

SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

Osa Wahn considers herself an artist, not a tattooist. Owing her life's calling to her father, Osa started tattooing at the age of 12, and she won her first award at Shockin' City Tattoo convention the following year when she was only 13 years old

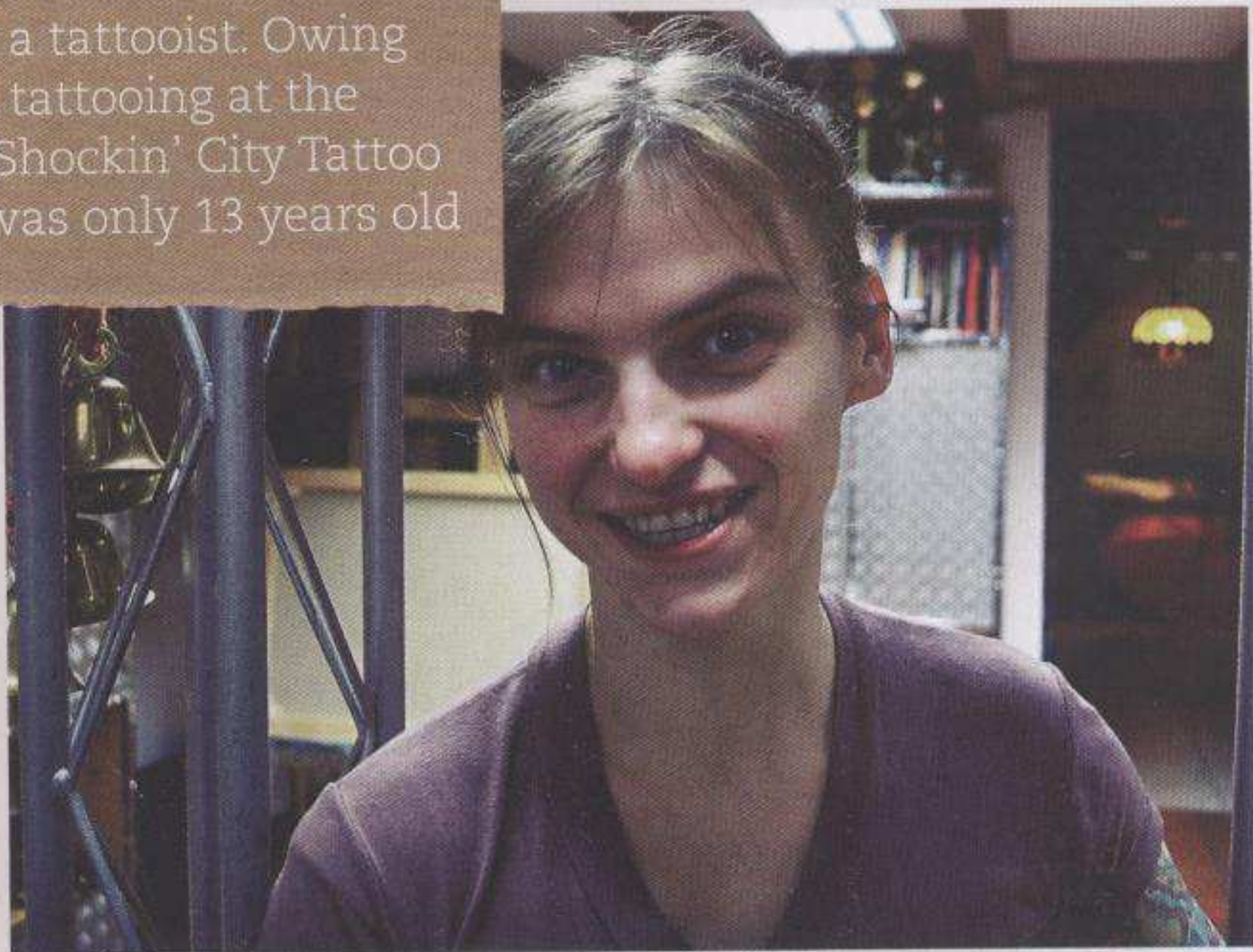


**SHOCKIN' CITY
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On a rainy and freezing cold autumn day, I step inside Shockin' City Tattoo, in what seems to be a more bohemian and culturally diverse area of Vienna, than the fancy, high-culture centre of town I just left, and for which the city is renowned. As you should when you stumble upon tattoo studios, I guess.

