

# 2019 *Trend Report*







# *Index*

<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<b><i>03</i></b>
<b><i>Industry 2019</i></b>	<b><i>05</i></b>
<b><i>Shops</i></b>	<b><i>07</i></b>
<b><i>Style Trends</i></b>	<b><i>12</i></b>
<b><i>Artists to Watch</i></b>	<b><i>34</i></b>
<b><i>inkbox Trends</i></b>	<b><i>39</i></b>
<b><i>References</i></b>	<b><i>43</i></b>





# Introduction

Another year, another trip around the sun. While we're not about to preach the whole "new year, new me" BS, there's something about the end of a year that gives us a chance to reflect on the past, while looking towards the future.

Glancing back at 2018, it was a year of unity as well as divisiveness. We were divided over the Trump-Russia scandal, not being able to discern between Yanny or Laurel, and whether or not that YouTuber who laughed about suicide should still be able to make millions. We were uncomfortable learning that Facebook got hacked, yet continued to use Instagram more than ever before. We were united by Meghan Markle and Prince Harry tying the knot, the winter Olympics in Korea, and the rise of Fortnite (which also brought some new moves to the dance floor). Black Panther made Hollywood history, and shows such as *Queer Eye* and *Ru Paul's Drag Race* won Emmys. Gen Z showed everyone that age is just a number by creating March For Our Lives after the Parkland shooting. It was also this past year that the #MeToo movement broke ground and its anti-sexual assault and women's empowerment movement began.

We can't pretend to know what will happen in 2019. We can't say whether or not Lindsay Lohan will party in Mykonos again, nor can we predict the next Walmart yodel kid. However, what we do know a thing or two about, is tattoos. In this report we'll establish a snapshot of 2018, and where we predict the industry will be moving in 2019. From style, placement, shop trends, artists on the rise, and inkbox tattoo trends, read on to get a glimpse of the future. Expect to see connections between these trends and the cultural events aforementioned, since public demand for tattoos is primarily driven by demographic and cultural trends (IBISWorld 2017).

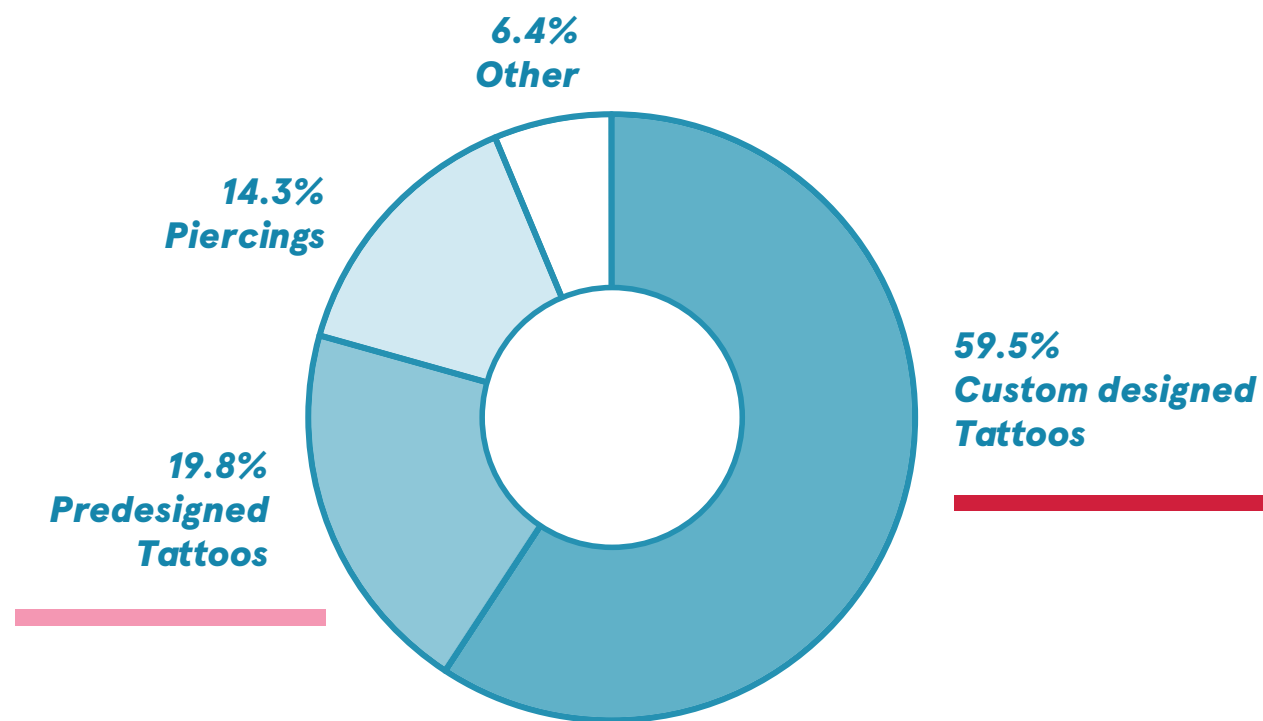
Tattoos, body piercings, and the tattoo removal industry is estimated to be worth \$3 billion and growing. This has doubled in the last decade as it was valued at \$1.6 billion in 2007 (*LaRosa, 2018*). One third of Americans report having a tattoo, while half of millennials say the same (*IBISWorld, 2017*). Among these younger demographics, it's common to not just stop at one, as one third of millennials have multiple tattoos (*IBISWorld, 2017*).

Tattoos have seen a culture shift from being taboo to common, largely due to the increase of exposure via Instagram and reality television (*LaRosa, 2018, Bryant, 2018*). One survey reported that 66.3% of people consider tattoos as mainstream (*YEAY, 2018*). The stigma towards tattoos has been decreasing over the last five to ten years, and while some of those who are tattooed feel positive about being more socially accepted, their feelings are tainted with sentiments that it's no longer as rebellious or unique to have a tattoo (*Trommel, 2018*).

At inkbox we believe that art is what tattoos are truly about, and the artists that maintain their unique styles while collaborating with clients to express their individualities, will be the tattoo trailblazers of 2019. While custom tattoo pieces take up about 60% of the industry's services and flash or predesigned pieces consist of 20% (*IBISWorld, 2017*), we predict that flash will grow in 2019.



