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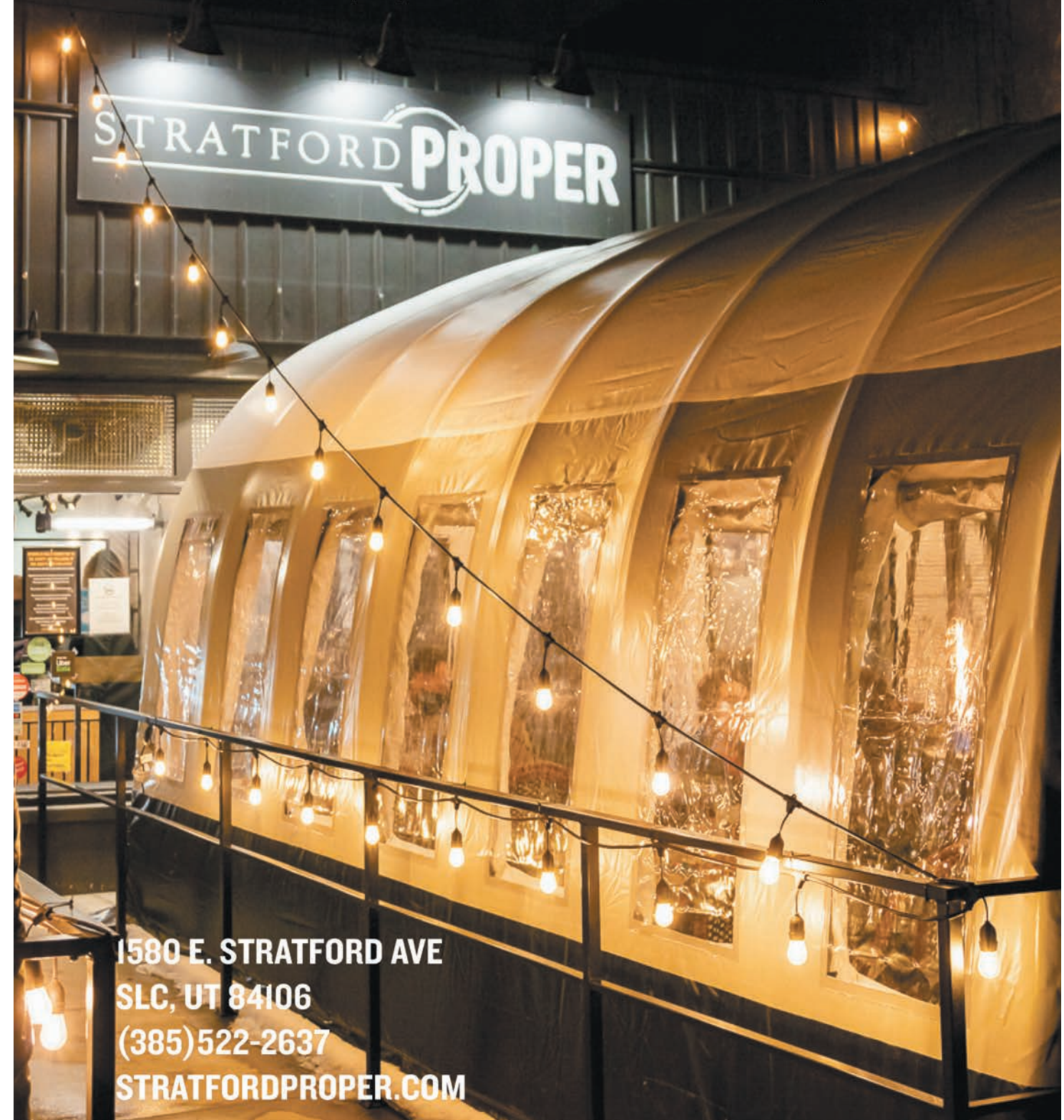
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ABOUT THE COVER: *SLUG's My Body and Me* issue highlights the things we do—big or small—that make our bodies feel like our own. To illustrate these core themes of self-care and personal growth, **Mirmsy's** (@mirmsy_) cover depicts a blossoming flower-human hybrid watering themself toward fully formed beauty.

DAVE CRESPO

Contributor Limelight

Distro Driver / Brand Ambassador

During his substantial tenure as a Distro Driver and Brand Ambassador, Dave Crespo has been a crucial building block in the bridge between *SLUG's* offices and the greater Utah community. Crespo's presence at events (both our own and those of our community partners) adds a bright tenor to the face of *SLUG Magazine*. As a driver, Crespo's monthly jaunts up, down and around Utah keep *SLUG's* avid readers stocked with new print issues—in Crespo's case, particularly those who lie outside the Salt Lake Valley. A reliable and joyous force, *SLUG* is ever thankful for Crespo's work on our team.



PATRICK GIBBS

Contributor Limelight

Film Writer

For just over a year, Contributing Writer Patrick Gibbs has been the driving force behind *SLUG's* film coverage through his almost-daily film reviews and periodic filmmaker interview features. With a deep knowledge of the medium's history, an incisive critical eye and a sly sense of humor, Gibbs' writing exudes—more than anything—a love and respect for the art of cinema. For his unshakable tenacity and colorful voice, *SLUG* is honored to count Gibbs among our ranks. Head to *SLUGMag.com* to find an archive of Gibbs' reviews and to keep up with new articles. Particularly this month, watch out for his upcoming coverage of the *Sundance Film Festival*.



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Community Development & Advertising Sales:

John Ford, Community Development Manager: johnford@slugmag.com
Angela H. Brown: sales@slugmag.com
SLUG HQ: 801.487.9221

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Morgan Keller

Marketing Intern:

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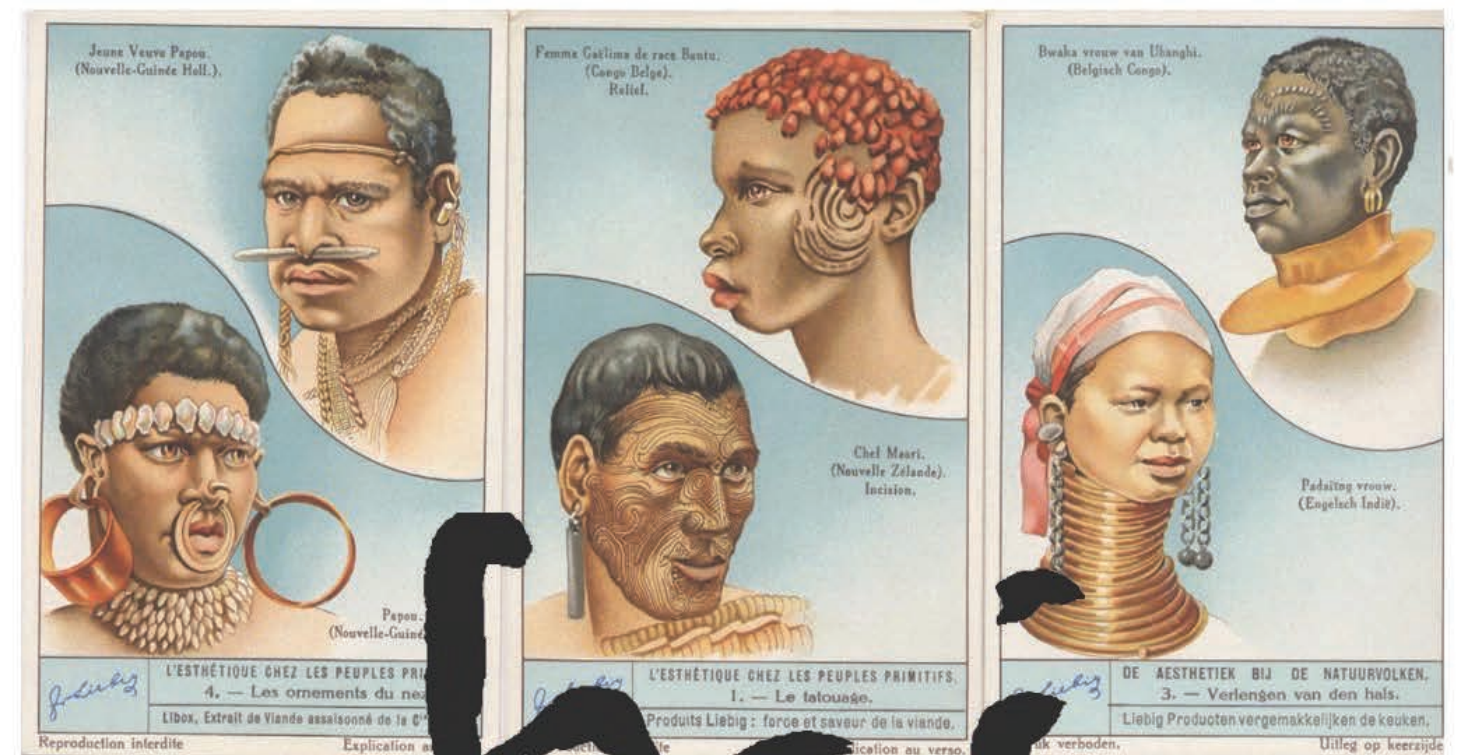
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EVERYBODY LOVES EVERYBODY TATTOO

By Ali Shimkus | alishimkus@gmail.com
Photos courtesy of Everybody Tattoo



Work by Logan Law
[@logan.law.art](https://www.instagram.com/logan.law.art)



Work by Victoria Lee
[@minjiyang_tattooer](https://www.instagram.com/minjiyang_tattooer)



Work by Devin Lindley
[@trashpartytroll](https://www.instagram.com/trashpartytroll)

Everybody Tattoo embraces whimsical, contemporary and uncommon tattoo artistry. With the goal of showcasing self-taught artists, the tattoos from *Everybody Tattoo* are flowy, avante-garde designs that seem like they came out of a dream rather than a traditional tattoo parlor. Each artist at *Everybody Tattoo* carries a trademark style and their own sought-after flash tattoos, as the shop prides itself on being a one-of-a-kind shop and an inviting atmosphere for clients of all backgrounds. For Owner **Victoria Lee**, maintaining a welcoming and inclusive space and catering to the originality of the in-house artists are some of the top priorities for *Everybody Tattoo*.

Everybody Tattoo's artists usually tattoo their own flash designs and artwork rather than creating custom work based on clients' commissions. Because of this, *Everybody Tattoo's* clientele are loyal to the shop and its distinctive artistry, affirming experience and notable customer service (the online reviews from clients are overwhelmingly positive). "[The] majority of the tattoos we produce are our artists' original art," says Lee. "While some of our artists' offer custom work, most of us focus solely on our flash."

For Lee, *Everybody Tattoo's* focus on each artists' special and individual work caters to clientele who want more contemporary tattoos that will not be found on anyone else, as well as a safe, expressive space to patronize. "We are also unique in that we are a shop of female and nonbinary, self-taught tattoo artists," says Lee. "Our clients have been appreciative of the type of space we [are] trying to create." The eye-catching flash and quirky artwork, along with events and giveaways on their illustrious

Instagram page, have fostered exponentiating interest in the shop.

Established in 2019 by artist **Gheybin Comish**, *Everybody Tattoo* has been a rare studio in offering new opportunities for self-taught artists and creating a safe space for their clients. Since Lee took over ownership of the shop in early 2020, she has kept the focus on highlighting *Everybody Tattoo's* eclectic artist base as well as an accommodating, affirming atmosphere for their clients. "Our styles are unique to each artist!" Lee says. "**Devin Lindsey's** work is fun, illustrative and whimsical. **Hallie Rose Taylor's** work is transformative and symbolic in nature. **Logan Law's** work is surreal and dreamy! My work is driven by all things nature, featuring fine-lines and touches of color."

Lee's illustrative style is reflected in her tattoo work, which seems to evoke a watercolor quality with delicate, fine lines and nature-based, minimalist subjects. Her inspiration often comes from the other small business she runs, selling original art, stickers and jewelry as [@painting.sheep](https://www.instagram.com/painting.sheep) on Instagram. "I did a tattoo of a couple of strawberries from a sticker design I made and a sheep based on a watercolor painting I did," says Lee. "Those really make it feel like my work has come full-circle, so I'll never forget them." For Lee, each tattoo is a learning experience. She plans on sharing some state-bird and flower illustrations soon as prints for her Painting Sheep shop, as well as flash tattoos.