Gone are the monumental old buildings, the Opera, the many theatres, galleries and The Spanish Riding School. Present are the Indian restaurants and the dive bars. The owner of Shockin' City, however, doesn't really seem to fit in anywhere in these fundamentally opposing worlds, even though Osa Wahn is probably a product of both.

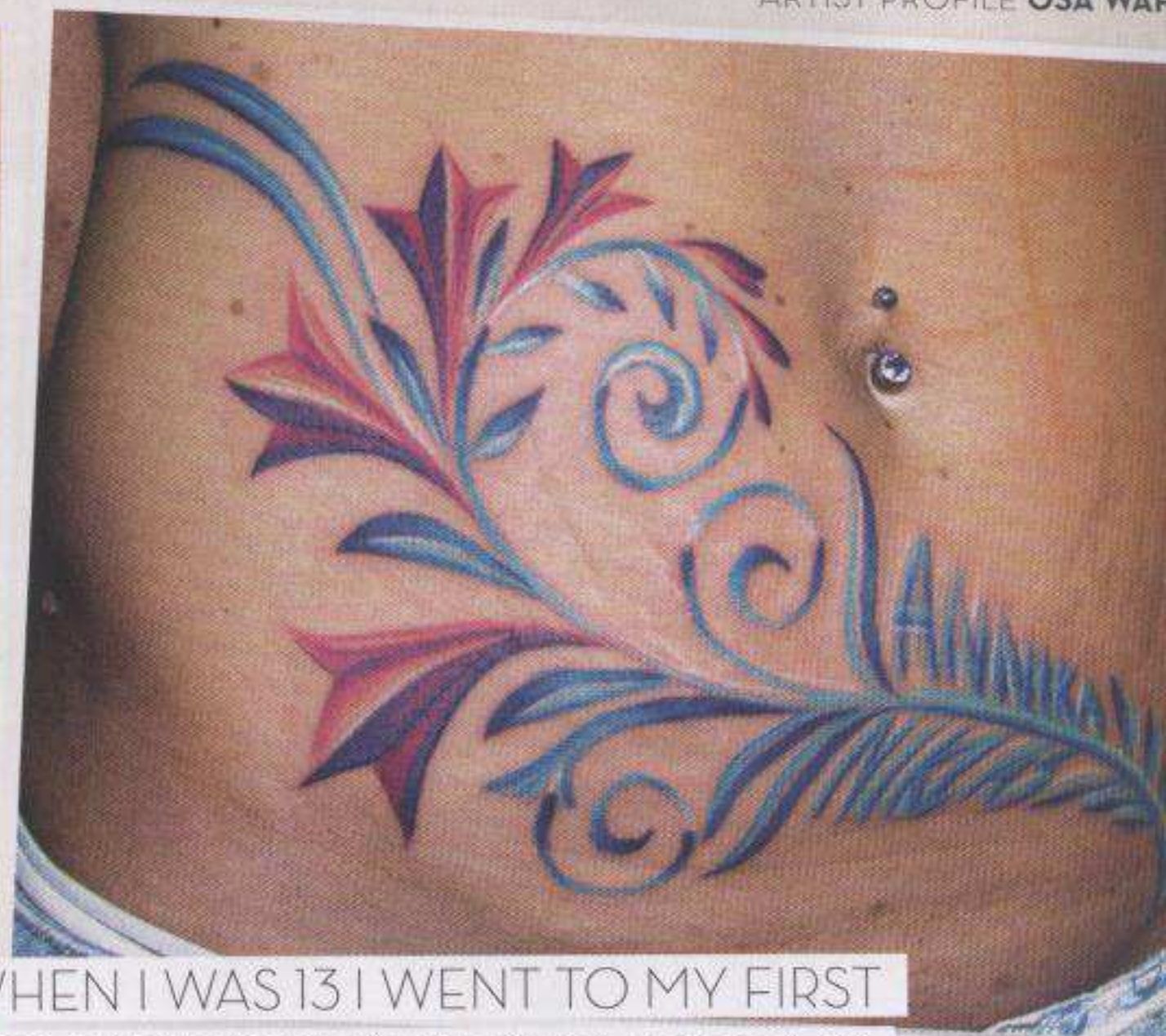
"I'm not a tattooist. I don't really have anything in common with the tattoo scene. I don't know many



