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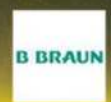
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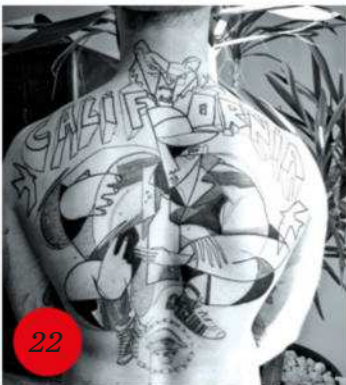




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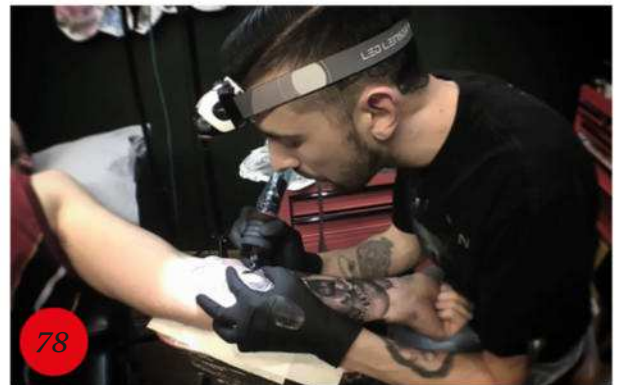
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## The Museum of Tattoo Art?

*Tattoo Art by Jess Yen*

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## We need to talk. Really we do...

**I** get some weird requests.

This week, a perfectly pleasant lady who works for a TV production company making a new show about tattooing, wanted to pick my brain for what I knew about genital tattoos.

“Well, I was judging at a tattoo show out in Richmond, Virginia with Mike deVries once and we happened to be judging a section called The Worst Tattoo and this guy comes up to the table, drops his trousers to the floor and proudly showed us the shark

I MADE A JOKE ABOUT IT BEING A DEFORMED HAMMERHEAD...



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he had tattooed on his penis. I made a joke about it being a deformed Hammerhead and Mike said it looked more like the Dwarf Lanternshark (the world’s smallest shark if you hadn’t figured it out) and yeah... it was pretty terrible, though not as bad as the piece of crap that actually won.

“Thus ends my experience of tattooed genitals, but to round the story off nicely, this guy



lived in a caravan that he had brought with him for about three thousand miles and had in it - and I know this to be true because despite his shark, we went and had dinner with him in the car park - the most amazing coffee machine installed that he had won in a game of poker.”

The other end of the phone went a little silent. “Hello? Are you still with me?”

And she was. Without missing a beat, she ran over my story with a truck until it was dead to get to what she really wanted. That’s what journalists and researchers do - they cut to the chase because they are busy people with Things To Sort Out Otherwise You’ll Probably Get Sacked... and your boss is also quite often within hearing distance to ensure such a thing happens.

“What I’m really looking for is a vagina specialist...”

Dear Lord, aren’t we all. I didn’t say this out loud because ummm... because it’s 2018. We would have to head back to a time when Gene Hunt was in charge of things to say that and for it to be funny.

“A vagina specialist you say?”

“Yes - are there any around that you know of?”

I scoured the inside of my Tardis-Head. I know more than a few things about tattooing for sure. I have seen exactly two pictures of such a thing over the years but not for a while and certainly not in the flesh.

“No. The one thing I know for sure about tattooers is they like to eat and sometimes drink too - so actually being a vagina specialist in tattoo-land means the grand total of your annual banquet would consist of a really, really small bowl of about nine grains of rice.”

“That’s a real shame. Are you sure?”

“Truly. If I knew of a specialist in such an area, I’d be handing over the number right now. Sorry.”

“Damn. No vagina specialist.”

“I’m not saying they aren’t out there. I’m saying that I don’t know of any but if you find one, by all means, give them my number.”

I’m not sure why I said that. Maybe it seemed polite at the time but to be honest, the last thing I need in my life right now is a hotline to a vagina tattoo specialist.

And that was the end of that - I heard no more - but I love it when things like this



“WHAT I’M REALLY LOOKING FOR IS A VAGINA SPECIALIST...”

happen. It shows that we’re really moving forwards with our education of the world as to what *Get Good Ink* really means.

Sometimes I could cry.

Nothing would please me more than to see the world’s greatest piece of blackwork sitting on a vagina or a penis. So long as it’s a great tattoo, I don’t care if it’s on the inside of your liver... of which there are about as many specialists for that as there are for the other.

It’s a good thing some crazy Australian TV company decided to remake *Monkey* for Netflix otherwise I might have to put a hammer through this rectangular screen thing they call a television...

I’m on episode four. So far, no genital tattoos have shown their faces and believe me, if they were going to show up anywhere on TV, it would be there. ▣



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## FANCY A NIGHTCAP?

**Raise a toast to the father of American old school tattooing Norman 'Sailor Jerry' Collins at *Nightcap Bar* in Edinburgh.**

To honour the tattooing legend, *Nightcap Bar* and *Sailor Jerry Spiced Rum* are offering four winners a bottle of Sailor Jerry and £100 towards a tattoo at *Den of Iniquity* parlour. If you're passing by—and it might just be worth you going out of your way—order the 'Pirates Life' cocktail before

31st July to be in with a chance to win one of the awesome prizes.

The limited-edition *Pirates Life* features Sailor Jerry Spiced Rum, sweet pineapple syrup, a kick of balsamic vinegar and salted lemon—all served in a veil of coconut smoke. Those who scoop the loot will navigate the treasure map to *Den of Iniquity* and select any design of their choice with [@justjentattoos](https://twitter.com/justjentattoos) or [@deborahpowtattoos](https://twitter.com/deborahpowtattoos).

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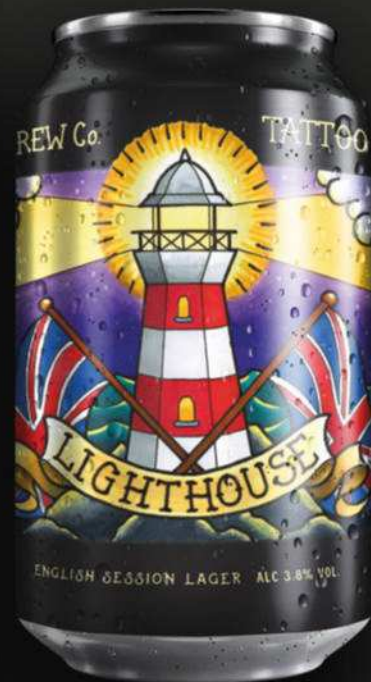




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REVIEW

## HAND POKED/NO ELECTRICITY

STICK 'N' POKE TATTOO CULTURE

by SARAH LU

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Quite often, the very mention of the phrase Stick 'n' Poke can drive fear into fans of tattooing. All too often, the style usually rears its head in the media along with horrendous images of nights at the kitchen table closely followed by a rush of abuse on social media but really, that's very far from the truth.

These things happen because it's the most primitive and accessible form of tattooing but in the right hands it's beautiful.

Sarah Lu is those right hands.

She cannot use a tattoo machine (or drive) but the results of her obsession with hand-poking tattoos can stand shoulder to shoulder with anything delivered by machine. Actually, that's not strictly true. In my experience, the two styles are very different once complete. I find hand-poked tattoos incredibly organic at a cellular level and that counts for a lot.

Anyway, this is a book review and I digress—you can find plenty of Sarah's work online.

What we have here is a lovely little hardback—the black cover of

which disguises how much fun it is inside. It's heaving with wonderful designs along the way, but fun is definitely the keyword here. If there's an opportunity to make this book sing with a little graphic or a humorous aside, the book designers have found a way to include it—and that raises the book high above far too many books about tattooing that take themselves Very Seriously Indeed.

And if you thought hand poking was all about simple, tiny designs, you won't be thinking that when you've finished it. My guess is you'll be left wondering why it took you so long to consider getting one yourself.

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It's always sad when momentous journeys come to an end.

In spring 2017 I landed a steady freelance job. This short-term contract would only last a few months but the immediate thought that bounced into the mind of my skint-ass-self was—*ooh, can I use this new income to invest in a long-term tattoo project?*

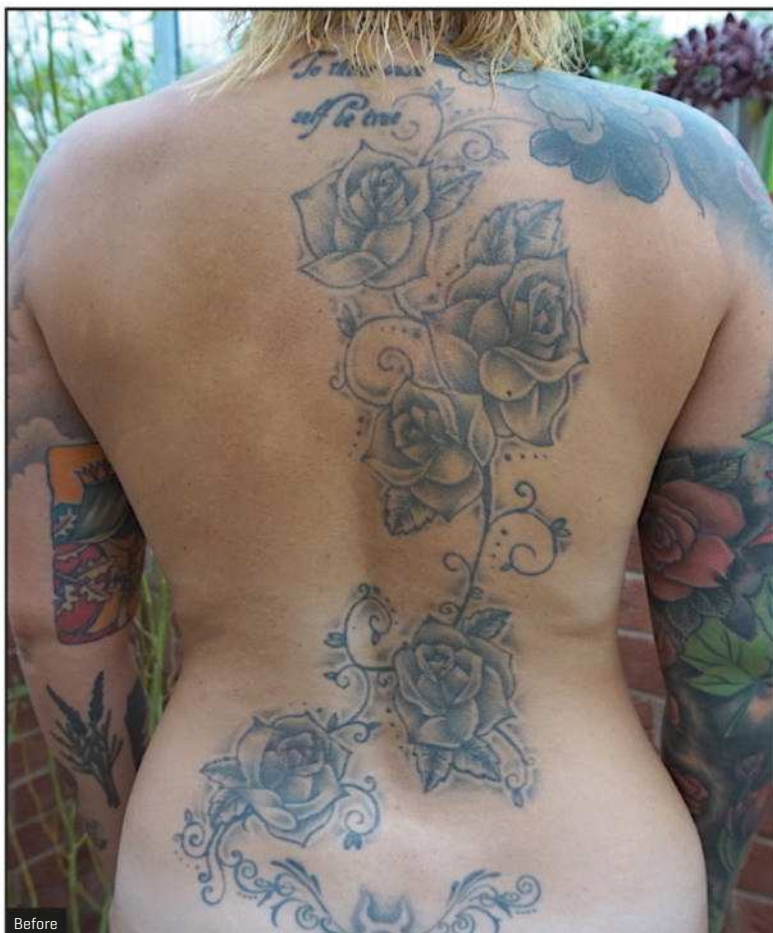
Hell yeah.

I'd been thinking for a while about what to do with the awkward space on my back, which at the time was adorned with some eight(ish)-year-old black and grey roses, created by Adam Frame, an Oxford-based tattooist and bloody awesome guy who has been the master of quite a few of my tattoos. For years, I'd considered maybe getting some pattern-work behind the roses, adding colour perhaps. As I toyed with different options, I wondered if it would be a possibility to actually cover them completely so I could enjoy the process of having one huge single back-piece, something I had initially completely ruled out.

After chatting to Adam and a few other tattooists I settled on a plan, to find a brilliant artist who would like to take on this epic cover-up, who could create something dark and beautiful to fill the entire canvas. I wasn't unhappy with my existing tattoos, I just wasn't attached to them and was keen to play around with how to best fill the gaps I had left. Cover-ups aren't always about regret—when our bodies become busier, we start to think about our art-works in terms of layers. I was so excited to see what new covering I could potentially acquire.

I'd long-admired the work of Jo Black (Black Moon Tattoos) and whilst Frome was the other end of the country, I knew a commitment like this was going to be worth the long trip(s). Apart from saying that I wanted a raven, Jo had free reign to create whatever she wanted for me. With cover-ups, you can't be too picky—so much has to be taken into consideration to successfully hide what lies beneath and it's worth letting your artist roll with what they think will work best.

On the 7th June 2017 I hit the A429 and the journey officially began. On 12th January 2018 it came to an end. 8 months, 7 intense sessions, 1,260 miles, over 50 hours of driving



**...ONCE SOMETHING IS PUT OUT INTO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, IN 2018 THAT OFTEN MEANS IT'S UP FOR GRABS**



BECCY RIMMER  
@R\_B\_RG

and one big epic piece at the end of it all. I get quite seemingly melodramatic about every single tattoo I get, even the titchy-teeny-tiny ones, so as expected this project has taken first place for having generated new levels of emotional response. Investing time, money, blood, sweat and tears into an on-going tattoo project is very different to adding a smaller one-timer to a growing collection. Getting a back-piece is like completing a marathon, but that sense of endurance and accomplishment stretches months, sometimes years. Over that time period you get to create new relationships with artists, studios, towns and cities—there's something to be said about the bonds that are made through blood. You also experience watching your body transform slowly over a long period of time and therefore properly engage with that idea. Physical





change is what getting tattooed is all about, yes, but we don't frequently stop to acknowledge that. Staggered tattoo projects force this reflection upon you.

Every single element of this journey exceeded my expectations and my gorgeous back-piece is perfect in every way. Ravens are a symbol of transformation, representing death but also hope, new beginnings, new chapters and change—my transformative imagery was so fitting for symbolising how getting tattooed can change us. Watching other details evolve over each session also brought me so much joy. Jo's gothic castle in her signature style, my cheeky bats, creeping autumnal leaves, the enigmatic snake, gleaming white stars... after each appointment I had a new element to rejoice over, knowing they were all contributing to one final picture of wonder. I've had the honour of watching an artist at work, admiring how she approached the different contours of the body, how she managed the challenge of cover-ups, dealt with her customer's pain. Yes, this has been the most painful tattoo of my entire life but pain is often completely counteracted by the special connection you make with a human being who is simultaneously giving you a beautiful gift and excruciating pain—this is a very complex thing, one of the



most interesting things about getting tattooed, I believe. There are so many different emotions buzzing around the air of any tattoo studio—excitement, anxiety, pain, relief, nervousness, joy, admiration, hard-work, concentration, endurance, creativity and elation. This unique cocktail of energies brings you closer to your tattooist and the ability to appreciate what they do, it brings you closer to your tattoo, it brings you closer to yourself.

The ritual of travelling five hours back to the Midlands in my 20-year-old banged-





up car, shivering and hungry, blood seeping through the dressing onto my seatbelt, was overwhelmingly memorable. Having a regular, still, silent drive through gorgeous Cotswolds countryside, aching, happy and pumped with adrenaline, was the perfect setting for thinking about this tattoo journey. Having these on-the-road meditations was so important for me and made me glad I had booked an artist geographically distant—I'd arrive home fulfilled, ecstatic and emotional to have reached the next stage of the voyage.

Finding the right artist to enjoy this experience with is one of, if not the most important thing. Jo is patient, caring, attentive and her work is flawless. Also, despite being the most painful, these tattoos have been the easiest and most effort-less to heal—her work may be as black as death but her technique as gentle for the skin as the touch of a feather. Completely trauma-less tattooing.

Sadly, as with all back tattoos, I don't get to look directly at my new permanent jacket each day, which is why organising a professional photoshoot with my good friend, photographer Lewis Membery (@lewismembery), was the final and very vital part of this puzzle. After all the hours spent creating such a perfect work of art, Jo (and I) deserved some perfect pictures as a final reward. If you're planning a large-scale tattoo project I can't recommend this enough.

A day exploring the woods of Worcestershire with Lewis was this tattoo's final chapter. I am no seasoned tattoo model, but as



my bare white ass revealed itself in public for the first time ever (in chilly British springtime winds), I stood confidently on the damp forest floor, a creature of nature, naked and proud, just like my raven. In this moment I found myself in a deep state of reflection about who I had become and what this back-piece had given me. As Lewis snapped silently behind me, I forgot he was there. Look at me, I thought, ten years of getting tattooed and here I am, now, a walking, moving, growing and changing piece of art—a representation of the talent of this incredible tattoo artist community but also a representation of my own lifetime, my own progressions, my own journey. This is my raven, my story, my body, my canvas. I will always continue to decorate it. I will always continue to own it. ▣



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# REBEL INC.

Wayne Simmons talks with some of his favourite rebels within tattooing, artists doing something different with their inks. This month he meets David Christ from Authentic Arts in Amsterdam

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**T**he social side of tattooing is something that's always fascinated me. I'm talking about the intimacy of the process, the connections we see going on—whether it's between the artist and the client or between one artist and another artist during a collaboration; it's something we don't see happening to anything like the same extent within other forms of art. And so when one artist—in this case, multimedia artist Sven Den Hartogh (featured in SD 287)—recommends to me another artist, you can be sure I'm going to look them up. It's a connection I want to know more about.

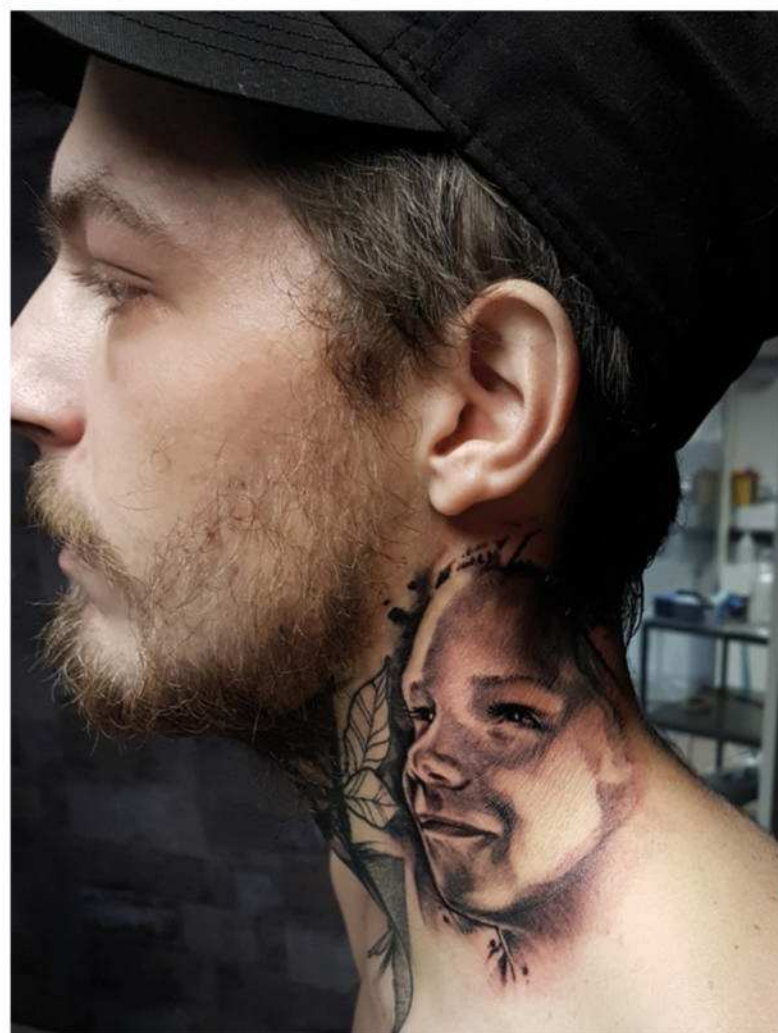
David Christ was born in Holland to Hungarian parents—Amsterdam, in fact, a city he describes as incredibly open and social. “You can pretty much get anything you want,” he tells me. “Party every day of the week if you want.”

