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Total Tattoo magazine No. 053 MARCH 2009
Published monthly by KMT Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved.
Printed in England on re-cycled paper by
The Magazine Printing Company - **020 8805 5000**
Distributed by Warners Group Publications Plc - **01778 391135**



model: **vikki**
tattoos: **lucy pryor, into you**
photo: **ester segarra**



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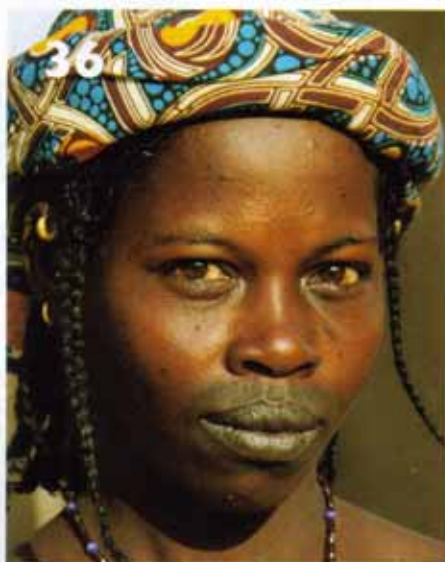
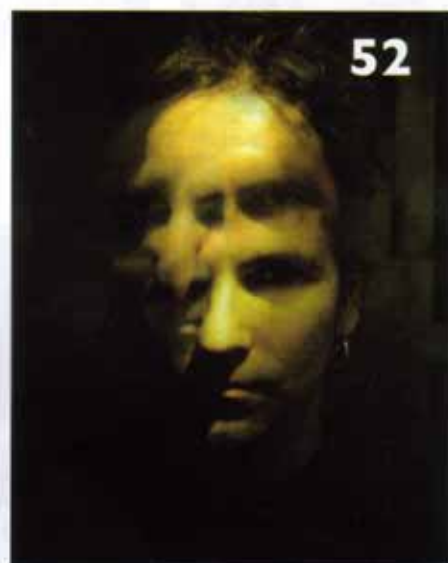
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The best way to cheer yourself is to try and cheer someone else up



Mark Twain (1835 – 1910)

Since I wrote about the credit crunch in an Editorial a few months ago, things have not exactly improved on the global economic front. Still, here at Total Tattoo we are definitely glass-half-full-if-not-more type of people and our metaphorical skies are always blue. 2009 is only a few weeks old which means it is still fresh from the packet and full of possibilities and opportunities.

It can't be denied that many people do feel a bit bluesy during the colder, darker months of the year and the recession will certainly not help lift their mood. Worrying about money, your job or your housing situation is guaranteed to take the shine off anyone's year. But if you are fortunate enough to have a little dosh sitting in your piggy bank or burning a hole in your pocket, there is no better way to start the year than with a new tattoo, or at least plans for one.

The dark evenings are great for hunkering down at home, throwing another log on the radiator and poring over magazines, books or the Internet for inspiration. If you feel like venturing outside, there are conventions aplenty, even at this time of year, and they are always happy hunting grounds for new ideas and new artists. (Years ago there was a distinct 'convention season' in the UK, running from around April to September. But now there are shows virtually all through the year, from January to November. New shows are popping up all the time, with three inaugural ones this year in Bournemouth, Norwich and Tenby, so I'm sure it won't be long before there is a Tattoo Christmas Party to fill in that last gap on the calendar!)

I was chatting with a tattooist on the phone the other day, discussing the economic situation and how it might affect the tattoo industry. He was optimistic (my kind of person!) and he said the loveliest thing: 'We are in the business of cheering people up.' I'd never really thought about it in those simple terms but it is true. As long as you choose your artist and your design carefully, a visit to a tattoo studio will definitely put a smile on your face as well as a beautiful tattoo on your body! How fantastic for tattooists to know that, as a direct result of their day's work, someone is smiling. The customer may have already been happy when they came into your studio, of course, but it's even more special if they were feeling down in the dumps before they got tattooed and happy

afterwards. The power of ink cannot be underestimated!

Even if you can't get a new tattoo at the moment, we like to think that your monthly dose of Total Tattoo cheers you up too – this month even more than usual. Starting on page 9 is our exclusive new cartoon strip, 'Fool's Gold', written and drawn by legendary tattooist Dan Gold. Some of you will know that Dan has been a top notch artist for many a long year, others will know him from the two series of the London Ink TV programme. As well as his tattooing, Dan is passionate about graffiti and cartoon art and has long wanted to do a tattoo-inspired cartoon strip. We are thrilled that he has created one just for Total Tattoo. The strip features a quirky little tattooist character who Dan assures us is in no way based upon him! Hope you enjoy this hit of humour in each issue over the coming months.

Another reason to be cheerful this month is that we are holding a sale in our webshop. There is money off some of our t-shirts and other goodies too so pop along to www.totaltattoo.co.uk, click on the 'Merchandise' button and grab yourself a bargain.

So forget about the recession for a moment, put the credit crunch to the back of your mind and switch off those doom-laden news bulletins. The best thing any of us can do to get through these testing times is to cheer someone up. Putting a smile on someone else's face will automatically put one on yours. If you are a tattooist, you're already in the business of putting smiles on faces. Anyone else who is stuck for ideas, why not pass on your copy of Total Tattoo to someone when you have read it? Of course we'd like everyone to buy their own copy, but in these tough economic times, we don't mind a bit of sharing!

Until next month

Sally



Tattoo news and reviews for your delectation and delight. If it goes on in the tattoo world, it goes in here. Send us your news items, books or products for review and items of general curiosity and intrigue for the tattoo cognoscenti. News Flash, Total Tattoo Magazine, PO Box 10038, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 7WL.



BOOK REVIEW CHINA TATTOO

By Chris Wroblewski

Publisher: Last Gasp, 2008

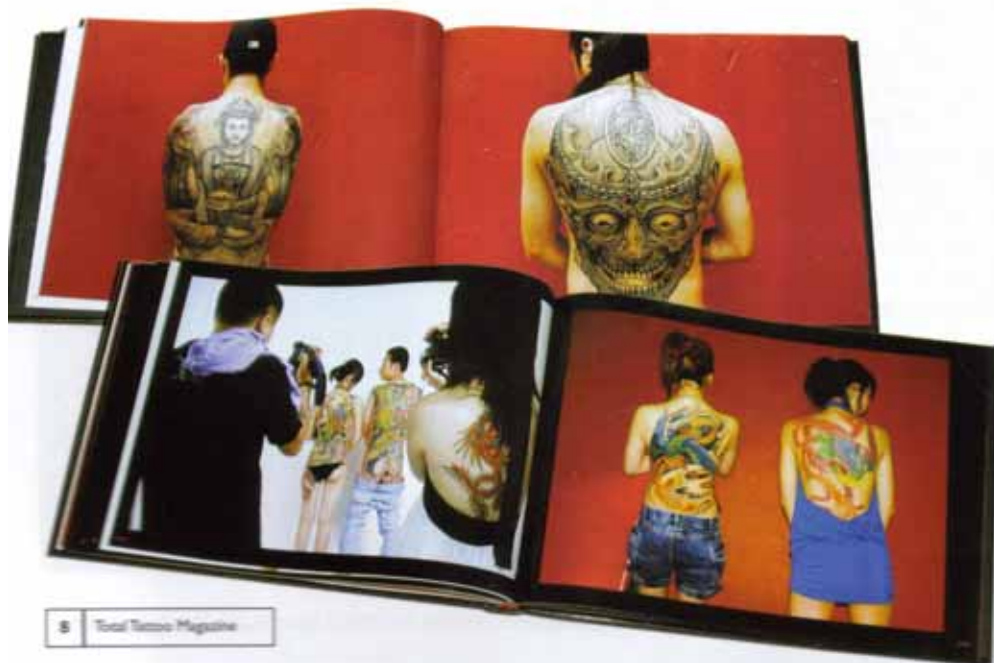
Price: £18.99

Total Tattoo Rating *****

The name Chris Wroblewski will be a familiar one to many tattoo enthusiasts. Chris has been documenting and photographing tattoos the world over for nearly 30 years and has produced some of the most iconic images and publications on the subject. His 'Skin Shows' series of books were amongst the first high quality books to show tattoos as the true art form they are.

Chris' latest tome is 'China Tattoo' which reveals the unique and fast-growing tattoo scene in China. The book is lavishly produced on glossy paper and is stuffed full of over 250 of Chris' superlative photographs. From the

rare tribal tattoos of the people of the Yunnan Mountains to the vibrant, modern tattoo work of artists in the cities, China Tattoo takes the reader into every corner of this intriguing country which is gradually opening itself up to the influences of the rest of the world. An interesting and intelligently written introduction puts China's development as a tattoo nation into a global context (all the text in the book is also printed in Chinese too) and a full credits list at the back puts names to all the diverse tattoos on show. The artists will probably not be ones that you know, but I guarantee this won't be the last you hear of them. Chinese tattoo fans are hungrily embracing every style, from Japanese to tribal, from western traditional to Chinese calligraphy, from realistic to bio-mechanical and the talent the artists display is positively breathtaking. China Tattoo is a fascinating view of a fascinating and beguiling country and culture.



IT'S ALL IN THE CARDS

Tarot cards, the ancient system of fortune telling, are often very beautiful things, adorned with intricate and highly symbolic imagery – much like tattoos. German tattoo enthusiast Astrid Köpfler has spent the last couple of years working on a project that combines these two things. The result is this amazing Tattoo Tarot pack, with each of the classic 72 cards bearing a painting or illustration by a tattooist. The list of artists who took part reads like a who's who of world tattooing: Theo Jak, Hunter Spanks, Alex Reinke, Jef from Boucherie Moderne, Colin Dale, Aaron Bell, Daniel Dimattia, Kamil, Theresa Gordon-Wade, Dave Bryant, Jeff Ortega and many more.



The Tattoo Tarot has been produced as a limited edition. As well as the pack of cards, the gift box contains a beautifully produced book which explains the meaning of each card as well as some simple ways of reading them, along with details of all the tattoo artists involved with the project. Whether you are into Tarot reading or not, this is a truly unique item which is sure to appeal to tattoo collectors and fans around the world. It is available from www.tattootarot.com for €96 (UK and Europe) and €106 (USA). It is also available from www.gentlemanstattoooflash.com and www.freaks-books.com. By the way, if you are going to the Milan Tattoo Convention on 13th to 15th February, you will be able to see an exhibition of all the artwork from the Tattoo Tarot.

➔ YOUR NAME HERE

Matt Hugill from Tattoo UK has told us about a petition he has started to bring in legislation to stop tattooing equipment being sold to anyone other than licensed professionals within the tattoo trade. This one change in the law would go a long way towards preventing the problems of unlicensed 'scratchers' ruining people's skin, health and lives with poor tattoos and poor hygiene. Matt told me "The petition has got approval from 10 Downing Street and is on the Prime Minister's website. I'm hoping the petition will do some good for the industry and I would be grateful if you could mention it in your magazine." Our pleasure, Matt. The petition address is <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/tattooequip/> Get signing, folks!

➔ WIN MIAMI INK SERIES 4 DVD SET FIVE UP FOR GRABS!

The popularity of the phenomenon that is Miami Ink continues apace. The fourth series has just been released on DVD, meaning that you can indulge your addiction to Ami, Garver, Nunez, Yoji et al to your heart's content whenever you like! This series follows the guys in the aftermath of



Kat von D's departure and includes their search for her replacement. The formula of each episode remains the same as it ever was, focussing on clients and their 'tattoo journeys' as well as following some of the tattooists' personal trials and tribulations. A highlight for me in this series is the story of 80 year old Annie who gets her first tattoo

from Ami because, as she puts it, 'If I don't do it now, when will I?'

The Series 4 set costs £34.99. Revelation Films, who put out the DVDs, have kindly given us five sets to give away. There are three discs in a set, featuring all 13 episodes as well as some special extra features. To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the following question:

Kat von D left Miami Ink to star in another tattoo TV show. Where is it set?

- a) New York
- b) Las Vegas
- c) Los Angeles

You can e-mail your answer to editor@totaltattoo.co.uk, putting 'Miami Ink' in the subject line. Don't forget to include your full name and address. Or you can pop your answer on a postcard and send it to Miami Ink Comp, Total Tattoo, PO Box 10038, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 7WL, UK. One entry per person, please. The closing date is Friday 6th March. The first correct entry pulled out of the hat after that date will win the DVDs.

