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WIN TICKETS
TO THE TATTOO TEA PARTY
AND SCOTTISH CONVENTION

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PALUMBO**
GROUNDBREAKING PUNK TATTOOS

**MARKUS
LENHARD**
ART AND SCIENCE COLLIDE
IN BIOMECHANICAL HEAVEN

MIRCO CAMPIONI
OILS AND INK FROM THIS OUTSTANDING YOUNG TALENT

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TATTOOING OUTSIDE THE LAW

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CRACK THE HIDDEN CODE
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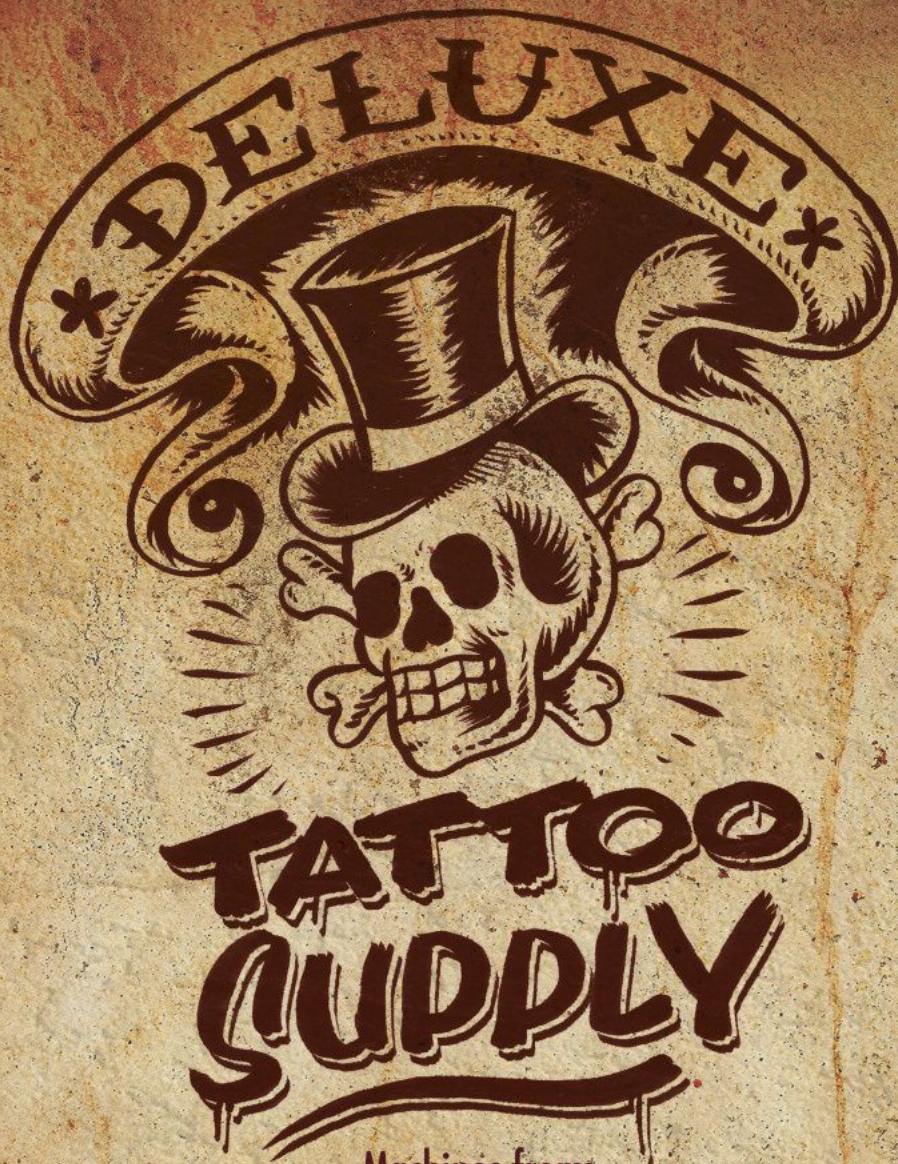
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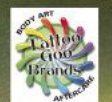
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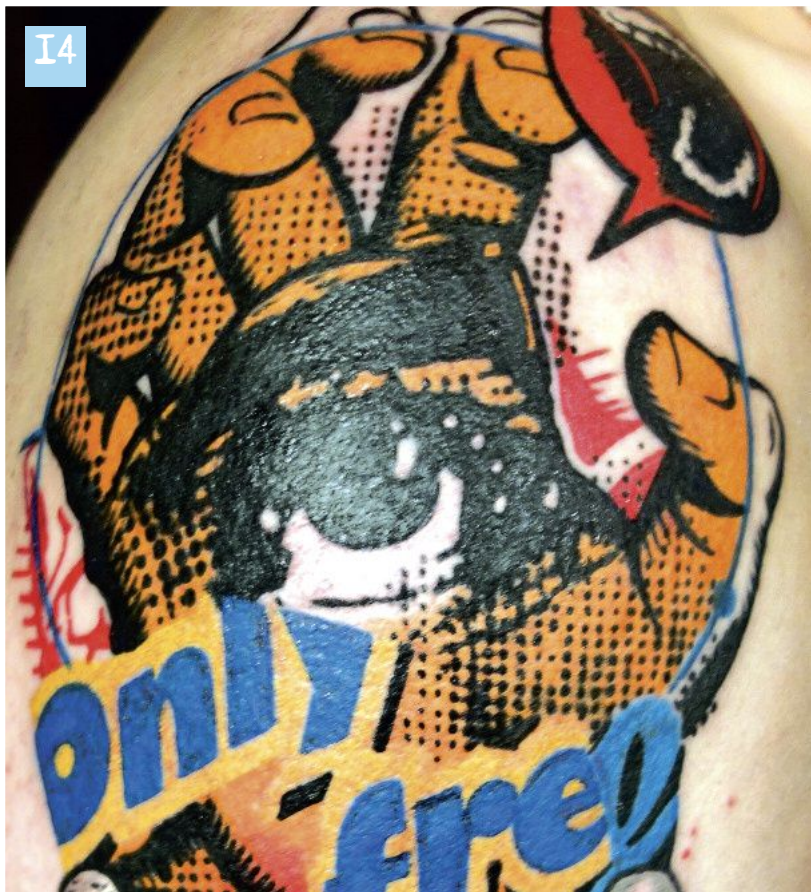
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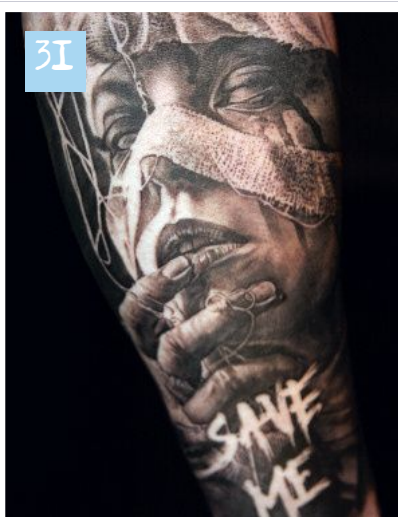
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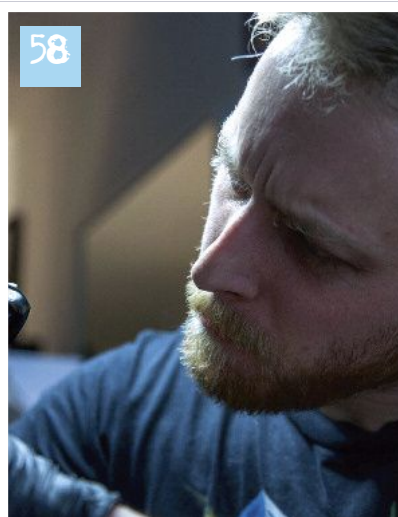
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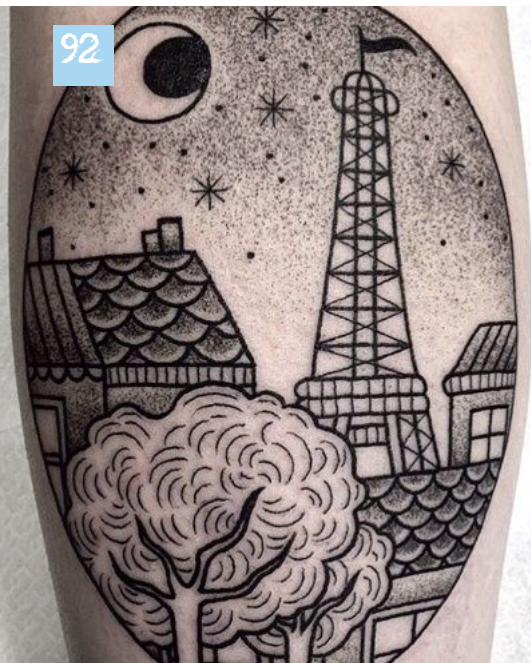
58

WELCOME TO ISSUE 160

78



92



40



- 7 WELCOME TO ISSUE 160**
Perry ponders tattoo ownership
- 8 NEWS & REVIEWS**
All the news that's fit to print
- 14 JEF PALUMBO**
'Dada-banana' tattooing from a founding member of La Boucherie Moderne
- 24 TOKYO KNIGHTS**
Lal Hardy and the Knights of the Round Shader in the Land of the Rising Sun
- 31 BRUSSELS INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION**
The biggest and best Brussels convention yet!
- 40 COVER MODEL PROFILE**
Cervena Fox, who loves to play with fire - and ink too!
- 47 GALLERY**
A fine selection of international tattoo treats
- 58 MARKUS LENHARD**
Biomech tattooing at a deeply emotional level
- 66 EAST COAST TATTOO CONVENTION**
A gangster-themed holiday park extravaganza

- 70 MIRCO CAMPIONI**
Graphic tattoos and a disturbing culture clash in painting and sculpture
- 78 FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE NEEDLE**
Alex Hennerley tattoos Gary with an enigmatic codes-and-ciphers design
- 82 STUDIO DIRECTORY**
All the best studios in one easy-to-use list
- 84 PITTA KKM**
Searching for the young Seoul rebel!
- 92 PORTFOLIOS**
Valeria Marinaci, Higgins & Co
Jamie Allan, Forevermore tattoo
- 96 TAKING UP SPACE**
Harriet Heath, our inspirational new columnist, on images of women in tattoos
- 98 CONVENTION CALENDAR**
Get out and about

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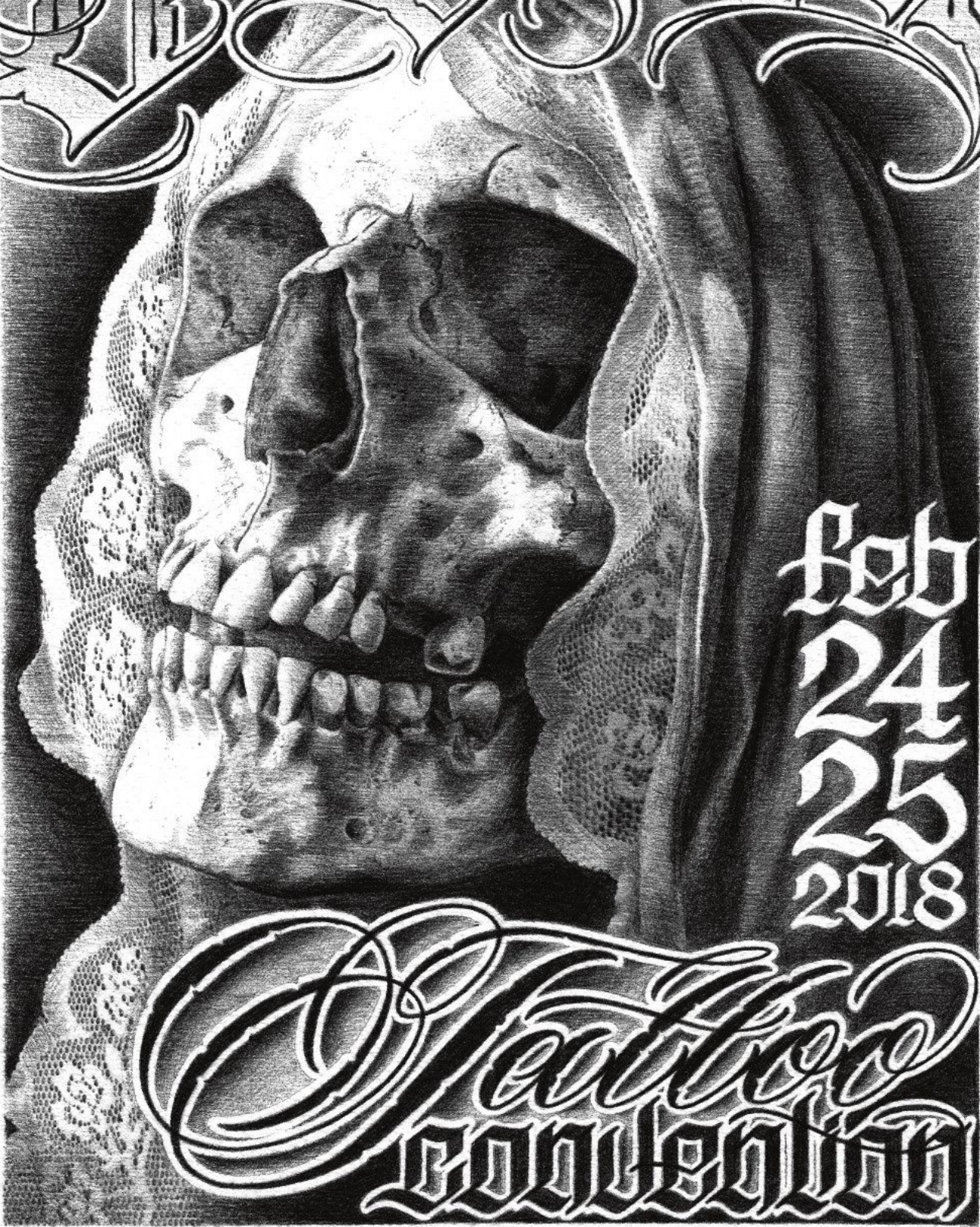
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WELCOME to 160

Have you heard the one about the monkey, a selfie and a court case? No, I'm not using leftover Christmas cracker jokes to introduce my editorial. In case you don't have a clue what I'm talking about, let me explain...

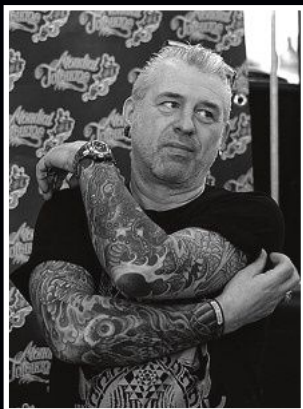
In 2011, photographer David Slater was on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi when a rare monkey picked up his camera and took a selfie. The image went viral – proving that with the right filters, even apes can take self-portraits. However, the animal rights group PETA stepped in and sued Slater 'on behalf' of the monkey, claiming that the image belonged to the animal who took the picture. After a two-year court case and a lot of hoo-ha, it was finally ruled that the monkey was ineligible to hold copyright over the image, and David Slater won the legal battle.

When I first read about this incident I was bemused, amused and unsettled. The whole thing was borderline farcical! But it did make me think about ownership – in terms of copyright and tattoos.

The subject of ownership in tattoos and tattooing is vast, with more grey areas than my head. And we've talked about it in these pages before, in connection with issues such as ripping off designs and replicating them in portraits or video games. One thing that particularly interests me is the concept of who owns the tattoo once it's finished – the artist or the client? And furthermore, do artists have the right to be offended if their client chooses to alter their tattoo in any way?

The thing that got me thinking about this recently was the current rise in blacking out and blasting over. I've heard of instances where tattooists have been so upset when their clients (or perhaps ex-clients?) have had cover-ups done, they've almost demanded an explanation from that client as to WHY the tattoo has been covered or blacked out! Stranger yet, I've even heard of the first tattooist demanding an explanation from the OTHER TATTOOIST as to why they would even think of covering-up or 'defacing' their work! In some ways, I can understand why - as an artist - you'd be upset if you saw a piece that you'd taken hours to draw and tattoo 'insensitively' covered up. It might seem to you to be thoughtless on the other tattooist/client's part. How dare they alter something that's taken you so much time and effort? But tattooing is changing and evolving so much now. This is not the trade to be in if you get upset easily...

Ultimately, I believe that tattooing is an artistic service – service being the most important word there. It may be YOUR design and execution, but it's on a paying client. And once the tattoo has been paid for, it belongs to them. More importantly, the work is on their body – which fundamentally means it's their choice as to what they do with it.



Perry
Total Tattoo Editorial Team
editor@totaltattoo.co.uk

'No one can come and claim ownership of my work. I am the creator of it, and it lives within me.'

Prince 1958 - 2016

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NEWS & REVIEWS

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, Total Tattoo Magazine, 111 Furze Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0AU

BRAND NEW CHARITY COVER-UPS

Song lyrics can often help us through the bad times. They can be a lifeline for those in abusive situations, and a source of healing for survivors trying to put such traumas behind them. Getting the words of a song tattooed on your body enables you to carry that special message with you and draw strength and inspiration from it every day. But what if the singer is themselves now being accused of hurting other people in the same way that you have been hurt, and those song lyrics take on a very different meaning for you? Recent allegations about Brand New's lead singer Jesse Lacey (and his own personal declaration on social media) have led many fans to wish they had never committed to getting his lyrics permanently inked into their skin.

Recognising the emotional pain that this is causing, Manchester tattooist Harriet Heath, who was herself a Brand New fan in her teens, made the amazing gesture of offering to cover up people's Brand New tattoos in exchange for a donation to Rape Crisis England & Wales (@rapecrisiew). One day was set aside for this (2nd December) and priority was given to those who had been personally affected by any form of sexual assault, who were asked simply to add #metoo to their email when making a booking. An astounding £300 has so far been raised. Knowing that demand was likely to be high, Harriet also offered to do reduced price cover-ups for the remainder of December. [Harriet writes a column for Total Tattoo Magazine – see back pages.]

PORTRAIT OF JANUS

Portrait of Janus' is a new film piece by Turner Prize winning artist Douglas Gordon. It shows a young Korean man being tattooed along his spine with an image of the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) – the heavily fortified strip of land that separates North and South Korea. The 24-minute film was screened at the Art Sonje Center in Seoul, South Korea, during November and December and we hear that it will be shown in the UK too (though details were unavailable at the time of going to print).

This is an apparently simple work with many complex layers of meaning. The DMZ is a national border, but it's also a powerful psychological barrier. It's the immensely symbolic dividing line between South Korea and its communist neighbour, Kim Jong-un's North Korea. The name 'Janus' is particularly apt. He was the ancient Roman god of gateways, doorways, beginnings and endings. Duality was his thing. He is traditionally represented as having two faces (one looking to the future and one looking to the past) and he also oversaw the beginnings and endings of conflicts as well as looking after many of the transitions and journeys in people's lives. The man featured in the film is a Korean refugee who was adopted in Denmark as a baby.

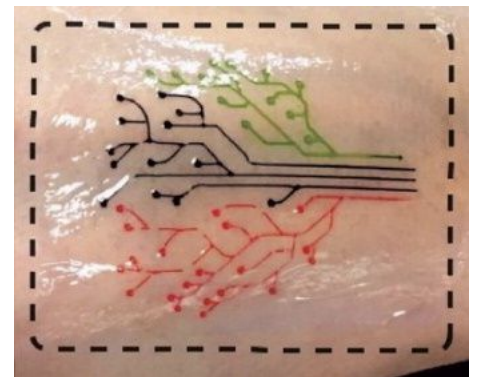
The film is of course given added poignancy by the current battle to legalise tattooing in South Korea.



