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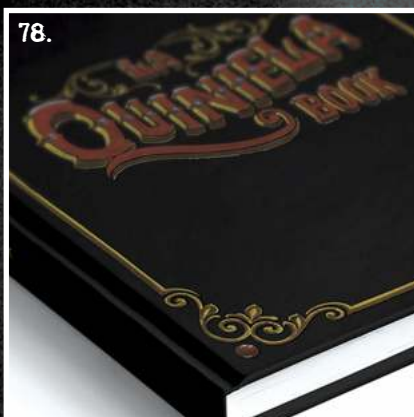
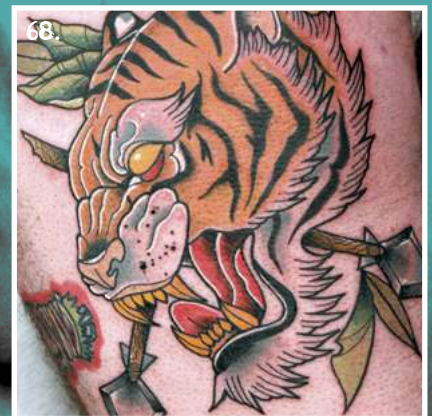
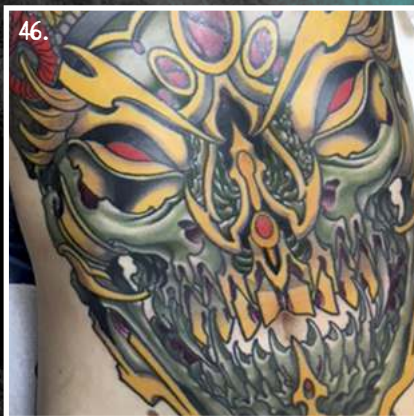
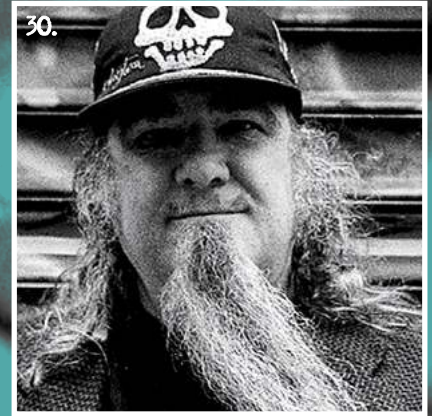
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111 Furze Road,
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Total Tattoo magazine No. 171 January 2019
Published monthly by KMT Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved.
Printed in England on re-cycled paper by Buxton Press Ltd
Distributed by Seymour Distribution



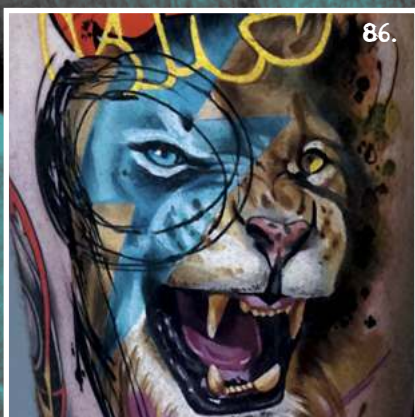
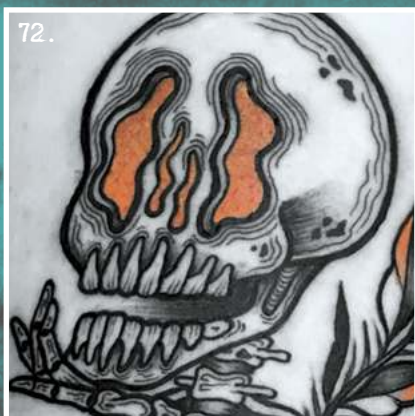
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WELCOME to 171

As some of you may know, I took part in the Great North Run in September. (A huge thank you to everyone who donated. We raised £1844 for The Samaritans!) I also do weekly 5k park runs. Am I fast? God no. I'm just happy to finish without coughing my guts up.

The great thing about park runs is that they're open to anybody. Sure, you get the 'proper' athletes who overtake everybody else, but the most inspiring people are the ones near the back – the people struggling, swearing and hobbling to the finish line. Even though they're last, they're just getting on with it. I'll never forget the woman I saw when I did a 10k run in July, who walked the entire course using a zimmer frame (closely followed the whole way by the end-of-race steward in a high vis vest). For me, she was the absolute winner of the day.

'Coming first' is seen as a positive thing. And this is only natural. It validates our efforts, boosts our confidence and actually releases feel-good neurochemicals. I won a mug once and it made my week. It's still my favourite mug. And I bet there are lots of tattooists out there who can still remember the sheer delight (and maybe surprise!) they felt when they won their first award at a convention. Winning motivates us to push ourselves to do even better.

But constantly striving to win has its ugly side too. Pity the poor client whose tattooist is more concerned about finishing their tattoo in time to get it up on stage rather than finessing the finer details... And what about the tattooists (shelves already groaning under the weight of all their trophies) whose egos demand that they question WHY they haven't won on this particular occasion? For that matter, why keep pushing yourself if everyone keeps telling you your work is the best?

There's something so much more inspiring about someone whose only competitor is themselves. Like the woman with the zimmer frame, who was doing it for herself – just for the hell of it. And all those tattooists who have the humility to look critically at their own work and constantly wonder how they can improve. It's an old saying, but it's true: It's not the winning that counts, it's the taking part.



LIZZY
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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

VICTORY FOR JAPANESE TATTOOING!

Big sighs of relief all round. We've received the news we were hoping for. Japanese tattooist Taiki Masuda's guilty verdict has been overturned by the High Court in Osaka. Just over a year ago, he was accused of breaking the law by practising without a medical licence (in contravention of the Medical Practitioners Act 1948) because tattooing was deemed to be a 'medical procedure'. Japanese law has long been a grey area where tattooing is concerned – despite the venerable history of the art form in that country – and Taiki Masuda's case was a real make-or-break situation for the whole industry. A guilty verdict could have meant the end of tattooing as we know it in Japan.



The tattoo world held its breath as this brave tattooist stood his ground, refused to pay the fine imposed by the court, and took his case to appeal. On November 14th, Judge Masaki Nishida finally acquitted him of the charge of working illegally. Handing down the ruling, the judge agreed with the defence lawyers' argument that tattooing is *not* a medical procedure; it is a form of artistic expression, and therefore tattooists should not be required to hold a medical licence in order to ply their trade. This is clearly a landmark case for tattooists, and many in Japan are also hoping that it will ultimately lead to a wider general understanding and appreciation of tattooing (which, after all, is so deeply embedded in Japanese culture and tradition). Congratulations to Taiki Masuda!

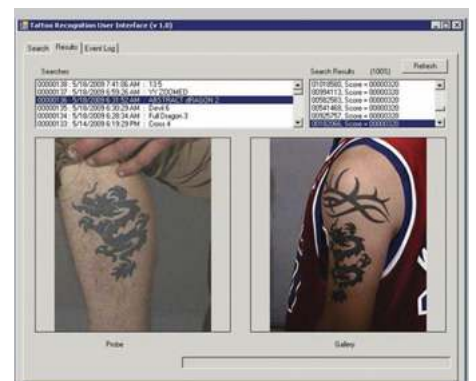
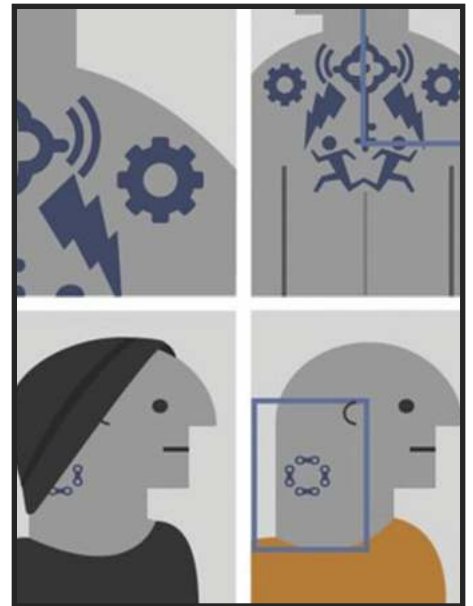


COMPUTER SAYS NO

NIST National Institute of Standards and Technology U.S. Department of Commerce

The US government's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), part of the US Department of Commerce, has released details of a major research project into tattoo recognition software – evaluating its accuracy with a view to using it to support law enforcement. However, amid serious ethical concerns and fears about infringement of personal liberty, many have commented on the obvious 'Big Brother' implications of using digital technology to recognise people's individual tattoos.

You can read the full technical details here:
<https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/ir/2018/NIST.IR.8232.pdf>



WIN A SWEET SCARF!

'Someone in London Loves You' is the brainchild of tattoo artist Lord Montana-Blue. He tells us it's a reaction against the stale and often repetitive merchandise put out for the consumption of tattoo fans. He wants to make clothing, accessories and household items for people who love tattoo art but can't find anything that really speaks to them – in other words, people who don't want anything overtly tattoo-styled. The brand is a labour of love more than a business, and making money isn't the main objective. It's all about making fresh, limited-edition quality products that people can get excited about. Making it fun, and spreading a little positivity!

We've teamed up with Someone in London Loves You to offer one lucky reader a perfect winter scarf in their 'chain link' design. To be in with a chance of winning, all you need to do is answer the following question:

Which one of these is both a body part and a London landmark?

1) Heart 2) Eye 3) Bottom

Email your answer to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with SCARF as the subject line, to arrive no later than 31 January 2019. The first correct answer drawn out of the hat will win. Usual terms and conditions apply (see page 4/5). Check out <https://someoneinlondon.bigcartel.com/>



GREEN HOUSE ECO CAPS

Lucy Frost, co-owner of eco-conscious (and vegan) Dark House Tattoo Co-Operative and Green House Tattoo Supplies, has just let us know that their ink caps are now ready to go into production, and if things stay on schedule the whole range will be on sale by the end of the year. These are premium ink caps made from plants! They're made from materials derived from abundant annually renewable resources, not from petrochemical derivatives. And Lucy tells us they're completely unlike the flimsy plastic Chinese ink caps we so often see nowadays; they have stable bottoms and ridged edges for easier handling. Green House Tattoo Supplies are keen to support local businesses and minimise environmental damage, so their products are all manufactured in the UK. Check out www.darkhousetattooco.com and www.greenhousetattoosupplies.com

GREEN HOUSE
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TRY TRY AGAIN

Rugby players are being advised to cover up their tattoos during the World Cup in Japan next year. This is to avoid causing offence or being seen as disrespectful to what one report described as 'the prevailing culture'. Despite the country's rich tattoo heritage and phenomenal output of top quality tattoo art, there is still a great deal of prejudice against people with visible ink – largely due to the legacy of Yakuza gangsters – but many in Japan feel that the time for change has now arrived. Taiki Masuda's momentous legal victory [see separate news item - ed] is a ray of hope for the future, but tattooed visitors will still have difficulty gaining access to Japan's traditional bathhouses, spas, gyms and swimming pools because of tattooing's 'unsavoury' image and perceived links to criminality. Some commentators have made the point that if big name players' tattoos are on show at the Rugby World Cup, it will serve a positive purpose in opening up the debate and may help to change society's attitudes.



**RUGBY
WORLD CUP**
JAPAN 日本 2019



WEAR YOUR TECH ON YOUR SLEEVE



We've recently featured a number of stories about so-called 'electronic tattoos' and their uses in monitoring health and fitness. These are becoming almost commonplace now, but a new invention promises to take things to the next level. In a joint project with the University of Coimbra, Portugal, researchers at Carnegie Mellon University in the States have come up with a way of manufacturing wearable devices that makes them as simple to apply as ordinary decorative temporary tattoos. You just need to add water! It will be some time before a marketable product is launched, but it's a great idea with obvious potential.

Check out the details and watch a video here:
www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2018/november/electronic-tattoos.html

SO BAD IT'S GOOD

Our news radar has picked up an amusing story about Brighton police officer Lee Willis, who has decided to get a tattoo of a rather embarrassing sketch that he drew way back in 2004 at the start of his career. Based on eye-witness reports at a crime scene, the sketch of the suspect was so bad it became a long-standing joke between him and his workmates (who on one occasion surprised him by all wearing masks based on the drawing). Lee's amateur artwork kept coming back to haunt him over the years, so he finally decided to lay the ghost to rest by getting it permanently inked on to his thigh... But the really good part of this story is that Lee is raising funds for the mental health charity Mind. He's already hit his target for getting the tattoo, but you can still donate via www.justgiving.com/fundraising/lee-willis6 or www.justgiving.com/mind



NO KIDDING



Until now, Ireland has had no specific legislation relating to tattooing and piercing. But that is set to change with the proposed Regulation of Intimate Piercing and Tattooing Bill 2018. If passed, the Bill would prohibit anyone under the age of 18 from getting a piercing anywhere other than the ear, eyebrow, nose or navel, and any tattoo whatsoever. There would also be more stringent health and safety regulations for the industry as a whole. Introduced by Fianna Fáil TD Mary Butler, this is a private member's Bill and therefore faces many potential challenges before being passed.

POLICE BAN



According to news reports, a recent court ruling in Bavaria (Germany) means that the region's police officers will no longer be allowed visible tattoos. The case concerned an individual policeman, but the judge's verdict will apply to the whole police force. Not surprisingly, it has been described as a 'disappointing' and 'outdated' decision.

CUBA LIBRE!

Tattooists in Cuba face immense challenges due to the official ban on their trade. They have very limited access to information (with slow, expensive, unreliable internet access) and it's virtually impossible to get hold of proper supplies and equipment. But a US non-profit organisation, Amigo Tattoo, is doing all it can to help. Tattoo artists and tattoo fans are raising funds and providing their Cuban colleagues with essential requisites for safe working. This usually involves bringing things into the country in person due to the impossibility of getting stuff there any other way. As their mission statement says, 'Amigo Tattoo puts hard-to-get items in the hands of tattooists and helps foster friendship and support between Cuban and American artists.' They provide all sorts of simple practical essentials (such as gloves) and more in-depth assistance in the form of classes on topics such as hygiene or advanced drawing skills. Co-founder James Langner of Atomic Tattoos in Florida is keen to emphasise that they do not break the law by providing tattoo equipment or specific tattoo instruction. (The idea for Amigo Tattoo was originally inspired by Miami-based non-profit organisation Amigo Skate, which supports the Cuban skateboarding scene by providing the decks, wheels, etc, that are not easily obtainable there.)

Take a look at www.amigotattoo.com for the full details.



TATTOOISTS AGAINST POACHERS



Renea and the team at Old London Road Tattoos in Kingston-upon-Thames, London, are supporting the International Anti-Poaching Foundation (IAPF) with a wonderful fundraising idea. For every tattoo of an animal at risk – lions, tigers, elephants, rhinos and many others – they will make a donation to this worthy cause. The IAPF protects many of

the world's animals from slaughter; their wildlife rangers are often the animals' last line of defence. If you would like to make a donation and help towards funding the necessary equipment, supplies and training for the IAPF's work, head to

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/tattooistsagainstopoachers You can give Old London Road a call to find out more about the campaign (020 8549 4705) or visit their website to see some of their beautiful animal tattoos:

www.oldlondonroad.co.uk





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Mike Dorsey

Interview by Lizzy
Pictures courtesy of Mike Dorsey



American artist Mike Dorsey combines his skill in Japanese tattooing with a gift for creating subversive, Western-influenced Ukiyo-e style paintings. Originally just a sideline to his tattooing, these paintings have achieved great popularity in recent years. And it's easy to see why. They're not only beautiful, but they're fun too, with images and captions that reflect Mike's dry sense of humour and plenty of surprises in the form of playful pop culture references. We met Mike at the recent London International Tattoo Convention, where his paintings were on show in a special exhibition, and we chatted about his artistic career and his life in tattooing.





"I've been tattooing since 1989," Mike begins. "I'm from Cincinnati, Ohio, and I've lived there my whole life - it's where my family are from. I travel quite a bit, but that's always been my home base." I ask Mike about his early tattoo memories. "I do remember the first tattoo shop I went into. I was skipping class in high school and I just wandered in. It was a biker shop and it was scary, like how they were back then. I kinda miss that edginess nowadays. But I remember going in there and being absolutely terrified!"

So when did Mike get bitten by the tattoo bug? "It was years later," he tells me. "I was a young squatter punk and a friend of mine wanted to get a tattoo. I went with him to get it done. The guy's set-up was pretty shady. He was like, 'You want one too?' and I was like, 'Hmm. Maybe later.' I wanted to see if my friend got sick from it first! But after a couple of weeks I decided to go back and get tattooed. I knew from then on that tattooing was what I wanted to do. It's that interaction with other people, and the permanence of a tattoo. Not just *having* the tattoo, but the experience of *getting* the tattoo. The whole thing being played out to its end result... Actually, in a way, I guess it is like a play." It's a good analogy (especially when you also consider the theatricality involved in decorating a workstation or studio).





It's the human interaction that's important, though. "One thing that's changed," says Mike, "is that nowadays everybody's got to be certified to do this, certified to do that. Back in the day, you just had two dudes sat down together wanting to do a tattoo. Two people who wanted to create a permanent mark. That was the magic of it. No hoops to jump through, no trophies on the wall or any of that other bullshit. No matter how beautiful a tattoo is, it can be soured if the personal interaction isn't right."

We start talking about the meanings of tattoos. "I'm not into the whole 'every tattoo has to have a meaning' thing," admits Mike. "Just get a bitchin' design 'cos it's a bitchin' design!" But how about the rules and symbology of Japanese art? "Sure, I try to learn as much about that as I can, but I didn't grow up in that culture so I won't ever know it all. I try to be accurate, but I've gotten it wrong a million times and that's all part of the learning. You'll never get it perfect. I just want to have fun. I goof around a lot. Other people might want to be a 'deep' tattooer or a 'deep' painter and touch social issues - and I like to do that too - but I also like to put a bit of humour into it. I think the world is serious enough. People turn to art for leisure... to get away from everyday life. That's certainly what I do when I'm painting. Perhaps that's why I paint so much. Like I said, all of the symbolism but none of the meaning!"

I ask Mike how he got into Japanese-style tattooing. "It was around '93 or '94," he tells me. "Before that I didn't really like it. I just didn't understand what I was looking at. Then I saw a photographic exhibition with huge images of tattoos by artists such as Horiyoshi and it just drew me in. It sparked my interest and I wanted to learn more. It was like seeing a new colour that you'd somehow never seen before."





That was of course in the days before the internet. "Yeah, it's different now," Mike continues, "because everybody's got a phone or a computer and you can see anything you want. Back then there were only about three magazines (and one of them was in black and white!) and if you wanted a book you had to go out and physically find it. It was like your bookcase was your treasure chest. Now it's all at your fingertips, which is both good and bad. People expect everything; they often assume that because an image is readily available, then so is the information about it. I get lots of messages asking how I do things. And I'm like, 'Well I've been trying to learn that for thirty years, but sure, let me break that down for you in five minutes!' [Laughs] There used to be a level of respect. You had to earn your way to the information. There was a kind of code. Not that I know everything or do things any better than anyone else (because I certainly don't) but the way people expect stuff to be handed over now is kinda ridiculous. I'd never be rude, though. I'll help as much as I can, but I don't want people to think the information has no value."





I'm curious to know whether Mike has any formal artistic education, because he seems to be able to turn his hand to anything creative. "I'm self-taught at everything," he tells me. "To be honest, I was lucky to have made it out of high school! I taught myself to tattoo, but that's mainly because there were only two shops in the city and I couldn't get an apprenticeship at either of them." And what about Mike's phenomenal output of work? "People seem to think I crank things out really quickly, but my productivity is mainly down to my minimal sleep schedule. Most people are asleep for half the time I'm awake. Nobody realises how much time I put into my art."

