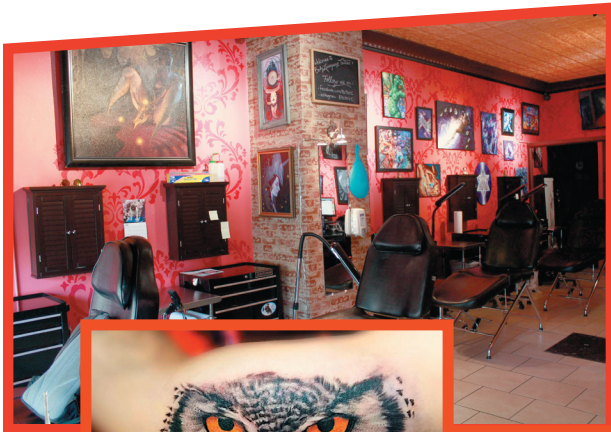


# Local Ink

BY REBECCA PATTON  
 @BECCAPATTONSAYS

The wonderful thing about Queens is its mammoth size, allowing for every business imaginable – and that includes tattoo shops. Astoria, Long Island City and Sunnyside have artists that rival those of Manhattan and even Brooklyn, but with both a homespun feel and that unique Queens flair.

I browsed dozens of artist Instagrams for this piece, and saw tattooed homages to our beloved borough in the form of the 7 Train, The Mets logo, the Triborough Bridge and even Long Island (which technically counts). Below are five such tattoo shops, the people who run them, and the art they produce.



Photos courtesy of Body Language Tattoo

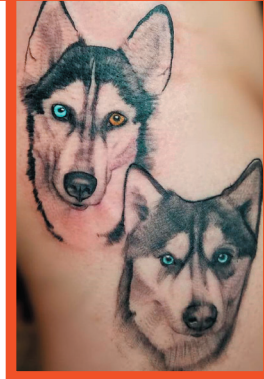


Photo via Instagram @blnyc. Tattoo by @natsuchiya

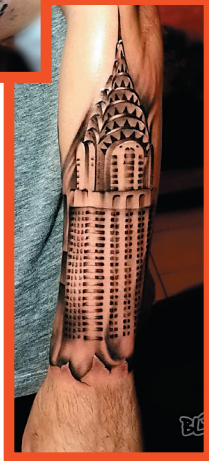


Photo via Instagram @blnyc. Tattoo by @carlosguzmanart

## Body Language Tattoo

"Every tattoo is special," said Body Language co-owner Rafael Jose. "If that person requested it, and it's going on their skin for the rest of their lives, and they trusted our artists to do that, it's extremely special."

Jose founded Body Language in 2012 with his partner, Nicole Palapoli, who is also one of the parlor's tattoo artists. Their shop believes in three things: good artwork, good customer service and a sanitary environment.

The shop features four other tattoo artists along with Palapoli – Carlos Guzman, Tim O'Connor, Nasa Tsuchiya and Rain Delmar – and they each have different aesthetics and backgrounds. Guzman works mostly in black and grey, for instance, while Palapoli prefers color portraiture, although she said in an email that her work spans a variety of styles in order to accommodate her clients. Jose recommended that you peruse the artists' work on their website or Instagram, then come in for a consultation. Their pricing starts at a minimum of \$100.

And although "consultation" sounds intimidating, the staff is dedicated to creating a warm and inviting environment. "It's a place where you're going to come by and get some good work, be around good people, and be happy, you know?" Jose said.

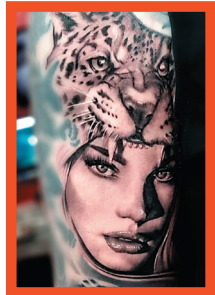
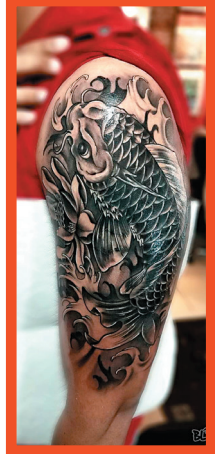


Photo via Instagram @blnyc. Tattoo by @carlosguzmanart



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Photo via Instagram @gotattoonyc. Tattoo by @blackwork\_works



