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A few months back, we introduced you to some of Copenhagen's finest. In this 'sequel', we take you 30 miles north of the capital to meet six members of tattoo royalty.

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Our close affinity towards animals runs deep in our veins, inherently linked to our longing to be free. Dom Wiley reconnects our tamed minds to the wild animal within.

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THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Nicky Connor
Rebecca Givens
Matt Haddon-Reichardt
Paula Hammond
Sean Herman
Steven Guichard-Kenny
Barbara Pavone
Wayne Simmons

COVER SHOT
Scott Cole

EDITOR

Sion Smith
editor@skindeep.co.uk
07841 999334

DESIGN

David Gamble
davidgamble@mac.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES

magazines@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Justine Hart
production@skindeep.co.uk
01244 881888

CREDIT CONTROL

Emma McCrindle
accounts@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 886009

ADMINISTRATION

Jan Schofield
jan@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 886019

TATTOO ADVERTISING

Mark McCarthy
mark@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 886022

SKIN SHOTS LISTING SALES

Sarah Shawcross
sarah@skindeep.co.uk
01244 886029

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

David Arthur
david.arthur@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888

EVENTS DIRECTOR

Shelley Bond
shelley@jazzevents.co.uk
01244 881888

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Stuart Mears
stuart@jazzpublishing.co.uk
01244 881888

DISTRIBUTION

Susan Saunders
susan.saunders@seymour.co.uk
0207 429 4073

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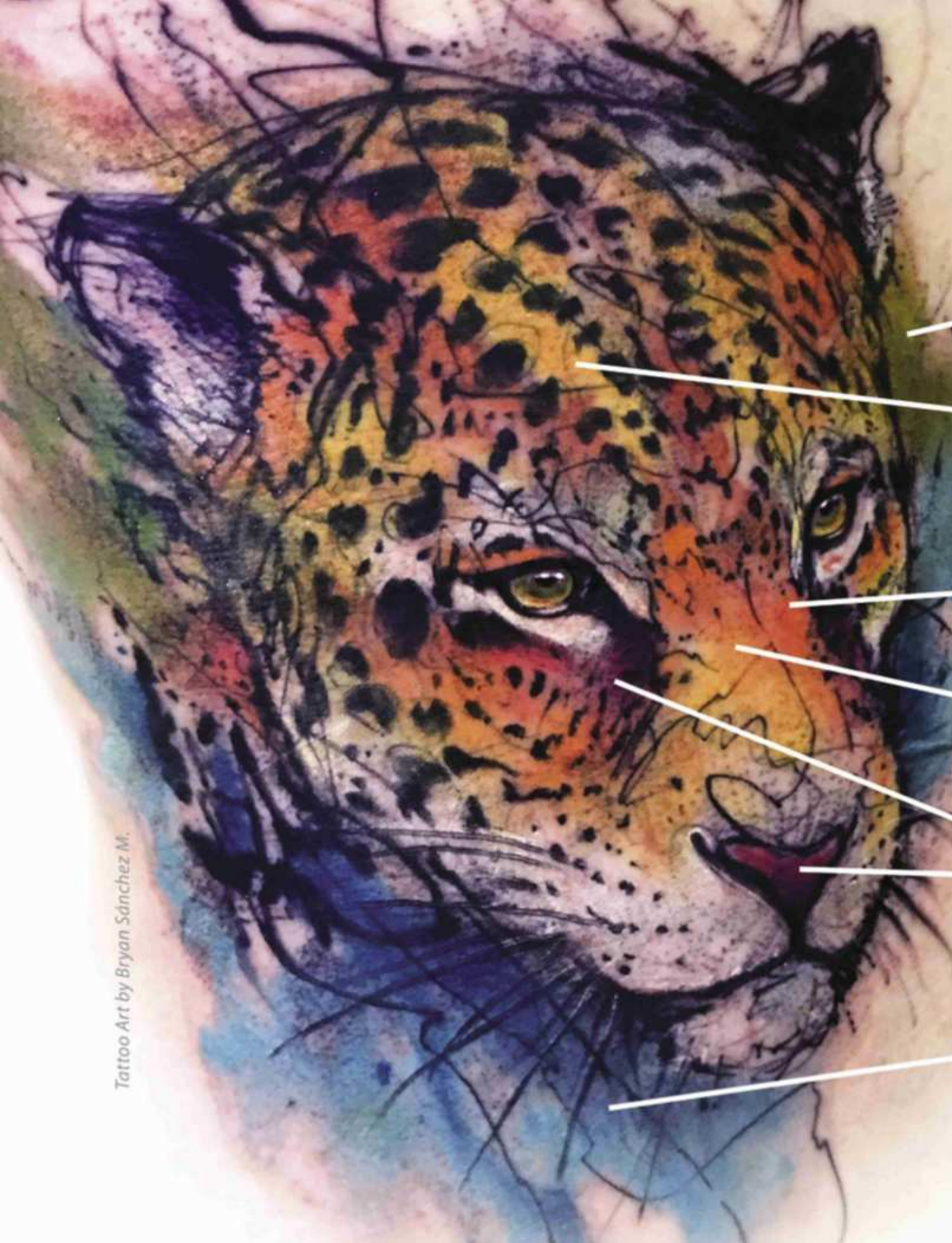
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Tattoo Art by Bryan Sánchez M.



Avocado



Solid Gold



Tangerine



Bright Orange



Ruby Red



Bermuda Blue & Turquoise Concentrate

BRYAN SÁNCHEZ M.

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12
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- BSW03 Cotton Candy
- BSW04 Light Purple
- BSW05 Exhaust
- BSW06 Snowflake
- BSW07 Bermuda Blue
- BSW08 Deep Sea
- BSW09 Turquoise Concentrate
- BSW10 Avocado
- BSW11 Solid Gold
- BSW12 Bright Orange



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SATURDAY NIGHT
& SUNDAY MORNING



The Body Thief

I recently moved house without telling anybody.

I didn't just move house. I moved countries too. Since the beginning of June this year, I have been living in Switzerland in an apartment that overlooks a river in the middle of nowhere with my dog and my guitar. I wanted to know if it was possible to hide in plain sight without hiding at all. With good Wi-Fi, I saw no reason as to why I couldn't operate in much the same manner that I always have without missing a beat—and that's exactly what has happened.

IF IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR CHRISTOPHER LEE,
IT'S SURE AS HELL GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME



SION SMITH • EDITOR
editor@skindeep.co.uk

Nobody noticed. The work got done... possibly even more work than normal because I was so paranoid about being discovered.

It's been an interesting experiment. I needed to spend some time alone to figure out what the world looked like from someplace else. Switzerland seemed like a good a place to move to as any. If it was good enough for Christopher Lee, it's sure as hell good enough for me.

As time pressed on, I took to writing in a cafe that had much better Wi-Fi than I have in my apartment and one morning, I found myself eating eggs across the table from a woman who had just had work finished on a full sleeve of birds. She noticed my birds first which is why she showed her sleeve to me and we bonded—as much as you can over eggs—over this simple state of affairs.

She asked me what my birds meant to me. So I told her the story. Since as far back as I can remember, I have been followed around by a storm of ravens. Once upon a time, it used to un-nerve me but a man can get used to anything and now we co-exist in a peculiar symbiotic relationship. There's more to it than this but right now, you and I are not bonding over eggs so you don't get to hear the rest.

She didn't know what to say, so I threw the question back at her and she told me her story. She thought nightingales were cool so she got a sleeve full of them. I'm glad she told me they were nightingales because I don't think I could have named one if you showed me a picture. Turns out she couldn't either and that was the whole of her story—that she thought 'they were cool' even though she had never seen one and had no connection to the birds whatsoever.

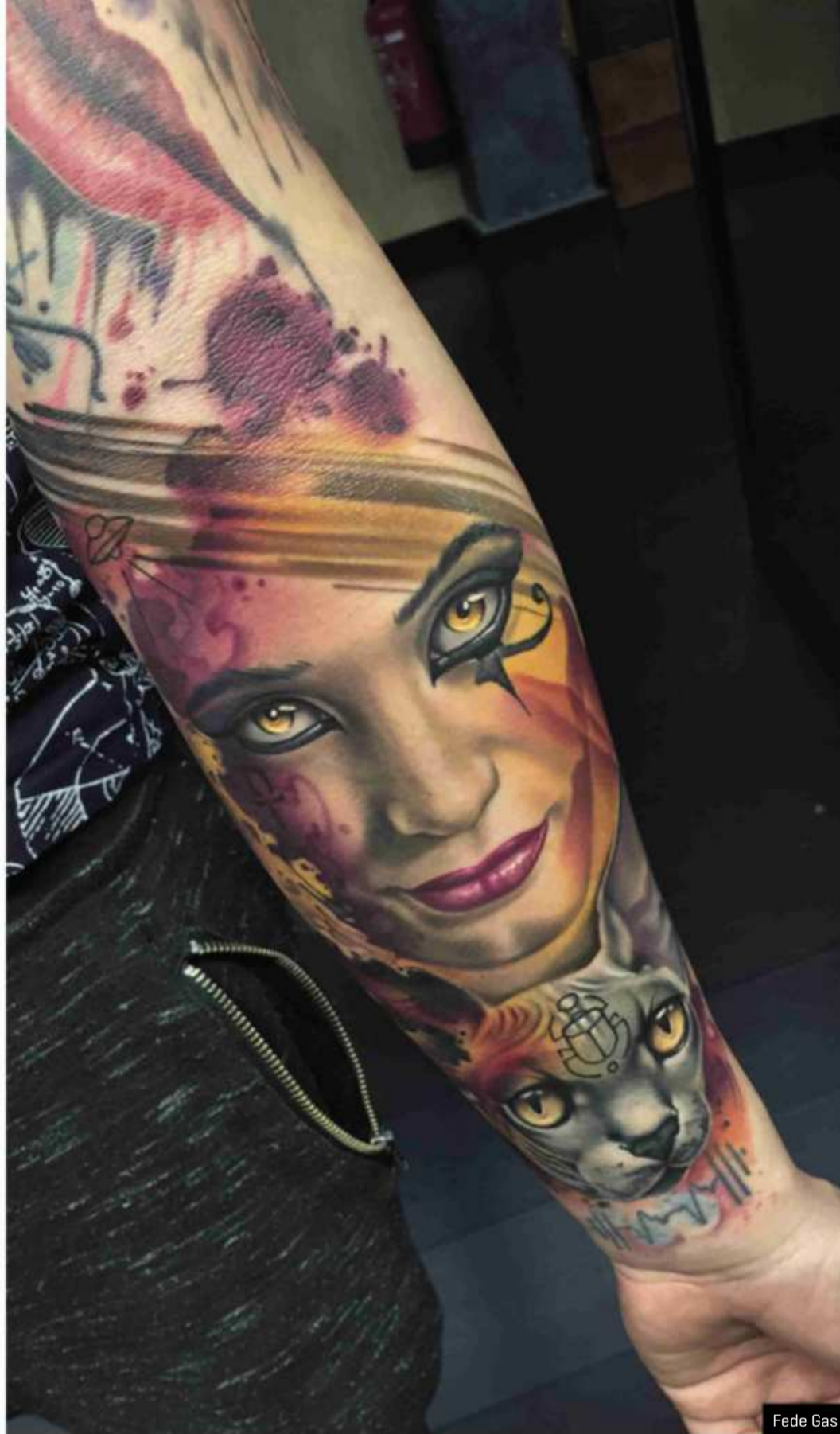
I finished my eggs and thought about this because damn, it was a fine sleeve. The tattooer had done a fantastic job... the tattooer whose name she couldn't remember, which is no use to me at all. I could have done something with that.

Then she dropped me The Bomb.

She'd had this sleeve re-created because she was a fan of somebody with the exact same sleeve and figured it looked great so she would get the same. She even showed me the pictures they had worked from.

I'm pleased that she didn't know the name of the tattooer because any respect I had dropped through the floor. That's known in my book as A Stolen Prayer. Who steals somebody else's tattoo idea and thinks it's OK? What tattooer thinks it's OK to do that?

In this little story we have a happy tattooer and a happy client. Happy. Happy. Happy. The whole world is happy. But the whole world is not because somewhere out there is a woman with the original sleeve who will



Fede Gas

SHE SHOWED HER SLEEVE TO ME AND WE BONDED—AS MUCH AS YOU CAN OVER EGGS ANYWAY

not be happy if she ever finds out and knowing artists as I do, they will be even less happy about it.

The more I tell this story, the more I hear of this happening. Following the Toni Moore article in the last issue, I even got an email from somebody with a picture attached showing me how they had the same throat tattoo... and there was pride in them saying this. Like they had joined a very special club nobody else could be part of.

Stealing other people's work and showing it to the world as your own is just about as low as you can get in tattooing. It makes you nothing but a tribute band. I have seen kitchen sink tattooers with more pride in their work than when this happens.

Don't do it. It devalues you as a tattooer and as a human canvas.

If you want to appreciate somebody else's stuff, buy a poster.

Footnote: A 'storm of ravens' is not the correct collective noun—but they don't like 'unkindness' as their descriptor.

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Life is a journey, and so is your tattoo collection

I'm quite often reflecting here on how progressive the UK tattoo scene is. Artists are always looking to push their craft forward and us wearers are always seeking new, unique and interesting ways to express ourselves. Tattooing is free-flowing, it doesn't follow rules, it can't be contained. It's a journey, both as an entire industry and as something we can connect to as individual collectors, throughout our lifetimes.

Our own personal tattoo collections are constantly evolving – each time we get a new tattoo, a new version of ourselves is born. We might mark a person, interest or memory, and owning that on our bodies can impact our every-day decisions, and vice versa.

I'm currently experiencing 'the other way' and undergoing my longest tattoo detox in over ten years. I had my last tattoo in April 2018 and I've never been this long without having a next appointment to look forward to. This is because, I might not be creating versions of my own identity right now, no, but instead, I'm creating an actual mini version of my own identity inside my body, one that demands nine months of rest, relaxation and not putting my body through intense physical strain for the sake of new tattoos.

Going through a life-changing thing like pregnancy has made me reflect on how I want to mark this journey with ink, and for once I can't run out and get the first new addition I can think of. Should I get my son's name tattooed? Could I eventually tattoo my stomach to symbolise the work of the womb? I have a long time to let these questions and ideas sit and stew in my mind before I am in the physical condition to answer them.

But perhaps I should also be waiting for the right mental condition too. When we want to use tattoos to mark milestones in our life, to what extent should we wait, to what extent should we plan? Should we, where possible, mark on impulse? How long should these events and experiences soak into the web of our lives in order for us to make the best decision about the art that will represent them forever? Will I look back on my birth in the same way during the days that follow, and the years that follow? With memorial tattoos, for



WE MIGHT MARK A PERSON, INTEREST OR MEMORY, AND OWNING THAT ON OUR BODIES CAN IMPACT OUR EVERY-DAY DECISIONS

example, sometimes they are created days after the death of a loved one, or the wearer might wait years to let ideas and emotions develop.

If you want to immortalise something on your skin, I suppose the only thing to remember is that you are the one who has to live with the decision forever. You know you, better than anyone. If you're like me and planning isn't your game... you know what to do. But if you often find yourself looking back on things and reacting to them completely differently to how you did at the time, maybe waiting and planning is your style. Give yourself months, or years, if that's what you feel you need. Tattooing will still be here for you when you're ready.

I think it's OK to look back on something in the future and have a different reaction to it. Like the industry, our lives move forward, and we're always going to change as individuals and see our ink differently in the years to come. As I reflect back at my old(er) tattoos I realise that whilst the images are immortalised, my feelings towards them at the time are not. Our emotions will always have a mind of their own and anyone who tries to control them is fighting a losing battle. Whether we plan for five minutes or five years, we can't see our future selves, we just have to go with the flow and look forward to meeting them further down the line.



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THE PAIN OF OTHERS

“Did your tattoos hurt?” “Which is the most painful place to get a tattoo?” Most tattooists and collectors will have heard these questions time and time again. Artist Chris Bintt is getting ready to send some answers into the ears of the inquisitive, but in the meantime, he needs your help.

Tell us about your new project, Did It Hurt?.

As a tattooer, the most common question I get asked is, “what is the worst area to get tattooed??. After endless debates with friends and colleagues over this question, I decided to find out the answer.

I have put together a concise and direct questionnaire to collect as much data as possible from a multitude of people, with varying ages, ethnicities and backgrounds. This will enable me to get the most accurate answer to the question!

This is only part of the project. I'd also like to make a book designed to inform and educate about the tattooing procedure: before, during and after. It will have advice and stories from tattooers and their clients. A sort of ‘how to get tattooed’ book, if you will. Aimed at making people’s tattooing experience as enjoyable as possible, by giving them all the information they need before they sit down in the tattooist’s chair.

This journey has just started, so I’m sure there will be other bits that get added to the book as it begins to come together!

When are you hoping it might be on sale?

The end of 2019 hopefully!

Have you had a good response from people so far? An inkling yet on where the most painful area is, if you’ve had time yet to read all your replies!

Since I started the project last month and put the questionnaire online, I’ve had over 800 responses, which is amazing, however the ratio is currently at about 3:1 female, so I need more guys to get involved! I’d love to get at least 5,000 replies so my results are as accurate as possible.

I don’t want to give too much away at the moment in terms of the winning body part, but a little example fact for you – 9.1% of people would give the throat a 5/5 pain rating. I am working to further breakdown that data into sex and age, which will allow me to extract results to even more questions!

And lastly tell us how Skin Deep readers can get involved and have their say.

I have an Instagram page (@didithurt_) – if you head over there, there is a link to the questionnaire. It takes about 5-10 minutes depending on how detailed you make some of your answers. I’ll be posting replies and information regarding the book on the page every week, to keep everyone informed and up to date. I appreciate those who have already taken part in the project so far and kindly ask anyone reading to go check out the page and share your stories with me!

didithurt_

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CHAMELEON PENS GIVEAWAY

This is quite a coup: Chameleon have given us a magnificent set of 52 pens/50 colour tops, a set of 22 pens/20 colour tops and 3 additional prizes of 5 pens/5 colour tops to give away. We suspect these will fast become a firm favourite of tattooers away from their machines very, very soon but they have so many uses it's a crime.

To be in with a shot at being one of the names out of the hat, simply send an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject CHAMELEON and we'll fish some winners out pronto.

You can find everything you need to know about the company and their products at chameleonartproducts.com, but take it from us, these are serious art materials.

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You can find out more right here—captainfawcett.com—and hey, it's nearly 'that time of year' and they have loads of cool gifts if you feel so inclined...



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REBEL INC.

Wayne Simmons talks with some of his favourite rebels within tattooing, artists doing something different with their inks.

This month he meets Renan Batista, a truly occultic artist from Brazil

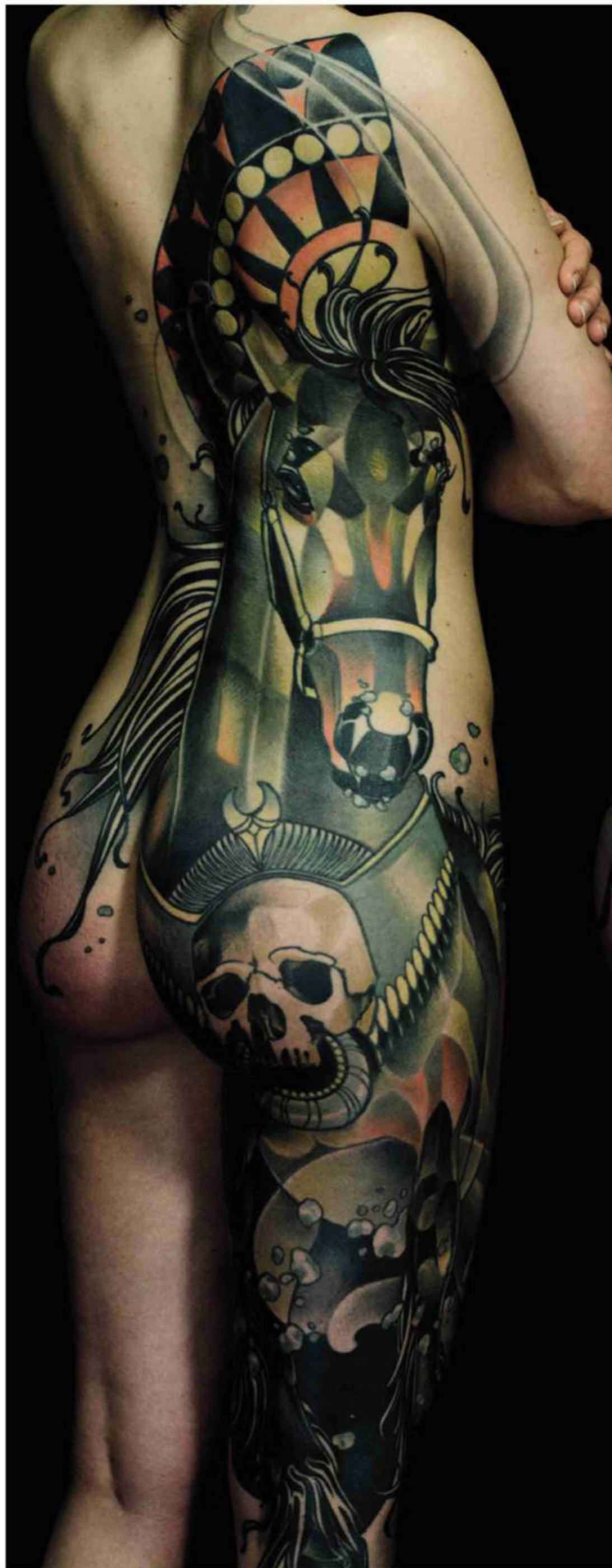
renanbatista.com
renanbatistatattoo

On his website, Brazilian artist, Renan Batista, talks very eloquently of the collaborative nature of tattooing. He's keen to highlight how special the process is and how it should affect those involved. For Renan a tattoo is 'the golden, ornamental expression of the connection between the feelings of the person who gets the tattoo, the soul of the Tattoo Artist, the art on paper and the craft that is finally engraved under the skin'.

When we meet for this interview, Renan goes even fur-



**WE'RE CHALLENGING
THE RULES OF NATURE
AND IN DOING SO, ARE
RECREATING NATURE**







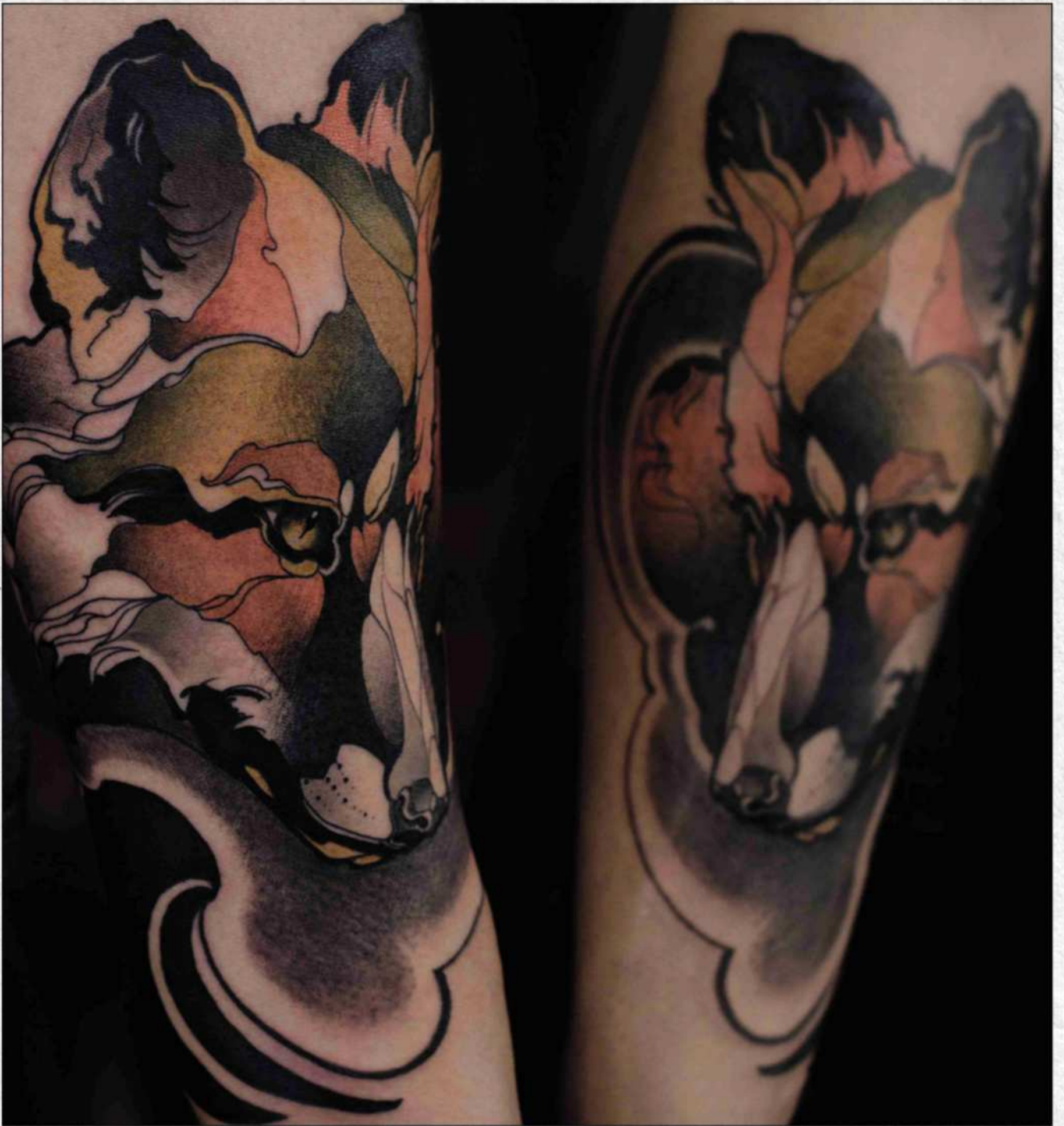
THE MORE CLEAR AND READABLE THE TATTOO IS, THE BETTER IT WILL AGE UNDER THE SKIN

ther: for him, tattooing is sacred, an exchange of energy, nothing short of a spiritual experience. “Each tattoo session is a rite,” he explains. “Blood and fire are involved. It is a challenge to nature itself because the body will try to get rid of the ink during the client’s entire life, but it won’t be able to. It’s alchemy and that’s how the alchemy happens. The spiritual experience is there, engraved under the skin, immortalised by the ritual.”

