933, Communists in the town of Dachau were imprisoned in the building which now houses the New Gallery for modern art.

Jews were sent to Dachau from day one, but



Before



After



it was because they were Communists or trade union leaders, not because they were Jewish. The first Jews to be taken into 'protective custody,' simply because they were Jews, were arrested during the pogrom on the night of November 9th & 10th in 1938, which the Nazis named Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). Kristallnacht was the night that German citizens smashed windows in Jewish shops and set fire to over 200 Jewish Synagogues throughout Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland in what is now the Czech Republic. Ninety-one people were killed during this uncontrolled riot which the police did not try to stop. That night, Hitler and his henchmen were gathered at the Bürgerbräukeller, a beer hall in Munich, celebrating the anniversary of Hitler's attempt to take over the German government by force in 1923.

Approximately 30,000 Jewish men were arrested during the pogrom, allegedly for their own protection, and taken to the 3 major concentration camps in Germany, including the 10,911 people brought to Dachau and held as prisoners while they were pressured to sign over their property and leave the country. During its tenor, over 1200 prisoners of Dachau were experimented on. The camp was also one of the sites where Zyklon-B was used, the same poison gas that was used to kill the Jews in the



homicidal gas chambers at Majdanek and Auschwitz.

Dachau was liberated on April 29th, 1945, over 12 years after opening on March 22nd, 1933. There were over 31,000 certified deaths during that time, with many more thought to have never been recorded. Journalist Martha Gellhorn said,

"Dachau has been my own lifelong point of no return. Between the moment when I walked through the gate of that prison, with its infamous motto, 'Arbeit Macht Frei,' and when I walked out at the end of a day that had no ordinary scale of hours, I was changed, and how I looked at the human condition, the world we live in, changed... years of war had taught me a great deal, but war was nothing like Dachau. Compared to Dachau, war was clean."

With the tattoo machine sound buzzing in my ear, my client continued about the story behind his reason for covering up his existing tattoo. Standing at the gates of Dachau, newly freed from prison, he was ready to unleash hell on those mourning. This man was so full of hate, almost boiling over onto everything around him. He planned on going through the camp, laughing. In his mind he was going to spit on every atrocity, every innocent life lost, all because of the hate that filled him. He felt that he had the power and control in the situation, and he was going to use it. He was going to have his day, and show those mourning through the site what he truly thought, what he believed was true, that these people deserved to die. His idea was to be blatantly sacrilegious and spit on the graves of the thousands of innocent people who lost their lives.

While I was tattooing him, he continued to open up about this plan to desecrate the site of Dachau. As he made his way through the camp, the ghosts of pain and suffering that lived within those walls began to approach him. As he came face to face with each horrific deed that was done to these innocent people, he suddenly had no more power to spit on their lives and the true horror of what happened was revealed. With every turn, he crumpled under the pain of tortured souls that surrounded him, until he finally was physically forced to run out,

Before



After



stumbling in tears, losing his footing and falling face first into the ground, rocks catching his fall. As he laid there, tears soaking his face and the ground around him, he realised the truth about the pain this hatred brings.

He laid with his head pushing into the rocks on the ground, swearing to change his ways, and to be rid of this hatred and pain that filled him. Finally he stood up, broken by the rocks he fell on, and the painful history he saw. He took a handful of those rocks with him, to remind him that hatred is a painful nightmare to humanity, and to never forget that day, and the truth he discovered. His story drew to a close as I finished the tattoo, which was a skull with a halo like glow to signify the death of his racist, hateful ways. Upon finishing the tattoo, he reached in his pocket and set a small, round rock in my hand. This pebble was one of the ones that had caught his tear soaked face at Dachau. To this day, this is one of my most meaningful experiences tattooing.

