

Nihilist.

Tattoos • Piercings • Body Modifications

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Tattoo taboos

From inked faces to body art in
the workplace.

interview with...

Eli Ink

AKA Black Cloud

Aftercare tips / What's
trending in the piercing
world? / The benefits of
body suspension

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Contents.

4. Editor's note

5. What's trending? ...in piercing

6. The unwritten rules of the studio



Interview: Eli Ink

The most tattooed man on Earth?

25. Aftercare tips

26. The ban on body mods

Tattoo taboos.

Jobstoppers

Can you be inked and professional at the same time?



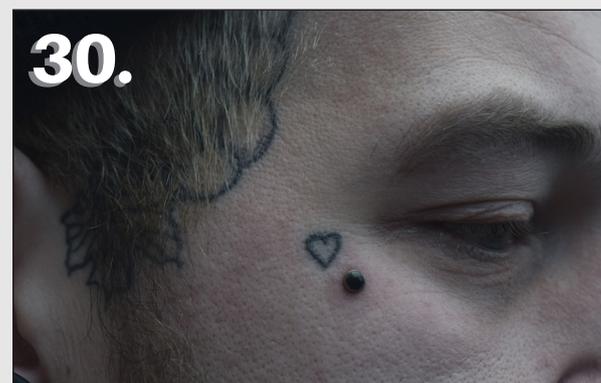
Hung, drawn but not quartered

Getting hooked on body suspension.



Gallery

A selection of the best designs.



The history of facial tattoos

Where it all began and what it means to have an inked face today.

Editor's Note

For the alt, the misunderstood and the lovers of all things body mods. The first issue of Nihilist. brings you an insight into the lives of the daring and the extreme. A celebration of subcultures joining together in the weird and wacky world of modification. From tattoos and piercings to suspension and tongue splitting. For the professionals who offer them and the people that receive them.

This issue is part of the tattoo taboos series, including all of the unconventional practices of tattooing. Whether that be inked faces or tattooed eyeballs. How long has tattooing been around? Can an inking cost you a career?

Nihilist. is a place for inspiration and education, where a community of body mod lovers unite. If you have an open mind and a curious soul, a passion for art and a creative flare then Nihilist. is for you.

TRIGGER WARNING: This magazine features images and discussion of a gruesome nature, including blood and needles.

Photo: Gaberali

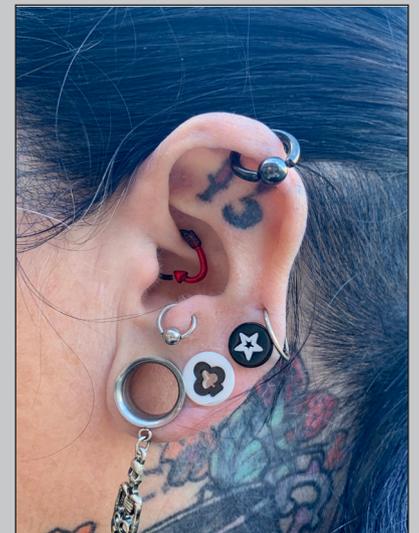
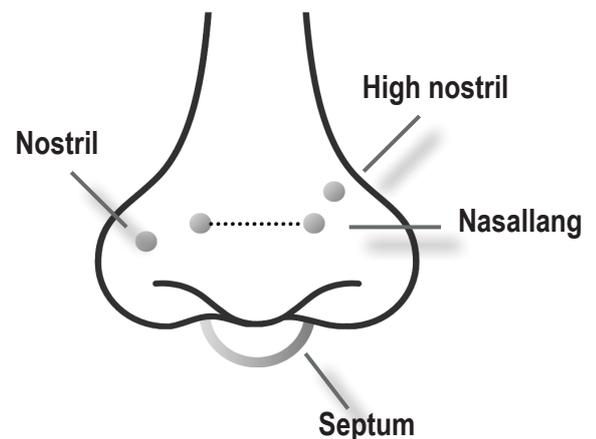
What's trending?

...In piercing

As the seasons come and go, so do the trends, and body jewellery is no exception

Throughout the years there have been ups and downs in the popularity of different piercing styles and locations.

Nose piercings have always been a fashionable choice from their symbolism in Middle Eastern and Indian culture to their depiction of edginess and rebellion in the West. Spins on a traditional nostril piercing include the high nostril, a few millimetres further up from the standard spot; the Nasallang, a single piece of jewellery passing through the septum and both nostrils simultaneously and the septum, located between the two nostrils.



Lyndsey Arnold, of Fates and Fury studio, in Sheffield, predicts that lobe piercings will continue in their popularity but may see a new spin on things, such as a vertical stack. Ear piercings are versatile with the many combinations that can be made, curated ears (pictured above, left and middle) can be made personal with different jewellery and piercing styles to suit the wearer.

More recently studios have seen an increase in interest of piercings with purported “healing” properties. The Daith (pictured above, right) is just one example, being linked to pressure points responsible for the treatment of migraines. This is yet to be scientifically proven and should not be the basis of a trusted piercer’s recommendation.

The unwritten rules of the studio

Having your skin repeatedly poked with a sharp instrument is sure to take it out of you, especially if you're planning on having a large, substantial piece done. Here are 7 top tips to make sure you're not that punter passing out on the shop floor...

1. Eat a decent meal beforehand.

It's good to fill up a couple of hours before your appointment begins. A combination of protein and veg will avoid that nauseous feeling but ensure you feel full during the day.

2. Stay hydrated.

Taking a bottle of water to your appointment with you is a good idea to keep you hydrated throughout your session. Energy drinks with electrolytes will help you to feel fresh and give you that much needed boost during your session.

3. Research your artist carefully.

There's no point in going to an artist that specialises in portraiture if you want a traditional, Japanese dragon. Use social media to your advantage and consider artists' different specialisms to ensure you're getting the best person for your chosen design.

4. Take it steady the night before.

You really don't want to be nursing a hangover whilst you're having a tattoo needle pounding into your flesh. Not only that, but alcohol thins your blood making you more susceptible to bleeding which not only is a massive pain in the backside but it means that you're more likely to bleed, risking messing up the final outcome.

5. Get some rest.

Getting tattooed is pretty exhausting on your body so a good night's rest the day before is essential, especially for big pieces.

6. Don't be afraid to take breaks.

Not only will you need a breather but the artist will need a rest from their hand seizing up. Bring snacks and take rests throughout; it's a great opportunity to stretch your legs and stop the awful pins and needles you've got going on in your left foot.

7. Think before you ink.

Check, check and check again. Make sure that you are 100% on board with your design. #NoRegrets

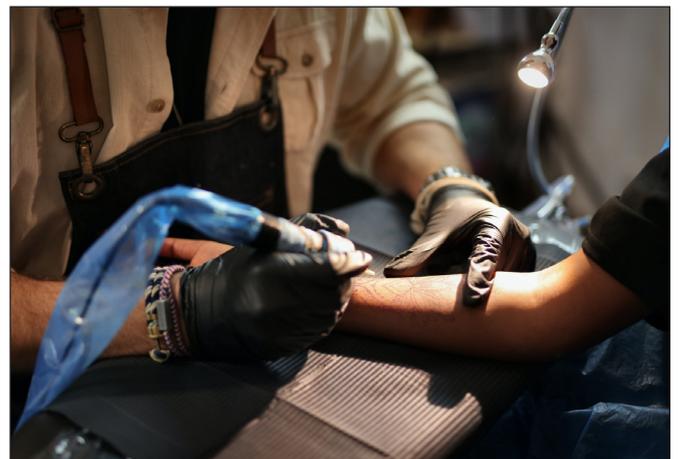


Photo: Andrea Piacquadio

There are also some major dos and don'ts when it comes to etiquette in the studio. Whether a first timer or tattoo aficionado, going by the book is certain to avoid any awkward situations when it's time to get down to inking.

- **DO take it one step at a time.**

Take it step by step, work your way up. Having overtly visible ink could be detrimental to your work life. Hands and neck for first timers is generally denied by artists.

- **DO be clear on what you want.**

It's frustrating for tattoo artists to have to guess what you like. Make sure you're explicit about the design, size and location that you want. "Not too big, not too small" and other vague statements will only get you something that you weren't planning.

- **DO leave a tip.**

Adding an extra bit of money when you pay is always an appreciated gesture.

- **DON'T get your ex's name.**

It's bound to cause an awkward conversation somewhere down the line so save yourself the aggro and avoid it in the first place!

- **DON'T copy other artists' designs.**

Artists can spend days, weeks, even months drawing up their designs, so for someone to take a straight copy is really not cool. Be original, get a custom design that's totally unique to you!

