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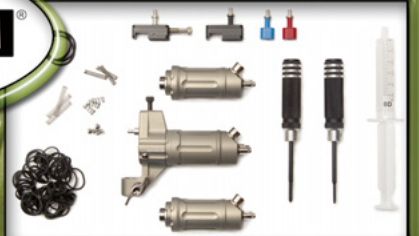


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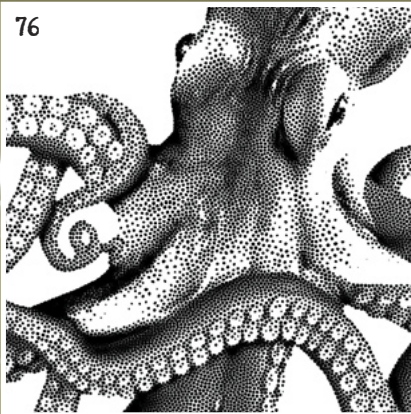
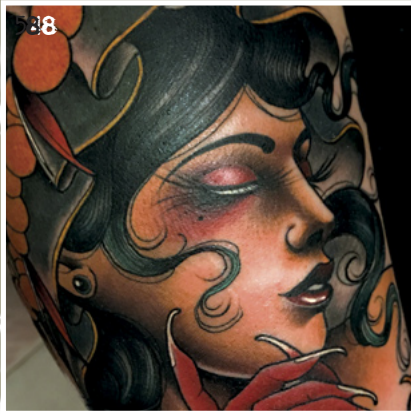
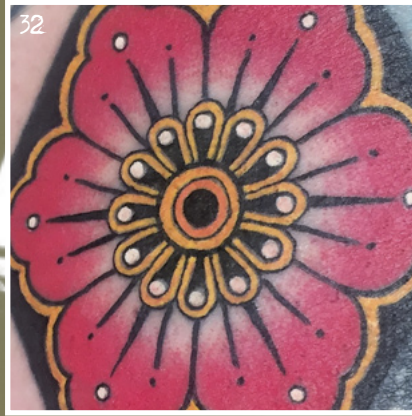
Photographer: Kamila Burzymowska

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Total Tattoo magazine No. 165 JULY 2018
Published monthly by KMT Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved.
Printed in England on re-cycled paper by Buxton Press Ltd
Distributed by Seymour Distribution

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WELCOME to 165

What does it mean to be part of a group? What exactly is it that keeps a community going?

I've recently become part of an online fitness group. I got together with some tattooists I know and we decided to challenge ourselves to 30 days of no junk food plus a daily exercise routine consisting of 100 squats, 100 sit-ups and 100 push-ups. We check in with each other and we chat about how we're doing. Far from being the macho intimidating atmosphere that I'd feared (with a load of blokes who were pros at working out), my first feeble "this is all I could manage" video was met with encouragement and praise.

And that's why, despite the fact that I'm struggling, I'm not backing out. This group is motivated, determined (or stubborn? I'll let you decide) and supportive. Our chats range from advice on how to do sets of squats and whether salted peanuts are junk food, to in-depth discussions about the problem of being overly self-critical and the knack of keeping a positive outlook when work gets stressful. Oh, and tattoos of course.

I've heard a lot of talk recently about the way tattooing seems to have been stripped of any magic it once had. There's a feeling that despite the bright new technologies, the infinite opportunities of social media and the greater openness within the industry, the idea of a "tattoo community" is starting to tarnish and lose its shine. Ask any old timer, and they'll tell you all about paying your dues, not opening your shop too close to anyone else's and so forth. It's this level of respect between artists and studios that resulted in the sense of community we've all shared and enjoyed over the years. But when you hear about all the designs that are getting ripped off, all the tattooists that are getting too big for their boots, etc, it feels as though this respect, and the meaning of "community", is severely diminished in some quarters.

But my little fitness group has helped me to re-evaluate the good things about the tattoo world. It's reminded me that most tattooists are positive, honest, down-to-earth people who know the real value of giving back (because if all you do is take, there'll be nothing good left). And it's people like this who make a community.



Lizzy
Editorial Team
editor@totaltattoo.co.uk

"My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was sixty. She's ninety-seven now, and we don't know where the heck she is."

— **Ellen DeGeneres**

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

DON'T BET ON IT

It's all over social media and the press. Bolton Wanderers supporter Mark Yates has got his first tattoo. OK, nothing especially unusual or newsworthy about that – except that it's a portrait of his team's veteran striker Aaron Wilbraham and it's come about as the result of a mad, spur-of-the-moment tweet. When his team recently took on Nottingham Forest in a crucial Sky Bet Championship match, Mark was joking with a friend and pledged to get Aaron Wilbraham's face inked on his leg if Wilbraham should happen to score the winning goal that saved Bolton Wanderers from relegation. The fact that this scenario might actually become a reality couldn't have been further from his mind. And the fact that it happened in the 88th minute just made the whole thing even more surreal.



In an interview with the club's official website (www.bwfc.co.uk) Mark said his phone nearly exploded with messages when the final whistle blew. He also had plenty of encouragement (to make sure he went through with it!) from Bolton Wanderers players themselves. Local Bolton studio Dave T's House of Tattoos created the special portrait.



A MOLE IN THE CIRCUS



Raised calcium levels in the blood can sometimes be a sign that there is a tumour developing in the body. Scientists at ETH Zurich in Switzerland have used this fact as the basis for developing an early warning device – a tiny invisible skin implant that will suddenly become visible (and appear as a small mole) if too much blood calcium is detected. The 'artificial' mole becomes visible because the implant, which consists of genetically modified cells, is designed to trigger the production of melanin, the skin's tanning pigment. The idea is that it will signal to the wearer the need to visit the doctor and get checked out – safe in the knowledge that if a cancer is indeed present, it will have been detected far earlier than by conventional techniques. Writing in the journal 'Science Translational Medicine', Martin Fussenegger (Professor of Biosystems Science and Engineering at ETH Zurich) and his team emphasise that the project is only in its infancy and there is still a long way to go even before human testing can begin. It could take a decade of research and development to turn the idea into an actual marketable product. But it is thought that the concept of the "biomedical tattoo" (as researchers call it) could have many future applications in all sorts of different medical fields.

HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE?

A small tattoo positioned over a man's heart has become the subject of a case report in the British Medical Journal. This report discusses 'never events', the medical profession's term for things that shouldn't EVER be allowed to happen, and in particular it talks about the nightmare scenario of 'wrong site surgery', where surgeons mistakenly operate on the wrong part of the body. The tattoo in question – a black play button – could have led to such an error because of its similarity to the black arrows surgeons use to mark up a patient's body prior to an operation. In this case, an arrow had been drawn on the patient's right shoulder; his tattoo, however, was pointing towards the left side of his torso. Of course all surgical teams follow strict protocols and rigorous checklists, but the report highlights the need for extra vigilance when a patient's body is already marked with tattoos. The patient himself (who recovered well from his surgery)



commented, "My parents always told me my tattoos would serve as a lesson one day, [but] I don't think they pictured this. Glad I could provide a source of bemusement and hopefully education." Reassuringly, NHS figures show that wrong site surgery is an extremely rare occurrence.



RIP RAYMONDO

Tributes have been paid to a popular and much-missed local tattooist, 71 year old Ray Jones of Raymondo's Tattoo Parlour & Art Studio in Stone, Staffordshire. Hundreds turned out for his funeral procession which, unusually, featured a large truck to carry the coffin. In press interviews he was described as the "nicest, grumpiest man you could ever meet". The funeral service was conducted by Rector Ian Cardinal, who revealed that he actually has a number of tattoos by Ray. At the wake, there was a slideshow of nearly 400 examples of Ray's work.

TATCON WEEKEND PACKAGE TO WIN!

Blackpool is... well, it's Blackpool! It's the quintessential traditional English seaside resort. There's the lights and the amusements, there's three piers, there's the beach, and there's a big tower. There's also a really fun convention, which will be returning this August!

The organisers of the show have been in touch to offer Total Tattoo readers some really great competition prizes. 1st prize is a 3-NIGHT PACKAGE FOR 2 PEOPLE (Fri 17th, Sat 18th and Sun 19th Aug) including bed, breakfast and evening meal and full entry into Tatcon! 10 runners-up will each win a two-person weekend pass. (The runners-up prizes don't include accommodation, and there are no cash alternatives for any of the prizes. Usual terms and conditions apply – see page 4/5.)

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

What does Blackpool have three of?

- a) 3 piers
- b) 3 piers morgans
- c) 3 pierce brosnans

Email your answer to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with BLACKPOOL as the subject line to arrive no later than 10th July. The winners will be the first correct entries draw out of the kiss-me-quick hat.



GOLDEN EYE



Tattoo inks may have found another use – in helping to restore blind people's sight. A research group led by Eric Glowacki in the Laboratory of Organic Electronics / Wallenberg Center for Molecular Medicine at Linköping University in Sweden is working on a special nano-material that converts light into an electrical signal which in turn activates nerve cells. This is basically the way an eye works – so the hope is that this new 'photoactive' film could be used to make an artificial retina. It consists of an ultra-thin sheet of gold. On top of this is an array of pixels, just like in a digital camera (and smaller than the diameter of a human hair)... made of exactly the same kind of pigments found in tattoo inks!

WORLD'S OLDEST TATTOO EQUIPMENT?



Back in 1985, the Fernvale ancient site in Tennessee, USA, was excavated by archaeologists. It wasn't fully investigated though, and many of the finds were stored away for future examination and analysis. That analysis is now taking place, and among the discoveries to have emerged is a set of wild turkey bones, stone tools and shells thought to have been used for tattooing by Native Americans around 3,500 years ago. The bones (which have sharpened tips) show traces of red and black pigment, and this is evident inside the shells too. The collection, which was excavated from a grave, was originally thought to be a 'sacred bundle' used for ritual purposes. It was reassessed and reinterpreted thanks to the interdisciplinary research efforts of Tanya Peres of Florida State University and Aaron Deter-Wolf, an archaeologist with an interest in ancient tattoos working for the State of Tennessee.

REALISM ARTIST WANTED ELECTRIC PUNCH TATTOO

Electric Punch Tattoo are looking for a realism artist to join their busy studio. The successful applicant must be able to work to a very high standard. The shop has a good clientele, so your own client base is not essential. To be considered, please email your CV and pictures of your recent work to Terry Frank: electricpunchtattoo@hotmail.com

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

According to a story picked up by our news radar, one little five year-old boy in Sweden is growing up with a slightly different name to the one he started with, thanks to a tattoo blunder. He began life as Kevin... but after his mum got his name tattooed on her arm (alongside that of his sister Nova) and it came out wrong, she decided that changing HIS name was easier than changing the tattoo! So Kevin is now Kelvin. And everyone's happy.



THE 'LIFEGUARD' TATTOO



This spring, a campaign was launched to promote a tattoo idea that could be of immense help to those living with diabetes. It's called the 'Lifeguard Tattoo' and it was the brainchild of tattooist Istvan Marton of Tattoo Body Traum in Germany. The hope is that the tattoo design will become widely recognised throughout the medical profession so that its wearers can receive immediate appropriate treatment in an emergency even if they are unconscious or unable to communicate (and avoid the possibility of their symptoms being confused with the effects of drink or drugs). There are different designs for different types of diabetes, and similar tattoos for other medical conditions are under development. Medical alert wristbands and jewellery do the same thing of course, but the advantage of a tattoo is that you don't have to remember to put it on! The tattoos are given to clients free-of-charge, and partner tattooists are being sought to join the scheme. To find out more, go to www.lifeguardtattoo.com where there is an extensive FAQs section (and different language and country options). If you have diabetes and are thinking about getting a tattoo, especially if it's your first, check out www.diabetes.co.uk/tattoos-and-diabetes.html for important information and advice.

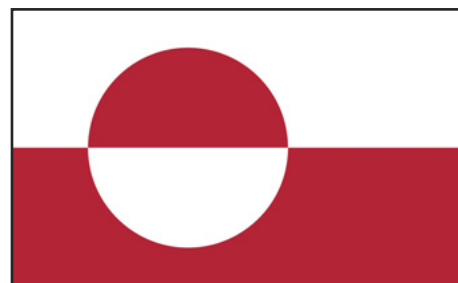


GREENLANDIC IDENTITY



Greenland is almost ten times the size of the UK, but has a population of only 57 thousand people (compared to the UK's 65 million!) Officially, it's a self-governing dependent territory of Denmark, but there's a growing movement towards independence and many Greenlanders are keen to reclaim their own heritage and Greenlandic identity. Some of them are now doing that by proudly wearing traditional Inuk tattoos. Prior to Danish

colonisation in the 18th century, these skin-stitched designs would have been a common sight among the Inuit. They were mostly worn as facial tattoos by women, but men wore them too. Now there's a resurgence in their popularity, along with other aspects of traditional culture such as drumming and singing. Many Greenlanders have mixed Greenlandic / Danish backgrounds and feel that the Danish side of their identity has, until now, been over-represented; for them, Inuk



tattoos are a way to reclaim and celebrate the other side of who they are. Watch this video: www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/valgigroenland/video-groenlaendere-bliver-tatoveret-i-ansigtet-vi-tager-vores



TATTOO ART EXHIBITION

At the end of June, Inkden Tattoo Studio (formerly The Dragon's Den) is hosting an art exhibition in the Sun Lounge on Blackpool's North Pier. The idea is to showcase the connection between art and tattoos – demonstrating how they influence each other, and showing that skin is really just another kind of artistic medium. The aim is also to challenge a few of the general (non-tattooed) public's perceptions of tattooists and tattooing! Many different artistic styles and media will be on display, with work by big international names as well as up-and-coming talent. Inkden's owner, tattooist Przemek 'Shamack' Malachowski, said he was really looking forward to spending a long weekend in the company of so many art loving people. The event begins with a formal reception on Saturday 30th June (with complementary wine, Prosecco and acoustic music) and the exhibition itself will be open to the public from Sunday 1st July to Tuesday 3rd July. On the Sunday, drawing and painting sessions



with Filip Pasielka and Jordan Oterski are on offer to all participating artists and pre-booked members of the public. To find out more call Inkden on 07957 021702, email tattooartevent@gmail.co.uk or check out www.tattooartexhibition.co.uk

NO 1 IN MEXICO

Here's the answer to a very interesting question (albeit one that we hadn't thought of asking!) What are the most popular tattoo designs in Mexico? Dr Carolina Romero Patiño of the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology in Mexico City has found that two styles are far and away the most prevalent – 'pre-Hispanic' and Chicano. 'Pre-Hispanic' tattoo designs draw their inspiration from Mexico's early civilisations (prior to the Spanish conquest), with imagery sourced from ancient religions or based on archaeological themes. This aesthetic is all about ancestral meanings and cultural origins. In contrast, the fineline black-and-grey of Chicano tattooing reflects modern Mexican migration and its many cultural aspects. It, too, expresses what it means to be a person of Mexican origin, but in a "bi-national context with the United States".



LOOKING FOR GUEST SPOTS

Newcastle-based tattooist Rob Fielder is looking to expand on his studio experience by doing some guest spots in the UK and around Europe. If you'd like him to pay you a visit, send him a message via his [Instagram @robfielder88](https://www.instagram.com/robfielder88)

BOOK REVIEW

Doodle Trouble: A Sketchbook by Dorian Bakalov £25

Dorian Bakalov is a tattooist who is based at Vivid Ink in Birmingham and specialises in New School style tattoos. This high quality hardback contains sketches Dorian has produced for clients as well as other ideas he's conjured up, all with a comic-book energy and graffiti-style dynamism. Over 90 pieces are reproduced, some as monochromatic sketches and some in full colour. What's nice about this is that you can really see the way Dorian builds up each concept into a finished design. As well as traditional and common tattoo themes such as anchors and anatomical hearts, Dorian gives us a glimpse into his extraordinary imagination by redefining New School tattoo ideas. There are lots of interesting and fun subjects in this volume, some of my personal favourites being the traditional imagery from Bakalov's Bulgarian heritage (for which explanations and definitions are helpfully provided).

Available from www.gentlemanstattooflash.co.uk and all the usual places. Email Dorian at dorian.bakalov@yahoo.com to find out more.

RECEPTIONIST WANTED

Great opportunity to work in a top London tattoo studio part-time as a receptionist/manager! You must be good with people, able to work on your own initiative and not be afraid of hard work. You'll be responsible for maintaining the studio's high standards of hygiene and cleanliness, and running the artists' diaries. If you think you're made of the right stuff, email tat2@live.co.uk and we can discuss it in more detail. This would initially be a part-time position (Fri, Sat, Mon) but it could turn into a full-time post for the right person. We would also consider a piercer for the position.

ARTIST WANTED

The Drawing Room in Coventry are looking for a full-time tattoo artist (with studio experience) to join their super-chilled team. Very good rates are available, with the majority of supplies included. If you are interested, please email thedrawingroomstudio@hotmail.com

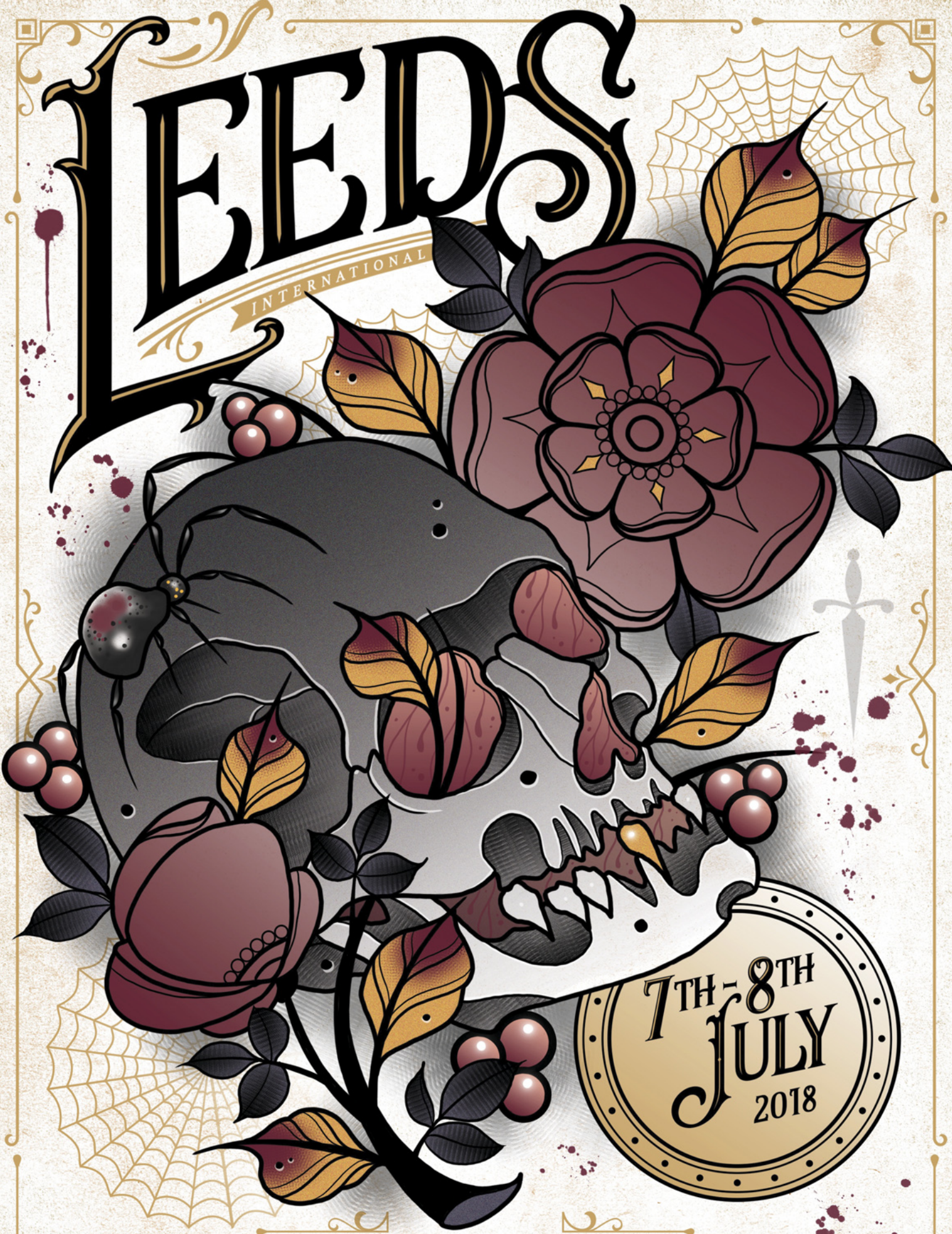
ARTIST WANTED

Nevermore Tattoo Studio are looking for a new artist to join their family run business. The ideal candidate will have shop an experience and a strong portfolio (this is not an apprenticeship). To be considered for the position, please email your portfolio and a covering letter to nevermoretattoo@hotmail.co.uk



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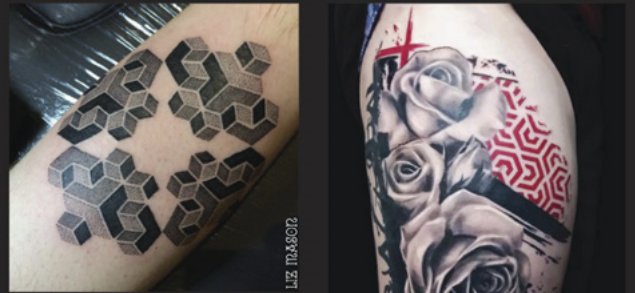
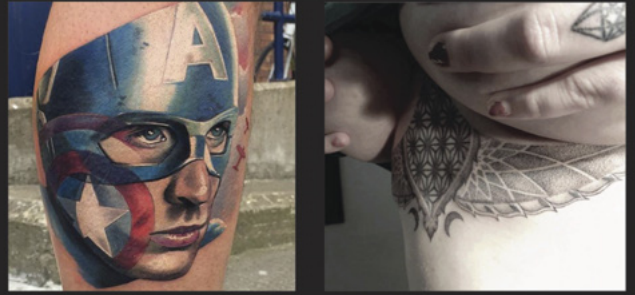


