

Tattooing: A Universal Language
History & Significance (part 2)

Throughout history, tattooing has been associated with religious, military, psychological, magical and social symbolism. There have been some civilizations who even named themselves after the art of tattooing. Two tribes of the British Isles, the Picts and the Britons adopted their names as a reflection of fierce devotion to tattooing. They tattooed their faces and bodies with colorful images and motifs which terrified their enemies. The Picts derived their name after the Roman soldiers who called them such. The name "Pict" is a Latin translation (pictus) of the Celtic word "breiz", meaning paint. The Roman soldiers gave this name to the Gallic soldiers who had the habit of undressing in preparation for battle, in order to startle their enemies with their fully tattooed faces and bodies, which were decorated with tribal designs and magical symbols, and also to relieve the restriction of movement imposed by their heavy clothing. Similarly, the Britons derived their name from a Breton word which means "painted in various colors".



tattoo and photo by skin deep © hady beydoun

The Roman soldiers in the third century C.E. who got in touch with the Picts were very impressed by the tribe's exotic body art, and so they returned to their home countries with tattoos of their own. At that point the newly converted Christian Emperor Constantine issued a decree banning the art form.

Consequently, the cause behind the anxiety generated by tattoos today, especially in western cultures has Biblical roots. The body, created in the image of God, is the temple of the soul and therefore must not be marred, according to Christian theolo-

gy. To its unfortunate discredit, some religious texts are unambiguously negative about tattooing. The Old Testament book of Leviticus (19:28) bluntly states, "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh on account of the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord." In contrast to this, several New Testament passages indicate that Christ's followers identified themselves by tattoos on their foreheads (Galatians 6:17; Revelations 7:3 and 22:4). Similarly, the Book of St. John states that Jehovah allowed the people to etch on their faces the Tau cross which is the divine seal of the Judeo-Christian religion. It is represented by a "T" which the Hebrews tattooed on their foreheads when they fled to the Promised Land. After the Hebrews fled with Moses from Egypt, tattooing was forbidden again because the Egyptians used that to mark them as their slaves.

According to other religions of the world, including the Copts, Buddhists, and Hindus, the everlasting nature of the tattoo enables them to establish contact with the after world in a positive way. They regard tattooing as a method of prayer and sacrifice. They also believe that by inscribing magical symbols on certain locations of the body, they can become closer to their gods and evil spirits are warded off. In the Islamic religion, conversely according to what the Koran states, tattoos are forbidden for they are a sign of evil. In this faith, tattoos are seen as impurities, making the necessary purifications required for prayer impossible. Never the less, the tattoo has flourished among Muslim people encouraged by the belief that any markings on the skin will be removed in the fiery purification process before the soul enters paradise.



tattoo and photo by skin deep © hady beydoun

Cross as a sign of faith, to serve as a souvenir, and there are a number of 16th and 17th century texts which explicitly describe the process. Even the Prince of Wales and members of the Russian royal family, in the 19th century collected similar tattoos during their visits to Jerusalem. This Christian ritual, in fact, is carried on until this very day.

Tattooing has long been considered a symbol of classification. It distinguishes believers from non-believers, the pure from the impure, free men from slaves, prisoners, criminals, prostitutes, vagabonds, from the upright man, and vice-versa. Symbolic of wealth, poverty, social status, the tattoo is always a classifying symbol. Quite simply, it defines people.

Not everyone is as lucky as I am. Lucky in the sense that I went to a proper tattoo studio, had my piercing done, and took good care of it. It's easy when you follow the instructions of a professional. My friend on the other hand, went through a different ordeal. We were supposed to have it done together, but she got impatient and, unfortunately to say, wasn't too happy about spending money on something she thought she could do herself. So, she cleaned the area around her belly button, rubbed some ice on it to numb her skin, and with a "sterilized" safety pin, did the deed. Needless to say, she felt incredible pain; to the point where she had to stop every minute or so, which means that the procedure took almost a full hour. By then she was hurting like hell and decided to give up. She bled for two days before she finally went to the emergency where not a single nurse or doctor was sympathetic. They flat out told her that it was a stupid thing to do, and that she should have gone to someone who knew what he was doing. When you buy some clothes, you can afford to forgo the expensive brands for something not so luxurious, same thing with music; you can always buy a second hand CD, or even copy from the original. But when it comes to messing with your body, how can anyone accept second best? Or in my friend's case, not even that. I mean, your body is your temple; it is with you for life, and if you don't take care of it, how long do you think it will hold out before it collapses? Proper care is worth it. And if you decide to have your body personalized and decorated, believe me, you will get your money's worth if you go to the right person.

