

# Filling in the lines at the Cape Tattoo Expo

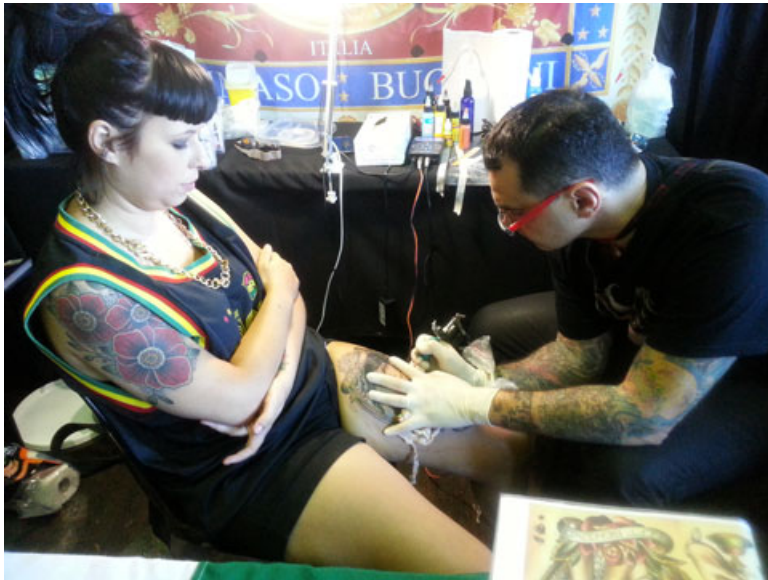
 By [Brandon Williams](#)

5 Mar 2014

If I was a theoretical physicist by the name of Dr Sheldon Cooper and my qualification cabinet boasted a BS, MS, MA, Ph.D and Sc.D, my review of the sixth annual Cape Tattoo Expo would read simply this: "*buzzinga*".

Alas, I am not this man and must, therefore, embrace my humanity in the form of a fully worded article. Aaah, don't look so glum, now you get to be whisked away on an enthralling journey of description. As your captain I must inform you that this review will be an account of my maiden voyage to the Cape Tattoo Expo on 1 March, 2014. So without further ado let's raise the anchor of apathy and set sail on the ocean of objectivity.

Mere metres from the dimly lit doorway of the City Hall, a lady limped forth from the cavernous darkness. "Ow, ow, ow" she groaned with each step she took. Hmmmkay then, solid first impression!



It was obvious that she'd just been marked for life. But this raised the question: What house of pain has event organiser Southern Ink Xposure, erected? At the foot of the eerie but grandiose staircase a little girl, no older than 12, proclaimed conspiracy theories to a small encircling crowd. This was clearly the work of the Illuminati, New World Order at the grass roots. But they would not get me, not this day! So I hardened my mind and made my way to the upper reaches of the City Hall, where the convention was taking place. With each step, the buzzing grew louder and louder. It reverberated through the air like insects on a carcass, or even worse a corpse. Its chilling call reached all as they made their way through the abyssal doors of the void. Then the beast, the horror, the heart of darkness revealed itself unto me - and it was beautiful.

## Ink slingers unite

A myriad of colour enveloped me. For a brief moment its vibrancy scorched my cornea. I found myself venturing through a wondrous warren, a bizarre labyrinth of interconnected hallways and rooms. Each spacious room housed multiple tattoo booths, which treated visitors to chromatic visual displays from renowned ink slingers the world over. These mystic "marksmen" included the like of Laura Fiorini (Italy), Boris Bianchi (the US), Psycho Pat (Belgium), Demian Cervera (Argentine) and Dermadonna (The Netherlands). South Africa's vibrant virtuosos also made permanent impressions with artists like Nathan Philips, Ze, Jinx, Sead Dean and Clinton Naidoo firmly representing. Even if you didn't place a booking to get inked, you still had the opportunity to witness real-life masters etching gorgeous graphics onto the most beautiful canvas of all: the human body. To my surprise, I didn't see a single soul flinch: they all just sat there and took it. And people

