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Beyond the Epidermis:

a practical investigation into

contemporary western tattooing

Adam McDade

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ABSTRACT

Academic focus on contemporary western tattooing is primarily from the disciplinary perspectives of the sciences, economics, history, and anthropology. With few exceptions, attention is placed on the modified body and the recipient of the tattoo rather than the tattoo producer or the processes of production. Though tattooing is an important creative industry, the occupational role of the tattooist and the processes and development of practice is yet to receive academic investigation from a practice-centred perspective. This has led to understanding of tattooing that is either absent entirely, partially informed, or flawed, from a range of perspectives.

This AHRC/NPIF funded research is conducted in partnership with Sunderland (England) based tattoo studio *Triplesix Studios*, where the researcher has worked as a tattooist. A multi-method methodology was created with practice at its core combined with a contextual overview and autoethnography to contribute insight into tattoo production, the role of the producer and stylistic development that is largely absent in academia. It is suggested that the processes of tattoo production are inherently collaborative between tattooist and client. The tattooist's role is proposed as both material (provision of medium) and non-material (provision of service). The material facet of the tattooist's role in the provision of the medium is presented as contingent in accordance with the tattoo brief. Autoethnographic accounts of tattooing practice are utilised to generate insight into the non-material facet of the tattooist's role in the provision of service. Stylistic development with tattooing as a medium through practical investigation that is informed by design training is then presented, illuminating factors that affect the approach of the tattooist.

This is the first piece of research to be conducted using tattooing practice as a core methodological approach and demonstrates that understanding of contemporary western tattooing more broadly can be enriched as a result. Through the contribution of a novel methodology, frameworks and documentation offered by this research, it is proposed that tattooing may be better understood from the perspectives in which it has previously been studied and be introduced into broader arts and design scholarship.

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house and for standing on my back to crack those areas that I can't seem to reach that are the result of long hours in awkward tattooing positions, and at a computer screen. *Yings Thai* (and *Jai Thai,* pre-2019) takeaway for an embarrassingly high number of delicious meals that have fuelled the six/seven-day workweeks since 2017. The illustrious Dr. Stanley Krippner, and Dr. Christopher Ryan, for supporting my development at various stages and sharing their networks of inspirational connections with me. My heroic mam Debra, who despite initially hating tattoos has never discouraged my interest, and who is proud and supportive of me irrespective of any professional or academic achievements. My late dad, 'Blue', who I owe any creative energy I possess to, and whose love is still and always will be with me.

Finally—I would like to thank all the tattooists whose work I embody, tattooing-focussed academics whose work I cite, and tattoo culture to which I belong. I hope I can do our discipline justice. This thesis is dedicated to you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation begins by outlining my biographical background as a design practitioner and tattoo enthusiast, to contextualise the perspective from which this research has been undertaken. Definitions of key terms are then provided to aid understanding of sections that follow, before the research questions, aims, and objectives are introduced. The methodology selected to address these questions, aims, and objectives is then discussed. The NPIF funding criteria of this research is communicated, and an outline of how this is adhered to it is presented. The scope of this research and the structure of the dissertation is then stated.

1.1 BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

In 2004 I illegally received my first tattoo at the age of fourteen, in a street shop in a residential area of Sunderland that had no windows. The design was of the Scorpio astrological symbol, sized around 1.5 x 1.5 inches, and placed (unintentionally) just off-centre from my right bicep. It cost £20. Two years later I had the tattoo covered over with a skull and rose traditional western style design. This lead to a full sleeve in the same style by the same tattooist, before seeking out other practitioners with different specialist styles for tattoos on various parts of my body. This involved travelling around the UK to collect pieces from highly regarded practitioners such as Claudia De Sabe, and Steve Byrne, to then discover Sunderland based *Triplesix Studios.* The founder, Bez (Richard Beston), would later tattoo my full left arm and foot, while contributing to the advancement of the discipline and become cited as a key practitioner in the industry (Hardy, 2009, p.42). It is with this spirit, enthusiasm, and empathetic resonance from an early age with tattooing as a discipline that this research is approached.

Projects such as full sleeve tattoos require multiple sittings, and during my full-day tattoo appointments with Bez I would continually suggest with a decreasing degree of subtlety that I would like to become a tattoo apprentice. Eventually, Bez told me; "go to university and study art, and then I'll see what I can do". I then withdrew from the BSc Psychology course that I was in the first year of my studies of, in pursuit of a Foundation degree in Art and Design at The *University of Sunderland* where I met my supervisor, Professor Mike Collier. This was followed by both a BA and MA in Illustration and Design at the same institution,

where I met my former director of Studies, Dr. Manny Ling, and developed an approach to image making and design that I utilised in the freelance work that followed.

After my MA graduation in 2014, I continued to refine and explore my illustration practice and produced freelance work in various contexts, including twenty-six illustrations and a cover image for the book *Tangentially Reading* by author and podcast host, Christopher Ryan (2018). Utilising traditional media, my approach to image making as an illustrator involves contrasting line weights and the apparent presence of the 'handmade'. After eight years absence of contact, I felt that I was ready to begin investigating how I could adapt this approach into tattooing and discover more about the discipline in the process. In April 2017, I sent an email to Bez to see if his previous suggestion of an apprenticeship was still available. It was. A relative late-comer comparative to many, I began my journey into tattooing practice in May 2017, aged twenty-seven, at the internationally award-winning *Triplesix Studios*, Sunderland.

Having undertaken academic study of Illustration/design as disciplinary fields, I wanted to apply the same rigour to my education of tattooing practice. I was fortunate enough to be awarded funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) with an NPIF award (National Productivity Investment Fund), to begin PhD research in Design from October 2017, in partnership with *Triplesix Studios*, and with a focus on cultural creativity.

In undertaking an initial literature review at the early research stages (further discussed in Section 2.1, p.23) I soon became aware that academic inquiry of tattooing is limited by an absence of practitioner perspectives or serious attention paid to practice. This has led to problems with understanding of tattooing from an array of disciplinary perspectives, and thus scholarship that ranges from being only partially reflective, to vastly distorted representations of tattooing more broadly. In examining this, the value of a practice centred methodological approach became clear.

As a discipline in which no formal qualification is available and no in-depth practice-orientated academic research exists, 'Beyond the Epidermis' is the first of its kind—providing frameworks for understanding tattooing practice and practitioner and otherwise absent documentation of practice through a novel methodological approach. In doing so, it contributes to remedying some of the issues in scholarship of contemporary western

tattooing and introduces it into a design and creative industries discourse, while illuminating the presence of the tattooist within the academy.

1.2 DEFINITIONS AND KEY TERMS

Definitions of key terms that are used within this dissertation are stated to ensure clarity. Terminology surrounding tattooing in both academic and cultural vernacular can be unclear or ambiguous, and so the following terms are introduced as they can be understood when used within the dissertation. More specific material, technical, and stylistic terminologies are introduced and discussed in the contextual overview (Section 2.4, p.51).

Other researcher-generated terms will be introduced and defined in various sections of the dissertation. The terms introduced here are used throughout and inform reading of the chapters that follow. Unless specified, when the shorter terms, 'tattooing', 'studio', or 'tattooist' are used within this dissertation, it is to these stated definitions that they refer to.

1.2.1 Contemporary western tattooing

In her tattoo themed research, Friedman (2012) states that the term 'Western' can be understood as, "…pertaining to Western European (primarily English/British and French) culture and that of citizens of the United States of America" (p.2). The term 'western tattooing' may suggest a distinction from tattooing that occurs in geographically 'non-western' locations, however this is not necessarily the case. When used within this dissertation, 'contemporary western tattooing' refers to tattooing practices since the twenty-first century (specifically, 2017–2021) in the UK.

'Contemporary western tattooing' can be understood to refer to the transactional nature of practice involving a professional practitioner and a commissioning client, in a studio context. The nature of practice is subject to the influences of contemporary western culture (i.e. technology, media) more broadly. While each region is subject to individual differences, the processes and findings discussed within, generated from North-East England tattooing, are transferable for other geographical locations in which tattooing operates in a comparable professional and transactional manner.

1.2.2 Tattoo studio

Environments in which tattooing takes place may often vernacularly be referred to as 'tattoo parlours' or 'tattoo shops' however the term 'tattoo studio' is used in this dissertation. The term 'tattoo parlour' has been used to refer to environments that historically were "…located in run-down areas of major towns…" (McComb, 2016, p.51), and offer externally sourced pre-designed images for tattooing. The term 'shop' has connotations with the selling of goods and services, but is not necessarily indicative of creative production.

The term 'tattoo studio' is selected to refer to the often-accessible environment in which tattooing takes place, that offers custom or pre-designed flash images by the tattooists working within it, for a range of clientele. In using the term 'studio', tattooing is better associated with broader arts and design disciplines and contexts of production.

1.2.3 Contemporary western tattooist

The term 'tattoo artist' has been used in some existing literature (e.g. Kosut, 2013; Walzer and Sanjurjo, 2016), favourably presenting tattooists as 'artists'. The term 'tattooer' is part of common vernacular, rooted in a more craft-like association to the role; "a good tattooer used to be like a good plumber or tradesmen…" (Sanders and Vail, 2008, p.149). These terms suggest that the tattooist operates in a fixed manner as an artist, or a craftsperson. While this can be true, the term 'contemporary western tattooist' is adopted within this dissertation to better reflect the holistic nature of practice.

In using the term 'tattooist' rather than 'tattoo artist' or 'tattooer', an acknowledgement is made that the practitioners way of using of the medium is directed by the tattoo brief (rather than the medium suggesting a fixed role of the practitioner). This allows for a more accurate representation of how a contemporary western tattooist operates, as will be expanded upon in Chapter 4 (p.114). The contemporary western tattooist can thus be understood as the professional practitioner of tattooing as a medium, working within the cultural context of the contemporary western tattooing studio.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIMS, AND OBJECTIVES

The research investigates contemporary western tattooing from the perspective of a practitioner of both design and tattooing, with professional experience in the former, and very little of the later from the period of commencement (October 2017). Tattooing has been approached with the spirit of academic rigour that was instilled in my prior education, examining the discipline while progressing from apprentice tattooist (from May 2017, prior to the research beginning) to more experienced tattooist. Distinct from my experience as an illustration and design practitioner, tattooing involves both the material (tangible matter) and non-material (intangible and interpersonal). This led to the creation of two core research questions, that emerged from the desire to increase understanding of tattooing as a practitioner of the medium, and as a researcher of the discipline. Responding to the questions, two aims were created and three objectives then identified to fulfil them.

1.3.1 Research questions

With a focus on tattooing production and producer, the research aims to address the following questions:

1/ What is the occupational role of a contemporary western tattooist;

> *1.1 What are the processes, methods, and techniques conventionally employed by professional tattooists?*

> *1.2 What are the material and non-material aspects of the role of the tattooist, and how can they be understood?*

2/ How can methods from illustration and design practice be implemented to inform and develop tattooing practice, and what effects might this have?

1.3.2 Research aims

From these questions, the following aims were created:

1/ To elucidate on the multifaceted role of the contemporary western tattooist and provide practical insight on tattooing as a medium within the creative industries.

2/ To investigate how methods developed from illustration and design practice might be implemented into tattooing practice to inform tattoo design process and outcome.

1.3.3 Research objectives

In order the fulfil the stated aims, the following objectives were developed:

1/ To utilise practice and autoethnography to:

> *1.1 Document the working processes, methods, and techniques conventionally employed in the contemporary western tattoo studio.*

> *1.2 Provide elucidation and insight into the role of the contemporary Western tattooist as a professional practitioner.*

2/ To utilise a practice-orientated methodological approach to:

> *2.1 Investigate how methods cultivated in illustration and design practice can be implemented into tattooing practice to develop novel stylistic outcomes.*

> *2.2 Investigate how the properties of tattooing as a medium affect the tattoo processes and outcome.*

3/ To develop practical/tacit knowledge and skills with tattooing as a medium to effectively fulfil aims 1 and 2.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

Responding to the qualitative nature of the research questions a multi-method methodology was created—combining a contextual overview, practical research, and autoethnography. Figure 1 depicts the methodological structure of the research that this section seeks to explain.
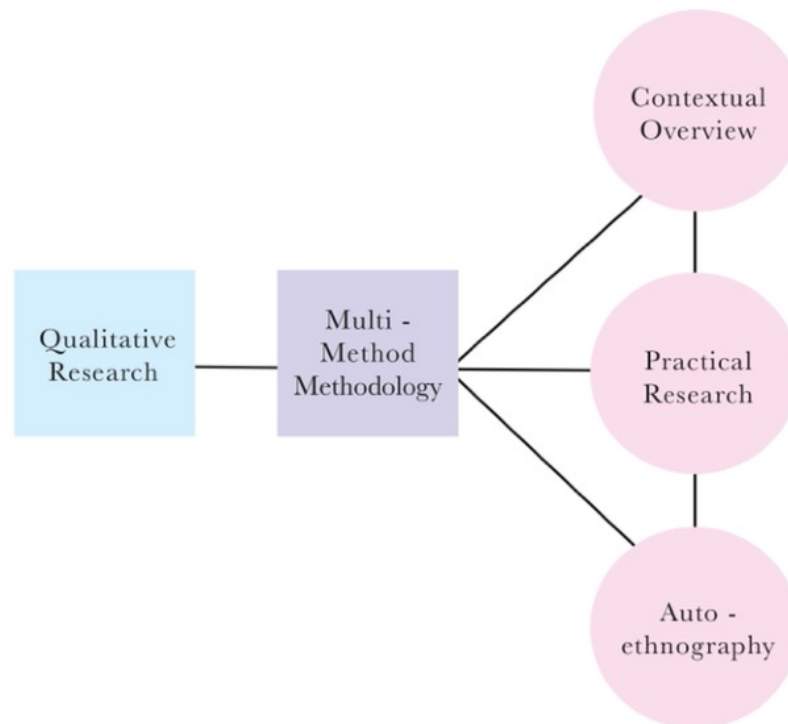
Figure 1: Methodological structure of the research (McDade, 2018)

1.4.1 Overview of the multi-method methodology

The research questions necessitate direct experiential involvement with tattooing as a medium and an industry. The research takes place within a tattoo studio in the north-east of England, utilising a medium that is practiced in variable ways, and generating a range of experiences, factors, and considerations daily. As such, a methodology that recognises the subjectivist qualities of the research themes and appropriately considers the ontological nature of what is being researched was considered.

Guba (1990) presents the research paradigm of constructivism, which contends that knowledge is human construction and that "realities are multiple" (p.27). The research is not seeking to claim objective truths regarding the questions asked, but rather to provide findings that are the result of the interaction between the "inquirer and inquired" (ibid.). The constructivist paradigm can thus be considered relevant, dealing with the qualitative nature of the questions asked. While the research generates findings from my personal experiences, these findings inform frameworks for broader understanding of contemporary western tattooing practice and practitioner.

It is important to stress at this stage that my position at the start of this research is that of a tattooist in the very early stages of a tattooing career. This means that the research has begun from an 'insider' perspective as a working tattooist—but only newly so. This *initial* inexperience has allowed for a decreased likelihood of insider bias than would have been the case had the research commenced at a later part of my career. As the research has progressed, so too has my tattooing experience and establishment within the studio as a resident tattooist. This has allowed for authentic experiences to be gained that have influenced the research findings and my qualification as a practitioner to suggest them.

Primarily utilising practice (Section 1.4.3, p.11) and including autoethnographic accounts and analysis of practice (Section 1.4.4, p.13), the research is informed by a contextual overview (Section 1.4.2, p.9). Gray and Malins (2004) state that "…a characteristic of 'artistic' methodology is a pluralist approach using a multi-method technique, tailored to the individual project" (p.21). The multi-method approach has also been described as 'bricoleur' (ibid., p.74) with the terms used interchangeably, however the term 'multi-method' was favoured in this research for its accessibility. Existing practice orientated PhD's that utilise a multi-method methodology include Guo (2016) who combined a contextual review with a practice-led methodology for their research into Chinese 'inside painting' in glass art. Tani (2013), also working in the field of glass and creative practice, utilised a multi-method methodology combining contextual research with action research (p.37).

The methodologies used as part of the multi-method approach ran parallel to each other in chronology, with three–four days of the week spent within the tattoo studio, and two–three days spent on theoretical aspects of the work, at various stages. Practice is the central methodology, however focus on each approach was taken on a pragmatic basis in response to themes that have emerged through practice. This manner of pragmatism is noted to have been adopted by Collier (2011), who on working on practice-led research using a multi-method methodology (termed bricolage in his dissertation) states, "I have found that my own way of researching is like a bricolage (or collage) of different, overlapping approaches…this is not to say that it lacks focus—it is just that I believe that visual research accompanied by academic research is not undertaken either empirically or 'logically' within a clear linear narrative framework" (p.27). This research was conducted in a similar way,

with themes generated from practice and the organic experiences of becoming a professional tattooist directing the path of inquiry that followed.

1.4.2 Contextual Overview

The contextual overview was conducted in order to inform the research theme and navigate the terrain of the project. The methods used as part of the contextual overview include a literature survey (academic and non-academic), professional practice (being embedded within the studio as a practitioner), and interviews with practitioners working in alternative studios/geographical locations. The contextual overview was part of the periphery of the research journey throughout, forming a backdrop in which the practice and autoethnography are situated. Diagrammatic representations were created at various stages of the research to contextualise and communicate findings. As stated in the thesis of Bradbury (2015, pp.10–11), a contextual review running alongside practice-orientated research has been used in numerous PhD research, including Smith (2011) and Richardson (2010). The term 'overview' rather than 'review' has been used, as the context for this research is informed by existing material in addition to primary research.

The initial literature survey was conducted to establish academic understanding of contemporary western tattooing. As this research utilises tattooing practice as a research method, a thorough search for academic research that utilises a similar methodological approach was pursued. This included using various database search engines such as the University of Sunderland's library search engine, *EThOS*, *Microsoft Academic*, and *Google Scholar*. Various Boolean search queries such as 'Tattooing AND Practice', 'Tattooing OR Tattooist AND practice-based' were attempted, with refinement of searches being conducted using 'advanced search' functions. As no research of such a nature could be found, broader search engines such as *Google* were used to search for any coverage of research that may be deemed similar, in addition to the platforms *ResearchGate* and *Academia.edu.*

No existing research on contemporary western tattooing was found that utilised tattooing practice as a central approach. A possible exception to this is Angel (2004), who produced a short descriptive account of executing a tattoo during a performance at her undergraduate fine art degree show. The difference in context and scope to Angel (2004) suggests the

methodological approach taken in this research to be novel. The literature survey revealed the fields in which tattooing has been academically considered, exposing a gap in what is yet to be understood. This is further discussed in Section 2.1 (p.23). Literature on tattooing from non-art/design disciplines thus informed the research by revealing voids in understanding.

Literature from broader arts, craft, and design disciplines have been consulted, in addition to literature related to service industries (specifically in relation to research question 1.2 regarding the tattooist's role, which is discussed in Chapter 4, p.51). Content from these areas has been referenced in response to themes emerging from practice to inform frameworks that aid understanding, in response to the research questions.

Publicly accessible tattooing content was surveyed. Specialist books such as *TTT: Tattoo* (TTTism and Schonberger, 2018) were reviewed, alongside tattoo publications such as *Skin Deep* and *Total Tattoo*. Media outlets containing articles and interviews with practitioners such as *Tattoodo.com* were also consulted, in addition to video content such as *Tattoo Age* (2017) from the *VICE* network. Material of this nature was reviewed to further contextualise the cultural terrain of the research. The social media platform *Instagram* was utilised to observe work of other practitioners thus informing contextual understanding, and to disseminate tattoos/designs produced to engage potential clientele.

Being embedded within the tattoo industry/studio as a practitioner (from the training process to becoming a professional) was important in responding to the research questions. This includes being an active member of the studios community of practice (Wenger, 1999), drawing upon peer-to-peer support and engaging in tattooing practice themed discussion. This was not only a crucial aspect of training within the medium to allow for skill development (objective 3) and professional insight (aim 1), but necessary to authenticate findings. As the literature survey reveals (Section 2.1, p.23), tattooing has generally been examined by academics as a research topic exclusively (rather than lived experience), with the short-term duration and lack of tacit first-hand understanding limiting what can be found. Understanding of the practical context of tattooing (Section 2.4. p.51) has been gained through being embedded within the studio.

To assess potential transferability of findings beyond tattooists working within *Triplesix Studios,* unstructured Interviews were conducted with two alternative professional

practitioners: Matthew 'Henbo' Henning at *Invisible Inc* in New York (possible due to the 'Research Training Support Grant' generously awarded by *Northern Bridge Consortium*), and Lara Thomson-Edwards at *The Blue Tattoo* in London. Both interviews were conducted in 2019 while being tattooed, and transcripts can be found in Appendix B. The interviews were unstructured, to allow for organic themes to emerge. Section 2.3 (p.49) discusses the findings in more detail, however the interviews revealed little distinction in the nature of practice between geographical locations, in relation to the research questions.

1.4.3 Practical research

Candy (2006) distinguishes between *practice-led* and *practice-based* research stating:

> *"1. If a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based.*
>
> *2. If the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-led." (p.1).*

As this research creatively investigates tattooing from a creative practitioner perspective (aim 2—practice-based research) in addition to enriching understanding about practice and practitioner (aim 1—practice-led research) the term practical research has been adopted to be inclusive of both approaches. Practical research is the dominant methodological approach of this research.

The literature survey identified the lack of internal practitioner perspectives and understanding of practice. As stated by Lane (2017), "…far too little research focuses on the producers of modifications. The first direction for future research is addressing the careers of modifiers" (p.6). In an earlier publication, Lane (2014) also expresses that, "…little is actually known about the process of tattooing" (p.398). A practical approach was thus highlighted as valuable. Grierson and Brearley (2009) state that, "new knowledge is made possible through the materiality of practice itself" (p.6). Tattooing has not been adopted merely as a tool of creative practice, but also as the primary medium used in a professional studio context. It is necessary for the practical research to be conducted in this context to respond to both research questions.

Gray and Malins (2004) discuss the idea of practitioner-researcher, stating that, "In the role of 'practitioner-researcher', subjectivity, involvement, reflexivity is acknowledged; the interaction of the researcher with the research material is recognized" (p.21). The findings of practice are based on my personal encounters in the geographical and cultural context in which it has been conducted, however the frameworks created from the findings allow for potential transferability.

Gray and Malins (2004) highlight the work of Robson (1993) of the problematic areas of the 'practitioner-researcher', stating that issues may occur in the form of "… 'insider' problems – the difficulty in adopting an open-minded approach and not allowing preconceptions to cloud the issues" (p.23). In order to maintain a critical perspective, the suggestion is made to expose, "…ideas and practices to other professionals for feed-back, support and advice" (ibid., p.23). This was integrated through being part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1999), as introduced in Section 1.4.2 (p.9). The 'insider' bias was also navigated through my unique positionality as an apprentice through to professional tattooist, as introduced in Section 1.4.1 (p.7).

The practical research includes both design practice and tattooing practice. Varied approaches have been taken to the tattoo design process, depending on the nature of the brief. Examples of approaches are discussed in Section 3.1 (p.70) and 5.2 (p.163) and include the use of digital media such as *Adobe Photoshop* and *Procreate*, and dominantly, the use of traditional tools such as pencil and fineliner. Sketchbooks were kept throughout the research process and form an integral part of my professional creative practice more broadly. They have been used to explore and generate ideas and designs. This relationship to a sketchbook has been cultivated from my background as an illustrator and implemented into my approach as a tattooist, as Section 5.3.1 (p.175) elucidates. The use of approaches from design practice was necessary to respond to question 2, regarding the investigation of such approaches into tattooing practice.

Each tattoo produced has been chronologically documented in a tattoo journal (Appendix A.1, p.264), with a tattoo session number, date, description, indication of placement, indication of if the client was new or returning, and a photograph of the outcome. This was created from the first tattoo executed on human skin to the most recent of the time of

submission (a very small number of tattoos have not been included, when no photograph was able to be taken). This archive of practice was kept to inform and assist the research findings, and potential further research.

As the materials of tattooing include a sentient surface, the conditions and demands of practice go beyond the material exclusively. To understand how these impact upon tattooing practice and practitioner requires more than presentation and analysis of isolated outcomes . It was deemed necessary to locate a methodological approach in addition to practice to communicate the nuances that exist in professional practice. An autoethnographic approach was deemed valuable in capturing such nuances and expressing them authentically.

1.4.4 Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a research approach related to ethnography and literary studies, historically rooted in anthropology. The most commonly cited definition is the following: "autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2010, n.p.). It is important to state at an early stage of the dissertation that I am not an anthropologist and I have no formal training in associated methodological approaches. It is also relevant to mention that a supervisor for this research, Dr. John Fulton, is knowledgeable in the field of autoethnographic and practice orientated research and has published and edited on this topic in numerous contexts (e.g. Hayes and Fulton, 2015; Costley and Fulton, 2018). Despite my lack of prior training, autoethnography was deemed a highly relevant approach in addressing research question 1 regarding the tattooists role, for reasons that will soon be illuminated. Before discussing how autoethnography has been used, it is valuable to introduce it as a methodology highlight its applicability.

1.4.4.1 A brief overview of autoethnography

Autoethnographic utilises the authors personal experience within and against a culture, to generate broader understanding of what is being examined. Ellis (2004) alludes that autoethnographers, "…connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social" (p.xix). The 'self', or "ethnographic I" (Ellis, 2004) is deemed a viable tool to assist in the

communication of the field of examination. Emphasis is placed on the intention to not merely focus on the self, but the relationship between self and culture. Spry (2001) states "autoethnography can be defined as a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts" (p.710). A similar understanding is presented by Hayes and Fulton (2015), who state that autoethnography can be, "…thought to be about the self in the context of a specific culture, and unlike many ethnographic studies were the research studies a foreign or unfamiliar culture, the autoethnographer is writing about his or her own culture" (p.6). It is this aspect of self and culture, or individual and social (Woodward, 2019, p.147) that separates autoethnography from autobiography, and what makes it an approach of relevance in understanding the tattooists occupational role (question 1).

The form autoethnography takes is variable, based upon the specific project. Méndez (2013) claims that no formally agreed regulations about writing (or in some cases, performing) autoethnography exist, as meaning is valued greater than the form itself (p.281). Different subgenres within autoethnography have been termed; namely 'evocative' (Bochner and Ellis, 2016), and 'analytic' (Anderson, 2006). Evocative autoethnography conventionally deals with themes that are under-represented, personal, or traumatic. They typically are written in a story-telling fashion that engages with the reader emotionally, to help communicate marginalised perspectives and thus gain greater representation (Ellis, 2000). The evocative approach has been criticised for deviating too far from analytic reflexivity. In light of this, Anderson (2006) proposes an 'analytic approach' which follows 5 key features, "(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis" (p. 378).

Despite difference in terminology, all approaches characteristically provide,"…a way of accessing what is unstated" (Woodward, 2019, p.141) and require the researcher to record their experiences and analyse them in some form (Ellis, et al., 2010, p.276). In their doctoral thesis in which they reviewed autoethnography literature, Sterling (2018) expresses, "all definitions express the intention not to focus on self, nor become lost in a narcissistic gaze, but to deepen understanding of the interface, spaces, power dynamics, and relations between selves" (p.92).

Autoethnography has historically been under scrutiny for lacking positivist objectivity (Ellis et al., 2010), as Douglas and Carless (2013) express—"Like many others before us and since, we were (academically speaking) birthed into a tradition and a history that seeks objectivity and to remove all aspects of self, including the body, from the research process in order to diligently focus on (different) others" (p.97). This inclusion of self is definitive of autoethnography, and what makes it a valuable approach to a subject area in which no practitioner has produced detailed academic material about their practice.

1.4.4.2 Overview of autoethnographic approach taken

Tattooing practice is conducted with a variety of clients desiring a range of outcomes, each with individual material and psychological identities. How the tattooist engages with practice varies in accordance with the idiosyncratic factors of each. An image of the same design tattooed on two different people could be presented within the dissertation and discussed on a material level, however this would not allow for holistic representation of the occupational role of the tattooist (research question 1). Autoethnography was utilised to address this. The specific approach taken will be outlined in Section 4.2.1.1 (p.128), however an overview is provided here.

Autoethnographic accounts of practice were produced in response to tattooing experiences that have been significant regarding my personal discovery of what my role is as a tattooist. The reflective process of writing the accounts assisted in revealing insights and understanding my own practice, echoing the claim of Woodward (2019) that, "…the process of research changes the self who undertakes it as well as the field" (p.141). Insights of this nature are termed "epiphanies" (Denzin, 1989, p.33) in the autoethnographic tradition. This approach to writing is in keeping with that discussed in Ellis et al., (2010), who state, "when researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity" (p.4).

A total of six accounts were produced from epiphanies occurring at various stages and published on a research blog (adammcdade.weebly.com/beyond-the-epidermis). The accounts were written in an evocative fashion (as previously introduced in Section 1.4.4.1, p.13) in "thick description" (Geertz, 1977, p.10) highlighting both material and psychological

activity, and then analysed using *NVivo12* software to identify reoccurring themes of relevance to the tattooists occupational role. The identified themes are presented in Section 4.2 (p.126), using vignettes from the autoethnographic accounts to illustrate the positions presented. In doing so, the autoethnography makes, "…characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders" (Ellis et al., 2010, p.4), aiding understanding and communication of the occupational role.

As my background is not in autoethnography, a great deal of time was spent researching and understanding the methodology due to the potential value identified. This includes reviewing aforementioned criticism of the approach. The critique of autoethnography lacking scholarly rigour has been addressed by examining the conventional criteria of academic research of reliability, validity, and generalisability. Ellis et al. (2010, pp.9–10) allude that within autoethnography, reliability can be considered as the authors authority to discuss what they are researching. Validity may refer to how seemingly authentic the content is and how useful it is, and generalisability can be considered how representative of the broader culture the autoethnographers account is able to expose.

For this research, reliability is granted on the understanding that unlike most researchers on the topic, I am engaged with tattooing *independent* of the research. Validity is described as content that is "…lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true" (Ellis, et al., 2010, p.10); each account describes both the events and my subjective experience of them, allowing for a greater 'truth' to be expressed. Generalisability is based not solely on the emergent themes from the accounts being experienced multiple times, but also from being embedded within the community of practice of the studio (Wenger, 1999); discussing and observing the themes with more experienced colleagues, who frequently shared their equivalent experiences. Vryan (2006) suggests that autoethnographic insights can be valuable when generated from a single account if socially and culturally relevant. Given the knowledge gap identified and potential of the autoethnography, the approach described was deemed appropriate in addressing the non-material facet of the tattooist's role.

1.4.5 Summary of the methodology

The questions of this research reflect the constructivist notion that multiple realities can exist (Guba, 1990, p.22) and are qualitative in nature. A multi-method methodology was devised to respond to the questions with practical research at its core, combined with a contextual overview, and autoethnography.

The contextual overview informs and navigates the project. It includes; a survey of academic and specialist content of contemporary western tattooing; the consultation of scholarly content from external disciplines (e.g. design, service industries); embeddedness within the tattoo studio, as an active member of a community of practice (Wenger, 1999), and interviews with tattooists in alternative regions/continents. Practice is the dominant vehicle of the research and is integral in responding to both research questions. This includes tattooing practice, and design practice, involving the use of sketchbooks, traditional media, and digital tools. Autoethnography was utilised to generate insights regarding the tattooist's occupational role and make them communicable. This involves the production of six textual accounts of practice deemed "epiphanies" (Denzin, 1989, p.33) written at various points in the research period in "thick description" (Geertz, 1977, p.10). The accounts were analysed using *NVivo12* software to identify themes that are representative of the non-material facet of the tattooists role.

While not an actively planned approach from the research conception, it is relevant to note that the research has been informed by the dissemination of working themes of the research presented/published at various stages of the journey.

This includes academic conference settings, such as the *6th International Conference of Autoethnography* in 2019 (facilitated by afore cited Douglas and Carless, 2013), where I was able to present after being granted funding from the Northumbria-Sunderland cross-doctoral training student development fund. It also includes the *Digital Humanities, Human Technologies* conference at (and funded by) the *University of Salford* (2018). Disseminating the research in academic contexts at various points in the research processes allowed for critical engagement, aiding the consolidation of thinking surrounding the themes presented through the questions asked by attendees. It also allowed for an opportunity to engage with

a broader research community across multiple disciplines, and to consider wider implications of the findings.

The research has also been disseminated in public lecture settings, such as the *Creative Lives* talk series at the *University of Sunderland* (2019) and lectures given to MA Design students (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). 'Research Training Support Grant' funding has been awarded by the *Northern Bridge Consortium* on two occasions, allowing dissemination of the research in international contexts. This includes delivering presentations at the *Saybrooke University Punchbowl Salon* in Los Angeles, U.S.A (2019), and at the LOTS *(learn of Things and Sharing)* series of talks in Bali, Indonesia (2020). Presenting the research in these contexts required critical reflection of content and communication of research themes, ensuring accessibility and narrative flow. Engagement with attendees from broad educational and cultural backgrounds has also consolidated my thinking around emergent themes, aiding the writing process.

The writing, revision, and publication of themes that have emerged in academic journals (McDade, 2019a) and specialist interest platforms (McDade, 2019b) has assisted in the refinement and focussing of the research. The process of submitting a draft proposal, receiving suggested edits from the peer-review process, re-submission, re-edit, until eventual publication required resilience and focus, demanding critical consideration of the ideas presented in my research.

The process of dissemination in formal academic and informal public contexts has helped shape and refine the findings of the research. A full list of research dissemination and associated funders (when applicable) can be found in Appendix C (p.466).

1.5 'NPIF-NESS' OF RESEARCH: FINANCIAL AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

This research is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF), who have generously invested in doctoral research that engages with a partner organisation with an emphasis on 'Design' and 'The Creative Sector'. The *Northern Bridge* handbook states, "our partners add value to students' research projects by providing access to collections and on-site training in resource discovery, study space, and expert supervision from professionals…" (Northern Bridge, 2018, p.9). Without the

facilities, resources, and expertise provided by *Triplesix Studios*, this research would not have been possible.

As an NPIF student, the research is expected to engage with "…economic and commercial aspects of artistic and cultural creativity…" (ibid., p.44). As discussed in the definitions Section (1.2, p.3), contemporary western tattooing involves a professional practitioner and paying client, and so the research questions have the NPIF criteria built into them. Like many studios, *Triplesix Studios* claim half of the total payment of each tattoo executed by resident tattooists. In undertaking the research and seeking to address research question 2 specifically, the partner organisation is able to broaden the nature of what is offered, contributing to the studio financial capital.

In addition to engaging with financial capital, the case can be made that the research also impacts the symbolic capital of the studio, which may be understood as, "…the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.291). As this research is the first of its kind to examine tattooing utilising a practice orientated methodological approach, it is able to uncover findings that otherwise would not be possible to discover and brings tattooing practice from a design perspective into academic discourse. In doing so, tattooing and tattooists may be more authentically represented. The project may thus imbue *Triplesix Studios* with notability and thus symbolic capital through being the first to facilitate such research within it.

The impact of the research on the partner organisation in response to NPIF funding criteria will be further isolated in Section 6.4.2.2 (p.225).

1.6 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

As the literature review will highlight (Section 2.1, p.23), tattooing is frequently discussed in the broader category of 'body modification'. This includes practices such as body piercing, scarification, or branding (e.g. Armstrong, 2005; Vanston and Scott, 2008; Iftekhar and Zhitny, 2020), which are distinct from tattooing practices. Other themes of academic inquiry include prison tattooing (Hellard, Aitken and Hocking, 2007), mastectomy tattooing (Kruger, 2018), and tattooing for religious purposes (Scheinfeld, 2007). This research is concerned

with tattooing as a medium of the creative industries, and not simply the process of alteration of the body in other contexts such as those listed.

As has been highlighted in Section 1.4.1 (p.7) the research began in October 2017—five months after my tattoo apprenticeship commenced. The research is thus not the reflection of the work of a heavily experienced tattooist. Rather, it is a report of the findings of a practitioner with an academic background in design, who has approached the discipline with an empathetic appreciation of tattooing as a medium and a desire to increase skill with it and promote understanding of it. While question 1.1 seeks to understand tattoo production, findings generated in response to this should not be considered as a 'how-to' guide for tattooing, as there is neither scope nor qualification to provide such an output. The research seeks to elucidate on tattooing processes/the tattooists' occupational role and investigate how approaches might be developed from the vantage point of the practitioner/researcher.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is divided into six chapters, which are separated into sections and sub-sections. Summaries are provided where multiple longer subsections occur. The final section of each chapter is a summary of the chapter as a whole.

Chapter 2 provides a contextual overview for the research. It begins with a survey of the existing literature on tattooing, identifying a definitive gap in understanding. Tattooing's presence in the public terrain is then reviewed, generating understanding of the cultural context of the research. Primary research in the form of studio embeddedness and interviews with external practitioners is discussed, highlighting how this has provided further context to the research. An overview of the practical context of tattooing is then given.

Chapter 3 introduces tattoo production and the processes employed within it. Four processes are identified and discussed, and factors that can affect tattoo outcome are presented. The chapter highlights tattooing practice as collaborative and outlines how tattoos come into being.

Chapter 4 discusses the multifaceted role of the tattooist, which is presented as both material (provision of a medium) and non-material (provision of a service). The material

facet of the role is proposed on a contingent spectrum of craftsperson/designer/visual artist, depending on the brief. The non-material facet of the role is then discussed, utilising excerpts from autoethnographic accounts of practice to present the positions adopted.

Chapter 5 documents the results of the investigation of tattooing as a medium, informed by my background in illustration and design practice. Examples from my design background are provided to give an understanding of my aesthetic sensibilities. Early tattooing practice is then presented, and navigation of approach with the medium is discussed. The development of a stylistic approach is then introduced and defined as 'Authentic Graphic', highlighting factors that affected its cultivation.

Chapter 6 concludes by reflecting on the research. How the questions have been addressed and the validity of the methodology in addressing them is discussed. An overview of the findings of the research and an indication of the chapter in which they are presented is then given. The knowledge contributions of this research are isolated, and their potential impact is identified. Future directions for tattooing research are then suggested.

1.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1

This chapter introduces 'Beyond the Epidermis' as a research project. The key points of the chapter can be summarised as follows:

- The research is conducted by an early-career tattooist, with an academic and professional background in illustration and design. It is in partnership with internationally award-winning tattoo studio, *Triplesix Studios.*

- It concerns contemporary western tattooing, conducted in a studio context, by a professional practitioner—these terms are defined.

- The research questions seek to understand and elucidate on the occupational role of the tattooist (question 1) and practically investigate development with tattooing as a medium informed by design training (question 2).

- A multi-method methodology is employed which is centred around tattooing practice, combined with a contextual overview to inform understanding, and an autoethnographic approach to make internal practitioner insights communicable.

- The research is funded by an AHRC NPIF award, requiring that it engages with the commercial aspects of creativity. This is built into the research questions of professional context of practice.

- The research is conducted in North-East England but provides more transferable understanding of practice and practitioner. It should not be understood as an instructional guide to tattooing.

- The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 is a contextual overview. Chapter 3 deals with tattoo production, and Chapter 4 concerns the tattooist's occupational role. Chapter 5 then discusses practical creative investigation with tattooing as a medium. Chapter 6 reflects on the how the research questions have been addressed and the validity of the methodology in addressing them, the knowledge contributions made, and the impact that may ensue. Further directions for tattooing research are then suggested.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces the context of the research. Section 2.1 presents current academic understanding of tattooing, highlighting limitations regarding practice and practitioner. Tattooing in the public terrain is then reviewed in Section 2.2, highlighting the relationship to and impact on practice. Primary research in the form of studio embeddedness within a community of practice (Wenger, 1999) and interviews with practitioners is then noted in Section 2.3, aiding in understanding of the research context and potential transferability. Section 2.4 (p.51) then presents the practical context of tattooing, providing an overview of the material, technical, and stylistic approaches of the medium. This chapter highlights the research relevance, contextualises the gap it aims to fill, and introduces tattooing practice into scholarly discourse, responding to question 1, aim 1, and objective 1 regarding the elucidation of practice and practitioner.

2.1 CONTEMPORARY WESTERN TATTOOING IN THE ACADEMY

A survey of academic material on tattooing revealed a focus on the tattoo consumer, rather than producer, identifying a clear knowledge gap that shaped aim 1 of this research, regarding elucidation of the tattooist's role and provision of insight on tattooing as a medium. No existing academic research that utilises tattooing practice as a central methodology was discovered. A similar issue was found by Cutler (2006) in their survey of literature of practice based uses of waterjet cutting for artistic purposes in glass, who stated that the gap, "strengthened the need for 'first-hand' practical experience" (p.38). This sentiment is transferable to this research. The lack of practitioner-led research consequently means that tattooing has not been academically approached as a creative medium. This shaped research aim 2 which creatively investigates tattooing practice and development.

It is useful to reinstate that this research is concerned with contemporary western tattooing as defined in Section 1.2 (i.e., professional, transactional practice). Literature regarding tattooing in other contexts, such as medical (e.g. Sasaki and Matsumine, 2018), cultural (e.g Nikora, Rua and Awekotuku, 2007; Awekotuku, 2011), and spiritual (e.g Cohen, 2009; Larsson, 2011; Krutak, 2014) is not within the research scope identified in Section 1.6 (p.19), and so was not thoroughly surveyed.

2.1.1 Strategy of the literature survey

A broad approach to literature survey was taken initially, and the term 'tattooing' was searched using the University of Sunderland's library search engine to identify any articles, doctoral theses, or periodicals that involve tattooing that exist. At the time of writing (January 2020), 68,664 results appeared, dated from 1509–2020.

Medicine was the dominant subject in which tattooing was discussed at 2,771 hits—discovered using the search engine filtering system. Tattooing in the subject of art returned 427 hits. It was noted that despite the categorisation of tattooing into categories such as 'medicine' and 'art', the article filtering system appeared to be based on key words within the article, rather than the perspective of analysis. As an example, articles that appeared when filtering for literature on tattooing and art such as *Tattooing, Body Piercing, and Permanent Cosmetics: A Historical and Current View of State Regulations, with Continuing Concerns* (Armstrong, 2005), may be more accurately categorised as health education.

Alternative filtering methods were introduced in response. This involved Boolean searches such as "tattooing" AND "artistic practice", which returned 222 more relevant hits. More specific searches included, "contemporary western tattooing", which returned three hits—one of which was directly relevant (Lane, 2017), and "tattooists", which returned 849 hits. A variety of searches of a similar nature were conducted, with much of the same content appearing across multiple searches. In addition to the library search engine, the British Library *EThOS* search engine of over 500,000 doctoral theses was utilised, again searching for 'tattooing' more broadly. This resulted in 46 recorded completed theses at the time of searching (March 2020), with few of direct relevance to the research questions. Similar searches were carried out using *Microsoft Academic,* and *Google Scholar*, in addition to *ResearchGate*, and *Academia.edu,* and the same content appeared in multiple platforms.

2.1.2 Findings from the academic literature on contemporary western tattooing

Lane (2014) places tattooing literature into four thematic categories; "tattooed individuals, group behaviour, art or cultural production, and commoditization of culture", emphasising that the focus tends to be towards the tattooee, and the purpose or meaning of tattoo acquisition (p.398). For the purposes of this research in, the literature can broadly be

considered in relation to the broad disciplinary perspectives from which tattooing has been examined: sciences; economics; history; anthropology. Though disciplinary overlap may occur, the distinction is useful in aiding basic understanding. It is not necessary to go into great detail on what has been produced in the entirety of literature from each perspective, but rather to give a thematic synopsis of each that evidences the gap in understanding that this research aims to occupy.
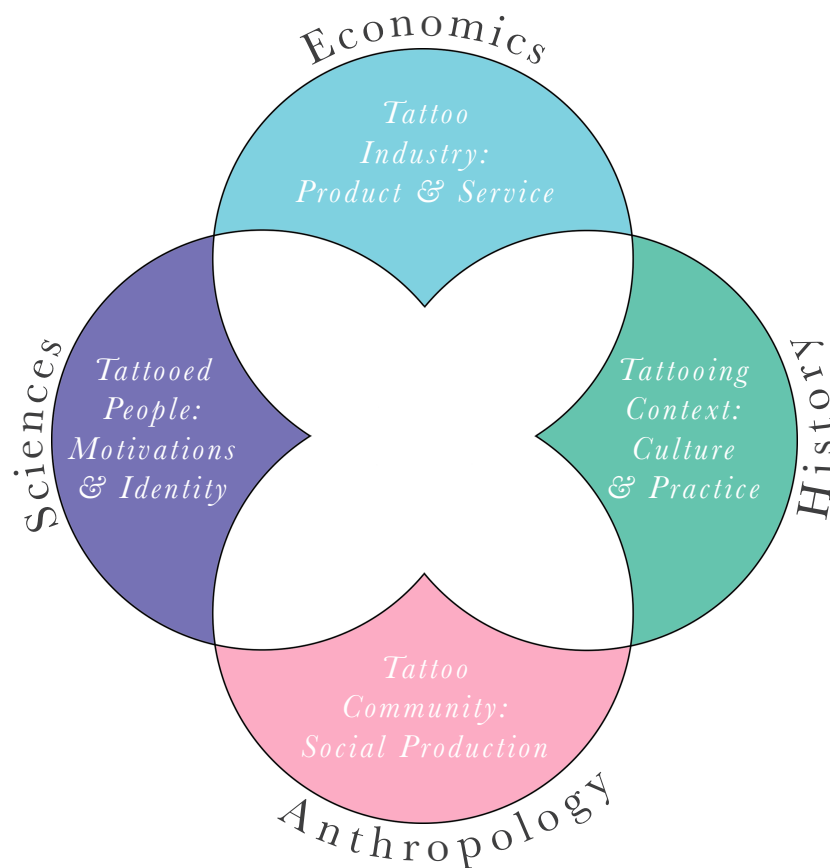
Figure 2: Diagrammatic of academic literature on contemporary western tattooing, indicating disciplinary perspectives (outer text), focus of inquiry (inner text), and the presence of a void in understanding (centre) (McDade, 2019)

Each avenue of disciplinary inquiry collectively contextualises the terrain of this research—a relationship is present between those motivated to become tattooed (sciences) who then patronise a practitioner to provide a product and service (economics) who's approach is influenced by the cultural context in which they are embedded (history) as a social actor in a community (anthropology). Figure 2 indicates the findings of the literature survey. The figure abstractly resembles a flower shape. Collectively, the flower represents academic understanding on contemporary western tattooing; the coloured sections can be considered

petals, representing existing disciplinary perspectives (outer text) and focus of inquiry (inner text). The centre of the diagram can be considered the pistil, which is currently intentionally left blank to indicate a gap in understanding of a central component of academic understanding—tattooing practice.

The findings from each disciplinary perspective (petals) will now be discussed, before revisiting Figure 2 in the summary of this section (p.38) to suggest how this research may contribute to addressing the gaps in understanding (pistil).

2.1.2.1 Tattooing in the literature: Sciences

Tattooing has been examined from a scientific medical perspective (e.g. Mortimer, Chave and Johnston, 2003; Vanston and Scott, 2008; Bandodkar, Jia and Wang, 2015). As this is not directly relevant to the research this literature was not reviewed. The social sciences—including psychology, sociology, criminology, and cultural sociology, appear to be the dominant disciplines from which tattooing is researched (sociology typically includes anthropology; however, this is reviewed independently in Section 2.2.2.4 [p.46], due to significance of content). Common to each is the theme of tattooed people and their relationship with tattooing.

Examples include being tattooed and engaging in "risk-taking" behaviour (e.g. King and Vidourek, 2013; Bo-Kyung Hong and Hyo Young Lee, 2017) or seeking to understand motivations for tattoo accumulation (e.g. Antoszewski et al., 2010; Pentina and Spears, 2011; Barron, 2017). Much of this literature places focus on adolescent tattooees, with content gathered through interviews and questionnaires with samples of participants. These studies may additionally examine 'body ornamentation' more broadly such as body piercing (e.g. Antoszewski et al., 2010) with the interest being corporeal alteration. This approach overlooks the multitude of variables that exist on practice and consumption, such as age, budget, geographical location etc., and does not distinguish tattooing as a distinct practice with its own idiosyncratic attributes.

Similarly, the theme of becoming tattooed as an act of cultural resistance or rebellion was found to be present (e.g. Atkinson, 2003, 2004). In contrast, publications from more recent time-periods discuss increased 'social acceptability' and 'normalisation' of having tattoos

and being tattooed in western contexts (e.g. Rees, 2016) from the second decade of the twenty-first century onwards. Some debate exists on notions of acceptability, such as Roberts (2016) who discusses placement/visibility, concluding that these factors must be considered when assessing how 'accepted' tattooing is. This literature evidences contemporary tattooing popularity, but is not concerned with how popularity impacts upon practice.

A central topic within the social sciences literature is tattoo meaning and the relationship between tattooing and identity expression (e.g. Sweetman, 1999), including critical analysis of the literature on such topics (Sullivan, 2009). Common themes that stem from the category of 'tattoo motivation' include the biographical narrative of the tattooee (Sundberg and Kjellman, 2018), what the tattoo communicates about the relationship between tattooee and their inhabited culture (Kosut, 2000), the notion of identity formation through the consumption of the "fashion tattoo" (Kjeldgaard and Bengtsson, 2005), and the utilisation of tattooing practices as identity expression in an increasingly digital landscape (Leader, 2017). Obtaining tattoos as a means of dealing with trauma has also been discussed (Crompton et al., 2020), including memorialising deceased loved ones (Gentry and Alderman, 2007), though no commentary is provided on how this may affect the occupational role. Literature on topics of this nature is again focussed upon on the individuals that get tattooed and how tattooing is utilised as a means to a desired outcome.

2.1.2.2 Tattooing in the literature: Economics

Overlapping with the social sciences in some cases, tattooing has also been examined from an economic perspective with a focus on the tattoo industry.

Wymann (2011) discusses the relationship between economy and output within the tattoo industry. Distinctions are made between the tattooist that engages with the medium for financial gain, to those who offer a high-quality product (pp.205–208). The observation is made that , "…the equal involvement of artistic and economic communication has effects on and challenges communication that relates to tattooing as well as tattoos" (ibid., 2011, p.264). This research distinguishes quality in tattoos as 'products' and provides some insight into the systematic operation of tattoo studios as businesses but reveals little about implications of industry on tattoo production/producer in providing a medium and a service.

Increased tattoo visibility in mass media in the form of tattooed celebrities and advertisements showing tattooed people has been stated to have contributed to the diversification of the tattoo patron, with tattoos being framed as a consumer product (Kosut, 2006; Barron, 2017). The growth of the tattooing marketplace has also been discussed by Turner (2005) and Patterson (2018). This increase in consumption is suggested as a motivation for seeking tattooing as an occupational role (Kosut, 2006, p.1036), emphasising the economic possibilities of the industry. This research highlights tattooing popularity and the broader range of clientele, but how these factors shape the occupational role of the tattooist and affect the nature of practice is not discussed.

Goulding et al., (2004) categorise tattoo 'consumers' as follows: those who get small tattoos for fashion purposes; those who collect tattoos in easily concealable areas of the body; those who are committed collectors and willing to have highly visible areas of the body tattooed (p.280). The client selection of a tattooist as a purveyor of the desired product is discussed, and the formation of client loyalty in relation to the tattooist's interpersonal skills are mentioned. Goulding et al. (2004) conclude, "…tattooing can now legitimately be classified as a service industry with clients and providers" (p.283). While recognising the implications of industry on tattooing practice, the emphasis is primarily on the client. Variability of tattoo consumer, results in variability of the how the tattooist engages with practice. This has implications on the tattooist as a 'provider', which remains to be thoroughly examined.

The relationship between tattooing and copyright is another recurring theme. The application of standard copyright, trademark, and right of publicity doctrine to tattoo designs is discussed by Cotter and Mirabole (2003), who question if the tattooist or client is the owner of the tattoo. Copyrightability of tattoos has also been discussed by numerous researchers (e.g. Hatic, 2012; King, 2013), and Harkins (2006) analyses copyright law regarding tattoos worn by public facing celebrities. This literature may be considered representative of the cultural significance of tattooing. Though not a direct aim of this research, a better understanding of the themes of intellectual property and economic entitlement may be gained by focussing on the process of tattoo production and the role of the tattooist within production.

2.1.2.3 Tattooing in the literature: History

Historical themed literature is centred around the relationship between culture and practice in previous time-periods.

Lodder (2010a) has examined contemporary tattooing (amongst other body modification practices) as artistic practice, utilising the methodological tools of art history to consider the discipline in a nuanced manner. Valuable contributions and empathetic representation of the tattooist and relationship between culture and practice are provided, however these are from an art history perspective. The insights regarding tattoo production/producer and stylistic development this research aims to offer through a practical and autoethnographic methodological approach may expand on this representation and provide findings that are valuable to tattoo historians.

Though this research is focussed on contemporary western tattooing in the twenty-first century, literature concerned with the history of western tattooing was examined to contextualise contemporary practice. Much of the literature (e.g. Scutt and Gotch, 1986, p.28; Inckle, 2008, p.484) suggests that tattooing was introduced to the west by Captain James Cook on his voyages to Polynesia in the 1770's. Friedman (2012) terms this notion "the Cook myth", revealing that tattooing was well-known and present on Europeans from the mid-eighteenth century, prior to Cook's voyages, and was utilised in a variety of ways at different points in time (Friedman, 2014).

Caplan (2000) notes that western tattooing history has received limited attention. In her anthology, *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History,* numerous historical-themed contributions are included in response. Topics include the relationship between tattooing and class in Victorian Britain (Bradley, pp.135–155), the inclusion of heavily-tattooed people as features of the early twentieth century circus (Oettermann, pp. 193–211), and the changing image of tattooing from 1846–1966 (Govenar, pp. 212–233). Though providing a historical backdrop for tattooing, a more contemporary representation is necessary to document.

The first professional tattoo studio in Britain is believed to have opened in the 1870's. Historically esteemed tattooist Sutherland Macdonald *claimed* to have clientele that

included kings and princes from his fashionable London studio, and to have invented blue and green tattoo pigment that was added to the existing palette of black, brown, and red (Lodder, 2012a, p.5). Though tattooing has historically been linked with working-class sailors who would acquire tattoos during travels to Polynesia (DeMello, 2000, p.49), tattooing is reported to have been adopted throughout all social classes including aristocracy, in Britain, America, and Europe from at least the nineteenth century. Images of fashionable tattoos appeared in high-end magazines, with designs informed by the "…wider artistic crazes of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, including Orientalism and the Aesthetic Movement…" (Lodder, 2012a, p.5).

With the patenting of the electric tattoo machine by Samuel O'Reilly around 1890 (based on the perforating pen by Thomas Edison) tattooists were able to increase their pace and stylistic possibilities, making the tattoo a more affordable and diverse product (Govenar, 1981, p.218; De Mello, 2000, p.50; Friedman, 2015, p.21). While tattooists in the 20th century are thought to mainly be "…working-class men with no artistic training" (DeMello, 2000, p.51), engaging with the medium for its economic rewards, Lodder (2012a) notes, "through the early decades of the twentieth century, almost up to the outbreak of the Second World War, tattooing was understood in particular circles to be a fashionable, artistic practice" (p.6).

Despite tattooing's cultural presence and popularity, it's association with 'savagery' and criminality perpetuated by Lombroso (1896) and links with circus attractions (Oettermann, 2000) resulted in an unfavourable public association with the medium. From the 1900s–1960s tattooists faced a stigma surrounding their occupation. Practitioners such as Les Skuse in Bristol (England) actively tried to challenge the negative association with the medium, and established the 'Bristol Tattoo Club' in 1953 with this motive (Negrini and Bicicchi, 2019).

Though some custom tattooing existed, many tattooists pursuing the career for financial motivations would typically tattoo pre-designed images based on 'flash' that were displayed for clients to pick and choose from. De Mello (2000, pp.59–66) presents an overview of tattoo environments during this time that may be described as unsanitary and misogynistic, and understood as the period in which the tattoo had acquired its association with anti-social behaviour. Public visibility of tattoos in this period and after the Second World War thus may not have been representative of the highest quality work being produced.

Tattooing was subject to the prejudices that existed towards 'lower classes', who typically were adorned in clothing suited to manual professions, with rolled sleeves that would reveal tattoos.

The term "tattoo renaissance" (Rubin, 1988) is frequently used to describe (predominantly American) tattooing from the 1970's, in which art school graduates began to pursue the medium (Lodder, 2012a, p.6) such as Ed Hardy and Cliff Raven (DeMello, 2014, p.652). Holding a Master of Fine Arts degree, tattooist Spider Webb utilised tattooing in conceptual art as a form of political activism in New York in 1976, when tattooing was illegal (Lodder, 2010a, pp.220–221). Tattooing during this period was adopted by numerous subcultures (including the commonly associated, 'bikers'), and practitioners such as Lyle Tuttle were tattooing celebrities from popular culture thus promoting public visibility of the medium through media attention (De Mello, 2000, pp.75–76; Friedman, 2015, p.26). The publicity of tattooing and subsequent increase in clientele also increased demand for tattoos in publicly visible areas of the body, such as hands and necks (Hardy, 1989, p.57). As fashion changed throughout the decades, more of the body and thus a greater visibility of tattooed people was observed.

In the USA (primarily San Francisco, where in 1974 Ed Hardy opened *Realistic Tattoo*; one of the first custom tattoo studios), influences from other cultures began to be introduced to western tattooing, including Japanese tattooing (partly through Ed Hardy directly). Tribal and 'blackwork' style tattooing from Indonesia became popularised by practitioners such as Leo Zulueta in the late 1970's. These cosmopolitan styles were sought amongst the middle-classes (De Mello, 2000, p.80). In 1982, Hardy released the first tattoo publication titled *Tattootime*, in an effort to have tattooing taken seriously and to "…show the *raw power* of it, and try to get people to understand" (1989, p.54. original emphasis), introducing new ideas about practice as a result.

The influences of the 'tattoo renaissance' (Rubin, 1988) became present in Europe in the 1980s, however during this time in the UK many tattooists are understood to have still worked alone, "…in little booths on side streets, upstairs or in basements, in the back of arcades or markets, quietly plying their trade and jealously guarding their secrets" (Binnie, 2017, p.6). Heightened public exposure and shifts in practice aroused fear in some tattooists, who had to contend with increasing market competition.

While many British tattooists were dismissive of the USA influence on tattooing, "…a wave of British tattoos like Ian of Reading, Micky Sharpz, Roy Proudlove, Phil Bond and others pushed themselves on in terms of the type of work they were producing, driven by the inspiration they were deriving from America via Hardy…" (Lodder, 2012b, p.37). Tattooists such as Lal Hardy became synonymous with the UK 1980s punk scene, and tattooing became visible amongst youth culture. In 1990, academy trained Alex Binnie opened *Into You*; inspired by the work of Leo Zulueta and experiences of being tattooed by 'Mr Sebastian', and began exploring tribal and custom tattooing. Aesthetic possibilities of tattooing increased around this time, as machinery and tools continued to be refined, with a new wave of tattooists preferring to create custom designs (De Mello, 2000, p.92).

In the 1990s, culturally visible celebrities such as Pamela Anderson and Johnny Depp obtained tattoos (DeMello, 2014, p.96). At the turn of the century, footballer David Beckham was tattooed by Manchester-based tattooist Louis Malloy, sparking a heightened interest in black and grey realism and thus increase in demand for tattoos in a similar style (Barron, 2017, p.45). Lodder (2012a) states, "because tattoos are and always have been essentially a reflection of the broader visual culture in which they are produced, examining the fashions of a particular era is an ideal way to understand the stylistic preferences of each particular time, place, or group" (p.7). Barron (2017) notes the impact of reality-television on tattooing's visibility from 2005 (p.31), which as Lodder (2010b) observes, focus on the clients supposed ''…serious and sincere narrative meanings behind their chosen designs" (p.5), in typical reality-television fashion.

The notion of tattoo adoption for an increasingly broad clientele in the period of "Individual populism" that focusses on "reflecting aspects of the self" (Barron, 2017, p.xi) is the period from which much of the social sciences literature has been approached, and the historical themed literature ends. Friedman (2015) notes the "…diversity of practitioners, clients, and styles" (p.27) of tattooing that exist today, indicating the layers of variability that exist in contemporary practice that are thus far not recorded in the literature.

The historical themed literature is largely concerned with the relationship between culture and practice broadly; the methodological approach employed in this research can offer

findings that generate greater understanding of tattooing as it functions in a contemporary context.

2.1.2.4 Tattooing in the literature: Anthropology

Literature from an anthropological perspective is centred around tattooing communities, and the social worlds that they inhabit. Though there are clear overlaps in thematic inquiry to the social sciences literature (tattooed people's motivations and identities) some key distinctions are relevant to acknowledge.

The relationship between tattooing and the social worlds of (amongst numerous other topics) youth culture (Kuwahara, 2005), gender and sexuality (Pitts, 2003), and 'phenomenological expression' (Barron, 2017) has been discussed from an anthropological standpoint. Other central themes include the culture of the tattoo enthusiast or 'body modification' community (Vale and Juno, 1989; Atkinson, 2003), and post-modern sensibilities regarding tattooing and identity (Atkinson, 2003). As with other themes of disciplinary inquiry previously outlined, limited (though some) focus is placed on the tattooist and tattooing procedure.

A contribution that somewhat resists classification by disciplinary perspective (but is largely sociological in focus) is Samuel Steward's, *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos* (1990). This unique work is authored by a former English professor who originally tattooed on weekends after becoming dispassionate towards his academic career (p.4), before committing to the profession on a permanent basis for its financial and social rewards. As such, the text reads in an anecdotal and literary fashion, and provides insight into the social (and a small degree of the practical) world of tattooing from the early 1950s to 1970 as a subterranean culture and practice. Steward correctly asserts, "Tattooing is one subject that—to be written about—demands a plunge into the waters, not a comfortable observer's beach chair at the side of the ocean" (p.198). While the book is largely psychosexual in focus and discusses the various motivations of clientele that relate to sexuality in some (often tenuous) manner (pp.37–80), some attention is paid to the tattooist and practice that is of relevance to note.

The culture of the tattooist community is a central theme throughout. Tensions and aggressions experienced from those who were resistant to the increased competition of

other practitioners and the 'hassles' of hygienic practice that Steward asserted are described (pp.19–35), with the tattooing world presented as a "jungle" (p.177). Many of the 'old-timers' are presented as ignorant and disinterested in proper practice, in addition to being responsible for the perpetuation of misinformation about practice for their own gain — "…the tattoo artists—gifted with the wondrous imaginations of the con-men—are very quick to create logical stories about the art itself"(p.82). Steward distinguishes these practitioners from younger practitioners who at the time of his writing (1990) are thought presented as "…models of sanitation" (p.181). Favourable commentary is also made on "legendary" practitioners such as Charlie Wagner and Bert Grimm (p.157). Amund Dietzel and his work is discussed with great admiration, noting the distinctive properties of his tattoos from a visual perspective (p.159). This commentary is representative of a sense of critical analysis of tattoo outcomes (though no images are included at any point); however, this analysis is rather limited and not always applicable in contemporary contexts in which the tattooists operational mode is variable.

Steward contributes several valuable insights into some of tattooing's occupational complexities as a client-dependent profession, representative of the associated decades in which he practiced. Alterations of language and tone to match that of the clientele are noted (p.67) suggesting a contingency in identity presentation of the practitioner. He also notes client resistance to 'custom' designs that do not look like tattoos his clientele were used to seeing (p.169). The tattooist is presented as a 'jack of all trades' who must deal with material aspects of practice such as machinery and sanitation, as well as patiently managing troubling or irritating clientele (p.173). Discussion is made at various points regarding a standard of 'ethical' tattooing, such as resistance to tattooing public body parts (p.58) and not persuading a client's choice of (pre-drawn flash) design (p.153). These discussions both parallel and contrast contemporary practice in such a way that requires further expansion—this research may offer an entrance point to do so.

DeMello (2000) is one of the few academic researchers approaching tattooing who is also heavily tattooed (Lodder, 2018, p.515) and can be inferred to empathetically engage with the discipline, prior to having interest in it as a sociologist. As such, her ethnographic research involves spending time in studios to conduct interviews with tattooists and tattoo wearers in North America—a method not always welcomed within the tattoo community due to fear of unfavourable representation (DeMello, 2000, p.ix; Barron, 2017, p.117).

The central theme of her book, *Bodies of Inscription* (2000), is that of middle-class adoption of tattooing practices approaching the turn of the century. This includes the development of the 'tattoo community' through magazines (pp.97–135), internet networking, and conventions (pp.17–43), and the tendency for some of the middle-class tattoo wearers to ascribe a meaning to the outcome (pp.159–184). The perspectives of tattooists on a broadening clientele are discussed throughout, and a very basic outline of the tattooing process is provided (p.198). DeMello (2000) provides an account of the evolving shift in culture since the 'tattoo renaissance' (Rubin, 1988) that still holds some relevance today, however major shifts have occurred from 2000 when the book was published. The effects of these cultural shifts on the tattooist's occupational role remain to be suitably documented.

Though first published around thirty years prior to the period from which this research is conducted Sanders (1989a) provides a foundational context from which this research may be situated in *Customizing the Body.* An expanded edition was published in 2008 with the addition of Angus Vail as an author, and an additional prologue and epilogue outlining sociological changes in tattooing since the original publication. Conducted in an ethnographic manner, the research involved spending time/helping in four studios across the east coast of the USA after having established personal relationships with the studio owners (Sanders and Vail, 2008, p.192). As the original text was produced in 1989 in which tattooing was more subject to derogatory representation (p.xxii) emphasis is placed throughout chapters on the notion of tattooing transforming from a practice associated with deviancy, to a practice associated with artistry.

In keeping with the disciplinary vantage point from which it has been examined, a central focus is on the social world of tattooing. This includes the client motivation for getting tattooed in regard to personal significance, social symbolism, bodily placement, and pain sensation, with variations of these factors in relation to gender noted (pp.36–61). Tattooing's "…transition from a (generally disvalued) craft to a (partially legitimated) art form" (p.24) is discussed at length, with chapter five (pp.149–163) presenting the relationship of tattooing to the broader art world. Of specific relevance, chapters three and four provide analysis of tattooing as an occupation (pp.62–116), and the social relationships between tattooists and client (pp.117–148). Vignettes from interviews with tattooists are utilised to generate findings presented.

In chapter three, the traditional tattoo apprenticeship is discussed and motivations for seeking tattooing as a career outlined, with shifts in the apprenticeship and training process from 1989–2008 noted in the updated epilogue (pp.174–176). The beginner tattooists' acquisition of technical skill is elucidated upon, emphasising the necessity of technical skill over artistry in early stages (p.76). Commentary is made on the social skills required of the tattooists in relation to the service-based nature of the occupation, to ensure client satisfaction and thus positive reputation, and potential client return and recommendation (pp.78–82). These skills include 'reading' the client to build trust, ensure comfort, and gain a sense of psychological clarity, in addition to refusing to tattoo subject matter that may be considered socially or ethically problematic. The tattooists career goal is also suggested as a desire for increased ability and reputation to allow for self-selected client base who request only custom work in the tattooist's preferred style (pp.83–86). Occupational difficulties in the form of stigma surrounding the profession, and various problems with clients (from fainting, to price-haggling, to aggression) are also discussed (pp.91–106).

In chapter four the social setting of the studio is outlined, and the criteria of what constitutes a 'good' and 'bad' client discussed (pp.134–147). This includes the material considerations, such as skin tone and coarseness (p.135), and non-material considerations, such as tattooee pain tolerance (p.138) or the tattooee who does not properly follow aftercare instructions resulting in a poor outcome (p.140). The chapter concludes by emphasising the notion of tattooists as service facilitator; "The smoother and more coordinated the commercial "dance" of the tattoo event, the greater the likelihood that the tattooee will receive a service/product that will meet his or her defined needs…" (p.148).

In contrast to much of the existing literature, Sanders and Vail (2008) convey the tattooist's perspective and recognise the complexities of the occupational role, with many (though not all) of the findings reflective of today's practice to some extent. The ethnographic approach adopted and sincere appreciation of the discipline from the researchers is perhaps responsible for this. As stated in the epilogue, "good ethnography tends to transcend many of the changes in the worlds it describes because it explains the processes through which people produce those worlds, not the outcome of those processes" (p.164).

Though highly valuable to this research, the limitations of the text in relation to addressing the questions of this research can be inferred from the area of disciplinary inquiry. While material and non-material factors that affect practice are noted, the findings are relatively limited and primarily related to sociology, and not practice. The actual processes of tattooing and the relationship between the sociological and material aspects of tattooing are not thoroughly accounted for. Similar limitations are recognised by the authors within the epilogue; "I also admit to a certain degree of discomfort with the inevitable distortion that results when the complex flow of real-people-doing-real-things is subjected to the simplifying constraints of sociological analysis" (p.201). Problems of authentic representation of ethnography more broadly have also been noted by Hammersley (2006). In response to the "distortion" and "washing away of emotion, play, and ambiguity" that is stated as a methodological problem (ibid., p.202), the autoethnographic approach of this research may be appropriate in offering authentic representation, and better elucidating on the relationship between the material and non-material facets of practice.

