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ly, a person inserts hooks through the skin in different points of the body and is then hoisted up to dangle from those hooks.

WHY BODY MODIFICATION?

"People often engage in body modification as a rite of passage," says UO folklore professor Daniel Wojcik, author of *Punk and Neo-Tribal Body Art*. "Rites of passage are rituals that mark a major change in one's life or overcoming a difficult situation or trauma."

"Tattoos can express affiliation, spirituality or commemoration," or sometimes body modifications are simply done for "aesthetic reasons — to look good — or even for erotic reasons," Wojcik says. Others enjoy the adrenaline rush that is an after-effect of the often intense pain.

According to Wojcik, tattoos and piercing have become "more acceptable in the last decade, but there's still a lot of stigma for women who get tattooed."

UO student Alicia Young agrees. She's 24 and pretty with red hair and bright blue eyes. She has several large tattoos already but is waiting to get more until "I know what my future plans are."

Young favors old-style tattoos with muted colors. This older tattoo style has classic tattoo themes such as hearts with daggers or pin-up girls, and a lack of shading. Young has an old-school sailing ship with mermaids colorfully inked upon her chest.

These are the sort of designs once found in tattoo shops from the 1920s into the 1950s. Whether old-school classic images or new-school designs with bright flashy colors, the pre-drawn tattoo designs and stencils found on the walls of tattoo shops are called "flash."

Many people chose a flash tattoo for their first tattoo, but Young's first tattoo was a design she had doodled. She had it done large on her lower back. It "hurt like a bitch," she says.

People should know they can bring in their own designs and don't need to choose flash, says tattoo artist Travis Boudreau. He also recommends looking through a tattoo artist's portfolio of recent tattoos to assess skills before choosing an artist.

In addition to her tattoos, Young has stretched her earlobes to allow the insertion of large plugs, and the cartilage of each ear has a hole created by a large flat needle, also plugged. Some people eat the cartilage removed in such a piercing as part of the ritual process, but that is not condoned in piercing shops in Eugene.

People sometimes stare at her when she's out with her boyfriend, Young says. But the stigma of tattoos may be wearing off. "I tattoo a lot of professionals and they are never worried" about what people will think, says Marth, one of the few women tattoo artists here in Eugene.

"I tattoo people from the hospital," she says, "and they say, 'Wow, you people are so clean!'" Marth and other tattoo artists take pride in the above-standard levels of cleanliness in their studios.

The majority of body modification artists are male, according to Splat, but he says women are welcomed. Many female customers prefer to be tattooed by a

woman, Marth says, and a good female artist gets a lot of customers. As a result Marth's tattoos are in high demand.

A lot of Jim Sens' clients come in to relieve the stress of finals or mark the end of a relationship. "It's easier to deal with physical pain than emotional pain," he says.

Sens, an outgoing and friendly 30-year-old, has his own stretched ears, tattoos and scarifications. "I didn't do this to look like a weirdo. I feel like this is the way I am supposed to look."

"My girlfriend likes the way I look," he adds. "She can always find me in a crowd."

He says that for people concerned about what the tattoos will look like in 20 years, tattoo collectors should wear sunscreen — it not only protects the skin, it keeps colorful tattoos from fading.

"I think it's kind of neat when I see old people with wrinkly tattooed skin," says Young. "Wow, they've lived!"

For people who regret their decision to get a tattoo, laser removal is an option. In fact, according to a recent *New York Times* article, an ink called "Freedom-2" has been developed that is encapsulated in beads that



break up after only one laser treatment. Currently it can cost several thousand dollars and take several painful laser treatments to remove a normal tattoo.

The Oregon Health Licensing Agency even has a program, "Piercing Thoughts," with slogans such as "Think Before You Ink" to get young people to "be thoughtful before taking the tattoo or piercing plunge."

TAKING THE (PENIS) PIERCING PLUNGE

Body piercer Sens says his clientele is largely made up of women 18 to 30, with the majority of them college students. Nostril piercings are the most popular, he says, but he also pierces five to 10 female genitals a week. Women tend to pierce the labia or the clitoral hood.

Neither male or female genital piercings are removed during sex — in fact pierced people say they enhance sex.

Piercing the male genitals, according to Sens, "is a lot of fun." With women he is careful to be gentle and respectful. "But guys," he says, "they just whip it out!"

The most popular male genital piercing is an apiradavya, a vertical bar through the head of the penis. An ampallang is a bar horizontally through the same area. Both of those piercings often go through the urethra. A less common penile piercing is the

Prince Albert or PA, which is a ring that goes in through the urethra and comes out under the head of the penis.

A rumor about the PA is that Prince Albert himself wore one and used it to tie his penis to his leg, to prevent a bulge in his pants.

One interesting side effect of penis piercings that go through the urethra is that urine flows out the holes and along the jewelry. As one man with multiple penis piercings put it, "I pee like a sprinkler."

CHICKS DIG SCARS

If even pubic-area piercings have become popular, what is the next step? For some body modifiers, scarification through cutting or branding has become the way to go.

Such scarification is not legal in shops in Oregon since the practices use surgical implements, so serious modifiers engage in these practices personally but never as professionals.

Branding and cutting are pretty uncommon still in the U.S. but are becoming more visible in Eugene. The most common way to cut is through slashes with a razor blade or scalpel. The blade cuts into the permanent layer of skin but usually not all the way through; the skin heals into slightly raised scars. Removing patches of skin results in larger scars, according to BMEzine.com, which has perhaps the largest collection of body modification photos and articles.

Some modifiers rub ink into the wounds to color the scar, though the ink may be pushed out as the wound heals. Introducing an irritant into the wound, or repeatedly reopening the scar, can also result in raised scars.

Some body modifiers will mix cremated the ashes of a loved one, even a loved pet, into the scar.

Sens has three scars on his right shoulder, near a tattoo of a rose. The scars symbolize "the three loves of my life" he says.

The whole notion of burning yourself aside, branding has some negative history to it. It was used for many years in Europe as a form of marking criminals and mark slaves. Branding has been present for many years among some African-American college fraternities. Basketball star Michael Jordan has an omega branded on his chest for the Omega Psi Phi fraternity.

Contemporary human branding for aesthetic purposes is done with an electrocautery device or a cautery pen. This creates a more detailed design than traditional "strike" branding (think of the way a cowboy brands a cow — that's a strike brand). Brands tend to heal in raised and white scars that wearers say are pleasingly tactile. The scar is always much wider than the surface that was burned, which is why the designs are kept simple.

Looking back at the last 10 years of changes in body modification, folklorist Wojcik says that body modification has definitely become more accepted by the general public, and it's possible even scarification will become more common, but "right now it's more commitment, more edgy, more hardcore."

Then again, he speculates, "Maybe the rebellious thing to do in another 10 years will be no tattoos or marks at all." **EW**