TATTOOING:

A Universal Language - History & Significance [part 6]

...The soldiers also tattooed themselves to appear tough and warlike imitating the hero of Suikoden, the Chinese story of ninety volumes describing the deeds of a hero with very high values and a protector of the oppressed.

Tattooing along with engraving subsequently became the most popular and representative arts in Japan. This worried the Japanese authorities in the 1870s who feared that this body art would discredit the country in the face of the foreigners who on the contrary highly appreciated this art. It was not until 1945 after WWII and with the arrival of the U.S. soldiers to Japan that this law was abolished and the practice flourished again and this time worldwide. Never the less , today in Japan tattooing is not widely practiced. Those who do usually belong to some sort of a closed circle usually an underground community like for example the Yakuza. These deliberately designed their tattoos which usually covered the whole of their body stopping at the wrist and the at the knee. This is because during the first part of the twentieth century tattooing was forbidden and was a crime causing severe punishment. So tattooists made sure not to expose any parts of the body. Those who took the risk of being tattooed entered a written agreement with the tattoo artist on the theme based on the amount of money to be paid.

In Japan the art of tattooing follows a precise ritual. The colors used follow those used in the art of engraving, red, green, indigo and yellow. The different shades of these colors are achieved by mixing and diluting the inks. The art is still carried on manually mixing pain and pleasure. Both slowness and silence are the basic parts of the ritual. Tea breaks and hot baths are the only interruptions of these sessions. The creation of these luxurious skin costumes can take years. This ritualistic approach differs from that of the west which is more commercialized one one hand, and contrary to the Japanese approach, is an assemblage of many small and different tattoos.

After that tattooing gained great recognition all around the world. Many of the great Japanese and Chinese masters moved to the west to satisfy the growing demand there. They opened saloons in the large ports and major cities like New York, San Francisco, London, Hamburg, and soon gained world wide reputation amongst tattooing fans and artists. Up until the the end of the 19th century, many tattooed Europeans would display themselves at circuses and fairs. It was also a fad that consumed Europe's upper classes. Detailed newspaper accounts of the royal tattoos of Kaiser Wilhelm in Germany, Princess Waldemar of Denmark, King George of Greece, and most male members of the English royal family. Even Winston Churchill and his mother were tattooed. In the USA the Barnum circus was famous for its Living Picture Gallery where Prince Constantine displayed his 388 tattoos. In France, Edmond Faucher exhibited himself as the most tattooed person in the world. He charged curious lookers fifty centimes. He had tattoos all over his body including the palms of his hands, the insides of his ears, and his tongue. In Spain, a so-called Ricardo exhibited himself at the Santander Fair, after serving a twenty year sentence of hard labor for murder. He recounted how it took him six years to get fully tattooed. Women as well started to get into the scene. For example Salome, the "blue lady" who was an oriental lady tattooed in fourteen colors. These men and women who exhibited their body art added spices to their erotic attraction by telling stories of their heroic adventures of how they were captured by savages and tattooed against their own will.

tattoo & photo by skin deep® hady beydoun

Your comments are highly appreciated. If you think you have any ideas to make this newsletter a better one, please do not hesitate to call or send email. If you feel you have something to say and would like to have it published here, please email your article to : skindeep@hotmail.com