TATTOO WARNING LIGHT



We've heard that research engineers at MIT in the States are developing temporary 'tattoos' (made of friendly bacteria!) that will alert the wearer to environmental hazards or dangerous substances in close proximity. They're produced using an innovative 3D printing technique and they light up when exposed to certain chemical stimuli. It's early days, but it's an interesting project to keep an eye on. To find out more, check out news.mit.edu/2017/engineers-3-d-print-living-tattoo-1205



ARTIST WANTED

El Diablo Blanco Tattoo Collective are looking for two artists to join the team in their newly renovated and equipped studio in Keighley. Ideally they are looking for a realism artist and a new-traditional artist with at least three years' studio experience. Contact Charlie at charles.bramwell@hotmail.co.uk with portfolio examples. The studio address is 41/43 The Arcade, North Street, Keighley, West Yorkshire, BD21 3SL

WIN TATTOO TEA PARTY TICKETS!

Now in its seventh year, the Tattoo Tea Party will host over 300 tattoo artists under one roof, showcasing the very best that is on offer in the multi-cultural melting pot of the UK tattoo scene. There will also be spectacular entertainment, including free funfair rides, sideshow and carnival acts, body painting, and much more. It's one of the UK's most talked about tattoo conventions! The 2018 Tea Party will be held on 3rd and 4th March at EventCity which is next to Europe's biggest shopping hub, The Trafford Centre in Manchester. Check out www.tattooteaparty.com for details.

To be in with a chance of winning one of three pairs of weekend tickets, simply email us the answer to the following question:

Which shopping centre is next to the Tea Party's venue?

- A) The Trafford Centre
- B) The Triffid Centre
- C) The Trippy Centre

Email your answer to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with TEA PARTY in the subject line, to reach us no later than 31st January. Usual terms and conditions apply (see p5).



EYEBALL TATTOO UPDATE



In Total Tattoo Issue 158 we reported on the horrific story of Canadian model Caitlin Gallinger, who suffered appalling complications following an eyeball tattoo that was allegedly inexpertly carried out by her ex-boyfriend. According to recent press interviews, Caitlin is now considering having her eye surgically removed, as her sight is already at risk and she is in such discomfort. She is urging others to exercise extreme caution before going ahead with eyeball tattoos.



DO NOT RESUSCITATE?

A medical team in Florida were faced with a serious ethical dilemma when an unconscious patient arrived at the hospital in a critical condition and was found to have DO NOT RESUSCITATE tattooed across his torso. Should they take this as a formal indication of his wishes and withhold lifesaving treatment?

According to news reports and various articles in medical journals, the doctors initially decided to ignore the tattoo and treat the man. After all, there was no way to be certain that the tattoo really meant what it apparently said. It could have been done for a joke, or a bet, or while under the influence, or indeed it could have been the name of a favourite band. And its meaning for the wearer might have changed over the years. However, supported by crucial documentation from social workers that shed new light on the situation, the hospital's ethics consultant advised that the tattoo should be interpreted to mean exactly what it said (and the man later died, in accordance with his wishes).

In the UK, in order for NHS medical staff to withhold life-saving treatment, an Advance Decision (sometimes referred to as a 'Living Will') must be in place. This is a legally binding document, signed by the patient and a witness, that clearly states the patient's wish to refuse life-saving treatment and acknowledges their understanding that they might die as a result. It must also specify exactly what types of treatment the patient has chosen to refuse

(antibiotics, CPR, ventilation, etc) and can include details of the circumstances in which those treatments should be withheld. If the Advance Decision is known about, and available at the critical time, medical staff can then act in accordance with the patient's wishes even if the patient is unable to communicate those wishes themselves.

The patient in Florida passed away, but his 'Do Not Resuscitate' tattoo has left a lasting legacy of fascinating ethical controversy. Does the law have some catching up to do if medical practice is to be more patient-centred? Maybe we're living in a different kind of world now?

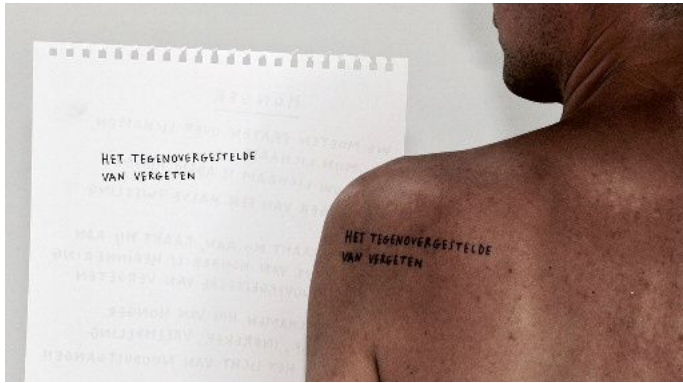


With appropriate legal safeguards in place, perhaps a tattoo – a permanent mark on the patient's body – could actually be the best possible way for a patient to communicate a Do Not Resuscitate decision? At the very least, it could alert medical staff to the existence of an Advance Decision document. This is clearly a complex debate that could run and run.

If this issue is of concern to you, and you'd like to find out more, the NHS website has detailed information and a list of useful links: www.nhs.uk/Planners/end-of-life-care/Pages/advance-decision-to-refuse-treatment.aspx



POETRY IN MOTION



We've picked up a great story about Antwerp poet Maarten Inghels. He's published a poem about the city and its inhabitants in the form of a tattoo – with each line of the poem tattooed on a different person. Volunteers could choose which line of the poem they wanted, and where they wanted it, and the tattoos were inked by Sven Rayen of Antwerp's Studio Palermo.



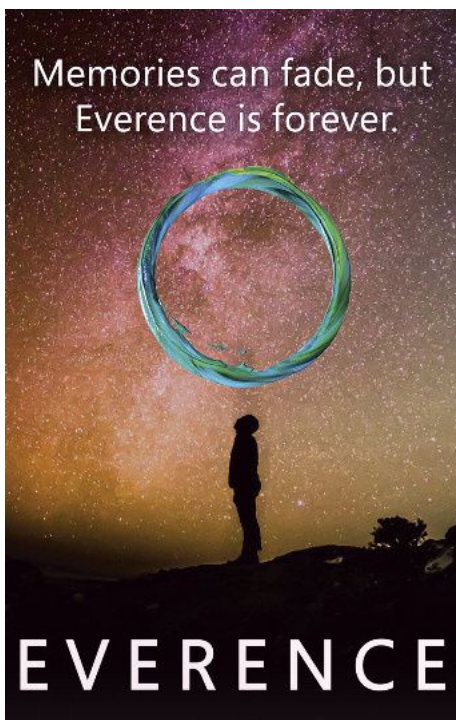
TATTOOS FOR TOYS

Modified Design Tattoo & Piercing in Texas is trading tattoos for toys! Customers are being offered 50% off the price of a tattoo if they bring in toys to the value of the other 50% – and all the toys are distributed to needy foster children in the local area. This wonderful scheme has been running for eight years now, and thousands of dollars' worth of toys have been donated.



EVERENCE - THE EVIDENCE

Everyone's talking about Everence on social media. The hype is incredible. According to their website, the company has patented an innovative process for the "micronisation, sterilisation, and microencapsulation" of DNA to enable it to be incorporated into a new or existing tattoo. They describe what they're offering as "a revolutionary technology that allows you to capture the essence of what is truly meaningful to you, and carry it with you on your journey through life." In other words, the DNA that defines (or defined) someone special to you can become a permanent part of your body too. Check out <https://everence.life/>



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PIERCERS WANTED

Kindred Tattoo in East London are looking for part-time or full-time piercers to join the Kindred family. Alongside their recent studio expansion they are pleased to announce the completion of their brand new piercing suite and they are currently interviewing for freelance piercers. A minimum of two years experience is essential along with a strong portfolio, friendly nature and positive attitude. To be considered for the position, please email your CV to mick@kindredtattoo.co.uk



ARTIST WANTED

Fat Fugu are looking for a new artist to join their expanding studio. All styles will be considered, but this

is not an apprenticeship. Please send examples of your work and a bit about yourself to: info@fatfugutattoo.com

STUDIO MOVE

Tattoo FX have moved! Neil Bass and the team can now be found at 32 Middle Village, Bolnore, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 4GH

WIN SCOTTISH TATTOO CONVENTION TICKETS!

Now in its eighth year, the Scottish Tattoo Convention is going to be bigger and better than ever, with world-renowned artists and some of the most exciting names in entertainment. Taking place in Edinburgh on 24th and 25th March, it's got to be one of the most eagerly anticipated events on the tattoo calendar. Details on www.tickets-scotland.com

We have a pair of weekend tickets to give away. To be in with a chance of winning, simply email us the answer to the following question:

In which city does the Scottish Tattoo Convention take place?

- (A) Moscow
- (B) Beijing
- (C) Edinburgh

Email your answer to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with SCOTTISH in the subject line, to reach us no later than 31st January. Usual terms and conditions apply (see p5).



Dean Taylor RIP



We were shocked and saddened to hear the terrible news that tattooist Dean Taylor passed away on December 10th 2017. Although he was only 27, Dean was amazingly talented in tattooing and excelled in both black and grey and colour realism. His portrayals of sports stars caught the attention of their celebrity subjects, whilst his family portraits were both brilliant and moving. He had the world at his feet, his passion and talent making him a true world-class artist. Friends, tattooists and family alike said that Dean was loved and respected by so many people. Described as charismatic, charming, funny and kind, he will be missed by all who knew him. Our deepest sympathy and condolences go out to Dean's co-workers, friends, family and fiancée.



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Jef Palumbo, one of the founders of La Boucherie Moderne, is a force of nature. Enigmatic, energetic, creative and brilliantly funny, his collaged, self-styled 'Dada-banana' tattooing reflects his personality. And to combine your personality with your own style of work is something that only a true artist can do.

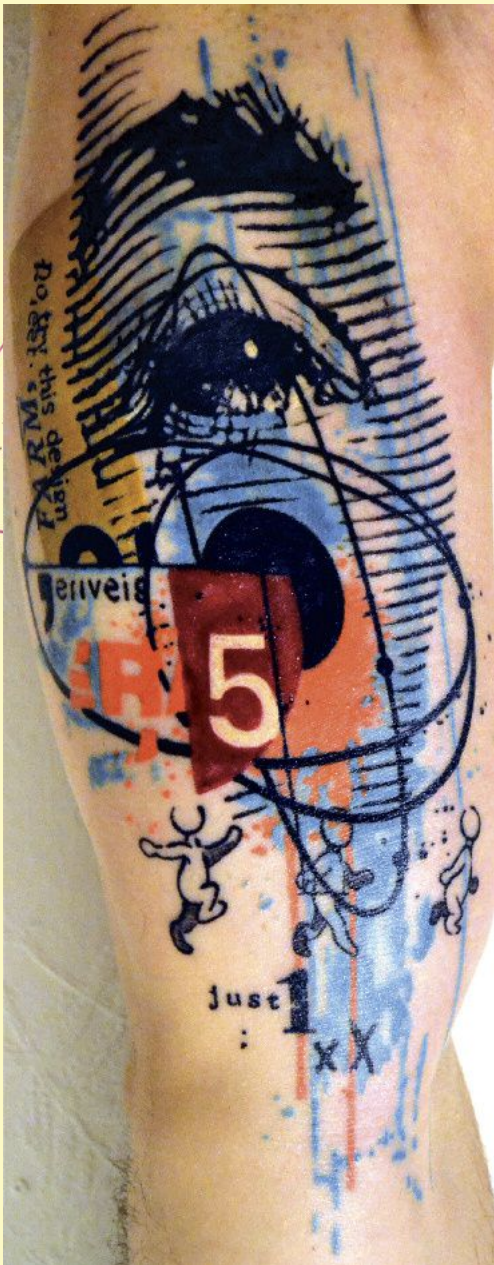
"I've been tattooing for about twenty five years and I learnt with one person", Jef begins, "a tattooist called EYE in Lille, France. He's a funny, funky, crazy guy, and he's like my second Dad. My apprenticeship was traditional and very difficult. It was tricky to get any equipment unless you were friends with a tattooist. Back then it was more hardcore. You had to prove yourself and show what you could do, especially because most of the people in tattooing were bikers. But I had my chopper and I had the connections. I was attracted to the noisy bikes, the tattoos and OK, maybe the sexy girls too – but of course that was not the main goal!"

"I tattooed in a traditional, classic way for about eight years. It was really interesting for me to work the classics – old school, Celtic, tribal, realistic, colours, *everything*. In fact it's a privilege to have done so many different things, because when you know the basics you can be free to imagine your own style. Right now, I feel like there is no limit; I try to push myself to the maximum. If it can be done on paper, it can be done on skin."

Jef's graphic, juxtaposed work remains inspirational to many. When he first emerged in this style, it was utterly groundbreaking. I asked him to say some more about it. "I'm like a DJ. I mix and collage; I imagine and re-imagine. I used to live and work in Berlin and that was so important for me – for the early twentieth century inspiration and also for the street art. You just need to go to Kreuzberg and look at any wall! Street art is messy. It evolves. It's living. When I look at that kind of work, I try to imagine who did it and what was there before. The street is all about fighting, sweating, pissing. And in all this misery, there is beauty! I call my style 'Dada-banana' because a friend of mine who was working in Berlin said, 'Jeff your style is Dada, but it's so f ucked up it's Dada-banana!'"

It's not often that a tattooist can be described as a true pioneer, but Jef certainly is that. "Maybe we [at La Boucherie Moderne] opened some doors. People realised they could work in a new style. At the Paris Tattoo Art Fest 2007, one of my customers wanted to enter his piece in the competition, but the judges came to me and said, 'We have a problem. There's no category for you!' Now of course it's the norm to have competition categories for graphic and abstract tattooing. What makes me so proud is walking through a convention and seeing younger tattooists doing stuff that's evolved from my graphic way."

“LA BOUCHERIE MODERNE INSPIRED FOUR OR FIVE PEOPLE, WHO INSPIRED TEN OR TWELVE PEOPLE... AND IT'S BECOME A NEVER-ENDING STORY, LIKE RIPPLES ON A POOL.”



“I was also one of the first people to use a laptop and a small printer at conventions – working out the sketch on the computer, then printing it and making the stencil. People were like, ‘What are you doing? This is bullshit! It’s not tattooing!’ Right now though, how many people are doing that very same thing? One day you’re stupid and the next day you’re super cool!”

Jef and his friend and fellow artist Kostek met at school. Both incredible tattooers, in 2005 they started La Boucherie Moderne, a hugely creative environment that has nurtured some amazing artists over the years. “From that point, my life changed so much. But it was all accidental. The goal wasn’t to become famous or make a lot of money. When we opened La Boucherie Moderne we just wanted to have maximum fun. It wasn’t really a tattoo shop. It was a laboratory for people to try new things, test things out, come and play the fool with us. It was all about crazy, stupid, nice, fresh ideas, in a collective kind of way. We wanted to create that energy and do something new.”





“For the first two years, we barely made any money! A lot of people who came to us would ask for something conventional, like a dragon, and we would explain that we didn’t do that style of work. We showed them our portfolios, and mostly they would say it wasn’t for them. But sometimes people were attracted by what we were doing simply because it *gr[af]* different. It’s a bit like a really exclusive nightclub with a bouncer and a dress code; the more difficult it is to get in, the more people want to be inside that club! So the more we proposed the different stuff, the more those people would want to check it out. But at the beginning, we were working for free (I did so many sleeves!) just to show people what we could do.”

It takes courage to stick with your artistic convictions like that. Would many tattooists in today’s industry do the same? “I think the worst thing about tattooing at the moment is that so many people just want to make the most money they can. So they check online for the popular stuff and go from there. And the established artists – Bugs for instance – are getting pushed back. Bugs is one of my best friends and he’s a genius. You know, most tattooists today just pretend to be punk, alternative and anti-social. That’s the image of themselves that they like to portray. But then they have these sponsorship deals, and they’re charging a thousand Euros a day for tattoos. That’s not punk, for fuck’s sake! And the sponsors treat the tattooists as if they own them, like they’re racehorses or greyhounds. ‘Oh, you want our stuff? Then we’ll use your name...’ My name is my own, and my work is for my customers, not for some corporate brand. The privilege of one’s life is to be free. I am my own boss. I make my own decisions. I don’t want people putting their corporate name on my work.”



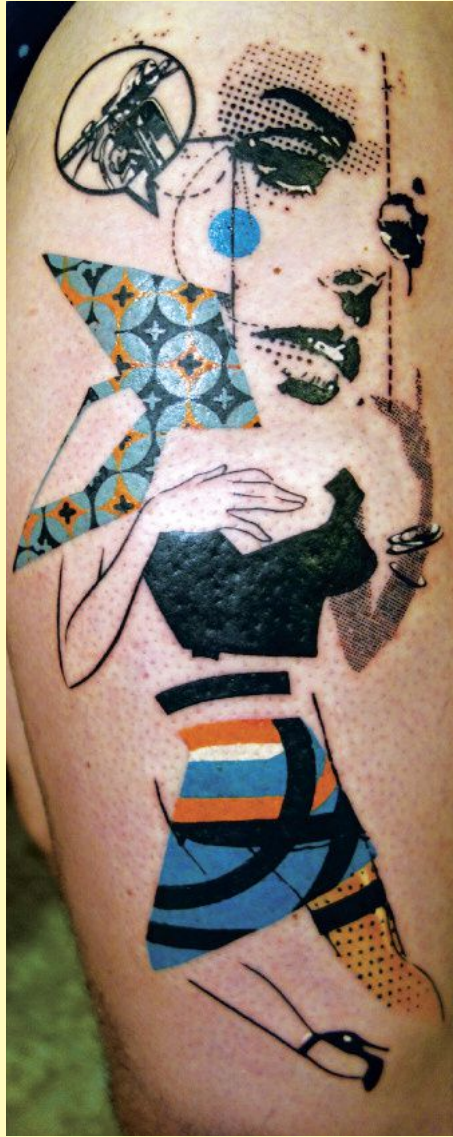
"I really enjoy what I'm doing, and I really enjoy the time I spend with people coming to me for their sessions. I've got some money, but that's not the main objective for me. When you decide to give up caring too much about money, you can feel free. Obviously I have to pay tax, buy food and have a place to live. But if I needed €10 to fix my life, I wouldn't try to get €15. If I only got €5 I'd be in trouble, so I'd try to get €11. And I don't like referring to people as 'customers', because that connects them to money and business. It's a privilege when people come to me for tattoos, especially if they've come from far away. I love to talk with them, and create something that is just for them."

"I'm not the oldest tattooist in the world and I can't even begin to imagine what my older friends must be thinking... but the tattoo scene is now so totally different. The world is changing. New rules, new ways of doing things, the internet, new kinds of communication. I feel a bit sad because I really love that primal connection with people. I'd much prefer to get a tattoo that may not be that perfect but is done by a super cool person, than a super cool tattoo done by a businessman."

“At the moment, it’s very trendy to be ‘punk’ – but being punk, for real, is another thing entirely. For me, the only true punk is the singer in our band, Tat2NoiseAct. I tattoo live on stage, and so does he – except that he’s singing at the same time as he’s tattooing himself from his face to his dick. That, to me, is punk. He doesn’t give a shit. It’s social suicide. I’m so proud to be his friend! And I’ve got so much respect for the fact that he’s not giving his money to some tattoo shop; he’s on stage with a big smile and lining through his face. As a band, we’ve been going for close on ten, eleven years now. We’re not famous because we only play in squats. But for me it has the same meaning as La Boucherie Moderne. Maximum fun!”

It’s a refreshing outlook on tattooing, and the kind of mindset that made Jef and Kostek hand over La Boucherie Moderne after only five years. Stopping something at its peak, before that moment is forgotten, was an incredibly brave move... “Thank you for saying that! You know, it was the kind of decision that was easy to talk about but difficult to actually do.”