My introduction to doing tattoos in a way that covers up an existing one was a memorable one, one that I am incredibly grateful for. From that one experience I was able to see the magic behind using the art of tattooing to create new positive symbols and moving past painful memories. In the ritual of tattooing we have the ability to transform our reality, causing it to reflect the person we are today, and the one we want to be. My client Mike reflects on this experience saying,

"Covering up those older tattoos definitely made me more confident in general, whether they were exposed or not. Before getting those tattoos covered, I remember feeling depressed that I was stuck with them forever."

A few years ago I finished a tattoo on my wife, Amanda Herman, that was largely a cover up. Here are her thoughts on it,

"I believe that we are all entitled to change, and when we transform from the inside, it is translated to our outer self. A tattoo could have been the exact representation of our feelings or experiences as we could interpret them at

the time the ink was injected into our skin, but years later and as we grow, the art can slowly become the scrawling of a stranger. Having the option to transform these old lines into new views, and knowing that there are artists out there with the incredible talent to not just 'cover', but invigorate the images you once loved, can truly be an experience of human metamorphosis."

In this human experience, we have the power and ability to transform the world that, to a degree, we want to live in. We can't control the world around us, the experiences that come our way, nor the way others respond. The only thing that we can control is the set of tools we have to respond to all of these things. One element of those tools for many is tattooing, the amulets that we wear.

These amulets can be given to mark a situation that is negative and hateful, yet these 'permanent' marks don't have to remain that way. Just as we change and grow, so our amulets change, becoming something all the more powerful and positive. We have the ability to make our lives better, to strengthen ourselves, and to better the lives around us, if we are willing to allow ourselves to look at the world in a new light. We can take those amulets, those markings of the past, and remake them into something that will empower us today.

To me, that is where the power in a tattoo lies. One tattoo can be transformed from a daily reminder of what we were into the reminder of what we are and will be. We are empowered, thanks to the astonishing craft of tattooing.

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VANISHING ACT

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The film was sparked by *The Mistake*,” starts Jacob Tillman, cheekily referring to “a conglomerate of three tattoos on my left arm. After trying everything I could to cover up the previous artwork, I knew removal was the only option I had left. At the time, there wasn’t a whole lot of information about tattoo removal and what to expect while you were going through the process, so I told director Ben Pierce, ‘Let’s grab a camera and document everything.’”



Here’s a topic we don’t often focus on: tattoo removal. As information on talented artists becomes increasingly abundant, knowledge about laser removal remains greatly lacking. Something Jacob Tillman learned the hard way when he decided to get his half-sleeve removed.

*Deciding to change the status quo, he took on the role of executive producer, teamed up with director Ben Pierce and filmed his entire journey in tremendous detail. The result? A feature-length documentary titled *D’Inked*, which “tells the story of people who have tattoos, people who give tattoos and the people and technology that make tattoos disappear.”*

Ben was immediately on board, realising the need for such a film and the positive impact it could have. “We decided that by documenting Jacob’s journey through the removal process, we could provide information—both good and bad—to anyone considering having a tattoo removed.”

No strangers to the film industry (both Jacob and Ben have worked in film and TV for over a decade), they embarked on their first feature-length movie and soon discovered it was like nothing they had done before.

“Ben and I had worked on several short narrative projects together, but the preparation of *D’Inked* was a new process for us,” remembers Jacob. “The storyline developed more organically from the information we learned while filming as opposed to having a polished script written beforehand.”

Starting locally, the guys eventually hit the road and made a total of 13 stops around the US, visiting a number of traditional tattoo studios, like *Inflicting Ink* in Rhode Island and *Propaganda Tattoo* in California, as well as businesses specialising in removal, including *Rethink the Ink* in Colorado and *Ink Doubt* in Utah.

Each location and interview subject was chosen based on good ol’ “research, research, research,” says Jacob. “After I made my initial half-sleeve mistake, it was really easy to spend time researching the artist I wish I had chosen from the start or the best laser technology to help get rid of my coloured ink. It motivated me to make better deci-

Words: Barbara Payne



sions by talking to the most informed people I could find. Some were recommendations and others were just really compelling stories that drove us to want to contact those people directly.”