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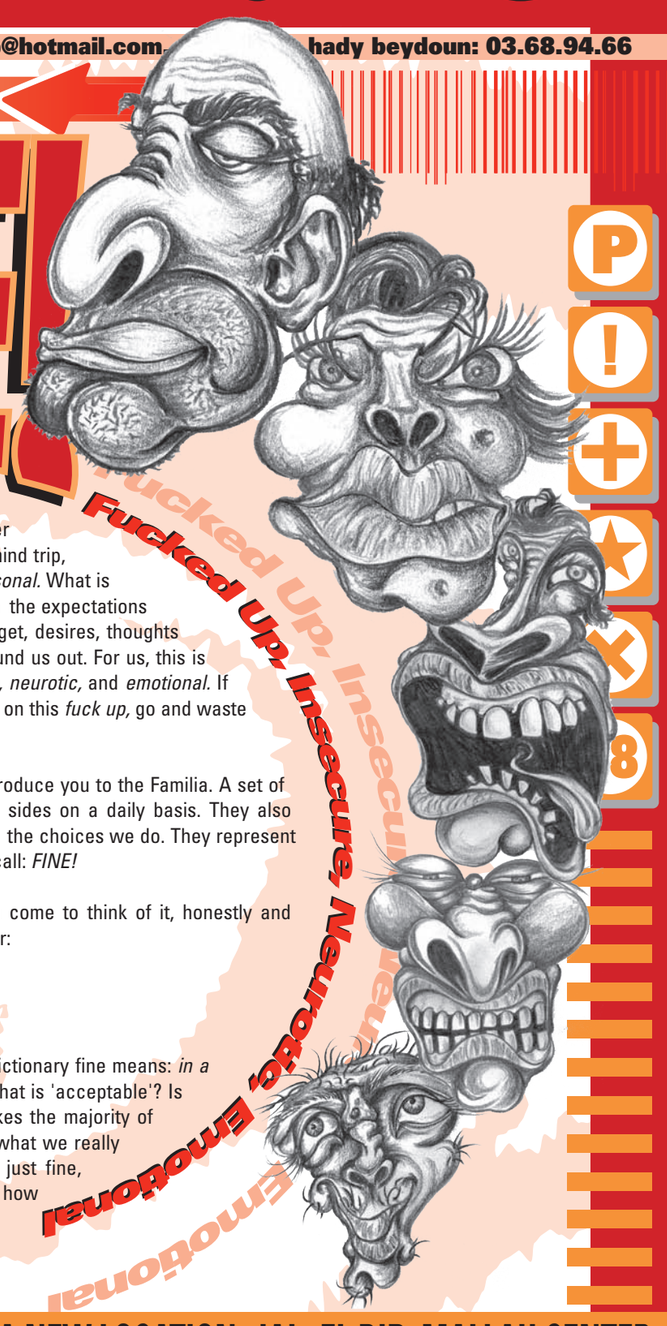
F.I.N.E!



As you may have realized by now, this newsletter is not intended for everyone to read or understand, for many it is utter bullshit. But for a few who read it, this newsletter offers a twisted mind trip, one that is as described by the title: *Fucked up.* By that I mean: *personal.* What is personal usually is what is somehow dark, unrevealed, different from the expectations of others and what is somehow coined as 'the norm'. Feelings we get, desires, thoughts and actions that are so personal, that they tend to freak people around us out. For us, this is being naturally ourselves; for them, we become *fucked up, insecure, neurotic,* and *emotional.* If you can relate to that, read on and enjoy, if not don't waste your time on this *fuck up,* go and waste your life somewhere else.

Now with that being said, I believe it is about time to properly introduce you to the Familia. A set of sick and twisted characters who represent our different parts and sides on a daily basis. They also represent various types of people living with us and affecting us and the choices we do. They represent opposites, insanity, convention...in short, they are what we everyday call: *FINE!*

So, given that, we are all *fine* or assume to be however, if you come to think of it, honestly and objectively, are we really fine? Well, there are two parts to this answer:

1. We could be fine health wise.
2. Are we really fine mentally, or are we *FINE?*

Here we come to another point: What is fine? According to the dictionary fine means: *in a good, acceptable, or comfortable condition.* So what is 'good' and what is 'acceptable'? Is 'good' what is 'acceptable by the majority of people? But who makes the majority of people? Isn't it the individual 'us'? If what we accept in majority is what we really accept individually then everything we do and accept should be just fine, because fine is what we are, and hence fine is what we all do, so how come most of what we wish for is fine and what others do is only *FINE?!* We resent it and complain about it and always believe we are 'finer' and forget we are the ***FINEST!***

NOTICE: SKIN DEEP HAS MOVED TO A NEW LOCATION: JAL- EL DIB, MALLAH CENTER

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DO COLORS FADE?

Yes, colors fade, but so do people. The whole problem with permanent pigments is that many of the best ones are unsafe for use in humans. That leaves the tattoo industry and the tattooists to find safe alternatives. For the most part, we are using very permanent, or light fast, colors. In the past, this was not always the case. Especially when it came to Yellow, Orange, and Purple. Magenta is not very fade resistant still.

The most common denominator in color fade in skin, or otherwise, is Ultraviolet light, especially from the sun.