More recent anthropological work has aimed to update aspects of Sanders and Vail (2008) that have changed since its first publication in 1989. Largely following the same methodological approach through field work and interviews with contemporary practitioners and patrons, Barron (2017) provides a modernised sociological perspective of contemporary tattooing in a British context. The effects of media, social networking applications, and celebrity culture on tattooing are considered, and the impact of media appropriation and celebrity adoption of tattooing is discussed in relation to visibility and popularity (pp.27–49). The findings echo the ebbs and flows of tattooing noted in the history literature, and the notion of tattooing as a 'consumer commodity' presented by Kosut (2006). In addition to commenting on the celebrity status of some tattooists who have become internationally recognised and develop a fandom (Barron, 2017, pp.133–136), the tattooist seeking a "signature style" is briefly noted (ibid., p.121).

Though a contemporary sociological perspective is valuable, the same limitations present in Sanders and Vail (2008) are present in more recent anthropology themed literature. The broad range of clientele on tattooing from a contemporary cultural context is acknowledged, but how this impacts the procedural processes (thus occupational role of the tattooist) remains to be suitably discussed. In addition, tattooists developing distinctive visual styles

may be recognised, however the processes of development from a practical perspective are still not represented.

The stated limitations of the anthropology themed literature highlight the value of the methodological approach of this research in contributing better understanding of contemporary western tattooing practice and practitioner.

2.1.3 Summary of contemporary western tattooing in the academy

A literature survey was conducted to contextualise and inform the research, revealing an absence of practical research in tattooing, thus a gap in understanding of tattooing practice and practitioner. Four disciplinary vantage points from which tattooing has been examined were found: sciences; economics; history; anthropology.

In sciences literature, the primary focus is tattooed people, and tattooing is generally presented as a singular phenomenon rather than a medium. The motivation for corporeal alteration, or relationship with identity tends to be the focus. Tattoo production and outcome are given less attention, despite the collaborative nature of practice and relevance to the field of inquiry. Considerations of the role of the tattooist their and degree of authorial input visible in the tattoo outcome is not discussed, despite the implications that this may have on the topics of inquiry.

Literature from an economic perspective is largely concerned with the industry of tattooing. The tattoo is presented as a product and the practitioner as a service provider, however understanding of the implications of economic factors on tattooing production and practitioner development requires more detailed examination. The way in which the tattooist utilises the medium to provide tattooing as a 'product' with varying degrees of visible authorial input, develops their professional identity in order to offer a service, and cultivates a profitable tattooing style has remained unexamined.

Historical analysis of tattooing demonstrates the relationship between tattooing and the broader cultural context of practice. While providing a contextual background to the research, a better historical understanding of contemporary tattooing practice may be gained with the inclusion of first-hand, practitioner insights from a contemporary context.

Even in high quality historical tattoo scholarship such as Caplan (2000) the presence of the practitioner is lacking—insights can be brought about regarding the relationship between culture and practice by understanding how contemporary tattooists operate and the factors of influence.

Research from an anthropological perspective concerns the community of tattooed people or tattooists, with an emphasis on social production. While recognising the significance of the social nature of practice, the research is limited in the depth of knowledge that it may uncover through the difficulties of obtaining detailed authentic representation in its methodological approach. Without meaningful frameworks to delineate how the tattooist operates both materially and non-materially (and the relationship between these), the depths of sociological understanding of tattooing are limited. By experiencing (rather than merely observing) the social worlds of tattooing in a contemporary context, an updated understanding may be contributed.
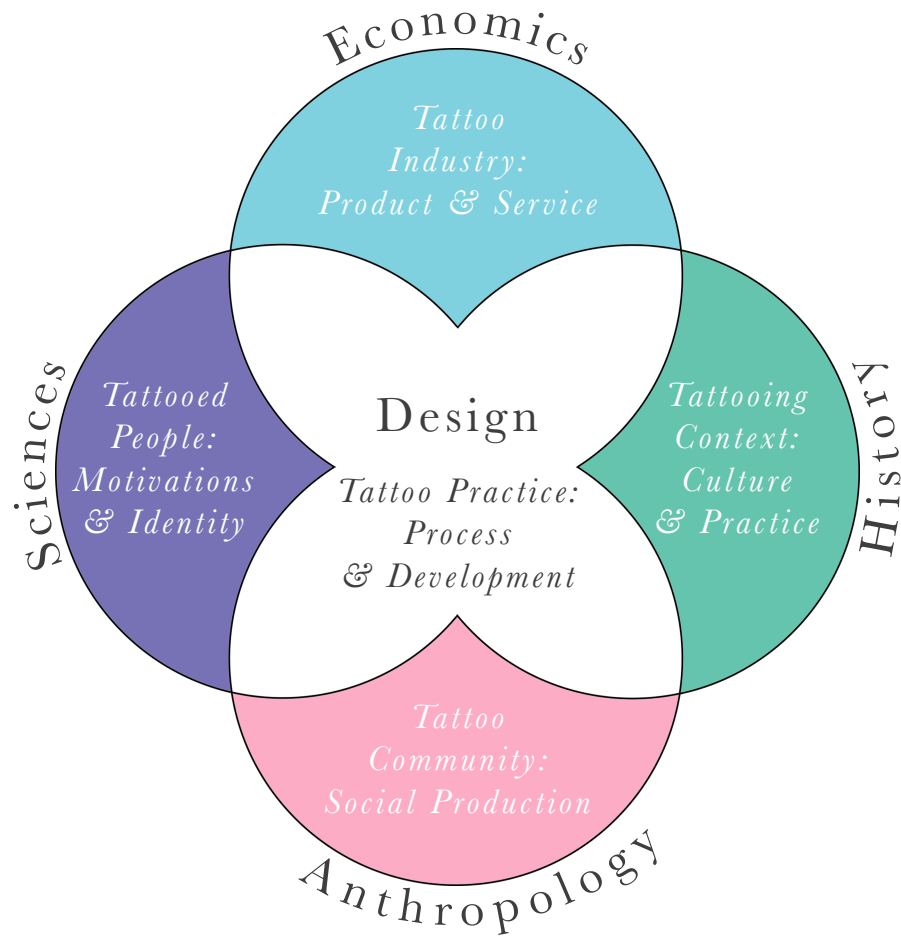
Figure 3: Diagrammatic of academic literature on contemporary western tattooing, indicating disciplinary perspectives (outer text), focus of inquiry (inner text) and the presence of a void in understanding (centre shape), which this research aims to address from disciplinary perspective of design (centre text) (McDade, 2019)

Figure 2 presented in Section 2.1.2 (p.24) can now be presented as the revised Figure 3, in which the central, non-coloured void in understanding can be understood as 'tattoo practice'. This may be approached from the disciplinary vantage point of design (the discipline of this research) using a practice-centred methodology to elucidate on the gap in understanding of tattooing process and development (the core themes of this research). Though some valuable work has been produced that relates to practice from extant disciplinary perspectives, greater understanding of actual practice is required to address the knowledge gap and inform further research that concerns tattooing. To utilise the previously adopted analogy of a flower; the central 'pistil' component of Figure 2 that this research aims to address can be considered the seeds of academic inquiry, from which further research in existing fields (the 'petals' of Figure 2 and Figure 3) may be informed, develop from, and grow.

Lane (2014) states, "…tattooists are embedded in a network of actors, who produce materials, create aesthetic ideologies, distribute equipment, construct a body of knowledge, and employ a method", before suggesting that greater understanding of the stated observation is required (p.407). The literature survey highlights a gap in knowledge of these areas, emphasising the value of research aim 1 regarding the elucidation of the role of the tattooist and the provision of practical insight of tattooing as a medium within the creative industries, in response to question 1. The literature survey also highlights the benefit that can be gained in addressing the knowledge gap of tattoo development (how a tattooist develops a body of knowledge and an approach with the medium) from research aim 2, which seeks to practically investigate the implementation of methods developed from illustration and design practice into tattooing practice, in response to question 2.

By overlooking the contemporary tattooists professional practice, the existing disciplinary perspectives are unable to fully understand the subject and lack the methodological tools to do so. As discussed in Section 1.1 (p.1), this research is the first to utilise a practice centred methodology in tattooing, and thus is able to partially illuminate the gaps in academic understanding that remain. By providing frameworks to better understand tattooing practice and practitioner using the methodology of this research, flaws and absences in understanding across the range of perspectives that have been discussed here can be identified and remedied in future work, leading to more informed, nuanced, and rigorous tattoo scholarship.

This section provides an academic context for this research through isolating a knowledge gap. To further enrich the contextual backdrop of this research, it is valuable to examine the non-academic content on tattooing to highlight its impact on the tattooist's role and development of practice; the central themes of research questions 1 and 2.

2.2 CONTEMPORARY WESTERN TATTOOING IN PUBLIC TERRAIN

Tattooing popularity has continually grown across Britain, Europe, and the Americas since the new millennium (Friedman, 2015, p.141), and the image of tattooed people/tattoo-related content has been increasingly capitalised upon in advertising contexts (Sanjurjo and Walzer, 2016, p.72). Lodder (2012a) states, "…tattooing and its particular visual languages

now exert as powerful an influence on fashion and design culture as these wider trends exert on tattooing" (p.7).

A number of specialist tattoo publications in the forms of magazines and books exist in print, as will be discussed in Section 2.2.1 (p.42). Reflective of a contemporary western cultural context, tattooing has been made increasingly visible in numerous media platforms. This will be discussed in Section 2.2.2 (p.44), and includes television programmes, non-specialist journalistic contexts, specialist digital media, and significantly—social media. An overview of tattooing's presence in the public terrain highlights how it has impacted upon on the context of contemporary practice.

2.2.1 Specialist print publications

This section provides a synopsis of tattooing themed magazines and books.

2.2.1.1 Tattoo magazines

Ed Hardy's *Tattootime* series published in 1982 is regularly cited as an influential publication by tattooists (examples can be found from *Tattoo Age*, 2017–2018; TTTism and Schonberger, 2018. P.84), and is considered the first tattoo focussed magazine. Barron (2017, p.46) notes that from 1984, numerous tattoo magazines began to proliferate, with DeMello (2000) stating how non-tattooed people were able to encounter tattoo publications in supermarkets, with many clients bringing designs from printed media into studios for tattooists as a reference image (p.35). Since the launch of image-focussed social media platforms such as *Instagram* from 2010 (Siegler, 2010), this tendency has shifted from print to screen, as Section 2.2.2.4 (p.46) will describe. Barron (2017) summaries that tattoo magazines generally, "…feature articles on tattoo artists and present portfolios of work, commentary upon industry developments, and coverage of prominent tattoo conventions" (p.46).

In the UK the two primary publications are *Skin Deep (*which ceased operating in 2020) and *Total Tattoo*. Both magazines feature(d) galleries of submitted tattooists work, interviews with and portfolios of tattooists, articles surrounding various aspects of tattooing (occasionally, though not often, written by academics), convention calendars, and other

tattoo related news. As tattoo magazines are essentially entertainment media aimed at tattoo enthusiasts, the aspects of practice that could be considered less glamourous but are equally important (e.g., smaller tattoos that are less visually engaging, unfinished tattoos) are not represented, and in keeping with the medium the content is journalistic, rather than academic in fashion. While magazines can provide useful discourse, they do not necessarily reflect practice holistically.

2.2.1.2 Tattoo books

Numerous non-academic books on tattooing of a varied quality exist. The most accessible coffee-table style books (e.g. Schiffmacher and Riemschneider, 2009; Hardy, 2009, 2011; McComb, 2016) generally provide an overview of tattooing history (with mixed accuracy), alongside photographs of tattoos from various time periods or geographical regions. Others focus on 'fashionable' tattoos that adorn individuals internationally (e.g. Snape, 2018; Brulez and Ebrard, 2019), or highlight works produced in the most reputable studios including interviews with key practitioners (Angell, 2017). Other pictorial-focussed books concentrate specifically on 'tattoo flash' (e.g. Shaw, 2017) or as guides for creating imagery that has the aesthetic sensibility of a tattoo (e.g. Buchanan, 2014; Betts and Schonberger, 2019). Independent publishers such as *Raking Light Projects* specialise in collectable books containing art works by tattooists that are not necessarily produced on the skin and are aimed towards an audience who follow the work of a specific tattooist, rather than simply the tattoo as medium.

Several coffee-table books published in the past decade provide a more sophisticated overview of tattooing. Alongside interviews with notable tattooists/studios on various aspects of practice, books such as *Forever: The New Tattoo* (Klanten and Schulze, 2012) and *TTT: Tattoo* (TTTism and Schonberger, 2018) feature scholarly articles on contemporary topics, such as the effects of social media platforms on tattooing exposure and industry (Schonberger, 2018, pp.492–495), or on the history and evolution of the tattoo machine (Nyssen, 2018, pp.496–501). Books of this nature represent a facet of contemporary tattooing, highlighting the work of renowned contemporary practitioners.

Books about tattooing may provide examples of high-quality work to be appreciated by an audience ranging from the general public, to a tattoo collector or connoisseur, to practicing

tattooists. As with magazines, however, the focus tends to be on the finished tattoo outcome. Emphasis is understandably placed on the work of tattooists who are successful and established enough to be selective about the work they produce—who may be considered as what Sanders and Vail (2008) term, "fine art tattooists" (p.27), and thus not necessarily representative of the more common facilitator of tattooing as a medium. In some cases, attention is given to production, however this tends to be sparse and divorced from how factors external to the visuals affect the outcome, which Section 3.2 (p.96) will discuss.

2.2.2 Media platforms

While specialist print publications may appeal to a more targeted audience, the presence of tattooing in media platforms has exposed a broader demographic to the discipline. Tattooing features in television, non-specialist journalism, specialist digital media, and social media—all of which have impacted practice.

2.2.2.1 Tattooing on television

The mainstream televising of tattoo-dedicated programmes is understood as one of the first major catalysts of tattooing's cultural proliferation (Angell, 2017, p.8). In 2005, the cable network *TLC* first aired the reality tv-show, *Miami Ink* (2005–2008), in which clients would receive a tattoo often portrayed as being imbued with deep significance. Woodstock (2014) notes, "each interaction between tattoo artists and client becomes an opportunity to tell a story about transforming significant life experiences into affirmations of individual identity…" (p.781). Lodder (2010b) points out that programmes of this nature are not primarily about tattooing, and more about the participants stories of personal matters such as loss or triumph, facilitated by producers to ensure "…maximum emotional drama and narrative structure in what is ostensibly a documentary format" (p.5).

The notion of tattooing imbued with sentimentality portrayed *by Miami Ink* (2005–2008) is understood to have directly affected the tattoo marketplace through the expansive reach of cable television. Consequentially, the tattoo as presented in the 'docu-soap' promoted a demand for tattooing produced in a similar way to those who may not have otherwise been exposed or interested in becoming tattooed. The success of *Miami Ink* (2005–2008) resulted

in a series of similar television shows to be produced following the same format, including *London Ink* (2007–2008) and *LA Ink* (2007–2011). These programmes continued to significantly popularise tattooing (Barron, 2017, p.31) through mainstream visibility. The increased diversification of clientele who were inspired by how tattooing is depicted in early tattoo-themed television had a direct effect on contemporary tattooing production and producer.

Other mainstream television shows that feature tattooing have been or continue to be broadcast. Examples include *Ink Master* (2012–2020) in the USA, in which tattooists perform tests of competence to compete for a cash prize and magazine feature, and *Tattoo Fixers* (2015–2019) in the UK, themed around covering regrettable tattoos with alternative designs, with a major emphasis on the stories behind client regret. *Tattoo Fixers* is recognised as controversial within the tattoo community for its insincere representation (Barron, 2017, p.161). Tattooing in these shows is not depicted as it operates in a real-world context, but is rather the medium through which an entertainment broadcast has capitalised upon.

Through *VICE Media Group*, tattooist Grace Neutral created a documentary titled *Needles and Pins* (2016), in which various forms of global body modification practices were examined in a documentary fashion, observing the relationship between the culture of the geographical location and practice. *VICE Media Group* later released *Tattoo Age* (2017–2018), with each of the eighteen episodes highlighting the work or significance of a particular tattooist. As with the higher-quality tattoo books (e.g. Klanten and Schulze, 2012; TTTism and Schonberger, 2018), the programmes of *VICE Media Group* represent aspects of tattooing that are culturally important to recognise and that promote a sense of connoisseurship, but are not necessarily representative of the tattooing as it operates for less culturally celebrated studios/practitioners.

2.2.2.2 Tattooing in non-specialist journalism

Tattooing has been a repeated topic in printed media for centuries, with attention often placed on four themes in different time periods: tattooing popularity; women getting tattooed; tattoo pain; tattoo regret (Cawley, 2014). Mainstream journalism in both print and digital contexts have repeatedly discussed celebrity adoption of tattoos or controversy over tattoos, such as David Beckham (BBC News, 2004; Mirror.co.uk, 2010) or Peaches Geldof

(Daily Mail, 2009), among numerous others. Media coverage of celebrities becoming tattooed (though often presented unfavourably) is understood to have shaped the diversification of clientele (Angell, 2017, p.10), who may request similar designs or tattooing styles that emulate the tattoos worn by those they admire. This contributes to shaping the occupational role of the practitioner, that question 1 of this research is specifically concerned with.

2.2.2.3 Tattooing in specialist digital media

Numerous websites dedicated to tattooing exist, with many focussing on tattoo designs or completed tattoos (such as *Inkme.tattoo*; *Tattoo.com*). These websites tend to list tattoos by category, with the aim of inspiring visitors tattoo choice. Other websites and blogs also exist that focus on various facets of tattoo community, such as *Things&Ink.com,* with an emphasis on femaled centred tattooing. The website and application, *Tattoodo.com,* involves articles written on various aspects of tattooing culture, in addition to featured tattooists and a client booking system. Websites such as *Things&Ink.com* and *Tattoodo.com* contribute to tattooing discourse, but as with tattoo magazines and other platforms in which what is written primarily entertainment journalism, content is generally broad rather than deep in focus.

Exceptions include *Tattooarchive.com*, established by tattooist/historian Chuck Eldridge (who had worked under Ed Hardy in the 1970's), focussing on documenting significant aspects of western tattooing culture. Similarly, the blog *Tattoohistorian.com,* created by art historian Anna Felicity-Friedman serves as a platform for accessibly written tattoo-history. Historian and anthropologist Gemma Angel's blog, *lifeand6months.com* is another exception, with content related to the post-mortem preservation of tattooed skin. As with the academic content on tattooing history, however, these platforms concern culture and practice from the past, rather than the process and development from a contemporary practical perspective.

2.2.2.4 Tattooing in social media

Social media platforms have grown in consumption across demographics of age, gender, and sociocultural backgrounds (Perrin, 2015, p.3). As it has with numerous businesses (Kerpen,

2011), social media has had a significant impact on tattooing culture (Angell, 2017, p.10; Plescia-Buchi and Schonberger, 2018, p.11). For many tattooists, it is integral for promotion and dissemination of work. For many clients', it is a tool to discover designs, styles, and practitioners. Barron (2017, p.129) highlights the importance of social media for tattooists to showcase their work. The significance of social media for clients in discovering tattooists is also highlighted through the inclusion of quotes from interviews with tattooists (ibid., p.121; p.145).

Of all social media platforms, *Instagram* (launched in 2010) is most directly linked with tattooing (Schonberger, 2018, p.495). In addition to being used by tattooists/studios to promote their own work, clients may utilise the platform to show an image of a tattoo executed by a practitioner they are unable to reach, that they aspire to have a similar iteration of by a tattooist they have access to. *Instagram* has additionally been credited with having a role in broadening the spectrum of appreciation for tattooing that falls outside of conventional styles (see 2.4.2, p.54) and introducing tattooists to the work of others internationally (Varghese, 2019).

Instagram has been used throughout this research as a means of dissemination of work produced, advertising of availability of time or pre-drawn designs to tattoo, and digital consultations with clients when possible. These are conventional uses of the platform by tattooists. Images of completed tattoos in keeping with the visual approach desired to promote have been uploaded, in an effort to establish a client base who request designs in a similar style (see Chapter 5, p.160, for insights regarding stylistic development). Images of tattoos produced that do not adhere to tattooists' stylistic preferences may be less likely to be uploaded, depending on the tattooists specific purposes for using the platform.

Figure 4 (left) depicts my professional *Instagram* page which has been used in the conventional manner described. Most tattoo studios have their own *Instagram* accounts from which they promote the work of tattooists working within them, exhibit finished tattoos, offer promotions, and advertise availability of appointments with tattooists, or 'walk-in' space for smaller tattoos (availability to tattoo without a formal appointment). Figure 4 (right) depicts the *Triplesix Studios Instagram* page which is used in this way.
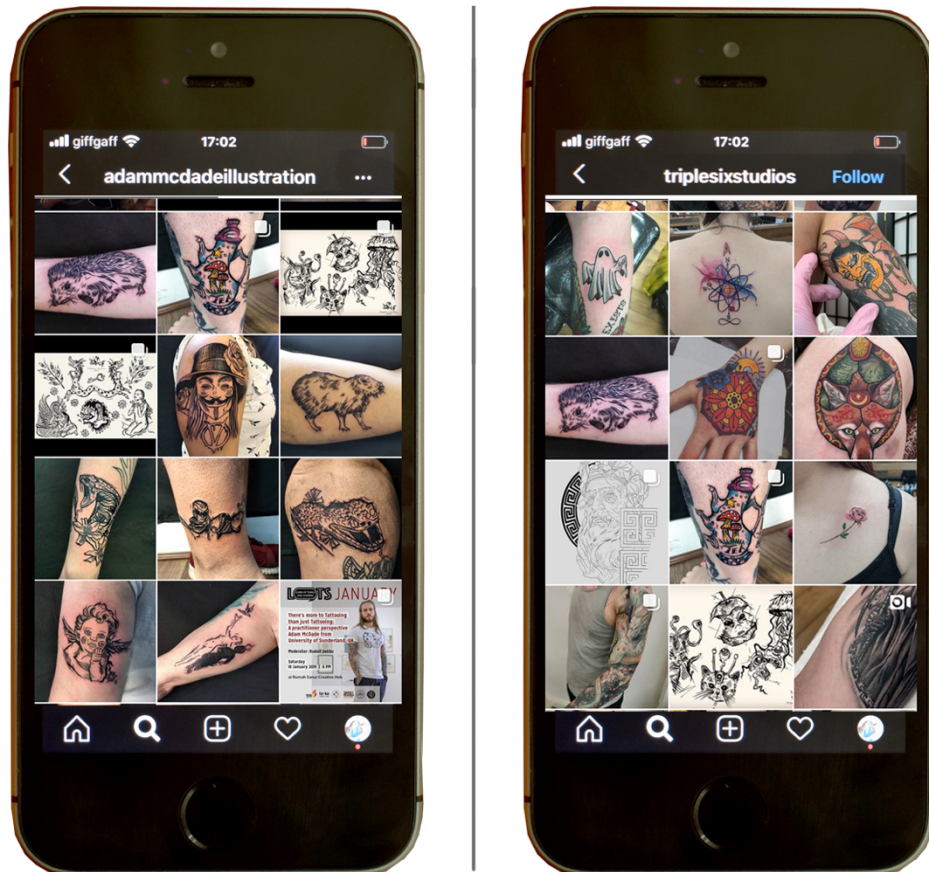
Figure 4: Depiction of the Instagram profile used throughout the research and as part of the occupational role of the contemporary western tattooist (left). Depiction of the Instagram profile of 'Triplesix Studios'; the partner organisation in which this research has been conducted, used to document and promote the work of completed within the studio (right) (McDade, 2020)

The image sharing platform *Pinterest* gained mass popularity in 2011 (Carlson, 2012), and although perhaps less pronounced than *Instagram,* has had an impact on contemporary tattooing. Working in a 'mood board' fashion, *Pinterest* allows users to 'pin' content to a user-created virtual board. The board may be thematically titled (e.g., 'small meaningful tattoos') and can be followed by other users, who may then then create their own boards that feature existing content, or their own uploaded pins.

In a tattooing context, *Pinterest* has been described as the "...new flash..." (Martin, 2018, p.75), with many clients discovering existing tattoos or designs on the platform and requesting similar pieces. Based on professional experience, the majority of clients utilising *Pinterest* tend to request smaller designs that can often be completed on a 'walk-in' basis such as a significant name/date, astrology symbol, simple flower etc., requiring little time for

design preparation. *Pinterest* can be considered a platform that typically inspires designs for those who may engage with tattooing in a 'tourist' fashion'; acquiring smaller tattoos that do not necessarily require a specific tattooist to complete, rather than active members of a tattoo community (see Section 2.4.3.1, p.64)

2.2.3 Summary of tattooing in public terrain

From the twenty-first century tattooing has been clearly visible in contexts outside of the body in mainstream platforms (Friedman, 2015, p.141), with magazines and books stocked in mainstream distributors since the early 1980s (Barron, 2017, p.46). The content of printed publications is wide-spanning, with the general commonality of featuring a high quantity of images of completed tattoos, emphasising the finished work of tattooists featured. As printed content requires conscious engagement to acquire, it can be inferred that its impact on increased tattoo consumption (and thus the effects on the cultural context of practice of this research) is not comparable to tattooing in media platforms.

Reality TV programmes such as *Miami Ink* (2005–2008) are frequently cited as exposing tattooing to a generalised audience (e.g. Angell, 2017, p.8; Nicola, 2018, p.17), alongside journalism reporting on publicly visible celebrities becoming tattooed. As digital platforms have become intertwined with contemporary culture, so too has tattooing content featured within them. Most notably, social media has altered how tattooists work is distributed and discovered (Schonberger, 2018, p.495) exposing tattooing to a diversity of potential clientele who want to be tattooed in different ways. This has lead to conseqential impacts on tattoo production/producer, thus the context of this research.

2.3 PRIMARY RESEARCH

Primary research in the form of studio embeddedness within a community of practice (Wenger, 1999), and interviews with external practitioners was conducted. This has informed understanding of the context of contemporary western tattooing and thus the findings presented within this dissertation.

2.3.1 Studio embeddedness

Though *Triplesix Studios* is the partner organisation for this research, it was also my place of work five months prior to the research commencement. As such, this research has been informed by being embedded within the studio as an active member in a community of practice (Wenger, 1999), in which practitioners actively support the professional development of each other. This research commenced in the apprenticeship stage of my tattooing career, which in addition to learning practical skills, involves working as a member of desk-staff to deal with appointments, take payment from clients, and maintain studio hygiene. This is common practice in traditional tattoo apprenticeships and was important in understanding the organisational structure of the studio. My role within the studio has been of a junior who is informed and encouraged by more senior colleagues. As the research/my tattooing career has developed, the findings generated through being an embedded member of a community of practice have regularly been discussed with other colleagues (including management and desk staff); these interactions and first-hand experiences have played a role in contextualising the findings reported within.

2.3.2 Interviews with external practitioners

As introduced in Section 1.4 (p.6), interviews have been conducted with tattooists working outside of *Triplesix Studios.* Though themes of discussion were considered prior, the interviews were unstructured to allow for organic conversation. The interviews were conducted to determine any distinctions in practice in alternative geographical contexts.

British expat Matthew 'Henbo' Henning was interviewed In February 2019, at the acclaimed New York studio, *Invisible NYC* (made possible through funding *from Northern Bridge Consortium*). The interview was conducted while Henbo tattooed me and revealed no notable distinctions between tattooing practice in the UK to tattooing in the USA, in relation to the questions of this research. One minor exception was that Henbo found clients in the USA more willing to pick an existing tattoo design that he had created, than clients in the UK, who he found preferred custom designs (this was not considered to have any impact on the findings of the research). The interview highlighted the similarities between the cultural context of UK and USA tattooing in relation to research questions, emphasising the potential transferability of understanding that this research aims to offer.

In order to establish regional differences in practice an interview was conducted in May 2019 in London, UK, with tattooist Lara Thomson-Edwards, at *The Blue Tattoo*. As with the interview with Henbo, the conversation took place while being tattooed. Lara commented on her unfortunate experiences of being subject to prejudice as a female tattooist (from both clients and tattooists). This includes sexist conduct that may impact of the environment of practice, thus the nature of the occupational role that as a male practitioner, I have not personally experienced. This finding assisted in contextualising the frameworks offered for understanding the non-material facet of the tattooist's role (see Section 4.2, p.126) to ensure catering for contributing factors beyond that of my own experiences exclusively. The interview did not reveal any regional distinctions that are relevant to the questions of this research, further highlighting the value of the research findings.

Both interviews were audio recorded, and transcriptions/accounts can be found in Appendix B (p.441). Due to a technical issue in which the recording hardware shut down, the interview with Lara Thomson-Edwards failed to record. As an alternative, a short summary of the interview was produced and sent to Lara to ensure accuracy of content.

2.4 PRACTICAL CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY WESTERN TATTOOING

Sections 2.1–2.3 establish the theoretical context of the research. The material (2.4.1, p.52), technical (2.4.2, p.54), and stylistic approaches (2.4.3, p.58) of tattooing will be introduced in this section to establish practical context for the research. Materials of practice are first outlined, before a simple summary of the core techniques of tattooing is given, and a presentation of popular tattoo styles and their characteristics is provided. As stated in the previous chapter, this research does not aim to provide instruction on how to tattoo or to present the full scope of the variety of materials used, techniques practiced, or styles that have emerged; content of such a nature can be found in Alayon (2007), Aitchison (2008), amongst numerous others, who are far more qualified in such topics than I. Rather, this section aims to aid understanding of the chapters that follow and introduce a basic contextual overview of tattooing, from a practical perspective. In doing so, research question 1.1, aim 1, and objective 1.1 concerning the provision of insight on techniques and methods of tattooing as medium are partially addressed.

2.4.1 Materials of tattooing practice

A simple depiction of the materials used in practice is presented in Figure 5. A more detailed description of each material can be found in Appendix D (p.472). This section does not represent the entire scope of materials that may be used, or all versions of those materials that are shown, but provides a foundational understanding. Materials shown are primarily used for purposes of either tattoo creation, or hygiene regulation. It is important to note that Figure 5 was created prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and personal protective equipment in the form of face coverings (for both tattooist and client), disposable aprons, and visors are necessary at the time of editing (2021). In addition to the descriptions provided in Appendix D (p.472), the functions of the materials in practice will be referenced in chapters to follow and are introduced here to inform understanding of practical context.

Figure 5: Illustrated diagram depicting the basic materials of tattooing practice (McDade, 2020)

1. Baby wipes	12 (a). Magnum needles (standard)	22 (a). Round needles (standard)
2. Cling film	12 (b). Magnum needles (cartridge)	22 (b). Round needles (cartridge)
3. Clinical waste bag	13. Marker pen	23. Surface cleaner
4. Disposable gloves	14. Micropore tape	24. Stencil applicator
5. Disposable razor	15. Paper towel	25. Tattoo machine
6. Elastic band	16. Petroleum jelly	26. Thermal copier hectograph paper
7. Green soap	17. Power cable	27. Thermal printer
8. Grip tape	18. Power cable cover/sleeve	28. Tongue depressor
9. Ink caps	19. Power supply	
10. Inks	20. Power supply cover	
11. Machine grip/tube	21. Rinse cup	

In addition to the materials shown in Figure 5, items such as a stool and work surface (typically a wheeled trolley with drawers) for the tattooist, or a massage bed and arm rest for the client are commonplace. The tools used for the design process may vary in response to each tattoo brief, which will be introduced in Section 3.1 (p.70).

2.4.2 Basic techniques of tattooing practice

Practitioners utilise a variety of techniques to create the desired tattoo appearance. It is not feasible or relevant to this research to present each of these, however it is useful to provide a brief description of the core techniques that are consistently utilised. These can be understood as: lining, shading, and colour packing. Table 1 introduces these basic techniques, and an example from practical research is provided.

Table 1: Basic techniques of tattooing practice, using examples from practical research (McDade, 2020)

Basic techniques of tattooing practice		
Technique	**Description**	**Example and Comment**
Lining	'Lining' refers to the process of creating a dominant line in a tattoo and is traditionally executed in black ink. The process involves the selection of an appropriate (typically) round needle grouping to create the desired thickness of the intended line. The thickness is created by pre-soldered needle groupings (made up of a variety of smaller needles) which collectively create a	*Adam McDade (2018). Tattoo 62.* A tattoo executed exclusively through the lining process. A 9-round liner grouping was used for the thicker lines, and a 5-round liner grouping was used for the few thinner lines.

	thicker gauge and tend to range from three needles (very fine) to fourteen needles (very thick). The lining process conventionally follows a stencil that has been applied to the body prior to tattooing and is completed in the first stage of the procedure to ensure the core elements of the design are complete, before the shading or colour packing commences. Different intended stylistic outcomes may dictate the approach taken by the practitioner to the lining procedure.	The 5-round liner grouping was also used to fill in any parts of the line created with the 9-round liner grouping that were not sufficiently saturated. The thinner liner was used for correction, to avoid the potential risk of making the line too thick in appearance, that using a thicker liner might increase.
Shading	'Shading' refers to the process of creating a sense of depth to a tattoo by introducing contrasting tonal values. The process is typically executed with magnum or shader needles of the desired needle grouping/size (see 'lining') and is approached based on the techniques suited to the style of the

Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 255. |

	tattoo. Traditional western style tattooing may use a technique called 'whip shading' which emphasises the marks made by the needle grouping and controlled by hand speed and machine voltage, whereas photorealistic tattooing may involve building up tones in layers with inks of different concentrations of pigment, for example (see Section 2.4.3, p.58, for examples of stylistic approaches). Shading is conventionally completed after the lining, and before the colour-packing process, except for the colour packing of black ink which is applied first to avoid tainting lighter coloured inks.	A lined and shaded tattoo, which was coloured in a later session. The shading in the top of the tattoo was created using an 11-magnum needle grouping to apply a single concentration of black ink. The tone gradation was created by lowering the machine voltage to inject less pigment into the skin than would be suited to lining, and a hand speed that tapered in pace; the faster the motion of the hand, the lighter the appearance of the shading.
Colour packing	Colour packing is a term used to describe the process of the application of coloured pigment to a tattoo. It is generally executed using a round shader or a magnum needle, though this may	

vary depending on the design. Different intended stylistic outcomes may dictate the approach taken to the colour packing procedure. Colours are applied on a dark to light basis, to avoid any 'staining' occurring through the spreading of excess darker coloured ink into lighter coloured areas of the tattoo. Needles may be rinsed in water and used for multiple colours between application to create contrast, or not rinsed to allow for a more organic tonal transition.	*Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 263.* A lined, shaded, and coloured tattoo created as part of a larger leg piece. After the black areas of the tattoo were completed, the darker tones were executed, and the white highlights which were applied last. A combination of smaller magnum (e.g., 5 magnum or 7 magnum) and round shader needles were used. The application involved slowly moving the hand in an oval motion to saturate the pigment and increasing hand pace to allow a fade from one tone to another.

Having introduced the basic techniques of tattooing, an overview of popular tattoo styles will be given. This is included to further contextualise the landscape of contemporary practice and how the techniques introduced can be used, rather than to document an exhaustive list of the breadth of contemporary tattooing styles (examples of the latter can be found in Klanten and Schulze, 2012; Friedman, 2015; and TTTism and Schonberger, 2018).

2.4.3 Overview of popular tattoo styles and characteristics

This section draws upon knowledge gained from my embeddedness in the tattoo community and from the coding/definitions provided in Friedman (2015) and TTTism and Schonberger (2018, pp.517–518) to present popular tattoo styles and their characteristics. Often a tattoo may adhere to multiple stylistic classifications or be categorised based on subject matter rather than aesthetic, and vice versa. The term 'black and grey' is synonymous with realism, for example, however the term does not necessarily suggest so. Style names are provided based on how they are referred to in a vernacular sense within tattooing culture.

Table 2 documents popular tattooing styles, characterisitics, and notable practioners, providing visual examples of each style from the work of tattooists at *Triplesix Studios*. This emphasises the diversity of tattoo styles that are possible, and highlights the visual possibilites of the tools and techniques previously introduced.
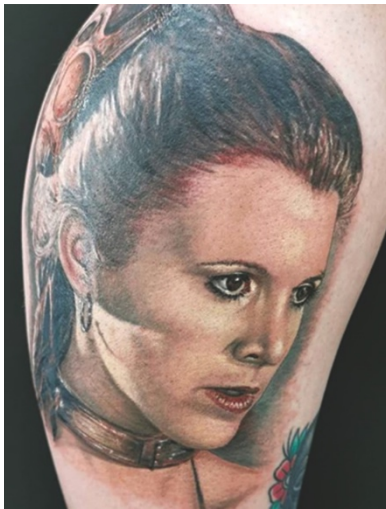
Table 2: Overview of popular tattoo styles, characteristics, and notable practitioners (McDade, 2020)

An overview of popular tattoo styles and characteristics			
Tattoo style name(s)	**Characteristics**	**Notable practitioners**	**Example (from tattooists working at Triplesix Studios)**
Bio-mechanical (aka) Biomech	Biomechanical tattooing utilises the shape of the body to give the appearance that parts of the anatomy are created from machinery. A photorealistic approach may be adopted, utilising various tones and colours, combined with varied line weights to create distinction between the elements.	Bez Bob Jones Guy Aitchison Jeff Croci Markus Lenhard	 *Bez (2013). Untitled.*

Blackwork	The term 'blackwork' is used to describe a range of tattooing approaches that use black ink exclusively. Blackwork tattooing may be associated with the visual properties of engraving and is often decorative, utilising multiple lines in the designs. Round needles are commonly used and powered at a low voltage to create a stipple effect for shading. 'Blackwork' may also be used to describe some forms tribal tattooing, such as Tibetan and Buddhist mandalas.	Andreas 'Curly' Moore Duncan X Robert Borbas Suflanda Victor Montaghini	 *Scott Grozier (2019). Untitled.*
Illustrative	Illustrative tattooing is a blanket term, used to describe tattoos that expand beyond the visuals typically associated with tattooing, and are informed by broader art and design movements. Illustrative tattoos may be approached in accordance with the	Carlo Amen Henbo Henning Julian Llouve, Peter Aurisch Wolfgang Paradiso	 *Dan Hartley (2019). Untitled.*

	specific nature of the style, which can vary. Approaches include the emulation of a watercolour aesthetic through the use of soft coloured shading, or using a mixture of line weights, textures, and negative spaces to create expressive imagery that emulates forms of illustration through a range of traditional and contemporary mediums.		
Japanese (aka) Tebori Irezumi* *Japanese style tattoos that use traditional, non-electric tools.	Japanese tattooing values composition and flow in relation to the body, which holds symbolic significance to the subject imagery. Lines in Japanese tattooing share similarities with traditional western, though can be subject to greater variation in width. A heavy use of black is common, and the colour pallet and subject matter is often inspired by Ukiyo-e woodblock prints that originated	Calle Corson Chris Garver Ed Hardy Horihide Horiyoshi III	*Dan Hartley (2020). Untitled.*

	around the 17th century in Japan.		
Neo-traditional (aka) Neo Neo trad	Neo-traditional tattooing often takes influence from the bold lines of traditional western tattooing, alongside contemporary sources such as manga, in addition to influences from arts and crafts movements. Shading is executed with a consideration of light source, and an expansive colour pallet is used to create rich tonal values.	Hannah Flowers Jen Tonic Lukas Adams Matt Adamson Rebecca Marsh	 *Lauren Stephens (2019). Untitled*
New school (aka) New-Skool	Similarly to neo-traditional tattooing, the new school aesthetic is inspired by the bold outlines, however unlike traditional western tattooing, the line widths may be more likely to vary in thickness. Emerging in the 1990s, new school tattooing has historically taken influence from cartoons, graffiti, comic books, and contemporary	Joe Capobianco Kelly Dotty Marcus Pacheco Steven Compton Thom Strom	 *Sophie Emms (2020). Untitled.*

	interpretations of traditional western motifs. Designs tend to feature exaggerated and distorted elements, such as facial features, or surreal colour pallets.		
Realism (aka) Photo-realism Realistic Hyper-realism Black and grey* *synonymous with realism.	Realism tattooing aims to create a realistic sense of tone and texture of a subject. Stencils for realistic tattoos are often more complex than other styles, and tonal areas are mapped out to create a tattoo with a photographic quality. While black and grey is a popular approach, colours are often also used with numerous ink brands creating premixed 'flesh tones'.	Bob Tyrrell Nikko Hurtado Nikki Simpson Paul Booth Steve Butcher	 *Tim Kingsbury (2019). Untitled.*
Traditional western (aka) Old school	Traditional western tattooing is derived from North America and is characterised by bold black outlines and heavy block/whip shading. This style is traditionally	**Classical** Bert Grimm George Burchett Jessie Knight	

Trad Western Traditional	limited to four or five colours, based on the tools available at the time of its origin. Motifs such as skulls, roses, swallows, anchors, hearts, ladies, and daggers, contribute to the visual vocabulary of the style.	Lyle Tuttle Sailor Jerry **Contemporary** Bert Krak Chad Koeplinger Ernest Graves Frank Armstrong Oliver Peck	 *Peter Heatlie (2019). Untitled.*
Tribal (aka) Maori* Polynesian* Aztec* Tibetan* Blackwork * Cultural context dependant.	Contemporary tribal tattooing draws upon ancient practices from numerous cultures/locations. These different cultures approach tribal tattooing in their own way, creating a variety of visual styles, that traditionally hold symbolic significance. The aesthetic properties of tribal may be informed by the tools in which they would traditionally be executed. Common	Alex Binnie Leo Zulueta Roxx Tomas Tomas Wa Wong	 *Danny Beston (2020). Untitled.*

	amongst all forms of tribal are; abstract and bold geometric shapes, a heavy and often exclusive use of black ink, and a flow of the design in accordance with the area of the body.		

Though Table 2 presents popular tattoo styles, it is necessary to emphasise that other styles and movements exist, many of which resist formal categorisation or may fall into multiple categories. The styles of tattooing presented here are those that are synonymous with tattooing in popular culture, that are often adopted by tattoo collectors who actively engage with a tattoo community (see Sanders and Vail, 2008, p.33), and are reflective of popular styles that tattooists may promote.

2.4.3.1 Minimum-charge tattoos

Section 2.2 (p.41) discusses how tattooing's presence in the public domain has led to an increased clientele. This includes clients who are considered "peripheral" tattoo adopters (Irwin, 2003, p.30), which can be understood as those who obtain tattoos in a 'tourist' fashion and may not be concerned with obtaining the work of a specific tattooist, or not be particularly interested in tattooing culture more broadly. The subject matter of the tattoo may relate to the clients personal cultural identity (Fong and Chuang, 2003), rather than their resonance with a visual style belonging to the cultural context of tattooing (such as those listed in Table 2).

Examples of subjects might include names, dates, symbols, or phrases. Drawing upon first-hand experience, tattooing of this nature constitutes a portion of the client base of many tattooists, between tattooing in their favoured style. This is comparable to how tattooists in recent decades have regarded tattooing pre-designed flash images as the 'bread-and-butter' of their income (Sanders and Vail, 2008, p.84). Though not a style classified on visuals, it is relevant to introduce tattooing that operates in this way to authentically contextualise the

scope of practice and contribute to addressing question 1 of this research, and the associated aims and objectives.

Tattoos obtained by peripheral tattoo adopters frequently (though not exclusively) are completed on a 'walk-in' basis when a tattooist is available, without a formal appointment always being necessary. This is generally due to the small size of the designs sought, which can often be completed in a short time frame between the tattooist's other appointments. These tattoos are frequently termed 'minimum-charge tattoos'. The term refers to the studio minimum charge for tattooing that takes up to around thirty minutes (generally less), and the charge covers the cost of disposable materials used in addition to the labour. In the studio in which this research has been conducted, the minimum charge is £40. Common characteristics of minimum-charge tattoos are presented in Table 3 alongside visual examples from personal practice in Figure 6.

Table 3: Overview of common characteristics of Minimum-charge tattoos (McDade, 2020)

Minimum-charge tattoos	
Common Characteristics	- Small designs, that can be completed in a short period of time. - Often do not require a pre-booked appointment and can be tattooed on a 'walk-in' basis. - Do not require a specific tattooist to complete. - Charged in accordance with the studio/tattooist's minimum rate, covering the cost of materials plus labour. - Often imbued with sentimentality or significance for the wearer. - Designs often inspired by similar tattoos seen on social media platforms such as *Pinterest.* - Frequently obtained by "peripheral" tattoo adopters (Irwin, 2003, p.30), rather than committed "tattoo collectors" (Sanders and Vail, 2008, p.168).

Tattoo 223 (2019)

Tattoo 227 (2019)

Tattoo 246 (2020)

Tattoo 261 (2020)

Tattoo 274 (2020)

Tattoo 273 (2020)

Figure 6: Examples of minimum-charge tattoos, from personal tattooing practice (McDade, 2020)

While minimum-charge tattoos tend to be considered less creatively gratifying by tattooists, they significantly contribute to the industry and are worthy of acknowledgement. As tattoos can be considered to reflect the visual culture of their production (Lodder, 2012a, p.7), minimum-charge tattoos can be considered representative of a facet of contemporary

tattooing subject to the influences of mainstream exposure that is outlined in Section 2.2 (p.41). Minimum-charge tattoos are proposed here as a tattoo style, based of common characteristics isolated in Table 3, rather than specific visual appearance (with the general exception of size).

2.4.4 Summary of practical context of contemporary western tattooing

This section provides a contextual overview of contemporary western tattooing from a practical context. Section 2.4.1 (p.52) introduces the materials of tattooing, providing a general understanding of the components of practice. Section 2.4.2 (p.54) presents the basic techniques that are practiced using these core materials. The techniques are known as, 'lining', 'shading', and 'colour packing', and are conventionally present throughout most stylistic approaches to the medium. Popular tattoo styles and their characteristics are then introduced in Section 2.4.3 (p.58), including visual examples for tattooists at *Triplesix Studios*. This contextualises the diversity of approaches to the medium and the forms of tattooing that are typically celebrated in tattoo culture.

Highlighting an underrepresented but crucially important aspect of tattooing, Section 2.4.3.1 (p.64) introduces the 'minimum-charge tattoo' as a style that is termed on the manner of production/monetary value, rather than visual characteristics necessarily. The style is presented as typically sought by "peripheral" tattoo adopters (Irwin, 2003, p.30), rather than "tattoo collectors" (Sanders and Vail, 2008, p.168), and has been shaped by tattooing's visible presence in mainstream cultural contexts (outlined in Section 2.2, p.41). The acknowledgement of 'minimum-charge tattoos' is necessary to contextualise the multifaceted nature of the tattooist's role that will be discussed in Section 4.1 (p.115), and to exemplify the variability of practice and production.

2.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

This chapter presents a contextual overview of the research. The contexts discussed are tattooing in the academy, tattooing in public terrain, primary research, and tattooing in practice. The chapter may be summarised into the following key points:

- Academic research on tattooing primarily focusses on the tattoo wearer rather than the practitioner and is broadly approached from four disciplinary perspectives: sciences; economics; history; anthropology. Despite being the core shared component, tattooing practice is insufficiently represented.

- Tattooing is publicly visible in in specialist print, and broader media contexts. Specialist magazines and books celebrate successful tattoo outputs, and engagement with the content is conscious. Media contexts of tattoo visibility include the following: television; non-specialist journalism; digital platforms; social media. These contexts shape public exposure to the discipline and have had a direct effect on tattooing processes and development.

- Contextual understanding of practice/practitioner has been gained through being embedded within a community of practice of tattooists in a contemporary studio setting. Understanding has been enriched through interviews with external practitioners working in alternative studios/geographical regions, revealing consistency in the nature of practice and practitioner throughout.

- A practical context of tattooing is provided. The material and technical aspects of tattooing are introduced to provide an understanding of the basic tools and processes of production. Popular stylistic approaches are discussed, representing the variability of practice and ways in which tools and processes may be utilised. 'Minimum-charge tattoos' are introduced and proposed as a relevant tattoo style— termed based on monetary value. 'Minimum-charge tattoos' are suggested as significant to contemporary practice/practitioner role, and as being reflective of a contemporary western cultural context.

This chapter highlights that while tattooing may be "…present on more bodies than ever before in European history" (Friedman, 2015, p.141), further understanding of practice and practitioner is required. This creates limitations on how tattooing is understood not only as a medium that is as varied as other mediums such as painting, as Hardy (1989, p.54) has stated it to be, but also in relation to existing disciplinary fields of inquiry.

This chapter informs understanding of the context of the research, and the validity of the research questions. Having provided an overview of the knowledge gap and a basic

understanding of the context of this research, Chapter 3 will elucidate on tattoo production, emphasising the factors that affect the outcome of a collaborative medium, and highlighting nuances of production that research question 1 seeks to unveil.

CHAPTER 3: MAKING A MARK—TATTOO PRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how tattoos come into materiality (Section 3.1), and accounts for how often-unacknowledged factors that are intrinsically linked to practice shape the tattoo outcome (Section 3.2). Tattooing requires a client to initiate production and a practitioner to provide the medium and is thus inherently collaborative to varying extents. This chapter provides a framework for understanding tattoo production, and responds to research question 1.1, aim 1, and objective 2.2 through elucidating on tattooing practice/practitioner.

3.1 THE PROCEDURE OF TATTOO PRODUCTION

Tattoo production can be considered as four processes: consultation; design; preparation; tattooing. Figure 7 depicts the procedure of tattoo production in which these processes are carried out, which the following sections discuss.
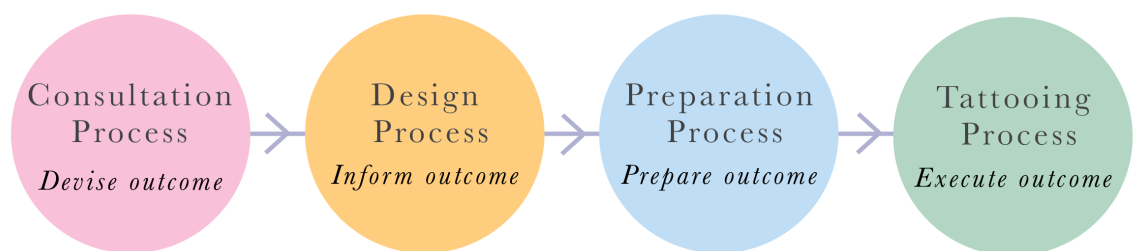
Figure 7: The processes employed in the procedure of tattoo production (McDade, 2020)

3.1.1 Consultation process

The consultation process is employed to devise the tattoo outcome. It begins when the client enters the studio and describes the tattoo they desire to a desk staff member. Clients generally show imagery on their mobile phones of existing tattoos, artwork, or photographs; most frequently via social media applications such as *Instagram* and *Pinterest*. The desk staff member assesses the client request and advises on the most suited tattooist based on style (see Section 2.4.3, p.58), subject matter, and/or availability. The client is brought to the tattooist, or the tattooist may come to the desk area to speak to client if they are not tattooing.

The intended tattoo style, general size, and bodily placement are then discussed. This informs the tattooists estimation of time to complete the tattoo, and total cost accordingly. Tattooing is generally charged at an hourly rate, with discounts given to longer sittings. The client and desk staff then find a mutually convenient date for tattooist and client on a calendar system, and an appointment is secured with a cash deposit. If the client requests a smaller design such as a minimum-charge tattoo (see Section 2.4.3.1, p.64), the tattoo may be completed on a 'walk-in' basis without a formal appointment, depending on tattooist availability.

If a client desires a tattoo from a specific tattooist, the consultation may be conducted via email/social media platforms between client and tattooist directly. After devising the tattoo outcome and selecting an appointment date, the client leaves a deposit by coming into the studio, or via a digital means such as *PayPal.*

3.1.2 Design process

The design process is employed to inform the tattoo outcome and varies with individual practitioner approach and client tattoo request. Most tattooists ask for a visual reference or prompt from the client, from which they will generate a design. A variety of tools may be used to create a design, including resources for image referencing such as *Google Image*, or software packages such as *Adobe Photoshop* to compose and edit elements such as images and text. Since the release of the *Apple iPad* in 2010 many visual practitioners have taken advantage of the "…combined tools and media through which to conveniently generate art" (Wang, 2018, p.52). This includes tattooists, who may create designs through software packages such as *Procreate* and *Amaziograph (*depicted in Figure 8) broadening aesthetic possibilities, often increasing the pace of the design procedure, and allowing for greater ease of editing if required*.*

 The use of digital drawing software is contentious discourse amongst tattooist communities, with some practitioners believing that others are overly reliant on such tools to be able to design tattoos. Some tattooists favour traditional materials to create designs, often sketching the design initially using pencils, before refining the design using ink pens. A 'free-hand' approach may be adopted by more experienced practitioners, in which the design is

drawn directly onto the client body to adhere to their anatomical composition (see Section 3.1.3.2.1, p.80).

Figure 8: Examples of software packages used on the Apple iPad in the tattoo design process. Procreate (left) is frequently used to draw designs directly or can be used to enhance imagery created in other mediums. Amaziograph (right) is frequently used to create geometric designs that require symmetry, such as mandalas (McDade, 2020)

When creating a tattoo design, the tattooist generally creates an image that will act as a stencil that is followed to ensure the key elements of the piece are suitably executed, rather than a finished artwork. Though some tattooists will complete a finished artwork as a reference for the piece, this is not always necessary or pragmatic, and is based on practitioner preference and style of tattooing. Shading, colour, and smaller details often are not included in the design, in favour of a legible line drawing that will inform the lining process (see Section 2.4.2, p.54). Lines in tattoo designs are created with an awareness of how the tattoo will appear over time and are a suitable distance away from each other to avoid appearing 'blurry' as they thicken in the tattoo ageing process. This distinction in creating imagery for tattoos in adherence to these properties and for other mediums is noted by tattooist Ed Hardy (1989, p.66).

A printed copy of the design is generally shown to the client on the day of the appointment, and a definitive size is established based on client preference. If the client requests changes, these are then implemented. If the changes requested significantly deviate from what was discussed in the consultation, clients are asked to re-book the appointment to allow time for a re-design. Once the design is approved the client is requested to sit in a waiting area and complete a consent form (see Appendix A.2, p.440), while the tattooist begins the preparation process.

Further nuances of the design process will be illustrated in Chapter 5 (p.160) when discussing the development of a stylistic approach in response to research question 2 and aim 2.

3.1.3 Preparation process

The preparation process involves the setting up of a workstation to ensure hygienic practice, and having all tools needed in accessible reach. It also constitutes the application of a stencil (or free-hand drawing, as Section 3.1.3.2.1 will discuss) to the client body, to be followed in the tattooing process. Figure 5 contained in Section 2.4.1 (p.52) can be consulted to contextualise the materials that are referenced in discussing the preparation process. Appendix D may be also consulted to provide further descriptions of these materials.

3.1.3.1 Workstation set-up
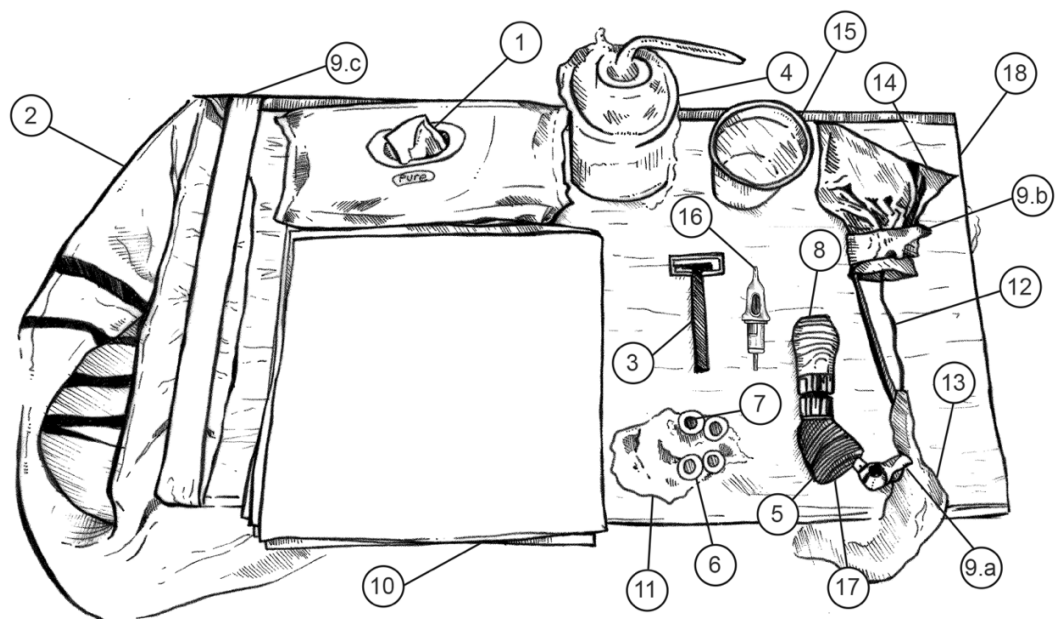
1. Baby wipes	9 (c). Micropore tape (adhering clinical waste bag)
2. Clinical waste bag	10. Paper towels
3. Disposable razor	11. Petroleum jelly
4. Green soap (cling film wrapped)	12. Power cable
5. Grip tape (wrapping tattoo machine)	13. Power cable cover/sleeve
6. Ink caps	14. Power supply (inside cover)
7. Ink	15. Rinse cup
8. Machine grip/tube	16. Round needles (cartridge)
9 (a). Micropore tape (adhering cable cover/sleeve)	17. Tattoo machine (wrapped)
9 (b). Micropore tape (adhering power supply cover)	18. Trolley (cling film wrapped)

Figure 9: Illustrated diagram depicting a tattooist workstation set-up (McDade, 2021)

Figure 9 depicts a tattooist's typical workstation. All surfaces are sanitised by the gloved tattooist prior to the tattoo application using a medical grade surface cleaner. This constitutes the work surface on which materials are placed (often a wheeled trolley with drawers), massage bed, and arm rest. These surfaces are wrapped with cling film for sanitation purposes, and all materials and cables and cleaned. Used cleaning matter is discarded in a medical waste bag. Disposable covers are placed on the power supply, tattoo machine, and power cable, and the green (antibacterial) soap bottle is wrapped in cling film. A disposable grip (or a grip which can be sanitised in an autoclave) is attached to the tattoo machine and secured with micropore tape, which may be wrapped with grip tape to maximise hygiene and increase grip. A stack of kitchen towel sheets of a volume appropriate to tattoo size is placed on the covered work surface, alongside baby wipes and/or green

soap (based on practitioner preference); these are utilised to absorb bodily secretions and excess ink and to increase visibility during the tattoo application. A tongue depressor is used to take a small amount of petroleum jelly out of the container and is spread on the work surface. This is commonly applied as an adhesive to secure ink caps of a volume appropriate to tattoo size and colour pallet. It is also used in tattoo application to prevent the spreading of the stencil, ink, and secretions from the skin. Ink caps are filled with the appropriate tones of ink for the intended tattoo, and a rinse cup may be placed on the workstation to clean needles if working in multiple tones.

3.1.3.2 Creating and applying a stencil

Carbon based stencils of the tattoo design are conventionally utilised to guide tattoo application. The (commonly) purple colour of the stencil is valued for allowing high visibility (different stencil colours are available for working with a variety of skin tones) while being discernible from black ink (the first pigment used for most tattoos). The printed appropriately sized design is placed onto the back layer of a sheet of thermal copier hectograph paper facing upwards, to enable the design to be transferred to the sheet's upper layer. The paper is placed in a plastic wallet and ran through a thermal printer to create a transfer of the intended design.

Thermal printers have dials that can be changed to alter the pace that the plastic wallet containing the design is ran through. An appropriate pace is based on individual design; more graphic designs require a slower pace that registers the design boldly, while finer more detailed designs require a faster pace, to avoid distorting the details of the piece while maintaining visibility of detail. The slower the pace, the greater the heat exposure, the more carbon on the stencil. Table 4 provides examples of what can be considered 'good' and 'bad' stencils, with commentary on how they qualify as such.

Table 4: Examples and commentary of good and bad tattoo stencils (McDade, 2020)

Good Stencils	
Design	**Stencil**
Example 1: Adam McDade (2018). Hanuman design.	*Example 1: Adam McDade (2018). Hanuman stencil.*
Example 2: Adam McDade (2019). Donnie Darko design.	*Example 2: Adam McDade (2019). Donnie Darko stencil.*

Example 3: Adam McDade (2019). Rama design.
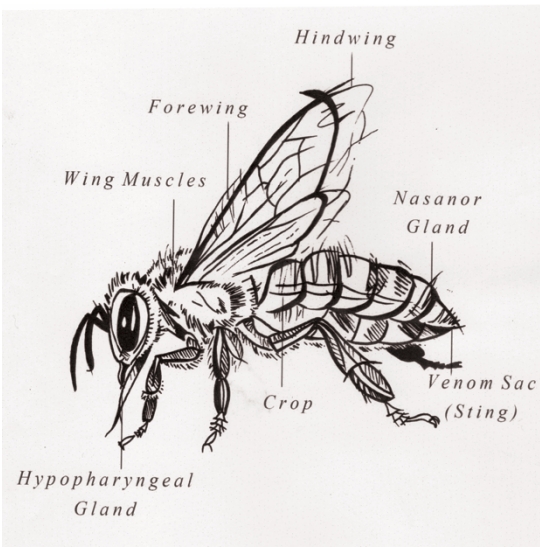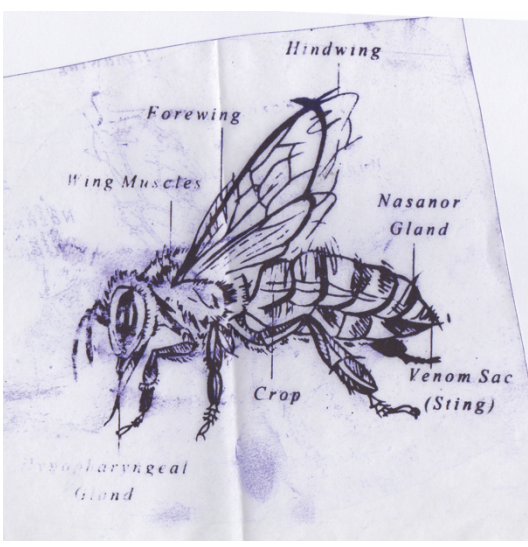
Example 2: Adam McDade (2019). Rama stencil.

Comment

Examples 1–3 depict 'good' stencils. Stencils can be understood as good if they convey all the elements of the design with a high degree of legibility. Lines in good stencils closely resemble the design regarding thickness/thinness, with any deviations not being significant enough to reduce ease of tattoo application. Though some of the finer details in the stencil of example 2 are slightly distorted, the deviation from design is minor and will not cause significant issues in tattoo application, and all core elements are clear.

Bad Stencils	
Design	**Stencil**
Example 4: Adam McDade (2019). Heather design.	*Example 4: Adam McDade (2019). Heather stencil.*
Example 5: Adam McDade (2019). Shamanic mouse design.	*Example 5: Adam McDade (2019). Shamanic mouse stencil.*

Example 6: Adam McDade (2019). Bee anatomy design.

Example 6: Adam McDade (2019). Bee anatomy stencil.

Comment
Examples 4–6 depict 'bad' stencils. Stencils can be understood as bad if elements of the design are distorted or illegible. Bad stencils may contain insufficient crucial detail, such as the text on the stencil of example 6 that should read 'Hypopharyngeal Gland'. Bad stencils may also distort design details, causing them to appear 'blurry' in appearance (such as 4 and 5), thus difficult to follow during the tattoo application. Though some tattooists are capable of working with stencils depicted here as 'bad', those depicted as 'good' generally increase ease for the majority of practitioners.

Once a sufficient-quality stencil has been created the image is cut from the sheet of paper in the shape of the design. The client is asked to come to the tattooists working area, and the intended tattoo area is shaved by the gloved tattooist with a disposable razor. The area is then cleaned to remove any naturally occurring oils and debris than can interfere with the stencil registration. The client is asked to stand in a natural position that is representative of how the finished tattoo will appear outside of the studio—if the tattoo was on an elbow, for example, the stencil paper would be placed on the client while the arm is by their side. Some tattooists place the stencil paper against the prepared body part and use a permanent marker to indicate on both the stencil and body where the design will be registered.

A small amount of stencil applicator is spread around the area, before the stencil paper is slowly placed on the body, and light pressure applied. After a few seconds the paper is gradually peeled away, revealing the stencil. The tattooist checks that the stencil has registered suitably and may make alterations with a permanent marker in necessary. The client is asked to check that they are satisfied with the positioning of the stencil. If so, the stencil is left to dry for up to ten minutes to maintain security. If the client requests to move the stencil to a different area, it is removed, and the process is repeated until client satisfaction is reached. Figure 10 depicts three examples of stencils on the body.

Figure 10: Examples of stencils applied to the body to guide the tattoo application process (McDade, 2020)

3.1.3.2.1 Free-hand

Experienced tattooists may utilise permanent markers to draw a design directly onto the body, with or without the aid of reference materials. This approach is termed 'free-handing' and is used to create designs that flow harmoniously with the anatomical structure of the area to be tattooed. Multiple tones of markers are generally used; a lighter tone marks out basic shapes of a design, which may be refined and detailed in a slightly darker tone, and finalised in a darker tone still, acting as the stencil to follow as an outline. Figure 11 depicts an example of a free-hand design (left) and finished tattoo (right) by tattooist Scott Grozier. Light green, dark green, and red coloured markers were used in the free-hand process.

Figure 11: Example of a free-hand technique (left) used to create a tattoo (right) (Grozier, 2019)

3.1.3.3 Final pre-tattooing preparations

While the stencil is drying the tattooist examines the design on the body, and selects the appropriate needles required. This is generally a combination of round and magnum needles, of varying gauges (see Appendix D, p.472, and Figure 12, p.87, for details on needles). Inks are also selected and poured into ink caps. Tattoos are conventionally started by creating an outline in black ink. A suitable lining needle gauge is attached to the machine and machine grip/tube, with a few millimetres of the point of the needle coming out of the end of the tube (known as the 'throw'). An appropriate voltage for the lining process is selected (this is dependent on machinery, and may often range from around 6v to 13v).

When the stencil is dry, the client is asked position themselves on the massage bed in a manner that stretches the skin to maximum capacity, while maintaining their comfort. This is helpful for tattoo application as the needles are easier to insert and control, while limiting unnecessary trauma to the skin. Once the client is positioned and comfortable, the tattooist may place a thin layer of petroleum jelly over the stencil, preventing its evanescence in the tattooing process. A copy of the design may be taped to a surface for reference. The

tattooist checks that the client is ready to begin, before the tattoo machine is switched on, and tattooing ensues.

3.1.4 Tattooing process

Tattooists typically work in a way that adheres to the notion of 'reflection-in-action' proposed by Schön (1983), in that adjustments and improvisations are made during the process depending on what best suits the intended outcome (as Section 3.2 [p.96] will introduce, and Section 5.3.3 [p.186] illustrate explicitly). This is described as a "…reflective conversation with the materials of a situation" (ibid., p.78). The tattooing process discussed draws from my personal experience. Though the specific approaches employed may vary somewhat between practitioner and style, the overview presented can be considered broadly representative of the tattooing process. For a more detailed technical insight see Aitchison (2008).

Tattooing begins by dipping the tip of the vibrating needle into the ink pot to absorb pigment using the dominant hand, before the non-dominant hand stretches the stencil area making the area of skin to be tattooed taut. Both tattooist and client may have to adjust their bodily position, including the tattooist's stretching hand, throughout all stages of the process; the extent of which is dependent on the placement of the tattoo. If right-handed, the tattooing process begins at the bottom-right of the stencil, working upwards towards the top-left of the stencil to minimise contact between stencil and hand, and subsequent reduction in stencil visibility. The first line is made, following the stencil. The motion taken is comparable to drawing a line with a pen, while applying a small amount of pressure towards the surface. The tattoo machine is positioned upright or on a slight angle during this process; if the needle is applied at too far of an angle, the lines may heal in areas slightly out of the intended range, resulting in a thicker appearance than desired. The line is tattooed until the tattooist feels they are not in total control and taper the needle out of the skin to regain control by adjusting hand positioning.

The tattooed area is dabbed with kitchen towel to absorb secreted blood and excess ink, more petroleum jelly may be applied, and the lining process continues following from where the last line ended. Dry kitchen towel is used at this stage to avoid stencil removal, which are disposed of in a clinical waste bag and replaced accordingly, held in the tattooing hand. This

process continues, with the main details of the stencil tattooed initially, before finer details are added. Table 5 can be consulted to illustrate the lining process described. Different sizes of round needles may be used for the lining process at various points—a process made easier through cartridge needles, rather than standard needles (see Appendix D, p.472, and Figure 12, p.87). The tattoo may be wiped with green (antibacterial) soap and kitchen towel, or baby wipes, and if necessary, a second lining pass may ensue. This generally involves using a smaller gauged needle than has previously been used, to make visually inconsistent lines appear consistent.

