

Inklingers

UNDER THE SKIN



Jakob Schultz . Michael Caddy Søndergaard



GUIL ZEKRI

Guil Zekri, Reinkarnation Tattoo, Cologne, Germany

☆ 10.09.1974, Netanya, Israel

"I never wanted to be a tattoo artist. When I was younger, I just wanted to do music. I studied piano for years and then moved to the bass. That was my life: music. I had always been drawing and painting. The influences came from the cover artwork of all the bands I was listening to at the time. I clearly remember a Whitesnake album cover that got stuck in my mind for a long time. I was like 10 years old, but this image just kept hanging in my brain. It's the first memory I have from art and one of the first feelings I had for a painting. Everything came to me and it was obvious that I needed to be an artist of some kind. A musician or a painter.

What led me to art was the fact that my family and parents didn't believe in it at all. I didn't get any support from them. No real support other than a few kind words. I was like a lost soul dressed in black when I was in school, and I was always drawing band logos on the tables. I was heavily inspired by the covers of Dan Seagrave. He did the fantastic artwork for bands like Suffocation, Entombed and Morbid Angel. I just loved it.

I grew up in Israel and it was kinda rough. There was not so much fun. Just too many problems. I think the problems made me look on other things with a different view and made me escape into some other place. It eventually made my need to create even stronger.

My life has changed completely after I began to tattoo. I started late. I was 29 and had made a lot of paintings and drawings. I was working as a bartender and studying in Paris. I had no money at all, and living in Paris was not cheap. I moved to Münster in Germany, and it was there I started tattooing. I was like this Israeli French guy learning to talk German but I was happy because I could turn my hobby into a real job. And not just a job, but the best job in the world."

"I never wanted to be a tattoo artist. When I was younger, I just wanted to do music. I studied piano for years and then moved to the bass. That was my life: music. I had always been drawing and painting. The influences came from the cover artwork of all the bands I was listening to at the time. I clearly remember a Whitesnake album cover that got stuck in my mind for a long time. I was like 10 years old, but this image just kept hanging in my brain. It's the first memory I have from art and one of the first feelings I had for a painting. Everything came to me and it was obvious that I needed to be an artist of some kind. A musician or a painter.

What led me to art was the fact that my family and parents didn't believe in it at all. I didn't get any support from them. No real support other than a few kind words. I was like a lost soul dressed in black when I was in school, and I was always drawing band logos on the tables. I was heavily inspired by the covers of Dan Seagrave. He did the fantastic artwork for bands like Suffocation, Entombed and Morbid Angel. I just loved it.

I grew up in Israel and it was kinda rough. There was not so much fun. Just too many problems. I think the problems made me look on other things with a different view and made me escape into some other place. It eventually made my need to create even stronger.

My life has changed completely after I began to tattoo. I started late. I was 29 and had made a lot of paintings and drawings. I was working as a bartender and studying in Paris. I had no money at all, and living in Paris was not cheap. I moved to Münster in Germany, and it was there I started tattooing. I was like this Israeli French guy learning to talk German but I was happy because I could turn my hobby into a real job. And not just a job, but the best job in the world."





"The biggest difference between artists is the way of seeing things. Every artist creates from his or her personal life experience, education, personal senses, and most importantly, sensibility for different things in life. This is how it is for me. I was born and raised in different conditions, and my education and family have influenced me. Even weather changes all perception. Of course, things became stronger and clearer in my head when my environment was not really supporting what I did. It just motivated me even stronger to move this way with my work. I'm also influenced a lot by Baroque and Renaissance times. In Israel you don't have this type of architecture, but I always loved that type of old art. When you live in a place where you don't see it, you always want what you don't have. The contrast between where my origin is and where I wanted to be makes me do art that is unique to me.

The first tattoo I ever did was on myself. I was stupid enough to think I could do a realistic face, Robert Hernandez-style free-hand on my leg. I got a Micky Sharp machine, made my own needle and began. It didn't hurt but I was sweating. If I told Robert Hernandez this, he would probably laugh his ass off. The tattoo is still there today, and I'm just happy that I didn't do it on someone I love. To create art you need to know art. For me it means I visit galleries, read books and keep myself informed about art and the history of art. I want to have a lot of input because the more input you get, the better output you do. I paint a lot – it's very important to me – but I make a complete separation between my tattoo work and my paintings. I just love the two different mediums. But still I can use the techniques in both ways of doing arts. I try not to check out so much work from other tattoo artists. I try to be more open and get influenced by life and other things. I think it's probably a bit different than what other tattoo artists do.

Working hard is also important. I knew a lot of guys who were not as talented as many others, but they worked that much harder and made it. They do beautiful tattoos. But it's not the same as being an artist. You have to be born into that. It has something to do with science and how each brain works differently. Some can calculate mathematics very fast, and others are excellent at sports. And then there are some that can create art and are gifted this way."

"I hope that I can some day reach a level where I can't develop any more, but still that's impossible as a human being and as an artist. Personally I'm only in the beginning and I have only just begun to feel like an artist. It's a long journey and you will develop until you die. I cannot imagine that the only thing that is burning inside you and makes you develop and grow as a human just stops or fades away.

Not everyone that can draw is an artist. Not everyone that can play guitar is a musician. Like American Idol, each young girl that can sing is directly transformed into a star. I don't really get it. It takes so much time to become an artist. So much hard work because there are no limitations. If you feel it and see it and the need to create is burning inside you, then there are no limitations.

If I can't see it, I can't tattoo it. I don't see tattoo as a challenge so I don't have to struggle to create a nice piece. Almost everything that I tattoo I can also paint or draw. I like the appreciation of the customer, but I think the process to get there is more interesting than the result itself. That's a part of evolving, in my opinion.

Everything influences me. The taste of coffee in the morning, the light from the sun shining through the clouds and seeing different people in the streets and imagining their lives even though I don't know them. Everything is influence, and everything can be art. You just need the sensibility to see it and feel it.

There is not one original tattoo artist in the world. Everything is influenced by everything. You cannot invent anything anymore. It's normal human evolution. We learn from what we know and try to digest it. Of course there are some incredible artists today.

A lot of guys and girls would like to get into this explosion of the tattoo scene. It has become a trend, and therefore many will try to make money and be one of the cool dudes and have fame. This will hopefully not last long. Everything has been done, so I think it will become more artistic in the future. We have reached a limit in what is possible to do on skin. The secret is to take all that has been done before and still be creative and innovative."

