

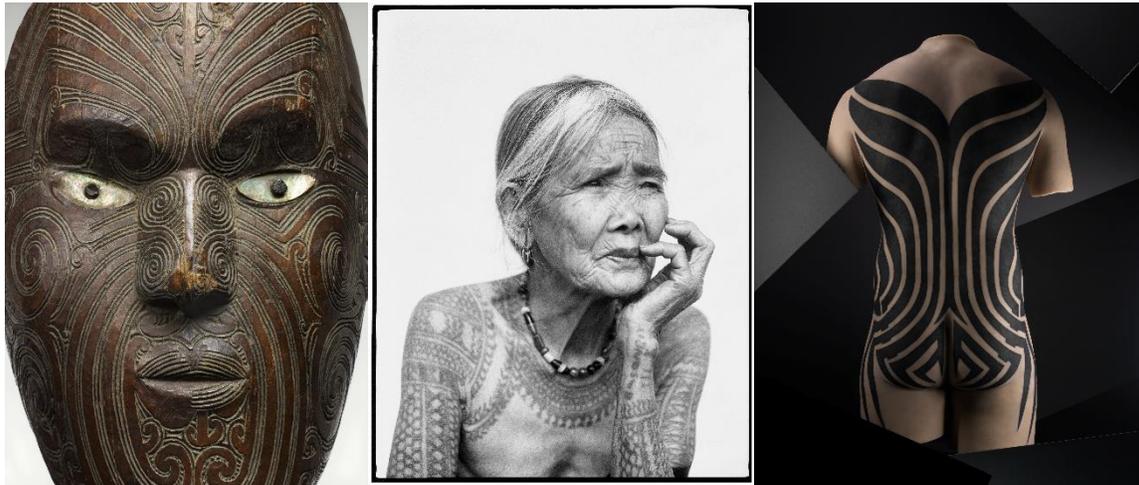


MEDIA CONTACTS:

Maura Klosterman-Vu, Polskin Arts & Communications
Maura.Klosterman@finnpartners.com; (310) 552 4117

Kristin Friedrich, NHMLA
kfriedri@nhm.org; (213) 763-3532

**TATTOO EXHIBITION COMES TO THE
NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY
On view November 19, 2017 through April 15, 2018**



Los Angeles, November 15, 2017 — The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHMLA) opens the traveling exhibition *Tattoo* to Southern California from **November 19, 2017 to April 15, 2018**. Created and developed by the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris, the NHMLA presentation of *Tattoo* concludes an international tour at stops including Toronto’s Royal Ontario Museum and Chicago’s Field Museum of Natural History. *Tattoo* explores more than 5,000 years of history, culture, and art connected to ink through specially commissioned, tattooed silicone forms; hand-drawn art; videos of tattoo ceremonies; interview footage of luminary practitioners; and the technology and tools of the trade—all while also spotlighting the vibrant tattoo scene in L.A.

While tattooing tools may vary from artist to artist, tattooists have employed a common method: puncture the skin and deposit pigment. The exhibition explores the variety of tools used around the world and throughout the history of tattooing including knives and needles made of citrus thorns, cactus spines, and metal. Historic highlights include a 250-year-old inepad that belonged to a family in Jerusalem who used candle soot mixed with wine to tattoo pilgrims on their journey and an electric stencil pen from Thomas Edison, which inspired the first electric tattoo machine.

Different from its iterations at other museums, the exhibit features 3,000 square feet of new content dedicated to Los Angeles, a creative capital for tattoo culture, plus historic pieces from NHMLA’s anthropology collection. A working tattoo parlor within the exhibition features live

demonstrations and special times for tattoo appointments in which visitors can get permanently inked by L.A.-based artists (advance reservation required). Collections at NHMLA and the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum—butterflies, saber-toothed cats, tigers, mammoths, and gems—inspired many of the onsite parlor’s designs.

