

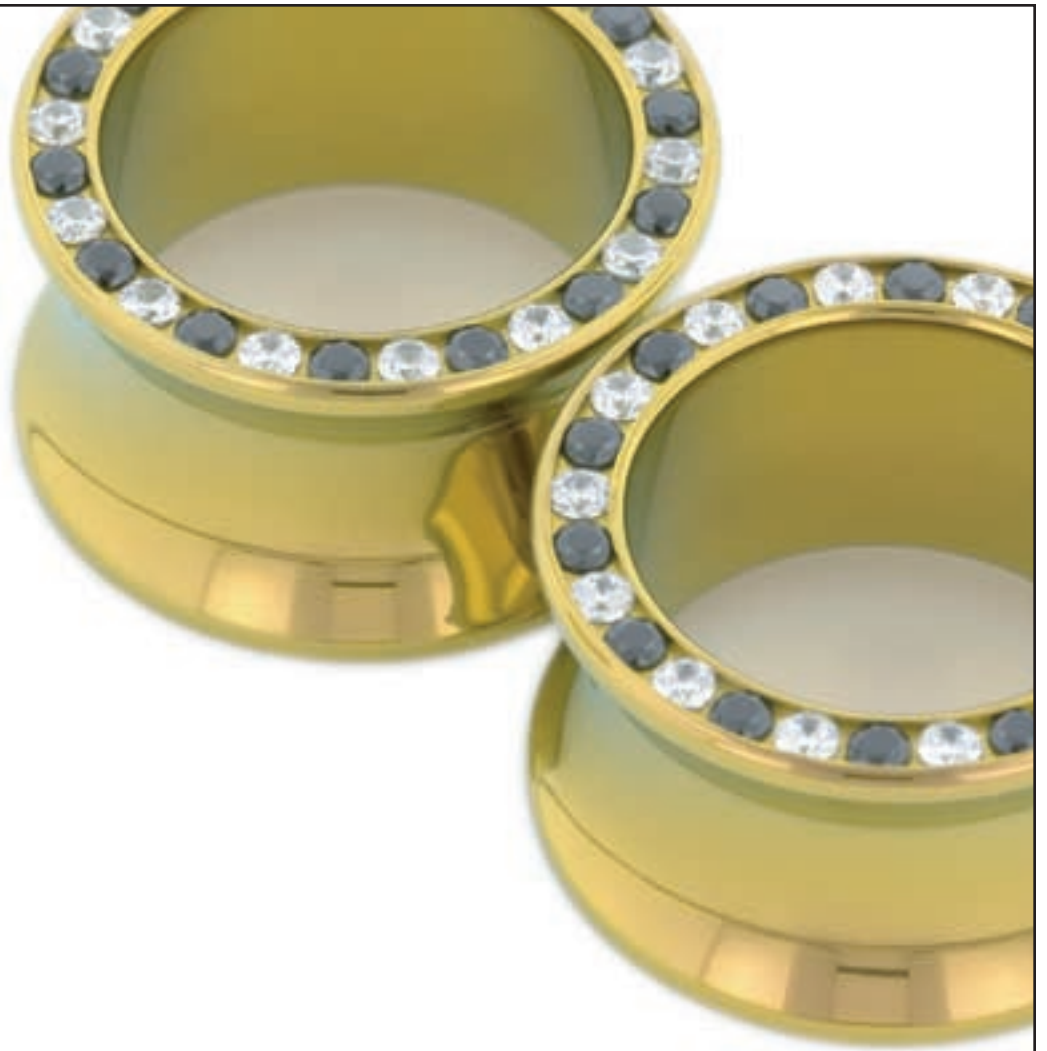
THE POINT

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The Quarterly Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers



APP MEXICO CONFERENCE 2006 OVERVIEW



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FROM THE EDITOR

I am very pleased to be able to bring you this issue of The Point focusing on the first APP Conference in Mexico which took place this past February 1st through 3rd in Mexico City. In addition to regular content, this issue spotlights reflections on the Mexico conference from its organizer, instructors, translators, and participants from Mexico and the United States. Responses from the speakers at Conference are presented in both English and Spanish, as this issue will be the first to be distributed to attendees throughout Mexico.

One of my goals in taking over as Editor (in fact, one of my reasons for joining the Board) was to help us to take a look at ourselves, to turn our collective gaze inward, to examine who we are and what role we play in the larger culture. In order to determine where we're going, it's not enough anymore to simply know where we've been — we must be comfortable knowing who we are.

As anyone who has done a bit of traveling knows; when in a different country, a successful trip is one on which you learn as much about yourself as you do about the culture you're immersed in, and quite often more. I think all of us coming from the US were greatly affected by the conference and its participants. We saw a passion, an enthusiasm, and a thirst for knowledge that, while embodied by piercers in the United States, is often difficult for us to see. Whether it is because we are too close to it, or whether these qualities are easily overshadowed by our perceived differences, it's hard to say. Perhaps we often feel that we've come to accord on the big issues, so we focus on hashing out — and being divided by — the details. Maybe we take our community for granted.

In Mexico, I was reminded of what it is I love so much about this industry, and the people who make their livelihood from it. I'm very much looking forward to next year, and to remembering and recreating this feeling in Las Vegas.

I would like to thank all who contributed to this issue, but especially Jason Pfohl (from Gorilla Glass) and Ron Garza for images, Ana Paula Escalante for translations and editing help and, most importantly, Danny Yerna for making this conference happen.

James Weber
Medical Liaison

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Association of Professional Piercers

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

TAKING PRECEDENCE



Alicia Cardenas
APP President

Being on the board of Directors, once in a while you have a moment where it is truly clear that all time and energy devoted to the mission of the APP was worth it. For me this year sitting in the audience of the Mexico City conference watching my fellow members educate the Mexican piercing community with love, humility and excellence was my moment. I would be lying if I said that going to Mexico wasn't a risk in that we had no idea what to expect, and it was the first time ever we offered our classes in another language. But what I have found is that when you put passionate people together with a focused mission, regardless of the few barriers there might be, success is imminent.

We started the conference with a lovely lecture by Luis Pingarron, he discussed truly connecting and guiding our clients through their experience and he reminded everyone of their direct cultural links to these practices. It was a well-received and excellent start to creating these new alliances. It opened up the group to sharing themselves and feeling at home with us. Many Mexican piercers contributed to the conversation and were even overtaken with emotion.

Although there were times when even the most fluent of our group got caught up on translating a concept, there was always someone there to help. Not only was this a great experience for each of us as individuals, but as a group we created a bond that will never be forgotten. We were tired and worn out, we spent every waking hour hanging with, eating with and meeting with as many of the attendees as possible. Luis Garcia, our International Coordinator, shone like I knew he would, not only presenting a great class but also answering questions, making jokes and generally being the International Piercing Man of Mystery. We had two first time presenters James Maldonado and Ron Garza, who both did an excellent job presenting their perspective. The infamous Blake Perlingieri presented an anthropology lecture that was enjoyed by everyone, including a surprise attendee -- an anthropologist from the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank some very crucial contributors to the success of this conference: Mr. Danny Yerna, our only member from Mexico, secured the site, the hotel, taught a class, scheduled the doctors and oversaw all the festivities. Danny is quite possibly the most organized and well-connected piercer in Mexico. Danny has contributed countless hours and energies to this mission. Ms. Ana Paula Escalante, the official interpreter for the conference, was present to help bridge the gaps in the language

APP MEMBER GETS KUDOS



Caitlin McDiarmid
APP Administrator

The APP received a very nice letter of thanks from Jacqueline Kulbel, CDA of the Washington State Dental Assistants Association in March. She wanted to let us know how much they appreciated APP member Charlotte "Chuck" Heller's presentation at their "Day of Continuing Education" in February. In part, the letter stated:

"It was obvious that her presentation was well received by those in attendance. This was confirmed as people kept mentioning to us how much they appreciated her informative presentation on Oral Piercing – Care and Concerns. Ms. Heller's well organized Power Point presentation powerfully demonstrated the good, the bad and the ugly in oral piercing.

The continuation of the conversation, after her presentation, was witness to the enthusiasm for the subject the presentation inspired. Ms. Heller's visit with us definitely provided a clearer picture of the dental profession's role in advising their patients about oral piercing. This combined with her high level of professionalism, also helped dispel many of our attendees' stereotypes about the piercing profession."

Ms. Kulbel went on to thank Chuck and the APP for the donation of educational piercing brochures which they were going to take to the Pacific Northwest Dental Conference in July.

The APP wishes to thank and recognize Chuck Heller for doing an outstanding job of outreach to this group, and others in her community. It is a sacrifice of time and energy, and shows a dedication to the piercing industry as a whole.

We encourage all APP members and non-members alike to do what they can in their communities to further piercing education to not only the Dental and Medical industries, but to high school/college students, and other groups in the general public. It is only through this type of education that real change will be made in our industry, and excellence in piercing will be recognized by all.

barrier and contribute both a great class and an overwhelming spirit of loving welcome. I would also like to thank the other presenters from both countries who shared their time and expertise with us. But above all, my heart and thanks go to the piercers from all over Mexico who enthusiastically came to the conference, offered their own experiences, and made the conference both moving and educational for all of us. We learned as much as we taught, and we all came back renewed and inspired. Thank you all.

LEGISLATION IN THE TWIN CITIES



Verno Musselman
Piercer/Studio Owner
Holy Mackerel
St. Paul, Minnesota

Piercing legislation is an issue we all face eventually, and which at times seems like a difficult or pointless battle. But piercers in many cities, states and countries are making progress. The following is the first in a series of articles contributed by Point readers about what they're working on. Please feel free to send us your own experiences.

In the city of Saint Paul, Minnesota there has never been any solid piercing legislation. No one has been required to be individually licensed, to obtain certificates in First Aid or CPR, or to obtain blood borne pathogen training. In the four years that I've been here, regulation has been in the form of a blanket license covering all aspects of the shop. Piercers were only required to follow the same mandates imposed on tattoo artists.

Recently, however, I received a letter from Council Member Deborah Montgomery and the Office of Licenses, Inspections, and Environmental Protection (LIEP) inviting me to an open forum to talk about the proposed changes in the legislative code. This is how my involvement in the process began. The meeting was well attended by other individuals in our local body modification industry, almost all from the tattoo community. Although the state's APT President, Shaun Andersen, consistently made very valid points, I had to offer my information as a representative of the piercing industry. It was important to convey the whole picture to Licensing Director Bill Gunther, and for the Licensing Board to understand the unique concerns of piercers.

We spent the day closely analyzing the definitions and each aspect of the proposed legislation. When Director Gunther said, "We don't know your industry, help us learn," I knew this was a real opportunity for change. This told me that the Board was open to writing new legislation, not just for now but for the future.

