A Brief History of Tattoos



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Introduction

A **tattoo** is a mark made by inserting pigment into the skin: in technical terms, tattooing is micro-pigment implantation. Tattoos may be made on human or animal skin. Tattoos on humans are a type of body modification, while tattoos on animals are most often used for identification.

Tattooing has been a nearly ubiquitous human practice. The Ainu, the indigenous people of Japan, wore facial tattoos. Tattooing was widespread among Polynesian peoples, and in the Philippines, Borneo, Africa, North America, South America, Mesoamerica, Europe, Japan, and China. Despite some taboos surrounding tattooing, the art continues to be popular all over the world.



A traditional Maori

Facial Tattoo

Terms

The word "tattoo" is traced to the Tahitian *tatu* or *tatau*, meaning to mark or strike (the latter referring to traditional methods of applying the designs). In Japanese the word used for traditional designs or those that are applied using traditional methods is *irezumi* ("insertion of ink"), while "tattoo" is used for non-Japanese designs.

Tattoo enthusiasts may refer to tattoos as *tats*, *ink*, *art* or *work*, and to tattooists as artists. The latter usage is gaining support, with mainstream art galleries holding exhibitions of tattoo designs and photographs of tattoos.

Tattoo designs that are mass-produced and sold to tattoo artists and studios and displayed in shop are known as flash.

History

In recorded history, the earliest tattoos can be found in Egypt during the time of the construction of the great pyramids (It undoubtedly started much earlier). When the Egyptians expanded their empire, the art of tattooing spread as well. The civilizations of Crete, Greece, Persia, and Arabia picked up and expanded the art form. Around 2000 BC tattooing spread to China.

It is arguably claimed that tattooing has existed since 12,000 years BC. Tattooing has been a Eurasian practice at least since Neolithic times. Mummies bearing tattoos and dating from the end of the second millennium BCE have been discovered in Xinjiang, West China. Tattooing in Japan is thought to go back to the Paleolithic era, some ten thousand years ago. Various other cultures have had their own tattoo traditions, ranging from rubbing cuts and other wounds with ashes, to hand-pricking the skin to insert dyes.

Purpose

The purpose of tattooing has varied from culture to culture and its place on the time line. But there are commonalties that prevail form the earliest known tattoos to those being done on people today.

Tattoos have served as rites of passage, marks of status and rank, symbols of religious and spiritual devotion, decorations for bravery, sexual lures and marks of fertility, pledges of love, punishment, amulets and talismans, protection, and as the marks of outcasts, slaves and convicts.

Tattoos have always had an important role in ritual and tradition. In Borneo, women tattooed their symbols on their forearm indicating their particular skill. If a woman wore a symbol indicating she was a skilled weaver, her status as prime marriageable material was increased. Tattoos around the wrist and fingers were believed to ward away illness. Throughout history tattoos have signified membership in a clan or society. Today, people choose to be tattooed for cosmetic, religious and magical reasons, and as a symbol of belonging to or identification with particular groups. TV and movies have used the idea of a tattoo to indicate membership in a secret society numerous times. It has been believed that the wearer of an image calls the spirit of that image. The ferocity of a tiger would belong to the tattooed person. That tradition holds true today shown by the proliferation of images of tigers, snakes, and birds of prey.

The image of two snakes intertwined to symbolize strength.



People have also been forcibly tattooed for various reasons. The best known is the ka-tzetnik identification system for Jews in part of the concentration camps during the Holocaust. European sailors were known to tattoo the crucifixion on their backs to prevent flogging (since it was a crime to deface an image of Christ).

The Greeks used tattooing for communication among spies. Markings identified the spies and showed their rank. Romans marked criminals and slaves. This practice is still carried on today. The Ainu people of western Asia used tattooing to show social status. Girls coming of age were marked to announce their place in society, as were the married women. The Ainu are noted for introducing tattoos to Japan where it developed into a religious and ceremonial rite. In Borneo, women were the tattooists. It was a cultural tradition. They produced designs indicating the owners' station in life and the tribe he belonged to. Kayan women had delicate arm tattoos which looked like lacy gloves. Dayak warriors who had "taken a head" had tattoos on their hands. The tattoos garnered respect and assured the owners status for life. Polynesians developed tattoos to mark tribal communities, families, and rank. They brought their art to New Zealand and developed a facial style of tattooing called Moko which is still being used today. There is evidence that the Mayan, Incas, and Aztecs used tattooing in the rituals. Even the isolated tribes in Alaska practiced tattooing, their style indicating it was learned from the Ainu.

