

Nicole Wilson

Ötzi

In the year 3,300 BCE or so, a man is buried under snow and ice in what we now call the Alps with a series of 61 tattoos on his body in 15 groupings. His body is found by hikers in the 1990s. He becomes the world's oldest natural mummy to be discovered in a well-preserved state. Named Ötzi, he is housed at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology. Scientists can reconstruct a last meal, a cause of death, etc. They know just about everything about him but can still only speculate as to the meaning of his tattoos. To us now, without Ötzi's voice, they are the signifiers without the signified.

Approximately 5,300 years after Ötzi's death and approximately 20 years after I hear of his discovery, I learn of his tattoos. I borrow his marks, collaborating with the researchers in South Tyrol and Three Kings Tattoo. I tattoo—to scale and in the same location on my body—images of his 61 tattoos in my blood. My body reabsorbs almost all the blood back into itself immediately following the process of tattooing, but leaves behind dark scars where heme, the pigment within blood, slowly disappears from the skin's surface. I watch and document as they fade over a period of years.





Documentation of the process of tattooing one set of Ötzi's tattoos (T_02) in Wilson's blood with tattoo artist Mat Moreno at Three Kings Tattoo, 2016



Documentation of Wilson and Moreno at Three Kings Tattoo as they set the stencils of Ötzi's tattoos in advance of tattooing, trying to match the location of each set of tattoos to the location on Ötzi's body, 2016

ÖTZI, NICOLE WILSON

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Instructions for collectors of the digital file(s) from the Ötzi exhibition and project by Nicole Wilson, referred herein as the "Artist", are described in this document.

A digital file can be purchased for two purposes: collection and one-time individual use. The "Artist" acknowledges that in some cases these two purposes may overlap. She's fine with that. "Collection" is defined as the ownership of, stewardship over, and preservation of the file, including maintenance of the file's security, in perpetuity. "One-time individual use" is defined as utilizing the digital file and executing instructions set forth here by the "Artist" to tattoo the digital file onto the individual owner's body once. Incorrectly collected or incorrect one-time individual use will unauthenticate the digital file. Unauthentication is defined as the voiding the digital file as an authentic work of art, meaning that the digital file will no longer be available for sale, use, and/or collection.

A digital file is not to be reproduced, imaged, copied, photographed, etc., in any way. It can be shown to others and put on display in cultural institutions or collections with the permission of the artist/ the artist's estate. If any digital file is reproduced, imaged, copied, photographed, etc., in any way, the digital file will be immediately unauthenticated. Unauthentication is defined as the voiding the digital file as an authentic work of art, meaning that the digital file will no longer be available for sale, use, and/or collection.

Any digital file unauthenticated through any misuse (as defined in this document) will never again be reissued by the artist.

After collection and/or one-time individual use, the digital file may be sold through Fairchain to another buyer for collection and/or one-time individual use.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR "COLLECTION"

The "Artist" acknowledges the right of the collector to hold on to the digital file in perpetuity. The collector is not obliged to create a physical tattoo on their body.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR "ONE-TIME INDIVIDUAL USE"

- Contact a tattoo shop and find a willing and collaborative tattoo artist to work with. The collaborative process is integral to the process of making tattoo. If you are both a tattoo artist and the owner of the digital file, you must find another tattoo artist to tattoo the digital file onto your body. Home-tattooing, self-tattooing, stick-and-pokes, and any other methods beyond that which the "Artist" has instructed in this section will unauthenticate the digital file.
- With your willing and collaborative tattoo artist, agree upon the pigment that will be used, and obtain that pigment for your tattoo artist if they ask you to do so. Your tattoo artist must agree to use the pigment for your tattoo before continuing. While the "Artist" acknowledges that she used blood to make these tattoos on her body, she sees your relationship to pigment as one that you can establish for yourself with the willingness of your tattoo artist. She suggests using tattoo ink. Tattoos must be made with the tattoo artist's standard tattoo gun(s) and the needle(s) that they see fit upon viewing the digital file.
- The tattoo artist will then print only page #1 of the digital file to make one stencil on transfer paper (that will then be used to transfer the image to the skin). Printing of any additional pages will unauthenticate the digital files, as will non-compliance with any one or more of the following:
 - The stencil from the digital file cannot be created more than once per individual collector.
 - Digital files must be printed at 100%, or at 1-to-1 ratio, and cannot be scaled up or down. The digital file/stencil cannot be cut, broken, or altered in any way.
 - Purchasers of tattoo sets T04 and T07 must space these groupings exactly as they are laid out in the digital file and as they print on the stencil.
 - Stencil(s) or photographs of the stencil(s) on or off your body may not be circulated.
- Utilizing the map and reference photo, as well as your own research, transfer that one stencil onto your body in a place that most closely matches the map. The "Artist" suggests that you spend time on this process, as the stencil cannot be created more than once. The "Artist" acknowledges that there may be a myriad of circumstances that may not allow you to match your tattoo precisely to where that tattoo sits on the map (such as other tattoos already on that space, natural markings or scars already on the skin, missing limbs, etc.) and instructs you and your willing and collaborative tattoo artist to follow your own instincts and place the stencil where it can fit fully onto the body in the next closest place. The tattoo artist must make the tattoo exactly following the stencil and referencing the map, reference photo, and your own research. Photographs taken at any time during the process of placing the stencil or tattooing will unauthenticate the digital file.
- The tattoo artist is responsible for destroying (shredded, ripped up, cut up, incinerated or any other means that make it impossible for the stencil to be recreated) the stencil transfer paper immediately upon tattooing.
- As they heal, take care of the tattoo in the weeks ahead. Take care of the tattoo in the skin in the years ahead.
- At this point, the tattoo is yours. The "Artist" suggests that you document the final tattoo as you see fit, when you see fit, and by your own metrics.
- In perpetuity, when asked about your tattoo, explain their origin(s) to the best of your abilities and as you understand them.
- Upon one-time individual use, the digital file can be held onto in perpetuity or sold to another buyer through Fairchain for collection and/or one-time individual use.



Documentation of collector, Margaret Boyer, and tattoo artist, Orrin Hurley, tattooing T_15 onto Margaret at Three Kings Tattoo, 2021

Opposite Page:
The 15 files that were used to create the initial sets of tattoos at Three Kings Tattoo in 2016 were authenticated and registered on the blockchain through Fairchain (like NFTs). With each file, which can be used to make one stencil for tattooing on one body, comes a set of Terms & Conditions that instruct collectors how to collect and/or recreate Ötzi's tattoos on themselves.



T_15 on Wilson's body, photographed December 22, 2016



T_15 on Wilson's body, photographed January 15, 2017



Wilson's body, photographed October 13, 2020



Installation view of Nicole Wilson, *Ötzi, Praise Shadows*, Brookline, MA, 2021.