Despite being a newer studio in Salt Lake City, *Everybody Tattoo* has maintained their business

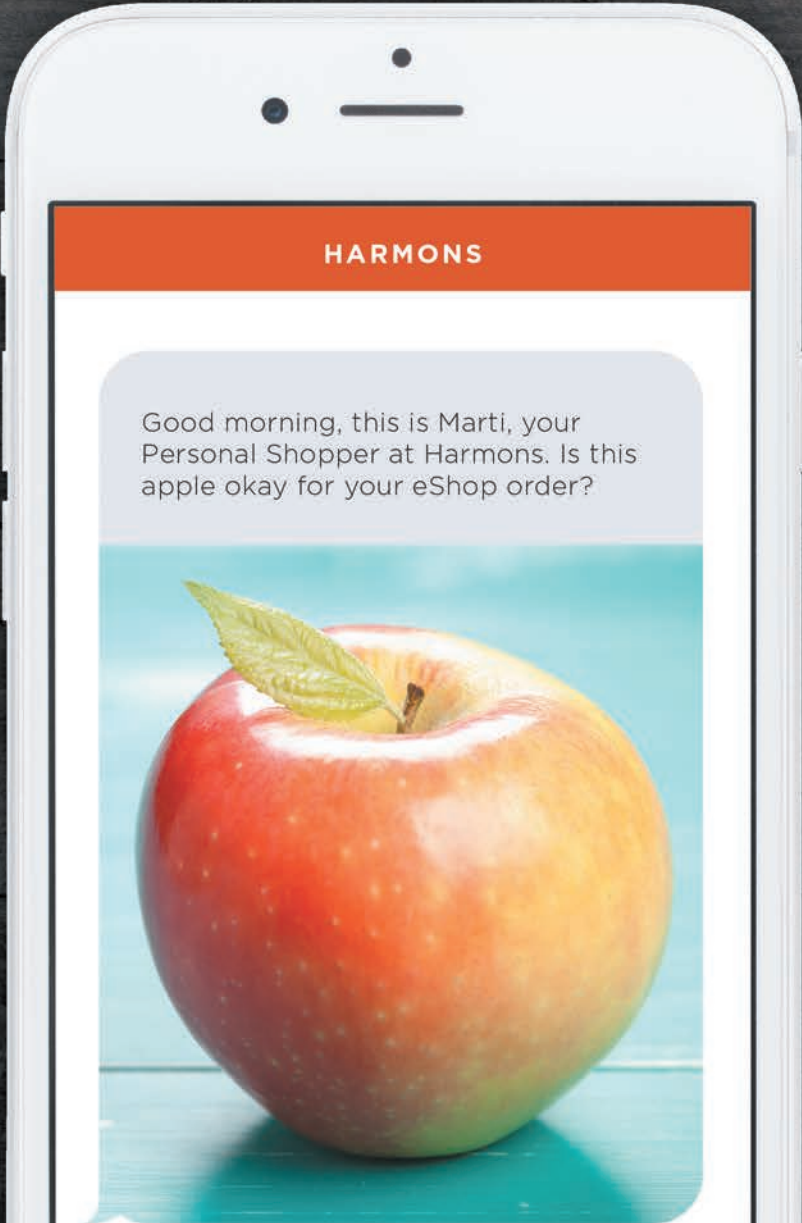
during COVID-19 by being appointment-only (for the time being). The *Everybody Tattoo* Instagram page often features monthly events at which the shop focuses on a theme and each artist creates flash based on that theme. However, since early 2020, *Everybody Tattoo* has focused on mostly virtual events, including tattoo raffles and virtual pop-up shops, which has helped keep interest in the shop alive.

"Luckily, we are able to control our working environment more than other businesses ... Our main focus is to remain open through the pandemic," says Lee. "Although we are not as busy as we have been in the past, I'm just grateful that we are still here and for our wonderful clients who have supported us through this." Lee's goals for *Everybody Tattoo's* future are to return to hosting in-person events and bringing in more self-taught artists, once it is safe to do so.

With *Everybody Tattoo* limiting the amount of people in the shop, Lee suggests that those interested in the shop get to know each artists' style and art. *Everybody Tattoo* does custom work as well, infused with each artist's flair. "Our goal is for both the artist and client to be happy with their piece. So before taking on a custom piece, I first decide if I am the right fit for what my client is hoping for stylistically. If I feel I am well-suited for their idea, I will draw up a sketch and collaborate with them from there," says Lee. *Everybody Tattoo* is located at 401 N. 300 West in Salt Lake. Their Instagram page, [@everybodytattoostudios](https://www.instagram.com/everybodytattoostudios), lists each artist's Instagram page, as well as their flash, events and FAQ.

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FROM MAGIC MOUNTAIN TO THE

PAINTED TEMPLE

By Paul Micheal Zuniga! • doctorbarber.paul@gmail.com
Photos courtesy of Painted Temple

Sometime around 1986 at California's *Six Flags' Magic Mountain* theme park, **Oak Adams** remembers being awestruck for the first time at the sight of tattoos. He was young and racing out of the boy's room to catch up with mom and dad. He turned a corner at full speed and ran straight into a heavily tattooed man who was standing just around the other side. "I was scared shitless," Adams says, "but he was the coolest guy I'd ever seen." Today, Adams has become a model of the same tattooed man that froze him in his tracks as a young boy.

In 2005, Adams opened the first *Painted Temple Tattoo and Art Gallery* in Provo with his wife, **Bleu Adams**. Today, it has become the home to some of Salt Lake's best award-winning tattoo artists. Now in the heart of Salt Lake City, *Painted Temple* sits at 1443 S. 700 East, and the shop covers everything from traditional, illustrative and old-school fine line to surrealism and trash polka—the list goes on. Adams, who mostly sticks to bio-organic macabre, skulls, faces, portraits and trees, has surrounded himself with artists that he looks up to. "I'm really blessed to work with so many kickass artists that are hungry to

improve and focus on art," he says, noting that the 13 artists in the shop share a combined 150 years of experience between them. He, as well as shop artists **Bonnie Seeley** and **Rick McGrath**, have been tattooing all over the country for 25 years, while artists like **Al Perez** and **Ryan Cumberledge** have both called Salt Lake City home since they began tattooing over a decade ago.

There are a lot of killer artists along the Wasatch front, but the amount of talent coming from *Painted Temple* speaks for itself. **Matt Morrison**, who has been with the shop for six years, puts so much detail into every black-and-grey realism piece he creates, it's jaw-dropping. **Miss Amanda**, who will soon be bouncing back and forth with McGrath between SLC and their newly opened shop

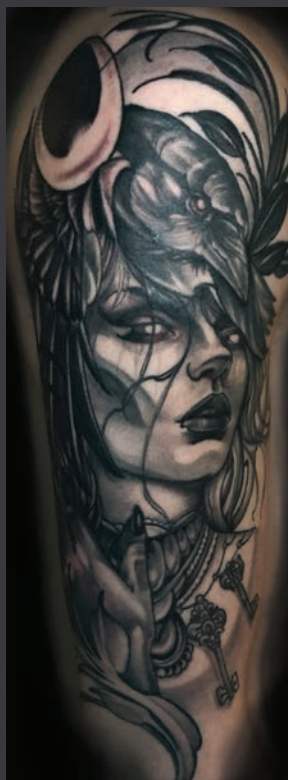
in Costa Rica, specializes in Japanese art and

Art Nouveau. Another talented artist, **Walt Watts**, has a broad range of styles and mostly focuses on sci-fi, fantasy, mythology and horror. Each artist specializes in multiple styles and each brings a unique style to *Painted Temple* that you won't find anywhere else in the city.

When I asked Adams what he looks for in an artist, he says, "We aren't into rockstar attitudes. We enjoy each other's critiques and terrible humor. I look for quality of work and attitude, professionalism and accountability." Adams began "scratching on friends" when he was 16. He never really imagined back then that he'd wind up where he did. However, from the minute he learned how to build a homemade walkman motor machine—also known as a "prison tattoo gun"—from a guy

named **Quentin**, he never really stopped. For Adams, *Painted Temple* has become a great place to tattoo, learn and grow. Adams attributes this all to the people who trust in them for tattoos. "We love you," he says, "and we couldn't do what we do without you." He looks forward to many more years and many more tattoos at *Painted Temple*.

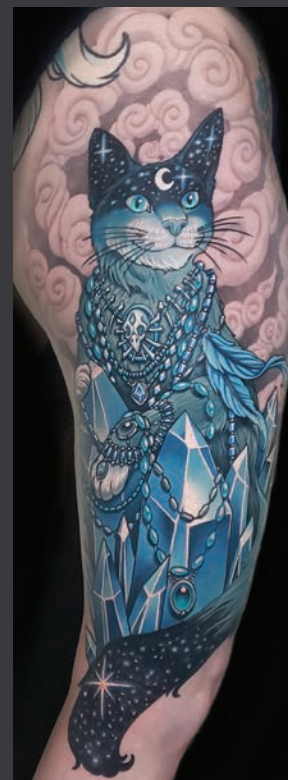
For some people, tattoos are a form of self-care. For me, it's more about self-expression. I got my first tattoo at age 20, and even though I was terrified that mom and dad would see it, I immediately wanted another—which I got a year later at *Painted Temple*. For anyone who is thinking about getting their first tattoo, I highly recommend doing your homework. Go to paintedtemple.com and check out each artists' portfolio to find the artist you like best, according to your style. Each multifaceted artist will be sure to make your next tattoo idea come to fruition at *Painted Temple*—the best thing to do is to check their work out yourself. Just like everywhere else during the pandemic, *Painted Temple* is taking every extra precaution to make sure the shop is clean, safe and comfortable for every client. For more information, head to paintedtemple.com.



Al Perez' history of tattooing for over a decade offers his clients a broad range of styles.



Oak Adams' work offers a more surreal and realistic style to his clients.



Walt Watts' work focuses on sci-fi, fantasy, mythology and horror.

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PIONEERS OF PIERCING-ONLY STUDIOS

AN INTERVIEW
WITH

KOI

Above all else, the staff at *Koi Piercing Studio* love the art of piercing, a commitment shown in their always high-quality work.

Brittnie Gallegos
gallegosbrittnie0319@gmail.com

Photos by Matt Nelson

At the age of 12, I sat in *Koi Piercing Studio* with my knee bouncing anxiously: My dad had taken me to get my ears stretched, much to my mom's dismay. I had picked out my jewelry, a nice blue stone on the end of stainless steel, and I remember my anxieties drifting away once I got settled in the room with my piercer and was welcomed with a calm environment and friendly people. Even at such a young age, I was able to see the respect and dedication that this team of compassionate people put into their work and their self-expression through beautiful body art.

Curt Warren, Founder of *Koi*, had a growing love for piercing when he got his tongue pierced in Hawaii by a mystical piercer who went by "the Piercing Elf," further cementing the importance of this art form to Warren. After a less-than-savory experience with a different tattoo-and-piercing shop, Warren and his friend **Brody** left disappointed. Jokingly, Brody said to Warren, "Well, if you think you can do better." Along with **John Pratt** and **Casey Fife**, Warren had pierced at tattoo parlors and retail stores but saw that his coworkers didn't give piercing the respect that it required, which inspired the founding of *Koi*. He says, "It has been one of the most important things in my life for the last 25 years." Warren, Pratt and Fife had dreams of working at a piercing-only studio, and Warren had job offers from studios in Seattle, San Diego and Santa Cruz, but Salt Lake City was his home. Pratt and Fife had quit their positions as piercers in other studios and went to live with Warren in his apartment—*Koi* was then born in 1997.

In order to have a unified and caring studio, passionate team members are a must. All members of *Koi* agree with Warren's sentiments, each detailing how important piercing is to them. **Catarina**

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Taylor Saenz, a piercer at *Koi* says, "Genuinely, it's everything. I've moved across the country multiple times to be an active and growing part of the industry. I can't imagine it not being my main focus." *Koi* prides itself on its authenticity and helping people reach their true selves through the expression of piercing. Store Manager **Ashley Hardman** says, "The very core of piercing is to be your most authentic self, regardless of what it is, where the only rule is safety."

Koi not only offers a wide selection of the highest quality jewelry, but continues to evolve with the industry as the years go on. Hardman mentions the vision of the '90s piercer, when piercing was less unique and more limited on which body parts could be pierced. This vision was prevalent when the piercing industry didn't have such a holistic approach, but now piercers have surpassed that and it's totally about "you." **Dustin "Deej" Heaton** says *Koi* offers emotional support, pain management therapy and life advice (although sometimes that advice is questionable). If a customer is ever nervous or curious before their piercing appointment, they are welcome to call ahead and talk about their worries or inquiries with *Koi's* knowledgeable and comforting staff.

While the normal cleaning protocols are up to par with hospitals, the *Koi* team has upped their cleansing process amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Warren says that every item used during a piercing session is either sterilized or destroyed and disinfectant wipes are used in each room. All staff and clients are required to wear N-99 masks or an equivalent, the client must also come without any guests and the piercing must not be underneath

In addition to the actual piercing, the staff at *Koi* serves the client by providing pre-appointment advice and helping the newly pierced select their jewelry.

a mask. It's safe to say that *Koi* puts clients' safety first and wouldn't dare advertise otherwise.

Overall, *Koi's* approach to piercing can be described with two words: honesty and respect. It's important that the piercer is 100% honest with the client about whether the piercing is the right fit for them. On top of this, they provide top-notch recommendations on jewelry types and what they think would look best for each person. Hardman says, "You are putting a new hole in your body and that's important! It's something that should be done [by] someone with precision and care."

Self-expression in terms of piercing is as simple as wearing a T-shirt, but with a quite a bit more permanence. Warren says he used to wear heavy metal T-shirts and would find like-minded people that way. Piercings can also be used as a bridge between differing mindsets. Piercings and tattoos are becoming more normalized as our society progresses, but there is still a stigma surrounding them. **Michelle Katzelnick**, a piercer at *Koi* says, "How someone looks on the outside doesn't dictate who they are as a person, which is something we teach children from a young age—why should body art be exempt from this teaching?" Although Warren believes that some employers have a right to have strict rules on body art in dress code, he says that change is inevitable. The *Koi* team is indifferent to what "society" says about piercings and choose to fight back by loving themselves and their body art.

"We are here because we love what we do, and the art is the people walking out of our shop with an experience that will live on through that piercing forever," says Hardman.

More information about *Koi Piercing Studio* can be found on their website, koipiercingslc.com, where you can make an appointment, as well!

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Team: (L-R) Carlos Duenas, Samantha Minh, Chelsie Ross, Bailee Daemons and Cristina Marie work together to ensure the safety of their customers through sanitation and COVID-conscious methods of practice.

According to Manager **Chelsie Ross** and Owner **Jesse Dobbs**, *IRIS Piercing* is dedicated to making sure every person who walks through their doors feels comfortable and empowered. The studio aims to connect on a personal level with their clients by involving them in the creative process of figuring out jewelry and placement. They also want to ensure clients feel confident in both the piercing process when they come in and themselves when they leave. “Our mission has been to create a welcoming environment where all will feel excited and comfortable when getting pierced,” Dobbs says. “Piercing can be so simple and fun, but there are also tons of different options that can make every piercing new and exciting.”

