Tattoo Aotearoa New Zealand

portraits by

Helen Mitchell
Tattoo Aotearoa New Zealand presents a cross-cultural geographical survey of tattoo in Aotearoa New Zealand and unravels some of the ideas around employing tattoo as a social passport, augmenting identity, marking life changing events and appropriating cultural symbols. The exhibition geographically represents tattoo in Aotearoa New Zealand and provides a regional overview of diversity.

Tattoo Aotearoa New Zealand features studio portraits collated from a series of studio sessions from locations including Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Nelson and draws on the personal narratives recorded during the process of photographing each subject.

Helen Mitchell’s current research practice in photography focuses on narratives about the ‘tattoo renaissance’ within contemporary New Zealand society. Her images engage with questions around the construction of personal identity and cultural exchange. This image exploration combines studio portraits with documentary photography and interviews with tattooed subjects. Mitchell explores how the customized body functions to transform and reinforce a sense of identity, individuality and to provide a record of personal experience.
Shannon
Shannon’s tattoos are a great example of Rod’s expertise in Japanese tattooing

Heather
Heather’s extensive Japanese tattoos are designed to be hidden beneath her corporate uniform

Liam
Liam’s half sleeve is an excellent example of Adam Craft’s contemporary Japanese style of work
Dominic
Dom’s tattoos integrate traditional oriental imagery such as chrysanthemums with more contemporary elements including family names
Tattooist Adam Craft, Illicit

Josh
Josh’s back piece is a good example of contemporary Japanese inspired tattooing
Tattooist Dan Anderson, Sacred

Aden
Aden’s half sleeve is characteristic of Japanese dragon tattoos
Tattooist Daniel Anderson, Sacred

Simon
Japanese Black Koi carp often represent overcoming adversity
Tattooist Visions Tattoo Studio

Simon
Dragon tattoos in oriental culture have various meanings but are most commonly associated with wisdom, strength and power
Tattooist Visions Tattoo Studio
Michelle
Michelle's partner was the late tattooist Steve Johnson, who tattooed a substantial amount of her work prior to his death in 2011.

Tattooist Steve Johnson, City of Ink continued by Josh Ross, City of Ink & Chris Downing Crazy Horse Tattoo

Dave
The tattoos on Dave's shoulders also cover up scarring from injury sustained during fire fighting.

Tattooist Rod Dawson, Stained Skin

Dave
Dave's tiger, part of his extensive Japanese body suit, is considered to be the supreme animal in oriental culture, representing strength, courage and long life.

Tattooist Rod Dawson, Stained Skin
Gavin
Gavin’s body project represents a long-term tattoo relationship with Rod Dawson at Stained Skin
Tattooist Rod Dawson, Stained Skin

Steve
Steve’s tattoos represent decades of work and his first tattoos were the work of Merv O’Conner, one of the earliest New Zealand European tattoo artists

Gavin
Tattooist Rod Dawson, Stained Skin

Steve
Tattooists
Merv O’Conner
Auckland Tattoo Studio
Steve Johnson, Josh Ross, City of Ink
Scott McEwan, Left Hand Path Tattoos
Keiron
Keiron's substantial tattoos are another excellent example of Adam Craft's contemporary take on traditional Japanese tattoo
Tattooist Adam Craft Illicit

Danni
Danielle's tattoos represent the importance of Buddhism in her life
Tattooist Matt Parkin, Soular Tattoos

Tim
Tim's full sleeves reflect a blend of traditional and contemporary Japanese tattoo styles
Tattooist Gill Tattoo
Marea
Marea's daughter was instrumental in designing her unique coloured moko and back piece
Tattooist Craig Breach, Pegasus Tattoos

Kerry
Kerry's tattoo represents her family, each piece of the wave around her middle represents one of her sisters and the flower on her back is for her grandmother
Tattooist Chris Bezencon, Eastside Tattoos

Spike
Spike's Maori inspired tattoo is a great example of Renee Lee's beautifully shaded work
Tattooist Renee Lee, Artrageous
Elizabeth
Lizzie’s work is by her tattooist father, Swan. The text on her side is in memory of her brother who passed away.

Faithe
The tattoos on Faithe’s left arm are about family.

Chase
Chase’s father Swan has woven together a selection of styles from pacific, to popular culture together on his son’s body.

