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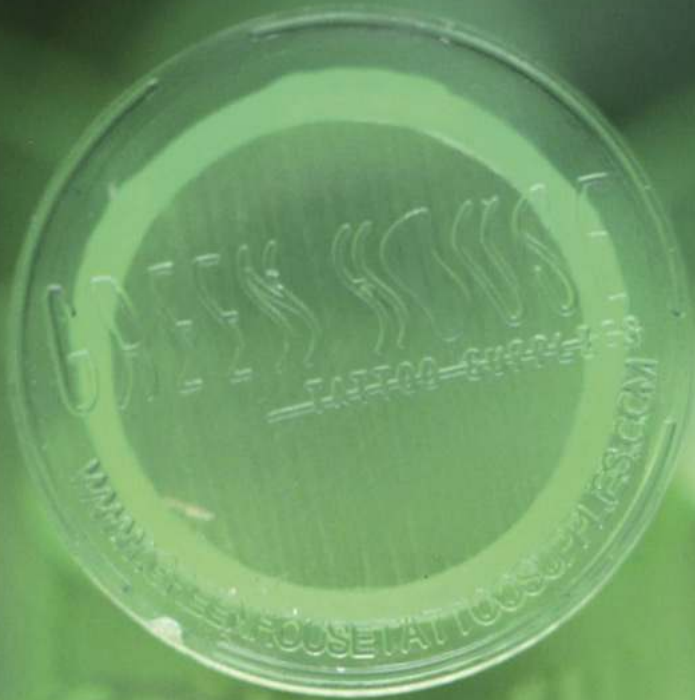
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EDITORIAL 176



'Everything is Now' is the powerful title of the current exhibition at The Solent Showcase Gallery in Southampton (running until 22nd June). At one of the accompanying events, visitors were offered free tattoos - the only condition being that they should feature the word NOW. Curated by Stacey Heale, the exhibition was inspired by a conversation she'd had with her husband Greg Gilbert after he was diagnosed with stage four inoperable bowel cancer. She asked whether he had any regrets. "I wish I'd dressed more like Marc Bolan," was the reply. "I can't really understand now why I didn't..." In an act of solidarity, Stacey immediately bought some silver glam rock boots for herself.

The theme of the exhibition is not letting life pass you by - because one day it'll all be too late - and it poses the big question, "What are you afraid to do?"

Ever asked anyone what they regret? I guarantee you, most of the time, they will start their answer with, "I wish I had..." Had. Not hadn't.

"If only I'd done this...", "I should have done that..." They're the worst regrets, the ones we dwell on, because the thing we regret is often something we really want to try. It's often something that feels very true to ourselves (rather than something that others expect of us). We just never get round to it. There's no time. Or we don't know how to do it. Or we're too old OR too young. And so we spend the rest of our lives thinking "What if I had...?"

There's a rather wholesome old American children's programme called 'Mister Rogers'. I watched a clip the other day in which he asked his audience, "Do you like to draw with crayons?" He then went on, "I'm not very good at it, but it doesn't matter. It's just the fun of doing it that's important." And then comes the punchline. He finishes his drawing and says, "Now, I wouldn't have made that if I'd just thought about it... It wouldn't be there!" and he goes on to sing about how good it is to do things instead of just thinking about them.

And now, somewhat paradoxically, I'll leave you to think about that.

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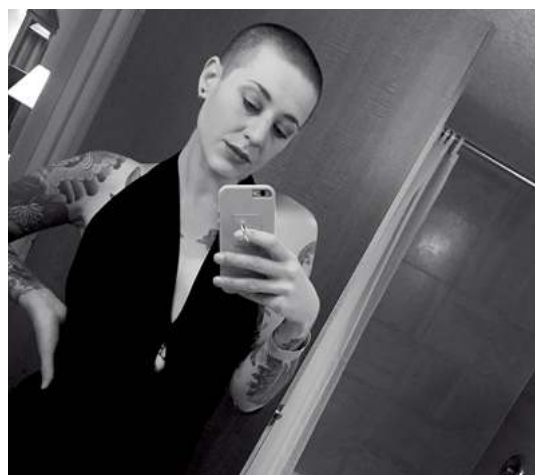
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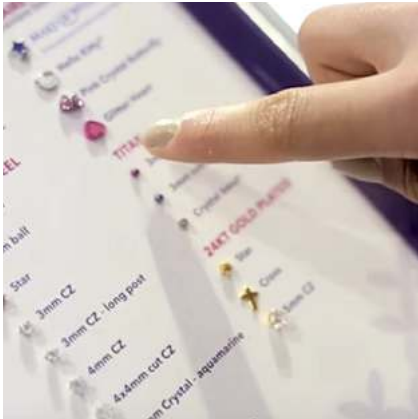
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NEWS & REVIEWS



Send your news, studio announcements, books or products for review, and items of general curiosity and intrigue for the tattoo cognoscenti to: **NEWS, TOTAL TATTOO MAGAZINE, 111 FURZE ROAD, NORWICH, NR7 0AU** (totaltattoo@totaltattoo.co.uk)



CHILD EAR PIERCING AT CLAIRE'S

The subject of consent in regard to body piercing continues to be debated amongst practitioners when an open letter to high street jewellery chain Claire's Accessories was shared across social media worldwide. Former Canadian employee Raylene Marks was allegedly told she could face disciplinary action for refusing to pierce the ears of a 7-year-old girl who changed her mind about having her ears pierced. In the letter, Raylene writes about how the child in question "pleaded and sobbed for thirty minutes not to be pierced.", and goes on to explain:

"This child was articulate, smart, and well aware of herself and her body. She expressed that she didn't want us touching her, that we were standing too close, that she was feeling uncomfortable... she no longer wanted to get her ears pierced.... That child's message was loud and clear to me... To my great relief, in the end the mother respected her daughter's wishes, and took her home."

Although the child did not have her ears pierced, Raylene says on social media that when talking to her manager about the encounter the following day, she was told that she would have had no choice but to do it, if the mother had insisted on it; and that even if they have to restrain a child the piercers are required to continue the procedure if it's what the parent wants. Following the meeting, Raylene handed her notice in, explaining "I had a choice between facing disciplinary action (that could eventually lead to my termination) the next time I refused to pierce the ears of children who withdrew their consent, or leaving on my own terms. I chose the latter. My manager continues to assert that the other Claire's managers in this district [Edmonton, Alberta] are in agreement with her... Children can be held down and pierced."

In a statement on social media, Claire's have announced they are re-examining their children's piercing policies.

FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

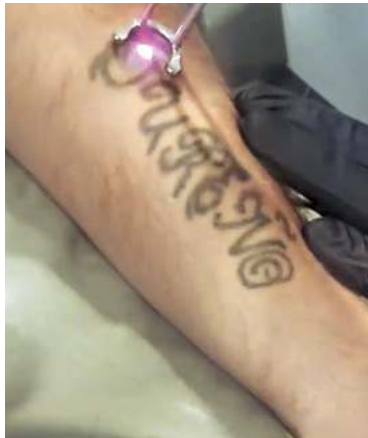


We've just heard about the important work a group of tattoo artists are doing with survivors of human trafficking.

Atlanta Redemption Ink (USA) offers free tattoo removals to individuals who have marks from sex trafficking, gang insignia, self-harm scars and addiction markings. In their mission statement, they state, "What cannot be removed is replaced by a cover-up that symbolizes freedom, beauty, and redemption in a safe environment with artists who are trauma-informed, trusted, and certified removal specialists."

Jessica Lamb, who is a human trafficking survivor herself, started the non-profit organization almost two years ago. Since its initial conception, the organization has gone on to help more than 160 survivors, not only in cover-ups of markings and scars but in program referrals, trauma-informed therapy, job readiness, and life coaching.

To read more about Atlanta Redemption Ink, donate or contribute, please head to: atlantaredemptionink.com



BOOTIFUL STUDIO COMES TO IPSWICH



Piercer Becky "Boobirch" Whiley will be opening her own studio, "Boo studio", this month! You can find her at 13a Fore Street, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 1JW. Check out her work on Instagram (@boostudio.ipswich) and facebook.com/boostudio.ipswich where you can see her portfolio as well as her range of fine body jewellery available for purchase.

LEFT FEELING NUMB...

A Scottish woman was left with an almost fatal infection after she bought a fake batch of numbing cream.

Victoria Doyle purchased the counterfeit "Dr Numb" cream online and used it for a tattoo session on her arm. However, she knew something wasn't right within an hour of being tattooed, when she began to feel the anaesthetic effect wearing off. She told television reporters that soon after, her arm began to ooze pus and scab over. Despite a visit to her GP and a course of antibiotics, her health deteriorated. Pain spread throughout and she was feverish. A week later, Victoria was forced to visit A&E, where blood tests revealed she had a severe infection. "My whole body was aching - really, really sore", she told reporters. "They said I was lucky. If I hadn't got treated as quick as I did then the



infected tattoo could have got into my bloodstream. I could have died."

When it comes to buying numbing creams and aftercare, we advise for you to go through your tattooist or buy from a professional, knowledgeable sources such as tattoo supply companies or tattoo studios. Never buy second hand and don't go on price - if you find yourself thinking "That's a good deal, but what's the catch?" the catch is most likely not worth it!



LYLE TUTTLE

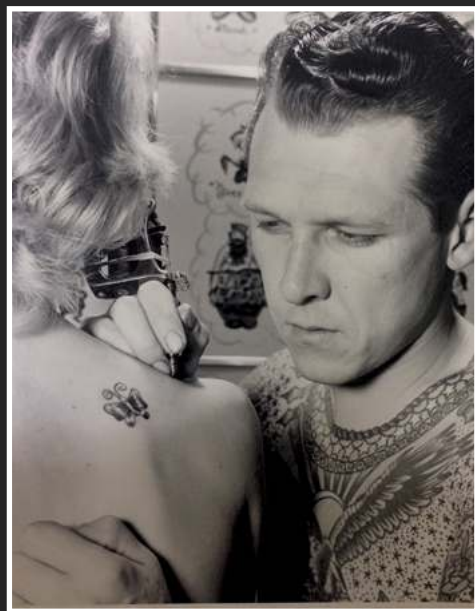
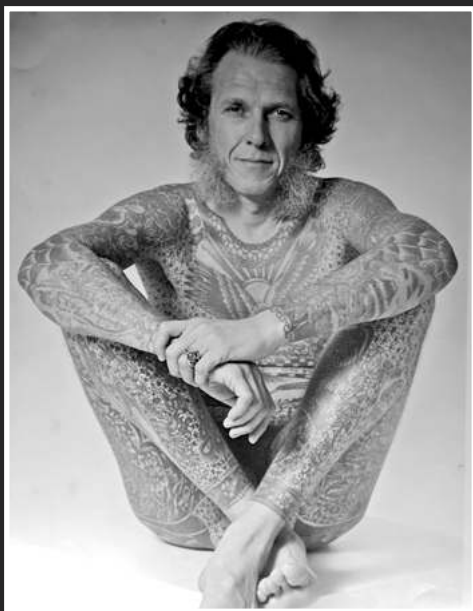


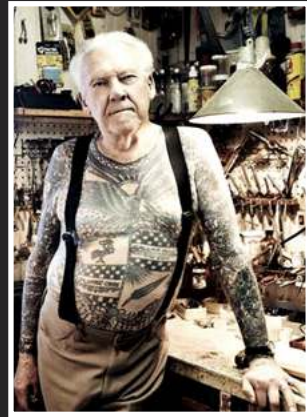
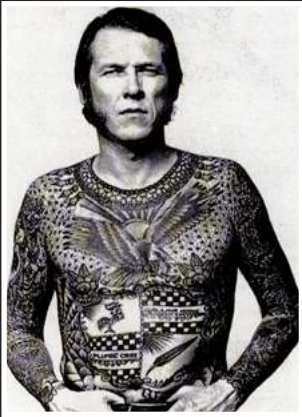
R.I.P.

The tattoo world was deeply saddened to learn of the death of legendary tattooist Lyle Tuttle.

Born in 1931, Lyle began tattooing at the age of nineteen in California, before opening his own shop in San Francisco. His shop became the go to destination for tattoo enthusiasts and celebrities in the 1960s, including Janis Joplin, Joan Baez, Peter Fonda and Cher.

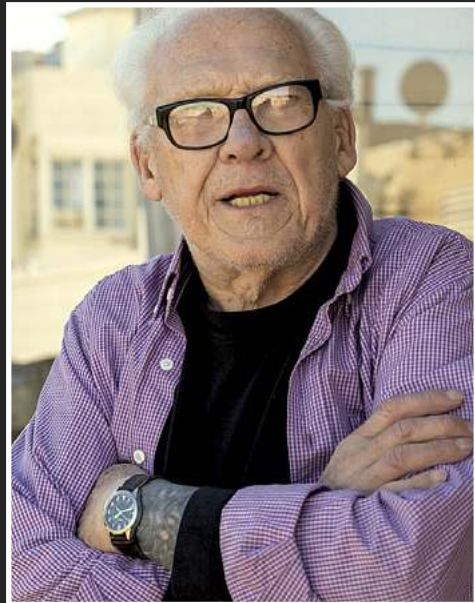
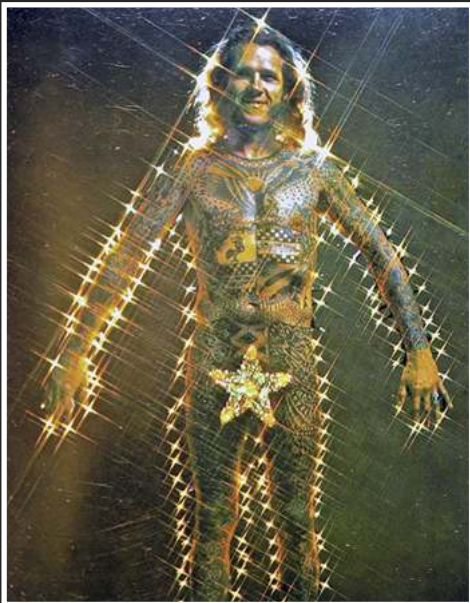
Lyle believed that he wasn't a good artist, but was simply around "at the right time" to help promote tattooing in a more positive direction from its earlier, unsavoury past. His work gained popularity from coverage in mainstream media including Time magazine, the Wall Street Journal and famously posing for the front cover of Rolling Stone magazine in 1970, as well as their 1972 Christmas card.





In 2014, Tuttle became the first and only person to have tattooed on all seven continents, including Antarctica. He also curated the world's largest tattoo art collection. In 2018 he celebrated his 70th year in tattooing and was still attending tattoo conventions up until a week before his death.

'I had the great pleasure to meet Lyle personally on a number of occasions and he was an incredibly friendly, warm and inclusive personality. Armed with a never-ending collection of witty stories and anecdotes from the history of tattooing, he would keep people mesmerized for hours with his hilarious stories and often terrible jokes. He remained sharp both physically and mentally continuing to travel the world and promoting tattooing till the bitter end. A true tattoo legend who will be sadly missed, my thoughts and love go out to his family and friends' - Perry



TATTOOING FOR WOMEN'S AID

Second City Tattoo Club in Birmingham UK have just announced that they will be hosting another tattoo fundraiser for Women's Aid on August 18th. Women's Aid is an organisation that help women and children who have been victims of domestic violence. From listening to survivors, to campaigning and education, they work tirelessly to help victims of abuse.



