

# 11 3000 type

Ina Saltz and Maxime Buechi are tattoo-experts: She is going to release her second book “Body Type – Messages etched in flesh,” where she present a wide range of type tattoos. He is publisher of «Sang Bleu» an extraordinary tattoo magazine.



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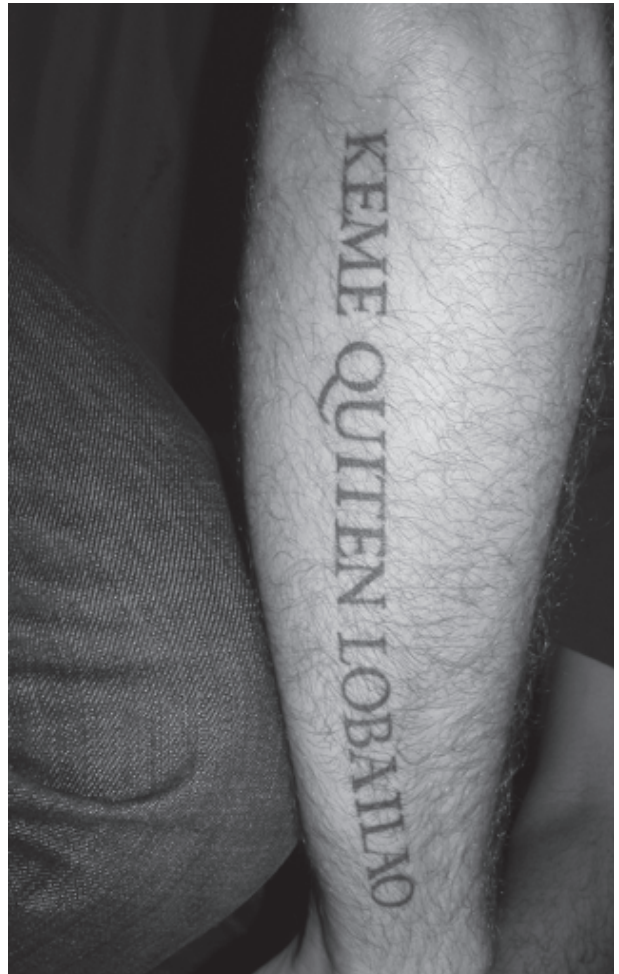
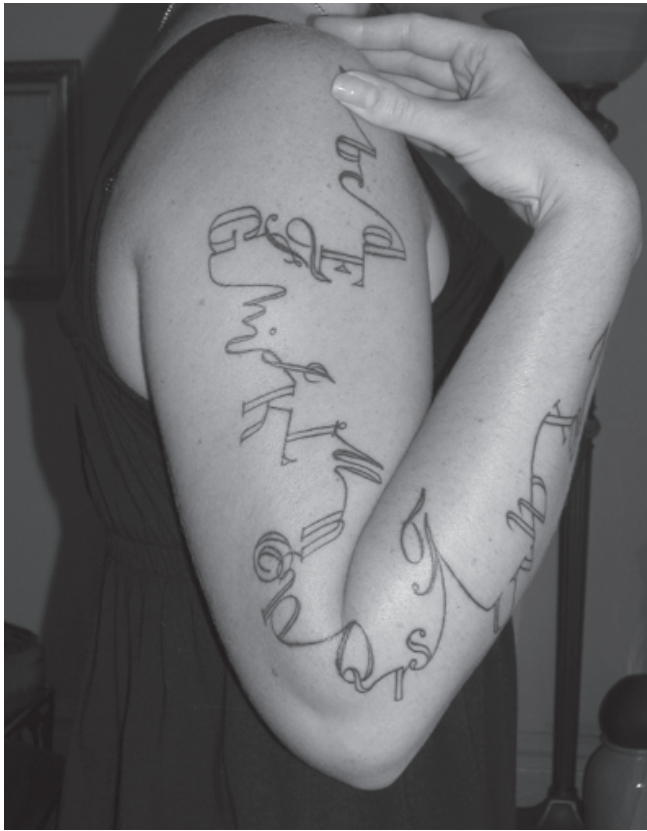
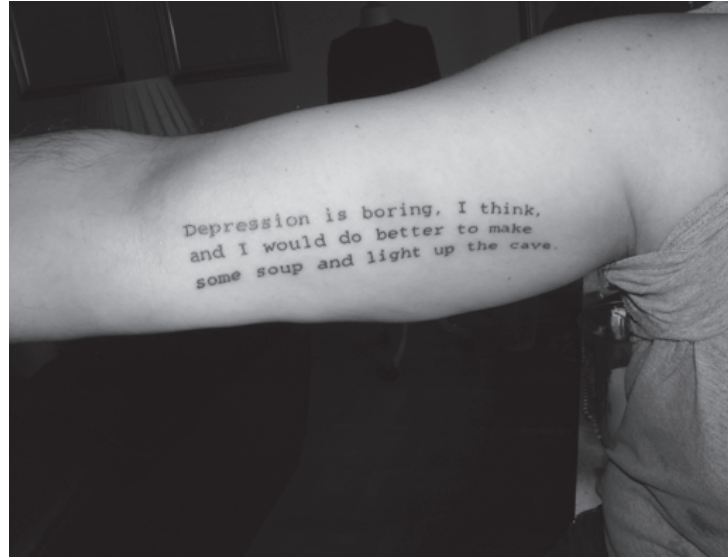
Body Type  
Ina Saliz / Maxime Buechi