➔ WONDERFUL WINNERS

In issue 50 we ran three fantastic competitions. Here are all the lucky winners: In Lal Hardy's 'Win a Tattoo' competition, the winner is Buck Neil from Kenilworth and his winning entry, picked by Lal himself, was

"I deserve to win a tattoo because... well, I don't 'deserve' to win but it would be bloody lovely!"

Buck will be visiting Lal's studio New Wave Tattoo shortly to receive his prize of £200 worth of tattooing. Lal has very generously given nine runners-up a voucher for money off a tattoo at New Wave. They are: Chris Russell from Warrington, Paul Smith from Kingston upon Thames, Betty Bones from London, Laura Wilson from Manchester, Tammy Bradley from Dublin, Nick Clements from Bedford, Teri Barham from Larkfield, Ronnie Broster from Denbigh and Annie Warren from Berkshire.

In our comp to win a subscription to the cool magazine Pinstriping & Kustom Graphics, the five winners are Dave Donnellan from County Clare, David Newport from Oxford, C. Eckford from Hayling Island, Hannu Finnila from London and Guy Brand from Braintree.

The winners of the tattoo design underpants from Athos Fashion are Leila Pullen from Slough, Carolanne Croft from Bristol and Darren Broxup from West Yorkshire.

FOOL'S GOLD

BY ADAM GOIDE

HI BABE, I GOT THAT SECOND JOB YOU TOLD ME TO GET!



NO, NO... IT'S GREAT, I CAN PRACTICE TATTOOING AND THEY DON'T MIND!



I'M THE NIGHTGUARD AT THE MORGUE



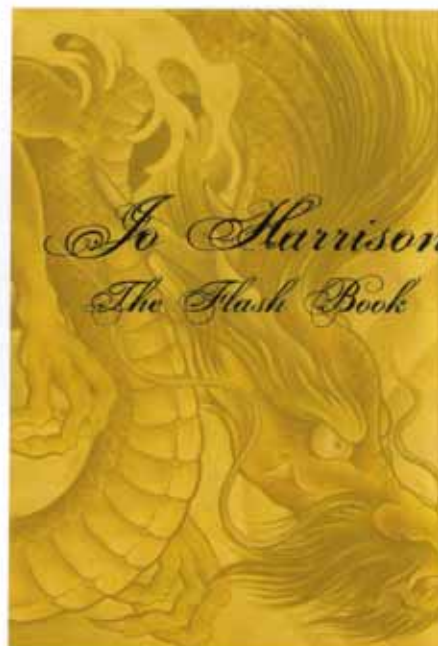
→ WIN JO HARRISON'S NEW BOOK!

Our favourite tattoo diva and sometime Total Tattoo columnist, Jo Harrison, has just released a new book of flash. It contains every sheet of flash Jo has designed including her collaborations with Jason Butcher and Phil Kyle, along with lots of photos. The book promises to be a real collector's item. It is available from Jo's studio website at www.modernbodyart.co.uk for £80. Jo has kindly given us a copy of the book to give away as a prize. To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Jo wrote a diary for Total Tattoo whilst on her recent tattoo tour. What was the name of the tour? Was it

- d) The Savoury Bite Tour
- e) The Sweet Sting Tour
- f) The Sour Grapes Tour

You can e-mail your answer to editor@totaltattoo.co.uk, putting 'Jo Harrison Book' in the subject line. Don't forget to include your full name and address. Or you can pop your answer on a postcard and send it to Jo Harrison Book Comp, Total Tattoo, PO Box 10038, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 7WL, UK. One entry per person, please. The closing date is Friday 6th March. The first correct entry pulled out of the hat after that date will win the book.



→ SHOP TALK

Opened a new studio? Got a guest artist? Do you have a job vacancy? This is the place to spread the word! E-mail your item to editor@totaltattoo.co.uk putting 'Shop Talk' as the subject. Please note we do not print 'Jobs wanted' adverts.

Dan Gold would like to announce that he is now working at **Skunx Tattoo** which is at 11 Chapel Market, Islington, London, N1 9EZ. Tel: 0207 278 6960. Website: www.skunxtattoo.com

Nutz Tattoo Studio is proud to announce they have taken on a second tattoo artist. Many of you will know Strangy as the slap bass player from bands such as Vince Ray & the Boneshakers and the Klingonz. Now he is tattooing, specialising in old school and rock 'n' rock styles, at Nutz which is at 27 Church Street, Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 9EH. Tel: 01920 469721. Website: www.nutztattoo.com

Ink Perfection is a new studio in Lincolnshire. Owned by tattooist Lee Hart, the studio is at 168 Trinity Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, DN21 1JW. Telephone number: 07786 653352. E-mail: hartsinink@live.co.uk. They are also on Facebook under 'Hartsinink Tattoos'.

Experienced tattoo artist required:

At Immortal Ink in Essex. Great opportunity for the right person. Must be hard working and have a good attitude. Please send your CV along with portfolio of tattoos and art work to Immortal Ink Tattoo, 15 Trinity Square, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex, CM3 5JX or e-mail jason@immortal-ink.co.uk

Tattooist wanted: Magnum Opus Tattoo in Brighton is looking for an experienced, all-round tattoo artist. Minimum five years' experience and good with all styles of tattooing. If you specialise in Japanese style it is a bonus and preferred. Position is open from March 2009 and is for the long term and for applicants serious about their work. If interested please e-mail for more details, along with references and photos of work to magnumopustattoo@gmail.com

Tattooist wanted: Wild Cherry Tattoo Studio is looking for a new talented tattoo artist to join the team. Must have a good knowledge of health and safety and hygiene. Goes without saying that you need to be a good tattooist. I have built up a flawless reputation at this shop and I need someone that is a good all-round artist. Sorry, but we are not looking for an apprentice or anyone who has just finished an apprenticeship. Please contact James or Garth on 01732 771230 or e-mail wild.cherry@virgin.net

Tattooist required: We are looking for a tattooist with a minimum of three years' studio experience for new studio in South Wales. You will need an up-to-date portfolio and be able to do custom and flash work. Piercing experience useful but not essential. No drug, alcohol or ego problems, please. Contact us on 01792 844008 or 07853 445710.

Tattoo studio for sale: In Suffolk. Two treatment areas and one sterilization area. Reception area, kitchen, two parking spaces at the rear. Fully furnished. 700 sq ft. Offers. Call 01638 717222 for more information.

Tattoo artist required: Busy tattoo studio, situated in sunny Edinburgh in a seaside location, looking to expand in early 2009. Applicants must have at least two to three years' studio experience and checkable references. Proficient in flash and custom work, free from drug or alcohol problems. No attitudes and must speak fluent English. E-mail Russ at studio@dragonhearttattoo.co.uk with examples of current portfolio and a short blurb about yourself.

Tattooist and body piercer required: Grasshopper are looking for a tattooist and body piercer for their studio in Harrow. Must have at least three years' experience. Contact Tony, Jeff or Amanda on 020 8427 9559.

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February 13 – 15

13th Milan Tattoo Convention

Quark Hotel, Via Lampedusa 11/a, Milan, Italy
Website: www.milanotattooconvention.it

February 13 – 15

6th Salt Lake City Tattoo Convention

Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
Website: www.slctattoo.com

February 27 – March 1

14th Motor City Tattoo Expo

Detroit Marriott Renaissance Centre
Detroit, MI 48243, USA
Website: www.eternaltattoos.com

March 7 – 8

8th Manchester Tattoo Show

Manchester Central (formerly the G-Mex), Manchester, England
Website: www.manchestertattoooshow.co.uk

March 20 – 22

17th Frankfurt International Tattoo Convention

Frankfurt, Germany
Website: www.convention-frankfurt.de
E-mail: webmaster@convention-frankfurt.de

March 29

7th Peterlee Tattoo Arts Festival

Peterlee Leisure Centre, Peterlee, Durham, England
Info: Eddie's Tattoo Studio, 0191 587 1787
Website: www.peterleetattooartsfestival.pizco.com

April 25 – 26

2nd North Lakes Tattoo Show

The Shepherds Inn, Rosehill Estate, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA1 2RR, England
Website: www.northlaketattoooshow.com
Tel: Mike's Tattoo Studio, 01228 545156

May 3 – 4

4th Newport Tattoo Convention

Newport Centre, Newport, South Wales
Website: www.newporttattooconvention.co.uk

May 16 – 17

10th International Needleart Convention

Inslag Sportcenter, Breda, Holland
Website: www.needle-art.com

May 17

3rd Somerset Tattoo Convention

The White Hart, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 5AR
Info: 01278 439569, ask for Mike
Website: www.somersetattooconvention.co.uk

June 6 – 7

2nd Liverpool Tattoo Festival

Liverpool University Guild of Students, Mountford Hall, 160 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, L3 5TR, England
Website: www.design4lifetattoo.co.uk
Tel: 0151 254 1352
E-mail: enquiries@design4lifetattoo.co.uk

June 19 – 21

Northern Ink X-posure

Toronto Hilton, 145 Richmond St. West, Toronto, Canada
Website: www.tattoos.com/nix
E-mail: dmcgrath@tattoos.com or stuk@tattoos.com

July 18 – 19

State of the Art Tattoo & Body Art Convention

Assembly Rooms, Derby, England
Website: www.tattoo-2001.com

July 19

Portsmouth Tattoo Convention

Mountbatten Centre
Portsmouth, England
Info: Pete Lake, 02392 482495

July 24 – 25

5th Stavanger International Tattoo Convention

Stavanger, Norway
Website: www.tattooconvention.no

August 7 – 9

2nd Starfire Tattoo Weekend

Kolpinghaus, Poysdorf, Austria
Website: www.starfiretattoo.com

August 7 – 9

Tattoo Jam

Doncaster Racecourse, Doncaster, South Yorkshire
Website: www.tattoojam.co.uk

August 15 – 16

1st Norwich Body Art Festival

Norwich, Norfolk, England
Website: www.norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk
E-mail: info@norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk

Tel: Indigo Tattoo, 01603 886143 or Outline Magazine, 01603 629920

September 5 – 6

Tattoo Warsaw

Warsaw, Poland
Website: www.tattoofest.pl
E-mail: kult@tattoofest.pl

September 11 – 13

2nd Moscow Body Art Festival

Moscow, Russia
Website: www.moscowbodyartfestival.com
E-mail: av@asinternacional.ru or alex82work@yahoo.com

September 12 – 13

4th Assen Tattoo Convention

Assen, Netherlands
Website: www.tattooconventieassen.com

October 9 – 11

1st Annual Tenby Tatt-Fest

De Valence Pavilion, Tenby, Pembrokeshire, Wales
Info: In2Skin Tattoo Studio, 07789 115582

October 16 – 18

Evian Tattoo Show

Palais des Festivites, Evian, France
Websites: www.eviantattoo.com or www.myspace.com/tattoopassion
E-mail: evian@tattoo-passion.com

November 6th – 8th

East Coast Tattoo Extravaganza

Martello Holiday Park, Walton on the Naze, Essex, England
Info: Cherry Blossom Tattoo Studio, 01255 850462 or Colchester Body Arts, 01206 768228
Website: www.colchestertattooexpo.com

If you are organising a tattoo convention we will include the details here absolutely free. Send the information to Convention Calendar, Total Tattoo Magazine, PO Box 10038, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 7WL, UK or e-mail editor@totaltattoo.co.uk All details correct at the time of going to press. E&OE.



Interviews by Sally
Photos by Magnum Opus & Perry





Magnum opus [n]. Origin: 18th century from Latin 'great work'. A large or important work of art, music or literature, especially the most important work of an artist, writer etc.

Phil Kyle's studio in Brighton certainly is a hotbed of large and important tattoo art so, without further ado, let's get straight on with the action...

PHIL KYLE

You are one tattooist I have to ask about London Ink! What impact did the two series have on your life?

My life hasn't really changed. I've always been busy and now I've got my own shop I am busier than ever. I suppose the only difference the TV show made is that people are flying in from all over the world to get tattooed here. Mind you, I tattooed one guy from Switzerland and he had no idea I had been in a TV show! He just came here for the work we do which is cool. Doing the show was a lot of fun. It was all about representing tattooing in a good light.

MAGNUM OPUS



So, let's talk about Magnum Opus... is it panning out how you thought it would?

We've been open 14 months so it is still a baby but it's going really well. We have a relaxed, friendly atmosphere here which is good for us and for the customers. I have only two rules in the studio. Rule number one is: No drama. Rule number two is: Don't break rule number one!

We have a great team. Everyone is pumping out the type of work they want to do. Our styles all complement each other too. I didn't want a shop where everyone does the same style. I still mainly do Western traditional. I like doing Japanese stuff but I don't get to do it that often. As well as the tattooists we have Tiff who does piercing and scarification and Shone who manages the shop and does laser tattoo removal.