tattoo artists and I think most of them are too primitive for me. The ones I spend time with, I consider to be artists. I like the exchange of ideas we have; it's constructive. Tattooing on the other hand is a craftsmanship. They call themselves artists, but really they're not. It's not art if you copy from stencils," she explains.

In other words, if you want a tattoo from Osa Wahn you need to trust her completely. Either you have a theme she enjoys or you let her altogether decide what to do. And bear in mind, she rejects about 80 percent of the suggestions she gets.

"People who want typical tattoos want them from typical tattooists



WHEN I WAS 13 I WENT TO MY FIRST CONVENTION, IN BERLIN. I GOT MY FIRST AWARD THERE AS WELL



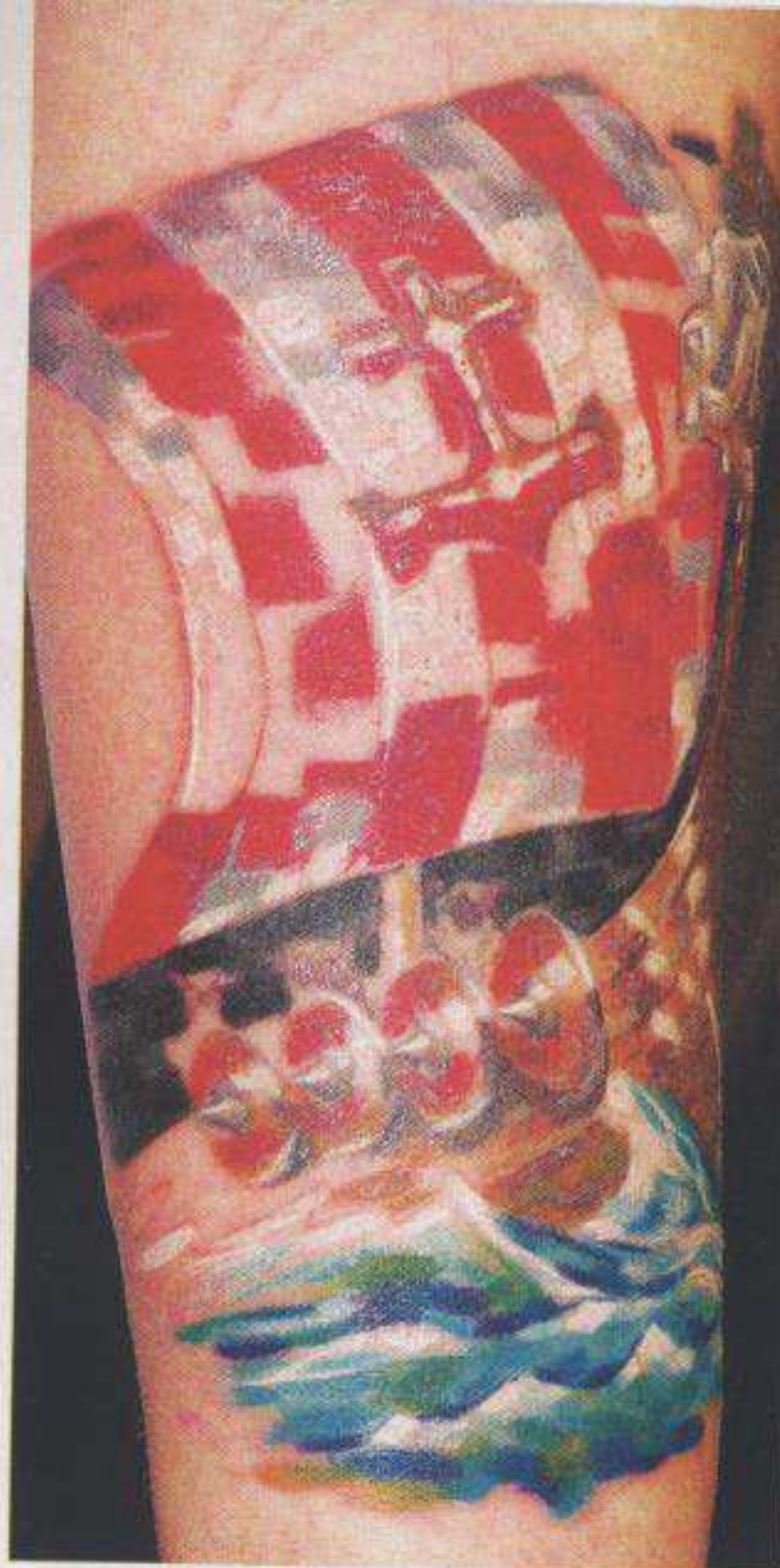
and I'm not interested in doing Chinese letters or symbols. The things that interest me are not done on stencil. I can't say that I have customers. They're canvases and the 'canvas' gives me free hands. It lets me do what I want."

