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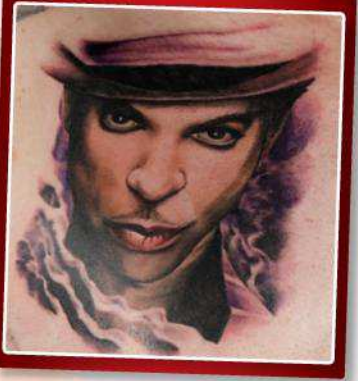


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Oliver Peck knows how to throw one hell of a party. His annual Elm Street Music & Tattoo Festival just keeps getting bigger and this year's edition featured 33 of the world's most talented tattoo artists

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The work of Hokowhitu Sciascia compels you to step into his void. He is far more interested in those who couldn't care less about polished Insta Stories and those who flaunt their daily calorie-controlled protein-rich meal plans. He's also one hell of a tattooer.

32 KINGS AND QUEENS

If you want good (make that 'great'), humble ink, there's a city in Denmark that's got your back. In this special feature, we take a look at twelve of the best artists Copenhagen has to offer.

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Sarah Lu has made something of a name for herself bringing what is more commonly known as 'stick n poke' tattooing to a very appreciative audience. It's not a gimmick, no PR stunt... it really is the only way she knows how to tattoo.

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Matt Pettis has his own graphic style that is easily recognised. Based in London he has joined forces with the guys at 'Through my Third Eye' and is happy calling it home. Nicky Connor swings by for a catch up.

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We're seeing more and more tattooists coming into the industry with a background in fine art—swapping the brush for a tattoo machine, so to speak. But what about when that happens the other way around? Wayne Simmons talks with Canadian artist, Kit King.

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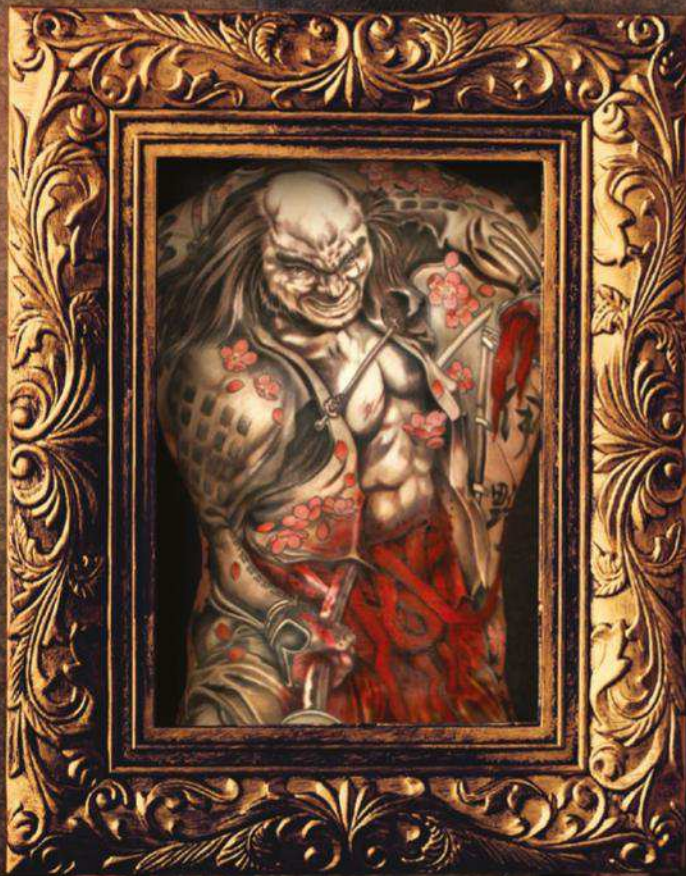
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The Museum of Tattoo Art?

Tattoo Art by Jess Yen

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Nomi Chi

The Wolf at your Door

I picked up a book this week called *Ten Arguments For Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*. Not the snappiest of book titles but good enough to have me standing in the bookstore ploughing my way through it. Such a thing is never too far from my thumbs, so I picked it up and in about five hours, read the whole thing without stopping for much.

There's a lot of food for thought in it and you should be scared. You should be concerned about what the platforms get away with behind the curtain that you would never, ever, put up with in real life.

IN A WORLD THAT PRIDES ITSELF ON BEING 'ALTERNATIVE', HOW COME A HUGE PERCENTAGE OF THAT WORLD, IS ALL THE SAME?



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Anyway, that's the bigger picture and I need to translate it into something relevant here. Allow me to paraphrase. There's a section that talks about humans as though we were wolves and goes on to point out that when you act as a solitary wolf, you're forced into thinking for yourself without caring what the larger pack thinks. You have to find water, food and shelter alone or you will die.



SATURDAY NIGHT
& SUNDAY MORNING

You must approach life based on the things you experience first hand and by doing so, you will take on the 'qualities of a scientist or an artist'. The key word here is artist. That's what an artist does: delivers their own unique world view.

On the opposite side of the fence, it (very correctly) states that when you're in a pack, the only thing that's important is your social status within that pack. You have no option other than to become a little cog in the machine - a slave to the grind if you like. You're left with no option other than to act like a machine operator... which is about as far from being an artist as you can get.

In a world - and I'm talking about our world here - that prides itself on being 'alternative', how come a huge percentage of that world, is all the same?

I can name only two artists who are not on social media, could care less about it and use the internet smartly to promote their art. They do not spend their time saying thank you or entering into conversations about how awesome they are - or are not - they are too busy getting on with creating art to care what anybody thinks.

Lone wolves. Both of them. I'm not even going to name them because I kind of like checking in and out with them like the guilty pleasures they are.

Most important of all, in that big scheme of things, it's not making things better. I could line up ten tattooers and ask them all what they hate most about tattooing and nine times out of ten it would be the client that comes along brandishing a phone screen picture of what they would like committing to their skin... forever.

Yet, what are your customers supposed to do when the entire industry is posting images thousands of times a minute?

It's a weird one. I despise the whole shooting match - even more since most of the platforms decided they would choose what I want to look at rather than chose for myself. And yet, some love it. It's a connecting lifeline to a world that's larger than it's ever been but there's so much information, I can't even begin to start to figure out what's worth looking at and what's not.

A few months back, a new 'thing' arrived on



Nate Anderson

I REMEMBER A TIME WHEN BEING TATTOOED MADE YOU A LONE WOLF BY DEFAULT BUT NO MATTER WHAT I MAY SAY, THAT GENIE AIN'T GOING BACK IN THE BOTTLE.

the scene called VERO. It was supposed to be a 'true social network'... I joined and found Jesse Smith on there. We hooked up and laughed about how this too would probably be the same as all the others before we knew it. Within two days, my feed was flooded with tattoos again. Not different tattoos... but the same ones I could see everywhere else.

I remember a time when being tattooed made you a lone wolf by default but no matter what I may say, that genie ain't going back in the bottle. There's only one thing worse than being in a wolf pack and that's finding yourself outside of the pack when it's all you've ever known.

Maybe everybody out there likes being in a pack. Maybe it's a safety in numbers thing.

Sheesh. I think about this stuff way too much. Next month, I'm going back to talking about weird people instead. ▣



@dannywoodstockphotographer



Hobo Jack

The Summer Six Collection from Hobo Jack is aesthetically vibrant and sure to turn heads aplenty when you don this magnificent series of apparel over the summer months. The striking nature of the illustrations used in this collection, which includes tattoo regulars like bulldogs, tigers and panthers, really does help to make this range stand out from the competition and we can't believe just how affordable Hobo Jack t-shirts are—from £5.95

up to £16.00. Something which makes it hard not to want to buy every one of the new tees in their Summer Six collection.

UK based Hobo Jack have become experts in producing the sorts of T-shirts that men love over the last few years and they've really hit the nail on the head with this Summer Six Collection. Visually vibrant, handprinted in the UK and boasting great comfort courtesy of the 100% ring spun cotton used in their creation, what's not to like? ▣

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Today I'm not going to bitch and moan. Here, hold my pen while I go light my incense

When you're a writer submerged in your field of interest, it can be hard to not get bogged down in all the serious stuff. Here in tattoo town, there are always important topics to be discussing and magazines are vital forums in which we can kick off relevant contemporary debate for our industry. But, as well as making time for the significant stuff, we have to do the same for the little moments of good.

I've just returned from a big family holiday to the island of Bali. It is a truly magical corner of the earth. Whilst the locals see the spirits of the gods in every object, visitors can find spiritual stories around every corner. Towards the end of our trip we enjoyed a day of touring, rejecting the advice of the famous 90s girl-band and heading deep into the mountains to find hidden waterfalls.

Driving back to our hotel that afternoon via the tourist hotspot of Ubud, we reached the heart of an area where hundreds of bronzed travellers evidently settled to rest their dreadlocked heads. We must have passed a dozen tattoo shops in just a few minutes. I guess it's clear why tattooing and travelling go hand-in-hand—exploring our planet with limited physical space for on-the-road mementos, tattoos are no doubt very meaningful and (more importantly) less heavy souvenirs for their wearers to take away.

When my mum turned her head to me—'look at all these tattoo shops, Bex!'—my inner, unnecessarily-defensive, know-it-all-about-tattoos ego perked up. Dirty laminated tattoo menus that had faded in the sun? Unwrapped new pieces absorbing near boiling heat? White visitors walking around with tribal adornments? Was it our right to wear their culture on our Western skin? Were these businesses registered and following the best practice health and safety? Was the quality of the work artistically up to scratch?

Before allowing my tattoo-snob con-



Celine Preher

I WAS REMINDED OF MY EARLIER THOUGHTS ON TATTOO JOURNALISM, AND HOW FREQUENTLY THE FUN CAN BE SUCKED OUT OF OUR CONSTANTLY-QUESTIONED INDUSTRY



REBECCA RIMMER
theanalogueblogger

science to speak such things, I was reminded of my earlier thoughts on tattoo journalism, and how frequently the fun can be sucked out of our constantly-questioned industry. Without further considering the follow-ups to any of my questions, I looked at the jolly faces of each tattooed traveller in sight and (having revelled in it first hand for two weeks) acknowledged the welcome, conscientious and peaceful nature of the Balinese. There was no need for a commentary from the fun police, today. Everyone was happy.

One of the most memorable things about the Indonesian province is the constant smell of incense. Throughout the day it is used in spiritual rituals by all, at home and work, to ward off negative spirits and bring good luck. Taking a leaf out of the book of my hosts, I simply sat back into the glow of the melting sun, took a deep inhale through my nose and any criticisms seemed to scurry back into their caves.

'Looks cool, doesn't it, mum.' ▣

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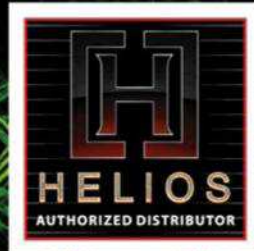
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BLACKPOOL TATCON TICKETS UP FOR GRABS

Where does the time go! It's almost August already which means Blackpool's Tatcon is on the horizon. This issue, we have some supersexy swag to give away for the event.

We have a first prize of a pair of weekend passes to the show plus accommodation (bed, breakfast and evening meal) across the 3 day event (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) for 2 people sharing a twin or double room. Backing this up, we also have a cool 10 pairs of weekend passes to give away—which means you can spend more cash on actually getting tattooed.

To enter, slide your fingers over to skindeep.co.uk/competitions, use the competition answer BLACKPOOL, fill in the other boxes and we'll do the rest. Winners will be notified by July 28.

Meanwhile, because we love the show so much, we'll also be giving away 1000 copies Skin Deep at the doors.

Full details of working artists, event times and just about everything else you could ever want to know is here: tatconblackpool.co.uk

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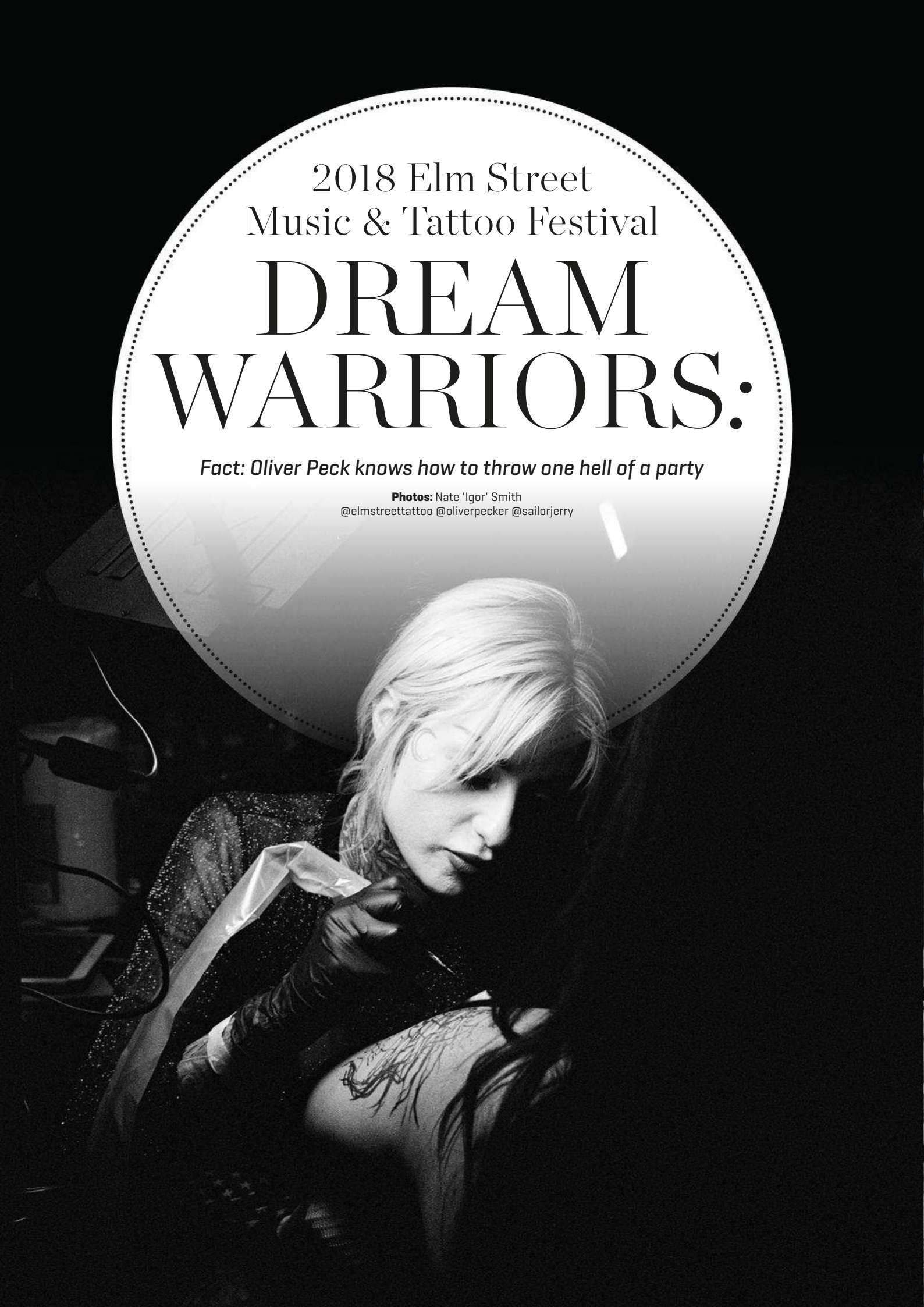
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2018 Elm Street
Music & Tattoo Festival

DREAM WARRIORS:

Fact: Oliver Peck knows how to throw one hell of a party

Photos: Nate 'Igor' Smith
@elmstreettattoo @oliverpecker @sailorjerry





His annual Elm Street Music & Tattoo Festival just keeps getting bigger and this year's edition featured 33 of the world's most talented tattoo artists (think Tommy Montoya, Keith Underwood, Rose Hardy, Alex Strangler) and plenty of rad bands, like Ben Nichols & Friends and Riverboat Gamblers.

Taking over Elm Street in Dallas, Texas' Deep Ellum neighbourhood from May 19th to the 21st, the fest also included plenty of Ink Master alums—oh hey, Steven Tefft, Ryan Ashley Malarkey, DJ Tambe, Dave Kruseman and Anthony Michaels!—as well as a special surprise from Harley-Davidson.



Teaming up with Sailor Jerry Spiced Rum, the iconic bike brand rolled out six custom 2018 Softail motorcycles covered in tattoo-inspired artwork from contest winners chosen by Megan Massacre, Sailor Jerry brand ambassador Ashley Marsh and, of course, Peck himself.

The latter of which rode in on one of the bikes alongside Leslie Porterfield (who holds the Guinness World Record as the fastest woman in the world on a conventional motorcycle), tattooer Luke Wessman, Lucero frontman Ben Nichols, Sailor Jerry's Anthony Bohlinger and motorcycle journalist Raine Devries.

Seriously, do yourself a favour and get down there next year... ▣

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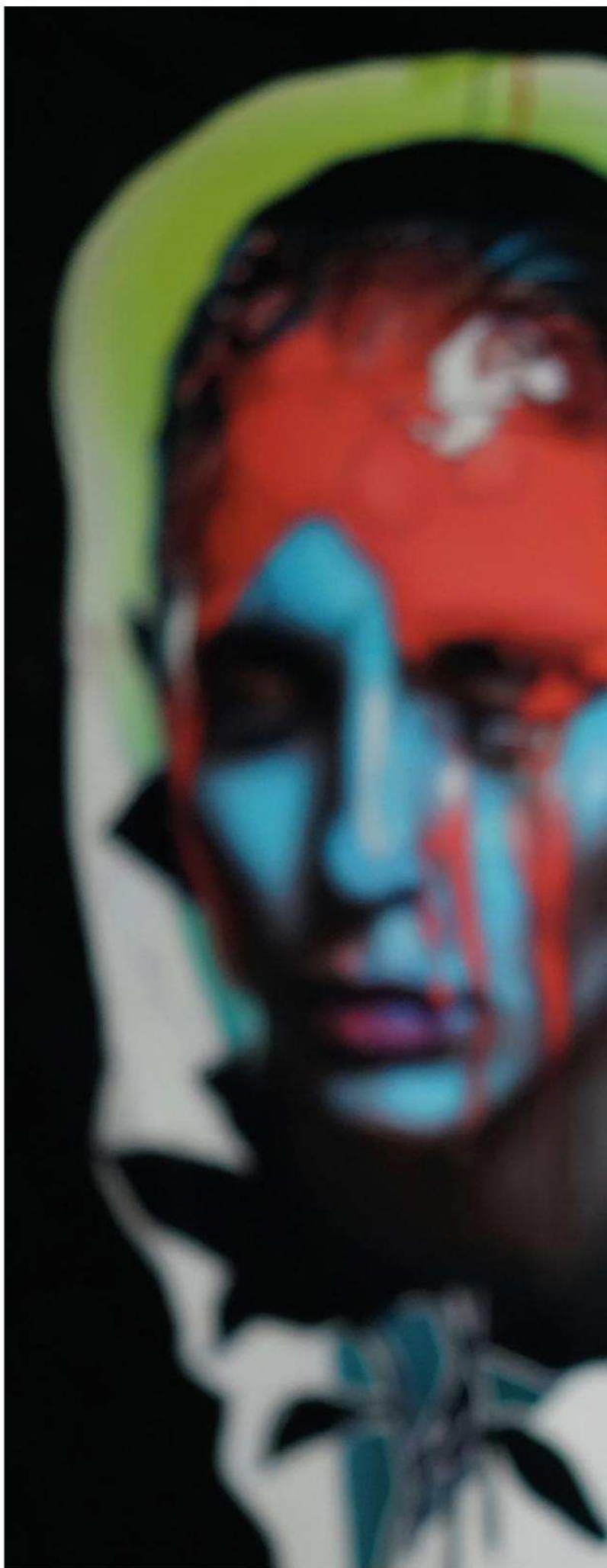
Wayne Simmons talks with some of his favourite rebels within tattooing, artists doing something different with their inks. This month he meets Dave Paulo