While he and Sven met at such a party, it was a tattoo that really brought them together. “Tattooing is a collaboration between the giver and the receiver, an exchange of energy,” Sven told me during his interview. “You have to fully trust the artist and their art to be comfortable in this almost sacred ritual. This is really important in order to get the best result because it's not just my tattoo, it's our process.”

It's a powerful endorsement and, for me, captures the tattooing relationship at its most pure. And the feeling is mutual, David speaking just as fondly of his friend.

“We met at a house party one evening and just started talking,” he tells me. “Sven's a very talkative, sweet guy, always shows interest in the people around him, asking

**YOU HAVE TO FULLY  
TRUST THE ARTIST  
AND THEIR ART TO BE  
COMFORTABLE IN THIS  
ALMOST SACRED RITUAL**











David Christ







## ... SOMETIMES I'M JUST STUCK WITH AN IDEA AND DON'T KNOW HOW TO PROCEED OR WHAT TO DO, AND THEN SHE TAKES OVER

It's helped him progress from the very beginning of his career, getting the basics down ("I couldn't make lines when I just started, in the early days when I was working at home; I needed to call over a friend of mine and have a beer or two to gather the courage") to further honing his craft and evolving his style ("Yuri Triple Dome, he just guided me in a lot of ways and masters more or less every technique, which is something I think it's good to have, just to be able to tattoo more or less anything in a cool way"). Collaborating with his girlfriend, Sandra Ivdra, is a daily occurrence and it might surprise other artists to learn just how deep that trust runs.

"We work together in the same shop, side by side," David explains. "There are a few customers who we ended up working together on: sometimes I'm just stuck with an idea and don't know how to proceed or what to do, and then she takes over and it turns into something cooler than I could come up with. She has a very cool taste in things so we usually complement each other."

And then there's the clients—the lifeblood of his art. David has learned how to read people over the years in order to work out what kind of tattoo would suit them. "How the person approaches me, the way they type or talk." It's best, he says, if they come into the shop for a chat but he knows that isn't always possible given the distance some of his clients travel to get tattooed by him.

There are a number of factors which will affect how smoothly the tattoo will go from there. How much control the client wants over the design is a factor, for sure,

you all kinds of questions that go beyond general talk. So I appreciated that and found out he's doing interesting things as well with his art. I was seeing more and more stuff on social media and was admiring his way to catch such a big audience by basically being himself." Sven arranged to have a tattoo done by David and things just took off from there. "We got to know each other more and more. Recently he tattooed some small stuff on me, too. We are planning on doing some paintings together as well: his colourful stuff together with my dark stuff could end up being something cool, who knows."

This collaborative spirit within David doesn't end with Sven, it pretty much runs through everything he does. Talking with him more, I get the sense that he's a communal type of guy in general—he likes the social side of tattooing, the intimacy, the connections on every level.





## PUT SOMETHING BOLD OR UNFINISHED NEXT TO SOMETHING SOFT AND DETAILED, AND YOU GET A REALLY COOL CONTRAST

but it doesn't seem to be a dealbreaker—he's open to taking each person as they come. "Best is when there is no awkwardness, just easy-going conversation. Like-minded ideas about designs, styles, vibes... it doesn't always have to be dark!" he laughs.

And it doesn't end with people. This open and communal approach translates to David's very art. What he does isn't one thing or another but rather a marriage of styles. "I like abstract stuff mixed with realism. I started out with realism, more to prove myself that I can (kinda) do it, but eventually got super bored of it so then started exploring other styles."

For David, everything—including his art—is in a constant state of evolution. He's not one to settle and allow himself to be pigeonholed as this or that. Right now, he's big on mixing realism with sketchy/trashy themes to get the most effective dualism possible. "Put something bold or unfinished next to something soft and detailed, and you get a really cool contrast. Some people might even wonder if the tattoo is finished or not, which hopefully makes them think."

David is an artist in the purest sense of the word, someone who sees what he does as a never-ending series of connections—between the artist and the art, the tattoo and the tattooed, the tattooed and the beholder of said tattoo. Ultimately, he is looking for a reaction—cautious, perhaps, at first, but then more willing to engage.



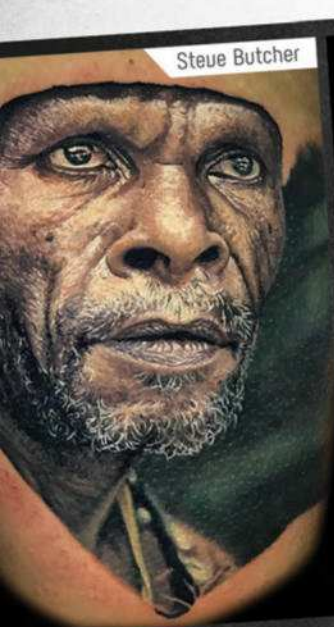
He talks of how people react to his own tattoos. One of his arms is blacked out and catches a lot of attention. "Mostly people who have no idea why I would have something like that, what it means. And sometimes they ask me, usually politely, but sometimes they think I'm crazy and are not afraid to tell me."

This is part and parcel of wearing tattoos, something I'm sure everyone reading this article can relate to. But for the artist in David, it's a positive thing—a response to his art. And it doesn't always have to be a negative response; a connection can be made with the most unlikely of people.

"I've had grannies looking at my arm, admiring and complimenting it," he smiles. "So, yeah, it can go both ways." ▣



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# THE ART OF FREEDOM

*Nicolas Gumo's tattoos are inspired by the imperfect world around us, his approach to 'work' driven by a commitment to freedom*



Words: Rebecca Rimmer • Images: Gumo





Some of the best tattoos are the ones that can't be categorised easily. They're not traditional, or watercolour, or neo-traditional, they can't be confined within the constraints of a label or movement. They are the mind of their creator, inspired by a world of varying arts that's constantly changing.

Paris-born and based Nicolas Gumo (aka Ugly Kid Gumo) creates tattoos that really scream loudly in a busy market place. Utilising varying techniques within single pieces, his deconstructed works are inspired by the likes of Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, Khalo and Basquiat, and his style influenced by his interests in brutalism, Italian futurism and Wabi Sabi, the ancient Japanese philosophy of accepting imperfection and transience.

His journey into the industry began around 4 years ago, when an artist who spent his days painting and creating graffiti made the decision to dedicate his artistry to tattooing. His artistic vision today encompasses a fresh perspective and desire to constantly explore the new: "I try to re-



new my work daily". He discovered the Wabi Sabi movement two years ago and claims it's "opened his eyes to many new things", providing daily inspiration for both aesthetics and the way in which he approaches his craft.

His day-to-day working as a tattooer with such a unique style doesn't differ from the usual process of any artist working on skin—Gumo creates a mixture of pieces from the heart that he then offers up to new clients, but also works on custom pieces inspired by the desires of the customer: "I realise my projects with people, we create something to-

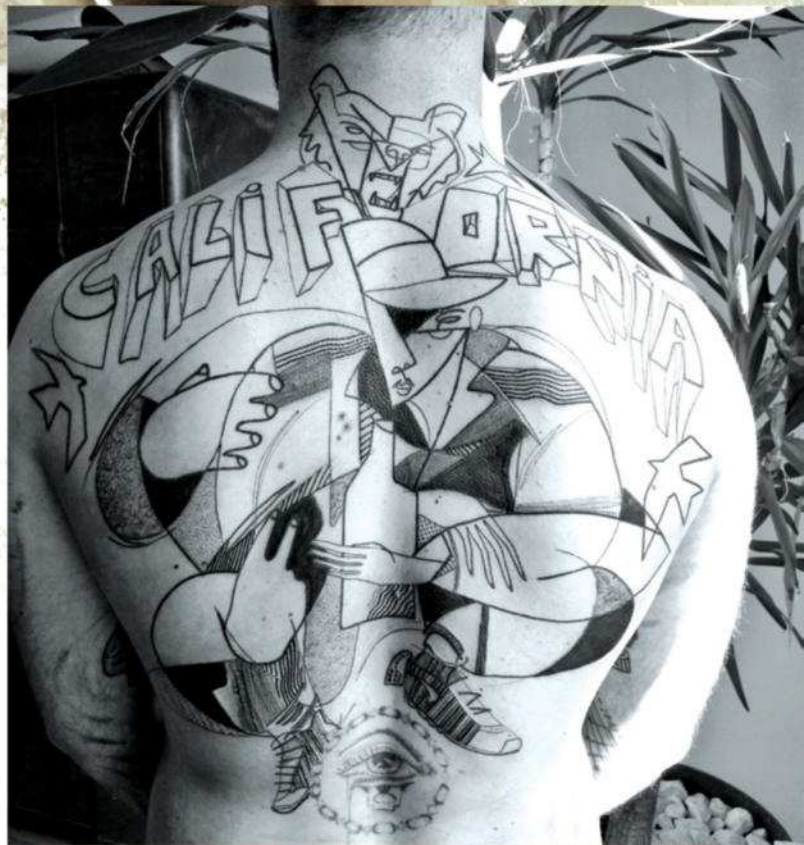
gether". When briefed, he will often create two or three options for his canvas and enjoys the creative process of there being different final drawings of one single concept.

After the completion of my own recent back-piece, I was keen to find out if size matters for an artist like Gumo. "I have no preference," he admits, "I like the completeness of a small piece but larger tattoos are a great challenge too... just like a larger canvas when painting, the energy is different." He explains the importance of size, however, when it

comes to considering detail and effects: "with larger pieces you can think about different textures that can age well on a larger surface—with some

*I don't know what I am going to be doing tomorrow and want to keep my freedom. Tattooing is not a job, it is an art, so we need to find time for ourselves, to think about our creations*





smaller tattoos this finesse is more complex and can be impossible.”

Experimenting with colour is a complex concept for an artist like Gumo. With tattooing, black takes priority as it “is very deep and pure”, he explains, “it plays simply and with great efficiency on the skin”. He describes colour, however, as “an enigma” and only uses it when he can find justification: “often this epiphany will come during the session—suddenly I find that a line or shape would bring more to the tattoo if it was red, or blue, so I talk to the customer and never impose colour unless he or she agrees.” Colour is something Gumo looks to experiment with more in the future—finding new combinations is an important part of his work: “I get bored quickly,” he laughs, “and I do not practice tattooing to

be bored. Every morning I tell myself that I am going to achieve something that I did not achieve yesterday.”

A resident artist at Le Phylactère, Gumo also tattoos at L’Encrierie (home of Leo Gavaggio). His dream is to set-up an additional studio in the south of France, in Valence, “to share my time between the bustling life of Paris and the southern sun”. Like many artists, travelling to tattoo elsewhere in the world is a key part of developing—for Gumo, what he refers to as “our greatest freedom”. He doesn’t book clients in more than a month or two in advance. “I don’t know what I am going to be doing tomorrow and want to keep my freedom”, he says, “tattooing is not a job, it is an art, so we need to find time for ourselves, to think about our creations.” □

**Nicolas Gumo:** @ugly\_kid\_gumo  
Le Phylactère, Paris:  
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# Holy Noir

*It's a joyous occasion whenever I meet someone who loves ridiculous banter as much as I do. When that someone also happens to be an incredibly talented tattooer, it's a damn good day. One worth documenting, preferably in an interview, which is exactly what happened when I came across British transplant Thomas O'Halloran who brought his oh, so fine linework to Canada a few years ago. He can now be found doing his thing at Toronto's Holy Noir and preaching about mustard to anyone who'll listen*

 tommy\_oh

“**S**hut your mouth!” jokes Thomas O’Halloran—aka Tommy Oh—the moment I point out that his Instagram bio, which reads “Mustard tattooing, and tea drinking,” is faulty because, well, we all know that mustard isn’t the best condiment.

He goes on to describe himself as “an enigma wrapped in a mystery, so an onion then—mustard” and it becomes quite evident that his passion for mustard runs deep. So I decide to switch gears and question his nationality instead, quoting a story that lists him as being a Brit. “It is true! Not a myth,” he laughs. “But I have read that I’m from London, which is not true. I was raised in Eastbourne.”

With our interview off to such a unique (and hilarious) start, I’m tempted to simply throw a slew of smart-ass comments his way and see how he handles them, but decide to stick to more traditional questions instead. Including how he discovered tattoos in the first place.

“My uncle Tony, also known as Buddha, had some traditional tattoos from the ‘60s, like a wolf on his wrist that was so blurred together, it looked like a dog wearing a wooly hat—it was amazing!” he gushes. “He also had a scorpion with a backwards face and I remember he had



two daggers on his forearms that were actually incredible. So much so that I got them tattooed on the backs of my legs. I even had them keep the snake that made no sense around the dagger.”

Despite having such a long-running love affair with ink, it wasn’t until about five years ago that O’Halloran decided that the whole

tattooing thing might be right for him. “I was working on a home maintenance crew, quite literally cleaning up shit, and I thought I could put some of my skills to use elsewhere,” he reveals.

“I wanted to do something that I liked doing every day,” so he picked up drawing, “which was hard because I had to move from my original graffiti style. I put together a portfolio of hand-drawn designs, all inspired from tattoo magazines, and at least 50 to 60 finished designs before I even set foot in a shop to start asking for an apprenticeship.”

“I started in a shitty shop, like most artists, and a bit later on got the opportunity to work in another shop called Holy Cow in Eastbourne, England,” he remembers. “They took me under their wing and taught me how to actually tattoo.”

The experience ended up being “everything I expected it to be—definitely hard,” he admits. “It’s not an easy process





and it's very mentally draining. I put a lot of expectation on myself to be good at it and was comparing myself to others who were much more skilled than I was, which was a bit counterintuitive, given my lack of skill at the time."

#### CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

"I went travelling to Australia and met some people from Toronto while I was there," he reveals when asked how the heck he ended up moving to Canada. "After spending some time at a walk-in shop in Manchester, I decided it was time to get away from home comforts. I was ready to push myself and moving away and setting up somewhere new seemed like the best bet."

*My uncle Tony, also known as Buddha, had some traditional tattoos from the 60s, like a wolf on his wrist that was so blurred together, it looked like a dog wearing a wooly hat*

So he packed up his life and landed in Toronto in 2014 where he "got a job with my friend and now co-worker, Curt Montgomery, who was apprenticing at the time at a shop in the east end. We were doing about two walk-ins a week and living on Tim Hortons bagels at the time."

After working at a handful of street shops across the city, O'Halloran eventually

#### Tommy Oh on...Toronto, Canada

As someone who comes from the very European-esque city of Montreal, to me, Toronto has always felt like the most American-y city in Canada. O'Halloran disagrees, however. "I don't know about American-y — I think Toronto has its own vibe," he says. "It's a very multicultural and welcoming city, that's for sure. Working in Toronto has been great and I've been very fortunate."





crossed paths with Alex Daechsel and Hayley Schofield, whom he met through a colleague. “They were running a fine art print company featuring tattoo artists from all over the world and they were looking to open a studio space to operate out of,” he recalls. “Curt hijacked it and proposed that him and I work out of there too and, shockingly, they said yes. Out of pity probably because they already had our stuff in stock!” he laughs.

“It turned into a shop overnight” and Holy Noir was born. “It’s been the absolute best thing that’s happened,” he declares. “Alex and Hayley have done so much for me and Curt. They kind of legitimised the disorganised hustle that was before this shop.” Now, he gets to work alongside Alex, Hayley and Curt, as well as Cheyenne Gauthier, Rud De Luca and Pepa Corleone, plus “a whack of great guests.”

“There have been so many incredible guest artists through the doors already and people have been travelling from all over the world to get tattooed here, which blows my mind,” he says. “I’m very grateful for them and everyone that’s come here, customers and guests alike.”

#### THE BOLD & THE BEAUTIFUL

Scroll through O’Halloran’s Instagram feed and you’ll immediately notice that his linework style, which he describes as “bold, graphic and mostly always clean, sometimes,” is impressively cohesive. A fact that makes his next confession seri-

ously surprising: “To be honest, I think I struggle with keeping things cohesive,” he declares. “However, I have spent so much time drawing and repeating similar subject matters that I’ve been able to develop a way of drawing that suits me, which I think stands out in the tattoos that I do.”

“I wouldn’t call it a style as such, more of an approach to drawing,” he elaborates. “It’s informed by street art and mostly traditional and neo-traditional tattoos and tattooers. I used to draw way more complicated designs and, over time, I’ve really simplified my drawings to suit the demand.”

There’s much more to his portfolio than what fans see online, however. Coming from a traditional apprenticeship, O’Halloran learned by “tattooing anything that walked through the door” and still works in all styles. In fact, he’s the first to admit that Instagram is merely “a snap-

**Tommy Oh on...**  
**Colour vs. Grayscale**  
 Flip through O’Halloran’s portfolio and you’ll see lots (and lots) of black and grey work. Ask him why he hates colour so much and he laughs, “I love using colour! I’ll always use it when people ask for it, but, for the most part, people are asking for monochromatic tattoos. I used to use colour daily, but the demand right now is for levels and variants of black.”





shot of what I'm doing currently."

"I'm fortunate now that people are receptive to what I want to do and they're open to me approaching their design in my style of drawing, but I'm happy to do any style of tattoo," he says. "Because, at the end of the day, it's not about what I think about it artistically, it's about how happy I can make someone with the tattoo they bring me."

Speaking of Instagram, which more and more artists are embracing as a marketing tool, O'Halloran admits, "I got involved in tattooing when Instagram was already being used and it's been pivotal for me in being able to support myself in another country."

