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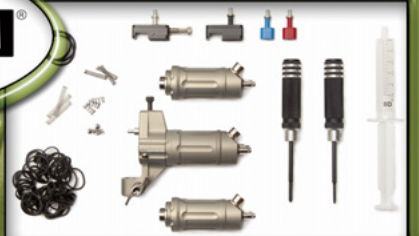


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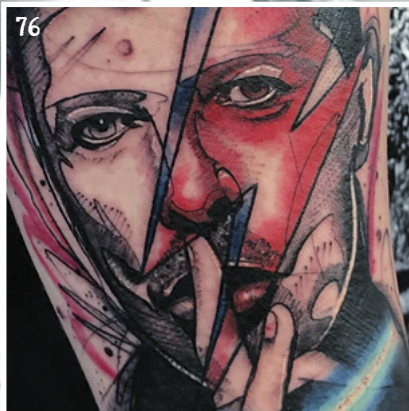
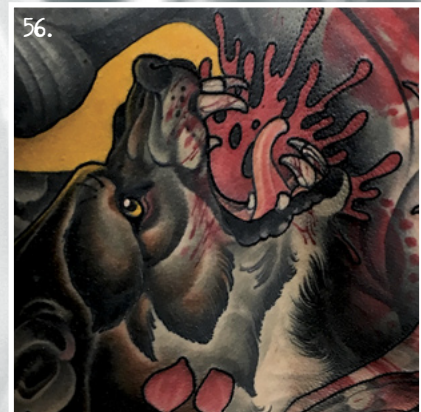
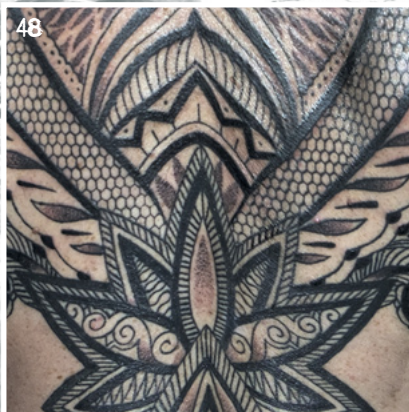
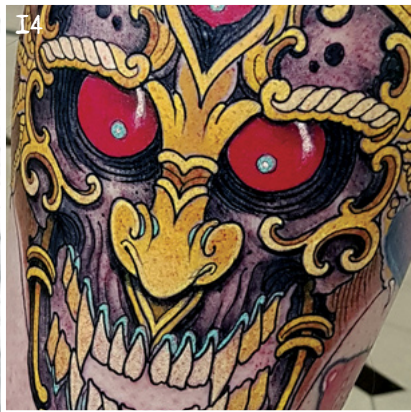
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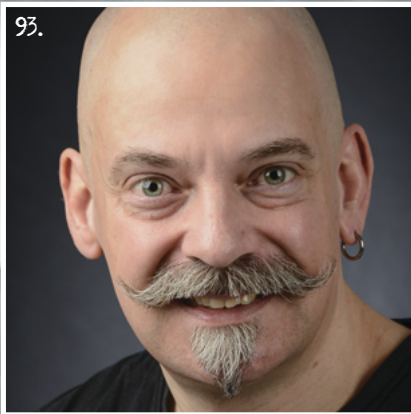
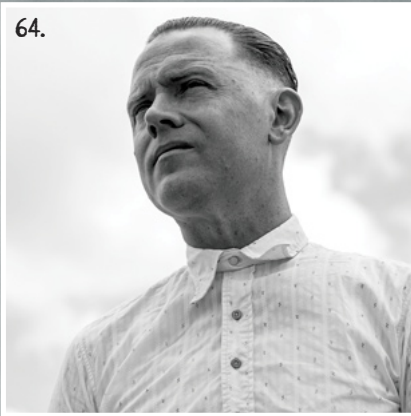
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WELCOME to 167

This issue of Total Tattoo features a report from Ink Mania, a three-day tattoo festival in Hasselt, Belgium. The organisers had laid on an action-packed event... but visitor numbers were on the low side, and by the start of day three a significant number of tattooists had already packed up and gone home! This got me thinking. What's the etiquette around making an early exit from a convention? Is it ever OK to do so?

Life is obviously going to get in the way once in a while. There are always going to be emergencies (of varying levels of seriousness) that require you to be somewhere else fast. That's completely understandable. But is it ever acceptable for tattooists to abandon a show, mid-weekend, just because it's not busy enough for them or because they simply don't want to be there?

Imagine you're a convention visitor hoping to get tattooed. You've spent time and money travelling there, you've paid to get in, but what do you find when you arrive? An empty booth where your favourite artist was supposed to be. Not only does this give a bad impression of the artist; it doesn't make their studio look too good either. And you're likely to think twice before you come to this particular convention again – or any other convention for that matter.

Then there's the organiser's point of view. You've worked non-stop for a year leading up to this one event. You've invested enormous amounts of energy, and you've probably put your own money into it to make it work. If artists start to walk out, not only does it kill some of the atmosphere; it rubs salt into the wound as well, because although they've paid to be there, it feels like they're withdrawing their support too.

There are lots of reasons for a dip in attendance figures, many of them completely outside the control of convention organisers. Factors such as competing local events, the weather and, most recently, the World Cup can massively affect visitor numbers from one year to the next. This is of course going to be disappointing for tattooists, especially those who are relying on walk-ups. It's not a great feeling if the only interest you're getting is when passing visitors pause to thumb through your portfolio just so they can help themselves to your stickers and sweets. Traders, too, will inevitably take a hit if a show is quiet. I think we can all understand why it's all too tempting to pack up and leave, and do a bit of sightseeing or even get home early to your own bed!

Here at Total Tattoo, we've found ourselves doing or experiencing all of the above on various different occasions. So, on the question of whether it's OK for tattooists and traders to pack up and leave early, we can appreciate both sides of the argument. But we'd love to know what you think. Convention organisers obviously can't force anyone to stay. On the other hand, if people do choose to go, it's nice if they don't just disappear without saying goodbye...



Lizzy
Editorial Team
editor@totaltattoo.co.uk

"Do I have to find a quote to go with this editorial? Or can I go home now?"
Lizzy Guy

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NEWS AND REVIEWS

Tattoo news and reviews for your delectation and delight. If it goes on in the tattoo world, it goes in here. Send us your news items, books or products for review and items of general curiosity and intrigue for the tattoo cognoscenti.

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

GENDER EQUALITY IN SPANISH ARMY

Women with tattoos may now find it easier to join the Spanish Army, thanks to a protest by Estela Martin who had been hoping to become an army psychologist. She was barred from joining up because of a small tattoo on her foot, which would have been visible when she wore the women's 'dress' uniform (which includes a skirt and high-heeled shoes). Male recruits have never faced this problem because all types of male uniform cover any tattoos a person might have on the lower half of their body. Understandably, Ms Martin saw this as gender discrimination. The updating of the Army's rules does not represent a change in attitudes towards visible tattoos (which are still not permitted for new recruits); rather, it is a step towards gender equality because there is now no difference between the uniforms male and female recruits are required to wear (and therefore no unfair distinction in the way they are able to conceal their tattoos). Sadly, the change in policy came too late for Estela Martin who, because of her age, will no longer be eligible to apply for an army job in the next recruitment round.



YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD



Scottish tattooist Steve Barnes has been battling various forms of cancer for more than ten years. To mark his fiftieth chemotherapy session, he decided to take on a different kind of epic mental and physical challenge – by walking the West Highland Way, a long distance footpath of nearly one hundred miles through some of Scotland's most beautiful scenery. He managed it in just over 31 hours, and has so far raised £2,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support. If you'd like to add a donation, visit

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/steve-barnes10

Steve is also an accomplished photographer and his stunning landscape images are on display in the cancer unit at Dundee's Ninewells Hospital, where he hopes they will help other patients on the road to recovery.

BRAVE SOLIDER

When tattooist Hannah Weston was approached by a charity to help a terminally ill child achieve one of their dreams, she rose to the challenge. The young boy, Jack, is just ten years old and will not reach the legal age to get a tattoo. As it was something on his 'bucket list', Hannah and the charity Taylor Made Dreams (@thetmdteam) were all too happy to help. For his appointment, Jack visited Norwich's Five Keys tattoo studio and whilst he didn't technically go under the needle, Hannah was able to create a realistic chest piece on him using pens and face paint. Jack is continuing to fundraise for the charity, despite being ill, so if you'd like to donate, head to www.justgiving.com/taylormade-dreams



ARTIST WANTED NORTHGATE TATTOO



Northgate Tattoo are looking for an experienced artist to join their busy studio on a full-time basis. The ideal candidate will be hard-working, down-to-earth and friendly. There is no minimum experience required, but this is not an apprenticeship. Please email links to your portfolio, plus a little bit about yourself to info@northgatetattoo.com and include examples of your work.



THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW



A recent survey in the USA has shown that, in general, visible tattoos don't seem to have any negative effect on how patients perceive the competence or professionalism of medical staff. Nearly a thousand patients at a Pennsylvania hospital were surveyed over a nine month period, and asked how they rated their doctors. There was no statistical difference between the ratings given to those with tattoos and those without. One doctor commented that she often finds her visible tattoos help to break the ice with patients because they provide an instant topic for friendly, non-medical conversation. A number of similar surveys have been carried out in recent years, but this one is different because it wasn't based on photographs; it was based on patients' actual experiences in the hospital environment.

WIN A TRIP TO HAWAII

To celebrate its new bottle design, Sailor Jerry Rum is offering a spectacular competition prize: A TRIP TO HAWAII TO GET TATTOOED at Old Ironside Tattoo, which is located in the same place as the historic former tattoo parlour of Sailor Jerry himself! And that's not all. Even if you don't win the Hawaii trip, you could still win an amazing tattoo from a top UK artist (including Jelle Soos from Black Garden Tattoo, Lauren Spoons from Cock A Snook Tattoo and Billy Hay from Bath Street Tattoo Collective).

To enter the competition, all you need to do is get hold of a new-style Sailor Jerry bottle of smooth and spicy rum and snap a photo of it against your skin (keep it respectable, folks!) Then upload your photo, and in return you'll receive a piece of digital tattoo artwork – a 'Sailor Jerry'-type design of course – via a direct Instagram message. Re-post it and share it across all your social channels with the hashtag #WINYOURINK... wait and see... and maybe you'll be selected as the winner of that once-in-a-lifetime tattoo trip to Honolulu!

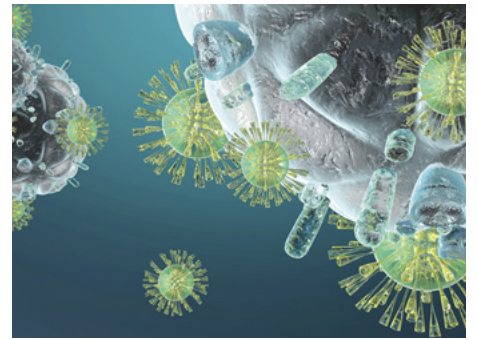
But do it right now! The competition runs until 31st August.

www.facebook.com/Sailor-Jerry www.instagram.com/sailorjerry/
www.sailorjerry.com

Norman 'Sailor Jerry' Collins (1911-1973) is one of the most famous names in tattoo history. Born in Reno, he grew up in California and spent his teens riding freight trains across America. He picked up hand-tattooing skills in Alaska then learnt how to use a tattoo machine in Chicago in the 1920s. Having travelled the world in the US Navy, he finally settled in Hawaii in the 1930s. It was here that he made his name as a tattooist, forever associated with the iconic old-school imagery that he inked on visiting soldiers and sailors during the war and post-war years. (And if you're curious about where that modern-day Honolulu studio name comes from, 'Old Ironsides' was the radio show Sailor Jerry hosted back in the day.)



NOBODY'S IMMUNE...



A recent article in the British Medical Journal's 'Case Reports' discusses the possible additional risks faced by people with weakened or compromised immune systems when getting tattooed. The report details the case of a woman who suffered chronic muscle inflammation – accompanied by severe pain and weakness – after being tattooed while taking immune-suppressant drugs following a lung transplant. Although the exact cause of the adverse reaction to the tattoo couldn't be pinpointed, the report concludes that its severity was probably due to a combination of her suppressed immune system (which made her more susceptible to infection) and the fact that the tattoo was done in what was described as an "unregulated tattoo parlour" (and we all know what that can mean...) It took her three years to recover. The report recommends that doctors should advise patients with weakened or compromised immune systems about the possible risks connected with getting tattooed. It also suggests that this might not be the only case of its kind; it might be an example of something that is occurring more widely but has not yet been picked up and identified. If you would like to read more about this, head to

www.bmj.com/company/newsroom/beware-of-getting-a-tattoo-if-your-immune-system-isnt-up-to-scratch-doctors-warn/

ARTIST WANTED STORMS & SAINTS TATTOO



There's an opportunity at Storms & Saints Tattoo for an experienced, reliable tattooist to join the team (full-time or part-time) on a self-employed basis. Available times are Mon-Sat 11am-6pm. If you are interested, or require further information, please email scoobstattoo@gmail.com

NEEDLE STICKIN' GOOD

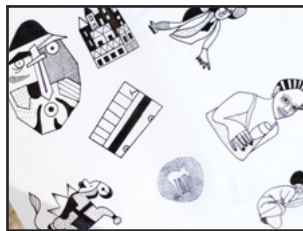


OK, here's a story from down under to make you smile (although vegans and vegetarians might prefer to look away now). In a recent competition on KFC's Facebook page, Australian school-leaver Brooke Collins won the title 'Queen of Chicken 2018' plus free chicken for a year by showing her love for the fast-food chain with a tattoo of its logo. But it wasn't just Brooke who got the KFC tattoo. Her friend Brielle Sharkie got matching ink at the same time, marking the special bond of their friendship and the time they've spent eating fried chicken together!



ART ON THE MARGINS

There was an exhibition opening with a difference at the Art et Marges Musée (Museum of Outsider Art / Art Brut) in Brussels recently. On the day of the Solstice, it launched its Summer Collection #3 with an evening event that included the opportunity to get tattooed! Tattooists from the city's Singulier studio were on hand to reproduce the museum's artworks on visitors' skin for the very reasonable price of just 50, 80 or 100 Euro, depending on size. Check out www.artetmarges.be for more information about the museum. The exhibition Summer Collection #3 (showcasing hidden treasures, new acquisitions, favourite works and a few surprises) runs until 23rd September.



RESTAURANT WITH A DIFFERENCE

We always love hearing about new tattoo-related businesses. In the city of Rennes, France, an exciting new "hybrid space" is about to open. In addition to a large restaurant area, AVEC will be offering tattooing and piercing, a barber shop and even customised cars and motorbikes. It's a huge project. There will be a lifestyle shop too, selling skateboards, surfboards, clothes, shoes and accessories. And the tattoo studio – operated by Kalil Tattoo Family (www.kalil-tattoo.com) – will have working space for up to ten artists. Each of the businesses in the complex will operate independently, with different launch dates. AVEC is at 1 Rue du Breil, 35000 Rennes, France, tel +33 7 71 20 34 68.



WORTH A TRY

Gloucester rugby club has recently redesigned its logo. That's nice, you might think – unless, of course, you're the proud wearer of a tattoo of the club's old logo! Not wishing to alienate any of their supporters, we hear Gloucester Rugby's management have come up with a generous goodwill gesture: They're offering to pay for new tattoos for any die-hard fans who want to bring their ink up-to-date. According to our source, the new tattoos have to be done in a Gloucester shop, and they have to be done before the start of the season. Take a look at the club website and get in touch with them to check the details of the offer: www.gloucesterrugby.co.uk



STOP PRESS!

Just as we were going to print, we received a message from tattooist Matt Adamson (Kings Avenue Tattoo) about his involvement in a rather special project. Matt tells us he's been invited to supply designs for a display at Tiffany & Co on New York's 5th Avenue to showcase the famous jewellery store's custom hand-engraving service. [@tiffanyandco](https://www.instagram.com/tiffanyandco)



GIVE THEM A BREAK

This American tattoo shop's response to a customer complaint was so full of righteous anger, so humane, and so incredibly supportive of their employee we just had to share it with you. The customer, having booked their appointment and paid their deposit, apparently discovered that the tattooist had previously spent time in jail; and for them, this meant he wasn't the right person for the job. In a rather offensive message (referring to "prison monkeys") the customer cancelled their appointment, asked for a refund and also demanded compensation for the inconvenience. The studio responded by saying, "You are correct, he is a convicted felon. He was convicted 20 years ago. Served 13 years. Has since gained his rights back. Is an outstanding member of the community. On top of owning the shop, we do charity work, donate money to research funds, speak with convicts and assist them with getting back on their feet. From the bottom of my heart, fuck you. You're barred from the shop. Don't come back." The support for the shop on social media has been overwhelming. "How are parolees supposed to become members of society again if no one gives them a chance?!" asked one person. Another summed it up perfectly: "Hot damn, some people are just the worst, convicts are people too."

WIN A ZIGGY NECKLACE!

Bloody Mary Metal creates high quality, original jewellery. Their collections are themed 'Light' (think bohemian, festival vibes and beachy bliss) and 'Dark' (iconic rock 'n' roll and heavy metal shapes). As they themselves say, it's jewellery for adventure seekers, beach bums and moto-babes, and not fashion for the masses. They even have editions of their jewellery that help to raise money for charity - including 'Cat Face' for The Brain Tumour Charity, 'Sunflower' for Rethink Mental Illness, 'Minerva' for Surfers Against Sewage and 'Ziggy' for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Lucy, owner, designer and jeweller extraordinaire, has kindly given us a 'Ziggy' necklace for one lucky reader to win. It's a beautiful bolt pendant which pays tribute to the original Star Man, David Bowie. To enter the competition, all you have to do is email us your answer to the question below (and every entrant will receive an exclusive code for 20% off anything on the Bloody Mary Website!)

Which 'Star Man' does the 'Ziggy' necklace pay tribute to?

A) David Bowie B) Yuri Gagarin C) Neil Armstrong

Email your answer, along with your name and contact details, to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with the subject line ZIGGY. The closing date is September 4th and usual terms and conditions apply (see page 4/5). First correct entry drawn out of the hat wins the necklace, but every entry gets a 20% off voucher. Head to www.bloodymarymetal.com to use it!



ARTIST WANTED REDS TATTOO PARLOUR



Reds Tattoo Parlour in Colchester are looking for a full-time tattooist to join their very busy studio. The ideal candidate must be able to work well in a team and be drama-free. Please note, this is not an apprenticeship. If you are interested, email redsonya6@mac.com with examples of your work and a brief bio.