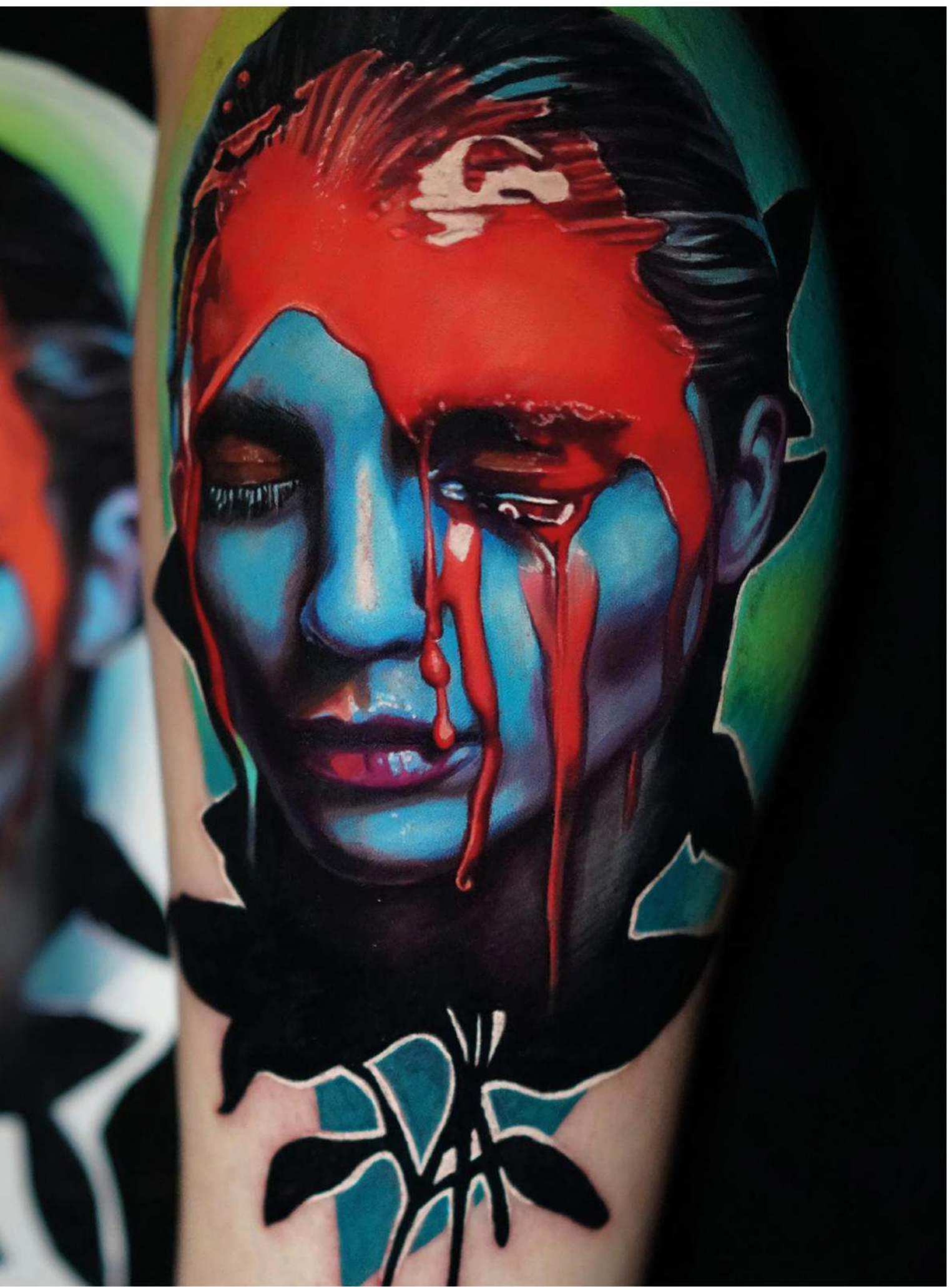
 davepaulo_tattooartist  @davepaulotattooartist

Surrealism is a funny ol' word. Rather aptly, you might say, it defies definition: most dictionaries and people in the know, such as those fine people at Tate, make a connection with the Parisian movement of the 1920s led by André Breton, but surrealism, as a term, has since come to represent just about anything in life that looks or feels or acts a bit... well... strange. For many, the most important word in there is 'realism' with 'surrealism' being a twisting of what we consider to be 'real' in some way. And if we were to ask, I reckon that's how a guy like Dave Paulo might see it.

David Costa Paulo was born not in Paris, not even in Europe, but in the good ol' US of A. His parents are Portuguese, though, and at the grand old age of eight, Dave returned with them to their homeland where he's remained ever since. He works at his own, private studio in the small village of Mira, a coastal town in the north of the country. "Portugal is a small and humble country," he tells me. "Its people are a little more conservative than most of the other countries that I've visited. In fact, until a few years ago, I would have said that tattoos where taboo in Portugal. People associated tattoos with criminals, delinquents and drug addicts." It was the sudden explosion of reality TV that changed perceptions about tattoos in Portugal, just as it did just about everywhere else. "TV programs like Miami Ink and LA Ink," Dave continues. "They changed the way a lot of Portuguese people would think about tattoos. Suddenly, they started to think of tattooing more as an art form."

**UNTIL A FEW YEARS
AGO, I WOULD HAVE
SAID THAT TATTOOS
WHERE TABOO IN
PORTUGAL**







MORE AND MORE I SEE KIDS AND TEENAGERS GETTING NECK AND HAND TATTOOS – SOCIETY, TV AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE INFLUENCING THEIR MINDS

Of course, with the internet and modern media, when change comes, it comes super-fast. These days, Dave is seeing some of the same trends within tattooing that we see here in the UK: the race to get coverage—and very public coverage—is becoming just as prevalent in Portugal as it is throughout wider Europe. “More and more I see kids and teenagers getting neck and hand tattoos,” he tells me. “Society, TV and social media are influencing their minds. They see heavily tattooed people and they want to be like them, so they start on areas that are visible.

They don’t seem to realise that those areas are normally tattooed only after most of the body is already tattooed.”

For Dave, it’s all about the art—the tattoos as opposed to being tattooed. He takes his lead mainly from the wider art world as opposed to other tattooists. “Lots of oil renaissance artists, like Caravaggio and his dramatic use of light, or more modern artists like Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele and Paula Rego.” For Dave, it’s about how these particular artists would approach portraiture—the unique ways in which they would paint the human form. He finds that approach hugely inspirational for shaping his own work. “It’s amazing how a human expression can tell so much,” he tells me. “That’s what I try to do on each of my designs: strong and dramatic expressions with powerful meanings.”

Later in life, Dave got into Warhol and Pop Art, as well as street art, and a couple of stand-out tattoo artists. “Led Coult and Dmitriy Samohin. I learned a lot from them both. With Led because I worked with him when I started tattooing and with Dmitriy because of his hyper-realistic tattoos.” This opened the door to other tattoo artists, such as Timur Lysenko and, of course, the Buena Vista guys. “They



inspired me to do more graphic and realistic tattoos.”

When I first came across Dave’s tattoos, it immediately struck me how I was looking at the work of an artist in the broadest sense of the word. He draws upon this huge variety of influences to create unique and complex pieces of art that, within the sea of realism and traditional tattoos that forms most of the tattoo community right now, really stand out. I’m interested in how he achieves this, how he distills all of what he’s been inspired by into his own definitive brand of tattooing. “It just came naturally to me, I don’t know how,” he shrugs, but I suspect modesty is at play. With Dave, this is a process and a process that involves a lot of hard work and introspection.

When I pry a little more, we see that very clearly. “Since the beginning, I knew if I wanted to be successful, I had to find a personal, individual and unique style that would

I WANTED TO STRIVE FOR DIFFERENCE, TO CREATE A PERSONAL TRADEMARK STYLE OF MY OWN, SO I STARTED MIXING GRAPHIC ELEMENTS WITH REALISM

distinguish me as a tattoo artist,” he explains. “I wanted to strive for difference, to create a personal trademark style of my own, so I started mixing graphic elements with realism. The graphic style has always existed, but not mixed with pure realism, so that’s why I settled on the combination of these styles. But over the last two years, I have also been mixing Pop Art into my compositions. I guess I call it ‘Realistic Pop Art.’”

Travel has been an important part of this process. Dave has regularly found himself on the road over the years, en route to a slew of conventions and guest spots. “It was and



I'M JUST TRYING TO CREATE POWERFUL REALISTIC POP ART DESIGNS

is very important to me. In the beginning when I decided to become a tattoo artist, communicating and working with other artists was what made me evolve as an artist myself. Watching them work, talking about tricks and tips, made me work harder and try new techniques myself.” There are some he tries to do every year: Zwickau, Golden State California, Milano Convention, ‘Le Mondial du Tatouage’ in Paris, Zurich Ink Days, Empire State New York, London and Florence. And that’s just to start—he’ll try to make other random shows on top of that. He’ll do guest spots in Germany, Switzerland and the US. And, of course, he keeps a full diary at his own studio back in Portugal. Dave, as you might imagine, is a busy man.

For most of the surrealism of the past, it was the message or philosophies behind the art—the movement itself



rather than its expression—that was most important to the artists and the critics that shimmied around them. This has rubbed off on Dave, too. “I’m just trying to create powerful Realistic Pop Art designs,” he tells me. “Tattoos with strong colour combinations and more meaning than just ‘the portrait’ or ‘the Flower.’”

And I think you’ll agree he’s winning at that. ▣



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Whether this is for first timers, or seasoned ink veterans, we aim to make every tattoo an experience our customers will look back on fondly in years to come. "I wanted our customers to walk in to a welcoming environment", says studio owner Warren Bennett, "I've been in plenty of studios which make you just want to turn around and head for the exit before you even say hello".

The Marlow Tattoo Lounge (MTL) lead Artist Andy Spraster, who has been tattooing for well over ten years,

has a keen eye for detail loves doing colour pieces and putting his own twist on the custom pieces he does. As an ex graffiti artist in his formal years he has always enjoyed being involved in art, so tattooing was his natural way to go. enjoying most styles of tattooing fine line and dot work likes a challenge getting the right piece to keep the clients happy.

Anna Elizabeth has a very strong portfolio in art was always going to make a very good tattoo artist she has been tattooing now for over four years enjoying her neo-



traditional style and realism work. Both our artists have started to show their skill set on the big stage at tattoo conventions which they both enjoy trying to establish the name of the studio as well as themselves. Andy has a large following in Bucks as he has worked in a studio based in Marlow for over 6 years, training up 2 apprentices and has now just taken on his 3rd to finish his trilogy. Warren and

Andy have worked extremely hard to get the studio right to make sure we have that welcoming vibe and giving the best service to our customers as possible. The aim is to work hard and ensure we have the best services possible which in turns builds a great reputation. The MTL are not finished just yet, they have plans to extend the MTL brand and family in a chain of studios in the near future. ▣

THE WEIRD AND FORGOTTEN CHILDREN OF HOKOWHITU SCIASCIA

The work of Hokowhitu Sciascia compels you to step into his void. He is far more interested in those who couldn't care less about polished Insta Stories and those who flaunt their daily calorie-controlled protein-rich meal plans. Instead his spirit sits firmly with those who would much rather immerse and engage with the fantastic, the lore of demonic horror movie villains and the blood-soaked pages of gruesome chillers. Influenced by the masters of the gothic genre, à la H. P. Lovecraft and H. R. Giger, Sciascia hopes to forge a new world of forgotten children; those who seek refuge in the realms of the macabre and the freedom of not giving a fuck about well-lit, filtered selfies

@inglourious_hoko

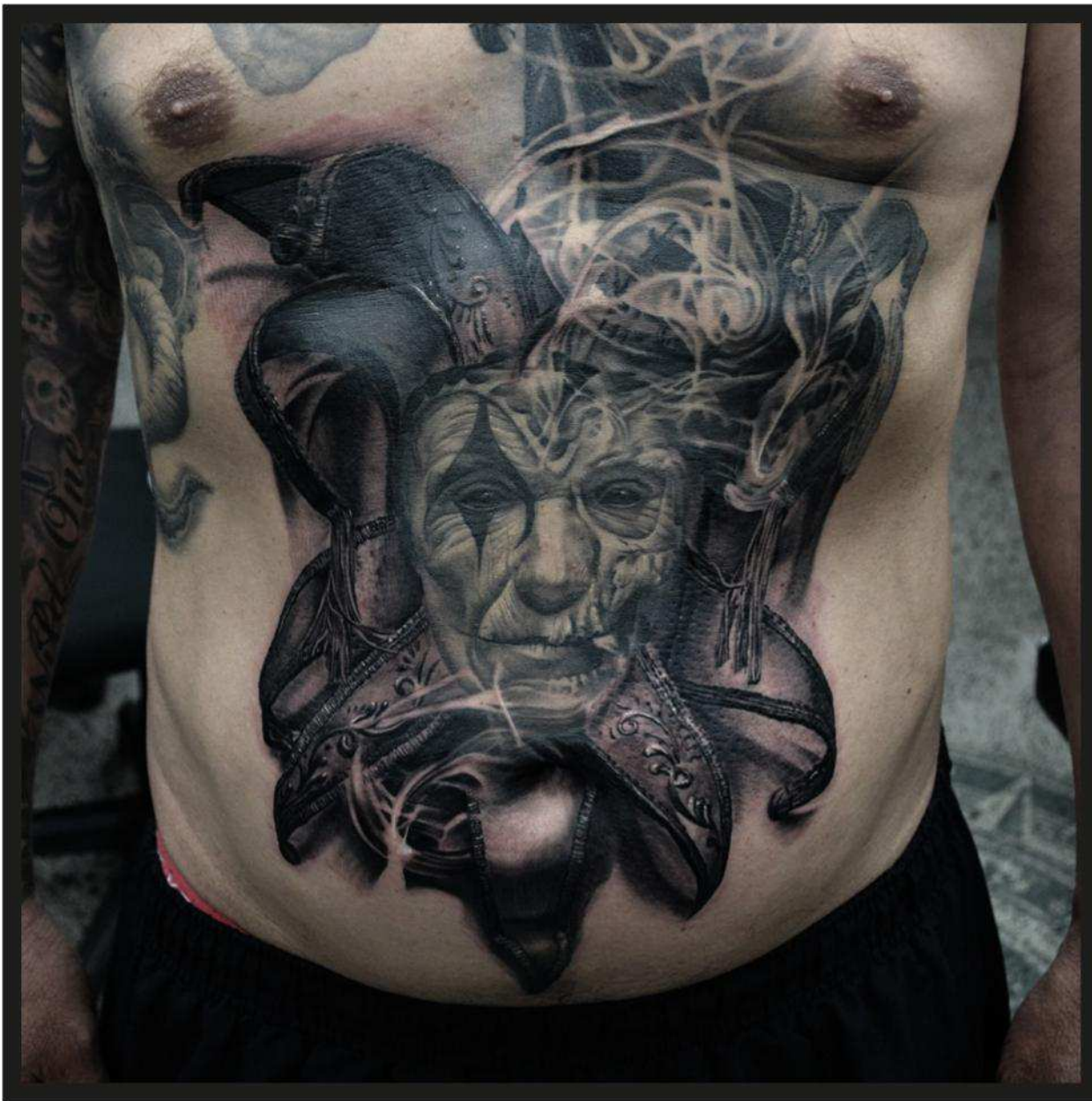
Just from the outset, your work is incredible! Each tattoo is so rich in detail and depth, breathing with life. How do you go about managing the complexity of each of your designs?

Thanks very much! It really does depend on the piece, sometimes I'll spend days in advance preparing, others I'll frantically sketch on the morning of the appointment. As to the actual tattooing, lately I've found myself almost scrawling lines over each piece, and allowing textures to build organically, with far more focus on style over realism. In previous years, I used to follow reference material methodically and meticulously; now I find myself working a lot looser, often without reference at all, and I think that lends a certain flavour to the resulting tattoos. Also, I often like to listen to audiobooks whilst I tattoo; this allows me to really lose myself in the piece, and focus without distractions.

Your mission statement is to make tattoos for the weird, forgotten and the middle children of society, who are these?

That is actually a partial quote from *Fight Club*, one of my favourite films. I find that with the popularity of tattooing, and with the current social media climate, people who would have balked at the idea of getting a tattoo ten years ago are now joining in, and are simply asking to have the most trite and basic tattoo ideas replicated on themselves. When one tattoo trends on social media, that tattoo is emailed to me, again and again, with the person asking how much, and how soon. As a person who gets bored very easily, I'd much rather be tattooing the weird kid who wants to expand and explore an idea, rather than the gym bro who wants to replicate the tattoos he has seen on a fitness model. I appreciate people who wonder.





I FIND MYSELF WORKING A LOT LOOSER, OFTEN WITHOUT REFERENCE AT ALL, AND I THINK THAT LENDS A CERTAIN FLAVOUR TO THE RESULTING TATTOOS

How do you successfully engage with these people? Ensuring that your work fits with their distinctive mindset and outlook.

I guess they seek me out, and it grows from there. I am quite picky with what work I take on, simply because I like to think of my tattooing as somewhat focused or specialised, and there are thousands of other tattooists who will nail an angel sleeve, and enjoy it. As soon as I see a request for a unique idea, something dark that flirts with abstract ideas, that walks the forest path, my interest is piqued, and I know something good will come out of it. But that really starts with the client; their background, influences and mindset is the difference between a great tattoo, and a good tattoo that would be better suited to someone else, hence my mission statement.

Where does your name Hokowhitu Sciascia originate from?

My name is of Maori origin, the indigenous people of New Zealand. My father is Maori, and my siblings all have Maori names. People often ask me

what my name means, and the answer is somewhat abstract. My name is literally a math equation; Hokowhitu means 7×20 , which equals 140. Maori chiefs considered 140 men to be the perfect number of men for a battalion, and the extended version of my name is "Te Hokowhitu A Tumatauenga," which means "The 140 chosen warriors to serve the god of war." So, this is what the battalions were named, and is my namesake. It is a very powerful name, that I feel extremely honoured to carry, although, it's really not an easy name for people to pronounce or remember.

There is a dark enduring atmosphere to each of your works, where do you find your inspirations?

Macabre imagery is something I've been drawn to my whole life, although I don't think I realised it when I was young. As a child, I was actually quite afraid of the macabre, I felt like it was something I shouldn't be viewing or experienc-



ing, but that morbid curiosity got the better of me, and took hold. One of the earliest examples of this gradual embrace was when I was a kid, a friend told me about a PlayStation game that his older brother had made him play, and that had terrified him. This was the first instalment of the *Silent Hill* series, and I became fascinated from this conversation alone. I eventually got a copy, and would secretly stay up well past my bedtime, exploring those misty streets to the tune of radio static and backmasked laughter. This series has influenced me to the point that when I design, the amazing compositions of Akira Yamaoka that scored these games is generally what I listen to, and I hope I can convey even a fraction of the atmosphere that those tracks contain.

The gothic nature of your work that depicts Lovecraftian characters is compelling, what is it about this author's stories that excites you so much?

Lovecraft is just amazing. He was truly ahead

of his time, and I think the thought of being confronted with a cosmic horror so great that a mind is scorched beyond repair is fascinating to anyone. His influence is absolutely everywhere, but few have done it like him. I've always admired the way he took content that theoretically was kitschy and ham-fisted, and presented it elegantly, with its subtleties intact, like in his story, *The Outsider*. Also, throughout my childhood, I was obsessed with deep-sea creatures, and I often had recurring dreams of being submerged in the endless green depths of the open ocean, while gargantuan, tentacle shapes threatened to consume me. I guess, like many others, I had heard *The Call of Cthulhu*.

How do you translate these monstrous characters successfully into tattoos?

It depends on what I'm creating. Sometimes I'll spend days working on it, reading about the subject matter, or similar influences. Other times I'll draw something that basically equates to a napkin sketch, and tattoo from that. These days, I don't find characters difficult to create, but there is a huge time investment that which truly turns the entire process into a labour of love. Despite this, I'd love to do more monster and character work, as who doesn't love to play Frankenstein?

I am a huge fan of H. R. Giger and his work with the *Alien*



franchise. How do films feed into your tattooing practice?

Giger is just as amazing and influential as Lovecraft, and he changed the face of science fiction and horror forever. I have definitely been hugely influenced by Giger, especially through the *Alien* films. I have early memories staying with relatives and being told not to come into the house so my Aunt could watch the films, and my cousin and I would sneak in and watch until we were caught and sent out again. When I got older, I would attempt to draw what I had seen in these films, being vaguely aware that it was something called “biomechanical”. Later, around the time I started my apprenticeship, my interest with Giger resurfaced, and got my hands on every one of his books I could find. I was further influenced when I discovered the work of Guy Aitchison (@guyaitchisonart) and Paul Booth (@paulbooth), and all I knew was that I wanted to be a combination of these two.

I noticed that you also do a lot of three-dimensional digital sculpting, how did you get into this? Do you continue a fine art practice outside of you daily tattooing work?