And then I can try to fit the sketch to what I understand about them. So I'll start to write words down and it will make me think of an image – metamorphic stuff. When the customer arrives in person, I explain my process to them and tell them how I built the sketch. Most of the time people are like, 'Wow, OK, let's go!' and I'm like, 'Phew!' wr Lni [t]

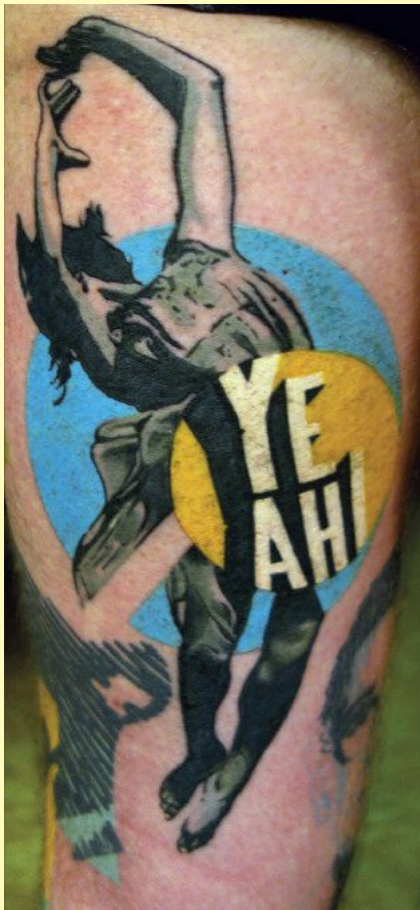
“Kostek and I were chatting one Sunday afternoon, taking a break from our work, and he suddenly said, 'What about the next five years? Or the next ten years?' We realised we could still be working in the shop, but it wouldn't be the same. When you get into a routine like that, the freedom is gone. Doing what I do is a privilege and it was really important for me to keep my mind fresh. I had to do it the funky way and stop. Looking back, it was like La Boucherie Moderne inspired four or five people, who each inspired ten or twelve people... and it's become a never-ending story, like ripples on a pool.”

Fast forward to 2017 and Jef continues to innovate and inspire with his multi-layered, graphic style of work. He's been involved with tattooing for almost three decades now and he still enjoys attending conventions. “It's important to show that I'm still alive! I'm not yet at that point where I'm begging people to let me tattoo them in order to pay for my next meal... but I realised that if I didn't go to conventions, people would lose that connection with what I was doing. And I just love to hang out with my friends in between

working. You know, the best convention I did this year was organised by Lionel Fahy from Out of Step. It was small, close to the sea, and there was a party before the convention started. It was so much fun. There were only about forty tattooists, so we all talked to each other about life, art, tattoo techniques... It was more like family. I think it's interesting to share your time between the small conventions and the big conventions – in the same way as I share my working time between the big city of Berlin and the small village in Belgium where I have my private studio. I really love them both. I wouldn't want one without the other.”

Jef still sees it as an honour to be chosen to tattoo someone. “People usually contact me by email. I ask them about the idea and what it means to them. For me, the meaning is even more important than the idea. I also ask them about themselves, because I've never met them and in order to create something unique for them, I need to know as much as I can about them. I ask them about their taste in music, their family, the work they do – nothing too private of course, but enough to enable me to get a sense of the meaning of their life.



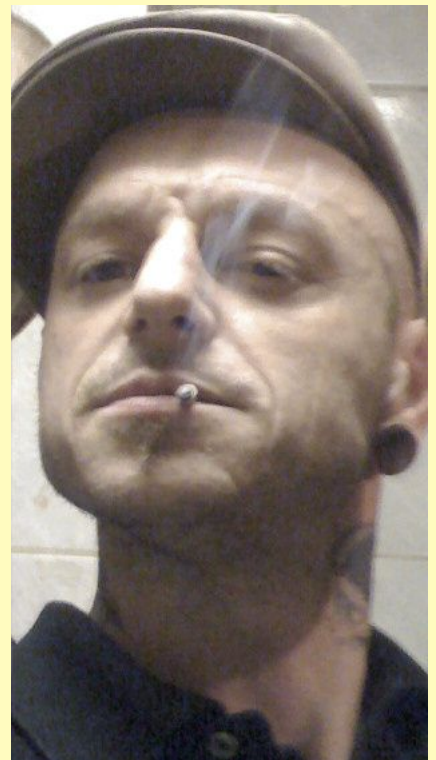




"My customers are always very friendly. I think most people come to me because they've read about me on the internet and they know that I'm always complaining about how this world drives me crazy... That's a privilege of getting old, though!"

And talking of getting old, what does the future hold for Jef? "I'm a bit scared! *wr Ln i [t* I'm doing my best. I work like crazy. I've got a little bit of money put to one side in case I have a problem or whatever. I don't want the two houses and three cars bullshit – that's not me – but I would just like to be secure financially. I don't have any problems with getting old, but I do wonder how much longer I can work. I'm totally broken! You start falling apart – your eyes, your back, your hands... The goal right now is to have maximum fun with my friends, meet people like you who are cool and friendly, and do more conventions and guest spots..."

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TOKYO KNIGHTS

Lal Hardy reports from the land of the rising sun

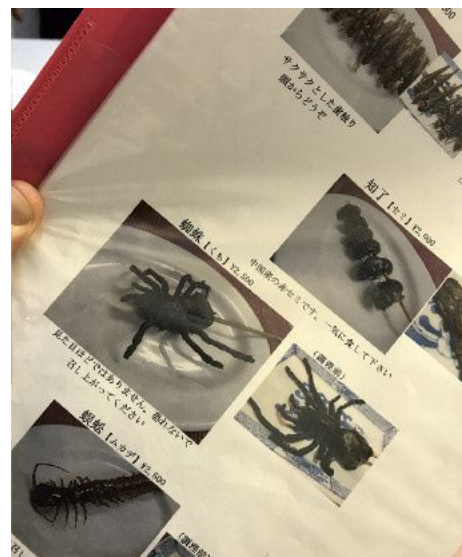
Many readers will be aware of the recent controversies surrounding tattooing in certain areas of Japan. In a country whose rich tattoo tradition has had such an impact on tattooing worldwide, the art is now being controlled in a manner that is, in reality, curtailing or even banning it. On my recent travels to the Land of the Rising Sun, I caught up with a few tattoo friends in Tokyo to see first hand if they had been affected by the recent court rulings in Osaka.

I run a small tattoo history group on Facebook known as 'Knights of the Round Shader'. After posting a question on the group page asking if any members fancied meeting up in Tokyo, I found myself in the good company of Rhys Gordon, Dean Reardon, Gummy Johnston and Mayonaize (all from Australia) plus fellow Brits Woodfarm, Dave T Taylor and Nick Iovene.

First stop on our short trip was Shinjuku, and a meeting with Japanese tattoo artist Megumu and the rest of the gang. The Shinjuku district is a large slice of neon madness. From my hotel room window I could see a giant Godzilla bellowing smoke atop one building with King Kong climbing up the side of another. Walking through the bustling streets I spied a huge sign depicting a tattoo-style tiger and a girl with a koi tattoo. This, however, was not a tattoo studio but the Robot Restaurant – a completely crazy place where for a couple of hours you can sit and drink while all manner of mad robots, warriors and monsters do battle. Well worth the experience should you ever find yourself in Tokyo (instagram @robotrestaurant).



Megumu (instagram @megumu_weirdo) had asked if I could tattoo a few of his Japanese friends with some of the old-style punk rock designs I'd done way back in the 1980s. Rhys and Gummy had requests for really old school pieces too, and it was interesting to meet so many Japanese people who are collectors of old-style western tattoo designs. Megumu's studio is in a small residential block (like so many studios in Japan, it's hidden away). I spent two days there tattooing Megumu's friends and it was a real trip down memory lane, design-wise, for me. Our evenings were mostly spent taking in the sights, sounds and flavours of Tokyo – although one eatery was selling cooked spiders and this I well and truly swerved!





Harajuku was next on our list and we visited two street shops here. The first was Holie Glory (instagram @holieglory), a tiny studio up a couple of flights of stairs. What a sight awaited us! The place is packed wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling with tattooing and music items. It was how I always love to see studios – visual stimulation everywhere. The owner Yushi, who is a member of the Knights group, sadly wasn't in the country but the artist at the reins, Natchin, made us most welcome.

We then visited the world famous Three Tides Tattoo (instagram @threetidestattoo). The first floor serves as a waiting area and merchandise store and they have some great stuff there to buy. The next two floors are given over to tattooing. The top floor was spectacular, with beautiful black, red and grey traditional-style Japanese tattoo artwork and an area for traditional tebori work. Whilst waiting for Three Tides to open we got talking to clients who had travelled from Guatemala, Australia and China to get tattooed there.

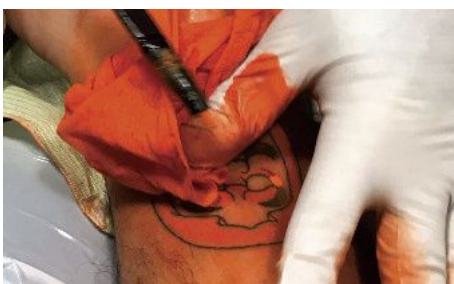
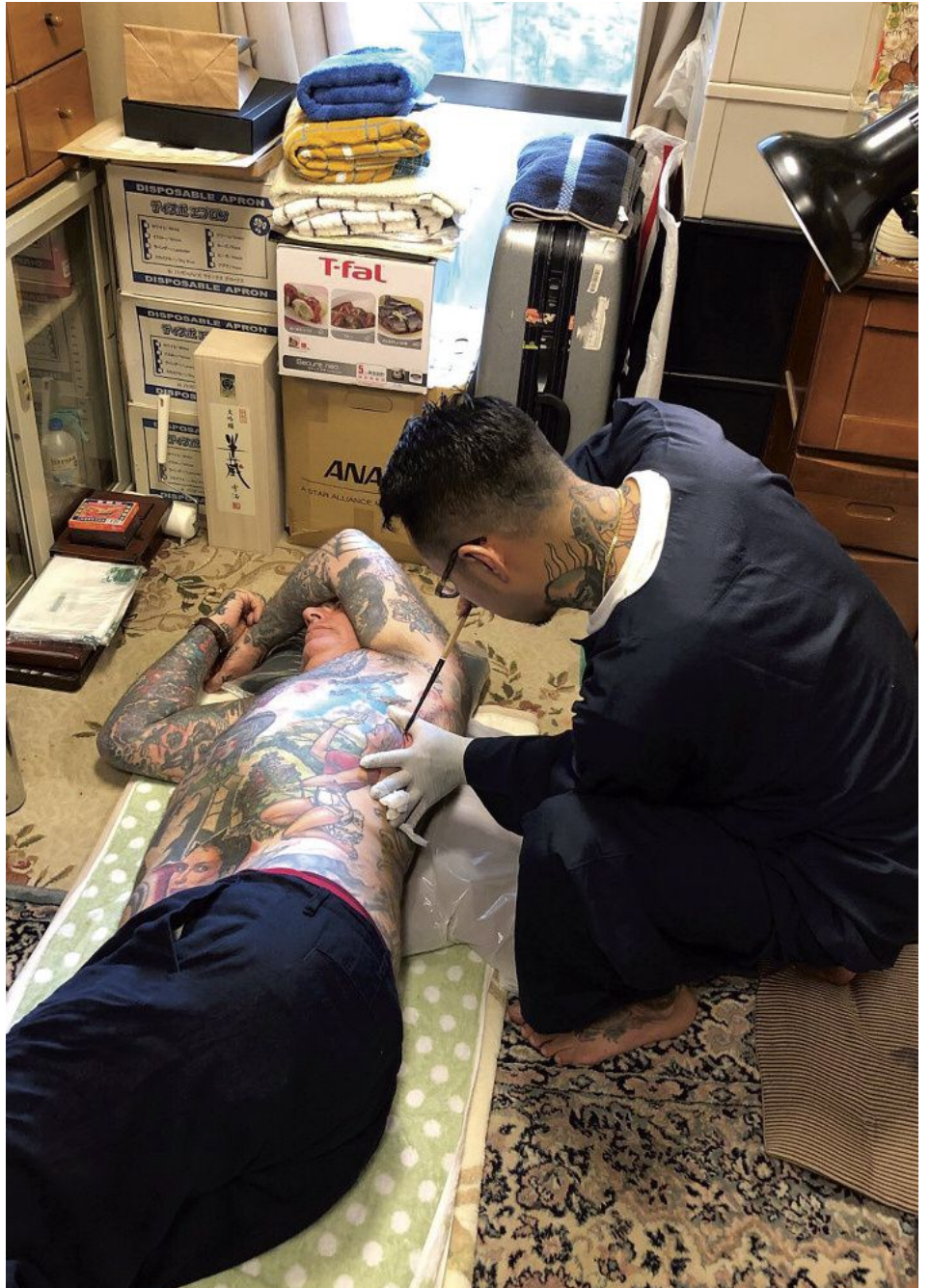
Whilst in the Harajuku / Shibuya area we also visited the Meiji Shrine and Yoyogi Park. The Shrine was founded in 1920 and is dedicated to the deified spirits of the Emperor Meiji and his consort Empress Shoken. The original shrine was destroyed during a bombing raid in World War Two and the present shrine constructed in 1958. One of the interesting features at the shrine was a wall of large sake barrels that are offered yearly to the divine spirits of the Emperor and Empress by the sake industry of Japan. Many of the barrels are decorated with the colourful imagery also found in Japanese traditional tattoos, such as cherry blossoms, peonies and hannya.





During our stay we were introduced to Horiken, a tebori artist who works in Shibuya. Four of us were keen to acquire tattoos in traditional hand-tattooed style from him, so design ideas were discussed and appointments were made. Nick and Dean selected matching Daruma tattoo images to celebrate their new friendship. Woodfarm chose a monkey head, and I selected Hyottoko. (This character has many guises including the fool and the drunk. I will leave the reader to google it should they wish to research the character further!)

Horiken's studio (instagram @horiken_shibuya), like so many in Japan, is not advertised with signs but rather just a tiny nameplate on the door. On entering, tradition and politeness dictate that one should remove one's shoes. Inside the tattoo room – which incidentally has underfloor heating – a mat was laid on the floor in readiness for the first client. Horiken then selected the needles needed for each particular piece. The stencils were drawn onto rice paper using a pen loaded with a transfer ink – another old method – and once the area to be tattooed had been shaved and prepared, a liquid was brushed onto the skin, the transfer was applied, and then a further coating of liquid was brushed onto the rice paper stencil. A light was then placed above the stencil to dry it.





The tebori method employed by Horiken was surprisingly fast and relatively painless. The sound of the tattoo process was strangely similar to someone eating noisily! One thing I found interesting was that when it came to tattooing white into the skin, this particular colour was not pre-mixed. Instead, it was actually tipped as a powder into a colour cap and then mixed with a solution immediately prior to being tattooed into the skin. The healing process was very quick too. Hardly any scabbing occurred and within five days my tattoo was pretty much sorted.

Asakusa was next on our list of places, with a visit to the Senso-ji Buddhist temple, dedicated to Bodhisattva Kannon. You enter the temple grounds through a large gate known as the Kaminarimon – the Thunder Gate – with huge statues of Raijin (the god of thunder) and Fujin (the god of wind) standing either side of an enormous lantern known as a Chochin. As you pass through the entrance there are numerous stalls selling souvenirs, traditional Japanese arts and crafts, foods, etc. Most of us bought items for our studios here – hannya masks, dragon wall hangings, chimes, lanterns, etc. Further vibrant colour was brought to the scene by the many Japanese women dressed in traditional brightly coloured kimonos.





We were very fortunate to be visiting the temple on October 18th as this is one of only two days in the year when the Kinryu No Mai golden dragon dance takes place. A huge 60ft long marionette dragon represents the story of Bodhisattva Kannon's form manifesting into a golden dragon who descended from the sky, creating a forest of a thousand pine trees. The golden dragon is carried aloft on poles and manipulated by eight men. A float pulled behind them has geishas playing flutes and lutes. It was a truly spectacular sight.

On our last day in Tokyo we visited the Galleria Harajuku, an art gallery that was showing an exhibition of work by Japan's greatest tattoo artist Horiyoshi III (instagram @horiyoshi_3) and American-based tattoo master Jess Yen aka Horiyen (instagram @jessyentattoo) A crowd was milling around on the street outside, and it was a real pleasure to see amongst others American legend Joe Vegas, Eric the Don and Chris Crooks, owner of White Dragon Tattoo in Belfast. When I first arrived at the gallery I honestly thought it was a florist as there were huge displays of flowers out front, but it turns out these are a form of congratulation and the name cards showed they were from tattoo artists worldwide. Inside the gallery every wall was filled with truly beautiful and inspirational artworks from Horiyoshi III and Jess. I have been fortunate to have known Horiyoshi since the mid-1980s so it was the highlight of my trip to meet up with him again and spend some time together. We all stayed until the gallery closed and then everyone went to a restaurant, but with an early flight the following day we sadly had to leave the revelry.



The trip had been educational, hectic and fun. I am glad to report that we saw no signs prohibiting tattoos anywhere in Tokyo (but an American friend, Yallzee, did tell me he'd been turned away from every gym he'd tried to visit because of his tattoos). I would like to thank Horiyoshi III, Kazuyoshi, Mayumi, Megumu, Horiken, Jess Yen and all the great people we met for their kindness, friendship and hospitality during our trip.

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BRUSSELS

INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

As 2017's convention season slowly drew to a close, there was just time for one more shot of inky culture before we parked the Total Tattoo battle bus for Christmas: a quick sortie across the English Channel for our annual visit to the International Brussels Tattoo Convention.

Based in the heart of Brussels at the historic industrial complex known as Tour & Taxis, this show has continued to grow year after year. 2017's event was the biggest yet. The venue is a succession of very large halls divided by massive doors that can be opened to create a customised exhibition space of almost any size. This year Kim and his team of organisers had three main halls. One was used purely for entertainment and market traders, and the other two were packed with tattooists.

Around 400 artists turned out to support the show, and the line-up was really very impressive! Tattooists were treated to large booths with high back boards on which to display their patchwork of multi-coloured backdrops, along with big tables to present their portfolios, prints, t-shirts, etc. There was plenty of seating too, making this show a comfortable working experience for everyone. The wide red-carpeted aisles were packed full, almost bursting under the strain of the largest public attendance I have seen at this show in the last five years. Visitor numbers always run into the tens of thousands, and these impressive figures show no sign of slowing down any time soon!

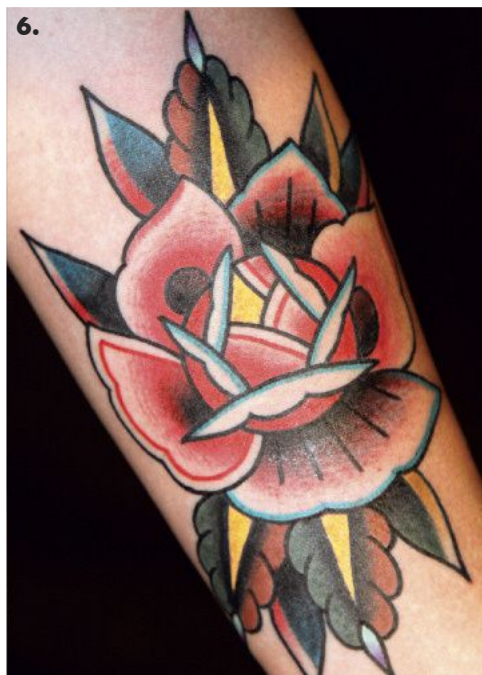
The convention begins on the Friday afternoon. Many of the traders, entertainers and artists gear up slowly for the weekend, unpacking their stock in a leisurely fashion, saying hello to old friends, and decorating their booths. The doors open at 2pm and straight away the tattooing gets underway.

The main stage sits in the corner of the entertainment hall and hosts a never ending succession of acts – rock bands, fire shows, fashion parades, suspension performers and of course the tattoo competitions. Elsewhere in the hall there was a wrestling ring (with several bouts of grunting and groaning throughout the day) and the now legendary Globe of Death, featuring up to six men on motorcycles defying gravity and filling the hall with loud cheers and the ring ding ding of small engines being revved to within an inch of their lives. Shiny custom chrome choppers are on display in between the numerous stalls selling t-shirts, wallets, jewellery and other paraphernalia to tempt you to part with your euros. Various art exhibitions are scattered around the venue and there is also a large BMX/skateboard half pipe. Vintage custom cars glisten in their pristine paintwork, and bottles of tattoo ink twinkle from the multitude of supplier stalls dotted around the tattoo halls.