In the west, early Britons used tattoos in ceremonies. The Danes, Norse, and Saxons tattooed family crests (a tradition still practiced today). In 787 AD, Pope Hadrian banned tattooing. It still thrived in Britain until the Norman Invasion of 1066. The Normans disdained tattooing. It disappeared from Western culture from the 12th to the 16th centuries.

While tattooing diminished in the west, it thrived in Japan. At first, tattoos were used to mark criminals. First offences were marked with a line across the forehead. A second crime was marked by adding an arch. A third offence was marked by another line. Together these marks formed the Japanese character for "dog". It appears this was the original "Three strikes your out" law. In time, the Japanese escalated the tattoo to an aesthetic art form. The Japanese body suit originated around 1700 as a reaction to strict laws concerning conspicuous consumption. Only royalty were allowed to wear ornate clothing. As a result of this, the middle class adorned themselves with elaborate full body tattoos. A highly tattooed person wearing only a loin cloth was considered well dressed, but only in the privacy of their own home.

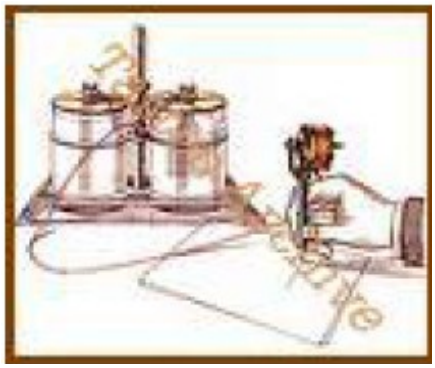
Tattoos are also placed on animals, though very rarely for decorative reasons. Pets, show animals, thoroughbred horses and livestock are sometimes tattooed with identification and other marks. Pet dogs and cats are often tattooed with a serial number (usually in the ear, or on the inner thigh) via which their owners can be identified. In Australia, the symbol Φ is tattooed in the ears of cats and dogs to indicate that they have been neutered. Also, animals are occasionally tattooed to prevent sunburn (on the nose, for example). Such tattoos are performed by veterinarians and the animals are anaesthetized during the process. Branding is used for similar reasons and is often performed without anesthesia, but is different from tattooing as no ink or dye is inserted during the process.

Prevalence

William Dampher is responsible for re-introducing tattooing to the west. He was a sailor and explorer who travelled the South Seas. In 1691 he brought to London a heavily tattooed Polynesian named Prince Giolo, Known as the Painted Prince. He was put on exhibition, a money making attraction, and became the rage of London. It had been 600 years since tattoos had been seen in Europe and it would be another 100 years before tattooing would make it mark in the West.

In the late 1700s, Captain Cook made several trips to the South Pacific. The people of London welcomed his stories and were anxious to see the art and artefacts he brought back. Returning form one of this trips, he brought a heavily tattooed Polynesian named Omai. He was a sensation in London. Soon, the upper- class were getting small tattoos in discreet places. For a short time tattooing became a fad.

What kept tattooing from becoming more widespread was its slow and painstaking procedure. Each puncture of the skin was done by hand before the ink was applied. In 1891, Samuel O'Riely patented the first electric tattooing machine. It was based on Edison's electric pen which punctured paper with a needle point. The basic design with moving coils, a tube and a needle bar, are the components of today's tattoo gun. The electric tattoo machine allowed anyone to obtain a reasonably priced and readily available tattoo. As the average person could easily get a tattoo, the upper classes turned away from it.



Picture of the 1st tattoo machine

Patented by Samuel O'Riely in 1891

By the turn of the century, tattooing had lost a great deal of credibility. Tattooists worked the sleazier sections of town. Heavily tattooed people travelled with circuses and *Freak Shows* Betty Broadbent travelled with Ringling Brothers Circus in the 1930s and was a star attraction for years.

The cultural view of tattooing was so poor for most of the century that tattooing went underground. Few were accepted into the secret society of artists and there were no schools to study the craft. There were no magazines or associations. Tattoo suppliers rarely advertised their products. One had to learn through the scuttlebutt where to go and who to see for quality tattoos.