# Tattoo Market Segmentation (2017)



Today, more and more tattooers are coming from previous backgrounds in art. Whether it's fine art acrylic painting like Curt Montgomery, or film like Yi Stropky, many contemporary tattoo artists were first artists in a different medium. This is why the particular style, subjects, genre, and technique of a tattoo artist takes precedence over whether the tattoo is specifically custom for the client.

***“I have been tattooing only my flash pieces for a while. Most of my clients are open to whatever is available in my flash book”***

- Yi Stropky @chinatownstropky

Based out of Holy Noir in Toronto, Curt Montgomery says that 75% of the work he's doing recently is from his flash book.

***“It's always rad when someone wants a piece I've put together from my own inspirations, but I also love doing custom work when its an idea that excites me”***

- Curt Montgomery @curtmontgomerytattoos

Since opening in March 2018, inkbox's permanent tattoo studio in Toronto has been host to 15 guests artists, and over 250 permanent tattoos have been done so far. Of these, approximately 87% were flash or pre-designed pieces. We believe that this demonstrates the eagerness, willingness, and excitement of viewing tattoos as collectible pieces from the artists. "I hope to see more original artists who make creative tattoos and more customers who like collecting original tattoo art," says Stropky. Keep in mind however, that the line between custom and flash can be blurry, as artists often adapt previous flash and portfolio pieces to suit a client's needs.







*Industry 2019*







Instagram has made the industry more approachable and accessible for people who would otherwise find tattoo parlors intimidating. Artists largely treat their Instagram accounts as portfolios, so the app can act as a bridge from client to artist (Bryant, 2018). The visual communication makes it a natural marketing tool for artists and shops, increasing the consumer’s comfort level with the process (IBISWorld, 2017). Now, artists often announce travel and availability over the platform. As a result, more people are scheduling appointments based on where and when a specific artist is visiting, instead of solely finding a local shop (Bryant, 2018).



“Instagram has given artists and clients the exposure, and inspiration that was much needed in the industry.”

– Curt Montgomery @curtmontgomerytattoos

“I think that for 2019 that will only continue to grow, and it will be really exciting to see what this means for both the artists and people getting tattooed,” says Montgomery.

Brittany Randell (@humblebeetattoo) says, “Instagram has become a great platform for artists to create dialogues about the tattoo industry, in regards to discrimination, safe spaces, artists sharing their techniques, and connecting with clients and supporters.” One of her goals for 2019 is to have conversations with her followers around the colonization of tattoos and its indigenous and cultural origins.







# *Shops*

Tattoo shops are no longer restricted to the seedy side of town, whether they operate by walk-ins or by appointment only (LaRosa, 2018). More and more, we see parlors popping up along main shopping streets, as well as inside or next to coffee shops (LaRosa, 2018). If money is no object, San Francisco is the most expensive spot to get inked at an average of \$280 per hour (YEAY, 2018). In terms of straight-up quantity, Miami Beach checks in as the most parlors per capita, with 28.5 studios per 100,000 citizens (YEAY, 2018). While permanent tattoos are predominantly the sole offering of these shops, many also offer piercings and merchandise. Merch currently generates 6.4% of revenue, but we believe that this will increase in 2019 as more artists sell branded apparel and prints of their art to boost that revenue stream (IBISWorld, 2017). As more parlors make their way from red leather seats and heavy metal music, to spaces offering tea that are covered in plants, the shift from an aggressive to approachable environment is prevalent. Innovative shops such as Sang Bleu are proving that the tattoo space is one filled with talent, art, and endless opportunity. While shops such as Outcast Club, Femme Fatale, and Valentine's Tattoo Co. are making sure that everybody, no matter their race, gender, or identity, feels welcome.

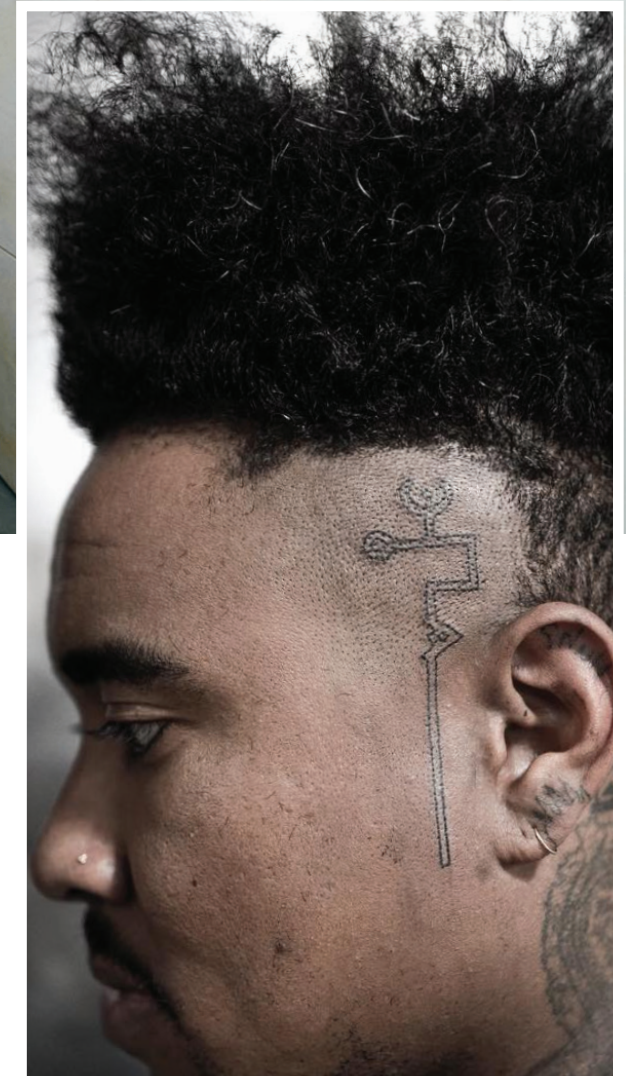




Sang Bleu - London UK

## Spotlight - Sang Bleu

In 2013, esteemed tattooist turned creative director Maxime Plescia-Buchi created Sang Bleu. Since then, the company has transformed into a collective consisting of its contemporary tattoo studios, media publication TTTISM, a clothing line, and an agency offering editorials, media and events. With studios already in London and Zurich, they'll be opening their Los Angeles location in 2019. We're sure they'll be making waves in L.A., a city that lacks alternatives to highly traditional shops.



