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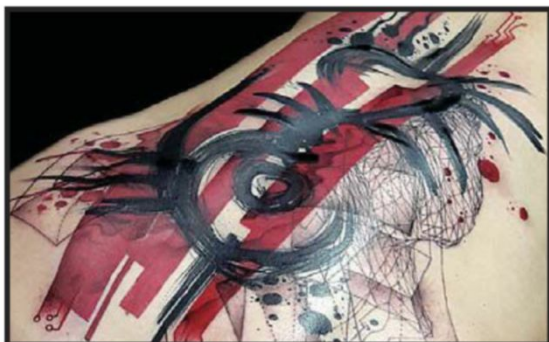
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Get out and about! And organisers, send us the details of your event!

All correspondence should be sent to
Total Tattoo Magazine
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NR7 0AU

www.totaltattoo.co.uk

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EDITORIAL 178



I started working for Total Tattoo Magazine just after my daughter was born. And now, just after my daughter's fifth birthday, I'm moving on to pastures new - to pursue a job that I hope will lead to a career in art therapy, which is something I've had a calling to do, for a very long time.

I can honestly say that working for Total Tattoo has been one of the best experiences of my life. I've gone to more conventions than I can count, some of them across the other side of the world. I've gotten my backside out for tattoo competitions (so I now know *exactly* how nerve wracking that is). And I've picked up some brilliant tattoos along the way too! Above all else though, I've interviewed some of the funniest, most inspirational, opinionated and talented people the tattoo and art world has to offer; and I've loved every minute of it.

There's been some low sides too, which everybody gets in this field of work. Deadline week is the time of the month where our office becomes a seething pit of hellfire as we lock ourselves in and live off a diet of biscuits and Pot Noodles in order get everything together to send to the printers, sometimes late into the night. There's also the downside of going away, where you physically ache for your own bed and to spend time with your actual family.

The thing is, these lows are so insignificant. What makes it all bearable is Total Tattoo's amazing team. You'll know most of them from conventions, and it's no lie when I tell you that they are some of the nicest, most genuine and inappropriately funny reprobates I've ever met. I've never felt so encouraged or supported (or laughed so much that tea has come out of my nose) in any other job. I really do owe them a lot for *everything*. And if they think they're seeing the last of me, they're completely wrong...

The tattoo world is all-encompassing and it's impossible to leave fully. This industry has introduced me to some of the most amazing friends and the love of my life; which is why, no doubt, I'll still be hanging around conventions and making a nuisance of myself. (In fact, I'll still be writing bits and bobs from time to time. I've got some cracking interviews on file!) It's literally under my skin and it's such a huge part of who I am, as well as who my own 'tattoo family' are.

I think somebody is chopping onions in this office...

Lizzy

Editorial Team

editor@totaltattoo.co.uk

Editorial team

Perry Rule

Lizzy Guy

Jill Feldt

Editorial enquiries

editor@totaltattoo.co.uk

Advertising enquiries

advertising@totaltattoo.co.uk

Gallery submissions

gallery@totaltattoo.co.uk

Subscription enquiries

subs@totaltattoo.co.uk

Social Media

Instagram: @totaltattoo

facebook.com/totaltattoo

Contributors

Doralba Picerno



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)

MRI CAUTION

We've recently come across a couple of scare stories in the press about the 'dangers' of having an MRI scan if you've got tattoos. This is nothing new (the information has always been on the NHS website) but we thought it might be useful to explain the facts here.

MRI stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging. It's a technique that uses powerful magnetic fields and radio waves to produce images of the inside of the body. Any metal in the body can cause problems – whether it's a surgical implant, a filling in a tooth, or the tiny fragments that are often found in the blood vessels of people who do metalwork for a living – because the metallic particles could heat up in the energy of the scan. Patients are always instructed to inform medical staff so that they can assess any risks and take any extra precautions necessary to make the scanning procedure as safe as possible.



Tattoo inks (especially older inks) sometimes contain traces of metal too, and this is why people are concerned. But most tattoos are completely safe in an MRI scanner. Nevertheless, it's important to make sure the radiographer is aware that you have tattoos and it's vital to let them know if you feel any discomfort or heat in your tattoo during your scan.

Read more here:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/mri-scan/who-can-have-it/

MIND BENDING

We enjoyed seeing pictures of Uri Geller's new tattoo. Nobody's going to deny the fact that this is one spoon he definitely can bend! Check out the video at www.facebook.com/theurigeller/videos/360927864555566/ It will make you smile.



OH WE DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE!

What could be more British than a weekend at the seaside? Sun (sometimes), sand (everywhere) and sea (brrrrr!) How about combining that good ol' sea air and bright lights with top-class tattooing and entertainment at Blackpool's very own Tatcon?

The show takes place at The Norbreck Castle Hotel from Friday 16th to Sunday 18th August and tickets are available via www.tatconblackpool.co.uk

We've managed to secure SIX pairs of weekend tickets for you lucky readers to win. To be in with a chance, just answer the following question:

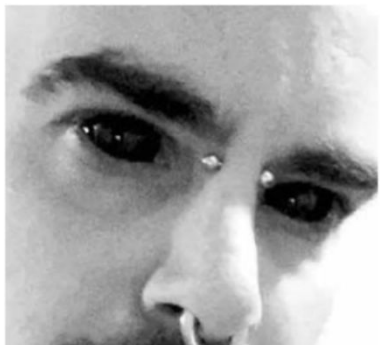
What type of confectionery is famously sold at seaside towns?

- 1) Rock
- 2) Paper
- 3) Scissors

Please email your answer to competitions@totaltattoo.co.uk not forgetting to include your name and contact details, to arrive no later than Friday 2nd August. Usual terms and conditions apply (see Page 12).



EYE SAY, EYE SAY, EYE SAY!



There are further moves in Canada towards making eye tattooing illegal. In the province of Manitoba, Scott Johnson (Member of the Legislative Assembly for St James) has proposed a bill banning “cosmetic eye tattooing and eye jewellery”. The Association of Optometrists of Manitoba and the Association of Physicians and Ophthalmologists of Manitoba have given the proposal their strong support, pointing out the obvious dangers of such procedures – which were brought to everyone's attention so dramatically in 2017 by the case of Catt Gallinger, a woman from Ottawa, who developed severe complications after an eyeball tattoo went badly wrong [see news item in Total Tattoo Magazine Issue 158]. If the legislation is passed, Manitoba will become the second Canadian province to make eye tattooing illegal. It is already banned in Ontario.



READY FOR TAKE-OFF



A very positive announcement from Air New Zealand – they've dropped their longstanding ban on staff having visible tattoos. In a country where a person's cultural heritage is so often expressed in ink, this is great news indeed. It means that those men and women who choose to wear *moko* (traditional Maori facial tattoos) will now finally be allowed to work for the national airline.

Many people have commented on the apparent hypocrisy of Air New Zealand proudly using Maori designs and imagery in its marketing campaigns and corporate graphics whilst hitherto denying this freedom of individual cultural expression to its staff. There had also been concern that the existing policy discriminated against Maori employees.

According to press announcements, from 1st September this year all employees (uniformed or non-uniformed) will be allowed to have “non-offensive” tattoos on view at work. A spokesperson explained that, in judging what is offensive and what is non-offensive, tattoos would be “treated like speech” – so in the same way that employees should not “swear, make hateful comments or lewd jokes, or use violent language in the workplace” tattoos featuring such language or imagery will not be permitted either.

And it's a massive leap forward for the whole airline industry too. Our research indicates that most carriers still don't permit cabin crew to have visible tattoos (some even ban tattoos altogether), so in lifting its ban Air New Zealand is leading the way to the future!



BURNING ISSUE

Here's an example of where going for the burn really isn't going to do your body any good at all. 'Sunburn tattoos' first became a trend a few years ago and it seems they're back again as this year's latest fad. Put a stencil on your skin then sunbathe for a while without wearing any sunscreen and you'll end up with a (painful) red mark in the shape of your chosen design – emphatically NOT a good idea if you have any concerns about the serious risk of skin cancer, or indeed simply don't relish the thought of burnt, sore, peeling skin or premature ageing. But if Instagram is anything to go by, it seems there are plenty of people out there who don't worry about such things...



SOMETHING FISHY



PRO CHOICE TATTOOS

In response to the recent news about draconian new abortion legislation in the American state of Alabama – which he describes as “like something from a dystopian novel” – Brighton tattooist Patrick Bates decided to offer free 'Pro Choice' tattoos in return for donations to charity.

Patrick, who is known for his edgy stick-and-poke tattoos of meaningful words and phrases, has been tattooing for three years and has acquired a very substantial online following. He wanted to use that popularity to reach out to people all over the world. As he himself says, “I'm never going to be Prime Minister, but I can at least use the platform I have to make a positive change.” He came up with the idea of offering free Pro Choice tattoos – and it was the fans themselves who then suggested making donations to charity in return for their ink. Patrick's chosen charities are Women Help Women (womenhelp.org) and NARAL (prochoiceamerica.org).

June 2nd saw a dedicated charity day at Heartbreaker Tattoo in Brighton, with people donating whatever amount they wished in return for one of Patrick's specially designed Pro Choice tattoos. Patrick is also sending out a photo of his lettering – free of charge – to anyone who couldn't make it to Brighton and who wishes to get the design tattooed by someone else. He also plans to release a Pro Choice t-shirt, with all profits going to charity.

You can contact Patrick by email at european.son.420@gmail.com

Every now and then we come across a news item that seems almost too bizarre to be credible. Here's one such story. It's also a tale of what many people will see as extreme cruelty, and it's gone viral on social media. It's all about a pet shop in South Africa that recently came under fire for selling a tattooed fish. Yes, you read that right, a tattooed *fish*. Responding to a barrage of complaints (from animal rights organisations and others), the pet shop's owner explained that the fish had not been tattooed on the premises; it had arrived in a consignment from their wholesaler, already adorned with the coloured design. This is apparently a new trend in the pet trade; B-grade 'reject' fish that would otherwise be destroyed are tattooed to make them more attractive for sale. The actual tattooing process is unclear, but experts have commented that whether or not it is done with needles, it's likely the fish will suffer considerable distress, together with potentially fatal damage to their scales. (Losing their protective outer layer renders fish susceptible to infection and disease.) We understand that the sale of tattooed fish is perfectly legal in South Africa and in many other countries too. In a subsequent interview, the pet shop owner said he returned the tattooed fish to the wholesaler.



MOVE TO FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS

David Barry and Tacho Franch have been in touch to let us know that Follow Your Dreams Tattoo has moved from the Forum to 160 Devonshire Street, Sheffield, S3 7SG (tel 07851 800848). Keep an eye out for even brighter and better things from this excellent studio!



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

The RAF has announced a limited relaxation of its anti-tattoo policy in an effort to promote greater inclusivity and reach its recruitment targets. Airforce personnel can now have visible hand and neck tattoos... but don't get too excited. You can only have a tattoo on your hand if it's on your finger and small enough to be covered by a ring, and any neck tattoo mustn't be visible from the front (whilst wearing certain uniforms) or extend beyond the hairline. Cosmetic eyebrow tattoos are now also permitted, but only if they are natural in appearance. Tattoos will no longer be required to be covered, whatever the occasion. Tattoos considered to be obscene or offensive remain banned. Check out www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment



TATTOOS WITHOUT NEEDLES

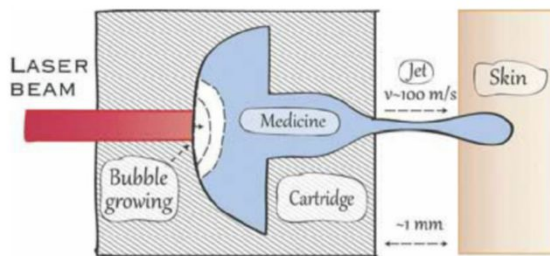
In recent years we've brought you a number of interesting stories about biomedical 'tattoos' – smart inks that can monitor health conditions or alert the wearer to environmental hazards. A team at the University of Twente in the Netherlands has now been working on a new way to inject these special inks into the skin... that doesn't use needles.

The new technique involves an ultra-fast jet of the 'ink' (as thin as a human hair) being fired at the skin. It penetrates to the required depth, and apparently feels something like a small mosquito bite. The liquid is propelled out of a micro-channel on a glass chip. Heated by a laser, a vapour bubble forms as the temperature rapidly soars above boiling point, and that's what ejects it at such high speed.

The advantages to the tattoo are obvious. There's less pain, less skin trauma, and minimal infection risk. But the new technique is also described as being more environmentally friendly than conventional tattooing

because less energy is used and there are fewer disposables.

There are many potential applications for this new technique – including biosensors for blood sugar, sun exposure and so on, needle-free vaccinations and a wide range of other medical treatments – and in years to come, who knows, it might even revolutionise the whole world of tattooing. Researcher David Fernández Rivas says the next step is to investigate ways of increasing the volume of liquid that can be delivered, and to develop smart inks that can safely remain in the body for longer periods of time. It's early days, so watch this space.



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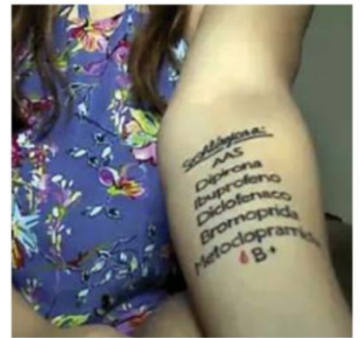
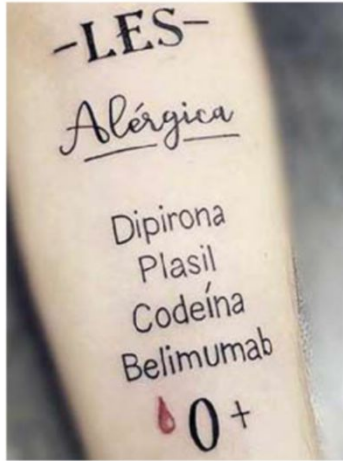
COMPETITIONS:

All winners will be picked at random (or on

merit if applicable) after the closing date. Entries received after the closing date will not be considered. The Editor's decision is final. Only one entry per person please, and remember to include your name and address. Winners of convention tickets will be responsible for their own transport and accommodation unless stated otherwise. Total Tattoo is not responsible for items lost or damaged in transit (though of course we will try to help if we can)

FREE HEALTH ALERT TATTOOS

Our news radar has picked up an optimistic little story from Brazil, where Santa Catarina tattooist Mael is offering free health alert tattoos (for allergies, diabetes, etc) to those who need them – in return for donations of food to help needy local families. These tattoos are a more permanent alternative to the usual wristband, bracelet or necklace, and of course you can't accidentally forget to put them on. We're sure there must be other generous hearted tattooists out there offering a similar service, so do please let us know!



VENICE EXHIBITION

'Tattoo: Stories on the Skin' is a new exhibition at the M9 Museum (Museo del '900) in Mestre, Venice. Organised in collaboration with the Turin Museums Foundation and Museo d'Arte Orientale, it explores "the universe of tattoos, from an anthropological, historical, artistic and social point of view".

Beginning in antiquity, with tattooed mummies, the exhibition brings things into the present day with a space showing the work of contemporary Italian artists and big international names such as Tin-Tin, Filip Leu, Claudia de Sabe and Horiyoshi III – covering great swathes of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century tattoo history on the way. It's a journey through time, with the emphasis on understanding the who, what and why of tattooing.

Also on show are tattoo-related photography and other art – including Fabio Viale's



tattooed classical marble sculptures and Wim Delvoye's controversial tattooed pigs – and much else besides. The exhibition is flanked by the images of Massimiliano Maxx Testa's 'Tattoo Off' from the Venice International Tattoo Convention, featuring work by Alex de Pase, Marco Manzo, Moni Marino, Silvano Fiato and Volko+Simone of the Buena Vista Tattoo Club. And look out for the side events too!

The exhibition runs until 17th November and a catalogue is available.

M9, via Giovanni Pascoli 11, 30171 Venice Mestre. Tel +39 041 2387230. Email info@m9digital.it

Check out www.m9digital.it/it/tattoo-storie-sulla-pelle-mostra-museo-m9 for more details.

SKINS AND NEEDLES

The UK Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) is calling for an improvement in safety standards and tighter legislation across the tattoo industry.

In a recently published report entitled **Skins and Needles** they investigate infection control risks associated with tattooing and other 'special procedures' such as piercing, acupuncture, electrolysis and dermal fillers. The report highlights the UK's "patchy" regulatory environment – which, as it says, has struggled to keep up with a rapidly evolving industry – and points out that there is currently no requirement in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland for practitioners to hold infection control qualifications. (Wales will be introducing this within a new licensing scheme due to come into force by April 2020 under Part 4 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017.)



In a press release, Shirley Cramer, RSPH Chief Executive, calls on legislative bodies in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to “follow the example set by Wales by introducing a mandatory licensing scheme”. **Skins and Needles** lists a number of far-reaching recommendations, including:

- Tattooists should be required to hold an infection control qualification in order to become licensed/registered
- Businesses should only sell equipment to licensed/registered tattooists
- Infections resulting from tattooing or piercing should be included in the list of notifiable diseases that must be reported to local councils or local health protection teams

Download the full report here:

www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/policy/infection-control/skins-and-needles.html

WORLD PIECE FOR WORLD PEACE

OK, so some will say it's just a marketing stunt, but the beauty of the concept – and the beauty of the finished result – simply cannot be denied.

For its latest campaign, entitled The World Piece, global travel company Momondo brought together 61 people from all over the planet and connected them together with a single continuous back tattoo. Each individual stand-alone segment of the design is an artistic statement in itself, but put them together and the effect is awe-inspiring. It's the perfect illustration of human difference and human connection.

Tattooist Gabriela Lastra of Blind Tiger took part in the project and told us, “I got an email asking if I would like to take part in it, and explaining what it was all about, and I thought it was lush idea! They sent me very specific measurements [for the person I was to tattoo]. I just think it's so lovely to be part of something like that. And the fact that so many people's work is joined up, well that's pretty incredible.”

To see more of The World Piece and read everyone's individual stories visit momondo.com/theworldpiece





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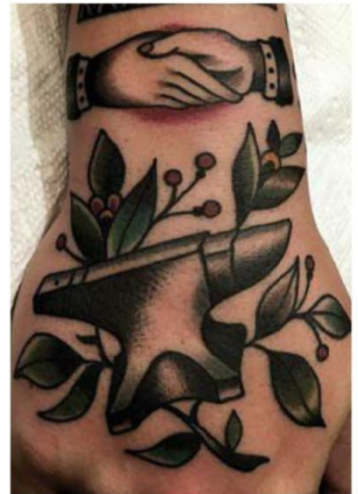
**PAUL
DOBLEMAN**



Paul Dobleman is to traditional tattooing what Harley-Davidson is to motorbikes; his style is solid, smooth and the pinnacle of American bold. Heavily influenced by the West Coast tattooers before him, his stripped back designs pack a real punch. He has an eye for perfection, which is evident in each beautifully executed tattoo and also in his painted flash. Having joined Spider Murphy's almost eleven years ago, he now proudly represents the shop at conventions all over the world.

Tell us a little about your background...

I'm based in Santa Fe, California, and I've been tattooing thirteen and a half years. I was born in San Francisco and grew up about fifteen minutes north of the Golden Gate Bridge. My parents are Latino, from El Salvador, and they have a Spanish background too. My father would play guitar while my mom danced flamenco! My mom threw fortune cards - they weren't tarot, they were cards she'd learned from a lady that she helped out. My father painted cars and motorcycles and did airbrushing, and when I was growing up I helped him while I was still in high school. I learned how to paint, fix bike parts and do bodywork. This was all in the nineties when there was a lot of money around from the dot-com bubble. People were painting their Ducatis or fixing up Moto Guzzis and my Dad was doing custom art on Harleys too.



Do you think Silicon Valley fuelled the West Coast tattoo boom as well?

