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## Humanizing the Tattoo: Looking Beyond the Skin's Surface

Julia Schuckman

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Humanizing the Tattoo: Looking Beyond the Skin's Surface

By

Julia Schuckman

A project submitted in conformity  
with the requirements for the  
Master's Degree in Art Business  
Sotheby's Institute of Art

2019

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# Curatorial Proposal

Tattoos. Works of art on the skin, but what does it mean? One does not just brand themselves without a just cause. There is much that goes into a tattoo; selection of a design, collaboration with an artist, color selection, actual tattooing, and the aftermath/healing. This is the same process no matter the size of the piece. Even as a simple quote in black across a section of skin, there is more behind the ink and skin. There is an individual with a story. The exhibition, *Humanizing the Tattoo: Looking Beyond the Skin's Surface* will explore the human relationship to tattoos. With works from over eight artists, this exhibition will look through history and current tattoo trends to discover the human experience. The exhibition will start historically from military tattoos of World War Two and go to Today's trends. Another important element is the storytelling aspect, where through interviews and clips, we can hear the voices of those with tattoos and their stories behind it.

The human experience of getting a tattoo is a very personal experience. It is a decision only the person receiving the tattoo can decide. This is also something, as a society, we never truly look into to. What causes someone to get a tattoo, over not getting one? Why do some have a great need to be tattooed, while others have no desire? It is an interesting split among people who want and do not. Also with tattoos, we are interested only in the work, but not the person behind it. It creates a wall between the works and the person, "a split between (as translator) and body (the displayed tattoo) inevitably takes place in performative tattoo discourse. The split allows as interactive play among the subject, viewer, and the tattoo."<sup>1</sup> The tattoo becomes similar

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<sup>1</sup> Lei, Daphne. "The Blood-Stained Text in Translation: Tattooing, Bodily Writing, and Performance of Chinese Virtue." *Anthropological Quarterly* 82 (2009), 100.

to an object for the wearer to become the speaker for. This exhibition wants to break that image down and create an equal one for both. One could not exist without the other.

Tattoos are two-sided beings. They showcase the artist who performed them and the person receiving one. For the artist, the tattoo shows their skill set in this art form and what they contribute to the community. To the individual getting the tattoo, it is adding to their person as a whole. They decided to get a tattoo because something was missing to them or they wanted something their persons forever. This exhibition will showcase the stories behind the art and how it has become the people's art, "Artistic tattooing is one of the most prevalent and accessible art forms in America- easily characterized as the people's art."<sup>2</sup>

In the exhibition *Humanizing the Tattoo: Looking Beyond the Skin's Surface* we will explore the human experience with tattoos. How it has changed over time? It is an ever changing art form that is constantly evolving. This both with the art form and those interested in receiving a tattoo. There are no limits, "Tattoos are images without a frame, bounded only by the horizons of the body itself."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Noonan, Claire. "Art Expressed on a Living Canvas: Proposing a Balance Between the Protection of Free Expression and the Governmental Interest in Regulating the Tattoo Industry." *Loyola Law Review* 60 (n.d.), 155.

<sup>3</sup> Buss, Laura, and Karen Hodges. "Marked: Tattoo as an Expression of Psyche." *Psychological Perspectives* 60 (2017), 22.

# Essay

## Introduction

*Buzzz. Buzzz. Buzzz. Stop. Wipe. Ink Refill. Buzzz.* The sounds of the modern tattoo machine during a work's creation. It is a light sound that penetrates the air as someone is getting a new artwork added to their body. It could be their first or twenty-first, but it is always the same sound. Tattooing has been around since the start of time. However, it has always been distinct to the time and place the tattoos were placed in. As anything throughout time, it has adapted and transformed into what we see today. But when did Tattooing begin? How was it used? What was the cultures response to the art?

Tattooing has gone through waves of popularity based on gender. In the beginning of Tattoo, females were primarily tattooed over their male counterparts, "In many cultures, female bodies are marked or decorated regularly, but such body art conveys a meaning very different from that of male body art."<sup>4</sup> While it was both males and females that could get tattooed, it held a different meaning within a variety of cultures. In many tribes throughout the world, females began their tattoo journey as soon as they became of age. Even so, they used tattooing methods that outdates the development of the modern electric tattoo machine, "the women's tattooing was *he mea haehae*, which means, probably that such tattooing was originally done by scratching the flesh, and then the colouring matter rubbed in, not cut in which the *uhi*, or tattooing-tool, as at present."<sup>5</sup> It was a completely different process of tattooing than what we see in today's world. It was a ritual for these communities with a process to develop this art form. While this is not the most popular or on-demand way to get a tattoo today, you can still travel to communities that use this type original tattooing techniques to

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<sup>4</sup> Lei, Daphne. "The Blood-Stained Text in Translation: Tattooing, Bodily Writing, and Performance of Chinese Virtue." *Anthropological Quarterly* 82 (2009), 109.

<sup>5</sup> The Polynesian Society. "The Origin of Tattooing." *The Journal of The Polynesian Society* 20 (1911), 167.

get a work of art done. Later in this essay, we will go more in depth about these communities and their contribution to the world of tattoos.

