

## **Conceal, reveal : tattoos and the dressed body**

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# Reveal, Conceal: Tattoos and the Dressed Body

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# Touch & Talk

**I am wearing denim shorts** walking through town, a woman comes up behind me and tries to touch the back of my leg where my new tattoo is visible by only an couple of inches. I spin around ready to give her a mouthful but am left speechless when I see she is dragging two small children behind her. Oh I just love your tattoo and have to know where you got it done, she exclaims I quickly give her the artists name and rush off.

- Wearing a vest
- Wearing shorts or something
- I have on jeans with ripped knees
- Back of my dress

More often than not these instances happened to women by men - reasoning behind this can be explained by the fetishisation of tattooed women

Guéguen (2013)- 'when men saw the woman with the tattoo, they judged her as less athletic, less motivated, less honest, less generous, less religious, less intelligent and less artistic'

Swami and Furnham (2007) 'While men see tattooed women as less attractive, they also see them as more promiscuous.'







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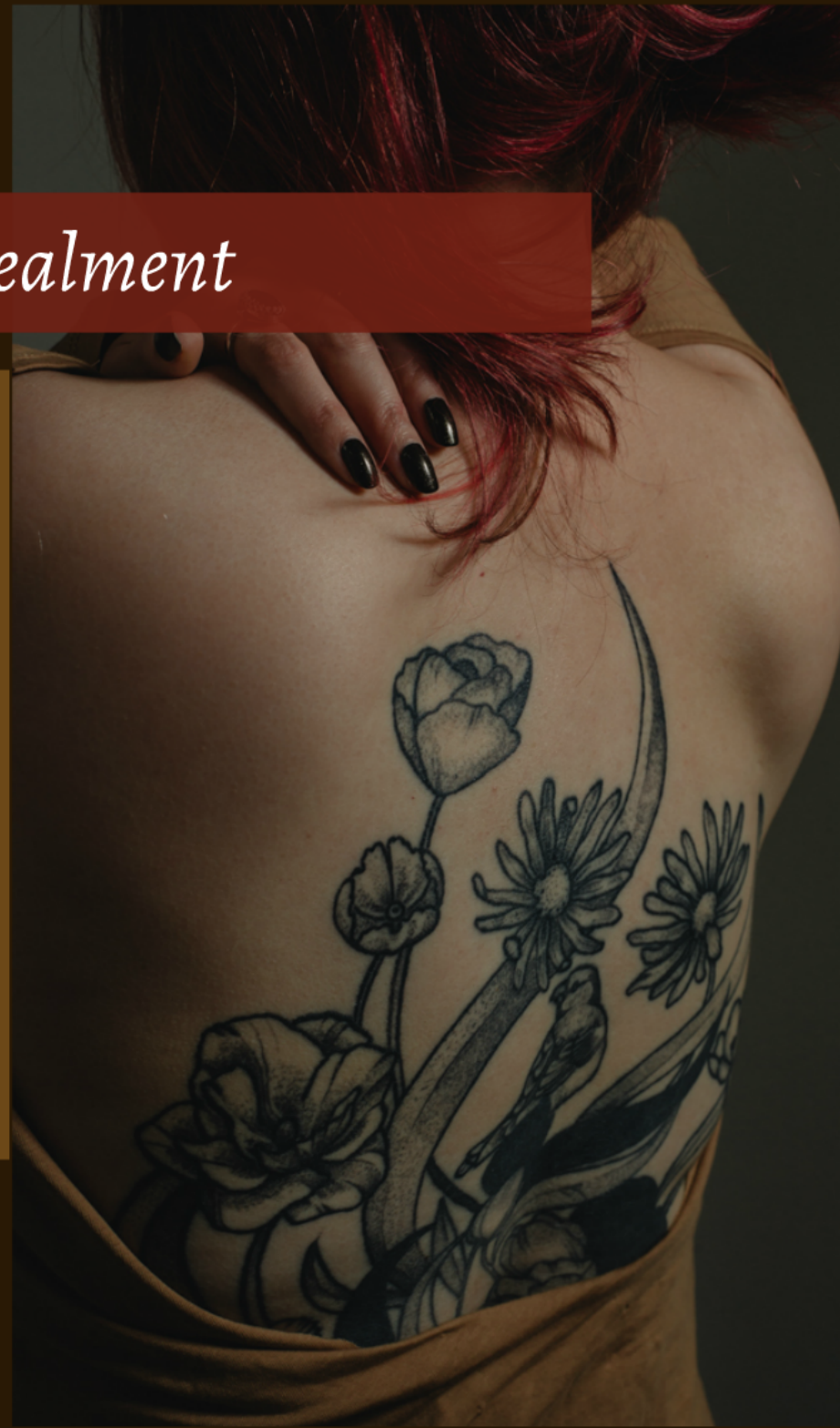


