



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

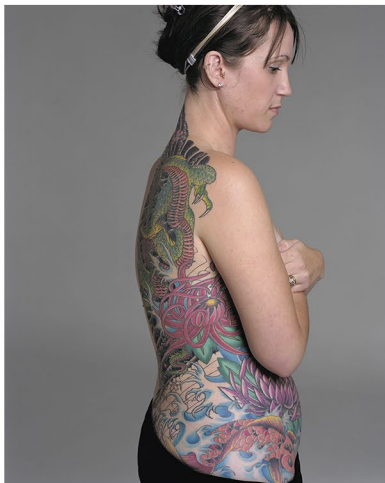
Shannon's tattoos are a great examples of Rod's expertise in Japanese tattooing

Tattooist Rod Dawson Stained Skin



Shannon

Tattooist Rod Dawson Stained Skin



Heather

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

Tattooist Rod Dawson, Stained Skin

Liam

Liam's half sleeve is an excellent example of Adam Craft's contemporary Japanese style of work

Tattooist Adam Craft, Illicit





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

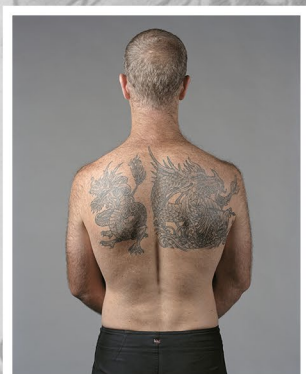
**Tattooist
Daniel Anderson
Sacred Tattoo**



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

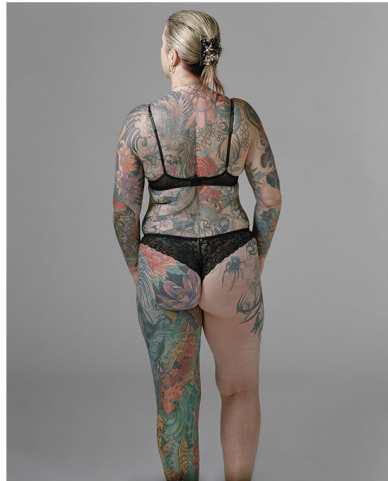
Tattooist Visions Tattoo Studio



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



Michelle

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

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



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

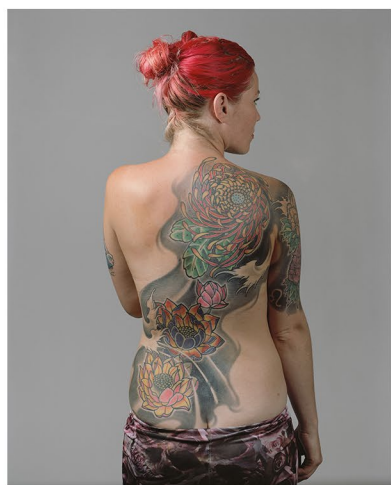
Tattooist
Adam Craft
Illicit



Danni

Danielle's tattoos represent the importance of Buddhism in her life

Tattooist Matt Parkin, Soular Tattoos



Danni

Tattooist Matt Parkin, Soular Tattoos

Tim

Tim's full sleeves reflect a blend of traditional and contemporary Japanese tattoo styles

Tattooist Gill Tattoo

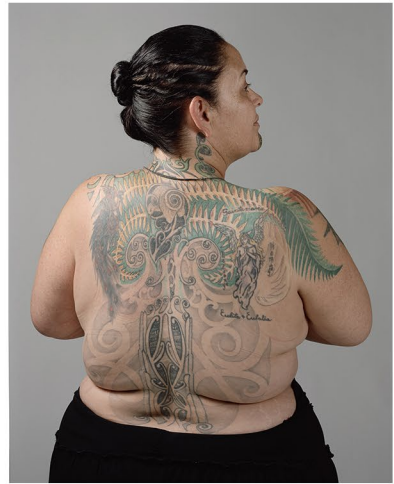




Marea

Marea's daughter was instrumental in designing her unique coloured moko and back piece

