

# How I got my job...

## as a tattoo artist

### CLARA SINCLAIR

is known for her ornamental drawing style. Here, she explains how to start a career in ink...

#### ► Experiment with jobs

When I was younger, I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I tried a bit of everything – bar work, hairdressing, working in a garden centre.

I'd been drawing since I was able to pick up a pen, but I never thought of tattooing as a career until I got my first tattoo aged 20. Then I completely fell in love with it. I'd studied prosthetics at university, so it was an easy transition into tattooing. When applying prosthetics, you have to view the body as a canvas – and it's the same with ink.

At age 23, I embarked on an unpaid tattooing apprenticeship, which took two years to complete. I did everything from mopping the floors to helping on the front desk. I worked 20 hours per week in the tattoo studio and the rest of my time was spent working in a betting shop, which I hated, so I could earn enough to pay the bills. Working in terrible part-time jobs



really added fuel to the fire – I was desperate to start tattooing full-time, so it kept me motivated.

#### ► If you don't ask, you don't get

I'm currently self-employed and rent a chair at The Family Business Tattoo Parlour in London's Exmouth Market. It's got a great reputation and loads of artists that I love. I plucked up the courage to ask the owner if I could work there. I sent him my portfolio and, luckily, he liked it.

Taking the leap into self-employment was scary,

but it gives me a lot more freedom. I can take time off when I want to and work the hours that suit me (I tend to work 12pm to 7pm). It's the best move I've ever made.

#### ► Instagram is your CV

Social media has had a hugely positive impact on the tattoo industry. It's opened people's minds regarding tattoos – they've definitely become more mainstream.

Before, tattoo artists relied on word of mouth, but now customers fly from all over the world to be tattooed by me because they've seen my work on Instagram. I've even travelled to different countries to tattoo at *Star Wars* conventions. I was one of 20 people chosen globally and won an award for a big chest piece of Darth Vader, Boba Fett and a Stormtrooper. I've developed a reputation online for my particular ornate style. I now have 28,500 followers.

To make my photos look good on Instagram, I add a vignette shadow around the edges, so that the focus is completely on the piece. But don't heavily edit pictures of tattoos – it can create a false idea of what they really look like.



#### What Instagram account do you love?

I'm inspired by @realalphonsemucha. Alphonse Mucha was a pioneer of Art Nouveau, an art movement in the 1900s.



#### What's your favourite podcast?

*The Last Podcast*

*On The Left.* The hosts discuss dark subjects with a comedy twist – it's daft and makes me laugh.



#### Best bit of advice you've received?

"If you think you've learned everything there is to learn, you need to try a different career."