Although the event will be hosted at Second City Tattoo Club, there is an open invitation for other studios and guest artists to participate. For more information please email maxrathbonetattooing@hotmail.com

For more information about Women's Aid, including how they can help victims, please visit www.womensaid.org.uk



ARTIST WANTED

Crown of Thorns in Chester are looking for an experienced tattooer to join the team. A strong portfolio and large client base is a must. Please note this is not an apprenticeship. They offer great rates and it's a fantastic opportunity. For any queries or questions please contact the studio. Email crownofthornstattoos@gmail.com Tel: 01244 344111 or message via instagram @ashbosstattoo

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TATTOO STUDIO FOR SALE

Lizi and Jim Gambell have decided to sell their long established studio, Ritual Art.

The sale includes all shop fittings (inventory available upon request) and the website/social media platforms, including the name 'Ritual Art Tattoo'. There is a full year's lease left at this current location, with a view to rolling onto another straight after.



If you're interested in this opportunity to run a thriving studio, please call Lizi on 07930 392945.

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OLE OLE!

For almost two years, studio owner Majbritt Petersen has been embroiled in a legal battle to save the world's oldest tattoo shop - Tattoo Ole, on Copenhagen's picturesque Nyhavn. The landlord had wanted to terminate the lease because he wanted to expand the kitchen area of the restaurant that shares the same building, which would have meant the end of 135 years of unbroken tattoo history at the premises. But on Friday April 12th, the court delivered the decision Majbritt was hoping for - that Tattoo Ole could remain at its current address, the legendary Nyhavn 17. Speaking to local reporters, Majbritt said she was very happy with the judge's ruling, but dreaded the possibility of the landlord appealing the decision.

"I have a functional studio which is 135 years old and runs really well. You can't just move that. There is a reason why Nyhavn 17 is a well-known address, and it is because of the tattoo artists who have been here through the time"



SHOKI OF ISAMI - EXHIBITION

We were excited to hear news of an upcoming exhibition in Japan featuring artworks from world renowned tattooists and artists.

"Shoki of Isami" will feature nearly thirty original paintings from artists and tattooists, including Mike Dorsey, Filip Leu, Luke Atkinson, Horiyen and Horishige, to name a few. The exhibition takes its inspiration from Kawanabe Kyosai (1831-1889), whose unique paintings and ways of depicting imagery still remain relevant in Japanese art and tattooing today. Each contemporary artist will be submitting a painting based on one of Kyosai's favourite motifs: "Shōki", the demon queller.

The exhibition will be open from May 1st to 25th and June 1st to 25th at the Kawanabe Kyosai Memorial Museum (4 Chome-36-4 Minamicho, Warabi, Saitama 335-0003, Japan, Tel +81 48-441-9780, kyosai-museum.jp)

Address: Kawanabe Kyosai Memorial Museum room #3
4-36-4 Minami-cho Warabi city Saitama, 355-0003
Website kyosai-museum.jp

If you are unable to make the exhibition then there is still the opportunity to purchase a seventy page, limited edition catalogue. The books are priced at ¥3,240 (around £22 at current exchange rates) and will be available from May 2019. For ordering enquiries please email: tftd_tat2_shop@hotmail.com or head to Instagram [@shokiofisami](https://www.instagram.com/shokiofisami)

STILL NOT ASKING FOR IT



In 2015, the first "Still Not Asking For It" event was started by tattooist Ashley Love (USA). Since then, it has grown to a

global tattooing phenomenon, raising over \$360,000 for various charities in just four years.

"Still Not Asking For It" was created with the intention of finding allies in the tattoo community and bringing them

together to show the public that they care and that they are present - "SNAFI" seeking to raise awareness as well as aiding recovery and preventing sexual violence. Each participating studio will donate their proceeds to an organization of their choice.

The date for this year's flash day will be June 9th, with hundreds of studios taking part. To find out if a studio near you will be participating, please head to www.stillnotaskingforit.gives, where you can also read FAQ's, donate or buy merchandise.

STILL NOT ASKING



FOR IT



YOJI HARADA



R.I.P.

On March 27th 2019, tattoo artist Yoji Harada passed away at the age of 46. Reports across various media sources are unclear as to the cause of death, although it is known that he passed away in Amsterdam, where he was living after he had opened a tattoo studio in the area.

According to a statement made by Yoji's former mentor and long term friend, tattooist Ami James, Yoji's body still remains in the Netherlands and his friends are working on the logistics of bringing his body back to the USA.

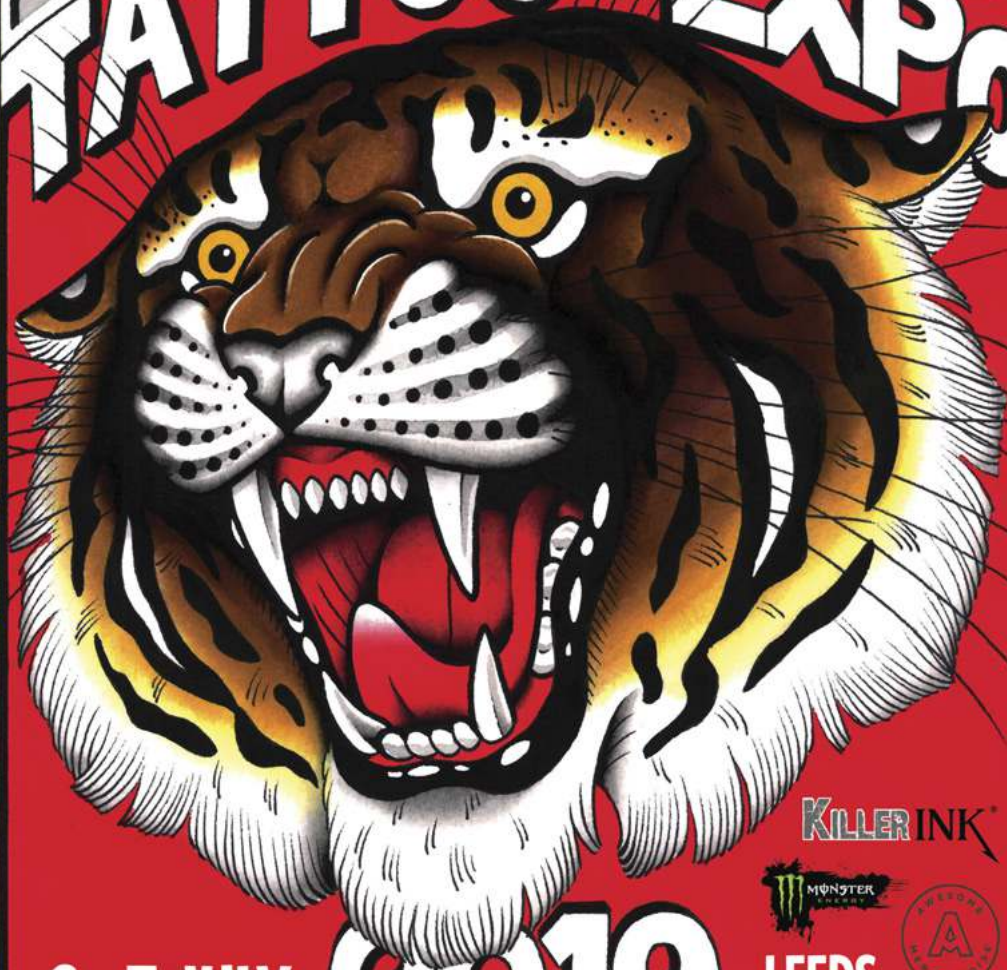
Yoji Harada was born in Tokyo, Japan, in 1972. After a career in the New York punk band *Big Deal*, he relocated to Miami to pursue an apprenticeship in tattooing with Ami James on TV's "Miami Ink"

In 2016 Yoji Harada relocated to Amsterdam, where he opened a tattoo studio and worked alongside tattooist Ben de Boef. He also co-founded the baby and childwear brand "Ruthless and Toothless" with ex-Miami Ink members.

A Gofundme account has been set up in order to create a trust fund for Yoji's daughter, Sidney. If you would like to donate then please head to www.gofundme.com/rip-yoji-harada-please-help-his-daughter-sidney



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MYKE CHAMBERS

Myke Chambers's tattooing career began when he attempted a tattoo at just twelve years old. From then on, driven by a love of punk and traditional tattooing, he fought against adversity in his life to become one of the most respected American traditionalists on the tattoo scene today. Aside from the technical perfection – crisp, bold linework, smooth shading and classic imagery – there's another element to Myke's tattooing that sets it apart from his contemporaries, and that's his respect for the art and the client. It was a great pleasure to meet Myke. He is humorous, intelligent and deeply passionate about tattooing.

How old are you and how long have you been tattooing?

I'm 42. Really old. Well, I used to think 42 was old, but now I realise it actually isn't! If you're as old as you feel, then I'm probably about 14! I've been tattooing for around 25 years.

Where are you based?

I've recently opened a new shop in Asheville, North Carolina it's called Seven Swords Tattoo Company. I was based in Philadelphia prior to that and on the road for a couple of years. Before that I had a tattoo shop in Austin, Texas, called Eternally Bound.



**'THE REBEL NOW
IS SOMEBODY WHO DOESN'T
GET TATTOOED!'**



Do you think you've got a good balance now between working conventions and having the shop?

I think so, but I would like to be at home more. I miss my dog (who doesn't always get to come with me) and travelling to Europe takes a lot of effort because the different time zones can be very wearing on the body.

Tell us what punk meant to you.

Music is art, and it's all self-expression. Really, it was saying 'Fuck You' to mainstream society and mainstream values and ideas. It was really edgy. I tattooed my face over twenty years ago, when people really didn't have facial tattoos. Back then, it meant that you'd probably been in prison or killed someone!

Do you still think there's a rebellious aspect to tattooing?

To an extent, but I also think it's almost more about conformity now. There are so many people with tattoos, people feel they don't fit in if they don't have one. Probably the rebel now is somebody who doesn't get tattooed!





And that shift seems to have happened so quickly.

Yes, very quickly. I think television really did it. I mean rock stars were always the edgy ones who had tattoos and people accepted it because they were rock stars. I'm not upset about it though. There's part of me where if I'm in a pub and I see a guy with a pink polo shirt, khaki shorts and full sleeves and fist-bumping with his bros, I think, "When did you get let into the club?!" But that's also very closed-minded of me. Who the fuck am I to say who is allowed to get tattooed?

But it's also about respecting the traditions?

Yeah, but I don't want to have a closed mind. I don't know anything about that person or their lives. I try to be open-minded about most things. Tattooing has definitely become fashionable and when it comes down to it most people get tattooed because it's cool. I have a memorial piece for my brother; I didn't have to get a tattoo, but ultimately I got it because it was cool. That's also why I started tattooing. Because it was rebellious and cool.

What first attracted you to traditional?

I think the main thing that attracted me to traditional was the aesthetic and the simplicity of it. Saying that, it's not as simple as it looks. It's actually quite hard to make it look simple! I started tattooing young, but I was into art and drawing from very early on (although I didn't go to art school or anything like that). When I started tattooing traditional, I really had to throw out a lot of my techniques and preconceptions.

To strip down to basics and get those elements right...

Yeah. It's easy to do a bad piece of traditional. Even the design, it's easy to mess it up. I don't think I would ever have progressed if I'd not done bad tattoos before. I think we all learn that way. Unfortunately, not everyone gets better! If you don't accept criticism you won't grow.



Do you have a set of rules when constructing designs?

I do have rules in my head and different ways of doing things. For instance I never put one leaf by itself on a rose. I often use the rules of nature, like the Fibonacci sequence. Everything I do is very intentional – the placing, direction, etc – but I just kinda do it and it feels right. Sometimes I draw something, or I watch someone else draw something, and it just looks wrong, but I can't see exactly why...

Do you find that you overthink designs?

I definitely do that, especially if I draw too far in advance for my clients. I typically like to draw the night before the appointment because if I work on it too far ahead I will overthink it. But it can be good to prepare, and I do know tattooers who draw things up months before the appointment.

Do you freehand a lot?

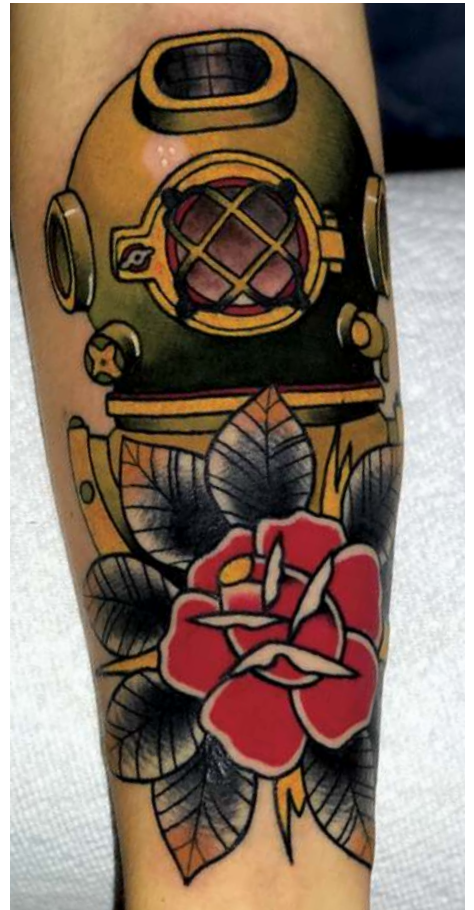
I like to freehand on large scale work. So if I'm doing a sleeve I may use some stencils that I've pre-drawn and then I'll use Sharpies to fill and do backgrounds. It's just much easier to do it that way and it's more organic with the flow of the body.

What are the most important elements of a tattoo?

I would say the most important element is your client being happy with the experience, and happy with the tattoo that they've got. I mean, it's art, so it's all subjective. In terms of the technical aspects, a good tattoo that's applied well will take into consideration the sun exposure that the client might have, which will determine the colours that are used. Like, you might use certain colours because you want that cool photo, but if they aren't going to hold up or they're going to get muddy, that's not beneficial



to the client. You need consistent lines, and it mustn't be overworked. A tattoo should really peel by the fourth day and should be healed by the fifth. It shouldn't have scabs; that's not a good sign. When I started tattooing, for the longest time we had Vaseline and A&D and when you tattoo that into the skin the body rejects it during the healing process, which makes it scab, and then any time you get a scab people want to pick at it... But now we have good products and we don't have to use Vaseline and stuff like that. Petroleum products are not good.



Tell us about being a mentor.

It's going well. It's a really interesting thing to do, because you don't want to fail someone as a teacher. Jonah Phillips was the last person that I apprenticed all the way through and she's a phenomenal artist. But they don't learn much from me! I mean, in the first year it's all about learning why we're doing things, this and that, before they actually tattoo. And until you have a tattoo machine in your hand, you're not going to really understand what you're being told. Tattooing has a way of inflating egos. Even the most well-meaning people – it just happens. I used to tell people that it was almost like a stage of learning how to tattoo. Typically a young tattooer will reach a point where they get quite cocky and arrogant and think they're God's gift to the world [laughs] and then later they realise and calm down.



What's your view of tattoo competitions and awards?

