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Naughty but knife

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Skulls, snakes and girls

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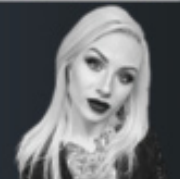
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CONTENTS & FEATURES



14

TUTTI SERRA

From Brazil's backstreets to London's West End and beyond



26

NIPPLE TATTOOS

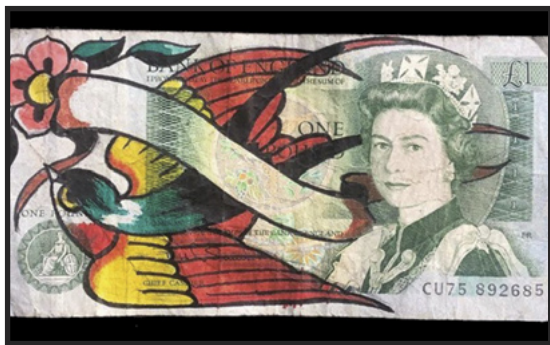
Restoring self-image and rebuilding self-esteem post-mastectomy



36

LORD MONTANA BLUE

On racism, representation, and a positive mental attitude



46

LAL HARDY: FLASH THE CASH

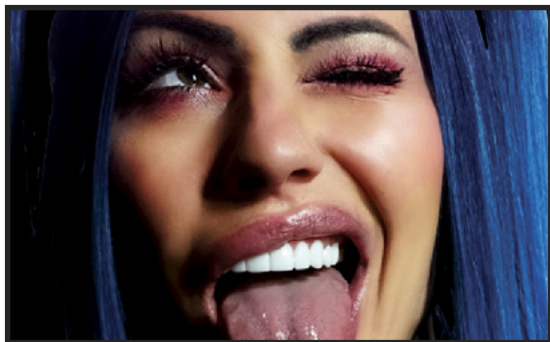
Old-time tattooists painted on vintage banknotes



53

GALLERY

Inspirational tattoos from all over the world



60

JENNA COFFIN

Knife work if you can get it



70

JEAN LE ROUX

Happy to tattoo snakes, skulls and girls for the rest of his life...



80

MATTHEW MEYER

The wonderful weird and scary world of Japanese Kokai



90

RAPA NUI

Fade FX heads to Easter Island

REGULARS

8

NEWS & REVIEWS

If it goes on in the tattoo world, it goes in here

103

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EDITORIAL 189

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Blimey, what a year!

I'm sure I'm not the only person thinking that! With the ever-changing landscape of rules and regulations – and laden with guilt and fear in an effort to protect the elderly, protect the NHS, protect the economy and think of the children – I've found myself in an anxious state of almost permanent confusion, not really sure exactly which direction I should be heading.

And as the captain of the good ship Total Tattoo, I think 2020 can best be described as the Bermuda Triangle, surrounded by shark-infested waters, with rough seas just beyond the horizon.

At present we are forced to be operating on a bi-monthly production cycle. With a calendar devoid of conventions, and with newsagents, shops and studios closed for long periods of time, normal life for us has been replaced by the economic strategising of a game of publisher chess, never really sure if the high street will be open to receive our magazine once it has served its time at the printers and made its way around the highways of the kingdom to get into stores before another lockdown.

Many of you will have noticed that your regular tattoo journal fix will be requiring a longer than usual reach into your pockets as we have been forced to increase the cover price. This is a decision we did not take lightly. It is due to ever-increasing paper costs, fuel costs, and everything else that goes into producing and distributing the magazine, exacerbated by our impending departure from the Europe Union. This is only the second time in Total Tattoo's 16 years of existence that we have had to make this decision. We hope you agree that we still represent value for money; we value your support immensely and we're always happy to hear your views both good and bad.

But it's not all doom and gloom! Many of us have had plenty of time to focus on our drawing and painting during the past few months and never before have there been so many prints and limited edition artworks available to buy online. Newly learnt creative skills will



also no doubt filter through into the tattoo art of tomorrow. Rest and relaxation have also re-established themselves as essential to the very fabric of our wellbeing, and many of us have become accomplished chefs, budding builders, great gardeners and learned scholars. The devil really does make work for idle hands.

Social media has become inflamed with agitations from all sides arguing the legitimacy (or otherwise) of government restraints on our freedom. You would be hard-pressed to have missed the story about the Bristol studio that refused to close, invoking ancient laws and standing up for the right of the common man to earn an honest crust. I am certainly not in a position to either defend or applaud these actions, but I have to say I found it amusing – joyful even, and maybe a bit cathartic – that at least one individual was prepared to put his head above the parapet and exercise his democratic right to call for something different, and I really cannot wait to see how it all plays out in court.

If there's one thing this year has taught us, it's that you can never rely on things to stay the same. But our ability to adjust, and our enthusiasm to bounce back, have always been fundamental human traits. In the tattoo world, as in the world at large, things will continue to change, grow and develop as they always do. Post-pandemic, I am sure we will witness a global resurgence of human artistic endeavour. The future of tattooing is about to light up!

There is hope on the horizon, and as things begin to improve with a new year just around the corner, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all well.

Perry

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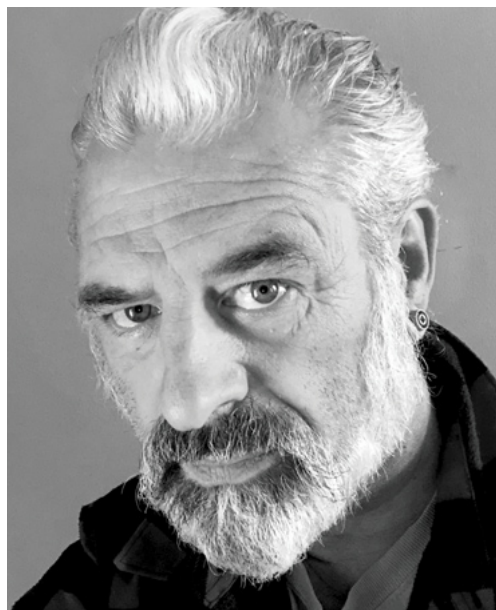
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NEWS & REVIEWS



Send your news, studio announcements, books or products for review, and items of general curiosity and intrigue for the tattoo cognoscenti to: **NEWS, TOTAL TATTOO MAGAZINE, 44 Albion Road, Great Yarmouth NR30 2JD** or **totaltattoo@totaltattoo.co.uk**

WILL THE REAL WORLD RECORD...

Guinness World Records has recently announced a new record: for the person having the most tattoos of the same musician on their body. It's been achieved by proud fan Nikki Paterson from Aberdeen, who had 15 portraits of Eminem when the record was awarded – and has since added another. Nikki also has numerous other tattoos relating to The Real Slim Shady and his music. She has some 50 tattoos altogether, with more than half of them Eminem-related, including some quality work by the likes of David Corden and others. Although it's only the portraits that counted towards the official record, overall it's an awesome collection of ink and no doubt still a work in progress! Incidentally, Eminem is also a record breaker, having achieved several Guinness World Records including fastest-selling rap artist (for The Marshall Mathers LP) and fastest ever rap (for 'Godzilla').



CHRISTMAS CHEER



Chesterfield studio Pierce of Art have been collecting donations of presents and toys to pass on to people who are finding Christmas a financial struggle this year. Wayne Grant and Suzanne Parsons are very community-minded, and this is not the first time they've done this kind of thing. Last winter they collected donations of warm coats for homeless people, and at the start of the lockdown in March the shop gave all its PPE, hand sanitiser and cleaning products to the local hospital. For Christmas 2020, they've also put together a hamper of goodies that's being raffled in aid of local Ashgate Hospicecare and the shop is welcoming donations of sweets to give to key workers too.



OOH AAH TATTOO

If you've ever visited the National Football Museum in Manchester, you'll have seen 'The Art of the Game'. It's a spectacular painting of Eric Cantona by artist Michael Browne (featuring Sir Alex Ferguson, David Beckham and the Neville brothers too). A clever reimagining of renaissance masterpiece 'The Resurrection' by Piero della Francesca, the painting was inspired by Cantona's own career "resurrection" after the Manchester United player received a nine month ban for that notorious kung-fu kick incident in 1995.



Michael Browne's painting has itself now been reproduced as an astonishing backpiece by Jonny Firth of Sorry Mum private studio (@firthjonny) for his client, Manchester United fan Jamie Wright. The piece took three years to complete. And Eric Cantona, who owns the original painting, has reportedly given the tattoo his personal seal of approval via social media.



CONVENTION CALENDAR

Mar 6-7 2021

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Phoenix Way Off, Barton Dock Rd,
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www.tattooteaparty.com

Mar 27-28 2021

The Scottish Tattoo Show

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

Apr 24-25

Big North Tattoo Show

The Utilita Arena
Newcastle Upon Tyne NE4 7NA
www.bignorthtattooshow.com

May 1-2 2021

Brighton Tattoo Convention

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

May 6-9 2021

Lille International Tattoo Convention

Lille Grand Palais
1 Boulevard des Cités Unies, 59777
Lille, France
lille-tattoo-convention.com

August 20-22 2021

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

TIERS FOR FEARS

It's not just COVID-19 that's contagious. The confusion surrounding the government's advice is too. So if you want to find the latest information about the tier you're in, and the restrictions that apply to your local area, this is the place to look:

www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know

MAGNA FORCE

800 years ago, the Magna Carta was drawn up and presented to King John by disgruntled barons fed up with how he was running the country. Now, it's being wheeled out and cited as a defence against the enforcement of coronavirus restrictions.

During the recent lockdown, tattooist Aron Walton of Holey Skin in Bristol took a stand against the temporary closure of his shop. He was determined to remain open for business despite police raids, the seizing of his equipment and the threat of fines. His belief is that he is protected by historic rights conferred by the Magna Carta. And he's not alone in this. There are others around the country who share his conviction. The majority opinion, however, is that this controversial stance has no basis in fact.

So what exactly is the Magna Carta?

The Magna Carta (or 'Great Charter') was really the first attempt to formulate a proper system of laws for the whole country and rein in the power of the monarch to do as they pleased. It was a prototype for the rights and freedoms we take for granted today; for instance it laid down the principle that everyone accused of a crime is entitled to a fair trial. Perhaps most significantly, it also enshrined the idea that *nobody* is above the law, even the king or queen.

However, only a tiny fraction of the Magna Carta's content survives in our modern day system. Despite this, it's acquired a kind of mythical status and is often invoked in legal or political arguments when personal liberty is felt to be in jeopardy. It will be intriguing to see what comes out of Aron Walton's fight.



THE FACE OF NZ

New Zealand's new Minister of Foreign Affairs is Nanaia Mahuta, a woman of Maori origin who wears the *moko kanae* or traditional chin tattoo. These cultural markings carry great meaning; they signify who a person is, where they come from, and their family heritage and connections. They communicate a person's identity.

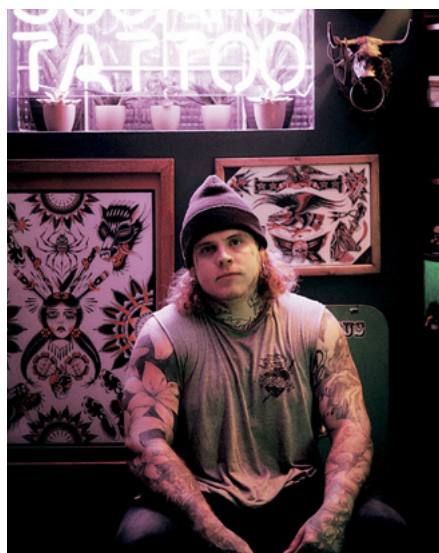
Nanaia Mahuta has served in the New Zealand Parliament for nearly 25 years and was the first MP to wear the *moko kanae*. She is only the second person of Maori origin ever to be appointed to the New Zealand cabinet. In a powerful interview with the BBC World Service, she commented, "I understand that the cultural representation of indigenous people can be quite confronting for some people. However it's becoming the norm in New Zealand." She went on to say, "I don't look like many people who have held the Foreign Affairs post, but that's perhaps the reason why the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern offered the role to me... You know I'm not surprised by the negative comments, but I'm not going to let them distract from the task I have at hand."

The negative comments Nanaia Mahuta is referring to were in a tweet from author Olivia Pierson – who, according to news reports, generated such outrage with the social media post her book was withdrawn from sale by major New Zealand online retailer Mighty Ape.

Listen to the BBC World Service interview here:
www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08xfthc



SWEET AS...



After many years working at Magnum Opus Tattoo, Brighton-based tattooist Oli Sugars (@olisugars) is branching out and opening his own private studio. To book in, contact Oli on 07493 740841 or email olisugarstattoo@gmail.com

HEY MR POSTMAN...



Lal Hardy from New Wave Tattoo has been very busy during the lockdown and produced this amazing set of postcards illustrating the old school drawing techniques taught to him by legendary tattooist Jock from Kings Cross. Check them out on his instagram page @lalhardy

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TUTTI SERRA

A founder member of London tattoo powerhouse Black Garden, Tutti Serra is now embarking on a whole new venture and setting up a private tattoo/art studio with his wife Laura. It's all a far cry from his childhood in the crime-ridden backstreets of Brazil...

Tutti Serra grew up on the wrong side of the tracks in a small Brazilian town. "Drugs, murders and street crime were commonplace in my childhood," he recalls. "They were just part of life. I never did any of that kind of thing myself of course, but I knew plenty of people who did."

'MY JOB AS A TATTOOIST IS ABOUT MY CLIENTS. IT'S NOT ABOUT ME.'





"I used to spend whole days out in the street, playing football," Tutti continues, "and I was always drawing too. I would decorate other kids' school books for money, and even take portrait commissions. My parents, who both paint, ran an art school from our house and they also taught soap making, candle making, picture framing, everything. They were proper old-fashioned long-haired hippies. So I grew up surrounded by art students and creative people the whole time. It was a really bohemian neighbourhood where we lived."



From an early age Tutti learnt a solid work ethic. "My dad did carpentry, and I started working with him and loved that. I did proper hours and got a regular salary. He never gave me any pocket money. He always encouraged me to earn my own income. I was selling ice lollies on the street aged nine, and I've been working ever since! By the time I was 16, I was teaching in the art school." Tutti's parents have always been super supportive and encouraged him in his endeavours, especially in the creative sphere. "For them, and for me, art is a constant presence in our lives. We think very similarly. And we've always been the best of friends."





Tutti was 13 when he decided to become a tattooist. "I went to buy some comics, but on the spur of the moment I bought a tattoo magazine instead. When I saw that you could do drawings on people's skin, I thought it was amazing! Pretty soon I had a pile of tattoo magazines, and I began copying all the designs that I liked. Then I went to get a piercing. The piercer's husband was tattooing there, with his long dirty hair and his shirt off, and they were listening to the kind of music I liked. It was a shit hole of a place. But that was the moment – right there and then – that I decided I was going to be a tattooist."

"Most of the tattoos I was seeing around me were very poor quality," Tutti recalls, "and to be fair a lot of what was in the magazines in those days was pretty bad too. But I vividly remember coming across photos of pieces by Filip Leu. They really stood out. Another thing that really made an impression on me early on was seeing all the tattooed people in Camden Market when we lived in London for a year during my teens."

"My parents' art school was busy," Tutti continues, "and we had more than a hundred students, but in Brazil you can never really make money, no matter hard you work. There's just so much corruption. So when I was 19, my parents and I came to Europe permanently."

"I spent a year in Italy first, then I came to London. I worked in kitchens, then I got a basic office job, and I also made contact with the guys at Self Sacrifice Tattoo. I'd heard they had a Brazilian guy working there - Cesar Mesquita - so I went down with my folder of drawings. And I just hung out there. The timing was perfect. When I got sacked from my office job, Cesar needed someone to manage the shop and his apprentice had also just left too. So I took on both those roles. And that's how I started at Self Sacrifice."



"Being in central London, the shop was very busy. I worked there all day, including doing all the cleaning, and at night I practiced my drawing and tattooed from my bedroom until 4am or 5am. I'd bought myself a tattoo kit at a convention in Sao Paulo before I left Brazil, but I got some better equipment at the 2006 London convention. After six months, I started tattooing properly in the shop. My professional journey had begun."

Although Tutti has always been drawn to Japanese, his early work was very much new school and neo-trad. Then he encountered Sailor Jerry-style traditional. "Most artists who were doing 'traditional' at that time were doing a kind of new school cartoony interpretation. But at Self Sacrifice there was a guy doing real Sailor Jerry traditional. I'd never seen this before, and I just loved the bold simplicity of it. As the apprentice, I'd already realised that I wouldn't get much work if I was doing Japanese - because everyone at the shop loved Japanese and they were already so good at it - so I started doing a basic traditional style. Slowly I gathered my own clientele, and for the next six years I was the trad guy."

"When we [Cesar, Rodrigo Souto and Joao Bosco and me] left Self Sacrifice and opened Black Garden in Covent Garden, we were all really busy. I was booked up for ages, and I realised that unless I stopped doing traditional I'd never be able to do what I really wanted to do - which was Japanese. So I decided to finish all the work I had booked in, and make the transition. I booked a trip to Japan with four friends, and I told myself that when I returned I was only going to do Japanese."

Tutti's love of Japanese art stems from way back. "There was a large Japanese community in the area where I grew up, and I remember hanging out in their houses, eating lots of Japanese food and being surrounded by Japanese art. I was saturated with all things Japanese. It definitely entered my subconscious. Of course when I was young I'd never seen a Japanese bodysuit, and I had no idea of the significance of Japanese imagery in tattooing."

"Once I switched to Japanese-style work, I knew I only wanted to do big pieces and bodysuits. I wanted clients who would stay with me for years. I wanted to be able to build that strong sense of friendship and family. I knew I needed a certain type of client for that... and as soon as I'd had that realisation, things

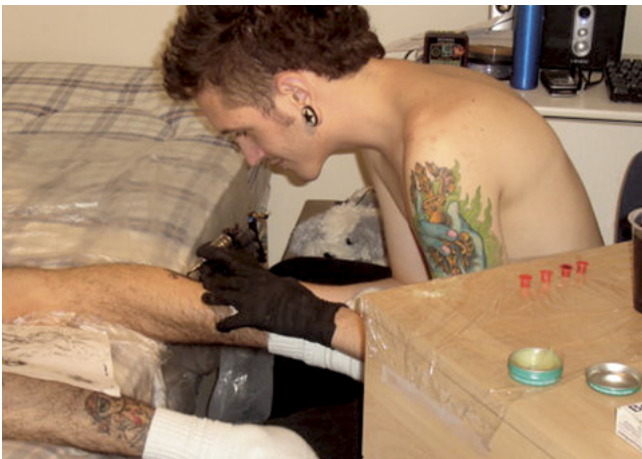


immediately changed! Out of the blue, men in their 40s came to me wanting big Japanese pieces (whereas before, lots of my clients had been students, and they'd also been mainly women because my work was very 'cute'). That's the mind's power of attraction!"



"Your own mind is the most powerful thing you have at your disposal. If you are positive, you will attract the positive. That's not always easy, but for me it works beautifully. Harnessing the power of a positive mental attitude is very much part of Seicho-No-Ie," Tutti goes on to explain, "which is a philosophy my parents have followed for the past 30 years. It's a blend of Buddhism, Shintoism and Spiritualism, and it emphasises gratitude to your ancestors and faith in a universal God. But it isn't really a religion. My parents are quite influential within the movement, giving public lectures and so on. I used to go to meetings every week with them, and hear their lectures. What I learnt through them has definitely slowly shaped me into the person I am today."

Tutti's philosophy of life is evident in his focused dedication to his work and his calm determination to produce tattoos that suit his clients needs above his own.





"My clients come to me with an idea – however vague – and it's my job as a professional to find the best tattoo to suit them. It's not about me. I get to know my clients, and I take time to develop their ideas with them. I always prefer that the project is a collaboration between us, and that we grow the suit together. I listen to my client's ideas, and I offer my own. The best results happen when we are both flexible. That's when we create something strong. A major part of the consultation is education. If I can share an understanding of the meanings and narrative of the images, then hopefully my client will get excited about the design."

"I've never believed that tattooing is just about putting a design on someone's body. All tattoos are decorative of course, but they go much deeper than that. A tattoo has the power to change a person. It's like a blood ritual. You sacrifice a lot of pain to get it. I try to teach my clients how to breathe and not tense up, but at the end of the day it's their own battle and ultimately no one can help. When they look in the mirror at their finished tattoo, you can see a physical transformation in them. They stand proud and strong. Tattoos are one of the few things that you can take with you to the grave."