Eventually we reached the last section of the proposed legislation, which contained suggested prohibitions. Suspension was set to be outlawed. In my view, suspension is, in the beginning, simply a piercing using a hook for jewelry. I didn't want to see it outlawed because some piercers, including myself, are participants. If prohibited, I feared suspension would be driven underground, making it more dangerous than it needs to be. Earlier in the meeting, a conversation about how the media promoted the popularity of tattooing had sparked Director Gunther's interest. I decided to apply the same argument to body suspension. My key point was that growing media attention increased public interest in suspension, and therefore the need for clear and educational regulation. People will do it if they see it; we must make it safe. To my surprise, Gunther agreed with

My key point was that growing media attention increased public interest in suspension, and therefore the need for clear and educational regulation.

me and we decided we should meet one on one, to discuss regulating suspension.

As the weeks passed I gathered some materials I thought might help the cause, such as a copy of the APP manual and spore tests, integrators and autoclave record sheets. I spoke with people like Allen Falkner; I attempted to try and find any kind of existing legislation supporting suspension to hopefully help, but unfortunately I couldn't find any.* Bill Gunther and I later met at the studio where I showed him what the needles and hooks looked like, and explained how everything should be sterilized and packaged for a body suspension. I then explained the procedure in great detail for him.

At this point I am still keeping my fingers crossed and looking for new ways to help the licensing director, so he can write legislation to allow body suspension under the umbrella of the legislation, to encourage those that practice this activity to do so safely.

Our goal is to get legislation passed without any of these activities being prohibited. What is necessary is to write safe and reasonable regulations for them and, of course, to pass the broader spectrum proposal in question. Ten years from now I am sure that some new form of body art will be out there and I would like to see it allowed and practiced in a safe manner. Hopefully this will be a start here in the Twin Cities. If we have success here, this will open doorways for this type of legislation to spread to other municipalities as well. Please stay involved and talk with your health inspectors and licensing directors. Open communication is the key and that's an easy thing for most of us in this industry.

***Editor's note:** *There is actually legislation that has been applied to suspension. In Philadelphia, for example, suspension performances fall under "temporary piercing sites," and must pass most of the hygiene requirements of a regular shop. Operators must obtain a temporary permit, work in an approved space, have Bloodborne Pathogens certification, be licensed and be from a licensed shop.*

Check the "Definitions" sections of your local regulations to see how piercing is defined. Many existing laws say something like, "Body Piercing: The process of penetrating the skin or mucous membrane for the purpose of insertion of any object, including but not limited to jewelry for cosmetic purposes." This wording would cover suspension and implants as well as piercing. Unless you're going to argue religious freedom, make sure before you make holes. And if these phrases are already on the books, you can fight future prohibitions by pointing out that it's already been regulated sufficiently.

INTERVIEW WITH DESTA SPENCE & LISA BLUE FROM ADORN IN PORTLAND, OREGON



Christina Shull
APP Secretary

I recently had the pleasure of talking with Desta Spence and Lisa Blue from Adorn in Portland, Oregon. We discussed their shop, their advertising, and their opinions on the state of the industry and it's attitude towards women. We also touched on the December 11th Festival, which Desta helps to organize every year in Portland. Excerpts from that conversation follow...

Christina Shull: The first thing that caught my eye about Adorn was your strong feminine touch. Has your studio always had such a strong female force?

Desta Spence: Adorn opened in July of 2000 with just two women, Anne and myself: One tattoo artist, one piercer. We used our clients as counterstaff until we could afford to pay someone. It's amazing and comforting to me to see how many of those initial clients whom we coached through the answering of our phone calls have stuck around to see us grow into this current payroll monstrosity! At a few points in our history we have found that the best woman for the job is a man. We choose personnel based on talents and personality rather than gender. Currently we have the strongest female force in the universe to the power of V. Our primary tattooist is a woman. We have an exclusively female piercing staff and 2/1 female to male ratio on counter/office staff.

CS: Much of your advertising that I have seen has been directed towards females. How do you feel this has affected your business?

DS: It's funny that you mention this. I have recently been criticized for ads that "insult" women. The ad in particular that was found offensive was one aimed at tattoo/piercing virgins. I consider our shop demographic to be novices. We are in a suburban area that was, up until recently, untapped. Our mission statement and overall philosophy is one of handholding and de-mystifying of the tattoo/piercing experience. So many shops aim their décor and selection at people like their friends. I believe they end up intimidating the general public. After touring shops across the country, I also found that they ended up looking counter-culture generic. Our ad campaigns are intended to be clever/kitsch aimed at making the process seem accessible. We have a reputation for being sassy but sweet. I think people are comfortable coming here and doing things and asking questions that they would otherwise be afraid to consider.

CS: Being a very vocal "female owned and operated studio", what percentage of your clientele would you say is male and how do your male clients respond to this?

Lisa Blue: We get equal proportions. The boys love the ladies too. Everyone wants to feel nurtured when they are facing their fears.

DS: I have found and many theories have expounded on the idea that both men and women feel more comfortable/safe/nurtured by females. There are two major exceptions to this as it relates to our shop and this industry: old-school men who are confused by the lack of flash on the wall and have an overall tendency towards misogyny, and insecure women who are seeking male validation and who distrust other women.

I would say that the majority of piercing clients are female... to the tune of 65/35. Lisa and I disagree on this though; so now I'm going to have to pay attention...take some stats. We



all agree that tattoo clients are mixed.

We are excited to have a primarily female environment. Furthermore, I believe it makes an initial difference to people, especially women when they are making a studio selection. After that choice is made, even if they walk in on a day where it's all boys, once they see the studio and the portfolios, gender is nearly irrelevant (spoken as a true bi-sexual!) The talent and charm of the staff speaks for itself.

CS: Your studio has a very comfortable and artsy feel to it. Would you say this has to do with having such a feminine foundation or the community that your studio is located in?

LB: Girls are just much better decorators! I believe that being surrounded by art work stimulates the imaginations of our clients and inspires the future work they'll be getting by us.

DS: We have been made fun of for our lack of adherence to the traditional décor of tattoo/piercing studios. People used to call us the "purple estrogen palace." This was an intentional choice. Not only from a marketing perspective, but also as a more accurate reflection of my personal taste, such as it is! I wanted us to stand apart from the other studios. I wanted to showcase the talents of local artists on our walls, not the all too common generic flash or tribal headdresses/masks. I wanted the average person to walk in and feel welcome. Our community is very suburban and they walk in apprehensive. Intimidating them with our décor would be counterproductive and contrary to our purpose.

CS: You are both known in the piercing community for being very involved with December 11th. Would you tell me more about this event and your involvement with it?

LB: It is an honor and a privilege to be a part of such and empowering day. I'm proud to have shared this day with so many of the most important people in my life. Participating in the transformations that have come from it make it one of the most important days of my year. It's just pure unadulterated fun I tell you.

DS: I began attending December 11th during its 3 year. I began hosting it on its 5th anniversary. It celebrated its 7th year in 2005. Once upon a time, December 11th was a small intimate gathering of industry friends getting together to engage in ritual suspension. Back then, before everyone and their cousin had a suspension, threshold, body modification or performance group, it was new and un-chartered territory for us children of an industrialized world. It was exciting and earth shattering and mind blowing. The people that first attended December 11th are part of a larger group of individuals responsible for bringing suspension into mainstream Western

consciousness. As the years have gone by December 11 has taken on a life of its own. It has grown by leaps and bounds. At one point, it needed to be spread out over two days to accommodate the over 150 attendees and their different ritual needs. December 11th has evolved over the years and has contributed to the evolution of each of us fortunate enough to be involved. I look forward to attending and seeing some of you there for years to come.

Our mission statement
and overall philosophy
is one of handholding
and de-mystifying of the
tattoo/piercing experience.



THE MISSING NOSTRIL JEWELRY



Alicia Cardenas
APP President

First I need to clearly delineate where the information I have gathered comes from. There are ancient manuscripts found in Mexico that are pictorial representations of the ceremonies and practices of the ancient people. Because no written language remains from these people, these manuscripts are the only “books” that document this history. They are painted on a bark-like paper or animal skins, put on hard plates and attached as screen-fold, and are read from right to left. These books are often called “codices.” However, there are two types of codices referred to in books and museums: ones that people drew of themselves, documenting their rituals and stories prior to their conquest; and drawings done by onlookers such as missionaries, Spanish informers and conquistadors. Unfortunately, both manuscripts are often given the same name. To refer to the type of manuscript we will be talking about as a “codex” is actually a misnomer. The term “codex” usually refers to European manuscripts, which are easily distinguished from the other renditions of these people. [Compare Figure 1, a traditionally drawn “codex” and Figure 2, a Spanish drawn codex.] It must also be noted that the manuscripts cannot be separated from the political history of their time. European observers drew a very biased version of what they were seeing to send back to Europe and “justify” the genocide that was going on.

The information I am referring to in this article is taken from the codices drawn up by the indigenous people of Mexico, not by their onlookers. I am working specifically from the Codex Nuttall, a famous set of plates that map out very important ceremonies and deities. In the early Nineteenth Century, an Italian friend presented the Codex Nuttall to Hon. Robert Curzon, 14th Baron Zouche, who had a collection of interesting and valuable rare manuscripts. The Codex now resides in a British Museum and has not been back on Mexican soil since its departure.

Over my years of studying the ancient codices of the people of

Meso-America, it came to my attention that there is a piece of jewelry worn in the drawings that until now, I have never seen in a museum or otherwise documented in a book. Historians and anthropologists alike recognize many of the different body modifications practiced by the ancient peoples, including ear piercing and stretching, septum piercing, labret piercing, and teeth modifications. But there is one particular piercing and piece of jewelry that has rarely been mentioned and continues to be overlooked as a part of the ancient practices. From my observation of the Codex Nuttall, it is clear that there was large gauge nostril piercing being done, with a single piece of jewelry that went through both holes and across the bridge of the nose. This is a rare and

as yet unaccounted for piece of jewelry. It looks as if there are several styles but are all basically worn the same. My suspicions have been confirmed by my most recent discovery of a three dimensional ceramic figure wearing the piece in question. [See Figure 3.]

The reality of this piece is that in order for it to sit the way it is shown in these examples there had to be two different types of jewelry worn in these drawings. They both must be lightweight and stiff. One style was two separate plugs on each side with a feather or lightweight extension that fanned up towards the forehead. These two



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

In a modern culture that is always re-defining beauty, it is exciting that a part of the past can reveal itself and give us a better understanding of our aesthetic history.

UPDATE ON OSHA'S RULING ON FREEHAND PIERCING



Luis Garcia
International Liaison

pieces may or may not have been connected. The other piece -- and most unique concept -- is one single piece that could be erected vertically and fits in both sides of the nose. It very well could have been made of ceramic or wood, but probably not stone, due to its weight. In order for a piece this size and style to sit up over the bridge of the nose would have to have been worn in a set of large gauge holes.