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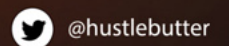
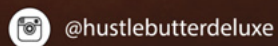
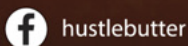
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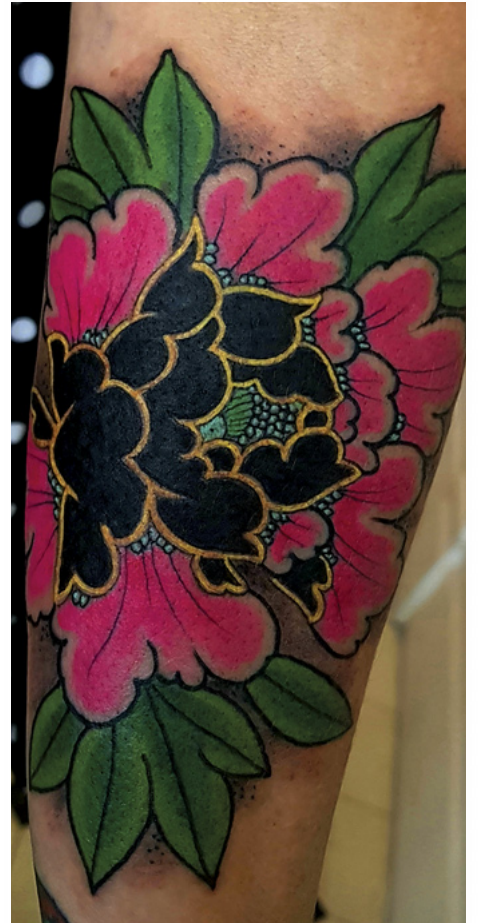


YOU CANT KNOCK THE HUSTLE

LUXURY TATTOO CARE

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If you want silky smooth flowers with petals like polished satin, or Japanese imagery in beautifully blended natural tones, Elliott Wells is your go-to artist. In this fun, frank conversation he shares his views on the tattoo industry and tells us what it's really like to be a tattooist at the sharp end...

How did you get into tattooing?

My mum and dad were 80s punks. They were covered in tattoos, and so were their friends. I would go with them when they got tattooed, so I've always been around tattooing, I guess. Even in my early teens I knew it was what I wanted to do. I didn't have that typical 'parents hate tattoos' thing; they were very supportive. I would bunk off school to draw and paint and they didn't seem to mind. So I kind of fell into it naturally. I've always been artistic. When I turned 18 I started working in the reception of a tattoo studio and I progressed from there. I've been tattooing for nearly ten years now.

When you were young, what sorts of things inspired your art?

I remember watching *Alien* when I was

eleven, and from then on that was all I wanted to draw – although an eleven year old's rendition of it was pretty shit! But I was really inspired by all that H R Giger and biomech stuff.

And it's been a huge influence on tattooing generally.

Absolutely. The first time I saw Guy Aitchison's work, I remember thinking it was insane. I didn't even know you could do that sort of thing as a tattoo. Until then, the only tattoos I'd seen had been home DIY jobs, or really shitty little things, so it was like a light had turned on in my head. I also remember seeing magazine photos of Filip Leu's work when he started doing big, avant-garde close-ups. That stuff really impressed me.



ELLIOTT WELLS

Interview by Lizzy • Pictures courtesy of Elliott Wells



I think tattoo magazines really helped the shift from flash to custom...

Definitely. Before I picked up my first tattoo magazine, I'd only ever seen flash sheets. But when I started buying magazines, I began to see what could be done with tattooing, and just what was possible. It's a shame that social media has taken over from that. It's all so accessible now. It's got to the point where we're saturated with tattooists and saturated with choice. I don't know if people appreciate how difficult it was back then – not just getting into tattooing, but finding a good tattooist. And apprenticeships were a lot harder too.

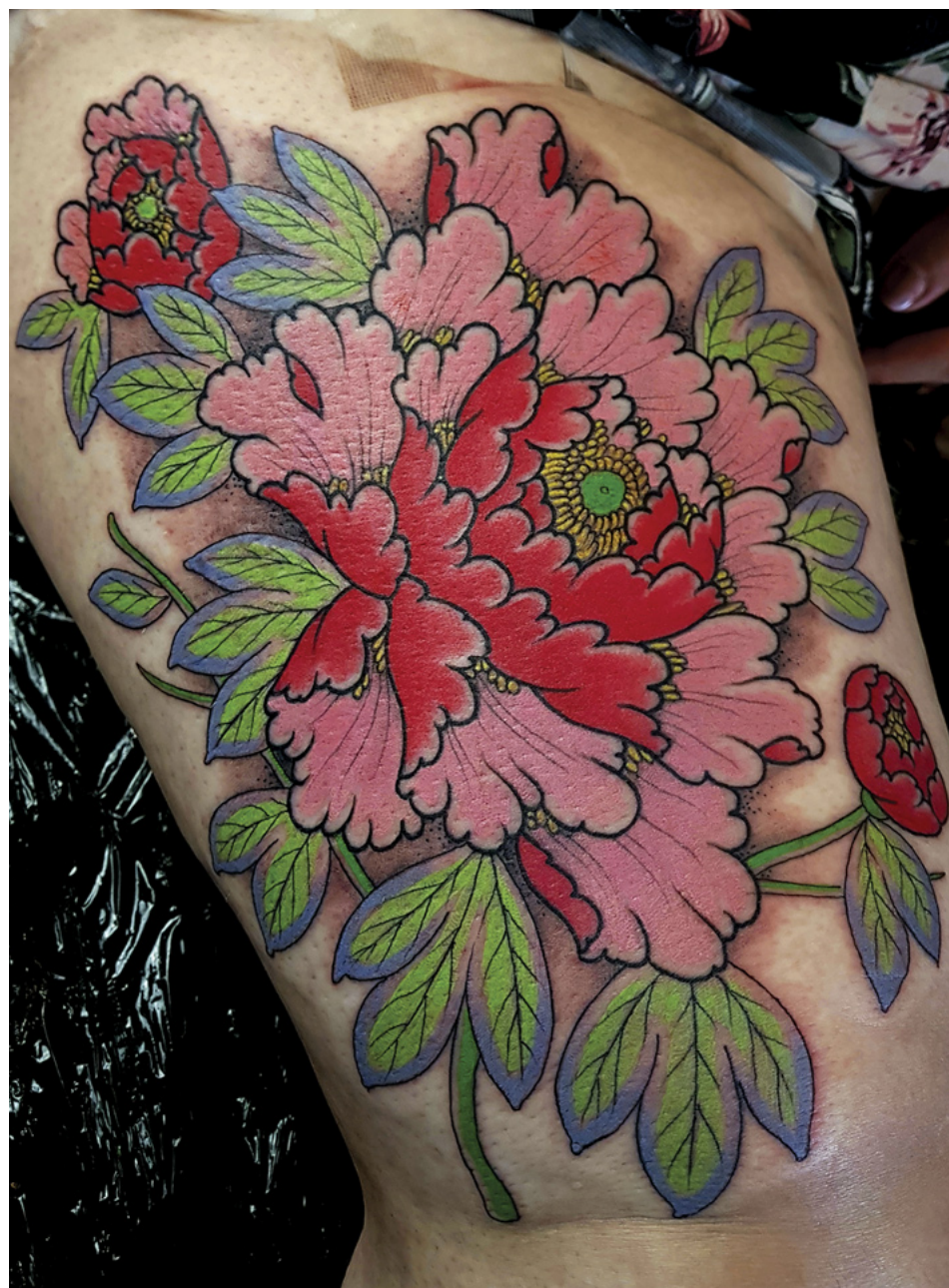
Nowadays you don't have to make needles for the entire studio on your day off!

Was that what you had to do?

Yep. I worked for a studio in Herne Bay. My boss had me making needles, and taking machines apart and putting them back together. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't hard work. It was fun. But it's a dying art that people, including myself, don't do anymore. Machine building, needle making... all these more hands-on elements of tattooing are being lost.

The craft of it is disappearing?

Yes, in some ways, I think so.



What machines do you use now? Do you still use coils?

Presently, yes. I was on rotaries for a while and I tried quite a few, but I didn't really get on with them. It's been nice to go back to coils. Plus I'm an obsessive tinkerer. I like taking stuff apart. If I have ten minutes down-time, I'll take a machine apart and mess around with it. I think rotaries are a bit like modern apprenticeships – they're handed to you on a plate. You see these slim-line, almost boring looking, ergonomic machines that have no soul to them. Even with cartridge machines, it feels like we're limited to certain gauges of needles, groupings, etc. But there's so much more to it than that! Take someone like Aaron Cain, who makes these beautiful hand-made machines. I have several of them, and they're some of the best things I possess.

What did it feel like when you did your very first tattoo?

The first person I ever tattooed was the guy who taught me. It was terrifying. My hand was all over the place, I was sweating, it was a horrible experience. My first tattoo on a paying customer was from a Jenny Clarke flash sheet, and even though I'd tattooed a few people by then, I was still all over the place. But you're never good straight away. I was terrible... for years! I think a lot of us were.

Did you feel frustrated that you could only do flash at that stage?

Yes I did. But I think it was for my own good that I was held back, because I wasn't yet capable of doing the styles I wanted to do. I did try some of my own stuff – because I was impatient – but I

wasn't ready, and I fucked it up. Looking back though, doing all that flash taught me about small tattoos, which are actually infinitely harder to do than big tattoos.

I guess, in a way, Pinterest and Instagram are today's flash?

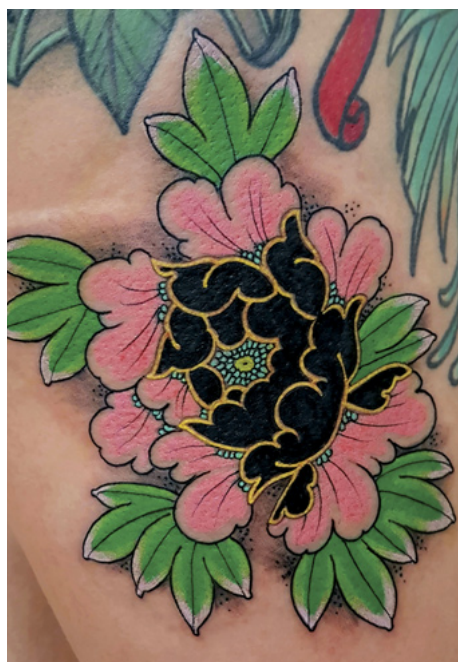
Yes - and it's funny, I think peonies have almost become the new rose! So many people want them, and there are so many variations on them.

Do peonies still excite you, even though you've done so many?

They do, yeah. I had a period of about a year when I didn't want to do them anymore, because I was getting about a dozen a week. But I know they're what a lot of people want from me - and at the end of the day I work in a service industry, so I'm happy to provide that service. In fact doing a convention usually means a whole weekend of peonies for me! And that's fine. I know it's sometimes difficult for customers to travel to the studio, so they come to me at conventions instead. And getting that tattoo means a lot to them.

Is it hard to customise an image such as a peony time and time again?

I think this is where traditional and Japanese are totally different from other tattoo styles. They're pre-set concepts, so there's no need to vary them too much. A koi, for example, is an amazing image and a timeless piece of art - so why try to change it? It's just nice to be able to recreate it. Obviously you'll put your own tweaks on it, but you shouldn't try to deviate too much from that original subject. People want it because of what it is. It takes a lot of pressure off when you know you don't need to reinvent it, or do anything ground-breaking.





How did your current style evolve?

When I started out, I was doing a lot of Japanese, but then I found myself doing more neo-traditional... and then something just clicked and I decided to go back to Japanese. The funny thing is, at the beginning I couldn't draw peonies. They looked like cabbages! And my chrysanthemums were even worse! I remember someone once told me one of my earlier efforts looked like a Sentinel from *The Matrix* with penises instead of tentacles...

When you first started, did you ever dream of being in the position you are now?

I couldn't even have imagined it. I remember my excitement when I first got accepted to work the Brighton Tattoo Convention. For me, that meant I'd made it. It was the best feeling on the planet. And as for London, well I tried a couple of times to get in – because if you don't ask, you don't get – but I knew you had to be patient, wait and earn your spot.

And when Miki emailed me and told me I had a booth, I couldn't believe it! I've worked London for the past three years, and I still get excited. I think that's how we all should be – grateful to be doing what we're doing, and grateful for where we are. I still have an 'Ooh!' moment when an artist I admire likes my tattoo pictures on social media. I know some people don't register that kind of thing, but it makes me feel happy. It validates me.

Can you tell us some of the artists who inspire you?

Jack Rudy, definitely. Especially his skulls. His work just has this amazing feel to it. I really like Hocheon too, who is from Korea. His work is phenomenal. And I wouldn't be drawing dragons the way I do without the inspiration of Filip Leu. But there are so many people who inspire and influence me. It's impossible to name them all. Tom Strom of course – he's so open and willing to share – and working at Semper... every day I see something that David Corden does, whether it's

colour combinations or needle set-ups, that makes me want to try new things.

Tell us how your gold-lined tattoos came about.

The first one was a chrysanthemum. I'd seen a few pieces of Shige's, and some older pieces by Filip Leu, and I couldn't for the life of me figure out how they'd been done. I'd always worked from dark to light, so how could you line with light and fill in with dark? It really weirded me out. But eventually I came up with a way to do it. That first tattoo was a real experiment. My client trusted me completely, although inside my own head I was screaming and crying!

What gets you through those kinds of moments?

I think it's a sort of quiet confidence – which is strange, because I don't think of myself as a confident person overall. Even now, I still get nervous tattooing. Especially at big conventions, with all those amazing artists watching you. It's terrifying.

Are you very self-critical?

Yes, but I've learnt to tell myself, 'You've done what you can, the client is happy, don't give yourself a hard time.' I can always see flaws in my work though. Whenever I line something, I always think it looks wobbly as fuck even though people tell me it's crisp and clean. Putting in any kind of solid black is the most stressful. I know it's down to people's skin, how they swell, and even the lighting conditions, but when I look at what I've done I think, 'Oh fuck, that's not going to heal solidly.' A month later, I'll see it healed and it'll look fine, but at the time of doing it I'll be convinced that it's going to be patchy. I used to panic, overwork the skin, hammer the black in, and then see it come back with scabs and bits missing. It's taken me my entire career to learn to step back and say to myself, 'Elliot, leave it. Don't overwork it.'

Do you have a favourite moment during the tattoo process?

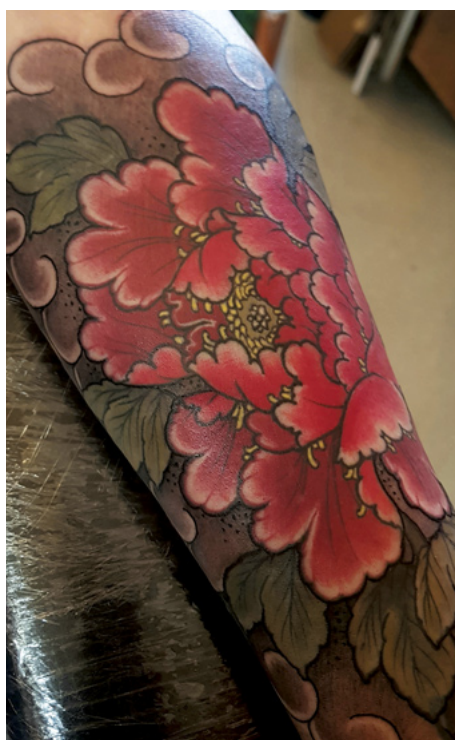
My favourite moment is the first wipe of the first line. Tattooing can be hit and miss. You can't account for people's skin, you can't account for how they will sit, etc. But when you put that first line in and it's gone in perfectly and you wipe down the skin and the stencil has stayed on, it's the best moment - you know you're in for a good day. Saying that, it can still catch you out. Even if the lines go in well, the colour might not. Then you'll have to question why that's happening. Is it the machine? Is it the customer's skin? Am I just a terrible tattooist?! Somebody with really good insight is a guy called Randy Randerson. He posts anecdotes about what tattooing really feels like. If anybody wants to know what goes through a tattooist's mind, they need to read this guy's stuff: the panic, the horror, the feeling sick when things go wrong...

Does your mood affect your work?

Yes, your mood can definitely affect what you do. If you're sad, your tattoos are going to be subdued; if you're angry, your tattoos are going to be aggressive. I find that for sure. Sometimes my peonies will look very summery in their colours, but if I'm not in the best mood, the colours might be more muted.

Does that give the designs a different meaning?

Not really. Things like koi are grounded in tradition and have their own meaning. For me, they're rarely personal. It's mostly the same for my clients too. A lot of tattooists play on that idea of 'meaning' - for themselves or for the client - but sometimes people just get tattoos because they look cool.





Do your customers generally give you free rein?

Most people are happy to let me do what works, which I'm grateful for. But sometimes if a client says, 'Do whatever you want' my imagination fails me! Too much freedom can create a block. What I've started telling clients is that I need some sort of starting point - a base idea that I can build on.

Do you sometimes have clients who want more input?

Yes, and that can be tough. At the end of the day, I want to do a tattoo that's going to last a lifetime, otherwise what's the point? So if I know something's not going to work, I always explain that to the client.

Do you always have longevity in mind?

Absolutely. And I've built up that knowledge through trial and error. As tattooists we've all had grandiose ideas way above our station, but seeing things come back that didn't heal or didn't settle well means you've got to find out why. If it's not the customer's fault, it could be overworking, a problem with the ink, anything. I took a gamble on the gold-line black peonies, because I didn't know how they were gonna work. Luckily the first one healed well, so I knew I had a process that would work time and time again. If that first one had come back and healed terribly, I would have known not to do that again. You need to know exactly what you're doing and admit when you're wrong. Being human means that you can fuck up - and that you will continue to fuck up. We're not robots. We do have bad days, and we do make mistakes. We need to remember that.

How do you see your work developing?

I love Japanese, but I like the idea of moving away from it and pushing other ideas. The subject matter might not be to everyone's taste though.

Tell us more...

I'd like to do some darker imagery. One of my biggest inspirations when I first started was Derek Noble. His zombies and evil goats are fantastic; I love that gory, satanic stuff. But I'm not known for that kind of thing at the moment, so I'm not asked for it.

Tattoos may be art, but tattooing is a service industry.

Exactly. And at the end of the day, I think a lot of tattooists forget this. A tattoo is a commissioned piece. It's a commission from the customer. WE don't have to wear the tattoos that we do. WE'RE not stuck with them for the rest of our lives. They're on our customers' skin. So it



would be wrong to try to convince someone to have a devil when they really want a peony. And I will turn stuff away if I think I'm not able to do it as well as another artist. For example, I'm not great with black and grey - I never have been - and I wouldn't want to take someone's money for doing a ham-fisted job.



How does it feel when someone comes to you with an older piece that needs finishing?

