



rethink

An Exploration of Tattoo

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01.

PROPOSAL





THE PROBLEM

Negative stigmas around tattooing persist today. Anything from associations with rebelliousness to associations with gang and criminal activity, this art form and the people who wear it are often written off as unprofessional.

Individual expression is incredibly important in both a personal and cultural context. Stereotypes around the ways people express themselves should be respectfully and clearly challenged.

DESIGN OPPORTUNITY

Tattoos have been around for centuries and a great deal of history and changing culture has gone into the resulting reputation they have today. Exploring this history, encouraging mindful thought about this practice, and creating a space to celebrate this art form is the design opportunity here. An exhibit that is both interactive and thoughtful is an opportunity to tackle these negative stigmas without forcing a specific way to think onto the viewers.





THESIS STATEMENT

Rethink is an **exhibition** that educates on the history and experience of tattoos to **challenge negative stigmas** and celebrate an art form.

02.

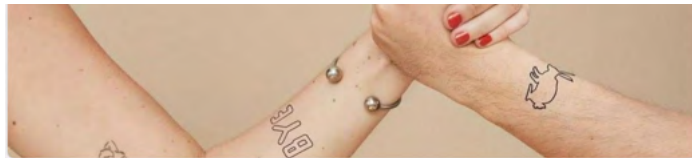
RESEARCH



METHODS

SURVEY

Using a simple Google form survey, I asked various tattoo experience related questions to the general population. People with and without tattoos were encouraged to take the survey to gain both quantitative and some qualitative data.



Tattoo Questionnaire - Senior Thesis 2021

This survey is intended to gather broad information about people's experience with tattoos. This information will be used to understand current feelings and experiences surrounding tattoos.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be

SURVEY RESULTS

Why did you get the tattoo you have?

- Most common response: "I like the way they look."
- Honor family connections
- "express myself"
- "express my interests"
- "express my art"

Do you hide your tattoos in certain settings?

YES  91%

NO  9%

Select all of the following statements that you agree with:

Tattoos promote individual expression.	100%
Tattoos make an individual appear more unprofessional.	9%
Tattoos are works of art.	95%
Tattoos are associated with more negative things than positive things.	27%
Tattoos should represent something significant.	22%
The content of a tattoo insights into the individual wearing it.	72%

02.

METHODS

SECONDARY SOURCES

Written on the Body, The Tattoo in European and American History • *Caplan, Jane*

Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community • *Margo DeMello*

Bodies of Subversion: A Secret History of Women and Tattoo, 3rd Edition • *Margot Mifflin*

These sources were used to get a factual, evidence based historical timeline together detailing the history of tattooing. This history includes design changes, social changes, and technical developments traced from 3000 BC to today.

From these sources, I created a summary of 7 centuries of tattoo history, tracking the social impact along the way as it changed.

TATTOO ORIGINS: SUMMARY

- Ötzi, the European Iceman
- Female figurines with broad arrays of tattoos
- Stylized animals, geometric symbols & patterns
- Hand poking sharpened bone or plant needles into skin, then rubbing ash/pigments into the wounds.

1500'S: SUMMARY

- Spanish conquistadors encountered Mayan tattoos in modern-day Mexico
- Colonization began increasing tattoo awareness
- Christian Europe began suppressing tattooing

1600'S: SUMMARY

- Religious pilgrims to Bethlehem, Jerusalem & Nazareth got crosses & religious iconography tattooed
- Tattooing faces of criminals & enslaved people became common during Great Qing Dynasty.
- Japan tattooing practiced by the ukiyo-e subculture

1700'S: SUMMARY

- The British navy began kept track of tattoos.
- Captain James Cook, the word "tattoo" came into the English language.
- Tattoos became a widespread practice among European sailors, Polynesian-style tattoos
- Constant struggle to keep traditions while colonized

1800'S: SUMMARY

- Europeans settler-colonial power decimated indigenous populations & traditions, discouraged tattooing.
- Tattooing gained popularity among American sailors, European.
- In England, tattoos became an object of aristocratic style and fascination, touring circuses
- By the end of the 1800's, estimated that up to 75% of New York City's female socialites were tattooed with such trendy designs as butterflies, flowers, and dragons.
- 1897: Sam O'Reilly created the first rotary tattoo machine. Thomas Riley invented the first single-coil tattoo machine