Tattooist Craig Breach, Pegasus Tattoos



Kerry

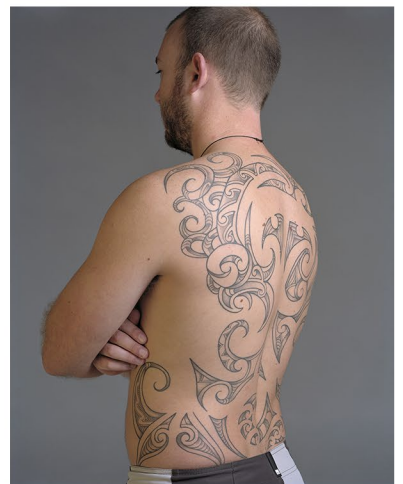
Kerry's tattoo represents her family, each piece of the wave around her middle represents one of her sisters and the flower on her back is for her grandmother

Tattooist Chris Bezencon, Eastside Tattoos



Marea

Tattooist Craig Breach, Pegasus Tattoos



Spike

Spike's Maori inspired tattoo is a great example of Renee Lee's beautifully shaded work

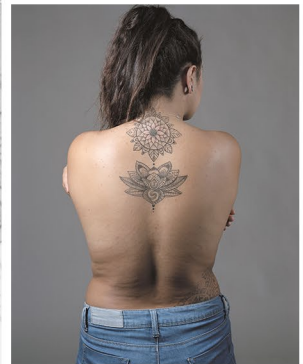
Tattooist Renee Lee, Artrageous



Elizabeth

Lizzie's work is by her tattooist father, Swan. The text on her side is in memory of her brother who passed away

Tattooist Swan Tangohau



Elizabeth

Tattooist Swan Tangohau



Faithe

The tattoos on Faithe's left arm are about family

**Tattooist
Pip Russell
Artrageous**



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



Chase

Tattooist Swan Tangohau



Pete

Pete's tattoos are an excellent example of Pip Russell's Pacifica style

Tattooist Pip Russell, Artrageous



Maya

Tuigamala Andy Tauafafi's tattoo is a contemporary Samoan piece created for a New Zealand tattoo competition

Tattooist Taupo Tatau



Rua

Rua likes to sample work from a selection of tattooists with varying styles

Tattooist Taupo Tatau and others



Adam

Adam's shoulder piece represents his Maori heritage

Tattooist unknown



Paul

Brent designed these full sleeves for Paul, his brother

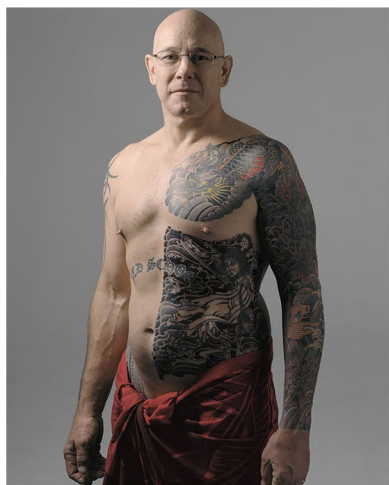
**Tattooist Brent Ryan
Jackson Street Tattoo**



Nate

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

Tattooist Taupo Tatau



Tim

Tattooist Gill Tattoo & Taupo Tatau





Ross

Ross's tattoos weave together Celtic elements with kiwi scenic imagery

Tattooist Scott Combes
Phoenix Tattoos



Craig

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

Tattooist Pip Russell, Artrageou



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)



Frederique

Traveller Frederique's tattoo was made to celebrate her time in New Zealand

Tattooist Riki Manuel



Janine

Janine's playful cartoon piece is one of a series of individual tattoos she wears

Tattooist Erin Chance Tattoo



David

David's tattoos weave together his personal, political and philosophical beliefs

Tattooist Dean Parkin Sacred 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**



