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Membre de la Chambre Européenne des Experts d'Art

Membre du Syndicat Français des Experts Professionnels en Œuvres d'Art et Objets de Collection

Membre du Comité Scientifique André Breton



TATTOO - Inked Identities

EXHIBITION

17 – 31 October 2019

Press Release

An exhibition on the **fine art of Tattoo** in the **Pacific Island & Eskimo Cultures** with a selection of **early Tribal Art** and early images from the periods of discovery and exploration – in conjunction with a **Pop-Up Tattoo studio** showcasing the work of **Dmitry Babakhin**, a Russian tattoo artist and **Po'oino Yrondi**, a Polynesian tattoo artist both specializing in Polynesian tattoo.

The Contemporary component will function as a temporary tattoo studio in the gallery offering on-site tattooing to a select number of collector-clients (see below for studio information).



Galerie Meyer - Oceanic & Eskimo Art has a long history of interest in tattooing or the « 10th art » as is now known. From the earliest periods of human history, men and women have adorned their bodies, both temporarily with jewels and paints and permanently with tattoos and corporal modifications.

The artistry and permanency of tattoo is known to have been practiced in Europe as early as 5300 years ago as can be seen on the preserved body of Ötzi, found mummified in the ice of an Austrian glacier in 1991. Slightly later examples are the Chinchorro Man of c. 2000 BP in Chile and the Central Asian Princess of Ukok who dates from around 2500 BP.

Tattoo of course existed before these examples - however, no preserved tattooed skin has so far been uncovered from the time before Ötzi.

Tattoo was used both a social identifier and as a prophylactic “remedy” used for medical healing and spiritual advancement as well as a protective device functioning as a “shield” against illness, bad magic or weapons. It would seem logical and most probable that early man, at least as far back as the Neolithic period of human development practiced tattoo. There appear to be traces of tattoo in the repertory of European cave paintings and in petroglyphs dating as far back as to 25/35,000 years ago.

The tattoo returned to Europe in the late 18th century as a result of Captain Cook's first voyage to the Pacific islands. Sailors showed-off their *tatu* or *tatau* obtained in Polynesia and the use of tattoo developed rapidly, coupled with the fantasy of the "New Cythera" created by the glowing reports of the French explorer Bougainville about Tahiti and the sailor's stories of easy living and free love.

Oceanic tattoo, and specifically that of Polynesia, which is probably based on the practice of the art in South East Asia, developed over thousands of years. It is possibly the most accomplished of all forms of the art. The representations include all geometric forms as well as flora, fauna and humanoid representations. From the delicate filigree black-work to the massive swaths of solid black, covering various parts, if not all, of the body in symmetrical and asymmetrical motifs, the fashion of tattoo reached its pinnacle in the South Seas in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Tattoo is attested to in the far North well over two thousand years ago. The earliest art-works from the Eskimo cultures of the Arctic Circle all show body markings represented as engraved lines and circle dot motifs carefully carved on the walrus ivory figurines. From the Tchukchi of Siberia to the Okvik of the Bering Strait onwards to the Punuk and later Thule cultures reaching as far East as Greenland - tattoo is omnipresent on the figures and masks.



Inked Identities relates to the permanence of one's marks, the total osmosis with the essence of one's inner being - your identity but also your ethnic origin, your social status, and your ritual and religious beliefs are identified through the motifs and arrangements of the imagery on the outside of your body.

Today tattoo has advanced to another level with many people now using their skin as a canvas to simply portray their interests, to embellish their persona or to carry the permanent work of a favorite tattoo artist. Tattoo has transcended the earlier reasons for its existential existence to become in many cases a "fashion", and a social practice that is now far removed from the protective and identifying role it played since its invention.

These *Inked Identities*, whether early traditional forms or contemporary imagery, are etched or injected into the derma forever. As the play on words with the French title "*Identités encrés*" shows us, the sound of the word "*encré*" (inked) is the same as that of the French word for "anchored" (*ancré*) thus one's identity is deeply anchored by the ink under the skin.



The exhibition *Inked Identities* will offer early photographs of tattooed, tribal Oceanic & Eskimo people, early art work from the time of European discovery and exploration as well as photographs of modern and contemporary tattoos. Early and modern tattooing tools and early examples of traditional tribal art representing tattooed people such as ancestor figures and masks from Oceania and the Arctic will be on display and some will be for sale.

We will have the pleasure to welcome a number of renowned tattoo people notably the Maori Artist George Nuku, the former Dutch tattoo artist and tribal art dealer Michel Thieme, and the Swiss journalist and collector Etienne Dumont and Professor Lars Krutak...



The Pop-Up tattoo work-shop will function in the gallery Thursday 17 through Sunday 20 of October by appointment only. Appointments should be made through the individual studios of the artists :

Dmitry Babakhin : babakhin@gmail.com

Po'oino Yroni : pooyroni@icloud.com



We are pleased to announce that Professor Lars Krutak will offer a "Gallery Talk" on the Art Of Tattoo in the Pacific and Arctic regions on Saturday 19th of October and a book signing on Friday 18th October.