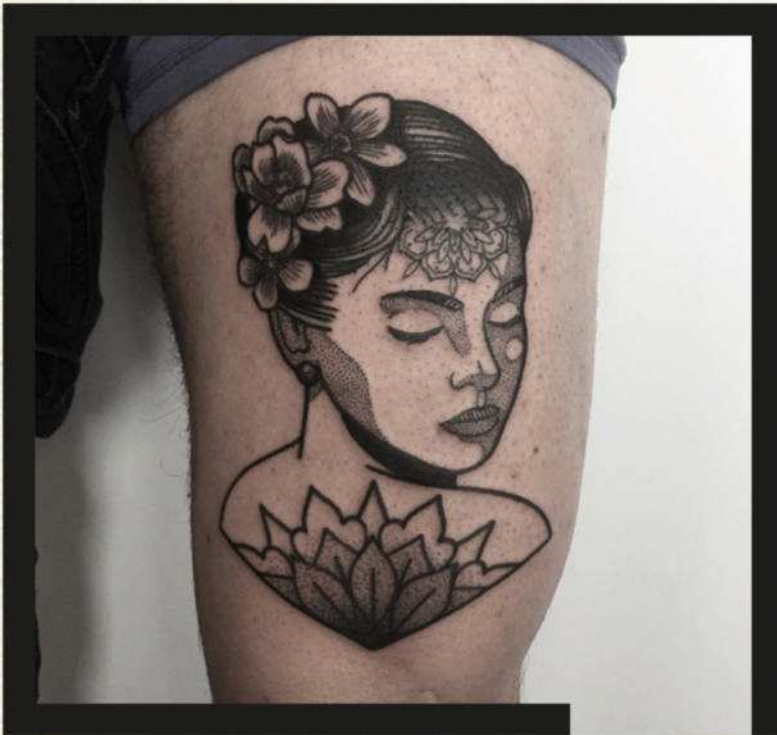
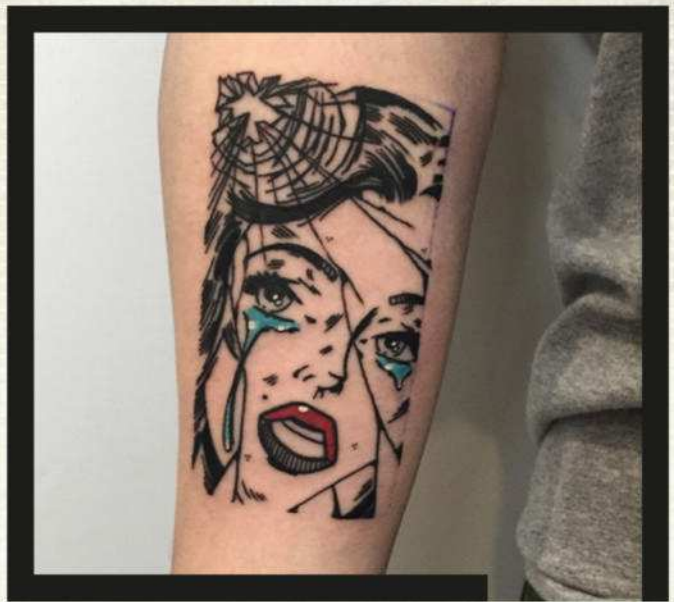
"You can put your work out there in front of an audience and it definitely helped jumpstart my career," he continues. "When I first met Curt, we decided to really hustle and put as much material

*I have spent so much time drawing and repeating similar subject matters that I've been able to develop a way of drawing that suits me*

out on Instagram as possible and people have been super accepting and welcoming of our work. We've been very fortunate that people have been so open-minded and trusting of novice tattooers and picking their own custom work to get tattooed."

That being said, there are artists who "certainly get carried away with it. People read into visibility and activity as a sign of how busy they are. Just because you're not posting, it doesn't mean you're not doing good work!"





*We like to stay busy at the shop and we're not overly preoccupied with posting what might be considered popular*

So when it comes to balancing his career with his social media game, it's all about "prioritising my workload over what I'm putting on Instagram. We like to stay busy at the shop and we're not overly preoccupied with posting what might be considered popular. I like to document the work through posts and stories because we're having fun doing it."

#### OUTSIDE INK

When he's not busy tattooing, O'Halloran likes to "lay and eat so many crisps that when I roll over there are so many crumbs I look like a

tempura shrimp, all whilst watching films," he laughs, offering up the ultimate mental image. "I think that is the look and smell of success!"

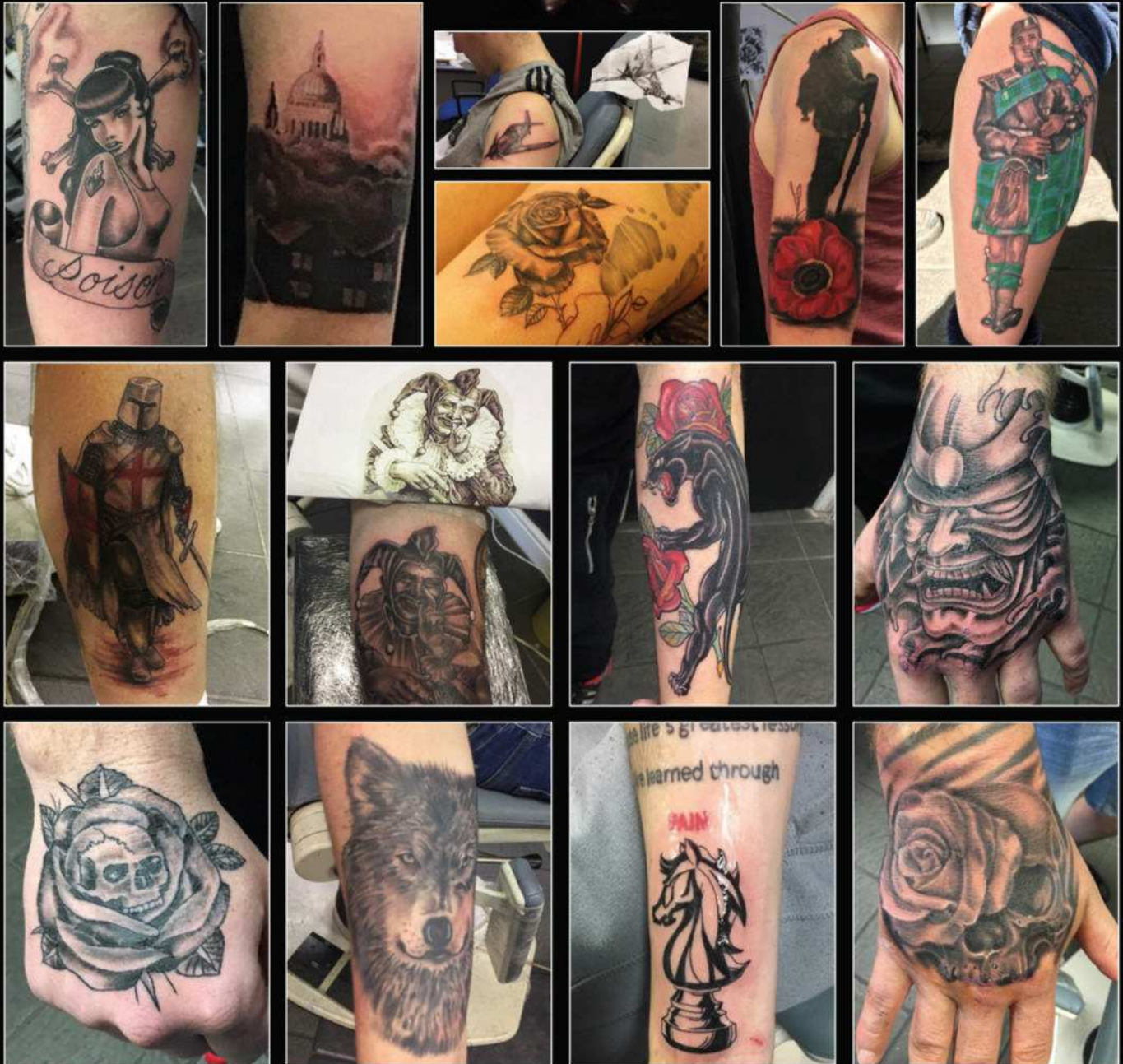
He'd also make a pretty good tour guide, if ever he wanted a side gig. Visit him in Toronto and hound him to take you around the city and your day will include stops at Holy Noir (obviously), followed by "Coffee Time and Dave & Buster's. Then I'd make Curt take you out to all his favourite places, which is the Canadian version of the worst kebab shop you'll ever find where the meat smells sulphuric. It will be good. It's going to be good. You should come!"

Next up, Holy Noir is moving into a bigger shop downtown with room for even more artists and O'Halloran is "looking to guest spot and expand my convention schedule, as is the shop. \*jumping fist pump freeze frame\*" ▣

**Holy Noir**  
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Amy Whiting Jodie Young  
Jodie Young Amy Whiting





# BLACK MOON RISING

*What's life like working as an apprentice in a busy tattoo studio? Rebecca Rimmer talks to two women finding their way in an industry that can be challenging to navigate.*

**W**alk down any one of the gorgeously quaint pedestrianised streets in the gorgeously quaint town of Frome in Somerset and (if you're like me) you will spend hours wandering aimlessly—or perhaps aim-fully—around various cute independent cafes, bookstores and antique shops. Amongst a hive of interesting businesses, nestled up a cobbled hill called Cheap Street, is Black Moon Tattoos, home of tattoo Goddess Miss Jo Black and her excellent team (you can read more about Jo's recent work on me in my column this month).

Many tattooists are uncomfortable with the word 'apprentice'—it may feel restrictive or hold a progressing artist back, but the truth is that, label or no label, the ritual of learning this craft in-studio from a master is an important and necessary tradition to our sacred art-form, vital to any student finding his or her feet in the industry. You can't learn tattooing solo. You can't learn much from a college course, textbook or online guide. With the increasing emergence of 'quick-fix' tattoo schools, many art-

ists in the industry today are keen to spread awareness of the value of the traditional shop apprenticeship.

The following two students would concur. Let's just say that I've had to cut this interview down significantly because they had so many inspiring things to say about what they have learnt on the front line. Black Moon's apprentices Jodie and Amy have found a dedicated teacher in Jo Black, and in them she's gained two talented artists who are grateful, hard-working and eager to grow. As they both celebrate their first year of tattooing in 2018, I interview them about how the wild ride has treated them thus far.

## **Hello ladies, let's start at the beginning.**

**Jodie (J):** Working at Black Moon has been my first experience of tattoo shop life. Before my apprenticeship I worked as a retail assistant, in a kitchen, as technical support, an administrator and more... I was never fully happy. I needed to be making and creating. When I left one recent job I hit rock bottom emotionally. I was so low but that also meant I was no longer scared of the potential re-



Amy Whiting



Jodie Young





All work on this spread by Amy Whiting



jection from applying for apprenticeships so that's what I did. I sent Jo an email, shared with her examples of my portraits, came in for a chat and the rest was history!

**Amy (A):** This has been my first job in the industry, too. I'd long-admired tattooing and felt that with my own illustration work (specialising in black-dip pen and ink) this would be a really natural step for me. I also feel incredibly lucky to have found an apprenticeship with amazing artists at a wonderful studio.

**Was there a 'light bulb' moment when you decided you wanted to be a tattooist?**

**J:** It's something I was always interested in pursuing. My dad is heavily tattooed and my mum is very artistic so I'd been around drawing from a young age. At school I was always scrib-

bling on my hands but never really thought I'd actually end up doing it as a profession!

**A:** On the contrary, I'm not someone who has always known they wanted to be a tattoo artist. I had a huge admiration for it as a medium and as I focused on my own illustrations, that style developed, and I eventually set my sights on tattooing.

**Amy, do you think that this background in illustration was a good stepping-stone? Or is there anything you have had to force yourself to unlearn?**

**A:** Well I already had those drawing skills: I could compose an image and had a style to bring to what I was drawing. I'm not sure I've unlearned anything but I have definitely had to learn a lot of new skills and adapt how I work

**THE APPRENTICES**

**Jodie Young**

Tattooing since March 2017

@jodieyoung

Jodie Young Tattoos

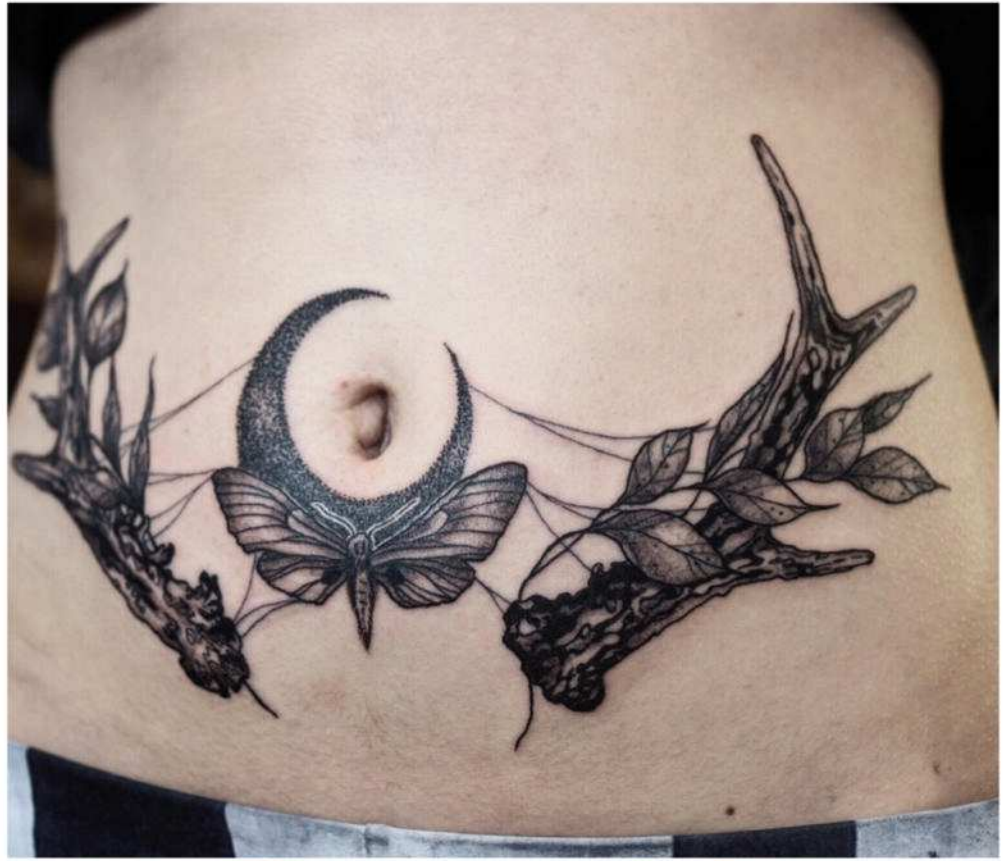
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for tattooing, like designing for the shape of the body. When I first started my apprenticeship I would only ever draw with pen and pencil on paper and thought I would never draw on a tablet, EVER. I felt really opposed to it and the lack of personal touch. But now, I draw up most of my tattoo designs exclusively on an iPad. The speed and immediacy with which you can tweak designs immediately for your client is amazing—that was a huge learning curve for me. I still use traditional ink and paper for my non-tattoo work and I can be completely free with my ideas. That was another big change—learning to not just solely tattoo my own ideas and working within the constraints of what a customer wants.

**Jodie, what have been some of the biggest**

**learnings for you over the last year?**

**J:** My apprenticeship has been broken down into different stages of learning. At first, I learnt about the importance of cleanliness and the implications of poor hygiene. I'd come in first thing in the morning to clean and autoclave the tips and grips, then move onto sweeping, mopping and general tidying-up of the shop.

The next stage of learning is all about how to run a shop: answering the telephone, responding to emails, dealing with customers, making sure the relevant paperwork is on hand and you can communicate the purposes of good aftercare and consent forms to the public. The third stage of my apprenticeship has been to brush up on my drawing skills and explore how I interpret colour and shape—





All work on this spread by Jodie Young



through being set tasks and also self-practice.

**I don't think people often realise how much there is to learn!**

**J:** Yes, in addition to tattooing (which is a pretty big thing in itself!) those personal skills are also so important—it can mean the difference between someone feeling comfortable, someone loving their tattoo in the end. It's all about gaining trust—not everyone that comes into a tattoo shop is 100% sure what they want so you need to make them feel that you're doing what's best for them, to ensure they believe in your artistic vision.

**A:** Developing a confidence in yourself is a big thing to learn too. When you see your client in pain or fidgeting it can be difficult to feel comfortable with your skills and ability.

You learn that the more confident you are, the quicker the process and the more successful the tattoo.

**What has been the biggest challenge in your apprenticeship so far?**

**A:** There can be many—from clients who change their mind at the last minute or who just don't like what you've drawn, to tattooing awkward places or a part of the body for the very first time. But I think the single biggest challenge for me at the moment is getting the balance of work and life right—drawing designs, replying to emails, tattooing full time, as well as trying to get some down-time to myself—it's definitely a work in progress!

**J:** Pushing myself out of my comfort zone was a big challenge, as well as believing I





could do it. Early on I found it hard to trust in my ability to do intricate and detailed tattoos—so I wouldn't draw up any complicated designs. It was only when Jo pushed me and I had willing friend volunteers that I was able to gain my confidence with it. Also trying colour was challenging for me but with practice and persistence I found I had a natural eye for colour theory and now actually prefer working in colour.

**And what about those rewarding moments that outshine the challenges?**

**J:** Day to day you can feel like nothing is changing but stopping and looking back, seeing how far you've come and how much you've improved is the biggest reward you can hope for. I like to place pictures of recent and earlier work that focus on the same subject matter side by side to observe the differences between them. It spurs me on to see the changes. There's not much point in carrying on if you think you're at the top of your game and can't improve any more.

**A:** The most rewarding moments happen when someone chooses

something that you've drawn that you would really love to do, and they give you the opportunity to actually tattoo it. It's really great when you can see they are over the moon with it. I also really enjoy getting to see my work out and about when it's healed. It gives me that boost that I'm on the right track.

