





# Osa

## Tattooing and painting

*The Polish/Austrian female tattoo artist Osa is the daughter of the well-respected artist Waldi whose work we featured in Skin Deep some time ago. Just like her father she combines the art of tattooing and painting to equally good effect. "Tattooing starts with drawing and painting" she says.*

**T**ogether with Waldi she runs the studio/art gallery called Shockin City in Vienna. Osa has been in and around the tattooing scene pretty much from the day she could walk and started to tattoo when she was 12 years old when she was living in the neighbourhood of the Polish capital Warsaw. When she was 15, she moved to Austria.

I have seen her at work at a convention in Vianden, Luxemburg. She was tattooing the back of a female customer with the faces of elves in remarkable sharp colours. I also know of Waldi's art. But Osa is an artist with her own ideas. "The tattoos are always my own idea" she tells me. "The starting-point is what the customer wants but I don't let him or her tell me what I have to tattoo, so we work it out together."

### Elves and the four elements

Osa combines elves with the four elements. "I make now two elements: fire and water. The side of the fire I tattoo with red colours, the side of the water with blue and purple colours" she says. "I don't draw a design onto paper first, that makes no sense to me at all. The back is not as flat as a piece of paper. The characteristics of the back are very important. I like to work that way on other parts of the body too. The shape of the body is the starting-point for me and not the piece of paper. I draw my designs directly onto the skin, with felt pen. I always work like that."

### School of art

When I asked Osa if she learned the art of tattooing from Waldi, she answers: "Nobody can teach you how to tattoo. What you can learn is drawing and painting, which I've done since my childhood. At elementary school I was drawing better than my teacher. I am still drawing and painting, but not in the studio. I have a big house with an atelier. There I have the peace and tranquillity to paint. Sometimes I paint long into the night. Although I never followed an art education, I now give painting lessons myself, not in groups but privately. I still make pen-drawings and oil paintings when

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I can." "Tattooing starts with drawing and painting," she adds. "And not the other way round, that doesn't bring you any further, artistically. Go to a school of art first and then take the following step and start to tattoo. Technically you can only learn to tattoo by trying. In that way you learn to master it. It's the same as when you change from drawing with a pencil to an

airbrush. You have to master the technique of airbrushing. I did that too: airbrushing is just like graffiti."

### **Osa and Waldi**

When I told Osa I could see a resemblance in her work with that of Waldi, she says. "But we are very different too. I make thinner lines, for example. Waldi makes

cubistic shapes, which have always fascinated him. It's attracting me too but I am also fascinated by the paintings of the Wiener Secession". After 1900 this art style became very popular in Vienna as a version of Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) and was a rebellion against conservatism in art, and it brought resurgence to the art of painting. Osa tells me she likes angular forms and