As trade routes were becoming formulated between nations by ship, goods of all kinds were being introduced to cultures different from their origin. Some of these items included food, decorative arts, flowers, and really anything they were able to transport safely back to their home land. One unexpected trade was the art of tattooing. To much of Europe and the United States, it was an undiscovered artform till this time of trade. It emerged as an art form for the high and upper class, “King Edward VII was tattooed a number of times, and in this practice encouraged his two sons, the Duke of Clarence and the Duke of York (future King George V), who were marked with dragons on their arms,”<sup>6</sup> and “women with names like Vanderbilt (in the United States) and Churchill (in England) were tattooed.”<sup>7</sup> Tattoo became the item to own from these trade routes. No two were exactly the same and no one would have the exact work you would have tattooed. The upper class flocked to this art form between it being fashionable to showing their support for these trade routes and what they were bringing, in total, to their country. In this essay, we will discuss tattoo history after this time period, focusing on military/war tattoos, prison tattoos, the waves of popularity of women receiving tattoos, and tattoo becoming the art of the people in today’s world. Finally, we will discuss the reasons someone chooses to receive a tattoo.

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<sup>6</sup> Buss, Laura, and Karen Hodges. “Marked: Tattoo as an Expression of Psyche.” *Psychological Perspectives* 60 (2017), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Braunberger, Christine. “Revolting Bodies: The Monster Beauty of Tattooed Women.” *NWSA Journal* 12 (2000), 6.

## Military Tattoos

Military tattoos have grown in popularity as time has gone on. With each war, soldiers found creativity in tattoos during their time in the service. It also became a rite of passage, “For teenagers, transformed rapidly into men prepared to enter battle, the military uniform and the warrior image were no doubt enhanced by a manly tattoo that also sent a message of courage and devotion.”<sup>8</sup> Tattoo was another piece of the uniform to add confidence to those who wore them. It turned the boys into men about to go to war for their country. These tattoos showed where they came from and who they were fighting for. While in today’s world, military tattoos are spread throughout all the branches of service, but it was not always that way. They were also on the new influencers to culture in the United States, “Tattoos were uncommon in America until the military intervened...Members in the Navy were the greatest patrons of the art during World War II with approximately 65% of Navy personnel sporting tattoos.”<sup>9</sup> The Navy was the first of the military branches to enormously, as a group, experience tattoos. There are a few possibilities for this. On the ships, there may have been fellow servicemen who had experience as a tattooer and performed on the ship during low times. The other possibility is when their ship was in a port, when on leave sailors would go looking for tattoo shops to get work done<sup>10</sup>, no matter the country. Whereas every tattoo is unique, there were a few staples to Naval tattoo culture. Some

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<sup>8</sup> Pearce, Robert. “Tattoos - Life - Saving Art or Potential Health Hazard?” *Journal of Military and Veteran’s Health* 18.4 (2010), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Lande, Gregory, Bhagwan Bahroo, and Alyssa Soumoff. “United States Military Service Members and Their Tattoos: A Descriptive Study.” *Military Medicine* 178 (2013), 921.

<sup>10</sup> Schwartz, Eric. *Tattoo Nation*. Documentary, 2013.

popular items were birds, such as sparrows, anchors, and anything unique to the port they were currently stopped at to show they were once there.

The aftermath of military tattoos was two-fold, interpersonal and their health. After the servicemen came home from war or their time in the service, they had to transition back to civilization life. Tattoos were not as widely accepted at home as it was during their time in the military. Luckily most thought ahead, “As with the previous generation, World War II servicemen tended to confine their tattoos to the upper limb; some being conscious of a perceived need to hide their tattoos from the public scrutiny made certain that they could be covered by short sleeves.”<sup>11</sup> They knew once their time ended in the service, they may need to cover up their tattoos to be reaccepted into everyday life. The placement of the upper arm allowed them the best of both worlds: being tattooed in the military style and easily covered up when needed. Some of the aftermath sailors had to their tattoos affected their health. Tattoo standards are different throughout the world. For example, getting a tattoo in the 1950’s has different sanitation standards then getting one today at the same shop. Since servicemen traveled the world, they had the possibility of experiencing from tattooing methods from different cultures. From this they were able to get the more unique works, then what was offered stateside. However, this came with its own risks, “They too were more prone to local complications such as bleeding and inflection from the parlours of Asian ports where unsterile bamboo needles were commonly used.”<sup>12</sup> Infection is a fear of anyone receiving a tattoo, it has to be double for

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<sup>11</sup> Pearce, Robert. “Tattoos - Life - Saving Art or Potential Health Hazard?” *Journal of Military and Veteran’s Health* 18.4 (2010), 14

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

someone who would limited medical options as an active military personnel. While tattooing became part of the Navy lifestyle for sailors, it also held some dangers.

## Prison Tattoos

Prison tattoos are an important part of tattoo history. From their design to color scheme to the reasons behind getting one. First, let's look into the basics. These tattoos are completed with the least amount of supplies and with that having an affect on its color schemes, "Prison and street tattoos are monochromatic (black only) because prisoners have no access to tattoo inks."<sup>13</sup> In prison, one must make the most with what they have and black ink was what was around. Originally for writing or printmaking, a skill taught in prison, ink was reconfigured to become the ink for tattoos. There was also a divide in who in the prison would get tattoos. Like military tattoo, it was not a mandatory event, but it is one that many did. It is what makes the difference between a convict and an inmate; "Since tattooing is illegal in prison, a convict gets tattooed, while an inmate does not... For the convict, after being locked up and stripped of everything he owns, respect is the one thing that cannot be taken away. An inmate has no respect."<sup>14</sup> This creates a divide in prisons even before tattoos are introduced. The tattoo joins some together, but others apart.

Themes found with prison tattoo culture is unique to the person and community they are a part of. They are very custom to the person and each has their own story they want told. A beloved tattoo many prisoners get is one paying homage to where they came from;

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<sup>13</sup> Demello, Margo. "The Convict Body: Tattooing Among Male American Prisoners." *Anthropology Today* 9 (1993), 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 11-12.

