

# The Tattoo E-Book



"Lucky Horseshoe Stock Tattoo" courtesy of [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

Welcome to the Tattoo E-Book. In here you will find everything you ever wanted to know about the process of getting "inked" -- from how to choose a design, to choosing a tattoo artist to post-operative care.

We have included a chapter on what to expect when you visit a tattoo studio, what questions you should ask of the tattoo artist with regards to hygiene and safety as well as the top ten signs that you are in the right place.

As a tattoo is considered by many to be a rite of passage that marks significant periods in our emotional and spiritual growth, we have also included information about how to emotionally prepare yourself for "the chair." We also provide you with plenty of tips on where you can find inspiration for custom designs as well as suggest ways to create your own custom designs. Unlike jewelry, a tattoo is a personal adornment that you will wear for life and the intention of this e-book is to help you make a decision that you can live with the rest of your life.

Tattoos are also works of art, and for this reason we have also included a chapters about the history of tattoos as well as compiled a list of tattoo artists who are considered to the best in their fields from all over the world, whether their specialty be flames, sacred hearts, Celtic knots, sailor tattoos, Asian symbols, cartoons, manga, zodiac symbols or tribal markings. You will also find creative and practical suggestions for designing your own tattoo using sites on the Internet.

It is the publisher's sincere hope that this guide to tattoos will help you to make intelligent and inspired choices before you decide to get inked.



"Angel wings" back tattoo reprinted by courtesy of Little Joe  
<http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe>



"Red Rose Stock Tattoo" courtesy of [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

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"Blue Rose Stock Tattoo" courtesy of [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

# **Chapter 1. THE TATTOO**

## **Why Get A Tattoo?**

"Think before you ink." That should be the motto of anyone who is considering getting a tattoo.

Most people are familiar with the horror stories about those who got a tattoo on impulse. There is the bride-to-be who tattoos her fiancée's name on her ring finger and then is left standing at the altar. There is the guy who has a drunken one night stand and wakes up with a strange woman's name emblazoned across his chest as well as the forty year old corporate executive who can never roll up his sleeves lest his colleagues discover the Sex Pistols tattoo he got on a trip to London in 1978.

In a nutshell, the worst times to get a tattoo are when you are *drunk, high, in love or on vacation*. When you are drunk or high, you are more likely to choose a design that looks just as bad as you are going to feel the next morning. If you decide to tattoo your lover's name on your forearm, make sure it's forever, otherwise you could find yourself hating your arm as much as you do your ex. People on vacation are also vulnerable to making hasty decisions, often taking home souvenirs on their skin that don't fit their normal lifestyle at all.

Before you get a tattoo, you should sit down and seriously question your own motivations for wanting to do so. For instance, "because it would make your mother cry" is not a good reason to get a tattoo. Getting a tattoo also rarely does not achieve the intention of "changing society" nor is it exactly an expression of rebellion against authority any more as everyone from Britney Spears to Paris Hilton to Tammy Faye Baker has one. "Doing it because everyone else is doing it" is also not a solid justification. Before you get that Hello Kitty or Teletubby tattooed on your ankle, make sure it is not going to turn your stomach every time you look at it sixty years from now.

There are a lot of good reasons to get a tattoo and many not that are not so great (as discussed above.)

## **Good Reasons To Get a Tattoo**

- ◆ *Self Expression.* Tattoos are works of art that can be used as a vehicle to display your unique sense of individuality to the world. For instance, if you are into the "undead scene" others will be able to identify you by the ghostly spirit tattooed on your arm. If you are an art lover, an Andy Warhol or Leonardo Da Vinci inspired tattoo will deliver the message to others. The tattoo can also give others some idea of your occupation.



A good example of a tattoo expressing an occupation or a hobby. "Sparkplugs"  
Tattoo courtesy of Stacey Sharp [www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

- ◆ *Tribal Identity.* The original intention of a tattoo was to mark an individual as part of a tribe or a group. This type of tattoo warns others if you happen to belong to some kind of gang (good for them) and allows other kindred spirits to identify you (good for you.) For instance, an iron cross can identify a Goth individual, the Serenity Prayer an AA member, a Harley Davidson logo a biker, a crucifix a Christian, an anchor a member of the Navy and so on ...
- ◆ *Spiritual Growth.* Many individuals will get a tattoo after they experience an epiphany or leap of faith that has led to their survival against great odds. Examples of this kind of tattoo are the lung cancer survivor who gets a tattoo of the wind blowing and the student of Buddhism who gets the "ohm" symbol tattooed on his chest after receiving teachings from a master.
- ◆ *For Spiritual Protection.* Cab drivers will boast a tattoo of St. Christopher on their arms to prevent accidents on the road. A very familiar tattoo for protection is the eye within the hand or the eye within the triangle that finds its origins in the ancient Mediterranean. Crucifix's, sacred hearts, St. Michael and gods or goddesses are often used for the same purposes.
- ◆ *Marking Important Events.* Weddings, anniversaries, divorces, surviving a war and other occasions sometimes warrant a tattoo. Some couples are getting tattoos marked around the fourth finger of their left hand rather than opting for the traditional engagement ring.

- ◆ *Paying Homage.* Sometimes a tattoo is in order after the death of a celebrity, favorite pet or relative. Usually these tattoos are portraits commissioned by a very talented artist who can reproduce likenesses of such personages as Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, John F. Kennedy or Malcolm X.
- ◆ *To Enhance Luck.* Getting a tattoo to enhance your luck is as old as primitive man. Today you can see everything from pairs of dice to four leafed clovers to the Greek Goddess Fortuna marked on the arms of those who wish to court Lady Luck.
- ◆ *To Express Commitment.* Getting a tattoo in this day of "disposable everything" is an expression of commitment to yourself that is forever. The sages say that making an irrevocable decision is good for the soul!
- ◆ *Totem Symbols and Animals.* Some people consider a tattoo to be an expression of their soul or spirit guide. Fairies, hummingbirds, butterflies, angels, wolves, tigers and other animals are popular examples of this kind of tattoo.



An example of a tattoo used as a totem animal.

Photo courtesy of Little Joe

<http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe>

- ◆ *As a memorial.* Some tattoos are used to remember a beloved family member or pet that has passed away.





A good example of a memorial tattoo. Photo of "Angel Baby" courtesy of Dave McCormick [www.fleshink.com](http://www.fleshink.com)

- ◆ *Enhancing Sexuality.* There is a theory that getting a tattoo on the lower back helps open up the base chakra (near the bottom of the spine) and enhances the kundalini (life force) that governs such matters as survival and sexuality. A tiny tattoo on the female hipbone or on the inner thigh is considered to be very sexy.
- ◆ *Multiple Births.* In this age of fertility drugs, more mothers than ever are giving birth to identical twins, triplets and quadruplets. Tattooing the bottom of the newborns' feet is one way to guarantee that you will always be able to tell your children apart from each other.
- ◆ *To Make People Laugh.* Tattoos do have a way of "breaking the ice" when it comes to starting a conversation. There is nothing wrong with adding a little levity to the world. After all humor dissolves all karma.



An example of a modern style tattoo used to enhance sexuality. "Sunflower" tattoo  
courtesy of Sean Donovan  
[www.tattoosbysean.com](http://www.tattoosbysean.com)

### **Lousy Reasons To Get a Tattoo**

- ◆ *To rebel against authority.* Tattoos don't change the world, people do.
- ◆ *To look like a biker.* This can seriously backfire on you if you run into a real biker who may be offended by your appropriation of their tribal markings.
- ◆ *"Everyone else is doing it!"* Follow your gut instinct, not the advice of your friends.
- ◆ *To make your mother cry.*



The classic homage to Mother.

## **Chapter 2. The History of Tattoos**

### **Primitive Tattoos**

Skin was the first canvas for art. Sticks and other pointy objects were the first paintbrushes. Tattooing was first a form of scarification. This involved wounding oneself and packing dirt or ashes into the scrape or cut to discolor it permanently. It is believed that prehistoric man cut holes in his skin, charred sticks in the fire, let them cool and then applied the black substance to the wound to create tribal markings.

As tattooing involved pain, blood and fire, primitive man believed the process released sacred life forces. The letting of blood was also associated with a sacrifice to the Gods. The symbol or animal form of the tattoo was thought to bring one protection from attack from that very same animal.

Tattoos were also used to bring one's soul in alignment with God's purpose, increase virility and fertility, ensure the preservation of the body after the death and delineate hierarchies and roles within tribes. For instance, a tribal chieftain would have a very different tattoo than the individual in the tribe who was thought to bring them all bad luck.

As skin does not preserve that well there is very archeological evidence that prehistoric people engaged in tattooing, although a few Paleolithic artifacts that have been discovered seem to suggest that the art of tattooing is as old as mankind.

### **Funereal Art**

Tattooing in ancient history was a funereal art. Images of tattooing are found on Egyptian female figurines that are dated between 4000 and 2000 years BC. Libyan figures from the tomb of Seti (1330 B.C.) also boast figures with tattoo markings on the arms and the legs.

Both in ancient and modern times, primitive people believe that the spirit or astral body resembles an invisible human body. This is similar to many modern occultist beliefs about the astral body. Tattoos are applied so that the spirit is allowed to pass into the spirit world undisturbed by evil entities. The primitive peoples of Borneo believe that the right tattoo ensures prompt passage to the other side as well as a guaranteed positive occupation in the spirit world.

The ancient Egyptians reportedly spread the practice of tattooing throughout the world. The pyramid-building third and fourth dynasties of Egypt developed international nations that ruled Crete, Greece, Persia, and Arabia. By 2000 B.C. the art of tattooing had found its way to Southeast Asia and the Ainu (western Asian nomads) then brought it with them on their migrations to Japan. Elsewhere, the Shans of China introduced the craft to the Burmese, who still include tattooing as part of their religious practices.

Today, tattoos are still used to create a spirit connection with deceased loved one and family members. These types of tattoos are rarer, but they often appear as hearts with initials, tombstones with parent's initials and heavenly symbols such as five, six and seven pointed stars.

## **Branding**

Around the same time, the Japanese became interested in the art but only for its decorative attributes. The Horis -- the Japanese tattoo artists --- were the undisputed ancient masters of the color tattoo. Their use of pigments, perspective, and imaginative designs gave the practice a whole new appearance. During the first millennium A.D., Japan adopted Chinese culture and confined tattooing to branding wrongdoers.

In the Balkans, the Thracians had a different use for the craft. Aristocrats, according to Herodotus (500 B.C.) were tattooed to show the world their social status.

Although early Europeans dabbled with tattooing, they truly rediscovered the art form when they explored new cultures in the South Pacific. It was a familiarity with the tattoos of Polynesian and American Indian tribes that introduced tattoos to the modern Europe. The word, in fact, is derived from the Tahitian word *tattau*, which means, "to mark."

Most of the early uses of tattoos were ornamental. However, a number of civilizations had practical applications for this craft. The Goths, a tribe of Germanic barbarians famous for pillaging Roman settlements, used tattoos to brand their slaves. Romans also tattooed slaves and criminals.

Tattooing was first associated with criminality in the Mediterranean region in the middle of the third century. These labels would include the crime, the punishment and the names of the criminal's victims branded on their foreheads.

In ancient Greece and Rome, slaves with tattoos could never become citizens, even if they were able to buy their freedom. This was because a tattoo was seen as degrading to the bearer. In essence, the tattoos were permanent marks of guilt. Eventually those tattooed out of punishment started to be proud of their markings. Tattoos are still a mark of honor among criminals today.

In Tahiti, tattoos were a rite of passage and told the history of the person's life. Men were marked when they reached adulthood when they got married. When the Turkish Ottoman Empire ruled Bosnia, military authorities tattooed all of the soldiers in order to recognize them in case they chose to flee conscription.

## **Clan Markings**

Primitive peoples also used tattoos to create what are called clan markings. These marking came in handy during battle to identify foe from friend. These tattoos also guaranteed that you would be able to greet your friends again in heaven, after you had passed away.

Family and marriage tattoos were also clan markings that enabled spouses who were separated in death to find each other again in the afterworld. A good example of this is the ancient Ainu tribe who believed that a bride without a tattoo would go straight to Gehenna - their version of hell.

In the Americas, native tribes used simple pricking to tattoo their bodies or faces. In California some native groups injected color into the scratches. Some northern tribes living in and around the Arctic Circle (mostly Inuit) made punctures with a needle and ran a thread coated with soot through the skin. The South Pacific community would tap pigment into the pricked skin using a small rake-like instrument.

In New Zealand, the Maori would treat the body like a piece of wood in order to make their world-famous *moko* style tattoos. Using a small bone-cutting tool, they would carve intricate shallow grooves on the face and buttocks, and infuse them with color. Thanks to trading with Europeans, they were able to make the method more efficient by using metal tools instead of bone.

A "moko", meaning to strike or tap, is the long-standing art form of Maori tattooing. This art form has been practiced for over a thousand years, and has withstood time and colonization. It was used as a form of identification with regards to rank, genealogy, tribal history, eligibility to marry, beauty and virility.

Moko designs were finely chiseled into the skin. Maori women were traditionally only allowed to be tattooed on their lips, around the chin, and sometimes the nostrils. A woman with full blue lips was seen as very beautiful.

## **Rites of Passage**

Primitive people also tattooed their adolescents as a rite of passage. The theory was that if a young boy couldn't take the pain of a tattoo at a young age, then he would be useless at battle. Similarly, if a young girl couldn't handle the pain of a tattoo, she would not be able to handle the pain of childbirth. Many of these children ended up with a tattoo anyway, that would label them as an outcast of the tribe.

Totem animals are also another common motif in primitive tattoos. Totem animals such as snakes, frogs, butterflies, wolves or bears signified that the individual has taken on the physical prowess of that animal. In some cultures, the totem animal is thought to have a special spiritual relationship with the bearer of tattoo and acts as a spirit guide.

From the South Pacific to the South America, primitive people have customs involved with their tattooing rituals. Usually the person being tattooed is separated from others, smudged, isolated from the opposite sex or fed a special diet.

From primitive times to now, Hawaiians celebrate specific tattoo gods. The designs associated with each God are locked away in the temples and priests conduct tattooing. Each tattooing session begins with a prayer to tattoo gods that implores that the operation goes well and that the designs be gorgeous in the end.

## **Love Charms**

In the ancient and primitive worlds, tattoos were also used as love charms. Often the dye used for these types of tattoos was concocted from magical ingredients. For instance, the dye for an ancient Burmese love charm is made from a recipe that consists of a bright purple pigment called vermilion and the skins of a trout and a spotted lizard. This tattoo was usually a small triangle created by three dots and was concealed by clothing so that others could not identify it.

Nowadays the equivalents of magic love tattoos are Celtic knots, hearts, cherubs, the Venus symbol and love goddesses.

## **Physical Health**

In ancient Asian cultures, tattoos were often applied to ensure long term physical health. The Tibetans equated designs called mantra wheels with many minutes of chanting. These designs were tattooed on chakra (energy points) on the body to help the bearer of the tattoo achieve physical, emotional and spiritual harmony. Sometimes tattoos were created from medicinal dyes and marked on acupuncture points of the body in an attempt to cure chronic health problems and diseases.

In quite a few cultures an image of a God or Goddess could also be tattooed on an acupuncture point or an afflicted part of the body in an attempt to heal it. In India, the Monkey God, Hanuman, was tattooed on dislocated shoulders. Older Maori women tattooed their lips and face to prevent failing vision. Ainu women tattooed a Goddess on their skin so that the evil spirits that bestowed disease would mistake them for the Goddess and flee in terror.



**In China peonies are thought to bring love into a young woman's life.**

Courtesy of Rueben "Rue" Kayden

[www.tattoorue.com](http://www.tattoorue.com)

## Good Luck

Historically tattoos have always been thought to bring the wearer good luck. In China, tattooing one's animal astrological symbol, such as The Pig or The Horse is thought to bring good fortune. Images of Koi, carp or goldfish were thought to bring prosperity and wealth to the bearer.