Some very precious and delicate obsidian ear spools have been preserved for hundreds of years without a scratch. Why has this nostril piece not survived? There may be a few reasons why this piece of jewelry has never been seen or documented properly. It could very well have been made of feathers or another degradable material that has not survived the test of time. Another very real possibility is that it has been mistaken for another type of artifact and has been placed in a completely different part of most museums' archives. This is actually more common than one might think. Out of the body, I imagine this piece looks like a tool of some sort, or possibly a child's toy. It could also be mistaken for a simple ear plug. When an artifact doesn't fit into the school of knowledge of a particular archeologist, it often gets pushed aside or cataloged incorrectly. Either way, and for whatever reason, THIS piece of jewelry is missing and not accounted for.

I am in an intensive search for a piece that fits this description. I believe this nostril piece is a rare and undocumented piece of adornment so unusual in its wear that it is possibly unique among the world's cultures. I have been to many of the largest Pre-Columbian collections throughout the U.S. and Mexico and have not seen or been able to find this piece. For the last few years I was unsure that this piece even existed, but after finding a few distinct three-dimensional representations in ceramic pottery, I am confident that this piece is out there somewhere. I also suspect that because of the design of this jewelry, it may have broken so easily that it didn't survive in its entirety. In Figures 3 and 4, you can clearly see that there is a person wearing a septum piece only, another wearing a nostril and septum piece, and one with just the nostril piece in question. In Figure 5 it is clear that there was a piece being worn, but it has been broken from even this ceramic representation, giving us only a glimpse of its look and wear.

Stumbling onto something never before written about is like finding a very important part of the historical puzzle. In a modern culture that is always re-defining beauty, it is exciting that a part of the past can reveal itself and give us a better understanding of our aesthetic history. In the last few years large gauge nostril piercing and stretching have become more common in the US. With their increasing popularity comes a desire to know the origins of these practices, and the techniques and jewelry used to achieve and adorn them. I am excited to present this information to you all, and to share at the Mexican APP Conference, I also had the opportunity to present this information to the Director of Archives at the Museo de Anthropologia in Mexico City. Director A. F. Josefina Bautista was invited to participate in the APP Anthropology lecture by Danny Yerna. She has since expressed an interest in reviewing my research and helping with the search. With access to the Museo's archives and the opportunity to look through some of its collections (other than jewelry), I believe I could identify these pieces. So this article is both an announcement, and a call out to any and all collectors or jewelry lovers: If you have a contribution to this search, please contact me. As individuals committed to and educated in the interaction of the jewelry and the body, both in the present and in the past, we are uniquely qualified to investigate and solve this historical mystery.

Alicia Cardenas

President@safepiercing.org.

Since my article in The Point #34 on the use of receiving tubes in freehand piercing technique, OSHA has passed an official ruling on the subject. Piercing without an instrument to receive the needle (like a cork or receiving tube) is now considered a violation of Provision 29 CFR 1910.1030(d)(2)(i) of the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard. This ruling is intended to protect the person handling the needle from needlesticks by minimizing potential contact with the contaminated end of the needle.

Not only does this affect freehand piercers, but it also affects piercers that use forceps, but do not bed the needle tip in a cork or other device during jewelry insertion. While it may not seem as dangerous as freehand piercing, leaving the needle unbedded does increase the risk of a needlestick to a level comparable to that of freehand piercing without a receptacle.

As the body piercing industry continues to grow, and continues to permeate popular culture, we need to make a concerted effort to abide by OSHA's recommended guidelines. In doing so, we facilitate OSHA's continued support of our industry. No matter what anyone thinks, the cooperation of organizations like OSHA will come in handy when local governments try to pass regulations on body piercing. Our compliance will help stop outright banning of body piercing, and will help include professional piercers in the creation of regulations. A small adjustment in daily procedure is a minor price to pay to keep our profession.

*To view these documents,
go to www.hlthedu.com under OSHA Interpretations.*

CARTILAGE COMPLICATIONS



David Vidra

Body Work Productions, Inc.
Health Educators, Inc.

Written for "The Skin Game" Newsletter: 4/23/2004

Ear cartilage piercings in the past decade have become the most popular piercings from the conservative suburban child to the punk rock community and everything else in between. The rim of the ear (which is known as the helix) is one of the most popular modern ear piercings, but now piercing of the ear cartilage has evolved. Not just to multiple piercings, but also what is called an "industrial" (a single piece of jewelry going through multiple piercings on the ear cartilage).

With all of the piercings that are known of, and all of the complications that go with them, cartilage is one of the easiest to become infected rapidly to the point of causing permanent damage to the ear. We're not just talking about the use of piercing guns (which is by far the worst way to pierce ear cartilage), but also professionals using a piercing needle can cause similar effects when not done appropriately.

These piercings should not be considered to be basic by any means. They are in fact more advanced piercings, which should be treated with caution. Piercers need to have a very good understanding of human anatomy, wound healing, and the effects of chemicals on healing tissue.

The ear is covered with loose skin. It has a number of convolutions and folds, which are caused by an underlying skeleton of cartilage, which is connective tissue that holds the shape of the ear.

The outer rim of the ear is called the Helix of the ear. The fold, which lies closer to the center of the ear, is called the Anti-Helix or "Anti-Helical Fold". This fold is often underdeveloped and in the piercing community is called a Rook. The shell shaped part of the ear is called the Concha.

Now that we have all of these big words out there, let's start talking some real serious business. For years many piercers always pierced cartilage a gauge larger. Then all piercers switched to same gauge piercing. We need to look at both the positive and negative aspects of each technique.

Point one, with piercing ear cartilage one gauge larger the problem always was and is, excessive bleeding and leaving too large of a hole to accommodate the jewelry, which can easily become

affected negatively by contamination from multiple areas leading to possible infection. The plus of a gauge larger is the fact that a tissue bed was able to form around the jewelry thus protecting the cartilage from the friction of the jewelry.

The problem with same gauge cartilage piercing is irritation caused by the constant friction of the jewelry against the cartilage itself. The plus with same gauge is less exposure to blood by piercer, but slower healing time.

In the piercing community for years piercers have always said that any bump with ear cartilage caused from a piercing is called a keloid. We're not going to get into what any bump can be and the specifics of it, but not all bumps on ear cartilage caused from

piercing the tissue are indeed a keloids. (We'll deal with this matter in another article)

After two years of research, under the supervision of two MDs, we experimented with a couple of different techniques. First we decided that due to blood exposure to the piercer we didn't want to initially pierce with a full gauge larger than the jewelry to be inserted. Same gauge piercing caused concern with some of the doctors about the friction factor and aroused question about the possibility of using half gauge needles for these types of piercings. After research was done, it was found that Industrial Strength, L.L.C.

did indeed make half gauge needles. We enlisted the help of Body Work Productions, Inc. and Splash of Color Tattoo and Body Piercing and what was found is that there were several factors that must be taken into consideration with every ear cartilage piercing performed.

With half gauge larger piercings there was only a slight increase in bleeding than with same gauge piercing.

No matter how the ear was pierced, most of the concern that we saw was at the exit of the needle where the tissue of the ear would separate from the cartilage itself. This problem is the biggest. We have found that cartilage must be supported on the exit and that the exit hole must be checked thoroughly. If the tissue looks raised, it needs to be gently massaged back into place. If it is not we leave a gap in between the skin and the cartilage where

Ear cartilage piercings
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PRESS RELEASE

SUMMARY OF MED-PIERCE & THE EMERGENCY BODY PIERCING JEWELRY REMOVAL KIT

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1-219-864-4681

A recent study showed that 51% of college students had something pierced beyond their ears! As hundreds of thousands of piercings are being done in the United States each year, medical professionals will be caring for pierced patients. Understanding the medical issues associated with body modifications as well as safe removal techniques are essential for all healthcare professionals. This kit not only provides the training but also the professional equipment needed for quick and safe removal of most body jewelry.

Our kit is designed to help dispel many of the "medical myths" and present the "research realities" regarding body jewelry removal and other associated issues for the medical community. This complete training kit is unique in that it not only provides a summary of the medical research and necessary tools, but also the "piercer's perspective" on removal techniques through our "live models," step-by-step full color guide, and videos.

- Step-By-Step Body Piercing Jewelry Removal Video for Medical Professionals (20-minute demonstration video)
- Tattoos, Teens, Tongues & Trauma (60-minute presentation video)
- Small & Large Removal Pliers (surgical instrument grade 410 stainless steel)
- Step-By-Step Body Piercing Jewelry Removal Handbook (fully illustrated)
- Samples (several of the most common types of body jewelry)

the jewelry moves too freely and bacteria can get trapped inside the piercing. Any bacteria such as *Pseudomonas* or *Staphylococcus* live on our body every day. It does however become extremely problematic when introduced into the body. In these situations (no matter who or where the piercing was done) these people ended up with very serious infections that settled within 24-48 hours of the piercing. Some requiring hospitalization and some not.

In two years we came up with the following suggestions:

Know your anatomy. Ear cartilage is firm but flexible and there are different types of it. Not all tissue is the same. Its blood supply is very poor and it can be easily damaged which is a very irreversible problem.

Never use clamps when piercing ear cartilage. This pressure can shatter the tissue and when nothing is supporting the exit of the needle, an opposite pressure is created, which bows the tissue in the cartilage itself.

Aftercare must be known. Every piercer must educate themselves to the affects of chemicals on healing tissue. Antimicrobial products are not always the answer and can be very harsh to the granulating tissue. Sea salt soaks must be done appropriately (not with eye contact solutions that are meant for lenses in your eye, unlike a healing wound). These soaks should be done at least three times a day for initial healing for a minimum of 5 minutes and no longer than 10 minutes. If under 5 minutes, the warmth of the water and salt cannot bring or increase the blood supply to the area. Over 10 minutes, the blood vessels that have dilated due to the heat of the water have adjusted and are no longer being beneficial. After the salt soaks, clients must wipe off the residual salt water with a gauze pad and not a Kleenex that has been sitting in their bathroom. The client should be aware of how bacteria is transmitted through every day items including bed sheets, pillowcases, hair, styling products, telephones, etc.

In conclusion, as a piercer I have seen less complications come from ear cartilage piercings done at half gauge larger than with same gauge needles. There will always be problems due to inappropriately followed aftercare technique related to either the client or uninformed piercers. There have been multiple lawsuits with ear cartilage piercings that have caused permanent deformities on clients. The problem with most of these cases is that the piercer could not show proof of why they do what they do with their techniques. There are organizations such as The Association of Professional Piercers, which is recognized as an expert in their area. Piercers need to get involved with these organizations that can provide them with appropriate ongoing education.

In the past decade, piercing has gone from an underground art to an industry both regulated and recognized by our government. We have to realize that even a bookkeeper must have ongoing education, what makes our industry any different? So many people in our community like to use titles such as "Master Piercer". The best thing that I have ever heard was from somebody who I would personally consider a "Master" which was, "The learning is never finished". That is something that every one of us should take to heart. There is always room to grow and learn from somebody else.