You are somewhat itinerant, having been born in the States, lived in France for a while and now running a business in the UK. Do you class England as your home?

I have always been drawn to England and all things British. My first experience of tattoos was seeing them on an old English guy who lived next door to my parents in Baltimore. He was covered in them and I loved them. When I was about five or six I told my folks that I was going to look like him one day.

At what point did you decide you wanted to be a tattooist?

I was collecting tattoos as a teenager and doing lots and lots of drawing. My friends used to say I should tattoo them but I knew even then that I wanted to learn the trade properly before I tattooed anyone. At one point I was doing drawings for a newspaper in Baltimore for \$10 a week. It may not have been much money but at least I was doing something artistic. I used to take drawings into the tattoo shop where I got tattooed – Main Street Tattoo just outside Baltimore. Finally, after about four years, they offered me an apprenticeship. That was about 16 years ago now. It was a true, old school apprenticeship too. I was the lowest of the low but it taught me what I should and

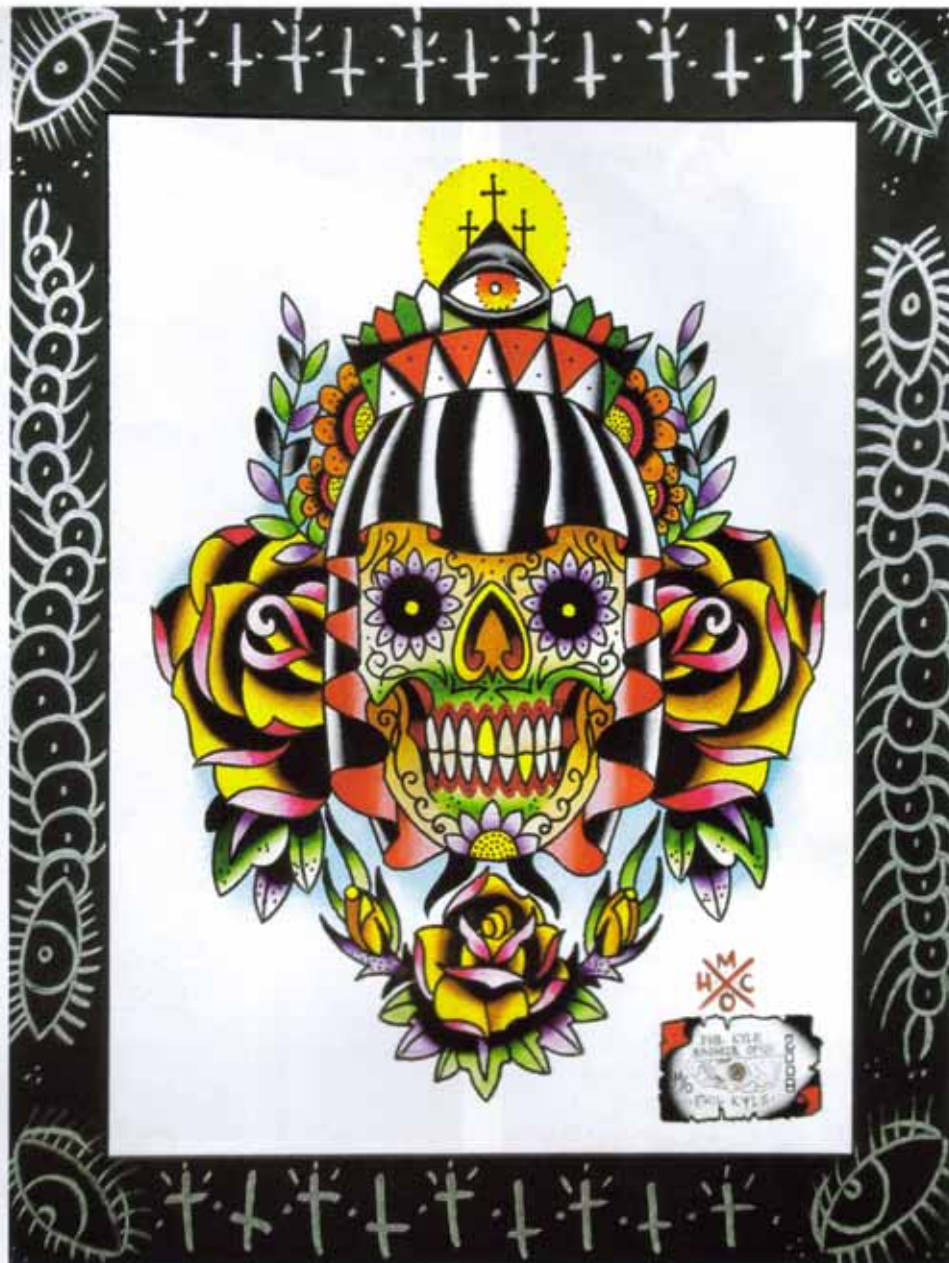


shouldn't do as a tattooer. That kind of training sticks in your head. This is why those of us who have done apprenticeships get so bent out of shape when we see people teaching themselves and working from home. We had to work so hard to earn what we have achieved. We got where we are through hard work. Then some joker buys a kit off the internet and starts fucking up all his friends, giving them hepatitis and bad tattoos. I can't have that happening to tattooing. It doesn't show any respect for the art.



Were things better when equipment was harder to come by?

Yes. Many things are better nowadays but when it comes to the availability of equipment, the old way was definitely the best. That's why I was determined to give Bob an old-fashioned apprenticeship. That way you learn respect for what has gone before. It's the same as in martial arts – the sensei wants his pupil to be better than he is, to take things to the next level. A tattooist should be humble enough to allow his pupil to overtake him. If you stay humble you will also keep learning. A big ego will just get in the way of your progress.



How would you sum up the state of tattooing today?

I think on the whole it is in a good place. There is some really exciting work being done. The standard of the artwork by some artists is so high, it is hard to imagine where it might go from here. Tattooing is going so strong that I don't see it stopping anytime in the future. Countries new to tattooing are embracing it big time – I have been contacted by tattoo magazines from Singapore and Taiwan wanting to do articles on London Ink. If someone had told me 16 years ago that I would be in a TV show about tattooing... No way, I mean *no fucking way* would I have believed them! It was inconceivable. I think people who have got into it recently have no idea how far-fetched that idea would have been. I am very lucky to be part of all this and to be doing the job that I love so much.

Would you say you were born lucky or do you make your own luck?

I don't know. Maybe I have a lucky horse shoe up my arse! *[laughing]* I have lucked out finding this place and being able to put together the team that we have here. But there is a lot of hard work involved too.

Someone once said 'The harder I work, the luckier I get'...

Couldn't agree more. Tattooing is hard work. You are working all day, then drawing until five in the morning... you need to be 100% committed to it.

What would you do if you couldn't be a tattooist?

Fuck, I don't know! Maybe open a pizzeria or be a pirate!





INMA

You have a very recognisable style of tattooing. How has your work developed since you came to work at Magnum Opus when it opened?

Everyone here is very creative and we inspire each other. I relate most closely to Lynn's work. I love the way she tattoos realism. I have learnt a lot by watching her.

Did you start tattooing in your home country of Spain or did your career begin in England?

I came over from Spain to London to start tattooing. There was no way of really learning in Spain, except for expensive courses lasting only four or five days. I had some connections



in London and I was lucky enough to get an apprenticeship at a studio in Camden. I was only 16 at the time, and I was going to college as well, so I wasn't as focussed as I am now. It took me about five years to really get serious about my tattooing. I feel my career really started when I got a job at Tusk in Covent Garden, which has sadly closed down now. I began to do more custom work there and my style developed.

An important moment for me was when I got my sleeve tattooed by Xam. My work actually changed after that as I learnt so much by watching him. I learnt to simplify things – even with realistic tattoos you shouldn't put too much detail in them. I also changed the way I used colour and shading and my tattoos seemed to acquire more depth as a result. I learn something from every artist who tattoos me. I don't actually think about the concept of the tattoos I get, it is more to do with choosing and watching artists who inspire me.

Do you plan ahead very much or do you just take each day as it comes?

I take it as it comes really. I never thought I would still be in England after so long. I didn't plan how long I would stay, it just worked out the way it did. I am happy to stay here and carry on working here. I will stay as long as I am having fun!

What is the best thing about being a tattooist?

The best part about this job is that I get to do the creative work I want to do. I am so lucky to have a job I enjoy so much. I can't think of a bad thing about it! If there is a downside to it, it is that it takes up all your time. I don't see it as a job anymore. It is my life.



ADRIAN WILLARD

Brighton is a very creative town. What is it like to work as a tattooist here?

We have a very well-informed clientele here. I would say 90% of our customers really know their tattoos! There are also some other great studios here which makes for healthy competition.

How long have you been tattooing?

I started six years ago but I gave up for a year during that time because I found it so hard and I wasn't getting the results I wanted. I worked in a busy street shop but I was pretty much self-taught. I made the mistake of thinking tattooing was going to be easy but it's not. I figured it would be the same as drawing. How naïve I was. You watch people doing it and they make it look easy.

What changed for you when you came back to tattooing?

I took a year out and went to Indonesia. I am really into surfing and the surf is good out there. I met a lot of tattooists there and hung out with them. It made me realise I wanted to get back into it.

Tattooing is more popular than ever now. Is this a good or a bad thing, in your opinion?

The TV shows have educated people and shown them what a good tattoo looks like – and I'm not just saying that because I work at Phil's shop! The downside is that the industry is a little over-subscribed now. I also think some people see tattoos as fashion statements. All those kids with throat and hand tattoos and nothing else... there may be some regrets in the





➔ future and a lot of lasering. Shone will be kept busy for years to come! I will only tattoo someone's hands or neck if they have lots of other coverage and know what effect tattoos can have on your life. The boundaries of what is acceptable are changing but tattoos can still limit your job options and get you turned away from pubs.

What style of tattooing really lights your fire?

I love old style, traditional work but I try to give it my own slant. I'd love to get into doing Japanese style work but it is so complex. I may start doing some Japanese paintings and take it from there.

How do your designs come to fruition? Do you collaborate with your customers?

I like people to come to me with their own ideas. If they say 'Do what you like' I may draw something that they aren't into. It's much better if they give me a starting point. If someone feels they don't know what they want, it's up to the tattooist to ask the right questions to find out what they want. My ideal customer will give me the initial idea and then let me run with it and give it a bit of originality. For instance, I have a customer I am tattooing tomorrow who wanted an owl.

There are a lot of owls being done at the moment – I don't really know why these trends happen! – so I've decided to do it with a woman's head and some other unusual bits and bobs.

You have to be very single-minded to succeed in tattooing. It takes over your whole life. Surfing and skateboarding used to be my passions but they had to take a back seat for my tattooing. I only surf now when I take a bit of time off in Indonesia each year. If you are afraid of hard work, tattooing is not for you. It becomes all you think about, all you talk about, all you spend your money on... but it is a great way to earn a living.



LYNN AKURA

Can you tell us how you became part of the team here at Magnum Opus?

I am not from England originally. I am half Belgian, half French. Phil knew of my work, although we didn't know each other. When he was planning to open the studio here he called to ask if I would like to work with him. So I have been here since it opened.

It is a really relaxed, friendly shop. We are just like a family here. We inspire each other and we socialise together as well as working together.

How long have you been tattooing?

I have been in the profession for about nine years now. I didn't do an apprenticeship as such but I did live in Japan for a few years and, while I was there, I was lucky enough to spend several months watching the tattooist Hideo Uchiyama at work.

Do you have an art college background?

Yes, I went to art school in Belgium. I think it is important for tattooists these days to have an artistic base to work from. It really helps, especially with the realistic and Japanese styles that I like doing. It is great to be able to draw correct anatomy and so on.

Who are your artistic heroes and heroines?

My greatest inspiration is Eugène Delacroix, a French painter from the 19th century. I am also inspired by Japanese painters from the same period.

In the tattoo world, I love the work done by Lars Uwe, a German tattooist who is also known as Lu's Lips. He is awesome. I love Horiyoshi III's work and anyone who does good realistic tattoos.

Does tattooing have a bright future?

It is hard to tell but people who never would have had tattoos years ago are now getting them. The appeal is much wider. The down-side to this is that more and more people are trying to be tattooists,





working from home and doing really bad tattoos on their friends. They are ruining skin and lives but they think they are good. That is the worrying part. I wonder sometimes why people cannot see the difference between good work and their own, bad work. Their ego gets in the way and they become blind! The one thing that would stop this is for it to be illegal to sell equipment to anyone who doesn't work in a proper studio. I hope that happens soon.