The bar area is, as always, a popular spot if you fancy the secure, snug feeling of being surrounded by other humans. But be warned... you need plenty of ready cash if you want to



1. manneken pis
2. chris radu, fine art element (germany)
3. inside the globe of death



stay hydrated. European beer prices might be alarming, but paying three euros for a plastic cup of water was the biggest shock for me! There were many food options available, including fresh sushi and of course the obligatory fries with mayonnaise, and they were all reasonably priced.

The competitions are always a focus for me. Our very own Rich from Dark Horse Collective won Best of Day Friday, and Jay Freestyle won Best of Show on the Sunday night with one of his wonderfully intricate detailed pieces. As usual at this show the competitions were well-attended and the standard of work was really high. The avant garde graphic styles that for some reason seem so lost on the British public have really taken hold in Europe. With no traditional rules to follow and no established foundation on which to build, the artists working in this style have the freedom to really let their imaginations run wild, taking tattooing in some very exciting new directions.

Every capital city deserves a great tattoo convention and Brussels has a belter. With endless entertainment, art exhibitions, skateboarding displays, music, shopping, food and a line-up of amazing tattooists it seems this juggernaut is just going to keep on gathering momentum. I can't wait for next year's edition!



4. brussels town hall
5. emilie b, P'Imaginarium (france)
6. chris, moth and rose tattoo (greece)
7. 'ouch'
8. karen sarin, old rules tattoo (belgium)
9. the atomium
10. guillaume smash, P'Imaginarium
11. oash rodriguez, la cosa nostra tattoo (spain)
12. andy seb
13. 'ouch'
14. sweet paint

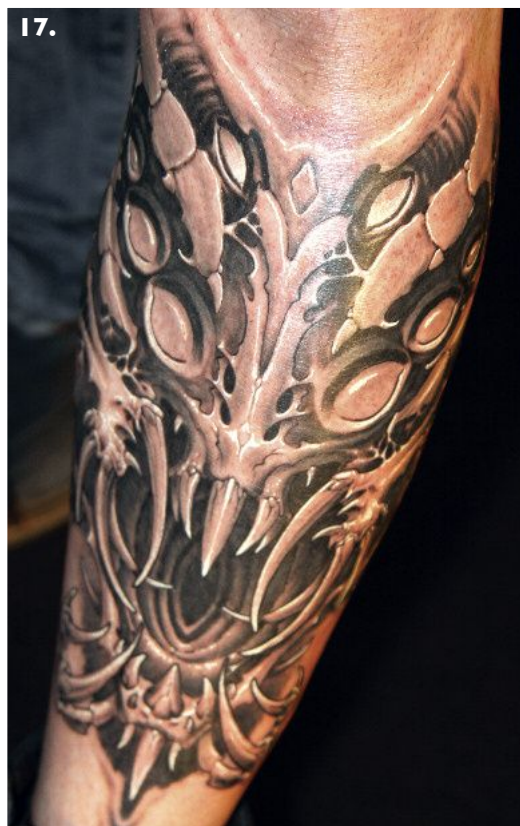




15.



16.



17.



18.



19.



20.

- 15. sergio carrasco, enekas tattoo (spain)
- 16. yaron messelis, inksane (belgium)
- 17. alex schwartz, mustache ink (german)
- 18. body tape exhibition
- 19. paulo altomare, altomare tattoo (belgium)
- 20. smyku, dead body tattoo (poland)
- 21. christos zorbas, tattoooligans (greece)
- 22. emi maero, lolita tattoo (spain)
- 23. artemij agat tattoo saveljev (latvia)
- 24. paulo altomare, altomare tattoo (belgium)



JK



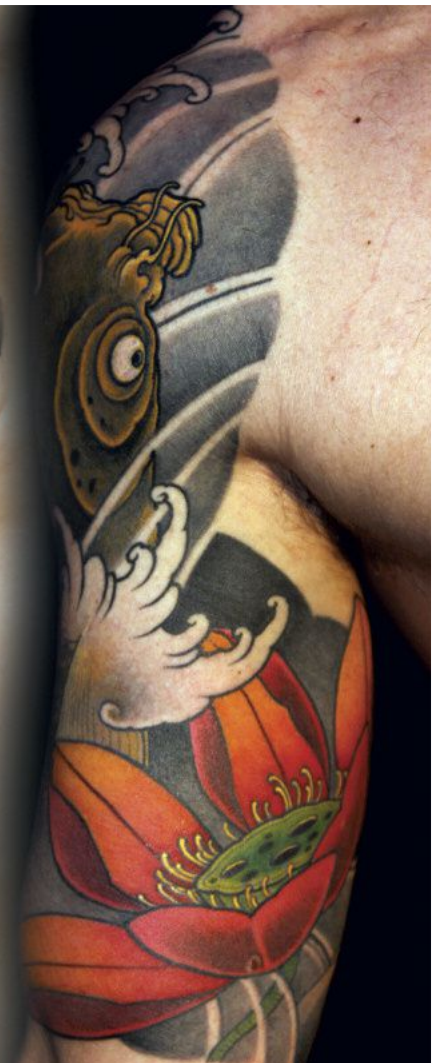
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25. igor puentes (spain)
 26. gabry scriba (italy)
 27. jacob, hypnotic art
 28. emi maero,
 lolita tattoo (spain)
 29. chippi, corpsepainter
 (germany)
 30. danie bleuth (spain)
 31. daniel herrera,
 inkiati tattoos (spain)

32. chris,
 moth and rose (greece)
 33. andrey biserov (russia)
 34. manu, black dot tattoo
 35. jay freestyle and art of
 alvin collaboration (greece)
 36. aber, moth & rose
 37. rich harris,
 dark horse collective





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Cervena Fox has been setting the tattoo world alight for many years now. She is a well-known tattoo model, appearing on numerous magazine covers and boasting a seven-figure social medial following, and she is also a founder member of Pyrohex, the famous all-girl pyromania show that regularly performs at tattoo conventions (including our very own Big North Tattoo Show). Cervena is now a tattooist herself, and with her recent marriage to American tattoo legend Durb Morrison her stratospheric career shows no sign whatsoever of slowing down!

What first attracted you to collecting tattoos?

I was into art from a really young age, but it was the music scene that really got me into collecting ink – seeing all those rock and metal band members with their tattoos! I knew from the age of 16 that I would be covered, and I'm still working on that ten years later...

Your tattoos obviously opened the doors to a highly successful career as a tattooed model. Was that something you planned?

I wanted to make sure my arms were tattooed by a quality artist that I could trust completely, so I went to Bez from Triplesix Studios in Sunderland. If it wasn't for him I don't think I would have got the magazine covers that I'd always wanted. The magazines loved my arms, and it was plus that I was already a model. But I didn't just get the tattoos for my career. I wanted great tattoos for myself too!

And what advice would you give to anyone aspiring to be a model now?

My advice to younger models is Be Yourself. Work on your portfolio and constantly build your social media presence on every platform there is! I'm constantly doing photoshoots and thinking about how to better myself – not only on the outside, but on the inside too.

How important has social media been to the development of your career?

Social media has completely and utterly exploded since I started out. I remember the days when it was all MSN and Myspace. It's super important for any business nowadays. Models are chosen on the basis of their social media reach. I've had people say they are picking someone else over me because their social media following is bigger than mine, even though I've been modelling for longer and would fit the job better. That bothers me, because having more followers doesn't mean you have more talent. But this is how the industry now works.

Interview by Total Tattoo magazine
Pictures courtesy of Cervena Fox



CERVENA FOX





What are the highs and lows of performing with Pyrohex?

I love performing with Pyrohex – working with the girls, and expressing ourselves on stage. There's some fierce team work that goes into it! The only thing is, it's hard to get everyone together in one place because we're all so busy with our solo modelling careers.

What are your future plans for Pyrohex?

We'll be doing a lot of tattoo conventions this year. I've recently added chains to my repertoire of skills in the aerial arts. It hurts so much, as the metal does pinch your skin, but I love every moment of it when I'm spinning in the air. I hope to bring out TWO new aerial shows – possibly one in an aerial hammock as well as the one in chains. I'll be announcing when and where I'll be doing them on all my social media.

You started out as a tattoo model, then went on to form Pyrohex. What inspired that?

I started to perform initially because I realised I had no 'talent' to talk about when doing beauty pageants! So I picked up a hula hoop and learnt how to do it, then saw some girls performing online with hula hoops that were on fire. I could really see myself doing that, so I spoke to a few fire performers that I knew and said, 'Hey, would you like to perform together if I can get us a show?' They all said yes. After our first show, we all thought, 'Wow, this could be something big', so we decided to give ourselves a name and that was how Pyrohex came about.

What's made Pyrohex so successful?

Social media has certainly helped build Pyrohex into a brand. We're all well-known models, and it's a powerful stage show. And we do it because we love it!



And now you're learning to tattoo with Megan Massacre at Grit 'n' Glory in New York?

Yes, I try to go over to New York City to see my girl Megan whenever I can. She teaches me so much, and I'm very grateful to her for setting me on the path to becoming a tattoo artist. I will be going back there soon, and I can't wait to see the team. You can't learn to tattoo without watching other artists work (there's so much bullshit online!) and there's nothing better than being in a studio surrounded by other tattooists. It's wonderful when one of the great names in the industry takes you under their wing! Tattooing is one of the hardest and most unforgiving art forms. It's great to see all those art students who are finishing college or university and deciding to become tattoo artists. The world of tattooing is definitely opening up.

Are you hoping to specialise in any particular style?

I've found that I am really into old school tattoos. I always thought I would be into black and grey, but as soon as I started to tattoo I wanted to use every colour in the world! Sometimes there is a neo-inspired look to my work, and recently I have started to learn how to blend colours together. I can't wait to see where it takes me.

What have you found most difficult to master?

Line work is the hardest thing in my opinion, but it's something you have to master early on. Everybody's skin is different and you can blow out a line very quickly and scar them! You have to understand how powerful your machine is, and be gentle. It's needles and skin; it ain't paper and pen.



What's your favourite thing about tattooing?

My favourite thing is seeing how happy and excited my clients are about their tattoos. Some people even send me pictures of them when they're healed - and they pose with their tattoos on Instagram and tag me in the photos! That makes my day.

Do you think your tattooing career will take over from your modelling career?

Honestly I'm just tattooing for fun. In a way it's been quite difficult, with

everyone having such high expectations of my tattooing just because I'm so well known on the tattoo scene. I've always wanted to be a tattooist, but I'm not aiming to be the best on the planet. I just want to enjoy what I do, and travel round the world working at different studios and tattooing my fans. I definitely don't want to compete on tv - not that there's anything wrong with that. I love watching those shows and cheering on my friends, but I just know I wouldn't be able to deal with the pressure. I'm not very good in competitions. I freak out too much!

You recently married Durb Morrison. How did you meet?

We met at the Titanic International Tattoo Convention in Belfast in 2015. It's quite funny, because I wasn't looking for anyone or anything in particular that weekend. I'd had my heart broken about a year previously and at that point I just wanted to be single, but as soon as I met Durb I was instantly attracted in him and I thought, 'Wow!' Long distance dating was a challenge, but we made it work and two years later we are now married and living happily in Columbus, Ohio. It's great to finally be with someone like this and I can honestly say I feel more complete as a person with him.

How is Durb helping with your tattooing?

I work at Durb's studio whenever I'm in town. He helps me a lot whenever I have questions or if I'm not sure on something. He's been tattooing for twenty seven years now, which is a crazy long time, and I respect everything he says. I'm learning a lot from the other guys who tattoo in his studio too. RedTree Tattoo Gallery is by far one of my favourite places to tattoo in the world!



How do you split your time between tattooing, modelling, performing and travelling?

I just split it as it goes. I do a heck of a lot of things and I love how busy it keeps me. I'm someone that can't just do one thing. I get bored way too easily and lose focus. My life gives me plenty of things to do and I just juggle them around. If I haven't done one of those things in a week, I'll start to get the itch! But I do make sure it's all balanced somehow for the sake of my sanity.

Your attitude seems to be one of real drive and determination. Would you say you are a positive thinker?

Yes I am. I always look on the bright side - because if you don't, and you just think about bad things, then bad things are more likely to happen to you. Don't get me wrong, bad stuff does happen to me. But I get over it quickly, sort it out and get on with my life. There are so many people in this world who have no choice. Maybe they're sick, or can't live a normal life for some other reason. So if you're alive, just be thankful for that. You're more lucky than you think you are!



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**jonathan toogood,
imperial tattoo company**



mauro tampieri, raion tattoo (italy)



tim childs, southsea tattoo co



**sicko black,
good changes
(russia)**



solid heart



**ben kaye,
ship shape tattoo
(new zealand)**



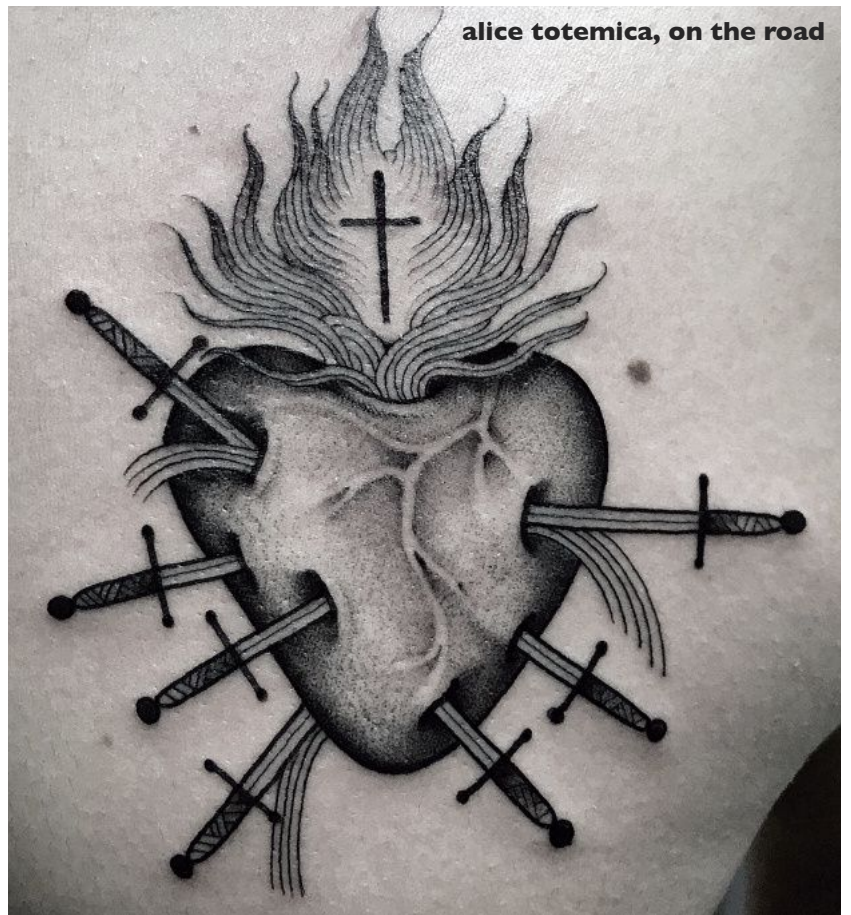
nissaco (japan)



ronnie cyndi, inklination



wes vaughn,
insider tattoo



alice totemica, on the road



aaron clapham,
wolf and arrows



jemma jones, sacred electric



micky, cloak and dagger



pedro mendosa



santa perpetua, private studio



ryan shaffer (usa)



daniel, inkdependent tattoo



arran burton, fudoshin tattoo



sean guthrie, sailor max



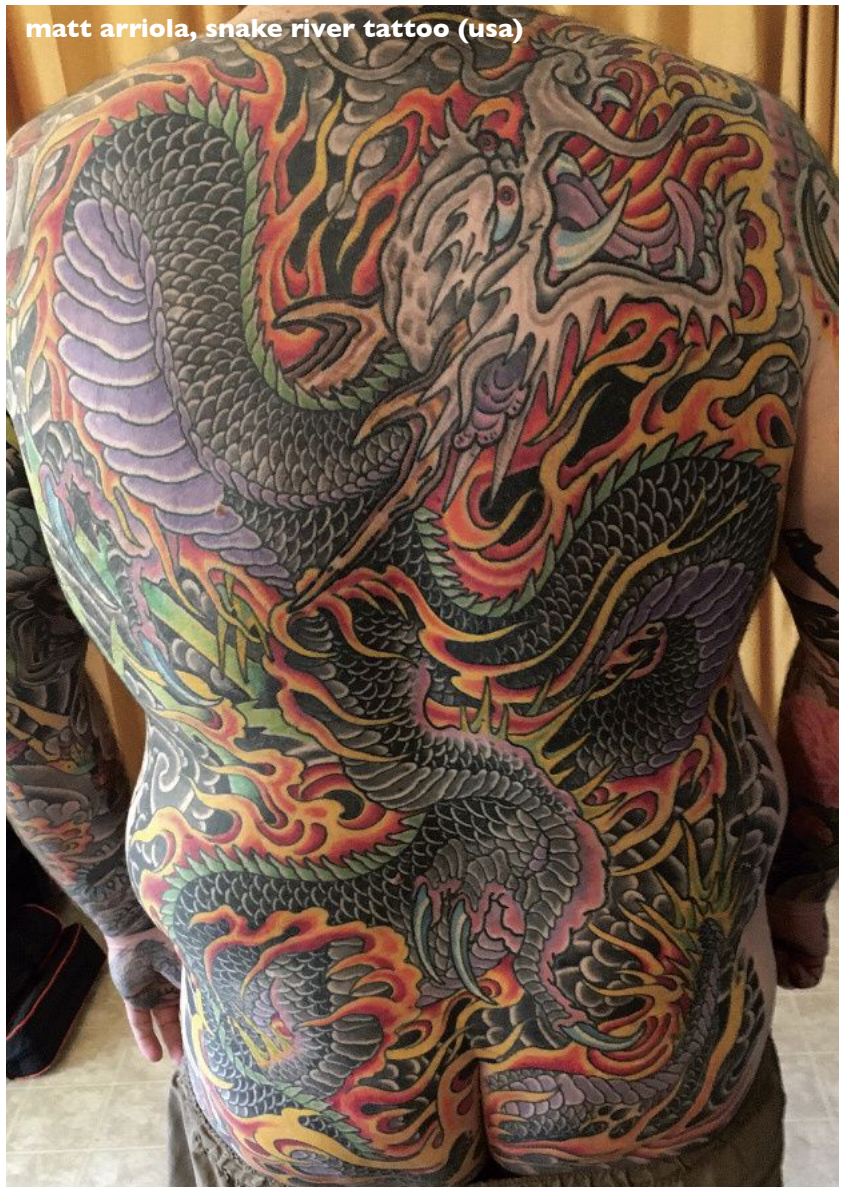
anthony mendoza,
mendoza ink (germany)



tomash blaszczak (ireland)



matt arriola, snake river tattoo (usa)



piotr gie, rock 'n' roll tattoo

belly, belly button tattoo (france)



chris morris, frontier tattoo parlour



ben kaye, ship shape tattoo (new zealand)



chloe jane, tanuki tattoo



piotr gie, rock 'n' roll



rob spider, cult xiii





christopher kenyon, true-til-death



paige spurdle,
attica tattoo studio



christopher kenyon,
true-til-death



daniel, inkdepent



gzy ex silesia, inkdepent



nick lovene, new wave tattoo





marie cox,
folklore tattoo



sim abbott, cosmic tattoo



georgia marshall,
next generation



jon potter, twisted image



loaf, big top tattoo (usa)

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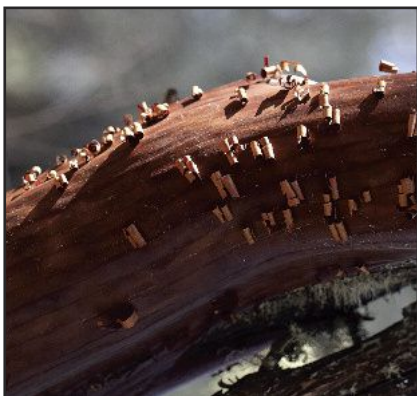
MARKUS LENHARD



B biomech specialist Markus Lenhard is well known on the convention circuit for his inspiring seminars, delivered with the same full-on intensity that he puts into his work and with which he lives his life in general. Regarding himself more as a scientist than an artist, he finds inspiration in nature rather than the man-made world. He works at a deep emotional level and wants his tattoos “to reach that part of the brain where people get a feeling before they get a thought.”

