

Tattooing: art of the people

Tattooing trends

Tattooing today is more popular and acceptable than ever before, with a large number of people around the world sporting skin ink. Some designs, such as floral or Japanese, have been around for centuries, while others come and go. Current trends include minimalist designs - simple tattoos with delicate, fine lines - and bright watercolours, which allow artists to experiment with new colours and effects. In addition, more people are having matching tattoos, as well as designs with a personal meaning, such as dates, names or quotes that matter to them. Social media and celebrities have played a big role in making tattoos mainstream, influencing styles and encouraging people to get inked.

Personal art

Sofia, 28, from Milan, explains what her tattoos mean to her. 'They are as much a part of me as anything else on my body.'

Angus, 35, from Brisbane, had been interested in China and the martial arts for a long time. 'It seemed almost inevitable that I'd choose a dragon. I'm also a huge fan of Bruce Lee – he was born in the year of the dragon. I've been thinking about getting a third. I love the work of Shige, a Japanese tattoo artist who works in Yokohama, Japan.'

Historical reminder

'I was living in Rio at the time and spending a lot of time in my bikini! There, it doesn't matter if you have tattoos. It's a way of decorating your body, in the same way that people wear earrings or a necklace. So I got myself a tattoo. I wouldn't choose the design now, but I still like it because it was a present to me from friends. It's a reminder of that time of my life, and how much fun it was!' (Trinidad, 24, from Valparaiso)

'At the time, the tattoo represented freedom and excitement, a fantastic year in the USA. I wouldn't have any more, in fact I'm getting rid of the one I have. I'm getting it lasered off. It's expensive, very painful and a long process. It'll probably take 18 months to get rid of it.' (Rowan, 29, from Glasgow)

Skin art

Whether it is the most glamorous celebrity, or the likes of you and me, people around the world have suffered the pain of the needle for the aesthetic pleasure of their tattoos for generations. No matter what the significance, those who get tattoos are expressing their tastes using their skin as the creative canvas. Love them or loathe them, tattooing is very much the art of the people.