Over the length of the shoot, Jacob admits, “there were a few people that were a bit skeptical along the way, but the industry as a whole was really receptive to the idea of tattoo removal. I will say that when

HOW LASER REMOVAL ACTUALLY WORKS

Laser tattoo removal works by breaking up ink particles using a Q-switch laser (or ultra-short pulse lasers), which relies on extreme heat and speed (working as fast as a trillionth of a second) to get the job done. Heat expands the ink particle, the laser zaps it when half is still cool and the difference in temperature pulls it apart. White blood cells then get to work to eliminate the small particles of ink and flush them out of the body with help from the liver. Surprisingly, dark ink is easier to remove, but more than one pain-filled session is always required and yes, scarring may occur.

I was researching an artist for my cover-up tattoo, it did take me a while to find someone that was both an amazing artist and willing to do the cover-up. A lot of high-end artists are able to pick and choose their clients based on their own popularity and some of them just wanted a blank canvas to work on as opposed to having to do cover-up work.”

“There were a few phone calls that were never returned,” adds Ben. “And a few artists that didn’t want to participate, but for the most part, nearly everyone we approached jumped at the chance to share their opinions and experiences.”

Of all the shops they dropped in on, Ben singles out Victor Beyer’s Rethink the Ink as being “the real hero. From the very beginning, he allowed us total access to his facility in Denver and his laser removal equipment and was incredibly open about sharing his extensive knowledge. He became an integral part of the film and we are very grateful.”

Jacob agrees. “Every shop was very accommodating, but Victor at Rethink the Ink was a real life-





saver! I was flying out from Los Angeles to Denver and back to have my laser sessions completed and he picked me up, dropped me off and educated me throughout the entire process.”

“Aaron Della Vedova from Guru Tattoo was also a big highlight for me, as he conceptualised the artwork for my half-sleeve cover-up,” he continues. “I already knew he was an amazing artist, but I really appreciated the hard work and communication he had with me from the beginning.”

Holy Kickstarter!

In addition to having a great idea, doing the necessary research and filming captivating footage, one of the most important aspects of any successful film is money. Without funds, you cannot move forward and for Jacob and Ben it was the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter that helped them turn their dream into reality.

They were able to reach their \$12,000 goal and, as Jacob admits, “were overwhelmed by the positive response we received. Kickstarter was the real starting point for our filming tour. We were shooting on a much smaller scale locally before that point, so it allowed us to interview others on a national level. We definitely couldn’t have made D’Inked without those finances, so we’re happy that everything worked out the way it did!”

“I think the way we presented Jacob’s story as unbiased, warts and all, really endeared him to anyone experiencing tattoo regret,” says Ben, reflecting on their crowdfunding campaign’s massive success. “I think that helps people connect with Jacob and root for him.”

That wasn’t the only challenge they faced, however. “Securing financing is always a big obstacle, but we also had to find the right people to be a part of the project,” explains Jacob. “We spent countless hours researching locations and building relationships with those who were relevant to our movie. I’d say one of my personal highlights of shooting the documentary was being certified in laser removal and getting my cover-up tattoos done by some of the industry’s most talented artists.”

What’s more, “because the process of removing such a large colour tattoo can take years, we went into production knowing that the film was going to be a big part of our lives for the better part of the decade,” adds Ben. Which, in turn, gave way to some interesting upsides.

“One benefit of this was that it allowed us to finance the production in stages, which relieved us from the burden of needing all of the money at once,” he says. “Each year we would shoot throughout the summer, then edit the footage throughout the fall and winter. Then, after reviewing what we had, we were able to better schedule what we needed to cover in the following summer shoot. This allowed us to shape the film slowly and tell the story exactly how we wanted to.”