1900'S: SUMMARY

- Many sideshows & carnivals included people with Japanese-style full-body tattoos among their attractions.
- World War I&II and the Great Depression, public fascination with tattooing decreased significantly.
- New York City became the center of the new tattooing subculture
- Advancements made in tattoo pigments & designs
- American traditional, evolved new styles
- American Tattoo Renaissance: 1936, 1 in 10 Americans had a tattoo late
- 1950s, Lyle Tuttle, Cliff Raven, Spider Webb & Don Ed Hardy - trained new artists to continue tattoo culture into the 1970s
- Celebrity tattoos, "bad boy", trending styles

2000'S: SUMMARY

- Pop culture: tattoo reality TV shows, art exhibits, tattoo Barbie (2011)
- Commercialization of flash tattoo, broke class barriers to tattoo access
- Modern tattoo styles developed with new generations of tattoo artists, full body plans
- More women are tattooed today than men

SOCIAL IMPACT

- Identity & Affiliations:
 - Females: mark age, marriage eligibility, puberty, rank in the tribe, & enhance beauty
 - Males: rite of passage into adulthood for them, often performed after first successful hunt/battle
- Culture:
 - Achievements throughout life, spirituality
 - Worship idols, ritual
 - European culture rejected the process
- Christianity that forms the basis of the western tattoo tradition.

SOCIAL IMPACT

- Identity & Affiliations:
 - More subjective
 - Connected to career, status, and personal experience
- Culture:
 - Sailors: document travels, memories, toughness/strength
 - High Society: display status, celebrate beauty, fascination
- Because of connections to indigenous cultures, tattoos became associated with crime, otherness
- Remained a fascination, art/design expressions, oddity
- Depending on who and where you were, tattoos could be shamed or celebrated.

SOCIAL IMPACT

- Identity & Affiliations:
 - Increasingly subjectivity, individuality
- Culture:
 - Mainstream culture moved towards viewing tattoos as improper, deviant, and frivolous
 - Soldiers & Sailors: community identity, travels, achievements
- Counterculture:
 - Artist design status, placement status
 - Individual expression/art
- Modern Culture:
 - Unprofessional, the permanence of this art form suggests your design requires personal thoughts

02. KEY FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

VISUAL EXPERIENCE

Any exhibit discussing a visual medium needs to incorporate eye catching elements and examples of the medium discussed. Emphasizing the visual nature of tattoos to be observed, studied, and understood is crucial for viewers to rethink their opinions on tattoos as is my goal.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Tattoos are inherently personal to the people who get them. From the process of choosing a design, the meaning behind it, and the act of getting one, this is a personal expression of individuality. I want to have a balance of emphasizing the subjective nature of tattoo with the objective understanding of an art.

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

As an exhibit that is meant to challenge people's negative stigmas, space to invite discussion is crucial. Sharing thoughts and debating opinions is important for people to begin rethinking aspects of tattooing so this exhibit needs to encourage sharing the experience with a group.

02.

PERSONAS



JANE

AGE: 26

- Interested in tattoo history
- Has many tattoos
- Does not know about tattoo history and is here to learn
- Has a positive opinion on tattoos and has experienced negative stereotyping
- Excited to engage in sharing personal experiences



MARK

AGE: 35

- Enjoys museum experiences
- Does not have any tattoos
- Values social history and norms
- Has a negative opinion on tattoos, unprofessional
- Excited to observe, willing to keep an open mind



CONNER

AGE: 17

- Interested in tattoos as art
- Enjoys museum experiences
- Does not have any tattoos
- Has a neutral opinion on tattoos
- Excited to engage in conversation & understanding

03.

BRAND



DESIGN PRINCIPLES

EDUCATIONAL

Informing viewers through text, images, and interaction.

ENGAGING

Connecting viewers with the information through designed interactions.

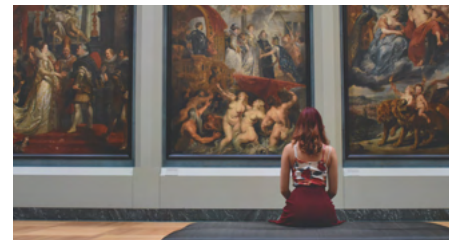
THOUGHT PROVOKING

Encourage viewers to expand their understanding of tattoos

TIME HONORED

Create an experience based on respect for an art form and its history.

MOOD BOARD



03.