- **DON'T haggle on price.**

It's pretty insulting to assume an artist will cheapen the price of their work for you. Apprentices often offer lower rates.



Photo: Chang Hsien

HUNG, DRAWN BUT NOT QUARTERED

The people hooked on being suspended by their skin

For most, the thought of needles is enough to make their skin crawl so when it comes to giant fish hooks being strung through loose flesh and bodies being hoisted from the ceiling it can be difficult to see why some people are so hung up on this cringeworthy act.

Suspension is just one of the many forms of body modification. The process of suspension involves rigging a human body via perforations in the skin and hanging them from the ceiling. Suspendees can elevate in these positions from a few minutes to hours at a time.

Though it may be new to many people, the act of body suspension has been around for many generations but is commonly seen today in live, circus-like, performances or is practiced by body modification enthusiasts. Lindsey Blinsmon, a body piercer from Texas, USA, regularly takes part in body suspension with Chase Campbell, a body modification professional based in the US. Lindsey said, "I first became interested when I was around 15 years old after watching a few documentaries about it. It looked so beautiful, I had to try it as soon as I could." So, she did back in 2016 when she was 21 years old. The first time that



“I was filled with so much joy, like I had finally found where I belonged”

Lindsey suspends above a crowd of spectators - Photo: Black Mill Photography

Lindsey suspended was everything she expected and more, “I was filled with so much joy, like I had finally found where I belonged.”

The participant begins by choosing their desired body part to suspend from: the back, shoulders and knees are among the most popular options, with positions identified by the names ‘suicide’, ‘resurrection’ and ‘crucifix’ as well as others. The practitioner cleans off the area after locating the appropriate patch to pierce, and threads varying sized hooks into the skin. The final step is to rig up the ropes and the suspension is underway.

Sound painful? It can be excruciating. Lindsey said: “Most of the pain comes from the piercing itself and then the pressure put on the hooks as you’re lifted up,” but the experience is so overwhelming that the pain is almost negligible. The surrounding world seems irrelevant once suspension commences, the focus is entirely on the suspendee and all of their worries are banished, they are living entirely in the moment and nothing else matters.

Scientific research has shown that this overwhelming sense of euphoria is caused by our bodies’ natural flight or fight response which is triggered

when experiencing immense amounts of pain. The body is overrun by endorphins and adrenaline working as a natural anaesthetic to combat any sensation of discomfort.

Dr. Sekhar Upadhyayula, a pain management specialist in the US, said: "The endorphins build up and peak to correlate that 'feels great' sensation." Ana Laco, a practitioner from Croatia, likened suspension to an overall transformative experience on the body, "After suspension you feel stronger. Everything intensifies."

The staggering sense of joy shouldn't divert attention from the extreme risks that come with suspending. The most obvious danger of the skin ripping is very rare. Hooks tear through the suspendees flesh leaving large scars. Other risks such as incorrect rigging can cause falls leading to major injuries. Lindsey (pictured) said, there have been cases where individuals have endured falls with such impact that their bones have shattered and have had to undergo surgery resulting in the amputation of limbs.

Although the art of body suspension may be new to a lot of people, the act has been around for thousands of years. The Native American tribe, Mandan, first began practicing body suspension as a ritualistic rite of passage to signify the transition from boyhood to manhood. In the 1800s suspension was referred to as Opika. This self sacrificial ceremony was an extension of the Sun Dance – a traditional celebration of religion and tribal faith. In India suspension is prevalent within Hindu communities, where it first began as a spiritual ritual.

Body suspension was popularised in the western world by Allen Falkner, often deemed the 'father of modern suspension,' he is the founder of suspension.org and TSD or traumatic stress discipline, a collective of body suspension devotees. Falkner hosts the yearly conventions – SusCon – where body modifiers and suspendees join in exploring this subcultural movement. The conventions offer a space for suspenders to learn, gather and hang out. Much like the Mandan used to.

***"After suspension
you feel stronger"***

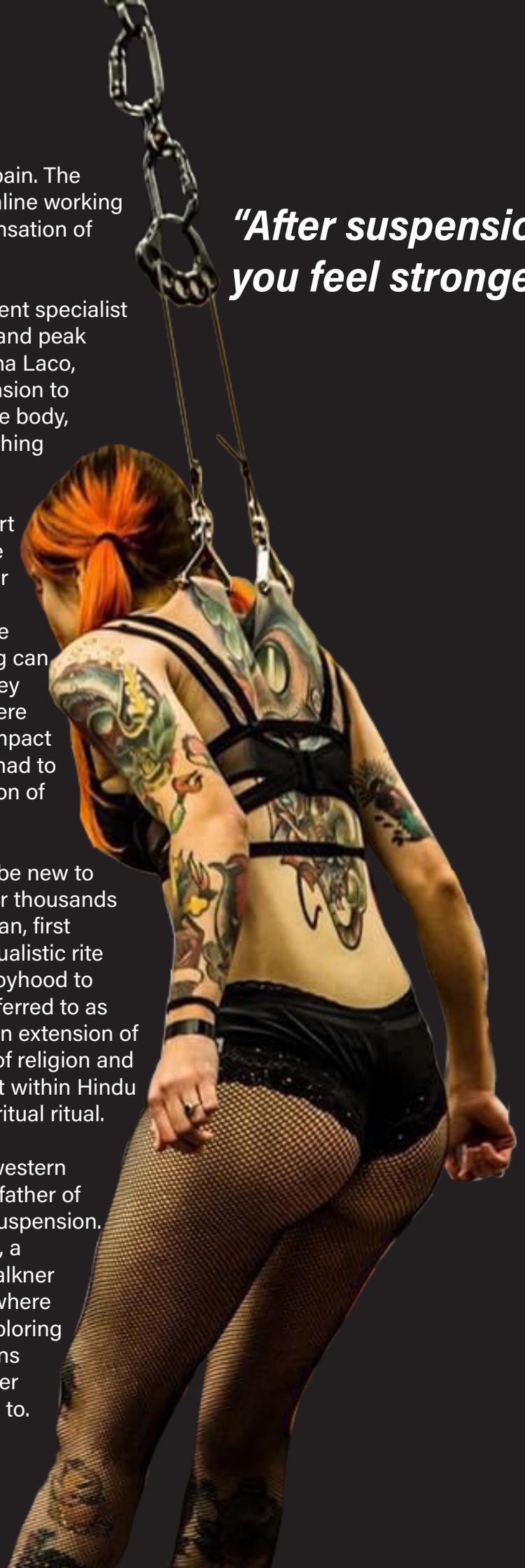
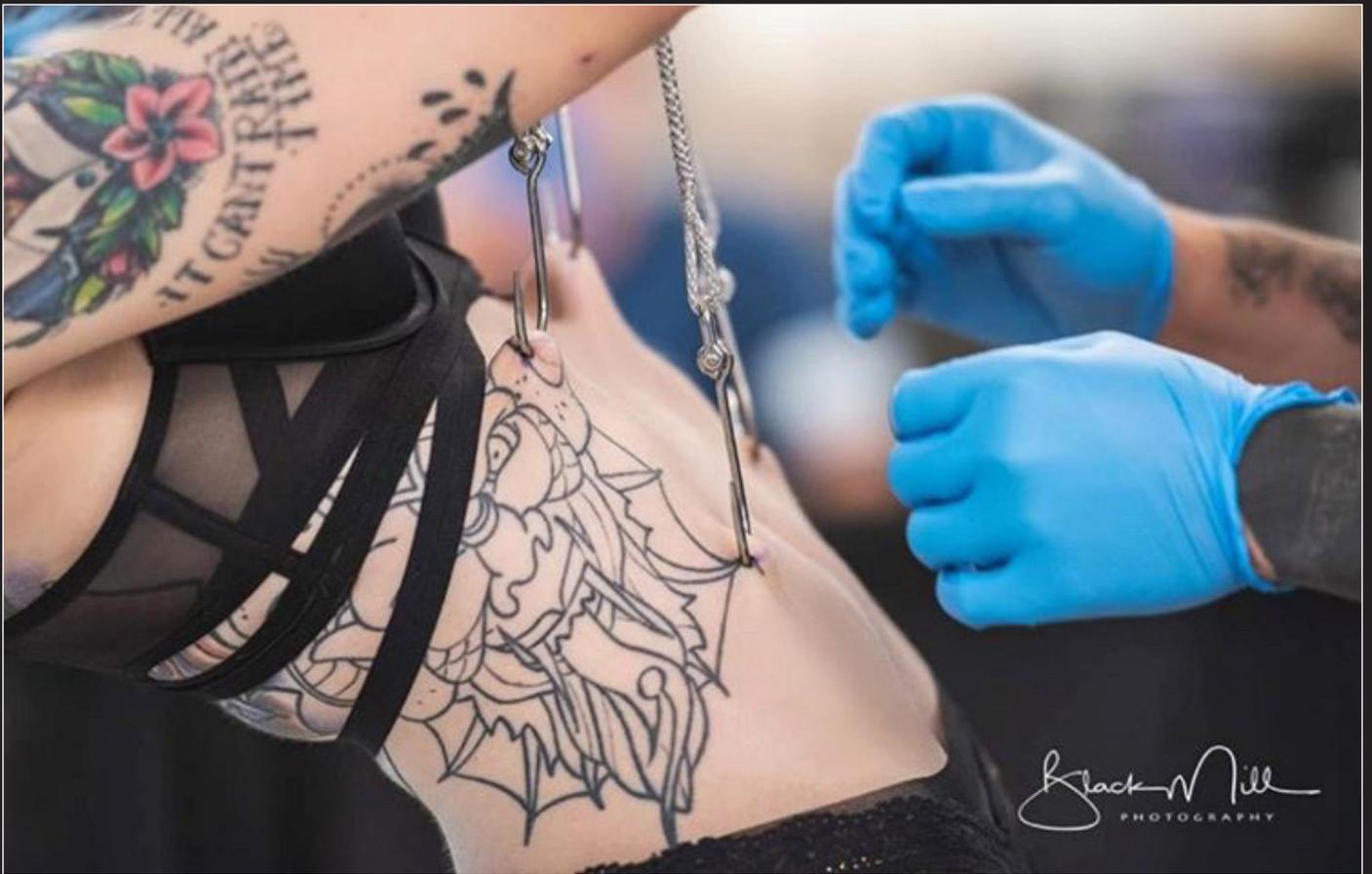