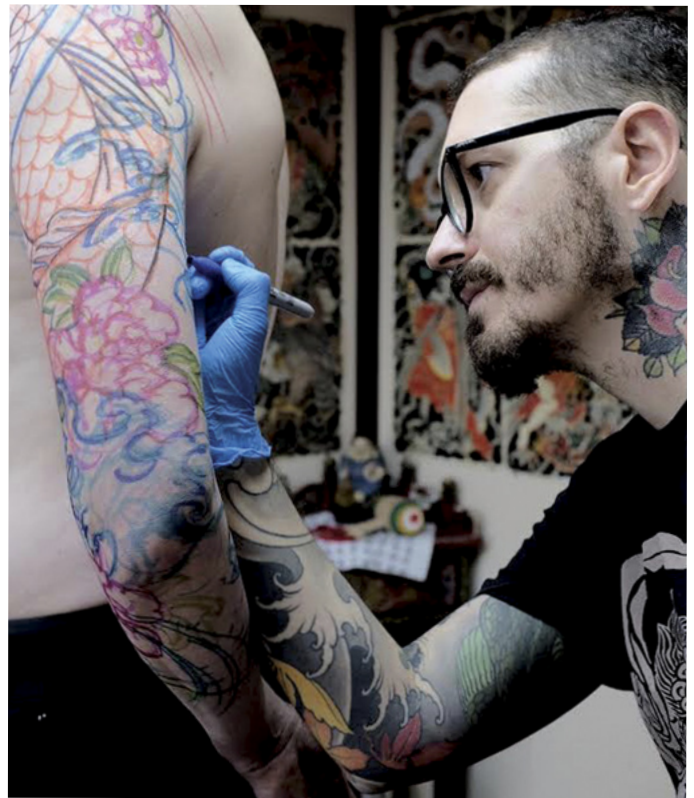
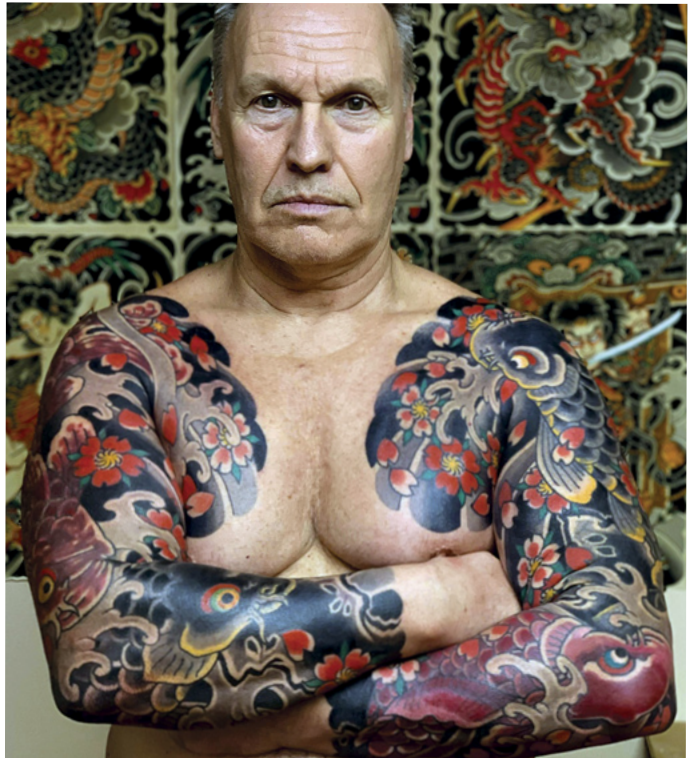




Tutti worked at Black Garden for 10 years. The shop is now closed, and he has a new direction in life, focusing full-time on the tattoo and art studio he set up with his wife Laura last year.

"Black Garden was a great shop," says Tutti. "It was a family of friends. Working there was the best thing I could ever have asked for. The physical shop may have closed, but the love we have for each other will go on. I'm proud that our seven apprentices are now excellent tattooists themselves. We never used them as cheap labour, like some big shops do. We really taught them well. All of us in the shop grew together, and we learnt so much. But it was also incredibly stressful. We really immersed ourselves in it! We had an average of 10 artists at any one time. The bills were high. And as much as we tried to be business people, we were really ruled by our hearts. Sometimes it's good to know when to stop."

"Right from the start we'd planned on 10 years. When we had one year of our 10-year lease left, we started discussing it and it seemed a good point to call it a day. Black Garden had been a beautiful thing, but we realised we all had other stuff going on in our lives."



"I opened a café with my parents last year," Tutti continues. "I also have a young family now. I always knew that I would want to have the same kind of close relationship with my own children as my parents had with me when I was growing up, which is why it's so good to be able to work full-time in the studio I've built at home, now that Black Garden is gone."

So FULLPWR STUDIO was born. "My wife Laura and I decided to start this project about eighteen months ago," Tutti explains. "We wanted to have a studio together, but not a tattoo studio. We wanted it to be more diverse than that. She's a photographer. We want to work creatively as a family. We've got plans for doing some printmaking and maybe some apparel. The name FULLPWR came from our family motto – to always give of our best every single day. FULLPWR is a state of mind that we want to pass on to everyone!"

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Tanya Buxton



Kerry Irvine

'THESE TATTOOS OFTEN SIGNIFY THE END OF A LONG AND DIFFICULT JOURNEY' - TANYA

NIPPLE TATTOOS

For women who have undergone mastectomy, nipple tattoos can be an important way to help restore their self-image, regain self-esteem and rebuild a positive relationship with their bodies. These tattoos can be a vital part of the healing journey.

Creating realistic 3D tattooed nipples is technically challenging. But despite this, it's often carried out by non-tattooists – people such as nurses, beauticians and others with only the most basic tattoo training – and sadly, the

results can be of questionable quality. Even for professional tattooists there are obstacles, because social media censorship means business pages get suspended, tattoo photos get taken down, and there's a serious lack of reference out there. It's not easy to find pictures of nipples unless you visit a porn site.

So we decided to have a chat with Tanya Buxton and Kerry Irvine, two tattooists who are doing great work in this area, to find out more.

First, can you tell us about your tattoo careers to date?

Tanya: My tattoo career began in 2009. But the first shop I worked in wasn't right for me. I knew if I stayed there I'd never become the tattooist I wanted to be, so I started helping out once a week at Monki Do in Belper, trying to persuade Andy Bowler to let me move there full-time. Eventually he gave in, and Monki Do is where I did most of my learning. I've travelled and tattooed in lots of places, including some time spent in Australia, and I'm now based at No Regrets in Cheltenham. I've set up a small business within No Regrets called Paradise Tattoo, which is very feminine and aiming to break down the old-fashioned image of what a tattoo shop should look like. My tattoo style? I'd describe it as neo-traditional. I love working in colour and I especially enjoy tattooing all things tropical-themed.

Kerry: My tattooing adventure began 15 years ago. I was doing a degree in Animation in Pontypridd, Wales, and I used to hang out at the local tattoo shop. That's where I did my apprenticeship. It was a proper old school kind of shop and we did everything – kanji for a fiver, all the simple small stuff, and loads of it. I learnt the hard way. I was chucked in at the deep end! I moved to London and tattooed at Ouch in Ealing and Brentford, then I joined Skunx Tattoo in Islington. I'm now at The Modern Electric Tattoo Co in Bromsgrove, near Birmingham. I'm still learning and loving what I do every day. Because of my passion for animation I really enjoy doing illustrative and painterly realism tattoos, but I'm happy to do pretty much everything, including the odd bit of nostalgic Cherry Creek flash!

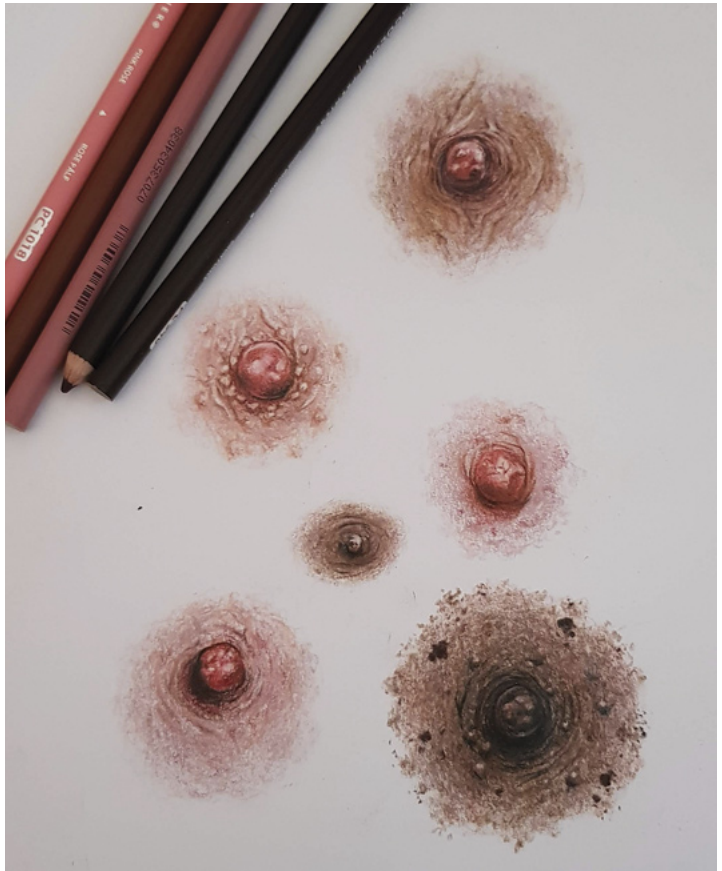


Kerry

'I LOVE THIS WORK, BECAUSE IT'S SO IMPORTANT' – KERRY



Tanya



Tanya

How much medical-related tattooing do you each do?

Tanya: I've been doing cosmetic tattooing for a while now, since 2015. But I really started to promote my medical stuff earlier this year, just before we all got locked down. Returning to work after the coronavirus lockdown, I'd expected tattooing to take a bit of a knock but we're actually busier now than ever before. And I'm doing way more of my medical and cosmetic stuff than anything else. The demand is definitely growing, as people become more educated about the possibilities. I still love to do 'traditional' tattoos of course, but I'm only doing a couple of those a week at the moment – just the ones I really want to do.

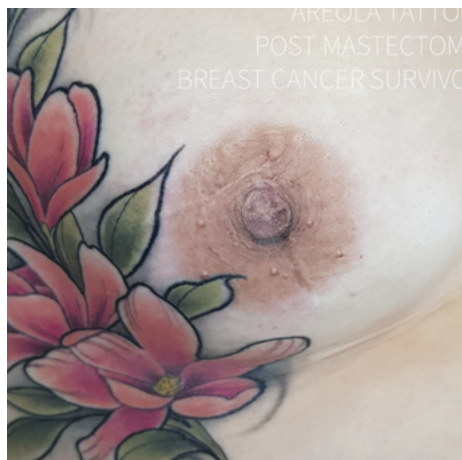
Kerry: I get referrals from doctors (both NHS and private) all over the UK, and I reckon I do at least two nipples every week. I get enquiries all the time. I never set out to be involved in this area of the industry; it just kind of happened to me. It all began when a lovely lady called Kelly came in and asked me to tattoo her. That was more than six years ago. I told her I'd never done a nipple before, but she insisted I give it a try, and it came out great. I posted it on social media and it went viral. It was only up for half a day before it got taken down, but by then loads of people had seen it. Kelly and her husband still come in to get tattooed. Her cancer diagnosis has gone terminal now.



Kerry



Tanya



Tanya



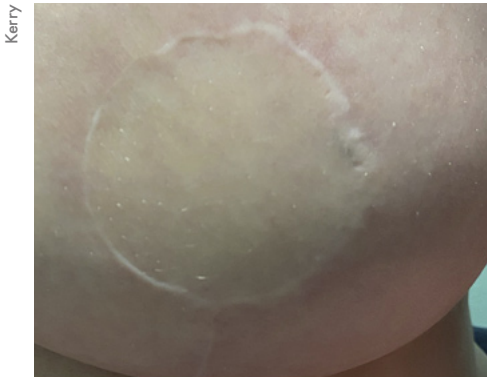
Tanya

These are obviously tattoos with real emotional involvement...

Kerry: Absolutely. Nipple tattoos often feel way more emotionally charged than other tattoos. I love this work because it's so important, but it can also be very hard. At first, I used to have to take myself away before I started a tattoo to have a little cry. I feel so sad for these amazing women. I've experienced loss due to breast cancer in my own family, so I can't simply regard them as 'customers'. I always like to keep in touch with them afterwards to check on how they're doing and see how they're healing.

Tanya: Yes, these are people who've been through a lot. Most of my clients for nipple tattooing are obviously women post-mastectomy, but I've also had enquires from trans people following top surgery, or people whose areolas or nipples have been affected by illness, a skin condition or other types of surgery. These tattoos can often signify the end of a long and difficult journey.

Kerry: One client of mine actually started crying while I was tattooing her. But they were tears of joy because suddenly she could feel her nipple again!



Is nipple tattooing painful for the client?

Kerry: Most of my clients report little or no sensation while being tattooed, and certainly no pain, but it's not unusual for women to say they can feel the nipple more when they come back for a second pass. It's almost as though the tattooing creates sensitivity where previously there wasn't any.

Tanya: None of my post-mastectomy clients have ever felt any pain while I've been tattooing them. I think it's because the nerve endings have been damaged or removed during surgery. Interestingly, I did have one lady whose breast had been reconstructed using tissue from her back and when I tattooed her, that was where she could feel it – in her back.

And is nipple tattooing stressful for you, as the tattooist?

Kerry: Oh God yes! Nipple tattooing is really stressful. Even though I know I can do it, I still get that fear. I'm constantly saying to myself 'Don't fuck this up...'

Presumably a fairly high percentage of your nipple tattoo clients are new to tattooing?

Tanya: Yes, that's often the case. They haven't been tattooed before and they're frequently not what you'd call 'tattoo types'. They sometimes need a lot more reassurance. These are tattoos that you definitely don't want to rush.

Kerry



How do you get the tattooed nipple to look natural? Apart from looking at your own nipples, where do you source reference?

Kerry: If it's a single nipple tattoo, I use the client's remaining one as reference. (You need to work in a warm room because if it's cold the nipples will change their shape and colour.) It's important to have in mind that nipples are sisters not twins. Every nipple is unique. If I'm doing two nipples, I encourage the client to describe what they used to be like, and I ask questions such as did they have a lot of Montgomery glands, the little bumps in the areola. I tend to make nipples proportional to the size of the breast; you wouldn't put a small nipple on a big breast.

Tanya

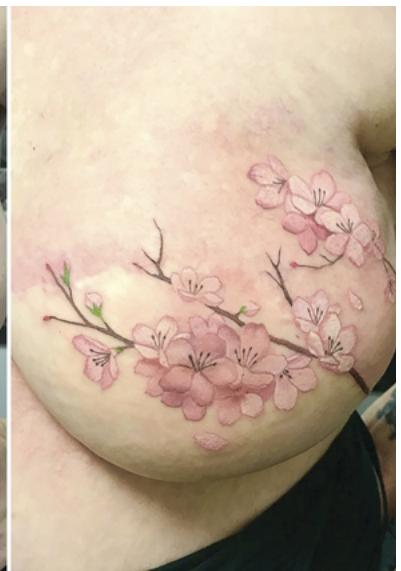


Tanya: I am currently making a look-book of nipples. I messaged all my clients and friends and asked them to send me photos that I could use (taken in natural light, so that I can match them to the Fitzpatrick scale for skin tones). It blew my mind when I started to see how different they all were! I'm trying to collect as many images as possible, to build a really useful reference library. [See box for information on how to contribute photos of your own nipples to Tanya's collection.]



If you would like your nipples to be part of Tanya's reference collection, please email your photos to us at totaltattoo@totaltattoo.co.uk and we will pass them on to her. Photos need to be taken in natural light. The image should include only the nipple itself, the areola, and a small amount of surrounding skin. Tanya would particularly welcome contributions from black and Asian women.

Tanya



Kerry

Is there an optimum time after surgery to have a nipple tattoo done?

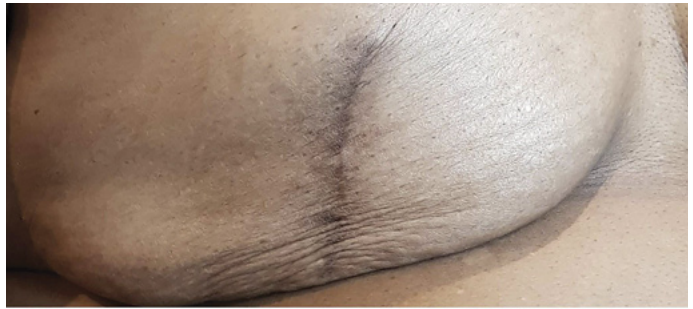
Kerry: It should definitely be at least six months after the operation – preferably more. If the nipple has been reconstructed you need to leave it even longer so as not to disrupt the healing process.

Tanya: I always recommend people to leave it for about a year. Surgical scarring can be really deep and if the skin's not ready the ink never goes in very well.

The technical challenges of nipple tattooing must be considerable.

Kerry: Yes. As with any tattoo, everybody's skin is different – but when you add scar tissue into the equation it can be a lot more challenging. If you go in too heavy, you can create even more scar tissue; too light, and the ink will be rejected. You don't know what condition the skin will be in until you actually meet the client, and you usually have to make a lot of adjustments on the day. The crucial thing to keep in mind is that although tattooed scar tissue might look fine at first – with great definition and good contrast, tone and saturation – the skin can often reject the ink as it heals. A second pass is nearly always needed. I never charge for additional passes, no matter how many are required. I just want it to be a perfect nipple for my client. I recently had a lady come back 18 months after I did her nipples asking if I could make them a little darker.

Tanya: I had a lady in last week who'd had her nipple tattooed by a medical professional with no proper tattoo training. The tattooed nipple had simply healed out and disappeared, causing her a lot of heartache.



Tanya



'IT BLEW MY MIND WHEN I STARTED TO SEE HOW DIFFERENT EVERYONE'S NIPPLES ARE' - TANYA

Kerry



Tanya

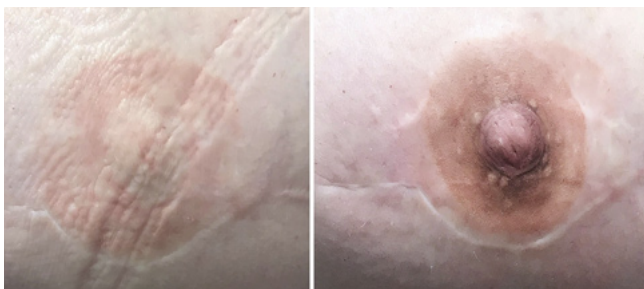


Do you often see this kind of thing?

Tanya: Oh yes. It's so infuriating, and so sad, that breast cancer survivors can be failed in this way. I'm on a few online forums for medical and cosmetic tattooing, and some of the questions that get asked... it frightens me, the things people carrying out this type of work don't know. But it's not their fault. They just haven't had the opportunity to learn.

Kerry: I've seen some terrible nipple tattoos done by specialist nurses and nurse practitioners who are obviously very caring people but clearly not tattooists. They've only been given the most basic training. It's no surprise they create nipples that look like burgers.

Tanya: Women who've already suffered so much through their cancer treatment shouldn't end up with such terrible nipples tattooed on them. But how can these poor nurses be expected to produce realistic nipples? You can't learn to tattoo in just a couple of days. One of my recent clients was actually a nurse herself and she told me she was hoping to raise the issue with the Royal College of Nursing [*the nurses' trade union and professional body*].



Kerry



Tanya

Kerry: Another problem is that hospitals and cancer groups seem very reluctant to recommend patients go to professional tattooists. I think there's still a tendency for us to be seen as a bit scummy and rebellious, even though tattooing has gone through this massive fashionable renaissance.

Tanya: And the stigma is reinforced by their insistence on calling the procedure 'micro pigmentation' and referring to 'pigments' instead of inks...

Tanya, you've got first-hand experience of some of the training that's on offer. What was your personal impression?