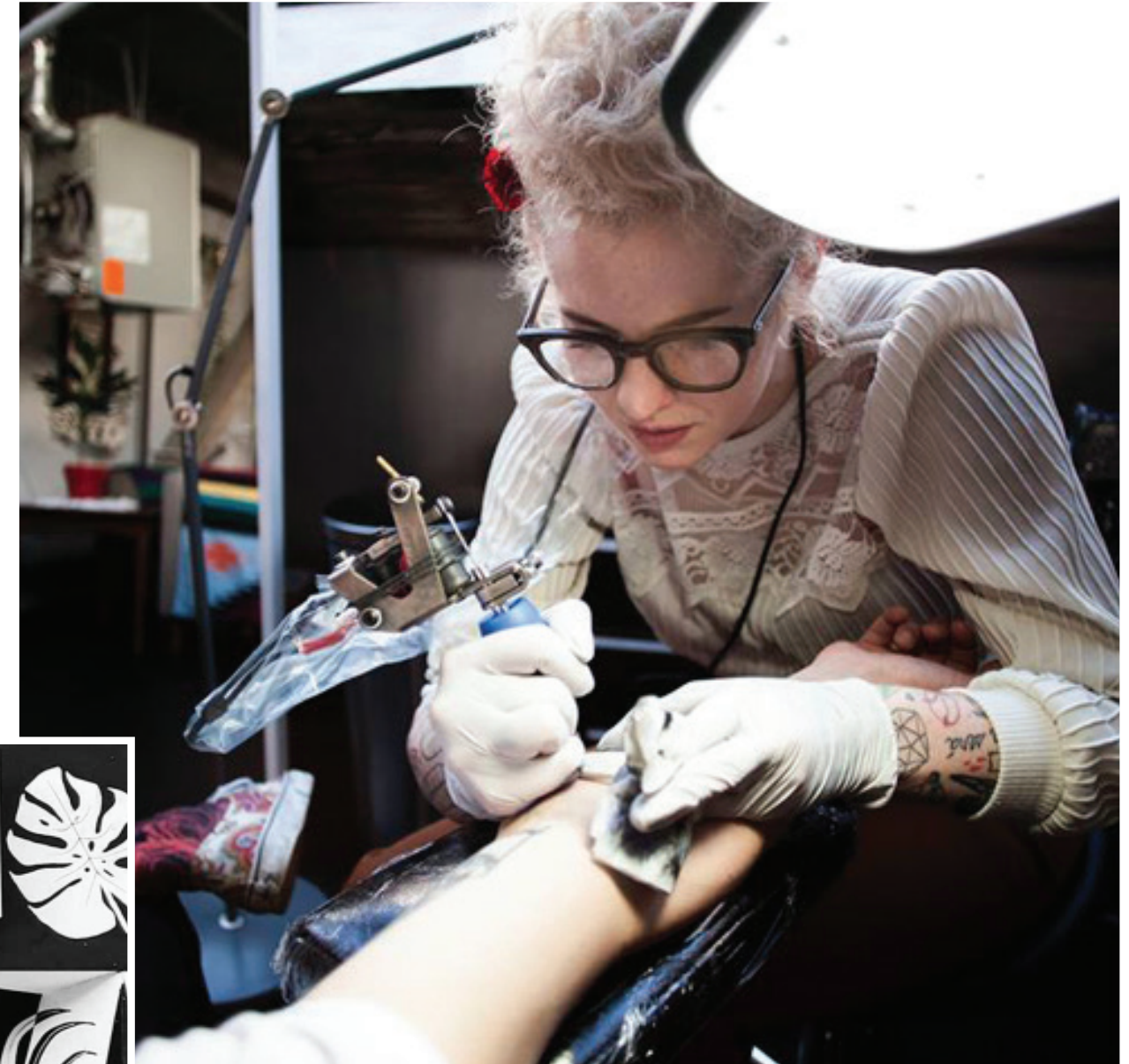
Tattoo by Maxime Plescia-Buchi @mxmttt



## Safe Spaces

As marginalized communities share their stories, underlying issues of the hypermasculine, intimidating, uncomfortable, and outdated industry come to light. Just as #MeToo was born out of a dark place to become an empowering and emboldening movement, we have seen a rise in tattoo shops that take pride in being a safe space for all. Shops such as Valentine's Tattoo Co. in Seattle preach zero tolerance for sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, fatphobia, ableism, or other bigoted stances (Perry, 2018).

Brody Podlinsky, of UNIV ERSE STUDIO in Berlin, wants their studio to engage in body modifications in a way that makes people feel safe and comfortable (Nichols, 2017). The Outcast Club in Toronto, states that they're creating comfortable experiences for these communities and its allies, prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities (*The Outcast Club*, 2018). The owners behind Valentine's Tattoo Co. were inspired to start their space as a way to combat the sexism that still lingers in the industry, and a workplace that they themselves also felt safe as queer artists (Perry, 2018).



Shannon Perry, Valentine's Tattoo Co.



TKVO - Toronto's Outcast Club



## Safe Spaces

Emily North (@em16), owner of the Scarlet Letter Club (@scarletletterbk) in New York City has found that despite all the progress driven by the #MeToo movement, there is still far too much sexist, racist, and homophobic behavior in tattoo shops. Still, she's hopeful for the future"

***“The truth is that clients outnumber tattooers, and because clients want to see more safe tattooers and safe tattoo spaces, we are able to build them. I’m so grateful that things are changing.”***

- Emily North, 2018



@scarletletterbk



Emily North, shot by: Vanessa Rondon



## Safe Spaces

While these are steps in the right direction, there remains ample room for progress in 2019. Randell speaks from her own experience and believes that not all shops that consider themselves safe spaces truly are, as some are predominantly run by cis white people.

