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Bare Skin is a Blank Canvas at Tattoo Convention

By Inna Kiyasova

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An attendee adding to his extensive leg designs in a convention booth at the 2009 Berlin tattoo extravaganza.

In Soviet times, tattoos had purely political, military and prison-related meanings, but over the last few years tattoo art has been changed immeasurably.

Now, Russian modern tattoo art is affected by a greater wealth of heritage and culture, and the most famous works of Salvador Dali, Michelangelo or Picasso can be painted on the any part of your body without anyone batting an eyelid.

For those with doubts about the rising art, numerous festivals held across Russia every year are beginning to attract more and more people.

This year, the 6th Moscow International Tattoo Convention will be held at "Arena Moscow" from May 24th to 26th, with a new show program.

Included will be "the best tattoo" where various styles of a similar design compete, alongside musical performances, the Brazilian martial art capoeira, a motorcycle show, and the "Tattoo Queen" competition, judged this year by Belgian supermodel Femke Fatale.

Everyone who wants to get a tattoo will also have the opportunity to land a 50% discount from the best tattoo artists from Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Poland etc., known around the world.

Moscow hosts
its sixth
International
Tattoo
Convention over
the weekend
for enthusiasts
of the colorful
coverings.

However, not all international ink artists will make it: American stars Carlos Torres, Nikko Hurtado and Carlos Rojas won't be visiting the Convention because of visa refusal.

"We look forward to correcting this for next year," they announced on Twitter.

One of the most famous Belorussian tattoo artist, Yuri Brestsky (Brest), will be. He has visited all the conventions in Moscow from 2007 onwards, along with many others worldwide, and says that every festival has its own individual twists.

"I was a guest in cities such as Kiev, Saint Petersburg, Lvov, Berlin and Frankfurt," he said, unable to decide on a firm favorite out of the collection.

"Everywhere I've been, I've met so many soulful people, friends and colleagues, old and newly acquired, because at the conventions we meet our old acquaintances along with the new."

"There are different levels, i.e. how can you compare the Berlin or Frankfurt International (the largest in the world) conventions with Lvov or Kiev, for example? That's impossible. They are really different," he continued.

Brest's skill is in high demand, and numerous people have already signed up for his tattoos. "I'm busy for the whole three days," he stated. "All of them are my regular clients, There is one who I met at the first Tattoo Convention in 2007! Almost every year we win together in various categories — mostly "Best of the Day".

Brest's clients request a diverse variety of styles and designs for their body-art, but there are some firm favorites. "They prefer fantasy, realism or bio-mechanics," he said, voicing a personal preference for a "Japanese style" or "oriental tattoos."

The designs themselves are partially of his own doing, but clients frequently bring along their own pictures. However, a single, particular image has been haunting him.

"There is one design that I wanted to realize for a long time. And I plan to realize it at the 6th Moscow International Tattoo Convention," he said mysteriously.

The convention also has a reverse aspect.

Every visitor of the Convention will be able to amend, cover-up, and remove old or unpopular tattoos.

For those that don't plan to engage in any contact with actual needles, watching the swarms who do will be entertainment enough alone.

Tattoos are not the only thing that will be presented at the Convention: pop-up shops selling branded clothing from the artists, discounted tattoo equipment and supplies, jewelry, piercings and visitor competitions all add another dimension to the riotous inkiness of the occasion.

The festival runs from 12:00, May 24, to 19:00 on May 26 at Arena Moscow (31 Leningradsky Prospekt)

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