

Designing for Tattoos

User Design with Boston's Tattoo Subculture

May 2011, Olin Year 2

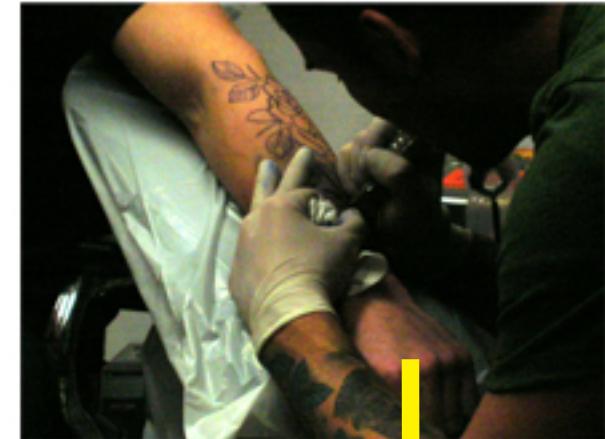
User-Oriented Collaborative Design (UOCD), is the task studying a group of users - who are they, what do they want, what are their needs? As engineers, we are taught to build solutions to problems and/or areas of opportunity that are not addressed.

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. We wanted to develop a new solution for a common problem they all had.

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 of all tattoo types to learn their ways of life and the people they socialize with and live with. It is to help us step into their shoes and ideate for the subculture.

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, these users are asked to work with props of our ideas, wear them and see how they feel, and report to us what they think. This co-design helped us see whether our feet fit well into the users' shoes. If they didn't, it was time to go back and re-think our designs.

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 tattooed people and their dear ones to give tattoos new meaning. Why this? 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