Tanya: They're charging a fortune and, as far as I'm concerned, they're ripping people off. When I told the trainer I didn't need a 'micro pigmentation device' (basically a cheap rotary) because I already had my own stuff, she genuinely didn't believe that tattoo equipment could be used for this work! She didn't have a clue. There was no attention to detail on the course. No nipple drawing exercises; nothing about how to really look. No discussion of light, shadows or contrast – not to mention healing, overworking the skin or pigment rejection from scar tissue. I was appalled. Nothing was explained in any depth. And we were only taught with pink pigments. All the models were white. When I got back from the course the first client who came to me was a black lady – and that's when it really hit me just how bad the training had been, because if it had been one of the nurses on the course tattooing that client, they simply wouldn't have known what to do.



Tanya

We hear you're planning to offer some courses yourself?

Tanya: Yes, I am looking into starting my own certified training programme, aimed at both tattooists and non-tattooists – for the sake of all those women out there who are currently having to suffer the indignity of being given substandard nipple tattoos. When I announced my idea, I was inundated with enquiries. 30 tattooists contacted me on the first day alone. And the enquiries didn't just come from within the UK. There was interest from America and Australia too. I really hope I might be able to get this up and running early in 2021.

Is social media censorship of your tattoo images (because they're seen as sexual) still a big problem?

Kerry: A while back, as you know, having my images taken down was a huge problem. Facebook seems to be fine with me now, but if someone else shares my pictures they get a warning! Instagram allows me to post pictures but I can't use hashtags. It's all very strange. Tattooists like me, who do this kind of work, need to be able to get our work out there, to show people what's possible.

Tanya: Yes, we need to be able to spread the message about the incredible services we can provide, in order to be able to help more people. Right now, Facebook does seem to be a bit better. Maybe that's because it's October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Facebook's guidelines do actually permit photos of mastectomy tattoos, but in my experience posts are still too frequently removed. (Earlier this year I posted some nipple drawings, in a kind of passive-aggressive way, because they kept taking my nipple photos down!) It's still the best way to get things out there though.



Tanya



Tanya



Tanya



Tanya



Finally, how can the tattoo world support the cause to get better nipple tattoos for those that need them?

Tanya: The most important thing is to keep the issue in the public eye. The more we talk about this, the better. As tattooists, we have so much to offer. If you're concerned about the censorship of nipple tattoo photos on social media, please sign my 'Celebrated not Censored' petition on change.org (chng.it/SVhBYvZy). You can read more on my blog: www.tanyabuxton.com/blog/social-media-censoring-of-breast-cancer-survivor-tattoos

Kerry: I would just like to add a small plea. These ladies have been through enough already. They deserve the best quality work. So if you're an inexperienced tattooist, or you're not skilled in realism, please don't take on nipple tattooing. Even now, after doing so many of these tattoos, I still struggle to get them perfect. And they do need to be perfect.

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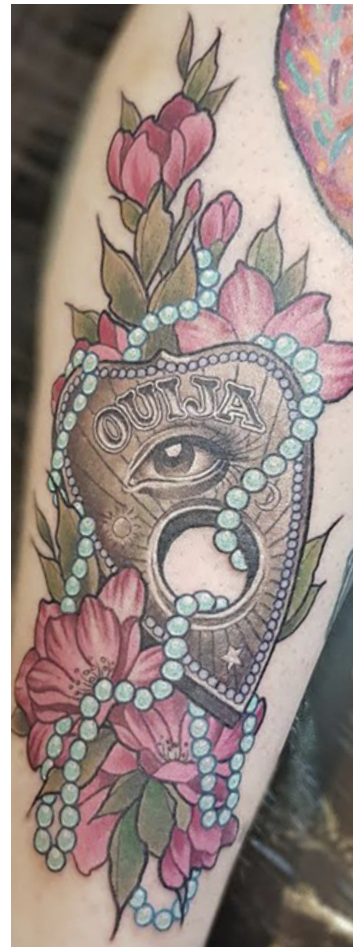
Kerry



Kerry



Tanya



Tanya



Tanya

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LORD MONTANA BLUE

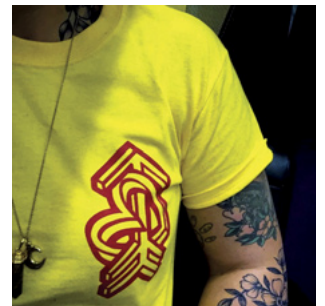


'TATTOOING DARKER SKIN IS ALL ABOUT COMPOSITION, CONTRAST AND A GENTLE TOUCH'

Lord Montana Blue always communicates with purpose and meaning – whether that's in his work, or when he's speaking out on racism and representation within our industry. British by birth and raised mainly in Ghana, he's one of the kindest, most warm-hearted individuals you could hope to meet. Lord has been tattooing for around 12 years and is currently to be found at Jolie Rouge in London. He also creates fun products with a worthwhile message for his 'Someone in London Loves You' range. We have long admired his tattoos, his art and his style, so it was great to have the chance to chat in depth and hear his views on the issues facing tattooing right now.

So Lord, where does your inspiration come from? Your work is so varied and vast...

I'm equally inspired by artists inside and outside of tattooing. It's important to study your craft, but I think it's just as important to look beyond it for inspiration. Inside of tattooing, I'm loving the work of Wes Vaughn, Mark Ford and Henry Lewis. I always like a left-field outsider view of things. I also love the work of James Jean, Wylie Beckert, Eddy Bennett, Tom Sachs, Nigo, Virgil Abloh and Alessandro Michele. They're all producing great things, and they all influence me in different ways. Social media has somewhat turned our personal worlds into an echo chamber so it's important to go hunting for inspiration outside of your sphere to keep things interesting.





Can you identify a particular 'style' that attracts you, in tattooing or anywhere else?

When it comes to style, I don't think I have a favourite anything! I'm simply drawn to people who are pushing what they do. People who are innovating in an interesting, creative way. Whether or not it's popular is entirely immaterial. Seeing something that makes you wish you'd thought of it first – that's the thing. I like seeing stuff that makes me want to work harder!

Did you enjoy the change of pace that lockdown brought?

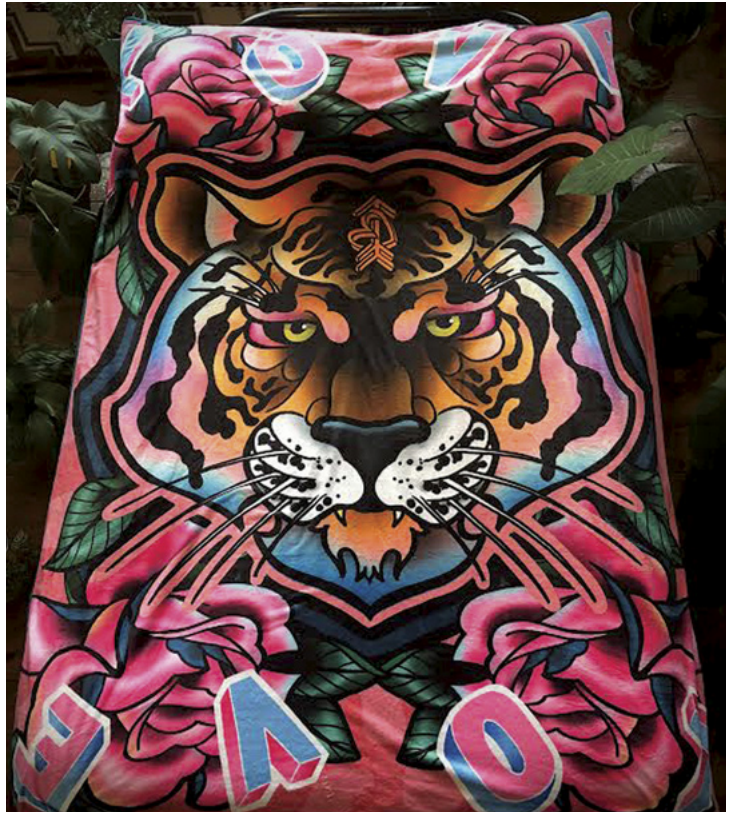
I wouldn't say "enjoy" is the word, but it was good to let go of the wheel of tattooing for a while without the guilt that so often comes with doing that. This has been a horrible period in our history, but creating things for Someone in London Loves You during lockdown meant I didn't feel so helpless all that time. I could feel like I was contributing something, albeit remotely, in what little way I could. But I'm missing the travel aspect of tattooing. I love to travel. Feeling grounded is tough. I'm definitely a bit of an indoor cat – I'm very happy in my studio putting time into whatever I'm working on – but I do like to dash out and see what the world is about. I think the biggest challenges of lockdown were mental health related.





Can you expand on that?

It's no one's natural state to be so sedentary. Having to process all the social injustices in the world, having to look at ourselves without all the external distractions that would normally shield us from the stuff we have to deal with. I feel I'm lucky to not be alone. I'm always thinking of everyone going through this solo. If you're on your own, it's gonna be a challenge. We all have to make sure to check in on our friends and loved ones. Especially now that the days are shorter. It gets harder to keep the black dog away.



The 'Someone in London Loves You' brand conveys a very positive message. Where did the name come from? What was the concept behind it?

To be honest I can't remember how the name originated. It's a phrase I find scribbled in old sketchbooks, but I couldn't tell you where it came from! I was a graphic artist before I started tattooing, and I was making things while I was apprenticing. I realised merchandise was becoming a big part of tattooing, and I made it my mission to make the best things I could – and treat my customers with respect. No one in tattooing needed another shirt with a sketch of a ship on the front of it. I wanted my products to be exciting and reach further than the boundaries of the tattoo world. Our philosophy is: Be kind, make rad shit, do no harm, and leave the world a little better than we found it. That's what we always try to do.





You certainly share the love...

All our products and projects are fun, but we also try to make things that send out a worthwhile message. And we like to do as much we can for charity through collaborations and donations. We always want to support organisations and causes close to our hearts, such as BlackMindsMatter [www.blackmindsmatteruk.com]. I'm also a member of the Shades Tattoo Initiative [[@shades_tattoo_initiative](https://www.instagram.com/shades_tattoo_initiative)] which amplifies the voices of BIPOC tattooers. Projects like this are so important, because they give a voice to everyone.

The issue of representation in tattooing is very much on the agenda now.

Tattooing has not been a welcoming place for black and brown people. But it has also not been the most welcoming place for women and members of the LGBTQI+ community. I think it all comes down to representation. If you feel represented, you don't feel alone and you know that when you speak, your voice will be heard.

Representation is one of the reasons I do so many conventions. Most of the time when you walk a tattoo convention floor, you can literally count on one hand the number of black artists and artists of colour. By being there, and being my authentic self, I can show that there is a place for you in tattooing no matter what your skin colour is. I've had people come up to me at conventions saying they've never seen a black tattooist before. They then go on to ask me a bunch of questions they felt unable, or too shy, to ask a white artist. You then see some of those same people a few conventions later covered in tattoos. All they needed was for someone to open the door.

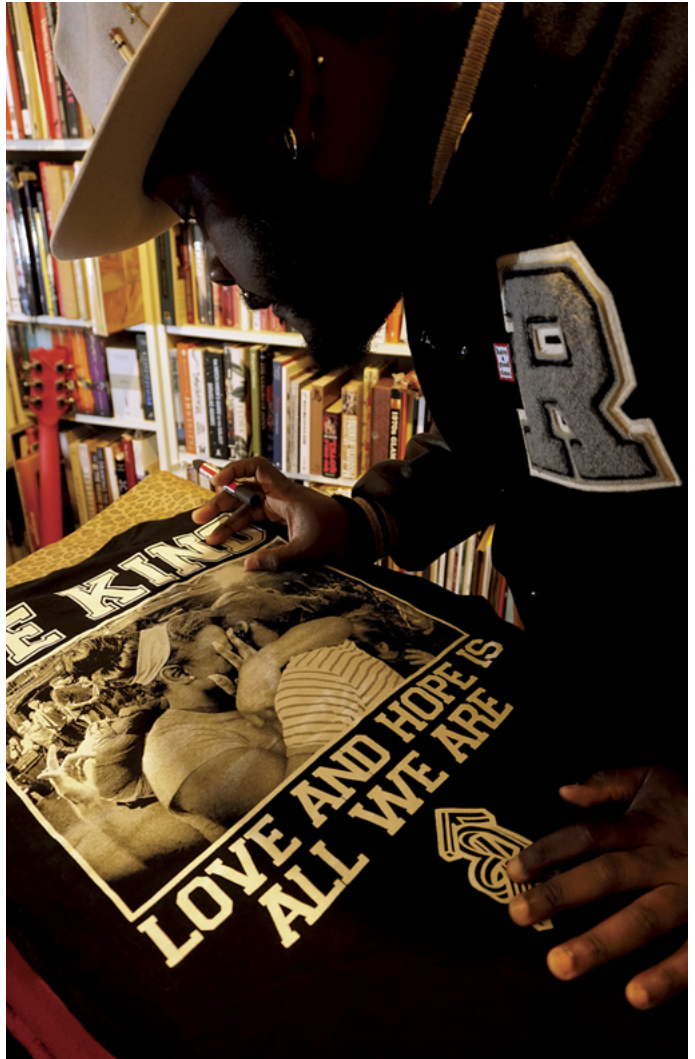




Most people don't know something is possible until they see it. Look at how many women tattoo artists we have now, compared to even just a decade ago! And look at how rich a place tattooing has become because of it. All it took was for a few women to kick open that door! I'm so excited to see what tattooing is going to look like in the next 10 years. All the diversity that people will bring, with their different points of view and their different artistic visions.

As a black tattooist, what does racism in the tattoo industry mean to you?

This isn't just a tattoo industry thing. Racism is everywhere. However, I've definitely experienced more racism in tattooing than anywhere else. When you're black or a person of colour in a mostly white-dominated industry it's hard to be visible in the context of the wider community. People only 'see' you if you fit the mould. So when you're producing work that doesn't match the stereotype – the tattoos that you're 'expected' to be doing, like lettering or black-and-grey portraits – you might as well be invisible. We have to work harder than most, and we have to make a lot of noise if we want to be heard. Whenever I'm in a tattoo industry setting, it always surprises me how little respect I get. I'm almost made to feel like I don't belong. And I know I'm not alone in feeling that. It's not until people figure out who you are or what you do... but then it often switches from people seeing you as an interloper to fetishising you for your blackness. Other industries don't seem to have this problem. I don't think this is something a black plumber or a black electrician would have to deal with.



Can you share any particular experiences?

For the most part, I've stopped sharing stories of racism. Black people and people of colour shouldn't have to provide receipts to prove racism is out there. You can see it yourself. The veil has been lifted. People can no longer say "it's not a thing" or "it's a thing of the past". If you still believe that, you're being wilfully ignorant.

Also, every re-telling of an account of racism could potentially re-traumatise any black person who reads it. I'm not into that. It feels like feeding voyeurism. We don't need pity. We need you to speak up whenever you see someone being treated unfairly. Believe me, I've been called names. Other tattooists have told me I shouldn't be tattooing. I've had to argue with people who don't believe I actually made the work in my portfolio. I've even been told the music I was playing in my booth at a tattoo convention was too black!



And how about all the misconceptions about tattooing darker skin?

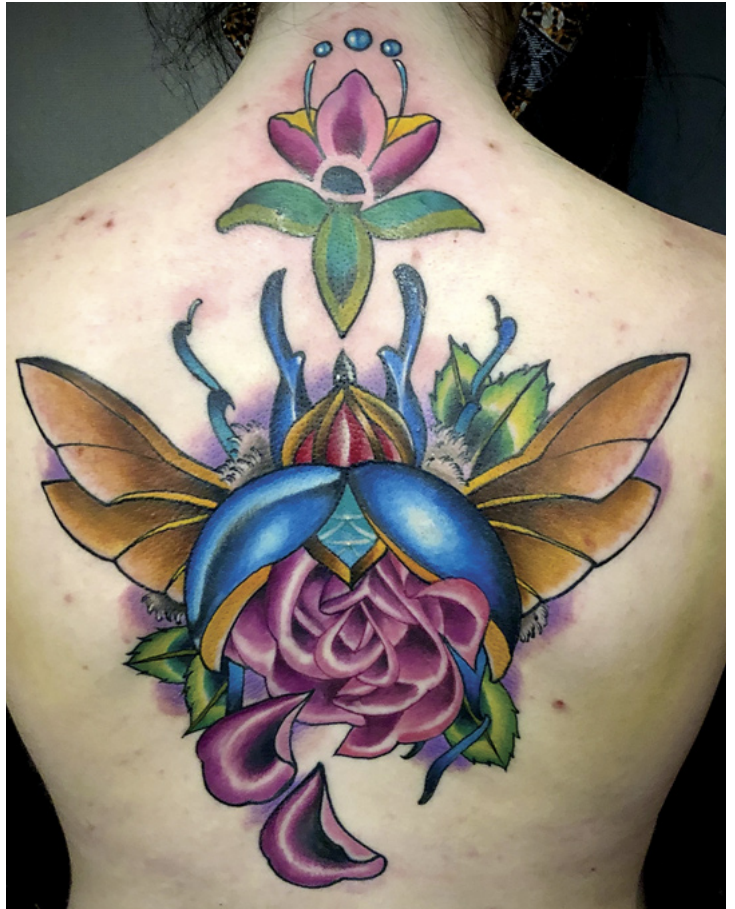
This is a big one for me. Tattooing is a service industry; without customers we are nothing. Yes, there are challenges in tattooing dark skin – but there are challenges in tattooing any skin. Everybody's skin is different. On the whole, tattooing on darker skin is all about composition, contrast and a gentle touch. Some tattooists seem to believe that dark skin somehow prevents you getting a good tattoo, which absolutely isn't the case. They need to get over themselves and simply accept that they don't have the range of skills or knowledge to work on all kinds of skin. As a profession, it's our responsibility to learn, and teach, so we can offer the best possible tattoo to anyone who walks through our door. If you're not capable of making the tattoo the customer is asking for, there's no shame in telling them you just don't have the expertise to work on them yet. Don't gaslight people into getting a tattoo they don't want just because you can't give them what they're asking for. No one should be saying that the customer's skin is the issue.





How about tattoo products that cater specifically to darker skin?

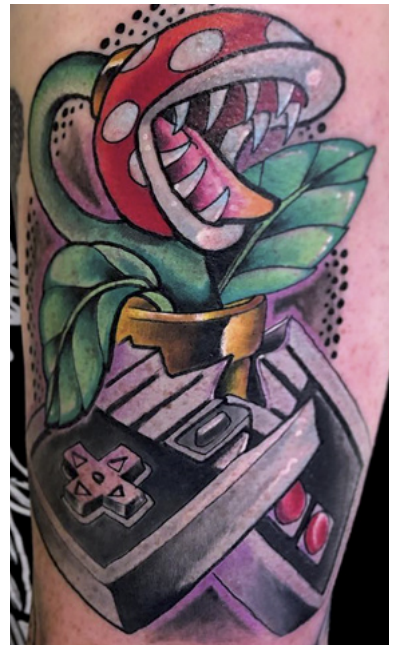
Aside from the darker practice skins that are now available, I haven't really seen any products that are geared specifically towards black people and people of colour – but improvements in tattoo products across the board have of course helped us. For me, the game changer has been all the stencil application fluids, because I used to find it hard to keep stencils on some darker skin.



What's going to make tattooing more inclusive?

Exposure, education and conversation. Making black people and people of colour visible. I love discovering black and brown tattoo artists but it feels like a treasure hunt sometimes!

We need to shine a light on the problem of racism. I've been shocked at all the people who've outed themselves as racists. Big names. People who represent our industry. Tattoo artists who are held in high esteem, convention organisers, shop owners. Black customers come into contact with these people, have horrible experiences, and then never set foot in a tattoo shop again. We need to keep the conversation going to show that these people are in the minority.





In the last couple of months we've all learnt that there's a lot wrong within tattooing. Tattooing has a long way to go to be a safe space for all. We need to address *all* the systemic problems that are lurking under the surface – not just the racism, but all the other issues such as client abuse and sexism too. I'm hopeful that the growth will happen and things will change.

Do you feel a pressure to be a voice for others?

I really don't think I'm a voice for anyone! I'm just pointing out the problems that I see. As far as pressure is concerned, I speak when I have to. But black people and people of colour are not a monolith. Everyone has their own experiences and everyone should be heard as an individual.

How do you protect your own wellbeing?

In terms of protecting myself, the big one for me is limiting trolls' access. I spend as little time as possible on social media, and I don't share my personal life online. Mostly I'm just happy working on cool shit and making stuff! And I put as much positivity into my work as I can.

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'DURING LOCKDOWN, I CAME ACROSS
SOME OLD BANKNOTES FROM MY TRAVELS...'