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 the address provided.



KULTURE
KULTURE
ALTER YOUR EGO • ALTER YOUR EGO • ALTER YOUR

For further detail visit: www.skindeepculture.com [currently under construction]. For comments and feedback send email to: skindeep@hotmail.com, or call hady beydoun: 03. 68. 94. 66

Vital Tattoo Information
by hady beydoun

The number of tattooed people in today's world is increasing by the hour. More and more people are getting ink put under their skin for many different reasons. At the same time even more people are getting involved in the tattoo world and establishing tattoo studios or even working from their bedrooms. None the less getting a tattoo today is a very difficult proposition. Plenty of hurdles have to be leapt including widespread suspicion and prejudice about the process.

Before acquiring a tattoo there are a lot of questions to ask. Most importantly related to hygiene, safety and technique. Unfortunately the tattoo has acquired a notorious reputation along the years as it has always been associated with the degenerates of society and disease. This notoriety however, is wearing off due to the growing awareness of the individual person acquiring the art and the level of hygiene maintained in the tattoo studio.

What follows are some of the most frequently raised questions and answers compiled from a variety of sources in the tattoo world, including many artists and clients themselves, as well as books and magazines available for those interested in delving deeper into the tattoo world.

• How is a Tattoo Done?

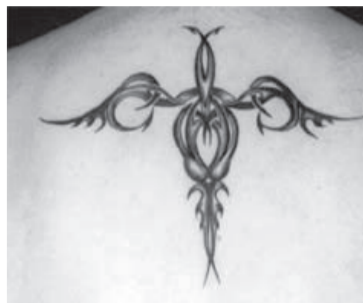
In the most basic terms, tattooing is the process of puncturing the skin via a needle (or a set of needles) and disposing ink under its surface. The needles are mounted on a hand held electric tattoo machine operated by a foot pedal with a variable speed controlled by a rheostat and determined by the tattoo artist as dependent on the type of work being done. The machine operates very much like a sewing machine with the needles going up (loading with ink) and coming down, penetrating the skin thus dispersing the pigment under the skin's surface. The speed of this process can reach 3000 hits per minute or more.

Contrary to common belief, tattoo needles are not hollow, they resemble sewing needles and pins, but are made of stainless steel or older models of carbon steel. This specific material is used to insure safety, line quality and shading which are affected to a great extent by the type of needles used. The needles are soldered by the artist to form a group that holds the ink. The number of needles used vary from one tattoo to another, anything from one needle (used in fineline tattooing) to a chunky bundle of 18 or more (for large scale filling and shading).

To begin the session, the area to be tattooed is prepared by shaving, cleaning and disinfecting. The selected design is then transferred to the skin by one of several means, including free hand drawing or a variety of stencil techniques.

• Is it Bloody?

The preconception that the tattoo process is gory is not very accurate (if it were terribly bloody, the ink would be washed away from the skin!). A certain amount of bleeding is expected, but a skilled tattoo artist's needles don't penetrate the skin deep enough to cause much of it. However, as bodies vary some people bleed more than others. The inks used for tattooing are special hypo-allergenic and cause no problems whatsoever that is, if the tattoo is cared for properly during the healing process. After the tattoo has been completed and banded, lymph, blood and some ink will typically seep out forming a scab that falls away after a week or so (don't pick the scab!). Within a few weeks, the skin heals completely and the tattoo is ready.



tattoo and photo by skin deep © hady beydoun

ONCE INK HAS BEEN APPLIED UNDER THE SKIN VIA THE USE OF A NEEDLE IT IS PERMANENT! THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A TEMPORARY TATTOO! EXCEPT, OFCOURSE IF IT IS APPLIED ON THE SURFACE OF THE SKIN LIKE HENNA OR A STICKER. HOWEVER, ALL TATTOOS CAN BE COVERED UP WITH NEW ONES!!

• Will it Hurt?