“As a Museum of, for, and with L.A., and committed to exploring the region’s nature and culture, we are honored to present *Tattoo* in Southern California. This is the birthplace of several pivotal tattoo movements, including the Long Beach Pike scene and the black-and-gray style,” commented Dr. Lori Bettison-Varga, President and Director of NHMLA. “*Tattoo* provides a special opportunity for our community to explore an often-misunderstood art form and shed light on the history and traditions of tattooing around the world and right here at home.”

NHMLA visitors will discover the West Coast’s pivotal role in both the American traditional style of tattooing and in tattoo today, and see the contributions of dozens of L.A. artists—past and present. There are “flash” sheets (designs printed on paper or cardboard, and often hung in tattoo shops) featuring work from legendary tattooists **Sailor Jerry** and **Bob Shaw**, who expanded the color palette of traditional style through their proprietary ink formulas. Visitors will see flash by Southern California native **Freddy Negrete**, whose tattoos contributed to a revolution in three-dimensional shading.



The exhibition highlights the dynamic work and importance of female tattooists. A video of **Jesse Knight**—an Englishwoman trained to tattoo by her father and famous for her freehand ability (tattooing without pre-drawn designs)—is a part of the content. There is also work from Southern California’s **Nell Bowen** and **Dainty Dottie**—and a newly-commissioned silicone arm form tattooed by **Kari Barba**, a pioneering tattooist and the owner of Outer Limits Tattoo and Museum in Long Beach (the site of the longest running tattoo studio in the United States).

NHMLA’s presentation of the exhibition features an original two-part video installation on tattoo in Los Angeles. The first, on the history of tattoo at the Long Beach Pike, details the unprecedented quality and quantity of the traditional-style tattooists who congregated at the Pike in the early and mid-1900s. During that period, Long Beach boasted the largest

concentration of tattoo parlors in the U.S., including Bert Grimm’s World Famous Tattoo, which was home to some of the most influential artists in the 20th century. The video also features interviews with living artists Barba, **Rick Walters**, and **Mark Mahoney**—all of whom also worked, or work, at the Pike—providing a continuum in the Southern Californian tattoo narrative.

The second video in the series traces the evolution of black-and-gray style tattoo: from early Pachuco and Chicano tattoos, to the practice of single-needle tattoo in Western correctional facilities and the streets of East Los Angeles, to global phenomenon. It features interviews with early practitioners and influencers like Negrete and **Jack Rudy**, as well as the next generations: **Big Gus**, **Isaiah Negrete**, **Steve Soto**, **Carlos Torres**, and **Franco Vescovi**. Within the exhibition, historical photographs, sketches, and artifacts accompany the video.

“*Tattoo* illustrates the extensive history of tattooing, from an expression of group identity to one of individuality,” Gretchen Baker, Vice President, Exhibitions remarked. “As we began to explore the history of tattooing in Southern California and how *Tattoo* would manifest itself at NHMLA, we connected with local tattoo artists, whose willingness to participate has been incredible, from actively putting their skills on display in the parlor, to revealing their personal stories, to lending artifacts from their shops. We are thrilled to be able to include artifacts from the NHMLA collection that will further the conversation around tattoos and the space they occupy within today’s world. It is our goal to show tattoos as an art form and demonstrate how this art form has manifested itself in cultures around the world.”

The exhibition closes with more paintings and silicone forms by some of the most exciting artists tattooing today, as well as a look at tattoo's evolution off the skin into a style that influences contemporary culture. The final wall of the gallery features an homage to tattoo in the form of a mural by world-renowned graffiti and tattoo artist (and native Angeleno), **Big Sleeps**.