This does not mean you have to stay a pale face. The sun, especially excessive amounts will fade your tattoos (with the exception of black) at about the same rate it will cause the skin itself to degrade.

Often I hear from potential clients "This tattoo is old, like 5 years old, it needs recoloring." I read this as either the artist did not apply the pigment correctly, or that the client exposed himself to too much sun or got it dirty or wet while healing. I do recommend staying out of the sun for the first few months after getting a tattoo. The colors can be aggravated by sunlight (photo chemical reaction) before they are properly healed.

I am not saying the sun will not fade a tattoo. You are especially susceptible if you have fair skin, or if you have color pieces without a lot of black to back them up. When black tattoos turn green, that is your skin aging, taking the tattoo along with it. Take care of your skin, and you take care of your tattoos.

ARE TATTOOS PAINFUL?

Hell yes it hurts! Actually it's not that bad. Some people enjoy it, some don't care and some can't stand it. Most in the industry agree that the more you get, the more it hurts, when the magic of the tattoo shop is your workaday life, it's not magic it's sacrifice. The best advice I can give you is to try to be calm, and try not to fight the pain. The people who breathe deeply and regularly and maybe even approach meditative states are the ones who fare the best. Don't come into the shop drunk or high, the artist may be offended, which makes it an unpleasant experience for all. Most describe it as a burning sensation, and most people take it just fine. I think the only reason they come back is that the pain is so mild they forget what it feels like. Even the sissies come back.

Q: Can you use anesthesia? Does it work?

A: There are a few products and someone is always trying to build a better mousetrap. There is nothing effective that is not made by pharmaceutical companies. They may claim their products work, but if you don't need a prescription they are only as effective as snake oil. EMLA and lidocaine do not numb the area, and they also make the skin react differently to the tattoo, and I personally am not comfortable working with them. I feel that a tattoo artist should be skilled enough not to cause their clients undue pain.

HYGIENE!

ALL ITEMS STERILIZED ARE SEALED IN STERILE POUCHES WITH AN INDICATOR THAT PROVES STERILIZATION PROCESS SUCCESSFUL.

DURING THE TATTOO PROCESS, THE NEEDLE IS NOT THE ONLY PART THAT GETS CONTAMINATED. DO NOT BE MISLEAD!

IT IS THE RIGHT OF EVERY CUSTOMER TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE STERILIZATION PROCESS PRIOR TO TATTOOING. SAFETY COMES FIRST!

GRIP & TIP

This is the ***Handle*** of the tattoo machine. It gets contaminated with every tattoo and must be ***autoclaved (sterilized)*** every time. Though it does not penetrate the skin, it gets in touch with blood and bacteria.

Cross contamination is a hazard to safety.

The MACHINE is the only part that does not get contaminated.

All parts labeled in RED get contaminated during the tattoo process and therefore MUST BE STERILIZED before reuse.

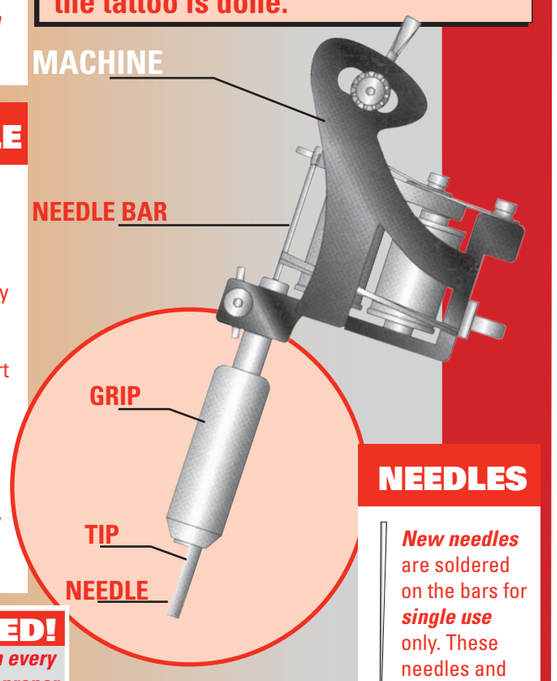
The NEEDLE is the only part that is used ONCE and is disposed of after the tattoo is done.