If it's something from years ago, and it's not how I work anymore, it can be difficult. But I always try to do my best with it. I feel it's my responsibility, no matter how long it's been; I started the piece, so I've got to finish it, even if I don't want to do it. It wouldn't be fair or respectful to the customer if I didn't. And I'd be very disappointed if I'd started a piece on someone and they went elsewhere to get it finished!

What's your view of the industry today?

There's a lot of sensationalism in tattooing, which isn't good. People are doing it because it's cool and because they want to be rock stars; they're not coming into it because of a love of the craft. You see that in the way apprentices pick and choose the styles of work they want to do. As far as I'm concerned, if you've only been tattooing two months, you don't get to say what you will and won't do. It's like saying to the client they're not worth your time.

I think you have to compare tattooing to being an electrician or a plumber. It's a trade, a job. But it's not like other jobs. I used to work on a building site, where you have to start early and work long hours, and if you fuck up there are SERIOUS ramifications. As tattooists, we can work when we want, wear what we want, smoke when we want... and we don't have to sign into a computer or answer to anyone. I don't think of it as work. It's a passion that pays the bills. I know I've not been tattooing for a super long time, but I want to say to some of the more rock-starry artists out there, 'Get your head out of your arse and be nice to people! People don't NEED to have tattoos. You have it easy. Appreciate what you have and enjoy it!'

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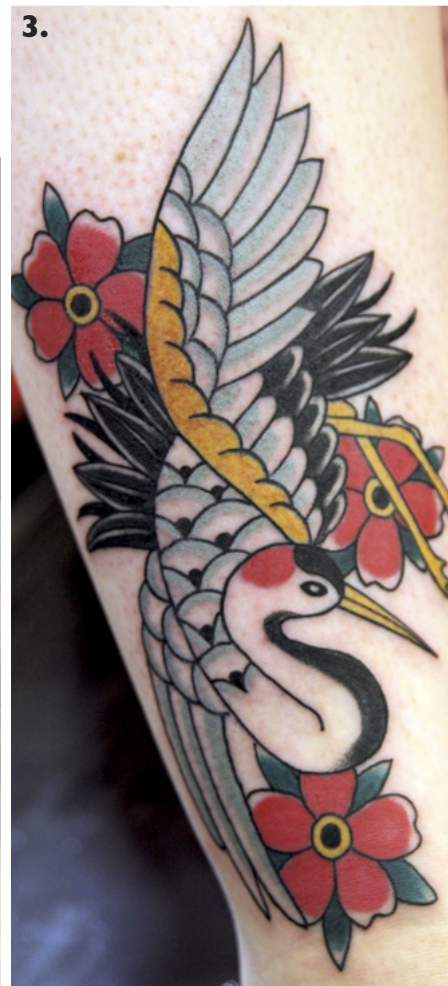
Every year when the Bristol Convention comes around, we wonder how it can possibly be as good as the previous year. Its debut in 2014 was a resounding success – in fact here in the Total Tattoo office we collectively suffered with post-convention blues for about two weeks afterwards. Bristol created a hard act for itself to follow, but years two and three definitely lived up to expectations. Was 2018's show going to be just as spectacular?

I don't know how this show does it, but it just WORKS. The format is simple: (1) Take a large, Grade I listed building, which also happens to be right next door to a city centre railway station; (2) stock the bar; (3) get some tunes on; (4) fill the building with hand-picked traders and tattooists. Sounds easy, right? Well on paper, it is... but other conventions have tried to do something similar and not been nearly as successful as Bristol.

Let's look at it in a little more depth, shall we?

The venue is impressive. The Passenger Shed at Brunel's Old Station is open plan and sunlight floods through the glass roof. This raised the ambient temperature at busier times during the weekend, but it was so nice to walk around a convention without wondering whether it was day or night outside. And the wonderful light was obviously a benefit for anybody holding a tattoo machine or hair clippers!

The bar area was towards the back of the hall. This show is limited in catering; there are snacks available, but no full-on meals. That wasn't actually a bad thing, though. Punters didn't have to sell their kidneys for overpriced food and drink, so they had more spare cash to spend with the traders whilst enjoying their cool beer. The Bristol organisers have been quick to understand that if there are too many traders crowded together it dilutes the market and results in unhappy stallholders, and they made sure that their small hand-picked selection was the best available.



1. gary, skin deep tattoo
2. bunshin horitoshi, traditional tebori
3. ellie richmond, modern body art



Talking of best-available... the tattooists. You could scrutinise their work as much as you liked, but there wasn't a single weak artist among the 120 present. The desire to work this show is famously high and it's evident by the smiles on the tattooists' faces that the Bristol convention is truly loved and respected. It was especially inspiring to see Doc Price with the studio Tiger Bones. Young nippers with backaches, step aside – I think we all lost count of how many tattoos he did! Tebori artist Bunshin Horitoshi was also there, and crowds soon formed around his booth to watch him work. This convention is also very popular with fans of traditional western tattooing, which is perhaps only to be expected in the hometown of the legendary Skuse family and the Bristol Tattoo Club. Saying that, the sub-styles within the traditional category – as well in the realistic and oriental genres – were incredibly varied, reflecting the rich past and contemporary present of tattooing.

Although the general trend seems to be for door numbers to be falling at tattoo shows worldwide, here at the Bristol convention all the artists were busy. As well as the sheer talent on offer, the local demographics also helped. Bristol is a cool city, full of graffiti and street art, and home to hipsters, punks, artists and other creatives. Inevitably, a tattoo convention is going to be highly appealing to these groups of people, who actually want to get quality tattoos and are happy to pay good money to do so! The £10 door entry is a massive selling point too; it's a low enough price to attract those who want to 'try out' a convention whether they're a tattoo fan or just curious.

Every year we wonder about the future of this show, but clearly we need not worry. It has been consistently brilliant, and it seems that it's going to remain that way. Bristol is proof positive that a successful tattoo convention doesn't need glitz and glam; it's the support of the public and the presence of talented artists that makes the atmosphere.



10.



11.



12.

- 4. doc price
- 5. jerry ware,
atlas tattoo (usa)
- 6. sam rivers, curiosities
- 7 & 8. joel blake,
black chalice tattoo
- 9. j betts,
northgate tattoo
- 10. stewart robson,
modern classic tattoo
- 11. lee mitchell,
madhouse tattoo
- 12. matt hunt,
modern body art

13.



14.



15.



- 13. tutti serra, black garden tattoos
- 14. tom grosz, eightfold tattoo
- 15. piers lee, circus of swords
- 16. jimie tatts, skin deep tattoo
- 17. sadee glover, black chalice
- 18. elmo teale, black garden

16.

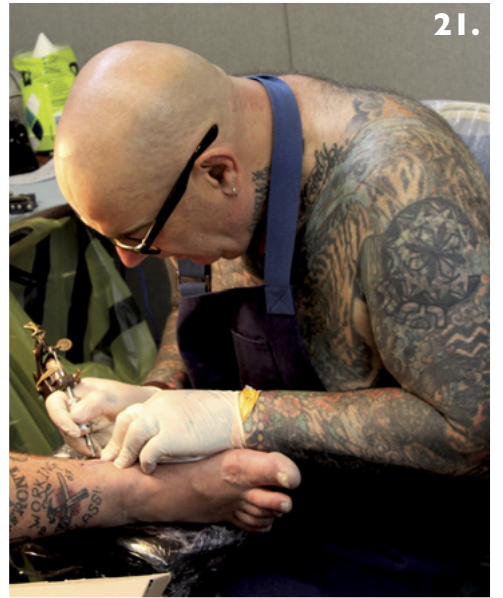


17.



18.





19. costa dan, northsea tattoo
 20. billy hay, bath street tattoo
 21. lal hardy, new wave tattoo
 22. matthew james, private studio
 23 & 24. neil bass, tattoo fx
 25. teide, seven doors
 26. flo nuttall, swan song tattoo (italy)

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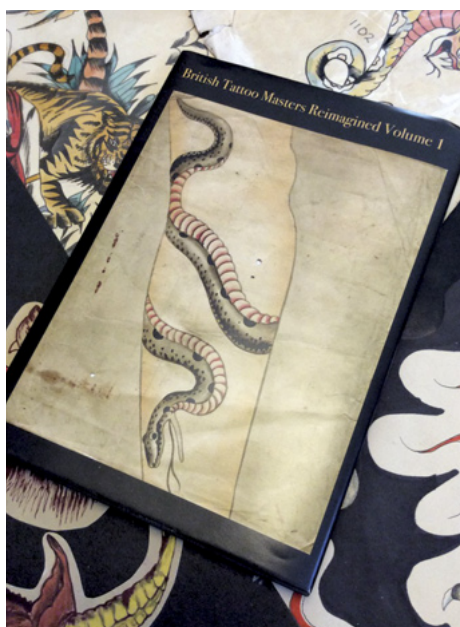
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BRITISH TATTOO MASTERS REIMAGINED

Words by Total Tattoo
Pictures by Barnaby Titchener

An interview with Barnaby Titchener about his latest book



Barnaby Titchener is a passionate tattoo historian as well as a second generation tattooist. His latest book, *British Tattoo Masters Reimagined*, is a wonderful treasure trove of tattoo designs. It's a retrospective of classic British tattoo flash repainted by some of today's top traditional tattooists. Each double-page spread shows a historic tattoo image alongside its contemporary interpretation; the modern pieces are sympathetic to the originals, yet with an original twist of their own. The result is an essential book for any collector of tattoo history, or any artist looking for inspiration in a traditional vein.

Tell us how it all began for you.

My dad Lionel Titchener opened his shop in Oxford in 1973 and started the Tattoo Club of Great Britain in 1979. I started tattooing in my dad's shop in 2001. It was primarily a street shop, as many shops were then. I did walk-ins every day, non-stop JD Crowe designs. We had Cherry Creek too, but it wasn't on display to avoid doing it. After a few years of doing that, Scott Harrison - whose wife was working in Oxford at the time - came in and I saw the stuff he was doing. I was showing him some of our old Burchett and Hartley design books, and I started to think I really dig this stuff. I like the weird way some of this stuff is drawn. And that's how my appreciation for the really old designs started.

How did you come up with the idea of *British Tattoo Masters Reimagined*?

Some of my favourite traditional tattooers

bought my previous book, *The Art of Mister Charles Burchett Davis*, and I was seeing them repaint designs from the book. That's when I started thinking it would be cool to make a book of repainted British designs. There's been various repaint books with Zeis, Coleman, Darpel designs, etc, but there hasn't been one with designs by the British guys.

Why did you choose to publish a printed book instead of doing something online?

I decided to do a book so that people could have a physical copy of the art. When you have that art in your hands, it's a real tangible thing that actually exists. Not a picture on a shitty screen. It's the closest people can come to having the original. I'm lucky enough to be able to hold and experience the real thing. These pieces have a very unique feel - and even a smell! - that you can't replicate by doing something like a blog.

How did you find the contemporary tattooists to take part in the project?

First I asked some friends, then asked them if they had any mates who'd be up for it. I also messaged a few guys who are really getting the traditional stuff out there on Instagram. I was surprised they agreed! After all, I'm just some guy asking them out of the blue to paint me a picture!

And how did you match the contemporary tattooists with the original pieces? Did you assign the designs, or did they choose?

After explaining what I was doing, I sent them a list of whose designs I wanted them to work from, plus some sample images. I asked what their favourite subjects were, then sent them a few more images until they found what they were happy with. There was something to suit everyone. For some artists, the subject matter was the important thing; for others, it was having an image that would suit their own particular style; a few of them wanted to work with designs by particular tattooists whose stuff they'd always liked. Some guys were so blown away with our collection they wanted to paint more than one piece.



How long did the book take to compile? And how on earth did you manage to get everyone to work to a deadline??!

The first image arrived in less than a week, but others came in after the deadline and didn't make it into the book. It took about eight months to get them all in, and after that I couldn't wait any longer. I'd already pushed the deadline back six months! One guy kept asking me to send more and more images. I sent about twenty, and then in the end he told me he was too busy making a book of his own...

What does this book tell us about traditional tattooing, both past and present?

I think this book tells us that these images are timeless. People still want them. We're still attracted to the same imagery that attracted





us a century ago. These designs are tried and tested! Tattooing is an imperfect medium, and should be treated as such. Colour fades, lines spread, hair grows back. These images take that into consideration and have been refined over the decades. I've seen super arty black-and-grey work by modern artists twenty years down the line and it doesn't last like a badass whip-shaded tiger with a dagger and a wonky eye!



Why is it important to preserve traditional tattoo designs?

These images are our history, our culture. Japan, Polynesia, and so on, all have a rich tattoo history and culture. And so do we, here in the West. Our 'tribal' tattooing has been lost – the Picts, for example – but Captain Cook's voyages reintroduced tattooing into Britain, particularly into so-called high society. He brought the tattooed Tahitian man Omai (not to be confused with Omi) here, and his sailors came back home with tattoos. Tattooing then became associated with men of the sea, and before long sailors all over the western world were tattooed with ships, exotic ladies, anchors, etc. I think it's important to preserve these images, not just through the paintings, but by tattooing them on people. We may have lost our original tribal imagery, but we can still preserve these 'modern' designs.



What does the future hold for traditional tattooing?

Traditional designs are still relevant and there are some cool guys keeping it real. I've (reluctantly!) got myself onto Instagram and I see Corday, Warlich and Burchett designs being done from the original, and not redrawn in a way that makes them not even resemble the original. I love seeing people tattoo from my books. I think we have to honour these designs and our heritage.

This is Volume 1. Are there any plans for Volume 2?

Trying to get 70+ tattooers to keep to a deadline was like trying to herd cats! I have a new book showcasing two British brothers that I'm laying out at the moment, and once that's ready I might start on Volume 2 of *British Tattoo Masters Reimagined*. I might change the format and have fewer tattooers, and maybe even see if we can paint several sheets each, and start a collective-type thing? We'll see!

Where can we buy the book?

You can purchase it directly from me at <https://tattoobarny.bigcartel.com> I also have some museum-quality Giclée prints of some of our sheets for sale.

Is there anything you would like to add?

I would like to thank all the people involved in the project. It wouldn't have got off the ground without the help of my dad who gave me permission to use the collection, the contributing artists whose work made the book happen, and especially Conor Payne who helped me get the ball rolling right at the beginning.

British Tattoo Masters Reimagined (Volume 1)

By Barnaby Titchener

A retrospective of classic British tattoo flash (by artists including George Burchett, Charles Burchett Davis, Bob Devine, Bob Maddison and Joseph Hartley) repainted by some of today's top traditional tattooers from all over the world.

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Alysha Nett

This month's cover model is Alysha Nett from California, who is passionate about helping others to forge their own path in modelling and really knows how to make social media work in a positive way!

Tell us a little about yourself...

I'm a photographer and a model, and I live with my boyfriend and my dog in San Diego, California.

How did you get into modelling?

I began modelling with the birth of social media. Myspace started it all, and I was soon documenting all my modelling adventures via the web.

Tell us more about your modelling career.

I've worked with a number of brands over the course of my career including Intel, Etnies, Playboy, Dr. Martens, various alcohol and cosmetics companies, and many more besides. I like sharing my journey via social media, and I've been growing my following for nearly ten years now.

What's the most important thing about maintaining your social media presence?

It's hard to stand out from the crowd, so I

always aim to be consistent. You know what you're gonna get from me, and I deliver each and every day.

So many platforms have come along since Myspace. What do you think the future of social media modelling will look like?

I think the stigma surrounding being an 'instagram model' will fade. People will become more accepting of it as a legit career. The digital space can only continue to grow.

Any favourite projects you've worked on?

I'm most proud of my recent work with my friend Danielle Victoria. We've started doing modelling workshops encouraging women to embrace their creative instincts and forge their own paths.

Any favourite modelling moments?

I REALLY enjoyed seeing my face on a billboard in New York's Lower East Side, advertising the clothing company Staple



Pigeon. Also being in a TV commercial for New Amsterdam vodka. That was really cool.

How would you describe the overall style of your personal 'brand'?

My brand is all about promoting self-love and positivity. I like the thought that I might have helped forge a path for other tattooed creatives in this industry. The internet has allowed me to break through the many barriers that might once have held me back – including being short and having tattoos.

What was your first tattoo and how do you feel about it now?

My first tattoo was very spur of the moment. I got it when I was 17. It was on my lower back and it has since been covered up... so I'm sure you can imagine how I felt about it!

Any plans for more ink?

Always!

Who is your dream tattooist?

I'm so lucky to have Tim Hendricks as my artist. It's already like a dream come true.

Have you ever had any negative experiences because of your tattoos?

Besides the occasional unwelcome stare, or strangers putting their hands on me for a 'closer look', I'd say my experiences have been pretty mild.

What's on your bucket list?

Oh, the normal things. I want to travel more (Amsterdam's one of my favourite places) and I want to get married and have kids. I'm very happy with my career so far, but I still have a lot of personal goals.

Any advice for new models trying to break into the industry?

Be nice but firm. Make sure your contact info is easily accessible on your pages. And don't gossip on set!

Greatest life lesson?

Don't ruin your credit when you're young!! You're gonna need it.

How do we get in touch?

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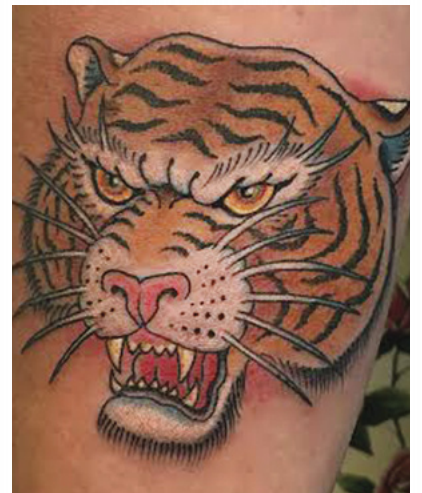
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Barb Rebelo

O riginally from Portugal, 'Biblical' Barb Rebelo is now based in the city of Hull. She is rapidly building a name for herself with her exquisite fine line black and grey work. We met at the Bristol Tattoo Convention, where she told us all about her journey into tattooing, why her shop is called Sainthood, and why her favourite tattoo image is the Sacred Heart.