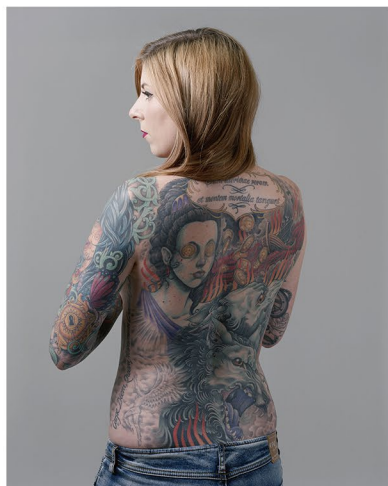
Steve

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

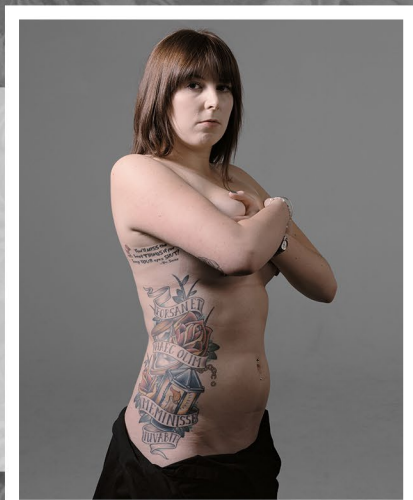
Caitlin's earlier work shows her love of the poet Virgil and her interest in history

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

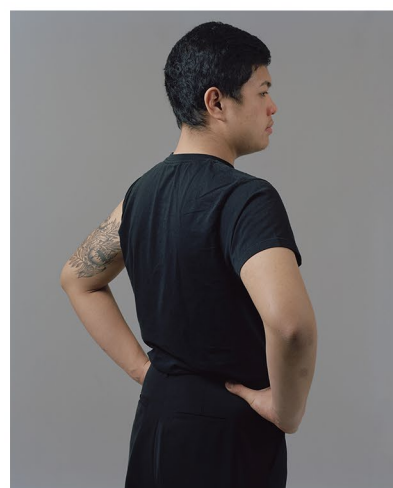
Tattooist Coen Mitchell



Chloe

Chloe's Rolliflex 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



Lance

Lance's tattoos combine personal motifs with poplar cultural elements

Tattooist Craig Breach Pegasus Tattoos



James

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

Tattooist Unknown



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

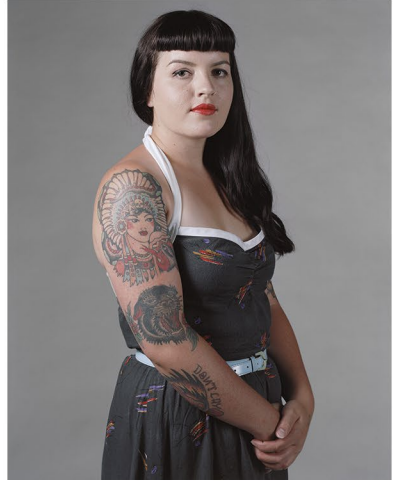
Nick's tattoo is from an Otis Frizzell design that he won in an auction

Tattooist Manu Tattoo

Kelle

Kelle's tattoos combine mystical fantasy elements with floral motifs

Tattooist Gizmos Tattoo



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

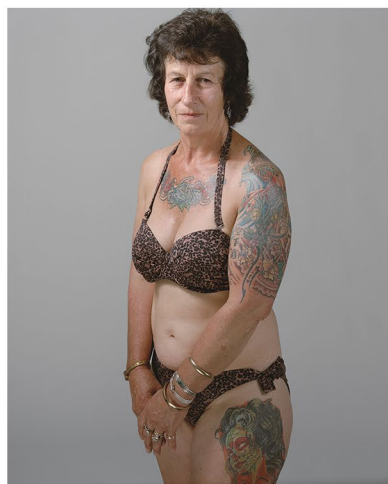
Tattooist Matt Lloyd
Slave to the Needle Tattoo



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



Alex

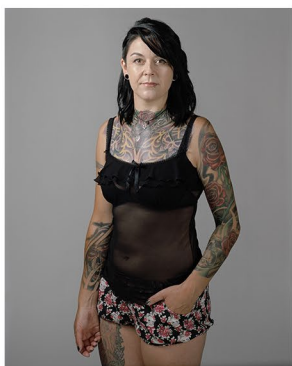
Tattooist Matt Lloyd
Slave to the Needle Tattoo