NEEDLE BAR & NEEDLE

The Needle Bar is what holds the needle to the machine. Like the other parts of the machine, it is reused and sterilized every time.

The Needle is the only part that is ***Single Use.*** It is broken off right after the tattoo is done and thrown away.

All needles must be NEW and STERILIZED prior to tattooing.



NEEDLES

New needles are soldered on the bars for ***single use*** only. These needles and bars must be ***sterilized*** prior to tattooing.

DO NOT BE FOOLED!

Always ask to see the Autoclave in every tattoo studio. It is your only sign of proper Hygiene.
REMEMBER, A NEW NEEDLE IS NOT THE ONLY GUARANTEE FOR SAFETY!

THERE IS NO OTHER WAY FOR HYGIENE. BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU GO!

TATTOOS & TOXICITY:

How safe is your pigment?

In the age of the tattoo boom, popularity and interest in the art form has spawned more artists and supply companies than the industry ever could imagine. Like any other grass-roots industry, mass production has diluted more traditional forms of learning the craft, such as an oral tradition passed down through generations of tattoo artists. With so few Old-Timers left, and even fewer willing to provide any tangible information on the tattoo process, many younger artists have jumped in blindly, believing that if they are ordering a product off the shelves, it must be a safe high quality product.

When you ask an artist what is in the pigment he uses, you'll usually get a stock reply, such as "vegetable dye". There are very few permanent, safe vegetable dyes on the market made for any artistic uses. This lack of knowledge on the part of tattoo artists has , to many clients' dismay, caused sometimes irreparable damage to skin.

Most tattoo pigments are made from metal salts, that is oxidizing certain metals and elements to produce a color change. Ever see the copper roof on a church turn green? Well, if you have any green or blue in your body, it comes from copper. The only safe greens and blues on the market are made this way, cobalt being too toxic, and ultramarine unstable. These are called Copper Pthalocyanine pigments, and are approved by the FDA for use in tattooing, contact lenses, surgical implants, and paint for infant furniture.

The other pigments considered very safe are Black, most commonly Carbon Black, or Bone Black, which is India Ink, made from burning animal bones or kerosene, and collecting the soot. Purple/Violet, which is dioxazine/carbazole violet, yellows of the Arylide type, Napthol red , based on the solvent Naptha. Reds based on other materials may or may not cause scarring and reaction. Magenta is safe, but generally considered less lightfast and more unstable than other pigments. Oranges are considered safe, as are Zinc and Titanium white, Titanium being the superior white. Browns, even though they are often based on Oxides of Iron are also considered safe.

Keep in mind that many reds are questionable, often causing burning, scarring, or rashes. While this is rare, many reds can cause serious damage, especially those made from Oxides of Iron, and Mercury. Cinnabar reds cause reactions and scarring in a high proportion of the tattooed population. These are considered very unsafe.

Yellow is generally a safe pigment, but when used in high concentration, may burn and scar due to a change in PH under the skin. Yellow has always been a problem pigment, due to the fact that cutting the pigment load causes a lighter, more washed out hue.

Another concern in pigment toxicity has nothing to with the pigment at all, but more with the carrier, or liquid suspension. Most suspension is attained (dissolved) using alcohols and glycerides. The safest modern pigments being carried by Alcohol (methyl or ethyl) glycerine, and other glycols. Witch Hazel and Listerine may also be used. These products are FDA approved for human use in a variety of products, including foods, candies, antiseptics.

By no means, do I mean tattooing is unsafe. However I do believe it may be unsafe in the wrong hands. While I do believe most tattooists to be concerned, conscientious, and caring individuals, I must say that the oral tradition of tattoo is dead. Many of today's artists think nothing of buying off the shelves as they would paint, canvas, or any other artist's supplies. So choose your artist wisely and hope he/she is well informed.