HOW TO HANDLE PRICE SHOPPERS



Christina Shull
APP Secretary

“BUT IT IS ONLY \$20 AT...”:

Not too long ago, Geico ran a television commercial featuring a teenage girl whose parents had just discovered her new piercing. The parents were not upset about the piercing itself, but how much she paid for it. The camera panned to her heavily pierced older brother as the parent quipped that the brother did his research and received many piercings for a small amount of money.

While comical in its own way, the ad both reflects and impacts how the public views the piercing industry. Sadly, price shopping was presented as if “cheaper is better” applied to both insurance and piercing equally.

How do you handle price shoppers in your studio? When they say, “But I can get this same service down the road for \$20...” where do you start? Do you reply with a quick retort? Do you say “But, we aren’t so-and-so?” Do you proceed to rant about the competition, “Well, naturally it’s dirt cheap to get pierced in the back of a van?” Please bite your tongue. While these responses may give you a moment of satisfaction, they will not gain you a new client, or keep this person (and his or her friends) safe.

The clients who announce that they are price shopping are handing you an opportunity to educate them about safe piercing and why your studio charges more than other studios. Your would-be client may not realize this, but they have just given you the best excuse to talk about your wonderful studio and staff. With a little bit of time, patience and finesse, you have a chance to demonstrate that your studio is a safer, better choice and that their health is worth the extra money.

How you say something can be just as important as what you say. By maintaining a positive approach and explaining why your studio is great, rather than why other studios are not, you show that you are knowledgeable and confident without being arrogant or badmouthing the competition. While visiting a studio recently, I complimented the piercer on their beautiful jewelry. He responded with something along the lines of, “Yeah, nobody else in town carries anything good – it’s all crap.” Nobody respects a person who raises himself up by insulting others (whether it is true or not), and I definitely thought less of him as a professional after he made that remark. For all he knew, I could have been a potential client who was dissuaded from spending money in his studio by the unprofessional way that he referred to his competition.

Price shoppers want to know why your studio is more expen-

sive and you get to show them what your studio does that sets you apart from other studios. Offer to give them a tour of your studio. Take the time to educate them about what they should look for in a professional piercer, and why. This is a good chance to don gloves and demonstrate the importance of aseptic techniques, appropriate layout and set-up, and your experience and knowledge as a piercer. Conducting a studio walk through has been especially beneficial to our studio since tattooing is illegal in our state. We give plenty of tours to explain the importance of a clean environment, not only for body piercing, but also to educate the public about the dangers of receiving a tattoo in an unsafe environment. Tours are essential for the parents of any minors considering a piercing.

Some things to highlight on your walk-through are:

In the Piercing Room:

The sharps container placement is an excellent example of proper set-up that lays the groundwork for a comment about your studio’s policy of using single-use disposable needles and the importance of witnessing the disposal of the needle after the procedure.

The handwashing sink is the perfect place to demonstrate proper handwashing and to mention how crucial this is to the prevention of disease transmission. Hand washing and donning clean gloves give your client a visual example of how serious you are about their health and safety and is a strong visual indication of your professionalism.

Display packaged sterile needles, jewelry, sundry items and tools when explaining the piercing procedure to the client. Show them the pouches and inform them about the importance of correct handling and use of sterile implements. Some studios will allow the prospective client to observe a procedure, which is extremely helpful in assisting the client make a good decision.

Show the client procedure surfaces, including the piercing stand/tray and the client chair/table. Explain how often surfaces are disinfected and what disinfectant is used. The more that is shown and explained to your client, the more they will see you as a knowledgeable and experienced professional.

The sterilization area(s):

Explain the importance of separating this area(s) from the rest of the studio and educate your client about cross-contamination and proper sterilization procedures.

The ultrasonic cleaning unit is a great piece of equipment to explain to the client. Unfortunately, there are still some studios that have these in the procedure area; help the client understand that this is a dangerous work practice.

Use clear delineation or separation of the clean and dirty areas to demonstrate that you are well trained in sterilization procedures and cross-contamination prevention. Explain the sterilization process from start to finish to help the client understand how seriously this process should be taken and how vital this is to their health and safety.

Autoclaves are a crucial part of your studio tour. Take the time to explain how they work and why regular maintenance and spore testing are essential to the guarantee of sterile piercing implements. In my experience, showing the client spore test results and informing them of the importance of regular testing proves that they do not have to take your word that everything is sterile; here is proof from an outside party that all of the equipment used for their procedure is being sterilized properly.

The counter area/lobby:

Show the client jewelry options and educate them about quality jewelry. Inform your client about jewelry materials, threading, style, gauge and diameter and let your client know why good jewelry is essential to their healing. If options are available, let them know. Chances are your client is more likely to get her nostril pierced at your studio with that cute little gem-set nostril screw than down the street with the captive bead ring included in the \$20 offer.

Provide written aftercare, and verbally explain it. The longer the customer is in the studio learning about the services you provide, the greater the chance they will become your client. Also, give the client a business card and let them know that you are always available to

answer any questions they may have, whether or not they get pierced by you.

Displaying your piercing and/or studio license (if required in your area) will prove to the client that your studio is following the regulations and standards set in your area. APP Member certificates and/or certifications (Bloodborne Pathogens, First Aid, CPR, or other certificates of continuing education received) will set you apart from other studios and demonstrate your dedication to going above and beyond minimum standards.

One studio I worked at had a policy that every client left with something in their hand, whether they received a piercing or not. This was an excellent policy that consistently brought clients back. If someone was not getting pierced that day, they left with an aftercare sheet, business card, sticker, coupon or all of the above.

Taking the time and energy to educate the client will demonstrate your experience and knowledge and show your dedication to safe and professional piercing. Many low-cost piercing studios do not devote much time to informing and educating their clients, and whether they verbalize it or not, clients notice the difference in quality and service.

Another source of information that you can offer to your clients is the APP website, www.safepiercing.org. Directing clients to the APP website will allow you to prove that everything you have discussed is compliant

with internationally accepted industry standards. Reading information provided by an outside party will not only educate your clients, but will also show them that the information you gave them is consistent with the current standards for the piercing industry.

The APP has brochures available that will inform the client about what to look for when they are researching studios. The brochure "Picking Your Piercer" addresses key points to consider when choosing a studio/piercer, including information about autoclaves, spore testing, piercing set-up, aftercare, piercer training and qualifications, portfolios, age requirements, ear piercing guns, and more. This brochure and others can be purchased for a nominal fee and are excellent to keep on your counter or to hand out to prospective clients. Free samples are available by calling 888-888-1277.

Good luck, and remember that the more information we give the public, the better choices they will make.

**The clients who announce
that they are price
shopping are handing you
an opportunity to educate
them about safe piercing
and why your studio charges
more than other studios.**

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PPIB recognizes the outstanding contribution that the APP has made to the success of the body piercing industry and so makes this offer exclusively to APP members.

Why piercing insurance?

Why should a piercer or shop owner purchase general and professional liability insurance? In case after case, the courts have determined that an owner of a body piercing shop is liable for the activities of the people working in the shop, even if they are independent contractors. If a piercer injures a client, or the client gets a necrotic

ear or an infected tongue, both the piercer and the shop owner will be sued. There is no way to avoid this, even with release forms that have waivers. By law, you can't waive away your rights ahead of time if you are ultimately harmed by a personal service procedure.

In the event of a lawsuit, if the piercer has disappeared from sight, or the shop owner doesn't have insurance on the piercer, the shop owner will be forced to pick up the tab for any injury to any pierced customer. For shop owners who don't carry insurance, he/she should have at least \$100,000 in the bank since that is what an ear gone bad could conceivably cost, at a minimum...

To reiterate, it is important to carry insurance on all piercers who work out of the shop, whether they are independent contractors or employees. Simply by giving a piercer the right to work under the shop name implies the shop owner is taking responsibility for them as to their liability. However, the insurance coverage available will only cover the owner for piercers listed on the policy and a premium paid for them. Many shop owners bill the premium to the piercer, as it is usually cheaper to have them on the shop's policy than to require they carry their own.

For specific rating information, visit www.tattoo-ins.com to see how the program works. And be sure to mention your APP membership when calling for insurance information.

Susan Preston,

Professional Program Insurance Brokerage & APP Member

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APP MEXICO CONFERENCE 2006



James Weber
APP Medical Liaison

On the first day I sat and watched the attendees begin to file in. Some knew each other, or of each other, and many more were being introduced. There was the normal nervousness and apprehension that comes from bringing over 100 piercers from all over Mexico together in one room. People look around and see friends, competitors, peers — sometimes in the same person. During a quick orientation all the APP Board members and guest lecturers introduced themselves, many apologizing for their bad Spanish, explaining that after all, we are from the US, and Americans are not known for their sensitivity to language...

The first scheduled speaker was Luis Pingarrón. Picture the scene: All the attendees are just starting to get settled, with the usual hesitation and nervousness that comes with such beginnings. Luis energetically hops up, has everyone stand, pick up their chairs and move them aside (this with over 100 people). He has everyone sit in a circle around him, takes off his flip-flops, and throws them dramatically over his shoulder. Standing barefoot in the center, he lights a piece of sage, and breaks into his talk.

With my poor Spanish, I couldn't understand much, but his passion and the wide eyes of his audience transcended any language barrier. Luis' talk was titled Servicio al Cliente (Customer Service) but diverged quickly into an opportunity for attendees to introduce themselves to the group, with lit sage being passed to each. When it was his turn, one of the younger piercers stood up and spoke, first steadily, then with a cracking voice, and finally crying as he talked. I was told (through translation) that he started by saying how glad he was that we were there, and then told of all the vandalism to his shop, and the death threats he gets because of how he looks, but that

he just can't stop because he just loves piercing SO MUCH. Those of us hearing this for the first time were stunned. The incident immediately drove home the importance of what we were doing, and why we were in Mexico.

Such was the beginning of the first Association of Professional Piercers Conference in Mexico. The Conference took place February 1st to 3rd, 2006 at the Plaza Florencia Hotel in Mexico City. It was organized by APP member Danny Yerna (from Wakantanka Piercing in Mexico City), with help from Alicia Cardenas and Luis Garcia (current APP Board Members), and various volunteer instructors from across the United States and Mexico.

The seeds of the Conference were planted last year when Alicia and James Maldonado were traveling in Mexico (see article in The Point #28). She gave a talk without much advance planning and, with organizing help from Ana Paula and Danny, drew 50 enthusiastic piercers from all over the country. She realized the tremendous passion and desire for more knowledge that existed among the piercers in the country. On the basis of this experience and the volunteered efforts of Danny Yerna, the current Board decided that a full-scale conference would be well worth the time and expense needed to pull it off.

While this was not the first APP event outside the US — two European Conferences have been held in Amsterdam — it was the first to be presented entirely in a language other than English. The European Conferences were conducted in English with translators available for those attendees in need. Many of the current Board attended and/or participated in the European Conference and had an idea about what to expect -- or at least thought we did -- but Mexico turned out to be an entirely different experience.



Map showing where many of the attendees traveled from to the Mexico City Conference.