**“It would be nice to see these shops that claim to be safe spaces hiring people from marginalized communities as well as providing safe and fair practices.”**

– Brittany Randell, Humblebee Tattoo



Brittany Randell



Tattoo by Brittany Randell @humblebeetattoo



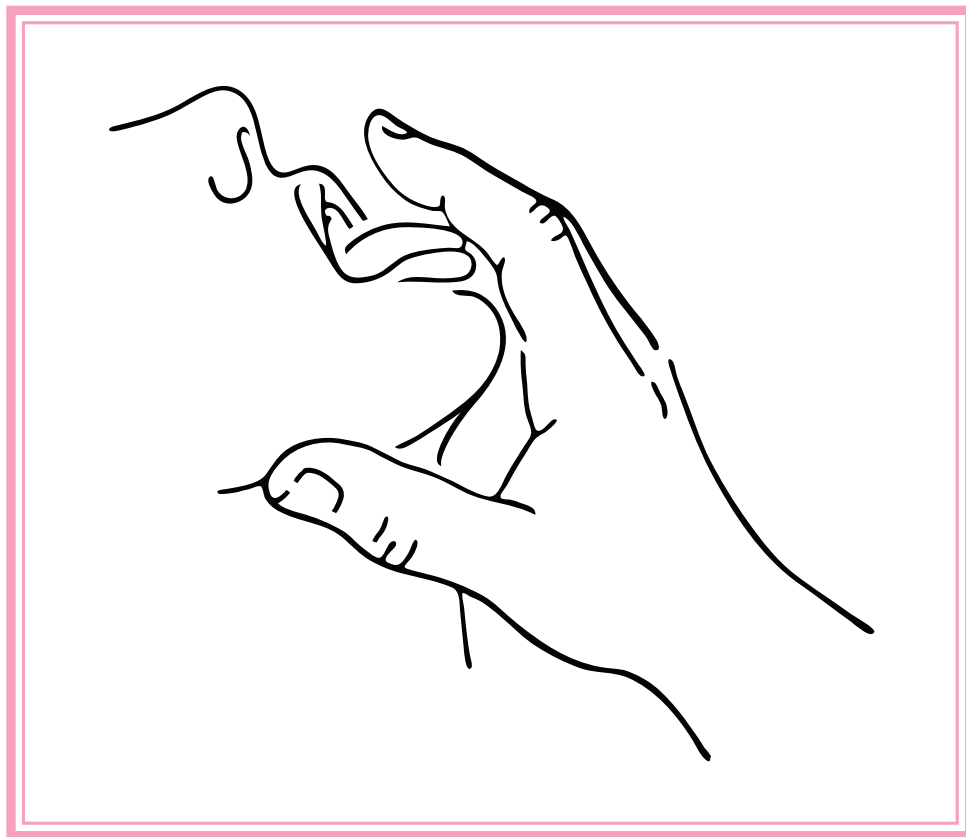


# *Style Trends*

## Style Trends

# Sex Positive

From Curt Montgomery's NSFW pieces (@curtmontgomerytattoos), to Brittny Abad's (@blaabad) mission of de-stigmatizing sexuality, we're seeing more and more sex-positive and sex-focused tattoos. After all, shouldn't we all feel good about something that makes us feel good?



inkbox design by Curt Montgomery @curtmontgomerytattoos





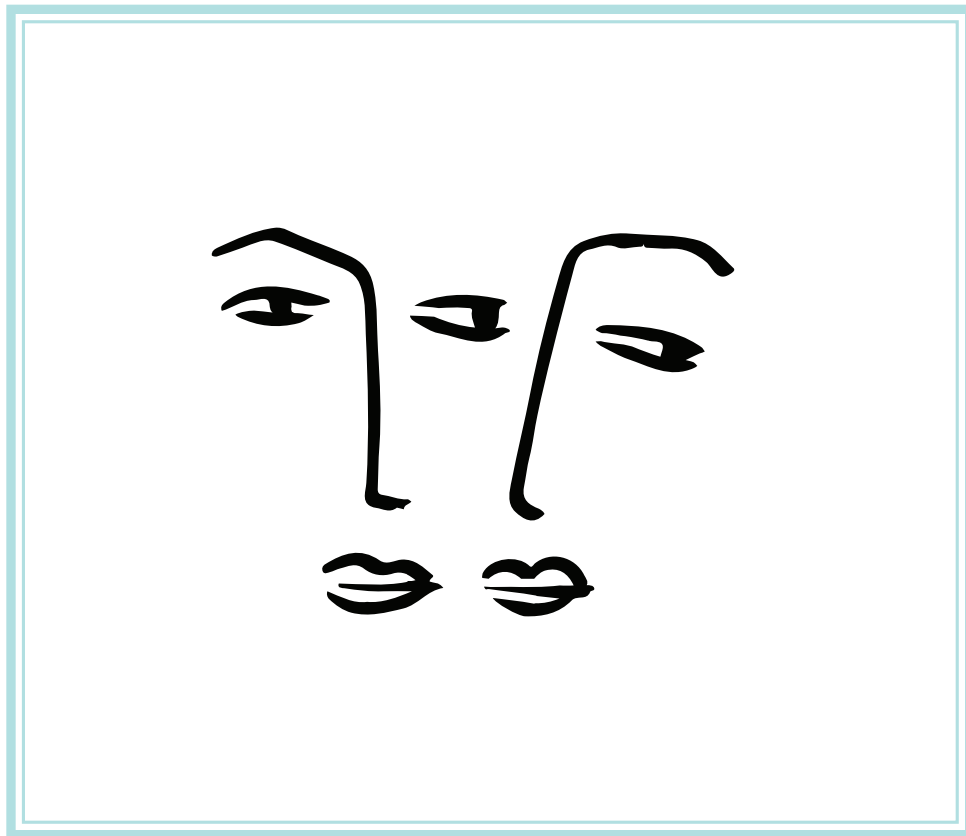




## Style Trends

### Minimalist faces

Minimal tattoos have been on the rise over the last couple of years, but we expect a big uptick in ones with more of an abstract twist. Whether inspired by Matisse or Picasso, face it, this trend is too good to pass up.