Why do you love biomech?

Biomech is very specific, yet very abstract. A bit like classical music, it doesn't always tell you exactly what it means. It's a very emotional style, and very visceral. It doesn't have to represent anything in a literal way. The only thing it must be is beautiful – and that is very much in the eye of the beholder. So I need to find out what my clients find beautiful, and to do that I have to get close to them and really get to know them. This is always interesting. They are often complex people. Most of my clients are very intellectual – doctors, architects, research scientists – and, at some level, they understand the designs in my work. They may not completely get it, but they tend to be looking for something deep. I don't do dragons or flowers or anything like that because those sorts of images don't reach the emotional depths that I am seeking. I want to access that part of the brain where people get a feeling before they get a thought. When you look at an abstract work of art, and you don't really understand what you're seeing, the first thing you get is a question mark in your head. But it's a good question mark, and you want to look some more, and try to work out what it's all about. Or maybe you hate it and think it's terrible! But you have an emotional response. You get a feeling before you get a thought. And that's what I want to provoke.



Do you find you can express yourself through the biomech style?

For me it's not about self-expression. It's about the final outcome. My work is a visual interpretation of the world that I see around me. But it's not a realistic representation. If you draw a rose a thousand times, you'll naturally find shortcuts – ways to represent the rose that still keep it looking like a rose. And suddenly a traditional rose design will appear, a simplified rose stripped back to its bare essentials. This is really a scientific process. I see a lot of parallels between tattooing and science.

But do you see yourself as an artist?

No, I've never seen myself as an artist. I know that somewhere along the line I have become an artist of sorts, but I've always felt that art is wishy washy in comparison to science. I've always been more of a science guy.

What inspires you?

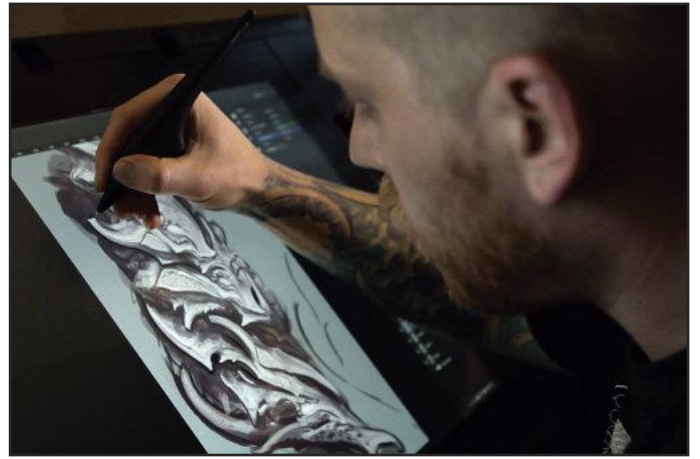
Physics is probably my favourite science. If you look at a blade of grass, you'll notice how it bends under its own weight, with the force of gravity. Visually, it will tell you a lot about itself. It creates a beautiful curve, and if you add a gentle breeze it will move. And all of a sudden what was once an insignificant blade of grass becomes an amazing physical presence, an arch, a shape full of complexity and subtlety. I am constantly reading the world around me. I look at the patterns in the wood on this table and I notice how similar they are to the wind bars of smoke from a cigarette. The wood might have taken several hundred years to mature; the cigarette smoke is there for only a few minutes. I am endlessly fascinated by this kind of thing.

So for you, nature is art?

Yes. I love to look at nature. I don't enjoy looking at technology any more. And I don't spend my money on man-made art either. I buy fossils, minerals, little pieces of driftwood... Every one of them is unique, and that's what I love about them. You will never find another identical piece anywhere in the world. That ugly lump of flint on the beach has taken millions of years to create; it's travelled thousands of miles and it's been subjected to unimaginably extreme conditions and now it lies there at your feet. It's the product of so many processes.

A painting on the wall is the result of just one person's contemplation. That can never compete. Anything that is man-made is inherently flawed. But any mistakes that nature makes are not mistakes at all, because nature is the ultimate artist.





So does that mean that your own 'man-made' tattooing is inherently flawed?

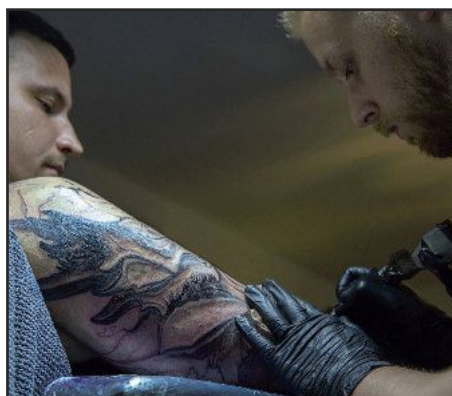
That's an interesting point. I'd never thought about it like that before... Maybe I just learned something right here and now! I love the human brain and the way it works. Everyone has something to teach you.

Are there any particular people you regard as guiding lights?

There are definitely people who inspire me, whether it's on an artistic level, or just because they are a good or beautiful human being. I spend a lot of time with Guy Aitchison. He inspired me artistically back in the day, and helped me with collaborations and by referring clients to me. He's also just a really good dude, a super nice person, interested in everything and everyone, and one of the most intelligent people I have ever met.

Tell us about your seminars.

I like problems and I like to analyse things and I wanted to give something back, which is why I love to do these seminars. At some point I will die and I don't want to take all my knowledge with me. I want to inject curiosity into others. You know, I never really thought of myself as being smart or intelligent. I never thought I had anything to offer. But then people like Jeff Gogue and Guy Aitchison pushed me, saying that I had something to give to the community, with the way that I think and the way that I talk. It took me some time, because I am shy and I didn't consider my views to be of interest to anyone. But my experiences have proved me wrong.

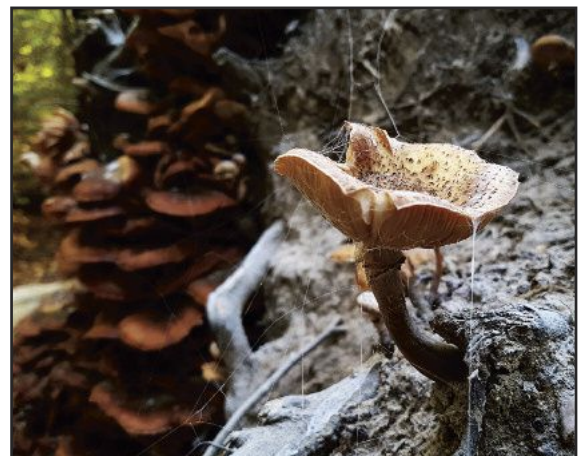


And now you enjoy teaching?

Yes, I really do. I enjoy talking! I always try to make my seminars a conversation between the audience and me. Most of the time I try not to get too technical; I find it better to be more philosophical. I think it's better to inspire people and let them discover their own skills rather than solve their problems for them. Life works better if you find your own solutions; it gives you more confidence and a stronger attitude that helps you move forward. I offer people ways of looking at problems so



into tattooing because it was trendy and easy to do. But it has now become a very fashionable trade, and even though the standard of work is good, something is missing. Of course this popularity is what we all hoped for... but now we are accepted, we no longer want to be. I miss being a pirate! I am pleased to have been around to see it change... and I am also guilty of perpetrating the knowledge and contributing to a change that I am kind of against. I don't want it to be easy or cheap. Nowadays I see people trying tattooing and then moving on to try something else. It should never have come to this. But I am a positive thinker, and I accept that it is what it is.



that they themselves can find the key to unlock the solutions. With the internet, everybody is so used to having all the information right there all the time, so they don't ever look to themselves for the answers – but if you never ask yourself any questions, how can you tell what's good information and what's bullshit? I mean look at us now. Apparently the world is fucking flat again!

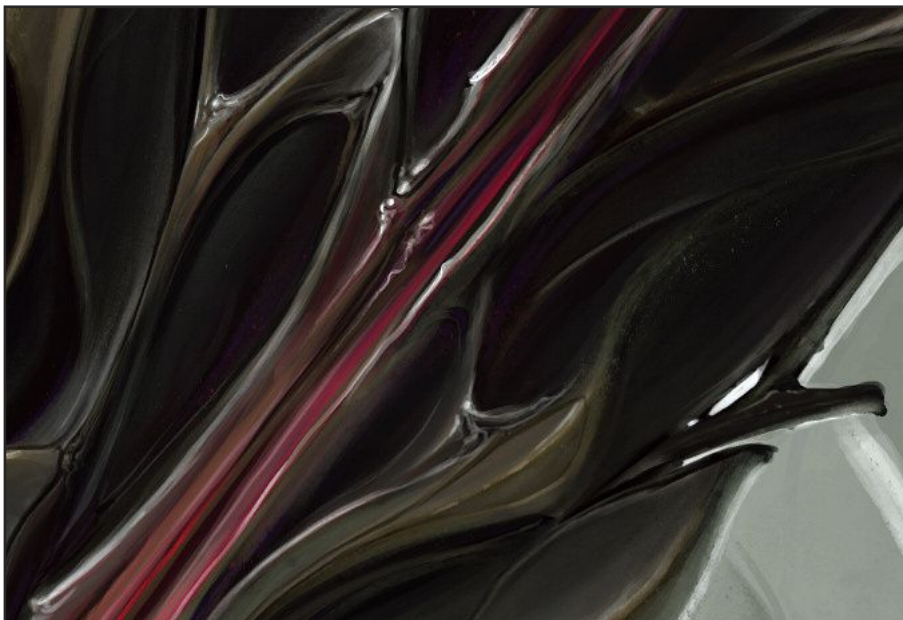
What do you yourself get out of your seminars?

When I am teaching, I have to organise my ideas into a narrative so that I can communicate them in an understandable way. This in turn leads me to a deeper understanding of those ideas. I find the process of verbalising my thoughts, from the abstract into reality, very therapeutic. The human brain is a muscle that exercises itself. There's this great myth that we only use a small percentage of our brains. That's bullshit. We use all of our brain, all of the time. And if you don't have enough to worry about, the brain will create its own problems to deal with!

You've seen a lot of changes in tattooing over the years. What do you see as the positives and negatives?

The availability of knowledge is a good thing. The quality that is demanded from tattooists is now so much higher. People's expectations have been raised, even when you compare it with ten years ago. People are so much better educated about tattooing and there is a greater awareness in general. Another positive is that we have so much good equipment now, and ink has improved a lot. But there are negatives. Anyone can now become a tattooist. It used to involve a kind of rite of passage. It was a bit subversive. I certainly didn't get





On a personal level, is there anything you don't like about tattooing?

The physical aspects. My back, shoulders and neck are all fucked. It's a really bad position to work in, and it's not sustainable in the long term. Also, the fact that our approach is not scientific enough. None of us really know what the fuck we're talking about. For instance, why does white ink sometimes turn yellow in the skin? Some people say it's because there's some flux on the needle, some people say it's because the customer went out in the sun too soon... but in all honesty nobody really knows. And that makes them all talk out of their arses!

How about conventions? Are they mostly a social thing for you now?

They are definitely more for the social side of things. Since I've been doing my seminars, I find that I get recognised a lot at conventions. There is always a group of people who want to hang out with me. At home, I'm usually a bit of a hermit. I'm a little hidden away, I don't have a lot clients every week, and I'm not super heavily tattooed so it's easy for me to fade into the background. But my seminars have been good for getting me noticed and getting me more attention, and who doesn't love that?



Presumably earlier on in your career you went to conventions to study other artists working?

Oh yes, I did all that. I would go to watch other tattooists and see if I could work out how they did what they did. But I didn't really learn that much out of it. It always looked so easy, then when I tried it for myself it never worked out. So I gradually stopped going. The convention thing really started up again for me when I felt I had something to offer – my seminars. Actually, I don't know many artists who really like working conventions. The big events are so loud, and the focus gets lost. I prefer the smaller ones with more of a community feel.

Have you seen anything else in tattooing that you want to try?

Lettering. I see a lot of similarities between biomech and script. You have that same flow and abstraction; the tattoo is beautiful and yet it retains a narrative. The more abstract it is, the more interesting it is to look at.





So will we see lettering in your work in the future?

Who knows. At the moment, I want to experiment with black and grey biomech. I don't do enough of that. I also want to devise a colour palette that works with darker skin. I like to make things complicated for myself!

Do you paint or draw for your work?

Hardly ever. I sit around and contemplate a lot. I look at a rock. I look at grass. I could draw it, but I don't need to. I have nobody to impress. My customers find me and they know what I do and they trust me. I don't have to draw out plans. I've done all that in the past. I don't acquire skills using the traditional method of drawing drawing drawing until I can't see anymore. I prefer to think about it, look at it, then procrastinate procrastinate procrastinate, work it out, and then contemplate it... then gradually, over time, it will present itself in my work.

What do you do when you're not tattooing?

I like to go out with my dogs. I live near to the forest and I love to be in nature. As I said, I also enjoy going to conventions to exercise the social side of my mind. I'm a very different person at conventions – way more outgoing, very personable. But at home I love to be alone. I ride my mountain bike aggressively on the trails, for the adrenalin. I need to turn my head off from time to time! I'm aware that I can be quite hard to be around; I'm quite intense. I meditate and I exercise a lot. Sometimes I need to turn off my thoughts without the use of substances.

Would you say you are an artist who always inhabits the present moment, or do you have an eye on the future too?

A bit of both. I certainly look ahead to future projects, but at the same time I am very much enjoying my current work. I don't ever look back. I live in the here and now.

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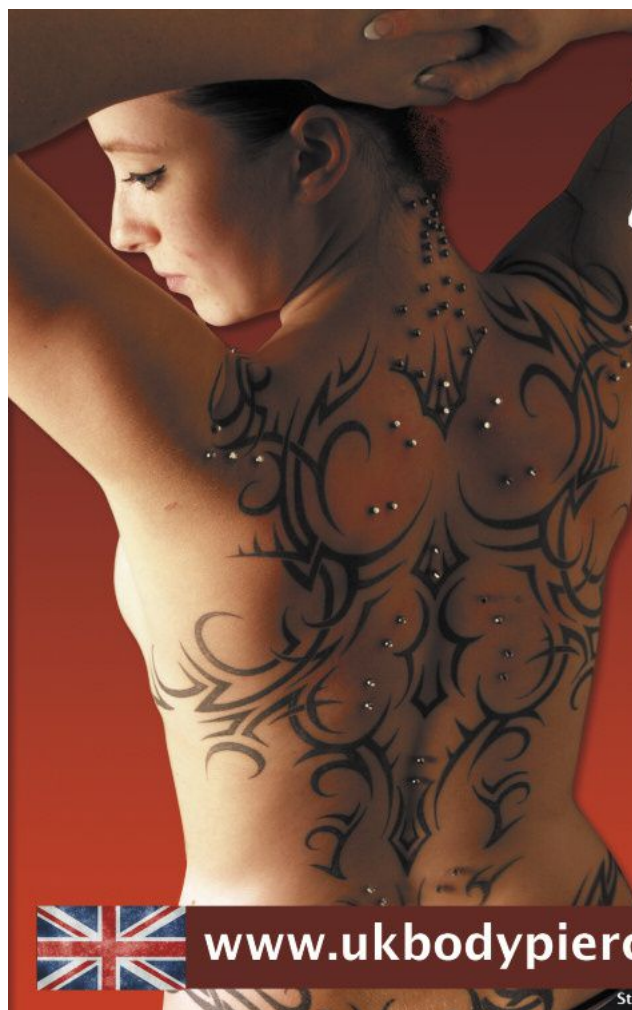


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EAST COAST TATTOO EXPO 2017

Every year, in early November, we make our way across the country to Essex for the East Coast Tattoo Expo, writes tattooist Fred Hedger of Needle and Fred Tattoo. It never seems to be sunny and it's always cold, but the weather is soon forgotten with the warm welcome that you receive as soon as you walk through the door. And the theme this year was Gangsters. Who'd have thought it? Gangsters in Essex? You're having a laugh! I know I did!

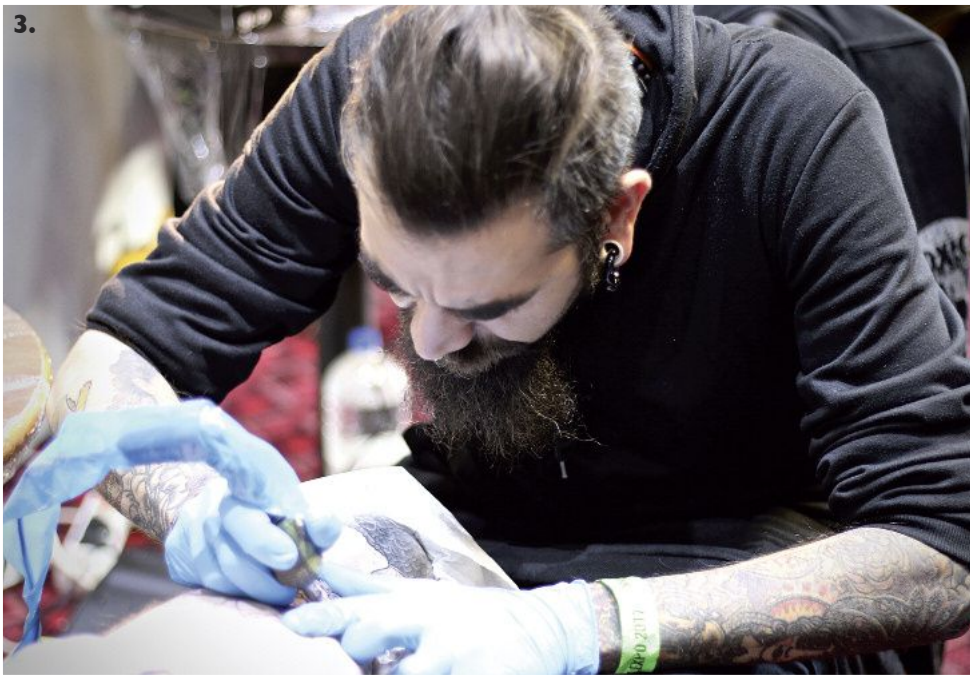
The ever-smiling Sonya Trusty of Reds Tattoo Parlour, and her husband Glyn, have been running this independent, unaffiliated show for fourteen years now. It's held in the Highfield Grange Caravan Park, which is a real bonus for working artists as the accommodation is cheap and it's all on-site.

On entering the convention, you're confronted with the usual traders and clothing stalls, plus sellers of fudge and moonshine (which is the proper potent gear, trust me!) Sauntering past all of that, you find yourself in the main hall where on the Friday night there were bands playing and on the Saturday night there was the howling and growling of good ol' karaoke (and who doesn't like karaoke?) with a nice abundance of tattooists and clients all having a good time on both nights. There was a great vibe and atmosphere. This is a show that has something to offer everyone. Being held at a holiday park it's even got a selection of arcade games, and there's stalls for the kids, a bar for the grown-ups and you can also have a flutter on the roulette. There was also a piercer and a barber on site. Everyone's happy!