Table 5: Depiction of the stages of the tattoo lining process (McDade, 2020)

Depiction of the tattoo lining process		
Stage	**Example**	**Comment**
1	*Example 1: Adam McDade (2020). Illustration representing a tattoo stencil.*	Example 1 depicts the stencil on the body prior to tattooing commences. The image is fully purple, representing the colour of the non-tattooed stencil.

2

Example 2: Adam McDade (2020). Illustration representing an in-progress, partially completed tattoo. | Example 2 represents a tattoo that is in-progress. The black area of the image depicts the part of the tattoo that has been completed. The bottom-right hand side of the design is tattooed first, to avoid the stencil disappearance through contact with the hands. The dominant areas of the tattoo are completed initially, with the finer, less crucial details around the tattooed areas left until a later stage. |

| 3 |
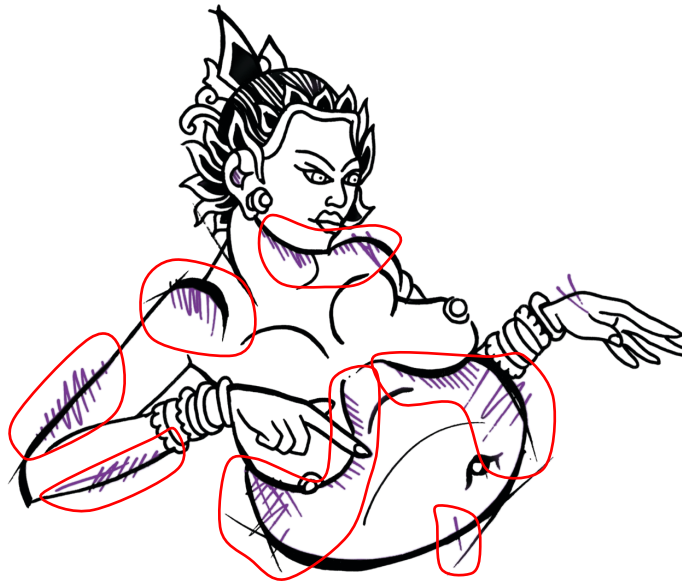
Example 3: Adam McDade (2020). Illustration representing a tattoo in which the dominant lines have been completed, and less dominant lines not tattooed. | Example 3 represents a tattoo in which the dominant elements of the design have been completed (depicted in black), with smaller details remaining (depicted in purple, and highlighted in red). This process may be employed to ensure that the aspects of the design in which the tattooist is dependent on the stencil, are successfully rendered. The finer details may also require an alternative gauge needle selection to that of the dominant outlines, and so the needle may |

		be changed once all dominant details are completed.
4	 *Example 4: Adam McDade (2020). Illustration representing an outlined tattoo.*	Example 4 represents a tattoo in which all elements of lining are complete. This includes outlining and finer details, that may have been approached with a variety of needle gauges to adhere to the visual properties of the design.

After completion of the lining process, areas of the tattoo which are intended to be black are then executed. This may be completed with a round shader, or magnum needles, and often requires a lower voltage than what is used when tattooing lines. Figure 12 depicts the tip of round and magnum needles, highlighting the difference in shape. In contrast to the linear hand movement of lining, this process is completed by moving the tattooing hand in a small overlapping oval motion in a clockwise rotation, resulting in the appearance of consistent saturation. Larger needle groupings may be used to increase saturation pace, with tighter needle groupings then used to reach smaller areas of the tattoo that are inaccessible with larger needles. Figure 13 depicts an example of a lined piece tattooed with all black areas of the design saturated, using both round shader and magnum needles.

Round Needles   Magnum Needles
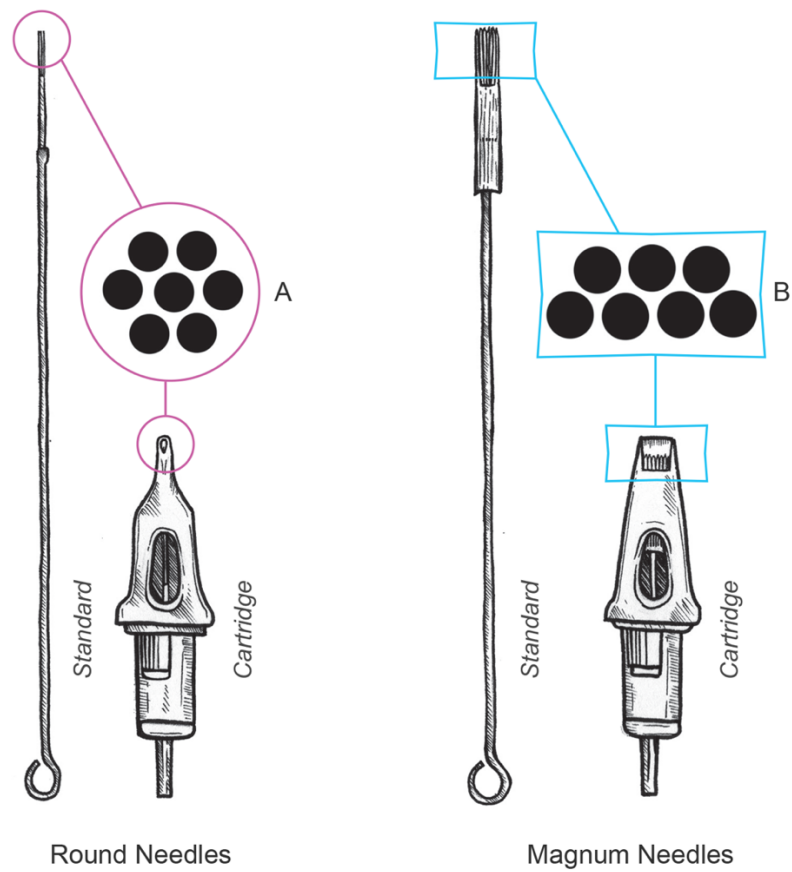
A	B
Shape of tip of round needle groupings.	Shape of tip of magnum needle groupings.
Needles for round liners are more tightly-packed together than needles for round shaders.	Needles for magnums are placed in a horizontal arrangement to create a wider surface area.

Figure 12: Depiction of tips of round needles and magnum needles (McDade, 2021)

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 101 (black ink only).

Figure 13: Depiction of a lined tattoo with solid black areas saturated using round shader and magnum needles (McDade, 2020)

When all lines and solid black areas on a tattoo are completed, shading may be added. The style of tattoo dictates the shading approach, ranging from 'choppy' whip shading used in traditional western tattooing to 'smooth' shading used in realism (see Section 2.4.3, p.58). The shading process is generally executed with magnum needles and at a lower voltage than lining, irrespective of tattoo style, and the hand pace is generally quicker and movements looser than that of the lining process. Black ink, or a range of diluted black or purpose-created ink washes can be used. The shading process is anecdotally (and from personal experience) reported to be less painful for the client than lining and tends to cause less trauma to the skin.

Colours may be added after lining and shading is complete. The colours used may be considered in the design process or decided between client and tattooist in an ad hoc manner. A variety of pre-mixed inks are available, allowing for consistency of pigment if the tattoo is completed in multiple sessions. Custom blends can also be created by the tattooist, combining existing inks. Colour is applied on a dark–light basis; the darkest tones are applied first, irrespective of where they are on the tattoo, before the lighter tones are added. This is to avoid 'smudging' the darker pigment into the lighter pigment and staining the tattoo, with white ink always applied last.

Needle selection (and thus size) is dictated by the size of spaces that are to be coloured in the tattoo design. The hand motion of colouring may be like that of shading or saturating solid black areas, depending on tattoo style. Baby wipes or green soap and kitchen towels are used frequently to clean the area, as coloured ink tends to be of thicker consistency than black or grey ink and thus require frequent wiping, to avoid visual obstruction. Needles may be rinsed between colours to create tonal distinctions, or not rinsed to create organic tonal transitions. Figure 14 depicts the coloured version of the tattoo shown in Figure 13, providing an example of the colouring process described.

Darker tones of colour are tattooed once all black ink/shading has been applied

Medium tones of colour are then tattooed

Lighter tones of colour and white highlights are tattooed last

Figure 14: Coloured and completed version of tattoo shown in Figure 13, with the order of colour execution depicted (McDade, 2020)

3.1.4.1 Tattoo preservation

After completing all aspects of a tattoo (ranging from a small tattoo made up of lines only, to a large colour piece), the tattooed area is thoroughly cleaned with green soap. The client is invited to view the piece in the mirror, and if consenting, a photograph of the tattoo may be taken for the tattooist's portfolio/social media (this is conventionally only done when the tattoo is in keeping with the style that the tattooist promotes). The tattooed area is cleaned again, before being coated in petroleum jelly and wrapped in cling film to avoid

contamination. If the tattoo requires further sessions to complete (e.g., large-scale back pieces, full-arm sleeves), the client may book a future session.

Before the client makes payment, they are given aftercare instructions; this involves cleaning the tattoo three times a day with antibacterial natural soap and applying a small amount of an aftercare product, such as cocoa butter, for approximately one week. The client is advised that the tattoo may be sore, itchy, and form scabs during the healing process of around four weeks. The scratching of the tattoo may result in inconsistent pigment saturation and can potentially lead to infection, and so the client is advised against doing so.

Clients are informed that once fully healed, a (typically) free touch-up service is offered on any areas that has not healed to a satisfactory standard. Clients are invited to contact the tattooist/studio, should they have any further questions regarding their tattoo at any point. An example of well-healed tattoo is shown in Figure 15, in which the no significant deviations are present from when the tattoo was originally created, beyond the natural fading of pigment that occurs in the healing process.

Figure 15: Example a well healed tattoo, photographed around five-months after the date of production (McDade, 2020)

3.1.5 Summary of the procedure of tattoo production
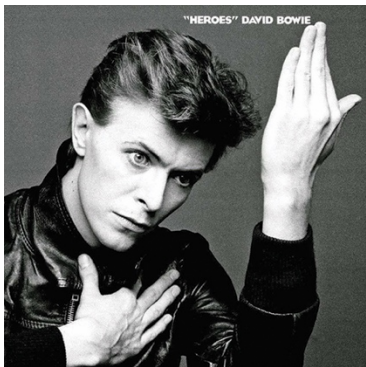
This section responds to the limitations in understanding of tattoo production identified in Chapter 2, in addition to research question 1, aim 1, and objective 1 (p.4) regarding the tattooists' processes and role. The procedure of tattoo production is presented as (to varying extents) collaborative between client and practitioner, and as four processes: consultation; design; preparation; tattooing.

The consultation process involves the client and tattooist devising a tattoo brief and an outcome. Image references are conventionally used to aid the tattooists design process. The design process involves the tattooist generating imagery that will inform the tattoo outcome. Designs may be completed using traditional mediums, or digital tools such as the *Apple iPad,* and may represent the outline of the tattoo that will be used as a stencil, the proposed finished outcome, or both. The preparation process requires the setting up of materials in a hygienic manner to maximise tattooing efficiency, shaving and cleaning the area of the client's body to be tattooed, creating a suitable stencil that can be followed during the tattooing process, and selecting the appropriate needles and inks in preparation for the tattooing process. Finally, the tattooing process involves executing the outcome by stretching the skin with the none tattooing hand, following the stencil on the body with (typically) round needle groupings, before utilising a range of techniques and materials that best achieve the desired style and outcome. Steps to preserve the outcome are taken by the tattooist in the studio and advice on preservation is offered to the client prior to their exiting exit. Table 6 depicts a variety of examples of tattoos that have followed the procedure of production described in this section, demonstrating the transition from a client reference, to a design, to a tattoo.

Tattoo production			
#	**Reference**	**Design**	**Tattoo**
1	*Joanna Roman (2019). Untitled.*	*Pencil Sketch of design based on client reference (top), traced fine-liner design based on pencil sketch (bottom).*	*Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 259.*
Comment			

During the consultation process, the client provided a reference of a tattoo found using the platform, *Pinterest*. The specific reference was not that which is shown, but another tattoo with very similar visual properties. The client approached the studio on a walk-in basis, and requested the tattoo on their inner bicep, at around 4cms in length. An initial pencil sketch was created that deviated enough from the source image to not be a direct copy, while maintaining the core elements of the design that the client desired. The sketch was then traced onto tracing paper using a fine-liner, picking out the lines that have been selected in the final design. This design was then made into a stencil, before being placed on the body, and tattooed overusing a 7-round liner for the thicker areas, and a 5-round liner for the smaller details.

#	Reference	Design	Tattoo
2	*Masayoshi Sukita (1977). Photograph of musician David Bowie, used for the cover of album, 'Heroes'.*	*Interpretation of hands featured in reference, created in fine-liner pen.*	*Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 178.*

Comment

The client requested a linework tattoo of the hands that feature in the iconic cover photograph of the David Bowie album, *Heroes* (1977), taken by Masayoshi Sukita. The tattoo was requested to be sized at around the width of the upper inner forearm, where it was to be placed. The design procedure involved tracing and interpreting the photographic details of the image reference, into a simpler design that could be tattooed. This required picking out the main details of the image, based on the intended tattoo size (i.e., excluding details that are close to areas of the design where lines already exist, to avoid the 'blurring' of lines into each other during the tattoo ageing process). The index finger of the hand on the left side of the photographic reference had to be

fabricated, due to the lack of visibility in this detail in the source image. The design shown was made into a stencil and placed on the body, to be tattooed using a 5-round liner exclusively.

#	Reference	Design	Tattoo
3	 *Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 168.*	 *Design based on a previously completed tattoo the client had referenced, with alterations made to suit client preference and create a custom outcome.*	 *Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 192.*

Comment
The client requested a tattoo of a similar style and subject matter to a tattoo they had seen on my social media, with alterations made to ensure a unique design. The tattoo was requested to be the width of the lower forearm, and at a size that was proportionate to the arm width. A design was created using a range of fine-liners and calligraphy style pens (see Chapter 5, p.160, for specific stylistic approach taken). After the stencil was applied, the dominant lines were created using a range of round liners, before the heavier black areas were completed with a combination of round shaders and magnum needles. This process was completed with multiple adjustments of bodily position from the client and I, due to the shape and size of the design.

#	Reference	Design	Tattoo
4	*Charissa Gregson (Rizza Boo) (2017). Untitled.*	*Mandala design created using the Apple iPad and Amaziograph software (top), then coloured using Adobe Photoshop.*	*Adam McDade (2018). Tattoo 74.*
Comment			

In this example, the client requested a coloured mandala tattoo, but did not give a specific visual reference. Though the design shown in the reference was not used, it is indicative of the style of tattoo that the client desired. The mandala design was to be placed on the outer wrist area, and as a result was to be limited in detail to ensure clarity. The software *Amaziograph* was utilised through the *Apple iPad*, to create a symmetrical design that would take a far greater time to complete if created using traditional mediums. The colours in the design were selected by the client, who sat with me while exploring different options using *Adobe Photoshop*, prior to tattooing commencing. Colours were added to the *Adobe Photoshop* document in layers using the gradient tool, with a variety of options being considered through the use the hue/saturation adjustment layer. Once the design was approved, a stencil of the non-coloured design was created. The lining process ensued using a 9-round liner, before a variety of round-shader needles

were used to saturate the black and coloured parts of the design. The dotted affect seen in the design was omitted, based on client preference.

While the examples given in Table 6 depict a variety of tattoo outcomes, the processes of production described in this section remains consistent.

The tattooist's role involves following the processes described in collaboration with the client to provide the tattoo output. Though presented here in a linear sequence for the purposes of clarity, tattoo production may be affected by multiple factors—many of which can have a direct effect on the tattoo outcome. Sanders and Vail (2008) refer to some of the "problems" experienced by practitioners in tattoo production (pp.102-106), however the focus is on the problematic nature of clients specifically, from a sociological perspective rather than practical. As tattoo production is collaborative, multiple factors can affect the outcome that can be both practitioner-based, client-based, or both. These factors have been briefly touched upon in this section but will now be introduced more definitively.

3.2 FACTORS THAT AFFECT TATTOO OUTCOME

Expanding on the findings presented in Section 3.1, this section introduces factors that can affect the tattoo outcome. This section aims to aid understanding of the complexities of practice, that as presented in Chapter 2 (p.23), are thus far insufficiently represented in academic literature (which largely omits tattooing practice from focus) and non-academic content (which is primarily concerned with the finished outcome, rather than production). This section demonstrates nuances that may shape the tattoo outcome that are necessary to acknowledge to represent tattoo production, responding to research question 1, aim 1, and objective 1.1, 1.2, and 2.2. regarding the occupational role of the contemporary western tattooist.

Figure 16: Diagrammatic depicting factors that may affect tattoo outcome, indicating if they are client-based (blue), practitioner-based (yellow) or can be both (green) (McDade, 2020)

Figure 16 presents factors that affect tattoo outcome, indicating if they are client-based (depicted in blue circles), practitioner-based (depicted in yellow circles), or can be both (depicted in green circles). The factors have been categorised in this manner to emphasise that the client and practitioner collaboratively shape the tattoo outcome, to varying extents. The factors noted are not necessarily to be read as indicators of reasons why a tattoo may look 'good/bad', or as attributions of blame or praise on the client or practitioner, but rather as contributions to how a tattoo may appear.

For example, the client-based factor of 'existing tattoos' could mean that a new tattoo outcome may have to be placed around, stylistically match, or cover-up, the existing tattoo, in a way that it might not have to if the client didn't have an existing tattoo. The

arrangement of the factors is alphabetical, to suggest a lack of hierarchy between them. Table 7 offers a description of the factors shown in Figure 16, demonstrating the collaborative nature of production. Each factor is listed with an indication of if it is client based (Cl.), practitioner based (Pr.) or both.

Table 7: Table describing factors that may affect tattoo outcome, indicating if they are client-based (Cl.) shaded in blue, practitioner-based (Pr.) shaded in yellow, or both, shaded in green (McDade, 2020)

Factors that affect tattoo outcome			
Factor	**Description**	**Cl.**	**Pr.**
Ability	The tattoo outcome can be affected by the ability that the practitioner possesses with several variables of practice. In relation to material aspects of the tattooist's role, practitioner ability may be considered as how able they are to perform core techniques and work with a variety of tattoo styles, skin types, or areas of the body.		✓
Aftercare	Aftercare is significant in ensuring a tattoo heals the way that is intended (assuming it has been skilfully executed). This involves keeping the tattoo clean and dry, applying a product such as cocoa butter three times a day for around seven days after obtaining the tattoo, and not picking/scratching the tattoo. The specifics of healing vary from client-to-client, but the process described is generally true to all tattoos. If an aftercare routine is not followed, there is a risk that the tattoo outcome may become infected and/or appear 'patchy' in some areas once healed.	✓	
Body structure	The shape of the client's body may affect the tattoo outcome. A design on one person's body may not appear as compositionally successful as it does of the body of another. Client bone structure, or muscle mass, are examples of factors relating to body structure that may affect tattoo outcome. Client body structure requires consideration from the practitioner in the design process and when sizing the stencil, to avoid having detrimental effects on the outcome.	✓	

Cost	The budget of the client will affect the tattoo outcome in that they may seek a tattooist who's hourly rate is lower than that of other tattooists (and whose work is potentially less accomplished). Budget may also affect the clients tattoo size, or style, with price primarily based on time taken to complete the piece. A client may opt to have a tattoo lined in one session and coloured in another due to financial considerations, for example. The outcome is thus affected in a way that it may not be if cost was not a factor.	✓	
Existing tattoos	Existing tattoos may dictate the placement, size, or style of the tattoo outcome, to varying extents. For example, if a client has a tattoo of on their right forearm and they request a new tattoo on their left forearm, the new tattoo may be positioned, sized, and in a style to match that of the existing tattoo on the right forearm. Even if the existing tattoo is unintentionally placed off centre, the new tattoo may be placed in the equivalent place on the other arm, to remain visually consistent. Cover-ups are also a common part of practice, in which the client requests that an older tattoo be tattooed over to create a new tattoo. The existing tattoo in this case may dictate the size and tonal value of the new tattoo. A light-coloured tattoo cannot cover a darker coloured tattoo as the existing tattoo will remain visible. This means that the new tattoo is generally dark in the area that is covering an existing tattoo, which commonly dictates the size of the new tattoo (conventionally, cover-up tattoos are at least three times the size of the tattoo being covered).	✓	
Ink selection	The tattooist's selection of inks can affect the quality of the outcome. Reputable brands such as *Fusion Tattoo Ink* assist in making the application of ink less challenging than lower-quality inks, which may not contain sufficient pigmentation to achieve the desired outcome. Using higher pigmented inks results in less time spent tattooing one area of the skin, reducing the likelihood of		✓

	unnecessary trauma caused to the client skin, and thus appearance of tattoo outcome. Some tones of ink, such as purples and light blues, are frequently reported as more difficult to tattoo with and may require multiple passes to ensure consistent saturation. If creating a cover-up tattoo, the practitioner must ensure that a suitable tone of ink is selected to successfully obscure the appearance of the unwanted tattoo.		
Ink acceptance or rejection from body	Various factors can affect how well the client body accepts pigment. If tattooing a large-scale piece over the course of a longer sitting, the client body may begin to reject the ink being inserted into it. If the client has consumed alcohol near the time of being tattooed, their blood may be thinner and the body less able to accept the pigment. The rejection of the ink affects the tattoo outcome, making it appear less saturated than intended.	✓	
Movement	Movement of the body during the tattooing procedure can cause alterations to the intended qualities of the tattoo, such as 'shaky' lines that were intended to be consistent. Client movement is generally in response to pain caused from the tattooing process, or discomfort resulting from the position they are in to make the area of the body suitably accessible for the practitioner. Frequent movement may also result in the tattooing process taking more time than intended, resulting in a potentially unfinished or different-to-intended tattoo outcome.	✓	
Pain	The pain caused by the tattooing procedure may affect the client's placement choice. Areas such as chest, feet, and ribs are often considered to be painful places to be tattooed, for example. The client's ability to withstand the pain inflicted from the tattooing process also can affect the duration of time taken to complete the piece. For example, if the client requires multiple breaks then the time taken to complete the piece (and thus cost) may increase. In some cases, tattoos can remain incomplete due to the inability of	✓	✓

	the client to endure the pain caused.		
	The practitioner may experience pain during the tattooing process, which in some circumstances can affect the tattoo outcome. In longer sittings particularly, the vibration of machinery may cause wrist pain, and the unnatural position of the body that is required to tattoo some areas may cause musculoskeletal issues. This can mean that the tattooist needs to take frequent rest breaks when tattooing, or in some cases end a session early if the client is willing, subsequently affecting the tattoo outcome. In addition, if a client is clearly suffering from the pain of the tattooing process, the practitioner may endure psychological pain from having to inflict it (see Section 4.2.5, p.149).		
Physical and psychological health	As the tattooing procedure causes trauma to the body, the health of the client can affect how they are able to tolerate the pain, and thus the tattoo outcome. The experience of pain can be affected by both physical health conditions (e.g. influenza), and psychological health conditions, such as depression (Korff and Simon, 1996). When experiencing health difficulties, a client may be more prone to fainting, moving during the tattooing procedure, taking breaks more frequently, or 'tapping out' (ending the session with the tattoo unfinished), than they might be if they were in good health. Kluger (2017) notes that tattooists, "…have a high prevalence of musculoskeletal complaints about back pain due to repetitive movements, awkward postures and use of a vibrating tattoo machine" (p.111). This means that preventative measures may need to be taken by the practitioner to maintain health, irrespective of if they are experiencing pain or not. These measures may include taking breaks and stretching, potentially slowing the tattooing process and tattoo outcome. The psychological health of the tattooist may also affect the outcome—for example, if they are struggling with mental health conditions such as depression or	✓	✓

	anxiety, their ability (and thus tattoo outcome) may be impaired (see Section 4.2.5, p.149).		
Placement	The placement of the tattoo on the body may affect the tattoo outcome. Areas of the body such as the ribs and the buttocks require more stretching from the tattooist, taking more time to complete while also being more prone to 'blowing out' (the unintended appearance of ink around the area of the tattoo that is intentionally visible). Tattoo placement can also affect the healing of a tattoo, with areas such as the palms of the hands and sides of the fingers typically 'falling out' (the rejection of ink by the body during the healing process). As the body frames the tattoo, the size of the design chosen may also be dictated by the placement on the body; a very small symbol or name may appear 'lost' if placed on the calf area of the leg, for example, and be more suited to a wrist. Tattoo placement may also relate to pain, thus influencing the client's choice of where they get tattooed.	✓	
Reference imagery	Reference imagery is used to formulate designs for tattooing, in as much of a variable way as it is for conventional mediums, and directly affects the tattoo outcome. A client is generally asked to provide some form of reference to inform understanding of the kind of outcome they desire. If a client supplies specific reference material, such as a photograph of a loved one for a realism portrait tattoo, then the resolution of the image must be sufficient to allow for a rendering of strong likeness. If the reference is a low quality, the tattoo outcome may not appear as the client has desired. In creating custom designs, the practitioner may gather reference from various sources. The dominant source of imagery is internet-based resources. The same source image from an internet search engine may be used for multiple tattoos by different practitioners. This means that stylization is necessary to make the outcome appear	✓	✓

	unique. This is more difficult to achieve with styles such as realism than it is with styles such as neo-traditional (see Section 2.4.3, p.58).		
Relationship	The relationship between tattooist and client may affect the tattoo outcome. If the client and tattooist know each other, more time may be spent in personal conversation, and both client and tattooist may be more comfortable requesting breaks (thus delaying the procedure and potentially the outcome), than if the client and tattooist conversed on an exclusively professional level. This can result in the client leaving with a partially completed tattoo due to time constraints.	✓	✓
Skin attributes	Various attributes of the client's skin may affect the tattoo outcome. If a client has particularly dry skin or scarring, the tattoo application may require more care in the affected area, potentially altering the design or the healed tattoo. Similarly, the smoothness/coarseness of the client skin can affect how the finished outcome appears. Clients who work in manual professions in which they spend time exposed to natural elements may have more coarse skin that can require multiple 'touch-up' sessions to achieve the intended outcome.	✓	
Stencil	The tattoo stencil can be considered a guideline for the tattooing procedure. Though some tattooists may be able to work without much reliance on a stencil, many tattooists require them. Should a stencil begin to disappear during the tattooing process due to insufficient drying time, skin attributes, or excessive wiping of the area, the tattooist may be left without a guideline for completion beyond their design reference. This can result in a different quality of output to what may have been initially intended. The application of petroleum jelly over the stencil may be used to decrease the likelihood of it fading.		✓

Time	Time may affect tattoo outcomes in a variety of ways. If a client finds the experience particularly painful, more breaks may be required, thus time to complete the tattoo. If the session over runs and the tattooist has another client waiting, in some circumstances this may mean that the client can leave with a partially completed tattoo. Time also changes the appearance of tattoos and is a factor that is considered in tattoo design (i.e., lines are spaced apart to allow for them to thicken in appearance over time, without merging into each other). Healed tattoos tend to be less vibrant than those just executed, and lines more subject to increase in thickness as the tattoo/client ages. The tattooist may also under-estimate the time taken to complete a piece, and thus a client may leave the studio with a partially completed piece. In these cases, tattooists will often aim to complete the piece to a degree that it is not directly noticeable that it is unfinished (i.e., lined and shaded, but not coloured). The tattooist may honour the quoted amount charged to the client for tattoo completion, if they have underestimated how long the process takes.	✓	✓

Though Table 7 does not represent all possible factors that can affect tattoo outcome, it indicates a range of influences on how tattoos come into materiality, highlighting how tattoo production is collaboratively informed. Each of the factors can interact with each other—the extent of which is dependent on the tattoo being executed, the client, and the practitioner.

3.2.1 Examples of factors that affect tattoo outcome

Table 8 provides examples of how tattoo production can be affected by the factors listed in Section 3.2. The examples emphasise Schön's (1983) notion of 'reflection in action' that is present in tattooing, elucidating on how practice is affected by the factors discussed as/when they arise. The factors that are present in each example are listed and colour coded, and commentary on how the factors have affected the outcome is provided. The

factors are italicised within the commentary to emphasise their presence. More detailed autoethnographic accounts of example are available (see Appendix E, p.481) and are discussed further in Section 4.2 (p.126).

Table 8: Examples of tattoo outcomes that have been affected by the factors proposed in Section 3.2 (McDade, 2020)

Examples of factors that affect tattoo outcome		
#	Image(s)	Comment
1	*Image 1: Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 169 (text tattoo already present).*	Image 1 shows a tattoo produced in commemoration of a clients deceased relative. The design was requested to be placed around the ankle area but had to be positioned around a previously obtained tattoo (*existing tattoos*). The client requested the piece to be tattooed in a purple colour, which was symbolically significant to the relative that the tattoo memorialises. As purple is a difficult colour to saturate, multiple passes of colour packing were required. Had an alternative tone of purple been used, this may not have been the case (*ink selection*). Additionally, the client reported that their skin was dry through frequent exposure to sun (*skin attributes*), meaning that it did not accept the pigment as efficiently as might be the case had the skin had less sun exposure (*ink acceptance or rejection*) and required extra caution when tattooing to prevent irritation.

	To avoid potentially causing unnecessary trauma to the skin, the session was ended despite inconsistent colour saturation, with the intention of colouring the piece a second time in a free touch-up session. More experienced tattooists may have been able to apply the colour in a way in which a second pass is not required (*ability*).
	(see Appendix E.3, p.492, for full autoethnographic account)
	Factors

#	Image(s)	Comment
2	 *Image 2: Adam McDade (2019). Stencil placed on inner ankle area, which was then removed and the design edited to face the opposite way.* *Image 3: New tattoo (left) placed on the body to match the position of the previously executed tattoo on the opposite leg (right).*	In example 2 the client requested a stylised portrayal of a character from a computer game on the inside of their ankle area. As the design requested is based on an existing character, the stylisation process was necessary to create a custom design for the client (*reference imagery*). The design was made into a stencil and placed on the body, before it was noted that the figures positioning was not in flow with the body (*placement*), as shown in Image 2. During the consultation process, it was decided to have the placement of the tattoo to be opposite a previously executed tattoo (*existing tattoos*) that was based on a different character of the same computer game, as shown in Image 3. Image 4 depicts the completed tattoo, and Image 5 shows a healed tattoo that has retained all intended qualities due to the client adhering to an aftercare routine (*aftercare*). The outcome is still comparatively lighter than when it was first produced due to the natural ageing process (*time*). (see Appendix E.4, p.502, for full autoethnographic account)
		Factors

Image 4: Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 210.

Image 5: Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 195 (healed).

Aftercare

Existing tattoos

Placement

Reference imagery

(practitioner)

Time

(client)

#	Image(s)	Comment
3	 *Image 6: Unfinished wing design tattoo (2020).* *Image 7: Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 269.*	Example 3 depicts a tattoo completed in two sittings, of wings on the client's upper chest. The design was sized and placed on the body so that it was complimentary to the client's body composition (*body structure*). The session was completed in two settings due to its large size and placement, with the outcome shown in Image 6 depicting the tattoo that the client left with after the first appointment. As the tattoo is placed near the collar area, the skin required multiple stretching adjustments with the non-tattooing hand (*placement*). This means that the tattooing process took longer than it may have if the tattoo was produced on other areas of the body. This increased the duration of the appointment (*time*). Example 3 was one of the largest tattoos I have produced at the time of writing (May 2020), on an area that I had no experience tattooing. This meant that other more experienced tattooists may have been able to complete a tattoo of similar detail and size at a faster pace (*ability).* As the area of the body is particularly painful to be tattooed on (*pain*), multiple movements were made by the client, resulting in time

		being spent correcting areas of the piece that were not intentionally tattooed (*movement*). The pain resulted in the client sweating (*physical and psychological health*), which contributed the stencil fading (*stencil*), resulting in the reliance on the printed reference (*reference imagery*). The experience of causing such noticeable pain to the client led to emotional distress for having to cause such trauma, and the necessity to frequently alter bodily positioning lead to severe physical discomfort (*physical and psychological health*). When the pain became too severe for the client, the body began to reject the ink, and the session was ended (*ink acceptance or rejection from body).* The session was ended at the point of the outcome shown in Image 6. The tattoo was completed in an alternative session, as shown in Image 7. (see Appendix E.6, p.516, for full autoethnographic account)
		Factors

	Ability / Body structure / Ink acceptance or rejection from body / Movement / Pain / Physical and psychological health / Placement / Reference imagery / Stencil / Time
	(client) (practitioner) (practitioner)

3.2.2 Summary of factors that affect tattoo outcome

This section has identified a range of factors that may affect the tattoo outcome, that are necessary to acknowledge to better understand tattoo production. The factors are classified as client-based, practitioner-based, or both—emphasising the collaborative nature of production. The examples shown in Table 8 demonstrate that tattoo production is influenced by factors beyond what can be inferred from an image of a completed tattoo alone. These factors are not discussed in academic literature (see Section 2.1, p.23) and are not apparent when encountering tattooing in public terrain (Section 2.2, p.41). When tattoo

269 (shown in Table 8, image 7) was uploaded to my social media page, for example, the factors that affected the production of the tattoo would not necessarily be known to those viewing the image, despite their significance. Recognition of these factors is thus important to aid understanding of tattoo production and the tattooist's role.

3.3 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

This chapter illustrates the procedure through which tattoos may come into materiality, and the factors that affect tattoo outcome. Tattoo production is presented as collaborative between client and practitioner. The key points of the section can be summarised as follows:

- Tattoo production can be considered a combination of four processes: consultation; design; preparation; tattooing.

- The consultation process involves the client and practitioner devising the tattoo outcome. The design process involves the tattooist generating imagery to inform the outcome. The preparation process involves the setting up of a hygienic workstation/gathering of materials, and the creation and application of an appropriately sized stencil on the client body. The tattooing process involves the practitioner executing the tattoo outcome onto the client body.

- The tattoo outcome may be affected by a range of additional factors, which can be client-based, practitioner-based, or both. The factors can shape the way the output appears the way it does.

- These factors are necessary to consider to authentically represent tattoo production and practice.

This chapter responds to the knowledge gap isolated in Chapter 2 (p.23) regarding tattooing practice, addressing the related questions, aims, and objectives of this research. It demonstrates that while tattoo outputs may vary in subject matter, size, style, placement etc., (see Section 3.1.5, p.91, for examples) the processes of production discussed within are shared. Factors affecting the outcome can differ based on client/practitioner/tattoo and are

necessary to acknowledge to better understand tattoo production more broadly. In doing so, Chapter 3 offers a framework for understanding tattoo production.

As Chapter 2 (p.23) has discussed, the cultural prevalence of tattooing has led to a broad range of clientele who choose to become tattooed in different ways. Barron (2017) states, "… tattooing is seemingly a ubiquitous presence within modern social life and culture" p.vii). Though the medium and procedure of production are consistent, it is necessary to distinguish the way in which the practitioner approaches the medium based on the brief to better understand the tattooist's occupational role. Having provided a contextual overview that highlights the diverse landscape of practice in Chapter 2 and an overview of how tattoos come into being in this chapter, the next chapter examines the occupational role of the tattooist.

CHAPTER 4: THE MULTIFACETED ROLE OF THE CONTEMPORARY WESTERN TATTOOIST

As Chapter 3 presents, professional tattooing is inherently collaborative, requiring a practitioner and a client. Lodder (2010a), comments that tattoo authorship, "…can never rest entirely with either party" (p.130), and states, "even though many tattooists are artistically talented and keen to produce custom pieces of work, they are also bound by the commercial realities of the tattoo industry" (p.143). This impacts the tattooist's relationship to practice. The role of the tattooist is thus proposed as two intra-connected facets; the provision of tattooing as a medium (material), and the provision of tattooing as a service (non-material).

Figure 17 references the Taoist rooted *Yin-Yang* symbol to illustrate both facets; simplistically, *Yin-Yang* represents the entanglement between the observable (yang—white) and unobservable (yin—black) world that constitutes the whole (Yang, 2010, p.136). Borrowing from this symbolism, the material facet of tattooist's role can be considered the observable (yang), and the non-material facet can be considered the unobservable (ying). This chapter elucidates on both these facets.
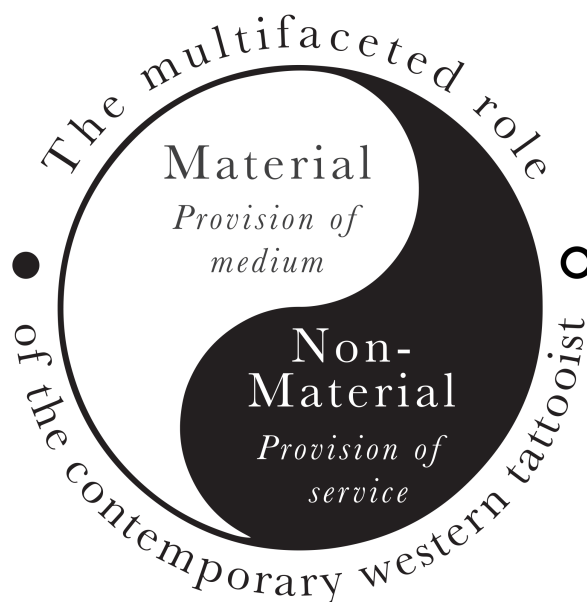
Figure 17: Diagrammatic illustrating the multifaceted role of the contemporary western tattooist, based upon the Taoist rooted 'Yin-Yang' symbol (McDade, 2020)

As Chapter 2 has discussed, tattooing has become increasingly visible in western culture (see Govenar, 1981; Kosut, 2006; Rees, 2016)—proliferated and popularised through media sources in more recent decades (Barron, 2017). This has resulted in a broad range of clientele and the creation of "…a structure in which the way one wants to be tattooed holds equal weight with the result" (Plescia-Buchi and Schonberger, 2018, p.11). George Bestall, co-founder of London-based *Cloak & Dagger Tattoo,* claims, "things have changed a lot in tattooing over the past 10 or 20 years, with people from all walks of life now getting tattoos" (2017, p.34).

A varied clientele has resulted in the practitioner's relationship with practice to be in accordance with the specifics of the client, as Sanders and Vail (2008, p.107) have suggested. Tattoo production may involve the same processes presented in Chapter 3, but the tattoo produced and the how the tattooist operates in bringing the outcome into being may vary. For example—the execution of a tattoo of a 1cm symbol on the wrist of a young person obtaining their first tattoo requires a different relationship with the medium and a different nature of service to when working on a full back piece, for a heavily-tattooed collector. Both clients could be tattooed by the same tattooist and on the same day. Both require the provision of tattooing as a medium and a service, but how these are provided differ.

Section 4.1 offers a framework for understanding the material facet, and Section 4.2 offers a framework for understanding the non-material facet of the tattooist's role. The recognition of both facets is essential to represent the role holistically. In doing so, this chapter directly addresses research question 1, aim 1, and objective 1, thus narrowing the knowledge gap presented in Chapter 2 surrounding tattooing practice and practitioner.

4.1 PRAGMATIC CONTINGENCY: THE MATERIAL ROLE OF THE TATTOOIST

This section expands on a position previously presented (McDade, 2019a) surrounding the tattooists material role, in which the term "pragmatic multiplicity" (p.269) is coined. The term has since been revised and replaced with the term 'pragmatic contingency', highlighting the shifting mode of approaching the medium (contingency) in accordance with the most suitable course of action to complete the brief (pragmatic). The material facet of the role of the tattooist is presented on a non-hierarchical spectrum of operational modes (craftsperson, designer, and visual artist) which are depicted in Figure 18 and will be

discussed in the sub-sections to follow. The operational modes described should not be understood as objective and didactic definitions of what a craftsperson/designer/visual artist is, but as a heuristic for how the material facet of the tattooist's role may be delineated. The degree of authorial input of the tattooist (which can be understood as their unique visible presence within the outcome) is considered for each operational mode, further representing the collaborative nature of practice.
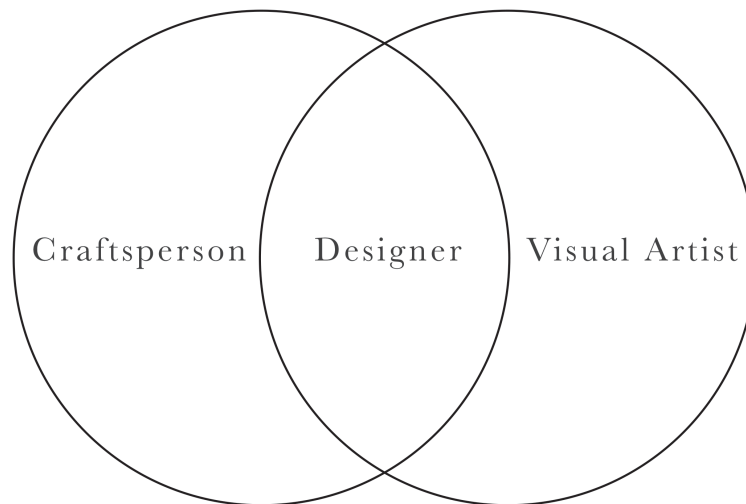
Figure 18: Diagrammatic depicting the contingent operational mode of the contemporary western tattooist. Original iteration in McDade (2019, p.270) (McDade, 2020)

4.1.1 The tattooist as a craftsperson

Adamson (2007) describes craft not as a purely physical action but as a process and a "…way of doing things…" (p.4). Craft is presented as a complex composite of principles that are "supplemental" (p.9) to an outcome, entailing engagement with the properties of a "material" (p.38) utilising a degree of "skill" (p.69). Craft as "pastoral" (p.103) and as "amateur" (p.139) are also discussed but are of less relevance to the position being presented.

When discussing the supplemental properties of craft, Adamson (2007) borrows an example given by Derrida (1987) of a painted piece of art and a crafted frame, stating, "a great painting must not be besmirched with a cheap mass-produced frame" (p.13). In this example, the frame is supplemental to the painting and requires a craftsperson for its creation. Adamson (2007) states that good craftspersonship "…draws no attention to itself;

it lies beneath notice…" (p.13). The frame should not express artistic qualities of the craftsperson, but rather, supplement the painting. Should the framed painting be purchased, it is the work of the painter rather than work of the frame maker that is sought.

The supplemental nature of craft can be applied to tattooing in some instances in which the tattoo adheres to the notion of client, "identity expression" (Kosut, 2000, p.80). For example, with tattoos of subjects of names, dates, symbols, etc., such as those presented in Figure 19, the client's primary interest can be understood as the personal significance behind the subject matter, rather than the visual properties of the tattoo absent of the context with which they identify.

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 139.   *Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 135.*   *Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 205.*

Figure 19: Examples of tattoos completed when operating as a craftsperson (McDade, 2020)

The tattoos shown in Figure 19 would not have equivalent significance to the clients if the names, dates, or symbols differed. Their appearance (in terms of selected font, size, line thickness, etc.) is dictated by the client based on their personal preference and can be compared to a consumer who is selecting a frame in a shop to display an important subject, such as a family photo. My input is based upon my knowledge of the material properties of the medium and my skill with it (e.g., suggesting the tattoo size be large enough to avoid illegibility in time as it ages). In executing the tattoos shown in Figure 19, my position can be considered supplemental to the tattoo subject; the clients were not seeking me as a tattooist specifically, and an alternative tattooist would be able to execute the piece to a satisfactory standard. It is the material properties of the medium executed with a degree of skill that the client requires.

Adamson (2007) presents 'skill' in craft as complex and difficult to objectively define. When skill is discussed in tattooing it may be considered as, "control within a productive operation, the ability to reduce error", and "purposefully constrained physical action" (p.73). This also aligns with Sennett's (2008) definition of skill within craft as, "…knowing which act should be done with which thing" (p.195) and his comment that skill level accords with experience (p.268). The skill required to complete tattoos when operating as a craftsperson relates to the controlled execution of the materials, rather than the production of original imagery that represent the visual style of the tattooist. Should the lines in examples be 'shaky' in appearance, or the ink inconsistently saturated then the level of skill may be lesser, but the operational mode would still be that of a craftsperson.

Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 262.   Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 154.   Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 147.

Figure 20: Further examples of tattoos completed when operating as a craftsperson (McDade, 2020)

Figure 20 depicts other examples of tattoos that I have produced when tattooing as a craftsperson. In each example, the subject matter is pre-existing—sourced in album/gaming artwork/symbolism. The tattoos produced required a practitioner with sufficient skill with the materials of the medium, who is supplemental to the subject (other tattooists may achieve an almost identical output). Despite the supplemental relationship to the subject, the tattooist's authorial input is still present. Multiple tattooists may follow the same stencil but produce an outcome that is reflective of *their* skill with the materials which may differ from tattooist to tattooist, and thus contain a degree of authorial input beyond application alone.

When working as a craftsperson, the authorial input of the practitioner is lesser than that of a tattooist working as a visual artist.

4.1.2 The tattooist as a visual artist

Sanders and Vail (2008) introduce the notion of the "fine-art tattooist", as those who are "…selective about the images they create…" (p.19). The notion of 'tattooist as artist' is also discussed in Atkinson (2003) and Barron (2017). This section proposes the notion of 'tattooist as a visual artist', highlighting how although the medium is shared, the mode of operation and tattooist authorial input visible in the outcome is distinct from that of the 'tattooist as a craftsperson'.

In their analysis of creative art-making, Mace and Ward (2002) state, "artists tend to produce a number of artworks that explore and express particular themes…", that, "…represent the artist's exploration of a particular style or concept" (p.192). The emphasis is on the practitioner's exploration with a theme or style based on their personal interest. While tattooing is patron-based, the culture of the 'tattoo collector' is common (see Irwin, 2003; Barron, 2017). Collectors may seek work from a tattooist who they resonate with, in the same way they may seek the work of a visual artist as an art print. The client is engaged with the themes or style of the specific practitioner working with tattooing as a medium, rather than the medium exclusively.

The tattooist may be operating as a visual artist when they are producing tattoos that are reflective of their own aesthetic sensibilities, with a decreased degree of client input. This reflects the notion presented by Dissanayake, (2015) that, "…it has generally been accepted that artists are more interested in their works as entities in themselves than they are in their success in representing some aspect of reality or ideality *outside* themselves" (p.40, original emphasis). In contrast to working as a craftsperson when their authorial input is less visible, when working as a visual artist the specific tattooist is essential to obtain the desired outcome, and their authorial input is pronounced. Figure 21 provides examples that reflect the positon of 'tattooist as visual artist' proposed.

Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 243.   *Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 250.*   *Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 215.*

Figure 21: Examples of tattoos produced when operating as a visual artist (McDade, 2020)

The designs for the examples shown in Figure 21 were created without a specific client in mind and were produced as part of my personal stylistic investigation (see Chapter 5, p.160). Despite the design generation being autonomous of a specific client, each design was sized, positioned, and tattooed in accordance with the idiosyncratic factors pertaining to each tattooee. For example, the central tattoo shown in Figure 21 (Tattoo 250) had to be flipped in orientation from how it was originally produced to fit the space between existing tattoos on the client's body, emphasising the collaborative nature of production discussed in Chapter 3. Though the degree of client input in the examples shown in Figure 21 is minimal, the tattooist can still be considered operating as a visual artist when client input is greater.

Adam McDade (2019). Cobra design
produced as part of my stylistic exploration,
that later informed tattoo 250.

Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 247.

Figure 22: Example of a tattoo produced when operating as a visual artist (right), with the design for the tattoo informed by the style of a previously created tattoo design (left), on client request (McDade, 2020)

Tattoo 247 shown in

Figure 22 depicts a tattoo produced for a client who had approached me specifically having resonated with the work displayed on my social media platforms. The client requested the subject of an open-mouthed snake and flowers, after seeing a similar design that I had created (that later became Tattoo 250, shown in Figure 21). It was important for the client that the style was consistent with that which they had seen in my other work, but the subject was customised to their preference. This is representative of how tattooists operating as visual artists conventionally work; the client commissions a practitioner of their predetermined selection to produce a tattoo that is stylistically consistent with their existing work, but the subject, size, and bodily placement are often client instigated. When operating as a visual artist the tattooist's authorial input is highly visible and necessary to achieve the desired outcome.

A few high-profile tattooists are able to exclusively adopt this position of visual artist, with some being granted "celebrity status" (Barron, 2017, p.vii). These practitioners tend to be celebrated in specialist media (see Section 2.2, p.44), but for many tattooists—tattooing as a visual artist is not an everyday occurrence. The degree of the tattooists' visible authorial

input can be greater than when operating as a craftsperson, but lesser than when operating as a visual artist, however. In these cases, the tattooist may be operating as a designer.

4.1.3 The tattooist as a designer

The notion of a designers role is varied in academic discourse (Tan, 2012, p.46). Whiting (2011) states that, "the designer is perceived as a main player but has limited influence…" in the production of an "…outcome based upon the needs of the client and user" (p.553). This understanding conforms to that presented by Margolin (1994), who in discussing the historical role of designers, claims, "they brought an artistic sensibility to this project, but had no voice to address the project itself" (p.67). While these definitions may be understating in some cases, they can be considered generally representative of the tattooist operating as a designer.

If a client desires a subject matter or style that requires a degree of artistic sensibility that stretches beyond the replication of a reference image but is not seeking the work of a specific practitioner per se, the tattooist executing the piece may be operating as a designer. The tattooist may create an outcome that engages with their artistic knowledge in a way that effectively fulfils the brief, but their authorial input to the outcome is peripheral, rather than almost invisible (as with when operating as a craftsperson) or vividly visible (as with when operating as a visual artist). The outcome is dictated by the restrictions instigated by the client, requiring a combination of craft-like skills and visual artistry from the practitioner. Figure 23 depicts three examples in which the operational mode adopted may be considered on the spectrum of a designer.

Masayoshi Sukita (1977). Photograph of musician David Bowie, used for the cover of album, 'Heroes'.

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 178.

John Tenniel (c.1865). Wood engraving illustration for Lewis Carroll book series.

Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 267.

Chris Daunt (2012). Pippi Bengal Kitten. Wood engraving.

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 213.

In the first example the source image was provided from photographic reference. The client required the hands in the photograph to be positioned how they are in the tattoo design to be recognisably representative of David Bowie, from the album cover of *Heroes* (1977). The outcome was stylised and altered to enable it to be tattooed as a line drawing while maintaining recognisable features. I produced the design by tracing the photograph in fineliner, and interpreted details based on my personal reading of the reference.

In the second example the source image came from an illustration by John Tenniel, used in Lewis Carroll's, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)*.* The outcome was produced by making a stencil of the Flamingo head, with the neck added using a free-hand technique (see Section 3.1.3.2.1, p.80) to position the piece around existing tattoos. Colours were added on client request, with the blue highlight the result of my recommendation for contrasting tones. The line quality of the piece was also stylised slightly for aesthetic purposes sharing similarities with the quality of line depicted in tattoos shown in
Figure 22 (when operating as a visual artist).

In the third example, the client requested the subject of a bottle that contained a ship, clouds, a whale, an anchor, and sand inside of it, referencing a wood-engraving style. Examples of wood-engravings were shown by the client on their mobile device during the consultation process. The engraving titled *Pippi Bengal Kitten* by Chris Daunt (2012) is representative of the style sought. The design was then produced with these aesthetic sensibilities in mind, and stylised based on my personal interpretation. The outcome is reflective of my attempt at best meeting the brief utilising my artistic knowledge and skills with the medium.

In all examples the client desired a specific outcome, but not necessarily a specific practitioner. In each example, however, the outcome may appear different if executed by an alternative tattooist, while still successfully fulfilling the brief. This contrasts with the examples shown in Figure 21 when operating as a craftsperson (in which the outcome could be almost identical if executed by an alternative practitioner), and the examples shown in

Figure 22 when operating as a visual artist (in which the outcomes represent my own stylistic approach).

Grant and Fox (1992) state that designers, "...combine their own aesthetic tastes with the realities of the marketplace and the client's needs..." (p.79). When operating as designer, the tattooist can be considered to have a degree of influence on the appearance of the outcome, but not on the specific subject matter, size, style, or other aspects of the brief that the client instigates. The authorial input of the tattooist is peripherally visible in the outcome, but not by necessity.

4.1.4 Summary of pragmatic contingency: The material role of the tattooist

This section expands on the position presented in McDade (2019a) of the tattooist operating as craftsperson, visual artist, and designer. The examples shown demonstrate that despite being executed by the same practitioner, the tattooist's operational mode is contingent in accordance with the brief. This notion of shifting mode is termed 'pragmatic contingency'. Each operational mode results in outcomes that remain inherently collaborative between tattooist and client, but the degree of tattooist authorial input adjusts.

The tattooist operating as a craftsperson is required to utilise the materials of tattooing with a degree of skill to create an outcome in which their authorial input is vaguely visible, and no *specific* tattooist is required. When operating as a visual artist however, the tattooist is essential in producing the outcome desired which is reflective of their approach to the medium, and their authorial input is vividly visible. The tattooist can be operating as a designer when they meet the brief through combining their skill using the materials (as they would if operating as a craftsperson) and their individual aesthetic approach to tattooing (as they would if operating as a visual artist); their authorial input is peripherally visible in the outcome and can be detected, but not with the degree of clarity present when operating as a visual artist.

Figure 18 presented earlier in Section 4.1 can now be displayed as Figure 24. The modes of operation that constitute the tattooist's material role are depicted, with an additional indication of the tattooist authorial input visibility in tattoo outcomes when adopting them. This is illustrated as a gradient arrow that is lighter on the left side (tattooist as

craftsperson), and darker on the right side (tattooist as visual artist), with tattooist as designer being grey. The gradient of the arrow also indicates the varying degree of tattooist authorial input within each operational mode (for example, both tattoo 178 and 213 shown in Figure 23 were executed as a designer, but my authorial input is more visible in the latter than it is the former).

Craftsperson   Designer   Visual Artist

Tattooist authorial input visibility in tattoo outcome
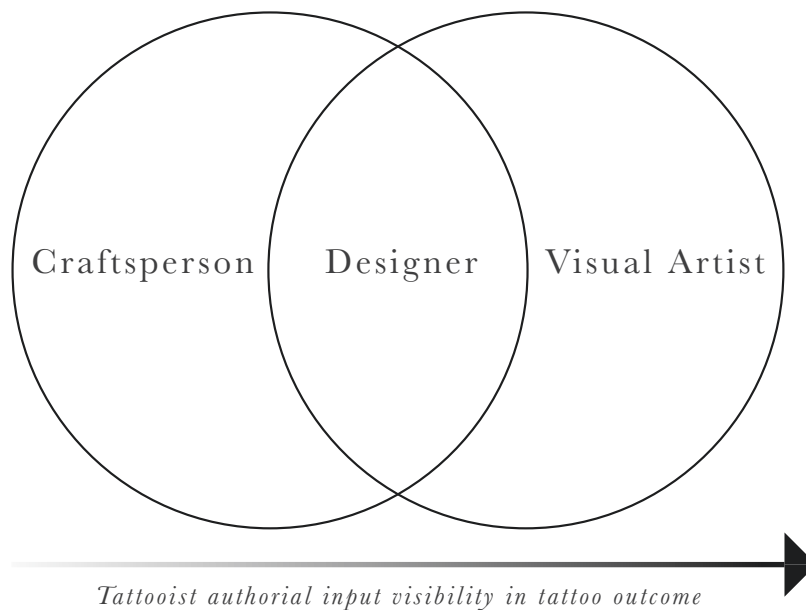
Figure 24: Diagrammatic depicting the contingent operational modes of the contemporary western tattooist, and the tattooist's authorial input visibility in the tattoo outcome when adopting each mode. Original iteration found in McDade (2019, p.270) (McDade, 2020)

Though the operational modes presented are broad, the distinctions are valuable in better understanding the tattooist's material role. Many notable practitioners such as Amanda Wachob (2012, p.142), Jon John (2012, p.126) and Thomas Hooper (2012, p.39) have been cited as considering tattooing as art and/or craft, but no specific framework for what this constitutes is defined. This section has presented a framework for understanding the material and observable facet of the tattooist's role in the provision of the medium.

4.2 THERE IS MORE TO TATTOOING THAN JUST TATTOOING: THE NON-MATERIAL ROLE OF THE TATTOOIST

Follett (2009) states, "tattooing requires to be studied in a holistic way, not limited solely to one aspect or component of tattooing" (p.5). While this research is concerned with practice,

the materials of practice include sentient clients, each with individual attributes. Reflecting on his ethnographic work *Customizing the Body,* Sanders (2009) states, "I began to think about the tattooist as a service worker who had to find effective ways to define and interact with customers…" (p.66). This section elucidates on the non-material facet of the tattooist's role in the provision of service, drawing upon autoethnographic accounts of practice to do so.

Three themes are identified as constituents of the tattooist's non-material role in the provision of service. These themes are termed; 'conscious canvas', 'navigating tension', and 'person, not just practitioner'. An outline of the autoethnographic approach taken is presented, before elucidating on how these themes can be understood.

4.2.1 Utilising an autoethnographic approach

Section 1.4.4 (p.13) Introduces autoethnography as a methodological tool. This section reiterates and expands on this introduction, before outlining the specific approach taken.

Autoethnography is an approach that draws upon personal experience to generate broader cultural understanding, or as articulated by Wall (2016), "…to make linkages between the micro and the macro…" (p.6). It has been accused of being "self-indulgent" (Sparkes, 2001, p.209) and unscientific, as Campbell (2017) illustrates in their autoethnographic work on criticisms experienced (and their defence) of being an autoethnographer. Two central scholars, Ellis and Bochner (2006), defend and celebrate the approach and state, "our enthusiasm for autoethnography was instigated by a desire to move ethnography away from the gaze of the distanced and detached observer and toward the embrace of intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation" (pp.5–6). These factors of 'intimate involvement', 'engagement', and 'embodied participation', are considered of core importance in addressing the void of internal practitioner perspectives (see Section 2.1.3, p.38) in academic literature, and in communicating what cannot be expressed through imagery exclusively.

As Section 2.1.2.4 (p.33) notes, the ethnographic fieldwork of Sanders and Vail (2008) was conducted in an immersive fashion through receiving tattoos, helping with studio business, and customer engagement (p.192). Though valuable (despite being representative of a

different cultural context of tattooing regarding time-period), this research has been conducted by sociologists, and not practitioners. As such, it lacks some of the insight that may only be gained through practice to illustrate and expand upon the findings it presents. The previously noted qualities of autoethnography addressed by Ellis and Bochner (2006, pp.5–6) highlight its applicability in addressing the limitations of Sanders and Vail (2008) and illuminating the non-material facet of the tattooist's role.

Autoethnography can take numerous forms. Evaluating what constitutes an autoethnographic approach can be difficult and criteria can be ambiguous. Sparkes (2018) discusses various lists and criteria that scholars have devised, commenting that they are "…fluid and changing, open-ended, and context specific, leaving us with only multiple standards and temporary criteria" (p.266). In his earlier work, Sparkes (2001) claims, "…it is clear that tensions, conflicts, and differences of interpretation will persist regarding autoethnographies", commenting that the diversity of potential approaches, "…should be seen as an invitation to deepen our understanding and sharpen our judgements…" of autoethnographic research (p.225). The approach taken in this research has been devised based on what best responds to research question 1.2 regarding the non-material facet of the tattooist's role.

4.2.1.1 Outline of the approach taken

From 2017 tattooing has been both my occupational practice and my research topic, and numerous tattooing experiences have been deemed significant in what they have revealed about my role. These experiences adhere to what are termed "epiphanies" in the autoethnographic tradition (Denzin, 1989, p.33) and inspired long form, textually rich reflective accounts to be produced in "thick description" (Geertz, 1977, p.10), describing the internal and external experience of my practice. Six accounts were produced in total, written within less than a week of their occurrence to ensure accuracy of detail. The full accounts are published on a research blog (adammcdade.weebly.com/beyond-the-epidermis) and can be found in (Appendix E, p.481).

Section 1.4.4.1 (p.13) introduces an approach celebrated by Bochner and Ellis (2016) termed 'evocative', which is characteristically emotionally engaging, confessional, and celebratory of the personal. The accounts produced fit into the evocative autoethnography tradition in

their raw form. As Section 1.4.4.1 (p.13) has also introduced, Anderson (2006) proposes, 'analytic autoethnography' as an approach "… that is consistent with traditional symbolic interactionist epistemological assumptions and goals rather than rejecting them" (p.378). The analytic framework involves being a member of the topic/culture being researched; an awareness of the researcher's impact on what is being researched; clear visibility of the researcher within the autoethnographic content; dialogue with others who have experienced the topic of research; analysis that aids broader understanding of what is researched. The analytic framework has been considered in analysing the accounts and ensure that the findings are presented in a way that indicates transferable themes of the non-material facet of the tattooists role.

All accounts describe personal tattooing experiences but are representative of numerous similar tattooing experiences of myself, colleagues, and many other tattooists. This has been verified through discussion on such topics with other tattooists within the studio as part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1999), first-hand conversation with external practitioners (as discussed in Section 2.3, p.49), and through published practitioner perspectives from specialist resources (cited in sections to follow).

The six accounts were placed into the software *NVivo 12* as individual documents. Three themes were identified in each as notable constituents of the tattooist's non-material role in the provision of service, and termed: 'conscious canvas', 'navigating tension', and 'person, not just practitioner' (defined in the sections to follow). Though the themes share commonalities and can overlap, they were deemed sufficiently distinct from each other to warrant individual classification.

NVivo 12 allows the highlighting of sections of text from individual documents that can then be placed into a 'node' (for the purposes of this research, the 'node' refers to thematic category). Sections of text from each of the six accounts were highlighted and categorised by the themes they related to ('conscious canvas', 'navigating tension', and 'person, not just practitioner'). Three documents were then produced that contained thematically collated references from the six accounts. These were further analysed by identifying the characteristics of each theme.
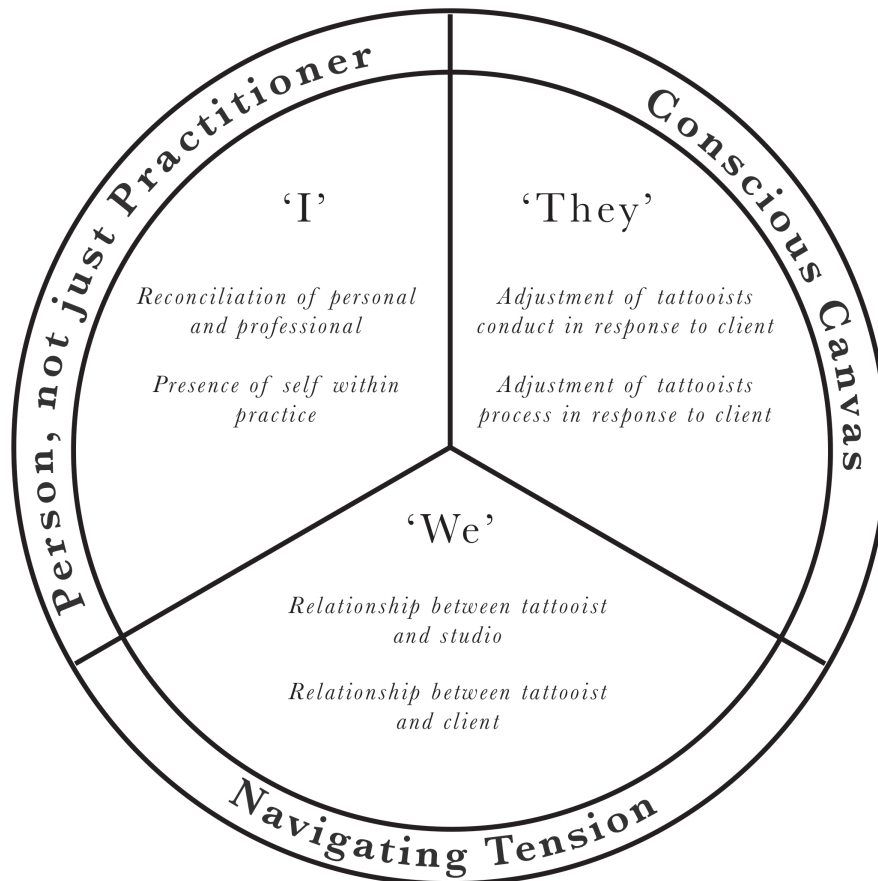
Figure 25: Diagrammatic depicting the themes (outer text), and characteristics (inner italic text) of the non-material role of the contemporary western tattooist, indicating the subject that is primarily concerned from the practitioner perspective (inner text indicating pronoun) (McDade, 2020)

Figure 25 depicts each theme (outer text) and the characteristics that were isolated (italic inner text), indicating the subject that is primarily influential from the practitioner perspective (inner text indicating pronoun). The characteristics are elaborated upon as each theme is introduced. Vignettes from each autoethnographic account that have been isolated through the approach described will be utilised to exemplify the positions regarding the non-material facet of the tattooist's role.

Prior to introducing the themes, it is useful to summarise the raw autoethnographic accounts and the 'characters' (clients the accounts relate to) within them.

4.2.2 Background and summary of autoethnographic accounts

The accounts are titled with a pseudonym of the name of the client. They are reflective of different levels of experience of tattooing between 2018–2020. A summary of each account is presented in Table 9, in the chronological order in which they were written and experienced. Each client has been attributed a colour in the table, which will be included in the vignettes that follow to indicate the source account.

Table 9: Background and summary of autoethnographic accounts of tattooing practice, including the client name (pseudonym), the date the original account was produced, and imagery related to the tattoo outcome (McDade, 2020)

Background and summary of autoethnographic accounts			
#	Client name (pseudonym)	Date of account	Image(s) related to tattoo outcome
1	Rebecca	12/2018	*Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 260.* *(A photograph was unable to be taken of Rebecca's tattoo due to technological problems. The tattoo shown is therefore not Rebecca's, but is of the same subject matter and the placement of the tattoo on the body is almost identical)*
Summary of autoethnographic account			

This is an account of tattooing a female aged eighteen, receiving her first tattoo of a simple heart-shaped outline on her wrist. The account is written while still in the apprentice stage of my tattooing career, in which tattoos are offered to clients at a heavily discounted cost to allow for technical practise. The material production of the tattoo is described. Factors such as client age, familiarity with being tattooed, and gender are discussed in relation to my conduct and approach in the provision of a service.

Full account available in Appendix E.1 (p.482).

#	Client name (pseudonym)	Date of account	Image(s) related to tattoo outcome
2	Ryan	01/2019	*Adam McDade (2018). Tattoo 38.* *(Ryan had to leave the studio early as he was parked on a meter, resulting in no photograph being taken of his tattoo. The tattoo shown is not Ryan's, however it is stylistically alike and was executed in a similar way)*

Summary of autoethnographic account

This is an account produced of performing my first 'free-hand' tattoo (see Section 3.1.3.2.1, p.80). The material process is discussed including problems that occurred, and the internal practitioner experience and conduct revealed. The conversational nature of the tattooing experience due to the durational aspect of the practice is highlighted, providing an example of how as an occupational theme, tattooists must navigate interactions with those they might not otherwise engage with due to conflicting perspectives.

#	Client name (pseudonym)	Date of account	Image(s) related to tattoo outcome
3	Linda and Samantha	08/2019	*Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 169.*

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 170.

Summary of autoethnographic account
This is an account of performing two matching tattoos that were obtained with the motivation of memorialising the client's loss of a relative through suicide. The necessity of personal presence in executing tattoos that are deeply imbued with meaning is made apparent, and the ways this can resonate with and personally affect the tattooist after the tattooing experience is acknowledged.

Full account available in Appendix E.3 (p.492). |

#	Client name (pseudonym)	Date of account	Image(s) related to tattoo outcome
4	John	10/2019	

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 210.

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 210 (left) and 195 (right).

Summary of autoethnographic account

This account discusses a client who I had tattooed on three separate occasions. It demonstrates how through the conversational nature of practice a relationship is formed, which may result in a client returning for further tattoos. Irritation experienced through client movement is also discussed, and reflections are made upon the source of the irritation and the considerations around improvement of future practice from a material and non-material perspective.

Full account available in Appendix E.4 (p.502).

#	Client name (pseudonym)	Date of account	Image(s) related to tattoo outcome
5	Alice	02/2020	*Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 246* .

Summary of autoethnographic account

This account discusses the process of creating a minimum-charge (see Section 2.4.3.1, p.64) 'walk-in' tattoo (a tattoo without a formal appointment) of a design combining an infinity symbol, paw print, a heart, and a name. It reveals the various factors that account for minimum-charge tattoos sometimes being less desirable for the practitioner to produce than more elaborate pieces (though it is acknowledged that this is not always the case). Factors include the time taken to prepare the materials in contrast to the time taken to create the tattoo, the felt pressures of the practitioner due to the generally simple nature of walk-in tattoo designs in which any errors made are highly visible, and the tendency for walk-in tattoos to be imbued with meaning by the client and thus the amplification of the responsibility of the tattooist to ensure client satisfaction. The empathetic connection that can result from conversation between client and practitioner is discussed, relating specifically to a health issue the client had experienced.