I got into this through my life-long love of video games. During my teenage years, I wanted to design video games, and I would spend countless hours making my own levels for *Unreal Tournament* and the *HalfLife*

series, among others. This early experimentation laid a solid foundation for when I started to learn digital sculpting in 2015, which I feel led to a lot of artistic growth for me, and consumed me for a solid year or so. Outside of tattooing, I like to start drawings that I never finish, and I toy with a bit of painting and physical sculpture. I’ve recently bought a 3D printer, and have been printing my digital sculptures and casting them in bronze, which has been as frustrating as it has been rewarding, which is to say immensely. The learning curve was incredibly steep, but I have always been one to hurl myself into the deep end.

How do these additional skills feed into your tattooing practice?

I feel as though they have really translated well to my tattooing. I started digitally sculpting with tattooing in mind, and for a long time, I would spend days creating something from



scratch that I would then tattoo and finish in a single session, resulting in a massive time commitment, that I both loved and became frustrated by. Nowadays, I've created such a large library of assets that I can make a design from assets I'd used previously, resulting in a much more efficient and less time exhaustive workflow, and I'll often use these digital designs as a rough base, with the idea that I'll flesh it out properly on skin. Recently, I've found myself becoming looser with my design process, which I've really been enjoying.

Are there many similarities in creating a three-dimensional sculpture to a two-dimensional tattoo design?

Digital sculpture, to me, is just another form of drawing, except it's 3D. I think practicing it is extremely beneficial to other art forms in general, simply because it forces you to understand the shapes and forms of absolutely eve-

MY NAME IS LITERALLY A MATH EQUATION; HOKOWHITU MEANS 7×20 , WHICH EQUALS 140...

rything you make. Since I'm often sculpting with the intention of using the piece as a tattoo design, I'll generally have an idea of what the finished product will look like, so I will sculpt with a certain perspective in mind. One major difference between the two design processes though is that digital sculpture anchors you to reality, in the sense that if I were to draw something, I can sketch whatever I want, and make design choices that make no sense in the physical world but look great in a 2D image. With digital sculpture, you're creating an imitation of a physical object, and thus you are to a certain extent bound to the limitations of said object. Combining these two mediums results in no limitations at all.

What would be your dream design to tattoo?

Right now, I have a few designs floating around in my head for large-scale front pieces. I have a murky little mythos, with recurring themes and characters, that I've tattooed on a few people, namely a backpiece tattooed on my client Marie in mid 2017, which featured a woman be-



LOVECRAFT IS JUST AMAZING. HE WAS TRULY AHEAD OF HIS TIME

ing consumed, submerged in liquid, as a grim, god-like entity watched on, and two figures blew trumpets. I'd really like to explore this little universe more, and I think a full torso piece is the perfect place to do that. I also have an idea for a Cthulhu backpiece I would love to tattoo.

What have you got planned for the future?

At the moment, I'm really looking forward to travelling back to the UK and Europe, but this time with my lovely girlfriend. I'm extremely excited to see Eastern Europe, namely Poland, and I feel like the Museum of Zdzislaw Beksiński is a must-visit. I'm also very excited to see Norway, and take part in the mandatory Black Metal pilgrimage of the burnt churches, and other famous sites. Aside from that, I'm looking forward to developing my tattooing further, I'm planning to delve deeper into physical sculpture, but perhaps most of all, I plan to befriend every last one

of the neighbourhood cats. I have a pretty good repertoire with them now, but I feel as though I need a gang of cats following me at all times.

What does tattooing mean to you?

Tattooing was literally the difference between being a delinquent, and being a functioning human being. There weren't many opportunities in small town New Zealand, so when the opportunity to tattoo arose, I seized it with both hands. The tattoo gods have been extremely kind to me, and I was very fortunate to have been helped, mentored, and critiqued early on by Hades McCullough and Matt Jordan. I'm eternally thankful to be a part of tattooing, and to have met all of the amazing people that come with it. It's been quite the ride. ▣


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KINGS AND QUEENS

Words: Rebecca Rimmer

If you want good [make that 'great'], humble ink, there's a city in Denmark that's got your back...

I don't have enough fingers to count the number of folk who have told me Copenhagen is their favourite place on earth. I wanted to find out what all the fuss was about so when my partner asked me where I fancied a European weekend trip as a birthday treat, I knew what to say. Asking our reliable and trustworthy editor here his top tip for visiting Copenhagen, I was told

to "wander, wander and wander some more until you are beyond lost."

By the end of my short three-day trip I had burnt my nose, slept like a baby and dirtied my favourite Converse. I had walked 52 kilometres, tried 7 different local ales, read 2 books and eaten 3 times at the outdoor street food market. But one fact I am unable to present to you in a



defined quantity is the amount of great tattooists there is working in this colourful and creative city.

When I asked my friendly interviewees to summarise their city in one word, they used terms like ‘diverse’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘hyggeligt’, but one phrase in particular uttered frequently in Denmark sticks with me. ‘Janteloven’ (aka the law of Jante) is an attitude adopted by many Norwegians that encompasses modesty and selflessness—it asks the individual not to be jealous of peers, not to gloat, but to remain humble and courteous, remembering that ‘we’ is better than ‘me’. When the last artist I spoke to in this

series, Jesper Jørgensen, uttered the final words ‘I’m just a humble guy doing what he loves, not trying to be a rockstar’, I understood the Danish concept and what it meant for an industry often tainted by egos and competition.

Considering this Jante philosophy, it felt important that the profiles showcased a range of experiences—one tattooist has been creating work for over 10 years, another, less than a few months. These craftsmen and women are not comparable and all brilliant in their own right.

Welcome to the story of Copenhagen, through the eyes of its artistic community.



COLIN DALE

skinandbone.dk / @ColinDaleTattoo

STUDIO LOCATION: Skin&Bone, Jægersborggade, Nørrebro ["a very Bohemian area not far from the city centre"].

TOP TIP: "Everything is pretty central in Copenhagen and accessible by walking or bicycle."

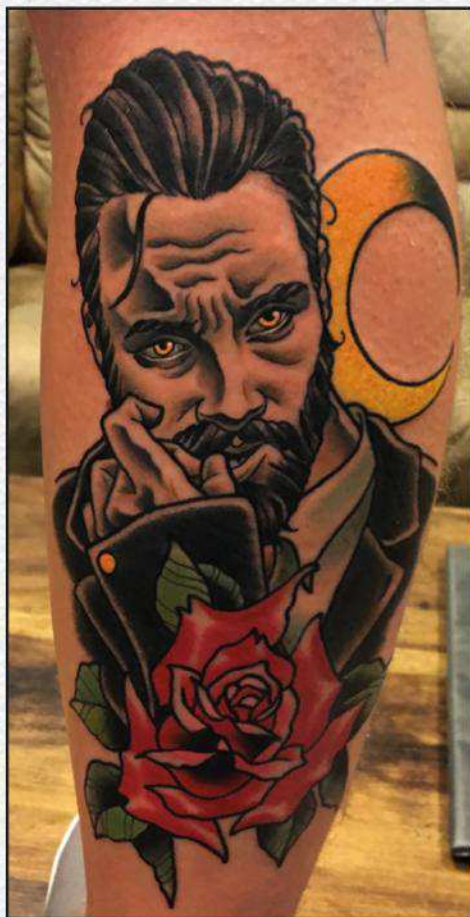
THINGS TO DO: The National Museum, Carlsberg Glyptotek, Tivoli.

FAVOURITE AREA:

Nyhavn [the old sailor district] "which boasts the oldest tattoo studio in the world", Tattoo Ole at Nyhavn 17.

MEET THE ARTIST: Colin Dale came to tattooing via an interest in primitive art and archaeology, which is still the focus of his tattoo work. He recreates prehistoric tools and techniques and today most of the work he makes on skin is hand-poked. He continues to "push the tools to the limit" in order to show what can be done without a machine: "it gives me great pride when people can't differentiate between my hand and machine work". One of his most memorable tattoos is seen here - Nordic tribal designs on his girlfriend Nanna's forearms. He competed the first arm in Tahiti whilst she was pregnant with their son, Loki, and the second years later: "we were on Vancouver Island and she was breastfeeding whilst getting tattooed."





PETER ALTHOFF

@PeterAlthoff

STUDIO LOCATION: Bright Side Tattoo, Christianshavn [a beautiful area down by the water, "easily one of the nicest place to go to work everyday in Copenhagen"].

THINGS TO SEE: The areas of Christianshavn and Nyhavn, The Zoo in Valby, Langelinje near Kastellet ["a cosy area to visit where there is an old military compound by the harbour and other interesting sculptures and architecture"].

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK: Gorilla i Kødbyen ["lots of small dishes, and a nice experience"] and The Bird and Churchkey at Gammelstrand ["a quality gin bar"].

MEET THE ARTIST: Creating custom tattoos for clients from scratch, Peter likes to focus on facial expressions - be it in male or female faces, or animals, these are his favourite things to make. He likes to add a sense of movement to his tattoos to ensure his designs "are not static". Out of these photos, one of his memorable tattoos is the gentleman with the lantern who is looking over his shoulder: "it's a good size but doesn't have too much going on so it is still easy for the eye to capture it".





TANYA BETTY

@BettyZooTattoo

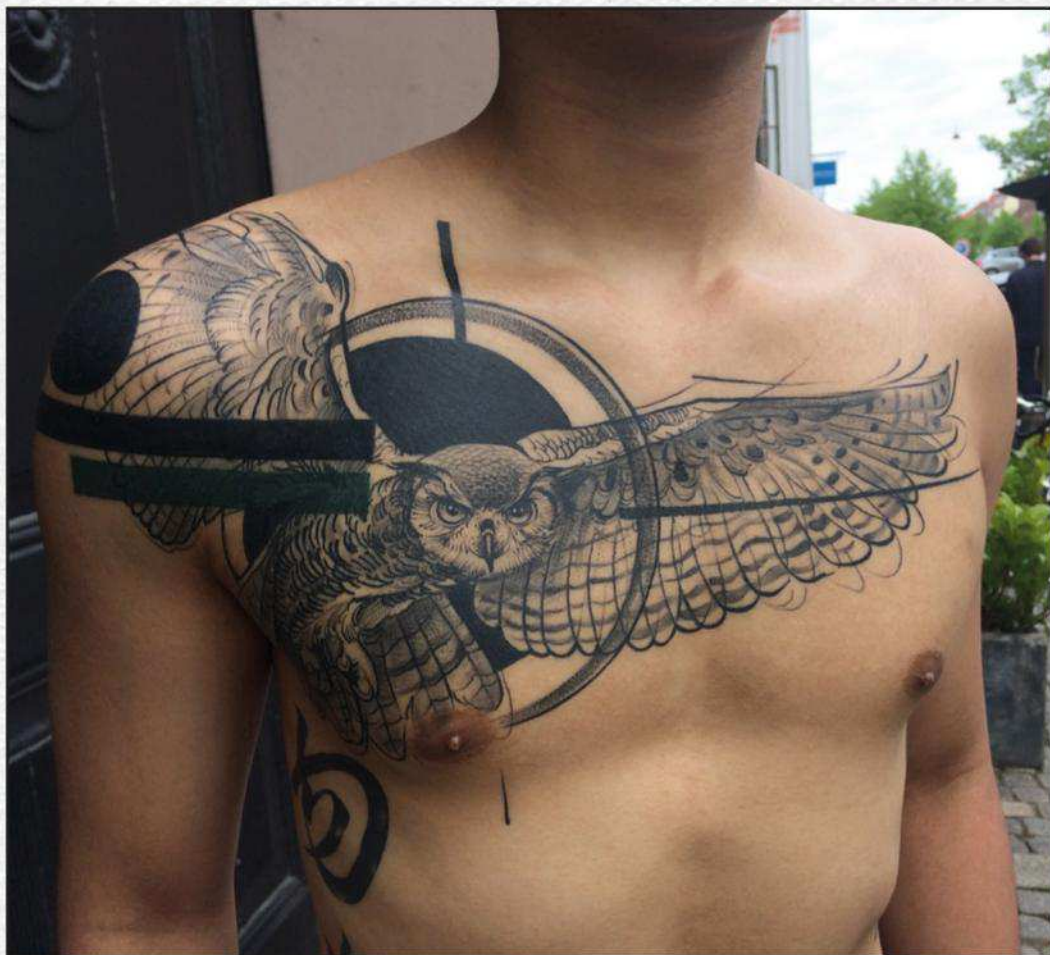
STUDIO LOCATION: Pretty Punk, Nørrebro ["the area is a real melting pot of all kinds of people and cultures which makes it a very interesting place to work"].

TOP TIP: "Copenhagen is beautiful - it's a great city for walking. You can reach almost everything on foot or by bike. The city centre has some amazing old architecture and each area has something different to offer."

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK: Mother [in the meat-packing district in Vesterbro] and Slurp [by Nørrebro].

MEET THE ARTIST: Tanya would describe her work as "clean, feminine, graphic and often minimalist" and definitely finds her own way of doing things. She seeks joy in "expressing a lot without having to use a lot of ink - the story is also in the air between the lines," she explains. She finds beauty in contrast and often pairs things that wouldn't normally be seen together. She believes that tattooing is mainly about a dialogue between artist and client: "I like to help people visualise what they have in their mind, collect their ideas and gather them into one design."





AYGUL

aygultattoo.com / @AygulTattoo

STUDIO LOCATION: Bright Side Tattoo, Christianshavn (“a very beautiful area with little canals, bridges and boats”).

FAVOURITE AREAS: Nørrebro, Vesterbro.

THINGS TO SEE: Assistens Kirkegård (cemetery), Sankt Hans Torv (public square in Nørrebro), Enghave Plads (a square in Vesterbro), Islands Brygge (outdoor public pools).

TOP TIP: “Rent a bicycle!”

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK: Cafe Tænk, Cafe Kalaset, The South Indian, The Bastard Cafe (“which has a great choice of tea and board games”).

MEET THE ARTIST: Aygul likes to focus on movement and impression in his designs. He says his main inspiration is nature so prefers to work with realistic proportions and natural colours. Everything he does is “a collaboration with the client” and he will consult with them closely, using keywords from their discussions (“like ‘dynamic’, ‘happy’, ‘simple’, ‘elegant’, ‘light’, ‘sharp’ or ‘calm’”). The owl chest tattoo seen here, created over two sessions, is a favourite as the artist was given free reign from his client to design any species. “The challenge was to keep it nicely balanced,” he explains, “to not overdo it with decorative shapes.”





MIKKEL WESTRUP

@MWestrup / @ThankYouTattoo

STUDIO LOCATION: Thank You Tattoo, Vesterbro ("I lived in this area when was a kid, only 300 meters away from where the shop is now, and today I live 2 blocks away").

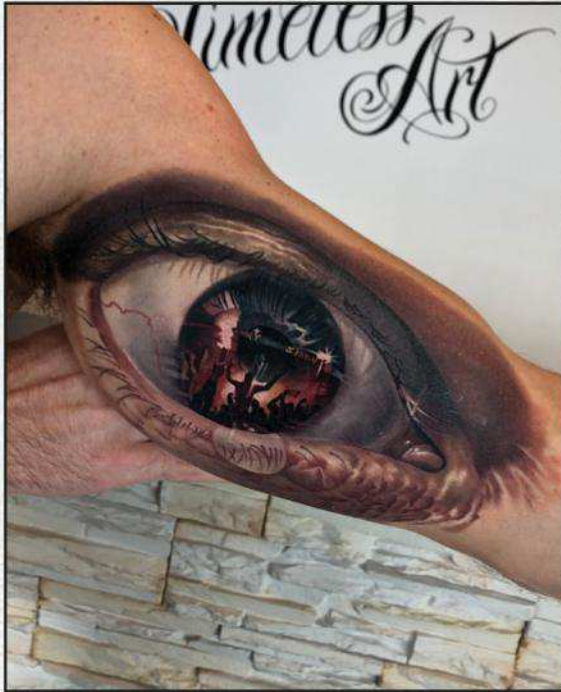
TOP TIP: "In the summer the city really livens up - everybody just wants to be outside so there are a lot of cool things going on around the harbour and canals, street parties and food markets."

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND

DRINK: "The quality of the food in all of Copenhagen is rising as nobody wants to eat junk anymore. My favourite restaurants are Osteria 16, Italo Disco and Skank. Also Det Lille Øresund - a small, local old-school bar."

MEET THE ARTIST: Mikkel's approach to tattooing is entirely focused on the craft: "tattooing is a craftsmanship and I am still learning". He has always been interested in different techniques and styles and constantly learns new tricks: "I want to be able to do all styles of tattooing. I have had periods where I tried to focus on just one style, but in the end it gets boring for me and I start trying new things out!"





CHRISTIAN BOYE LARSEN

@BoyeTattoo

STUDIO LOCATION: Timeless Art, Roskilde ["a small town just outside Copenhagen"].

TOP TIP: "You have to see Christiania, and try to come in June for the festival in Roskilde".

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK: Hansens, Butthers.

FOUND ON DAY OFF: With my friends, playing football or Fortnite.

MEET THE ARTIST: Christian approaches his work with an open mind, saying that every day he tried to do something new, "push myself just a little bit". His flawless work jumps from realism to Japanese and back again. Each year, he can be found at the London International Tattoo Convention at Tobacco Dock, and is looking forward to returning there again in 2018: "it is my all-time favourite convention", he says.





EMIL 'TATTOOSVED' SVEDBORG

tattoosved.com / @TattooSved

STUDIO LOCATION: Handshake Studio, Frederiksberg ["a quiet area with lots of students, small cool shops, artists and small businesses – if you come here, grab a beer at our studio... we often do BBQ nights with spin-the-wheel tattoo games"].

TOP TIP: "Don't ever go to any of the bars in the city centre – they are a trap. Go to any of the small local 'bodegas' where nothing has changed in 40 years. The beer is cheap and you can have a laugh with the local drunks."

THINGS TO DO: "Parties in Nørrebro, or do a boat trip."

FAVOURITE PLACE TO EAT AND DRINK: Spisebar 20 ["I just fell in love with the food and the vibe years ago and never really stopped loving it"].

MEET THE ARTIST: Emil's approach is to maintain the traditional touch, without being restricted to old norms. "For an example there is a good ol' discussion about how the flag on a ship is supposed to point," he explains, "but I don't want to pay attention to what's right or wrong... I will make it point where me and my client want". He tries to stay true to the roots of tattooing whilst simultaneously being open-minded with regards to new technology and techniques, saying this happy balance makes him love being a tattooer. Recently, he has been experimenting with mixing dark saturations and bright colours. The black cactus tattoo here was a recent favourite because it was executed straight from needle to skin: "when you start doing freehand tattoos, you know you're a privileged tattooist".





MIKE HO

handshake-studio.com / @MikeHolnk

STUDIO LOCATION: Handshake Studio, Frederiksberg.

TOP TIP: "Check the weather before you schedule to come - it is a totally different city once the sun shines on Denmark. When it does, it's the best place to be."

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK: Berkeley ("I am a sucker for their crispy fried chicken sandwich"), Captain Cock and Brass Monkeys.

MEET THE ARTIST: Mike describes his work as "graphic, naive & mystical." With a background in advertising, he spent years perfecting the philosophy of how a logo should be designed, and says this has influenced his tattoo work today. His tattoo apprenticeship taught him to be versatile in many styles but his focus remains custom tattooing: "it is so easy to trace and copy, so I try to move as far as possible in the opposite direction to that and add a genuine sense of illustrative hand drawing in my tattoos. I don't do the same motive twice."





MALTHE STRØYER

@MaldeStroyer

STUDIO LOCATION: The GetWell Giftshop ["we're based in the very centre of Copenhagen - it's a pretty busy area but nice and quaint at the same time"].

FAVOURITE AREAS: Christiania, Nørrebro, and the meat-packing district.

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK: Ma'ed [Ethiopian food] and Blågårdsgade.

MEET THE ARTIST: Malthe is a busy tattoo apprentice, working under Jesper Jørgensen who had been tattooing Malthe for five years beforehand: "I obviously admire his artwork and tattoos so it's a very big deal for me that I'm now his apprentice - it's still pretty surreal." The first tattoo he did on himself was "a ritual I had to go through, not the most pleasant experience, but it turned out alright!" Apprenticeships are about a lot more than just tattooing, and Malthe has been learning to master best-practice hygiene as well about general tattoo etiquette, different tools and supplies, and how best to organise a busy schedule and work day-to-day in a busy tattoo shop.





MATHILDE HØYBERG

@ thick.shady

STUDIO LOCATION: The GetWell Gift Shop ["based in the centre, right next to some big tourist attractions like Kongenshave, The Kings Garden, and Strøget, the main shopping street"].