No, San Francisco had something special way before then. It was already established. There was Ed Hardy and Tattoo City, Bill Salmon's Diamond Club, lots of others. It just grew in popularity. A bunch of really great shops opened up in the nineties that are still around, like Temple Tattoo – and Spider Murphy's of course. There was a lot of stuff going on at that time, like Lyle Tuttle being on the cover of Rolling Stone which was a real big deal. On the West Coast, tattooing's always been more generally accepted and not outlawed like it was in New York [from 1961 to 1997 – Ed.] That ban would definitely have been a setback, but it didn't take the East Coast long to catch up! There was a moment in time when it was really exciting to see New York tattooing, and all the great artists who were there. It made me want to go and see for myself, and guest there.

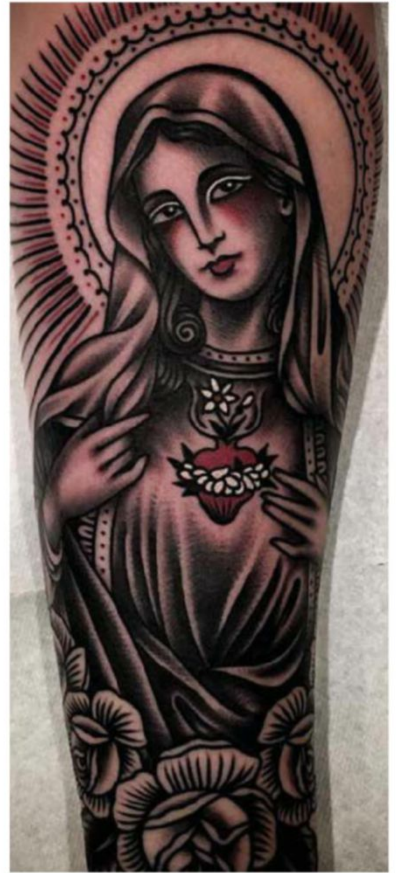


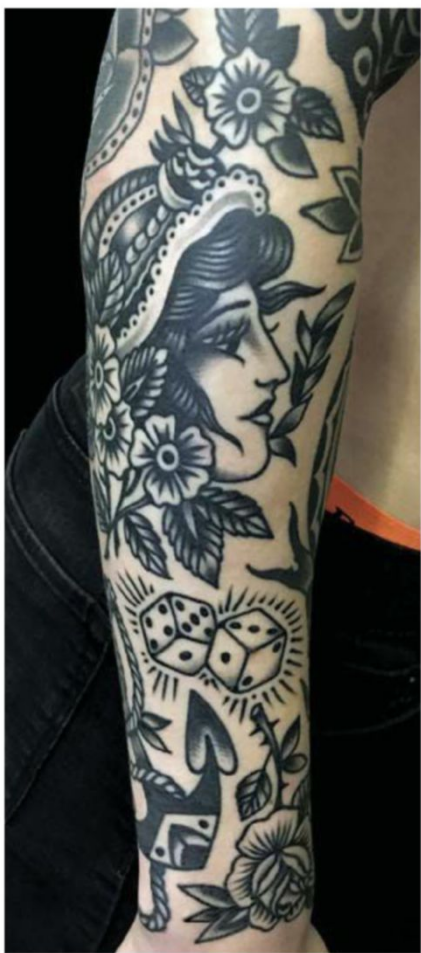
Do you think those moments still happen? Even in today's global industry?

Yeah, I think so. Recently, for example, the Australians were really dominating and putting out all kinds of great work, lots of classic-style tattooing. I see it now in Italy and Spain, with all those great young artists who are really inspired by older tattoos.

You can definitely see different styles of traditional, but it's often difficult to describe exactly what makes them so distinctive...

I think sometimes it's the way things are drawn, or certain colours that are used – a tone of green, or a bluey grey, or a stripped-down, minimal palette. Even the line weight of a classic tattoo, maybe thinner or thicker... In Italy right now, there's a lot of thinner lines and it feels very Owen Jenson and Bert Grimm influenced. Smith Street in Brooklyn, New York, is a good example of a shop with its own style. Bold and bright.





What was it about traditional tattooing that first appealed to you?

When I started out, I was working with a guy named Mikey Slater. He'd been in the navy and he loved traditional tattoos, and that was the stuff he did. I loved maritime art, and pirate ships, and I loved gypsy imagery too - because of my mom - and I was really drawn to all these designs that told a story. The tradition of painting flash by hand was something I wanted to keep up too. Traditional imagery holds up over time. Someone once said to me, 'What would you rather have, a warped crazy-looking skull or just a simple one?' It's the simple skull that will last. The one that's got snarling teeth and stuff, you're more likely to look at as you get older and think, 'That was a dumb idea'.





One thing we're noticing in the UK is that some traditional tattooed images are being seen as potentially problematic – Indian heads for example. Is that happening in the US too?

I don't hear much about tattoo imagery being a problem. I mean, Native Americans were put in such a horrible position; their culture was completely beaten and stripped down. So it's an emotive subject. But I think the imagery is really beautiful and maybe there to be celebrated. The more you know about the culture, the more appreciative your tattoo can be – for example if you know about types of headdress or the animals that might have been worn. Geographical knowledge about tribes also helps to make a more correct tattoo. But I think people mainly just like the imagery – and that's not just in the US, but all over the world. When I first came to Europe I was very surprised by the number of people wanting Native American girl heads, but I think that's because it was something new. It's just like the popularity of Day of the Dead designs. That imagery is celebrated all over the world because it's so different and unique. The classics will always stay classic.

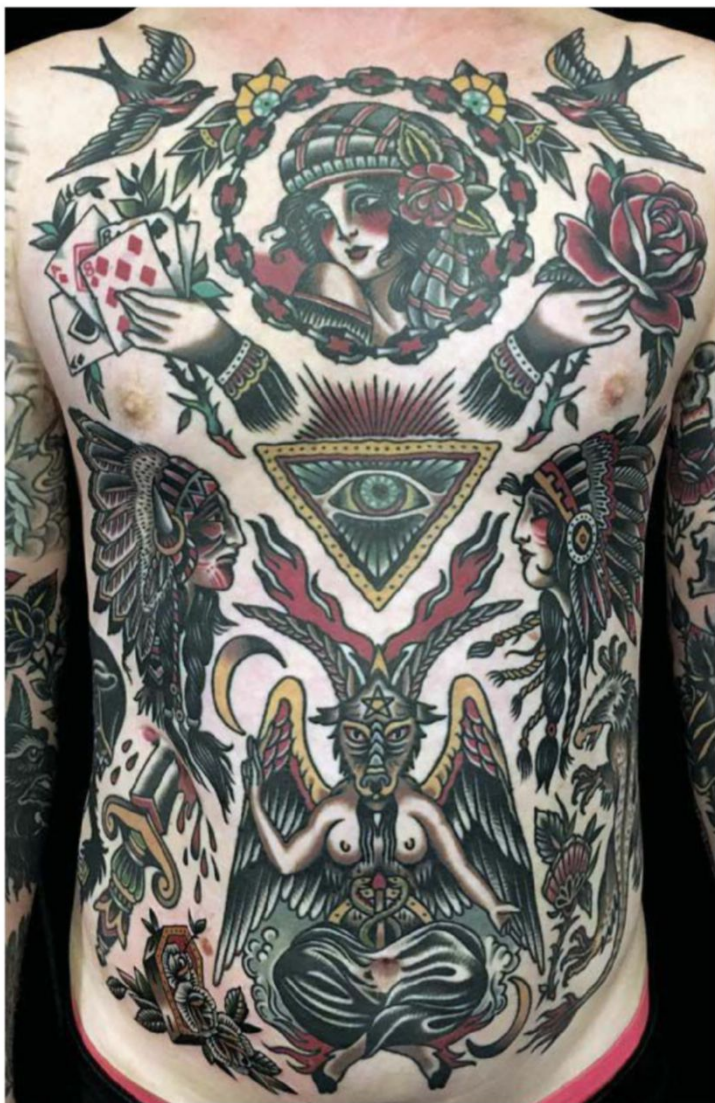


What have your years in tattooing taught you?

There's been times in my career where I've experimented with different line weights, etc... Yeah, you do learn a lot as the years go by. One thing about having that little bit more experience is that you get to see the way your tattoos age. The way colours change and the way lines spread. Those things are important to know. For example, if you're going to do a small face on a tattoo of a lady, you have to make sure it's simplified enough that it doesn't become a mess later down the road.

Are there 'rules' in traditional tattooing?

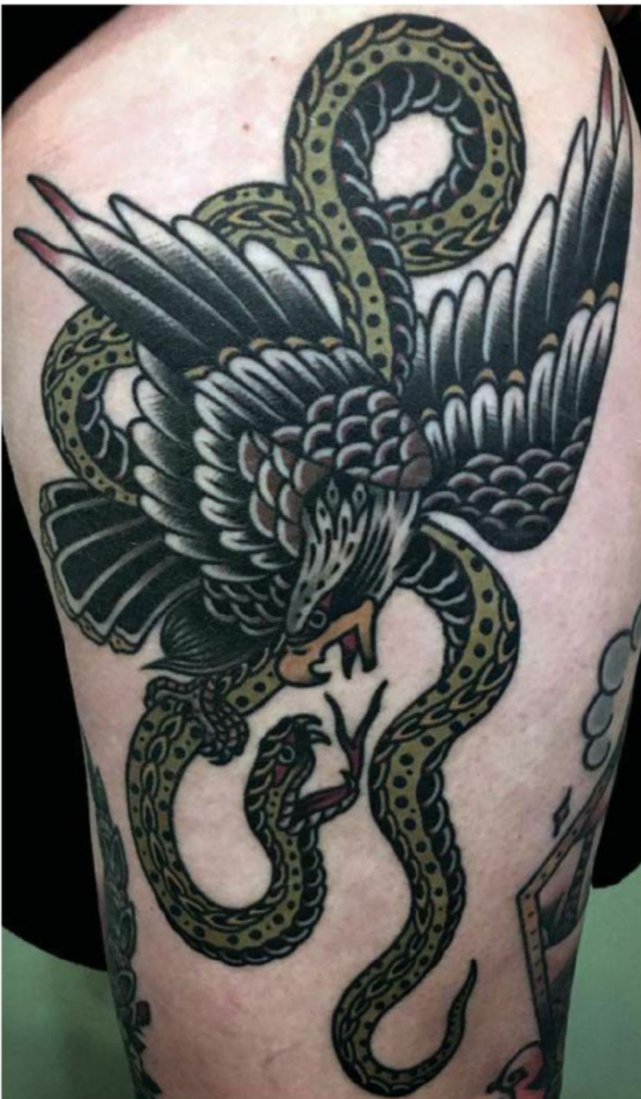
I guess people would say there are rules about how much black there should be, or the general line weight. Personally, I think traditional tattoos should look stark and bold. If a tattoo has the same line weight throughout, it's a very different thing to start adding fine lines. That changes it for sure. It becomes more of an illustrative-style tattoo with some of the fundamentals of a traditional tattoo but not that same feeling. So yeah, I think there's definitely a certain look. You have to have enough black, but not too much either.





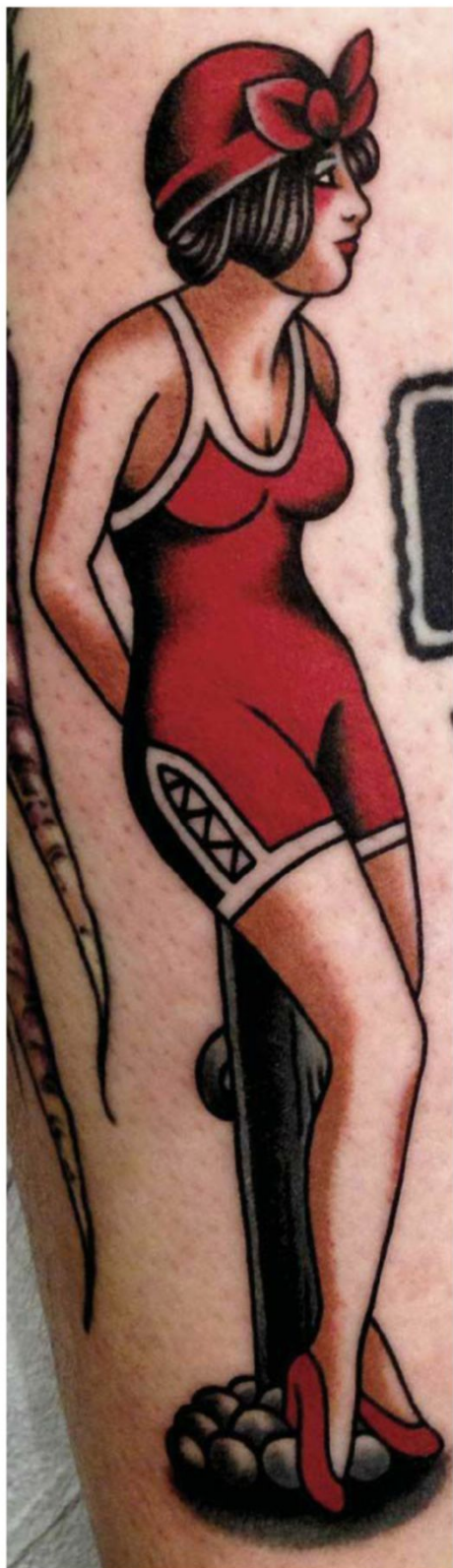
A lot of your work is monochrome. Is it difficult to balance the black and the shading?

Not particularly. I think you just need to give yourself enough room in your design to have all the lines, so it's not overly busy, and put enough shading in. You don't need to patronise your audience; it's OK if you cover up some parts with shading. Say for example it's a gypsy scarf, you don't have to show every detail – a third of her scarf could be black with some of the design poking through. You don't always have to always show every little detail. Suggesting it is often sufficient. Creating that simplicity is a lot harder than it looks. People think it's easy to draw something, but you have to know what to leave out. If you put in too much, you'll look at it later and you'll see the bullshit. You don't need all that stuff, like sparkly eyeballs or whatever. The most important thing is that it looks clean, it's breathable and it's got enough black in it.



It's hard to cover up mistakes with simplicity...

Yeah, there are certain spots on a tattoo that you can't fuck up! And those areas have to be super clean. There are other areas where you have a bit of leeway, where you can shade stuff out if your customer moves or if something else happens. With an image of a woman, the most important things are the face, boobs and hands. A fucked up line on those areas really shows!



Do you think it's important for tattooers to be able to draw?

Yes. The thing about drawing is that you can create a design that doesn't yet exist apart from in your head. You can certainly come up with designs on a computer, but they won't be new ideas in the same way as if you created them yourself. The drawing helps in creating an idea. I haven't gone down the route of the iPad yet. I've always been kinda against those first waves of technology. But a lot of my friends have them and they show me how easy it is to build a design fast and get the proportions right. The iPad is a pretty amazing tool. I definitely get the convenience of it. I'm not opposed to using one... I just haven't gotten round to it!

What's the relationship between your tattooing and your painting?

Painting was traditionally something that tattooers had to do - to show your customers what you had to offer. From the circus times through to the biker shops, you would walk in and see designs. It's always been something I thought I should do, but it's also something I really enjoy doing.

Whenever I have free time, or if I make time to do it, it's a very peaceful activity for me – listening to music and painting. I listen to different kinds of music, mellow or fast, depending on the time of day. And if I have to get something done quickly, I'll put on something like The Ramones, something really repetitive where I can crank out a bunch of designs. But yeah, it's important to me. Most Fridays my brother and I hang out at the shop (he works at Spider Murphy's too) and work on paintings and designs together, and critique each other's art.

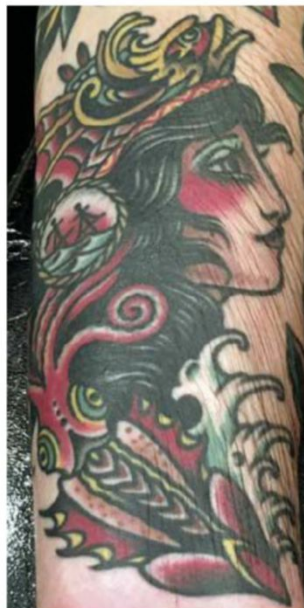
That kind of thing is getting rarer nowadays...

Yeah and it's a shame. I think constructive criticism is a really important part of growing. When I first started at Spider Murphy's I'd have Theo critique my tattoos and sometimes he'd be like, 'OK... are you ready for this?' [Laughs] But that was exactly what I was hoping for when I first showed up on his doorstep with my portfolio.



Were his critiques tough?

Not too tough. I feel I've been lucky to have friends who aren't afraid to tell you if your stuff sucks. You don't need to be praised all the time, especially if you don't deserve to be. And of course when you're learning people have to say something to ensure you don't make the same mistakes again and again. Some people are afraid to hurt other people's feelings, and some people enjoy it. Neither of those are helpful. The honest truth about your work is the most helpful. Getting that balance of both – saying what's good about it and what could have been better – is the important thing.



You need to get that perspective from other people.

Yeah, and actually that's also what's so beautiful about travelling. You get a new perspective, you see people doing things differently, and you can apply those things to your own work. You grow and learn. My brother is in his first year of tattooing and I said to him, 'If you give up on trying to make a better rose tattoo, then you're failing. You can always make something a little bit better or a little bit different.' You have to keep working at it. You mustn't think, 'Oh, this is good enough' or, 'This is great.' Things can always be better.



Tell us about your recent Open Road Tattoo Tour.

Justin Weatherholtz, Frankie Caraccioli, Brian Thurow and myself had met through Kings Avenue Tattoo. We're good friends, and I was asked if I wanted to go on this road trip with them. I didn't have a whole lot of information about it! It just kept on building and we ended up with an RV and a whole heap of shops that we were gonna visit. It was really amazing, a really fun trip. Everyone got along and was respectful of each other. We tattooed a lot and visited a lot of cities in a short amount of time. It was great, we got to see old friends and meet new ones. It's a humbling experience to see how many talented people are out there and then work with them also. We acquired more people along the way, like Austin Maples, Adam Warmerdam, Marc Nava and Zac Scheinbaum.



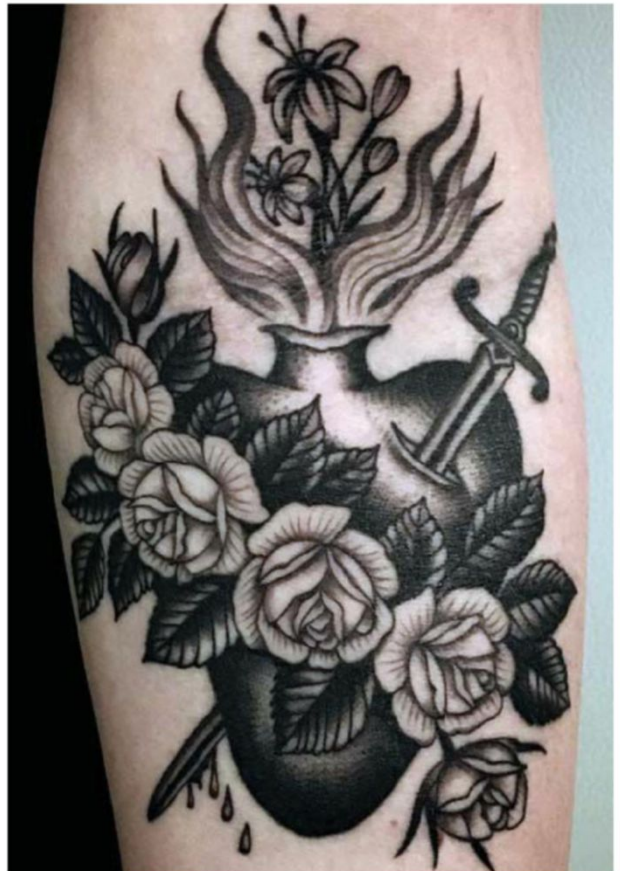


To many people, your name is now synonymous with Spider Murphy's. That must feel like a huge responsibility?