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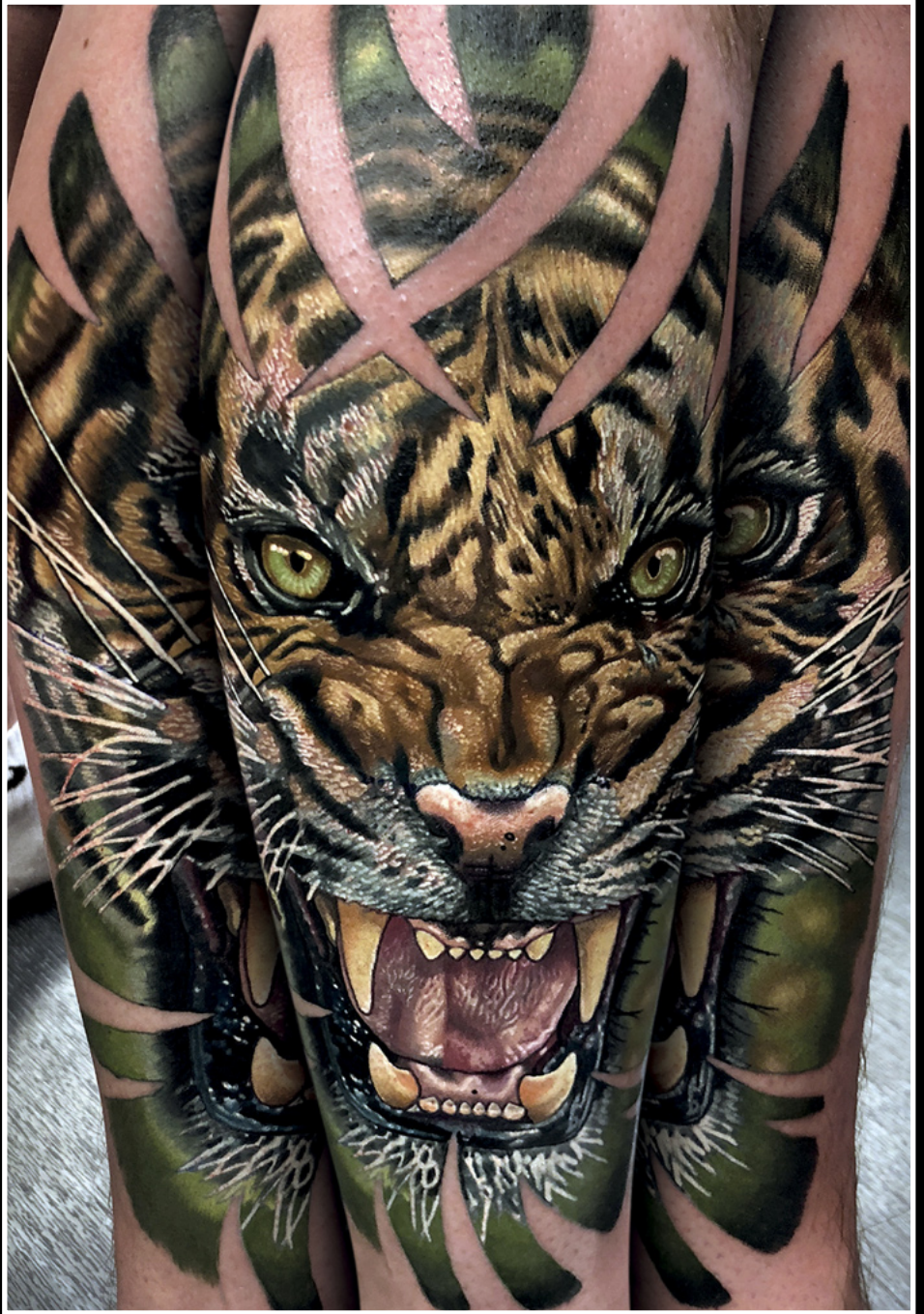
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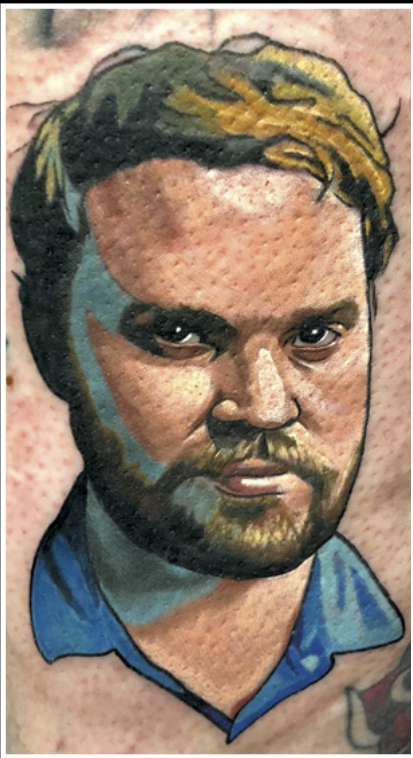
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laura jane perman



EMPIRE INK

Late on a Sunday night (after two full days at The Scottish Tattoo Convention!) was possibly not the best time be meeting up with the crew from Edinburgh's Empire Ink, but sometimes you just have to grab these opportunities when they come along. It was high time Total Tattoo visited Alex Rattray's awesome shop to interview Alex himself and fellow artists Laura Jane Penman and Kyle Shields.

Alex Rattray is one of the UK's most renowned tattoo artists. Tattooing has taken him all over the world. "Opening my own studio was the next logical step," he tells me. "I have so much passion for the industry, but I've spent years travelling around and working for other people. I wanted to set something up that would be my permanent home for the future."

The process of bringing a studio together can be a tricky one, and Alex has had previous plans that haven't materialised, but Empire Ink got off to a flying start last year. Alex brought his good friend Baz on board to be studio manager and his long-term customer Laura was the first artist to join the crew. Laura had always travelled to shows to get tattooed by Alex and he'd seen her potential. "So we opened with just the three of us," Alex tells me, "and then we set about finding the rest of the team. We put an advert on social media and after sifting through tons of terrible replies – some of whom couldn't spell 'tattooist', or even their own names – we finally found Kyle." This was perfect timing for Kyle. "Yes, I'd been aware of Alex's work since before I'd started to tattoo. When I heard he was opening a studio, I just knew it would be a good move for me. I'd been tattooing in the shop where I had apprenticed, and I wanted to work in a studio where I could learn more. I was ready."



The recent Scottish Tattoo Convention was the first show that Empire Ink attended as a unit. And that seems fitting, because it was also the very first convention that Alex himself worked – eight years ago (and many times since). In fact Kyle recalls watching Alex tattooing Laura at the Scottish show a while back, before he'd even embarked on his own apprenticeship. "It wasn't until I actually started working here at Empire Ink that I realised we'd all shared that little moment in history!" he laughs.

Alex has become a very familiar face on the convention scene and has attended more events than most – including a record-breaking personal best of twenty two shows in one particularly busy year. "Everybody still talks about it, but actually it was horrible," he confesses. "I was working solid, without any days off, coming home from one convention and

having to get straight back to work to earn the money to pay for my next trip. Basically, I burnt out."

Winning top awards at major international conventions (including Best of Show in Milan, London and Paris) has become a bit of a habit for Alex. "I love winning prizes," he admits, "and I love knowing that I have achieved something. But you'll usually find me standing at the side of the stage shitting myself because I'm so terrified! In Paris, the crowd was so big..." But Alex feels things are changing in the way people view awards at tattoo conventions. "The competitions are getting weirder," he continues, "because some shows have so many categories that almost everyone who attends the show will win a prize. I don't think that's good for the industry. Winning at a

alex rathroy



convention doesn't seem to mean so much any more. A decade ago, if you won at London – or even if you were good enough to work the convention, let alone enter the competitions – you were set up. It made your career. But it's different now."

All three Empire Ink artists relish the idea of working at shows together. "I like doing conventions," Laura tells me, "but I get very nervous. I enjoy the travelling aspect and it's good to see everyone's work, but it can all be a bit daunting. Attending as a studio helps to spread the stress." Alex also feels that sharing the load and travelling together will ease the burden for everyone. He certainly doesn't want anyone to reach that point of burn-out that he himself experienced. But it seems there's definitely no chance of that happening to Kyle: "I love working conventions," he tells me. "My average day is about six or seven hours, so I'm usually having a few pints by the time Alex is just getting to do the hair on his piece!"

Having worked in a lot of different shops over the years, Alex had a clear vision of the structure he wanted for his own studio. "My aim was to create a place where artists would want to be – because if they want to be here, they will be more creative. I never saw myself as an owner-manager and I never want my co-workers to feel they are providing an income for me. Everyone is self-employed. I don't dictate working times or get involved in anyone's diaries. If anyone wants to work on their days off, or work until midnight, then that's up to them. And if someone wants to ask me something, or learn something, I'll happily tell them – not because I'm the boss, but simply because I'm the most experienced and I want to share what I know. That works both ways of course. Kyle can paint really well and I'm hoping that he will teach me..."

laura jane penman



kyle shields



alex rathroy



alex rathroy



laura jane penman



"We have room for more tattooists," Alex continues, "but they need to be the right people. It's not just about filling the space. It's about building the right crew and getting the best team. I am prepared to wait for that. I could have just taken on five artists in one go, but I know from experience that doesn't always work. With five different temperaments, it could have been like sitting on a time bomb. So when the next person applies, Kyle, Laura, Baz and me will all check them out and make sure they will be an asset to the family. First and foremost, they will need to be down to earth, able to speak to customers and generally OK as people. Only then does the emphasis move on to their tattooing. Without the personality bit, it's never going to work." "But there does need to be a good balance of tattoo styles within the team as well," adds Kyle. "It's no good if there are too many people doing the same thing. We need to be able to cater to all kinds of different demands."

laura jane penman



kyle shields



laura jane penman



alex raffroy



laura jane penman



alex raffroy



alex raffroy

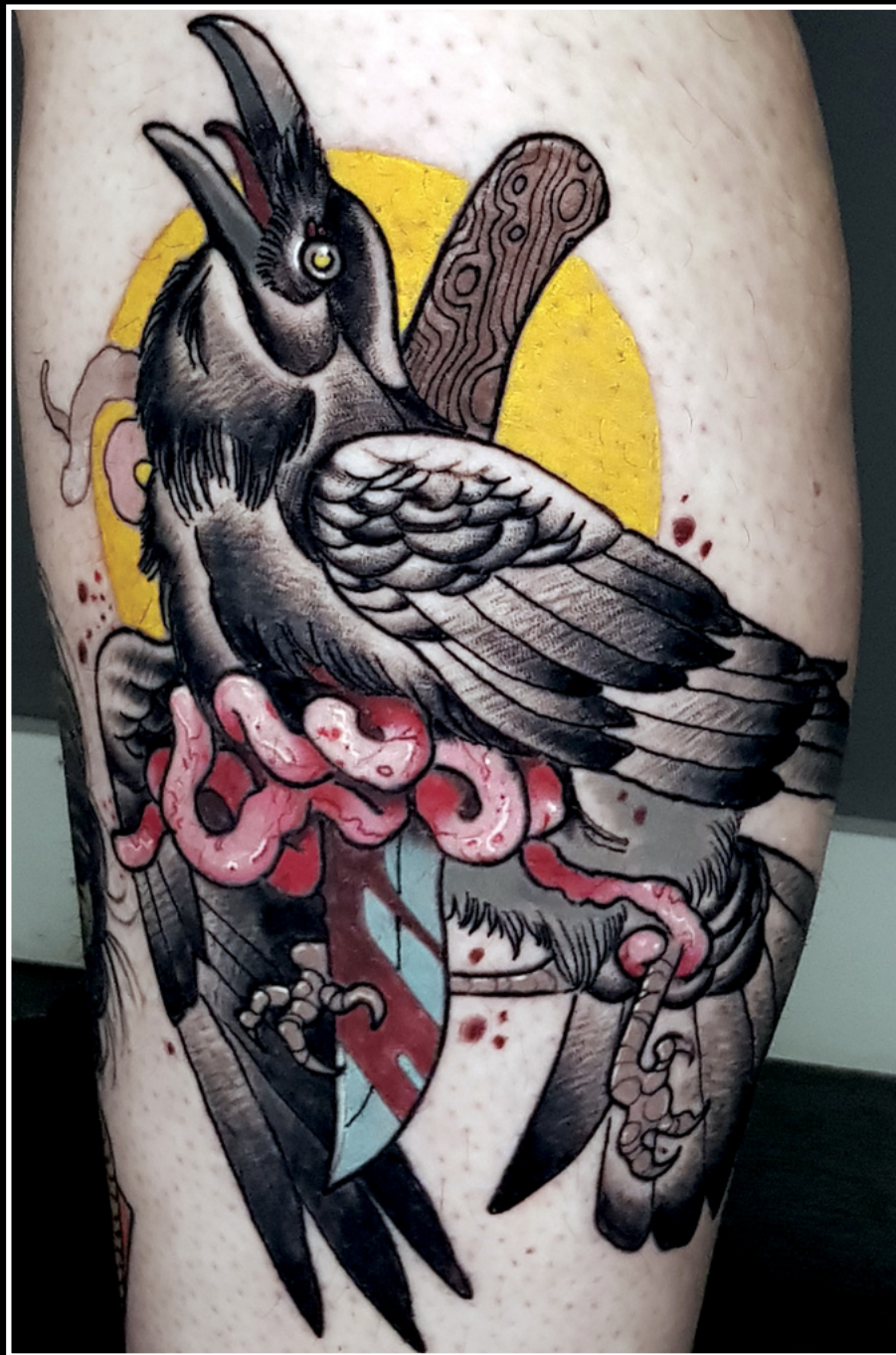


I wonder if the other guys feel at all overshadowed by Alex's success. "For me it's been nothing but positive", replies Kyle. "Being associated with Alex is a kind of validation. All of sudden, the people that I look up to are aware of me, and know that I work at Empire Ink. That's not the reason I wanted to work here of course. I came here because I wanted to learn and grow. But it's a good thing, all the same!" Laura agrees. "The studio has a great name. Being part of it can only be a good thing for all of us. I really like the fact that I'm becoming known as an artist who works at Empire Ink." "Yes, I really hope the overshadowing thing doesn't happen," adds Alex. "I want us all to work together as a studio."

Kyle is probably best known for his neo-traditional style tattoos, but he is keen to develop his portrait skills too. For him, the opportunity to study and learn how Alex saturates a face with colour has been vital for his own progression. "I used to blend my skin tones out to flesh. Now I'm working on developing a style of neo-trad/realism portraiture that encapsulates partly what I do and partly what I see Alex do. Laura does beautiful smooth-shaded black and grey, and that's also something I want to develop more of an understanding of in the future."

When I ask Laura what she's taken from working with the others, she replies without hesitation. "Working with Alex has taught me to slow down and focus more. I used to get frustrated and almost lose my concentration if a piece was taking too long. But from sitting with Alex – and seeing how he plans his time and allows the tattoo to grow with all the detail he wants to put into it – I've learnt not to be afraid of giving it two days, if that's what it needs to make it work, rather than trying to cram it into one day. And I agree with Kyle. The saturation of Alex's work means that even years later, his tattoos still look amazing. I look at the ones he's done on me and they still look exactly as they should."

alex raffroy



kyle shields

"But having just said I've learnt to slow down," Laura continues, "I'm also inspired by the sheer volume of work that Kyle produces! On his way home on the train he'll post three or four new designs almost every day. He's made me look at my own productivity, and now when I'm at home I feel more motivated to draw and create. Being around creative people definitely fires me up to be more productive." Kyle interjects. "As far as instagram and social media goes, I know it's just algorithms and bullshit. I do try to post every day, but I just let it do its own thing."

Next, I ask Alex what he's learnt from his young crew. He admits that, having been in and around tattooing for a while, he feels he's beginning to adopt the kind of attitude to the industry more usually seen in an old-timer. "I'm starting to see a lot of the negatives in tattooing. I'm losing my excitement and enthusiasm and I know I've become jaded. But Laura's perpetual optimism is infectious. That's what I really want to rediscover in myself. And Kyle's laid back yet hyper-enthusiastic approach kind of balances out my own way of working. I've been tattooing long enough now to be pretty wound up and run down at the same time... but fingers crossed having these two here will outweigh my sometimes negative attitude. Both Kyle and Laura have that drive and motivation to push forward. Together, I hope we can create something really amazing."



kyle shields

kyle shields



Tattoo artists often move from studio to studio, but these moves don't always leave good feelings in their wake. How has it been for the crew of the good ship Empire Ink? "I was really lucky," Laura tells me. "The person who taught me to tattoo is still one of my best friends. I was so scared to tell her I was leaving – after everything she'd done for me, helping me get into tattooing – but when I told her where I was going, she was so cool and super supportive." It was the same for Kyle. "When I told my old boss I was coming to work with Alex he was really pleased for me. He's a big fan of Alex's work. We're really good friends. I went to his stag do and his wedding." Alex contributes a studio owner's perspective. "Yes, you do hear horror stories about studios trying to keep hold of an artists' clientele, but at the end of the day they don't want to lose the money. If an artist who is booked up for six months suddenly leaves, that can be a big hit financially. It's also hard to replace people. Tattooing is definitely a business, but at the same time you have to be careful not to make it too 'businessy'."

Alex started tattooing only a decade ago, but the tattoo world has changed out of all recognition during that time. So where does he feel it's at now? "It's like tattooing is teetering on the blade of a very sharp knife," he says. "There are so many artists, and so many studios, but I don't really see there being that many

laura iane pennon



kyle shields



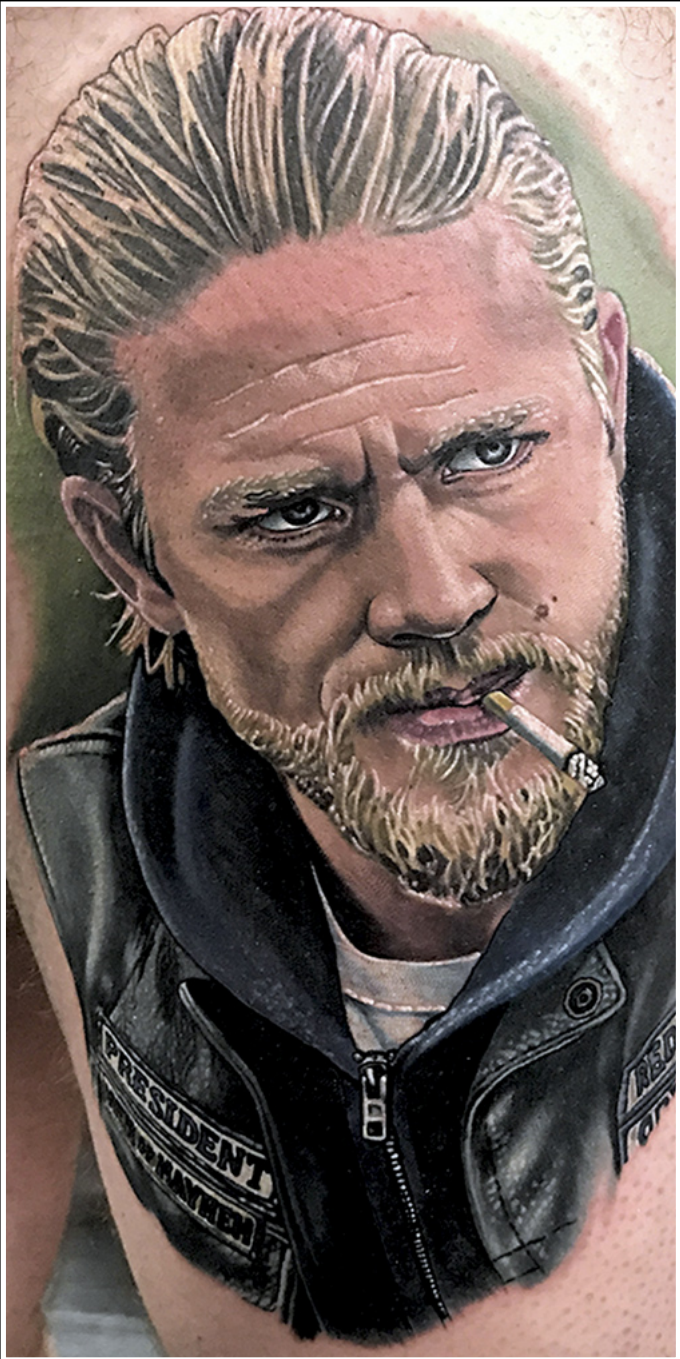
laura iane pennon



clients! When I started it was still fairly underground. There were maybe five or six studios in each city, and each shop usually had just one good artist. People were prepared to travel, and conventions were busy places because clients would come to get work by that one guy. Now every city has amazing artists in every style, so nobody has to travel. And the standard of work continues to grow. A few years ago, if you wanted really good colour realism you needed to go to someone like Nikko Hurtado or Mike DeVries. Now there are probably fifty artists in the UK who could give those guys a run for their money."

For Kyle, because he has come into tattooing reasonably late in life, there is the feeling that somehow he may have just missed the 'sweet spot' of tattooing. "Looking at social media, you get the impression that the market is super saturated. For an artist, that can be a bit terrifying. So I just try to concentrate on what I'm doing and not worry about the rest of the world!" Laura is also facing the challenge of discovering her true identity within the industry. "Going to my first Scottish show, and seeing so many tattooers in one place, I was so amazed. I don't feel I know enough about the industry yet. Finding your way in all of this can make your head spin."

Alex Rathroy



kyle shields



alex rathroy



laura iane penman



kyle shields



alex rattray



kyle shields



"Yes, everybody is looking for that niche," Alex adds. Then he continues, "I began my tattoo life in Edinburgh, and all my early mistakes are kicking around the streets here. There are some proper howlers, because I didn't have anybody guiding me at the start. I want to help these guys get to where they want to go quicker than I did, and without too many nightmares."

As for the future of the studio, Alex has a simple plan. "For the time being our focus is on helping each other and sticking together as 'us'. We're going to concentrate on creating a really strong studio because I reckon things are going to get a bit tough. It will be the weaker studios that go first and we need to make sure that we are not one of those - because after the dust settles, for the ones that survive it will be amazing!"

Alex Rattray, Bazza Fett, Kyle Shields, Laura Jane Penman

laura jane penman



laura jane penman



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SCOTTISH TATTOO CONVENTION

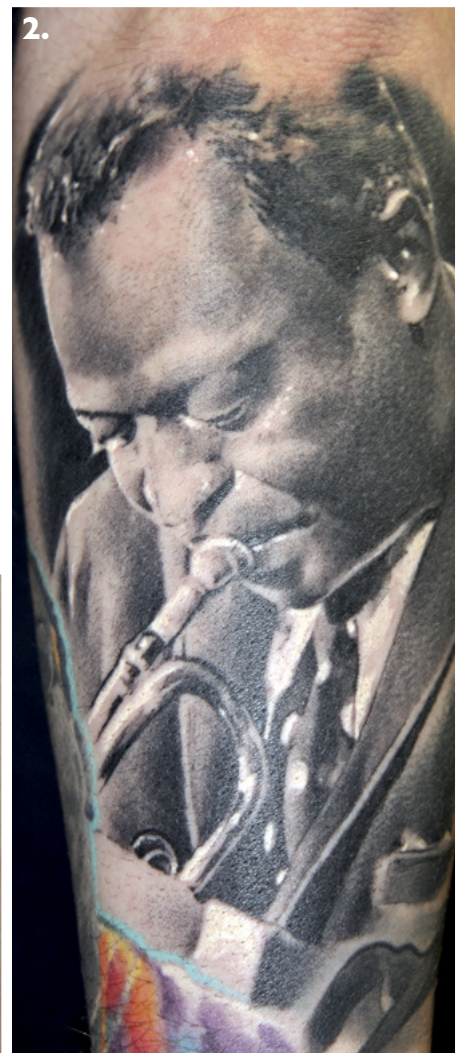
Once again, the Scottish Tattoo Convention was blessed with glorious sunshine across its entire weekend. But in contrast to what happens at many other conventions, this didn't seem to affect the turnout one bit. This event has now established itself as a popular favourite on the UK calendar. The public, traders and artists all love it (and so do we!) but what's the secret of its success?