FAVOURITE AREA: Christiania, "a hippie town outside of the normalities of society, where music, art, weed and creativity has taken over and runs free in the streets".

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND

DRINK: Mother [a pizza place in the meatpacking district, "they serve a pretty decent Aperol spritz"], Bodegas ["a place where the music isn't way to loud and you can smoke inside the bar"] and Floss ["an old punk bar based in the Latin area where mostly locals go"].

MEET THE ARTIST: Mathilde's style of tattooing ranges from neo-traditional to old-school traditional and she likes to make sure she explores and creates tattoos in both categories. On her day off, she says you would find her "with my boyfriend and friends, sitting with a cup of coffee or a glass of white wine on the stub outside the apartment, smoking cigarettes and people-watching".





AMALIE ARSINEVICI

@AmalieInk

STUDIO LOCATION: Bright Side Tattoo, Christianshavn [“the area is filled with bars, restaurants, a very varied crowd of people from the suits to the homeless”].

THINGS TO DO: “Rent a bicycle, visit Nørrebro and go to the food market Torvehallerne. Go hang out by the lakes if the weather’s good, and visit the beautifully-located Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. Also, take a boat tour from Christianshavn.”

FAVOURITE PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK: For food: Restaurant Nabo [little sister to Danish Michelin-starred Kadeau], Manfreds [in Nørrebro, also little sister to Michelin restaurant Relæ – “their menu of natural wines and vegetable-based tasting menu is amazing, and their tartar is the best in the city”]. “My favourite bar is Lidkoeb, which houses a whiskey and champagne lounge on the top floor – it’s high quality without being pretentious... it houses a lot of late nights of messy fun.”

MEET THE ARTIST: Amalie begun her artistic journey drawing realistic portraits. When she started apprenticing [with Mark Wosgerau of Sinners Inc.] she found out that she could do a straight line so began to create more line-based work. Today, she tattoos many different styles, claiming she “liked to keep things varied, working with varied clients who all have different stories”. She says that her boss Amina Charai taught her a very important philosophy: “you need to be very versatile, think on your feet, and not be too fancy to do whatever walks in the door.”





JESPER JØRGENSEN

@GatorTattoo

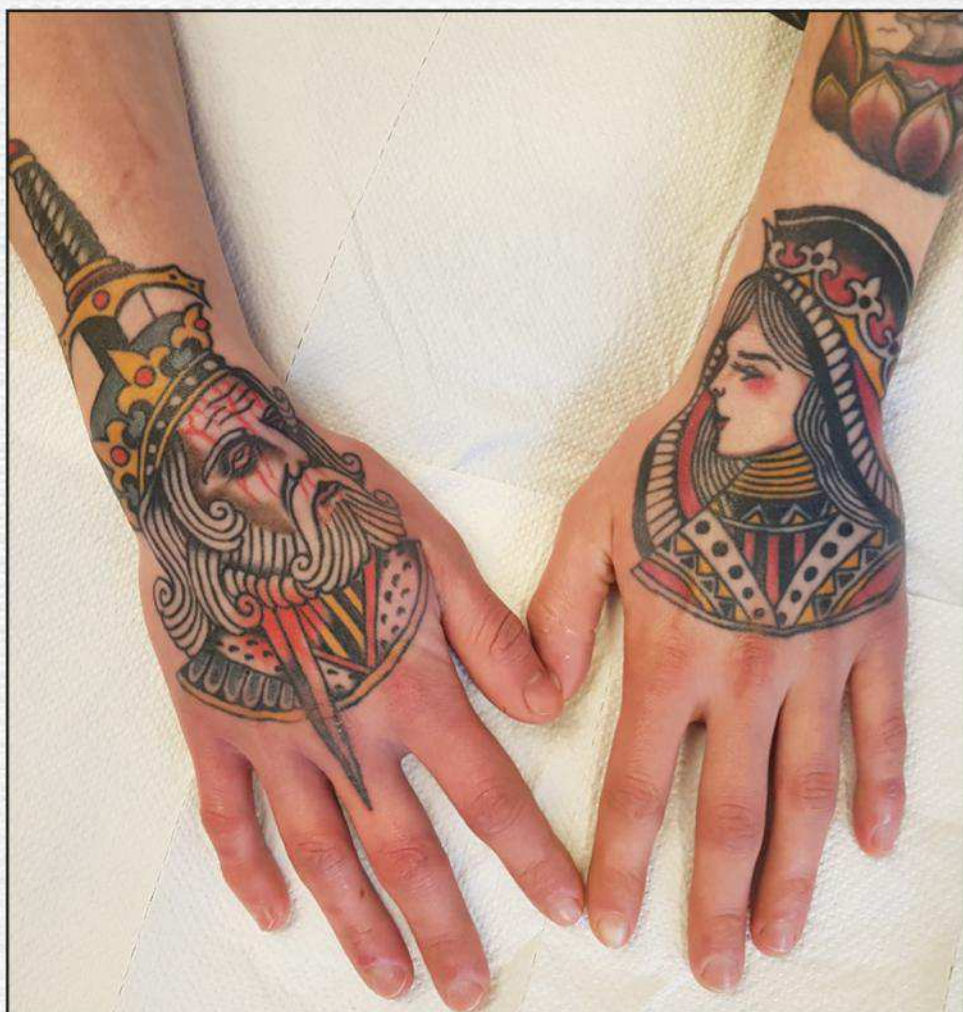
STUDIO LOCATION: The Getwell Giftshop ["based in the city centre, a very quiet and peaceful area"].

THINGS TO DO: "One of my favourite things to do is go to concerts."

FAVORITE PLACES TO EAT AND

DRINK: "My favourite place to eat in Copenhagen is Bæst in Nørrebro [famous for their stone-oven pizzas]. For drinking, the bodega next to the shop is called Byens Kro [they have cheap beers and indoor smoking]".

MEET THE ARTIST: Jesper calls his tattoo style "self-taught traditional" and says he is inspired by the music he listens to, the artists he admires and his love for horror. His utilises a "trademark red" in his tattooing, to indicate the dangerous parts of the piece". He is currently organising a non-profit convention in Copenhagen called The Wizards Den which will bring together a small selection of what he calls "skin wizards" to "have a convention the way it should be - no bullshit, just world-class tattooing and a party". Outside of tattooing, he claims to have a PhD in Pizza: "you will find me searching random pizza places, sitting in the park yelling at the pesky birds or running around beautiful nature areas with a head full of mushrooms".



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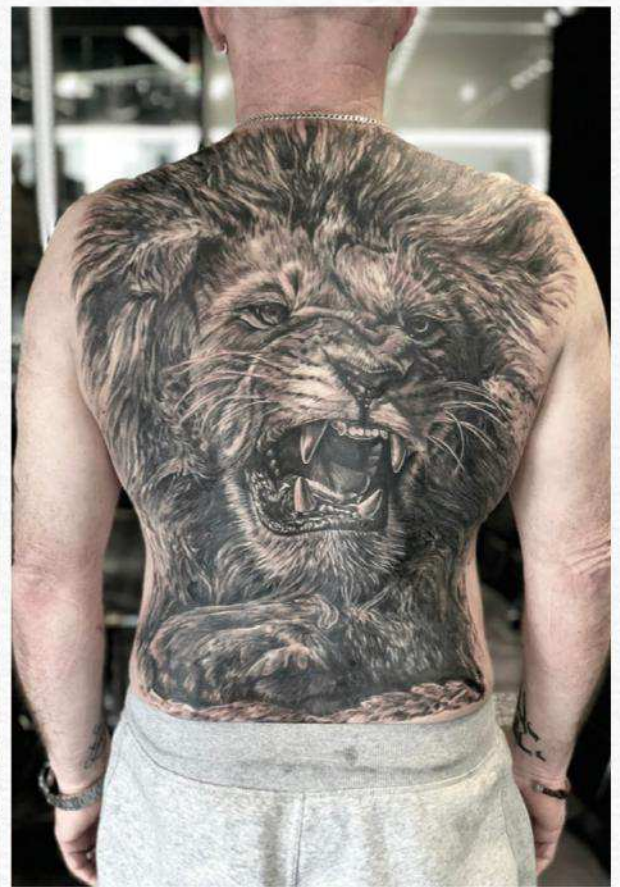
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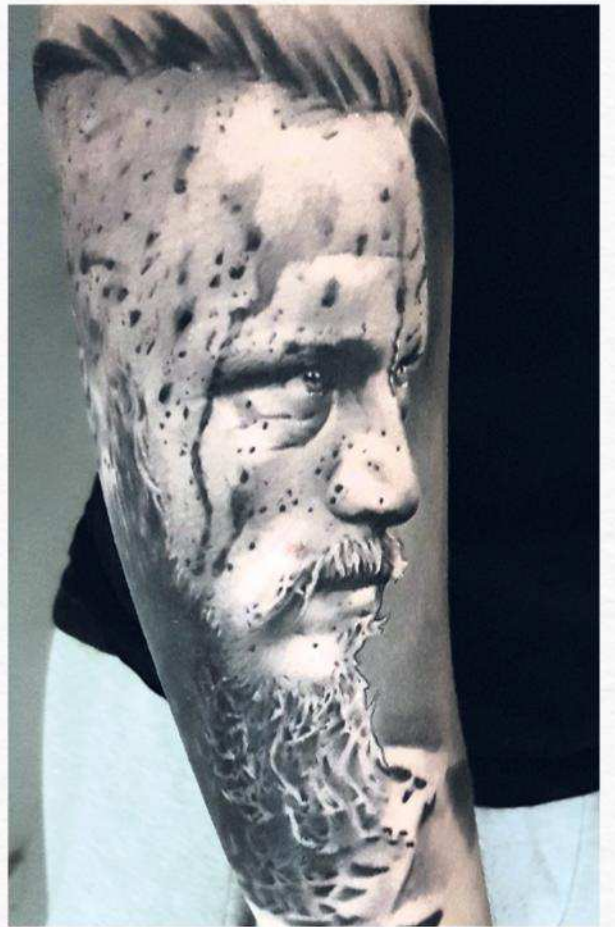


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STICK TO YOUR GUNS

Sarah Lu is absolutely, my favourite analogue tattooer. Veering from full-on fun to as serious as she needs to be, there's not much she can't turn her hands and chopsticks to. That's right... chopsticks. Read on:

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Currently working out of Blue Dragon in Brighton, Sarah Lu has made something of a name for herself bringing what is more commonly known as 'stick n poke' tattooing to a very appreciative audience. It's not a gimmick, no PR stunt... it really is the only way she knows how to tattoo. Last issue, we took a brief look at her wonderful new book—Hand Poked/No Electricity—and off the back of that, I figured it was worth spending some quality time seeing what makes her tick. Let's do this:

YOUR BACKGROUND IS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN/ADVERTISING. DO YOU MISS IT OR DO YOU STILL KEEP YOUR HAND IN TO KEEP SHARP? I WOULD IMAGINE THERE'S NOT A WHOLE LOT OF TIME FOR SUCH A THING ANYMORE BUT REGARDLESS, IT'S A MIGHTY FINE SKILL TO BE BRINGING TO THE TABLE.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't miss it, because I do... but, I love drawing so much more! I drew a lot of weird doodles since I was a child and up into my late teens, and to be honest, I always dreamt of making a living from it, but back in those days, my drawings didn't really fit in. In fact, I didn't fit in either. I was always the strange, quiet one, but my best mate was a sheet of paper and a black pen. I still do graphic design though. I designed my book, I also designed my website and I do the odd website and logo for friends and for briefs that I cannot possibly say no to—and I use many of these skills in



Words: Sion Smith · Images: Sarah Lu



...ON BEING AN AMBASSADOR FOR UNIGLOVES

Sarah has been using Uniglove's Black Pearl gloves for almost five years – and loves them.

Before finding Select Black, Sarah used standard hospital surgical gloves but found them "baggy, loose, full of powder and so utterly rubbery". Her small hands felt lost in the large, one-sized gloves – so much so that she had to tape them to her arm to prevent them from falling off!

But having had enough, she searched for solution to her gloves woes and found the answer in Select Black.

"I decided that enough was enough, and so I researched other surgical glove options and stumbled upon the Pearl Black gloves via a tattoo suppliers website. The cost per box was slightly higher than the norm, but it was worth a try."

After buying her first Black Pearl XS box of gloves in 2013, Sarah has never looked back. She has now made the jump to the Select Black range, choosing the non-latex/nitrile glove option.

"Not only are Select Black comfortable and fit well, but they also give you that little bit of wriggle room that you need to manoeuvre. They are thin and lightweight, which feels like you aren't wearing gloves yet also strong enough that you feel protected. The fingertip grips give you more control too!"

To find out more about Select Black, head over to <http://select.black/>



A thirteen year old Sarah's doodle

I decided I should just stick to what I am comfortable with—needle and a chopstick—and just 'go hard or give up'

my tattoo work, especially when it comes to answering a client's brief, which enable me to 'go beyond' and create meaningful individual tattoo designs for my clients, that visually communicate their story.

My tattoo work is at its best, when I'm given the reigns to design something that (1) is visu-

ally capturing (2) provokes intrigue and (3) tells a story

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN YOU HOLD OUT AND STAY FAR AWAY FROM MACHINES FOREVER? YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY SEEN THOUSANDS OF THEM IN ACTION OVER THE YEARS. HAS THERE EVER BEEN A POINT WHERE YOU'VE WATCHED SOMEBODY AT WORK AND THOUGHT TO YOURSELF 'WELL THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG' OR DOES IT JUST ENFORCE WHAT YOU'RE DOING... HAND POKING SEEMS EXTREMELY 'PERSONAL' TO ME.



I tried to use a coil machine. Each time, I have felt uncomfortable and not in control. It's strange... I can't explain it.

I even bought a Cheyenne pen tattoo machine back in 2014—which was bloody expensive compared to chopsticks—I figured that it might be more familiar to me but I think I used it three times—maximum!

Back in 2014, I went through a period in which I really convinced myself that hand poking was too slow for me to be able to replicate my 'detailed and complicated' drawings onto skin. I told myself: "Sarah, if only you could do the line work by machine, then you would be faster, the lines would be cleaner, your clients would be happier... and most importantly, you wouldn't have to simplify your drawings to compensate for these things."

So I attempted to use a coil machine and also the Cheyenne pen, but I quickly gave up due to being an impatient person—which is ironic considering I'm a hand pocker.

I decided I should just stick to what I am comfortable with—needle and a chopstick—and just 'go hard or give up'.

"Do your drawings as you would do... and your aim/goal is to fucking hand poke tattoo them in their entirety onto skin!"

I've spent the past few years working hard to achieve that aim/goal, and I am now able to tattoo anything that I draw on paper in its entirety.

Funnily enough, a few weeks ago, I had a client who is a drummer. He used his metronome app to help me to calculate the number of pokes I did per second. The average results over 5 counts were: 430 pokes per minute... this is 7.1666666 pokes per second. Is there a Guinness Book of records for this?

JEEZ... I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE. MAYBE WE SHOULD FIND OUT! TALKING OF CHOPSTICKS ARE THEY GENUINE CHOPSTICKS YOU USE? BOUGHT WHOLESALE FROM A RESTAURANT SUPPLIER OR HAVE YOU FOUND SOMETHING BETTER THAT YOU JUST CALL A CHOPSTICK?

They are genuine disposable chopsticks, which my mum



buys for me from Wing-Yip—a Chinese food wholesalers in Birmingham—when she goes to the Buddhist Temple. I haven't tried out any other sticks, so I wouldn't know if there's a more comfortable alternative.

To be honest here, I love the fact that my Mum, who is against tattoos, supplies me with them.

IS THERE SUCH A THING OUT THERE AS A PERSON YOU LOOK UP TO WHO HAS WALKED A SIMILAR PATH? WHEN ARTISTS NAME THEIR INFLUENCES, THEY ARE MAINLY BIG NAMES MOST PEOPLE HAVE HEARD OF, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO HAND-POKING, I WOULD IMAGINE THAT POOL IS AN AWFUL LOT SMALLER THAN YOU WOULD IMAGINE... IN FACT, YOU AND GRACE (NEUTRAL) ARE PROBABLY 'IT' FOR OTHER HAND-POKERS!

No, not really. I find that big named hand pokers tend to

A few weeks ago, I had a client who is a drummer. He used his metronome app to help me to calculate the number of pokes I did per second...

veer towards geometric and sacred tattooing—which is not particularly to my tastes.

My influences come from historic painters—Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel and Escher. I love these artists. Their works are of depictions of purgatory, the macabre, and hell on earth, but more so because each and every inch of each of their creations tell a story.

The attention to each face and animal, and the interaction between each of the 'beings' tell us about the darker side of these beautifully strange works.

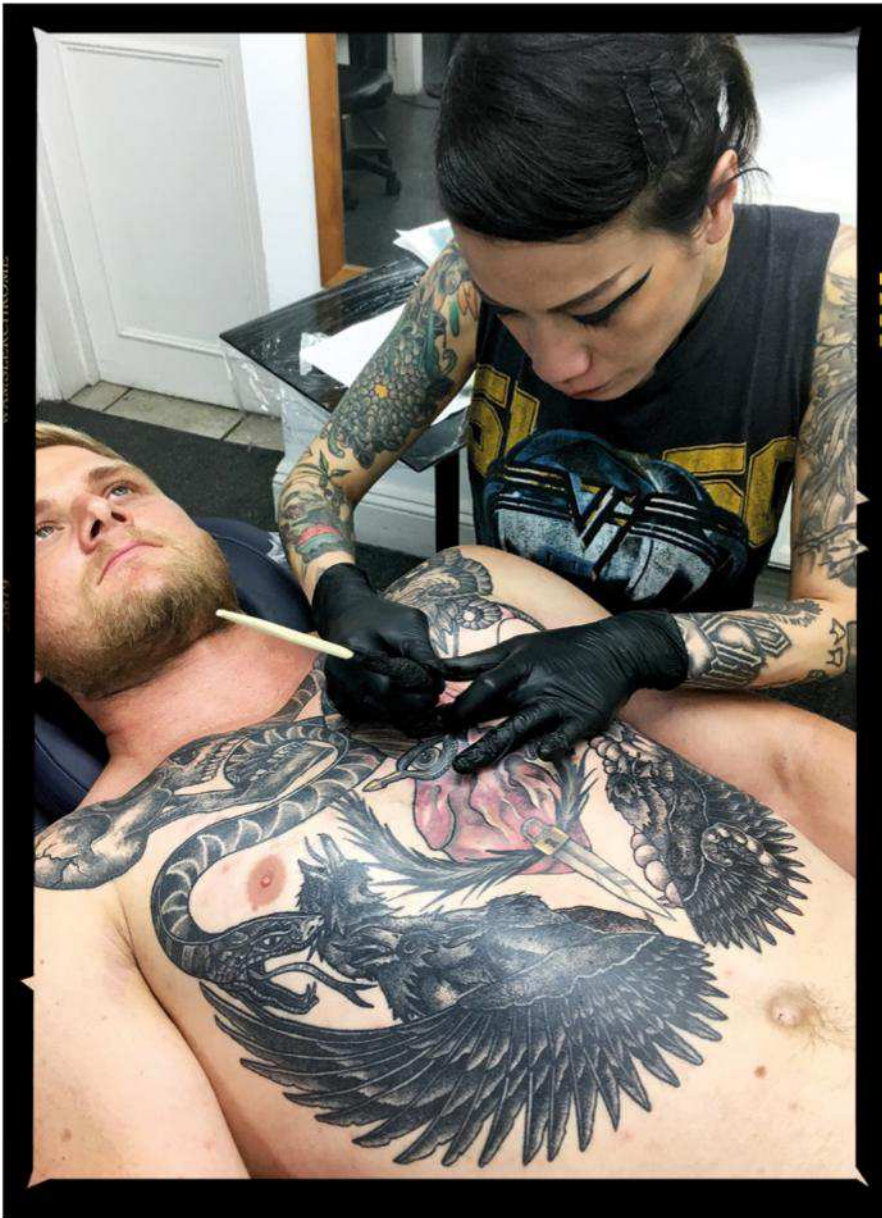


These are things that I try to implement in my designs wherever possible—not everyone wants a dark and serious Jelly-Cat tattoo!

I MENTIONED IN MY REVIEW OF YOUR BOOK THAT (GENERALLY) WHEN SOMEBODY SAYS ‘HAND-POKE’ OUTSIDE OF THE INDUSTRY IT CAN HAVE SOME PRETTY NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS... OR AT LEAST IT DID A FEW YEARS BACK. TATTOOING IS ADVANCING AT A SCARY PACE OUT THERE AND FOR ALL IT’S SIMPLICITY, HAND-POKING IS KEEPING UP WITH IT TOO. DO YOU THINK IT NEEDS TO?