Any and all questions are welcome. Though I have little knowledge of the human body, being a tattoo guy and all, I am very interested to find who may have had chemical reactions and possibly help them in the search for a solution. My first advice is always visit a qualified dermatologist should problems arise. But if you do contact me, you may be armed with some information to inform your doctor, should he/she have any questions. My only agenda is to keep tattooing safe, and to provide any possible information that can keep my art safe and alive.

tattoo & photo by skin deep® hady beydoun

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THE BUBBLE 'PEOPLE'

'THE BUBBLE PEOPLE' IS A CONTINUATION OF A SERIES OF DIALOGUES IN SEARCH OF HAPPINESS

by hady beydoun

Uncle Smith wrote in a publication that has appeared a week ago in Milialand, the home-town of La Familia:

"We are living in bubbles. All of us. Each one of us has our own bubble. Each one of these bubbles has a shape of its own. Every bubble is distorted to fit the individual living inside it. Distorted to a horrible shape, twisted and dishonest about its features. These bubbles act like filters. Actually, they act like two-way filters. They are filters of reality. Filters of information and codes. Information about anything and everything. Codes of everything as well. Codes of behavior and expectations. Fairytale makers. Deceivers. And we love these filters! We love these bubbles! These bubbles represent us! They speak for us! How could we not love them and defend them? Let us polish these bubbles. Today is Sunday…oh no, it is Friday…hell no, it is Saturday! Well, it might even be any day of the week…"

:/Gathered around a pool table, La Famila discuss Uncle Smith's article and his point of view.

Evil Madeline: *(polishing her blood-red fingernails):* Tell me, Uncle Smith, what in hell do you mean in that article of yours that appeared in last week's Milianews? I mean, I don't see a bubble around me and I'm sure as hell I don't look like one, I have a slender waist can' you see?

Junior the Son: Hey Madeline, maybe those bubbles are transparent?!

John the Father: I know a lot of people who look like bubbles (joking) huh! Or maybe he (referring to Uncle Smith) means that everybody's head looks like a bubble hahaha!

Sweet Aunt Rosa: Oh come now John, he surely does not mean that, I mean we all have round heads, and they don't look like bubbles, and surely they are not transparent!

Uncle Smith: Are you sure about that Aunt Rosa? Yes, these bubbles are transparent. These bubbles represent our own identities and what we show other people around us. These bubbles filter and regulate what we give out to others and how we receive information from others. Each of you now has spoken through your individual bubble. These bubbles chose your words for you, regulated the tone of your voice, and bred the idea of which you spoke.

Evil Madeline: I don't understand you Uncle Smith!

Uncle Smith: You never have, my dear. Tell me, we've known each other for 23 years? Yes, I think so. When have you ever grasped the essence of what I am speaking? From all the drivel that I swill, what do you grasp but those futile words and ideas? Can't you ever read between the lines and guess those unspoken words? Anyhow, as I was saying we live in these bubbles under the illusion of happiness. We do believe our happiness lies within the confines of these bubbles and we never seem to find it there. We keep on looking and we die still looking around this transparent disfigured bubble in vain. Our bubble is infinitely changing.

Aunt Rosa: I find my happiness in religion. It gives me all the happiness and security I need. It makes me feel so special and worthy of living. It gives sense to my aimless life. It gives me ground to stand on and face tomorrow! It is my daily bread, the air I breath! My only hope of making it to Heaven! Oh, I am so happy just thinking about it!

Evil Madeline looks with pity in her eyes at Aunt Rosa and shakes her head...

Uncle Smith: (smiles a little and goes on talking) This is what I am talking about. Aunt Rosa said nothing. She did not say a word 'she' genuinly meant. It was merely her bubble speaking for her, through her own mouth. Nothing much, but very, very dangerous!

John the Father: What could be so dangerous about that?! It's only Sweet Aunt Rosa speaking of her own happiness! What harm could it do? It is only faith, and everyone is free to speak their own mind, surely there is no harm in what she said, why do you condemn her so, Uncle Smith? And you, Evil Madeline, why do you look at her with such eyes, what do you know of faith and happiness?!

Evil Madeline: Always Mr. naive John, just like your son, I wonder what made me get married to you, I must have been blind!

John the Father: No I must have been the blind one! Look at you! You worry about nothing and all you care about is your self! What are you made of?! Always spending what you do not earn!

Evil Madeline: Look who's talking! You have never worked a day in your life and always begging money from your brother! And I do make my own money, if I don't go to an office everyday it doesn't mean i am not working.....I have my ways (she looks at Uncle Smith and winks).

