

Beneath THE SKIN®



SKULLAVERA
DAY OF THE
DEAD SUGAR SKULLS

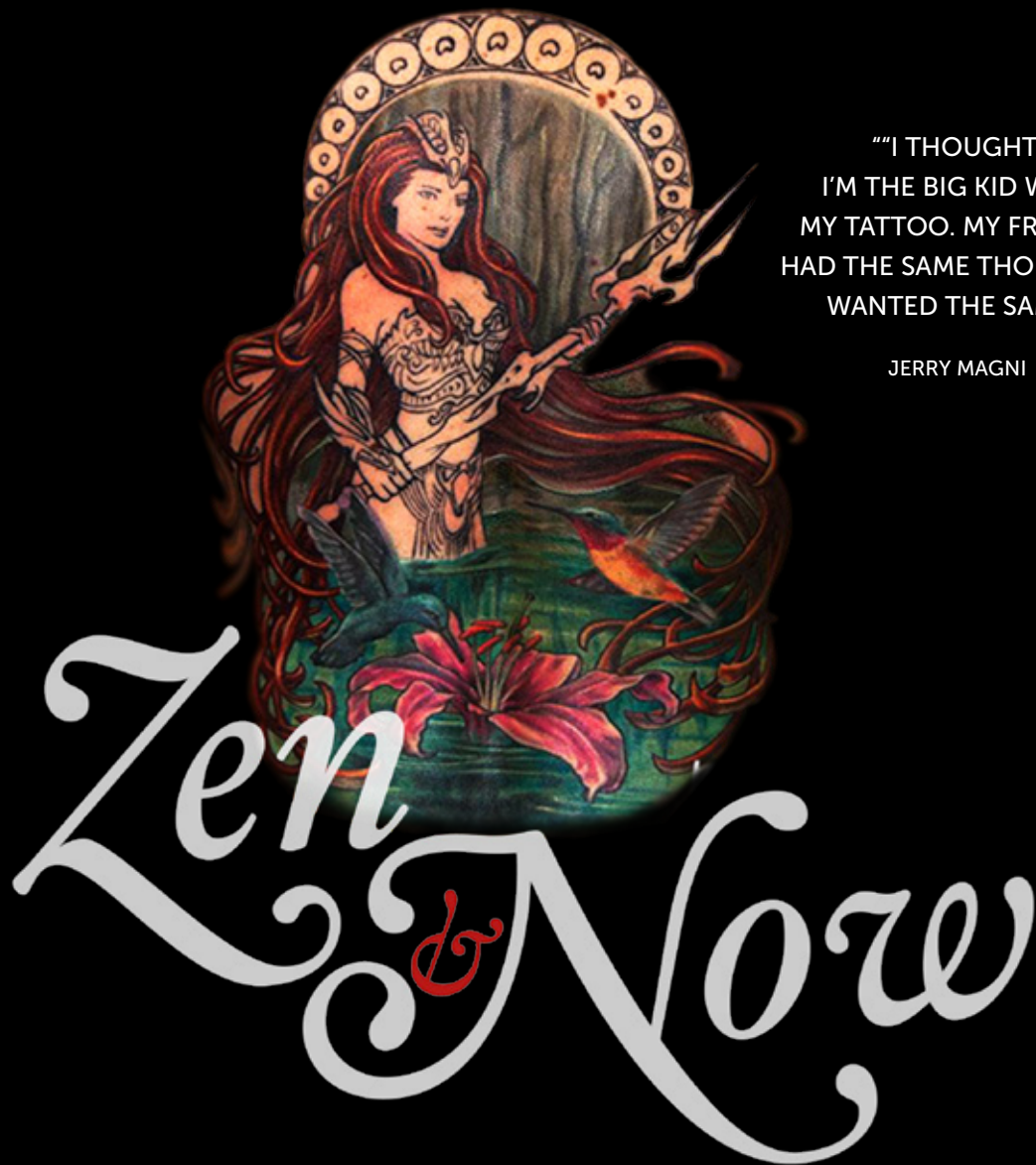
**BOHO
NOMAD**
HILARY JANE

ZEN & NOW
TATTOOIST JERRY MAGNI

OUR
INTERVIEW
WITH

Fatal Smile

**WELCOME
TO THE
FREAKSHOW**



"I THOUGHT,
I'M THE BIG KID WITH
MY TATTOO. MY FRIENDS
HAD THE SAME THOUGHT &
WANTED THE SAME."

JERRY MAGNI

TATTOOIST JERRY MAGNI

This story begins in an Italian pub in the 1980s. A fourteen-year-old Jerry Magni walked in and spotted a man with strange drawings on his skin. He immediately began to inquire what it was. This was the night he became introduced to tattoos. With no knowledge of what he was actually doing, and wanting to be a 'big kid' Jerry asked how it was done.

His tools became a sewing needle and a cotton ball to hold the ink. He gave himself his first tattoo. "I thought, I'm the big kid with my tattoo." Jerry said. "My friends had the same thought and wanted the same."