inkbox design by Yi Stropky @chinatownstropky





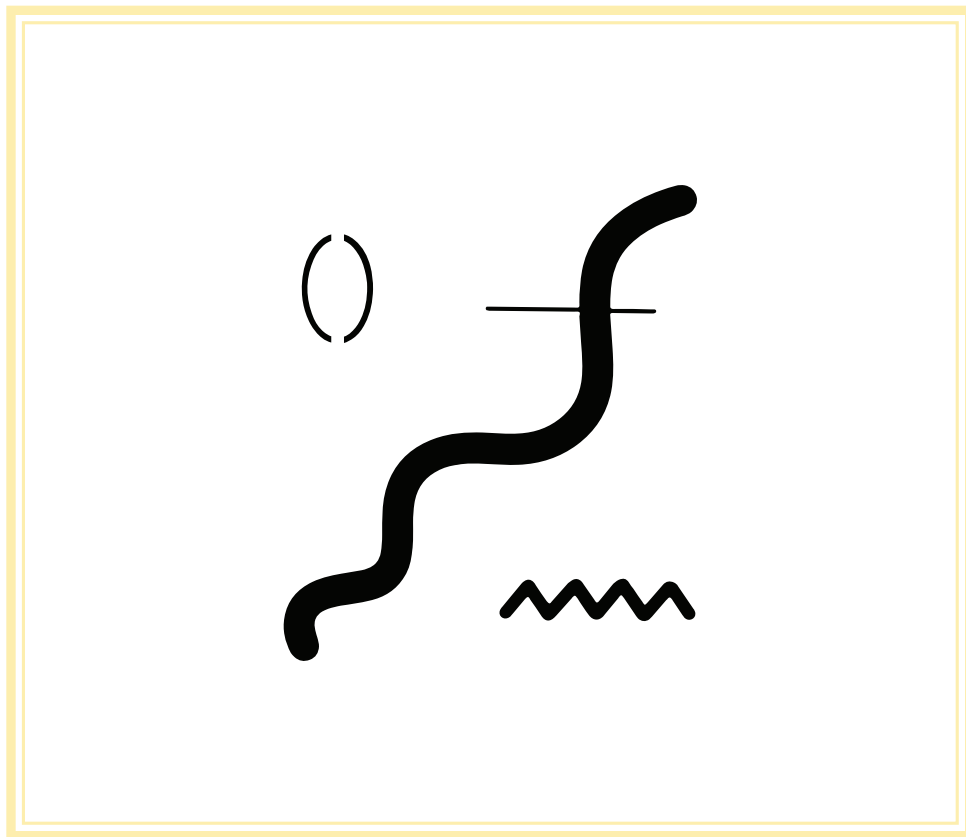




## Style Trends

### Abstract shapes

Seeing as geometric tattoos have been a staple for a while, it was only a matter of time before it fused with the abstract and minimal trend of tattooing. Expect non-symmetrical, simple, whimsical pieces in 2019.



inkbox design by Melina Mansing @60\_\_8









## Style Trends

### Still life

Whether it's fruit, dishes, flowers, or makeup stands, we've been seeing still life pieces pop up everywhere. Some artists, like Kelli Kicio (@kellikicio), arrange the still life IRL beforehand to photograph, from there turning them into sketches and then tattoos.



inkbox design by Mikie Jae @miksjae



@kellikicio



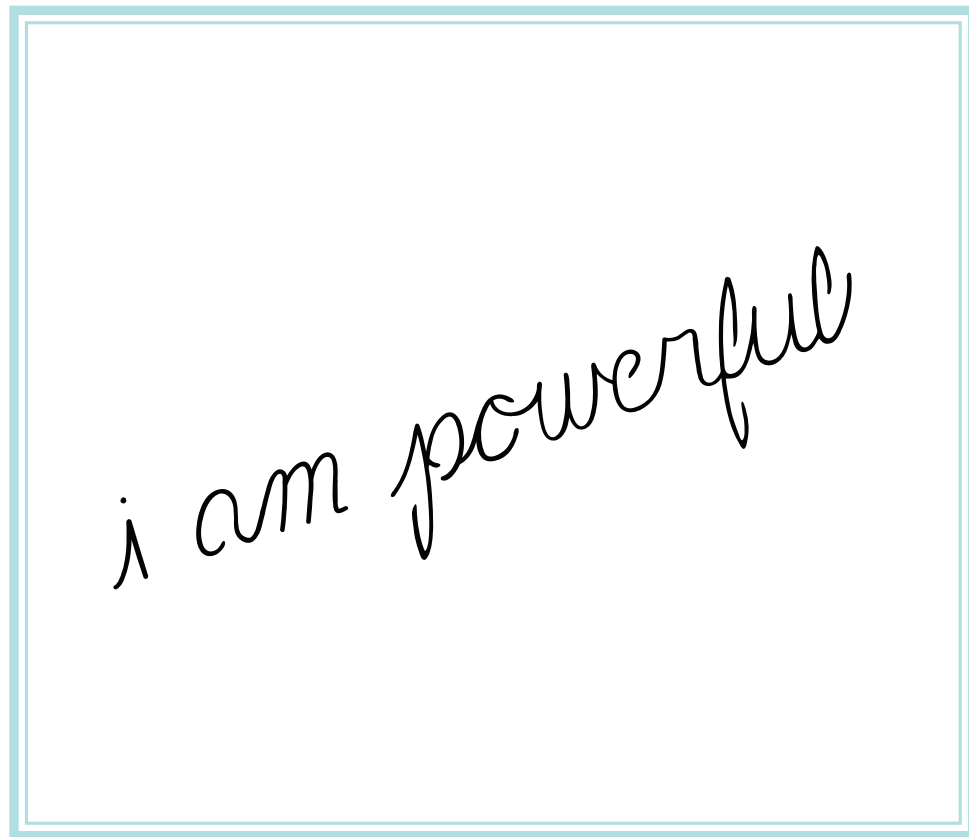




## Style Trends

# Female empowerment

2018 was a big year for badass babes around the world, and we only see this ramping up in the new year. Not only are female tattoo artists kicking ass and taking names, but they're empowering their female clients to do the same.



inkbox design by Nikki Di Biasio @nikkismind



@sulim.andrei







## Style Trends

# Sexual identity

No matter how you identify in this moment, tomorrow, or in the year to come, getting a tattoo to honor yourself can be a tool towards acceptance and ownership. Be proud of who you are, who you were, and who you'll be.

the future  
is fluid

inkbox design by Talia Missaghi @\_novareye







the future  
is fluid



Style Trends

South Korea

Bold, bright and boisterous is how we’re describing the style of tattooing coming out of South Korea right now. The South Korea style has been full of quirky characters this past year, and we expect this trend to catch on in 2019.