What do your customers gain from being tattooed?

There are two sorts of customers nowadays. There are some people who get tattooed for fashion reasons, who may get small pieces done because it is trendy. And then there are the true collectors who get larger, more creative pieces. Everyone has their own reasons for getting tattooed, I guess. I like to try and inspire people to get a unique tattoo, even if they are on the 'fashion' side of things. Some people genuinely don't know that you can have a tattoo of anything you like.





BOB DONE

You are one of that rare breed, someone doing an old-fashioned apprenticeship. How did that come about?

Yeah, apprenticeships are few and far between. I was looking for someone to give me some honest feedback on the artwork I was doing. I was a big fan of Phil's work so I sent him some paintings. He would critique them and tell me when they were shit. He didn't give me any information as such but he would say things like 'You don't want to be using that type of paper' and I would go away and experiment to find out what would be better. I did that for a whole year, sending him a painting every day. I spent every spare second I had drawing because I knew I wanted to be a tattooist. At the time, Phil was still in France and I was working for the Home Office, processing asylum applications. One day Phil asked me to call him. We had never met, by the way. While we were on the phone he said 'Are you going to ask me, then?' I said 'What?' He said 'Ask me for an apprenticeship.' So I did and he said yes. I was prepared to move to France to work with him but he opened this studio shortly after he had agreed to take me on.

How has your apprenticeship progressed?

I spent about a year just observing, as well as setting up and breaking down work stations, scrubbing tubes, sweeping floors, cleaning the toilet. Finally I was allowed to pick up a machine and I started tattooing. I am only doing small pieces. I don't want to run before I can walk. I watch everyone here working as much as I can. I like to learn something every single day.

Where is your style heading?

I am following in the boss's footsteps and keeping it traditional. I hope to put my own twist on things though and mix it up a little bit. To me, that is what tattoos should look like! Traditional style tattoos will last a lifetime. Even when your skin goes wrinkly you can still tell what they are.

What advice would you give someone who wants to get into the industry?

Draw, draw, draw. Show your stuff to someone whose opinion you value. Listen to what they say and act on their advice. Then get an apprenticeship or forget it. Self-taught, in this day and age, is just bullshit. You can't learn anything from yourself.

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Interview & photos by Ester Segarra
Make-up by Lucy Darkness





VIKKI

COVER GIRL PROFILE



This month's cover model is Vikki whose tattoos reflect her life which is lived on both sides of the Atlantic. Here Vikki tells us about her journey through life from a small town in Cornwall to the bright lights of Las Vegas.

I grew up in a small Cornish town but, as pretty as it was, it felt like it was the end of the earth so I took the first train out of there when I was 16. I moved to Nottingham where I lived for a while. During this time I took my first vacation to California, which is where my love of the States began. Later on I went and stayed in Los Angeles for three months which was an amazing experience! When I came back to England, I lived in London and back in Cornwall for a little bit. Now, numerous visits to the States later, I split my time between the UK and the fabulous Las Vegas where I plan to move later in the year.

I've always liked the alternative things in life, whether it be music... the louder, the dirtier the better! Movies... mindless blood and gore please! Fashion... white trash with a hint of rock and fifties pin-up, if you like. And, of course, tattoos. I got my first tattoo when I was about 17. I didn't really know anything about tattoos, just that I wanted one. They just seemed so cool to me and growing up on a musical diet of bands like Motley Crue and Guns 'n' Roses it seemed the more the merrier! So I ended up just going to the tattoo shop in town where everyone seemed to go. I had a small Japanese symbol on the back of my right shoulder. I remember the guy pulling

out an A4 piece of paper with about 12 symbols on it. It's laughable now by today's standards. I've since had it covered up but I remember feeling really proud of it at the time. Even after I got my first tattoo, I never imagined having as many as I have now. I find that each new tattoo fuels my fire to get the next one!

My second tattoo was a tribal symbol on the bottom of my back, which my friend



lovingly calls my tramp stamp! Not the most thought-through idea I've had, but I knew I wanted another and it was a popular choice at the time. It led me to having my Japanese symbol covered over as I didn't like the mix of the styles together.

My next big tattoo session was the swallows on the front of my hips and I love them to this day. Yes, the line work needs a touch up and they could probably do with a bit more colour but I had them done in my friend's living room in Hollywood, drinking vodka and chain smoking Lucky Strikes, with probably everyone including the take-out delivery guy peeking over to watch me squirm! They took four hours to complete and I was in agony. But I always remember good times when I look at them.

After that, most of my work was done by one of my best friends, Lucy Pryor at IN2U in London. I had met Lucy a year or so previously through a good friend of ours and I ended up sharing a flat with her and another girl who worked at IN2U. This is where my tattoo education really started. I loved Lucy's work the minute I saw it. She's super talented and I was blown away by her portfolio.



end of the day, they know tattoos are part of who I am. My parents were secretly quite proud when I showed them their initials on my wrists. My dad even gushed... just a little!

To be honest, I don't really know much about the tattoo scene in America. From what I can see it's a little more accepted than it is in the UK and maybe a little bit more commercial. In Vegas there's Mario Barth's shop, Starlight Tattoo, inside The Mandalay Bay and Carey Hart's shop, Hart



I started off by having little pieces, a star on the underneath of one arm, a diamond underneath the other, and then I progressed onto the bigger piece I have on my right arm. Lucy knows what I like. I told her I wanted hearts and roses and just rolled with what she came up with. Over the next few months, it all came together really well with the roses, buds, hearts and a horse shoe. My favourite part of the whole piece is the little rosebud on the front of my shoulder.

Lucy also came up with a heart-shaped padlock that I have on the inside of my wrist. I'm a romantic at heart and tend to wear my heart on my sleeve which has lead to bad choices in the past. This tattoo is a reminder to occasionally think with my head instead of my heart! On my birthday last year, Lucy and I celebrated the occasion by having matching cupcakes on the back of our necks, done by JJ at Blood Brothers Tattoo Studio. They're the cutest things ever and commemorate a good friendship as well as my birthday.

The last tattoos I had were done in Vegas by Riley Baxter at Dirk Vermin's Pussykat Tattoo. I had my parents' initials on each of my wrists. It was something I wanted as I've always had a great relationship with them and, even though I don't see them as often as I'd like, they made me into the person I am today. I'm really pleased with the tattoos. They're so dainty and pretty.



I'm planning to have my forearm worked on next. I can't wait to have a full sleeve. And I have many more ideas of what I want after that. Next time I am in Vegas I'm hoping to be tattooed by a friend of mine, Cleen Rock One at Last Chance Tattoo. His work is amazing.

I don't get many negative reactions to my tattoos. Occasionally I get the odd comment, but it really doesn't bother me. When I worked in a bar a little while ago a guy asked me why I do this to myself. My quick-thinking friend quipped that it won't kill me and asked why he was drinking pints of beer at 11 o'clock in the morning! Ha ha! (Love you for that, Erin). I was once turned down for a job on a cruise ship for having too many tattoos though. I wouldn't have minded but the ones I had were easily covered. Some of my family have had mixed reactions to them but, at the



and Huntington, inside The Palms Casino, Vince Neil Ink is right on Las Vegas Boulevard and there's also a club near The Strip called The Ice House that hosts Inked Fridays every week. Cheesy or not? You decide. At the end of the day I like what I like and I look forward to getting tattooed out there by some great artists in the very near future.

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4. nate beavers, l-45 ink (usa)
5. jef, boucherie moderne (belgium)
6. the convention hall
7. stage show by satomi



Evian tattoo convention

Report & Photos by Travellin' Mick



Although it is only in its second year, the Evian Tattoo Convention, staged in France against the idyllic backdrop of Lake Geneva, is already drawing fans from all over Europe. In 2008 organiser Dats, who is a studio owner and tattoo journalist, and his team once again invited artists from around the world who stunned visitors with their incredible work.

The first Evian show was a huge success, with thousands of tattoo fans enjoying a colourful weekend in a beautiful location. It was a triumph that was hard to top in 2008 but hard work and skilful organisation made it happen all over again. Dats has an incredible knack for persuading great artists to choose to work at his convention. This a valuable gift, given the plethora of events on the tattoo scene. Not only did Dats present a spectacular line-up but the entrance fee for the public was a very reasonable 10 Euros for both days!

The biggest draw was probably a group of extraordinarily young and talented artists from the USA. Rising star Nick Baxter, who has just opened a studio in Austin, Texas with Jeff Ensminger, certainly felt welcome at the Evian show. Both artists tattooed several masterpieces during the weekend which left some of the experts present gasping for breath! Their tattoos seem to perfectly saturate the skin, while doing as little damage to it as possible. Nick as well as Jeff took several trophies in the competitions. The trophies, by the way, weren't just cheap cups, but unique (and pricey) tattoo machines, crafted by masters like Aaron Cain or Karl Marc, as well as valuable tattoo books. Adrian Dominic and Nate Beavers were two more artists making waves this weekend. Working next to artists from Japan, Malaysia, China and Tahiti, was master of Chicano fineline tattooing, Boog, who has been travelling extensively recently. He worked in a particularly varied corner of the airy hall, which featured – among others – old school talent Joey Ortega from Texas, tattooing opposite Sergio Villagran (Belfort Tattoo Family). A few of Britain's finest could be found there: The ever-sweet Jo Harrison of Modern Body Art did some great tattoos, while Endre Szabo of Tattoo End (London) showed what he is able to do with colour. Gerry Carnelly of Octopus Tattoo (Derby) worked downstairs in the main hall, doing a collaborative piece – a pair of white and black roses on a visitor's hands – with Jeremy Justice from Seattle (Muthafucknjustice Tattoo).

Upstairs the artists were grouped together in the galleries which framed the main floor. On one side, Dimitri HK worked back-to-back with Lea Nahon, Karl Marc and Roberto of Art Corpus (Paris) whose artistic work is getting more and more attention. He showed a masterful surreal bodysuit on a stunningly beautiful French girl as well as an unusual sleeve tattoo that skillfully incorporated some cover-up work. It is no secret that the Belgian tattoo scene has great artistic vision and this was again proven by tattoos from Jef and Kostek of Boucherie Moderne (Brussels) as well as newcomers Loic of Needles' Side or Alex Wuillot (Liège, Belgium). If you were looking for some great old or new school tattoos, the place to be was the large booth that Uncle Allan shared with Electric Pick (Conspiracy Inc., Copenhagen), Igl of Stichtag (Graz, Austria) and American talent Jesse Smith, who specialises in tattoos that are clearly inspired by graffiti art.

Aside from the tattooing, there was plenty on offer at the convention: Satomi's highly erotic bondage show was one highlight as was the expertly hosted auction on Sunday





night. Dats had no problem selling a number of paintings by renowned artists, raising more 1500 Euros for a cancer charity.

Numerous guests and tattooists took the opportunity to extend their stay in the beautiful French Alps. Lots of cheap accommodation in Evian and the proximity to attractive tourist destinations, such as the Mont Blanc area, make a holiday there very tempting. Several tattooists also used the ferry across Lake Geneva to pay a visit to Filip Leu's studio in Lausanne. Loretta Leu actually briefly visited the convention on Saturday, while Filip was busy working in his street shop.

A very French phenomenon at conventions is that Sundays are always the busiest day. At Evian, after a relatively quiet, relaxing Saturday, the aisles were crammed on the second day, with about 4,000 visitors coming through the doors. Unsurprisingly, the Evian convention will be extended to three days in 2009. Keep an eye on Total Tattoo for all the details!





8.



9.

8. uncle allan, conspiracy inc (denmark)
9. mr biz, body seasons authentik (france)
10, 11 & 12. robert hernandez
vittamin tattoo (spain)
13. julian, clockwork needle (france)
14 & 15. dimitri hk, dimitri tatouages
(france)
16. satoru koizumi, one shot tattoo (japan)



10.



11.



12.





17.

17. tommy lee & nate beavers
collaboration



18.

18. vincent, bizarroid (france)

19. florence amblard (france)

20. mikael de poissy

mikael tatouage (france)

21 & 24. berit uhlhorn, tatau obscur

(germany)

22 & 23. nick baxter (usa)



19.