Since their first establishment in Salt Lake 15 years ago, *IRIS* has expanded into five other cities in four different states, with shops in Denver, Boulder, Brooklyn, Chicago and Portland. As they’ve expanded, they’ve made sure to bring that personal touch along with them. “When there is a deeper connection to a city and the location of the studio, it makes the process really fun and fulfilling,” Dobbs says. Every new location that has been established was done so because an *IRIS* piercer either moved to the city or knew people that lived there, ensuring that the *IRIS* mentality would come along with them.

The expansions have provided the opportunity to explore and experience new cities for Ross. “I typically go work in each of the other locations a couple times a year, and it has been really cool to go explore other places [and] see what client styles are like, but I have SLC be my home base,” she says. Ross has been with the studio for ten years now, and in addition to managing, Ross herself is a piercer and helps with the training and development at their new locations. “I originally started out very part-time [as a Gallery Assistant], wanting to get the job in addition to the two other jobs I had at the time because I had always loved being in the studio,” Ross says. “I jumped on that opening so I

could be a part of the team ... It has been such a fun place to grow with.”

In addition to Ross, the Salt Lake City location has three other piercers, **Carlos Duenas**, **Samantha Minh** and **Bailee Damons**, along with one Gallery Assistant, **Cristina Marie**, who helps clients pick out the perfect pieces of jewelry for their piercings. In terms of their services, *IRIS* offers all types of piercings, from the standard ear piercings to ones more “under the belt,” as Ross put it. A customer can also buy jewelry without needing to get a piercing done at *IRIS*. Their gallery offers everything from the standard jewelry to designer pieces from **Pupil Hall**, **Suzanne Kalan**, **Shiva Design and Jewels**, **Future Primitives** and more.

All of these things add to the studios’ mission of making people comfortable because at *IRIS*, piercings are a form of self-care, according to Ross. With so many other things out of a person’s control, piercings act as a great way to take control of your own body. “It is something you can do to make yourself feel better,” says Ross, “be it by altering your physical appearance in a way that you feel expresses you better or by feeling that sense of accomplishment by facing your fears and doing something that hurts a little bit.”

Of course, as with most businesses, the pandemic has thrown a bit of a wrench in things. Right now, *IRIS* is not doing any piercings that require a client to remove their mask—which means no nostril piercings—and all piercings are by appointment only. Even with the restrictions on appointments and services, Ross says there has been an uptick in people using piercings as self-care since the pandemic started. They’ve seen both returning clients come back more frequently as well as an influx of completely new ones coming in. While this increase is great, according to Ross, it’s also important to let piercings take their time to heal. “We absolutely love seeing y’all



IRIS offers jewelry from Pupil Hall, Suzanne Kalan, Shiva Design and Jewels, Future Primitives and more.

back, but here is the gentle reminder that you don’t want to do things in quick succession; your body needs to heal,” she says.

Along with making sure every client feels confident and in control, *IRIS* is also careful about making sure everything is done as safely as possible. “Getting pierced can be a little bit scary, but we are here to make it as quick and easy as possible while having a great time doing it,” Ross says. “We are excited about what we do, and we want you to be, too.” With the pandemic, that means not only safety with the piercing procedure but in terms of COVID-19 safety measures as well. When a client arrives for their appointment, they must complete a symptom screening and have their temperature taken at the door. *IRIS* has also added air filters in every room to ensure proper circulation and filtration.

IRIS doesn’t have any plans for future expansions right now, as they are focusing on trying to get through the year just like the rest of us. Though, Ross and Dobbs are hoping they will be able to get to all the nostril piercings soon. “I’m very excited to be able to help all those on our nose piercing waitlist,” Dobbs says. “It’ll be super fun and maybe we’ll do a nose event or something. Until then, we are just making the best of 2020!” Right now, appointments can be booked online at irispiercing.com.

black Lives matter

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SLUG Mag stands with you in demanding **equality** and **justice** for all.

An Acronym for Salt Lake UnderGround, *SLUG Magazine*’s mission is to amplify Salt Lake City’s thriving alternative and underrepresented music, arts, lifestyle and events subcultures with thoughtful media coverage and exclusive event curation.

SLUG Mag recognizes the long history of racism and discrimination that continues to live in the independent arts and lifestyle communities we exist within and cover, not just here in Salt Lake but across the country. We’re working internally to review our processes and practices to reevaluate whether we’re truly accomplishing our core mission of diversity and inclusion across all the fields and disciplines we cover.

If you have any comments, questions or feedback for us, please reach out to our Executive Editor, Angela H. Brown, at: angela@slugmag.com.

HIGH-BROW —WITH THE— BROWFRAU

EXPLORING MICROBLADING WITH
MEGAN DAVIES

By Avrey Evans • avreyevans21@gmail.com
Photos by Jessica Bundy



Brittany Scott receives an eyebrow touch-up through microblading, a permanent form of eyebrow tattooing, from Megan Davies, aka [@browfrau](https://www.instagram.com/browfrau) on Instagram.



In the past decade, permanent makeup has gone from an avant-garde trend to a worldwide beauty movement. Permanent eyeliner, lipstick and even freckles have become popular cosmetic enhancements, but the most beloved by far is microblading. A form of tattoo, microblading accentuates the shape and density of the eyebrows using individual hair strokes. The process is fairly quick but can be tedious, so finding a skilled artist is crucial. One such individual is Megan Davies, a local microblader who has been working in the body-art industry for several years.

Davies began her career in aesthetic enhancements when she was a tattoo apprentice at *Lonely Hearts Club Tattoo*. During her apprenticeship, Davies learned about tattoo ethics, personalization of pieces and how to create a good experience for clients. In time, Davies realized that she wasn't interested in pursuing tattooing as a career, and instead pivoted her passion toward something that had caught her eye decades ago. "Being artistically inclined, I recall being interested in learning permanent makeup in the early 2000s, but I couldn't get past the way old-school, tattooed brows and eyeliner looked years down the road," Davies says. It wasn't until one of her friends began microblading out of *Lonely Hearts* that Davies saw how the world of bold, permanent brows had changed.

"Microblading was brought to life again in the beauty world due to tool and technique innovation," Davies says. "[I learned how] microblading could add shape and density to brows, while keeping the look natural, by creating super-fine, individual hair strokes." After learning the basics of microblading from her friend, Davies started honing her craft by taking advanced courses around the country. Soon she was offering her own microblading services out of *Lonely Hearts Club* and several other studios around the city. Davies currently operates outside of *Studio Aurum* in Salt Lake, a peaceful and stylish appointment-only studio.

As a permanent brow enhancement, microblading is essentially a tattoo. Imagine tiny needles dragged across your skin in delicate individual strokes on your face. While it may sound arduous and painful, when applied by a skilled microblader like Davies, the process is actually quite soothing and perfectly suited to a client's face shape and features. Each client is matched with their ideal brow shape and color to accentuate their existing eyebrows, keeping them looking natural and effortless. By using these special techniques, microblading can appear to lift and open the eyes, creating a more youthful and well-rested appearance.

"I work with each client to determine their goals for their brows before starting any work," Davies says. "However, I want my

microblading to look classic and timeless, and lean toward brow shapes that have stood the test of time."

To prepare for your microblading appointment, Davies asks that you avoid alcohol, caffeine or blood thinners for 24–48 hours. Your skin must be free of any injuries or sunburns, and you should arrive with a clean face. Davies begins by mapping out reference points for your personalized brow outline. Once she creates the ideal symmetric brow, an anesthetic numbing cream is applied to the brow area. This ensures the procedure is comfortable and safe. Once complete, the cream is removed, and Davies draws a "skeleton" brow to reference as she microblades. Using a manual hand tool, Davies begins by making carefully placed hairstrokes between existing brow hairs. She then applies a cosmetic-grade tattoo pigment and lets it soak into the newly created hairstrokes. The process is repeated as needed and takes between two and three hours.

To care for freshly microbladed brows, gently cleanse with mild soap and warm water, followed by a special healing balm that will be provided at your appointment. Davies recommends avoiding sweating, direct-sun exposure or submersing in water for two weeks. After 10–14 days, the area will have healed externally, and after a few more weeks the pigment will show more clearly. As skin cells naturally turnover from exfoliation and other factors, microblading tends to fade with time. Touch-ups may be needed, and color refreshers are recommended every 12–18 months.

At *Studio Aurum*, Davies is also taking special precautions during the lingering age of COVID-19. Only one client is allowed in the studio for an appointment, and must wait in their car until summoned. Davies asks that clients leave all nonessential personal belongings behind and provides everyone with new masks upon arrival. While it may be a bit different, customers can expect a safe and relaxed microblading experience.

The world of permanent makeup has enhanced the beauty industry in so many ways, and Davies is grateful for the ways microblading has created opportunities for her. "I feel so fortunate to be able to do what I love and make other people happy, too!" she says. As permanent makeup continues to gain popularity, Davies wants to expand her range of services and eventually offer freckles, lip blush and powder brows. Keep an eye out for changes on the horizon at *Studio Aurum*!

To find out if microblading is right for you, head over to Davies' website at megandavies-artistry.com. Keep up with *Studio Aurum* by following their Instagram [@studio_aurum_slc](https://www.instagram.com/studio_aurum_slc), and follow Davies' microblading journey at [@browfrau](https://www.instagram.com/browfrau) on Instagram.

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Happy New Year!



VIRTUALIZED

By Taylor Hartman • mr.taylor.hartman@gmail.com

SLUG Mag's January *Virtualized: An Online Concert Featuring Utah Bands* features Ben Ra, **\$liing** and **Arcvne**, three talented local musicians who can't wait to turn up with you from the comfort of your own sofa, bed, shower or wherever you may tune in. Both artists create high-energy rap music, drawing on both local and international inspirations to create some amazing songs. Both are putting in the work to put SLC on the map when it comes to new rap. Check out *Virtualized* Jan. 22 at 8 p.m. on *SLUG Mag's* YouTube Channel.

June 2013: **Barack Obama** is in the White House, "Thrift Shop" by **Macklemore & Ryan Lewis** blares on radio stations across the country, and **Kanye West's** studio album *Yeezus* has just dropped. The album is experimental, the sound is new and unique—different from Kanye's other work. All the while, Ben Ra, a musician observing from inside his home in Utah, becomes inspired.

Ben Ra saw something in his favorite artist that was new. *Yeezus* didn't carry the traditional Kanye sound. It was experimental and groundbreaking. For a young musician just finding his footing, it was the motivation and inspiration he needed. "I said, 'I wanna make something like that,'" Ben Ra says. "Not replicating, but experimenting with music and trying to push my own boundaries with production and sound."

Seven years after this point, Ben Ra has developed into a well-polished, committed and creative musician. His SoundCloud hosts an eclectic blend of sounds, fluctuating from classic hip-hop to more modern, auto-tuned ballads that escape a distinct genre. A producer as well as rapper, Ben Ra layers his vocals and beats in a way that makes him stand out as an artist in SLC. And for the Utah native, not fitting in has been an issue in his life. "I think naturally everyone tries to fit in, and I struggled with that for a while in my teens, because it wasn't always easy," Ben Ra says. "I learned to start accepting me for who I am and stopped looking for approval from people [whose] opinion/beliefs hold no weight or influence on my life."

Ben Ra not caring what you think means his music is authentically his. His track "No Sailing" (which is an absolute banger and could easily be found on a "Rap Cavier" Spotify playlist) paints a picture of style and optimism, bleeding charisma throughout. He bounces along a self-produced beat with ease, his voice pleasantly auto-tuned. One lyric on the track really sums up Ben Ra's view of himself, and what other people may think of him: "Gotta say that we the hottest in the whole town / How I juggle all this shit? / Man, you a whole clown."

Though there's no official "hottest in the whole town" award for hip-hop and rap in SLC, Ben Ra is definitely up there. When it comes to the local-music world, Ben Ra says he mostly keeps his head down to focus on his craft. He says he's most inspired by his friends and family, as well as accomplished artists from all mediums and locations, rather than artists in his immediate geographical location. "I don't really pay as much attention as I used to to what people are doing in the local scene," he says. "I will say that there are definitely a few artists I keep up with, but I never force feelings and don't go out of my way to try and discover or be a part of that scene."

When it comes to local collaborations, Ben Ra has done some,



After seven years of polishing his sound, Ben Ra's music transcends the confining expectations of specific genre.

but likes to keep his circle close-knit, working with a handful of producers and rappers he respects and vibes with. "**Bijuu** is my go-to favorite and, in my opinion, [the] most talented producer in this town. His creative mindset has inspired me from day one," Ben Ra says. "**Idan Jene** is an amazing artist and a good friend of mine. **Younga\$\$ Nico** is, bar for bar, one of my favorite lyricists, and we have plans to collaborate soon."

This year, Ben Ra's been using COVID-19 and isolation to his advantage. Partly an introvert, he says he misses his friends, but everyone isolating has made him feel less bad about diving into his music in his spare time. Taking the time to dedicate himself to production has paid off for Ben Ra. He says, "I've dialed it in and seen big improvements from my own perspective, as I've spent a lot of time just creating." As far as the creative

process goes, finding inspiration is the same as before for Ben Ra. "I sit down and start making a beat by layering melodies, drums and instruments until I feel I can fit vocals in," he says. "I've grown a lot with time and learned a lot from a technical aspect, which I think is reflected in the quality of the music."

Ben Ra is staying tight lipped about what we can expect during his *Virtualized* performance, but if it's anything like what he's been producing recently and the shows he and his friends throw, you're not going to want to miss it. Check out *Virtualized* on Jan. 22 at 8 p.m. on *SLUG Mag's* YouTube Channel. You can find Ben Ra's music at soundcloud.com/benraaa.

Growing up as a kid in Utah, **Bryan Rolon**, who performs under the name \$liing, remembers listening to Latin rock in the car with his mother. On the way to the grocery store or heading back from school, the heavy guitar and vocals would blare out of the stereos, shaping the young artist's mind before he even knew he wanted to become a rapper. "From there, my passion for music grew and grew bigger," \$liing says.