**Specifically how have you seen your styles evolve over time?**

**A:** I have started to add a lot more detail and fine elements into my tattoos. I sometimes swap-out line-work for stipple or dot—this has been a change that I discovered through creating work on skin, rather than paper, so that's been interesting. I'm a huge perfectionist so every session I find something that I'd like to improve on or do differently next

**AMY WHITING: A DAY IN THE LIFE**

7am: Alarm goes off

8.45am: Arrive at work, start tidying. Wipe down surfaces, tidy desks and waiting area, put away any beds, organise clinical bin collection (on Tuesdays) – make sure they have been emptied and have fresh liners.

9am: Sweep and mop the studio floor, make sure I bleach-out ink spots.

9.30am

Check studio supplies (including forms) are stocked well and make a list of what we need.

9.40am: Take the (normal non-clinical waste) bins out to the back and go to buy any supplies we need. Run other errands.

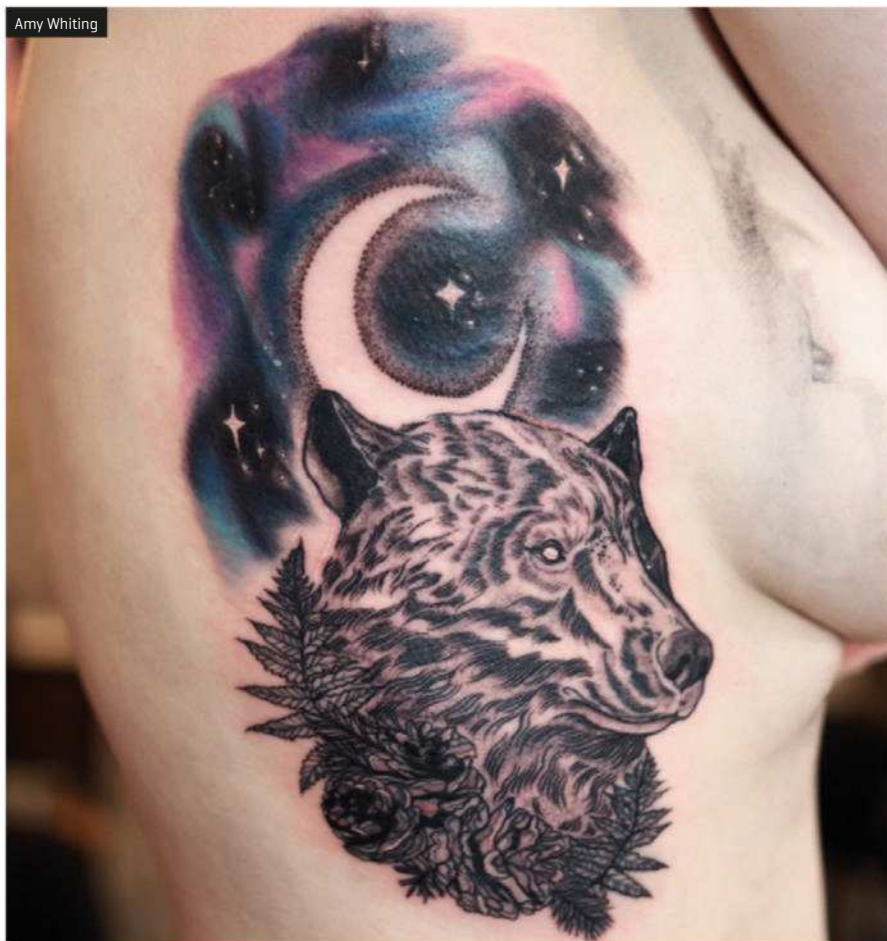
10am: Set up Jo's station for the day.

10.15am: Set up my own station and start working on designs and preparing stencils for the day's appointments.

11am: Clients start to arrive. Tattooing begins and can carry on until around 6pm depending on how many appointments we have. Any free time is spent drawing or answering emails.

6pm: Break down and clean my station and Jo's (when she has finished!). Quick tidy then home-time!





time—a particular way to shade things or the thickness of lines, for example.

**J:** To begin with, I wanted to concentrate on black and grey realism and never saw myself working with colour. One day during a 'draw-off' I sketched a rose in full colour and Jo thought I had an eye for it, so I moved in that direction. When it comes to colour realism, a lot of the progress is through trial and error and learning from other artists who have helped me along the way. At the moment I love tattooing animals—being able to put life into something. I've learnt the importance of eyes—they can make or break any piece.

## WHICH TATTOOISTS INSPIRE YOU?

### AMY

Ryan & Matthew Murray, Black Veil Tattoo, MA, USA [[@blackveiltattoo](#)]

Daniel Baczewski, Inkdependent Tattoos, Edinburgh, UK [[@danielbacz](#)]

Stephanie Brown, Black Oak, Chicago, IL, USA [[@feralcatbox](#)]

Kate Mackay Gill, West Sussex, UK [[@kate\\_selkie](#)]

Kelly Violet, Parliament Tattoo, London, UK [[@kellyviolence](#)]

Lozzy Bones, Occult Tattoo, Worthing, UK [[@lozzybonestattoo](#)]

### JODIE

Lianne Moule, Immortal Ink, Chelmsford, UK [[@liannemoule](#)]

Nick Imms, Church Tattoo, Redditch, UK [[@littlenicktattoo](#)]

Antonina Troshina, Moscow, Russia [[@\\_rostra\\_](#)]

Leanne Fate, Immortal Ink, Chelmsford, UK [[@leannefate](#)]

Hannah Weston, Norwich, UK [[@hannah\\_tattoos](#)]

## Have you set yourself clear goals for the future?

**A:** To keep getting better, to develop and push my style. At some point I'd really like to learn a bit of the basics of colour—at the moment that blows my mind a little!

**J:** To be the best artist I can be, with a loyal client base. I'd also love to regularly attend conventions and other studios—meeting other artists through guest spots is important as you're never too old to learn from others! It's always fascinating to see how other people work.

## What's the single thing you love most about your job?

**J:** That it doesn't feel like a job! Also, creating art that brings a person happiness, especially if it's a meaningful design or a cover-up that they've hated for ages, it's great being able to put a smile back onto someone's face, knowing that your efforts are appreciated.

**A:** Everything. For the first time ever I feel like I have found an outlet for my work that fits me and feels natural.



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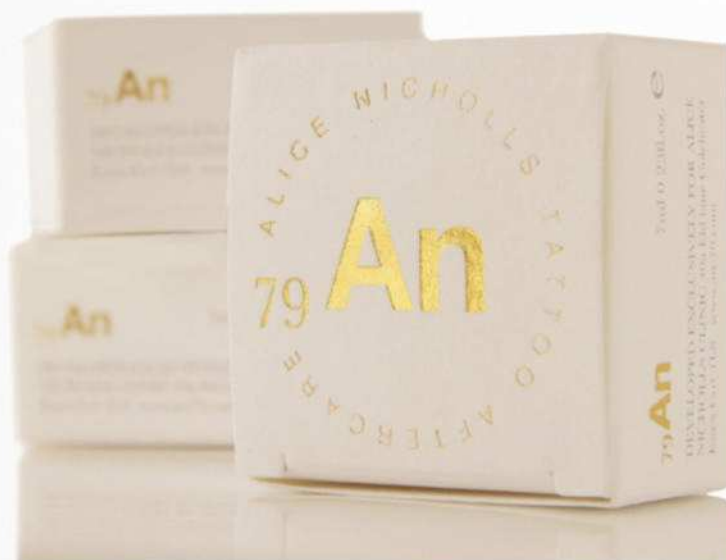
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# THE SPINE OF GOD

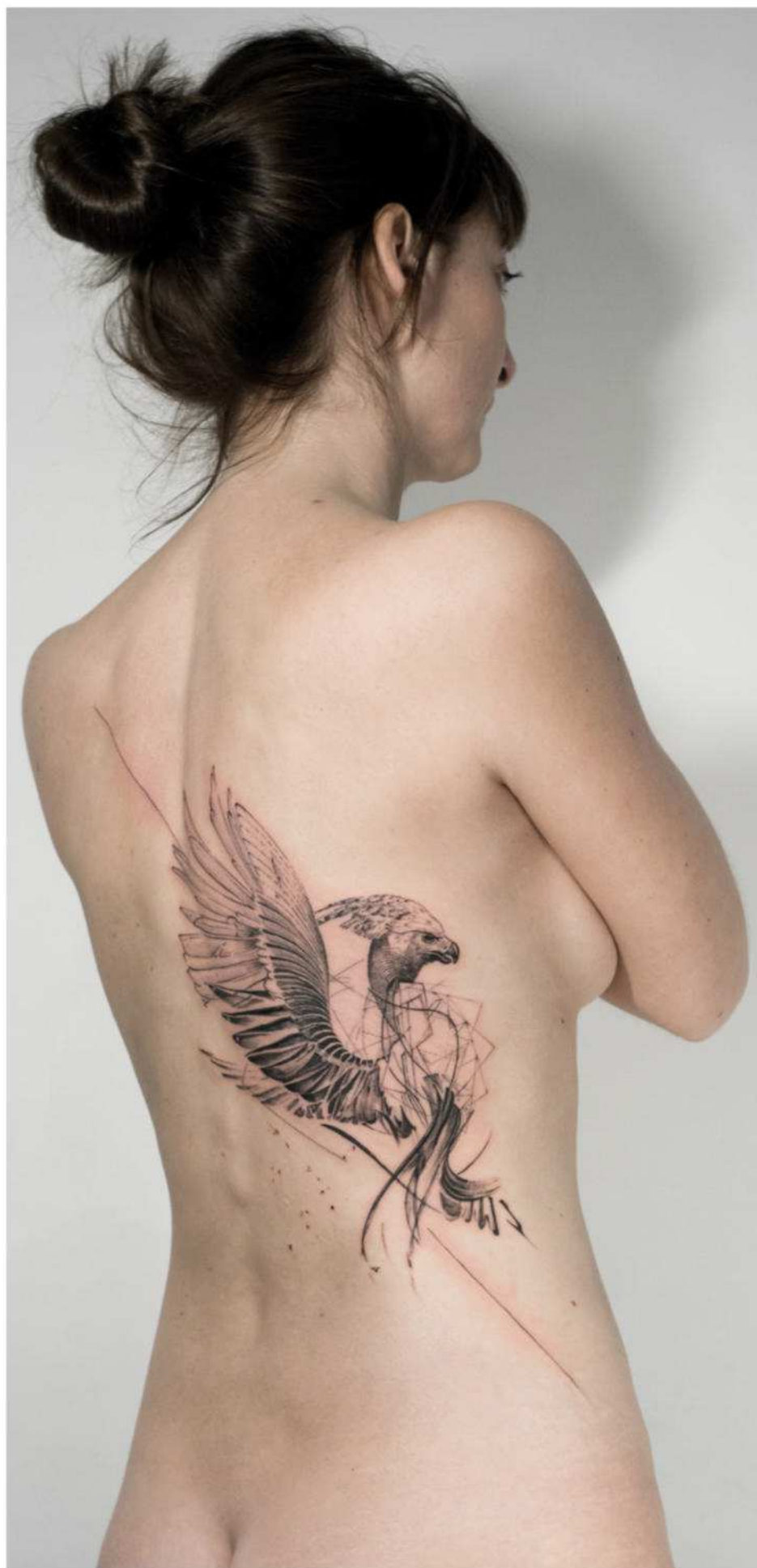
From his background in the music industry London based tattooist Mowgli has found his way from film scores to rhythmic tattoo design. Now residing over his own studio in Finsbury Park we catch up with him to reflect on the journey

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**Through My Third Eye**  
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I used to be a musician, and pursued this venture for quite some time with a lot of academic studies at university and a Masters Degree in composing for film & television. I was initially influenced by the punk ethic of bands and the idea that you could do it all yourself but as time went on and my music enthusiasm expanded, I found myself swamped in the world of Hans Zimmer and Clint Mansell. These two composers would shape and cement my determination of taking creative risks and believing in the idea that you can indeed do everything yourself. Mixing genres and textures of varied soundscapes in the eventuality of capturing the ideas in my head, the influences and the technology made creating unrestricted. My venture of music came to a halt when the recession happened, and studios were closing down instead of hiring. I felt a bit lost but somehow found myself at the doorstep of tattooing.

In school and in my A levels I was studying product design and so I had a bit of help with design and Photoshop and that allowed me to have some sort of grounding in a visual world.

I'm from a Muslim family, and have been instilled with the most beautiful culture that people don't really see. I have the most progressive parents that did not really agree that







I was tattooing at first, but have come to understand my curiosity for the art.

But it was my brother who always encouraged me, he brought me up with comic books, movies and film scores, and I never realised how much of an influence to my life he really is. When we were little we would always draw together and this was my first introduction to art, and have endless talks on comic book culture, and that still hasn't changed to this day.

So, he has always encouraged me to draw and believe in myself. He got me into film music, thus my need to pursue composing (I would still like to do it) always looking out for me, he's incredible. So when it came to tattooing, he understood that it was an artistic thing.

I still find being called an artist a bit weird, but he always encouraged me and is really patient and when we have cool projects coming up he is still the first person I speak to. He has nothing to do with tattooing, but he will just sit and hang out while I'm working or throwing ideas around. He's my best friend and he knows me better than I know

**A TATTOO SHOULD BE LIKE A SONG,  
SOMETHING THAT IS CLASSIC LIKE  
WAGNER OR LED ZEPPELIN, SOMETHING  
THAT YOU MAY NOT UNDERSTAND BUT  
IT IS BLOODY INTERESTING**



**MIN (GRAFFITOO) AND I WORKED TOGETHER, HE'S LOVELY HUMAN, THERE WAS NEVER A SENSE OF HIERARCHY BETWEEN US AND THAT IS WHAT HAS REALLY STAYED WITH ME**



myself, he will come over for dinner and help me choose my favorite work and keep me focused. He is the loveliest man in the world, Jesus would ask him how to be a good guy.

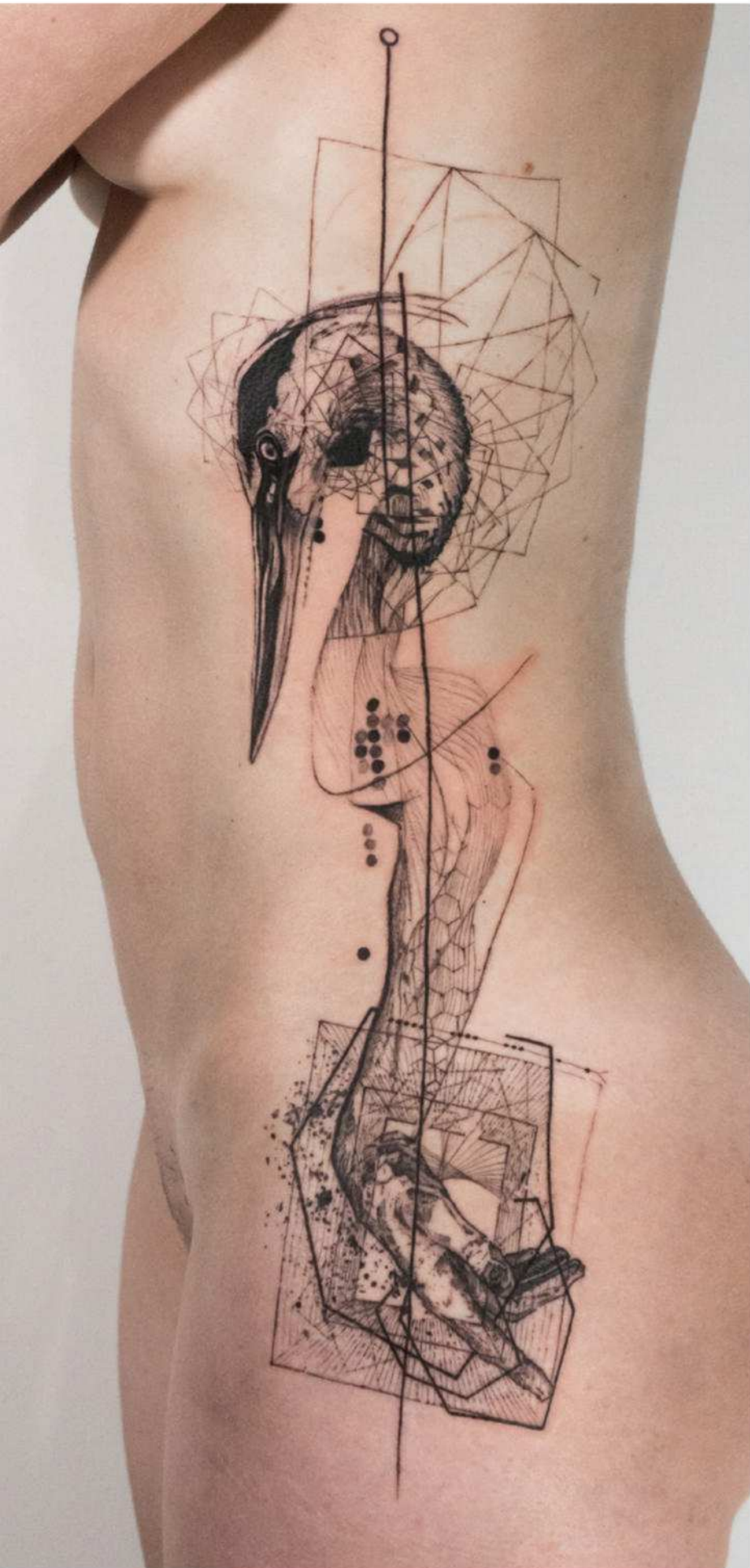
**THE JOURNEY TO TATTOOING:**

I have loved tattoos since I was younger, but I never aspired to be a tattoo artist. I was always getting tattooed (at the dismay of my family) and after my Masters I was working in various jobs from bar work to an IT office and somehow also ended up working at the studio where I was getting tattooed.

Working there was just such a natural feeling, I did not really try. Originally I wanted to be a piercer and when I saw someone getting their tongue pierced I was like 'that's not for me'. I was just as a receptionist at the studio in the evenings after my other job and on the weekends and I just liked how the guys they were cool artists and focused in their own style. There was an artist "Graffitoo", Min from South Korea who taught me all of my tattooing. So, on the weekdays when I finished work I would just run from London Bridge straight back to Wimbledon and work in the shop until 10pm and spent my week-







ends annoying everyone in the studio. I did not think I was going to become a tattoo Artist. I just thought that the guys were cool and wanted to make cool art. We would hang out eat food and drink together. Then one day the guys were like 'You should just buy a machine', and I was like 'Why?' So, it just naturally progressed and I thought, 'this is cool!'.