Uncle Smith: Both of you are right in your own ways; however, I see more truth in what Evil Madeline has just said than in what you did. Evil Madeline has spoken one golden truth in her little speech and one lie. The lie is that she called you, John, 'naive'. The golden truth was that she has more ownership over her bubble than you have over yours. Her bubble is her ego, untainted. I mean her bubble has no or little guilt in it.

Sweet Aunt Rosa: What do you mean Uncle Smith?

Uncle Smith: The bubble I am speaking about is those convictions and beliefs each of us has put around him. They were not put up by the individual on his own. His parents laid down the infrastructure for him and society filled in the gaps, adjusted some and deleted some. The rest was added by the person himself, his friends and tv.

Junior the Son: I learn from no one! I rebel against everyone of you!

Uncle Smith: Why does man preach what he does not practice and not the other way around? Why doesn't man preach about what he practices? Is it because the unattainable is far more impressive to preach? Is it because it elevates the preacher to a pedestal in front of the local man? Is it because to give the 'he' who preaches more 'power' over others? To make the parent more powerful than their children? To put them down all the time and to always prove them wrong? To always have the upper-hand by being the one who knows what is better for you?

I tell you one thing: If man would preach about infidelity and deceit, then our children will grow up and face the world better equipped. They face the world as it is with all its harshness and brutality with no illusions about fairytales and the good always conquering evil. In our world today it is evil that wins and goodness does not even exist. Look around you. Tell me what you see. You see lying and stealing and corruption and you name it. You call that bad, and you raise your voices to the sky and you ask 'Why? Why all this???'

I tell you, well, why not? Everything that is happening in this world is only natural. Anything and everything is what it should be because it is the only reality that exists. And we struggle to change that reality believing that by changing the nature of man the world will become a better place. And man suffers all alone in the face of his nature. His evil nature, as it has been called throughout history. Why is man's nature evil anyway?

Aunt Rosa: It is evil because religion says so!

Uncle Smith: Man's first duty is to himself. What his self desires and needs in order to go on.

Junior the Son: Even at the expense of other people Uncle?

Aunt Rosa: No way my dear boy, that is unacceptable!

Evil Madeline: Yeah? unacceptable, and by whom?

John the Father: Your morals Madeline, not that you have any!

Uncle Smith: Unfortunately, and I quote 'unfortunately' because yes, it does happen at the expense of other people. No matter how much you call that evil and bad, it is the only reality available to us through our own doings. Why do we do them? Why do we lie and corrupt and cheat and hurt others in every possible way, in order to please ourselves? Why do we do that and call it bad and feel guilty about it all the time? Why do we try to reach that which we are not and never have been nor could ever be?! Read your history books. Do you think this will ever change?

Aunt Rosa: Well, that is exactly why we have religion. God sees the ways of man and wants him to change for the better, so that there would never be all this suffering you are speaking about!

Uncle Smith: Aunt Rosa, if you only scratch the surface, you have a point, the easy one. The truth of the matter is that which you do not see! In appearance, what you have just said is good and wants to change the ways of the world by following certain guidelines. What you fail to see is that those guidelines are beyond man's reach. Yes you can all understand them and think and talk about them, but can you really fulfill them? Can you really fulfill them consistently? I doubt that. You may be able to do that for a while and then you err, and you call it human error and you move on. You blame your faults on human nature and you try to attain the impractical. So why be the hypocrite in the first place?! If man accepts his nature as thus and stops trying to change his own essence, stop trying to turn against himself, I believe much of self-suffering will be reduced to a fraction of what it is now. If we learn that what we instinctively do is right and not wrong, and that we are not born guilty, what would that change? It definitely would change nothing around us because the world will always be corrupt but what that would do is prepare us to face it as it is and not give us any illusions about it. We would face it knowing it is what it is and we would know what to expect. Why burn our youth on the unattainable and face bitter disappointment everyday?

I tell you, let us each break his/her own bubble and face the hypocrite in ourselfves, in everything and everyone around us. How can we do that? Finally, there is no ONE way to do that, the ways are as plenty as the number of living men on this planet. If happiness does not exist on the inside of this bubble, it then certainly must be on the outside.