Elaine

Elaine's unusual white and blue tattoo displays playful visual motifs

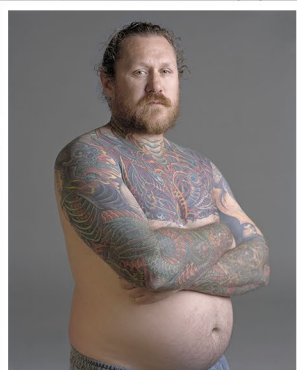
Tattooist Craig Breach Pegasus Tattoos



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

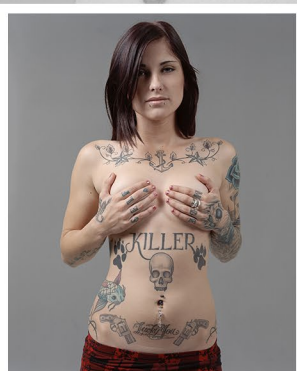
dogs that were taken from her by the council

**Tattooist Mike Purdy
Tahuna Beach Tattoo Lounge**



Amelia

**Tattooist
Mike Purdy
Tahuna Beach
Tattoo Lounge**



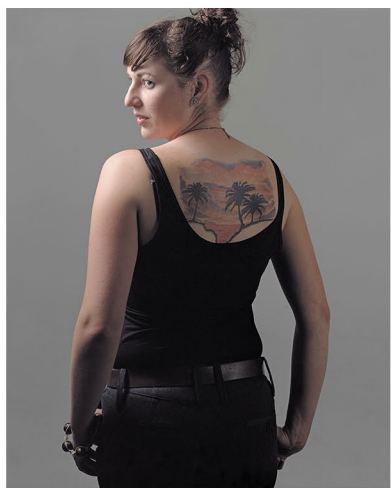
Amelia

**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



Alexa

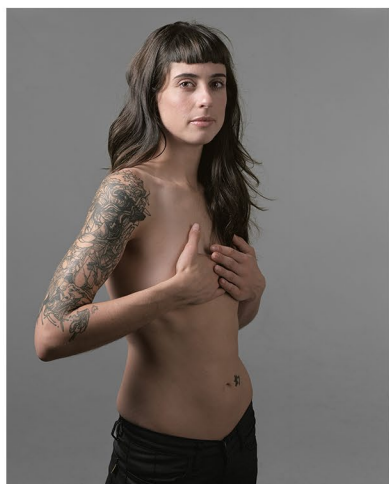
Alexa's ankle piece was commissioned at the annual Taranaki Tattoo Festival from an international visiting artist

Tattooist Unknown

Alex

Alex's sleeve is a great example of her own artwork

Tattooist Roger Ingerton
Tattooart by Roger

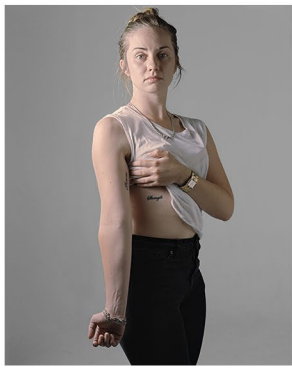


Lyle

Lyle's tattoo contains the derivation of a famous quote attributed to German Philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

Tattooist Adam Craft, Illicit

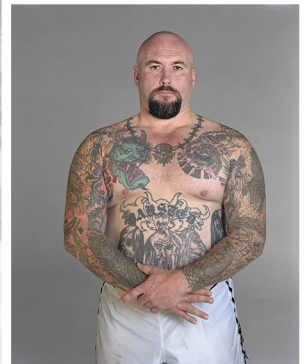




Sarah

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



Steve

**Tattooist
Rod Dawson
Stained Skin**



Pat

Pat has a tattoo on both arms dedicated to each of his two sons

**Tattooist Joelene
Tempest Tattoo**



Mary

Mary's bird tattoos were acquired around the same time she cut her hair short and decided to go grey