Yeah, but it's awesome too. To carry on that tradition and fly the flag is a great honour, and Theo's now made me a partner. I've been at Spider Murphy's ten and a half years, and I still love it and it still feels amazing – especially now that my brother is working here too. It's been really inspiring watching him grow; we're so close. But everyone here has become my family. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else!

www.instagram.com/pauldobleman
www.pauldobleman.com

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OH WE DO LIKE TO INK BESIDE THE SEASIDE!

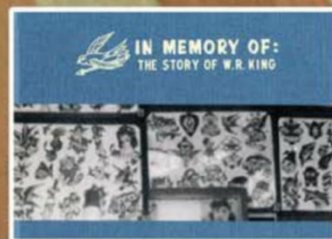
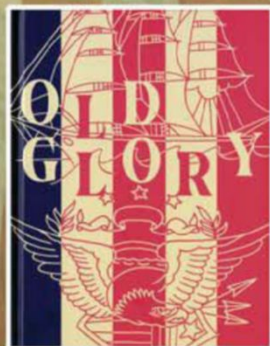
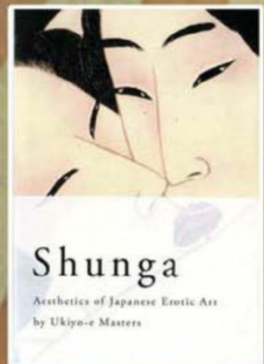
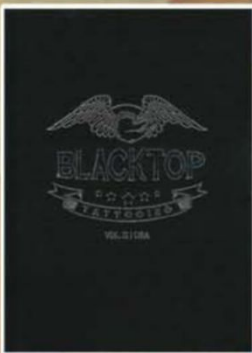
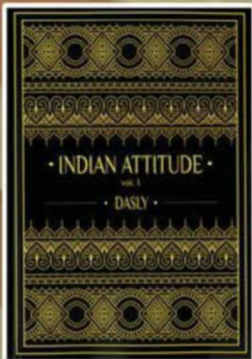
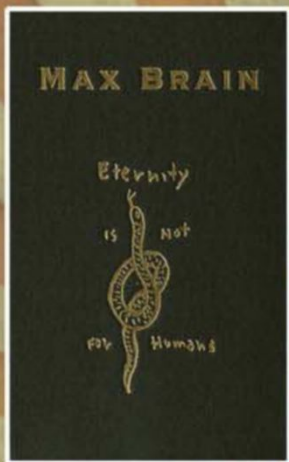
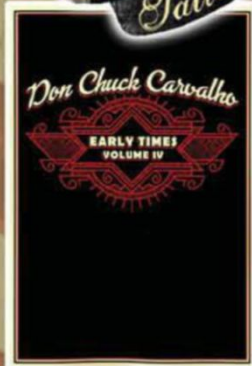


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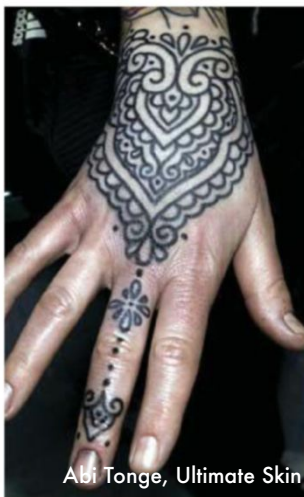




THE BIG NORTH TATTOO SHOW



Bethany Rivers, Studio Twenty Three



Abi Tonge, Ultimate Skin



Dan Gold, Dan Gold Tattoo



Tim from Dancehall



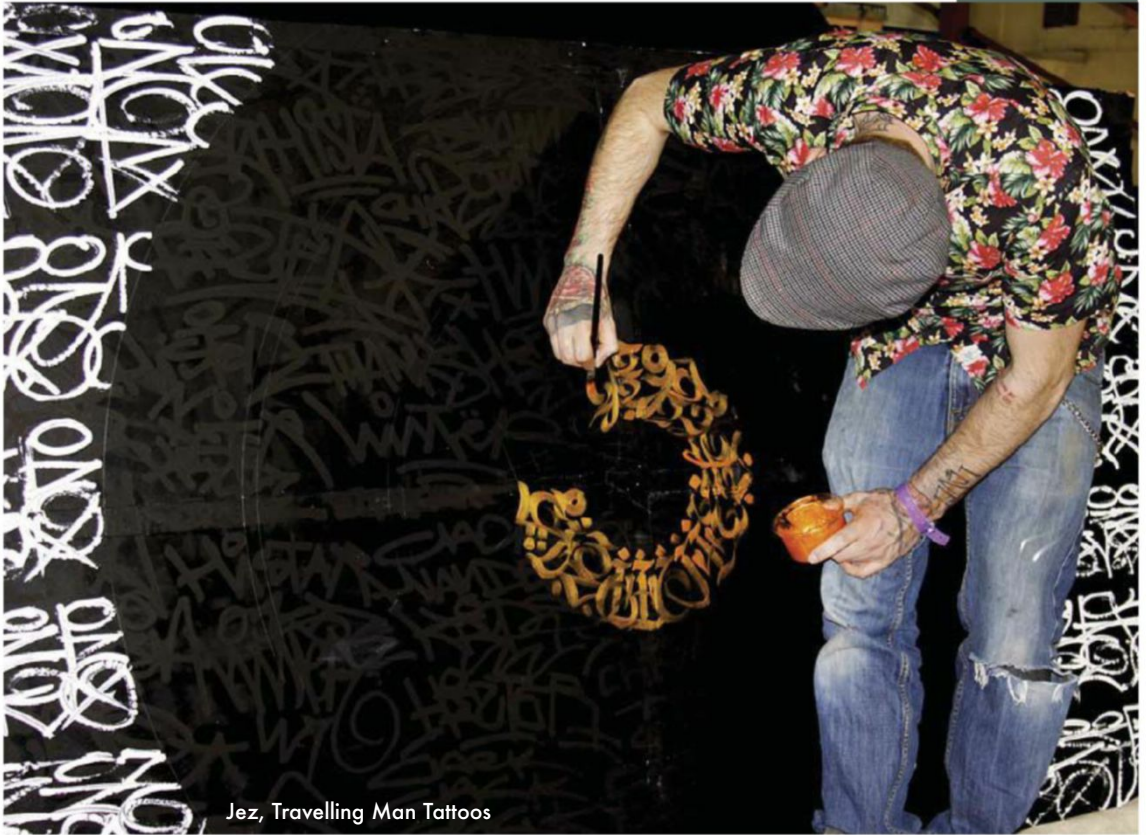
Gabbie Vasquez, Nirvana Tattoo
Winner Best Small Colour

We asked Doralba Picerno, one of our guest reporters, to give us her perspective on the Total Tattoo Big North Tattoo Show...

I have to admit that I have a particular soft spot for the Big North Tattoo Show. This is because the Northeast of England has a special place in my heart and I always welcome any opportunity to go!

The city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne has played host to this event since 2017. And the Big North has established itself as a bridge between all the more southerly English shows and the popular Scottish ones north of the Border. Continuing its tenure at the Metro Radio Arena, recently re-christened Utilita Arena, the Big North's successful formula has remained more or less the same, with two days full of tattoo action and entertainment.

Unfortunately, the weekend of the show coincided with some works on the local metro line, so there were travel challenges for some visitors, me included. But when I arrived at the venue, first impressions were good; the show was busier than last year, and there was a bustling atmosphere. With nearly 300 artists from around the world and a top band like The Urban Voodoo Machine booked to play on the Sunday, it all felt very exciting.



Jez, Travelling Man Tattoos



Mark Boyle, Nothing Sacred Tattoo

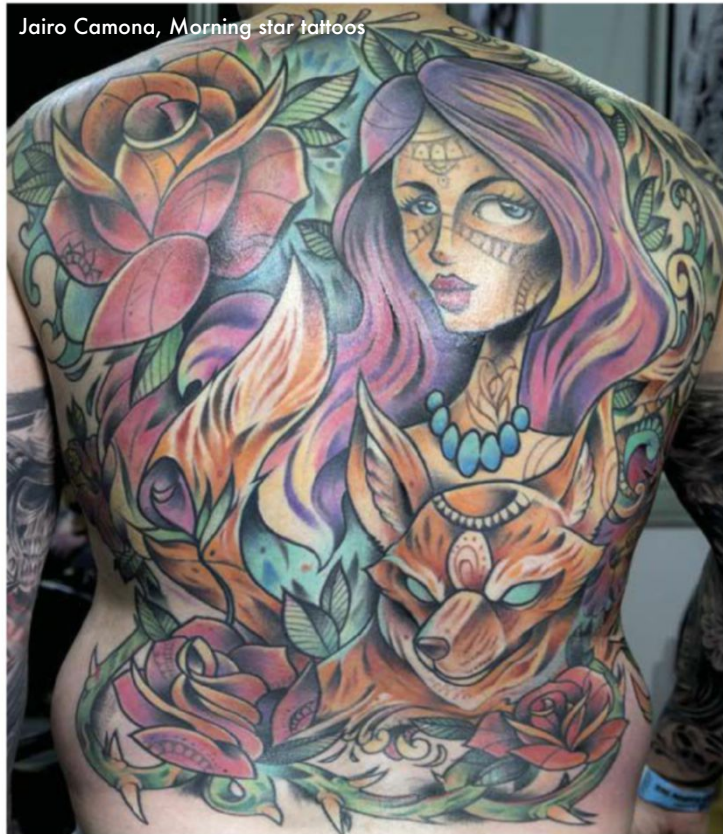


Dean Gunther, North of Winter



Paul Terry, Old Street Tattoo

Jairo Camona, Morning star tattoos



Kyle Shields, Empire Ink



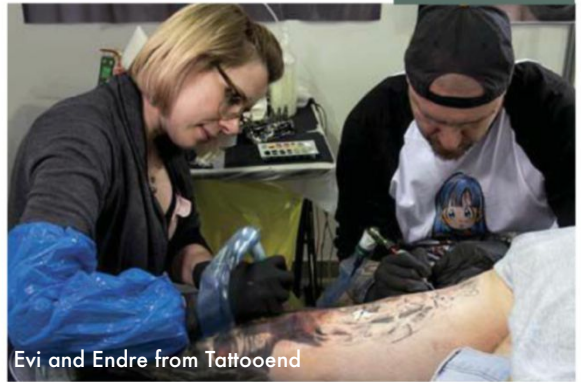
Jessie Foakes, Good Ship 13



Endre Szabo, Tattoeend



Matt Back, High Bridge Tattoo



Evi and Endre from Tattooeend



Monika Koch, Rock 'n' Roll

The entertainment was fun, interesting and varied, with acts including the magical Jyoti Supernatural, the father and daughter team of Cunning Stunts Cabaret and the truly engaging punk shoegaze band Dancehall. It all took place on the foyer stage, with the main hall being reserved for tattooing and merchandising. I have to say this foyer area did lack some of the vibe of the main arena with its buzzing machines, but it was a full schedule of quality acts. And also on offer were over fifty arcade games for the whole family – an absolute treat, completely free of charge – plus plenty of comfy beanbags for everyone to chill out in. A bold exhibition of tattoo-inspired artworks by Yogi XIII added a welcome arty touch.



Mira Paramonova



Mira Paramonova, Fat Fugu

A big innovation this year concerned the tattoo contest. Inspired by Asian tattoo shows, the competition model was updated to that of Far Eastern conventions. This meant a more informal, less conventional judging experience.

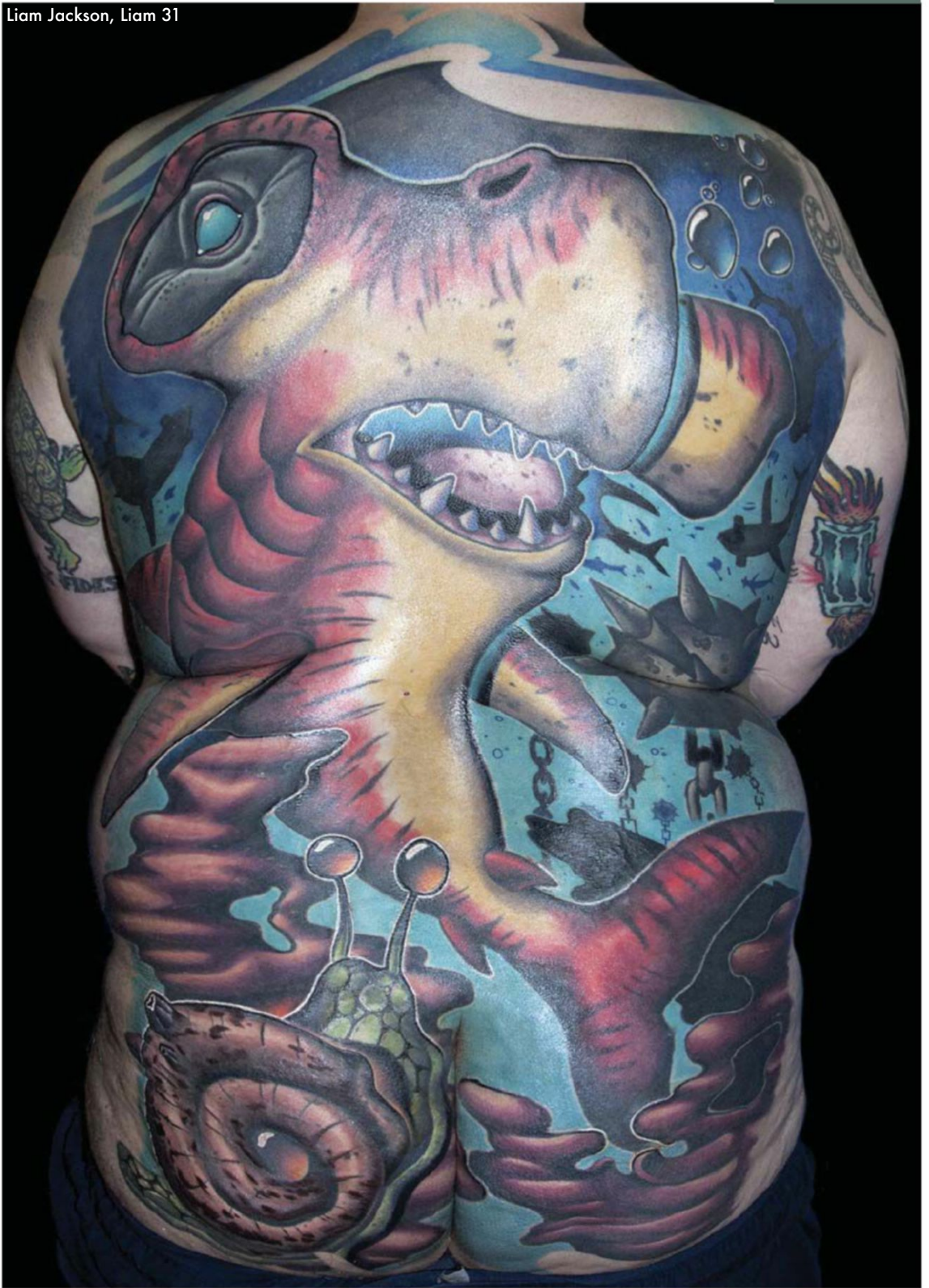


Ricky Lopez, Black Galleon. Winner Best Realism



The Urban Voodoo Machine

Liam Jackson, Liam 31





Yogi XIII Exhibition



Tenkiryu



Kirsten Pettitt, Dark Horse Collective
Winner Best of Show



Brent McCown



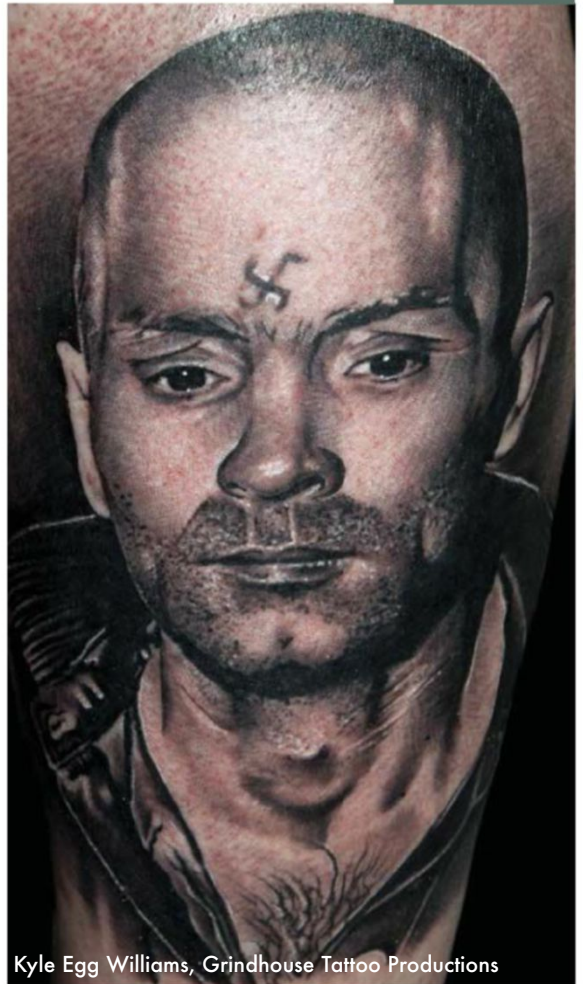
Patryk Mazur,
Surrealistic Sanctuary



Patryk Mazur,
Surrealistic Sanctuary

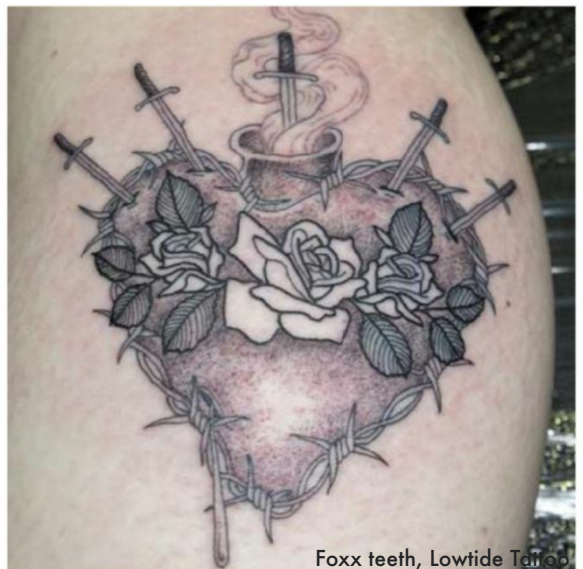


Paul Vander Johnson, On the Road

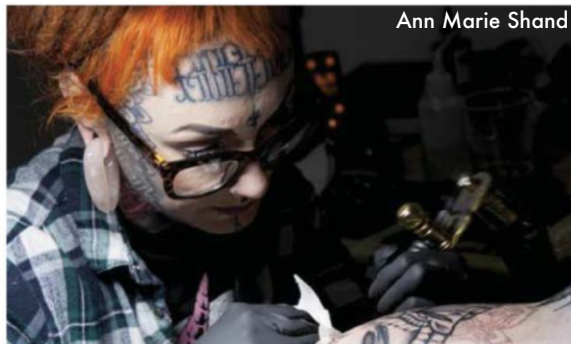


Kyle Egg Williams, Grindhouse Tattoo Productions

No parading in front of the jury was involved; instead, the tattooees all went on stage at the same time and were given tokens by the jury members who particularly liked their tattoos. The one with the most tokens was the winner for the category. All this happened under the watchful eye of MC and former Total Tattoo editor James Sandercock, who led the proceedings. Having witnessed the 'Western' way of doing competitions for the last 25 years, I appreciated the streamlining of the contests, which too often can become drawn out and tedious.