Krutak began tattoo research in 1996 as a graduate student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Trained as an archaeologist and cultural anthropologist, he spent three years exploring the complex symbolism and practice of tattooing throughout the Arctic. He received his Ph.D. at Arizona State University's School of Human Evolution & Social Change in 2009. Krutak's tattoo research culminated in an unpublished Master's thesis, *One Stitch at a Time : Ivalu and Sivuqaq Tattoo*, focusing on the traditional tattooing of the St. Lawrence Island Yupiit. Today, Krutak contributes articles to international tattoo publications. Professor Krutak has worked for several years as a Repatriation Research Specialist at the National Museum of the American Indian, an Archaeologist in the Repatriation Office of the National Museum of Natural History, and today he is a Program Specialist at the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, an agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior. He is very active in the field of museum curation and is an Anthropological Consultant for three National Geographic television documentaries, and is the Technical Advisor for one of the world's largest and most popular tattoo websites, www.vanishingtattoo.com. In 2003, he was a co-recipient of the American Book Award in Literature.

His latest book the co-edited volume "Ancient Ink: The Archaeology of Tattooing" with Aaron Deter-Wolf, assembles the research of international scholars and tattoo artists. Published by the University of Washington Press in November 2017, "Ancient Ink" is the first book to explore the archaeological history of tattooing through ancient tools, tattooed mummies, and tattooed objects of material culture



Exhibition Location :

Galerie Meyer – Oceanic Art, Paris
17 rue des Beaux Arts, Paris 75006 France

Exhibition Dates :

17 October – 2 November 2019
Tuesday to Friday 14:30 – 18:00
Saturday 11:00 – 13:00 / 14:30 – 19:00

Contact press : HD photographs and further information :

Anthony JP Meyer : ajpmeyer@gmail.com / +33 680 10 80 22
Dmitry Babakhin : babakhin@gmail.com
Po'oino Yrondi : pooyrondi@icloud.com

Tattoo Pop-Up Studio dates :

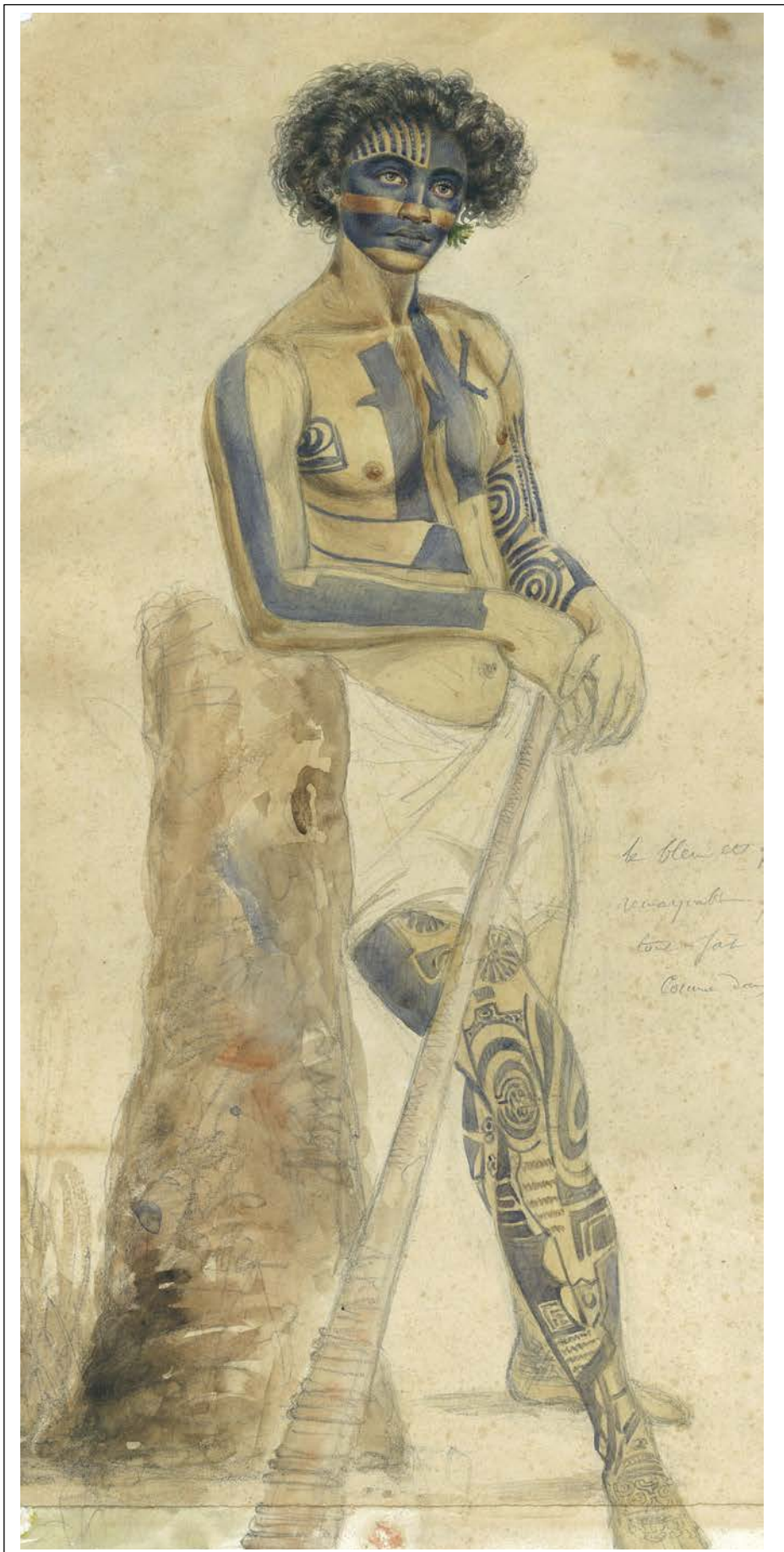
17, 18, 19, 20 October (in the gallery and by appointment only)
Dmitry Babakhin : babakhin@gmail.com
Po'oino Yrondi : pooyrondi@icloud.com