Full account available in Appendix E.5 (p.508).

#	Client name (pseudonym)	Date of account	Image(s) related to tattoo outcome
6	Kacper	02/2020	 *Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 253.* *Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 269.*

Summary of autoethnographic account
This is an account of tattooing a large design of stylized wings under the client's collar bone and around the chest area—an area considered particularly painful. It outlines the processes and interactions that occurred during a full-day tattooing session, in which both client and practitioner experience varying levels of pain and discomfort from procedure/bodily positioning. How this

affects the psychological state and conduct of the tattooist is discussed. Practitioner anxiety and emotional engagement with clients are reflected upon in relation to how this can affect and shape the experience of tattooing as a professional practice.

Full account available in Appendix E.6 (p.516).

4.2.3 Conscious canvas

'Conscious canvas' refers to the materials of tattooing including a conscious surface, subject to numerous factors such as age, cultural background, personal taste etc. In the same way that the tattooist's material operational mode is contingent upon client brief (as discussed in Section 4.1, p.115) the tattooist's *conduct* and *process* may also adjust in accordance to the specific client, in the provision of service.

4.2.3.1 Adjustment of tattooist conduct in response to client

Tattooist conduct can be understood as the way that the tattooist behaves and engages with the client. This involves taking into consideration the biographical factors of the client through knowledge gained in conversation, and inference based on client demeanour and behaviour. When tattooing Rebecca (
Figure 26) who was receiving her first tattoo at the age of eighteen, it was apparent that she was nervous due to inexperience and unfamiliarity with the tattoo studio environment.

Vignette 1	Rebecca	12/2018
"I noticed who I assumed to be Rebecca waiting outside of the studio with her boyfriend having a cigarette at around 9:50 am. I assumed it to be Rebecca due to the direction of the eye gaze and noticed a sense of nervousness from her actions and from my experience of observing others outside the studio displaying similar characteristics."		

Figure 26: Vignette 1. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Rebecca (McDade, 2020)

In this case the adjustment of conduct was required. This can mean speaking to the client with an awareness of their state of mind, and adjusting factors such as tone of voice or physical posture accordingly, trying to relieve anxieties when possible (Figure 27).

Vignette 2	Rebecca	12/2018
"I offered her a drink of water while she waited and assured her that the set-up would probably take longer than the actual tattooing procedure, in an effort to make her feel less nervous and more at ease."		

Figure 27: Vignette 2. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Rebecca (McDade, 2020)

A similar adjustment of conduct in relation to the specific needs of the client is present in the account of tattooing John (Figure 28).

Vignette 3	John	10/2019
"Carrying a nervous disposition and some difficulty with speech due to a stammer, I tried to adopt a lightness of tone and to have a consultation away from the studio desk area (where they are typically conducted) in favour of the seating area. This was to ensure a more informal setting that I hoped would make John feel more comfortable."		

Figure 28: Vignette 3. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing John (McDade, 2020)

Jones, Taylor and Bansal (2008) discuss factors that contribute to client loyalty within service industries broadly, stating, "…consumers can become committed to two different entities: the service company and the individual employee with whom the consumer interacts" (p.275). The significance of social exchange in service industries is also highlighted (ibid, p.475). As John is a returning client a pattern of conduct emerged in which my approach to our interactions was adjusted to suit him uniquely, resulting in his continuous return to me as a tattooist in a studio in which over ten tattooists may be working simultaneously.

Adjustment of conduct and tone of communication is necessary when performing 'memorial tattoos', which can be understood as, "…an expression of a bereaved person's continuing relationship with the deceased person that the tattoo memorializes" (Cadell et al., 2020, p.1). Memorial tattoos are known to be a common motivation for obtaining a tattoo from personal professional experience, and from academic literature (e.g. Pentina and Spears, 2011; Hill, 2014, p.202). When creating tattoos that have been sought for such reasons, it is important to gauge the comfort of the client in talking about the motivation for their tattoo. In their research in the discipline of hairdressing, Garzaniti, Pearce and Stanton (2011) state, "service firms may then choose to tailor their communication with clients on the basis of the patronage length and client preference for conversation during the service encounter" (p.682). This notion is transferrable to tattooing, as was found when creating matching memorial tattoos for Linda and Samantha (Figure 29).

Vignette 4	Linda and Samantha	08/2019
"As we walked over and I prepared Linda's skin to be tattooed, I tried to keep my conversation tone light, while simultaneously trying to welcome any depth of content that she would like to share. My tone of voice contained a 'brightness' to try and communicate openness and acceptance of whatever Linda wanted to share with me, and when Linda started to speak about Michael, I asked questions that elaborated on the content she was already discussing (such as his taste in music and how his brother is emulating it now). The questions were along the lines of "…so did Michael play an instrument?", and I had tried to ensure that what I was asking was not overly personal, but personal enough for Linda to understand that I was willing to listen to whatever she was comfortable to share, and create a space for her to do so."		

Figure 29: Vignette 4. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Linda and Samantha (McDade, 2020)

In some cases, attention to client sensibility also includes gauging if a client is claiming to be comfortable or satisfied with an aspect of the procedure that they are not, but are resistant to vocalise. Examples can be found in the account of Kacper (Figure 30), who was being tattooed in a particularly painful area of the body. It was necessary to address the discomfort that was detected non-vocally.

Vignette 5	Kacper	02/2020

"After creating the first line of the tattoo, I could sense Kacpers discomfort in the tension of his body and rigidity of posture. I offered him some kitchen roll to have in his hands, to absorb the sweat that was naturally coming from his palms."

"Kacpers breathing was becoming increasingly unsteady as the tattooing procedure commenced, and when I occasionally looked at his face, I noticed that he was squinting. I asked at regular intervals if he was okay, which he assured me he was, and I insisted that I get him a drink of water as I noticed a white deposit around the corners of his mouth and I worried that he may be dehydrated."

Figure 30: Vignette 5. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

The benefit of 'canned comments' or 'small talk' in distracting from tattooing pain is noted in Sanders and Vail (2008, p.138), and is acknowledged as an important aspect of service industries more broadly (Nikolich and Sparks, 1995; Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996). When tattooing a particularly painful area it is often useful to communicate topics such as the remaining duration of the session, the procedural conduct, advice on surrendering to the sensation, and the offering of praise to the client for their ability to withstand pain. This communication is valuable in assuring client comfort and thus a positive experience (increasing the likelihood of client retention), in addition to making tattooing easier due to client stillness. Examples of communication of this kind can be found in the account of Rebecca (Figure 31).

Vignette 6	Rebecca	12/2018

"As I continued the tattooing procedure, I attempted to maintain 'small-talk'; asking Rebecca what her plans were for the rest of the day, what she studies, and what her and her partner have planned for the Christmas period."

"I also informed her that she was sitting very well, in an effort to maintain enthusiasm and distract from any pain".

In addition to adjusting conduct, the tattooists process may shift when working on a conscious canvas in a way that would not be present when working on non-sentient surfaces.

4.2.3.2 Adjustment of tattooist process in response to client

The patron-based nature of tattooing means that the client's aesthetic taste and sensibilities are generally more important than the practitioners. As such, the tattooist might adjust aspects of their process in response to the client's preferences or circumstances.

In the case of tattooing Linda and Samantha (Figure 32) it was important that the design was coloured purple, which was deemed significant as it referenced the favourite colour of the figure who was being memorialised through the tattoo. Though my preference would be to have tattooed the silhouette in black ink, it was of greater importance that both clients were satisfied with the symbolically imbued colour choice.

Vignette 7	Linda and Samantha	08/2019
"I brought Linda three different tones of dark purple to choose from for the colour of her tattoo, and kept the bottle that she had selected on top of the booth area to refill for when it came to tattooing Samantha, ensuring that the tones matched".		

Figure 32: Vignette 7. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Linda and Samantha (McDade, 2020)

In some cases, the client may request a tattoo to be executed in a way that can be problematic. Sanders and Vail (2008, p.27) note the work of Griff (1970) in their discussion of the tattooist adopting a "compromise role" (p.156), in which they attempt to persuade the client to opt for an approach that satisfies both client and practitioner preferences.

This rationale for persuasion may be based on tattoo longevity (how clear the tattoo will appear over time) and involve a simplification of design for smaller pieces, or an alternative consideration of bodily placement of a piece if the area is prone to not sustaining legibility

(e.g., fingers, palms, lower areas of the feet). In the case of Kacper (Figure 33) who was receiving a tattoo of a pair of wings on his upper chest with text underneath, multiple versions of design were created for him to select his preference on the day of his appointment.

Vignette 8	Kacper	02/2020
"The finished wing design composite was then printed, and text drawn in a similar style to the image added in pencil onto the printout. This was then traced in a similar fashion to the above, before an alternative text option was also created. This was to give Kacper more options in his design choice. Both texts were scanned into the computer and placed into the file containing the wing design, and three variations of placement were created."		

Figure 33: Vignette 8. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

Kacper and I had discussed having the text run parallel to the wing design during the consultation. In the design process I had opted for an alternative placement for the text which echoed the anatomical shape of the chest. A text style based on a computer-generated font was created, and an alternative hand drawn font created that was deemed more visually consistent to the stylistic appearance of the piece. From a personal perspective independent of the client request, the hand drawn text and physiologically harmonious placement of the text was considered stronger, however it was necessary to offer Kacper a version of the design in keeping with our original discussion.

4.2.3.3 Summary of conscious canvas

This section suggests that that the non-material role of the tattooist is affected by the consciousness of the surface. The tattooist may adjust both *conduct* and *process* in relation to each client, as part of the provision of service. Ensuring a positive client experience is integral, as tattooist and owner of *The Family Business* Mo Coppoletta has stressed (2017, p.48), with *Parliament Tattoo* owner and tattooist Scott Move stating, "when you are getting something as intimate, expensive and fucking painful as a tattoo, the experience is as important as the outcome…" (2017, p.154).

As tattoos are created on humans, by humans, and generally within a collective studio environment amongst other humans, variable forms of tension can arise.

4.2.4 Navigating tension

'Navigating tension' refers to the possible tensions that can occur in tattooing as professional practice, that must be dealt with as an aspect of the non-material facet of the role. As tattoo studios are businesses, the tattooists working within them are expected to produce high-quality outcomes, at a frequency that generates profit for the studio. This relationship between the *tattooist and the studio* may incite tension that must be navigated. The collaborative nature of tattooing makes it a practice in which social interactions between tattooist and client are common. This relationship between *tattooist and client* may also result in tension occurring that the tattooist must navigate in the provision of service.

4.2.4.1 Relationship between tattooist and studio

There are two conventional business modes of contemporary tattoo studios. The first involves tattooists renting space from the studio but supplying their own materials. The second involves the studio taking a percentage of the total income from each tattoo session but providing all materials to tattooists. This research has been conducted in a studio that conforms to the latter. This mode of business shares commonalities with Illustration agencies, who will often take a high percentage of the cost of an illustration job in exchange for their services (Zeegen and Crush, 2005, p.142). As the studio is a business, one of its central purposes is to create profit through the productivity of the resident tattooists.

The studio in which this research has been undertaken is "multi-award winning" (Triplesix Studios, 2020) with the studio name being synonymous with a high level of quality. Bronnenberg and Dubé (2016) state, "…a consumer develops a brand preference through positive associations between the brand and the consumption benefits of the underlying product" (p.12). The studio can be considered a brand, with each client assuming a level of quality on offer from the 'products' and service provided. These expectations to deliver a high-quality outcome (thus profit) may cause tensions for the practitioner.

If tattooists have gaps between appointments studios may advertise that there is 'walk-in' space available, using social media and front-door signage. The value of walk-in tattoos in the potential creation of a returning client who may also recommended the tattooist/studio to their personal networks has been expressed by prestigious tattooist Henk Schiffmacher (AKA, Hanky Panky) in his appearance on the *Tattoo Tales* podcast (Bastiàn, 2019), and is considered common knowledge amongst practitioners. Despite the potential benefits, walk-in tattoos are generally considered less desirable to execute amongst more experienced tattooists and are frequently assigned to early-career tattooists. This expectation from the studio to complete such tattoos as a less experienced practitioner can cause tension, as was noted in the account of Alice (Figure 34).

Vignette 9	Alice	02/2020
"…there is a greater requirement for skilled craftspersonship, which as a junior practitioner, is less honed than that of my senior colleagues. Coupled with the acknowledgment that many walk-in tattoos (from my experience of both tattooing and working on the studio desk) are sentimental in nature to a varying extent, the level of responsibility to produce a high-quality output feels greater, making tattooing of this nature as a junior tattooist particularly anxiety inducing".		

Figure 34: Vignette 9. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Alice (McDade, 2020)

As a junior tattooist the tension and insecurities experienced must not be revealed to the studio members in fear of appearing unsuitable or inept (Figure 35).

Vignette 10	Alice	02/2020
"It would also be considered bad practice for me to refuse to tattoo based on my resistance from the perspective of the studio, who must adhere to business demands and not turn away custom for reasons that might be deemed unnecessary. For this reason, it is always my intention to not reveal my insecurities about my ability or my desire to avoid doing such tattoos to both my clients and my colleagues/superiors"		

Figure 35: Vignette 10. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Alice (McDade, 2020)

The premature ending of a session by the practitioner due to factors such as pain or fatigue (see Section 3.2, p.96) is also discouraged. As will be outlined in Section 4.2.5, the tattooist is present as an individual as well as a practitioner, and can find emotional difficulty in causing severe pain to a client. This was the case in tattooing Kacper (Figure 36), were I was willing to charge the client a reduced rate at my own expense, rather than the studios.

Vignette 11	Kacper	02/2020
"It is discouraged to offer a reduce price in the studio as they also lose out, however I was willing to 'take the hit' myself financially to stop having to continue causing the trauma I had been commissioned to any longer while in the state of mind that I was."		

Figure 36: Vignette 11. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

As professional tattooing is an industry, 'profit' is a consistently present theme. The studio expectation of the acquisition of profit from the tattooists working within it may cause tension however, as this section illuminates. As Figure 36 suggests, tension experienced may additionally involve the relationship between tattooist and client.

4.2.4.2 Relationship between tattooist and client

The commonality of tattoo consumption from a range of clientele (Heywood et al., 2012) requires tattooists to interact with those they may not otherwise engage with. While this

can often be one of benefits of the occupational role (as discussed by tattooist Robert Ryan in his podcast conversation with Stortz, 2019), occasionally tensions can occur when conflicting perspectives arise. This was the case in tattooing Ryan (Figure 37), in which the material aspect of practice was directly affected by the content of the conversation.

Vignette 12	Ryan	01/2019
"As we were discussing Ryan's' hometown and his feelings towards it, he expressed unfavourable sentiments as it had what he termed 'a big Asian problem'. He then went on the express views and opinions of Asian communities that, in conservative terms, could be understood as deductive and prejudice. As the tone of communication and nature of Ryan's' opinions are in vast contrast to my own in a way that could be deemed offensive, I found that I was subconsciously applying more pressure with my needle while packing the ink into the skin. I didn't vocalise my contrast to his perspective, as I didn't deem it pragmatic to fulfilling my role efficiently, but rather attempted to subtly but noticeably direct the conversation to an alternative topic."		

Figure 37: Vignette 12. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Ryan (McDade, 2020)

In their discussion of the management of patient dissatisfaction in cosmetic surgery, Adamson and Kraus (1995) state, "…the most common reason a cosmetic surgeon gets sued is a lack of rapport between him and the patient" (p.102). A similar emphasis on rapport importance may be applied to tattooing (though perhaps with less severe consequences resulting from rapport absence). Sanders and Vail (2008) state, "concerned with minimizing conflict while maximizing economic and interpersonal rewards, the tattooist has a clear interest in understanding the client and channelling his or her intentions and behaviour" (p.108). In the case of Ryan, it was necessary to navigate the tension that occurred from the strongly oppositional views held between us, retaining a demeanour of professionalism that considers the interests of the studio, in spite of personal perspectives (Figure 38).

Vignette 13	Ryan	01/2019
"My role as a tattooist is not to adopt a position of moral arbiter and attempt to change Ryan's' views, however toxic they may appear. Attempting to do so may actually be detrimental to the likelihood of his return, and thus bad for business."		

Figure 38: Vignette 13. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Ryan (McDade, 2020)

Tension navigation may extend beyond the avoidance of conflict. As demonstrated in Section 4.2.3 tensions can arise in engaging in conversation that deals with personal and sensitive topics, such as the death of a loved one (Linda and Samantha) This need for heightened sensitivity of client state is also pronounced when tattooing in particularly painful areas, to avoid causing unnecessary irritation (Figure 39).

Vignette 14	Kacper	02/2020
"As I glanced up at Kacper, I noticed how much pain he was in, which was evident with the movement he was making with his hands, feet, and legs. I continued to ask him if he was okay or if he wanted to stop for a break, but felt that if I asked him a further time it could irritate him."		

Figure 39: Vignette 14. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

As Figure 39 alludes, the tension experienced may be instigated by the relationship between tattooist and client, but introspective for the practitioner. This will be further elaborated in Section 4.2.5.

4.2.4.3 Summary of navigating tension

This section highlights the theme of tension navigation within the non-material facet of the tattooist's role. Tension is potentially present between the tattooist and the studio; the studio operates as a business and thus aims to profit. The quality of tattooing is expected to

be reflective of the studio reputation. Resistance to taking on tattooing jobs due to insecurities or preferences must be navigated to appear competent and adhere to studio requirements. Tension is additionally recognised as potentially present between tattooist and client; the tattooing process is durational, involving a communicative exchange. In some cases, this can cause tension that must be minimised by the tattooist in the provision of service.

In both sections, it is suggested that the tattooist must be sensitive to the requirements of the client. In many instances, the relationality of practice can require the presence of, or have an effect upon, the personhood of the practitioner.

4.2.5 Person, not just practitioner

'Person, not just practitioner' refers to the relationship between the personal and professional self that is present within practice. To varying extents, the tattooing process is painful, durational, and functionally intimate—intimacy that is a by-product of the intended outcome (Schroeder et al., 2017). As the previous sections have indicated, sociability is a significant aspect of the tattooing experience, with conversation that may start as 'small talk' often being a gateway to more authentic conversation, allowing connections to be established. The notion of "commercial friendships" occurring from professional client oriented practice has been discussed in the context of hairdressing (Garzaniti, Pearce and Stanton, 2011, p.667). Though sharing connection and alteration (and thus trust) in common—In contrast to hairdressing, tattooing involves pain and permanence. This may result in increased vulnerability for the client, and may cultivate a desire for the tattooist to care for the client as a person, not just a practitioner. The role of the tattooist thus can involve a *reconciliation of the personal and the professional*, and practice may be impacted (and thus occupation affected) by the *presence of the self* within it.

4.2.5.1 Reconciliation of personal and professional

Unlike disciplines such as illustration or graphic design, the practitioner and client must be simultaneously present for tattooing to occur. As Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 have suggested, intimacy of variable extents is present within tattooing experiences. This may result in emotional resonance between practitioner and client, which in some cases must be

reconciled to maintain professionalism. An example of this may be in practitioner discomfort with the consequential infliction of pain that tattooing creates, as can be found in the accounts of Linda and Samantha (Figure 40), and Kacper (Figure 41).

Vignette 15	Linda and Samantha	08/2019
"Samantha's arms were thin and appeared delicate, and I felt uncomfortable in both putting pressure on her arm and in inflicting the pain that the tattoo process incurs. It didn't feel appropriate to be causing additional pain to somebody I deemed to be suffering so much already. I contemplated how this feeling has occurred in other scenarios, such as tattooing people who are aged only around eighteen or nineteen, or people who clearly find the pain more difficult to tolerate."		

Figure 40: Vignette 15. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Linda and Samantha (McDade, 2020)

In the case of tattooing Linda and Samantha (Figure 40) the discomfort felt in inflicting pain was based on knowledge of the client's grievance, and inferred fragility. When tattooing Kacper (Figure 41), his physical expression of pain made executing the tattoo difficult to reconcile, despite his instruction to continue.

Vignette 16	Kacper	02/2020
"I also felt incredibly distressed at having to be repeatedly engraving a line in a surface that was evidently causing agony, which was clearly communicated somatically. Each baby wipe that I used to wipe away the excess ink appeared to be a lot more red than it was black, making the process feel like a torture procedure more than the positive experience that I aspire for each of my clients to have."		

Figure 41: Vignette 16. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

In addition to the feeling of guilt for causing pain, anxiety may be present when tattooing. This may be when tattooing those who have not reached full adult maturation, and as such may make different decisions in their late adolescence/early twenties, to when reaching full

adulthood (Johnson, Blum and Giedd, 2009, p.1). Nuances that contribute to the anxiety may include the desire to not patronise the client, and the necessity of physical touch in the procedure. This was acknowledged in the account of Rebecca (Figure 42).

Vignette 17	Rebecca	12/2018
"As a generally introverted and self-aware twenty-nine-year-old heterosexual male based in the post-industrial town of Sunderland, tattooing an eighteen-year-old female who I have never met and is getting her first tattoo in the knowledge that I am an apprentice carries a certain gravity. In addition to executing the tattoo, I am also required to bypass my social anxiety; addressing the client in an appropriate manner so as not to patronise her due to the age gap, while simultaneously ensuring her comfort. I must touch her for a prolonged period in a manner typically reserved for traditional forms of intimacy, being careful not to make her feel uncomfortable, and explaining the necessity of my conduct. I also must contend to the pressure and responsibility that I assume in taking on a tattoo in which any mistake is visually apparent, for a client new to tattooing, and as a junior practitioner. I must additionally feel ethically justified in offering the tattoo at a lower rate than that of a senior tattooist to a client to whom budget may be a greater consideration, due to age and access to income."		

Figure 42: Vignette 17. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Rebecca (McDade, 2020)

Anxiety and stress may be present in undertaking challenging pieces. The trust imbued in the tattooist by the client is based upon the expectation of a successful outcome/studio reputation, however in some cases, the tattooing procedure may cause material difficulties that the tattooist had not expected. In these instances, the tattooist must repress expressing difficulties they are experiencing to maintain a demeanour of professionalism, and not concern the client. An example can be found in the account of tattooing Kacper (Figure 43), in which the material difficulties of practice were combined with the discomfort caused in being the facilitator of intense pain, the expectation of a successful outcome for the client, and generation of income for the studio.

Vignette 18	Kacper	02/2020

"I felt conflicted knowing I had to continue as part of my occupation; knowing that I was causing such intense pain for a client who I already felt empathetically connected to through his vulnerability; knowing that I had to deliver a certain quality of output that I didn't feel I could achieve the way I had thought I was capable of previously; knowing that Kacper would have to pay me a sizeable sum of money in exchange for what he had to suffer, with what I thought would be a result he would be unhappy with; knowing that the studio expected to make their half of the money from the tattoo total cost; Knowing that the studios reputation was carried in part through me; knowing that the studio was recommended to Kacper by a trust worthy friend for its internationally award-winning reputation, to be what I felt was let down, while in a foreign country in which connections were limited; knowing that I had made a sizeable and permanent mark on Kacper as a young man of twenty-one years of age, when taste is subject to change, and knowing that the tattoo I had produced was covering a one he was already unhappy with—a tattoo that was in honour of his deceased mother with wings representing her angelic presence in Kacper's life. While finishing the details of the right-hand wing, I considered if I was capable of being a tattooist, if experiences such as this are representative of the future of my career."

Figure 43: Vignette 18. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

In cases akin to Kacper (Figure 43), the intimate and difficult experience of both parties can lead to the natural occurrence of an authentic and sincere relationship. For the practitioner, the presence of the "professional self" may become less pronounced, and the "personal self" and the "personal humanity" of the practitioner (Kissil, Carneiro and Aponte, 2018, p.71) more apparent. While in the examples given the personal and professional self must be reconciled, in some cases the tattooist's personal humanity cannot be separated from practice. The social transactions that take place may have an impact on the practitioner that can affect them during, as well as after the tattooing procedure.

4.2.5.2 Presence of self within practice

The collaborative nature of tattooing may lead to observations of self that otherwise may not be made. This may occur through "reflexive practice", which can be understood as "…focusing close attention upon *one's own* actions, thoughts, feelings, values, identity, and their effect upon others, situations, and professional and social structures" (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018, p.14, original emphasis). This form of reflexivity was found in the account of John (Figure 44), in which the recognition of my irritability at his movement resulted in reflection of my personal self within practice.

Vignette 19	John	10/2019
"After moving fairly frequently, I witnessed myself feeling irritable, and simultaneously feeling annoyed at myself for feeling irritable. I understood that the area I was tattooing was prone to create involuntary movements and can be painful, and understood rationally that the movements were not the result of any lack of attempt to stay still. Despite this acknowledgement, I found myself feeling frustrated by the consistent movements, and noticed myself being less engaging with John in the way that I would have liked to have been."		

Figure 44: Vignette 19. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing John (McDade, 2020)

Ibid. state that reflexivity, "…can only be done by somehow becoming separate in order to look at it as if from the outside: not part of habitual experience processing" (p.14). This can be found in the case of Ryan (Figure 45) who had suggested views that I found personally offensive, but the durational nature of practice necessitated further communication. This led to contemplating how cultural conditioning can shape, but not necessarily define, an individual.

Vignette 20	Ryan	01/2019
"As I continued to tattoo and talk with Ryan, I found that although we had some severely contrasting opinions, on a human level I was able to be in his company without		

> *any severe discomfort. I considered how culturally and generationally we differed, and how this might affect how we deem validity of information sources such as newspapers and news articles. Ryan's culturally influenced reality tunnel was different to my own, but I recognised through the lengthy interaction that the medium of tattooing allows for that despite contrasting identity constructs, we were able to coexist harmoniously, and enjoy (or at least respectfully tolerate) aspects of each other's company."*

Figure 45: Vignette 20. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Ryan (McDade, 2020)

While in the cases discussed the presence of self in practice was in the form of introspective reflexivity, in the case of Linda and Samantha (Figure 46), a direct emotional resonance was created. It transpired that Linda was a friend of my late father, who at the age of sixty-two ended his life by deliberately not taking his required medication for numerous health conditions after a life-long struggle with depression and alcoholism. As Linda was being tattooed in commemoration of her deceased nephew and was aware of my biographical narrative prior to my disclosure, the personal self was organically present.

Vignette 21	Linda and Samantha	08/2019
"Linda's expression of condolence made me aware that she was already informed of my own loss, and we had a shared experience of grievance. As I continued to outline the tattoo—an already intimate procedure in which I am touching the client's body with my hands, with the remainder of my body in close proximity and with the client positioned in a manner that is aimed towards informal relaxation (it is important to ensure a client is comfortable when they are being tattooed and have them in a position that maximises this), the intimacy of the exchange became more nuanced. I stated that my comparative loss was not the same and that Linda's was no doubt more severe, as Michael was significantly younger than my Dad, who's death had been anxiously anticipated far ahead of it happening."		

Figure 46: Vignette 21. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Linda and Samantha (McDade, 2020)

In this case (Figure 46) my personal self was present in a way that the client was aware. To meaningfully engage, it was necessary to draw upon personal experience, which resulted in a residual emotional reverberation from having discussed such topics. In some instances, the tattooist may find that the conversational nature of practice ignites emotional states such as empathy and compassion, in more nuanced ways. This is in keeping with the notion of "emotional contagion", which Banerjee and Srivastava (2019) describe as, "...the process of transferring one individual's behaviors and emotions to another individual" (p.250), which can take place consciously and subconsciously (ibid., p.255). Emotional contagion can be found in the account of Alice (Figure 47), in which the discussion of her recovery from a brain tumour coupled and her positive demeanour affected me on a personal level.

Vignette 22	Alice	02/2020
"As I was tattooing the final details of Alice's tattoo, I couldn't help but feel an emotional resonance with her spirit and a sympathy for her; sympathy that was not necessary given her gracious approach to life. I recognised how my sympathy was not exclusively to her and her triumphant story of recovery from a life-changing ordeal through positivity, a loving community, and humour, but to an almost archetypical personality type that I recognised. Her gentle, passive, and kind demeanour coupled with her midlands accent reminded me of a figure in my life who shared many common experiences of dealing with difficulties with resilience and determination. Though the biographical specifics between Alice and my connection differed, the nature of the narrative shared similarities. This connection between Alice and the figure to who she represented to me was only made upon later reflection, but felt in the moment of the experience as a gathering of emotion that was felt in my body, and expressed through the sincere presence of compassion and wish of wellbeing for Alice and her family. This feeling stuck with me."		

Figure 47: Vignette 22. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Alice (McDade, 2020)

Emotional contagion may lead to emotional triggering, as Figure 47 alludes. This was also the case in tattooing Kacper (Figure 48), when during our interaction I was triggered into focussing on my ongoing body image struggles.

Vignette 23	Kacper	02/2020
"Kacper asked me when he could next go to the gym, and I asked if he trained with weights, or cardio. With a straight face and matter-of-fact tone, he expressed, "cardio, because I am fat", which I did not feel was particularly true, and felt a sadness in that Kacper saw himself this way and stated so in such an objective manner. His expression of disdain towards his body reminded me of myself and my life-long issues with bodyweight and eating disorders, and of my younger brother who has similar issues. I felt I wanted to make peace with his insecurity in the way I am unable to do for myself, but I recognised that this was not appropriate."		

Figure 48: Vignette 23. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

In the cases of Alice (Figure 49) and Kacper (Figure 50), emotional triggering outlasted the encounter.

Vignette 24	Alice	02/2020
"Even in recording the experience in writing, I find the presence of emotion that cannot be categorised in the singular. It is more the amalgamation of compassion for others in recognition of the fragility and impermanence of existence, sadness surrounding the insecurities ever present in others and in myself that are culturally and sociologically ingrained, and admiration for the resilience of the human spirit to prevail. The presence of these emotions may be uniquely my own, based on my individual nature and sense of being in the World, but the experience of being personally affected by the presence of a client while tattooing is not just unique to me."		

Figure 49: Vignette 24. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Alice (McDade, 2020)

Vignette 25	Kacper	02/2020

"Later that evening when approaching the front door of my one-bedroom flat where I live with my partner, I felt an intense build-up of emotion that increased in severity in syncopation with the turn of my key in the door. My partner said hello from the kitchen, to which I replied while entering the bedroom to hang up my jacket. She came into the room, looked at me, and asked if I was okay. As I went to explain I burst into tears, explaining the experience to her. She assured me that the tattoo looked good, and was supportive and empathetic to the experience."

Figure 50: Vignette 25. Excerpt from autoethnographic account of tattooing Kacper (McDade, 2020)

The notion of 'tattooist as counsellor' is commonly discussed within tattoo communities, to such an extent that in 2014 an American television network aired a show titled, *Ink Shrinks* (Inked Mag, 2018). The effect on the tattooist of engaging with a client who has experienced personal trauma, such as health issues or grievance, has been directly observed through working within the studio. The experience of emotional contagion has been visible in the shift of tattooist demeanour after tattoo completion, or the tattooist being openly in tears once the client has left.

4.2.5.3 Summary of Person, not just practitioner

This section suggests that the personal humanity of the tattooist may be present in practice in addition to the professional self and may need to be reconciled. The collaborative nature of practice can also affect the tattooist's personhood. This includes challenging personal perspectives, emotional contagion from client to tattooist, and emotional triggering based on social interactions.

In the discipline of the counselling, the practitioner has a supervisor to whom they can gain guidance from relating to occupational difficulties (Creaner, 2013). As no such role exists in tattooing, direct management of the difficulties that can occur from being present as a person, not just a practitioner, is required, and thus a characteristic of the role.

4.2.6 Summary of there is more to tattooing than just tattooing: the non-material role of the tattooist

This section utilises an autoethnographic approach to elucidate on the non-material facet of the tattooist's role. Six accounts were produced and analysed identifying three common themes, termed: 'conscious canvas', 'navigating tension', and 'person, not just practitioner'. The process of writing the accounts allowed for the themes to become clear, and the thematic analysis of the accounts allows for the otherwise non-observable findings to be communicated.

'Conscious canvas' demonstrates how the tattooist must adjust both conduct and approach in response to the sentience of the surface. The identity of the client must be sensitively considered by the tattooist, who must adjust their conduct to maximise client comfort. The processes employed may be adjusted to suit the requirements of the client, in a way that may contrast the tattooist's aesthetic judgement. 'Navigating tension' presents how tensions may occur from working in a studio which operates as a commercial business, and from collaborating with clients as a purveyor of a process of permanent alteration, in a service-industry context. Tension must be navigated to ensure the satisfaction of the studio and the client, taking profit, studio reputation, and client contentment/retention into consideration. 'Person, not just practitioner' elucidates on how practitioner identity may need to be reconciled to establish an equilibrium between personal/professional, and how the personal self of the tattooist may be affected by practice. The functional intimacy (Schroeder et al., 2017) of practice can lead to sincere care for the clients, causing distress for the tattooist in unavoidably inflicting pain from the tattooing process. The conversational aspect of practice may lead to emotional contagion (Banerjee and Srivastava, 2019) in which the clients emotional state may transfer to the tattooist, or cause emotional triggering, having a lasting psychological impact on the tattooist.

It is worth highlighting that this research has been conducted in a post-industrial town in the North-East of England, and as such is representative of tattooing in a specific sociocultural context. It has been undertaken as a junior tattooist, and as such some factors (e.g., anxiety surrounding practice) may not be as pronounced with more experienced practitioners. It has also been undertaken as a white male, and thus the experiences recorded may be different if the accounts were produced by non-male, or non-white tattooists, even if in the same

context. While specific factors may vary, the themes isolated can be considered broadly representative of the non-material facet of the tattooist's role—providing a service, in addition to the medium. This section thus offers a framework from which the tattooists non-material and unobservable role can be understood.

4.3 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

This chapter elucidates on role of the tattooist holistically. The material role of the tattooist is presented as the provision of tattooing as a medium, and the operational mode employed in providing the medium is contingent. The non-material role of the tattooist is presented as the provision of service, and the service provided is shaped by the client, the studio, and the practitioner. The key points of the chapter can be summarised as follows:

- The broad range of tattoo clientele means that the tattooist's role is multifaceted, shifting on a client-to-client basis.

- In the provision of the medium, the operational mode employed by the tattooist can be considered that of a craftsperson, designer, or visual artist—on a contingent and pragmatic basis. The authorial input of the tattooist visible in the tattoo outcome adjusts depending on the operational mode adopted. These distinctions are useful to better understand the material role of the tattooist, and tattoo production.

- In the provision of a service, the tattooist may adjust their conduct or process in accordance with the specific client. Tension may emerge from working in a commercial studio context and with a variety of clients, which must be navigated. The presence of the tattooist's personhood may arise due to the conversational nature of practice; this may need to be reconciled to ensure professionalism, or may be affected by the intimacy of practice. These themes are necessary to recognise to better understand the non-material role of the tattooist, and tattoo production.

Having provided an overview of the tattoo production in Chapter 3 (p.70) and the role of the tattooist in this chapter, the next chapter will elucidate on how tattooing as a medium has been practically investigated to cultivate a stylistic approach.

CHAPTER 5: DEVELOPING A STYLISTIC APPROACH WITH TATTOOING AS A MEDIUM

This chapter responds to question 2 and aim 2 by documenting a creative investigation of tattooing as a medium in the development of a stylistic approach, informed by my professional and academic experience.

My professional background is first introduced in Section 5.1 to aid understanding of my aesthetic sensibilities as an illustrator/designer, providing visual context to the sections that follow. Early tattooing practice and development is discussed in Section 5.2, accounting for the implications of the material properties of the medium on the appearance of the outcome. The investigation of stylistic approach is then introduced in Section 5.3, noting the influences of marketplace consumption. The cultivated style is termed, 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing in Section 5.4, which is defined, contextualised, and considered in relation to marketplace engagement. Reflections are then made on how the introduction of 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing has contributed to the partner organisation of this research, in keeping with the NPIF funding criteria of this research.

Sanders (1989b) has presented a sociological analysis of tattooists' stylistic development and alludes to some key influences on it (practitioner skill, organisational structure, tattoo marketplace) that remain relevant today. This chapter provides a contemporary, detailed, and practitioner-based perspective of what these influences look like. In doing so, this chapter provides a framework for understanding the relationship between tattoo style cultivation and the factors that influence it in a contemporary context.

5.1 PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AS AN ILLUSTRATOR

As introduced in Section 1.1 (p.1), my background prior to tattooing is that of a tattoo enthusiast and collector, and illustration and design practitioner. During and after my bachelor's and master's degree, I have worked as a freelance illustrator/designer. I have additionally been employed at the *University of Sunderland* as an academic tutor for the illustration and design programme from 2016 and have assisted with teaching on the MA Design programme since 2020.

My approach to image making has been largely centred around traditional mediums, utilising digital tools to aid (rather than generate) visual content. The appearance of the hand-made mark that is indicative of tangible interaction with the materials has been consistently present within my work. This includes creating contrasting degrees of refinement and detail in the same image, in appreciation of such aesthetic sensibilities. The primary tools used have been fine-liner pens, Indian ink and brushes, graphite, coloured inks, and collaged materials. Recurring themes include Eastern-inspired subjects, psychedelia, portraiture, and natural forms.

I have produced work for numerous contexts and for a variety of clients. A full portfolio can be seen via my website (adammcdade.weebly.com). The largest commission completed at the time of writing (September, 2020) involved the production of twenty-six portraits for the book *Tangentially Reading* (2018) by evolutionary psychologist, podcast-host, and *New York Times* best-selling author Christopher Ryan (Ryan, 2019). Figure 51 depicts a sample of examples of these portraits.
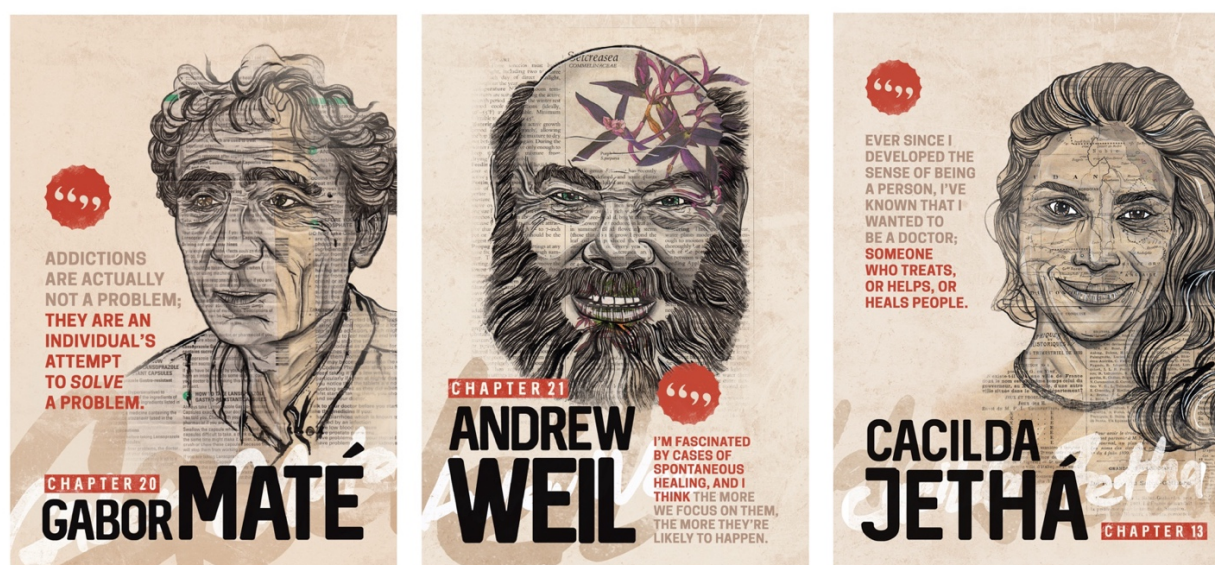
Figure 51: Examples of illustrations used in Ryan (2018). Portraits of physician Gabor Maté (left), medical doctor Andrew Weil (centre), and psychiatrist Cacilda Jethá (right). Illustrations created using ink and graphite, on surfaces pertaining to the occupational background of the person depicted (McDade)

Other contexts include editorial illustration such as those shown in Figure 52. A series of illustrations were produced to accompany an article I wrote surrounding experiences of grievance following the death of my father, for a regional publication. My personal work outside of commercial or directed briefs has been created with the objective to expand my

skillset and explore composition. Figure 53 depicts works produced in keeping with this motive.

Figure 52: Photographs of illustrations produced to accompany an article titled, 'In Loving Memory', written for The Northern Correspondent Magazine (2016). Illustrations created using ink, graphite, collage, and Adobe Photoshop (McDade, 2020)

Figure 53: Personal illustration works. 'Ginsberg' (2017) depicting Beat Generation poet and student of Hinduism, Allen Ginsberg (left). 'Love Everyone, Tell the Truth' (2020) depicting former Harvard psychology professor turned

spiritual guru, Ram Dass. Illustrations produced primarily using fineliner, with colour added from collaged scanned materials, using Adobe Photoshop.

It is from this visual vocabulary that the practical investigation with tattooing has been undertaken. My illustrative approach has informed my tattooing practice but has had to be adapted to work with the qualities of the medium.

5.2 EARLY PRACTICAL INVESTIGATION AND NAVIGATION OF STYLISTIC APPROACH

This section will first discuss early tattooing practice and skill refinement. Approaches to designing tattoos in consideration of the material properties of the medium, that are informed by design training are then introduced. Table 10 highlights considerations present when designing for the body.

Table 10: Key factors of consideration when producing a design to be tattooed onto the body (McDade, 2020)

Considerations when designing for the body	
Factor of consideration	**Description**
Ability	Tattoo designs should be produced to represent an outcome that is reflective of the practitioner ability. Designs may be produced in any medium, however they should reflect what the tattooist can successfully execute with the medium of tattooing.
Lines	Tattoo designs should be produced with suitable distance between lines, to ensure legibility. As tattoos age, pigment is prone to spreading, resulting in lines appearing 'thicker' than when originally tattooed. It is thus conventional to leave around 1.5mm or more between lines when producing a tattoo design.
Placement	Bodily placement of an intended tattoo may affect how a tattoo design is produced. The shape and composition of the design may be produced with an awareness of its embodied context, and the placement of the intended tattoo may directly affect the size.

Size	The intended tattoo size may dictate the nature of the design. Smaller tattoos should be designed with fewer details than larger tattoos, to ensure legibility over time. If producing a design at a size that is larger than the client intends to have tattooed, details may have to be removed.

An awareness of the factors discussed in Table 10 is useful to aid understanding of the relationship between design thinking/making and tattoo production. For more detailed insights into tattoo production and factors that affect tattoo outcome, see Chapter 3 (p.70).

5.2.1 Early tattooing practice

The earlier stages (2017–2018) of tattooing education involved a series of exercises undertaken to inform understanding of tattooing as a medium and a process, drawing in consideration of compositional flow, responding to marketplace demand, and working on skin-like surfaces. Tasks were assigned by the studio founder/tattooist Bez, alongside other experienced tattooists. Examples include replicating stencils to mimic the outlining process of tattooing, creating tattoo designs that are simple enough to remain clear in on skin over a prolonged time period by avoiding lines being too closely placed together, and material practice of tattooing on synthetic skin and fruit skins. Figure 54 depicts examples of outcomes from these tasks. Detailed descriptions, insights, reflections, and images pertaining to such tasks can be found in the earlier posts of the research blog (adammcdade.weebly.com/beyond-the-epidermis).

Figure 54: Examples of tattooing practice on non-sentient surfaces, with the objective of technique development and gaining familiarity with the materials. Organic psychedelic forms were tattooed onto banana skin (top), and Eastern-inspired imagery was tattooed onto synthetic skin (bottom) (McDade)

Central to all tasks was the aim of technical skill development and designing in relation to the materiality of the medium and the embodied context of display.

My first tattoo was executed on an impromptu basis, on December 15th, 2017. After being instructed to source a banana (I was practicing on banana skin at this time) and draw a lightning bolt shape filled with a 'swirl' like pattern, it was revealed by the studio founder (while eating the banana) that the design would be tattooed onto *his* skin, and not the banana skin. The result was an adequate representation of the ability of someone with no tattooing experience, and a photograph was not taken due to my nervous distraction. Figure 55 depicts the design I produced and me tattooing it—kindly photographed by a colleague in recognition of the personal significance of the event.

Figure 55: Lightning bolt design created for my first tattoo (left), and a photograph of the tattooing process taking place (right). Both images created on December 15th, 2017 (McDade, 2020)

Similar smaller tattoos were then produced, free of charge, to interested individuals who were recruited via personal networks and studio advertising. The objective was to develop tacit understanding of the medium, in keeping with the notion presented by Grierson and Brearley (2009) that knowledge may be gained through the materiality of practice (p.6). Emphasis in early tattooing was placed on the practice of linework, shading, and consistent tonal saturation. An increased ability in operating as a craftsperson (see Section 4.1.1, p.116) with tattooing was desired at this stage. Figure 56 depicts a range of examples of tattoos that were produced with this motive. Appendix A.1 (p.264) can also be consulted for other examples of early practical outcomes.

Adam McDade (2018)

Tattoo 3.

Adam McDade (2018)

Tattoo 10.

Adam McDade (2018)

Tattoo 26.

Figure 56: Examples of early tattooing practice, executed as a means of skill development. Design for tattoo 3 based on Sailor Jerry flash sheet. Designs for tattoos 10 and 26 were custom produced to tattooee request (McDade, 2020)

Early practice primarily involved tattooing imagery based on pre-existing visuals (text, flash, etc.) or creating custom designs that were simple in detail. This was to adhere to my technical ability at the time, which I sought to improve. The subject was not as important (to me) as the skill development derived from tattooing them.

In creating custom designs, it was necessary to drastically simplify the drawing process for tattooing, comparative to illustration (see Section 5.1). The simplification process was also required to translate the drawing from traditional surfaces onto skin. After struggling for some time to effectively manage this, a technique was drawn upon that had been utilised in illustration practice to create an alternative, simpler aesthetic to that which I ordinarily achieve—drawing with my left hand.

5.2.2 Non-dominant hand designs

Drawing with the non-dominant hand is understood to result in a, "significantly simpler" outcome than when drawing with the dominant hand (Zacharias and Kirk, 1998, p.306). The

term 'bilateral art' is used in art-therapy contexts to refer to artworks produced using both the dominant and non-dominant hand simultaneously (see McNamee, 2003, p.283). This approach has also been employed in broader arts practice, such as in the work of Tony Orrico (2014) who explores the relationship between the body and geometries, with an example shown in Figure 57. I have utilised my non-dominant hand for creating images in freelance design work, such as the graphic depicted in Figure 58.

Figure 57: '8 Circles'. Graphite on paper (Orrico, 2011)

Figure 58: Example of design work produced in 2012, in which the left (non-dominant) hand was utilised to create a graphic image (left) for print onto garments of an independent clothing brand (right) (McDade, 2020)
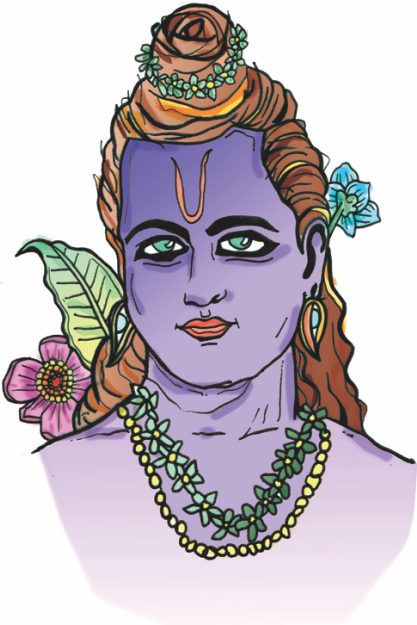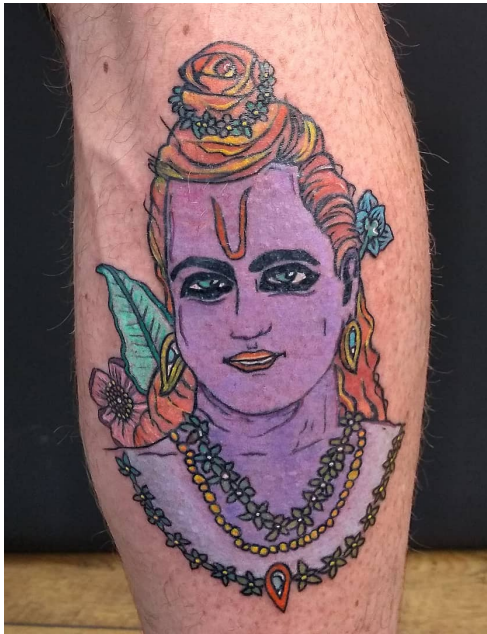
The design shown in Figure 58 was created for print onto fabric and drawn using my left, non-dominant hand. This method was valued for the bold/graphic outcomes that can be produced by using it, and for the aesthetic properties of these outcomes. The same approach was applied to creating tattoo designs, which were initially drawn with my left-hand before being traced with the right-hand. This was to ensure a suitably simple 'tattooable' outcome—reflective of considerations of the medium and my ability with it. The designs produced possessed a loose line quality, which was emulated in the tracing process in appreciation of the visual properties. Table 11 depicts examples, in which lines drawn in the left-hand sketch process that might conventionally be considered incorrect, were deliberately taken into the refined and edited design and the tattoo outcome.

Table 11: Stages of production for tattoos created utilising the non-dominant hand in the designing process (McDade, 2020)

Creating non-dominant hand tattoo designs		
e.g. 1	**Original drawing: Stage 1**	**Refined drawing: Stage 2**
	Adam McDade (2018). Pencil drawing of Hindu deity, Hanuman. Executed with non-dominant hand.	*Adam McDade (2018). Refined version of original drawing, executed in fineliner with dominant hand.*

Edited design: Stage 3	Tattoo outcome: Stage 4
Adam McDade (2018). Refined design, digitally edited to include colour.	_Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 91._

Comment
A design depicting the Hindu deity Hanuman was produced using non-dominant hand (stage 1). The design was drawn using a mechanical pencil, with a naïve quality of line. Tracing paper was then placed over the pencil drawing, and a refined version of the design was created in fineliner pen that maintained aspects of the 'loose' qualities of the original drawing (stage 2). The refined drawing was then scanned into a computer and placed into _Adobe Photoshop,_ and colour was added to inform the tattoo outcome (stage 3). The design was then tattooed onto the client's thigh area (stage 4).

e.g. 2	Original drawing: Stage 1	Refined drawing: Stage 2
	Adam McDade (2018). Pencil drawing of Hindu deity, Rama. Executed with non-dominant hand.	*Adam McDade (2018). Refined version of original drawing, executed in fineliner with dominant hand.*
	Edited design: Stage 3	**Tattoo outcome: Stage 4**
		Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 123.

	Adam McDade (2018). Refined design, digitally edited to include colour.	
	Comment	
	A design depicting the Hindu deity Rama was produced using my non-dominant hand (stage 1). The design was drawn using a mechanical pencil, with a naïve quality of line. Tracing paper was then placed over the pencil drawing, and a refined version of the design was created in fineliner pen that maintained aspects of the 'loose' qualities of the original drawing (stage 2). The refined drawing was then scanned into a computer and placed into *Adobe Photoshop,* and colour was added to inform the tattoo outcome (stage 3). The design was then tattooed onto the client's calf area, and edited to include a necklace of flowers to give the piece a definitive end-point (stage 4).	

e.g. 3	Original drawing: Stage 1	Refined drawing: Stage 2
	Adam McDade (2019). Pencil drawing of Balinese-inspired mask. Executed with non-dominant hand.	*Adam McDade (2019). Refined version of original drawing, executed in fineliner with dominant hand.*
	Edited design: Stage 3	**Tattoo outcome: Stage 4**
		Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 181.

	Adam McDade (2019). Refined design digitally edited to create a sense of symmetry.	
	Comment	
	A design depicting a Balinese-inspired Rangda mask was produced using my non-dominant hand (stage 1). The design was drawn using a mechanical pencil, with a naïve quality of line. Only half of the design was drawn, with the intention of digitally copying, pasting, and rotating the image to create a symmetrical artwork. Tracing paper was then placed over the pencil drawing, and a refined version of the design was created in fineliner pen that maintained aspects of the 'loose' qualities of the original drawing, with areas of solid black added (stage 2). The refined drawing was then scanned into a computer and placed into *Adobe Photoshop,* in which it was edited to create the effect of a full mask. Slight edits to the image were then added, to avoid the design appearing overly rigid through perfect symmetry (stage 3). The design was then tattooed onto the side of the client's calf area (stage 4).	

In some cases, colour was digitally added to designs using *Adobe Photoshop*, to inform the colour selection in the tattooing process, as examples 1 and 2 shown in Table 11 exemplify. The outcomes are indicative of a style that had been developed that contrasts with many conventional tattoo styles (see Section 2.4.3, p.58). While clean lines, smooth shading, and smooth colour application may often be considered representative of strong tattooing, the non-dominant hand designs produced favour loose and broken lines of inconsistent weight, limited shading, and highly contrasting, vibrant colour. Figure 59 depicts three examples produced this way.

Adam McDade (2018)

Tattoo 52.

Adam McDade (2018)

Tattoo 57.

Adam McDade (2018)

Tattoo 73.

Figure 59: Examples of early tattooing practice in which designs were generated using the non-dominant hand (McDade, 2020)

Though I found tattoos produced in this manner stimulating and satisfying to design and produce, demand for such outcomes was low in the North-East region of England. The collaborative nature of tattooing means that in seeking to increase the likelihood of operating as a 'visual artist' (see Section 4.1.2, p.119), it is necessary to navigate a stylistic approach that engages an audience, in addition to the self. An alternative approach of harmonious alignment between myself and the marketplace was thus sought.

5.3 STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT WITH TATTOOING AS A MEDIUM

In the early stages of a tattooing career (this can be thought of as around the first three–four years, and thus the period in which this research was undertaken), emphasis is largely placed on technical rather than stylistic development. However, the gradual development of a visual identity is still encouraged by senior peers. In order to maximise personal interest with the medium while simultaneously adhering to marketplace realities, an approach was developed based on my illustration and design training, that was also representative of my skillset.

5.3.1 'Sketchbook-ing'

Leonard and Ambrose (2012) state, "a sketchbook is often the best way of compiling insights, research, and resources…" (p.82). The importance of a sketchbook has been emphasised throughout my undergraduate training and utilised throughout my professional career to inform and develop my practice. Wigan (2018) states, "…the sketchbook is the

place where illustrators play with ideas: it is a personal space for exploring, collating, recording and juxtaposing images…" (p.20). This understanding of the sketchbook coincides with my relationship to it as a practitioner—the sketchbook offers a space for discovery. In transitioning into designing for the body, the use of a sketchbook has remained. Figure 60 depicts an example spread from an early tattooing sketchbook, in which I was investigating different compositional arrangements for a design of a snake.
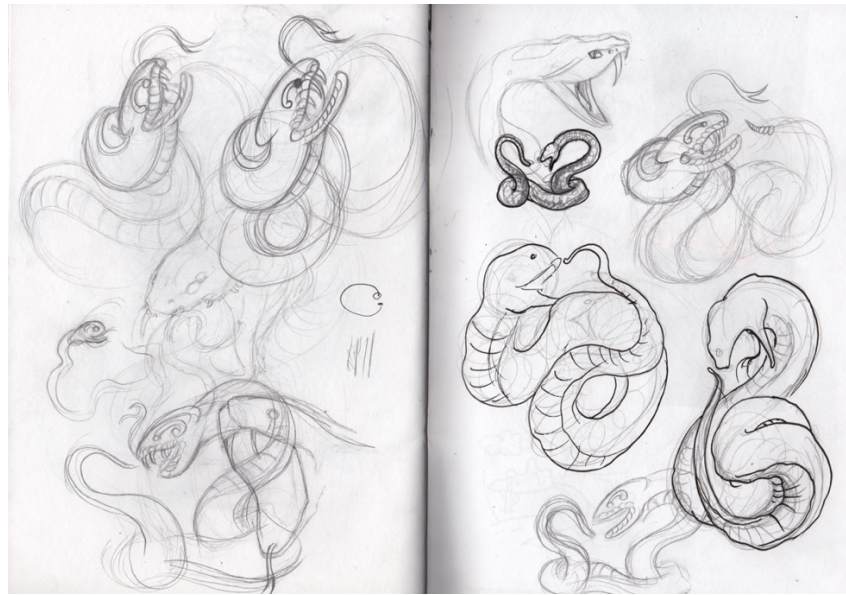
Figure 60: Scan of a 2018 sketchbook page, depicting variations of a snake design (McDade, 2020)

While preliminary drawings have conventionally been produced to inform tattoo production (frequently, using red and blue coloured pencils, before being traced), the increasing prevalence of digital technologies for image production has decreased the tattooists use of traditional materials. Through being embedded within a large studio it was noted that many colleagues would favour the *Apple iPad* over a sketchbook. This is due to its ease of use and efficiency, and direct access to digital image resources that can be seamlessly collaged, edited, or traced, using software such as *Procreate* (see Section 3.1.2, p.71). This approach is perfectly suited to produce tattoos that are representative of the respective tattooists preferred specialist stylistic approaches, however I found that I was unable to achieve a satisfactory quality of line and development of a composition using digital tools exclusively. As such, sketchbooks were utilised as a central element of my design process throughout and have influenced the characteristics of the stylistic approach cultivated.

A client who resonated with my more detailed traditional illustration work requested a tattoo of an elephant for his forearm. An alternative approach to non-dominant hand drawing was required, and it was necessary to produce a design that remained suitably simple to translate into tattooed form, that was reflective of my technical ability, but was also representative the style that the client desired. While sketchbooks may conventionally be used to discover or inform a refined rendering of a finished design, Wigan (2018) states that, "…occasionally, the free and vigorous approach of a sketchbook drawing might perfectly answer a project brief…" (p.20). This was the case in this example. The evidently hand drawn image (Figure 63, p.180, which will soon be discussed) responded to the client needs but needed to be translated into a tattooable design.

5.3.2 Authenticity of mark

Dutton (2003) proposes two categories of authenticity: 'nominal authenticity', and 'expressive authenticity'. Nominal authenticity can be understood as, "…the correct identification of the origins, authorship, or provenance of an object…" (p.259). Though not termed as such, this category of authenticity has been discussed in the context of artistic production (e.g. Kennick, 1985; Hoving, 1997; Benjamin, 2008), and is useful in understanding themes such as artwork legitimacy and market value. Expressive authenticity is presented as something that, "…expresses the authentic values of its maker…" (Dutton, 2003, p.272). The example of a musician playing in a fashion that is not derivative of another musician is given, with the comment, "here authenticity is seen as committed, personal expression, being true musically to one's artistic self, rather than true to an historical tradition" (p.267).

In discussing drawing, Nicolaïdes (1941) introduces two approaches, which he terms, 'contour' and 'gestural'. Contour drawing involves examining the subject and fixating on the contoured form (rather than the paper) to create a linear representation (p.9). Gestural drawing involves the consideration of the subjects "…action, life or expression…" (p.13). Contour drawing may be understood as a means to represent form, and gestural drawing understood as a means to represent energy and impulse. The contention expressed is that "learning to draw is really a matter of learning to see…and that means a good deal more than merely looking with the eye" (ibid., p.5).

The combination of form (contour) and energy (gesture) can be considered to imbue drawn marks with a sense of expressive authenticity—the marks created express how the 'draw-er' interprets the subject in a manner that extends beyond objective representation. The works of Expressionist artist Egon Schiele (Figure 61) and contemporary illustrator Ralph Steadman (Figure 62) exemplify this idea through the stylised rendering of the subjects. Both Schiele and Steadman's works depict a form that can be clearly recognised (figures, in these examples) with the quality of line and use of materials expressing something of the artists unique interpretation of and engagement with the subject.

Egon Schiele (1912) Nude
Self-Portrait. Ink on paper.

Egon Schiele (1918) Female Nude with Long Hair
Propped up on Her Arm. Crayon on paper.

Figure 61: Examples of expressive drawings (Schiele, 1912, 1918)

Ralph Steadman (2014). Saul Goodman. Ink and Watercolour.

Ralph Steadman (2019). Boris Johnson. Mixed Media.

Figure 62: Examples of expressive illustrations (Steadman, 2014, 2019)

The drawn marks shown in these examples may be understood to possess Dutton's (2003) idea of 'expressive authenticity'. This notion of expressive authenticity has been considered in transitioning a sketchbook drawing, to a tattooable design. In creating the elephant design, the sketchbook drawing was made into a refined ink design that retained the informative, gestural, and expressive lines of graphite that are reflective of my own aesthetic sensibilities, while adhering to the inherently necessary simplicity of the medium. Figure 63 depicts this process, from drawing, to design, to tattoo outcome.

Adam McDade (2019)

Elephant drawing in graphite pencil.

Adam McDade (2019)

Elephant design, drawn using Faber-Castell PITT pens.

Adam McDade (2019)

Tattoo 108.

Figure 63: Depiction of process from sketchbook drawing to tattoo outcome (McDade, 2020)

The central design shown in Figure 63 was executed by tracing over the sketchbook drawing using varying weights of *Faber-Castell PITT* fineliner, making particular use of the calligraphy pen. The shape of the nib (shown in Figure 64) allowed for an angular mark-making quality. This injected a lively energy and organic flow of line quality into the traced design, that retained and exemplified the gestural qualities of the sketchbook drawing.

In the outcomes previously shown in Table 11 (p.169) the quality of the mark is informed by the left-handed drawing, and marks that may be considered conventionally incorrect are emulated in the refinement process. When producing designs using the calligraphy pen, the properties of the nib are utilised to advance the characteristics of the sketchbook drawing and create (rather than emulate) marks for a design that is representative of the materials of production. This may be considered to adhere to the notion of 'truth to material'— popularised in the nineteenth century by designers such as Henry Moore, who created objects to celebrate (rather than obscure) the materials of production (Collins, 2015). The designs produced this way emphasise the properties of the angular nib of the calligraphy pen, rather than simply being a copy of the sketchbook pencil drawing rendered in fineliner.
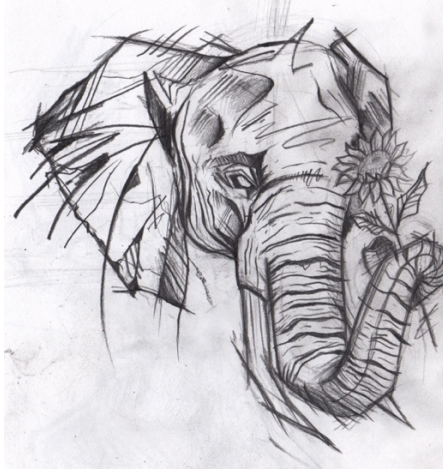
Figure 64: Photograph of tip of Faber-Castell PITT Calligraphy Pen from two angles, emphasising the shape of the nib that has utilised in tattoo design production (McDade, 2020)

The use of the calligraphy pen also allowed for an approach to tattooing that was coincident with my skillset. I had found difficulty in creating clean, consistent tattooed lines at this point in my practice. In using the approach described, the varied line quality and lack of discernible correct or incorrect lines decreased the emphasis on the conventional criteria of 'good' lining (see Table 10, p.163). This allowed for a less anxiety-inducing tattooing process, with a decreased possibility of noticeable errors in execution. If a line appeared too thin, it was easy to correct without notice due to varied line-weight; if a line appeared broken or 'wobbly', this did not necessarily affect the strength of the finished outcome and could be adjusted with ease if required.

Tattoo 108 depicted in Figure 63 was posted on the studio and my personal social media and resulted in engagement from others seeking a tattoo that was stylistically similar. Tattooing in this way allowed for an opportunity for skill development and cultivation of style, alongside technical practise. Table 12 presents a sample of tattoos produced following the success of Tattoo 108 and created using the approach previously described.

Stages of stylistic development		
E.g.	**Sketchbook drawing: Stage 1**	**Fineliner design: Stage 2**
1	 *Adam McDade (2019). Sketchbook pencil drawing of elephant, produced on client request.*	 *Adam McDade (2019). Design based on sketchbook drawing, produced utilising a Faber-Castell PITT calligraphy pen, and varying weights of fineliner.*
	Tattoo outcome: Stage 3	
	  Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 132.	

E.g.	Sketchbook drawing: Stage 1	Fineliner design: Stage 2
2	*Adam McDade (2019). Sketchbook pencil drawing of rose, produced to inform a flash design.*	*Adam McDade (2019). Design based on sketchbook drawing, produced utilising a Faber-Castell PITT calligraphy pen, and varying weights of fineliner.*

Tattoo outcome: Stage 3

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 155.

E.g.	Sketchbook drawing: Stage 1	Fineliner design: Stage 2
3	Adam McDade (2019). Sketchbook pencil drawing of lighthouse, produced on client request.	Adam McDade (2019). Design based on sketchbook drawing, produced utilising a Faber-Castell PITT calligraphy pen, and varying weights of fineliner.

Tattoo outcome: Stage 3
Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 175.

E.g.	Sketchbook drawing: Stage 1	Fineliner design: Stage 2
4	*Adam McDade (2019). Sketchbook pencil drawing of lotus flower, produced on client request.*	*Adam McDade (2019). Design based on sketchbook drawing, produced utilising a Faber-Castell PITT calligraphy pen, and varying weights of fineliner.*
	Tattoo outcome: Stage 3	
	Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 202.	

Stage 3 of each of the four examples shown in Table 12 depicts an outcome that the client had either commissioned to be designed for them (examples 1, 3, and 4), or that was created as a flash design (example 2) in an attempt to explore the stylistic approach. In translating the fineliner design into a tattoo, it was sometimes necessary to edit the design

to fit the constraints of the brief, such as size, placement, and legibility—adhering to the notion of 'reflection-in-action' proposed by Schön (1983) introduced in Section 3.1.4 (p.82).
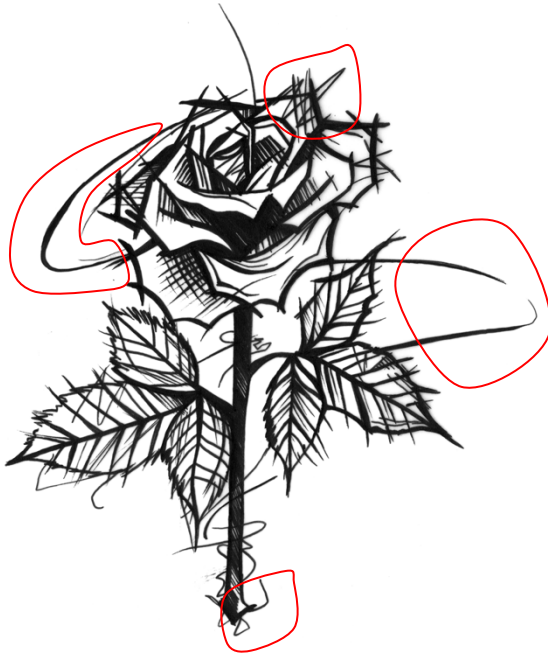
Adam McDade (2019). Rose tattoo design, with red shapes indicating deviations from
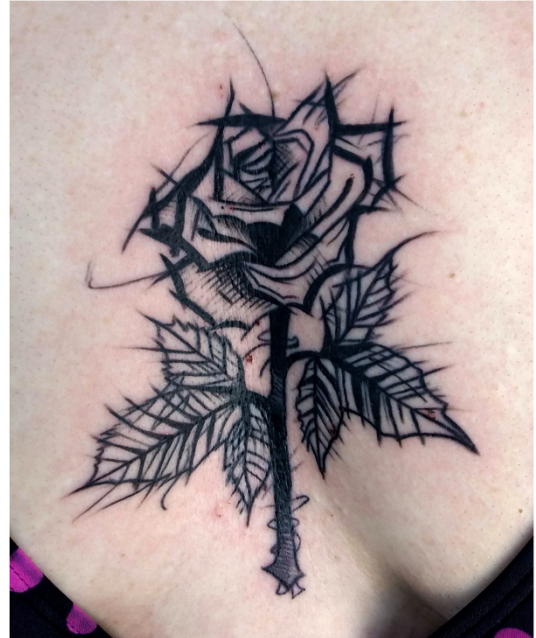
Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 155.

Figure 65: An example of deviations from fineliner design to tattoo outcome made in the tattooing process, in response to the material considerations (McDade, 2020)

Example 2 from Table 12 illustrates this, which Figure 65 highlights. The red shapes indicate areas of the design that deviate from the tattoo outcome. Lines, shading, and colour packing were either edited or omitted in the highlighted areas, to create a clearer outcome that better suited the tattoo size and placement. This was the case in executing numerous tattoos in this style, requiring a consideration of how the style may be appropriately simplified, while retaining expressive authenticity.

