

ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis is to conduct qualitative research aimed at psychological aspects of tattoos in the form of ethnographic study. The research follows a relationship between an individual and his tattoos with the main topics being a motivation for getting a tattoo, meaning of the tattoo for the owner, and the relationship between the artist and his client. Data were gathered using unstructured interviews with an emphasis on building trust between the researcher and the interviewee. The study concludes the motivation can be distinguished into internal and external. The internal motivation represents the benefits tattoos can bring to his owner while the external motivation shows the ways an individual can use the tattoo to send a message to others. As for the owner-tattoo relationship, results show variations in how can one perceive his tattoos and what tattoo could mean for the owner. Some of the respondents viewed their tattoos as just a body decoration, others used them as symbols of their own deeper thoughts and lifestyle. When exploring the artist-client relationship, it has been found out trust and mutual sympathies as well as setting up proper boundaries to keep the relationship on the professional level all seem to play an important role.

KEYWORDS

tattoo, self-expression, identity, motivation, meaning, body image, social ident

