

POINT LINE SURFACE

Tattooing meets graphic design

The art of tattooing is thought to originate well over five thousand years ago. Though it is subject to debate, the general theories behind early tattooing align with some combination of cultural cohesion, creative expression, and even primitive pain relief (not unlike acupuncture). Regardless of why it exists, tattooing has been a common and persistent element throughout our shared human history – one that crosses borders, religions, and virtually any other aspect that defines one civilization over another.

Of the countless schools in contemporary tattooing, I personally find inspiration in blackwork. As the name suggests, it is a discipline open to a world of different aesthetics and styling, but one that is relegated to black ink. In this respect, it is a close offshoot to the tattoos that date back to the very beginning of the art form. With that in mind, below is a curated list of three blackwork artists whose work embodies the truest departures from that original legacy.



Chaim Machlev is a master of dot and line. While his stippled tattoos align more towards sacred and symmetrical geometries, his line work is ironically organic and flowing, as if reacting to lines and curves in the body. The tattoo pictured here straddles both extremes, marrying a phenomenal line quality with a meticulously balanced composition.



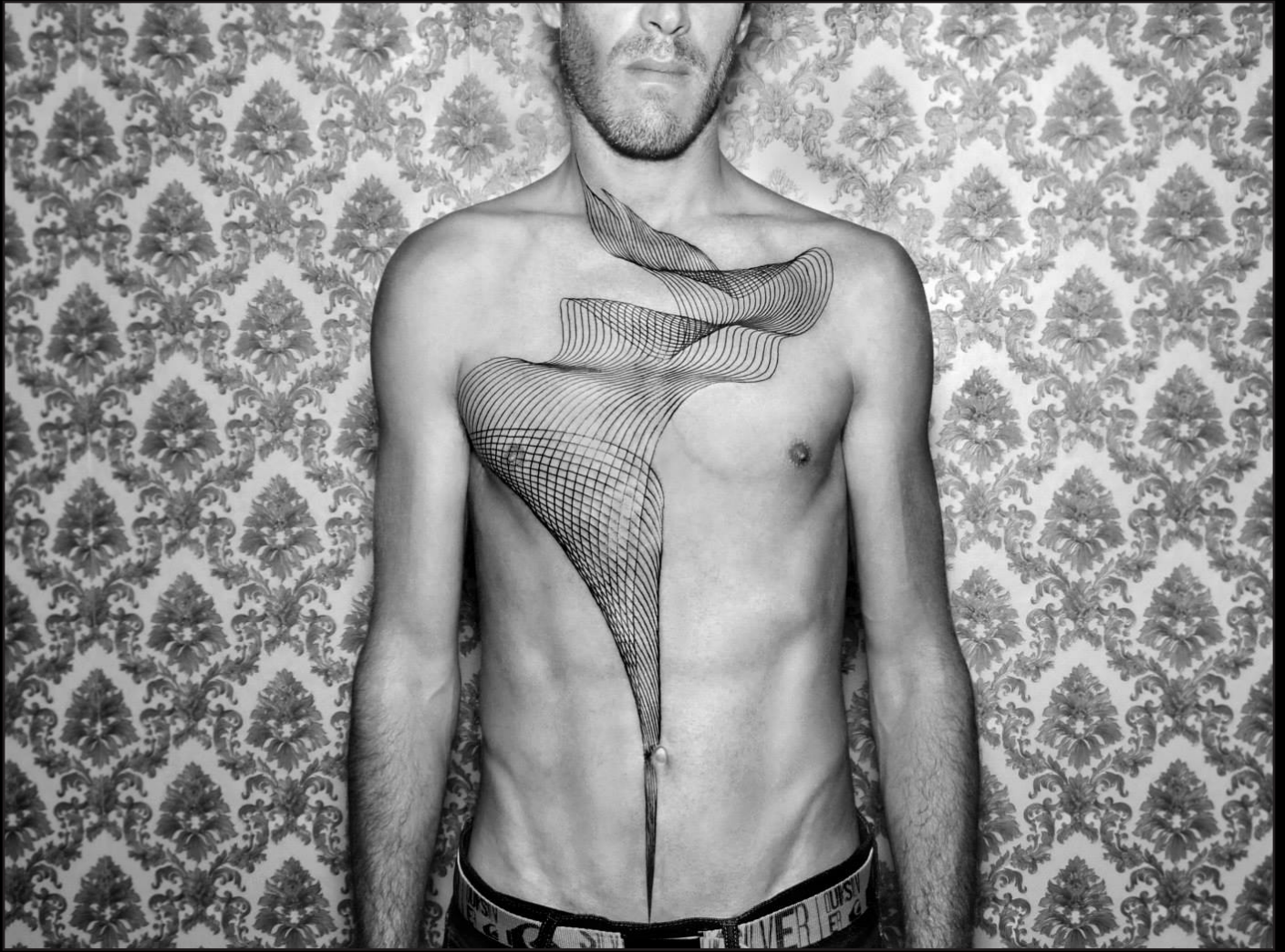














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Guy le Tattooer is a traveling tattoo artist originally from New Caledonia who is heavily inspired by Buddhist and Eastern imagery. Guy also toys with traditional henna – even alluding to Berber and other cultural iconographies. That said, much of his work is large-scale, covering sleeves, backs, and even full bodies.



















Kenji Alucky is a traveling tattoo artist based in Japan whose work spans from psychedelic dotted mandalas to minimalistic line. Aside from technical ability, there is a unique visual and conceptual sensibility behind many of his tattoos. One of my favorite examples is the plant-like growth tattoo, which radiates both a welcoming and nurturing overtone.