LOGOMARK

The logomark developed with inspiration from other exhibit wordmarks. The work rethink is broken into three portions, 'rethink' to emphasize the message of the exhibit; 'think' to encourage reconsiderations; and 'ink' to nod to the exhibit's content.

rethink
An Exploration of Tattoo

rethink

rethink
An Exploration of Tattoo

rethink
An Exploration of Tattoo

FONT & COLORS

Poppins

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz

Mikela

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz



PT 19-3953
Sodalite Blue



PT 19-0419
Rifle Green



PT 17-0529
Cardamom Seed



PT 15-1062
Gold Fusion



PT 19-1650
Biking Red



PT 19-1663
Ribbon Red

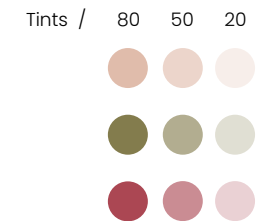


PT 19-1245
Arabian Spice



PT 12-0913
Alesan

The color choices are meant to align with the aforementioned design principles and the feel. Sophisticated, balanced, and eye catching these colors work to create an effective narrative. These colors also reflect the originally developed pigments for the first color tattoos. The richness & boldness of the colors emulates tattoo style.



04.

DEVELOPMENTS



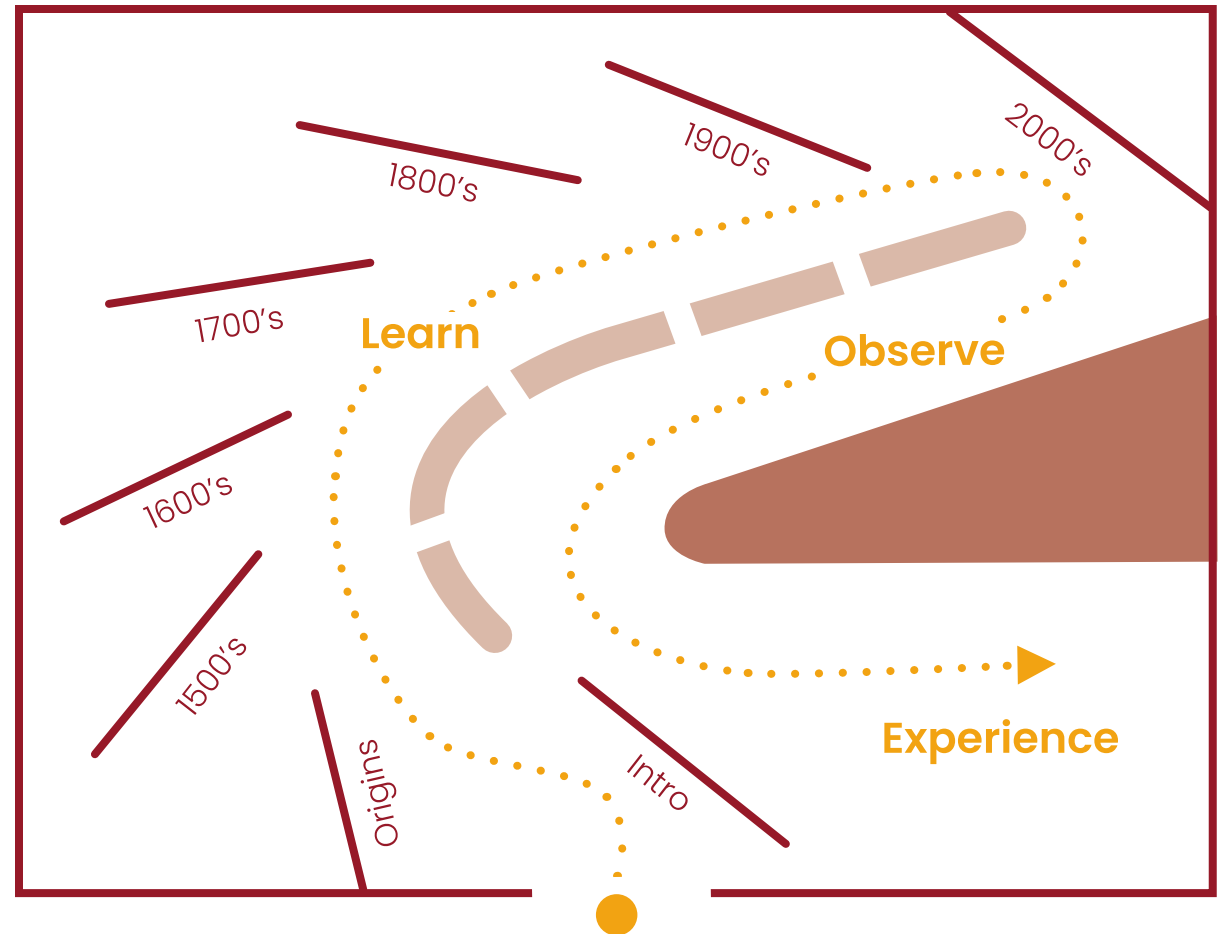
EXHIBIT PLAN

The layout of the exhibit is crucial to structuring a narrative for the viewers coming through. I knew I wanted to create a natural flow between timeline walls that allowed them to stand on their own, but still emphasize their belonging to a group. The spiral curved shape of the wall arrangements allows for a bit of the next wall to be seen while observing the previous one, encouraging a forward flow.

The structure of the timeline and the benches in the center of the room leads one directly into the second section, continuing the structured narrative.

NARRATIVE

LEARN → OBSERVE → EXPERIENCE



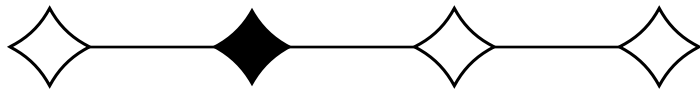
03.

IDEATIONS

PATTERNS

The patterns for this project are used in various ways on the exhibit walls, both front and back. They are intended to reflect the chaos and geometry of tattoo design through history while using elements of different tattoo designs. These patterns can be used in any colors both as focal points and at lower opacity as accents.

ICONS



These icons reflect the logomark and are used for navigation from timeline wall to timeline wall.



05.

FINAL DESIGN



EXHIBIT WALLS

INTRODUCTION

This wall sets the stage for the exhibit, presenting the brand and hinting at patterns, images, and colors to come on the following walls.



05.

EXHIBIT WALLS