The venue, Edinburgh Corn Exchange, is a stone's throw from the city centre and really easy to access. On the Saturday morning the doors opened to large queues, and the crowds filed in – to get tattooed by some of the best artists around or watch others get some awesome ink, and experience some great entertainment at the same time! There were two tattooing areas, the largest of which featured a stage for entertainment and also a viewing platform which hosted an art exhibition. The bar and trader stalls were in between these two areas. Towards the back of the venue was an outdoor smoking zone, a coffee stall (which had good coffee, unlike a lot of shows we've been to!) and two food trucks. The catering was ample and busy throughout, and anybody who didn't agree could simply walk out of the venue and around the corner to Asda.

Throughout the weekend, the atmosphere felt really positive and exciting (which is not always the case for shows that have been going several years). But just what is it that makes this convention so good?

For a start, there's the artist list. This show is smaller than many other conventions and that makes its high calibre line-up seem even more special. As well as top notch artists from Scotland and other parts of the UK, there are tattooists from around Europe and America – and they've all come to join in the fun. People such as Dave Fox are always happy to return, and it was great to see Koan from Family Art make a debut. For me, the logic is there: Why travel outside of the UK to get tattooed by these amazing artists, when you only need to travel up to Scotland? The quality of the tattoos was evident not only in the competition entries, but also in the artist portfolios displayed on every booth and in the work they were doing on the day. There was a really good balance of styles, and something for everyone. It was a real pleasure to walk round and see it all.

The entertainment throughout the weekend was also fun and varied. Of course the Death Do Us Part Danger Show and Cervena Fox were highly popular, but my absolute favourite was the 'Glasgow Burlesque'. I would attempt to explain it... but that would spoil the surprise if she's



1. koan, family art tattoo (spain)
2. krzysiek, azazel tattoo
3. reece, signwriter
4. black magic jake

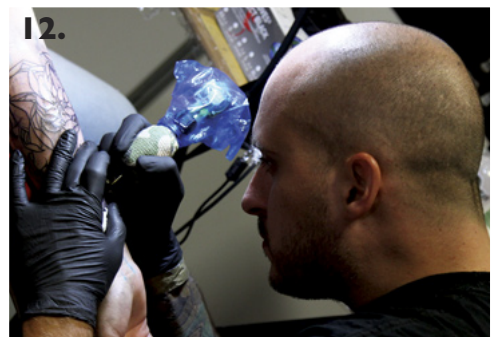


there again next year and you haven't seen her before! Pedro was the cool, calm and collected compere, introducing acts and talking the audience through the tattoo competitions too. What worked really well was alternating the competitions with the entertainment – progressing from Small to Best of Day in each of the various categories through the course of the afternoon.

It's also worth mentioning the after-show party, which was open to the public as well as those working the show. The Scottish Tattoo Convention has acquired something of a reputation for their fun parties, and this was no exception! There was a hotdog eating competition, and Buckfast-fuelled punters could have a go at a surfboard simulator; contestants got down low during the limbo, and a live surf-rock band kept us all dancing until the early hours. But even the after-show party didn't signal the end of the convention for everyone. Edinburgh is one of those places that tempts visitors to stay on for a few extra days and explore – not just because of the distance they've travelled to get there, but also because the city itself is so damn beautiful – and many grabbed the opportunity to do just that.

So, banging entertainment, amazing artists, and a venue in one of the world's finest cities. Surely that package explains why this show is so good? Well, yes, but there's something else too. The atmosphere at this convention is quite unlike any other that I know, and I think this can only be explained by the passion that goes into putting it on (Jim, the organiser, may call it madness?) as well as its uniquely close-knit feel. From the family-run chip stall outside to the 'toy drive' collection point and donations to charity from poster sales, the whole show has a community vibe. You can tell that the Scottish Tattoo Convention is organised out of love – not just for the industry, but for the people within it and surrounding it too

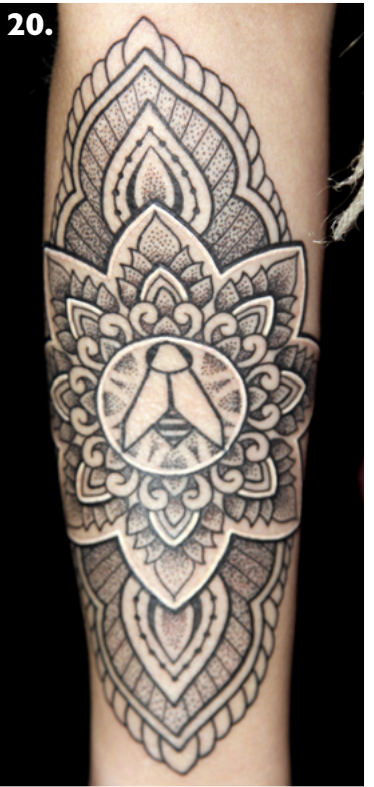




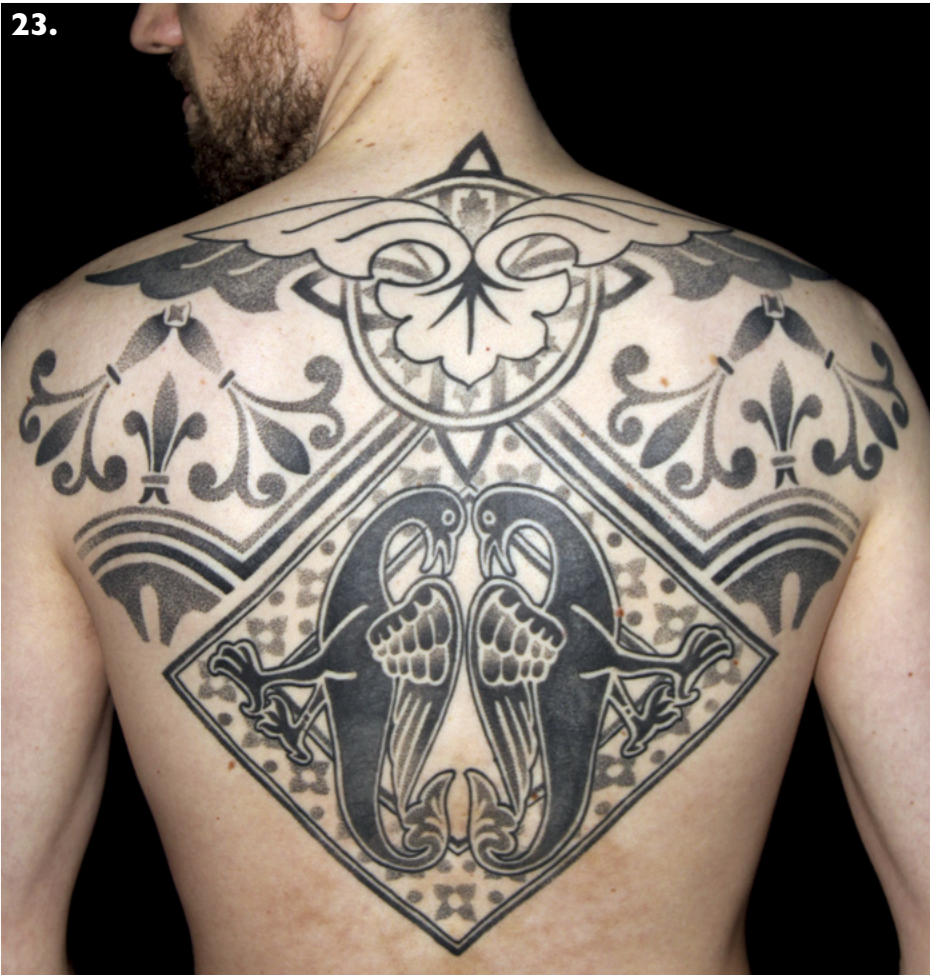
- 5. ruairidh von linden, studio xii
- 6 & 7. jack peppiette, insider tattoo
- 8. marcin, inkdependent tattoo
- 9. olivia chell, insider tattoo
- 10. chris meighan, santa cruz kustom club
- 11. artist unknown
- 12. mosh working
- 13. joe frost working



14 & 15. yarson, yarson tattoo
 16. marc diamond, studio xiii
 17. jessica v & mark ford working
 18. bárbara jiménez,
 seny tattoo (spain)
 19. scoobs, storms and saints
 20. wojtek, inkdependent
 21. marcin, inkdependent
 22. daniel, inkdependent



23.



24.



25.



26.



27.



- 23. jason corbett, insider tattoo
- 24. mosh, family art tattoo (spain)
- 25. james surridge
- 26. daryl watson, painted lady tattoo parlour
- 27. billy hay, bath street tattoo

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LEG SLEEVE PROJECT

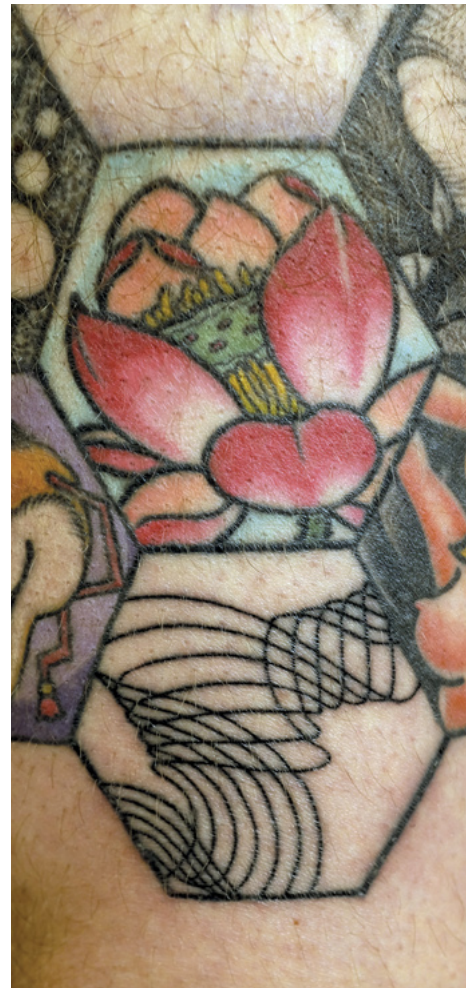
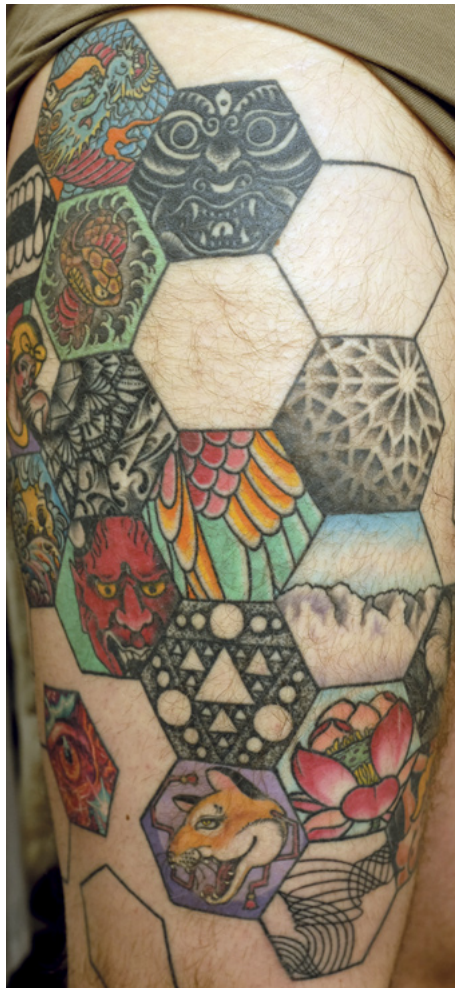


We've known about Martin Dobson's leg sleeve project for some time now, and we've been patiently waiting for it to reach the stage where we could present it to you on the pages of Total Tattoo. That moment has now arrived. Martin's creative vision, dedication and sheer determination are clear for all to see. This is an enviable collection of work by some of the best tattooists in the world, and it's not finished yet! But where did the concept originate? And how on earth has Martin made it all happen?

Tell us how it all began.

Actually, it wasn't really planned. The whole thing began when I was on a long trip away from home for a month or so, over Christmas 2015, travelling in Australia and New Zealand. I travel a lot generally, to different countries and cities, and I thought it might be fun to have a tattoo in each. I couldn't decide what kind of tattoo I wanted, so I thought maybe I'd just get the name or logo of each tattoo shop, perhaps in a circle, a bit like a passport stamp. It was when I was talking about it with my wife that it morphed into the concept of simply getting what each artist thought would look cool. They're the ones with the best ideas, after all!





Why hexagons?

The first tattoo was done at White Tiger Tattoo in Queenstown, New Zealand. We only had a few hours before our flight to Sydney, but Chloe Mayes – the artist there – was game, and so she was the person who created the very first hexagon. At that point I didn't yet have the overall concept clear in my own head, so it was difficult trying to explain what I had in mind (not the best way to start a big project, I know!) but my wife suggested hexagons because they would fit together... so that's what we went for. It was a bit of a punt into the dark and it could have looked terrible, but Chloe helped us with placement and size and it worked out amazingly.





duncan x



by duncan x



Did you work out in advance how the growing pattern would fit on to your body?

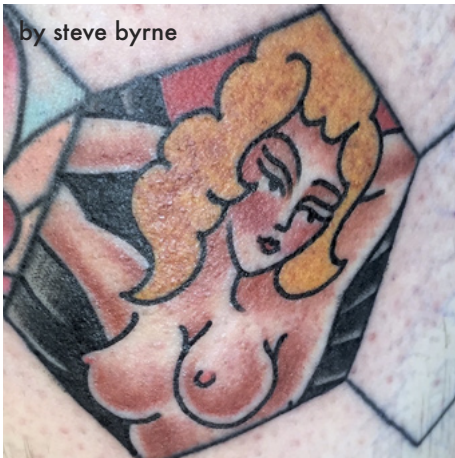
For the first four hexagons, each artist just connected their own stencil onto the previous one. But it was a nightmare to line up. Rich D'Amaru did the fourth hexagon and as we got on so well I asked if he'd do an outline of hexagons over my whole leg to make it easier for everyone going forward. Because it hadn't been designed in one go from the start, Rich said it would be quite hard to get the pattern wrapping all the way round my leg and connecting properly. Instead, he had the idea of having hexagons breaking off from the pattern - which in my view makes it more artistic, and also allows for expansion later on.

When did you begin collecting?

I got the first hexagon on January 3rd 2016 - but I had lots of tribal tattoos in the 90s, so I guess you could say I've been collecting for twenty years.

Were you already aware of all these amazing artists, or has your knowledge grown along with the project?

I knew nothing about all these tattoo artists when I started! The idea was simply to get tattoos to follow my travels (I travel a lot with work too). But this changed as I started getting into the world of tattoo artists and Instagram. Artists who were working on me would suggest other artists I should check out, and that snowballed. I'm currently following more than 300 artists on Instagram. My wish list is very, very long!



by steve byrne



by dave tevenal



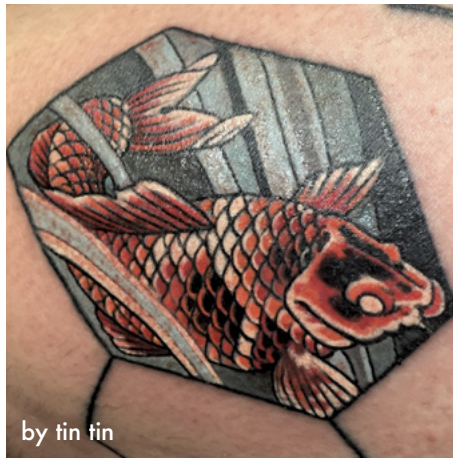
steve byrne



ami james



by ami james



by tin tin



tin tin



Do you have any favourite hexagons?

It's like children. You can't choose a favourite... although each time I get a new one, that one becomes my favourite for a while! But if I was to pick a few out... Tin-Tin's koi is amazing. What he got into such a small space is crazy, plus he freehanded it on at a convention, which is even more impressive. I've just had a hexagon filled by Jim Sylvia in LA, and his colour saturation is something else. Jacob Wiman is also amazing when it comes to colour, and Mario Hartmann's looks like it was done yesterday even though it's eighteen months old. Kelly Violet's black rose is beautiful, and most people point that one out as their favourite - plus she's one of the loveliest artists out there. And obviously

getting tattooed by Duncan X was simply a privilege. I could go on and on... See, I definitely don't have a favourite.

Do you give artists carte blanche to do whatever they want?

Yep. And that's the best part of it. I never know what I'm going to get!

How do artists usually react?

Most think it's a great idea and almost everyone is super keen to do it, although the size of the tattoo is of course a real challenge. Now that I have work by well-known names, more and more artists want to be involved. And because it's such a small space to tattoo, it's easy for them to fit me into their diary even if they have a big waiting list.

Have any artists declined?

Yes, a couple of them have. Nissaco, for example, preferred not to take part in the project because he only ever does large scale pieces. Not everyone gets back to me, though. But I keep trying. I think persistence is sometimes needed for artists with big followings. I'm sure it's just that they haven't seen my message rather than them not wanting to do the tattoo!

How many hexagons have you had done, and how many are there to go?

I've had 36 filled, and I currently have 16 more spaces (since extending to my ribs - a very bad idea). But I've already decided to go on to my left leg when all of these hexagons are full. I might even do that before the rib ones.

Can you remember who has done what?

Yeah, I'm pretty good at remembering all of them. The connection when getting a tattoo is pretty strong. I do have them all written down (with dates and so on) but I don't usually need to refer to the list, even if I'm taking someone through all of them.

How do people react when they see the tattoos?

The public have been amazing. At conventions, lots of people come and chat to me. A good few of them have met me before, so they enjoy seeing how the sleeve is progressing. On Instagram, more and more people are following my profile (@martindninja). I think they like to check which artists I snag. I've had so many messages saying what a great idea it is, and how it's such a unique way of collecting.

And you see it as a project...

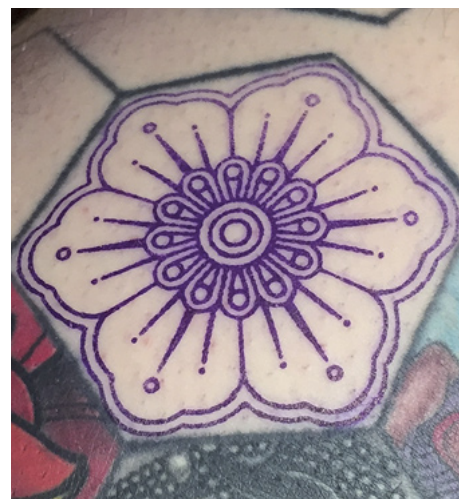
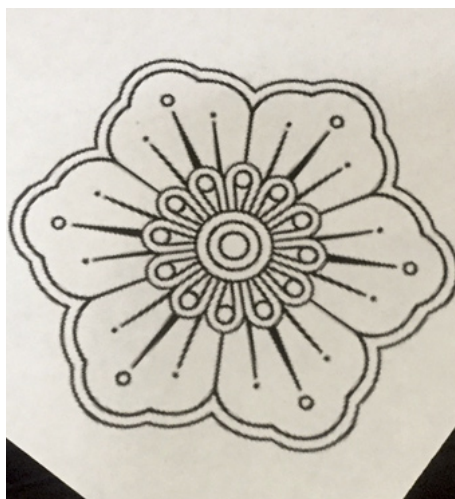
Yes, with spaces there to be filled and artists on my wish list to fill them, it's definitely a project -- but it may be a never-ending one! In the first year I got 18 hexagons filled, which was pretty crazy. I tried to slow down, but I still did 15 the next year. I'm being more picky now when it comes to setting up sessions, but with so many good artists coming here to London, it's hard to resist popping into the studio where they're guesting to grab another tattoo.

Do you have a vision of when and where it will end?

Everyone wants to know that. My wife and I have different visions. We'll see who wins out...

And how do you feel about the whole process?

I love it! The artists I've met are all really nice, and my free weekends are now filled with going to conventions.



Travelling to a new city and doing research about which artists work there and who I might try to book in with is exciting every time. Also, the actual tattooing is pretty easy because it's such a small area of skin (I'm not thinking about the ribs...) In fact I kind of feel like I'm cheating! There is just one bad thing about it though. Every time an artist fills a hexagon, I like what they've done so much I always want them to do a large piece on me - but of course I will never have room, so I just have to be happy with the small work of art they've decided to add to my collection. I'm so glad I stumbled on such a fun and fulfilling idea!

Follow Martin's progress on Instagram: @martindninja



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FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE NEEDLE

Jenko & Laura



Chris Jenko is based at Ultimate Skin in Leeds and is known for his strong, bold, traditional tattoos. He is currently working on a medical-themed leg for his client Laura, a student nurse. It began as a chance walk-up at a convention last year and has developed into something much more ambitious and involved.

Total Tattoo: We're here at the North Lakes Show and you've just got two new tattoos from Jenko.

Laura: Yes. The one he did yesterday is a prosthetic hand, based on the ideas of a French surgeon in the First World War.

Total Tattoo: It certainly fits the theme.

Laura: I've always had a keen interest in medical history, but I've become even more fascinated by it since I started my nursing training. I first got tattooed by Jenko last year and it just kind of went from there really. He gets just as excited about the pieces as I do! He contributes lots of ideas. If he sees something that he thinks will work as a design we talk about it and I normally let him do it.

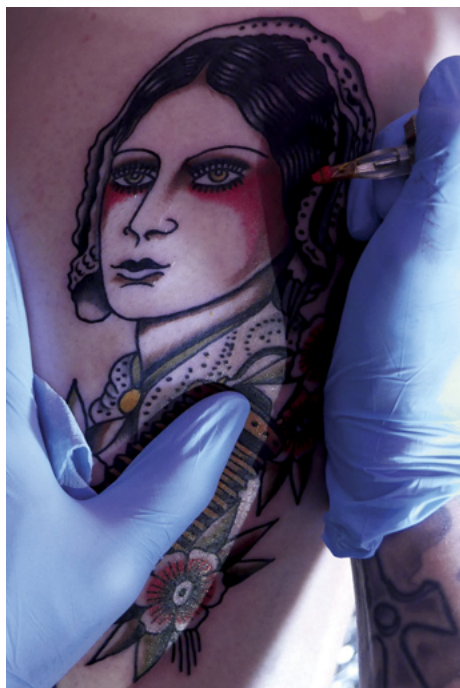


Total Tattoo: Who came up with the idea of a Florence Nightingale tattoo?

Jenko: That was me, through knowing Laura and the theme she was going for.

Laura: Yes, and I loved the idea. Florence Nightingale laid the foundations for modern nursing, so I was really happy to have her. She cared for wounded soldiers in the Crimean War and became known as 'The Lady with the Lamp' because of her night-time rounds. That's the image in the tattoo. She set a lot of the hygiene standards that we have in hospitals now. She was also an expert in statistics, and her analysis of army hospital figures revealed that 16,000 out of 18,000 deaths were due to infection – rather than battle wounds – and could well have been prevented if proper sanitation had been in place.