5.3.3 Maintaining balance, establishing harmony

Ling (2008) examines the Eastern notion of 'Ch'i' in Eastern calligraphy, exploring how it may be identified and practiced in a Western context. Simply expressed, Ch'i may be understood as 'breath', and in the context of calligraphy, "...is perceived to be the traces of the spirit and

vital energy left by the gestural movement of the calligrapher" (p.41). Two approaches of Ch'i that can be applied in Western calligraphy are presented: simplicity, and spontaneity. Simplicity concerns "...the abandonment of non-essential elements"—the comment is made that "...the integrity and the standard of the calligraphy should be apparent" (p.49). Spontaneity is proposed as "...the control and the engagement of the brush and ink on paper; and the execution of the brush strokes and the gestural movement" (p.49). Though it is not my intention to claim that the tattooing style cultivated possesses Ch'i', the themes of simplicity and spontaneity as identified by Ling are useful in understanding the stylistic adaptation that ensued in my tattooing practice.

In order to maintain a balance between the materiality of the medium and tattoo style, it was necessary to adapt and refine my approach to create a slightly simpler outcome that possessed integrity. By simplifying while maintaining aspects of spontaneity and expressive authenticity, a harmonious relationship between my aesthetic sensibilities, ability with materials, and the broader marketplace was established.

The simplification process involved reducing the number of gestural marks in the designs, to ensure legibility and avoid them becoming superfluous to the original drawing. Through simplifying, a more graphic aesthetic was created, and I found a greater range of clientele became interested in becoming tattooed by me, with a variety of subject matter. Integral to the stylistic approach is the presence of the spontaneity, through the inclusion of expressive marks that deviate from traditional visual sensibilities associated with tattooing. In cultivating an approach that considered simplicity and spontaneity, outcomes produced for skin began to resemble more closely those produced for paper (as presented in Section 5.1). Table 13 presents four examples and a commentary of tattoos produced with these considerations.

Examples of tattoos produced in refining stylistic approach		
E.g.	**Tattoo Outcome**	**Comment**
1	 *Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 204.*	The design for example 1 was produced as part of a flash sheet which featured depictions of various characters from the video game series, *Street Fighter.* The flash sheet was created in an effort to appeal to a wider audience demographic, through depicting subject matter than has a pre-existing fan base. The design is based on a character, re-drawn in a way that is in keeping with my stylistic approach. This includes broken lines of various thickness, which are used in different ways to indicate outline, and tone. The design was simplified comparative to previous works (see Table 12, p.182) to increase legibility, and ensure the subject was recognisable.
2		The design for example 2 was produced as part of a Halloween-themed flash sheet, and selected by the client on a walk-in basis as part of a Halloween event. The purpose of the event was to engage potential clientele with the studio, with multiple tattooists also offering designs to be picked for selection. The design was

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 214. | created based on a witch's cauldron, with stylised smoke emerging from the centre. Spontaneous, gestural lines and shapes were included, to express energy and dynamism, while the dominant features remained simple and legible. |
| 3 |

Adam McDade (2019). Tattoo 231. | The design for example 3 was produced on a custom basis, for a client who had become aware of my tattooing style through social media. The subject matter, including lettering, was defined by the client, and colour was requested. It was required to keep each element simple, to adhere to the size constraints of the tattoo. The design is thus less gestural in areas and further simplified than previous tattoos, but retains the same energetic line-quality. The client allowed me to choose the colour selection based on my preference, with the tones selected based on the subject theme, and my personal resonance with pastel, psychedelic colour pallets (see Section 5.1). |

4	 *Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 243.*	The design produced for example 4 was produced as a flash design. In drawing it, an effort was made to explore the balance between simplification and spontaneity, using finer lines that I would have previously lacked confidence to execute (smaller lines are more prone to 'blowing-out', resulting in a thicker-than-intended line weight). The tattoo depicted is the result of increased ability with the medium, and discovering a harmonious balance between simplicity and spontaneity.

The examples shown in Table 13 are representative of the stylistic approach that has been cultivated, and are visually distinctive from the specialist styles offered by other tattooists working within the studio. The term 'illustrative' may be used to broadly describe the style of tattooing, in that the outcomes share similarities to traditional mediums (see Section 2.4.3, p.58). Though the term describes aspects of the stylistic properties, it lacks the specificity that would distinguish it from tattoos that emulate the properties of watercolour paintings, or vector art, for example, that fall under the same categorisation. The style of tattooing cultivated has been influenced by the material properties of the medium and my skillset with it, marketplace engagement, and my own aesthetic sensibilities, rather than by exclusively trying to emulate the properties of an illustrative medium. An alternative stylistic categorisation to the catch-all term 'illustrative' was thus considered.

5.4 'AUTHENTIC GRAPHIC' TATTOOING

In discussing genres within art, DiMaggio (1987) presents the notion of 'professional classification', in which artists assign a name to their work to differenitate it from the works of others (p.451). Terms such as 'sketchy' or 'scratchy' have been used by clients and colleagues to describe the style, however (though well-intended) adjectives of this nature

may suggest that the tattoos are incomplete, or incompetently produced. An alternative term was thus carefully considered. Having introduced the tattooing style emerged and the factors that have influenced its appearance, this section proposes a new term for its professional classification; 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing. The term will now be defined, contextualised in relation to existing tattoo styles, and discussed in relation to audience engagement.

5.4.1 Proposing an alternative term for tattoo style classification

Much consideration has been given to the terminology chosen to describe the tattoos style cultivated. Attempts were made to avoid simply describing the visual characteristics due to the problematic nature of adjectives such as 'sketchy' that are aforementioned. A term was sought that in addition to representing the visuals characteristics, was also indicative of the approach taken to designing/tattooing. Contemplating terminology in external disciplines such as music, the term 'Post-Punk Tattooing' was originally selected as a stylistic classification.

'Post-punk' describes a musical phenomenon that occurred from around 1978. The term does not necessarily denote a specific musical sound in the way that genres such as progressive rock, funk, or numerous others may be considered to. Rather, it indicates an alternative approach and framing of the sensibilities of punk that coincided and preceded it. Crossley and Martin (2015) note that the lables of both punk and post-punk are difficult to define as they were, "…devised in the heat of the action, by participants, on the basis of practical interests", rather than analytic categorisation by academics (p.6). It is not within the research scope to give a thorough analysis of post-punk (see Reynolds, 2005, or Crossley and Martin, 2015, for this), but it is useful to give a brief overview of the movement to aid understanding of the rationale for considering the term.

Punk is understood as a movement that was reactionary to the broader social, political, and cultural climate of the early-mid 1970's (Robb, 2006). Central to the movement was a D-I-Y ethic and raw energy that broke away from the convention of music, fashion, and lifestyle. Crossley and Martin (2015) state of punk music; "It didn't matter that the band couldn't play in the conventional sense because this wasn't conventional music" (pp.31-32). It was the authenticity and energy that was deemed of aesthetic merit, and the music was a vehicle to

challenge various moral, political, and aesthetic ideas of the time (Crossley and Martin, 2015, p.3). As a musical style, it is characteristically simple, unpretentious, and raw, rejecting and subverting conventions within the culture and industry of rock music of the period.

As punk became increasingly popularised and commercialised, key figures of the movement became disillusioned and sought an alternative approach to making music that maintained the punk ethos. Reynolds (2005), states, "by summer 1977, punk had become a parody of itself" (p.xvii). Post-Punk is a term used to describe a movement in which musicians began to introduce influences from external genres and broader artistic movements into their work, while maintaining the authenticity and expression that punk had originally delivered. While the sonic qualities of post-punk bands are diverse, the presence of external influences and experimentation that punk had previously rejected, remains consistent in post-punk.

The term post-punk was considered relevant to the tattoo style cultivated, as the following parallels were noted:

- **Aesthetic qualities**

  In the same way that post-punk may retain elements of punk, such as energy and 'raw-ness', the tattoo style aims to possess such qualities through its expressive line quality, and simple graphic characteristics.

- **Subversion of tradition**

  The incorporation of external influences into post-punk (that punk rejected) is visibly apparent in the tattoo style. Gestural marks and mixed line weights are celebrated in the design, in a way that they would conventionally not be in tattoo traditions (see Section 2.4.3, p.58)

- **Ethos**

  The tattoo style adheres to the material constraints of the medium such as line spacing and negative space, and the outcomes still look like tattoos (rather than other styles, that more closely resemble photographs or watercolour paintings, for

example), but is influenced by the expressive qualities of drawn illustration and mark-making. This can be compared to the way in which post-punk, "…selected, reworked, and played with elements of punk…" (Crossley and Martin, 2015, p.166) to create an alternative sound, driven by a similar ethos.

After discussing the classification and the rationale for selecting it with my director of studies, it was advised that I discuss the application of the term with a figure of expertise on post-punk. On this advice, an email correspondence ensued with author of definitive post-punk text, *Rip It Up and Start Again* (2005)*, Simon Reynolds. An outline of my rationale for the terminology selection was sent alongside visual examples of my tattooing and design work, to gain Reynolds's feedback regarding the appropriability of the term. Reynolds was very agreeable and enthusiastic in our communications, but noted that post-punk has become synonymous with a specific visual language that my tattooing style does not represent, stating:

"…looking at your work, I don't think the word 'post-punk' would spring to my mind if you hadn't raised the idea. I tend to think of postpunk graphic design (and new wave graphic design generally) in terms of angularity, geometric patterns, blocks of primary colour (with a fixation of very inorganic pinks and yellows)."

(Reynolds, 2020).

The full email communication can be found in Appendix F.1 (p.527). Though Reynolds was very encouraging and stated that he would not want to discourage the use of the term if I feel it appropriate, his comments were illuminating of a point I had not considered. Figure 66 provides examples of works representative of Reynolds comments on the visual language that post-punk has come to be associated with. These aesthetic sensibilities deviate from that of the tattooing style cultivated, and so an alternative terminology was sought that was not rooted in an existing cultural context.
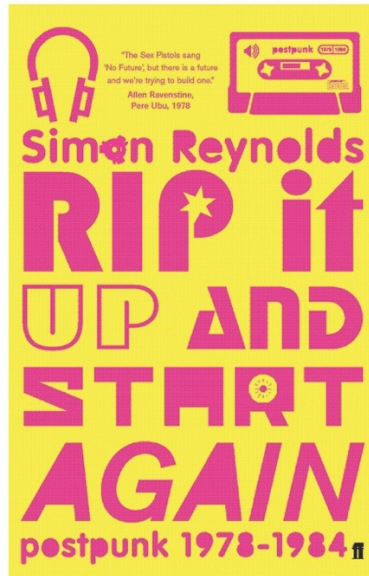
Book cover design for Reynolds
(2005). Published by Faber and
Faber Limited.

Record sleeve design for record by
post-punk band Delta 5 (1981).
Licensed by Rough Trade Records.

Figure 66: Examples of visual style and themes associated with post-punk

Alternative terms such as 'energetic' and 'dynamic' were contemplated but deemed overly simplistic and vague in isolating the defining characteristics of the style. After some time and discussion with my director of studies, the term 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing was decided upon.

5.4.2 Defining 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing

The term 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing was selected to encompass the approach to design and tattoo production, and the visual characteristics of the tattoos produced. Figure 67 graphically depicts the defining characteristics of 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing.
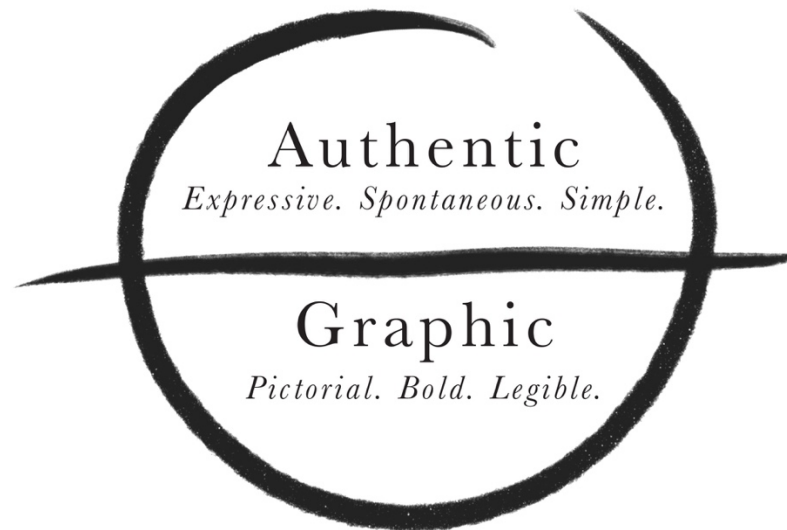
Figure 67: Diagrammatic defining the characteristics of 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing (McDade, 2020)

As discussed in Section 5.3.2, 'authentic' in the context of creative production can be understood as pertaining to a creator's unique interpretation of a subject, expressed through the engagement with materials, and subject to their aesthetic sensibilities. The creator's presence in production is expressed through the appearance of gesture/energy/spontaneity, that appears unadulterated by formal conventions. A necessary balance is established between spontaneity and simplicity, to maintain expression that is authentic, rather than superfluous. The tattoos produced can be considered authentic by this understanding. They are reflective of my aesthetic sensibilities and influences, rather than being reflective of the conventional characteristics of tattooing. Designs are produced based on my approach to using the materials, including expressive marks, and have been created with an awareness of my technical abilities with tattooing as a medium (It is important to stress that the use of the term 'authentic' in this stylistic classification relates specifically to what has been outlined here and is not a suggestion that other tattooing styles lack authenticity in a broader sense).

The term 'graphic' is selected for its association with artworks produced in line and tone to create form, historically in etching and engraving mediums (Wright, 1917, p.263), and across a range of pictorial mediums in a contemporary context. The meaning of 'graphic' as clear/vivid/explicit is also representative of the style's boldness, and consideration of the materiality of the medium. The tattoos produced can be considered graphic in how lines are

used and tone is created in a way that holds some resemblance to historically graphic mediums. It also refers to the clarity of design legibility, achieved through a variety of linear weights that ensure the tattoo is discernible from a distance. This echoes the traditions of western tattooing (see Section 2.4.3, p.58), highlighting that the designs have been created for skin, rather than paper. 'Graphic' additionally has connotations with graphic design—a discipline akin to tattooing in that professional practice typically necessitates a client. This suggests that while the tattoo style may represent authentic expression of the practitioner, it is still informed by marketplace demand.

5.4.3 Contextualising 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing

The format of Table x presented in Section 2.4.3 (p.58) can be revisited to contextualise 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing as a tattoo style. Table 14 depicts the style characteristics and references other practitioners who produce tattoos that may adhere to the categorisation.

Table 14: Characteristics and examples of 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing, and tattooists whose work may be classified as such (McDade, 2020)

Authentic Graphic Tattooing Stylistic Classification			
Tattoo style name	**Characteristics**	**Examples of Practitioners**	**Example**
Authentic Graphic	'Authentic Graphic' tattooing may be considered a branch of illustrative tattooing. Tattoos are approached in a way that is expressive of the creator's relationship to the medium. Spontaneity is present in designs through energetic, gestural marks, that are included with	BK Kévin Plane Mate Nicolas Agus Varo	 *Adam McDade (2020). Tattoo 318.*

	consideration to maintain a degree of simplicity. In this sense, tattoos can be considered pictorial graphic representations of expressive authenticity of the tattooist. Tattoos are bold in appearance, sharing a degree of resemblance to traditional graphic mediums. Designs are produced with a consideration of how the tattoo will appear over time, to retain legibility throughout its embodied existence.		

Writing for the popular tattoo platform *Tattoodo*, Morrow (2020a) states, "…Illustrative tattooing involves many different styles, cultures, histories, and concepts". As Table 14 indicates, 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing may be understood as a branch of illustrative tattooing. In identifying 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing as a unique classification, a more informed understanding of how the style differs from other tattoos termed illustrative can be gained. For example, Figure 68 depicts two tattoos that may both be categorised as illustrative, but are visually distinct. The tattoo on the left by Sophie Emms resembles a watercolour painting, and the tattoo on the right by Carlo Amen resembles a drawing in coloured pencil. Both tattoos may accurately be termed illustrative, despite apparent dissimilarities. Similarly, both examples share little resemblance to 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing, emphasising the value of an a more targeted classification.

Sophie Emms (2020). Untitled.

Carlo Amen (2020). Untitled.

Figure 68: Examples of tattoos that would be broadly categorised as Illustrative, despite being visually distinct. Left by Emms (2020). Right by Amen (2020)

While the tattoo style cultivated is in response to my individual engagement with tattooing as a medium and the circumstances surrounding it, the visual characteristics of the tattoos are comparable to the work of a number of other practitioners. Table 14 indicates numerous other contemporary tattooists produce work in a comparable style, that may now be proposed as 'Authentic Graphic'. Figure 69 provides examples of the works of a sample of these practitioners.

Varo (2019). Untitled.

Mate (2020). Untitled.

Kévin Plane (2020). Untitled.

Figure 69: Examples from a sample range of practitioners whose work may be proposed as 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing. Left by Varo (2019). Middle by Mate (2020). Right by Plane (2020)

In all examples shown in Figure 69 there is a spontaneous quality, however the expression of spontaneity is slightly varied depending on each tattooist's unique approach to designing and tattooing. This includes the degree of simplicity, through the use of negative space and compositional consideration. The tattoo on left by Varo contains greater areas of saturation and a more scattered use of spontaneous marks than the tattoo in the centre by Mate, for example, in keeping with each tattooist's individual approach. While expressive marks are consistently included, the subject of each piece is pictorial rather than abstract, and resembles traditional mediums such as ink, graphite, and relief printing. Each of the examples are bold in appearance through the use of contrasting line weight and quality, and legible from a distance. It can therefore be claimed these tattoos adhere to the defining characteristics of 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing articulated in the previous section, offering an alternative terminology to 'sketchy', 'scratchy' or simply, 'illustrative' to current classification.

5.4.4 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing and marketplace engagement

As the previous section has discussed, examples of 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing can be found in the portfolios of other contemporary tattooists, however the style is far less commonly encountered than the popular styles presented in Section 2.4.3 (p.58). Practitioners working in this style listed in Table 14 all appear to be located outside of the UK (South Korea [x2]; France; Germany; Italy), with no tattooist working in *Triplesix Studios* specialising in 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing. Figure 70 is presented to exemplify this—each tattoo shown has been executed by tattooists working at *Triplesix Studios* at the time of writing (October 2020). The subject matter of a skull is consistent in each piece, demonstrating a variety of styles and approaches available from tattooists within the studio.

Tim Kingsbury (2017). *Danny Eddy (2019).* *Scott Grozier (2020).*

Pete Heatlie (2019). *Lauren Stephens (2019).* *Sophie Emms (2020).*

Danny Beston (2020). *Dan Hartley (2018).* *Bez (c. 2014).*

Figure 70: Tattoos based on the subject matter of a skull, produced by tattooists operating within Triplesix Studios in March 2021.

Figure 71 depicts a sample of skull tattoos that I have produced that clients have specifically requested for me to execute, rather than the other tattooists in the studio offering alternative stylistic approaches. Clients stated that they resonated with the aesthetic sensibilities of the tattoo style and expressed that they enjoyed my work as it was different from what they are familiar with. On multiple occasions, clients commented that they had

not encountered similar tattooing approaches before. This led to many clients returning to me as a practitioner for multiple pieces. Frequently, clients travelled from alternative North-East cities within England that have other reputable tattoo studios that are geographically closer to them, in order to be tattooed specifically by me in the 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing style.

Adam McDade (2019)   *Adam McDade (2019)*   *Adam McDade (2019)*

Tattoo 168.   *Tattoo 192.*   *Tattoo 215.*

Figure 71: Examples of tattoos of skulls completed at various points in 2019 (McDade, 2020)

Through developing 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing as a specialist style available to clients in North-East England, the partner organisation of the research benefited from a broader range of clientele. This can be evidenced through the tattoo journal (Appendix A.1, p.264), in which there are 116 examples of tattooing in this style recorded at the time of dissertation submission (examples are isolated within Appendix A.1). These clients may not have become tattooed at *Triplesix Studios* (or potentially at all) had 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing not been available to them. As the studio receive fifty percent of total tattoo cost, this has directly increased studio profit through the research being undertaken within it. As this research is NPIF-funded, it is required to directly engage with commercial or economic aspects of cultural creativity. The case can be made that this research has successfully met this criterion through offering 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing as a novel stylistic approach, as Section 6.4.2.2 (p.225) will highlight.

5.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5

Responding to question 2, this chapter provides insight into the development of a stylistic approach to tattooing, informed by my first-hand engagement with the medium and embeddedness within a studio as an apprentice, through to professional tattooist. The influence of practitioner aesthetic sensibilities, the materiality of the medium, and the commercial realities of the marketplace are illuminated as significant factors in the cultivation of a stylistic approach, as Figure 72 depicts. The emergent style is termed 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing, which is defined, contextualised in relation to existing styles/ the work of other practitioners, and considered in relation to audience engagement and subsequent impact on studio capital.
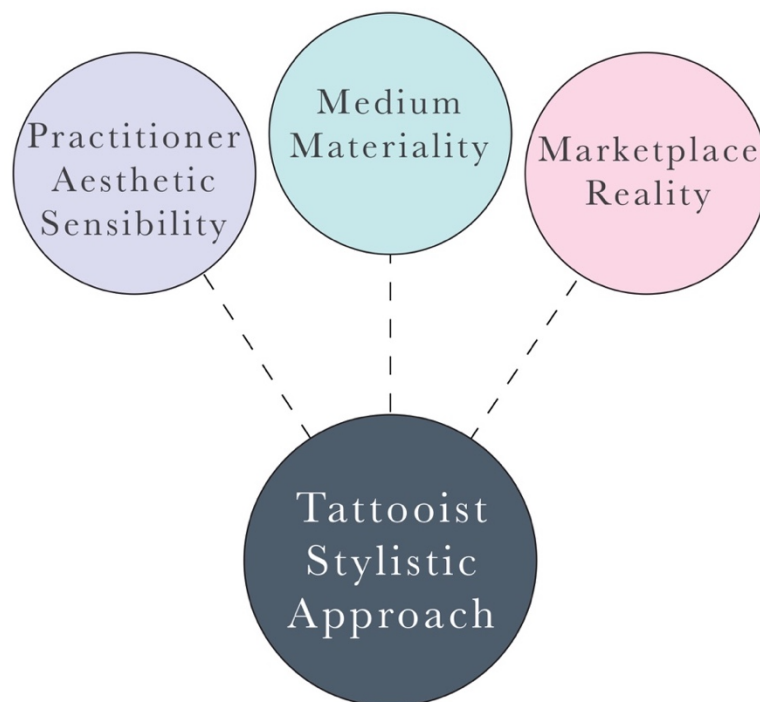
Figure 72: Influential factors on tattooist stylistic approach (McDade, 2020)

The key points of the chapter can be summarised as follows:

- The implementation of methods from illustration and design practice into tattooing practice can be used to inform and develop a stylistic approach, however the style is informed by additional factors pertaining to the materials of the medium and the

marketplace realities.

- Early career tattooing involves small, simple designs, which should be created and selected in keeping with the materials of practice. Understanding of the simplification process and skill development are primary objectives to meet to successfully cultivate a stylistic approach.

- In order to increase professional productivity, the tattoo style being cultivated must gain interest from potential clientele in the region of practice. This requires the tattooist to be adaptive to marketplace engagement, while maintaining personal creative satisfaction.

- The development and refinement of an approach is ongoing throughout the tattooist's career. These processes can involve the tattooist reflecting on their practice to distil their approach in such a way that maximises the quality of output while attracting potential clientele.

- The result of cultivating a tattoo style that is informed by broader design influences can be financially beneficial for the practitioner/studio.

In presenting how my illustrative background has informed my stylistic approach with tattooing alongside other factors of influence, this chapter directly addresses the knowledge gap regarding tattooing practice development that is discussed in Section 2.1 (p.23). In doing so, a framework for understanding contemporary tattooing stylistic development more broadly has been created.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

This concluding chapter of the dissertation provides a holistic reflection upon the research. The first section comments on how the questions presented at the research conception have been addressed. The multi-method methodology that has been created is then discussed, highlighting its effectiveness in responding to the research questions. The core findings are then presented, indicating the section of the dissertation in which they can be found. Ten knowledge contributions are isolated, which are themed around methodology, documentation, and frameworks. The potential impact of these contributions on academic inquiry of tattooing is then discussed, and the value of the research for the partner organisation in and beyond adherence to the NPIF funding criteria is highlighted. Based upon necessary limitation of this research, directions for future tattooing research are then suggested as targeted toward greater representation of practitioners, and further creative investigation.

6.1 REFLECTION ON ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As Section 1.3 (p.4) introduced, this research concerns the occupational role of the contemporary western tattooist (question 1), and the effects of the implementation of illustration and design approaches into tattooing practice and development (question 2). The aims and objectives of the research were devised in response to these questions, in recognition of a gap in academic understanding of tattooing practice and practitioner (see Section 2.1, p.23).

6.1.1 Reflection on addressing research question 1

Question 1 is separated into two parts; 1.1 deals with the processes, methods and techniques employed by tattooists, and 1.2 questions the material and non-material role of the tattooist.

Section 2.4 (p.51) and Chapter 3 (p.70) address question 1.1 directly; the practical context of tattooing and processes of production are highlighted. The collaborative nature of tattooing is made apparent, and the factors that can affect tattoo outcome are presented. Chapter 4 (p.114) suggests that the tattooist's role requires the provision of a medium, and the

provision of a service. Addressing question 1.2, Section 4.1 (p.115) discusses how these processes, methods, and techniques are employed by the practitioner in the provision of the medium, providing a framework through which their material role can then be understood. Question 1.2 also concerns the non-material role of the tattooist. Section 4.2 (p.126) specifically addresses this through analysis of autoethnographic accounts of practice. Central themes within the accounts are identified and elaborated upon to elucidate on the tattooist's role holistically.

In responding to question 1, research aim 1, objective 1, and objective 2.2 regarding the tattooists role and practical insight on tattooing as a medium are met, and objective 3 regarding practical skill development met in the process.

6.1.2 Reflection on addressing research question 2

Question 2 involves the investigation of tattooing from a practice-orientated, design perspective. It is asked how methods from illustration and design practice can be implemented to inform and develop tattooing practice, and what the effects might be.

Chapter 5 (p.160) specifically responds to question 2, aim 2, objective 2, and objective 3 through documenting my development in tattooing practice from apprentice, to professional tattooist, that is informed by my illustration and design background. In doing so, it provides an understanding of how tattooing styles may be developed more broadly. The stylistic approach is termed 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing; development is discussed in relation to my aesthetic sensibilities and professional background, considerations of the material properties of the medium and my ability with it, and marketplace engagement. The effects of the development of the Authentic Graphic tattooing style in regard to studio profitability is also outlined in Section 5.4.4 (p.199) and will be further discussed in Section 6.4.2.2, highlighting how the partner organisation has benefited through addressing question 2.

6.2 REFLECTION ON METHODOLOGY

A multi-method methodology was created to adequately address the research questions. Core to the research is tattooing practice, and thus a practice-focused methodological

approach was central. Practice was carried out alongside a contextual overview to inform and navigate the terrain of inquiry. An autoethnographic approach was additionally taken to make non-material aspects of practice in the provision of service communicable. This methodology is novel in approach and leads to new understandings about the field of inquiry through findings that are rooted in practice.

It is necessary to stress the value that the research trips and dissemination have brought to the project (see Appendix C) through allowing a context for critical engagement with emergent themes, and aiding clarity of communication in presenting them.

6.2.1 Reflection on contextual overview

The contextual overview aided the research journey throughout. The literature survey revealed the gap in academic understanding of tattooing practice. Literature from disciplines specific to creative practices, and service industries were consulted at varying points, to inform the findings that were discovered (see Chapter 4, p.114). The contextual overview also involved an overview of public and specialist material on tattooing to contextualise the cultural backdrop in which the research is situated. This highlighted the scope of the gap in understanding in both an academic and non-academic context, stressing the validity of the research questions.

Embeddedness within the studio and the community of practice (Wenger, 1999) has allowed for an authentic context for inquiry, including access to a wealth of insight from other practitioners who offered support and advice on practice and themes of discovery. This aided verification of the potential transferability of my own experiences of practice and relationship to it, informing the research findings. This was further substantiated through interviews with tattooists working in New York and in London (see Appendix B, p.441). The contextual overview positioned the research in a targeted area.

6.2.2 Reflection on practical research

The questions of this research would not have been able to be adequately addressed without a practical approach. Tattooing practice has been essential for gaining tacit understanding of the medium and context of production from the early stages of my

tattooing career/research onwards. A practical approach has provided the content from which frameworks for understanding tattoo production, the role of the tattooist, and the cultivation and development of a stylistic approach with tattooing as a medium have been created.

The autoethnographic accounts of practice have been valuable in understanding the tattooist's role (as the next section will further reflect on) in response to question 1.2. Practical research as an active tattooist has been the vehicle through which these accounts have come into existence. Practical research has also included approaches used in illustration and design practice as part of my stylistic development (significantly, the use of a sketchbook) in order to address question 2. While practitioner approaches with the medium and disciplines will vary, the practice-orientated methodology remains appropriate in uncovering how tattooists may develop a style, and what factors are of influence.

My tattooing practice has been conducted before the research was conceived (May 2017), and thus exceeds and will continue to exceed the duration of this research. This authentic engagement with the discipline (and thus a practice-focussed methodology) has been vital in providing meaningful contributions to the field that cast light on the gaps that alternative methodological approaches are unable to.

6.2.3 Reflection on Autoethnography

As Section 1.4.3 (p.11) states, my academic background is in design. Autoethnography was introduced to me by a member of my supervisory team, Dr. John Fulton; an autoethnographic specialist, who has guided my adoption of the approach. Before generating autoethnographic writings, it was necessary to isolate its applicability to the research. Autoethnography literature was surveyed to find examples of different forms of autoethnographic writing, and critical engagement from a methodological perspective. It was deemed that an autoethnographic approach was a valuable methodology in understanding and communicating the non-material facet of the tattooist's role, in response to research question 1.2.

Section 4.2 (p.126) outlines the specific approach taken to autoethnography. The six accounts generated have been produced within one week of the tattooing experience and

published on the research blog. Reflectively writing each account created clarity of reoccurring themes regarding how I engage with practice/clients, and how this varies. The writing process had therapeutic qualities in reconciling some of the challenges brought about in practice. The accounts were analytically dissected using *NVivo 12* software to detect these reoccurring themes, forming the basis of the findings regarding the non-material facet of the tattooist's role.

My autoethnographic findings and approach have been presented at the 6th international conference of autoethnography in Bristol, in July 2019, as noted in Section 1.4.5 (p.17). My presentation was very well received by autoethnographic scholars, who have continued to enthusiastically express encouragement of my autoethnographic work as it has developed. Appendix F.2 (p.531) shows a screenshot from *Twitter* of the conference organisers (Dr. Kitrina Douglas and Professor David Carless) demonstrating support for works I had published on my research blog following the conference. This support helped validate the applicability of my approach, and the impact of my insights generated through it.

The use of an autoethnographic approach to tattooing research has been impactful in both understanding and responding to research question 1, aim 1, and objective 1, in addition to introducing tattoo practice to autoethnographic research. As discussed in Section 2.1.2.4 (p.33), the ethnographic work conducted from a sociological perspective has provided some useful understanding of the social world of tattooing, but lesser regarding the practical. The limitations of ethnography in fully understanding the relationship between the social and practical world of tattooing have been addressed in the adoption of an autoethnographic approach.

6.3 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Having reflected on addressing the research questions and the methodology taken to address them, this section provides an overview of findings that have been generated. Chapters 2–5 of the dissertation contain the central findings relating to the research questions, which are outlined in Table 15.

Table 15: Overview of research findings, including the chapters in which they can be found (McDade, 2020)

Overview of research findings	
Chapter	**Findings**
2	Chapter 2 provides a contextual overview of the landscape of contemporary western tattooing. Section 2.1 (p.23) highlights a knowledge gap regarding tattooing from a practical perspective in academia, leading to limited understanding of tattooing production or producer. Section 2.2 (p.41) surveys the public terrain of tattooing and suggests that the broad exposure of tattooing content has had an impact on the tattooists role. Section 2.4 (p.51) introduces a practical context for tattooing understanding by documenting the material, technical and stylistic properties of the discipline. This includes the proposal of 'minimum-charge' tattoos as a tattoo style in response to increased public engagement. The term refers to smaller sized designs that take little time to execute and are thus lower priced.
3	Chapter 3 concerns tattoo production. Section 3.1 (p.70) deals with the processes of production, which are found to be the following: consultation, design, preparation, and tattooing. The consultation process is conducted to devise the outcome, the design process is conducted to inform the outcome, the preparation process is conducted to prepare the outcome, and the tattooing process is conducted to execute the outcome. Each of these processes are collaborative between tattooist and client, to varying extents, depending on the specific nature of the brief. The collaborative nature of practice is further emphasised in the presentation of a range of factors that may affect the tattoo outcome (Section 3.2, p.96), which are found to be practitioner-led, client-led, or both.

4	Chapter 4 concerns the role of the tattooist and expands on the variability of the medium expressed in Chapter 3. The tattooist's role is presented as both material (provision of a medium) and non-material (provision of a service).
	The material facet of the role (Section 4.1, p.115) is found to be contingent on a broad spectrum of operational modes, which are proposed as craftsperson, designer, and visual artist. Each mode is adopted on a pragmatic basis, depending on what the tattoo brief requires. When the tattooist is operating as a craftsperson the tattoo produced may look near identical if executed by other practitioners, and the visible authorial input of the tattooist is limited. When operating as a designer the tattoo produced may not necessarily reflect the tattooist's aesthetic sensibilities directly, but their authorial input may be peripherally visible to some extent. When operating as a visual artist the tattooist is essential to the outcome as the tattoo produced is representative of their unique engagement with the medium, and the authorial input is vividly visible.
	The non-material facet of the role is discussed in relation to the provision of service (Section 4.2, p.126). In the analysis of six autoethnographic accounts of practice, three themes are found to be consistently present. These themes are termed; 'conscious canvas', 'navigating tension', and 'person, not just practitioner'. 'Conscious Canvas' refers to the way in which the tattooist must adjust both conduct and approach in response to the sentience of the surface, in a way that is distinct from working on traditional surfaces. 'Navigating Tension' refers to tensions that may arise through working in a studio which operates as a business, while acting as a representative. It also refers to tension that may arise through the collaborative process of tattooing, in a service-industry context. 'Person, not just practitioner' presents how the personal and professional practitioner identity may need to be reconciled and how the tattooist's personal self may be affected, by the durational, intimate, and social nature of practice.
5	

	Chapter 5 documents my personal investigation of the development of a tattooing style, informed by my academic training in illustration and design. It was found that it was necessary to adapt my approach to creating imagery for tattoos, to that of illustrations. This required a simplification of elements in response to the material considerations of the medium and my ability with it, while remaining expressive of my aesthetic sensibilities, and in keeping with the commercial realities of the marketplace. Through the investigation of approaches from my illustration practice (primarily the use of a sketchbook for expressive drawing) in response to these factors, a new classification of tattooing is proposed, titled, 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing. This style is defined, contextualised in relation to existing styles, and found to have had positive financial impact for the studio as a partner organisation (Section 5.4.4, p.199).

6.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH IMPACT

A total of ten knowledge contributions are claimed as a result of the research. Section 6.4.1 presents these contributions, before discussing the potential impact of the contributions in Section 6.4.2.

6.4.1 Contribution to knowledge

Table 16 presents the contributions to knowledge that may be claimed from this research. The table additionally indicates the specific section of the dissertation that the contribution can primarily be found, and the value that can be considered from it.

Table 16: Contributions to knowledge and impact made through this research (McDade, 2020)

Contribution to knowledge			
#	Contribution to knowledge	Diss. Section	Potential value
1	First piece of academic research to investigate contemporary western	1.4 (p.6)	Provides a novel disciplinary vantage point for understanding

	tattooing utilising a practice-focussed methodology.		tattooing, offering a methodological structure from which future practical research may refer to and develop to generate findings that have thus far been inaccessible through alternative approaches.
2	Introduction of practical context of tattooing (material, technical, and stylistic properties) into the academy.	2.4 (p.51)	Tattooing is formally recognised in a design discourse, contributing to a better understanding of the discipline within the creative industries.
3	Documentation and establishment of criteria of 'minimum-charge tattoos' as a tattoo style, that is otherwise not termed or defined, but representative of contemporary practice.	2.4.3.1 (p.64)	Tattoo outcomes may be better distinguished and understood. Disciplines examining tattooing may more accurately present the nature of their examination, thus minimising broad generalisations about tattooing/tattoo wearers.
4	Development of a framework for understanding tattoo production as collaborative, and the factors that affect tattoo outcome.	3 (p.70)	Increased understanding of the ways in which tattoos are produced and reasons that tattoos may appear the way they do. Highlights the collaborative nature of production, assisting in better understanding of what tattoos may or may not indicate about the tattooee.

5	Development of a framework for understanding the material facet of the role of the contemporary western tattooist, building on findings published in McDade (2019a).	4.1 (p.115)	The relationship between tattooing practice and practitioner may be better understood from a material perspective, providing a greater understanding of the role of the tattooist than currently exists. Disciplines examining tattooing may better understand distinctions in tattooist operational modes in the provision of the medium, which may inform their findings as a result.
6	Development of a framework for understanding the non-material facet of the role of the contemporary western tattooist, in the provision of service.	4.2 (p.126)	A greater understanding of the social world of contemporary western tattooists in the provision of a service. A greater understanding of the relationship between the material and non-material facets of the tattooist role.
7	Production of the first autoethnographic accounts of contemporary western tattooing practice in a professional context.	Appendix E (p.481).	Provision of first-hand practitioner insights into contemporary western tattooing practice, that represent the complexities of practice that are insufficiently accounted for.

Introduction of contemporary western tattooing practice into autoethnography, providing a |

			methodological reference point for future autoethnographic research in tattooing practice.
8	First piece of practical doctoral research that investigates contemporary western tattooing as a creative discipline, providing a framework for better understanding how tattooists develop a stylistic approach.	5 (p.160)	An increased understanding of the stylistic development and influences on approach of a tattooist, from a design perspective. Introduction of tattooing as a creative practice with the design academy.
9	Development of a stylistic approach with tattooing as a medium based on a design background, and a categorisation of the style as 'Authentic Graphic Tattooing'.	5.4 (p.190)	Increased capital for the partner organisation of the research. A more targeted terminology to describe a style of tattooing that is otherwise not specifically classified can be adopted.
10	First record of tattooing practice that is chronologically logged and records if clients are new or returning, acting as a resource for understanding tattoo development.	Appendix A.1 (p.264)	A greater understanding of tattooist skill development, stylistic development, tattoo marketplace variety, and visual culture of contemporary western tattooing may be gained, informing research examining these areas.

The ten knowledge contributions claimed in Table 16 are centred around methodology (contributions 1, 7, 8), documentation from a practitioner perspective (contributions 2, 3, 7, 9, 10), and the development of frameworks to understand practice/practitioner

(contributions 4, 5, 6, 8) as Figure 73 depicts. The potential impact of these contributions is now considered.
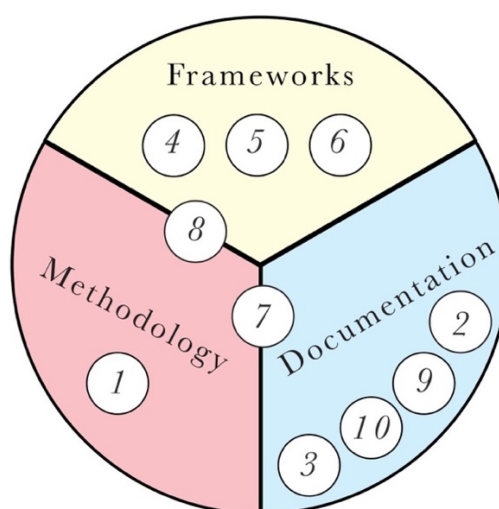
Figure 73: Diagrammatic depicting themes of knowledge contributions isolated in Table 16 (McDade, 2020)

6.4.2 Research impact

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) define impact as academic (contribution to knowledge), and economic and societal (contribution to society, individuals, or organisations) (2020). In their publication *Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact toolkit,* Tilley, Ball and Cassidy (2018) also present four categories from which impact can be considered. These categories are termed: conceptual; instrumental; capacity-building; enduring connectivity (p.5). Conceptual impact concerns knowledge, understanding, and attitudes. Instrumental impact concerns change in policy and practice. Capacity-building impact concerns the enabling of researchers to conduct similar work. Enduring connectivity impact concerns networks of users/organisations who may make use of the research.

In consideration of the definitions presented above, Section 6.4.2.1 will discuss the academic impact of this research, which can be considered as conceptual, and capacity building. Section 6.4.2.2 will discuss the economic and societal impact of the research (specifically in relation to the NPIF research criteria), which can be considered as instrumental, and enduring connectivity.

6.4.2.1 Impact of knowledge contributions on academic inquiry of contemporary western tattooing

Building on Figure 3 (p.40) presented in Section 2.1.3 (p.38) which indicates the disciplinary perspective and focus of inquiry of tattooing within academia, Table 17 indicates how the contributions claimed in Table 16 may impact these perspectives and foci.

Table 17: Indication of how contributions to knowledge claimed in Table 16 (numbered) may impact the disciplinary perspectives and foci of inquiry of tattooing research noted in Section 2.2 (McDade, 2020)

Impact of knowledge contributions on academic inquiry of contemporary western tattooing			
Disciplinary perspective	**Focus of inquiry**	**Contributions of relevance**	**Potential impact**
Sciences	Tattooed people: motivations and identity.	2 3	Formal presentation of contemporary western tattooing materials, styles, and techniques, that contribute to a practical context of the discipline. Criteria for defining 'minimum-charge tattoos', which may be used to distinguish such tattoos from larger/bolder work and other tattoo styles, and thus inform understanding regarding motivations and identities of tattooed people.
		4	Increased understanding of the presence of the practitioner in tattoo production, thus increased understanding of what tattoos may (or may not) express about the tattooee.

		6 7	Better understanding of the tattooist's role in the provision of service, thus better understanding of potential tattooee motivations beyond the material alone.
Economics	Tattoo Industry: product and service.	2 3	Formal presentation of contemporary western tattooing materials, styles, and techniques, that contribute to a contemporary contextualisation of industry. Criteria for defining 'minimum-charge tattoos', which may be used to distinguish such tattoos from larger/bolder work and other tattoo styles, and thus inform understanding regarding tattoo marketplace.
		4	Increased understanding of the processes of tattoo production and their relationship to commerce.
		5	Framework for understanding the material role of the tattooist and their contingent operational mode in response to varied marketplace.
		6	Better understanding of the tattooist's role in the provision of service, thus better understanding of tattooists/studios from an industry perspective.

		8	Framework for understanding how marketplace realities can affect tattooist stylistic approach, thus impact the 'product' provided.
		10	Basis to generate understanding of the variability of the tattoo industry, and the way in which tattooist develops their 'product'.
History	Tattooing context: culture and practice.	2 3	Formal presentation of contemporary western tattooing materials, styles, and techniques, that contribute to a contemporary contextualisation of practice. Criteria for defining 'minimum-charge tattoos', which may be used to distinguish such tattoos from other styles, thus providing terminology that is reflective of the contemporary relationship between culture and practice.
		4	Increased understanding of the processes of tattoo production in a contemporary western cultural context.
		5	Framework for understanding the material role of the tattooist and their contingent operational mode in response to contemporary cultural consumption.

		6 7	Better understanding of how the tattooist's role in the provision of service may affect tattoo outcome, thus better understanding of outcomes from an art historical perspective.
		8	Framework for understanding factors that affect tattooist stylistic approach in a contemporary context.
		9	Terminology to better describe and classify a contemporary tattooing style.
		10	Basis to generate understanding of tattooist skill development, the variability of the tattoo consumption/trends, and the way in which tattooist develops a preferred style.
Anthropology	Tattooing community: social production.	3	Criteria for defining 'minimum-charge tattoos', providing terminology that distinguishes such tattoos from those adopted by tattoo enthusiasts, thus increasing understanding of tattooing communities.
		4	Increased understanding of the processes of tattoo production as a collaborative discipline, in a contemporary western cultural context.

		5	Framework for understanding the material role of the tattooist and their contingent operational mode in response to contemporary cultural consumption.
		6	Better understanding of the tattooist's role in the provision of service, thus better understanding of the social production of tattooing.
		7	Detailed insights on the occupational realities of contemporary tattooing, providing an otherwise unaccounted for first-hand understanding of the tattooist's relationship with practice from a sociological perspective. Introduces autoethnography to tattooing practice.
Design	Tattooing practice: process and development.	1	Introduces tattooing practice into design discourse, providing a methodological framework that may be implemented/adapted in future practical tattooing research, while acknowledging tattooing as a significant discipline.
		2	Formal presentation of contemporary western tattooing materials, styles, and techniques, that contribute to a

				contemporary contextualisation of practice from a design perspective.
			3	Criteria for defining 'minimum-charge tattoos', providing terminology that reflects the landscape of contemporary practice.
			4	Provision of an overview of tattoo production, formally documenting the collaborative nature of practice.
			5	Framework for understanding the material role of the tattooist and their contingent operational mode from a practical perspective.
			6, 7	Framework for understanding the tattooist's role in the provision of service, thus providing understanding of the tattooist's role holistically/the relationship between the material and non-material aspects of practice.
			8	Framework for understanding factors that affect tattooist stylistic development from a design perspective, potentially informing future practical investigation.
			9	Point of reference for potential future practical investigation when considering the

			classification of a developed tattooing style.
		10	Resource for understanding tattooing practical development, and cultural context of practice.

The colours in Table 17 column titled 'disciplinary perspective' correspond to those attributed to the disciplinary perspectives and foci of inquiry of tattooing literature presented in Figure 3 (p.40) in Section 2.1.3. As noted in Section 1.4.1 (p.7). prior to this research being undertaken, no practical doctoral research on tattooing from a practitioner perspective existed. Figure 3 may thus be presented as a revised Figure 74.
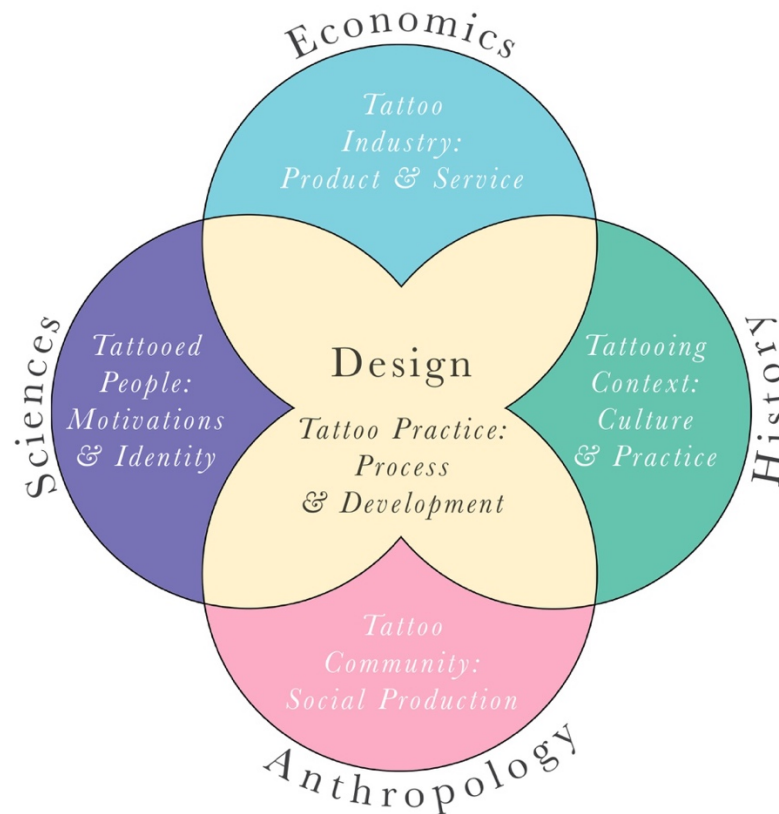
Figure 74: Revised diagrammatic of academic literature on contemporary western tattooing, indicating disciplinary perspectives with the illuminated inclusion of design (outer text), and focus of inquiry (inner text) (McDade, 2020)

As Section 2.1 (p.23) has suggested, much of the existing disciplinary perspectives of tattooing is limited or flawed as a result of the absence of practitioner perspectives. Tattooing practice is central to academic understanding of tattooing broadly, and so the previously blank central component of Figure 74 is now coloured with a faint yellow to suggest illumination from a practical perspective. This reflects the potential impact of the research findings on tattoo scholarship that have been presented in Table 17. The audience for the research findings may be researchers in existing disciplines that have examined tattooing with flawed, partial, or absent understanding.

Research concerning tattoo motivation and identity can become more nuanced through increased understanding of the practitioner. As Appendix A.1 (p.264) indicates, tattoos can be very different sizes, subjects, bodily places, etc., and the tattooist's role and authorial input within the outcome is contingent (see Section 4.1, p.115). Without the frameworks for understanding this that this research provides, questions surrounding tattoo motivation and identity cannot be answered with clarity and attempts to can be distorted as a result. Tattoos that I have executed as a visual artist (see Section 4.1.2, p.119) potentially express more about *my* identity than the clients, whereas tattoo's executed as a craftsperson (see Section 4.1.1, p.116) such as a name of the client's loved one expresses very little about my identity, for example. Similarly, the motivations for obtaining such tattoos may be distinct. Discourse surrounding motivations may be informed by the frameworks and documentation provided through this research and its methodological approach.

Research examining tattooing as a product and a service may benefit referencing the frameworks for understanding the tattooists material and non-material role and its contingency (Chapter 4, p.114), and how tattooists develop a stylistic approach (Chapter 5, p.160). By demonstrating the shifting degree of tattooist authorial input within the tattoo outcome, questions surrounding economics and copyrightability can be more clearly articulated and better informed. A richer understanding of the tattoo marketplace and consumer habits may also be gained by the documentation provided in this research, such as the tattoo journal that indicates returning clients and shows common tattoo subjects (Appendix A.1, p.264) and autoethnographic accounts of practice (Appendix E, p.481). The impact of the marketplace on tattooist stylistic development discussed in Chapter 5 (p.160) and the tattooists relationship to designing an outcome based on existing pictorial reference

(see Chapter 3, p.70) may also influence greater understanding of the tattoo industry more broadly.

While the historical literature examining the relationship between culture and practice is strong thanks to tattoo-focussed historians, there are gaps regarding contemporary tattooing in the most recent decade. Though there is some high-quality tattoo history scholarship surrounding earlier decades and centuries, such as the contributions in Caplan (2000)—the tattooist is still omitted from focus despite their centrality to production. By providing frameworks for understanding contemporary tattoo production, the processes involved, the factors that affect outcome (Chapter 3, p.70), the tattooists material and non-material role (Chapter 4, p.114), and the development of a stylistic approach (Chapter 5, p.160), a better understanding of the relationship between culture and practice can be gained. The documentation of practice provided in the tattoo journal (Appendix A.1, p.264) and autoethnographic accounts of practice (Appendix E, p.481) additionally provide content from which historical tattoo scholarship may be informed.

The work of Sanders and Vail (2008) particularly can be considered to have broken new ground regarding the social production of tattooing through high-quality ethnography. Since Its original publication in 1990, a significant amount has changed in tattooing from multiple perspectives, including sociology. While Barron (2017) has contributed to documenting such updates to some extent, the work is limited by methodological approach. In order to understanding tattooing and tattooing communities authentically, it is necessary to be part of one authentically. The practice-centred autoethnographic approach of this research has contributed insights regarding the social worlds of tattooing from the tattooists perspective, that could not have been gained by any other means. Tattoo scholarship from an anthropological perspective may thus benefit from the intimate insights and updated representations of the social world of tattooing through the frameworks and documentation provided through the methodology devised and employed in this research.

In addition to impacting existing disciplinary perspectives, the contribution of a methodology by which future research can be approached may act as a catalyst for introducing tattooing practice into a design and creative industries context. This may allow future practice-oriented tattoo researchers to contribute to the field by addressing some of the limitations

of this research that were outside of the scope. These limitations and directions for future research are discussed in greater detail in Section 6.5 (p.229).

In accordance with the impact categories proposed by Tilley, Ball and Cassidy (2018), this research may thus be considered to potentially have conceptual impact of the holistic academic understanding of contemporary western tattooing, while additionally possessing capacity-building impact through introducing design into the academic discourse on the subject.

6.4.2.2 Impact of research on the partner organisation in response to NPIF funding criteria

Section 1.6 (p.19) introduced that this research is funded by an AHRC NPIF award and is in partnership with *Triplesix Studios*. The criteria of being awarded NPIF funding is for the research to engage with economic and commercial aspects of artistic and cultural creativity. This criterion has been considered throughout and built into the research from its conception. As the preceding chapters of the dissertation have discussed and Chapter 4 (p.114) has made explicit, the contemporary western tattooist's role is in the provision of tattooing as a medium, and a service, in a commercial context. Engagement with the commercial aspects of creative production has thus been essential in order to address the research questions.
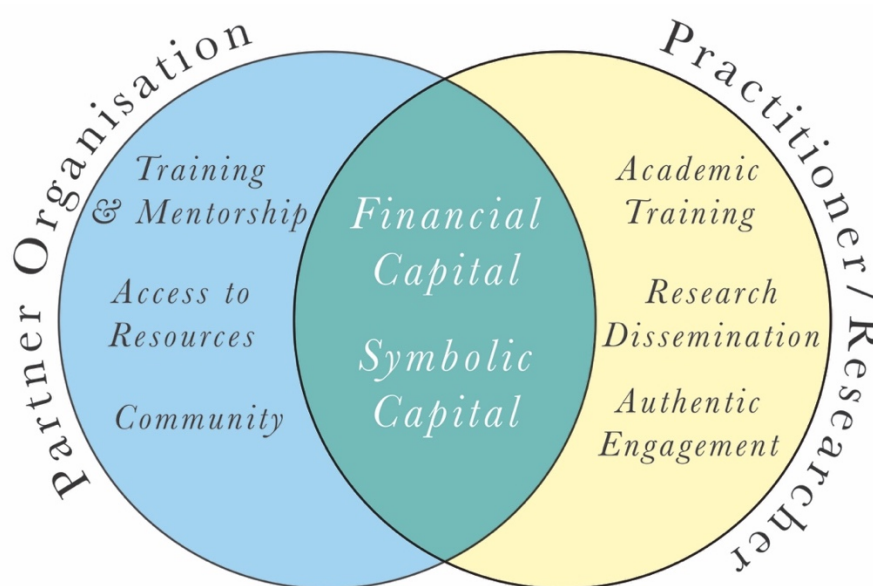
The resulting impact of the research being undertaken in collaboration between *Triplesix Studios* and myself as a practitioner/researcher can be considered in regard to both financial capital and symbolic capital. The studio has provided training and mentorship regarding development of practice, access to all necessary resources and materials to conduct practice, and membership to the studio community. I have provided my previous academic training in design to inform the tattooing approaches available in the studio, authentic engagement with practice as an internal resident tattooist (rather than external researcher), and increased awareness of the studio as a legitimate context for practical academic research, through disseminating findings in numerous contexts (see Appendix C, p.466).

Figure 75 represents this relationship between the partner organisation (left) the research/er (right), and the impact that has resulted (centre)—financial and symbolic capital. *Financial capital* may be understood in the vernacular sense of monetary value (Ross, 2019), which this research claims to have had a positive impact upon for the partner organisation (see Section 5.4.4, p.199). *Symbolic capital* is defined by Bourdieu (1984) as, "…a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability" (p.291) that make something notable. Ihlen (2007) makes the claim that, "with institutionalization comes symbolic capital" (p.273). Simplistically, symbolic capital is apprehended as meaning *prestige* (Ihlen, 2018). The claim may be made that this research imbues the partner organisation with symbolic capital, in being an active and integral aspect of the first practical academic investigation of tattooing from a practitioner perspective. Table 18 summarises the impact made on the partner organisation (financial and symbolic) that result from this research.

Table 18: Summary of impact of the research on the financial and symbolic capital of Triplesix Studios (McDade, 2020)

Impact of research on the partner organisation	
Form of capital	**Impact**
Financial	Increased stylistic offerings of the studio through the development of 'Authentic Graphic' tattooing, leading to a broader clientele, thus increased financial capital (see Section 5.4.4, p.199).

	Increased financial capital through the availability of an additional tattooist within the studio actively seeking to engage with practice through a range of operational modes (see Section 4.1, p.115) for clients who may otherwise have patronised an alternative studio due to lack of tattooist availability.
Symbolic	Increased notability of the studio through working in partnership with a researcher to contribute to knowledge of the discipline, and through being exposed to a broad audience through research dissemination (see Appendix C, p.466).
	Better representation of tattooists as legitimate and diversely competent creative industry practitioners, through authentic and empathetic engagement with tattooing practice.

The NPIF criteria only suggests projects engage with the financial aspect of cultural creativity, however by also contributing to the symbolic capital of the studio, a greater impact has been made. Symbolic capital has been articulated as a "metacapital" (Swartz, 2013, p.112), meaning it additionally constitutes other forms of capital, such as *cultural* and *social* (Bourdieu, 1986), and is therefore of high value. When presenting my findings with tattooist colleagues, they have expressed that they feel an authentic representation of practice and practitioner has been made, and that the tattooist's perspectives have been suitably articulated and illuminated, allowing them to feel 'seen'. The research can thus be considered to have made a greater impact on the partner organisation by positively affecting their financial capital (instrumental impact), in addition to their symbolic capital (enduring connectivity impact).

6.4.3 Summary of contribution to knowledge and research impact

Ten knowledge contributions are proposed from the research findings. The contributions are centred around methodology, documentation, and the development of frameworks. Table 16 indicates where in the dissertation the contributions can be found and suggests their potential value. The impact of the knowledge contributions are then considered in relation

to the UKRI (2020) categories of academic impact, and economic and societal impact, and more explicitly in relation to the conceptual, instrumental, capacity-building and Enduring connectivity impact categories presented in the REF impact toolkit (Tilley, Ball and Cassidy, 2018).

The potential impact of each contribution on the disciplinary perspectives of academic inquiry of contemporary western tattooing isolated in Section 2.1 (p.23), is then expressed in Table 17. Science-based research may utilise the frameworks provided to gain a better sense of the presence of the practitioner within practice, leading to more informed inquiry into the theme of 'tattooed people'. Economics-based research may utilise the findings to gain a greater sense of the tattoo industry, through better understanding of tattooing as a multifaceted medium and service. History-based research may benefit from access to resources that demonstrate the relationship between thinking/making and practice/culture of tattooing in a contemporary western context. Anthropology-based research may better understand the social world of tattooing through access to first-hand practitioner autoethnographic accounts that are vulnerable and confessional in approach, and that amplify and modernise the presence of practitioner voices. The claim can be made that the research has created an entrance point for tattooing as a discipline in the broader arts and design academic discourse. Through providing findings regarding the process and development of practice, the research potentially improves the holistic understanding of contemporary western tattooing. The claim is thus made that the research provides conceptual and capacity building impact.

The impact of the research on the partner organisation is considered in relation to the NPIF funding criteria of engaging with commercial aspects of creativity. The financial capital of the partner organisation has been impacted as a result, through a novel stylistic offering being made available to the studio clientele, in addition to the presence of an additional practitioner producing a range of tattoo styles. The symbolic capital of the partner organisation has been impacted by the notability that is acquired from being an active part of novel research, that increases empathetic understanding of practice and practitioner. The claim is thus made that the research provides instrumental and enduring-connectivity impact.

Table 19 provides a summary of the impact of this research, in relation to definitions proposed by UKRI and the REF impact toolkit.

Table 19: Summary of the impact of the research (McDade, 2020)

Summary of research impact		
UKRI Impact Category	**Ref Impact Toolkit Category**	**Summary of impact**
Academic	Conceptual Impact	Greater knowledge and understanding of tattooing practice.
	Capacity-building Impact	Frameworks for future practical research.
Economic and Societal	Instrumental Impact	Development of practice, resulting in increased financial capital.
	Enduring connectivity Impact	Strengthening of networks/representation, resulting in increased symbolic capital.

6.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR TATTOOING RESEARCH

The knowledge gap regarding tattoo practice that has been isolated is vast, and this project only has the scope to partially fill it. As stated in Chapter 1, the research has been conducted at an early stage in my tattooing career (most colleagues at the time of writing have been tattooing for an average of ten years). It has also been conducted by a white, male practitioner, from a working-class socioeconomic background. While the frameworks presented regarding tattoo production, the role of the tattooist, and tattoo stylistic development have been created with an awareness of these factors (and thus are aimed to be representative of practice in a broad sense), the specific nature of the findings may differ if investigation was conducted by an alternative practitioner, with other experiences, and different skillsets. To gain a more informed understanding of tattoo practice, future research

may be directed towards greater representation, and further creative investigation. As this dissertation is limited by wordcount only content that is of specific relevance to the research questions has been included, and potentially valuable (but less relevant) content has been omitted. These limitations are discussed as potential avenues for future research.

6.5.1 Towards greater representation

During the period of this research being undertaken, *Triplesix Studios* has had between nine and twelve resident tattooists working within it at any one time. This includes seven tattooists who identify as female. My female colleagues have expressed that they have been subjected to numerous prejudices regarding their practice as a result of their gender. This includes patrons expressing a desire for their tattoo to be executed by a male in the assumption that it would otherwise appear, 'girly', without having seen the tattooist's portfolio. It additionally includes clients who have spoken to them inappropriately, in such a way that they feel would not have been the case had they been male. Similar issues were vocalised during an interview in 2019 with London-based tattooist, Lara Thomson-Edwards (Appendix B, p.441). These experiences, which I have not had, have direct effect on the non-material facet of the tattooist's role in the provision of service (see Section 4.2, p.126). The framework for understanding the non-material facet of the tattooist's role acknowledges the sentience of the client (conscious canvas, Section 4.2.3, p.138), the potential for tension to arise (navigating tension, Section 4.2.4, p.144), and the possibility of this to affect the tattooist (person, not just practitioner, Section 4.2.5, p.149). While this framework may encompass these possibilities, more autoethnographic accounts of practice from non-male practitioners would be valuable in broadening understanding of practice.

The research has been conducted in the North-East post-industrial region of Sunderland, with very low ethnic diversity, with 95.9% of the city's population being white (Sunderland City Council, 2016). This is reflected in the tattooing clientele and resulted in few opportunities to produce tattoos for non-white people. Though the processes employed in production are consistent with the framework presented in Chapter 3 (p.70), specific factors pertaining to client skin type may affect these processes and outcome. Representation within contemporary tattooing practice is, as with many areas, problematic (Morrow, 2020b). During the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 this was made apparent, with numerous tattooists utilising their social media platforms to draw attention to this. While

very useful information and commentary on tattooing non-white individuals can now be found on a variety of websites and blogs (see McNab, 2020), further research on tattooing non-white skin from a practitioner, design perspective is necessary to better represent practice.

6.5.2 Towards further creative investigation

Chapter 5 (p.160) of this dissertation documents practical investigation with tattooing as a medium in the development of a stylistic approach. The focus of the chapter is the implementation of my training as a designer into my tattooing practice. Further practical research in creative disciplines may be directed towards investigating alternative ways in which tattooists utilise creative outputs within their practice, and the potential impacts these may have.

An example of utilising design within tattooing contexts from my own practice, is the production of content that attempts to promote ethical tattooing culture. This content has not been included within the body of my thesis as it is outside the direct scope (and word count) of the thesis. As such, the ideas that are to be presented are only now being introduced to the dissertation but are included to provide examples of starting points from which further creative investigation may be informed.

An uncomfortable truth regarding western tattooing practices is that there is a longstanding history of cultural appropriation (Strohecker, 2011). As Section 5.1 (p.160) notes, I have a strong personal resonance with Eastern imagery, culture, and philosophy, which can feed into my practice. I have produced numerous tattoos based on my own designs of Hindu-inspired imagery, that reference historically symbolic content. In tattooing such images onto the bodies of others, I felt a discomfort in not knowing if they were appropriately understood as culturally significant by the client, and a responsibility to inform. In an attempt to rectify this, I designed a document that acted as a 'flash' sheet of available designs of Hindu deities, provided written content surrounding the visual content, and functioned as an art print (Figure 76). The document took the form of a risograph-printed double-sided zine and was given to those who expressed an interest in receiving one through social media, and in person. The outcome shown in Figure 76 was found to be

useful in concept, but insufficient in written content due to the limitations of the format, suggesting the necessity of a more detailed document.

Figure 76: Designed document aimed to exhibit available tattoo designs based on Hindu deities, function as an art print, and offer textual commentary of the image symbolism (McDade, 2019)

In January 2020 I was granted funding by *Northern Bridge Consortium* to visit Bali, Indonesia, to work alongside art-historian Bruce Carpenter, and gain a basic understanding of aspects of Balinese art, culture, and spirituality. The trip enabled the visit to numerous museums and galleries of classical Balinese art and performance, and allowed access to Carpenter's extensive private library of resources, and valuable insights. A series of designs inspired by the trip were then produced to be utilised within my tattooing practice, and a detailed overview of what was learned from the trip in written format was produced. This content was then designed into a fourty-four paged booklet (cover shown in Figure 77) and disseminated via my website, and in print. The digital version was made freely available (adammcdade.weebly.com/bali-book.html), and the printed copy offered free of charge to those interested in obtaining a Balinese-themed tattoo. This resulted in clients opting to have imagery that was produced based on first-hand encounters (rather than imagery from internet resources), but more importantly, gain some understanding of the significance of the images they embody. Figure 78 provides an example of tattoos produced from this booklet.
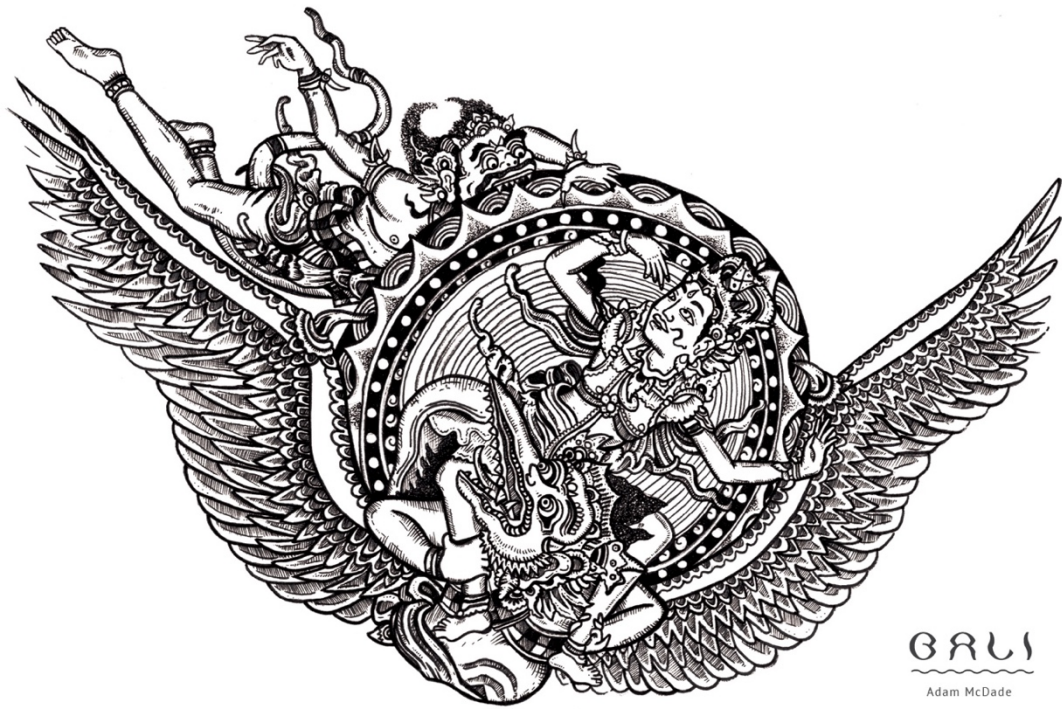
Figure 77: Illustrated cover of 'Bali', aim to exhibit designs available to be tattooed and inform the reader about the relationship between Balinese art, culture, and spirituality. Design based on a detail from painting by Balinese artist I Gusti Ngurah Ketut Kobot (McDade, 2020)

Figure 78: Tattoo 334 (centre) and 369 (outer). Designs based on those featured in booklet titled, 'Bali' (McDade, 2020)

Han (2019) expresses, "when people within a dominant culture use objects from another culture without thorough research, and remain ignorant of the cultural context, cultural appropriation takes place" (p.9). The examples discussed reflect my own attempts at utilising my background as a designer to move away from cultural appropriation, and towards "cultural appreciation" (ibid., p.8). Further practitioner investigation may involve utilising other creative disciplines to encourage tattooing practices that are in alignment with a range of ethical considerations. Tattooists may create content that promotes their preferred stylistic approach, while also promoting social consciousness. Further practitioner investigation may thus be targeted towards utilising tattooing practices as part of broader creative practices to encourage greater cultural and social consciousness within the industry.