FLASH THE CASH

BANKNOTE ART BY LAL HARDY

We all know that the tattoo world is full of extremely creative people. With the temporary closure of tattoo studios during the coronavirus lockdown, many tattooists have been diverting their talents into making other forms of art. One such project that caught our eye is Lal Hardy's beautiful illustrated banknotes. Lal has been a pivotal figure in UK tattooing for many years and he's also a tattoo history aficionado. It's always a pleasure to visit him, so as soon as the restrictions were lifted we popped down for a chinwag...

I started by asking Lal where the idea for this project came from. "I was sorting through my collection of tattoo memorabilia and I came across a whole lot of old banknotes from my various travels," he tells me. "That's how it began. I don't know where the idea came from exactly. I just know that in the past I've seen banknotes with messages on them finding their way into circulation, so I guess that must have been in my subconscious somewhere. To be honest, I think that's how most art originates. Everything we see is recorded subconsciously."

"During lockdown, many artists had a chance to reset their minds. Being away from other people, not having so many interactions with other humans, we all had time to focus ourselves on other things. The amount of artwork that was produced was absolutely brilliant. Myself, I was trying all sorts of different stuff."

So which banknote did Lal do first? "There was a banknote from Sweden with some royalty on it; I drew a Mohican on him and a snake around his body, then I did a dragon around Edinburgh Castle on a Scottish note. I put them online and people liked them. I was just having fun. I started doing old school tattoo designs on various different notes. I began to experiment with different techniques. It became an interesting challenge, with all the different banknote sizes, textures, etc. There's some you just can't paint on. Some of them have great effects because of the way the ink reacted differently on the various surfaces."



I ask Lal to explain how he goes about it. "I use a paper called Tracedown for the initial drawing," he tells me. "I draw like I'm doing a tattoo stencil then copy it down, using a light box to position it onto the banknote. Sometimes the positioning can really add to the overall effect, with the printing on the note coming through the design. Once it's positioned right, I do a rough outline. Then I paint with a thin brush, or use fine line markers or pencils. Sometimes I use a Sumi ink from Japan that you mix up with hot water to create different dilutions for different tones. Really it's like taking skin techniques back to paper."

"The first tattooist portrait I did was of Les Skuse from Bristol. I sent it to his grandson Jimmie Skuse, who still runs his grandfather's Bristol Tattoo Club. And I did a George Burchett note. Then Terry Manton, who runs a page called Scottish Tattoo History, asked me for one of Prince Vallar. Jimmie Skuse also wanted me to do one of Joseph Hartley, but there are only three known photographs of him in existence, and they're all faded and old. Finding reference for the tattooist portraits can be a challenge. There's a site called Vintage Tattoo Photos on Instagram. That was a good source to go to, but I've had to look all over the place."





"I did one of Terry Wrigley for his son," Lal tells me, "and although the photo wasn't the best, it was very satisfying when his son said how much like him it was – especially as I'm someone who's never had any art training (some would say it shows!) and I don't normally do portraits. Doing these banknotes has given me a new respect for all the amazing portrait artists out there; if I go wrong I can just throw the note away and start again, but you can't do that with a tattoo."

"One thing I learnt is that less is more," Lal continues. "Knowing when to stop is good. With a portrait, often the tiniest smudge is all that is needed. On the Dorothy Heywood one, for instance, I was really pleased with it but I felt I'd overworked it, so I got some really fine sandpaper and very gently managed to rub some of the ink off, which created an effect in itself." "I did some banknotes of people outside of tattooing – like Johnny Cash, and the Tiger King bloke – but it was the tattooist portraits that I really loved doing. And I wanted to do artists that I was interested in. I did two of Ron Ackers, and with Jessie Knight I did one banknote with her portrait on it and one with her designs. I also did Horiyoshi, George Bone and Dennis Cockell, who've all tattooed me. It was a funny feeling doing banknotes of people I know, or have known in the past."





"I was asked to do one of the Razzouks from Jerusalem for the Leu family. It was on a nice German note and I was really pleased with it. But it got lost in the bloody post! So I had to do it again. I found a really old note and spent ages trying to get it perfect, then just when it was finished my mate called me to say the original had turned up! So I sent the second one to the Razzouks themselves."

One very special thing to have come out of Lal's project is his new-found connection with old school tattooist Dot Shaw (née Dorothy Heywood). "Terry Manton researched and wrote about Prince Eugene, reputedly the UK's first black tattooist, who worked on Blackpool's Golden Mile. Dorothy Heywood was his partner. At that time,

they only tattooed using black and red ink – plus a little bit of green if you had more money. So I painted a series of banknotes for Dot just using red and black, and based on her traditional swallow designs (and since lockdown I've tattooed quite a few of those onto people). I contacted Dot to send her the banknotes and we've become friends."

"Although she stopped tattooing in 1972, since I got in touch she's started painting some flash sheets again. She's now become a member of my Facebook group, Knights of the Round Shader. It's great to see this influential female artist come back into the tattoo world after all this time. Hats off to Terry Manton for finding her, and to Dot for embracing the love and respect that she deserves."

So, what next for the banknotes? "I did get a good financial offer for the whole collection, but they've all gone, been posted out as gifts," Lal tells me. "That's what I wanted – to give them as presents to people. People are now asking me to do commissions; they usually want old school tattoo designs, which I can do quite easily."

"I'm 62 now," Lal continues, "and it just goes to show there are always interesting new projects out there waiting to be explored. During the lockdown, I found myself getting up each day feeling really excited about doing the next banknote. I did think about producing a booklet, but maybe just putting them in your magazine will be enough. When we came out of that first lockdown we all said we were going to change our lifestyles and take more time for ourselves. But the truth is, it's back to being as mental as ever."

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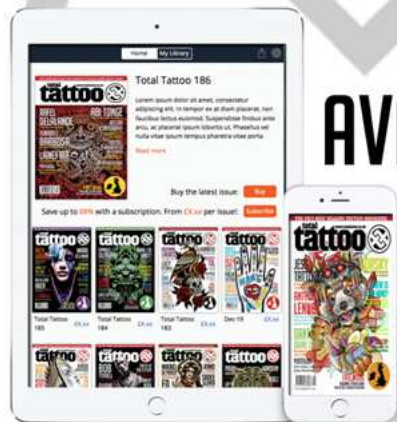
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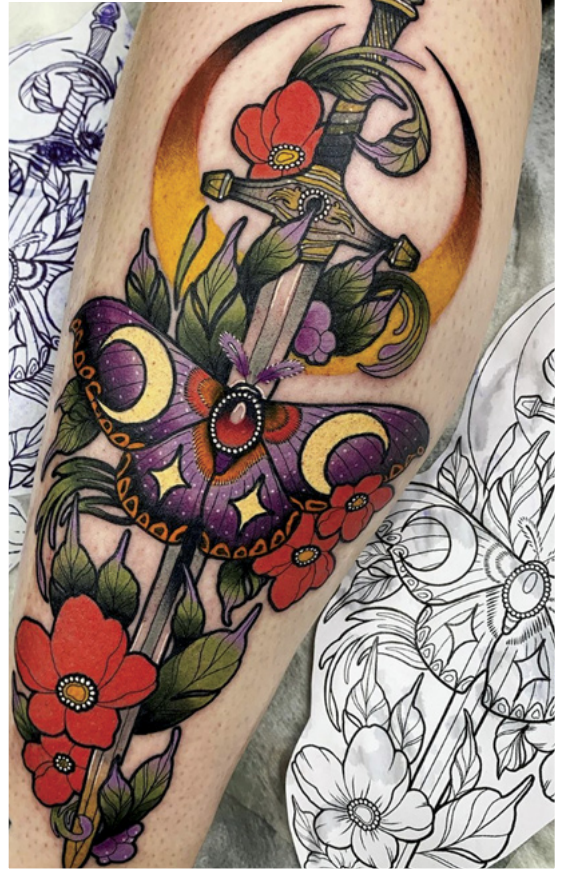
MATT GARDINER, END OF THE LINE TATTOO



TIM BALD, CUSTOM CULT TATTOO (NETHERLANDS)



ANTHONY LENNOX, PROPHECY TATTOO



SETH CANE, THE FAMILY BUSINESS

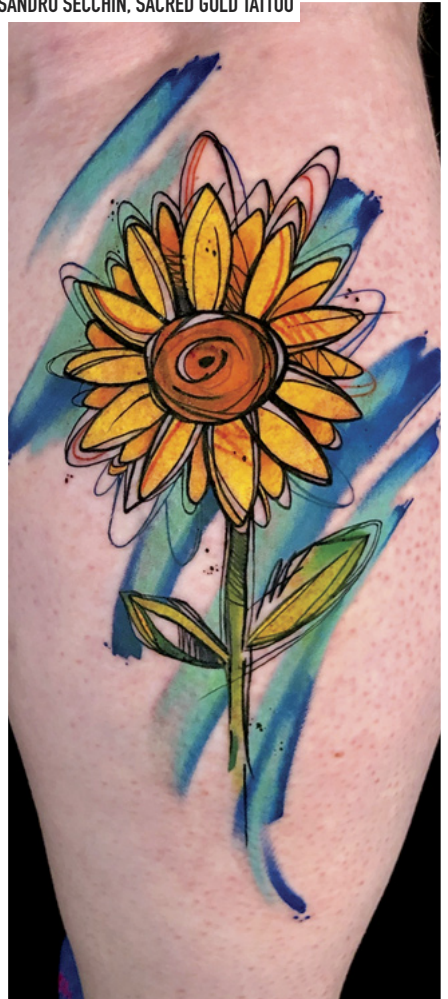




TIM CHILDS, SOUTHSEA TATTOO CO



SANDRO SECCHIN, SACRED GOLD TATTOO



ALEX WHILEY, WOLF AND ARROWS



SII BARRACLOUGH



KARA CHAMBERS, NORTHSIDE TATTOOZ



NIK NASON



GARRETT HARPER, MAYDAY TATTOO



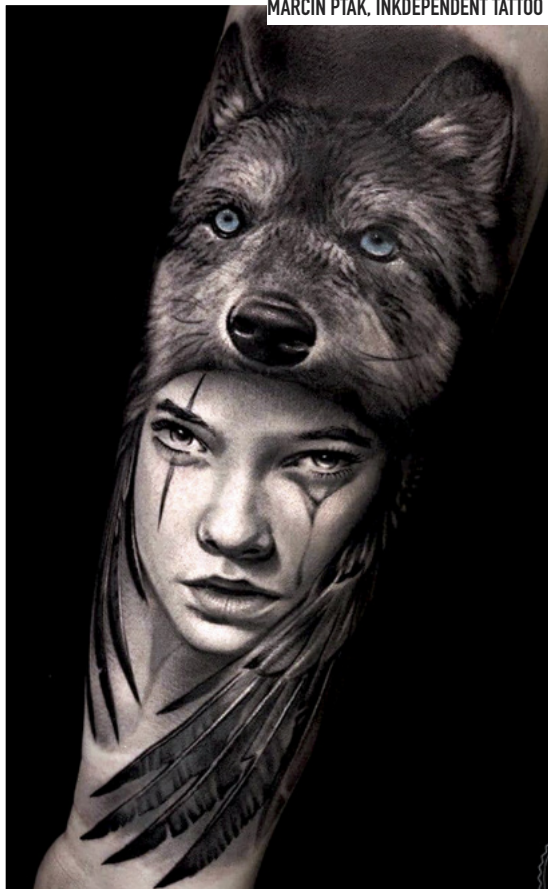
INKY JOE, FIVE KEYS



Laura Agea



Marcin Ptak, Inkdependent Tattoo



Paula Castle



Beth Rose, Calamity Tattoo

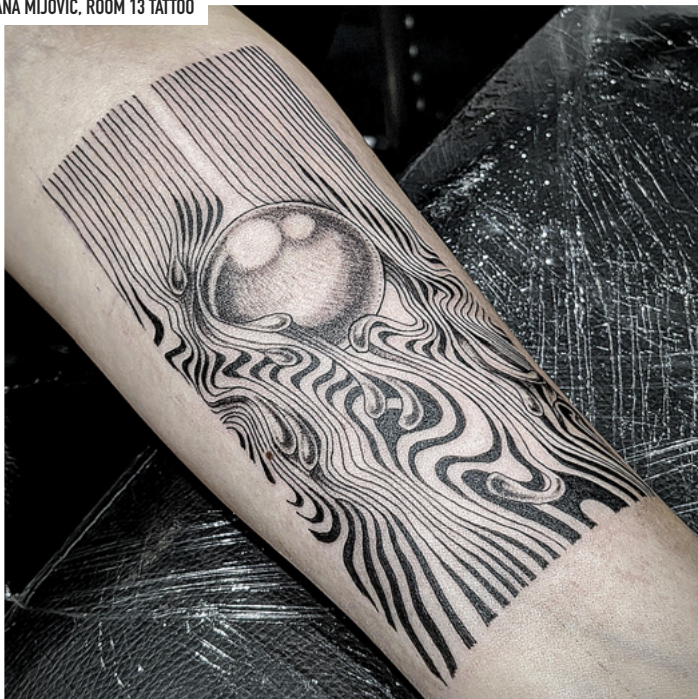


Marc Ditcher, Turquoise Blue

SCOTT BICK, WHIFFLET STREET TATTOOS



ANA MIJOVIC, ROOM 13 TATTOO



MAUD DARDEAU (FRANCE)

GEEZY, INKDEPENDENT TATTOO





JENNA COFFIN

**'Knives just feel right for me.
They suit my personality!'**

Interview by Perry • Pictures courtesy of Jenna Coffin

'BEING SURROUNDED BY TOP ARTISTS REALLY LIT A FIRE UNDER MY ARSE.'

Canadian tattooist Jenna Coffin is an exceptional new artist with a rapidly growing fan base. Her bright, colourful imagery sings from the skin. She incorporates multiple tattoo styles, often strongly framed within her signature knife motif. Jenna is based in Amsterdam where she shares a studio with her tattooist husband, Jay Freestyle.



Tell us a little about yourself.

I'm just a smart-arse trying to make my way through life. I love to laugh. My hobbies include long walks to the fridge for snacks and torturing my husband by taking ugly pictures of him sleeping with his mouth open. I may or may not make these photos into a coffee table book some day...

If you were a superhero what would your superpower be?

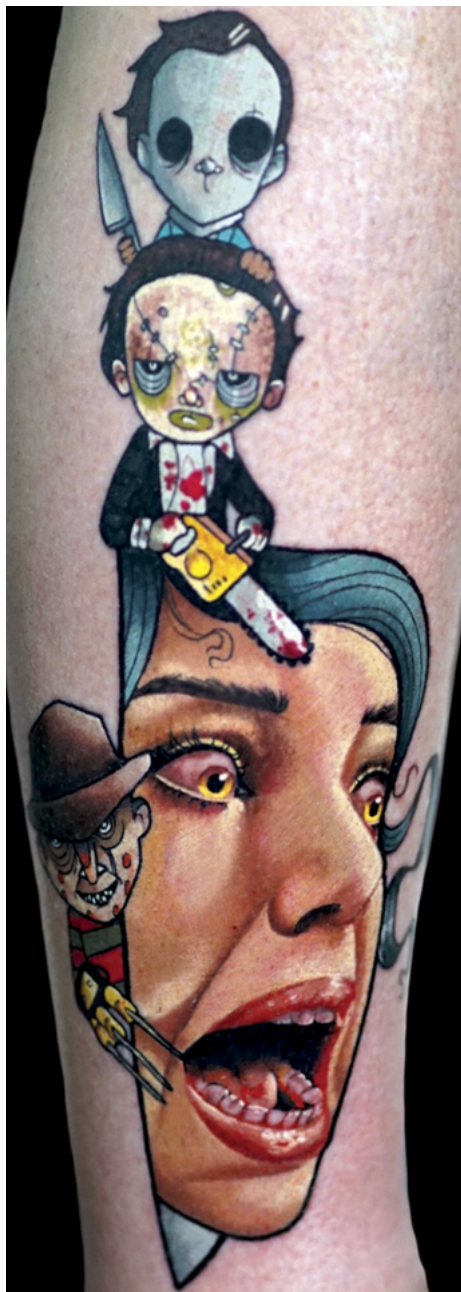
I would like to be able to morph into other people – so that I could still wreak havoc, but disguised as someone else.

If you could travel to any country in the world, which would it be?

I want to go to Japan and collect all the *kawaii* things I can, to bring home and litter about my house. But as my husband knows only too well, once I'm unleashed into the land of cuteness there'll be no stopping me. Bankruptcy will befall us and he'll have to live in a box with me and 50,000 little stuffed toy animals.

Tell us about a job you did before becoming a tattooist.

I once worked in a factory for three days. But I had the longest nails you've ever seen, so I couldn't pick anything up and I kept dropping every damn thing onto the floor. Instead of just cutting my nails I went for lunch and never came back. Priorities!



What would be your dream subject matter for a tattoo?

I've always wanted to do a piece based on Beetlejuice. I have so much childhood nostalgia surrounding that movie. I actually had one booked in, but then they shut the world for the pandemic so I'm going to have to wait again.

How has the coronavirus pandemic affected you?

I really like doing what I do, and I enjoy the company of others, so it was a real shock to the system to have stay home and not be able to create tattoos. But during the lockdown I spent time painting on canvas (usually I do everything on my iPad) and I enjoyed it so much I think I'll do more in the future. I guess the pandemic has affected all artists really badly. But we can all bounce back from this. You can't get rid of us that easily!

You're part of a new generation of fast-learning, wildly creative talent...

Flattery will get you everywhere! I think we're learning faster because the older generation laid such a good foundation. It's all the work they put in that allows us to excel in the way we do. Without that, none of us would be where we are now. A lot of our inspiration comes from the beautiful tattoos they made. We also have the equipment and supplies to enable us to create our art. As to the future, well I think there's a lot of cool stuff in store for everyone!







And how about the development of your own work?

I've only been tattooing for two years but I feel I've evolved a lot in that short time. I'm excited to see what the next few years will bring. I hope I'll never stop progressing and coming up with awesome new stuff.

Do you feel a pressure to perform?

And how! I live inside a pressure cooker! I feel blessed to be surrounded by some of the top artists in the world – but man did it ever light a fire under my arse. Right from the beginning, the bar was set very high. But I'm so lucky to have had all these helpful people around me guiding me in the right direction. This is a career where you never stop learning. I'm very self-critical and I always see room for improvement in everything I do.

Which part of the tattooing process do you find most satisfying?

When I grow up I want to be one of those artists who can create a design they're happy with in 20 minutes flat. It takes me so long! I get distracted by anything shiny that happens to be nearby. For me, the most satisfying part is putting the design on the skin and watching it come to life.

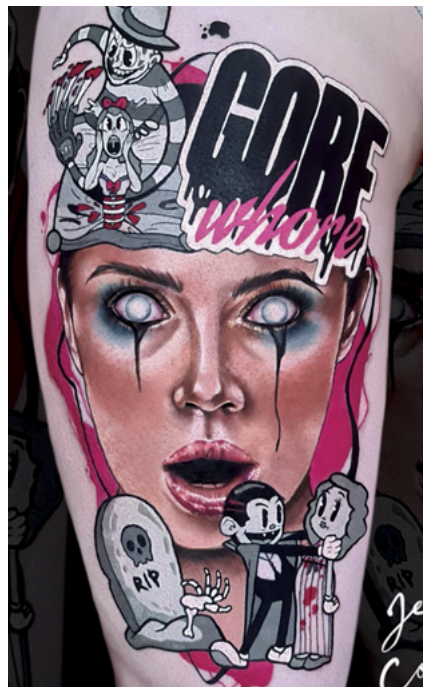


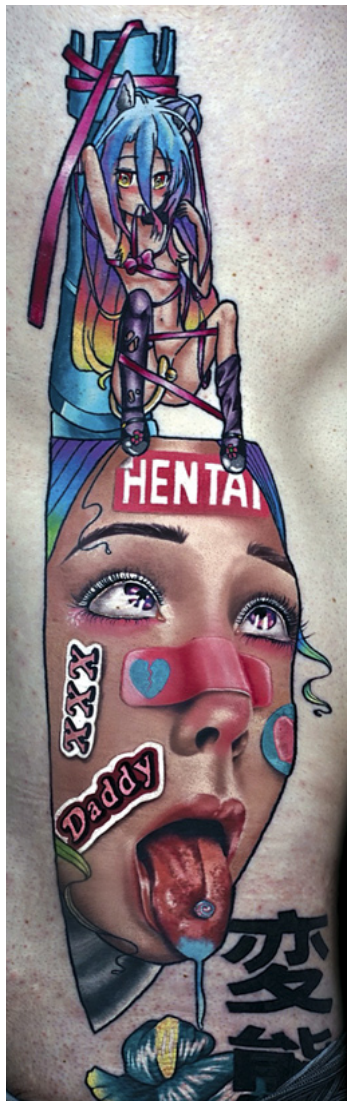
Your work includes many genres. Which of them has been the hardest to master? And do you have a favourite?