Foxx teeth, Lowtide Tattoos

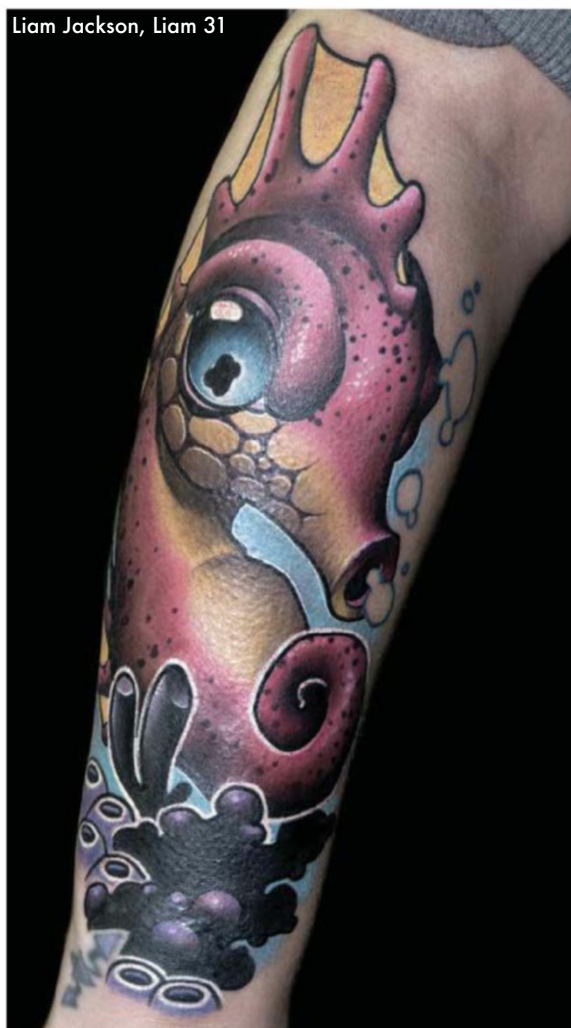


Ann Marie Shand

The competition stage itself was more like an accessible platform at one end of the arena, with plenty of seating around it. Thus, the traditional tattoo competition was subtly subverted!



Simon Cooke, The Inkspot

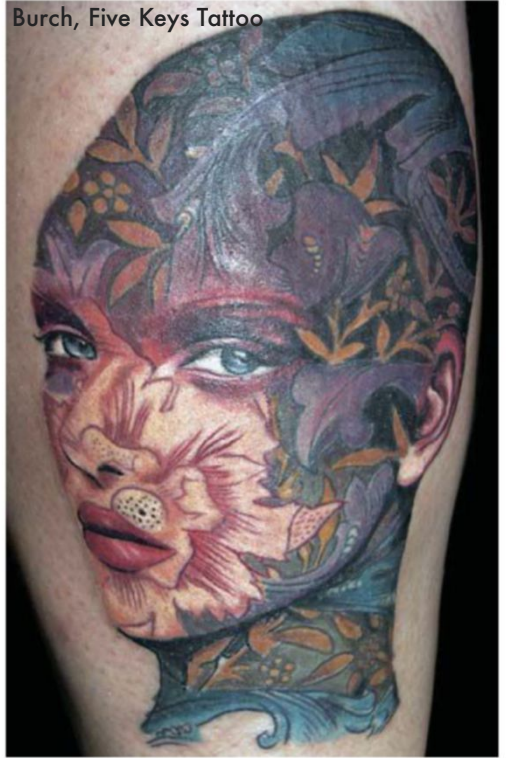


Liam Jackson, Liam 31

Sophie Brown, Helter Skelter.
Winner Small Black & Grey



Burch, Five Keys Tattoo



Mogwii & Paul Goodwin
Winner Best Large Black & Grey



Wes, Insider Tattoo



Jyoti



Jun & Khan, Winner Best Oriental

Gorski, Ushuaia Tattoo - Winner Large Colour



Impermanence Tattooing

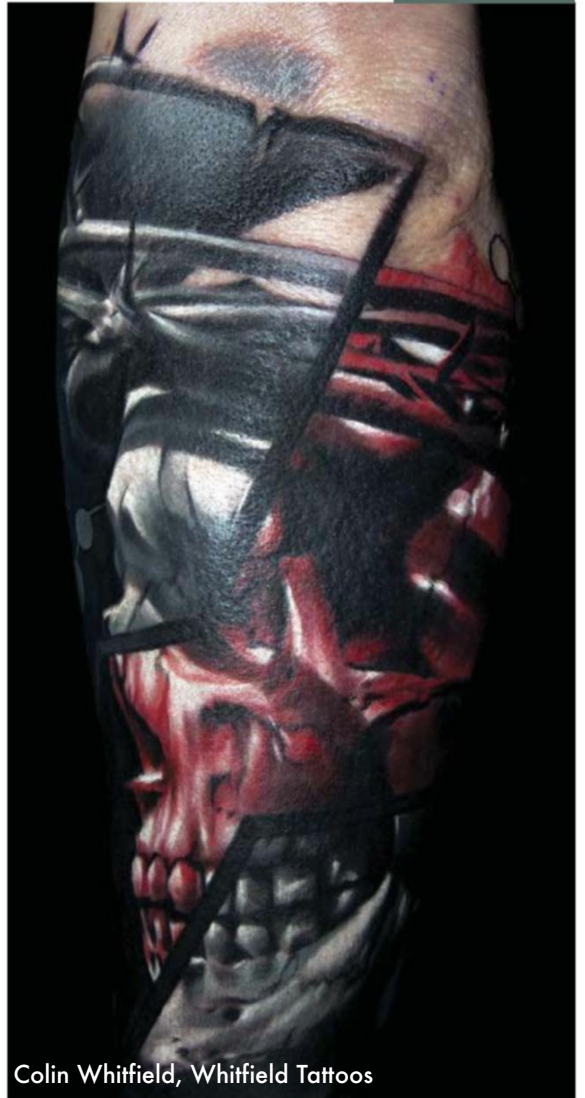


Paul Vander Johnson, On The Road

Among the international artists present were some amazing talents: Abi Tonge, Neil Dransfield, Daniel Bacz, Pedro Mendonca, Szidonia Gergely, Monica Koch, Paul Vander-Johnson, Mira Paramonova, Lord Montana Blue, Brent McCown, Khan, Endre Szabo, Gorsky, Chris Meighan, Mowgli and Sam Barber were just a few representing a huge variety of styles and techniques. Much work was executed, all over the body, including quite a lot of facial tattoos too, which I have recently noticed happen more and more at tattoo expos in recent months.



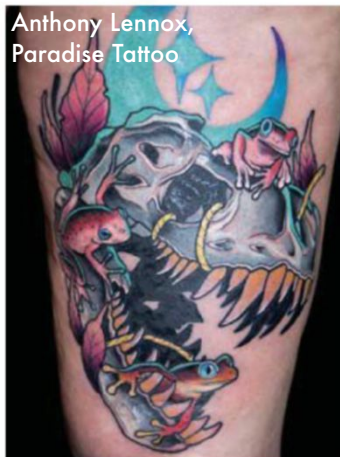
Colin Whitfield, Whitfield Tattoos



Colin Whitfield, Whitfield Tattoos



Kara Chambers,
Northside Tattooz

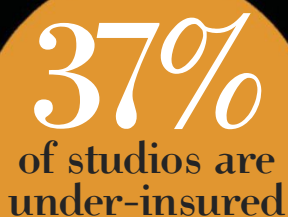


Anthony Lennox,
Paradise Tattoo

The Big North Tattoo Show has found a strong place on the roster of UK tattoo conventions. It has already become a destination tattoo event for many punters, and I, for one, am looking forward to see what next year's edition will bring.

Words by Total Tattoo Magazine, Ray Colenutt and Carl Tero,
with opinions supplied by an anonymous panel of tattooists

UP IN FLAMIES?



37%
of studios are
under-insured

It's not all fun and games being a tattooist. Sure, you get to wear what you want, listen to great music and essentially draw on people all day – but there's a whole heap of other stuff that has to be organised underneath, one of which is insurance. It's not perhaps the most enticing of topics, so we've decided to look into it for you (with the help of two insurance experts and an anonymous panel of tattooists).

The types of cover most relevant to tattooists are public liability, treatment risk and insurance for premises and property. It is not a legal requirement in England to have either public liability or treatment risk cover, although your local licensing authority will often insist on you having this before they give you a licence to tattoo or pierce. The level of cover required also varies with each council, and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland each have their own rules. It is basically a postcode lottery.



£440

THE AVERAGE COST OF INSURANCE

From our panellists, we discovered that the average cost of such cover is around £440 per artist. Although more affordable if broken down into monthly payments, this can still be a major outlay, so it's not surprising that many tattooists (or new studios) choose not to bother. As one of our insurance professionals acknowledges, "Sadly, we find a lot of tattooists live hand-to-mouth and struggle to pay for insurance. Bottom line, if a studio is only charging its customers £70 or £80 per hour, this isn't really enough to cover rent and rates, wages, supplies, etc. Compare that to what solicitors and accountants, or even motor mechanics, charge!"

In the UK, the first public liability insurances for general trade risks were written shortly after the enactment of the Employers' Liability Act in 1880 - which simultaneously created a demand for wider cover, since accidents in the workplace could also cause injury to persons other than employees, such as visitors or passers-by. Recently, thanks in part to Conditional Fee Agreements (no-win no-fee deals), the idea of taking a business to court has become far less

daunting than it used to be. Chances are you will have heard of some high profile cases, but in reality they are rare. Such a claim could mean the death of a small business though, so it is important to have appropriate protection.

As with body art, good products ain't cheap and cheap products ain't good. It's somewhat tempting to skip on the 'minor' details for the sake of saving a few quid. But when it comes to insurance, you need to make sure you're covered.

The main problem is when artists assume they're covered under a general studio policy. but it is expected that all tattooists work from a studio and require "mobile" cover if they work away (such as at a different studio to the one they told their insurers about).

Another huge issue is whether tattooists have treatment cover (for such problems as infections and wrong designs). Many have only public liability insurance, which won't cover for this. This treatment cover would also cover other procedures such as cosmetic tattooing, laser removal and piercing.

Laser removal and infections

The most current and common liability claim against a tattoo studio

One company told us that insurance quotes for tattoo studio start-ups have more than doubled over recent years.

Remember, both studio and artists should be covered. The studio owner is liable for any damage caused in the studio so should insure the studio themselves. This is especially true if you are renting the premises as you may also be responsible for any damage caused – to your shop window for instance – and this may be stated in your lease agreement. Individual artists can either obtain their own insurance cover (especially helpful if they move studios a lot) or they can be covered under the main studio insurance as a guest artist or as an employee.

Most common claims:

1. Thefts and break-ins
2. Smashed front windows
3. Burst pipe or flood
4. Customer claiming an infection
5. Trip or slip in the studio
6. Fire damage

Our insurance professionals told us that most of their claims have been for treatment risks. One of our panellists, a studio owner, faced legal action when a tattoo performed by one of their artists healed badly. Although not the artist's fault (the tattoo had scarred due to sun damage and incorrect aftercare), his treatment and liability cover ensured that any fees were sorted when the customer attempted to make a claim against them. Although stressful, this saved large financial losses that might have resulted in the closure of the studio.

Being taken to court for a dodgy tattoo is one risk, but there are obviously others. 22% of our surveyed panelists had claimed for theft, of which all but one had received payouts to cover loss of



£9million

The average amount paid out to businesses in insurance claims every day

equipment (with only 11% stating that they had received no payout because of extraneous circumstances, or had received less money than the cost of the total sum of equipment).

When it comes to damage of property, there are some clauses that you need to be aware of. Of our panelists, 37% had been affected by property damage (but not all had claimed, as the costs of fixing the damage was affordable and they were concerned about their premiums increasing in future years). The most common damage, unfortunately, was vandalism related, with a whopping 85% being broken windows and damage to signs. However, there were also some very unique cases which included a car being driven into a tattoo studio and a fire in a nearby building.

But what happens when you can't get a payout? A couple of our panelists shared their experiences:

"The fire closed my business for 5 months... I tried to find out if any type of insurance would cover me for this and was told that loss of earnings cover would be hard to get because of my type of job (and would be very expensive if I did) - and also, because there was no damage to the studio (it was the council stopping me getting into it that was the reason for the closure), it would be hard for them to pay out if I did. I was told, in no uncertain terms, that it was not their problem."

One of our panellists also got a shock after they tried to claim for a broken shop window:



"I initially thought I could claim on the landlord's insurance, but the very small print on the lease stated that I was liable for [the damage]. There was a huge rigmarole of to-ing and fro-ing and the insurance company wanted to know everything about it: crime numbers, prices and cross-referencing similar cases from businesses that were also affected. I wasn't reimbursed the full amount sadly. I realise that it is important to make sure your own insurance covers things like plate glass - because a lot of landlords insurances don't!"

We asked our panel about how they felt their claiming process went, and we were surprised to discover that of the 36% who had made a claim, one third were unhappy with how the process went. The main reasons specified were the time it took to evaluate each case and in 8% of

Why a claim may be denied

The value of the claim is less than the excess

Lack of information/evidence

Fraud/suspicious circumstances

Not covered by the policy

cases, a frustration of not being paid out. But, as one of our insurance experts pointed out, claiming wasn't a simple process. "Our job is to get you up and running again as soon as possible, but this can take time (depending on the claim). It's often not as straightforward as people think. Patience is the key!"

When asked what could be done to improve things, some of our panellists felt insurers should spend more time talking to tattooists, to find out what their needs were and to discover more about tattooing and how it is to run a studio, whilst one made the very fair point that tattooing is still somewhat "closed" and that insurers therefore have to "play a guessing game".

In short, nobody wants anything bad to happen, but it makes sense to ensure that you are covered, should the worst happen. Insurance companies may seem like an unnecessary part of tattooing, but it is in their interest to protect you, and it should be yours too.

Here are some handy tips from our insurance experts. Follow these and, should you need to make a claim, you could greatly reduce any inconvenience to yourself and get back to working with the minimum of stress:

- Ensure your locks, alarms and security comply with the insurer's requirements.
- Fit a roller shutter over your front window if possible.
- Keep a copy of your appointment book, designs, etc, on a USB stick in a separate place from your laptop or computer.
- Ensure you maintain your customer consent forms and always keep a copy.
- Always advise the client as to how to look after their tattoo before and after the procedure, and give them a leaflet to take home with them detailing the instructions you have told them as well.
- Do not leave the reception area unoccupied.
- Check the whole studio for any loose carpet, flooring, wires, or other items that anyone could trip over.
- Make sure all taps are turned off and all electrical appliances that are not needed overnight are turned off and unplugged.
- Try to keep all electrical equipment at least three feet off the floor. This will help keep damage to a minimum in the event of a minor flood or water leakage.
- When leaving the premises at night ensure that all the accessible windows are locked and also all doors leading to the outside are locked securely.
- If you can take any portable equipment (laptops, tattoo machines, etc) home with you then do so. The same applies to money. If not, keep these locked away.
- Security mark all your equipment by writing your name and postcode on them using an ultra violet pen.



12%
of claimants were
unhappy with how the
process went

What's the benefit of using a specialist insurer?

Literally, nobody else will offer treatment risk cover. A few non-specialists will offer Public Liability or salon cover WITHOUT treatment risk, but our experts advise against these policies.



People have been known to walk off with laptops, mobiles, flash book, etc, from unoccupied reception desks

What happens when you make a claim? After realising an incident has occurred, contact your insurance broker as soon as possible. They will take the basic details and advise the insurance company. The insurance company will appoint a loss adjuster who will contact you to go through the claim with you. They may even visit your premises for a face-to-face meeting and evaluate the damage. Their job is to get you working again as soon as possible.

Top questions to ask yourself when looking for an insurer:

1. How easy are they to contact? Do they have a working website?
2. Have they been recommended to you by a friend?
3. Did they explain the options for cover and did you understand them?
4. Do they specialise in insurance for tattoo artists and body piercers?
5. And the price? It may seem obvious to get the cheapest policy, however, the lowest priced deal is not always the best option. Get a couple of quotes and compare the cover and the company as well as the price.

It only takes a few seconds to break in, and a few minutes to clear your shop out, but it could take you months or years to recover from the loss.

How can tattoo insurance be better?

“The main problem is tattooing doesn’t like telling anyone anything. Everyone likes pointing out what’s wrong but no one wants to tell anyone how to make it better.”

Anonymous panel member

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TODD NOBLE

VALERIE VARGAS

TATTOO TAKEOVER

KIKU

BEAU BRADY

JEFF RASSIER

DAN SINNES

In these days of massive tattoo conventions offering hundreds of top international artists in their line-up (supported by semi-naked fire-breathing dancers and rock bands) it's refreshing to see someone doing something truly different.

The Tattoo Takeover in North East London was the brainchild of Dante Di Massa from Frith Street Tattoo and Stewart Robson from Modern Classic. The plan was simple: to bring together a very small, select group of the best UK and international tattooists to work alongside each other in a very low-key location; and to under-advertise the event and give it only very limited promotion on social media platforms. The result: a super-exclusive tattoo happening.

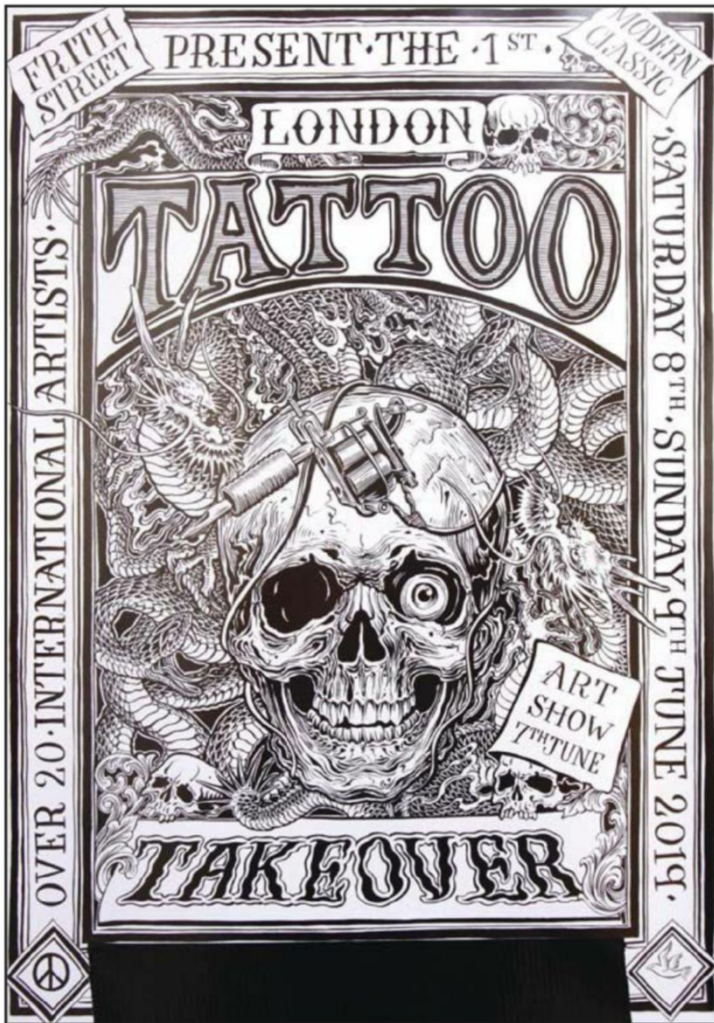


Alex Binnie



It's actually quite difficult to categorise the Tattoo Takeover as it was neither a convention nor a social gathering. It was more like a pop-up tattoo studio with one of the best artist line-ups imaginable!

It all started on the Friday night with an exclusive art exhibition showcasing work by attending tattooists and special guests including Alex Binnie, Alex Reinke and Jordan Teear, amongst others. A warm summer's evening ensured a good turnout with lots of London studios showing up to offer their support. The art was for sale, and considering the names involved and the high calibre of the work, prices were very reasonable, making the pieces even more desirable.