Photo: Ralph Kelly @gorilla.bee



Photos: Black Mill Photography



Eli Ink

“I will be completely tattooed”

With tattoos becoming more and more common, it's becoming increasingly difficult to stand out from the crowd, but when it comes to one man it's hard not to be noticed. Eli Ink, also known as Black Cloud on Instagram, is a resident tattoo artist down at Mother's Ruin Tattoo Collective, in Sheffield, creating monumental body pieces of everlasting, abstract art on people's skin. Not only is Eli a creator but he himself is a walking, breathing, living piece of artwork, recognised for his daring, abstract bodysuit designs and his own ink spanning from head to toe – quite literally.

His work often takes inspiration from existing pieces of art and paintings, visiting galleries often to gain a deeper insight into the creative world. It has been 5 years since Eli began tattooing down in Brighton, where he initially worked as a body piercer for 10 years. He made the shift from piercing to tattooing as a way of being able to connect with his clients on a deeper level by being able to spend prolonged periods of

time with them. “You get to know them and their personality. You can work with them on a deeper level.” Eli takes the client's personality into consideration when creating their own unique design by hosting a consultation prior to their appointment. “We usually go to the caff next door and I'll ask them questions about what they like. Their favourite colours, why they like my work and why they want to be tattooed by me.” Each piece that Eli creates is completely personalised for the individual. He curates a unique tattoo journey for his clients, spending anything from hours to even months on a piece, “I could spend all year tattooing the same person.”

“I wanna make the biggest impact on a person I possibly can”

“If I had to describe my style of work in three words it would be modern, experimental and bold.” In the future Eli plans on making an even greater

impact with his work, where he prepares to go bigger and more daring than ever before. As part of his upcoming 'abstract tattoo project' he wants to produce full bodysuits, for him the bigger the better, "I want to create tattoos as big as I physically can." Eli gets a lot of his inspiration from this style of work performed by artists in Germany, where he often works and where many of his clients are based. His biggest inspiration is a German artist who goes the name of Little Swastika who creates vast pieces of body art sometimes spanning across the skin of multiple people, like a human jigsaw – it doesn't make sense until each individual is lined up bare next to one another revealing a giant grouped image.

Not only does Eli offer modifications to other people but he is a walking portfolio of others' body mod work. From his stretched ears and nose piercings to the scarification across his face and if all of that wasn't audacious enough his most extreme body mods are his total body black out tattoos, including his eyeballs, as well as the removal of his ring finger. The ink on his skin so heavy that he appears a blued black, so unnatural it's almost alien. "I don't really have a reason as to why I do it. It's like asking why someone dyes their hair blonde. They couldn't give me a reason." He doesn't attempt to describe his body mod journey to anyone, it's purely for himself.



Eli's work - Photos: Eli Ink





Eli's designs - Photos: Eli Ink

Eli began getting tattooed at age 17. "I started off with traditional, sailor-style tattoos; lettering; crosses, all of that," he admitted that he thought they were the only designs that his local studio offered, "I used to go in and just ask what I could get for 40 quid." Eli confessed that he didn't put much thought into the tattoos he got at first, "I just wanted to look cool. I wanted a cool, tattooed girlfriend and I thought that that getting loads of ink was the way to do that."

Now, at 30 years old, Eli is blacked out from head to toe with barely an inch on his body left untouched. He chose to cover up his old work in black because, in his opinion, "it looks the coolest," as well as being dark enough to hide the colours peeking through from his previous designs. "I am pretty much tattooed everywhere now, I just have a patch around my groin, bum and lower back, it's like I'm wearing boxers." Eli decided to leave out inking these highly sensitive body parts for now, "I haven't had it done yet mainly for how painful it is going to be, but I do want to get everywhere done eventually."

Of all the body parts that Eli has had inked until now his most painful tattoos to date are his eye sockets. The thin layer of skin of skin underneath the eyes is extremely delicate and sensitive. "I had to have each eye done separately because they swelled shut each time. I couldn't see." It is definitely one way of covering up eye bags, they do say beauty is pain after all.

Following on from the total blacking out of his skin, Eli got designs tattooed on top of the dark hue such as white writing and splashes of colour. The white numbers written on his face have no meaning, "I want my tattoos to make sense to me but mean fuck all to everyone else." Eli used to have the word "artist" mirrored on his right cheek, until having it covered with scarification, "only I could read it properly when I looked in the mirror but to other people it was spelled backwards. It wasn't for anyone else, it was for me." Along with the attention and fascination that comes with Eli's body modification journey is a lot of criticism. "About 80% of responses are negative which can be



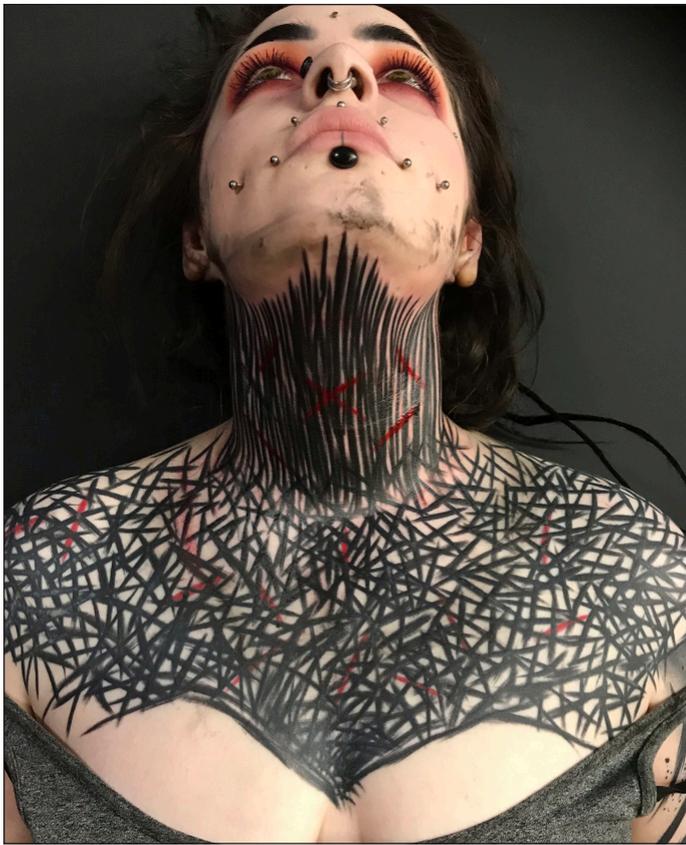


Photo: Eli Ink



Eli's amputated finger

“I never wanted to fit into society”

hard to deal with. You have to choose to not take it personally.” He revealed that it gets difficult to live with people constantly taking photos of him in the street, “it’d be weird for someone to take a picture of a random girl in the middle of town but because I look the way I do it’s accepted.” He believes that the negativity stems from people’s own insecurities and is a result of stereotypes. “I never wanted to fit into society. I always wanted to be different.”