With tattooing becoming so commercialised and televised, tattooing itself has entrenched itself into every day life, rather than being behind closed doors. The impact of this has completely catapulted tattooing into being acceptable and the norm.

So I think that the epic, beautiful designs and the size of tat-



OTHER STICKS

Out in Thailand, Sak Yant is bamboo driven. Have you ever tried other sticks? That might be a dumb question because I don't actually know what chopsticks are made of—and I should... but you learn something new everyday if you're not afraid to ask!

No, I haven't... that's bad isn't it? I feel that, thus far, I have pushed the boundaries of the stick 'n' poke scene with using just a needle attached to a chopstick...

I would really be intrigued to know what I could do with other "hand-poke" tools. Maybe, I should do a tour around the globe and do some experimenting!

toos, gave room for hand poking to sneak back into the world and so it became popular because it catered for people who wanted small, simple tattoos.

Hand poking was the only way to tattoo before electricity was invented. It dates back to cave-man times. When the tattoo machine was invented, it infiltrated the western world, and simply took over.

However, hand poking didn't disappear—it simply continued in other countries and as a respected and traditional method

of tattooing too. So it's about time it returned and took a stance with the modern world—and it has done so with a vengeance. What can be achieved with these simple tools is an exciting place to be!

We are used to hand-poking being seen as creating

smaller, basic, simpler tattoos but that's changed. Hand pokers are getting more experimental, brave and are pushing boundaries. Frankly, this is great.

HAVING A SWIFT FLICK THROUGH YOUR WORK, I SEE TWO OR THREE INSTANCES WHERE YOU'VE INTRODUCED COLOUR FOR EFFECT. HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIMENTED HARD WITH IT? I'M NOT THE WORLD'S BIGGEST FAN OF COLOUR—BLACK IS ENOUGH FOR ME (THE BLACKER THE BETTER) BUT SURELY IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMEBODY PUSHES YOU IN THAT WAY... OR IS THAT THE POINT AT WHICH THE CONVERSATION OF YOU TATTOOING THEM IS OVER.

I've always stuck to black because even as a child, I only drew in black ink. The amazing thing about using just black, is that there are so many textures, shading techniques and detail that can be created in place of colour.

Having said that, watch this space! I have some big projects this year and they do indeed involve colour—Sarah Lu's way! ▣

YES I'M TATTOOED

AND I DON'T

GIVE A SHIT

IF YOU

DON'T LIKE IT.

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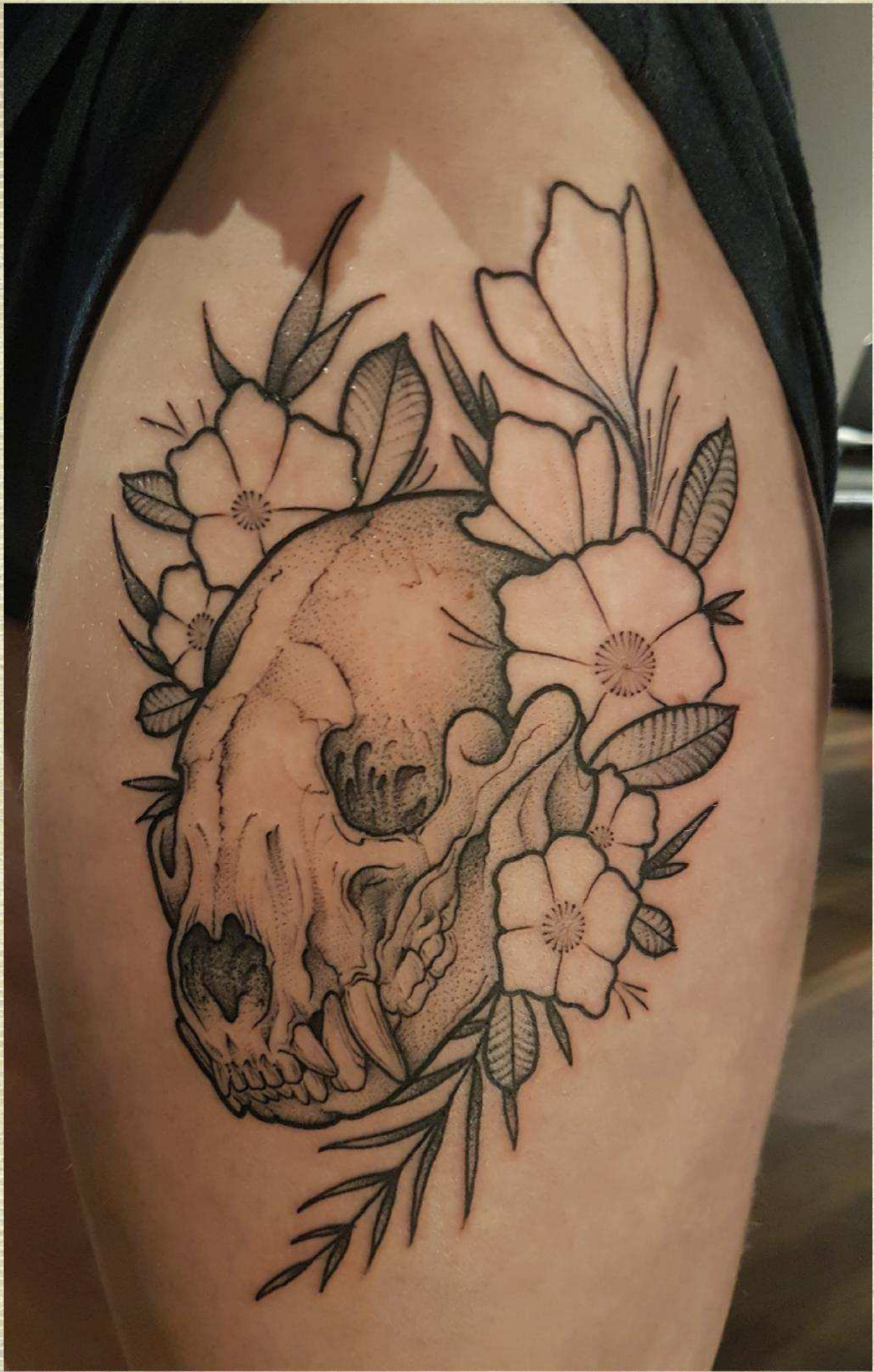


Dek Kent



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BLACK IS BLACK



Matt Pettis has his own bold graphic style that is easily recognised. Based in London he has joined forces with the guys at 'Through my Third Eye' and is happy calling it his home. Nicky Connor swings by for a catch up about techniques and technology

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Journey

"About three years ago I was working at a shop in Kingston and met Mowgli at the Great British Tattoo Show, we became good friends and stayed in contact. When I heard he was opening his studio we spoke about me working here and I've now been at Through My Third Eye for about a year and a half. I think our styles sit quite well together, I wouldn't say they look similar, but we have a similar thought process with our work. It's also quite nice to be able to bounce ideas off each other because our styles are visually different as well. I use a lot of bold lines and a lot of harsh black in my designs whereas Mowgli's work is very fine stuff that makes my head hurt, it's ridiculously good. It doesn't really feel like work, we come in and do what we do, it's nice working here as it's totally different from anywhere I have worked before.

"I don't have an artistic background, I would just draw stuff all the time when I was a kid. I did art at GCSE and that was about it, there was no university or college or anything and before I was tattooing, I did all sorts of jobs. I began tattooing because when I was in my early twenties I started drawing some tattoo designs for myself and my friends. After a while I thought to myself 'how hard can tattooing be' and although I soon realised it was very difficult I decided it was something I would like to



IT DOESN'T REALLY FEEL LIKE WORK, WE COME IN AND DO WHAT WE DO, IT'S NICE WORKING HERE AS IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ANYWHERE I HAVE WORKED BEFORE



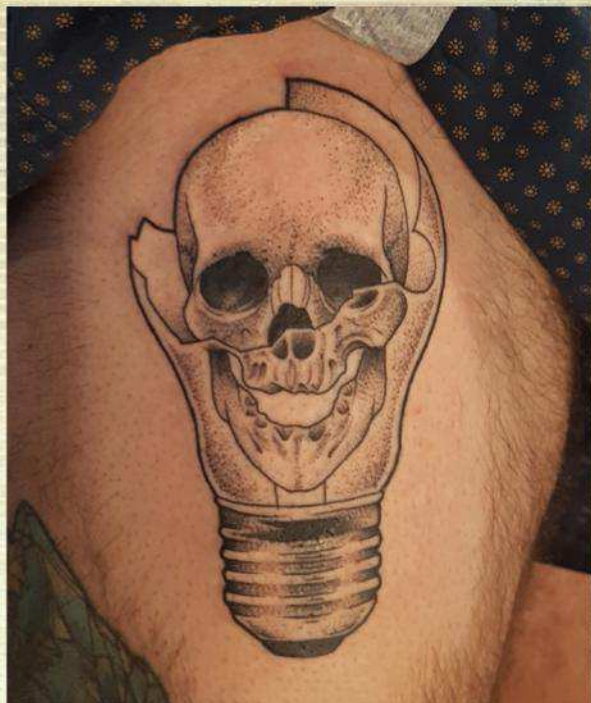
pursue. Then I just started looking for a shop to apprentice in and found a place at a studio in Wimbledon, southwest London. My fiancé, Clemie had her back tattooed at the studio and the guy there said I could come down after hours and learn the craft.

"I was initially tattooing after-hours under his supervision, on friends and whatnot, but then unfortunately the shop closed, this was a shame because the guy was a great artist. So, again I had to look for somewhere else and eventually found one in Kingston and it all started from there really. I started learning and moved around between a few shops until I ended up at Through my third eye. Myself and Mowgli were actually apprenticing in dif-

ferent shops on the same street in Wimbledon at one point but didn't know each other at the time. I have also worked a lot with my friend Ya at Electric Thaiger Tattoo who I have learnt a lot from. I'm still so happy to be learning from all the people I tattoo with at the studio, we all share thoughts and techniques and everyone is very open to new ideas."

Style

"I'm actually not too sure how my style developed, I think I really liked the traditional work to begin with. Then, I started to get into bolder lines, more solid use of black and more harshly shaded spaces. From there my style has just sort of evolved, from initially quite simple but bold designs, to now where I add more details but still use bold lines. Now I think I'm working out what I want to do rather than following a certain style. I think my style has progressed and become more detailed. With almost every piece I now use a mixture of dot-work, bold lines and black, you can get some really good effects using that combination of elements. I can also create different effects and produce more realistic looking work with the dot work, as well as



MY STYLE HAS JUST SORT OF EVOLVED, FROM INITIALLY QUITE SIMPLE BUT BOLD DESIGNS, TO NOW WHERE I ADD MORE DETAILS BUT STILL USE BOLD LINES.



getting different tones in and more detail and I just like the way it looks. I think it's really interesting when you have some contrast; some thick and thin lines, some really harsh black, some negative space and some dots in between. I can build up a pretty good picture in that way.

“When I create my designs, these days I use a mixture of drawing and computers. Last year I got an iPad Pro and it took me six months to be able to use it properly as I was always used to working on paper. The transition from paper and pens to the digital



screen was quite difficult initially, but now I mostly use the iPad as it's easier to make adjustments if necessary. I can just take one bit out and put another one in or whatever is needed, instead of having to retrace the whole drawing to just change one aspect of it. I used to end up with mountains of tracing paper for six slightly different designs before

I got the final piece. So now with the iPad it's quicker. I do miss pen and paper, so sometimes I still go back to make dot-work and other pieces on paper. I don't think you can create the same look on the iPad as it doesn't yet do everything I need it to do. I don't think the consistency is there that we get with a pen and paper. And I'm used to finishing on paper anyway. I get quite excited going from the digital to the physical part of the tattoo. When I have the stencil on the skin and I have the actual 'working' part, that's the fun bit.” □



The SERPENTS of BIENVILLE

Fandom tattoos: part two

serpentsofbienville.com seanherman.com  theserpentsofbienville  SerpentSean

This issue, Mr Herman brings us part two of his unique take on tattooing and pop culture... with some unexpected results

I found myself in a situation I never thought I would be in my wildest dreams. There I was, standing in the shadow of a creature that filled the nightmares of the children I knew growing up. Looking upward, I was blinded by the sun creeping over its gigantic shoulders. This creature's arms were spread high, the black liquid like skin seeming to consume the light shining on her, her blue eye shadow and Dame Edna like hair reached to the sky. Wait, blue eye shadow, Dame Edna hair... who could this be you ask? I was confronted with a three story tall statue of Ursula from Disney's "The Little Mermaid" as I stood in a brave new world, Disney World.

All melodrama aside, I was engulfed in a fandom universe, and I realised in that one trip how completely wrong I had always been about that damn mouse. I was married into Disney, and like anyone who has been in my situation, I was in a world that I didn't understand, one I had never experienced. My wife had an intense love for the Disney classics that were released during her child-



hood. "The Little Mermaid" amongst others, were soundtracks to her youth. She can sing every word to every Disney movie, and does, beautifully. I was the other side to that spectrum. I grew up with horror films, punk rock, and burning down corporations. Many times Disney was at the cross hairs of my anger, and I was the furthest thing from being a "fan". This was the mindset my Little Mermaid wife married into, and she never challenged it. She slowly planted a seed, and waited quietly.

Our lives grew, we got married, had children, two girls, and began a parental life. One thing that my girls loved immediately was Disney movies, and suddenly I found myself thrust into a world I had fought against for so long, but one that I couldn't take away from my small daughters. My oldest daughter didn't want to know my reason for boycotts or my morals... she just wanted to sing every song to Frozen at the top of her lungs. Surprisingly, I loved it. I didn't care what she was singing, I just cared that she was singing, that she was having fun singing with my wife. Thus began



Sean Herman

MY OLDEST DAUGHTER DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW MY REASON FOR BOYCOTTS OR MY MORALS... SHE JUST WANTED TO SING EVERY SONG TO FROZEN AT THE TOP OF HER LUNGS

my shift in thought, a shift that eventually led me to the quintessential family road trip to Disney World, complete with a soundtrack fitting of such a journey, a soundtrack that led us to that crazy world know as Orlando, Florida.

Pulling up to Disney felt much like the beginning of Martin Scorsese's "Goodfellas". If you don't know this film, the beginning has a scene where the main character, Henry Hill, is introducing you to his mobster world. The camera follows Hill in a first person point of view, as if he was introducing you to these characters like Freddy No Nose and Jimmy Two-Times. With every introduction, you feel yourself getting pulled into a world that you obviously know nothing about, and you get the feeling you may be in over your head. That was me walking into Disney World. My beautiful wife and oldest daughter pointed at characters as we drove past, listing the movie they were in, and who they were in context of the story. I had no clue what they were talking about, but

what I did know is that I loved the look on their faces, they were in complete amazement and joy. That look never went away from them that weekend, and I knew that I wanted to help keep it there.

Walking through the parks all weekend, I found myself trying to keep up with what characters did throughout the park. I would try to interject at the appropriate times, adding "Well, we should get a limited edition button that Livi can trade". These words were never things that I thought would come out of my mouth, but they did. On the last night we went through Epcot, hurrying to hopefully catch the characters of the film "Frozen", Elsa and Anna, for our daughter to meet them and get an autograph. I know what you are thinking, "Sean, aren't they from an animated movie, how could you meet them?" Bear with me, use your imagination, it's a thing. My oldest daughter waited patiently in line, holding her autograph book. She had been collecting the autographs



Pony Stephenson



Pony Stephenson



Sean Herman



Sean Herman

I LIKE HOW THEY USE THE COLOUR BLUE FOR NIGHT, OR TO CREATE AN OMINOUS MOOD

of her favourite characters in the park, and this was the finale for her. As she walked up to the girl playing “Anna”, she pulled something out of her pocket and gave it to her. It was a drawing she had made for Anna to have, because she thought it was important to give her something, to make something with her hands and give it to this person she so looked up to. My wife teared up, and I think right there I realised that it didn’t matter what I thought about Disney—that experience made me love Disney, and helped me start to understand what the fans that are engrossed in this world are truly feeling.

A few years ago my good friend Vernon mentioned wanting to get a back piece tattooed by me. He wanted the piece to be based on something he loved, something that I knew nothing about, Disney’s “Legend of Sleepy Hollow”, which was the second half of the film “The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad”.

I researched for weeks, using each nuance that was in the film as material for his back piece. I knew that if it was that important to him, I better take it seriously and learn about it. My friend Vernon talks about his piece, explaining it much better than I could, saying,

“One of my earliest, and most vivid, memories is of going to Walt Disney World when I was five years old. As a kid with an incredibly potent imagination, it hit me like a ton of bricks. The Haunted Mansion left me a trembling mess.

Likewise, the Sleepy Hollow portion of the Disney classic, “The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad” was the scariest thing I had ever seen when my 1st grade teacher played it on our projector at our class Halloween party.



Sean Herman



Pony Stephenson



Sean Herman

WHEN I'M IN DISNEY, I LITERALLY DON'T HAVE A CARE IN THE WORLD. I'VE NEVER HAD A PANIC ATTACK IN DISNEY

Since then, it's not surprising that I've developed a love for the Haunted Mansion, scary movies, and dark imagery in general. I also love classic Disney design and animation. In my opinion, Disney was at their pinnacle of achievement and creativity in 1949, when the Ichabod and Mr. Toad film was released. It featured the work of numerous artists, whom I consider to be geniuses: Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston (who literally wrote the book on Disney animation), Ward Kimball, and one of my favourite artists of all time, Mary Blair.

It was the perfect blend of scary and funny, and it still hits me just right. I still laugh at Ichabod's antics, and get a little nervous when he begins his fateful journey home, after the Halloween party at the Van Tassel homestead. I like how they use the colour blue for night, or to create an ominous mood. For me, every frame is a work of art worthy of framing. Couple that with the performances of Bing Crosby and Basil Rathbone, and it's just a monumental creative effort, created by a Disney team/machine that is hitting on all cylinders like it never had before, or since.

I don't have a lot of tattoos, but I knew I wanted something large on my back. I wanted something that really expressed who I am as a person who really enjoys both funny, and scary, things. I love this film so much that I wanted to be joined with it forever. I wanted to absorb it and have it be a physical part of me, not just as a memory or something to look at on a screen.

Sean had already done a Haunted Mansion tattoo on my arm, and he's one of my oldest friends. We grew up as teenagers skateboarding together and listening to music. It doesn't hurt that I love his work as an artist, both on skin and in other mediums. I knew he would understand my vision for it, and so he drew it up, incorporating a lot of elements from the film that fans may notice, but may not be immediately evident to everyone.

There's a good chance that this may be my last tattoo,



Sean Herman

and I am fine with that, because I feel like this one really sums it all up, for me."

This all brings me back to my good friend Pony, who I introduced you to in my last article. I have been friends with Pony for well over a decade, and I have been known to give him a hard time about the various things he may be into, and for a brief moment my focus was his love for Disney fandom. That time has come and gone though, and after my visit to Disney World with my family, seeing those eyes light up, and listening to friends like Vernon, I started to understand what this fandom does for people, and how it can improve their lives, even their mental state. Could fandom and getting tattoos based on it then improve mental health?