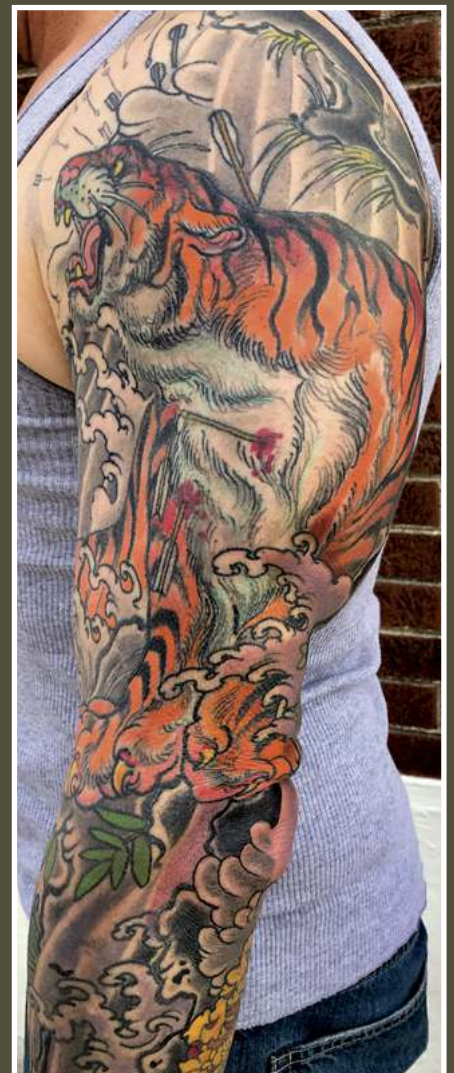
"The paintings take a lot of research," Mike goes on to say, "but whilst I'm working on one I'll usually be thinking about the next. Sometimes I won't know what I'm going to paint until I sit down and start. I'll pick images and put them together and work from that. I like working with factual history, especially the period from the 1920s to the 1950s. There was so much innovation then. I particularly love stories about lost inventions and forgotten inventors, and I often get ideas from documentaries. It's the history we don't get taught in school that fascinates me."





We begin talking about all the carefully constructed details in Mike's Japanese paintings. "There is some symbolism that's true to Ukiyo-e, but I try to put it all in a modern context so that people can identify with it. One of my earliest inspirations was Masami Teraoka [a Japanese-American contemporary artist whose work includes Ukiyo-e influenced woodcuts and paintings]. I came across his work completely by chance when I was skipping classes from high school. I'd ducked into an art gallery to avoid a load of police I saw down the block, and the gallery happened to be showing his 'Waves and Plagues' stuff. It was my first real exposure to that kind of thing. I ended up staying all afternoon. Those pictures are impressive enough in books, but in the flesh they're the size of a wall! People sometimes compare my work to his, and that always feels like a real compliment."

I ask Mike how his painting and tattooing fit together. "When I first started painting, I was doing it to help me cut down my tattooing time. I simply painted the tattoo I was going to do so that I knew what was going where. But over the last couple of years my painting has kinda taken over and become its own beast. Tattooing is always going to be the primary thing for me though. I don't post a lot of my tattoos anymore because I seem to get a bigger reaction to my paintings, and I only want to put up online what people want to see. Also, I hold tattooing a little closer to my heart and people on the internet can be so cruel... It's like putting up a picture of your mother. If somebody makes fun of your mother, you're gonna be mad! But if it's a picture of my cousins, it doesn't matter so much! To me, painting is like my cousin but tattooing is like my mother - you know what I mean?"



Does Mike see similarities between the two creative activities? "Painting is a lot like tattooing in many respects, especially when you get into doing the washes, the grey and so on. But there are things I can do with a painting that I can't do with a tattoo. With oil painting especially, I can get messy and dirty and I don't have to abide by any rules! But everything has been mish-mashing together recently. My paintings were going in a different direction to my tattoos, but now people are wanting imagery from my paintings tattooed on them. A lot less traditional; much more of an American slant."

"There's some things I do," Mike continues, "and I wonder if people will get the reference or know who it is. When I'm working on something, I tend to think it's only people of my generation who will find it funny. The Twisted Sister - Dee Snider - for instance. I didn't think anybody would get that and I was so surprised when they did! A few people messaged me with 'You are so old!' [Laughs] I'm 50, but I look 21. It's OK, you can say it..."



Earlier this year, Mike stopped making prints of his paintings. I asked him what had led to this decision. "I found that when I was doing a painting I'd already have the print in mind - which meant I'd be thinking about how the image would look when it was reproduced. Now that I've stopped doing prints I've opened new creative doors for myself. I can use metallics, for example. Also, it had become pretty crazy. It was like another full-time job. The Dorsey men don't live much past 56, so if I haven't got much time left I'd rather spend it making new stuff than reproducing what I've already done. I know what I did last week; I wanna see what I'm gonna do next week!"





Mike operates at an intense level of creativity. His mind is buzzing with ideas. "I've always been like this. I remember my grandmother - who was also a painter - telling my mom, 'He's an artist. That's how they are.' If I was a schoolkid now, I would probably be labelled ADHD. When I'm not tattooing or painting I'm looking at Ukiyo-e prints. I've got myself into the habit of making lists of all the things I want to do. I'll be brainstorming when I'm painting and if I don't write things down I'll be trying to remember them a couple of days later. My phone is hysterical. I've got a whole notes section of painting ideas. Most people have a million pictures of their family or their dog or the food they ate! Come to think of it, I don't remember the last thing I ate... Maybe I should take more pictures..."

"My work is constantly evolving," Mike continues. "Take water, for instance. I'll do a backpiece and the water I've done at the top might be totally different to the water I'm doing at the bottom - especially if there's a few months in between. I have to ask myself whether to do it how I used to, or how I do it now. When people look at a backpiece or a bodysuit on the internet and hit the 'heart' button, they don't always realise just how much has gone into that tattoo. All the time and dedication on the part of both the tattooist and the client. All the meetings and talking before anything even gets started, then all the pain and physical healing afterwards."

Mike owned his own studio for twenty years, but gave that up a while back. So what's the big picture for him right now? How does he see his life? "I guess at my age, most people would want to be owning multiple tattoo shops and taking care of their future, but I went the opposite direction where I got rid of my shop! I just decided to cut loose. My living standards are pretty basic and I don't need to earn a lot. Food and art supplies are the only things I need to buy. I've streamlined my life instead of adding more to it. I've made it simpler and I'm much happier. I have less to worry about."

I finish our interview by asking Mike whether the current popularity of avant-garde and naïve tattoo styles is affecting the demand for his work. His reply is both profound and refreshing. "There's a rhythm with everything. We've had a period of about ten years when there's been less interest in Japanese tattooing in the States. But everything is cyclical. It all comes back round. You just gotta hope that when it does, you've become even better and you're going to be even more in demand! I always tell people, 'Don't deviate from what you love. Stick with it.' There's a lot of artists who jump from car to car, looking for the next cool thing. Stay on your train and you'll be good to go."

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BARCELONA TATTOO EXPO



Running successfully for two decades now, the Barcelona International Tattoo Expo is one of Europe's oldest and most respected tattoo events. In recent years, it's been integrated into BAUM Fest, Barcelona's magnificent celebration of urban culture – encompassing street art, music, dance, extreme sport, motorbikes, cars and much else besides. More than 18,000 people attended this year, and the organisers estimated that more than a thousand tattoos were created during the course of the weekend!

Some 300 artists from 32 countries were in attendance at the Barcelona Tattoo Expo. Most of them were creating large-scale pieces, and most of them were fully-booked for the duration of the show. For the crowds of visitors who were simply wandering round taking it all in, there was plenty to admire and plenty to inspire. As show organiser Mik Garreta put it, it's just like visiting Barcelona's famous Miró museum; you don't have to be a painter or want to buy a painting in order to enjoy the art!

The impressive artist line-up included Spain's very own Deborah Cherrys (who designed the convention poster), Rosie Edwards (a Polynesian artist making her first visit to Spain) and Ryan Ashley Malarkey (from Paramount's TV show 'Ink Master: Angels'). Other overseas artists included Teresa Sharpe and Alisha Gory from the USA, Joanna Faferko from Poland, Kätlin Malm from Estonia and Jenna Kerr from the UK. The tattoo competitions showcased some incredible talent. Best of Day on the Friday was won by Cristian Kasas from Switzerland; Best of Day on the Saturday was won by Lea from local Barcelona studio Black Ship Tattoo; and Best of Day on the Sunday was won by Dani Martos from Demon Tattoo in the Catalonian city of Lleida – who also took the overall Best of Show award. The convention also featured a special booth supporting the 'Tatuadores por la Paz' (Tattooists for Peace) initiative, raising funds for a humanitarian aid project to help Syrian refugees in Lebanese refugee camps. They raised more than 3,500 Euros during the weekend.



As if this feast of international tattooing wasn't enough, there was a packed entertainment schedule featuring such treats as a Shibari Japanese rope bondage show, hip hop and other urban music, swinging tunes from The Lolita's Sisters, graffiti courtesy of Montana Colors, and an exhibition of exquisite Sumi-e ink wash painting by Alberto Castineira (aka Hasu Art). There was a multi-artist collaboration involving painting the bodywork of a Ferrari 458 Italia, a junior biker build-off in which young customisers had the opportunity to show off their talents, and a range of top quality entrants in the various 'Arte sobre Ruedas' (Art on Wheels) competitions. BMX, in-line and skate contests took place throughout the weekend, and on the final day of the convention more than 200 competitors took part in the BAUM Fest breakdance tournament, one of the most important urban dance contests in Spain.

This is an awesome event with lots to enjoy in an exciting city whose cultural offering is hard to beat. We reckon it's definitely worth considering a trip to next year's Barcelona International Tattoo Expo!





- 1. cristian kasas (switzerland)
- 2. lea, black ship (spain)
- 3. lea, black ship (spain)
- 4. cristian kasas (switzerland)
- 5. dani martos, demon tattoo (spain)
- 6. teresa sharpe tattooing



7.



8.



9.



- 7. javier franko, bhorn tattoo (spain)
- 8. javier franko, bhorn tattoo (spain)
- 9. dani martos, demon tattoo (spain)
- 10. horiyo tattooing
- 11. benjamin laukis, on the road

10.



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In conversation with Clayton Patterson & Marvin Moskowitz

Part 2 – Clayton's story



ℳ-R: Elsa Rensaa, Marvin, Lizzy and Clayton

Although it seems unbelievable now, tattooing in New York City only became legal twenty years ago. From 1961 to 1997 it was banned by the authorities. One of the people who was instrumental in getting that ban lifted was radical artist, photographer and film maker Clayton Patterson. We met Clayton when we were interviewing tattooist Marvin Moskowitz (for our special feature in last month's Total Tattoo Magazine). He kindly invited us to use his Manhattan gallery as a quiet and private space for our interview with Marvin, and during the course of our conversation it soon became apparent that his own story would make a fine feature too. So here it is: Clayton, in his own words and pictures, on tattoo history in the making and how he documented alternative culture on the Lower East Side and beyond.

Lizzy: So you've played a part in tattoo history, even though you're not a tattooist yourself?

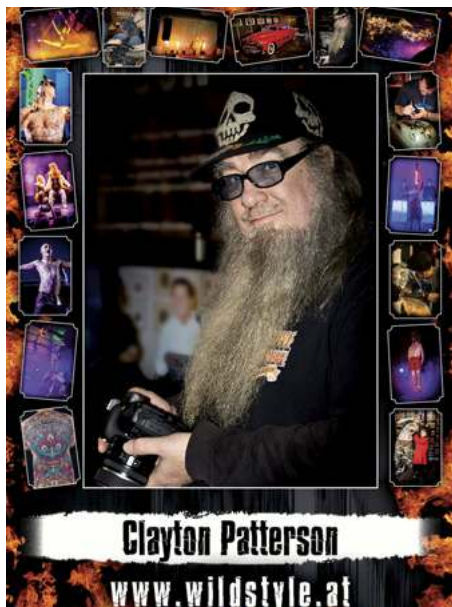
Clayton: Well... I've certainly documented a reasonable amount of it! And I guess I've made my own contribution to it too.

Lizzy: You spearheaded the campaign to lift the NYC tattoo ban in 1997. Let's begin by talking about that.

Clayton: Well, it's a long story. The whole effort got underway in 1996. I was already heavily involved in radical politics and I knew a city councillor on the Lower East Side called Kathryn Freed. There was someone in her office who was wanting to get a tattoo, and I think that's how she really became aware that tattooing was illegal. She sponsored the bill. Lots of people wanted to make tattooing legal again, but the problem was they wanted to make it legal in a way that suited *them*. There was all this crap going on in the background. The thing is, since the beginning of time tattooists have always wanted to get rid of the competition. A lot of it was about that. They were all scheming.

Lizzy: But I guess you didn't have that kind of bias?

Clayton: No, that's right. The fact that I wasn't a tattooist meant that I could campaign in a way that was fairer for everybody. Also, it seemed to me that some of those who were trying to get involved didn't know shit about politics. I'd been arrested and gone to court enough times to understand how it all works. I was pretty well known, too; I'd had stories in the paper and I'd been on television. I knew the landscape and I knew how to fight those fights. Wes Wood found out about the campaign and he contacted me, and we were able to unite and gather people through the Tattoo Society of New York. We already had that outreach. Wes was at this time in the supply business, so he knew a lot of people. Between the two of us, I think we were able to connect with every tattoo shop in the city. Other people were still trying to take over the campaign – it was a bit of a power struggle – so we had a big meeting to sort it out. We had a vote and Wes and I won. That's how it came to be us spearheading the campaign.





Lizzy: And how long did it take to get the ban overturned?

Clayton: It was a long and complicated process. It's not like hey! you go to court, get it overturned and it's done. Shutting down tattooing was one thing – that happened pretty quickly – but to restart it? That was a whole different thing. All in all it took about a year.

Lizzy: How did you go about it?

Clayton: The great thing about Wes was that he knew a lot of medical stuff. He's very scientifically minded. We had a lot of meetings with the Health Department, which Wes could handle really well. He was really good at helping with the particulars of re-writing the regulations. We had other supporters with us – like Darren from Rising Dragon, Tom Murphy from Mean Streets, and so on – and we eventually had to go in front of City Hall. There were those in the background who were trying to de-rail the whole thing, and various people were still trying to come in the back door and get involved, but the City had chosen who they were going to deal with – us – and so all those others were just being stupid. The thing is, this was a one-time opportunity. It was crucial that we didn't lose. It wasn't just a case of going to court; the legislation had to be carefully re-written before it could be re-introduced, and everything needed to be properly negotiated. Anyway, we pulled it off. In 1997 the ban was lifted and people could tattoo legally again in New York City.

Lizzy: So it wasn't a straightforward fight by any means...

Clayton: No, it wasn't. And that's why it was so important that Kathryn Freed and myself weren't actually in the tattoo business. With the tattoo artists, there were all sorts of battles going on. You had all these tattooists from outside the city, who were of course benefiting from the NYC tattoo ban, trying to stop the campaign in its tracks. They didn't want tattooing legalised in the city, because then they would lose business. And then you had the tattooists in the city who were fearful of increased competition trying to figure out ways of protecting themselves – for example by trying to make it illegal to open a tattoo shop next door to all sorts of public buildings like churches or schools (as long as they didn't have that kind of building next door to *them!*) They all lost out eventually. With the gentrification in New York, so many people have had to move.

Lizzy: So it was a time of real change.

Clayton: The other thing that happened was the English invasion. New York was all about 'spotty' tattoos – patches and emblems – whereas the British had tattoos from the hands and knuckles all the way up to the shoulders, even on their necks. They brought that look to New York. It was highly unusual at the time, and it was new and refreshing. It was like, 'Oh my God!'



Lizzy: Do you think people romanticise the 'good old days'? You hear a lot of tattooists say they wish tattooing was still underground... How do you feel about those sorts of comments?

Clayton: Those people are talking nonsense. They weren't there. You get all this pishing and moaning about how wonderful it was to be illegal. It's all bullshit. People think it was great to be an outlaw, but you weren't a fuckin' outlaw! It was a misdemeanour! The money they're making in tattooing now, you could never get that kind of money if it was underground. Nowadays, you can get insurance, you can charge real rates, have a street shop, appointments... A legitimate business, in other words. If you wanna be an outlaw, sell drugs! It was really important that tattooing should become legal. Even the Moskowitz brothers moved out to Long Island because they wanted to be legitimate. [*Marvin nods in agreement.*] They wanted to have a proper business to support their family. The reality was that you couldn't get well known if you were a tattooist in New York City. What's the point of being in a magazine if you can't say where your shop is? Meanwhile tattooists on the West Coast, in California, were becoming famous. Everybody knew about Leo Zuleta, Ed Hardy, Jack Rudy... The ban was detrimental to the craft. It was unhealthy. Getting the ban lifted was really important because New York could then join the international tattoo scene.

Marvin: They called it 'the underground movement,' but it wasn't a 'movement.' Nobody decided to make tattooing illegal so we could all go underground!

Clayton: Being illegal made you vulnerable in so many ways. People could just call up the Health Department and say 'this guy's tattooing' and you could get arrested. And of course it made it easy for landlords to demand more rent. If you made a fuss, you were outta there. It's so much better to be legitimate. If you're legitimate, nobody can bother you.

Marvin: A lot of the tattooists were robbed, held up at gunpoint or worse, and because they were working illegally they couldn't report it. Some of the shops were like fortresses.

Clayton: Yeah, that's what it used to be like. You'd go into a shop and there'd be bulletproof glass. You don't have that now. You can be open, sweep your store front, say hi to your neighbours, whatever, you're just part of the community now. And tattooists can make a lot of money nowadays. You've got clients with big incomes, like doctors and lawyers. When something's illegal, it becomes stigmatised. You'd soon lose those high end clients. Why give all that up? Tattooists need to be careful, and not dick around too much. The stuff that's happening in Japan can easily happen here; you just need one person to flip out, make a lot of noise and it can be made illegal again. And once that happens it's really over. The reality is that it's very simple to end tattooing, and that's what people need to realise.



Lizzy: What was the role of the Tattoo Society at that time?

Clayton: Because tattooing was underground, people didn't really have any place to meet. The Tattoo Society of New York enabled tattooists to come together, and it pretty much eliminated all that crap of the bullies coming round and putting in the muscle or whatever. Prior to that, there'd been the Tattoo and Body Art Society of New York, but that was just too many years ahead of its time and it was fairly short-lived.

Lizzy: When did you start the Tattoo Society?

Clayton: I started it in 1986 with a guy called Ari Roussimoff. He was a painter and film maker. He made a dark feature-length movie called 'Shadows in the City' [released 1991, see www.roussimoff.com/shadowshome.htm - ed]. A number of people from the Tattoo Society appeared in that film. He directed it and I was kind of like the art consultant. After he finished the film, he decided to move on. But I stayed, and my partner Elsa Rensaa and I kept the Tattoo Society going. For a period of time, she was the vice president. It was a very unique organisation. We met on the first Monday of every month. Early on it was in bars (I'd get the door money, and they'd get the booze money) and then we used various gallery spaces. There was a large cross-section of people there, and they would come from the whole tri-state area, Delaware, Connecticut... I think the biggest attendance we had was about 600 people. It was like a huge cross-pollination.





Lizzy: Tell us about your role in launching the New York convention.

Clayton: The NYC International Tattoo Convention was created by Steve Bonge, Butch Garcia, Wes Wood and myself, right after the ban was lifted. Elsa drew a lot of the posters. After that first year, Butch and Steve became the owners, Wes continued to look after all the Health Department aspects, and I was the manager/organiser – which was my role for the next fifteen years. We used to do it at the Roseland Ballroom, which was a really great venue in New York City. It was centrally located, in the theatre district. If you went out the door and turned right, you could get rice and beans for three dollars; if you turned left, there was a hot dog stand! The New York City convention became one of the top tattoo events in the world. I'm really proud of that. Steve and Butch did an incredible job and Wes was really important to the whole thing.



Lizzy: And you documented it all for posterity?

Clayton: Yeah, I photographed a lot of the people there, and Elsa would video the meetings. The battery on the video camera lasted less than an hour, so every now and then she'd have to run home to get another one! We've got a lot of rare footage and pictures. Pulsating Paula was there too. She was a major photographer in the tattoo world. She covered the whole spectrum. Really, the whole late 80s / early 90s tattoo scene in New York came out of the Tattoo Society – that whole new wave of tattooists like Sean Vasquez, Bill Loika, Michelle from Daredevil, Emma from Porcupine, and many others. So I guess those are the two ways in which I helped to change tattoo history: getting the tattoo ban lifted, and setting up the Tattoo Society of New York.

Lizzy: And you also helped to shape future tattoo conventions with your involvement in the original Wildstyle & Tattoo Messe in 1995. How did that come about?

Clayton: It all happened because my name appeared on one small line in the book 'Modern Primitives' (which came out in 1989). That was the connection! I got a phone call from Jochen Auer in Austria, inviting me to be part of the show. It was a whole new concept. It wasn't a tattoo convention *per se*, more an international gathering of alternative youth cultures. I was going to show photos and a video, as well as bring American tattooists and sideshow performers along. I asked tattoo photographer Steve Bonge to share a booth with me, and that was the start of our twenty-year friendship. The Wildstyle & Tattoo Messe had hot rods, custom motorcycles, music, dancers, body mods, everything. I remember there was a guy from France who did cuttings, and that was completely off the hook in 1995! Now you have this sort of thing at tattoo conventions all the time of course, but this was the first show to mix it all together in that way.