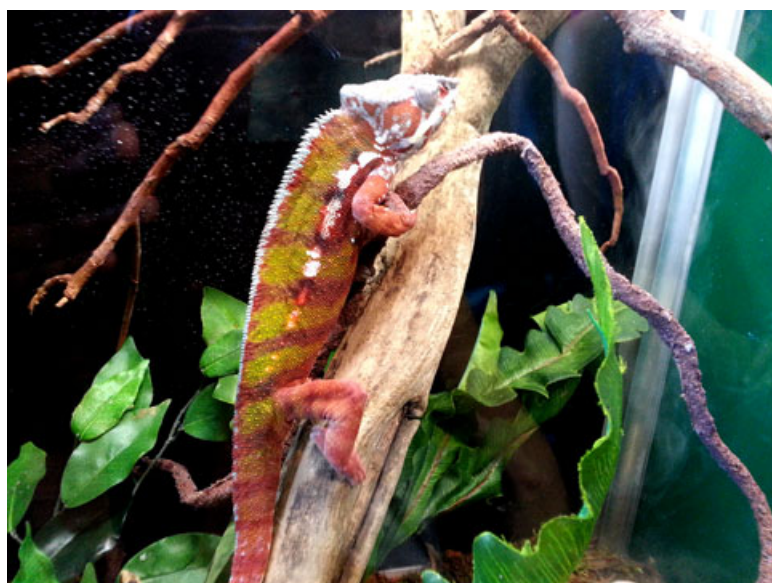
certainly didn't shy from putting some of their more intimate areas on display. I remember one girl whose ... "OMG is that Kat von D??? No? Just a normal girl? Aaah damnit - every time man, every time."



This surreal scene of body beautification was only made more vivid by Victorian oddities mounted between booths, on walls and in designated exhibition rooms. All of these eccentric fine arts pieces, whether graphic or crafted, were so richly textured. Achieving such intricate levels of detail in graphical pieces, using predominantly flat colours and bold brush strokes, is simply exquisite. And with rockabilly-styled crafts and apparel vendors like Jeez Louise, Stay True, Miss Happ and Witch Night; visitors could shop for the perfect items, wild and whimsical, to make not only their tattoos pop, but their all-inclusive lifestyles.

## Cold-blooded creations

If this wasn't enough, the conference even featured a reptilian repository, which showcased the scaly splendour of Mother Nature's cold-blooded creations. Whether you posed for pictures with pythons (assuming it was a python), or cuddled the cutest rock monitor I've ever seen; you had to take a moment simply to be in awe of these precious little fellas. The "hazardous" signs on all their tanks really brought out their beady little eyes - like moonlit pools on a mid-summers eve. Man I want one of these creatures so badly. To love, to cherish, to tuck in at night, they'd be my little nunu-pies and I'd be their legal guardian.



If this intense aaah factor still hasn't sold you for next year, then let's see "ooh!" There was a gaming area! A small room at the other end of the building, which took a significant amount of adventure time to discover. Nonetheless, it was a place

where visitors, mostly younger children, could also be kept entertained; far flung from blares from the breezy courtyard bar. I didn't really take note of the playable titles on offer, but two of the games I sort of made out were a recent version of Need For Speed and some kind of dungeon crawler like Diablo III. I thought the dungeon crawler was rather fitting as the entire convention did sort of resemble an enchanted lair teeming with treasure.

But, by and large, the most colourful aspect of this event was the people. The look of accomplishment on visitors' faces as they proudly strutted about the halls displayed their decals; you could just tell that they were firmly rooted in their element. I haven't seen that much skin since Miley Cyrus - Wrecking Ball. It's kind of funny; out in the real world these are the people who draw the most stares. But at the expo it was my bare, supple, golden-brown flesh that stood out the most - and not in a good way. Every 10 minutes someone would be like: "Hey where's your tats at man?" and I'd be all like: "Uhm my birthmark kinda looks like Africa?" Heck If I had a nickel for every person who asked me that question, I'd actually get that blemished inked in . . . then it would be my 're-birth' mark.