One of the things that I give Pony a hard time about is being sweet, but he is probably one of the kindest people I have ever met. He genuinely cares, about his friends, and his clients. His sessions tattooing people are a form of release for his clients, with one of his clients saying,

"All these tattoos I get make me never forget some of my happiest moments in life. But they're seriously also something I found to deal with social anxiety and depres-



Tattoos on this page by Pony Stephenson

AT THAT MOMENT SHE EMBRACED EVERY BIT OF DIY, PUNK ROCK, ARTIST CULTURE I HAD EVER LIVED, AND PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

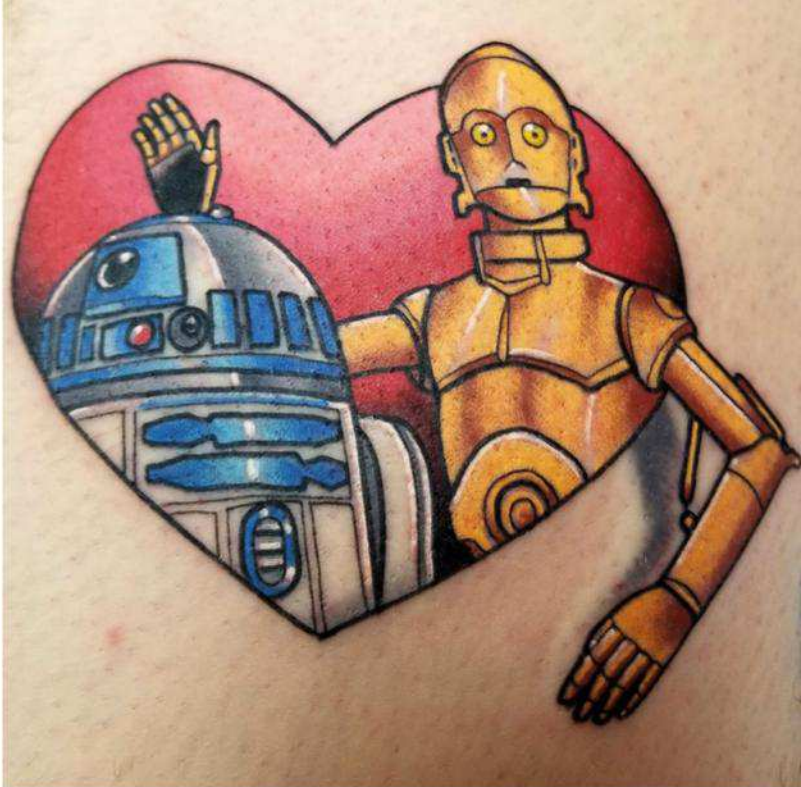
sion. It's like a form of therapy to me. It's made me find myself and just be happy in life. Of course I have tattoos by other people, but I'm not the happiest with those and they don't mean as much as what (Pony has) done for me. I know it sounds crazy, but (Pony) seriously alleviated me of so many mental problems I use to have. This artwork is truly a medicine for me!"

Something Pony and I talk about is our struggles with anxiety and dealing with it publicly. Over the years he has found that this outlet of Disney is a way for him to connect with his family, going so far as saying, "...that the parks are the only place I have zero anxiety."

His client continues about his feelings on being at the parks, "When I'm in Disney, I literally don't have a care in the world. I've never had a panic attack in Disney. Before I started getting these arm tattoos, I use to have some pretty rough panic attacks and mental breakdowns in public. It was pretty severe. But since I got my fox and the hound tattoo as my first arm one, I haven't had a panic attack like the ones I've been dealing with my whole life."



Through the years I have found myself repeating one important phrase, "I was wrong". From the outside looking in, we create judgements for worlds we don't understand; be it a culture across the world, or a subculture in our backyard. I have spent years closing out so many because I couldn't understand where they were at, now realising the error of my ways. I am now brought back to that moment, watching my daughter do something that she could never know was everything I could have wanted for her; giving her hero something she created.


At that moment she embraced every bit of DIY, punk rock, artist culture I had ever lived, and put it into practice. Our heroes and loves live within us, and with fandom




there is a chance to take part in those worlds, be it experiencing the magic in a park, or experiencing the magic getting tattooed. Fandom isn't a new thing, it's just now something we can explain a little better, something that I can now see the impact it can have. Tattooers like Pony are bringing that magic to their clients, one tattoo at a time.

To get in touch with Pony, or to get tattooed by him, visit www.thebellrosetattoo.com, or check out his instagram @pony_tbr

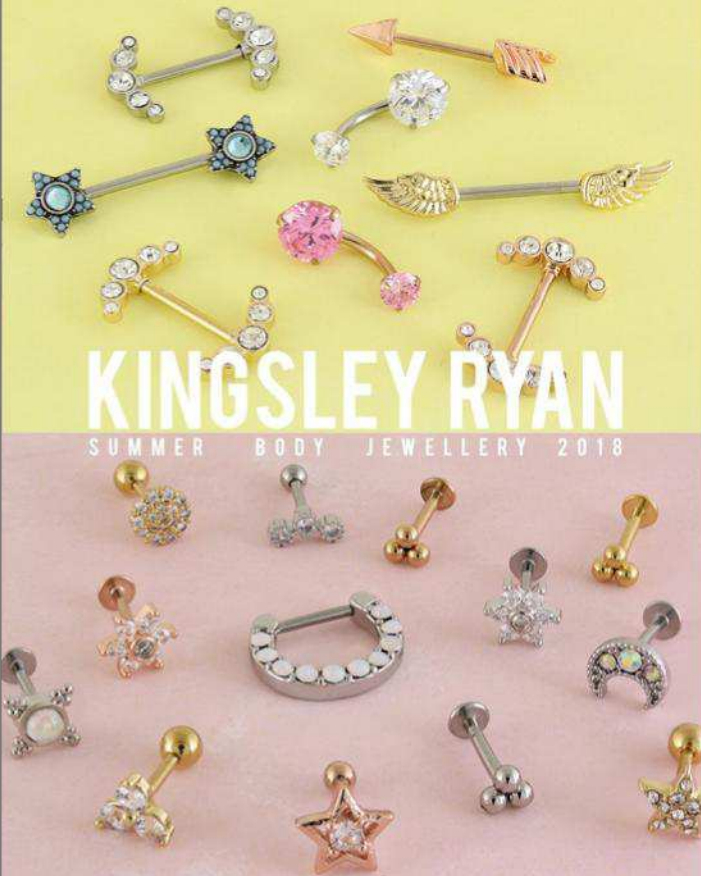



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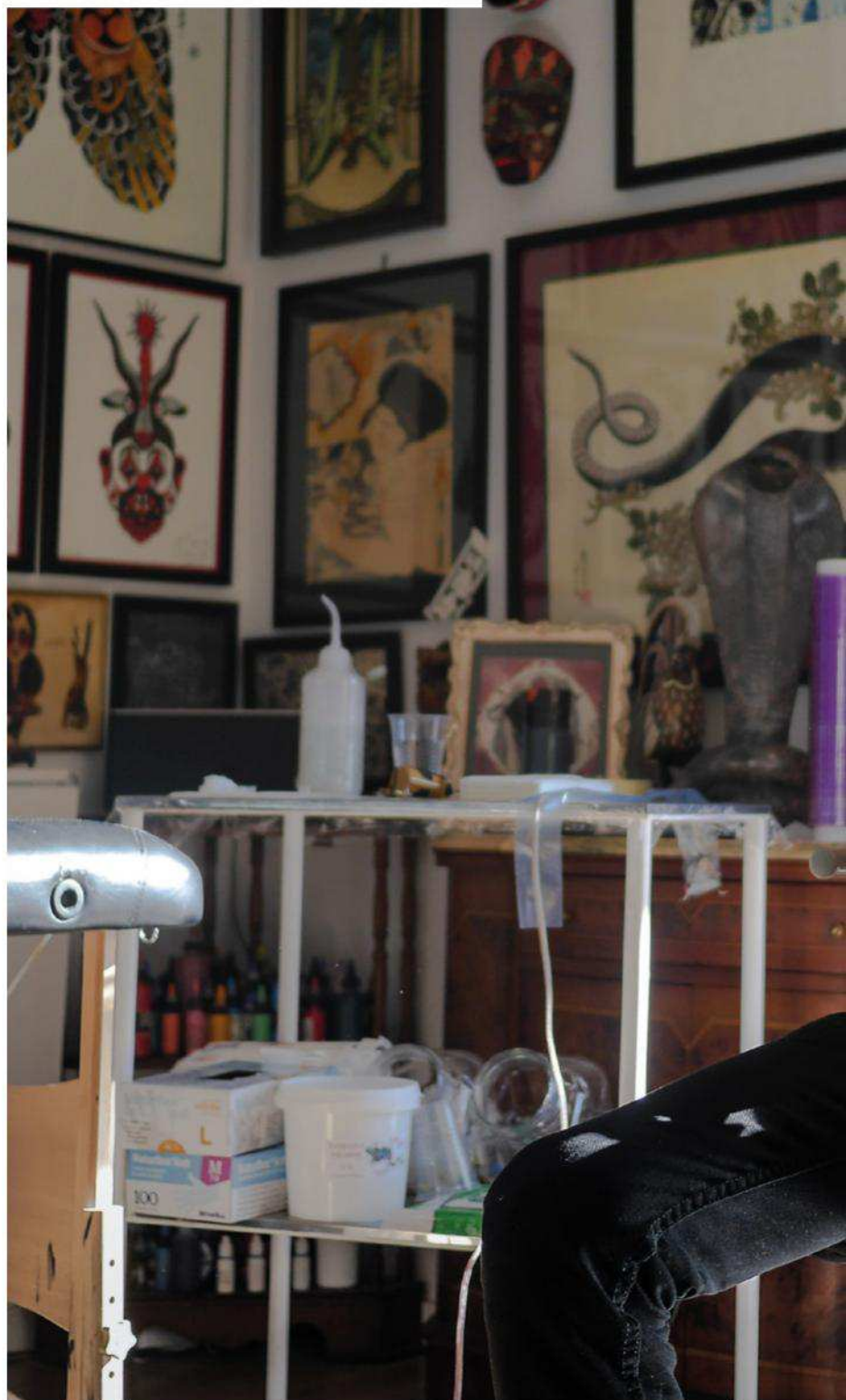
A SERIES OF FORTUNATE EVENTS

Waiter. Receptionist. Cook. Bellboy. El Javi had a slew of jobs under his belt by the time he hit his early twenties, but something was always missing. So the Barcelona native decided to grab life by the horns and set out to discover his true calling. Soon, he found himself being pushed towards tattooing by a series of fortunate events. Given his deep-rooted passion for art and travel, the choice couldn't have been more perfect. Barbara Pavone gets her nose to the ground

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“I felt so bad waking up in the morning to go to work and do stuff that I really hated,” recalls Spanish artist El Javi when thinking of his life before ink. “I could say it was my first step towards tattooing, without me knowing it.”

At the time, he was still a student, “so I followed my inner voice and signed up at the art





school. That was my second step.” But the biggest driving force of all “was the combination of wanting to do something related to art and to have another way of working. And I thought that tattoos were something really magic and cool!”

“I remember always being amazed by tattoos in magazines, but the first time I was close to a real tattoo was on my older brother when I was 15,” he remembers. “He got a very ‘90s style Hannya mask on his chest and I said to myself, ‘I need one of those, too.’ The guy who did it was the older brother of one of our friends, so when I was 18, I put some money together and went there and had a geisha with a tiger tattooed on my thigh.”

Then came the next crucial step in his journey: meeting El Monga from Aloha Tattoos in Barcelona. “I got tattooed by him, then, one night, we bumped into each other at a gig and I said to him, ‘Look, I want to tattoo and I could learn at home by myself, but I don’t really wanna do that. If I learn from someone, I want it to be from you.’”

“I didn’t plan any of that—we were both drunk—but he said, ‘OK, you can come by the shop a couple of days a week and we’ll see how it works. But I’m not teaching you, you have to learn for yourself. You observe and, if you have questions, you ask,’ he reveals. “It sounded great to me, so I showed up at the shop next week.”

That was 2006 and El Javi, who was only 23 at the time, will be the first to admit that he “didn’t know anything at that moment. It was very difficult to get information back then. The Internet and social media were just starting, so there wasn’t as much information as there is nowadays.”

Add to that the fact that he didn’t have much patience—“plus, I was always stoned!” he laughs—and things got off to a bit of a rough start. “At the time, I felt like it was very



slow, but now I know it was just me being lost,” he admits.

“I couldn’t appreciate it at that time, but I learned how to be way more patient and now I know some things have to take their time to be right,” he adds. “I think there must be a balance between letting things happen and chasing after them. In every aspect of life, that’s one of the most difficult things to learn.”

“Perhaps my biggest obstacle, however, was not having support from family and friends. Most of them didn’t think I could or should take that path, so in that case, it was a good thing that I’m stubborn.”

WINDS OF CHANGE

No longer the impatient young man he once was, El Javi is extremely passionate about continuously learning and perfecting his craft.

“I still consider myself an apprentice,” he declares. “The more I know, the more I want to know. So, thinking about my career as an evolving thing, I can now see that it’s made out of cycles. Meaning that sometimes I’m in a cy-



EL JAVI ON... HIS TATTOO STYLE

I’d say I make simple, iconic images with bold lines and, usually, a strong presence of black. Most of my images are somehow ‘alive’ — just making an object is not my favourite thing to do — and my main colours are red and yellow with some blue, green and/or purple to contrast.



EL JAVI ON... BEING A TOURIST

Whenever it's possible, I go and do some tourism. It's a crucial part of travelling. Not only just being there, but talking to people, seeing what they do and how they do it. I'm a nature lover, so I always try to get out of the city and enjoy the simple things, like trees, birds, rocks, rivers and more.



cle where I feel very confident and happy and I see I'm walking towards something bigger and better. Unfortunately, sometimes I also feel lost and am asking myself what I am doing."

"I second-guess a lot of things in my life," he continues. "In my case, I see it as a test. I've seen a lot of crises in colleagues and also in myself. Following an artistic or creative career, whatever it is, is not easy. We live in a very competitive time and sometimes we tend to forget that we, as humans, will all feel the same way at some point in our lives. Maybe the more we expose ourselves to the rest of the world, the less we are able to look into ourselves to seek out the root of our troubles."

"I don't know if any of that makes any sense," he laughs, "but my point is that we can't always be happy and 100% sure of our decisions! So when something is wrong, face it and talk about it with the people who really matter to you. Face that problem and look for a solution."

THE PERPETUAL TRAVELER

Do a quick Google search for El Javi and you're likely to come across a quote of his from 2008 in which the young artist boldly dismissed the idea of ever settling down in one shop. "Well, that was 10 years ago!" he

laughs. “I think very differently now. I said that because I was 25 and I felt like I wanted to see the world while I had the energy to do that. I still have the energy, but I would also like to have my own place.”

For now, though, he’s still traveling. A LOT. “Basically, I go to places where I have friends, so I get to spend some time with them and, sometimes, these friends recommend me to go to their friends’ shops, so we can widen our circle,” he says of the key to choosing his destinations. “I see the tattoo world as a family, so in the end, we all know each other. It’s something beautiful to experience.”

Being a perpetual traveler isn’t without its hardships, however. “The process of traveling is never fun, especially flying,” he points out. “I try to take trains as much as I can. In fact, I’m writing this on a train in Galicia, Spain and it’s a great experience! I feel very grateful for how lucky I am.”

“I haven’t had my own home for almost three years now, so I’m getting used to this feeling of not belonging anywhere—in a positive way,” he elaborates. That being said, “there are some places I love better than others and usually it’s because of a combination of having good friends there, having cool customers and a cool city. Sevilla and Mallorca are two examples. I have also worked with great people in very cool places that feel like paradise in Costa Rica, México and Colombia.” Up next on his travel wish list? Ulan Bator, Lagos and Pyongyang.

And now, he’s thinking of doing the unthinkable: “I’m planning to move abroad in the near future and settle down for a bit!” Not only that, but he’d also like to open his own studio. “I was about to do it, but a number of circumstances didn’t make it possible,” he confesses. “I’m an idealist, so if I do that, it has to be perfect. I see myself living out of the city. I don’t know where, but far from the futile noise and distractions of any big place. I’d rather be looking for shapes in the clouds.”



FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY

Back in December, right as the #MeToo movement was really picking up steam and dominating headlines in Hollywood, El Javi took to Instagram to address sexual misconduct in the tattoo industry, posting an image that read: ‘Protect tattooing. Stop sexual assault. Support victims.’

“It totally is present in the same proportion as in society in general,” he starts, explaining his timely message. “I’ve seen it and it makes me sick. I usually work at my friends’ shops, so in the end, we all think alike in terms of respect towards others and I don’t see it every day, but we live in societies made of levels and hierarchies, so harassment and disrespect is in our DNA.”

“Sometimes it’s so common that it’s hard to recognise because for many people it’s their daily bread,” he continues. “For both the ones who exert it and the ones who suffer from it. There are probably many ways of stopping it. I’m no expert and I don’t know the perfect solution, but before giving an opinion, I want to say something: We should give the victims of these acts a chance to speak, and we should listen to them.”

“I’m privileged, so I’m not in the position of giving out lessons about it, but what I know is that many times, when there’s a conflict or someone is saying or doing something we know is wrong, we remain silent to avoid making it worse. It’s cultural—we somehow need to be friendly and indulgent—but we should speak up when that happens. We can’t let the bigots rule and nowadays, it’s more important than ever.” ▣

**EL JAVI ON...
INSPIRATIONAL ARTISTS**

Tattooers: Don Ed Hardy, Scott Harrison, Bert Grimm, Percy Waters, Dave Lum, El Monga.
Illustrators: Goya, Picasso, Juan Gris, Jules Pascin, Matisse, Joann Sfar, Robert Crumb,
Kawanabe Kyōsai, Akira Toriyama, Hayao Miyazaki.
Musicians: Camarón de la Isla, Lole y Manuel, Otis Redding, Johnny Cash, The Murder City Devils,
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ART IS KING

We're seeing more and more tattooists coming into the industry with a background in fine art—swapping the brush for a tattoo machine, so to speak. But what about when that happens the other way around? Wayne Simmons talks with Canadian artist, Kit King

[@kit_king](#) [kit.king.art](#) [www.kitkingart.com/](#)

A quick glance at her website and you'll find an impressive bio for contemporary artist Kit King—solo and group exhibitions worldwide, as well as her native Canada, and a list of awards as long as your arm. Her unique blend of hyper-realism and avant garde may be striking on canvas, but it was originally conceived on skin.

"I tattooed for seven years before very suddenly developing severe social anxiety and agoraphobia," she tells me. "I soon found I couldn't leave my house or be around people. I did all I knew to do and turned to art for solace. I painted and it wasn't long before people started to notice me for my art and were asking to purchase those paintings. Then curators were asking me to do shows, and then museums were reaching out to exhibit, and it wasn't until I

hadn't tattooed in a couple years and examined my situation and went 'woah! I guess I'm an artist'"

During that time, Kit's social media bio read 'tattooer on hiatus' because she genuinely believed she would overcome her anxiety and get back to tattooing. But something else was happening. "I never saw art as a viable career path—even while it was taking shape. I'm a big hermit who just lives and breathes art all day every day. I've not left my home in about ten years, never even made it to one of my own openings. But I paint my ass off and my art travels the world for me."

While it may be in her past, Kit's tattoo art has definitely shaped her fine art. Style-wise, with a grounding in hyperrealism, it's reflective of what's happening in the industry right now—albeit accidentally. "My painting style

is just derived from my tattoo style and my tattoo style was just derived from my art before I got an apprenticeship," she points out. "I never really kept track of what was going on as far as styles in the industry—I pretty much just do my own thing."

On her website, Kit talks of how a portrait, in its purest form, is not a living thing—it's static and rigid and very much part of the past as soon as it's finished. For Kit, art should have life and fluidity and I'm wondering if her work—and in particular how she works—is an attempt to achieve that.

"Absolutely. I find something a bit morbid about capturing a person in paint, to have that image frozen like that for all of time. It's un-



true to life which is always shifting, moving, changing. So I'm trying to find ways of breathing that life into my work, to make the subject come alive and not be condemned to a fixed existence, stuck in the past."

For me, tattoo art is more of a 'living' art form in that it becomes part of the life of its wearer. Our tattoos interact with the world, they become part of who we are—we wear them, we don't hang them in galleries. I wonder whether Kit's transition from tattooing to the relative coldness of painting and fine art has led to her feeling unsettled and unfulfilled. Is part of her search now to reclaim that which was lost from tattoo art within her fine art?

"There is definitely a difference in that you can have unlimited paintings, but you're limited to how many tattoos you can wear—so the choices you make as far as what art to keep with you is special," she explains. "I definitely want to bridge the gap between wearable art and the art that sticks around once we're gone... but that's it." For Kit, tattoo art is even more fixed in time, so to speak, than fine art. Its life is finite, it dies with its wearer. "Tattoos become a part of the life cycle, oil paintings don't. So yes, there's a bit of magic lost when switching from tattooing to fine art, and, when I tattooed, it was that magic that was so alluring. So it seems only natural that I should try to recapture that in paint."

Some of the methods Kit uses are quite unique in helping to achieve this. I'm thinking in particular of her use of a razor to create 'cut-up' style pieces.

"I paint the whole piece first. Put all those painstaking hours into it. Then when dry, I cut it into even slices with a razor knife and a long straight edge. Then when it's all cut up, I



i've not left my home in about ten years, never even made it to one of my own openings. but i paint my ass off and my art travels the world for me



begin to shift the pieces allowing it to sort of take the shape it wants to." Again, it's about allowing the art to take on a life of its own, to make its own choices so to speak, and for Kit this is very different from the total precision and control an artist normally commands with painting. "I let the piece tell me where it wants to go. I know that sounds so bizarre and bullshit, but it's really how it goes. No matter how I want it to take shape, it's never like that first controlled painting step: the art sort of takes on a life of its own and I feel compelled to move the strips in a way that works for the piece, and not the piece working for me."