From there his tattoo career began. He went on and off for several years tattooing his friends until his mandatory military service.

"In 1982 there was nothing about tattoos - just a lot of really bad tattoos. No tattoo machines and me an ignorant kid," Jerry said. Jerry's job in the military was as his platoon's tattooist. He rarely ever had to stand duty because he was the only person who could provide ink to his comrades.

"It's Jerry's turn to stand watch.' [A comrade would say] 'No it isn't, he has to tattoo someone.' [His commanding officer replied.] I felt untouchable," Jerry told me.

He began to tattoo professionally in 1995. Between 1992-1997 he was a comic book artist for several Italian magazines. His last comic published in 1999, and his last online comic based in the US in 2001. The first tattoos he did were tribal.

"I didn't realize the same thing I did on paper could be applied to skin," Jerry said.

When it clicked into place things began to flourish for him and his tattoos began to breath moving life. Italy's love affair with tattoos didn't take off until the 90s about 50 years behind on the tattoo movement that started in the United States.

From 1996 to 2003 Jerry produced over 20,000 published flash tattoos for various magazines including Idea Tattoo, Original Tattoo, Tattoo Tribal, and Colour Tattoo. He has published two books with nothing but flash, Segni di Pelle (Skin Marks) which was a must have in many tattoo shops around Italy at that time.

Even though Jerry has created so many Flash Tattoos he is against using it. Flash is part of the industry but to him it should be used as a starting point. "An educated artist should say [to a customer wanting flash] this is an idea. Don't treat it as stickers," Jerry told me.

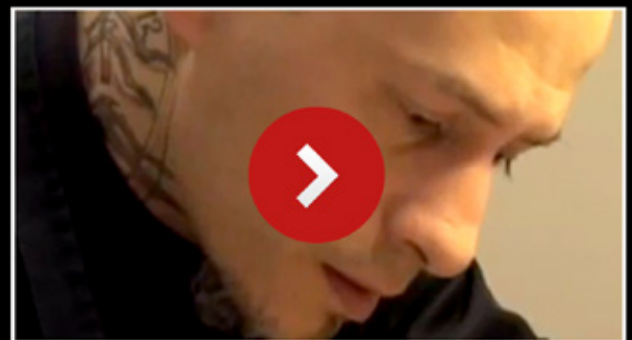
Jerry has always worked with art. Anyone who talks to him can feel his passion and respect for it vibrating off every syllable. In the early 2000s he was working multiple jobs from web designer to online comic book artist, along with tattooing. The crisis in the publishing market began making Jerry feel unsure about his future.

"I had been doing tattoos for so long and a friend told me, 'Anything you do with tattoos goes well. You should concentrate your skill here.' And so I opened my shop in 2005. So disappointed I didn't do it before," Jerry confessed.

Jerry creates masterful color pieces and engaging black and white tattoos. He has never done old school style tattoos, and has given up doing tribal. He feels tribal tattoos are better left with the culture they originated from where that sacred form of art is passed between them. He also doesn't like to do script.

"If you want script, if it is a line you don't need a tattoo. If it is two lines you don't need a tattoo you need an agenda," Jerry said smiling. He likes to have silence when he works. Sometimes he can fall into a meditative state of mind when he is creating a piece from scratch. He often goes into it when working on his own canvases. He told me that there is an energy created by two people when making a tattoo, that of the artist and that of the client. These energies merge so when the client is having a bad day, it often flows into the tattooist.

He prepares his work like a tailor, creating stencils, and sitting down with his client as he draws it out. The only thing he might do freehand, other then cover-ups, are biomechanical tattoos so they can go with the flow of the body. Jerry feels all tattoos have some sort of story behind it. "There is always a reason why someone got a skull instead of a flower. If it has a meaning it will last longer, if there is none they will find one. You can adjust the meaning of your tattoo. Hard to do with script," Jerry said. Jerry has not taken on an apprentice, but it wasn't for lack of trying from



the wanna-be tattooists of Italy. "I get a request once a week for an apprentice. Never found anyone who was talented enough. Someone has to have enough talent to draw. If someone isn't good enough on paper they can't be good on skin. Tattoo artists are the rock stars of this era. In the 80s everyone wanted to be a rock star, now everyone wants to tattoo." Jerry said.

He suggests that anyone who really wants to be a tattoo artist get an education, go to an art school, and then bring that knowledge in to apply it to tattooing.

Jerry is working on an artistic series he calls KATZ. Every artist looks for their own style that makes them unique and this is what he found. In his KATZ he brings out his passion for nature, passion for tattoos, and passion for being an artist.

"I did the background like a wall painter taking the paint from the wall. A metaphor for how we are all working on ourselves like a painter, bringing down the old layers to put up the new," Jerry said. "The cat is in many cultures a positive and a negative."

When asked what his favorite tattoo he ever did was he replied, "The next one as Picasso would say. If you are an artist, perfection doesn't exist. Every tattoo is a way to learn something new. I look at a piece and think I could do this better. I'm never completely satisfied."

Writer: Tyla Smith