Lizzy: And I guess nobody at the time knew how influential it would prove to be.

Clayton: It certainly changed the history of tattooing in that part of Europe – especially because of the big name artists I brought over. We toured the show for three months at a time. There wasn't a big tattoo scene in Austria back then, or in Germany, other than in Frankfurt and Berlin. So you suddenly had all these tattooists that you could see for real, where you'd never really seen many before. Experiencing modern tattooing being done by famous artists opened the doors for a lot of people. And it was a great opportunity for the artists themselves to build their reputations, because every weekend they were tattooing dozens of new customers. It had momentum. It was really ahead of the curve.

Lizzy: And again, documenting it all was so important.

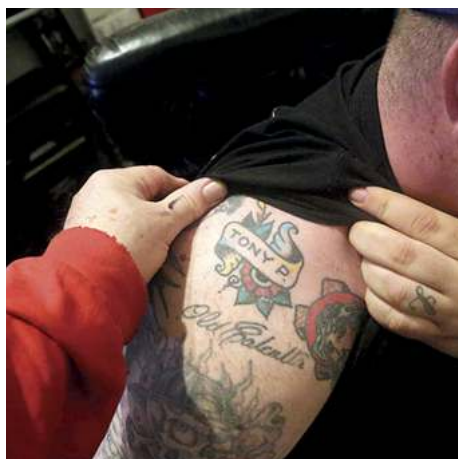
Clayton: Yeah. It's rich tattoo history, much overlooked. The thing is, the Wildstyle Tattoo Messe, the Tattoo Society, all of that, it was still quite underground. And the thing about being underground is that the history is often lost or confused.

Lizzy: How did you get into photography?

Clayton: Elsa bought me a camera when we first got together. That was in 1972. That's what got me into it. I was doing pretty well in art, getting some one-man sculpture shows and so on, and getting into some well-known collections, but I hated the whole SoHo vibe. It just wasn't my thing; it was pretentious, all that crap. That's why I moved over here.



©clayton patterson





Lizzy: To the Lower East Side.

Clayton: Yeah. It was a really dangerous neighbourhood at the time. It wasn't the hip neighbourhood that it is today. Soon after we moved in, somebody got shot across the street. The area used to be like twenty-four hour drugs territory. A forgotten no-man's land. Each street was basically controlled but I became familiar with the local crews. Every crew would tag my front door with graffiti, like it was a train. I got to know people. And I started taking pictures right outside my front door, of everyone who was out there on the street. I took *thousands* of photographs.



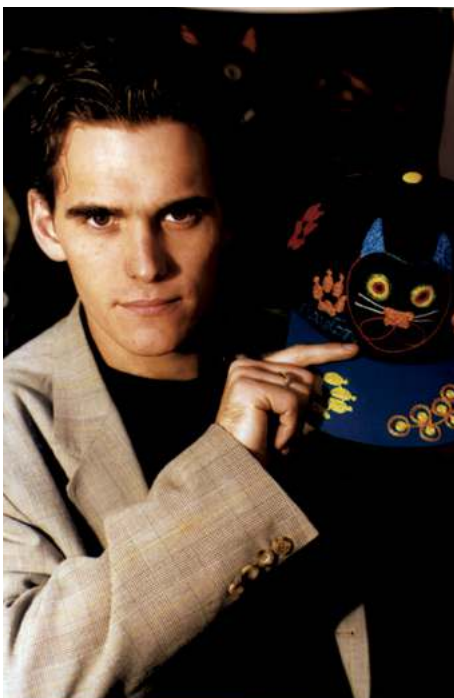


Lizzy: That must have built into quite a project...

Clayton: Over the years it turned into a multi-generational thing. Some of the people I photographed were schoolkids back then, and now they have grandkids here in the neighbourhood. Some of them went on to murder people. Sometimes tragedies would happen in families and the pictures I took are the only pictures they have of their loved ones. And some of the guys I photographed ended up in jail, running things. I've photographed people that nobody else would be able to photograph – primarily because I photographed them when they were young. It was kinda like one of the greatest blessings I've had. I wasn't interested in photographing famous people; that was never my ambition.

Lizzy: What did you do with all the pictures?

Clayton: I used to put them in my window. There would be thirty-two pictures on display, 3" x 5" prints, and it became a kind of 'hall of fame.' The kids were always looking at it. It was a big deal to be in that window! Everybody wants their fifteen minutes, and I gave them that opportunity.





Clayton with one of his famous embroidered baseball caps

Lizzy: A kind of pre-digital Instagram...

Clayton: There was a real magic to it. When you were taking the photographs, you were limited to the number of exposures on the film, so you could only take 24 or 36 at a time. And of course you didn't know what the pictures were going to be like until you got them back. There was a really good one-hour place that used to develop my stuff and the quality was great.

Lizzy: And you published a book too?

Clayton: Yeah, the 'Front Door Book.' The thing is, because I documented so much of the street, and everybody knew I was that guy with the camera, a lot of drug posses and crews that sold on the corner... well I could have gotten robbed or whatever, but I feel that I was always protected in a way. When you photograph someone there's an incredible innocent moment. It's like people are vulnerable at that point and you're capturing that. It's an intimate thing. If you're a tattoo artist, you're touching people both physically and emotionally. Photography, for me, was the same. It was a sharing process. I always wanted people to look normal, happy and cool in my photographs. When I meet people that I photographed years ago, there's always this link between you – like no defences, or something like that. The front door was my introduction to a lot of things. Photography has brought me lots of adventures, and it's got me into so many places and situations over the years... Then in 1986 Nelson Sullivan, who documented so much of the 1980s art and club scene, introduced me to the video camera.

Lizzy: That must have been a real game-changer.

Clayton: Yeah. When I was at art school, film making was like heavy technology, so getting that hand-held video camera changed my life. In 1988 I made a three hour thirty three minute video of the Tompkins Square Park riot. That riot was a real major episode in New York City's history. And I had footage of it, the police brutality. Everybody – the police, the FBI – wanted my tape. But I knew if I gave it up, and it got used as evidence, it would no longer be my property. So I said, 'Fuck that!' For me, the concept was simple. I was an artist, that was my art, and it belonged to me. So I was arrested. When I got to court, it was huge. The media were all there. They said I had to give up the tape or I'd go to jail. I got ninety days for contempt of court. That was the beginning of me entering street politics.

Lizzy: And I guess video news footage was something quite novel at that time?

Clayton: I believe it was the very first time a hand-held video camera had been used in that way – instead of a bulky television camera, with all the cables, the sound guy, the lighting guy, and so on. It changed the history of news reporting.

Lizzy: That photo on the wall, is it you? [Picture left]

Clayton: Yeah! When I was in the Bronx House of Detention after the Tompkins Square Park riot I went to the barbershop and asked for my hair to be cut from one ear to the other. That was a radical haircut at the time.

Marvin: That's you? What the fuck happened to you?!

Clayton: *Life* happened to me!

Check out Clayton's website www.claytonpattersonles.com and his show on New York City's 8 Ball Radio: www.mixcloud.com/8ballradio/playlists/the-clayton-patterson-show/

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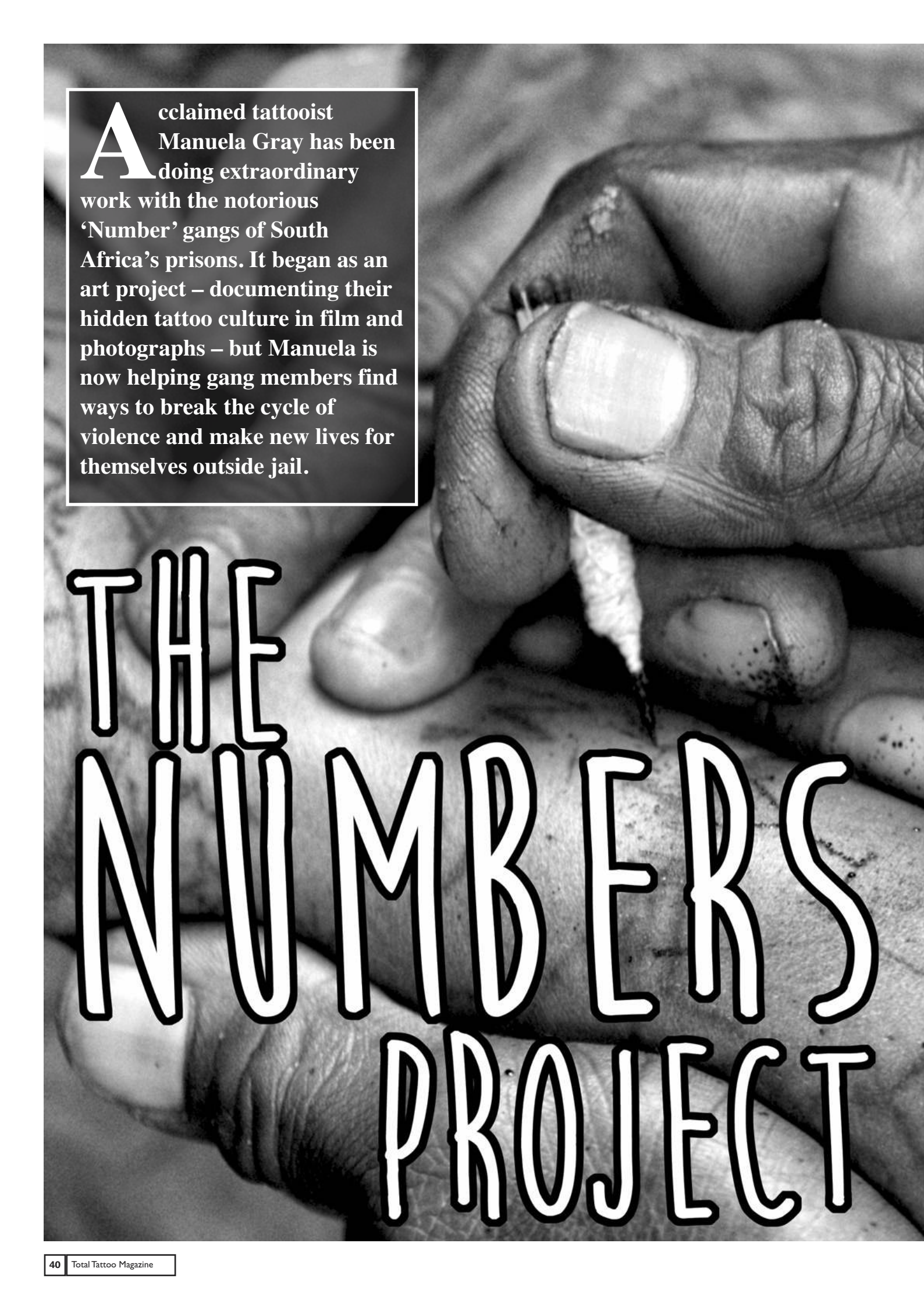


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Aclaimed tattooist Manuela Gray has been doing extraordinary work with the notorious 'Number' gangs of South Africa's prisons. It began as an art project – documenting their hidden tattoo culture in film and photographs – but Manuela is now helping gang members find ways to break the cycle of violence and make new lives for themselves outside jail.

THE NUMBERS PROJECT



Interview by Perry
Pictures courtesy of Brendan Mcginty

Total Tattoo: First of all, what are the ‘Number’ gangs?

Manuela: The Number gangs only really exist within the prison system here. For prisoners, their tattoos are very much like warrior markings. They are putting their identity on their skin – it’s all about violence and crime, but also community and belonging. When people are marginalised and have nothing (which happens here because of Apartheid), these tattoos are a status symbol. To go to prison and come out wearing these marks says, ‘This is what I’ve done. This is what I’m capable of.’ Just like a warrior’s mask. They wear these marks with pride. They walk out of prison feeling revered.

Total Tattoo: Do the Number gangs have connections on the outside?

Manuela: There are no Number gangs outside of prison, but members will often affiliate with other gangs. Your Number gang will support you as an ex-prisoner – but likewise you will be expected to send stuff back into the prison to support them. You have to remember that these people come from very small communities; rival gang members will often know everything about each other’s families and they may even have been neighbours. The Numbers gangs are a living system, passed down via word of mouth. There are slight differences between the different prisons, and as a gang member you need to know all the details. People put a lot of effort into learning all the rules and regulations of the code. If they invested as much time into learning to be a lawyer or something like that, they would come out of prison much better off!

Total Tattoo: Where did the Number gangs originate?

Manuela: It began as a Zulu tribal thing in the 1930s, in the early years of the British Commonwealth. Tribespeople were enticed to work in the mines and they formed gangs and began to identify themselves using numbers as a kind of covert protest against the dominance of the system. When the Coloured population [*those of mixed African/European heritage – ed*] came into mining in the 1950s, they were already marking themselves with other gang symbols. It was like a powerful secret language that only they understood.



Total Tattoo: And when people were put in jail, the system spread into the prisons?

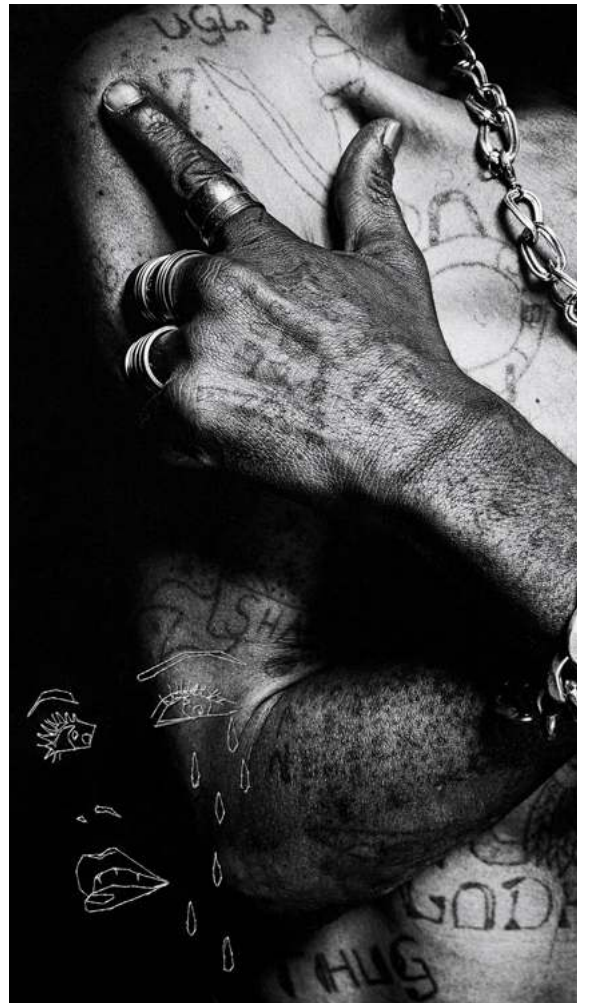
Manuela: Yes. Tattooing was a way for people to demonstrate their allegiances. You can see this in their image choices. Their tattoos represent so much of their lives – the type of comics that they read as a child, for example. They even used the symbolism of the British military to reflect rank within the gang – cutlasses and stars on their shoulders, and so on. A lot of older iconography is now slowly getting lost, with younger gang members now preferring to get 2PAC logos and other rappers' names tattooed on them. I wanted to document and preserve this true tattoo voice of South Africa.

Total Tattoo: Tell us more about what inspired you.

Manuela: As a tattooist, I was always looking for a South African voice in tattooing. We don't really have one. There is no real history of tattooing in Africa – because, for obvious reasons, everywhere where the skin is darker you get scarification but not tattooing! Where I live, the bushmen have lighter skin and there are some documented histories of dot-and-dash tattoos, but that's about all. For me, these photographs of tattooed prison gang members are iconic images of a marginalised section of our society. I wanted to document this particular tattoo style and record this moment in time because, like all things, it is continually changing.

Total Tattoo: How did you go about it?

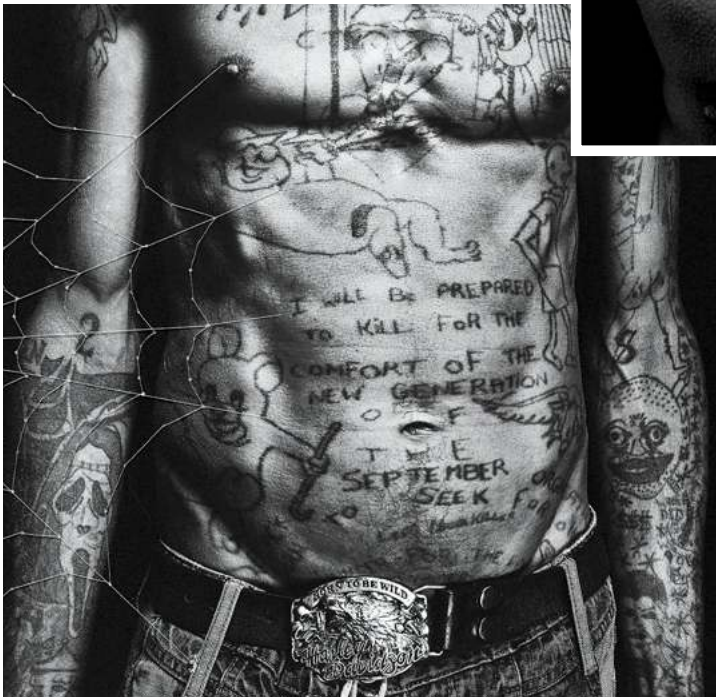
Manuela: It began with the film that I made with Brendan McGinty, who is a really great cinematographer. We always knew we wanted to take stills from the movie to produce a book. However, as a tattooist I found it hard because I'm used to taking photos of *tattoos*, whereas the guys were much more interested in filming the *person* – so the tattoos would always be out of focus! I didn't want the language of the tattoos to get lost in the character study of the wearer. But we had a lot of very good images to choose from. We decided to concentrate predominantly on the 26, 27 and 28 gangs, giving each of them pretty much equal representation.





Total Tattoo: The exhibitions of your work (including the photographs embellished with hand-stitching) have been very well received. There's been a lot of interest in the book too. What else came out of the project?

Manuela: The proceeds from sales of the book go to an NGO offering arbitration to stop gang violence. Tattooing is of course officially prohibited in prisons, but I wanted very much to help by providing sterilisation equipment and disposable supplies. I wasn't given access though, because the prisons really don't want to be seen to be encouraging tattooing in any way. However, I am doing all I can to help ex-prisoners on the outside.



Total Tattoo: If a person has been in prison and they're covered in tattoos, it's hard for them to get a second chance...

Manuela: Absolutely. The thing is, most of these people didn't choose a life of crime. It was their only option. They simply didn't have any other opportunities. And although these people have done some terrible things, I want to focus on what they can become, not what they used to be. So this has been my project for the last couple of years – to educate and train these guys when they come out of prison, so they can tattoo better, and perhaps make a living at it. We all know how lucrative tattooing can be! If a career in tattooing can give a family an income, that income will generate many other opportunities for them too – and, in turn, inspire the next generation of youngsters to see that they don't *have* to follow the usual path into crime. Becoming a tattooist is an opportunity for ex-prisoners to provide for themselves outside the gangs.

Total Tattoo: What sort of things do you teach?

Manuela: Most of the ex-prisoners have no idea about sterilisation and hygiene or the need to use gloves and change needles, so part of my responsibility is to make sure they learn all they need to know to work safely. They don't have the money to buy disposables, so I've been providing these for them myself. I have also met some amazing supply companies who are helping out. Some of the ex-prisoners are even building machines now. I also help them to find art courses. As a white South African, with the advantage of an art school education and access to the internet, I am very aware of my privileged position in this respect. Some people might look at prison tattoos and see them as naïve and crude, but that is what they were drawing when they were children – and once they were inside prison they had no chance of any proper art education.



Total Tattoo: So you're really trying to transform people's lives...

Manuela: Education can really make a difference. We need to open up the world to those who are less privileged. If we don't stop this cycle of violence and crime, it will continue to grow. The disparity between rich and poor in Cape Town is very evident. You encounter it all the time in daily life. We have guys who will park and watch your car for you, and make sure it doesn't get broken into, and guys selling flowers at the traffic lights... and they're usually covered in gang tattoos, on their hands and their faces. They're trapped in low-paid work and unable to move on. It was through encountering these people that I came to realise that this form of tattooing has a real social significance. It's like a voice that needs to be recorded and preserved. Personally, I value individual people whoever they are, whatever their walk of life, and wherever they're from – street or royalty. And I've found that being a heavily tattooed person myself really helped to break down the communication barriers.





Total Tattoo: Being so involved with prisoners and ex-prisoners, how do you feel about the naïve ‘prison style’ ink that’s becoming such a trend on the tattoo scene right now?