Music in \$liing's childhood wasn't limited to just car rides with his mom—when he would get home from school, his uncle would often camp out on various instruments in the living room, passing the time making compositions. "My earliest memory I have with music is seeing my uncle jam out and put together sounds," \$liing says.

The love of music and passion for creating \$liing saw in his family when he was young helped mold how he viewed music. To him, it's an essential part of life; an escape to take you out of yourself, to enjoy while driving and to relax after a hard day at work. "There was nothing better than putting on headphones and blurring everything out in the real world," \$liing says.

Now, as an adult, music is still a major part of \$liing's life. As a teen, he found a love for rap music, which grew exponentially until \$liing started to make his own. Not only does \$liing rap, but he produces his own beats, making him a full package. His style is unique and modern, utilizing trap beats and slight autotune to deliver hyped-up, bass-heavy music.



\$liing (Bryan Rolon) wields his Latinx roots and Latin rock inspiration from his youth to structure the music he produces today.

Like a lot of modern-day rap music, \$liing's tracks are perfect to get hyped to, and it will be hard not to dance along during his performance. New tracks like "Gelato" employ simple beats and breathless, heavily ad-libbed vocals that sound like the lovechild of **Playboi Carti** and **Migos** jumping on the track. Being the mature and developed rapper he is, \$liing knows how to rap on tracks like "Gelato" and delivers a strong performance. In the song, he raps: "Drop in the spot / Pull up in Mercedes / We smoking on loud / Bitch a 380."

"I love the scene and what it's become over time," \$liing says when asked about rap in Salt Lake City. Whether it be in the studio or in the community rubbing shoulders with other artists, he says it's important to prop fellow musicians up. This is especially true in a small place like Salt Lake, where one may not know how much weight one's opinion has on younger musicians. "I remember seeing people [make music] so it motivated me to actually start doing it seriously. The way music made me feel back then is what I want people to feel with my music," he says.

As far as the rap game goes in Salt Lake, \$liing says it's still in its infancy for the most part, but it's only a matter of time before a musician makes it big. "I like how everyone in the scene keeps working and pushing," he says. "Someone is bound to take it to the next level."

When asked what inspires him, \$liing says he looks to the world around him for new ideas. Recently, he's wanted to go back to his musical roots and has started sampling sounds from his earlier years, nodding to the music of his mother and uncle's tastes that shaped him into the artist he is. "I really love to sample and create something new out of old pieces of art," he says.

From short guitar samples to little vocal snippets, the music of \$liing's past can be heard in many of his tracks. Piecing sounds together makes music interesting and inspiring for \$liing, who, after four years as a producer, still likes to keep things fresh. And when COVID-19 happened and parts of Utah were locked up, \$liing took it as an opportunity to buckle down. While many people complained about not being able to leave the house, the rapper saw it as an opportunity to be locked away for a bit, alone, working on music. "COVID sucks no doubt," \$liing says. "Being quarantined this year definitely sucked, But it did motivate me to work 10-times harder, so for that, I'm not too upset about it."

One thing \$liing misses most are his shows. "I just hope this can all get resolved as soon as possible so I can get back to moshing and having crazy shows. I definitely miss seeing people rage to my music and just get loose," he says.

Thankfully, we can all see \$liing's amazing energy in January's *SLUG Virtualized*. And in the meantime, check out \$liing's music at soundcloud.com/damn-474747474. *Virtualized* takes place on Jan. 22 at 8 p.m. on *SLUG Mag's* YouTube Channel.



STYLISH SMILES

TOOTH GEM ART with **MIDDONY ROMAN** and **ALYSSA VIGIL**

By Austin Beck-Doss • austinbeckdoss@gmail.com

Many popular body modification trends belong to an enduring and ancient tradition of altering one's appearance as a means of self-expression. Tooth gem art, the increasingly popular practice of adhering small charms and stones to the front teeth with dental bond, originates with the Mayan practice of drilling holes into teeth and filling them with jade, gold and other precious materials as a display of social status. In present-day Salt Lake City, Middony Roman and Alyssa Vigil are working tooth gem artists. Both of these artists are keenly aware of the history of dental adornments, and each is motivated by helping their customers express style and personality through newly shimmering smiles.

MIDDONY ROMAN:

In addition to their tooth gem work, Middony Roman is also a tattooer and artist. In 2015, they had two gems installed on their own teeth, and can recall feeling "like a badass," they say, with the new accessories in place. They loved how the gems felt and "wanted others to feel that way, too." Within a few years, Roman began offering the service on their own.

"Tooth gems are exciting to me because of the way people look at themselves once they have them," Roman says. This satisfaction comes all at once, when the customer finally looks in the mirror. "A certain suave and laid-back aura comes over them," Roman says, "It takes a real cool cat to rock a gold gem or crystal."

All of the gems that Roman offers are hand-selected from a Los Angeles-based artist. When curating their collection, Roman selects for "funky" stuff, like playboy bunnies, cherries and spiderwebs. "I like making a statement with my style, and I want my clients to be able to do the same," Roman says.

Roman has been tattooing professionally since 2018, at which point they completed their apprenticeship and began working toward opening a shop of their own. "In the last month of 2020, I am going for it," Roman says. The new shop is called *Los Amantes*, or *The Lovers* in Spanish. "I want to carve out my own lane," they say. *Los Amantes* will begin taking appointments soon. For now, find Roman and their tooth gem work on Instagram @donytattoos.



ALYSSA VIGIL:



When Alyssa Vigil began offering tooth gem art, there weren't many others in the Salt Lake Valley offering the same service, and she considers it a side hustle. "It popped off more than I thought it would," she says. Now, through social media exposure and word of mouth, Vigil fixes tooth gems to returning and first-time customers alike on a regular basis. "Tooth gem art is still evolving, and I am excited to see what it becomes," Vigil says.

Regarding this recent increase in popularity, Vigil feels that the semi-permanent nature of the gems is a major factor. "Tooth gems can last from six months up to two years," she says. Gems can be quickly removed by a dentist, and their maintenance is straightforward and minimal. Vigil wants prospec-

tive tooth gem owners with oral retainers to know that she can often work around such devices.

Like Roman, Vigil sources her tooth gems from California-based jewelers. "If a client is interested in a specific gem, I do my best to work with jewelry artists to ensure the custom piece is created," she says. Also, Vigil is adamant about keeping her gems and installation service affordable and accessible. After bringing tooth gems into the lives of many Utahns and watching the trend grow, Vigil remains convinced that this form of body modification is "a great way for people to add a small change and give a subtle sparkle to their smile," she says. To learn more about Alyssa Vigil and her work, find her on Instagram @avgems_.

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LIVIN' A PUG LIFE:

GROOVY GRANDMA VIBES
AND BODY POSITIVITY

WITH
*designer
mirmsy*

Hannah McBeth
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Photos courtesy of Mirmsy

Getting in the right mood to talk about Mirmsy's (aka **Miriam Barse**) art involves borrowing a line from the cartoon cult classic *Adventure Time*: "C'mon, grab your friends!" Let's frolic in the upbeat pastels and pop-culture puns that make up the loveable and unique artistry of Mirmsy. Web and graphic designer, jewelry and upcycled clothing maker, and overall jack-of-all-trades, Mirmsy's wares are the stuff of Instagram impulse buys and unstoppable late-night giggling. Even nowadays, you'd have to be dead inside not to crack a smile at her punny resin pins with quotes like "Ovaries over brovaries" or "Talk Bernie to me." Hitting the millennial and Gen Z pop-culture sweet spot in a polished and professional way isn't easy, but this 26 year old who describes herself as having "big grandma energy" has the whimsy and confidence to make it all work.

Mirmsy's day job may be working in web design at the *University of Utah* College of Humanities, but her roots come from the East Coast, as she studied fine arts education at the *College of Charleston*. Even with technological and academic cred, Mirmsy's style still stays true to her self and aims to bring some uncomplicated joy to the people who view or wear her art. "I think my style comes from mixing a delicious blend of humor, whimsy and too many pastel colors. My goal for everything I create is to make people smile or feel related to in some way," Mirmsy says. "I love getting comments from people that seeing my stickers make them laugh, or they love wearing my earrings and shirts. I just want to add



Mirmsy (Miriam Barse) exercises her self-proclaimed "big grandma energy" while still appealing to a millennial and Gen Z market.



"Plantlady," 2020.

some brightness and levity to my little corner of the world."

Her nods to Japanese and American animation in her illustrations are inviting—wearing a piece of Mirmsy's art, whether sustainable textile or jewelry, feels empowering and jives with the lighter, more loving side of today's culture. This is an approach to practical art and craft that bridges fans from opposite sides of the globe and many different age groups. "My biggest inspiration has been **Hayao Miyazaki**, and discovering his movies really ignited my imagination and they are still my go-to movies when I'm running low on creative energy," she says. "The way he blends the whimsical, magical realm with lovingly relatable characters and slice-of-life storytelling is so captivating to me." Mirmsy's original characters—like the plant lady surrounded by potted friends featured on one of her T-shirts—bring the same sense of lovability and depth with a simple and straightforward line style.

While Mirmsy draws characters like Howl from **Studio Ghibli**'s *Howl's Moving Castle*, the Goblin King from *Labyrinth* or Finn from *Adventure Time* in her work on Instagram or her website, she also pulls from her own life and unique, quirky sense of humor and fashion. An original upcycled T-shirt and crop top offerings have two strategically placed flames on the chest—giving the wearer the chance to channel the same confident energy that Mirmsy herself radiates. Her adorable pug dog (who she describes with the formula: loaf of bread + manatee + piggy = pug) is a frequent star of her Instagram posts. Mirmsy says, "Inspiration really can come from anywhere for me. Ideas come from anything that I find adorable, things that make me laugh (mostly bad puns), or the little moments that get me to just stop and appreciate life (my pug's splooty booty). I've been drawing inspiration from vintage novelty knitwear lately. Think granny meets Ms. Frizzle. #stylegoals."

For all the laughs and the groovy grandma vibes, Mirmsy also engages with serious issues like body positivity or how to transform social media into something empowering for women and members of marginalized communities. In an age where we're all barraged with messages about how people should look and act, Mirmsy's illustrations of happy women of all shapes and colors (even in her signature pastel hues of yellow and purple!) are welcome rays of sunshine when you scroll through your Instagram feed.

"Every person has so much worth and value, and society starts teaching us young that that value comes from what we look like, but our bodies are not who we are, and we have so much to offer as beautiful, unique individuals," Mirmsy says. "Your worth comes from who you are and how you treat those around you—the things you create, the laughs you share, the people you touch. It doesn't come from how much you fit into society's very narrow (and let's be real, unattainable) beauty standards. It's something I have to keep re-learning, and I hope my art can help people with that journey as well."

You can bask in Mirmsy's hip grandma vibes (and squee at adorable pug photos) on her Instagram [@mirmsy](#). To browse all her wares—including earrings and prints—go to her website, [mirmsy.com](#).

Mirmsy expresses her artistic vision through a variety of mediums, including polymer clay earrings and pins.



Mirmsy's ghost resin earrings, released in October of 2020, make for a holiday piece that shine year-round.



Mirmsy's illustrations can be obtained as prints or stickers to display her work in whatever way suits the consumer best.



YOU DESERVE THIS



SLBC Co-owner Eric Stone (right) touts the amount of detail in the shop's cuts.



SLBC Co-owner Isaac Atencio (left) heralds the shop's classic community feel.

By Ben Trentelman | BDKTO@yahoo.com
Photos by LmSorenson.net

I have to admit that over the past few years, I've become increasingly aloof about the amount of money and energy I put into my personal appearance. I've skated by as a patron of styling establishments with their price in their name and a regularly shifting team that ensured I could never just ask for "my regular." **Isaac Atencio** and **Eric Stone**, Co-owners of *Salt Lake Barber Co.*, believe that both the patrons and the barbers in their shop deserve more. In their mission, they state that they are "a collective of talented professionals, dedicated to building a community in and around our barbershop."

Stone and Atencio opened *Salt Lake Barber Co.* in 2016 after working together in a shop that inspired them to go into business for themselves, with a greater focus on the power a barber shop has to build communities. Atencio says, "That is what barber shops are all about, and that is our ultimate focus at SLBC. We are also very proud to say that we are a Black- and Latino-owned small business."

Stone and Atencio's vision manifested in the comfortable atmosphere they've created to intentionally help patrons feel welcome. "Eric and I really wanted something that ultimately looks and feels timeless," Atencio says. "We also designed it to honor layouts of classic barber shops, especially those that really focused on how barbers and patrons would interact with one another. If you look at the way our shop is laid out, both rooms are essentially circles, in terms of chairs and couches, so that way, when it's a full house, everyone is encouraged to communicate with one another."

SLBC patrons can get haircuts, beard trims, straight-razor shaves and shampoos. Stone says, "People should expect pretty much whatever haircut they are looking for. Our shop prides

itself in being able to provide nearly any cut and style a customer wants, whenever they walk into the shop. Whether it be a full-length gentlemen's cut, shag or a tight bald fade, our staff can give you what you want."

In creating an atmosphere that is just as supportive of the staff's experience as the patrons', the team of barbers stick around and have the opportunity to settle into a stable career with *Salt Lake Barber Co.*, which in turn translates into consistent results and ongoing relationships with clients. This level of professionalism and relatable approach means you are paying a bit more for your cut than your typical strip mall-style hut cut.

"I would say the biggest difference is the amount of detail we take in our haircuts," Stone says. "Most shops that charge a much lower rate than us are more about quantity than quality. With us, one ... receive[s] a full client consultation upon arrival, a detailed and tailored haircut, followed by a hot steam towel and straight-razor shave on the neck, and finished with styling and product advice." He continues, "From the moment someone walks in the door and sits in the chair, they know they are about to get pampered. From the use of high-quality products, fantastic smells and the scented hot towel, they are getting quite the relaxing experience."