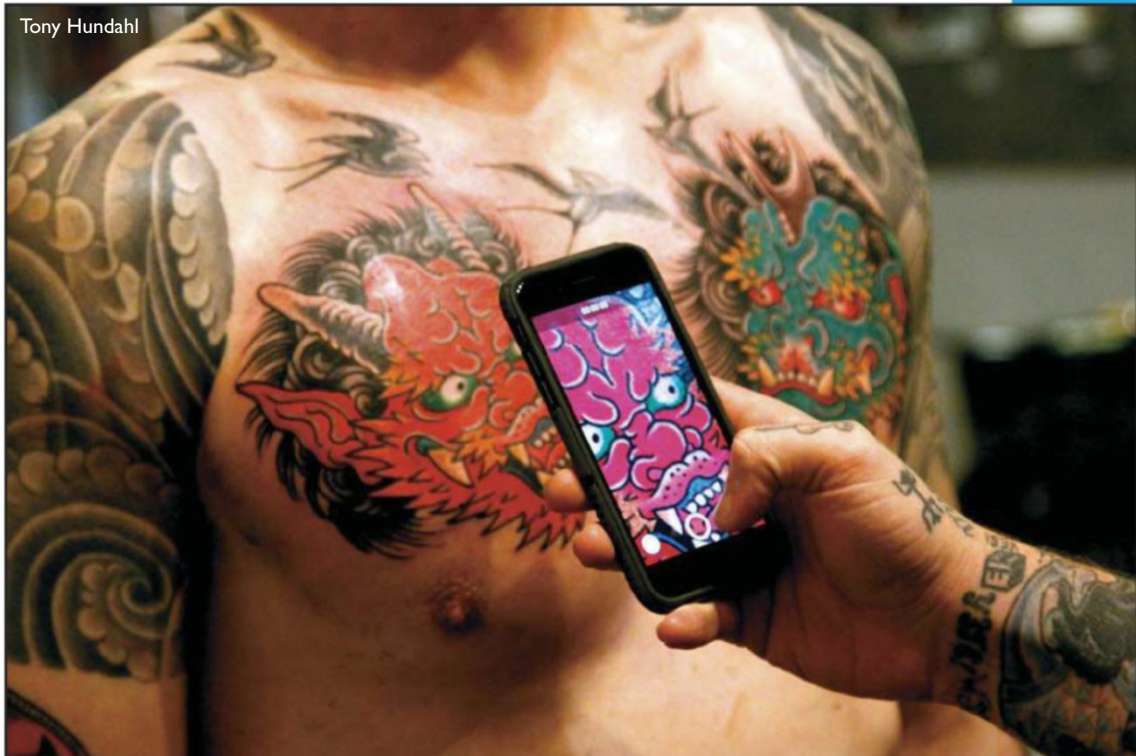
Dan Simmes



Jordan Teear



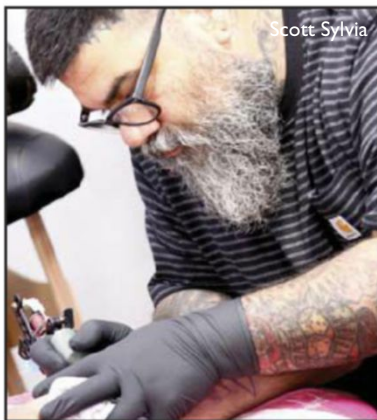
Tony Hundahl



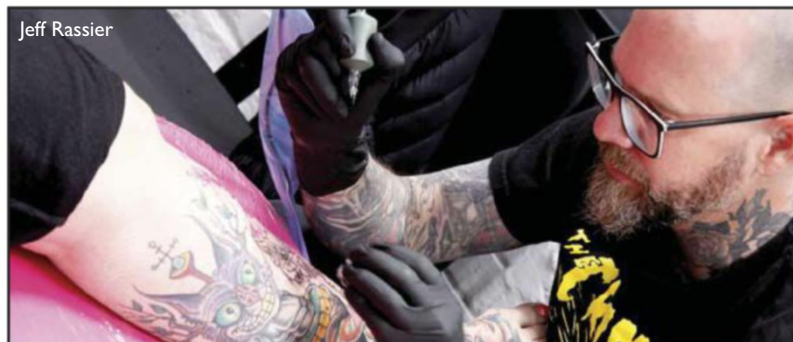
Kiku



Scott Sylvia



Jeff Rassier



On the Saturday morning the tattooing began in earnest. The 17 artists working were all friends of Stewart and Dante, which meant that – unlike at bigger conventions – it was a very sociable and personal atmosphere. No tables to divide the artists and the public, no entertainment, no trade stalls, just a small makeshift bar area selling refreshments... and world class tattooing, of course!



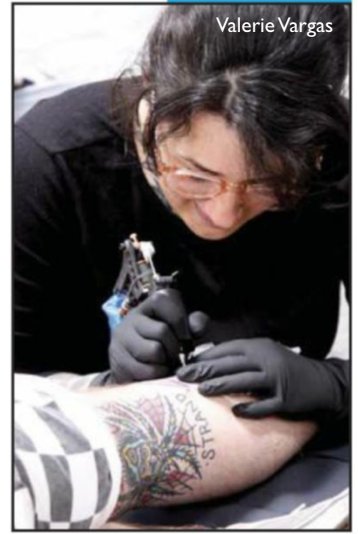
Beau Brady



Tony Hundahl



Valerie Vargas



Valerie Vargas

The room was like a Who's Who of solid traditional tattooing: Todd Noble, Valerie Vargas, Kiku, Beau Brady, Jeff Rassier, Dan Sinnes, Mario Desa, Thomas Hooper, Cats, Roxx, Scott Sylvia, Tony Hundahl, Em Scott, Barb Rebelo, Oliver Macintosh, and Greggletron.

That old familiar scream of coil machines belting out the ink filled the air – no silent rotaries and gentle hum for these guys. The sheer speed at which they worked was enough to send you dizzy, and a stream of willing customers waited patiently as – one after another – each superbly drawn, shaded and coloured piece appeared. For me personally, Tony Hundahl's pair of demon heads on a guy's chest – smashed out in just three hours – was simply mind-blowing. The incredibly subtle and accurate fine line lettering of Em Scott was sublime, and the constantly evolving girl heads from Todd Noble never cease to amaze. Everyone was working long into the evening, yet all had saved energy and space for walk-ups, and at the speed that they worked almost everyone was catered for.



Dan Crowe

Em Scott





Jordan Teear



Andreas Coenen

It seems strange that in these days of overexposure and social media hype, an event of this nature could possibly go ahead with little or no fanfare. It felt exclusive and special. Maybe a little too select? Possibly a few more paying public would have added to the atmosphere? But



Bradley Tompkins



Gregglettron

what the Tattoo Takeover certainly proved is that, despite the dominance of large-format tattoo conventions, there is a real desire to focus purely on the art and the artists. At this show everything was provided: needles, grips, inks and food. To measure its success in terms of numbers or financial success is to miss the whole point of its very existence... Top tattooing by top tattooists for proper tattoo fans – nothing more, nothing less!

Dan Sinnes



Valerie Vargas



Scott Sylvia





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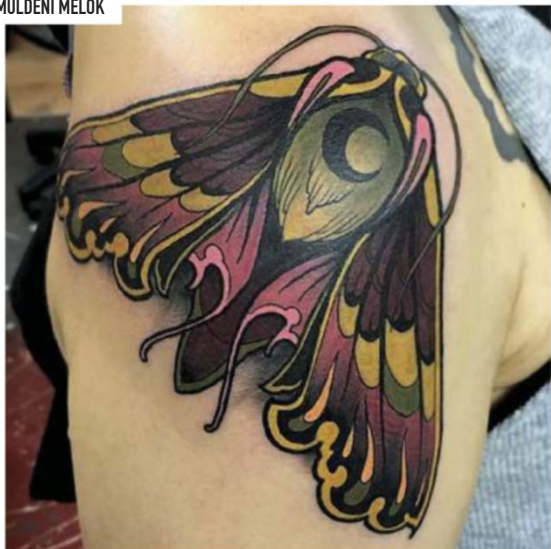
IVALDAS GULBINAS, WEST ONE TATTOO



MAX PNEIWSKI, PHOENIX RISING TATTOO



MÜLDENI MELÓK



JOHANN SALZINGER, OLD SALT TATTOO



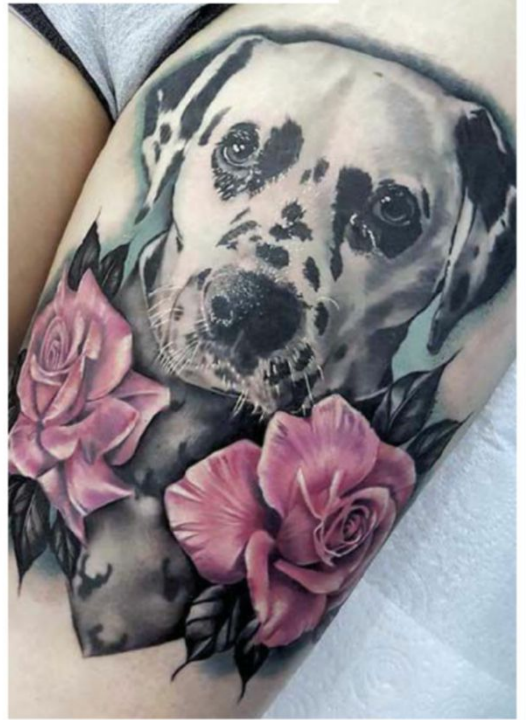
SANTA PERPETUA, PRIVATE STUDIO



CRAIG SMARTIN, BW TATTOO



GLEN CARLOSS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN TATTOO



TRAWA, MODERN ELECTRIC TATTOOING



THOMAS BATES, CAVALRY TATTOO



VIVA MORTA, ABRAKADABRA TATTOO



IVANA, PRIVATE STUDIO (USA)



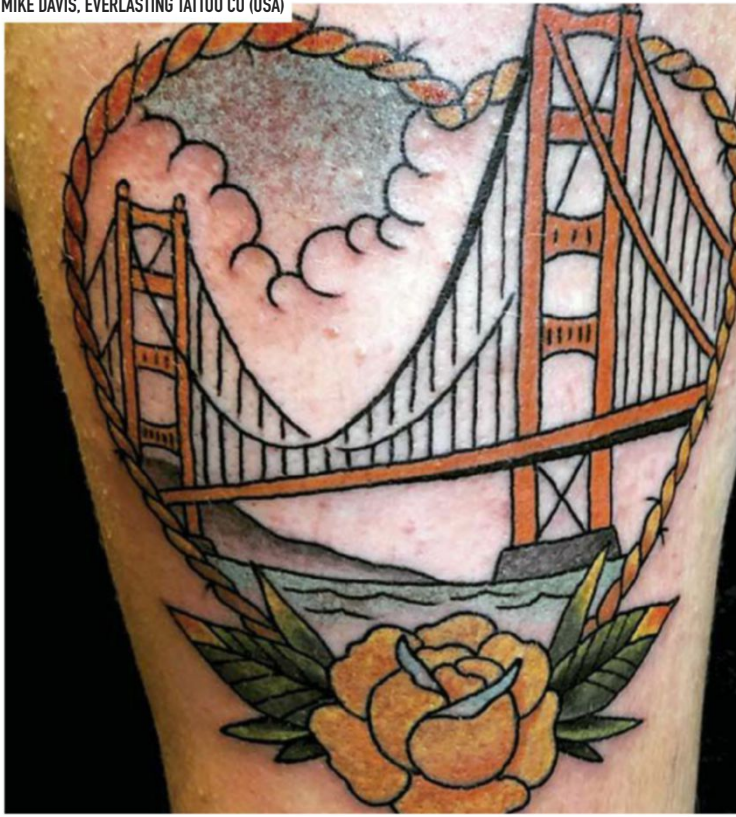
PAIGE SPEED, PS TATTOOING



LEAH, BLACKSHIP (SPAIN)



MIKE DAVIS, EVERLASTING TATTOO CO (USA)



LENNY LINDBACK, STOCKHOLM CLASSIC (SWEDEN)



JAY FREESTYLER, FREEDOM AND FLESH (NETHERLANDS)



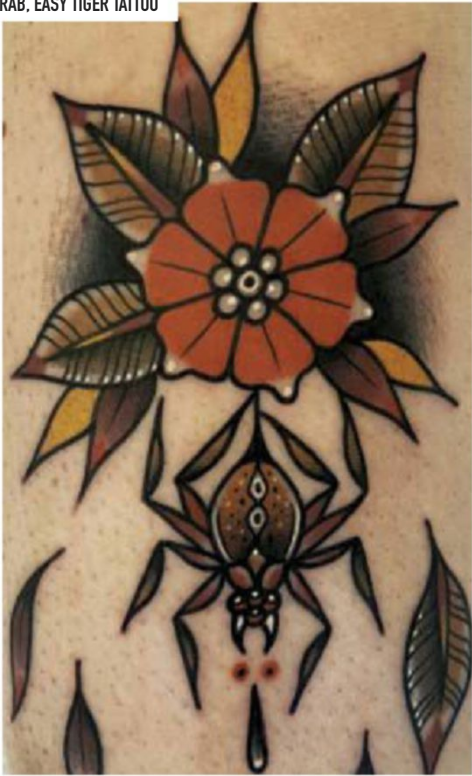
JAVIER ODESA.



JOSH FISHER, CAVALRY TATTOO



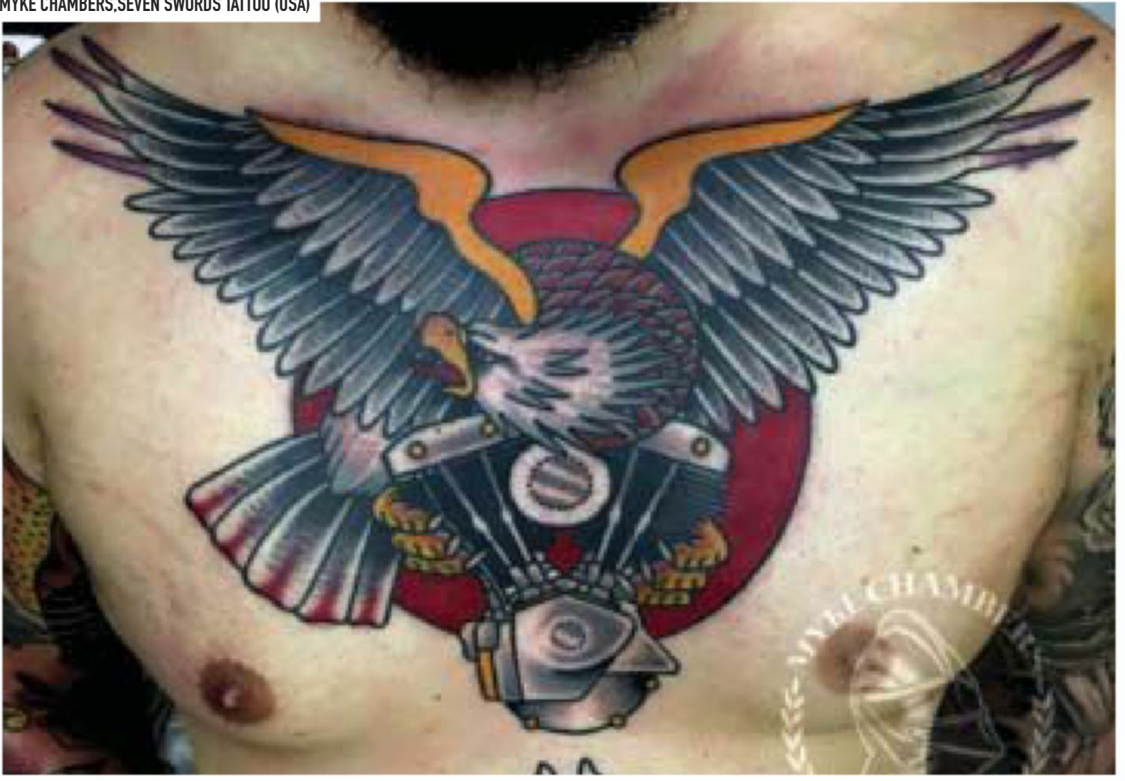
RAB, EASY TIGER TATTOO



ARRON CLAPHAM, CATHEDRAL TATTOO



MYKE CHAMBERS, SEVEN SWORDS TATTOO (USA)



KAROLINA SYLWIA, TERRY'S TATTOO STUDIO



DEK KENT, ELECTRIC KICKS

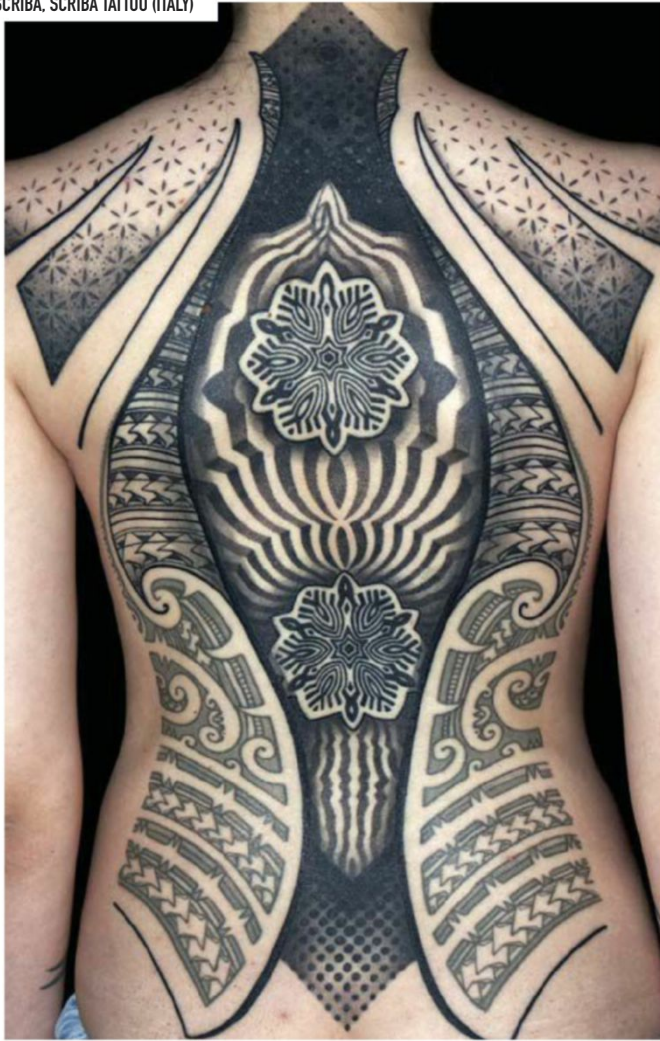


AIDAN ROSE, OPAL TATTOO CO

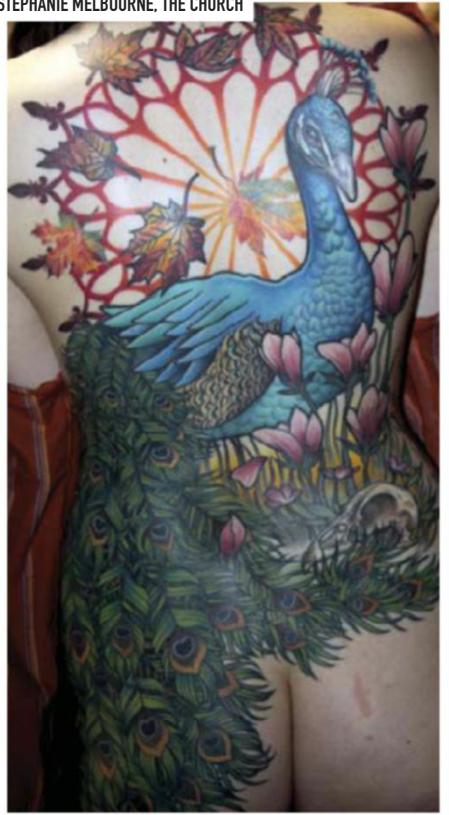


NICK IMMS, THE CHURCH TATTOO

SCRIBA, SCRIBA TATTOO (ITALY)



