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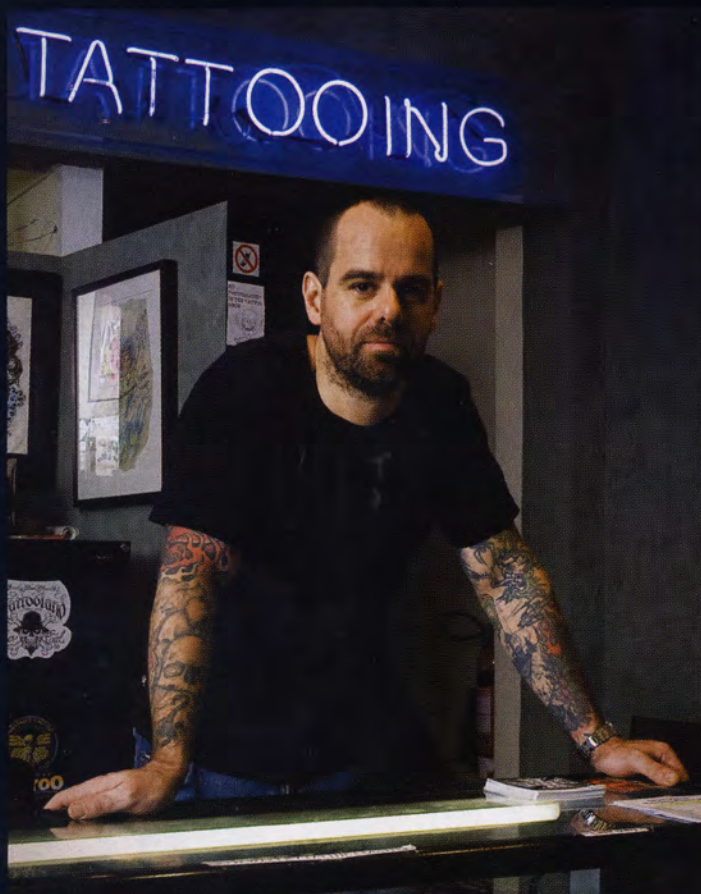
Sabina Kelley

Mother, fashionista, entrepreneur and total babe!

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Inked Australia's resident tattoo advisor Kian Forreal on why he wants the real deal back

I WISH TATTOOING WERE STILL ILLEGAL THERE.

I SAID IT.

With all this clamouring from the 'tattoo world' for acceptance and mainstream exposure, we have finally got it whether we like it or not... and you know what? It sucks. Now there is a difference between acceptance and repulsion. I don't particularly want the masses to revile tattooing, but I also don't want to discuss business plans with suits and bankers about how I can expand my market share, lower my costs and deliver more efficient product while paying employees less. I don't want to get emails from Chinese tattoo supply companies offering me ever lower priced supplies that are barely suitable enough quality for marking pigs.

But the funny part of it all is this: They still hate tattooing, but they are accepting it, for now, to use against us and to gentrify it. That's exactly it right there.

Tattooing is not a product. And that is the crux of the matter. All these people that claim to represent the 'industry' are latecomers themselves that are just jumping on the bandwagon trying to make an easy buck and be 'cool'. Fuck them because 'they' are selling us out.

Real tattooers are, and always have been outcasts, pirates, derelicts, loners and vagabonds and criminals and pimps etc. We don't want the world to accept us.. we want to do our thing. We have been giving authority the big middle finger and doing what we want, when we want and how we want and that used to be getting tattooed, living our lives our way and not giving a shit what anyone thought about us. And look at us now... it's turned into a fashion. I mean a real fashion movement, with seasonal changes of what's hot and what's not. Owls were in.. and now they're passé.. but hurry up and get your big-ass neck tattoo while it's all the rage! Never mind you don't have any other tattoos. I am not raging on one particular style here... lots of folks are just doing Japanese because it's popular and couldn't give a shit about it. Just another koi. I tell you this... most tattoo 'artists' have little to no respect for their clients, they think you're fools for wanting 90 per cent of what you get, they just want to get paid. AND think about this tattooers, everytime you tattoo something that you KNOW is stupid you are hurting tattooing and cheapening it and falling right into the hands of the people that want to destroy it.

That's why I don't tattoo most of what people ask of me, I respect my clients and want them to be the real deal, not to walk around like stunned sheep parading the latest 'cool tat'. I spend the time talking to them and explaining what's what, at least from my perspective.

I wish tattooing were illegal. And then we'd see who was still doing tattoos. Who was dedicating their lives to the art. It is not a product, it can't be packaged, as much as every glossy mag tries to, as much as every advertising executive tries to adopt tattooing to sell a new Volkswagen to some suburban twat with 'edgy' advertising. It's a joke now. All the big fashion houses are





using tattooed models for their billboards. Almost all of the tattooing in these ads is shit, without exception. Real bad quality tattooing at its finest. Makes you wonder... is this intentional? Can it be true that not a single person in the fashion industry can find a model or at the very least a consultant that knows what a good tattoo is? Are they portraying shit tattooing as a look? I don't know the answer, but it's strange. What if they actually used great tattooing for advertising? How would that affect the status of this 'outsider art'? That would take it from their control. However, by using crap tattoos they push the 'idea' of tattooing as cool without actually showcasing any quality tattooing to the mainstream, thereby they can make it 'uncool' when they see fit. Just a thought.

As some of you may know, I did the Sydney Tattoo Expo in March this year. What a great example of a parasitical company exploiting tattooing. Don't get me wrong, I had a good time, I tattooed all three days and even won an award. However, it didn't come cheap. Us tattooers at that show were treated like hired help, lucky to be there. The booth came pretty much bare bones and over-priced. Sydney is the most expensive tattoo show in the world for the artists and the least provided for. Lights? Nah, you gotta pay for those. Power points? Only one or pay. Extra table? Pay. Twenty-second council inspection. Thanks, that'll be a hundred bucks.

Nickled and dimed to death. The promoters didn't even bother to introduce themselves. The showground staff was fucking rude and overall I worked my arse off to break even. And what did they give back? A weekend of advertising over the PA trying to promote the people that sponsored the event, trying their hardest to lure potential clients away from tattoo booths to the event next door that no one wanted to go to, a poorly organised tattoo contest with too few categories that ended up pitting backpieces against sleeves, stupid. No one running the show gives a shit about tattooing or tattooers, and it showed. And that's the problem with the direction we're going in. The 'man' is slowly commercialising tattooing and making it their own, and all these newcomers are helping them along the way. Stop it. This is our thing, and it should stay in our hands.

I won't say that I won't do the show again but Mike, I'd like to see more care put it in to how the artists are treated and more attention to making it a 'Tattoo Convention' that highlights the positive aspects of tattooing, and not a 'how can I make more money from these suckers convention'. Nuff said.

In any case, I have no idea who my readers are so this rant is directed at everyone, tattoo artists, client, sell-outs and the man himself. To tattoo artists: keep it real and don't deal with the man in any capacity, to the clients: give your money to the right people that care, to the sell-outs: go find something else to destroy, to the man: you're put on notice, we know what you're up to and it's not going to work. There you have it. ☹



Kian Forreal is a professional tattoo artist with 17 years international experience and who specialises in traditional Japanese tattoo work and script lettering. He has worked all over world and has studied under some 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