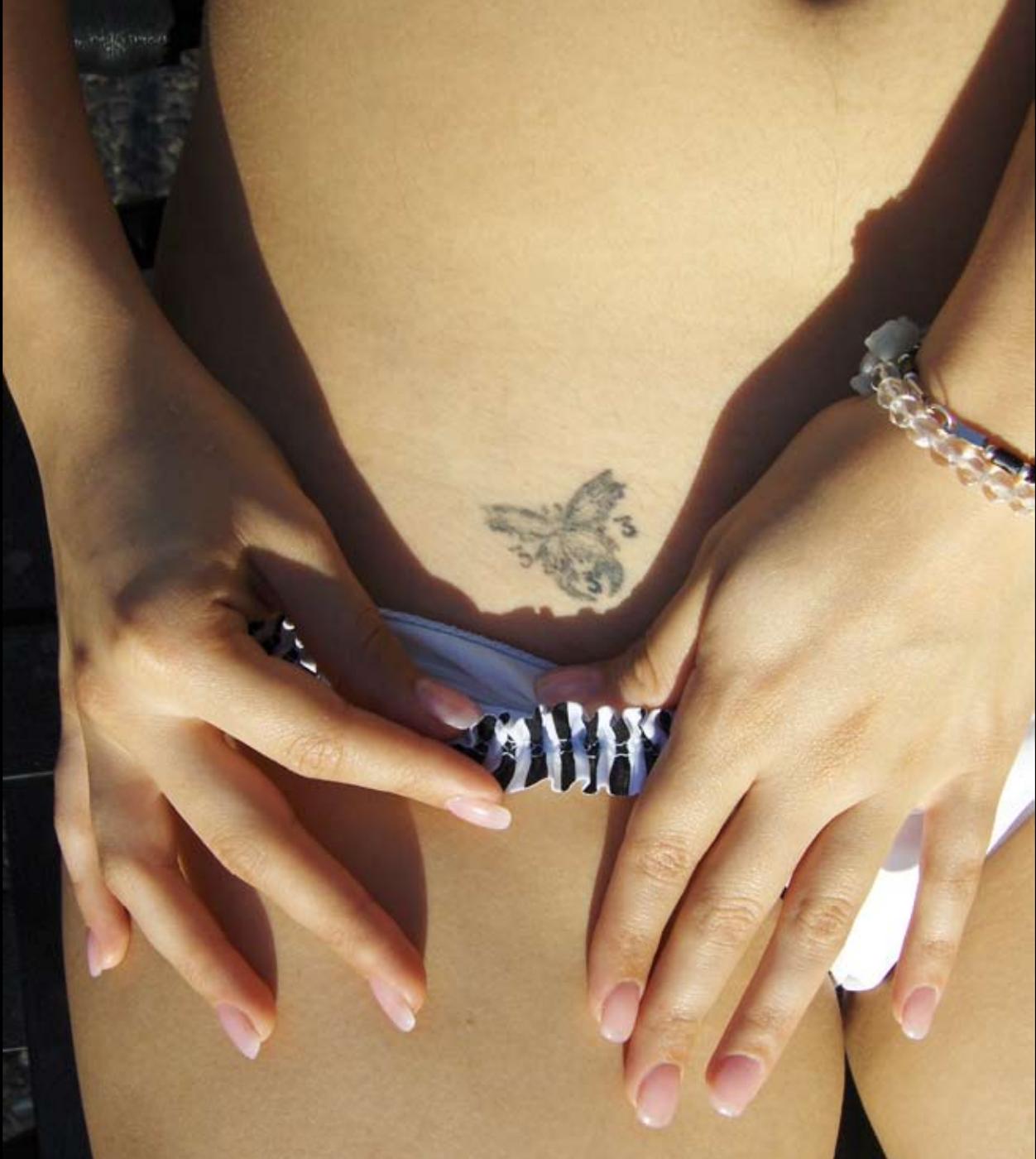


Journal.

The stories behind Body Art and the history that began it.