The birthplace of the American style tattoo was Chatham Square in New York City. At the turn of the century it was a seaport and entertainment centre attracting working-class people with money. Samuel O'Riely came from Boston and set up shop there. He took on an apprentice named Charlie Wagner. After O'Reilys death in 1908, Wagner opened a supply business with Lew Alberts. Alberts had trained as a wallpaper designer and he transferred those skills to the design of tattoos. He is noted for redesigning a large portion of early tattoo flash art.

While tattooing was declining in popularity across the country, in Chatham Square it flourished. Husbands tattooed their wives with examples of their best work. They played the role of walking advertisements for their husbands' work. At this time, cosmetic tattooing became popular. When used as a form of *Cosmetic Surgery*, tattooing includes permanent makeup and hiding or neutralizing skin discolorations. Permanent cosmetics are tattoos that enhance eyebrows, lips (liner or lipstick), eyes (shadow, mascara, liner), and even moles, usually with natural colors as the designs are intended to resemble makeup. With World War I, the flash art images changed to those of bravery and wartime icons.

In the 1920s, with prohibition and then the depression, Chatham Square lost its appeal. The centre for tattoo art moved to Coney Island. Across the country, tattooists opened shops in areas that would support them, namely cities with military bases close by, particularly naval bases. Tattoos were known as travel markers. You could tell where a person had been by their tattoos.

A Typical Tattoo design incorporating

The Ying/Yang sign which could be used to

Symbolise a Naval visit to the far east



After World War II, tattoos became further denigrated by their associations with Marlon Brando type bikers and Juvenile delinquents. Tattooing had little respect in American

culture. Then, in 1961 there was an outbreak of hepatitis and tattooing was sent reeling on its heels.

Though most tattoo shops had sterilization machines, few used them. Newspapers reported stories of blood poisoning, hepatitis, and other diseases. The general population held tattoo parlours in disrepute. At first, the New York City government gave the tattooists an opportunity to form an association and self- regulate, but tattooists were independent and they were not able to organize themselves. A health code violation went into effect and the tattoo shops at Times Square and Coney Island were shut down. For a time, it was difficult to get a tattoo in New York. It was illegal and tattoos had a terrible reputation. Few people wanted a tattoo. The better shops moved to Philadelphia and New Jersey where it was still legal.

In the late 1960s, the attitude towards tattooing changed. Much credit can be given to Lyle Tuttle. He is handsome, charming, and interesting and knows how to use the media. He tattooed celebrities, particularly women. Magazines and television went to Lyle to get information about this ancient art form.

Tattoos have experienced a resurgence in popularity in recent decades in many parts of the world, particularly in North America, Japan, and Europe. The growth in tattoo culture has seen an influx of new artists into the industry, many of whom have technical and fine art training. Coupled with advancements in tattoo pigments and the ongoing refinement of the equipment used for tattooing, this has led to an improvement in the quality of tattoos being produced. Movie stars, models, popular musicians and sports figures are just some of the people in the public eye who are tattooed, which in turn has fueled the acceptance of tattoos. During the 2000s, the presence of tattoos became evident within pop culture, inspiring television shows such as A&E's *"Inked"* and TLC's "*Miami Ink*"

Detailed portrait of Gary Oldman in the movie

Braham Stokers Dracula



In many traditional cultures tattooing has also enjoyed a resurgence, partially in deference to cultural heritage. Historically, a decline in traditional tribal tattooing in Europe occurred with the spread of Christianity. A decline often occurred in other cultures following European efforts to convert aboriginal and indigenous people to Western religious and cultural practices that held tattooing to be a "pagan" or "heathen"

activity. Within some traditional indigenous cultures, tattooing takes place within the context of a rite of passage between adolescence and adulthood.

A poll conducted online between July 14 and 20, 2003 by Harris Interactive; found that 16% of all adults in the United States have at least one tattoo. The highest incidence of tattoos was found among the gay, lesbian and bisexual population (31%) and among Americans ages 25 to 29 years (36%) and 30 to 39 years (28%). Regionally, people living in the West (20%) were more likely to have tattoos. Democrats were more likely to have tattoos (18%) than Republicans (14%) and Independents (12%); approximately equal percentages of males (16%) and females (15%) have tattoos.

