



Photos by Alyssa Evans

ABOVE: Flash tattoo designs. **BELOW:** Some of Robbie's work.



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“It’s about my time to do this’ was the feeling I got during the pandemic as a person in my own head. It’s time to make something cool,” Robbie said about opening Signal.

Candela started tattooing seven years ago. After being inspired by one of his friends who is a tattoo artist, Candela enrolled in tattoo school. Though their backgrounds differ, Robbie and Candela learned that they have a lot in common while working together at Shanghaied.

“We found through working together at Shanghaied that we have a lot of the same feelings about tattooing as a job, about being tattooers as an identity, and about the kind of attitude and atmosphere that we want to bring to our clients,” Robbie said. “It’s all about them having a good, positive experience.”

The pair hopes to contribute to Astoria’s collection of shops that show people “you don’t need to leave the coast or go to a bigger city to get a certain quality of tattoo or a certain tattoo experience,” Robbie said. They don’t intend to be in direct competition with other local shops.

‘Putting your weird stink on it’

Both Robbie and Candela are inspired by older, classic tattoos.

“In tattooing, you see a lot of those classic flash designs and they’re all an evolution of a

root design,” Robbie said. “Sometimes when you’re going through vintage Victorian advertisement catalogs or other collections of copyright free images, you can find source images that you’ve seen famous tattooers through the late 30s through modern times doing their own version of that design. It’s like a visual game of telephone.”

Trying to make images better is where Robbie and Caldera have fun with the process.

“It’s like tipping the hat and then taking it somewhere new. That’s always the field that you’re playing with tattooing because there’s so much history and it’s so rich and it’s so recognizable,” Robbie said.

“Yeah, you’re putting your weird stink on it,” Candela added.

Though they’re inspired by classic tattoos, both Robbie and Candela delve into other tattooing styles and will work with clients to make their ideas come together. For example, Candela recently created a watercolor turtle tattoo for a client.

“We’ll let (clients) in and just show them our home, the artwork and talk to them about whatever they want to talk about. Our books are always open. I want it to feel like a secret club without it being a secret club . . . I want people to come up and feel special, like they’ve discovered something,” Robbie said.

Robbie and Caldera will participate in the Pacific Northwest Tattoo Expo at Spirit Mountain Casino in November.

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