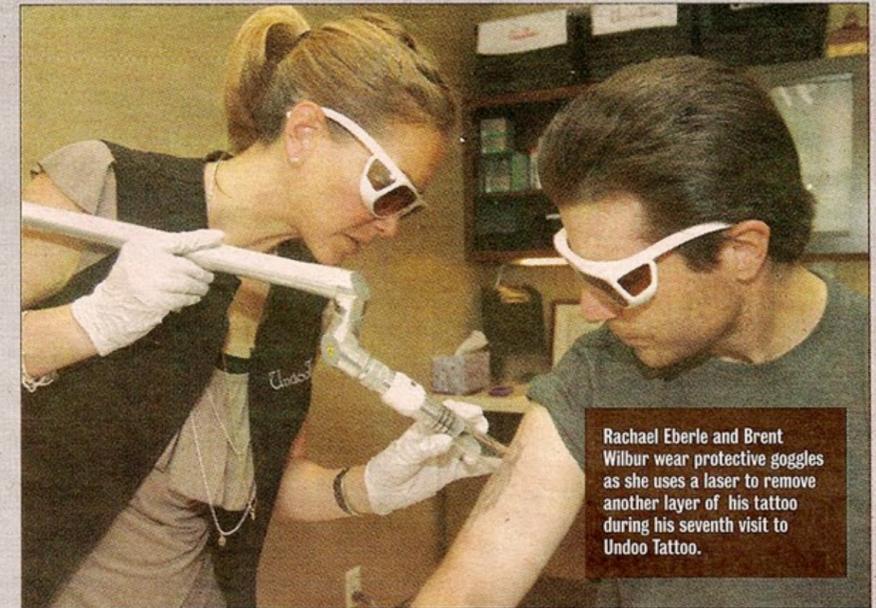


REN

Reno News & Review

TATTOO YOU

MAYOR
CASHELL'S
PROPOSED
MORATORIUM ON
TATTOO SHOPS
PROMPTED A
DISCUSSION
OF WHAT IT
MEANS TO BE
INKED IN RENO



Rachael Eberle and Brent Wilbur wear protective goggles as she uses a laser to remove another layer of his tattoo during his seventh visit to Undo Tattoo.

REMOVING PICTURES

Tattoos, like marriage, are supposed to be forever. But sometimes you need a divorce. / BRAD BYNUM BRADB@NEWSREVIEW.COM

Rachael Eberle is the proprietor and laser technician of Undo Tattoo, a South Reno tattoo removal and modification business. Eberle uses a state-of-the-art laser, which heats up tattoo ink so that it fragments and is absorbed harmlessly by the body. The process can take multiple sessions, sometimes as many as 15, depending on the inks involved and the quality of the tattoos. The cost is \$70-\$150 per session, depending on the size, location and color of the tattoo.

Eberle started the business four years ago. It's currently located in The Ageless Zone, a medical spa, an advantage of which is that she's able to work in a physician-supervised environment. Before starting Undo Tattoo, she worked as a skin care specialist at Center for Plastic Surgery in Reno.

"I have a tattoo," she says. "I understand getting one. But I started seeing more and more tattoos, and I knew not all those people were going to want to keep them."

She serves a variety of clients: divorced couples getting their tattoo wedding bands removed, World War II veterans embarrassed by tattoos that have morphed into indiscernible blobs, and ex-gang members looking to start a new life.

"I get a lot of former gang members," she says. "That's big here in Reno."

But many of her customers are just people moving into new phases of their lives.

"Tattoos are very overt expressions, and as you get older, you prefer anonymity," she says. "When you're young, you're trying to define yourself, and tattoos can be part of that, but as you get older, you guard your privacy more. Of course, that's not true for everyone, but it's often the case."

She's studied art and graphic design, which she says is helpful with the precision work involved in, say, removing an ex's name from a tattoo.

Eberle says that in recent years she has noticed more and more people with tattoos working customer service jobs.

"Tattoos are everywhere," she says. "They're becoming more and more acceptable in the workplace."

There are still some taboos involving tattoos, particularly neck and face tattoos.

"They call them 'job stoppers,'" says Eberle.

In recent years, with the poor economy, Eberle says she has seen more people getting tattoos removed in order to comply with military restrictions.

Eberle works closely with many tattoo artists, helping customers looking to modify their tattoos. Mike Curatello, a tattoo artist and co-owner of Nightmare Studios Tattoo, is currently having some tattoos removed at Undo Tattoo.

"I've been tattooing for 13 years," he says. "When I first started tattooing, it was just me and a couple of buddies, and we had no idea what we were doing, and I just got a bunch of crappy tattoos. And I'm at an age where I'm tired of looking in the mirror and seeing crap on my arms. I want what I have on me to represent what I do. ... The removal process is fairly easy, though it hurts just as much as getting a tattoo. It doesn't hurt afterward. The aftercare isn't as intensive. ... But it feels like a thousand hot rubber bands being strapped to your skin. It's a very weird sensation, like nothing I've ever felt before."

Even for a tattoo artist like Curatello, having a tattoo removed is about maintaining a professional appearance.

"For a lack of a better term, I have an image to uphold," he says. "I have to represent what my shop's about, and my shop is not about bad tattoos." □