“One of the most popular tattoos in prison is the *loca*, which gives the name of the convict’s neighborhood of origin, or else his gang affiliation. These tattoos are extremely important in prison, as they serve as a reminder of the community to which the displaced convict belongs”<sup>15</sup>

This tattoo lets the person place their stake into a community of people. It is a reminder of where they are from and can help them find others from the same area. So much of a prisoners identity gets removed while in prison, that this type of tattoo can remind them of who they are. Another popular tattoo found within the prison system is one known throughout popular culture. It holds some of the deepest meanings for those who received it to display an important part of their life. This tattoo is the teardrop, “most powerful prison tattoo is the tear, tattooed just below the outside corner of the eye... (each tear signifies a prison term served, or a man may wear a tear for each person he killed). And thus serves as a kind of self-inflicted brand.”<sup>16</sup> This is a compelling tattoo for the person and the outside world to view. First, with it being on the face, it is one that will never truly covered up from the outside world. It is a reminder every look in the mirror of the individual’s personal meaning behind it. Finally, it is a message to all who view it, whether in prison or out in the world, of what the person behind the tear has done.

Similar to it’s tattoos, the aftermath of prison tattoos are also unique. One may regret work they had done during their time in prison when they do get out. The work may label their time in jail and not be something they want to be reminded of later in life. One’s prison sentence may be up before a tattoo could finish getting completed. Since tattooing is illegal in prisons, large pieces have to be done slowly over a period of time. The person receiving the tattoo may

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<sup>15</sup> Demello, Margo. “The Convict Body: Tattooing Among Male American Prisoners.” *Anthropology Today* 9 (1993), 11.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

get out, but their artist is still in prison. Some may try to find an artist on the outside to finish it or wait for the artist to get out, others may take a more drastic approach, “simply be re-arrested within a short period of time, allowing the work to be completed”<sup>17</sup> They believe it is that artist’s work and it should be finished by them. Their artist has their vision of what they want and what it would take to complete. Finally, to the prisoner a tattoo gives a freedom. This is part of the aftermath because not all who go to prison come out of it and the tattoo gives some breakage to that. It is something that cannot be taken from the person, “The very gratuitousness of the tattoo is a form of freedom... yet still it is perceived as the ‘property’ of the tattooed criminal. This property, significantly, cannot be stolen, even in a word of thieves”<sup>18</sup> It is something that is the individual’s in prison and can not be removed once it is placed on the person. Tattoos give prisoners a freedom and creativity inside isolation from the outside world.

## The Female Body and Tattoos

Tattooing and the female body has gone through waves from the start of time to today. At points only females were tattooed in certain cultures to it becoming completely taboo for a woman to be tattooed in another. As stated in the beginning of this essay, here we will get more in detail about tribe communities and their tattoo practices. In the Tribes of Dudhi, females get tattooed as soon as they reach the age for marriage. It is believed “No man would be willing to accept a girl untattooed as a wife.”<sup>19</sup> Tattoos are one of the requirements to be wed and in

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<sup>17</sup> Demello, Margo. “The Convict Body: Tattooing Among Male American Prisoners.” *Anthropology Today* 9 (1993), 12.

<sup>18</sup> McCarron, Kevin. “Skin and Self-Indictment: Prison Tattoos, Race, and Heroin Addiction.” *English Studies in Canada* 34 (2008), 93.

<sup>19</sup> Mathur, K. S. “Female Tattooing Among the Tribes of Dudhi.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 54 (1954), 140.

turn to be considered attractive. In this tribe, it has become precedent for males to expect this from their future wives, but the females have another vision for the tattoos. The women believe this rite happens to give them higher peace, “The idea also seems to be known that the marks are a passport to heaven.”<sup>20</sup> Women take this pain from the tattoos because it is said to bring them to their final destination: heaven. This gives the tattoo an otherworldly quality and belief. It is more than just ink and skin, but something bigger. Something we cannot see as mere mortals but as something our spirit does in the afterlife. Everyone, well women, was tattooed. No matter the tribe’s beliefs, it was tradition. In South Eastern New Guinea, “in districts where until recent years tattooing was consistently practiced, (women) were tattooed without exception”<sup>21</sup> It is an important rite of passage for the women of these communities. Tattoos were traditions passed on from generations before them, to continue on to the future.

At the same time military tattoos were becoming popular for men in the service, tattoos for women were taboo in many social circles of the United States. While some women did fully get tattoos like men, this includes large pieces on arms, legs, back, chest, etc., it has become hidden in most tattoo literature. The history books have a different look on women with tattoos, “Censured by neglect, women have been erased from the Western tattooing which remains almost exclusively about male bodies, glowing out of the homosociality of sailing and military communities.”<sup>22</sup> Women were written out of the history books for tattoos for a segment of time. This may be because the ratio of women to men getting tattooed to women was smaller, but they

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<sup>20</sup> Mathur, K. S. “Female Tattooing Among the Tribes of Dudhi.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 54 (1954), 141.

<sup>21</sup> Barton, F. R. “Tattooing in South Eastern New Guinea.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 48 (1918), 24.

<sup>22</sup> Braunberger, Christine. “Revolting Bodies: The Monster Beauty of Tattooed Women.” *NWSA Journal* 12 (2000), 4.

still had a small population. There was pageants for women with a large amount of tattoos to participate in and conventions. However, this population of women was small. What was the everyday women's view of tattooing? This was hidden in their beauty salons as "salons began to discreetly offer tattooing to add a glow to one's cheek, an arch to one's brow, a pout to one's lips, and for the very brave, the illusion of a few more eyelashes."<sup>23</sup> This was the beginning of beauty tattooing we see today. Women, in secret, used tattoos to fix facial insecurities into a thing of beauty. It could be as simple as adding makeup they place on every day to drawing something in to look more fuller, like eyebrows. The most important part of this tattooing was how secretive it was. It happened at the beauty salon, where one would go regularly to get hair done. The tattooing would just be considered another treatment one could get, like a facial. The word tattoo was never uttered and these practices for years stayed behind doors to keep separated from other tattooing practices.

