



Giving some ink to local painter-tattooist Shay Bredimus March 21st, 2014 ·



Shay Bredimus

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Thirty-four-year-old Shay Bredimus is known locally for his work as a tattoo artist, having inked skin since 1998, but his training is rooted in formal education; this tattooist has a master's degree in fine arts.

The now Long Beach resident hails from Omaha, Nebraska, was raised in Phoenix, Arizona, and "bounced around the West Coast after that." Bredimus, who has been living in Long Beach for five years, currently creates skin art at Outer Limits, 22 S. Chestnut Pl., which is, according to its website, the oldest tattoo shop in the country. Last month, Bredimus was the featured speaker for the Long Beach Museum of Art's Artist Talk event entitled "Tattoo Influence," during which he explained how the technical skill he has learned from tattooing has influenced his fine art and how the aesthetics of fine art has affected his tattoo work.



Tattoo work by Shay Bredimus

What drew you into the tattoo world?

When I was 10 years old, I saw a guy that had an eagle tattoo on his face, just under his eye. He embodied everything I was attracted to and frightened by, all in one. I liked the fringe and the danger of this marginalized art form. It was also the only kind of artistic expression that was available to me at the time, in my neighborhood. We didn't have ateliers and private art schools. We had tattoos and graffiti.

What would you say is your "point of view" as a tattoo artist?

Before I am a tattoo artist, I am an artist. So, the way I see or approach tattoo art is from a painter's point of view. The light, the shadow, the concept and the composition... I approach it like I approach a painting- not just as a tattoo.

Your tattoo work includes a lot of very realistic portraits. What training as an artist have you had?

I had a two-year apprenticeship as a tattooer early on. But, I also have a bachelor's of fine art in painting from Emily Carr University and a master's of fine arts in painting from Laguna College of Art and Design. I have been doing art since the first grade- I knew early on that I was going to be an artist.

Do you work full-time as a tattoo artist?

Yes, I work 40 hours a week as a tattoo artist. It's been my main job for as long as I can remember.

What's the strangest experience you've ever had while giving someone a tattoo?

Since I work at the oldest shop in America, Outer Limits Tattoo, they don't have air conditioning, and during the Long Beach summer, it gets so hot in this old shop that people drop like flies. People pass out more often from heat stroke than pain- and it's pretty startling to have your client go limp in the chair while you're tattooing them. In the five years I've worked at Outer Limits, I've probably seen 20 people pass out while I've been tattooing them.



Tattoo work by Shay Bredimus

How did you get involved with the presentation you gave at the Long Beach Museum of Art?

Last year, the Long Beach Museum of Art asked me to submit a piece of art for their annual art auction. They knew of my work through my gallery representation, Koplín Del Río in Culver City. Then again, this year, in preparation for my upcoming third solo show, they decided to have me back to discuss my work– both tattoo art and fine art– and the overlapping areas, influences and techniques of both.

How would you characterize your non-tattoo artwork?

My fine art is a blend of flat graphic device, compositional depth and realistic rendering.

What would you say is the number-one thing, besides artistic talent, that one needs to be a successful tattoo artist?

Talent and mileage are the most important. But, I think you also have to be courageous and confident as well. Mistakes can happen, and if they do, they're huge. But if you are trained, skilled and confident, you can will yourself through the most intense and ultimate alla prima art form.

To view more of Bredimus's work, visit shaybredimus.com.