STEPHANIE MELBOURNE, THE CHURCH



KAROLINA SYLWIA, TERRY'S TATTOO STUDIO



MATT BACK, HIGH BRIDGE TATTOO

CHRIS MEIGHAN, SANTA CRUZ TATTOO KLUB



JAY FREESTYLER, FREEDOM AND FLESH (NETHERLANDS)





JON ENGFORS, THE NORTH TATTOOS (SWEDEN)



LUKASZ, AZAZEL TATTOO



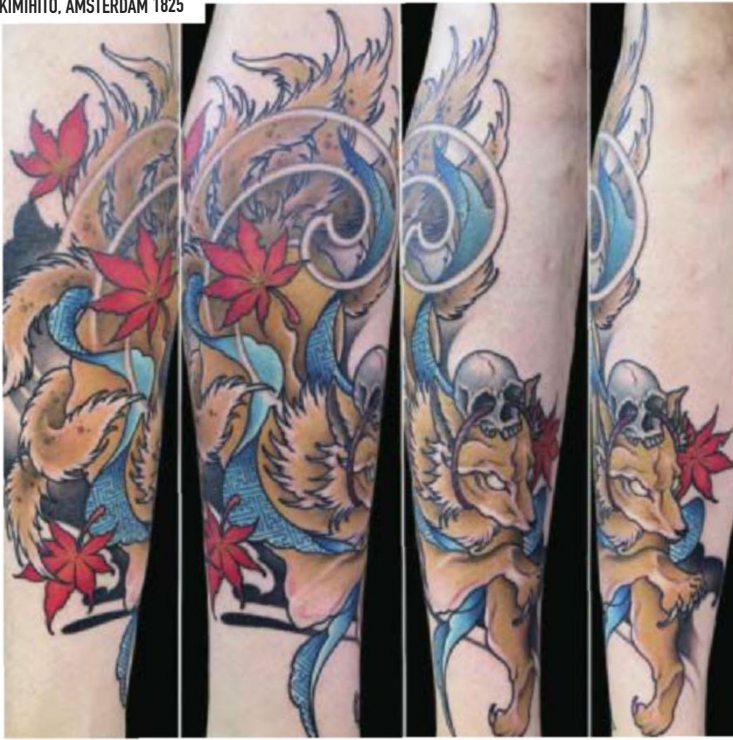
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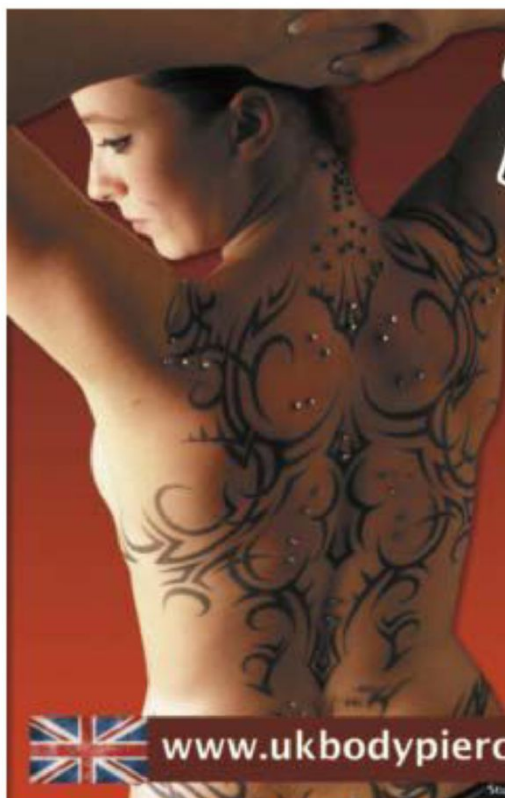
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Yarson has been making waves throughout the tattoo world. Taking top honours at both the London Tattoo Convention and Le Mondial du Tatouage in Paris, his work is admired by his peers for its strong contrasts, subtle shading and instantly recognisable creative edge. He's based in the granite city of Aberdeen in Scotland.

Tell us how you came to be in Scotland.

I grew up in a small town in Poland where I didn't have too many prospects. I wanted a better future, so I became a lorry driver and that brought me to the UK. I moved to Scotland at the age of 22 and did a couple of different jobs before finally starting tattooing. I've been here many years now, and it definitely feels like my home.

Do you come from an artistic family? Did you have an art education?

My dad certainly had art skills, but to be honest he never really used them. I'm self-taught, picking things up along the way. I think we're all constantly learning!

Do you travel much?

I like to do guest spots with friends of mine in the industry. It's good to experience other ways of working and see how everyone creates their tattoos. In many ways we're all very similar, but we all have different processes. I haven't returned to Poland that often to tattoo - maybe just the odd convention here and there. The Polish tattoo scene has moved on a lot since I lived there.

How important is it for tattooists to travel?

I think it's very important for artists to travel and venture out of their comfort zone. It also gives any clients who aren't able to travel the chance to get tattooed by them

IN MY STUDIO
WE TAKE IT SERIOUSLY
BUT WE'RE ALWAYS UP
FOR A LAUGH TOO

YARSON



Tell us about your successes at Le Mondial du Tatouage and the London Tattoo Convention.

Le Mondial du Tatouage is an incredible convention and I was honoured to win two awards – first place Black and Grey and also second place Best of Saturday. I am fortunate that some of my most regular clients are able to travel with me to these kinds of events so that we can show my work. Winning first place for Realism at the London convention also feels like a massive achievement in my career. I've met so many amazing people through being at these conventions, and it's been a real pleasure to tattoo customers from so many different cities and countries

The tattoo industry is changing so much. Is corporate involvement and media coverage a good thing, or should tattooing still be the underground art of pirates?

Tattooing is obviously becoming more and more mainstream, and it's good for up-and-coming artists to be able to get that widespread recognition.



You're sponsored by eight different companies. How does that work for you?

It's great. I work well with all my sponsors. I highly recommend their products, and I would like to thank them all for supplying me with the best of what I need.

Tell us what you're using right now.

Right now I am using the FK Irons Xion and World Famous ink. For my technique and style of work, they're right for me.

How do you respond to people who say realistic tattoos won't last? And is it important for a tattoo to last?

Of course it's very important for a tattoo to last! I think it's about getting the tattoo solid and heavily saturated and giving it good contrast. That's what makes it stand the test of time. I've seen tattoos that I did five years back and they look like they were only done a year ago.



Are there any other elements that contribute to a successful tattoo?

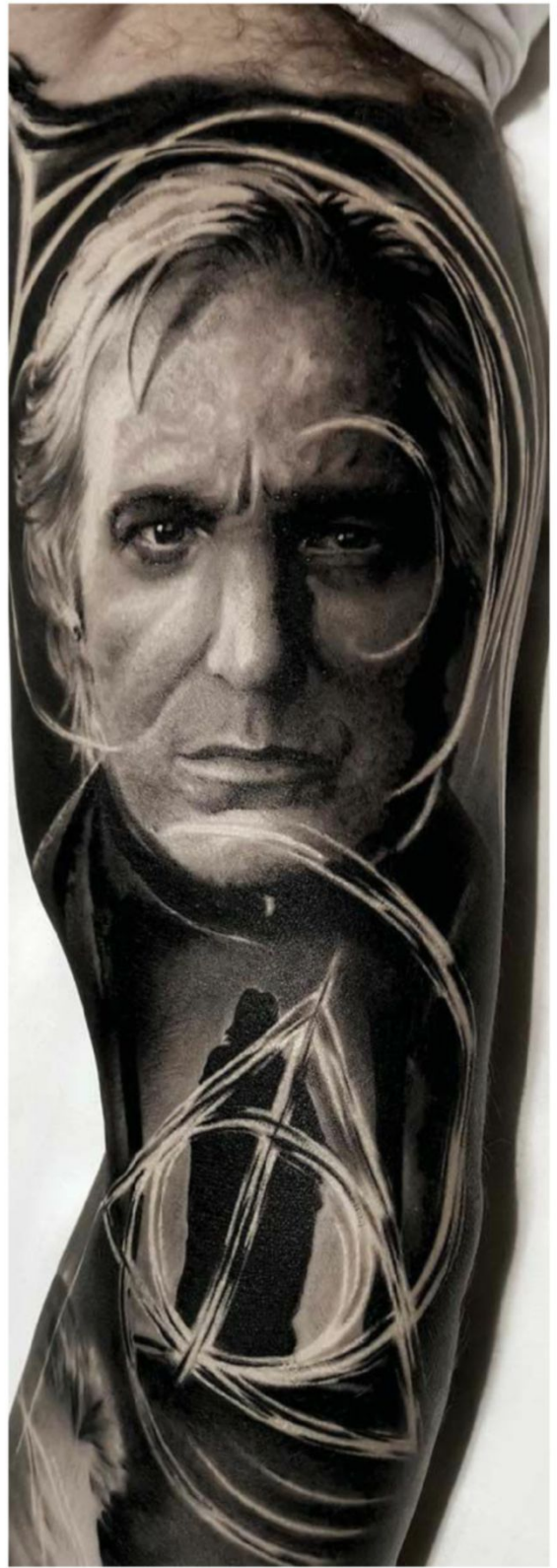
In addition to contrast and saturation, the composition is important and also the size. Those are the things that will make a tattoo look great.

Technically, how do you apply your tattoos? Do you work light-to-dark or dark-to-light?

I personally work from dark to light.

Do you work exclusively in black and grey?

I have always been drawn towards black and grey. It's what interests me the most. In the past, I have done many colour pieces, but I made the decision that black and grey would be my main style. It's the one I prefer.





Who has had the greatest influence on your style?

Carlos Torres, Victor Portugal, Jak Connolly and Silvano Fiato. They all do incredible black and grey work.

What do you look for in a customer?

Good design ideas... and what the customer is open to in terms of size and placement... those kinds of things.





How important is good reference material?

Where do you find yours?

It's immensely important to find the correct image for the piece you're looking to do. I find a lot of reference images through a couple of favourite websites (I pay for high resolution images) and also Pinterest and so on. I also try to take my own photos when I can

Is there a tattoo design you'd like to do that you haven't done yet?

There isn't any particular design, no, but I always like doing backpiece projects and also famous portrait work. Overall I'm open to most things, especially large-scale pieces.

On a personal level, do you plan ahead much or take life as it happens?

I don't plan ahead that much. I'm trying to work more effectively now, and doing fewer hours per week. I've also decided to slow down a little with trips, conventions, etc. I had a stroke recently. I'm recovered now, but it did affect me when it first happened and I wasn't able to work for a little while. With tattooing being my passion, I was glad when I could get back to it. That made me even more determined in my work ethic, and it also made me re-evaluate everything in my life. The most important thing is to have a balance between one's work life and one's personal life.

What do you do when you're not tattooing?

I have a few hobbies that I do now and then, but spending time with family is the most important thing to me. Any time I get the chance, I focus on them.

You are now mentoring an apprentice as well as managing your own studio...

Yes. It feels like a big responsibility – for him as a person, as well as for the work he's producing. As for running the studio – before I opened my own place, I didn't realise there were so many things involved! It's all that behind-the-scenes stuff. We've been open just over two years now and we've become really well regarded in our area for the work that we produce.

Talk us through a typical Yarson tattoo day.

My clients usually come into the studio in the morning, and I have all my designs ready to discuss with them. We decide on the exact size and placement etc, then the stencil is made. We will start tattooing and take it from there really. Depending on how the client is sitting, we take breaks accordingly. In my studio we have an open-plan tattoo room, so although we all take it seriously we are always up for a good laugh to make everyone feel relaxed.

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If you're looking for a fun, inclusive event where you can experience fanatical fandom and the odd tattoo, then an MCM Comic Convention is for you.

MCM Comic Cons take place in Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham and London. We set off for the UK capital, where the convention took place at ExCel London over a Bank Holiday weekend. This East London venue is ideal for any visitor, with over 3000 car parking spaces, two on-site DLR stations and London City Airport practically around the corner. It boasts twenty-seven different places to eat, and ample facilities (read: toilets!) that are easily accessible. In short, it's gigantic and therefore the perfect place to host the ultimate pop culture event.

The three-day event featured merchandise stalls, clothing, cinemas, VR and immersive experiences, stalls, lightsaber training, gaming tables and Lego building stations. Most of these attractions are included in the price of a ticket; and considering that paying adults are allowed to bring in up to two children for free, there's definitely a lot of bang for your buck here. There was an additional cost for meeting celebrities for autographs – big names included Sebastian Stan (Captain America) or David Harbour (Stranger Things) – which ranged from £18-£90, depending on the actor and whether you wanted a photo as well.

Antonio Gabriele





Manni K



Antonio Gabriele



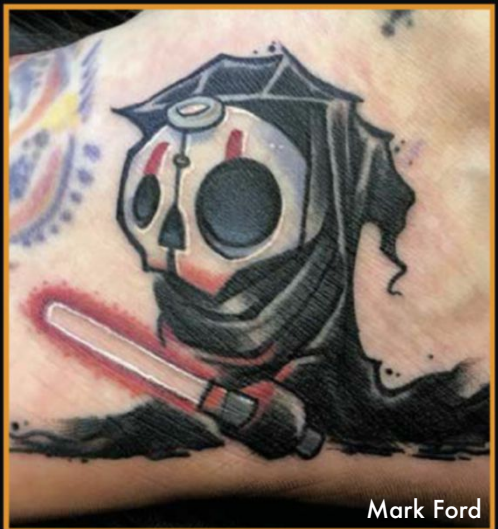
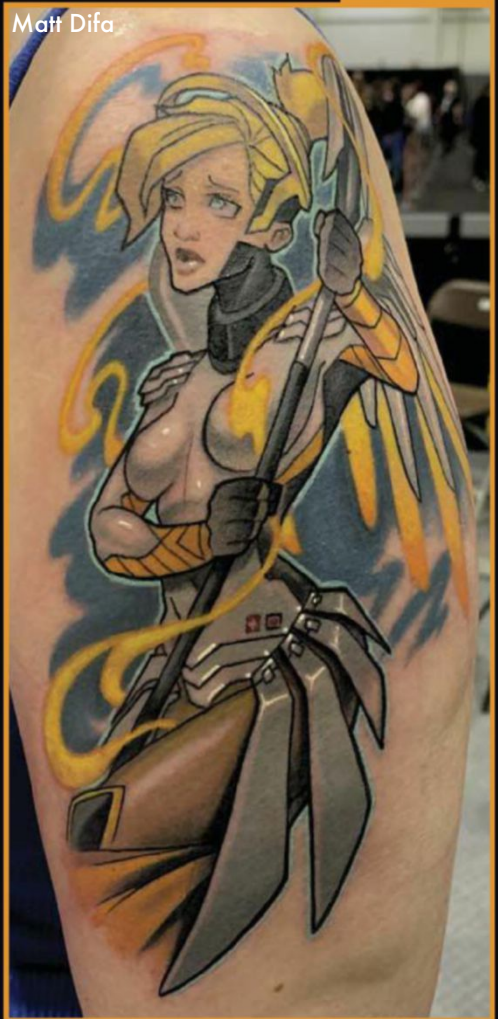
Throughout the weekend there were seminars with special guests such as authors, comic book creators, game designers, actors and animators. These live events showed that there was more to MCM than just bright lights and entertainment, as they gave people the opportunity to get involved in Q&A sessions, listen to exclusive panel discussions, get tips on making costumes and even find advice on future careers, such as game design and blogging. It's so important for events to have opportunities such as these, as it gives the public real value for money and shows that there is still a need for 'live' happenings, as opposed to simply watching social media reports.





Comic Cons have become known as a safe haven for Cosplayers, and the London event was no exception. Colourful wigs, wings, scales and swords were *everywhere* to be seen. From the Fifth Doctor of Doctor Who, to Deadpool in a poncho, there was pretty much every character from TV or film covered here; some instantly recognisable, some more obscure, but all amazingly recreated nonetheless. These all came together during the Cosplay Masquerade – where participants would step onto stage in character, to a huge round of applause from the enormous audience. As someone who only dresses up for Halloween and the Rocky Horror Picture Show, I wondered how much it would cost to recreate some of the characters' outfits; but like asking people about getting tattooed, it's a question that feels a little on the rude side.

Matt Difa



Mark Ford

Phil Denby



Mark Ford

Phil Denby



Speaking of tattoos, there were fourteen tattooists from the Ink Fusion Empire present at the show. The Empire ("Where the worlds of tattooing and pop culture collide") is organised by Marc Draven and the tattoo troupe are now recognised as official artists to be present at conventions – they even hold license agreements with Lucasfilm. Each artist is not only brilliant, but a self-confessed 'geek' themselves. This means that you're not only going to get a good tattoo, but you're going to have a great time with your chosen tattooist. Having only fourteen artists present worked well, as it ensured that they all had a good stream of clients, although sadly some tattoo fans may have been turned away disappointed. But let's not forget that this wasn't a tattoo convention; it was an event reflecting all aspects of pop culture (and in fact it was noticeable that the 'un-tattooed' attendees far outnumbered those who were tattooed).



Manni K



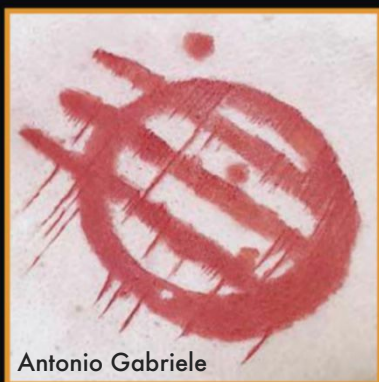


Joshua Heckert



Manni K





Antonio Gabriele



Antonio Gabriele



Mark Ford

In many ways, the MCM Comic Con reminded me (and the tattooists I spoke to) of the halcyon days of tattoo conventions, when people would take time out to travel to events simply to network and enjoy themselves. There are many similarities: the acceptance in one's subculture, the showing off of collections and knowledge, the escapism from the daily grind to be who you want to be. Although the first UK Comic Con was held in 1968, MCM's debut event was just fourteen years ago in 2005. Perhaps this relatively short time span may explain the joie de vivre throughout, or perhaps it could be that these events will always be seen as a safe place for those who never felt that they belonged. Either way, it's an infectious energy that radiates inclusivity, which I hope will continue for many more years to come.



Matt Difa



Joshua Heckert



Manni K



The next MCM Comic Cons in the UK will be in Manchester (27th-28th July) and Glasgow (28th-29th September) before the event returns to London at the end of October. For more information, including venue details, how and where to buy tickets, and Cosplay rules, head to: www.mcmcomiccon.com



Laura Jane



Antonio Gabriele



Lord Montana-Blue

'IT'S COOL, BUT WHAT IS IT?'
IS A COMMON AND
APPROPRIATE REACTION
TO MY WORK.

KALI

Kali is no stranger to the pages of Total Tattoo. His work has appeared in the magazine on many occasions. As one of the most influential biomechanical artists working in the UK today, his large scale pieces hug the body, accentuating its form and structure, transforming it into a flowing organic vision of art. Here he is – uncensored – giving us his frank opinions on the world of tattooing and the future of biomech.

You've been tattooing for over twenty years now. Are you as passionate about it as you were when you first started?

Yes, or course! I first started experimenting with tattooing around 1996, building my own DIY machines from a Walkman motor, a guitar string and a pen – and attempting, unsuccessfully, to tattoo with them. Then I got full-time job in a proper tattoo studio in 1999. So yeah, 20 years now. Am I as passionate as back then? Fuck yes. I'm probably even more passionate about it now than before. Step by step, tattooing has swallowed me completely... It's like an obsession.



Would you describe yourself as a veteran or influencer in tattooing?