6.5.3 Limitations of this research

The research scope has been limited by wordcount. While interesting content has arisen during the research process, I have had to frequently refer back to the research questions—considering what is of most relevance in responding to them. This has created areas for potential future research by both me and other tattooist/researchers who may utilise the

methodology devised in this study, thus enrich the canon of content that may be utilised in tattoo-focused studies from other disciplines.

While the framework for understanding the non-material facet of the tattooists role discussed in Section 4.2 is broadly inclusive of this (p.114), an examination of the 'ethics' of contemporary tattooing deserves specific focus. This can be understood to include the tattooists/studios decision making process regarding tattooing particular clientele. Steward (1990) introduces his 'ethical code' of practice of tattooing from the early 1950s, which includes not tattooing hands or faces (p.58) and in his case, a refusal to tattoo unmarried women (p.127). Similar tattooing ethical codes representative of tattooing in the late 1980s are noted throughout Sanders and Vail (2008). As the culture and practice has changed in recent decades such ethics have become more nuanced, or (fortunately) rectified in line with social and attitudinal progression.

As an example—In my tattooing career so far, I have tattooed only one client's full hand (Tattoo 202), and very few fingers (see Appendix A, p.264), despite being asked to by potential clients on numerous occasions. I made the decision to execute Tattoo 202 based on the client's age (he was in his mid-thirties), existing tattoo coverage (his other hand and parts of his neck were also tattooed), and because he selected me specifically for the piece and was aware of my low (comparative to my colleagues) accumulated years of tattooing experience. Had the client been of a younger age, or had less existing tattoo coverage, or merely wanted a tattoo on his hand (rather than a tattoo on a 'saved' bodily area by a specific practitioner), then I would have refused to complete the piece. Internal discourse surrounding such ethical codes is varied—some practitioners may have the perspective that if a client did not have much tattoo coverage (for example) but was adamant to have their hand tattooed, then they would have done so at a different studio of a lower standard— they may then suggest that if this is the case, it is more ethical to ensure a high-quality output for the client, and thus complete the tattoo for them. Greater internal perspectives and discussion surrounding tattooing ethical codes would be of benefit to tattoo practitioners, and scholarship that seeks to understand them.

Throughout my practice I have executed pieces that I am particularly satisfied with, yet potentially will not get to see again beyond a photograph. As the tattoo adapts with the body that wears it, I may be unable to observe what this looks like during the course of its

lifetime. If the tattoo is to be completed in sessions then I have no control if the client will ever return, or if they will have the piece completed by a different tattooist. While I have adapted to this occupational reality and remain acceptingly aware of professional tattooing as a commissioned and embodied practice, some tattooists find difficulty in accepting this. Steward (1990) notes such concerns and disillusionment regarding this reality, expressing,"[p]ity the poor tattoo artist" (p.167). As with tattooing ethics, increased perspectives regarding this topic from practitioners may increase understanding of the complexities of the discipline and contribute to positioning tattooing within the creative practice academic discourse.

It is important to highlight that the partner organisation of this research and its members are part of my personal and professional community. As such, I have been particularly sensitive to presenting information truthfully but sensitively, however as with many working communities—occupational discomforts can occur and have been observed at various stages. For tattooing, these can be discipline specific and result in conflict between members of the studio regarding matters relating to income declaration, jealousy regarding social media impact (largely perceived in tattooing culture as practitioner notability), and harsh critiques of tattoo outcomes. My apprenticeship period also involved undertaking a large degree of unrelated-to-tattooing administrative duties in a manner that (although culturally traditional and willingly accepted) may be perceived as somewhat exploitative. Future research may place focus upon these topics from an impartial perspective, contributing to an authentic representation of the tattoo studio environment.

6.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6 AND CLOSING REMARKS

Concluding the dissertation, this chapter provides an overview and reflection on 'Beyond the Epidermis' as a doctoral research project. The research questions are discussed in relation to how they have been effectively addressed, and the multi-method methodology that has been devised is highlighted to have been effective in addressing them. The findings generated through addressing the questions are summarised, indicating where within the dissertation they can be found. Ten knowledge contributions are claimed as a result and listed in Table 16 (p.211), which are centred around methodology, documentation, and frameworks. These contributions introduce a practice-based design perspective into tattooing discourse and are considered in relation to how they may be of value to the

existing disciplinary perspectives of tattoo inquiry that have been isolated in Section 2.4 (p.51). The impact of these knowledge contributions from an academic, and economic and societal perspective is proposed based on UKRI definitions of impact, highlighting how the partner organisation of the research has been positively affected, in and beyond adherence to the NPIF funding criteria. Responding to the limitations of this research, future directions for tattooing research are then suggested.

Reflecting on the research holistically—it is necessary to emphasise that as a practical research topic knowledge surrounding tattooing is as varied as the consumer, producer, and culture of practice. Despite the variations that are present, the knowledge contributions claimed provide a basis from which future tattooing research may be informed and generated.

When discussing the difficulty of obtaining access to high quality content for tattoo research in episode seven of the *Inking of Immunity* podcast (2021), tattoo scholar Matt Lodder states:

> *"…I think it takes time and it takes patience. It takes empathy, and it takes embeddedness in the cultures we're talking about to try and bridge these gaps. And I think what's really been really interesting over the last decade in my generation of tattoo scholars…all of us try and be proximate rather than anthropologically distant from the things we're writing about. And I think, obviously, there are risks to that as a set of research methods, but I think it's only through doing that, that we're ever going to get access to the things that we need to get access to."*

> (Lodder, 2021, 00:24:16–00:24:48).

The methodology that has been devised and employed in this research reflects the sentiment that Lodder has expressed, resulting in contributions to knowledge regarding tattoo practice and the practitioner that have thus far been insubstantially accounted for. These findings impact on remedying the absences, distortions, and flaws in academic understanding of tattooing, as this chapter has made explicit.

In future research I am interested in further utilising my positionality as a researcher and practitioner. I desire to continue investigating the relationship between illustration and design practice and tattooing practice, building upon the findings presented in Chapter 5 (p.160). Writing about tattooing in between 1950–165, Steward (1990) states, "…the majority of tattoo artists have never had any art training" (p.168). This statement is not necessarily true today, and I have increasingly noticed in my illustration and design teaching practice students from a range of specialisms expressing a great interest in tattooing. Similarly, a greater number of tattooists positioning themselves as tattooists/illustrators has been noted in recent years (some of which have undertaken formal arts or design training). In these cases, practitioners often are not necessarily as interested in the aesthetics associated with tattooing (see Section 2.4.358) as much as they are it's idiosyncratic properties as a medium, and the tattoos/designs produced reflect this. I am interested in monitoring the development of this observation, in addition to discovering how my tattooing and design practice interact or have commonalities and differences as they both evolve. By doing so, I hope to contribute to elevating the academic focus of tattooing as a creative practice, rather than the social phenomena surrounding it.

I additionally hope to explore how aspects of my role are affected while tattooing in different geographical and cultural contexts, at different levels of professional experience. Though I hope to continue in my teaching practice, I also aspire to tattoo, illustrate, and design while doing so. I intend to continue keeping a document of my tattoo practice (see Appendix A.1, p.264) and continue to write autoethnographic accounts of practice in response to any 'epiphanies' that may occur. I hope that such works can enrich the findings presented in this thesis regarding tattoo practice and practitioner by contributing greater specificity to the frameworks proposed, and greater documentations of practice for other academics to work with.

From a personal standpoint, I have long held the belief that tattooing is a discipline filled with romance, mysticism, and wonder. After investigating the discipline for over three-and-a-half years, my belief regarding these qualities of tattooing not only remains but is amplified. Tattooing is a magical discipline. Only through empathetic engagement can that be fully understood, but I hope that this research can suggest how.

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APPENDIX A: TATTOO JOURNAL

Appendix A consists of a tattoo journal of each tattooed executed (A.1) and a consent form template that each tattoo client completes prior to being tattooed at *Triplesix Studios* (A.2).

A.1 TATTOO JOURNAL

A.1 is a chronological record of each tattoo executed during the course of this research. Each tattoo is numbered by session and dated. A description is provided of the subject and the bodily placement, and an indication is given if the client is new (rather than a returning client). Multiple tattoos are shown together in instances where the client received multiple tattoos in one session.

The following tattoo numbers can be considered representative of the 'Authentic Graphic' (see Section 5.4, p.190) tattooing style that has been developed from the research period:

108, 117, 118, 119, 120, 132, 142, 143, 148, 150, 153, 155, 158, 168, 171, 173, 175, 179, 180, 181, 184, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 194, 195, 199, 200, 202, 204, 208, 210, 211, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 222, 225, 226, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 237, 240, 241, 243, 244, 247, 248, 250, 253, 254, 255, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 271, 276, 277, 278, 283, 284, 287, 288, 289, 295, 296, 297, 298. 299, 300, 301, 303, 306, 309, 318, 321, 325, 328, 329, 334, 335, 336, 337, 341, 342, 353, 363, 364, 365, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381.

Tattoo One
15/12/2017

* no photograph of tattoo taken.

Description:
Lightning bolt design with 'swirl' pattern.

Placement:
Left upper arm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Two
13/12/2017

Description:
Sailor Jerry flash sheet death moth.

Placement:
Right inner ankle area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Three
07/01/2018

Lined *Shaded*

Description:
Sailor Jerry flash sheet hula girl.

Placement:
Right inner bicep area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Four
13/01/2018

Description:
Drawing from scene in film,
'Mr Bean: The Movie'.

Placement:
Right upper arm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Five
20/01/2018

Description:
Birds eye chilli and Thai lettering that reads as 'Pad Kee Mao' (drunken noodles).

Placement:
Left lower leg/outer ankle area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Six & Seven
03/02/2018
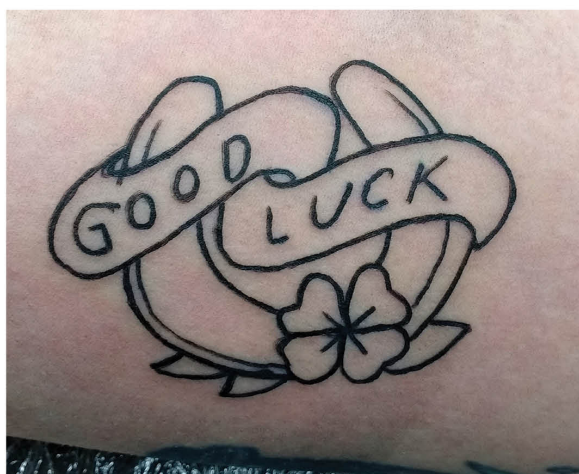
Description:
Sailor Jerry flash sheet horse shoe and text (six), and butterfly (seven).

Placement:
Right inner arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Eight

24/02/2018

Description:

Gradated green colour added to client's existing star shaped piece.

Placement:

Right outer elbow.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo Nine

03/03/2018

Description:

'Felix the cat' character.

Placement:

Right lower leg/outer ankle area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo Ten
17/03/2018

Description:
Hand and eye of Horus design.

Placement:
Right lower/inner arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Eleven
31/03/2018

Description:
Re-saturating existing tribal tattoo.

Placement:
Left upper arm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Twelve
31/03/2018

Description:

Re-saturating and completing existing tribal tattoo.

Placement:

Left abdomen/hip area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo Thirteen
05/04/2018

Description:

Re-saturating and completing existing tribal tattoo.

Placement:

Right upper arm.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Fourteen
07/04/2018

Description:
Shading and colour of Sailor Jerry flash sheet horse shoe and text reading, 'GOOD LUCK'.

Placement:
Right inner arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Fifteen
12/04/2018

Description:
Unalome symbol.

Placement:
Left side body/ribs.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Sixteen
14/04/2018

Description:
Re-saturating existing tribal piece.

Placement:
Left upper arm.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Seventeen
21/04/2018

Description:
Start of bird skull design.

Placement:
Left inner forearm.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Eighteen
26/04/2018

Description:
Linework 'Shaka' hand gesture design.

Placement:
Right upper arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Nineteen
27/04/2018

Description:
Character from series 'The Mighty Boosh'.

Placement:
Right lower leg/outer ankle area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Twenty

12/05/2018

Description:
Eye of Ra (facing towards client, on client request).

Placement:
Right lower arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Twenty-one

12/05/2018

Description:
Children's drawing of dinosaur and signature.

Placement:
Left lower leg/inner ankle area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Twenty-two
17/05/2018

Description:
Eye of Ra (facing towards client, on client request).

Placement:
Left lower arm/wrist area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Twenty-three
19/05/2018

Description:
Re-saturating existing tribal piece.

Placement:
Left upper arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Twenty-four
26/05/2018

Description:

Children's drawing of angel and gateway.

Placement:

Right thigh area above knee.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Twenty-five
26/05/2018

Description:

Character from Disney film, 'Hercules', based on client's friends drawing.

Placement:

Left lower/inner leg area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Twenty-six
02/06/2018

Description:
Noodles and chopsticks with text reading 'Send Noods'.

Placement:
Left lower inner leg/ankle area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Twenty-seven
02/06/2018

Description:
Abstract mark making produced by friends and client, in black, pink, and blue ink.

Placement:
Various parts of right arm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Twenty-eight
14/06/2018

Description:
Pagan symbol drawn by client.

Placement:
Left outer upper arm area. above elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Twenty-nine
14/06/2018

Description:
Sun design based on client's drawing.

Placement:
Right lower/outer forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Thirty
14/06/2018

Drawing by client's friends.

Description:
Three stars, drawn by client (central) and friends of client (upper,lower).

Placement:
Left rib area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Thirty-one
21/06/2018

Description:
Re-saturating existing tribal piece.

Placement:
Left upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Thirty-two
23/06/2018
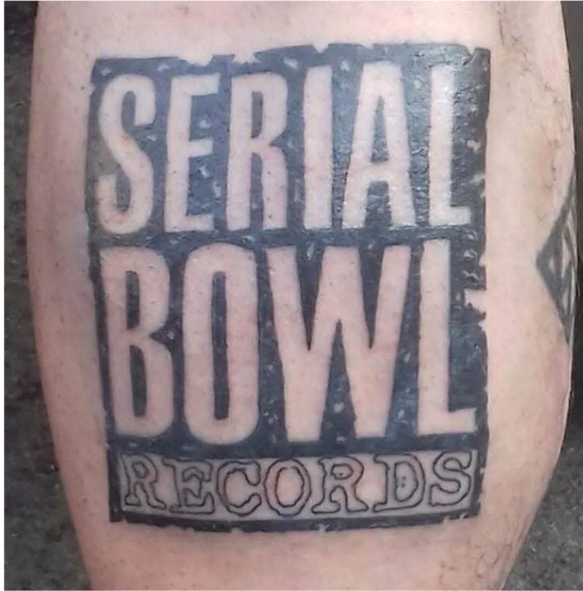
Description:
'Serial Bowl Records' record label logo.

Placement:
Left calf.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Thirty-three
26/06/2018

Description:
Words 'Wizards' and 'Lizards' in handwriting of client.

Placement:
Lower leg area, above ankles.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Thirty-four
30/06/2018

Description:
Naïve drawing of a swing.

Placement:
Left lower/upper arm area, above back of elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Thirty-five
05/07/2018

Lined

Coloured

Description:
Character from 'Pokemon' franchise.

Placement:
Left lower/upper arm area, above back of elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Thirty-six
07/07/2018

Description:

Re-saturating existing tribal piece.

Placement:

Left arm area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Thirty-seven
19/07/2018

Lined

Coloured

Description:

Stylised banana and word 'Fella'.

Placement:

Left lower leg/inner ankle area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo Thirty-eight
19/07/2018

Description:
Custom tribal design.

Placement:
Left upper arm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Thirty-nine
21/07/2018

Description:
Blackout work over existing tattoos.

Placement:
*Left lower arm
(full circumference).*

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fourty

24/07/2018

Description:
Roman numerals.

Placement:
Right wrist.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fourty-one

26/07/2018
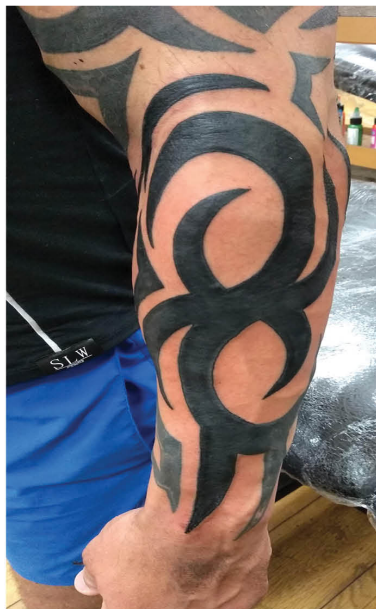
Description:
Re-saturating existing tribal piece.

Placement:
Left arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Fourty-two
28/07/2018

Description:
Custom skull and abstract colour marks.

Placement:
Right lower leg/inner ankle area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Fourty-three
28/07/2018

Description:
Custom sunflower design.

Placement:
Left shoulder blade area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fourty-four
28/07/2018

(no photograph taken)

Description:

Re-saturating existing tribal piece.

Placement:

Left arm area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Fourty-five
04/08/2018

Description:

Character from 'Pokemon' franchise with rope.

Placement:

Right lower/inner leg area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Fourty-six
07/08/2018

Description:
Design relating to motherhood, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fourty-seven
09/08/2018

Lined

Coloured

Description:
Design relating to motherhood, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fourty-eight
11/08/2018

Description:
Sailor Jerry flash sheet butterfly.

Placement:
Right upper arm.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Fourty-nine
16/08/2018

Description:
Custom stylised rose design.

Placement:
Right lower leg/outer ankle area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fifty
18/08/2018

Description:

Design based on hat worn in 'Alice in Wonderland' by 'Mad Hatter' character.

Placement:

Right inner leg area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo Fifty-one
23/08/2018

Description:

Design based on drawing by client's granddaughter.

Placement:

Right lower/inner leg area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo Fifty-two
24/08/2018

Description:
Custom design of pepperoni pizza slice.

Placement:
Right inner ankle area

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fifty-three
25/08/2018

Description:
Custom feather design.

Placement:
Right inner forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fifty-four
30/08/2018

Description:

Character from 'Pokemon' franchise with traditional American style dagger.

Placement:

Right side calf area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Fifty-five
03/09/2018

Description:

'Mother Earth' in psychedelic text with abstract colour flowers, based on client artwork.

Placement:

Left upper thigh area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo Fifty-six
04/09/2018

Description:
Simple dinosaur design, based on client reference image.

Placement:
Left lower upper arm area, above elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fifty-seven
09/09/2018

Description:
Custom antler design.

Placement:
Left side of head, above ear.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Fifty-eight
13/09/2018

Description:
Recolouring of existing angel tattoo.

Placement:
Right shoulder blade area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Fifty-nine
14/09/2018

Description:
Custom feather design.

Placement:
Left side outer arm area, above elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Sixty

15/09/2018

Description:
Custom sheep skull design.

Placement:
Left lower outer leg area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Sixty-one

21/09/2018

Description:
Custom jellyfish design.

Placement:
Right upper thigh area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Sixty-two

22/09/2018

Description:
Custom simple desert design.

Placement:
Left calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Sixty-three

22/09/2018
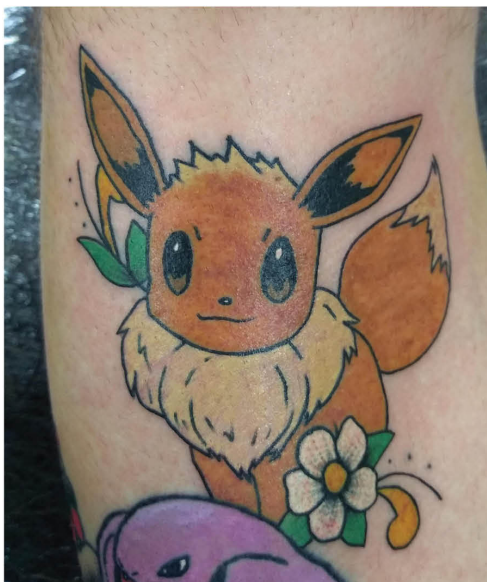
Description:
Character from 'Pokemon' franchise with traditional American style flowers.

Placement:
Right upper calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Sixty-four

28/09/2018

Description:
JR Tolkien logo.

Placement:
Left side calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Sixty-five

29/09/2018

Description:
Blackout work over existing tattoos.

Placement:
*Left mid–forearm
(full circumference).*

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Sixty-six
29/09/2018

Description:
Character from 'Pokemon' franchise with traditional American style skin tear.

Placement:
Right lower shin area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Sixty-seven
13/10/2018

Description:
Custom mushroom design.

Placement:
Right lower side leg area, above ankle bone.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Sixty-eight

14/10/2018

Description:
Figure from painting 'Music' by Matisse, in addition to artists signature.

Placement:
Right lower side leg area, above ankle bone.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Sixty-nine

20/10/2018

Description:
Names of client's children in client's handwriting.

Placement:
Thumbs.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Seventy & Seventy-one

20/10/2018

Description:
Custom shell designs, based on client's collection.

Placement:
Right lower leg area, above side and back of ankle.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Seventy-two

21/10/2018

Description:
Custom simple beach design.

Placement:
Right calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Seventy-three

02/11/2018

Description:
Custom amanita muscaria mushroom design.

Placement:
Right lower leg area, above foot.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Seventy-four

06/11/2018
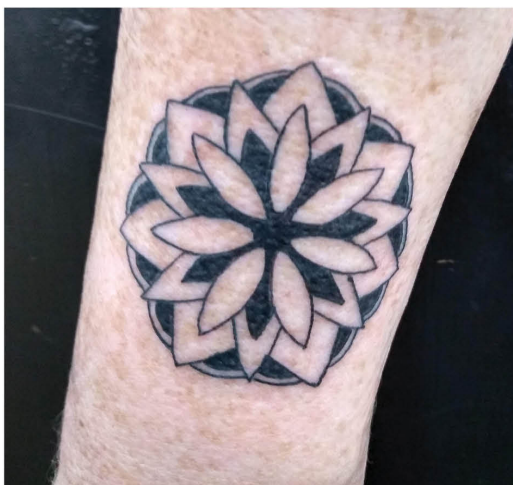
Lined and coloured black
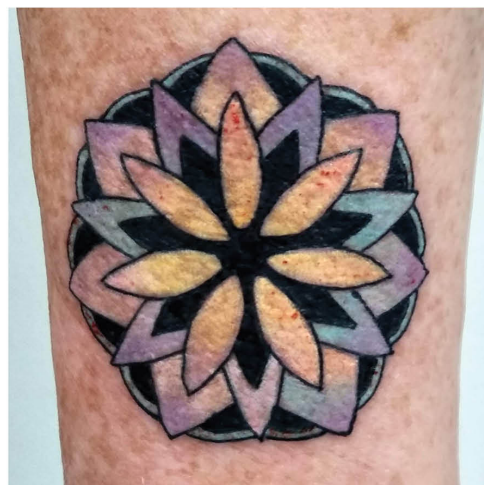
Coloured

Description:
Custom mandala design.

Placement:
Left outer lower arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Seventy-five

17/11/2018

Description:
Custom mandala design.

Placement:
Left inner lower arm area, above wrist.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Seventy-six

18/11/2018

Description:
Band of text reading, 'It's all sacred', from book 'Be Here Now' by Ram Dass.

Placement:
Left upper forearm (full circumference).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Seventy-seven

24/11/2018

Description:
Ongoing blackout work over existing tattoos.

Placement:
Left upper forearm (full circumference).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Seventy-eight

01/12/2018

Description:
Rabbit from 'Alice in Wonderland', based on John Tenniel illustration.

Placement:
Right lower outer leg area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Seventy-nine
08/12/2018

Description:
Start of custom Satanic 'Mr. Blobby' design.

Placement:
Right kneecap.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Eighty
11/12/2018

Description:
Simple crude bee design, based on sketch from client's friend.

Placement:
Right thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Eighty-one
15/12/2018

Description:
Start of custom rabbit design.

Placement:
*Left central thigh area,
slightly above kneecap.*

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Eighty-two & Eighty-three
21/12/2018

Description:
Custom designs of 1990's worm toy.

Placement:
Right lower outer leg area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Eighty-four

22/12/2018

Description:
Character from 'Pokemon' franchise with traditional American style flowers.

Placement:
Right lower outer leg area, above foot.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Eighty-five

28/12/2018

Description:
Start of custom design based on Hindu deity Hanuman .

Placement:
Left side upper thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Eighty-six
05/01/2019

Description:
Start of custom giraffe design.

Placement:
Left side thigh area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Eighty-seven
12/01/2019

Description:
Start of custom design based on Balinese Rangda mask.

Placement:
Right upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Eighty-eight
15/01/2019

Description:
Starfish design based on illustration by artist, 'Miss Fluff'.

Placement:
Left side forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Eighty-nine
19/01/2019

Description:
Custom moon and cloud design with face.

Placement:
Left lower leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Ninety

19/01/2019

Description:
Touch up and addition of colour to Previously executed tattoos.

Placement:
Lower wrists.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Ninety-one

26/01/2019

Description:
Completion of previously started custom Hanuman design.

Placement:
Left side upper thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Ninety-two

26/01/2019

Description:
Name of client's deceased friend, in tradition-al American style lettering.

Placement:
Left side hand area, underneath thumb.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Ninety-three

26/01/2019

Description:
Completion of previously started rabbit design, adding shaded elements.

Placement:
Left central thigh area, slightly above kneecap.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Ninety-four

31/01/2019

Description:
Start of custom Balinese style Barong mask.

Placement:
Left inner side calf area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo Ninety-five

01/02/2019

Description:
'Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum' characters, based on John Tenniel illustrations.

Placement:
Left inner side calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Ninety-six

02/02/2019

Description:
Completion of custom giraffe design.

Placement:
Left side thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Ninety-seven

22/02/2019

Description:
'Valknut' design, with red colour gradient running through it.

Placement:
Right lower forearm area, above wrist.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo Ninety-eight

23/02/2019

Description:

Sheep design from hardcore punk band, 'Minor Threat' .

Placement:

Right hip area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo Ninety-nine

02/03/2019

Description:

Custom whale shark and diver design.

Placement:

Left side body area, below ribs.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo One Hundred
09/03/2019

Description:
Continuation of custom design based on Balinese Rangda mask.

Placement:
Right upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 101
16/03/2019

Description:
'Babycakes' in cursive lettering, based on computer generated font.

Placement:
Left upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 102

21/03/2019

Description:
Continuation of custom design based on Balinese Barong mask.

Placement:
Left inner side calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 103

04/04/2019

Description:
Graphic associated with rock band, 'Panic at the Disco', depicting figure and clouds.

Placement:
Right outer lower leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 104

04/04/2019

Description:
Bee design from personal flash.

Placement:
Left upper chest area, below collarbone.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 105

06/04/2019
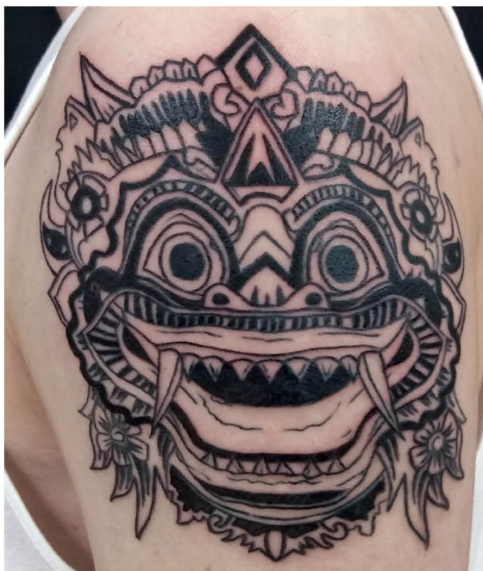
Description:
Completion of custom design based on Balinese Rangda mask.

Placement:
Right upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 106

11/04/2019

Lined and coloured black

Coloured (unfinished)

Description: Placement: New Client?
Start of custom design of Hindu deity Ram.   *Right calf area.*   *Yes.*

Tattoo 107

13/04/2019

(no photograph taken as client needed to leave in a hurry)

Description: Placement: New Client?
Continuation of pre- existing tribal piece.   *Left lower arm area.*   *Yes.*

Tattoo 108

18/04/2019

Description:
Custom elephant design, based on style of drawing in sketchbooks.

Placement:
Right inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 109

25/04/2019

*incomplete as client realised that they had given incorrect number order for tattoo.

Description:
Scanned drawing of kissing lips, plus numbers '1347' in old English style font.

Placement:
Right outer foot.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 110

25/04/2019

Description:
Calligraphic letter 'L', based on computer generated font.

Placement:
Right thumb.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 111

25/04/2019

Description:
Chinese lettering, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left side/ribs area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 112

27/04/2019

Description:
Custom simple tulip and flowers linework piece.

Placement:
Right outer lower leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 113

03/05/2019

Description:
Gardeners characters, based on Alice in Wonderland illustrations by John Tenniell.

Placement:
Right outer lower leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 114

04/05/2019

Description:
Telephone number in stencil font, from cult 1980's horror film.

Placement:
Right outer mid leg area, on the side of the knee area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 115

04/05/2019

Description:
Simple wave design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left upper thigh area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 116

04/05/2019

Description:
Norse Runes design.

Placement:
Right inner forearm, below elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 117

07/05/2019

Description:
Infinity symbol design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right outer lower leg area, above back of foot.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 118

07/05/2019

Description:
Question mark design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right side lower leg area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 119

09/05/2019

Description:
Custom design of Viracocha—South American deity from Inca and pre-Inca mythology.

Placement:
Right upper leg/thigh area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 120

11/05/2019

Description:
Custom design of bear and mountains, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right upper inner arm/bicep area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 121

14/05/2019

Description:
Alice character, based on 'Alice in Wonderland' illustration by John Tenniell.

Placement:
Right outer side leg area,

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 122

16/05/2019

Description:
Continuation of colour of wings as part of ongoing back piece.

Placement:
Right shoulder blade area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 123

18/05/2019

Description:
Addition of colour to previously started tattoo of Hindu deity, 'Ram'.

Placement:
Right calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 124

18/05/2019

Description:
Custom Illustrative naive cat design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 125

25/05/2019

Description:
Custom blackwork heather design as part of set of three matching sibling/mother tattoos.

Placement:
Nape/back of neck.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 126

25/05/2019

Description:
Custom colour heather design as part of set of three matching sibling/mother tattoos.

Placement:
Left outer side arm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 127

30/05/2019

Description:
Custom shamanic rat.

Placement:
Left foot.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 128

30/05/2019

Description:
Custom colour heather design as part of set of three matching sibling/mother tattoos.

Placement:
Right outer forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 129

31/05/2019

Description:
Design based on mother/daughter relationship from client reference. Matching tattoo.

Placement:
Right lower inner forearm area, above wrist.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 130

31/05/2019

Description:
Design based on mother/daughter relationship from client reference. Matching tattoo.

Placement:
Right lower outer forearm area, above wrist.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 131

01/06/2019

Description:
Start of piece based on post punk band 'Sonic Youth' 'Goo' album artwork.

Placement:
Left upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 132

04/06/2019

Description:
Custom elephant design, based on previously executed elephant design in same style.

Placement:
Right upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 133

08/06/2019
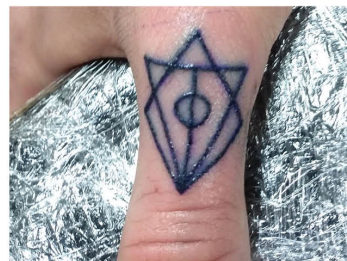
Description:
'IFWT' and symbol, relating to rock band 'In Flames'.

Placement:
Right fingers and thumb.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 134 & 135

08/06/2019

Description:
Name and date in computer generated font, based on client's existing tattoo style.

Placement:
Right lower outer forearm.
Right lower inner forearm.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 136

08/06/2019

Description:
Small custom rose design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower leg/inner ankle area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 137

15/06/2019

Description:
Small naive daisy design, based on sketch provided by client.

Placement:
Left hand/lower thumb area.

New Client?
No (walk-in).

Tattoo 138

18/06/2019

Description:
Design of characters from 'Winnie the Pooh' franchise, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left lower inner leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 139

20/06/2019

Description:
Names, based on computer generated text.

Placement:
Left central forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 140

21/06/2019

Description:
Rendering of Arthur Rackham illustration of Cheshire Cat.

Placement:
Left central lower leg area,

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 141

22/06/2019

Description:
Design combining pre-existing elements memorialising client's deceased brother.

Placement:
Left upper inner arm/bicep area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 142

22/06/2019

Description:
Custom illustrative skull / drink can with a scythe, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right central inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 143

25/06/2019

Description:
Start of rose design, based on personal flash. Incomplete due to client pain.

Placement:
Central chest/breast bone area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 144

25/06/2019

Description:
Arabic text reading, 'Choose Life'.

Placement:
Right upper chest area, beneath collarbone.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 145

28/06/2019

Description:
Simple custom mushroom design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left lower inner leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 146

28/06/2019

Description:
Custom mushroom design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left lower inner leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 147
29/06/2019

Description:
Completion of piece based on post punk band 'Sonic Youth' 'Goo' album artwork.

Placement:
Left upper arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 148
02/07/2019

Description:
Design based on Disney character 'Bambi'.

Placement:
Right inner bicep.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 149
04/07/2019

Description:
Arabic text of deceased friends name, based on client supplied reference.

Placement:
Right side forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 150
06/07/2019

Description:
Custom design based on character from film, 'Donnie Darko'.

Placement:
Right upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 151

11/07/2019

Description:
Logo from computer game, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 152

12/07/2019

Description:
Stylised simple portrait holding rose, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left lower forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 153

13/07/2019

Description:
Depiction of hands from Michelangelo painting 'Creation of Adam'.

Placement:
Right inner arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 154

16/07/2019

Description:
Symbol from computer game.

Placement:
Right central inner forearm.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 155

18/07/2019

Description:
Completion of rose design, based on personal flash. Incomplete due to client pain.

Placement:
Central chest/breast bone area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 156

19/07/2019

Description:
Simple hands in 'Pinky Promise', based on client reference.

Placement:
Right upper inner arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 157

19/07/2019
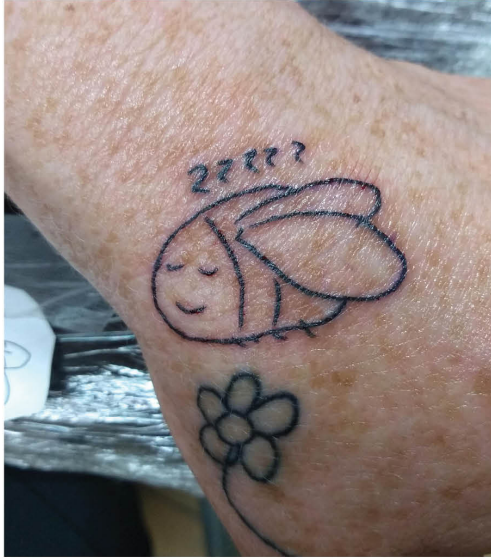
Description:
Simple sleeping bee, based on doodle provided by client.

Placement:
Left side hand.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 158

20/07/2019
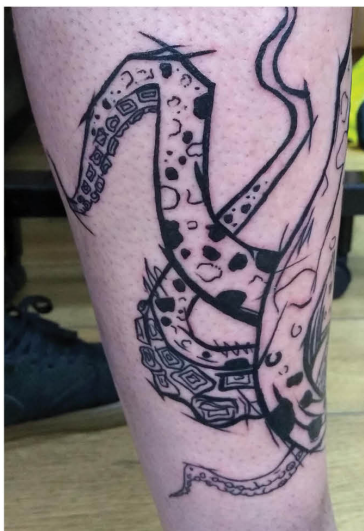
Completed area

Incomplete area

Description:
Custom octopus design.

Placement:
Right lower leg (wrapping).

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 159

25/07/2019

Description:
'Nil Desperandum' in old English style computer generated font.

Placement:
Left inner centre forearm.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 160

25/07/2019

Description:
'Nil Desperandum' in old English style computer generated font.

Placement:
Left inner centre forearm.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 161

26/07/2019

Description:
Roman numerals of client's wedding date, based on computer generated font.

Placement:
Left side body/ribs area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 162

27/07/2019

Description:
Italic text and initials, based on computer generated font.

Placement:
Right upper side body/ribs area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 163

27/07/2019

Description:
Typewriter style text, based on computer generated font.

Placement:
Right lower arm, above inner elbow area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 164

30/07/2019

Description:
Start of custom bee design (session ended early due to client movement).

Placement:
Right outer side leg area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 165

30/07/2019

Description:
Wings, halo, and initial, based on client reference (orientation on client preference).

Placement:
Right lower forearm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 166

02/08/2019

Description:
Simple arrow design.

Placement:
Right lower upper arm area, above outer elbow.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 167

02/08/2019

Description:
Simple crescent moon design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left lower side arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 168

03/08/2019

Description:
Custom occult skull and branch design.

Placement:
Right outer lower forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 169

06/08/2019

Description:
'Mickey Mouse' design with expanded ears, provided by client. Memorialising relative.

Placement:
Left lower/outer leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 170

06/08/2019

Description:
Matching memorial design to tattoo 169.

Placement:
Left upper/inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 171

08/08/2019

Description:
Design based on 'Tinkerbell' character from Disney franchise.

Placement:
Right lower central forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 172

08/08/2019

Description:
Design based on illustrative figures from existing musician's artwork.

Placement:
Right central forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 173
15/08/2019

Description:
Completion of custom octopus design.

Placement:
Right lower leg (wrapping).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 174
16/08/2019

Description:
Touch up of colour on tattoo 151.

Placement:
Right lower upper arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 175

17/08/2019

Description:
Custom lighthouse design, based on lighthouse in Roker, North East England.

Placement:
Left central inner forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 176

20/08/2019

Description:
Butterfly and symbol design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower central forearm, above wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 177

22/08/2019

Description:
Pagan symbol, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right inner side forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 178

23/08/2019

Description:
Linework hands, based on photograph of David Bowie for cover of 'Heroes' album.

Placement:
Left inner upper forearm area, below elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 179

24/08/2019

Description:
Design of character from Tim Burton film franchise, created for promotional flash day.

Placement:
Left side upper thigh area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 180

24/08/2019

Description:
Design of character from Tim Burton film franchise, created for promotional flash day.

Placement:
Right inner bicep area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 181

27/08/2019

Description:
Custom design of Balinese style mask.

Placement:
Right inner side calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 182

06/09/2019
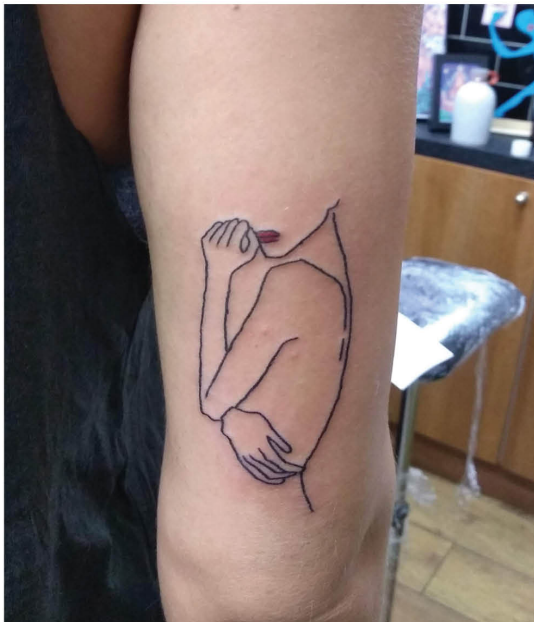
Description:
Linework design of figure, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right central outer upper arm area, above elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 183

06/09/2019

Description:
Seven petal flowers in 1970's colour palette.

Placement:
Right outer arm area (mainly forearm).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 184

07/09/2019

Description:
Custom spartan helmet design, in reference to client's American football team.

Placement:
Right calf area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 185
07/09/2019

Description:
Logo from WWE wrestling platform.

Placement:
Right central inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 186
12/09/2019

Description:
Custom Betta fish design.

Placement:
Right inner bicep area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 187

13/09/2019

Description:
Character from 'Funny Bones' franchise, from Friday 13th flash sheet.

Placement:
Left central outer upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 188

13/09/2019

Tattoos 187 and 188 together

Description:
Character from 'Funny Bones' franchise, from Friday 13th flash sheet. Matching tattoo 187.

Placement:
Left central outer upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 189

13/09/2019

Description:
Character from 'Funny Bones' franchise, from Friday 13th flash sheet. .

Placement:
Left central outer forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 190

13/09/2019

Description:
Custom design of sign from Alfred Hitchcock film, 'Psycho', from Friday 13th flash sheet.

Placement:
Right lower forearm area, wrapping around side wrist.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 191

13/09/2019

Description:
Design of 'Casper the Friendly Ghost', from Friday 13th flash sheet.

Placement:
Right lower inner leg area, around ankle.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 192

14/09/2019

Central view

Right side view

Description:
Custom design of skull and star (client referenced tattoo 162 as inspiration).

Placement:
Right outer forearm (wrapping).

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 193

14/09/2019

Description:
Naive hand drawn cat, based on scan of client reference.

Placement:
Right inner lower ankle/side of heel.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 194

17/09/2019

Description:
'Dalek' character from 'Doctor Who' franchise design, covering scars.

Placement:
Right lower side arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 195

19/09/2019

Description:
Character from 'Street Fighter' franchise design.

Placement:
Left lower inner leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 196

19/09/2019

Description:
Graphic illustration on mountains, clouds, road, and figure, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left central inner forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 197

20/09/2019

Description:
Constellation and star design.

Placement:
Right side foot.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 198

21/09/2019

Description:
Start of design based on historically significant tattoo.

Placement:
Left inner thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 199

21/09/2019

Description:
Design based on character from, 'Gremlins' film franchise.

Placement:
Right inner bicep area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 200

28/09/2019

Description:
Completion of custom bee design.

Placement:
Right outer side leg area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 201

01/10/2019

Description:
Hare character, based on 'Alice in Wonderland' illustration.

Placement:
Right upper side calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 202

03/10/2019

Description:
Custom lotus flower design.

Placement:
Left hand.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 203

03/10/2019

Description:
Simple rose design based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower inner arm, above wrist.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 204

05/10/2019

Description:
Character from 'Street Fighter' franchise design.

Placement:
Left upper back/shoulder area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 205

05/10/2019

Description:
Simple astrology signs.

Placement:
Right lower arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 206 & 207

11/10/2019
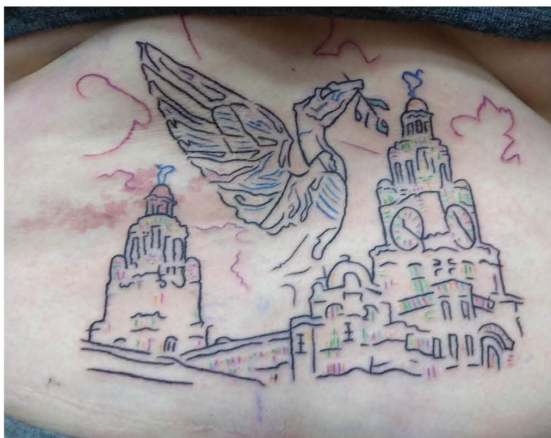
Description:
Design based on client reference of drawing of skyline (206). Semicolon (207).

Placement:
Lower back (206). Right side inner wrist area (207).

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 208

12/10/2019
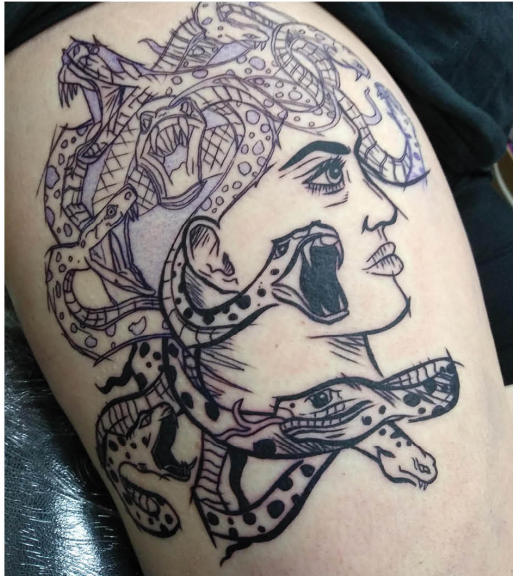
Description:
Custom design depicting Greek mythological character, Medusa.

Placement:
Left outer upper thigh area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 209

17/10/2019

Description:
Pagan themed symbol, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower inner arm area, above wrist.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 210

18/10/2019

Description:
Character from 'Street Fighter' franchise design.

Placement:
Right lower inner leg area, above ankle.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 211

22/10/2019

Description:
Custom cactus and skull design.

Placement:
Left outer upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 212
25/10/2019

Description: Placement: New Client?
Custom blue bottle fly design.   *Right thumb.*   *Yes.*

Tattoo 213
29/10/2019

Description: Placement: New Client?
Custom nautical design, in wood engraving   *Right outer upper arm area.*   *Yes.*
style.

Tattoo 214

31/10/2019

Description:
Cauldron design created as Halloween promotional flash.

Placement:
Right lower inner leg area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 215

31/10/2019

Description:
Skull design created as Halloween promotional flash.

Placement:
Right upper inner arm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 216

31/10/2019

Description:

Fly design created as Halloween promotional flash.

Placement:

Right mid inner arm area.

New Client?

Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 217

01/11/2019

Description:

Mocking jay bird design, based on cover for book, 'Hunger Games'.

Placement:

Right lower outer side leg area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 218 & 219

02/11/2019
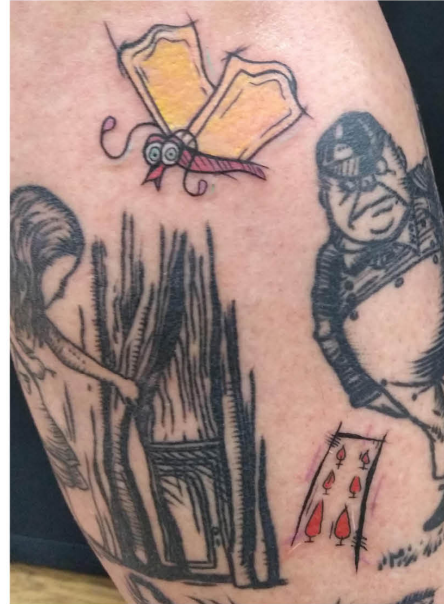
Description:
Caterpillar and flying toast characters, based on 'Alice in Wonderland' illustration.

Placement:
Right lower leg area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 220

05/11/2019

Description:
Custom bee design.

Placement:
Right upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 221

08/11/2019

Description:
Addition of colour to design based on client reference of drawing of skyline.

Placement:
Lower back.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 222

09/11/2019

Description:
Completion of custom design depicting Greek mythological character, Medusa.

Placement:
Left outer upper thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 223

19/11/2019

Description:
Heart and initials, based on variation of client reference.

Placement:
Left lower inner arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 224

21/11/2019

Description:
'Playboy' logo.

Placement:
Central lower back.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 225

21/11/2019

Description:
Touch-up of skull design created as Halloween promotional flash.

Placement:
Right upper inner arm area.

New Client?
No..

Tattoo 226

23/11/2019

Description:
Custom teeth and lyrics design, based on those of band 'My Chemical Romance'.

Placement:
Right side ribs area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 227

26/11/2019

Description:
Text based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Left side outer arm.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 228

26/11/2019

Description:
Simple cat and heart design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left lower outer leg/ankle area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 229

26/11/2019

Description:
Simple paw print design.

Placement:
Right lower foot/heel area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 230

03/12/2019

Description:
Custom Owl and crystal design.

Placement:
Right outer lower arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 231

10/12/2019

Description:
Custom UFO abduction scene and text.

Placement:
Right upper back of arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 232

12/12/2019

Description:
Dog from 'Funnybones', from Halloween flash.

Placement:
Right upper inner arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 233

17/12/2019

Description:

Custom Queen chess piece.

Placement:

Right lower upper outer arm area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 234

17/12/2019

Description:

Design based on crop of painting 'medicine' by Gustav Klimt.

Placement:

Right calf area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 235 & 236

19/12/2019

Description:
Characters from 'Pokemon' franchise.

Placement:
Right lower leg area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 237

21/12/2019

Description:
Custom atom design.

Placement:
Right inner lower leg/ankle area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 238 & 239

21/12/2019

Description:
Roman numerals (238), Wave, sky and sun design (239) based on client reference.

Placement:
Right outer lower leg (238)
Right lower upper arm (239).

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 240

21/12/2019

Description:
Constellation and astrology design.

Placement:
Right outer forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 241

28/01/2020

Description:
Stylised detail from Hieronymus Bosch painting.

Placement:
Right upper inner bicep area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 242

30/01/2020

Description:
Diamond and text, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 243

31/01/2020

Description:
Cherub design from personal flash.

Placement:
Left upper outer arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 244

01/02/2020

Description:
Custom dog design, based on client photograph.

Placement:
Right inner forearm.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 245

01/02/2020

Description:
Simple abstract figures and date, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower inner arm/wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 246

06/02/2020

Description:
Paw print, infinite symbol, heart, and name—based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower outer forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 247

06/02/2020

Description:
Custom snake design.

Placement:
Left upper side thigh area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 248

08/02/2020

Description:
Stylised character from computer game.

Placement:
Left outer lower leg area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 249

08/02/2020

Description:
Cat design covering name, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower inner leg/ankle area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 250

11/02/2020

Description:
Cobra and flowers design, from personal flash.

Placement:
Right side forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 251 & 252

11/02/2020

Description:
Handwriting (251) and simple smile design (252) based on client reference.

Placement:
Right central inner arm (251), lower outer arm area (252).

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 253

13/02/2020

Description:
Start of custom wings and date of birth and death design.

Placement:
Upper chest area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 254
15/02/2020

Description:
Custom capybara design.

Placement:
Right inner bicep area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 255
18/02/2020

Description:
Start of custom Guy Fawkes design.

Placement:
Left central upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 256

20/02/2020

Description:
Handwriting and simple figure, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left inner central arm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 257

22/02/2020

Description:
Custom flower bunch design.

Placement:
Right central inner forearm.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 258

27/02/2020

Description:
Text from computer game.

Placement:
Right central lower forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 259 & 260

29/02/2020

Description:
Simple rose design (259) and heart outline (260) based on client reference.

Placement:
Left central inner forearm (259) and wrist area (260).

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 261

29/02/2020

Description:
Paw print design, based on client photograph.

Placement:
Right pectoral area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 262

29/02/2020

Description:
Symbol, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right middle finger.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 263–267

03/03/2020

Description:
Various custom 'Alice in Wonderland' themed designs.

Placement:
Various parts of right leg.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 268

06/03/2020

Description:
Custom hedgehog design.

Placement:
Right central inner forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 269

07/03/2020

Description:
Completion of custom wing design.

Placement:
Upper chest area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 270

12/03/2020

Description:
Text design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Central upper back/neck area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 271

12/03/2020

Description:
Custom bee design.

Placement:
Right outer leg, beneath knee cap area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 272

13/03/2020

Description:
Simple rose design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower arm, close to wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 273

13/03/2020

Description:
Simple clover design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower arm, close to wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 274

14/03/2020

Description:
Simple rose design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left upper thigh area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 275

14/03/2020

Description:
Globe and aeroplane design, based on combination of client reference.

Placement:
Right central bicep area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 276

17/03/2020

Description:
Cherries and eye design, from personal flash.

Placement:
Right upper inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

(significant gap between tattoo appointments due to COVID-19 pandemic)

Tattoo 277

23/07/2020

Description:
Custom elephant design.

Placement:
Left front thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 278

24/07/2020

Description:
Custom insect design.

Placement:
Left side calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 279

24/07/2020

Description:
Name, based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Left upper arm/shoulder area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 280

25/07/2020

Description:
Roman numerals, based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Right side forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 281

25/07/2020

Description:
Simple butterfly design.

Placement:
Left lower upper arm, above elbow area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 282

25/07/2020

Description:
Custom north star design.

Placement:
Central chest area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 283

30/07/2020

Description:
Custom figure and globe design.

Placement:
Left inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 284

31/07/2020

Description:
Custom pineapple on cocktail spoon design.

Placement:
Left side ribs area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 285 & 286
31/07/2020

Description:
Design based on image from 'Oasis' flyer (285) and song name from 'Fontaines D.C' (286).

Placement:
Right lower upper side (285) and inner (286) arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 287
01/08/2020

Description:
Custom snake body, flowers, and bamboo design.

Placement:
Left inner thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 288

01/08/2020

Description:
Vegvisir design.

Placement:
Right inner forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 289

06/08/2020

Description:
Custom globe and arrow design.

Placement:
Right shoulder blade area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 290

07/08/2020

Description:
Symbol associated with author, J.R.R Tolkien.

Placement:
Left inner bicep area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 291

07/08/2020

Description:
Custom comic owl design.

Placement:
Central inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 292

08/08/2020

Description:

Heart-themed design, based on client reference.

Placement:

Right lower outer leg area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 293

08/08/2020

Description:

Heart-themed design, based on client reference.

Placement:

Right lower side forearm area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 294

08/08/2020

Description:
Rework of abstract piece, previously executed by a different tattooist.

Placement:
Right upper side arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 295 & 296

13/08/2020
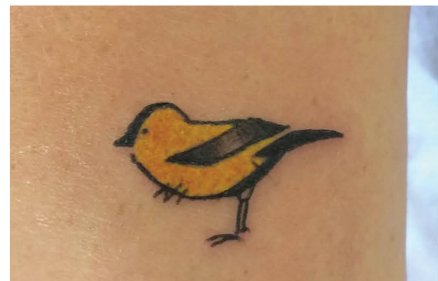
Description:
Custom moon phases (295) and bird (296) design.

Placement:
Left lower central (295) and upper inner (296) forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 297

14/08/2020
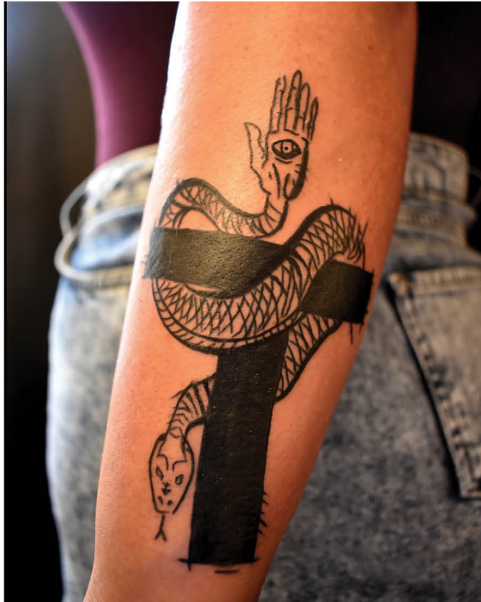
Description:

Custom cross and snake design, based on client reference, covering playing card symbol tattoo.

Placement:

Left lower side forearm area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo 298

14/08/2020

Description:

Simple fish design, based on client reference.

Placement:

Right lower forearm/wrist area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo 299

15/08/2020

Description:
Custom jellyfish design.

Placement:
Right calf area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 300

20/08/2020

Description:
Custom rhino design.

Placement:
Left inner thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 301

21/08/2020

Description:

Exploding flower/eye design from personal flash.

Placement:

Right lower forearm area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo 302

22/08/2020

Description:

Design based on artwork by M.C Escher.

Placement:

Right lower central upper arm area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 303

27/08/2020

Description:
Addition of colour to previously started Guy Fawkes design.

Placement:
Left central upper arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 304

28/08/2020

Description:
Addition of symbols around previously executed tattoos.

Placement:
Right lower leg (various areas).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 305

28/08/2020
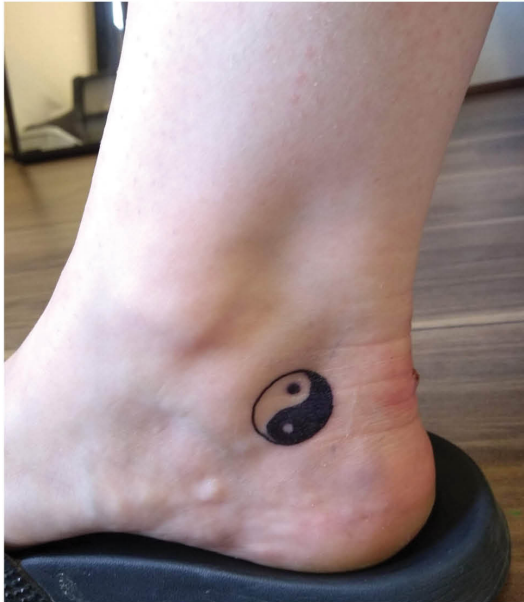
Description:

Taoist yin-yang symbol.

Placement:

Right inner ankle area.

New Client?

Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 306–308

29/08/2020

Description:

Custom bear (306), plaster (307), and fire (308) designs.

Placement:

Right bicep (306), left knee cap (307) and ankle (308).

New Client?

No.

Tattoo 309

03/09/2020

Description:
Custom rabbit and film-wheel design.

Placement:
Right inner calf area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 310

04/09/2020

Description:
Tree and initials design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left side forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 311

04/09/2020

Description:
Design based on client reference of an image associated with 'Harry Potter' franchise.

Placement:
Right calf area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 312

05/09/2020

Description:
Simple bee design.

Placement:
Left thumb.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 313
05/09/2020

Description:
Simple cross design.

Placement:
Right central calf area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 314
10/09/2020

Description:
'Alice in Wonderland' themed design, based on illustration by John Tenniel.

Placement:
Right side thigh/buttock area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 315

11/09/2020

Description:

Design based on logo from gaming franchise, 'God of War'.

Placement:

Central upper back area.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 316

11/09/2020

Description:

Custom flower design, based on combination of client references.

Placement:

Right central forearm.

New Client?

Yes.

Tattoo 317

11/09/2020

Description:
Design based on client's kick boxing company logo.

Placement:
Right lower side leg area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 318

17/09/2020

Description:
Custom design based on characters from 'The Lion King' franchise.

Placement:
Left lower side leg area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 319

18/09/2020

Description:
Memorial design, based on combination of client reference.

Placement:
Right pectoral.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 320

19/09/2020

Description:
Vegvisir design.

Placement:
Right inner bicep area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 321
24/09/2020

Description:
Custom octopus design.

Placement:
Right lower outer upper arm area, above elbow.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 322
25/09/2020

Description:
Text based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Left upper inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 323

25/09/2020

Description:
Lizard design, based on imagery associated with computer game.

Placement:
Right outer lower leg area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 324

25/09/2020

Description:
Linework statue head design, based on client's personal drawing.

Placement:
Right lower inner forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 325

26/09/2020

Description:
Custom bird design.

Placement:
Right calf area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 326 & 327

26/09/2020

Description:
'Paddington Bear' character based on illustration (326) and Mickey Mouse design (327)

Placement:
Right lower arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 328 & 329
01/10/2020

Description:
Tibetan skull design (328) and custom sad balloon design (329).

Placement:
Right outer lower leg (326) and right pectoral (327).

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 330
02/10/2020

Description:
Initials, based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Left inner wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 331

02/10/2020

Description:
Text, based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Right inner wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 332

03/10/2020

Description:
Initial and knuckle-duster design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right upper pectoral area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 333

20/10/2020

Description:
Stars and dots design.

Placement:
Left side body/ribs area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 334–336

21/10/2020

Description:
Various designs from personal flash.

Placement:
Upper back (334), Right inner forearm (335) and inner calf (337).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 337 & 338

24/10/2020

Description:
Design based on client reference of poetry book artwork (337) and pagan symbol (338).

Placement:
Right central (337) and inner (338) bicep.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 339

24/10/2020

Description:
Text based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Central back area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 340–342

29/10/2020
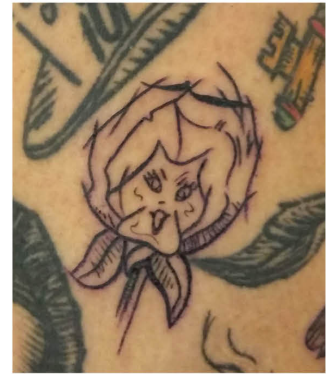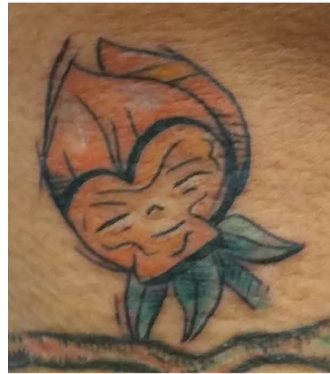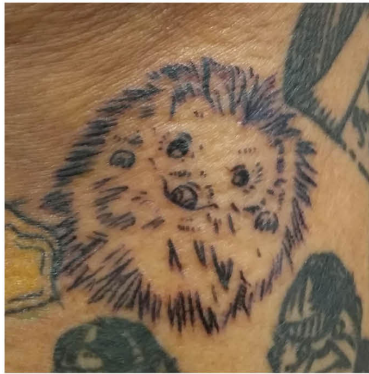
Description:
Custom hedgehog (340) and flower designs (341 & 342).

Placement:
Various parts of right leg.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 343

29/10/2020

Description:
Heart and semicolon design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Right lower outer forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 344

29/10/2020

Description:
Heart and semicolon design, based on client reference (matching tattoo 343).

Placement:
Right lower outer forearm area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 345

29/10/2020

Description:
Alien from film, 'Toy Story'.

Placement:
Right lower inner forearm/ wrist area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 346

29/10/2020

Description:
Teacup from film, 'Beauty and the Beast'.

Placement:
Left lower side forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 347

30/10/2020

Description:
Roman numerals, based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Right lower inner forearm/ wrist area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 348

30/10/2020

Description:
Text based on lettering style of client reference.

Placement:
Right lower upper arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 349 & 350

30/10/2020
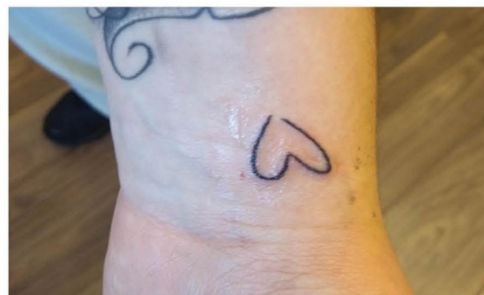
Description:
Text based on type-writer lettering (349) and simple heart design (350).

Placement:
Right inner lower bicep (349) and side wrist (350).

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 351

30/10/2020

Description:
Simple lotus flower design, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left inner lower forearm/ wrist area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 352

30/10/2020

Description:
Lettering, based on computer-generated font.

Placement:
Central inner upper forearm.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 353
31/10/2020

Description:
'Jack Skellington' character, from film, 'The Nightmare before Christmas'.

Placement:
Right inner lower forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 354
31/10/2020

Description:
Signature of client's late father, based on client reference.

Placement:
Left lower outer upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 355
31/10/2020

Description:
Design based on combined client references.

Placement:
Left outer upper arm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 356
04/11/2020

Description:
Custom mugwort plant design.

Placement:
Left outer upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 357

04/11/2020

Description:
Image associated with musical outfit, 'The weekend'.

Placement:
Right inner upper forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 358

03/12/2020
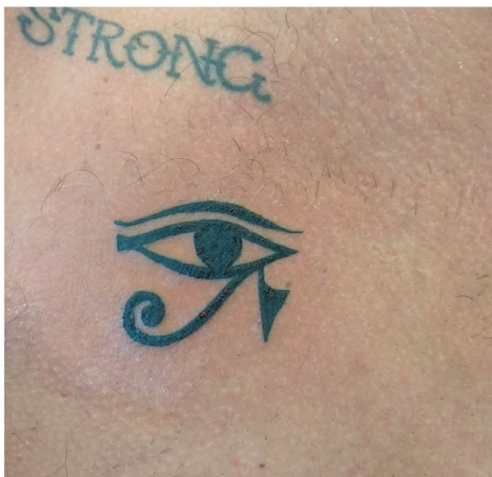
Description:
Eye of Horus design.

Placement:
Left central pectoral area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 359

04/12/2020

Front of leg
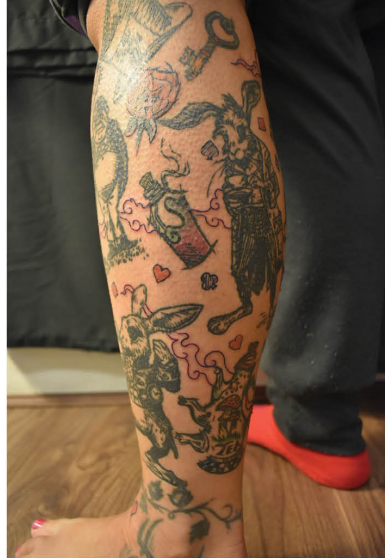
Side of leg

Description:

Filler made up of card suits and smoke around previously executed tattoos.

Placement:

Various areas of right leg.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo 360

04/12/2020

Description:

Silhouette of poet John Cooper Clarke, based on image from promotional flyer.

Placement:

Right inner upper forearm area.

New Client?

No.

Tattoo 361

05/12/2020

Description:
Illustration based on Internet meme.

Placement:
Right inner upper forearm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 362

05/12/2020

Description:
Lyrics from musical group, 'Guns n' Roses', in typewriter style font.

Placement:
Right upper outer thigh area.

New Client?
Yes (walk-in).

Tattoo 363

10/12/2020

Description:
Custom wave design.

Placement:
Right inner upper forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 364

10/12/2020

Description:
Custom design based on characters from 'The Lion King' franchise.

Placement:
Right lower side leg area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 365
11/12/2020

Description:
Character associated with musical group 'My Chemical Romance' from existing reference.

Placement:
Right inner side forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 366 & 367
11/12/2020

Description:
Jean-Michel Basquiat design (366) and client's drawing of dog (367).

Placement:
Left upper forearm (366), Right outer lower forearm (367).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 368

11/12/2020

Description:
Penchant and skeleton hand design, based on combination of client references.

Placement:
Right lower side forearm area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 369–371

12/12/2020
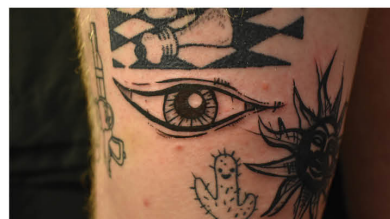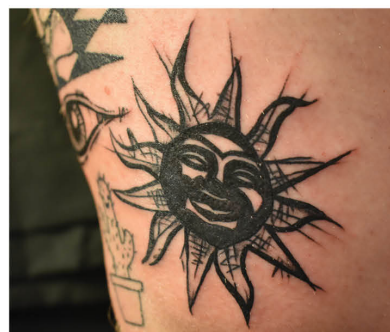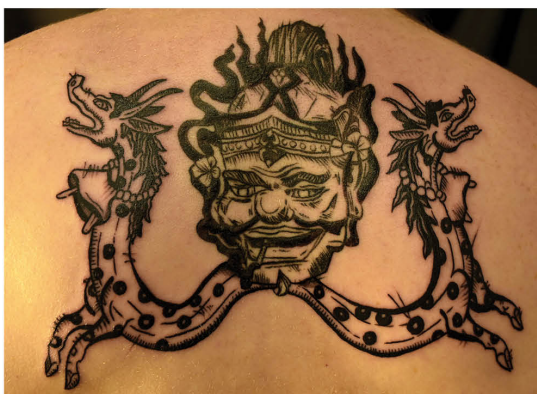
Description:
Custom Balinese style dragon (369), tribal sun (370, and free-hand eye (371).

Placement:
Upper back (369), lower central thigh (370 & 371).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 372 & 373

16/12/2020

Description:
Custom skull and runes (372), custom 'Xenomorph Alien' design and letters (373).

Placement:
Left and Right feet.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 374–376

16/12/2020

Description:
Custom mushroom designs.

Placement:
Left outer forearm (various areas).

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 377

18/12/2020

Description:
Custom design depicting Greek mythological character, Hades (based on Disney design).

Placement:
Right upper central thigh area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 378

19/12/2020

Description:
Custom design based on Huddersfield tower.

Placement:
Left upper outer arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 379

19/12/2020

Description:
Custom design of coffee mug and text.

Placement:
Right lower outer upper arm area.

New Client?
Yes.

Tattoo 380

19/12/2020

Description:
Custom flower design.

Placement:
Right inner ankle area.

New Client?
No.

Tattoo 381

23/12/2020

Description:
Custom Gorilla design.

Placement:
Left outer upper thigh area.

New Client?
No.

A.2. TATTOO CONSENT FORM

A.2 depicts the consent form that each client must complete prior to being tattooed by any tattooist at *Triplesix Studios.*

TRIPLESIX STUDIOS

Artist ....