It’s a refreshing and, I would suggest, incredibly radical way to look at tattooing. I mean, we’re talking about

an art-form that is often portrayed within popular media as lowbrow. For Renan it’s anything but. He describes his work as ‘mosaic’ which, for me, conjures up very ornamental types of imagery and Renan’s tattoos capture this beautifully, I feel, especially the more organic pieces featuring human or animal faces. I ask more about the inspiration behind his work, what ignites that creative energy he speaks so passionately of.

“It is hard to describe,” he says. “Even though I have influences from Neo-traditional and Japanese, it is quite modern as well. I guess the surreal, the modern, the experimental has always been around me. My biggest inspiration, though,” he goes on to say, “is always nature. The reality is fractal, always changing, never stuck, forever dynamic. And through the elements in the background, I work my magic, connecting these never-ending changes



of reality to the present moment on my clients' bodies."

Again he references alchemy which, for the uninitiated, basically refers to an ancient occultic practice that sought to change base metal into gold. Many scholars – and indeed modern day practitioners - would suggest, however, that the true aim of alchemy is a spiritual rather than material transformation, that the whole metal/ gold thing is simply a metaphor for a radical form of personal and metaphysical development.

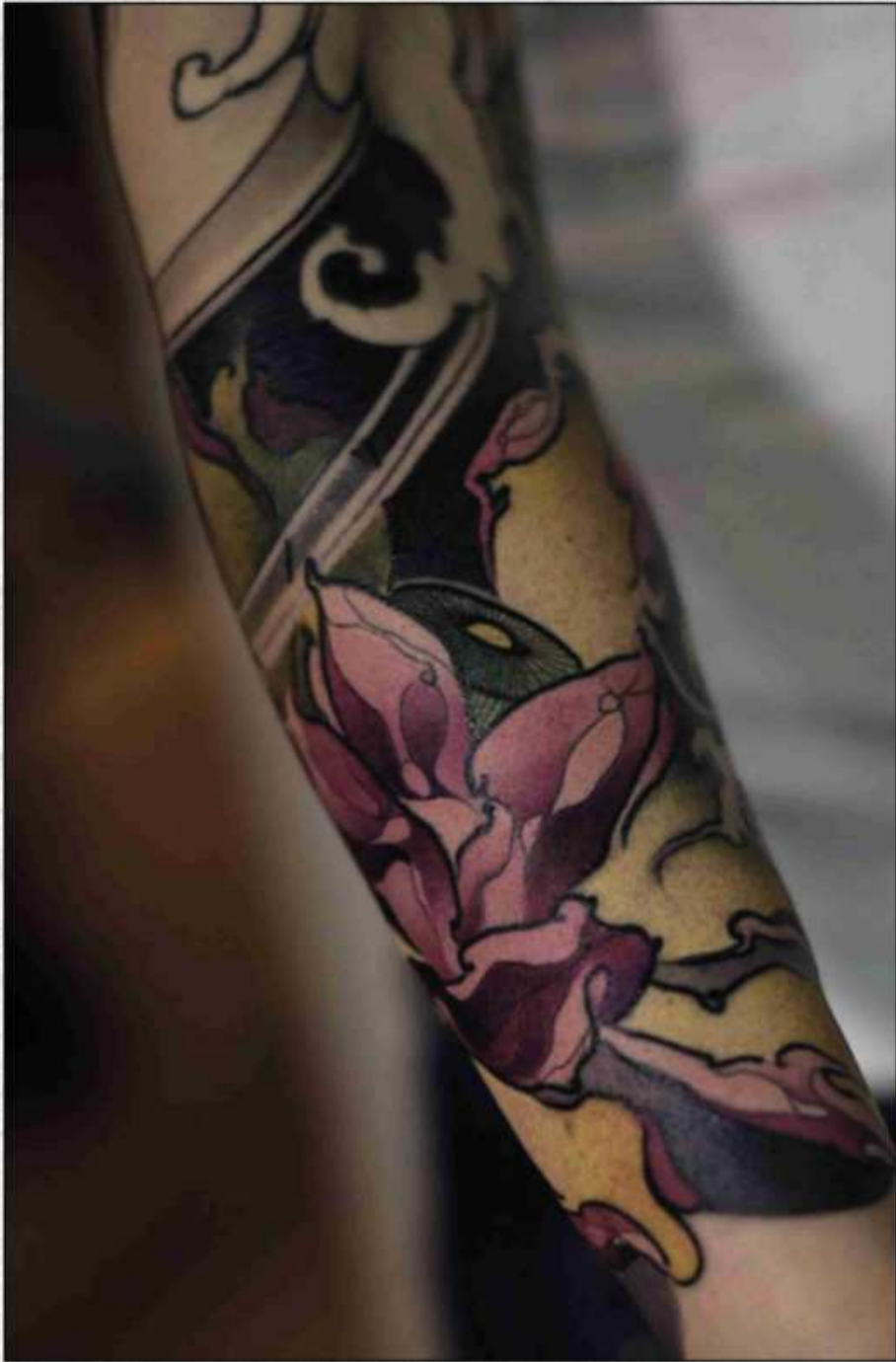
But for Renan, the tattooing process bears both spiritual and physical results, the alchemist's 'base metal' being the client's skin with the 'gold' being the beautiful tattoo that is formed through interacting with that skin. "We're challenging the rules of nature," Renan proclaims, "and in doing so, are recreating nature!"

This is an intense process, no doubt, for both client and

TO BE HONEST, I DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH THOSE TRENDY TATTOOS ANY LONGER...

artist. I'm wondering how this intensity manifests itself during the creation of a tattoo. Does Renan, for example, need a specific working environment in order to ensure the mood is right? Does the process require some form of meditative state for the artist, or maybe even the client, to become engaged in? Is there some form of ritual work involved? Or is the intensity he speaks of not as overt as that?

"It's more subtle, I guess," Renan says. "But it depends on one's sensitivity. On my side, I feel it and I work during the whole time to manage the energy balance during the



THE NOTHINGNESS AND THE PRESENT MOMENT ARE MORE ATTRACTIVE TO ME THAN EVER BEFORE

session. The most sensitive clients might feel it too, others will see it on the final result, which is equally satisfying in the end.”

In a sense, then, a tattoo is a privilege. Something to be earned. This is a familiar trope found within authentic traditional tattooing as well as both the ancient and modern mystery school traditions from which modern occultism has sprung up.

For Renan, it not only relates to the process of tattooing and the necessary connection between client, artist and art, but on a much more down-to-earth level whether he will actually do the tattoo that a client asks for. Or more specifically where they ask for it. On the FAQ section of his website, for example, Renan states he will only tattoo hands, face and neck if the person is already massively tattooed.

“Well, I’m lucky I guess, because my clients seem to understand this very well,” he says. “To be honest, I don’t have to deal with those trendy tattoos any longer.”

Another thing Renan shares with traditional artists is his choice of colour palate. He seems to go for a minimalist approach, almost limiting himself to a small number of colours like the most puritan among the old school, tra-



ditional community would do. Is this intentional on his part, I wonder?

“It is intentional. Less is more, in my opinion. The more clear and readable the tattoo is, the better it will age under the skin.”

As our time together draws to a close, I ask Renan about his plans for the future and it seems, in this case, it’s his minimalist side that bears out rather than his occultic side – there’s no temptation to consult any oracles, to indulge in divination of any kind to see what the future might hold. Quite the opposite, in fact.

“I have no plans,” he says. “The nothingness and the present moment are more attractive to me than ever before. So, I guess if the right people are able to know themselves deeply, they’ll come ready for the tattoos. If not, we’re gonna build it up together anyway!” ▣



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WASTE LAND

Tattooing is big business. While many companies are struggling tattooing is one of the few growth industries in UK towns and city centres. But this exponential expansion comes at a price and waste produced by tattooing is having a real environmental impact. Plastic waste is the eco crisis of our generation and tattooing is playing its part in dumping non biodegradable plastics into the environment



“I guess it’s hard to put an exact amount on the waste we produce as a studio on an annual basis.” Explains Hollie May Wall of the Old Smithy Tattoo Parlour in Leek. “Last year we decreased our general waste to a monthly collection and increased our recycling to bi-monthly, so everything plastic that at least comes in to the studio and is recyclable leaves the studio in the recycling bin.”

While tattooists like Hollie try their utmost to recycle, some plastic items used in tattooing simply cannot be recycled.

“Everything used in the tattoo process, plastic or not, goes into medical bags which are collected weekly. That for us is roughly 1 to 2 bags of contaminated waste. We are talking big bags that end up very full.”

Blood contaminated items cannot be recycled due to health and hygiene reasons.

“Unfortunately the biohazard waste produced in a tattoo studio is a negative by-product of the industry but it’s a necessity in order to keep the public safe. I guess there is now more waste produced due to more tattooists using disposables which increases the biohazard waste. The alternative is if you’re using reusable metal grips it requires using electricity for both the autoclave and ultrasonic, plastic bags to put over the newly sterilised grips and someone to stay late to clean the grips using more electricity. I guess you can’t win!”

One of the plastic items used in tattooing that constitutes a huge proportion of plastic waste is cling film which many tattooists use to wrap a fresh tattoo.

Tony Brown is a retired community nurse and first aid trainer and is baffled by the tattoo industries obsession with wrapping tattoos in cling film.



“I imagine your readers are aware that a tattoo is an open wound. It’s much like a graze; a graze with ink pigments pushed into the dermis by needles. The top layer of skin is damaged and destroyed in the process and as the tattoo heals the ink is encapsulated by the body and lodges in the dermis.”

“The important thing to remember that despite the ink, the body heals this damaged area the same as it heals a non ink injected cut or graze. You don’t see bikers who get road rash going into A&E and getting their wound wrapped in cling film, you don’t see first aiders at skateboard competitions wrapping grazed knees in cling film and if your GP is treating a skin abrasion they don’t tell you to get down Tesco and buy some cling film.”

“I was an RAF medic, a nurse and I taught first aid for years and I’ve never come across the notion of the best way to heal a wound is to wrap it in cling film. It encourages bacterial growth and isn’t sterile. In extreme cases cling film can be used in first aid but we are talking about when there are no other alternatives.”

The good news recent years alternatives to cling film have arisen as Hollie explains.

“An alternative we are now using is a protec-



Tattoo ‘tourism’ is a growing sector of the industry with tattooists and their customers travelling the globe to ink and get inked. I asked Matt Wall, manager of the Old Smithy Tattoo Parlour in Leek, if he thought tattooing was worth the price of a large carbon footprint.

“Besides running the studio I’m an outdoor pursuit in instructor and our impact on the environment is a big topic; travelling, environmental and economic, and they’re many pros and cons with these impacts. Unfortunately we generally seem to focus on the negative impacts of travel but the bottom line is there will always be some level of detrimental impact. As a responsible outdoor instructor I saw it as my job to help educate and protect and use the environment responsibly. The other option is we stop going in to the outdoors, but the benefits of been in the outdoors far outweigh not going in to the outdoors.”

“This is similar to the tattoo industry. Yes there is an impact but it’s how we manage it and we need to think about the positives. What is more inspiring than art? It gives a lift like nothing else and makes people feel something deep down. Art has been a constant though out human evolution and tattooing is one of the oldest forms, so it’s important it is kept. Due to the higher levels of hygiene in the modern industry to ensure client and artist safety, excessive waste has become one of the negatives of our tattooing. What we have to look at as we move forward, is how we can become greener and more environmentally conscious while not sacrificing artist integrity or creativity.”





tive sticky film, as you use a lot less of it to cover the tattoo and it can be left on the fresh tattoo for up to 5 days which means the client is not replacing cling film for days, there for producing less waste. In my studio we use either, Sani-derm, Dermalize or Yayo Guard.”

The bad news is the new wraps are still plastic based. Hollie still believes wrapping a wound in plastic is for the good of the tattoo and its new owner

“Unfortunately, I believe it is necessary to cover a fresh tattoo to help prevent bacteria getting in the tattoo during the early stage of healing which then in turn minimises the risk of infection, again I believe it will also help the tattoos I create look the best for the long run.”

While alternatives to cling film may cut down on waste the question arises that should tattooists be using plastic at all to cover tattoos. Tony disagrees with Hollie that plastic wrap is necessary.

“I’ve taken a look at the products Hollie mentioned and while they sound a lot better than using caterers cling film to wrap a fresh tattoo, professionally speaking, I recommend a traditional sterile bandage.”

Mattias Andersonn agrees that the industry needs to move away from cling film.

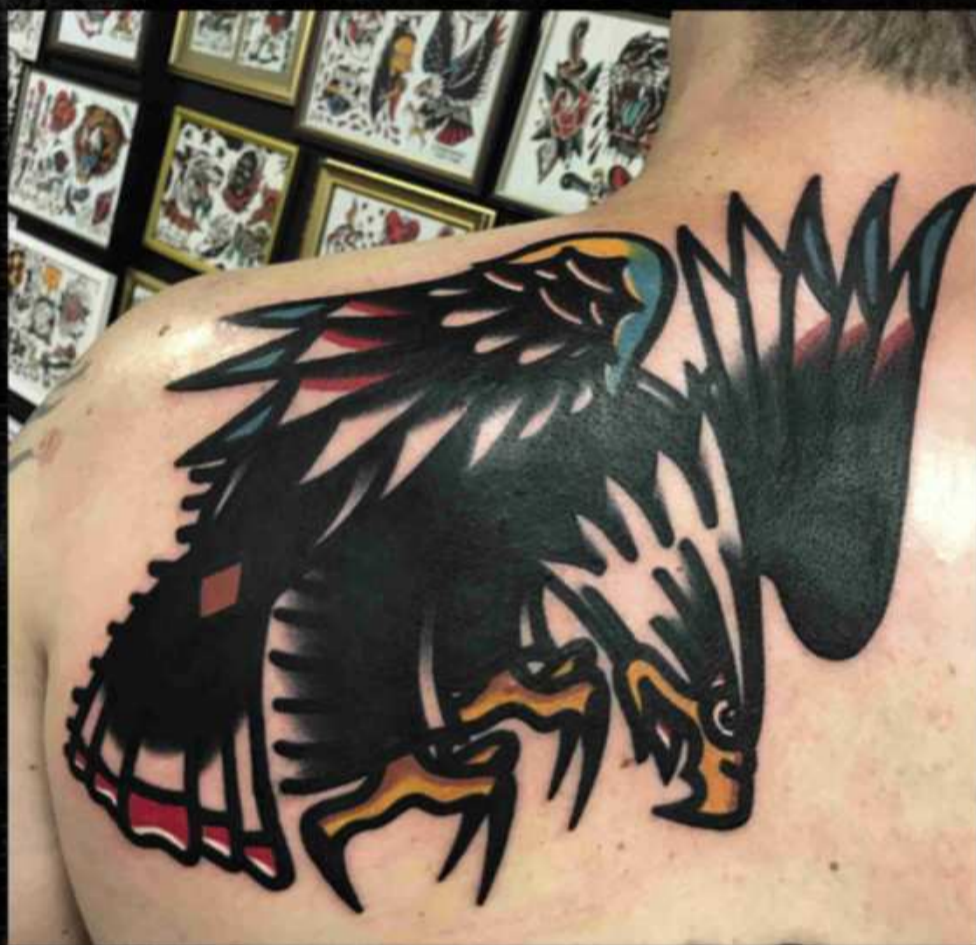
“A tattoo isn’t food you will put in the fridge so why wrap



it in cling film or shrink wrap?”

Matt owns Stray Dogs Tatton in Kungälv, Sweden, and the plastic waste problem is the same in Sweden as it is the UK.

“The problem with cling film and shrink wrap is it’s been around for so long and it’s always worked. By ‘worked’ I mean offered a cheap way of protecting a tattoo in the journey from the studio to home. People have to remember modern tattooing had its origins in the underground world of bikers. Back in the day before the hipsters and TV companies got in on tattooing, it was a pretty spit and sawdust industry. People also have to remember that in the pre internet days you just couldn’t do a Google search on how best to heal a tattoo. Cling film was cost effective, readily available and did the job. It has always had the added bonus of allowing the tattoo to be seen while protecting



ANCIENT WISDOM

Tattooing and humans go back; way back. Archaeological evidence from the Stone Age presents us with tattoo tool kits made from bone, stone and ash. While prehistory is a murky place its clear tattooing was an important art form alongside cave painting and sculpture. Perhaps the future environmental impact of tattooing can be reduced by turning back to the old ways. Prior to steel, electric coils and cling film our ancestors tattooed with environmentally friendly and biodegradable products. Needles and incision tools would be made from bone, antler, teeth, thorns and stone. Otzi the Copper Age Ice Man, the oldest human mummy in existence, had numerous tattoos most probably made with flint knives cutting the skin and soot being rubbed into the wound. Carbon from fires and the bottom of cooking pots was often the basis for Stone Age inks and continues to be used today by indigenous people around the world. Other none mechanised means of applying tattoos include hand tap, hand poke and sewing techniques all of which heal quicker and easier than when a tattoo is hammered into the skin by a machine. Not all ancient tattoos are crude like Otzi’s. The mummy of a 2500 year old Siberian Ice Maiden, found in 1993 in a kurgan of the Pazyryk culture in Republic of Altai, displays tattooing of such quality that they look like they could have only been made with modern machines. Ancient tools in the right hands are a match for today’s technology. Perhaps if the industry is to take seriously its responsibility to the planet tattooing needs to go back to its roots and give up electric coils and cling film for good.

it from clothing and the elements.”

Matt agrees that it’s time to move on from cling film and look to more environmentally friendly alternatives even if he isn’t a fan of traditional bandages.

“I’ve read research that plastic based bandages can be used to help wounds heal; to protect them from damage and bacterial infection. I think tattooists need to move away from cling film but there are some great plastic bandages out there produced by some very respectable companies. Besides fabric bandages still produce waste even if its plastic light and you can’t see the tattoo if it’s wrapped in gauze and cotton.”

Sadly wrapping a tattoo in plastic is still standard operating procedure for most tattooists. While this element of plastic waste is going nowhere in a hurry, Hollie believes all studios can do their bit to cut down on plastic.

“As a studio we recycle all recyclable waste, even ensuring we remove bottles and cans from the general waste bins when customers stuff them in. As said, we recently decreased our general waste collection from fortnightly to monthly as we realised we could recycle more. I guess it’s difficult to reduce much of the plastic waste used during the tattooing process as its used for hygienic reasons, everything needs to be wrapped and we use disposables which are encased in plastic so were aware that we need to do everything possible to help counter balance this. Like I said we have changed the way we wrap the tattoos after the procedure which reduces waste.”

For Hollie cutting plastic waste at her studio goes beyond the tattoo process.

“At Old Smithy we do our best to cut down on waste of all kinds. I co-own my studio, Old Smithy Tattoo Parlour with my husband Matt who is also Studio Manager, and we’re based in the Leek, North Staffordshire. I’ve been tattooing since 2010, and now specialise in my own abstract style. We have two more resident artists Bex Heath and Mick Emery. Bex is my old apprentice who’s still tattooing anything she can but loves the more cartoony designs. Mick Emery has just joined us and specialises in traditional colour work. The whole studio and team ethos is keep it green.”

“We have milk delivered from a local milkman in bot-



tles which reduces our use of plastic bottles. We have a one cup boil kettle which enables us to only boil enough water for each drink rather than boiling a full kettle each time, and we ensure lights are switched off when not in use; including the bathroom light. We even had a new obvious light switch installed to make this easier.”

Hollie acknowledges that tattooing is tainted by the same fever that grips the whole of society; an addiction to cheap plastics.

“Yes, there is definitely a level of hypocrisy both in the tattoo industry and society as a whole. I witness “so called” preaching vegans drinking beer, using leather, driving when they can walk. I see the middle aged, middle classes lecturing about recycling then driving their 4X4 to the recycling centre. I see hipsters banging on about carbon foot prints then going on multiple foreign holidays each year. If you’re going to preach about something you need to back it up with actions. I feel as a studio we try to be conscientious in all areas of “green living” and don’t need to preach about it, we can just feel confident knowing we do whatever we can to have as little impact on the environment as possible.” □





THE ROYAL FAMILY

A few months back, we introduced you to some of Copenhagen's finest. In this 'sequel', we take you 30 miles north of the capital to meet six members of tattoo royalty

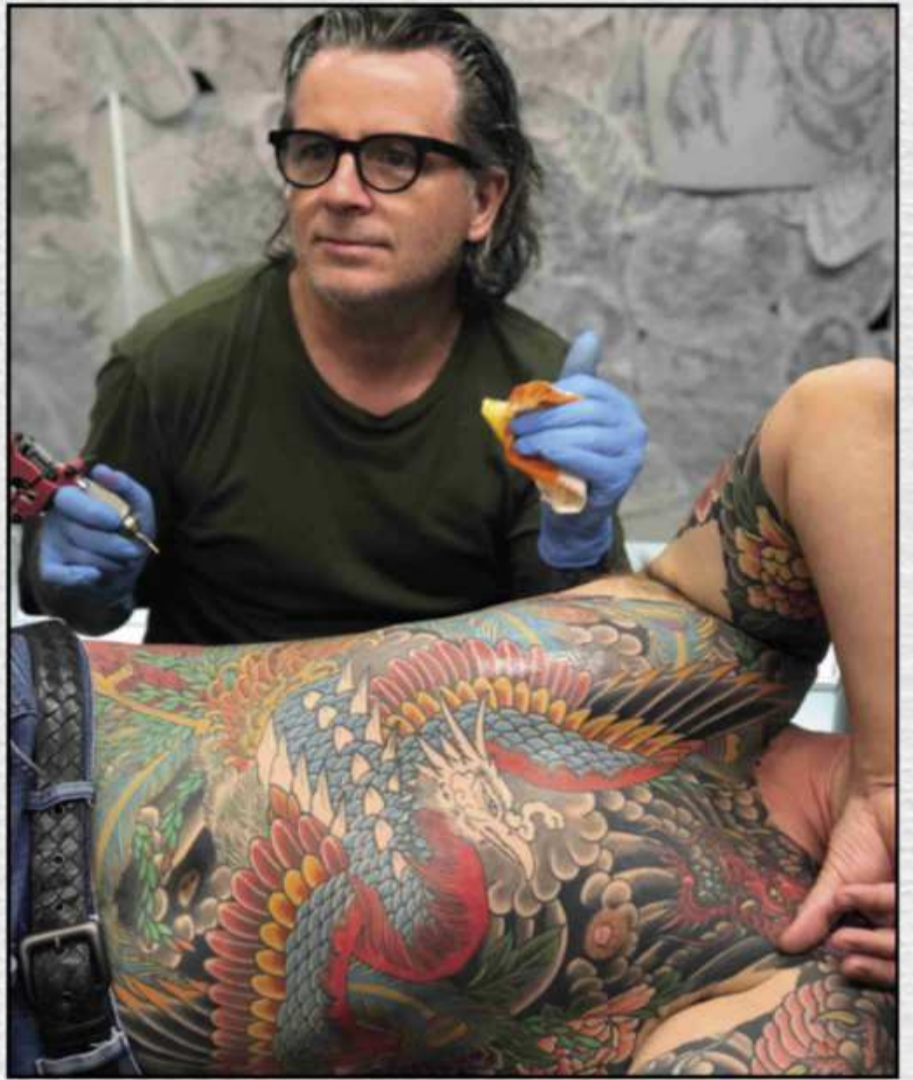


The Danish city of Helsingør is most famous for being the location of one of the world's greatest writer's greatest works—its beautiful Kronborg castle the setting for one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies.

Spoiler alert, all does not necessarily end so well in Hamlet, but it's not so glum in the present day, with Helsingør not just packed with interesting art, architecture and history, but home to one of the world's most famous tattoo shops.

Sitting within the shadow of the magnificent 16th century castle is a much smaller but largely influential establishment. Royal Tattoo was founded by Henning Jorgensen in 1983 and today still attracts visitors from all over the world.

So... what is so great about this particular tattoo home and the family that reside within it? Do they get on better than the fictional Prince of Denmark and his periphery characters? Why is Helsingør such a great place to setup shop, and remain working for 35 years and counting? Let's find out:



HENNING JØRGENSEN

royaltattoo.com / @henning_royaltattoo

"We never stop evolving in tattooing. The learning process never stops."

ON HELSINGØR:

"This is an old city. Water on one side and forest on the other side, we have a lot of old buildings and history here."

ON THINGS TO DO:

"It's a small city but a great place to gather because lots of cultural events take place here."

FAVOURITE RESTAURANT:

"Madam Sprunck – always great food and atmosphere."

FOUND ON HIS DAY OFF:

"Mike Rubendall and I started the EU branch of Lucky Tattoo Supply here in Helsingør, so you would most likely find me at the warehouse, or at my drawing desk at home preparing new tattoos."

MEET THE ARTIST:

"I love doing Japanese and American Traditional tattoos. Imagery wise, I love Japanese, and dragons [no limits to the imagination and [the dragon is] perfect to follow the shape of the body]. I also love backgrounds, water and wind... they really frame an image.