inkbox design by Felipe Sena @felipe7sena









## Style Trends

### Detailed botany

While detailed florals are nothing new, we've recently seen some insanely talented artists take it to a whole new level. Rita Zolotukhina (@rit.kit.tattoo) takes plants, flowers, or branches, and imprints them onto the client with stencil ink. Tattooing over this afterwards results in highly realistic pieces that truly blend nature and human.



inkbox design by Talia Missaghi @\_novareye









## Style Trends

### Glitch

This next trend is a total trip and we're loving every bit of it. It's like if the show Black Mirror was a tattoo. The distorted imagery in glitch tattoos can have a dark, ominous quality which creates a sense of movement and optical illusion.



inkbox design by David Clifton @david\_clifton\_art





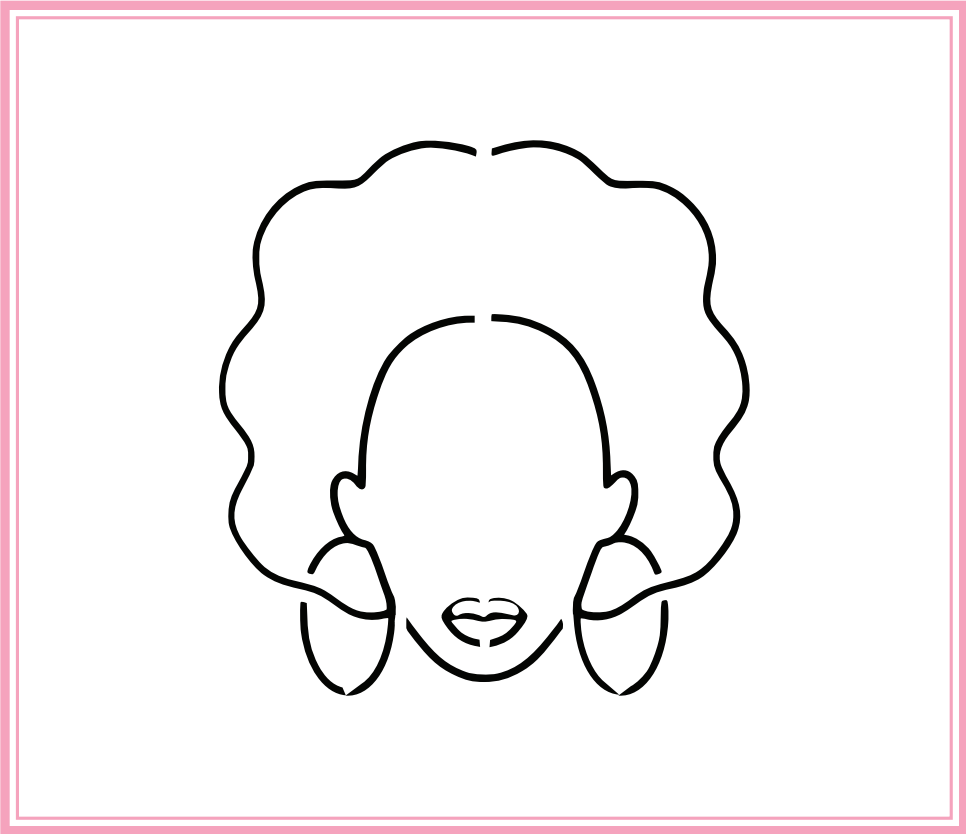




*Style Trends*

**Representation for POC**

In 2019, we’ve got no time for discrimination or underrepresentation. Brittany Randell often hears her clients struggle as people of color to find tattoo artists, and she’s even experienced it herself. We hope and we predict that this year more artists will make it a priority to educate themselves on tattooing darker skin, and that more artists of color will gain popularity.



inkbox design by Melina Mansing @60\_\_8









# Trend Analytics

Scouring Google Trends, we came across more styles and trends to take note of for the new year.

We think 2019 is going to be the year of matching tattoos. Whether you're pairing up with your partner, blood ties, or chosen family, there's something so powerful about committing to forever with someone close to you.

"Cute couple tattoo ideas" search rose **190%**

"Mom and son tattoo ideas" rose **160%**

"Bff tattoo ideas" rose **130%**

"Daddy daughter tattoo ideas" rose **100%**

"Brother sister tattoo ideas" rose **70%**

---

Seeing that tattoos are identity pieces, it's no surprise that fandom and gaming related tattoos will continue to gain popularity in 2019. With the release of Venom in October came a huge spike of searches, and the internet lost it at the Rick and Morty green screen tattoo that circulated the web. For 2019 we predict tattoos based on Captain Marvel, Avengers: Endgame, and the live-action Pokemon movie, all to be released this coming year.

"Venom tattoo ideas" search rose **3,750%**

"Minnie mouse tattoo ideas" rose **2,800%**

"Rick and Morty green screen tattoo" rose **2,500%**

(Statistics based on May 2018 - December 2018)