In Burma, a parrot tattooed on the shoulder is thought to bring luck. In Thailand, a scroll representing Buddha in the posture of meditation is said to charm Lady Luck. Card tattoos such as the Ace of Spades and the Ten of Diamonds were worn by American soldiers in Vietnam to protect against bad luck and venereal disease.

## Celtic Tattoos

In the 1970s, the counter culture in America rediscovered the beauty of primitive and tribal taboos. The most copied designs are primarily from Borneo, Japan, and the islands of the South Pacific. In the 1980's, Celtic tattoos became very popular, probably as a result of the popularity of Wiccan and pagan religions among young people.

Most modern Celtic designs are sourced from ancient scrolls called the Irish Illuminated Manuscripts, which were created during the sixth and seventh centuries. As before that the Celts did not keep written records, designs are also found in ancient stone and metal work. Before the sixth century, these ancient peoples often tattooed or painted their faces and bodies to protect them from evil spirits and ensure victory in battle.

The knotwork tradition of tattooing that was derived from Celtic manuscripts spread from Britain and Ireland to Scotland. Viking invaders eventually appropriated many of the Celtic designs into their own culture, often adding totem animals into the interlacing designs.

Celtic knots are "zoomorphic" meaning that each strand of the design connects or spirals into another strand. Often these designs will graphically terminate in images of the feet, heads and tails of animals and other natural symbols. These animals were emblematic of different Celtic tribes and nationalities.



Celtic tattoos found a [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

Roman documents also indicate that ancient British and Scottish peoples may have tattooed themselves before entering into battle. Ancient stones from Gaul also show leaders with tattooed faces. These tattoos were created from woad, a plant that produces blue dye. A body of a Pict found frozen in the permafrost in Siberia indicated that these pre-Celtic peoples tattooed using puncture marks to create the forms and outlines of animals using woad as the dye.

The Romans often employed Celtic tutors for their children. Many of these tutors were Druid priests.

An ancient Roman recipe for tattoo ink, courtesy of the long deceased Roman physician Aetius

*1 lb. of Egyptian pine wood bark  
2 ounces of corroded bronze, ground with vinegar  
2 ounces of gall (insect egg deposits)  
1 oz. of vitriol (iron sulphate)*

*Mix well and sift. Soak powder in 2 parts water and 1 part leek juice. Wash the skin to be tattooed with leek juice. Prick design with needles until blood is drawn. Rub in the ink.*

Don't try this one at home, kids!



An example of a lucky parrot. Printed by permission of the artist Tim Hanan. [www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)





A spectacular example of a koi fish tattoo for bringing wealth and prosperity. Photo reprinted courtesy of the artist Reuben "Rue" Kayden. [www.tattoorue.com](http://www.tattoorue.com)

## **Pilgrim Tattoos**

The rise of the Christian and Islamic religions brought a halt to tattooing in the Europe in the Middle East. In the Old Testament of the Bible, the book of Leviticus states, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord." This crede against tattooing caused the practice to disappear for about two thousand years as both the Christians and the Moslems revere the Old Testament.

Still despite the widespread popularity of this religious belief, pilgrims in the Middle Ages still got tattoos once they reached the Holy Land to prove to the folks back home that they had actually made the journey. The Coptic priests who sat outside the walls of Jerusalem waiting for tourists practiced this kind of tattooing. Usually these tattoos were just a simple cross, but some pilgrims opted for more elaborate symbols of their trip such as images of the Pieta or St. George slaying the Dragon.

Moslem pilgrims visiting Mecca and Medina also returned from their trips boasting commemorative tattoos. These Moslem pilgrims believed that, by being cremated at death, they would be purified by fire, before entering paradise and thus are forgiven for transgressing Levictus's proclamation.



A reproduction of a Pilgrim tattoo done in the "woodblock style". Courtesy of Rueben "Rue" Kayden  
[www.tattoorue.com](http://www.tattoorue.com)

## **Oriental Tattoos**

In Japan, tattooing reached its height in the 18th century images from traditional watercolor paintings; woodcuts and picture books were the basis of the design.

Japanese tattoo artists were usually also ukiyoe woodblock artists, who simply exchanged their wood-carving blades for long, sharp needles. This long process has come to produce what is known as the uniquely-Japanese traditional art tattoo art form, called horimono.

## **Sailor and Military Tattoos**

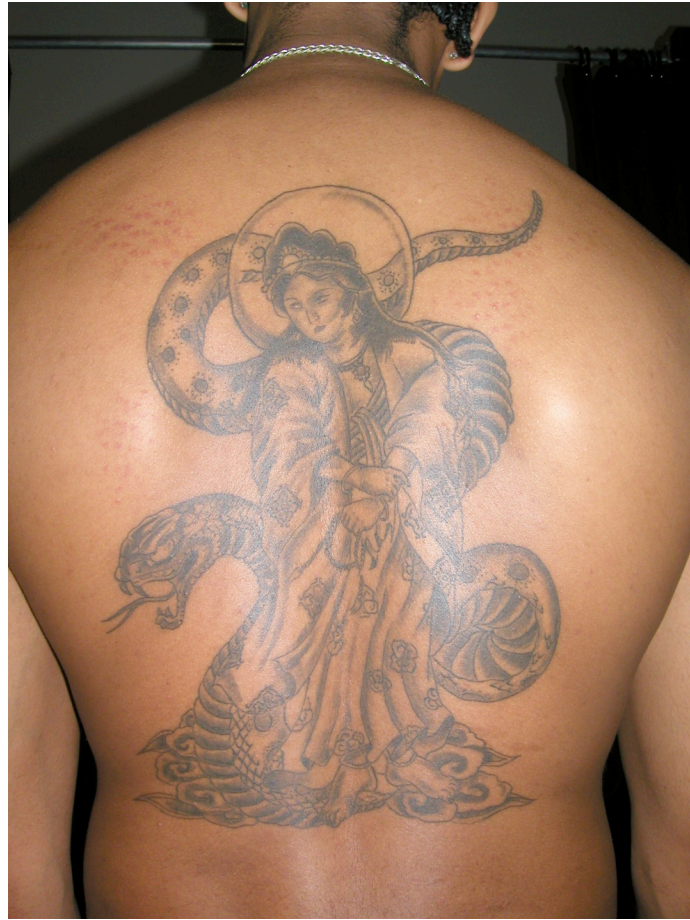
When European explorers first arrived in the New World, they discovered that tattooing was a large part of the stone-age culture practiced by Native Americans. Common among most tribes were geometric patterns and dots that were applied to celebrate the individual's passage into puberty. Many tribes, including the Sioux Indians believed that a tattoo was necessary in order to gain passage into the other world.

After an almost two thousand year absence from popular culture, the phenomena of tattooing re-emerged after explorers brought tales of it home after they had sighted examples of it in the North and South Americas.

Tattooing was also very popular among sailors who, from the 1600's to the 1940's tattooed a chicken on one foot and a pig on the other to protect them from death by drowning. During World War II, the big symbol that protected sailors from drowning

were twin propellers (one tattooed on each buttock) meant to symbolically propel you to the shore.

Images of bluebirds inked on the chest were often used to mark the number of miles a sailor had spent at sea. Each bluebird represented 5,000 miles logged at sea. If a sailor had sailed south past the equator he sometimes got a picture of Neptune tattooed on his leg. If he crossed the international dateline, a sailor owned the right to wear a tattoo of a dragon. A hula girl tattoo meant the sailor had been to Honolulu. Female underwear and stockings tattooed on the sailor's body meant that he had been on more than one cruise.



An example of a reproduction of a Japanese horinomo tattoo. Photo reprinted courtesy of the artist Reuben "Rue" Kayden. [www.tattoo.rue.com](http://www.tattoo.rue.com)



A sailor's bluebird by Tim Hanan  
<http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net>

Chatham Square in New York City became the epic-center for tattoos in pre-civil war days in the United States. Sailors, gang members and low-lives (who often boasted elaborate tattoos on their torsos and forearms) frequented this area known for its beer halls and sex parlors.

Sailors passed the long hours at sea "pricking" designs into their own skin or that of their mates. These designs were a mix of patriotic and protective images. Often gunpowder was mixed into the ink, as gunpowder was thought to possess magical powers of longevity and protection. The seamen of that day were familiar with tattoos because of their extensive travel. They had seen the dragons of the China, the Christian charms and evil eyes of the people and the highly detailed designs of Edo and Yokohama worn by the citizens of Japan. Sailors bearing these exotic designs, passed through the port of New York everyday, greatly influencing and broadening the very concept of "tattoo" itself.



A classic Sailor's anchor by Sean Donovan  
[www.tattoosbysean.com](http://www.tattoosbysean.com)

With the outbreak of the Civil War, thousands of men from New York were conscripted into the Union Army. The demand for patriotic designs grew tremendously during that war and thousands of individuals were tattooed on the battlefield. Favorite designs often included depictions of major battles complete with sky and landscape.



A reproduction of a civil war tattoo  
courtesy of Rueben "Rue" Kayden [www.tattooerue.com](http://www.tattooerue.com)

## **Electronic Tattoo Machines**

Tattooing was revolutionized by Samuel O'Reilly's invention of the electric tattoo machine during the last decade of the 19th century. The time required to complete a design went from hours to minutes, moving the art away from personally conceived, hand picked designs towards stock choices that were displayed like art on the walls of the tattoo parlor. Much of this tattooing was also conducted in the back of beer halls and barbershops.

The years ahead would see vast improvements in O'Reilly's machine, plus the establishment of tattoo equipment manufacturing companies. This machine was the prototype for the tattoo gun that is the standard of the industry today.

In the 1920's and 30's the styling of tattoos adapted to include comic strip characters like Mickey Mouse and Felix the Cat, Lindbergh's crossing, stars and starlets of the silver screen and phrases that were popularized in the press.

Cosmetic tattooing also originated during this time period. Many artists offering specialties such as moles and beauty marks rosy cheeks, permanent eyeliner and red lips to both male and female customers.



A reproduction of a World War I tattoo  
Courtesy of Rueben "Rue" Kayden [www.tattooerue.com](http://www.tattooerue.com)

## Modern Tattoos

In the 1960s tattooing for art's sake alone became popular and nowadays the sight of a tattoo on someone's shoulder, hip or ankle has become commonplace. In recent years Celtic Tattoos have enjoyed a revival, as have primitive tattoos.

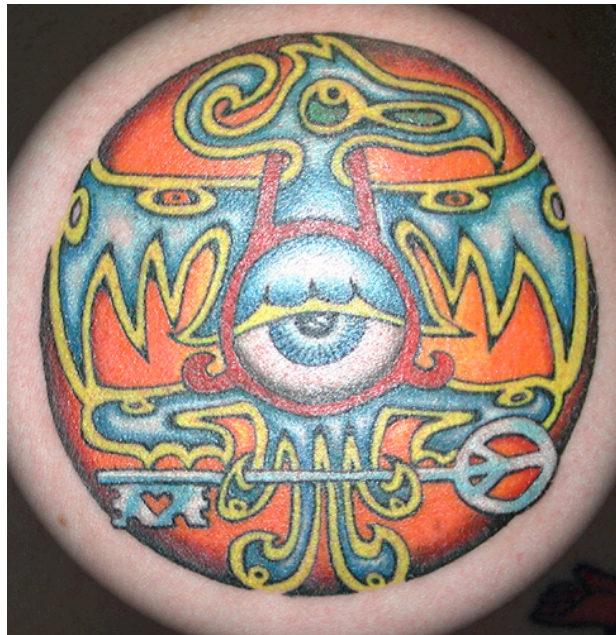
Some people collect tattoos the way others collect antiques or works of art. Others are interested in the super sleek designs that are a product of the thinking of the 21st century such as biomechanical designs (which look like muscles beneath the flesh) and designs that resemble the interior workings of cyborgs.

In the 1970s, artists trained in traditional fine art disciplines began to embrace tattooing and brought innovative imagery and drawing techniques to the industry. Advances in electric needle guns and pigments provided them with new ranges of color, delicacy of detail and artistic possibilities. The physical nature of many local tattooing establishments also changed as increasing numbers of operators adopted equipment and procedures resembling those of medical clinics -- particularly in areas where tattooing is regulated by government health regulations.

The cultural status of tattooing has steadily evolved from that of an anti-social activity in the 1940s to that of a trendy fashion statement in the year 2000s. First adopted and flaunted by influential rock stars like the Rolling Stones in the early 1970s, tattooing

had, by the late 1980s, become accepted by mainstream society. Today, tattoos are routinely seen on rock stars, professional sports figures, ice skating champions, fashion models, movie stars and other public figures who play a significant role in setting the pace of contemporary culture.

During the last fifteen years, two distinct classes of tattoo business have emerged. The first is the "tattoo parlor" that glories in a sense of urban outlaw culture, advertises itself with garish exterior signage and offers less than sanitary surroundings. The second is the "tattoo art studio" that most frequently features custom and fine art designs, all of the features of a high end beauty and "by-appointment" services only. Today's fine art tattoo studio draws the same kind of clients as a jewelry store, fashion boutique, or high-end antique shop.



A true hybrid of ancient and modern styles, featuring the evil eye, the mandala, magic keys and Celtic influences.  
"Mandala Evil Eye" back tattoo reprinted by courtesy of Little Joe  
<http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe>

Tattooing today is the sixth-fastest-growing retail business in the United States. The single fastest growing demographic group seeking tattoo services is middle-class suburban women.

Tattooing is recognized by government agencies as both an art form and a profession. As tattoo-related artwork is considered to be fine art, tattoo designs are the subject of museum and gallery art shows across the United States, Canada and Europe.

Nowadays everything from Andy Warhol portraits to Teletubbies to instant messenger smiley face icons just about any image is fair game for a tattoo. Your choice of a tattoo design is only as limited as the reaches of your imagination!

## **Chapter 3. Styles of Tattoos**

### **Stock and Custom Tattoos**

Tattoo designs fall in two categories: stock (sometimes called flash) tattoos or custom tattoos.

Stock or flash tattoos are the pictures that you see lining the walls of tattoo parlors. Usually these images consist of perennial favorites such as anchors, hearts, skulls, dragons, butterflies, crucifixes and other common images. These are the images that the tattoo artist is willing to do for a flat rate.

Custom tattoos are usually more expensive. In this case you commission the artist to draw what you want by bringing in an image or combination of images that you would like reproduced on your flesh.

### **Bigger is Better**

Although any image can be tattooed onto your body, some of them might look better on paper than they do on your skin. In general a big, bold simple image is clearer than a tiny, detailed image. Bigger images simply have more impact.

American tattooist Walt Dailey sums up the "bigger is better" issue by saying "A beautiful, big, fierce bear head design just looks like an angry hamster's face when you shrink it down."

When it comes to tattoos "bigger is better." If you find yourself looking at an array of complex designs full of curlicues, landscapes and portraits you might also want to recall the KISS rule used by American astronauts "KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID." Remember you can always add elaborations to your tattoo later if you are not satisfied with a simple design.





An example of the bold and beautiful look.  
Courtesy of Rueben "Rue" Kayden [www.tattoo.rue.com](http://www.tattoo.rue.com)

## **The Science of Tattoos**

Early tattooing techniques seem quite barbaric by today's standards. South American tribes scratched or pricked at the skin and then smeared it with dye or dirt. The Inuit punctured the skin and passed a needle covered in soot through the open wounds. The Maoris pierced the skin with a tool used for cutting bone and then smeared ash and other dyes over the cuts. Today traditional Japanese tattoos are still created by manually puncturing the skin and wiping the wounds with dye.

Fortunately, tattooing techniques have become much more sophisticated thanks to O'Reilly's electrically powered tattoo machine.

## **The Tattoo Gun**

This modern tattooing machine has a base that looks a bit like the handle of a gun so it is sometimes also called a tattoo gun. The tattoo machine is a three-part device; the gun-shaped base, the motor housed within the base and a tube that holds the ink and needles.