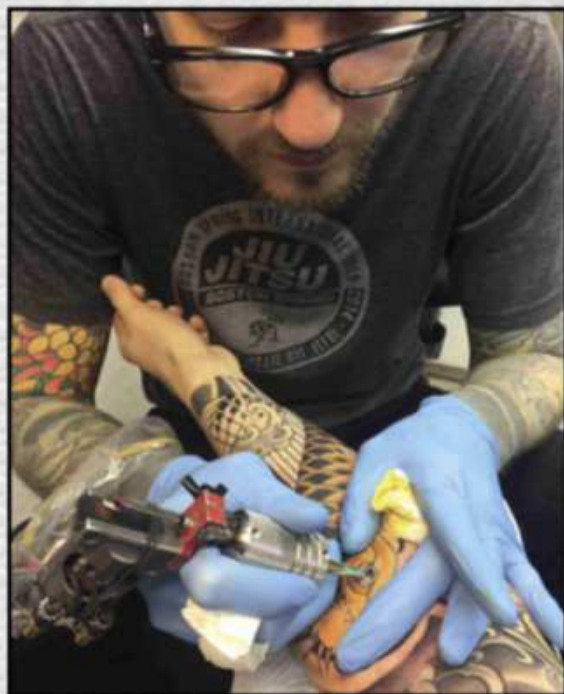
"Making a readable tattoo is very important to me. When you see a tattoo from across the street, it should be possible to read it and separate the different elements. When you get closer, you discover all the details. To me, it is crucial to listen to the client, connect to their ideas, put myself in their place and together find the best possible solution. I love that process.

"I do believe that we never stop evolving in tattooing. The learning process never stops. I look forward each day to working with great people and amazing clients."





BRIAN MACNEIL
 @brianmacneil
 "I design a tattoo as if I'm going to wear it, I try to put as much as myself into my drawings."
ON HELSINGØR:
 "A wonderful quiet town next to the beach. There are lots of small shops, bars and restaurants to relax in."
TOP TIP:
 "I like to watch the sunsets on the beach after work."
FAVOURITE RESTAURANTS:
 "La Vecchia Maniera for the best pizza, and Sushi Taro."
FOUND ON HIS DAY OFF:
 "When I'm not working being outside is wonderful. I generally like a lot of downtime and quite on my days off to collect my thoughts and to take in new inspiration."
MEET THE ARTIST:
 "I would describe my work as having a technical foundation in traditional tattooing but not limited to just traditional images and motifs. I'm mostly inspired by the large-scale work of Japanese tattoo artists and the designs of the 18th and 19th century woodblock prints. That being said I'm not solely inspired by things from the past. I like to look towards nature as well, in order to find characteristic of my subjects that are not found in other peoples work. I try to make the boldest and strongest design possible with powerful movements and flow that can be recognisable from 100 feet away.
 "When I am designing a tattoo it can sometimes be a long process: research and reading the history to make sure I don't misrepresent the subject. I design a tattoo as if I'm going to wear it, I try to put as much as myself into my drawings even though there may be over 100 representations of that same motif I feel it's important to create original content rather than just trace the hard work of others.
 "In the future, I'd like to have more time to do watercolour and oil painting. I feel it's important to exercise creativity in many different forms in order to learn new approaches to old problems that I may encounter in tattooing."





THÉO

@theotattoo

"I find fun in the act itself, putting a picture on a human. There is still something amazing to me about this process."

FAVOURITE BAR:

"My favourite bar in town is Valdemar. It is cheap and pretty, small and smoky, welcoming, fabulous! Also, Hold-An - it's a local place for local people, the unexpected can happen anytime, the place can flip and turn into the twilight zone!"

MEET THE ARTIST:

"I like doing colourful and humoristic tattoos, also unusual ideas and concepts are fun too. There is also bande-dessiné [an illustrative influence] in my flash and tattoos. I do enjoy a large range of styles as I find fun in the act itself, putting a picture on a human... and it stays! And he consented to it! There is still something amazing to me about this process.

"If I'm given blank page, I'll probably come with a somehow politically cynical piece. My flash is more in that vein I guess. That's what I usually paint as well, but painting takes me much longer!"





JAKE GALLEON

@galleontattoo

"I really enjoy working in the two styles of neo-traditional and black and grey realism. I try to bring elements from both styles together."

ON HELSINGØR:

"The area in which Royal Tattoo is based is nice and chilled, with many outdoor activities and great places to eat."

TOP TIP:

"Kronborg Castle and the Maritime Museum are worth a visit."

FOUND ON HIS DAY OFF:

"At the beach or hiking in the forests."

FAVOURITE RESTAURANT:

"Bistro Francophile – great food and the owner creates a great atmosphere!"

MEET THE ARTIST:

"I'd describe my work as Neo-Realism. I really enjoy working in the two styles of neo-traditional and black and grey realism. I try to bring elements from both styles together, with a realistic portrait and neo-traditional-style frame or details. My favourite tattoos to create are realistic animal portraits with cool elements of neo-traditional like roses, skulls or foliage."





SAEID

@saeidtattoo

"Some of my favourite tattoos to do are the big compositions... a tattoo that looks like the client has been born with it."

ON HELSINGØR:

"Very close to the shop there is a very nice beach and a street food hall which is very cosy."

TOP TIP:

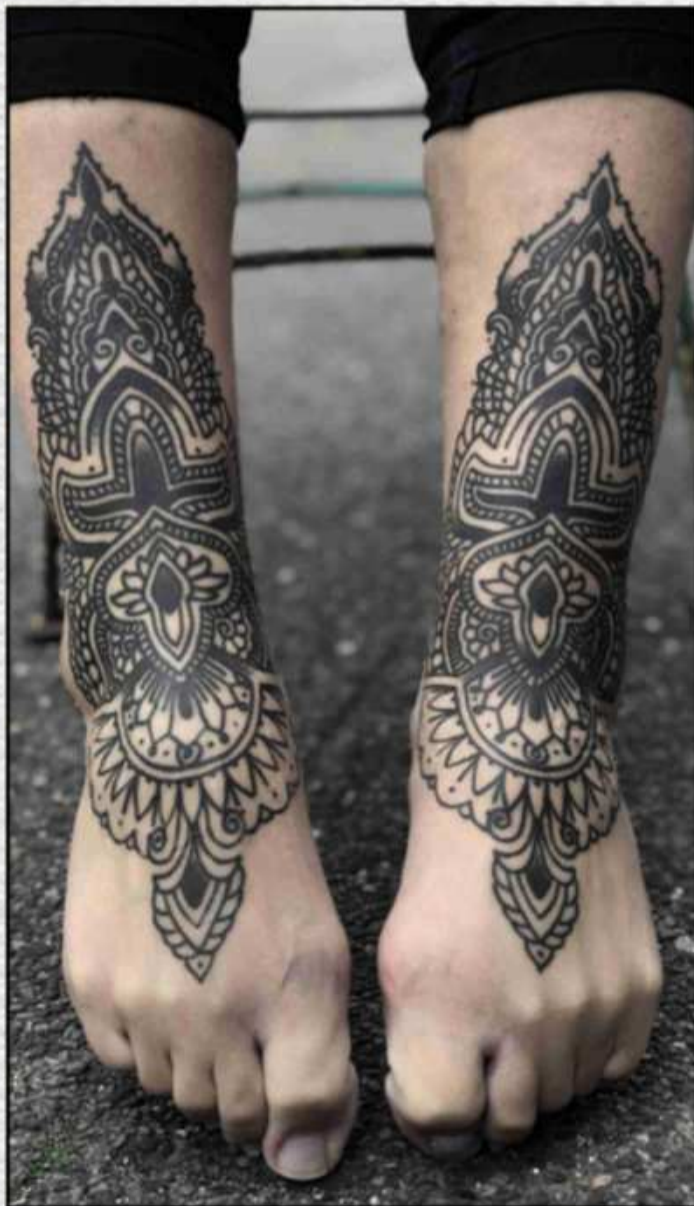
"Kronborg Castle has some beautiful art in it."

FAVOURITE RESTAURANT:

"Madam Sprunk. It's actually the place that Henning took us when I had my first dinner with the shop."

MEET THE ARTIST:

"I create mostly dot-work, black-work and geometrical tattoos. I often use the negative skin tone to create the pattern on the skin. Dot-work is the style that I have most fun doing. Some of my favourite tattoos to do are the big compositions, when I have space to use the person's body lines to create a tattoo that looks like the client has been born with it. I always enjoy making mandalas and patterns. I have also long been inspired by Japanese art and would really love to do more of that mixed with my dot-work style."





TAIOBA

@taioba_tattoo

"I like to find escape in the artistic process, to be alone in my home when creating."

TOP TIP:

"For good coffee, go to Caffe Karisma – lovely people, good coffee and good vibes."

FOUND ON DAY OFF:

"I usually clean my home, hang out with friends, visit museums and go around to some parks with my daughter. I also like to paint calligraphy murals."

MEET THE ARTIST:

"I have worked in different styles during these 20 years in the game. Today, I'm more focused in black and grey, lettering and new traditional [in black and grey]. I try to use more contrast in my black and grey work and for my lettering as well, try to do something a bit more classic. I believe this way people can read what has been tattooed on the skin."

I like to find escape in the artistic process, to be alone in my home when creating. To get inspiration, I like to listen to roots reggae, read old books, look at pictures and take walks in the city where I live [in Copenhagen]."





CLAWS OF THE BEAST

Our close affinity towards animals runs deep in our veins, inherently linked to our longing to be free. To be liberated from the monotony of an all-consuming corporate lifestyle, which holds us in constant surveillance and gasps us tightly in its monetary claws. We play out our lives in a constant struggle to survive, to nourish our bodies with the brands and products of the consumerist gods. Yet instead of our bellies feeling full, we crave more; we are addicted to the momentary high of materialist consumption. We live in false hope; we are empty vessels wandering aimlessly to be fulfilled. Dom Wiley reconnects our tamed minds to the wild animal within, in retribution to the control of the predatory marketplace. His tattooed ferocious beasts realign our perspective, to pay devotion to what really matters, our capability to be free. Provoking us to turn away from the swarming vultures of greed, and walk headfirst into the wilderness

@domwileyart

YOUR WORK CONFRONTS THE UNTAMED WILDERNESS, PICTURING FEROCIOUS BEASTS AND ANCIENT SKULLS, WHAT LED YOU TO WORK WITH THIS SUBJECT MATERIAL?

I've always been drawn to anything dark and gnarly, right from being a kid I'd have an alien toy instead of an Action Man, insects and snakes as pets instead of a goldfish, and that has stuck with me all the way. I get a little more excited working with that kind of subject matter than anything else and I can't help but touch on that every time I draw something up or suggest an idea to a client. If they come to me with the idea of flowers I'll try to stick skulls in the middle of them and most of the time people go for it, which is a great feeling.

HOW DO YOU CONTAIN THE WILD ENERGY OF YOUR CREATURES IN YOUR TATTOO DESIGNS?



The pose of the animal or creature I'm working with has a big part to play as well as what it may be doing. If I'm drawing up an eagle, I could have it perched on a branch or I could have it in flight clutching the skull of a rabbit with undead puppies coming out of its eye sockets! I guess I try to exaggerate what you might picture that animal doing naturally but then add in some of my own ideas with it. Keeping the eyes completely blank on many of the creatures I tattoo is something I really like; you can make a kitten look like a rabid creature of the night with that little detail.

WHAT DO YOU THINK DRAWS YOUR CLIENTS TO CHOOSE SUCH UNTAMED BEASTS AS TATTOOS?

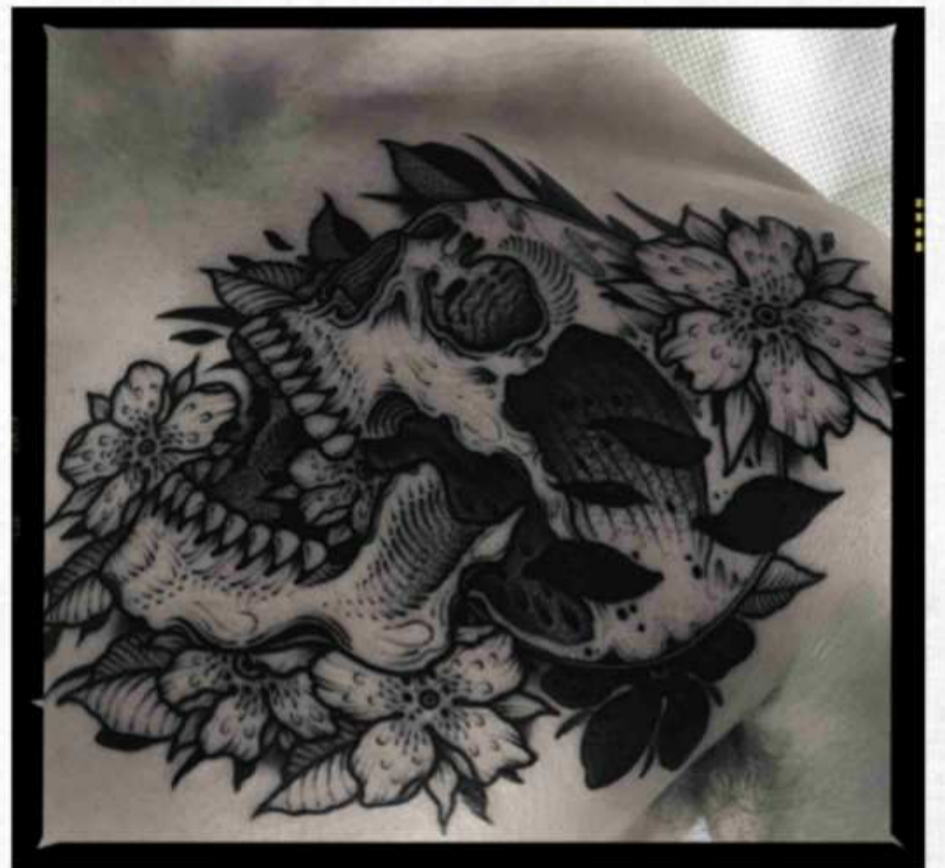
I have the best clients, they come to me with some of the coolest ideas and often with an open mind for me to play around with the ideas they have. I think that open-mindedness is one of the most important things when it comes to a client coming to any tattoo artist. We've moved from going to the local tattooist down the road to seeking out

KEEPING THE EYES COMPLETELY BLANK ON MANY OF THE CREATURES I TATTOO IS SOMETHING I REALLY LIKE

an artist because you simply like what they have been doing. I think that's why my clients will already have an idea based loosely or completely on what I like to do, it's awesome to see so many people traveling so far to get the work that they want. Social media has had a massive part to play in that kind of thing and it's made finding all of the talent out there so much easier.

WHAT ARTISTS AND TATTOOISTS HAVE INFLUENCED AND DEVELOPED YOUR STYLE AND WHY?

There are way too many to list and all for different reasons. Albrecht Dürer is one of my favourite artists; the scope and detail of his illustrations blow me away. Beth Cavener (@bethcavener) is a sculptor that I came across



a couple of years ago, looking at her work has shown me a lot when it comes to posture, particularly for animals. I like the contrast and detail that Godmachine (@godmachine) achieves in his art too. I enjoy seeing the work of other tattooists working in black like Bruno Santos (@brunosantostatoo), Gakkin (@gakkinx), Kelly Violet (@kellyviolence), Alexander Grim (@alexandergrim), and Marko (@marko_tattoo) who works with me at Hand of Hope Tattoo. Being fortunate enough to work alongside the artists I do has had the biggest impact on me by far, you learn so much more from people by being around them and taking everything in first hand.

WHAT TECHNIQUES ARE USED TO CREATE THE ILLUSTRATIVE-LIKE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK ON THE SKIN?

I find it hard to explain what I put into my work to make it mine, I'd say contrast is the main thing I think about when putting everything together. I'm always trying to look for an excuse to put in more and more black shading and I have to slap myself in the face and tell myself that's

enough! (Sorry clients) What I like about working with blackwork is that the style tests you to come up with different textures and shapes to make a tattoo; I enjoy putting bloodshot details into the eyes of a demon or trails of saliva coming off the teeth of a snarling wolf. When I look at all of the other art out there whether its a painting or a tattoo, I try to look at the little details that the artist has put into it, I think that can help separate one persons art from another.

THERE IS A LOT OF BLACK AND GREY WORK OUT THERE AT THE MOMENT FUCKING KILLING IT, HOW DO YOU ENSURE YOU STAND OUT AGAINST THE CROWD?

For me it comes down to hard work and the situations you put yourself into. I've been in bad places and good places in tattooing, I've found that I struggle with my artwork when I'm in a bad place so I simply try to keep all the shit things away from me. Working alongside the people I work with, that puts me in a great place, watching people doing so well and pushing themselves makes me need to do the same. Coming together with my friends



and colleagues at Hand of Hope Tattoo has been a recent turning point where I feel I can be at the top of my game. Right from the get go the studio was a collective idea with everyone having some kind of input so it felt so fresh right from the start and I'm sure it's only going to get better.

THERE IS A PREVALENCE OF ESOTERIC AND SYMBOLIC IMAGERY IN YOUR WORK, WITH SMALL NODS TO THE EYE OF PROVIDENCE, MAYAN CULTURE AND ANCIENT RUNES, WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO THIS TYPE OF IMAGERY?

There isn't really too much thought behind this other than I think it fits really well and looks really cool. This goes for most people but I find all of the ancient history and the imagery that comes with it fascinating. Having a pentagonal dice with demonic symbols scratched into it and putting it inside the mouth of a sabre-toothed tiger skull is cool as fuck by anyone's standards, surely! The symbolism or ancient type imagery doesn't have to make sense but I like that it can get someone thinking even if there isn't even anything to figure out. I think it adds a

I'M ALWAYS TRYING TO LOOK FOR AN EXCUSE TO PUT IN MORE AND MORE BLACK SHADING...

level of class to tattoos, don't get me wrong, tattooing a sabre-toothed tiger skull with a ball gag in its mouth and the McDonald's logo carved into its forehead is cool (email me for that) but I tend go for the former first.

DO YOU LOOK TO THE PAGES OF HISTORY, LEGENDS AND MYTHOLOGIES TO DEVELOP YOUR TATTOO IDEAS?

Yeah of course, a lot of my favourite imagery comes from mythology; I'd say practically everything I tattoo has a bit of history in it, whether it is an old diving helmet or the Egyptian god Anubis. I find myself reading a lot about history and mythology out of my own interest but also because it's good to know about what you're tattooing. So if someone comes to me with the idea of a Norse demon I'm



straight on the Internet learning about it before I start to come up with a draft. I might read about certain artefacts or symbolism that relates to what I'm tattooing so I have a lot more to work with when coming up with a design.

THERE IS SOMETHING QUITE MYSTICAL ABOUT THE MARK OF A TATTOO, AND THIS IS ACCENTED FURTHER BY YOUR CRYPTIC AND SYMBOLIC DESIGNS. DO YOU THINK WITH THE RECENT POPULARITY OF TATTOOING, CLIENTS NOW WANT TO HAVE WORK THAT IS MORE CHALLENGING AND REPRESENTATIONAL OVER TYPICAL PICTORIAL DESIGNS?

I wouldn't say so, I think people pick tattoos for a lot of reasons and the reasons behind that are always relative to that person. Whether it is for fashion, to represent past experiences or to pay homage to something they are passionate about. The cool part for me is getting to know a bit about why that person has picked that idea or subject out of everything, sometimes you're taken back by a story or you ask why and they reply with "Because it's awesome!" which is completely fine too.

WITH THE RISE OF IMAGE BASED SOCIAL MEDIA SITES SUCH AS INSTAGRAM, WE ARE CLOSER TO DIFFERENT CULTURES (AND THEIR TATTOOS: STYLES, DESIGNS AND TECHNIQUES) THAN EVER BEFORE, BUT WHAT CAN TRAVEL AND EXPLORATION BRING TO YOUR WORK AS A TATTOOIST?

Life experience has had a lot to do with tattooing for me, and the more I travel around and meet new people the more I pick up. You can take in more first hand than you ever can in front of a screen and that's hopefully something I'll always have the opportunity to do. I've worked alongside some awesome people already and I've learned a lot from it even if it's the smallest things. You can find endless amounts of shit information on Google about tattooing, a lot of which is useless. Being told first hand or seeing something done at a convention that you can try out in your tattooing is so much better, and you're always meeting likeminded people while you're doing it, it's one of the best parts of the job.

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP AS A TATTOOIST WHILST ENSURING YOU ARE INTEGRAL TO YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL STYLE?



HARD WORK. There are days when I want to put everything down and walk away but then there are days when I say, "I have the best job in the world." If we just gave up every time we felt like it we wouldn't get very far in anything, that's no different for a tattooist trying to better their work. I try to find new techniques and little things to put into my work that I haven't used before, that keeps me moving forward and my clients give me the freedom and trust to be able to do that. There are so many new people coming into tattooing so it's harder than ever to stand out from the crowd but it's something that keeps me on my toes and makes me even more determined.

WHEN YOU CREATE A TATTOO DESIGN WHAT DO YOU HOPE MOST TO CONVEY?

That changes from tattoo to tattoo, if I'm tattooing a grizzly bear I want to get across that he will probably eat your face if you come near him. This is usually talked about when I'm discussing a design with a client before I start to draw,

so I usually have a good idea on how I want to present what I'm tattooing before I start to sketch it up. I definitely like putting a twisted and eerie vibe in my tattoos but I have just as much fun with something elegant and pretty, variation is what keeps it interesting. The main point to the tattoos I do is that it makes the person wearing it happy; I don't think it's really a job well done if that's not the case.

WHAT DOES TATTOOING MEAN TO YOU?

Tattooing was not something I had been set on since being a kid but I had always been interested in it, since art has always been something I've had a strong passion for whether it be with a paintbrush or a pencil. As soon as I did start going down the path of tattooing I was completely hooked, it's something that has given me a complete sense of freedom and allowed me to channel my drive and ambition into something I feel has no limits. No matter how long you've been tattooing there is always more to learn, so there is always a reason to keep on being a part of it. ▣

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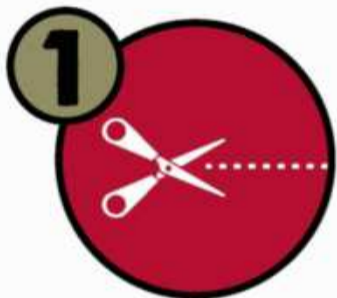
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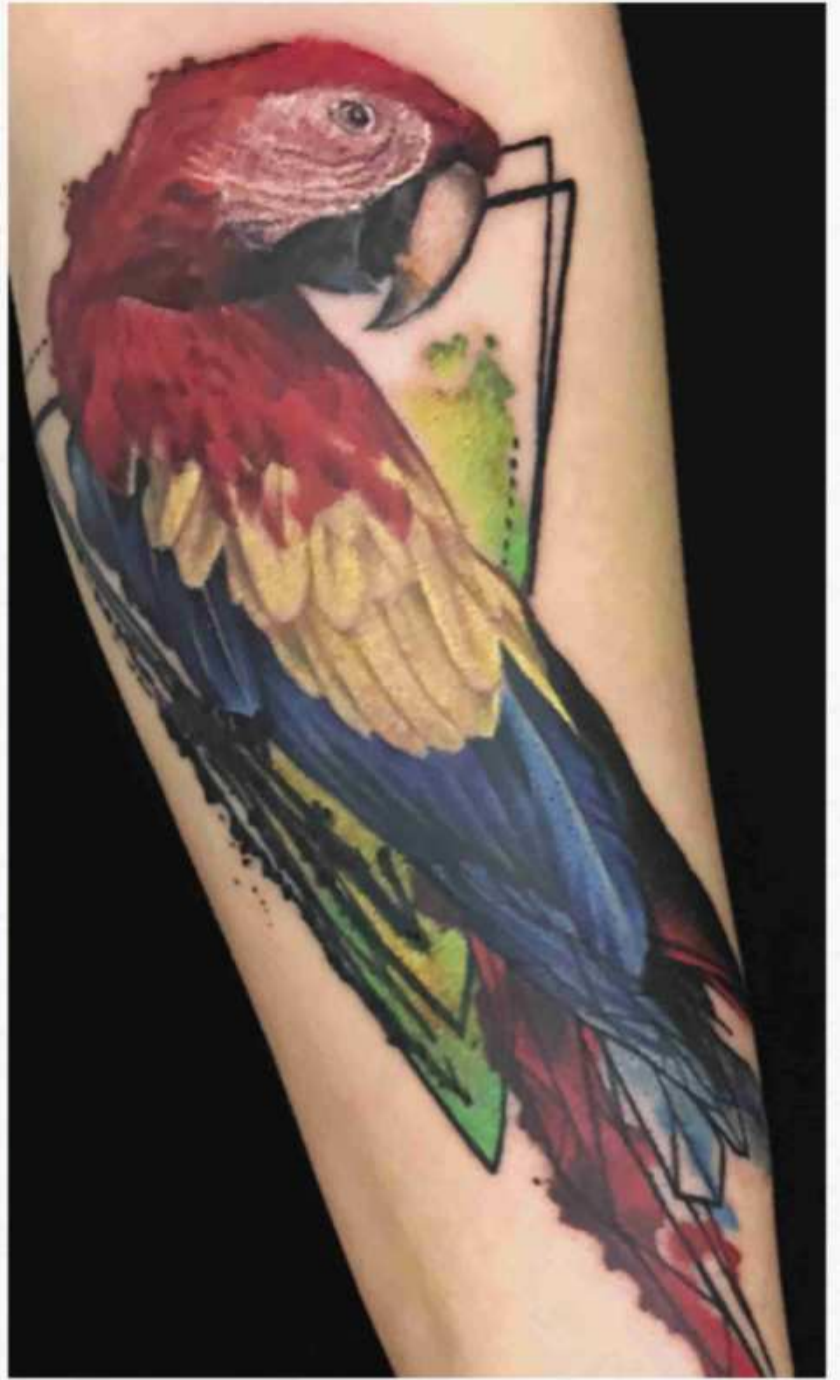
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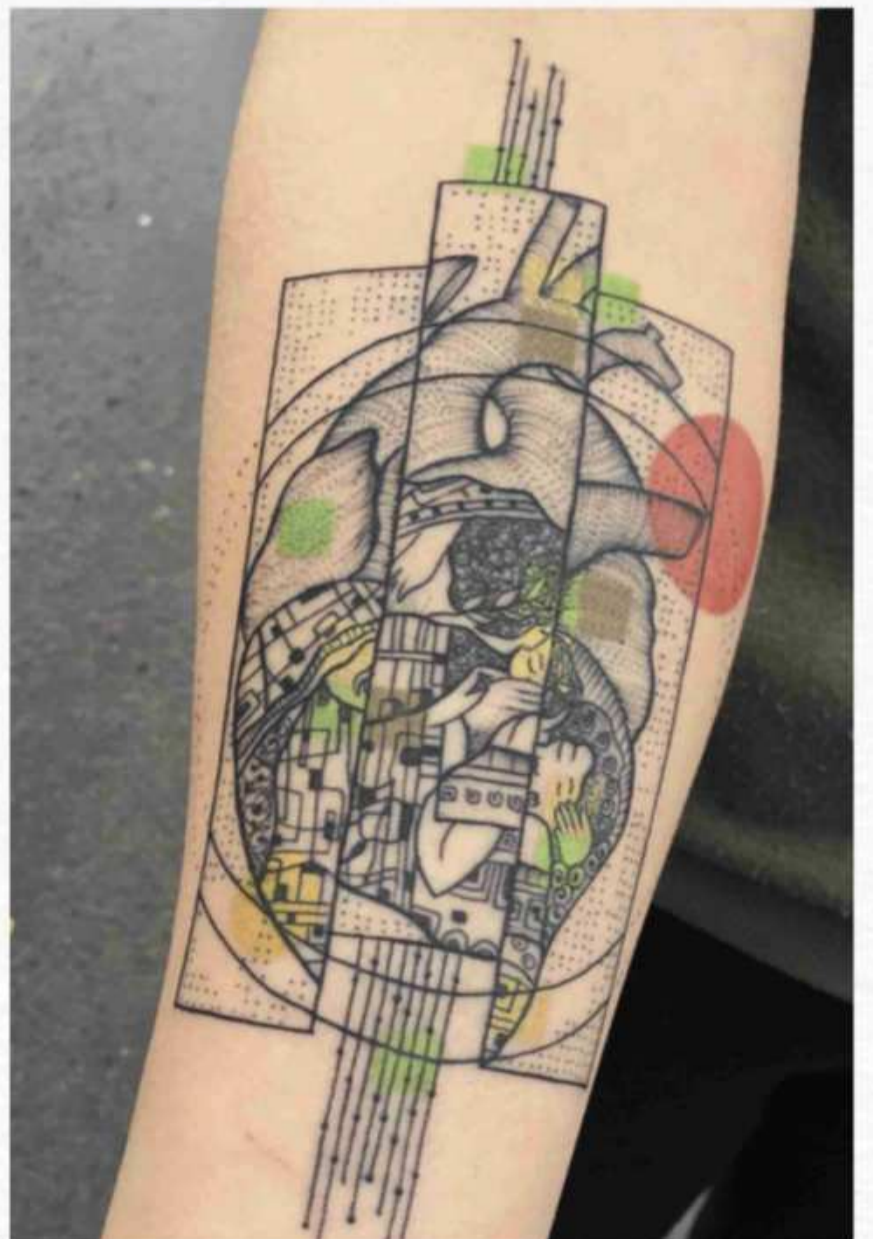