I don't think people should take awards so seriously, because who's really to judge art? It all comes down to what that judge likes. It's not really fair to say one tattoo is better than another. I mean, if you're only going to judge colour blends, saturation, line consistency and aesthetic aspects like the flow, then it would be more objective. But a lot of the time, people favour the styles they like, and all sorts of more subjective factors come into it too. So I don't put too much stock into tattoo competitions. At the end of the day, what really matters is your client. There was a time when I was all about winning awards and I would ask my clients to enter competitions. But then I stopped. I was over it. I'm not gonna lie, I go to some shows and I'll think, "That's a really nice trophy!" A contest can be awesome, but don't beat yourself up about it or put your clients out for it.



You co-own the Sorry Mom aftercare range.

Yes. I just wanted something that I could totally stand behind (and not just do for a profit). Our products are maybe a little more expensive than others, but that's because the ingredients are much higher-end. Obviously I use Sorry Mom products myself - when I'm tattooing and when I'm getting tattooed. It's been five years now, and everything is doing really well. There will be some new product variations coming out soon.

And you've got an ink set with Eternal too. How did that come about?

Well, I've been using Eternal for a really long time. I have a 'sponsorship' with them, but that began way before such things were commonplace. The owner of Eternal told me he liked my tattoos so much, I should just call them up and they'd send me ink any time I needed it. I was just blown away by that. After a short while, I told them they were lacking a really good golden yellow - something I use a lot. (This was a long while ago when their inks were still good, but there was less of a range.) So he asked for a 'sample' of what I'd mixed myself, and from that he started producing True Gold. Around three years ago, we began discussing a different red for the range - the existing colour was a little too bright and I wanted something deeper - and that led to us reformulating all the colours that I regularly use to be exactly how I wanted them! It was super cool! I had a dusty blue for example, that was tweaked a little bit. Granted, I will still mix some colours for different tattoos but it's really a simple, easy set that people can travel with - it has everything you need.



What's your machine set-up?

I use both coils and rotaries. I use a Kevin Riley coil liner and a Dan Kubin Sidewinder. I use an FK Spektra Direct 2 rotary. I like all of them. I don't make needles any more. I'm glad I don't have to do that! Although... there was something very meditative about it. I would go in early, sit down, turn on my music, chill out and make needles. I kinda miss that. But I don't miss inhaling all the fumes!

Do you have any 'rituals' before tattooing?

I kinda do. It's quite hard for me to start tattooing. I always feel like there's something I need to do before I sit down and start, although I can't really explain what that is. A lot of my friends will just get on with it, but I'm not like that. I usually pace around, or nip to the

bathroom. I used to smoke, but I quit recently and it's still very strange for me to set up and not go for a cigarette before starting a tattoo.

Tell us what tattooing means to you.

Tattooing has done everything for me. I can't even imagine where I'd be if I didn't have tattooing. It's really everything. I'm so fucking grateful! And I want to give that back, too - to the newer artists, to help them, to teach them. Tattooing has been very closed for a really long time - that whole not sharing knowledge thing. The cat's out of the bag now though. Everybody wants to learn how to tattoo. I have a lot of knowledge and I don't want the values to get lost. We need to remember to respect the client. They're not just a pay cheque.





Respect for the client is paramount.

Yes. I say this a lot. I do a lot of tattoos, and I will probably forget most of those tattoos, but those clients will never forget when they got that tattoo. It's my responsibility as a tattooer to give them the best experience I possibly can. So even if I'm having a bad day, I really need to put that aside. Ultimately the client is there to get tattooed by me. I believe in transference; that my emotions can get transferred onto the client - and if you're hurting them by tattooing them, they're already in a vulnerable state. It's hard to put your own bullshit to one side and focus on someone else, but sometimes it can actually help you! We have a lot of responsibilities as tattooers, because people put their trust in us - their trust and respect - and we need to honour that.



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


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BRIGHTON TATTOO CONVENTION

A photograph of the Brighton Pier structure in the sea at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The pier is a dark silhouette against the water. In the foreground, there are some dark shapes on the beach, possibly people or equipment.

Some conventions are the same year after year. The same entertainment, the same exhibitions, the same venue... and after a while, it can all just feel too familiar. To keep a convention alive, you need to make it exciting and keep it evolving, which is exactly what Woody, the organiser of the Brighton Tattoo Convention, has continued to do year after year.

For a start, the show promotion and publicity – both local and nationwide – was second to none. As well as the graffiti phone boxes we've all come to know and love, photo banners of tattooists (revealing their bodysuits and backpieces) were hung from lampposts all over the city. The signs looked elegant. Think art gallery exhibitions and you'll get the picture. The posters were also plastered all around outside the venue, making sure that nobody could escape the fact that there was a convention happening!

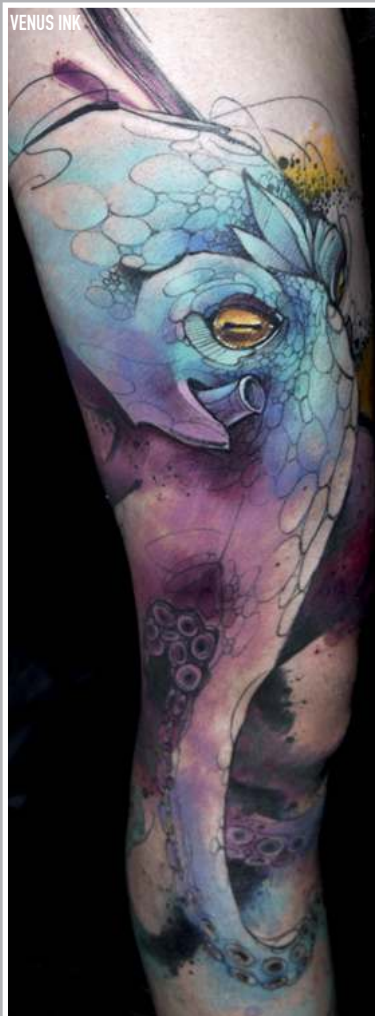


MISS FREYA



Once inside The Brighton Centre (the largest exhibition/convention centre of its kind in the south of England), the public walked straight into a combination of traders and tattooists. The integration between the two meant that there was a lot more 'buzz' around the lower floor. In previous years the footfall in this particular area had been disappointing, as people had tended to disappear upstairs to the bar and tattoo booths.

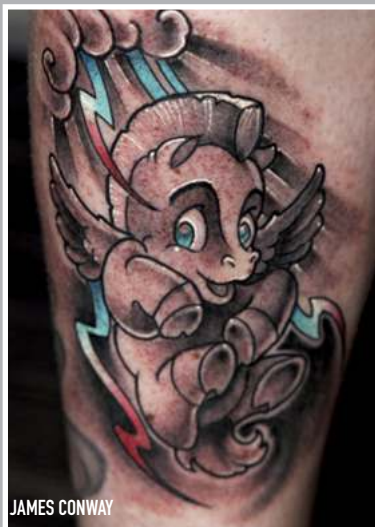
This year, people definitely 'hung about' for much longer. The 'Hands Exhibition' by YogiXII graced the gallery area, which featured over fifty A2 hand designs by tattooists, with proceeds from sales of the pieces going to charity. By the entrance there was also a café and food zone, which provided a calm place to sit and people-watch or take in the views of the seafront.



VENUS INK



CHARLIE COPPOLO



JAMES CONWAY

Upstairs, there were further traders and tattooists' booths in the main arena and in several separate rooms. There was no 'hierarchy' in the layout; the most popular studios didn't necessarily have a prime location (as is common in some other conventions). And it was clear that all the artists attending were excited to be there from the work they'd put into their booth displays. Seriously, the banner designs and booth layouts were incredible – our personal favourites being the funeral-themed booths by Dead Slow tattoo studio.

On the upper level there was a stage and seating area next to a well-stocked bar, where punters could sample Sailor Jerry cocktails, cider and other refreshments whilst listening to rockabilly and surf-rock bands. At 6pm on both days, the competitions saw the public crowd to the stage to see the



SNEAKY MITCH



THOMAS POLLARD



DAN ARIETTI

weekend's efforts. What was great about the categories for the contests was, well, that there weren't any! There were simply awards for Best of Day Saturday and Sunday. This worked well because there were no disagreements or controversies over what genre a tattoo should or could fall into - and as there were so many different styles of



SNEAKY MITCH



MISS FX



ANTHONY COLE

tattooing over the weekend, it would have been impossible to categorise them all. It was great to see a variety of different styles and sizes win across both days. Winning artists were able to secure a free booth for next year's show and a custom designed skateboard by Nipper tattoo, whilst their clients were awarded free tickets for next year's show and a merchandise goody bag.



DANIELS BAUTI



SAM BUTLER



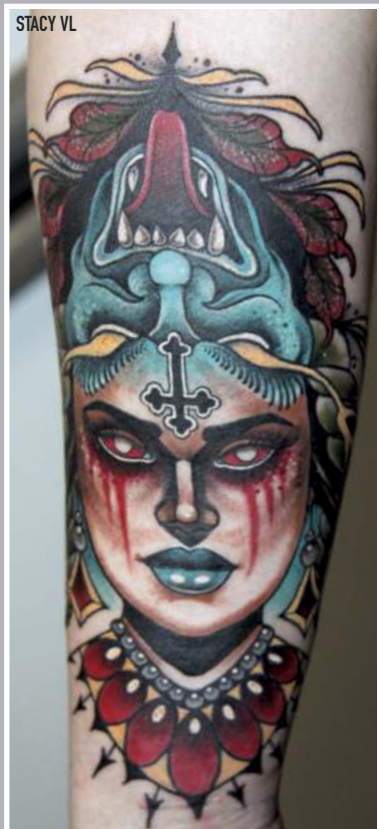
MIKE STOCKINGS



TOM MAGGOT



JESSIE FOAKES



STACY VL



DANIELLE TAYLOR

Holding a convention at the start of the year on a sunny weekend immediately before payday (and in Brighton's case, at the same time as a local half-marathon *and* railway closures) could spell trouble for some shows. However, the Brighton Tattoo Convention is too firmly established on the tattoo scene for other events to be a threat. And the city of Brighton itself is very art-centric and liberal. People are open to new ideas and happy to commit to being tattooed. This was evident in the huge queues that formed on both days! (But of



JESSICA SVARTVIT & TATTOO FRANKY

EMIL SALMINS



RAYMOND RAMIREZ





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RAFEL DELANDE

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STACY VL



JESSIE MUGSGONE



GAZ TATTOO

course as with everything at this smoothly run show, the queues were very efficiently managed and the public got into the venue quickly.)

Over the years, one thing that never seems to go away is the murmurs about those halcyon days of "the racecourse." And in some ways, the Brighton convention's previous venues do haunt the show and allow for unfair comparisons. One thing is for certain though, the Brighton Tattoo Convention has found its true home here at The Brighton Centre. And the mix of 'older' and 'younger' tattooists has injected a new shared eagerness and enthusiasm. But the reason this show is such a hit all comes down to the way it is so impeccably organised. It's not something you'll see as you wander round – sheer professionalism makes the 'nuts-and-bolts' of this show invisible – but it's obvious in the energy between the artists, traders and attendees.

JORDAN CROKE



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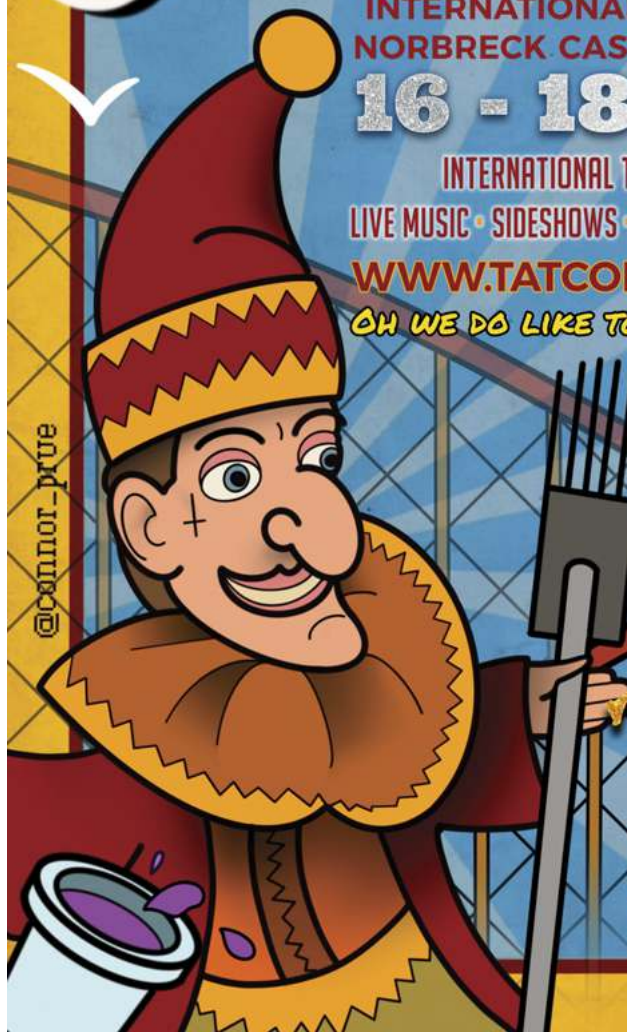
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tattoo art ivana

Ivana's work is a combination of colour, energy, fun and elegance. "Art is my life", she says on her YouTube channel. And her passion is obvious; not just in her tattoo work but in her art, paintings, prints and fashion line. Ivana is 38, lives and works in Long Beach, California, and has been tattooing for around 20 years.

What is your first memory of tattoos?

When I was just eighteen, I did a little ornamental tattoo for a friend. The moment my needle touched the skin, it was 'love at first sight' and I knew that was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Actually, the only reason I decided to get my first tattoo was to experience the feeling of being tattooed!

When you first started tattooing back in your home town in Slovakia, the industry was very male orientated, and tattoos mainly appealed to bikers. What was it that made you decide to tattoo and get tattooed?

I was never influenced by who dominated the industry or who the tattoo industry appealed to. I have always tattooed because it spoke to my creativity. Yes, I experienced negativity when I first started, but it never really affected me. It certainly didn't discourage me or stop me – and never will.





What artistic training do you have?

I am artistic by nature but have never had any formal training.

Why did you choose to teach yourself to tattoo? Wouldn't you rather have had an apprenticeship?

Looking back, I think yes, an apprenticeship would have been good – because it would have helped me learn faster – but only if it had been with one of the best people in the industry.

Last year the MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome announced that it officially recognised your work as Fine Art. How did this come about and what did it mean to you?

I was one of ten tattoo artists to be recognised in that way by the MACRO Museum. A group of art critics were reviewing works in the collection and setting criteria for what should be included. They began wondering why tattoo art wasn't officially

part of their remit and they decided that it should be. In November, the museum announced a list of ten tattoo artists whose work met the criteria and could be acknowledged as Contemporary Fine Art. I was the only female artist on the list. I feel very honoured and I feel like a trailblazer. It's a great accolade to have my work listed in the museum's catalogue.

Should all tattooing be considered an art form?

Yes, tattooing should be considered as an art form. It *is* an art form, and it's one of the oldest. The only difference is that the canvas is alive and moves.

What else do you like to do besides tattooing? Do you like to keep your work and hobbies separate?

