

A hole of one's own

Continued from Page 24

"Pierced people are a tribe," Williams muses. "We get pierced and stay pierced for many reasons. It's a personal celebration, a reminder of a time or moment. It's everywhere."

New holes usually result from one of four types of piercings: surface, facial, midbody and genital.

Surface piercings are those that do not go through tissue or cartilage but merely enter and exit through a few layers of skin, such as the nape of the neck or webbing between fingers. They tend to be temporary.

"Surface piercing," explains Miss Corey, a professional piercer at Black Hole Body Piercing, "goes with the grain of the tissue, which makes the body want to expel or absorb the jewelry."

Facial piercings include ears, eyebrows, lips, cheeks, tongues and septums. "It's the Summer of the Nose," says Kristi, also of Black Hole. "Everybody wants to get their nose pierced."

One of the most popular facial piercings among young lesbians lately is the Monroe: an upper lip piercing that resembles a mole.

"Facial piercings sometimes compel people to really look at you whether you want the attention or not," Williams says. "I'm always getting compliments about my Monroe or the configuration of my nose piercings."

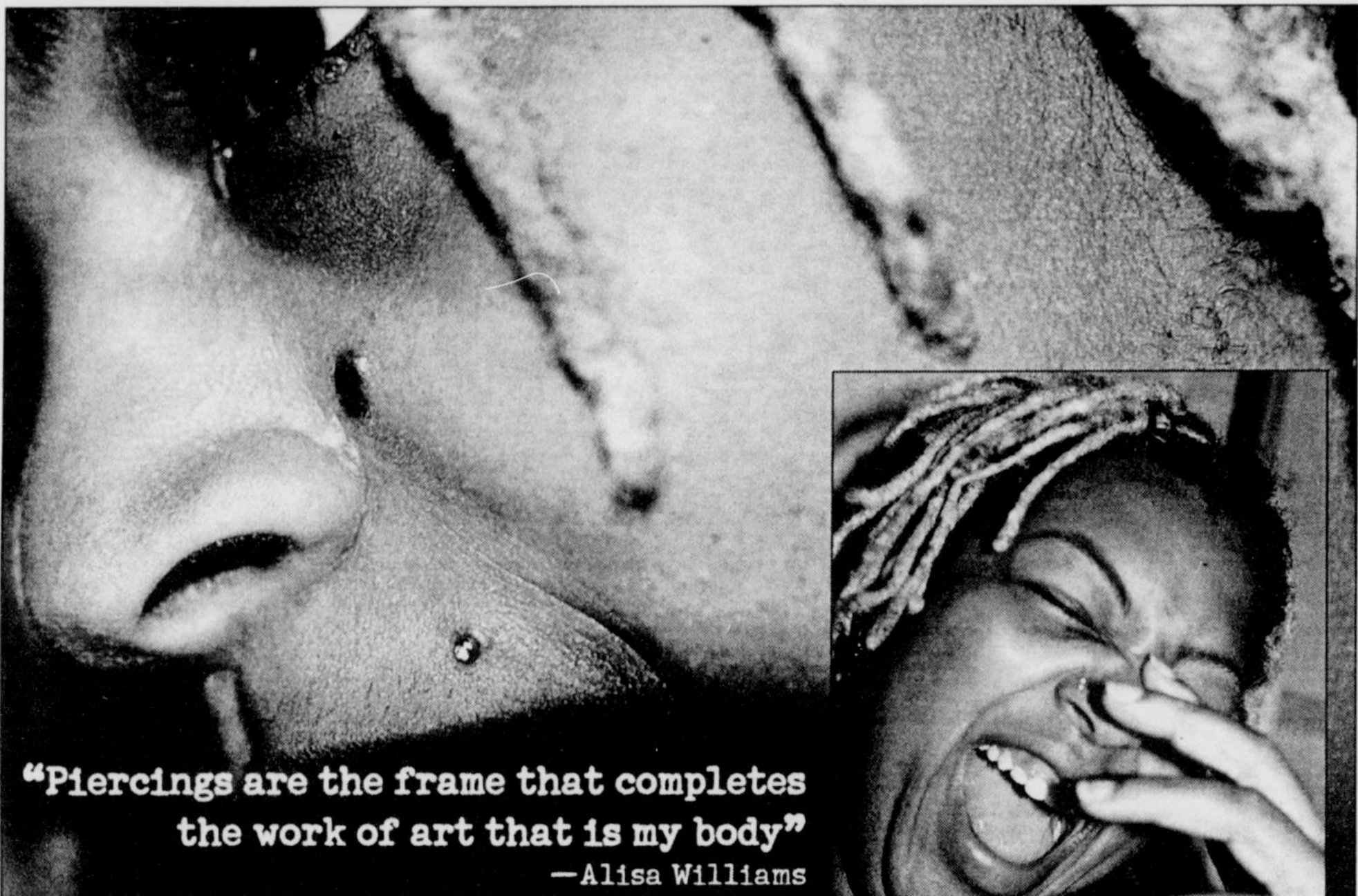
Midbody piercings involve two of the most popular piercings among sexual minorities: nipple and navel. "When that young woman got her navel pierced in the Aerosmith video, everyone had to get their navel pierced," laughs Jesse, a member of the queer community and the professional piercer at Captain Jack's. Navel piercings are actually one of the trickiest to perform and have the highest rate of rejection.