Toady, tattooing is making a strong comeback. It is more popular and accepted than it has ever been. All classes of people seek the best tattoo artists. This rise in popularity has placed tattooists in the category of "fine artist". The tattooist has garnered a respect not seen for over 100 years. Current artists combine the tradition of tattooing with their personal style creating unique and phenomenal body art. With the addition of new inks, tattooing has certainly reached a new plateau.

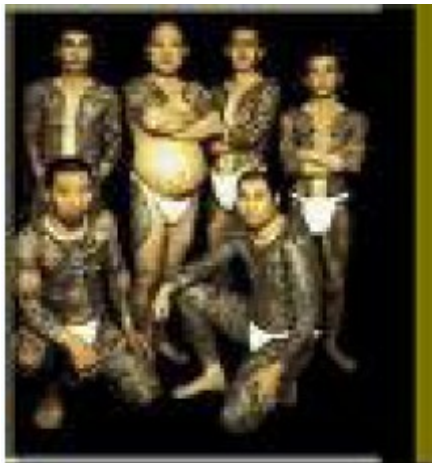
Negative associations

Secular attitudes

Some employers, especially in professional fields, still look down on tattoos or regard them as contributing to an unprofessional appearance. Tattoos can therefore impair a wearer's career prospects, particularly when inked on places not typically covered by clothing, such as the hands, neck or face. It is not unusual for tattoo artists to refuse to tattoo these very conspicuous areas.

In some cultures, tattoos still have negative associations despite their increasing popularity, and are generally associated with criminality in the public's mind; therefore those who choose to be tattooed in such countries usually keep their tattoos covered for fear of reprisal. For example, many businesses such as gyms, hot springs and recreational facilities in Japan still ban people with visible tattoos, in part because of their association in the popular imagination with the *yakuza*, or Japanese mafia. In Western cultures as well, some dress codes specify that tattoos must be covered.

Yakuza gang members with traditional "full body suit"



According to popular belief, most *triad* members in Hong Kong have a tattoo of a black dragon on the left biceps and one of a white tiger on the right; in fact, many people in Hong Kong use "left a black dragon, right a white tiger" as a euphemism for a triad member. It is widely believed that one of the initiation rites in becoming a triad member is silently withstanding the pain of receiving a large tattoo in one sitting, usually performed in the traditional "hand-poked" style.

In the United States many prisoners and criminal gangs use distinctive tattoos to indicate facts about their criminal behavior, prison sentences, and organizational affiliation. This cultural use of tattoos predates the widespread popularity of tattoos in the general population, so older people may still associate tattoos with criminality. At the same time, members of the U.S. military have an equally established and longstanding history of tattooing to indicate military units, battles, etc., and this association is also widespread among older Americans. Tattooing is also widespread in the British Armed Forces.

Tattoos can have additional negative associations for women; "tramp stamp" and other similarly derogatory slang phrases are sometimes used to describe a tattoo on a woman's lower back.

Procedure

All societies and cultures have different tattooing procedures. Some tribal cultures traditionally created tattoos by cutting designs into the skin and rubbing the resulting wound with ink, ashes or other agents; some cultures continue this practice, which may be an adjunct to scarification. Some cultures create tattooed marks by hand-tapping the ink into the skin using sharpened sticks or animal bones or, in modern times, needles. Traditional Japanese tattoos (irezumi) are still "hand-poked," that is, the ink is inserted beneath the skin using non-electrical, hand-made and hand held tools with needles of sharpened bamboo or steel.

The most common method of tattooing in modern times is the electric tattoo machine, which inserts ink into the skin via a group of needles that are soldered onto a bar, which is attached to an oscillating unit. The unit rapidly and repeatedly drives the needles in and out of the skin, usually 80 to 150 times a second. In prisons tattooing is done with homemade machines as common tattoo machines are not available. But the tattoos created by these handmade machines cause pain and injury. There is also major risk of illness, including such blood-borne diseases as HIV and hepatitis.

The modern electric tattoo machine is far removed from the machine invented by Samuel O'Reilly in 1891. O'Reilly's machine was based on the rotary technology of the electric engraving device invented by Thomas Edison. Modern tattoo machines use electromagnetic coils. The first coil machine was patented by Thomas Riley in London, 1891 using a single coil. The first twin coil machine, the predecessor of the modern configuration, was invented by another Englishman, Alfred Charles South of London, in 1899.