The machine pulsates vertically and needles puncture the first two layers of the skin. The ink from the tube is forced through the epidermis by the impact of the needle hitting the skin

Varying the number of needles used in the machine makes the different lines that are used to build up the tattoo. Solid lines are created by a group of needles arranged in a circular pattern. Needles used for shading are usually lined up in vertical or horizontal slots.

## **Tattoo Ink**

Tattoo ink isn't really ink. It's a combination of pigments suspended in a carrier solution. Unfortunately there is no real way to know what is in tattoo ink, as manufacturers of the stuff are not required to label the ingredients. Also, recipes for certain colored inks are secrets that are as closely guarded as the recipe for Kentucky Fried Chicken.

It is known that most tattoo inks are created from metal salts, although some may consist of vegetable-based pigments. Given that the ingredients in most tattoo inks are unknown even to the tattooist, it's difficult to predict if you could have an allergic reaction to the ink. Reactions are rare but it is something to consider if you have especially sensitive skin. The most common reaction is an itchy raised appearance to skin that can take as long as a week to show itself.

## **Basic Inking Styles**

Just like any art form, tattoos can be expressed as line drawings, paintings, cartoons, caricatures or even as airbrushed creations. Tattoos may be classified into distinct styles, much as painting may be classified into the styles of impressionism, realism, cubism, etc. Each style incorporates specific artistic elements which many are not familiar with. So here's a look at tattoos, not as a form of rebellion, a health hazard, or a display of "coolness," but as an art form.

The following is a summation of just a few of the most popular tattoo styles.

- ◆ **Black and Gray work.** This style originated in the prison system of America, where it was difficult to get colored ink. These tattoos have the kind of warmth and depth to them that you usually associate with a charcoal drawing.



An incredible example of black and grey work by  
Tim Hanan [www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)



An example of black and grey landscape  
By Enrique Patino Bottino [www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)

- ◆ Traditional. This style of tattoo refers to work that features bold black outlines and pitch black shading contrasted with very bright colors. The style is thought to have its origins on military bases in the 1930s and 1940s.



An example of a traditional rose tattoo by Tim Hanan <http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.n>

- ◆ Finline. These delicate tattoos are very detailed and usually associated with black and gray work. Finline is also often used to express a realistic depiction of an image. Finline images cannot be too complicated as sometimes over time the image can degenerate into a blotch or a shadow.



Fine line work by Little Joe  
<http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe>



An example of fine line work by Tim Hanan <http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net>

- ◆ Tribal. These designs are black silhouettes. Most are based on ancient tribal designs. A popular modern mutation of this style is to modify a traditional design so that it appears to be tribal. Many of the most popular styles are modeled after the ancient styles of the South Pacific Islands. These tattoos are usually abstract, artistic representations that consists of combination of discrete design elements such as spikes swirls and spines. Tribal tattoos are often designed to fit or accentuate a specific part of the body. For example, a tribal tattoo might snake along the contours of the lower back.



A stunning example of a tribal style tattoo  
courtesy of Rueben "Rue" Kayden  
[www.tattoorue.com](http://www.tattoorue.com)



A tribal tattoo with a Teutonic flair  
By Sean Donovan  
[www.tattoosbysean.com](http://www.tattoosbysean.com)

- ◆ Realistic. These designs are usually portraits or landscapes that mimic the fine detail of a photograph. Mostly they are done in black and white as it takes a master tattoo artist to emulate images in colors. Sometimes this style is also called photo-realism.



A baby portrait by Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artsagrado.com](http://www.artsagrado.com)

- ◆ Oriental. Usually the oriental style of tattooing involves using the entire body as a canvas rather than adding a single image here and there. Images are used to weave a story or a myth on an entire arm or over the entire back. Usually this is very fanciful, bold, yet

detailed color work. Big murals of dragons, flowers, fish, and other animals are the most common oriental tattoos. A dominant image such as a dragon might be surrounded by “fill work” that consists of artistic, fluid-like swirls of color. The oriental tattoo often follows the rules of Japanese perspective in painting that is concerned with symmetry and balance. Also the symbols in a Japanese tattoo often have deeper meanings. For instance, a tattoo of a carp represents wealth and prosperity.

- ◆ Celtic. These silhouette style tattoos have thick bold black lines, and sharp angle. A Viking offshoot of the Celtic style includes mythological creatures such as griffins. They are primarily completed in black ink only. Because they are difficult to do, Celtic tattoos are often best created by an artist who specializes in the style



Celtic tattoos found at [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

- ◆ Biomechanical. These tattoos often depict machinery intertwined with human flesh. A typical biomechanical tattoo work might depict a human hand, arm, or chest tangled with pieces of machinery such as screws, wheels, or pulleys. The result is an image of a creature that looks half-robot, half-human. This type of tattoo is inspired by movies such as "Alien."



An excellent example of a biomechanical tattoo.

Photo reprinted courtesy of the artist Rueben "Rue" Kayden. [www.tattoo.rue.com](http://www.tattoo.rue.com)

- ◆ Caricatures and cartoons. These tattoos are noted for their bold lines and often-humorous references to classic tattoos.



An example of a skull and bones caricature.





A more classical example of skull work by Tim Hanan <http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net>

## Chapter 4. Tattoo Motifs & Symbolism

There are literally as many motifs and symbols for tattoos as there are ideas for art in the world. When choosing a design it might benefit to ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ What inspires me?
- ◆ What do I aspire to?
- ◆ What gives me strength?

These three simple questions should trigger your gray matter to come up with an idea of what is meaningful "marking" for you.

Below are is a compendium of some of the most common motifs and symbols that are commonly used as tattoos.

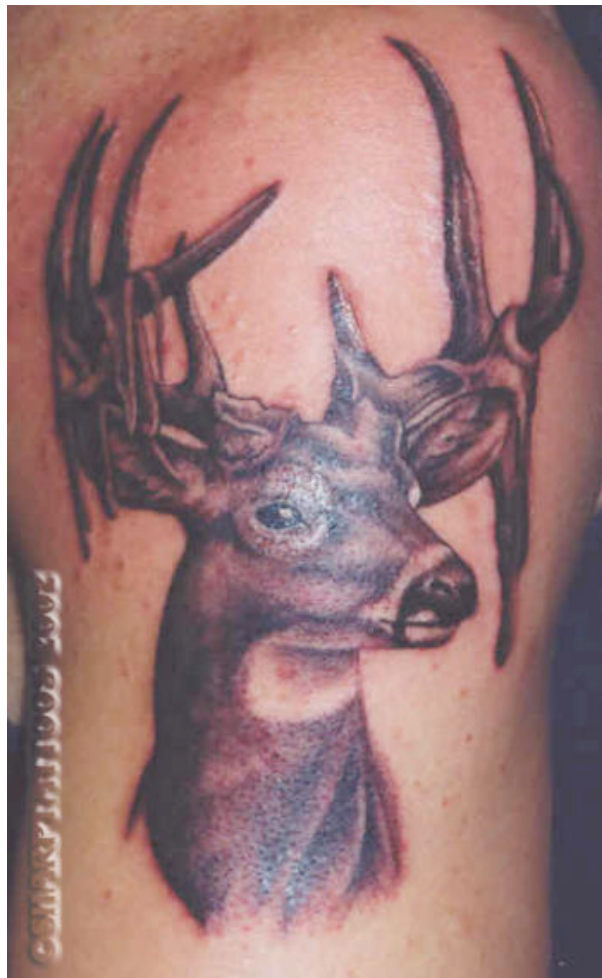
### Animals

Animals are chosen as tattoos for many reasons. It may be just because you happen to like the four-legged fuzzy creature. It may be because you need to commemorate the memory of a special pet that has passed away.

More often though, the animal is chosen either because the person identifies with the strengths and attributes of the creature and wishes to accentuate these traits in his her or her own character or because the animal functions for them as a shamanic spirit guide.

Here is a description of some of the attributes of animals commonly figured in tattoo art.

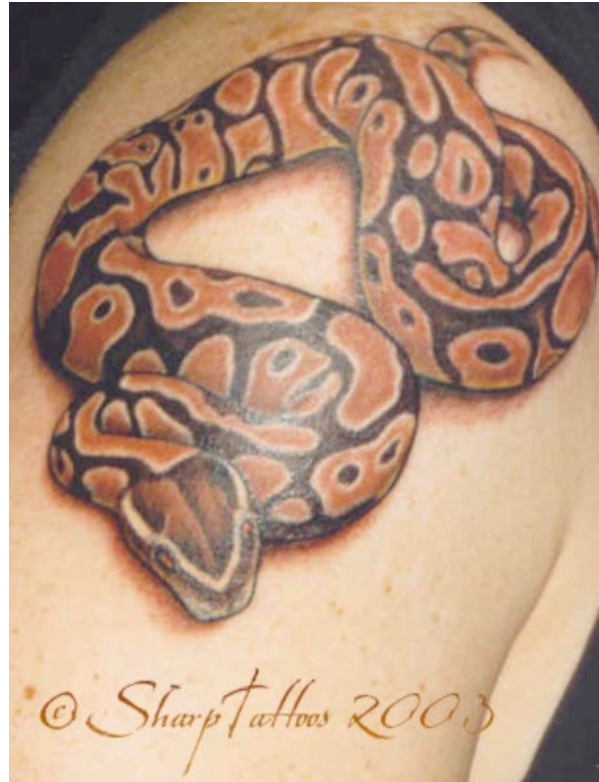
- ◆ Apes and Monkeys - symbolizes joy, freedom from persecution (Chinese) and sex (South Pacific), Chinese Astrological Sign
- ◆ Bats -a symbol of longevity and joy, psychic ability, vampires (Pagan)
- ◆ Bears - emblem of power, protection, strength and rebirth (Native American)
- ◆ Bees - messengers of God (Greek), carriers of souls to heaven, (Native American), prosperity (Ukrainian and Viking)
- ◆ Bison and Buffalo - inspires meditation (Native American)
- ◆ Boars - personification of victorious battle, wealth (Roman)
- ◆ Bulls -- strength, motivation, domination (Native American), Astrological symbol for Taurus
- ◆ Cats - divine, connection with Egyptian and alien spirits, psychic protection (Wiccan, Pagan)
- ◆ Cows - mother goddess symbol that is sacred in India. A red cow is a symbol of hope (India, China)
- ◆ Crickets - reincarnation, creativity, good luck charm (Pagan)



Portrait of a Deer by Stacey Sharp  
[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

- ◆ Deer - cure for epilepsy, visions , dreams, related to the Goddess of the Hunt Diana (Greek), beauty (Native American)
- ◆ Dogs - loyalty, service, trust, affection, an easy life. Chinese astrological sign
- ◆ Donkey - fertility, health, well-being and luck (Asian)
- ◆ Fox -shapeshifter, intelligence, magic (Pagan, Wiccan)
- ◆ Frog -mediumship (Native American), wealth bringing (Chinese)
- ◆ Gazelle - health (Africa)
- ◆ Goats - symbol of the God Pan (Greek, Celtic, Wiccan), Western Astrological sign of Capricorn, Chinese Astrological sign
- ◆ Hares - symbol of the God Brigid (Celtic), symbol of the moon (Wiccan)
- ◆ Horses - freedom, strength (American), Chinese astrological sign
- ◆ Jaguars - shamanism (African, Nordic)
- ◆ Lamb -symbol of Christianity, a Ram represents the Western astrological sign of Aries
- ◆ Lions - symbol of the Sun (Roman, Greek), protection (Africa), lion cubs symbolize mercy and gentleness (Native American)
- ◆ Ox - wealth, employment, Chinese astrological sign
- ◆ Pigs - Wealth and happiness (Chinese), Rebirth (Celtic), owner of motorcycle or chopper (Biker)
- ◆ Rabbit - Luck (Celtic), powers of manifestation (Pagan)

- ◆ Rat - Creativity, intelligence, Chinese astrological sign
- ◆ Rooster - Sexual fertility (Celtic), Chinese astrological sign
- ◆ Scorpion - the fire of the soul, sexuality (Egyptian), Western astrological symbol for the sign of Scorpio, Chinese astrological sign
- ◆ Tiger - virility, strength (Celtic), Chinese astrological sign
- ◆ Tortoises and Turtles -wisdom (Celtic), prosperity (Chinese)



"Snake Tattoo" courtesy of Stacey Sharp

[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

## **Biker**

Purists would say that a tattoo is not a true biker tattoo unless it contains the Harley Davidson logo. Although the Harley Davidson symbols are pretty much the same, many of them are dressed up with other symbols such as jaguars, eagles, feathers, skulls, dragons, bats, flames and hot babes.

Many bikers simply opt to get a photo of their custom chopper tattooed on their arm. Often those into customizing choppers will boast tattoos of nuts and bolts, screws, wheel hubs and other motorcycle parts on their bodies. The wheel of a bike or the bike itself roaring in a bouquet of flames is a very popular image.



A typical "Harley" biker tattoo dressed up with  
Patriotic and Native American references

Three dots found anywhere on the body are a common indicator of a biker tattoo as is the use of Old English Goth script.

Although weapons and anti-authoritarian statements are also common to biker tattoos, many of them are surprisingly complacent and involve the usual roses, poker hands, tributes to Mom and flaming skulls that are seen adorning the body parts of non-bikers.

## **Biomechanical**

Biomechanical tattoos often depict machinery intertwined with human flesh. The father of all biomechanical designs is H. R. Giger, who designed the creature from the Alien movies. A typical piece of biomechanical work might depict a human hand, arm, or chest tangled with pieces of machinery such as screws, wheels, or and pulleys. The result is an image of a creature that looks half-robot, half-human.

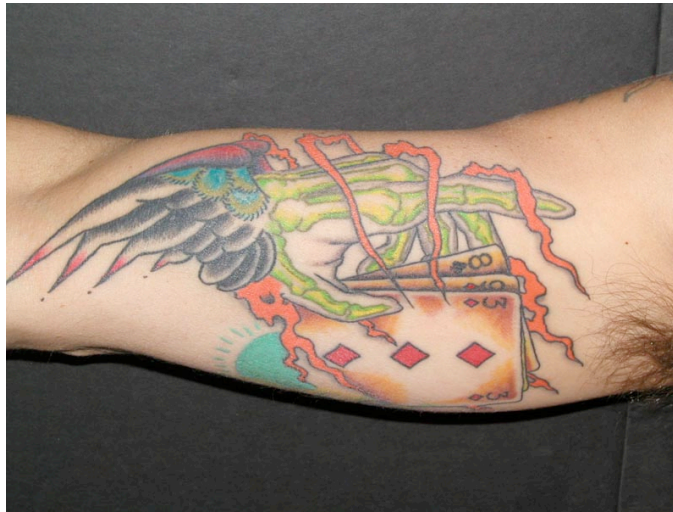
Biomechanical tattoos are considered to be fetish tattoos and take their cues from painting by Salvador Dali, fetishism and Satanism.



A colorful biomechanical tattoo by Tim Hanan <http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net>

## **Bones Skulls and Skeletons**

Tattoos of bones are as old as shamanism, healing and magic. This probably originates in the ancient superstitious belief that wearing death wards off death. The idea is that any evil that may approach the bearer of such a tattoo will be frightened away by the image of death on the body.



A colorful custom design by Rueben "Rue" Kayden  
[www.tattoorue.com](http://www.tattoorue.com)

Images of skulls also represent occult wisdom and psychic powers. Skull tattoos are very popular among bikers, Goths, Wiccans and in the military.



An example of a black and grey skull  
by Dave McCormick [www.fleshink.com](http://www.fleshink.com)

## **Birds**

Birds are symbols of soul freedom and the flight of the imagination. Tattoos of bird's feathers indicate honor, victory and shamanic powers. Birds' feathers are still used

for various magical purposes such as conducting energy and decorating spiritual devices such as dreamcatchers. Tattoos of birds are found in just about every culture.

Here is a brief, but by no means comprehensive list of the symbolism represented by birds that often appear as tattoo motifs.