Gallery – Talk with Lars Krutak :

Saturday 19 October (time to be announced)

Book Signing by Lars Krutak :

Friday 18 October (time to be announced)



Watercolored drawing of a tattooed Marquesas man.

Félix Randon de Grolier, officier on board L'ARTEMISE (1837-1840). Paper. 42,5 x 20,4 cm. C. 1838.

This drawing is the work of Randon de Grolier, the ancestor of Madame Christine Benoit (née Randon de Grolier) drawn during his stay in Tahiti in 1838. The drawing has remained in the Randon de Grolier family since the return of Félix Randon de Grolier to France in 1840.

© Galerie Meyer – Oceanic & Eskimo Art



Portrait of a tattooed Maori Chief.

Anonymous artist

Painted plaster

19th/20th century

24 x 18 x 12 cm

© Coll. : Galerie Meyer – Oceanic & Eskimo Art



Dmitry Babakhin : babakhin@gmail.com

Photo © Dmitry Babakhin

Artist of the Year 2013-2019

Polynesian Tattoo Awards

International Competition for the Best Polynesian Tattoo Pictures and Artists



Tribal tattoo master Dmitry Babakhin based in St. Petersburg gets his inspiration from the Polynesian tattoo culture, especially the Marquesan one. Babakhin was originally a seafarer by trade. He received his first tattoo at age 14. After seeing how it was done, he started experimenting and made his first machine a few years later from a cassette player and guitar string. He began tattooing clients onboard the ships. In 2000, Babakhin started tattooing professionally. While, St. Petersburg is far away from Polynesia, it is home to the Hermitage and Kunstkamera museums that house remarkable collections of Polynesian art. Babakhin also draws inspiration from his private collection of Polynesian objects, photographs and rare books, which he acquires from art and antique dealers in Europe. Voted by his peers « Artist of the Year » for the Polynesian Tattoo Awards from 2013 through to 2019, Babakhin's expertise stems not only from his technical abilities but also from knowing how to read bodily contours and accentuate them with artistically rendered black-work patterns. For Babakhin, anything is possible, and his creative scope is seemingly unlimited. Babakhin's tribally infused works convey the endless possibilities of tattoo art that can be created with Polynesian black-work, and these complex, eye-popping patterns ignite the visual senses in profound ways.

"Polynesian tattooing is bold, black, geometric, and abstract, so this sets me apart."

Text abstracted from Lars Krutak



Po'oino Yroni : pooyroni@icloud.com

Photo © Po'oino Yroni

Creator of the Dwayne Johnson "The Rock" Tattoo

Polynesian Tattoo Awards

International Competition for the Best Polynesian Tattoo Pictures and Artists



Po'oino Yroni, a tattoo artist for over twenty years, grew up in the Marquesas Islands and Moorea in Polynesia. He began by getting tattooed and then tattooing others to claim the cultural identity of the islands. For some years, Po'oino has been interested in ceramics through which he approaches the origin of the Polynesian tattoo. Lapita pottery dating back over 3000 years is the oldest evidence of the presence of the Polynesian people and their art in the Pacific. The Ti'a'iri Tattoo studio of Po'oino Yroni is located in the castle of Saint-Amand en Puisaye, France, a unique setting thanks to the restoration of the commons. This offers the visitor, a relaxing and warm atmosphere in this village which has become a focal-point for ceramic artists.

"In Polynesia, we share the tattoo. We give it with love. I choose reasons in which I find a certain universality. The tattoo artist is like a navigator on his boat, it is up to him to make sense in his way of interpreting."



Fully tattooed Marquesan warrior with club.
Anonymous artist
Watercolor & graphite, on paper
20,5 x 18,5 cm.
c. 1840/1845
© Coll. : Galerie Meyer – Oceanic & Eskimo Art