You're asking the wrong person. I think it's for others to answer that question. I don't like to think of myself in these terms, or exaggerate my importance, imaginary or otherwise. From what I can see, people have indeed been influenced by my style, and my sketchbooks seem to sell fairly well, which is very humbling. But I truly dislike the term 'influencer'. It reeks of the self-absorbed vanity of Instagram stars. You know what I mean. When it comes to influence, I also fail to understand why some artists throw their toys out of the pram when someone copies their design. Let's be realistic. If your work is good enough to influence or inspire others, if your design is good enough for someone to steal it, it's the biggest compliment. Stomping your feet and crying is a sign of insecurity in my eyes. As soon as you put your effort out there it belongs to the world anyway. I'm not saying I encourage stealing, but let's not power trip over of it.

Over the past twenty years, have attitudes to your work changed?

When I started out, I wanted to do the most diabolical and far-out biomechanical designs possible. But of course I couldn't. I was lacking the composition skills, the technique, the experience. Biomech was very popular back then, and in all the magazines you could see that typical 90s style – ripped skin revealing tubes and wires inside – which gradually came to be seen a bit cheesy. But I never really did that clichéd biomech. I wanted to create something different. And over time something really strange



happened. As the general interest in the 'biomech style' evaporated, there was more and more interest in the abstract and custom thing that was starting to emerge in my portfolio. And I tirelessly tried to convert people! I believe that an artist cannot just passively sit on a pile of excellent sketches and wait. One should actively try to convince... no, *bully* the prospective victim into submission. And I did just that. I'm very enthusiastic about what I do, and being blessed with an army of open-minded and trusting clients I was able to successfully kindle the fire of passion for this obscure and godforsaken style. In general the reaction to my work is, "It's cool, but what is it?" And that, most of the time, is the appropriate reaction.

You've stated before that you regard tattooing as a journey of self-discovery...

Yes, tattooing is a journey for sure. And getting tattooed even more so. One can be in denial of things, repress them, but in one way or another they keep coming to the surface in the ritual that is tattooing. Things you don't necessarily understand or acknowledge even. You put things on your skin, at a price of great pain and time, and money too, and yet sometimes you don't



quite understand what it is that is manifesting itself – or why. I mean, what makes you choose one idea instead of another, out of a million possibilities? It's a deep mechanism, and we have been preconditioned to make this or that choice by the story of our life, or the story of that particular day, or whatever has made a lasting impression on our delicate psyche. It's easier to understand things when they are externalised – otherwise they're forever repressed in the dark dungeons of our minds – and I think getting tattooed is one of the many ways to achieve that. So yeah, it is a process of self-discovery, and as a tattooist I am helping people to make that pilgrimage. And when I witness their journey, it helps me understand things about myself too. Maybe all that sounds pretentious to those who think tattoos are nothing but cool pictures on skin, but I couldn't care less. If tattoos were just a fashion

accessory without any spiritual depth, how terribly shallow and boring and meaningless the whole thing would be. All that blood and sweat in vain.

Over the past twenty years there have been numerous developments and changes within the tattoo industry. What has been the most valuable change?

The equipment and the technology. It's made the whole thing so much easier and more efficient. From sleepless nights of soldering needles to having all that incredible equipment easily available. Also the standards of hygiene are much higher now. And having all the ideas and images in the world at one's fingertips, for free, instead of having to go through all the dusty books in the local library, photocopying two or three pages. But I think the best thing is all the incredibly talented people who've become tattooists. Artists who are doing eye-watering work now, when 20 years ago they probably wouldn't have come near a tattoo shop if you paid them! All this has pushed us towards new horizons and new levels of far-outness in tattooing.

And what changes have been the least beneficial?

All of the above! They go hand in hand. The fact that there are so many talented artists who would previously have steered clear of tattooing, means there are also ten times that number who are not so talented. Unfortunately the popularity of tattooing will be its downfall too. The stickers say, 'We must resist the corporate takeover of the tattoo industry'. But it cannot be done. It will be watered down, made easily accessible to the masses of uncultured swine, and turned into its own parody. It's already happening. Tattoo shops run by businessmen who see them as just another profit opportunity. I've heard artists are now referred to as 'service providers' in the US. What the fuck is that, excuse my language? This is one of the problems of capitalism, the child of greed and the cancer of mankind. It will take anything meaningful, swallow it,





squeeze out every penny possible, and spit it out when it's lost all flavour. We are doomed. But I digress. I can't help myself. To sum up, these endless masses of sheep following this unfortunate trend are the biggest curse I can think of.

A lot of tattooists we speak to say they were drawn to the underground, gritty side of tattooing. If you'd known that tattooing would be as popular as it is now, would you still have become a tattooist?

In Poland where I come from, there was no tattoo industry, no nothing, prior to say 1990, when the Iron Curtain and the socialist paradise on earth came crashing down. Nothing, zero, apart from prison tattoos. To say it had humble beginnings is an understatement. At that time, the situation we're witnessing today was absolutely inconceivable. I, too, am from the underground school, the rebel tribe that never conforms. Would I still have become a tattooist if I'd seen the future? Probably yes, because no amount of 'popularity' will take away my own journey, or my passion for tattooing. I still like to cling to my illusions, more than I have the courage to admit. But now that I've mentioned the topic of prison tattoos, I just want to elaborate on this. One thing I really and truly don't understand is fake prison

tattoos. I went to prison for a bit when I was 19 years old. I learned to handpoke there, and witnessed the prison tattoo culture, its meaning and code, the social structure. In my opinion, there is no graver disrespect, or bigger mistake one can make, than getting a fake prison tat for the wrong reason. Like the epaulettes or whatnot. If you're getting something like, that you're making a fool of yourself at best and getting yourself obliterated at worst, if you meet the wrong people. And if you happen to go to prison one day, as you do, then may the gods have mercy on you. The plague of fake prison wannabe badboys from middle class families has been baffling me for a long time now. There. I said it.

What do you think are some of the most inspiring things happening within tattooing right now?

The fact that artists are now specialising in very narrow stylistic niches, and exploring them like there's no tomorrow. We're going to see great progress this way. We're going to discover new dimensions that I cannot even begin to imagine.

Who has tattooed you?

Prior to becoming a tattooist, I mostly tattooed myself. I started getting decent work from other artists a bit later. My full chest and neck is by Xed LeHead, who is my absolute hero. His relentless dedication and unbeaten spirit have really inspired me. My backpiece is by Filip Leu, who is hands-down the Jimi Hendrix of tattooing. From watching Filip work, I learned a lot of incredible technical tricks. His work taught me that simple is the opposite of easy – and how simple and bold composition is the basis of everything. The guy is unsurpassable. End of story. I also have a sleeve from Piotrek Taton, and work from Victor Portugal too, as well as Gino Angelov among others. Although they're not biomech artists per se, I've picked up a lot from them in terms of composition and ways of achieving different effects.

Who else are you influenced by?

One artist who never ceases to amaze me is Markus Lenhard. His work is taking biomech to heights that the rest of us mere mortals can only dream of. He's a true visionary. Guy Aitchison and Aaron Cain also.

What about non-tattoo influences?

With the type of work that I do, it's usually just a case of observing whatever is around you. That's enough to inspire. My work is fairly abstract, relying on light and shadow, textures and so on, so I can look at a cauliflower or a rock or the root of a tree and have enough inspiration for ten pieces. It's all about the way you see things.

'WITH BIOMECH, AS WITH JAPANESE, THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STYLE CAN BE LIBERATING'





Is there a reason you've steered away from colour?

Practically all the work I have on myself is black and grey. It's the most simple, most striking, basic type of tattoo, and also it stays forever if done properly. Colours fade over time, some more than others. I do enjoy colour sometimes, and it does allow for more depth. In general I don't like to use 'Disneyland' oversaturated happy colours – they would take away the grimness – but in a limited palette, some colour can work well. I certainly don't avoid colour, but somehow things always tend to go in the black and grey direction.

Your work is mainly freehand and large scale. Do you make any preparatory studies or sketches?

I usually do a freehand sketch on the skin. Sometimes just a few lines are enough. With especially large or complex compositions, like a full back, I'll do a freehand marker drawing on the skin, then take a print of it and shrink it to paper, redraw it small-scale, blow it up again to life size and then do

the stencil. I don't do full sketches for every tattoo, but I always do loads of preparatory studies to develop my ideas. I find it I get better results that way.

Do you feel constrained by your own style?

I definitely work in a style that is relatively constricted and narrow, stylistically speaking. Biomech language is quite limited, but within that frame there's almost limitless potential and space for individuality. Just like in traditional Japanese. That's a very, very conservative style which is constrained by a handful of basic themes and ideas. Japanese has been done a million times. And yet, I keep looking in disbelief at a never ending ocean of mind-blowing individual takes on the style. It's the same in biomech, just on a smaller scale. I find the stylistic constraints incredibly conducive to creativity. You find freedom within that rigid framework. That may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it's not. The limitations of the style can actually be very liberating.





What research and studying do you do to ensure you keep evolving as an artist and tattooist?

I like studying natural forms – wood, bone, rocks and so on – and just trying to figure out how they look when the light falls this or that way, and whether that effect can be successfully achieved in a tattoo. Even looking at something as seemingly banal as a landscape painting can give you countless ideas about depth, perspective and atmosphere. The inspiration is everywhere.



'IF TATTOOS WERE JUST A FASHION ACCESSORY WITHOUT ANY SPIRITUAL DEPTH, HOW TERRIBLY BORING THE WHOLE THING WOULD BE...'

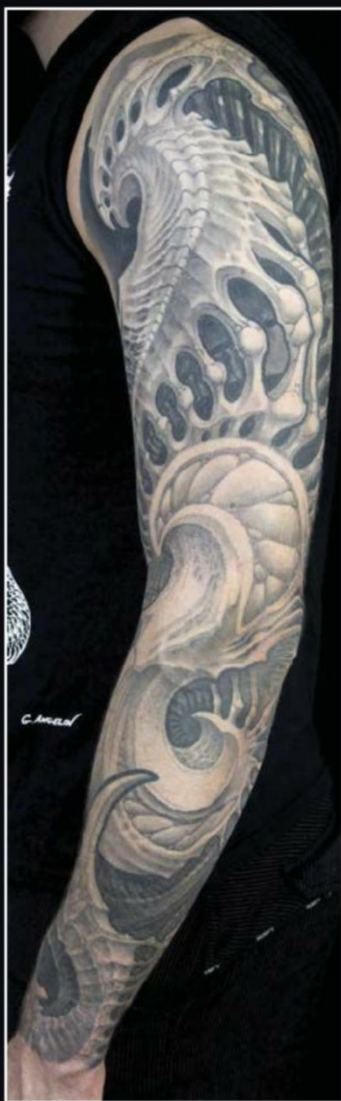
Over the years your tattooing has taken you to different parts of the world. What different attitudes have you seen to your work, and to tattooing in general?

That's the best part of it. I love to travel, tattoo-related or not. It would be hard to generalise, but I find it fascinating that tattooers in some countries and cultures embrace their traditions and merge them with the modern take on tattooing (so that a new quality emerges), while for others tattooing is in conflict with their traditional culture (and therefore remains a reflection of a 'Western' thing). It would

be safe to say that all around Asia my work is getting a lot of positive feedback, wherever I go.

You've won countless awards for your work. What does this mean to you?

I have mixed feelings about this one. On the one hand, I do realise that tattoo competitions are a vanity fair, stroking egos and providing entertainment and not much more. And the results are so arbitrary. How can you decide which tattoo is better than the other? There's no objective measure. It's only ever a





matter of personal opinion. I've been on many competition juries, and I can tell you, it's very very hard to decide which one out of 20 or 30 is the best. Especially if the level is high. Even more so if the level is garbage. That makes it impossible. So I don't think we should assign too much significance to the results of competitions. On the other hand, it's a massive deal to enter the competition. For the artist, who has put in

innumerable hours of hard work to produce their best, and for the victim who has had to sit and suffer those countless hours of pain, blood and sweat – and now they have to get naked and go on stage in blinding lights in front of cameras and an army of strangers to be judged. It's not to be taken lightly. It can be a soul-destroying nerve-wracking experience. And if by some mysterious divine intervention you happen to win, it shouldn't just be a gigantic boost for your ego; primarily, it should be an incentive to work even harder, rather than resting on your laurels. Winning competitions is nice, but it's not everything. For me, winning the Black and Grey category at last year's London Tattoo Convention – out of all those stellar works – was the most humbling experience. I decided that I will not be taking part in competitions anymore. It can't get any better than that.



You're also in the band Witchmaster. Does your music influence your tattooing, and vice versa?

Not directly, but the two have always overlapped. When I started out, my clients were metalheads and punks, and I was influenced by the cover art of many death metal albums. (I especially love Dan Seagrave's work, and I'm lucky enough to own an original painting by him.) I've been playing in Witchmaster almost 25 years and it has been a massive part of my life, just like tattooing, so really the two are inseparable.

What equipment do you use?

I always line with coils, because this way I can do obscenely thick lines very fast. For a long time I used Micky Sharpz and it was my favourite, but now I'm in love with my Golden Tattoo Machine. Man this thing is like a tractor. For a long time I used coils for shading too, but for a good few years now I've been using Rotary Works. Equipment now is so good and so easy, I don't know what to think about it. People sometimes do good tattoos but don't even know the basic principles of how the thing actually works, and that could be a cause for concern. Because the easy way is not always the best way. But at the end of the day, the new precise shit that's developed makes doing our job much more efficient. The artist can dedicate all his attention to his art, rather than springs and screws.



What memories of your career will always stay with you?

Oh definitely when my daughter Nadia tattooed me for my birthday when she was six. On my knee. That was the moment she began her apprenticeship. She's 20 now, and working full-time with me. I'll never forget that day. I also remember how nerve-wracking it was to do my first tattoo at a shop. I'd applied for a job there, and the boss told me to bring a client and show him I could actually tattoo. I was shitting my pants and I did a terrible wobbly insult to tattooing, Kamikaze style with a single needle liner. He looked at this train wreck and said, 'It's alright, you start tomorrow, 10am.' I praise his lack of sound judgement every day.

When, in your opinion has been the best time for tattooing?

Fucking now. No question. One could argue that it was better in the good old days of sailors and prostitutes, but the problem is that we humans idealise the past. There's never been so many absolutely incredible artists doing so many great tattoos, in every style and every direction. And even with all the negative things happening, all these Instagram wannabe rockstar bullshitters and a whole army of scratchers, trend followers and business people who only see this as a profit opportunity, this is the golden age we are witnessing.

If you could go back in time and give yourself some advice, what would it be?

I would tell myself to go to art school and get classical training in how to draw and paint. I did it later anyway, but it was too late. If I'd done it earlier, I'd be miles ahead now. The more I learn, the more aware I am of my own limitations, and I really regret wasting my energy and time on pointless things. But I also know I wouldn't listen to myself...

Kali
Never Say Die
38A George St,
Croydon CR0 1PB
Tel: 0203 609 5317
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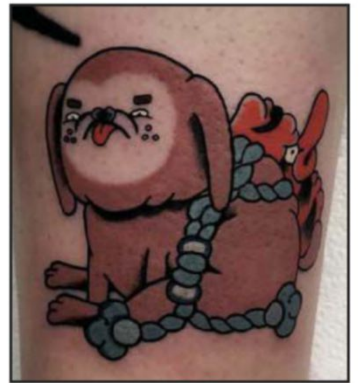
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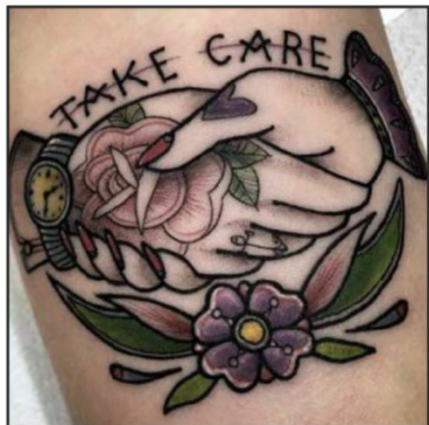
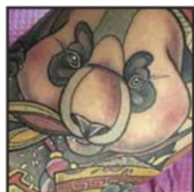
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TONI-LOU



English artist Toni-Lou moved to southern France a few years ago and now owns her own studio, Tetrodon, in sunny Bordeaux. Her happy, positive personality is reflected in the fun-filled work she produces.

Where were you from originally?

I'm a Yarmouth girl! I come from Norfolk. I was taught by Joe Slatter, who'd been tattooing since the seventies. I did a very old-fashioned apprenticeship with him that lasted seven years. I definitely paid my dues! That was in the early 2000s.

Do you think, even then, being a woman made it more difficult to get an apprenticeship?

I think it got me the job in the first place. Joe wanted a girl on the desk and he also needed a female piercer. And over the years of doing desk work, cleaning and making cups of tea, he agreed to let me tattoo. But yes, at that time there definitely weren't as many women in tattooing as there are now. And Great Yarmouth is a very small town. Back then, people would literally cross the road to tell me what wrong life choices I'd made! And guys coming into the shop would refuse to get tattooed by me.



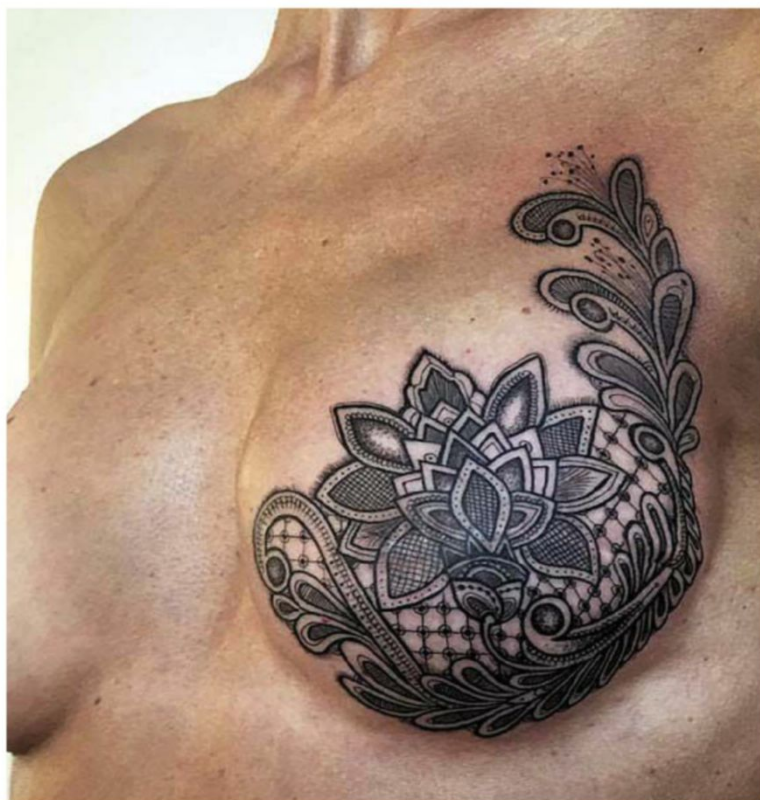


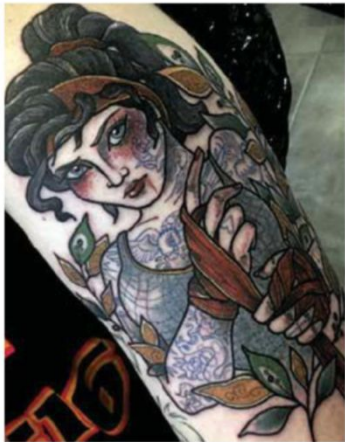
That's so surprising, especially so recently.

Yeah, then with the internet and Miami Ink, all of a sudden it changed. It's interesting how quickly that happened.

Tell us about your early career.

Joe's shop was a flash-style street shop. I definitely worked hard. Too hard in fact, because I burnt out basically. I got to the point where I thought I couldn't do it anymore. I nearly quit. That was in 2007. I thought about taking time out, but then I got offered a job at another studio. Coming from an hourly wage to a 60/40 split was really amazing, with no chair rent or overheads. Initially it was only meant to be for a few months, but it turned into several years. When you're on a voyage like that, you soon realise you've got the best job in the world. And it has literally got me all around the world!