Jenko: One of my favourite things to tattoo is girl heads. Whilst Laura was in for a day session getting other things done, I thought we could incorporate that – and of course Florence Nightingale was the obvious choice. I drew the idea and sent it to her, and she was really keen to do it.



Total Tattoo: How was it getting tattooed at a convention?

Laura: I always thought I preferred getting tattooed in studios, as they're more intimate. But it depends on the convention. This one is very homely. Although there are a lot of people, everyone is very chatty and friendly, so I still felt relaxed when I was being tattooed.

Total Tattoo: And how was it to do the tattoos?

Jenko: Personally, I always find tattooing at conventions more stressful than tattooing in a studio because you've got an audience and you're trying to do your best work in an environment which you're not used to – you're more cramped and the lighting isn't as good as in the studio. Plus, you're seeing loads of friends who keep popping over and having too much fun!

Total Tattoo: Tell us about your set-up.

Jenko: I used two liners, a Shagbuilt coil liner and a Seth Ciferri, and a Shagbuilt D20. For lining I used Kwadron needles, a Turbo 9 Round Liner and a tight 7, and a Curved 9 Mag for shading. The different needles for lining were for the different line sizes.



Total Tattoo: The tattoo is on the upper thigh. Is that an easy area to tattoo?

Jenko: It's easier than other parts of the body. And Laura sat perfectly for it!

Laura: For both tattoos, I was sitting for about six to eight hours in total, with breaks in between. I'm really happy; Chris is a perfectionist and it shows. His lines are really crisp and all the details are there.

Total Tattoo: How was the pain?

Laura: Pain-wise, I was fine. I was very relaxed during the sessions, which I think is a big thing. If you're relaxed and you get on with your tattooist, I think you sit better. If you're investing your time and money in someone, you need to be able to get on with them.

Total Tattoo: Will Jenko be doing the rest of your leg?

Laura: Yeah. He's going to do the whole leg continuing the same theme. We've got ideas involving surgical instruments and maybe traditional herbs too, which a lot of early medicine was based on. We bounce off each other and come up with ideas as we're talking. Each time I get tattooed, we start discussing the next piece...

Jenko: Having met by chance when I did that convention walk-up piece for her, Laura now travels to get tattooed by me. She's always open to new ideas for pieces, and she always sits really well. I'm really thankful that she's my client!

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Tattoo Street Style



Alice Snape's new book has hit the streets. It's a celebration of tattoo style in eight of the world's greatest cities (London, Brighton, Paris, Berlin, LA, Amsterdam, New York and Melbourne) and a tribute to the creativity and self-expression of those cities' tattooed inhabitants. 'Tattoo Street Style' is a thoughtfully compiled collection of over 400 portraits – gorgeous photos and insightful interviews that beautifully document the here-and-now of fashion and tattoo culture. We asked Alice to tell us more about it!

Why did you want to publish a book on tattoo street style?

The idea first came about when Ebury Press got in touch with me and asked if I would like to write a tattoo book for them. Of course, I was delighted. Writing a book has always been a dream of mine. So I set about thinking of a concept. When I was publishing *Things&Ink* magazine, I used to enjoy heading out to street-spot stylish tattooed people. It was one of my favourite sections. I absolutely adore street style photography. I love that it captures a moment – a time and a place – and, in the case of this book, both the fashion styles and tattoo styles that belong to that moment. I am also endlessly fascinated by how people choose to wear their tattoos, whether they have them fully on show, or just peeking out of a sleeve, or showing through a pair of tights...





In this digital age, why did you want to do a physical book?

I am a print lover, and always have been. Nothing beats the magic of a book. It makes you sit down and take in the content properly. It isn't about scrolling and mindless liking. A physical book is something to keep and pass on. It's an object; something you can hold in your hands. I have done a blog about tattoos, a social media account, and a print magazine – and print is always the most beautiful platform for me. Reading a book is a break from the digital world, which I think is really needed. And a gorgeously printed book – a curated collection of photographs – is reflective of the tattoos themselves. Tattoos are works of art that we wear on our skin; they are part of our physical body; and many of the tattoo lovers that I know would describe themselves as collectors too. Also, I believe that capturing this present moment is important. I like to think that in the future, the book will perhaps be regarded as a historical document (in the same way as old tattoo photographs are now).

How did you determine the locations of the shoots?

These are cities I have lived in, been tattooed in, and dream of returning to. They are places that I feel have a vibrant tattoo community. London is where I live now and regularly get tattooed, of course. I also get tattooed in Brighton and like to hang out at the Brighton Tattoo Convention, so that was a must for the book. The other six cities are places that I have travelled to, specifically to get tattooed (like New York, for example, where me and my husband were tattooed by Cris Cleen at Saved for my thirtieth birthday) or they are places on my tattoo travel wish list. They are so many more cities I could have included. It was so hard to choose just eight. I am definitely hoping there will be a Volume Two. I would also love to re-visit these first eight cities in a couple of years, to see what has changed.





Who, and what, did you want to represent in this book?

I wanted to capture a sense of what each city is like, and capture the stylishly inked inhabitants of each place. I wanted to feature everyone from bankers and doctors to stylists and creative directors, and of course the people who tattoo them, the artists themselves. Speaking personally, becoming heavily tattooed has made me much happier in my own body, and therefore more confident in my own sartorial choices, so this book is just a celebration of that really. It represents two of my favourite things: tattoos and fashion.

How long did the book take to compile?

Gosh, it felt like I was working on it for ever. I am a magazine editor and journalist and so in comparison, the production process felt very long. From initial proposal to publication date I think it was around a year and a half.



Did you encounter any particular challenges?

Working with a publisher was definitely an interesting experience and a steep learning curve. A few times, our visions went in different ways, but it's important to take in everyone's point of view and expertise, and I hope the book is better for it.

Who else worked on the book with you?

I worked with some of my favourite photographers, and I love that each photographer brought their own creative vision to the book too. I asked Cally-Jo to write the foreword. She has a gorgeous classic style and is a brilliant tattoo artist. She talks beautifully and eloquently about the tattoo world and what made her fall in love with it. It's an honour to feature her and her words in the book.

And there are interviews in the book too?

Yes – a mix of tattooed people whose style I admire and tattoo artists who are doing incredible things for the industry.



Did you notice any recurring tattoo or style themes?

There are plenty of the tattoo classics of course – snakes, spiders, anchors, and so on – but each and every person in this book is unique and stylish in their own way. One of the things I noticed was that even the simplest of outfits is elevated when there's a glimpse of tattooed skin poking out!

Were there any pre-arranged shoots or was it all spontaneous and unplanned?

Co-ordinating eight photographers in eight different cities was a logistical nightmare. So the collection of photos is a real mix of people we stumbled across, people we sought out at tattoo shops and conventions, and people who came to us as a result of social media posts announcing where we were going to be shooting and on what dates. I wanted to make it open, so people could just come and be part of it, if they wanted to. A few shoots were pre-arranged, as they were people I simply had to include in the book – people like Grace Neutral, who I regard as the epitome of tattoo style.

Did it become a stressful process, being constantly on the look-out for subjects?

Yes, there was a lot of pressure. We'd arrange a date to go out style spotting, and then it would be raining or cold... Sometimes I would just go over to people I thought looked cool and ask them if they were tattooed! It's funny, you get a bit of a radar and can spot tattooed people





even if their tattoos aren't on show. But that's what I love about it. You never know who you might discover. Some of my favourite portraits from the book are people I spotted while they were sitting eating lunch or just wandering by. I love that this book gave me an excuse to go and chat to people like that! It's amazing how many people wanted to be involved when I went to say hello to them.

The book has a substantial information section too. In comparison to the photography, was this harder or easier to compile?

Much, much harder. I wanted the book to end with some proper facts, including a glossary of tattoo styles, because it's aimed at both tattoo collectors and also those who have never been tattooed. I think this section gives it a wider appeal. I had a bit of fun with it too, for example the page headed 'Never Ask a Tattooed Person...'

TATTOO STREET STYLE

By Alice Snape

Ebury Press

ISBN 978-1785037276

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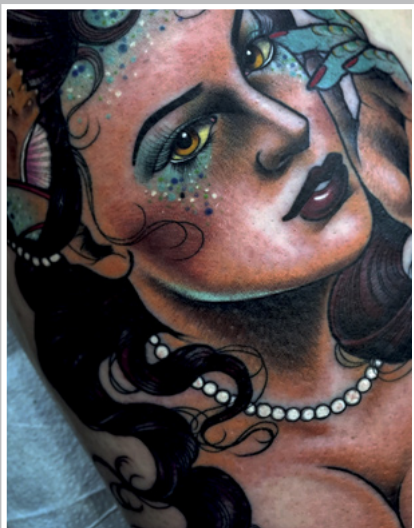
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JASMINE WRIGHT



I came across Jasmine Wright's work purely by chance, writes James Sandercock. I'd been aimlessly wandering the googleverse, as I often do, and I'd just hit saturation point when I stumbled across some tattoo images that stopped me in my tracks. They were perfectly executed. Just enough; not too much. The artist was based in California but she just happened to be coming over to Europe for the Mondial du Tatouage convention in Paris... so I decided to get in touch. These days, you never know if you're going to reach the artist themselves or some pit bull of a personal assistant, but thankfully on this occasion it was the former and she kindly agreed to meet.

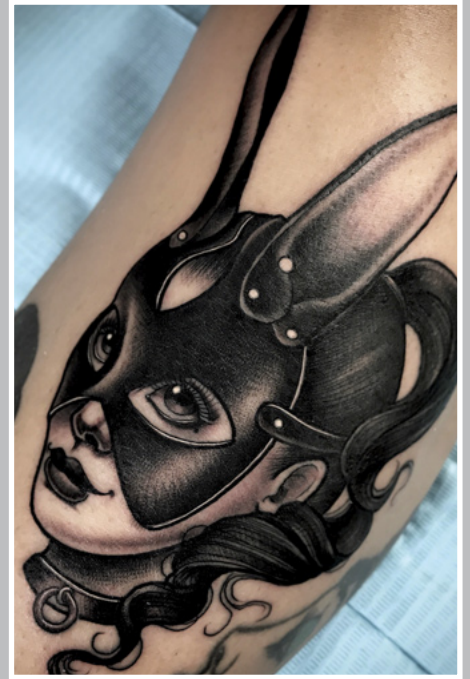


Jasmine tells me that now she's an established artist, she's starting to realise the importance of everything she experienced in her formative years. "I grew up in San Diego, California, and it's where I still live. I'm an only child, and my parents worked really long hours. From a very early age I walked home from school on my own and then I would have several hours during which I had to entertain myself until they got in from work. So I drew. I was always somewhat artistically inclined. I don't think what I was doing showed any particular promise, but it was probably better than the average. Every time you pick up a pencil you are developing as an artist! And at the same time I was becoming a very independent person. Both of those things have stood me in good stead."

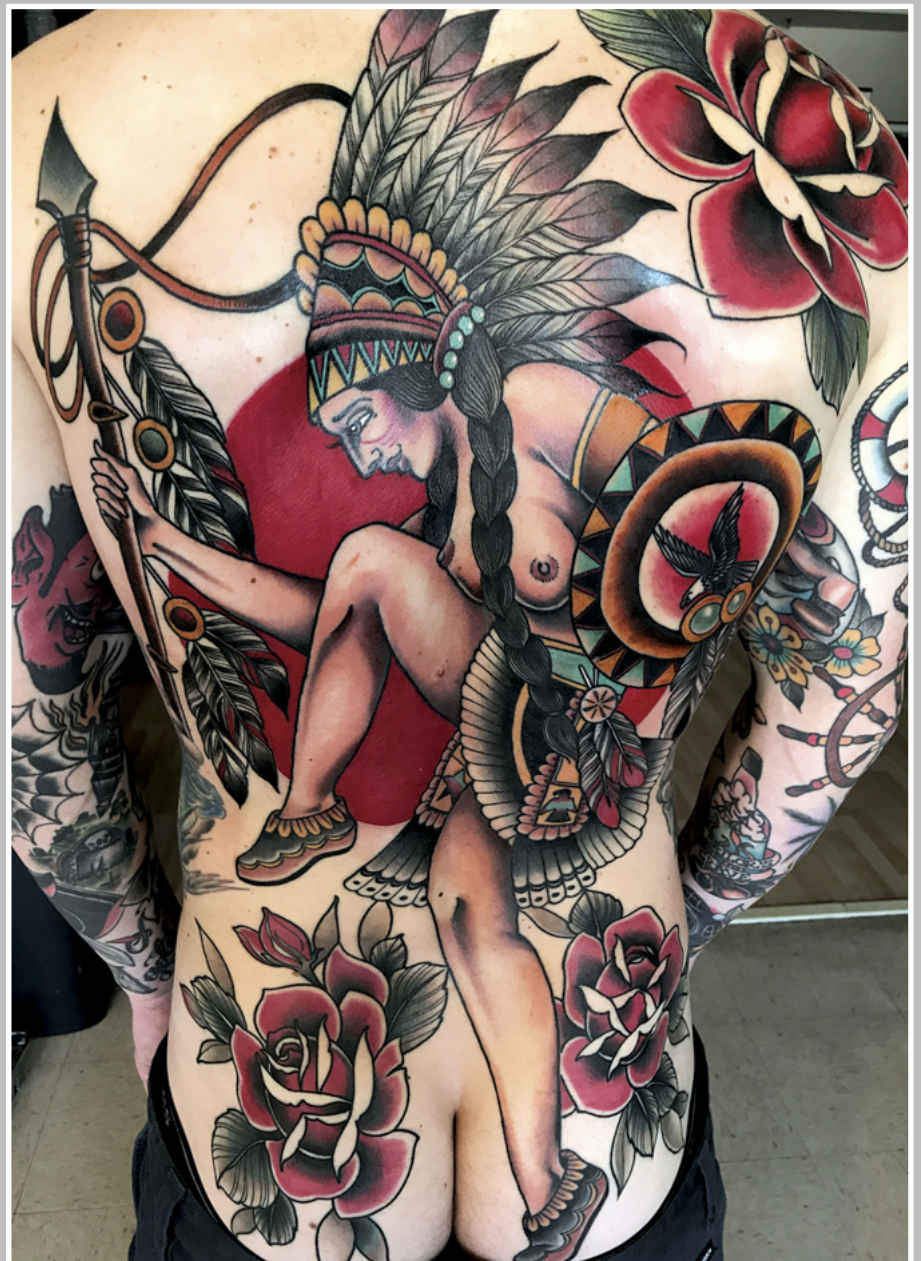
"I hated school," Jasmine continues, "despite the fact that I was good at it. I was just never interested in what they had to offer. So I dropped out at 16 and got myself a job drawing caricatures at Legoland. Standard stuff – you know, big head, little body. I stuck at that

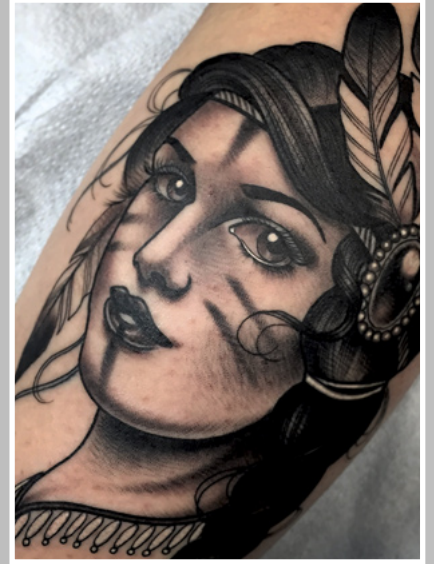
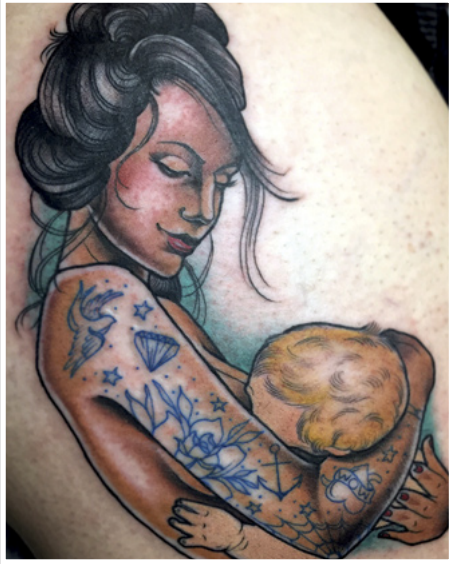
for three years. I had a boyfriend who was getting tattooed a lot, so I used to go to the shop with him and hang out. I already had some tattoos, and I began to realise that this was the kind of place I could work. It was somewhere I could be myself and do my thing, with cool, like-minded people. So I got a job working front-of-house and never looked back."

I wondered if there had been anyone who had given Jasmine artistic encouragement at this early stage, or encouraged her to pursue her creative side. "Not really," she tells me. "My mum is very corporate and conservative. My dad is a little more artsy. But even though they were both very supportive, I don't think either of them were that interested in what I was actually doing. There was nobody who really understood where I wanted to go, or who helped me in that direction. I had to be very self-motivated. It's taken a long time for my parents to come round to accepting the life that I have chosen to lead, but I think they can finally see that I've made something out of it."

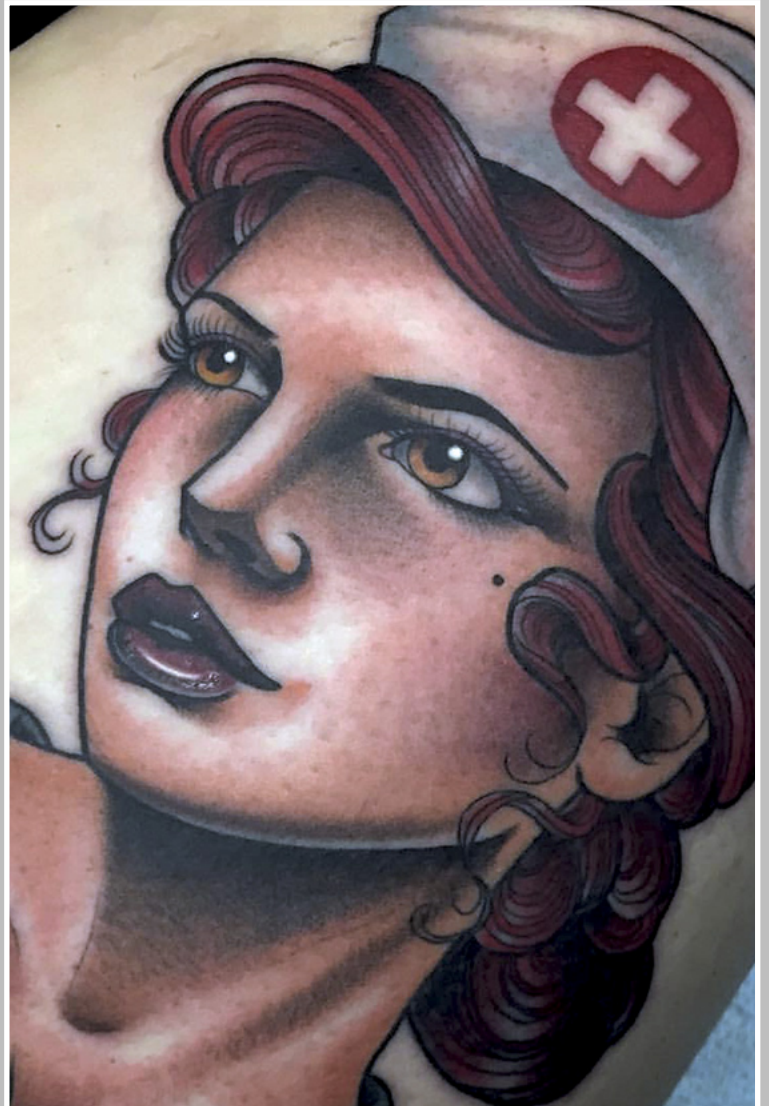


Eventually Jasmine managed to make the move from front-of-house to behind a machine. Or least she thought she had. "I was pretty much shown what NOT to do," she recalls. "The guy was a total crook. I was just cheap labour." Fortunately, three years later she was given a second chance when she was offered an apprenticeship with an artist she really respected: Aaron Della Vedova at Guru Tattoo. Aaron's work is beautiful and large-scale. The kind of thing only an experienced artist can pull off. Finally, Jasmine had found somebody who could help her develop artistically and take her to the next level. "Everyone at Guru is different," she tells me, "and they're constantly pushing themselves. Just being exposed to those artists was motivation enough. I realised I could create for myself. I could make my art anything I wanted it to be, which was pretty cool."



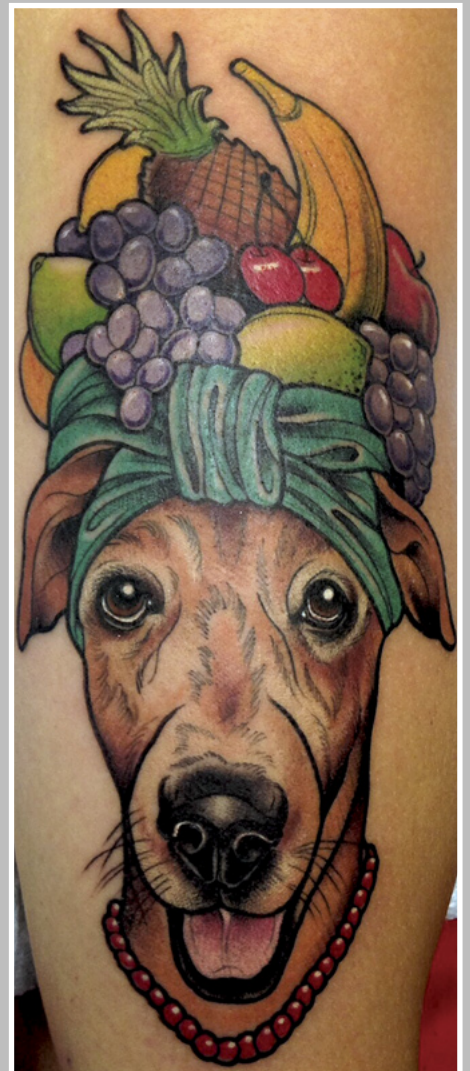
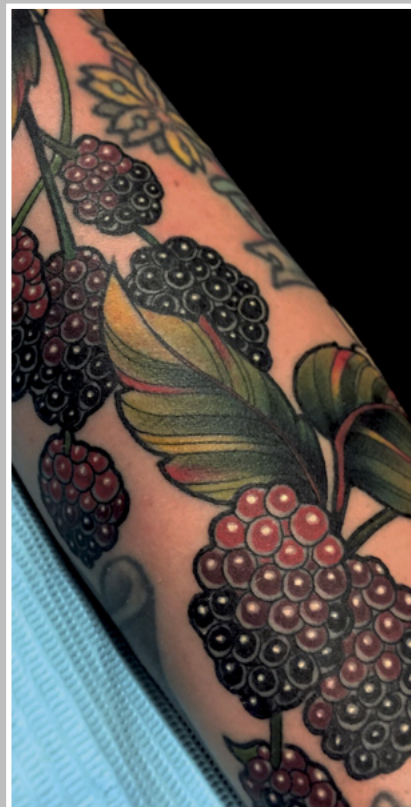


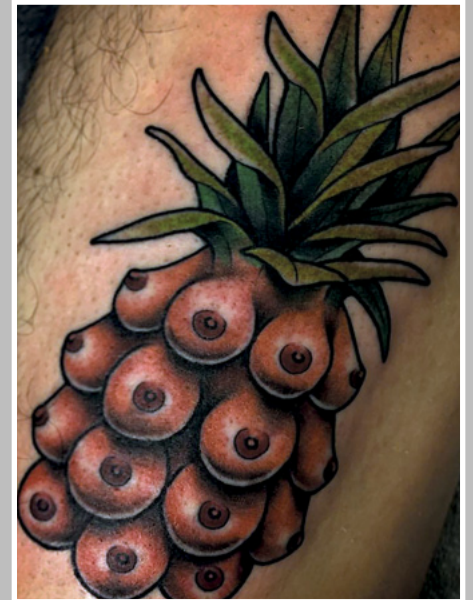
Jasmine finished her stint as an apprentice at the tender age of 21. "It was certainly tough, but now I can really appreciate it all – the good and the bad. I basically ran that first street shop. I did everything from cleaning to payroll to advertising. And although it wasn't really what I was expecting to do, I learned all about the business of business! My second apprenticeship, with Aaron, was a different matter entirely. He is someone I really look up to. Apprenticeships like that don't happen often. I worked my arse off – long hours, seven days a week, all of that. I feel I've really earned what I have today."