- ◆ Bluebird - represent happiness, safe journeys, a classic "sailor" tattoo
- ◆ Crane - a Chinese symbol of health, fidelity and marriage
- ◆ Crow - a Celtic and Roman messenger of death, a Native American Indian Spirit Guide, a Chinese symbol of occult wisdom
- ◆ Cuckoo - a pagan symbol of weddings, second sight and transformation
- ◆ Dove - a universal symbol of peace and love, a symbol of Christ Consciousness in Christian religions
- ◆ Eagles - a biker and patriotic symbol, a Native American symbol of strength, a Greek and Roman symbol of a leader, an Egyptian and Celtic symbol of the "carrier of souls" past death
- ◆ Geese - a symbol of Canada, a symbol of new beginnings
- ◆ Hawk - a symbol of divine intervention and second sight in many cultures
- ◆ Hummingbirds - a love charm in Celtic and African Voodoo traditions
- ◆ Magpie - an American Southwest symbol for wealth and protection
- ◆ Owl - a symbol of wisdom and wisdom from the Gods in all cultures
- ◆ Peacock - a symbol of immortality, dignity and authority in most cultures
- ◆ Ravens - a Celtic symbol for victory in battle, a pagan symbol for messages from the dead
- ◆ Robin - an ancient symbol for compassion and fertility



Stock Tattoo of a Sparrow  
Found at [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

- ◆ Sparrow - a Christian symbol for faith
- ◆ Storks - traditionally announce the arrival of a baby, a universal symbol of fertility, a guardian of the elderly (North American Indian), a symbol of justice (Greece)
- ◆ Swans - a traditional love symbol, a messenger of the communication God Apollo (Greek), a symbol of the moon (Celtic and Pagan)
- ◆ Wren - a charm against drowning (Sailor), magic or occult powers (Wiccan and Pagan)





A traditional color work by Tim Hanlan  
<http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net>

## **Butterflies, Insects & Bugs**

On the lighter side of the "bug" motif in tattooing are butterflies and dragonflies.

Butterflies are popular because they represent inspiration, freedom and transformation. The three phases of the butterfly's life symbolize the three cycles of life (birth, death and rebirth) in just about every culture. In Native American Indian cultures the Monarch butterfly represents safe journeys thanks to the insect's ability to fly thousands of miles during its annual migration season. In some pagan and Celtic traditions, butterflies are thought to carry the spirits of the deceased to heaven. Butterflies are a very popular motif with women.



Stock image of a butterfly found at  
[www.tattoo.com](http://www.tattoo.com)

Dragonflies are truly magical creatures whose shiny bodies and luminescent wings make a great uni-sex tattoo. Dragonflies are a symbol of harmony, luck and ancient knowledge. They are also thought to bring prophetic dreams and protect against nightmares.

On the darker side of things are spiders. Spiders are a popular Goth, biker, pagan and punk symbol. In Greek myth the spider was associated with the Greek Goddess Ariadne who was responsible for magic and myth making.

## **Cartoon and Animated Characters**

Stock cartoon images that are licensed for the express purposes of tattooing are now big business in North America. On the Internet one can now purchase images of Betty Boop, Scooby Doo, Mickey Mouse, Batman, Spiderman, Superman, the Tasmanian Devil, Babar the Elephant, Nemo and just about any other animated character you can imagine.

Anime action figures, which most of us are familiar with from manga cartoons are also big business in the tattoo industry and feature such popular characters as Hello Kitty, Emily and Sailor Moon.

Of course, tons of individuals have bypassed the licensing procedure and gotten their own personalized versions of these cartoon characters. Cartoon characters in sinful positions is also a popular motif in tattooing and are often used as a creative way to express one's vices to the world.

Caricatures and cartoons have always been an integral style in tattooing, beginning with the invention of animation itself in the 1920s when cartoons of Betty Boop and the stick-figured Mickey Mouse were popular with sailors visiting New York.

Mostly however, any portrait or figure can be made into a cartoon as is demonstrated by Enrique Patino and Stacy Sharp's examples below.



Cartoon coyote by Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artsegrado.com](http://www.artsegrado.com)



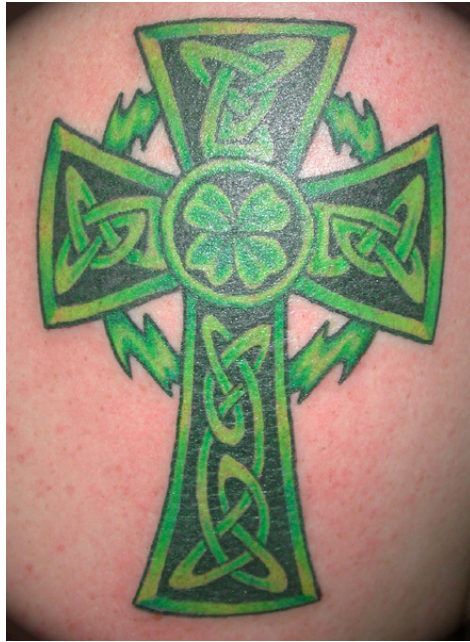
Cartoon turtles courtesy of Stacey Sharp  
[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

## **Celtic & Irish**

Celtic tattoos are mainly characterized by their interlacing knots that are complete loops with no end or beginning. Sometimes the motif also features animals or a zoomorphic design that is stylized into a spiral.

Knotwork designs are emblematic of the Celtic nationalities, even though the symbolism of many of the images have been lost through time. Trees, cauldrons, shamrocks, spirals, horned gods, wheels, mandalas, serpents, druids, dark jewels are signatures of the Celtic tattoo style.

The repeated crossing of the physical and the spiritual are expressed in the interlacing of the knots. The never-ending path of the strands may represent the permanence and the persistence of life, love and faith.



"Lucky Celtic Shamrock" tattoo by Little Joe <http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe>

## Celebrity Tattoos

What better way to pay homage to your favorite celebrity than to make him or her a part of your skin. This can be done through portraiture, as in the classic portrait of Elvis or John F. Kennedy that is done in black and grey work, or you can emulate the tattoo of another famous celebrity.

Tattoos have rapidly become part of the personae of the rich and influential since the 1960s and it seems that everyone from Gillian Anderson to Ben Affleck boasts a tattoo. Even the normally complacent Barbie Doll was marketed with a large flower tattoo beneath her ribs in the early 1970s.



Two KISS inspired tattoos executed by Tim Hanan  
[www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)

Some famous tattoos include the AC/DC band logo, the Rolling Stones' red lips and tongue logo and the KISS band logo. Favorite portraits have included Gene Simmons from Kiss, Brian Jones (formerly of the Rolling Stones), Marilyn Monroe, John Lennon, Frank Sinatra ("I got you under my skin") and Jim Morrison. In recent times, Kurt Cobain is also a favorite of the "Teen Spirit" set.



Kurt Cobain Memorial tattoo courtesy of  
Enrique Patino [www.artsagrada.com](http://www.artsagrada.com)

Another way to go is to emulate the tattoo of one of your favorite celebrities. Celebrity tattoos are the subject of tabloid folklore. Angelina Jolie who boasts about seven tattoos on her body just had a tiger inked into her skin in Tibet, although many wonder if she will ever get the big black Billy Bob tattoo she has on her forearm removed. Drew Barrymore, Courtney Love and Cher are two other female celebrities who are known for their ink addiction.



Pamela Anderson's Barb Wire tattoo  
More photos at [www.vanishingtattoo.com](http://www.vanishingtattoo.com)



Johnny Depp's "Winona Forever" before the breakup.  
He changed it to Wino forever.  
More photos at [www.vanishingtattoo.com](http://www.vanishingtattoo.com)

Johnny Depp made headlines ten years ago when he had his Winona Forever tattoo changed to Wino forever. Pamela Anderson is well known, not only for her barb-wired forearm but also changing a tattoo on her left ring finger from "Tommy" (a reference to her ex-husband Tommy Lee) to "Mommy."



Drew Barrymore's butterfly tattoo  
More photos at [www.vanishingtattoo.com](http://www.vanishingtattoo.com)



Cher's famous tattoo of a necklace with charms  
More photos at [www.vanishingtattoo.com](http://www.vanishingtattoo.com)



"Here's Johnny!" Jack Nicholson in a scene from "The Shining" by Tim Hanan [www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)

## **Celestial Stars, Planets and Suns**

Depictions of the planets and stars and their symbols are very common motifs in tattoo art. Perhaps one of the most famous planetary glyphs and symbols is the symbol for Mars and Venus that is interlinked. This mark symbolizes the eternal dance between male and female energies.



Stock tattoo of a Sun found at



The sun is a motif from early childhood that represents glory, achievement, wealth, love and prosperity. The moon is an occult symbol symbolizing the subconscious, intuition, sexual and esoteric mysteries and the mysterious forces of the supernatural. The planet mercury symbolizes the Roman God of communication and the creative arts. Venus represents love, Mars represents war and Saturn represents discipline and the acceptance of one's lot in life.

Each of the planets in the solar system also has its own equivalence to the Western Zodiac symbols. For instance, a glyph of Venus or depiction of the planet is appropriate for those born under the signs of Libra or Taurus. The glyphs for the astrological symbols also make wonderful tattoos, especially if you are sick of people using "what's your sign?" as a pick up line.



"Evil Moon" tattoo, courtesy of Enrique Patino Bottino [www.artsagredo.com](http://www.artsagredo.com)

Stars are often encountered as esoteric symbols, and the meaning of any particular star symbol depends upon its number of points. The five-pointed pentagram is a powerful symbol of protection and balance. It represents the human figure and is connected to pagan and Wiccan traditions.



Stock image of Pentagram found at [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

The six-pointed hexagram is a potent symbol of the interaction of the Divine with the mortal, of God with Humankind. It is linked to the Kabbalah and is often called the Star of David

The septagram or seven-pointed star is a symbol of integration and the mystical due to its links with the number seven. It is associated with the seven planets of classical astrology and to other seven-fold systems, such as the Hindu *chakras*.

The octagram or eight-pointed star is a symbol of fullness and regeneration. It is related to eight-fold systems such as trigrams of the *I Ching*, the pagan wheel of the year and the Ogdoad of ancient Egypt.

The nonagram or nine-pointed star is a symbol of achievement and of stability, though this is a stability that is subject to change. It can also be related to nine-fold systems, such as the nine Taoist kanji.



The moon kisses the sun in this charming tattoo by Tim Hanan [www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)

## Commemorative

Commemorative tattoos are used to remember or mark an important event such as a death, world disaster or triumph in war. Most commemorative tattoos are "custom tattoos" that incorporate several elements to make it a personal item.



Examples of two custom tattoos remembering the events of September 11th. Photos reprinted with permission of Stacy Sharp [www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

Commemorative tattoos can also mark the passing of a loved or celebrate a birth or the eternity of a special relationship.



An example of a custom tattoo celebrating a personal relationship. Photos reprinted with permission of the artist -Stacey Sharp [www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

## **Criminal and Prison Tattoos**

The symbolism of prison and criminal tattoos is an area of real esoteric interest to some and of real interest to the police. An article written by Sergeant Ken Whitley called "Tattoos: Recognition and Interpretation" claims that a tattoo can tell you three things about a convict: "who he is, where he has been and what he has done."

As these kinds of tattoos are usually done in prison, freehand with ink from a pen. A sewing needle is used to form a picture or a word. Prisoners also make a homemade tattoo machine out of a ball point pen, a guitar string and a nine volt battery.

Police often use the images in a tattoo to identify parolees and suspects. For instance, a gun pictured downwards means the man prefers to be armed. Images of walls, towers and barbwire signify he has been in prison for some time.



A tattoo any criminal would be proud of  
by Tim Hanan [www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)

Below is a list of some of the symbolism associated with classic prison tattoos.

Clock faces without hands = Doing Time

Spiders or cobwebs on shoulders = Doing Time

Tombstones with numbers on them = The number of years they were in jail'

Tombstones with R.I.P. on them and numbers = Mourning the death of a friend who died on the inside

Eight balls = Means being "behind the eight ball" or bad luck.

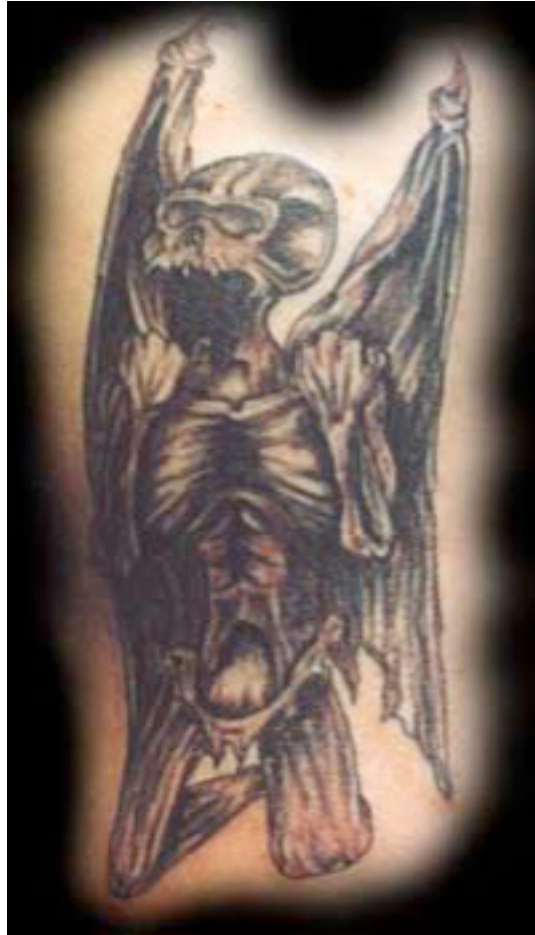


Flaming 8 Ball found at  
[www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

- ◆ One laughing face, one crying face = member of a gang, "play now, pay later."
- ◆ The anagram SWP = Supreme White Power
- ◆ The word Peckerwood = Male White Pride
- ◆ Featherwood = Female White Pride
- ◆ "100% Pure" = White pride tattoo
- ◆ Granite block walls + Time in Old Folsom Prison
- ◆ Cell Window with sun or bird = Waiting to get out.
- ◆ Face of female crying = Has loved one waiting for him to get out.
- ◆ SUR = Southerner
- ◆ Norteano = Northerner
- ◆ Prison block wall with bricks falling outward = On the inside wanting to get out.

## Demons and Monsters

As tattoos, the creation of demons and monsters on the skin work psychologically and spiritually in the same way that images of skulls and bones do.



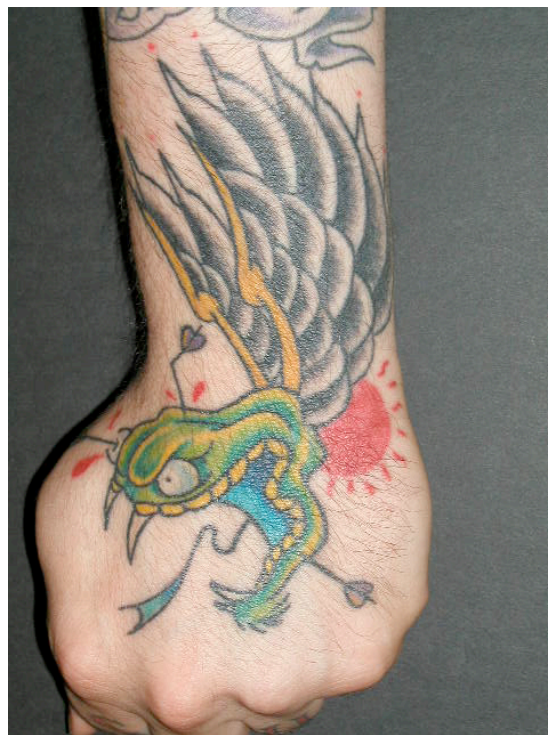
A winged devil skeleton tattoo by  
Dave McCormick. [www.fleshink.com](http://www.fleshink.com)

The symbolic purpose of the monster is to protect the wearer from evil spirits who may identify the beast as being part of or a guardian of the person.



"Laughing Red Devil" by  
Dave McCormick [www.fleshink.com](http://www.fleshink.com)

Devils, gargoyles, winged creatures and dragons are the most popular type of monster motif. Many of these types of tattoos are custom designed to create anthropomorphic creatures.