As soon as I arrived I set up my booth in the main hall then went for a look around. I saw all the regular artists and their crews – PJ Reynolds and Rising Phoenix in their usual spot, and Blood Sweat & Pain all working away, and Tanuki in attendance too. There were no fewer than nine international artists working the East Coast Expo this time – and with a substantial waiting list of other artists wanting to be there, it all goes to show that this is a convention well worth considering.

Walking around the labyrinthine layout, there was a plethora of artistic avenues to go down (Japanese, realism, dotwork... take your pick). There was some top work being produced at this convention, including solid Japanese work from Aaron Willett of King's Ship Tattoo, sublime black and grey and some heavy blackwork with beautiful contrasts, and some not too shabby colour work by some fella called Fred... but I digress! And of course the era of the fancy rotary is well and truly upon us, so instead of the familiar buzz of conventions gone by there was more of a mild hum accompanying all the work being done.





1. ben nuthink
2. jonny firth, sorry mum tattoos
3. ray hunt, diablo tattoo
4. lauris vinbergs
5. steve airey
6. artist unknown
7. sean siamese, alans tattoo





8. chloe, tanuki tattoo

9. ben nuthink working

10. jayson smith, deer heart collective

11. luke rushdon, the cult tattoo studio

12. lal hardy

13. gary fairclough, this mortal coil

14. artist unknown

15. lauris vinburgs

16. dotwork damien working

It was also nice to see some of the tattooists showing off their artistic talents in other media such as painting or sculpture. Sean Crane's pieces were very different and particularly inspiring to see.

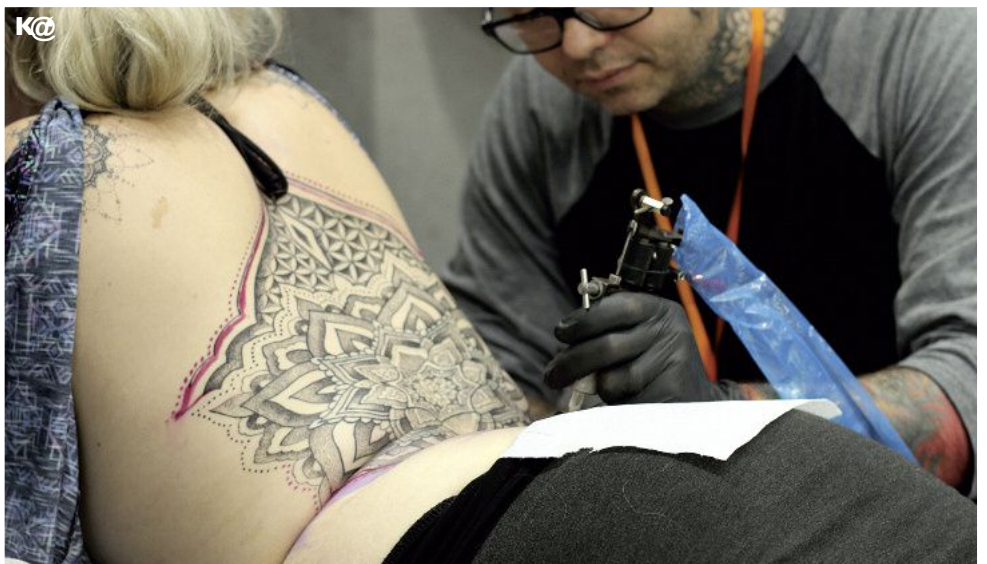
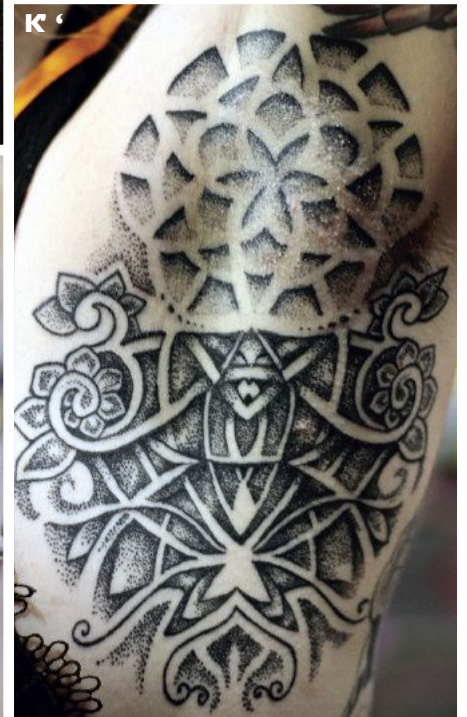
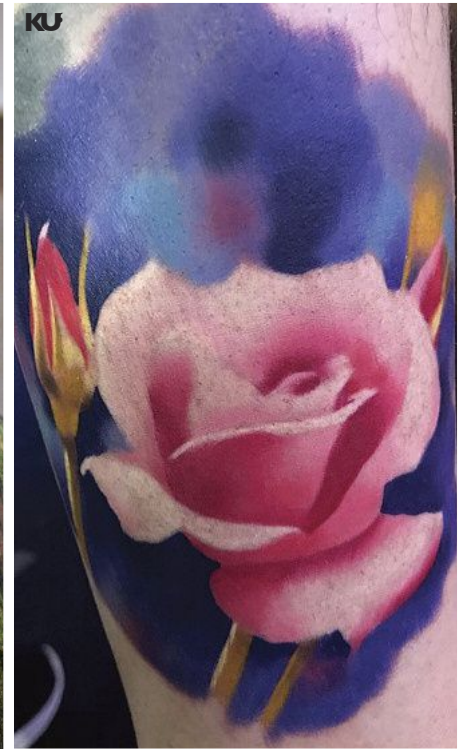
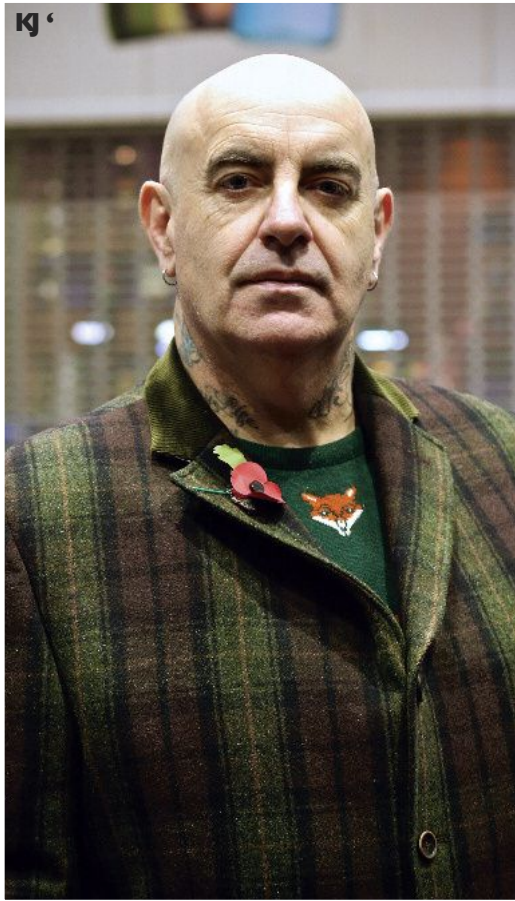
The footfall on the Saturday was slow yet steady. (Tyler, who came from Germany to work in my booth, did very well.) And once the hustle and bustle of the day was over, everyone congregated in the main hall for a beer and a chat. Sunday was a lot busier, and the convention rapidly filled up. As I was walking around taking pics I spied a true tattoo titan in the shape of none other than Lal Hardy. He was nonchalantly walking about and I'd like to think I caught him in a good light with my photo!

As the awards loomed, the main hall became an arena of expectation and excitement. This is one of the few conventions I know that does first, second and third prizes – and at the end of the day, who doesn't like winning an award? Right! Well you have a decent chance of picking up something here – and as a struggling artist who definitely thinks he can always do better, take it from me, this can be a very good incentive and a great confidence boost. But saying that, you'd better bring your A-game. The level of tattooing ability here was the highest it's ever been.

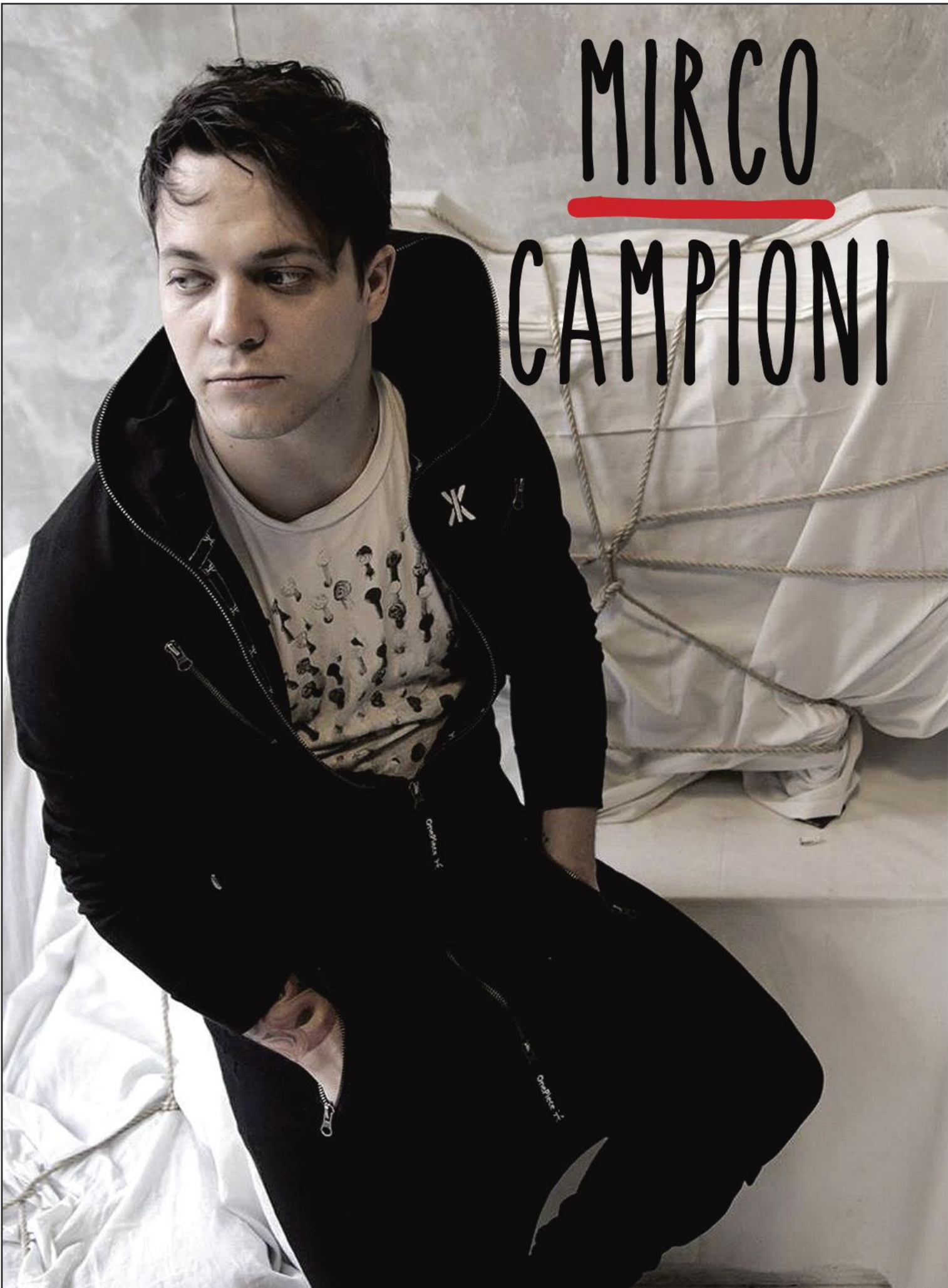
Once the dust had settled and the awards were handed out, I got to photograph a lot of the winners. With some of the tattooists winning their first-ever awards, there were big grins all round. It's always nice to see people getting rewarded for their hard work and a real pleasure to see the 'next generation' of artists coming through. Best of Show was won by Jonny Firth with a large skull done with high contrasts of black and grey shades. It was very striking!

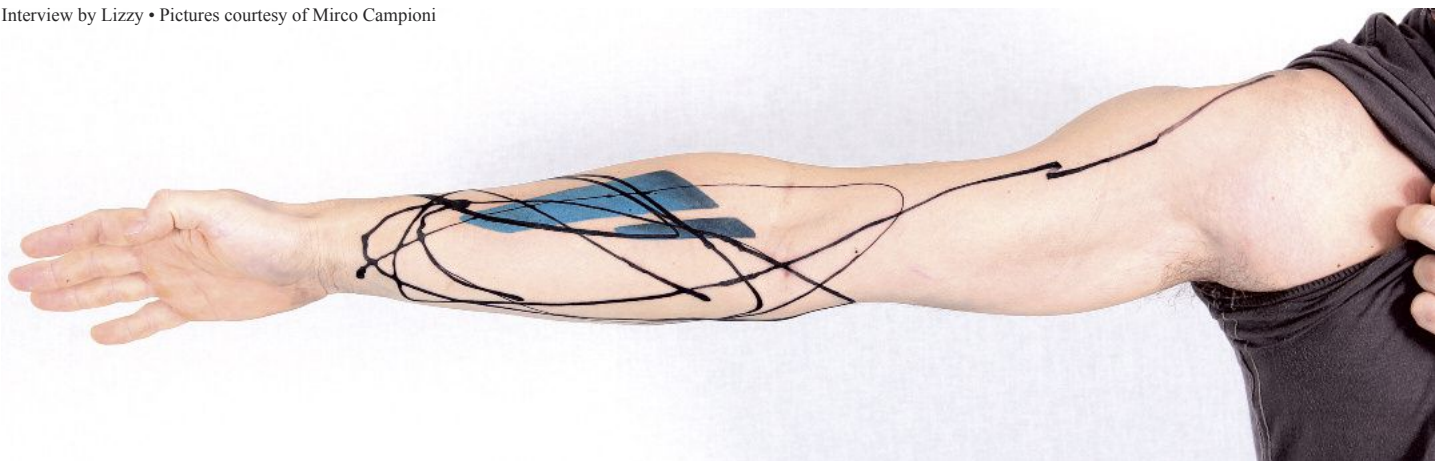
As we all got packed away and the usual handshakes and well-done pats-on-the-backs were subsiding, I was thinking about the event itself and what a success it had been. There's something for everyone here, and it's always a great convention to work as you're very well looked after. The unusual layout can be a slightly tricky one – it's a bit of a maze, so some artists could easily be missed by those who are not too inquisitive in their explorations – but this is due to the high demand to work the show and is not Sonya and the crew's fault at all. And in some ways it's quite a plus. This is not a show you walk around in five minutes and you're done. It's a real labyrinth of artistic talent.

So if you do come to the East Coast Expo next year, make sure you have a really good look around as you never know what gems you might find!



MIRCO --- CAMPIONI





Multi-talented Mirco Campioni is an accomplished painter as well as a highly regarded tattooist. His tattoos combine a multitude of elegant graphic styles. And in his paintings and sculptures, contemporary pop culture icons find themselves re-imagined in classical or fine art contexts... often with truly disturbing results.

Mirco's social media handle is 'Mirco is Dead'. Knowing that the person I'm interviewing is still very much alive, I'm wondering whether this is maybe a reference to the sad fact that an artist's work often generates serious money only when they're dead? And is it perhaps even an attempt by Mirco to capitalise on that fact while still in the land of the living?



Mirco laughs out loud. "That's what my friends say!" he tells me. "They're like, 'OK, so when you do die, we can have your paintings and your prints, yeah?' They're already planning for it. Every time I draw something on a piece of paper, they say, 'Can I have this one too?' and they're always asking, 'Are you sure you're feeling alright? You're not dying soon?' I really do think we need to joke about death and not take it too seriously. In fact I believe, in a way, that we are all already dead – every one of us! But the main reason I have that name is that my old Facebook page (Mirco Mouse) got closed down, and I just impulsively chose Mirco is Dead when I opened a new account. It was like, 'Mirco... Mirco is... Mirco is Dead.' It's that simple really."

So how did it all begin? "I started painting about eleven years ago," Mirco tells me, "and I actually paid for my first tattoo by swapping it for one of my oil paintings. It was when I was watching my own tattoos being done that I suddenly started feeling that I really wanted to try it for myself – painting on skin, rather than painting on canvas. I tried it on one of my friends pretty much the next day! I've been tattooing for about five years now. I work in other media too. In fact I've just had my first solo exhibition (in Milan), which included sculpture and other stuff as well as paintings. There were fifty artworks in all, and it was called 'Mr Monsters'."

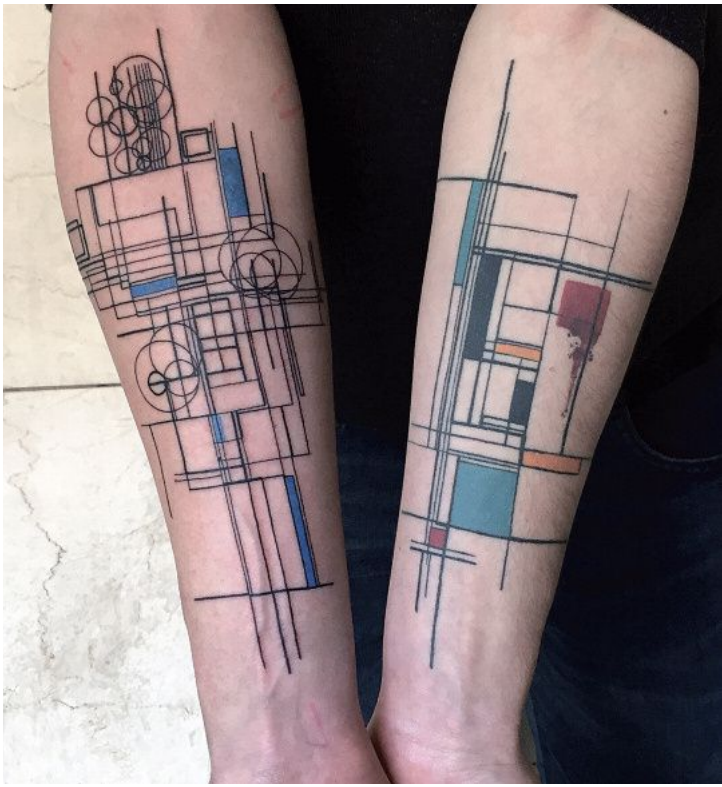
Mirco's styles of tattooing and painting appear very different. Was this intentional, I wondered? "Yes, it is intentional," is Mirco's straightforward reply. "When I first started tattooing, I was doing everything in a realistic style. But I think the outline of a tattoo is necessary for its longevity, and I tried mixing the realism with graphics and other stuff. There are still some realistic elements in my tattoos, though, which is an obvious similarity with my paintings, and sometimes the subject matter can be similar to my paintings too. After all, I am a super nerd!"

I ask which pop culture icons appeal to Mirco the most? "My favourite super hero is Batman," he answers, "because he's a metalhead! He has no superpower, he just has just money! Another favourite figure is Freddy Krueger, and I also love other eighties characters like Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Ghostbusters... But for me, one of the most important characters in pop culture today is the Stormtrooper from Star Wars. A Stormtrooper is a clone, and I like to use that image as a metaphor in my work – as a basic human. It's definitely one of the most important icons for me."

I ask Mirco to tell me about his other artistic influences. "Lots of things! I can pick something from any graphic style and incorporate it into my work. I don't like looking at familiar stuff all the time. I like to look at stuff that I don't know how to create, because that's how you learn. I think you can learn something from everyone – whether they're good at what they do, or not so good. In this job, you learn something every day. Most of my friends are artists, so I feel very lucky and constantly very inspired."

"In tattooing, influence is all-important," Mirco continues. "Nowadays, there are so many tattoo artists. Too many perhaps. Directly copying somebody else's work is not right, but if you can find things that inspire you and use them in your own way, it can make a real difference to what you do. I can explain what I mean if I use an example from another creative field. Quentin Tarantino is a great film director. He 'took' much of his material from other movies – both good and bad – but he mixed everything together and came up with something special that was his own."