I ask Jasmine to talk about her style and influences. "I prefer to work in an illustrative way, but my grounding is very much in the traditional style. I still have that street shop ethic; I don't decline much! Unless I know that I absolutely can't do it of course. I use a lot of black, and bold lines, but I also like to be flexible. I'm able to do most things, and I bounce around. At the moment I'm working with slightly finer lines, but that could just be a passing thing. I feel a definite connection with the past – with the history of tattooing – and I think that's important. I don't get asked to do much straight-up traditional work, but I jump at the chance to do it when I can. It's where modern electric tattooing began. It's my roots. So I always lean towards the traditional, even though it may not be immediately obvious in my work. In all honesty, though, I love pretty much every style of tattooing. I always enjoy tracing a style's lineage, and seeing where it's come from. For us artists, there really is no excuse for mediocrity any more. It's all out there, right now, for us to take. We're exposed to so much now – all the time – and inevitably you end up pulling ideas and inspiration from everything you see. Sometimes it can feel like there's a little too much reference, but on balance I think that's a good thing."



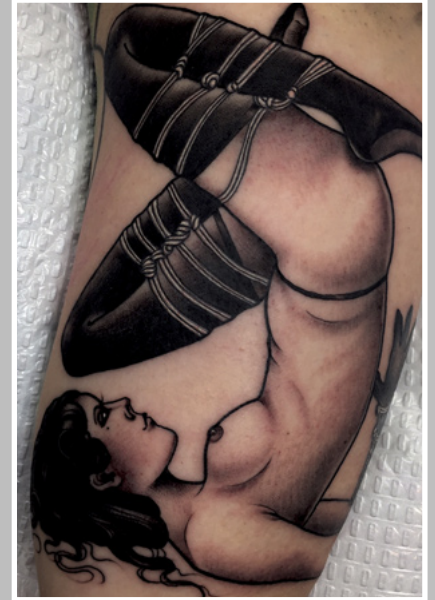


"I'm pretty lucky that most of my clients already know what I do and want to work with me in my style," Jasmine continues. "Occasionally clients want to micro-manage things, which can be difficult, or we might rub each other up the wrong way, but I am always very much aware that people do not have to come to me. The fact that they have chosen me in the first place is an honour, so I will always try to be as accommodating as possible. Sometimes I have to compromise. I always remind myself that it's not just MY art. It's not all about me. I am never going to be the artist who says, 'You do it my way or not at all'. I may never see that tattoo again, but the client has to live with it."





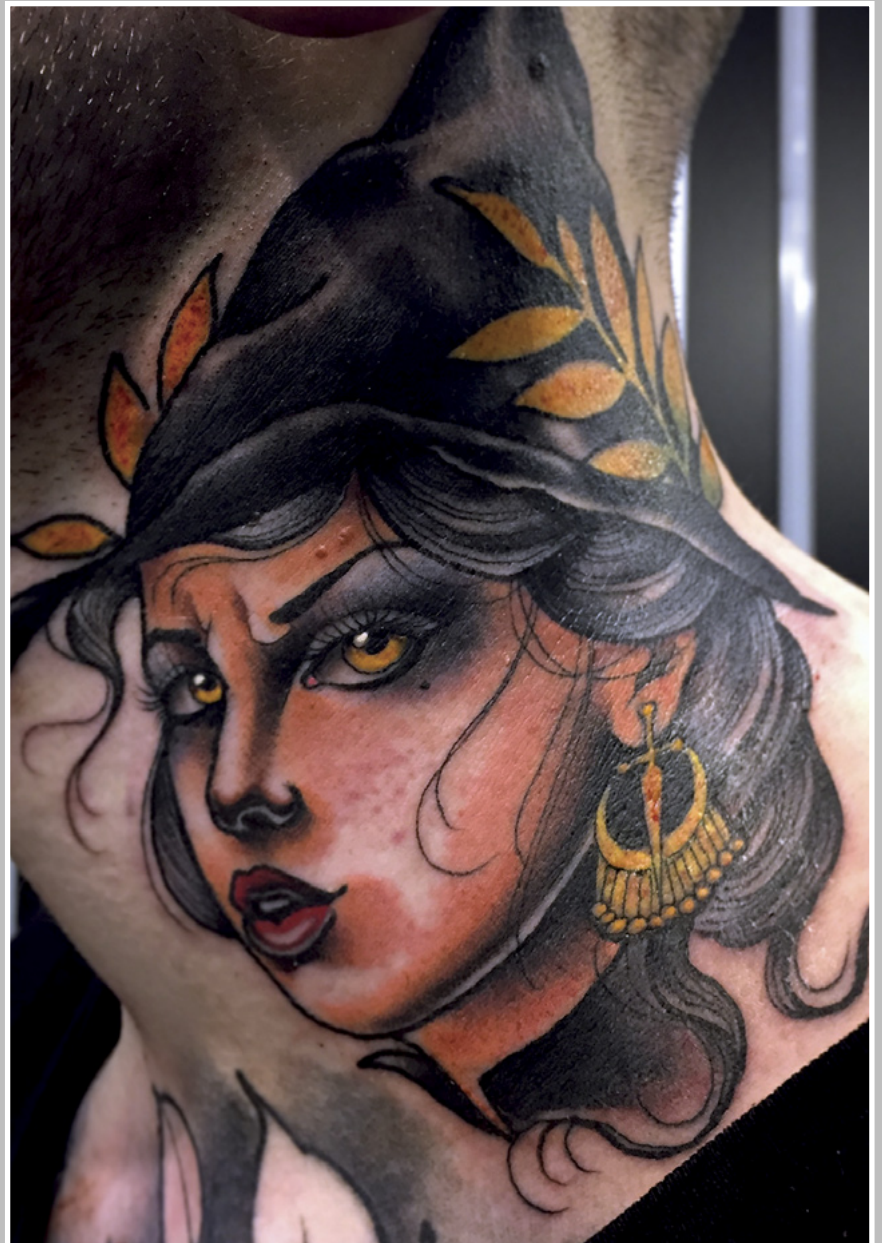
Jasmine goes on to talk more about the nature of the encounter between tattooist and client. "It may only be a very brief exchange, but for that short period of time there is a bond and an understanding. And of course this grows with scale. A while back I was working on this leg sleeve for a young guy. In no other universe and under no other circumstances would our paths ever have crossed, but he happened to like my style and he started getting tattooed by me and we are now actually good friends. We have nothing in common and we are both aware of that, but we really respect each other. It's kind of strange, and it's more than pleasant! We both think it's kind of cool."



I ask Jasmine if she feels that being an American tattooist gives her a particular cultural identity? “The internet has blurred all the boundaries,” she replies. Then she continues in a slightly different vein. “Culturally, I know the US has been massively influential – but personally, at this moment in time, I sometimes feel embarrassed to be an American. Not because of our tattoo history of course, or the wider creative community, but because of our country’s political choices. The present government feels like a real threat to our particular demographic. There’s a growing amount of protest. As artists, we have an outlet – a way to display our frustration. And ironically, I think these very strong emotions are a good thing for art. I’m almost excited to see where that goes. I’ve seen a groundswell in support for those who are directly threatened, and a lot of positive action. I feel tattooing is very involved in that – although it’s not a thing for my own clients... yet!”

Knowing how all-consuming tattooing can become, I am curious to know how Jasmine unwinds. “Disneyland!” she tells me, and laughs out loud. “I go to a lot of concerts too. I don’t play an instrument, but I just LOVE music.” And what of the future? “I have this weird fear that I’m going to end up in San Diego for ever,” Jasmin confesses, “so I travel as much as I can to keep that fear at bay. I’m only at home maybe ten to fifteen days a month. I’m very happy at the moment. It’s kind of crazy how much tattooing has given back to me. There are long, hard, tiring days and every so often I might complain, but this life is amazing! Today I woke up in Paris. I get to hang out with some great friends and I’m just drawing pictures. I had no idea this kind of thing was even possible when I set out on this journey. I thought it was going to be just a nine-to-five job! I’m thankful every single day. Tattooing has never done me wrong and tattooing has never failed me.”

To catch up with Jasmine, head to www.jasminewrightisyourfriend.com or [imbusy666](https://www.instagram.com/imbusy666) on instagram



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acetates (spain)



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jack peppiette, insider tattoo



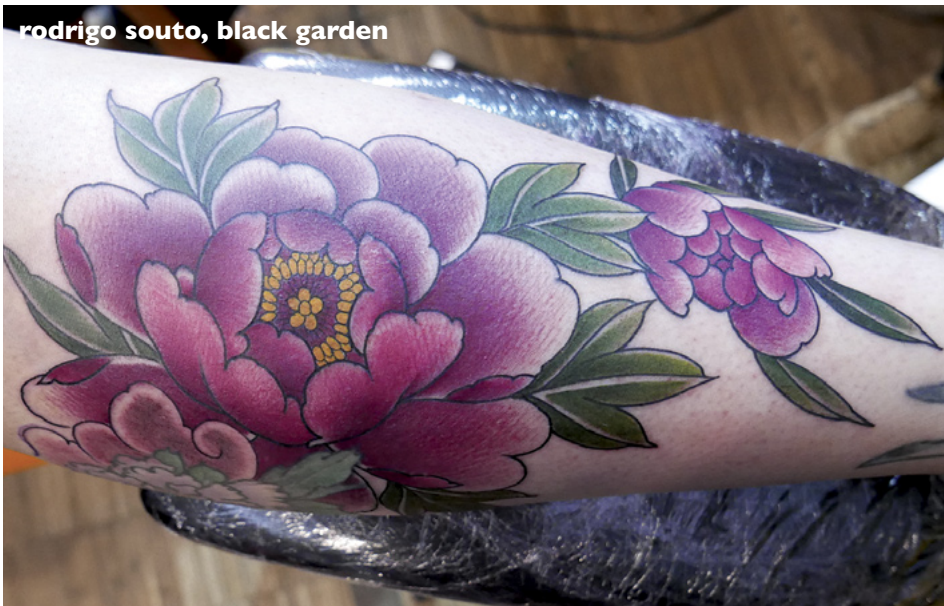
angie gooderson, flaming art

tofi, ink-ognito (poland)



nik brierley, art house tattoo

rodrigo soutu, black garden



kel tait (usa)

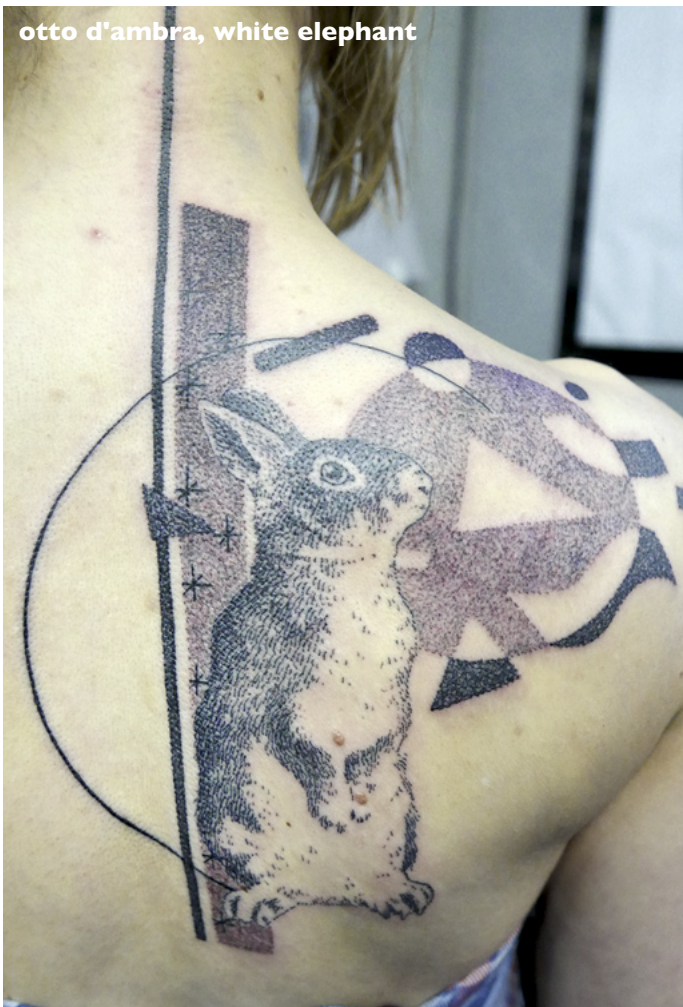
chris meighan, santa cruz kustom club



thomas petucco



otto d'ambra, white elephant



ash davies, stronghold tattoo





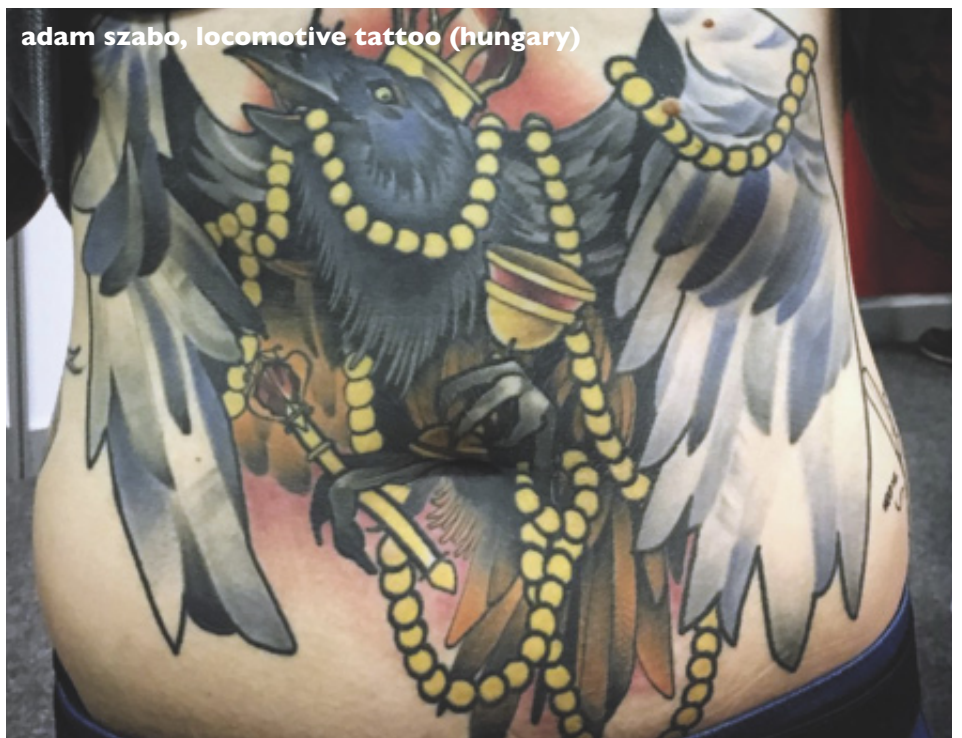
simon smith, yarson tattoo



ellis arch, painted lady tattoo parlour



paul goodwin, no regrets



adam szabo, locomotive tattoo (hungary)

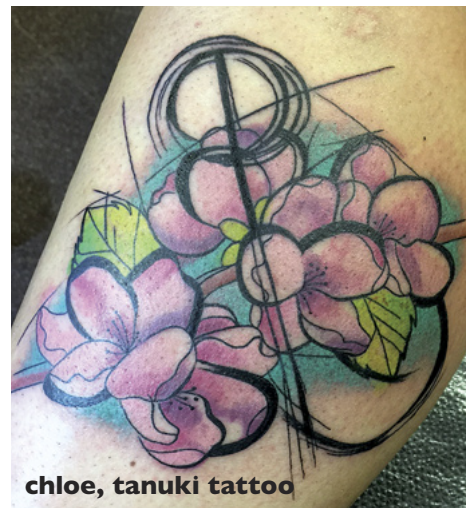
steve morante, fudoshin tattoos



emilie b,
l'imaginarium (belgium)



guido schmitz, on the road



chloe, tanuki tattoo

chris micallef



sam barber, north of winter



colin whitfield,
whitfield tattoos



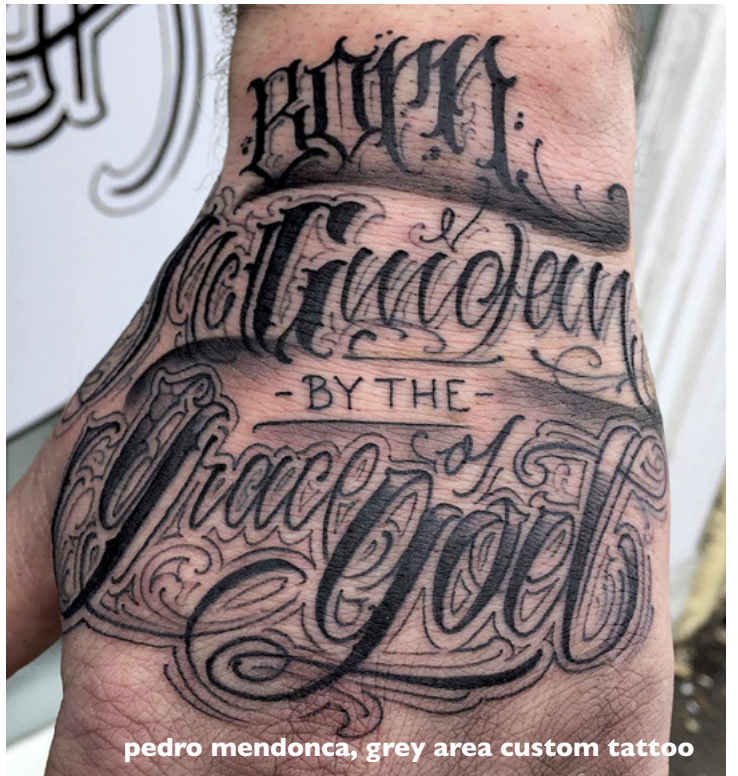
alex rattray, empire ink



ryan bowey, electric punch



chris sutton,
flaming art tattoo



pedro mendonca, grey area custom tattoo



chad newsom
hybrid moments tattoo (usa)



richard dyminski, blood sweat & tattoos

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Interview by Lizzy
Pictures courtesy of Meghan McAleavy

TEXTILES

MEGHAN MCALEAVY

There is something very special about traditional wall hangings. You only need to look at the vintage banners used by trade unions, community groups and churches to see the pride and care they inspire. But in our throwaway society, their charm and history is in danger of being left behind. It's fortunate that talented makers such as American textile artist Meghan McAleavy are stepping in to preserve and develop this wonderful legacy. Meghan makes one-of-a-kind satin wall hangings incorporating various embroidery and appliqué techniques. Her designs are inspired by the aesthetics of Masonic regalia. Currently living and working in New Jersey, she's made dozens of unique and beautiful banners for tattooists all around the world and, not surprisingly, has a long waiting list of commissions.





Where did your love of textiles come from?

It was my grandmother who really opened the doors for me. She babysat me as a toddler and was always crocheting blankets with wild patterns and extraordinary colour combinations. It was fascinating to watch. As soon as I could hold a needle and thread she taught me how to do embroidery. I was maybe around five years old.

And you studied textiles at college?

Yes, I studied at Oregon College of Art & Craft and received my BFA in Textiles in 2005. I've always been a maker, and going to college to learn more about my craft benefited me hugely. It motivated me and pushed me outside my creative comfort zone.

Can you tell us about the course, and how it influenced your work?

My work has obviously evolved a lot since then. But being so immersed in art – participating in critiques, learning about art history, and so on – was a crucial part of making me the artist I am today. At college we mainly focused on disciplines such as weaving and surface design (including printing and dying). Throughout the course there was a whole lot of sample-making; this frustrated me at the time, but later on I was able to appreciate the process. And it's funny, because now I never start a banner without making a sample first. It's kind of like the old saying, 'Measure twice, cut once.' Except I measure ten times because I'm a perfectionist!



Did you do any embroidery projects at college?

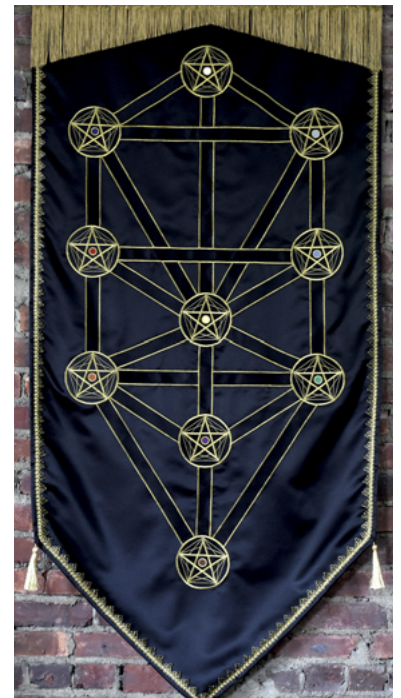
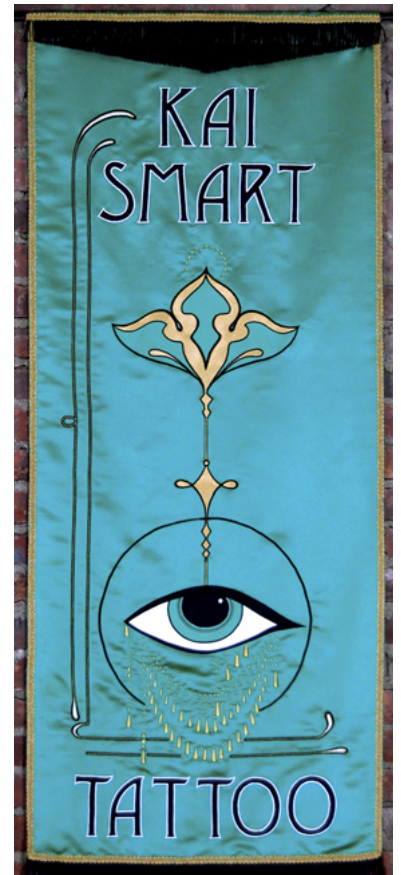
Yes. In my thesis year I began to explore free motion embroidery on a sewing machine, which of course is a huge part of what I do now. I've always had a love of hand embroidery, but not necessarily the patience for it, and for that particular project I wanted to work with embroidery and soft sculpture.