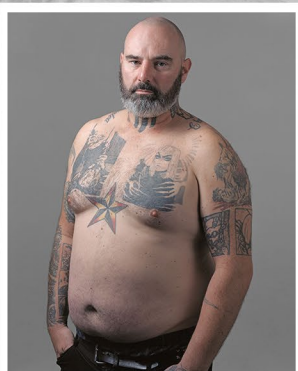
Tattooist Sharon Tattoo



Mark

Mark's Seido Karate symbol, a five-petaled plum blossom, is Kaicho Nakamura's family crest. The circles represent love, respect & obedience

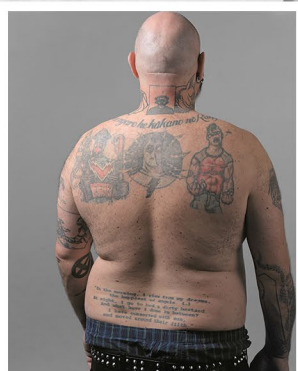
Tattooist Unknown



James

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

Various Tattooists



James

Various Tattooists



Steve

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

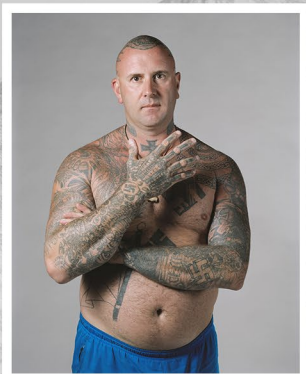
Tattooist Craig Breach
Pegasus Tattoos



Caitlin

Caitlin's tattoos are a celebration of the charming, sometimes childlike drawings of artist, Paul Klee

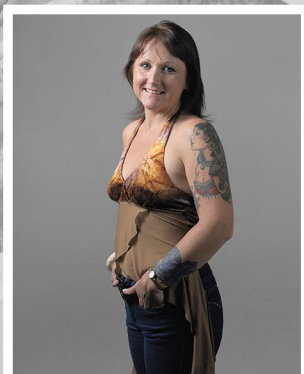
Tattooist Roger Ingerton, Tattooart by Roger



Scott

Artist Scott has many of his own tattoos; he first started tattooing in Papakura Prison, he now specializes in fantasy and biomechanical tattoo

**Tattooist Scott Combes
Phoenix Tattoos**



Melody

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

Tattooist Tattoo Freaky

Paula

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

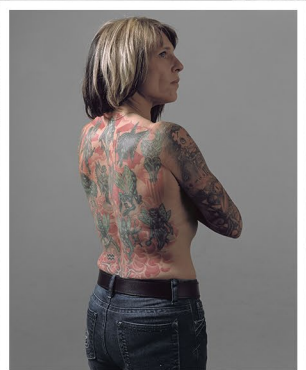
Tattooist Tattoo Freaky



Deb

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

Tattooist Tattoo Freaky



Melody, Deb & Paula

The skull and flower tattoo that these Harley riders share speaks to beauty and mortality

Tattooist Tattoo Freaky



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

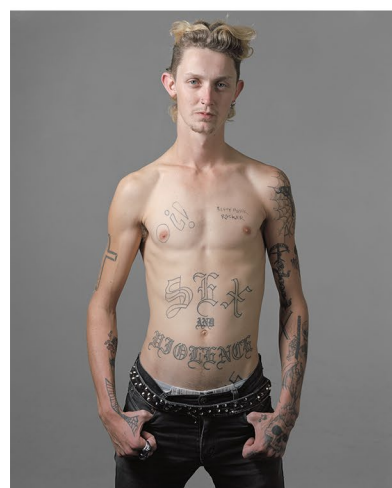
Tattooist Dave McEwan, Tattoo Freaky



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

Special thanks to the following:

**My partner Tam Webster
for his enormous contribution
to every aspect of this project**

My son Seth

**The staff and technicians of the Photography Department
Massey University, Wellington**

**Emma Febvre-Richards acting Head of School
School of Art Massey University, Wellington**

Isaac Gutschlag, Ryan McCauley and Shuman Wang

The tattooists and tattoo subjects who participated in this project

Auckland University of Technology

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology

University of Canterbury School of Fine Art



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