Manuela: I am very concerned about the fetishisation of ‘prison tattooing.’ As a tattoo style, it needs to be properly honoured. We obviously can’t stop people taking and using the imagery – but the truth is, people who are not part of prison culture haven’t *earned* the right to appropriate that culture and its imagery for themselves. I do hope we are not going to see lots of Number gang tattoos springing up all over the world! There’s a big difference between being inspired by something and copying it directly, especially when it’s something with which you have no personal link.



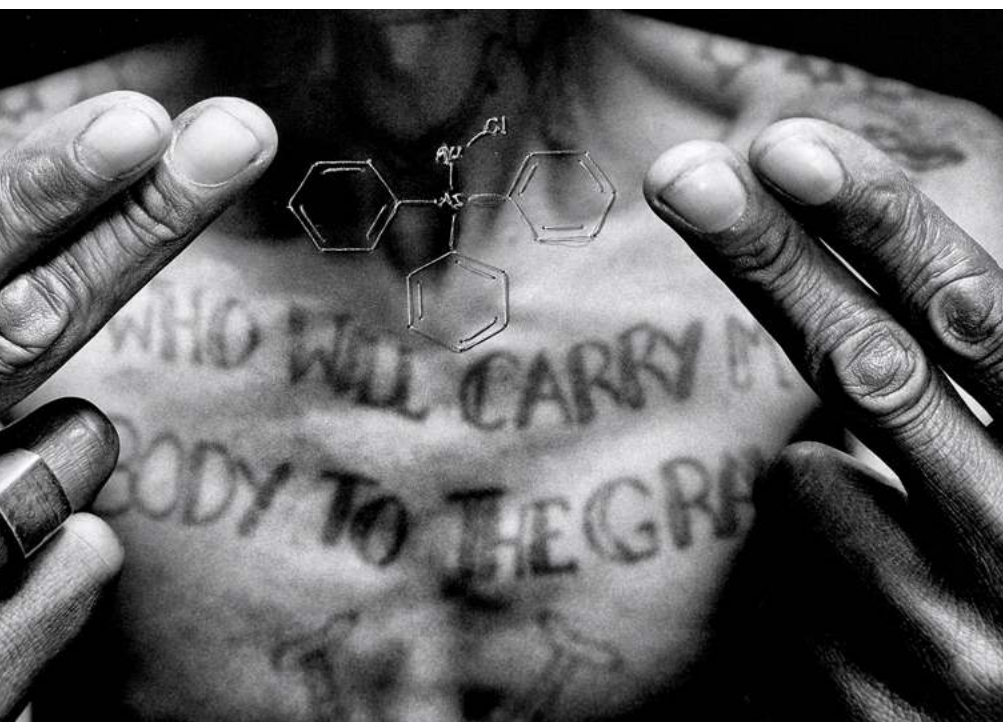


Total Tattoo: A final question - do you ever do cover-ups of gang members' tattoos?

Manuela: Yes I do. You have to remember that when gang members get tattooed, they can't really ever envisage a day when they're not going to be in that gang, so they get covered with stuff – malicious, violent, disgusting imagery – and then have to live with it. One guy told me, 'People used to cross the street to avoid me. Now they cross the street to talk to me about my beautiful tattooed sleeves!' He now has a good job, and he's managed to lift himself out of poverty. Before that, he was just in the wrong situation with nobody to show him a way out. If it worked for him, it can work for others too!

The wider issue of gang violence and prison overpopulation is very much on the political agenda in South Africa. If tattooing can play a positive part in helping to change the lives of those trapped in poverty, that can only be a good thing!

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matt gardiner, end of the line



teide, red point tattoo

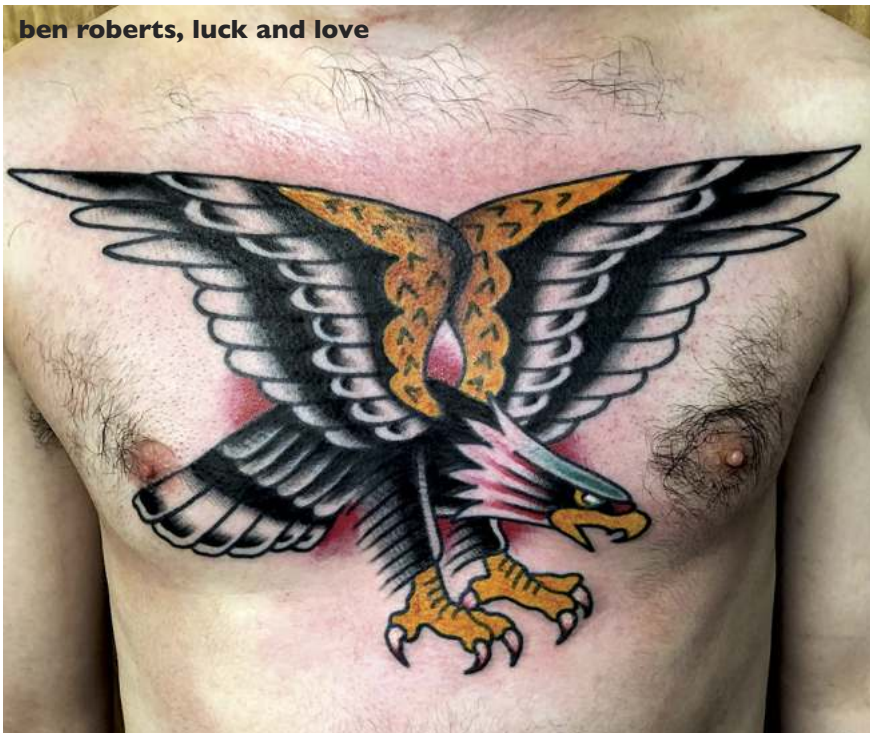


jim gray



ross lee,
inkaddiction

ben roberts, luck and love



abbie johnston



annabelle luyken



roberto poliri, black cobra



paul fulton,
northside tattooz



dek kent, electric kicks

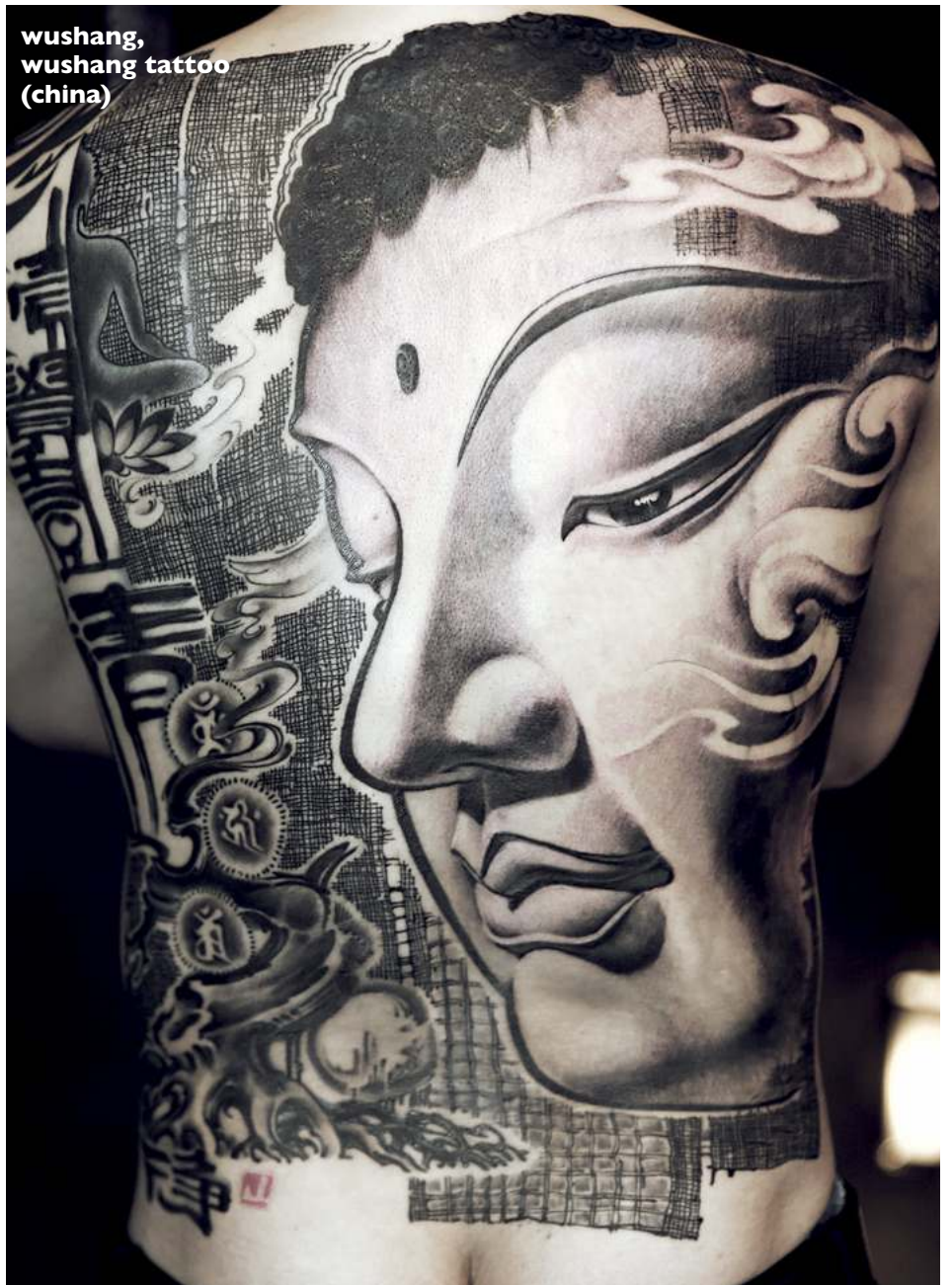
**kyle shields,
empire ink**



ginge, heavy duty tattoo company



**wushang,
wushang tattoo
(china)**

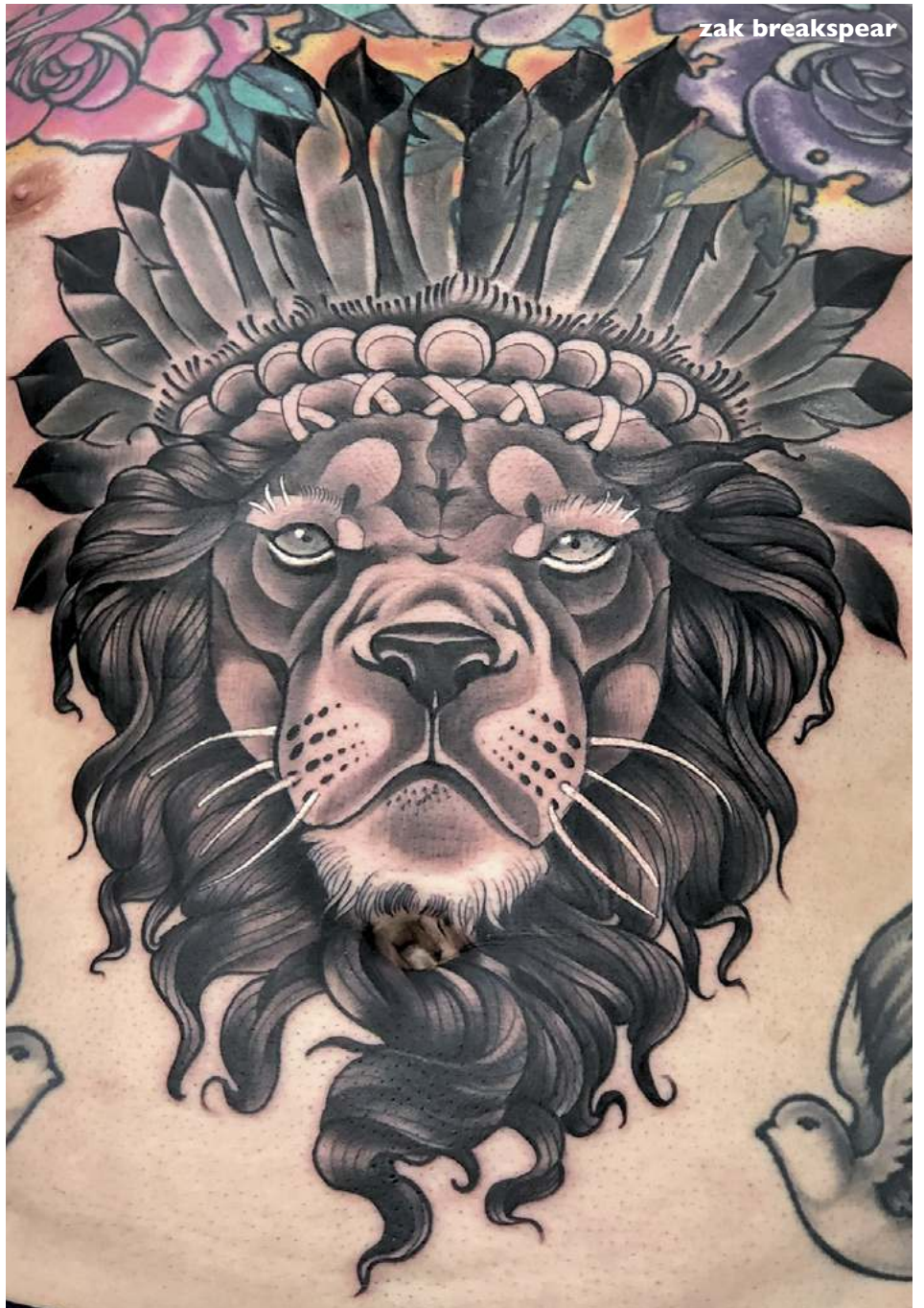


**danielle merrick,
inkden tattoo studio**





kelly smith, cry baby tattoo



zak breakspear



chantelle lewis



natalie petal gardiner



sandro secchin,
old london
road



yvonne heartmann,
caffeine tattoo (poland)



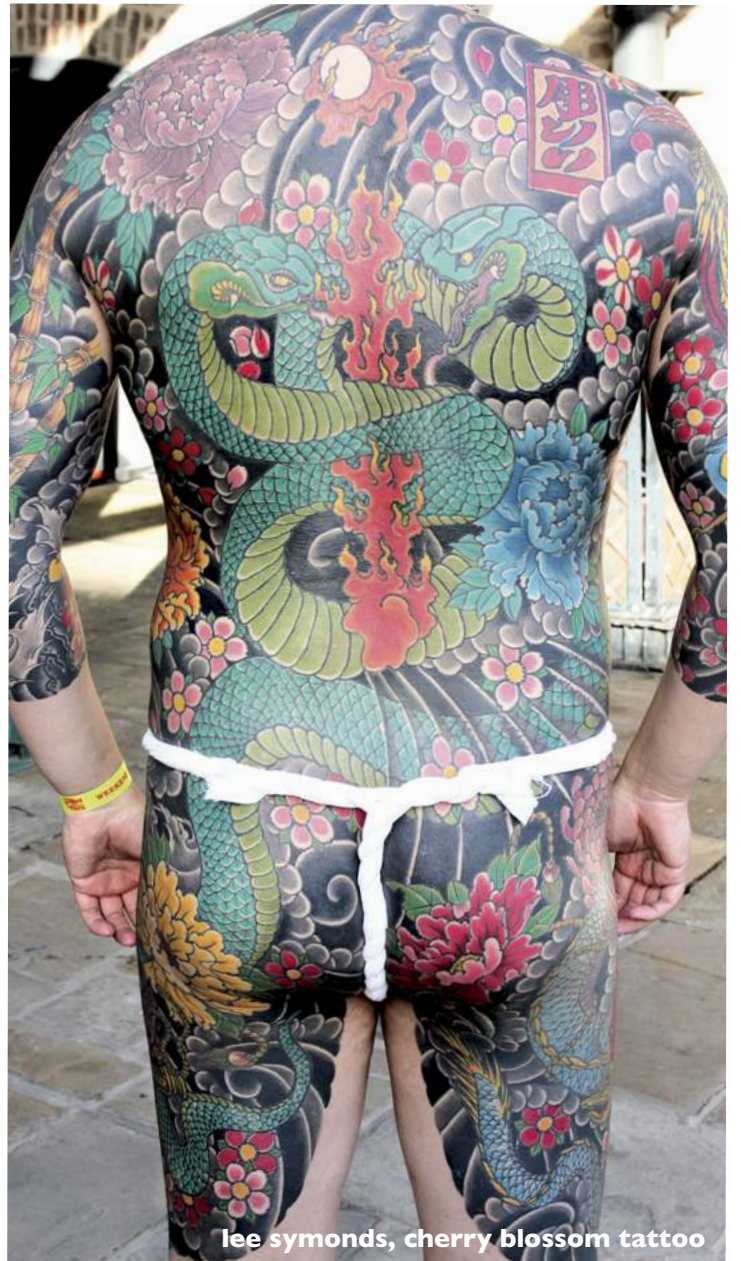
adam osborn,
wolf ink studios



emily herridge,
golden dragon tattoo



lee symonds, cherry blossom tattoo



lee symonds, cherry blossom tattoo

lukasz trawczynski,
modern electric tattoo company

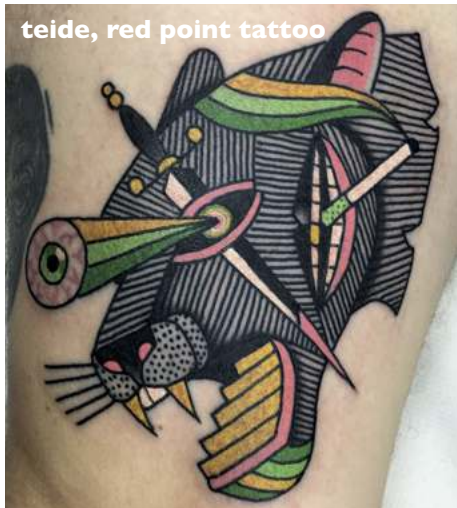


danielle merrick,
inkden tattoo studio

mike rubendall, kings avenue tattoo (usa)



teide, red point tattoo





jonathan mckenzie,
the family business



ana mijovic,
happy sailor tattoo



patrick mcfarlane, the black
freighter tattoo company



pete vaughn,
hellbound heart



jonny domas, piranha tattoo
(portugal)



