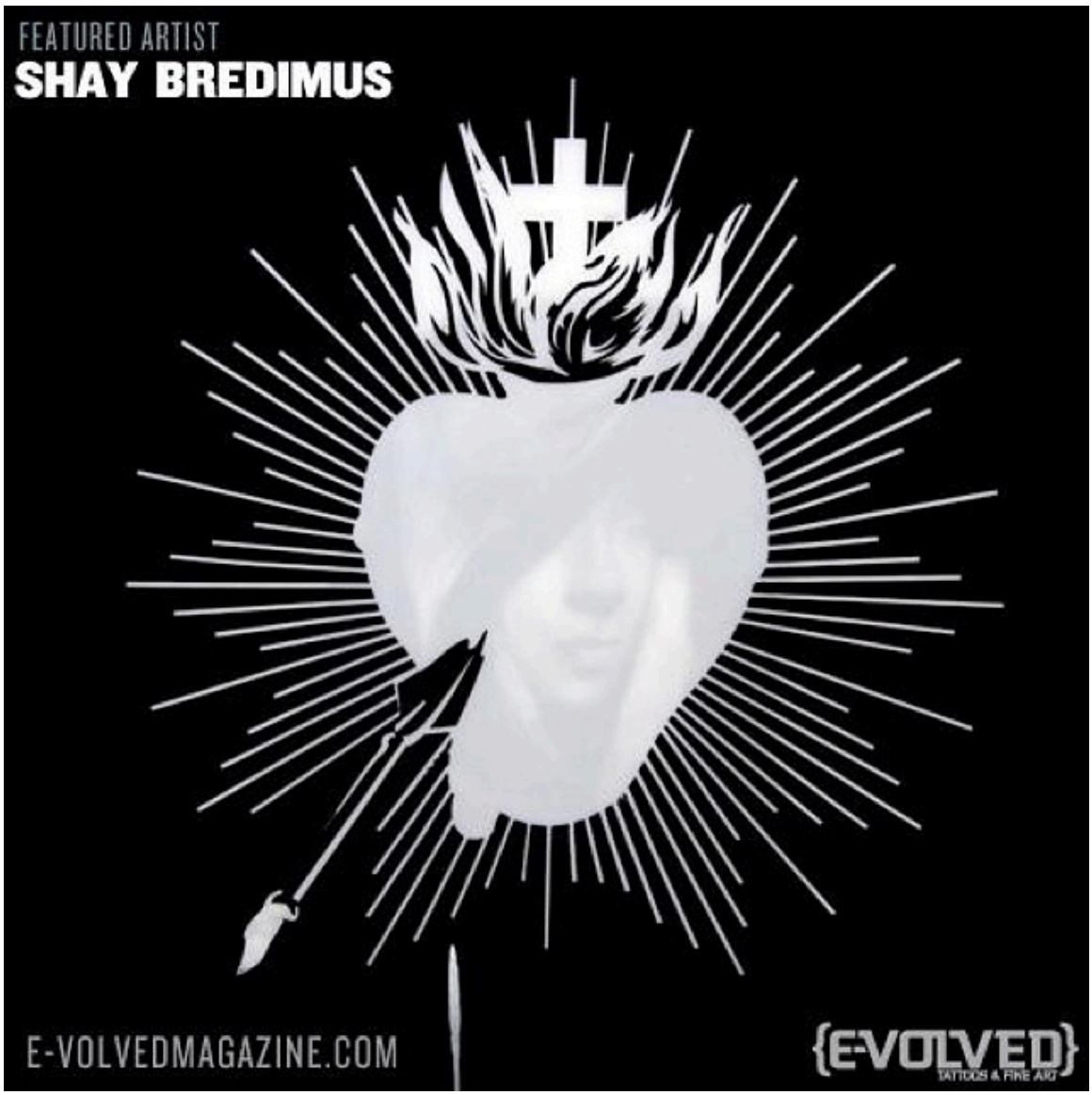

January 3, 2014
Shay Bredimus Artist Feature
{E} Features Fine Artist: Shay Bredimus
Medium: Tattoo ink and wax crayon on drafting film
Interview by Christina Diaz for {E-VOLVED}
Meet fine artist Shay Bredimus. Born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1979, and raised in Phoenix, AZ. Phoenix is where Shay cultivated his tastes and tendencies for his fine art and tattoos. The most immediate form of expression at that time for Shay was graffiti and tattoo culture. With artists like GRIME and EL-MAC also in Phoenix at that time; he had inspiration literally on the walls to study. These customs and cultures influenced his earliest interest in art.Shay also adds, "the Phoenix Art Museum has the painting Pollice Verso (1872), by Jean Leon Gerome. This painting set the standard for greatness in my mind, and began an obsession for nineteenth

century painting that still evokes me to this day. My fine art influences my tattoo work and my tattoo work influences my fine art. My fine art draws from tattoo iconography, and my tattoos are applied in a painterly style."
Shay works full time as a tattoo artist at Kari Barba's Outer Limits in Long Beach, CA, and paints non-stop on his days off.

{E}: Who got you interested in art?

SB: Technically, I am a descendant of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon-a big influence early on. My family is also related to French muralists that immigrated to America in the 1800s.

{E}: Were you artistic as a child?

SB: After I was involved in a near death car accident at the age of ten, visual language became my primary mode of expression and cemented my passion and future as an artist.

{E}: Are you self-taught or did you attend a trade school?

