

THE TAIL OF THE DRAGON & A SKUNK NAMED STINKY

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THE TATTOO MAGAZINE • OCTOBER 2008

Tattoos & Blues in TUCSON

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Display Until November 12, 2008

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SKIN CITY—THE ART OF THE TATTOO * TATTOO TATTLER * THE MAKING OF A COVER
AT THE TAIL OF THE DRAGON: THE VANISHING TATTOOS OF CHINA'S LI PEOPLE
TATTOO TREASURES WITH DANA BRUNSON * VALI MYERS—A MEMOIR * BIG 10 QUESTIONS

Two of the Skin City's contributing artists, Nick Bubash and John Wyatt.



SKIN CITY— THE ART OF THE TATTOO

BY MATTY JANKOWSKI WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN WYATT



Artwork from Don Ed Hardy's Eyecon series.

From its humble beginnings alongside a collection of folk art and oddities in a New York City brownstone to tattoo flash hanging on gallery walls in prestigious galleries the world over, it is only recently, perhaps within the last ten years, that skin art has become recognized as fine art. The latest example of this growth, this transformation, if you will, was the October 2007 exhibit at The Arts Center in St. Petersburg, Florida. Dedicated to promoting the arts and enriching the community for over forty years, this forward-looking institution recently presented a somewhat unconventional vision, when compared to previous exhibitions on the topic. In the past, most shows of tattoo art featured colorful collections of flash art,

paintings of different kinds and various anthropological artifacts. Entitled Skin City—The Art of the Tattoo, this refreshing collection broke fresh ground by featuring, among other displays, massive 3D sculptures and expansive, site-specific,



Outside The Arts Center in St. Petersburg, Florida.

environmental artworks in wood, ceramics and non-traditional mixed media. The theme was further expanded with renderings in oils, prints, a hand-painted book comprised of ninety original works of art four feet tall and

spanning sixteen feet, plus photo essays paired with intimate statements by heavily tattooed individuals reflecting on the place body art has filled in their lives. It was almost surreal to drink in the tattoo experience on such a totally new level.

SKIN CITY—THE ART OF THE TATTOO

In response to the gallery world's recent trend toward art of the street—graffiti, hip hop, cartoons, etc.—the exhibition attempted to document the transformation of tattoo into a thriving vehicle of visual expression, while noting the influence of tattoo designs among contemporary artists and shedding light into the creative lives of working practitioners of body art.

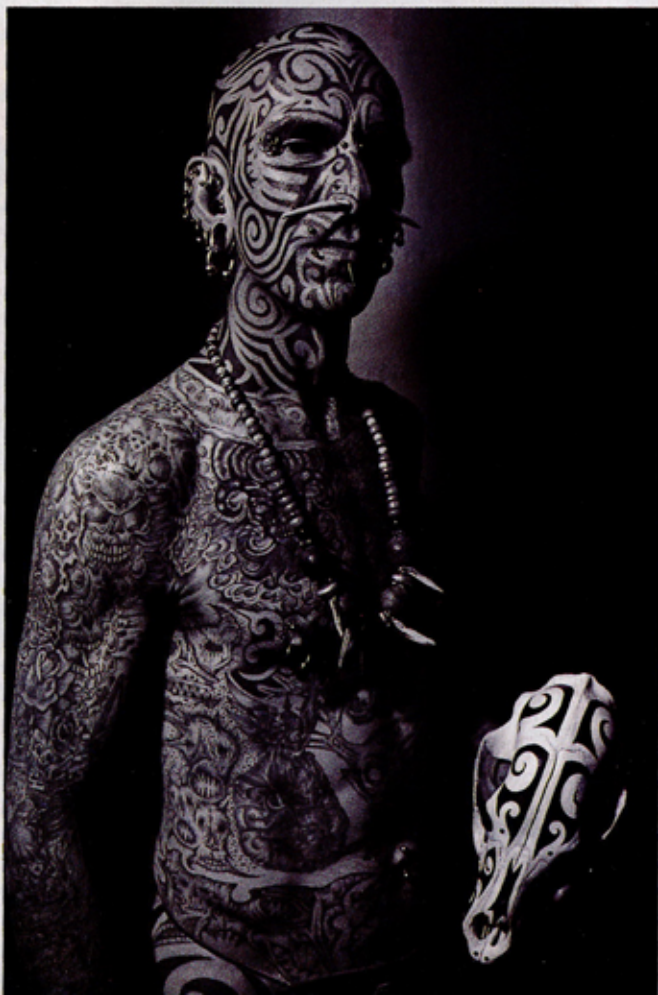
Featured were seventy-five works by eight artists, all of whom have contributed significantly to the world of tattoo. Included were D. Dominick Lombardi, whose series of India-ink, post-apocalyptic tattoos has been exhibited in galleries across the country, Pittsburgh's Nick Bubash, a professional tattooist since 1972 (his paintings and assemblages look like three-dimensional tattoos) and, of course, the godfather of modern tattoo himself, Don Ed Hardy. Filling out the roster of respected innovators and interpreters were Thom deVita, Susan Moore, John Wyatt, Susan Jamison and Steed Taylor. It was truly an interactive and highly educational experience for people of all ages and backgrounds.