TIMELINE

These walls are presenting varieties of information, visual, textual, and social. They are sized and arranged to optimize viewer understanding but also freedom to discover the wall in whichever directions they chose, the information is comprehensive.

ORIGINS

The First Ink Into Skin

The First Tattoos
The earliest discovered tattoos were those of the ancient Egyptian mummies. The mummies were found in the desert, and the tattoos were made for health or to ward off evil spirits. Tattoos were also used for identification and as a form of punishment.

Tattoo Machines
The earliest tattoo machines were made of wood and bone. A tattoo was made by hand using a sharpened bone or piece of wood to pierce the skin, then rubbing ash or pigments into the wounds.

Ancient Art
The tattooing of women was a common and sometimes exclusive ritual practice. Female figures with breast ornaments of tattoos on their bodies and bodies have been found that date back to 4000 B.C. The focus of these tattoos often symbolized girl transitioning into a woman, coinciding with puberty and age.

Early Designs
Tattoo designs varied but common designs were symbols of status, animals, and a wide variety of symbols and patterns often also found in their beliefs and religious beliefs. Tattoos have been found on bones, teeth, jewelry, the fingers and thumbs, and the face.

1800s

The American Tattoo Revolution

Circus Tattoos
In England tattoos became an object of fascination and excitement. During the time of the circus, circus performers would get the ink on their bodies to make them more attractive and to make them more memorable. It was common for a circus to have at least one fully tattooed performer. His goal was to have entertainers, artists and women alike.

Changing Stigma
Europeans and other sailors carried news of tattooing to America and Europe. They were fascinated by the practice and began to get tattoos themselves. This led to a change in the American attitude towards tattooing. It was no longer considered a mark of disgrace but a mark of honor. This led to the American style of tattooing, which is characterized by bold, black ink designs.

Tattoo Machines
Sam O'Reilly created the first tattoo machine. A great idea, Thomas Riley invented the first single-needle tattoo machine. Both received patents that they held to this day. The machine is highly regarded as a milestone in tattooing, allowing for more precise designs, better application, and longer sessions.