He confessed that not everyone in his family agrees with the modifications that he’s made to his body but they can accept it now that they understand how

he makes a living from it. “I think that the people who are fully tattooed should be completely invested in it. Like body builders, they don’t do anything else. My whole life and occupation revolve around it.” Eli is so invested that he even changed his name, he wasn’t born Eli Ink, but “Josh just didn’t seem like it fit,” once he started blacking out his skin.

Eli will continue to get tattooed and add more layers of colour and ink to his skin. “I don’t have any particular plans for what’s next. Just go with the flow.” And maybe one day will become the planet’s most tattooed man.

Gallery

Some of our favourite tattoos from the best artists around. Tag us @nihilistzine on Instagram to be featured.

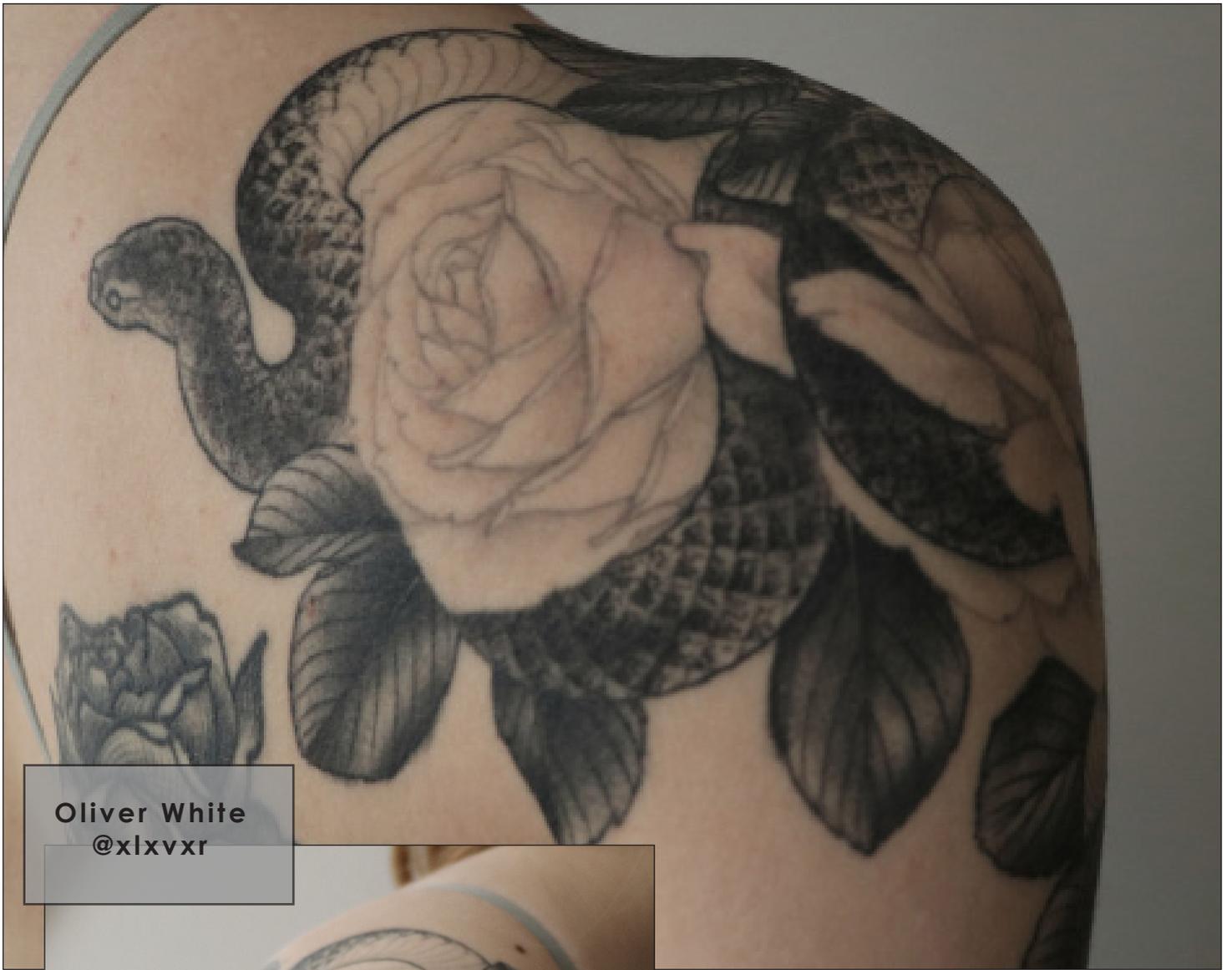


Photos: Alex Cutts
Billy Sleight
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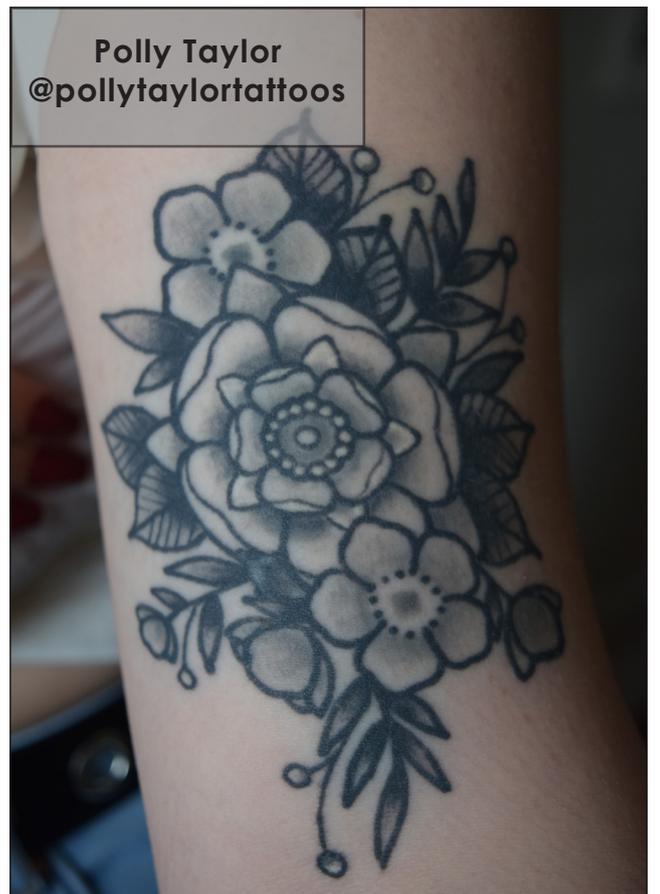
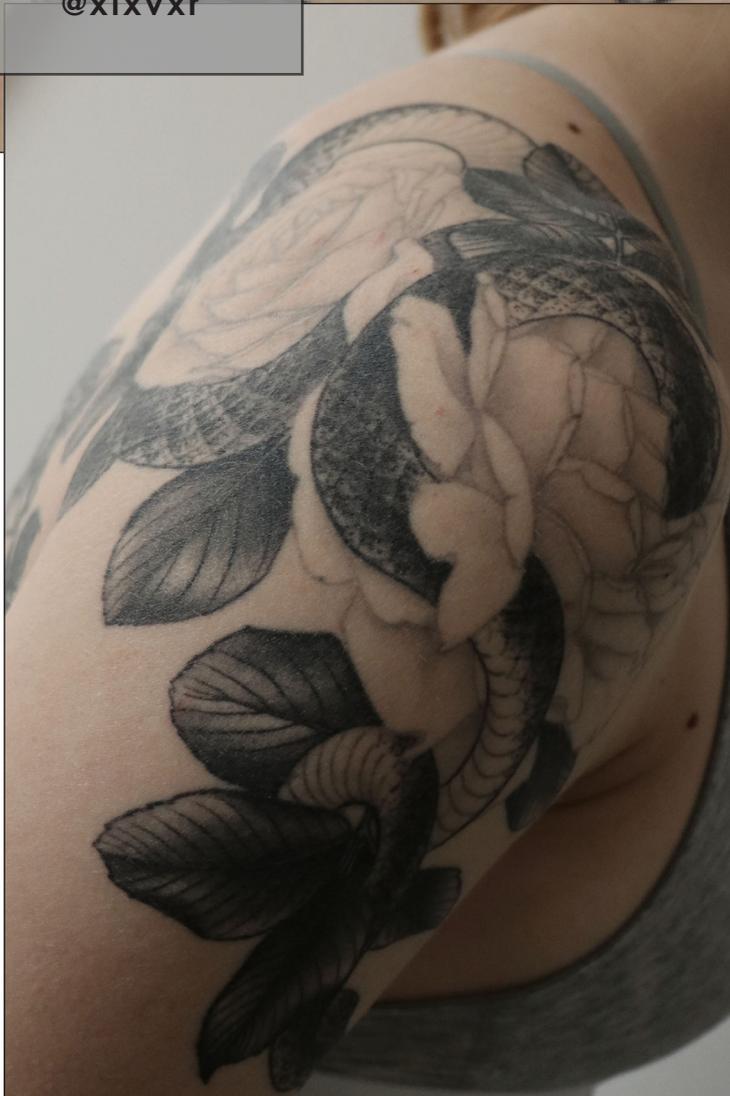


