

## Woodstock Tattoo and Body Art Festival

September 6 - 7, 2003

I arrived at the first annual Woodstock Tattoo and Body Art Festival, which I'm covering for *Print* magazine, with a slight prejudice: people who get tattooed and pierced aren't the most respectable or responsible. But because so many of my respectable graphic design students proudly display body art I was curious. What do all these newly chic, painful, and permanent markings mean?

In those two days I learned a lot about art—and about passion. I've been interviewing designers and illustrators for more than 20 years, and I found tattoo artists to be uniquely intense and committed. There is no art more personal. It's not for a corporation or amuseum or gallery, or for other, richer, people. It's for you, the client. It emanates from and expresses your deepest wishes, dreams, fantasies. It commemorates big moments in your life. It is yours alone. And you wear it all the time. There is a huge element of trust involved. Trust that the artist will not physically injure you. And trust that the piece that will become part of your body will be everything you'd hoped it would.

I now consider the clients artists, too. Many of them are. But those who work in other professions collaborate so closely that they are part of the creation of the art.

It was also interesting to learn that tattoo artists, most of whom have degrees in illustration or painting from institutions like The School of Visual Arts, charge an average of \$125 an hour, and their services are in demand. They can't be replaced by clip art from a stock illustration CD. Clients are lining up for appointments.

Is skin the new canvas? Take a look at the pictures on the following pages...

Ellen Shapiro



Alex Soto and Neil Fishman, both vendors, met at the beginning of the festival. She works at Unimax Supply on Canal Street, a purveyor of tattoo and piercing supplies. A Florida hardware and software designer, Neil manufactures a touch-screen portfolio system for tattoo shops. “I’m trying to bring them into the 21st century,” he said.



Alex's boss let her take a break from selling books and magazines to get her picture taken. "I've been collecting [tattoos] for 14 years—since I was 16—and I'm tattooed from hairline to butt," she said.



Canman and Angela own a tattoo and body piercing shop in Plymouth, MA. “People bring us art from all around the world—different places, different cultures, different time frames—and we combine it into something new,” said Canman. “It’s kind of an honor that people choose you to put artwork on their bodies.”



Edward Burden owns Beasts of Burden, a custom hot rod business in Rhinebeck, NY. I met him on Saturday when Needles of Triple-X Tattoo was halfway through this piece, which extends from Ed's upper chest and took eight hours to complete. I shot this picture on Sunday afternoon when he entered it in the "Best of The Show" contest. He found the inspiration, Miss India, via a Google image search for "beautiful woman."



David Cavotti works part-time at Ed Burden's car shop. I photographed his newest tattoo, based on a dream image of a skeleton losing control of a car, in front of Ed's car. "I was kind of a control freak before," he said. "But I don't have to be in control any more."



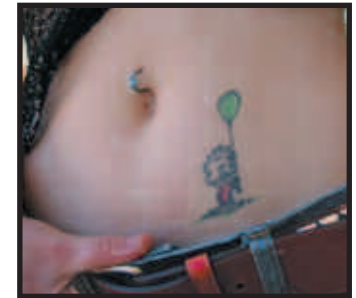
Joanne Tremblay has a degree in fine art from the University of Québec in Montréal. She tattoos Michael Cazzetto, a Long Island carpenter, with her right hand and wipes blood and excess ink with her left. When she finished, Michael exclaimed, “This is art, this is art!” comparing the likenesses on the tattoo to the snapshot of himself and his brother at ages 5 and 7 that Joanne used as reference.



Katzen and Enigma's band, The Human Marvels, performed at the festival. "We play all kinds of venues," she said. "We just came from doing the Brothers Grimm sideshow and are going to Kansas to be in a film with Dennis Hopper and Karen Black." Katzen's whiskers are teflon implants, as are Enigma's horns.



I took several shots of Seth Jeremy, a Chicago artist, in the garden behind the Bread Alone bakery, where I interrupted him buying his breakfast. I couldn't decide which one I liked best, or rather, in which he looked most like the young Bob Dylan. "This tattoo is based on my own paintings," he said. "I love flowers and wanted something beautiful and timeless."



Michelle Duff is a 27-year-old solo vocalist, who got her first tattoo, a little balloon near her navel, at age 18. She explained that her tattoos are “all based on things that relate to morals or ideals, like Ganesh, the first Tibetan god of good fortune. He’s helping me get into the music business.”



Competition judges included Bruce Bart, tattoo parlor owner and festival organizer, legendary tattoo artist Lyle Tuttle, and Woodstock Film Festival curator Matty Jankowski, with glasses, left. Judging criteria include crisp lines, smooth gradients of color, and flow of the design so it works with the muscle structure and contours of the body.