What led you to start using appliqué?

After college, the work I was making was still quite small, because although machine embroidery is faster than hand, it's still very time-consuming. I wanted to go bigger. That's what led me to incorporate appliqué is when pieces of fabric are cut out and layered on top of a larger piece to create an image. I like to combine appliqué and embroidery to create a sense of depth and texture.

How did you first come up with the idea of making banners?

I'm married to tattooist and artist Robert Ryan, and in 2007 we were organising a group art show at our studio. There's a loft space in the corner and he asked me if I could make something to cover it. That's when we came up with the idea of creating a fabric piece similar to a masonic apron. I was already trying to figure out new ways to display my embroidery (I'd been layering it under resin and also framing it in hoops, but this was all too boring and conventional for me) so the concept of the banner itself functioning as a kind of frame for my work was very interesting. And that's when my love of Masonic artwork began to develop.





How did the commissions from tattooists start?

In 2011, Robert asked me to make him a banner that he could use at tattoo shows. He took it to the Bay Area Convention and lots of tattooists started asking where he got it from. Tattooer Bubba Reeves was the first to contact me about having a banner made. He's a member of The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.), an international fraternal organisation with similarities to the Masons, and he wanted a banner in that style. From that point on, it was kind of a domino effect! Having tattooers hang their banners at conventions was the best possible form of advertising for me. I started an Instagram account around that time too, which has also been crucial to my business.

How has your work developed since then?

I love a good challenge and I'm always trying to push myself. I try never to make the same style of banner twice, unless it's specially requested by a client. So I'm constantly working towards new design ideas. I think the embroidery is much more detailed in my current work. And I'm approaching each new banner with greater confidence and focus, knowing that it will push my creative boundaries even further. I always try to produce exactly what a client wants. Some clients let me do my own thing completely, whilst others have a specific vision in mind that I bring to life for them. For instance, they may send me a photo of a painting they've done and I will try my best to match every nuance and highlight, right down to the exact shading. This can be a really great challenge for me. Sometimes I have to devise new techniques in order to get the result that I want. I just figure it all out through trial and error. I'm constantly learning.



How do you see your work evolving from here?

I'm continuing to think about new ways of displaying my work. I'm experimenting with making banners into actual shapes that will work as site specific pieces – installations in other words, rather than just wall hangings.

Do you ever collaborate with other artists?

Yes. I love collaborating with fellow artists. Last year I did a small run of banners with my good friend Rich Cali. I think it's really beautiful transforming someone's painting or drawing into a textile piece. And of course many of the banners I make for tattooers feel like collaborations too.

Tell us about the symbolism in your work.

Symbology fascinates me. My primary inspirations are mysticism, religion and esoteric art. I think my interest in symbolism stems from my strict Catholic upbringing. Sacred art and religious iconography were a big part of my childhood. I see symbols in everything, whether meanings are expressed through imagery or with colours.

Do you have a favourite banner that you've created?

I'd have to say it's the one I made for Lux Lunae, a Masonic Lodge. Obviously my whole aesthetic is drawn from vintage Masonic and I.O.O.F. banners, so when I was actually asked to create one I was extremely honoured. For me, it feels so important that I was given the opportunity to make a piece of history.

How would you describe your work? Is it art, or craft, or both?

I am a seamstress and a freelance textile artist. Craftsmanship is, and always has been, of the utmost importance to me, but this goes hand-in-hand with a strong design sensibility and aesthetic execution – exactly the same processes that go into making fine art. I don't necessarily see a divide between fine art, craft and design. (You only have to look at fraternal artwork and lodge symbolism to see that something anchored in craft can also be highly expressive artistically.)





What do you think about the current resurgence in the market for hand-crafted goods?

It's amazing, it seems that everyone wants to be a maker these days! It's so great that more and more people are able to support themselves through a craft, and some people are coming up with great ideas. But others are just ripping off whatever they think is popular, and that can be infuriating.

What are the pros and cons of working on commission?

The ultimate pro – these amazing people keep me employed! Everyone said I'd never get far with an art degree and look at me now. I thought I'd be waiting tables on the side forever. But I'm really living the dream, making art every day and getting paid to do it. The con – I wish I had more hands! I'm backed up with work for the next six months or so (which isn't actually such a bad thing...) People keep telling me to hire help but I'm too much of a perfectionist and I like to have full control of what I'm creating.

What has your craft given you?

It's given me a livelihood where I'm able to make one-of-a-kind pieces that, I hope, will be passed down from generation to generation and be around for a long time! Nowadays, most people choose to use computer-generated artwork to advertise their business, but my clients have provided me with the opportunity to make something by hand from an age-old, timeless tradition.

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INK & IRON TATTOO CONVENTION



The undisputed longest-running tattoo convention in the UK! That's quite an achievement. Ink & Iron has now been running for more than 20 years, although the exact figure changes depending on who you're talking to. During this time, the show's been held in a sports centre, a night club and a ballroom before settling into its current home, the New Bingley Hall, a large purpose-built venue close to Birmingham city centre.

The venue is split into two distinct areas. There's a large carpeted hall featuring all the tattooists, an art show, body painting area, trade stalls, bar, food and stage. Outside, a covered area with a concrete floor houses all the custom bikes, cars and yet more traders. The competitions take place in the centre of the hall mid-afternoon – and the judging, a tough enough job already, isn't made any easier by the presence of a rock and blues band playing on the main stage just metres away.

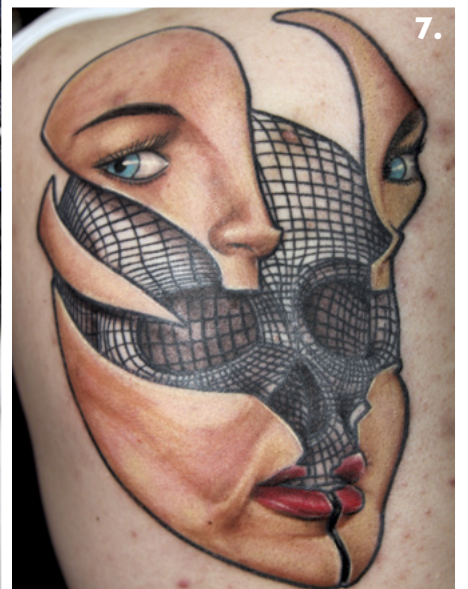
There are very few shows that still cater to the biker/tattoo fraternity and Ink & Iron has a real nostalgic feel to it. Its honest, no-nonsense, 'what you see is what you get' attitude is somehow very refreshing and I still get a real kick from looking at the shiny chrome and power-enhanced bikes and cars. This is the third year for Ink & Iron in its new venue – and considering Birmingham is the UK's second largest city I would really like to have seen a much bigger turnout supporting the show.

And for a city with so many fantastic studios, I am always amazed that so few of them seem to want to work Ink & Iron! Nevertheless, there are some fine tattooists here who did make the effort – including Rich Pearson and Helen Brown from Gung Ho!

Being a one-day show, everything moves at great speed and by half past five the staff were already dismantling the booths and the curtain was coming down for yet another year. The effort required to set it all up, rattle through everything in just a few short hours, and then wrap up so quickly at the end is just extraordinary. It's a miracle of organised chaos.

I can't help feeling that Ink & Iron may need some kind of re-invention. It's hard to keep breathing new life into such a long-running show and continue bringing in new customers year after year. Birmingham definitely deserves a great tattoo convention, but in order for that to happen people need to get behind it and help carry it forward. Hopefully we'll see that in 2019.

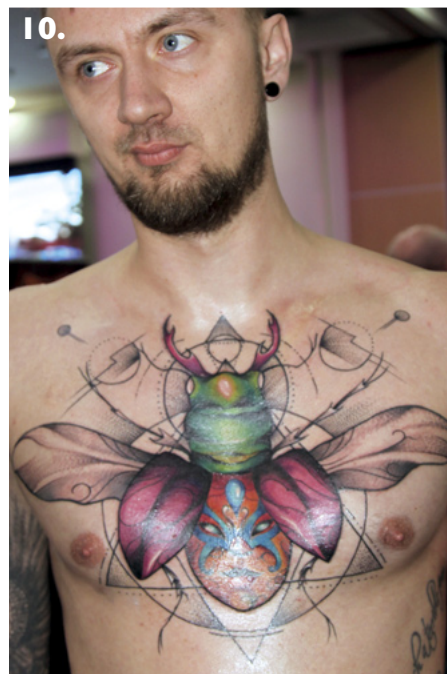
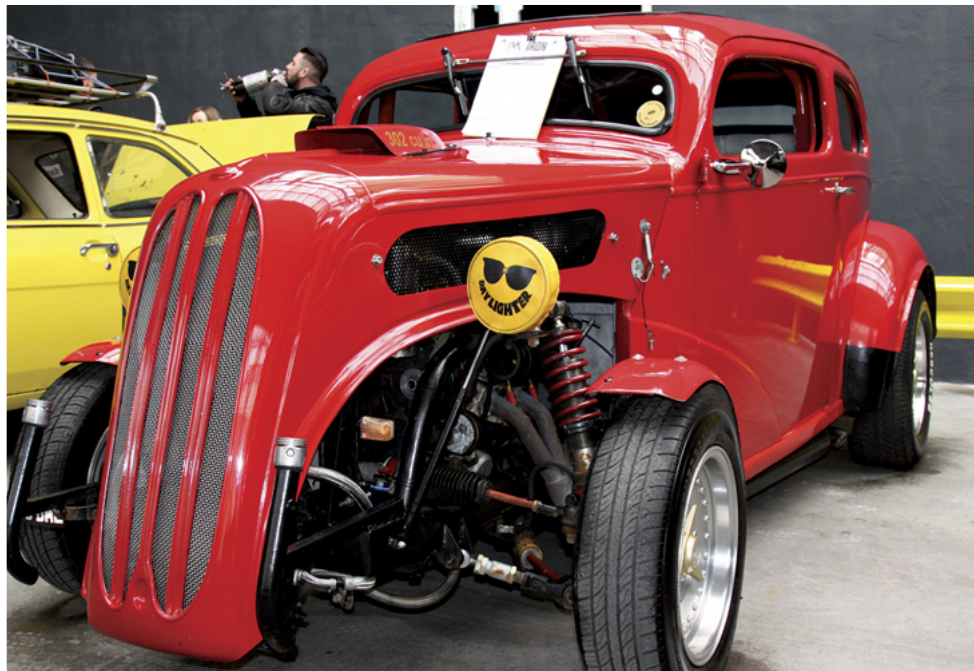




1. some class iron on show
2. craig james, new ink
3. tom maggot,
second city tattoo club
4. spike, inked moose
5. martin moloney, dragonfly
6. stephanie melbourne,
brass heart tattoo
7. anthony pring,
relentless body art



8. tom maggot,
second city tattoo club
9. sean healy, ink shack
10. kris, anima tattoo
11. sofie simpson, nala tattoo
12. leonardo blackbirds,
till you die





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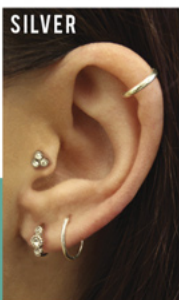
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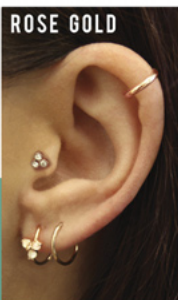


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FADE: FX



Words Matthew Haddon-Reichardt
Images Fade Manning and Matt Haddon-Reichardt

Fade 'FX' Manning is a tattooist whose life is infused with art. When not producing beautiful geometric dotwork tattoos or practising the ancient tradition of hand-tap tattooing, she can be found creating documentary films, designing wallpaper and even performing on the trapeze. Matt Haddon-Reichardt met up with her at the Skin FX Body Illustration Gallery, her studio in Hove on the south coast of England.

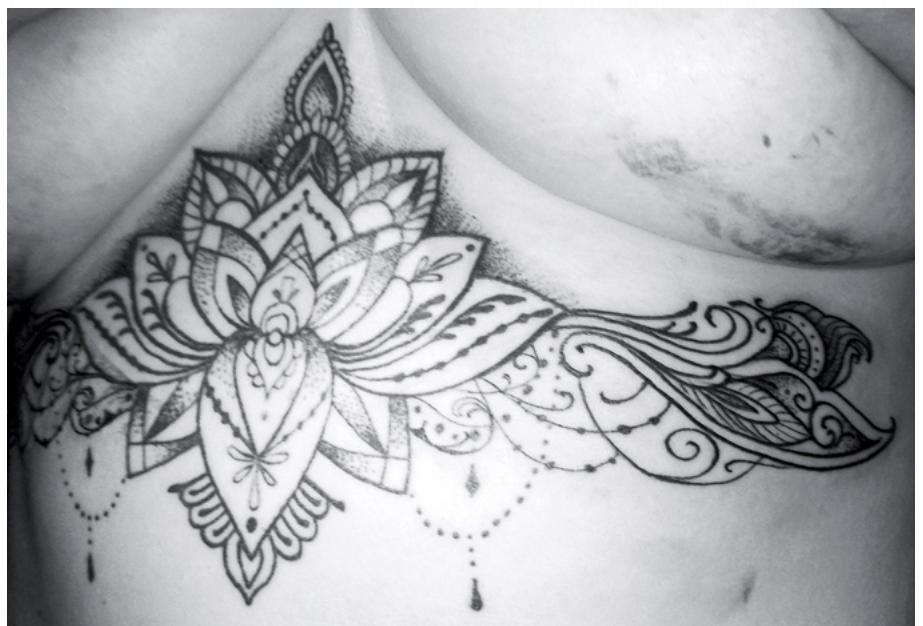
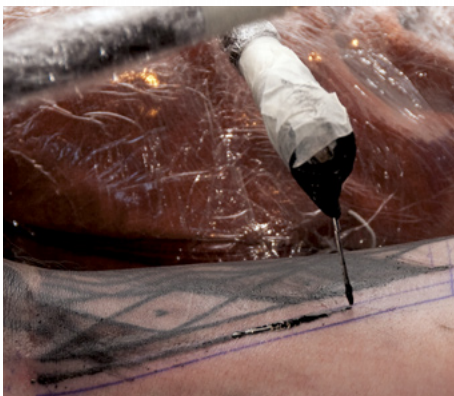
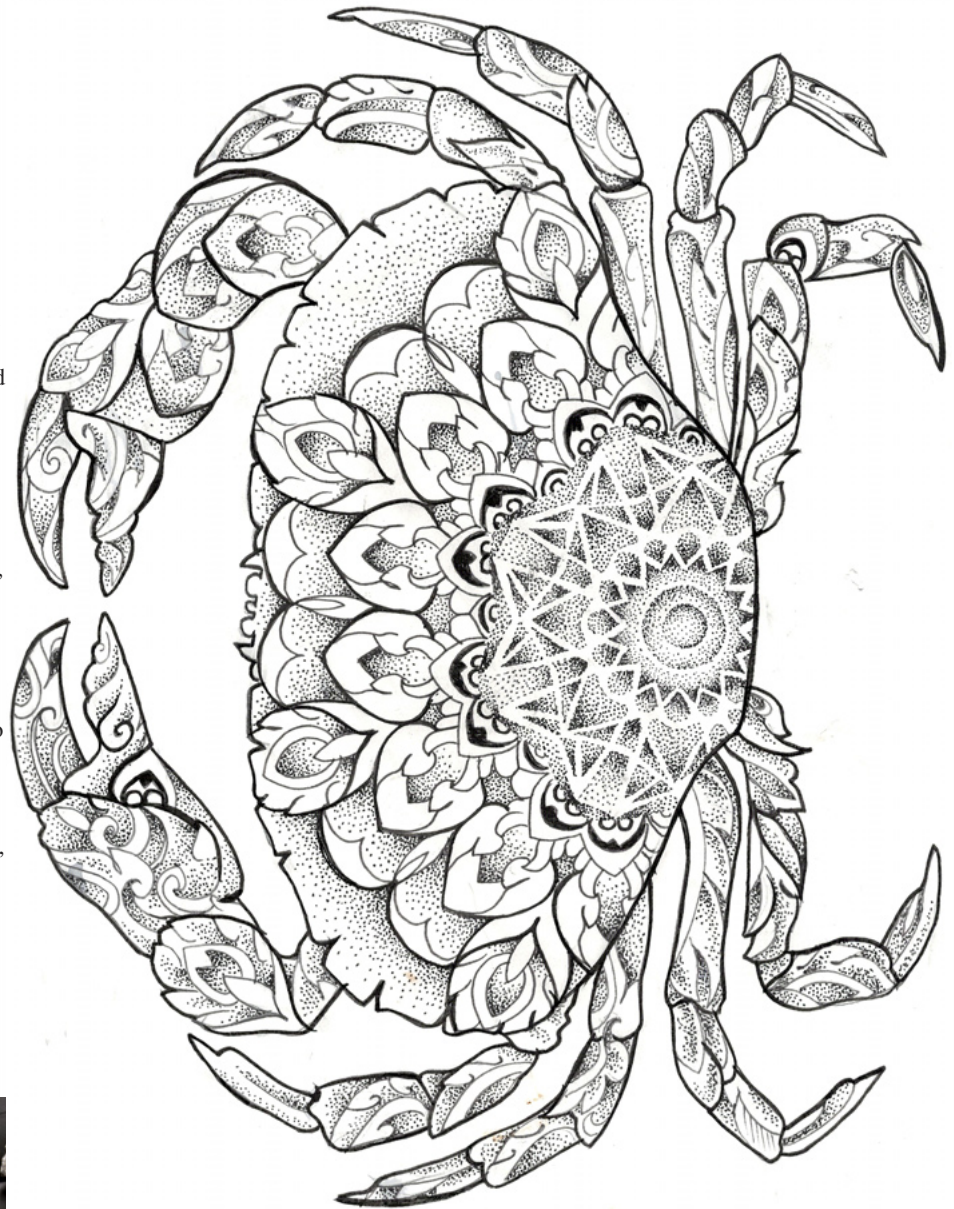
Inside Fade's studio, the atmosphere is warm and tranquil. My Earl Grey tea is a welcome reward after the train delays and awful weather I've braved to get here. Sitting on a comfortable black leather sofa next to a minimalist black coffee table, I find myself captivated by the extraordinary geometric wallpaper – one of Fade's own hypnotic designs. Fade comes in from the kitchen carrying a steaming mug of coffee.

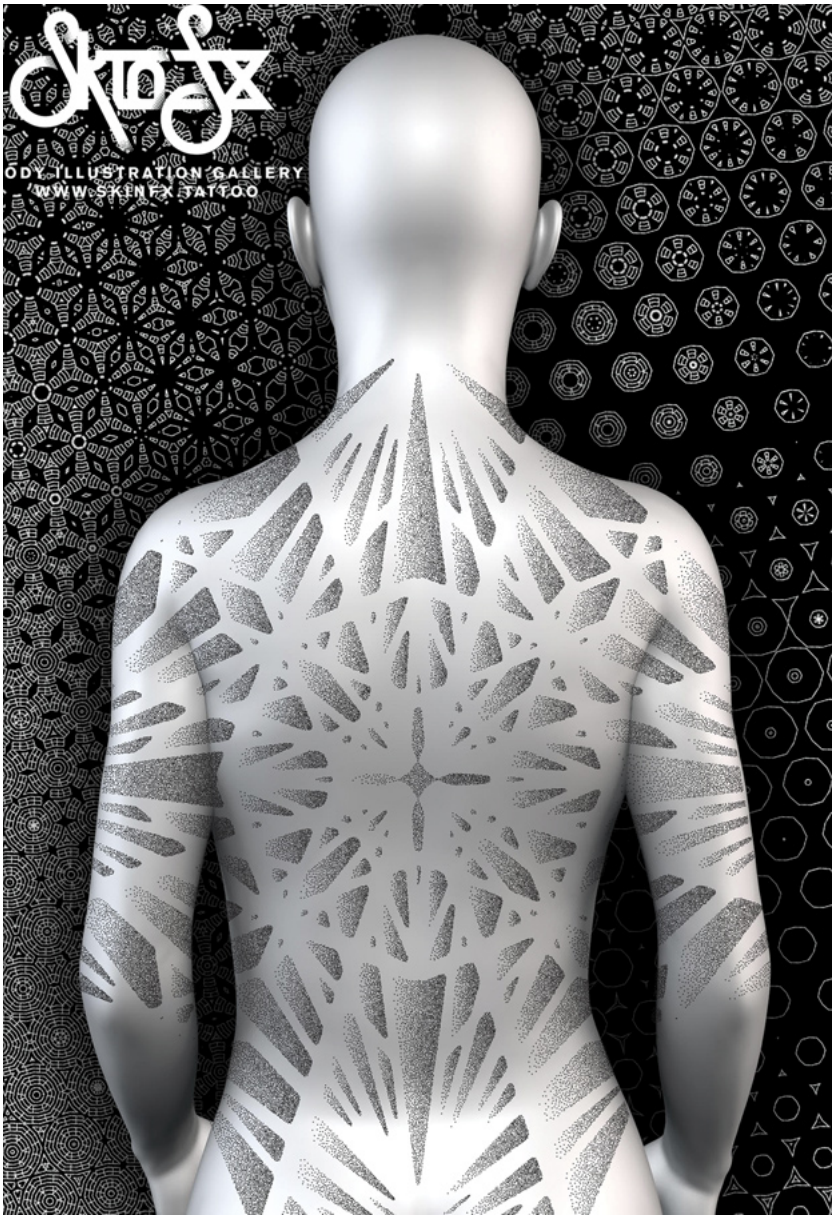
"You like the wallpaper?" she asks. I nod in approval. "When I designed my first tattoo studio, I had the idea of getting my patterns printed in gold ink on black lining paper. We then hung them so they repeated both horizontally and vertically, and it created a really opulent effect. Customers seemed to enjoy having something to focus on while getting tattooed, and I was always being asked if I had any rolls of the wallpaper for sale."