# Clothes as Concealment

For all bodies, tattooed or not, clothing is used to conceal or reveal areas of our body in whatever way we should wish.

However for tattooed individuals choice of dress is often affected by the opinion of others, e.g. tattoos in the work place:

*I was informed that 'body art' has 'many negative and aggressive connotations' and was not 'appropriate' on an 'educated woman'. Yet in the same place of work, male colleagues with tattoos on their arms were not asked to keep sleeves rolled down. I do feel as though tattoos are far too often thought of as aggressive and unbecoming of women; I challenge anyone to find something aggressive with mine.*





# SKIN

The naked and dressed body in relation to tattoos:

Many of the interviewees admitted to being touched on their tattoos without permission. Perhaps the images on the skin look tactile, those without tattoos may wonder how they feel, how they change the skin.

In becoming heavily tattooed the tattoo experience is more intense than for someone gaining a small tattoo.

Recovering from the tattoo session whilst the tattoo heals can also affect the relationship with the persons body, movement may be restricted, sleep uncomfortable and clothing restrictive. It is a unique experience perhaps once which can only be likened to recovering from an injury.





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# BODY

Only when naked are tattooed bodies viewed in their entirety for the most part we are only seeing parts of a whole, parts which the owner has decided to reveal - the reveal is done using clothing.

Meanings too are concealed to the viewer unless the owner decides to reveal.

Tattoos are symbols on the skin which only the wearer knows the meaning, if indeed they do choose to attach a meaning at all to their tattoos.

Meanings may also become transient, changing or evolving as the person wearing them will do so too.





# LOVE

**PAYING TRIBUTE** to a child, parent, or lover; memorializing the dead or remembering a past relationship; swearing allegiance to a cause or simply swearing a love of love itself. These tattoos represent passion made visible: passion through pain, a vivid declaration of the wearer's devotion.

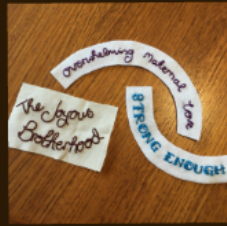
*Love is perhaps one of the easier emotional reasonings for people to comprehend why someone would choose to become tattooed.*

*In choosing to photograph and interview those with tattoos for love it was hoped that by understanding the meanings the tattoos would be viewed in a less prejudice way.*