Themes established in the beginning of women becoming tattooed are vastly different from their men counterparts. The tattoos played into the gender norms that the sexes followed till modern day;

"Young women may use tattoos to enforce rather than challenge traditional femininity, and they do so by selecting small feminine images such as flowers, celestial motifs, hearts and butterflies... Men often use their tattoos to represent masculinity and thereby tend to select images such as dragons, reptiles, skulls and crossbones, and Tribal/Celtic insignis"<sup>24</sup>

Women and men toward the beginning of tattoo liberation for all, stayed around what would be accepted for their gender. This was not everyone getting tattoos, but these were the popular

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<sup>23</sup> Braunberger, Christine. "Revolting Bodies: The Monster Beauty of Tattooed Women." *NWSA Journal* 12 (2000), 4-5.

<sup>24</sup> Dickson, Lynda, Richard L. Dukes, Hilary Smith, and Noel Strapko. "To Ink or Not to Ink: The Meaning of Tattoos Among College Students." *College Student Journal*, 109.

tattoos for men and women. There was a line drawn between each of what would be considered a man's tattoo and what would be a woman's tattoo to the public eye.

## Tattoo: The Art of the People

Tattooing over time has become the art of the people. Everyone of every class can afford to get one done. It was not always looked at as an art form, however. Tattooing, as we have seen, as traditional based values within many groups of people, but it was not until recent times that it was considered an art form to be celebrated, "The tattoo renaissance comprises not the rebirth of a techniques, but the social relocation of a practice; it is a tattooing becomes gentifiries that it is elevated into a socially elaborated art form."<sup>25</sup> This renaissance would not have been possible if people did not start accepting tattoo, as a whole. People had to support the artists, who create the designs, for new methods and skills to be developed. Within this community, there is only growth from where it started to create an even larger impact on the art form.

How did tattooing become the art of the people? It was the technology behind the tattooing, the infamous; electric tattoo machine. This was not always the way of tattooing, in fact during the early days of tattooing, it was all hand poked with a needle, thread, string. Some tattooing methods still use this, but overall most modern tattoo artists use the machine. This machine made tattoos more attainable than before, "The electric tattoo machine allowed anyone to obtain a reasonably priced, and readily available tattoo. As the average person could easily get

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<sup>25</sup> Fleming, Juliet. "The Renaissance Tattoo." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (1997), 35.

a tattoo, the upper classes turned away from it.”<sup>26</sup> Tattooing has become easier for the artist by this tool and can, in turn, help the consumer. The artist has more control of the tattoo, in terms of line, color, and time. They can make smaller or cleaner looking lines and color is easier to be added into sections of the piece. The electric tattoo machine transformed the industry into one that can mass produce to the public, while also staying to its artistic values.

Tattoos during the beginning of the electric tattoo machine has transitioned to more custom pieces overall for the art form. Tattooers in the beginning used pattern sheets to apply the design over the clients desired area, then they would just have to trace and fill in. With this method, they were no differences between designs and many people could have the same tattoo. It was very much like copying and pasting on a computer, just with a tattoo. Not everyone wanted a copied design and some artists did not want to do the same design repeatedly, “artists such as Don Ed Hardy differentiate their practice from that earlier American tattooists by invoking their own departure from the use of ‘flash’ or pattern sheets.”<sup>27</sup> It was through known tattooists that these sheets started to slowly fade out as the main way to tattoo. Pattern sheets are still used today, but are not typical for complete custom works. When the artist started to view tattooing without them, was when the revolution of design happened.

## Today’s Tattooing World

In Today’s world, tattoo culture is only thriving as time goes on. It has become more widely accepted than any other time in history. The art form is flourishing with new designs to

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<sup>26</sup> Brzezinski, P., and L. Martini. “The Prediction of the Percentage of Tattoo Ink That Is Able to Penetrate the Stratum Corneum in Different Races.” *Our Dermatol Online* 9(4) (2018), 387.

<sup>27</sup> Fleming, Juliet. “The Renaissance Tattoo.” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (1997), 36.

give everyone who wants a tattoo their own uniquely from others. Tattoo culture nowadays are best described by this statement;

“In recent years, the number of people undergoing tattoo procedures has rapidly increased, the association of tattoos with negative symbolism has changed, and tattoos have become more accepted as a form of physical and cultural expressions; they are accepted as a means of expressing individuality or fashion, and celebrities have helped to turn tattoos into a mode of expression the popular arts.”<sup>28</sup>

This perfectly sums up how tattoos are looked at in today’s culture. They are no longer negative and bad, but something to be celebrated. Like many things, with the charm of influential people, such as celebrities, the acceptance of tattoos seemed to have happened over night. Now, many people partake in them. The youngest possible generation eligible to get tattoos are flocking to them. College students, from the late Millennials to early Generation Zers (roughly anyone born in the 1990’s), are already close to being the top generation with the most individuals tattooed. This age group also assists with the positive view of tattooing, “Tattooed college students may also serve as a ‘bridge’ between younger tattooed persons for whom tattoos are still correlated with a plethora of negative behaviors.”<sup>29</sup> This generation can become the middle ground of views of tattoos, almost neutral territory. They can debunk distressing stereotypes still carried on from older generations about tattoos, while showing how the world is changing.

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<sup>28</sup> Hong, Bo-Kyung, and Hyo Young Lee. “Self-Esteem, Propensity for Sensation Seeking, and Risk Behavior among Adults with Tattoos and Piercings.” *Journal of Public Health Research* 6:1107 (2017), 158.