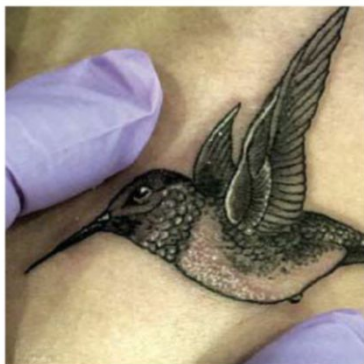
Tell us about some of your travel experiences...

I travelled around Australia. Working in a ten-person studio was eye-opening. And that was the first time – after eight years in tattooing – that I'd ever been asked what I specialised in. Until then, I don't think I'd realised that you even *could* specialise! I was taught to be an all-rounder, that you did whatever came in the door. And I still think that's a good way to be. It's certainly paid off for me, travelling around different countries, although I would love to be able to say I only do one style, and I'm envious of people who do. In Australia back then it was all portraits and realistic stuff, lots of blacks and greys. Then I worked in Berlin for a while and it seemed everybody wanted neo-trad animals wearing hats and things, which is really the style where I'm most comfortable. Oh, so many places... I'm so glad I got the chance to travel. Every studio I worked at was amazing in its own right and I took a little bit of something from each one.



And then you settled in France?

Yes. My husband is from Bordeaux, which is why we settled here, as well as the great opportunity of opening up the studio. I couldn't backpack around the world forever! And it's brought me a whole new clientele. At first, though, it seemed everybody here wanted blackwork. I remember setting up the studio and buying a full set of coloured inks and feeling really happy with myself, only to have the inks sit on the shelf for six months before I opened them! But people know me much more for my colour work now, three years down the line.



As a foreigner, how do you think people see you?

I think they actually see me as a bit exotic, which is something I never thought I would be as an English person! But Bordeaux is very student-orientated and chilled out. It's small, but still busy. As for the language, I've got limited French, but I'm getting there.



Tell us about working the Mondial du Tatouage in Paris.

That show is so well organised. The whole weekend was amazing. It was humbling. It made me realise – as if I didn't know already – that even after 17 years there's still so much I can learn. I made a point of stopping to watch the competitions. The atmosphere was incredible, like a rock concert. When they announced the winner, the person who had the tattoo started crying and I found myself caught up in the moment and crying too!

What about winning awards yourself?

I entered my first competition only because the tattooist I was sharing a booth with suggested it. I didn't really know anything about how they worked. But I can see now why they're almost addictive for some people – that adrenaline rush, stopping work for the day to watch your pieces go onstage, seeing what everyone has done and feeling inspired! It doesn't matter to me if my work wins or not. It's the fact that my customer chooses not only to get tattooed all day, but then wants to go on stage and present it. I've been lucky enough to win a few times. I do wish, though, that you could hear the critique from the convention judges. Even if it's done privately, it would be so nice to get feedback about what they liked or what could be improved; just so there's more of a learning curve. It should at least be available as an option. I do also think there are some conventions where the organisers maybe favour their friends, so there are some results I would take with a pinch of salt.





Do you go to many conventions now?

Before settling in France, I was used to picking up my stuff, moving around countries and tattooing everywhere. But I've only really started doing conventions in the past three or four years, because of opening my studio and wanting to promote it. This is actually the first time in a while that I've been stuck in one place, so to speak, and conventions are my way of getting out there and catching up with people. My husband is a musician, so he's the one who gets to go away on tour now!

How would you describe your personal tattoo style?

I'm very much the 'bird lady of Bordeaux'! I love birds and wildlife, so I'm always happy doing them. It's great if you get known for something you enjoy doing.

What do you discuss at consultations?

It's always good to have consultations with people to know how much I can add in, and how 'fun' or 'silly' I can make the tattoo. Then it's about looking at positioning and angles, and we talk about all sorts of other aspects, like sizing. Although it's sometimes hard to do, it's important to make it unique for the client. Face-to-face consultations are the best.

How do you manage the stress and pressure of your working day?

Hmm, that's a tough one. I love what I do, so I don't actually see it as stress. It's only when I stop that it hits, and then you realise your back's gone and the arthritis is creeping in. But when I'm tattooing I completely lose myself in it. It's like doing a watercolour painting, it's so therapeutic. Especially with the work I'm doing now. I'm doing a lot of covering up of tattoos and scars, like mastectomy tattooing. That's not stress to me, that's a beautiful thing to be able to do for someone. I mean, stress can build up after a while if you've got people not turning up or other problems like that. But on the whole, I don't notice it.

Do you pay particular attention to your health – mental and physical?

When I started, my boss told me my life expectancy would be shorter than other people's, mainly because I'd be sat on a chair all day. But nowadays everyone's more aware of their health. People take more care of themselves. I know from past experience that I'm susceptible to burn-out. I go through those stages and it'll get to a point where I need a week out from it. I never really go on holiday as such; I'll go to visit friends and family... but still manage to get a guest spot in. I just can't say no!

It sounds as though you have a good work-life balance.

I'm very lucky that my husband does a lot of the childcare; he can be flexible because of his job. But when he goes on tour, that's when things get interesting. Then again, because I'm my own boss I can manage my hours around childcare. I'm very lucky with my son, too. He's four and he's very sweet and good – he knows when Mummy's had a hard day! I guess between me and my husband, we're quite cool parents. But kids have to rebel against their parents don't they? So he'll probably end up as a policeman, or completely without tattoos!

You've achieved so much in your life...

If you'd asked me five years ago if I planned to have a baby and a husband and be living in France and working in my own studio, I would have been like, 'No chance!' I mean, at that time I was quite content with travelling; I never wanted to be tied to one studio. But after getting married and having a baby, it was the right time and it was a great opportunity. I was ready to create my own studio by then.



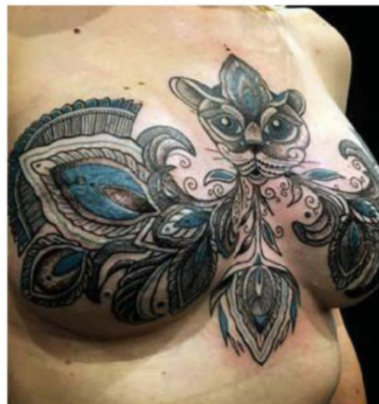
Some artists open their own place very much earlier in their career.

Yeah, like after only a year of apprenticing. That's the trend now. But I've got very old school values – like not opening up round the corner to an existing business. When I opened in Bordeaux, I wrote to all the other studios to introduce myself and reassure them. I think it's just a respectful thing to do. There are some great artists here. It's harder to have a successful shop now than it has been, and it's just as hard to actually get into a shop and learn to tattoo. I'm very lucky to have got into it when I did, and I value the approach I was given. I've just taken on an apprentice myself and I'm putting her through the same training because that's how I think it should be. If you can get through it, then you deserve it. Maybe I won't be too horrible though!



What scares you in life?

Whoa, you crept that one in! I thought we were just having a nice friendly chat... [Laughs] Seriously though, just over four years ago I lost a friend very suddenly – the tattooist Rae Pinx. She died because of an epileptic fit. We'd been living in Berlin together, and we'd been talking about getting a studio together. But she kept saying, 'Wait one more year, one more year'. Unfortunately, that year never came for her. That's obviously spurred me on, but yeah, there's an element of being scared of not being around for my son, or not being able to enjoy life to the fullest.



And a final question. If, God forbid, something awful was happening to the studio and you could only save one piece of equipment, what would it be and why?

Oh! This is so hard because I have so many personal things in the studio; they're safer there than at home with a four year-old! What a tough question. I guess it would be my Grandad's ashes, which were made into a paperweight. He taught me how to draw and how to express myself, and he took me to get my first tattoo at 15 years old! He is my hero, and I owe him so much. Second to that would be my Dan Kubin machine, which is pink of course!

Tetrodon Tattoo
52 Cours de l'Yser
33800 Bordeaux
France

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Black Lantern Studio
4 Marshall Avenue, Bridlington,
East Yorkshire, YO152DS, UK
Tel no: 01262 674 045
Blacklanternstudio@gmail.com
FB: black lantern tattoo studio

Crooked Claw Tattoo
734 Ecclesall Road, Sheffield,
S11 8TB
Tel no: 0114 327 1411
crookedclawtattoos@gmail.com
www.crookedclawtattoo.com

Electric Kicks
17 Front Street, Pontefract.

WF8 1DA
Tel no: 07725 029 567
electric.kicks@hotmail.com
FB: Electric Kicks Tattoo Studio
Instagram: @electric.kicks.crew

Fun House
140 Sheffield Rd, Barnsley
S70 1JH
Tel no: 01226 779 595
nigelkurt1@gmail.com
www.nigelkurt.com

Sacred Electric Tattoo
2-3 Mill Hill,
Leeds LS1 5DQ
Tel no: 0113 242 5553
Sacredelectrictattoo@gmail.com
www.sacredelectrictattoo.com

Ultimate Skin
33 New Briggate,
Leeds LS2 8JD
Tel no: 0113 244 4940
ustattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @ultimate_skin

EAST MIDLANDS

Bunraku Tattoo
1a Victoria Parade,
Leicester, LE1 5FG
Tel no: 0116 262 9401
info@bunrakatattoo.co.uk
www.bunrakatattoo.co.uk

Embody Tattoo
(handpoke and machine tattooing)
7 Canal Street, Derby. DE1 2RJ
Tel no: 01332 986 920
embodytattoo@mail.com
www.embodytattoo.co.uk

Epona Art and Tattoo
Waterloo Yard, King St,
Southwell NG25 0EH
Tel no: 01636 815 771
theresatattoo@btinternet.com
www.eponatattoo.com

Fat Fugu
24 Fish St,
Northampton NNI 2AA
Tel no: 01604 630 557
info@fatfugu.com
www.fatfugu.com

Hypnotic Art Tattoo
200 Queensway,
Milton Keynes MK2 2ST
Tel no: 01908 989 695
hypnoticarttattoo@gmail.com
www.hypnotic-art.co.uk

Lucky 13 Tattoo
192 Clarendon Park Road
Leicester
LE2 3AF
Tel no: 0116 270 0558
studio@wearelucky13.com
www.wearelucky13.com

Second Skin
77 Ashbourne Rd,
Derby DE22 3FW
Tel no: 01332 242 688
info@secondskinstudio.co.uk
Instagram: @secondskinderby

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

Wet Paint Collective
7 Bowley Court, Melton Mowbray
LE13 1XY
Tel no: 01664 668110
wetpaintcollective@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/Wetpaintcollec-
tive

EAST OF ENGLAND

Black Dog Tattoos
47 St Benedicts Street
Norwich
Norfolk NR24PG
Tel no: 01603 291049
blackdogtattoos@gmail.com
Instagram: @blackdogtattoos

Black Galleon Tattoo Studio
22 Blackfriars Street
Kings Lynn
PE30 1NN
01553 777322
www.facebook.com/blackgalleontat-
toostudio

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

Churchyard Tattoo
14 Churchyard,
Hitchin SG5 1HR
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cytattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @churchyardtattoos

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21-23 St George Street,
Norwich. NR3 1AB
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crossedarrowstattoo@gmail.com
Facebook: Crossed Arrows Tattoo

Cult Classic Tattoo

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

Electric Punch Tattoo

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

Five Keys Tattoo

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

Good Ship 13

374 London Road Hadleigh, Essex
SS7 2DA
Tel no: 07415 299998
goodship13info@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/Good-Ship-13-Tattoos

Indigo Tattoo and Piercing

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

Immortal Ink

39 - 43 Baddow Road,
Chelmsford, CM2 0DB
Tel no: 01245 493 444
contact@immortalink.co.uk
www.immortalink.co.uk

Next Generation

4 Wolverton Rd, Stony Stratford,
Milton Keynes MK11 1DX
Tel no: 01908 560003
info@nextgenerationtattoo.co.uk
www.nextgenerationtattoo.co.uk

Red's Tattoo Parlour

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

True Love Tattoos

16 Bridewell Alley,
Norwich NR2 1AQ
Tel no: 01603 613277
tlnorwich@gmail.com
www.tlnorwich.co.uk

LONDON

Briar Rose Tattoo

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

The Family Business

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

Frith Street Tattoo

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

Happy Sailor Tattoo

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

I Hate Tattoos

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

Ink Lounge Tattoo Studio

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

Inksmiths Of London

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

Kilburn Original Tattoo

175 Kilburn High Road,
Kilburn, London. NW6 7HY

Tel no: 0207 372 3662
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Instagram: @kilburntattoo

Leviticus Tattoo Emporium

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www.leviticustattooemporium.co.uk

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London E2 6AH
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Inquiry@lowridertattoo.london
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lowtidetattoo@gmail.com
Instagram: @lowtidetattoo.uk

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Tel no: 01621 842443
Instagram: skin_sorcerer

Through My Third Eye

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

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14 Arrows Tattoo Studio
55-57 Grosvenor Road

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TN1 2AY
Tel no: 01892 458342
fourteenarrows@hotmail.com

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www.aontattoo.com

1770 Tattoo

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

Death's Door Tattoo

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

The Church Tattoo

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

Fine Art Tattoo and Piercing Studio

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

Higgins and Co

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

Inked Moose

204 Whaddon Way, Bletchley, Milton
Keynes MK3 7DG
Tel no: 01908 411151
info@inkedmoose.co.uk
www.inkedmoose.co.uk

Leo Rios Tattoo Studio

11 Lime St, Bedford MK40 1LD
Tel no: 01234930504
leoriotattoos@hotmail.co.uk
www.facebook.com/LeoRiosStudio

Rising Phoenix Tattoo

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

Rivergate Tattoo

Unit 1 Rivergate House
Cheapside
Luton
LU1 2HN
Tel no: 01582 51500
info@rivergatetattoo.co.uk

Seven Sins Tattoo

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

Skinned Alive Tattoo

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

Tattoo FX

32 Middle Village, Bolnore,
Haywards Heath,
West Sussex,
RH16 4GH
01444454411
info@tattoo-fx.co.uk
www.tattoo-fx.co.uk

Valhalla Tattoo

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

SOUTH WEST

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5 Maylord Street,
Hereford.
HR12DS
Tel no: 01432 278330
blackfriarstattoo@gmail.com
Instagram @blackfriarstattoo

Crow Quill

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

Needle and Fred Tattoo

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

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

Purple Rose Tattoo

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Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 5BS
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purplerosetattoo@hotmail.co.uk
www.purplerosetattoo.co.uk

Whitfield Tattoos

17 Bear St, Barnstaple EX32 7BX
Tel no: 01271 374666
whitfieldtattoos@gmail.com
www.whitfieldtattoos.co.uk

WALES

Dexterity Ink

Unit 9 Indoor Peoples Market
LL13 8 Wrexham
Tel no: 01978 447 100
www.facebook.com/DexterityInkTat
tooStudio09

Physical Graffiti

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

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

Surrealistic Sanctuary

144 City Rd, Cardiff, CF24 3DR
Tel no: 07413 383 323
sstattooacardiff@gmail.com
www.surrealisticsanctuary.co.uk

WEST MIDLANDS

Blood & Honey Tattoo Co

Winchcombe St,
Cheltenham,
GL52, 2NE
Tel no: 01242 352306
hello@bloodandhoney.uk
bloodandhoney.uk

Cosmic Monsters Incorporated

Mitre House, the courtyard
27 The Strand, Bromsgrove B618AB
Tel no: 07863 135814
cmitattoo@gmail.com
www.cmi-tattoo.com

Dark Horse Collective

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

Folklore Tattoo

119 Lichfield St, Tamworth B79 7QB
Tel no: 01827 768446
folkloretattoos@live.com
www.folkloretattooostudio.co.uk/

Modern Electric Tattoo Co

147 Golden Cross Lane
Catshill, Bromsgrove
Worcestershire, B61 0JZ
Tel: 01527 759434
info@modernelectrictattoo.co.uk
www.modernelectrictattoo.co.uk

Nala Tattoo

& Piercing Studio

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

Sweet Life Gallery

80 Bristol Street,
Birmingham.
B57AH
Tel no: 01216921361
Enquiry@sweetlifegallery.co.uk
www.sweetlifegallery.co.uk

The Inkspot

Number 6 the Parade,
Silverdale,
Newcastle Under Lyme.
ST5 6LQ
01782 619144
tattoosbycookie@hotmail.com
www.theinkspotuk.com

Tokyotattoo® Studios (Cheltenham)

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www.tokyotattoo.co.uk

Vicious Pink Tattoo

Suite C, 9a Willow Street,
Oswestry,
SY11 1A
Tel no: 01691570427
visciousspinktattoo@gmail.com
www.visciousspink.co.uk

NORTH WEST

Ace Kustom Tattoo

78 Church Road
Manchester, M22 4NW
Tel no: 0161 945 8433
acekustomtattoos@gmail.com

All Style Tattoos

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

Aurora Tattoo

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

Black Freighter Tattoo Co.

56-60 Lower Bridge Street
Chester, Cheshire
CHI 1RU
Tel no: 01244 297528
theblackfreightertattoooco@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/TheBlack-FreighterTattooCo

Bold As Brass Tattoo

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

Dabs Tattoo

78b Eastbourne Road
Southport
PR8 4DU
01704566665
Dabstattoos@btconnect.com
https://www.facebook.com/dabstat-
too/DABS Tattoo
@tattoosatdabs

Inkden Tattoo & Piercing Studio

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

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21 Eastgate Row North,
Chester. CH11LQ
01244638558
info@inkedupchester.co.uk
Instagram @inkedupchester

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Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1SB
Tel no: 01642 641 235
tattooofl@gmail.com
www.marked-for-life.com

Market Quarter Tattoo

14 Market Street, Southport,
Merseyside. PR8 1HJ
marketquartertattoo@gmail.com
Facebook - Market Quarter Tattoo
Instagram- @marketquartertattoo

Sacred Art Tattoo

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

Skin Kandi Tattoo Studio

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

True 'til Death

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

IRELAND

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

6th-7th July

Leeds Tattoo Expo

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

27th-28th July

The Southampton Tattoo Festival

The Ageas Bowl, West End,
Southampton, UK
www.facebook.com/southamptontattoofest18

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

21st-22nd September

Tattoo Extravaganza

The Gaiety Bar on the Prestigious
South Parade Pier, Southsea
Portsmouth PO4 0SW
www.facebook.com/Tattooextravaganzaportsmouth

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

6-7 July

Tattoo art expo Dublin

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

26th -28th July

Ink and Art International 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

26th-27th October

Southampton Tattoo Show

W Marlands Rd
Southampton SO14 7LP
www.facebook.com/southamptontattooshow

25th-27th October

Amsterdam Tattoo Convention

Amsterdam RAI Exhibition and
Convention Centre
Europaplein,



1078 GZ Amsterdam,
Netherlands
www.tattooexpo.eu

1st-3rd November
Dublin Tattoo Convention
Royal Dublin Society
Anglesea Rd, Dublin 4, Ireland
www.dublintattooconvention.com

8th-10th November
Florence Tattoo Convention
Fortezza Da Basso Viale Filippo
Strozzi, I 50129 Florence, Italy
www.florencetattooconvention.com/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 I – 47814 Bellaria Igea
Marina, Italy
www.tattooconventioncesenatico.it

2020 CONVENTIONS

2nd-3rd May

Brighton Tattoo Convention
Brighton Centre, Brighton BN1 2GR
<http://brightontattoo.com/>

25th-26th April
Big North Tattoo Show
Utilita Arena
Arena Way
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE4 7NA
www.bignorthtattooshow.com

OVERSEAS

17th-19th January
Goa Tattoo Festival
Tito's Whitehouse
Arpora Mapusa Road,
Anjuna
Goa
India
www.goatattoofestival.com

13th-15th March
Mondial du Tatouage
Grand Halle de La Villette, Paris,
France
www.mondialdutatouage.com

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