The faces in my work have been the biggest challenge to learn and I still have a long way to go before I reach where I would like to be. But the faces are also my favourite elements to create, for that exact same reason. They challenge me every time. And of course I also really like doing cute cartoon characters because they make me smile!

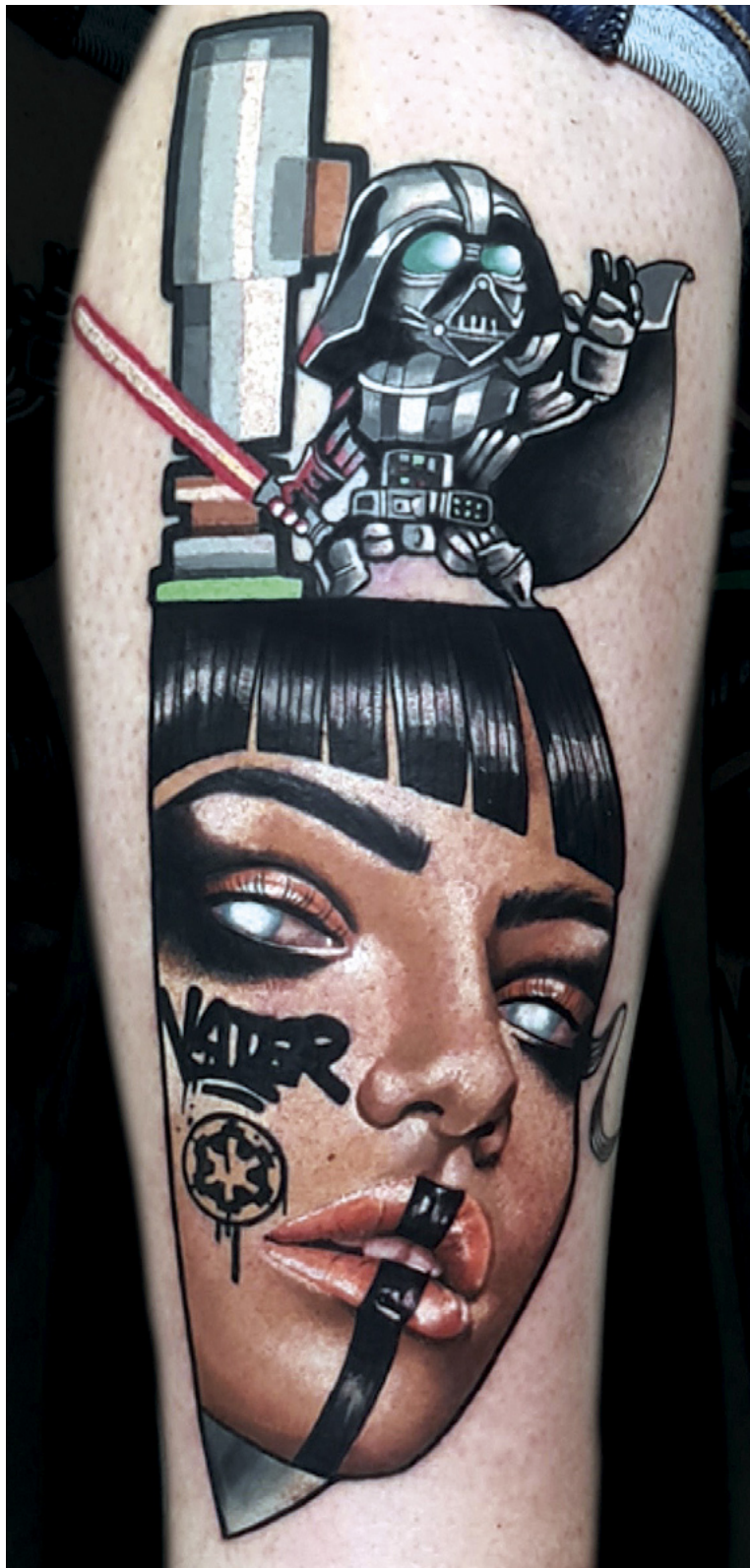
Tell us about your signature knife motif.

I honestly don't know how it came about. It was an idea I had one day and it just stuck. I'd been searching for my own thing for a while, and the knives just felt right. They suit my personality. I guess they've become a kind of brand for me. Something that's instantly recognisable. And of course when you do the same thing all the time you can concentrate on making it really rad. Plus I frigging LOVE doing them, so it's a win-win for me.





**'NOTHING I DO IS
SERIOUS, AND
ALL MY CLIENTS
ARE JUST LIKE
ME!'**



Is it important to you that your work is recognisable?

It feels very important. With so many great artists out there, it's difficult to make yourself stand out. Right from the start I wanted to develop a signature style. I knew I liked women's faces, and cartoons and lettering, so I just had to find my own unique way of combining them all.

Does it bother you if your work gets copied?

It's only happened to me once so far – I'm still a very new artist – but the idea doesn't trouble me at all. I just hope they do it well so it doesn't end up as one of those hilarious memes.

Do you think you will always tattoo knives?

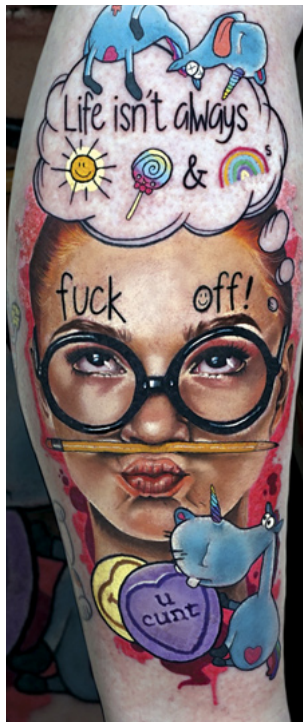
I totally will! For as long as people keep requesting them, I will be banging out radical new designs.

Does having such a strong style mean you attract a certain type of client?

Oh absolutely. I have bodacious clients. They're hilarious and quirky. And because nothing that I do is very serious in nature, I get to tattoo people who are just like me!

What's your funniest tattoo story?

I was doing a piece for a man who spoke with a very strong accent. He said he wanted a dragon tattoo on his calf. I thought I'd understood, but I obviously hadn't. When he arrived for the consult I asked him to remove his trousers so that I could take a photo, but he seemed a little hesitant because there were other clients around. I just thought he was being a bit weird, so I was like, "Come on, let's get those trousers off." Turns out he hadn't said 'calf'. He'd said 'cock'. When he whipped out his penis, and I realised my mistake, I was just too embarrassed to tell him. I just had to try to be professional and take the photo while everyone laughed at me.



Amsterdam is known as a party town. For you as a tattooist, is this a good thing or a bad thing?

The downside is the clients who show up hungover for their appointment (you know who you are!) but the upside is that people will always want to come to Amsterdam for a vacation, and they can pick up a rad piece of art while they're here. Most of my clients are from America, Canada and Germany. Here in the studio, we also have lots of clients from the UK. I don't have many clients from the Netherlands. Larger collectors' pieces aren't so popular with people here. Another downside of Amsterdam is all the terrible street shops that employ anybody who can hold a tattoo machine and charge practically nothing – although I think in general, quality tattoo shops in the Netherlands charge higher rates than in the UK.

Let's talk some more about your work. It's really come together over the last year.

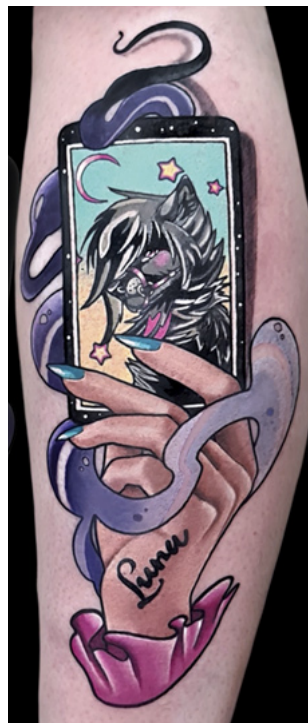
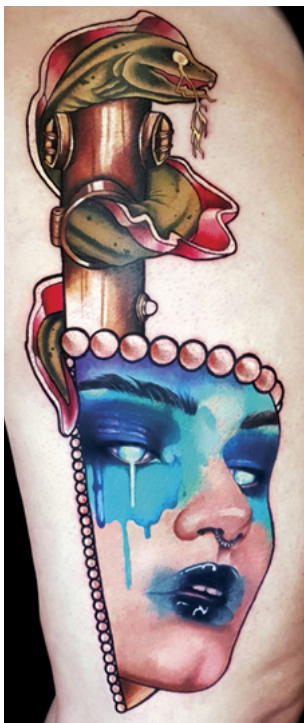
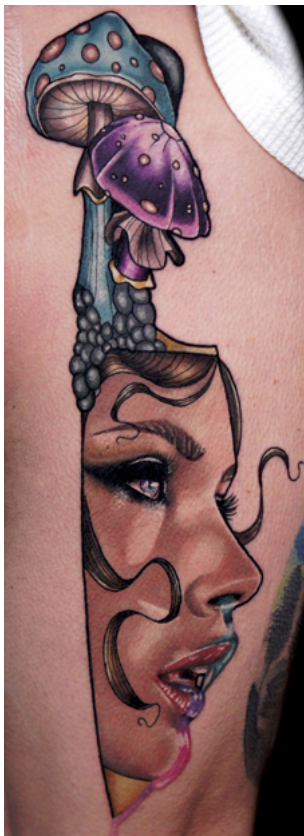
I've been working really hard to improve my technical skills. My husband is always pushing me to try new stuff. He's the real force behind my development and the reason I don't just stay in my comfort zone and stagnate. He pisses me off sometimes but he's always right. About tattooing that is. He's never right about anything else.

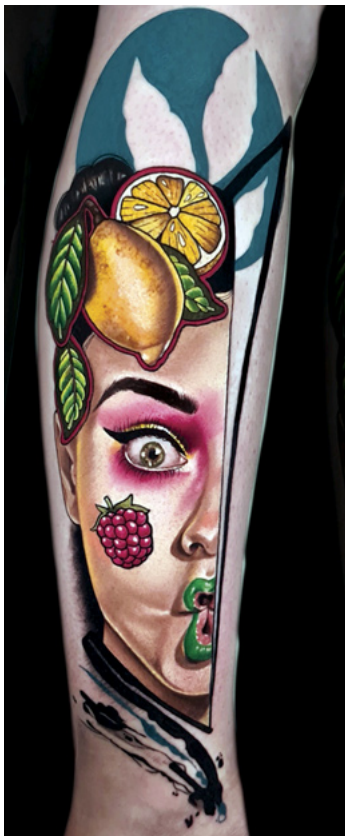
Can you recall a particular piece of advice from Jay that made a big difference to your work?

Recently, what's helped me the most is him breathing over me like a dragon and telling me to SLOW DOWN. I was always just so worried about finishing on time. But you can't rush yourself. If you do, you don't put your all into it.

What else do you think has helped you?

I think I had the largest improvement after attending a seminar by Dave Paulo and Sasha O'Kharin. Obviously Jay teaches me most of the technical aspects, but we both learned a lot during that seminar and when he learns





something he also teaches me. Anyone out there who is looking to grow and expand your technical skills, I would recommend you take these seminars and absorb as much as you can – because it can be just the smallest thing that you pick up that can make the biggest difference in your work.

If you could get a tattoo from any artist, what would it be?

I would get a free-rein piece from Sam Barber. But I'm super wimpy and a terrible client. I'm literally the worst kind of client an artist can have. I will pretend I'm dying if I have to, so that I can take a break and see if the toilet window is large enough to escape through.

And if you could tattoo anyone (living or dead), who would it be and what would you tattoo on them?

I would tattoo my husband on his knee – for the time he told me the knee didn't hurt and tattooed mine and then posted a video of me screaming. I don't even care what gets tattooed there. I just want revenge!

How long have you and Jay Freestyle been together?

We've been together for six years. At the beginning, he was in Europe and I was in Canada so I wasn't expecting much from the relationship. The first time we went out, he was so awkward and silent I thought he was a serial killer. But I was happy to risk being an unsolved murder case and I went out with him again.

Does working alongside your husband put extra pressure on the relationship?

Sometimes he does things that annoy me, like breathe. But I think we work well together.

Who would play you in 'Tattoo: The Musical'?

I'm trying to think of someone who's as weird as I am. Maybe Melissa McCarthy or Jack Black. I feel like both of them could nail it. Just put Jack in a poorly made wig and some busted eyelashes and he would look exactly like me the morning after the convention afterparty.

Final question: What's the best secret you've managed to keep?

One of my friends had this guy she really liked. He came over, and we were all sitting together in this small room... and she farted and it filled the room up. I didn't want her to be embarrassed, so I said it was me and took the blame. My friend ended up marrying the guy. He still torments me by sending me fart memes and calling me Toots. I have to take that secret to my grave. Unless he reads this of course, in which case I'm in big trouble!

Jenna Coffin

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JEAN LE ROUX

'THE SIMPLEST THINGS
ARE OFTEN THE HARDEST!'



Nestled in the heart of London's Kings Cross district is where you'll find Good Fortune Studio, home of South African born Jean Le Roux and his wife Lianne. Jean's tattoo career spluttered into life with an apprenticeship in Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk. But it wasn't until a couple of years later that things really got going for him, with his second apprenticeship, at prestigious London studio Black Garden.

"Coming to England was quite a culture shock," Jean recalls, "because I spoke mainly Afrikaans back then. I knew some English, but I really struggled with the accent! I was 15. It was 2001, and we'd moved to Ormsby, near Norwich. My father is a dentist and there's a large South African community there."

"I went to university to study graphic design," Jean continues, "but I lost interest towards the end. I just wanted to draw. After I finished uni, I started a tattoo apprenticeship at a local studio and I was there for maybe four or five months, but it didn't really work out for me. Then I spent a couple of years doing freelance graphics and illustration. Things were ticking along OK. I went and worked with my sister in America for a while. Then when I came back to England, I saw a post on Tumblr (which was a huge platform at that time) advertising an apprenticeship at Black Garden Tattoo in Covent Garden. So I sent them some samples of my work. I was invited to a face-to-face interview with Cesar and Tutti, which felt really intense, and they offered me the position right there and then!"





**'WHILE I'M TATTOOING,
I DON'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE.
IT'S ALMOST LIKE MEDITATING.'**

Even though he'd tattooed before, the boys at Black Garden took Jean right back to first principles and gave him a thorough grounding in everything he needed to know – in other words, a good old-fashioned apprenticeship. "It wasn't a paid position," Jean tells me. "I'd saved some money from my two years freelancing, plus I was selling t-shirts and prints, and the guys also helped me out with food and travel costs every now and then. At the start I was doing three days a week, and slowly it grew to an almost full-time thing. I loved it. Every day I would aim to be the first one in and the last one out, and I was always sitting there drawing or doing whatever needed to be done. I spent the whole time looking, learning, asking questions, and trying to get from where I was to where they were. I knew I was only going to get out of it what I put in."





"I was really lucky to get in with Black Garden," Jean continues. "I got a tattoo education that was both broad and deep. It was tough, but it was worth it. Especially after about a year and half, when I was finally allowed to pick up the machines and start tattooing."

Drawing comes naturally to Jean. "I've always drawn, and I've always loved the imagery that gets used in tattooing – skulls, snakes and so on. And now I can draw that imagery every day! It was mostly the art that drew me to tattooing. I just love the way tattoo images sit in the skin. Back home when I was growing up you didn't see many tattooed people about, just occasional gang members and people you didn't really want to get to know. Those guys looked so cool, with their fantastic cars and stuff, but I was never tempted to join any kind of gang and hold up a shop! Their tattoos were awesome though. Back then, I never dreamed I would one day become a tattooist..."

Jean felt particularly inspired to be working alongside Australian Crispy Lennox at Black Garden. "I loved what he was doing. His work influenced me a lot. Especially watching him draw. Emily Rose Murray is another artist I've always looked up to, and Justin Hartman too. Basically anyone who tattoos female images in a neo-traditional style can inspire me, because that's pretty much the tattooing that I do."



"I would love to be a tattooist who does everything (except portraits stressful!) and I'd love to do and-grey. I think my brain grey tones. It's sometimes what colour will look like, quite a pressure to get it to suit the client. Occasionally someone will ask for a particular colour scheme. If I think it's going to work then that's great, but if I don't, then I will always share my opinion with the client. Hopefully they trust me! At the end of the day it's their tattoo, but I try to give them the best possible result."

Jean admits he would be happy tattooing snakes, skulls and girls for the rest of his life. "I would also love to move into doing dragons," he tells me. "I haven't got a clue about scales, and matching up the belly and spine, so I need to do a bit of studying first. But hopefully I can draw some up and expand my subject matter."

Jean's work is instantly recognisable. "Most people know what I do and come to me for my style of work. But I also enjoy doing things outside what I'm known for. During my graphics degree I had a real passion for typography, and when I first started tattooing I loved doing script. Scripts are amazing. They really sharpen your work. If you make a mistake with typography, you can't hide it. The simplest things are the hardest!"



"I am now getting some larger pieces to do, and that's both exciting and challenging for me because it's a completely different concept. It's another reason it was so good being at Black Garden. They did a lot of large scale work and I learnt so many tips - like when designing for the small of the back, you need to stretch out the design to compensate for the way it can distort. Those guys were also very good at convincing people to go larger. Especially Tutti. If someone came in for a sleeve, they would often leave with a bodysuit!" Jean laughs. "That's a skill in itself."

I ask Jean about his design process. "On the whole I still prefer to draw with pen and paper, but the iPad does make the design process so much faster. And I look at a lot more reference now. I always used to draw from memory, but the iPad gives me instant access to so much great imagery. It's really improved my working day! But I still believe the ability to draw naturally is essential if you want to be a good tattooist. If you've drawn the design a few times, you have a better understanding of how it feels to create those lines when you put them into the skin. When I'm tattooing, I like to work with the image firmly in my head, without having to check back to the reference all the time. I just get on with it. And I'm happy to draw pretty much anything direct to the skin - except faces. You only need something like a pupil to be the tiniest bit off and it won't look right at all..."



"Often I just do a line drawing to give the client an idea of the design," Jean continues. "Most people seem to trust me and are happy with a rough sketch. But if there's time, I sometimes do a full rendition of the piece. I also find it's really good to post pictures and videos of my designs as people seem to like them as much as the tattoos!"

"When I work I'm quite quiet," Jean tells me. "I completely zone into what I'm doing. For me, it's almost like meditating. While I'm tattooing, I don't think of anything other than the tattoo." That's not to say it's without its pressures though, as Jean readily admits. "Every tattoo has an initial moment of stress. What's this person's skin going to be like? Will it blow out with a fine line? Will the skin take the ink easily, or will I have to turn up the machine and work it in harder? There's always that uncertainty and adjustment as you find your way."





We move on to talking about equipment. "I can't wait to try one of the new cordless machines," Jean tells me. "Everyone who's been using them says they're amazing. For me the cartridge system has been great. I used to set up four or five machines – some coils, some rotary – but now I just use two. One for lining, and one for shading and colour. It took a while to find the best system for me. I'm using Black Claw, Kwadron and Magic Moon, and I still use Black N Gold legacy."

Jean tells me he's recently moved over to a Bishop rotary. "I love it. But I still have my Dan Kubin, which I use for large scale work. I find it carries a little more punch and I can pull a thicker line. It runs faster and it's slightly heavier, so it sits steady. The Wand is great, but if I'm doing a super long line the Kubin can be turned right up and then grip it and rip it! It's good for backpieces. I found that after a long day using coils if I touched anything it felt like it was still vibrating – so I think if I'd carried on with them I would have had problems."



Jean has only been tattooing for seven years, but he is already a well-established artist. "I get invited to do various guest spots and conventions," he tells me, "but I'm also very comfortable here in my own space."

Completing their joint studio took quite a bit of work for Jean and Lianne. "We love this place. I do sometimes miss hanging out in a bigger shop, but we have lots of tattoo friends and colleagues popping in."