santa pepetua
private studio

tasha-leigh stewart,
kaleidoscope
tattoo collective



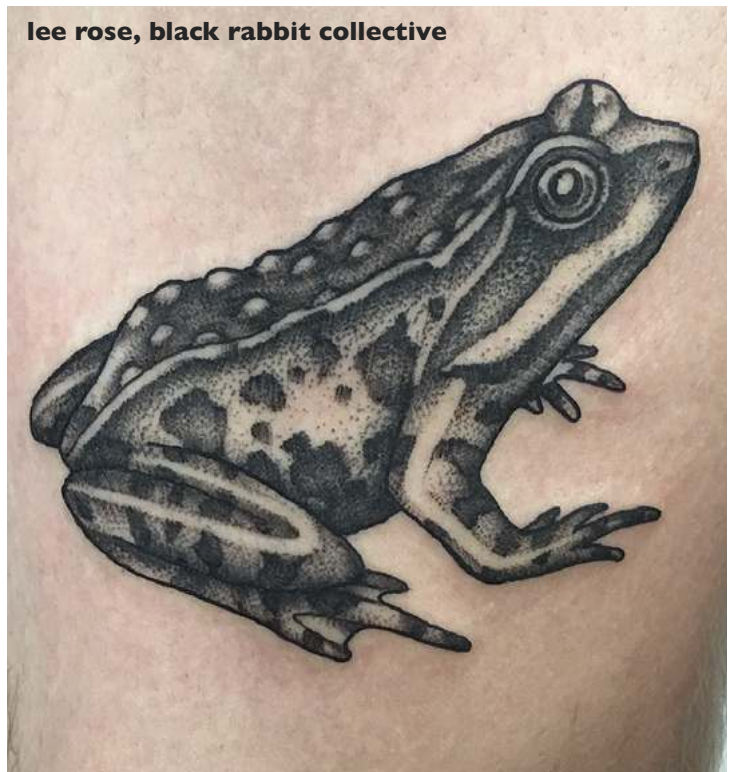
gloria manzillo, starletink



kelly smith, cry baby tattoo



lee rose, black rabbit collective



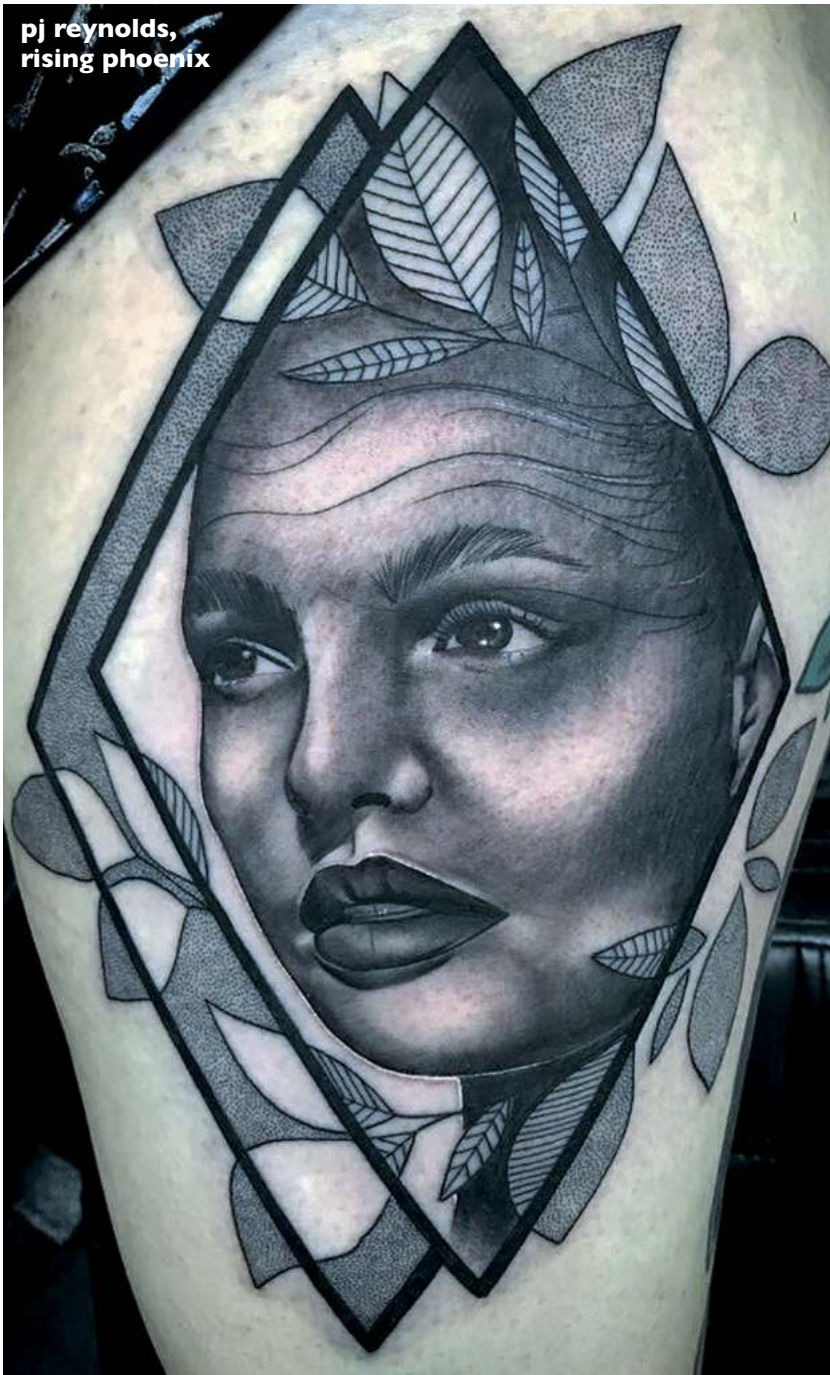
mikey black, pigments of imagination



lucy frost, dark house collective



pj reynolds,
rising phoenix



luke atkinson,
checker demon tattoo (germany)

boo

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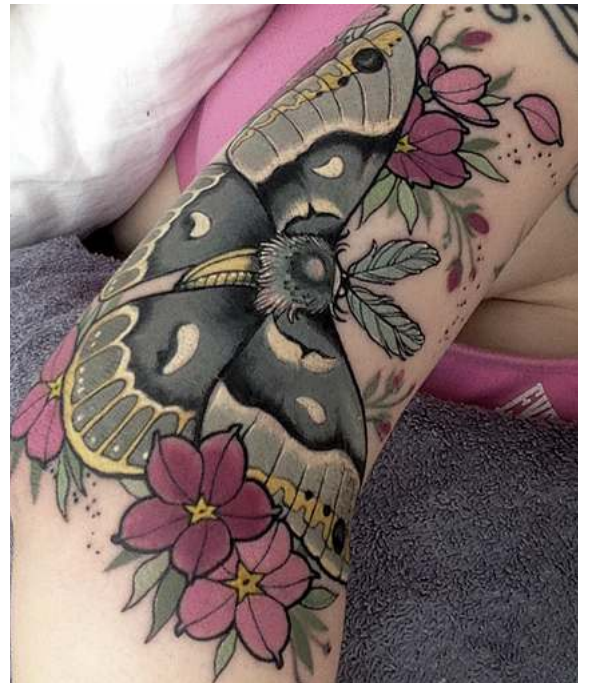
Interview by Lizzy Guy
Pictures courtesy of Samantha Smith



SAMANTHA SMITH

Canadian tattooist Sam Smith creates glorious neo-traditional tattoos in a fine art style. Heavily influenced by Art Nouveau and classical sculpture, her beautiful work exudes originality. We talked about artistic influences and creative freedom, the importance of friends, and Sam's love of Calgary and its tattoo scene.



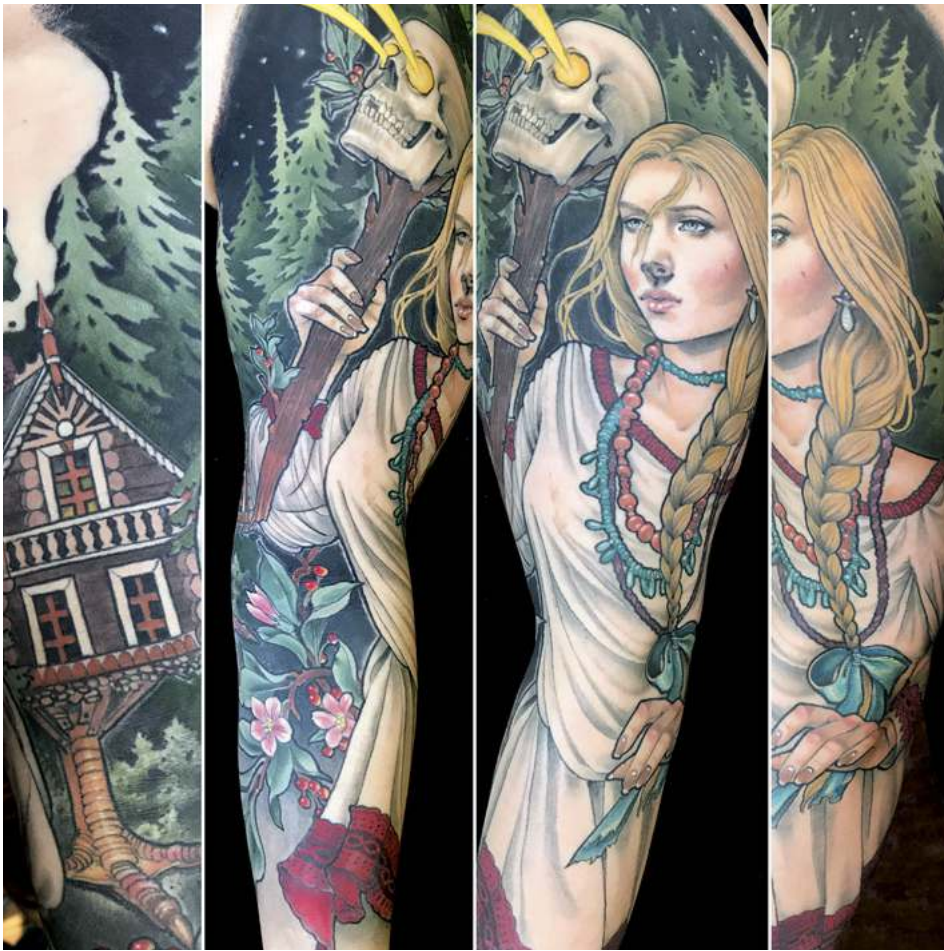


Tell us about yourself and your studio...

I'm 29 and I've been tattooing for ten years. I own Scythe & Spade in Calgary, which is almost three years old now. I originally wanted a private studio - not just because I wanted to work alone, but also because there's a real gap in the market here - but at the time there weren't enough small studio spaces, so I simply found a bigger space, got my shit together, got some friends working with me, and here we are! We're a cosy, tightly knit shop, tattooing by appointment only but always open to visitors during regular hours.

What's the tattoo scene like in Calgary?

It's awesome. It's like tattoo mecca! People in Calgary have been getting large-scale work since Paul Jeffries [Smilin' Buddha] came on the scene in the '80s. It's not unusual to see people like teachers or cops with two sleeves and a backpiece. We're not the same as England in that it's not so accepted to have your face tattooed, but it seems like everyone has bodysuits! It's wild. The clients are amazing. And economically it's a really prosperous area, so most people aren't afraid to get large, good quality work. It really is the dream. I'm very aware of how lucky we are.



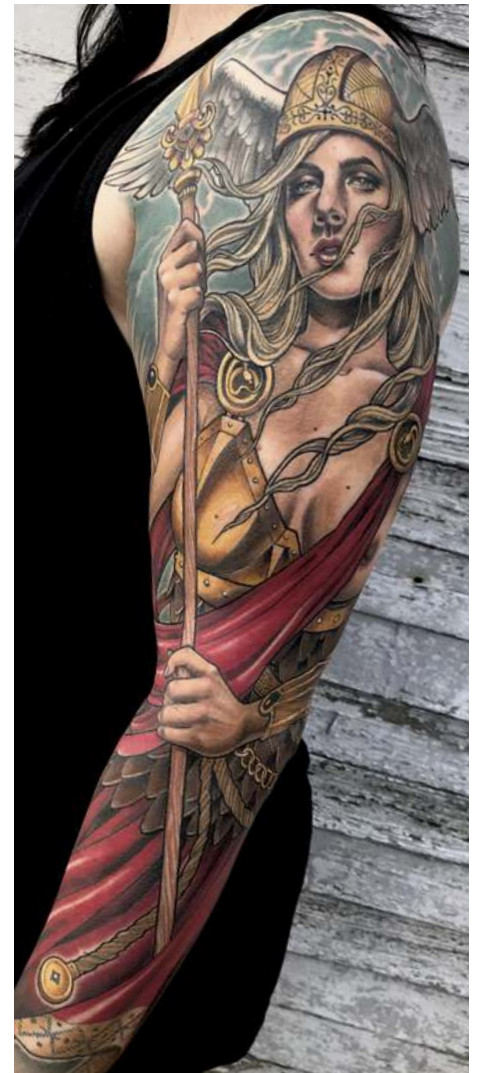
Are you originally from Calgary?
 Actually, I'm a farm girl. I grew up an hour outside of Calgary and didn't really go to the city much until I was eighteen. So I spent my childhood around horses and cows! I've moved around a little bit through Canada, and I've travelled around Europe and the States and stuff, but Calgary is definitely my home.

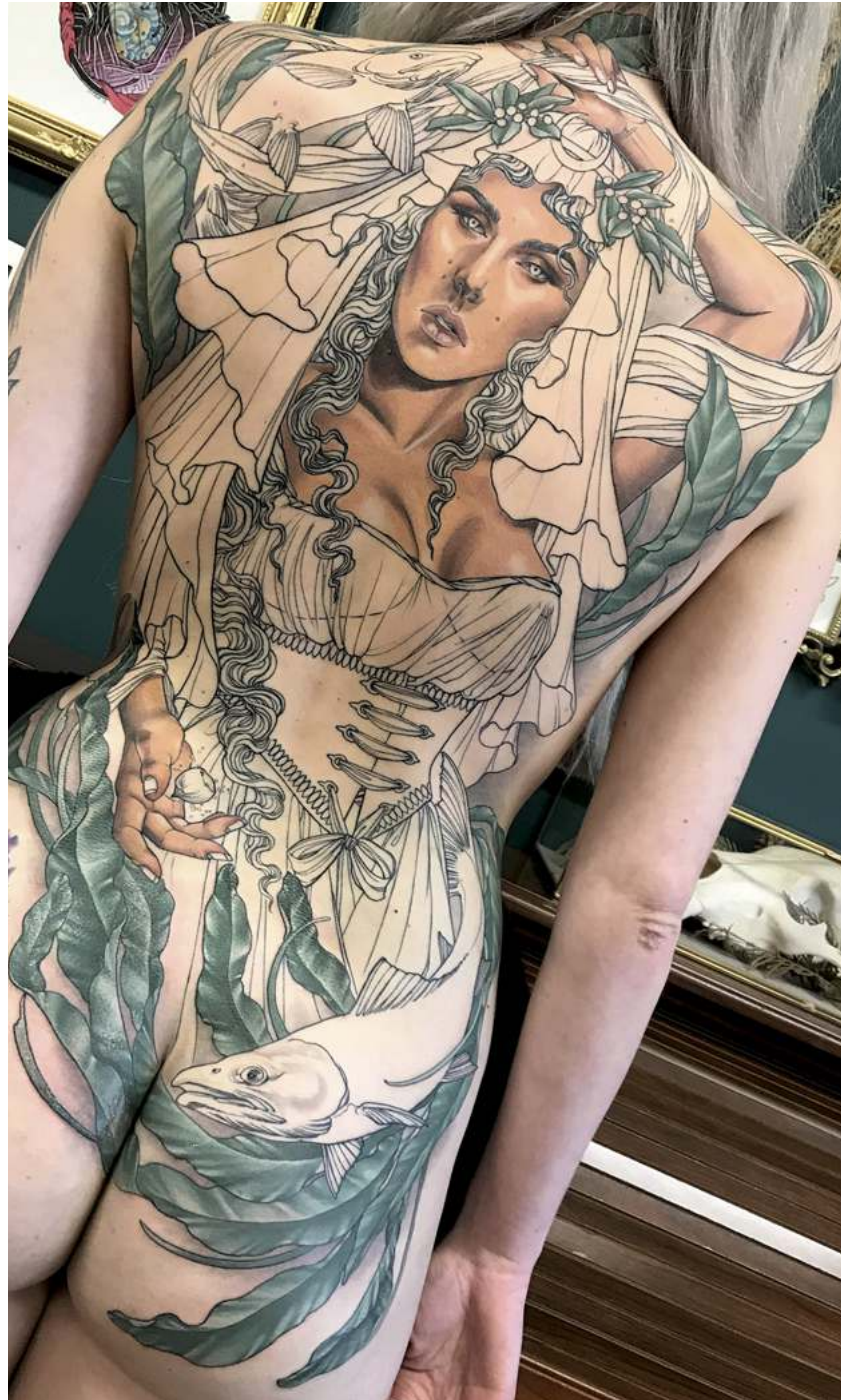
And is that where you learned to tattoo?

Yes, it was a total accident though. I wasn't thinking about being a tattooist at all. I was at art school and I wanted to paint. However, I'm not so keen on the intellectual side of fine art. I would rather just make things that are beautiful, because I think that adds a lot more to the world. Goddammit, just enjoy things! I think that's why people have tattoos – because they want something that speaks to them visually.

Where did your love of art come from?

I've loved art since I was very young. I've always had good teachers and my mom was super supportive of me being a weird little goth girl! (See, it's not a phase, Mom!) Now, the more tattoos I get, the more normal I look...





So would you say it was nurture over nature?

Yes, I think so. I don't think my family are particularly artistic. It's not in the genes. They're all from farming backgrounds, or they're East Coast fishermen. I'm the black sheep. But they were so supportive. They really were. When I sat my mom and stepdad down and told them I was quitting art school – I mean, nobody wants to tell their parents they're dropping out of college, but I guess art school's maybe the easiest one to drop out of – they were like 'You do you! If it feels right, we're here for you.'

Is there anything you took from art school that helped your career in tattooing?

It certainly made me appreciate the lack of intellectual bullshit in tattooing! But in addition to that, there are certain technical things – such as colour theory and knowing how to study other artists and what they do – that are really valuable. A lot of tattooists get stuck just looking at other tattooists' work, but there's so much more out there. Art history was awesome for that. I also learnt that even if the thing you're looking at isn't finished, it can still give you an idea to work from.

You can see that classical fine art knowledge in your work.

I super appreciate that. Composition is important in my work, as well as anatomy – and matching those together – and it's very different doing that on skin rather than on paper.





Is it more difficult working on a large scale?

It can be, but there are tricks you can use. I've had to learn these over the years, and I still learn something new every time I do something huge. I believe you have to challenge yourself with every piece you do. If you're going to improve, you need to get outside your comfort zone.

Do you still feel nervous before starting new work?

Oh yeah, totally! If you're not nervous, then you don't enjoy it. I have utmost respect for the fact that I'm working on someone else's body. I treat each piece as if I'm tattooing myself. I would never let things slide just because they may take a little extra effort, or just because I want to try to save time. Things like that. It shows. Caring shows.

Which artists are you influenced by?

Art Nouveau is a huge influence on my work. I love artists such as Mucha. I also love looking at classical sculpture, the expressions and the poses. I'm definitely inspired by classical-looking faces. I'm also inspired by make-up artists and seeing how people create different looks. I'll be like, 'Ooh, I want my faces to be contoured like that!' You have to broaden your horizons because if you're directly referencing tattoos your work can become very derivative.

Sources of information and inspiration are so much more accessible now.

Yeah, and I think the open exchange of information is super helpful for anybody up-and-coming. I remember when I first got my hands on Guy Aitchison's book I was wowed that he was telling me these secrets! Technology has had a big influence too. Even in terms of



photographing your work. I'm sure there are tattoos from a couple of decades ago that are just as beautiful as ones we see now - it's just that people couldn't take a really crisp, easy photo using a phone in their pocket!

What concepts excite you?

It changes all the time. I'll do a concept maybe three or four times then I'll feel that I want to move on. I think I've just finished my Mermaid phase... and before that I was in a Valkyrie phase... then I got a ton of requests for sexy, alien ladies and I'm like, 'You know what? This might be a thing!'

Are you inspired by fantasy?

Big time. Anything that gives you creative freedom that doesn't have to be overly accurate. I do love history and historical clothing, but I'm not into historical research - you know, when the historians say, 'Oh, they didn't have *that* type of corset until *this* particular time...' I'm just into making it look cool!

I guess you have total freedom of expression if something doesn't actually exist...

Yeah, you can't fuck it up! Like if someone says, 'I want a real dragon', I'm like, 'What the fuck are you talking about?!' [Laughs] It's all too easy to get stuck with what something 'should' look like. It's okay to make it up and play with it. I'm so fortunate that my clients are cool with my ideas. I really appreciate their commitment.

Is your approach the same regardless of the scale of the work?

I love doing both large-scale and small-

scale pieces, but they're different disciplines really. It's easier to make small stencils of course. The big stuff definitely takes it out of you - in making sure it's solid all the way through, you know? You're still using similar-sized needle groupings and the same set-up, but it's a very different type of day.

Are you very self-critical? Or are you able to pay yourself a compliment now and then?

I definitely try to bask in it if I'm feeling good about something because it doesn't take too long for me to flip the switch and start criticising what I've done! But if I didn't have that element of self-criticism, I don't think I'd be at the stage I am now with my work. I don't get bummed out though, because really it's all about the client. If I've made someone happy, and they're proud to wear the tattoo I've done, than I'm happy too. But I'm still gonna keep pushing myself.

It must be difficult if the client loves their tattoo but, privately, you're pulling it apart?

Yeah, totally. They'll be saying they love it and I'm like, 'Didn't they notice *this* and *this*?' But at the end of the day you have to realise you're still making something of quality. I'm always concerned with the end result. The rest is just muscle memory really; I don't think I could tell you how I do things... except that I know I hold my tubes in quite a weird way, compared to other tattooists - like at the very tip, so my fingers are literally 3mm apart! It looks uncomfortable, but it works for me.



Is friendship an important part your working life?

Oh definitely. I've learned that the hard way. You have to be so picky about the people around you, because you see them more than you see your family. I care about what everybody around me is doing and I'm genuinely excited to see what comes out of the shop. And that's the whole point. Why have a shop if it's not going to be the best? Why would you put all your effort into something like that, unless you're going to make it the best it can be?



Is a good work-life balance important to you?

Yes, absolutely. I love sleep! [Laughs] And I love travelling of course – doing guest spots, but also just visiting places. You have to keep that creative bank account topped up. Life shouldn't just be about one thing. It's so easy to get caught up in tattooing, or just hanging out with tattooists and talking shop. It can be a very narrow world.