Nipple piercing has long been an expression of kinkiness in leather and B/D/S/M communities. "I have a barb in my left nipple," says Rivers, referring to a common nipple ring formed of a long post with beads that screw into both ends. "I am thinking about getting the other tit pierced but kind of like having the two different sensations."

Genital piercings for women include clithoods, which allow the bead of the jewelry to lie directly over the clitoris for stimulation; inner or outer labial piercing; and even the clit itself, though it's not recommended.

"For women, it's important that we check the anatomy for its ability to heal," Miss Corey cautions. "One out of 10 women can't have a genital piercing; they just don't have the right anatomy."

Most reputable piercing shops conduct a



"Piercings are the frame that completes the work of art that is my body"

—Alisa Williams

consultation before considering a genital piercing. "There's been a wave of hood piercings lately," Miss Corey says. "Women want to honor their sexuality. It's a liberation thing."

Genital piercings for men include piercings through the glans, through the connecting tissues, through the scrotal sac and—one of the most popular piercings among gay men—the guiche, piercing through the skin located between anus and scrotum.

But by far the daddy of all male genital piercings has to be the Prince Albert, which goes through the urethra and exits where the shaft and underside of the glans meets.

"One buddy of mine just swoons every time he sees my PA," says Rivers, who admits having had mixed reactions. "One buddy of mine said he wouldn't suck my dick any more because of the PA.... He has, though."

Why do people get their genitals pierced?

"Getting my 'treasure box' piercing gave me vaginal pride," Williams points out. "For a time, once the area healed, I was show-

ing off the goodies. For me, it wasn't about being sexual. It was about liberation and bold expression."

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

Miss Corey sums it up this way: "The major reason people get a genital piercing is sexual: to honor their sexuality, to honor their sexual selves or to recover from something."

And what about the pain?

"It's different for each person," Jesse explains. "For a lot of people, this is therapeutic. A way of achieving a healthy release, rather than by hurting themselves in a negative way."

The best advice for those interested in piercing seems to be preparation and proper aftercare. Do research, ask questions and be prepared, Rivers advises. "Know what is going to happen and how it will feel."

Williams agrees: "Think about what's motivating you, and think about the consequences. Arm yourself with questions and ask, ask, ask!"

The more knowledge and info you arm yourself with, the more pleasant the experience will be."

Then, "take care of your body," Snakie says. "Bad aftercare leads to infection, rejection and scar tissue."

Miss Corey adds: "Remember, scar or jewelry, it's permanent. Someone is going to be invasive with your body. You want someone who knows what they're doing."

No longer thought of as a passing fad, piercings, Williams says, are "such a part of my personality...I hope to keep all my piercings. Especially the naughty ones! I feel naked without them." **J**

GLENN SCOFIELD WILLIAMS writes poetry, prose, plays, periodica and porn in Portland.

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