An anthropomorphic by Reuben "Rue" Kayden  
[www.tattooerue.com](http://www.tattooerue.com)

## Eastern Symbols

There are literally thousands of Eastern Religious symbols that find their origins in countries such as China, Japan, Tibet and Thailand.

Perhaps one of the most popular of these symbols is the lotus flower that symbolizes the oneness of being with universal consciousness. The symbol stands for the six syllables of the holiest mantra of Tibetan Buddhism ("OM Mani Padme Hum") together form a very powerful symbol of balance, liberation and enlightenment.



Stock Tattoo of Lotus Flower  
Found at [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)



A fiery "custom lotus design by Tim Hanan  
[www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)

Another popular symbol is the OM symbol, which consists of many curlicues. The symbol represents is the highest name of God and is the most venerable Hindu symbol of spiritual knowledge. Many traditions use the symbol for meditation, and its corresponding syllables as a powerful mantra.

The Yin-Yang is a dynamic symbol representing the flow and interaction of the two polar energies of male and female whose totality encompasses creation.

An Enso is Japanese 'circle', and is painted in a single brushstroke. It is a Zen symbol of the true nature of existence and enlightenment.

-

The beauty and antiquity of Chinese Symbols make them attractive for meditative, decorative or talismanic use today. These include Chinese characters such as the "Double Happiness Sign" and the characters that comprise each of the Chinese astrological signs.





A Byzantine elephant - an Asian symbol for good luck . Reprinted courtesy of Little Joe [www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe](http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe)

## **Egyptian**

Egyptian tattoos are usually an expression of an affinity with the occult. The most popular tattoos are the eye of Horus, which is a powerful symbol of protection, health and wisdom. Goddesses such as Isis, the Goddess of Wisdom and Bastet, a goddess with the head of a cat are also popular Egyptian tattoo motifs.



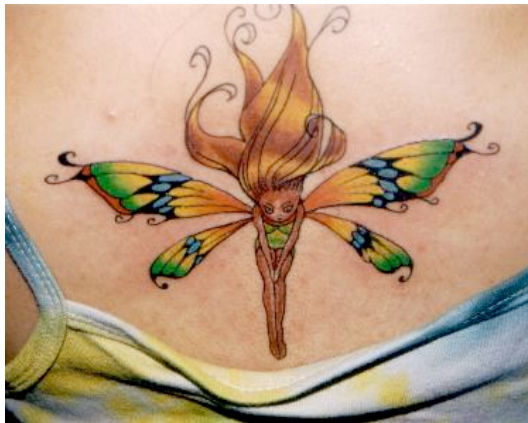
A modern depiction of the Goddess Isis  
By Dave McCormick of [www.fleshink.com](http://www.fleshink.com)



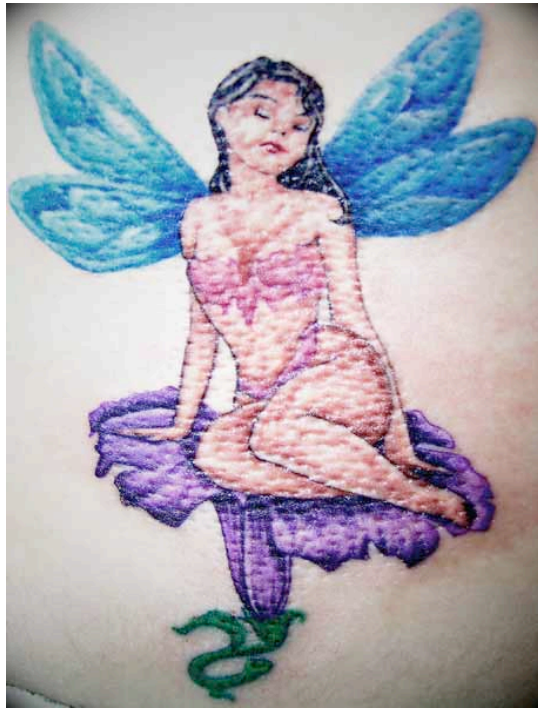
King Tut's Death Mask tattoo  
by Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)

## **Fairies, Pixies and Nymphs**

These mythic creatures that have existed in every culture since before the birth of Christ are especially popular choices for tattoos for women. Most designs find their origins in Celtic or British art.



A Dragon Fly Fairy by Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)



A Flower Fairy by Tim Hanan  
[www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)



"Fairy Under an Umbrella" by  
Stacey Sharp [www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

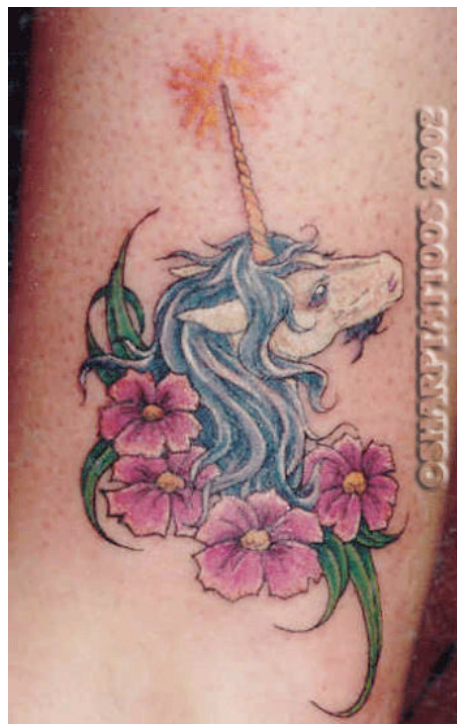
**Fantasy**

The most popular fantasy figures are dragons, wizards and unicorns.

Images of wizards, with their long cloaks and white beards are associated with pagan and Celtic magic. Modern versions include images from the Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter.

The Dragon is a potent Celtic, Greek, Roman, Japanese and Chinese symbol of protection. They represent an affinity with the occult and magical powers as well.

Unicorns represent the uniqueness and fragility of the individual and is a tattoo image very much favored by young girls.



A girlish unicorn tattoo by Stacey Sharp  
[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

**Flames**

Whether they represent the purifying aspect of holy fire or the burning flames of Hell, flames are a huge motif in tattooing. Part of the reason for this may be that flames provide a brilliant background that allows a tattoo to really stand out.

Common motifs include motorcycles in flames, babes in flames, sacred hearts in flames, crucifixes in flames and skull in flames.



An Iron Cross in Flames by Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)



A patriotic skull in flames by Tim Hanan

## Flora and Fauna

Whether they be large and elaborate, tiny and demure or part of the background of a tattoo, flowers are one of the most common motifs found in tattoo art. The rose with its association with romance and fidelity probably tops the list when it comes to favorite flowers.



Stock Rose Tattoo found at  
[www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

Below is a list of common flowers and their symbolic meanings.

- ◆ amaryllis - pride, pastoral poetry
- ◆ anemone - forsaken
- ◆ aster - symbol of love, daintiness
- ◆ azalea - take care of yourself for me, temperance, fragile passion, Chinese symbol of womanhood
- ◆ bells of Ireland - good luck
- ◆ bluebell - humility
- ◆ cactus - endurance
- ◆ camellia (pink) - longing for you
- ◆ camellia (red) - you're a flame in my heart
- ◆ camellia (white) - you're adorable
- ◆ carnation (pink) - I'll never forget you
- ◆ carnation (red) - my heart aches for you, admiration
- ◆ carnation (striped) - wish I could be with you
- ◆ carnation (white) - sweet and lovely, innocence, pure love, woman's good luck gift
- ◆ cattail - peace, prosperity
- ◆ chrysanthemum (white) - truth
- ◆ chrysanthemum (yellow) - slighted love
- ◆ crocus - cheerfulness
- ◆ cyclamen - resignation and good-bye
- ◆ daffodil - regard, unrequited love, you're the only one, the sun is always shining when I'm with you
- ◆ daisy - innocence, loyal love, I'll never tell, purity
- ◆ dandelion - faithfulness, happiness
- ◆ fern - magic, fascination, confidence and shelter

- ◆ fir - time
- ◆ forget-me-not - true love, memories
- ◆ gardenia - you're lovely, secret love
- ◆ heather (lavender) - admiration, solitude
- ◆ heather (white) - protection, wishes will come true
- ◆ holly - domestic happiness
- ◆ hyacinth (blue) - constancy
- ◆ hyacinth (white) - loveliness, I'll pray for you
- ◆ iris - fleur-de-lis, emblem of France, your friendship means so much to me, faith, hope, wisdom and valor, my compliments
- ◆ ivy - wedded love, fidelity, friendship, affection
- ◆ jonquil - love me, affection returned, desire, sympathy, desire for affection returned



Purple Lilies by Stacey Sharp  
[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

- ◆ lily (white) - virginity, purity, majesty, it's heavenly to be with you
- ◆ lily (yellow) - I'm walking on air, gay
- ◆ lily (calla) - beauty, remembrance
- ◆ lily (day) - coquetry, Chinese emblem for mother
- ◆ lily (tiger) - wealth, pride
- ◆ lily of the valley - sweetness, tears of the virgin Mary, return to happiness, humility, you've made my life complete
- ◆ magnolia - nobility
- ◆ mistletoe - kiss me, affection, to surmount difficulties, sacred plant of India
- ◆ myrtle - love, Hebrew emblem of marriage
- ◆ narcissus - stay as sweet as you are
- ◆ orange blossom - innocence, eternal love, marriage and fruitfulness
- ◆ orchid - love, beauty, refinement, beautiful lady, Chinese symbol for many children
- ◆ palm leaves - victory and success
- ◆ peony - happy life, happy marriage

- ◆ poppy (general) - eternal sleep, oblivion, imagination
- ◆ poppy (red) - pleasure
- ◆ poppy (white) - consolation
- ◆ poppy (yellow) - wealth, success
- ◆ primrose - I can't live without you
- ◆ rose (bridal) - happy love
- ◆ rose (dark crimson) - mourning
- ◆ rose (hibiscus) - delicate beauty
- ◆ rose (leaf) - you may hope
- ◆ rose (pink) - perfect happiness, please believe me
- ◆ rose (red) - love, I love you
- ◆ rose (tea) - I'll remember always
- ◆ rose (thornless) - love at first sight
- ◆ rose (white) - innocence and purity, I am worthy of you, you're heavenly, secrecy and silence
- ◆ rose (white and red mixed) - unity, flower emblem of England
- ◆ rose (white-dried) - death is preferable to loss of virtue
- ◆ rose (yellow) - unfaithful,
- ◆ rosebud - beauty and youth, a heart innocent of love
- ◆ rosebud (red) - pure and lovely
- ◆ rosebud (white) - girlhood
- ◆ roses (bouquet of mature blooms) - gratitude
- ◆ roses (single full bloom) - I love you, I still love you
- ◆ snapdragon - gracious lady
- ◆ spider flower - elope with me
- ◆ tulip (general) - perfect lover, frame, flower emblem of Holland
- ◆ tulip (red) - believe me, declaration of love
- ◆ tulip (variegated) - beautiful eyes
- ◆ tulip (yellow) - there's sunshine in your smile
- ◆ violet (blue) - watchfulness, faithfulness, I'll always be true
- ◆ violet (white) - let's take a chance
- ◆ zinnia (magenta) - lasting affection
- ◆ zinnia (mixed) - thinking (or in memory) of an absent friend
- ◆ zinnia (scarlet) - constancy
- ◆ zinnia (white) - goodness
- ◆ zinnia (yellow) - daily remembrance





Yellow Lilly Tattoo by Stacey Sharp  
[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

## **Goth**

The Goth culture is identified by its fascination with existentialism, depression and anarchy. The tattoos tend to be black, Nordic or Germanic in style and feature a fascination with medieval, Victorian and Edwardian history.

Common Goth symbols include the Christian cross, the Egyptian ankh (a symbol for eternal life), the Egyptian "eye of Horus", the German Iron Cross and the Satanic inverted pentacle. Bats, griffins and images of the "undead" and howling spirits are also identified with Goth culture.



A pentagram with an image of a depressed punk  
By Enrique Patino Bottino [www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)



A Gothic purple Bat Devil executed by Tim Hanan [www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)

## **Griffins**

Formerly adornments that guarded the turrets of ancient architecture these mystical winged creatures are also now the spiritual guardians of the human body. Griffins are most popular with bikers, Goths, Wiccans and pagans.



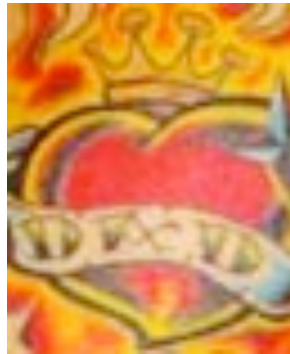
Two Griffins by Stacey Sharp  
[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)



A British style Griffin by Dave McCormick  
[www.fleshink.com](http://www.fleshink.com)

## Hearts and Love Symbols

The Heart symbol is self-explanatory, having been the universal symbol for love between the sexes for aeons.



Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)



"Heart with Web" tattoo  
[www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

## Logos

Logos can be words of wisdom, such as the classic Hell's Angel's logo "Born for Fun, Loyal to None" or they can actually mean the real corporate thing. In fact, the latest fad amongst corporate types is to have the logo of their company tattooed somewhere. This is true of the computer company Apple that now boasts something called "The Apple Tattoo Cult."

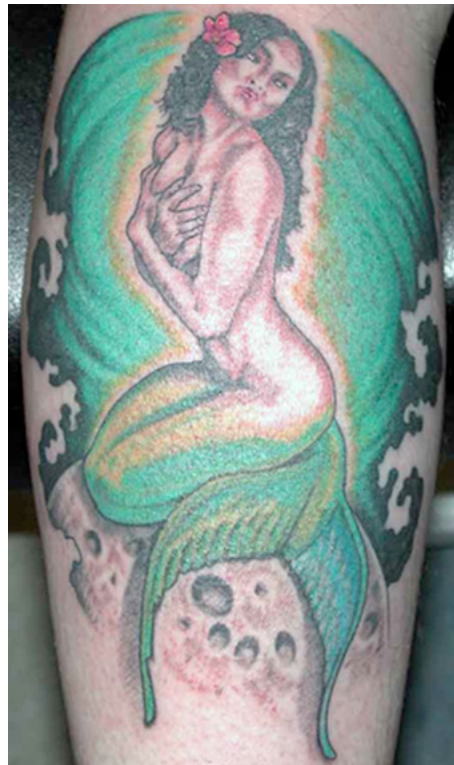
Just about any logo or catch phrase can become a tattoo. In fact perversions of logos are also very hip in tattoos. An example of this is the image of the cocaine spoon with the Coca-Cola beneath and the words "It's The Real Thing."



A bloody looking distortion of the Superman logo  
by Tim Hanan [www.artfultattoo.dyns.net](http://www.artfultattoo.dyns.net)

## **Mermaids**

Mermaids represent a lot of things to different people. For sailors they represent rescue from death at sea. For women, mermaids represent female sexuality and a reliance on intuition. The tattoo below has a definite South Pacific flair to it.



"Mermaid" tattoo reprinted by courtesy of Little Joe  
<http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe>

## Ocean and River Life

The most popular oceanic tattoos are fish, whales, crabs and dolphins.

Fish are associated with messiahs and saviors. The ithycus fish, which is a Christian symbol, represents the renewal faith and is constructed from two simple curved and crossed lines.

In China, carp represent love and courage. Goldfish represent gold coins. In North American Native Indian lore, salmon love and courage as well because of their ability to swim upstream to spawning grounds. Fish are also associated with the Western zodiac symbol of Pisces.

Crabs are also a common subject of tattoos, simply because they represent the astrological sign of Cancer.

Whale tattoos are often borne to support the ecological causes of the creature. In most cultures, whales are identified with an emergence from depression and "the dark night of the soul" as well aligning oneself with the water element.

Dolphins represent joy and harmony in Western culture. In South Pacific and Native American cultures the animal is thought to carry departed souls to their next incarnation.