DANCE
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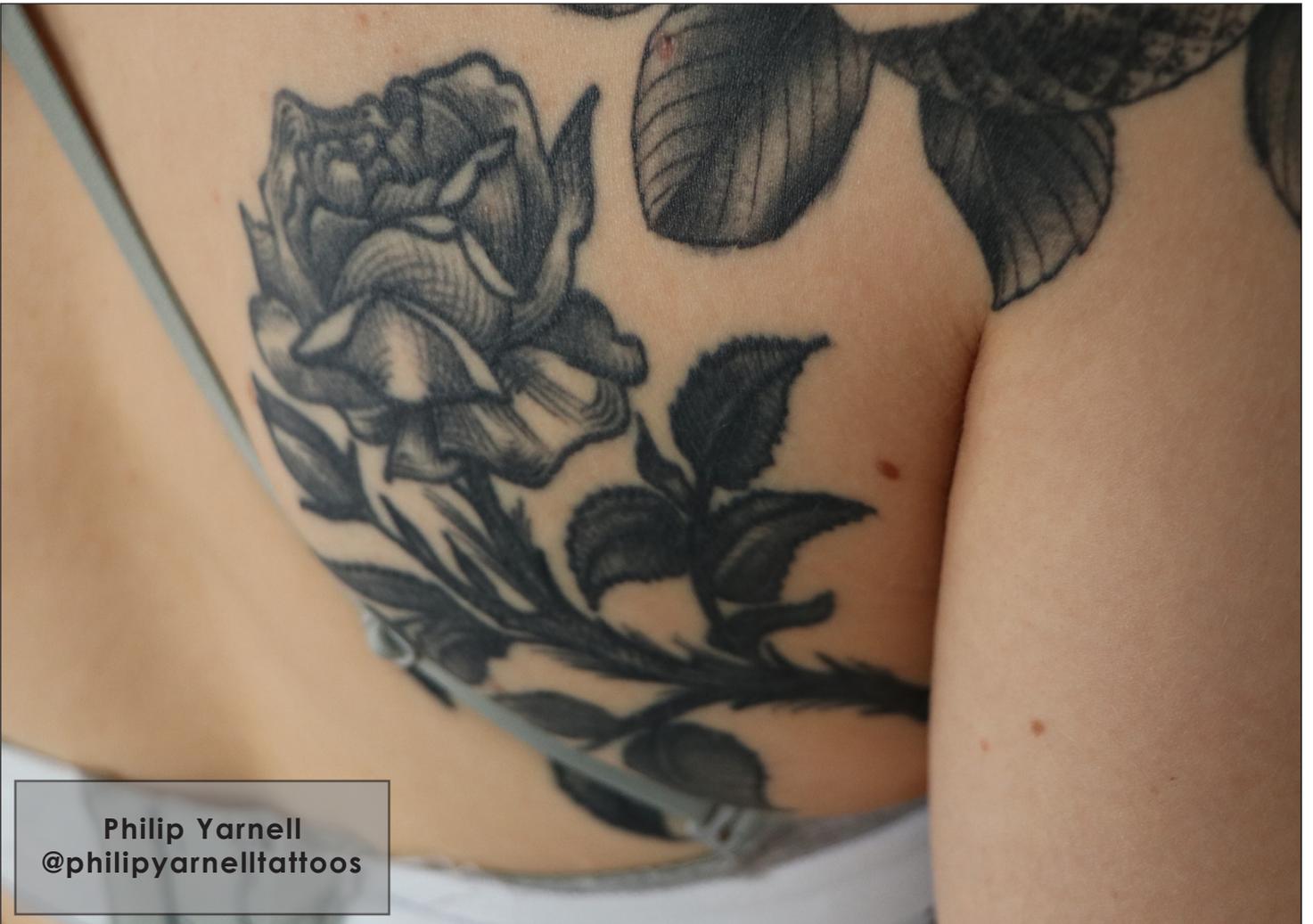