Photo via Instagram @gotattoonyc. Tattoo by @tattoosbyelly



Photo via Instagram @gotattoonyc. Tattoo by @tattoosbyelly

## Go! Tattoo

Go! Tattoo's logo is a friendly maneki-neko, or Japanese waving cat thought to bring good luck. This is an apt descriptor for the welcoming atmosphere at their parlor, which is run by Chung Cheng. In an email, Cheng said he'd like potential clients to know that their staff is friendly – their staff being Niiru Dominguez, Tony Styles and Elly Cornwell, the three main artists at Go! Tattoo. Their styles could be described as traditional, although Cheng said that they specialize in a wide variety. For instance, Dominguez did a custom tattoo not long ago depicting the "Dragon Ball Z" character Trunks, while Cornwell recently gave a client a piece of pizza wearing sunglasses; cheese dripped down onto the roller skates it wore, and in the upper left hand corner of the crust was the Yankees symbol.

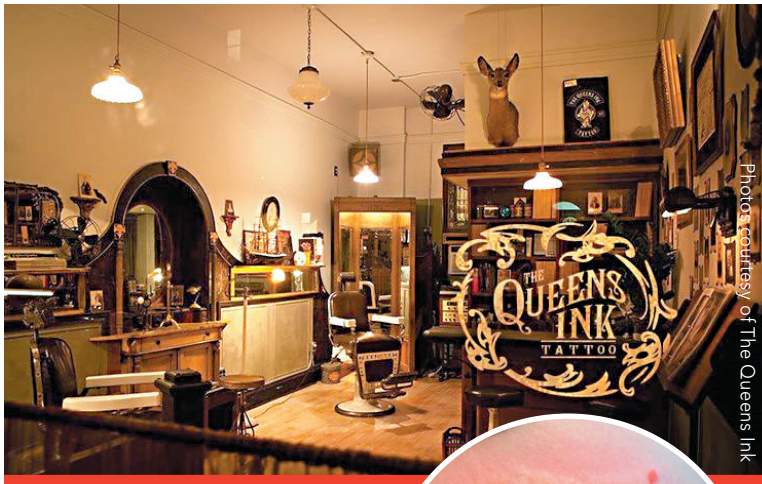
Go! Tattoo's deposits start at \$50 and go up to \$100, depending on the size of the custom work you would like done, and their rate is \$150 an hour. They're closed on Sunday but open every other day of the week, and they welcome walk-ins.

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Photo via Instagram @gotattoonyc. Tattoo by @tattoosbyelly





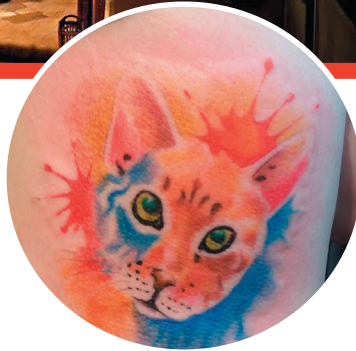
Photos courtesy of The Queens Ink

## The Queens Ink Tattoo

Cristian Zinc runs this nearly six-year-old shop in Ditmars alongside fellow tattoo artist Tina Rakotoarivony. The shop could be described as steampunk-barber-shop-meets-homey-bookstore, but that would just pigeon-hole it, which I doubt anyone at The Queens Ink would want. Victorian-style, black-and-white portraits line the walls along with taxidermy, while boat models and antiques sit unassumingly on shelves.

When asked what Queens Ink is known for, Zinc said, "Good work?" while Rakotoarivony offered, "No bullshit?" They pride themselves on their honesty, even telling customers not to get certain tattoos – names, specifically. Rakotoarivony specializes in line work, lettering, and organic shapes, while Zinc prefers realistic pieces, black-and-grey tattoos and portraiture.

Most customers already know about Zinc and Rakotoarivony's artwork when they come in for a consultation – to get



a custom tattoo, it typically takes a few weeks for the tattoo to be designed – and it's easy to see why. Their work is knock-your-socks-off good: A recent piece Rakotoarivony did for a client featured a magnolia branch climbing up the subject's spine and blooming into flowers at the shoulder blades, while Zinc's hyper-realistic illustrations have to be seen to be believed. Their shop minimum is \$60, but for larger pieces, like sleeves or back tattoos, the deposit is typically \$200-250.