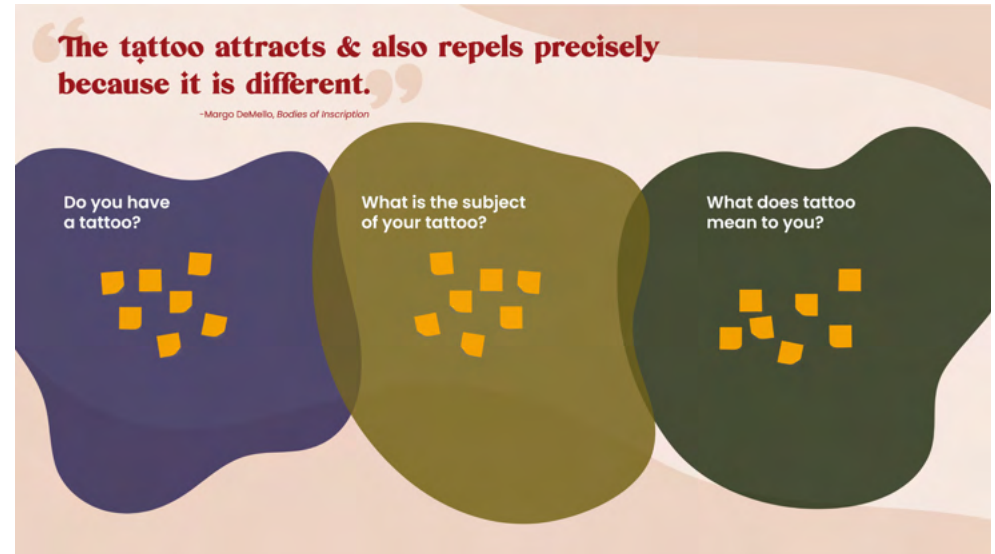
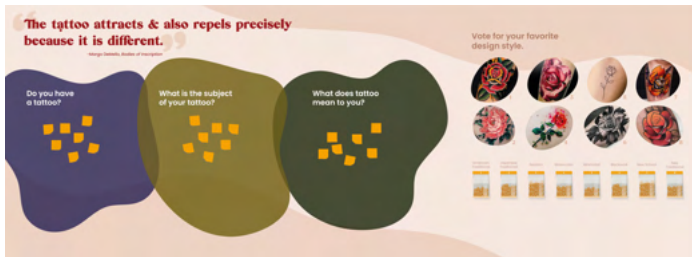
Developing Designs
Despite the growing negative stigma, the power of tattoo as a form of expression continued to grow. By the end of the 1800s, it was estimated that up to 50% of New York City's female population were tattooed with their social lives being considered heavily designs like butterflies, flowers, and designs. This time was the power of tattoo as an expression.

05.

EXHIBIT WALLS

INTERACTION

This wall has two main sections to interact with. The first involves responding and writing your own answers to the most successful questions from my survey. This wall is large to allow multiple people to stand at it and facilitate discussion amongst groups.



rethink

An Exploration of Tattoo

Expressing yourself as an individual is fundamental to the human experience. We do this through our things, creations, and the ways we present ourselves to the world. One of the most fascinating and personal ways to self express is through body art; piercings, colored hair, tattoos. The social stigma around these forms of expression, specifically tattoos, can be unfavorable. There is constant talk about how tattoos can hinder your chances of being taken seriously in professional settings and associating one with deviant behavior.

Inherently, tattoos are neutral and this exhibit aims to take a deeper look at tattoos as self expression, art, and a form of cultural connection. The history of this art form from its origins to today's practices traces a beautiful connection between humanity on art.

ORIGINS

The First Ink Into Skin



The First Tattoos

Two tourists discovered the remains of the oldest known Iceman nestled into a glacier in the Italian Alps. The mummy was named Otzi and his remains were studied for insight into life over 5,000 years ago. In total he had 61 tattoos preserved on his skin, mostly of organized geometric patterns and shapes.

Tattoo Machines

The earliest tattoo machines were simple sharp tools. A tattoo was made by hand poking sharpened bone or plant needles into skin, then rubbing ash or pigments into the wounds.



Ancient Art

The tattooing of women was a common and sometimes exclusive ritual practice. Female figurines with broad arrays of tattoos on their bodies and limbs have been found that date back to 4000-3500 B.C. The focus of these tattoos often symbolized a girl transitioning into a woman, coinciding with puberty and age.



Early Designs

Tattoo designs varied but common designs were ornate images of stylized animals and a wide variety of symbols and patterns often also found in their textile and pottery designs. Tattoos have been noted on torsos, limbs, hands, the fingers and thumbs, and the face.



“The tattoo attracts & also repels precisely because it is different.”

-Margo DeMello, *Bodies of Inscription*

Do you have a tattoo?



What is the subject of your tattoo?



What does tattoo mean to you?



Vote for your favorite design style.



FURTHER APPLICATIONS

SIGNAGE

As with many special exhibits, merchandise should be considered. The focus for this exhibit is signage and t-shirts to direct and encourage the guests to carry the message of the exhibit with them.



05.

T-SHIRTS





**thank
you!**