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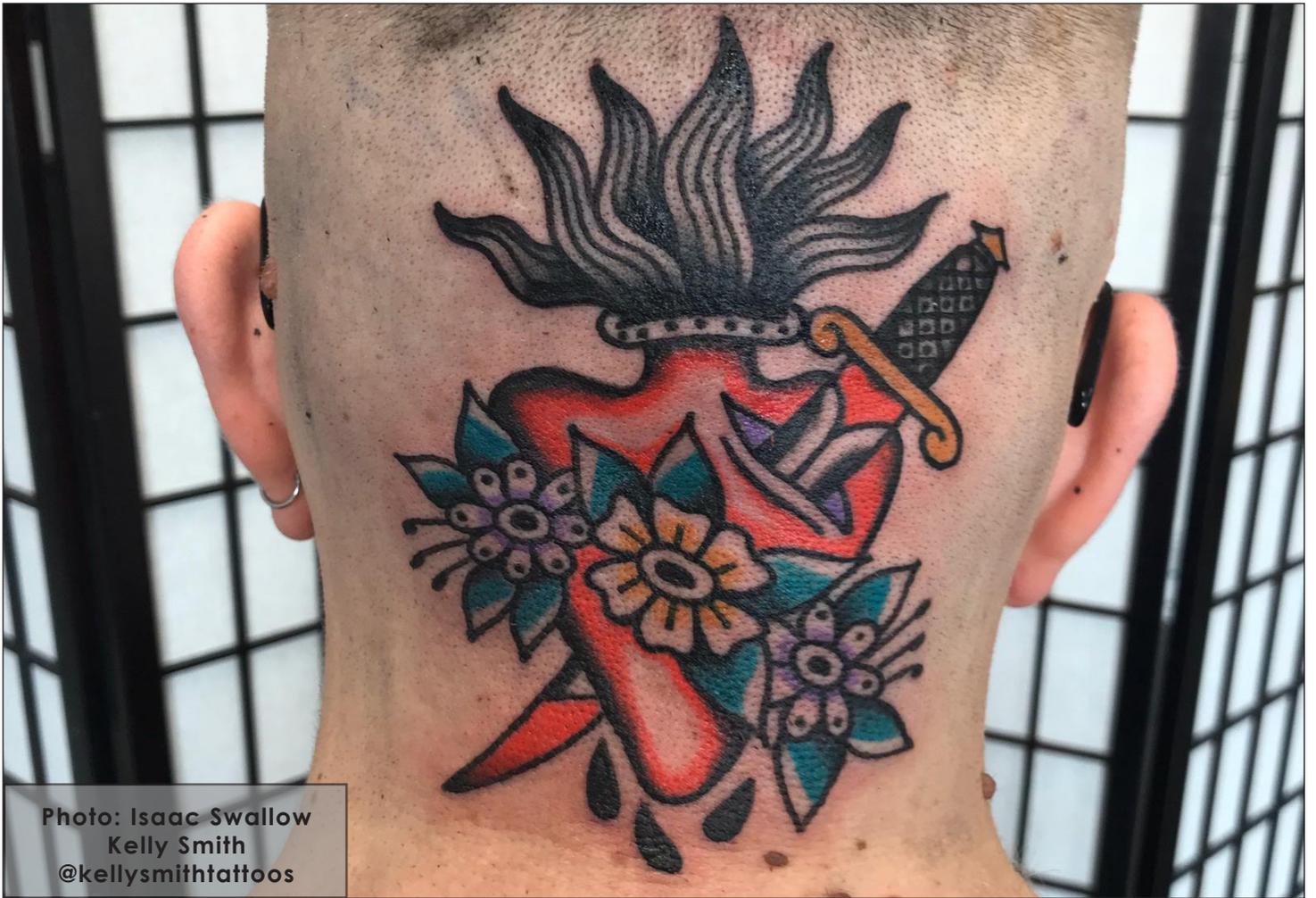
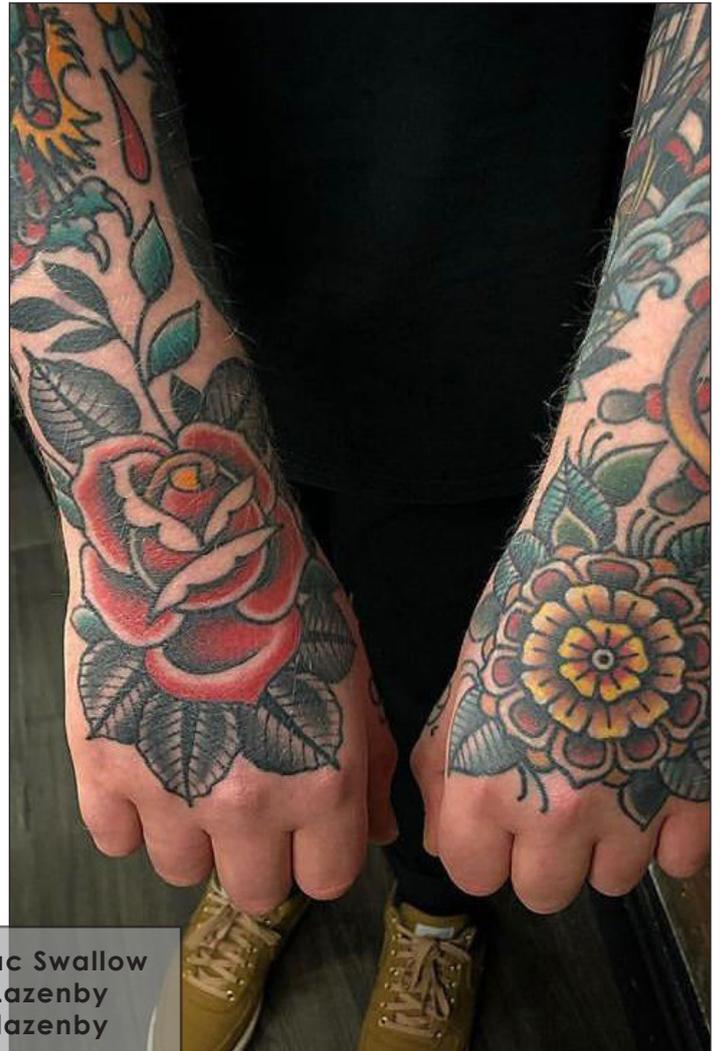
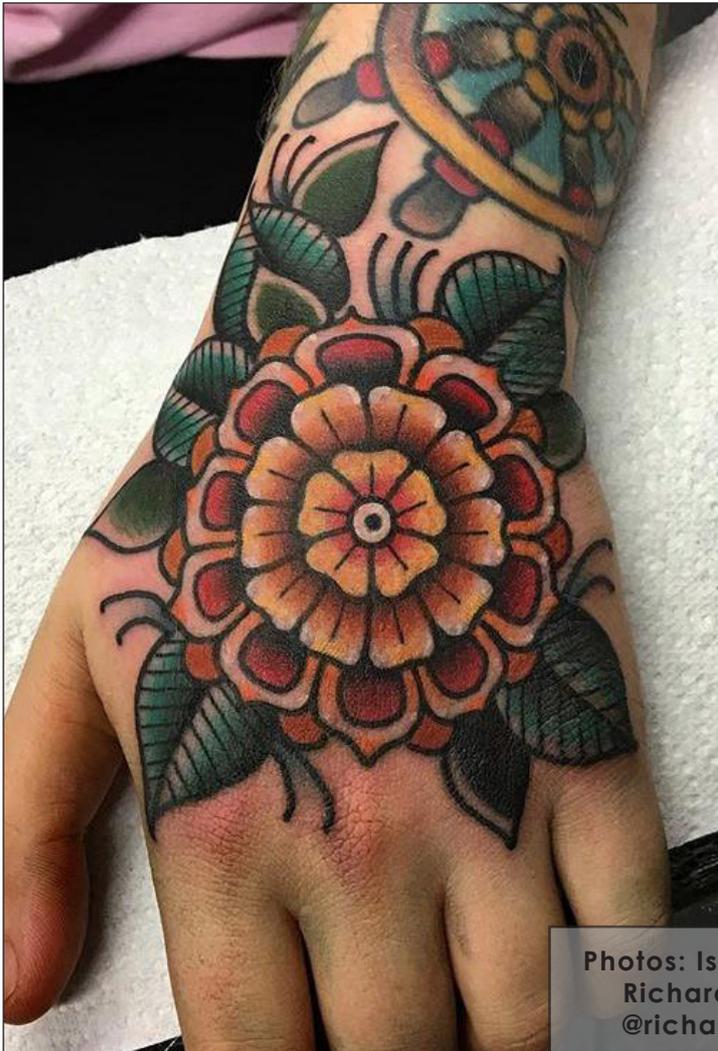


Photo: Isaac Swallow
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How to... care for your new tattoos and piercings

Aftercare should not be an afterthought

Taking proper care of your new body modification will set it up for how it will look in the long run. Every tattoo artist and body piercer's aftercare advice varies from studio to studio, make sure to take the advice being offered by professionals and not to follow the crazy remedies you read online.

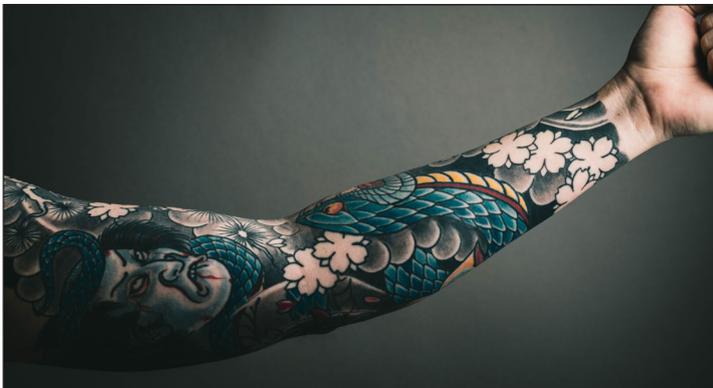


Photo: Kevin Bidwell

TATTOOS

When it comes to new tattoos, the skin is essentially one big graze. This new, open wound can bleed, weep and is susceptible to infection so proper aftercare is essential.

After first having a tattoo, the artist will wrap the skin in cling film or a breathable, "second skin", plastic bandage. Leave this on for the amount of time that the tattoo artist recommends, this can vary from a few hours to a couple of days depending on the product used. Once the wrap has been removed it's time to wash the skin; the area will be very sensitive so a fragrance free soap is best.

Once the tattoo has been cleaned, a very thin layer of antibacterial ointment is to be applied to prevent the skin from drying out and cracking, this not only helps with the healing process but stops the irritating itch that comes with fresh ink. Expect peeling but DO NOT pick. This can mess with the overall outcome of your tattoo by making the final image look patchy and distorted.

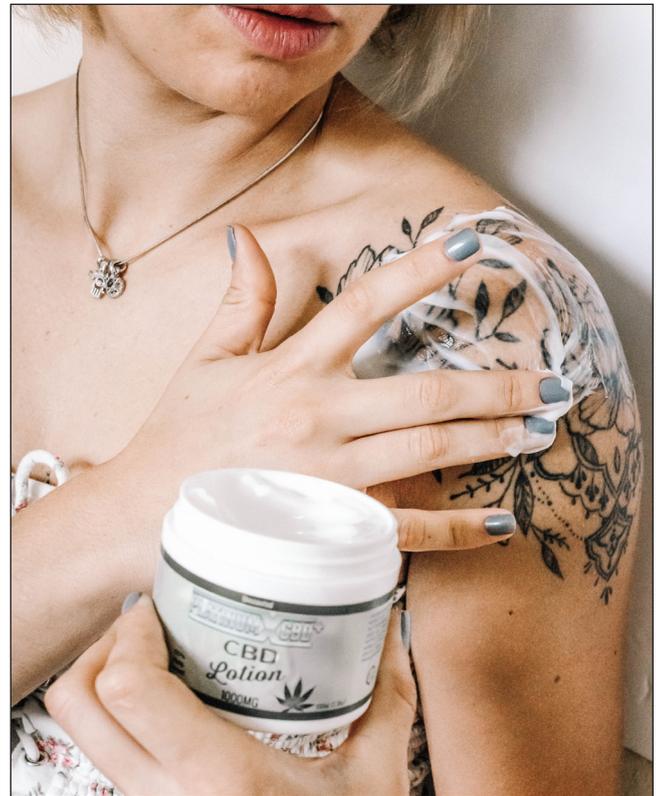


Photo: Laryssa Suaid

PIERCINGS

There are many products on the market intended for cleansing fresh piercings; including oils and sprays, which are often packed with harsh chemicals. Keeping it simple is always best for treating brand new pokes in order to avoid irritation; such as salt-water solutions.