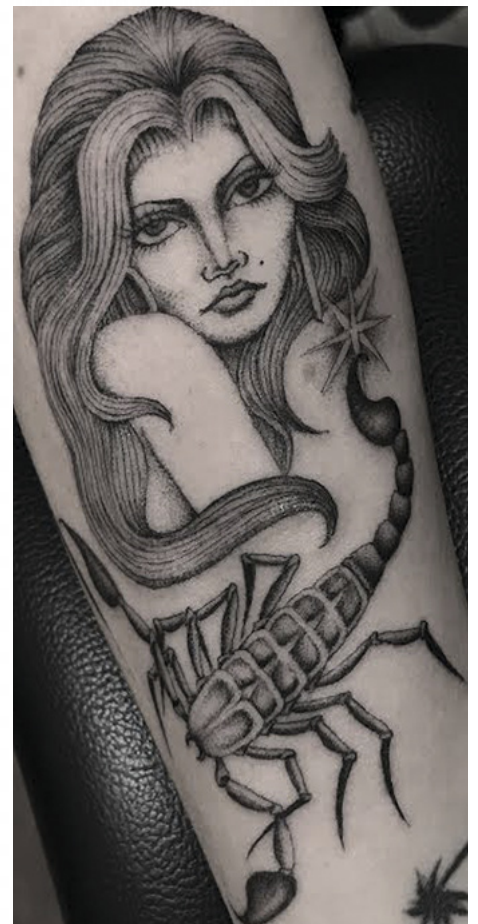
She's only been tattooing for five years or so, but Barbara Rebelo has already opened her own shop. I was interested to know how this came about. "Actually, I never intended to have my own shop – especially so early in my career," she admits, "but when I moved to Hull, which is where my wife is from, I couldn't find anywhere that suited me. The city has some really good shops, but I couldn't see my particular style fitting into any of them. In general I think there are too many tattoo shops now, so I almost didn't want to open one on principle, but the vision I had for my studio was for it to have a true street shop vibe, with flash on the walls and so on, and Hull didn't have anything like that at the time. There wasn't anything that would have satisfied my dream."



Sainthood has been up and running for two years now. "The first year was incredibly hard," Barb tells me. "Starting a new business is difficult enough, but we also had to contend with major roadworks right outside our door which began just a month after we'd opened. Some days, I couldn't even get into the shop because there was a bulldozer parked there. We had constant noise and all sorts of commotion, and dust everywhere. It was a miserable time." Happily, the second year has been much better and the business seems to be developing nicely. "We've got a good team and I've even managed to employ an assistant, which makes things so much easier. Now I don't have to deal with booking all the appointments, taking phone calls every five minutes, opening the mail, or paying the utility bills. I can just do the fun part! It feels like it's all starting to fall into place."

Bookings are healthy too. "I'm lucky," continues Barb, "because my style of work is in vogue right now. It varies with the season, but usually I'm booked a couple of months ahead. And if I have a no-show or a cancellation, I can always do walk-ins. That's why having a street shop makes real commercial sense."

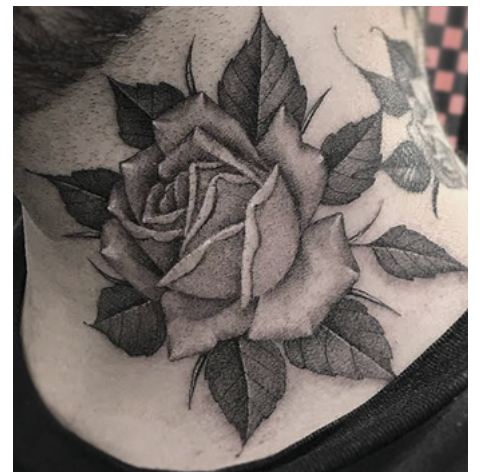
It's refreshing to see a resurgence in street shops that are accessible to all, and Barb very much enjoys this aspect of the business. "I've worked in all sorts of places, and they all have their advantages and disadvantages, but I know I'd soon get bored working in a private studio. It definitely isn't fun having a street shop in the middle of Hull on a Saturday evening when everyone is drunk and trying to come in and cause havoc... but at the same time, I like all the characters, and the craziness from people coming in and out. I'd miss all that. We've got a lot of religious memorabilia in the shop and there's a guy who comes in every week, prays and does his blessings and goes out; he never talks to us or anything, he just comes in, prays and goes out!"





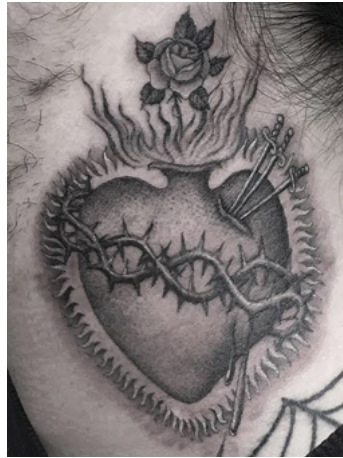
With a shop called Sainthood that's full of religious artefacts, and the nickname 'Biblical' Barb Rebelo, there's one question that I simply have to ask: Is Barb herself a religious person? "Well, I was baptised and technically I'm a Christian, but I wouldn't necessarily describe myself as religious. Growing up in Portugal, I went to church quite a bit when I was young. The churches there are so beautiful, and when you're surrounded by that kind of beauty you can't ignore it. And religious art translates so well into tattooing. I just love the look of it. As you say, the studio is called Sainthood. I like the idea of religion as a philosophical approach to life – a moral compass, or a way of being the best version of yourself... that type of thing. So everything just ties in. The Marys and Jesuses in the studio, and me tattooing them all the time. I think they work."

I ask Barb if she would ever want to move back to Portugal. "I would move there tomorrow if I could," she tells me. "But unfortunately tattooing isn't as popular there, or as developed as it is here in the UK. It's just a different culture. It's catching up, but even though there are some amazing Portuguese tattooists, Portugal is never going to have the kind of tattoo history that England, America or Northern Europe have. I've also got the shop to think about, and of course I'm now married with two kids. Because the kids are fostered, we have to stay in Hull. It's not the worst place to be though!"

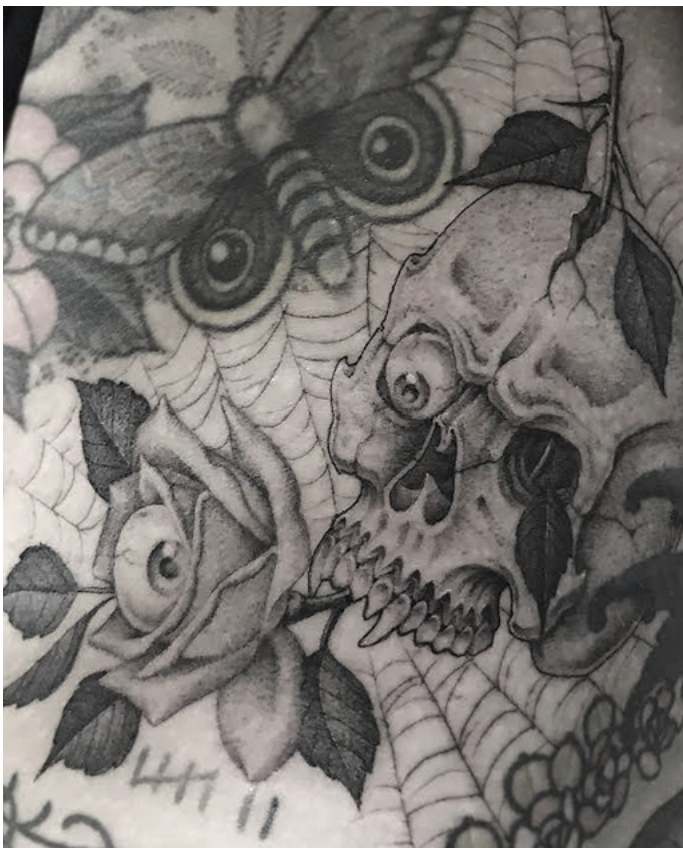


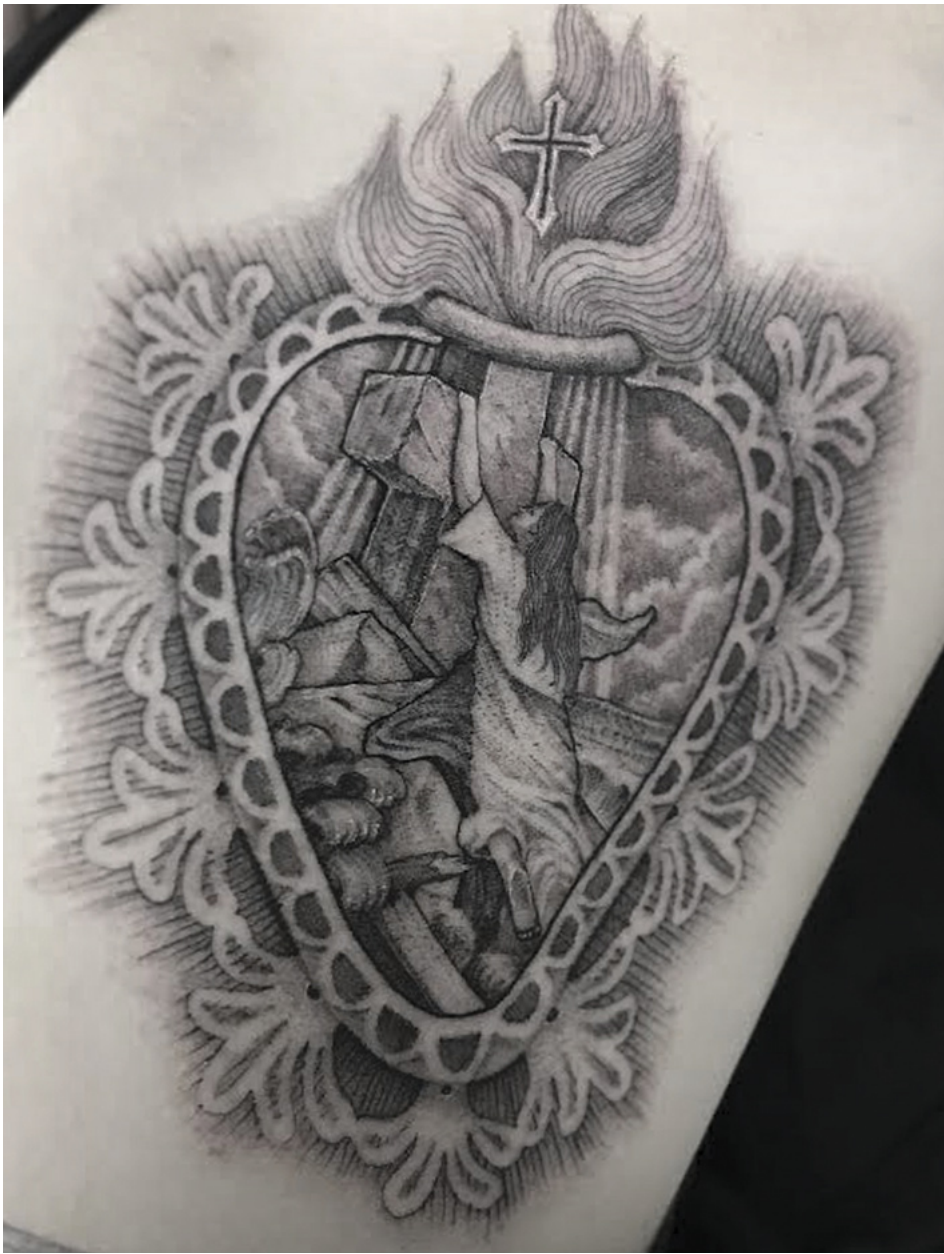


From an early age, Barb knew she wanted an artistic career. However, she saw herself in a more commercial role rather than doing something purely creative. "I was never really into the idea of creating fine art *per se*," she explains, "because I didn't feel I had much to say to the world, or any message I wanted to convey. I just wanted a career that would put a roof over my head." She studied product design, then came to England ten years ago to pursue a degree in management at the University of Warwick. She then worked in marketing for a while. "I hated it," she confesses.



Barb had always been into tattoos, but had put the idea of being a tattooist to one side. "I was a pretty good student," she recalls, "so I thought I ought to be concentrating on a 'serious' professional career instead. I had some tattoos myself, but I'd been holding back from getting too much coverage because of the management job I thought I was going to be doing!" It was clearly time for Barb to get back into tattooing and see if that's where her future lay. "I was still working in marketing, but I went along to my local tattoo shop and asked if I could clean there – just to get my foot in the door," she tells me. "This gradually became a sort of informal apprenticeship, and before I knew it I was tattooing full-time. It was crazy. I was thrown in at the deep end and I had my own clients within just a few months."





Barb has always had a love of drawing. “Throughout this whole time – at university, and when I was doing my marketing job – I was always drawing, and it was always very tattoo-based imagery. Occasionally I still find headed paper from the company I used to work for, and it's just got drawings on it instead of notes from meetings... At that time, I was aiming for traditional. But I found I was better at fineline and black and grey, so that's what I ended up doing. I am fascinated by traditional though, and it's a skill set I want to improve.”

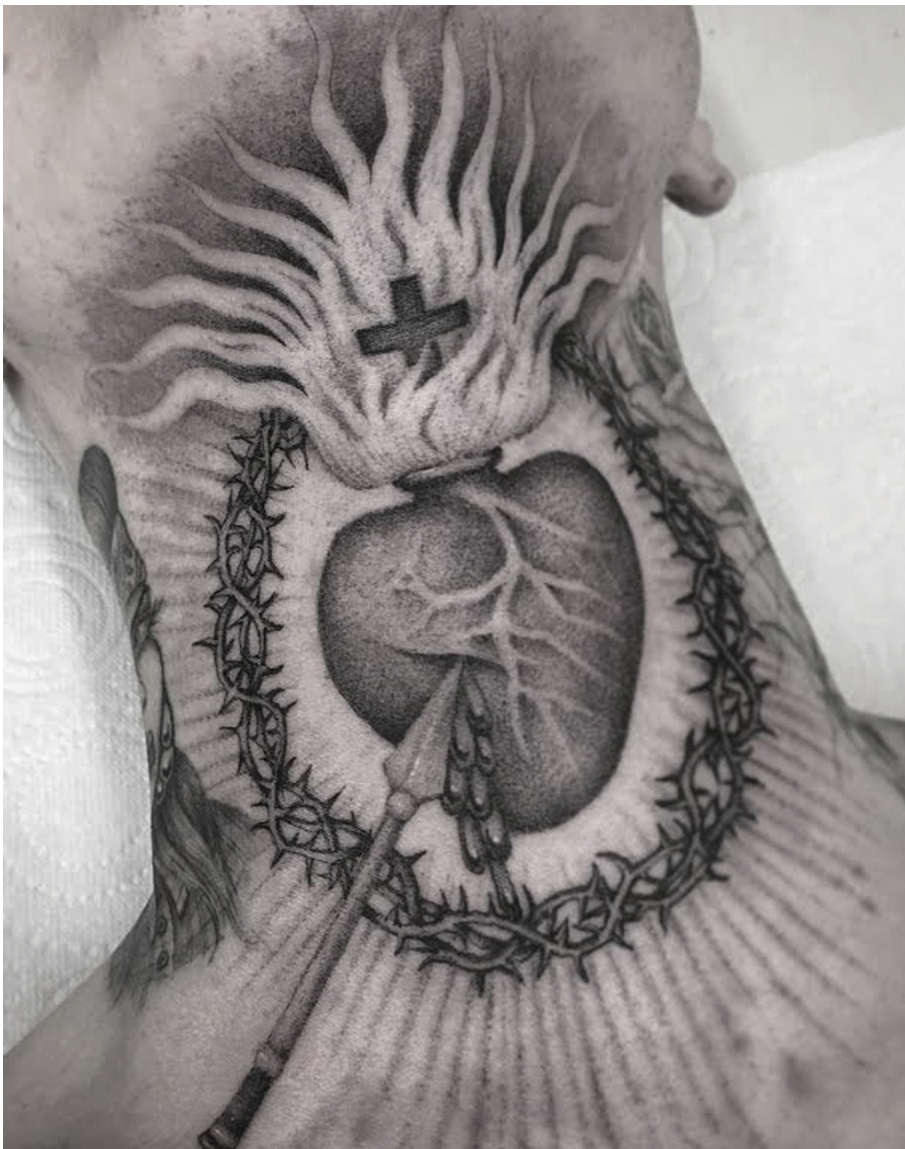
I ask Barb to elaborate. “I think it's quite easy to do something you can call 'traditional',” she explains, “but traditional that actually looks right is very hard to do. The lines need to be perfectly neat and they need to have exactly the correct thickness – whereas in black and grey, if a line isn't quite perfect I can disguise it with shading. And to do traditional well, you need to know about tattoo history. Traditional tattoos need to be authentic. I have the greatest admiration and respect for both styles, but I just kind of fell into doing black and grey.” Barb's work has both a subtlety and a crispness to it. “I pay a lot of attention to how my work will heal,” she tells me, “and I believe the classic techniques are important. I want my black and grey to stand the test of time, just the same as traditional.”

“I particularly love Chicano style and Mexican American-inspired imagery,” she continues, “and I've started to develop more of this in my work. Again, religion is very present in that type of tattooing.” Barb also does beautiful colour work, although she is asked for this much less frequently than her trademark black and grey. “Being a street shop, we get asked





for all sorts. We try to offer as many styles as possible, so that we can accommodate everyone, but if we're not the right people for the job we're happy to recommend another studio. For New School, for example, we would send people to Creative Vandals. Personally, I don't do a lot of colour realism (although I have done some dog portraits) and I wouldn't do Trash Polka, because I don't feel connected with that style. I also prefer to stay away from darker themes and surrealist imagery, and the Eastern European style of black and grey. But I do try to tackle most styles because I enjoy the challenge."



Barb has achieved a lot in her five and a half years in tattooing, including guesting at a number of prestigious studios in America and Europe. But she is incredibly modest and plays down her considerable achievements. "I've still got a long way to go," she tells me. "I've been extremely lucky. The right things have happened at the right time. For example after my apprenticeship I worked for a couple of years at The Tattoo Company in Wilmslow. They taught me so much. But I only ended up working there because my ex had to move to Manchester. All along, it's been more a matter of circumstances than anything of my doing. And here at the Bristol Convention there are so many artists I look up to... I just feel like a tiny incapable mouse!"





I ask Barb how she sees her work developing from here. “The next step for me is to improve my drawing and composition,” she replies. I am somewhat surprised by this answer, but Barb goes on to explain what she means. “I feel limited in that area. I missed out, because I had such a short apprenticeship – if you can call it that – and I was studying management when I should have been doing art. I want to go back to basics and refine those skills.” Barb is concerned that her work might “plateau”, as she puts it, and she doesn't want that to happen. “Before I opened my own shop, I was working with people who were more experienced than me. But now that I'm technically the boss nobody is going to tell me I'm doing something wrong! I miss being taught, and I miss being told off... well maybe I don't miss being told off, but I do miss being told to improve. People keep telling me my work is good, but I want some criticism too.”

As our conversation draws to a close, I ask Barb if she has a favourite image that she particularly enjoys tattooing. She answers without hesitation. “For me, it's Sacred Hearts. They're classic, and it's hard to make them look bad! If I'm doing a sleeve and I'm stuck, and we don't know what to do next, nine times out of ten a Sacred Heart will work. You can combine them with pretty much anything. A Sacred Heart can be as big or as small as you need it to be. You can make it as ornamental or as simple as you like. You can make the flames organic, you can have rays around it... You can make it realistic or jewellery-like or stylised. It's a flexible little item!”