My absolute favourite pastime on an everyday basis is reading all sorts of books. Right now I'm enjoying all sorts of business motivational books, but I go through stages when I read psychological books... spiritual books... books of all kinds! Although I say 'read', I actually listen more to audio books. In terms of whether there is a separation between my work and my hobbies, my work really *is* my hobby, so it's impossible to keep it separate. Art is what I am made of and it's the air I breathe. I create even in my sleep.







How important is it to incorporate your personality into your art?

It is the only way to develop an original and unique style. An artist's style reflects their individual personality.

How important are conventions and travelling in the evolution of your work?

They are very necessary. Every convention I attend brings me new opportunities and new contacts and the chance to work alongside the best artists in the industry. I can learn from them just by watching them. I love to be around that creative energy. You never know when opportunities will present themselves to you when you are in this flow of being. I am constantly learning from the many people I encounter all over the world. I am in a position now to teach others, through my seminars and writing, and I feel very grateful that I can pass my knowledge on in this way.

How much of your success is down to talent, and how much is down to sheer hard work?

Success comes from hard work. If someone is talented, it speeds the process. Real success is a combination of these two aspects.

Tell us about your book *just Love, Tattoos and Sushi*.

The book explores my most recent work. It also describes how tattoos have shaped my art and soul. I have interwoven tattoo photos with stories from clients and my own personal history too – like the early tattoos I did on my brother, which I have now covered up! I take my readers on a journey into my tattoo world. It's a 120-page full-colour volume.





In May 2018 you launched your clothing brand ITA Los Angeles. How would you describe the style?

It's funky street fashion with a rebellious tattoo spirit. A luxury brand that reflects an opulent tattoo lifestyle.

How has the first year been?

The first year has been fascinating. I am a very positive person who loves a challenge! The clothing industry is completely different to the tattoo industry, so it has been a fun year of evolution and learning. It has taken up a great deal of my time but I am enjoying every second of it. Coming up with an idea and making it into a tangible product is a great feeling.

Tell us about why you decided to branch into fashion.

Making clothing had been a dream of mine for around fifteen years. Because my tattoo designs are so colourful, not everyone wants to wear an actual tattoo so I decided to put my designs on clothing too. It's just another form of creativity. I wanted the clothing designs to reflect the positive, playful, beautiful, and sometimes mischievous spirit of my tattoos.

What are your plans for the future?

I am building an empire with my renowned IVANA TATTOO ART brand and taking over the world with my ITA LA high fashion clothing label! I hope to continue travelling, breaking down barriers, and inspiring and motivating others through my seminars and workshops.

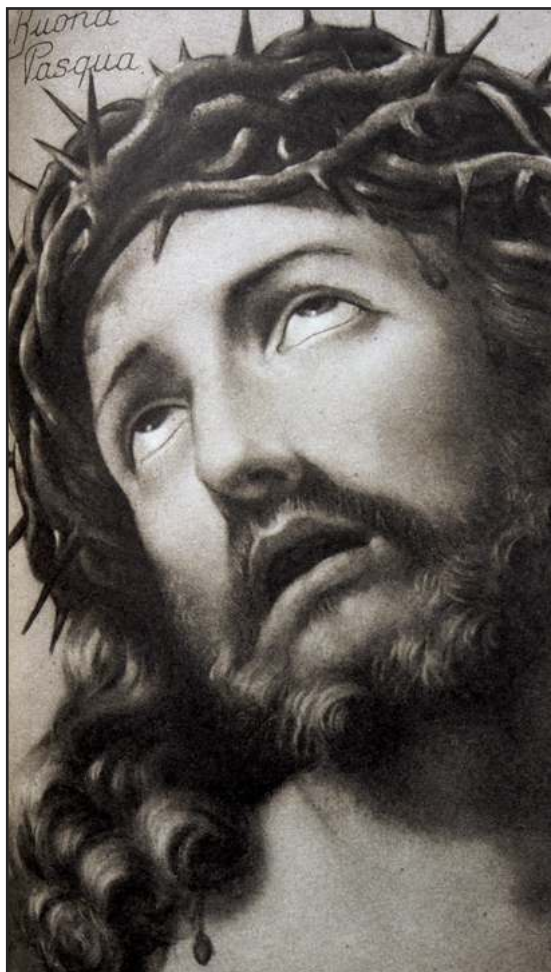
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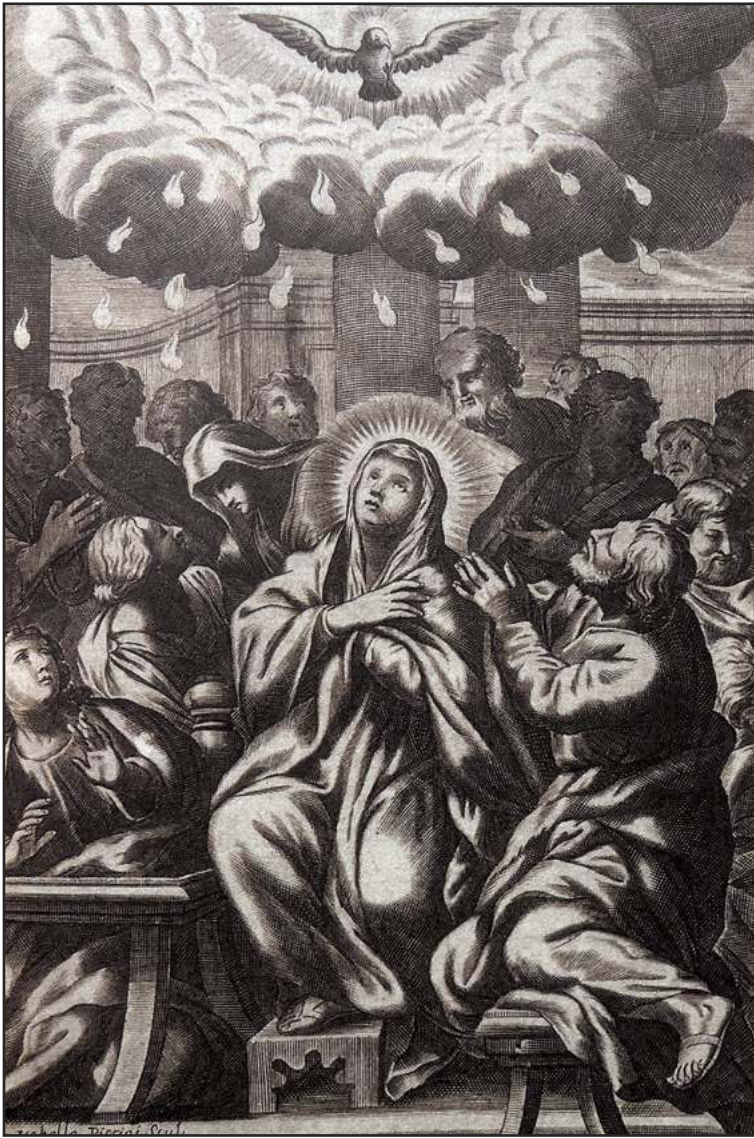


BOOK REVIEW-COME TO ME ALL

From the Coptic Christian tattoo blocks of the Jerusalem's Razzouk tattoo family, to the soft black and grey styles immortalised in the Chicano style, the connection between tattoo art and faith has been present for centuries. The relationship however has remained controversial, with many adhering to the Hebrew prohibition in Leviticus 19:28 — "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves." However, many religious and non-religious people still see a permanent adornment as symbolisms of belief, love and protection, as reminders of one's own personal strength against adversity.

Come To Me All is a book that looks pretty unassuming from the cover; hardback, bound in linen and with a small, embossed sacred heart printed onto the front. The contents however, truly pack a punch with their rich religious imagery. This is a reprinted edition of the book, after the first (published by Surith Press) sold out almost immediately.





The book is essentially a collection of Christian holy cards. Historically were produced for devout believers to carry with them, send to loved ones or even adorn their home. The imagery ranged from biblical themes to devotional subjects. Some of the very first cards can be traced back to the 1400s, which were most likely created with woodcutting. Their popularity escalated with the invention of lithography in the late eighteenth century, which allowed the cards to be mass produced and distributed more readily, as well as the process itself allowing more detail in the artworks.

The various sections of the book feature different aspects of Christian iconography (such as the Saints, the Virgin Mary, crucifixes and sacred hearts). The images are in colour, sepia and black and white. It's a treasure trove of artistry and craftsmanship from a forgotten time. For artists, this is an invaluable resource, as well as an opportunity to examine vintage drawing and illustration techniques.

Surith Press compiled the book from various collections of the cards, before donating them to the Agostinelli Museum (Italy), which houses one of the biggest compendiums of holy cards in the world. Speaking to Total Tattoo Magazine, Surith hinted that there may be a second book in the pipeline, as they have been allowed access to the collection. Watch this space...

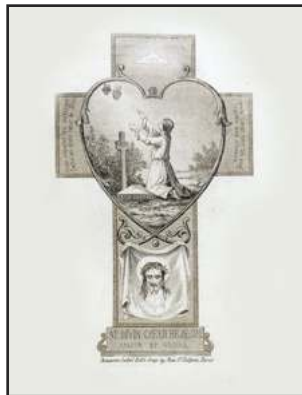


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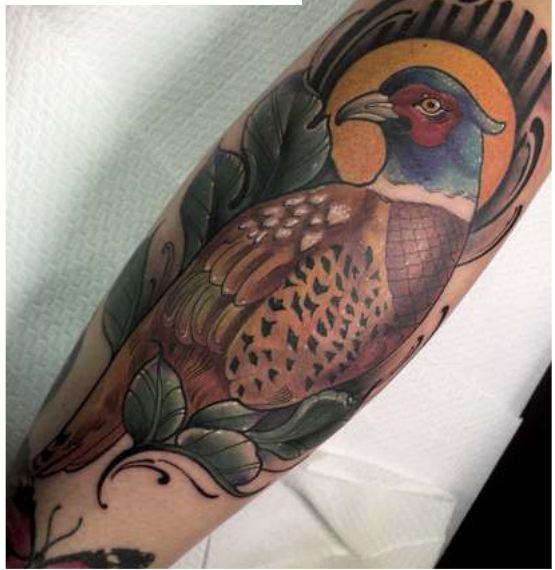
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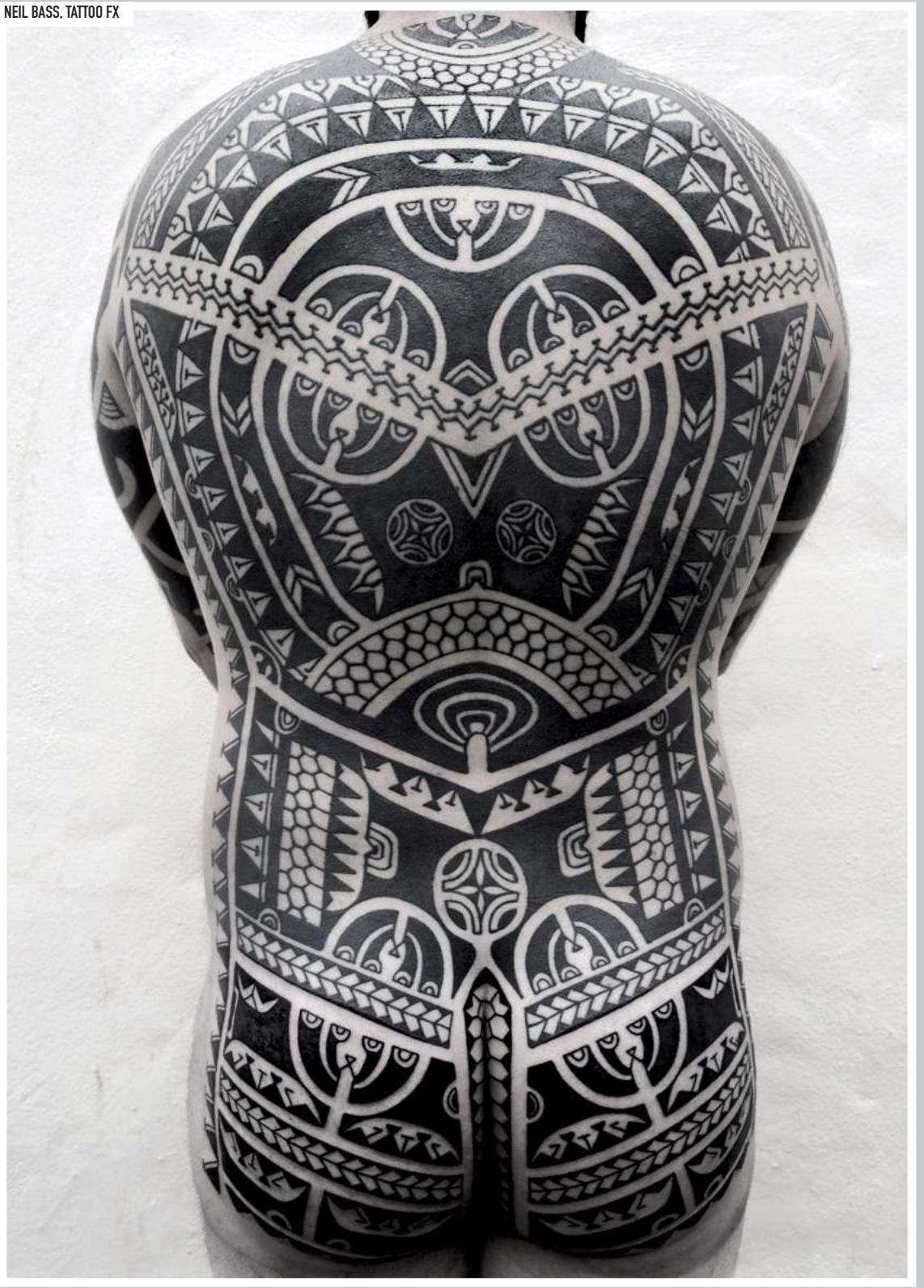


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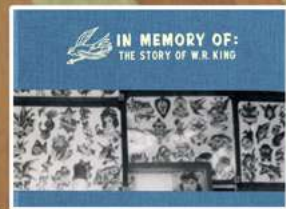
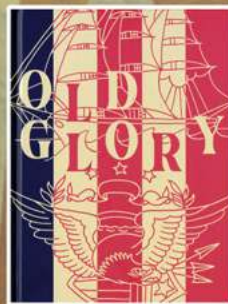
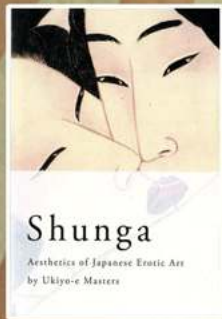
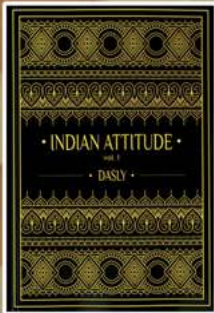
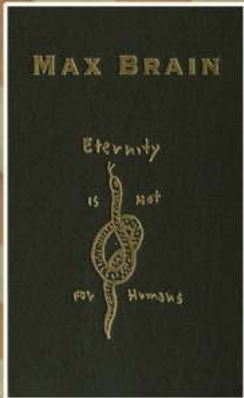