<sup>29</sup> Dickson, Lynda, Richard L. Dukes, Hilary Smith, and Noel Strapko. “To Ink or Not to Ink: The Meaning of Tattoos Among College Students.” *College Student Journal*, 107.

## Reasons for Tattoos

Everyone has their reasons for deciding to get a tattoo. It varies person to person, with their interpretation of their story taking different forms with their tattoo. No two are similar whether it is their story or tattoo. Tattoos have always had deeper meaning for the people receiving them, even if their story is not detailed with meaning. Tattoos could be simple and show who you are as a person, “People don’t get tattoos done for fashion, on the contrary, I think nowadays people are getting tattoos more for reasons of self representation.”<sup>30</sup> Tattoos have become part of how a person views themselves. Additionally, the tattoo represents themselves more than it is for aesthetic reasons. People could literally wear their heart on their sleeve, depending on the significance of their tattoos. It is said that there are five reasons that every tattoo falls under. A tattoo only needs to fall under one, but it could fall under multiple. These elements are “Self empowerment, belonging, memorization, a message to oneself, and pain transformed into beauty.”<sup>31</sup> The above mentioned are broad enough for anyone one’s story to fall into, but also narrowed down to have a simple overhead theme. These each have a different meaning to each person. For example, memorization could be considered for a tattoo based on a passed loved one. A belonging might be about joining a community of people. A message to oneself could be something small to the outside world but the person it is placed on, it holds a greater meaning. In the next paragraph, we will look into two real life situations with tattoos and how these elements match up to them.

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<sup>30</sup> Walzer, Alejandra, and Pablo Sanjurjo. “Media and Contemporary Tattoo.” *Communication and Society* 29, 76.

<sup>31</sup> Buss, Laura, and Karen Hodges. “Marked: Tattoo as an Expression of Psyche.” *Psychological Perspectives* 60 (2017).

The two circumstances we will look at are the prison tattoo and the young adult tattoo. First, is the prison tattoo. As stated earlier in this essay, many individuals in prisons elect to get tattooed to remember to community they are from. This is also true about the new community they are joining in prison, “The tattoo provides the new convict a means of joining the new community to which he now belongs... Without a tattoo, prisoners often feel isolated.”<sup>32</sup> In this situation, it is a great example of the reason of belonging. The individual gain their tattoos in order to feel accepted among the new community they have been thrust into. Tattoo gives them a place within it, without feeling left out or feeling the negative effects of not being in. The second example is about a tattoo a young adult may get. At the age of 18, sometimes 16 with parents permission, teenagers are able to receive all the tattoos of their heart’s desire. These tattoos may symbolize their younger years for when they reach peak adulthood, the “tattoos will serve as *aides-memoires* of their youths”<sup>33</sup> Depending on the tattoo it could fall under different elements, but overall it could be under message to oneself. It could be a message to the person about their youth and the events surrounding the tattoo. For example, the tattoo is something that meant something when the person was younger but as they matured, it no longer is true. However, they keep the tattoo because it is a reminder of their younger years and what life was like then.

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<sup>32</sup>Demello, Margo. “The Convict Body: Tattooing Among Male American Prisoners.” *Anthropology Today* 9 (1993), 13.

<sup>33</sup> Blair, Lorrie. “Tattoos Teenagers: An Art Educator’s Response.” *Art Education* 60 (2007), 43.

## Conclusion

In essence, tattoos are a very personal item to have done. The process is double ended, it is storytelling and physically painful. Everyone's story with tattoos are incomparable because like life, no two are the same. Tattoos are a way for a person to make a claim over themselves. It allows the individual to have complete say over what happens to their body, "(Tattooing) as an assertion of personal ownership of the body and a screen on which to project their struggles, wishes, and victories."<sup>34</sup> Tattoos allows the individual to have meaningful artwork on their body that no one but themselves could take away.

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<sup>34</sup>Buss, Laura, and Karen Hodges. "Marked: Tattoo as an Expression of Psyche." *Psychological Perspectives* 60 (2017), 19.

# Location

## The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University



“The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University is the cornerstone of the Arts District in Atlantic City with a mission to promote education, provide resources for emerging artists, and enrich the community.”

*-Mission Statement of the Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University*

### About the Location:

The Arts Garage is nestled in the general tourism of Atlantic City, New Jersey. Located in the bottom of a large parking garage that inspired its name, The Arts Garage is surrounded by the local large outlet mall, while only being a few blocks from the beach and major casinos, such as Caesar’s and Bally’s. As stated in their mission statement above, the goal of this arts space is to showcase newer artists and support its local community. The Arts Garage is a multi-functional space with a gallery space, shop of local products, artist studios, coffee shop that can be transformed for large community based events. The Arts Garage takes pride in being involved in different events based in the Atlantic City community and is always looking for new innovative ways to get involved. Their programs and events reach a diverse audience from college students to small families, to families that have been in Atlantic City for generations. The Arts Garage has been a positive pillar in the regrowth of Atlantic City.

# Works Checklist

## Photographs:

Alan Powdrill

Covered Series, 2018

All Works 27 x 43 cm

Description of Collection: Artist, Alan Powdrill created a collection of photographs showing individuals with their tattoos covered and then completely uncovered in their home neighborhoods. It was to show that anyone can have tattoos not matter age, gender, etc.