Salt Lake Barber Co. carries a variety of grooming products from around Utah like **Beehive Grooming & Co.**'s top-shelf shaving and beard oils and balms, **Olio Skin & Beard**'s organic soaps, beard products and facial/tattoo treatments, and **Royal Palms Pomade**'s natural light pomade. Stone and Atencio carry their

communal approach to the relationships with the vendors they work with as well. "We have been extremely grateful to carry all these lines and build the relationships with the people that make them," Stone says. The shop also carries a wide selection of their own branded hoodies, hats and shirts.

Despite COVID-19, *Salt Lake Barber Co.* has maintained their neighborly feel in the community by upholding the trust of clients while taking all necessary precautions to keep patrons and staff safe. "We have made [it] our number-one priority to keep our shop open and our clients and staff as safe as possible," Stone says, "We require all clients and barbers to have a temperature check at the door, use hand sanitizer and wear masks while in the shop. After every service, we completely clean and disinfect our stations, change our barber-cutting capes and thoroughly sanitize."

Remaining in business and upholding safety expectations is also reliant on clients. "A big part of us not having exposure to the virus moving forward is to put a lot of trust in our clients," Stone says. "We ask them to respect our shop and the other patrons by making sure they are honest about taking the right precautions before they enter our shop, social distancing, making sure they don't have symptoms, etc."

As we all venture into this strange new world, Stone wants you to know that at *Salt Lake Barber Co.*, "We respect all who come in and we will do everything in our power to keep you safe and provide you with an exceptional service that when you leave, you will feel like you are a brand-new person. And the simple reason is you deserve this shit!"

You can find SLBC online at saltlakebarberco.com.

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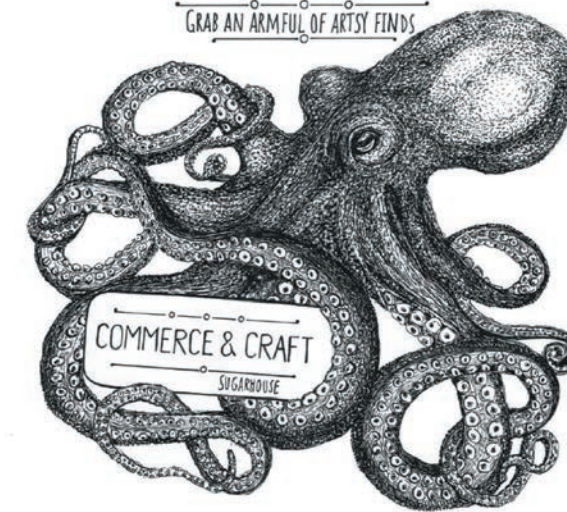
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Welcome to Chroma World

By Kimberly Portillo | port.kimberly@gmail.com

Chroma SLC is a Latinx-owned nail salon run by **Jessie Vega** and **Nanci Armendariz**. They've been following their passion for nail art since 2009, but it hasn't just been a hobby for them: It's been a way of making themselves feel beautiful, too. For the *My Body and Me* theme this month, we found that nails were an important part of self-care. Vega and Armendariz both went off to *Color My Nails School of Nail Technology*, which they attended at the same time with different schedules so they never bumped into each other. It wasn't until they found themselves working at the same nail salon four years ago that they met. "It's a small world after all / It's a small world after all / It's a small world!" is a lyric they could sing together since they've always been in close proximity. Welcome to the *Chroma* (small) world!

Vega and Armendariz worked at a salon together for two years until they found themselves feeling like they weren't growing or expanding as freely as they'd like. In January of 2019, Vega and Armendariz took a leap of faith and became official business partners when they established *Chroma SLC*. "It was one of those moments where you're presented with the opportunity to take an adventure and see what happens," they say. They were able to take their passion for nails and turn it into a secure and stable business. "We wanted to explore what we could achieve together."

When it came to developing *Chroma*, Armendariz and Vega approached the venture with intentionality. In deciding their name, the two considered the fact that, in color theory "chroma" means the degree of vividness in a color. This is particularly fitting, as the two love playing with colors in their nail art. With

Chroma, Vega and Armendariz wanted to create a place where they nurture and respect creative expression; a place where they knew they could work well together and express themselves as freely as they wanted to; a place that is a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ+, Black, indigenous and POC individuals where they can get their nails done. *Chroma* holds strong to their right to refuse service to all racists, homophobes and xenophobes in order to keep their space safe.

In terms of services, customers have their pick from gel manis, hard-gel, gel-x, builder gel, acrylic and nail art. From simple clean manis to intricate nail art, as long as it fits on the nail, *Chroma* can provide—they have you covered with everything from fixing one broken nail to getting a paraffin treatment that helps soften the skin and increases blood flow. Prices range from \$10–\$55 depending on the service, and Vega and Armendariz can be flexible with their designs and use the experience they have gained the last 11 years going to school and teaching themselves. During this time, Armendariz and Vega practiced on family, friends and on themselves—a prime set of canvases. YouTube and Instagram are also tools they both continue to use as they are helpful in learning new techniques and allows them to be able to post their own design content.

Within the COVID-19 climate, you'll find the two masked up and changing into a new set of gloves with each customer that comes in, along with following protocols of single-use files and buffers on all services: Instruments and workspaces are cleaned and disinfected in between services; only four customers are allowed into the studio at a time and are

required to wear a mask and wash their hands when they enter. Vega and Armendariz social distance in their personal lives and only take a limited number of appointments per day to minimize exposure from COVID-19.

Don't let anyone tell you that nail care isn't a form of self-care, because it is—whether you want to have long nails, short nails, a flower on each one or nails with a ton of gems on them, go for it. "It's a way of being intentionally present with yourself," they say. A visit to *Chroma* can be a way of disconnecting from the outside world, because you can't exactly have your phone on you when they're painting, glueing or drying your nails in their hands. It's a good feeling being able to get put together and shed away the day-to-day pressures. "Our clients often tell us that they feel like they can just do about anything," Vega and Armendariz say. They both want their clients to feel renewed, confident and ecstatic after getting their nails done at *Chroma*.

If you want to feel refreshed and feel like a baddie walking out into the world again, then you should definitely get your nails done. *Chroma* is open from Wed.–Sun., 12 p.m.–6 p.m. Vega and Armendariz are the only artists at *Chroma* and work by appointment only. You can contact them for an appointment at vagar.com/chroma1 or by text at 801.895.2827. Make sure you schedule a time that's best for you. They will get back to you if you decide to leave a voicemail. They might also be able to squeeze you in for their last taking of an appointment at 6:30 p.m. if you're fast enough. You can find them on Instagram @[chroma.slc](https://www.instagram.com/chroma.slc) and look through their designs on their personal accounts: Vega @[nailplate](https://www.instagram.com/nailplate) and Armendariz @[nail.views](https://www.instagram.com/nail.views).



Photos courtesy of Chroma SLC

Chroma artists' skill set and versatility make for captivating custom nail art that express the individuality of each customer.

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Crust Club's Funeral Potato Pot Pie makes for a prime comfort meal built with plenty of starches and proteins to enjoy.

By midwinter, when it's still cold outside but the holidays are over, I often find myself simultaneously a little less inclined to go out and kind of "cooked out" from the holiday festivities. It's during times like these when delivery food services are especially appealing, and having a local establishment with their own delivery system is even more exciting. Enter *Crust Club*, a meal service that brings locally made dinners, pies and desserts right to your front door.

Crust Club provides easy meals that can be cooked immediately, or frozen, to use whenever you need, and I was excited to try out this service. While making my order, I decided to choose a couple simple meals and a dessert to take some cooking off my plate over the course of a week. The ordering process was simple, and the meals came in an insulated package ready to be stored in the fridge or freezer, or eaten immediately.

One thing I love about this service is that they offer a recycling program where you can leave the packaging from your last order on your porch when your next order comes, and they will take care of the recycling for you. If you're close to Pleasant Grove, you can also drop the packaging off at their location, which is nice if—like me—you tend to forget and might end up with a growing pile of packaging on your entryway table.

I was intrigued by the dinner pies and meal kits and decided to get one of each. Having a pie to throw in the oven, or a simple meal kit with all the ingredients in one package without the hassle of

planning out a big meal, makes my life easier and lets me feel productive without having to do too much actual work.

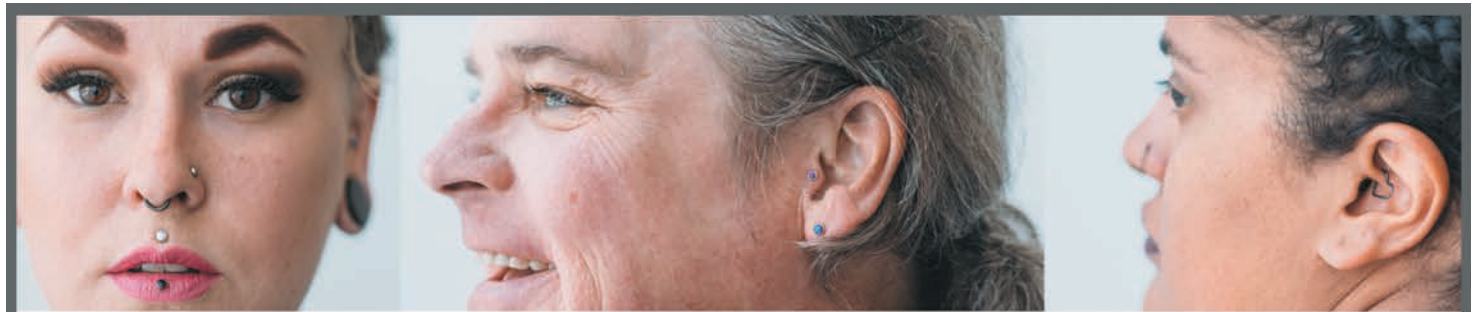
The dinner pie I chose was the Funeral Pot Pie, which comes in at \$20 for four servings or \$25 for six. It promised to be a tasty feast with ham, funeral potatoes and green beans all in one flaky bite. It came frozen and with simple instructions to bake before eating. *Crust Club* also includes instructions on their website, so if you lose yours you can still get it cooked the proper way. The pot pie had a flaky crust that held in the creamy interior. I loved the contrast of textures that is often missing in dinner pies, though I did find that the honey ham made for a little bit sweeter of a bite than I prefer. Overall, the Funeral Pot Pie made for a great experience of the traditional Utah funeral-meal flavors without the accompanying sadness that the funeral itself brings.

I also got the Homemade 3-Cheese Mac kit, which is \$10 for four servings. It's advertised as a side, but I decided to see what it could do as a meal and supplement with leftovers from earlier in the week. The kit came in a foil container with noodles, butter and cheese and instructions to complete the meal from start to finish. The process is simple and only uses one pan to boil water and cook the pasta, which you then strain and add the cheese and butter until it melts. The result is a pretty creamy mac and cheese with a good balance of salty and tart. This easy meal takes about as long as the Kraft version to make but definitely delivers a cheesier and more delicious experience.

To finish things off, I ordered the Tres Leches Babies (\$16 for a half dozen). They come ready to eat straight out of the fridge and require no cooking. I was impatient and, rather than saving them for actual dessert, ate one almost immediately upon their arrival. Though they don't require heating, I was feeling adventurous and popped them in the oven for a few minutes at 350 degrees. This warmed the crust but left the creamy filling a little cool and made for a nice balance. The crust was flaky and slightly crispy on the edges while the inner custard was soft and sweet with just a hint of tartness at the end. I found them to be a delightful little treat, but rich enough that I ate mine one half at a time. The crimping was cute but a little loose, so some of the filling came out of the edges when I ate—but I don't mind a little mess with my dessert. Altogether, these hand pies were delicious and fun, and I am excited to taste more of the flavors.

Crust Club offers a great chance to incorporate home-cooked meals into your week without having to do much home cooking. The delivery service adds a level of convenience that makes these meals especially tempting. Next time you are looking to upgrade your dinner plans, check out *Crust Club* for a home-delivered meal that will bring warmth and comfort into your winter evening.

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SLUG STYLE

EMMALY ANDERSON

"I've always loved the '80s—punk and goth babes like Siouxsie Sioux and Joan Jett have inspired me since I was a little kid."

Photos by Roberto Valdez
@robtookthis
slugmagazine@gmail.com

Emmaly Anderson is a local musician who does vocals for powerviolence band **NARC** and works for buy-sell-trade clothing shop *Pib's X-Change*. Anderson loves the '80s and amalgamates her punk background with the agency of choosing from a hodgepodge of clothing options while working at *Pib's*. You can see her eclectic style on display here.

Every month, *SLUG Style* features a distinct and unique member of the community and asks them why they do what they do. Exploring more than just clothing, *SLUG Style* is an attempt to feature the people who give Salt Lake City flavor through personality and panache. Head to *SLUGMag.com* for previous and future (online-only) *SLUG Style* features.



Top: "My style was much more static before I started working at *Pib's* ... I'm much more open-minded and have fallen in love with plenty of items and styles that I didn't think were 'me' before."

Left: "My childhood love of anime and alternative Japanese street fashion guides my taste, too. The character Misa Amane from *Death Note* and other cartoon goth girls have inspired me for a long time."



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Top: “I was a figure skater for a long time, but I gave up on it recently—maybe I’ll get back into it with enough money, motivation and free time.”

Right: “I’ve gone through a lot of phases ever since I was a 10-year-old emo kid. My personal style now is just a goofy combination of the different styles I’ve been into, and it keeps changing all the time.”

Bottom: “NARC is on Instagram, @narcpv. We just released our demo on narcpv.bandcamp.com, if you want to check us out.”



Right: “We play powerviolence because it’s fun—it’s high-energy, angry, chaotic, therapeutic. I guess our music ties in with my style because they’re both constantly evolving creative outlets where I do whatever I want without limitations.”