## Made with men in mind

After such an intense session of observation, I was feeling a little famished. At this point my stomach and the needles were practically doing a duet. So I headed over to the food area and noticed that outside the food hall was the courtyard bar. So I headed past the food area and ordered a double Sailor Jerry and coke for R25. "Aaarg" for a bunch o' land lubbers the drinks sure were reasonably priced. I mean expo/festival bars usually inflict brutal "walletary" wounds. Yes I just made up my own word, but I did for science! Thank you Dr Sheldon Cooper you're the atom bomb!

I did eventually make it back to the food hall, but wasn't too impressed with the variety or prices. Could the lower prices of the bar actually have been geared toward making patrons drunk so that they'd be more inclined to fork out at the food hall? "Dammit," I knew I shouldn't have let conspiracy theory girl fill my head with poison. But price aside, your options were



pretty much limited to a burger, savoury wrap or a Vienna-stuffed bread baton - we sure were spoiled for choice, hey? And no, I was not describing a hot dog that time.

Deciding which meal to order demanded intense introspection and the mental fortitude of a mine sweeper. So after meeting my cosmic owl on my higher mental plane, he bestowed unto me transcendent visions of a burger so titanic, it is said to have the diameter of two adult male fists. So that's exactly what I ordered, who am I to fight destiny? Though the taste of these Original Captain burgers was pretty generic; the novelty of wolfing down such a behemoth was sure to make anyone, regardless of gender, feel like a real man.



It wasn't until I almost dozed off on my scatter cushion of a burger that I realised just how lethargic the music actually was. Having live entertainment in the food hall, yes great idea! But shouldn't music serve to heighten the atmosphere? This is not to say that the artists weren't talented, and perhaps the music did liven up later that night; but the midday melodies were mellow as moonlight. It didn't dull the vibe; I just don't think it was entirely compatible with it. I get that as an event organiser you'd naturally want to cater to everyone's tastes. But let's say that, hypothetically, my buddies and I were iron clad in spiked bands, inked from head to heel and donned skeletal ornaments on our slashed jeans. In a scenario like this, it wouldn't be generalising as much as it would be common sense to assume that we like livelier subgenres of rock. So why not move the food area to a different section of the building, so patrons can still enjoy their meals in relative peace, but have another bustling bench area with a more hard-core band where visitors can sit, drink and enjoy the music? At most people would head bang, but I'm sure they wouldn't start a mosh pit. Besides extra seating at an all-day affair always goes highly appreciated.

## Colour, culture and couture

One final critical note, I would have loved to see cash express ATM points inside the actual venue. The FNB mission up Plein Street wasn't exactly the time of my life as I had to walk past conspiracy theory girl again. I also felt that, at R150 a ticket, there wasn't an awful lot to see. I know, I know, procuring artists beyond our borders doesn't come cheaply. But considering that the duration of the event was 12 hours, yeah I'd say there wasn't an awful lot to see. I took my time to analyse, appreciate and admire each and every piece, but got through everything in less than 40 minutes. However, the handful of artworks that were exhibited were absolutely fantastic and no one can take that away. So, next year, maybe we could expand the exquisite art exhibition to keep people in awe just a tad longer?

All in all, I had a great time at this highly anticipated lifestyle event. The contrast between the 19th- century Edwardian pillars and regal statues against a kaleidoscope of bikers, hipsters, rockers, gamers and beer stands was nothing short of an inter-dimensional trip. A place where the sands of time stand still and the lines of the past, present and future converge in flare of colour, culture and couture; a testament to the evolution of arts. The building was easily accessible, the parking was free and the energy was ecstatic - a definite recommendation from my side.

## ABOUT BRANDON WILLIAMS

Cape Town based UX designer, striving to become an apex machine of health and fitness. Passionate about, economics, investing and building business systems.

- AfrikaBurn: Desert of Dreams - 9 May 2014
- Filling in the lines at the Cape Tattoo Expo - 5 Mar 2014
- Origin 2014 - a journey of rediscovery - 5 Feb 2014
- Loyiso Gola Live and very, very direct - 21 Nov 2013
- Niskerone & SFR - free trip down memory lane - 31 May 2013

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>