SB: My first real academic experience in the arts was at community college in Mesa, AZ, with Jim Garrison. In his amazing class I learned atelier style training with a small group of students who have also flourished in the arts, including Frank Gonzalez, painter Matt Dickson and tattoo artist Modo Rascon. After receiving my Associates Degree in Art from MCC I went to Art Academy in SF, then on to Emily Carr University in Vancouver, British Columbia for my BFA in Painting, where I painted alongside young painters like Charlie Roberts and Jesse Garbe. I also learned great lessons from teachers like Peter Schuyff. I later relocated to Laguna Beach where I earned my Master's Degree from Laguna College of Art and Design, again, with amazing mentors like Scott Hess, Stephen Douglas and so many great guest artists like Jerome Witkin and Alex Kanevsky, who helped me become well rounded.

{E}: Describe your artwork.

SB: My fine art is conceptually and physically layered, I use tattoo ink on plastic (a metaphor for skin in my opinion). I choose tattoo ink to reference my influence of tattoo culture from an early age (14) when I started tattooing. I choose monochromatic format for its immediate visceral impact and dramatic evocation. I have coined the term "brush drawings" to describe my wet and dry process influenced from my training in traditional painting and life drawing as well as the surgically meticulous tattoo work. My work also gives subtle reference to x-rays and hospitalization. My traumatic brain injury sustained at age ten is probably my greatest influence; by this I mean the symptoms of traumatic brain injury like spontaneity and impulsive mark-making are a direct result of my accident, and are probably the reasons for the overall dark quality of my work. My older brother always said pressure makes diamonds-I think it is adversity that leads to the greatest works of art or music; Caravaggio made his greatest work while on the run for murder, and many great composers' most breathtaking concertos were created after tragic loss.

{E}: What would you say sets you apart from others in the industry?

SB: What separates me from other tattoo artists in the industry-besides my education-would be my personal aesthetic. My tattoo style is approached more like a painting than a tattoo. I feel like tattooing is a rite of passage for modern people who have lost touch with primal and tribal rituals that link us to the past. A good

tattooer is a kind of shaman who gives you symbols or talismans to help you receive the power from the image applied to your body.
{E}: Tell us about your personal tattoo collection.

SB: My arm and back have been tattooed by Mike Roper, an enigmatic tattoo artist that does very good japanese work. I have also been getting a bunch of laser tattoo removal to make room for new work…
{E}: What inspires you?

SB: Inspiration comes from life experience, tragedy, pain, beauty, art and other artists alike, more specifically, masterful figurative allegorical painters. What I'm drawn to when I visit a museum is portraiture, the human form; past lives, the stories told are like a time machine into the past.
{E}: While growing up, what cartoons or stories had an influence on you?

SB: Marvel comics, Thunder Cats, early anime like Ninja Scroll or Fist of the North Star; I am drawn to post-apocalyptic art for some reason-drawn to the flame like a moth.
{E}: Where do you get ideas for your artwork?

SB: My art is directly influenced by events in my life. I have had two solo shows in LA since being signed to Koplin Del Rio in 2009, and I am currently working on the 3rd. The concept for my first show "Indelible" was a direct reference to the permanence of tattooing in our fleeting and ephemeral world we live in. The second show was inspired by a trip to Japan. While in Osaka, I saw a traveling art show from Chicago, it turns out that Chicago and Osaka are sister cities. I wanted to explore this concept. I had seen female personifications of the seasons by Alphonse Mucha, and I was inspired to make these same personifications, but instead of season I thought I would do cities, and more specifically sister cities, and even more specifically Los Angeles-the dream center of culture for the entire world. Hence my second show, "Kotomi: The Female Personifications of the Sister Cities of Los Angeles." My 3rd and current project is "The Seni Horoscopes," based on a card system derived from 16th century Italian oracle Giovanni Baptiste Seni, this card system is an accurate way to answer questions based on math and astronomy.
{E}: Whom are some of your favorite artists and why?

SB: It is probably easier for me to name movements or periods because I love so many painters. From the Renaissance to Baroque, Pre-Raphaelites to the Naturalists, Impressionists, Expressionists and Japanese woodblock prints; but if I had to make a list of top 3 old masters it would have to be John Singer Sargent, Alphonse Mucha, and Jean Leon Gerome. As far as contemporary painters, probably Jerome Witkin, Justin Mortimer and Alex Kanevsky.
{E}: What do you enjoy most about this profession? Least?
SB: My favorite thing about the profession of tattooing or of fine art is the same-creating. Creation is the highest form of intelligence; art defines what it means to be human, it is what we look too to understand the past. We make a mark to describe

the condition of our time; art records this mark, it is a time machine of sorts. The worst and best thing about tattooing is its fleeting nature, your art will age and pass, like a sand painting. It's more about the ritual of getting it, then it is about keeping it forever, I think.

{E}: Favorite art tool?

SB: One tool I can't live without in my practice is my surface, the giving and haunting support that I paint on. The plastic has become a staple in my work and I feel it parallels my art on skin.

{E}: First tattoo experience.

SB: My first tattoo was my mom's name on my chest when I was 14. My friend did it. He was neither an artist nor a tattoo artist; it was a brutal experience with a homemade setup guitar string and walkman parts; two cover ups later and now I'm getting laser to start over on that area.

{E}: What does your family think about your career choice?

SB: My family is very supportive of my life in the arts, they all commend me on having the courage to follow my dreams, as difficult as they may be to achieve.

{E}: Do you have any words of advice for an up-and-coming artist?

SB: My advice for up and coming artists would be mileage: 10,000 hours to mastery, 40 hours a week for 5 years.