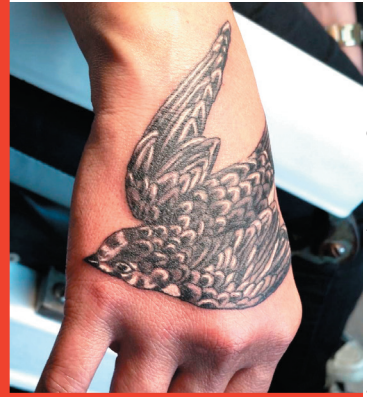
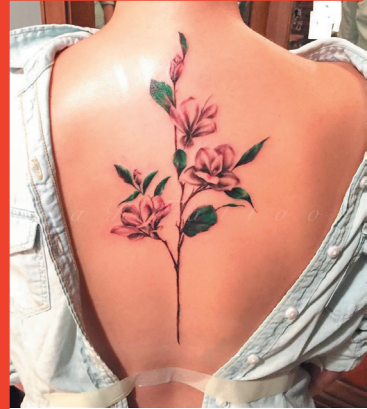


Photo via Instagram @thequeensink: Tattoo by @cristian\_zink



Photo via Instagram @thequeensink: Tattoo by @tinartatooos



Photos courtesy of The Queens Ink

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Photo via Instagram @sunmysidetattoo. Tattoo by @bones\_tattooer

## Sunnyside Tattoo

Nestled between the MetroPCS and Pay-o-Matic on Queens Boulevard sits the unassuming Sunnyside Tattoo. Blink and you'll miss it, especially if you're looking down from the 7 Train. But inside is a vibrant shop that's filled with eclectic decor and boasts three tattoo artists – Ivan Paz, Bones (which is the artist's pseudonym) and Maxine Keyes. Paz, who is also the owner, explained that his tattooing style includes American and neo-traditional, as well as black-and-grey and geometric, while Bones, who is only there on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, prefers American traditional. Keyes, meanwhile, specializes in illustrative tattooing and fine lines.

Although Sunnyside Tattoo is known for custom tattooing, they also do flash tattoos every Friday the 13th, for which they offer small, whimsical designs for either \$20 or \$31 – plus tip. Designs for the April 13 event included a pair of Converse sneakers, "NY" composed with bones, and a steaming takeout container. And these sales are insanely popular, too – they posted an Instagram during last October's sale, which showed people lining up out the door. Paz said that the shop has been open for nearly 10 years, and their hours are noon to 9 p.m. on Monday through Saturday, and noon to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

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Photo via Instagram @sunmysidetattoo

Photo via Instagram @sunmysidetattoo. Tattoo by @ivanpaz25



Photo via Instagram @sunmysidetattoo. Tattoo by @bones\_tattooer



Photo via Instagram @sunmysidetattoo. Tattoo by @wetcoats



Photo via Instagram @sunmysidetattoo. Tattoo by @big\_marshall







## GMCoffee Studios

Artist Gene Coffey uses his Long Island City art studio to tattoo clients, yes, but also to paint and host events. In order to get a highly coveted tattoo from him, you must first fill out an application, during which you tell Coffey what you'd like to get and a bit about you. He charges a flat fee of \$250 an hour, and his average tattoo takes two to three hours. His style is technically watercolor, although Coffey points out that he doesn't actually use watercolor in his tattoos. But each piece on his Instagram has a similar theme: an imaginative, colorful, and in many cases abstract illustration with paint splashes squirting out the sides, and sometimes dripping down the subject's ribcage or arm.

"My goal as an artist right now is that each tattoo ... I like better than the last," he said. "So, the one I did yesterday? I love it! My favorite tattoo I've done." As for the atmosphere of the studio, Coffey said he wants to curate a calm, relaxed ambience. It not your typical tattoo experience, and that's not what he's aiming for. Coffey recommends looking at his website or Instagram first to check out his style. "I'm not trying to have a party, I'm trying to be cool," he said. "I'm trying to make a beautiful object, you know, and a beautiful thing for you."



Photos courtesy of Gene Coffey

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