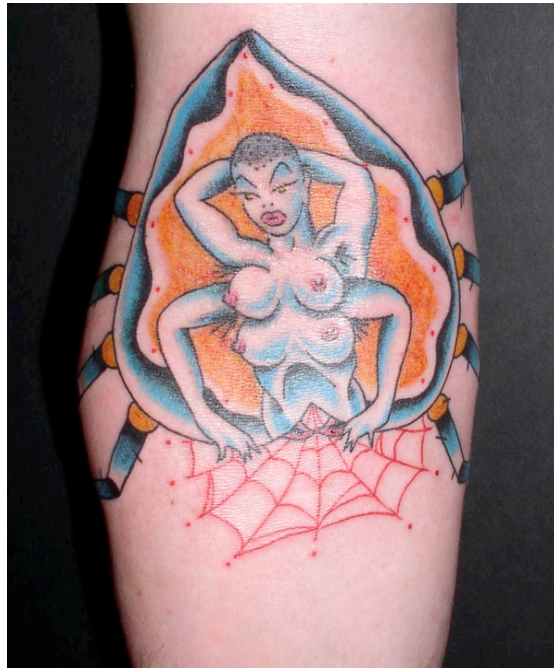
Dolphin tattoo by Stacey Sharp  
[www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

## Pin Up Girls Good and Evil

Pin up girl tattoos have something to do with the phrase "a sailor has a lady in every port." Explorers in the South Pacific came home with tattoos of their exotic feminine finds on their arms. Some of these tattoo designs were morphed into goddess like creatures who were thought to protect the men while they were at sea.

The pin up tattoo hit it big during World War I and World II, at the same time as magazine pin up girls came into fashion. Image of the Gibson girl and Betty Grable adorned the forearms of fighting men. During the Korean War images of Marilyn Monroe and Rita Hayworth were also popular.

The lighter pin-up girl tattoos were based on popular celebrities. The dark side of this motif was represented by images of goddesses, witches, Viking Queens, Amazons and anthropomorphic creatures.



"Spider Woman" tattoo courtesy of Rueben "Rue" Kayden  
[www.tattoorue.com](http://www.tattoorue.com)



"Viking Witch" tattoo reprinted by courtesy of Little Joe  
<http://www.geocities.com/tat2byjoe>

## Portraits Realism

Simply an expression of affection for one's family, it is a popular custom in the South Americas to have one's children and wife tattooed some place on the body so that they can be carried with you everywhere. Usually these are photo-realistic portraits done in fine-line and black and grey.



Family Portrait courtesy of Enrique Patino Bottino [artesaagrado@hotmail.com](mailto:artesaagrado@hotmail.com)



## Religious - Symbols of Faith & Spirituality

Crosses, praying hands, flaming sacred hearts and doves characterize religious symbols. Also quite common are full reproductions of the Crucifixion and other well-known scenes from the Bible. Devout followers will often have fully landscaped myths tattooed on their backs, chest and arms depicting such scenes as The Last Supper or to-scale reproductions of famous works such as the Sistine Chapel.



Examples of religious tattoos  
Courtesy of Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)

## Tribal

The tribal tattoo is based on primitive traditions and is usually black and white with strong organic references such as horns and branches. The tribal style can be informed by a number of cultures include Native American, Maori, African, Celtic and Viking styles.



Primitive horned tattoo



South Pacific Style Tribal Tattoos



A tattoo that combines the primitive style of fine art with references to primitive tattoos.

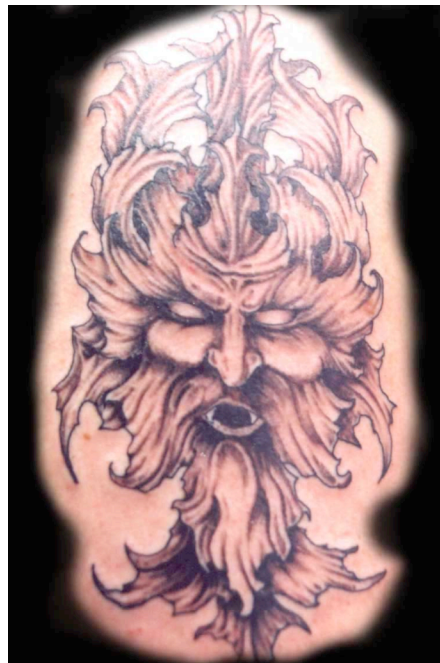
All tattoos above reprinted by permission of Enrique Patino Bottino  
[www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)



An example of a tattoo that incorporates Native American Indian Tribalism.  
By Stacey Sharp [www.staceysharp.com](http://www.staceysharp.com)

## Wiccan and Pagan Tattoo Motifs

Everything Celtic, angelic, flaming, bony, satanic, druid-like, natural or celestial can comprise a Wiccan or pagan tattoo. Images of Gods or Goddesses or their symbols also comprise the vast array of symbols that represent the many sects to do with these religions.



The Leaf Man by Tim Hanan  
[www.fleshink.com](http://www.fleshink.com)

Below is a list of common images found in these religions.

The Rose Cross is a very important symbol in the Western Mystery Tradition, originating with the Rosicrucians. It is a holistic symbol incorporating elements of the Kabbalah, alchemy, astrology and esoteric Christianity, among others.

The Eye of Horus is a powerful symbol of protection, health and wisdom from ancient Egypt. It has its origins in the legendary battle between the gods Horus and Set, over Set's murder of Horus' father, the god Osiris.

The symbol of an 'eight on its side' is sometimes known as the lemniscate and is a symbol for infinity, eternity, the numinous and the higher spiritual powers.



Gray Sun by Sean  
[www.Tattoosbysean.co](http://www.Tattoosbysean.co)

The Triquetra is a beautiful symbol of trinities, often encountered in Gothic and Celtic art. It is usually found in Pagan or Christian contexts, but it can be used to represent many three-fold systems.

The Spiral is a common natural form and an ancient mystical symbol. It represents the forces and patterns underlying creation, as well as evolution and self-transformation



The winged God Mercury by Sean Donovan  
[www.tattoosbysean.com](http://www.tattoosbysean.com)

## **Chapter 5. Where To Find Designs**

### **Inspiration from the Heart**

If you ask any tattoo artist, he or she will tell you that the best place to find a design is within your heart. However what is in your heart may not be the most practical design for you. Also it may be difficult to describe what is in your heart to the tattoo artist, who is after all, sitting there with a tattoo needle ready to brand you forever. It is highly recommended that you bring some kind of template or design with you before you visit the tattoo artist, as like a diamond, a tattoo is forever.

### **Inspiration from Art**

The best places to find ideas for designs for tattoos that you can take along with you to the tattoo parlor are the Library or everybody's favorite one-stop resource - the Internet. Actually, don't even bother going to the library. This is only necessary if you don't own a computer or are moved to have a full reproduction done by Delacroix tattooed in fine detail on your back.

However before you begin a search on the Internet you need to decide what period of art appeals to you most. Do your tastes run more to Andy Warhol or Leonardo Da Vinci? Do you like the woodblock etching effect associated with Japanese and Medieval style tattoos or do you prefer the swirls of color identified with Chinese art? Do you like realism or caricature? Anagrams or company logos? These are all questions you need to ask yourself before you type those all-important keywords into your search engines.

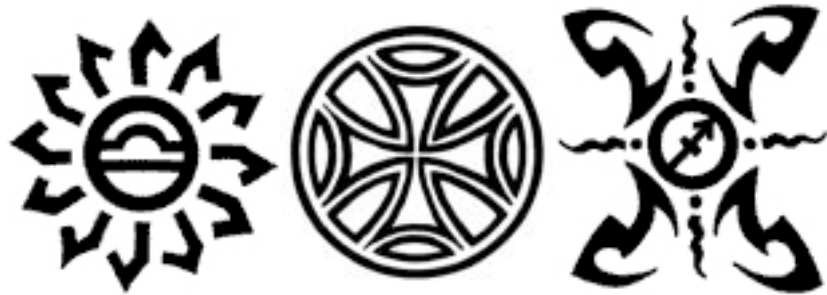
Good artistic key words to type into your search engine in order to find examples of art to inspire your tattoo are: "astrological symbols", "expressionism", "flowers", "fantasy art", "gods" "goddesses" "goth art" "native American" "neo-primitivism", "modernism "

"photo-realism," planetary symbols" "primitivism" "romanticism" "surrealism" "symbols", "religious symbols". "tribal art". "woodblock" and of course the key word phrases " tattoos" and "tattoo symbols"

## Designing Your Tattoo on the Internet

Typing the word "tattoo" into your search engine will bring up scores of sites inviting you to look at what are called flash or stock tattoos, which you can sometimes have for free, or a small fee. These are the same kinds of images that you often see displayed on the walls of a tattoo parlor. The idea is that you can take these templates directly to a tattoo artist and have them replicate the image on your body. Usually the tattoo artist will also personalize the tattoo slightly for you also, either by adding stripes, rays or bars, initials, vines and flowers, flames or other "fill work" that help make the tattoo uniquely yours.

One of the most amazing on-line resources for stock and flash tattoos is [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com) which stores about 6,000 online flash and stock tattoos in its virtual gallery. Below are some examples of the kinds of tattoos you can find at [www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com).





All of the above images found at  
[www.findatattoo.com](http://www.findatattoo.com)

There are also computer programs available that can help you design your own tattoo. One of the best is Symnet, which allows you to create your own tribal custom designs with laser precision in a matter of seconds. You can access this program, which is great for creating custom arm bands and anklet designs at [http://www.symynet.com/tattoo\\_designs/tattoo-designs-home.htm](http://www.symynet.com/tattoo_designs/tattoo-designs-home.htm)

Another fantastic site that will really get your creative juices going is <http://www.createatattoo.com>. This little known site allows you to create your own custom tribal tattoo in two minutes or less, even if you have absolutely zero artistic ability. You simply choose a design, customize it and then print it out to take to the tattoo artist.

If your design involves lettering then you might have some fun looking at the hundreds of unusual fonts at <http://www.fontmagic.com>. These fonts allow you to download all sorts of unusual styles, including the Roman and Gothic lettering that can be so hard to find for free.

## **Chapter 6. Choosing A Tattoo Artist**

### **Reputation is All**

Tattoo artists fall into two different categories: those who have had formal training or an apprenticeship and "scratchers."

The scratcher is an untrained tattooist who may be artistically gifted but rarely bothers sterilizing his instruments. The scratcher may work out of a studio, but often works from his home, a basement or the back room of a bar. They may describe themselves as freelancer. A scratcher often purchases equipment through the Internet or email. The worst thing about a scratcher is their tendency to reuse needles which of course can lead to fatal diseases such as hepatitis or AIDS.

In a category somewhere between the shoddy practices of the scratcher and the brightly lit sanitary studio of professional tattoo artists are the artists that just don't have any artistic talent. Their tattoos are badly executed, the outlines uneven, the colors unattractive and their drawing perspective is out of proportion. If a tattoo artist's works

seems ill thought out or lacks a pleasant composition then trust your instincts and stay away.

Unfortunately we live in a day and age where tattooing could literally be the death of a customer if proper procedures are not strictly carried out. Needles and equipment must be properly sterilized, cross-contamination and strict sterilization techniques must be adhered to, or disease can spread as quickly. Blood-borne pathogens do kill tattoo clients. If you think all that you need to get a tattoo is a needle and some ink...think again!

Before you choose the tattoo artist, you need to make an inner decision that you are not going to settle for banal, boring or sloppy work. There is too much talent on the market for you to walk away with a badly drawn or splotchy looking tattoo.

It is your ultimate responsibility to choose an artist who has the cleanliness of a surgeon and the talent of a drawing master. Sometimes this means investing some money and sometimes it means travelling to another city to get the tattoo that you want. You need to tell yourself that this expense of time and energy is worth it, as it is an investment in what is ultimately a permanent work of art.

The only way to properly assess a tattoo artist is to see examples of his or her work. They should have a portfolio that is signed or watermarked in some way. The portfolio should consist of photographs of work that they have done. You can also visit the shop or studio and ask if you can watch the artist in action. One good reason to do this is to establish the verity of the artist's portfolio. Unfortunately anyone can put up examples of tattoos on their walls and then claim authorship of the work.

Another way to find a good tattoo artist is to walk up to someone, whose tattoo you admire, and ask him or her who did the work. They will be the first to recommend the artist if the tattooist is good. Make sure you question these individuals to find out the cost of the tattoo as well as the hygienic conditions of the shop. In this case, strangers are likely to give you better advice than your friends. The problem with a friend is that they may be a "friend of a friend" of the tattooist and not be familiar with the tattooist's artistic or business reputation at all.

Industry and cultural magazines are also a good source of information about tattoos. The intent of most of these magazines is to weed out the scratchers from the fine artists and showcase the best of tattoo artists.

## **Don't Expect the Moon and the Stars**

Like most artists, tattoo artists have their own specific styles that they excel at and styles that they are not so good at. For example, if you want a realistic portrait of Marilyn Monroe on your arm, don't seek out an artist that specializes in reproducing lurid cartoons.

Ultimately when it comes to tattooing, you are the art director and you are selecting the talent to realize your dream. Some tattoo artists are better at fine line tattoos than others, others have a knack for the rhythms and designs associated with primitive work and some are better at flowers than flaming skulls. Usually you can tell by looking at the



artist's in-shop photo-album whether or not they excel at colorful traditional work or the fine shadings that create photo-realism.

Most tattooists have a great deal of enthusiasm for their work and are willing to "get into the spirit" with you when it comes to arriving at the style and size of tattoo that is best for you. If the artist has suggestions about size and color, listen to the voice of experience. They may simply know what looks best or they may be trying to subtly tell you something about the limitations of their own talent.

Once you are in the chair, treat your tattoo artist with respect. Don't try to be a "back seat" artist and annoy him or her with impulsive creative suggestions. Of course, this is not going to happen if you and the artist have mutually agreed on an appropriate design in the first place.



Sean Donovan works on a customer's tattoo at a tattoo convention in Hollywood [www.tattoosbysean.com](http://www.tattoosbysean.com)

## **Cost is a Factor**

If you can't afford a tattoo, than accept your circumstances. Although a tattoo is priceless, it can also be considered to be a form of "beauty treatment." You wouldn't allow a bad hairdresser to butcher your hair, so don't let an affordable tattoo artist brand you for life with a marking that you might dislike.

As with any product, the cost of a tattoo varies from artist to artist. Popular or award winning artists will always charge more than inexperienced artists.

The cheapest tattoo is a flash or stock tattoo. These are the designs that you find hanging on the walls of the studio, parlor or (traditionally) the barber shop wall. Artists usually charge a flat rate for their flash designs, but this, of course is dependent on the size of the design and the amount of color that is used to saturate it. In general you can expect to pay between \$50 and \$100 U.S. for a tattoo that is about two by two square inches.

For custom work, most artists usually charge by the hour. It is highly recommended that you bring your template or design with you so that the artist can give you an accurate estimation of how long the work will take. Rates for custom tattoos go anywhere from \$50 and \$300 U.S. an hour. Although price doesn't always dictate the excellence of the artist, you are probably best ensured to receive a tattoo that you are satisfied with by choosing an artist that charges \$150 an hour or more.

## **Professional Considerations**

Applying a tattoo involves a lot more than just creating a pretty picture. A professional artist is an artist, a technician and a craftsman. Selecting the artist who is going to apply your tattoo is the most important decision that you will have to make, so make sure the artist is part-doctor, part artist.

Make sure you take the time to scrutinize the artist's work? Do the lines of the tattoos look shaky or feathery? Do the circles look like circles and squares like squares? What about the coloring? Are the colors blended well to create even forms of shading, dimension, and depth? Do any of the tattoos look swollen, faded, bleary or out of proportion. Trust your own artistic eye when it comes to this, as despite all of the promises or excuses that explain inferior work, your tattoo will probably resemble what is in the artist's portfolio in the end.

Tattooing can be considered to be a form of invasive surgery because it involves bonding color through to base layer of your skin. The more translucent outer layer of the skin grows over this layer, once the tattoo has healed.

