



tattoo art

ivana

Ivana's work is a combination of colour, energy, fun and elegance. "Art is my life", she says on her YouTube channel. And her passion is obvious; not just in her tattoo work but in her art, paintings, prints and fashion line. Ivana is 38, lives and works in Long Beach, California, and has been tattooing for around 20 years.

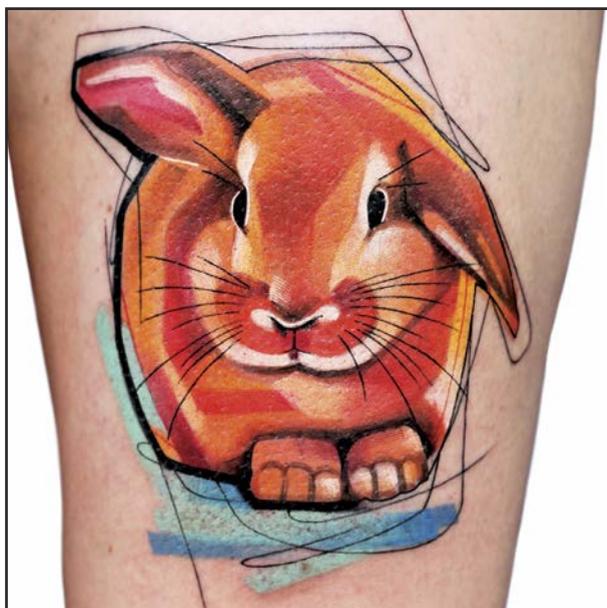
What is your first memory of tattoos?

When I was just eighteen, I did a little ornamental tattoo for a friend. The moment my needle touched the skin, it was 'love at first sight' and I knew that was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. Actually, the only reason I decided to get my first tattoo was to experience the feeling of being tattooed!

When you first started tattooing back in your home town in Slovakia, the industry was very male orientated, and tattoos mainly appealed to bikers. What was it that made you decide to tattoo and get tattooed?

I was never influenced by who dominated the industry or who the tattoo industry appealed to. I have always tattooed because it spoke to my creativity. Yes, I experienced negativity when I first started, but it never really affected me. It certainly didn't discourage me or stop me – and never will.





What artistic training do you have?

I am artistic by nature but have never had any formal training.

Why did you choose to teach yourself to tattoo? Wouldn't you rather have had an apprenticeship?

Looking back, I think yes, an apprenticeship would have been good – because it would have helped me learn faster – but only if it had been with one of the best people in the industry.

Last year the MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome announced that it officially recognised your work as Fine Art. How did this come about and what did it mean to you?

I was one of ten tattoo artists to be recognised in that way by the MACRO Museum. A group of art critics were reviewing works in the collection and setting criteria for what should be included. They began wondering why tattoo art wasn't officially

part of their remit and they decided that it should be. In November, the museum announced a list of ten tattoo artists whose work met the criteria and could be acknowledged as Contemporary Fine Art. I was the only female artist on the list. I feel very honoured and I feel like a trailblazer. It's a great accolade to have my work listed in the museum's catalogue.

