



AUTHENT/INK

**Inked Australia's resident tattoo advisor
Kian Forreal on respect for your artist
and tattoo etiquette!**

IT'S BEEN A LONG FEW WEEKS FOR ME BUT THE PACE IS FINALLY SLOWING DOWN.

Lots of large drawing projects on the go, a few still to complete, and then re-researching and writing my seminar on traditional Japanese tattoo history for the Sydney Tattoo & Body Expo in what little free time I had after working full time. Then just doing the Expo and presenting the seminar each of the three days of the show between tattoo appointments. Very tiring experience but I wouldn't change it for the world! I had a great time at this year's Tattoo Expo here in Sydney, it seemed much better organised and more geared towards the actual tattooing and the artists attending and participating this year. The organisers learned from last year's mistakes and it ran and felt a lot better, for me and the people I spoke with. Of course, there was the usual circus antics of piercing, scarring, painting with body fluids and hanging from hooks that has nothing to do with how I live tattooing, but the mob must be entertained and I am sure they were as there was plenty to see!

My little talk on Japanese tattooing seemed well received and needless to say it was quite daunting getting up in front of all those people I don't know and just going for it off the top of my head. Practice and whisky helped, by the third day I was a seasoned public speaker... at least in my own mind! I have posted a video of my talk on YouTube and a link from my webpage if anyone missed it and wants to check it out.

One of my pet peeves and for most other artists as well is the 'bargain hunter' tattoo shopper. The potential client that runs from tattoo booth to tattoo booth or shop to shop and asks for quotes for a tattoo, usually off their phone screen and then tries to play price war between artists. What possible good can come of this? Attention bargain hunters... there is always going to be someone who will do your tattoo cheaper and quicker and sooner, and it will be crap. Just so you know in case you didn't. You really do get what you pay for with the arts. Us artists have no retirement scheme, paid holidays, sick leave, maternity leave, or any safety net at all... we are on our own. And that's cool, I wouldn't have it any other way, but don't try to run our prices into the ground. It's insulting. Tattooing is a luxury item for people who want them – if you can't afford it then save up and get what you want because nine times out of 10 you're going to end up at one of those 'expensive' shops anyway, begging a pro tattooer to fix the mess on your arm, and then you're going to get shitty when we say we don't fix other peoples mistakes. Just do it right the first time.

I don't know if you'd call it tattoo etiquette or whatever but if you want to create a good rapport with your artist and you're serious about getting decent work done, you have to have the mindset that you're buying and supporting a brand and helping it perpetuate. If you love something, support it. I really like certain brands of things and I have no problem dropping good money on them knowing I am helping them. Certain authors, artists, clothing, watches, cars... whatever you're into it's the same. I enjoy spending a couple hundred bucks on a book by an artist that poured his heart and soul into creating it, knowing that it will enable him to create another book that I will enjoy. Patronising the art of tattoo is the same, by supporting your local artist you're enabling him to continue practicing his craft, getting better at what he does and being there when you want another tattoo.

And since we're on about etiquette, tattoo shop reception personnel and clients need to show some to each other. A tattoo shop is just like any other business: dealing with the staff politely will get you a lot farther than attitude will. Simple things like not talking on the phone at the front counter, not abusing the portfolios, not demanding a better price etc... just being respectful and nice will usually get you what you want and if it doesn't at least there are no hard feelings. And counter staff needs to show patience and understanding to new or potential clients. It may be hard answering the same questions every day to different people, and being nice to folks that are maybe rude or less than polite, but it's your job and what you're paid to do, and you represent the artists that have worked hard to attract those clients. By being rude or short and less than understanding to these new clients you are doing a major disservice to the artists paying your wage. Something to keep in mind. The first job of tattoo shop reception is to make everyone who walks through that door feel special, if you can't do that then get another job.



Seems like there's a bunch of new tattoo shops scheduled to be opening in Sydney this year. Its going to change the landscape I would think. There's talk of tattoo reality show being linked to one of these shops as well. I just hope the owners of these shops have tattooings' best interests at heart because the last thing we need is more people taking from it without giving back. I worry for the state of things to come... the best way for you, the reader, to help and preserve tattooing is to patronise artists that you believe in that are doing good for the tattoo world, and if you do that, everything else will be ok. 🙏

Kian Forreal is a professional tattoo artist with 18 years international experience who specialises in traditional Japanese tattoo work and script lettering. He has worked all over the world and has studied under some of the leading tattoo artists of today. He is based in Sydney at Inner Vision Tattoo in Surry Hills. His website is: www.kianforreal.com For information on Laser Tattoo Fading and Removal please visit www.fadeyourtattoo.com