By his own admission, Jean is terrible at organising his time. "Last week I had three starter sleeves, so I was up drawing until 3am, coming in to do a long day, then drawing until 3am... again and again. I've always had a tendency to take too much on, to the point of burn-out. Fortunately Lianne has slowed me down a bit. She makes me take proper breaks when I need to. I'm still far from organised, but now I take bookings only three or four months ahead. That way, if I need to take a few days off once in a while I know I can. But I guess too much work is a great problem to have."





And how about returning to his beloved South Africa? It doesn't sound like Jean has any plans to move back there any time soon. "I've been in the UK for 19 years now. I'm too used to things here. And I've still got so much to see! I love going back to South Africa to visit of course. I love seeing my family and I would be very happy to do the convention again – but obviously it all depends on the pandemic. We will have to wait and see what next year brings."



I ask Jean how the lockdown was for him. "For me, it was a bittersweet experience. The first few weeks were amazing. I have never had that much time off, and it was nice to draw, paint, do t-shirts, etc – and Lianne and I loved spending time together too – but after a while I was itching to get back to work. I'm super grateful that all through the lockdown people were getting in touch and booking in. That was awesome. In fact post-lockdown all the tattooists I've spoken to have never been so busy. I guess people can't spend money on holidays or anything like that, so they're all wanting to get tattooed. The biggest problem for me now is the logistics of moving appointments. Some of the appointments I'd previously rescheduled are now having to be moved again because of the second lockdown!"



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Matthew Meyer is an American-born artist who fell so deeply in love with Japan he decided to move there. He has a fascination with Yokai – the beings and spirits of Japanese folklore, a universe of terrifying demons and dangerous beasts, enigmatic presences, and a few benevolent characters too, some of whom have enormous popular appeal not just in Japan but all over the world. Each Yokai has its own story and significance, and Matthew has explored these in depth through his books, website and ongoing blog project, A-Yokai-A-Day.

MATTHEW MEYER

Tell us how you first discovered Yokai.

Long before I came to Japan, I was familiar with Japanese spirits and monsters from books and movies. I'd read just about everything written by Lafcadio Hearn, the late nineteenth century collector of Japanese folk tales, and I loved *Kwaidan* [the 1965 Japanese horror film, loosely translated as 'Ghost Stories', and based on a quartet of Hearn's tales]. But it was only when I came to live in Japan that I came across the term 'Yokai' and really began to understand just how rich and varied the world of Japanese folklore is. Back then, the word 'Yokai' wasn't commonly known outside of Japan, and you would see all sorts of horrendous English translations of the creatures' names. But now, thanks largely to the internet, their true Japanese names are much more widely used by Yokai fans everywhere.





What exactly does the word 'Yokai' mean? On your super informative website (Yokai.com) we found fire-eating bats, beautiful icicle women, a stingray the size of an island, the guardians of the gates of hell, and that crazy little one-eyed paper umbrella that likes to surprise people by licking them with its long tongue...

Yes, 'Yokai' is an extremely broad term! It's meaning is quite vague and everybody will give you a different answer. The most common definition, and the one that I like to use, is that Yokai are all the strange and supernatural creatures and phenomena that inhabit Japanese folklore – the ghosts, gods, monsters, and everything from transformed humans and animals to mysterious fireballs and even sounds. In other words pretty much anything that is unexplained and unexplainable. Loosely translated, in Japanese, the word 'Yokai' is made up of characters that combine together to mean 'bewitching', 'attractive', 'wonder', 'calamity' and 'mystery'.

Were you instantly drawn into the world of Yokai?

Yes, for several reasons. It tied in to my existing love of folk tales, ghost stories and that sort of thing. But more than that, Japanese folklore has a strong connection to Japanese art and the traditions of Japanese illustration. They're inseparable. So with Yokai, my passion for folklore and my favourite artistic styles perfectly intersect.



Tell us about your artistic background.

I grew up in New Jersey on the East Coast of the US, so I was pretty close to cities like New York, Philadelphia and Washington. I had a lot of exposure to museums and culture as a kid, which helped me develop a strong and varied interest in art. Growing up, I was fascinated by book illustrations – particularly the ones in fantasy novels, and collections of folklore and fairy tales. At college I studied illustration, which of course is just the technical term for the art of telling stories through images.

How did your interest in Japanese art come about?

I first encountered Japanese woodblock prints while I was at college. Their aesthetic style really made an impact on me; the strong linework, the flat colours and the subtle textures had a huge influence on my own art. Then I visited Japan as part of the college's homestay programme, which gave me even more opportunity to explore Japanese art and deepened my passion for everything Japanese. I decided that I definitely wanted to return to Japan after finishing college. Two years after I graduated, I moved here.



What's the most challenging thing about being a foreigner living in Japan?

The language barrier is the major challenge. You're not going to hear a whole lot of English spoken around here like you do in other countries. It's the small things – the daily activities you don't think twice about in your home town – that can suddenly become problematic in a foreign language. For the most part though, Japan is a very easy place in which to live.

Tell us about 'A-Yokai-A-Day'.

The project started way back in 2009. It was Halloween, and I wanted to create something on my blog to celebrate. I decided to paint – and briefly describe – one Yokai each day for the whole month of October. I knew Yokai would make good subject matter, but the project turned out to be a much bigger success than I thought it would be.

Where did it go from there?

I quickly learned that there were a lot of people like me – who loved folk tales and legends, but had never been exposed to much Japanese folklore. The demand was definitely out there. So I did A-Yokai-A-Day again the following October. Pretty soon people were asking me to produce something in book format. Since then, I've essentially been working on Yokai full time. One book turned into three, and I'm working on a fourth book now. The books have also been translated into Spanish, French and Italian. (They're available through all the usual online retailers, but please support your local bookseller if you can!) I also use the Patreon platform, where I talk to backers about my artistic process and give them extra information about each Yokai that doesn't make the 'final cut' in my books. And of course I still do A-Yokai-A-Day every October, only now lots of other people are doing it too, sharing their daily Yokai illustrations on social media.





Do you have a record of how many Yokai you have illustrated to date?

At the time of this interview, I've illustrated a total of 455 Yokai. I tend to produce about one illustration a week (aside from October, when of course I do more!) and that includes the whole process of research and translation as well as constructing the image itself.

What's the biggest challenge for you when doing the background research?

The hardest part is that so many of the original historical texts are very old and difficult to read. They're written in archaic Japanese calligraphy that almost nobody understands today. It's much harder than trying to read medieval Latin manuscripts. So when there's a particularly obscure Yokai that I want to look into, it can take a lot of work to decipher the original material. Fortunately, lots of older books and scrolls have now been scanned with OCR technology, providing legible transcriptions. But that's not always the case!

For your illustrations, do you use traditional media, digital art, or a mixture?

It's a mixture, but primarily digital. I'm a big fan of traditional media and I love oils, watercolours and gouache. However, working digitally saves on material costs and doesn't take up so much space in my home; and it's also faster, so it's just more practical. All my illustrations start out as pencil drawings though, because I'm better at designing a composition physically, with my hands and a piece of paper.

Tell us more about how you produce your illustrations.

Once I'm happy with the pencil design, I bring the sketch onto the computer. I separate the image into blocks and apply my colours; I do the linework. It's actually quite similar to the way a traditional woodblock print would have been made: layer by layer, building up colours on top of each other, and putting the linework on last. My digital palette consists of colours that were traditionally used in Japanese art, which also helps me to feel connected to the woodblock medium that I love so much.

Do you have any other art projects on the go?

I have lots of ideas for things I'd like to do – if only I had unlimited time! – but I find it difficult to work on multiple projects simultaneously so I keep putting them off. One project I've been working on is a series of 100 views of Philadelphia in woodblock print style. I've completed nine of them so far. I also have side projects involving dinosaurs, and chickens, which I'd like to develop further. And I especially want to create some longer, more narrative, comic-book style versions of my favourite Japanese folk tales. I'm sure I'll get to all of these one day, but it probably won't be for a little while as I'm just having so much fun doing Yokai in my current format right now!



What is it about Japanese folklore that especially appeals to you?

The initial appeal of Japanese folklore was that it was so different to what I'd grown up with in my childhood. I'd been exposed to the myths and legends of medieval Europe, the American Indians, and ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, but Japanese folklore was very fresh and surprising to me when I first encountered it, which of course instantly made it attractive. Then after the initial novelty had worn off and I began to study it in more depth, I began to appreciate some of its distinct patterns, rhythms and features, which are very different to those of Western stories.

In what ways is Japanese folklore different?

For a start, the stories are a lot less heroic. While there are of course plenty of hero tales, your average Japanese folk tale isn't about using brains or brawn to defeat an enemy or overcome an obstacle. They're just accounts of strange happenings or weird things, and they're often surprisingly short. They merely describe something, with no conclusion or explanation. Western stories are often concerned with explaining or solving a riddle, whereas Japanese stories embrace the unknown and don't always try to understand it. And, as many people will know from the recent surge in popularity of Asian horror movies, in Japanese horror, the ghosts often win.

Do the stories exist in different versions, as is often the case with European folklore?

Yes, every geographical region – every town even – has their own variation on each particular story or character. And these versions sometimes directly contradict each other. Part of enjoying Japanese folklore is accepting these contradictions and just going with it. The very nature of Yokai is that they defy human understanding. You just have to learn to enjoy a story without getting hung up on the 'facts' of it.

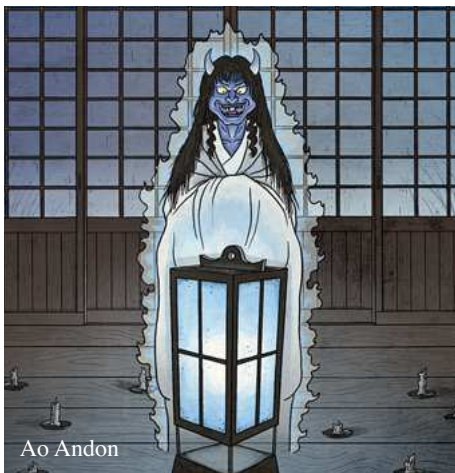


How do you handle this in your books and illustrations?

It does pose a problem when I try to define a Yokai in my books, because the very act of defining the unknowable seems futile. I try to overcome this by painting as broad a picture as possible, then explaining some of the contradictions or variations that exist. I also try to be clear that I am not the final authority on any Yokai, and while I do my best to present a detailed description that captures what each Yokai is about, I would never be able to give a complete definition. Nobody can do that; it goes against the very nature of Yokai.

I'm sure you get asked this all the time, but do you have a favourite Yokai?

Yes I do get asked that a lot, but it's a great question so I don't mind! There are a few Yokai that I love dearly, but my absolute favourite is called Ao Andon. You can find it in my first book, *The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons*. In a way, Ao Andon is the embodiment of fear itself. When people used to gather to tell ghost stories late at night, there was a legend that after the 100th story a real ghost would materialise, summoned by the collective fear of everyone participating in the event. That ghost was Ao Andon. However, nobody knows what precisely would happen if Ao Andon appeared, because they were always too scared to go beyond the 99th story! It reminds me of childhood games like chanting 'Bloody Mary' in the bathroom mirror at midnight to try to summon a ghost. It was thrilling and terrifying. So Ao Andon sort of has a nostalgic charm for me.



Ao Andon





And finally we have to mention Amabie of course, the mermaid-like Yokai that predicts pandemics and also helps humans ward off the disease.

I think there's no question that Amabie is the unofficial Yokai of 2020! Until recently, it was a relatively unknown, extremely minor Yokai with only a single known documentary source way back in history. But it rapidly achieved international fame this year.

People certainly took the story to heart, that they could stop the spread of the pandemic by spreading Amabie's likeness around the world instead. So Amabie went viral on social media, with drawings, paintings, themed food and even costumes for pets...

Yes, the Amabie Challenge linked everyone together around the globe. And I'm sure there are more than a few people who have now become big Yokai fans because of it. So despite all the horrors of 2020, thanks to Amabie it has at least been a good year for Yokai awareness!

yokai.com
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Amabie



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RAPA NUI

FADE FX EXPLORES EASTER ISLAND

Geometric dotwork artist Fade FX has a deep fascination with authentic tribal tattooing. For the past few years she's been making trips to far flung destinations to experience for herself the world's disappearing tattoo traditions. Her latest journey was her biggest adventure yet – to Rapa Nui, also known as Easter Island. Way out in the Pacific Ocean and more than a thousand miles from its nearest inhabited neighbour, Rapa Nui is certainly remote. And it's small too, about a tenth the size of London. Officially it's part of Chile, and that is where Fade FX's trip began.

I flew to Rapa Nui from Santiago, the Chilean capital, a city currently enduring a storm of political unrest. The sounds of violent protest (against decades of austerity and corruption) reverberated through the night time streets, with demonstrators marching shoulder-to-shoulder chanting slogans and setting fire to barricades, and the police firing teargas into the crowds.

A six-hour flight later, and I was in a completely different world. As the plane descended towards Rapa Nui – a tiny island in the vast blue expanse of the Pacific Ocean – I caught my first glimpse of the beautiful sailing ship that was to become my temporary home. I was joining the Rapa Nui to Tahiti leg of an all female round-the-world voyage organised by eXXpedition, a not-for-profit body dedicated to tackling the problem of plastics pollution and toxicity in our oceans. The ship was the SV TravelEdge, and I was to be a volunteer crew member. We were due to sail in a week's time, and meanwhile I'd booked into a hotel on the island to give myself a chance to explore.

I have a passion for researching tattoo culture and history, and I've always wanted to discover more about Polynesia. Joining the crew of the SV TravelEdge totally fitted with my personal ethos and vision. I live on a houseboat, I've worked with Sea Shepherd (the non-profit organisation for worldwide marine wildlife conservation) and I'm sponsored by Green House Tattoo Supplies (whose products are plant-based and plastic-free). By tattooing marine-themed artwork, selling prints and designing t-shirts for much of the previous year, I'd already managed to raise more than £8000 for eXXpedition's campaign.



'THE FIRST SETTLERS WHO CAME TO RAPA NUI WERE ON A QUEST TO FIND THE ISLAND SEEN IN A VISION BY THE ROYAL TATTOOER...'



Having left behind that storm of political protest in Santiago, a violent storm of a different kind was approaching as I arrived on Rapa Nui, bringing with it some of the most extreme weather I'd ever witnessed. As I slept in my hotel bed that night, the SV TravelEdge, anchored offshore, had a lucky escape. Two nearby boats were wrecked, tragically with a fatality. But with the wind howling through the rigging, skipper Anna stood on the bow of her vessel, cut the anchor chain with an angle grinder, and managed against all the odds to move the SV TravelEdge to safety in a sheltered bay.

Rapa Nui is the easternmost island in Polynesia. (You can visualise Polynesia as a huge triangle in the Pacific Ocean, with Hawaii at its northern tip, New Zealand to the south, and Rapa Nui at its eastern extremity.) Archaeologists believe that all Polynesian cultures can be traced back to a prehistoric people known as the Lapita who migrated across the region from southeast Asia. Tattoo instruments have been found at various Lapita sites and in a fascinating link with the ancient past, the distinctive patterns that decorate prehistoric Lapita pottery are still frequently seen in Polynesian tattoo designs today.



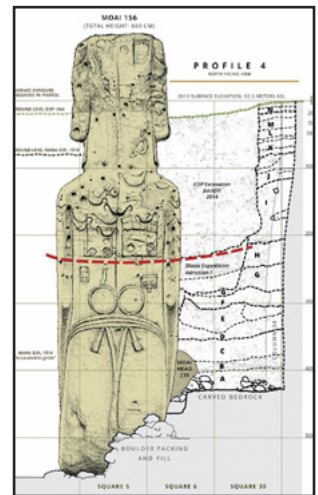
Rapa Nui is of course home to the world famous Moai, the monumental, mysterious stone statues. They're often referred to as the 'Easter Island heads' but they do in fact have bodies; some are in a kneeling position, others have become partially buried as ground level has risen around them over the years. There are nearly a thousand Moai in total, in various locations across Rapa Nui, and they were carved by the island's early inhabitants over a period of several centuries. Intriguingly, recent excavations have uncovered intricate carvings of tattoos adorning the backs of some of these statues.

One of the first ever archaeological investigations of Rapa Nui and the Moai was carried out in 1913-1915 by the pioneering adventurer and academic Katherine Routledge (1866-1935). Her extensive research, and her interviews with the island's elders, are credited with 'rescuing' and preserving knowledge of the island's ancient culture that would otherwise have disappeared. Because of that, Katherine has herself come to be regarded as an important figure in Rapa Nui's history. American archaeologist Jo Anne Van Tilburg, a specialist in rock art and one of the world's foremost experts on the Moai, has written a wonderful biography of her entitled 'Among Stone Giants'.

The first inhabitants of Rapa Nui were settlers who arrived around 600 to 800 CE (the time of the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons in the UK's history). They'd made a long and arduous sea voyage, and there is a theory that they came from the island we now know as Mangareva in French Polynesia. According to Jo Anne Van Tilburg, describing the traditional stories recorded by Katherine Routledge, "Their motivation for embarking on such a hazardous, life-threatening adventure is not known... but Rapa Nui legends say they were on a quest to find the island that had appeared in a vision to Haumaka, the royal tattooer."

The one person I really wanted to meet during my visit was Mokomae, the only bloodline tattooist of Rapa Nui descent. I was taken to his studio and introduced to him by a local historian who also gave me an informative tour of the Moai. Mokomae started tattooing 25 years ago at the age of 17. There was nobody left to teach him the craft, so he built his own tattoo machine and began using the designs he saw carved into the island's stones to recreate traditional motifs. He has gone to great lengths to revive Rapa Nui's tattoo culture.

Mokomae told me how Rapa Nui's population had been almost wiped out in the second half of the nineteenth century – due to raids and abductions by Peruvian slave traders, plus the devastating effects of Western diseases unwittingly brought to the island by whalers, traders and others. The religions of the West had a deleterious effect too, resulting in the suppression of traditional culture and customs. With the arrival of European missionaries, tattooing ceased; and with the deaths of the last remaining elders, it disappeared. Throughout this period a great deal of information about Rapa Nui's heritage was lost. This partly explains why the Moai are so shrouded in mystery, and it's also why Katherine Routledge's work is now regarded as being of such crucial importance.

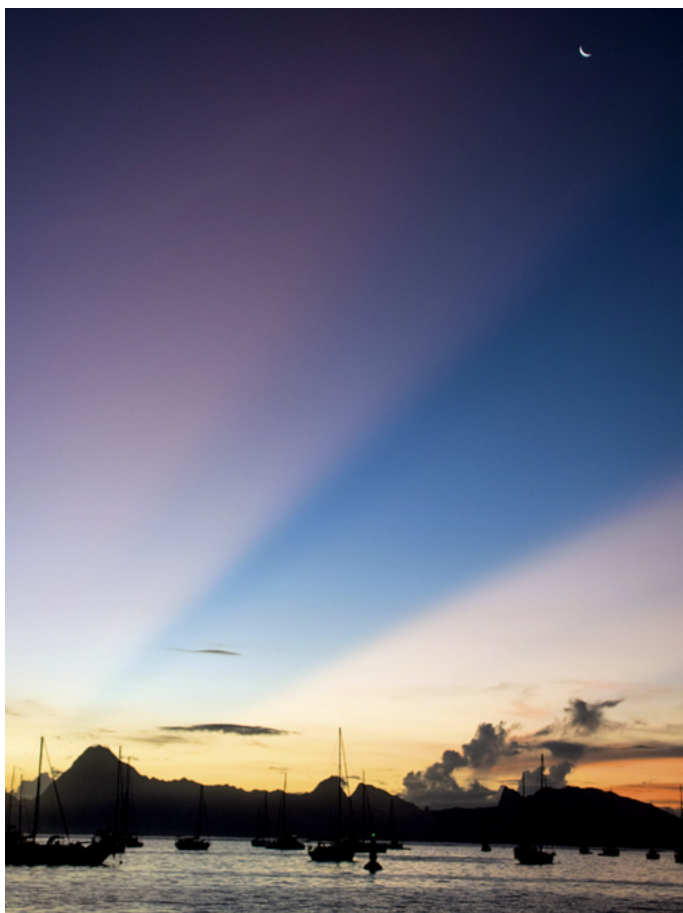




“Moai is not their original name,” Mokomae goes on to say. “They are actually called *Aringa ora o te tupuna*, which translates as ‘face of the ancient people’. Way back, when there weren’t any cameras, pens or paper to make pictures, these statues were created as representations of the island’s inhabitants, their leaders, their royals. And they carved tattoos on the statues, because the people themselves were tattooed. In Polynesia, your tattoos were your passport. They signified who you were, where you were from and your skill set – whether you were a warrior, a sculptor, a fisherman, and so on. It was all described in the symbols in your tattoos. You had your identity and you didn’t need to tell people. Your tattoos spoke for you.”