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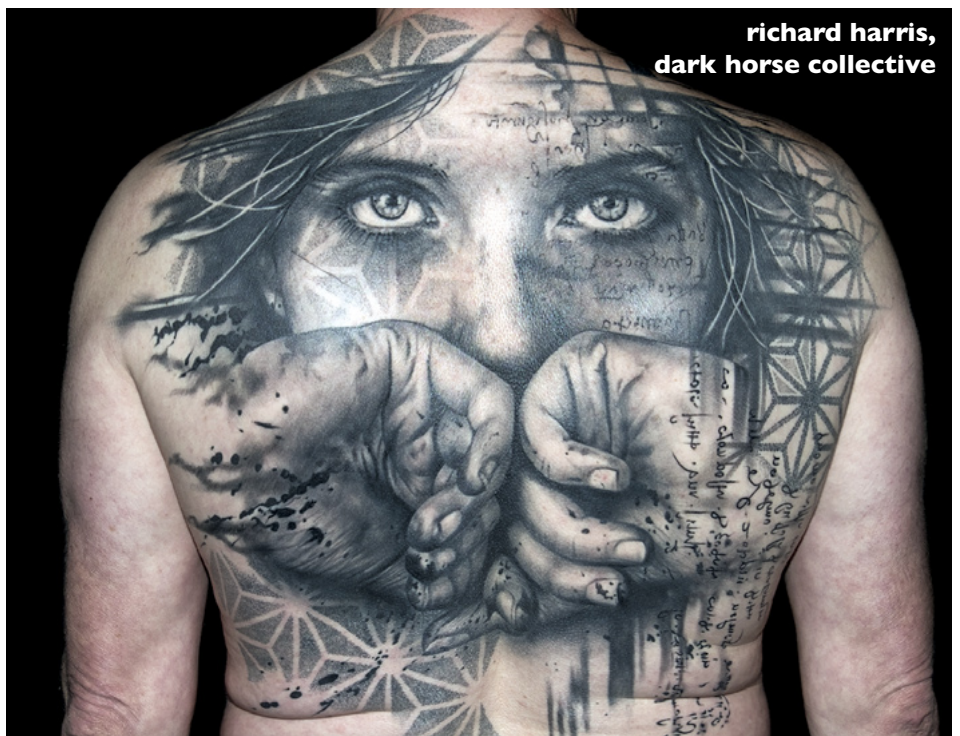
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nick imms, the church



peter, evil needle



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jessi james, crow quill



john anderton, nemesis tattoo



danny, triple six tattoo



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Sneaky Mitch

Sneaky Mitch Allenden tattoos at Dock Street in Leeds city centre, which he co-owns with Rich Wells. He's known for his animal tattoos and illustrative, neo-traditional style. His work is pure quality and he's been on our radar for a while, so it was good to have a chance to interview him at last!

How long have you been tattooing?

I started tattooing in 2010. Initially I apprenticed with Lee Hart in Gainsborough. I was at university as well, so when I started tattooing customers I only worked part-time. Once I'd finished uni, I relocated to Leeds and spent a couple of years working for Matt Hart (no relation to Lee) at both of his studios. Then me and Rich Wells opened Dock Street Tattoos.

What were you studying at uni?

I was studying Illustration. It was basically a great opportunity to work on a portfolio and spend three years concentrating on building my technical ability. I've painted and drawn for years. It was always a hobby and a way to relax when I was a kid. I got tattooed a lot when I was younger and that's actually one of the things that made me start to take art and illustration seriously.

And you did some piercing too?

Yes, I did pierce for a few years. It was a good way to work within a similar business. Obviously I learnt a lot about cross-contamination and basic hygiene – a solid base for all the boring but necessary stuff.

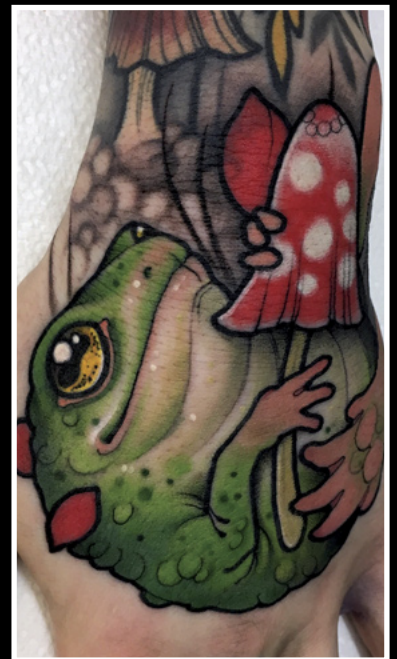
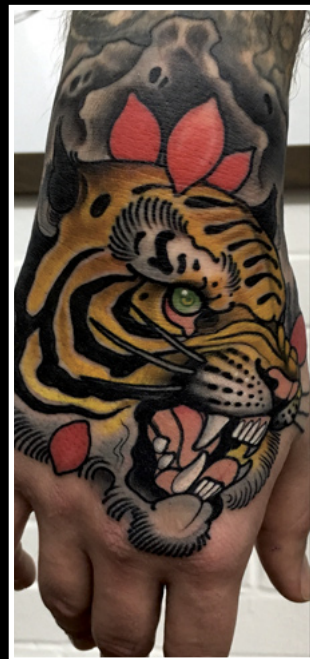
From looking at your work over the years, it seems you fell naturally into neo-trad. Tell us more about your style.

I think I'm really lucky, because my work is quite adaptable. There are certain things I always tend to include – specific colours, line weights, etc – but other than that it's quite flexible, especially as far as subject matter





goes. And I'm equally happy working in black and grey. I really enjoy the variety. It keeps things interesting for me. But I try to keep aspects of good traditional tattooing in whatever I do. In the last year or so I've stripped down the technical aspects of my work. I still try to keep the designs fresh and dynamic, but I like to keep the colours simple and solid. I've found in the long run it holds up far better. Instead of worrying about getting an amazing photo, I'm more concerned about how my tattoos will look in five years' time - which is something not everybody thinks about.





Did your design abilities and your tattooing skills develop alongside each other? Were you able to execute what you intended straight away, or did you have to hold back?

Things have developed pretty evenly. The more comfortable I've become as a tattooist, the easier it's been to enjoy the whole process – rather than being a nervous wreck!

How do you feel about the new wave of apprentices who are 'qualifying' so quickly?

I refer to them as 'iPad tattooists.' I fully condone the use of iPads and other tech to aid the design process, but ninety percent of the newcomers I see just piece together stuff and trace it off. It's become too easy to knock up a design without putting very much thought or skill into the process. Plus, there are far too many apprentices! Eventually it needs to cave in. I know of tattooists with similar levels of experience to myself who have already had half a dozen apprentices. It just seems insane to me. It's lazy guys





wanting free labour! There's no love in apprenticeships now. Nobody's interested in sharing their knowledge purely for the love of the craft. I believe that if you take on an apprentice, it should be someone who deserves it, someone who's already involved with the studio. That's why I've never considered it. And also because I'd be a harsh bastard! I'd expect a lot from them...

With all the tech that's available, how important is it for tattooists to be able to draw?

It's still the most important thing. Anyone can trace an image from the internet, but if you don't have a developed eye for design - something I believe you can only learn with a lot of repetition and practice - you'll always be a lower class of artist in my opinion. I get a lot of compliments on my bird designs, which I really appreciate, but people don't realise that I've probably drawn five to ten of them a week on average for ten years. So it's almost become a reflex. You can't get that from technology.





Do you use an iPad at all?

Yes, I do. Painting and paper-and-pencil sketching will always be the most natural way for me to work, but the iPad is a great timesaver when it comes to tattoo designs. I always like to show my designs to the customer, and the sketch is important. Before, if I fucked up part of it I would have to spend hours re-drawing it. Now, with the iPad, I can layer stuff. So if I fuck up one section, I haven't ruined the whole design. Some of my sketches have about twenty layers though, and I get paranoid about losing parts that I love. The iPad is just so good if you need to mock-up a design on a body part, or move elements around. But I don't use it for my other art; I think if people are going to be buying prints there should be some craft going into it.





You are known for your animal tattoos...

Yeah, I love working with wildlife and natural imagery. You can be so dynamic with it, and it works really organically when applied to the body. If you have an odd gap to fill, you can change the pose; if someone wants more colour, you can always find something that has it. The options are endless. It's great.



Do you think your work has any particularly recognisable characteristics?

I've always tried to do something 'different' and I like to think my work is recognisable. That's what I strive for. Attention to detail is something I'm really keen on. If I pack colour in, I like to make sure it's solid - and stays solid. Also, you'll see a lot of variations in line weight and high levels of contrast in my work.

What machines do you like to use - coils or rotaries?

I use a mixture. In terms of the end result, I don't think you can beat coils. And I love using them for lines. But I like the consistency of rotaries. I can order ten of the same and they all feel the same - which means that if you find a machine that suits you, you never have to worry about things going out of time, etc.

Dock Street Tattoos is a private studio. Are there any particular advantages or disadvantages to that?

The most obvious advantage of the private thing is that you don't have to deal with so many dickheads and timewasters. But at the same time, that's part of the charm of tattooing...!

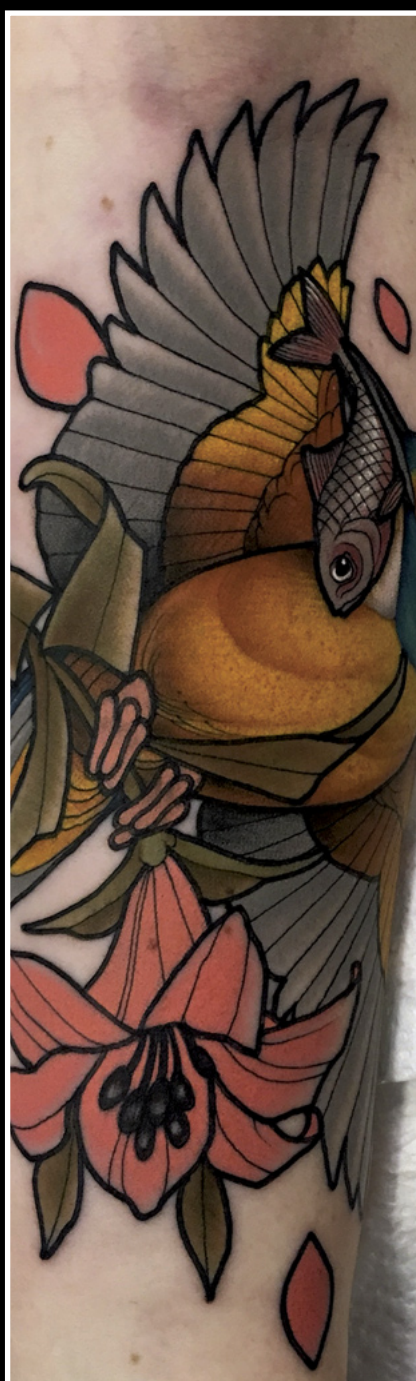
What do you do when you're not tattooing?

I've got a motorbike, which I love. Keeping it roadworthy takes a good chunk of my time! I also try to get to the gym when I can, because I find I concentrate better if I've done some exercise. It's just nice to move about when your job consists of sitting on your arse all day.

A final question. What's the best piece of tattooing advice you've ever been given?

Always wash your hands after going to the toilet!

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C.W. STONEKING



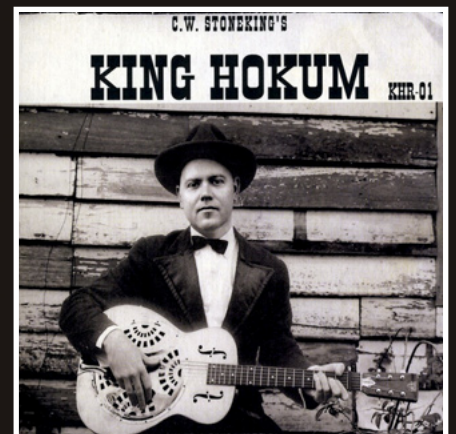
Every now and then we like to interview people who are not tattooists or even avid tattoo collectors, but whose personality and creativity somehow match the spirit of Total Tattoo Magazine. People we think you, our readers, would like to meet. Australian musician C.W. Stoneking is one such person. With a style inspired by early blues and calypso music, he has released three exceptional albums to date, each with a very different feel. We grabbed the opportunity to meet up during his recent UK solo tour.

C.W. Stoneking has a relaxed and jovial stage presence, sharing his stories and narratives with a wry smile and a cheeky glint in his eye. With skills developed through many years of busking, he is a modern master of the old school tradition of spinning a yarn enveloped in rhythm. Always immaculately presented, when we meet for our interview he is the embodiment of cool with his crisp black shirt and tattooed hands. And his voice is slow and melodic as he thoughtfully contemplates my questions.

"The music I do is kinda hard to describe," he begins. "It's stylistically mixed up, with early blues, New Orleans jazz, old Caribbean calypso and a little R&B. They're all just influences that I've picked up along the way. Sometimes I write a song that sounds like it should have been on a previous album, but I don't want to keep covering old ground. I like to try and push myself. Sometimes I'll be writing a song in a particular style, but

that style will have limitations, so I'll introduce a little something that doesn't traditionally belong. To make that work, you have to find the similarities between the different genres and blend them, whilst still maintaining the illusion of it being authentic and traditional."

C.W. was born in Katherine, in Australia's Northern Territory, the son of an American school teacher with a passion for music. He remembers, at







the age of 11, listening to a record in his father's collection called *Living with the Blues* and falling in love with it. I wondered if this kind of music was a big part of his childhood and adolescence? "No, not really," he says. "I got into the whole blues thing with a couple of older guys who I played along with for a while, but after that I was always pretty much just doing my own thing. It took a long time before I got any recognition at all," he continues. "I was touring around for a good while, and busking a lot. I made my first record around 2000, but I couldn't find a record company to put it out because it didn't sound like anything else that was happening at that time. Music labels tend to lack imagination. They said they liked what I was doing but didn't know how to market it. In the end I signed with a tiny shitty label because I felt it was better to get a shitty label than none at all, which of course turned out not to be true. We made some CDs and sent them out. A few radio DJs got really interested and people started to take notice but the label was always having trouble maintaining enough stock. There were a lot of missed opportunities in those early years."

C.W. is no stranger to this country, and he spent a couple of years living in Bristol a while back. I asked him how that came about. "I was touring a lot in the UK and Europe (including doing a spot on 'Later... with Jools Holland'). My third child came along in 2010 and I was gone for most of that year. Then my wife was pregnant again, so we would have had two babies in the house as well as our other two children. That's when we decided it would be good to move here for a while, so I could be at home more to help with the children. The music business in the UK is so much better set up, especially for touring. There are lots of venues, with the added advantage that you can get back home easily if you need to."

C.W. has released three albums of original material: *King Hokum*, *Jungle Blues* and *Gon' Boogaloo*, his most recent. *Gon' Boogaloo* was recorded in just two days. An incredible achievement, but why such a strict time frame? "It was the only time the band could all get together," C.W. explains. "People were going off on tour and doing other things, and I really needed to get something made. Usually the recording process takes a long time because I'm waiting to get



hold of somebody, but this last one was at the other extreme. I've yet to find a happy medium..."

Gon' Boogloo incorporates a wide range of musical influences. I ask C.W. to tell me more about creating it. "On the day there were technical issues, and I knew we had to get things done in a very short space of time, so I just pared it back to essentials. We ended up with a real simple recording set-up using just one mike for pretty much everything, with an additional tube mike for my vocals. There wasn't any time to think about it, or make it perfect. When it was finished I thought, 'Oh, maybe it's shit', but it kinda worked out OK. It was an interesting experience because I was using backing singers, which I've never done before. I deliberately avoided using too many instrumentalists, and I forced myself to do more with the guitar just as a personal challenge. Gon' Boogaloo took me six long years to write, so it was funny to

record it in just two days. There are no overdubs or edits. Each song was 'mixed' live in the room by positioning the band (drums, electric and double bass, the four backing singers and my guitar amp) around an old RCA 77-DX ribbon microphone in such a way as to achieve the best mix for each tune as it hit the tape. And how it arrived at the tape is how it stayed. It was recorded on a 2-track Ampex 351 tape machine out of Capitol Records."

Our conversation moves on to tattoos, and C.W. tells me how he came to get the work on his hands. "I was doing a gig in Newcastle [in New South Wales, Australia] and there was some girl there who said she'd give me a tattoo for free the next day. So I went down to the tattoo shop, and there were no pictures on the walls, no books... I didn't have a clue what the fuck was happening in that joint. It was like a black hole. I said I wanted a bird with my kids' names. She went online and the only images



she could find were tiny and looked like pixelated moles. It was like a 70s rendition of the internet! I didn't want a puffed-out swallow, I wanted a lanky bird like the logo for the Bluebird record label, but before you know it, I've got this shit bird with a wing halfway down its back. She wasn't a very good tattooist. Most of it fell off, so I got a half-decent tattooist to put it back in a little better. Then we had another baby and so I got the other hand done. I've got a few





more over my body, but they haven't really got any meaning, except the snake and palm tree on my arm which reminds me of my music."

"In Australia, a lot like anywhere else, tattoos have become pretty normal now," C.W. continues. "Even on the hands. Nobody really takes much notice. I do plan to get some more as time goes on, but I'm pretty slow about it. I can't think of what I want. But every now and then I come up with an idea, and sometimes

people offer to do a tattoo on me if I travel to some place or other. But you don't really get much time when you're on tour. You roll up, set up, sound check, grab some food, do the gig, pack up and move on. I think it can be a bit tough for my wife when I'm away because she's back home with four kids under the age of 12. None of them are showing any interest in following me into music, by the way. They're into their thing - computer games and stuff."

C.W. famously owns a 1931 National Duolian dobro, a guitar that has almost become his signature instrument. Knowing nothing about guitars I was keen to be educated. "I do still have that one," he tells me, "but I'm not using it on this solo tour. The National sounds really good on some things, but I'm playing an old Epiphone Deluxe archtop here because it has more versatility. It's more in-between. It has pick-ups so it sounds electric, but it can also sound a little acoustic. It does most things. On *Gon' Boogaloo* I played an electric. I've been using some Gretsch guitars; I picked up a 6120 in Nashville and I had a Duo Jet, but that got busted on the airplane..."

I ask C.W. whether there have been any pivotal moments in his career. "No," he replies, "I don't think that's happened for me. It's just been steady gradual growth. A real pivotal moment would be if I produced an amazing song - a perfect musical achievement - but it ain't happened yet, and I don't know if I'm even close..." But if you ask me, C.W. Stoneking's albums are chock full of perfect musical achievements and I wholeheartedly recommend you check them out.