This is the place to dispel one tattoo myth, namely that it is excruciatingly painful. Well it is not! The level of discomfort varies on the placement of the tattoo and the threshold of pain. Some people feel more pain than others and mind you, people generally tend to exaggerate the process giving themselves more credit for withstanding more pain than YOU could possibly handle! In general soft fleshy areas like the biceps, buttocks or shoulders are less sensitive than protected spots like the underarm and inner thigh while bony areas are more likely to be more painful. Everyone has a different tolerance of pain and so reports on the tattoo vary widely. Average sessions lasting for an hour or two are often described more as an irritation than as the all out torture many people expect. On the other hand, the tattoo process is more of a ritual than the simple purchase of an item, so a little pain and thrill make the experience worthwhile and nice to remember!

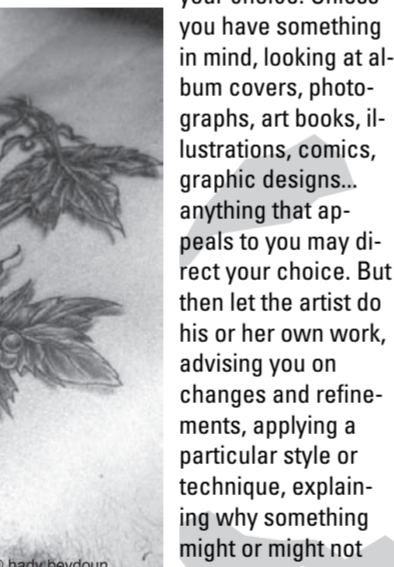
space and a quick buck, so beware! Do not settle for hack work. A poorly executed artwork has profound implications when it is part of your skin for the rest of your life.

There are plenty of ways to find an artist to execute and or create your tattoo. First you must decide how committed you are. It is not uncommon for people to travel great distances around the globe collecting work from many masters of the field. Or if you'd rather stay close to home, one of the easiest things to do simply is ask your friends who have tattoos you admire and ask where they got them done. Visit as many tattoo studios as you can and look for photographs of finished artwork to see if they reflect a style and quality you like. By all means educate yourself first; pour over magazines and learn what is well done and what is mediocre so you can recognize good work from shit work. Compare what you see in magazines to the photos you see in a tattoo studio. Finally cheaper does not necessarily mean lesser quality, but hey, is there any other way around it?

• How Much Will it Cost?
Prices vary depending on the tattoo artist, the size and the complexity of the tattoo, and whether the tattoo is custom or flash. A small tattoo in a street shop might cost twenty dollars and the hourly rate by an established tattoo artist for a custom piece can run anywhere between a hundred and two hundred fifty dollars. You should expect a non binding oral estimate based on the design, placement and the level of detail and rendering keeping in mind that prices vary a lot between artists in the same country, let alone artists in different countries.

• How do I Pick the Right Design?
This is one of the most personal and definitely most permanent of the decisions you are likely to make in your lifetime, so choose wisely. You

have to be as honest with yourself as possible about what you want and why. Again, educating yourself about the tattoo process, what can and what can't be done and what style you want is indispensable in defining your choice. Unless you have something in mind, looking at album covers, photographs, art books, illustrations, comics, graphic designs... anything that appeals to you may direct your choice. But then let the artist do his or her own work, advising you on changes and refinements, applying a particular style or technique, explaining why something might or might not look good. At the end of the day, it is you who are going to wear that tattoo for the rest of your life, so it might as well be the best job possible you can get!



tattoo and photo by skin deep © hady beydoun

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE:
By Sandy Mufarrij

You ever thought about having a piercing done? Or maybe a tattoo? In decision can last for a long time, but once you resolve to go for it, you better make sure a professional is taking care of you.

Let me tell you a little about me. My name is Sandy. I have my navel pierced and two tattoos. The piercing came first. I had wanted to have one since I was fourteen. At that time, fake piercings were in style; remember the little rings that you could clip on to your lip, or your nose? That's what I'm talking about. It started out as a fashion statement, but the more I thought about it, the more I wanted it, and not just for fashion's sake, but for me; something personal that says something about who I am. I finally had it done when I turned sixteen. I am twenty-one today. It's been five years and I still enjoy the sight of it as much as when I first got it.