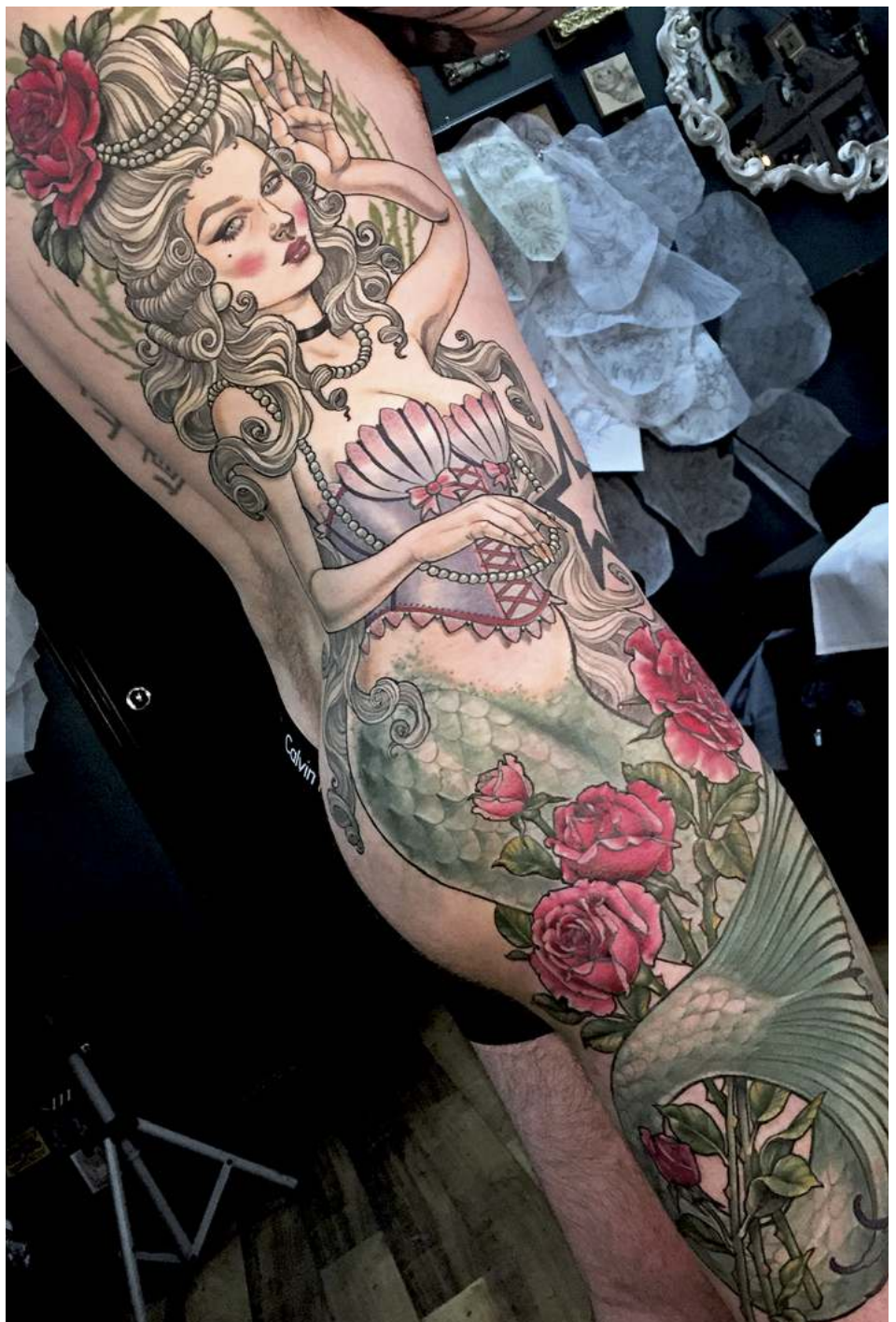
And it can lead to burnout.

Exactly. And that's such a shame. The world is so big and so interesting. There's so much inspiration to be had. You've just gotta not spend your whole life in a tattoo shop! I don't feel guilty about switching off. I'm 100% on when I'm on, so I'm 100% off when I'm off. There's a lot of pressure in this job. The number of people who put things on social media like #nosleep... Are those people really doing the best they can do or are they just bragging about how hard they're working?

Where do you see yourself in the next ten years?

Oh my! I don't even plan my life three months in advance! I just want to be the best I can be – as a person and as an artist – and still working with my best buds I hope. One thing I do know for certain is that I'll be in Canada until the day I die. It's my favourite place in the world.

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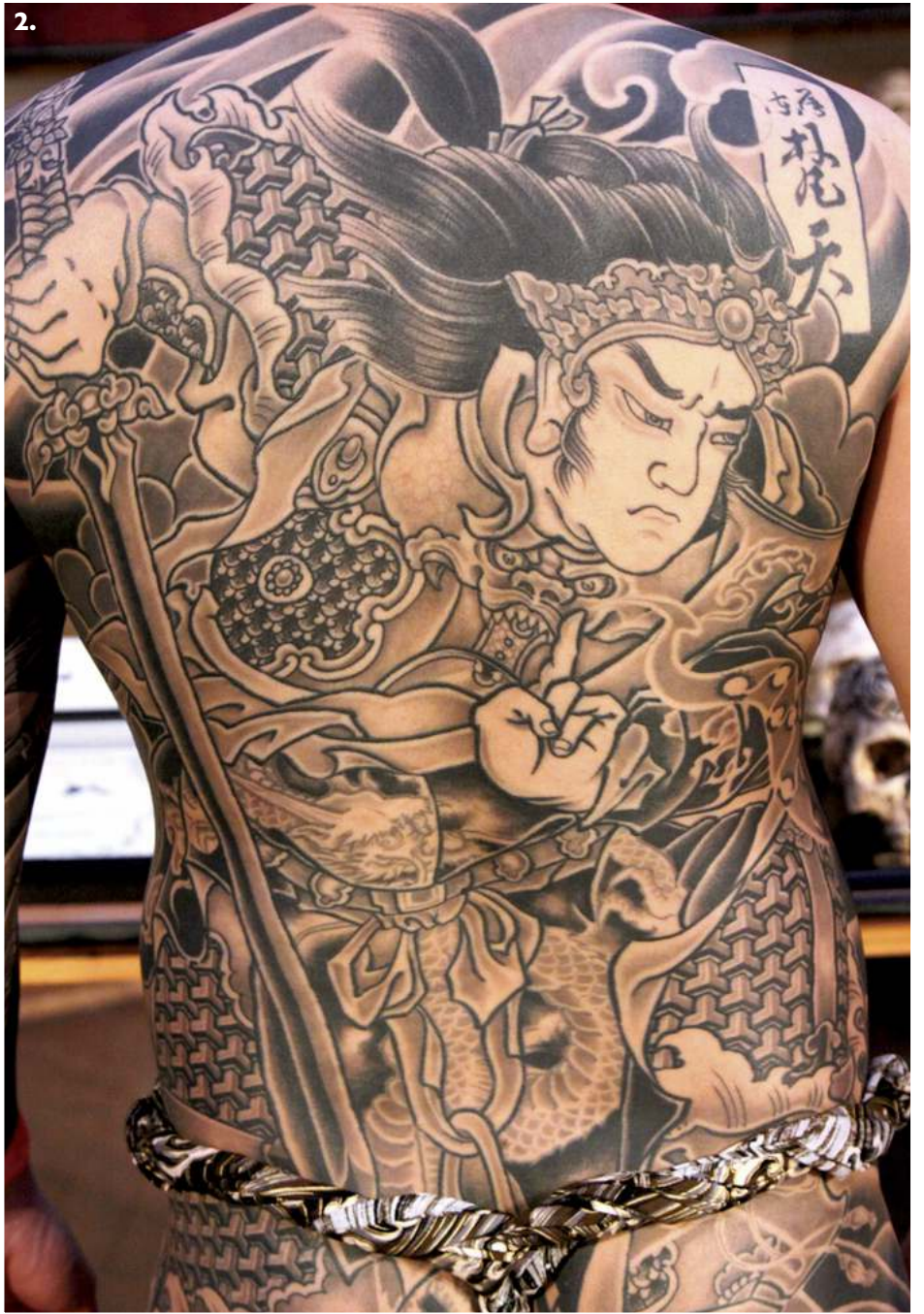
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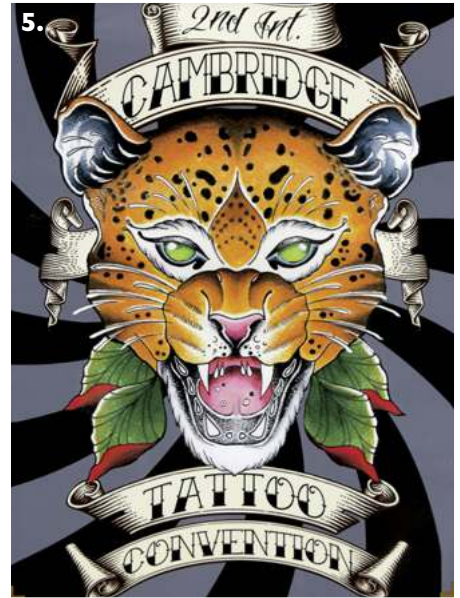
Late autumn is a quiet time of year for tattoo conventions in the UK, so it was a welcome relief from the household chores to visit the 2nd Cambridge Tattoo Convention at the end of October – where the focus was very much on top quality international tattooing.

The convention was held in the very grand Cambridge Guildhall slap bang in the middle of this beautiful city. It's a fine and majestic building with two adjoining function rooms, both of which were in use to house the fifty or so artists who had been personally invited by show organiser Leo Rios (of Leo Rios Tattoo). The booth layout was familiar – all around the edge with a single back-to-back row down the middle – and the rooms were very bright, with high ceilings and a fair amount of natural light. Columns and a polished wooden floor contributed to the sense of civic grandeur.

Finding the actual entrance to the show was a little tricky! It was a small door on the side of the building, and with nowhere suitable to erect a large sign the event wasn't exactly shouting about its existence. Once inside though, clear signage led the way up a few flights of stairs and visitors soon found themselves in the 'belly of the beast.'

Even though the venue boasted a large stage, entertainment was kept to a minimum (predominantly acoustic guitar and singing at a very acceptable low volume) with background music helping to create a comfortable atmosphere.

The heart of this convention was the line-up of quality international artists. Amongst others, lettering specialist Pedro Mendonca and biomech master Krzysztof 'Kali' Wlodarski were there (check out www.cambridgetattoocon.co.uk for the full list). The highlight for me was the small team of Taiwanese tattooists, including George Chou, Tin Chi Im and Edward Yu, who had travelled such a long way to be a part of the event. It was also good to see fresh young English talent – artists such as Ryan Bowey – getting their feet on the convention ladder. Competition time gave the four tattooist-judges a tough challenge, but with sixteen categories over the two days (and both first and second prizes up for grabs) a lot of artists went home happy.



- 1. andrada tattoo (italy)
- 2. edward yu (taiwan)
- 3. dean lofty, two hearts
- 4. donatas lasys, inked moose
- 5. convention poster
- 6. jose, blood of angels
- 7. ceser lemos, the kingdom tattoo art
- 8. stefano o (italy)



Realism is the prevailing style at many conventions right now, and to an extent that was true here. But something else was even more noticeable - the lack of female artists working the show! Only two of the working tattooists were women, which seemed somewhat disproportionate when you consider the picture across the industry as a whole. We're fully aware, though, that getting the balance right on all fronts can be an impossible task for convention organisers.

It seemed to me that good numbers of people were coming through the door, and the artists were certainly busy – but without a bar or a seating area, and with no food inside the venue, the lure of the market outside and so many nearby eateries meant people tended to leave the convention somewhat prematurely after a relatively short visit.

There was a lot to like about the Cambridge Convention and the time passed all too quickly. I was sad that I could only be there for the Saturday; I would very much have liked to come back for a second helping on the Sunday. This show may only be in its second year, but with a great venue and Leo's connections to a stellar line-up it has the potential to grow into something quite special. I look forward to seeing how things progress for Leo and his team.



10. george chou (taiwan)

11. lieke ketelaar, blood of angels

12. alexis masso, black lotus (spain)

13. david pengerzz jenkins, m23 tattoo studio

14. convention trophy

15. koen chamberlain, grey area tattoo

16. dean lofty, two hearts

17. rafal ralfy dabrowski, hypnotic art tattoo

18. filippo puglisi

19. edward yu (taiwan)



TAHLIA UNDARLEGT



Tahlia Undarlegt is a queen of Radness. She's a creative whirlwind, and her artistic talents extend beyond tattooing to illustration and music. Her striking tattoos emerge from her imagination as twisted, dark and playful imagery, executed mainly in black. We were keen to know more about her life and her art!



Tell us about yourself...

I'm somewhere past my mid-twenties, and I'm a full-time nomad with resident guest positions across the globe. I'm from nowhere, but always everywhere.

What led you into tattooing?

A series of epic adventures, a creative mindset and a ratbag attitude.

What's your artistic background?

Sharpies and bathroom walls.

Did you get into art in order to tattoo, or did you start tattooing because you're artistic?

I've always been creative in all aspects of my life. Getting into tattooing was just a natural progression. No matter what route I took, I would always somehow have ended up here.





Which is more important, imagination or ability?

Imagination for sure! Ability comes from lots of hard work and practice, and if anyone is passionate enough about it they can master a skill. It's the ability to create something unique – something that makes you feel or connect without necessarily knowing why – that takes real imagination.

How long have you been tattooing?

I had a bit of a stop-start when I was apprenticing and learning to tattoo. I was really lucky in that I was able to hang out at studios as I travelled. Full-time tattooing has been about two years now, but overall it's three and a half years since I started properly.





Have you always tattooed in your particular blackwork style?

While I was learning, I was heavily influenced by neo-traditional and colour traditional tattoos. I'd always created quite dark, intricate, weird designs with my illustrations – I'd just never realised this was something I could tattoo, as I'd never seen anything like that done before. Luckily I had a good bunch of people around me who pushed me to pursue my own style.

Who, or what, inspires you now?

The observation and weirdness of life, and the world passing by, is what inspires me. It's all so trivial and meaningless, yet we are so connected to it all.



Do you put any hidden symbolism or meanings into your designs?

I try to add personal symbolism and meanings to the pieces I create in the hope that they will resonate with the client – but I wouldn't say they're really hidden as such.

What's the appeal of travelling and working in more than one shop?

I'm a nomad. I love meeting new people, and it's rad to get inspired by the creative crew around me. It's just a way of life for me now.

What has been the biggest lesson you've learned whilst travelling?

Stress less, smile more. Life is pointless so have a rad time.

Would you say you are a tidy person or a messy person?

Somewhere right in the middle.

Tell us about the recent charity flash event at the Darling Parlour in New South Wales, Australia.

The Darling Parlour is my resident guest home. My tattoo family. It was the **@notjustagirl_flashday** event. Female artists all around Australia take part, with the proceeds going to different charities: emergency centres and safe spaces for women and children affected by homelessness or violence; the Full Stop Foundation supporting those affected by sexual assault or domestic abuse; and the Stars Foundation, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support network for women that provides better healthcare and education services. Altogether the event raised nearly one hundred thousand Australian dollars. We were blown away by the support we received. I feel very happy to be able to be able to use my skills to contribute.





What do you aim for in your work? Do you aim for the same things in your tattooing and your illustrations?

I always aim to grow and learn as much as I can, and to keep things fresh and weird. My illustration and tattooing seem to have morphed and grown together as time has gone on. I think they complement each other well.

Do you have to prioritise one medium over the other?

I definitely do. Tattooing is my main medium, and because I enjoy it so much I commit pretty much all my time to it. But I recently realised how important it is to leave some time for myself - to create in other media - otherwise my tattoo work can feel a little stagnant.

Tell us about your love of music.

Music is the heartbeat of life, in my opinion. It's always there to help me create. Each genre has its time and place to boost the good vibes. Just for fun, I'm in a 70s psychedelic band. I find that helps me to top up the creative vibes and also just chill out.

What makes you happy?

Being inspired.

If you could only tattoo one image for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?

Vaginas. because they are beautiful.

What are you most proud of in your career?

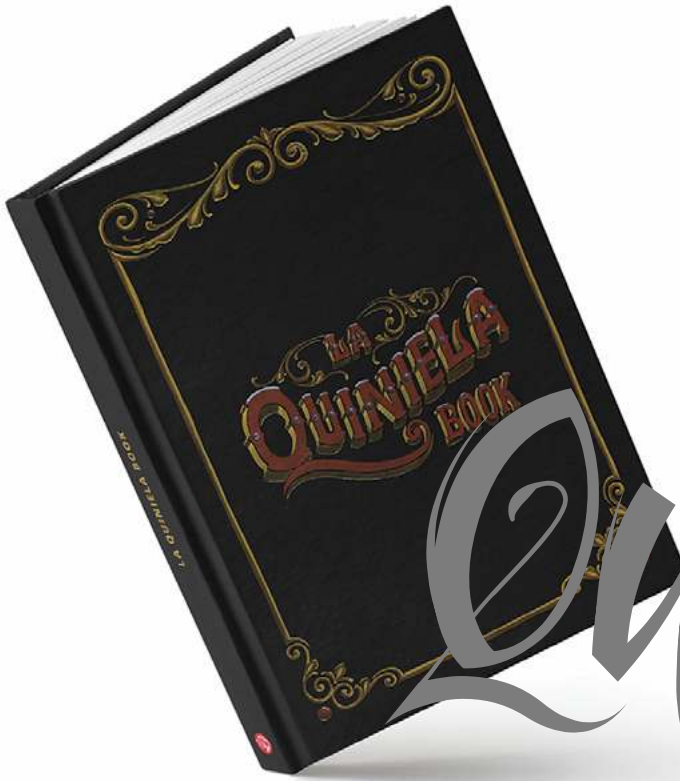
That I am able to actually have a career doing what I love.

What are your plans and hopes for the future?

I go with the flow. I'm hoping to tattoo in Canada and the US next year, then visit Mexico again. I usually only book a few months in advance as I like to be flexible to ride the vibe. I'm always open to invites to new places as well!

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La Quiniela Book

'La Quiniela' is Argentina's equivalent of the UK's National Lottery, football pools and bingo, all rolled into one giant game of chance and prediction. Anibal Fernandez of Antiek Tattoo in Amsterdam tells us how it inspired him to create a beautiful new tattooists' art book.

Perry: First of all, can you explain to us how La Quiniela works? It looks complicated, but I guess that's only because I'm unfamiliar with it...

Anibal: Basically, players bet on groups of four numbers (0000 to 9999) coming up in the draw. It's all run by the National Lottery of Argentina, and it's hugely popular. But for me, the really interesting thing about La Quiniela is the system by which people choose their lucky numbers.

Perry: Tell me more...

Anibal: Well the usual thing is for people to choose their numbers based on a dream they had the previous night, or something that happened to them that day. All the numbers have special meanings and interpretations. For instance a wedding is number 63, the death of a loved one is number 47, and prison is represented by number 44. Even something as ordinary as bad weather has its own number, which is 83. Number 46 is tomatoes, number 66 is earthworms and number 91 is excrement!

Perry: Where did these meanings originate?

Anibal: They are derived from the 'Smorfia Napoletana', a system for interpreting dreams that originated in Naples and was brought to Argentina many years ago. (The word 'Smorfia' actually comes from 'Morpheus', the ancient Greek god of dreams.)

Perry: How does someone know which numbers to choose?

Anibal: There are people with special gifts who look at everyone's dreams and tell them which numbers they should play. When I was a kid, people were gambling on the numbers illegally and every neighbourhood had a 'Quinielero.' These Quinieleros were very respected characters who went from house to house, and also visited all the bars and factories, to take people's bets. But now everybody plays online and there's no longer any need for that clandestine way of doing things.



Perry: Did your family play?

Anibal: No, we never played La Quiniela in my family, but a lot of my friends did.

Perry: What intrigued you about it?