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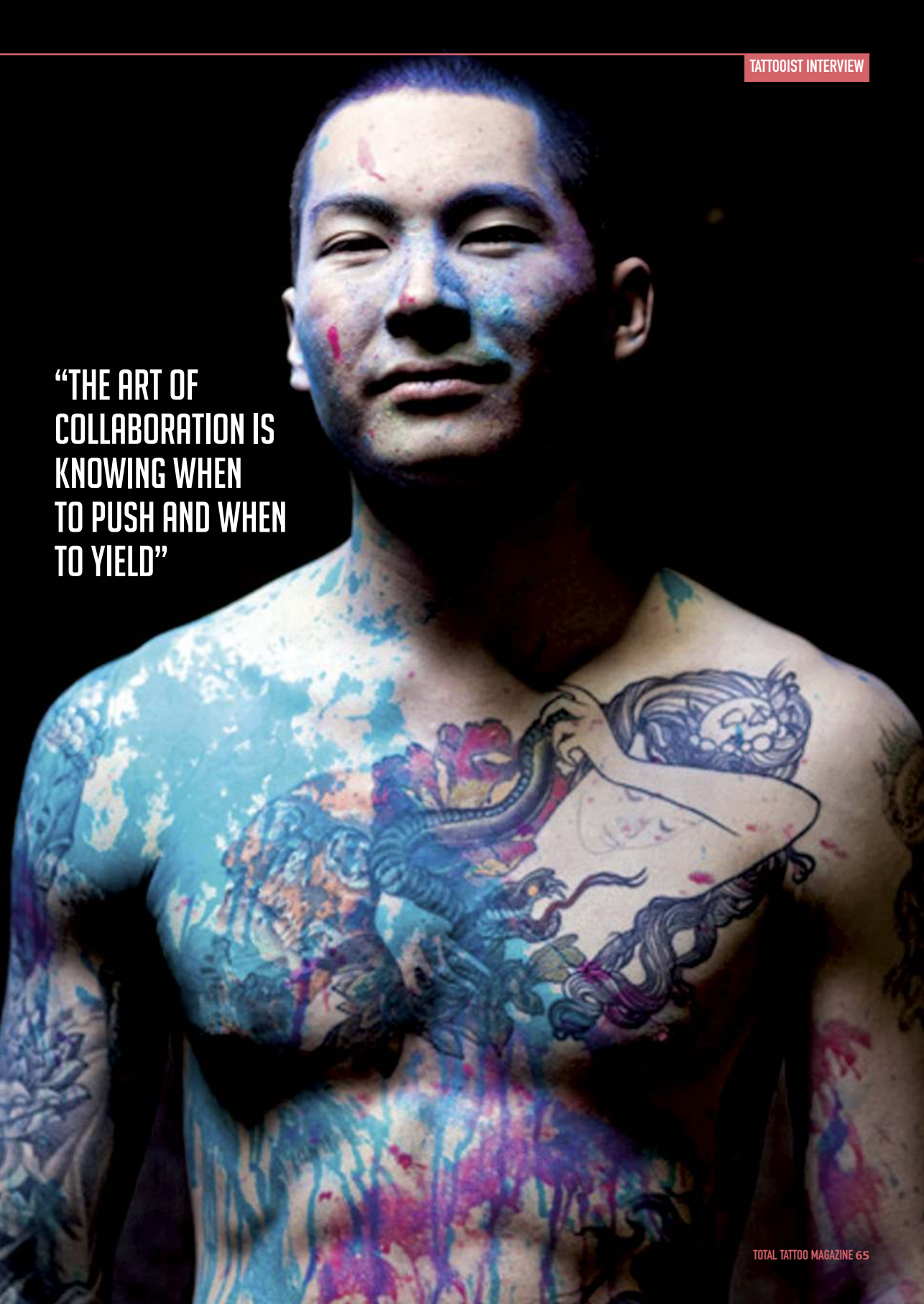
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JAY FREESTYLE

Like his tattoos, Jay Freestyle is a whirlwind of infectious, dynamic energy. But he's also a cool, calm and collected guy with extensive knowledge and expertise. Jay creates incredible works on skin, and when he first emerged onto the scene his innovative approach generated a media storm. But it's not just the public that wants his work; Jay has also been in demand for collaboration pieces with other world-renowned artists, resulting in some of the most truly unique pieces on the planet.

Preparation is an important part of every tattoo. I'm interested to know how much of Jay's unique work is pre-drawn and how much is spontaneous. "I used to just do it on the day," he tells me, "but that can be very difficult. I prefer to work on it beforehand, but I don't always have the luxury of lots of design time. That makes for a more fluid impulsive tattoo though, and it often gives it much more dynamic energy." And does Jay always know how a tattoo is going to work out? "No, not really!" he admits. "There's a big difference between looking at the design and seeing how the tattoo comes out on the skin. The first session is always full of doubt, trying to work out how it's all going to come together and over-analysing every decision; the second session is when it's really flowing and it's just a case of getting it in there; and usually by the third session it's just a case of adding the finishing touches."

**“THE ART OF
COLLABORATION IS
KNOWING WHEN
TO PUSH AND WHEN
TO YIELD”**





Take the collaborative piece I did with Deborah Cherrys at the Milan show for instance. It was only when we came to tattoo it – and I'd been colouring a solid red rose for hours – that I realised there's a reason why traditional style tattoos are a certain size. They can't really be stretched or distorted or scaled up. Just like my designs don't really scale down – they can't be done small – because there's too much detail."

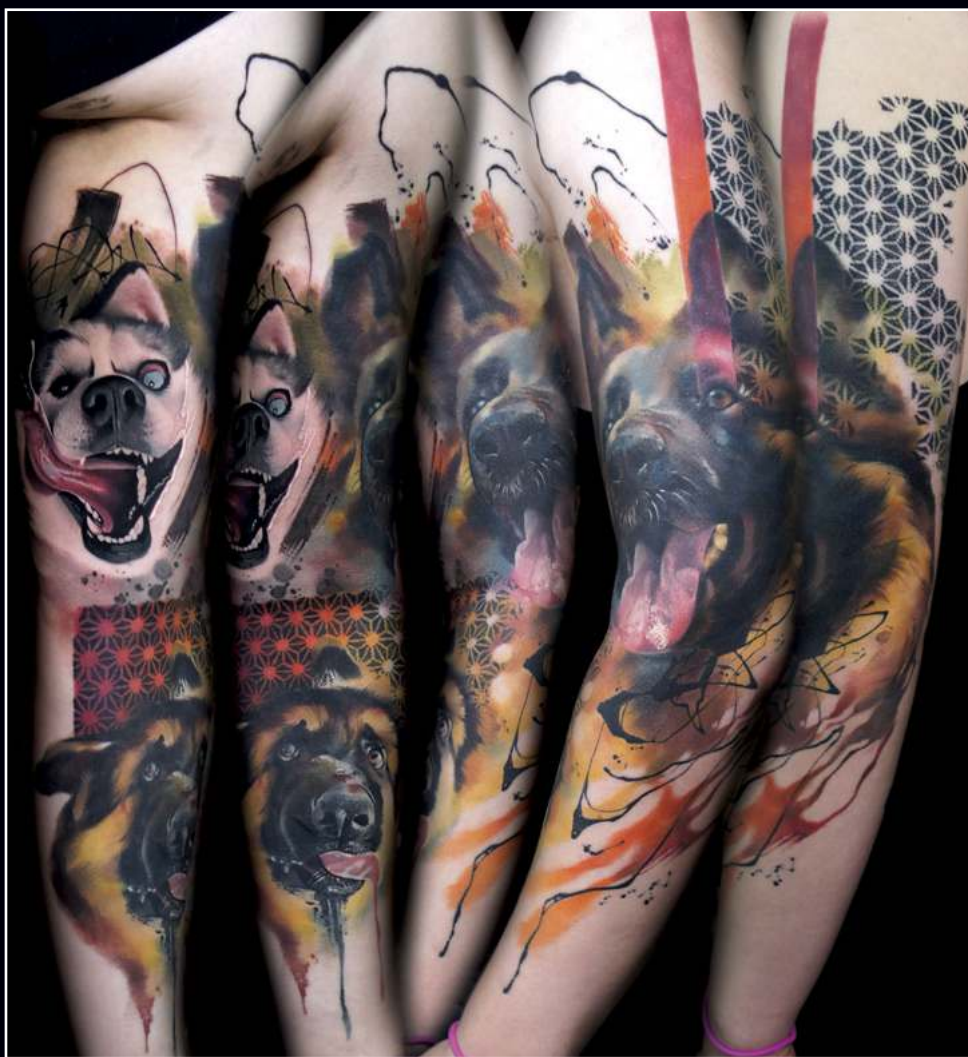
Collaborative tattooing (in which artists work together on the same piece) is an exciting part of the scene right now and Jay is a prominent figure in this movement. Does he regard it as important to partner up with artists whose style is complementary to his own? "Because I use techniques from every genre of tattooing," he explains, "I find it easy to mould my work to accommodate what the other person is doing – although there are some constraints with certain styles. Some things don't work so well. Traditional designs, for instance, can't really be stretched or distorted or scaled up. There's a reason why they're the size they are. And my designs can't really be done small, because there's too much detail."

I ask if one artist tends to take the lead in a collaboration. "It really depends on the artists involved," Jay tells me. "Every collab is different. Sometimes one artist is much stronger, and you can definitely see that in the end result. This is not necessarily a bad thing, and it can produce some great pieces with a good flow and a clear direction. If the two artists are both headstrong and refuse to yield, then the finished piece can look disjointed and conflicted; then again, if the artists' personalities are less forceful, the finished piece can sometimes look confused and lack direction. It's different every time. The art is really in knowing when to push and when to yield. If you share a friendship, or you know about each other's work, it can be advantageous. You can push to each other's strengths."



I ask Jay to describe the evolution of his approach. Did he find any particular style easier to master? "I wasn't even really aware of the different tattoo genres when I was learning. I love Japanese (most the tattoos I wear are Japanese-style) and that's the style that I initially wanted to specialise in. But it's so hard to understand properly and get right - that whole balance between foreground and background, and the rules that make it so much more complex than almost any other style. So I was doing a lot of black and grey realism. But that doesn't have so much creative freedom, so I started to drift into an illustrative neo-traditional style."

"At the time, in Amsterdam, not many people were doing that kind of thing. The only problem I had with it was that I was still drawing all my designs straight onto the skin - because I never knew how to use a stencil - and there were so many fine lines it got really confusing. People didn't share information back then, or if they did they would give you a load of bullshit! But bizarrely this really helped me to develop my own style. It gave me a level of confidence that many artists don't have. So in some ways it was better that I didn't have anyone to teach me. Being self-taught meant that I had to get good quick through sheer willpower and determination if I was going to survive."





As a child Jay was always drawing, but he hadn't painted until he started to develop his tattoo watercolour style. He knew he couldn't mimic that look without understanding how it actually worked, and how to create it with a paintbrush. "It's the same for good black and grey artists," he says. "They're always sketching and working in low tones. And you notice that the neo-trad guys tend to use a much more illustrative form of drawing incorporating a lot of line work. My own style is hard to categorise. I'd say it's kind of abstract, with a bit of watercolour thrown in, plus a touch of realism, and illustrative elements too. There's no name for it, and I like that."

"If you get pigeonholed," Jay continues, "people come to you with too many preconceived ideas. For instance, I hear people complaining that their traditional tattoo design is not traditional enough... Maybe the tattooist has used too many colours, or too many lines... But personally I think, 'Who cares?' With my work, I like to take from every genre. A lot of my compositions are based on Japanese construction; I use realism, but I try to interpret it into my own style. My iPad Pro makes things a lot easier, especially when I'm travelling - and much faster than collaging together conventional drawings, which I would have had to do previously."

Perhaps because he himself is self-taught, Jay is keen to share the knowledge he has gained over the years. "I've done a lot of seminars. I believe this is the next level of learning for the teacher as well as the student – because when you have to explain your process and analyse your own techniques it gives you a much clearer understanding of what you're actually doing, and why you do it. And when people ask me the best way to learn how to tattoo, I always say you should get tattooed by really great artists and watch them work. I don't have any shit tattoos because I always go to the best!"

Jay grew up in South Africa, but he emigrated from there more than a decade ago. He moved to Amsterdam – the city he now calls home – to work in his family's body jewellery business, and that's when he started tattooing. Just over a year ago he opened his own studio. "We have two other artists, as well as my wife and myself. We have space for more, but we need to keep the harmony in the studio! We do have lots of guest artists though. Everybody loves to come to Amsterdam. And this means I have a lot of international clients, which is great. But the Amsterdam tattoo scene itself is very small compared to other capital cities. It's a strange situation. Our guest artists can struggle to get booked up. I guess we have the same problems as everyone else – too many studios, and a city too small to support them all."



So what does Jay think is the answer to this ongoing problem? "I'm not sure there is one! Tattooing is in a recession right now. A lot of artists are feeling it. There are too many studios, too many conventions. Only the strong are going to survive, and it's not necessarily the best artists who are the strongest. I know a lot of top artists who are struggling. The tattooists who are putting out bad work for low prices are killing the industry. They're holding it back from improving. We need to educate our own client base, to raise their expectations so they don't settle for mediocre work."

"Maybe we somehow need to get artists to unite," Jay continues. "I go to a convention in Gothenburg and because it's small, the organiser says to all the artists, 'Please don't go below €100 minimum'. And everyone adheres to that. The artists know; the public know. Maybe this needs to be done across the whole industry? It would stop the price war that I believe is eventually going to kill the industry. Artists need to take pride in their work and hold the standard. And customers need to demand better work."





Big business has now moved into tattooing, viewing it as just another profitable commodity. As a sponsored artist, how does Jay view this change? "A few years ago, to be on a pro team meant something. But if that team grows and grows and takes on anyone and everyone, it becomes meaningless. If you don't need to be good to have a sponsorship, what's the point? But I can't stop any of this happening. I just get on with my own thing. Every sponsorship is different though. Some have a more corporate feel and you are legally obliged to act in accordance with the company's wishes; other businesses are perhaps more family run and the sponsorships are a lot less official; and the same company might offer different contracts to different artists. Some sponsorships are business-driven and other are more like artist collectives."

Jay's work is now recognised the world over. I ask how he sees his style developing. "I've kind of done everything I set out to achieve artistically," he tells me, "but, as styles come and go, my work will always be changing to incorporate aesthetic and technical developments. And there will always be the challenge of coming up with original designs for my clients. They have a major input in my work."

"I love it if I'm given completely free rein," Jay continues, "but that's pretty rare. I get maybe four or five of those in a whole year. In general my clients usually have a basic idea of at least what elements they want included. Those TV shows made everyone think all tattoos have to have a story behind them - when really nobody give a shit about what your tattoo means! Tattoos are judged on their appearance, not their back-story. Clients who want their tattoo to tell their whole life story aren't generally the clients I can work with. Their expectations are too high."

When it comes to equipment, Jay is known for his classic combination of World Famous ink and Cheyenne machines. "For machines, I definitely think it's between Cheyenne and FK Irons. They seem to be the two main powerhouses right now. For me, coils are ancient technology. It's like comparing a dial phone with a smartphone!"