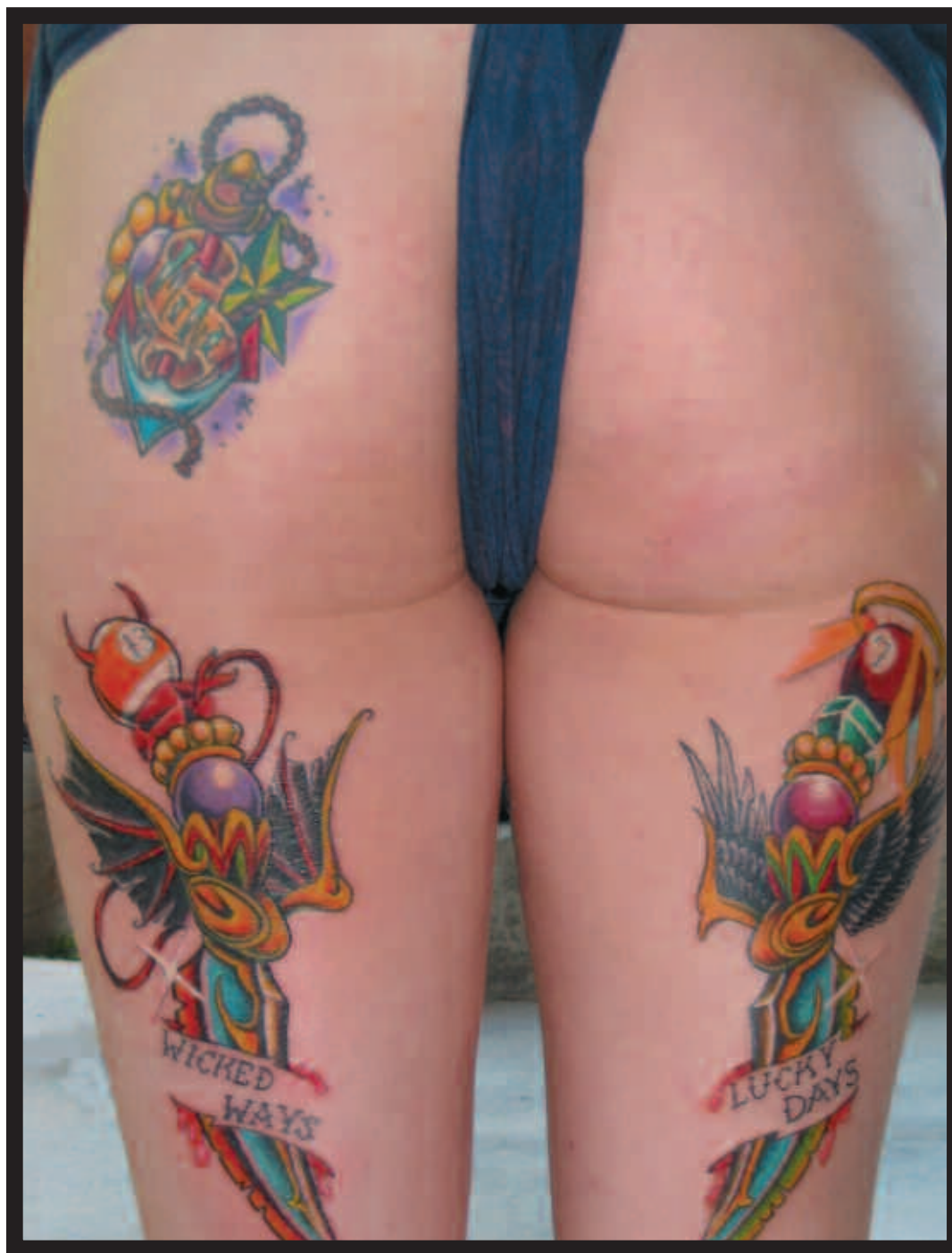
Waitress and painter Samantha Schramm's tattoo was completed by Jason Leigh at Bruce Bart's studio just in time for the contest. "We are mixing two Tibetan goddesses," she explained. Some clients told me that the pain was a '4' on a 1 to 10 scale, others an '8.' It depends on the artist's touch and the location on the body.



Eddie Muniz of Brooklyn won first place in the “most realistic” category with portraits of his son and his daughter at age 18 months. His daughter Maddisson, now four, posed for me at her daddy’s knee.



Wes Pasterfield won in the “best Japanese traditional” category. this piece took 10 hours a week for a month.



Christina McClevsky took third place in “best American traditional.” She was judged wearing a pink lace camisole and a jean skirt she could bring up between her legs.

The end.