The key to making your own saline solution is to use boiling water and minimal salt, to avoid drying out the sensitive area. The perfect ratio is ¼ teaspoon of non-iodised sea salt to 250ml of water hot water. Clean the piercing with the solution using a cotton bud or tissue up to two times a day. For oral piercings use alcohol free mouthwash.

Keep the piercing dry, especially after cleaning the area or taking a shower. Avoid things like tight clothing, antiseptics and detergents and cosmetics such as foundation and moisturiser on your new piercing as these may cause irritation and lead to nasty bumps.

The ban on body mods

Should modification be treated as a crime?

It's not unusual to see someone walking down the street with tattoos or piercings but more extreme body modifications are less commonly seen. People are choosing to make a personal statement with their bodies through dramatic alterations to their skin in order to stand out from the crowd.

Body modification has always been a grey area in the eyes of the law, and more so since the incarceration of Mac McCarthy, AKA Dr Evil, last February. Mac was a tattooist and piercer who often performed various body modification procedures such as tongue splitting, branding and scarification on his clients at his studio, Dr Evil's Body Modification Emporium. He was one of the most highly regarded body modification artists in the country.

Dr Evil was sentenced to 40 months in prison for three counts of grievous bodily harm, including a tongue splitting, nipple and ear removal, despite all of his clients claiming that all procedures were done with full consent. The lack of legislation regarding body modification puts practitioners at risk of facing legal repercussions.

Daz Shelton, a body piercer and former body modification practitioner from Doncaster, was trained by Mac and later became close friends with him. At the time, Mac was considered to be one of the best in the industry. Daz got into more extreme forms of body modification, following on from his piercing work, such as branding and scarification but recently stopped and went back to solely piercing after Mac's ordeal.

Daz was disgusted when he heard the news of Dr Evil's fate, he professed that "there's always



Mac McCarthy - Twitter: @doctorevil666

"There's modification and then there's mutilation"

a line," but who draws the line and where at? Body modification practitioners and clientele are fighting for regulation to be put in place to secure the safety of the industry. The legal uncertainty causes extreme modifications to be pushed underground making them more dangerous. "There's modification and then there's mutilation. But body mods will never be accepted in the way that cosmetic procedures are. The stigma attached to it is what will leave it unaccepted and pushed underground."

Pippa Kovacks, a 32 year old tattoo artist from Sheffield, had her tongue split by Mac to resemble the style of a snake 11 years ago



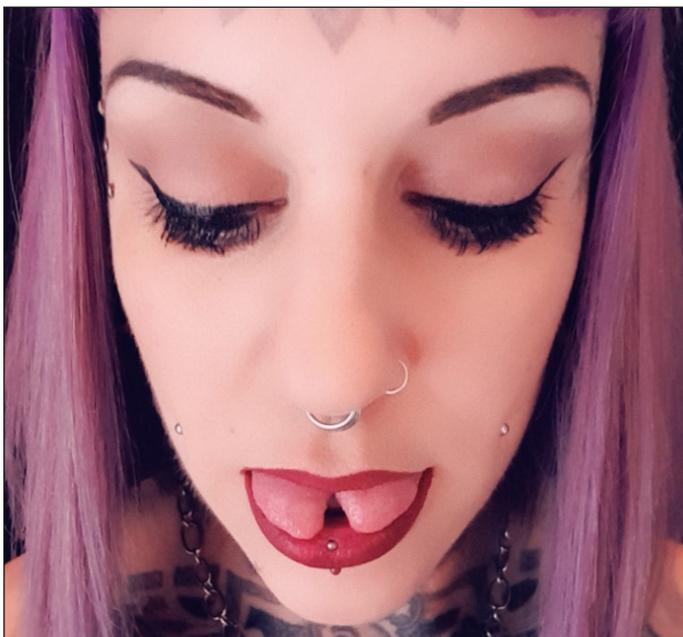
Scarification and brandings performed by Daz - Photos: Facebook

when she was aged 21 and was beginning her tattoo apprenticeship. Mac had been personally recommended to her by a friend. She had the procedure done out of curiosity as to what the final result would look like, "You know what a tattoo or piercing is going to look like before you get it but you can't really do that with a tongue split, it was the intrigue of it all that made me want to do it."

Before having her tongue split Pippa already had a few tattoos and piercings, including a large gage bar in her tongue. She talked through the process of having a human tongue be turned into that akin of our cold-blooded friends, "I had complete trust in Mac.

There were no second guesses about him." Pippa stated that nothing seemed seedy, Dr Evil was completely professional, friendly and knowledgeable, "If I were to have anything else done I would only want Mac to do it. I would only trust him."

Some studios have even stopped offering services such as genital piercings and laser tattoo removal in fear of facing legal action. Until there are clear, black and white measures in place it will continue to be outlawed and carried out in secret. Body modification will never have a place in society until it gains legal clarity and regulation in the same way that other procedures have.



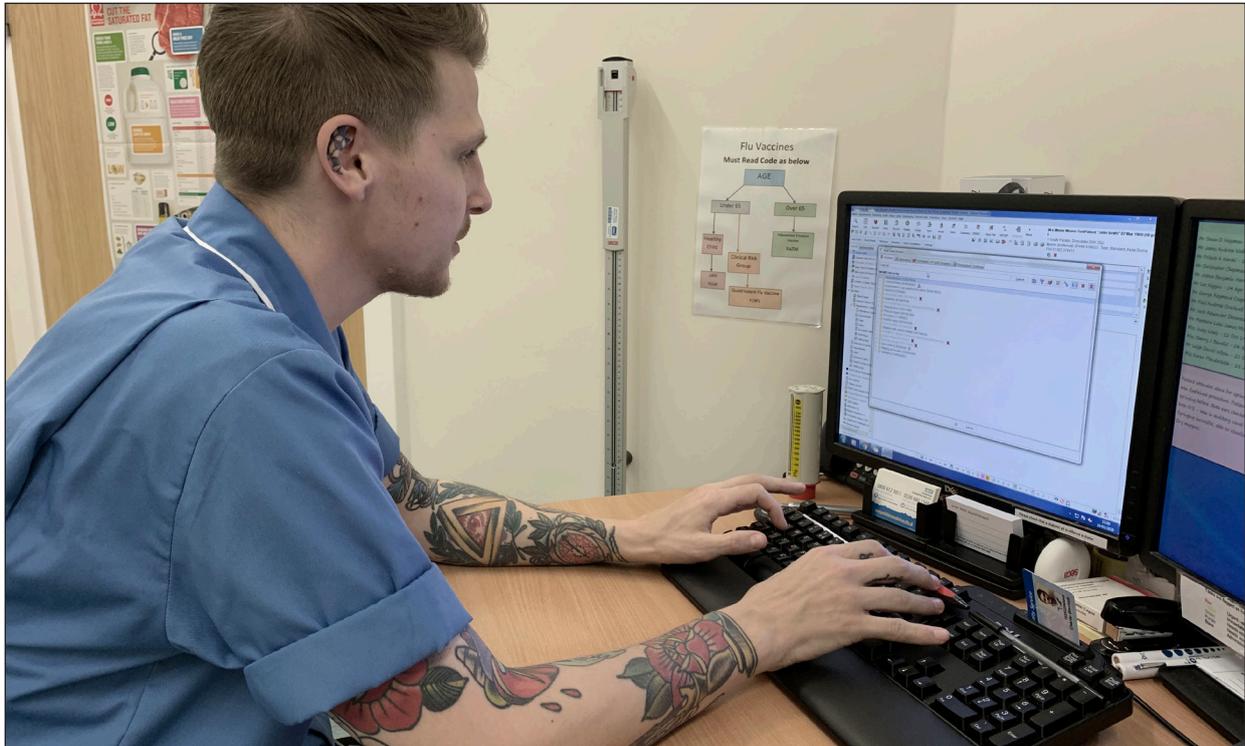
Pippa's forked tongue - Photo: Pippa Kovacks

Extreme body modification procedures:

- Tongue splitting
- Dermal implants
- Branding
- Scarification
- Ear cropping
- Piercing stretching
- Magnetic implants
- Microchipping
- Amputation

JOBSTOPPERS

Can tattoos impact your career prospects?