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Programming

NHMLA will present *Tattoo* related public events and programs throughout the full run of the exhibition, including tattoo parlor demonstrations on weekends and during the popular First Fridays series February through April. A Thursday evening lecture series titled *Tattoo: Stories of Identity and Culture* will feature legendary tattoo artists in conversation, along with late exhibition hours, live tattoo demonstrations and a cash bar. Panelists will include black-and-gray all-stars Jack Rudy and Freddy Negrete in November, indigenous women who have taken up facial tattoo practices of their elders in March and a special conversation with female tattoo artists Margot Mifflin, Kari Barba, and Roxx Two Spirit moderated by Cara Santa Maria in April. In January, the NHMLA will host a special *Tattoo* edition of the Moth Radio Hour with extended hours and tattoo demonstrations. A fully functioning Tattoo Parlor will be up and running within the exhibition, with live tattoo demos taking place and the opportunity to make an appointment and be tattooed within the exhibition on weekends. A calendar of exhibition related events is available upon request. For an updated timeline, please visit nhm.org

Onsite Tattoo Parlor Appointments

November through January Appointment for the Museum’s Tattoo Parlor, located inside the exhibition and visible to exhibition visitors, are now sold out with a wait list. Appointments for

February through April will be available early next year. Appointments can be made only online and visitors are able to make appointments with artists on select dates. Each artist will have six pieces of 'flash,' a series of pre-determined printed or hand-drawn designs, per weekend (may vary if an artist works multiple weekends) from which the visitor can choose. No substitutions or modifications allowed. The non-refundable cost is \$250 and includes one tattoo and 2 adult admission tickets to both the Museum and the *Tattoo* exhibition. Participants must be 18 years of age and proper ID will be required on the day of the appointment.

Social Media

Every tattoo has a story. What's yours? Share them with us on Instagram using the hashtag #tattooNHMLA.

Visitor Information

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007
www.nhm.org

Ticketing

Timed tickets for *Tattoo* are on sale at nhm.org and are separate from general admission. Tattoo tickets cost \$12 for adults, seniors (62+) and students with valid ID; \$6 for children (3-12); and are free for Museum members and children age 2 and under. For tickets visit nhm.org.

Tickets purchased online guarantee admittance to the exhibition. Limited same-day timed tickets are available each day at the door.

Group Visits

Groups of 10 or more people receive discounted rates on Museum admission. Group tickets available now by calling 213.763.3218 or by emailing groupsales@nhm.org for reservations and more information.

Membership

Tickets to the exhibition are free for NHM members. To become a member, visit nhm.org/membership.

About the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

The Natural History Family of Museums includes NHMLA, the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum (Hancock Park/Mid-Wilshire), and the William S. Hart Museum (Newhall, California). The Family of Museums serves approximately 1.4 million visitors annually, and it is a national leader in research, exhibitions, and education. NHMLA was the first dedicated museum building in Los Angeles, opening its doors in 1913, and has since amassed one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history—more than 35 million objects. Its decade-long transformation created compelling, award-winning exhibitions including Nature Lab and Nature Gardens; *Becoming Los Angeles*; Dinosaur Hall; *Age of Mammals*; the *Haaga Family Rotunda*; and the outdoor *Spider Pavilion* and *Butterfly Pavilion*. Taken as a whole, these separate exhibitions have transformed the museum into an indoor-outdoor experience, with an increased focus on community engagement and Los Angeles' surprising urban nature. NHMLA is

the only natural history museum in the world today that incorporates on- and offsite nature exploration, local wildlife inventories, a slate of citizen science programs, and active research into a museum paradigm that once focused on the past, but increasingly addresses the present and the future.

Photo Credits:

(left to right, top to bottom)

Koruru or Parata (gable mask). Māori, New Zealand, 19th century. Carved wood, white pigment, *pāua* shell. From the collection of musée du quai Branly. © musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, photo Thierry Olivier, Michel Urtado

Whang-od Oggay (b. 1920). Philippines, 2011. Exhibition print. Photograph by Jake Verzosa. Tattooed silicone torso. USA, 2013. Artist : Leo Zulueta (b. 1952). From the collection of musée du quai Branly. © musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, photo Thomas Duval
Flash Design by Brynne Palmer for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County