To understand better the intent and scope of the exhibit, the public was provided with a comprehensive companion booklet. The captivating cover art was a stunning black-and-white photo from John Wyatt's book *Under My Skin*, while the text included an enlightening explanatory essay by D. Dominick Lombardi. As a result, viewers of Skin City—The Art of the Tattoo were treated to a singular experience, a parallax view of tattooing, a vision which was elegantly enhanced by the contemplative gallery atmosphere of a both daring and supportive environment.

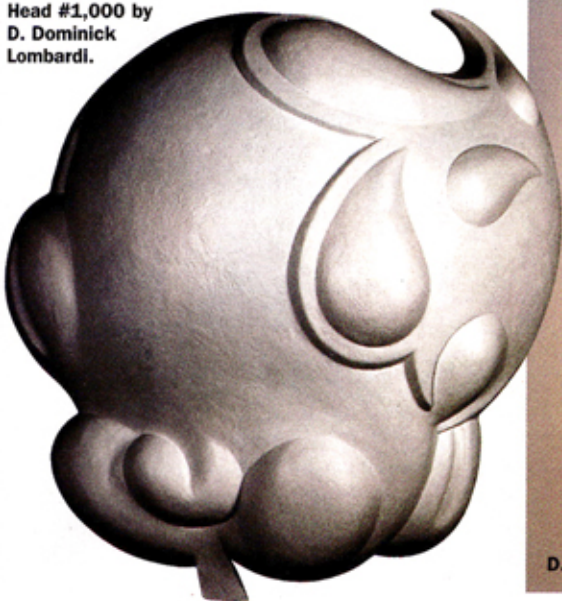
—Matty Jankowski



Photographs from John Wyatt's book *Under My Skin*.



Head #1,000 by
D. Dominick
Lombardi.



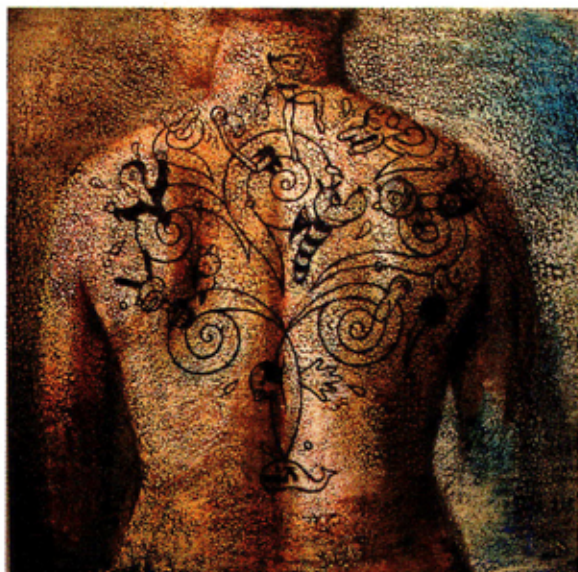
D. Dominick Lombardi's Head Series.



Photographs of Steed Taylor's Tattoo Road work.

In my opinion, this show (taking my photographs out of the mix) was one of the most evolved of all the shows that I've seen that are tattoo related. I was particularly impressed with Susan Moore's eighty-four by eighty-four inch painting "Ellen and Kaz." And, although they are friends, and it is hard to be objective, Nick Bubash and Thom deVita are continually generating art that is better than what I am seeing in the Chelsea galleries. It might be interesting, too, for some of the readers to understand that there is an interest in tattooing outside the tattoo community, besides just the commercial aspects. It is also important to note that serious artists who are not from the tattoo world are likewise doing interesting work. Please take a look at The Arts Center's site at www.theartscenter.org, I am certain it will serve as an inspiration to artists everywhere.

—John Wyatt



Susan Moore's painting "Ellen and Kaz."

SKIN CITY—THE ART OF THE TATTOO



Paintings by Susan Jamison.

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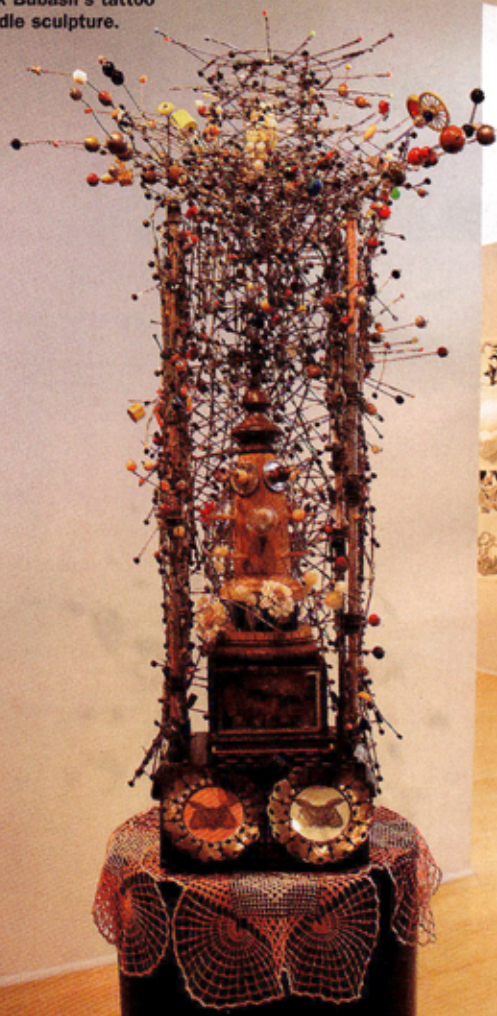
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Nick Bubash's tattoo
needle sculpture.

Lithographs from Thom DeVita's box set.