*Dave*



*Lillianna*



*Victoria*



*Peter*



*Kimmy*



## Mike Allebach

*Normandy Farms*

2016

21 x 21 cm



## Nik Hampshire

2016

21 x 28 cm



## Brian Cummings

Sean Baltzell

2012

29 x 36 cm



## Steven Burton

Skin Deep Collection, 2019

All Works 28 x 44 cm

Description of Collection: Artist, Steven Burton, took portraits of individuals with gang and/or prison tattoos. Burton then photoshopped them without any tattoos to help break down the stigma of these tattoos.

### *FRANCISCO RIVERA*



### *MARCUS LUNA*



### *ERIN ECHAVARRIA*



### *CALVIN SPANKY*



## Australian War Memorial

Ink in the Lines Digital Exhibition, 2018

Description: From the digital exhibition *Ink in the Lines*, these works were submitted by veterans or their families into a large digital collection. Each of the descriptions is exactly what was submitted with the photograph.



William Seraphina, of 2RAR, 1950.  
Each tattoo represents a place he's been,  
over decades of service.  
22 x 33 cm



At sea in 1945, This photo shows  
Able Seaman John Paterson  
\*\* receiving a needle from a  
doctor, rather than a tattooist!  
27x 42 cm



Roy Hodgkinson  
Australian matelot and Sinhalese tattooist.  
black crayon with pencil and wash on paper.

20 x 19 cm

Austin Tott

All Works 18 x 18 cm

*January 22, 2014*



*January 28, 2014*



*March 14, 2014*



## Nathanäel Louis

What My Tattoos Mean To Me Series, 2019

Description: Photographer, Nathanäel Louis, photographed and interviewed willing individuals about their tattoos and stories. The text is the exact individual's words about their tattoos/



### *ELIZABETH*

The number 350 represents how much I use to weigh.  
350 represents an old life that I never want to revisit!  
It's also a daily reminder of how strong and resilient of a person I am.

21 x 28 cm



### *CHRIS*

A little about my tattoos:

While I've always appreciated the way people utilize their tattoos to convey a deeper sentiment or tell their story - mine simply don't. I enjoy the aesthetics and they make me feel confident and happy. I've met people who were perplexed by that notion, but to me, a flower tattoo is just a flower tattoo and you can get tattooed solely because you like them.

24 x 28 cm



### *DEVON*

The one reads, "Keep me in your heart, I'll stay there forever." Each word is written in one of my six siblings' and my parents' handwriting. I'm a big traveler so keeping a reminder of my loved ones everywhere I go is most important to me.

22 x 29 cm



*HAILEY*

I got my 1/2 sleeve after I became a mother. I saw a similar tattoo on a woman years ago. I think tattoos can be empowering - mine is empowering for me. I hope my daughter finds many ways throughout her life to feel the same way.

18 x 28 cm



*ALEX*

My Tattoo is actually a coverup. So this time at art school....my friend bought a tattoo gun and wanted real time practice. So my close friends and I all agreed to let him test it out on us, and we all ended up getting tattooed on my neighbors couch. It was a red skull and cross bones, that I thought was sick until it blew out a week later. It didn't bother me as much, because I got it on my thigh, so it was likely that nobody would see it. Fast forward some years, to when I started running and wearing skanky shorts. I had to fix it. I took the opportunity to cover up the the scar tissue with a traditional black panther(favorite animal). Now I can wear even more scandalous running shorts.

21 x 28 cm



*BETSY*

I get tattoos to remind me of people and things I love. Even if I grow out of something, I have a visual reminder of how I got to be who I am today.

18 x 28 cm



*ANDREW*

In 2012, I was fortunate to be part of a delegation from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston to attend the opening of “Japanese Masterpieces from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston” in Tokyo. Over 100 pieces were in the exhibition, most of which hadn’t been in Japan in over 100 years. One of the pieces in the exhibition was Soga Shōhaku’s “Dragon and Clouds,” a 35-foot long painting that would have originally decorated sliding doors. The painting stood out, even amongst all of the other pieces in the show.

Being there on opening day, seeing the crowds of people lined up, and meeting a Princess, was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I knew the painting would make an amazing tattoo, and I was really happy it was my first. @ChadChesko at Fat Ram’s in Jamaica Plain did a great job translating the painting onto my leg.

20 x 28 cm



*NATE*

My tattoo is a combination of two trucks; the truck my father had when I was a kid, and my father’s first truck. It is a tattoo I share with my siblings. About 6 months ago my father was diagnosed with liver cancer. My siblings and I all decided we had to get something in solidarity with him, and we came up with this design. He passed about a week ago and thus the meaning of the tattoo changed from solidarity to remembrance. My father and I would often say to each other “keep on trucking” while he was going through treatments for his cancer. This tattoo also serves as a reminder to do just that, even when he isn’t here to tell me to do so.

23 x 28 cm



*MILOURDES*

My tattoo's literal translation is "All the little pieces make me whole". It is written in my native language, Haitian Creole. I got this tattoo during a really challenging time in my life and I wanted to remind myself that though things may seem dark and falling to pieces, I can always pick-up those pieces and put them back together. Being broken is not the end, almost anything can be mended, including me. This was 4 years ago and I've since then learned how to properly read and write in my native language and realized that there's a spelling error and slight grammatical error (maybe more than one lol) but this has made me love my tattoo even more. My journey has been painful, joyful, messy and funny and this tattoo is a direct reflection of a particular moment

20 x 28 cm

# Video Clips

## Tattoo Nation

Documentary Film, 2013

Director: Eric Schwartz

Trailer: <https://www.tattoonation.com/>

Clips from Documentary:

0:08-1:02



1:04-1:31



1:32-1:57



47:24-47:50



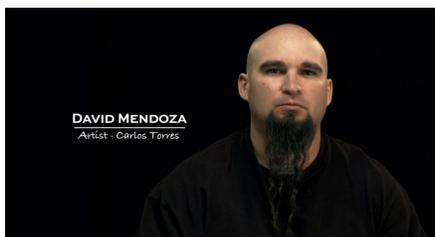
48:32-49:00



49:25-49:58



1:09:37-1:10:17



# Exhibition Layout:

## Bird's Eye View



# Wall Renderings:

## Wall 1 A

Humanizing the  
Tattoo: Looking  
Beyond the Skin's  
Surface

*Then...*

The slide features a sequence of four images connected by small white squares. The first image shows a man with a tattoo on his chest being examined by a doctor. The second image shows a woman with a tattoo on her back being examined by a doctor. The third image shows a man with a tattoo on his arm being examined by a doctor. The fourth image shows a man with a tattoo on his arm being examined by a doctor. A dashed white box is on the right side of the slide.