C.W. Stoneking discography:
Gon' Boogaloo (2014)
Jungle Blues (2008)
King Hokum (2006)

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Interview by Perry
Pictures by Ollie Munden & Lizzy Guy

We first heard of illustrator Ollie Munden when we reviewed his tattoo colouring books in *Total Tattoo Magazine* a few years ago. I loved them so much I still have them (un-coloured I might add). So when we were asked to look at a new tattoo-inspired tarot set, and we realised it was designed by Ollie, we simply had to get in touch. Ollie has worked with many A-list design clients during his impressive career. He has also always had a passion for tattoo art, and things have now come full circle as he begins to establish himself as a tattooist under the watchful eyes of Leni and Laura Nikijuluw at Rock Steady in Worthing. We had a lot to talk about!

Let's start with the obvious question. Had you ever used tarot cards before embarking on this project?

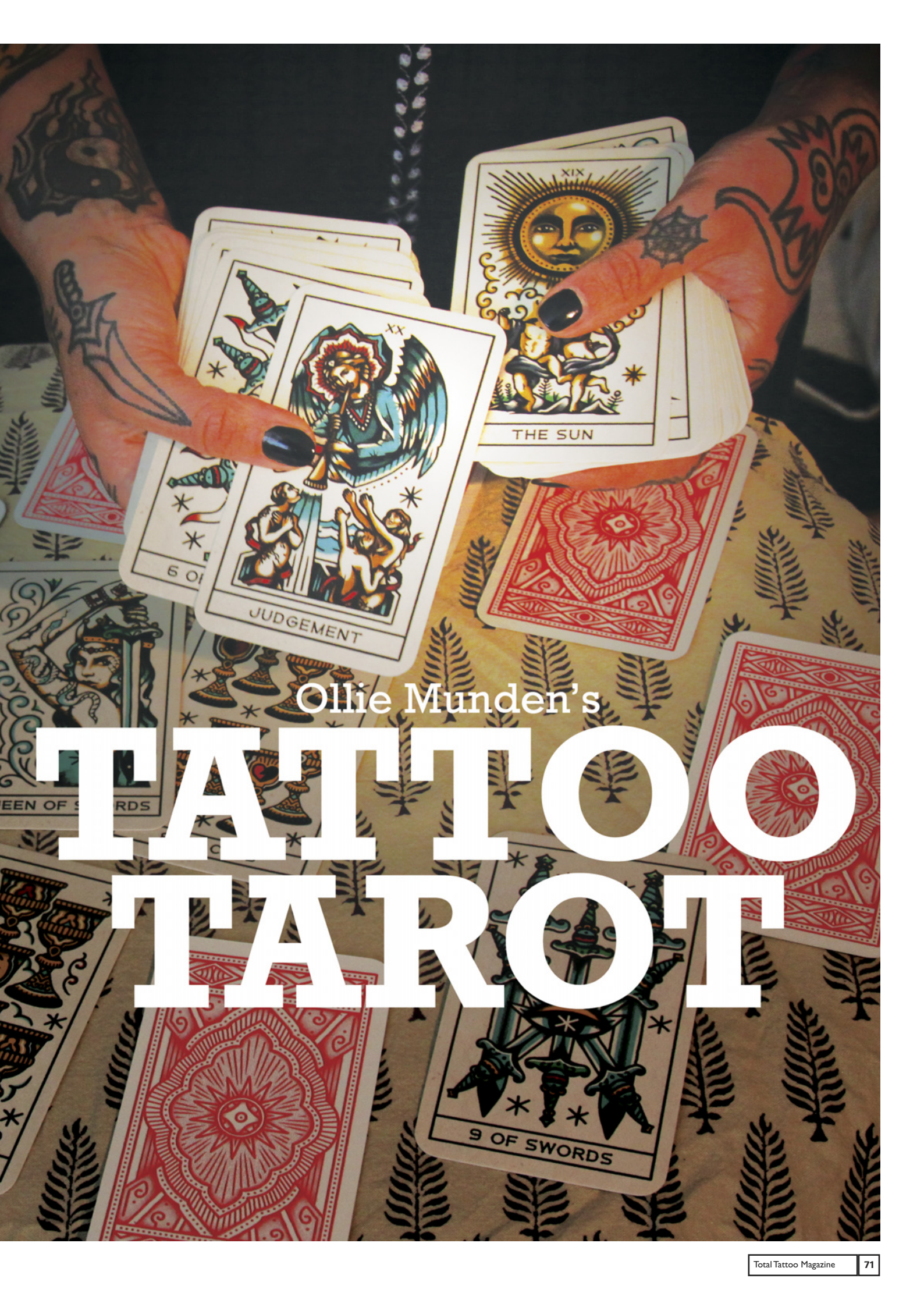
I must confess I hadn't! This was actually part of the appeal. I knew I'd need to do a lot of learning and research. The publishers, Lawrence King, hired a tarot reader to critique every design I drew. Many people buying these cards will just want them as a bit of fun, perhaps as a nice gift for a tattoo enthusiast friend or relative, but there's a serious side to them too. They must 'work'. So we needed to find a balance between sticking to the traditional tarot iconography and also having that tattoo aesthetic. The tarot reader wanted the cards to be very 'tarot', whereas my agenda was for them to look cool as f**k basically!

What do you find so appealing about tattoo imagery?

The bold lines, the high contrast, the flow... and who doesn't like skulls, snakes and dragons?

Tell us about your own tattoos. What do they mean to you?

I feel like an art collector. My taste in tattoos has changed over the years, just like my taste in other kinds of art. But I love all of my tattoos. They're like a timeline. And getting a new tattoo is just like commissioning a piece of art. I love the process of choosing a tattoo artist and I've learnt to keep the brief super open, because the more freedom you give an artist, the better their work will be.



Ollie Munden's

TATTOO TAROT



What do you think is the purpose of art?

The primary purpose, I suppose, is to make us happy. Good art gives me a real buzz. I look at an amazing image of a dragon, or something like that, and I want to draw it... I want to wear it... I just get hyped. I'm currently having my back tattooed by Oliver Macintosh at Frith Street Tattoo. His entire portfolio gives me that buzz.

Tell us a little about your creative background. Were you artistic as a child?

Yes, I've been hooked on drawing since the age of six. I have a childhood memory of drawing an old classic car. I drew most of it fairly accurately, except for the wheels. No matter what I tried, I couldn't get the perspective right... that circular shape viewed at an angle. But my dad stepped in and helped me out, and I finished the drawing. Both my parents are creative folk. My father's into photography and my mother's into interior design (and at the age of 62 began her own tattoo collection). They've always pushed me to pursue my dream of earning a living from my art.

And how did you make that dream a reality?

I studied graphic design at university and worked for a while as a graphic designer. Then I teamed up with an old college



tutor of mine, John McFaul, who was already pretty successful in the world of illustration. My first job with him was a nationwide campaign for Vodafone. Seeing my work on buses, London billboards, and even on television, had me hooked. A few years later I decided to go it alone, and that's when I set up MEGAMUNDEN. I started working with my good friend Johnny McCulloch on those first Lawrence King projects, *The Tattoo Colouring Book* and *The Tattoo Flash Colouring Book*. (We're working together on *The Tattoo Tarot* too.) We also put on an illustration show in Brighton. Then when Mark Graham from ILOVEDUST got in touch, I decided to take him up on his offer of a job. I'd known the guys there for a long time, and I knew they



worked with some of the biggest brands in the world, so I thought it would lead to some good things. And it certainly has! Recent highlights have included painting Red Bull murals at the Monaco Grand Prix, working for Nike on the US Open of Surfing in LA, and a huge sixty-foot piece for Chevrolet to celebrate sixty years of the Camaro. I've had to pinch myself a few times...

What attracted you to The Tattoo Tarot project?

I really liked Lawrence King Publishing's concept of a boxed set of tarot cards. In contrast to the tattoo-themed books that I'd done for them previously, the individual cards needed to be designed within certain constraints and criteria, and this appealed to me. Another big selling point was that I would get to fully colour up each card. (With the exception of their covers and the accompanying posters, the colouring books were just line art in black, with a subtle hit of gold detailing.) I also really liked the idea of being let loose on the packaging. Lawrence King are great to work with. They showed me a dummy box they had made up; it was a decent size and it just felt nice in the hand, so I was hyped to see what Johnny and I could do with it. Johnny always works with me on Lawrence King projects. He lays out the artwork and is a HUGE inspiration, sending lots of ideas my way!



Tell us about more about the designs.

I was keen to use a simpler, bolder style than in the books. The cards are much smaller than book pages, and I wanted to draw up readable designs. I also wanted the designs to have an aged feel to them and a solid impact. And I wanted to push the way I draw people. Tarot cards have Kings, Queens, Knights and Knaves – all people – so creating these cards offered me that challenge. The deck I've created is based on the Marseille Tarot. Each of my designs contains the main elements found on the original deck – all of which give meaning to the card – and I've incorporated tattoo symbolism as well, to add to the story. But it was important for the deeper meanings to be correct. I recall including a traditional heart icon in one of the designs, but having to switch this out for a sun symbol to help strengthen the link to fire which that particular card held.



And are you happy with the overall finished result?

Yeah, I'm really happy. I'm pleased that the cards have that vintage feel that I set out to achieve from the start, and I love the box too, with the ribbon to help lift the cards out and the gold detailing.

How long did the project take, from start to finish?

Approximately a year. But that was alongside my other full-time work! I was coming into the studio at 6am to do a few hours on the tarot cards before starting my normal day, then often carrying on again in the evening. It was a hectic year...





And we hear you're now learning to tattoo?

Yes, it's the new chapter in my art career! It just seemed that everything was pointing in that direction. Tattoo artwork has been a constant inspiration for me in my career, and it's always the tattoo-related illustration briefs that I've been most hyped about. I started getting tattooed about ten years ago, and my tattoo passion has just kept on growing. I'd been toying with the idea of seeing if I could get a tattoo apprenticeship somewhere, but I'd never taken that step of approaching anyone. At 36 it seemed a bit late to switch careers. With hindsight though, it was exactly what I needed.

Where are you working?

I'm doing an apprenticeship at Rock Steady Tattoo in Worthing, with Leni and Laura Nikijuluw (@leni_rock_steady, @laura_rock_steady) and Dan Pease (@danpeasetattoo). I'm taking it one hundred percent seriously and it's hard graft! Tattooing has given me so much creative inspiration over the years; I am hoping that I will be able to give something back by doing some great tattoos for my future customers. I want to say a huge thank you to Leni and Laura for giving me the chance to learn to tattoo with them. My brother Joshua (@joshua.munden) has also now begun apprenticing at the shop with us, which is really cool.

Do you have any thoughts on tattoo style?

I want my tattoos to be bold and readable. But it's very early days, and right now I'm trying out a variety of styles, much as I do on a day-to-day basis with my illustration work. I've done some Japanese, some traditional, some lettering and some black-and-grey. I want to be as diverse in my tattooing as I can be, but I also want to put my own stamp on my work. I just want to make my customers happy and have them coming back for more!

What do you enjoy most about tattooing?

The thing that's got me most excited about tattooing is picking up traditional machines and practising a craft by hand. There really is no cheating! What you see in a tattoo was done directly on the skin by the artist. Unlike digital design, you can't go back and undo things! I like sitting there with a client and not being on a computer. I also really like the sound, feel, and aesthetic of the machines themselves. I like it all really...

Does digital design play a big part in your illustration work?

It plays a huge part in my design process. I used to draw by hand all the time, but then I tried out a Wacom Cintiq... and I have to say they are so good I hate them! The Cintiq has kept me from drawing on paper, but it gives me

so many options – and when you have to turn around ten sketches in a day for an impatient client it really is the go-to tool. I love the fact that I've found myself drawing on paper much more now that I've moved into tattooing. I plan to start painting a lot of flash too.

How do you divide your time at the moment?

I'm currently tattooing half of each month and doing the other half at ILOVEDUST.

Where do you see yourself headed in the future?

Down the line, I definitely want to tattoo more but I also want to maintain a steady flow of independent illustration work. I'd like to take on more jobs for brands I feel connected with – clothing, motorbikes, stuff like that, or skateboard and snowboard brands. I designed a cycling kit recently, which was pretty cool, and I've also been doing some record sleeves, which I really enjoyed. In terms of tattoos, I've got some really nice customers coming my way and I hope that continues. I want to get some big pieces in. I've been working on a Japanese sleeve and backpiece, and I'd like to do more of that kind of thing – as well as some bold traditional stuff.

Do you ever suffer from artists' block?

Working in illustration, more often than not you have to turn a design around in no time at all – and I think that's beaten any notion of artists' block out of me!

Can you namecheck some of your biggest artistic influences, in both tattooing and other art forms?

There are too many to list. But here are a few off the top of my head... James Jean, Mike Giant, Tomer Hanuka, Yaia Gift, Faile, Cyrle, Paul Dobleman, Shige of Yellow Blaze, Alex Bage, Rafa Decraneo, Phetrus, Chris Garver, Tim Hendricks, Roberto Gonzales, Regino Gonzales, Justin Olivier...

A final question: Who would win in a fight – a tattooist or an illustrator?

The tattooist every time. A tattoo machine is way more deadly than a Wacom pen.

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Thomas Petuccio is internationally renowned for his fine abstract style. He grew up in Italy, came to London at the age of twenty to embark on his tattooing career, and now relishes a busy travelling lifestyle, dividing his time between the UK and Australia. We asked him what his art means to him, how much of himself he puts into his tattoos, and whether there's a downside to living the dream...

How long have you been tattooing?

I've been tattooing professionally for about six years now, following a two-year apprenticeship at Illumin-Eye in East London.

Tell us where you're from originally.

I grew up in a town called Bassano del Grappa, which is in northeast Italy, near Venice. When I was in my teens, in the early 2000s, tattooing wasn't nearly as popular in Italy as it is now. People saw it as a negative thing. Tattoos were something that 'labelled' people, rather than being a respected art form... which is surprising when you think about it, because Italy is a country with a real passion for art and a rich cultural history. Tattooing is of course much more accepted now, but back then it was a struggle to get involved with the scene. There wasn't anything on the internet (which is actually kind of a good thing, if I think about it!) and the only way to engage with tattooing was by going to tattoo shops and getting tattooed. Luckily

my mum and dad were on board with it and allowed me to get some work done at a very young age, which I am very grateful for.

What made you first want to pick up a tattoo machine?

When I was about six, my grandparents took me to the seaside for the summer holidays. I remember being fascinated by all the tattoos I saw, wondering how people could get pictures on their skin like that! As I was growing up, I was always into graffiti, photography, and so on. But tattoos really caught my imagination because they're such an extreme form of art. The artist can portray their creative vision, on someone's skin, permanently. I've always seen tattooing as a rebellious act, against the mainstream – especially because tattoos are on the skin, and therefore so personal. With tattooing, I can challenge the rules of conventional art, creating something that is almost alive, that will be with the owner for ever. That concept blows my mind.

Do you have an art education?

No, I'm self-taught in that respect. Graffiti and hip-hop have been my education. Growing up, the underground scene was what shaped me as an artist. That's where I discovered the bold designs and bright colours that years later still are the backbone of my tattoos. I think if I had an art degree or anything like that, it might have helped me and would probably have saved me a lot of time, but I don't think I would have enjoyed it much as the 'education' I've had. I've always felt free to express myself without being too technical and strict with my designs.

How would you describe your tattooing style?

Hmm, that's a good question. Modern and abstract, I guess... but I don't really like to put myself into a category. I try to think outside the box. I think I'm pretty flexible as a tattooist. I can do line work, shading, colours, black and grey, geometric designs and realism. I really enjoy all of them, and I always think, 'Why don't I just mix everything together, go with the flow and see what I can come up with?'



Apart from street art, what else has influenced your style?

For me, everything started with graffiti. But my influences are quite wide. Painting has played a big role. Spanish painters such as Salvador Dali and Picasso have had a big impact, with their unique techniques and ways of thinking. Italy has an abundance of art history of course, but the Spanish surrealists just had something that really inspired me to think about art in a different way. Photography has helped me too. It's enabled me to develop a better understanding of lighting and the composition of images. I really enjoy portrait photography and playing with high contrast subjects to find a balance – just as I would do with my tattoos, particularly when it comes to black and grey. I've also found a lot of inspiration from travelling and opening my mind to different cultures, religions and lifestyles. I believe that whatever inspires you will influence your work. Inspiration can – and should – come from every possible source. It's just a matter of applying it to your tattooing, with your own signature.

Are there any particular tattoo artists who have influenced you?

There are so many artists I look up to! But I have to give a special mention to Jeff Ortega at Evil from the Needle. He's helped me a lot – on the technical side, with the structure of my designs, and of course by giving me the chance to work in such an iconic shop. In terms of artistic influences though, I think focusing too much on a specific artist or style can limit your imagination and make it harder to create unique work, because somehow you always have that artist or style in mind. It's important to me that the pieces I create are uniquely mine. Nowadays, the internet is overflowing with millions of tattoo images. I want people to be able to look at my work and say, 'I've never seen anything like THAT before.'