Date ....

Time

Placement ....

Batch No. of Inks Used ....

I acknowledge that by signing this agreement that I have been given the full opportunity to ask any questions regarding my tattoo from Triplesix Studios and that any questions asked have been answered to my full satisfaction. I am fully aware that a tattoo is a permanent indelible mark left on my body.

I agree to the following -

I am over 18.
I do not suffer from any communicable diseases such as Hepatitis A, B, C or HIV.
I am not taking any blood thinning medication.
I do not suffer from any skin conditions such as Eczema, Psoriasis or Impetigo.
I am not pregnant or breast feeding.
I do not suffer from any form of seizure.
I am not prone to dizziness or fainting.
I have no heart condition or heart disease.
I do not have any conditions that compromise my immune system.
I am not under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
I have disclosed all information including medical history etc.
I understand that every care has been taken by Triplesix Studios to carry out my tattoo in a hygenic and professional manner and once I leave the studio the aftercare of my tattoo is my sole responsibility. I understand that a reaction to pigment can occur after the tattoo is healed. I will follow the aftercare information given to me by Triplesix Studios.

Name ....

D.O.B. ....

Address ....

....

....

Tel. No. ....

Identification ....

I acknowledge by signing this agreement that I have been given the full opportunity to ask any and all questions which I might have about my tattoo and all my questions were answered to my full satisfaction and I am happy with the service provided today.
I am fully aware my deposit is non-refundable and I must give 48 hours notice to change my appointment, changes after this time will result in me loosing my deposit.
I acknowledge that infection is always possible as a result of obtaining a tattoo, particularly in the event that I do not take proper care of my tattoo. I have received aftercare instructions and I agree to follow them while my tattoo is healing.

Signature .... Date ....

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS WITH EXTERNAL TATTOOING PRACTITIONERS

Appendix B consists of two interviews with tattooists operating in alternative studios and geographical locations. Both interviews were conducted while being tattooed and sent to the respective tattooist for approval once transcribed.

B.1 is a transcript of a conversation with Matthew 'Henbo' Henning at *Invisible NYC*, New York City (USA) on 10/02/2019. The transcript includes all of what was audible on the recording.

B.2 is an overview of conversation with Lara Thomson-Edwards at *The Blue Tattoo*, London (UK) on 22/05/2019. Unfortunately, there were technological problems with the recording of the conversation. As a consequence, the interview was unable to be fully transcribed, and so an overview on the conversation is provided. The overview was sent to Thomson-Edwards for approval prior to inclusion in the dissertation, to ensure accuracy of content.

B.3 presents the interview release forms for both interviewees, and the participant information sheet that was provided to them prior to interview commencement.

B.1 TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW 'HENBO' HENNING AT I*NVISIBLE NYC*, NEW YORK (USA)

10/02/2019

HH: I was 29 when I started my apprenticeship.

HH: I think it helps—illustrating—definitely

AM: Did you do freelance work?

HH: Yeah

AM: What sort of work were you doing?

HH: I was just doing local bands and shit, and all stuff like that. I was working in an office full-time.

AM: I guess you get used to having a client and a brief?

HH: Yeah, and I get on with people pretty easy and I'm pretty good at persuading people that 'this will be better', and I think it's helping them out, I guess. Like, "OK this is not going to work for the size, or it's a bit too complicated—stuff like that, I guess. I think it's good to know…it's definitely good to know your boundaries as well.

AM: Yeah, it's always a negotiation it seems.

HH: Definitely. Sometimes you have to just say, "Look this isn't going to work", you know? Because at the end of the day you're going to be tattooing it. Sometimes they don't understand the difference between something that's going to be in the skin forever, and what might be online as a photo, and how long is this going to last? I don't know, it's complicated, but I guess sometimes people get a bit lost, don't they?

AM: Yeah, there are a lot of qualities that are very specific to tattooing as a medium that are distinct from other mediums.

HH: Oh yeah absolutely, and that was pretty hard for me, because I'm an illustrator so I just want to do fancy shit all the time, you know?

AM: Yeah, did you over-complicate designs at first?

HH: Oh yeah, all the time.

AM: That's my issue too.

HH: Oh yeah. Now I know the technique—I know how to break stuff down, but when I first started I just wanted to do the most complex shit and think, "ah this is going to be sick!", but my work changed —you know, elements of it worked…but definitely, now I know, like you, and working with all these guys and also being a bit more Japanese influenced helps you.

You begin to look at things and think, "right this works because it's really graphic, you know – that's why it works".

AM: Yeah that's something that I've found as well. I have a tendency to over-complicate (well when I illustrate, I do), so that's one of the main things I've struggled with. And the way I get around it the moment is I draw the design with my left hand then trace over it with my right hand, because I can't draw well enough with my left hand to make it overly complicated. But it adds a nice quality to it as well—so I've been trying that, and I kind of like how it's turning out but I'm still sort of getting to grips with it.

It's not just learning to tattoo, it's learning to draw for tattoos, which is a totally different thing.

HH: Yeah, it's leaving space and things like that.

HH: Yeah I saw [anonymous tattooist who used to work at *Triplesix*] when he came through—he came to New York but something happened between him and his girlfriend, I

don't know exactly what, they split up or something like that.

AM: When was he in New York?

HH: Last Summer.

AM: Ah I don't know. I never really kept in touch with him as I didn't really get to know him that well. He left shortly after I started.

HH: Yeah and him and [anonymous member of Triplesix] just don't get on, do they?

AM: Yeah that's it, they're not particularly on good terms. It's strange, it seems to be the case a lot of the time with studios.

HH: It happens sometimes, yeah. People clash heads, get bored, whatever. But here, in New York, everyone is good. Everyone hangs around in each other's shops.

AM: In New York in general?

HH: Yeah and London is a bit like that I think. But I've definitely noticed it here, where, you know, loads of other tattooers' come in all the time and say hi.

AM: That's nice, it's much better to be part of a community rather than part of a competition.

HH: I think for most, it's like, you're all in the hustle together.

AM: Yeah I feel like it's like that in any other visual medium—like graphic designers will hang around with each other because they've got common interests. Although there's money involved, so there's competition to some extent, you're still part of the community, doing the same thing, and hopefully helping each other out. At least that's how I would…that's the world of tattooing that I'd like to be involved in when I get to that point.

HH: Also, you learn stuff, you know?

AM: Yeah, the community aspect of it is really nice, it's one of my favourite things about tattooing.

HH: Yeah tattooers are awesome. A lot of tattooers are the nicest people.

HH: Thanks for coming to get tattooed from me. It's cool that you made the journey.

AM: Ah no worries, it wasn't just because you're friends with Bez (Triplesix founder), I didn't realise until after I booked it. I really like your work—I looked through all the tattooists in New York and you were the one that I liked the most. I didn't realise you were from the UK.

HH: Did you not?

AM: No, but what's interesting…there's going to be a lot of value in this conversation, because you'll have a good grasp on the differences and similarities, if there are any.

HH: Oh right, definitely, there definitely are in some ways, but it's ultimately still the same. It's definitely similar in some respects, but also way different as well, you know. New York tattooing has a rich history. Very specifically Japanese.

[interruptions]

HH: And then Brooklyn—it's like a lot of black tattoos and smaller, more traditional based tattoos. There's a lot more blackwork shops in Brooklyn. The thing is it's where young people who, who are more followers of trends, you know what I'm saying?

Whereas here, it's more like, "This is how we tattoo; Asian-inspired, or traditional-inspired, but everything is really strong".

You know, there's different shops and I think you can tell, you can definitely tell, a *Kings Avenue* tattoo from an invisible tattoo [inaudible additional comments]—you can really see the difference. All the tattoos are equally the same, you know equally cool.

AM: It's interesting that it's like a restaurant business in a sense, where two restaurants might both sell Thai food, but they've got their own…, a Thai green curry in one restaurant might be different from the same curry in another.

HH: Yeah exactly. I mean here, it's like proper traditional Japanese. We still have that American [aesthetic]. Very strong background, 3 or 4 colours—no more, hard lines— not too big but…

Whereas if you go to Europe, Japanese is much more grey and swirly. Do you know what I'm saying?

AM: Yeah it has a sort of, I don't know—accent to it?

HH: Yeah yeah, so I came to here, to New York for a guest spot I did and I was like—this is awesome. And also, I started really getting into learning more about this style of tattooing, and there's no better place to do it than here, you know? So, I thought, "I've got to get into a shop like that".

AM: Yeah it's got authenticity to the style that is coming out of it.

HH: Yeah, and that's why I moved shops—I started out in a shop called gristle in Brooklyn. That was more a base for blackwork tattooing. It was very like, it was, it was a 'vegan shop', and I'm not really…so there's a problem straight away. And also, personally, I don't want a tattoo shop to be based upon…it should just be a tattoo shop and everyone is welcome, you don't need to put [restrictions]. The first and foremost rule of tattooing should be…"let's do some good tattoos first".

AM: Yeah absolutely. I mean, I am vegan and I get bullied for it at work, but only in a playful way.

HH: The vegan food here is sick—I'll give you some names of restaurants if you want to go to some.

[discussion on restaurants and interruption of arrival of tattooists friends in the studio]

HH: There's a lot of this—there's a load of different cultures that are mixed together in this shop. You know, Japanese, Brazilian, English.

AM: So, do you stand out for being Northern English?

HH: Yeah so I'm teaching them a load of Northern words—it's cool though, it's nice, having loads of different people around.

AM: Yeah definitely, it's a very cosmopolitan city and it makes sense that you'd also have that in one particular place.

HH: It's cool—I love this city. I mean the old guys, the guys who have lived here their whole lives and have done tattoos here tell me that it's not as cool as it used to be, but to me, you know, it's better than…Warrington.

AM: Is that where you're from? Where is that geographically again?

HH: It's between Manchester and Liverpool, a sort of no-man's land. There's fuck-all to do there.

AM: Right, yeah well, Sunderland—I understand.

[discussion about New York operating hours and contrast between LA and New York and homelessness and upcoming festival]

AM: How did you start off tattooing in the UK then?

HH: So, I wanted to tattoo for a long time, but I didn't know anybody in tattooing, at all.

AM: Were you not getting tattooed by anybody?

HH: I'd been getting tattooed but just by random…I didn't know anybody.

And I was like, basically I was living with a girl and working in this awful fucking office, and I got home one day and she said, "I don't love you anymore, I'm going to go travelling for 2 years, see ya", and I got sacked that day at work as well. It was a pretty shit day. And I was like, "well this is bullshit. That's that then".

And it's cool, you know, it helped me if anything. Because I was shit with money when I was young, and whatever you know. I was young at the end of the day, and I was like, "right then, I need to sort my life out".

I booked to go on holiday with my family and it was my grandads seventieth, or something, and then my cousins eighteenth (I have a big family—it's like, if you can imagine a New York Jewish family or an Italian-American catholic family, and like —well you will know, you're Northern. I'm from a Northern, Warrington family—we shout at each other and get pissed together).

AM: Yeah I understand what you're saying, It's quite the same for me.

HH: I was away and I was thinking about what I was going to do, because I just lost my job—I mean I fucking hated my job anyway, so I didn't really care, but it's still money at the end of day. And I was like, "I really want to tattoo" but I didn't know how to get in it. And my Grandma (I love my Grandma), she said to me, "You should tattoo" and I was like, "yes Grandma, I should shouldn't I?" and she was like, "Yeah".

And then I got back to Manchester (I was living in Manchester at the time) and I was like, "How am I going to do this?" and I started to get tattoo magazines and things like that, I started to collect them, and I started to learn about stuff, and I totally wasn't in the same…(you know like you said earlier) when you're learning how to draw for a tattoo it's totally different to when you're...and you just don't understand…I think at first it's funny. Because you don't appreciate traditional tattoos, it's because you don't understand.

AM: Yeah it's like graphic design sometimes—what works as the most basic elements.

HH: Yeah exactly, so I was getting into that. And at the same time my friend was like," I got a job. He said, "If you want the job, it's working in an office again but I get a grand and you get a grand if you get the job" and I was like, yeah anything is fine, I need a job.

So, I went back to an office, and it took from that point to tattooing another 6 years to get my apprenticeship. Because I just had no money, so I paid off all my debt and shit like that. Luckily, my mam and dad were awesome and I asked if I could move back home because I had no money, and they were really nice and let me live at home, so I moved home, which is weird because my girlfriend Jen (I've been with Jen 10 years) she was like, "While you're living at home and have a bit of extra cash, shall we go do something before you settle into tattooing?", so I thought "Alright then, yes".

So, I went to central America and travelled for 3 months and went on that turtle conservation [topic previously discussed prior to recording] and did that and swam with whale sharks—went to Costa Rica and Guatemala and travelled all the way around – it was amazing. And that, while I was there, I thought, "When I get back, I'm changing my life. I'm going to be tattooing". I needed that break to awaken…

AM: What was it about that, that instigated your desire, or motivation?

HH: When I was away it seemed like—you know you're in the middle of the jungle. There's no electricity, no hot water. You're like, "fucking hell, this is simple", and tattooing is simple, in a way…

AM: Yeah, like, manual.

HH: Manual, yeah. And I was like, I fucking… I can't be back in this fucking office anymore watching people die on their fucking desk. And that's fine if you want to do that job, it's not for me that's all. I don't want to work their full-time, I don't want to be a manager full-time. I'm not interested in that at all.

AM: Yeah you don't want to be on the top of a career ladder that you didn't want to climb in the first place.

HH: Yeah I just didn't want that. In no way did I want that. And then also when I was travelling I saw a load of these people who were just lost. I found that, you go to hostels and you meet new people with all the same fucking stories. They're just lost. They travelled for 5 years – and I realised that I don't want to travel for that long, ever, because when you get back you have to start again. And they're fucking losers basically (I know that sounds tight) but they're fucking losers.

AM: I know what you mean though, It's kind of like that limbo stage of life.

HH: Yeah they were fucking dead behind the eyes when they spoke to me, and they were lying to themselves and saying to me, "Yeah we're going travelling forever, it's really good", and then they were like, "Oh, right, I've got to go sell my shoes now because I need some money". You know what I mean? I was like, "well that's not cool".

I want to travel…I want to be able to travel and have a career. That's what I want to do.

AM: So, is that one of the things that was appealing to you, the idea of tattooing being a portable career? It certainly is to me.

HH: Yeah definitely! We did that, and then we got back, and I went around loads of shops. I even went to loads of shops in London, like big-name shops and I got ripped apart a little bit. Which I didn't mind because if anything it gave me like…'I've got to win at all costs' you know? I wasn't concerned about all that. I was just excited.

And Nikole Lowe in London, she was tattooing my arm and she was really kind to me actually. She went through my portfolio with me and she just gave me a bit of time and was like, "Look this works, this doesn't work, maybe try this?". She was telling me about shit, you know? And I didn't know anything about it so it was nice of her to do that.

And I'm sure that the majority of the stuff was fucking awful, and I'm sure they'll have laughed about me and everything. But that's fine. You kind of deserve that a little bit when you're an apprentice or whatever. But it just drove me, and eventually I thought, "I don't think I'm going to get in a big-name studio because they just seem to all have apprentices. No one wants one".

But then I found a studio. My friend was like, "Oh I know a guy who has just opened a studio – I'll give you his number". I rang the number of this guy...he was alright this guy. But he had a tattooer, that I thought was a pretty good tattooer

AM: Ah does he work in…

HH: *Black Lotus* in Liverpool now.

AM: Ah, did he used to work somewhere near Middlesbrough way?

HH: Erm…he might have done. He does a bit of Japanese, but mainly its portraits what he does. But I saw he could tattoo in different styles and in general. And at that point I just needed a foot in the door. I was desperate. And I thought, "as long as I can get with a tattooist who can tattoo, good." You don't have to be original, I'm just talking like, technically good, so you can learn the right techniques to use.

AM: Yeah absolutely, the craft aspect of it, rather than the artistic side which would come later.

HH: Yeah, and he says now that when he first met me he didn't like me, but he took me on anyway because he thought he saw something in me.

AM: Oh well that's kind of nice to know that he believed in you so much that he took you on even though he didn't like you at first.

HH: But then, obviously we became best friends, you know really good friends. I miss him actually; I miss him quite a lot you know. I don't see him that much unfortunately.

And then we worked in a shop, but the guy who owned it wasn't a tattooer. And he was a bit much. So, then we left, and Sonny had a shop in Liverpool – I went to work there. I worked there three days a week and I worked at a place called *Blue Cardinal* up North. And that was pretty hard actually. It was like three hours' drive a day—an hour and a half there and an

hour and a half back. It's like, in the middle of nowhere, so there's no walk-in traffic or anything like that.

But what it did was—it drove me to draw all the time, because I needed to get people in. "This is available. This is available. This is available [reference to designs]. Come and get this. Come and get this". What it did is it made me get into to process of "I'm going to draw every night. I'm going to get home and get a couple of beers. I'm going to sit…" (In my old bedroom where I grew up because I lived at home because I had a computer set up and a big desk), and I was watching *True Detective* at the time. And I would just watch that and just draw all night.

Different things—a lot of black stuff because I was just that way more inclined at the time. I was chatting to this guy and I was like "I'll give you this tattoo for one-hundred quid". It was a big piece but I'd just do it. It was a rose, so I started doing some black roses. And them some people were like, "ah I like the stuff you do", and then it just kicked off a bit.

It was just before any kind of blackwork got popular in the UK. You had the old guys doing it already, I was doing it to get big or anything like that. I was doing it to…

[audio indistinct due to music volume and background noises]

…After a while I got offered a job at *Sacred Art* in Manchester, which is good and I had friends who worked there. So, for me it was the perfect job.

AM: Where is it sorry?

HH: It's around Chorlton

AM: Ah yeah I know that area.

HH: A lot of my friends were there, and at the time they had some good artists. So, I left *Blue Cardinal* and told them, "I don't want to spend twelve hours a week driving anymore". But I still worked in Liverpool, so I worked in *Sacred Art* and in Liverpool, so working six days a week.

And then I got offered a guest spot in *The Circle* in London, so I went and got to know everybody. And then they invited me for a week a month, so I used to go down to London for a week a month. And that really helped. To get to work with better tattooers and learn to push yourself. And after that that's how I got work.

And I didn't really fall out with any studios, apart from the last one here.

[discusses problem with old studio]

AM: It's a shame. That's one of the things I've noticed about the tattoo community. There seems to be a lot of internal dramas.

HH: Yeah you see, this is why I love it here. We all get on.

AM: Inside the studio it's maybe a bit different, but I mean with other ones [studios].

[Henbo offers a beer, discussion of unrelated topics]

AM: We've kind of covered a lot of the stuff I've written down to ask you about anyway, but you mentioned different regions, even in New York, having different subject—well not so much subject matter, but styles. Is it the same with subject matter?

HH: Yeah definitely, so Manhattan style is different to Brooklyn style. Here you've got some big shops.

[inaudible due to background noises]

HH: …There are facets of other styles. You've got 'Bang Bang' and all that you know? You know, Bang Bang, them little tiny black tattoos. They're charging about $500 an hour. [inaudible]. We're on totally different ends here—a lot of tattooers don't give that any respect.

HH: People come in and they want to hang out, tattooists come over and they want to spend time each other—it's a good vibe.

And the style is like, Manhattan style is more—big, colour. But then I think Thomas Hooper brought a lot of blackwork here as well. Brooklyn is way more blackwork or traditional from what I've noticed. *Smith Street*—they're in Brooklyn – you know Bert Krak and all that, they do all the traditional tattoos and stuff. They tend to do very good, solid, traditional tattoos. I think there's so many different tattoo parlours in Brooklyn now that they all kind of…there's [inaudible], *Three Kings*, and *East River*—they do a lot of blackwork actually. You know Suflanda? She guests there a lot.

[Henbo chats with another tattooist, Momo, about getting a Tebori tattoo]

AM: So, what is the influence of the style that you draw in—the subject matter, the colour pallet. Because your designs on the wall are very distinctive, and to me I feel like I can see influences from both illustrative and Japanese imagery.

HH: I think it's definitely like…I like monsters and stuff, but I want to use the elements of traditional Japanese and American Japanese whereas [lists other tattooists in studio] all do traditional Japanese tattoos, and they do them sick. They are—you can see they all base it on the elements of traditional Japanese tattooing. Not too much colour—maybe three or four colours, and I know now I have to break down the drawing a bit more. But I like to go back to it a bit you know [illustrative approach] as the illustrator side of me still wants to do a moving character.

I just love little creatures. This egg [distinct character of Henbo's based on an egg]—I just like the egg. I just drew it one day because I thought it was funny, and everyone liked it, so I kept tattooing it more. And these Fugus or these blowfish—they just look funny don't they? I try pick weird animals—weird shit you know like [points out designs on wall]—I haven't done them yet, I don't even know if I'll tattoo them because they're a bit out there but, but yeah it's just kind of like that.

And definitely being in this shop has influenced me—you see the volume of work they're producing—body suit after bodysuit, back piece—and it makes me want to match up. To me

one of the highest levels of tattooing is when you get to go to like…you're doing a body suit of somebody, it's a big thing!

AM: Yeah, it's a big sort of, commitment from the client. Obviously, it's on them—you can't separate the idea of it being a collaborative process, so it's a big compliment when someone is willing to get their full body tattooed by one tattooist.

HH: Exactly, and I love that and I think some of the best tattooers around are in this room — so to be in the same are as these for me is just awesome. That's why I wanted to come here there's something about New York tattoos that's different.

AM: Do you think people appreciate it more here as well?

HH: Could be, but it seems there's a melting point of good tattooists all pushing the same kind of style. It's the same in any city, it's just the nature of tattooing.

[Henbo discusses how in the studio they go on trips together and invite some other studios to socialise together]. And here, we all eat together, we all try to have lunch together, it's nice.

AM: Yeah, that it really nice—do you think that's distinct to New York, or America…?

HH: I think—in this shop definitely. I'm not sure, to be honest about the other shops, but I think because we take food away and get it all in it does become a bit like that, sort of 'oh we're getting this for lunch again today'. I know it *Smith Street*—a lot of those guys eat together and stuff like that. They order pizza in and stuff like that.

AM: Yeah, they do it at *Triplesix* now and then.

HH: Yeah, it's just cool, I like it.

AM: Is there any difference at all in the actual process of…the drawing process…do you find that you're doing more or less flash or…

HH: I find that, people here definitely like (not when they're booked in for big work), they like to see what you've got. I'll post something up [to *Instagram*] and somebody will pick it. Whereas in England its people asking me. It's a lot people wanting custom—custom this, custom that, you know. Whereas here people are down to pick something of a wall. People will come in and are like, "Yeah fuck it, I'll have…that!" which I actually never do but I like it.

[Henbo talks about a client who picked a large pre-drawn image of a fugu blowfish with a sword through it on a whim]. And then one guy was like, "I really don't know what to have" so I looked at the space and said, "what about a [Japanese word]", and he was like, "sick". And then he came back and got tattooed of Kiku, next to my station, so we all tattoo a lot of the same people as well.

AM: Yeah, I suppose in the UK, from what I've experienced it tends to be people coming in with an image on a phone (unless they come in for someone specifically), they come in with an image on their phone and they just want someone who can do a similar job.

HH: Yeah, I know what you mean, but that's the same…that's just the way it is sometimes. Yeah, I get that.

AM: It's like we were talking about earlier—you can't really separate the area you're in from the clientele requests.

HH: The area's got a lot to do with it. Yeah, I think in England particularly, people love that black and grey stuff. They love it. I mean I get it, but it's not for me.

AM: Yeah exactly, you can appreciate that it works well or it's done well, but it's just not aesthetically what you're into.

[Conversation with other tattooists/clients. Henbo requests the music to be turned down a small amount by the studio assistant]

HH: Sorry, these are party people.

[laughs]

AM: No, it's fine, I'm not used to even being in a tattoo shop this late, or even up this late in general.

HH: Oh yeah this is normal. Normally everyone is here all the time.

AM: It's nice, I really like it—it's just totally different from what I'm used to.

HH: Yeah right? It's a twenty-four-hour city.

[other tattooist comes to look at tattoo in progress. Lines of tattoo are complete. Henbo gives tour of studio and interview finishes].

B.2 OVERVIEW OF CONVERSATION WITH LARA THOMSON-EDWARDS AT *THE BLUE TATTOO*, LONDON (UK)

22/05/2019

Lara is From Edinburgh originally, and moved to London to pursue an arts degree but found it to be not suited to personal approach of working.

Lara gained an apprenticeship through a friend working in a tattoo studio in London. She later moved to 'The Blue tattoo' in Hammersmith, before moving to 'The Circle' in Soho in mid 2019. In regard to working in different areas of London, Lara stated that there is not a hierarchical difference in areas, and both have rewarding aspects —they just are different.

Lara has been tattooing for around three years. She found the intimidation of tattooing in the early stages to be short-lived, and developed confidence quickly. She learned using coil machines, which she finds preferable to rotaries, based on having more experience with them.

Lara approaches drawing for tattooing using traditional mediums such as pencils and watercolours, which translates into tattooing in a way that feels more natural than using an iPad. She enjoys drawing and tattooing faces, which was part of the motivation of adding faces to face-less objects such as fruits and vegetables. Her methods are in part influenced by Japanese and illustrative approaches and culture.

Lara stated that tattooing as a female has unique idiosyncratic qualities. Some clients have expressed that they do not want to be tattooed by a female as they do not want their tattoos to appear 'girly', or they feel that their partners would be unhappy. As tattooing culture is heavily associated with *Instagram*, and *Instagram* is a visual-based platform, she believes there are pressures in regard to presentation of self as a female. Tattooing as a female makes the tattooist subject to undermining comments that deduct any success to being a by-product of their gender, rather than their ability.

MATTHEW 'HENBO' HENNING

CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Beyond the Epidermis: A practical investigation into the enrichment of contemporary Western tattooing.

	Please initial box
I confirm that I am over the age of 18 years.	☑
I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☑
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within the time period specified in the information sheet, without giving reason.	☑
I agree to take part in the above study.	☑

	Please initial box	
	Yes	No
I agree to the interview / consultation being audio recorded.	☑	☐
I agree to the interview / consultation being video / photographically recorded.	☑	☐
I agree to the use of any data related to the tattoo I receive (photographs, sketches, etc.) in publications.	☑	☐
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.	☑	☐
I agree to the use of data / quotes in publications that are **not** anonymised.	☑	☐
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be shared (after it has been anonymised) with other researchers.	☑	☐
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be shared (**that is not anonymised**) with other researchers.	☑	☐

Consent Form <insert version number and date>

I agree that my data gathered in this study (after it has been anonymised) may be used for teaching purposes.	☑	☐
I agree that my data gathered in this study (**that is not anonymised**) may be used for teaching purposes.	☑	☐

Matthew Henning   10/2/19

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

Adam McDade   10/2/19

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

LARA THOMSON-EDWARDS

University of Sunderland

CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Beyond the Epidermis: A practical investigation into the enrichment of contemporary Western tattooing.

	Please initial box
I confirm that I am over the age of 18 years.	LTE
I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	LTE
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within the time period specified in the information sheet, without giving reason.	LTE
I agree to take part in the above study.	LTE

	Please initial box	
	Yes	No
I agree to the interview / consultation being audio recorded.	LTE	☐
I agree to the interview / consultation being video / photographically recorded.	LTE	☐
I agree to the use of any data related to the tattoo I receive (photographs, sketches, etc.) in publications.	LTE	☐
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.	LTE	☐
I agree to the use of data / quotes in publications that are **not** anonymised.	LTE	☐
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be shared (after it has been anonymised) with other researchers.	LTE	☐
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be shared **(that is not anonymised)** with other researchers.	LTE	☐

Consent Form <insert version number and date>

| I agree that my data gathered in this study (after it has been anonymised) may be used for teaching purposes. | LT-E | ☐ |
| I agree that my data gathered in this study (**that is not anonymised**) may be used for teaching purposes. | LT-E | ☐ |

LARA THOMSON-EDWARDS   22/5/19

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

Adam McDade

Name of Researcher   22/5/19

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

Consent Form <insert version number and date>

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Study Title:
Beyond the Epidermis: A practical investigation into the enrichment of contemporary western tattooing.

What is the purpose of the study?

Tattooing is a prevalent part of our culture, however there is a gap in the knowledge of how tattoos are produced and what actually happens within the tattoo studio. This gap in knowledge means that a significant part of our culture is not being properly understood, and is undervalued as a consequence.

The research aims to demonstrate the value, significance, and relevance of tattooing. This will be done by documenting the broader tattoo context, including (but not limited to) the client consultation process, the methods used by tattooists to create designs, and the process of tattooing.

The research will be carried out in conjunction with Sunderland based tattoo studio, *Triplesix Studios*. The researcher is a tattooist with an illustration and design background who began a tattoo apprenticeship in May 2017. The research will investigate how personal tattooing practice might be impacted by the design background of the researcher.

Content created within the research will be used as part of a thesis (and potentially in other publications) submitted by Adam McDade in partial fulfilment for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of Sunderland.

Why have I been approached?

You have been chosen to participate in the study as you have requested to be tattooed at Triplesix Studios and are valuable to achieving the aims of the research. The number of participants will be dependent on the quantity/variety of data that has been gathered that is helpful in achieving the research aims. You are eligible to participate in the research providing you have completed a consent form from both Triplesix Studios and the researcher and fulfil the criteria that is outlined within.

Alternatively, your participation may have been deemed relevant as you are able to provide insight that is useful to the research through your presence within tattoo culture as an artist, designer, or tattoo consumer. The number of participants will be dependent on the quantity/variety of data that has been gathered that is helpful in achieving the research aims. You are eligible to participate in the research providing you have completed a consent form given by the researcher.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you may refuse to take part without given any reason. Please fully read the Participant Information document before agreeing or declining to be included in the research. Consent for inclusion in the research will be given on a separate consent form.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Should you decide you no longer want to participate you have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without incurring any penalties. If you wish to withdraw you can email the researcher directly, who is ethically obliged to not include anything you have provided within the study. All data collected up to the point of withdrawal will be immediately destroyed where possible, however if you decide to withdraw after publication of information you have provided then this may only be possible for original data, and not data that has already been included within publications.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you're getting tattooed;

If your participation in the research involves obtaining a tattoo, you may be asked to provide any content that might indicate the style of tattoo you want (images of existing tattoos or artworks), Your tattoo consultation may be audio/video recorded, and will involve a conversation with the researcher who will aim to gather enough data to design a tattoo for you that fulfils your motivation. The conversations may be transcribed as text, and included within the research accompanying related images. During the tattooing process, further audio/video recordings may be made of the conversation, and will similarly may be transcribed and included within the research. Once the tattooing process is complete, your tattoo may be photographed and included in the research. The time taken to complete the tattoo will vary depending on the design. All activity noted related to your participation will take place within Triplesix Studios.

If you're being interviewed:

If your participation in the research involves being interviewed, you will be asked a series of semi-structured questions about a particular aspect of tattooing as a subject. This may be questions such as, "how did you get into tattooing as a career?', or there may be questions that ask you to elaborate on ideas that might exist within the tattoo community, but have never been formally recorded. This could include questioning of how design trends have changed over the course of the time you've been involved in the community, or questions of a similar nature. The time taken for the interview will depend on the level of detail in the conversation, but should generally not exceed one hour. Interviews will generally take place within the tattoo studio environment, unless you specify an alternative public venue that is deemed preferable.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

In some circumstances, potential disadvantages may arise for those receiving the tattoo. The disadvantages may be in having to recall a particular experience that may be emotionally challenging but is relevant to the tattoo design that you have requested, such as memorial tattoos. Should you wish to participate and receive a tattoo of this nature, you are not obliged to share any information beyond what you are comfortable with doing so.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your participation in the research will help to increase knowledge and understanding of the process of cultural production of contemporary Western tattooing.

What if something goes wrong?

If you are unhappy with the conduct of this study please contact myself Adam McDade, my supervisor Dr. Manny Ling, or the Chair of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group Dr John Fulton. Contact details are included below.

How will my information be kept confidential?

All participant information (data) will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act (1998).

All information provided will be stored on a password protected macbook hard drive and backed up onto an external data storage device.

All data will be destroyed after publication.

Data collected from participants wishing to remain anonymous will be completely anonymous because participants will not be asked to provide any person identifying information. Completely anonymised data from the project may be shared with other researchers and/or used for teaching purposes. The data may be looked at by staff authorised by the University of Sunderland for audit and quality assurance purposes.

What will happen to the results of this study?

Results will be written-up in project reports for educational qualifications and/or may be published in academic journals, and/or presented at academic conferences, and/or used within external publications (such as books and websites) and/or shared with external organisations (Triplesix Studios).

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is organised by Adam McDade who is a PhD research student at the University of Sunderland, Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries, School of Art and Design

The project is externally funded by The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF).

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group.

Further information and contact details:

Adam McDade
Email: bf46fu@student.sunderland.ac.uk

Dr Manny Ling (Research Supervisor)
Email: manny.ling@sunderland.ac.uk
Phone: 0191 515 3816

Dr John Fulton (Chair of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Group)
Email: john.fulton@sunderland.ac.uk
Phone: 0191 515 2529

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet!

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

Appendix C indicates the contexts in which the research has been disseminated. This is separated into two parts: Presentation (C.1) and Publication (C.2).

C.1 consists of a table indicating the context, date, audience, and funder (where applicable) for research dissemination via presentation. C.2 consists of a table indicating the context, date, publisher, audience, and a reference for research dissemination via publication.

C.1 PRESENTATION

Table 20: Context, date, audience, and funders for research presentation (McDade, 2021)

Research Dissemination: Presentation			
Context	**Date(s)**	**Audience**	**Funding**
University of Sunderland Student Conference	2018	Post-graduate students	n/a
		Academics	
Digital Humanities, Human Technologies conference. University of Salford	2018	Post-graduate students	University of Salford
		Academics	
		Creative industry professionals	
NPIF Student Conference. Queens University Belfast	2018	Post-graduate students	Northern Bridge Consortium
		Academics	
Saybrook University Punchbowl Salon. Hosted by Dr. Mona Toubian, Los Angeles	2019	Post-graduate students	Northern Bridge Consortium RTSG (Research Training Support Grant)
		Academics	
		General public (international)	

		Undergraduate students	
Creative Lives: Adam McDade. University of Sunderland	2019	Undergraduate students	n/a
		Post-graduate students	
		Academics	
		General public	
		Creative industry professionals	
Northern Bridge Summer School. Radisson Blu Hotel, Durham	2019	Post-graduate students	n/a
		Academics	
6th International Conference of Autoethnography. M Shed, Bristol.	2019	Post-graduate students	Northumbria-Sunderland Cross-Doctoral Training SDF (Student Development Fund)
		Academics	
	2020	Undergraduate students	

Learn of Things and Sharing (LOTS) Talk. Rumah Sanur, Bali		Post-graduate students	Northern Bridge Consortium RTSG (Research Training Support Grant)
		Academics	
		General public (international)	
		Creative industry professionals	
Professional Lecture Series. University of Sunderland.	2018	Post-graduate students	n/a
	2019		
	2020		
	2021		

C.2 PUBLICATION

Table 21: Context, date, publisher, title, and audience of research publication (McDade, 2021)

Research Dissemination: Publication				
Context	**Date**	**Publisher**	**Title**	**Audience**
Journal Article	2019	*Craft Research* (Intellect)	*The contemporary western tattooist as a multifaceted practitioner*	Academics
				Creative practitioners
				Students
Reference				
McDade, A. (2019) 'The contemporary western tattooist as a multifaceted practitioner', *Craft Research*, 10(2), pp. 263–77. doi: 10.1386/crre_00005_1.				
Context	**Date**	**Publisher**	**Title**	**Audience**
Web Article	2019	*Tattoodo*	*Giving Form to the Intangible*	Creative practitioners
				General public
Reference				
https://www.tattoodo.com/a/giving-form-to-the-intangible-meaning-and-transformation-in-tattooing-14551				
Context	**Date**	**Publisher**	**Title**	**Audience**

Book Chapter	2021 (expected)	*Palgrave Macmillan*	*Contemporary Western Tattooing as an Inherently Collaborative Practice: The Contingent Authorial Input and Operational Mode of the Tattooist.*	Academics
				Creative practitioners
				Students

Reference
McDade, A. (2021) 'Contemporary western tattooing as a n inherently collaborative process', in Martell, J. and Larsen, E. (eds.) *Tattoo Theories: Analyzing the Tattoo Across Disciplines*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

APPENDIX D: DESCRIPTION OF MATERIALS OF TATTOOING PRACTICE

Appendix D provides further details of the materials of tattooing practice discussed in
Section 2.4.1 (p.52) and depicted in Figure 5.

Table 22: Description of materials of tattooing practice (McDade, 2020)

for title

Description of materials of tattooing practice		
#	**Item**	**Description**
1	Baby wipes	Baby wipes are used by some tattooists to remove excess ink from skin to allow a greater visibility of the tattooed area. They are generally used once the tattooist is confident that they no longer require a non-permanent stencil or marking, as this can fade when wiped.
2	Cling film	Cling film (or saran wrap) is a thin plastic material used to cover all surfaces subject to contact from the tattooing session. All points of potential contact are wrapped, including the arm rest, massage bed, surface containing tattooing equipment etc. Cling film is changed for each tattooing session to prevent contamination and ensure hygienic practice. It is also used when the client leaves the tattooing area (including breaks within a session) to avoid potential external contaminants.
3	Clinical waste bag	Clinical waste bags are used to place any disposable items from the tattooing session (with the exclusion of needles, which are placed in a sharps bin). This includes the materials used to wipe objects of practice before the tattooing commences, kitchen

		towel and baby wipes that have direct contact with the tattooed skin, and cling film that has been used to wrap surfaces subject to contact from the tattooing session. Clinical waste bags are commonly yellow in colour with black stripes. They are disposed of after each individual tattoo and collected by a clinical waste collection service to be incinerated.
4	Disposable gloves	Disposable gloves are worn throughout all stages of the tattooing procedure. This includes setting up the workspace, tattooing, and breaking down the workstation. Gloves are changed at every stage where new contact is made and are disposed of in a clinical waste bag. They are used to adhere to hygiene policies and prevent contamination.
5	Disposable razor	Disposable razors are used to remove any hairs from the area of tattooing. This is to allow for the tattoo stencil to adhere to skin successfully, and to make the tattooing procedure easier. Razors are disposed of in a sharps bin after a single use.
6	Elastic band	A tight elastic band is used in some instances (depending on tattoo machine) to stabilise a needle bar and prevent unwanted movement, which may result in an unintended mark to be made.
7	Green soap	A solution of green soap made into a bottle with a spout is commonly used in tattooing. Green soap

		generally contains witch hazel (valued for anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties) and aloe-vera (reported to ease soreness and aid skin moisture). Green soap is used to clean tattoos at varying points of the process, while ensuring care to the skin.
8	Grip tape	Grip tape is a self-adhesive wrap, used primarily to cover tattoo grips and allow for increased tattooist comfort due to its soft texture. It is often used to wrap tattoo machines and disposed of after a single use, to reduce the risk of surface contamination.
9	Ink caps	Ink caps are single use pieces of plastic that vary in diameter. The tattooist dips their needle tip into the well of ink to load the pigment. They are used to store the desired amount of tattoo ink for a tattooing session, and disposed of after each use in a clinical waste bag.
10	Inks	A variety of different coloured inks for tattooing are available, including pre-mixed grey washes with different concentrations of black pigment. The desired amount is poured into a single-use ink cap, to avoid contamination or wastage.
11	Machine grip/tube	Machine grips/tubes house the tattoo needle and are attached to the tattoo machine to be held during the procedure. Different forms of grips/tubes exist to suit the tattooist's machine of preference or needle selection (if using standard needles), and are

		either disposable, or made up an autoclavable metal to allow for reuse.
12 (a)	Magnum needles (standard)	Magnum needles are combined individual needles that are grouped next to each other in a horizontal arrangement, to allow for a greater saturation of ink in the skin than that of round needles. As with round needles, they can be they can be arranged in numerous ways and with various levels of tightness to create desired aesthetic affects. Magnum needles can contain significantly more individual needles than round needles, making them best suited to covering extensive areas of skin rapidly. Standard needles are attached to the armature bar or grommet of the tattoo machine, to be driven backwards and forwards by a coil or motor, inserting the needle into and out of the skin at the set voltage. Needles are disposed of in a sharps bin on a single-use basis.
12 (b)	Magnum needles (cartridge)	Cartridge magnum needles work in the same way as standard magnum needles but come in a disposable cartridge format. Cartridges allow for faster and more convenient changing of needle groupings and are disposed of in sharps bins after a single use.
13	Marker pen	Permanent marker pens are used in some instances by tattooists to draw a design directly onto the body. This often involves using a lighter coloured marker to begin with, establishing a rough sense of the

shape and composition, to then refine the design gradually with darker coloured marker. Marker pens are also used to correct stencils on the body that have not successfully registered. *Sharpie* branded pens are commonly used, due to the versatility that the shape of the tip allows for in mark making, and quality of pigment. Marker pens are discarded in a clinical waste bag after use if the tip comes into contact with broken skin but kept for future use if not.

14	Micropore tape	Micropore tape is used for various adhesive purposes. These include securing cling film to surfaces, securing protective wrapping to tattooing equipment, and securing cling film to client bodies.
15	Paper towel	Paper towels or kitchen roll is used for multiple purposes. Examples include cleaning equipment with medical grade disinfectant and wiping the tattoo during the process to absorb excess ink or bodily fluids to increase visibility of the area. A pile of paper towels is often placed on the tattooist's workstation prior to starting the tattoo, with single sheets used throughout the process and disposed of in a clinical waste bag.
16	Petroleum jelly	Petroleum jelly is used by some tattooists to form a layer between the stencil on the body and the hand/needle, preventing its evanescence during the tattooing process. Petroleum jelly additionally prevents a build-up of excess ink around the

		tattooed area, increasing the visibility and thus ease for the tattooist. It can also be used as a protective layer over the tattoo when the client leaves the tattoo station, and is often also used for its adhesive properties, such as securing ink caps to the working area.
17	Power cable	Power cables are used to link the tattoo machine to the power supply. They are cleaned with medical grade disinfectant before and after use, and covered during the tattooing process.
18	Power cable cover/sleeve	A thin sleeve of single-use disposable plastic that is placed over the cable that attaches from the tattoo machine, to the power supply. The ends of the cover/sleeve are often secured with micropore tape. Power cable covers/sleeves are used to adhere to hygiene policies and prevent contamination.
19	Power supply	Power supplies are used to provide electricity, allowing the tattoo machine to operate. Voltages can be adjusted (generally ranging from around 1.5 volts, up to around 17 volts). The voltage affects the speed at which the needle moves, and is adjusted in accordance to the tattooist's desired aesthetic result of the tattoo. The power supply is cleaned before and after use with medical grade disinfectant, and covered with a protective cover to allow for voltage adjustment when tattooing without contamination.

20	Power supply cover	Power supplies are covered with a thin piece of disposable plastic, and secured with micropore tape. This allows the tattooist to alter the settings of the power supply while tattooing, without contaminating the power supply.
21	Rinse cup	A disposable cup is filled with water and placed on the tattooist's work station and is used to clean pigment from needles, when the same needle is used for multiple colours/shades. The used cup is disposed of in a clinical waste bag alongside its liquid contents, which is absorbed with excess kitchen towel or purpose made products.
22 (a)	Round needles (standard)	Round groupings of needles are referred to as 'liners' and 'shaders'. Groupings are made up of different numbers of smaller individual needles soldered together to form a variety of thicknesses. Liners are grouped together tightly, with different options available of tapering depending on practitioner preference, and are generally used to create lines in tattoos. Shaders are also grouped together in a circular shape but with more space between the needles, and are used to create shading effects in tattoos. Standard needles are attached to the armature bar or grommet of the tattoo machine, to be driven backwards and forwards by a coil or motor, inserting the needle into and out of the skin at the set voltage. Needles are disposed of in a sharps bin on a

		single-use basis.
22 (b)	Round needles (cartridge)	Cartridge round needles work in the same way as standard round needles but come in a disposable cartridge format. Cartridges allow for faster and more convenient changing of needle groupings and are disposed of in sharps bins after a single use.
23	Surface cleaner	Medical grade surface cleaners or alcohol wipes are used to clean all non-disposable surfaces of potential contact during the tattooing process, including machinery and work station. They are also often used to clean the client's skin prior to stencil application, to ensure high standards of hygiene as well as ensuring the stencil remains on the skin by eliminating any natural oils that may be present. In the UK, *Distel* is a commonly used brand.
24	Stencil applicator	Stencil applicator is applied to the shaved and cleaned area of the body that is to be tattooed. It acts as an adhesive for the carbon that is on the layer of the thermal copier hectograph paper containing the stencil of the intended design.
25	Tattoo machine	Tattoo machines are the central component of practice, and contain the technology required to create a tattoo. Traditional machines utilise an electromagnet current to power a pair of coils to create the movement needed for the needle to perform. Rotary machines utilise a small motor in a

		cyclical fashion to perform the same function and tend to be significantly quieter and lighter than coil machines. Machine choice is based on personal preference and can be either wrapped in grip tape or bagged in disposable plastic for hygiene purposes.
26	Thermal copier hectograph paper	Thermal copier hectograph paper is used to create a copy of a design to be used as a tattoo stencil. It is composed of multiple layers, including a sheet of carbon and a thinner sheet of paper. A version of the intended design is placed in the back layer of the sheet, to be transferred as a carbon copy on the front sheet of paper, which acts as a stencil. The sheet is placed in a protective plastic wallet, and ran through a thermal printer.
27	Thermal printer	The thermal printer uses heat to create carbon copies of imagery for tattoo stencils. The speed of the printer can be altered by adjusting a dial. The pace at which the hectograph paper is ran through the printer affects the saturation of design visibility, and is adjusted in accordance to each design. If the machine is set at too fast of a pace, the design may not fully register, and if it is set at too low of a pace, the design may distort and becoming illegible.
28	Tongue depressor	A single use wooden tongue depressor is used to take petroleum jelly out of the container and transfer it to the workstation. It is disposed of in a clinical waste bag after use.

APPENDIX E: AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNTS OF TATTOOING PRACTICE

Appendix E contains the full autoethnographic accounts of tattooing practice that are primarily discussed in Section 4.2 (p.126). Each account has also been published on the research blog, which may be found at: http://adammcdade.weebly.com/beyond-the-epidermis.

E.1 REBECCA (12/2018)

Rebecca had contacted me via Facebook when she advised from desk staff that I would be able to tattoo her for a lower rate than the resident artists. She had sent the studio a message inquiring about the cost and availability to get a tattoo of a very small heart-shaped outline on her wrist area. Tattoos of this nature are referred to as 'minimum-charge' tattoos, and are generally considered those in which the actual tattooing process will take up to around fifteen-minutes, such as a name/date, initial, or basic pictorial piece. These tattoos are generally not sought after by tattooists, and an inquiry from a desk-staff member may be met with resistance.

A minimum-charge tattoo at Triplesix is £40, however Rebecca was advised that she could get the tattoo for the lower rate of £20 if she was willing to be tattooed by the studio apprentice (me), with the price reflective of practitioner experience. Rebecca had messaged me personally to arrange an appointment around her working schedule and asked to come into the studio for 10am. Despite the small size of the tattoo, the set-up of the workstation is the same. All equipment is thoroughly disinfected and wrapped before and after use, and a toxic-waste bag is used for each client, irrespective of the size of the tattoo. In many cases, tattoos of this nature take less time to perform than setting up the workstation does, which is partly the reason many tattooists are resistant to them. I prepared the station in preparation for Rebecca's arrival, and a sheet of printed heart images in different sizes to provide a variety for her to choose from.

I noticed who I assumed to be Rebecca waiting outside of the studio with her boyfriend having a cigarette at around 9:50 am. I assumed it to be Rebecca due to the direction of the eye gaze and noticed a sense of nervousness from her actions and from my experience of observing others outside the studio displaying similar characteristics. Rebecca had turned eighteen in the early days of December, and this was to be her first tattoo. When she entered the studio, she approached the desk and was given a consent form, providing ID which was photocopied, and asked to take a seat. As I was aware of her nerves, I made an effort to appear as welcoming and approachable as possible to attempt to put her at ease.

I approached the seats in which her and her partner were seated, introduced myself, smiled, and wished her a belated happy birthday. I brought the sheet of various sized hearts over to

her to have a look at and asked her to pick a size that best matched her intentions. During this time, I noticed how my behaviour and tone shifted in order to accommodate for her apparent discomfort, in a way that felt natural due to familiarity of tattooing others displaying similar characteristics. I reflected on how these characteristics were in keeping with my role as a tattooist, and how such conduct tends to be more necessary when dealing with tattoos that may be considered to adopt a craft approach and to be tattooed on what has been termed a 'person with tattoos' rather than a 'tattooed person', that is, a person who may have a tattoo but not necessarily be considered part of the 'tattooed community'. Rebecca had selected her chosen size design, and then told to relax while I created a stencil for her tattoo, and that I would let her know when it's ready. I offered her a drink of water while she waited and assured her that the set-up would probably take longer than the actual tattooing procedure, in an effort to make her feel less nervous and more at ease.

After running the design through the stencil machine, I invited Rebecca and her partner over to the booth. I brought a chair from the waiting area for her partner to sit on, and after inviting her to remove her jacket, I asked Rebecca to indicate where on the wrist she wanted the tattoo. She indicated that she wanted the design to be slightly right-aligned on her right wrist, and I asked her to assume a natural posture for the stencil application process to make for a representative indication of how the tattoo would appear in lived context. I noted the tension in Rebecca's posture initially, which can be common when placing stencils on even the most experienced patrons or 'tattooed person(s)'.

Amidst the noticeable tension I became aware of the surroundings that are every day and normative to me and my colleagues but may be intimidating to those unfamiliar with the tattoo studio environment. The distinct smell of antiseptic *Dettol* used to mop the floors on a daily basis, the equipment within the station such as a tattoo bed (massage bed), arm rest, or trolley, all of which are wrapped in cling film, with a box of latex gloves nearby to be worn when touching the skin. The array of ink bottles in the ink wells, and the distinctive tattooing stool, machine, and equipment—such as individual sheets of kitchen roll, baby wipes, ink caps, petroleum jelly, and needles. This assemblage of tattoo culture is what I recall romanticising in youth for its novelty and distinctiveness, which led my enthusiasm and interest in the medium. I considered how although the collective experience of being in a tattoo studio may seem welcoming to myself, to an outsider it may be particularly intimidating, with the classical associations of pain elicited from the presence of needles and

sounds of buzzing tattoo machinery. In light of such considerations—I noted how to perform my role optimally for clients of a similar nature requires skills in compassion and empathy, as much as skill in inserting pigment into the skin.

Once the stencil was applied, I asked Rebecca to take a seat on the wrapped tattoo bed while it dried. I informed her I was going to select the appropriate needles for the tattoo based on her size selection, invited her to have another cigarette if she required it, and offered her another glass of water. I encouraged her to take a seat when she was ready, and to relax— assuring her that the expectation of pain is generally reported to exceed the actual pain felt for most first-time tattoo patrons. After around ten minutes I placed Rebecca's arm on an arm rest, adjusted the bed to an appropriate height, and informed Rebecca that I was going to begin the procedure by going over the stencil initially, before wiping away any excess ink with a baby wipe and evaluating if any areas required an additional pass. I felt it was important to indicate my intentions to Rebecca, to eliminate any potential concerns that may occur due her unfamiliarity with the process. This can be compared to good dental or medical practice, were the practitioner outlines the procedural conduct.

After ensuring Rebecca was ready and informing her that if she wanted a break at any point to let me know, I created the first line of the tattoo. As the needle left the skin for the first time, I looked up towards Rebecca and asked, "how is it?"—to which she responded, "not anywhere near as bad as I was expecting", with a tone of relief made apparent through the laughter within the vocalisation that can be assumed to be a relief on tension. As I continued the tattooing procedure, I attempted to maintain 'small-talk'; asking Rebecca what her plans were for the rest of the day, what she studies, and what her and her partner have planned for the Christmas period. I considered the importance of 'small-talk' as not only a method on maintaining comfort of a client, but in creating a relationship that may potentially be maintained in the future if the client considers another tattoo.

After the initial outline, the excess ink was wiped away revealing the tattooed design. I noticed areas in which I had not inserted pigment sufficiently, which I put down to both my junior status and my desire to avoid inflicting pain (for more accomplished tattooists, a tattoo of such a nature does not require a second pass). I informed Rebecca that I would now go over the areas that required another pass and assured her that it wouldn't take

much longer for the procedure to be completed. I also informed her that she was sitting very well, in an effort to maintain enthusiasm and distract from any pain. After around two or three minutes, the tattoo was complete. I wiped away the excess ink, and asked Rebecca if she wanted to take a look at it the mirror before I wrapped it up in cling film for protection.

As Rebecca walked toward the mirror, I paid attention to her expression in order to gauge if she was satisfied with the outcome. She smiled as she looked at her wrist in the mirror, rotating it to view it from various angles, before returning to the booth and declaring she was happy with the outcome and that she thinks it looks "cute". The satisfaction demonstrated by her shift in demeanour may be induced from both the acquisition of a new tattoo, as well as having overcome a fear successfully. I responded that I was very pleased she was happy with it, and then placed a protective layer of petroleum jelly over the piece and wrapping it with cling-film, secured by micro-pore tape. I then discussed aftercare procedures and gave her a printed sheet which explained what I had vocalised, informed her to call back into the studio should she have any question or concerns, and thanked her for allowing me to participate in her first tattoo. She paid me £20, thanked me, and left the studio with her partner.

As I went to clean the booth where I was working, another tattooist informed me that it would be more time efficient to not wrap all aspects of the working area for tattoos of such a small nature (I had wrapped the full bed but was only required to wrap the arm rest). While removing all the cling film wrappings and disinfecting my equipment for the next tattoo of the day, I considered how tattoos of such a nature (often referred to as minimum-charge tattoos) require skills from the practitioner that are external to tattooing and also may outweigh the gravity of difficulty of the tattooing procedure. In addition to my technical skills needing to adapt to each brief from a practical standpoint, my conduct must also be malleable in order to effectively perform my role.

 As a generally introverted and self-aware twenty-nine-year-old heterosexual male based in the post-industrial town of Sunderland, tattooing an eighteen-year-old female who I have never met and is getting her first tattoo in the knowledge that I am an apprentice carries a certain gravity. In addition to executing the tattoo, I am also required to bypass my social anxiety; addressing the client in an appropriate manner so as not to patronise her due to the

age gap, while simultaneously ensuring her comfort. I must touch her for a prolonged period in a manner typically reserved for traditional forms of intimacy, being careful not to make her feel uncomfortable, and explaining the necessity of my conduct. I also must contend to the pressure and responsibility that I assume in taking on a tattoo in which any mistake is visually apparent, for a client new to tattooing, and as a junior practitioner. I must additionally feel ethically justified in offering the tattoo at a lower rate than that of a senior tattooist to a client to whom budget may be a greater consideration, due to age and access to income.

Factors of such a nature are not representative of tattooing practice in general, but certainly are true of many minimum-charge tattoos conducted on people with fewer tattoos. The tattoo on Rebecca parallels similar context-appropriate considerations to that on a sixty-five-year-old pensioner, getting the initials of their deceased spouse. Though seemingly simple from a design perspective, such tattoos demand a skillset from the practitioner that is distinct from tattooing practice in isolation. These intangible skills are to be cultivated as part of the occupational requirements of a tattooist. To acknowledge importance to the role thus requires us to re-assess the criteria of what we mean when we talk about what constitutes a 'good tattooist' more broadly. Tattooing is a contingent and inherently collaborative medium; the practitioner must therefore be malleable to the multifaceted conditions of the brief.

E.2 RYAN (01/2019)

As with many disciplines, a practitioner of tattooing must create work that they both do and don't resonate with on a personal level. In some cases, the client is interested in getting the work of the particular practitioner as a visual artist. In many cases, however, the client's selection of practitioner will be based on their assumed basic ability, their hourly rate, and how mutually convenient the available dates/times to perform tattooing are. Ryan was an example of the latter.

Work that isn't personally satisfying to the tattooists' taste is not necessarily dissatisfying to undertake however, as such pieces may still present aspects of challenge and opportunities to practice improved craftspersonship. In addition, the collaborative nature of the practice means that the client satisfaction is of central importance, which creates an altruistic sense of satisfaction for the tattooist when this is achieved. In the early stages of a tattooist's career, it is normative to tattoo pieces of such a nature more frequently than it is to tattoo pieces that satisfy personal creative desire. This was the case for the tattoo I completed for Ryan.

Ryan was introduced to me by a member of desk staff as I was tattooing another client, as he was seeking a tattooist who was able to extend a large tribal piece that had been tattooed previously on the outer side of his upper arm, to his forearm. He wanted to continue the piece in a similar style, to make the piece appear as a cohesive whole. Ryan had moved geographical location from a small post-industrial town outside of London for personal reasons, and was thus unable to have his tattoo completed by the tattooist who had started it. Ryan was a gentleman aged around his mid-fifties, and stated that he considers Sunderland to be more his home than his place of birth.

The consultation process involved looking at Ryan's' existing tattoo and taking photographs using my mobile phone, from which I would later reference when creating a preliminary sketch in a shape that matches what he already has. It was explained to Ryan that I am a junior practitioner, and my rates are £30 per hour less than my peers, and thus not as competent as some of the others in the studio due to my comparative lack of experience. Ryan was happy with my skill level being suitable to complete the piece, and advised to book for a full day if possible, or less time if his availability or budget would not allow for this. He

then made a three-hour appointment for a Saturday in April, and was advised that the tattoo would be started but not completed within the three hour period.

Prior to Ryan's' appointment, I had composed on an A4 sheet of paper the photographs of Ryan's' arm that had been taken from different angles during the consultation process. On a separate piece of paper and larger in size, a photograph of the area that would be tattooed was printed and used as the surface on which the preliminary designs would be created. In keeping with the existing shapes of the tribal design, rough shapes were drawn over the areas of non-tattooed skin on the photograph, using a yellow sharpie marker. Theses shapes were made to appear visually consistent and harmoniously with the anatomical structure of the forearm. The shapes were then refined further using an orange marker, and finalised using a blue marker, creating a more formal and considered reference. This drawing process is comparable to the method of 'free-handing' that many practitioners use in favour of using a stencil, when deemed more appropriate. It was unnecessary to research any significance culturally attributed to tribal shapes, as Ryan's' existing tattoo had already established a set aesthetic, and my role in this instance was merely as a designer utilising a visual medium, not a creator or facilitator of the communication of symbolic meaning.

On the day of Ryan's' appointment, the usual procedure of set-up was performed, and Ryan's' arm was shaved and cleaned using an alcohol wipe to remove any excess debris. The preliminary drawing was then placed in the left hand, which was used to inform the free-hand procedure following the same format of using lighter coloured sharpie markers to darker coloured markers, echoing the process of drawing on paper. As the photographs are two-dimensional they are unable to represent the form in the same way as it is in material reality, and thus some customising from the original design was undertaken in order to better fit the flow of the arm. This was particularly around the elbow area as their it was important to make the upper and the lower arm harmonious in design, rather than clearly disparate pieces.

After applying the final marks on the arm using a blue sharpie marker, the tattooing process began. The process involved using a relatively thin 0.5 liner (five small needles soldered together) to go over the shapes drawn on the body and create a permanent stencil, which would later be saturated in black. This meant that the line thickness was not important at this stage, as rather than be reflective of the finished outcome, it was acting as an aid of

completion to the process. For this same reason, the 'cleanness' of the line is not as important as it would be if 'lining' alone was the purpose and the piece was not to be internally coloured black.

On creating the first line, I had realised that due to the layered pigments of marker ink on top of each other, the stencil had become very dark. As a result, the thin black tattooed line became very difficult to distinguish amongst the thick, dark, instructional blue line that was being followed. This meant that keeping the line consistent was increasingly difficult, and as a result the blood that came to the surface of the tattooed line was used as an indicator of what had been tattooed, rather than the actual pigment on skin.

On recognition of the marker being too dark to act sufficiently as a guide, I began to sweat and feel severe tension and anxiety. As the process was too far undertaken to make opting for an alternative possible, the approach of following the blood line was adopted until the entire piece was able to be wiped clean with a baby wipe. The line appeared not clean, but sufficient to serve the purpose it was intended to serve in this instance, and a sense of relief was gained. Once both of the large tribal shapes were lined in, the colour packing using a larger needle grouping (magnum needle) began, and I spoke with Ryan about his background, work, and interests.

The sitting was booked for three hours, and a large part of practitioner conduct involves ensuring client comfort. In part this means giving them an opportunity to speak about themselves and express their beliefs and opinions in the knowledge they are being listened to. As we were discussing Ryan's' hometown and his feelings towards it, he expressed unfavourable sentiments as it had what he termed "a big Asian problem". He then went on the express views and opinions of Asian communities that, in conservative terms, could be understood as deductive and prejudice. As the tone of communication and nature of Ryan's' opinions are in vast contrast to my own in a way that could be deemed offensive, I found that I was subconsciously applying more pressure with my needle while packing the ink into the skin. I didn't vocalise my contrast to his perspective, as I didn't deem it pragmatic to fulfilling my role efficiently, but rather attempted to subtly but noticeably direct the conversation to an alternative topic

One of the issues I have had as a tattooist is in my discomfort in the unavoidable necessity of inducing pain, that is a consequence of tattooing. This manifests itself materially in my insufficient application of pressure of needles and depth of insertion into the skin, and results in the tattooed area not being sufficiently saturated and thus requiring a second pass. In turn, this demands more time being spent on the area, which can be more painful for the client overall, and less economical in regard to both time and money (as they are required to pay for extra time, or are sometimes quoted a set cost based on projected time, which is honoured irrespective of actual time spent tattooing). When Ryan had expressed beliefs and attitudes that I had found ethically distasteful, my conduct subconsciously was altered in such a way that was more suited to performing my role successfully.

I continued tattooing with the increased pressure, recognising that I indeed was not causing any unnecessary trauma to the skin, but instead tattooing with superior efficiency, meaning the client received a higher-quality tattoo in less time than they would have had I applied less pressure.

One of the unique and positive attributes of tattooing is the opportunity to have long-form conversations with those who I may not have an opportunity or desire to otherwise. As I continued to tattoo and talk with Ryan, I found that although we had some severely contrasting opinions, on a human level I was able to be in his company without any severe discomfort. I considered how culturally and generationally we differed, and how this might affect how we deem validity of information sources such as newspapers and news articles. Ryan's' culturally induced reality tunnel was different to my own, but I recognised through the lengthy interaction that the medium of tattooing allows for that despite contrasting identity constructs, we were able to coexist harmoniously, and enjoy (or at least respectfully tolerate) aspects of each other's company. His experiences of life had shaped how he exists in the World, in the same way that my experiences have shaped my reality and my conduct.

Tattooing Ryan taught me not only how to improve aspects of my own craftspersonship and ability as a designer materially, but also how to both interact with and holistically appreciate / understand, somebody who I may otherwise had tried to avoid communication with. His experiences of life had shaped how he exists in the World, in the same way that my experiences have shaped my reality and my conduct. That is not to say that holding oppressive beliefs is justified and ethically sound. It is rather an acknowledgement, through

compassion that has been cultivated in the time taken for communication that tattooing necessitates, that multiple external factors shape an identity.

My role as a tattooist is not to adopt a position of moral arbiter and attempt to change Ryan's' views, however toxic they may appear. Attempting to do so may actually be detrimental to the likelihood of his return, and thus bad for business. My reflection and analysis of my personal experience is an attempt to generate understanding on both a tangible and intangible level of one aspect of the broader cultural experience of tattooing that exists in multiplicity. How each practitioner approaches and interprets each interaction is contingent upon how they engage with the world on an individual basis. Though this account may be unique to me, many other practitioners have comparable accounts of experiences that have similarly informed their conduct. My account thus contributes elucidation on a small fraction of the shape of the tattooists multifaceted occupational role.

E.3 LINDA AND SAMANTHA (08/2019)

Linda came into the tattoo studio on a Friday afternoon to make an appointment for a small piece. As a junior tattooist—part of my role still involves helping out on the desk (booking client appointments, taking payment from clients etc.), which I was doing on this occasion. After greeting Linda who told me that she wanted a tattoo on her ankle area, I asked to see a photograph of what she was hoping for. At an estimate, Linda was aged somewhere around her fifties. She was of average weight and tanned complexion, with around two or three relatively large (distinguishable from a distance) tattoos on her arms. She also had a smaller tattoo of a name around her ankle area, as I came to see when she showed me where she wanted the new tattoo to be placed.

It is often the case (in the post-industrial town of Sunderland, at least) that when discussing tattoo designs/placement with clients who have fairly limited tattoos and are of a particular age, that expectations may not be realistic. An example may be that the client wants a large piece of text tattooed in a small area—unaware that the tattoo ageing process may make the piece illegible over time. Similarly, a client may request a portrait of their dog/child/partner but be only able to provide a photograph that is of low resolution for the tattooist to use as a reference which would be insufficient to complete the piece with desirable quality. This wasn't the case for Linda however, and it appeared that she had considered the piece by her confidence in placement, size, and design simplicity. This consideration was also apparent in her tone and demeanour, which appeared to be confident and defined.

Linda showed an image on her mobile phone, which she had indicated she would like to be tattooed above her ankle. The design looked as though it was from a sign that had been placed in a public space such as a train platform community notice board, or in a doctor waiting room, and read, "You are not alone. Not now. Not Ever. Don't Give Up". In the centre of the design was a silhouetted icon of the *Disney* character 'Mickey Mouse', but with an additional circular silhouette with a hollow inside that was placed on each ear, to suggest the ears were expanded. On initially looking at the design, I had not considered that the circular shapes inside of the ears were indications of expanded ears, as I was looking at the image from a purely pragmatic standpoint in regard to its suitability as a tattoo, to be placed above the name already tattooed on the ankle. Though I recognised the design was not the

traditional portrayal of 'Mickey Mouse', the significance of the deviance from the original icon at that point was not relevant to my assessment of the design translation from screen/print, to skin.

Linda stated she wanted the silhouette to be coloured, "a nice purple", which she reinstated when making the booking, and around 2.5 x 2.5 inches in size. I assured Linda that we could gather together some pre-mixed coloured ink bottles on the day, and she could select the purple pigment of her choosing. I told her that the tattoo should take around an hour, and I was able to do it for her for £40 (the studio minimum charge, and my hourly rate). Linda was suitably satisfied with this, and booked to have her tattoo on the following Tuesday, leaving the full tattoo cost as a non-refundable deposit. When leaving a deposit, it is necessary that the member of desk staff inform the client that the deposit is non-refundable prior to taking the money. I made Linda aware of this, and she confidently assured me that she would definitely arrive for her appointment, which I didn't doubt. I asked Linda to email me the image, from which I would prepare a design. This is ordinary practice within the studio and ensures that the reference image from which the tattooist produces a design adheres to the clients request appropriately.

Design Process

Around forty-five minutes from leaving the studio, Linda had emailed the image to me, from which the design was to be produced. The image was a photograph of a laminated sign taken on a slight angle. I downloaded the attachment and copied it into an *Adobe Photoshop* A4 document, where I had intended to see if I was able to make a stencil from the photograph. Due to the angle, I was not, and so I utilised google image search to find an image for the search, "mickey mouse head icon".

The images were all silhouetted icons, however it was only the outline of the shape that I required, and so I intended to generate a line drawing from the existing shape to utilise as a stencil and inform my tattooing process. A silhouette was isolated, copied, and pasted into the already open photoshop document. As the icon was placed alongside the image that Linda had sent to me, I remembered that the intended design included the circular shapes in the ears. I was still unaware that these shapes were indicators of expanded, but wanted to honour the original design, and so using the shape tool, created a white circle that was then

placed over the ear area of the design. The placement was informed by the original photograph, and once the left-hand side of the image appeared correct, the full design was marked in the centre, the left-hand side copied, and then mirrored/placed over the top of the right-hand side of the image to ensure perfect symmetry.

This composite design was then selected using the magic wand tool, before being contracted by around 4 pixels and feathered slightly, for the selection to then be deleted, leaving an outline of the shape that could then act as the stencil. I composed the shape on a sheet of paper four times at varying sizes, and followed the same outlining procedure for a version of the icon without the additional edits to the ears. These versions of the design were also created in four sizes that reflect the first set, and placed on the same piece of paper. The sheet was then printed, to be shown to Linda on the morning of her tattoo so that she could pick a suitable size for her tattoo (though deviance in size from those which are printed is possible, and the sheet is merely an informed guideline in accordance with clients original stated size for the tattoo). Both versions of the image were included (traditional 'Mickey Mouse' and expanded ear mickey mouse), as at this point I was unsure if Linda simply was unable to locate a version of the design without expanded ears for any reason.