## Wall 1 B

*...Now*

The slide features a sequence of six images connected by small white squares. The first image shows a man with a tattoo on his chest. The second image shows a man and a woman with tattoos. The third image shows a hand with a tattoo. The fourth image shows a hand with a tattoo. The fifth image shows a hand with a tattoo. The sixth image shows a hand with a tattoo.

Wall 2 A

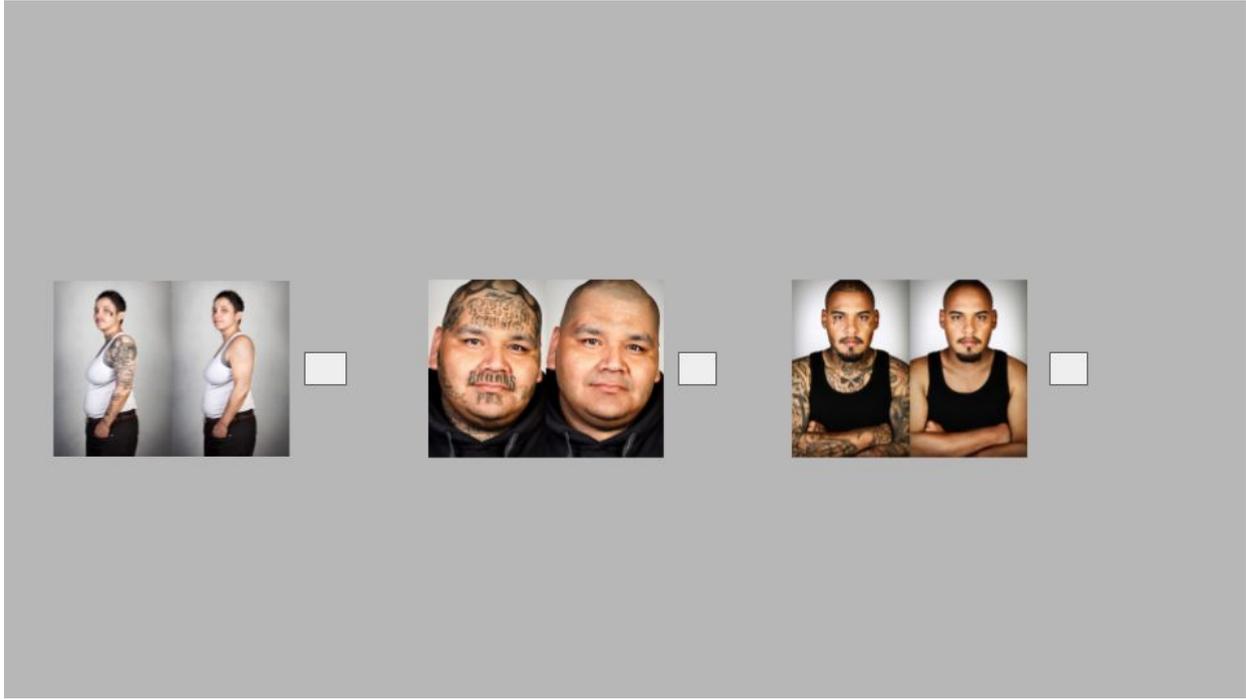
Covered  
and  
Uncovered



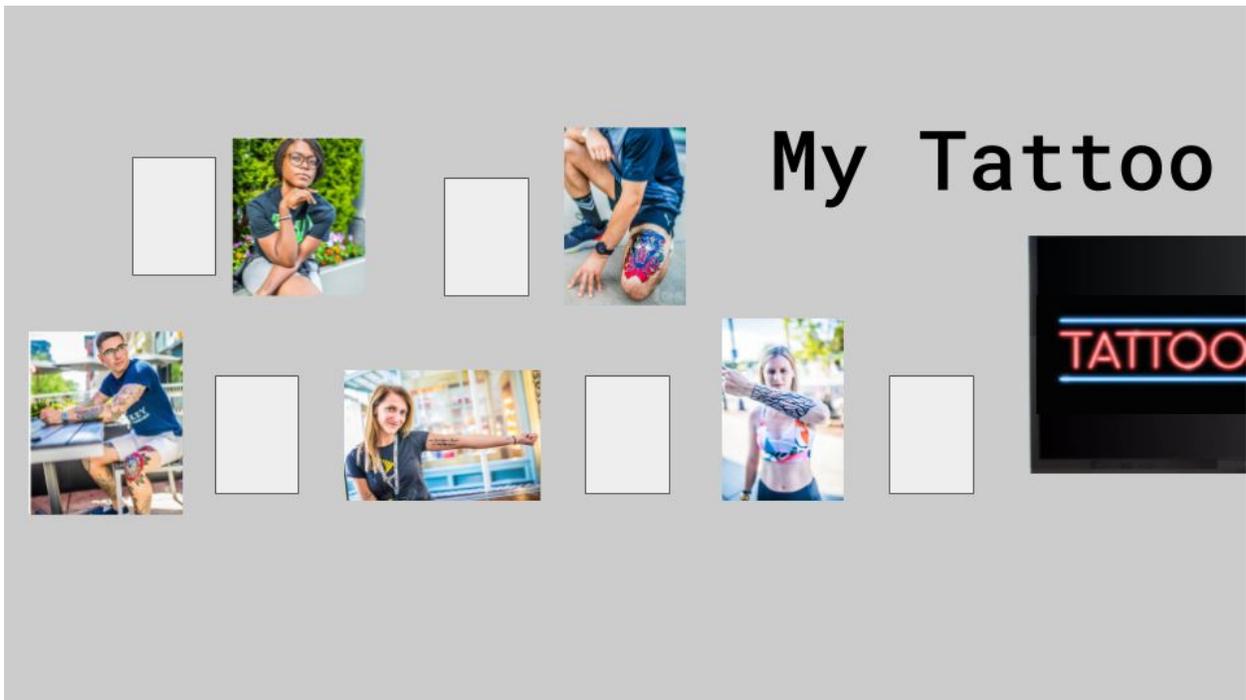
Wall 2 B



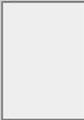
Wall 2 C



Wall 2 A



# Story



# Marketing and Press Plan

Press Release:



## **Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University: *Humanizing the Tattoo: Looking Beyond the Skin's Surface***



Brian Cummings  
*Sean Baltzell, 2012*

### ***For Immediate Release;***

**ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.** - The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University, 2200 Fairmount Ave., presents an opening reception for *Humanizing the Tattoo: Looking Beyond the Skin's Surface* on **Saturday, October 24, 2020, from 4:00 – 6:00 pm**. This unique exhibition about tattoos and the human experience with them runs from Oct. 24 – Dec. 5, 2020.

This exhibition of tattoos features works by artists Alan Powdrill, Mike Allebach, Brian Cummings, Steven Burton, Austin Tott, and Nathanäel Louis. There is also selected pieces from the Australian War Memorial and video from the Eric Schwartz documentary “Tattoo Nation.” The exhibition looks back at the history of tattoo to see where it has come to today. Through storytelling, the exhibition strives to build a bridge of communication when it comes to tattoos and their stories.

**Contact:**  
**Saskia Schmidt**  
**Noyes Museum Director of Education**  
[Saskia.Schmidt@stockton.edu](mailto:Saskia.Schmidt@stockton.edu)

# Marketing Plan

## Three Part Plan

### Part One: Press, Paper, Social Media

- Like every exhibition, there will be a Press Release going out to local papers about the upcoming show.
- Postcards/Invitations will be sent out to Members and important members of the community inviting to the exhibition and opening night
- Flyers will also be made and placed at all other Noyes Museum locations
- All branches of Social Media will be used to let the public know of the exhibition (Facebook, Instagram, Email, Twitter, etc.)

