

Oregon gets *inked*

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The annual Pacific Northwest Tattoo Expo officially returned last weekend to the Spirit Mountain Casino for its second year, bringing artists from around the nation and locally to exhibit their work of art.

In the past two decades, tattoo culture has seen a rise in business. It is a part of today's modern culture where everyone from athletes to celebrities show them off as a symbol of their personality or their background. It has certainly permeated the modern era, especially in a place like Oregon, where the city of Portland is known for its retro style and art. This caused tattoo conventions to pop up around the globe, bringing in fans of the culture. The PNW Tattoo Expo is no different.

Though the expo is barely in its second year, it has seen

an exponential growth of popularity.

"Last year went very well, but this year is even bigger and better," said Timothy Azinger, a tattoo artist from Pittsburgh and the organizer of the event.

Azinger has been organizing and tattooing for 25 years and has built a reputation internationally for holding these events. He currently runs a shop located in Pittsburgh and has opened a new one with his partner.

The event showcases talented artist trying to make a name for themselves in the business by displaying their work and even selling their art in the form of portraits.

"This is my first time at an expo," said Lance Smith, a local tattoo artist from Oregon City. "I'm not expecting a lot to come out of this expo, but I thought it would

be a great experience and maybe even get inspired by other artists to build up my credibility." Smith was introduced to tattoos at the age of 14 when his uncle opened a shop. His uncle mentored him throughout the years until he finally opened the shop in Oregon City called Oregon City Tattoos.

One of the biggest booths showcased at the expo was the Eternal Art Tattoo shop with a total of eight artists. Jesse Perez, the brother of the owner, was among them only having three months of holding the title as a tattoo artist but having about 10 years of experience by shadowing his brother.

"We've always been into art, so

we figured it was a chance to make some money and do something we love, it wasn't a hard sell," said Perez. "Conventions like these have helped us get our name out, look at other tattoo artists and styles of tattoo and learn from them to see what's going on in the business."

The shop is located in Santa Rosa, Calif., where it's owned by Jesse's brother: Jesus Perez, the lead artist.

Of course one of the biggest things about these events are the fans that come to support the culture and even get a tattoo from the experience.

"Being in the business for 25 years, you can imagine how things have changed," Azinger said. "People still had a lot of stigma attached towards tattooing since people thought it was disturbing, thinking of it as a back-alley-biker-gang kind of thing. So my thought was to bring a lot of talented tattooers to a comfortable public setting, where people who were iffy about tattoos, might be interested in one, but they were just intimidated to go into a shop. Well, here we are in a beautiful ballroom where you can go in and explore all the possibilities tattooing has to offer."

This included fans like Nick and Katina, a couple who declined to give their last names. They decided to spend their three-year anniversary at the expo, looking to get a tattoo. "It's pretty cool for my first time being at a convention," said Katina. "The fact that so many artists gathered in one place is awesome, in addition to seeing their artwork."

If you missed this year's Pacific Northwest Tattoo Expo, definitely check it out next year, if you're looking for high-quality tattoos, want to see more of the tattoo culture, and maybe even have the first experience of getting a tattoo. The expo offers you many possibilities. To check out more info about the expo and its artist, go to: <http://www.tattooogh.com/pnw.html>

photos by McKenna Streed



Top Left: Maureen Orrissim tattoos a new bee on Nina Anderson.

Bottom left: Henry Rodriguez tattoos a butterfly on Ben Baker.

Right: Kent Parrell tattoos Dominique Meldredge.