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★ star letter

showtime in scotland

Dear Sally and the Total Tattoo team

This is more of a plea than anything else. A few years ago I went to my first tattoo convention, the Granite City Show in Aberdeen, Scotland. I really enjoyed all aspects of the convention. I got a tattoo done and a piercing. I went to my next convention in Perth, Scotland the following October and continued to go to the Granite City and Perth conventions for the next few years. Each time I went to a show, I got tattooed and I saw and experienced many different aspects of tattooing and the wonderful world of tattoos. I also enjoyed speaking to many different people from many walks of life. I am fairly new to the world of tattoos, although I am now completely hooked, so it was very useful to learn what I should expect from my experiences of getting tattooed. It was also an amazing opportunity to be tattooed by artists from across the country as well as some international tattoo artists. The conventions were always mobbed and usually required a weekend ticket due to the number of people there – one day to book your tattoo slot and the next to be tattooed.

This brings me on to my plea. There are no conventions running in Scotland any more. The Granite City one stopped two years ago and the Halloween one in Perth stopped last year. Scotland is a big place and does have a lot of people wanting tattoos. I am wondering if any artists or studios would like to organise another yearly convention in Scotland. I live in Dundee and there are halls here that are big enough to support a decent-sized convention. I apologise for being naive, but having only ever been to shows I have no idea who organises them or how much effort is involved.

Thanks for your help

Vicky Downie
Dundee

Conventions can be organised by anyone at all, Vicky. Many are put on by tattooists but others – such as both the Aberdeen and Perth shows – are organised by tattoo enthusiasts rather than artists or studios. A lot of work goes into even the smallest show so it takes real dedication to set one up. But let's throw it open to everyone in Scotland and see if another convention will materialise there - Sally

starting from scratch

Dear Total Tattoo

First of all I would like to say how much I enjoy your magazine. It has to be the best tattoo mag available by far. However, having read on numerous occasions how bad 'scratchers' are for the tattoo industry and having just read the article in issue 51 entitled 'You can't get me I'm part of the union', I feel compelled to write and put across a 'scratcher's' point of view.

The first point I would like to make is about the availability of tattoo apprenticeships.

In an ideal world we would all have the chance to learn from a great artist and work in a top studio but unfortunately we don't live in an ideal world. Even if you are lucky enough not to have to work to pay the bills and you have the potential to be the greatest artist ever, there is still no guarantee that a studio will take you on as an apprentice.

How many potentially great tattoo artists have been lost to the world because they couldn't get in with a studio to learn the business? And how many professional artists working today started out as the 'scratchers' they now knock? I would hazard a guess at more than a few.

The second point I wish to make is on the subject of hygiene. I can only talk for myself

here but I treat hygiene as seriously as possible as I have no desire to cause people problems with their ink. My needles are disposed of in a proper sharps container. I use disposable tubes until such time as I am able to afford to purchase an ultra-sonic cleaner and autoclave. All the consumables are new for each tattoo. I do everything I can to avoid cross-contamination.

The next point is on the subject of tattooing under-age people. Again, just because we are not classed as professional doesn't automatically mean we have no scruples and will tattoo anybody as long as they wave the cash under our noses. I myself have turned away people who thought that as I work from home I would ignore the fact that they were only 17.

Then there is the subject of the quality of work. Someone who has learned 'under the wings' of a professional is no more likely to produce faultless work right from the outset than somebody who is self-taught. On a personal level, if I feel I cannot do justice to a piece I would rather turn away the work than do a bad tattoo. Tattooing is a constant learning curve. We should all strive to improve and do better work with each and every tattoo regardless of where we work.

Yes, I am a 'scratcher', that derogatory word.

One day I hope to work in a studio but until that time comes I will continue to work full-time to pay the bills and 'scratch' away in my spare time whilst I learn the trade.

A couple of final thoughts: Maybe all the knocking of 'scratchers' isn't just about sub-standard work. With the popularity of tattoos on the increase and more people wanting to work in the industry, the professionals who aren't exceptional artists are afraid of a little competition.

Instead of trying to discourage new artists and make it harder for people to learn the trade, why not encourage us. If you don't want us to sit at home 'scratching' away, make a professional environment more available so those of us that wish to work in such a fantastic industry have a better opportunity to learn. Maybe there needs to be a national college set up, where those of us who are unable, for whatever reason, to get in with a studio can still have the opportunity to learn under professional guidance. It can only be good for everyone in the long run.

All the best

Mick

By e-mail

stop thief!

Dear Total Tattoo

It has come to my attention that a tattooist has been applying for jobs using other artists' photos and passing them off as their own work. Amongst the artists whose work has been stolen are Louis Molloy and Stu Lambie at Middleton Tattoo Studio, Amanda West at Alzone and Wendy Thomas at Kustom Kulture. This really is a bad idea and I know it is not the first time it's been done by somebody. It is not only unethical but it misleads the shop that needs an artist into thinking that they are getting just the person they need, when in fact they are not. The other person that loses out is the customer. They go to get their tattoo from that shop with the great reputation and may end up less than happy, through no fault of theirs or the tattoo shop.

It will, of course, quickly become apparent that things aren't as they appear but it would be far better if the situation didn't occur in the first place. There's no way that an artist could hold down a job for long with this deception. This leads them to move on and perhaps do the same again and again.

In any other profession (teaching, nursing or engineering for instance), a forged CV would be taken as a very serious problem. I do not believe that it should be any different in our business. It is virtually impossible to police this, so the only way to help each other out is to keep our eyes peeled. And if we see a problem, speak out. Don't let the problem become someone else's, or the vicious cycle will continue.

Name & studio withheld

The Tattooed Fulani Women of Mali

Report & photos by Travellin' Mick

Mali

This West African republic, blessed with a stable and responsible government, is roughly five times the size of Britain, but home to only about 12 million people. The country, which is two thirds desert, is one of the poorest in the world, with less than 20% of its population literate. About 90% are moderate Muslim, with the rest being Christian or Animist. The official language is French, which is only spoken by 10% of all citizens, who belong to more than 30 different ethnicities. The most important tribes are the Bambara (30%), Songhai, Fulani, Malinké, Bobo, Bozo, Dogon, Dioula and Tuareg.

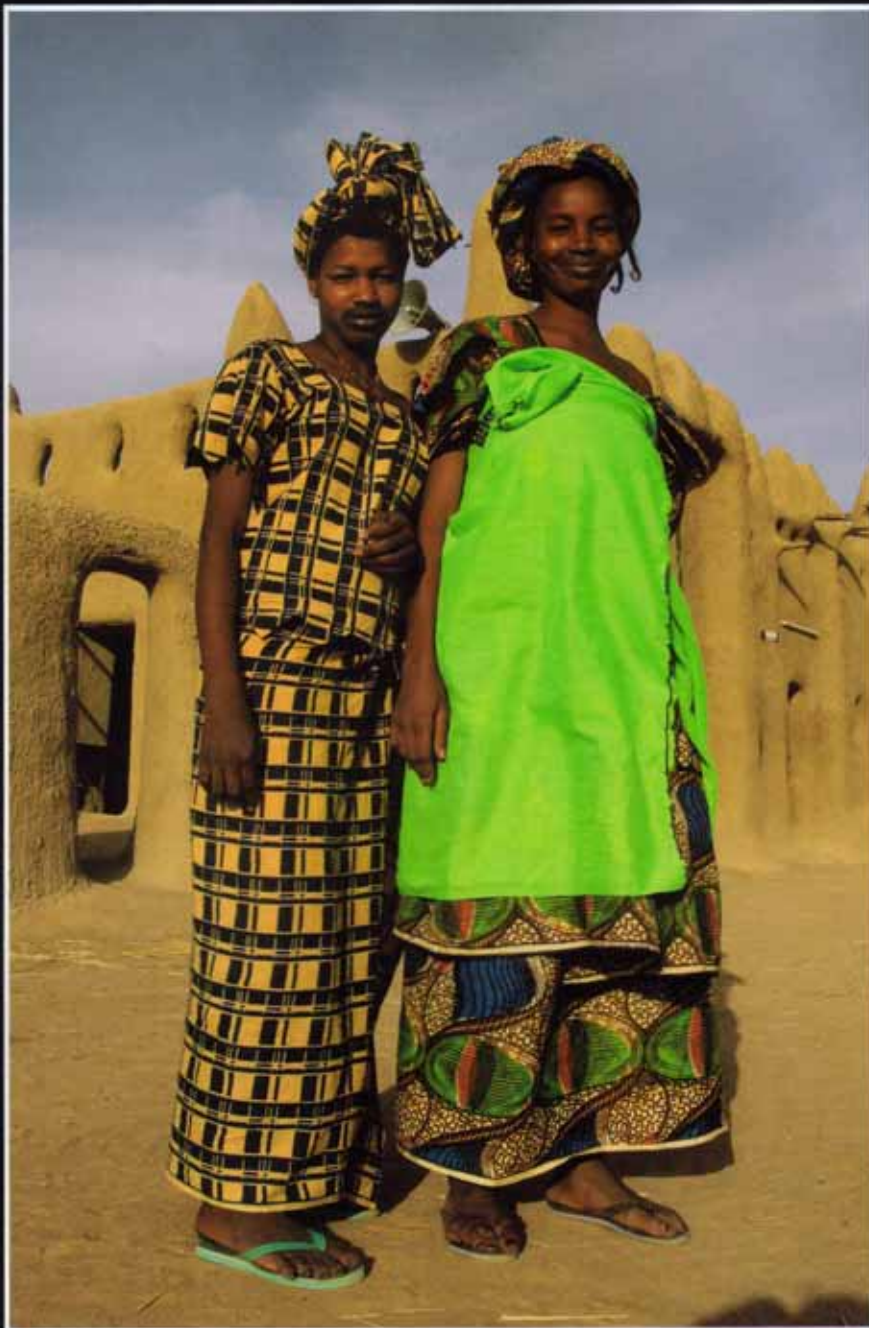
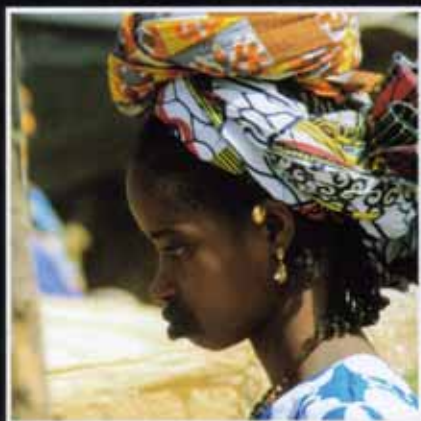
Mali in West Africa is home to the Fulani people, whose strong women are keeping alive their tribe's tattoo traditions in a constantly changing region of the world. Travellin' Mick went to Mali to meet and talk with these former nomads about their way of life and their tattoos.

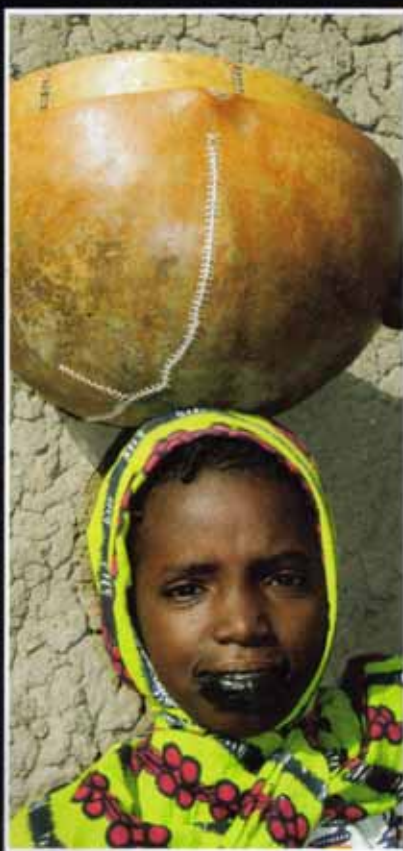
The old city of Djenné – a UNESCO cultural heritage site – forms an impressive backdrop to the weekly market. It looks like a scene from 1001 Nights! At first glance one would never think this was Mali, one of the poorest countries on earth. In front of Djenné's mosque, the largest – and arguably most beautiful – clay structure in the world, colourfully-clad, beautiful, dark-skinned women strut through the congested market area. Wares from all over West Africa are on offer, a sensory overload of colours and scents. Statuesque women, dressed in their Sunday best and decorated with plenty of gold, argue noisily about grain prices, happily spread gossip about friend and foe, buy perishables for the coming week, while some breastfeed their offspring in the middle of the bustling crowds.



These are hard working women. The men of the Fulani tribe, the main ethnic group in the Sahel region of Mali, don't often bother with the indignity of the daily chores. Traditionally they looked after the sacred cattle herds which had to be led to fertile lands hundreds of miles away (in their creation myth, the cow was on earth before humans), but these times are past for most Fulani now. Drought, local feuds and quarrels about rare grazing lands have forced them to become toroobe, the so-called 'town Fulani'.