Nietzche's *goat just passed through the front yard, leaping about and merry as ever, and he followed right behind it pondering eternity....*

Or maybe the answer could be found in the words of **Max Ehrman...**

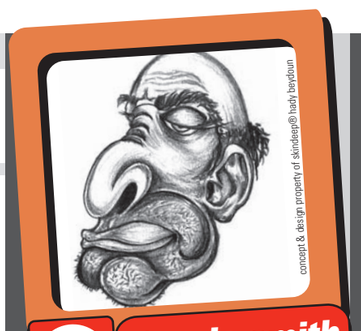
"Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is perennnial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.

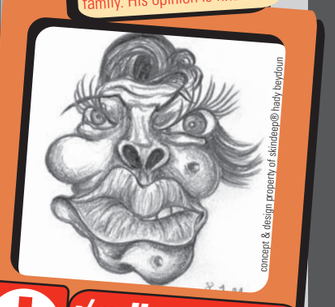
And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy."

"The answer is 'yes' or 'no', depending on the interpretation." *Albert Einstein*



:/uncle smith

/late 60's, very rich, very wise, "wife beater" (although he has no wife!) plays poker heavily, drinks and fucks everyday. He gambles a lot has to know every detail in the family. His opinion is final.



:/evil madeline
the mother

:/late 30's, very strong personality and commanding presence no one dares cross her. she is always up to some evil scheme. always dressed fancily, and a big spender. (well, she spends only on herself), does not cook or take care of anyone around her. everyone fears her.

18

:/junior
the son

:/barely 18, silly, aggressive and not very bright. he adores his mother and tries to be like her. he is a trouble maker, always arguing with someone, smokes, and is a big heavy metal fan, (he stole a bicycle once, recently). he has no pity in his heart, and thinks of himself as the center of the world. uncle smith likes him a lot, and they both get in to fights with **john, the father.**

'On the surface.' *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*

P

:/good aunt rosa

:/everyone likes her, and she adores everyone! especially **junior**! she treats him like her baby always giving him 'shrooms and space cakes! she does all the shopping and cooking for the familia. never married, she is in her mid 30s. she is somehow related to the **familia**, but only **uncle smith** knows the truth, he will not say how...(hmmmm something fishy here, but hey, she is sweet!)

'Where?'

!

:/john
the father

:/he is the brother of **uncle smith** and the husband of **evil madeline.** somewhere in his 40s (he doesn't even know!) takes money from his brother **smith** and almost shouts and spits every time he talks.

'Depth is hidden'

CHEAP WORK AIN'T GOOD AND GOOD WORK AIN'T CHEAP!

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"THE BITTERNESS OF LOW QUALITY REMAINS LONG AFTER THE SWEETNESS OF THE LOW PRICE IS FORGOTTEN" chinese proverb

HYGIENE!

TATTOOING CAN BE A SERIOUS HEALTH RISK TO THE TATTOO ARTIST, THE CLIENT, AS WELL AS EVERY PERSON WHO ENTERS A TATTOO SHOP. *Tattooists have an ethical, if not legal responsibility to see that proper procedures are in place that ensure exposure to health risks are minimized.*

This is the most important aspect in the tattoo world unfortunately, here in Lebanon this subject is being overlooked by everybody. From health officials and the people performing the art right down to the customer who is in general unaware of the whole matter. Sadly, there is no orientation on that subject given out to the public to increase awareness. In the U.S and most of Europe, one cannot operate a professional tattoo studio without owning a functional Autoclave. Health officials would visit the studios regularly and without notice to check on proper hygiene and safety for customers, this subject is simply non-existing here.

What we have in this country are people claiming to be tattoo artists and who do not even know what an Autoclave is! *If asked the question, they would reply that an Autoclave is for those who reuse their needles and that they proudly do not own one!*

Well, I would like to ask these people how the hell do they sterilize their contaminated equipment before reuse!

Surely they should not soak contaminated items in anti viral chemical solutions as this method has never been proven as s safe sterilizing procedure in the medical world *(Believe it or not, I have seen some people here wipe their equipment with alcohol!).* Just like a dentist's equipment, tattoo machine parts are made of stainless steel and therefore are able to withstand heat and pressure to ensure proper sterilization. The Autoclave is the only safe and sure method to ensure proper sterilization up till today. **Do not be fooled by cheap talk:**

ANY TATTOO STUDIO WITH NO FUNCTIONAL AUTOCLAVE IS A DIRTY PLACE AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

A tattoo studio advertising the use of new needles alone is no guarantee for safety. New needles are a must and so is clean sterile equipment! The needle is the only part in the tattoo process that is used only once simply for the fact that needle configurations cannot be sterilized properly along with other utensils. This is due to the microscopic space created between individual needles in needle configurations that allows bacteria and other viruses to live and shrink inside a somehow isolated capsule. The second reason why needles cannot be reused is that they tend to lose their sharpness during tattooing. What is as important is the proper sterilization of the other contaminated parts in the tattoo process before reuse. A new needle alone means nothing when it is used with other contaminated parts in the tattoo process and the opposite is true.