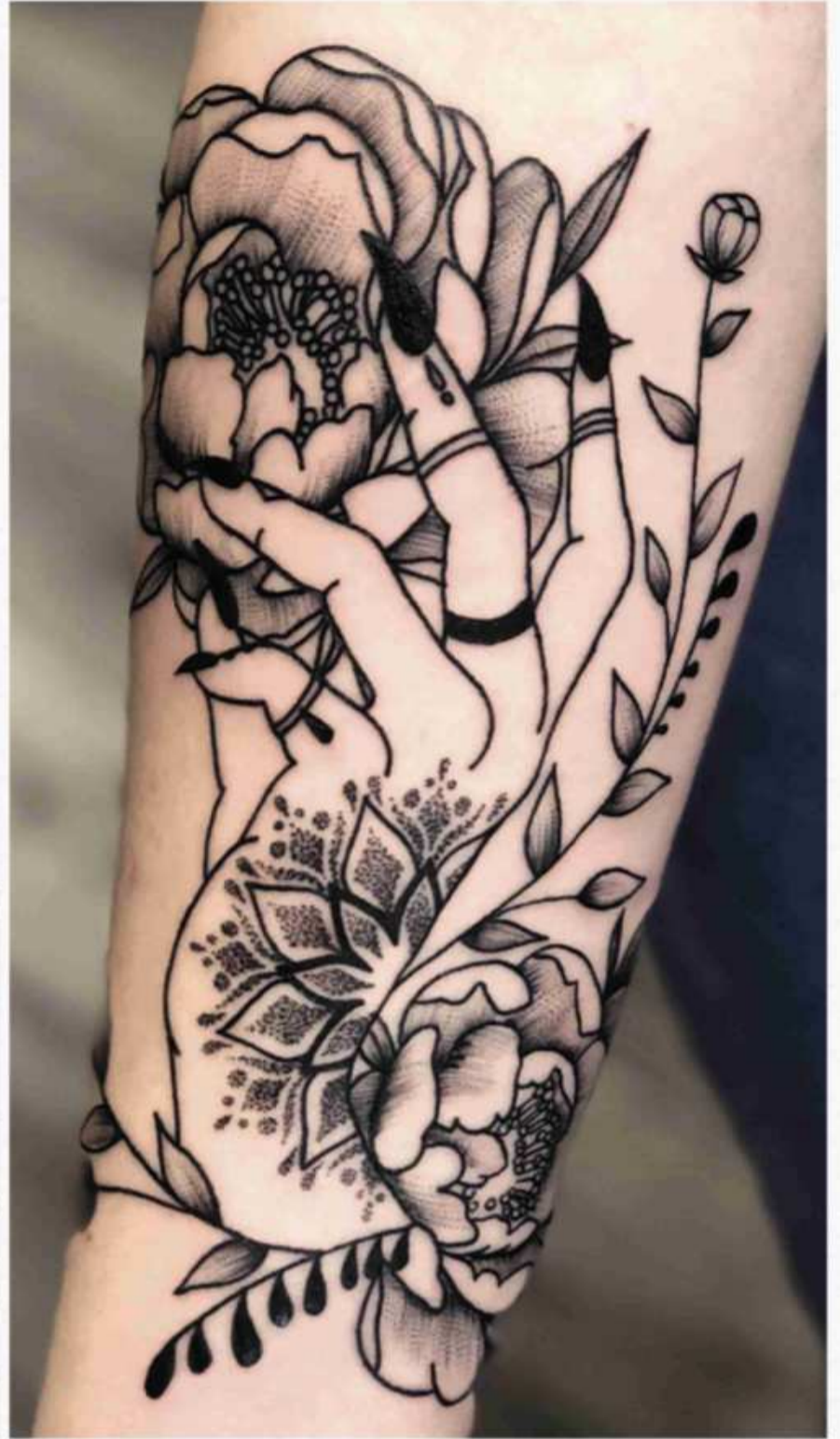
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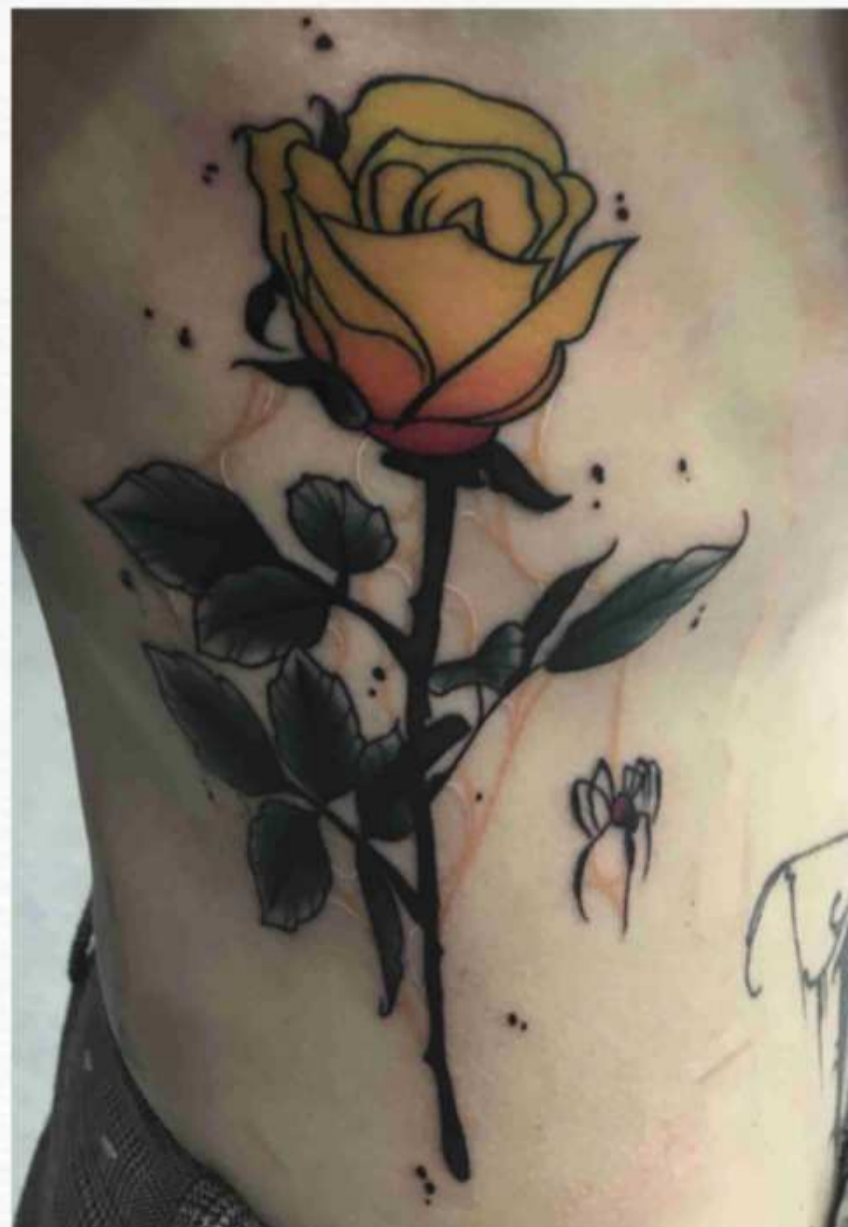


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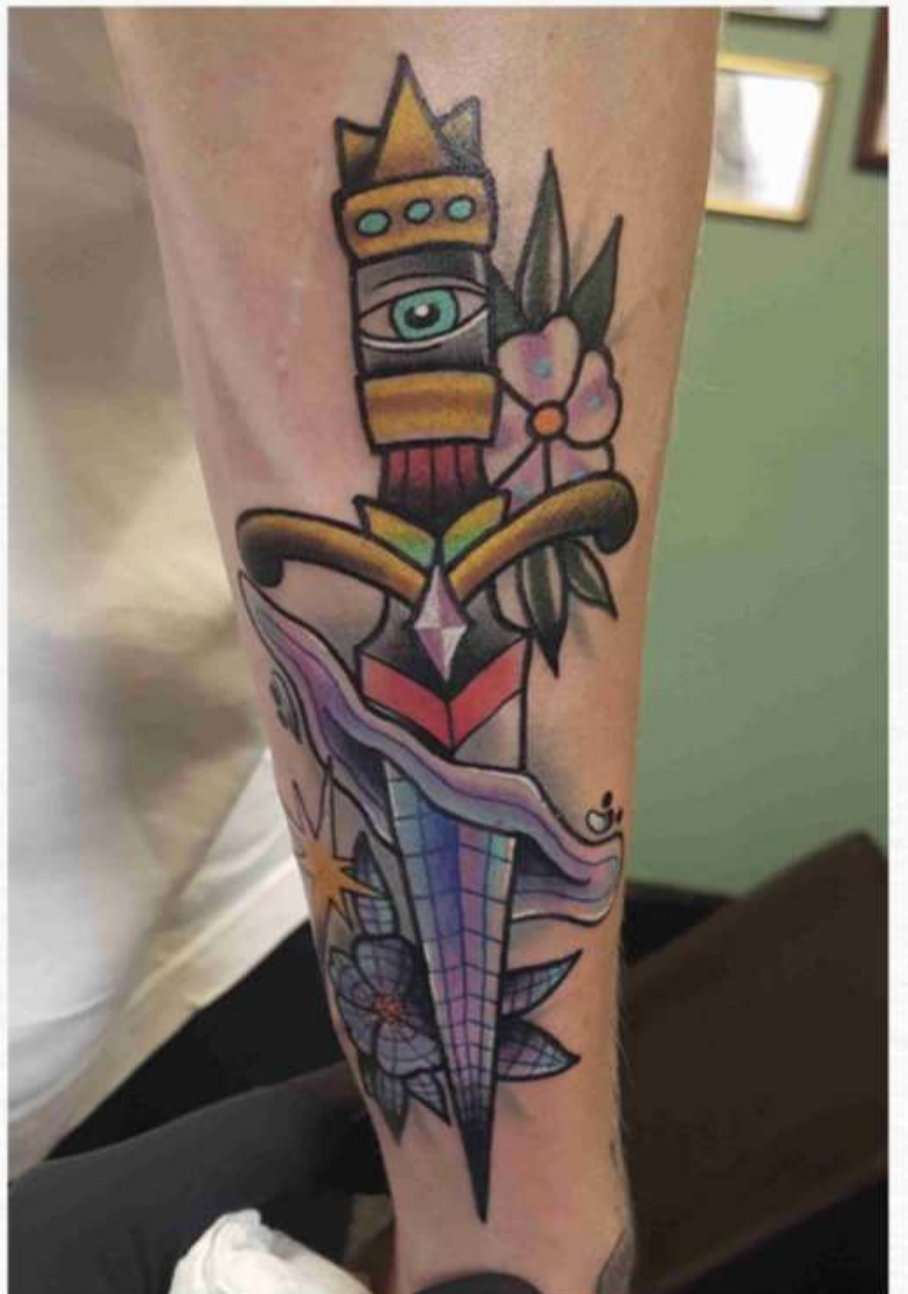
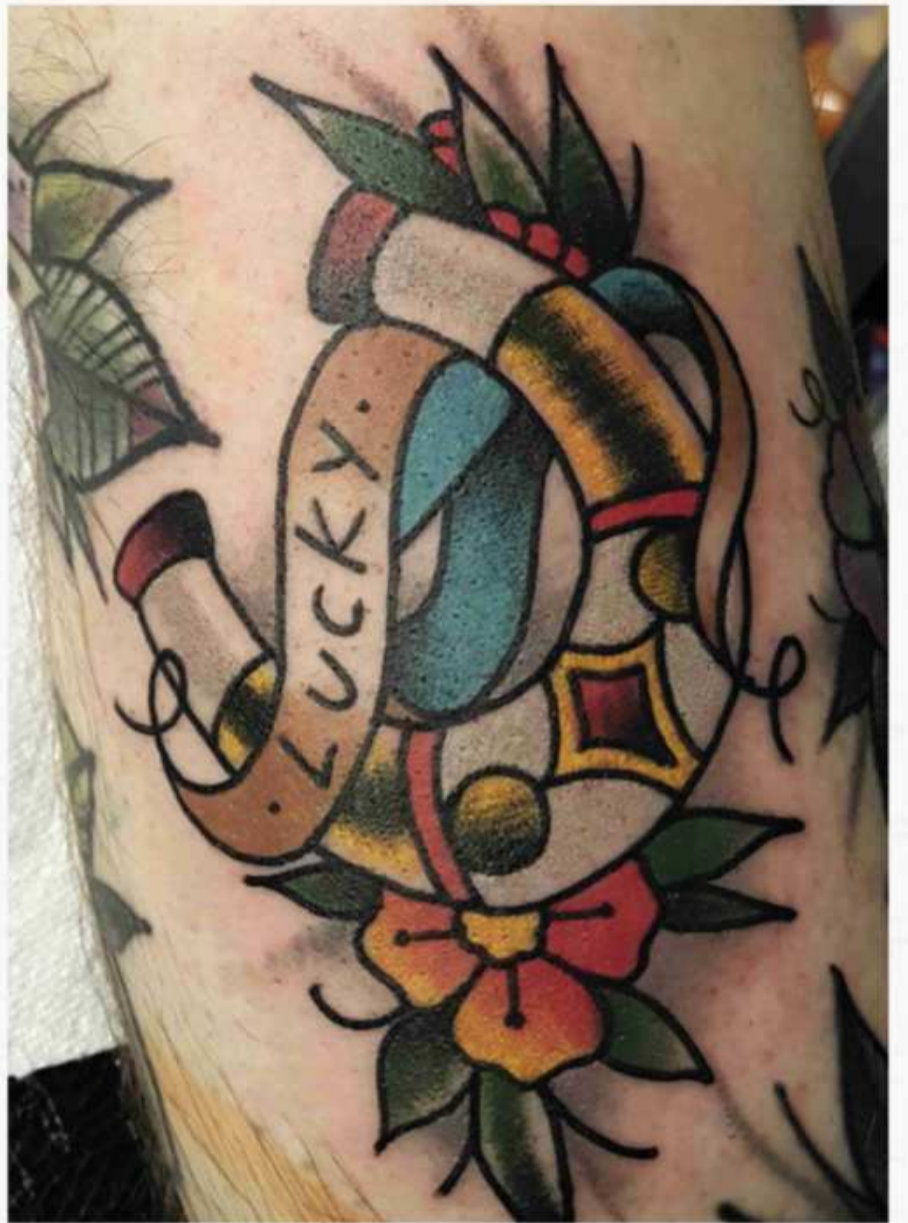


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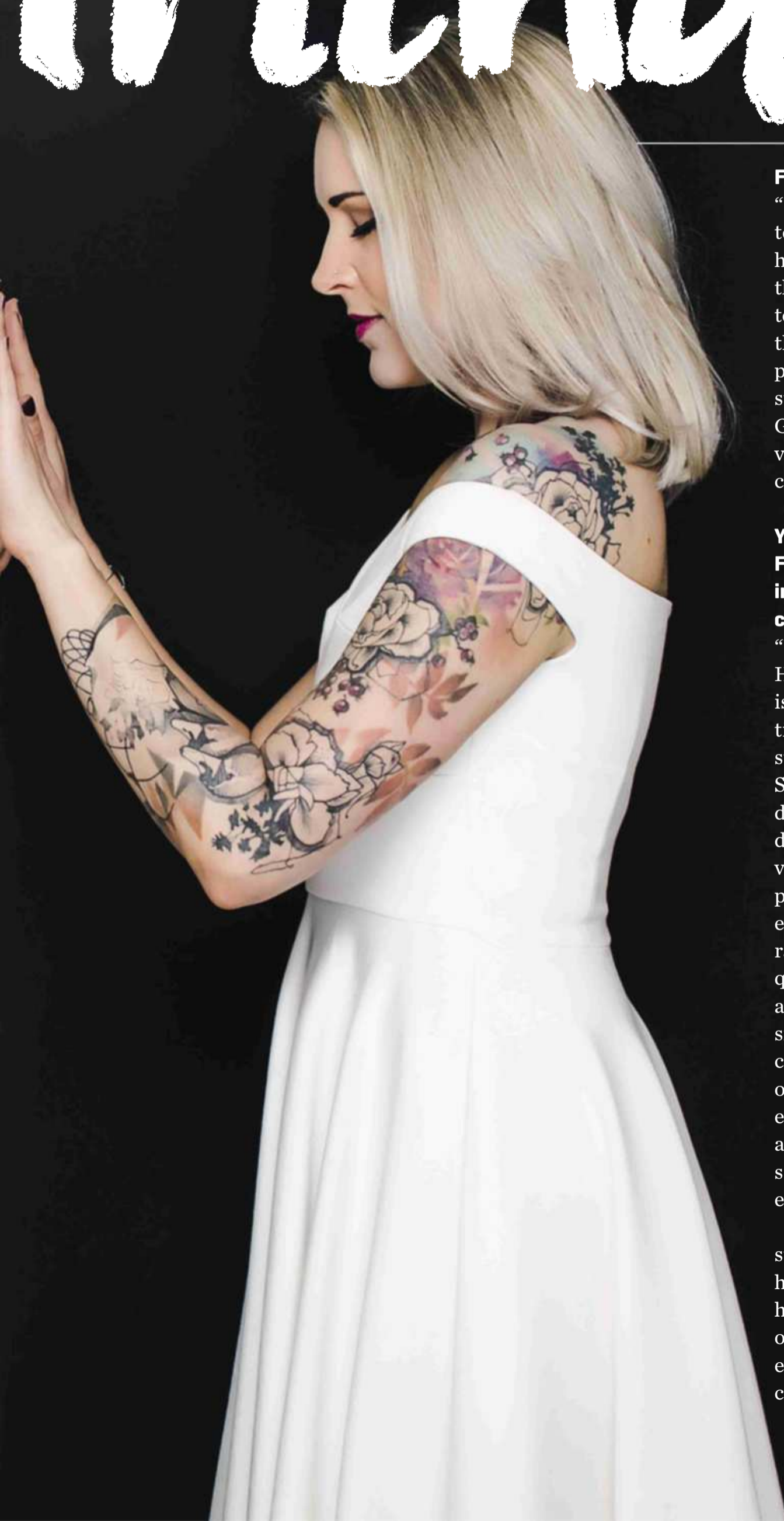
a feast of

It has been a while since we caught up with the creative duo at DECASA: tattooist Carola Deutsch and her sister/business partner graphic designer Sabrina. In the few short years since, they have been busy with a studio move, artist collaborations, travelling, commercial projects, art exhibitions and many, many beautiful tattoos...



friends

decasa.at
carola_deutsch
decasakreativstudio



First of all, you've moved!

“Yes, we just needed more space. We wanted to have my personal art space, which I first had at home and that was already bursting at the seams, integrated into the studio in order to give our clients an even better insight into the life of an artist. Having all things in one place also makes work-life easier. The new studio, which is also located in the heart of Graz, is now 105 square meters big, enjoys a view over the rooftops of the city and offers a completely private atmosphere.”

You also recently collaborated with Jay Freestyle—probably most famous for his intricate large-scale work. How did that come about?

“Working with Jay was very inspiring to me. He’s an incredibly talented and focused artist, I have been watching his work for a long time and we both agreed that our combined styles could create something very unique. So, he invited me to his studio in Amsterdam, where we tattooed two side-legs in two days, for 12 hours each. Both projects were very different, but both extreme—extremely painful, extremely exhausting and extremely exciting. Jay has already had a lot of collaborations, but for me it was the first time. It was quite an emotional challenge—because I usually don’t tattoo longer than a maximum of six-seven hours and additionally because the customers had to go to their limits in terms of pain. I’m a very empathic person, so these emotions did not pass me by without leaving a trace. I am very impressed by Jay’s colour scheme, and for myself I took away to have even “more courage for colour.”

“The main designs were applied using a stencil and some elements were done free-hand. Colours were decided upon in the heat of the moment by feeling or orientating ourselves on reference images. The customers gave us the maximum freedom that you could wish for as an artist on such a project.”

Words: Nicky Connor · Images: DECASA



DEVELOPING DECASA:

“DECASA is and always will be our baby. We don’t want our company to grow up. My sister and I complement each other very well in our areas of expertise. We do not want to grow and don’t really have the desire to get bigger. We founded our studio in order find peace and to be able to do things that make us happy. Making our own decisions and assuming all responsibilities. We want to explore the most diverse places in the world and work with people who share our motivation. Nothing is impossible - and everything is allowed.

In addition, no letter would have room for another member, Because DECASA means DEutsch CArola SAbrina.”

Over the last few years you’ve both been busy travelling to—and for—a number of projects, guest spots and appearances all over Europe and beyond. Can you distill it down for us?

“The last years, we travelled a lot, the journeys were characterised by either tattoo-projects or art-installations. In 2014, I started with a guest-spot invitation in Hamburg (Germany). Others followed in Ravensburg, Kassel, Mönchengladbach and Berlin. I was also invited several times to Zurich and have future trips to Paris, Portugal and Copenhagen lined up.

“Two years after I opened my studio, I won the young talent contest of the “Tattöwier Magazin”, which I am very proud of. It is the biggest competition for young emerging tattoo artists in German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland).

“In 2016, I received an invitation to travel to New York and to paint an apartment in a former church. New York is a very charismatic city, on the one hand, the big towers and the diverse lifestyle impressed me—on the other hand, the city never sleeps, so I felt very stressed at times.

Last year, 2017, my main focus was a great project in an art gallery in the heart of Barcelona. The most recent travels were to Jay in April in Amsterdam, in June at a convention in Hasselt/Belgium and in July in Marburg / Slovenia. All very impressive cities that could not be more different. In Spain you have to spend a bit more time on everything. People from the south are not the same as in central Europe. They are connoisseurs at all levels. Spirited, chaotic, fun-loving, self-confident. In Holland, we enjoyed the basic tranquillity of the locals. Everything is structured, no one



these last few years, we travelled a lot, the journeys were characterised by either tattoo projects or art installations

is stressed, everyone is very determined and makes the best of what the system offers. The city is dominated by stylish shops, sophisticated concepts, well-organised traffic and clean houses. Slovenia in turn is a bit more of a minimalistic country. In Marburg you can find everything—from historic houses to bombed-out ruins. People get by with little and try to make the most of it. I experienced a lot of hospitality and down-to-earthiness.