Realities Of Removal

Throughout the filming process, Jacob repeatedly went under the laser and is the first to admit, “when you see some of the tattoos I removed, you may think the artwork wasn’t bad or ‘Why would he

TATTOOER AARON DELLA VEDOVA

The proud owner of San Diego, California’s Guru Tattoo, which he describes as a “world-class tattoo art collective,” Aaron Della Vedova is a talented artist consistently churning out breathtaking custom work in full color. When he’s not tattooing, he can be found riding his motorcycle, painting and spending time with his wife, two daughters and son. Up next, you’ll be able to catch him in D’Inked.



**REMOVAL
SPECIALIST VICTOR
BEYER**

Victor Beyer is the owner of Rethink the Ink Tattoo Removal in Denver, Colorado, as well as the co-founder of A Laser Academy, which offers a certified laser tattoo removal training course. Not only is Beyer a hands-on specialist, but he's also made it his mission to help anyone interested in following in his footsteps by "providing tattoo removal education to some of the industry's top medical and professional leaders."

go through this much pain?' But the half-sleeve in particular just didn't represent me. The initial artist and I just had a completely different vision for the artwork and he convinced me I would love it, but when he wiped away the blood and ink from my arm, I remember walking up to the mirror

and just hating it. So the tattoo itself was a constant reminder of that bad decision in my life that I just wanted gone."

Unfortunately, being fully committed to his decision didn't make things any easier. "The removal process flat out sucks!" he declares. "I think it hurts more than getting a tattoo and, in my case, it took a long time to get the results needed. The only positive was being able to educate others on the process and being able to cover it up with some really beautiful artwork after three and a half years and 17 sessions of removal."

"But the hardest part of it all has been the time it's taken to get to the finish line. This journey really started for me in 2010 when I got the initial half-sleeve and we're still working on wrapping up our film distribution, so it's been a long process."

As Ben elaborates, "Jacob and I were a two-man show for all of the shooting across the country and the burden of having to do everything ourselves, from scheduling to travel, filming, recording sound and getting good content was definitely a major challenge. Even after investing all of our combined savings and the money we raised from Kickstarter, we still needed an unbelievable amount of help from friends, family and people within the industry to make the film. Plain and simple: The film would not have been possible without dozens



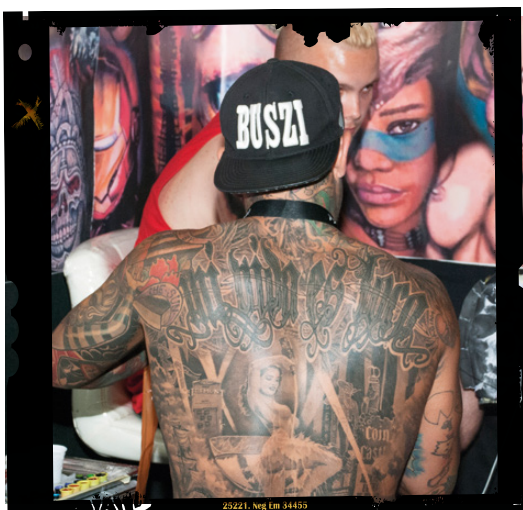


of people who helped us simply because they believed in us and the project. That was definitely one of the best parts about making D'Inked!"

Another highlight was learning more about the industry and discovering that "while tattoo artists and collectors may have different opinions about the process of getting a tattoo, they both share similar views on removal," reveals Jacob. "Both are striving for the best artwork they can get and sometimes it means starting over."

Now that D'Inked is complete, the guys agree there's one clear message they hope to send to anyone who watches their film: "Learn from our mistakes and do your research," says Jacob. "If you don't feel good about the artist or removal shop, walk away. Have multiple options in mind and remember to ask questions. I wish I had watched this movie before I got my half-sleeve!" he laughs, as Ben echoes, "Think before you ink! With all the information available on the Internet nowadays, no one getting a tattoo has to settle for anything less than exactly what they want."