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

I started tattooing at 'Ohh My God' in Wimbledon and it was really cool. We were a young band of renegade underground artists, some of them did graffiti and that kind of art. Everyone had a different style, we were just a bunch of guys and it was brilliant. Min (Graffiti) and I worked together, he's lovely human, there was never a sense of hierarchy between us and that is what has really stayed with me.

My artist name is a nick name my family have given me. And before the moustache, I guess I do kind of hold a resemblance to the character from the Jungle Book. It was difficult at first using my real name as people struggle to pronounce it, so Mowgli seemed fitting.

When I started to make my own style of work, I was obviously inspired by the Photoshop style like such artists as Xoil especially with his use of composition, elements and contrasting textures. My aesthetic is based on contrast of textures, or at least this is what I'm looking to achieve. The cleanliness of graphic design contrasting with academic illustrations. Min and I tried to work it out



**I LOVE BANDS LIKE DEFTONES, SO MANY DIFFERENT TEXTURES AND LYRICS, THEY DO NOT STICK TO ONE THING AND THEY USE THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE DAY. I WANT TO CREATE THAT KIND OF MULTI-LAYERED TEXTURE VISUALLY**

in a tattoo he gave me based on my drawings. We tried it, he tattooed it, it worked out really well, and I am still obsessed with it.

My area of development now is trying to work more with the composition on the body, that's what I really want to explore next. How to create designs that are bigger, more intricate and experiment with how they can be viewed.

**WORKING WITH CLIENTS:**

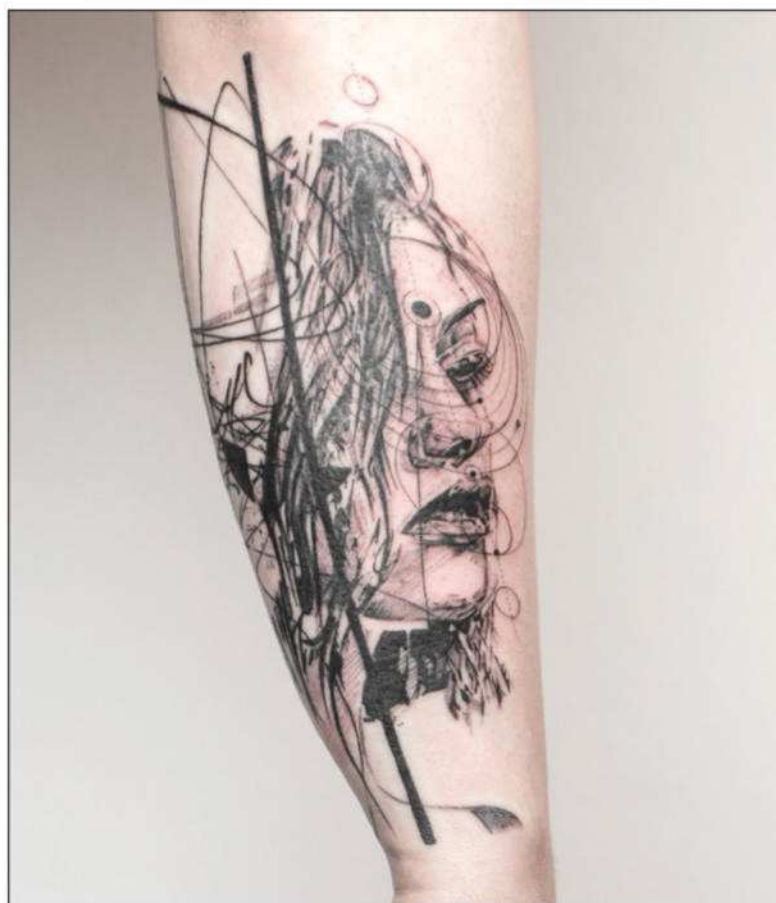
A tattoo should be like a song, something that is classic like Wagner or Led Zeppelin, something that you may not completely understand but is bloody interesting to hear.

I like to meet people before I design their tattoos. I like to meet people in person or by skype, you have to see someone's face to really understand them. I tell clients I don't really want to see other people's tattoos as reference points; I like music and film, and science and books and meaning; that's where I get my inspirations. I am inspired by other artist's passion and drive, but I don't want to replicate what they do, that's what makes us different.

Clients are being really vague with the visual direction of their tattoos which is wonderful as I can really run with it, everything can be an inspiration, anything has an aesthetic. Clients have seen my work and see that I like lines and the aesthetic of sacred geometry but composed in my own way.

I am so lucky as I get to have a job which allows me to create something from this starting point, and they now let me explore freely. I am so excited by it.

I love the meanings behind tattoos, when I create a design, I feel the client gives me a purpose. It has to be aesthetically beautiful, it has to suit the person too. I understand this is a very personal process for my clients,



and even with the creative freedoms, I must not get lost in my own ideas, but sometimes the original focus can change due to a compositional reason (for example the main subject) but retain the concept of the tattoo.

I love people, I get inspired by their stories and they give you so much I want to create something that is meaningful to them when I design. I want my tattoos to be something that is private between me and the client. I take all of my time and energy to create something for them and it has to look aesthetically wonderful. It's my little love letter to them.

**DEVELOPING AN AESTHETIC:**

I was really lucky as I always got to work in my own desired style, everyone at the shop had their own style, the owner was inspired by fine artists and I was inspired by the graphic drawings of Da Vinci. I was fascinated by movies and movie posters, how old movie posters were designed by combining the text and illustration done originally by painters and now by designers and computers.

I have realised, you have to use the technology of the day, nobody cares how you get there, but only the end result. If you can do things without technology that's awesome but there are other tools. Before artists would measure with pencils and one eye closed. Now we have cameras to take reference photos and programs that help with composition, now with technology you can get to you concept a lot faster.

You can get the idea in your head and can use the technology to develop something without getting distracted. You still have to use your hands to make the tattoo, you still have to know the craft and how to work with the skin. I think that's how I am developing my work, I want to keep moving towards what I feel is compositionally interesting and





I still want to use really complicated elements and have lines that connect with each other. There might be two different subjects contrasting but there is a weird flow. Like when you listen to music it flows up and down, that's what I want from visual art as well. I love bands like Deftones, so many different textures and lyrics, they do not stick to one thing and they use the technology of the day. I want to create that kind of multi-layered texture visually. Sometimes it's like dance, sometimes it's like reggae, sometimes it's more electronic and it's up to the composer. I think we should be free in being artists.

#### **OFF-DUTY:**

I don't really have anytime outside of my work, I design all night and tattoo all day, but I love to dance. I sometimes play video games and I am trying to give myself some down time to get inspired. My favorite thing to do on a day off is put on my headphones, go to the coffee shop, go into London, try not to talk to anyone and go to galleries and book shops and try and spend some time alone. What I'm really trying to do is spend my down time going comic book shopping and for afternoon tea and my evenings having dinner with my friends and movie nights, I love Christopher Nolan films. I really want to do a Memento (film) tattoo I wonder what I have in my head from that film.

I don't really have future plans, I just want to try and be in the present of being and don't worry about the future, we all have a really good time, I just want to be present in my experiences. ▣



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STEVEN MOSTYN · SZILARD RITZL · TITCH  
WOJCIECH TACZALA**





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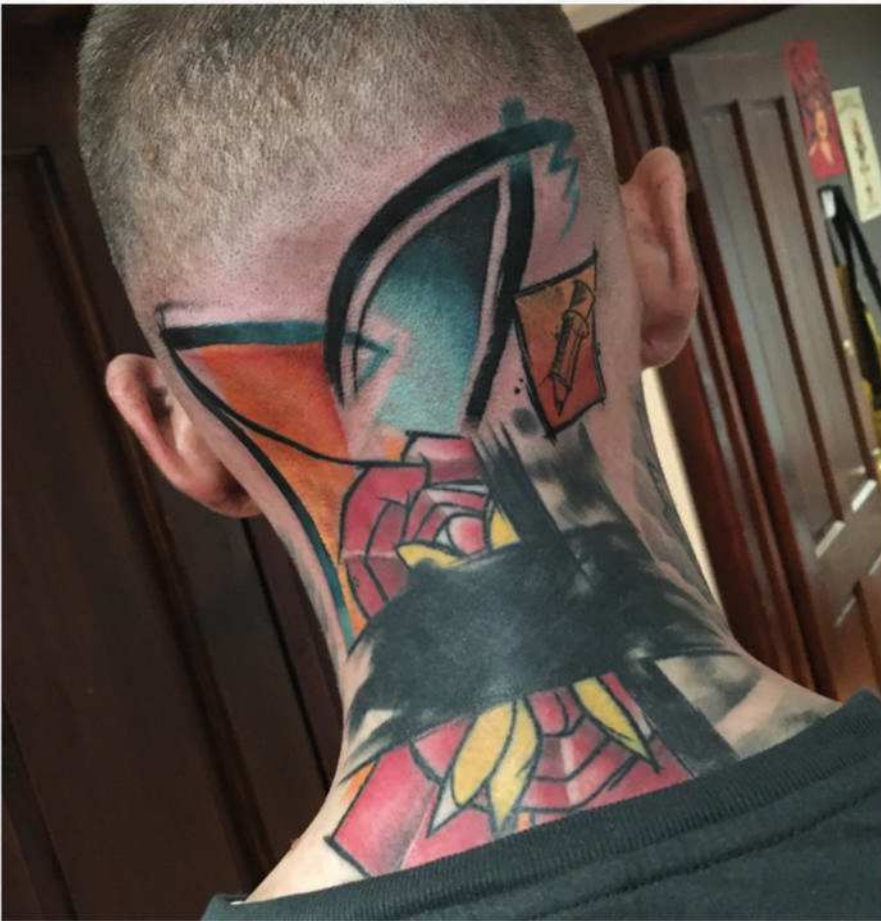
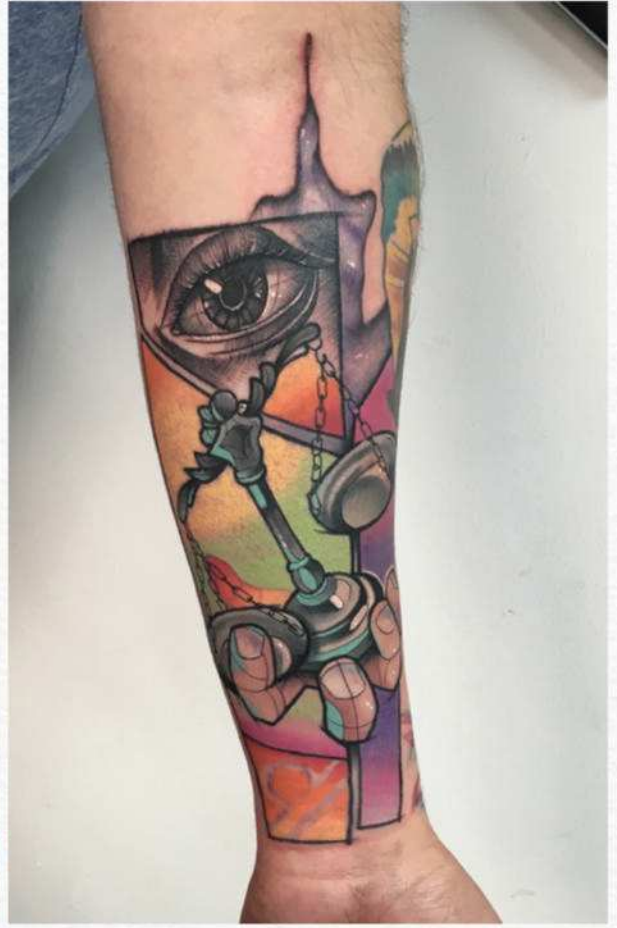
# CHRISTOPHER JADE

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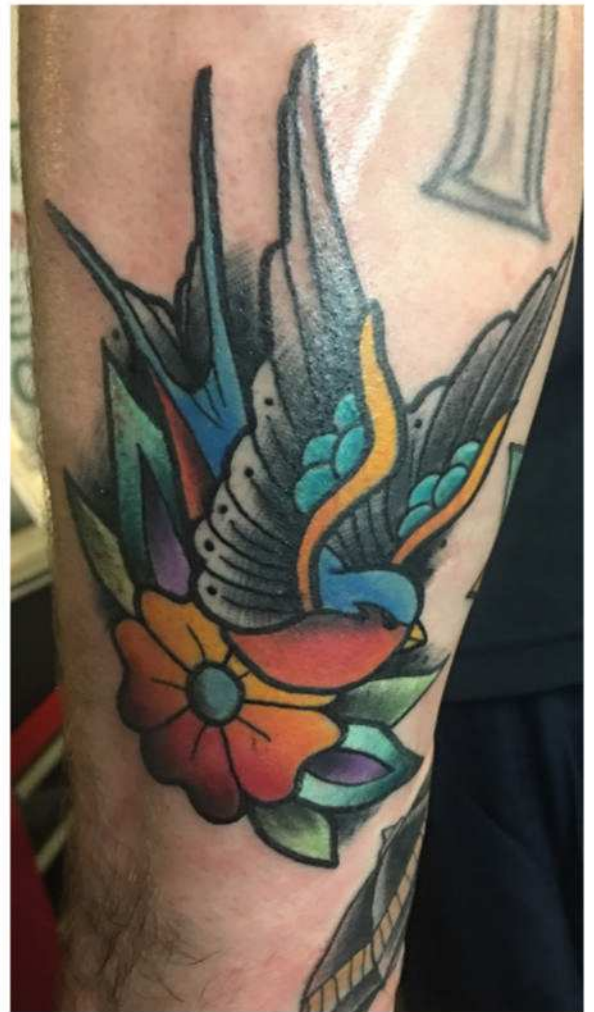
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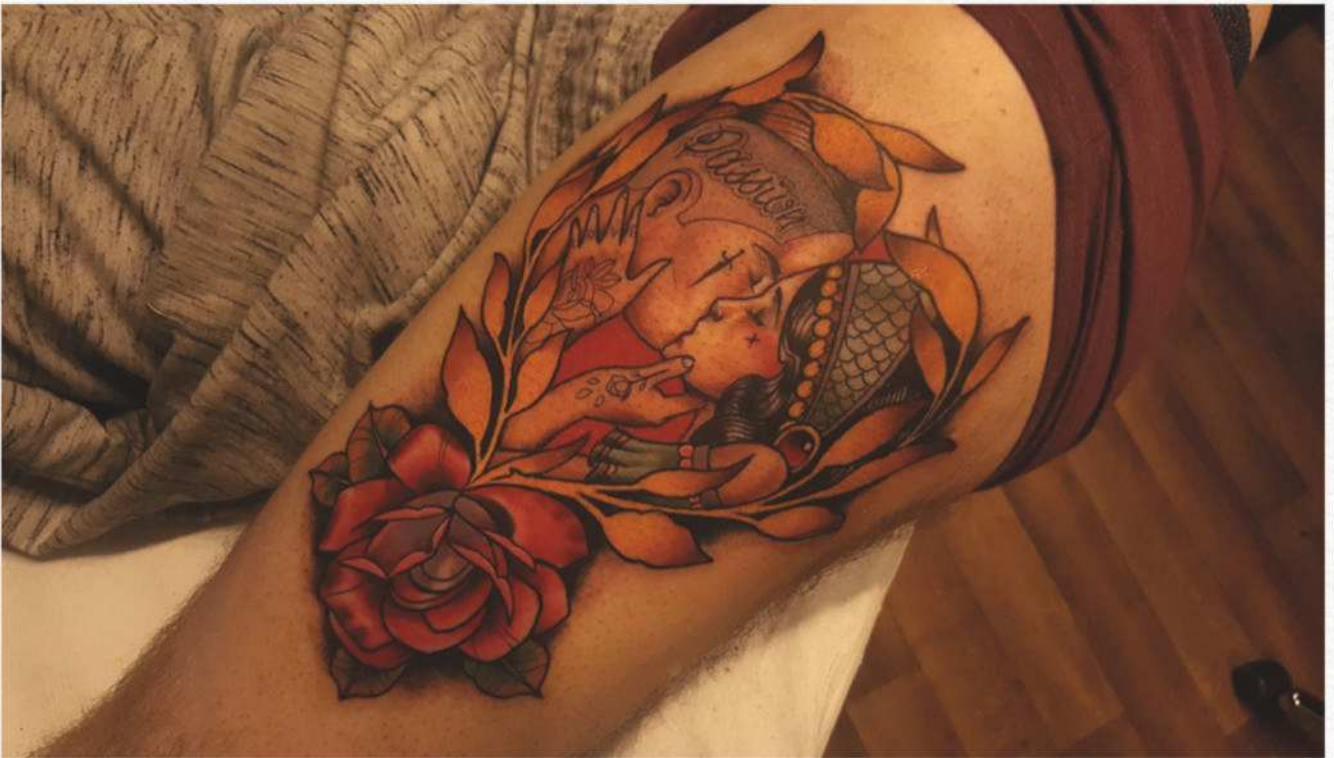


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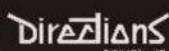
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# STRANGE DAYS

*The total assimilation of man and machine is inevitable; it is only a matter of time before wires sit under the skin in a complicated arterial highway of cybernetic veins. Our flesh will be cut by the rough edges of steel as chips and switches scatter across our bodies in a freckle like fashion...*



Strings of 0s and 1s intertwine in a genome twist of cybernetic beauty as our metallic innards remain encased and functioning better than any organ once could. Our ticking heartbeat chimes a metallic ding that reverberates along our newly formed skeletal system of bone and carbon. Do we dream of these changes or are they happening slowly before us? Alex Odisy's practice of revealing these cyborg beings allows us to consider that if we do not pay attention we

will eventually be machine from inside to out. Or perhaps these tattoos function as a visual reminder that are we not already machines? Automated to daily periodical tasks such as eating, sleeping, shitting, working, etc.