Standing behind the counter at a local bead shop, surrounded by African tribal masks, trays of beads, and various artsy/traditional objects, she is hooking wires into little loops to hold strings of beads. Her tiny, dark hands move smoothly, yet quickly as she bends the wire. She is short, no question about it. Her skin tanned by her Mexican heritage. Her dark, curly hair is curled up tightly in a bun; if it were to fall down it would reach all the way down her back. She speaks Spanish but an accent is not audible: she prefers to speak Spanish with a “white girl” accent. Her features are delicate yet strong. Her back is covered with three butterflies, ivy and the word Karma. Her tongue is pierced. Her ears have several holes and stretched earlobes. Her hipbone brands a tiny black butterfly surrounded by three 3’s. The colors of her tattoos stand out beautifully on her dark skin. She is a soldier for the Air Force National Guard. She is Venesa Bombard. Her body is her canvas, her journal.

Right: Venesa Bombard, Hip Tattoo

My introduction into the body modification community started while I was young. Both my parents are tattooed and I never viewed it as something that was taboo. The reasons behind it seemed simple to me until Venesa became my best friend. I began to question why people chose to pierce their flesh, inject ink into their skin and all the various other things you can do. I began watching shows on body modifications, learning about its history and its societal meaning. My passion for the subject began forming itself on my own body once I turned 18. This book is not about me, it's about all the other people who have taken the journey to turn their bodies into their journals.