“Invitations to Brazil and Hong Kong are on the table, but for the moment need to wait unfortunately. Fortunately, I still have a lot of time ahead. Plus, I am very patient! Traveling is important to me—it expands my horizons. I’m inspired by many cultures and I take countless ideas back home from every trip. Per year, we try to plan around 2-3 city-based projects to personally develop and gain new experiences.”

And aside from all of that, you’ve both been involved in art projects galore—street art, mural work, a solo exhibition and some more commercial work. Can you elaborate on that too?

“Well, our studio is divided into three areas: tattoo—painting—street art. In the latter area, depending on the size and effort, my sister Sabrina helps me out. She is responsible for graphics, photo documentation and marketing in our company. Every year I try to find a passion project for me that is based neither on commission nor on a specific topic. A project that may just be art, purely because of the art. This is exactly what the project in Barcelona was. I was given the chance to paint three different murals on different levels within an art gallery. When you stand at a certain point of the entrance, all three levels merge into one overall pic-



traveling to me is as significant as breathing air. it's extremely important, because it expands my horizons

FUTURE PLANS:

"I try not to plan for more than half a year in advance. Generally, things usually come up automatically. Next year we have an invitation for a trip to Paris as well as a project in Sweden. Either way, we will not run out of colour, no matter what lies ahead! Many times, it's better not to know what the future holds. We're motivated for many things."

ture. To include the tattoo aspect, I tattooed a model on the back with a symbol that forms the piece of the puzzle of the overall picture. With this project I was only concerned about the art and the tattoo to flow even more into each other. The project is very complex to describe in a few words. Feel free to check it out in all of its detail on my homepage (decasa.at—helpful Ed.)

"It was an artistic challenge that made me grow. The team was awesome, and everyone did it purely for the sake of art. The energy was priceless, and the result was unique.

"During the project, the word 'Travelink' was born. It describes journeys that revolve around colour and art. Traveling art, so to speak. Street-art projects are incredibly de-

manding because it requires a lot from you physically. You often have to change position and move around a lot to see if proportions and colours fit.

"We have already painted restaurants, companies as well as private households. It is always a challenge to translate the message of the customer properly.

"I enjoy working with topics of the clients, but I also need compensation with art projects where I have exactly the opposite of that. At my own solo exhibition in May of this year, I gave myself the framework of 'Jazz'. Under the title 'Come fly with me', I showed off several musician portraits and painted musical instruments. Many clients would probably not have asked for an idea, where I could use



exactly a certain photo of Alicia Keys as the main painting as I did. Nor to paint musical instruments in terms of architecture or to let them grow out of women's bodies. Right there, I enjoyed inspiring people.

"Another very interesting thing is the area of product design that I set up together with my sister where our design-work is based on my paintings. These are photographed by Sabrina and processed as graphics. These projects strengthen us as a team, because we can perfectly align our different skills in these various areas. Projects like 'Hands on Veggies' or 'Rick Gin' as well as the 'Truck' highlight this very well."

Do you think you can pin down how both your artwork and tattooing has developed in the time since we last spoke?

"I think my style of tattooing was very sketchy in my early days, very experimental. Over time, it became clearer, flatter and I added more details and expressions. As I grew, the sizes of my tattoos have also grown. Hardly any project is smaller than a half-sleeve.

"Over the years, I continued to develop my personal tattoo-style and my time capacity was quickly exhausted. The demand for a session with me is extremely high and I am honoured to receive this much encouragement for my style of tattooing."



what strikes me is that now my painting and my tattoo art are getting closer and closer



“It’s a long learning process and it takes a lot of energy to always deal with your own style and its evolution. What strikes me now is that my painting and my tattoo art are getting closer and closer. In the beginning, tattoos were more tattoos and my paintings more paintings. Nowadays, I work more and more with pictures that I paint as a basis for tattoo-concepts and vice versa. Customers should really understand that art can—and must—function on different levels. During every round of appointment intakes, I offer more and more

wanna-do’s on this exact basis. I call these concepts ‘living art’ (breathe life into art, give art a body) and they are a great personal motivation and give a glimpse into my artistic future.

“Art was always my motivation—only through it did I get into tattooing. That’s why it has always been important to me that I wouldn’t miss out on other art projects. I have participated in many exhibitions, but even here, I soon reached my limit of implementation possibilities. The day only has 24 hours, even I need to accept this sometimes.” □

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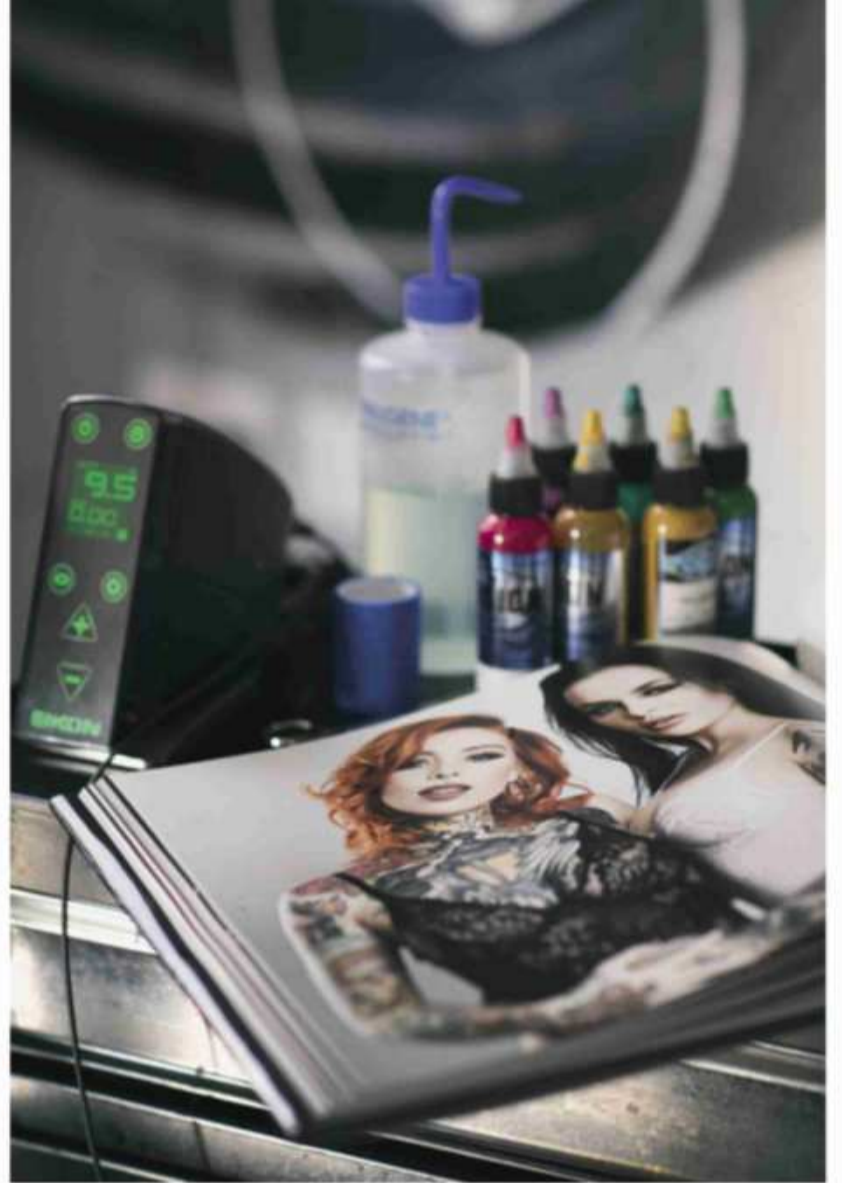


While it may be lost on some, tattooed models are a big part of our alternative culture. Finding the professional models at the top of the tree, working with those on their way to the top and filtering out those who think it's easy (and count poorly taken shots dropped into the multitude of digital magazines that have sprung up, as being 'published') is a never ending job...



Not a particularly hard job I'll grant you, but a job all the same—although having said that, there's a very moveable line in the sand in which we are continually faced with great models with poor ink or poor models with great ink (and by poor models, we mean without that x-factor that makes you look like you've been doing it for years... and nothing else). Great models with great ink are hard to come by, so if you were wondering what it takes to be a cover girl around here, those two things will get you a very long way indeed.

As you'll have noticed, the work of Scott Cole is what we like to work with around here but with just thirteen issues of Skin Deep a year, that means an awful lot of fantastic material finds itself archived... most likely never to be seen.



That is, until Scott and I had a conversation in which I pretty much bullied him into thinking about publishing another book featuring the cream of this unseen material.

What I didn't expect was for him to pick up the gauntlet and start laying rubber straight away—the result of which can be seen in that very book: *Dodging Bullets & Dirty Looks*.


You can find out all you need to know about getting your hands on a copy over at his website—scottcolephoto.co.uk—but in the meantime, here's an exclusive look at what's going on inside.

Thanks to Justin Oldham at Valkyrie Tattoo Studio, Cardiff for letting us crash the joint for the afternoon.



TRULY RAD BROTHERS

It's amazing what a massive impact a simple mental shift can have on your life. A fact that tattooers and brothers Robbie Ripoll and Jayvo Scott learned first-hand when they grabbed life by the horns, stopped their fighting and discovered a new calling... together. Now, the Ink Master alums are spreading their message of positivity and, if you've ever felt unhappy or unsatisfied, they've got a powerful invite for you: Join their Truly RAD Movement and learn how to attack life in a whole new way

TrulyRadMovement.com  TrulyRadMovement

The year was 2014 and brothers Robbie Ripoll and Jayvo Scott were battling it out on Ink Master: Rivals, butting heads and airing their grievances for the world to see. A few weeks later, their reality TV stint came to an end and Robbie, who was just 32 at the time, was left struggling with both his mental and physical health.

"I didn't win Ink Master and closed my dream tattoo studio and moved out of the mansion that I was living in," he remembers. "At that time, success was just monetary to me. It wasn't until I sold my gun collection that I felt free from all the things that I owned, which had started to own me."

"When I was at my lowest, I Googled how to be happy and found motivators like Brendon Burchard, Tony Robbins, Lewis Howes and Les Brown, along with so many others," he continues, sharing the tools that helped

him turn things around. "They have great stories of overcoming extreme adversity and coming out successful in the end."

Needless to say, Robbie was inspired and now, just four years later, not only is his relationship with Jayvo better than ever, but the former rivals are actually working together to help artists in their own search for happiness.

Dubbed the Truly RAD Movement, Robbie and Jayvo's unique initiative is on a mission to bring inspiration, motivation and joy to fellow tattooers and creative types from all walks of life. Using YouTube videos, seminars and weekly podcasts, the brothers are tackling a slew of topics, including "taking care of your body, eating better as a tattooer, meal plan solutions for traveling artists, training and workout plans that can be done in your hotel room, mending relationships and, all in all, changing your life from negative to positive."



ROBBIE AND JAYVO ON... BATTLING DEPRESSION

"Any outlet along the lines of motivation, including self-help books, meditation, yoga, exercise and speaking to someone, are great ways to cope. Using any healthy outlet is taking a step closer to being able to overcome depression and each person will have their own favourites."

Words: Barbara Pavone



FOES BECOME BROTHERS

“Our rivalry was there long before Ink Master, so we both reluctantly agreed to the show,” Robbie and Jayvo recall of their decision to compete on Ink Master: Rivals. “Unfortunately, we hated each other at the time and the rivalry was more real than we would like to admit.”

“We had many obstacles in our relationship,” they elaborate. “After being best friends growing up, we came to a point where we were on different paths and we couldn’t see eye to eye. We were fighting and hurting each other emotionally until we decided that staying away from each other was best for us.”

“Looking back, we are glad we did the show because we are here now, together again, and we couldn’t be happier,” they say before explaining, “Ink Master is like boot camp for tattoo artists. It can break you down, but then you decide how you want to rebuild yourself. We both have been on a slow, hard road to being the best versions of ourselves and are achieving our life goals along with finding each other. We have improved our relationship 100 percent!”

“We were miserable deep down and didn’t realise it was because we had lost our rela-

tionship over things that didn’t even matter,” they add. “After years of that nonsense, we slowly started talking to each other and eventually had a breakthrough in our relationship, making us the strongest we have ever been. We both realised that what we had been missing the whole time was each other. Now we have an unbreakable bond. We are strong on our own, but indestructible together.”

RAD MEETS TRUE

After working hard to rekindle and strengthen their relationship, Robbie and Jayvo joined forces to launch the Truly RAD Movement. An amazing initiative that was actually born from two separate but very similar passion projects.

First, there was I’m Rad. Started by Robbie, it was born from “a lifelong chain of events, beginning with being a scared fat kid and figuring out at some point that I actually am rad. If I had to pinpoint the one time in my life when it all began, it would be in the early 2000s on the back porch of my first home while having late-night chats with my best friend, Ozzie, who also grew up a fat kid and knew the struggles all too well,” he says.

“We came up with a mantra to stay in touch with our inner rad and at that point I got ‘I’m

SUMMER VIBE TATTOO & ARTS FESTIVAL

This year’s United Ink Summer Vibe Tattoo & Arts Festival, which ran from June 29 to July 1 in New York, saw the grand debut of Truly RAD Movement’s seminar component. Robbie and Jayvo helped kick off the ink-filled weekend with an empowering hour-long rally, which focused on “healing relationships and improving self-love through entertainment that motivates, as well as inspires.”



rad' tattooed on my thumb. After many years of building I'm Rad, my brother and I rekindled our estranged relationship and thought it only made sense to join forces because we basically had the same message, just in slightly different forms. So we merged his brand—True To You—with I'm Rad, creating the Truly RAD Movement."

As fans of motivational speakers and self-help books, they admit, "It's not that we didn't find anything that resonated with us, we just found our unique viewpoints on what we did take in and wanted to give new and fresh alternatives to like-minded people."

"Oftentimes, artists are very emotional and empathetic," they elaborate. "They can offer help in different ways and we wanted to be the ones to do so. Our mission is to help others realise their self-worth and to help them see

that life has so much to offer, but it all begins with self-love and realising that they are truly rad."

"We are the right people to fill the gap because we are regular guys with regular problems, such as financial issues, divorce and day-to-day struggles," they continue before laughing, "We find ourselves relatable to many people and we also say the word 'fuck' a lot!"

TRULY RAD TAKES OFF

Initially geared toward helping tattooers, the Truly RAD Movement is actually reaching a much wider audience. "We realised it resonates with so many more people than just the ones in the tattoo industry," the brothers say. "So we have started working on speaking publicly outside of tattooing, as well as going to high schools to deliver our



Jayvo Scott



Jayvo Scott



Robbie Ripoll



Robbie Ripoll



Robbie Ripoll



Jayvo Scott

INK MASTER: RIVALS

In 2014, *Ink Master* premiered its fifth season with a major twist: Nine pairs of rivals entered the competition and fought for the *Ink Master* crown, plus the chance to publicly outshine their archenemy. Robbie and Jayvo's rivalry only lasted a few weeks [older brother Jayvo left in Week 3 while Robbie made it through Week 6], but it was by far one of the most memorable. When all was said and done, Jason Clay Dunn took home top honors.

message. We are working on getting our message as widespread as possible, so we can touch as many people who need to hear it as we can."

As they move full steam ahead, the biggest obstacles so far have been "fear and ego [and] finding the motivation to keep moving forward when you don't think anyone is listening. It's very difficult to be so vulnerable in front of an audience who spend so much time being stoic and unmoved."

"Overcoming the fear of rejection and continually putting out a message because you know it's damn good shit that can help a ton of people [isn't easy]," they admit. "The whole time we were wondering if people would accept our message and learn and grow from it, rather than ridicule us and think we are corny or cheesy."

"The sibling part of it hasn't been an issue to us because we have gotten so strong in our relationship that, even when we do disagree, we've learned to respect each other's opinion and work things out amicably," they add.

Overcoming all of their trepidations and putting their public speaking chops to the test, Robbie and Jayvo hosted their first major seminar this past June at New York's United Ink Summer Vibe Tattoo & Arts Festival. The event was free and open to all artists and show attendees and, despite the fact that they were "nervous going into it and that there were a few minor technical difficulties, overall, it went over great," they gush. "People enjoyed our message and even came up to us afterwards to let us know that—we were both super excited about that!"

Looking to the rest of the year, the brothers are focused on "a number of amazing opportunities to move forward with our message, but our main goal is being able to attend Christmas dinner together for the first time and give our parents the gift of togetherness, which we haven't had in years."

Another first for Robbie and Jayvo? Being able to agree that they're both "truly fucking rad... and so are you!" ▣

*Rob Storm & Maya Dark's
The Dark Side Of The Ink*

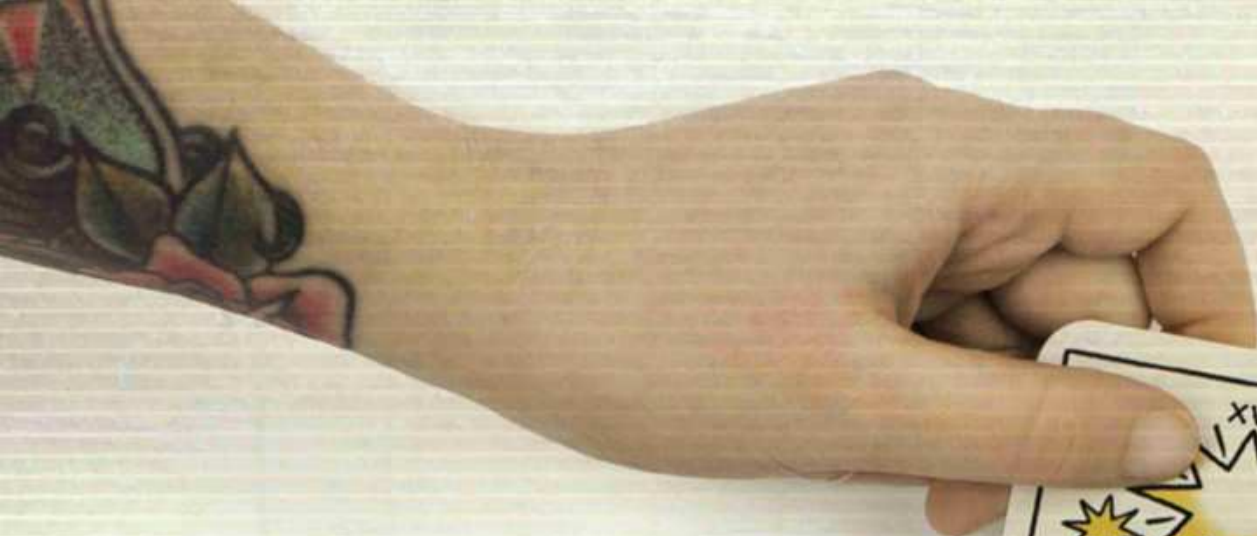
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Ink & Intuition

Collaboration has always been at the heart of making a good tattoo. It's a two-person thing—artist and client. The tattoo simply will not be made if either party decides to bail at any time for any reason. Elsewhere in this fine publication, Brazilian artist, Renan Batista, talks of this fact when he describes the tattooing process as 'the connection between the feelings of the person who gets the tattoo' and 'the soul of the Tattoo Artist.' The alchemy he speaks of, the 'golden, ornamental expression' that culminates at the end of this process [ie. the tattoo] is only successful if everyone is at one with the process itself and each other throughout. I mean, we all know that magical feeling that comes from getting the right tattoo from the right artist

mindbliss.co.uk
DianaMcM_Collis

With the Tattoo Tarot, the latest attempt to invoke the spirit of tattooing within a deck of tarot cards, this somewhat mystical collaboration is not between artist and client, but rather between artist—MEGAMUNDEN, with whom we chatted last month—and tarot reader/mentor, Diana McMahon Collis. There were others weighing in, of course—not least the publisher with their various editors acting as gatekeepers of the whole thing—but ultimately, the real alchemy came from Diana and Ollie working together. “It was a new venture for the publisher,” Diana explains, “and they knew, as is often the case in publishing, that we would need to find a suitable working method. I felt their history as art and game publishers needed to be respected, just as they felt that tarot knowledge and conventions needed respect. In the middle was the card illustrator who, arguably, had the toughest job of all! But Ollie had already worked

There is common ground between tattoos and tarot imagery in the use of symbols, which makes for an interesting meeting point in the cards



with the publisher so there was a great rapport already established.”

The actual process, then, involved Ollie creating a draft of a particular card and then passing it over to the editor who would pass it to Diana. “Ollie had some key words for inspiration and then I would check over the images he produced, to be sure the cards contained appropriate tarot elements. Some of the process was intuitive, I would say, from both the artistic and tarot sides—it was not just a technical exercise.”

Words: Wayne Simmons



I also have the impression that tattoo choices are not only expressive but deeply personal—and tarot is a way to access personal truths

But that wasn't Diana's only role within the process. She was also tasked with writing content for the accompanying booklet with the Tattoo Tarot which not only offers help regarding the meanings of the cards, and what spreads to use, but also seeks, in some way, to tie the worlds of tattoo and tarot together. In the booklet, Diana points out how a big part of this was achieved through riffing on one of the first known tarot decks, the Marseille style, which in our previous issue we talked about having an affinity with traditional tattooing—in particular with its penchant for clean lines. While Diana is hesitant to make any specific claims about an actual historical crossover between tattoo and tarot, she does elaborate on their shared heritage aesthetically as well as the archetypal nature of both traditions. "There is common ground between tattoos and tarot imagery in the use of symbols, which makes for an interesting meeting point in the cards," she explains. "I also have the impression that tattoo choices are not only expressive but deeply personal—and tarot is a way to access personal truths. There is a

uniqueness in the personal stories told in both."

There's also the suggestion that both traditions share a sort of fringe quality. The booklet makes specific reference to 'the decidedly chequered history' of tattooing, from its 'ceremonial symbolism in early Egyptian and Greek civilisations' and, of course, Japan, right through to the 'sleazy or freak-show connotations' in nineteenth century Britain. Tarot has a similarly chequered history, misconceptions about the cards prevalent even today. There could be many reading this article now who would still shy away from anything divinatory or occultic, believing it to be in some way demonic or evil. "To 'divine' relates to using intuition, and the term 'occult' really means knowledge of what is hidden," Diana explains, "but it has come to be associated with ideas around the supernatural, magical powers, mysticism, the paranormal etc. In my experience there is a lot of misinformation in those areas, often promoted by books and films, which may have been developed from a few details, or an unusual story that made it into the sensationalist side of the press. Those stories will have been told for emotional effect and to emphasise polarities, such as the 'goodies and baddies', among the characters. They may have been based on historical figures who misused divination, or other tools and rituals that were intended for sacred and positive use, not for any kind of harm against others."

For Diana, that's what is key in all of this—how one uses the tarot. Much like any tool, you might say—including

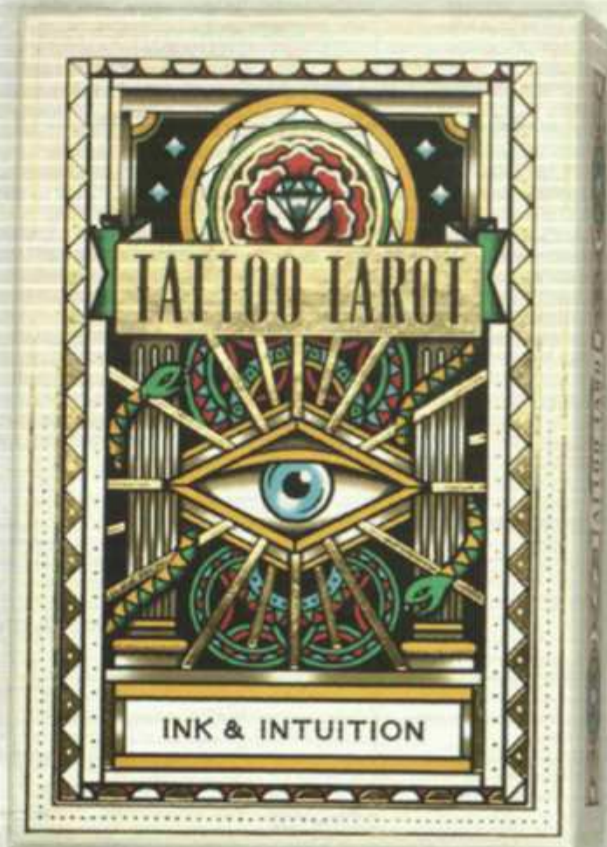
a tattoo machine—the tarot’s power lies in the hands of those who hold it. Tarot isn’t some demonic force waiting to possess you, it is simply, as one of tarot’s godfathers, AE Waite, puts it: ‘symbolism; it speaks no other language and offers no other signs.’

“It’s not a fortune telling tool,” Diana points out. “That is a fairly limited and tricky way of approaching it, not least because it places the person consulting it in a sort of victim stance—as though life just happens to us and we have no responsibility for making choices and making an effort to walk a definite path. I also don’t think tarot is inherently dark or threatening, although it does sometimes involve looking at images or reading meanings that some people may find unsettling at first.” That’s not to say that the cards shouldn’t be used responsibly, or that there isn’t a danger of the symbols being misinterpreted in some way to suggest a course of action that could be ill-advised. But again, it’s all down to whoever is reading the cards, not the cards themselves. “I think it’s worth emphasising that the person consulting the cards should ideally do so with a balanced and open view,” Diana adds, “which can be a particularly interesting challenge when reading your own cards! But it’s important when reading for anyone.”