While this was not the first APP event outside the US... it was the first to be presented entirely in a language other than English.



On the eve of the Conference, most of the American instructors were apprehensive. It's all well and good to be knowledgeable in the use of aseptic technique, but how should we modify what we say for an audience where many of the piercers may not have autoclaves? What can you offer from a knowledge of American piercing technique when piercing needles are outlawed as a "medical device," and canula piercing is the norm? What is most useful to say about jewelry standards in a country where body jewelry can be bought by the pound? How can we convincingly emphasize cleanliness and standards of cross contamination when many piercers are competing with people who perform implants at sidewalk markets outside the subway stations? Most clinchingly, how should we as Americans talk about what we feel should be standard piercing practice to people who have already been victims of US imperialism for the last 250 years, and don't need yet another American organization telling them what is in their best interest?

No one really knew what to expect, including Danny, the event's organizer. Finding a space to hold the Conference was initially difficult enough; just like in the United States, when hotels discovered our profession, they became less than welcoming with their space. Danny was finally able to secure space in the Plaza Florencia Hotel, located in the Zona Rosa, right in the heart of Mexico City's gay club district. It was an amazingly vibrant area, and the perfect environment for our Conference. Standing outside the hotel in the early evening, one saw streets full of the most beautiful men and women (and some who were a bit of both) who got more outlandish and more fabulous as the night came on.

The classes were originally to be held in one of the adjacent hotel's smaller conference rooms, but space was upgraded several times as the numbers of pre-registered attendees quickly exceeded the capacity of the smaller rooms. When the designated meeting space was

ultimately moved to a room that could hold just over 100, we had close to 150 piercers wishing to attend. Finally, 30 or so prospective attendees had to be informed there was simply not enough space for them.

As a Board, we went in with the same financial attitude about the APP Mexico Conference that we had for the two European ones: the Amsterdam conferences were amazingly effective in terms of outreach and education, but were not financially profitable for the APP. We went into Mexico thinking that it would be a wonderful educational opportunity and, despite the financial cost to the organization, something that was well within our mission statement. By the start of the Conference it became obvious that not only would we be at least breaking even, but, because of the large number of attendees we would actually finish with a slight cash surplus to be earmarked for further Mexican outreach. This served to buoy our already giddy optimism as we prepared to start the next day.

At the first day's classes, each speaker addressed a packed room, often with extra chairs brought in from other rooms and still more people standing at the back. After Luis Pingarrón's dramatic introduction (and the return of the chairs), Etica (Ethics) was co-taught by Ana Paula Escalante (from Tonatiuh in Mexico City) and James Maldonado (from Twisted Sol in Denver, Colorado). Ron Garza (from Outer Limits in Orange County, California) followed with Técnicas de Asepsia (Aseptic Techniques). As most readers know from his article in *The Point* #33 ("Know Your Gloves"), Ron is an excellent resource on cross contamination and cleanliness standards. His class easily led into Luis Garcia's *Contaminación Cruzada* (Cross Contamination). While Ron and Luis are quite fluent in Spanish, the challenge of translating more technical terms while speaking in Spanish often proved to be difficult. This was the first of many instances that Ana Paula's translation skills proved invaluable.



...how should we as Americans talk about what we feel should be standard piercing practice to people who have already been victims of US imperialism for the last 250 years, and don't need yet another American organization telling them what is in their best interest?



In the middle of the first morning's classes, an unassuming man in a dark suit made his way to the back of the meeting room. While Conference was open to all with an interest in piercing, the entrance of a conservatively dressed middle-aged man did not go unnoticed. His presence was modest, but casually authoritative, and there was little doubt he worked for the government. After being greeted by Danny and Alicia, he introduced himself as Dr. Alvarro Herrera Huerta, Subdirector Ejecutivo de autorizaciones en Servicios de Salud (the closest translation being: Assistant Director of Health Care Authorization). He was very friendly and seemed genuinely interested in the conference. He listened intently to the lectures, and paid special attention when, in Etica (Ethics), there was much talk about the lack of legislation restricting the piercing of minors without parental consent. This is a huge problem in the Mexican piercing industry, just as it is in the US.

Dr. Herrera Huerta stayed for the rest of the morning and returned after lunch. During the break, he had done a check on current legislation in place, and shared his findings with the attendees. It turns out that there is current legislation concerning body piercing and minors, as piercing is encompassed by age of consent laws which are already in place. He further explained that, given cause, piercers doing work on minors could be prosecuted under the existing law. When asked the obvious: "Why is this was not already being done?" he politely answered, with some resignation, that the government at this time was not educated enough on the issue and the industry in general, and this was one of his primary reasons for attending our

conference. While somewhat discouraging, this did suggest an optimism that would be fully realized several days later on his return to Conference...

The day ended with a round table discussion entitled *Uso de Pinzas o No* (Freehand vs. Clamp Technique), and the attendees and exhausted instructors made ready for the night's activities. Just like the Annual APP Conference in Las Vegas, classes were only half of the experience. Socializing with piercers from all over Mexico was a rare experience for all, and I don't think anyone, attendees or instructors, passed on any of it. There were few not dragging a bit from lack of sleep the next morning.

The second day continued much like the first. Luis Garcia started with *Zona de Trabajo* (Studio Set-up) and Danny followed with *Joyería* (Jewelry) before breaking for lunch. Afterwards, the first of two medical doctors spoke (the second was the following day) on anatomy. There were problems finding medical professionals available for the conference, and Danny juggled three different cancellations before finding success with the two that agreed to attend. While the doctors were quite knowledgeable on some topics, they also got educated by the many piercers in the audience who offered some corrections to their facts. Afterwards, Ron Garza spoke on *Riesgos Médicos* (Medical Risks) with Ana Paula providing help with some of the more difficult Spanish terminology.

The day ended with the round table *Rituales* (Rituals). Each American facilitator talked personally about the importance of ritual in the piercing studio and industry, and many touched on the seeming lack

of such spirituality in US culture back home. This roundtable highlighted the difficulty many Americans had through the whole conference not projecting a romanticized ritual culture onto Mexico. Coming from the US, where the dominant European culture has spent the last 500 years seeking to eradicate the Native American population, it was hard to not be carried away by the abundance of pre-Hispanic artifacts around us, or to interpret the integration of imported and indigenous culture as evidence of people still deeply connected to their non-European heritage. When visiting the renowned National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico (which we all did, some of us more than once), it was difficult to not ascribe to the culture of Mexico certain romantic preconceptions that most piercers, many of us amateur anthropologists ourselves, have about indigenous culture.

These concerns became readily apparent to most of us in the Rituals roundtable, for how can we presume to lecture on the importance of ritual in a community that seems to completely dwarf our own understanding of the topic? How do we not come to embody the globalist impulse that we most despise from our own country? It was a slippery slope to climb, but I think ultimately we succeeded when the roundtable evolved very quickly into more dialogue than instruction. We each spoke on turn, some of us (Alicia and myself) making use of Ana Paula for translation to make up for our poor Spanish. It ran far over schedule, and was brought to a close not because the topic was exhausted, but because we were all too hungry and tired to continue.

Day three started off with James Maldonado teaching Cuidados Básicos (Aftercare), with the early afternoon slot taken by Blake Perlingieri teaching Antropología (Anthropology). For those not familiar with Blake and his work as a piercer and lay anthropologist, much can be found in his book *A Brief History of the Evolution of Body Adornment: Ancient Origins and Today*. In his almost two decades as a piercer and body art enthusiast, Blake has traveled extensively through Mexico and much of the world collecting jewelry and documenting body art. At Conference, he spoke extensively on the indigenous jewelry of Mexico, in addition to offering some strong opinions on topics from the ethics of piercers to the practice of piercing the ears of children. Not only was his lecture extremely well received, but the audience also included A.F. Josefina Bautista, Director of the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. Señora Bautista added much to Blake's speech. She voiced her enthusiasm for our interest in the museum's collection, and commended not only Blake, but also our insight as piercers in linking these traditional ornaments with their modern counterparts. She graciously accepted our hospitality, and offered her own in the form of the museum. She was given a quite a reception by those present, with very good reason.

After lunch and the second anatomy lecture, the last class was pre-empted by Dr. Alvarro Herrera Huerta, The Assistant Director of Health Care Authorization in Mexico. He had returned to the Conference that afternoon, and had asked for the opportunity to

address the attendees. What many assumed was going to be a short announcement turned into an impassioned twenty-minute talk. He started by saying how impressed he was with the Mexican piercers for being so proactive, for organizing themselves and seeking to set standards independent of governmentally enforced ones. He stated that from that point forward, the national government of Mexico would be working towards the implementation of licenses for piercing studios nationwide, and he looked forward to working with piercers and shop owners to make sure these laws were inclusive and just. Coming from the US, where the quest for fair and balanced legislation often seems to border on the futile, to have a national legislator attend

Conference and so openly state his intention to work with the community gathered was truly inspiring. We are all grateful and optimistic.

After this, Ana Paula Escalante closed the Conference with Expansiones (Stretching). While a few attendees milled about, or headed off to make their buses out of Mexico City back to their respective shops and homes, the others stayed and listened with rapt attention directed towards Ana Paula and her talk. Even though the attendees were in desperate need of a break, hungry and exhausted from three days with not enough consistent food or sleep, the passion for information and learning kept most there until the very end.

After all was done and many, MANY pictures were taken to commemorate the occasion, with great resignation, everyone began to go their separate ways. Many headed to buses and trains, some back to hotels before flights out in the morning. A few, like Alicia and I, would use the next day to start of the rest of our Mexico adventure. (That, of course, is another story...) In the end, though, we would be understating if we did not say the first Mexican APP Conference was an unparalleled success.

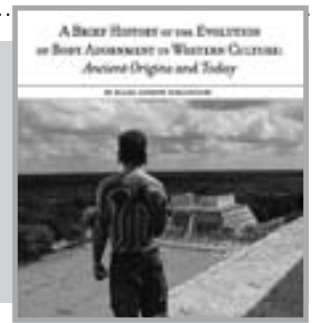
Coming from the US, where the quest for fair and balanced legislation often seems to border on the futile, to have a national legislator attend Conference and so openly state his intention to work with the community gathered was truly inspiring.





Blake Perlingieri
Nomad
Piercing Studio

For information on Blake's book and DVD,
visit www.nomadmuseum.com



It seems all things in time come full circle.

12 years ago in San Francisco I sat with a handful of colleagues to form the APP. There were less than a dozen of us and we each volunteered a specific task: outreach, establishing medical and health guidelines and so on. Now, over a decade later, the APP has a worldwide presence that constantly raises the bar for professional piercers. Most realize the importance of this with so many untrained "piercers" using substandard or inappropriate "jewelry"; we all have a lot of fix-it work and education to do on a daily basis.