Piercing

Right: Vincent G

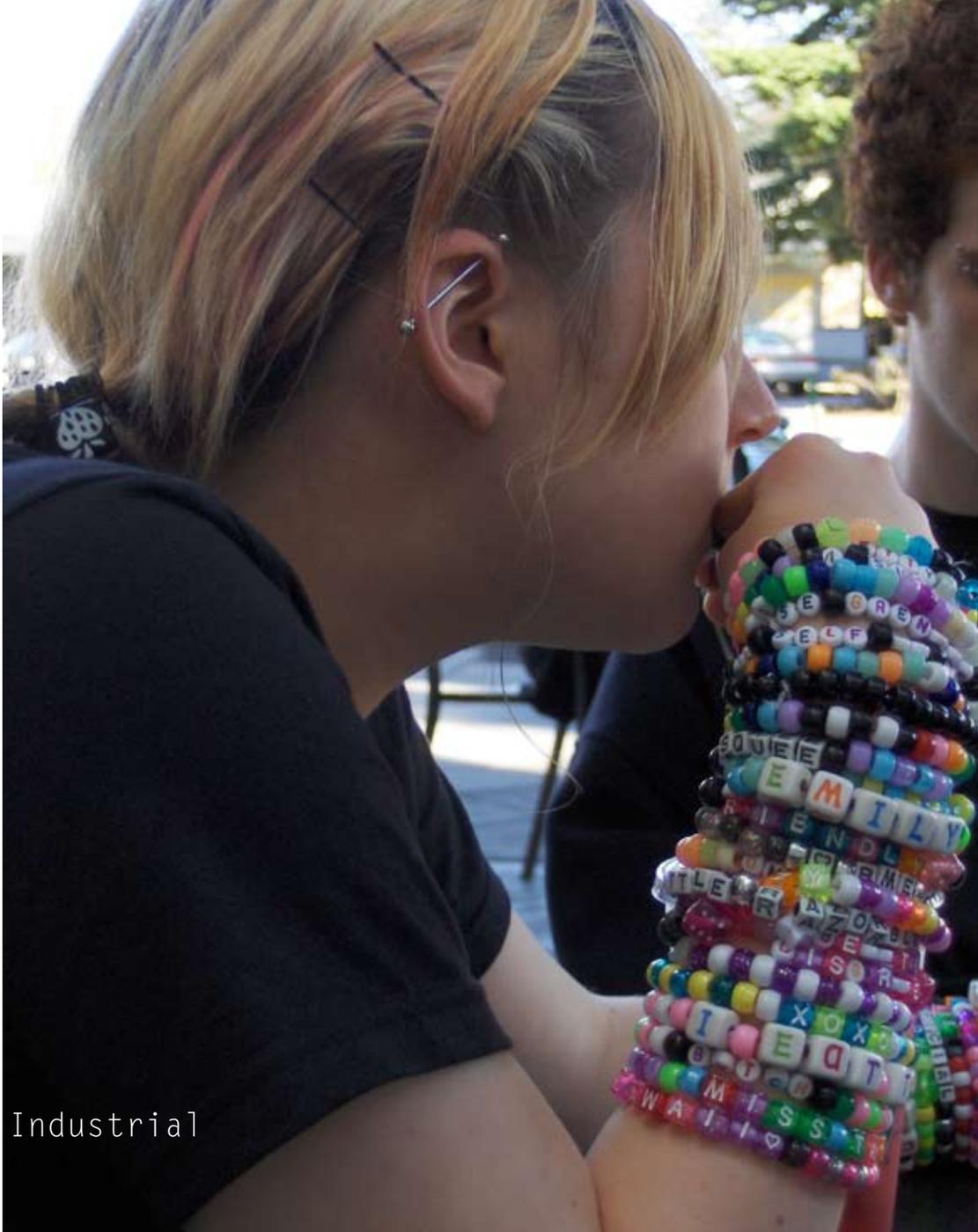


Among the Tlingit of southeast Alaska ear piercing showed a person's rank in society. One could be born into a certain rank, however, if their parents decided to throw a "potlatching", which is a community feast, they could pay to have their child's ears pierced. A great amount of wealth was required to host this feast and pay the person to pierce the child's ear. As a result the many holes marked the child as a member of nobility. Ear plugs were found in Mayan culture, many plugs range from one centimeter to an inch in diameter.