Since a catastrophic drought in 1973, thousands had to settle in the towns and, since there is nothing much for the men to do now, they do virtually nothing, except spending all day drinking tea, or – increasingly – beer. The struggle for survival for their extended families has been left mainly to the women. They raise the children, find an income, fetch water and firewood, go to the market, cook... Somehow, these strong women manage all of this and look glamorous at the same time!





Mick's driver & guide

Even more than their beloved gold jewellery, the Fulani women treasure the *socou-gol*, the traditional tattoos decorating their lips. Many Western visitors don't realise that the dark lines around their mouths aren't make-up, but are permanently tattooed. The Fulani are immensely proud of their body art. If asked politely and respectfully, they will happily pose for photographs without standing to attention as so often happens when taking portraits of tribal people. Some even pose for images in an almost professional manner, although always with a touch of shyness.

To find out more about their tattoos, my guide and my driver (both Fulani men themselves) are taking me to the villages of these former nomads. Just a few miles outside Djenné, in the Niger inland delta, lies Sènoussa, a large area that was given to the Fulani at the time of their worst plight. Now there is a picturesque, largely subsistent village there and its charismatic chief Hamadi Mama Cissé is pleased to welcome visitors. Without much ado, this hospitable and friendly man leads us to meet Aissa Kayenta, the local tattooist.



The Fulani

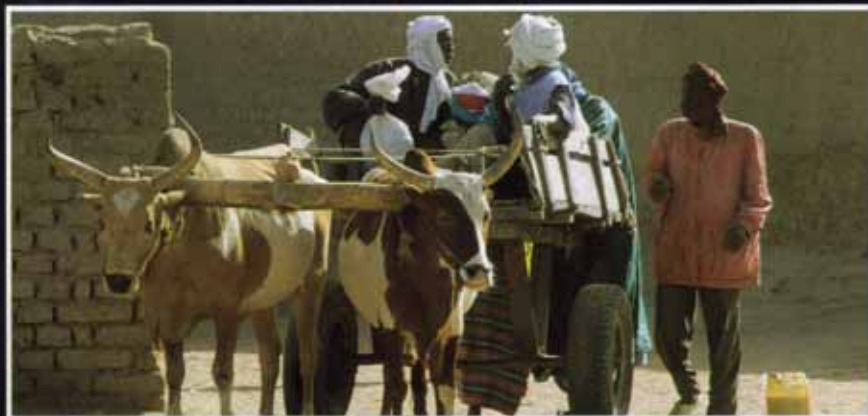
The Fulani tribe numbers between seven and ten million, scattered over the entire Sahel region between Senegal and Sudan. It is unclear where they originated, with some linguists claiming them to be related to the Senegalese Wolof. Others, along with most of the Fulani themselves, insist that they came from Ethiopia or even Egypt. Indeed there are some physical and cultural similarities to the Ethiopian Amhars (with whom they share the gum tattoos). Fulfulde, the Fulani language, even has some apparent parallels with Ancient Egyptian and is said to be one of the most complex tongues of the world. Originally all Fulani were nomads (*bororo*), while nowadays a large proportion is forced to settle down as *toroobe* (town Fulani).





While we are walking to see her, the children of the village are cheerily chanting their mantra of "Ca va!" and "Bonjour!" without immediately demanding sweets or pens or both as so often happens. In between the clay houses we meet numerous Fulani ladies and girls, all of whom were tattooed when they reached the age of around twelve. One girl actually had endured the procedure about a week before our visit. Painful? I ask. Sure, she says, but, being a proud Fulani, she would have never considered not doing it. Her tribe would never have allowed her to be the odd one out. On the contrary, she looked forward to it and saved the 1000 CFA (about one pound) to get the *socou-gol* by the *throdi*, the female tattooist, on market day.

The Mali government is clever enough not to meddle too much with the traditions of the numerous ethnic groups of the country. When I ask the chief if there is an official ban on tattooing (as in other countries of the region) he laughs out loud: "We are Fulani and do as our customs demand. Our highest goal is to be proud, brave and honest!"



In days gone by, only the lower lip and gum were tattooed at puberty, while the upper lip had to wait until the girl was married (usually to a cousin) as a visible sign of being in matrimony. This is one tradition that has changed however. Now teenagers frequently have the full tattoo, often in addition to small scars on their temples or cheeks, medicinal markings which underline the grace and elegance of the beautiful Fulani girls.

When we arrive at her house, the *throdi* Aissa Kayenta has already taken her spot in the courtyard, where she sees her customers. Today her younger sister is getting a touch-up on her gums. The Fulani want neat, clean tattoos without any scarring and Aissa is taking her time with the five needles in order to get the tattoo as dark as possible. One lower lip will take her almost two hours, she says, for a good result. The pigment is made of crushed charcoal mixed with shea butter, which comes from the Karité tree. (The soothing properties of this substance mean that it has even found its way into the Western cosmetics industry.) The *throdi* murmurs magic spells during the tattooing, secrets passed down to her through generations of this tattooing family. And, at a certain point in the future, Aissa will pass on the knowledge of the Fulani tattoos to her own daughter, for her to continue the tradition of the *socou-gol*.



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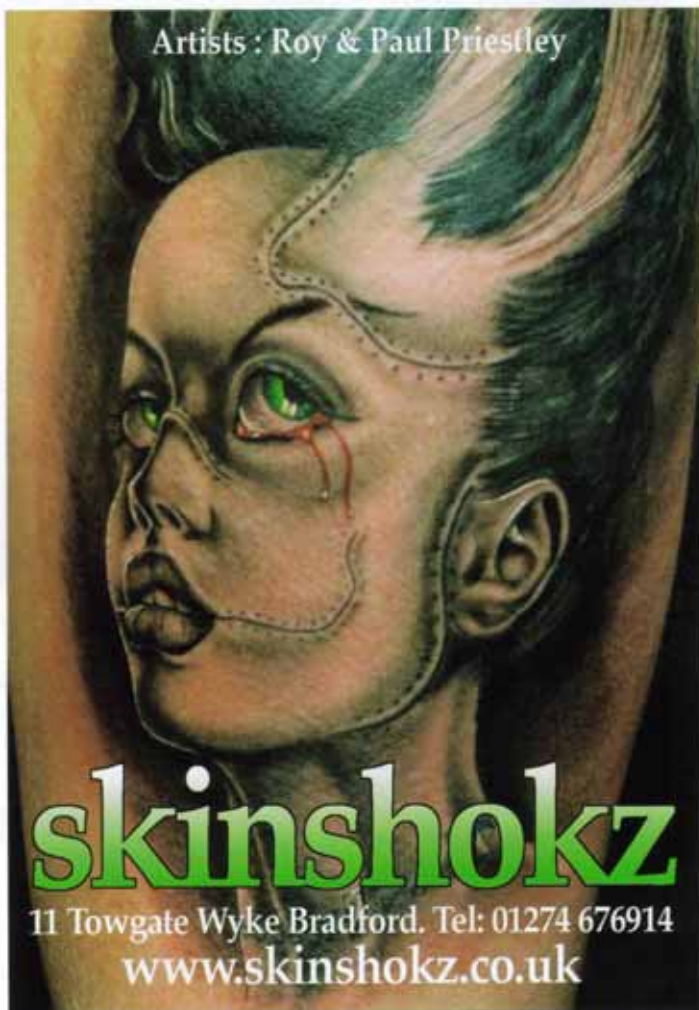
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1. organisers horitaka (left) & roman (right)
2. chris trevino, perfection tattoo
3. how low can you go?

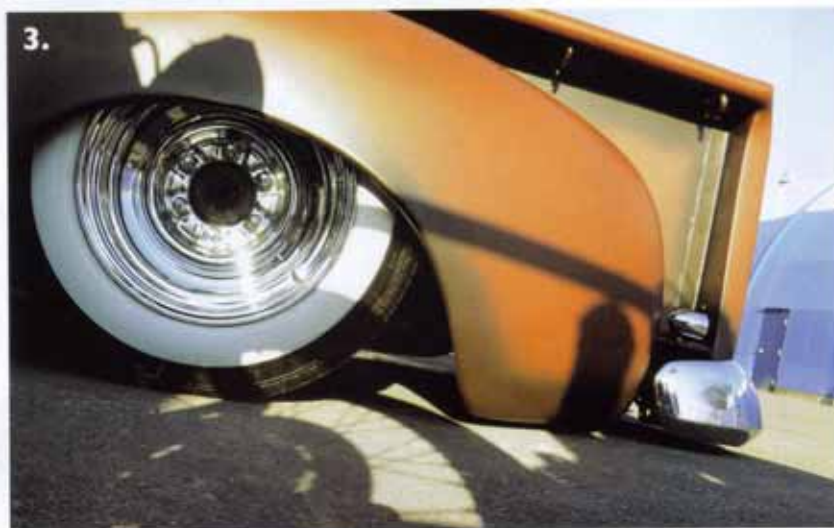


convention of the tattoo arts

Report & Photos by Mattie John Bamman

From the outside **A Convention of the Tattoo Arts, otherwise known as the San Jose Tattoo Convention, looks much like any other tattoo show.** Several bouncers in black hulk near the entrance frisking patrons. Passers-by try to catch a glimpse of what's going on inside but see nothing besides these men and several souped-up Harleys. When I approached, the bouncers asked, "You got any knives or guns?" Thankfully, I did not. But behind this tough exterior, the San Jose Tattoo Convention was like a family reunion, only a lot more fun. In fact, the bouncers offered their time for free, and when I asked them why, David Derosa answered with a smile, "I've known Roman since he was this tall," placing his hand at his knee.

Roman and Horitaka are tattooists at State of Grace Tattoo in San Jose and have organised the San Jose Tattoo Convention for four years now. This year's convention took place a few days before Halloween and ghoulishness was in the air. Tattoo Mania offered eyeball candy beside a severed arm at their booth, and 17 original paintings from the 36 Ghosts series by Japanese tattoo legend Horiyoshi III hung at the center of the convention. ➔



- 4. eric by rob struven, garage ink
- 5. brenda by christine nelson
- 6. a painting by horiyoshi III from his book 36 ghosts
- 7. skateboards designed by chris trevino
- 8. may by matt shamah analog tattoo
- 9. ashley by chad koeplinger tattoo paradise



➡ After introducing myself to tattooists like Bugs, Aaron Bell and Rob Struven, who I'd only read about in books and magazines, I looked around and found that the attendance was on the small side. Grumbles about the poor economy arose here and there but they were almost completely hidden by the loud buzz of needles: Most booths had at least one tattooist hard at work at all times. In the end the convention attendance was comparable with the previous year, a feat most tattooists attributed to their dedicated clientele. A room full of world-class artists didn't hurt either. Attendees could get tattooed by Japanese and Danish tattooists without having to leave San Jose. For some, like Henry Lee, it was a chance to finish a tattoo that'd already been started years ago. "It's all Bugs," he said, referring to the Picasso-esque work of the LA tattooist. Some of the world-class tattoo shops in attendance included Three Tides, Analog Tattoo, 7th Son, Slave to the Needle, Idle Hand, Black Heart Tattoo, Diamond Club, Modern Electric Studio, Skull and Sword and Staircase Tattoo. As Chuy, of Tiger Rose Tattoo, ruminated: "It's overwhelming. Everywhere you look there are great tattooists."

The nice thing about such a moderate turnout was that artists were more accessible, and lively conversation abounded. Attendees didn't have to fight massive crowds to speak with their tattoo idols. The friendly convention showcased the artistry of tattoo culture, thanks to Horitaka's scholarly devotion to the subject. Horitaka, who was trained by Horiyoshi III, flew several Japanese tattooists to the event. The crowd gathered to watch as the modern master Shige tattooed a complete outline for a traditional Japanese body suit and Horiken, who tattoos out of Yokohama, Japan, demonstrated the tebori, or hand-tattooing, technique.



With tattooists known for their painting as much as their tattoos, including Grime and Horitomo, who performed live painting on Saturday and Sunday, the weekend was a visual playground. Shops like 12 Monkeys, featuring paintings by Jon Highland, flooded the event with original artworks. And the art didn't stop at paper: Victor Macias of True Love Tattoo designs shoes, Chris Trevino, aka Horimana, of Perfection Tattoo drew Japanese demons on skateboards, and Kosuke Yamagishi, director of The Softmachine, brought a beautifully hand-carved guitar case depicting elaborate dragons in gold leafing.