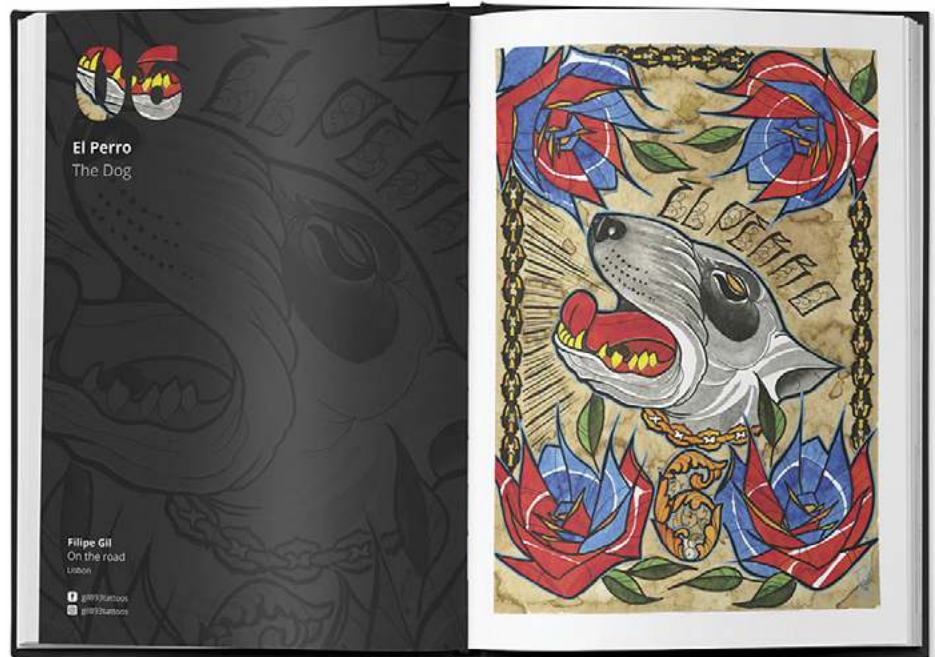
Anibal: I became fascinated by this very real feeling that people had, that they would be saved by a stroke of luck.

Perry: In the book, a hundred artists have each interpreted a different number. What inspired you to embark on this massive project?

Anibal: I've been tattooing for more than twenty years now, and really this book was just a great excuse to bring everyone together and invite them to make art on a theme that has great personal significance for me.

Perry: How long did the book take to compile?

Anibal: It took more than four years. First I had to collect together the hundred artworks, then there was the time that it took to design the book itself, and finally I had to get it printed.



Perry: What are your ambitions for the book?

Anibal: My hope is that people will like it! I really want people to appreciate all these good paintings. From the response it's received, and the feedback I'm getting, it's more than met my expectations.

Perry: So tell us how you put it together.

Anibal: I chose one hundred artists to take part, and each of them produced a picture based on an individual number from one to a hundred. All the artists are friends or colleagues of mine, and we've shared many good moments together over the years. There's only one of them I don't know personally, but it feels like we know each other because of all the friends we have in common.

Perry: How did you allocate the numbers?

Anibal: Because La Quiniela is a game of chance, I thought it made sense to do it as a raffle. So the number each artist received was purely a matter of luck.

Perry: And your number is 16...

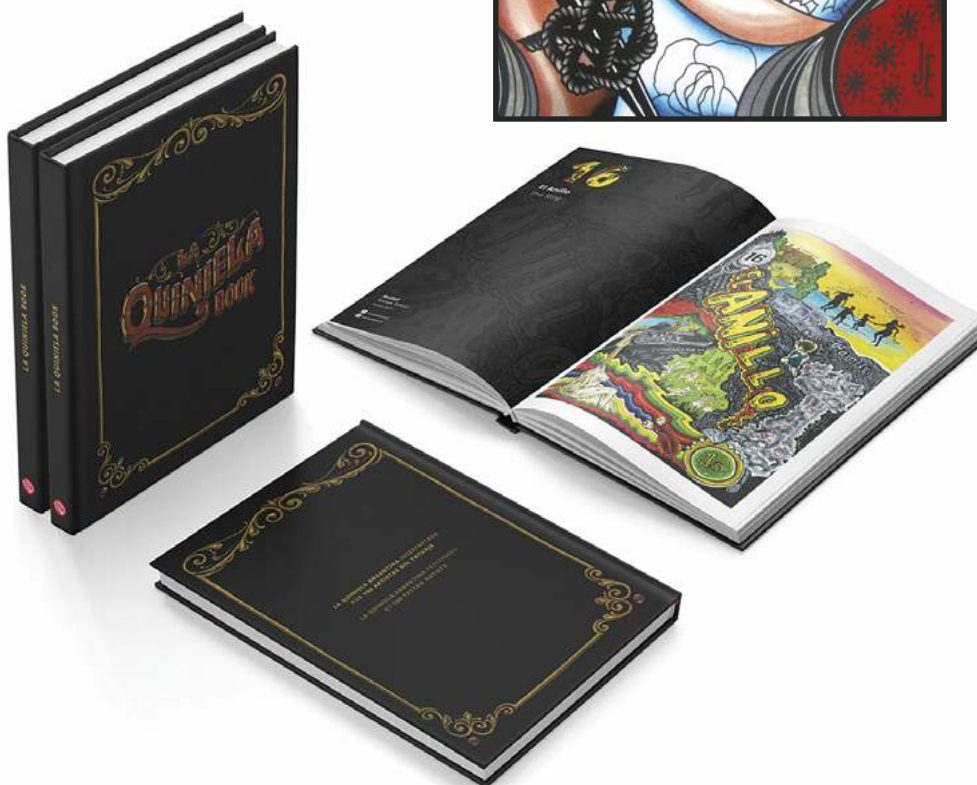
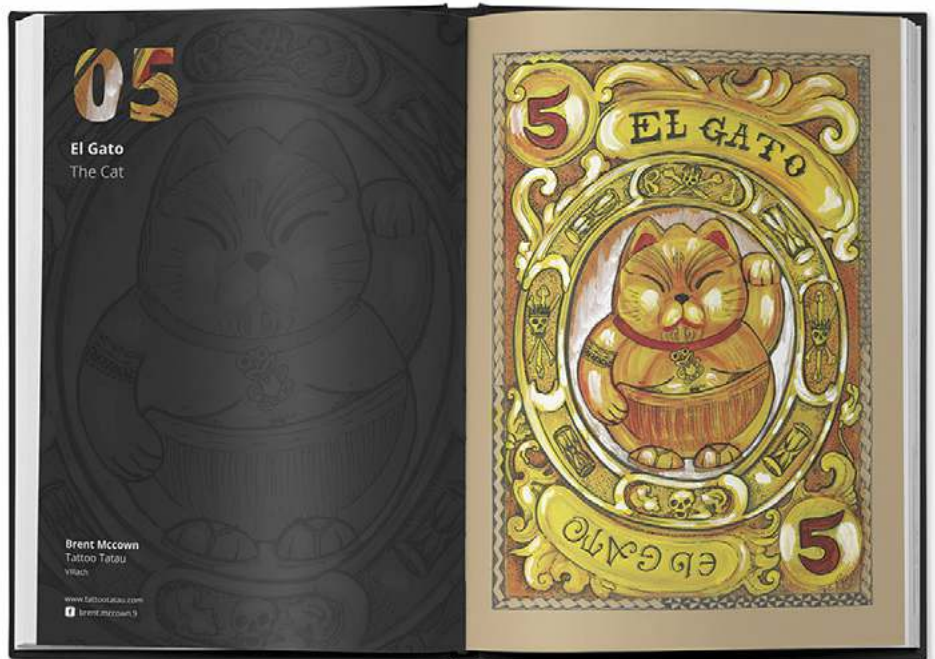
Anibal: Yes, I got the number 16 in the raffle. It's the ring – referring to an engagement ring or a wedding ring – which is rather funny, given that marriage and commitment are the last things on my mind! Hence my interpretation, showing the two contrasting lifestyles that people can choose.

Perry: How many of the artists knew about La Quiniela before this project?

Anibal: About a third of the artists are from Argentina, so obviously they knew what it was all about. For the others, from different countries, I had to do a bit more explaining. Actually, the best thing for me was seeing how the artists who didn't know the game interpreted their numbers. It was amazing to see the finished results. Some of them literally took my breath away. They're all so unique!

Perry: Do you have any personal favourites?

Anibal: That's an impossible question to answer, because all the artists are my friends. But I'm very glad that special people like 'El Bara' (Gustavo Barahona, who taught me a lot in the time that we worked together) and Mariano Castiglioni (the artist who inked my first tattoos, gave me my first tattoo machine and first taught me the art of tattooing) are included.





Perry: Did you encounter any particular problems in compiling and producing the book?

Anibal: Oh yes, there were many problems. I could write a novel about everything that happened! But the good news is that all the artists were very patient...

Perry: Looking back, would you change anything?

Anibal: This was a very big project, and it was the first time I'd done anything like it – so yes, if I had the opportunity to go back I would definitely change a few things. I've learned a lot.

Perry: Where does the project go from here?

Anibal: We launched the book with an exhibition of the original one hundred artworks in my tattoo shop / art gallery, Antiek Tattoo in Amsterdam. It was truly amazing to see so many artists gathered together in one place. We then had an exhibition at the Brussels Tattoo Convention this autumn. Next year I'm planning on doing it all in Argentina, with a big party!

Perry: How can people get hold of *La Quiniela Book*?

Anibal: You can visit our website, www.antiektattoo.com

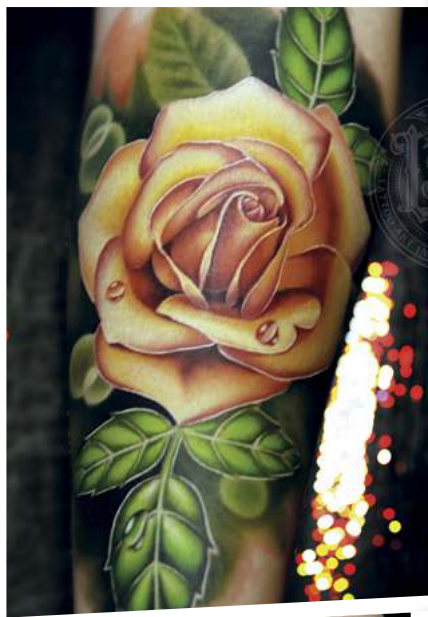
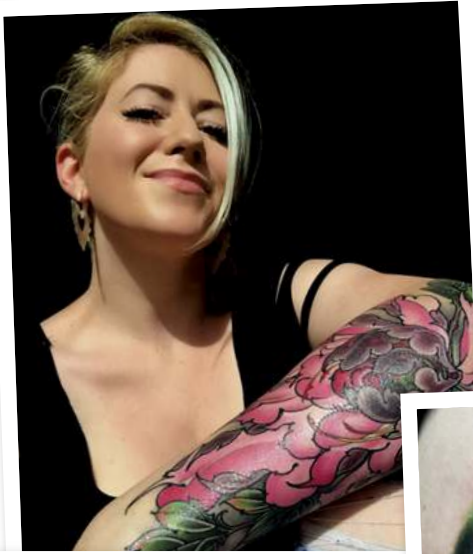
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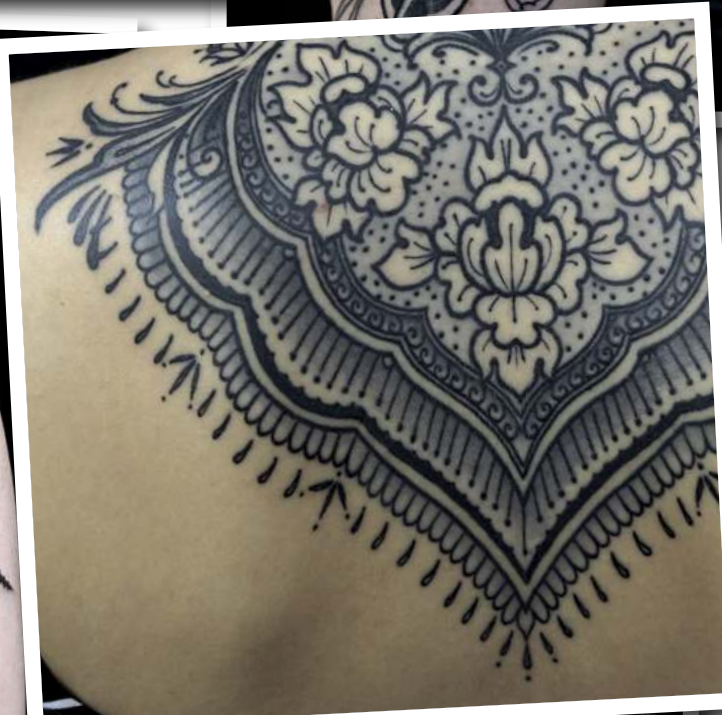
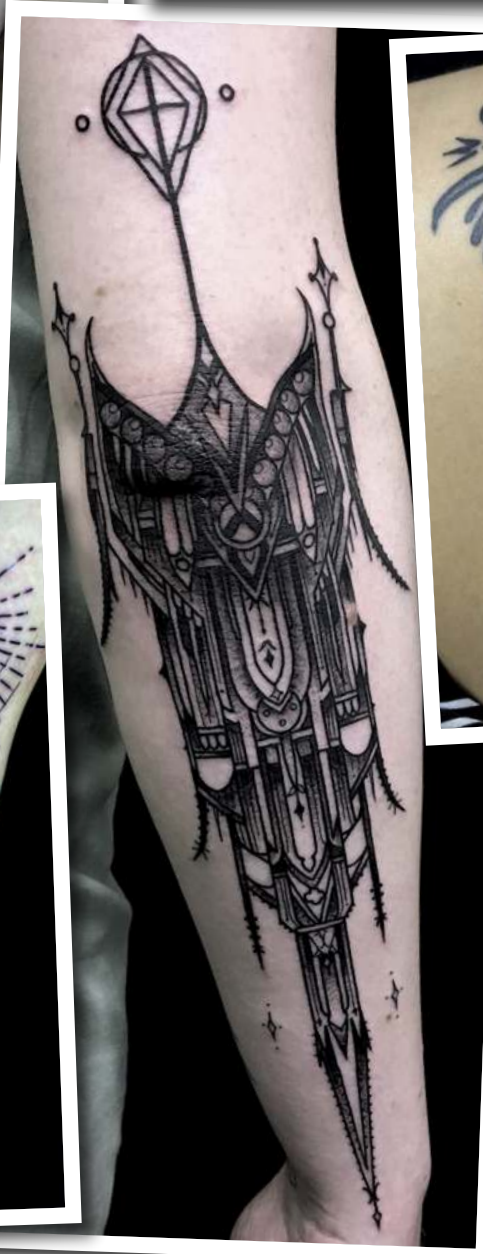
LIZ VENOM BOMBSHELL TATTOO (CANADA)





ESZTER DAVID

PARLIAMENT TATTOO







Daria Pirojenko is a highly original 26-year old Russian artist who has developed a unique style of collaged tattoos. Combining realism, script, colour washes and avant-garde elements, she's rapidly establishing a name for herself at the exciting creative edge of contemporary tattooing.

Originally from the Sochi region of Russia – in the south, near the Black Sea and surrounded by the beautiful Caucasus mountains – Daria only got into tattooing about five years ago. “My friends were starting to collect tattoos, and I got to know a local tattooist. He was very old school; he wasn't very good at drawing and his work was very out-of-date. I'd always been very artistic – despite my parents' efforts to get me to be more academic! – so I offered to help him with his designs. Then with the money he paid me I decided to buy some equipment of my own and begin tattooing from home. Previously I'd had a job as a manager in a finance company but I'd been made redundant, so I had some money from that as well. I just put a post on social media saying I was starting out as a tattooist and was looking for customers who wanted free tattoos. I was inundated!”

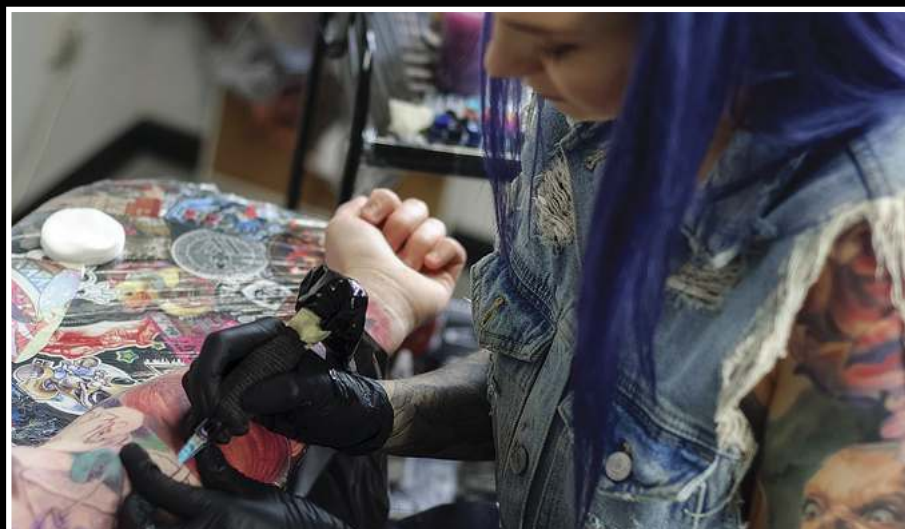
PiROJENko

Interview by Perry • Photos supplied by Daria Pirojenko



After just a few weeks Daria was invited to work in a nearby beauty salon, in her own private room, where she soon built up a loyal local clientele. After a while, though, she felt the time was right to relocate to the big city – and that’s when her tattoo career really began.

I ask Daria how she learnt to tattoo. Surely someone must have taught her the basics at least? “No, there wasn’t really anybody who actually taught me how to tattoo. But it’s in my nature to be a perfectionist. I could never allow myself to do a ‘bad’ tattoo. I began by doing simple things, then tried to make each one more and more difficult, to develop my skills. I visited good tattoo shops and sat behind the tattooists (hardly breathing, so I didn’t disturb them!) to watch how they worked. I noted how they held their machines and how they moved their hands, how they wiped their tattoos, what power settings they were using... Everything! Then I would go back home and try it for myself. Step by step, I slowly gained the knowledge I needed.”



“Last winter,” she continues, “I attended an excellent 7-day workshop given by a Russian realism artist. It was incredible. One day we would paint with oils, the next day we would tattoo our painting on to skin. We did this three times. I learnt so much. Before the workshop, I would just copy portraits; now, my work has so much more life. That course showed me how to really use colours for maximum effect.”

“Tattooing in Russia is very popular now,” Daria continues. “Where I’m based, in the southern city of Krasnodar, the weather is warm and people feel naked if they don’t have tattoos on show. In other parts of the country – Siberia for instance – where it’s colder, people are always more covered up with clothes, so it’s not so good for tattoos. In the shop where I currently work, NBK Tattoo Collective, there are eighteen artists spread over two floors. We all work in different styles and we’re all busy. But tattoos are more for young people here. They’re not so popular with the older generation. I think this is probably because we don’t really have a history of tattooing, or a tattoo culture as such. Really it’s only been prison tattoos. So if I walk down the street with my tattoos on show, I still get funny looks from older people.”



Daria goes on to tell me that the Russian tattoo scene is different from that in many other countries. "In Russia, tattooing is still a little bit underground," she explains. "It's less like a business. It's purely an artistic passion. When I travel around Europe I see that in most other countries the relationship between tattooist and client is usually based around the shop; the client makes an appointment through the shop and may not even meet the artist until the day of the consultation, or even the day of the tattoo. In Russia it's much more like a personal friendship; tattooists and clients have to find each other. Artists do all their own bookings, so we meet the client early on and if we don't 'click' we can always say no! It seems to me that it's much more of a collaboration this way; it's not just a business arrangement."

But for Daria, this collaboration definitely doesn't extend to the design process itself. She explains why. "I show my design to the customer only on the morning of the session. It's basic human psychology. If the customer sees the design any sooner, they're going to take it home to show their mother, father, brother, sister and all their friends, and even if they liked it fine in the first place, the next day they'll be thinking, 'Hmm, I want to change this, and that, and that...' and it simply won't work. I create my imagery from an initial idea provided by the customer, but it's always my own artistic vision that I then present in the form of the finished tattoo design. I find that's always the best way."