*Artists to watch*



**South Korea**



## **Greem**

Based in Seoul, Korea

Shop: Private Studio

Style: Bold Lined black angled line illustrations



## **Hugocide**

Based in Seoul, Korea

Shop: Private Studio

Style: Fantastical black line work



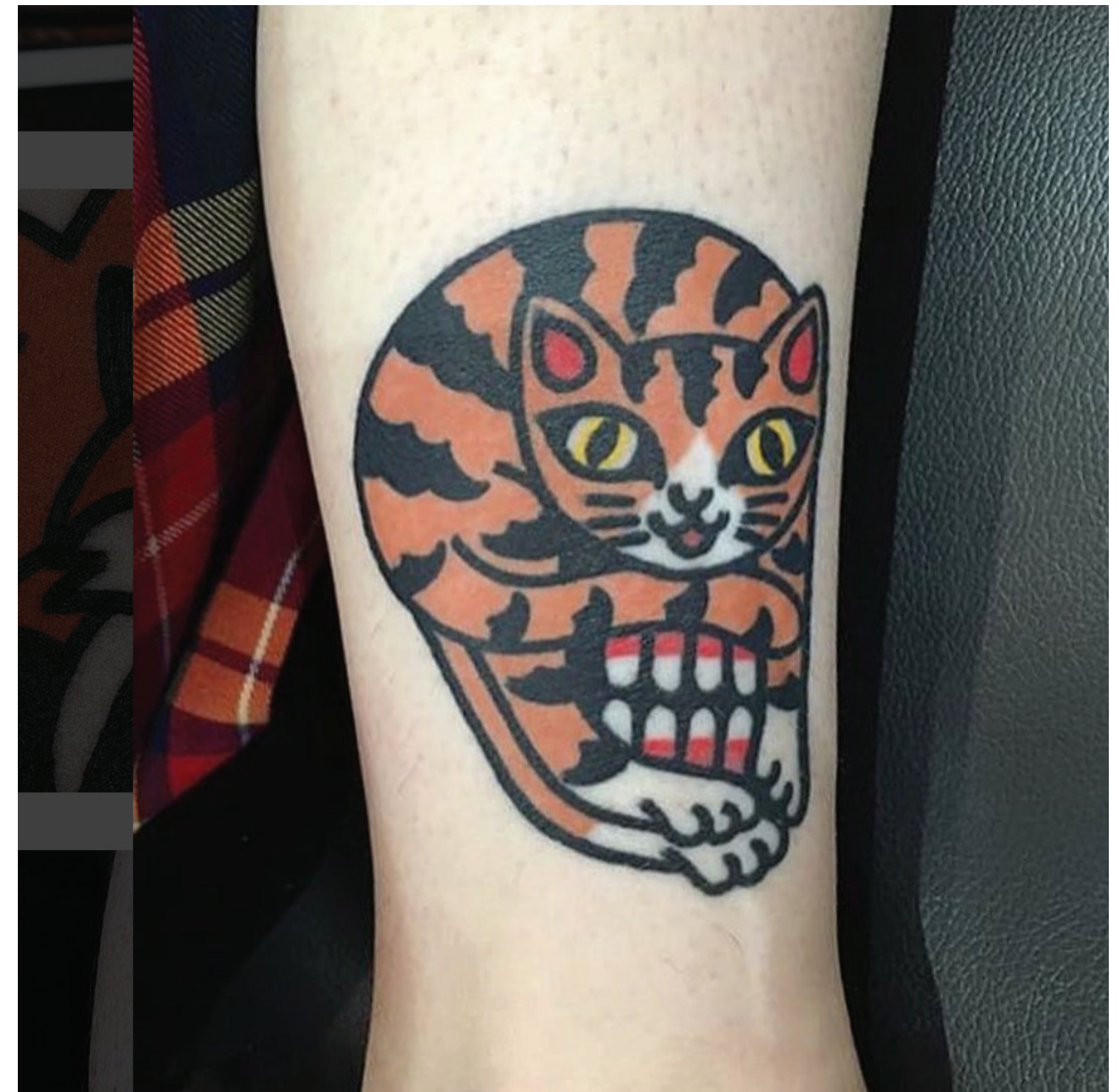


## Yoojin

Based in Seoul, Korea

Shop: 432hz Tattoo Studio

Style: Bold line conceptual character illustration



## Woo

Based in Seoul, Korea

Shop: 432hz Tattoo Studio

Style: Bold line colour blocked concepts





## ***Nickavge***

Based in Greece

Style: Abstract blackwork



## ***Mattia Mambo***

Based in Italy

Shop: The Mambo Tattoo Shop

Style: Pop art inspired strain of colourful minimalist tattoos





## ***Rita Zolotukhina “Rit Kit”***

Based in Kyiv, Ukraine

Style: Live leaf botanical impressionism inspired by watercolour.