Hence, to ensure proper safety, the tattoo artist should be aware of these hazards and be conscientious about it and work ethically. The more important role in this case lies on the customer in being aware of these risks and smart enough to know where to go for their art.

MY METHODS:

All needles are disposable single use, and sterilized by Autoclave.
All needles are checked for flaws before assembling machines.
All items used during tattooing are disposable barring tubes and machines.
Tubes are autoclave sterilized.
All spray bottles, are bagged prior to tattooing.
All surfaces are disinfected by a virucide before and after tattooing. This includes work surface, work machinery, lamps, tables, armrests and cords.
Gloves are worn during all procedures, and I do not touch any non-protected surfaces or objects during procedure. Gloves are changed around 3x per hour.
No object that touches skin is reused.
Skin is disinfected using alcohol and soap prior to tattooing.
Hands are washed before and after tattooing, and after breaks.

HOW MUCH SHOULD A TATTOO COST?

I will only discuss this in terms of US currency as, I don't know customs and exchange rates overseas.

Most tattoo artists charge on a piece-by-piece basis, usually ending up at about $100 - $400 an hour. Lesser pricing meaning your tattoo artist is broke, or unskilled, likes you a lot, or is horny. Higher pricing because the artist is world class or may think he/she is. Sometimes mediocre shops charge big money because they are the only game in town. But still be wary of anyone giving away tattoos for free.

We would like it to be a perfect world where artists charge based on their skill, but it is not, so choose your artist wisely, be careful too: Look at lots of photos of completed work. Some so called artists photograph pictures of finished work from magazines, which are other people's work and claim them to be their own! It is said that it does not matter how high the price was if you got the perfect tattoo. If you get a great deal on a crummy tattoo, you have still been ripped off.

Most shops have a minimum charge, which in the urban areas of the US tends to be about $50. Sometimes the minimum may be as low as $35. You do not want a $15 dollar tattoo. This means the artist is either unskilled, desperate for the money, or wants to get in your pants. The minimum may be higher if you are placing the tattoo on the torso, or other areas of the body that are harder to get to, or apply the tattoo on. A fact of life is, that if you are having a tattoo put on stretch-marked skin, or your butt, or your armpit, that $50 tattoo your friend got cost you $75 because your skin will be harder to tattoo, and at an hourly rate, may take longer.

The price of your tattoo may also rise in accordance with your attitude. If you are rude, drunk, or otherwise hard to deal with you may get treatment that we artists call "priced out of the door" so be courteous, and do not make unreasonable demands on your artist. If your artist is obnoxious, don't bother arguing, find another one.

Many custom tattooists charge hourly, on timed basis. The general pricing of custom work is $150 an hour, if your tattooist is especially slow, he should be charging less. If you are visiting a well-published, world class artist that is very high in demand, you may pay as much as $400 an hour. But check this out, as I have seen artists that were not world-class, claiming they are, so check your artist out and see if they are as good as they say they are.

In some shops, haggling is acceptable, but most artists do quote the price they want for a tattoo, and generally that is a fair price. Do not try to talk your artist down too far or he/she may be offended. If he quotes $120 and you only have $105 in your pocket, most tattooists, being people's people, will accommodate you. But don't pull a wad of hundreds out of you pocket when you pay them. If you plan to haggle leave your Rolex at home, and take the bus, this is a sure sign of a bullshit artist.

If you think your tattooist is charging an outrageous price, look at the quality of their work, then shop around and judge strictly on a quality/price basis. If he's the best around, he's worth whatever he's asking. I cover up tons of tattoos that were done at a super low price, so remember that a really cheap tattoo may be an expensive nightmare in disguise.