Mirco has a large client base and a busy work schedule. I ask how he balances his time. "I usually tattoo every day in the studio," he tells me, "but I guest around Italy as well. I find I need to focus on either painting or tattooing. I can't focus on both. If I want to paint, I need to devote myself to it entirely. All day long, I'll be surrounded by my canvasses, working on several at a time, and focusing only on that. It can take nine or ten days to paint one of the smaller pieces, and a month for the large ones. I did a huge canvas with the pink t-rex from the Flintstones, called 'I Wanna be a Rock Star'. It was nearly three metres by two metres and it took me about three months. When I was preparing for my last exhibition, I had to take four months off from the tattoo studio. But it's the same for tattooing. When I tattoo, I can't paint. Sometimes, though, I have no choice but to split my time between the two. If I'm running really late for an exhibition, for instance, I might tattoo all day and paint all night – but you can't do that for long. It's too dangerous for your mind."



Oils obviously give Mirco the results he seeks in his paintings. “Yeah. I used to use acrylics, but once you move over to oils, you never go back. The colours are more brilliant and the oil painting process gives you more time – which is what I need when I am doing the hyper-realistic stuff. With acrylics, you mix them with water and they can dry in a matter of minutes. There is less pressure when working with oils.”

I ask Mirco to describe what he sees as the differences between tattooing and painting. “For me, there is more freedom in painting,” he replies, “because it’s just for me and my mind – even if I do eventually share it with the world. But when you are tattooing, you are tattooing SOMEONE. And that means you have to discuss your ideas with them (or at least that’s how I like to do it). I always want to do my thing, but at the same time I also want to understand what my client has in mind. That’s why I don’t do commissioned paintings any more. It’s partly because of the time involved, but mostly because I feel I’m more free to do something special if I’ve got no directions or restrictions.”





So does Mirco feel creatively constrained when he talks through tattoo ideas with a client? “Yes and no,” he admits. “I do listen to what my clients say, but I’m the one who has to make the final decision because I do this job every day and I know what will work on their skin. They know what they want the tattoo to look like, but they don’t have the artistic or technical knowledge to know how to create it. It’s good though, because my customers understand this. And I never try to convince them to have something different; I just like to help them get the best from me.”

I am curious to know whether Mirco ever uses his paintings as tattoo designs. “I do, but I have to adapt them of course,” he tells me. “I’ve turned three of my paintings into tattoos so far, and it’s something I enjoy doing. It’s another way to get my paintings known. It’s that recognition – to tattoo what I paint. And because my customers like what I do on canvas, they also want it on their skin.”



I wondered whether Mirco felt he was better known as a tattoo artist or as a painter?

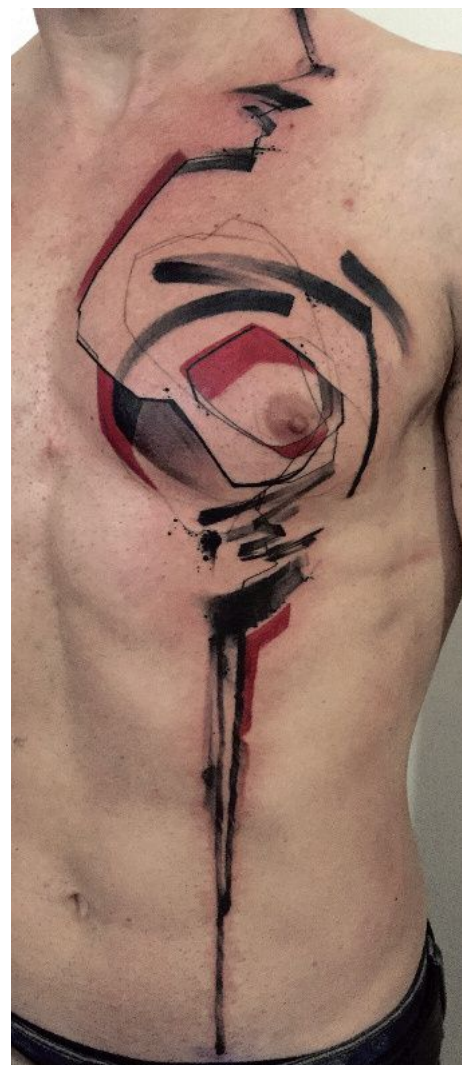
“Unfortunately, I’m better known as a tattoo artist,” he replies. He then goes on to explain the negative tone of his answer. “Inside, I’m more of a painter – mainly because I was painting long before I started tattooing. But I do like to do both. The thing is, I think it’s almost too easy to be ‘famous’ in the tattoo world. There’s a saturation of tattoo artists. ‘Anyone’ can do it. Of course there are a lot of really super tattoo artists out there, but for me personally, fine art is another thing. To be recognised solely as a fine artist is, I think, much more difficult. In fact it’s almost impossible, because you have to know all the right people. But I’m working on it!”

“So, to answer your original question,” Mirco continues, “I guess most people know me for my tattoos. But really, I try to do both things in parallel. I like to be recognised for both. Saying that, though, every time I work a convention my prints always sell out. Even though I’m actually there to tattoo people, everyone wants to look at my paintings! I’ve also been featured in tattoo magazines, not for my tattoos but for my paintings. I like that. It’s good when people can look at a tattoo magazine and see something they weren’t expecting. It’s pretty obvious you’re going to see tattoos, but there I am with my art... It’s strange, but I like it.”

As our conversation draws to a close, I ask Mirco about future plans. “I’d like to be a rock star, and I’m almost there!” he says with a laugh. “Seriously though, I’m planning to take my ‘Mr Monsters’ solo exhibition to more cities in Italy, and I’d like to take it to other countries too. But other than that, I’d really just like to do more of what I’m currently doing. And Plan C is to open a pop culture cinema!”

Mirco Campioni works at Sundance Tattoo in Bologna, Italy

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The Secret Tattoo

**From Both Sides of the Needle
Alex Hennerley and Gary**

Alex Hennerley of Adorned Tattoo is known for her stunning dotwork and blackwork. She recently created an amazing geometric tattoo for her customer, Gary. But take a closer look. This isn't just a mind-blowingly fine tattoo design. It's also an intricate puzzle, a complex web of codes and ciphers, and a beautiful enigma hiding a secret! Here's the story, from both sides of the needle.



Words by Total Tattoo reporting team
 Information and images courtesy of [cosmosian.com](#)

ALEX

Could you tell us about your first meeting with Gary?

On the initial consultation, which was several months before his first booking, Gary didn't know or seem too bothered about what he wanted. He just liked my work and wanted something big in my style. I told him in the wait between to start collecting images of the kind of thing that appealed to him, and when he came back he had this epic plan that seemed really original and complex. I loved it!

In terms of the design of the piece, how much artistic input did you have?

From what I remember, Gary was happy to give me complete freedom. He told me he wanted matching sleeves, and as many of the coded elements as I could get in, but he was very open to letting me loose on how I wanted to put it all together. A lot of my clients seem to feel like this. I am extremely lucky.

Composition-wise, did this piece differ from your usual work?

I try to be inventive with the composition of all my bigger projects. I learn something new from each of them, and I get inspired for the

next, which means every new piece is different and a challenge to me.

How long did the piece take to tattoo?

So – added up by Gary as I have no idea! – he informs me that with the added chest link it came to a total of 50 hours in 13 sessions over 11 months.

Do you have a favourite part of the tattoo?

I think my favourite part of Gary's tattoo is the hidden meaning! And the clues that are less obvious, which make you examine it on another level.

Do YOU know the meaning behind the tattoo?

Let's just say I asked, I nagged, I tried to bribe, threaten and eventually beg, but he wouldn't tell me the answer. I ended up getting my extremely clever scientist brother-in-law to work on it. So yes, I do know, but I will NEVER tell... You have to work it out!

How was the tattoo constructed?

Both sleeves were plotted and outlined in the first session. I always like to get a main structure on straight away and build from there. The chest was added later and was not

part of the original plan, but it has been constructed with matching codes to make sense of the whole piece.

As a tattooist, what did you learn from doing this tattoo?

What I get from every new piece is lessons in structure, negative space and composition. I never stop learning. From every single tattoo I gain some vital insight for the next.

What was the most challenging part of this tattoo?

The hardest part of this piece was to get the symmetry, as I plot everything out freehand. I go through a LOT of Sharpies.

Were there any elements that Gary wanted that couldn't be incorporated?

Sometimes it's hard to incorporate every element a client wants. I do really try, but it can be difficult as I don't want to compromise the flow or structure. But we got everything in that Gary wanted. I actually think he got more than he bargained for, because he initially wasn't going for the chest but people kept saying he should link up the sleeves.



Do tattoos with special personal meanings give you additional pressure?

It can be a pressure, but I kind of work better like that. Hence why I do everything freehand on the day. It brings something out in me, which seems to work.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Gary was an amazing client and he's now a friend. I love my job so much, and I hope people keep coming to me with these crazy ideas that I can be let loose on!

GARY

Are codes and ciphers something you've always been fascinated by?

I've always been interested in computers, programming and codes – right from a very young age. My grandparents gave me my first computer when I was six years old and I loved writing my own programs and games on it. It must have made an impression, because I'm a programmer now, so I get to look at code all day! And I really enjoy solving puzzles. The codes and ciphers were just a good way to make a puzzle with skin and ink.

Why did you choose to have a tattoo with a hidden message? Had you been considering that idea for a long time?

Honestly, I didn't have any particular plans at all to begin with. I just always wanted sleeves, and when I started looking around at other geometric work, I noticed that the art I liked the most was broken up using text, equations, formulae, etc. I didn't really have any text that I wanted to use, so I started thinking about how I could incorporate equations or formulae, and then I thought, 'Huh, maybe I could turn this into a puzzle...'

Why did you choose to get tattooed by Alex?

I fell in love with her portfolio. It's massive and very impressive, and I just had a good feeling that I'd be in safe, experienced hands. She knows what she's doing.

How did you originally envisage the design? And does the finished piece live up to your expectations?

All I really knew at the beginning was that I wanted matching, symmetrical sleeves. I absolutely love what Alex has managed to put together, especially with me throwing codes at her every session.

Did you work closely with Alex during the design process?

I gave Alex the codes and the formulae, and she gave me homework to find geometric patterns and tattoos that I liked. We then sat down and put it all together. Alex knew exactly which patterns would work well with each other, and how she wanted to lay everything out. She then just picked up a pen and started drawing outlines all over me. It was crazy!

Do you have a favourite part of the tattoo?

Wow, that's a tough question. I like the large ancient symbols on each arm, especially the shout out to the All-Seeing-Eye. I also love the main circle in the chest piece. It has huge significance to the puzzle and, y'know, kinda makes me look like Iron Man...

What was the most painful part to get tattooed?

I thought it was the elbows. Then we started on the chest. Ouch.

Do you get lots of comments?

Yes, I do. People often seem to get lost staring at the designs... until they realise I'm staring back at them...

Tell us more about the coded elements.

All of the symbols and formulae are put together based on known ciphers – some more well known than others – plus there are a few tricks in there to make it a bit more complicated.

Aside from yourself, does anybody else know the hidden meaning?

Yes, but only because they worked it out. I'm not telling anybody! There are people who have worked out some of the parts, but got stuck on others. Maybe they should all get together to solve it.

Do you have any advice for cracking the code that you're happy for people to know?

To get started, take a look at the co-ordinates. They point to a Geocache that contains a clue... You don't NEED this clue, but it might help. I'm not giving you any more than that. It's a puzzle! You have to work it out for yourself!

What happens if somebody deciphers the tattoos?

If people want to try to find the solution, that's great. But I think I probably had more fun coming up with it in the first place! If you think you've deciphered the tattoos you can go to the website I've made to check your answer (**cryptink.com**) If you're right, I'll add you to the Hall of Fame, which is full of totally cool people.

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info@thefamilybusinessstudio.com
www.thefamilybusinessstudio.com

Frith Street

18 Frith Street (basement), Soho,
London W1D 4RQ
Phone number:
frithstreettattoo.london@gmail.com
www.frithstreettattoo.co.uk

Fudoshin Tattoos

158 George Ln, London
E18 1AY
Tel number: 020 8989 6144
fudoshintattoos@hotmail.com
www.fudoshintattoos.com

Happy Sailor Tattoo

17 Hackney Rd, London E2 7NX
Tel no: 020 7033 9222
Email: Via website
www.happysailortattoo.com

Inksmiths Of London

8 Chequers Parade, Eltham,
London SE9 1DD
Tel no: 020 8617 3338
Inksmithsoflondon@gmail.com
Instagram: @InksmithsofLondon

Kilburn Original Tattoo

175 Kilburn High Road, Kilburn,
London. NW6 7HY
Tel no: 02073723662
info@kilburnoriginal.com
Instagram: @kilburntattoo

New Wave Tattoo Studio

157 Sydney Road, Muswell Hill,
London N10 2NL
Tel no: 02084448779
lalhardy@hotmail.co.uk
www.newwavetattoo.co.uk

Old Habits Tattoo

364 Kingsland Road, London.
E8 4DA
Tel no: 02036090931
oldhabitstattoo@gmail.com
www.oldhabitstattoo.com

Seven Doors Tattoo

55 Fashion St, Shadwell, London
E1 6PX
Tel no: 020 7375 3880
sevendoorstattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @sevendoorstattoo

SOUTH EAST

1770 Tattoo

4 Little East Street Brighton
BN1 1HT
Tel no: 01273710730
info@1770tattoo.com
www.1770tattoo.com

The Church Tattoo

11 Church road Redditch
B97 4AB
Tel no: 01527 759852
thechurchtattoo@hotmail.com
Instagram: @thechurchtattoo

Higgins and Co

69 Terminus Road, Above
Coffee Republic, Eastbourne
BN21 3NJ
Tel number: 01323 301973
higginsandco71@gmail.com
www.higginsandcotattoo.co.uk

Scribbly Head @Electric Buddha

32-36 Plains of Waterloo,
Ramsgate CT11 8HX

Tel no: 01843 855041
scribbly_head@hotmail.com
Instagram: @scribbly_head

SOUTH WEST

Needle and Fred Tattoo

22 High St, Littlehampton BN17
5EE
Tel no: 01903 733622
needleandfred@live.co.uk
Instagram: @inkfred

WALES

Dexterity Ink

Unit 9 Indoor Peoples Market
LL13 8Wrexham
Tel no: 01978 447100
www.facebook.com/DexterityInk
TattooStudio09

Physical Graffiti

124 City Road, Cardiff. CF24 3DQ
Tel no: 02920481428
pgct@hotmail.co.uk
Instagram: @physicalgraffittattoos

Stronghold Tattoo

Unit 12, 12 Mount Stuart Square,
Cardiff CF10 5EE
Tel no: 07943 981671
www.strongholdtattoo.com

WEST MIDLANDS

Broad Street Studio

26 Broad Street, Bath
Tel no: 01225329825
info@broadstreetstudio.co.uk
www.broadstreetstudio.co.uk

Dark Horse Collective

33 Boldmere Rd, Sutton Coldfield
B73 5UY
Tel no: 01214061635
www.darkhorsecollective.com

NORTH WEST

Aurora Tattoo

Sultan of Lancaster, Brock St,
The Old Church, Lancaster
LA1 1UU
auroratattoo@hotmail.co.uk
www.auroratattoostudio.co.uk

Bold As Brass Tattoo

Charleston House, 12 Rumford Pl,
Liverpool L3 9DG
Tel no: 0151 227 1814
boldasbrasstattoo@gmail.com
www.boldasbrasstattoo.com

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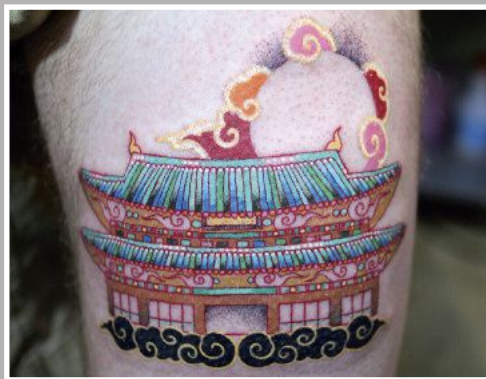
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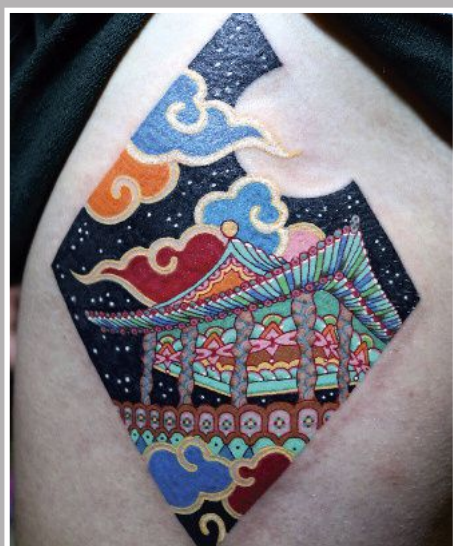
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PITTA

Korean tattoo artists are producing some stunning work, yet their profession is currently outlawed in their home country.* Pitta Kkm, who has been guesting at Bez's Triplesix Studios in Sunderland, creates astounding tattoos whose colours have a luminosity that has to be seen to be believed. His unique palette is inspired by traditional Korean aesthetics, and his designs often incorporate pop culture references and borrowed imagery from Western fine art – all with a beautiful Korean twist.



* In South Korea, it's currently illegal for anyone who isn't a qualified medical professional to practise tattooing, because it's classed as a medical procedure. There is, however, a groundswell of public opinion against anti-tattooing legislation. A few months ago a petition was presented to the Constitutional Court in Seoul by South Korea's tattoo and make-up artists' trade associations.





Because of the legal situation, practising tattooing in South Korea obviously has its challenges. What kinds of day-to-day problems do you face?

It's difficult to get established in business as a tattooist, because of course there's no official framework in which to operate and no acknowledgement by the authorities that we even exist. It's also hard to get supplies and machines. And obviously we're always worried about getting caught and having everything confiscated (as well as facing other penalties).



Is there much prejudice against tattooed people in Korea?

Yes. Historically in Korean society, tattooed people have been regarded as criminals and outsiders. We often face prejudice.

How does South Korea's tattoo scene compare to other countries where you've worked?

I have been to Hong Kong and the UK, and both places have quite a different tattoo culture - much better than Korea. Especially in the UK, there are so many tattooed people! And they're not even 'alternative' people. They work in mainstream jobs. I haven't seen any negative reactions directed at tattooed people. Everyone seems to regard me as ordinary here!





You've been tattooing at Bad Hands Tattoo Works in Seoul for three years now. Are you self-taught?

I learned from other tattoo artists for a really short period of time, than I just did it myself. I've got lots of tattoos from famous Korean artists, and I always like to watch them working and ask questions about how they do their tattoos. My struggle has been to adapt their techniques to my own tattooing style.

What has been the most difficult technique for you to master?

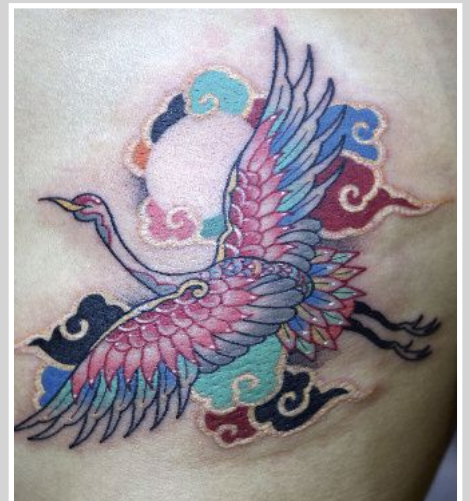
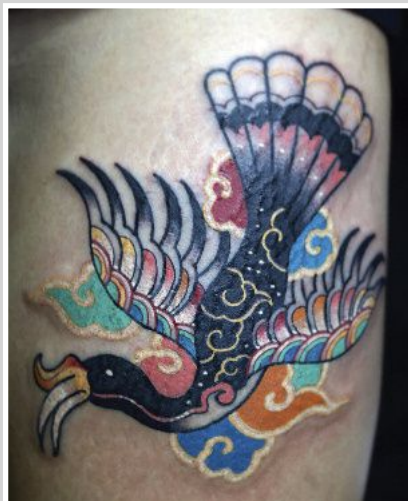
I think creating a tattoo that will heal well is the most difficult part of my job. Each person's skin is unique - and every part of the body has a different type of skin - so I am constantly having to adjust my technique accordingly.