Up next on their radar is securing worldwide distribution (with, fingers crossed, a Spring 2018 premiere) and Ben hopes that "everyone everywhere interested in removing a tattoo will be able to see this film." Their ultimate goal? To "empower you to make better decisions before getting a tattoo," says Jacob, as Ben laughs and dubs D'Inked "the Citizen Kane of tattoo removal documentaries!" ▣



Scenes from **BERLIN TATTOO CONVENTION**



I was off to my favourite European city and although I never need an excuse this time I was going to check out the Berlin International Tattoo Convention

The show is billed as the oldest in Europe spanning 27 years and is housed in a monster venue next to the river, due to the show's history I expected to see a wide range of quality traditional tattoo styles along-side some examples of Berlin's experimental tattoo scene, so I had high hopes for the weekend.

We flew in on the Friday morning and Berlin in August is warm, not like our UK two-day summer but the dry heat of Europe, great when all you packed is black jeans and no sunglasses! We stayed in Kreuzberg, in west Berlin. This was close to the venue and in an area of the city I have visited many times before. X-Berg is one of Berlin's cultural centres and on each side of the main high-street the blocks hold independent shops and café bars selling great coffee and food that is good for you. Also, like all the boroughs in Berlin, Kreuzberg has its fair share of tattoo shops, both walk in and private appointment only studios. The laws in Germany about tattoo premises are different to that in the UK so the opportunity to open a more private studio is greater.

The convention itself ran from the Friday through to Sunday and promised both indoor and outdoor entertainment. The venue was the Treptow Arena, an indoor hall that can hold up to 7,500 people and hosts concerts, parties and special events located next to the river



This year our international tattoo convention in Berlin is taking place for the 27th time. In Berlin we started the experiment to unite tattoo artists from all around the world in 1991. That was a good idea: Artists, as well as their clients, were fascinated by our event and such conventions followed gradually throughout Europe

Spree so the venue backs on to the water.

A short walk from X-berg high-street through Gorkitzer park and past cool waterside bars brought us to the site, we navigated through the complex that included other music venues and lots of street art. The opening to the show could not be missed due to the line-up of 1920s vans parked on the street.

Once inside the show was held on one level (save for the piercing area) with a large outdoor space for live music, food and trade stalls right next to the river with an outside bar and large graffiti wall, street art is a big thing in Berlin and they do it on a massive scale. The location was perfect to listen to tunes and drink beer in the August sunshine.

The show was held in a big space with many, many artists working, over 200 in total from around the world. In addition to the tattoo work, also on offer was entertainment throughout the weekend including side show acts, music and a beauty contest with a twist. We caught the 'The Side Show All Stars' on the Friday afternoon as we arrived and were treated to a side show performance of a somersaulting sword swallower, weight suspension (that's all you need to know) and silliness.

The convention itself was a mix of tattooists, merchandise and supplies. Close to the entrance was a large booth of 12 artists from the Berlin based tattoo studio Lucky Monkey. With the scale of the show, all tattoo styles were showcased but looking at the work being tattooed, there was a lot of black and grey, realism and colour work. This included that of German artist David Giersch with his amazing colour realism work. He won first place in the Modern Art category in the tattoo awards and was among a group of other artists housed in a large area sponsored by Cheyenne tattoos supplies.

Other artists in the group included Jessi Manchester and the realism of Yan Vilks. Other artists working included familiar face Johnny D Matthews with his beautiful black and grey realism, Noon, with his wonderful illustration work and British artist Paul Talbot with his unique brand of collage.

Other weekend entertainment included a play piercing show by Mario Lavorato and the annual tattoo queen contest, Saturday held the first rounds and the winner was announced on the Sunday. The tattoo awards were also held over the Saturday and Sunday. There were lots of things to look at including a Giger statue, other tattoo based art and exhibits from the Liverpool tattoo museum, including Ötzi, the Tyrolean iceman, a mummied tattooed man from around 3250BC.