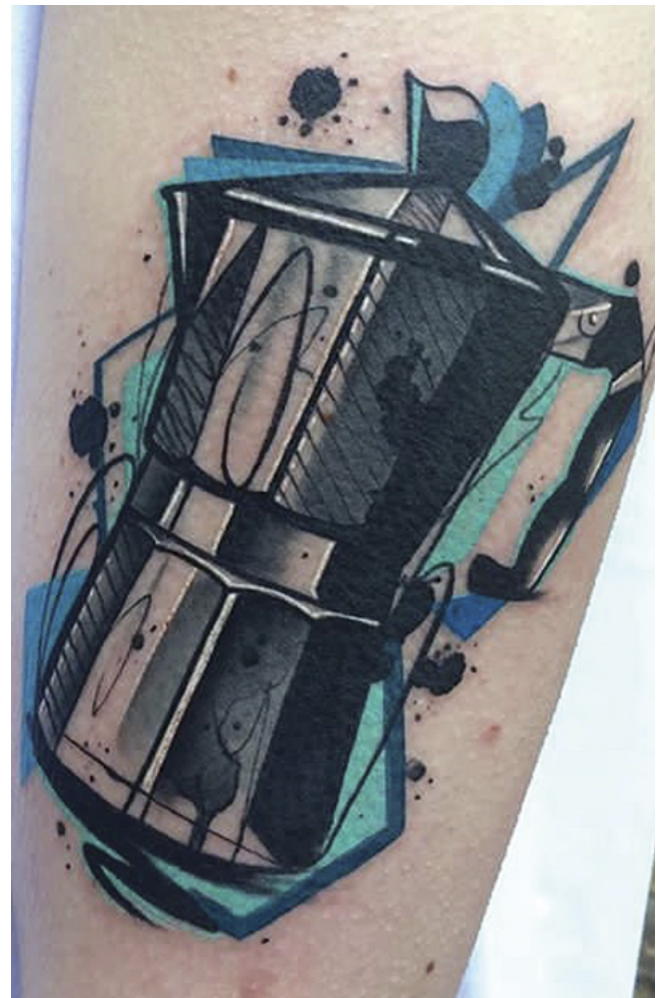


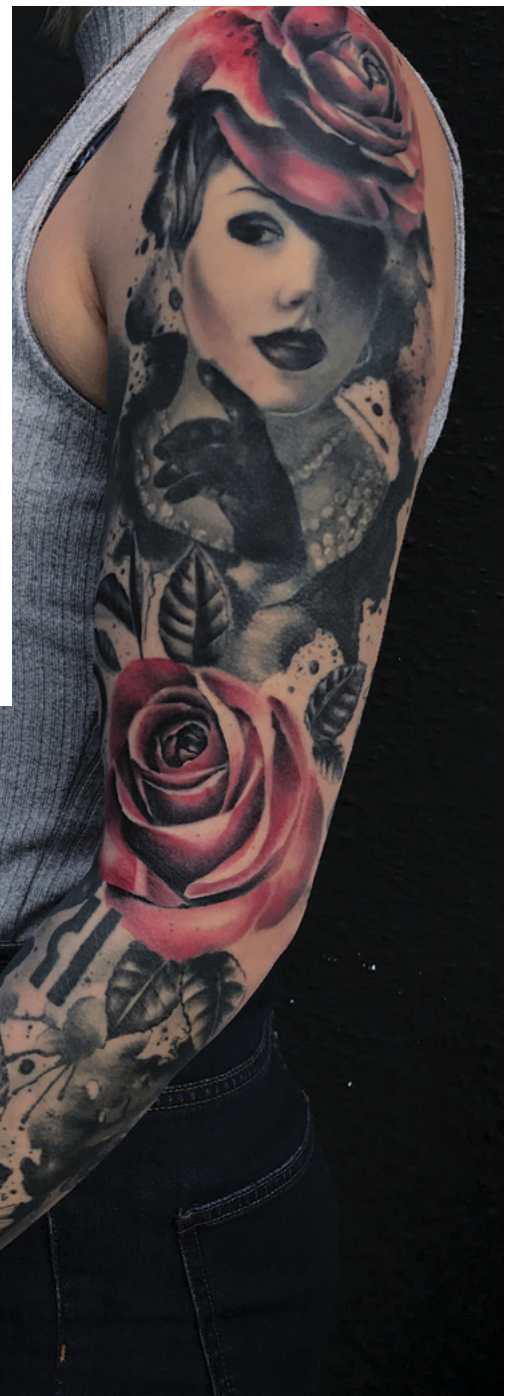
So for you, tattooing is definitely an art rather than a craft?

Yes, definitely. Art comes in many forms. You can see it, listen to it... and of course wear it... Surely the expression of feelings transformed into something 'real' is ALWAYS art? Tattooing expresses what's in the artist's mind and heart. It appeals to the eye too. That's why it's such a strong art form. However, because we're changing our body and our skin, some people don't see that as art. But I see my body and my tattoos as the story of my life, recalling particular moments of my journey, with the artist portraying that moment... and if that isn't art, then what is?

Do you think your personality is reflected in your tattooing?

Yes, I'm sure it is. I believe every artist's personality is unconsciously reflected in their work - whether they're a tattooist, a painter, a photographer, an architect, a tailor... It's the same in any creative field. My parents are very good at making things, and they always taught me to be precise and patient with whatever I was doing, and not rush my work. So attention to detail dominates my tattooing - through the sketching process all the way to the finished tattoo - and that really affects the final outcome. Sometimes I'll spend hours on something that's actually fairly small... It's just the way I feel comfortable. We all need patience and precision in order to deliver our best work. That approach always pays off in the end.





Amongst all the tattoos that you've done, do you have a favourite?

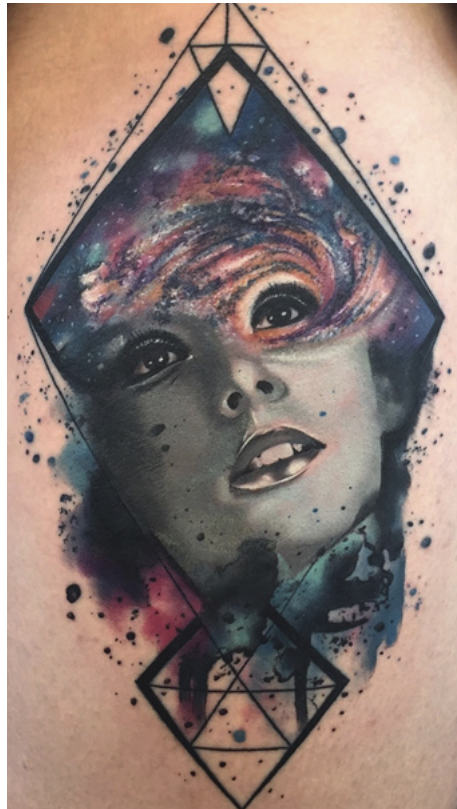
That's a good question. Two particular tattoos spring to mind. One is a black and grey sleeve with red roses and some female faces that I did on one of my best friends. I love it because it was the beginning of a mix of semi-realism and soft blends that I'd had in my mind for a while. My friend gave me free rein, and I was very happy with the result. That tattoo really allowed me to develop my realist/abstract work. Another tattoo that's special to me is a sleeve I did a couple of years ago with a mix of Kandinsky and Miro paintings and a Frida Kahlo portrait. It's very bright and powerful. It's one of my favourites because the person wearing it had been through some really hard times and coming to get tattooed was her way of leaving those problems behind. It was a reward to herself for being so strong, and it signified feeling 'safe'. I wanted to do the coolest tattoo for her that I possibly could!





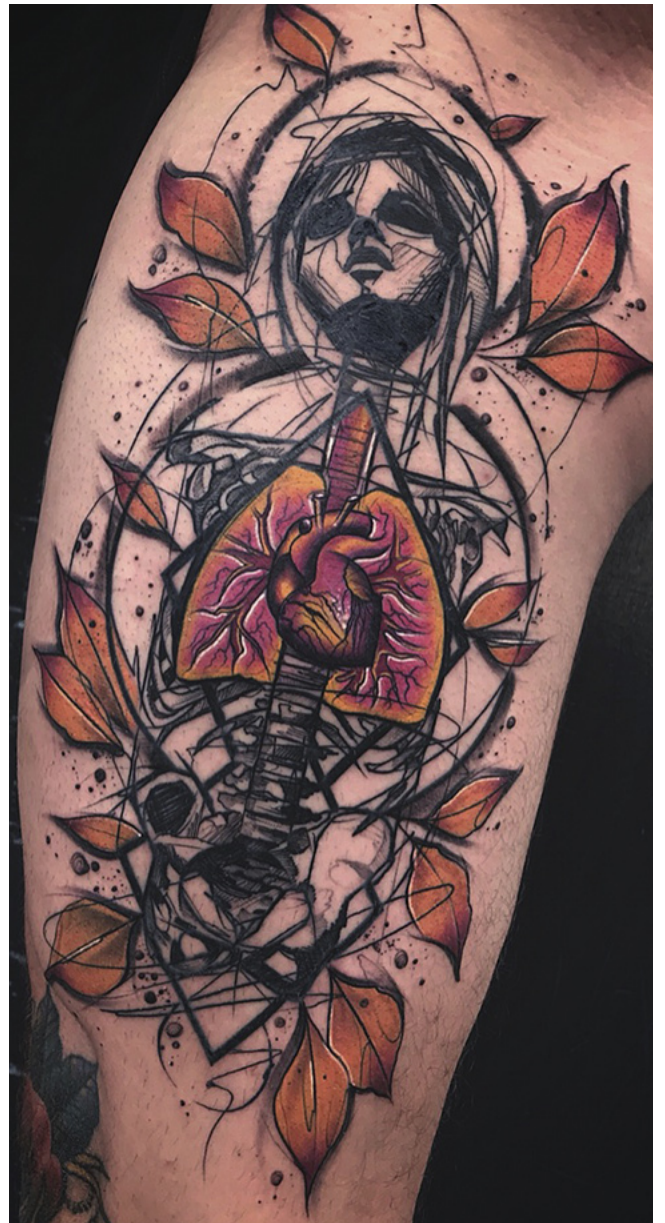
What brought you to London?

Coming to England – and especially London – was something I'd always wanted to do, even when I was growing up. And I had family here, which made it easier. The more I visited, the more I liked the lifestyle and vibe of the city, and its open mentality. It just drew me in. I knew London was the place to be. It was like a different world. And when I looked at the tattoo magazines, so much great work seemed to come from here! Back home, it was almost impossible to get an apprenticeship – there so very few artists to learn from – but London offered a lot of opportunities. So, right after my 20th birthday, I decided to make the move.



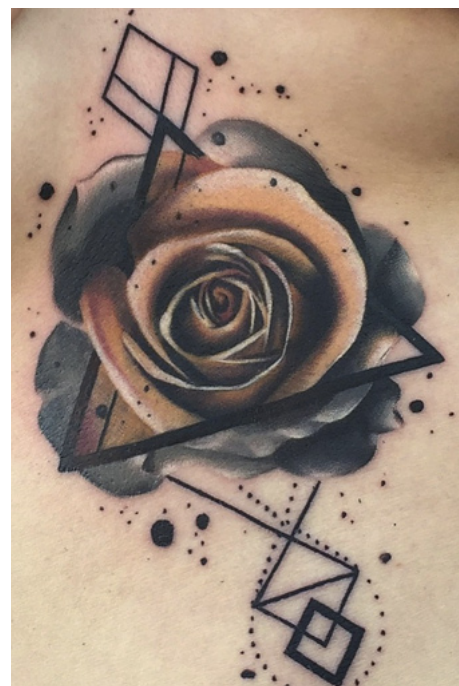
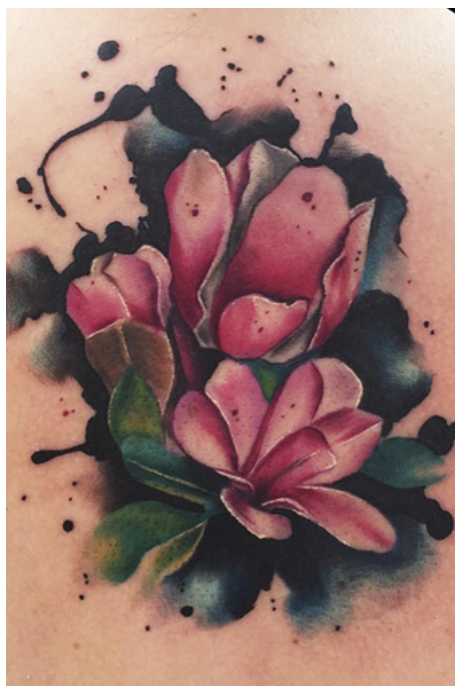
And you currently divide your time between England and Australia?

Yes, that's pretty much what I'm trying to do. I've been based in London for more than eight years now, but for the last couple of years I've been moving around a bit. I'd heard so many positive things about Australia, and everybody said I should go and check it out, then my good friend and fellow artist Matt Curzon invited me over to Melbourne and I went to my first Expo there. I completely fell in love with the city, and the guys in the shop made me feel at home from day one. Australia's definitely stolen a piece of my heart. I really enjoy tattooing over there and I try to attend as many conventions as I can. The standard of tattooing is very high, and Melbourne offers the kind of stress-free lifestyle that is sometimes hard to find in London.



How do the Australian and UK tattoos scenes compare?

They're very similar – I get asked to do cool stuff over there too – but one major difference is that Australians seem to LOVE large scale pieces. Everyone's wearing these big, bright tattoos! More so than anywhere else I've been. It really struck me when I first went there. The other major difference is related to styles. When people see my work, they can spot right away that I'm not from Australia. My kind of work is more 'European'. Especially at conventions, I can see the interest from artists and clients because of this. Likewise, I can often look at tattoos and spot the Australian artists. Their neo-traditional work is amazing. The colours, the softness, the high contrast... Those pieces really stand out. In Europe I think we have a wider range of styles, largely because there are so many different countries and cultural influences.



How is abstract tattooing received in the various different countries that you visit?

The response is usually positive, and that's because mine is a really mixed-up style that catches people's attention and attracts their curiosity. I think every country has some sort of abstract tattoo scene now, but I see a lot of stunning work coming particularly from France, Germany, Poland and Russia. I'm always happy and surprised when people come a long way to get a piece by me, considering how many great abstract artists there are in Europe. I feel very lucky here in the UK because people generally allow me to do my thing – they give me a lot of artistic freedom and trust in what they'll get – whereas maybe in Italy or Spain clients often want a bit more control over the design.

You do a great deal of travelling and you work a lot of overseas conventions...

Yes, travelling plays a big part in my life at the moment. Of course international shows are great for promoting your work, but they also somehow enrich you as a person and an artist. Even if sometimes you barely make your money back, the experience is priceless. Meeting new people is what I love. We do tattoos, but we also share a passion and a lifestyle. We're a tight community, respecting one another because we all know how much hard work it takes to get there. And I always like to take time out to explore the city I'm in. Sometimes I take a step back and think, 'I'm just an ordinary guy from a working class Italian family... This is like a dream come true...' When I travel, I get to discover the world, share my love of tattoos, and feel free!



What are the downsides of being on the road?

I love stepping into the unknown – that sense of adventure – but one of the side effects is that sometimes things can turn out differently from what you expected. Being away from home for a few months can really test your organisational skills and your mental strength. Technology helps these days. I can't imagine the struggle of doing this twenty or thirty years ago without the internet, social media, mobile phones, etc. Life on the road is expensive and it can be nerve-racking at times, but I'd advise anyone to do it if they can, because it makes you a stronger and wiser person, as well as revealing new sides to your personality that you never knew existed. Travelling has become like a drug to me. The more I do it, the more I want to do it – even if I'm tired, broke and stressed at the end of a trip.

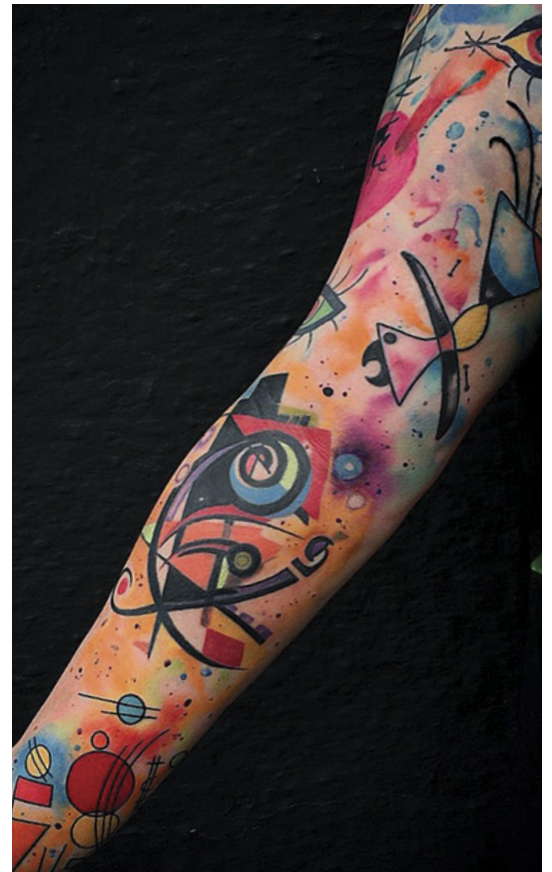
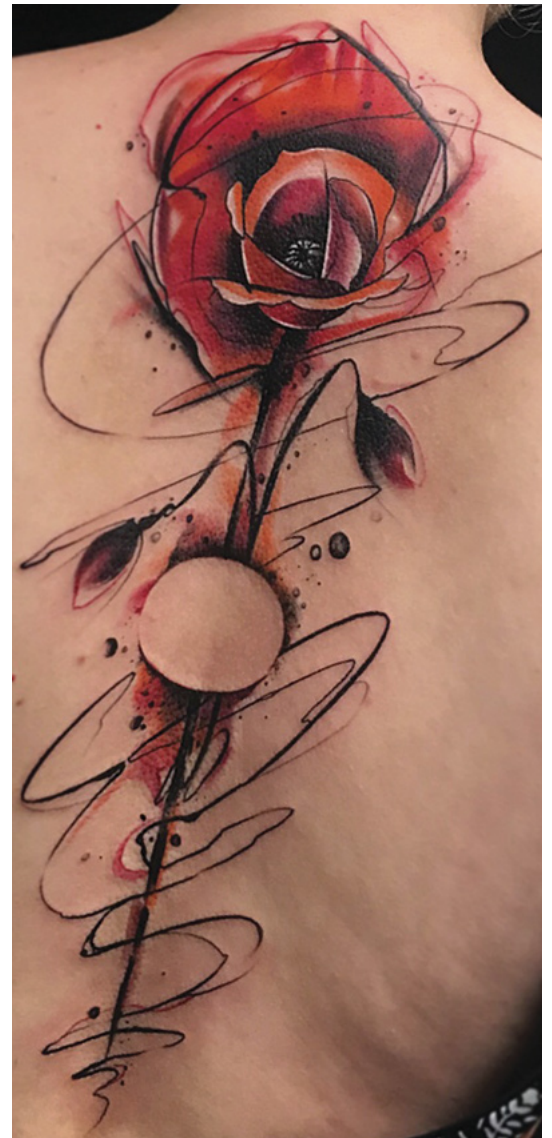
If you could go back in time, what would you say to your younger self?

Hmm. Mostly, I would advise myself not to get too disheartened, or conditioned, by other people's judgements. When you're trying to break into something as tough as the tattoo world, people say all kinds of disparaging things to you. I was twenty, it was my first experience of being abroad, and I really struggled with self-belief. There were many times when I just wanted to give up. So my advice to young Tom would be, 'Listen to what people have to say, but don't let it get in the way of what you're striving for. With ambition and hard work, you can achieve anything, no matter what other people tell you.'

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing tattoo artists today?

I would say it's the challenge to come up with something special, something that will last. There are lots of amazing artists out there nowadays. Some of them are only in their early twenties and they're kicking arses after just a few years in the business. How do you keep up with that? By way of contrast, I once had the pleasure of working with Bugs, who I guess you could describe as 'old school'. He's been a huge inspiration to me. With his distinctive signature style, he definitely created something. A real legacy. THAT'S the challenge.