So what of the future? I ask Jay about his plans. "I'm trying to split my time between tattooing and painting. My paintings are now starting to do quite well, which is encouraging. I'll probably be tattooing for another four or five years, but by then I think I'll need to take things a bit easier, and perhaps move into something outside tattooing altogether. In terms of the physical effect it has on your body, being a tattooist is one of the worst jobs you can do! The strange thing is, despite big business wanting a part of it and governments wanting to regulate it, tattooing is still not a respected profession. We need to be taken more seriously."

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We'd heard about a new tattoo convention in Belgium, in the small West Flanders town of Kortrijk. There were going to be some amazing artists there, and it sounded like it would be well worth making the trip...

After an easy (pre-Brexit!) Channel crossing and 90 minutes of motorway driving, we were parked outside the Depart exhibition hall on the outskirts of Kortrijk. A functional venue in utilitarian grey concrete, the main entrance to the building was somewhat hidden behind crash barriers and food trucks. Once inside, we found ourselves in a large rectangular reception area with double doors to the right leading into the main sports hall. This brightly lit space, with its wooden floor, was where most of the tattooists were working, and it was ideally suited to the purpose. Forty or so artists shared the space including Len Leye and Ben Vervotte from Clan of Tusk, Mister P, Jean Harai, Mr Levi Netto, and Guy Rubicon to name just a few.

A second hall over the other side of the main entrance hall housed a further thirty or so artists. By contrast, it was darker and relied on artificial lighting and was noticeably colder too. But this didn't deter anyone! Again, there were some great artists working. And it didn't end there... Half a dozen more artists took up space in a third room and in a connecting corridor that led to a purpose-built indoor skate park. Bands played in a large marquee outside alongside some very fine food trucks.



Interestingly, most of the artists in attendance were doing primarily traditional work – that is to say, solid tattoos with strong outlines and packed-in colour. In terms of today's tattoo trends, realism and portraits were definitely under-represented. But it was the quality of the work that counted.

This was the organisers' first show, and a great deal of work had obviously gone into getting it right. It was smoothly put together and well run. All the elements were in place. But for some reason, despite a large advertising campaign, posters in local studios, and advance publicity at many tattoo shows leading up to the event, numbers through the door were on the low side. There was a feeling this could have been due to the entry price, which at €18 (on the door) was felt by some to be rather on the high side. Who knows? The good thing was that all the artists were busy and everyone was certainly enjoying themselves!

I think this show could grow into a real little European gem, if the organisers can maintain the quality of the line-up and word gets out about how good it is. But it does need more local support, and more people through the door, to keep everyone buzzing throughout the day. Fingers crossed for 2020!





JORRE, BLACK LOTUS



PHILIPPE BONAMIE, INKGLORIOUS



PHILIPPE BONAMIE, INKGLORIOUS



ARTIST NAME UNAVAILABLE



EL GATO NEGRO TATTOO



ARTIST NAME UNAVAILABLE



SANDY, INKSANE



EL GATO NEGRO TATTOO



ARTIST NAME UNAVAILABLE

MARCO MANZO

Italy was the birthplace of the Renaissance, and continues to make a significant contribution to the contemporary art conversation thanks to artists such as Maurizio Cattelan, Loris Cecchini and Francesco Vezzoli. So when Doralba Picerno recently visited her home city of Rome, it was no surprise to come across an amazing tattoo art show – that wasn't part of a tattoo convention, didn't have an ethnographic or historical angle, and was taking place at the prestigious Complesso del Vittoriano Ala Brasini alongside exhibitions of work by Pollock, Warhol and the New York Abstract Expressionists. The artist in question was Marco Manzo.

One of the most proactive of contemporary tattoo artists, Marco has long been pushing for tattoo art to be recognised as a bona fide form of contemporary art in its own right – not simply as a by-product of tattooing or a tattooists' sideline, but as a discipline worthy of sharing the same platform as other art practices endorsed by the museum world and fine art establishment. Aside from winning many awards within the tattoo scene, he has exhibited and curated at the MACRO and MAXXI museums in Rome, and his work has been shown at galleries including the Gagosian and MOMA in New York. He also had work exhibited at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale and designed an exclusive piece for BMW to celebrate the 90th anniversary of BMW Motorrad. He's a master of ornamental and decorative work, and his visuals lend themselves to collaborative projects with other disciplines such as fashion and performance/installation art.





Doralba: This exhibition here at the Complesso del Vittoriano Ala Brasini seems to me to be the culmination of a steady and unstoppable journey. Let's begin by talking about some of the milestones along the way – your experience in the fashion world, for instance.

Marco: I brought ten women I'd tattooed to Alta Roma [Rome's high-end fashion event, akin to London Fashion Week – ed] It was as if they were models wearing permanent haute couture garments! Fashion designer Gattinoni opened his catwalk show in the MAXXI Museum with three gowns that referenced the tattoo world. This really was a legitimisation of tattoo art by the fashion world, a veritable acknowledgement of tattoos as symbols of elegance and refinement. It was a 'Marco Manzo' event – so this was a fashion designer taking part in a tattoo artist's show – and that sent out a very strong signal. Don't forget, until very recently these two worlds were quite separate. But on that day, high fashion met tattoos as contemporary art and I really feel that something changed.



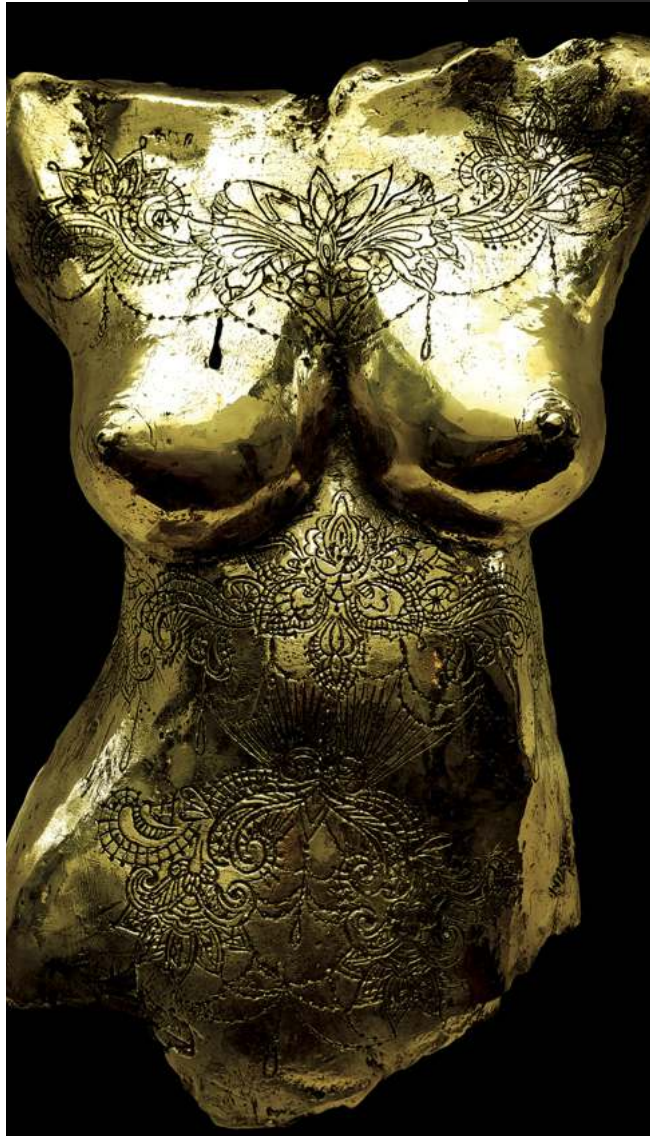


Doralba: How did your collaboration with BMW come about?

Marco: BMW invited a few artists to paint cars, which were then exhibited around the world. Ultimately they ended up in the BMW museum. I was the first one asked to create an art bike. It was unveiled at the Benucci Art Gallery, right next to work by De Chirico, Tiepolo, Guido Reni, Giacomo Balla, Lucio Fontana...

Doralba: And then came Tattoo Forever at the MACRO Museum.

Marco: Yes. It was because of my work with BMW that I became involved with Tattoo Forever not as a tattoo artist, but as an artist full stop. My art had been exhibited in major galleries before, and there had of course been important events such as the Tattoo Art show at Somerset House in London, but it was at the Tattoo Forever exhibition at the MACRO Museum – which centred on tattoo art as a language of contemporary art – that all the elements came together. I was both an exhibitor and a curator for this exhibition. The Italian Arts Council, the Municipality of Rome and many art critics were involved, and it was a true legitimisation of tattoo art as contemporary art.





Doralba: Tell us more about the exhibition.

Marco: We invited contributions from tattoo artists whose work is not restricted to skin. And we decided to exhibit very large photos of tattoos by those participating artists to explain that it was their choice to express their art in this way. When something new happens in the art world, there is always a sort of backlash from other creative fields, so I decided to invite them too! I tried to get the fashion world involved at first. I was told I was crazy. But ultimately I proved this wasn't the case when the designers agreed to get involved and produce gowns that were a tribute to the tattoo world. Next to come on board were the sculptors, street artists and tattoo collectives who exhibited work on non-skin media, and a hundred cartoonists from a hundred countries who gave us their own particular take on the tattoo world. The result was a show of more than three hundred artworks! Some artists had their own dedicated space within the exhibition - for instance we had a Cheyenne room with Volko and Simone of the Buena Vista Tattoo Club, DotsToLines, Alex De Pase, Antonio Proietti and Andrea Lanzi (and some of my work too), and we also had sixty or seventy artists who participated in collectives. MACRO is a large museum, and it was almost dwarfed by the volume of work exhibited. I genuinely feel this was when tattoo art officially entered the art world as a bona fide art form. I am especially proud that this happened in Italy, which is such a major country in world art heritage. I am hopeful that this legitimisation of tattoo art will spread around the world.





Doralba: Tell us more about your own work.

Marco: I created some tattooed sculptures. I'd prep a plaster model, print the artwork on it, tattoo it properly with a tattoo machine, and then finish it with the foundry stage. There were also works in marble, bronze and ceramic, as well as 'live' tattooed people. The critics really liked that each discipline was true to itself: the sculptures were made using sculpting techniques, and the tattoos were of course done in the traditional way.

Doralba: Do you have an 'artistic manifesto'?

Marco: My manifesto is that I explore and search for eternity with my mark. The body is mortal, and my mark makes it last, makes it live forever. This concept was very attractive to the critics. I won a few awards, and several museums acquired my tattooed pieces. My work centres around the ornamental style. This type of work has a much wider spectrum outside Italy, but in my home country I

am thought of as a pioneer of the genre. It's a style that redesigns the body, streamlining its shape and concealing its 'flaws'. The body is always the starting point I plan a piece. The result is not a drawing to be 'placed' on the body, but rather a piece that is triggered by the body and born out of an understanding of the various techniques, cultures and decorative elements involved – be they Venetian lace, mandala or macramé. My wife Francesca Boni executes the initial drawings. She draws on cultural heritage rather than copying or imitating the styles. The results are patterns that have a history. What is interesting about museum acquisitions is that it's the tattoo they are interested in – not the photograph of it – and as a consequence, being part of a few permanent collections is important. It's something that changes the conversation about the definition of contemporary art.

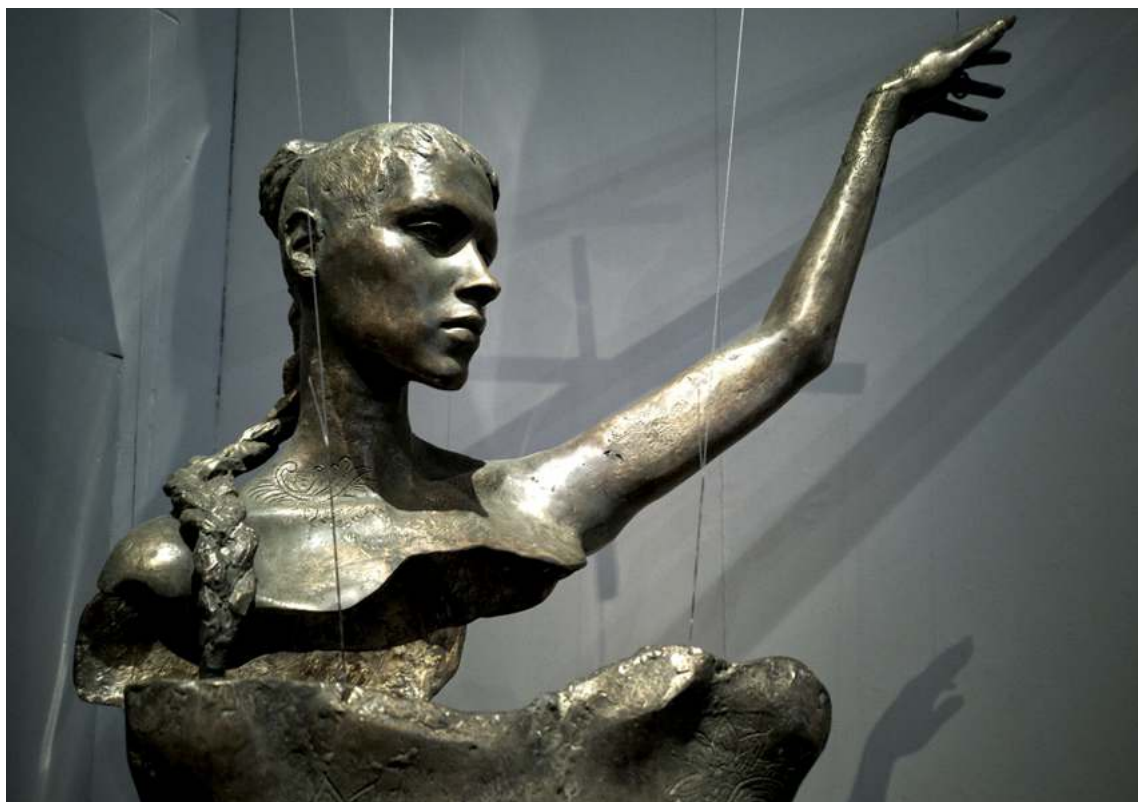
Doralba: Giving tattoo art credibility rather than viewing it with suspicion.

Marco: Absolutely. Being at the Venice Architecture Biennale was also an important step. I took 'Andromeda', my anamorphic sculpture, plus more than fifty other works. It was a wonderful opportunity, not just for me, but for tattooing in general. Another step towards credibility and respect.



Doralba: Tell us about your intriguing interactive installation at Back Music 2017 [an annual cultural event on Rome's Tiber waterfront – ed]

Marco: It was a collaboration with singer/songwriter Max Gazzè and sculptor Alessandro Di Cola, again with the support of the Municipality of Rome. Forty bronze circles were handcrafted in the style of my ornamental work, and we used lighting to project new combinations of shapes and designs on the River Tiber and the performers. There was also a musical instrument for visitors to play, creating sound waves that generated images and mandalas. This was incredibly popular. We had a huge response, which I believe reflects a huge interest in tattoo art. And in theory this installation can live its own life without us; it could continue creating content even after our deaths. That's a significant part of the concept.

