

March Core Team Meeting Notes

Last week we heard from Tyree Duverney who owns [Aartistic Inc.](#) in Winooski and Montpelier. You can watch the recording here: [Recap: Washington County Core Team Tattoo and Piercing Career Panel Friday, March 14](#) and read the notes below. Please share this information with youth who are interested in this career.

Tyree shared that it can be hard to answer the phone during the workday so email (Aartisticinctat2@yahoo.com) and Facebook messenger work best if you want to get in touch with staff at Aartsitic Ink. Tyree is happy to provide 1:1 information or connect you to their piercer for information about that career.

Training

To become a tattoo artist you need to pass the Red Cross training on bloodborne pathogens and complete a 1,000 hour apprenticeship. Tyree also recommends taking art classes to learn how to use different materials and develop specific techniques. It can be especially helpful to take additional art classes in high school when the materials are free to use. Art is more of a science than some people realize. Studying anatomy, architecture, and mechanics can help an artist improve their craft. Some apprentices need more time than others to learn how to keep their space clean, communicate with clients, and manage their time.

No one likes their work in the beginning but it's good to keep a record of it so you can track your progress over time and develop a portfolio. Most folks are using digital portfolios now but they should still include work demonstrating skill with different mediums and styles. No two customers are the same so Tyree looks for versatility in a portfolio when he is deciding who to take on for an apprenticeship. To get an apprenticeship, first research whose work aligns with what you want to do and then contact that artist/tattoo shop directly to share your portfolio and get feedback. It might take several tries before you find the right fit for your apprenticeship. Tyree enjoys hosting apprentices because he likes training, finds it helps him stay current with trends, and gives him an opportunity to diversify the industry. He looks for people who have artistic ability and ideally some artistic training. Every new apprentice needs to buy their own new equipment so he gets to see what new technology is coming through the industry.

Apprentices are very vulnerable and they are often young people who really want this career which lends itself to an unfair power dynamic. There isn't an HR department to help support them if they need it and apprentices might be asked to do something they are uncomfortable with. Tyree shared that if you're not being respected or feel comfortable, don't stay there and instead find a different shop that is more supportive.

Industry trends

Tyree started tattooing in the late 80's and didn't like how scary the environment was because it was treated like a party. While the industry is still sexist, it was even more sexist when he first started. He is excited that there are so many more female artists and wants to see that keep growing.

Tattooing used to have a criminal and negative stigma but has evolved a lot. He loves how many people get cute tattoos just because they are cute.

The busiest time of year is when tax refunds get deposited in the spring through the summer and the slowest time is around the holidays. However, the more established you are, the steadier the amount of work will be. Word of mouth is everything so building a happy client base will help you get more clients in the future.

Typical day

Tyree enjoys that no two days are exactly the same however they do often have a mix of the following tasks:

- Respond to email and social media messages from current or prospective clients
- Prepare designs for client feedback
- Create stencils
- Clean the shop and equipment
- Tattoo clients

When there is downtime Tyree works on his personal art projects so that he can continue to develop his technical skills because he believes you can never get enough practice. He prefers the realism style and especially likes more technical projects based on architecture and cars.

A lot of the day is spent communicating with clients either digitally or in person during their session. It's important to get to know their preferences and focus fully on them when you are together. Clients often have an emotional attachment to the work they've requested.