When a tattoo "fails" it is usually because the ink was placed too deeply into the skin where bodily fluids can cause the tattoo to spread and lose definition. If the tattoo is not impressed deeply enough into the skin, the tattoo may fade or completely disappear.

You also might want to find out if the artist is abiding by city or state laws and what certifications and licenses are required to legally tattoo in your city and state. If the artist cannot produce this certification than don't risk it.

## **Assessing the Artist's Practice**

If the tattoo studio does not look as clean as your doctor or dentist's office than walk right out of the door. Bad places to get tattooed are in someone's kitchen, a local bar, in the bleachers at a racetrack or at a county fair. This is because sterile conditions cannot be met in certain environments.

Watching the artist in action is also highly recommended, as everything that is used to apply the tattoo should be sterilized or disposable. For instance, the artist should not be dipping his needle into a large plastic jug of ink. The ink should be poured into a disposable container that is intended for use with just one customer.

You might also want to observe how the tattooist is applying ointments and Vaseline. The tattoo artist should always use steel or disposable wooden sterile spreader and not a finger to apply these substances to your skin.

The tattooist should also use disposable sterile latex gloves. If he or she is using bare fingers then you are vulnerable to infection and disease. New sterile needles should also be used for every tattoo.

All non-disposable equipment should be sterilized after each use with an autoclave. Ultra-sonic cleaning does not sterilize equipment. It should only be used as a method of cleaning the equipment before it's placed into the autoclave. Make sure you question the artist to make sure that he or she is in possession of an FDA regulating auto-clave. Dunking equipment in a tub of rubbing alcohol is not enough to sterilize tattooing equipment.

Many artists will use roll-on deodorant to create a darker impression of the transfer copy on your skin before they begin the tattoo. Although this is a very effective method of transferring a stock tattoo to the skin, keep in mind that the deodorant may have been used on another client's skin. The deodorant should be wiped onto a tissue, and then tissue the tissue should be used to place the deodorant on your skin.

You also might want to ask the artist if he or she is vaccinated for Hepatitis B. Never just take anyone's word for it. Do they have proof? Can they show you a doctor's record proving they were vaccinated? The hepatitis vaccination is a series of three shots given over a four-month period of time. It's not something that's going to just slip someone's mind. Getting a hepatitis shot is "an affair to remember."

Unfortunately, mandatory testing for hepatitis B is not required before an artist can pick up a needle. For ultimate safety, make sure that *you* are vaccinated before you receive a new tattoo.

## **Ten Signs You Are in the Right Studio**

### **1. The Tattoo Artist Provides Samples of Previous Work**

Never select an artist who can not produce some kind of portfolio. A photo album of tattoos done on living skin should be provided for you to look at in the studio. An artistic display of stock tattoos on the walls is not enough to tell you that the artist has a good reputation.

### **2. The Tattoo Artist Lives in a Disposable Universe**

Nothing that that the tattoo artist uses should ever be placed back into a container. This includes ointment, ink and water. Usually these substances have been in contact with your blood plasma. Such thriftiness increases the risk of the spread of infection to you and others.

Ink should always be placed in ink caps, which are tiny cups used to hold just enough color that is needed to tattoo you. This ink should never be returned to a bottle or a jar.

### **3. The Tattoo Artist Possesses an Autoclave Certificate**

An autoclave is an electric sterilization unit that resembles a steel pressure cooker. It is used by doctors to sterilize medical equipment. In order for equipment to be sterilized it must sit in the autoclave at a temperature of 246 degrees for at least thirty minutes.

Just being in possession of an autoclave does not guarantee that it is in use. Ask if the artist possesses a recent autoclave certificate that shows that the unit is regularly tested and in use by the operators of the business.

If the tattoo artist gives you any "attitude" or is evasive with regards to the use of the autoclave or tries to pass off an ultra-sonic cleaner as a sterilization equipment then head for the front door.

#### **4. The Tattoo Artist Uses New Sterile Needles**

New sterile needles are always removed from a pouch called an autoclave bag. The needles should not be removed from this pouch until your tattoo work is in progress. Each autoclave needle bag usually boasts a small label called a "sterile confirmation" label along with the name of the manufacturer. If you do not see this label on the bag or if your needles are sitting outside the bag, then the artist may be reusing materials.

New needles are bright silver in color. If needles appear stained, brownish or dulled then stop the procedure.

#### **5. The Tattoo Artist Wears Latex Gloves**

Fingers spread germs to raw, freshly tattooed skin faster than anything else. For this reason the tattooist should always wear standard medical latex gloves. The gloves should not have holes or tears in them and fit the artist properly. It only takes a pinhole in the latex glove to increase the risk of cross contamination.

#### **6. The Tattoo Artist Disposes Needles In a Sharps Container**

A Sharps container is a plastic container, usually red, with a biohazard symbol on the outside. You also see these containers that are labeled "hazardous waste" in dental and doctor offices.

Used needles, and anything else contaminated and not scheduled for autoclave sterilization should be placed in these containers and removed in a timely manner.

#### **7. The Artist Has a License to Practice**

Most states require a tattoo artist to have some kind of license before they can touch anyone with a needle. Check the laws in your state to make sure that you are dealing with a licensed practitioner.

#### **8. The Artist is Trained and Certified**

Unfortunately, there isn't any kind of official certification given to tattoo artists that complete their education. Tattooing is an oral tradition that is usually passed down through generations through an apprenticeship. However most tattoo artists will be able

to produce proof that a well-known tattoo artist has trained them in safe and hygienic practices.

### **9. The Tattoo Studio is Clean and Well Lit**

Although most tattoo studios are kind of Goth looking, complete with black lights and loud stereo music, this doesn't mean the place is dirty. What matters most is that the "surgical" area looks spic and span and is well lit with halogen lights.

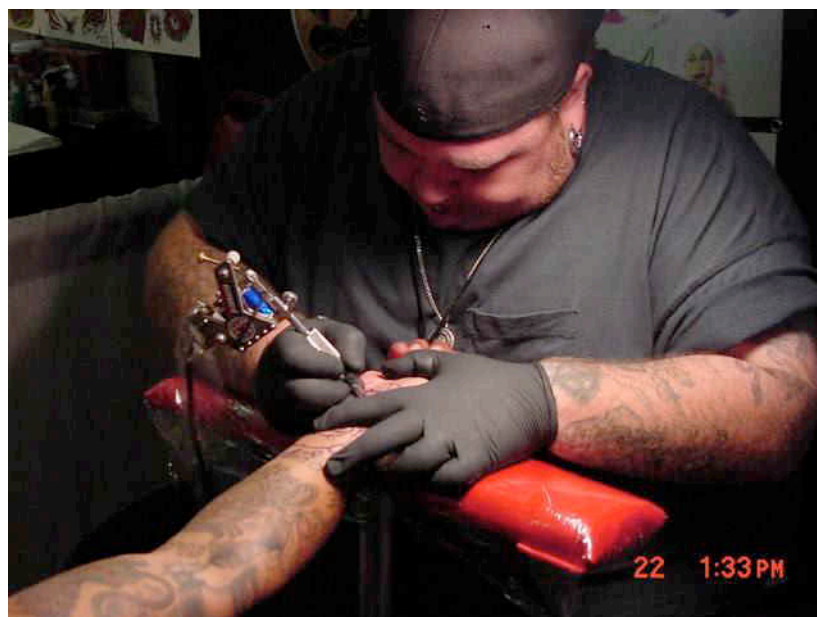
### **10. You and the Tattoo Artist "Click"**

You must revere and respect the tattoo artist and he or she must revere and respect you. You do not have to become best friends, however this is a situation where you should not be subjected to any kind of humiliation, sarcasm or displays of artistic temperament. Behaviors that fall into the category of displays of artistic temperament include anger, giddiness, and a reluctance to stick to schedule and inviting you to get high or drunk. A tattoo artist should also not consider him or herself to be too hip to conduct themselves in the civil and courteous manner that is usually associated with good business practices.

## **Chapter 7. Getting Inked**

### **Where Should I Put It?**

Pain is often a determining factor when it comes to deciding where to put a tattoo, although obviously some individuals will want to place their tattoo wherever it is either the least or most concealed by clothing or wherever they feel is spiritually appropriate. For instance, a long-distance runner may opt to put a tattoo of the winged God Mercury on his or her ankle to enhance their speed while the adulterous wife might want to tattoo her lover's name between her two front toes so that her husband may never see it.



## **The Pain Factor**

Where does getting a tattoo hurt the most? Most would say the pocket book although the most painful areas are considered to be the stomach spine and chest in men and the ankle, spine and ribcage in women.

The least painful areas for men are considered to be the buttocks, arm and back. For women the least painful areas are the stomach, buttocks, thigh and shoulder.

## **What to Expect**

Once you've picked a design and discussed the procedure, the tattooist will schedule an appointment with you.

It is important not to take aspirin based painkillers before the procedure as these medications thin the blood. Aspirin based medications may make your fresh tattoo bleed more and hinder your natural ability to heal.

Once you have arrive at the tattoo studio, the tattooist usually presents you with a stencil that is has been created from your design. Some tattoo artists to create an instant transfer on special thermal paper. This is your last chance to change your mind.

Most tattoo shops require payment up front. This is to ensure that they are paid whether you like the end result or not. In the tattooing business, satisfaction is not guaranteed. Refunds are as difficult to obtain.

Before you are inked, most tattooists will ask for proof of your age and contact details in case of an emergency. In some places in the world, such as Canada, this is mandatory. In some countries in Asia, the tattooist has the right to reject you as a subject at his or her discretion.

## **The Chair**

After the money exchanges and paper work are completed, you will be seated in some form of a tattoo chair. Usually this is in a private area such as a booth or separate room. Many tattooists use a dentist's chair or an Easy Boy rocker, but others might use an ordinary chair. You might also be asked if you mind if another potential client can observe the process.

## **Preparing the Canvas**

Once you're sitting in the chair, the area to be inked is rubbed down with a cleaning solution (usually rubbing alcohol). If the area is hairy, the tattooist will shave a patch of skin a little bigger than the size of the design. Make sure that the tattooist shaves you with a new, disposable razor.

The tattoo artist will then confirm the exact placement of the transfer on your skin. The skin is sometimes moistened with a cream or a swab of roll-on deodorant, which makes the transfer stand out more clearly from the skin. The reverse-image transfer is then pressed and applied to the skin for a couple of minutes.

After the paper is pulled back you should see a bluish outline of your design. Most tattooists will ask you to check in the mirror to make sure the placement of the tattoo is correct. If you do not like the look of the tattoo this is your very last chance to opt out of the situation.

The tattooist will then put on plastic latex gloves and take some time to pour inks from big jugs into small disposable cups called ink caps. He or she will then remove sterilized needles from a sealed autoclave bag and ready other materials to be used for the procedure such as Vaseline and ointments/

## **Drawing the Outline**

The area to be tattooed will be covered in a light layer of ointment. This ointment cleans the skin, seals the transfer in place and allows the needle to move more smoothly over the skin.

As with dentist drills, the sound of a tattooing machine is much worse than the discomfort of it. If you are truly bothered by buzzing sounds it is suggested that you put on a pair of stereo headphones and listen to some music to block the noise out and calm yourself.

The tattoo artist will insert the appropriate needles in the tattooing machine. Usually the artist will use a thicker needle to follow the outline of the transfer in black. Depending on the size or detail involved in the design the tattoos will periodically stop the machine and clean your skin with a cotton swab to remove any seeping blood.

Most people say that the most painful part of getting a tattoo is creating the black outline of the design. Although it can be a bit intense, the pain usually diminishes rapidly afterwards.

After the outline is completed, the tattoo artist will wipe away any remaining bluish marks created by the application of the transfer.

## **Applying the Color**

After the outline is complete the tattooist will add shading and color. You will probably get a chance to take a breather as the tattooist changes needles on the machine.

Color inking can be uncomfortable but it is a different sensation than black outlining. Most do not find it as painful as sitting through the process of creating the black and white outline of the tattoo.

How long the process takes depends on how large the design is and how many colors it takes to create the final effect. Very large designs may take a number of visits to complete.



Enrique Patino Bottino at work on a  
Tattoo at his studio in Lima, Peru  
[www.artsagrado.com](http://www.artsagrado.com)

## **Chapter 8. Caring For Your Tattoo**

### **Post-Operative Care**

The minute you step out the front door of the tattoo studio, you are responsible for the post-operative care of your tattoo. How you look after your tattoo for the next few days and weeks will determine how crisp and clear it looks for the rest of your life.

Do not try to "air out" your tattoo by removing the bandage. Leave the bandage on for as long as recommended by your tattoo artist. Some tattooists will recommend that you leave the bandage on for as long twenty-four hours but others will recommend not taking a peek at your design for at least three to six hours.

When it is time to remove the bandage, do so very gently. Don't forget to always wash your hands before you touch your tattoo or the surrounding area If the bandage is



stuck to your skin, do not tug at it or try to rip it off. Wet the bandage with some warm water until the moisture loosens it and then carefully pull it away.

When the tattoo is uncovered, use warm soapy to thoroughly clean the area. Pat (don't rub) the area dry with a soft, clean towel. For the first week try to avoid soaking the tattoo while in the bath or the shower.

After you remove the bandage, some tattooists will recommend that you leave the tattoo open to the air for around ten minutes while others will tell you to treat the area with ointment immediately. Usually the tattooist will recommend that you apply an anti-bacterial cream such as Bactine or a specialty tattoo cream such as Tattoo Goo to the tattooed area. If you have a reaction to any kind of ointment, make sure you inform the tattooist immediately. He or she will recommend an alternative or suggest you seek medical advice if the reaction is severe.

## **The Healing Process**

Remember to clean and apply fresh ointment to your new tattoo at least twice a day for the prescribed number of days recommended by your tattoo artist. Generally, you'll be told to use the ointment for three days or so. Some tattooists will tell you to do so until the tattoo has scabbed and others until it is healed.

When you stop using the ointment continue to keep the area clean and use a lotion after washing with warm soapy water to keep the tattooed skin soft.

Around the three day point, the new tattoo will start to peel and scab. If there is a great deal of scabbing it means that your tattoo has been poorly inked.

It is normal for the tattoo to look a little bleary or cloudy for a few days as it heals. This is part of the natural healing process and is known as "Onion Skin." You know you are experiencing Onion Skin if the tattoo only looks clear when it is wet.

The key to post-operative care is to keep the tattoo clean and well moisturized. Use the ointment until the wound is healed and then a lotion to help the skin recover its pliability and softness. Don't try to hurry the process in anyway. Let your own body's powerful natural healing abilities follow their own course and all will be well.

## **Shaving a Tattoo**

If you've had a tattoo applied somewhere you would normally shave like your face or legs, then you must let the tattoo heal fully before you start shaving again. You can shave around the tattoo but, if you do so, make sure that shaving foam, cream or hair doesn't infect the tattoo.

You must leave the tattoo unshaven until the skin above it is entirely healed. If there is any scabbing or peeling, wait a bit longer. When you can't tell the difference between the surrounding area and the flesh around the tattoo, then it's safe to start shaving again. If the surface of the skin around the tattoo looks at all rosy or angry looking avoid taking a razor to it.

Once you've started to shave the area again, make sure to moisturize it thoroughly afterwards as this will help to keep the skin healthy/

## **The Golden Rules of Tattoo After Care**

1. If the tattoo itches, don't scratch it. Don't pick at scabs, rub it or press it against your body. You may try to allay the itchy feeling by gently patting the area with the flat side of (your very clean) fingers. Believe it or not it is entirely possible to scratch the ink right out of the tattoo during the first few days of healing!
2. Stay out of the sun. This could cause the tattoo to discolor. A sunburn on top of a tattoo can also be very uncomfortable. Don't apply sunscreen on top of a tattoo. Wear long sleeves instead. After your tattoo has COMPLETELY healed you may apply sunscreen to protect the area and keep it from fading.
3. Avoid salt water. Sun and surf are a tattoo's worst enemies. Salt water can cause a fresh wound to sting as well as leave it vulnerable to infections and fading.