### Part Two: Billboard

- All ways into Atlantic City is by highway. The best way to promote anything happening in A.C. is by Billboard on one of the highways going in.
  - Casino's promote shows or deals they to upcoming events like conventions to universities marketing their programs rent one.
  - There are two highways in and out of the city, with both getting the same amount of daily traffic.
- The Billboard will have basic exhibition information; Name, location, dates, and image of a work in the show.

### Part Three: Tattoo Convention

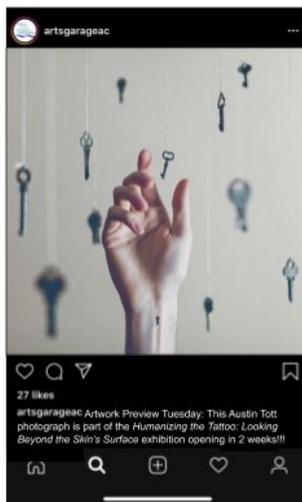
- Every November, Atlantic City is home to one of the longest running Tattoo Conventions on the East Coast, The Atlantic City Tattoo Expo
  - Every First weekend of November
  - 2019's Dates: November 1-3
- The Expo has been in the same location for the past 16 years
  - Bally's Casino and Resort
    - Between Bally's and the Arts Garage, it is less than a ten minute walk in between the two.
- Plan is to promote to those already coming to the area for the Expo to come to the exhibition.
  - With the Expo, there will be a special event the same weekend at the Arts Garage. There will be a showing of the documentary of Tattoo Nation with light Refreshments following, proved by the Hospitality Student of Stockton University.
  - This promotion for this event will be done on Social Media and at the Expo.

# Examples of Marketing Materials

Billboard:



Instagram:



Postcard Invitation:

*Humanizing the Tattoo:  
Looking Beyond the Skin's Surface*

October 24 – December 5, 2020

**Opening Night Party:**

October 24 4-6pm

RSVP to Saskia Schmidt

(Saskia.Schmidt@stockton.edu)



Brian Cummings  
Sean Baltzell, 2012



# Budget

Category	Tasks	Cost
<i>Art Work</i>		
	Shipping/Transportation To Exhibition	1,500
	Flat Screen Television	300
	Vinyl Letters	300
	Shipping/Transportation From Exhibition	1,500
	Installation Supplies	300
	Packing Supplies	400
<i>Labor</i>		
	Paint Job	400
	Installation of Television	200
	Art Handlers: Installation	400
	Art Handlers: Destallation	400
<i>Marketing</i>		
	Press Release	300
	Postcards/Paper Promos	100
	Social Media Ads	150
	Billboard	2,000
<i>Events</i>		
	Opening Night Refreshments	2,325
	Rental of Projector and Screen	100
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>10,675</b>

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