Appointment Morning

The design sheet was placed in my tattooing booth on Saturday afternoon, in preparation for the appointment on Tuesday morning when the studio opened. Linda arrived at around 10:45, fifteen minutes ahead of the appointment time, and had brought another person with her. I greeted Linda with and intentional but sincere familiarity of tone, expressed through an informal "hello", and gave her a consent form to complete (mandatory for every tattoo session, irrespective of the client is new or returning). I had assumed that Linda's companion was simply company for the appointment, which is very common, however she had asked if she could also be tattooed with the same design, on her forearm. I checked the schedule, calculated that I should have both tattoos completed by around 1pm which would allow me to cover the front-desk so that my colleague would be able to have her 1pm lunch break, and said that I should be able to complete the tattoo for Linda's friend directly after tattooing Linda.

Linda's companion was named Samantha, and appeared around ten years younger than Linda, and had a similar demeanour of sincerity but slightly less confident and more timid. I later found out that Samantha was Linda's cousin, who had decided to get the tattoo after hearing that Linda had booked in for the piece. After both clients had filled in their consent forms, I brought over the design sheet and explained that I had included both version of the design ('Mickey Mouse' with and without expanded ears) and asked which they would prefer. Confidently, they both opted for the expanded ear version of the design without any hesitation, confirming that the design was of significance. It was at this point that I recognised that the circles in the ears were expanders, and that the tattoo was likely a memorial of a person who both Linda and Samantha had lost. I asked both clients to take a seat while I cut out various sizes of the design, which I then brought over to them to place next to the area to be tattooed so they could gain a more accurate understanding of the placement.

After the desired sizes were selected, I created a stencil to work from, dealing with Linda's first as she would be getting the tattoo before Samantha. During this process, I thought back to the image that was originally sent to me as reference and the words. I couldn't recall the specific words, but I remembered them as being something to the effect of "you're not alone" and "never give up". It was at this point that I made the inference that the loss both Linda and Samantha suffered was due to suicide. Though the tattoo as a symbolic memory of a specific individual was stated, the cause of death never actually confirmed, and it did not feel appropriate to ask for details. It later transcended that person being memorialised was young, had expanded ears, and named Michael. My recognition of the seemingly obvious symbolic significance of the piece was so delayed due to my focus on the material nature of the brief on first encounter. I was not looking at the image to draw out any particular meaning, but merely considering if the design would work as a tattoo. I recognised that when performing the role of a tattooist, my interpretation of the same situation would be different than when not performing any specific role, as my assessment of the situation would not be guided by any particular requirements to be fulfilled.

Tattooing Process: Linda

As I now became aware that the tattoo I was completing was not merely pictorial, but perhaps ceremonial, the felt sense of responsibility was amplified. Interestingly, it was not

the pressure to ensure the tattoo was well-executed that I felt the most crucial aspect of my role at this particular point, but my desire was to ensure that both clients were suitably comfortable at all points in whatever way possible seemed of a higher priority. I asked Linda and Samantha to come over to the booth and brought a chair for Samantha to sit in while I tattooed Linda, and vice-versa. As we walked over and I prepared Linda's skin to be tattooed, I made a particular effort to keep my conversation tone light, while simultaneously trying to welcome any depth of content that she would like to share. My tone of voice contained a 'brightness' to try and communicate openness and acceptance of whatever Linda wanted to share with me, and when Linda started to speak about Michael, I asked questions that elaborated on the content she was already discussing (such as his taste in music and how his brother is emulating it now). The questions were along the lines of "…so did Michael play an instrument?", and I had tried to ensure that what I was asking was not overly personal, but personal enough for Linda to understand that I was willing to listen to whatever she was comfortable to share, and create a space for her to do so.

The duty I felt to be present in such a way is not unique to being tattooist and a simple human instinct, however as memorial tattooing is commonplace, tattooists may more commonly have to develop skills in being present to ensure client comfort. While waiting for the stencil to dry, I poured ink into my ink caps, attached the appropriate needle gauge to the tattoo machine in accordance to the stencil thickness, and went to the bathroom to tie back my hair as a health and safety precaution. Linda and Samantha talked between each other at this point, and I offered them both a drink of water between the other tasks. I brought Linda three different tones of dark purple to choose from for the colour of her tattoo, and kept the bottle that she had selected on top of the booth area to refill for when it came to tattooing Samantha, ensuring that the tones matched.

After around ten minutes when the stencil dried, I adjusted the tattoo bed so that Linda was able to sit up asked her to stretch the tattooing leg out straight, and began the tattooing procedure, starting with the outline. As the procedure continued Linda told me that after booking her appointment with me she had looked at my social media accounts by following the links that are included on my appointment card. She recognised my surname—McDade; and contacted my uncle of the same surname who she is friends with, to see if we were any relation. My uncle informed her of our relation, and that I was his brothers' son.

It transpired that Linda was active in the music scene during the 1970's, and regularly went to local gigs. My late father, 'Blue' (as he was ironically referred to as due to his high decibel and distinctly decipherable booming laugh that it is likely was only ever present as a mechanism to deal with his social anxiety and life-long depression), played in a popular progressive rock band named *Cirkus*. Linda told me how she had known my dad and had enjoyed watching his band perform many times. She expressed her condolences for his death in April 2016, in which he had suffered heart failure due to what is believed to have been a deliberate failure to take medication resulting in the ending of a life that was burdened by a serious of health conditions such as prostate cancer, deep vein thrombosis, fibromyalgia, life-long depression and alcoholism. His sixty-two-year-old body was found on the floor of his apartment in which he lived alone, by my sister who had a spare key, around four days after his death based on the coroner's estimation. My relationship with my dad was very positive overall, though we were never able to be as close as we both would have wanted due to his excessive absence and unreliability in my childhood and adolescence which was largely the result of his self-medicative relationship with alcohol to deal with his depression. His death was simultaneously sad and relieving, as his health issues made his premature death an inevitably that had been anticipated for over half my adult life, after being told to, "expect the worst", when visiting him off and on in hospital over the past decade and a half.

Linda's expression of condolence made me aware that she was already informed of my own loss, and we had a shared experience of grievance. As I continued to outline the tattoo—an already intimate procedure in which I am touching the client's body with my hands, with the remainder of my body in close proximity and with the client positioned in such a manner that is aimed towards informal relaxation (it is important to ensure a client is comfortable when they are being tattooed and have them in a position that maximises this), the intimacy of the exchange became more nuanced. I stated that my comparative loss was not the same and that Linda's was no doubt more severe, as Michael was significantly younger than my Dad, who's death had been anxiously anticipated far ahead of it happening.

As we spoke through the tattooing process, switching from the outline to beginning the colour, the exchange felt significantly more personal than tattooing a standard client. Linda's design choice was semiotic in its communication of loss in that she had chosen to have it embodied, and she was additionally aware of my personal biographical narrative regarding

my relationship with my dad. Though tattooing for a longer period of time invites more informal and holistic conversation than other service industries might (such as massage), the personal involvement in this instance required a combination of professionalism (ensuring client physical comfort, checking that they are okay in regard to the pain etc.) and personal presence (that is, being present as Adam, with my own sense of self, rather than simply as a tattooist).

I told Linda that her skin was accepting the purple-coloured ink very well (sometimes purple can be difficult to appear saturated depending on client skin type), and she appeared to be completely comfortable with the physical pain. She stated that she did not believe that tattoos hurt her much, and I relied on my canned tattooist response (though from experience—true) that women tend to be able to tolerate pain better than men, and that comparatively to child-birth tattoos must a 'walk in the park'. Canned comments such as this are useful as tools for the client to recognise that they are dealing with the pain very well, and to try and help them to feel positive. It was apparent in Linda's demeanour that the pain was not actually affecting her due to her stillness, which may be inferred to be comparatively easier to handle than the grievance she was experiencing.

On completion of the tattoo, I wiped down all the excess ink and asked Linda if she would like to take a look at it in the mirror. On the way to the mirror, she showed Samantha who had been seated during the process, who expressed her fondness of the tattoo. Linda returned with a smile, stating she was very happy with the piece and thanking me before her tattoo was wrapped in cling film for protection. It felt more appropriate to hug her than simply thank her for allowing me to do the tattoo for her, with the professional environment in which the tattoo was produced being the dominant deterrent to such an exchange. I asked both Linda and Samantha if they could please take a seat at the front of the studio so that I could clean down the workstation and prepare it again for Samantha's tattoo. As I proceeded to remove cling-film and protective layers from the surfaces and into the toxic waste bag, I considered how this creation of space shares parallel to that of a shamanic healing facilitator, in which a ceremonial environment is created and cleansed (though through smudged sage, rather than medical grade disinfectant) for trauma to be dealt with and navigated with the assistance of a practitioner. It was not the role of 'shaman' in its full array of responsibilities that I thought was comparable, but rather the attribute of the role as a facilitator for an experience.

Tattooing Process: Samantha

After taking the time to set up the space, I asked Linda and Samantha if they wanted to return to the booth. Linda sat in the chair with her mobile phone in her hand, and I noticed she was sharing a photograph of her new tattoo to her Facebook account. Samantha had a far less confident demeanour than Linda—she was much shyer in her mannerisms but wore a consistent smile. The smile seemed authentic and sincere, but as though it was just a veneer to cover up some unbearable pain that it would not be socially acceptable to make visible to a stranger. It was a genuine smile, but it was present to express politeness, rather than happiness. Though given the motivation for the tattoo, a sense of sadness was to be expected, it felt as though it was sourced in something more deeply rooted than one particular event or reason.

Samantha had chosen the forearm as the placement for the tattoo rather than her ankle, where Linda had placed it, and requested for it to be slightly smaller in size. I vocalised that small, often almost invisible hairs can interfere with the tattoo stencil to Samantha. As I shaved the discreet, white-coloured hairs from her arm in preparation for the stencil, she told expressed that she feels she is hairier than she "should" be in an almost apologetic tone. I assured her that it is very normal and natural to have body hair, and that she didn't have to worry. The tone of shame that I detected confirmed that the other aspects of her nonverbal communication that lead to my inferences of her vulnerability were perhaps correct, and I was able to infer their presence through sharing similar traits and characteristic throughout my life. I positioned the stencil on the arm, checked that she was happy with the placement, and adjusted the bed so that she could lay down with her arm out straight on an arm rest.

Though tattooists have different preferences for client positioning when tattooing, I find that having clients lay down assists in the feeling of relaxation, thus helping to alleviate any nerves that may be present. Following the same procedure as when tattooing Linda, the outline was completed with the same needle gauge. As the tattooing commenced, it did not feel appropriate to discuss the death of Michael due to Samantha's vulnerability. Instead, I opted for more 'small-talk' forms of conversation, and learned that Samantha worked in a retail outlet, and would be going into work later that afternoon. She stated that she thought

the job was okay and she didn't mind going in to work. Samantha's smile was consistent throughout the conversation and the remainder of the tattooing procedure, though her responses (though very polite) were limited, and didn't prompt many further questions to naturally occur.

It seemed that even speaking was painful for Samantha, which I wanted to respect for her tattoo experience. As I used my non-tattooing left hand to stretch the skin around the area to be tattooed, I felt very aware of amount of pressure that was necessary that I otherwise would not have considered. Samantha's arms were thin and appeared delicate, and I felt uncomfortable in both putting pressure on her arm and in inflicting the pain that the tattoo process incurs. It didn't feel appropriate to be causing additional pain to somebody I deemed to be suffering so much already. I contemplated how this feeling has occurred in other scenarios, such as tattooing people who are aged only around eighteen or nineteen, or people who clearly find the pain more difficult to tolerate. I had to consider how my interpretation of my analysis of her situation and character would likely be at least in part my own projection, though perhaps combined with some sense of intuitive understanding.

As I began the colour stages there were no words that were exchanged, but the silence did not feel at all uncomfortable. As the blood rose to the surface of the saturated coloured areas of the tattoo, the process of wiping it away with a baby-wipe and continuing to extract more though the continued tattooing reminded me of my earlier comparison of shamanic healing ceremony and tattooing procedure. The pain that was being initiated coupled with the care that was taken to assure the comfort, and the necessity of the client to surrender to the sensation, reminded me of my personal experiences of dealing with trauma during an ayahuasca ceremony. The blood was the body purging, wiping it away was a means of cleansing.

As the procedure finished and after following the usual protocols, I wrapped Samantha's arm, I attempted to keep the conversation light. Part of Samantha's vulnerability may have indeed been the nerves she could have been experiencing in undergoing the tattooing process, as there was a sense of brightness in her tone of voice. This may have been the relief of the process being finished, the acquisition of a new embodied signifier, or the assistance that having underwent the procedure had in the grievance procedure. I thanked both Linda and Samantha, who were both charged the minimum amount for a tattoo (£40),

went over the aftercare instructions, and said goodbye. They thanked me in return, generously tipped me £5, and left the studio.

E.4 JOHN (10/2019)

John initially came into the studio seeking a tattoo of a symbol from a game that he plays as part of the larger online gaming community. The symbol was circular in shape, with a figure of a coloured fist in the centre and a blue colour in-between the fist and the circle. Carrying a nervous disposition and some difficulty with speech due to a stammer, I tried to adopt a lightness of tone and to have a consultation away from the studio desk area (were they are typically conducted) in favour of the seating area. This was to ensure a more informal setting that I hoped would make John feel more comfortable. After a few minutes' discussion of size and placement, John was advised to book three hours, which would total at £120.

On the day of Johns appointment, the regular procedure that is undertaken for each tattoo was followed—the workstation was prepared and sterilised, before the pre-printed stencils of varying sizes were shown to John for his selection, each of which were placed against the part of his arm to be tattooed as an indicator of how they might appear on the body. Once selected, the image was placed through the thermal copier machine to create the transfer, that was then applied to the intended body part, and after a ten-minute waiting period for the stencil to dry, tattooing commenced.

The process begins with the black coloured outline, before moving on to colour, working from the darkest to the lightest tone to avoid causing any 'murkiness' in appearance. During the tattooing process, conversation ensued surrounding the design choice. John was in his early-twenties, and a part of the online PC gaming community. He told me how he was getting this tattoo ahead of his upcoming trip to *Center Parcs*, where he and a few others who also play the game from which the symbol is from were going together—all of which were from different parts of the UK. His choice to get the tattoo of the gaming symbol prior to his holiday was in part an effort to express his commitment to the community to which he is involved.

Part of my social development as a practitioner in a service industry involves ensuring client comfort through attempting to relate. Though not at all interested in gaming to the same extent as John, and so unable to offer much to the conversation in such a regard, I mentioned that I had a strong desire to play the game *Street fighter*, that is rooted in a romanticised nostalgic memory of playing the game as an adolescent. John transpired to be

very knowledgeable about *Street Fighter*, and a prolonged period of time was spent in discussion of our memories of the game.

As the conversation developed, John began to ask about my job as a tattooist. He had looked at my work via my *Instagram* page after booking an appointment, as my *Instagram* link is stated on my business card. He noticed that many of the pieces I had created were in black ink only, and stylistically different from the piece I was doing for him, and he was curious as to what made me take on his brief. I explained that the skills required to complete his tattoo could be considered that of a craftsperson—insomuch as the design was already produced and decided, and it simply required a practitioner who was able to work with the materials of tattooing in a skilled manner to create it for him. I went on to explain how although my personal taste maybe more accurately reflected in some of the pieces I had included in my *Instagram* portfolio, I was capable of tattooing in other styles also, and that my thoughts on the tattoo output are of secondary value to the client. I expressed that I was simply grateful to be tattooing and would only take on work that I felt I could do a sufficient job of.

As I informed John of this, I recognised a slight emotion of guilt that was rooted in the knowledge that other more experienced tattooists in the same studio would have been able to produce the tattoo to a higher standard in regard to line quality and colour saturation, but I had taken this job on myself as I had dealt with the initial inquiry and believed I could produce the tattoo suitably. The desire to take on the job in the knowledge that others could produce a better output was not simply for financial sustenance alone (though this may often be the case in similar scenarios with many tattooists), but also to adhere to the pressures of working as a junior tattooist in a successful studio filled with more qualified practitioners, displaying a degree of confidence that demonstrates a desire to be successful and generate income for the studio.

As I looked at the tattoo I was producing and noted the comfort that John appeared to be in on a social level comparative to his arrival, despite the physical pain generated for a long duration, I considered how the tattoo experience is more than simply the output of the interaction. As John had trouble with speech occasionally and had vocalised having issues with sociability, I made it my intention to create a space for him to feel comfortable as far as possible and engaged in conversation. I considered some of the tattooing experiences I have

had, with some of the most respected tattooist internationally, and how some of them appeared to not care for the psychological comfort of me as a client in a way that I aim to do for my own clients.

Though I am very pleased with the outcome of tattoos from such experiences, the tattoo as a material form is also associated with the memory of a largely negative experience in which I was made to feel inferior or considered as indifferent through lack of interaction, or the audience of egotistical ramblings. When looking at my own tattoos, I recall the experience of getting them, and thus perceive them differently to how I would have, had the tattooist conducted themselves in a different manner. I considered how my attempt to bring myself to the experience of tattooing in such a way that increased the likelihood of a more positive memory for the client could be considered a credential that is valuable to the role, but harder to express in material form.

As John and I continued discussing tattooing, he stated that he really liked the style of the work I was producing as a visual artist/designer, and that he would like to have another gaming tattoo produced in a similar style to my own. John then stated he would like to have a *Street Fighter* character piece tattooed somewhere on his body, and I suggested that above the ankle would be a suitable placement due to the size of the area and the size he wanted the piece (relatively small, meaning that somewhere such as an arm would make the piece look lost). As the tattoo experience ended, John stated that he would consider a further tattoo based on our discussion, and wanted to spend some time deciding on a character to be depicted. After receiving aftercare instructions, John had informed me he would be in touch in the future to book in for his next piece. The finished tattoo appeared suitable to fulfil what he required, and I contemplated how if he was unhappy with it, he would not be considering returning to get another piece from me.

A few days later, I received an email from John regarding his character choice for his tattoo. He had selected a character named 'Vega' that wore a face mask and a claw, which he deemed to be suitably visually interesting. I invited John to come to studio to discuss further and make a deposit to secure the booking. A few days later John came to the studio, and we discussed the size and specific placement of the tattoo. On the character selection screen of *Street Fighter* games, the player icons are made to face opposing each other to indicate that it is 'x' vs 'x'. John and I considered how as a placement choice we could make it so that the

tattoo he gets of 'Vega' on his right ankle could be joined by another character being tattooed in the future to echo the way that the selection screen appears.

Enthusiastic about the idea for placement, John booked in his first appointment, with the intention of booking in for another in another in the near future in the equivalent place of the opposite leg. On the day of the appointment, the regular procedures were followed of preparing the skin area, placing the stencil on the leg, and performing the tattoo. The character of 'Vega' was positioned to face outwards from the inside of the lower left leg. The size of the design was dictated by the area in which it would be placed (in addition to client budget and preference), and as a single tattoo, appeared to read better positioned in such a way compositionally. On leaving the studio, John expressed that he would be back in the near future to book in for another piece.

After a few days, John emailed to inquire about coming into the studio again to chat. Though emailing ahead to meeting is not necessary, I had noticed how John appears to feel more comfortable with a formally arranged meeting than just simply turning up. We arranged a time and date for a consultation, which John turned up for punctually. With many clients, the consultation takes place stood up over the desk area, however as I had sensed in the past that John is more comfortable talking when seated, I asked him to take a seat in the studio waiting area, where I joined him and offered him some water from the cooler. He showed me how his almost-healed tattoo, which he seemed happy with, and we discussed another character to add to the opposite leg. Unsure of his selection at that point, but sure that he wanted to be tattooed, an appointment was made for the following week, with the request for a decision a few days later to allow sufficient time to produce a drawing.

I received some image reference from John a few days later and created a stylised version of the character of his choosing, in a style that was visually similar to the tattoo I had created on Johns other leg. The character of his choosing is named 'Akuma' and has notable jewellery around his neck in the form of large wooden mala beads, that make a visually engaging composition. The stencil for the tattoo was created from the source image that John sent and drawn using a calligraphy pen to create a varied quality of line, with a design that celebrates the qualities of the 'unfinished' and the 'sketch-like'.

John turned up on the day of his appointment, selected the appropriate size for his 'Akuma' tattoo, and the stencil was then placed on the body. It was at this point that I noticed that the position of the figure was not consistent with the tattoo of 'Vega'. Although the intention was to make it appear so that the figures were facing each other in a way that emulates the character selection screen of the game, the way that the body frames the tattoos meant that this wouldn't appear compositionally 'right'. Upon noticing the contrast, the design was taken back onto *Adobe Photoshop*, where it was flipped at the exact same size, and printed again to be made into a stencil for a tattoo of consistent orientation. I considered in this time how tattooing is unique in that the body dictates an element of the design choice, in contrast to the traditional 2D surfaces such as paper or canvas. The body is also asymmetric to varying degrees, with centre points often being relative to visual perspective and bodily stance. In this circumstance, John and I agreed that the choice we had taken made more sense, and that should another two characters be added to his ankle area, they could be on the outer sides and thus fulfil the original aim to emulate the character selection screen of *Street Fighter*.

We proceeded to complete the tattoo, with John also interacting with other members of the studio surrounding their mutual interests in TV series and games. I noticed that in this instance John appeared to move more during the process, making tattooing more of a challenge. After moving fairly frequently, I witnessed myself feeling irritable, and simultaneously feeling annoyed at myself for feeling irritable. I understood that the area I was tattooing was prone to create involuntary movements and can be painful, and understood rationally that the movements were not the result of any lack of attempt to stay still. Despite this acknowledgement, I found myself feeling frustrated by the consistent movements, and noticed myself being less engaging with John in the way that I would have liked to have been. In the realisation of this, the frustration turned towards myself; in the moment of tattooing, with the full awareness of the permanence of the medium and the trust placed in me by John to create the piece successfully, I felt that any deviation in the design from my intent, based on client movement, was a failure.

I considered my feelings towards the tattoos I had from tattooists I admire, but that bring to mind not necessarily pleasant experiences, and felt a sense of guilt for potentially creating a similar experience for John. I also felt a sense of ignorance for not taking into consideration that tattoos are not just produced on humans, but by humans, who may have a range of

factors affecting their conduct, which may account for some of my personal negative experiences. Fortunately, my irritability did not seem to be picked up on by John, and he seemed very satisfied with both the outcome of the tattoo and the tattooing experience.

As John left, I thanked him for getting tattooed by me, and he told me that he would be in touch soon with other ideas. My experience of tattooing John on three separate occasions made me consider how clients can become established based on more than just the tattoo as an output, but on their relationship with the practitioner. The tattoos that I created for John on the second and third occasion were never Johns intentions when he first came into the studio, but resulted from the initial interaction. I also considered how the experience on the third occasion made apparent that the body as an object has a level of design input, as the tattoo is restricted to the confides of form and flow.

My awareness of my 'shortness' of attitude with John made me feel regretful of my conduct and lack of ability to override my egoic response to his movements, despite being aware that tattooing is a painful and durational process. The transactional nature of tattooing as an industry requires a level of professionalism as a service, however, to divorce the fact that tattoos are produced by humans and on humans results in only a partial understanding of the nature of the role. My experiences with John as they have been recorded here, serve as an example of the layers that exist in tattooing practice, and as a reminder to myself for how to improve my role as tattooist on a material and social level, as well as recognising aspects of myself that are not serving my personal growth.

E.5 ALICE (02/2020)

Alice came into the studio with who I assumed to be her mother, but as I later found out through the conversation that occurred during the tattooing process, was actually her stepmother. My introduction to Alice as a client was based on my availability to tattoo at the moment in which she happened to enter the studio, versus that of my colleagues, who were all tattooing or about to be tattooing at that point. As I sat on the computer, scanning in a design I had prepared for a future upcoming appointment, a colleague who happened to be at the desk area and dealing with Alice's request shouted to me, "Adam, do you want to make some money?". I knew that that meant performing a walk-in tattoo (tattooing without a formal appointment). Despite being an important part of the role of the early-career tattooist, I often dislike doing walk-in tattoos for reasons I will now outline.

Walk-in tattoos tend to require a lot of time to set-up the equipment and create a design that suits the client intention, comparative to how long the tattoo takes to complete. They also can be difficult to place on the body in a way that appears visually correct based on the variable ways in which the tattooed area can be seen and can thus take multiple attempts to get right (wrists are a good example of this, as a design may appear central when relaxed, but aligned more to the left or right when the arm is bent). Tattoos of this nature tend also to be more spontaneous in how they have been approached by the clients, who often say things such as, "I knew if I didn't get it now then I'd probably never get it". This means that as a tattooist, I have to contend with the knowledge that the client to whom I am making a permanent mark upon may not desire the tattoo in the near future in the same way as they do the day it is created, in contrast to those who have considered a piece for a prolonged period of time. This is not always the case however, and sometimes clients simply lead busy lives working irregular shift patterns, and as such cannot commit to a formal appointment.

As walk-in tattoos are generally relatively small (typically taking under twenty-minutes of actual tattooing), every aspect of the piece is explicitly visible, including any lines or colour-packing that is less successful than other areas. With larger tattoos were there is more coverage, factors such as this are less visually apparent due to other details of the overall composition. This means that there is a greater requirement for skilled craftspersonship, which as a junior practitioner, is less honed than that of my senior colleagues. Coupled with the acknowledgment that many walk-in tattoos (from my experience of both tattooing and

working on the studio desk) are sentimental in nature to a varying extent, the level of responsibility to produce a high-quality output feels greater, making tattooing of this nature as a junior tattooist particularly anxiety inducing.

On an objective economic level, walk-in tattoos will generally be charged at £40 (the studio minimum charge), from which I will earn £20. Should the tattoo require a free touch-up due to any pigment being lost in the healing process (which can occur for numerous reasons), then the full process of setting up, tattooing, and cleaning down the workstation must be repeated, with no economic gain. In some cases, walk-in tattoos can lead to returning clients for larger pieces that are more suited to the tattooists preferred style of working, leading to greater economic gain over a prolonged period of time. Often, however, walk-in tattoos are sought by those who generally choose to have only a few smaller pieces, and if they return, may request tattoos that are similar in size, placement, and the difficulties that can accompany this that have been outlined.

Despite the resistance that I find myself always experiencing when asked to perform walk-in tattoos, I also find myself frequently enjoying social aspects of the process, and being able to offer a service to somebody that may provide some form of value to them. It would also be considered bad practice for me to refuse to tattoo based on my resistance from the perspective of the studio, who must adhere to business demands and not turn away custom for reasons that might be deemed unnecessary. For this reason, it is always my intention to not reveal my insecurities about my ability or my desire to avoid doing such tattoos to both my clients and my colleagues/superiors. Upon being summoned, I approached the desk where Alice and her stepmother were stood, said hello, and asked what tattoo design was being sought.

Alice adopted a demeanour that suggested fragility and resilience simultaneously. Writing this with retrospective understanding of Alice's biographical narrative may make such a statement appear insincere, or as an additional attribute falsely remembered given some of her later learned contextual background—but this is not the case. I distinctly remember detecting a sense of hardship in the moments of our first interaction; a sense I only picked up on through having encountered people close to me who have lived through difficult or traumatic experiences in the past, and been able to continue to survive in the World without being overcome with fear. Alice had a child-like wisdom to her presence; child-like in the

sense of engagement and presence with the moment, not considering the before or after, and wise in the acknowledgement that nothing was forever, and thus recognising that enjoyment is a necessary condition of living a rich life. These assertions may be my personal projections and not representative of Alice's own sense of self, however they are necessary to include to elucidate on the variable factors that contribute to the experience of the practitioner, and how that affects the nature of practice.

She looked like she was in her early-twenties at first glance, but after talking for slightly longer it seemed that she may have been closer to her late-twenties. Alice told me in a soft midlands accent that she would like to have an infinity symbol with a heart and paw print incorporated into it, with the name of her deceased dog underneath, tattooed on her forearm. As she described what she wanted, her stepmother showed me her own wrist, which was a similar design to that which Alice had described, and while showing me her tattoo said, "just something like this". Alice's stepmother adopted a maternal and protective demeanour, but in such a way that she respected Alice's independence to make her own choices, and merely wanted to support her when necessary. This was evidenced in the way in which they both interacted with each other, in a manner that reminded me of siblings who have a significant age gap, more so than mother and daughter. A design such as what Alice had requested is not something I would produce for artistic gratification, but is often expected to be requested with walk-in tattoos, as such subjects are commonly reoccurring.

I felt as though my interaction was with Alice and her stepmother as a pair, rather than Alice as an individual based on our design consultation, and so I told both that the tattoo wouldn't be a problem to produce. I asked if she had any particular requests for the style of font, and she expressed that she didn't. I photographed the tattoo of Alice's stepmothers' arm as a visual reference from which to base the design upon, and informed them both that I would need around fourty minutes to set up a workstation and produce a design. I suggested they could go and have a coffee and return afterwards, as well as stating that they were welcome to wait in the reception area if they would prefer to. Opting to return to the studio fourty minutes later, Alice and her stepmother left for a coffee while I created the design.

I had recognised the design on Alice's stepmothers' arm from seeing it on various other clients. This is often the case with smaller tattoos that can circulate on platforms such as *Pinterest* with titles that relate to the subject (e.g., 'mother and daughter tattoo' or 'infinity

symbol tattoo' etc). As the tattoo for Alice was motivated in part by it matching her stepmothers, I opted to look for the source image from which her stepmothers tattoo was produced using a 'google images' search. Numerous versions of the same design were displayed, as both graphic symbols and tattoos. I found a version of the design that most closely resembled the source image I was basing the design upon, and dragged the image into *Adobe Photoshop.*

In an attempt to avoid directly copying the design in its entirety, I adjusted the thickness of part of the forms based on my own aesthetic sensibilities, by selecting the outlines of the shapes, contracting the selection by around seven or eight pixels, feathering the edges, and deleting the appropriate selection. I then added a text box underneath the image, and found three different fonts that I felt confident tattooing, all of which were relatively simple. From my experience creating tattoos of a similar nature, clients tend to opt for cursive or italic fonts, and I went to select a font from the dropdown selection, I noticed that those at the top were the styles that had been most frequently used.

On an A4 sheet, I created three versions of the design with the different writing styles. These were copied and pasted, and adjusted slightly in size to make them larger, before the process was repeated, and the sheet printed to show to Alice on her return into the studio. The pieces were composed in rows, and each row was cut out, allowing Alice to be able to select first a size she would like to have the tattoo produced at, and then which versions of the design she would like to opt for. After preparing the design, I set up the tattooing booth, brought an additional stool for Alice's stepmother to sit on during the procedure, and came back to the front desk awaiting Alice.

Alice and her stepmother arrived with various shopping bags, and a bottle of *Lucozade*, assumingly in the knowledge that blood sugar can be lowered during the tattooing process and it is necessary to restore it. After greeting both of them, I approached the seating area and showed them the design, which they seemed very happy with. Opting for the italic font and smallest version of the design, I placed the paper cut out against the intended area of skin to be tattooed to test its suitability. Alice was very easy-going with this process, and seemed content with each step. I asked if she was sure on everything, in case she was uncomfortable to state that she would like any alterations in the sometimes-intimidating setting of a tattoo studio. I attempted to make it apparent in my tone of communication that

I was happy to make any alterations if necessary, which I absolutely was, but she told me that everything was perfect, and that she really liked the font. Her stepmother echoed these sentiments.

After making the stencil, I invited Alice and her stepmother to my tattooing booth, which is located upstairs and is independent from the other tattooing areas. I have deliberately attempted to create a space that is far removed from the traditional tattoo shop in many ways, in that the music selection is often ambient or jazz themed, and the designs and images on the walls are eclectic in source and not centred around the typical motifs of skulls, roses, demons etc. This is in order to both satisfy my personal aesthetic sensibilities, and assist in making the client feel more relaxed in a potentially new environment. As we entered the room, I invited both Alice and her stepmother to hang up their jackets, place their bags wherever they would like to, and to take a seat.

As I prepared and placed the stencil on Alice's arm, I began the 'small-talk' process that is a necessary part of the durational tattooing procedure, and often ends up being the gateway for real conversation to enter. I asked Alice if she had other tattoos. She showed me her existing pieces, which were themed around her love for music and her pets, and were a similar size to the small tattoo she was getting today. As I applied pressure to the stencil, I noticed that Alice's arm were relatively thin and seemed fragile. The necessity of touch in various aspects of the tattooist role is inherently intimate, and I felt that I wanted to be mindful of Alice's comfort level on a physical and psychological basis. As the stencil dried, I invited Alice to take a seat on the tattooing bed and get comfortable while the stencil dried for ten minutes, while I would go and get a number of needle cartridges to complete the piece. I offered both Alice and her step-mam a drink of water, to which they were thankful, but declined, before setting up the remainder of the equipment.

I returned, and asked Alice to lay face down on the tattoo bed with her arm out on a cling-film wrapped arm rest. I asked Alice if she was comfortable or wanted to adjust any aspect of how she was seated, but she seemed comfortable how she was. I informed Alice that I was about to begin the process of tattooing, and that if at any point she would like to stop for any reason, to just let me know. After positioning the printed design next to Alice's arm at the same orientation of the tattoo, I began the tattooing procedure, asking how it felt after creating the first line. She expressed that it felt fine, which I didn't doubt through what

her physiology communicated to me, as her body seemed relaxed, and her breathing steady. As I continued tattooing, I asked Alice if she was in employment or in education or anything of a similar nature. It was at this point this she told me that she was in remission from a brain tumour and had had an operation four years ago in Sweden, from which she was still recovering.

Not wanting to pry too much into this topic, I navigated around it as respectfully as possible, trying to decipher how comfortable a topic of conversation that it was for Alice and her stepmother. In a nonchalant manner, they both went on to explain how Alice, her siblings, parents, and stepparents had travelled to Sweden for six weeks to have the operation. I didn't get the impression that the topic was uncomfortable in any way to discuss, and felt more of a sense of triumph than sadness, which I found admirable. They went on to tell me how expensive the cost of living was in Sweden, and how they didn't care too much for the food there. They then turned the conversation on to me, and asked what questions such as, "what is the strangest tattoo you've ever done", to which my answer was likely unsatisfactory due to my relative lack of experience to other tattooists who have anecdotes of tattooing obscure subject matter, or intimate body parts.

As the tattooing progressed, the conversation moved back and forth through different topics, and Alice's stepmother expressed how her tattoos are imbued with meaning. Alice stated that getting this tattoo had aroused her appetite for getting further pieces. I asked what subject matter she would like, and she stated she hadn't thought of anything at that point, but likes the idea of tattoos that have a humorous element. Humour appeared to be a big part of how Alice and her family have navigated through what I can assume would have been a troublesome and traumatic period of time, and on numerous occasions Alice's stepmother would explain various 'in-jokes' that they had together to me. Alice suggested that an eyeball would be a good subject matter for a tattoo, to which her stepmother laughed and agreed enthusiastically.

When I asked why, it transpired that at some point in Alice's treatment, damage was caused to her right eye. Alice was lying face down as the tattooing commenced, however as this was explained to me, I recalled how she wore her fringe over her right eye, making it difficult to notice. Alice's stepmother explained how part of their 'banter' involved mocking each other on aspects of themselves, and she stated that occasionally they would send text messages of

eye-themed 'emojis' as part of their rapport. It seemed apparent that this mockery came from a place of love and acceptance, and was part of the healing process of dealing with an otherwise difficult permanent change in aesthetic appearance and general health. I considered how Alice's causal and easy-going nature to the minute details of the tattoo that I was producing for her was likely present as comparative to her eye, the tattoo particulars were almost superfluous.

As I was tattooing the final details of Alice's tattoo, I couldn't help but feel an emotional resonance with her spirit and a sympathy for her; sympathy that was not necessary given her gracious approach to life. I recognised how my sympathy was not exclusively to her and her triumphant story of recovery from a life-changing ordeal through positivity, a loving community, and humour, but to an almost archetypical personality type that I recognised. Her gentle, passive, and kind demeanour coupled with her midlands accent reminded me of a figure in my life who shared many common experiences of dealing with difficulties with resilience and determination. Though the biographical specifics between Alice and my connection differed, the nature of the narrative shared similarities. This connection between Alice and the figure to who she represented to me was only made upon later reflection, but felt in the moment of the experience as a gathering of emotion that was felt in my body, and expressed through the sincere presence of compassion and wish of wellbeing for Alice and her family. This feeling stuck with me

Upon completion of the tattoo, I invited Alice to take a look at it in the mirror. Before doing so, she showed her stepmother who said she thought it was "lovely", and took a photo to send to her other family members. I realised that despite the tattoo evidently being a homage to a pet, at no point during our conversation did the specifics of the tattoo meaning come up. Alice told me that she liked the tattoo, and after photographing it for my own records, I wrapped the piece in cling film. While doing so, I asked Alice and her stepmother what their plans were for the remainder of the day. Alice informed me that she had her first kick-boxing lesson later that evening, which she said she was learning as a means of self-defence and to get build up some strength. I considered how this exemplified the impression of her resilience of character that I had previously noted. I told Alice and her stepmother to take their time getting their belongings together, and that I would meet them at the front desk when they were ready and go over the aftercare procedure.

While waiting at the front desk, I annotated an aftercare slip with the key details of how to look after a tattoo, in preparation to explain vocally. As I explained the procedure to Alice, I noticed again how she had her fringe covering her eye, and felt emotionally stirred in the recognition that despite the abundance of strength and ability to deal with the problems she had been dealt, Alice must have felt a sense of self-consciousness about her appearance to try and obstruct her eye from her vision of others. This reminded me that my short experience with Alice or many other clients can only ever be telling of a limited amount the multiplicity of realities that exist in each individual's conscious experience of existence.

Later that evening, I told my partner about my experience in tattooing Alice, and I found myself getting emotional while doing so. Even in recording the experience in writing, I find the presence of emotion that cannot be categorised in the singular. It is more the amalgamation of compassion for others in recognition of the fragility and impermanence of existence, sadness surrounding the insecurities ever present in others and in myself that are culturally and sociologically ingrained, and admiration for the resilience of the human spirit to prevail. The presence of these emotions may be uniquely my own, based on my individual nature and sense of being in the World, but the experience of being personally affected by the presence of a client while tattooing is not just unique to me.

Tattooing is a medium through which many people express what they deem significant. Combined with the durational and thus conversational nature of conduct, many clients open up about their lives and share aspects of themselves with the tattooist. The way in which that affects the tattooist can vary based on how their own personal baggage, with examples such as my account of tattooing Alice illustrating how factors such as client demeanour and a small amount of contextual background information can initiate an emotional response. In a more direct example, I have been in the studio when some of friends/colleagues have produced memorial tattoos, and have been in tears after the client leaves the studio. This autoethnographic is an attempt to illustrate how tattoos are produced on humans, by humans, and as such require the presence of a person, not just a practitioner. In counselling, the role of a supervisor is to assist the counsellor in dealing with the various issues that are experienced as a role of working with individuals. Perhaps a similar system would be valuable for the occupational health of the tattooist.

E.6 KACPER (02/2020)

Kacper had come into the studio on a day in which I wasn't working prior to our meeting and was suggested to book in with me for the tattoo style he wanted. He had returned on a day on which he was informed I'd be around, and asked the desk staff to speak to me to find out if I was happy to produce the tattoo he desired. As I was summoned to towards the desk to arrange a booking, I recognised the person who Kacper was with as Maček; an existing client of another tattooist working in the studio. I greeted both Maček and Kacper and asked how I could help. Maček and Kacper are of Polish origin, and while Maček is fluent in English, Kacper could communicate sufficiently for basic interactions, but was less able to speak as fluently as Maček. Maček had introduced Kacper to the studio as a reputable place to get a tattoo, and accompanied him to assist in making the booking and translating any information that was beyond Kacpers understanding.

Kacper explained to me that his English is limited, and that Maček would communicate for him for the most part. Maček showed me an image of a tattoo on a phone screen of a tattoo. The tattoo was on the chest area, in black ink exclusively, and in a 'sketchy' style. The style shared commonalities with my own, which is why I was suggested as the tattooist. The subject matter was a pair of wings that went down onto the chest area, with the words "fuck alcohol" incorporated into the design. It was explained that the text was not wanted, but the subject matter and something similar in style were desired. The explanation process was a combination of direct communication with Kacper, and occasionally Maček would interpret what I was saying, to which Kacper would respond, and Maček translate back to me. I tried at all times to communicate to both Maček and Kacper, through direction of my eye gaze and bodily positioning towards both of them.

Kacper explained that he would also like an existing tattoo that he has to be covered, which he pulled down the collar of his t-shirt to reveal to me. The tattoo was underneath his right collarbone and was text that read "15.05.1973 – 16.07.2003". It was explained to me that this date was incorrect, and that the text should have read "14.05.1973 – 16.07.2003". The significance of the date was not revealed, assumingly as it was not directly relevant to the line of inquiry Kacper was making, however Maček explained to me it was desired to have date incorporated into the piece in another way. I suggested that we could incorporate it into the piece and have the text be in a similar style to the tattoo, rather than similar to

Kacpers existing style of text tattoo. Kacper expressed enthusiasm with this idea, or at least I interpreted his wide eyes and agreeable disposition as enthusiasm. I also explained that we wouldn't be able to fully cover the existing tattoo due to the negative space that would be in his requested design, but we could obscure it from being obvious. Kacper said that he understood, and his body language/response suggested to me that he had anticipated that would be the case anyway.

I advised that the tattoo would take multiple sittings and warned that the area of the body is particularly painful. I made a particular effort to clarify Kacper understood this by repeating it a few times, as he was keen on sitting for a full day for the first session at the set discounted rate of £250, which is still required if the client chooses the end the session early. This is a system set by many studios, as the tattooist Is often unable to find a client should the client they are booked to tattoo for a full day end the session early, and thus potential earnings are lost. I explained that we would tattoo as much as possible in the day, and book another session to finish it off based on how many hours are forecast. I suggested a total capped cost of the tattoo at £360; this was a maximum price, and stated to allow sufficient time to complete the tattoo to a high quality, with the understanding that it would likely take less time than the price suggests and thus be priced accordingly. Kacper and Maček appeared to both be happy with all that was discussed. After finding a suitable date to complete the tattoo, I requested a £100 non-refundable deposit to secure the time slot. This is common practice within many studios, and prevents any loss from having spent time on designs for clients that don't end up being tattooed due to the client absence.

After signing a form stating that he agreed with all the terms outlined, and Maček translating the terms when necessary, Kacper handed me a handful of £20 notes. I can't recall the specific value, but I noticed that there was far more than £100 which is all I needed to take from him, so I politely returned the excess, attempting to light-heartedly explain that he didn't need to leave as great a deposit as he handed over in a such a way that would not embarrass him. I noticed that Kacper had no other visible tattoos other than what he had shown me, and considered that he was likely nervous on two accounts; the first being organising an experience that was both unfamiliar, painful, and potentially emotionally evocative, and the second being that he is in an environment in which he could not fluently communicate in a culture different to what he was used to. I felt a strong desire to ensure

that he was comfortable and understood everything I had said, which I had to contend with while also not patronising him by over explaining myself.

After securing the appointment and writing the details on an appointment card, I asked that Kacper email me the reference image, and the text that he would like added to the design, for me to prepare in advance of his appointment. A few days later, I received an email with all of the relevant information, from which I prepared the design. As the design was of two wings, I sourced various images of birds such as eagles with fully spread wings, and put them onto photoshop together as a reference sheet, alongside the tattoo that was shown to me as a source image. This sheet was then printed at A4 size, and used as a series of reference images to create a pencil sketch of a wing in a style that was similar enough to Kacpers desired style, but distinct enough to not be plagiarised.

It was considered that only one wing would be necessary to draw as the design could be replicated and flipped, with deviations being made from the stencil in the actual tattooing procedure. This pencil sketch was then traced with a calligraphy-nibbed fine liner and tracing paper, before being scanned and placed into *Adobe Photoshop*, were it was flipped and edited slightly to make it not one-hundred percent symmetrical and appear more natural. The finished wing design composite was then printed, and text drawn in a similar style to the image added in pencil onto the printout. This was then traced in a similar fashion to the above, before an alternative text option was also created. This was to give Kacper more options in his design choice. Both texts were scanned into the computer and placed into the file containing the wing design, and three variations of placement were created.

On the appointment day, Kacper arrived alone, without Maček, who he told me was working that day. After he had completed a consent form, I showed Kacper the design options, from which he selected the version I personally favoured also. I printed the design at various sizes, and asked Kacper to follow me up the stairs where we could assess what size was the best fit for his chest. In most circumstances, the sizing process is completed while the client is in the waiting area, but as in this case it would require Kacper to remove his t-shirt, I thought it more respectful to allow him more privacy. As we walked up the stairs, Kacper reminded me in an almost apologetic tone that his English was limited. I assured him that it was not a problem, and that as long as he could inform me if he needed to stop at any point and let me know he was OK, then there were no issues. While shaving Kacpers chest and applying

the stencil, I found that Kacpers English was far better than he seemed to believe, as we were able to engage in general small-talk. Prior to his appointment, I was anxious that I would struggle with applying the stencil and having it cover up Kacpers existing tattoo effectively, but I didn't want to communicate this to him in fear of appearing inept.

Kacper explained to me that he was from Gdansk in Poland, and had been in the UK for six months working in IT. While chatting with clients, I often hope to connect in some way and share something about myself as a means of making them more comfortable and the space more open, and so I told Kacper that I had a good friend who was from Gdansk, who had taught me some basic phrases. Kacper appeared to be very surprised and delighted by this, which was expressed through his laughter, as I (no doubt badly) spoke the three phrases that I could recall. The laughter was loud in such a way that suggested more of the release of tension in an uncomfortable situation, more so than the expression of humour. Kacper translated each one into English after I said it, and appeared more comfortable immediately after such an exchange. I couldn't explain in logical terms the reason why, but I couldn't help but immediately like and care for Kacper, in a similar fashion to how I might for a younger brother, despite the age gap not being particularly wide. Perhaps the delta between cultural contexts made me perceive Kacper as more vulnerable than he actually was, and I felt compelled to try to connect with him.

As the stencil dried, I asked Kacper if he had eaten anything in preparation for the appointment as advised. He told he had eaten four sandwiches, holding up four of his fingers while doing so, and laughing in the acknowledgement that this was a hearty-sized breakfast in preparation for the tattooing. He then pointed to the printed design, and explained that the date on the design was the date of his mother's birth and death. I told him that I was sorry to hear of his loss, and he convincingly assured me that it was OK; it was convincing in that his eyes did not seem to indicate any shift in emotion in the topic being introduced from when we were discussing sandwiches, however it was apparent it was still significant to him, or no date would be necessary to add to the design he was getting tattooed. The recognition of the memorial nature of the tattoo, alongside the compassion and empathy I already felt towards Kacper as a Polish person living in a city that has historically not been very tolerant of those from outside of even its region, never mind country, made me feel additionally responsible to ensuring a positive experience for Kacper.

After setting up the basic materials and finding a suitable position for the tattooing procedure, in which I could ensure a tight stretch of the skin, and Kacper could stay still for a prolonged period of time, the tattooing procedure began. This started with the right-hand side of the tattoo which was where the existing tattoo was already, with the decision for doing so being based on the importance of getting the cover-up side correct more so than the non-tattooed side, and the recognition that the stencil will inevitably fade as the procedure continues making the accuracy to printed design increasingly more difficult. After creating the first line of the tattoo, I could sense Kacpers discomfort in the tension of his body and rigidity of posture. I offered him some kitchen roll to have in his hands, to reduce the sweat that was naturally coming from his palms. I asked if he was okay, and he insisted he was fine. At this point, he was not moving frequently as can often be the case when a client is in pain, and he sat very well. Kacper asked me when he could next go to the gym, and I asked if he trained with weights, or cardio. With a straight face and matter-of-fact tone, he expressed, "cardio, because I am fat", which I did not feel was particularly true, and felt a sadness in that Kacper saw himself this way and stated so in such an objective manner. His expression of disdain towards his body image reminded me of myself and my life-long issues with bodyweight and eating disorders, and of my younger brother who has similar issues. I felt I wanted to make peace with his insecurity in the way I am unable to do for myself, but I recognised that this was not appropriate. I told him that cardio was fine, but to avoid weights as stretching the areas close to the tattoo may irritate it and interrupt the healing.

Tattooing Kacper was my first time tattooing a chest, and I found that I had to adjust from seated to standing at various points to create a sufficient stretch of the skin. In doing so, I found myself in unnatural positions that made me feel very physically uncomfortable, but were necessary to ensure the line quality that was required. I found this particularly stressful, as in addition to the physical pain I was causing Kacper, I was also experiencing my own pain, and found that the stencil was fading due to the natural sweating of Kacper through the painful procedure. At this point, I committed to tattooing the most crucial lines to ensure the design was rendered in its intended shape, valuing the more gestural shading lines lesser in specificity of replication from the printed design than the core shape of the wing. I also ensured that I tattooed the date of death before the stencil faded, given the significance of this part of the tattoo.

After completing the first part of the basic shape of the right-hand side of the tattoo, I asked Kacper to stand off the massage bed, and lay down on the opposite side of it so I could tattoo the left side of his body. The same procedure was followed, with slightly more confidence from having undertaken tattooing the right-hand side, but also exhaustion in having done so. Kacpers breathing was becoming increasingly unsteady as the tattooing procedure commenced, and when I occasionally looked at his face I noticed that he was squinting. I asked at regular intervals if he was okay, which he assured me he was, and I insisted that I get him a drink of water as I noticed a white deposit around the corners of his mouth and I worried that he may be dehydrated. After completing the second outlining stage of the tattoo, I suggested that we take a lunch break as it was around 1pm, and the session was set to end at 5pm. After cleaning it with green soap (a combination of witch hazel and aloe vera antiseptic soap) I wrapped Kacpers tattoo in cling-film, and asked him if twenty-five minutes would be a sufficient lunch break. I told him he could have longer if he liked, however he stated that twenty-five minutes was fine as he had prepared more sandwiches.

As there is no food allowed in the tattooing areas, I asked Kacper if he could eat in the waiting area. The morning of the appointment I had had an argument with my partner, which by the time I arrived at work was resolved, however in my distraction I had forgot my lunch. I left the studio to get some lunch, and on my return noticed a few of my colleagues outside the studio smoking cigarettes and chatting, while Kacper was stood alone with his vaporiser pen, looking down at his phone. As a non-smoker, I felt that I wanted to ask my colleagues to attempt to engage with him, but I considered how it was not appropriate or reasonable, or possibly necessary to do so, and how if I were in the equivalent scenario I would likely prefer to be alone. Despite this consideration, I couldn't help but feel that I wanted Kacper to not be isolated. I ate my lunch and had a one-cup French press of coffee brewing while I did so. Kacper returned inside of the studio, and took a seat on the couch a little further away while typing on his phone. After finishing my salad, I pressed the coffee, and with the French press in hand to indicate what I was asking visually, I approached Kacper and asked if he would like to have half of my coffee. He took a moment, before saying that he would, and I handed him half a paper cup of black coffee, pointing out where the milk and sugar was kept should he need any. After cleaning the press, I invited Kacper back upstairs to commence with the tattooing.

The remainder of the tattoo involved relining areas, saturating the lines to create a varied line weight, and adding a heavy amount of detail to suggest feathers. I asked Kacper if he could position himself the way in which we started, suggesting that we would start with the right-hand side first. I removed the cling film from Kacper that was wrapped around his shoulders and chest, wiped down the bodily fluids that had naturally occurred in the time that the tattoo was wrapped, and began the tattooing process. As I made the first mark, I noticed a much more severe and obvious sense of discomfort from Kacper. I tried to continue with conversation, and asked Kacper what sandwich filling he had, to which he told me was a combination of "cheese, ham, and ketchup...but Polish ketchup!"—he expressed this with pride and enthusiasm, pointing as he did so to indicate the distinction from British ketchup. Despite the enthusiasm, I could see he was in a lot of pain, and choose not to pursue conversation in fear of being an additional irritant to the needles I was inserting into his already traumatised skin. As I tattooed, I noticed that the pigment was not appearing to go into his skin at a dark enough saturation. I questioned multiple parts of my practice. I stopped to refill my ink pots with black ink despite them being over half-way filled, in the assumption that the frequent moving from the body to the ink caps of the needle may have resulted in watering the ink in the pot down with the blood that was on the needle. This was not sufficient, and the lines were still not going into the skin as I required them to.

I adjusted my needle cartridge, thinking that perhaps there were faults with the cartridge I was using, but this did not appear to be the case. I adjusted the voltage that the machine was running at, sweating and feeling flustered while doing so, worrying that the voltage could be high enough to be risky and contemplating my options. When this didn't seem successful, I switched to a more familiar machine, thinking that perhaps the 'drive bar' that makes the needle go in and out was not machine was not sufficiently engaging. While this helped to some extent, I still found that every line I produced was causing a lot of bleeding and evidently a lot of pain to Kacper, but not delivering the results. I attempted adjusting how I had Kacper positioned, and in what was no doubt apparent, adapted my own standing/seating position in numerous ways in a very flustered fashion. I did not vocalise any of my concerns, however my body temperature, redness of tone, and constant adjustment no doubt communicated my distress more lucidly than any vocal expression would be able to.

After much frustration, the tattooing began to go the way that I needed it to more so than it had previously. As I glanced up at Kacper, I noticed how much pain he was in, which was

evident with the movement he was making with his hands, feet, and legs. I continued to ask him if he was okay or if he wanted to stop for a break, but felt that if I asked him a further time it could irritate him. I considered how in addition to tattooing him successfully, I also had to attempt to not make him aware of how much I was struggling with the procedure, both on a material and a non-material level. I knew I would have failed in disguising my distress, but also recognised that how I felt will have been almost irrelevant to Kacper, who was undergoing far more of a difficult time than I was on a physical level at minimum. This requirement to maintain professionalism in difficult situations contrasted the part of my role I had considered in the past of being vulnerable and open with clients to allow them to feel comfortable, and I recognised I was required to exercise a degree of constraint that I had failed to demonstrate with Kacper.

The procedure commenced, with Kacpers movements resulting from the intensity of the pain making it increasingly difficult to execute materially. I also felt incredibly distressed at having to be repeatedly engraving a line in a surface that was evidently causing agony, which was clearly communicated somatically. Each baby wipe that I used to wipe away the excess ink appeared to be a lot more red than it was black, making the process feel like a torture procedure more than the positive experience that I aspire for each of my clients to have.

I felt conflicted knowing I had to continue as part of my occupation; knowing that I was causing such intense pain for a client who I already felt empathetically connected to through his vulnerability; knowing that I had to deliver a certain quality of output that I didn't feel I could achieve the way I had thought I was capable of previously; knowing that Kacper would have to pay me a sizeable sum of money in exchange for what he had to suffer, with what I thought would be results he would be unhappy with; knowing that the studio expected to make their half of the money from the tattoo total cost; Knowing that the studios reputation was carried in part through me; knowing that the studio was recommended to Kacper by a trust worthy friend for its internationally award-winning reputation, to be what I felt was let down, while in a foreign country in which connections were limited; knowing that I had made a sizeable and permanent mark on Kacper as a young man of twenty-one years of age, when taste is subject to change, and knowing that the tattoo I had produced was covering a one he was already unhappy with—a tattoo that was in honour of his deceased mother with wings representing her angelic presence in Kacpers life. While finishing the details of the right-hand wing, I considered if I was capable of being a tattooist, if experiences such as this

are representative of the future of my career.

The first wing was complete by around 4pm, when I asked Kacper if he wanted to continue and make a start of the right-hand side, or if he would prefer to stop for the day for a reduced price, and continue another day to finish it off. It is discouraged to offer a reduce price in the studio as they also lose out, however I was willing to 'take the hit' myself financially to stop having to continue causing the trauma I had been commissioned to any longer while in the state of mind that I was. I knew that I absolutely wanted to stop at this point, but Kacper was keen to continue after having a toilet break. I wrapped Kacper up in cling film as he went to the toilet, and while he was gone I tried to hold myself together through drinking cold water, stretching, and taking deep breaths. When Kacper returned, he used a translation feature on his phone to ask questions regarding continuing on the tattoo, suggesting that he might prefer to stop at this point. I explained that we would have to wait four weeks for the tattoo to heal, but could finish it one go then. Kacper opted to take this option.

After knowing the tattooing was finished, I told Kacper we could properly clean down his tattoo and he could see it in the mirror. I used green soap to get rid of any excess ink and blood, and walked Kacper to the mirror. He expressed that he liked how the tattoo looked, however I sensed that he was perhaps being polite. I wasn't one-hundred percent certain if this was reflective of my own state of mind and thus not true, or if Kacper perhaps just didn't seem as enthusiastic because he was exhausted from all the pain that had been caused. I photographed the tattoo , and while wrapping him up with cling film as a protective layer from outside debris, I asked again if he was happy with the tattoo, and he said yes in a way that was more convincingly enthusiastic. I was relieved by this, but also felt selfish for wanting him to make me feel better after having caused so much pain myself to him. I told Kacper to take as long as he needed to get his possessions together, and that I would meet him at the studio desk downstairs when he was ready, where I would prepare an aftercare information sheet.

As Kacper approached the front desk, we realised that he could not book his next appointment at this point as he didn't have his work rota. I advised Kacper to simply email me when he knew of his availability, and that we would find an appointment that suited him from there. I charged Kacper £200 rather £250, and was not questioned by the studio for

doing so. I thanked Kacper for getting tattooed by me, desperately wanting to express my emotional resonance with him, while knowing that I was unable to do so. Kacper thanked me, said goodbye, and left the studio to purchase an aftercare product prior to going home.

Later that evening when approaching the front door of my one-bedroom flat where I live with my partner, I felt an intense build-up of emotion that increased in severity in syncopation with the turn of my key in the door. My partner said hello from the kitchen, to which I replied while entering the bedroom to hang up my jacket. She came into the room, looked at me, and asked if I was okay. As I went to explain I burst into tears, explaining the experience to her. She assured me that the tattoo looked good, and was supportive and empathetic to the experience. After some discussion, she suggested that I email Kacper and make sure that he thoroughly understood the aftercare instruction with the language barrier being in place, and also checking that he is happy with everything—which I did. I didn't hear back from Kacper until the following day, however he assured me understood everything and was keen to come into the studio to get the piece finished soon.

When telling my colleagues of the experience the following day, they expressed that, "days like that will happen", and told me that I can make an excuse ask them to come to the room in which I work to see if they are able to help in any way. They had recognised the desire to not reveal any insecurity to a client to maintain a demeanour of professionalism and not worry the client, and acknowledged that this is part of the experience of the role of a tattooist. They also consoled me by explaining that the chest is an area that many have struggled with until they have over seven years of experience, and that often in situations like the one I described, the tattoo is better than the practitioner thinks it is.

I showed my colleagues a photo of Kacpers tattoo at the point we got to, and they told me they thought it worked well and was a good piece. I trusted their sincerity and was appreciative to be part of such a community of practice. We then went on to discuss how there is a void in the acknowledgement of these aspects of tattooing as a professional creative industry in favour of the more glamorous representations of the medium. This conversation echoed the importance of recording such experiences, representing the insecurities, concerns, and uncertainties in a reflective and confessional manner, in order to gain an authentic understanding of what the past three years have taught me is a layered and complex practice.

APPENDIX F: COMMUNICATION WITH EXTERNAL SCHOLARS

Appendix F contains correspondence with external scholars that has had impact on this research.

F.1 shows email communication between post-punk specialist Simon Reynolds, which aided the terminology ascribed to the tattooing style developed through the research (see Section 5.4, p.190).

B.2 shows some correspondence with the *Twitter* account for *The International Conference of Autoethnography*, where the research was presented in 2019 (see Appendix C.1, p.467). This has been included to verify the validity of the autoethnographic writings produced, through positive encouragement from specialists.

F.1 EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH SIMON REYNOLDS

Correspondence between 30/09/2020 and 8/10/2020

Re: Post Punk Tattooing

Adam McDade <bf46fu@student.sunderland.ac.uk>
Mon 05/10/2020 16:15
To: Simon Reynolds <simonreynoldswriter@gmail.com>
Hi Simon,

Apologies for not replying sooner! I thought I had, but it turns out I hadn't pressed send!

Thanks so much again for taking the time to feedback to me on your thoughts about this. I think while it might be possible for me to draw parallels between the tattooing style and post-punk sensibilities — your points about the imagery associated with post-punk having specific characteristics are necessary for me to be aware of. I'm going to try and generate a new term that isn't associated with a visual culture specifically.

Your ideas about a 'macro-genre' seem very useful in establishing a better understanding of this messy business of classification! Another example of macro-managing from literature could be the Beat Generation I suppose. Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs writings are so different to each other, but they were part of the same cultural history. I'm sure there are countless examples of other artforms where this is the case too — and it's absolutely the case for tattooing styles! If you publish on this topic, please let me know, as I'm sure I could reference it in my future work as a very useful terminology.

Thanks so much again for engaging with me, I really do appreciate it and its beenvery helpful. If you change your mind about the artwork, just let me know!

Adam

From: Simon Reynolds <simonreynoldswriter@gmail.com>
Sent: 01 October 2020 19:49
To: Adam McDade <bf46fu@student.sunderland.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: Post Punk Tattooing

hi Adam

it was a pleasure, i don't often get such interesting, left-field questions.

i don't want to discourage from using the term postpunk if you feel it fits what you're doing

"take influence from artists and illustrators (rather than tattooing exclusively)" certainly parallels to some extent the way that postpunk musicians were often inspired by things that were outside the rock tradition - art movements, literary movements, etc

>not doing lines too close together, maintaining an aspect of simplicity).

it's interesting that this is a hallmark of tattooing because as my (uninformed!) blog comment indicates, i'd thought it was the opposite - that most tattoos were, if not baroque, then full of intricate detail and curlicues.

>post-punk is difficult to put into a genre classification stylistically

yeah this is the essence, and what i said later (during interviews around Rip It Up - infuriatingly often things become clearest after the book has gone to print!) postpunk wasn't really a genre but a possibility space within which new genres formed (i managed to squeeze this idea into Totally Wired the follow up companion book of Q/A transcripts)

recently i've been thinking about genres and wondered if the term 'macro-genre' is a way of describing these kind of possibility spaces. so, an area of music (or could be any other form of art, but let's stick with music) where the coherence of it as a field coheres not around sonic properties but other ones - could be ideology, could be political-social values, it could even be geographic.

so for instance this thing i've talked about for years, the hardcore continuum (a specifically UK strand within rave / club culture, linked to pirate radio strongly - things like jungle, UK garage, grime), would be better understood as a macro-genre, where the coherence of it as a field is a mixture of demographics, geography

(London centric but not exclusively limited to the city), means of transmission (pirate radio, dubplates etc), certain sets of rituals (rewinds, MCing over the DJing, etc) and perhaps sonic fixations (bass, breaks or broken rhythms). but that would explain why across the history of the hardcore continuum, you have just a wide range of sounds, b.p.m.s, etc etc. the coherence of it lies elsewhere than the purely musical .

so postpunk is similar – you have everything from Throbbing Gristle to Wire to the Slits to Echo and the Bunnymen , an absurd range of sounds really – what coheres it is much more vague principles, values, attitudes, and history as well – the start point of circa 78 (although of course some of the groups were active prior to punk, but they only got attention or even the possibility of an audience during postpunk. (the same applies to punk itself – many of the participants had been doing stuff with music for years before 1976.)

i suppose postpunk *has* become a genre now, through the fixing of its sound. there are replicable sonic characteristics that can be carried on , like a tradition.

anyway good chatting. that's kind of you to offer an art print, i don't want to put you to the trouble

good luck with your work

Simon

On Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 12:10 AM Adam McDade <bf46fu@student.sunderland.ac.uk> wrote:
> Hi Simon,
>
> Thank you so much for taking the time to respond to me in such a considered way, i really appreciate it.
>
> I understand what you mean about the visual language that is historically associated with post-punk being suggestive of a set of key characteristics. I would certainly see yourself as the authority on this, and so I'll think of an alternative term. Thank you so much for your advice!
>
> I suppose the reason I had made the link between the style of my tattooing and post punk is more to do with this notion of breaking away from cultural clichés, incorporation of influences from broader movements, and exploration of form. Tattooing typically values clean, consistent, unbroken lines, references imagery and tropes from within its culture, and is drawn to look like a tattoo. The work I am trying to do aims to preserve the energy of a sketch and retain qualities that would be conventionally omitted, take influence from artists and illustrators (rather than tattooing exclusively), while maintaining the material constraints that the medium imposes, and respecting them (not doing lines too close together, maintaining an aspect of simplicity).
>
> My thinking was that post-punk is difficult to put into a genre classification stylistically, but it's bound by this overarching theme. I was proposing to apply that theme and the framework that unites these bands that may sound so stylistically diverse, into a visual context.
>
> Thank you for sharing your blog excerpt! Interestingly, some tattooists do take influence from broader design movement's, but it's certainly more difficult to come across. The tattooist style is at least to some degree, informed by marketplace demand. I guess historically in recent decades, tattooing as a medium hasn't typically appealed to audiences who are as interested in these broader design movement's, so you'll have seen less. The marketplace is certainly more broad now than it ever has been though, so you'll find a variety of work out there. I can send you some links, if this is of interest.
>
> Thanks so much again for your response and for looking at my work! I really appreciate it. If you would like an art print as a thanks, just let me know and I will send one your way!
>
> Thanks again!
>
> Adam
>
>
> On 30 Sep 2020 20:49, Simon Reynolds <simonreynoldswriter@gmail.com> wrote:
>> hi Adam

well i get asked a lot of questions (often from people doing their thesis or dissertation or what have you) but never had a set questions like this before!

i probably don't really know enough about the aesthetics and history of design in tattooing to offer much useful thoughts

but looking at your work, i don't think the word 'post-punk' would spring to my mind if you hadn't raised the idea

i tend to think of postpunk graphic design (and new wave graphic design generally) in terms of angularity, geometric patterns, blocs of primary color (with a fixation of very inorganic pinks and yellows).

later as it gets into Goth you get different aesthetic, more romantic / macabre / intricately detailed etc. but although Goth comes out of postpunk in a historical sense, it's really its own entity. much more romantic / magick oriented.

same really applies to industrial culture – it comes out postpunk initially but then goes into the magick / ritual etc zone and becomes its own thing.

funnily enough long ago i did once do a very short blogpost about tattooing (from a very uninformed perspective) triggered by looking through a magazine called Ink at my local supermarket

"you hardly ever see a tat that is modernist/minimal in design... a Peter Saville type tat, a Neville Brody type tat... tattoos tend to be ornate, all filigree and curvilinearity and intricate detail... even the small tasteful inconspicuous tats you see, they're hardly ever stark, angular, geometric... now is this because of the nature of the human body surface? modernist/minimalist wouldn't work because the skin surface isn't flat, but that's not a problem with more frilly-curvy designs? "

but perhaps i am being too literal, in bringing up postpunk graphic design, whereas you are seeing more general parallels between the music / overall aesthetics and your tattooing. although a lot of postpunk actually *sounded* angular, geometric, minimal, stark, etc etc

interesting work though – i like the eyes and mouth on the strange curved 30 (i think that's what is is, anyway), and the hedgehog, and apple core / kitten one.

why don't you try coining a completely new term if you can?

all best
Simon

On Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 8:59 AM Adam McDade <bf46fu@student.sunderland.ac.uk> wrote:

Hi Simon,

I hope you are well, and that you don't mind me reaching out to you!

I'm a practice-based PhD student in Design, at the University of Sunderland. My research is about tattooing, and I'm also a tattooist. As part of my research I've been documenting how my stylistic approach with tattooing as a medium has developed, and I have been encouraged to create a term for it. I believe 'post-punk' may suitably describe the tattoo style, and so of course, your work came to mind!

I'm emailing you to ask, if you would be so kind, if you could perhaps advise on if you think I am on the right lines in utilising the term, to describe the style. You can see visual examples of my most recent work here.

The parallels I draw between post punk and the tattoo style are based on the following:

Aesthetic qualities: In the same way that post-punk may retain elements of punk, such as energy and 'raw-ness', the tattoo style aims to possess such qualities through its looseness of line quality, and simple graphic quality.

Subversion of tradition: The incorporation of external influences into post-punk punk that otherwise rejected is visibly apparent in the tattoo style, in which gestural marks and mixed line weights are celebrated in the design, that would conventionally not be in tattoo traditions.

Ethos: The tattoo style retains the characteristics that make tattoos materially work (line spacing, negative space, etc), and still look like tattoos (rather than other styles that look like photographs or watercolours, etc), but is influenced by the visual properties of an illustration. This may be comparable to the way in which post-punk valued the ethos of punk but approached it in an alternative way.

Apologies for taking up your time in asking for your thoughts on this, and no problem at all if you aren't able to respond to me. I just wanted to reach out to hopefully get your thoughts on if you think it would be appropriate for me to use the term 'post-punk', given your expertise on the subject.

Thanks so much in advance,

Adam McDade.

www.adammcdade.weebly.com

Tweet sent on 12/02/2020