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INK MANIA

Tattoo shows in continental Europe can be very different from the average UK convention. I'd heard amazing things about one show in particular that started last year: Ink Mania, a new type of full-on lifestyle festival with everything thrown in, including entertainment on five stages and, I'd heard, 15,000 visitors at its 2017 debut! With statistics like that, and always on the hunt for new experiences to share with Total Tattoo readers, I decided to head over to the modestly-sized but rather beautiful city of Hasselt in Belgium.

The Ethias Arena, a purpose-built venue with ample parking, is within walking distance of the city centre. We arrived with our van, set up the stand and meandered around to see who else was there.

Most of the major supply companies were represented, with many of them booking out entire rows for their sponsored artists. Five stages divided the space into separate areas – and with each stage very conspicuously sponsored, you got the feeling this show was definitely all about big business. Barber DTS had invited over a goodly number of UK artists including Nick Imms (The Church), Chris Meighan (Santa Cruz Kustom Club), Simon Cooke (The Ink Spot), Luke Naylor (Hand on Heart) and Paul LaVey (Art LaVey) to name just a few. There were also large contingents of Russian, Italian, Spanish and French artists present. In all, the Ink Mania website promoted over 550 artists, but I saw a considerable number of empty booths and I think to be fair the actual figure working the show would have been closer to 450.

Across the middle of the main hall was a wall of large metal shipping containers, effectively dividing the whole thing into what felt like two separate shows. The first area was quite dark and not very welcoming, while the far side was bathed in sunlight from the open shutters leading to the food court and outdoor entertainment area, where you could watch the graffiti wall develop, shoot fairground ducks, grab some traditional Belgian frites and mayonnaise, and watch the motorcycle display, all whilst listening to the bands on the stage.

The show was open to the public from 4pm to 10pm on the Friday, then from 11am to 10pm on the Saturday and 12 noon until 8.30pm on the Sunday. Most shows now open early to allow for a long day's tattooing, but Ink Mania opted for these very sensible late starts, meaning people had a chance to grab food and get there at a leisurely pace and, especially on the Sunday, pack and check out of their hotels without the usual rush.



1. antonio pescia, no code (italy)
2. mick, dash tattoo



Friday evening saw the start of the competitions. Jay Freestyle had shown the organisers how to judge Eastern-style using tokens. Here's how it works: First, all the entries are presented on stage. Then, once all the entries have been seen, the eight judges award a token to any they would like to see go through to the next round. This cuts the numbers really quickly. In the second round, the judges can award either one or two tokens to their favourite pieces. A winner usually emerges from this round, and possibly second and third places as well. It's a fast, efficient and completely transparent way of judging; you can have as many judges as you like, specialising in various styles, and it doesn't take ages. Some of our UK artists lost out in the competitions, but some won – including Simon from The Ink Spot who won Best Small Colour with an amazing Viking portrait.



Saturday loomed large, hot and very sunny. We were ready to welcome hordes of excited visitors, but when the doors opened such small numbers came through I can honestly say none of us in the hall really noticed! The rolling entertainment programme began and we could hear the sound of entertainer after entertainer quietly dying on stage – performing to a tiny audience before being ushered on to the next stage an hour later to die all over again. Some tattooists had pre-booked appointments, but many didn't. Lots of fine tattoos were created though, and there was certainly a great line-up of international artists. (One thing continental European shows benefit from is the ease with which artists can simply drive from one country to another.) The largest crowd of the day gathered to watch the competitions, and once the winners had received their prizes – a specially presented flask of local spirit – it was time to head to the after-show party. This was held in a very posh nightclub next to the venue that even boasted its own swimming pool... which many a tattooist fell into!





- 3. dimitriy gorbunov (russia)
- 4. joyce kamania, trash tattoo (belgium)
- 5. andrea lanzi, antikorpo (italy)
- 6. javi metetintas, alta escuela aattoo (spain)
- 7. slava stankov (russia)
- 8. ralfy, hypnotic art tattoo
- 9. amy edwards, dark horse collective
- 10. the sullen angel competition
- 11. nitra art



Sunday was busier. People had finally started to arrive. Once again the sun was hot, roasting the queue that patiently waited for the show to open. But when we got inside, we noticed that quite a few artists had simply packed up and left the night before – so the visiting public were greeted by whole rows of empty booths on entering the hall. The outside arena was the place to be; cold beers and hot sun is always a great combination.

On one of the many stages a street dance competition began in which teams of children synchronised their moves and laid down some hot shapes in an effort to win the top award. Meanwhile, on an adjacent stage (on the other side of a metal shipping container) body modification fans were treated to a full-on suspension show. Many of the acts from Saturday stoically ran through their paces again on the Sunday, and one of the highlights came with an amazing set from 'Belgium's Got Talent' winners Baba Yega, a high energy dance troupe who really know how to entertain. They were truly impressive and I would recommend that you check them out online. After the excitement of their performance there was just the judging of the tattoo competitions to go.



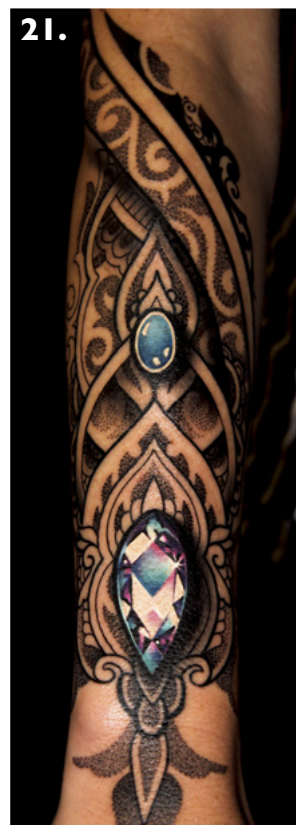
18.



19.



20.



21.

- 12. anthony, wanted tattoo (spain)
- 13 & 14. tinten manufaktur, custom made tattoos (germany)
- 15. vladimir berezovsky, slaid ink (germany)
- 16 & 17. tinten manufaktur, custom made tattoos (germany)
- 18. vladimir shatsky, nbk (russia)
- 19. murick malyaki
- 20. chris meighen, santa cruz tattoo club
- 21. ryan smith, nr studios exeter

22.



Sunday's competitions were again very well supported, with every category limited to just thirty places. The crew from Dark Horse Collective in Sutton Coldfield did very well, with Rich Harris and Jamie Lee Knott winning Best Collaboration, Amy Edwards taking second place in Best Realistic with her stunning Johnny Depp 'Cry Baby' portrait, and Kirsten Pettit winning Best of Sunday for a cool Groot piece and also taking second place in Best of Show.

Having heard so much about Ink Mania, expectations were really high. Maybe unrealistically high? The organisers had thrown everything at this show. It had model competitions, dance competitions, plenty of circus entertainment, live bands outside away from the artists, good food and drink, and a great line-up of high calibre tattooists from all over the world. It was well supported by all the pro teams and sponsorship. It was smoothly organised and promoted, and the door price was very reasonable. But for everything that it did right, there just weren't enough people through the door to give it any atmosphere. Maybe this was because of that weekend's train strike? Or the football? Or did the fabulous weather keep people away? Who knows. Maybe people have just had enough of tattoo shows! My heart goes out to the organisers. They worked really hard to try something different, but ultimately it just didn't work this year.

23.



24.



25.



25.



- 22. simon cooke, the inkspot
- 23. fabio guerreiro, true world tattoo (portugal)
- 24. rich harris & jamie lee knott, dark horse collective
- 25. uncl paul knows (greece)
- 26. vierves, 13 tattoo collective (mexico)
- 27. tinten manufaktur, custom made tattoos (germany)
- 28. eunge malu, needle art (holland)
- 29 & 30. lazarus, ritual tattoo
- 31. tim beijsens, private studio

26.



27.



28.



29.



30.



31.



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DIRK-BORIS ON...

Why it's perfectly OK if your first tattoo is on your hand or your neck

So these young dudes come into the shop and ask for a tattoo on their hand, their neck or even their face. No way! They should get some ink done on their arms, back, chest or legs, and when they run out of space, then – and only then – is it time to think about maybe getting tattoos on their hands. That's how we did it. If you want to get 'public skin' tattooed, you've got to earn it! And just think of all the problems you're going to have to cope with if you've got tattoos on parts of your body you can't hide. You'll have more difficulties when applying for a job, finding a flat, travelling to countries where tattoos are not such a common sight... These young people need to be protected from making such decisions. Can't they be a little more sensible?

OK, I'll admit it. I've said things like that myself over the years. Why? Because I've been slowly turning into a boring, petty bourgeois. But actually, right now, I'd say: *You want to get a rose on your hand as your very first tattoo? Why not! You want to get your football team's logo inked on your neck? Go for it!* No, seriously. Since when have tattoos had anything to do with being sensible or reasonable? My generation, who started getting tattooed in the 80s and 90s, didn't get our first tattoos on the upper arm or shoulder blade just because it was more sensible. Getting tattooed was already an act of rebellion and it didn't matter where you had your ink. Who were the people who got tattooed back then? It was bikers, punks, skinheads and rockers. They didn't give a shit whether their tats diminished their chances of finding a decent job or a flat. BACK then you didn't get a tattoo DESPITE the fact that you might get problems but BECAUSE that was the plan in the first place. And now, today, these people who used tattoos as a means of rebellion are telling the younger generation that they shouldn't get their neck or hands tattooed, because it's not sensible?!?!?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying I think it's smart to start getting tattooed on visible body parts. Actually I think it's rather unwise. But everyone has the right to make their own decisions – and also the right to experience, deal with, and learn from the consequences. We, my generation, exercised our right to make decisions that brought our parents close to heart attacks, and now we want to deny the next generation their right to overstep the mark. What right have we got to do that? Or is there another reason? Is it maybe just a little bit of envy? Being jealous of the naturalness and ease with which young people can do things that we only dreamed of doing, but didn't dare?

Nowhere is it written in stone that you have to get started with tattoos on this or that body part. Of course it's also not written anywhere that a tattoo artist is obliged to tattoo an 18 year old's hands if he doesn't want to. Every tattooist has the right to turn down a customer or a project. I just don't see a convincing reason why any tattooist should want to.

Young people want to get these tattoos because visible ink is becoming more and more acceptable. Maybe it's not the case everywhere, and maybe not in every walk of life, but it's certainly a trend that can't be stopped. And the more tattooed hands, necks and faces there are around, the greater will be their social acceptability. Is there something wrong with my thinking if I find it absurd that, of all people, it's tattooists who seem to want to work against this evolution?



By Dirk-Boris Rödel



IN FOCUS

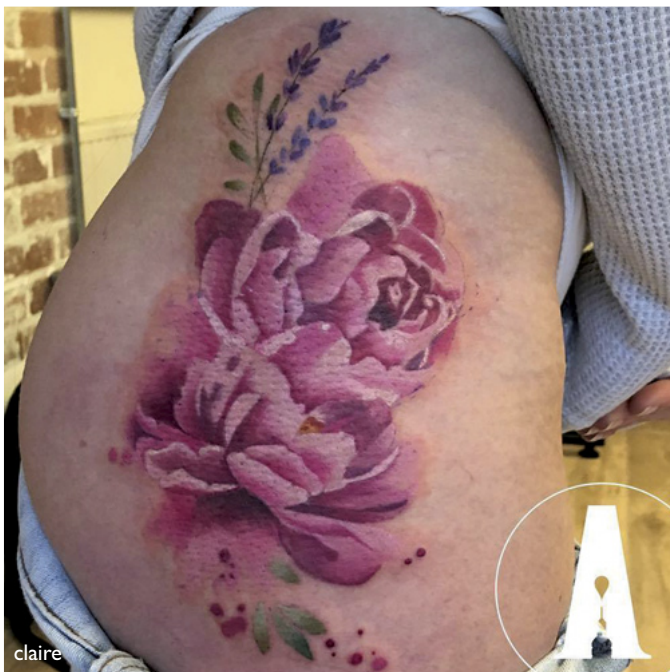
In these pages we showcase a small selection of work from a group of artists working together. This month:
Artium Ink, 25 Manor Rd, Exeter EX4 1EN
www.artiumink.com • info@artiumink.co.uk
To have your studio featured, please send examples to:
In Focus, Total Tattoo Magazine, 111 Furze Road, Norwich, NR7 0AU, UK



claire



aaron



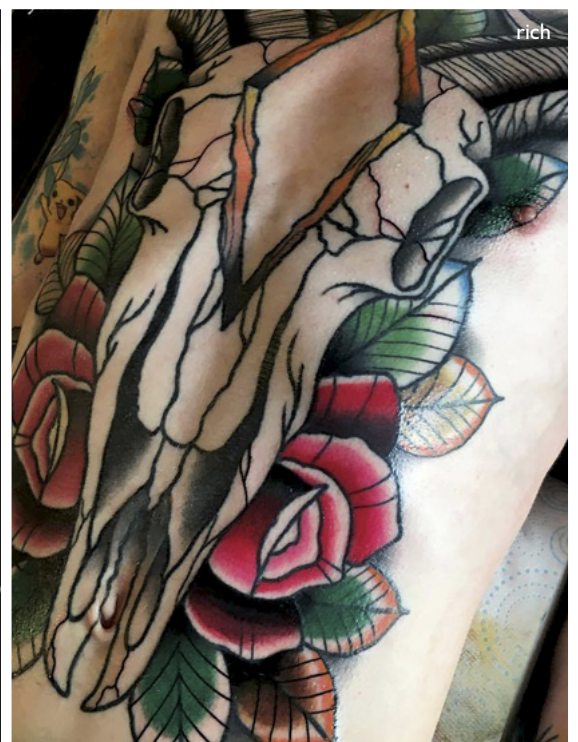
claire



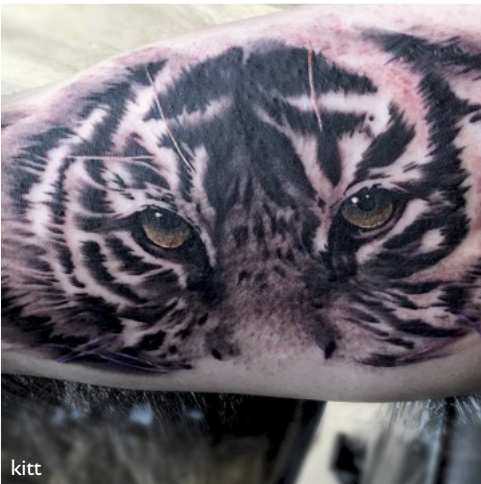
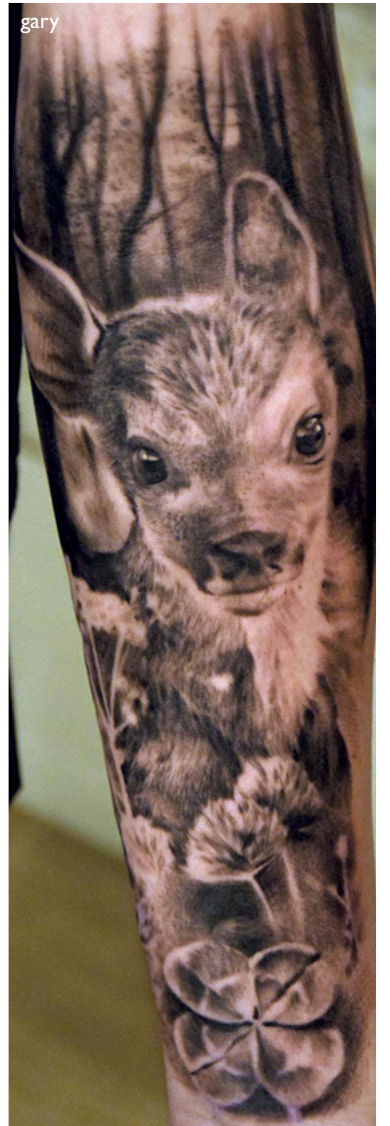
claire



dris



rich



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www.northsidetattooz.co.uk

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www.facebook.com/
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Sunderland. SR1 1RH
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Contact through Facebook:
triplexixstudios666

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Instagram: @electric.kicks.crew

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS

10th-12th August

Portsmouth Tattoo Extravaganza

Gaiety Bar, Portsmouth, Southsea, UK
www.facebook.com/Tattooextravaganza-portsmouth

17th - 19th August

Tatcon Blackpool

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

31st August – 2nd September

Kustom Kulture Blast Off

Lincolnshire Show Ground
Lincoln LN2 2NA
www.kustomkultureblastoff.com

1st - 2nd September

Oxford Tattoo Convention

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

2nd September

Staffordshire Tattoo Gathering

Kings Hall, Kingsway, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 1HH
www.instagram.com/staffordshiretattoogathering

28th-30th September

The International London Tattoo Convention

Tobacco Dock, 50 Porters Walk
London E1W 2SF
www.thelondontattooconvention.com

29th-30th September

Buckley Ink Tattoo Convention

The Tivoli, Andover Road, Cheltenham,

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

27th-28th October

Halloween Tattoo Bash

Wolverhampton Racecourse

Gorsebrook Rd
Wolverhampton WV6 0PE
<http://www.halloweentattoobash.co.uk>

11th - 12th November

East Coast Tattoo Expo

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

2019

6th April

Portsmouth Tattoo Fest

Portsmouth Pyramids Centre
Clarence Esplanade,
Portsmouth PO5 3ST
www.tattoofest.co.uk

20th April

Maidstone Tattoo Extravaganza

Detling Showground,
Detling Hill, Maidstone, Kent
www.maidstonetattooextravaganza.co.uk

26th -28th April

The Big North Tattoo Show

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Arena Way, Newcastle Upon Tyne
www.bignorthtattooshow.co.uk

OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS

3rd-5th August

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info@tattoo-convention.de
www.tattoo-convention.de

24th - 26th August

Shanghai Tattoo Extreme & Body Art Expo

Shanghai International Fashion Center,
Yangpu, Shanghai, China
www.tattooextremeexpo.com

3rd-5th August

Pagoda City Tattoo Fest

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

14th- 26th August

Maiden City Tattoo Convention

Everglades Hotel
Prehen Rd,

Derry BT47 2NS
www.maidencityink.com

24th-26th August

Winnipeg Tattoo Convention

Red River Exhibition Park, Portage Ave,
Winnipeg, MB, Canada
www.winnipegattooconvention.com

14th-15th September

Kaiserstadt Tattoo Expo

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

14th – 16th September

Galway Tattoo Show

Lough Atalia Rd, Galway, H91 CYN3
www.galwaytattooshow.ie

5th-7th October

Florence Tattoo Convention

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

6th-8th October

Monster Ink Tattoo Fest

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

8th-9th November

Brussels Tattoo Convention

Tour & Taxi
Avenue du Port 86,
1000 Brussels, Belgium
www.brusselstattooconvention.be

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