



'APPLE' SHOWS OFF HIS BRAND

WANNA SEE MY TATTOO?

Eugene and the body mod scene

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Smiling cheerfully, Alex Harrington says, "I stop traffic with this face."

"It's a lifestyle," he says. Harrington is quick to point out that in his case, it has to be. His entire face is covered with a bold tattoo.

"I like the attention," he says of the stares he gets anytime he goes anywhere in Eugene. "It's a big deal to change peoples' lives just by walking down the street."

Though at first his tattoos may cause a double-take, Harrington's winsome smile and welcoming demeanor soon make it clear why his friends say, "Don't be fooled by his face; Al is the nicest guy around."

He is more comfortable in Eugene than any other place he has lived, Harrington says. He says — with a grin — that with a face like his, "you're not going to work at some corporate job."

Instead, Harrington has always been able to find work in the body modification community.

Oregon qualifies as one of the hardest places to get a license to tattoo, explains Splat Ter, a local tattoo artist. Splat, as he is known, has tattooed all over the world. But Eugene, many body artists and collectors say, is one of the best places to be if you have body modifications.

"I feel more normal around here than I do anywhere else," says Jim Sens, a body piercer for more than 10 years. He says Eugene has "the best shops in the country" for tattoos and piercings.

"One thing I definitely noticed about Eugene is that it's a safe haven for modified people."

Until recently, permanent body modifications were seen as deviant in American culture. Eugene, however, is a Mecca for body artists and collectors. On a walk down 13th Avenue, near campus, you may see anything from a simple navel ring to a full back tattoo to a body brand.

THE HISTORY OF TATTOOS AND PIERCINGS

When you think of permanent body art, tattoos are probably the first things that come to mind. But in the realm of body modification, as the practice is called, you will find piercings and different forms of scarification.

It is impossible to say what culture practiced tattooing, piercing, or scarification first. A commonly quoted biblical prohibition, Leviticus 19:28 in the Old Testament, admonishes, "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD." This reference is often interpreted as a prohibition on tattoos by Judaic scholars and some Christian groups.

However in Genesis 24:22 Abraham's servant gives a nose-ring (sometimes translated as earring) to Rebekah, the future wife of his son Isaac. And in Revelations 19:16 it says of Christ's return: "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS," which is sometimes interpreted as a tattoo. Groups such as the Christian Tattoo Organization use such biblical interpretations as justification for religious tattoos.

Egyptian mummies from about 2000 BCE feature tattoos, and the frozen corpse of a Bronze Age man found in the Alps has 59 separate tattoos, according to tattoo historians. Ancient Greek and Roman scholars such as Plato also mention tattooing.

The word "tattoo" came into use after the voyages of Captain James Cook, deriving from the Tahitian *tattau* or *ta-tu*. Tattooing gained popularity among European sailors and later among upper class Europeans. Lady Randolph Churchill, mother of Winston Churchill, had a snake tattooed on her wrist.

Although the art form also existed among other cultures including Native American groups, as well as in Japan, where it is known as *Irezumi*, it was the European fashion for tattoos that spread to the U.S. in the late 1800s.

Well into the 1920s, society women had small decorative tattoos and even cosmetic tattoos — the same tattooed lipstick and eye paint now known as permanent makeup. But tattooing soon went back to its rebellious association with sailors, bikers, "primitives," and punks until the 1980s and '90s.

Many contemporary piercers and body modifiers say they were inspired by photos in older issues of *National Geographic*.

For years heavily tattooed people displayed their tattoos as curiosities at carni-



ALICIA YOUNG



YOUNG'S WHITE INK TATTOO



SHERMAN SNOOK BEGINS HIS FULL-BODY TATTOO WITH ARTIST, ERIC DAOUST