It can take time to get the piece to where it wants to be, to where Kit is sure it has found its own shape. Once that is achieved, she adds a custom aluminium support to hold it in place.

"I map it all out, drill a fuck ton of holes, take each strip one by one and hand rivet them all to both ends of the support. The reconfiguration part of the process is painstaking. Every time I ask why

I do this to myself, until it comes time to cut up the next piece, and there's that magic moment where the art and I get to have this intimate little dance together. Usually I can coerce my husband into doing the painful grunt work for me, bless him," she laughs.

'Raw' is a particularly striking piece. Kit takes the head of a portrait and reimagines it as an almost Barker-esque, surreal horror still. But that's not where she is taking her cues from at all.

"I am not a big movie watcher, let alone horror. I won't watch those films. The reason the subject matter was so macabre wasn't

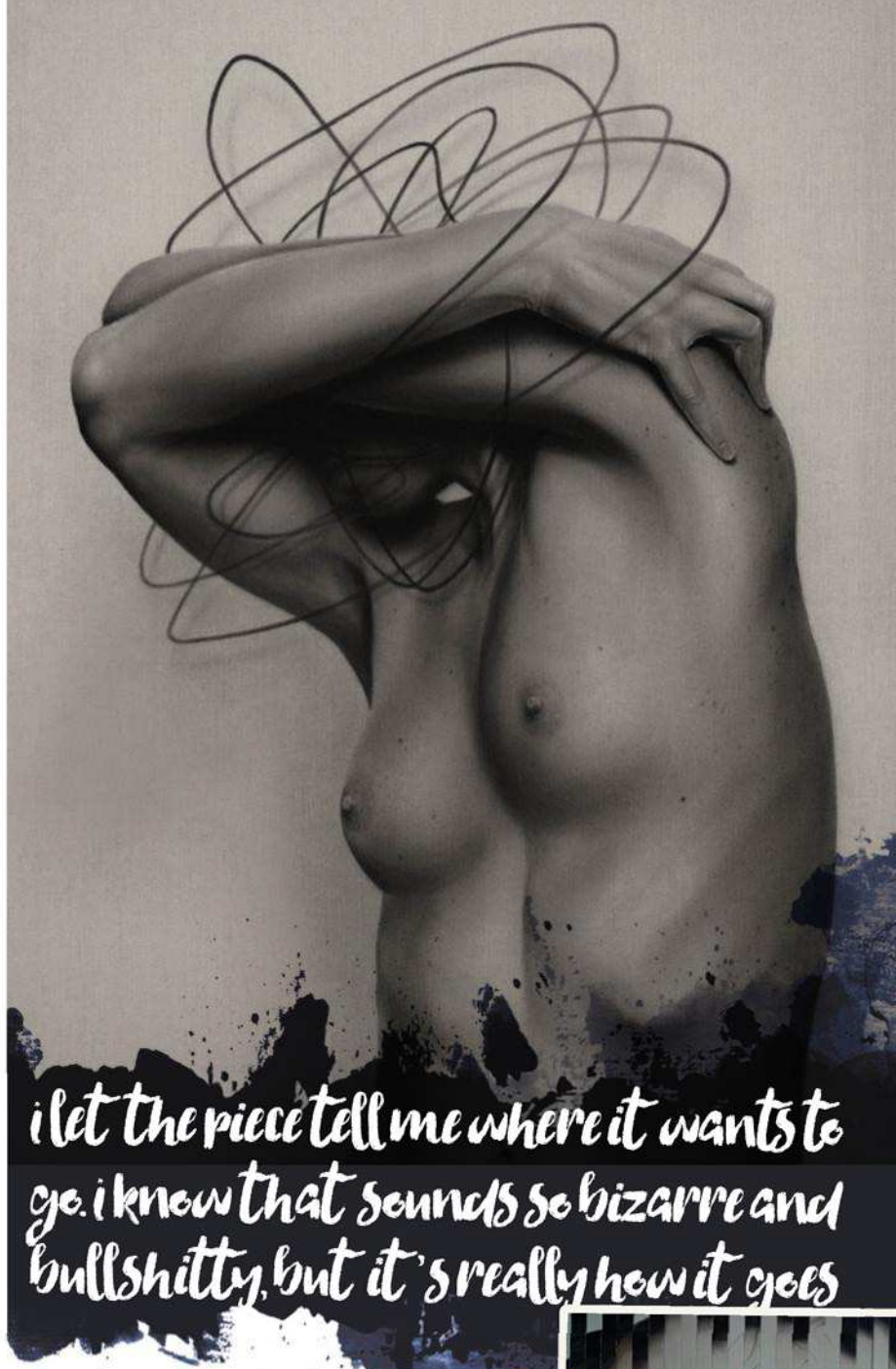


from outside influence—it just came from me addressing my own inner demons.”

During its creation, Kit was in a dark place and basically trying to break down and understand everything she was feeling. ‘Raw’ was just that, then: the artist at their rawest and most vulnerable point, trying to scrape back the facade and see what was really going on underneath.

“If you imagine cutting up a head, you’d realistically see brain matter, bones and veins, but in the painting it’s only meat. So it’s a more of a literal depiction of my reductive thoughts of feeling like nothing more than an exposed sack of meat—nothing human, no mind, bones, no structure, just flesh. I feel like I’m not alone in that. I’m sure everyone has felt like nothing more than a meat sack at some point. And the irony there is how human that makes us. To feel not human is somehow very human. So these chunks of cubed meat, it wasn’t meant as a horror piece, just a life piece. A painting of man in its raw, beautifully human state.”

And what of tattooing, working with actual, raw flesh again? Will we ever see a return to that medium with Kit? Could it become part of the natural life cycle of her art, to come full circle?



i let the piece tell me where it wants to go. i know that sounds so bizarre and bullshit, but it's really how it goes

“No, I don’t tattoo anymore. My social anxiety is still too bad to tattoo. Maybe once a year I’ll do a couple of minutes on my sister, mum or husband, but that’s it.”

She still has a lot of respect for the industry—her husband is a tattoo artist and, as we’ve seen, Kit still takes her cues from her own time spent with a machine in her hand. And, of course, she’ll always respect the artists working within the tattoo scene—the real artists, that is.

“The ones that got into tattooing for the art, not the rockstar lifestyle. The passionate. The creatives. The artists that just so happen to have skin and ink as one of their mediums. The ones who go home at the end of a long day of tattooing just to get a couple hours of paint time in. Those are my kin. Those are the ones that inspire me.” ▣





NORTHERN INK XPOSURE

8-10 June 2018



This year was the 20th edition [holy cow that's a lot of shows] of this always fantastic convention out in Toronto, Canada. As luck would have it, photographer Paul Salvatori happened to be on the floor and spent some time logging great work from the good people who turned out for it. In attendance amongst a huge menu of artists were Boris, Jay Freestyle, Bob Tyrrell, Cory Ferguson and Steve Butcher—who hosted a seminar on his approach to realism that we would love to have been on the inside of. Here's the view from the floor—and man, there's some big pieces happening out there.



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This big show of ours gets better year on year—you can't fail to have a good time unless you're on a serious mission to prove how miserable you can be. Let's take a look at what happened, who won what and then, just because we can, take a segue into the Skin Shots section with as much of everything else as we can fit in

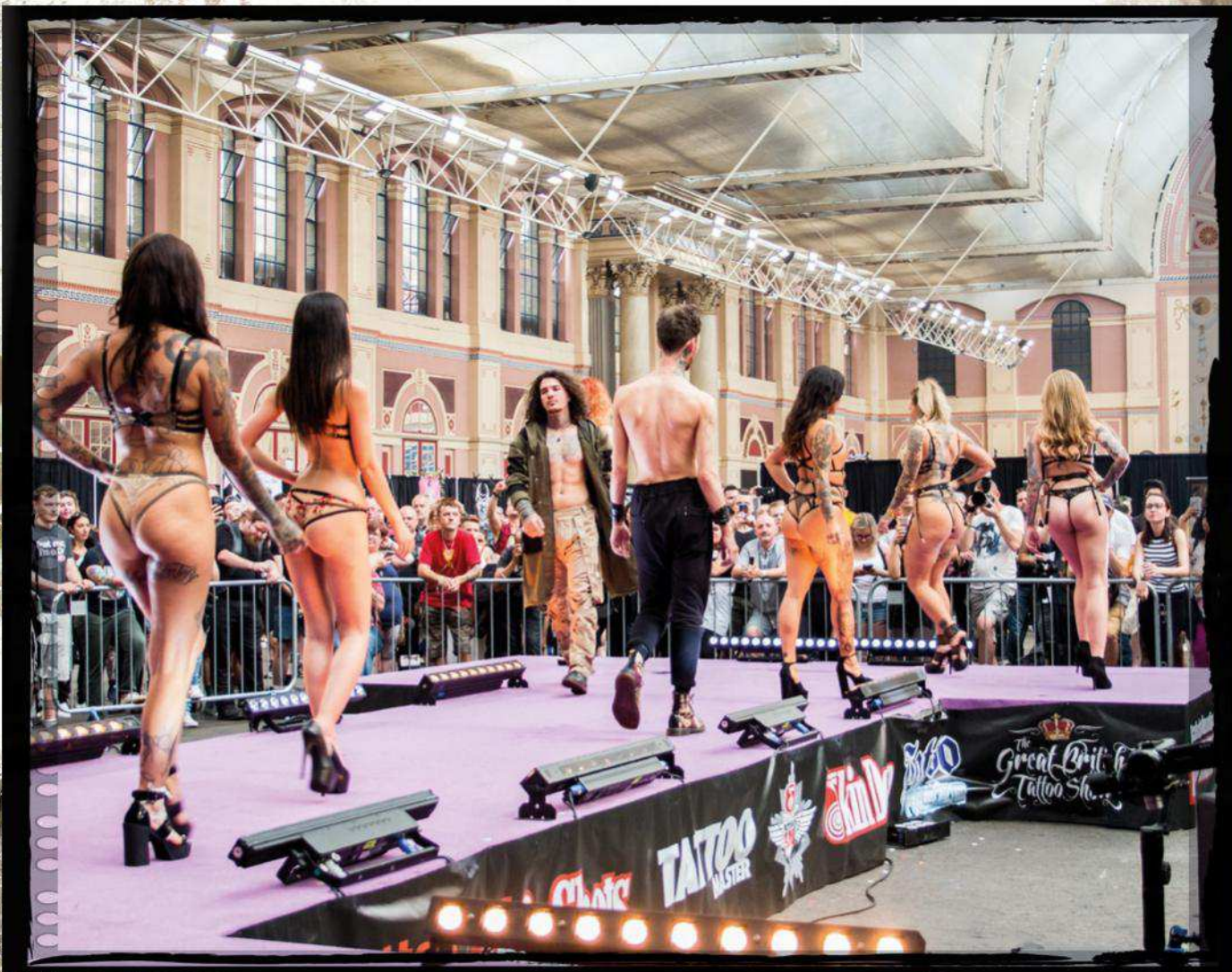


H heading anywhere in London on a hot day can be a high pressure experience for even the most haggard traveller. The journey can be long and tough as you navigate transport systems and parking hell that makes no sense as you sit behind the wheel wondering exactly how hard it can be to get your car into a similar sized rectangular space.

And hot it is, both inside and out but nobody is com-

plaining. Spirits are good n high so far as I can see and work has begun before you can even grab yourself a coffee to shake away the sandman.

The first thing that grabs me is how the tattooing landscape can change in the tiniest fraction of time. It's on a par with the changing face of music festivals—those who were burning up the circuit last year are not the same people as those setting fire to it this year. It's tough out





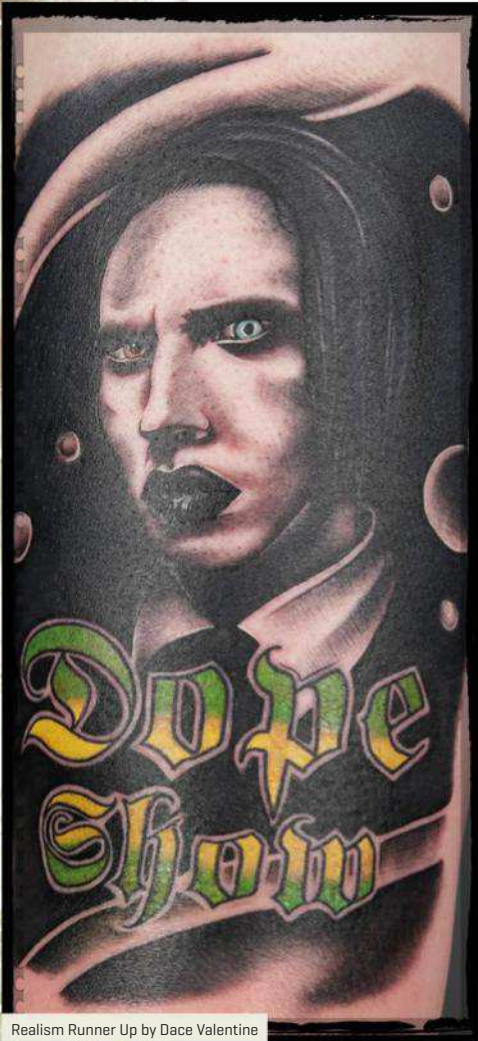
Runner Up Avant Garde by Alcaz Alex



Runner Up Best Colour by Viola Cristiano



Best Traditional by Rudi Ridgwell



Realism Runner Up by Dace Valentine



Best Black & Grey, Best of Sunday, Best of Convention by Erick Kueh



Black and Grey Runner Up by Alexandra Hugliano



Best Realism Winner by Zmetek



Gazz Neaves, Best Colour and Best of Day



Neo Traditional Winner by Miro



Blackwork Runner Up, Claudia Traina



Oriental Runner Up by Andrew Curzon-Berners



Gabriel by Ionut Alexandru Botez Best Avant Garde



Neo Traditional Runner Up by Richard Shaw



Best Traditional Runner Up Nick Brace



Best Blackwork by Erikas Bulanovas



Best Oriental Winner by Simon Caves



there and it's not the fault of the industry either. It's the incessant need for the human race to be hunting down the new, the happening and the thing that nobody else has dumped on social media yet.

You get used to it and from my point of view, both professionally and personally, new blood is just what I need. Sometimes, the blood isn't even that new—it can simply be people I've not met before. One such person is Rick Shaw at Broken Puppet. He kicked out some superb work at the weekend and checking in on what's going on daily out there, he's one to watch for sure. His wing-lady, Sarah Peters is no slouch either. It will be good to see how the future pans out at that studio.

Not so far away (in feet and inches), I find Gazz Neaves. Again... wickedly clean, great imagination and a command of the space he has to work with. Here's another guy with his head down, not much caring what's going on outside of his own world and being all the better for it. I don't do prediction-type things but it will be worth you keeping your eye on his colour work as the months press on. Brilliant stuff. Having said that, it's also good to see those familiar faces too. Fade FX I haven't seen for a couple of years now and for my money, she still remains one of the premier artists in her style in the world... and damn, if there's anybody out there who is 100% invested in tattooing and all it brings, it's her.

Sunday morning, I decided to get tattooed myself. It's been a long time since I've had work done at a convention. There's only so many times you can walk around the greenhouse and say hello... and once those people have got their heads down, I'm

ASHLEY G PHOTOGRAPHY



not one to interrupt the flow. Getting tattooed (by my buddy Fiumix whose work is often overlooked but is quite excellent) was a fine idea. If you stay in one place long enough, sooner or later, everybody will pass by just because you're standing still. I handed out some advice, ate some sweets, drank some coffee and a few hours later rejoined the land of the living.

Tattooing aside, the 'unplugged' stage where troubadours do their thing is always a joy for me and to say the crowds gravitate to the fashion shows and semi-naked entertainment would be an understatement... it's great fun but on the peripherals—and if you choose to look—there is magic to be found in the darkest of corners also. A hand-crafted wooden cane with a snake-head (not for sale) sparks my interest. A whole booth of beautifully painted reclaimed wood that would look fine, fine, fine in any room. My friends at the Camden Watch Company have brought their entire arsenal of watches to show... likewise, Carter Gore and their classic tattoo design inspired jewellery are here.

It's good to be in a place where there are so many talented people grafting their hands to stumps but it's equally good to see just how much tattooing has inspired the outside world along the way.

Overall, this is one of the best shows we've ever out on. Major thanks from the heart to both Rob Ratcliffe and Bex Priest for judging with me this year. It ain't easy up there for two or three hours at a time trying to fathom things out.

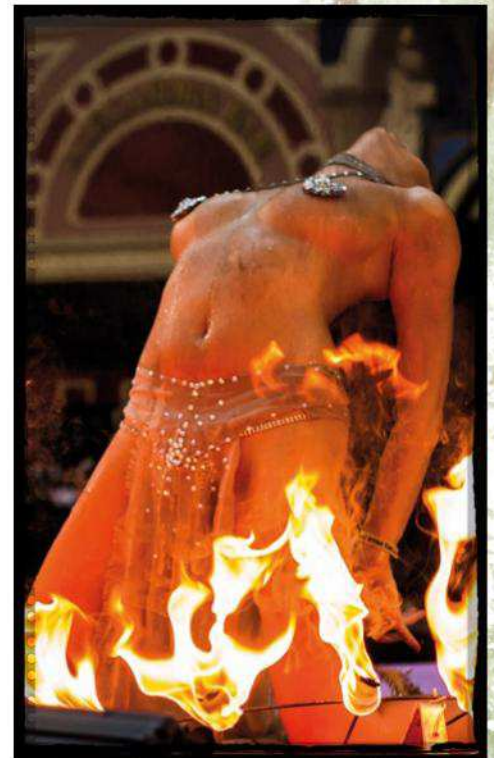
With Tattoo Jam taking a break this year to rest the field, our next show is Tattoo Freeze—sheesh! That's like January 2019. It will be upon us soon enough but



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in the meantime, it's time for me to hit the road again.