To read the full *SLUG Style* Q&A with Emmaly Anderson, head to SLUGMag.com.



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FINDING A WILDER FLOW

Rocky Lavoie wants to hold healing space with you

By Paige Zuckerman
paigex@redwillowcounseling.com
Photos by Bonneville Jones

Rachelle “Rocky” Lavoie has been transplanted like a pacific northwest pine from Portland, Oregon, to SLC and back over the years, returning to our neck of the woods only this last spring. Lavoie is a holistic healer in every sense of the term, bringing multimodal and transformative yoga, sound bath and sensory traditions into her expressive mind, soul and body work. **Wild-Flow** is the core of Lavoie’s offerings, a local small business finding ways to keep doing the work during particularly trying times. “Blessed to have a backyard, I held socially distanced outdoor yoga, sound bath and cacao ceremonies during this summer and early fall. I’ve adapted offerings to both virtual and small in-person circles,” she says. Lavoie speaks to the soul of her practice and her vision of how healing can happen with an abundance of passion. “Sometimes we encounter adversaries like physical or mental resistance. I believe that we deserve to be our healthiest, realest, most authentic selves on all levels of this human experience,” she says.

WildFlow’s mission is all about deep integration and reconnection with our most native human truths. “Nature has rhythms and seasons; so do we,” she says, speaking to the dynamics that underpin that mission. Nature’s tempestuous tendencies have merely deepened Lavoie’s devotion to the work, including her experiences as a death doula and reiki practitioner. “Death and grief are part of the human experience, but our culture seems to be grief-illiterate and death-phobic,” she says. Lavoie received certification through **H.E.L.D. (Help from an End of Life Doula)** in how to support individuals and their families in death. “It really opened my eyes to the need for that in our culture. I also offer Usui reiki energy work. This type of energy work invites the client into deep relaxation and anxiety relief that ultimately gives their body and mind a break to come back into balance,” says Lavoie.

WildFlow emerged organically, Lavoie says. “It started shortly after challenging myself to learn guitar and sing in public back in 2012. I started with mantras and songs at the end of my yoga classes. I remind students that the sound is as [real time] and intuitively moving as their

bodies are.” During her classes, Lavoie’s Wild-Flow students are awash in an array of sensory experiences that tap into the somatic mysteries of the human form and its connected capacity for wellness. “The feedback from students is that they felt shifts in their mental and physical well-being, even after our sessions into the rest of their week,” says Lavoie. “I’ve helped clients on their healing journeys through physical things like realigning their spine with scoliosis, post-surgery rehabilitation and helping peak-performing athletes with balance and recovery. Many have shared that these practices helped alleviate their symptoms of anxiety and depression.”



With a focus on mind, body and soul work, Rocky Lavoie shares her skills as a holistic healer through WildFlow.



One of Lavoie’s many goals with WildFlow is to host a 200-hour yoga teacher training for aspiring yoga teachers.

Although WildFlow’s programming has had to shift with the times, it continues to expand and deepen while maintaining core concepts that Lavoie attests have been key to her and her students’ process. “We typically practice in a circle (or a sphere if practitioners are also attending virtually) in the spirit of community and togetherness,” she says. The newest “Crystal Class” series provides courses based on student’s goals for calming, enlivening or specific exploration. “Students can expect chill and grounding experiences or an energizing, strengthening experience, as in the Pyrite Power class,” she says. WildFlow will also be offering free bi-monthly classes called “Sapphire Society” with unique themes each night. “Whether it’s breathing exercises for stress-relief, how to make cacao or a musical showcase, it’s a fun time to gather in cyber space or safely in person,” says Lavoie.

Beyond the present and precious moments for Lavoie and her students, there’s a bright near future for WildFlow. Remaining spiritually unhampered by the limitations of this year, Lavoie has her creative and intuitive eye on the next steps. “Once hybrid online classes get rolling, I’d love to offer workshops and eventually a 200-hour yoga teacher training,” she says. “When we are able to gather safely in the community once again, I’d love to offer music, yoga and art events with my mover and shaker friends throughout SLC. There may even be more recorded offerings like on-demand yoga classes, music, podcasts and radio shows,” she says. In a frosty season of the (ostensibly) last stretch of a grueling pandemic, grounding and rejuvenating spaces like WildFlow can craft a warm shelter in the cold of this winter. Self-care and thoughtful integration of our bodies and minds will be critical now more than ever. Perhaps Lavoie and her tuneful, moving and attentive options can help sustain sanity and stability as we await the greatest thaw of a lifetime.

Learn and explore more of Rocky Lavoie’s WildFlow mind & body wellness programming at wildflow.com.

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Photo: John Barkiple

Skinworks student Alisha Steward (left) gives her first facial to a Skinworks client.

I remember the day I realized the pandemic was really happening. My partner and I had made plans for an afternoon visit to *Skinworks School of Advanced Skincare*, a local spa and esthetics school located near *Liberty Park*, to each receive luxury facials. Both of us were stressed and worried, and as a chronically anxious person, I had made a habit of booking times at the spa at least once a month after trying it on a lark years ago. The care I received that first time surprised me with just how calming and meditative skin and body care could be, rivaling my yoga practice for fulfilling my sense of the body and mind as a full circuit. That moment in March, when *Skinworks* called me and politely told me they would have to cancel mine and my partner's appointments, was what it took to make the whole situation really sink in. I almost instantly felt a sense of longing for the genuine self-care *Skinworks* offers.

It is 2021 now, nearly a year after that day, and while many aspects of life still suck, I thank God that *Skinworks* is open again. The school and spa is, of course, still following strict guidelines, as set out by the Utah State Health Department—staggering appointments to minimize simultaneous traffic, requiring masks at all times (except at the point of service for customers where it would interfere) and discontinuing certain practices like couples treatments and the use of steamers.

You can get a wide range of skincare experiences at *Skinworks*, including those beyond the nail and facial care I have personally taken advantage of: Exfoliators, eyelash and brow work, chemical peels, waxing and body treatments like sugar scrubs and contour wraps, as well as even more advanced services like laser work, botox and tattoo removal are on the menu. Student treatments are assisted by licensed estheticians, who are teaching students the business of beauty.

Esthetics is the variant spelling of aesthetics used for the practice of skincare. Estheticians are those who see beauty in skin itself and train to care for our largest organ. Since 1995, *Skinworks* has been one part for-profit esthetics training, one part student spa. Students of the school perform high-end treatments at a low price as a trade-off for the experience of working with a student.

This setup is important: It creates a sort of reciprocal exchange of needs and care that defines *Skinworks* and sets it apart from other spa experiences. The inherently intimate experience of having someone dote on your face, arms, feet or wherever is all made more meaningful in your opportunity to speak with and give feedback to students who are training not just in the physical acts of care, but the ways in which a spa experience is improved by attending to your personal skincare needs; vocalizing mid-session what is happening as well as walking you through the esthetic process in layman's terms.

Skinworks was created 25 years ago by a woman named **Susan Tullis**, and in 2005 **Natalie Parkin**—its current Owner, Operator and School President—bought *Skinworks* from Tullis, along with a close friend and her father as a silent partner. Parkin and her friend went separate ways early on, and with the passing of Parkin's father in February, she is now the sole owner. The decision to buy the school was a deeply personal one, informed by her upbringing and the atmosphere of women in business during the dot-com era.

"I was a high school dropout myself—a teen mom, I guess you would say," says Parkin. "Having a child at 17 and my second divorce at 22, I decided that I needed to get myself out of this situation I put myself in."

Parkin enrolled at *ITT Tech* and ran a full schedule. After graduating, she worked selling bandwidth to places like universities, ISPs and call centers. But when she discovered Tullis' intent to sell *Skinworks*, she jumped at the chance to own a business she felt could empower herself and other women.

"I honestly feel it has been a really long rollercoaster ride these past 15 years," says Parkin. She recalls her mother's salon as a child and the care she demonstrated early on. "I looked up to my mom greatly as a business owner," says Parkin. "She ran her salon and created a family with her clients and operators. The beauty world offers so much to women that many other businesses cannot ... This industry empowers women—no other way to put it."

Skin is an incredibly personal thing. As I have neared my 30s and spent almost 15 years fussing over my skin, the experience of care at *Skinworks* is not just about pampering, but learning about the kind of daily care appropriate for your skin, which can change according to the environment and naturally over time. While you are being cared for, you are also offering yourself, your body and your time. Letting a student learn your particular needs prepares them for the process of care for the diversity of bodies that exist beyond yourself. You are paying for this reciprocity at *Skinworks*—it is what creates the atmosphere of genuine care.

To plan a visit, review COVID-19 safety precautions and locate more information on *Skinworks*, visit skinworks.edu.

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HAIR SALON

By Jamie Christensen • jamiec1331@gmail.com

Great Hair is a Piece of Cake



Randy Topham, Owner of *Cake Hair Salon*, makes hair-care education the primary focus of his salon.

Photo: ImSorenson.net

Cake Hair Salon, located in downtown Salt Lake, is a complete embodiment of the city's open-door policy to the unique and anomalous. *Cake* is a place for all those who are different, unique and wish to more adequately express themselves. Their website exclaims, "Great hair is a piece of Cake!," something their expert staff backs up through educational stylings and tutorials. *Cake* cares about individuality and self-expression, offering consultations and guidance on what cut and color is most flattering for each client. The best way to start off 2021 might just be a refreshing new look from a salon that specializes in the art of educational styling.

Randy Topham, Owner of *Cake Hair Salon*, has been in the art of hairstyling for over 20 years. "We are founded on education," says Topham about *Cake*'s mission. "It is an incredibly important part of our industry that a lot of salons don't focus on." Though Topham graduated from hair school 22 years ago, he is still refining his trade and the art of styling by teaching others.

Becoming a national stylist in 2007, Topham has a reputation for educational styling. "I work in NYC at Redken's advanced academy called *The Redken Exchange*, helping stylists from all over the world become better at what they do," he says. "I am as passionate about what I do today as I was when I started, so I guess that means that I picked the right career!"

Cake's inception began when Topham searched unsuccessfully for a salon that satisfied his specific vision—so, instead, he opened *Cake* with a friend in 2007. "My goal in opening the salon was to have a place where everyone felt welcome. I want every customer that walks in our door to know that we are grateful to have their business," says Topham. This is the heart of *Cake*—creating an inclusive, respectful space for diversity and self-expression.

"We are a salon that is focused completely on the guest experience with a casual, inclusive environment that is never pretentious or stuffy," Topham says. "We care about everyone that comes in our door and make it our mission to help them understand their hair and how to work with it. We love our diverse guests and are known as THE salon to go to for great hair with zero judgment."

With Topham having such an extensive background in the industry and a selection of experienced and knowledgeable stylists at his side, you already know your dry, brittle, damaged, fried or otherwise difficult hair is in good hands at *Cake*. As someone with hair in the dry and brittle category who has frequented salons all over Utah and still hasn't understood how to avoid damage, *Cake*'s mantra caught my attention.

Their website states, "We succeed in our mission by sending you out of the salon looking your best and giving you the knowledge that you need to look your best between visits. We know that while looking perfect when you leave the salon is great, being able to recreate the look at home is even more important!" For Topham, the ultimate goal is to help clients understand their hair and how to properly manage it.

Their specific intent to educate and instruct is what sets *Cake* apart from other salons in

the area; they've even gone so far as to offer tutorials for how to manage and create certain hairstyles so their clients have the ability to achieve "salon-perfected" hair at home. "We answer all the questions we can while our client is in our chair and add the most common questions [to] videos that clients can watch at home," says Topham.

He mentions that the tutorials are based upon guests' frequently asked questions and around common styling trends. These videos can be found on YouTube or their website. Topham says, "We also have a service called a 'style tutorial,' where a guest can come in and we style part of their hair, then have them style a part while we watch and add coaching where necessary."

He continues, "I had a huge realization when I ran into a client and could tell she had spent a lot of time styling her hair, but it wasn't at all how I had done it, and it just wasn't flattering. I realized this meant I had failed her as her stylist. She had no idea how to do her hair because I had never taught her!"

Topham's epiphany has defined the salon experience at *Cake*: Upon entering, you will receive individual guidance for your specific hair type and about what products and treatments you might need to create your desired look. At *Cake*, expect your opinions to be heard while also receiving expert advice on what style might complement you most. "By analyzing face shapes, we can complement or exaggerate shapes and features to create unique results," says Topham. "That is what makes [hairstyling] an art. Within hair color, the art is to understand what light will do, what depth will do and what illusions the highlight patterns will create."

Check out *Cake Hair Salon* if you're looking for a socially distanced and inclusive environment that specializes in the art of styling and self-expression. As Topham says, "Whether someone is the type that has a specific look that fits their 'self' best, or if variety is what fits them, hair is a great place to express that." Find more information at cakehairsalon.com.

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Barkley L. Hendricks, *Lowdy Mama*, 1969, oil and gold leaf on
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L. Hendricks. Courtesy of the artist's estate, Jack Shainman
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AMY ARCHULETA of SPA TROUVÉ:

LOVE YOURSELF by LOVING LOCAL

By Theadora Soter • theadoraisabella@gmail.com

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Photos by John Barkiple



(Left) Katie Allen provides a lip enhancement for a fuller-lip look at Spa Trouvé.



Spa Trouvé Co-owner Amy Archuleta.

After a year like 2020, the importance of self-care is increasingly apparent each day. Self-care is a matter of giving time to yourself—in doing the things that you want and need, happiness is sure to follow. A Co-owner of Salt Lake City *Spa Trouvé*, Amy Archuleta says it perfectly: “Self-care is more than just a look; it’s a feeling. Do you feel confident, do you feel abundant, do you feel secure? You have to feel it first, and then you can be it.” And, with that eloquent logic, it’s no wonder that Archuleta has been an expert in the art of self-care since 2016, not long after the conception of *Spa Trouvé* in 2011.