## **IT IS IMMEDIATELY APPARENT THAT THE SCIENCE FICTION GENRE PLAYS A LARGE PART IN YOUR TATTOO DESIGNS, WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THIS GENRE?**

I'd been tattooing for a few years, trying out different styles and subject matter. I started concentrating on drawing faces and drew a cyborg one day with her face coming off which was influenced by the original poster for the 1973 film *Westworld*. It went down well so I built on that; it laid down the foundations to what I do now, so it was a good move. It seemed like an obvious subject for tattooing as I've always been into science fiction, although it wasn't obvious at the time as 'sci-fi' isn't exactly an established genre of tattooing!

## **HAVE YOU ALWAYS HAD A PASSION FOR THIS SUBJECT MATTER?**

I've always been into science fiction and comics. NASA and the space shuttle were in the news a lot when I was a kid; I've always been fascinated in space adventures and what could be out there in the unknown. I was watching stuff like *Star Wars*, *E.T.*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Ulysses 31*, *The Hitch Hikers Guide To The Galaxy* and reading comics like *2000AD*, which lead me to discover artists like









Moebius and Liberatore. I was given books about sci-fi artists like Syd Mead and Chris Foss. Basically it was all robots, spaceships and lasers when I was growing up.

**DO SCIENCE FICTION FILMS AND THEIR AESTHETICS INFLUENCE YOUR PRACTICE?**

I do take influence from older, pre-CGI science fiction films but I'd say comics and illustration have influenced me more. Artists like Otomo Katsuhiro, Moebius, Brian Bolland, Kevin O'Neill, Cliff Robinson and Geof Darrow.

**WHAT OTHER TATTOOISTS WORKING WITH SCIENCE FICTION DO YOU ADMIRE?**

The main man is Ian Bederman at Royal Legion Tattoo in Austin, Texas (@wonkytiger). He's deep in the sci-fi game!

**YOUR TATTOOS HAVE A CERTAIN FUTURISTIC MINIMALISM TO THEM, HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT ACHIEVING THIS AESTHETIC?**

I want my designs to have a good contrast balance so I aim to have one third black, one third grey and one third untouched. I try to have detailed parts of my designs contrasted by uncomplicated parts.

**IT IS INTERESTING HOW SOCIETY AS A WHOLE HAS BECOME MORE AND MORE DEPENDABLE ON ELECTRONIC SMART DEVICES; THEY AID OUR DAILY WORK AND FULFIL OUR ACTIVE LIFESTYLE CHOICES. AS WE CONSTANTLY DESIRE NEWER TECHNOLOGIES, DO YOU SEE THE CYBORG AESTHETIC BECOMING POPULAR OVER TIME IN REGARDS TO TATTOOING?**

Maybe not cyborgs in particular but aesthetics surrounding technology might gain popu-







larity. I think technology has opened up tattooing to all sorts of new audiences and made it possible for artists to promote niche tattoo aesthetics like science fiction for example. Without smart phones and social media I doubt I'd have been able to reach enough of an audience to sustain a career in something as niche as science fiction themed tattoos.

**THE CYBORG IS A MONSTER OF SORTS, A BEING HALF MANMADE MACHINE AND HALF ORGANIC FLESH, WHY DO YOU THINK YOUR CLIENTS ARE ATTRACTED TO THESE BEINGS?**

I can't say for all of them but some people are into sci-fi and comics like I am. Other people like pin up style tattoos but want something a bit different. I mainly draw images of the human head with some other element or scene happening on top of them or inside them that hints at a story of some sort. How that is interpreted is up to the viewer. People put their own slant on things. Personally, I've done some drawings whilst thinking about our relationship with technology and our fears about the future of A.I. but I've done others just thinking about laser noises.

**MANY OF YOUR CYBORG SUBJECTS EXPOSE THEIR INSIDE MACHINERY, THEIR HUMAN FLESH ACTS AS A SORT OF DISGUISE FOR THESE BEINGS, HOW DO YOU MAKE THESE TWO FORMS SIT COMFORTABLY NEXT TO EACH OTHER?**

I always start with the human elements and draw the mechanical bits in later. I guess it's just a matter of contrast, putting busy elements next to plain elements.

**DO YOU THINK OTHER MONSTERS I.E. ZOMBIES,**



**FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER, SPEAK OF THE CURRENT FEARS WITHIN SOCIETY TODAY?**

There's been an increase in sci-fi films and TV shows recently and I think it's a reflection of how much people are thinking about advances in technology, space travel and A.I. etc. Monsters always seem to represent our fears. The first Godzilla film was a representation of Japan's very real fear of their cities being destroyed by nuclear attack after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Frankenstein represented a fear of medical advances and doctors playing God. Films that feature cyborgs like Ex Machina, Westworld and The Terminator represent our fears of technology becoming too advanced and overtaking us.

**CONTEMPORARY BIOHACKING IS PUSHING THE CAPACITIES OF WHAT THE HUMAN BODY CAN ACHIEVE, CREATING NEW WAYS FOR USERS TO**





**BE ENHANCED BY CYBERNETIC DEVICES. DO YOU SEE THE TATTOOING OF CYBORGS A VISUAL BY-PRODUCT OF OUR RENEWED INTEREST IN THE MAN/MACHINE HYBRID?**

I think it's about people being increasingly interested in cybernetics and technology, fascinated about what can be achieved when man is merged with machine. But then again, it might just be because the two together looks super cool!

**IF YOU COULD HACK A PART OF YOUR BODY, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

My shoulders are fucked from years of bad posture whilst tattooing cyborgs on people. I'd start there.

**IN OTHER WORKS YOU FEATURE A SUBJECT SPIT IN TWO, AN AGGRESSIVE SEPARATION BETWEEN BOTH HUMAN FORM AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, WHAT LED YOU TO WORK WITH THIS CONCEPT?**

I wanted to incorporate scenes into the faces I was drawing. I got the idea partly from montage style film posters and partly from that game where one person draws a head and folds the paper over so the next person can draw the body and so on. The idea of having the two halves so harshly separated comes from looking at so many comic book panels.

**YET MANY OF THESE SURROUNDINGS ARE STILL SUPER SCIENCE FICTION BASED, DO THESE DESIGNS ALLOW GREATER CREATIVITY FOR EXPLORATION?**

Definitely. I get to do landscapes and portraits in the same design. Buildings being destroyed and alien abductions are always fun.

**DO CLIENTS COME TO YOU WITH TWO CONCEPTS THEY WANT TO MERGE? OR A THEME THAT ALLOWS YOU ARTISTIC LICENCE TO COMBINE TOGETHER?**

The split designs have a lot more scope and it's a good framework for people to put their own ideas onto. Sometimes I'll draw my own ideas and sometimes people come to me with suggestions. Not every idea can work. If someone wants a design based on a film with a certain character they have to be recognisable from the nose down.

**SOME OF THESE SPLIT WOMEN DESIGNS HARK BACK TO THE VISUAL AESTHETICS OF 50S SCIENCE FICTION B-MOVIE FILMS, WAS THIS A CONSCIOUS DECISION IN YOUR DESIGNS?**

Yes, I grew up watching old sci-fi films like *The Day The Earth Stood Still* and *Invaders From Mars*. I love that aesthetic. It's got a bit more of a comic feel to it compared to a modern aesthetic. People had better hairstyles back then too; they're better to tattoo.

**WHAT SPLIT SUBJECT MATTER DO YOU HOPE TO TATTOO IN THE FUTURE?**

I would definitely like to do a H.G. Wells portrait/*War Of The Worlds*. And another of Judge Dredd/*Mega-City One*.

**WHAT DOES TATTOOING MEAN TO YOU?**

I love it. I get to draw robots for a living. What could be better? ☐



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*In our previous article we were introduced to the exchange of information that is uniquely privy to the craft of tattooing, the passing down of that holy knowledge that will inevitably be marked by a tattoo. Learning from our mentors, we can have a piece of work on our bodies that reminds us of that experience, and also gives us a guideline, mapping where we should be headed in our future*





Tattoo by Sean Herman on Jesse Huggins

One of my favourite examples of this is from the documentary “Stoney Knows How” when Ed Hardy got tattooed by Stoney and learned not only his methodology, but also his ideology on tattooing. In our last instalment I introduced you to a client and friend of mine, Jesse Huggins, and we began to learn about his path in knowledge exchange via getting tattooed. One mutual mentor that Jesse and I both have is the southern hurricane that is Famous Gabe Smith.

Many years ago I found myself in that all too familiar spot, five minutes into getting a tattoo and wondering why I thought putting myself through this was a good idea. I was getting tattooed by my good friend, and one of my handful of mentors, Famous Gabe. Gabe had been someone that was spoken about in my area for years before I was tattooing. His name and work preceded him, and his contribution to tattooing along with his stories will long outlive him. I would always find whatever excuse I could to sit down with Gabe and learn from him. Passing down information in the craft of tattooing isn’t always just sharing technical information, it’s also demonstrating something that is vital to tattooing, the art of

**YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO TELL ME TO TAKE THE TRASH OUT! I WORKED LIKE THAT TO STAND OUT FROM THE OTHER GUYS HANGING AROUND**

storytelling. Just as a tattooist needs to know and understand their machine, we also need to understand the art of keeping a client comfortable while you are putting them through intense pain, and expecting them to come back again to get it finished. Gabe is a master of that craft, one that I am still to this day trying to learn from him. One of my favourite stories is when Gabe talks about getting into tattooing.



Jesse Huggins

“So, I am at Billy’s place and I guess I had hung out enough that he didn’t run me off. Capt. Billy intimidated the heck outta me. He is still the most talented man I ever met. He might not have been the best Tattooer but that guy believed in a naive kid like me. Every chance I could be at the shop I was. It was a competition everyday. It wasn’t easy because I wasn’t the only one hovering. He had several grommets always hanging out like vultures





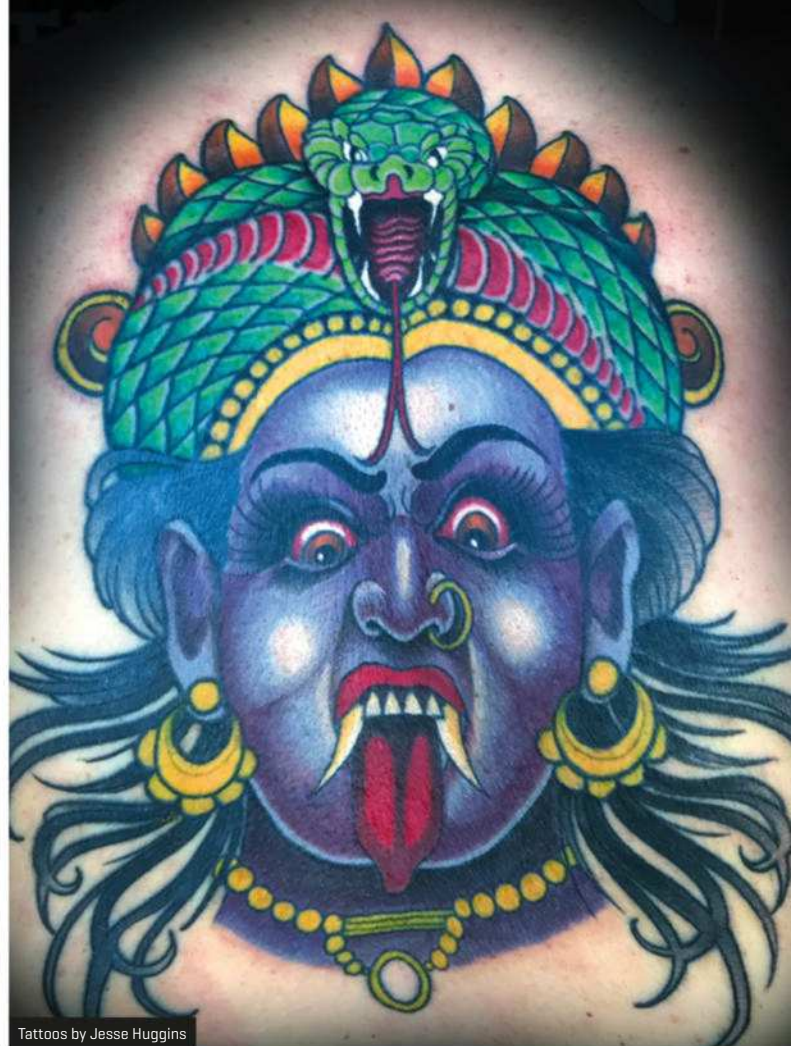
Tattoos by Jesse Huggins

***I KNOW NOT EVERYONE HAS THE OLD SCHOOL STYLE APPRENTICESHIP THAT I HAD, BUT I FEEL IT WAS SUPER IMPORTANT TO HAVE MY MENTOR TATTOO ME***

waiting on the chance to get a foot in the door, but Capt. Billy had his methods for weeding out who was serious and who was not.

Once he made me walk miles to buy him a Coca Cola and it had to be ice cold when I got back to him. I was only allowed to walk, nothing else. So I did it. I think he was surprised I came back, and that the Coca Cola was cold. It literally took all day, but I had my secrets of making it happen. Ice in a back pack will do wonders. He confided years later that usually that was his goto to really run someone off. Back in those days you did what you were told. You mopped floors or shined spokes on the bosses ride. I just watched and did things before he asked. As soon as he was done with a tattoo I broke the station down, set back up, and then washed the dirty tubes. You didn't have to tell me to take the trash out! I worked like that to stand out from the other guys hanging around."

Through humour Gabe's respect for his mentor is obvious, and this is something that he has passed down to both myself and Jesse. Jesse has always been the first to quickly point out those whose valuable contributions have helped guide his tattoo career. One of those people he always speaks about is the incredible artist and tattoo-



Tattoos by Jesse Huggins

ist Jason Stephan.

Jason's work speaks for itself, but his words have helped guide Jesse's attitude into one of respect and devotion to a craft. Here are Jason's thoughts on the importance his mentor had on him, and the value of passing down information through the tattoo experience.

"I know not everyone has the old school style apprenticeship that I had, but I feel it was super important to have my mentor tattoo me. He let me watch every tattoo he did, and even help stretch and assist at times, but he was guarded with information, so he didn't want me to ask questions while he was working on clients. I could write stuff down and ask him later, but not in that moment. When he tattooed me I could ask whatever and he could answer and even stop and show me a few things. I've always felt like that was one of the most beneficial parts of my apprenticeship. I didn't realise how much I took for granted watching, that became so much more clear with guidance behind it."

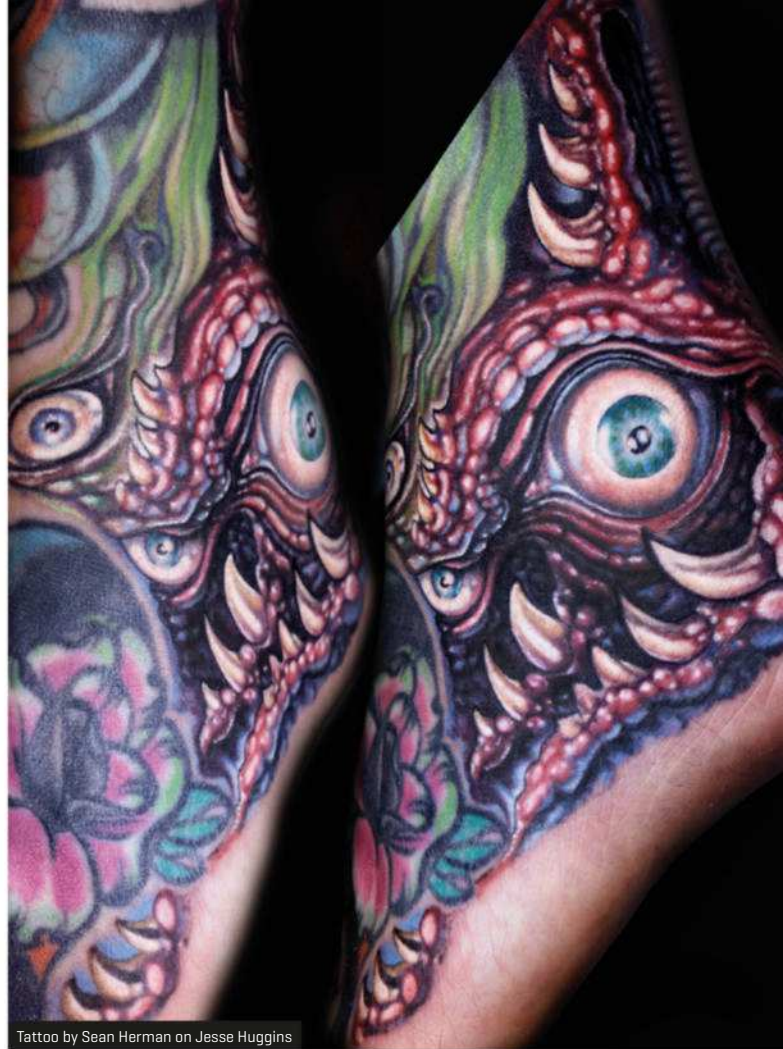
I'm now working out of a private studio, as a result, my time with my clients is now my primary interaction with someone all day. I'm not sure if it's that intensity, or maybe just my own changing, but I find now that I am the one learning more and more from these tattoo sessions. I decided after a particular session with Jesse a while ago that I wanted to write this series about the growth of his tattooing through the respect of getting tattooed by those you look up to.

His words were so respectful and heartfelt about his deep love and regard for tattooing, something that is in-





Tattoo by Jason Stephan on Jesse Huggins



Tattoo by Sean Herman on Jesse Huggins



Tattoo by Sean Herman on Jesse Huggins



Tattoo by Sean Herman on Jesse Huggins

spiring for those new to tattooing, and those who have made it their home for many years. Here's a little of what Jesse has to say about this process, and about the shape it continues to take for him.