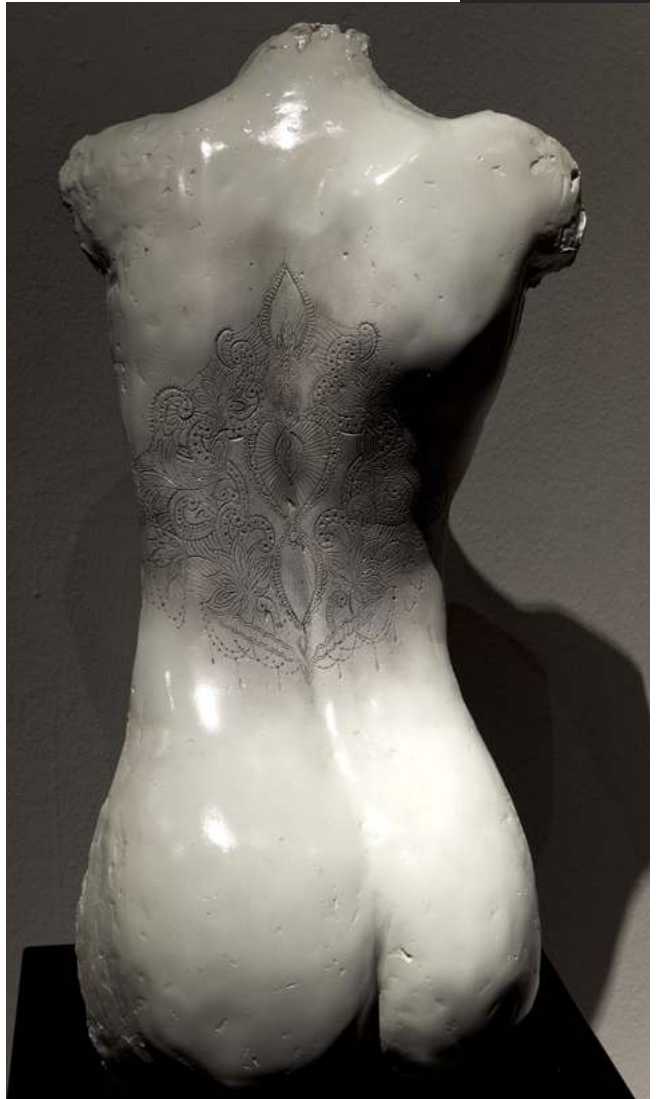


Doralba: Eternity is clearly an important theme for you.

Marco: Usually eternity is bestowed upon the artist and the artwork becomes a monument of sorts. But with these installations the process of creating art going beyond the life of the artist. At the Vittoriano I am exhibiting a piece that I also took to the Venice Architecture Biennale. It comprises forty seven one-metre-square printed sheets – which could combined in twenty three trillion different ways. That would take far longer than a lifetime, so there we have it: art that goes beyond life. Eternity in the creation of an artwork.

Doralba: And then there was Tatu-art(I).

Marco: Yes. I feel that was another important step towards the acceptance of tattoo art. I curated that project with the support of art critic Giorgio Di Genova. We really pushed the envelope. Giorgio has curated the Italian Pavilion at the Venice Art Biennale twice, and he has written a history of twentieth century Italian art, so the essay he wrote to accompany Tatu-Art(I) carried a lot of weight. It was a very successful event and we hope to do something similar in the future. I know the participating tattoo artists were certainly very appreciative of the recognition. We also held a conference with sociologist Carla Guidi, called 'Saving your own Skin with Art', and we made a very important point. If tattoos really are art (we think they are), they elevate their wearer and obliterate all those decades-old stereotypes. If you are tattooed you are no longer 'dodgy' or 'untrustworthy'; you are a work of art. I do feel as human beings we are fundamentally all the same. What matters is what's inside you and what you do in your life. Being tattooed or not shouldn't even be a factor in that respect.



Doralba: And now you find yourself sandwiched between Warhol and Pollock!

Marco: Absurd, isn't it? We have over a hundred pieces here, some of them lent by the museums who have acquired them, and we also have a few holographic pictures where you can admire the beauty of the body with and without tattoos. The important point is that I have been curator of my own work here; there has been no art critic to curate and validate. The Vittoriano is a major cultural institution; they do important shows here, and state ceremonies too. I'd always looked at it from afar, as a spectator as it were, never imagining I would ever be part of it. That was a sort of forbidden dream! So I feel very lucky to be here. But I don't see it as my own triumph. To me, it's as if the whole of tattooing has worked hard for this (in the same way as tattoo conventions have become bigger and bigger, and are now taking place in more and more prestigious venues).

Doralba: What does tattooing mean to you?

Marco: As tattoo artists, we're incredibly passionate about what we do, and we have a huge amount of responsibility. I often feel that I get to know my clients when I tattoo them, and that is a privilege. My clients already trust me because they have chosen me to tattoo them, but sometimes we bond at a very deep level, especially when they open up to me and say, "I want to tell you something I have never told anyone before". That is a wonderful feeling. I am very lucky to be doing this job. I love that there is a story behind the acquisition of a tattoo: a birth, a death, a pivotal moment in someone's life.

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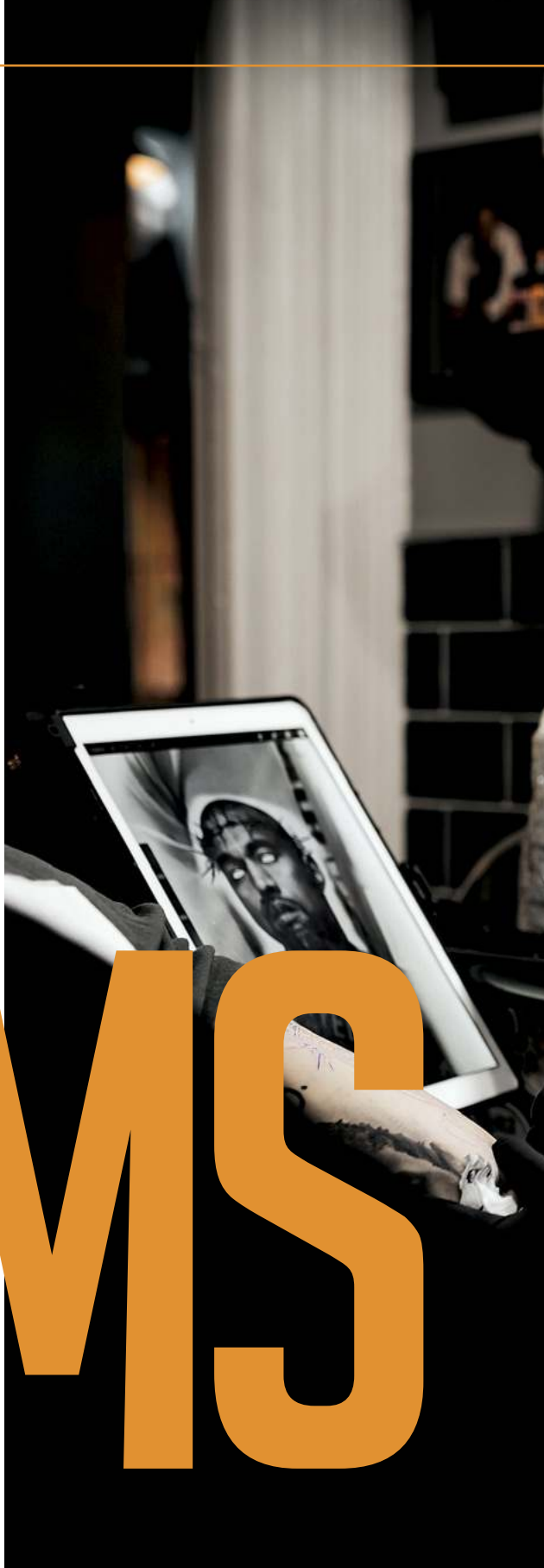
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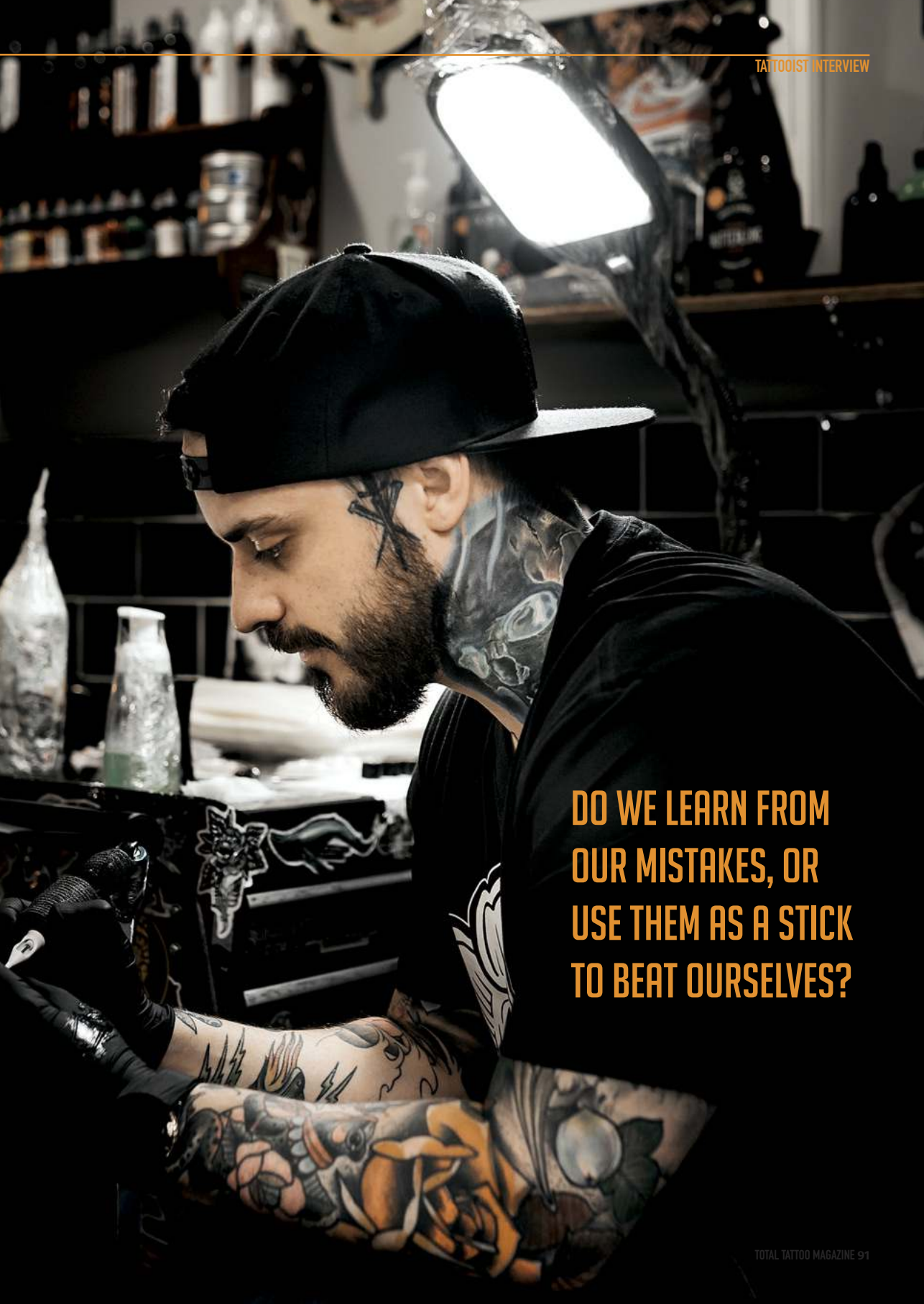


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Nick's tattoo story is a timeline of two distinct halves: 'BD' and 'AD', or 'Before Dawnii' and 'After Dawnii'. It's hard to overestimate the impact that meeting Dawnii Fantana and working at her renowned Painted Lady Tattoo Parlour (in Birmingham) had on Nick. You could almost say it saved his tattoo life...

NICK IMMS





**DO WE LEARN FROM
OUR MISTAKES, OR
USE THEM AS A STICK
TO BEAT OURSELVES?**



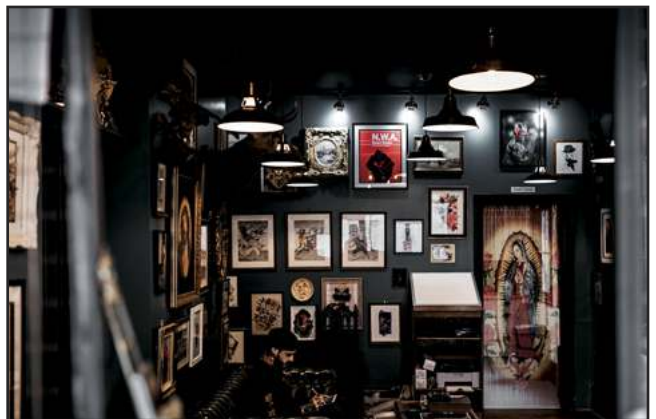
Nick's story up to the point when he met Dawnii was not too dissimilar to that of many other up-and-coming young artists. He's happy to admit that he just kind of fluked it when it came to getting his apprenticeship. He'd just hit 18, and he started to get tattooed at a local street shop while he was working on his art 'A' level. They wanted an apprentice, he showed them his work, and hey presto he had his foot in the door. But I think it would be fair to say he didn't really realise just what he'd got into. "I was so naïve," he tells me. "I didn't have any idea about the tattoo industry, or what was possible in tattooing. I didn't even realise you could do a tattoo portrait! They taught me how to do the fundamentals – clean lines, packing colour properly, shading smoothly – so I had all the strings to my bow and could cover all the bases. It was a busy street shop. You didn't turn work away..." Bums on seats, bills to pay and all that.

Nick stayed at the shop for just under four years. And that was life pre-Dawnii.

Then everything changed, and not a moment too soon. Nick left the street shop and was feeling pretty disenchanted with the whole tattoo thing. He told me how he felt. "I'd got to the point where I really didn't like tattooing. If the rest of the tattoo industry was the same as that shop I was working in, then I really didn't want to do it anymore." But he was still a tattoo fan of course. He went up to the Tattoo Jam at Doncaster Racecourse and was tattooed by Gordon Patterson (who is now a good friend). Matt Youl, who worked at Painted Lady, was also there. He knew Nick was looking for work and asked him if he wanted to meet Dawnii. "I obviously knew loads about her," Nick tells me. "I mean it was Dawnii! A big name who'd done so much for tattooing... and she just wandered over, took a

look at my work, and said there was an opening for me at Painted Lady if I wanted it. Mind blowing! I was like, 'Holy shit. Somebody whose work I've seen in magazines is saying I can come and work at her shop! It's the first time I've met her and she's offered me a job!'" It's lovely to hear the utter disbelief and wonderment in Nick's voice as he tells me the story.

I push Nick to put into words exactly what that meant to his tattoo career. "Before I went to Painted Lady I wasn't really enjoying tattooing anymore," he admits. "I was disillusioned. But Dawnii showed me another side of the industry. She showed me that it was full of people passionate about their art, that it was an active community of people supporting each other. Her shop was run totally differently from the street shop I was used to. It was about art, not profit. Yes, you needed to pay the bills, but Dawnii was never about the money. She encouraged me to do what I needed to do to develop as an artist, and she was always there to help. I owe everything I have now to Dawnii really. I don't know what I would be doing if our paths hadn't crossed. I tell her that all the time. She is one in a million. And she is held in such affection by everyone."