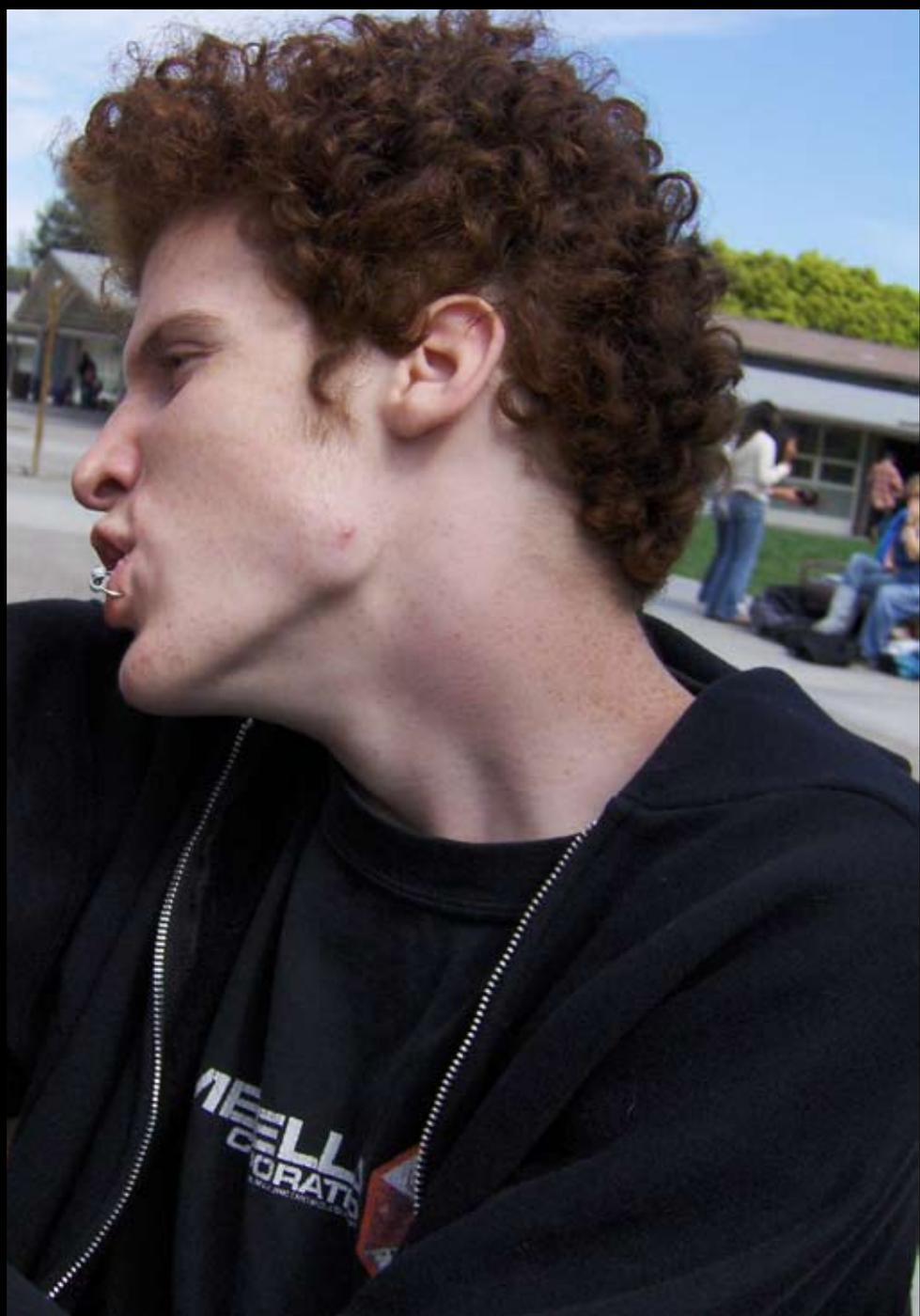


Rachel with multiple ear piercings



Emily with Industrial

Lip piercing has been catching on in the west as well. What many don't realize is that until the late nineteenth century, the Eskimo of Alaska defined social status by lip piercing. A man in an Eskimo tribe either wore one lip plug in the middle (labret) or two on either side of the mouth. A man wearing the double labret looked like a walrus. Young men received this piercing, symbolizing their entrance into manhood. Women in this culture usually wore only one, middle, lip plug as decoration. Tlingit girls wore labrets to show their noble social status.





Allie S. and Venesa B and their tongue piercings



Vincent
G.

Tattoo



The art of tattooing began over 2,000 years ago in the Polynesian islands. Their tattoos are unique and have a deep societal meaning. The masters of tattooing were called tufuga in Samoa, tohunga in Aotearoa/ Te Waipounamu, and kahuna in Hawai'i. Even the sacred chiefs held them in high esteem. It was the master who decided what design was right and who was to be marked and when. Often the tattooee would be instructed to fast or stick to a special diet before receiving the tattoo, lest they taint their spirit. Many tattoo ceremonies were a rite of passage into adulthood.



*“Your necklace may break, the
fau tree may burst, but my tattoo-
ing is indestructible. It is an ever-
lasting gem that you will take into
your grave.”*

-Verse from a traditional tattoo artist's song

Tattoos, in battle, were viewed as exerting magical protection. Maori men of New Zealand had their faces, buttocks, and thighs tattooed. Their tattoos were signs of prestige and power. They were designed to impress and intimidate enemies in battle.

Left top: Umbrellas, bottom: Ms. Forrester
foot tattoo

Right top: Ms. Forrester back tattoo, bot-
tom: glass lamp





Venesa back tattoo



A1 arm tattoo



A1 arm tattoo



Elvis leg tattoo of an 'E'



“It’s like a journal entry. I can’t wait to show my whole life on my body and be like everything I’ve been through. Art-work; it’s like a painting that you just get to keep forever and ever and ever and ever.”

-Venesa Bombard

Left: Metal grid on street

Some people write poetry, some write music. Then there are those who mark their bodies with designs, made with ink and/or scalpels. The intent is the same. It helps to show life's experiences and people. It's not about being a freak. Bombard states it plainly: "There's deeper meaning to it." Perhaps one day it will be seen as completely acceptable, and not something that's on the fringes of society.





This book is dedicated to all the people that supported me, let me invade their lives, and gave me advice.
Thank you.