According to Rapa Nui mythology, tattooing was introduced to the human world by two spirits, *Vi’e Moko* and *Vi’e Kena* (‘Lizard Woman’ and ‘Bird Woman’). Some unique local practices developed, such as body painting with white, black, red and orange pigments to highlight the tattooed designs, but Rapa Nui’s tattoo tradition is still closely related to tattooing in other parts of Polynesia. “There are similar patterns in all Polynesian tattooing,” Mokomae explains. “Island to island you see local variations, but all they have the same elements in their designs – animals, stars, wind – just tattooed in different ways. The traditional hand-tap methods of tattooing are also fundamentally the same.”

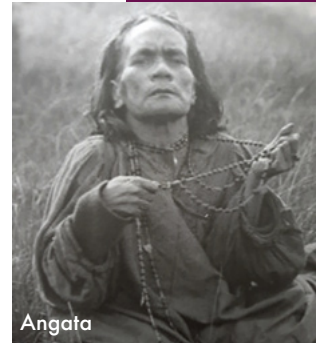
Mokomae told me he makes completely different tattoos for local people and for tourists. Designs from Rapa Nui are for people from Rapa Nui, he says. For local people, he doesn’t charge – but he only tattoos traditional designs, not imagery that fashion has brought from outside. “It’s the only way to preserve our culture and keep it alive,” he explains. He also insists on tattooing only the symbols that are appropriate to the person’s family (no matter how much money a client offers to pay him!) For him, it’s the revival and preservation of traditional culture that’s of paramount importance. His own family symbol is a lizard, so this is what he himself has as a tattoo. Other family symbols he tattoos include marine animals, horses, various plants and geometric motifs.



While staying on Rapa Nui, I bought a copy of 'Takona Tatu' by Ana Maria Arredondo. This is a fascinating book documenting Rapa Nui's tattoo culture and history. It's not widely available, so I was thrilled to find an English-language edition. I was reading this book on the boat one evening when Tavi, a fellow crew member, came over to chat. Tavi was born and raised on Rapa Nui and has a wealth of knowledge and a deep love for the island and its traditional culture. She asked what I was reading. I showed her the book and we looked at the pictures together. When we came across a photo showing a woman with a tattooed forehead, Tavi suddenly said "That's my great great grandmother, Angata!"

I'd read about Angata and her friendship with Katherine Routledge in Jo Anne Van Tilburg's book. What a coincidence to be sitting there now with her great great granddaughter! And it was moving to think that Angata would also have known the last traditionally tattooed elders on Rapa Nui, including two other women I'd read about: Veriamo (who died in 1936 at the age of about 100) and Uka a'Hei a'Arero (who is believed to have died in 1946, also aged around 100).

"I admire Angata a lot," Tavi tells me, as we watch the sun setting over a calm sea in beautiful shades of purple and red. "I feel so inspired by her strength. It was a century ago and she was living on this remote island, at a time when the population had been reduced to only about 100 people. She raised a family. Life was very tough. But she remained strong. She survived. I'm not her, but I have a part of her in my body, in my soul and in my spirit, in my heart, you know. That's the importance of knowing one's own history. Yeah, she was the best!"



Angata



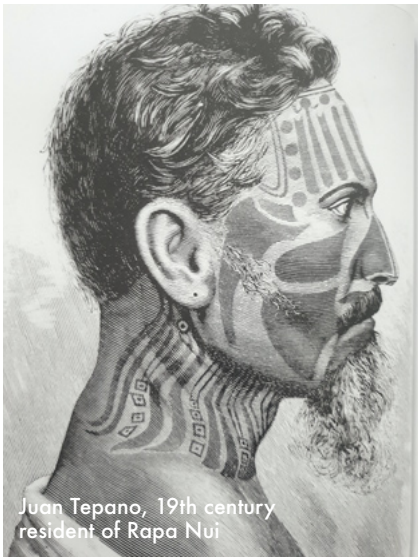
Tavi is heavily involved in marine conservation work. She has noticed the plastics pollution increasing from year to year. A keen surfer, she also runs a surf school on Rapa Nui for tourists and local children. "If the kids fall in love with surfing, they will learn more about the ocean and they will want to protect it and love it," she tells me. "I really want to do something good for the island, and for future generations." She smiles, and holds up Angata's photo to her chest. I can see where her courage, vision and drive and come from.

We talk about the worldwide interest in Rapa Nui's history and culture. "Rapa Nui is one of the most studied islands in the world – but not by its own people," says Tavi. "If you have Rapa Nui people doing the research, the sense of love, care and belonging that goes into it is so different. But I'm so grateful for early archaeologists like Katherine Routledge. She spent more than a year here, and even learnt the language. Her books are priceless to us, because they hold so much information that we can use today – to understand, to learn, to remember."



All over Rapa Nui you'll find *Komari* petroglyphs, an ancient symbol which represents the vulva. Many of these are found carved on the *Moai* themselves. "There are around 600 *Komari* symbols on the island," Tavi tells me, "and when you see this, you realise the importance of the feminine spirit. Those big statues, these delicate petroglyphs... I think they were trying to achieve a balance between the feminine and the masculine. It could be good for us to look back to the old times to remind ourselves how to do that. Humanity has achieved so many things – like voyaging to the moon or deep beneath the sea – but I believe losing that balance is what's destroying the planet."

Something very special that I've brought back with me from my trip is a *Komari* tattoo on my finger, gifted to me by tattooist Mokomae. With its connotations of female power and energy, it was the perfect way to mark my voyage with the 14-woman crew of the SV TravelEdge. And the feminist symbolism was made even more fitting because it coincided with the eve of International Women's Day and a women's rights march on Rapa Nui.



Juan Tepano, 19th century resident of Rapa Nui



Fade FX with Rapa Nui tattooist Mokomae

When the time came for us to set sail for Tahiti, the small boat that took us out the SV TravelEdge was loaded with provisions for our trip, including lots of bananas that we'd been given as parting gifts. On Rapa Nui bananas are a symbol of good fortune; for Western sailors though, it's considered bad luck to have them on board...

But it wasn't the bananas that caused our voyage to be curtailed. It was the coronavirus pandemic, forcing us to re-route to the Gambier Islands and prepare for the possibility that we might be held at anchor somewhere in the Pacific until COVID-19 had played out and passed (with inadequate supplies of food, and cyclone season on the way) unless we could get home before borders were closed and flights were grounded.

We're happy to say Fade FX made it home safely. Perhaps the Rapa Nui bananas were lucky after all.

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TK LONDON

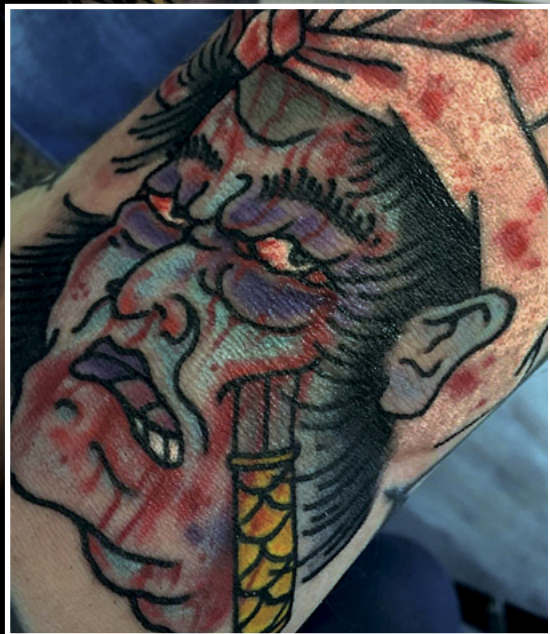
Not content with their existing shops in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Long Island (plus the recent expansion of their empire to LA) New York's Three Kings Tattoo have now extended their reach across the pond and opened a premises in London. It's an exciting move, and they got in touch to tell us more. We spoke with tattooist Amanda Rodriguez, who manages the new Deptford shop.

Is Three Kings becoming tattooing's equivalent of a corporate business? Do the individual shops operate as franchises?

We're all connected, but we're not franchises and it's definitely not a large corporation. All of us are friends, and at one point we all worked together in New York City. The business is owned by the two guys who first set it up, Alex McWatt and Matt Marcus.

How long has Three Kings been operating in New York City?

We've been in NYC for 13 years. And I'm so proud of the reputation we've built over that time. It's credit to the hard work of the whole team.



'WE'VE BUILT A REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN NEW YORK AND WE WANT TO CONTINUE THAT TRADITION HERE IN LONDON'



How did the expansion come about?

When Kal Morrison moved to LA, she approached Matt and Alex to discuss the possibility of opening a branch there. I did the same – quite separately – when I decided I wanted to move to London. These discussions all took place around the same time. Matty and Alex were really into the idea of expanding our tattoo family around the world, and for all of us to grow together organically.

How would you summarise the Three Kings philosophy?

Three Kings is all about bringing high-quality tattoos and a great tattoo experience to everyone in an inclusive and welcoming environment. I think that about sums it up!

I guess opening a shop in London must feel like a big deal.

Yeah it does! Bringing Three Kings to London is a real big deal. We hope it will consolidate and extend the great reputation that we've already built up in the States.

Who is working at the London shop?

I'm tattooing, and I'm also the person

who runs the shop. Alex and Matt, who own all the Three Kings locations in the US, are also working on this project remotely and will occasionally be in the studio when normal travel resumes after the coronavirus restrictions. We have two other artists, Joe Macigno and Colin Clark, along with our receptionist Sophie. We'd got our small crew together just before lockdown, and we waited it out together through all the ups and downs until we were finally able to open. We all get along so well it feels like we've worked together for years!

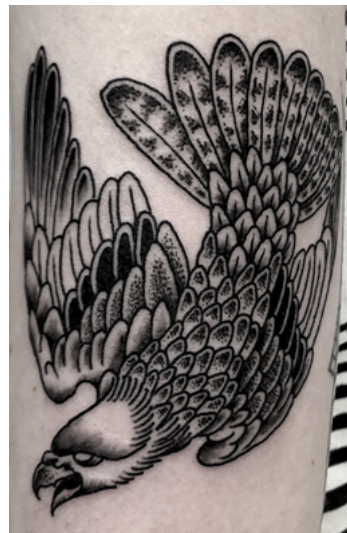
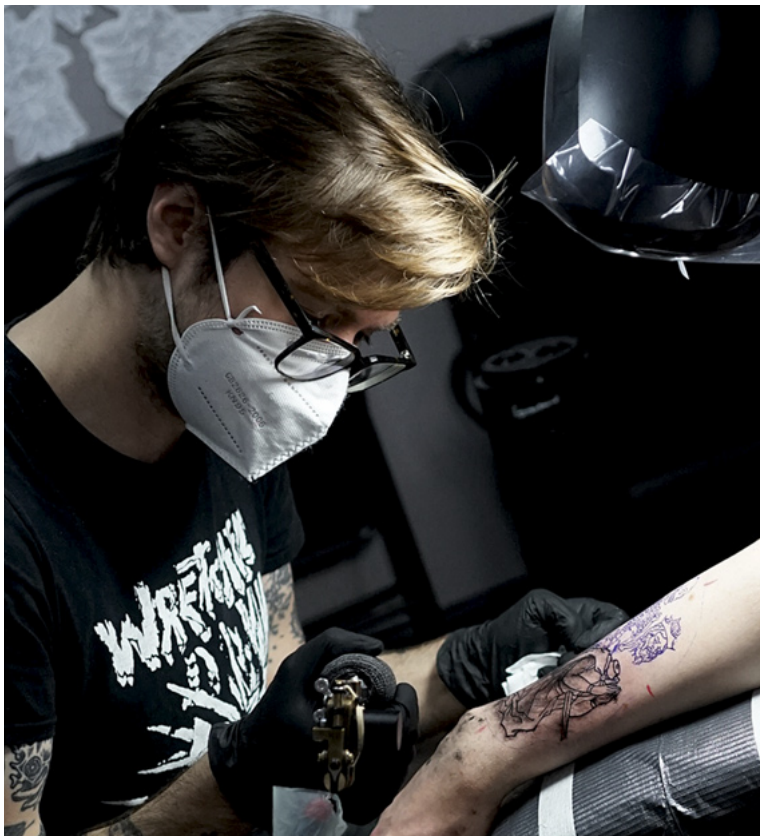
What does it mean to you all to come to the UK?

We see London as a sister city to NYC. It's a place of such diversity and creative excellence. Opening in London felt like a natural next step. On top of that, Alex has family connections in the UK and we all love the culture here.



'WE SEE LONDON AND NYC AS SISTER CITIES'





And for you personally?

I've personally always felt an affinity with everything British, particularly the musical heritage here. I'm a huge Blur fan (I have a Damon Albarn portrait on my arm!) and I love some of the newer bands too, like IDLES. We're also big football fans. I'm a Tottenham supporter, Alex is Arsenal. Whilst the UK is very different to America in some major ways, the two countries have a lot in common – particularly in terms of quality of life – and we're really happy to be here.

Can you tell us a bit more about your own tattoo journey? How long ago did you start tattooing?

I started tattooing 12 years ago in Taunton, Massachusetts.

Did you study art at college?

Yes, and I was desperate to put my degree to use in my career!

So how did you get into tattooing?

I was at home painting a portrait of my grandmother, who had passed away, and a roommate's friend came by who was a tattooist. He saw what I'd done and he said I'd make a really good tattoo artist, that I should look into it. I did, and I instantly fell in love with it. I landed an apprenticeship and the first shop I worked at was an old school biker shop.



And then you moved on to Three Kings...

I'd always longed to be in a proper studio, where the tattooists took tattooing seriously as art. And I knew I wanted to work in a friendly no-drama environment. It took me about six years to find the perfect place, but once I got the job at Three Kings I knew that was it. I was beyond happy. I worked in the Brooklyn shop for three years before deciding I wanted to bring Three Kings across the Atlantic. I can't believe I've now got my own Three Kings shop! I wouldn't work anywhere else.

In your view, what makes Three Kings special?

For me, it's the way we treat our customers – before, during and after their tattoo. We want their experience to be really special. That's what we're known for in New York (which is a demanding city!) and we're adamant about continuing to do that here in London.

What styles of work do you offer?

I tattoo a lot of nature-based designs – flowers, skulls, bugs, animals, etc – in a very illustrative style. I love what I do because I feel it's timeless and beautiful, with bold outlines and solid colour, the traditional attributes of a tattoo. Joe specialises in American traditional and Japanese, and Colin specialised in blackwork with imagery that's based in history and mythology.

What are your hopes and plans for the shop?

Three Kings is known for its welcoming atmosphere, a tradition we're looking forward to continuing as we become part of the tattoo community here in London. Speaking personally, I want to continue to grow as an artist here. We have an amazing team and my goal is to have regular amazing guest artists too, so that we can trade ideas with them and learn from them.

You seem to approach tattooing in a very modern, business-orientated way.

Tattooing is art, and it's fun, but there is a responsibility beyond that. Our approach is about being good to the customer, and it's also about protecting the craft of tattooing. It comes not only from our years in the industry, but also from our experiences as consumers ourselves. When you go into a shop – any kind of shop – you're much more likely to return if you're treated with respect, professionalism and friendliness.

How do you see the future of tattooing in a post-pandemic world?

One thing I've noticed is that we're getting lots of requests for cover-ups – most likely because people have been stuck indoors for months staring at tattoos they don't particularly like any more!

182 Deptford High Street, London, SE8 3PR
www.threekingstattoo.com/london
@threekingslondon



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Find the best studios near you, If you own a world class studio and would like to be included in our directory simply call **07776221612** or email **totaltattoo@totaltattoo.co.uk** for more information. Alternatively you can write to:
Directory, Total Tattoo Magazine, 96 Glendenning Road, Norwich NR1 1YN



SCOTLAND

Aberdeen Tattoo Collective

80 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen,
 AB25 1NU
 01224 635 172
 aberdeentattoo.co@gmail.com
 www.aberdeentattoo.co.uk

Aughra's Eye Tattoo

93 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6LD
 aughraseyetattoo@gmail.com
 IG: @aughraseyetattoo
 FB: /AughrasEyeTattoo

Bold and Gold Art

238 Leith Walk, Edinburgh, EH6 5EL
 0131 6290 171
 boldandgoldart@gmail.com
 www.boldandgoldart.com
 IG: @boldandgoldpiercingart
 @boldandgoldart

Dark Ink Gallery

160 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 2TJ
 07492 622 582
 darkinkgallery@gmail.com
 www.darkinkgallery.com

Den of Iniquity Tattoo Parlour

47 Broughton Street, Edinburgh,
 EH1 3RJ
 0131 557 0077
 denofiniquitytattoo@gmail.com
 IG: @denofiniquitytattooparlour
 FB: DenofIniquityTattooParlour
 Edinburgh

Empire Ink

11 East Fountainbridge, Edinburgh,
 EH3 9BH
 07540 290 234
 Email: via website
 www.empire-ink.co.uk

Forevermore Tattoo

202, Hope Street, Glasgow,
 G2 2UG
 0141 332 9340
 forevermoretattoo@gmail.com
 www.forevermoretattoo.co.uk
 IG: @fmtglasgow
 FB: /FMTGlasgow

Inkdependent

56 Dalry Rd, Edinburgh, EH11 2BA
 0131 623 6565
 inkdependenttattoos@gmail.com
 www.inkdependent.eu

Insider Tattoo

89 Henderson Street, Edinburgh,
 EH6 6ED
 0131 554 6083
 info@insidertattoo.com
 www.insidertattoo.com

Kraken Studios

2 High Street, Renfrew, PA4 8QR
 0141 258 0706
 IG: @kraken_studios
 FB: /krakenstudiosrenfrew

Main Street Tattoo

116 Main Street, Wishaw, ML2 7LU
 01698 355 877
 mainstreettattoo@live.co.uk
 IG: @mainstreettattoo

Nirvana Tattoo

9 Chisholm Street, Glasgow,
 G1 5HA
 0141 548 1543
 nirvanatattooostudio@yahoo.com
 IG: @nirvanatattooostudio

Body Piercing by Nathan

202 George Street, Aberdeen,
 AB25 1BS

01224 6423 477
 sailormax13@gmail.com
 FB: /sailormax13

Richards Tattoo Studio

3 Trinity Quay, Aberdeen, AB11 5AA
 01224 575 599
 info@richardstattoo.com
 www.richardstattoo.com

Santa Cruz Kustom Club

58 Murray Place, Stirling, FK8 2BX
 01786 357 272
 SCKCTattoo@gmail.com
 www.SCKCTattoo.com
 IG: @santacruzkustomclub
 FB: /SantaCruzKustomClub

Semper Tattoo Studio

7 Grass Market, Edinburgh,
 EH1 2HY
 0131 466 0370
 sempertattoo@gmail.com
 www.sempertattoo.com

StudioXIII

3 Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1DH
 0131 558 2974
 artwork@studioxiii.tattoo
 studioxiii.tattoo
 IG: @studioxiiigallery
 FB: /StudioXIIIGallery

Terrys Tattoo Studio

23 Chisholm Street, Glasgow,
 G1 5HA
 0141 552 5740
 hello@terrystattooostudio.com
 www.terrystattooostudio.com
 IG: @terrystattooostudio
 FB: /TerrysTattooStudio

Watermelon Tattoo

19 Easter Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5PJ
0131 6652 1988
info@watermelontattoo.com
watermelon.tattoo
IG: @watermelontattoo
FB: /watermelontattooedinburgh

NORTH EAST

1873 Tattoo Club

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Whitworth Forum, Barnsley,
S70 2HZ
07710 699 670
leon.walker85@hotmail.co.uk
IG: @1873_tattooclub
FB: /1873tattoo

Apostle

23 Church Square, Hartlepool,
TS24 7EU
01429 271 030
www.apostletattoo.co.uk
FB: /apostletattoo

Art La Vey

56 High Street, Gateshead,
NE10 9LT
0191 447 2490
art_la_vey@outlook.com
www.artlaveytattooostudio.co.uk
IG: @art_la_vey_tattoo
FB: /LaVeyArt