"Natural" tattoos

According to *George Orwell*, workers in coal mines would develop characteristic tattoos owing to coal dust getting into wounds. This can also occur with substances like gunpowder. Similarly, a traumatic tattoo occurs when a substance such as asphalt is rubbed into a wound as the result of some kind of accident or trauma. These are particularly difficult to remove as they tend to be spread across several different layers of skin, and scarring or permanent discoloration is almost unavoidable depending on the location.

Dyes and pigments

A wide range of dyes and pigments can be used in tattoos, from inorganic materials like titanium dioxide and iron oxides to carbon black, azo dyes, and acridine, quinoline, phthalocyanine and naphthol derivates, dyes made from ash, and other mixtures.

Iron oxide pigments are used in greater extent in cosmetic tattooing. Many pigments were found to be used in a survey of professional tattooists. Recently, a black light-reactive tattoo ink using PMMA microcapsules has surfaced. The technical name is BIOMETRIX System-1000, and is marketed under the name "Chameleon Tattoo Ink".

Chameleon Tattoo ink GLOWS under a UV light



Studio hygiene

The properly equipped tattoo studio will use biohazard containers for objects that have come into contact with blood or bodily fluids, *sharps* containers for old needles, and an autoclave for sterilizing tools. Studios are also required by law to have hot water.

A reputable tattooist will wash his or her hands before starting to tattoo a client, and between clients, as well as wear disposable latex gloves (a new pair for each client). He or she will refuse to tattoo minors without parental consent, as well as intoxicated people, people with contraindicated skin conditions, or those incapable of consent due to mental incapacity, and attempt to ensure that the customer is satisfied with and sure about the design before applying it. Moreover, she or he will open new, sterile needle packages in front of the client, and always use new, sterile or sterile disposable instruments and supplies, and fresh ink for each session (loaded into disposable containers which are discarded after each client).

Memberships of professional organizations, or certificates of appreciation/achievement, generally require that an artist is aware of the latest trends in equipment and sterilization. However, many of the most notable tattooists do not belong to any association. While specific requirements vary between jurisdictions, many mandate formal training in blood borne pathogens, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and cross contamination. A local department of health regulates tattoo studios in many jurisdictions.

Aftercare

Tattoo artists, and people with tattoos, vary widely in preferred methods of caring for new tattoos. Some artists recommend keeping a new tattoo wrapped for the first twenty-four hours, others suggest removing temporary bandaging after a few hours. Many western tattooists advise against allowing too much contact with water for the first few days or weeks; in Japan, in contrast, a new tattoo is often bathed in very hot water early and often.

General consensus for care advises against removing the scab that forms on a new tattoo and avoiding exposing tattoos to the sun for extended periods, which can contribute to fading. Various products may be recommended for application to the skin, ranging from those intended for the treatment of cuts, burns and scrapes, to petroleum jelly or lanolin. In recent years, specific commercial products have been developed for tattoo aftercare. In other cases, the client will be advised to use no products on a new tattoo.

Tattoo removal

While tattoos are considered permanent, it is possible, to varying degrees, to remove them. Complete removal, however, is often not possible, and the expense and pain of removing them typically will be greater than the expense and pain of applying them. Some jurisdictions will pay for the voluntary removal of gang tattoos.

Tattoo removal is most commonly performed using lasers that react with the ink in the tattoo, and break it down. The broken-down ink is then absorbed by the body. This technique often requires many repeated visits to remove even a small tattoo, and may result in permanent scarring.

A newer method of removal is by tattooing glycolic acid into the skin with a tattoo machine: the acid pushes the ink to the surface of the skin in the scab, which is later removed. This method purportedly scars less than laser techniques. Glycolic acid is also used for facial peels; when used for tattoo removal, a lower percentage mix is used.

Some wearers opt to cover an unwanted tattoo with a new tattoo. This is commonly known as a cover-up. An artfully done cover-up may render the old tattoo completely invisible, though this will depend largely on the size, style, colours and techniques used on the old tattoo. Some shops and artists use laser removal machines to break down and lighten undesired tattoos to make coverage with a new tattoo easier.