Osa Wahn started tattooing when she was 12 years old. The reason for

that was her father, Waldemar Wahn, a well-known name on the Austrian scene. "I started helping out in studios when I was a kid and started tattooing at the age of 12. When I was 13 I went to my first convention, in Berlin. I got my first award there as well."

From then on she combined school with tattooing: "It was child labour,"

she says with a smile. "I went to school in the morning and tattooed in the afternoon. I didn't really care what my friends thought. I actually didn't have many friends. I was living in my own world; the teachers were alright with it since I did pretty well in school. Some of them didn't even know, I think." 🌸



"I like to experiment with painting. It's a great way of developing your style and try out new ideas, but I don't have the time anymore. I did some new paintings for an exhibition

in the beginning of 2011, but nothing since that."

In the meantime, we'll just have to satiate ourselves with what she does do regularly. 🐼

A COMMON PLACE TO GET A TATTOO IS THE UPPER ARM AND ITS FORM IS PERFECT FOR FACES. THAT'S PROBABLY WHY. ALSO YOU CAN EXPRESS A LOT MORE WITH A FACE THAN, FOR INSTANCE, A FLOWER.



Being that young she was bound to get some attention, but it was nothing she couldn't handle.

"I probably got some and in one way it wasn't easy, since some people have problems with female tattooists. On the other hand it got people interested in my art, not who I was or how I looked."

Waldemar himself doesn't really tattoo anymore. He wound down a couple of years ago and is now just doing the occasional tattoo for friends. But his legacy lives on through his now 31-year-old daughter, whose style is remarkably similar to that of her Dad.

"We worked together, exchanging ideas for many years," Osa says. "If we hadn't done that, our styles



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wouldn't have evolved so fast. I can't understand artists who won't reveal their secrets of the trade and teach new tattooists. The more artists work together, the faster they evolve. I've gone a long way to where I am right now. If you saw some older tattoos by us you'd see there wasn't much similarity with what I do today."

And what she does is basically abstract paintings on skin, often inspired by nature. "I like abstract

things that can also be done as a picture and I like landscapes. I really enjoy tattooing trees in landscapes and animals, and I also do plant motifs.

"A common place to get a tattoo is the upper arm and its form is perfect for faces. That's probably why. Also you can express a lot more with a face than, for instance, a flower."

She does not, however, actually paint as often as she used to.