For people who are into tattoos, I imagine that the iconic tattoo imagery could have quite specific meanings, too

For Diana, the particular strength of the Tattoo Tarot lies in its use of tattoo imagery alongside tarot imagery. “For people who are into tattoos, I imagine that the iconic tattoo imagery could have quite specific meanings, too. It could be fascinating seeing this bound up in cards that also seem to have other meanings attached to them.” One particular card that stands out for her in this way is the King of Coins. There’s a flash-style traditional diamond embedded within the coin its protagonist is holding which could bring a whole new layer to the card’s traditional meaning. “Something about the position of the King’s hands and fingers, and his beard, makes that image double up as a ring—as a piece of jewellery. So maybe this is a man who shows up as quite mature, with his beard (and his crown) and also someone worldly and wealthy—a man able to purchase a ring for someone. He might





The reader's own reality will then help to describe the ultimate significance of the card turning up at that time

look like good 'husband' material to a woman interested in finding an answer about marriage or he might represent a businessman, willing to invest in a good deal." Diana points out how these meanings are simply based on our own natural intuition—our responding to the card's specific visuals, its blend of iconic tattoo flash and traditional Marseilles tarot imagery. If we're to then check this against the listed meanings for that card in the booklet, we will see the King of Coins described as characterful, successful, a master or someone with business acumen. "A story is starting to form here, based on a character and possible actions. The reader's own reality will then help to describe the ultimate significance of the card turning up at that time. I see no reason why all the cards can't be

approached in that way."

Looking to her own future, Diana has plenty of other projects on the table and a familiar theme is emerging. "Just before Tattoo Tarot was launched, a book I had been working on for at least as long was also published—The Book of Music Horoscopes, where I was fortunate to coordinate work on a number of author essays, as well as have one of my own included, on David Bowie and Iggy Pop. I've also written in the Astrological Journal on the artist Prince and Abba's Agnetha—I love music, so, who knows, maybe something on tarot and music next? Or maybe a book on another aspect of tarot, or specifically on Tattoo Tarot. The cards probably have the answer!" ▣

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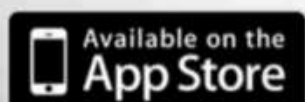
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The SERPENTS of BIENVILLE

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“There is something in us, as storytellers and as listeners to stories, that demands the redemptive act, that demands that what falls at least be offered the chance to be restored.”

FLANNERY O’CONNOR, *MYSTERY AND MANNERS: OCCASIONAL PROSE*

Long winded tall tales of small town ghosts and the occasional “who done it” are an essential aspect to living on the “Christ haunted” American Gulf Coast. Southern story telling is a right of passage for so many growing up in the South; the passing down of stories creates a mythology, blurring the line between truth and fiction, enveloping the listener into a world all its own. Years ago, the world of a tattooer had a parallel to this, the over the top raconteur. My favourite aspect of tattooing is the open floor room, tattoo machines humming, and the tattooist that can keep a room full of people breathless, waiting on the next word, hanging on experiences that seem too large, too ridiculous to be true. There is a romanticism in this that grabbed me and never let go, becoming a huge part of my tattoo practice today. One of the most important aspects to story telling is the redemptive truth, the lesson learned, the cost of living a grandiose life, something that brings the audience around full



circle. Southern artists are notorious for these tall tales, but could the lesson learned take generations to be fulfilled? Could science also explain how some people seem to pick up from where the family members before them left off?

Living near the Mississippi Gulf Coast, you are going to hear one name consistently in regard to artistic notoriety, Walter Anderson. My friend Famous Gabe would tell me huge tales of the tormented painter that took a small row boat out onto a secluded island off the

coast of Mississippi. This artist then painted in a dilapidated house, filling it with art; piles of papers, sketches towering, falling, and overflowing rooms, spilling onto huge murals on the walls. One of my favourite stories in particular was one dealing with time Anderson spent after undergoing treatment. During one of several escapes from the Mississippi State Hospital, he lowered himself on bedsheets from a second-story window, leaving the brick walls festooned with drawings of birds in flight,



STEBLY MAKES ME BELIEVE THAT IT MAY TAKE GENERATIONS FOR THE REDEMPTION TO COME FROM A SOUTHERN ARTIST'S TALL TALE LIFE, BUT PERHAPS SCIENCE MAY PLAY A PART IN THAT GROWTH

done in soap. There is such a romantic notion to that story, an artist escaping, creating birds from soap that guide his way. That is a romantic story, and there is a truth that isn't so pretty to look at. Walter Anderson was a man that was distant from his family, tormented by his thoughts, and overwhelmed with the world around him, in all its beauty and pain.

When I met Anderson's great grandson, Matt Stebly, he was not the picture I would have imagined. Upon first meeting him I was immediately aware of his intense respect and quiet demeanor. He would make intentional eye contact, and kept the topic of conversation away from himself, and more asking questions about what I was working on. He has an unrivalled love for his home on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, saying, "I couldn't imagine living anywhere else. I love living on the coast. I have been all over the world but there is no place on earth I would rather live." Similar to his great grandfather, this love of home influences his subject matter, which is primarily consisting of the local wildlife. Stebly seems to pick up where Anderson stumbled though, having a

beautiful family and successful business. Stebly makes me believe that it may take generations for the redemption to come from a Southern artist's tall tale life, but perhaps science may play a part in that growth.

Epigenetics is the study of inherited changes in gene expression; changes that are inherited and not inherent to our DNA. For example, life experiences, which aren't directly coded in human DNA, can actually be passed on

to children. With artists like Walter Anderson, we are presented with grandiose stories and artistic abilities learned over time, which leads one to wonder, could the effects of these experiences be passed down in our genes, creating book marks to pick up where a family member left off?

Dr. Oded Rechavi, with a team of faculty members from TAU's Faculty of Life Sciences and Sago School of Neuroscience, published this research in the journal *Cell*. According to their study, epigenetic responses that are inherited follow an active process as it gets passed on through generations. Explaining the research, Dr. Rechavi said, "We previously showed that worms inherited small RNAs following the starvation and viral







TATTOOING IS AN ART OF IMPERMANENCE, ONE THAT'S PRIMARY FOCUS IS BEING COMPLETELY IN THE PRESENT, EXPERIENCING THE ACT OF TATTOOING

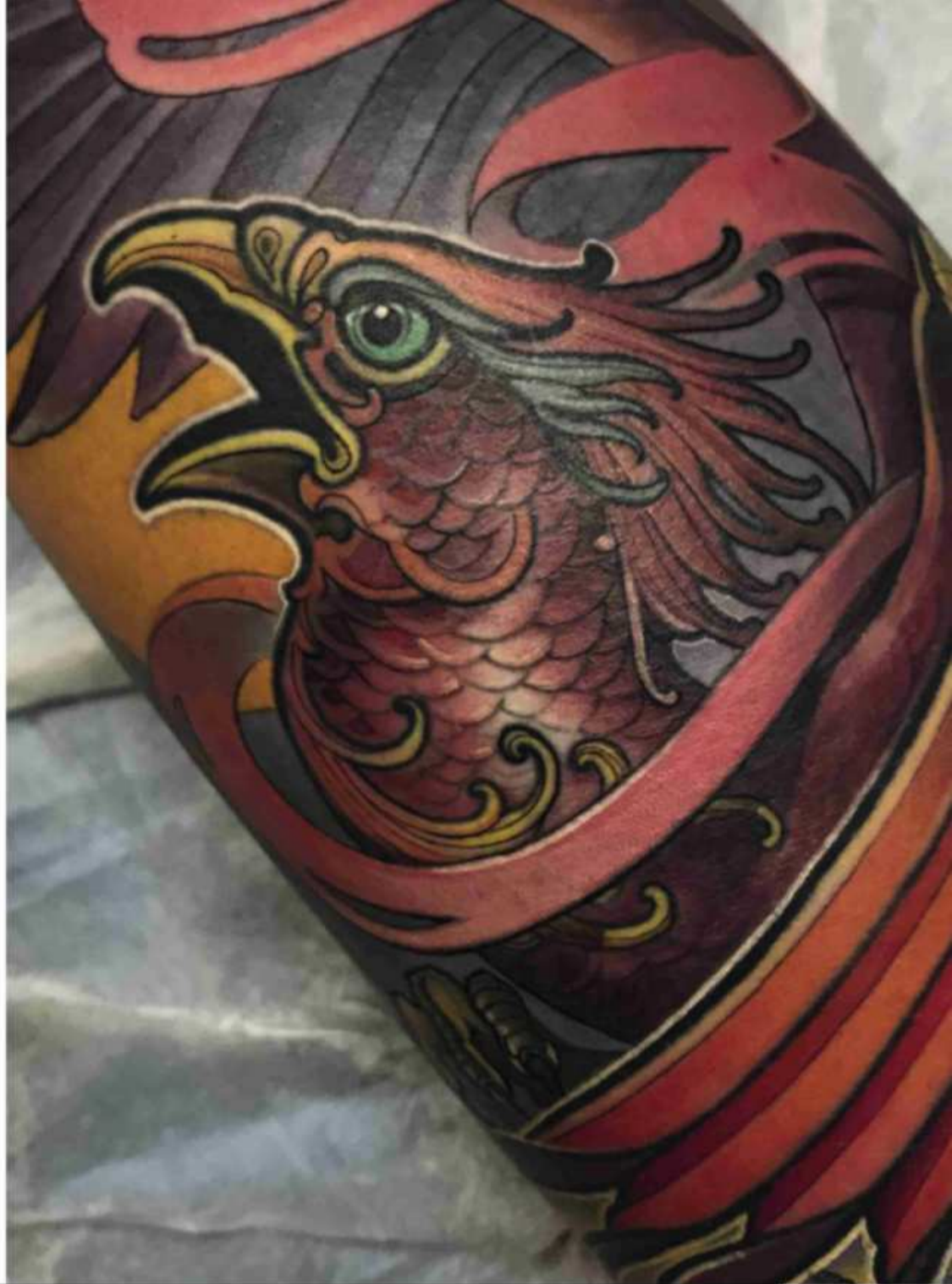
infections of their parents. These small RNAs helped prepare their offspring for similar hardships. We also identified a mechanism that amplified heritable small RNAs across generations, so the response was not diluted. We found that enzymes called RdRPs are required for re-creating new small RNAs to keep the response going in subsequent generations.”

From there, scientists were able to determine that specific genes, which they named Modified Transgenerational Epigenetic Kinetics (MOT EK) are also involved in turning epigenetic transmission on and off. Switching on/off is based on the feedback interaction between RNAs (which are inherited) and the MOT EK genes that are necessary to producing and transmitting the RNA through each generation.

Recent research suggests that events in our lives can indeed affect the development of our children and perhaps even grandchildren, all without necessarily chang-

ing the DNA. For example, studies have shown that both the children and grandchildren of women who survived the Dutch famine of 1944-45 were found to have increased glucose intolerance in adulthood. Other researchers have found that the descendants of a Holocaust survivor share lower levels of the hormone cortisol, which helps your body bounce back after trauma.

In that same way, could the intense lifetime of creative experiences lived by Walter Anderson imprinted on the DNA for generations to come? Walter had an intensely independent spirit, though he was indifferent to his own career. When the Brooklyn Museum invited him to an exhibition of his linoleum block prints in 1948, he chose instead to travel to China, where he hoped to gaze upon mysterious landscapes and examine Tibetan murals. The China trip ended, deep inland, when his passport and other belongings were stolen and Anderson returned, partly on foot, to his point of departure back in Hong



HAVING A WHOLE ISLAND TO EXPLORE FOR WEEKS AT A TIME WAS PRETTY AWESOME, AND SOMETHING I TOOK FOR GRANTED WHEN I WAS THAT YOUNG

Kong. Anderson's painting thrived on his love of limits, and the overwhelming majority of his best watercolours, undated and unsigned, were done on 8.5 x 11 typing paper with little thought for its longevity. For him, painting was simply a way of turning art and nature into "a single thing," helping the natural world "realise" itself through the artist's intervention "Order is here," he wrote of Horn Island, "but it needs realising," and to him "realisation" meant discovering and giving memorable form to unities missed by the casual observer. I would venture to say that this idea correlates with the tattoos Stebly creates.

Tattooing is an art of impermanence, one that's primary focus is being completely in the present, experiencing the act of tattooing. The client is forced via pain to clear their mind and focus on nothing but that experience at that given moment, if they even begin to count the seconds, it will seemingly last an eternity. The tattooist is wielding a vibrating machine, creating a piece that is technically well done, artistically well done, and keeping their client comfortable. Then, after all of this, the tattoo is finished and walks out the door, seemingly never to be heard from again. Could the experience of pain not be one of those realisations overlooked by the casual observer? Tattooing is an experiential craft because of this. Walter Anderson's art too was experiential, Patti Carr Black points out, and that Anderson regarded

his art not as a "product, but as a process, a means of experiencing the world." Stebly too makes this correlation, saying,

"Tattooing in itself is a "process" through life. The art of marking the skin, something that will last decades at most. We put our art on living, breathing, ageing things. Tattooing is just a platform. If I wasn't tattooing I would still be creating."

The passion for bringing art into existence is strong in Matt Stebly. His humility is incredibly apparent, but so is his raw flame of creation that was burning inside of Anderson, and it thrives in Stebly. From constantly tattooing, to painting for gallery shows, to screen printing and creating products for his incredibly successful shop, Stebly never ceases creating. From all the stories one can read about Anderson, you can see that same passion, but where Anderson was an uncontrolled wildfire, Stebly is a concentrated laser, cutting with precision, constantly refining throughout the creation process, giving him the ability to accomplish more than artists far more advanced in years. If genetic memory exists, it seems strong here, but genetic memory is not a new concept.

In 1940, A.A. Brill quoted Dr. William Carpenter who, in comparing math prodigy Zerah Colburn's calculating powers to Mozart's mastery of musical composition, wrote,

"In each of the foregoing cases, then, we have a peculiar



...THEN, AFTER ALL OF THIS, THE TATTOO IS FINISHED AND WALKS OUT THE DOOR, SEEMINGLY NEVER TO BE HEARD FROM AGAIN

example of the possession of an extraordinary congenital aptitude for certain mental activity, which showed itself at so early a period as to exclude the notion that it could have been acquired by the experience of the individual. To such congenital gifts we give the name of intuitions: it can scarcely be questioned that like the instincts of the lower animals, they are the expressions of constitutional tendencies embodied in the organism of the individuals who manifest them.”

Intuition seems to be a guiding factor in Stebly’s quick success in the art field. From an early age Stebly was immersed in art, inspired by the nature around him; as he says, “Subconsciously influenced” by the surrounding environment.

He continues, “I was obviously influenced by the art I saw growing up. Walter, Peter, and Mac Anderson along with a handful of local artists from the coast were all incredibly influential. I also spent a lot of time on my fathers houseboat as a kid, located on Chandelier Island. Having a whole island to explore for weeks at a time was pretty awesome, and something I took for granted when I was that young.”

One more quick interesting correlation, from 1945 until his death in 1965 Walter Anderson lived a reclusive life, making frequent excursions, in a rowboat, from Ocean Springs to Horn Island, Mississippi where he lived in primitive conditions and portrayed the life around him

birds, sea creatures, animals, trees, landscapes—in radiant watercolours and in a series of logbooks. Anderson was drawn to an island lifetimes earlier for inspiration.

Further reflecting on Anderson’s creation process, Stebly says, “My great grandfather only created for himself, he created because that’s what he had to do. He didn’t do it for other people, money or fame. Once he put something on paper that was it, he didn’t have an attachment to it. That’s probably why he burned so many of his paintings. An artist mind is a crazy thing. I don’t doubt I have had some of the same struggles as him, but I don’t feel I was half the creative mind as he was. I can’t fathom what things were going through his mind constantly. I’m just glad I got to see the art it produced.”

Next month we will delve further into Matt Stebly’s narrative, the mindful life he leads, along with how he grew into becoming one of the most sought after and successful tattooers in the Gulf Coast. We will also talk about the tattoo convention he puts together, and the process that led to him taking on an apprentice, and eventually passing down more of that knowledge engrained in him, and helping to create something better for his home on the Gulf Coast. Could his hard work and experiencing continue to get passed down genetically? Learn more next month. ▣



QUEEN

OF



SKULLS

The moms on the school run may wonder if she is a witch, but Skye Hall is happy to defy stereotypes...

Known to thousands of Instagram fans as the Queen of Skulls, Skye walks two very distinct paths. “I’m generally drawn to people who are tattooed, pierced, and have colourful hair”, she laughs, “but I’m kind of in a halfway house myself because I have a corporate job and I’m doing the school run. And, to be honest, I’ve always been a little bit torn between who I really want to be—which probably would be covered head-to-toe in tattoos and piercings—and what are the socially-expected norms. But thanks to my Queen of Skulls work, I’m breaking out of that little bit and it feels quite an adventure.”

Skye’s fascination with bones started at a young age. When other kids were playing with dolls and teddies she was making up beds for her favourite skeleton toy. “Don’t ask me why. I can’t really explain where my passion for skeletons came from. It’s just always been there, from the word go. I started collecting replica skeletons quite early and then I started collecting real bones

The decoupage tattoo/clown/
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Words: Paula Hammond



I WAS INTERRUPTED BY THE POSTMAN ONCE WHEN I WAS HOLDING THIS BIG RAM'S SKULL I WAS CLEANING. HE BACKED AWAY VERY, VERY SLOWLY. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM MUCH SINCE!

and, luckily, my parents supported it.”

They say that some paths can't be discovered until you get a little lost and for Skye that moment came with a life-changing diagnosis. “I discovered that I had a bone tumour. A one in one million, really rare, completely out of nowhere bone tumour. It was benign, thankfully, but it gave me a wake-up call. I started looking at my life, thinking ‘do I really want to work as an IT consultant 9-to-5? Am I doing what I love?’ The truth was that I was happy enough but something was missing. So I sat back and thought ‘what do I really love’ and it all came back to bones—strangely enough with this diagnosis.”

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Her first artworks began as experiments. She put some images online and suddenly discovered that she wasn't

alone. Along with the joy of flexing her artistic muscles, Skye discovered a world of people to connect with. “It's a definitely a passion but I'm also really enjoying the connections with

people that I'm making through my art. I've had the most amazing experiences, met the most amazing people.”

When you're working with physical remains, respect for the animals who provide you with the realest and rawest of raw materials is important and Skye is careful to ensure that every skull is ethically sourced. She would never, she comments, work on a human skull—“I wouldn't be comfortable with that from moral standpoint”—but her collection includes everything from bats to buffalo.

Initially it was that collection which formed the basis for her work but, as she became more widely known, people began to give her skulls too.

Contrary to some people's expectations, she doesn't have a huge cauldron out back where she renders down eye of newt and toe of frog. Skye:

“I have a lot of contacts in rural areas, in Ireland, in the



hills where they walk. I also buy skulls from antique fairs or from people who have found them and cleaned and articulated them for me. Occasionally people will find things—maybe a fox in the forest that passed away—and they give me the body. So—and this sounds really weird—I will sometimes bury animals in my garden. I leave them a couple of months and then clean the bones with biological washing powder. I was interrupted by the postman once when I was holding this big ram's skull I was cleaning. He backed away very, very slowly. I haven't seen him much since!"

Her work touches on things both old and things new: scrimshaw, tattoos, steampunk. "I actually love", she says, "working on commissions because people come to me with their visions. Some people are very specific while others say 'I really love your skulls, so make me something'. Whatever the starting point, I always try to personalise the commission as much as I can. For example, I'll often add a watch face, with a time of day that's important to the client. The time they got married, or

the time that their child was born. Recently I decorated a skull with a pair of swallows, because the client and her husband have swallow tattoos, and a little dice because her dad had a dice tattoo, and she had just lost him. So it's as personal and as meaningful as possible."

At the same time, art is always a collaboration, so it's a balance "between producing artwork that I love myself and producing things that other people will like. It's easy to go too far down the road of pleasing others and end up not liking your own work. Fortunately, at the moment, I'm in a space where the people commissioning me want to go down the same route that I'm going."

GETTING AHEAD

While the reason for Skye's love of skulls may be hard to pin down, her artistic influences are a much easier to source to track. Dad was a metallurgist and Mum was a jeweller. "Dad was always knocking things up in metal, and I've never seen my mum not tinkering with jewellery, so there's probably a lot of my parents' influence in my



IT'S EASY TO GO TOO FAR DOWN THE ROAD OF PLEASING OTHERS AND END UP NOT LIKING YOUR OWN WORK

work. I especially love the contrast between the natural structure of the bone and the man-made materials. There are a lot of cogs and steampunk influences in my work, and the ways that these materials come together with the bone to create something quite unique and new is amazing.”

Some may see Skye’s work as ‘dark’, even sinister, but art and inspiration comes in many forms and the fact that so many tattoo artists and tattoo studios love her work is proof that she’s doing something right.

But what about those moms on the school run? “Yeah, I do get a lot of comments! My daughter has just started

school and I was preparing for a home visit. I’ve got skulls everywhere and I was ready to explain that it was all about art, because some people assume that it’s related to death and darkness or even Satanism! Of course, it’s nothing to do with that, but luckily the teachers had already seen my shop on Facebook and they really liked it. There are so many preconceptions about people who like alternative things that are just not true. It’s exactly the same as people in the tattoo community experience. So, yes, I have had some questions asked, but generally I’ve had nothing but amazing support and the attitude towards my work has been overwhelmingly positive.” ▣

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TATCON BLACKPOOL 17-19 AUGUST 2018



This years Tatcon in Blackpool was another feather in the cap for seaside based tattoo shows—and if such a thing doesn't exist, it does now. Relatively new to the UK scene, Tatcon has gone from strength to strength as they've built their show with much love to make it one of the most popular 'go-to' shows on the calendar.

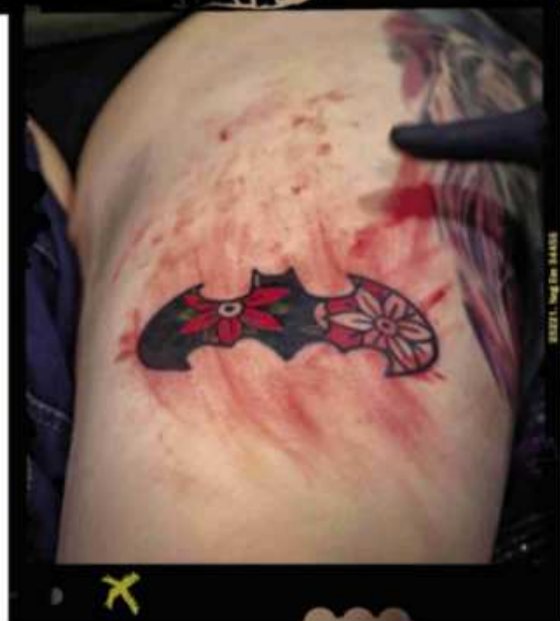
In as much as you can in a few pages, we take a look back across the weekend to bring you the highlights and if you're feeling like you should be there next year, 2019 show dates are already booked: 16-18 August.