Overall, green-based ink is the most difficult to remove. Black ink is most readily broken down by the laser, and unprofessional tattoos done at home are the easiest ones to remove, due to the low quality of ink used, as well as the ineffective manner in which they were applied.

Health risks

Because it requires breaking the skin barrier, tattooing may carry health risks, including infection and allergic reactions. In the United States, for example, a person who receives a tattoo will generally be prohibited from donating blood for 12 months (FDA 2000).

Modern western tattooists reduce such risks by following universal precautions, working with single-use items, and sterilizing their equipment after each use. Many jurisdictions require that tattooists have blood borne pathogen training, such as is provided through the Red Cross.

Infection

Since tattoo instruments come in contact with blood and bodily fluids, diseases may be transmitted if the instruments are used on more than one person without being sterilized. However, infection from tattooing in clean and modern tattoo studios employing single-use needles is rare. In amateur tattoos, such as those applied in prisons, however, there is an elevated risk of infection. To address this problem, a program was introduced in Canada as of the summer of 2005 that provides legal tattooing in prisons, both to reduce health risks and to provide inmates with a marketable skill. Inmates were trained to staff and operate the tattoo parlors; the program, however, was discontinued by the new Canadian government in 2006.

Infections that could be transmitted via the use of unsterilized tattoo equipment include surface infections of the skin, tetanus, some forms of hepatitis, and HIV. No person in the United States is known to have contracted HIV via a commercially-applied tattooing process. Tetanus risk is prevented by having an up-to-date tetanus booster prior to being tattooed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that: *no data exists in the United States indicating that persons with exposures to tattooing alone are at increased risk for HIV infection.* In 2006, the CDC reported 3 clusters with 44 cases of methicillin-resistant staph infection traced to unlicensed tattooists (MMWR 55(24)).

Allergic reactions

Allergic reactions to tattoo pigments are uncommon except for certain brands of red and green. People who are sensitive or allergic to certain metals may react to pigments in the skin with swelling and/or itching, and/or oozing of clear fluid called sebum. Such reactions are quite rare, however, and most artists do not recommend a patch test prior to tattooing.

There is also a small risk of anaphylactic shock (hypersensitive reaction) in those who are susceptible.

Tattoo Inks

Although the FDA technically requires premarket approval of inks; because of limited resources, it has not actually approved the use of any ink for tattoos. The first known study to try to characterize the composition of these inks was started in 2005 study at Northern Arizona University (Finley-Jones and Wagner).

There has been concern expressed about the interaction between magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) procedures and tattoo inks, some of which contain trace metals. Allegedly, the magnetic fields produced by MRI machines could interact with these metal particles, potentially causing burns or distortions in the image. The television show *Myth Busters* tested the theory, and concluded that there is no risk of interaction between tattoo inks and MRI.

However, research by Shellock and Crues reports adverse reactions to MRI and tattoos in a very small number of cases. Waggle and Smith also documented an isolated case of *Tattoo-Induced Skin Burn During MR Imaging*.

Temporary tattoos

Temporary tattoos are not really tattoos. Rather, they are a type of body sticker, like a decal. They are generally applied to the skin using water to temporarily transfer the design to the surface of the skin. Temporary tattoos are easily removed with soap and water or oil-based creams, and are intended to last only a few days. Like nail polish, these can be changed to match one's clothes or mood.

Henna tattoos are becoming very popular for people on holiday



But BEWARE some are better than others and

A lot of people suffer allergic reactions to the Henna

Other forms of temporary "tattoos" are henna tattoos, also known as Mehndi, and the marks made by the stains of silver nitrate on the skin when exposed to ultraviolet light. Both methods, silver nitrate and henna, can take up to two weeks to fade from the skin.

A Final Note

Tattoos have been around for thousands of years and will be for thousands more. They can be a thing of beauty or a real eyesore.

They can tell a story of a persons life, be it good or bad, or even give you an insight into the person who they adorn.

You should think long and hard before deciding on getting any tattoo placed on your skin as they can sometimes be harder to remove than to actually put on, and they are certainly a lot more expensive to remove!!!!

One thing is for sure, the growth in tattoos over the last 10 years is phenomenal. It seems that there are actually more people over the age of 21 who have tats these days than don't have them.

My personal view on them……



……All of the single tattoos pictured in this eBook including the front cover have been painstakingly placed on my body over the years. And there is plenty of room for more!!!!!!