How is it that the San Jose Tattoo Convention garners the ultimate tattooists from around the world? Horitaka and Roman hand-pick every tattooist, snuffing out any suggestion that this convention has gone corporate. Horitaka explained his approach: "Whenever I interview old timers and we talk about the early conventions, they always say it's more about sharing ideas and talking than about making money." At the San Jose





➔ Tattoo Convention, the fine art of tattooing is still in the artists' hands, right alongside their buzzing needles.

The term "artists' convention" gets thrown around a lot, but it wasn't until the San Jose Tattoo Convention that I got a clear concept of what it means. For one thing, it is the philosophy of the convention to treat every artist in attendance equally, and the shop posters that hung from the ceiling and walls featured every shop on the bill, not only the best known shops. As I spoke with more and more tattooists, it became clear that they truly love this convention. Suzanna Shifflett of Modern Electric Tattoo commented, "You don't usually have people coming around to see if you need anything. Here, they pick up our trash twice a day." Sandwiches and coffee are also provided for artists in the morning.

Horitaka, who used a skateboard to navigate the large hall, was constantly on the prowl. ➔

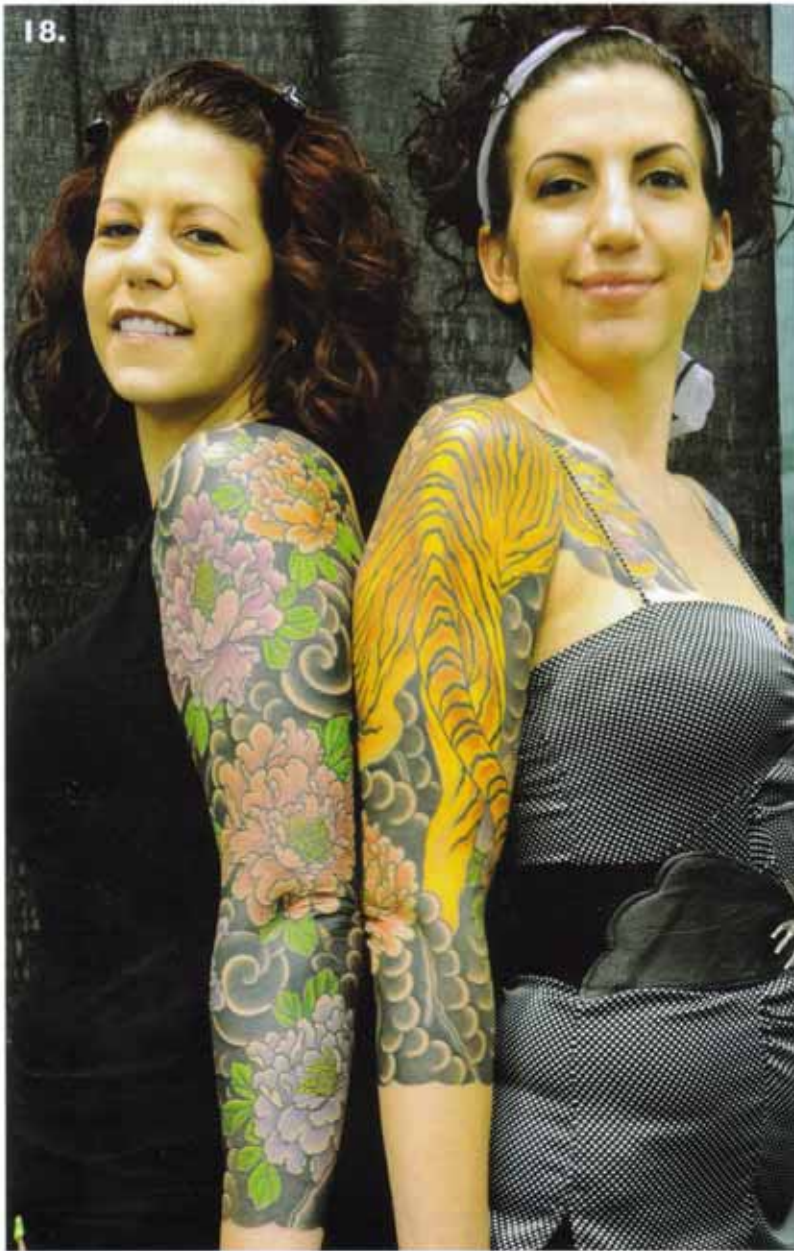


10, 11, 12. don by roxx
13. three paintings by horiyoshi III
from his book 36 ghosts
14. dave by grez, kings avenue tattoo

15. chad by marcus kuhn
just good tattoos
16. competition judging
17. matt beggs by tex, authentic tattoo



18.



18. cindy & nicki by dana helmuth
new york adorned
19. guitar case by kosuke yamagishi
20. the convention hall

19.



back to the community," he said, including the greater San Jose community in his scope, "and you can see it by how many people are here – we have cops and we have bikers." And the community clearly wanted to give back to them, with bouncers like Derosa donating three days of hard work and companies donating tattoo machines to be awarded to the winners of the 'Best of the Day' competitions.

At the end of each day, the after-parties ignited – whether at The Blank Club with Duane Peters rockin' the stage or at one of the room parties at the Marriott Hotel, located just a block from the convention. Of course, alcohol is not everyone's cup of tea. Marcus Kuhn, for example, preferred to wake up early each morning and watch the sunrise from the hotel's sauna.

Horitaka and Roman worked hard to make sure that everyone had a good time, and I think the familial atmosphere made everyone feel welcome. The family reunion wasn't exclusive. All you had to do was show up, and you got to hang out with a roomful of talented relatives you didn't even know you had.

20



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“

*A tattoo should be personal
and never repeated*

”



Interview by Doralba Picerno
Photos by Doralba Picerno & Robert Hernandez



Robert Hernandez

VITAMIN TATTOO



There are not many tattoo artists in the world who could be described as truly influential, who start a trend – a genre even – and whose style becomes established in its own right. I can think of a few, Bugs, Paul Booth, Joe Capobianco, Xed LeHead for example, whose work is not only instantly identifiable, but also widely copied and imitated, but it is a very select club indeed. Another example is Robert Hernandez, who was born in Poland into a family with a Spanish background, but who is now based in Madrid, Spain, at his studio Vitamin Tattoo.

Like the artists I mentioned earlier, he is frequently the tattooist of choice for other artists, which is quite telling. His hyper-real blend of brush-like tattoo work, the vividness and intensity of his colours and the translucent quality of his black and grey work transcend the limitations of tattoo realism. You might think a tattooist of Robert's calibre and reputation would be impossible to pin down for an appointment but this is not the case. Refreshingly, it is possible to get a session with him relatively easily, as he refuses to book himself up months in advance.





➤ Total Tattoo: You opened your studio, Vittamin Tattoo, a few years ago after working for other people. How do you find it, flying solo?

Robert Hernandez: I had spent seven happy years at Mao & Cathy's, which was more like a family, but I knew when it was time to move on and do something new. The biggest change was being my own boss. The success of your shop depends on how much you are able to adapt to the demands of your clients. It's a very different atmosphere to many studios. Most of the time I work alone in the shop, so there is no interaction with other artists. I do miss that, naturally, but it also means that it's quiet and relaxing. The transition from a large studio to a smaller one was smooth and it worked out fine. At first I did not think beyond working on my own, but perhaps in the future I'll make space for someone else or open another studio.

TT: You get to interact with your fellow artists at tattoo conventions, of course.

RH: Of course. Conventions are a great opportunity to catch up with them and you get that feeling of anarchy and fun from working together. For me, conventions are a big part of the tattoo world. It's the travelling, meeting new people, having new experiences. I especially enjoy travelling to new places. Going to conventions requires a lot of re-organizing for me, because I have to close the shop. Maybe in the future that will change. I am trying to find a solution!





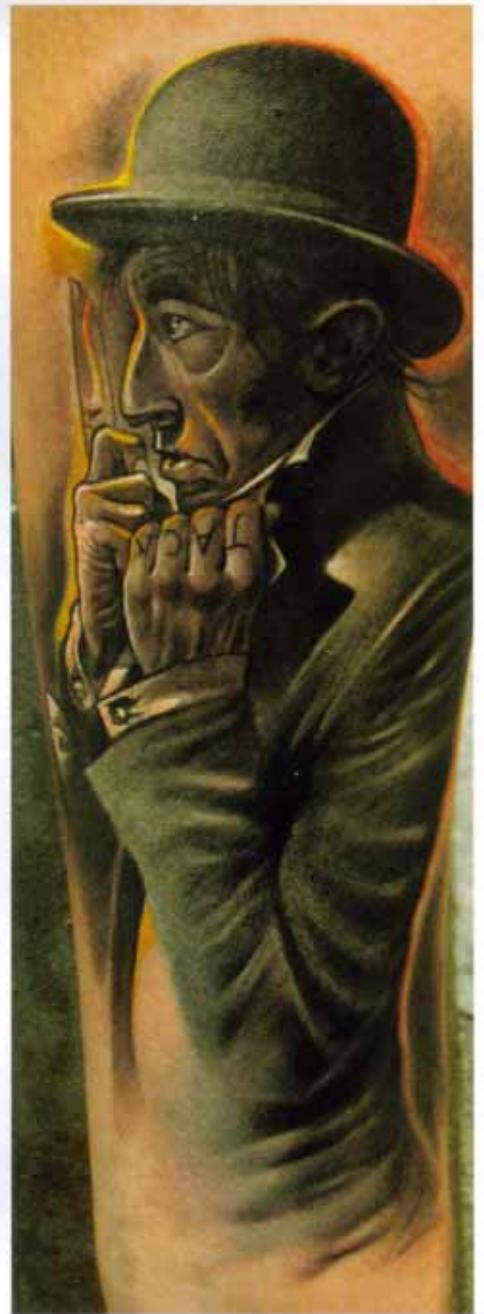
TT: Did you get into tattooing when you moved to Madrid?

RH: I moved from Poland in 1988. I went Mao's studio with a bunch of drawings and he offered me a job drawing flash. After two months I started tattooing. And that's it! Being in the shop was great. I got to learn by watching guest artists like Bébert. I had never seen realistic tattoo work before. Now it's popular, but it wasn't back then. There was no internet, remember, so I had only seen other people's work in American tattoo magazines.

TT: You have an amazing reputation and your work is often imitated. Does that bother you or do you find it flattering?

RH: I don't have a problem with people being 'inspired' by the work I do. A lot of people look at what you do and take it as a starting point. They might take certain elements from it and that's fine. It's preferable to them doing an exact copy of a tattoo you have done. Every artist should try to find a style of their own.







TT: I see a lot of tattoos nowadays in which your style has been mimicked very faithfully.

RH: It's up to the people who get tattooed – and the artists. If all they do is take it as inspiration, it's OK. Of course, a copy is always a copy. The tattooist should be more ethical about it and the client should demand a unique piece. A tattoo should be personal and never repeated.

TT: Is there any subject matter you would refuse to tattoo?

RH: I have done everything. When you start out you have to be humble and do whatever you're asked to do. When I was first at Mao's I did tribal and all sorts. Now I prefer to stick to my own style of realism. Having said that, I do enjoy using different techniques within my style. For instance I like doing line work which is very sketch-like, as if I was only using a pencil.

TT: The way in which you tattoo reminds me of brushstrokes and your work has very strong painterly qualities and but is not like a painting, if that makes sense.

RH: To be honest I miss painting a lot. Over the last five or six years I have concentrated more on the tattoo side but recently I started work on my first acrylic painting in six years, maybe even longer. It always depends on how busy I am, how much time I've got. Perhaps the solution is to take a vacation and have two or three weeks just for painting. I need to find a better balance between tattooing and other visual forms, painting or whatever.

TT: Do you think that having a very distinctive style can be a little limiting? Does it still leave you room for experimentation?

RH: It largely depends on your clientele. Obviously if you get a customer who comes with a picture of a geisha you did three years ago and wants something like that, it does not leave a lot of room for progression. In that way it can be limiting. This takes us back





to the question of people who want copies of someone else's work. You need to be given the freedom to put something new into it.

TT: It strikes me that much of your work is on the smaller side and doesn't cover large areas of skin. Do you get asked for large pieces?

RH: I mostly get asked for realist portraits and the size people want them is usually 'medium', not too small, not too big. But I have done about eight or ten complete backpieces in 15 years.

TT: If a client wants several smaller pieces is it hard for you to fit them together?

RH: To be honest, I am open to all ideas and suggestions. I enjoy small pieces and larger ones equally. Again, it depends on the customers. Of course, it would be great to work on a bodysuit but you have to be realistic. A lot of clients cannot do follow-up sessions regularly. I have clients who visit me once a year, as well as those who can come every two weeks.







TT: How booked up do you get?