à chacun son goût











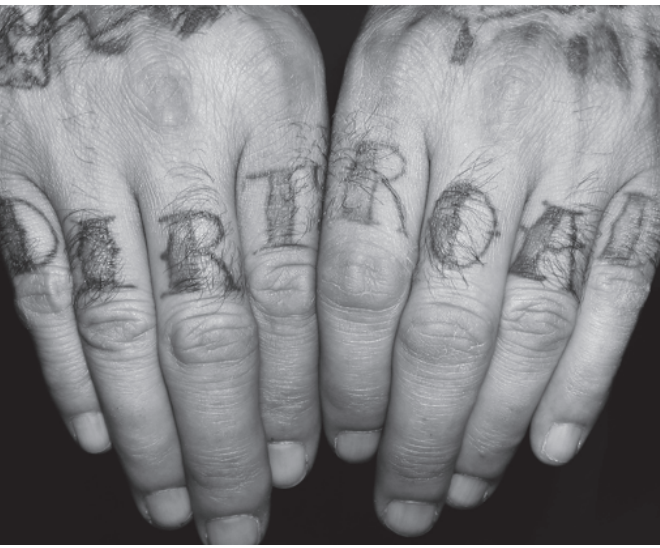
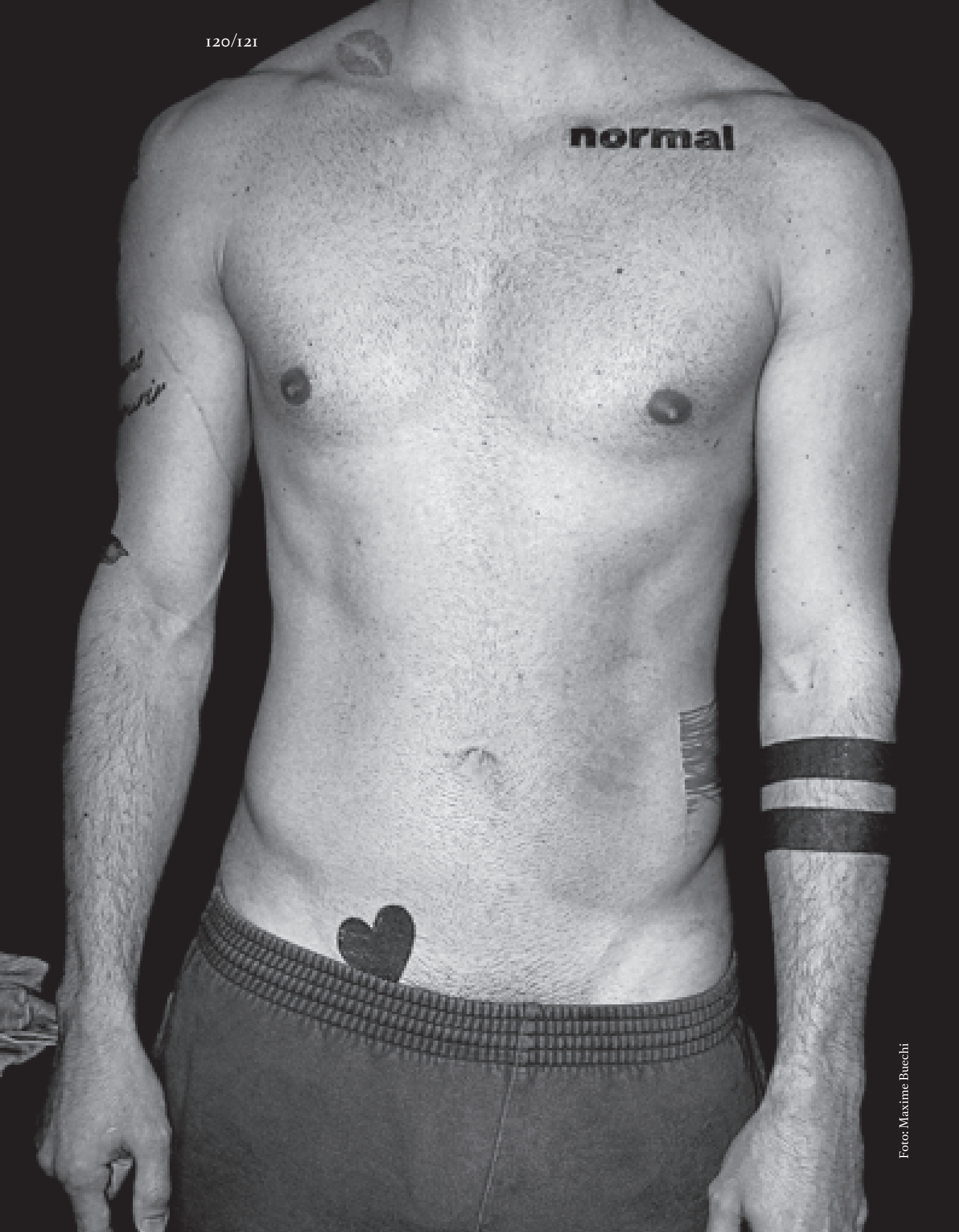




