

INK

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People

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The art of tattooing is an ancient one. According to SmithsonianMag.com, the earliest evidence of tattoos we have now comes from the famous Iceman; who was discovered, mummified in ice, hence the name, in 1991. In addition, tattooing is a part of many cultures and traditions - including the Ancient Egyptians, the Maori tribes and the Yakuza-clans.

“Think before you ink” is a common saying among tattoo enthusiasts. Jordan Daniel Nel is an award-winning tattoo artist who has been running Sorry Mom Tattoo Art Studio in Lonehill since 2014. He advises people to think about what they would like to get tattooed and how big, where they would like to get the tattoo done, whether or not they would like to add onto it in the future - and also whether or not the design will still appeal to you ten years from now. “Fashion changes, but tattoos last a lifetime, so think carefully.” Also consider if you would need to keep the tattoo covered for work purposes.

“If you choose a design out of a book or off the internet, there’s a good chance that someone out there will have the same tattoo as you.” A custom design might take weeks to prepare, but it can be worth it if you would like a one-of-a-kind piece. “Considering it’s going to be on your body for a lifetime, it should be worth thinking about.”

The right studio

It might seem like a good idea to go to the nearest tattoo place near you, walk in, pick a design and get tattooed - because, hey, they’ve got a special offer on R100 tattoos. Don’t! Daniel says you should do your research first. “Does the studio have the correct sterilizing equipment and dispose of medical waste correctly? Is the studio well lit, and do you feel comfortable in the studio environment?” Also check online reviews and ask to see the artist’s previous work - can they put you in touch with happy clients and are they registered with any counsels? “Don’t be afraid to ask questions. If you’re satisfied with all of the above, you probably have yourself a decent place to get tattooed.”

“Scratchers”: Why you shouldn’t buy a tattoo kit

Daniel’s studio has seen a fair amount of desperately needed cover-up work - some that range from backyard tattoo artists (referred to as “scratchers”) to people who just bought a tattoo kit for R2 000 and under before setting up shop. “Some 'tattoo artists' buy cheap tattoo kits online and make work for us to fix. Please stop this.”

Proper tattoo equipment, says Daniel, takes a professional to operate. “Professional tattoo equipment is expensive and takes a professional - we commit our lives to learning how to do what we do.” Generally, cheap tattoo kits are just that. “These should only ever be used for training and never put to actual skin.”

It’s more than just a bad tattoo - it’s a huge risk of infection and diseases like Hepatitis or HIV. “Anyone who thinks that buying a kit online and learning how to tattoo in two weeks can not in any terms call themselves a professional, and you can almost be sure they are falling short on hygiene standards too. ”

The most tattooed man in the world

Guinnessworldrecords.com lists the current most tattooed man in the world as Lucky Diamond Rich, who has everything tattooed including his eyelids, into his ears and his gums - but wait, does that include...? We're not sure we want to know!

Celeb tattoos: The good, the bad and the painful

- Johnny Depp is no stranger to regretful tattoos! During his relationship with actress Winona Ryder, he had WINONA FOREVER inked on his arm. After the breakup, he had it touched up to something with a bit more bite: A tattoo proclaiming WINO FOREVER. Ouch!
- Brad Pitt had Angelina Jolie's pen-doodle on his back immortalized in ink - we wonder if Jennifer Aniston ever took a pen to Brad Pitt?
- Rock star Ozzy Osbourne's tattoos are legendary, and according to his autobiography I AM OZZY they include OZZY on his knuckles, the word "thanks" on his left hand palm and smiley faces on his knees, which he did himself as a teenager when he was feeling depressed.
- Die Antwoord member Ninja has the words "Wat Kyk Jy?" tattooed on his member. We found a proud picture on Google, and suggest that you take our word for it!

SIDESHOW

Candice Simmons runs Sideshow Tattoos in Hartbeespoort, North-West. After watching her husband take designs from drawing to skin-deep ink, she was inspired to hone the tattoo gun herself. Over the years, she's filled her empty canvas with more than fifty tattoos (after that, she's stopped counting!), including a Cheshire cat on her upper arm, a skull and crossbones on her shoulder and a fiery she-devil on her leg.

For those who are looking to get their first tattoo, she recommends that they find a tattoo artist whose style and general vibe works for them, and to relax! "Pain is dependant on person to person." Candice says that those who come in with emotional baggage also seem to find the tattoo process to be cathartic, and leave saying they felt little to no pain.

When it comes to her own client's comfort, she keeps them talking during the session, which can last from four to six hours for a decent-sized piece. Her tattoo shop is also known for its legendary playlist, which keeps rock hits cranked. This, clients note, manage to chill them out and get their feet moving while the buzz of the needle fades into the background...

Her job doesn't come without judgement, and she has experienced severe discrimination by conservatives.

Tattoos are meaningful, and Candice says that she's encountered people who fill up their skin by saying too much as well as backyard tattoo artists who do sub-par work. In both cases, those with tattoos that look like a five-year old did it have to go to professionals like Candice and Jordan to fix them.