Overall of the weekend, I found the show was held on a grand scale with many artists at work. There were solid examples from both traditional, blackwork and other popular tattoo styles but, although there were a few strong artists including some great surreal illustrations and abstract avant-garde, there were not that many examples of the more experimental tattoo artists as I expected. The quality of the work on show definitely made the convention though.

As always I had an amazing time in Berlin, great sights, food and night life and adding the convention into the mix made it an even more of an awesome weekend.







When preparing for a long tattoo session, it's so important that you DON'T think about what you look like

Over the last 10 years and (probably to date more than) 60 tattoo appointments, I've gained a pretty good insight into how best turn up to get inked. For me, it's a familiar ritual of giant water bottles, cereal bars, headphones and hoodies.

My first piece of advice would be to fish out from the deep, dark depths of your closet, the oldest, most ruined tracksuit you can find. Something comfortable, loose—and most importantly—you don't mind getting ruined by a concoction of blood, sweat (literal, not metaphorical) tears. I have no doubt that the freshly tattooed community has contributed to rising sales in black clothes, bedding and towels.

Jogging bottoms and baggy tops are ideal as they can be rolled up and stretched so the tattooist can reach the area being tattooed. Also have a think about which piece of your body you're choosing to expose for the day. Upper leg? Wear a skirt that is easy to hike up rather than jeans that would require you stripping down to your knickers in front of a room full of strangers.

Talking of stripping off in a room full of strangers—you know those girls in the gym who turn up for an intense workout with an entire full-face of make-up, and by the time they come to leave the premises, they look like The Joker?

Yeah. That.

If you're someone who can't leave the house without your Kat Von D Highlighter (I know that's not 'a thing' but I buy 99p mascara, so don't expect brand accuracy), six hours of sweating and sobbing may well be the thing that changes your mind.

Little things can make a huge difference. No clunky jewellery. A hair bobble. A fluffy pair of house socks. A cuddly toy (what, did I just say that?).

There are no doubt other things I have missed here, but, in summary—when getting a tattoo, make the most MINIMAL effort you can with your appearance. Wear the most DISGUSTING clothes you can



David Corden

YOU KNOW THOSE GIRLS IN THE GYM WHO TURN UP FOR AN INTENSE WORKOUT WITH AN ENTIRE FULL-FACE OF MAKE-UP...



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find. Prepare to challenge that version of you who worries what they look like in front of others. Your tattooist doesn't care what you look like (they've seen it all) and neither does your tortured body.

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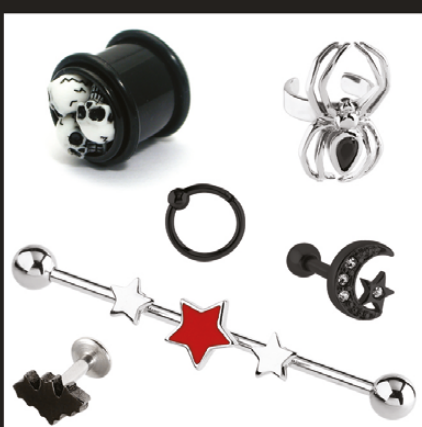
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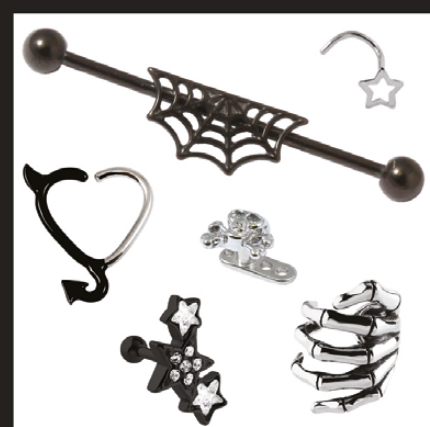
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