Heavy Duty Tattoos

38 Tubwell Row, Darlington,
DL1 1PD
01325 484 432
heavydutytattoos@gmail.com
www.heavydutytattoos.co.uk

High Bridge Tattoo

15 High Bridge, Newcastle Upon
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0191 261 9473
dean@highbridgetattoo.co.uk
IG: @Highbridgetattoo_ncl
FB: /HighBridgeTattooNCL

Marked for life

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01642 641 235
tattooofl@gmail.com
IG: @markedforlifeuk
FB: /markedforlifetattooostudio

Masamune Tattoos

29 Front Street, NE16 4EA
0191 488 6222

masamunetattoos@gmail.com
www.masamunetattoos.co.uk
IG: @masamunetattoos
FB: /masamunetattoos

Northside Tattoo

25 Station Road, Whitley Bay,
NE26 2QY
0191 2971327
hash@northsidetattoo.co.uk
www.northsidetattoo.co.uk

Northside Tattoo (Newcastle - The Private Rooms)

2 - Basement, Bewick Street,
City Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 5EF
0191 221 0328
low@northsidetattoo.co.uk
www.northsidetattoo.co.uk

No Love Lost Collective

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TS24 7DA
no.lost.love.collective@gmail.com
IG: @no.love.lost.collective

Pins & Needles

27 Grainger Street, Newcastle Upon
Tyne, NE1 5JE
pinsandneedlesnewcastle@gmail.
com
IG: @pins_and_needlestattoo
FB: /pins.NE1

The Tattoo Station

20 Ridley Place, City Centre,
Newcastle Upon Tyne,
NE1 8JN
0191 232 8491
studio@tattoostation.co.uk
www.tattoostation.co.uk
IG: @tattoostationnewcastle

Triplex Studios

24 Fawcett Street, Sunderland,
SR1 1RH
0191 565 6665
www.triplexstudios.com
IG: @triplexstudios
FB: /triplexstudios666

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

Blue Collar Club Tattoo

Unit 7, 92 hardwood Street,
Sheffield, S2 4SE
bluecollarclubtattoo@gmail.com
IG: @bluecollarclubtattoo
FB: @bcctattoo

Crooked Claw Tattoo

734 Ecclesall Road, Sheffield,
S11 8TB
0114 327 1411
crookedclawtattoos@gmail.com
www.crookedclawtattoo.com

Easy Tiger Tattoo

003, Castleton Mill, Leeds, LS12 2DS
0113 887 0172
www.easytigertattoo.com
IG: @easytigertattoos

Electric Kicks

17 Front Street, Pontefract,
WF8 1DA
07725 029 567
electric.kicks@hotmail.com
IG: @electric.kicks.crew
FB: Electric Kicks Tattoo Studio

Follow Your Dreams Tattoo

160 Devonshire Street, Sheffield,
S3 7SB
0114 216 8078
fydtattoo@gmail.com
www.fydtattoo.com

Gothika

7-9 Dundas Street, Redcar,
Cleveland, TS10 3AD
01642 498 572
IG: @GothikaTattoosRedcar
FB: /GothikaTattoos

Nigel Kurt's Fun House Tattoo Studio

140 Sheffield Road, Barnsley
S70 1JH
Tel no: 01226 779 595
nigelkurt1@gmail.com
www.nigelkurt.com
IG: @nigelkurttattoo
FB: /funhousetattoosUK

Pins & Needles

23a Market Place, Driffield,
YO25 6AR
01377 538 080
jamesnorry1975@gmail.com
IG: @pinsandneedles_driffield
FB: /pinsdriffield

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Leeds Corn Exchange
0113 242 0413
redtattooandpiercing@hotmail.
co.uk
www.redtattooandpiercing.com

Roadhouse Tattoo Studio

York House, 223 Bingley Road,
ShIPLEY, Bradford, BD18 4DH
07730 272 692
roadhousetattooostudio@gmail.com
www.roadhousetattoos.co.uk
IG: @roadhousetattooostudio
FB: /RoadhouseTattooStudio

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Sacredelectrictattoo@gmail.com
www.sacredelectrictattoo.com

Tenacious Tattoo

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www.tenacioustattoo.com

The Wolf Shed

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IG: @thewolfshed @neilwolftattoo
FB: /neilwolftattoo

Ultimate Skin

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ustattoo@gmail.com
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FB: /baseshadetattoo

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LE1 5FG
0116 262 9401
info@bunrakutattoo.co.uk
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FB: /bunrakutattoo

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FB: /maria.perks.52

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IG: @churchyardtattoos
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www.cultclassictattoo.com

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IG: @prizemantattoo
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contact@factotumbodymods.com
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www.fivekeystattoo.com

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FB: /Good-Ship-I3-Tattoos

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www.indigotattoo.co.uk

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

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IG: @jaynedoetattoo
FB: /jaynedoetattoo

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IG: @st.gilestattoo
FB: /StGilesTattoo

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tlnorwich@gmail.com
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01284 701643
IG: @wolfandarrows
FB: /wolfandarrowstattoo

LONDON

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info@thebluetattoo.co.uk
www.thebluetattoo.co.uk
IG: @thebluetattoolondon

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www.diamondhearttattoo.com
IG: @diamondhearttattoo
FB: /diamondhearttattoo

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www.thefamilybusinesstattoo.com

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020 7734 8180
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www.frithstreettattoo.co.uk

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020 8989 6144
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IG: @fudoshintattoos
FB: /fudoshintattoos

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Tattooed_tota@hotmail.com
www.happysailortattoo.com
IG: @happysailortattoo
FB: /happysailortattoo

I Hate Tattoos

Unit 1, 400-405 York Way, London,
N7 9LR
07904 174 819

herringfishbloke@hotmail.co.uk
FB: /IHateTattoosStudio

Ink Lounge Tattoo Studio

310C Green Lanes, Palmers Green,
London, N13 5TT
0203 490 2663
info@inklounge.co.uk
www.inklounge.co.uk
IG: @inklounge

Inksmiths Of London

8 Chequers Parade, Eltham, London,
SE9 1DD
020 8617 3338
Inksmithsoflondon@gmail.com
IG: @InksmithsofLondon

Kilburn Original Tattoo

175 Kilburn High Road,
Kilburn, London, NW6 7HY
0207 372 3662
info@kilburnoriginal.com
IG: @kilburntattoo
FB: kilburnoriginaltattoo

Leviticus Tattoo Emporium

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leviticustattoo@hotmail.com
www.leviticustattooemporium.co.uk

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E2 6AH
0208 739 5115
Inquiry@lowridertattoolondon.com
IG: @lowridertattoolondon

Low Tide

19 Market Place, Southend-on-Sea,
SS1 1DA
01702 344 060
lowtidetattoo@gmail.com
IG: @lowtidetattoo

Morning Star Tattoos

Unit 3a, 6 Hornsey Street, London,
N7 8GR
07702 390 788
info@morningstartattoos.com
www.morningstartattoos.com
IG: @morningstartattooslondon
FB: /Morningstar-Tattoos-London

Nemesis Tattoo & Body Piercing - Buck Street

3 Buck Street, Camden Town,

NW1 8NJ
020 7482 0063
nemesiscamdentown@gmail.com
www.nemesistattoo.co.uk
IG: @nemesistattoo
FB: /mindtheink

Nemesis Tattoo & Body Piercing - Inverness Street
26 Inverness Street, Camden Town,
NW1 7HJ
020 7419 8621
nemesiscamdentown@gmail.com
www.nemesistattoo.co.uk
IG: @nemesistattoo
FB: /mindtheink

New Wave Tattoo Studio
157 Sydney Road, Muswell Hill,
London, N10 2NL
0208 444 8779
lalhardy@hotmail.co.uk
www.newwavetattoo.co.uk

Old Habits Tattoo
364 Kingsland Road, London,
E8 4DA
Tel no: 0203 609 0931
oldhabitsattoo@gmail.com
www.oldhabitsattoo.com

Seven Doors Tattoo
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020 7375 3880
sevendoorstattoo@gmail.com
IG: @sevendoorstattoo
FB: sevendoorstattoo

Tattoo Shop By Dan Gold
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W1D 1LP
0207 637 7411
www.tattooshopbydangold.co.uk

The Good Fight
Cheriton, Queens Crescent, London,
NW5 4EZ
www.thegoodfighttattoo.com
IG: @nick_whybrow
IG: @heidikayetattoo
IG: @emilyrabbit.tattoo

Three Kings Tattoo
182 Deptford High Street, London,
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020 3612 9123
london@threekingstattoo.com

www.threekingslondon.com
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Ushuaia Tattoo London
486 Fulham Road, SW6 5NH
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www.ushuaiatattoo.london.co.uk/en
IG: @ushuaiatattoo.london
FB: /ushuaiatattoo.london

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I4 Arrows Tattoo Studio
69 Grosvenor Road, Tunbridge Wells,
TN1 2AY
01892 681 224
fourteenarrows@hotmail.com
IG: @14arrowstattoo
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1770 Tattoo
4 Little East Street, Brighton,
BN1 1HT
01273 710 730
info@1770tattoo.com
www.1770tattoo.com

Dead Slow
9 Boyces Street, Brighton, BN1 1AN
01273 208844
www.deadslowco.com
contact@deadslowco.com
IG: @deadslowco
FB: /deadslowco

ElectricThaiger Tattoo
2 Station Parade, Tweedy Road
Bromley, BR1 3NN
0208 460 6160
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Fine Art Tattoo and Piercing Studio
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fine-art-tattoo@hotmail.co.uk
www.finearttattoo.co.uk

Forever Wear Tattoos
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forever-wear-tattoos@hotmail.co.uk
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IG: @foreverwear_tattoos
FB: /foreverweartattoosbuckingham

Gold Irons Tattoo Club
41 Preston Street, Brighton,
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goldironstattooclub@outlook.com
IG: @goldironstattooclub
FB: /goldironstattooclub

Gun & Pedal Brighton Tattoo
21 Ditchling Road, Brighton,
BN1 4SB
01273 692 171
gunandpedalbrighton@hotmail.com
IG: @gunandpedaltattooostudio
FB: /gunandpedaltattoo

Higgins and Co
69 Terminus Road, Above Coffee
Republic, Eastbourne, BN21 3NJ
01323 301 973
higginsandco71@gmail.com
www.higginsandcotattoo.co.uk

High Tide Tattoo Studio
Unit 1 Reeves Yard, Warwick Road,
Whitstable, CT5 1HX
01227 263 864
zbreakspear@yahoo.com
IG: @high_tide_tattoo_studio
FB: /hightidetattooostudio

Inked Moose
204 Whaddon Way, Bletchley, Milton
Keynes, MK3 7DG
01908 411 151
info@inkedmoose.co.uk
www.inkedmoose.co.uk

Keepsake Tattoo
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BN15 8BD
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www.keepsaketattoo.co.uk
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Leo Rios Tattoo Studio
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FB: /lordsinktattooostudioukbexhillonsea

Magnum Opus Tattoo

51 Upper North Street, Brighton,
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01273 271432
magnumopustattoo@gmail.com
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IG: @magnumopustattoo
FB: /magnumopustattoo

Rising Phoenix Tattoo

28a High Street Mews, Leighton
Buzzard, LU7 1EA
01525 217 121
studio@risingphoenixtattoo.co.uk
www.risingphoenixtattoo.co.uk
IG: @RisingPhoenixLeightonBuzzard
FB: /rptattoo

Seven Sins Tattoo

10 High Street, Horley, RH6 7AY
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
IG: @skinnedalivetattoo

Stay Much Better

1 Beaconsfield Parade, Beaconsfield
Road, Brighton, BN1 6DN
01273 564 494
www.smbtattoo.com
IG: @smbtattoo
FB: /smbtattoo

Tattoo FX

32 Middle Village, Bolnore, Haywards
Heath, RH16 4GH
01444 454 411
info@tattoo-fx.co.uk
www.tattoo-fx.co.uk

The Hidden Tannery

10-11 Lewes road, Brighton,
BN2 3HP
hello@hiddentannery.com
www.hiddentannery.com

Valhalla Tattoo

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

SOUTH WEST

Black Chalice Tattoo

Unit 4, Plaza 21, Edgeware Road,
Swindon, SN1 1HE
01793 671 432
blackchalicetattoo@hotmail.com
FB: /blackchalicetattoo

Blackfriars Tattoo

5 Maylord Street, Hereford,
HR12DS
01432 278 330
blackfriarstattoo@gmail.com
IG: @blackfriarstattoo

Crow Quill

63 Bedford Place, Southampton,
SO15 2DS
023 8034 0058
IG: @thecrowquill
www.thecrowquill.co.uk

The Custom Propaganda Tattoo Company

Unit 7, Botley Mills, Botley,
Southampton, SO30 2GB
01489 325 341
IG: @custompropagandatattoo
FB: /CustomPropagandaTattoo

Eightfold Tattoo

1 Heanton Street, Braunton,
EX33 2JS
Phone: 01271 523 732
www.eightfoldtattoo.com
IG: @eightfoldtattoo

Equinox Tattoo Collective

21 Bilbury Street, Plymouth,
PL4 0BH
01752 952 741
equinoxtattoocollective@gmail.com
IG: @equinoxtattoocollective
FB: /Equinoxtattoocollective21

Needle and Fred Tattoo

22 High Street, Littlehampton,
BN17 5EE
01903 733 622
needleandfred@live.co.uk
IG: @inkfred

North Gate Tattoo

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

Purple Rose Tattoo

56 Staple Hill Road, Fishponds,
Bristol, BS16 5BS
01173 300 123
purplerosetattoo@hotmail.co.uk
www.purplerosetattoo.co.uk

Turquoise Blue Tattoo

112 Castle Lane West,
Bournemouth, BH9 3JU
01202 514 514 - 07812 938 174
artists@turquoisebluetattoo.co.uk
www.turquoisebluetattoo.co.uk
IG: @turquoisebluetattoo
FB: /turquoisebluetattoo

Zeppo's Tattoo Studio

56 South Street, Pennington, SO41
8DX
01590 676 348
info@zeppostattoo.co.uk
FB: /zeppostattoo.co.uk

WALES

Broadside Tattoo

38 Singleton Street, Swansea,
SA1 3QN
01792 455 000
broadsidewanseawh@hotmail.com
IG: @broadsidewanseawh

Dexterity Ink

Unit 9, Indoor Peoples Market,
Wrexham, LL13 8BE
01978 447 100
FB: /DexterityInkTattooStudio09

Different Dimension

Unit 4, Pontcanna Mews
200 Kings Road, Cardiff
CF11 9DF
07413 383 323
patrykmazurtattoo@gmail.com
www.surrealisticsanctuary.co.uk

Keep the Faith Social Club

14-16 Royal Arcade, Cardiff,
CF10 1AE
029 2140 6954
keepthefaitthsc@gmail.com
www.keepthefaitthsocialclub.com
IG: @keepthefaitthsc
FB: /keepthefaitthsocialclub

Physical Graffiti

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

Stronghold Tattoo

2nd floor High Street Arcade,
Cardiff, CF10 1BE
07943 981 671
www.strongholdtattoo.com
IG: @strongholdtattoo

Sursum Tattoo

11 Market Square, Narberth,
SA67 7AU
01834 860 616
www.sursumtattoo.com
sursumtattoo@gmail.com
IG: @sursumtattoo
FB: /sursumtattoo

WEST MIDLANDS

B.W Tattoo Studios

9 Eastern Avenue, Lichfield,
WS13 6TE
01543 898 766
www.bigwillstatoos.co.uk
IG: @bwttattoostudios
FB: /BWtattoostudios

Blackfriars Tattoo

5 Maylord Street, Hereford, HR12DS
01432 278 330
blackfriarstattoo@gmail.com
IG: @blackfriarstattoo
FB: /blackfriarstatoos

Blood & Honey Tattoo Co

Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham,
GL52 2NE
01242 352 306
hello@bloodandhoney.uk
www.bloodandhoney.uk
IG: @bloodandhoney
FB: /BloodHoneyTattooCompany

Cosmic Monsters Incorporated

3 High Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8AJ
07863 135 814
cmitattoo@gmail.com
www.cmi-tattoo.com

The Church Tattoo

11 Church Road, Redditch,
B97 4AB
01527 759 852
thechurchtattoo@hotmail.com
FB: /thechurchtattoo

Folklore Tattoo

119 Lichfield Street, Tamworth,
B79 7QB
01827 768 446
folkloretattoos@live.com
www.folkloretattoostudio.co.uk
IG: @fts_tattoo
FB: /folkloretattoostudio

Imperial Art Tattoo

20 King Street, Bedworth,

CV12 8HT
0247 664 0947
www.imperialarttattoo.co.uk
IG: @imperialarttattoo
FB: /imperialarttattoo

Modern Electric Tattoo Co

147 Golden Cross Lane, Catshill,
Bromsgrove, B61 0JZ
01527 759 434
info@modernelectrictattoo.co.uk
www.modernelectrictattoo.co.uk

Nala Tattoo & Piercing Studio

81 Bolebridge Street, Tamworth,
B79 7PD
01827 68 353
contact@nalastudio.co.uk
www.nalastudio.co.uk

Second City Tattoo Club

91 Vittoria Street, Birmingham,
B1 3PA
IG: @secondcitytattooclub
FB: /secondcitytattooclub

Seven Foxes Tattoo

3 Kingsfield Road, Birmingham,
B14 7JN
0121 610 0348
sevenfoxestattoo@gmail.com
www.sevenfoxestattoo.com
IG: @sevenfoxestattoo

Sweet Life Gallery

80 Bristol Street, Birmingham,
B5 7AH
0121 692 1361
Enquiry@sweetlifegallery.co.uk
www.sweetlifegallery.co.uk

The Ink Spot

The Parade, Silverdale, Newcastle
Under Lyme, ST5 6LQ
01782 619 144
tattoosbycookie@hotmail.com
www.theinkspotuk.com

Vicious Pink Tattoo

Suite C, 9a Willow Street, Oswestry,
SY11 1AF
01691 570 427
viciouspinktattoo@gmail.com
www.viciouspink.co.uk
IG: @viciouspinktattoostudio
FB: /ViciousPink

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
01229 838 946
allstyletattoos@gmail.com
FB: /allstyletattoosbarrow

Aurora Tattoo

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

Black Freighter Tattoo Co.

56-60 Lower Bridge Street, Chester,
CH1 1RU
01244 297 528
theblackfreightertattoo@gmail.com
IG: @blackfreightertattoo
FB: /TheBlackFreighterTattooCo

Bold As Brass Tattoo

Charleston House, 12 Rumford
Place, Liverpool, L3 9DG
0151 227 1814
boldasbrasstattoo@gmail.com
www.boldasbrasstattoo.com

Bridge Street Tattoo

32 Bridge Street W, Chester,
CH1 1NN
01244 638 765
bridgestreettattoo@gmail.com
www.bridgestreettattoo.co.uk
IG: @bridgestreettattoo
FB: /bridgestreettattoochester

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WNI 1YP
07849 114 380
www.ButchersBlockTattoo.co.uk
ButchersBlockTattoo@hotmail.com
IG: @ButchersBlockTattoo
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Dabs Tattoo

78b Eastbourne Road, Southport,
PR8 4DU

01704 566 665
Dabstatoos@btconnect.com
IG: @tattoosatdabs
FB: /dabstattoo/DABS Tattoo

Indelible Ink
3 York Avenue, Thornton-Cleveleys,
FY5 2UG
01253 280 157
www.indelibleinktattooostudio.co.uk
IG: @indelible_ink_tattoos
FB: /indelibleinkuk

Infernal Rites Tatoo
71 Market St, Westhoughton,
Bolton, BL5 3AA
01942 811 132
infernalritestattoo@gmail.com
IG: @infernalritestattoo
FB: /infernalritestattoo

**Inkden Tattoo
& Piercing Studio**
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FY1 4PD
07957 021 702
inkden.tattoo@gmail.com
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Inked Up Chester
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CHI 1LQ
01244 638 558
info@inkedupchester.co.uk
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Market Quarter Tattoo
14 Market Street, Southport,
Merseyside, PR8 1HJ
marketquartertattoo@gmail.com
FB: /MQTSouthport
IG: @marketquartertattoo

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

Studio78 Tattoos
15 Earle Street, Crewe, CW1 2BS
01270 581 581
studio-78@hotmail.co.uk
www.studio-78.co.uk

True Colours Tattoo Studio
14 Guildhall Street, Preston,
PR1 3NU
01772 378 565
www.truecolourstattoo.co.uk
IG: @truecolourstattoo

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