Tattooist Swan Tangohau
Pete
Pete’s tattoos are an excellent example of Pip Russell’s Pacifica style
Tattooist Pip Russell, Artrageous

Rua
Rua likes to sample work from a selection of tattooists with varying styles
Tattooist Taupo Tatau and others

Maya
Tuigamala Andy Tauafiafi’s tattoo is a contemporary Samoan piece created for a New Zealand tattoo competition
Tattooist Taupo Tatau

Adam
Adam’s shoulder piece represents his Maori heritage
Tattooist unknown
Paul
Brent designed these full sleeves for Paul, his brother
Tattooist Brent Ryan
Jackson Street Tattoo

Nate
Nate's tattoos weave together tribal images with Samoan design elements and his name
Tattooist Taupo Tatau

Tim
Tim's tattoos are about his relationships with women and his connection with the Pacific
Tattooist Gill Tattoo & Taupo Tatau

Tim
Tattooist Gill Tattoo & Taupo Tatau
Ross
Ross’s tattoos weave together Celtic elements with kiwi scenic imagery
Tattooist Scott Combes
Phoenix Tattoos

Simona
The work of tattooist Craig Breach represents a huge diversity of tattoo styles and influences
Tattooist Craig Breach
Pegasus Tattoos

Ruby
Ruby's beautiful Indian inspired design displays her love of peacocks
Tattooist Pip Russell, Artrageous
(and other overseas artists)

Craig
Craig's leg piece is an excellent example of Pip Russell's contemporary work displaying Maori, Pacific and Asian influences
Tattooist Pip Russell, Artrageous

(where other overseas artists)
Frederique
Traveller Frederique’s tattoo was made to celebrate her time in New Zealand
Tattooist Riki Manuel

David
David’s tattoos weave together his personal, political and philosophical beliefs
Tattooist Dean Parkin Sacred Tattoo

Janine
Janine’s playful cartoon piece is one of a series of individual tattoos she wears
Tattooist Erin Chance Tattoo

Jason
Jason’s tattoos combine personal motifs with those of American culture
Tattooist Renee Lee, Artrageous
Roxy
Roxy’s tattoos are a melding together of diverse tattoo styles and motifs
Tattooist Erin Chance Tattoo

Steve
Steve is an excellent example of a ‘tattoo collector’ with numerous acquisitions from a variety of New Zealand tattoo artists

Lizard
D.J. Lizard’s tattoos attest to his love of ‘Star Wars’ and music
Tattooist Chris Bezencon
Eastside Tattoos

Steve
Various Tattooists
Caitlin

Caitlin's left arm and back are recent tattoos, the back piece detailing the journey across the river Styx into the underworld.

Tattooist Erin Chance Tattoo

Caitlin

Caitlin's earlier work shows her love of the poet Virgil and her interest in history.

Tattooist
Brent Ryan Jackson Street Tattoo

Caitlin

Tattooist Erin Chance Tattoo

Caitlin

Tattooist Brent Ryan Jackson Street Tattoo
Ange
Ange’s tattoos are as striking as her personal style and just as unique
Tattooist Matt Lloyd
Slave to the Needle Tattoo

Sarah
Sarah’s classic Canon camera tattoo was made in her first year at university
Tattooist Coen Mitchell

Chloe
Chloe’s Rolleiflex tattoo was an act of teenage rebellion, but as a graduating photography student appears particularly apt
Tattooist unknown

Dilwin
Dilwin’s tattoo is a design adapted from the work of 19th Century textile designer, William Morris
Tattooist, Berhampore Tattoo Studio
Mellissa
Mellissa's design is a collaboration between the tattooist Naith and herself
Tattooist Naith, Absolution Tattoo

James
James design comes from his love of the cartoon, 'The Last Airbender'
Tattooist Unknown

Lance
Lance's tattoos combine personal motifs with popular cultural elements
Tattooist Craig Breach Pegasus Tattoos

Lance
Tattooist Craig Breach Pegasus Tattoos
Chris
Chris’s graphic tribal shoulder piece is an excellent example of contemporary black work.
Tattooist Unknown

Reuben
Reuben’s tattoos are a melding of graphic elements with delicate sketch-work.
Tattooist Scott Combes, Phoenix Tattoos

Reuben
The tattoos are at different stages of completion and suggest an overarching personal narrative.
Tattooist Scott Combes, Phoenix Tattoos

Nick
Nick’s tattoo is from an Otis Frizzell design that he won in an auction.
Tattooist Manu Tattoo
Kelle
Kelle’s tattoos combine mystical fantasy elements with floral motifs
Tattooist Gizmos Tattoo