Foto: Maxime Buechi



**normal**





*The second volume of your book “BODY TYPE: Intimate Messages Etched in Flesh” will be published in 2009. What aroused your interest in typographic tattoos?*

In the summer of 2003, I was traveling cross-town in New York City on the M86 bus when I spotted an interesting-looking young man with a very large text tattoo on his right forearm; it spelled out “happy” in a typeface which I instantly recognized as Helvetica. The fact that it was in lower-case letters and so tightly kerned that the letters were touching was especially intriguing to me as a designer and a typophile. I had never seen a tattoo quite like this one, sans serif! Although one does not usually talk to strangers in New York City, my curiosity finally got the better of me. “Are you a graphic designer?” I asked. Why, yes, he was. “And would you mind if I took a photo of your tattoo to show my students? I teach typography at City College.” No problem. I whipped out my digital camera and managed to get one shot and to grab his proffered business card before I jumped off at my stop. That evening I uploaded the photo and went to the Web site on his business card to send him the image with a proper thank you message. Imagine my astonishment to find our entire conversation recounted on his blog! That encounter led to an article I wrote for a design magazine on typographic tattoos, and ultimately to “Body Type: Intimate Messages Etched in Flesh.” Notice that the word “tattoo” does not appear anywhere on the cover!

*Tattoos, especially those that are based on type, often show Asian calligraphy, runic or black letter attitudes. Would you say using classic fonts in tattoo art, like Helvetica, Garamond and so on, could be described as kind of a new movement?*

Absolutely. In my first and second volumes of “Body Type” I found that many people who had typographic tattoos were design professionals or type aficionados, educated in the graphic arts; so of course they chose classic typefaces for their tattoos. Yet I was amazed to find that many others with no creative training also were quite familiar with the names of typefaces and chose typefaces from their computers for their tattoos. Computers have really educated everyone about type choices. Blackletter is still quite popular, but now it might be a Fette Fraktur instead of hand lettering.

*I read that you don’t have any tattoos and that you call yourself a “tattoo expert without really trying.” Whenever I look at your photos I’d love to go to the next tattoo artist with my favorite font and get this thing immediately done. Aren’t you interested in getting your own tattoo? What would it look like?*

Others have called me a tattoo expert; I have looked at (and judged) thousands of tattoos! Of course I have my favorites: dingbats and fleurons, or single letters from favorite fonts would be what I might choose. But there are many reasons why I don’t have a tattoo. As a designer,

I find I always want to redesign and so I cannot make such an irrevocable commitment. I also have a phobic fear of needles, so that I do not even have pierced ears (or any other pierced body parts). Thus it is a great irony that I am documenting an art form which requires repeated penetration of one’s skin with needles!

*You say that also people with no creative training understand that the effect of their tattooed message can be amplified and enhanced by choosing a certain typeface. Do you have one or two special tattoos in mind that exemplify this effect?*

Yes, one is on a poet who composed all his work in Courier because it reminded him of how writers used to use typewriters so he wanted his tattoo (of an alphabet around his ankle) in Courier, to represent his creative process. Another is on a woman who had a tattoo of the word “gently” because it was how she wished to be treated ... she chose Wedding Script because it was a good visual representation of the meaning of “gently.”

*Do you think that typographic tattoos are experienced more as body-art or as a message?*

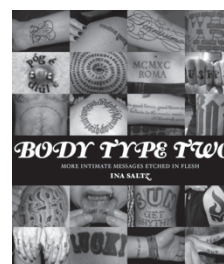
Of course words consist of pictures of letterforms that we “read” as text when they are assembled in certain recognizable patterns. So they are both images and messages. Many find the specificity of word tattoos appealing because of the importance of precise interpretation. Body type is not symbolic, pictographic or iconic: it conveys exactly what it says.

*What was the most bizarre or funniest tattoo you have ever seen in this context?*

A question mark with a nipple as the dot under the mark. This always gets the biggest laugh in my presentations.

*What will you be doing in 10 years?*

I hope to be playing a lot more golf, tennis, bridge and Scrabble. And I want to learn how to play piano. Seriously.



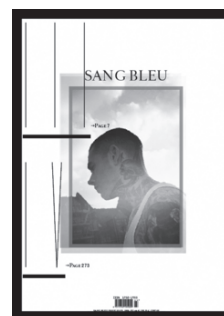
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The interview with Ina Saltz was conducted in May 2009 by Niko Singer.

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