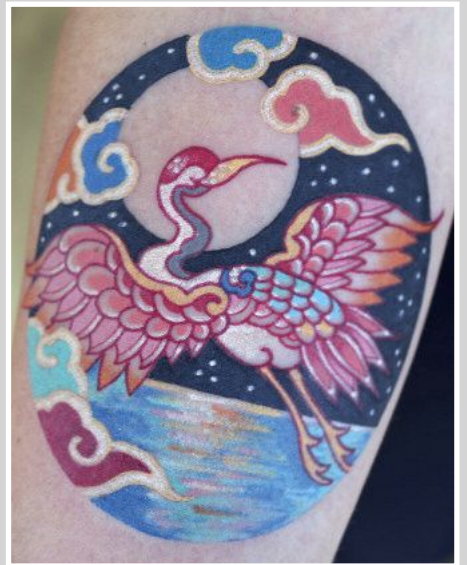
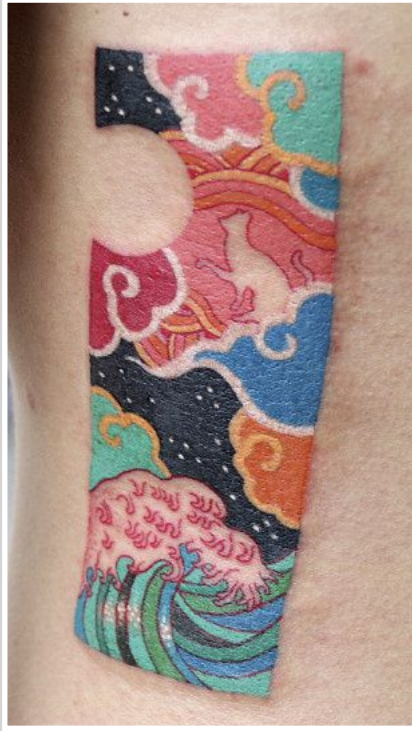
How did you get interested in tattooing?

I got into body modification when I was a high school student. Then I just fell in love with tattooing. I've been into art - and wanting to be an artist of some sort - ever since childhood. I went to art college then majored in sculpture at university.

And fine art is clearly an important influence in your work now.

Yes, I'm very inspired by the Old Masters and by many other Western artists too. Buddhist art is also a great inspiration to me, and of course traditional Korean designs. I also love old school Americana. In my tattoos, I combine EVERYTHING with Korean aesthetics.







You seem to gather imagery from everywhere, and work your magic on it!

I like using well known motifs – such as Hokusai's wave, the Pink Panther, Magritte's Man in a Bowler Hat, or The Creation of Adam from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling – and whether they're from fine art or pop culture, I always have fun with them, giving them a Korean flavour.

How would you describe your style of tattooing?

I want to say my style is just Pitta-style!

Tell us about the Korean elements of your work.

ALL of my designs – the shapes, colours, composition... – are based on traditional Korean aesthetics. I always represent the clouds, cranes, lotus flowers and tigers in the traditional way.



And your wonderfully bright colours?

In Korea we have a special colour scheme called the 'Obangsaek', or The Five Cardinal Directions. Blue is for east, white is for west, red is for south, black is for north, and yellow is for the middle. I always try to make perfect combinations of these five colours. You will also find the traditional 'Dancheong' colours in my tattoos - literally Cinnabar and Blue-Green - which are used for decorating wooden temple buildings.

Do you have a personal philosophy that governs how you design a tattoo?

Every time I design a tattoo, I always imagine that it's going to go on my own body. It feels weird to tattoo someone with a design that I wouldn't want myself.

What machines do you like to use?

I use Ego machines. The Ego V2 was my first machine, then I tried the Overkill model. They're powerful, easy to set up, and perfect for me. I don't use any other machine brand - just a Critical power supply.

How important is travelling to you?

It's very important. By travelling, I can meet other artists who will inspire my work. When I was invited to do a guest spot at Triplesix, I thought it was such a good opportunity - both professionally and socially.

What have you enjoyed most about being in the UK?

The best (and the worst!) thing is meeting new people all the time, every day. English is not my first language, so there are sometimes misunderstandings in communication. But everyone is so nice, and I feel really happy talking with them and tattooing them.

You're only 24 years old. What are your future goals?

My ultimate ambition is for there to be a Korean tattoo style that's as famous as traditional American or Japanese.



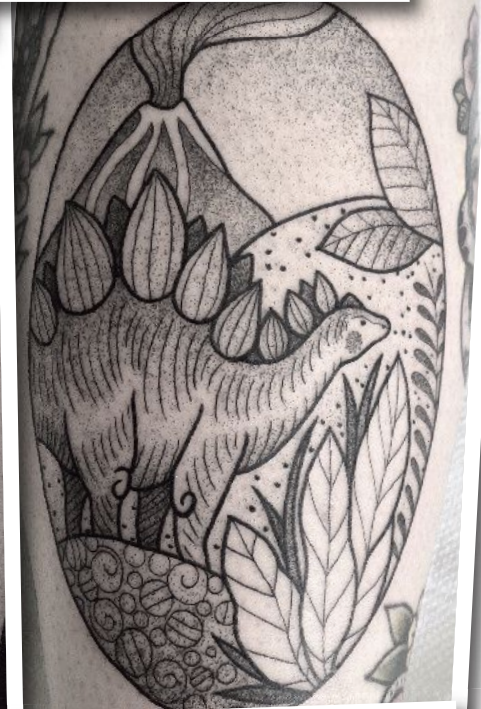
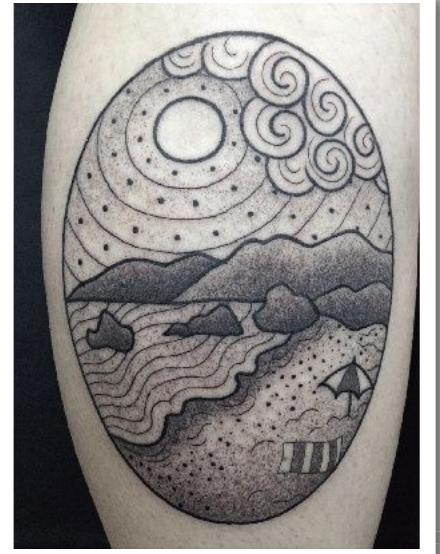
[facebook.com/pittaKKM](https://www.facebook.com/pittaKKM)
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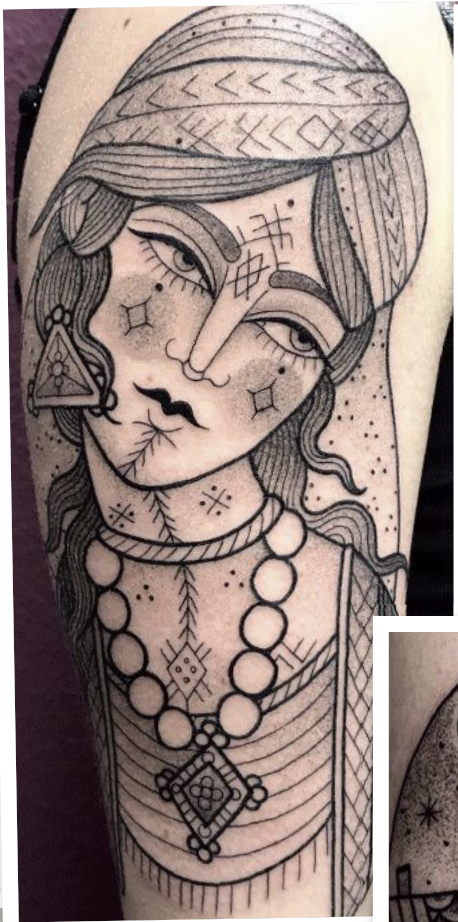


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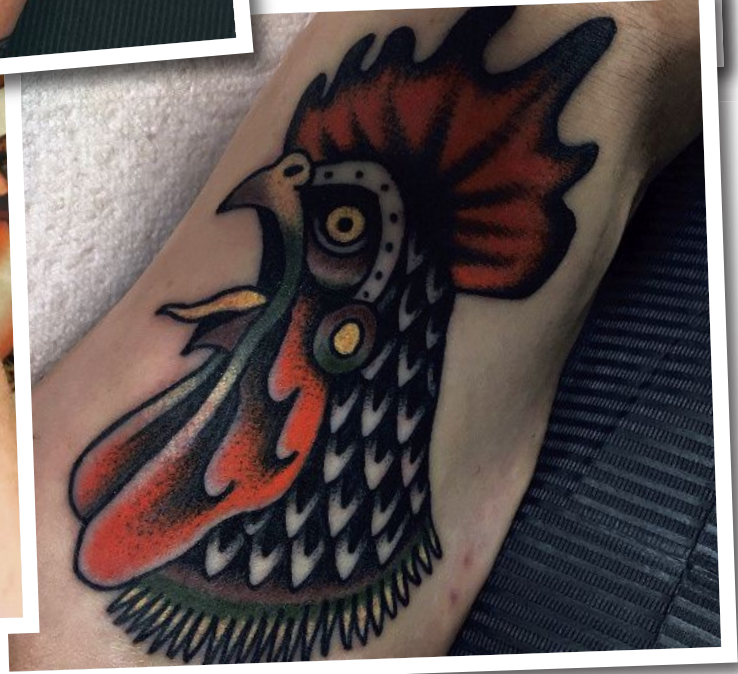
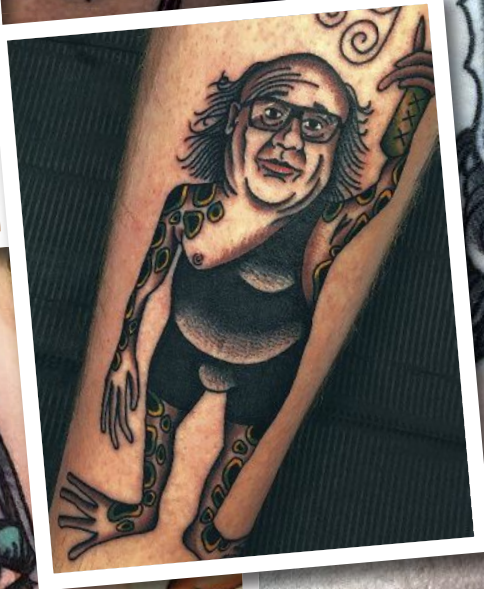
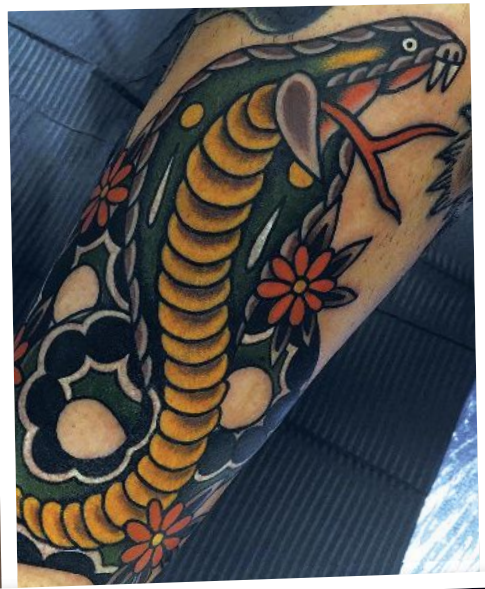
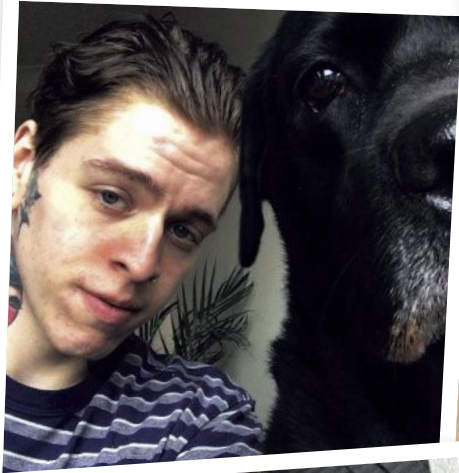
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SPACING

TAKING UP

When you think of the traditional pin-up tattoo, certain images come to mind. Hula girls on sailor's arms, or poised ladies with big boobs, tiny waists and itsy bitsy bikinis, or lady heads with something sweet like a rose or a heart as a dedication to a lover back home. These classic designs were based on the illustrations and photographs that were literally pinned up on a wall to be admired.



Historically, tattooed images of women have been designed and marketed to appeal to the male gaze. However, there has been a huge shift in the nature of these images and also in the client base who are now getting them. Women have always been getting tattooed, but in recent times there's been a big increase in the numbers getting work done, and in the coverage they're getting too. (Not to mention the fact that there are more female tattooers in the industry than ever before!)

Pin-ups and lady heads are my speciality, and the overwhelming majority of my

clients are women. Whenever I sit down to draw anything, it's always ladies that come out! Many of the tattooists I admire are those who tattoo interesting and dynamic imagery of women with character – showing individuality, different body shapes and personalities of their own. I had a bit of an epiphany a while back: Not all women have long black hair and red cheeks and lips, so why are they always depicted that way? These days, most of my ladies have brightly coloured hair, piercings and fun clothes and make-up reflecting the look and attitudes of my clients. They can be sexy, but I try to make them more than just that.



Often clients who are quite shy themselves ask for bolder imagery such as a tough punk girl with a studded leather jacket, big boots and blue hair. It's a way of representing parts of themselves they find harder to show. It's easier to have a picture of a blue-haired lady on your arm than to dye your own hair and have to face the world. But perhaps looking at her every day will give you the courage to go for it!

I reached out online to ask women about the tattoos they have. Many of them have images of historical figures who inspire them. Courageous women like the artist

Frida Kahlo, and Valentina Tereshkova who was the first woman in space; musicians like Dolly Parton and Amy Winehouse; and cool characters like Mia Wallace from Pulp Fiction and even Lisa Simpson! These tattoos sit alongside imagery of female scientists, circus strong women, witches and sexy devil ladies. Not forgetting those tattoos of women who are simply classic beauties. One respondent said, "I like to surround myself with strong, inspiring, beautiful and fearless women – something to aspire to." Others speak of feeling empowered, resilient and like they have a girl gang looking out for them. Their celebration of the female body is an act of self love and a reminder of how they aspire to be.

For many, the process is a political act – a way of representing women in ways we don't see enough of in the media. For a long time, in popular entertainment and in society in general, women have been portrayed as merely two-dimensional beings, existing purely for the purpose of pleasing and assisting men. However we are so much more than that, which is why I love to create imagery of women myself. Whether that imagery immortalises famous women, or is my own design, giving the subjects their own personalities and complexities draws people in. (One client asked for a sad woman walking a tightrope because she wanted a pin-up who was more complex.) Everyone just wants something they can relate to. Women are so much more than something pretty to be looked at, and the designs depicting us should be as well.



Of course this doesn't mean there's anything wrong with classic pin-ups. Tattooists like Ben Corday and Sailor Jerry paved the way in traditional tattooing and inspired generations of tattooers and collectors alike with their designs. They occupy a very important place in history and I love seeing their tattoos recreated today.

And I have noticed that a lot of men are now getting imagery of other men. Whether it's lumberjacks or celebrities, we all seem to be getting tattoos of people we consider role models or those who encapsulate everything we strive to be.

Tattoo imagery seems to have shifted from representing what we desire in others to what we desire in ourselves. If we can project strength, beauty, confidence and empowerment from our tattoos, it takes us one step further toward embodying that in ourselves.

Harriet Heath
Instagram: @lonerosetattoo

CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS 2018

**24th-25th February
Brighton Tattoo Convention**
The Brighton Centre, King's Road,
Brighton, www.brightontattoo.com

**3rd-4th March
Tattoo Tea Party**
intu Trafford Centre,
Trafford Boulevard, Manchester
www.tattooteaparty.com/

**17th-18th March
The Tattoo Collective**
The Old Truman Brewery
91 Brick Ln, London E1 6QR,
thetattoocollective.co.uk

**31st March-2nd April
Maidstone Tattoo Extravaganza**
Kent Showground
Detling
Maidstone ME14 3JF

**8th April
Ink and Iron**
The New Bingley Hall | Hockley Circus
Birmingham B18 5PP
inkandiron.co.uk/

**21st -22nd April
Portsmouth Tattoo Fest**
Portsmouth Pyramids Centre
Clarence Esplanade,
Portsmouth PO5 3ST,
www.tattooofest.co.uk

**28th -29th April
Big North Tattoo Show**
Metro Radio Arena
Arena Way, NE4 7NA
Newcastle upon Tyne
www.thebignorthtattooshow.co.uk

**4th-6th May
Liverpool Tattoo Convention**
Britannia Adelphi Hotel
Ranelagh Place
Liverpool, L3 5UL
www.liverpooltattooconvention.com/

**TBC May
Glasgow Tattoo Festival**
The Studio
8 Dixon St,
Glasgow G1 4AX
www.facebook.com/GlasgowTattooFestival/

**19th-20th May
Scarborough Tattoo Show**

The Spa Scarborough South Bay,
Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO11 2HD
www.scarboroughtattooshow.com/

**19th-20th May
Northern Ireland Tattoo
Convention**
Belfast Waterfront 2 Lanyon Pl
Belfast BT1 3WH
nitattoo.com

**7th-8th July
Powys Charity Tattoo Convention**
Community Centre, Mount Lane
Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6EZ
www.facebook.com/Powys-charity-tattoo-convention-283437561802173

**7th-8th July
Leeds Tattoo Expo**
First Direct Arena, Arena Way,
Leeds LS2 8BY,
leedstattooexpo.com

**24th-29th July
Cardiff International
Tattoo Convention**
Mercure Cardiff Holland House
24-26 Newport Rd, 28 Cardiff CF24 0DD

**1st - 2nd September
Oxford Tattoo Convention**
The Oxford Academy, Sandy Lane West,
Littlemore, Oxford
www.facebook.com/oxfordtattooconvention

**28th-30th September
The International London Tattoo
Convention**
Tobacco Dock, 50 Porters Walk
London E1W 2SF
www.thelondontattooconvention.com

**19th-21st October
Midlands Tattoo Industry Show**
Athena Leicester, Athena, Queen Street
LE1 1QD Leicester
www.midlandstattooindustryshow.co.uk

**27th-28th October
Cambridge International Tattoo
Convention**

Guildhall Place
1-6 Corn Exchange St, Cambridge, CB2
3QF
www.facebook.com/cambridgetattooconvention

OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS 2018

**9th-11th March
Mondial du Tatouage**
Grande halle de la Villette
211 Avenue Jean Jaurès 75019 Paris.
France
www.mondialdutatouage.com/

**13th-15th April
Perugia Tattoo Convention**
Hotel Gio Wine e Jazz area
V.le Ruggero D'Andreotto, 19
06124 Perugia
Italy
www.perugiatattooconvention.com

**1st-3rd June
Amsterdam Tattoo Convention**
Amsterdam RAI Exhibition and
Convention Centre. Europaplein, 1078 GZ
Amsterdam, Netherlands

**29th June-1st July
Ink Mania**
Gouverneur Verwilghensingel
70 3500
Hasselt
Belgium
www.inkmania.be

**6th-8th October
Monster Ink Tattoo Fest**
Evenementenhal Venray
De Voorde 30, 5807 EZ Venray, The
Netherlands
www.monsterinktattooofest.com

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