Jesse: "Tattooing, and getting tattooed, is one of the oldest and most unifying acts that humans have taken part in throughout our history. Historians say that the practice goes back as far as 12,000 BC, and has had many meanings and purposes from uniting tribes to warding off illness and evil spirits. Whether we know it or not, getting tattooed connects us to this timeline and makes us apart of something that is so much bigger than our-

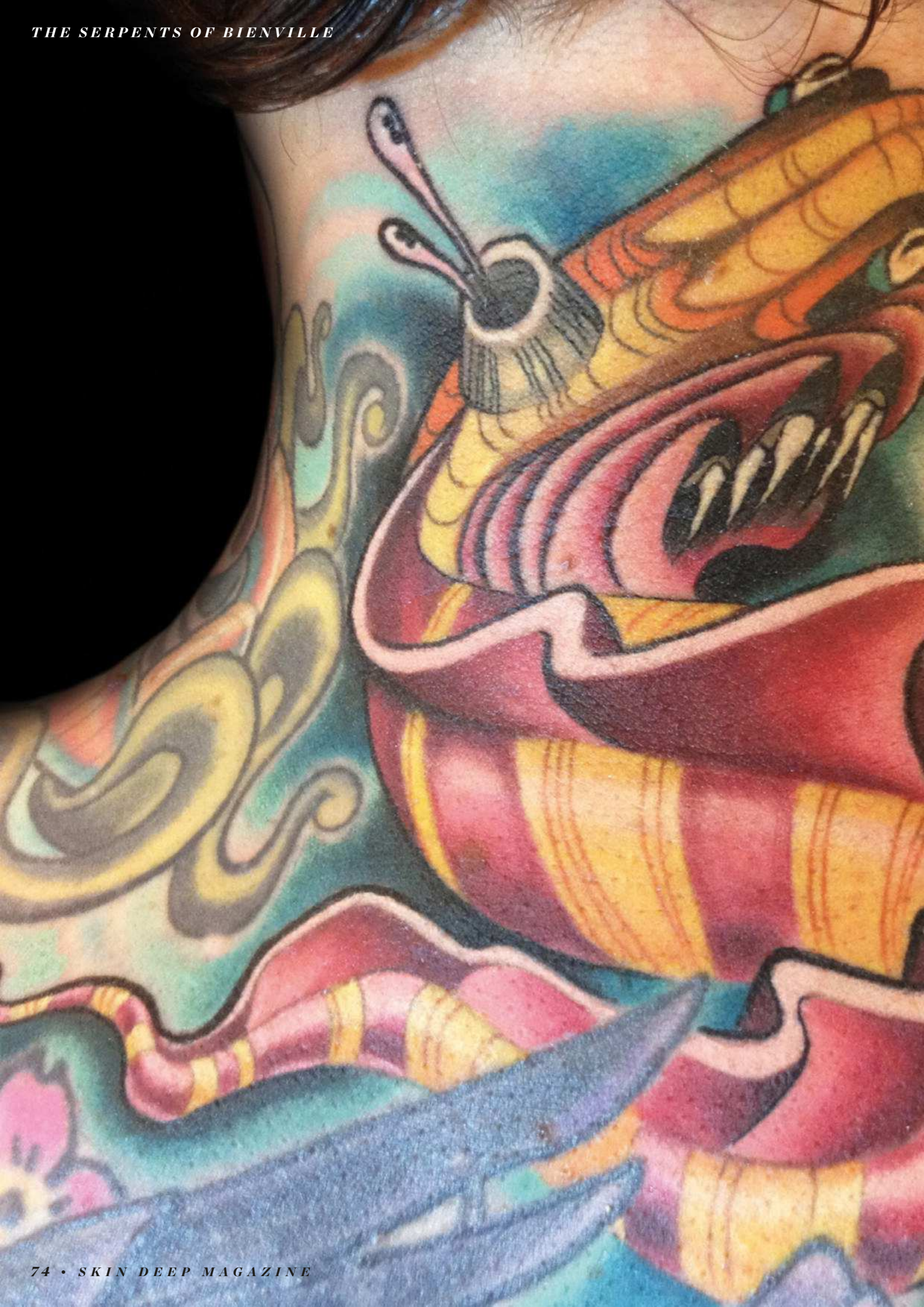
selves. As a tattooer, the biggest honour of my life has been the privilege of learning this craft, but it did not come without hard work and sacrifice.

Since the advent of 'tattoo reality television', most people know that in order to become a tattooer you must serve an apprenticeship under a knowledgeable and established tattooer. There are many avenues of gaining tattoo knowledge and improving your technical and drawing ability. Nowadays there are countless tattoo seminar DVDs you can buy that promise to help you achieve this faster, but there used to be only one way to gain this knowledge and that was by getting tattooed.

When I was apprenticing I would hear stories about artists having to travel to get tattooed and being able to ask questions during the process, then bring home the knowledge they received and apply it to their own work. This began to resonate with me once I myself began getting extensively tattooed. Before that I would watch my mentors tattoo all day long and ask tons of questions and think I had it all figured out, but when I would get the opportunity to do a small tattoo everything I thought I knew fell apart.

When I began to get tattooed I would feel the needle, the stretch on my skin, the pressure used, how different needle grouping felt and how hard or soft they would run their machines. I began to ask questions that correlated with what I was see-









Tattoo by Jason Stephan on Jesse Huggins

**WHETHER WE KNOW IT OR NOT,  
GETTING TATTOOED CONNECTS  
US TO THIS TIMELINE  
AND MAKES US A PART OF  
SOMETHING THAT IS SO MUCH  
BIGGER THAN OURSELVES**

ing and feeling in front of me and I gained a much deeper understanding of how tattooing worked. I realised that going this route to gain knowledge was more deliberate and meaningful, and solely relying on dvd seminars sold for profit was arbitrary and only set me back from what I was trying to accomplish. I earned this knowledge, I didn't pay for it.

My first turning point was getting my sleeve tattooed by Earl Funk. We would do ten hour sessions at a time, and I watched closely as he layered his colours, and after a few sessions I began feeling comfortable enough to ask questions. I feel like that was the first big step in getting an overall vision of the kind of work I wanted to do.

After the sleeve was done I began getting a lot of work by Jason Stephan, who is one of my favourite tattooers in the industry. He really went in depth with me and gave me a lot of technical advice that helped me tattoo better and faster than any dvd I had paid for.

Lastly, getting tattooed by Sean Herman really turned my focus not only on the technical side of tattooing, but also the purpose that tattooing has in our lives and what it means for our clients. In an industry that seems overly

Tattoo by Jason Stephan on Jesse Huggins





Tattoo by Jason Stephan on Jesse Huggins

**...SOLELY RELYING ON DVD SEMINARS SOLD FOR PROFIT WAS ARBITRARY AND ONLY SET ME BACK FROM WHAT I WAS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH. I EARNED THIS KNOWLEDGE, I DIDN'T PAY FOR IT**

concerned with Instagram likes and convention accolades, he taught me that it only matters that the client likes the tattoo. The truth is, if your client isn't happy with their tattoo then it renders 10,000 Instagram likes completely meaningless. That lesson has had a profound effect on me and has changed my views on tattooing completely.

I'll never claim that knowledge is meaningless based on the source, however I can say through experience that learning about tattooing by simply getting tattooed by great artists has helped me more than any other avenue of obtaining knowledge. I can look at my tattoos and remember the lessons taught, and take pride in how it has shaped my own work. I hope to one day pass on this age old tradition. Who knows, maybe I already have. Time will tell."

As I sit and write this, my computer lights up with notifications. Messages about tattoo seminars, classes, DVDs, all things available for the distribution of information into the tattoo world. We have everything at our fingertips, we can watch hours of seminars by our heroes, and this information has helped tattooing grow in techniques by leaps and bounds in just the last decade alone. I can't help but wonder though, if in all of this technological innovation, if we have somehow lost that spark and connection that is the essence of tattooing. Perhaps it is the generational vantage point of becoming the shoulders that are being stood on, so the horizon is a little bit harder to see.

Maybe a years from now, new generations will be creating lore around the emails sent between two titans of tattooing that haven't even yet held a machine. Tattooing is



Tattoo by Jason Stephan on Jesse Huggins



Tattoo by Jesse Huggins

greater than all of us, will outlive all of us, and lives through all of us. Thankfully for tattooers like Jesse Huggins, we have a growing lineage of tattooers that learn directly from those they look up to, marking the experience forever in their skin. This is something that is uniquely tattooing, something that has been true for thousands of years. With every mummy found, we uncover a history of tattooing that goes further and further back, to a time where humans ventured through fields of ice to discover a new world.

As the adage states, tattooing is as old as time, with information and rituals of exchange being one of the things that guarantee it will live on for generations to come. ▣



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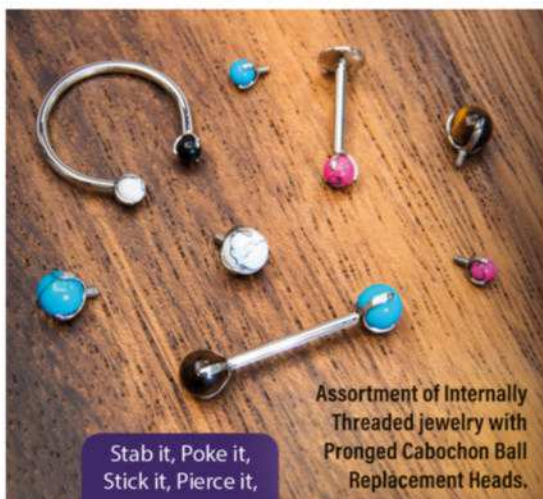
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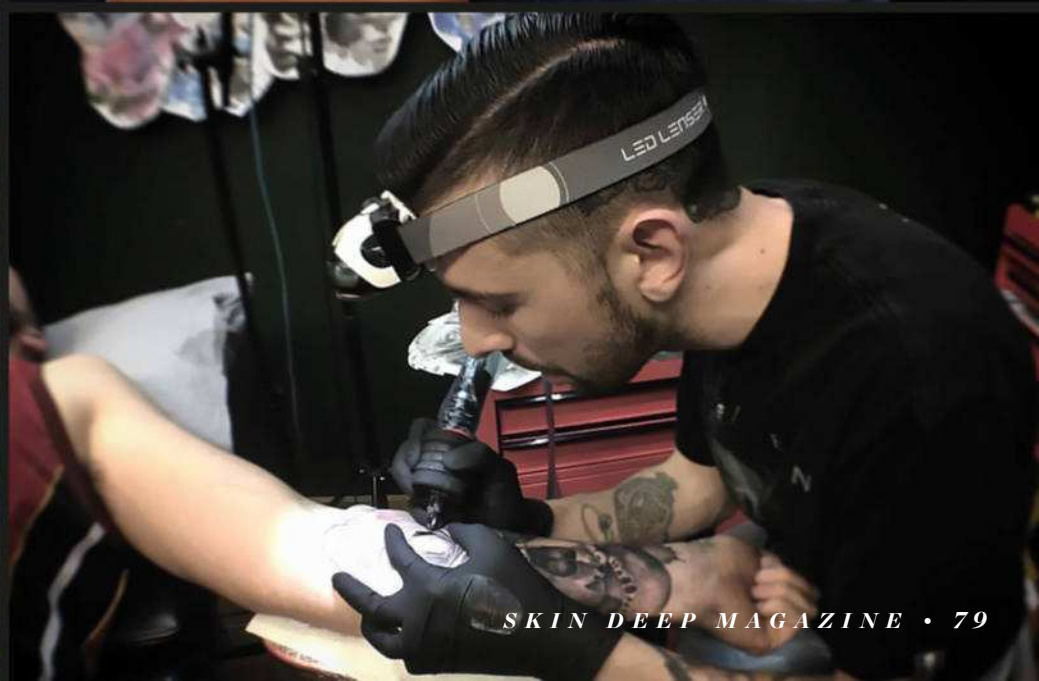
# MONSTERS UNIVERSITY

*One of the most important things for any artist is their workspace. Those four walls commonly referred to as the tattoo studio. This is the place, after all, where all the magic happens, where needle meets skin and ideas become living, breathing art*

@whoswillgee  
monstersartemporiumtavistock











**IT HELPS ME FEEL CONNECTED TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, WHICH I DON'T GET TO SPEND MUCH TIME IN THESE DAYS EVEN THOUGH WE LIVE RIGHT ON THE EDGE OF DARTMOOR**

**W**ill Gee knows this only too well. For the last two months, he and his team - his wife and studio manager, Laura Gee, and apprentice Emily Lynch - have been burning the midnight oil, working around the clock to create the perfect space to work in. The result is Monsters Art Emporium in Tavistock, Devon, or, as Will describes it, his "own little slice of heaven."

"It was a challenge," he reflects now. "We were very happily set up in a lovely office space I'd converted, with loads of room, and just to throw a spanner in the works, Andy, a friend of mine, mentioned a property that would make a lovely studio. So I went to look at the place and was given an offer we couldn't turn down." Being fully booked meant a lot of overtime to get the new place ready for the local Environmental Health Officer to come in and do their inspection prior to opening - something that happens for every reputable new tattoo studio. "But we did it! And then we all had mental breakdowns," Will laughs. "My wife Laura was my rock and made everything work managing all the ins and outs of it all, literally would never have happened if it wasn't for her."

Of course, this wasn't just to create the perfect work-

ing environment for him and his team. No, tattooing is a two-way process and that space is just as important to the clients. "We could probably fit about eight artists into the new place if we squeezed them all in, but for me it's about having a better workspace," Will explains. "A lot of clients say how studios that they have been in before are really uncomfortable, and they feel like they are crammed in, all the while being in the very vulnerable position of being tattooed. So we try and go to the polar opposite." He has a badass sound system, "all the better to blast metal with," wooden cladding and a nice shade of forest green acting as the dominant colour in the tattoo room. "It's really relaxing and helps me feel connected to the outside world, which I don't get to spend much time in these days. Even though we live right on the edge of Dartmoor National Park."

The client relationship is particularly interesting, I find, for artists operating within the more offbeat styles of tattooing - 'Watercolour Surrealism' is what Will self-identifies as working within. With such a style, flash is used less often, if at all. A client coming to a surrealist artist is going to have less of an idea of how their ideas might be interpreted as, say, if they were to go to a traditional





artist. Will's studio is very client-friendly. His ethos, as we've seen, is to make the tattooing process as comfortable as possible. But is a line drawn when it comes to the design process: does Will, as some surrealist artists do, insist on free rein or is the client encouraged to input as much as possible?

"This is always a hard question to answer, because I think to get the best out of any artist you like is to let them do their own thing. I'm always trying to push the envelope and do things I've not seen done before and challenge myself. However, most clients want things within the parameter of what they have seen on Pinterest or Instagram." Will encourages the client to bring as much to the table as they like as it helps give him some direction – better that, no doubt, than them saying, "Just do what you like." But he does advise people to avoid the word 'tattoo' on Pinterest and Google searches and look within themselves for inspiration. "Otherwise, the same images get sent through time and time again which is very disheartening." Like most artists, he isn't afraid to turn down a piece or recommend someone else better placed to do a tattoo – and, again, this isn't him being precious or snobbish but rather a case of putting the client first. "If

I feel that a piece isn't for me, I won't take the piece on," he says plainly. "My heart has to be in it. That's what the client deserves, someone who will put their heart into the artwork they want."

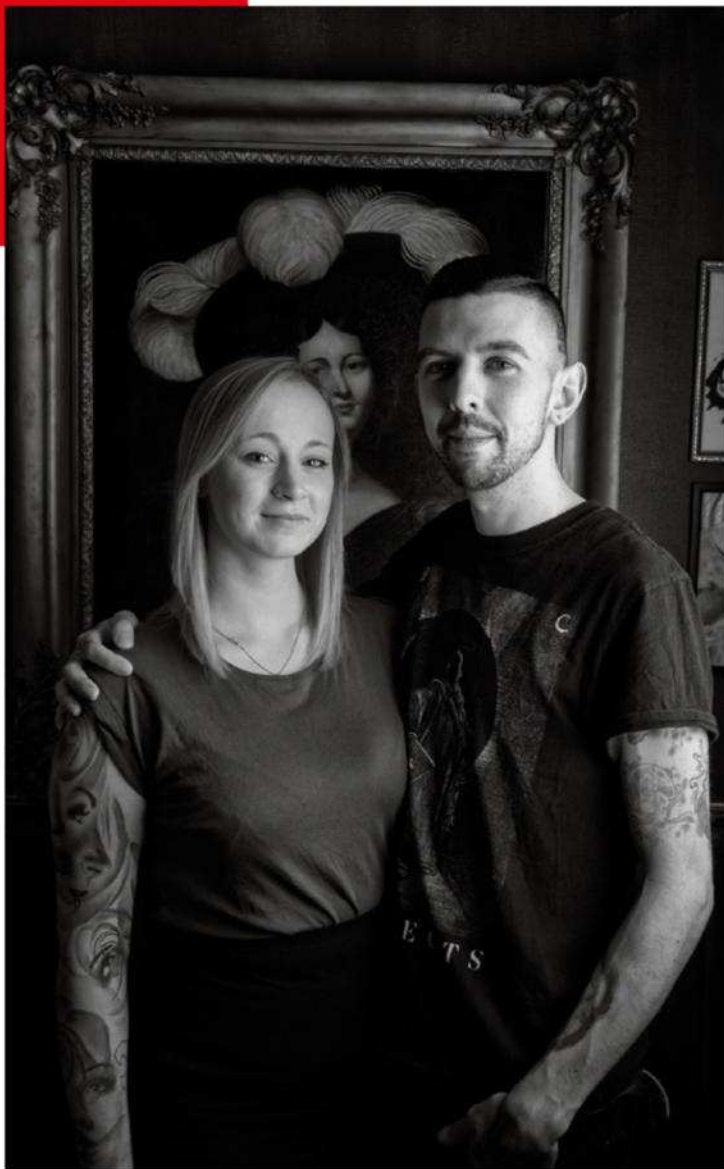
Surrealism wasn't initially what Will wanted to do, he started off working mostly within realism. "However, as I moved through realism," he says, "I started wanting to add something different to my work, so I started adding some graphic watercolour style elements with inspiration from artists like Paul Talbot." Back then, there wasn't a lot of people doing watercolour-style tattoos and he struggled to build a client base for it, even giving tattoos away for free to build his portfolio. "As that started to take off then I decided to add the realism elements back into my work, so that's where it all comes from, really."

What I notice most about Will's work is the softness. Particularly his floral pieces – clearly a staple for Will. I wonder if this is a conscious effort and, if so, how he balances this aesthetic out with creating a tattoo that stands the test of time.

