

Title:

Instantly Removable Tattoo Inks

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Summary:

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Article Body:

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Part of the attraction of getting a tattoo for some people has been the permanence of the body art that one chooses to place on their skin. If one tattoos a name on their body, it means that name has permanent meaning for them. Likewise, the designs they choose would be something they would never want to change. New tattoo ink technologies are threatening to change the whole concept of permanency of tattooing. Although there currently exist many methods of tattoo removal, their difficulty and cost make tattoos effectively permanent for most people. Likewise, older methods of removal, such as surgery may be painful and leave significant scarring. Laser tattoo removal, while usually effective, often requires multiple treatments and can be costly.

One company, Freedom-2, is bringing products to market that will change the paradigm of tattooing. Their ink is based on encapsulating bio-absorbable dyes in polymethylmethacrylate microspheres. The dyes in the ink are already FDA-approved for use in food, cosmetics, and medical devices. The ink is injected into the skin by standard tattooing techniques. At any time when removal of the pigment is desired, a single laser treatment disrupts the encapsulation, allowing the ink to flow out into the tissues and be absorbed. The tattoo then quickly fades without the need for further laser treatments. This ink is not yet available for general use, but has been tested in human subjects, according to the company's website. They indicate that it will be commercially available in early 2007.

They are also developing tattoo inks that will fade away on a predetermined schedule without the need for any laser treatments at all. The technology behind

this is not elucidated, and there is no date of availability listed yet for this type of product.

The main difference between these two products is that the former is a permanent ink that can be removed anytime, while the latter will last a long time but then fade away, even if the owner prefers it to stay.

Tattoo artists may not instantly take to the new inks. The ability to remove a tattoo is not necessarily the foremost consideration when choosing tattoo inks. Some artists believe that tattoos should be permanent, or one is better off not getting a tattoo if he or she is unsure about them. However, some tattoo shops may choose to cater to the less-decisive. Also, it may encourage more experimentation and fanciful designs, if the recipient knows that they can get the tattoo quickly lasered off if they don't like it. The new ink will likely be significantly more expensive than standard ink, so cost will also be a consideration for artists.

Although a tattoo's ink may be temporary, there is often scarring left behind from the tattoo needle's penetration of the skin. Thus a textural image of the tattoo may remain permanently. Even so, the concept of tattoos as purely permanent body art may be replaced by tattoos as fashion. If a tattoo could be instantly removed, some people may choose to periodically change their tattoos as they would their style of clothing.