RH: I try not to overbook myself too much. I travel a lot, I do tattoo conventions and having a fully booked diary a year in advance does not interest me. It's stressful to work that way and you just don't know what might happen.

TT: Your work is highly respected in the industry and many artists have your work on them. Whose work do you find inspiring?

RH: Well, I am bad with names, but when I travel to conventions I am constantly discovering artists whose work is incredible and that's always nice.

TT: A lot of excellent artists are under the radar because unless they go to a convention or get their work published in a magazine the wider public does not know who they are or what they do.

RH: There are a lot of excellent artists in Eastern Europe. A lot of new names are beginning to come out of Poland and the Czech Republic and their work is really impressive.

TT: Tattooing is very trendy and very present in everyday media. Has your clientele changed over the years because of this?

RH: You definitely get more girls and their tattoos are bigger and more visible: necks, chest, sleeves. The age of clients is getting younger too.

TT: Do you think some people rush into getting a lot of tattoo coverage?

RH: Well, look at me: I still have a sleeve which is almost empty and I am nearly 40! I would like to get some work on it. Deciding which artists is difficult. There are artists I love like Shige, Guy Aitchison, Aaron Cain, Filip, but then I travel and work a lot so it's hard to find the time...

Robert's websites:

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Tattoo fans have had to cope without the much-loved Barcelona Tattoo Convention for three long years now so the long-awaited follow-up to the Catalan expo was bound to be a success. Also in Spain, the Madrid convention has been off the map for a few years too. This has left people wondering what happened to stop two of the most successful shows, not only in Spain but in the whole of Europe, in their tracks. Unsurprisingly, it has very little to do with tattoos and a lot to do with new legislation and local bureaucracy.

Essentially, the organisers were presented with a practical problem: how do you set up a three-day event where every single booth has to be equipped with running water (taps, basin, the lot) and surrounded by a glass screen? The plumbing provided the biggest headache, as most of the booths at previous Barcelona shows only had basic sanitary provisions, with any washing and sterilizing taking place elsewhere on the premises. After years of wrangling and trying to sort the problems out, a venue was eventually found which provided both the requisite plumbing and glass dividers, without making the artists feel like monkeys at the zoo. I know that a lot of tattoo shows have glass walls but it can be a little claustrophobic for the artists if they are working in a particularly small space.

To remedy all the issues, the new and revamped Barcelona Tattoo Convention was held in a convention centre on the outskirts of the city. The new venue is not as conveniently located as the ones used in previous years but this won't really be an issue as there are excellent public transport links on its doorstep, with both mainline trains and the underground stopping nearby. There are also lots of places to eat, drink and shop, should you want to take a breather from the convention for a little while. Another big difference is the 

barcelona tattoo convention

Report & Photos by Doralba Picerno

1. marc by virginal tattoo (germany)
2. expo venue





- 3 & 4. monica by junior ink (poland)
5. beautiful barcelona
6. monica by junior ink (poland)
7. benoit by marc riedmann (germany)
8. daniel by mauro gentile (argentina)



7.

➔ absence of smoking on the premises. It may be because the venue is much bigger or perhaps smokers were going outside to have a ciggie, but the air inside the convention seemed a lot cleaner and fresher than in previous years.

So, what can I tell you about the show itself? Many international artists were pleased to be back in Barcelona. The show was scheduled for the week following the London Tattoo Convention which ensured that quite a few big international names were in Europe and could participate in both events. There was obviously a large Spanish contingent too. All the artists were working in one huge room. Among the international names at work were Bad Bones (Portugal), Black and Gold (Japan), Dimitri Tatouage and the Belfort Tattoo Family (France), Pittan Tattoo Family (Italy), Xed LeHead, (England), Shad (Belgium), Tahiti Tatau, Jack Ribeiro (France), Liorcifer (USA), Mystery Touch (Austria), Jo Harrison (England), Milosch (Czech Republic), Mana Tahiti Tatau (Polynesia), Miguel Ramos (Peru), Junior Ink (Poland) as well as several Spanish studios like LTV, Trimur, Robert Hernandez's Vittamin Tattoo, Laura Juan, Mo'o, Tattoo Lucio and many, many more.

I can't really find fault with the new version of this popular show, but if I had to suggest a change it would be with the entertainment and the tattoo contest: both of them started quite late in the day, even on the Sunday, and many visitors missed them. They were both great fun to watch, so perhaps moving them forward to a little earlier might make for an even more enjoyable day for both audience and tattoo artists.

All in all, this was a great welcome back to a popular and well-attended show. Let's hope Madrid now follows suit!



8.

9.



10.



11.



12.



- 9. ramon by victor portugal (tenerife)
- 10. yurena by javier rodriguez Itw (spain)
- 11. jose by jorge riera (spain)
- 12. nazareno by xed lehead blue fire tattoo
- 13. sergio by gonzala stress tattoo (spain)
- 14. alex by jorge teran trimur tattoo (spain)
- 15. demetrio by wolf tattoo (spain)
- 16. ramon (colour arm) by david roque, caution tattoo (spain)
- (b/w arm) by victor portugal (tenerife)



17.



17. ugo by olivier, glamort tattoo (canada)

18. luuk by joako, human fly tattoo (spain)

19. albano by jondix, Itw (spain)

20. isobel varley the world's most tattooed senior cizezen

18.

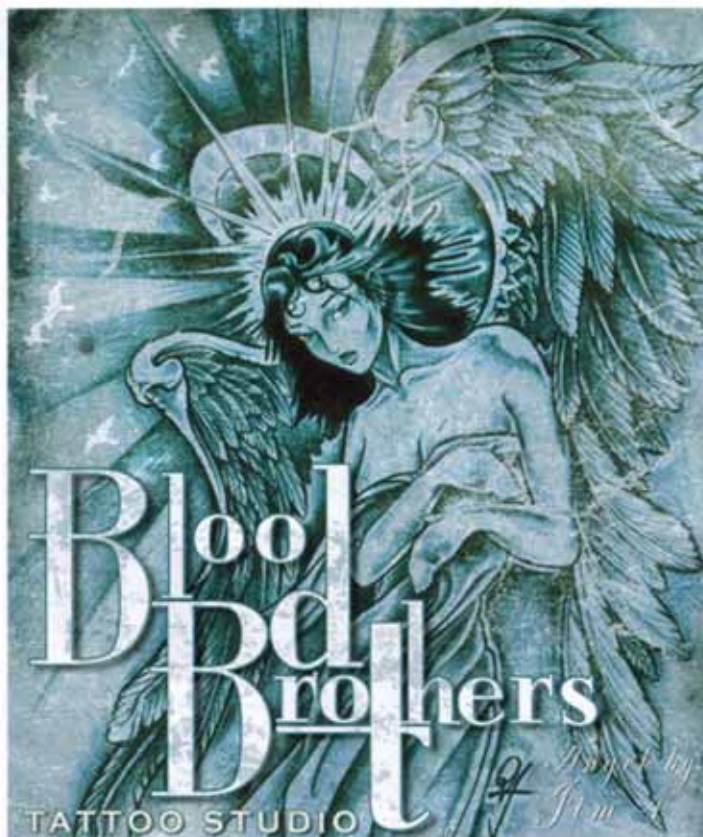


19.



20.





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gallery | issue 53

Inspirational tattoos from around the world
Artists are in the UK unless stated otherwise



1. chris black, electric expressions (usa)
2. steve byrne, in name and blood
3. ray johnson, immortal ink
4. jj, blood brothers
5. tutti, self sacrifice
6. miss nico, all style tattoo (germany)



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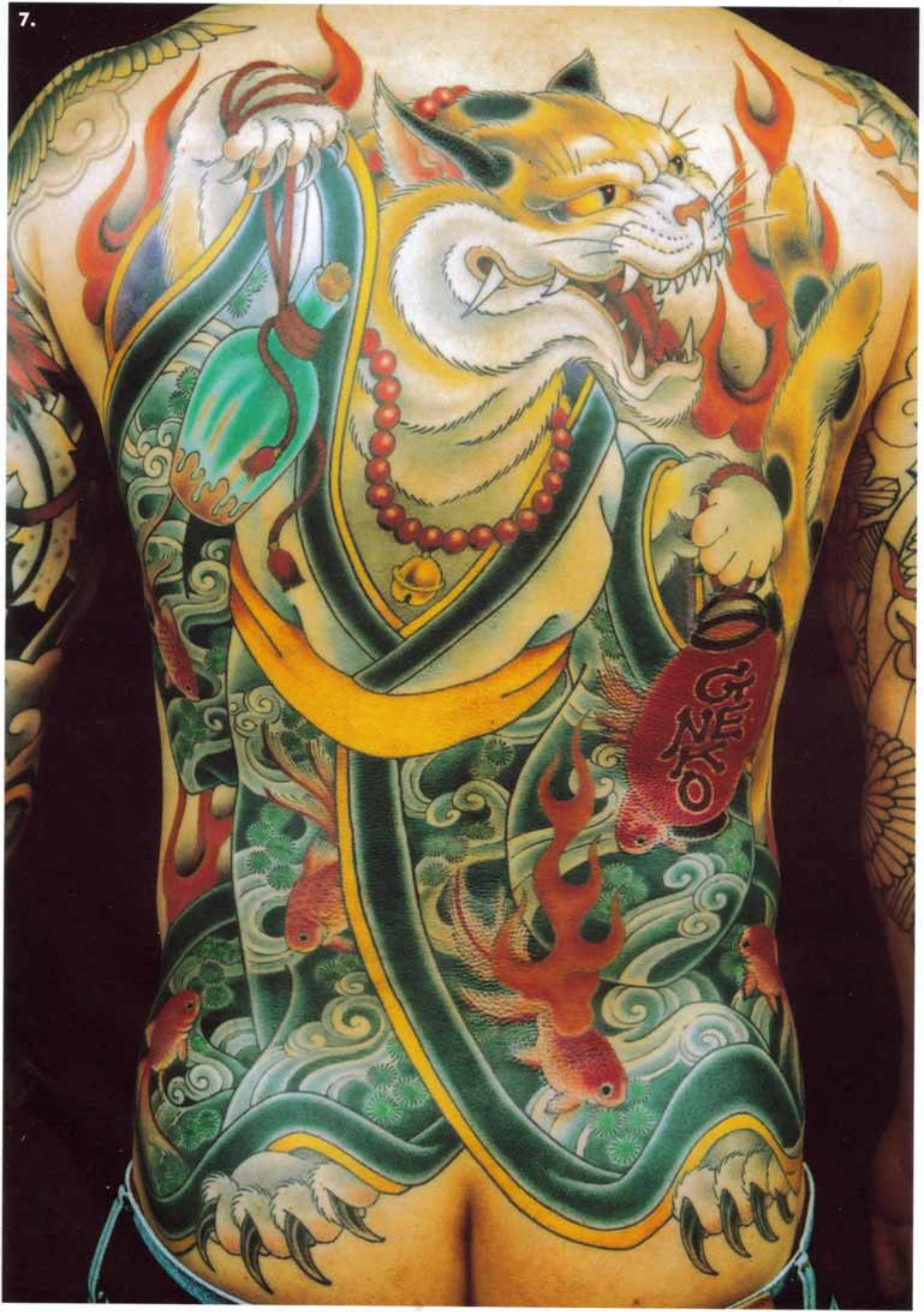
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7. genko, genko tattoo (japan)
8 & 9. jon, sacred heart
10. ivana, kaleidoscope tattoo (australia)
11. cilla, original skin



12.



13.



14.

- 12 & 13. dave bryant
evil from the needle
- 14. valerie vargas, frith street tattoo
- 15. aaron hewitt, cult classic tattoo
- 16. richie clarke, memento mori
- 17. kurt wiscombe,
tattoos for the individual (canada)
- 18. dave ayres, skin deep tattoo



15.

16.



17.



18.



19.



- 19. mike rubendall,
kings avenue tattoo (usa)
- 20. clean fun tattoo (poland)
- 21. luca ortis, new wave tattoo
- 22. leah, spear tattoo
- 23. karena, i hate tattoos

20.



21.



22.



23.



24.



25.



24. jimmy mackay
richard's tattoo studio
25. kamil, kamil tattoo
26 & 27. mark bailey
golden dragon tattoo
28 & 29. pontus, alternative art (sweden)
30. steve prizeman, eternal art tattoo

26.



27.



28.



29.



30.



31.



32.



33.



31. ade, nine tattoo
 32. woody, woody's tattoo studio
 33. darren stares, unique tattoo
 34. michael rose, michael rose tattoos
 35. matt hunt, modern body art

34.



35.



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