Thanks for working if you worked and thanks for coming if you came—a show is nothing if we ain't all in it together. ▣

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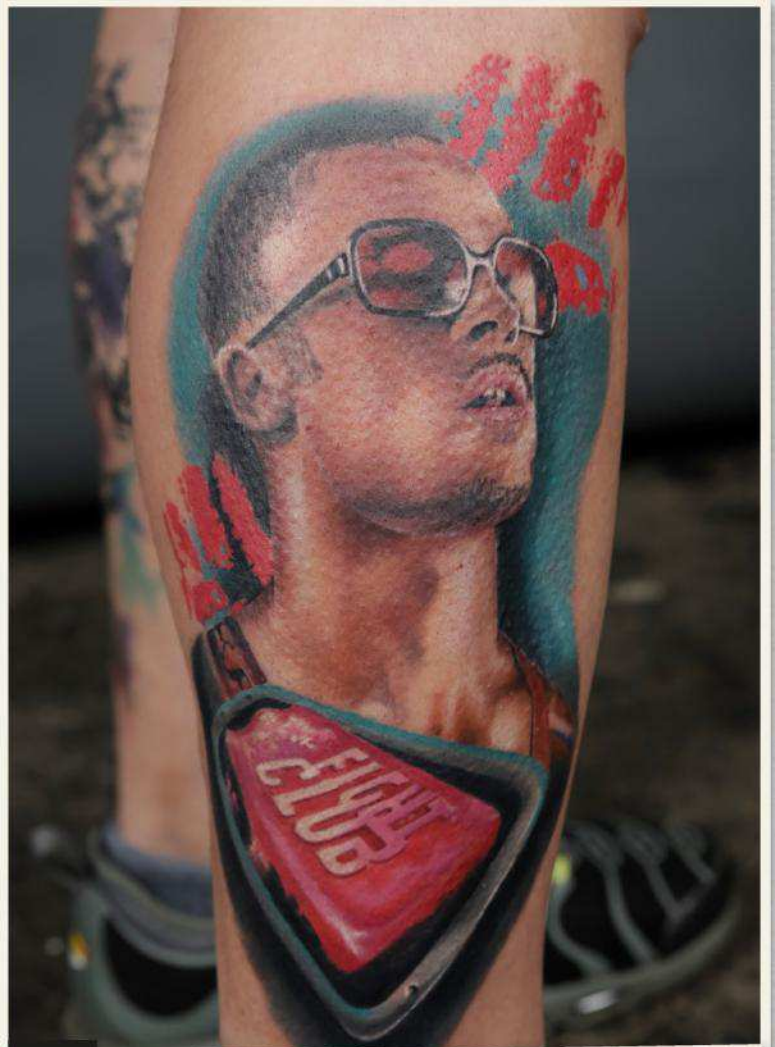


KinShots

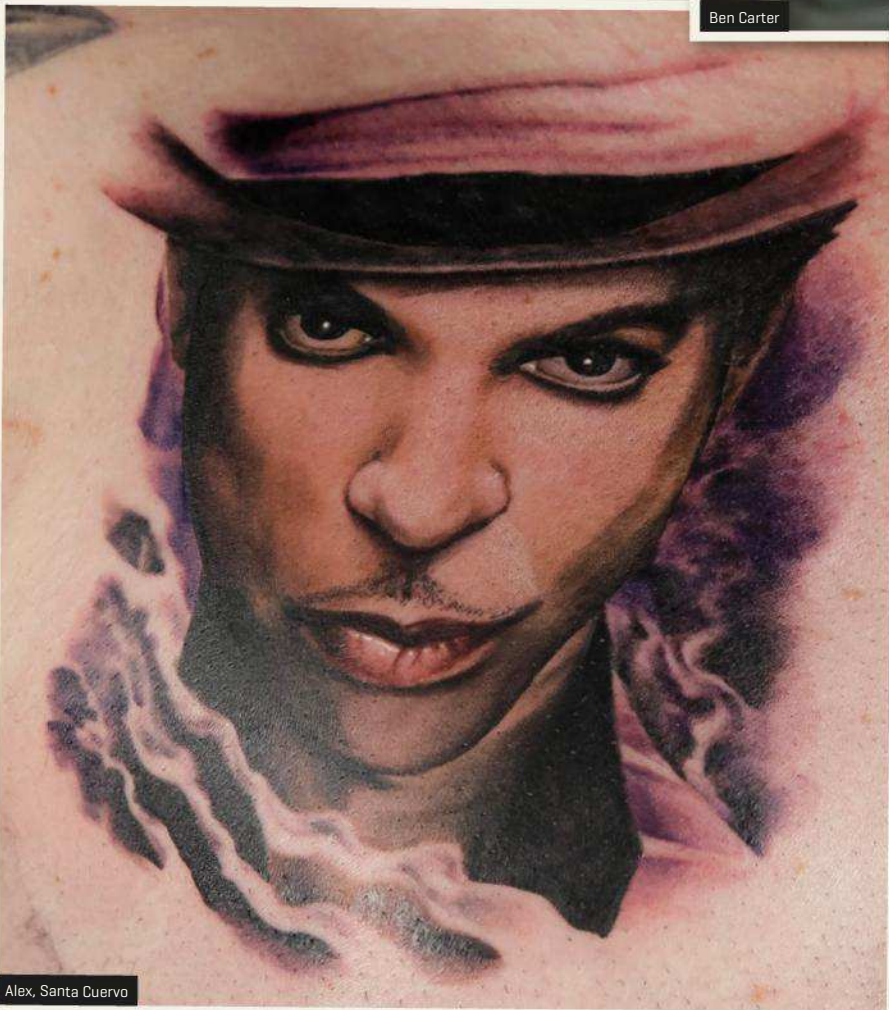
THIS ISSUE, OUR **SKIN SHOTS**
SUPPLEMENT BRINGS YOU SOME OF
THE BEST TATTOOS FROM **THE GREAT**
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Ben Carter



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Claudio Traina



Charlie, Dos Pistolas



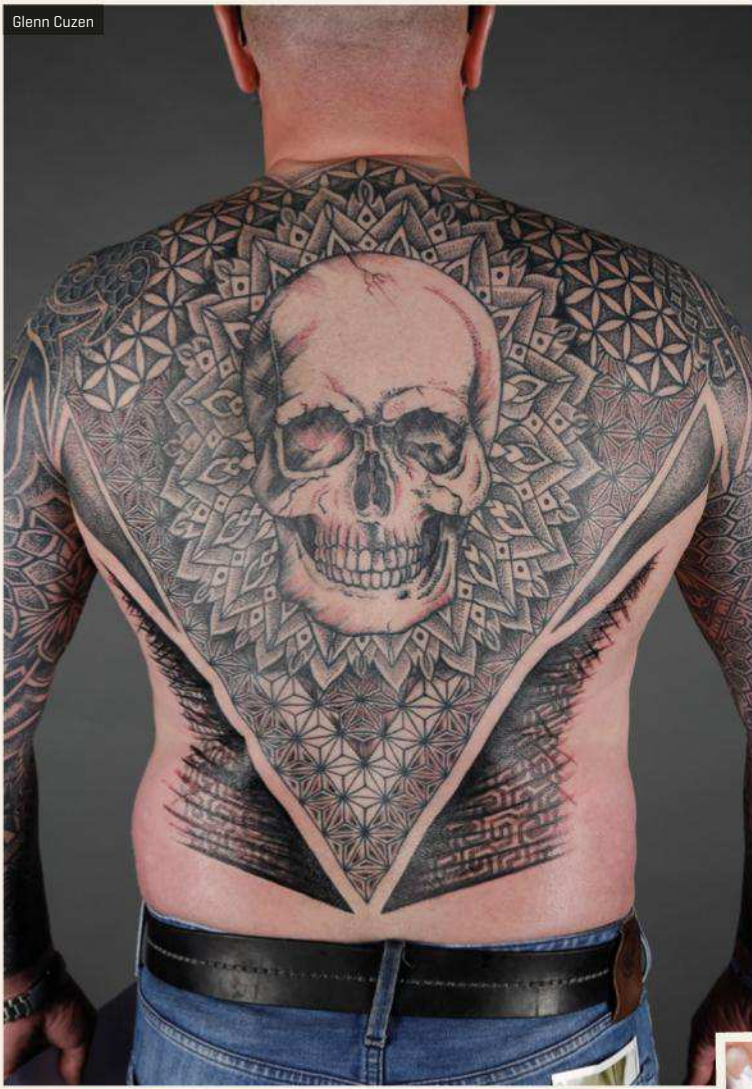
Erikas Bulanovas



Daryl Healey



Glenn Cuzen



Frank Klika



Guy Anderson

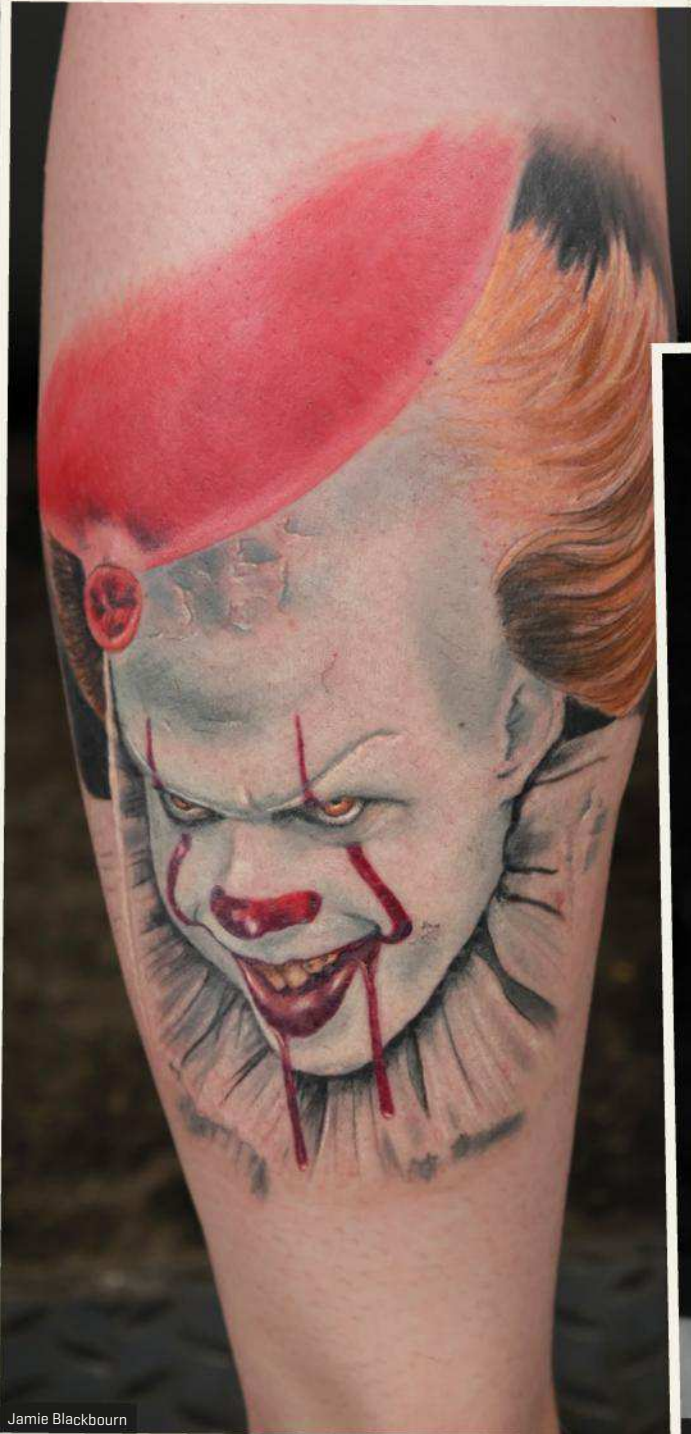


Gergana Petrova

Jarda Tattoo



Kev Finlay



Jamie Blackburn



Jodie Bow



Lacey Finedon



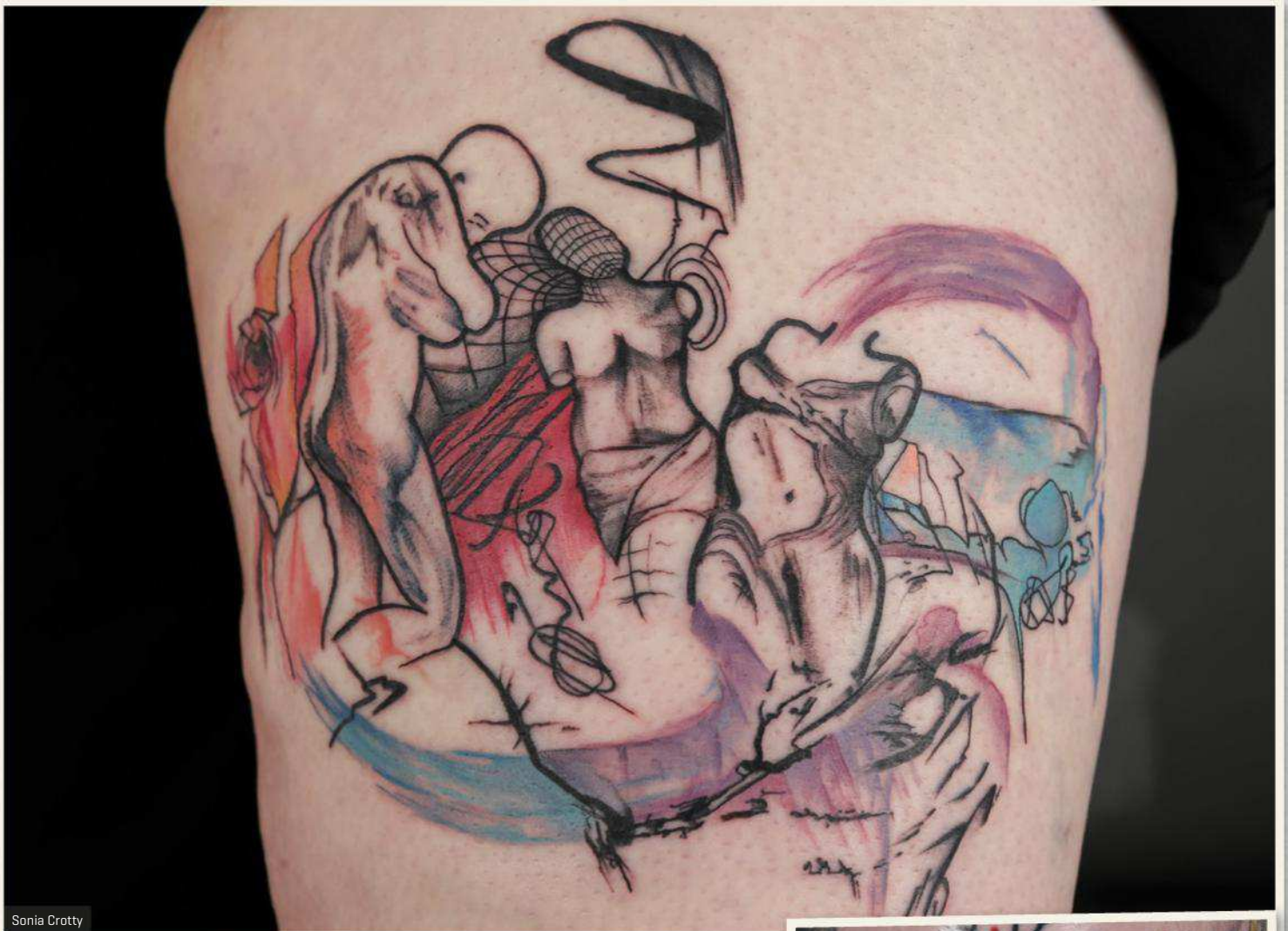
Laura Weller



Luca Garzella



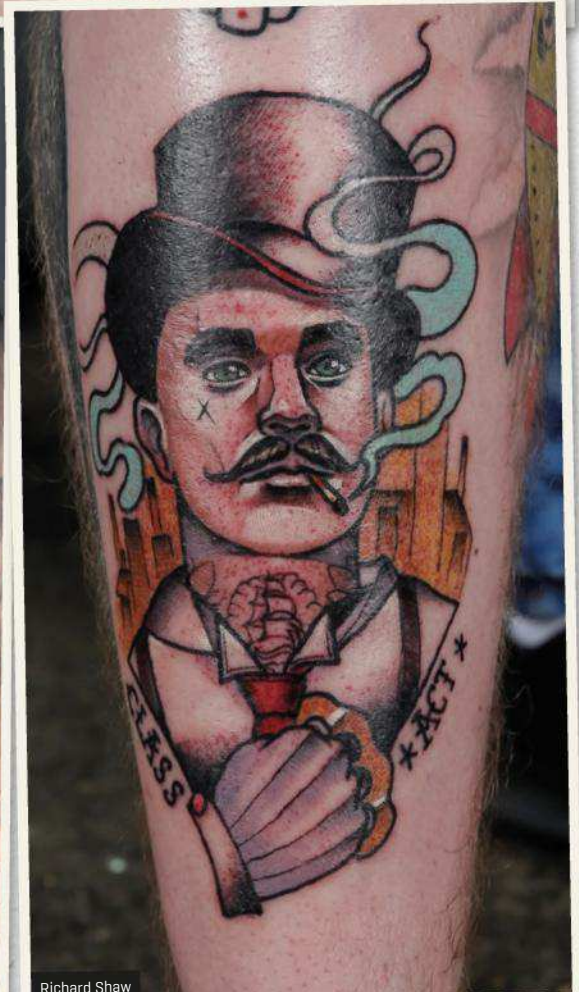
Leonardo Vegnuti



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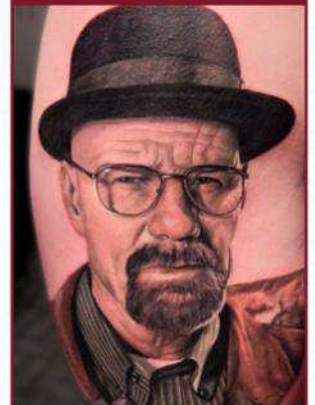


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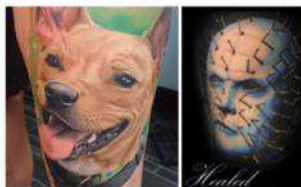
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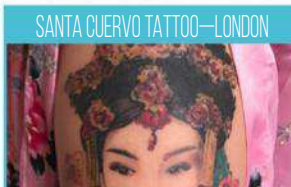
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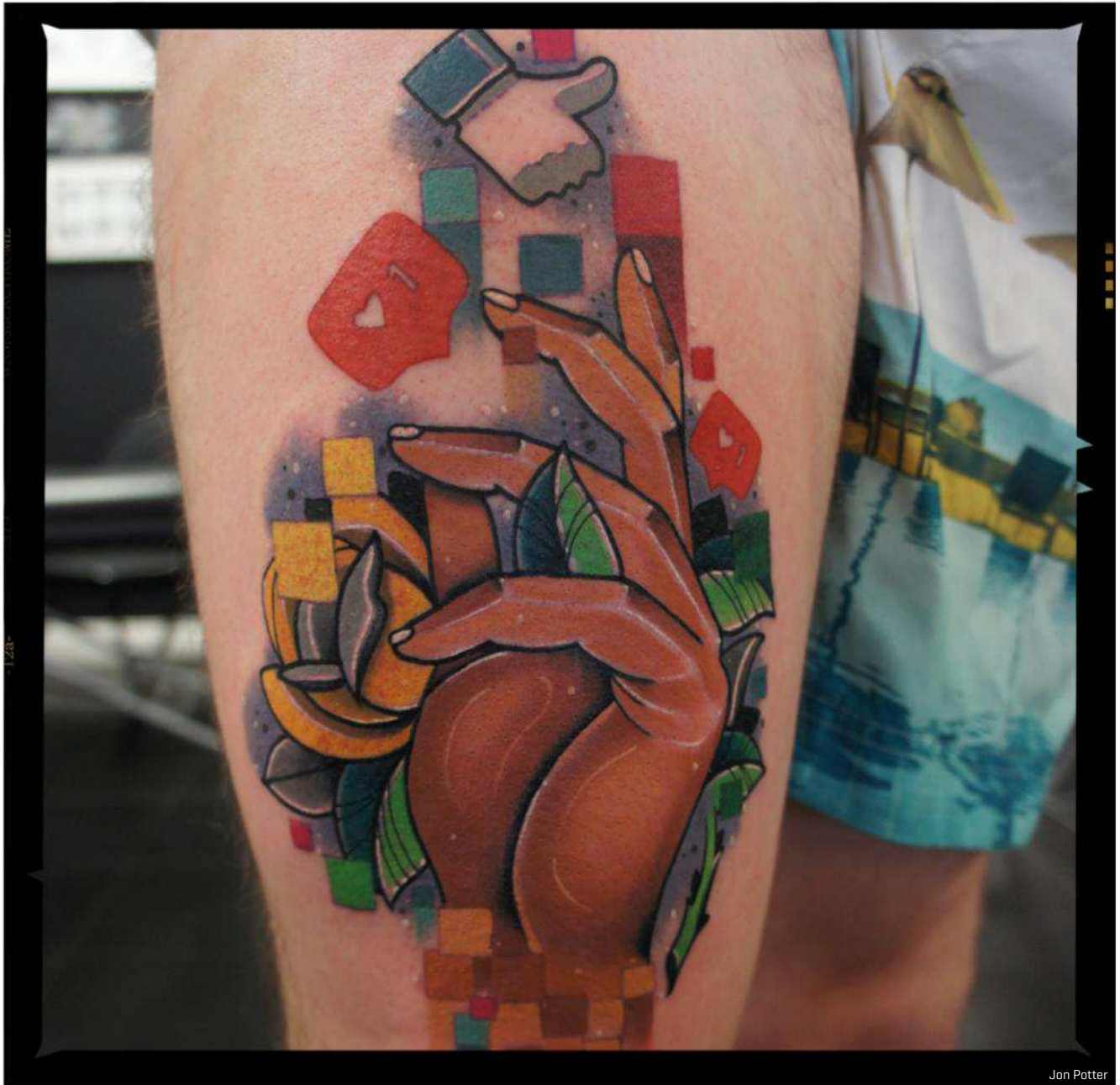
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by
Jon Potter



Jon Potter

This little piece is an absolute peach—and as the man himself said: “it’s probably my favourite piece to date”. “It represents the current generation grasping at social media likes and losing themselves to something built up of nothing but pixels”.

For once, a picture really does cut to the chase and says more than the thousand words that were promised. I love this. Jon’s style is always super clean, always inventive and the man never stops pushing at the boundaries of his own style. He flies under the radar most of the time, but we love his

work here and never get tired of seeing it.

It can be a really tall order for a tattoo to say anything at all most of the time—and that’s cool because tattoos don’t have to say anything—but when you want them to speak, you’d better get it right or you’ve just wasted your time.

The way to a man’s heart might be through his stomach (or sometimes the ribcage as Dirty Harry would have it) but you can also get there by giving social media a mighty punch in the mouth with a right hook.

Sold!

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