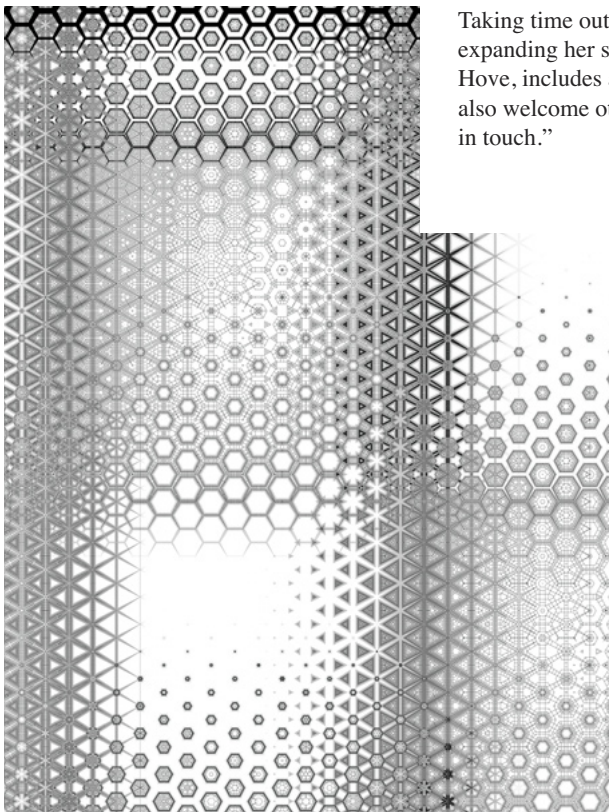
And that was what made Fade realise she could turn a hobby into a business. “I’m working with fashion and graphic designer Matt Corbin and we’re creating something entirely new... a style that I believe hasn’t been seen in either tattooing or interiors. It’s really exciting! The wallpaper range will be launched commercially later this year, and I’m looking forward to finally being able to say to ‘yes’ to all those enthusiastic tattoo customers who want a version of my studio wall in their own homes.”

“My tattooing techniques are very specialised,” she continues, “and my designs are one-off custom pieces every time. So over the years I’ve built up a library of literally hundreds of unique tattoo patterns and ideas. In designing the wallpapers, Matt and I figured out a way to combine all those years’ worth of drawings into just ten eye-catching patterns (five of which we plan to release in 2018). With multiple patterns transitioning in all directions, they’re beautiful, intricate and mesmerising designs that will give any room movement as well as shape. And of course they will also work really well as tattoos! All the wallpapers are going to be printed by hand to add an artisan finish.”





The popularity of Fade's geometric dotwork tattooing has seen her move from a small walk-in studio in Lewes to a private studio in Brighton, then to larger premises down the road in Hove – all in the space of just five years. She also travels the world tattooing individual clients and working at conventions. And as if tattooing and setting up a high-end wallpaper business weren't enough... "I teach and perform trapeze," she tells me. "Last year I performed at Glastonbury, the Bimble Inn and the BoomTown Fair. Sadly during my BoomTown routine I tore a hamstring."



Taking time out to recover from her injury gave Fade the opportunity to focus on expanding her studio. "My new private tattoo studio, Skin FX Body Illustration Gallery in Hove, includes an exhibition space," she explains. "I exhibit my own work here, and I also welcome other artists who wish to use the space. Anyone who is interested should get in touch."

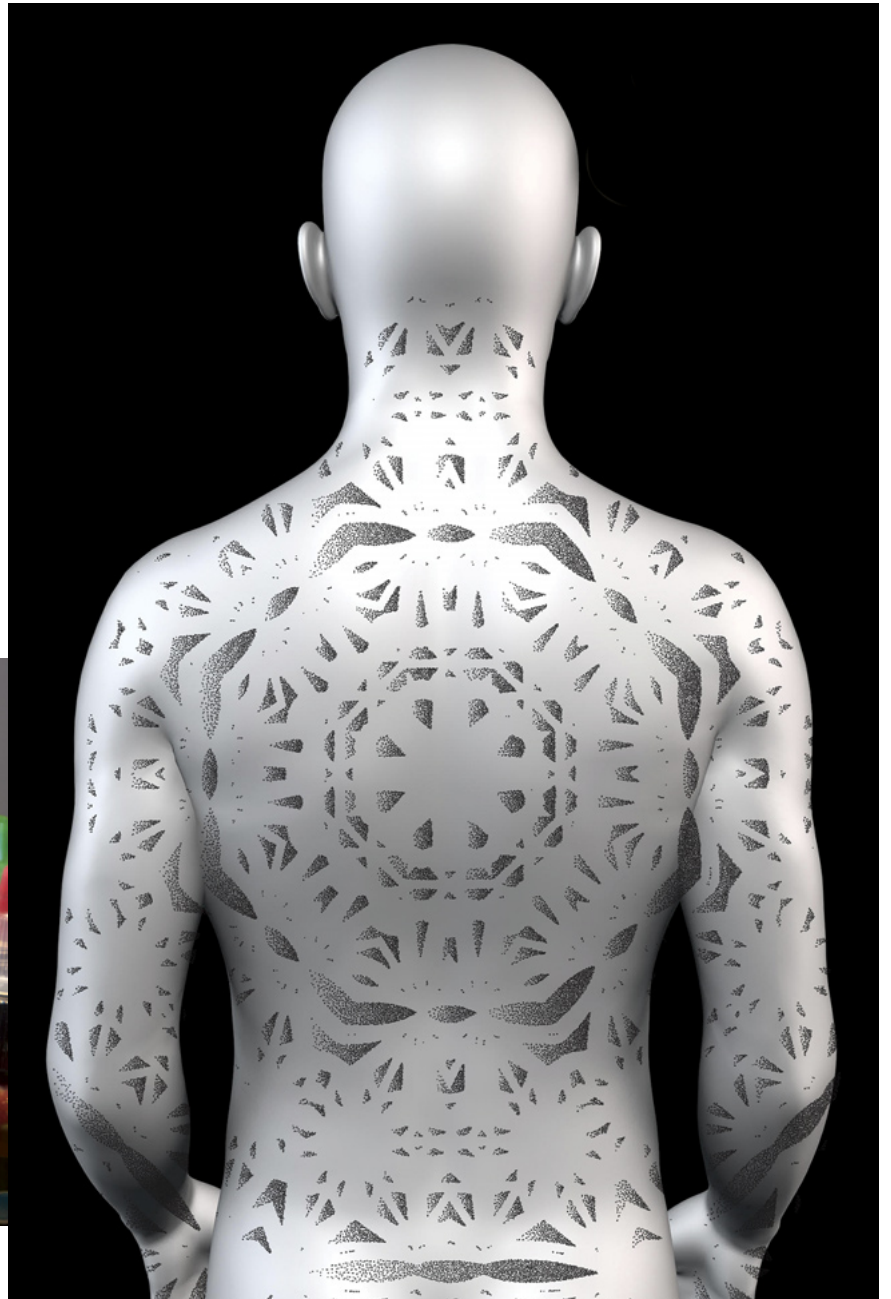
"We've also recently welcomed a new resident tattoo artist to the team – Dan Gully, who is perhaps best known for tattooing perfect portraits on premier league footballers. I'm very excited to have him here. The studio often hosts international guest artists too, which lets me focus on other projects such as launching my book and my wallpapers."

Fade is working on a book about her travels in Borneo. Her film 'Point of No Return' documents the last tattooed headhunters of the Iban tribe and explores Borneo's tattoo renaissance. Shooting in the autumn of 2015, Fade was given unprecedented access to the closely guarded secrets of Iban hand-tapping. "When I've finished the Borneo book, I want to move on to making a documentary about the Nagaland tribes in India," she tells me.

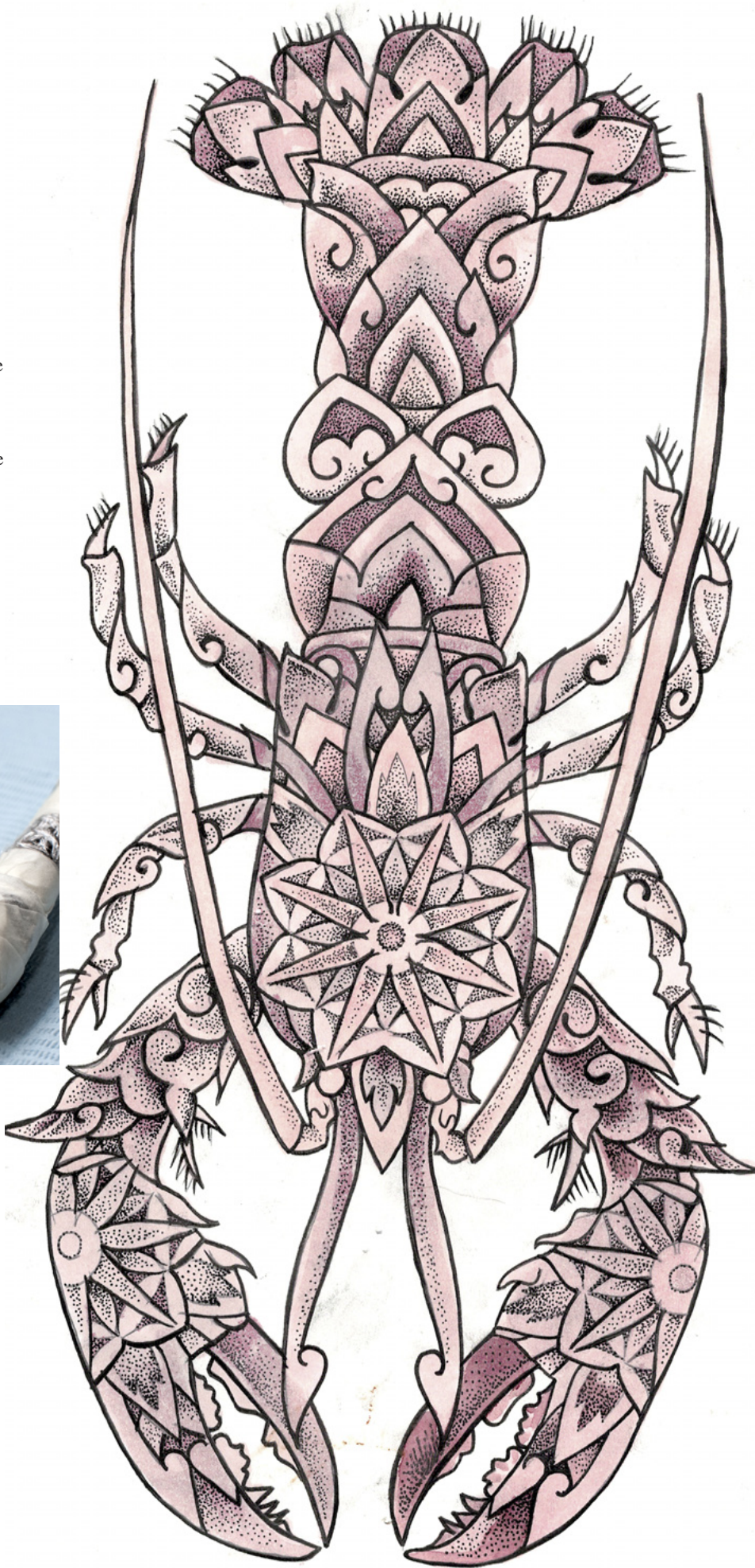




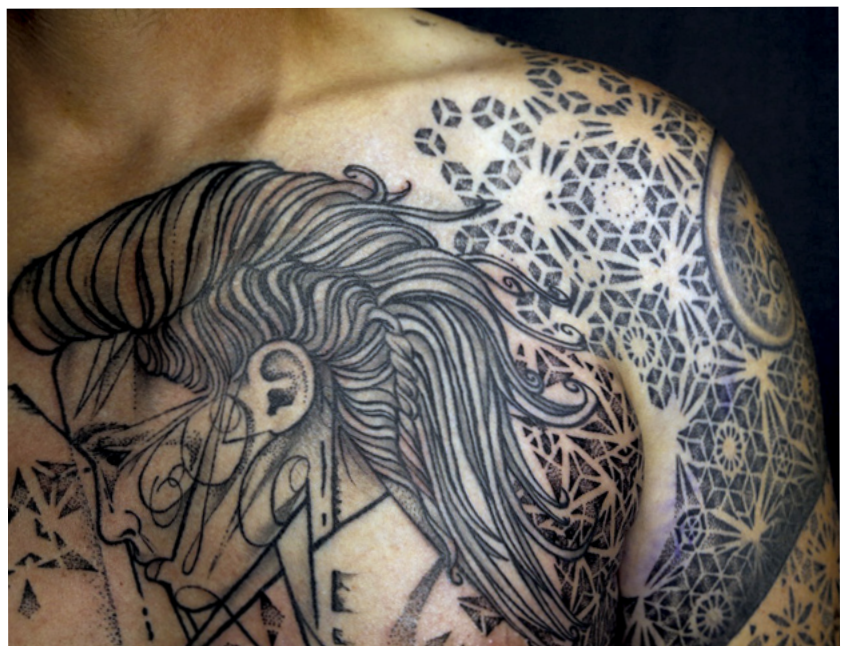
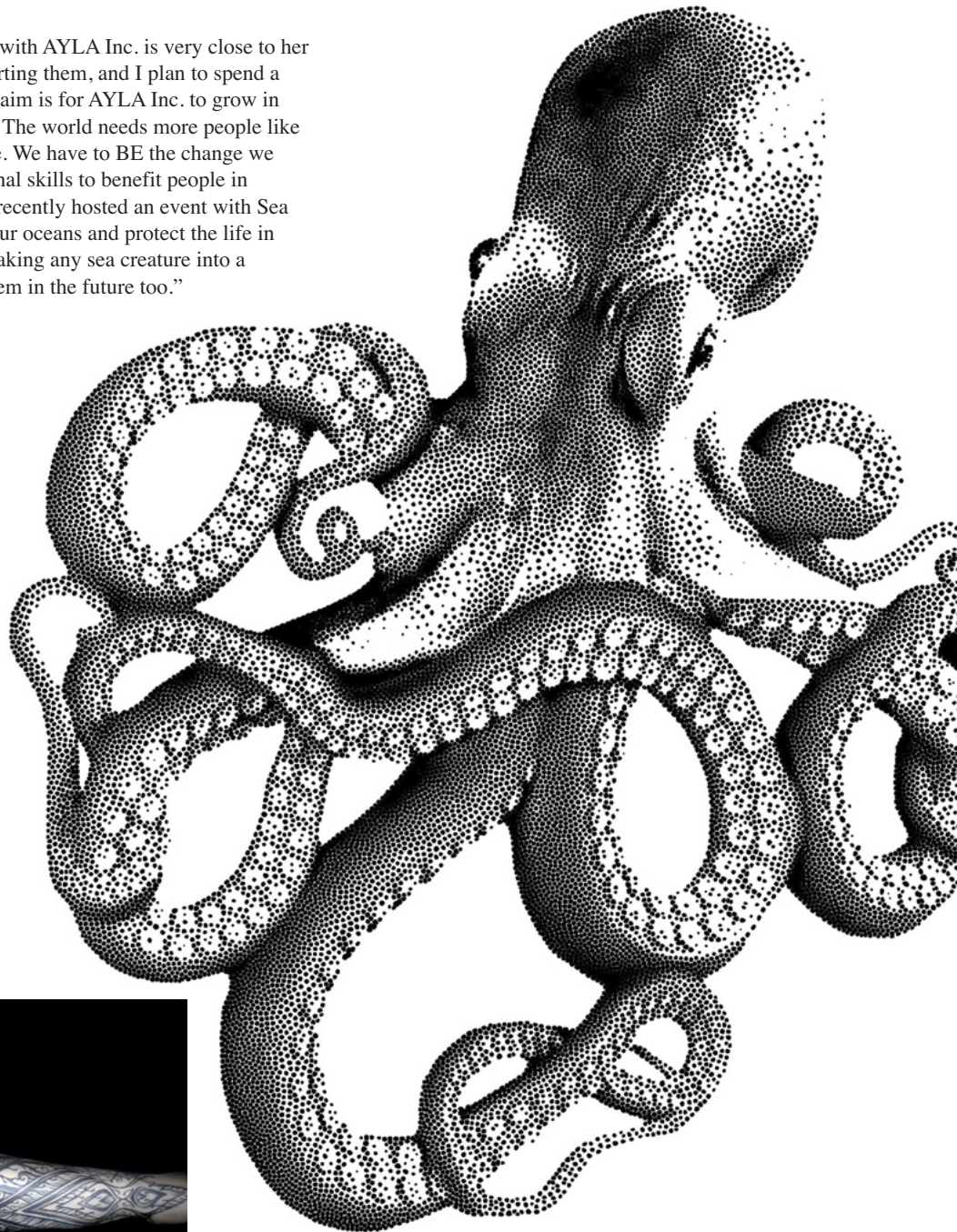
Fade has just returned from a trapeze training course in Australia, at the internationally renowned Lunar Circus. Whilst there, she also lent her tattooing skills to a charity organisation. "I've been volunteering at Assisting Your Life to Achieve (AYLA Inc.) who are based in Perth, Western Australia. The organisation was founded by friends of mine, Scott and David Paton-Meiliss Johnson. It's a non-government funded, not-for-profit charity that offers mental health, counselling and life coaching services, a food bank, crisis aid, LGBTQI youth accommodation and a women's refuge to those in need, as well as a 'profit for a purpose' low-cost food market, charity shop, cafe and hair salon. I went there to donate my services at their first annual Mental Health Week this February."

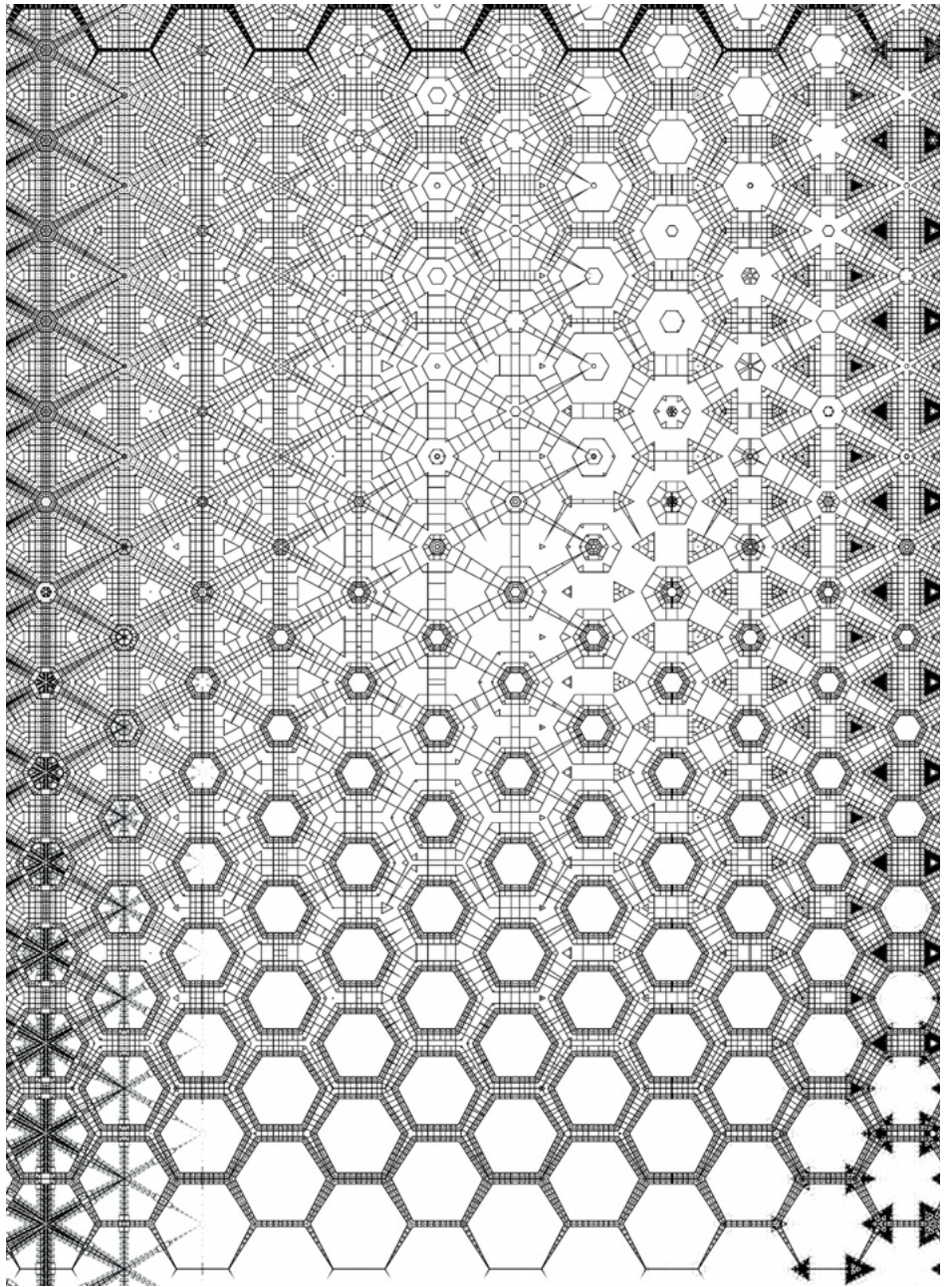


“I tattooed people who had come through huge life battles and wanted to signify how far they had come, and I covered mastectomy scars, burns and self-harm scars. The tattoos were free, but if people could afford it I asked them to donate to the charity. I also offered luxury tattooing to the general public in order to raise money for AYLEA Inc’s projects. In the evenings, I organised after-school trapeze classes for local teenagers. Whatever their age or background, and whatever their 'struggle', it's so important to give young people the opportunity to learn how to utilise their bodies, improve their fitness and confidence, and build a social life around a healthy hobby.”



I can tell from Fade's enthusiasm that her work with AYL A Inc. is very close to her heart. "Yes, I feel really passionate about supporting them, and I plan to spend a month or so there every year. Scott and David's aim is for AYL A Inc. to grow in scale and become a self-supporting community. The world needs more people like them! We can't simply wait for things to change. We have to BE the change we want. I find it so rewarding to use my professional skills to benefit people in unexpected ways. Here at the studio in Hove, I recently hosted an event with Sea Shepherd, who run global projects to clean up our oceans and protect the life in them. I signed myself up for the challenge of making any sea creature into a mandala tattoo! I hope to do more work with them in the future too."





So, in between tattooing for charity, teaching trapeze, writing books and making documentary films, how does Fade make any money for herself? Her smile makes it clear to me that getting rich definitely isn't one of her top priorities. But where does she find the time for it all? "These projects have a momentum of their own which can certainly be extremely challenging, but when it comes down to it, achieving my goals and helping others is truly liberating".

"The support I've received has been overwhelming, and I'm very excited to see what the rest of this year will bring my way. I'm going to be at the Bangkok convention – where Eddie the organiser (who I met last year) has asked me to tattoo both his hands afterwards – and on my way back to the UK, I'll probably stop off in Perth and spend some more time at AYL A Inc."

Fade laughs and sips her coffee. "Sometimes I can hardly keep up with myself..."

