

La Marca – Cuba's first legal tattoo parlour

La Marca's innovative tattooists attempt to capture Cuba on the skin of their customers.



La Marca is a tattoo parlour and a visual art gallery.

Posted 4 Sep 15 By Jamie Matroos Graphic Design & Illustration Creative Work / Design News

The veil on the Cuban creative scene was lifted when Cuba re-established ties with the United States this year, and the world looked in on the Caribbean Island's bustling art scene, specifically tattooing. At the forefront of the island's inking is tattoo artist Leo Canosa, the owner of Cuba's first legal tattoo shop, La Marca.

Canosa's shop and accompanying art gallery are located in the heart of Cuba's Old Havana city. It is here that a number of Cuba's best graphic designers and tattoo artist attempt to capture the essence of Cuba on the skin of their patrons.

According to Cuban media, the shop is a testament to how innovative the art of tattooing can be as it personalises the work for each customer, while the gallery is used to showcase graphics and posters from young and talented designers.

But in the midst of their success, there is a community of illegal tattoo artists who face persecution from the Cuban government.

While tattooing has been widely practiced in Cuba it has gone largely unregulated, occupying a legal grey area. All that changed as the popularity for the art form boomed, drawing government scrutiny. A number of home-run tattoo businesses were subsequently shut down and fined.

Canosa speculates that the government's interest stems from the want to secure revenue and tax fees from the growing industry. The artist welcomes the move, calling for stricter regulations on sanitation, licensing and equipment.