Spa Trouvé is the perfect example of the axiom, “When one door closes another opens.” In this case, the door that closed was *Elase Medical Spa* in Orem, Utah. Unfortunately, *Elase* “was failing,” Archuleta says. *Spa Trouvé* Co-owner **Courtney Anderson**, who managed *Elase* at the time of its closure, vied for the spa to remain open because she saw its potential—Anderson then had a single week to rebrand, rename and reopen. The result was the first *Spa Trouvé*. Anderson opened another location and, in 2016, met Archuleta. Together they opened a location on 900 South.

Reflecting on opening the 900 South location, Archuleta says, “This spa was different. It was elevated and inspiring. [It] helped to refresh the image, look and feel, and expand our vision into what was possible for future markets.” She continues, “A year later, *Spa Trouvé on Pointe* opened in Draper, and *Spa Trouvé* became the home of Utah’s most famous bloggers, local stars and personalities.” While Archuleta touts the special touches of the location on 900 South, all five *Spa Trouvé* locations collectively stand out thanks to their dedication to quality product and services and, according to Archuleta, their “bold and hip boutique vibe.”

Spa Trouvé’s many services include, but aren’t limited to, classics such as facials and Botox and Dys-

port, CoolTone (muscle-toning) and CoolSculpting (body-contouring) services. “For new clients to the spa, our most popular services to receive are our Mini Lip Plump for a soft subtle enhancement, \$399; The Hydrafacial for a glowing, dewy look, \$199; and Botox to turn back the hands of time, \$13 a unit,” Archuleta says.

Spa Trouvé undergirds their services with heightened attention to clients’ skin and are thus “devoted to carrying evidence based medical-grade skin care products,” Archuleta says. “Skin health is a priority, and therefore, we provide well-researched brands including SkinCeuticals, Obagi, Alastin, SkinMedica and SkinBetter.” Archuleta knows that the secret ingredient to true pampering is, in fact, good ingredients. All of the brands *Spa Trouvé* uses are thoroughly researched, resulting in guaranteed goodness. *Spa Trouvé* even pursued an exclusive, family-owned skincare line called Vivant Skin Care based out of Miami, Florida.

Archuleta says of the Vivant, “Vivant shares the same values that *Spa Trouvé* does with a vow to remain premier, boutique and quality-driven. They are pioneers in the science of skincare with a mission to provide transformative solutions for problematic skin.”

Beyond magical skin products, *Spa Trouvé* out-matches their competition based on their range of services alone. “Our team provides comprehensive skincare and injectable experiences with dependable outcomes,” Archuleta says. “We have achieved the Top 50 in the Nation with **Allergan**, a world-renowned medical cosmetic company. *Spa Trouvé* is the first medical spa in Utah to bring on Allergan’s new electromagnetic device, CoolTone. CoolTone is the newest device in the revolution of FDA-approved, non-invasive body-contouring, toning muscles safely and innovatively.” Additionally, “We have several clients transitioning and we help them to feel extremely comfortable while doing so,” Archuleta says.

“Some services we offer to help with this are laser hair removal, injections and CoolSculpting,” an innovative fat-freezing procedure that reduces fat cells that diet and exercise may not reach.

Spa Trouvé’s combination of classy branding, exclusive products and effective procedures puts them ahead of the beauty industry, but what truly makes *Spa Trouvé* incredible is their passion and dedication to each patient’s unique path to well-being. Archuleta asserts that each client is sure to walk out of *Spa Trouvé*’s doors feeling confident and secure in their beauty plan thanks to their “master estheticians” who help clients map out their unique plans.

Above all else, Archuleta strives to cultivate a space of teamwork and empowerment. The *Spa Trouvé* team starts each day off with a mini team meeting where they go over each employee’s specific goals and how they will achieve them—which, according to Archuleta, “has helped tremendously in setting the tone and attitude for the day and truly gives the staff a sense of empowerment to go out and seize the day!” This just goes to show that *Spa Trouvé* employees are on a unique journey of enabling self-care for each one of their clients and ensuring that everyone who enters the spa leaves feeling taken care of and confident, rather than just looking like it.

Spa Trouvé’s success story exemplifies the power and positive mental and physical effects that self-care can have. As Archuleta says, “When I give myself love first, I can give love to others more freely.” To love yourself and a dedicated, authentic local business in the new year, stop by one of the five *Spa Trouvé* locations to purchase some incredible products or to receive a complimentary beauty consultation. And, if you have more questions for *Spa Trouvé*, be sure to visit their website at spatrouve.com.

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LOCAL MUSIC SINGLES ROUNDUP

New year, same us: *SLUG* is still committed to uplifting the voices of our shining Utah music community through reviews, interviews and more. In the January edition of our monthly Local Music Singles Roundup, find reviews of tracks that span the gamut between bluesy mysticism (**Ark Animalz**) and emo-trap (**Phobia the Greatest**), emotive synthpop (**the Gontiks**) and frenetic electronica (**VCR5**). Give these tunes a listen and support your musical neighbors!



Ark Animalz

“King is Dead”
Self-Released
Street:09.04
Ark Animalz = Jack White + Soundgarden

“King is Dead” is a fast, bluesy new track from Salt Lake City–based group Ark Animalz. The track starts off blazing with a driving, relaxing beat that exudes cool vibes. The lyrics add a veil of mystery right off the bat, making the listener wonder what will come next: “Face to face with the joker / He’s laying next to the queen / The king’s drinking cold hard whiskey / In his head it’s all a dream.” It brings hints of sadness, but the music makes it hard to stay too melancholy for long. The rhythmic strumming accompanied by high-pitched, wailing guitar will make you tap your feet to the beat as you find out the fate of the king. *–Emilee Atkinson*



The Gontiks

“Every Day”
Self-released
Street: 12.04
The Gontiks = Wild Nothing + Flume

From the start of “Every Day,” there’s a whirly vibe mangling its way throughout the track. Being familiar with The Gontiks, the chillness of the single doesn’t surprise me. It fits his characteristic artistry, from the rippling waves of synths to the all-too-relatable lyrics set atop an airy tune: “Every day feels the same / The time that I spent / You’d think that I’d get / This world doesn’t owe me anything.” This single shows how well The Gontiks work with equal disposition between beats and words. “Every Day” is a song to turn to if you want to get lost in repetitive synthesizer haziness and wind yourself down. *–Kimberly Portillo*



Phobia The Greatest

“Sad Girl Anthem” (Prod. Skilidko)
Self-Released
Street: 10.01
Phobia The Greatest = KennyHoopla + Halsey + Blink-182

Phobia The Greatest has twisted genres once again with their latest single, “Sad Girl Anthem.” By taking a simple, dreamy guitar line and adding a trap production, this single takes a classic pop-punk sound and evolves it into something modern. The track builds in complexity with countless unique vocal tracks layered with incredible nuance. From short lyrics with a subtle autotune to haunting echoes and rich harmonies, the finesse of the vocals is endless. Phobia’s hard-hitting rapping with sharp snare cracks also has an aggression that adds a high energy to an otherwise somber tone. “Sad Girl Anthem” is a gorgeously complex single with a classic sentimentality, and you can easily play the song on repeat for days on end. *–Marina McTee*



VCR5

“Dark Ager”
Self-Released
Street: 11.23
VCR5 = Squarepusher + Drexciya

As VCR5, **Joe Greathouse** pays homage to the days of hardware-heavy dance music, particularly the sounds of classic **Warp** artists. His latest, “Dark Ager,” runs over nine minutes in length and bottles this analog love into a restless, mind-bending cut of electronica. Full of breakneck drum programming, ping-ponging synths and an ever-evolving web of alien sound effects, Greathouse creates a musical world built around the allure of interlocking rhythms that provides as much delirium as it does sweaty aggression. “Dark Ager” moves with angular, sharp-edged purpose—it juts, jabs, strikes and ricochets with nearly militant fervor, pricking your synapses and animating your hips in equal measure. *–Audrey Lockie*



Transgender Health Program at the University of Utah

By SLUG Staff • slugmagazine@gmail.com

At the core of each story in *SLUG's My Body and Me* issue lies the powerful force of bodily autonomy. Here, **Ariel Malan**, the Program Coordinator of the Master of Healthcare Administration and the Transgender Health Program at the *University of Utah*, talks the physical, social and emotional changes surrounding this identity-affirming body transformation.

SLUG: Can you please fill us in on the history of the Transgender Health Program? How has it changed/grown since its inception?

Malan: Thanks to the work of several dedicated healthcare providers, our Program was officially launched in 2017. Prior to this date, many meetings were held between providers and hospital leadership about the need for more coordinated care for transgender and gender-diverse patients. Since then, we have seen volumes dramatically increase across all of our specialties. We believe that this is predominantly due to the fact that there has been a gap in providing this care to patients—not just in Utah, [but] across the nation. We are the only multidisciplinary program in the Mountain West, and although we serve primarily Utah's communities, we also see 12% of our patients from other states.

In addition to our growth, we have defined our mission and vision to better serve our communities and continue to hold the Program and our *University* system accountable for health outcomes:

Vision (where we are going): A patient-centric, multi-disciplinary gender health program for all gender journeys across the lifespan.

Mission (what we do): The Transgender Health Program is committed to providing comprehensive, compassionate, evidence-based care for gender-diverse individuals in a supportive, affirming environment.

Intersectionality: We will recognize the unique social and political identities that exist within gender-diverse individuals and advocate to remove inequalities within healthcare.

Coordinated Care: We will provide coordinated care through patient navigation and provider communication on all aspects of care.

Research: We will engage in research to advance knowledge and well-being for the care of gender-diverse individuals.

Education: We seek to educate providers, trainees and the public on the needs and health of gender diverse individuals.

SLUG: What are the range of services offered at the Program?

Malan: Our Program spans across eight different specialties that coordinate care for all gender-affirming services a patient might need on their gender journey. Patients and families can access the [following] range of services at our website, uofuhealth.org/transhealth: primary care and HRT, plastic surgery, fertility and family planning, voice therapy, physical therapy, laser hair removal, adolescent medicine [and] gynecologic care.

SLUG: Can you please elaborate on the range of staff at the Program? What types of professionals are available?

Malan: Currently, we have three dedicated administrative staff to our Program. This includes two Patient Coordinator roles that assist patients in navigating care and scheduling appointments, and a Program Coordinator role that manages marketing and outreach, education, strategy and other programmatic projects.

Our clinical staff is not dedicated to our Program alone in that they serve in multiple capacities. For example, we have plastic surgeons that are specially trained in gender-affirming surgery, but they also deliver other types of plastic surgery to patients that are not our transgender patients. The range of professional clinical positions include physical therapists, plastic surgeons, family-medicine providers, speech-language pathologists, endocrinologists, adolescent medicine physicians, aestheticians, physician assistants, reproductive specialists, OB/GYNs and urologists.

We have high hopes that our hospital system will continue to support us in providing us with more dedicated positions both clinical and administrative.

SLUG: I read in your FAQ a bit about opening up your services to be more inclusive toward nonbinary identities and others. Can you please elaborate on the types of changes the Program is undertaking in this regard?

Malan: Transgender is an umbrella term that encompasses many gender-diverse identities, including those who identify as nonbinary. It's important that our Program is able to serve all of these identities by not assuming what someone's gender journey looks like based on how they identify. This is why all of our providers consider every patient's journey as unique and discusses with them what options exist. Not all transgender people pursue medical transition, and some are only interested in a handful of gender-affirming options.

We are working closely with our new Patient and Family Advisory Board to identify ways that our Program can be more inclusive to gender fluid/nonbinary identities.

SLUG: I saw a section on your website regarding events. While those are (likely) on pause right now, what are the types of events that the Program typically holds or appears at?

Malan: Many of the events we offer are educational either for patients or providers. Every month, we offer a patient-education seminar on various transgender health topics. Our providers are present to talk about the services and what to expect, and we offer a panel of patients who have had that particular service. This is free and open to the community to attend and ask questions. Since COVID, we have hosted these virtually via Zoom and will continue to do this until it is safe to resume back in person. [In these

cases,] these are offered at the *Utah Pride Center*. Patients can visit uofuhealth.org/seminartransgenderhealth to see a list of upcoming seminars.

For our providers, we hosted our first annual conference on transgender health this year and plan to offer this and more educational offerings to community providers.

SLUG: In addition to the medical services you offer, it seems like there are a lot of other areas (counseling, voice therapy, etc.) deal with more "intangible" things. Can you please talk about how these areas interact with things such as surgeries, hormones, etc.?

Malan: For many of our patients, counseling or mental-health therapy may be their first point of contact in a healthcare system in talking about their gender journey. For many folks in the beginning of their journey, they may still be in what's called their "social transition," ... finding what is most authentic to them in their own expression through body language, adjusting their voice, changing hair or clothing styles, or a legal name change.

These are reversible and fluid things that people are figuring out for themselves, so medical and surgical changes may or may not be on their list to pursue.

An unfortunate barrier that still exists to this day in accessing gender-affirming medical and surgical options are the **WPATH (World Profes-**

sional Association for Transgender Health) requirements. Although these guidelines provide evidence-based practices for providers offering these services, there is a list of criteria, including "living in your desired gender role for at least one year," before many things can happen. These guidelines can be interpreted loosely by providers to make sure patients get the care they need, but health-insurance companies sometimes have stricter standards they go by in order to cover any services that someone may need as part of their journey.

SLUG: A significant offering at the Program are the youth and teen Transgender Health Services. Can you please elaborate on the breadth of these services and their place in the Transgender Health Program?

Malan: More and more youth are identifying under the transgender umbrella, so the services offered at our Adolescent Medicine Clinic, [such as the] Gender Management and Support are critically important for families and youth.