Pictured: Charlie Blackett

Once hidden beneath blazers; considered a total deal breaker in the eyes of recruiters. For many industries, the concept of having inked skin is still very much taboo. But many fields are now opening up to the idea of having tattooed members of staff, some companies even being more likely to take an interest in job seekers if they fit the "alternative" look. People can now get inked without the bat an eyelid as to what their boss may think.

Although some employers are becoming more accepting towards potential employees that are heavily tattooed, many individuals still face discrimination in the workplace. There are currently no legal defences for workers with tattoos, as they are not considered one of the discriminatory characteristics such as race, religion or age. A worker's ability to have their body art on

display comes under employers' uniform policies. The British Army has set out a guide for recruits consisting of 4 rules regarding tattoos. These include not allowing obscene or offensive depictions nor allowing tattoos on the face or head. The NHS's guidelines state that "potentially offensive or intimidating tattoos should be covered."

Rosie Roberts, 23, from Huddersfield works as a service desk analyst and has both of her arms filled with ink. For the past six months, it has been her job to handle sensitive documents within the IT department of a major building agency, working with the government and other authoritative bodies, but she started getting tattooed long before that.

Rosie started off her tattoo journey aged 18, by getting more hidden pieces on her torso and her legs, which could be covered

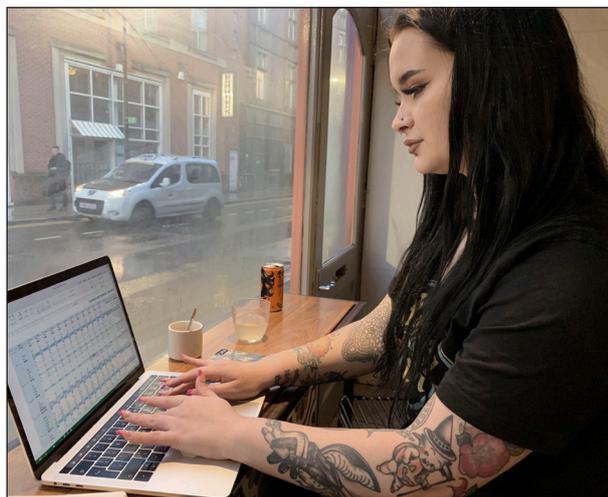
easily. This was partially because she didn't want to close off any potential career paths too early on but also because of her parents' distaste for them.

In retail, there were no major constraints for having tattoos so Rosie began getting her arms filled. After working in the sector for a few years she got bored and wanted a change in career paths and the hunt for an office job was on.

"I never really had any issues during interviews with my tattoos but I did always keep them covered up just in case. I did see a few job advertisements that straight up asked candidates to disclose any tattoos or piercings that they had." Rosie admitted that she was unsure whether it was her skills or tattoos that caused her unsuccessful applications.

"When I am in a job interview and it's going well for me I try and drop in hints and questions on what their policy is."

At her current workplace, Rosie isn't the only member of staff with tattoos but she definitely stands out for how many she has. "I know some other members of the team have tattoos but they're only small ones which aren't overly obvious." Her workplace is pretty relaxed about it and don't have any issues with them being on show. There has only ever been one occasion where she was asked to cover them up, for a meeting at one of the central offices. "I think this was to maintain the perception of professionalism."



Pictured: Rosie Roberts



Pictured: Charlie Blackett

Charlie Blackett, 28, from Doncaster, works as a Healthcare Assistant and has tattoos filling both arms and designs on his neck and ears. His workplace enforces a policy of "bare below the elbow", for hygiene reasons, meaning that his ink is on show during office hours.

Charlie began getting tattooed at age 14, but kept it restricted to easily concealable parts of his body. It was at age 16 that he began to get tattoos in more visible places such as his fingers and arms. "I started off by avoiding my neck and hands. I thought that was probably the best idea before I decided on a career."

Charlie deals with patients one on one and follows the NHS's uniform policy. "They're pretty laid back here with my tattoos. My contract says that they're allowed as long as they're inoffensive." But what about the people that he treats? "Patients actually tell me that they like my tattoos, they're a distraction for them to look at when I'm taking their blood."

Despite already having both arms and legs, neck and hands inked, Charlie has plans to get more tattoos, including having designs on his face.

Stephen Williams, ACAS head of equality, said "a dress code that restricts people with tattoos might mean companies are missing out on talented workers." So, tattoos aren't a total write-off in terms of your future career but is definitely something to consider.

The history of facial tattoos

Tribesmen, criminals and now hip-hop's biggest rappers

Facial tattoos, once only considered tribal practice, have now become more recognisable in the mainstream. Now that celebrities such as Post Malone, Justin Bieber and Mike Tyson have been spotted sporting ink on their mugs, this ancient rite of passage doesn't seem so out of touch.

Facial tattoos have been around for centuries, and there is evidence of it dating back 12,000 years to the Neolithic Period of the Stone Age, especially among Polynesian tribesmen. According to InkedCartel.com the word "tattoo" itself is derived from the Samoan word "tatau", meaning "to write". But why did these tribes begin tattooing their faces in the first place? Many used it as a way of symbolising their heritage and social status within their community, such as the ancient Maori tribes; the indigenous people of New Zealand. Maori tribal tattoos are some of the most recognisable designs on Earth. Men often had their entire faces covered in spiral designs known as "koru", whilst women typically only had designs on their chins. In



Maori tribesman - Photo: Gerard Wessel

their culture, facial tattoos represented a high social status in regard to their skills and ancestry. There were many other tribes and cultures that adopted the act of facial tattooing such as the Southwestern indigenous tribes; Luiseño and Diesgueño, where women received facial tattoos as a rite of passage when they began their journey into womanhood during puberty. For Inuit people, it was the women that had the more elaborate tattoos to display their spirituality, it was their way of accessing the afterlife.

Over time facial tattoos have drifted from their depictions of power, status and faith, diverging to obtain more negative connotations such as their association with crime. The connection between criminality stems from the common practice of tattooing inmates. Offenders may have facial tattoos for many reasons, some represent punishment with designs being etched upon faces as an act of humiliation; the face is a place where a design cannot be hidden and is on show for all to see. Others are open and want their tattoos to be seen, as a warning to others; a 'don't mess with me' esque attitude. Barbed wire on the forehead symbolises the amount of years served whereas teardrops represents the number of people killed. Prison tattoos are a common affiliation with Mexican gang members. The three dots known as "Mi vida loca" or "My crazy life" is a



Post Malone - Photo: Adam Degross

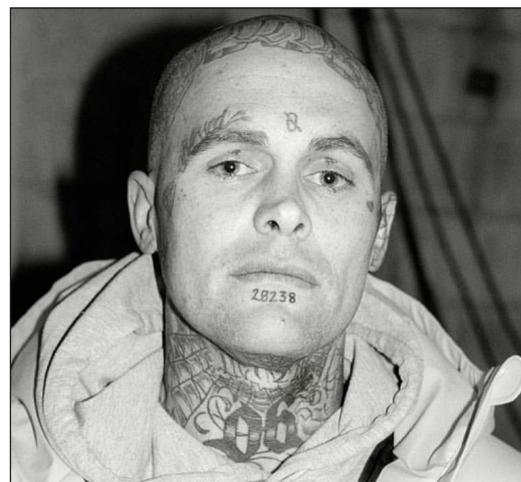
Tom's cartoon heart tattoo beneath his right eye



symbol depicting membership into the gang life and being a part of the cholo culture, belonging to a familia of other gang members and representing community spirit much like the tribes.

The emergence of hip-hop culture over the past two decades has popularised facial tattoos and made them more accepted than ever, with The New York Times claiming, back in 2018, that "Face tattoos have gone mainstream." Tom Johnson, a 28 year old call centre agent from Sheffield, is just one individual that was inspired by the aesthetic of modern day rappers' face tattoos and took the plunge to get his own. He was inspired by, Soundcloud rapper, Louie Knuxx who has a face donned with digits, diamonds dollar signs. Tom started getting his arms tattooed at age 17 and decided to move onto his face two years ago when he became enticed by the aesthetic. Tom has four designs displayed on his face and skull but plans to get more substantial pieces in the future; currently he has script writing across his head and a rattlesnake wrapping from temple to temple along with a cartoon heart and his own version of a "La Vida Loca" tattoo on his cheek. The symbol represents a hand gesture his own group of friends, the "Kliq", do when they are together, his own familia. "I was fascinated with the idea of subcultures and the working man having a place of belonging."

Although attitudes towards facial tattoos has shifted over the generations they all seem to join in the common denotation of being part of a community.



Louie Knuxx - Instagram: @louieknuxxdttd



Tom's head tattoos - Photo: Tom Johnson

ABSTRACT

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