I had the great honor of presenting the Anthropology lecture at the first APP Mexico Conference this February. I was happy to see great passion and enthusiasm, with piercers from as far away as Peru attending. It was a packed house. Having presented the Anthropology lecture at APP in Las Vegas in 2004, I could not help but notice a cultural awareness and appreciation of the topic by the Mexico City attendees that was lacking in the United States. One of the issues I touched upon was the importance of respect for culture within our studios that we, as piercers, are spiritually bound by-- specifically, the importance of piercing of children, perhaps humanities oldest and most sacred ritual. While there are American piercers conflicted on this subject, either due to lack of ability or lack of cultural awareness, my lecture (which, admittedly, sometimes departed from official APP policy) was received with rapturous applause. It seemed I was preaching to the choir, as it were.

Danny Yerna and Ana Paula Escalante worked tirelessly with Alicia Cardenas to present a top-notch international APP first. I am

certain that the ball is rolling and that our colleagues south of the border will uphold the values of piercers both professionally and culturally. At this occasion I released my long-awaited DVD, which sold out immediately. I was further honored to present the lecture not just to my friends and colleagues in Mexico but to the esteemed A.F. Josefina Bautista, director of the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico; one of the greatest collections of personal ornament in the world is overseen by Señora Bautista. She and the Museum are an inspiration and role model to both the humble Nomad museum and me.

I would like to personally acknowledge, among others, Ana (for translating too) and her partner Russo at Tonatiuh; Olman, as well as the crew at our brother studio in Mexico; Nomadas for honoring culture, (in spirit, in practice, and with their own bodies) in their piercing studios. Further, I would like to thank Danny, piercer, author, and editor of the respected TatuArte magazine for his work with the APP in Mexico. Last, but not least, APP President Alicia Cardenas, (whose plate is already quite full) for putting her skills as former APP International Liaison to use orchestrating this event. Her work as a piercer and her respect for indigenous cultures are well known; I salute her for that. We are all in debt to these people and many more unmentioned for upholding the values and standards of the APP. Bringing all of this to a new country is no small task. After nearly two decades as a piercer, I can assure you that the first APP Mexico Conference was a milestone event in our industry's history, as well as a career high-point for me which I will not soon forget.



Luis Garcia
International Liaison
Coordinador Internacional

I would like to extend a big thanks to everyone who attended the APP Mexico Conference. The passion and energy you showed revitalized my passion for the industry, and my passion for my position as International Liaison. I've learned so much from all of you, both technically and spiritually. I hope we can have this conference again, so I can see all of you again in your own element. Hopefully I'll see some of you at our Las Vegas Conference. Keep up the amazing work!

Big thanks go out to Danny Yerna of Wankatanka in Mexico City; without Danny, this conference would not have happened. Danny, you put your heart and soul into the work, and it showed. I would also like to thank Ana Paula of Quetzalli, without whom we would have been lost in a stuttering mess of Spanglish!

Quiero darle gracias a todos los que atendieron la conferencia en el D.F. La pasión y energía que enseñaron revitalizó mi pasión por nuestra industria, y en mi posición como representante de Relaciones Internacionales dentro de la A.P.P. Aprendí mucho de ustedes espiritualmente y técnicamente. Ojalá podamos volver a organizar este evento nuevamente, así podrá verlos otraves en su elemento. Y esperamos ver a algunos de ustedes en la conferencia en Las Vegas. ¡Continúen ese gran trabajo!

También quiero darle muchas gracias a Danny Yerna de Wankatanka. Sin Danny, la conferencia no podría haber sido posible. Danny, tú pusiste todo tu corazón en el trabajo que hiciste y se nota. También tengo que darle gracias a Ana Paula de Quetzalli. Sin ella nos hubiéramos perdido en un drama de Spanglish!



Ana Paula Escalante
APP Mexico Instructor
Instructor de APP México

GENETIC MEMORY

**What we do changes us... the way we do it moves us...
but it is what we want to reach that guides our inspiration...**

So much that we can do to our bodies, so much that we do and take part of. Energy released and blood drawn. As a need that we act on, as a call that makes us gather and connect with each other.

What is this that joins us.. from far places and different winds?

Some of us, little tribal kids in search of our spiritual path, and others in for the ride and adventure. But when we smell some incense burning and we feel the warmth, it is our soul that is being fed.. Or when we just might feel a little funny thing when we accidentally listen to the sound of drums playing, that sound beats as our heart. It is this too that we feel when we can share and meet, as if we were a clan, reunited, though never met before for some.

And that feeling touches this part of us. Not spoken, but eternal. Touches what we call our genetic memory. The same way that feeling of changing our bodies and expressing through it is born in us as if by accident. And our need to gather as this clan comes to us. And this IS our genetic memory acting in us.

Social pollution has blinded us from seeing this energy, but we feel it move through us. It rattles us, and it grounds us. We hear the call, though we don't know who is calling. It is the movement of ancient knowledge struggling to pass the message through city sounds and hectic lifestyles. It is a call reaching out.

Getting us to gather, to talk and share, to learn. Through knowledge and respect we grow. Energy is released, seeds are planted, so our original truth can flourish through us. We feel it when we see others searching and working in their fiscal form. This energy is flowing.

As all great gifts this comes with great responsibility. Might it be doing a proper procedure. May it be the respect for the decision of going through this passage on to us or to others. We take in so much of the pain and joy of transformation. We give so much and it is for us to choose if we do it as evolution or personal repression. If we harmonize ourselves and reach a balance. Not to show or to prove, but to learn. To make ourselves present in this, our experience in life, is an opportunity we can find in ourselves. This will take us to feel and be felt, instead of being lost and in our dream.

In times like this when we meet from different backgrounds and situations. We connect and we share. When social circumstances make no differences, and we are as a clan again, eager, willing, sharing our blood, our personal rituals, our thoughts, and our vision. And is at that moment when we can feel the energy flowing, paths opening and this memory come a little closer to its awakening.

MEMORIA GENETICA

Lo que hacemos nos cambia.. el modo en el que lo hacemos, nos mueve.. pero es lo que queremos alcanzar que guía nuestra inspiración.

Tanto que podemos hacer a nuestros cuerpos, tanto que le hacemos y tantos rituales en los que participamos. Energía que se libera, sangre que se derrama.

Como una necesidad, un llamado que nos lleva a unirnos y a conectarnos entre nosotros.

Que es esto que nos une.. de lugares tan distantes y de vientos diferentes?

Algunos de nosotros como pequeñas almas tribales en búsqueda de nuestro camino espiritual, otros por la aventura y la experiencia. Pero cuando olemos el copal quemándose, y sentimos ese calor, es nuestra alma la que se alimenta... O cuando sentimos esa cosquilla dentro de nosotros, cuando aunque por accidente escuchamos el sonido de los tambores tocando, es que ese ritmo late como nuestro corazón. Es esto mismo lo que sentimos cuando nos reunimos y compartimos, así como un clan, aunque sin conocernos para algunos.

Este sentimiento toca esta parte de nosotros de la que no se habla, pero que es eterna. Toca nuestra memoria genética. Del mismo modo que ese sentimiento de cambiar nuestros cuerpos y expresarnos a través de ellos nace como si por accidente. Y nuestra necesidad de juntarnos como este clan nos llega. Es esta, nuestra memoria genética, actuando en nosotros.

La contaminación social nos a cegado y no podemos ver esta energía. Pero la sentimos moviéndose dentro de nosotros. Nos mueve y nos aterriza.

Escuchamos el llamado, pero desconocemos quien esta llamando. Es el movimiento de el conocimiento antiguo luchando para que el mensaje no se pierda. Y a través de el ruido de la ciudad y vidas atareadas, este llamado se esta acercando.

Logrando que nos reunamos, que platiquemos, compartamos y aprendamos.

A través de este conocimiento y el respeto crezcamos. La energía se libera y las semillas se plantan para que esta verdad original pueda florecer a través de nosotros. Lo sentimos cuando vemos a otros buscando y trabajando en su forma física. Esta energía esta fluyendo.

Y este, como todos los grandes regalos de la vida. Viene con una gran responsabilidad. Ya sea la de hacer procedimientos adecuados. O el encontrar el respeto por las decisiones de realizar estos rituales en nosotros o en los demás. Absorbemos tanto de este dolor y gozo que trae la transformación. Damos tanto y recibimos aun mas, y esta en nosotros el escoger si lo hacemos como evolución o como represión personal. Si nos armonizamos y alcanzamos un balance. No para demostrar nada, sino para aprender. El hacernos presentes en esta, nuestra experiencia de vida, es una oportunidad que encontramos solo dentro de nosotros. Esto nos llevara a sentir y a ser sentidos, en vez de estar perdidos y dentro de nuestro sueño.

Y es en momentos como estos en los que nos encontramos, de lugares y situaciones diferentes. Y nos conectamos y compartimos. Cuando las circunstancias sociales no marcan diferencias. Y estamos como un clan nuevamente, dispuestos, abiertos, compartiendo nuestra sangre, nuestros rituales, pensamientos y visiones. Y es en ese momento cuando sentimos la energía fluir, los caminos abriéndose y esta memoria acercarse un poco mas a su verdadero despertar.

APP IN MEXICO



Danny Yerna
Wakantanka Studio
Mexico City / México D.F.

After going for four years in a row to the APP Conferences in Las Vegas and being accepted as a member, after having piles of information and especially having the contacts with APP members, we saw the opportunity to organize a similar conference here in Mexico City. It was something no one had ever organized, so we started with this project. After all, more and more members of the APP speak Spanish and are more than happy to spread their knowledge in Latin America, and this made everything a little easier.

We first started to talk about organizing this event at last year's Las Vegas Conference, but it wasn't until August that we picked up this subject again. We tried to settle the dates, place, amount of assistants, subjects, and speakers. Due to the craziness of it all, we had to change the dates a few times, but we finally settled on the first three days in February.

Finding a space was a nightmare, as most hotels and classroom managers were not interested at all in an event with all these "crazy people." Several hotels said that they didn't have problems, until they found out what we were planning. Comments such as "Sorry, no more space for that date." and "OK, but in January the classroom rate will go up." were heard a lot. The good thing was, at the Hotel Plaza Florencia, the people accepted us without any problem; they didn't have issues with what we were planning and with who we were expecting at the conference. It was just perfect, with the hotel in the middle of the Zona Rosa in Mexico City, right near the Angel of Independence. We first rented a room for 50 people but soon we found that this was not enough, so we rented a second room for about 80 participants, but the response from Mexican piercers was so great that we rented another one for 110 people. That was our limit, being that there was no more space available, and 25 people had to miss the conference due to this fact.

We started working with the people from the hotel, doing publicity, looking for doctors that were willing to help and speakers for the conferences; the idea was that the event would be completely in Spanish. We also had to agree on the subjects, based on what I had saw in Las Vegas from the classes that are taught every year. Time was getting short and I started to get nervous; I always like to cover the details, and organization is a big part of my life...