## ***Daisy Watson***

Based in Berlin, Germany

Shop: Private Studio

Style: Single black line impressionist and abstract illustrations





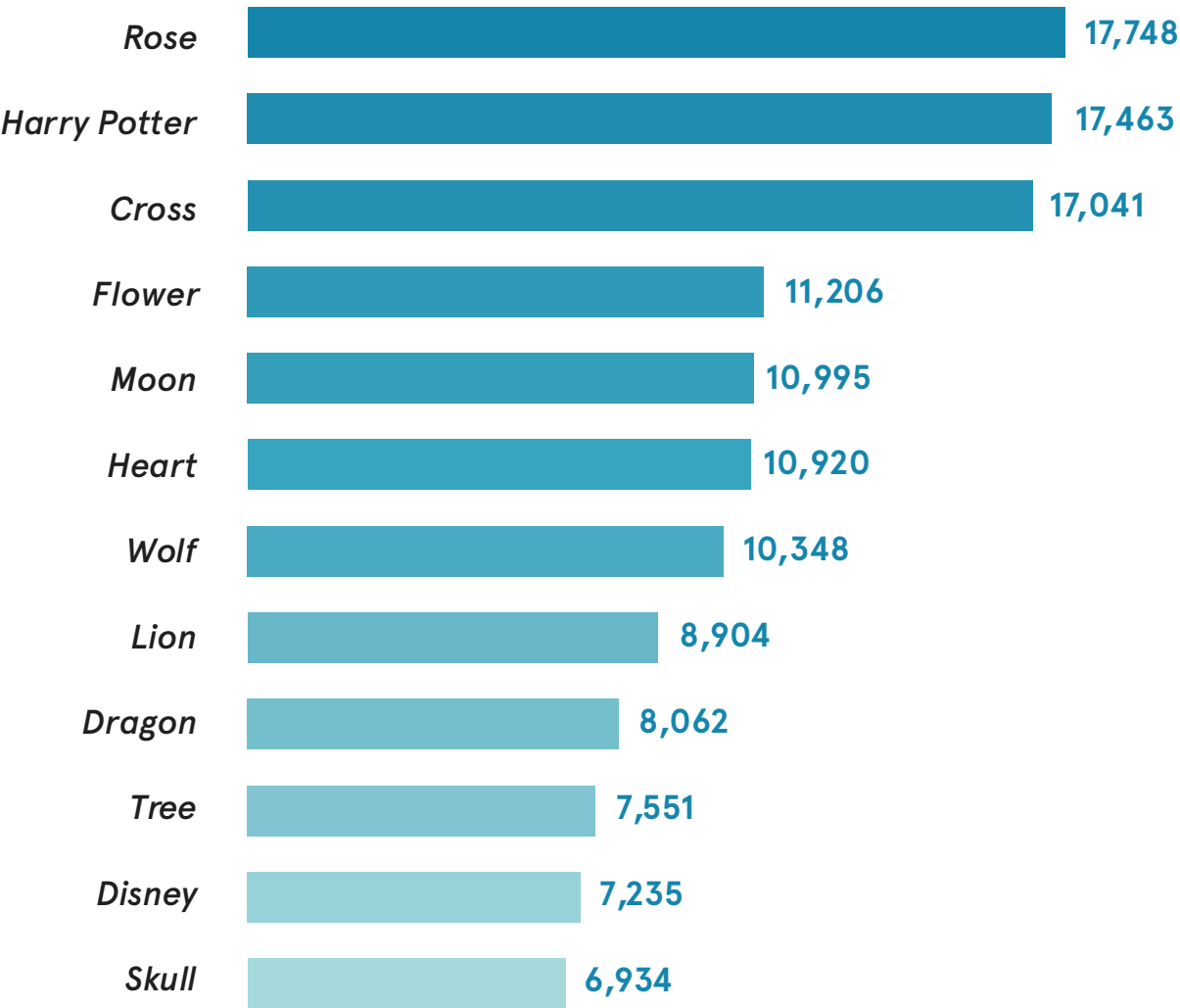
*inkbox Trends*



# Trend Analytics

The trends we see here at inkbox are very much reflective of bigger trends from the industry at large. What happens in the shops of N.Y.C., L.A., Berlin, and Seoul gradually informs the tastes of our customer base. However, the company’s core demographics consist of North Americans who are 18-34 years old, and skew approximately 65% female, 35% male. Because of this, there are key differences that exist when it comes to what designs become popular from a sales and search perspective.

These trends are constantly in flux due to the ever-evolving nature of the industry and the fast-pace of social media. Throughout these ebbs and flows, the trends can be broken down into two main categories: mainstream and niche.



Tattoo searches on inkbox.com 2018



# Mainstream

The majority of our the inkbox customer base falls into mainstream interests, which emphasize more fashionably recognizable designs centered primarily around nature, animals, quotes, travel, and astrology themes with varying styles of line work. Of our 20 top-sellers, 80% fall within the mainstream category. This same phenomenon is paralleled in search volume on site, with “Rose”, “Moon”, “Heart”, and “Wolf” garnering the most searches for the same time period.



# Niche

By comparison, the niche category is more dynamic in the sense that it's been a much faster growing portion of our customer base even if its designs rake in a smaller amount of revenue individually. These designs are becoming increasingly popular because their appeal lies in a narrower, deeper, fan-based sense - one rooted in allegiance to specific subcultures or communities. In turn, these niches have a range within themselves. Purely aesthetic and artistic designs are at one spectrum, where gritty experimentation reigns supreme and avant-garde tattoo artists command a devout following based on their mastery of a particular technique (with styles such as minimal, geometric, and anatomy). On another part of the spectrum, the design is considered less art than it is a representation of experiences (with styles based around religion, music, sports, video games, and TV shows).





It's precisely this phenomenon which has propelled sales for fandom, self-love, and spirituality related designs that will comprise the company's robust long-tail marketplace. Of the same top-selling 20 designs from this year, we have seen a 300% increase in representation from the niche category compared to last year. Naturally, this plays out in a similar way for search terms like "Harry Potter", "cross", "Disney", and "love" which have seen anywhere between 200-400% increases in search volume over the same period (adjusted for business growth).



As inkbox enters 2019, we expect both mainstream and niche categories to gain momentum as we continue to expand design offerings across all categories with the introduction of our International Artist Marketplace, and as customers across the ecommerce ecosystem continue to reward companies focused on hyper-personalization.





# References

“About: The Outcast Club.” TKVO, 2018, [tkvolife.com/pages/about-outcast-club](http://tkvolife.com/pages/about-outcast-club).

Bryant, Taylor. “How Instagram Has Changed Tattoo Culture.” NYLON, NYLON Media, 9 Nov. 2018, [nylon.com/articles/instagram-influence-tattoo-culture](http://nylon.com/articles/instagram-influence-tattoo-culture).

LaRosa, John. “Tattoo Parlors & Tattoo Removal Is Now a Booming \$3 Billion Industry.” Market Research Blog, 12 Sept. 2018, [blog.marketresearch.com/tattoo-parlors-tattoo-removal-is-now-a-booming-3-billion-industry](http://blog.marketresearch.com/tattoo-parlors-tattoo-removal-is-now-a-booming-3-billion-industry).

McGinley, Devin. Tattoo Artists in the US. IBISWorld, 2017, pp. 3–26, Tattoo Artists in the US.

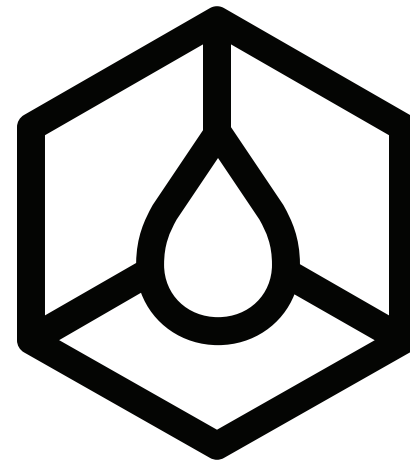
Nichols, James Michael. “This Tattoo Shop Is Creating A Safe And Accepting Space For Queer Bodies.” HuffPost Canada, HuffPost Canada, 15 Mar. 2017, [www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/queer-tattoo-shop\\_us\\_58c95a73e4b01c029d78044f](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/queer-tattoo-shop_us_58c95a73e4b01c029d78044f).

Perry, Shannon. “Valentine’s Tattoo Co. (@Valentinestattoo).” TTTism – Contemporary Tattooing, 23 Oct. 2018, [tttism.com/2018/10/23/valentines-tattoo-co-valentinestattoo/](http://tttism.com/2018/10/23/valentines-tattoo-co-valentinestattoo/).

Trommel, Linde. “From no-go to trend: Generational perceptions on tattoo stigmas and trends.” ASW Journal. 9 April, 2018, <https://aswjournal.nl/category/global-youth-papers//>

“YEAY Global Tattoo Index.” TATTOO INDEX – YEAY, 2018, [www.yeay.com/tattoo-index-yeay-usd](http://www.yeay.com/tattoo-index-yeay-usd).





*@inkbox*