

**OSCAR GUERMOUCHE**  
The Illustrated Man  
2002-2009

*Och ingen vet hurudan jag är* (2002)  
*Trompe l'oeil* (2002)  
*Ida och Oscar* (2002)  
*Namna* (2003)  
*50* (2003)  
*Så här går man* (2003)  
*Behaviorism* (2003-2004)  
*Din hund är sjuk* (2005)  
*Sent Items* (2006, 2009)  
*Signum 1977-2007* (2008)  
*Vi vill åka till Moskva* (2008-2009)  
*The Illustrated Man* (2002-2009)

The works of Oscar Guermouche are based upon and makes frequent use of text with his own body serving use as “book” or “exhibition space”. In the spring of 2002, he started a project involving tattoos with the aim of leaving a fragment or component on his body of each art project that he initiates. The objectification of the own body has caused a change in relation to his environment; complete strangers feel entitled to comment on, point at and sometimes touch his body to read the words that have been tattooed thereon.

Magnus Bårtås

*Text*

What is collapsing before our very eyes is nothing other than this falsely aristocratic conception of the arrangement of works of art, associated with the feeling of territorial acquisition. In other words, it is no longer possible to regard the contemporary work as a space to be walked through (the “owner’s tour” is akin to the collector’s). It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion.

Nicolas Bourriaud

*Relational Aesthetics*

The Master’s group will critically discuss and examine the concept of the public realm – which embraces the entire social arena relevant to citizens – from an art perspective. Issues that are brought up include, for example, how various forms of art can relate to the public space, the writing of history and storytelling, the public dialogue, freedom of speech, and property rights in an information society.

Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design

*Art in the Public Realm*

He had seen her painted sign by the road: SKIN ILLUSTRATION! Illustration instead of tattoo! Artistic! So he had sat all night while her magic needles stung him wasp stings and delicate bee stings. By morning he looked like a man who had fallen into a twenty-color print press and been squeezed out, all bright and picturesque.

Ray Bradbury  
*The Illustrated Man*

Art has always mirrored the zeitgeist of the time. In this Postmodern epoch in which all the art of the past has been assimilated, consumerized, advertised and replicated, the last artistic territory resisting co-optation and commodification by Museum and Gallery remains the Human Body.

V. Vale and Andrea Juno  
*Modern Primitives*

Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you.

*Leviticus 19:28*

The little notes aren't working out. Not for the more important stuff. You've got to find a more permanent way of writing this down.

Christopher Nolan  
*Memento*

Strange as it may seem, the tattoo-covered body of a “vor v zakone” (legitimate thief), is primarily a linguistic object. Tattoos are a unique language of symbols and the rules for “reading” them are transmitted via oral tradition. Esoteric in nature, this language resembles thieves’ argot and it performs a similar function by encoding secret information to protect itself against uninitiated outsiders. In exactly the same way as argot is a masked language, neutral words with coded meanings, tattoos convey “secret” symbolic information through the use of allegorical images which at first glance may seem familiar to everyone, (a naked woman, a devil, a burning candle, a dungeon, a snake, a bat, etc.).

Alexei Plutser-Sarno  
*Russian Criminal Tattoo Encyclopaedia*

A child is amoral. A Papuan too, for us. The Papuan slaughters his enemies and devours them. He is not a criminal. But if a modern person slaughters someone and devours him, he is a criminal or a degenerate. The Papuan covers his skin with tattoos, his boat, his oars, in short everything he can lay his hands on. He is no criminal. The modern person who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty percent of the inmates have tattoos. People with tattoos not in prison are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats.

Alfred Loos  
*Ornament and Crime*

They follow me along country roads. Everyone wants to see the pictures, and yet nobody wants to see them.

Ray Bradbury  
*The Illustrated Man*

Our reaction to freaks is not a function of some deep-seated fear or some “energy” that they give off; it is, rather, the result of our socialization, and of the way our social institutions managed these people’s identities. Freak shows are not about isolated individuals, either on platforms or in an audience. They are about organizations and patterned relationships between them and us. “Freak” is not a quality that belongs to the person on display. It is something that we created: a perspective, a set of practices – a social construction.

Robert Bogdan

*Freak Show*

Men’s (and women’s) bodies are surfaces that are inscribed with, defined by and disciplined through social norms and conventions about gendered appearances, in size, weight and deportment as well as through decoration and clothing.

Linda McDowell

*Redundant Masculinities?*

The information of most relevance in the study of stigma has certain properties. It is information about an individual. It is about his more or less abiding characteristics, as opposed to the moods, feelings, or intents that he might have at a particular moment. The information, as well as the sign through which it is conveyed, is reflexive and embodied; that is, it is conveyed by the very person it is about, and conveyed through bodily expression in the immediate presence of those who receive the expression.

Erving Goffman

*Stigma*

For in his hands and feet there immediately began to appear the marks of the nails in the same manner as he had seen them in the flesh of Jesus Christ crucified, who had appeared to him under the form of the seraph, so that his hands and feet appeared to be pierced through the middle with nails, the heads of which were in the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet; and the points came out again in the back of the hands and the feet, and were turned back and clinched in such manner that within the bend formed by the reversal of the points a finger could easily be placed as in a ring; and the heads of the nails were round and black.

Ungolino di Monte Santa Maria  
*Little Flowers of St. Francis*

From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

*Galatians 6:17*

The flesh was culled during Orlan's nine forays into plastic surgery, which she dubs "carnal art", during which she obtained the nose of a Fontainebleau sculpture of Diana, the mouth of Boucher's Europa, Mona Lisa's forehead, the chin of Botticelli's Venus, and the eyes of Gérôme's Psyche.

Julia Stuart  
*Not just a pretty face*

Leaving aside the world of dreams and having a closer look at the actual actions and experiences of the heavy user, the thought springing to mind is hardly that of euphoria. Whilst looking at the general way of life of these users, the most important arguments against euphoria being the cause of problematic drug use becomes apparent. This lifestyle choice can hardly be described as pleasant; instead the heavy user's life aim seems to be one of self-destruction.

Ted Goldberg

*Narkotika*

Body art is also a sub-category of performance art, in which artists use or abuse their own body to make their particular statements.

*Wikipedia*

Tattoos a snake on the shoulder, a striped one, a viper, a venomous one. Andrea is not as meek, as nice as many would probably have thought. It doesn't hurt. Although the tattooist continuously mentions the lack of fat under the skin, how hard, it must hurt. No! It doesn't hurt! Not in comparison, she thinks. To all the rest.

Anna Jörgensdotter

*Pappa Pralin*

When I was twenty years old and working a carnival, I broke my leg. It laid me up, I had to do something to keep my hand in, so I decided to get tattooed.

Ray Bradbury

*The Illustrated Man*