Finally, it was February 1st, and time for the conference to begin. It was great! Among the 110 participants we had piercers from 22 different states in Mexico. People traveled from as far north as Tijuana, La Paz, Tecate, Saltillo, and Monterrey, as far south as Cancun and Merida, as far east as Veracruz and as far west as Acapulco. It was great to see so many piercers from all over the country. There were piercers with more than 12 years of experience and others that had never pierced before, but were willing to absorb all the information that was given. The conference went on for eight hours every day, with classes, round tables, with a lot of information and good vibes being exchanged among all.

There were even some participants and speakers that still had enough energy to go visit the pyramids, anthropology museum, and the floating gardens in Xochimilco. Some even went home with some new piercings and other modification received at shops visited in Mexico City..

Personally I think that these three days were excellent. I heard a lot of good comments, and everyone seemed to share as much information as possible. From these comments, I'm guessing most of the piercers are ready to participate in an even better and bigger seminar next year. Obviously we have to correct some minor details to make the overall experience run a little smoother, but plans have already begun for next year.

It was great to be involved in the organization of the first APP conference in Mexico. I made some new friends, started to know better some of the participants, and would like to say thanks to all the participants for their patience and comprehension, as I know that not all our speakers were so fluent with their Spanish. The effort was just great, though, and Ana Paula was always there to help us out with translation where needed.

Thanks to everyone involved in the conferences, the piercing world, and our friends...

Don't think twice, just be there next year!!

Danny Yerna

** Piercer in Mexico City since 1994*

** Co-author of the book "Body Piercing, Ritos, Tradicion, Moda y Dolor"*

** Sub-director editorial of the magazine "TatuArte en la piel"*

** APP Member since 2005*

** www.wakantanka.com*



APP EN MEXICO

Después de haber ido cuatro años consecutivos a las conferencias de la A.P.P. en Las Vegas, de haber sido aceptado como miembro, de haber obtenido una pila de información y sobretodo tener los contactos con algunos de los importantes miembros más de esta organización vimos la oportunidad para organizar algo similar en México, algo que nunca antes se había organizado. Así comenzamos con este proyecto, pues además, cada vez hay más miembros de la A.P.P. que hablan español y están interesados en difundir sus conocimientos en Latinoamérica, lo cual facilitó en gran parte la tarea de llevar a cabo este evento.

Las primeras pláticas sobre organizar las conferencias en México tuvieron lugar el año pasado en Las Vegas, sin embargo, nos tardamos un buen rato en ponernos de acuerdo en cuanto a fechas, lugar, cantidad permitida de asistentes, temas, ponentes, etc. Por lo mismo, se tuvieron que cambiar dos veces las fechas, en principio se tenía planeado para la primera semana de diciembre, después para mediados de enero y finalmente lo realizamos durante los tres primeros días de febrero.

El espacio fue otra pesadilla, ya que en muchos hoteles y salones no les interesó un evento con gente tatuada ni perforada, todos se ofrecían a rentarnos los salones y darnos los presupuestos, pero a la hora de ver lo que queríamos hacer las cosas cambiaban por un: "Perdón, pero ya están ocupados los salones para estas fechas" o "está bien, pero en enero tendremos que subir los precios" y así varias frases por el estilo; pero también hubo otros, por ejemplo, Adriana Chávez del Hotel/Salón Plaza Florencia que nos recibió sin ningún problema, le explicamos nuestros planes, el tipo de gente que esperábamos y lo que implicaba un evento de este tipo, y el trato siempre fue muy cordial y sin complicaciones, así que rentamos el primer salón para 50 personas, pero de pronto nos dimos cuenta que no sería suficiente

y lo cambiamos por otro para 80 personas, pero por la gran participación y respuesta de la gente, nos tuvimos que quedar con un salón para 110 personas, este fue nuestro límite y por desgracia, más de 25 personas no pudieron asistir al evento por falta de espacio.

Nos encargábamos del salón, publicidad, contactar médicos que estaban interesados en ayudar a la causa se ponía de acuerdo con algunos de los miembros para que asistieran a México, la idea era que el evento se llevara a cabo en español para evitar traductores o mal entendidos, así que intentamos buscar a ponentes que dominaran el español lo suficiente para dar los seminarios. Además tuvimos que checar los temas, basándonos un poco en lo que enseñan en los seminarios de la A.P.P. en las Vegas. El tiempo ya se nos venía encima y los nervios empezaban a ponernos los pelos de punta.

Finalmente llegamos a la fecha de las conferencias, la participación de los perforadores estuvo mejor de lo que esperábamos entre los 110 participantes tuvimos perforadores de 22 diferentes estados, estuve interesante ver tantos perforadores de todo el país, algunos con más de 12 años de experiencia otros apenas empezando en este medio pero todos con el mismo objetivo, aprender lo más que se pudo en estos tres días de conferencias y ocho horas de clases y mesas redondas por día.

Entre todos los seminarios todavía algunos encontraron tiempo para ir a Xochimilco, al Museo de Antropología y Teotihuacan y otros aprovecharon para hacerse un "trabajito", algunos regresaron a casa con más perforaciones y modificaciones.

En lo personal pienso que fueron tres días de un excelente convivio, mucha información, contactos y parece que la mayor parte de los asistentes están listos para el siguiente año, obviamente hay que corregir algunos errores que detectamos, pero en realidad nada que no se pueda solucionar o mejorar. Creo que se hizo un gran esfuerzo por ofrecer estos seminarios en español, hay que recordar que es difícil dar conferencias y más aun si no es en tu idioma, así que creo que fue un gran esfuerzo por parte de todos y en aquellos momentos que se impuso la barrera del idioma Ana Paula siempre estuvo ahí para ayudar.

Gracias a todos los involucrados en la conferencia, los perforadores y amigos

No lo piensas dos veces y apúntate para el próximo año!!

Danny Yerna

** Perforador en México D.F. desde 1994*

** Co-autor del libro "Body Piercing, Ritos, Tradición, Moda y Dolor"*

** Sub-director editorial de la revista "TatuArte en la piel"*

** Miembro de la APP desde 2005*

** www.wakantanka.com*





Ron Garza
APP Member
Mexico Conference Instructor

When I was asked to do a write up on the Mexico City Conference, I thought it would be easy; it's been much harder than I expected.

I went to Mexico more than a little apprehensive. Some of my fears were that things were going to be behind-- in not only sterilization methods, but also the use of outdated piercing techniques. I was also afraid that:

1. The information wouldn't be well received by the attendees because it was new or different; and (of course) the biggest fear,

2. I had to not only speak in front of strange people without as much preparation as I'd like, but even though I can speak on these subjects till I'm blue in the face in English, I had to try to do so in a language that I thought I was more fluent in than I actually was. This turned out to be much more difficult than I thought it would!

What I thought was going to happen, and what did happen were two totally different things entirely...

Although some of my fears were realized, it was never as I had pictured. EVERYONE was more hospitable than I expected, and the culture (or at least how it looked through my eyes), seemed much more open to the idea of heavy body modifications (i.e. large gauge lip piercings and stretched lobes) and art (i.e. tattoos) than here in the States – or even places in Europe I've been. It's always seemed to me that modern piercing is more an "American" thing, especially from what I've seen and the treatment I've received when I've been overseas. I've actually had to remove facial piercings to simply get service in certain restaurants in some countries!

We all know that body modification is an ancient art form, as old as many and older than some. This is evidenced by the fact that some of the oldest mummies found are tattooed and pierced. Even with all the books I've read, movies I've seen, and the studying I've done, nothing could have prepared me for what I saw at the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City. NEVER in my life have I seen SO MANY pieces of ancient jewelry, and other types of body modification artifacts (like jade teeth implants) in one place, like I did at this museum! Today, back at home, I look at pictures, and words cannot describe the emotion it stirs up in me.

Another thing that had a deep impact on me is the fact that the country has not only such a deep and profound history, but history AND culture, and SO RICH in both! How jealous I am! That is one thing I feel we don't really have in the United States.

Not having our own proper culture (although some will say that the lack of a defined culture is the American culture - a "mixing pot" of cultures, and not one single culture) has made us lose a lot as a society in many aspects of daily life, ways of living, and etiquette, in just the simplest associations and communications with others. It seems that, because of an influx of so many other cultures and ways of life, people only paid attention to their own cultures and mostly stay to themselves. Being mostly a society of isolated individuals (how many of you know your neighbor's name?), it seems the collective consciousness of American culture has lost sight of some of life's simpler things, like respect for our fellow people and for their opinions. American culture is a very "me first: leave me alone I can do it myself" culture, and in an industry like ours, that isn't always the best way to facilitate organization. It ends up with a tribe of chiefs (who can't agree on anything), and no warriors.

I never had this feeling ONCE in Mexico. It felt like the piercing community was fully formed there – something which has taken over 10 long, hard years to build up to in the States. Having this community is not only beneficial in creating something like what was happening at Conference, but creates a framework which will only help everybody for years to come!

My overall impressions of the convention are positive, as well. It was amazing to see EVERYONE in the classes for the ENTIRE time. It was not uncommon for classes (and entire convention days) to go over the time allotted and sometimes into the early morning (I can personally vouch for that!) because of long talks and sharing of ideas, discussions on techniques and

topics that were brought up in classes. This is something that stirs up feelings deep inside of me; knowing I'm able to give something back (as little as it may be) to help an industry that has given me so much. Thanks to Alicia, the APP and whole Mexico crew for everything, and to all of you for giving me this opportunity to help this grand cause of ours.

If there is ever anything I can do to help in any way, you know I'm here...

Always,
Ron Garza
sicklove666@yahoo.com



Cuando me preguntaron que si podría escribir algo de mi experiencia en México, pensé que iba a ser algo muy fácil, pero en verdad no lo a sido.

Fui a México con la idea de que todo iba a estar retrasado. En cuanto a esterilización, técnicas y mas. Tenia miedo que la gente no iba a tomar de un buen modo la información que teníamos que dar. Además de el miedo de hablar enfrente de gente extraña, “tratando” de explicarme en español (gracias otra vez Ana), con una presentación que tenia solo una semana de estar preparando. (Y aunque, en ingles, puedo hablar de estas cosas hasta que me ponga azul en la cara.) El dar clases en un idioma en el que pensaba que era mas fluido de lo que soy me tenia algo nervioso. Me dije, todo depende de la gente y de que tanto la regaría yo! Jajaja!!

Lo que pensé y lo que paso son dos cosas completamente diferentes!!! Aunque algunos de mis miedos fueron bien fundados, no fue NADA como lo que yo esperaba. Toda la gente fue mucho mas amable que lo que yo estaba esperando, y la cultura (o como lo vi con estos viejos ojos) es mucho mas receptiva a la idea de modificaciones corporales, como tatuajes, grande orejas o un besote, mas aun que aquí, en los Estados Unidos y en otros países a los que e viajado en Europa. Pensaba que las perforaciones modernas eran una cosa mas Americana o es decir - una cosa mas de la cultura occidental.

Me siento mas consiente de esto que aun cuando estaba en Europa este año pasado y tuve que quitarme mis perforaciones de la cara para simplemente ser atendido en algún restaurante.