We have physicians who ... specialize in adolescent transgender medicine [and] can provide options for puberty blockers, hormone therapy, behavioral health and nutrition wellness, and coordinate care with our adult providers so the transition to those services can be seamless.

SLUG: How does the Transgender Health Program interact with other aspects of the Utah LGBTQ+ community?

Malan: We are heavily reliant [on] and grateful [for] our community partners. We cannot do the work we do without their help and feedback. A couple of our community partnerships include:

Genderbands: Every year we partner with Genderbands to offer a top surgery grant for those who are uninsured in the community.

Utah Pride Center: Pre-COVID, we used their space to offer our patient-education seminars and refer patients to them for their mental health services and support groups. Every year, we also participate in the annual *Utah Pride Festival* and *Genderrevolution* conference.

We have been present at many other community organization events through outreach booths, presentations and referring patients directly to them for resources. As mentioned previously, we also have created our own Patient and Family Advisory Board made up of community patients and family members ... They are helping us shape the strategy and direction of our

Program, which will ensure our services are patient-centric.

SLUG: What's one thing you'd like the readers to know about the work you do and the communities you work with?

Malan: We are a new and growing Program! This means that we have a long way to go in making sure our Program is remedying the historical trauma that our community has experienced directly by healthcare providers. But this also means we have many exciting opportunities to engage with our community and integrate their feedback into how we provide these services. For our allied healthcare providers, we hope to be a resource in providing education for you and your staff to better serve transgender patients. For our patients, we thank you for your continued vulnerability during our growth and aim to be [a] safe space that can meet your healthcare needs.

SLUG: If a reader is interested in obtaining services, how can they get in touch or schedule an appointment?

Malan: Call us directly at 801.213.2195, option 1, and leave us a voicemail. We receive many phone calls a day, so leaving a voicemail will make sure we can get back to you. Also, emailing us at transgenderhealth@hsc.utah.edu.

SLUG: What does the Transgender Health Program have planned for the future?

Malan: So many things! We are looking forward to creating our first five-year business plan, which will include direct patient feedback from our Advisory Board, and both clinical and administrative input on ensuring the sustainability of our services. We also are launching our first educational-needs assessment that will guide us in delivering needs-based education on LGBTQ+ communities to our providers and staff. A few others to mention: a community photoshoot to use representative photos of our community marketing materials; improving the accessibility of our patient education seminars and other patient education materials; identifying our underserved communities so we can better reach them; creating a development plan to bring fundraising dollars into the Program to fund important initiatives like scholarships for patients and research; work toward requiring standardized education for our system on LGBTQ+ people and get all of our inpatient facilities designated under the Healthcare Equality Index.

In the online version of this article on *SLUGMag.com*, find a list of additional, local transgender health-and-wellness resources compiled with the invaluable assistance of **River Jude August**.



Illustration: Mariella Mendoza

The Transgender Health Program offers a variety of gender-affirming services, programs and more.



By Dillon Ely
dillon.b.ely@gmail.com

For nearly eight years, **Derek and Jennifer Williamson** have been using natural, organic and predominantly vegan processes to create their *Olío Skin and Beard Co.* products. “We’re mindful of what we’re making and how we’re making it,” Derek says. As Co-founders of *Olío*, they provide Salt Lake City residents and visitors with beard oil, face and body oil and salt scrubs. Their modest beginnings at a booth at the *Wheeler Farm Farmer’s Market* have evolved into a Sugar House studio housing a greatly expanded self-care product line, including products for skin, tattoos, babies, beard and hair as well as soaps.

The Williamsons spend roughly a year creating each new product, from initial concepts to store shelves, with three-to-four products in the creation process at any given time. What the product will be used for is the first question they ask themselves, and this affects the decisions taking place afterward. For instance, will it be for cleaning or moisturizing?

“That’s where our science comes in, is figuring out how deep in your skin we want the product to sink,” Derek says. Each oil in consideration is judged by its absorption rate and molecular size, not just for its aroma. These considerations aid in eventual use, such as skin preparation for shaving or scalp rejuvenation. Most components that go into each product are sourced locally, with many of the minerals coming from the *Redmond Minerals* mining company and other components, such as beeswax, from local suppliers.

Once construction of a new product has met the desired criteria established by *Olío Skin & Beard Co.*, Jennifer and Derek begin the initial testing and include family and friends in this process. They then provide it for regulars, and it’s finally considered ready for sale “when our regulars come back to us and want more,” Derek says. At this point, routine manufacturing begins but is never rushed, regardless of demand. The Williamsons place a great deal of attention on having a small environmental footprint and manufacturing in the “cleanest, most sanitary and eco-friendly way we possibly can,” Derek says.



With *Olío Skin & Beard Co.*, Derek and Jennifer Williamson create skin care and beauty products with an eye on sustainability.

In an effort to teach the community about natural products that can replace the commonly used, chemically laden ones within many homes, *Olío Skin & Beard Co.* provide a DIY line as well as construction workshops (on hold during COVID-19). The motivation for this is two-fold. First, “We look at [Salt Lake City] as a stronger community when more people are doing what we do. It’s educating more people [and] there’s enough business for it to all go around,” Derek says. Second, mainstream products are often harmful to the environment and neither organic nor natural, even when they’re labeled as such. The DIY products and classes help educate customers, reduce chemicals in the environment and assist



Made entirely from scratch and thoroughly tested and reworked, *Olío Skin & Beard Co.* products are fine jewels of skin care.

Photos by Bonneville Jones

in the mindfulness that self care provides. An additional benefit that the workshops have created is customers starting their own businesses with the craft they learned.

Soap is a relatively recent addition to the *Olío* product line and is now one of the most popular. It found its way into the store from a collaboration with **Amin Kees** (@bee_smooth_skincare) who taught *Olío Skin & Beard Co.* the ropes of soap crafting. When moving away from Salt Lake City, she simply said, “You guys are going to do this now.”

This became the medium that allows for most *Olío Skin & Beard Co.* artistic features to truly shine through. Each piece has varied earth tones and unique changes over time from use. “Every bar of soap is a piece of art; every bar of soap is like a fingerprint,” says Derek. These fingerprint creations are assisted by day-to-day motivation from Jennifer’s meditation teachings and the **Jimmy Buffett** tracks that are usually playing in the studio. “Breathing and mindfulness is paramount to the quality of our products,” Derek says.

The newest addition *Olío Skin & Beard Co.* has made available to the community—and arguably a culmination of everything they have learned thus far—is their *Live Skin Care* line, a set of self-care products composed of all-natural ingredients such as carrots, rosemary and ginger. “It’s made from the same stuff we’re eating, so we need to treat it as such,” says Derek. The first member to this line is a nourishing tonic, and other products will soon join the team. Skin and scalp sprays have completed their initial testing and received positive feedback from their trial runs. Customers can also look forward to seeing more botanical and herbal sprays, leave-in conditioners and moisturizers with raw botanical infusions.

For further information on *Olío Skin & Beard Co.*’s products and creative processes, head to olioskin.com or visit their Salt Lake City shop at 2157 E. 2100 S., Ste. B. The shop requires masks to be worn and only two customers at a time, and the team sanitizes the shop between customer visits.

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By Jack Dawe • @wjackdawe

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BEER OF THE MONTH

By Chris and Sylvia Hollands
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Beer Name: Carcosa
Brewery: Proper Brewing Co.
ABV: 10.2% (TBD)
Serving Style: 1 pint, 6 ounces



At the tail end of the exhilaration that *Proper Brewing Co.* was feeling after winning a gold medal for Proper Beer in 2020's *Great American Beer Festival*, further compelling news came to light: Head Brewer **Jack Kern** and Head of Cellars **Jeff Bunk** cued us in about their newly formed barrel program. One of *Proper's* newest headliners, Carcosa, is on the horizon, and we were invited to slip under the ropes for an advanced tasting. Carcosa is a pinot noir-barrel-aged version of *Proper's* Gruit beer. Using a Belgian dubbel as the base and adding some beer magic, Gruit has turned into a completely different beast, leaving only hints of its former self. (Disclosure: Carcosa was not fully developed, out of the barrels or carbonated at the time we wrote this. However, with the help of the creators, we gleaned the vision of what they are trying to accomplish.)

Description:

Carcosa was served to us in a snifter from a pitcher containing a blend between several barrels. This liquid gold was aged in pinot noir barrels for 11-14 months, so it was important to find the right mix to best demonstrate Bunk's vision. The beverage poured a murky, dark brown but appeared to lighten up around the edges, only retaining the darkness in its core. Because the beer has yet to be fully carbonated, we are only getting a glimpse of the flavor.

"I want this to drink more like a wine, so we are going to keep it a relatively lower carb so it's not as poppy on

the tongue," says Bunk. "We want it to remain creamy with herbaceous notes to finish, so it leaves your palate and is not lingering."

Our first whiff pleasantly greeted us with tart cherry, raisin and date aromas and a delicate, woody finish. The tart comes from Kern honing in on one of his older, homebrewed sour bacteria and introducing it to the batch. We expected the beer to be very tart, but at this point in its journey, it had a nice surprise for us: The tart flavor was subtle and proved to enhance flavors of plum, sour cherry, vanilla, pinot noir tannins and tender oak. Kern says, "The blend isn't to make it a full-on sour; it's to utilize complexities of the current flavors." When fully developed, we could believe the level of tartness will increase, with the robust flavors taking a stronger hold.

Overview:

Once *Proper* releases it, Carcosa is a beer you should pick up a couple of to taste its development at different times in its life cycle. Both brewers agreed that if you hold onto it for another year, it could be pretty tart and cool. As the beer is carbonated and bottled, it will continue to develop based on the yeast from Kern's private stash. We anticipate trying it when it's freshly released to see how much it has morphed from the sample. And of course, we will keep one to enjoy later, after it evolves in its own glass incubator.

Proper Brewing Co. is coming off a string of barrel-aged hits, and Kern and Bunk are focused on a bevy of releases continuing through 2021. Scheduled upcoming releases include Libre, a Mexican lager in Reposado barrels; Lei Effect in rum barrels; and Rogan, a rye lager from pinot barrels.

In all, it's nice to see that *Proper* is still killing it on the production side, pumping out award-winning beer and getting the opportunity to show some personality and satiate the need to be creative. Thank you, Jack and Jeff, for helping to keep Utah beer interesting and delicious.

Cheers!

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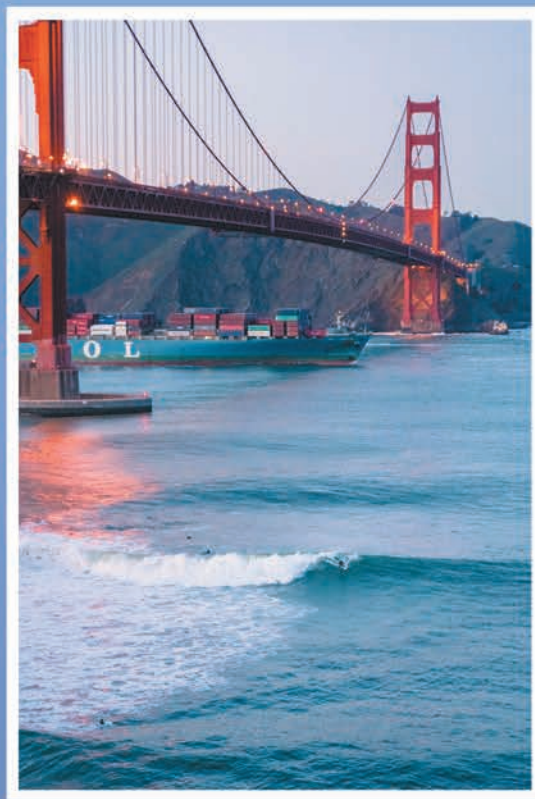
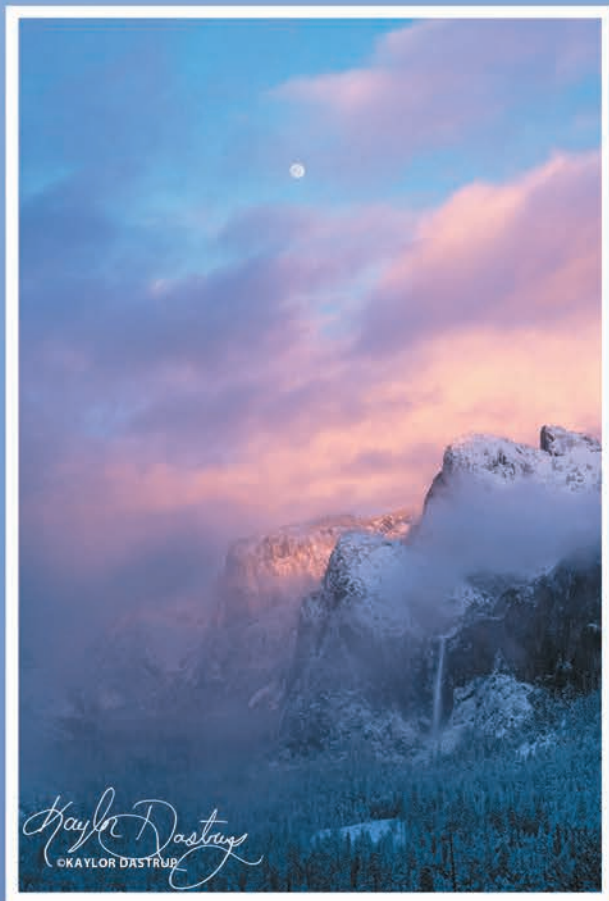
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One of the reasons why I love landscape photography is because it has given my mind a canvas for its creativity. I like being able to capture a meaningful moment in time that I can then share with others.

My advice for any photographer is to give yourself time to finish your personal projects. I have been most rewarded by the projects that I've created for myself. Saying "no," is saying "yes" to what you want. Give yourself your time, and set your sights high on what you want to accomplish and within time you'll see the benefit.

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