

needle/work

using ink & steel to create a body of art

Human canvas

Two of Portland's top tattoo artists get some ink
by Andy Mangels

They're two of Portland's most in-demand artists, and chances are you've seen their work at Pride, the beach, the bars or just about anywhere. But their art isn't hanging on a wall in a frame. The canvas that Jacki Randall and Fish use is skin, and their tools of the trade are most often tattoo guns.

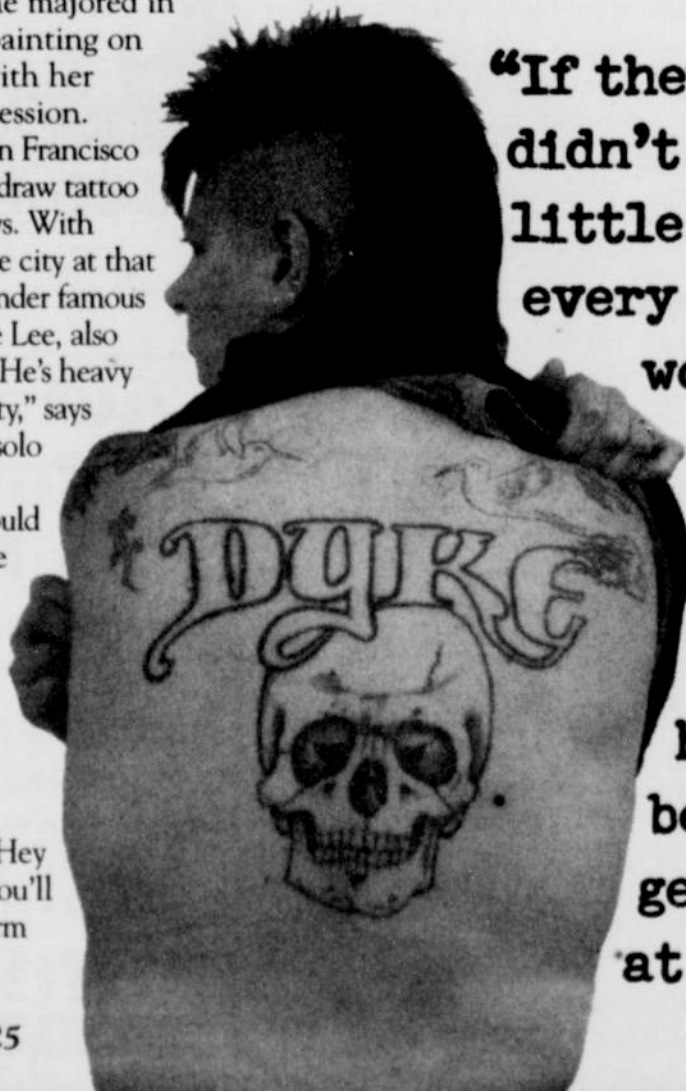
Besides the artistic trade they share in common, Randall and Fish are also two out-and-proud dykes; Randall even has the word "dyke" tattooed across her back in huge letters. And growing up, they never imagined they'd be ink-slingers.

Born Suzanne Shifflett, Fish grew up in a small town in Maine and studied art at a school in New York. She majored in sculpting and pursued painting on the side but struggled with her developing artistic expression.

"Friends of mine in San Francisco were always asking me to draw tattoo designs for them," Fish says. With few female tattooists in the city at that time, she began to train under famous gay tattooist Wayne Bruce Lee, also now a Portland resident. "He's heavy into the leather community," says Fish, noting that her first solo tattoo on someone was a Leather Pride flag. She would do two more tattoos before she ever got inked herself.

Randall was born in Pomona, Calif., and grew up in Chicago, Ohio, California and Pennsylvania. She says, "When I was in grade school, kids used to say, 'Hey I'll give you a quarter if you'll draw something on my arm with a Sharpie marker.'"

Continued on Page 25



"If they didn't sting a little bit, every wuss would have one and it would hardly be worth getting at all"

—Jacki Randall

A hole of one's own

Piercings hold more meaning than mere jewelry
by Glenn Scofield Williams

Not that long ago, you could tell if a man was gay by where he put his hole: *Pierced right ear, that boy's queer; pierced left ear, just likes beer.*

Nowadays, it's a little more complicated. Apart from ears, queer and straight people alike get all kinds of body parts pierced—from tongues to nipples, from navels to genitals. In the past 20 years, piercing has become something of a happy national panic, and the queer community has been most actively involved in it.

"I got in touch with my body through piercing," says Alisa Williams, a Portland lesbian and events tinker. "I'm still coming to terms of acceptance with my body: what its capabilities and limits are. Piercings are the frame that completes the work of art that is my body."

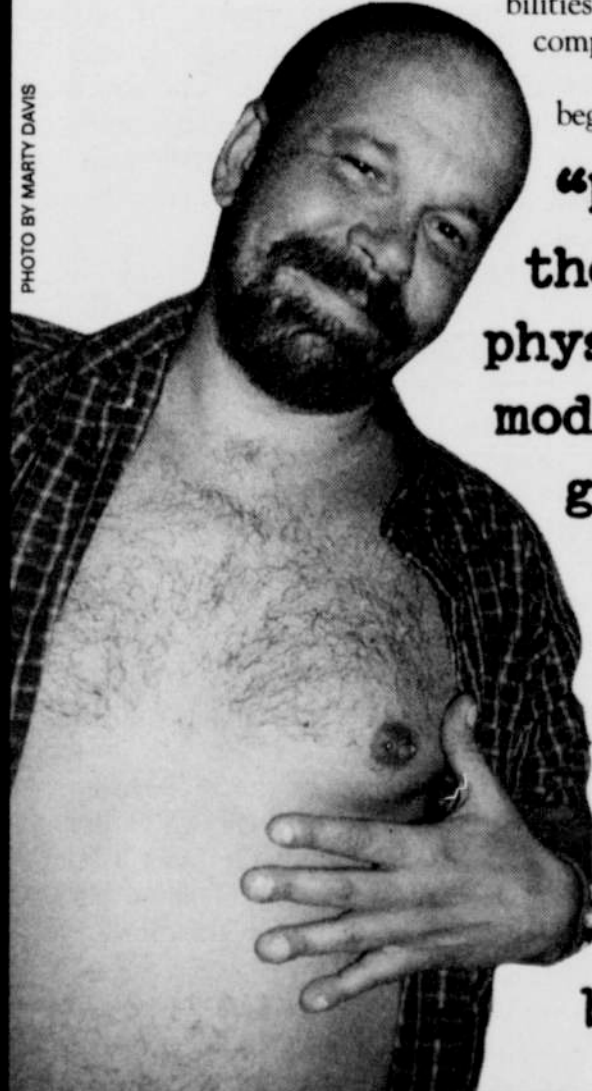
Portland porn performer Adam Rivers says: "I began seeing Prince Alberts in certain porn films. I

just thought they looked so cool. I loved the way a big fat dick-head looked with a gleaming piece of jewelry coming out of it."

The fact is, queer people get their bodies pierced for uncountable reasons now: rebellion, self-esteem, sexual stimulation, sexual identity, even to make a cultural statement.

"Most people get pierced to let the inside come out. To be themselves," claims Snakie, a piercing apprentice at Optic Nerve Arts.

Continued on Page 26



"Making these physical modifications gives me a certain sense of ownership and control over my body"

—Adam Rivers