Como todos, reconozco que la cultura de modificaciones corporales tiene su historia (como la tienen los hombres ancianos). Estas cosas son tan viejas que algunos de las momias mas antiguas que los arqueólogos han encontrado, tenían tatuajes y habían sido perforadas. Pero ni todos los libros que he leído y fotos que he visto durante mi vida me habían preparado para lo que mire en el Museo de Antropología. NUNCA en mi vida mire tanta joyería antigua para perforaciones o modos de modificar el cuerpo (como implantes para dientes de jade) en un lugar reunidos como lo que vi allí. Todavía miro los fotos y no tengo palabras que puedan explicar como me hacen sentir.

Otra cosa que me toca bien profundo de la cultura es que no

solamente tienen historia, pero historia Y cultura, Y esta es tan rica, que me dan celos!!

Eso no los tenemos aquí en los estados unidos, y pienso que al no tener una cultura Americana propia (aunque algunos dicen que eso es lo que “forma” a la cultura americana) perdimos mucho de los modos de vivir y en los modos de relacionarnos con los demás. En mi opinión, es porque esta cultura americana es una mas solitaria. Cuando tienes una industria de gente que todos quieren ser totalmente independientes (como es en los estados unidos), vas a tener muchos jefes, pero esto te deja sin ningún guerrero. Eso no ayuda a trabajar tampoco en el respeto que se necesita al crear una comunidad. Pero el respeto que ustedes tienen por la humanidad lo llevan por dentro, se siente, y brota de la cultura.

Esto lo pueden usar para empezar a moldear su industria y su asociación como una comunidad (network) como no a existido antes, y que se extienda por toda la ciudad! Esta comunidad ya esta hecha, solo hay que aprovecharla. El reconocer esto es una cosa que pueden usar para el beneficio de la industria y de ustedes mismos, no solamente para ahora que esta empezando, pero es algo que va a afectar y ayudar a todos en años por venir!!

Mis impresiones de la convención son muy buenas también. Todos estuvieron presente en las clases con interés. Muchas de las clases terminaban su tiempo mientras muchos puntos todavía se estaban discutiendo. Y la discusión de los temas seguía tam-

bién entre grupos de diferentes perforadores, en lugares variados y hasta horas después de la convención. En muchas ocasiones a altas horas de la noche o a la siguiente mañana.

Me da una gran alegría el saber que pude ayudar en algo que esta naciendo. El poder dar aunque sea solo un poquito de regreso a una comunidad que me a dado tanto. Gracias a todos ustedes por esta oportunidad. Gracias a Alicia y todos en La APP que me dejaron ayudar en algo tan grande como esto. Y sepan que si hay algo que puedo hacer para ayudar en esta gran causa de todos nosotros, por favor déjenme saber que puedo hacer.

Trabajando con ustedes, Siempre.

Ron Garza

Sicklove666@yahoo.com





FROM THE OUTSIDE, LOOKING IN

REFLECTIONS ON THE APP CONFERENCE, MEXICO CITY 2006



Jason Pfohl
Gorilla Glass
Oaxaca, Mexico

As an American living in Mexico I am occasionally asked about the new wall the U.S.A. has begun constructing on its southern border, attempting to “secure the border” with Mexico. I try to explain that the wall is political, not physical, and that not everyone supports walls and security cameras. I am always greeted with polite skepticism; everyone knows Americans are apathetic.

The good news is the first APP Conference in Mexico was anything but apathetic. This event was a true reaching out across linguistic, cultural, and political borders.

In Mexico it is not uncommon to see piercing and tattooing done on the street without gloves or sterilization. In the historic center of the city, on Argentina Street, you can find city blocks full of jewelry of the cheapest substandard quality. In this predominantly Catholic society, job discrimination because of piercings is commonplace, and tattoos have an indelible criminal stigma. Despite, or perhaps because of, these stigmas, piercing is flourishing in Mexico. I read a report estimating that there were 1,000,000 piercings performed in Mexico City alone in 2004. I am sometimes surprised at the number of full facial tattoos and extreme body modifications I see -- a radical rejection of the current and dominant social norms.

In this enthusiasm for body art there is sometimes an abandon of caution and a vacuum of basic information. Now with the emergence of a third and fourth generation of new Mexican piercers, there is a hunger for information and betterment of the technique and possibilities in the art. Indeed, the conference exceeded maximum capacity (there was only room for one hundred people). This was also

evidenced in the attention and participation of the piercers. The new generation wants information. Obviously the APP Conference is just another stepping stone in a long process; it is the piercers themselves who have the responsibility of raising the standards.

Amongst the instructors there was also a tangible enthusiasm and excitement. By reaching outside of the usual venues and circles, there was an opportunity for self-reflection and a renewal of purpose. In contrast to the APP in Las Vegas, the absence of the vendor show in Mexico afforded a clear focus on education and information; corporate rivalries and politics were circumvented altogether. The APP Conference in Mexico was educational, first and foremost.

As cultural ambassadors and guests, the APP instructors and Board Members continued an exchange and extension of earlier relationships, both personal and professional. Ana Paula and Danny Yerna have been involved in the APP for years. Their organizational and translating skills, and hospitality was inspirational and heartfelt. The cultural exchange was evidenced by several extra-curricular activities; canal rides with the mariachis in Xochimilco, field trips to the Anthropology Museum, and a pilgrimage to the Temple of the Sun in Teotihuacan. This exchange was exemplified one evening in Coyocan, when APP president Alicia Cardenas, who is part of an Aztec dance troupe in the U.S., joined a group of traditional Aztec dancers in a downtown park. The sparks in the eyes of the dancers, the enthusiasm of the drummers, and the exchange of food and thanks afterwards was all evidence of bridges, rather than walls that the APP is helping to build between neighbors.



James Maldonado
APP Mexico Instructor
Instructor de APP México

I would like to thank everyone who attended and helped out at this year's first Annual APP Conference held in Mexico City. It was an honor for me to be there, and be surrounded by so many great people, and to share information to our industry. It was a little nerve wrecking for me, being that this was my first time in the position of teacher! Nevertheless, I got through it without incident and the class went extremely well. I left that enormous city with a feeling of accomplishment that was both personal and towards our industry in Mexico. Thank you to Danny Yerna and Ana Paula Escalante. Special thanks to Alicia Cardenas for convincing me to do this, and to Luis Pingarron for really helping me out with my class... Viva Mexico!!!

Quiero decir gracias a todos los participantes que vinieron a la primer conferencia de la APP en México D.F, 2006. Para mi fue una experiencia muy especial e inolvidable. Tuve la oportunidad de conocer gente muy buena y aprendí mucho de ustedes. Gracias por su apoyo y por recibirnos con el corazón abierto. Tienen un movimiento muy fuerte y gracias por haberlo compartido con nosotros. Gracias a Ana Paula y Danny por todo lo que hacen por nuestra industria. Hasta la próxima.



Luis Pingarron
APP Mexico Instructor
Instructor de APP México

APP Mexico City was for me the beginning of a journey of self-discovery that has yet to find an end. Self discovery not only because I was able to learn more about my cultural roots, but also due to the deep significance that body modification has in Mexico's history. Growing and maturing not only as a modification practitioner, but also as an enthusiast, I have become aware that body modification is among the oldest of human traditions. In a civilization where organized religion and the job market have affected not only our traditions but also our appearances, Mexico proudly shares her rich traditions in the National Anthropology Museum for all to see. A pre-Hispanic tradition; one of the few traditions left that was not completely eradicated by European influence, even though they tried. We saw an amazing amount of jewelry for stretched ears and labrets, thousands of years old, displayed in the museum. Body piercing's footprint is undeniably a part of Mexico's rich history. The best part for me, though, was meeting the Mexican piercers that are aware of this history, and are passing it on to their clients. A reclamation of culture, a decolonization if you will. It was wonderful to see an indigenous history that was not leveled by Western influence. I dream of someday living and working in Mexico, where I too can be a part of this cultural renaissance.

En nuestra estancia en el D.F. nos recibieron muy bien y espero pronto reunirme con todos nuevamente. Si, como perforador en México, pero mas aun será como lo mande dios.

Salí de México muy encantado.

Y quiero tomar la oportunidad para pedir perdón a Dickie, Marciano, y Xochitl por no poder cumplir con lo que les prometí. Ojala que sea suficiente el que les diga aquí públicamente, que los quiero mucho y les tengo mucho respeto profesionalmente, también como amigos y familia. Especialmente a Dickie, que lo veo como un hermano.



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A LITTLE CUBAN BOY'S PERCEPTION OF THE STATE OF BODY PIERCING IN MEXICO



Luis Garcia
International Liaison

The APP recently had a mini conference in Mexico City, as some of you might already know... I didn't know what to expect initially, due to the misconceptions a good portion of piercers in the United States have about piercers in Central and South America. Hearing horror stories about most shops not having autoclaves, or people piercing in the streets off of grass mats, gave me a sense of ill ease. It was nerve racking to think of these rumors on my way down to Mexico City, wondering how the APP and our classes would be received.

Luckily, all my nervousness was unfounded, as was most of the hearsay. By the end of the first day of classes, I had a great feeling about the state of piercing in Mexico. Everyone was very welcoming. All of our attendees were pining for information, asking great questions, and offering up great knowledge from their experiences. After several surveys, we came to see that every one of our attendees worked in a shop with a working autoclave, and was practicing decent aseptic technique.

During studio set up, we had the attendees submit floor plans for their studios, and many had amazing studio set-ups that rival the biggest and nicest here in the U.S. Others did work out of very small cozy shops, but one of the things that struck me was that even the tiniest of shops were set up in the best way possible, using the little space they had in unique ways.

Another factor I loved about the Mexican piercing community is the fact that there were few egos in the group. Most of these guys work very hard making very little money due to both the state of the Mexican economy, and the sheer number of shops in the country. Most of these guys make the equiva-

lent of about 5 dollars a piercing -- a lot less than we most of us make here. Combined with the thirst the attendees had for knowledge, this fact illustrated the passion that I feel has been lost here in the U.S. A lot of piercers in the U.S. are trapped in an ego-boosting realm of a "my way is better than your way" attitude. This attitude seemed much less prevalent in the group we had at the conference, which made the overall experience very refreshing.

Bad piercers are no more common in Mexico than they are in the U.S., and it would do most of us some good to remember this.

Yes, there are craptastic places that pierce out of a kiosk on the street, but it is no more prevalent in Mexico than it is in a major city like New York. Bad piercers are no more common in Mexico than they are in the U.S., and it would do most of us some good to remember this.

Granted, not even close to every piercer in Mexico attended (we only had 100 spaces), but we actually ended up having more people register than we had space for. This is a great sign, and hopefully we will be able to put this conference on again, bringing in more people, if only to give them the chance to converge in one spot and share their knowledge among themselves.



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Group photo at the APP Mexico Conference, February 2006

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