Not everyone is as lucky as I am. Lucky in the sense that I went to a proper tattoo studio, had my piercing done, and took good care of it. It's easy when you follow the instructions of a professional. My friend on the other hand, went through a different ordeal. We were supposed to have it done together, but she got impatient and, unfortunately to say, wasn't too happy about spending money on something she thought she could do herself. So, she cleaned the area around her belly button, rubbed some ice on it to numb her skin, and with a "sterilized" safety pin, did the deed. Needless to say, she felt incredible pain; to the point where she had to stop every minute or so, which means that the procedure took almost a full hour. By then she was hurting like hell and decided to give up. She bled for two days before she finally went to the emergency where not a single nurse or doctor was sympathetic. They flat out told her that it was a stupid thing to do, and that she should have gone to someone who knew what he was doing. When you buy some clothes, you can afford to forgo the expensive brands for something not so luxurious, same thing with music; you can always buy a second hand CD, or even copy from the original. But when it comes to messing with your body, how can anyone accept second best? Or in my friend's case, not even that. I mean, your body is your temple; it is with you for life, and if you don't take care of it, how long do you think it will hold out before it collapses? Proper care is worth it. And if you decide to have your body personalized and decorated, believe me, you will get your money's worth if you go to the right person.



tattoo and photo by skin deep © hady beydoun

THE EFFECTS OF WHIM:
By Suriya Jayanti

Isn't a tattoo synonymous with permanence? Certainly historically much of the power and importance of tattooing lay first in the endurance required to receive one, and second in the fact that once applied it was there for life. Until recently, decorative body art was primarily religious. Thus a tattoo was a life-long statement of piety and or commitment. Early man worshiped nature, using animals as symbols and religious icons. Consequently, as has been proven by archaeological findings, our ancient ancestors decorated their bodies with images of bison and other animals. Similarly, in Ancient Egypt, in order to physically mark the pharaohs as gods, the divine rulers were tattooed. Still today many people have small crosses or crucifixes drawn in their skin.

As western society has moved towards widespread secularism over the past hundred years, however, tattoo art has become increasingly less about a symbolic dedication to a religion or tribe and more of a personal statement. With this transformation from iconography to pop-culture, that influence which made the permanence of a tattoo important, primarily religion, has dissipated.

It is likely that the desire to remove tattoos has existed as long as the art has been practiced. With the introduction of whim however, via popular fashion, into the equation, tattoo impermanence or removal has become a sort of a "necessity"; no longer do all people always take the needed time to pick a design they're going to like for the rest of their lives. Hypothetical situation, though in no

way a unique one: A couple have been together for three months. One day he tells her that he is in love with her, fulfilling her utmost wishes. The next night she goes out with a friend, has a few drinks, and as a bonding experience they decided to get tattoos together. Still overcome with her boyfriend's declaration yesterday, the girl decided to get his name tattooed on her shoulder so that she'll never forget that they love each other. Three months later they break up. Shit!

The explosion in whim-tattoos is remarkable. It is no longer uncommon for people to walk past a tattoo studio and decide, spur-of-the-moment, to have something permanently drawn on their bodies. Frequently, the design chosen reflects nothing more than their mood at the time. The crucial mistake is in not choosing an image or design that will have lasting meaning.

The ultimate attack on the infinity-factor of tattoos is laser-removal. This method, using laser beams to break up the molecular structure of the ink under the skin so that the body can excrete it, takes a remarkably long time, doesn't break the skin, leaves no scars and does not really involve pain, though still very expensive.

So what does the future hold for tattoo art? While certainly the whim-tattoo explosion has been beneficial for the popularizing of tattoo art in civil and mainstream society, and thus assisting the art form's growing legitimacy, ethically speaking it has not kicked the foundational meaning out of the art. What is the point of a tattoo if not its permanence? Will tattoo studios and removal-clinics share quarters in the future? Surely not!
Or is a grass-roots tattoo movement brewing even now? ☹



tattoo and photo by skin deep © hady beydoun



tattoo and photo by skin deep © hady beydoun

• Is it Safe?
According to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, which in 1985 issued national guidelines for protection during the tattoo process, there has NEVER been a recorded case of tattoo transmitted HIV infection. Any self-respecting tattoo studio now must possess: **Disposable latex gloves, disinfectant soap, disposable ink cups, disposable needles, sterilizing fluids and autoclaves are the rule!** This is both to protect the clients and the artist. Ultrasonic cleaners are not sterilizers! So if there is no autoclave in a tattoo studio, take your business elsewhere!

• How do I Find the Right Artist?
The success of any artistic tattoo depends on a collaborative relationship between the receptive client and skilled artist. As in every field, there are amateurs and in the tattoo world; there are scratchers fighting for