"Getting everything soft is something I have always strived for, and have been plagued by, but it's just about studying and assessing constantly," he tells me. "As for

**MOST CLIENTS WANT THINGS WITHIN THE PARAMETER OF WHAT THEY HAVE SEEN ON PINTEREST OR INSTAGRAM**





## **I WANT TO PUSH BIGGER, ADD MORE BLACK BRUSHSTROKES INTO MY WORK TO ADD A DARKER CHAOS AND USE THE WHOLE BODY AS A CANVAS**

making a tattoo stand the test of time, for me that's more about saturation, having good value and colour theory. Any tattoo, regardless of the style, can scar, drop out and fade if it's not done properly, so I really see tattooing as putting ink in the skin. After that fact, it's just making it look like a style - using techniques that make it look traditional, Japanese, Neo trad, realism or whatever. But fundamentally, it's all putting ink into the skin. And if you don't get that basic element right, the tattoo won't last." Simply put, Will approaches watercolour tattoos the same way he approaches colour realism, reproducing the watercolour effect we know from fine art onto skin - and it's an ongoing process for him, something he constantly works to refine. "All the little washes and blends, splats and saturation of the ink in different places. I think I'll always be pushing for smoother, larger, more depth, better colour theory and always aiming to do better each day."



Ten years ago, it was the sketchy style of mostly European artists like Lionel and Noon that dominated surrealist tattooing, alongside the counter-culture style of the Buena Vista guys. Now we're seeing a surge in the watercolour style. What does Will see as the next step in the sub-genre's evolution? And where does he see himself fitting in?

"I'm really not sure where it will go, and where I will fit in. A lot of the time I feel I don't really fit in anyway. I want to push bigger, add more black brushstrokes into my work to add a darker chaos and use the whole body as a canvas. But generally, I hope this movement is helping people see that tattoos can be something else, a piece of artwork that uses the whole body as a canvas not just one area for a tattoo."

Will's just signed a sponsorship deal with Barber DTS and would like to work with other companies, such as Sullen. "They've been doing a series where artists come in and do a tattoo on camera, and a run of seminars as well. I spend a fair amount of time replying to e-mails from other artists asking how I go about doing the things I do, so I try to help where I can and I think a seminar would be a good way to combine it all some day."

But mostly, it's about his art, taking it to the next level, discovering new things, injecting (literally) new ideas into the mix and keeping it fresh for himself. "I mean, sometimes it's not just about the skin that is tattooed," he adds, "but the space that isn't."

Wise words indeed. ▣



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**A**s ever, in our combined travels of the world, we come across some great shows that really stick it to the people. This month, we take a look at the show in Poznan (Poland) where they raised the bar on themselves with a huge fleet of great artists and there was superb work to be seen around the show which we've pictured here as best we can—as ever in that neck of the woods, shot, curated and delivered by the always wonderful Kamila Burzymowska.

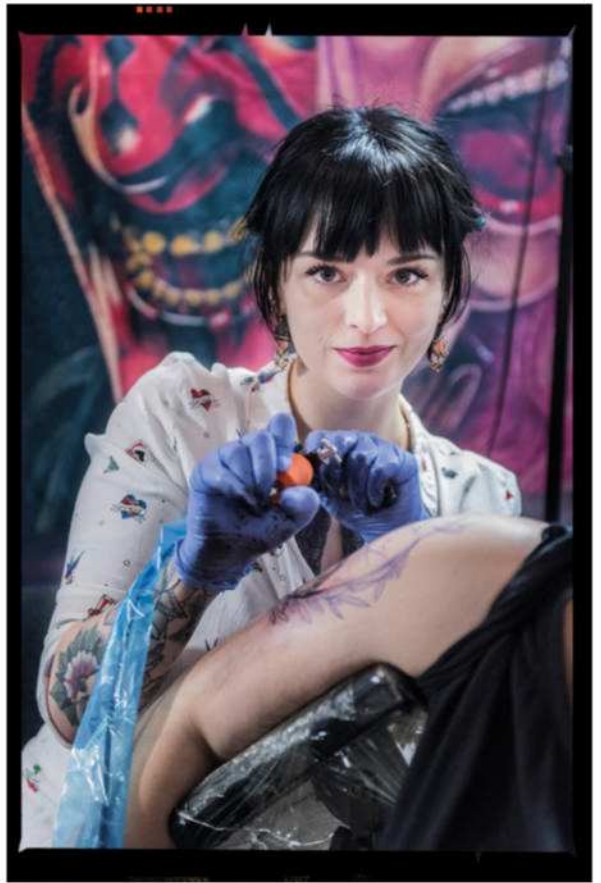
We'll never get tired of saying it—it costs pennies to get around the world now—there's no excuse for not checking out some of these shows in the flesh. Netflix will still be there when you get home - you could even take it with you. Go out and see the world and some of the amazing tattooers the world has pulled together for us.

Images: Kamila Burzymowska

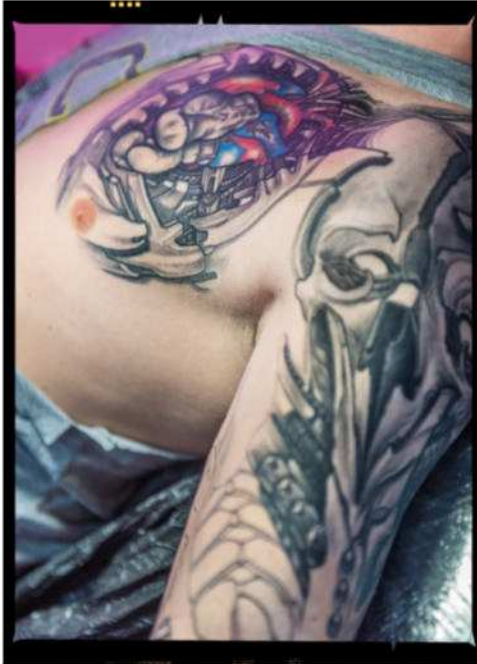
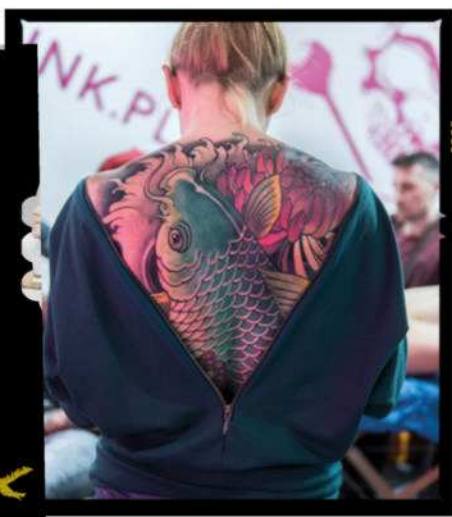












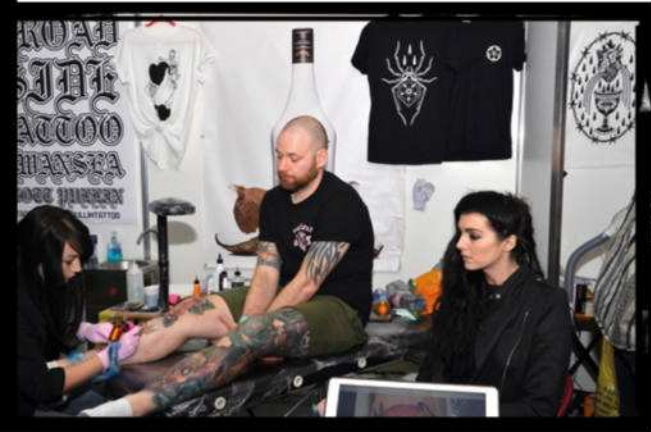












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**W**ith over 150 international artists on hand at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange, it's easy to see why the Scottish Tattoo Convention - this being the eighth - has become a lynchpin in the country's tattooing calendar. Here, we present a flashback to the weekend in which some damn fine work was born.

Pics: Gitz & Glam Photography



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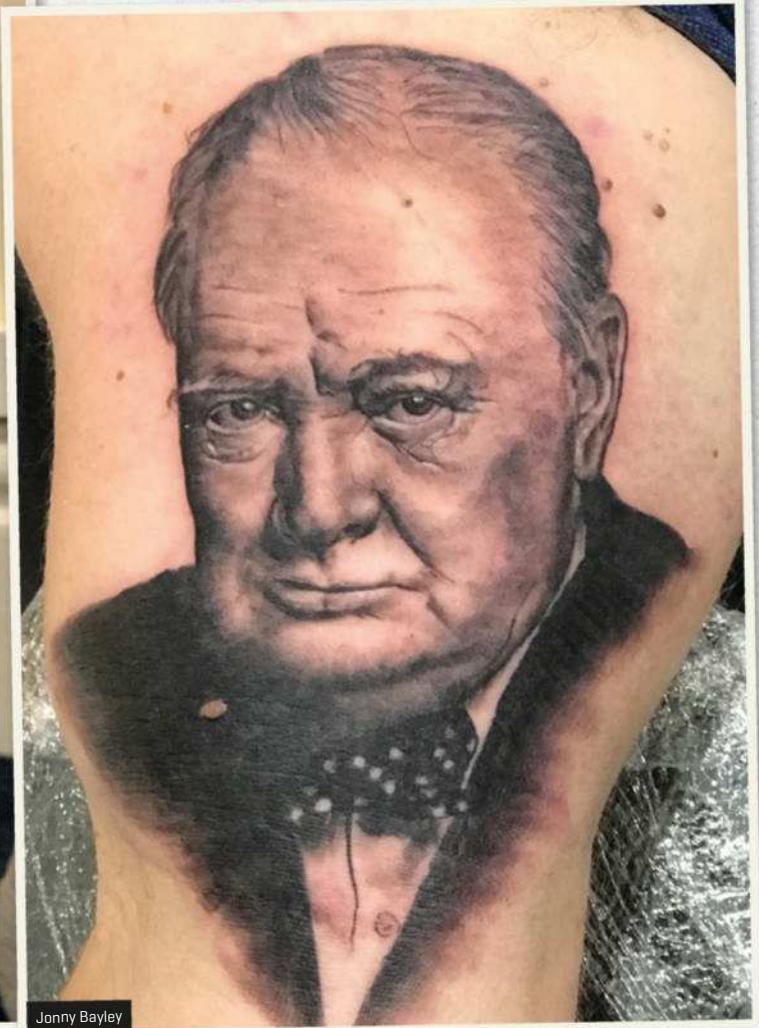
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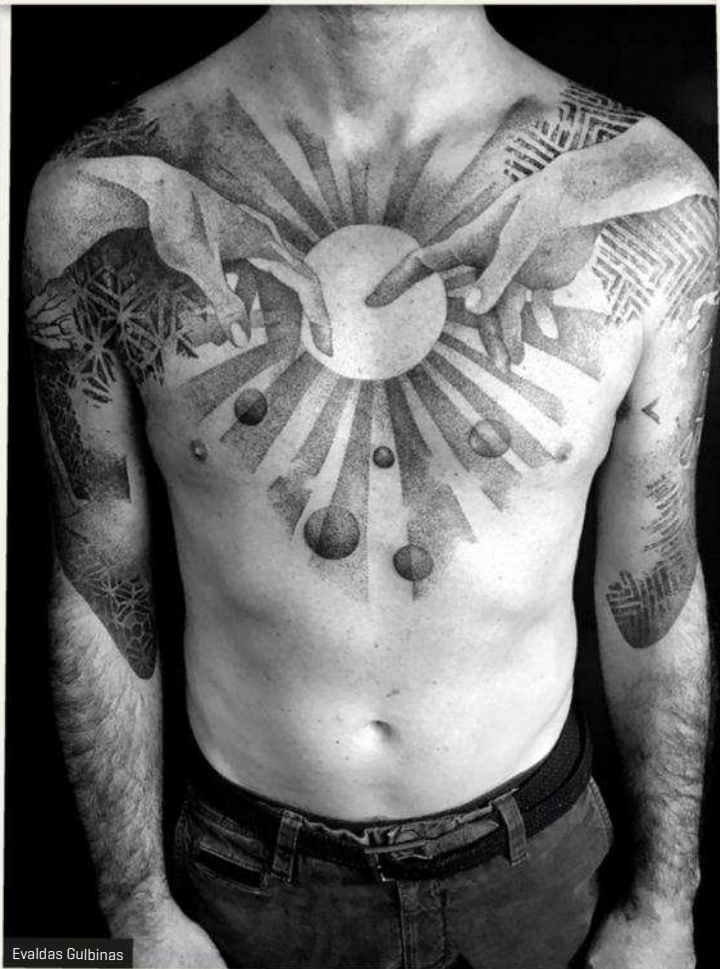




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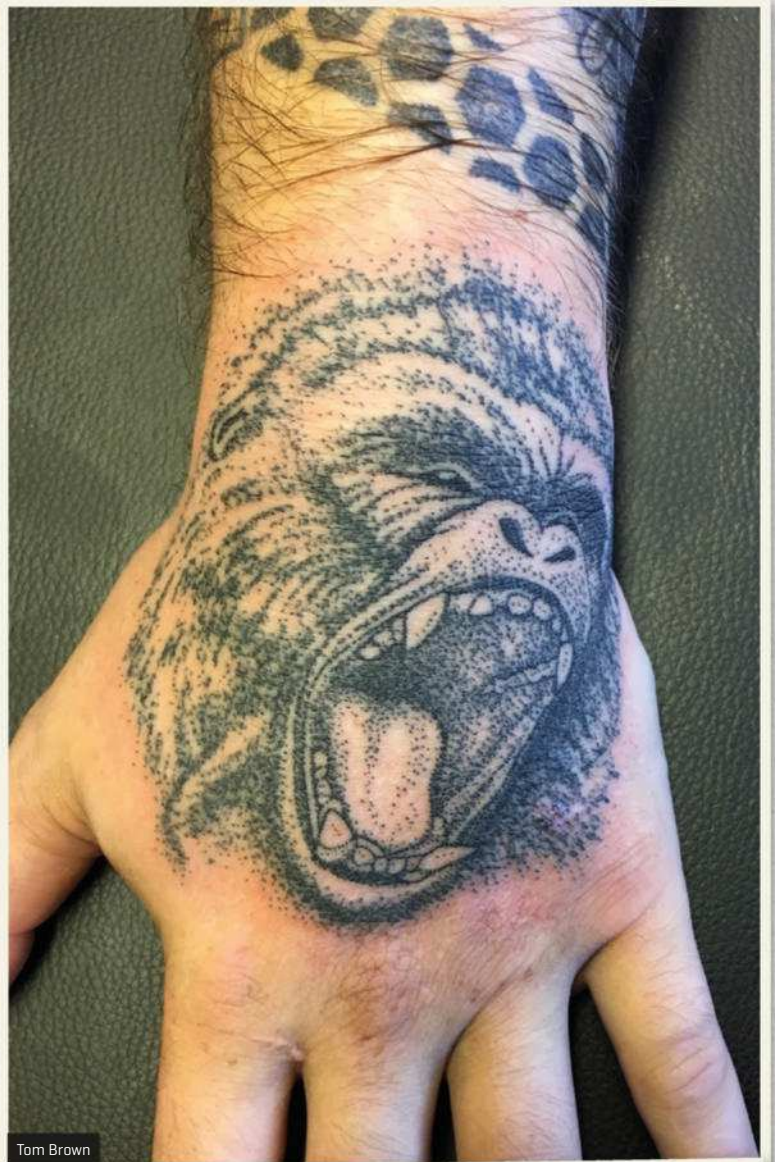


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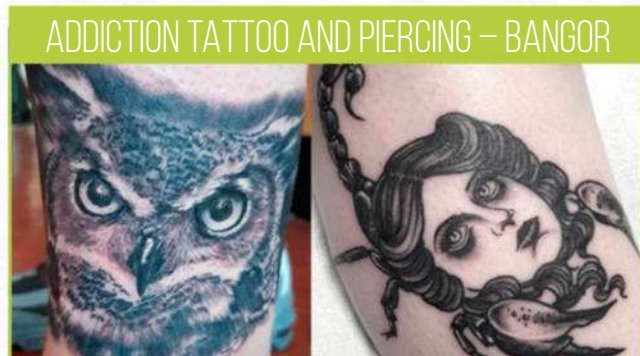
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by  
Ben Kaye



Ben Kaye

**In case you missed it, we threw a big party-type feature on Ben Kaye in the last issue but you know what?** I keep coming back to his work and looking at it again and again, all the time thinking to myself that it's a world apart from the norm.

While we all know how good Ben is at rustling up the odd pop-culture portrait or wildlife scene ('rustling up' being something of an understatement), this is something very different. I've seen more tattoos pass before my eyes over more years than I care to mention, but this is pretty special.

It's an easy one to pass over too when the rest of his portfolio is in your face

like Motorhead playing in your kitchen, but the sheer subtlety of this keeps bringing me back to it. How many times have you seen a tattoo of a flower and thought it was pretty?

Now, how many times have you seen one with as much life as this? Hell, anybody on the planet would be proud to be sporting such a thing. I'm super-sold on this tattoo. Seriously, if you have a better looking rose than this, I'd love to see it because that's just about as good a rose tattoo has even gotten in my book.

I'll stop talking now. There's no need to say anything else...

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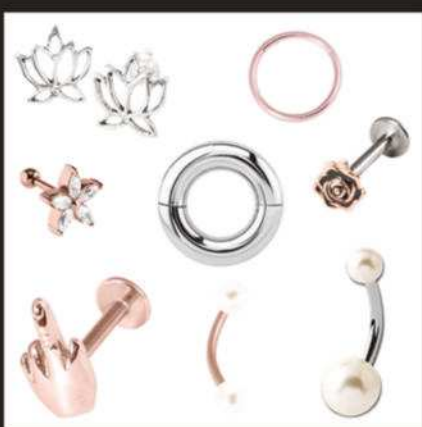
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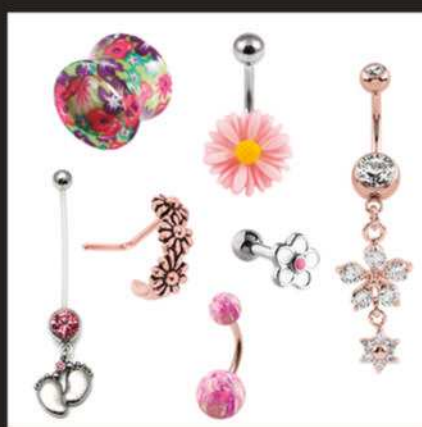
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