Best of Show - Tom Stephenson - Vivid Ink on Becky



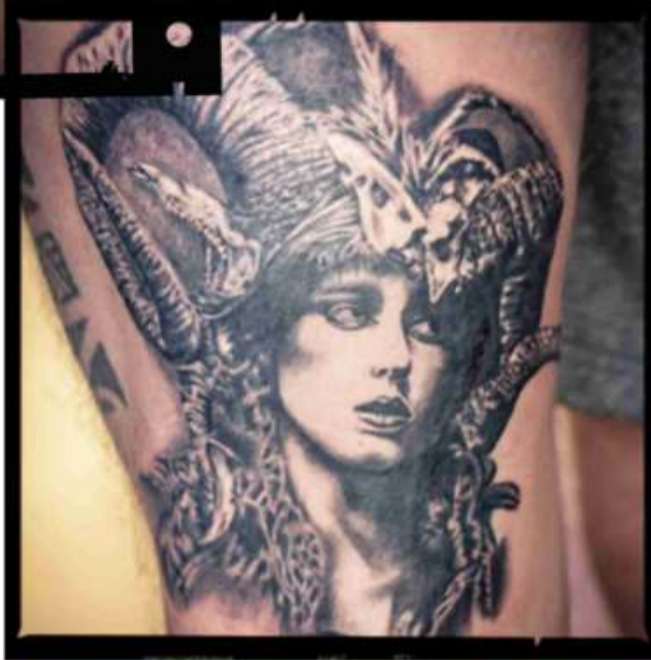
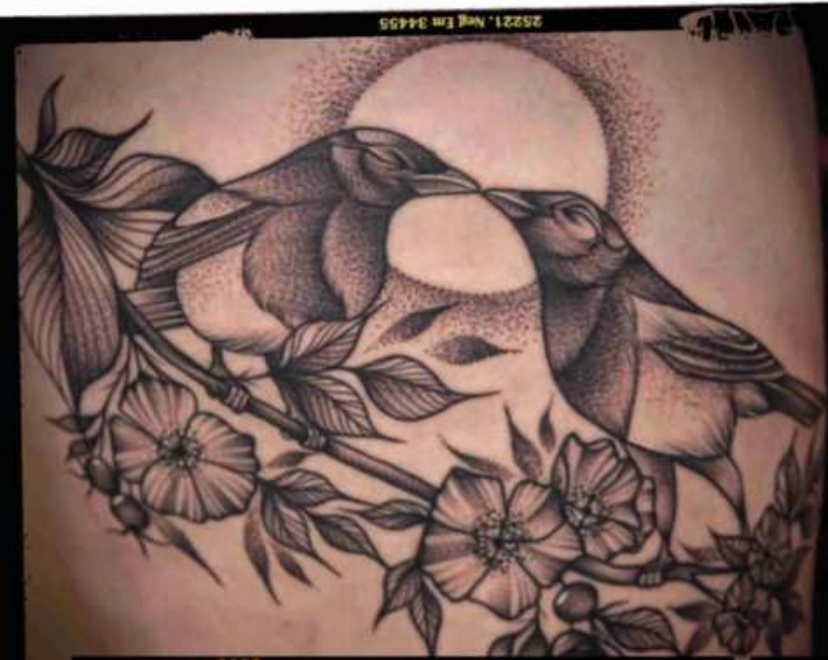
Best of Saturday Geofferson Longley - Studio 59 on Megan

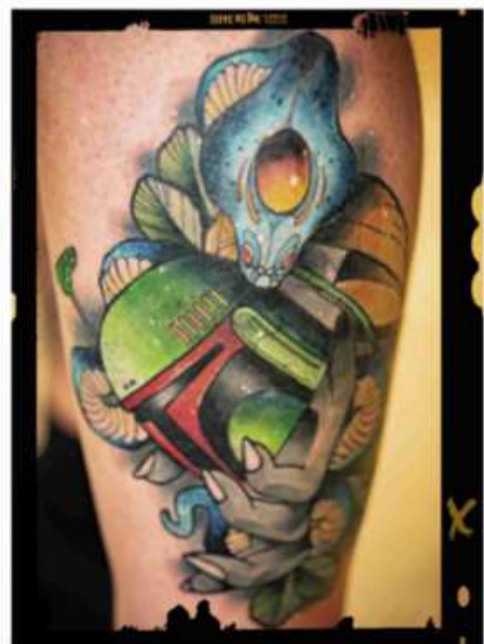
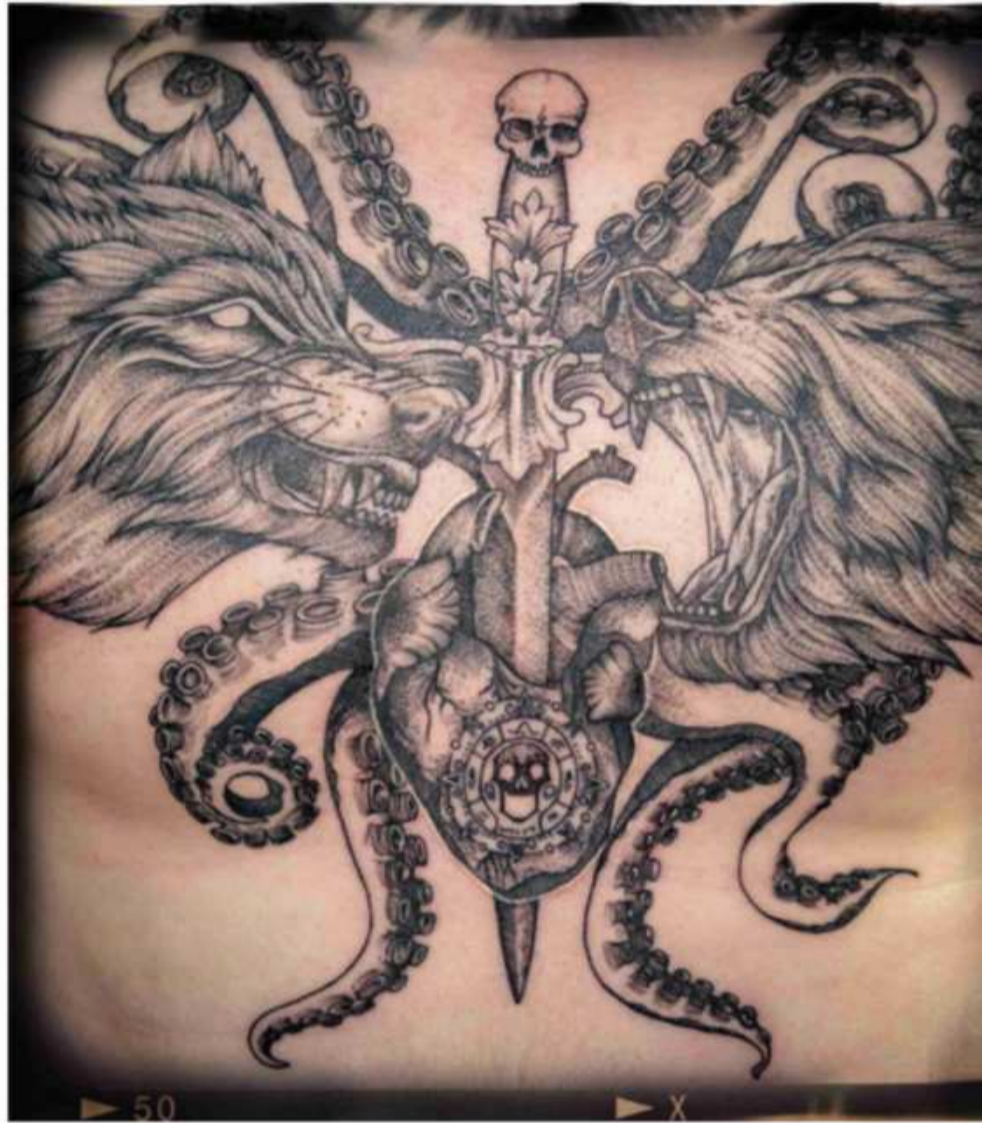
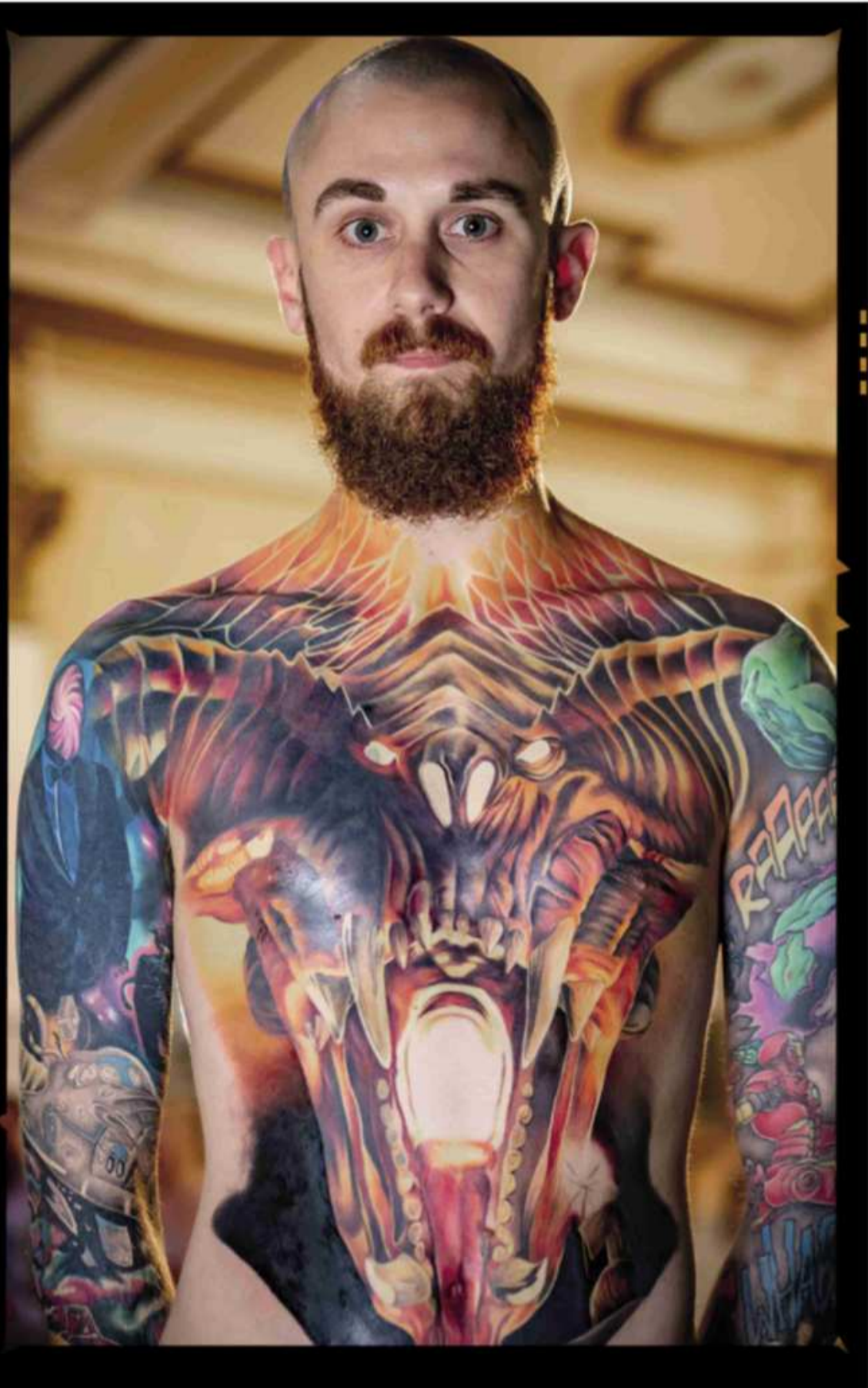




Best of Sunday Scott McCreadie - Ruby Tattoo Collective on Derek







Mark Gill Tattoo

Natt Farren

Darren Fox

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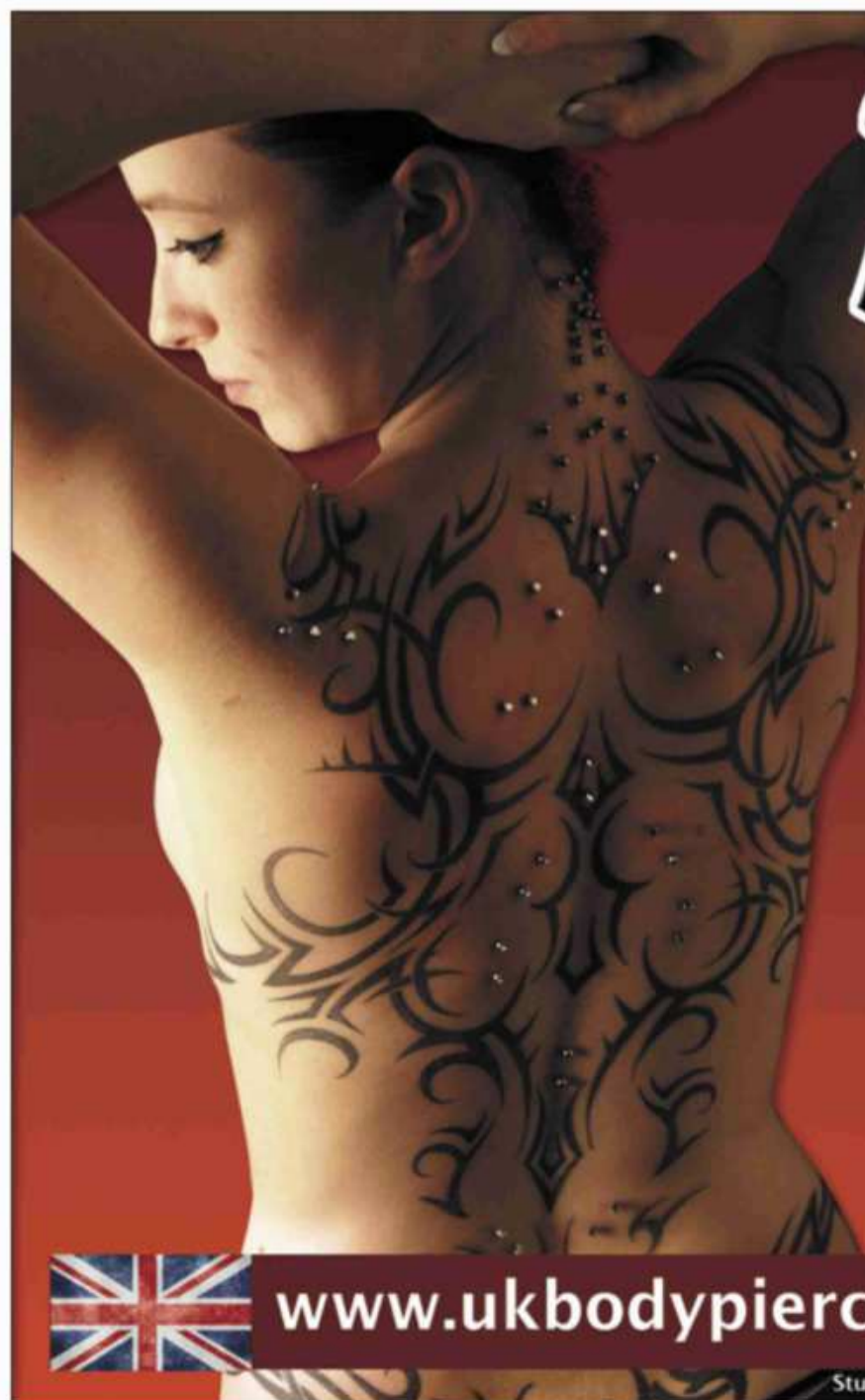
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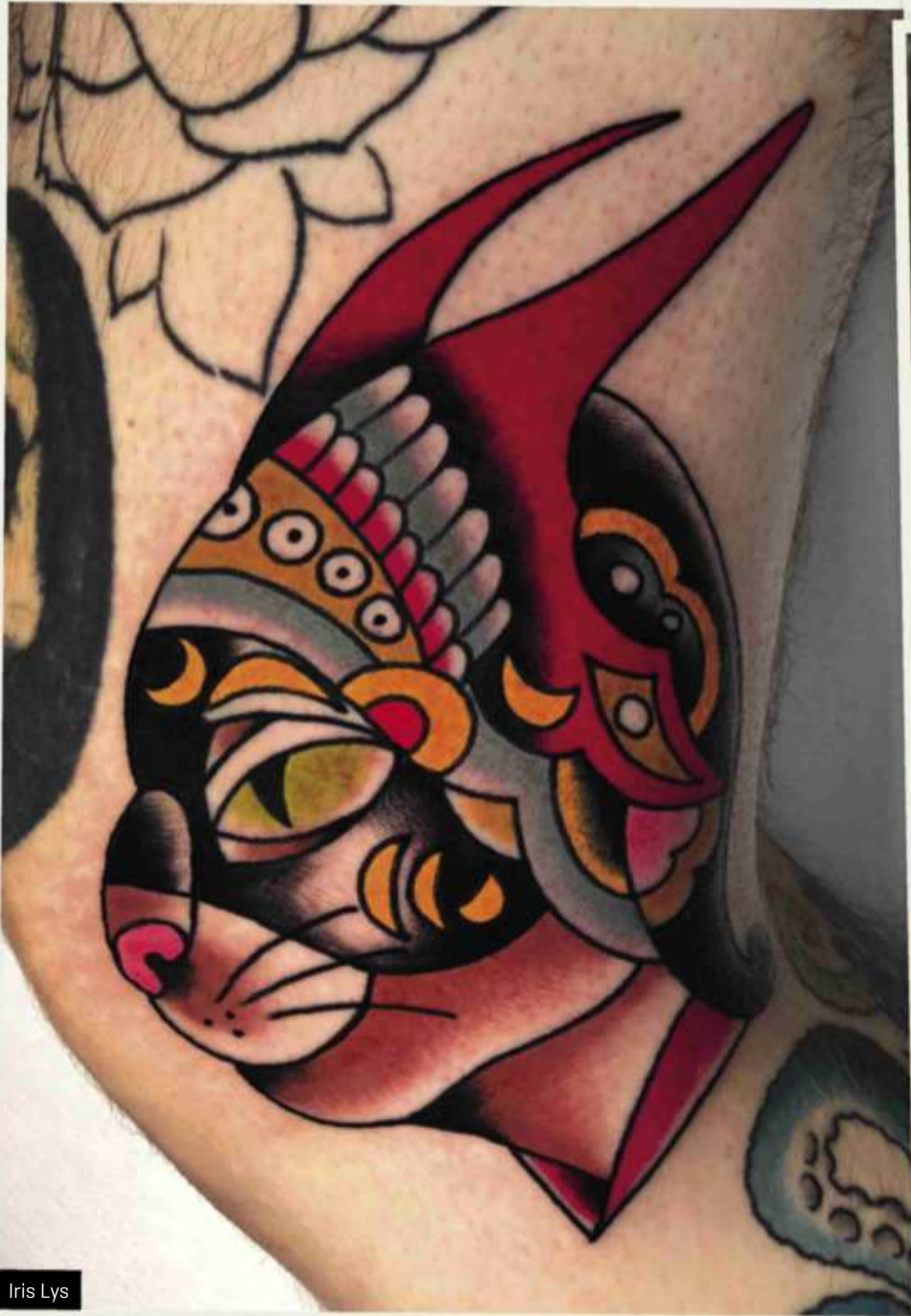