It was when he was the new guy at Painted Lady, all that time ago, that I first met Nick. He had already developed his taste for black and grey and was working on a Batman portrait. I wondered at the time whether working with Dawnii might bring more colour into his work, but as you can see from the images that surround this text his appreciation for greyscale has only grown. So what is it that keeps him coming back to black? "I just fell into it naturally," he admits, "and of course the more you post, the more work you attract. So I got a bit of a name locally and things just went from there. Black and grey has always felt more natural to me than colour. I do enjoy doing colour, but when I get into black and grey I just find it's more fun. I feel I can put on a better tattoo that the customer will be happier with in the end. If somebody wants a colour tattoo, I will recommend somebody else who I feel can do a better job. It's all about the customer getting the best tattoo they can get."

"Sometimes it does feel limited – black, grey, white and the skin tone – but my challenge and focus is to get as good as I can with those elements. I don't want to plateau," Nick continues. "I want my blacks blacker. I want good contrast. I want to make things as smooth as I can. I'm starting to work with more textures now, looking at Jordan Croke, Jak Connolly, Yarson and Matthew James's work. Those guys are putting in amazing texture as well as smooth shade and great contrast. I'm definitely my own worst critic, but that means I'm always striving for improvement and I understand that it's a process of development."





Nick is keen to venture into new territory. It's a constant quest to find something that will make his work stand out. "Even when black and grey work is technically amazing, it doesn't always stand out," he explains. "I'm trying to find something that is applicable to my work, something that works with my tattoos... some element that needs to come into play in my personal progression. The guys I mentioned before, you can spot their work a mile away. I feel like there's a missing piece that's really going to set my work apart too, but I don't know what it's going to be. Only time will tell."

Nick goes on, "It's about stepping over a boundary, stepping out of your comfort zone into a place where you're no longer safe, and I struggle with that. When you're working on something so permanent, being outside your comfort zone is not that comfortable! I like 'tried-and-tested', because then I know my customer is going to be happy with the piece. They've put their trust in me, which is massive. I don't want to experiment on them. Perhaps it's going to be a case of working with a few friends. There is definitely more I can bring to my work. It can go further. Maybe it will be something a bit weird, some kind of provocative subject matter, or a different sort of composition... Who knows? I know I need to paint more too, but it's finding time in days that already seem packed."





I have always felt that black and grey has a different emotional impact to colour. Looking at Nick's work, sometimes hints of colour have crept in and I wondered if this was his idea or his client's? "Customers always ask, 'Can we put a bit of colour in?'" he tells me, "but I try to steer them away from that. I guess I want the tattoo to stay quite pure, just black and grey. I certainly don't want to totally discount colour - because it does have a different feel - but I guess it really has to interest me if I am going to put it in. There are so many people who are so much better at colour than me."

Nick has now progressed to the next stage of his career by opening his own studio, The Church, with Little Andy. It was the natural step for him to take. Unsurprisingly this was done with Dawnii's blessing and with all the help she could possibly give. "There were no bad feelings at all," Nick emphasises, "and if I hadn't wanted to open my own studio I would still be at Painted Lady one hundred percent! Dawnii was super supportive. Her generosity was unbelievable."



The Church is a relaxed, welcoming space, with room for guest artists too. "We get a lot of amazing guest artists," Nick tells me, "and that creates the kind of environment that makes you want to be on top of your game. We are always learning from each other. It's an important part of the studio - to offer a space where people can drop in and tattoo for a couple of days. It's about hanging out, doing some wicked tattoos, having a good time and getting paid. It's a cool vibe and it's working out really well. I'm not sure we planned to have as many guests as we've had... but people just kept asking! I guess we must be doing something right. It's a great way to keep yourself motivated."



Nick clearly feels a great responsibility in his work as a tattooist. But does this ever make him feel anxious? It's something tattooists tend not to talk about, but Nick is quite open. "I try not to think about it. If you focus on it too much, it will scare you! You need to put it to the back of your mind, but always be respectful of it. Of course there are going to be good days and bad days. Some people don't sit well, some skin types make things more difficult. As artists, our desire is for every tattoo to be perfect. That's completely unattainable, but it's the goal we set ourselves. We've all made mistakes but what's important is how we react to them. Do we learn from them, or do we use them as a stick to beat

ourselves? At the end of the day, if your customer's happy, and so are you, then that's great. You have to enjoy it. That's the key, and that's what takes the pressure away. But the anxiety still does come and go, depending on who you're tattooing or what you're tattooing – a portrait of a loved one for example – or even where the tattoo is. Tattoos, especially visible ones, can be life changing."





After more than a decade behind the needle, Nick is still incredibly passionate about tattooing and being tattooed. He's negotiated the inevitable peaks and troughs by surrounding himself with good people who love tattoo art. Tattooing does take over your life, but only because it's so rich. But what of the future? "I don't really have a master plan," Nick tells me. "Every part of my career so far has been a case of 'let's just see how it goes.' I couldn't tell you where I'll be in ten years. I guess it will just unfold." One thing's for sure. The Nick Imms sitting with me at this moment in time is a happy man. "Yes, I am very happy," he agrees.

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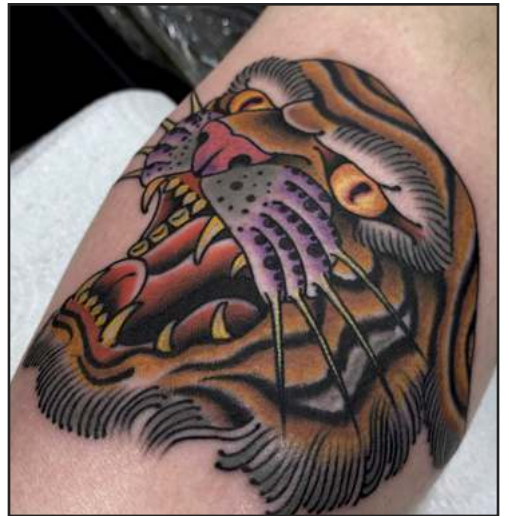


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THE TATTOO TEA PARTY

Like many people, we had to miss last year's Tea Party because of the snowy weather. So it was a welcome relief to get back to Manchester for our annual fix of fun and frolics. The Tea Party has established itself as a big family day out, blending a full roster of entertainment and plenty of shopping stalls with some truly top notch tattooing.





KATE MURRAY, RAPTURE TATTOO

As you arrive at Event City, a purpose built venue adjacent to Manchester's iconic Trafford Centre shopping and leisure complex, the first thing you notice is the vast amount of free parking directly next to the hall. And the friendly security staff who smile as they welcome everyone into the building and into the show itself!

We arrived soon after the show opened on the Sunday and it was already buzzing. The numbers through the door were definitely up on last year. All of the artists were working and everyone seemed to be in a good mood. The main stage had moved from the centre of the show to sit against one of the walls, which worked well. In front of the stage was the now familiar boxing ring, in which old grudges could be settled and energetic fun could be had using oversized gloves.



KAROLINA, WHITE RABBIT





BEJO TATTOO



BASSIA, HOLY GRAIL



LAINY B



EDGAR IVANOV, OLD LONDON ROAD



SIDEUSZ, WHITE RABBIT TATTOO



BODY PAINTING COMPETITION

There was a very large number of retail stalls selling everything from high-end bespoke jewellery to fabulous secondhand retro clothing. For the visiting public this was great of course, but for the stallholders themselves the large number of stalls meant they had to compete for the public's attention which inevitably diluted their takings. Throughout the day bands and entertainers took to the stage, while at the back of the hall FREE bumper cars were available for anyone who wished to have a ride. This is typical of the Tea Party's fun approach, with the organisers aiming to create a family atmosphere that everyone will enjoy.

And, uniquely, in the corner at the rear of the show a full-on professional weightlifting competition was taking place! With their rippling leotard-wrapped bodies straining under progressively increasing weights, the grunting and sweating weightlifters drew crowds and cheers to rival any tattoo competition I've seen lately.



PAUL TERRY, BOLD STREET TATTOO



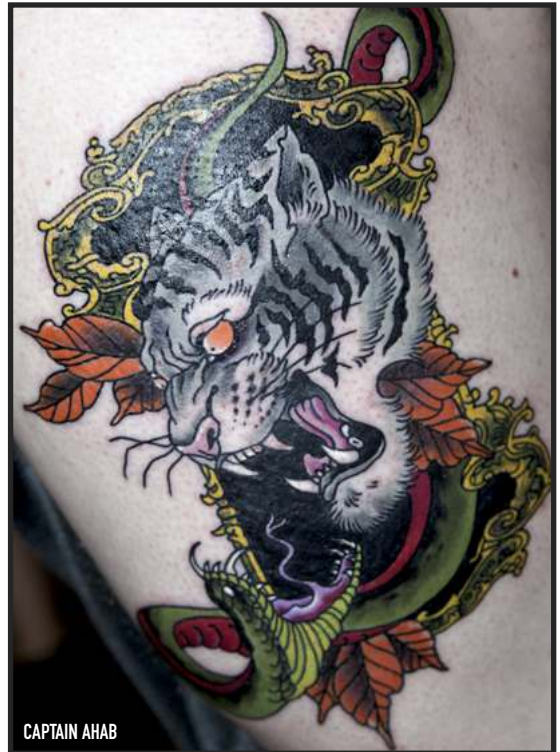
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LIAM FREEMAN, WET PAINT COLLECTIVE



NATHAN HAWORTH, DIAMOND DOZEN TATTOO



LIAM FREEMAN, WET PAINT COLLECTIVE

Without a doubt the biggest negative with this show is the noise. A large cavernous high-ceilinged hall such as this works like a drum and sound is amplified as it rolls around. The artist booths close to the stage areas bear the brunt of it, and unfortunately there is little that can be done to remedy the situation.

The Tea Party's artist list has changed over the years and we no longer see the big international tattooists making their way to Manchester. Instead there is a more local UK-based core and the standard varied from exceptional to some very dubious characters. With 60+ shows in the UK alone this year it is clear to see that artists have plenty of destinations to choose from and we are seeing some of the Tea Party's usual talent deciding to try pastures new. But of course that is in turn a great opportunity for a new younger generation to take up the mantle.





LEAH MOULE, SWEET LIFE GALLERY



MIRA, FAT FUGU



KRIS, HOLY TRINITY



JAY BARLOW, JAY BARLOW TATTOOS

The Tattoo Tea Party has a personality all of its own. It caters to a family market with fun at its heart. It has managed to remain constant over the years and has a comforting familiarity that seems to ensure smiling faces. I see people returning year on year to dunk themselves in its happy atmosphere. If you're in the area, or fancy making a trip, it's definitely worth a visit.



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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
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Yakuza Tattoo

41 Michael Street
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS

1st – 2nd June Bristol Tattoo Show

Ashton Gate Stadium,
Bristol. BS3 2EJ
www.bristoltattooconvention.com

14th-16th June Mourne Tattoo Convention

Newcastle Centre
10 - 14 Central Promenade
Co Down
Northern Ireland
BT33 0AA
www.facebook.com/mournetattoo

15th-16th June UK Tattoo Fest

Marshall Arena,
Stadium Way West,
Milton Keynes MK11ST
www.uktattoofest.co.uk

6th-7th July Leeds Tattoo Expo

First District Arena
Arena Way
Leeds
LS2 8BY
www.leedstattooexpo.com

3rd-4th August Oxford Tattoo Convention

Abingdon College
Oxfordshire
OX14 1GG
www.oxfordtattooconvention.com

16th-18th August Blackpool Tatcon

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

30th August- 1st September Kustom Kulture Blastoff

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

27th-29th September London Tattoo Convention

Tobacco Dock, London, UK
www.thelondontattooconvention.com

18th-20th October Liverpool Tattoo Convention

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

OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS

10th-12th May Athens International Tattoo Convention

Olympic Tae Kwon Do and
Handball Centre
Palaio Faliro,
Greece
www.athenstattooconvention.gr

18th-19th May Montpellier Tattoo Convention

Montpellier Exhibition Center
Route de la Foire,
34470 Pérols,
France
tattoo-montpellier.fr

25th-26th May Moscow Tattoo Convention

Sokolniki, Vystavochnyy Tsentr
5-Y Luchevoy Prosek, 7,
Moskva
Russia
moscowtattooconvention.com

30th May-1st June Prison Ink

Fussingsvej 8
Horsens,
Denmark
www.prisonink.dk

7th – 9th June Palermo Tattoo Convention

Saracen Sands Hotel &
Congress Center,
Via Libertà, Isola delle Femmine,
Province of Palermo, Italy
www.palermotattooconvention.com

14th_16th June St Petersburg Tattoo Convention

A2 Green Concert
Prospekt Medikov, 3,
Sankt-Peterburg, 197022
Russia

**22nd – 23rd June
Bourges Tattoo
Convention**

Auron Palace
Edmond Jongleux Street,
18000 Bourges,
France

**28th-30th June
San Diego Tattoo
Invitational**

Golden Hall
202 C St, San Diego,
CA 92101,
United States
sandiegotattooinvitational.com

**28th-30th June
Dallas Tattoo Arts
Convention**

Kay Bailey Hutchison
Convention Center
650 S Griffin St,
Dallas, TX 75202
United States
www.villainarts.com

**6-7 July
Tattoo Art Expo Dublin**

Griffith Conference Centre
South Circular Road,
Merchants Quay
Dublin 8,
Ireland

**26th -28th July
Ink and Art Inter-
national Tattoo Festival**

Hotel Las Palmeras
Calle Martínez Catena, 6,
29640 Fuengirola, Málaga,
Spain
www.jaganathtattoo.com

**26-28 July
Transylvania Tattoo and
Arts Summit**

Corvinilor Castle,
Strada Castelului 1-3

Hunedoara, 331141
Romania
www.transylvaniatattooart.com

**2nd-4th August
Berlin Tattoo Convention**

Arena Berlin
Eichenstraße 4,
12435 Berlin,
Germany
www.tattoo-convention.de

**30th-31st August
Hans Christian Anderson
Tattoo Convention**

DOK5000
Havnegade 20,
5000 Odense,
Denmark
www.hcaink.dk

**30th August-
1st September
Ti-Tattoo Convention**

Exhibition Center Lugano
Via Campo Marzio
6900 Lugano
Switzerland

**5th-7th October
Barcelona Tattoo Expo**

Fira Barcelona Montjuïc
Avinguda de la Reina Maria
Cristina,
Barcelona,
Spain
www.barcelonatattooexpo.com

**25th-27th October
Amsterdam Tattoo
Convention**

Amsterdam RAI Exhibition and
Convention Centre
Europaplein,
1078 GZ Amsterdam,
Netherlands
www.tattooexpo.eu

**8th-10th November
Florence Tattoo
Convention**

Fortezza Da Basso Viale Fi-
lippo Strozzi, 1 50129 Florence,
Italy
www.florenceconvention.c
om/en/

**8th-10th November
I Love Tattoo Expo**

Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
www.ilovetattooexpo.com

**8-10 November
International Brussels
Tattoo Convention**

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

**7th-8th December
Cesenatico Tattoo
Convention**

Palacongressi Bellaria Igea
Marina
Via Uso 1 – 47814 Bellaria Igea
Marina, Italy
www.tattooconventioncese-
natico.it

2020 UK Conventions

**2nd-3rd May
Brighton Tattoo
Convention**

Brighton Centre, Brighton BN1
2GR
http://brightontattoo.com/



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