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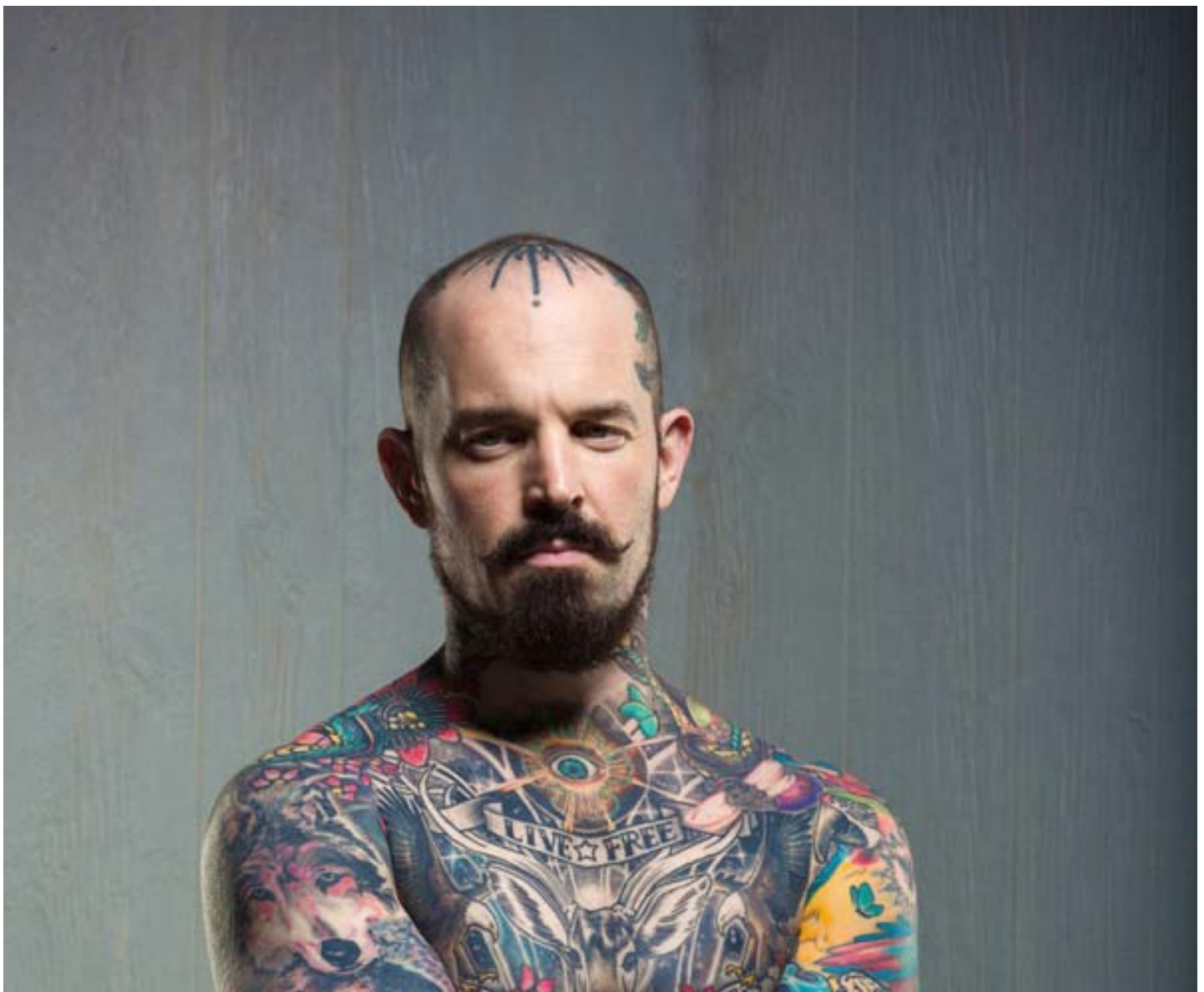
DANIEL CARTIER: BLANK TO BODY SUIT IN 3 YEARS

November 14, 2012

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I'm fascinated with the phenomenon of inking your entire body. A living canvas carrying the symbolism of something personal is incredibly beautiful.

A friend of mine from our period in New York City was among the first to start inking his head at a time when such a thing was pretty shocking. In 1988, musician and artist [Daniel Cartier](#) got an ankh (Egyptian Eternal Life Symbol) on the back of his head from Lenny Mental, the lead singer of a punk band they both played in, and he never looked back.

"I always wanted to be fully covered...but my body remained blank until December 2010...that's when I decided to start pursuing my lifelong dream and look like the tattooed man at the circus. In the midst of a lot of personal chaos, Cartier decided to start getting tattooed. It made no sense "on paper", but like many journeys we take in life, it was a leap of faith.

The end game for Cartier is to be completely covered, except his face, by the end of 2013. Cartier is preparing to release a coffee table book of photographs and essays chronicling the journey from "no ink" to being "fully loaded" in less than 3 years. To defer costs of the book, Cartier will be setting up a section on his [website](#) devoted to it and contributors will have a chance to sponsor various tattoos. He believes tattooing is slowly being regarded as the "fine art" form that it is, but it has been a slow process. He hopes books like this one will further the cause.



Cartier is a devotee of [Kustom Thrills](#) in east Nashville. Johnny Lashley has performed the bulk of Daniel's work, but everyone in the shop has added pieces. "They are like family to me at this point," he says.

Having seen the progression of Cartier's body art, the easier question to ask is where isn't he inked? There are still some spaces left and he intends to leave his face, ears and his genitalia blank also.

His favorite tattoo is the portrait of his dog Miss Banjo in her wheels (her hind legs use a doggie wheelchair). Close second runner-up is an ankle sleeve devoted to Little Edie Beal from Grey Gardens, whom Cartier calls his "spirit guide". "She lived in absolute squalor yet chose to view it all as a soundstage."



Averaging about two sessions a week, Cartier says it's a brutal timetable and he is always healing.

Typically, most people are intrigued by his body art, but he does get some people who seem freaked out by it. Complete strangers will start asking really personal questions about his body and what parts are tattooed. Often they will start pulling the waistband of their pants down to show off their own tattoos or pulling their breast out to show a butterfly near their nipple. Cartier is always polite when this happens. There have even been a few marriage proposals once people get a good look at this post-Modern Illustrated Man.

[Blair Schulman](#) is an art writer/critic and Editor of [Cupcakes in Regalia](#) in Kansas City, Missouri.

Photos by Ned Siriyutwatana and Daniel Cartier

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