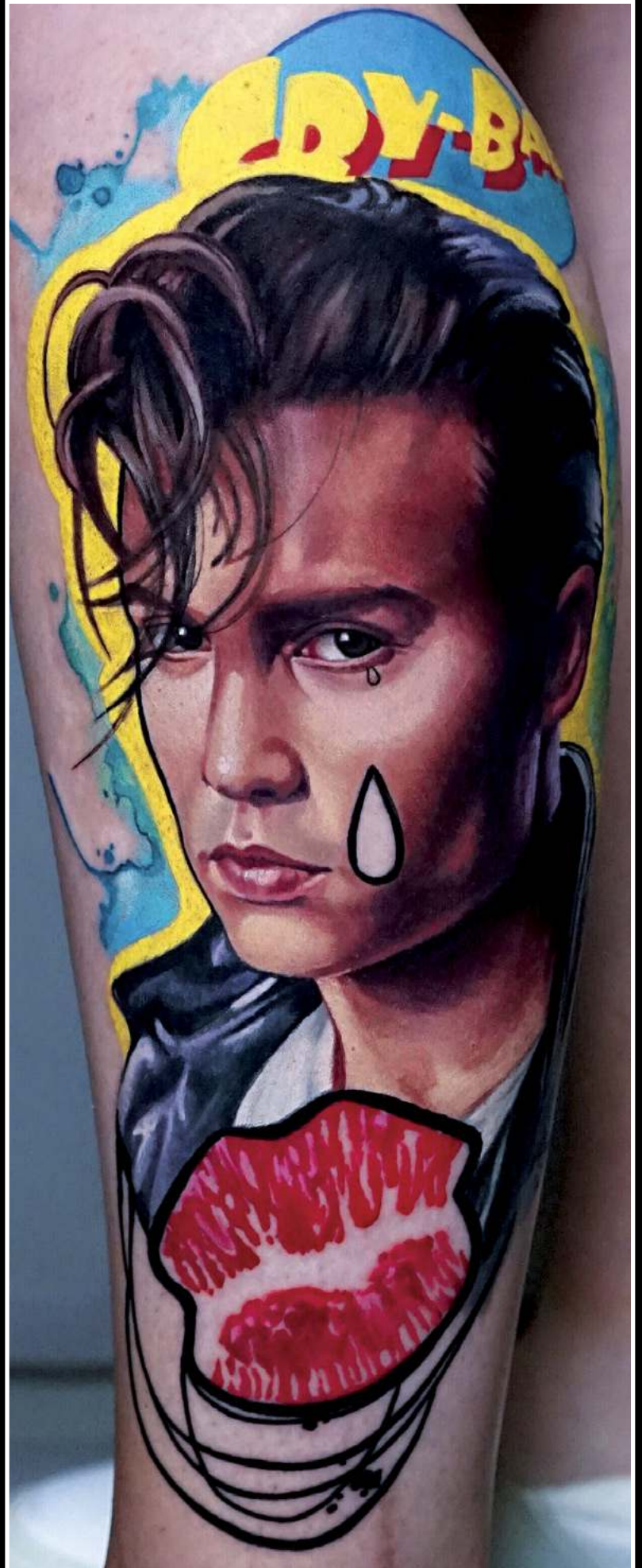
"In Russia," Daria continues, "customers are usually very open-minded and happy to take suggestions from me. It's great, because I can usually turn them on to one of my designs. In Europe, clients see my work and like it, but they're not often brave enough to take a chance on it! I think this is partly because it's so colourful, and they are worried about how it will look in the future. But people do seem to be opening up to my ideas a bit more now; every time I travel, it's different."







Because Daria's work encompasses such a variety of different elements, she needs to be skilled in lots of different techniques. I ask her to describe how she has developed her style. "It happened quite naturally. My previous work was more in a watercolour style, which has always interested me. Then I introduced lettering. I started finding line work and flat colours really attractive, then after a few years I began using more realistic elements as the central focus of my designs. So again and again I had to learn new skills. The actual construction of my designs is not difficult. I enjoy combining all that I have learnt into every piece."



There aren't many other tattooists who do work like Daria's, so I found myself wondering where she looks for inspiration. "Jay Freestyle has been a major influence," she tells me. "He used to do a lot of avant-garde, watercolour tattoos. Now he does some amazing crazy designs. Another artist is Dave Paulo. I love the way he can adapt and transform a portrait. There are lots of artists who inspire me, but I never copy anyone. I would only use their work as a springboard for my own ideas."

Daria tells me she always begins by working on the bottom third of the tattoo. Then she moves on to do the top section, and comes to the central part of the design last. "The logic is simple," she explains. "Doing it this way makes it much easier for both me and the customer to complete the tattoo. When we're coming towards the end, we're both tired and it's also the most painful time for the customer. If we weren't doing the main part of the design, it would be easy for the customer to say, 'It's OK, I'm happy for it to be slightly unfinished. Let's stop now!' Whereas if it's the central element that we're finishing off, they somehow find the strength to power through. For me, of course, it's the slowest part of the design because I'm using a small needle and putting in lots of detail. But that's how I manage to finish big projects in one session. And because I always design the tattoo completely before I start to tattoo it, I don't have to adjust what I'm doing as I go along. I can simply focus on recreating the image exactly as I've drawn it. This means the client also knows exactly what to expect and can watch the progress throughout."

Daria tells me that ideally, she would like to progress to larger-scale projects. "I did a whole leg at the Deauville Tattoo Festival – a geisha design – and that was really cool. But I know that my style doesn't necessarily lend itself to larger pieces. I don't like it when a sleeve is made up of several small pieces dotted about; the overall design should be visible from a distance, then reveal more and more detail the closer you get. So I know that I need to change my composition a bit for it to work on a larger scale. That's why I love the work of Jay Freestyle. He can do whole sleeves, backs and legs – incorporating dotwork, watercolour, realism – and they work so well."

I ask Daria about her equipment and ink. "I only use World Famous inks now," she tells me. "I love their consistency. Of course all skin is different, but the first time I tried World Famous it just went in so well. So smooth. So bright. And it heals well too. They also have a huge range of colours. I use a Russian machine. It looks like a pen and uses cartridges, and it was designed by a tattooist. It's really strong and it wasn't expensive at all. If people ask me, I just say it's a Cheyenne! I think equipment like this is fuelling the amazing development of contemporary tattooing – with cordless machines, cartridges (meaning you only need one machine) and inks that go into the skin so efficiently and cleanly. I don't think it can get much better than it is now!"





I am curious to know whether Daria makes much use of an iPad. "I use an iPad, but I like to paint by hand too," she tells me. "I think it's crucial to always be drawing and looking. My brain never turns off! Every night I use the iPad to prepare for the next day's tattooing. It's a good tool for that. But painting is important to me, because I use a lot of watercolour in my tattoos and without the actual reference that I create I cannot properly see how it will work on the skin. With something like watercolour, unless you actually do it you can never really understand how it works. It's such a pleasure to work with oils, too, and enjoy the richness of that particular creative experience. I like digital art, but I don't have the time to create it. The iPad is good for so much in tattooing, but for convincing avant-garde you really need to paint it and splash and blend by hand for it to be real."

Right now, Daria has no plans for opening her own studio. "I'm just an artist," she says, "and I don't want to be responsible for people working under me. I want to enjoy all the freedom that tattooing can offer me. Besides, in my city I already have a good studio to work in!" And what of the future? "I would like to do some collaborative tattoos at some point, because I think I could learn a lot from working closely with other artists. And maybe I might even design a range of clothing..."

Daria travels a lot and finds overseas conventions inspiring. (She tells me the after parties are as important as the conventions themselves because she loves to meet and mix with the other artists when they're not working.) She is also keen to take up any opportunities for guest spots that might come her way. But the sense of belonging and happiness that she feels when she returns from a long trip means that, for Daria, Russia will always be home.

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Instagram: @secondskinderby

Uptown Tattoo Studio

4 woodgate, Leicester, LE3 5GE
Tel no: 01162 251 661
uptowntattoostudio@gmail.com
www.uptowntattoostudio.com

EAST OF ENGLAND

Braintree Tattoo Studio

148 Coggeshall Rd,
Braintree CM7 9ER
Tel no: 01376 560 633
info@braintreetattooostudio.co.uk
www.braintreetattooostudio.co.uk

Churchyard Tattoo

14 Churchyard,
Hitchin SG5 1HR
Tel no: 01462 338 781
cytattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @churchyardtattoos

Crossed Arrows Tattoo

21-23 St George Street,
Norwich. NR3 1AB
Tel no: 01603 762 636
crossedarrowstattoo@gmail.com
Facebook: Crossed Arrows Tattoo

Cult Classic Tattoo

32 North St,
Romford RM1 1BH
Tel no: 01708 730 500
cultclassicattoo@gmail.com
www.cultclassicattoo.com

Electric Punch Tattoo

Unit 4, the Pavillion,
Tower Centre, Hoddesdon
EN11 8UB
Tel no: 01992 447 756
info@electricpunchtattoo.co.uk
www.electricpunchtattoo.co.uk

Five Keys Tattoo

8 Orford Hill,
Norwich, Norfolk NR13QD
Tel no: 01603 958 814
fivekeystattoo@gmail.com
www.fivekeystattoo.com

Indigo Tattoo and Piercing

2 Lower Goat Lane,
Norwich, Norfolk NR2 1EL
Tel no: 01603 886 143
www.indigotattoo.co.uk
indigotattooandpiercing@gmail.com

Immortal Ink

39 - 43 Baddow Road,

Chelmsford, CM2 0DB
Tel no: 01245 493 444
contact@immortalink.co.uk
www.immortalink.co.uk

Red's Tattoo Parlour

123a High Street
Colchester, Essex, CO1 1SZ
Tel no: 01206 766 606
www.redstattoo.co.uk

LONDON

Briar Rose Tattoo

172 Manor Lane, London,
SE128LP
private and custom only studio
www.briarrosattoo.com
instagram: @briarrosattoo
instagram: @tiggytattoos
instagram: @olivetats

The Family Business

58 Exmouth Market,
Clerkenwell, London EC1R 4QE
Tel no: 0207 278 9526
info@thefamilybusinessattoo.com
www.thefamilybusinessattoo.com

Frith Street Tattoo

18 Frith Street (basement),
Soho, London W1D 4RQ
Tel no: 020 7734 8180
frithstreettattoo.london@gmail.com
www.frithstreettattoo.co.uk

Fudoshin Tattoos

158 George Lane, London E18 1AY
Tel no: 020 8989 6144
fudoshintattoos@hotmail.com
www.fudoshintattoos.com

Happy Sailor Tattoo

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

I Hate Tattoos

Unit 1, 400-405 York Way, London
N7 9LR
Tel no: 07904 174 819
herringfishbloke@hotmail.co.uk
Facebook: I Hate Tattoos Studio

Ink Lounge Tattoo Studio

310 C Green Lanes, Palmers
Green London N13 5TT, UK
Tel no: 0203 490 2663
info@inklounge.co.uk
www.inklounge.co.uk
Instagram - inklounge

Inksmiths Of London

8 Chequers Parade, Eltham,
London SE9 1DD
Tel no: 020 8617 3338

Inksmithsoflondon@gmail.com
Instagram: @InksmithsofLondon

Kilburn Original Tattoo

175 Kilburn High Road, Kilburn,
London. NW6 7HY
Tel no: 0207 372 3662
info@kilburnoriginal.com
Instagram: @kilburntattoo

Leviticus Tattoo Emporium

170 High Road (Cuthberts Alley)
Loughton, Essex, IG10 1DN
Tel no: 0208 502 4029
leviticustattoo@hotmail.com
www.leviticustattooemporium.co.uk

Lowrider Tattoo

311 Bethnal Green Road, London
E2 6AH
Tel no: 0208 739 5115
Inquiry@lowridertattoo.london.com
Instagram: @lowridertattoo.london

New Wave Tattoo Studio

157 Sydney Road, Muswell Hill,
London N10 2NL
Tel no: 0208 444 8779
lalhardy@hotmail.co.uk
www.newwavetattoo.co.uk

Old Habits Tattoo

364 Kingsland Road, London.
E8 4DA
Tel no: 0203 609 0931
oldhabitstattoo@gmail.com
www.oldhabitstattoo.com

Seven Doors Tattoo

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

Through My Third Eye

342 Hornsey Road, London.
N7 7HE
Tel no: 0203 417 2552
throughmythirdeye@outlook.com
www.throughmythirdeye.com

SOUTH EAST

All Or Nothing Tattoo and Piercings

12 Church Street
Witham, Essex CM8 2JL
Tel no: 01376 519 602
Email: aontattoo@outlook.com
www.aontattoo.com

1770 Tattoo

4 Little East Street
Brighton BN1 1HT
Tel no: 01273 710 730
info@1770tattoo.com
www.1770tattoo.com

Death's Door Tattoo

13-16 Vine Street,
Brighton. BN1 4AG
deathsdoortattoos@gmail.com
Instagram: @deathsdoortattoo

The Church Tattoo

11 Church Road
Redditch B97 4AB
Tel no: 01527 759 852
thechurchtattoo@hotmail.com
Facebook:
facebook.com/thechurchtattoo

Fine Art Tattoo and Piercing Studio

6 York Street, Ramsgate, Kent
CT11 9DS
Tel no: 01843 588 885
fine-art-tattoo@hotmail.co.uk
www.finearttattoo.co.uk

Higgins and Co

69 Terminus Road, Above
Coffee Republic,
Eastbourne BN21 3NJ
Tel no: 01323 301 973
higginsandco71@gmail.com
www.higginsandcotattoo.co.uk

Scribbly Head @Electric Buddha

32-36 Plains of Waterloo,
Ramsgate CT11 8HX
Tel no: 01843 855 041
scribbly_head@hotmail.com
Instagram: @scribbly_head

Rising Phoenix Tattoo

6 High Street,
Leighton Buzzard. LU7 1EA
Tel no: 01525 217 121
studio@risingphoenixtattoo.co.uk
www.risingphoenixtattoo.co.uk

Seven Sins Tattoo

10 High Street, Horley, Surrey,
RH6 7AY
Tel no: 01293 775 385
info@sevensinstattoo.com
www.sevensinstattoo.co.uk/

Skinned Alive Tattoo

24 Church Street
Brighton, BN1 1RB
info@skinnedalivetattoo.com
www.skinnedalivetattoo.com
Instagram: @skinnedalivetattoo

Valhalla Tattoo

215 High Street, Bromley,
Kent. BR1 1NY
Tel no: 0208 313 9470
info@valhallatattoo.co.uk
www.facebook.com/valhallatattoo215

SOUTH WEST

Crow Quill

63 Bedford Pl, Southampton
SO15 2DS
Tel no: 023 8034 0058
instagram: @thecrowquill
www.thecrowquill.co.uk

Needle and Fred Tattoo

22 High St, Littlehampton
BN17 5EE
Tel no: 01903 733 622
needleandfred@live.co.uk
Instagram: @inkfred

North Gate Tattoo

13 Northgate St,
Bath BA1 5AS
info@northgatetattoo.com
www.northgatetattoo.com

Purple Rose Tattoo

56 Staple Hill Road, Fishponds,
Bristol, BS16 5BS
Tel no: 01173 300 123
purplerosetattoo@hotmail.co.uk
www.purplerosetattoo.co.uk

WALES

Dexterity Ink

Unit 9 Indoor Peoples Market
LL13 8 Wrexham
Tel no: 01978 447 100
www.facebook.com/DexterityInk
TattooStudio09

Physical Graffiti

124 City Road, Cardiff. CF24 3DQ
Tel no: 029 2048 1428
pgct@hotmail.co.uk
Instagram: @physicalgraffittatooos

Stronghold Tattoo

2nd floor Hugh St Chambers
Cardiff, CF10 1BD
Tel no: 07943 981671
www.strongholdtattoo.com

WEST MIDLANDS

Cosmic Monsters Incorporated

Mitre House, the courtyard
27 The Strand, Bromsgrove
B61 8AB
Tel no: 07863 135814
cmitattoo@gmail.com
www.cmi-tattoo.com

Dark Horse Collective

33 Boldmere Rd,
Sutton Coldfield B73 5UY
Tel no: 01214 061 635
www.darkhorsecollective.com

Nala Tattoo & Piercing Studio

81 Bolebridge Street
Tamworth, B79 7PD
Tel no: 01827 68 353
contact@nalastudio.co.uk
www.nalastudio.co.uk

NORTH WEST

All Style Tattoos

28 Crellin Street
Barrow in Furness, LA14 1DU
Tel no: 01229 838 946
Email: allstyletattoos@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/allstyletattoos
barrow

Aurora Tattoo

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

Bold As Brass Tattoo

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

Dabs Tattoo

78b Eastbourne Road
Southport
PR8 4DU
01704566665
Dabstatoos@btconnect.com
https://www.facebook.com/dab-
stattoo/DABS Tattoo
@tattoosatdabs

Inkden Tattoo & Piercing Studio

50 B Coronation Street,
Blackpool FY1 4PD
Tel: 07957 021 702
inkden.tattoo@gmail.com
www.inkdentattoo.co.uk

Marked for life

45 High Street, (Winpenney house)
Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1SB
Tel no: 01642 641 235
tattooofl@gmail.com
www.marked-for-life.com

Sacred Art Tattoo

497 Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton,
Manchester. M21 8AG
Tel: 0161 881 1530
tattoo@sacredarttattoo.co.uk
www.sacredarttattoo.co.uk

Skin Kandi Tattoo Studio

50a Westfield Street, St Helens
Merseyside WA10 1QF
Tel no: 01744 734699
skinkandi@hotmail.co.uk
www.skinkandi.co.uk

True 'til Death

13 Whalley Road
Accrington, BB51AD
Tel no: 01254 433 760
Email: via Facebook – True 'Til
Death Tattoo
www.accringtontattoo.com

IRELAND

Yakuza Tattoo

41 Michael Street
Waterford, Ireland
Tel no: +353 51 852 621
Email: soydantattoo@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/Yakuza Tattoo
Studio

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS

2nd-3rd February

Tattoo Freeze

The International Centre
St Quentin Gate,
Telford TF3 4JH,
www.tattoofreeze.com

23rd-24th February

Brighton Tattoo Convention,

Brighton Centre, Kings Road,
Brighton, BN1 2GR
www.brightontattoo.com

2nd-3rd March

Tattoo Tea Party

The Trafford Centre
Stretford
Manchester
www.tattooteaparty.com

30th – 31st March

Scottish Tattoo Convention

Edinburgh Corn Exchange
10 New Market Rd
Edinburgh EH14 1RJ
www.scottishtattooconvention.net/

6th-7th April

Portsmouth Tattoo Fest

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

7th April

Ink & Iron

The New Bingley Hall
1 Hockley Circus
Birmingham B18 5PP
inkandiron.co.uk

20th April

Maidstone Tattoo Extravaganza

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

27th -28th April

The Big North Tattoo Show

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

26th-28th April

World Tattoo Festival

Eikon Exhibition Centre,

Balmoral Park,
Lisburn, UK
www.worldtattoofestival.com

3rd-5th May

Liverpool Tattoo Convention,

Britannia Adelphi Hotel,
Ranelagh Street, Liverpool,
www.liverpooltattooconvention.com

16th-18th August

Blackpool Tatcon

Norbreck Castle Hotel
Queen's Promenade
Blackpool, Lancashire FY2 9AA
www.tatconblackpool.co.uk

OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS

14th-16th December

Bucharest Tattoo Convention

Neomundo Convention Center
Calle 89 Transversal Oriental Metropolitana-69,
Barrio Tejar, Bucaramanga, Santander,
Colombia

12th-13th January

Winter Tattoo Fest

Midleton Park Hotel
Old Cork Road, 000 Midleton
Ireland

18th-20th January

Goa Tattoo Festival

Tito's Pub, Baga, Goa, India
www.facebook.com/goatattooofestival

25th-27th January

Lille Tattoo Convention

Lille Grand Palais
1, Boulevard of the United
Cities 59777 Lille France
www.lilletattooconvention.com

25th-27th January

Golden State Tattoo Expo

Pasadena Visitor Center
300 E Green St, Pasadena, CA 91101,
United States
www.goldenstatetattooexpo.com

8th-10th February

Milan Tattoo Convention

FIERA MILANO CITY
Via Gattamelata Gate 13,
Milan 20149,
Italy
www.milanotattooconvention.it/

15-17 February

Mondial du Tatuage

Parc de la Villette
211, avenue Jean Jaurès
75019 Paris
www.mondialdutatuage.com

15-17 February

6th intl. Tattoo Expo Maastricht

MECC Maastricht
Forum 100
6229 GV Maastricht
Netherlands
www.tattooexpo.eu

1st-3rd March

Ptak Warsaw Expo

Aleja Katowicka 62,
05-830 Nadarzyn,
Poland
www.tattoodays.pl/

March 8th-10th

Pittsburgh Tattoo Expo

Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel at Station Square
300 W Station Square Dr Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania 15219
United States
www.pittsburghtattooexpo.com

9th-10th March

Rotterdam Builders

Tattoo Convention
Maassilo, Maashaven Zuidzijde 1-2, 3081 AE
Rotterdam, The Netherlands
www.unitedconventions.com

22nd-24th March

Taiwan Kaohsiung International Tattoo Convention

International Convention Center Kaohsiung
274, Zhongzheng 4th Rd.
Yancheng Dist. Kaohsiung,
Taiwan
www.tattoo.org.tw/

5th-7th April

Singapore Ink Show

Suntec Singapore Exhibition Centre
1 Raffles Boulevard, Suntec City,
Singapore
www.sginkshow.com/



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