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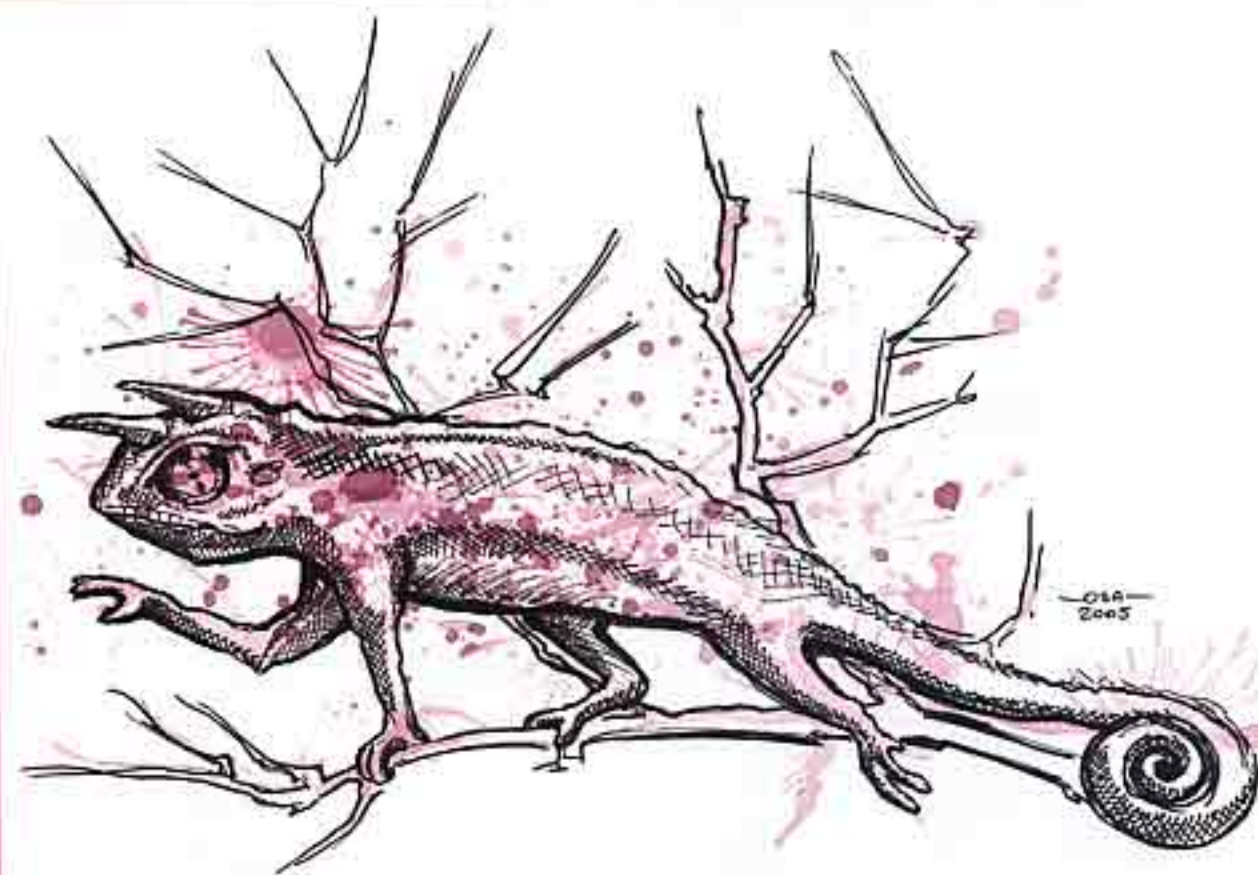
that she wants her tattoos to look graphic. "I don't make big blocks of colour like Waldi, in that way we are different. Of course we also influence each other, we often exchange experiences. We work in the same studio and Waldi sees what I tattoo and vice-versa."

### Painters and other cultures

Osa is more inspired by other painters than by tattoo artists. "I am influenced by many things. By Picasso and images from other cultures like the Aztecs and the Egyptians," she says. "And my inspiration is not just modern art but painters from the past. For example Polish artists like Matejko and Beksinski who recently passed away. And by the Austrian artist Fuchs. The last one made such a beautiful dome with golden leaves. The Second World War fascinated Beksinski, he documented his experiences in the war in his paintings. They are colourful but also cruel. Matejko is much older, he is an artist from before communism. He was a painter of kings and battlefields."

### Tattoo studio and art gallery

The studio of Osa and Waldi looks like an art gallery. They have two rooms in which they tattoo. They also carry out piercings there too. The walls are full of paintings. You will not find examples of done tattoos or flash like in other tattoo shops. Customers don't visit the studio just for a tattoo or



piercing. "We are also visited by people who are only interested in our paintings and they can see them in our studio" Osa says. Osa and Waldi don't tattoo everybody. "The customers who visit us usually know of us already. They know what they can expect when visiting. When someone visits us for the first time, we explain to him or her about the most important aspects of tattooing, that tattooing is a form of body art and that we draw directly onto the skin. When a customer has his own design, we have to be convinced that it fits well on a particular part of body where the customer wants it."

### Colours and forms of nature

Waldi and Osa both have regular customers but they also make collaborative pieces together. "We make paintings and tattoos together," Osa says. "Or I will start by drawing onto the skin first and then Waldi continues with the tattoo. I only do that when the tattoo is to contain images of animals or of plants and herbs as like to I study them. So I have a sense of the proportions when I draw them. I walk a lot in the Wienerwald (A large wooded area), northwest of Vienna. This is a big walking area and I find much of my inspiration in the colours of nature but also in the forms I see there. The shape of a plant or a fern. In nature I see so many forms and ornaments that I can use in my paintings or tattoos."

So Osa is not only inspired by the colours of nature but also by the ornamental forms and figures she sees in nature. She abstracts them from their surroundings. Because an artist such as Osa has to detach herself from the beauty she sees around her. She can then reproduce the richness of colours and forms and combines them with images from other cultures. And so using these influences Osa can transform many of these new images in her tattoos or paintings.



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