Duncan Henderson



Fiumix



Iris Lys



Iris Lys



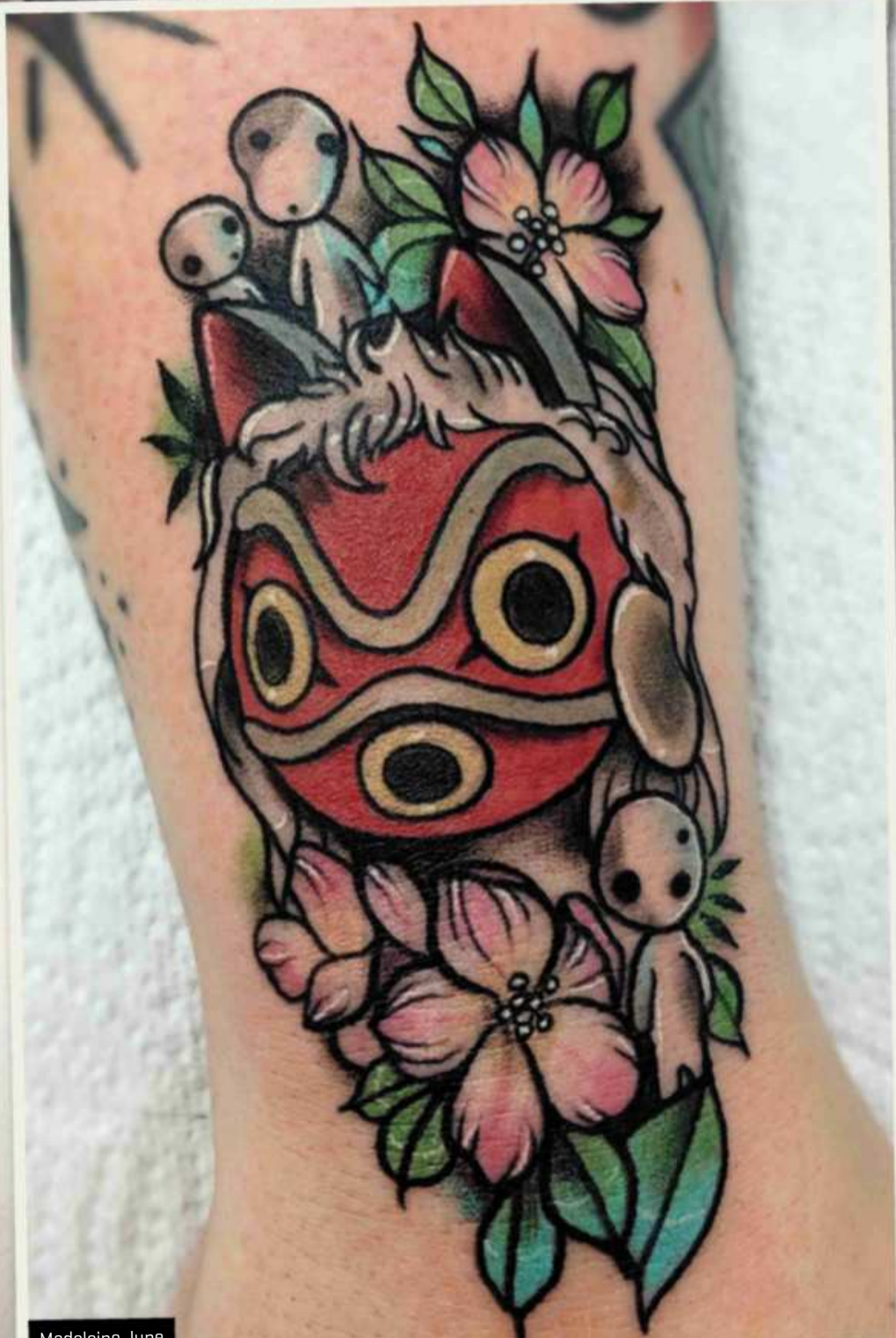
Madeleine June



Marley Paine



Duncan Henderson



Madeleine June



Katie Barber



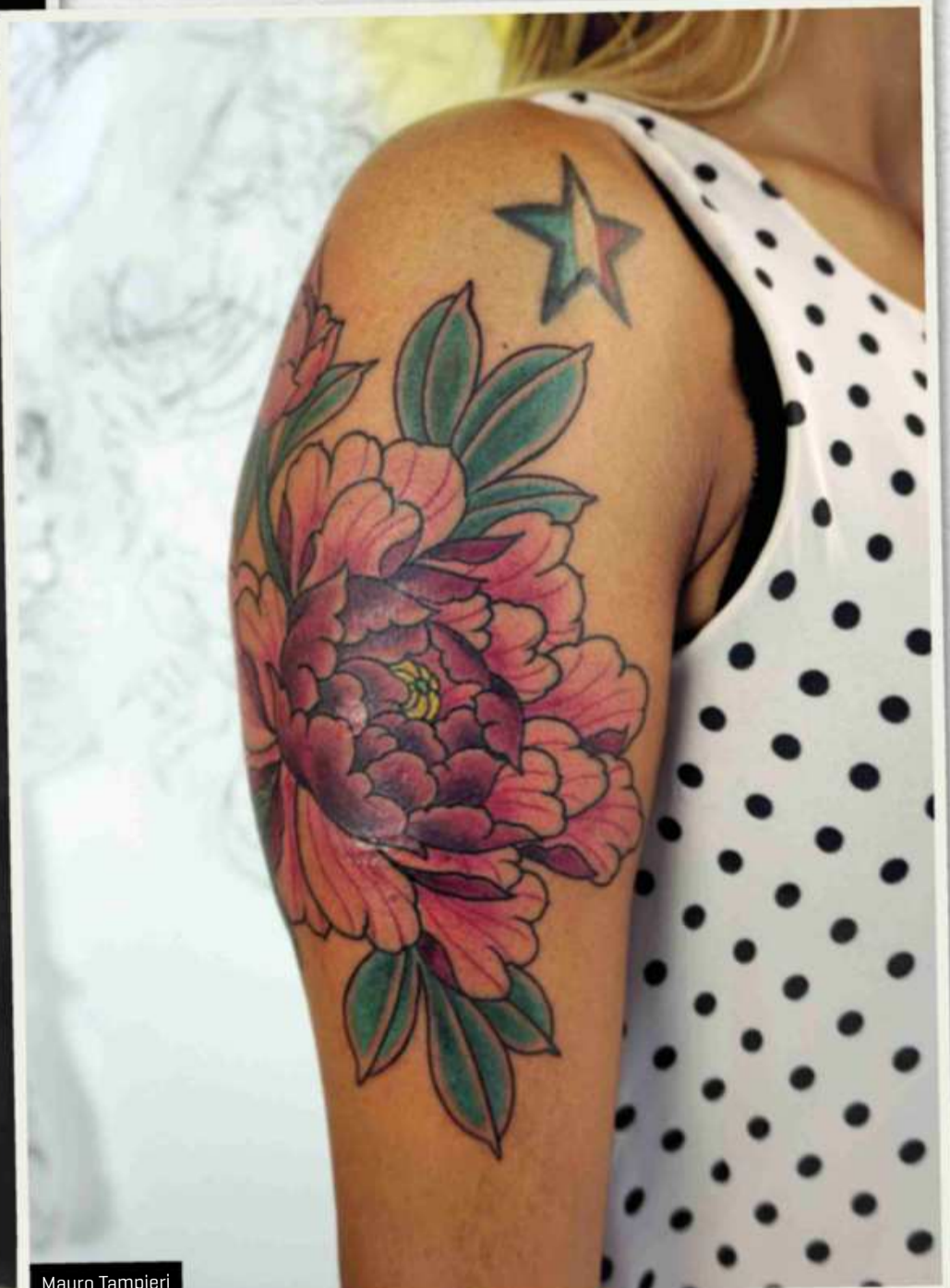
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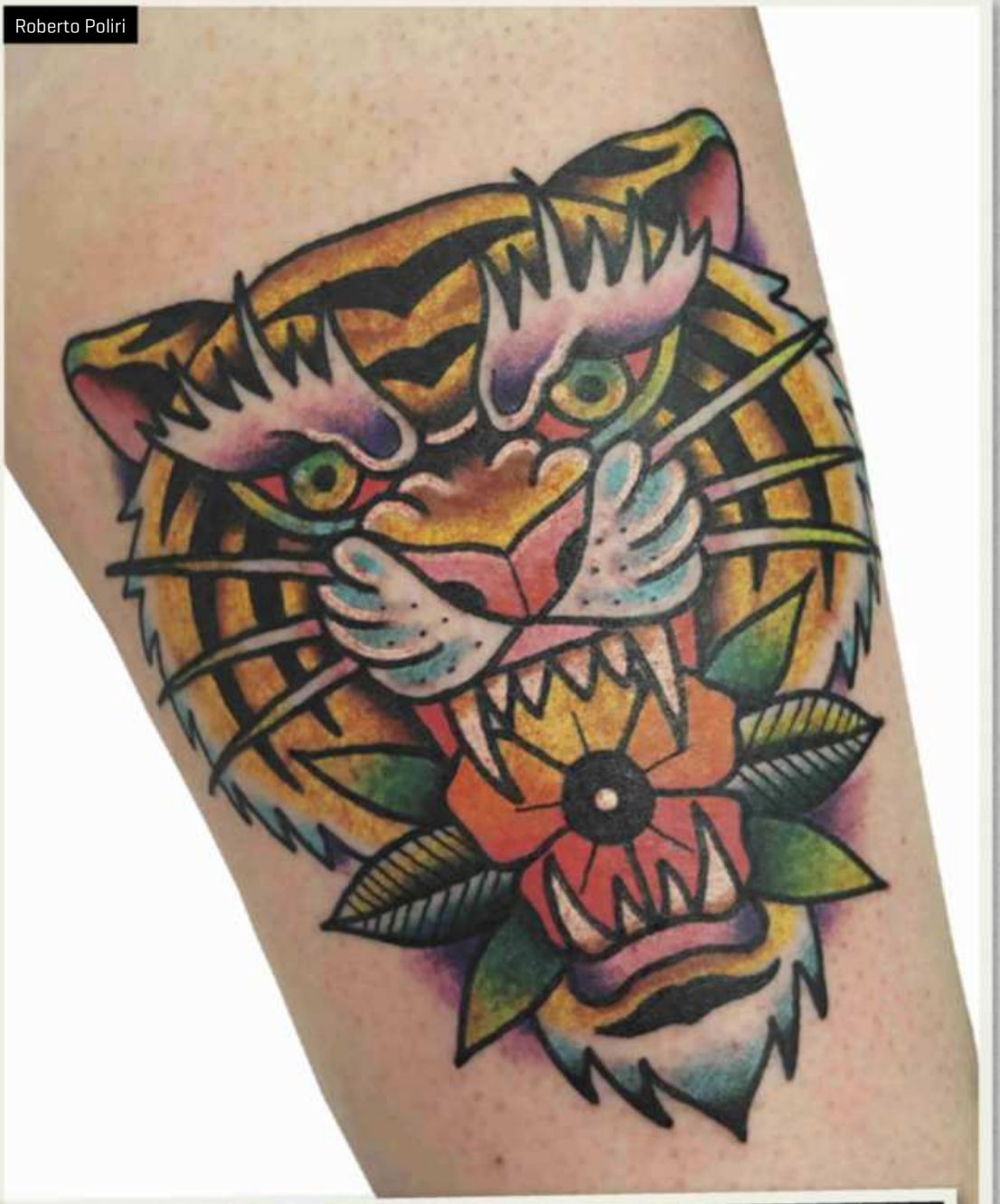
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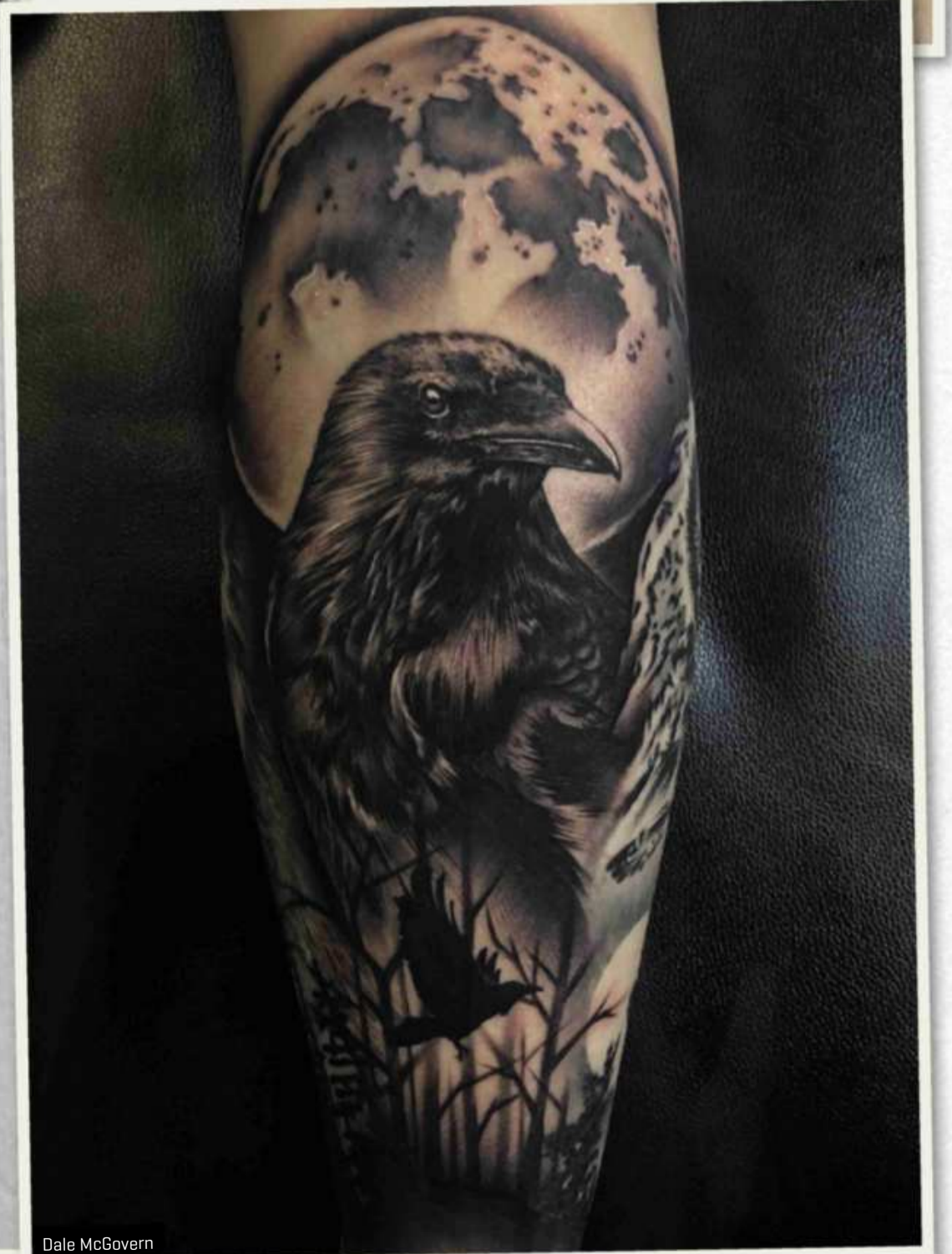
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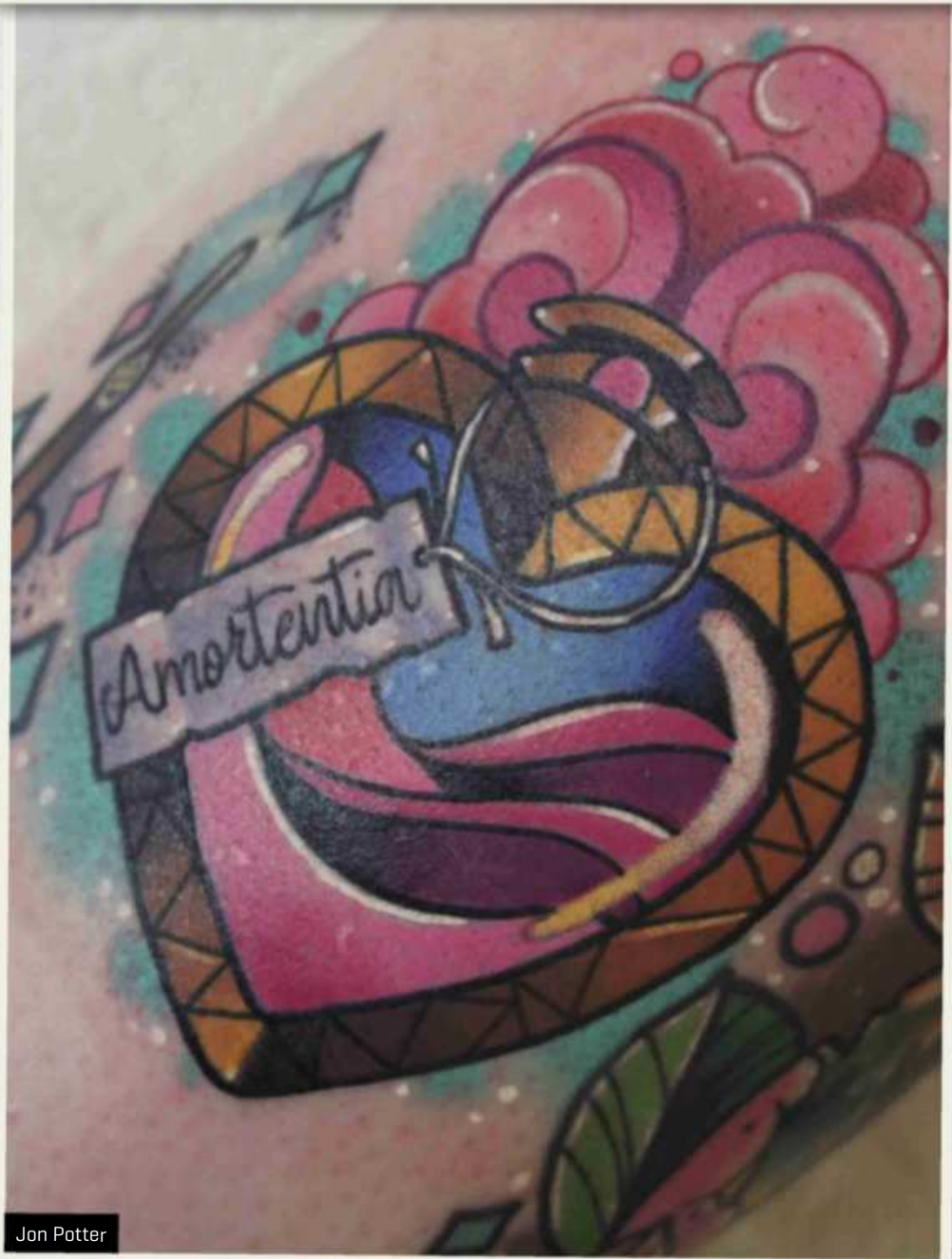
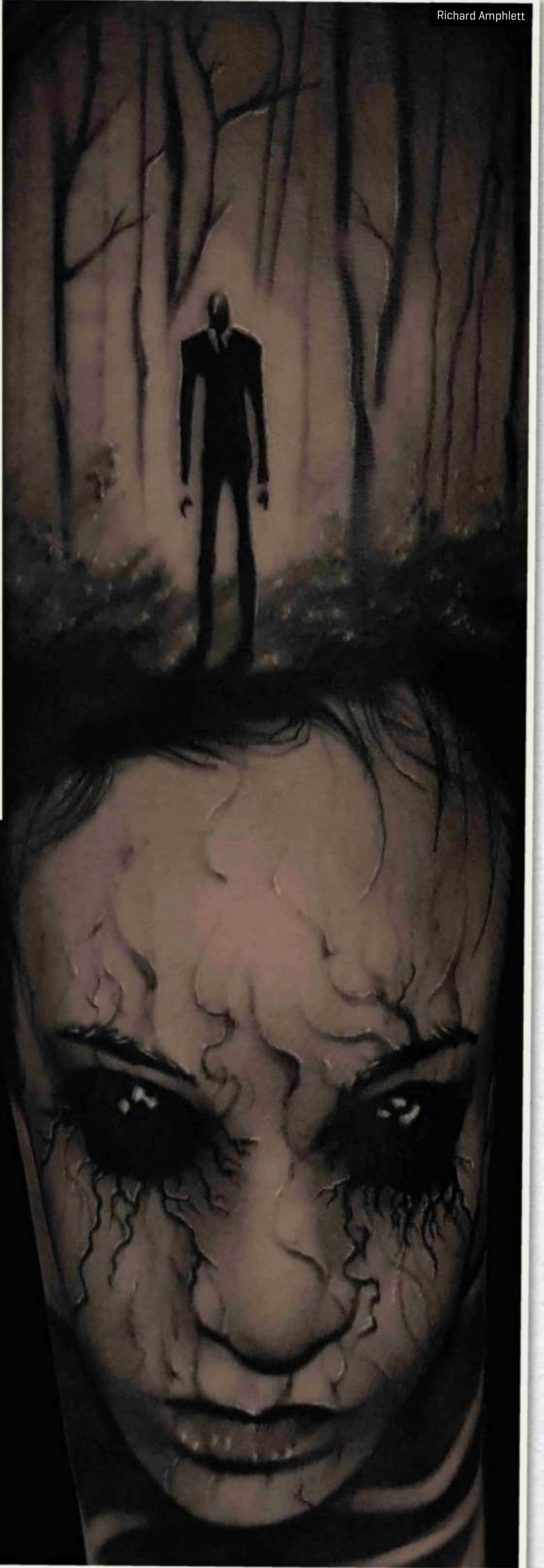
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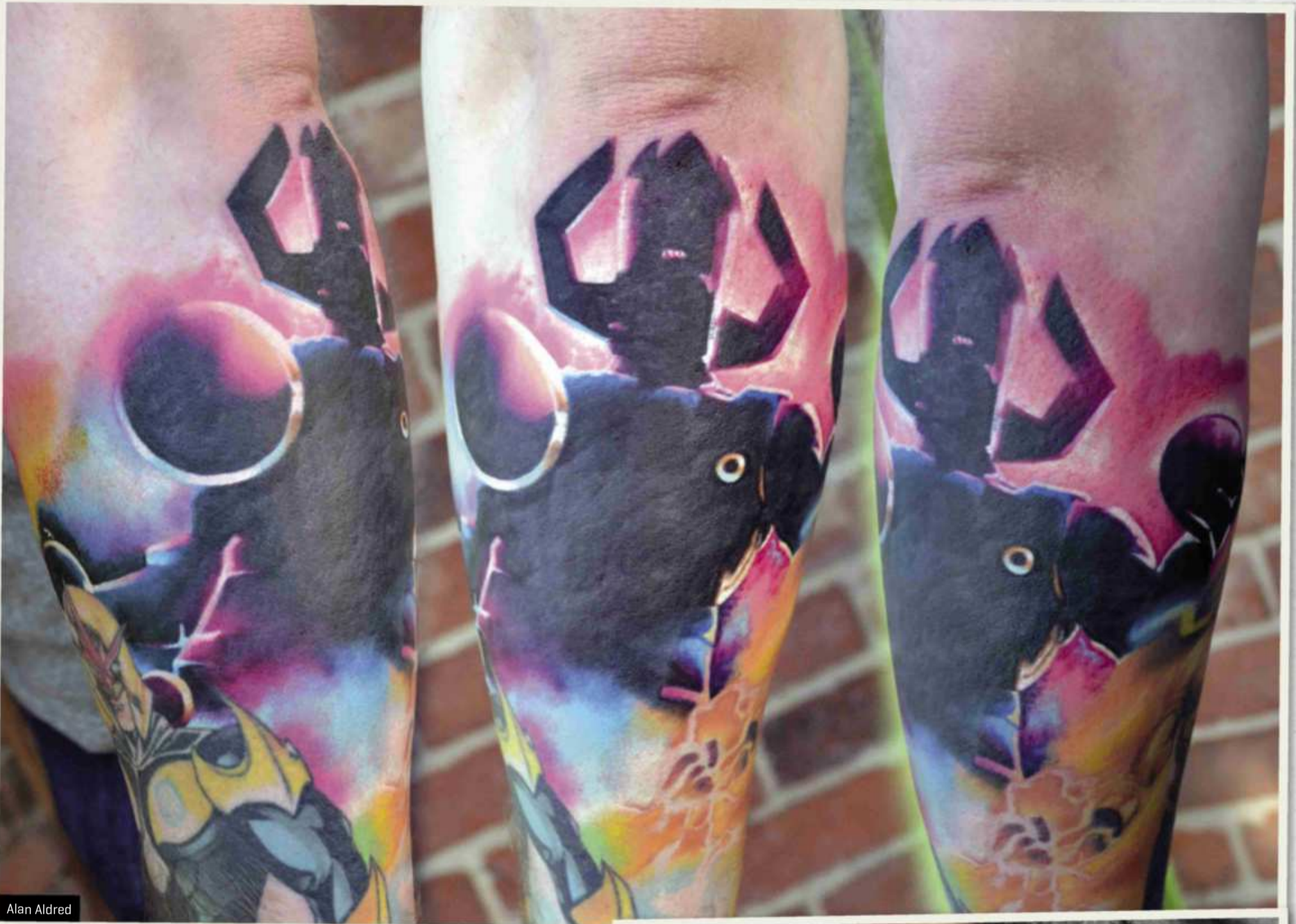
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Craig Startin



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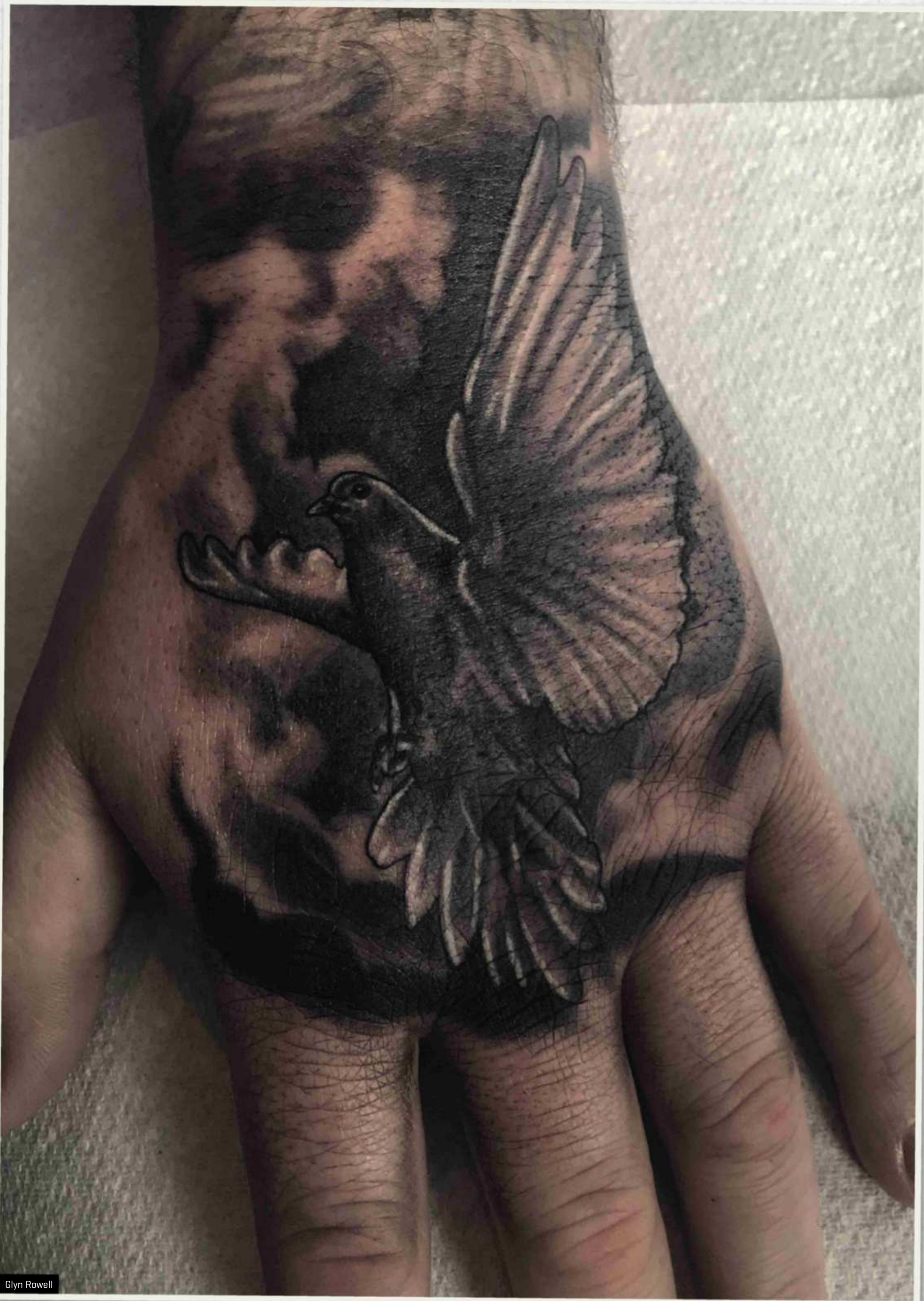
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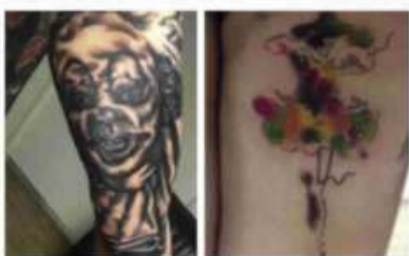


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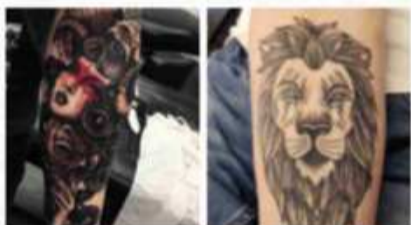


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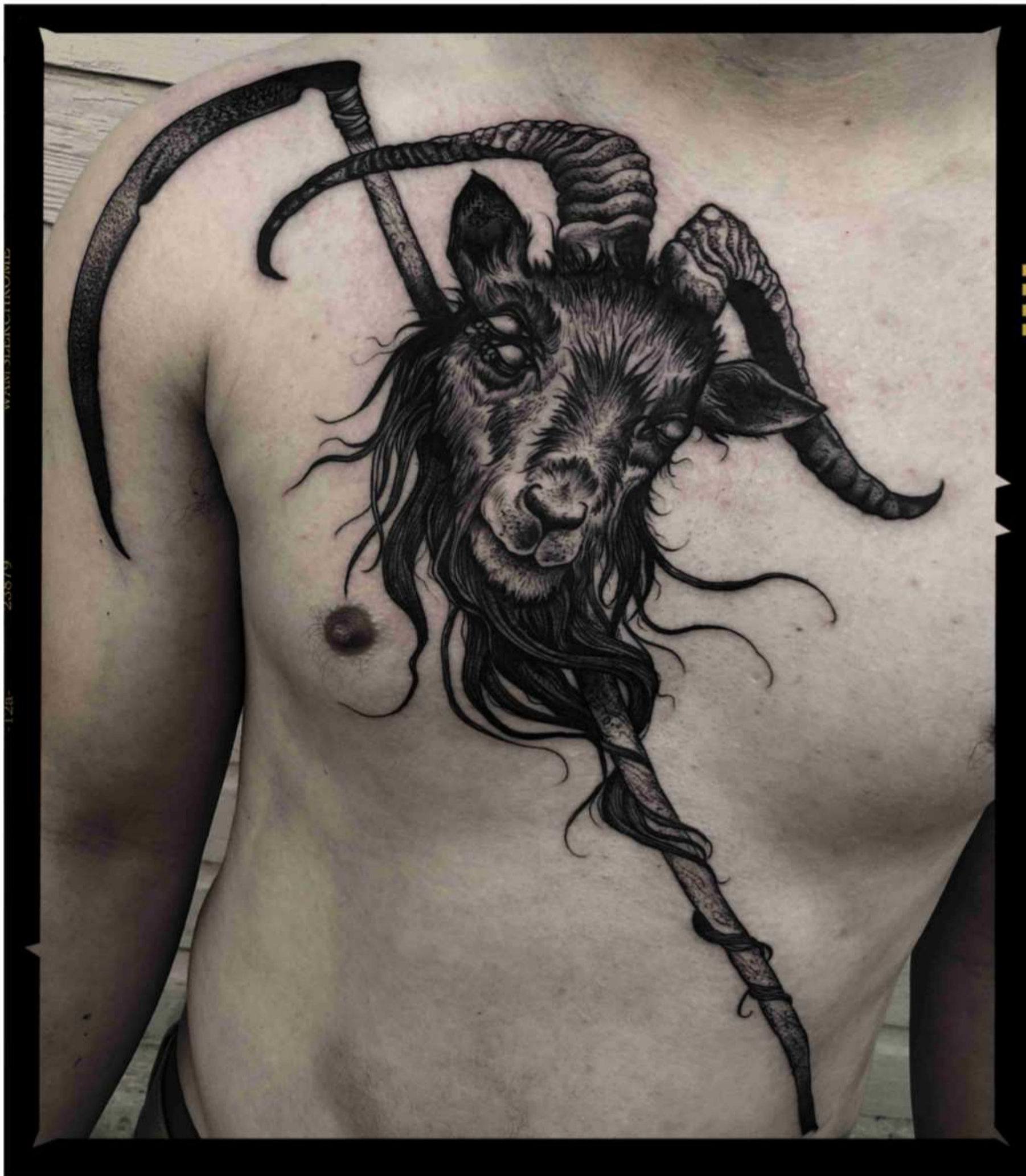
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Coming straight out of Salem - home

of all things excellent, unless you happened to be around in the late 1600's —we've got a real fascination for their darkness. Next issue, we sit down to grill one of them (could be both) but in the meantime... I need no excuse at all to load up this page with a massive goat delivered to the chest.

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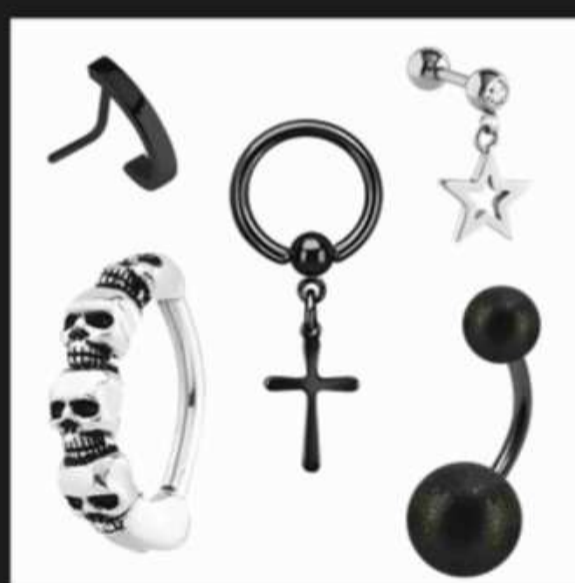
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