## **Touching Up Your Tattoo**

Sometimes, for one reason or another, a tattoo may require some re-inking. If you think your tattoo needs some extra work, return to the tattooist and for his or her's educated opinion. Most are willing to redo faded or unset work for free unless you have obviously picked and peeled the tattoo right off your body.

Once you have been re-inked, you will need to follow the same rules for post-operative care that you did the first time around: keep it clean, moisturized, avoid soaking it and stay away from the sun and surf.

## **I Hate My Tattoo**

If you don't like your tattoo, consider asking the tattoo artist to give you a cover up. Tattoo artists usually have stock designs that they used to cover offending tattoos. These designs usually feature large blocks of black and featured images such as black panthers, black clouds and other chunky designs.

A talented tattoo artist can redo your tattoo without resorting to blotting it out with a large dark mass. However, you need a skilled artist for a cover-up job. You will need a custom design that obliterates the existing one. Cover-up work is demanding and exacting so you will also pay more for a cover-up piece than you would for fresh tattoo. Try to choose an artist with a good design sense.

Reworking a tattoo is another answer to restoring fondness to the afflicted body part. Sometimes the tattoo just needs some sort of enhancement. Reworking the tattoo is also recommended if the tattoo is faded, jagged or uneven. Any reputable tattooist will also fix any skips in color or the outline that may be discovered shortly after the piece is healed. Tattoos can also be enhanced by the addition of bars, borders, rainbows and flora and fauna.

# Chapter 9. Tattoo Removal

## You're Doomed

You've spent hours choosing your design, lived through the pain in the chair, avoided picking at the scab and now you've decided you can't stand the sight of the ugly thing. In this case, you would not be alone. It is estimated that over 50% of people who get a tattoo live to rue the day they visited the tattoo parlor.

This is probably due to the impulsivity factor discussed in the first chapter of this book, which warns against the folly of getting a tattoo while *drunk, high, in love or on vacation*. This is why it is so important to "think before you ink."

Most dermatologists will tell you that complete tattoo removal just isn't possible. Although modern technologies can perform a remarkable job of removing most of the ink, most of them also leave some kind of mark behind on your skin whether it be a blemish, scar or variation in skin tone. It is hard to tell what is more despicable, the accursed tattoo or the marring left behind on the skin by removal methods.

The potential to make your tattoo vanish depends on a number of factors including skin type, skin color, how well you heal as well as the size the tattoo. It also depends on where the tattoo was placed on the body and the type of ink used as many different types of ink are used around the world.

Most tattoo removal technologies remove black ink the best but removing color tattoos can be very difficult. In fact, some color tattoos suffer from even greater discoloration and blotchiness after a tattoo removal treatment!

## Tattoo Removal Technology and Techniques

There are four main ways to remove a tattoo. None of them are inexpensive or pain-free as the ink from a tattoo is designed to permeate to the deepest layer of the epidermis.

- ◆ Dermabrasion - With this technique an abrasive machine (like a sander) or chemical-based cream is used on the skin to rub off the tattoo.
- ◆ Excision - This involves surgically removing the tattoo and then having a doctor surgically stitch up the area. This technique is better in the case of tiny tattoos. Large tattoos require general anesthesia and the application of a skin graft to the area.
- ◆ Cryosurgery -The area of the skin is frozen and then the tattoo is surgically removed. Once again t his is usually only effective with small tattoos.
- ◆ Laser Surgery - Lasers emit short pulses of light. When used for tattoo removal, this light passes through the top layers of skin and in to the pigment of the ink in the dermis. The energy from the laser's light causes the pigment to break down in to smaller particles that can be removed by the body's immune system. This treatment avoids damaging the surrounding skin because the laser's wavelength is targeted specifically at the tattoo ink pigments. However once again, this procedure does not

always work on color tattoos as lasers work best when there is a contrast of black ink against white skin. Laser removal does not work at all on people with darker skins.

Tattoo removal is expensive as well as time consuming. It can cost from hundreds up thousands of dollars and, generally, tattoo removal isn't covered by health plans or insurance.

Usually your doctor refers you to a dermatologist who may then refer you to a dermatological surgeon. Alternatively, your tattooist may be able to recommend a tattoo removal specialist. Whatever you do, make sure that the actual removal is carried out by a licensed medical professional.

## **Chapter 10. Artist Recommendations**

### **The Alliance of Professional Tattooists**

If you are looking for an elite and exclusive organization that has compiled a comprehensive list of "the cream of the crop" when it comes to tattoo artists then the publishers of this book highly recommend that you go immediately to <http://www.safe-tattoos.com>.

[www.safe-tattoos.com](http://www.safe-tattoos.com) is the official site of the Alliance of Professional Tattooists. On this site you will find the latest updated information about safety issues, Tattoo parlors, tattoo shops, piercing, body piercing, artist, artists, Flash Sets, Flash Sheets, Custom tattoos, Professional Tattooists, information about autoclaving, HIV, Hepatitis in tattooing, and more. There is also a function on the site that allows you to access the artistic talents of the nearest APT member to you.

APT a nonprofit educational organization that was founded in 1992 to address the health and safety issues facing the tattoo industry. Up until that time, no organized effort had been made to educate artists or standardize infection control procedures. Recognizing the need for change, a group of concerned professionals formed APT with the idea of making autoclave sterilization, sterile equipment and the wearing of gloves part of usual visit to a tattoo studio.

With increasing numbers of people (many of them in the government) voicing concern about the safety of tattooing, it is more important than ever to have accurate information about HIV and hepatitis transmission. Through education, practice knowledge and activism, APT and its members promote the understanding that professional tattooing CAN be a safe form of artistic expression.

We recommend this site as a resource to find a tattoo artists simply because health officials and lawmakers have recognized APT as a professional, ethical and authoritative voice in the industry.

### **Publisher Recommended Artists**

## Canada

**Artist:** Cam **Famous For:** Clown, Death, Traditional, portraits, color, black and white  
**Location:** Toronto, Ontario **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.voodooattoostudios.com/tattoogallery.html>

**Artist:** Robin Dutcher **Famous For:** Colorful portraits, traditional  
**Location:** Whistler, BC **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.machinegirltattoos.com/TATTOOS1.HTML>

**Artist:** Craig Fenrick **Famous For:** Black and white, Traditional, Oriental, Custom  
**Location:** Saskatoon, Saskatchewan **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
[http://www.inkchambertattoos.com/gallery\\_page.htm](http://www.inkchambertattoos.com/gallery_page.htm)

**Artist:** Mike Hilcox **Famous For:** Oriental, Traditional, color, Black and white, Black and grey **Location:** Kitchener, Ontario **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.wizardskinart.com/displayMike.asp>

**Artist:** Gerry Lefort **Famous For:** Realistic Portrait styles, oriental,  
**Location:** Winnipeg, Manitoba **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.tattoos-by-gerry-lefort.tk/>

**Artist:** Thomas Lockhart **Famous For:** Primitive and neo-primitive tattoos **Location:** Vancouver, British Columbia **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
[www.vanishingtattoos.com](http://www.vanishingtattoos.com)

**Artist:** Bob Paulin **Famous For:** black and white, realistic, portraits,  
**Location:** Welland, Ontario **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.sacredflashunauthorized.com/>

**Artist:** Kevin Polanski **Famous For:** Tribal, Custom, Large pieces, Celtic, Portraits, Traditional, Color **Location:** Cambridge, Ont **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.headoftheclass.ca/tattoo/gallery.asp>

**Artist:** Denis Prevost **Famous For:** Black and grey, Coverups, New Skool, colorful traditional **Location:** Sudbury, Ontario **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.luckypricktattoo.com/fsgallery/viewfsmenu.html>

**Artist:** Raz **Famous For:** black and gray, portraits, color, black and white **Location:** Grande Prairie, Alberta **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.raztat.com/gallery.html>

**Artist:** Rex **Famous For:** Color Fantasy done in Japanese style  
**Location:** Vernon, BC **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.fatbabycustom.com/gallery.html>

## Europe

**Artist:** ALEX **Famous For:** custom, freehand, portraits, oriental, color, black and grey  
**Location:** Ehningen, Germany **View the artist's portfolio at:** [http://www.alex-tattoo-atelier.com/stage/en/gallery\\_alex.php](http://www.alex-tattoo-atelier.com/stage/en/gallery_alex.php)

**Artist:** Filip **Famous For:** Oriental, Bands, Black and white, portraits  
**Location:** Brussels **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.filipstattooshop.com/>

**Artist:** Jari **Famous For:** Black and grey, Color, Tribal, Portraits, Animals **Location:** Rovaniemi, Finland **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.ironbeardtattoo.com/>

**Artist:** **Famous For:** Tribal, Portrait, Black and Grey,  
**Location:** Waterford City, Ireland **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.jmdsbodyart.com/main.html>

**Artist:** Tsiotsios George **Famous For:** custom, freehand, portraits, color, black and grey  
**Location:** Crete, Greece **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.medusatattoo.gr/gallery.htm>

**Artist:** Dave Wiper **Famous For:** Tribal, Colorful traditional, Portraits, Black and grey, Japanese, Celtic **Location:** West Yorkshire, England **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.modern-savage.com/tattoos/tattoos.php>

## South America

**Artist:** Enrique Patino Bottino **Famous For:** Every style but especially charcoal style black and grey work and religious landscapes **Location:** Lima, Peru **View the artist's portfolio at:** [www.artesagrado.com](http://www.artesagrado.com)

## United States

**Artist:** Doctor John **Famous For:** Black and white, color portraits  
**Location:** Fraser, MI **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.drjohnstats.com/>

**Artist:** Gerry Beckerman **Famous For:** Southwestern style tattoos, black and grey work  
**Location:** Ava, Missouri **View the artist's portfolio at:** [www.ozarkink.com](http://www.ozarkink.com)

**Artist:** - John Bergin III **Famous For:** American Traditional color work, animals in portrait **Location:** Newfoundland (West Milford), NJ **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://jbxpressiveimages.com/>

**Artist:** Brandon Bond **Famous For:** American Traditional color work, animals in portrait, big tattoos **Location:** Smyrna, Ga **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.brandonbond.com/>

**Artist:** Chad, AKA CHUBBY **Famous For:** Custom Tattoo's Portraits, comical, color, Black and white **Location:** FT Worth, Texas **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.kustomtattoo.com>

**Artist:** Chris Cockrell **Famous For:** Color Asian and western traditional **Location:** 1032 7th in Downtown San Diego 92101 CA **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://homepage.mac.com/ccockrill/PhotoAlbum1.html>

**Artist:** Doby **Famous For:** -Traditional Color tattoo's, Bands **Location:** Temple, PA **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.dobysbodyart.com/photogallery/>

**Artist:** Sean Donovan **Famous For:** Graffiti style, color bomb work **Location:** Everett Washington **View the artist's portfolio at:** [www.tattoosbysean.com](http://www.tattoosbysean.com)

**Artist:** Ed "Wiz" Dumont **Famous For:** Portrait style animals, Neo primitive armbands, black and grey **Location:** Brewer, Maine **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.wiztattoos.com/images.php>

**Artist:** Dennis Dwyer **Famous For:** Various color **Location:** Tucson, Arizona **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://dennisdwyer.com/>

**Artist:** Pat Fish **Famous For:** Irish and Scottish Celtic Tattoos **Location:** Santa Barbara, CA **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.luckyfish.com/>

**Artist:** Reuben "Rue" Kayden **Famous For:** Japanese inspired gore **Location:** Roxbury, Massachusetts **View the artist's portfolio at:** [www.tattoorue.com](http://www.tattoorue.com)

**Artist:** Ryan "Opie" Mueller **Famous For:** Totem Anthropomorphic faces, color **Location:** Las Vegas, NV **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.opieshinobi.com/tattoos.html>

**Artist:** Tattoo Adam **Famous For:** Hawaiian Tattoos **Location:** Honolulu, HI **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.tattooadam.com/>

**Artist:** Theresa Romine **For:** Native American depictions, surreal colorful images. **Location:** Killen, Al **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.tattoosbyt.com/>

**Artist:** SonnyJ **Famous For:** Various American colorful tattoos **Location:** Albuquerque, New Mexico **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.startattoo.com/sonny/son1.htm#>

**Artist:** Stacey Sharpe **Famous For:** Realistic flowers, fairies and animal portraits **Location:** Ronkonkoma, New York **View the artist's portfolio at:** [www.sharptattoos.com](http://www.sharptattoos.com)

**Artist:** Jay Strange **Famous For:** Colorful primitive and neo-primitive stars and crosses  
**Location:** Addison, Texas **View the artist's portfolio at:** [www.jaystrange.com](http://www.jaystrange.com)

**Artist:** William Thidemann **Famous For:** Various American colorful tattoos **Location:** Denver, Colorado **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://thidemann.com/tattoos/01.htm>

**Artist:** DAVE VOGEL **Famous For:** Traditional, Color, Bands, Black & Grey **Location:** Warroad, MN **View the artist's portfolio at:** <http://www.bigdstattoos.com/>

**Artist:** Zee **Famous For:** Seamless Celtic-knot armbands, custom abstract/tribal blackwork, highly-detailed fineline black and soft grey wash work, portraits and memorials **Location:** NEW HAVEN, CT **View the artist's portfolio at:**  
<http://www.studiozee.com/>

## Chapter 11. Resources

### Books of Interest

[Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community](#)

Margo Demello, Duke University Press, 2000.

[The Japanese Tattoo](#)

Photography and Text by Sandi Fellman, Introduction by D.M. Thomas, Abbeville Press, Inc., 1988.

[The New Tattoo](#)

Victoria Lautman and Vicki Berndt, Abbeville Press, 1994

[The Total Tattoo Book](#)

Amy Krakow, Warner Books 1994

[Tribal Tattoo Designs](#)

Maarten Hesselt Van Dinter, Shambhala Press, 2000.

### Web sites of Interest

<http://www.tattoophi.com>

Bamboo tattoo by hand

<http://www.cocktailmaking.co.uk/butterflytattoo>

Inspiration and ideas for butterfly tattoos. Submit your butterfly tattoo to our gallery.

<http://www.tattoos.com>

Everything you always wanted to know about tattoos. Thousands of links to conventions, artists, parlors, shops and studio

<http://www.tattoos-by-design.co.uk>

Tattoos by design Tattoo pictures and free images with tattoo language translations

<http://www.createatattoo.com>



Create your own tattoos with hundreds of templates to get you started. Just pick a design and tweak it with an easy to use editor and print it out.

<http://www.Christiankidtattoos.com>

High quality temporary tattoos with a Christian theme.

<http://www.findatattoo.com>

Hot tattoo designs from some of the most renowned tattoo artists in the world

<http://www.keibunsha.com>

The Japan Tattoo Institute is the first organization devoted to preserving and encouraging the traditional Japanese art of hand tattooing known as 'tebori'.

<http://www.vanishingtattoo.com>

Lots of information about the history of primitive art and links to artists who do primitive tattoos

<http://www.ratemytattoo.co.uk>

Vote and rate on real tattoos

<http://www.rune-tattoos.co.uk>

The purpose of the web site is to provide private individuals and tattoo artists with resources, information, examples of rune designs, and runic forms for tattooing

<http://www.tattoofashion.com>

Tattoo designs, amazing choice of temporary tattoo designs to try before going for a real tattoo. Our vast gallery of tattoo designs has the perfect tattoo for you

<http://ttw.ath.cx>

A source of imagery of tattooed women. Also tattoo web sites, tattoo artist, tattoo conventions, tattoo designs relating to women

<http://www.tatu.co.uk/Tattoos.htm>

Temporary tattoos in full color that is hand-painted by our professional artists. These tattoos fool even the professional eye.

<http://www.transname.com/tattoo.html>

Translation of your first name, last name, full name, words or phrase into Chinese characters or symbol to be used for tattoos.

<http://www.wizardtattoos.co.uk>

An extensive collection of stock tattoos.



**"Tattoos are a work of art."  
Design by Sean Donovan. [www.tattoosbysean.com](http://www.tattoosbysean.com)**