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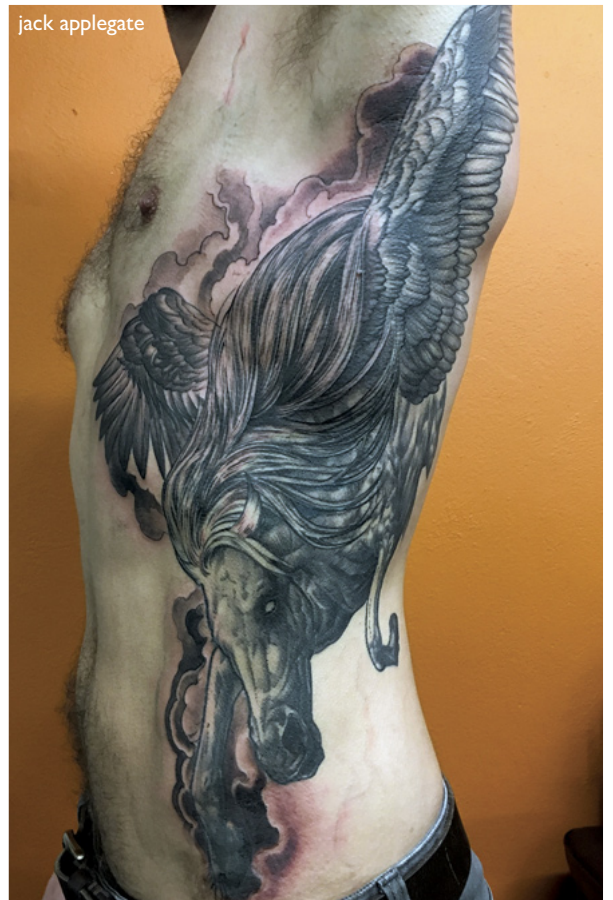
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kirsty simpson



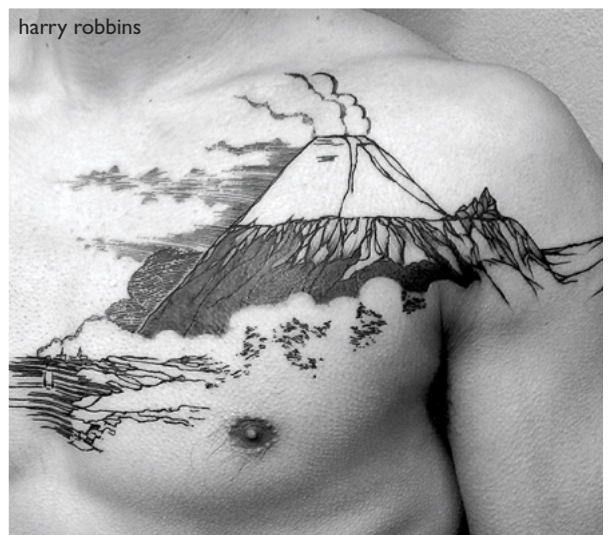
mr heggie



mr heggie



sean hill

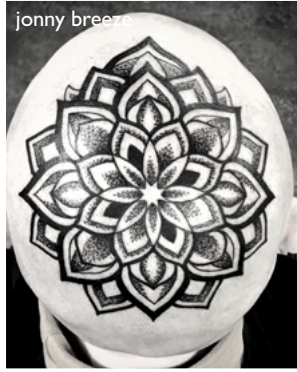


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SPACING TAKING UP SPACE

I'm sure every tattooer has at some point had to explicitly refuse to tattoo a client's chosen design. And I don't just mean Nazi swastikas, white supremacist tattoos or any other imagery they find might unacceptable or way too offensive.

Sometimes, a perfectly innocent design that a client wants to have on their skin simply won't stand the test of time. Websites like Pinterest and BuzzFeed - full of pictures curated by people with no connection to the tattoo industry - give so much false hope to people who don't really know what's feasible in terms of tattooing. I can understand why a page of 'cute mini tattoos for girls' or 'cool 3D tattoos that you won't believe are real!' can seem so enticing, but they are often littered with fake photoshopped images and pictures of fresh tattoos that will never heal well. Newbies to tattoos don't always understand that something which looks cool on paper, or on screen, might not work on skin. Clients who have seen an online photo of their chosen design tattooed on somebody else often think we're being mean when we refuse to tattoo it for them. But we're not being mean. We're refusing to do it because we care!

I've also had many customers come to me with concepts they've come up with themselves which in their heads sound like the greatest idea ever, but on paper would be impossible. My favourite was a young guy who came into the studio wanting to book in for his first tattoo for his 18th birthday. He was after a pair of wings across the top of his back going down his arms, with the wings turning into wolves made of smoke. I may have broken his heart when I told him that his idea was impossible, but he ended up with a wolf on the top of each arm and he was very happy with the final result. He also didn't have to sit through getting his whole upper back and shoulders outlined for his very first tattoo!



'No' by Simon Erl,
other lettering by
Dan Morris



Often we choose to refuse customers requesting hand, neck or finger tattoos when they are very young and don't have much tattoo coverage. I always say that if you don't already know what it's like to live your life as a heavily tattooed person, you can't possibly be prepared for how people will react to you if you have a very visible tattoo. I already had two full sleeves when I decided to add a tattoo to the back of my hand, and I still noticed a remarkable difference in people's reactions. Even now, with much more coverage, I'm very happy I can wear jeans and long sleeves to hide most of my work when I need to. On tough days, I still find it hard to be so conspicuous. But my hand and neck tattoos are always visible of course. Sometimes I'd love to be able to order a coffee without the person behind the counter reading aloud all the words I have tattooed on my hands! Visible tattoos can obviously hold you back in work too. Someone may be doing well touring in a band now, but what happens if they want a different career later? When we tattooists refuse to do these visible tattoos it's because we're thinking about the everyday lives - both now and in the future - and mental health of our clients. It's not because we want to stop them joining our club.

Another reason for refusing a tattoo might be because the client is asking for a style wildly different to our specialism. There have been many occasions when someone has asked me to do something far more suited to the expertise of one of my co-workers in the same studio, and I will usually point them in their direction. Sometimes, though, if a client has a good rapport with you and wants you to do the design anyway, you just have to give in and agree to it. In those situations I'm happy to try my hand at anything as long as I know it's within my technical capabilities - but I would hate to do a below-par tattoo if someone else could do the job to a much higher standard and with more passion.

Clients can be stubborn and unwilling to listen, and this can be immensely frustrating. The familiar adage 'the customer's always right' doesn't always hold true - especially when that customer's only done a few hours of research online, whereas I've had eight years' experience of tattooing real people! Personally, I would never dream of questioning a doctor's diagnosis or a hairdresser's advice on which style would best suit the shape of my face. And if a tattooist told me 'No', I would respect that.

Nobody likes being told 'No', but sometimes refusing to tattoo someone is the kindest thing you can do. Trust me, a tattooist who says 'Yes' to everything doesn't care about the longevity of the design or your happiness - only your money!

Harriet Heath
Instagram: @loverosetattoo



ALEJANDRO MONEA

Interview by Lizzy
Pictures courtesy of Alejandro Monea

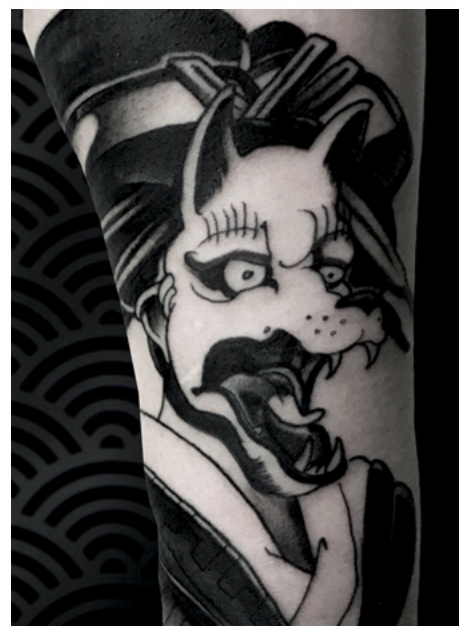
We were awestruck when we saw Alejandro Monea's work at the Florence Tattoo Convention last year. We loved his colourful new-school take on animals and Japanese imagery and his bold, bright and assertive style – which seems so unlike anything we're seeing in the UK at the moment. We had to find out more about him.

Tell us about yourself.

I'm 24, and I've been tattooing for nearly four years. I'm originally from Madrid, but now I'm based in Barcelona. I work at Black Ship BCN.

Have you always been artistic? What brought you into tattooing?

I painted graffiti as a teenager, but at that time my life was focused around sports and studying. My love of tattoos came later. I studied chemistry at college, and continued with graffiti and illustration, then one day – out of sheer curiosity – I tried tattooing. I liked it so much, everything else paled into insignificance. I was crazy about the idea that someone actually wanted to wear on their skin the same stuff that I was doing on walls and in my sketchbooks. At that stage, it didn't even cross my mind that I might make a living from it.



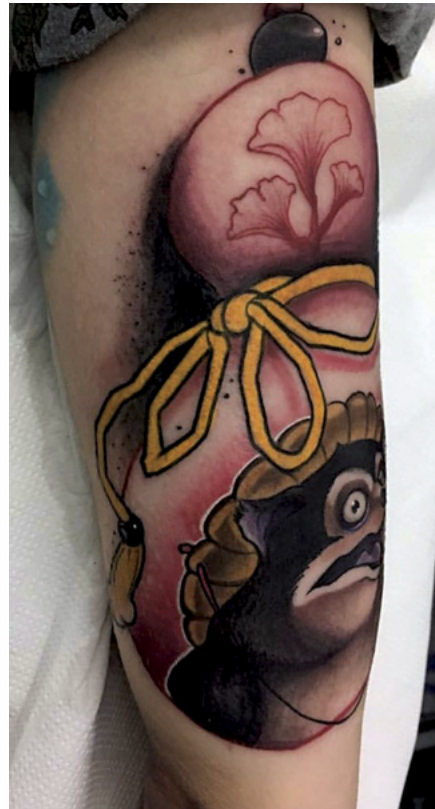


Who, or what, inspires your tattooing?

A great deal of my artistic inspiration comes from the graffiti I see in my neighbourhood in Barcelona, and in Madrid – by people like smak47, the IWANA Boy, Taem54, the hvk... Sources of tattoo inspiration include artists such as Victor Chil and Koan, and the work of Raul Moreno.

How would you describe your style of tattooing and art?

I still don't think I have a solid style. I'm just constantly searching. What I do is simply illustration on skin. I like to mix ideas and mythologies, and I try to create meanings and make some sense out of what I do, but I haven't yet found a true artistic identity or a way to define my work.





Tell us what you like about drawing and tattooing animals.

I love doing animal imagery (whether or not it's Japanese-style) because animals help to express so many other concepts. A fox, for instance, doesn't transmit the same kind of meaning as an elephant or a rat. For each client, there will be an animal that represents the feeling or the idea that I want to communicate.

Tell us about the parallels between tattooing and graffiti.

I know that graffiti has influenced my tattoo style a lot, but I think this is probably more obvious to other people than it is to me! It's hard for me to see it. But I guess it shows in the colours that I use and in design aspects such as the power lines. The only real similarity between graffiti and tattooing is the fact that I am working with a unique surface every time, and adapting my art to the particular conditions of that surface – whether it's a wall or a client's skin. Other than that, there is no link. Graffiti is dirty, fast and illegal. Tattooing is neat, slow and highly regulated.

What do you particularly like about Japanese imagery?

I love everything that surrounds Japanese culture, and I'm fascinated by the hidden meanings and ways of representing all the various monsters and deities of the different Eastern religions. There is a story behind everything, and the more you draw each image, the more you want to learn about it.

Do you follow the traditional 'rules' when designing Japanese-inspired tattoos?

The truth is I still don't know much about those rules, so really I'm just doing what I want. But as soon as I discover how something SHOULD be done, I like to respect that – unless a client insists on having it done differently. But even if I don't keep to the traditional aesthetic, I'm not going to mix things in a crazy way – like suddenly doing a tanuki in a diving suit, or shit like that.





Your tattoos rarely feature the human form, or human faces and heads...

The fact is I don't get asked for them. There are lots of other things that I'd be delighted to do – including traditional or blackwork – if only clients would ask me!

Tell us about your interesting colour palette.

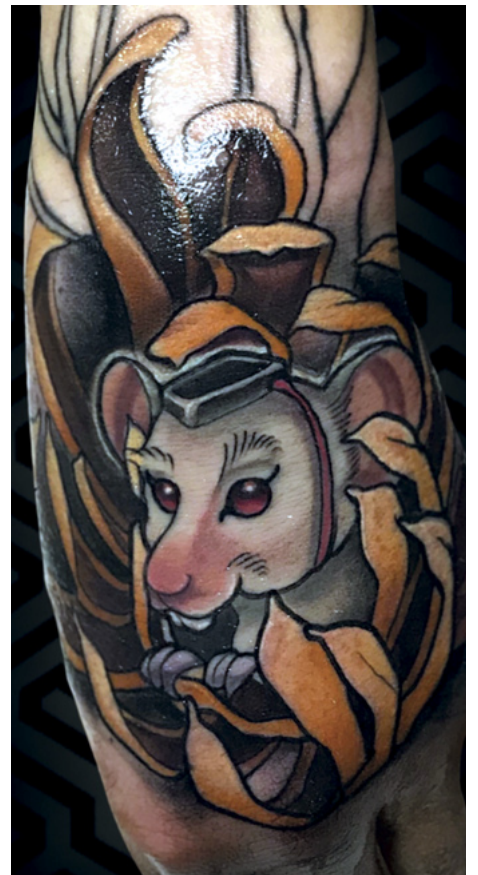
It's through colour that you give your work its identity. My palette used to be brighter, but over time it's become more grey. Now, I would really like to simplify it. I believe the simpler the palette, the better the result.

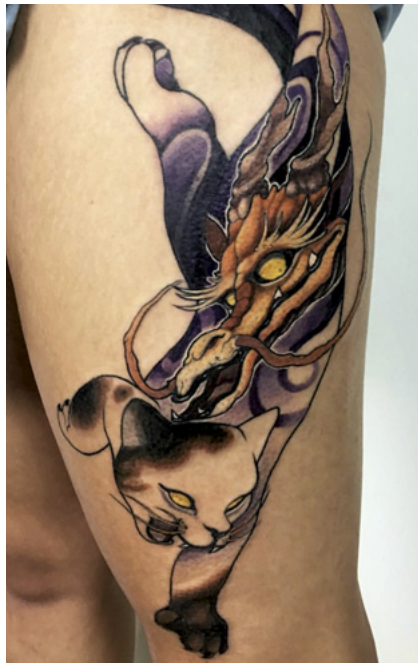




Is there anything else you would want to change about your tattooing?

There's so much I want to improve! I'm still looking for a way to feel happy with my work. I can see that my drawing has improved over the years, simply through repetition, but I'm not even close to where I want to be. And of course (looking back to the made-in-China guns with which I started!) equipment has evolved so much in such a short space of time. I invest practically all the money I earn in new equipment or improvements to the equipment I already own. I would like to try more machines, more colours...







What is the greatest gift that tattooing has given you?

Work without working! When I'm tattooing, I still feel the same as I did when I was sixteen years old and I went out painting. The thought that I can make a living from it is amazing.

If you could give one piece of advice to your younger self, what would it be?

I would give the same advice to my younger self as I would give to myself now: Work more and stop being a lazy bum!

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aberdeentattoo.co@gmail.com
www.aberdeentattoo.co.com

Body Piercings by Nathan

202 George St, Aberdeen
AB25 1BS
Tel no: 01224 642347
Instagram: @Nathanhague85

FHT Bathgate

46 Hopetoun St, Bathgate
EH48 4EU
Tel no: 01506 654442
fhtbathgate@gmail.com
www.fhtbathgate.co.uk

Forevermore Tattoo

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G22UG
Tel no: 01413329340
Email:
forevermoretattoo@gmail.com
www.forevermoretattoo.co.uk

Inkdependent

56 Dalry Rd, Edinburgh
EH11 2BA
Tel no: 0131 623 6565
inkdependenttattoos@gmail.com
www.inkdependent.eu/

Insider Tattoo

89 Henderson St, Edinburgh
EH6 6ED
Tel no: 01315546083
info@insidertattoo.com
www.insidertattoo.com

Main Street Tattoo

116 Main St, Wishaw
ML2 7LU
Tel no: 01698 355877
mainstreettattoo@live.co.uk
Instagram: @mainstreettattoo

Richards Tattoo Studio

3 Trinity Quay, Aberdeen
AB11 5AA
Tel no: 01224 575599
info@richardstattoo.com
www.richardstattoo.com

Twit Twoo Tattoo

238 Leith Walk,
Edinburgh EH6 5EL
Tel no: 01316290171
tattoo@twittwoo.tattoo
http://twittwoo.tattoo/

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High Bridge Tattoo

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dean@highbridgetattoo.co.uk
Instagram:
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hash@northsidetattooz.co.uk
www.northsidetattooz.co.uk

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low@northsidetattooz.co.uk
www.northsidetattooz.co.uk

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masamunetattoos

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Sunderland. SR1 1RH
Tel no: 01915656665
Contact through Facebook:
triplexixstudios666

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Black lantern Studio

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East Yorkshire, YO152DS, UK
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FB: black lantern tattoo studio
Instagram @blacklantern_tattoos-
studio

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www.nigelkurt.com

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Sacredelectrictattoo@gmail.com
www.sacredelectrictattoo.com

Ultimate Skin

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Leeds LS2 8JD
Tel no: 0113 244 4940
ustattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @ultimate_skin

EAST MIDLANDS

Embody Tattoo

(handpoke and machine tattooing)
7 Canal Street, Derby. DE12RJ
Tel no: 01332986920
embodytattoo@mail.com
www.embodytattoo.co.uk

Epona Art and Tattoo

Waterloo Yard, King St,
Southwell NG25 0EH
Tel no: 01636 815771
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www.eponatattoo.com

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24 Fish St,
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www.fatfugu.com

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joe@scarletrosetattoo.com
www.scarletrosetattoo.com

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Tel no: 01332 242688
info@secondskinstudio.co.uk
Instagram: @secondskinderby

Uptown Tattoo Studio

4 woodgate, Leicester, le3 5ge
Tel no: 01162 251661
uptowntattoostudio@gmail.com
www.uptowntattoostudio.com

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148 Coggeshall Rd,
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info@braintreetattoostudio.co.uk
www.braintreetattoostudio.co.uk

Churchyard Tattoo

14 Churchyard,
Hitchin SG5 1HR
Tel no: 01462 338781
cytattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @churchyardtattoos

Cult Classic Tattoo

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Romford RMI 1BH
Tel no: 01708730500
cultclassictattoo@gmail.com
www.cultclassictattoo.com

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info@electricpunchtattoo.co.uk
www.electricpunchtattoo.co.uk

Five Keys Tattoo

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fivekeystattoo@gmail.com
www.fivekeystattoo.com

Indigo Tattoo and Piercing

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www.indigotattoo.co.uk
indigotattooandpiercing@gmail.com

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contact@immortalink.co.uk
www.immortalink.co.uk

Red's Tattoo Parlour

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CO1 1SZ
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www.redstattoo.co.uk

LONDON

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www.frithstreettattoo.co.uk

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www.oldhabitstattoo.com

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sevendoorstattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @sevendoorstattoo

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www.throughmythirdeye.com

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Tel no: 01376 519602
Email :aontattoo@outlook.com
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1770 Tattoo

4 Little East Street
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Tel no: 01273710730
info@1770tattoo.com
www.1770tattoo.com

Death's Door Tattoo

13-16 Vine Street,
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deathsdoortattoos@gmail.com
Instagram: @deathsdoortattoo

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11 Church Road
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thechurchtattoo@hotmail.com
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www.auroratattooostudio.co.uk

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skinkandi@hotmail.co.uk
www.skinkandi.co.uk

True 'til Death

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Email: via Facebook – True 'Til
Death Tattoo
www.accringtontattoo.com

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Waterford, Ireland
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Email: soydantattoo@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/
YakuzaTattooStudio

CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS

9th-10th June

Bristol Tattoo Convention

The Passenger Shed, Station Approach,
Bristol BS1 6QH
bristoltattooconvention.com

23rd - 24th June

York International Tattoo Convention

Earswick Club, Huntington Road
York YO329PX
www.yorkinternationaltattooconvention.co.uk

7th-8th July

Powys Charity Tattoo Convention

Community Centre, Mount Lane
Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6EZ
www.facebook.com/Powys-charity-tattoo-con-
vention-283437561802173

7th-8th July

Leeds Tattoo Expo

First Direct Arena, Arena Way,
Leeds LS2 8BY,
leedstattoexpo.com

27th-28th July

Titanic Tattoo Convention

1 Queens Road, Titanic Quarter,
Belfast BT3 9EP

24th-29th July

Cardiff International

Tattoo Convention
Mercure Cardiff Holland House
24-26 Newport Rd, 28 Cardiff CF24 0DD

17th - 19th August

Tatcon Blackpool

Norbeck Castle Hotel, Promenade,
Blackpool.
www.tatconblackpool.co.uk

1st - 2nd September

Oxford Tattoo Convention

The Oxford Academy, Sandy Lane West,
Littlemore, Oxford
www.facebook.com/oxfordtattooconvention

1st-3rd September

Kustom Kulture Blast Off

31st August – 2nd September
Lincolnshire Show Ground
Lincoln LN2 2NA
www.kustomkultureblastoff.com

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/cambridgetattoocon

11th - 12th November

East Coast Tattoo Expo

Highfield Grange Holiday Park
London Road
Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO16 9QY,
www.eastcoastexpo.co.uk

OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS

29th June-1st July

Ink Mania

Gouverneur Verwilghensingel
70 3500
Hasselt, Belgium
www.inkmania.be

13th -15th June

Empire State tattoo Expo

The New York Midtown Hilton
NYC Manhattan. USA
www.empirestatetattooexpo.com

3rd-5th August

Berlin Tattoo Convention

Arena Berlin, Germany
info@tattoo-convention.de
www.tattoo-convention.de

3rd-5th August

Pagoda City Tattoo Fest

Crowne Plaza Hotel Reading
1741 Papermill Yard,
Wyomissing, PA 19610, USA
www.pagodacitytattooofest.com

24th-26th August

Winnipeg Tattoo Convention

Red River Exhibition Park, Portage Ave,
Winnipeg, MB, Canada

www.winnipegatattooconvention.com

14th-15th September

Kaiserstadt Tattoo Expo

Tivoli Eissporthalle Aachen
Hubert Wiener Straße 8
52070 Aachen, Germany
www.kaiserstadt-tattoo-expo-aachen.com

5th-7th October

Florence Tattoo Convention

Fortezza Da Basso, Florence, Italy
www.florenceatattooconvention.com

6th-8th October

Monster Ink Tattoo Fest

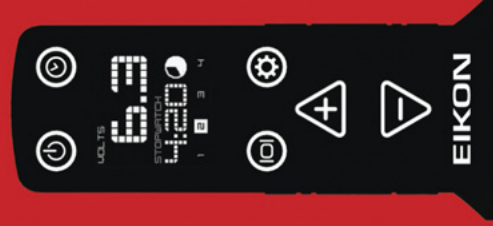
Evenementenhal Venray
De Voorde 30, 5807 EZ Venray,
The Netherlands
www.monsterinktattooofest.com

8th-9th November

Brussels Tattoo Convention

Tour & Taxis
Avenue du Port 86,
1000 Brussels, Belgium
www.brusselstatattooconvention.be

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