Byron
Byron’s tattoos display a contemporary remix of a traditional style
Tattooist Rene Harvey

Jana
Jana’s images talk to an interest in popular cultural motifs
Various Tattooists

Byron
Traditional placement of tattoos on the body combined with heavy metal iconography and biomechanical imagery plays a similar role or creates meaning for a new culture
Tattooist Rene Harvey
Alex
Alex’s back piece was completed over two days for a tattoo competition
Tattooist Matt Lloyd
Slave to the Needle Tattoo

Colleen
Colleen is married to Craig Breach, they run Pegasus Tattoos together. Clients talk about the relationship they establish with Craig and Colleen as being like family
Tattooist Craig Breach Pegasus Tattoos

Elaine
Elaine’s unusual white and blue tattoo displays playful visual motifs
Tattooist Craig Breach Pegasus Tattoos
Donnella
Donnella’s tattoo combine floral elements & shading, the skull motif on her right arm reminds us of the temporary nature of existence.

Tattooist Matt Parkin, Soular Tattoos

Rex
Rex’s combination of skeletons and serpents are seamlessly woven together in this tattoo.

Tattooist Sacred Tattoo

Amelia
Amelia’s tattoos combine traditional tattoo elements with autobiographical ones, the word, killer, with the paw prints are a memorial to her dogs that were taken from her by the council.

Tattooist Mike Purdy
Tahuna Beach Tattoo Lounge

Amelia
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Amelia
Tattooist Mike Purdy
Tahuna Beach Tattoo Lounge
Alexa
Alexa’s back tattoo is the view from her house in Niue where she lived for a while
Tattooist Tattoo Hades

Alex
Alex’s sleeve is a great example of her own artwork
Tattooist Roger Ingerton
Tattooart by Roger

Alexa
Alexa’s ankle piece was commissioned at the annual Taranaki Tattoo Festival from an international visiting artist
Tattooist Unknown

Lyle
Lyle’s tattoo contains the derivation of a famous quote attributed to German Philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche
Tattooist Adam Craft, Illicit
Sarah
Sarah’s text tattoos are the start of an ongoing tattoo acquisition
Various Tattooists

Steve
Steve’s clown tattoos are a reminder of his grandfather who worked in Sydney’s Lunar Park
Tattooist Rod Dawson, Stained Skin

Pat
Pat has a tattoo on both arms dedicated to each of his two sons
Tattooist Joeline Tempest Tattoo

Mary
Mary’s bird tattoos were acquired around the same time she cut her hair short and decided to go grey
Tattooist Sharon Tattoo
Mark
Mark's Seido Karate symbol, a five-petaled plum blossom, is Kaicho Nakamura's family crest. The circles represent love, respect & obedience.

James
James has been collecting tattoos for decades, the tattoos range from celebrations of life to excising personal demons.

Steve
Steve's biomechanical tattoo is a celebration of his successful kidney transplant.

Caitlin
Caitlin's tattoos are a celebration of the charming, sometimes childlike drawings of artist, Paul Klee.
Artist Scott has many of his own tattoos; he first started tattooing in Papakura Prison, he now specializes in fantasy and biomechanical tattoo.

Melody's biker name is Gypsy, this is represented in the tattoo on her left upper arm, and the blue rose on her wrist is a cover-up of an old tattoo.

Paula's sleeves are a mixture of Japanese and more traditional western tattoo elements such as the stars on her left wrist.

Deb's unusual back piece depicts winged zodiac signs in a contrasting mixture of colour.

The skull and flower tattoo that these Harley riders share speaks to beauty and mortality.
Clayton
Clayton’s tattoos speak to his musical tastes, specifically, metal
Tattooist Dave McEwan, Tattoo Freaky

Warwick
Warwick’s tattoos illustrate his musical and movie tastes
Tattooist Dave McEwan, Tattoo Freaky

Heather
Heather’s tattoos celebrate her love of actress Marilyn Monroe
Tattooist Dave McEwan, Tattoo Freaky

Andrew
Andrew’s tattoos are partly commissioned and partly acquired more informally via friends with tattoo guns
Various Tattooists
This project is dedicated to the memory of my mother

Kathleen Lillian Mitchell

24th February 1925 to 9th September 2015

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University of Canterbury School of Fine Art
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Open Tuesday to Friday 10am-3pm, Saturday & Sunday 10am-5pm
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Tattoo Aotearoa New Zealand Exhibition Catalogue

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