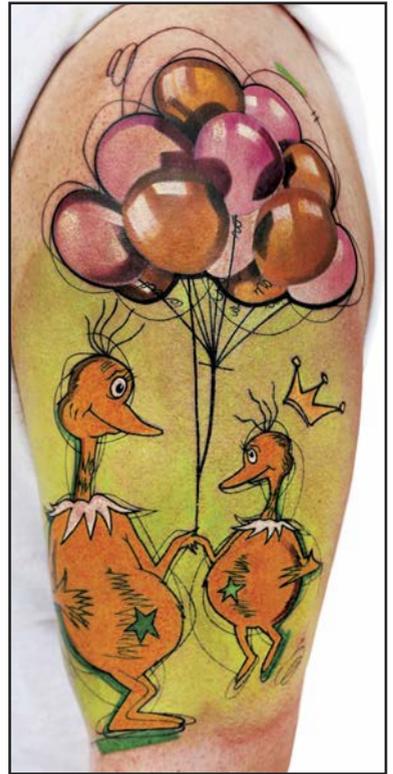
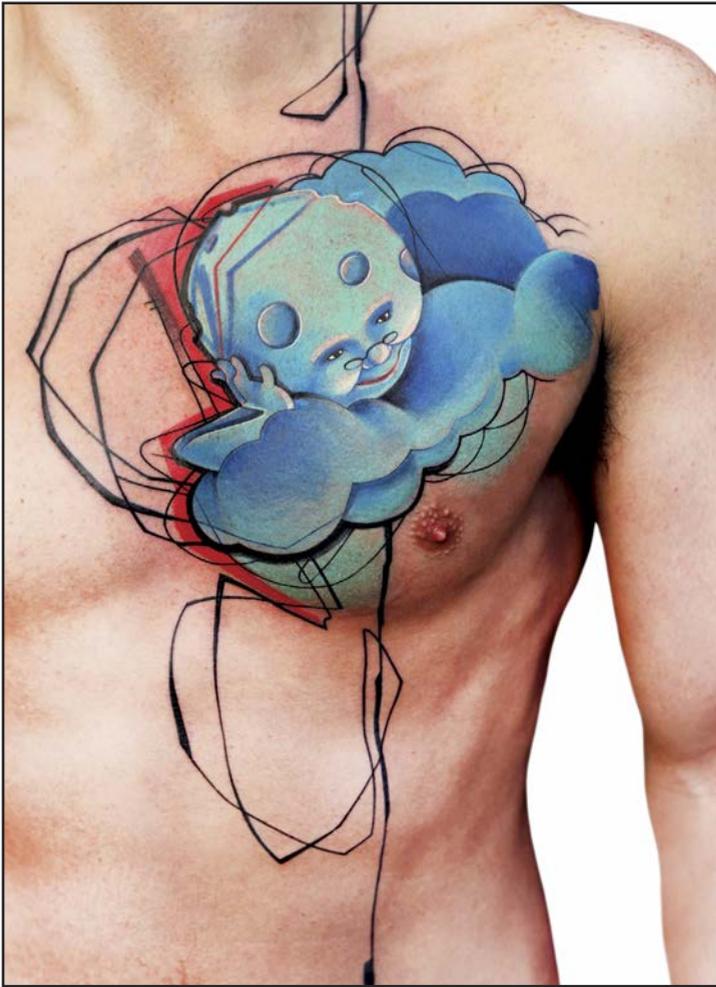
Should all tattooing be considered an art form?

Yes, tattooing should be considered as an art form. It *is* an art form, and it's one of the oldest. The only difference is that the canvas is alive and moves.

What else do you like to do besides tattooing? Do you like to keep your work and hobbies separate?

My absolute favourite pastime on an everyday basis is reading all sorts of books. Right now I'm enjoying all sorts of business motivational books, but I go through stages when I read psychological books... spiritual books... books of all kinds! Although I say 'read', I actually listen more to audio books. In terms of whether there is a separation between my work and my hobbies, my work really *is* my hobby, so it's impossible to keep it separate. Art is what I am made of and it's the air I breathe. I create even in my sleep.







How important is it to incorporate your personality into your art?

It is the only way to develop an original and unique style. An artist's style reflects their individual personality.

How important are conventions and travelling in the evolution of your work?

They are very necessary. Every convention I attend brings me new opportunities and new contacts and the chance to work alongside the best artists in the industry. I can learn from them just by watching them. I love to be around that creative energy. You never know when opportunities will present themselves to you when you are in this flow of being. I am constantly learning from the many people I encounter all over the world. I am in a position now to teach others, through my seminars and writing, and I feel very grateful that I can pass my knowledge on in this way.

How much of your success is down to talent, and how much is down to sheer hard work?

Success comes from hard work. If someone is talented, it speeds the process. Real success is a combination of these two aspects.

Tell us about your book *just Love, Tattoos and Sushi*.

The book explores my most recent work. It also describes how tattoos have shaped my art and soul. I have interwoven tattoo photos with stories from clients and my own personal history too – like the early tattoos I did on my brother, which I have now covered up! I take my readers on a journey into my tattoo world. It's a 120-page full-colour volume.





In May 2018 you launched your clothing brand ITA Los Angeles. How would you describe the style?

It's funky street fashion with a rebellious tattoo spirit. A luxury brand that reflects an opulent tattoo lifestyle.

How has the first year been?

The first year has been fascinating. I am a very positive person who loves a challenge! The clothing industry is completely different to the tattoo industry, so it has been a fun year of evolution and learning. It has taken up a great deal of my time but I am enjoying every second of it. Coming up with an idea and making it into a tangible product is a great feeling.

Tell us about why you decided to branch into fashion.

Making clothing had been a dream of mine for around fifteen years. Because my tattoo designs are so colourful, not everyone wants to wear an actual tattoo so I decided to put my designs on clothing too. It's just another form of creativity. I wanted the clothing designs to reflect the positive, playful, beautiful, and sometimes mischievous spirit of my tattoos.

What are your plans for the future?

I am building an empire with my renowned IVANA TATTOO ART brand and taking over the world with my ITA LA high fashion clothing label! I hope to continue travelling, breaking down barriers, and inspiring and motivating others through my seminars and workshops.

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