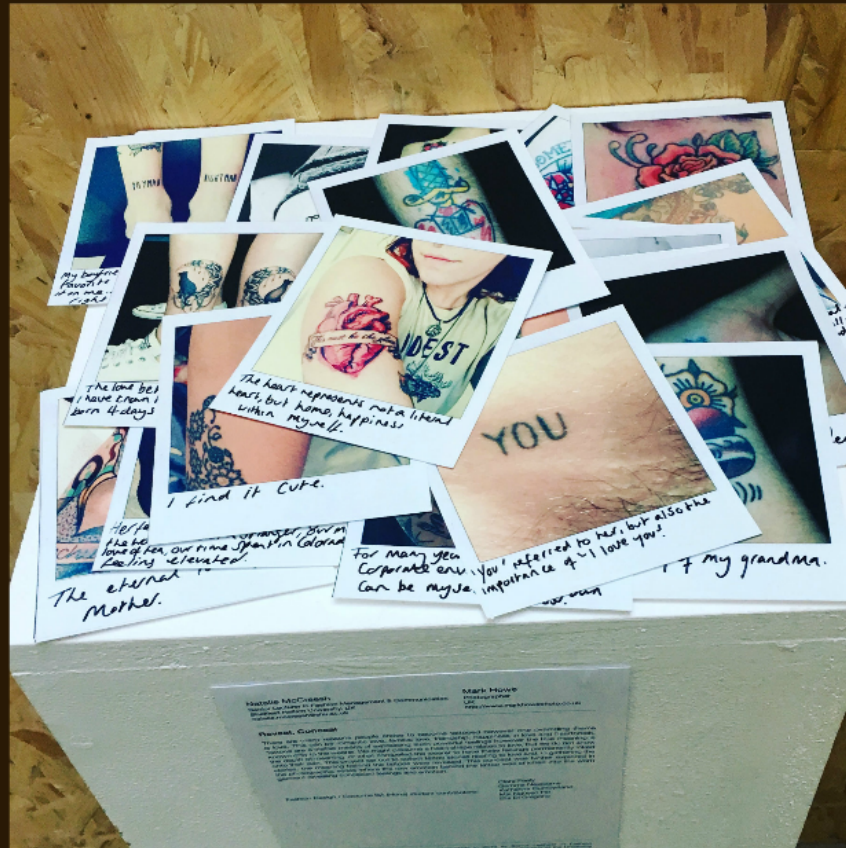
*This concept was explored by using clothing to reveal the tattoos and in a second (not yet complete) stage through embroidering the tattoo meanings onto garments. The third stage will be to conduct in depth interviews and wardrobe analyses with tattooed women, also creating a multimedia zine.*

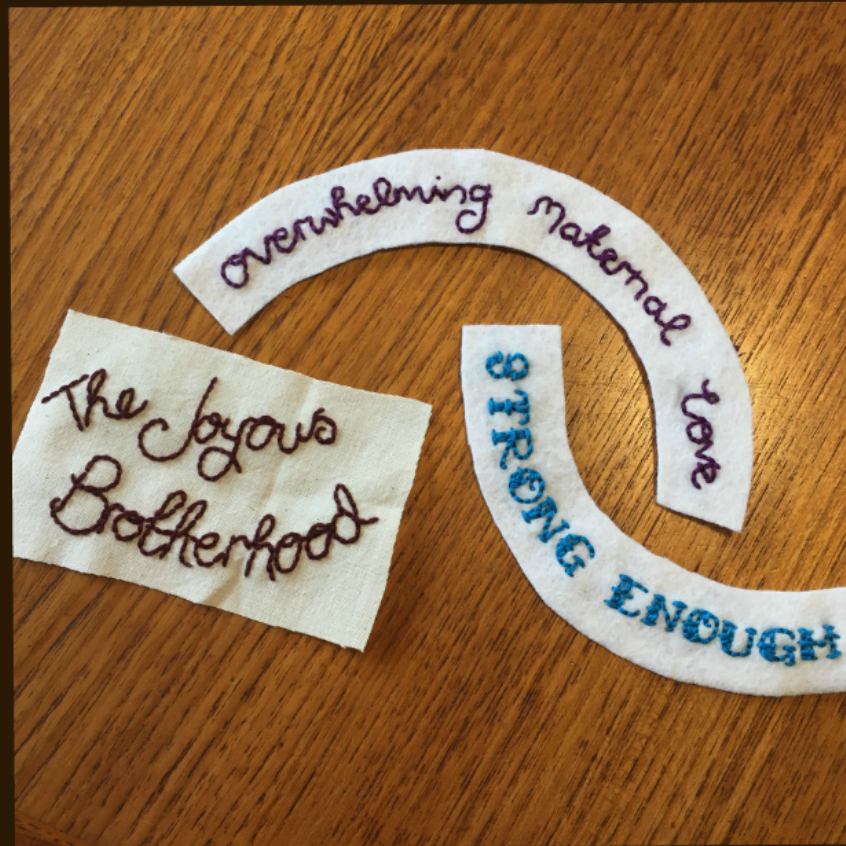


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The Joyous  
Brotherhood

overwhelming maternal love

STRONG ENOUGH











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