

# Designing for Tattoos

User Design with Boston's Tattoo Subculture

Spring Semester, Olin Year 2

User-Oriented Collaborative Design (UOCD), is the task studying a group of users - who are they, what do they want, what are their needs? As engineers, we are taught to build solutions to problems that people struggle with in daily life.

**Aim:** My team chose to study the 'body modification' subculture in Boston. Tattooing became legal in the 21st century in the city, and quickly tattoo parlors have risen in the past decade.

**Design:** We started by interviewing tattoo artists, tattoo users, people who have friends with tattoos, people who want tattoos, and those who want to get them removed. We talked to users to see their lifestyle and it helped us step into their shoes. We saw their dilemmas in the career, social, and family worlds. Quite honestly, they stood out with their body art.

We created personas and values maps, areas of opportunity, and brainstormed ideas. Then a few weeks later, we went back to our users and presented our ideas. While co-designing, we asked them to use our props and play along with our solutions. If they didn't click, it was time to go back to the drawing board.

My team concluded the 5-month design project with the 3D printed model of the product *EnhancInk* as shown in the bottom picture. It is a temporary tattoo pen that draws like a tattoo and allows them and their dear ones to give tattoos new meaning.

Why? Well, the sense of a tattoo's permanence is very strong among people of the subculture. They have committed to a piece of permanent design on their skin. This pen helps them embrace the permanence by adapting the tattoo(s) to new experiences and stages in life.



We watched the real user-experience, someone getting a tattoo!



Brainstormed Areas of Opportunity to develop solutions.



Created final 3D printed product